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## of the best places we ate in 2021

From low key cafés serving amazing cake, to rustic country pubs, and fine dining restaurants serving wine flights and tasting menus - here are our foodie 'best bits' from 2021.

If you've had your fill of cooking over the Christmas and New Year period, and need a break from the kitchen, let us inspire your next foodie expedition with just some of the very best spots we dined at last year.

**CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS,**  
group food and drink editor

### The Freston Boot

An idyllic country pub that really does feel like a muddy boots and paws kind of place – with a roaring fire, exposed beams, tiled floors and a great selection of real ales at the bar.

New exec chef Louis, who joined in the autumn, makes the most of the pub's smokehouse, kitchen garden and smallholding, with everything (including bread and around 12 flavours of ice cream) crafted from scratch, and little, if anything, going to waste.

We feasted on scrumptious, reasonably-priced pub food with a twist, including cauliflower bhaji with pickled cucumber, coconut yoghurt and mango chutney, wild mushroom and blue cheese mac and cheese, Dingley Dell pork with black pudding mash, seasonal veg and a cider vinegar and mustard sauce, and chef's vegan take on a pina coloda. Well worth a look in... and one to watch.

### The Lion Brasserie, East Bergholt

A newcomer during lockdown, this pub is just a few minutes' walk from the National Trust Flatford site, and has been beautifully renovated inside and out – the huge lawned garden buzzes in the warmer months. Head chef Ashley uses prime local ingredients, including rare breed meats, and ice cream made in the village, to create a sumptuous menu. We tried plump scallops in the shell, drenched in garlic and chilli butter, perfectly cooked

steak, and rich lobster Thermidor, served with some of the very best chips in Suffolk.

The molten chocolate fondant is a must-try – ask to have it with the delectable salted treacle ice cream.

### The Lakes, Stoke By Nayland Hotel

Alan Paton returned at the end of last year to oversee the hotel's huge food operation, working alongside head chef Rob Wells – his former protégée.

The restaurant has a new home, and a new look, spanning two large, elegant dining rooms hung with wistful monkey wallpaper and inset with soothing mood lighting.

Alan and Rob take their cue from the seasons and use as much produce from the family's fruit farm as possible – especially in the abundant summer and autumn months. And the menu is big, bold and confident, filled with lots of Alan's little touches.

After huge slabs of really very good homemade focaccia, I enjoyed a ceviche of cod loin with pineapple salsa and bhajis. A wibbly, savoury Baron Bigod and apple bread and butter pudding with pear and tarragon salad. And a stand out good dish of crisped rolled belly of pork, served over sweet potato puree with a green chilli ketchup, stilton mousseline, mulled red cabbage and puffed pork rind - one of my favourite plates of the year.

### The Bull Inn, Woodbridge

An unassuming pub with rooms, whose new owners have put a lot of time and energy into making it a great place to eat (and drink) in the town. Find the hotel on the market square and pop in for breakfast, lunch or dinner every day of the week – even Mondays.

The new head chef, who's worked on luxury yachts and in five-star alpine lodges amongst

Cauliflower bhaji with sambal, coconut yoghurt and mango chutney  
Picture: CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS



Lobster at The Lion in East Bergholt



Mushroom and truffle polenta with mushroom ketchup and ricotta at The Crown and Castle, Orford

Picture: CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS

Picture: ARCHANT





Mark's sandwich at Wright's Café in Bury St Edmunds - the Bloody Mary-infused beef short rib

Picture: MARK HEATH



Mark and Liz's shared dessert at the Troston Bull - dark chocolate and amaretti ganache

Picture: LIZ HEATH



Venison croquette with pickled walnuts, hazelnut mayonnaise, charred onion petals and crushed hazelnuts

Picture: CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS



other career highlights, has put together a generous menu based on punchy flavours, and including a selection of classics alongside more intricate cooking. We adored the venison croquette with pickled walnuts, winter leaves and crushed hazelnuts, a melting plaice, served on the bone with a briny caper and preserved lemon dressing, buttermilk chicken Caesar salad, and a superb chocolate fondant.

They take wine seriously here and have an excellent selection.

**Forage Kitchen Pop-Up, Fen Farm Bungay**

In late summer, the makers of Baron Bigod teamed up with the folk at Forage Kitchen in Rougham to lay on a few evenings of magical pop-ups, from a hilltop marquee overlooking the farm.

The Forage Kitchen team used a multitude of ingredients from the farm, alongside prime Suffolk

produce, to bring together a thoughtful, playful menu including the likes of elderflower cured salmon with buttermilk dressing, unctuous beef fillet with beef fat potato, bone marrow onions, smoked aubergine, black garlic ketchup and lovage, and a dreamy mascarpone mousse with 70% dark chocolate cremeaux, pickled blackberries and blackberry parfait.

Forage Kitchen has big plans for 2022. Watch this space.

**The Crown and Castle, Orford**

New head chef Jake and his team cook unfussy, hyperlocal dishes, making the most of the bounty of Orford (fresh and smoked fish, chocolate, bread) and the immediate surroundings. Portions were generous. And flavours were excellent - especially in the dishes from the separate vegetarian menu, which included a 'beefy' slab of wild mushroom polenta with truffle and mushroom

ketchup, and a katsu curry with crispy tofu and tenderstem broccoli.

Desserts were standout. Especially the vegan coconut and lime parfait and sensational Pump Street chocolate millionaire's.

**MARK HEATH  
Tuddenham Mill, near Bury St Edmunds**

The Mill is one of our favourite places to eat/stay in all of Suffolk, it genuinely feels like a little holiday whenever we go - even though we only live down the road.

The dining room is stylish, the staff are friendly and knowledgeable, and most importantly, the food is great. We always try to treat ourselves to Lee Bye's latest tasting menu and a flight of wine when we go, but even just popping in for a drink next to the stream feels special.

If you're staying, the loft suites are extraordinary and well worth the extra cash. Our happy place.

**The View at All Saints Hotel, Fornham**

We dropped in for the tasting menu in September, and loved it.

Now being run by Masterchef Professionals star Adam Spicer, with a great front of house in Tom Sparkes, this restaurant is really going places.

As the name suggests, the view itself is lovely - you can see right across the hotel's scenic golf course - and the food under Spicer is exciting and fun.

**Wright's Café, Bury St Edmunds**

You want a sandwich? Wright's is the place to go - a café fast elevating the humble sarnie to an artform.

I loved the Bloody-Mary-infused beef short rib, but there's lots to try! A nice relaxed vibe and plenty of other food options too.

**The Bull, Troston**

Wow, what a find, Newly refurbished, renovated and re-opened when we visited back in May, this will fast become an essential Suffolk foodie location.

It's cosy, stylish - and the food is tremendous.

They even have their own microbrewery! What's not to like?

**The Anchor, Walberswick**

If you asked me where the best fish and chips are in Suffolk, I'd say here - every time we go, they are perfect.

The pub is literally two minutes' walk from the beautiful, quiet Walberswick beach too, so you can either work up an appetite or walk off a hefty meal!

**Hmm Burger, Newmarket**

Best burgers in Suffolk, bar none. Enough said.

**SIMON WEIR**

**The Brewers, Rattlesden**

I've no idea what it was like watching The Beatles play in The Cavern but I suspect it's like eating in The Brewers, where there's a sense of enjoying a serious talent that hasn't yet been fully discovered. This small village put is not a Michelin-starred establishment... yet. But the food is serious, detailed, playful and astonishingly tasty. The atmosphere is that well-judged balance of relaxed yet grown-up. It's a treat - every mouthful, every moment, is a pleasure. Get there now so you can say you were a patron before it became famous.

**Unico, Newmarket**

I love Italy and I love eating out in Italy... so this family-run restaurant on Newmarket high street has instantly become one of

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my favourite places to eat out in Suffolk. It's a proper high-end restaurant serving food from Italy, with the warm and boisterous atmosphere of a restaurant in Italy – not an English chain's watered-down reimagining it. These are pizzas with attitude, risotto with gusto and pasta with presence – every mouthful packed with flavour. Generous portions too.

#### The King's Head, Dullingham

I loved my partner's reaction to every dish when we came here: unalloyed delight, as every mouthful hit the mark. I had two great courses that showed real skill and delivered masses of flavour – and even though I ended with what looked like a bought-in pud, the main in particular was such a stand-out dish that it was easily one of the best meals of the year. Great atmosphere, great flavours – definitely one to revisit.

#### Baileys 2, Bury St Edmunds

This has become my go-to lunch stop in Bury St Edmunds. Good value, good-sized portions and a huge range of high-quality home-made food, from soups to salads to the biggest sandwich menu you'll ever encounter. It's always busy, which tells you a lot, but it's worth waiting for a table – especially as the cakes are to die for (even though you promise yourself you don't need one).

#### Victor Victoria, Newmarket

Coffee and cakes. Sounds so simple, but so hard to lift to another level. This crisp and clean Newmarket café - behind the high street, just by Palace House – succeeds. Good sandwiches, a great range of high-quality cakes and a proper coffee. Very good indeed.

#### Cortado, Newmarket

Newmarket is blessed with good coffee shops – and the award-winning Cortado delivers a belting shot of espresso, a fine flat white and a potent, perfect cortado... as you'd expect. This is backed up by good breakfasts, tasty sandwiches and decent cakes. There's a real sense of atmosphere, too, with horse art on the wall and racing discretely on the telly. It's Newmarket through and through - and as far from a soulless chain coffee shop as could be.

#### DANIELLE LETT

##### The Gallery, Ipswich

With another Veganuary on our radars once again, I can't help but cast my mind back to a few months ago when I visited The Gallery in Ipswich – an upmarket cocktail bar that specialises in plant-based small bites. And boy, were these delicious.

Based on the town's waterfront, this bar and lounge had speakeasy vibes, and one could argue it's Ipswich's best-kept secret.

In terms of drinks, there's around 20 different wines to choose from, near enough any and every spirit your heart could desire, as well as ciders, beers, and



The wild bass, oyster and tartar sauce course at The View restaurant in Fornham St Genevieve  
Picture: LIZ HEATH



Rocket and parmesan salad - fresh, peppery and delicious  
Picture: SIMON WEIR

soft drinks too. And of course, don't forget to check out the range of cocktails – all expertly prepared with extra flare.

And nothing pairs better with a couple of drinks than a selection of tapas-style dishes – all plant-based, of course.

We first ordered garlic and herb mushrooms alongside some freshly-baked breads which came with black truffle-infused olive oil and balsamic vinegar, and flame-baked garlic and coriander naan with harissa hummus, which were all heavenly.

But it was the vegan black pudding slices, Italian-style soya meatballs, and portobello mushroom that were the standout trio of dishes.

Anytime I've opted for plant-based options before, they've always lacked that punch of flavour that meat and fish dishes tend to have. But you'd honestly be forgiven for mistaking these were meat – they were that tasty. The texture, the flavours, and even how they looked – they ticked all of those boxes and more. And not only that, they were all really filling too.

Even if you're not vegan or plant-based, The Gallery is certainly worth checking out – its

impressive range of drinks and dishes make for a great night out on the town.

#### Good Inside, Ipswich

If you're looking for a restaurant that replicates that good old-fashioned, homecooked feeling – with a twist – then you have to check out Good Inside. Keto-friendly, its ethos on its website is 'meat, vegetables, friends and family'. No frills, just delicious, fresh food.

With an emphasis on a low carb/high good fat diet, its menu is filled with locally-sourced fare that can best be described as 'guilt-free goodness'.

Hearing the term 'keto' might make some eyes roll, but it was honestly incredible food from start to finish – and it just goes to show you don't need to rely on carbs to leave your table feeling full.

Highlights include the plentiful seafood platter sharing starter, pan-fried fillet of hake, and the roasted root vegetable mash with gruyere – the former of which might be the best mash I've ever had. Smooth, strong, and almost truffley in the taste, it was to die for.

And if you can squeeze it in, be



Crispy pork belly bites slow cooked in fennel, paprika and Galician lager



Rolled slow-cooked pork belly with sweet potato, green chilli ketchup, pork rind puffs, smoked stilton mousse and a lobster nugget  
Picture: SBN





Picture: DANIELLE LETT



A chocolate delicade with golden chocolate and hazelnut

Picture: SBN



Asian duck taco with hoi sin and kohlrabi

picture: CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS



Pan-fried fillet of hake with roasted fennel, dill beurre blanc and cherry tomatoes

Picture: DANIELLE LETT

sure to order a dessert too. I just about managed to put away a slice of chocolate mousse cake served with vanilla cream and berry compote. Dark and rich, it was incredibly indulgent and decadent while remaining carb-free. Who says healthy has to be boring?

### The Moloko, Ipswich

For anyone missing the Mediterranean sun, there's thankfully a place in Ipswich that'll help satisfy your cravings for Spanish paella while international travel proves to be up in the air due to the ongoing pandemic.

The Moloko opened on Ipswich's Lion Street last summer – and certainly proved to be one of my dining highlights in 2021.

Marketing itself on its website as 'a stylish and modern cocktail bar and restaurant that brings Spanish Tapas and Italian Cicchetti styles together, creating a chic yet casual dining experience' - it definitely ticks all of those boxes.

Its interior décor is Instagram-fodder galore – think pretty patterned wallpaper, fancy furniture, and neon signs throughout.

And the food itself, while also

just as Instagrammable, tasted as good as it looked.

With over 17 tapas dishes on offer – ranging from meat, fish, and vegetable – there's more than plenty for you to try.

I wholeheartedly recommend you order the seasoned and grilled tiger prawns; the deep-fried squid rings served with garlic mayonnaise; and the slow-cooked crispy pork belly bites in fennel, paprika and Galician lager. The former was definitely the star of the show, and could in fact be the best tapas dish I've ever had this side of the English channel.

If you're looking to order something else however, The Moloko serves a range of mains, and also does a bottomless brunch. And if you're looking to satisfy your sweet tooth, the menu is packed with a selection of desserts such as cheesecake and chocolate brownie.

When you head there, and it goes without saying, be sure to order a few of the cocktails too – The Moloko has become well-known for its stylish, artisan drinks that are dying to be sipped. Whether you head there on a date, with a group of friends, or your family, you'll all enjoy what this eatery has to offer.