

Amuse

Let's go outside – these open-air tables are the best places to enjoy fine food in the great outdoors

BATH PRIORY HOTEL, RESTAURANT AND SPA, BATH

Perfect for... foodie excitement. Also afternoon tea.

The lowdown Raymond Blanc disciple Chris Horridge brings gastro pilgrims to this country hotel, where he serves cured salmon with alder-bark smoke and creamed nasturtium, and roasted bass with St John's wort emulsion. A simpler lunch menu can be taken outside.

The scenery The hotel's wisteria-draped façade.

Fresh/wild Rabbit with 'forgotten hedge herbs and flowers'.
Weston Road, Bath (01225 331922). Three-course lunch, £27.50. Three-course dinner, £60.50.

THE BEETLE & WEDGE, OXFORDSHIRE

Perfect for... idyllic lunches by the Thames. Also parties.

The lowdown This old beamed boathouse is well loved by its affluent Thames Valley clientele. In summer, you can eat griddled asparagus, warm goat's cheese salad and Gressingham duck

at a table on the wooden jetty. In winter, watch your Cornish sardines or calf's liver being prepared on the charcoal grill.

The scenery It's *Wind in the Willows* territory.

Fresh/wild Wild mushroom soup with Parma ham julienne.
Ferry Lane, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire (01491 651381). Mains, £13.25–£24.50.

BENTLEY'S OYSTER BAR & GRILL, MAYFAIR

Perfect for... pavement culture. Also dates.

The lowdown We already had half a dozen reasons for loving Bentley's, starting with the tuna tartare, the stone bass ceviche and the fat chips. Now it offers a patch of pedestrianised pavement for summer Chablis and oysters. Upstairs are smart dining rooms, but the downstairs oyster bar is our favourite spot. Grab a corner banquette and get stuck into some of the best seafood in town.

The scenery A quiet side street.
Fresh/wild Beautiful bivalves.
11–15 Swallow Street, London W1 (020 7734 4756). Mains, about £9.95–£20.



THE CHERWELL BOATHOUSE, OXFORD

Perfect for... punting and Pimm's. Also family get-togethers.

The lowdown Before you get carried away channelling Ratty/Sebastian Flyte at this dreamy riverside spot, Cherwell Boathouse's seasonal menu has much to tempt you with. You might order ham hock terrine, followed by poached salmon or rack of lamb – simple-sounding but expertly prepared dishes. There are lots of outdoor tables, making it great for groups.

The scenery A leafy riverbank.
Fresh/wild Fresh: local asparagus. Wild: cheesecake with popping candy and a shot of milkshake on the side.
Bardwell Road, Oxford (01865 552746). Mains, £15–£18.75. Set menus, £23 and £25.

DAYLESFORD ORGANIC, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Perfect for... a countryside courtyard lunch. Also brunch.

The lowdown You know you're getting older when your heart beats faster at the thought of a farm shop. But this isn't just any farm shop – it's Carole Bamford's chic organic-lifestyle empire (also in Sloane Square, Harvey Nichols and Selfridges). The café spills out into the courtyard; next-door is a cornucopia of wonderful fresh produce. Come for organic eggs Benedict, pasta and fab sandwiches and salads.

The scenery A Cotswolds farm.
Fresh/wild Everything.
Daylesford, near Kington, Gloucestershire (01608 731700). Mains, £11.95–£13.95.



FISHERMAN'S LODGE, NEWCASTLE

Perfect for... fine dining. Also afternoon tea.

The lowdown This Victorian lodge serves great seafood with inventive accompaniments: smoked eel comes with beetroot, horseradish cream and orange powder; steamed trout, with warm grape jelly, purple potatoes and split pea dressing. In summer, enjoy canapés in the garden.

The scenery Wooded parkland.
Fresh/wild Seared wild sea-bass.
Jesmond Dene, Newcastle upon Tyne (0191 281 3281). Three-course dinner, £50.



DOWN BY THE RIVER
The Beetle & Wedge,
Oxfordshire