

UK: London »

The world's on your plate

London's a cultural melting pot; you won't find a more diverse showcase of flavours from across the globe, writes Joel Porter

Llama Inn

Llama Inn is a hot new NYC import, recently opened in a beautiful rooftop space on the seventh floor of The Hoxton hotel in Shoreditch. The Brooklyn original, founded by Juan Correa and chef Erik Ramirez, is rated as one of the city's best restaurants, serving modern Peruvian food with a New York edge — and it's hit the ground running in London too, with several glowing reviews from critics. Alongside obligatory pisco sours are flavour-packed snacks like charred cabbage skewers and pork shoulder sliders, plus standout sharing dishes like pork chop with aji verde. An outdoor terrace with city views completes the idyllic setup.
llamainnlondon.com

The Devonshire

Some restaurants take time to make their mark, but The Devonshire, a new pub and dining room in Soho, was being talked up as the best pub in London before it even opened. With an all-star team behind it, including publican Oisín Rogers and ex-Fat Duck head chef Ashley Palmer Watts, The Devonshire has indeed gone

down a storm with Londoners. The upstairs dining room, which serves simple steaks and fresh seafood cooked on a wood-ember grill, is the city's most difficult to score reservation — try for a last-minute walk-in or console yourself with bar snacks and an excellent pint of Guinness in the ground-floor pub.
devonshiresoho.co.uk

Bambi

In London Fields, Bambi offers up great music, wine and food in equal measure — and the formula has proven a big hit, with tables booked out weeks in advance. More of a wine bar and restaurant in the early evening, Bambi offers pitch-perfect bar snacks like cauliflower cheese arancini and smoked mackerel pate and pickled cucumbers, alongside a line-up of low-intervention wines from around the world. After dinner, resident DJs get the party started, playing tunes from the custom-built wall of records over a high-spec vintage sound system while bartenders shake up excellent martinis and margaritas.
bambi-bar.com



Chishuru

West African cuisine has been a defining trend in London's restaurant scene in recent months, with openings such as Akara and Ikoyi 2.0 making waves. Most celebrated of all, however, is Adejoke Bakare's Chishuru, which moved from its original home in Brixton to a new central London location in Fitzrovia



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in September 2023. Already a favourite of critics and London foodies, Adejoke's new opening has been an unqualified success, with rave reviews for her modern take on West African dishes like moi moi, a savoury bean cake served at Chishuru with bone marrow, an omelette, red peppers and scallop roe; and fiery peppercorn soup topped with shellfish, radish and apple. chishuru.com



Kolae
London is now home to an exceptional array of Thai restaurants — and the latest hot new opening (in more ways than one) is Kolae, the second restaurant from the team behind Som Saa. The Southern Thai-inspired menu focuses on grilled dishes and kolae, a technique where ingredients are soaked in a coconut marinade before cooking: excellent examples are the must-order mussel skewer and the chicken bamboo skewer. Spice fanatics should go for the mouth-burning prawn, snake fruit and shrimp paste relish with crunchy vegetables, and the sour mango salad with roasted coconut and dry fish. kolae.com

Cafe Laperouse
Years in the making, the first Raffles hotel in London finally opened at the historic Old War Office in late 2023, bringing with it a spate of new restaurants. Alongside two restaurants from world-renowned chef Maruo Colagreco (behind the three-Michelin-starred Mirazur) is classy Parisian import Cafe Laperouse, which occupies a stunning modern glass pavilion in the hotel's central outdoor courtyard, plus a cosy adjoining salon that is pure old-school Parisian glamour.



From left, Llama Inn has opened at The Hoxton hotel in Shoreditch, tempting diners with modern Peruvian cuisine with a New York flair; Saltine, in Highbury, North London, is popular for its sleek design and unfussy modern British-European cooking; Bambi in London Fields offers a mix of great music, wine and food. Photos / Llama Inn, Saltine, Bambi

On the menu, there's classic French fare like *paté en croute*, Burgundy snails in garlic, and beef fillet with peppercorn sauce. laperouse.com

Saltine
Saltine, which opened in Highbury, North London in November 2023, has quietly become one of the city's hottest restaurants thanks to a winning combination of sleek interior design and unfussy modern British-European cooking which transcends the "neighbourhood restaurant" billing. The menu, courtesy of head chef Phil Wood, offers the likes of braised mutton, carrots and caraway; red mullet with fennel; and a superb sticky toffee apple cake that has become a social-media sensation. And the smart gallery-like space (designed by founders Jess Blackstone and Mat Appleton), with its exposed brick walls, painted murals and vintage furniture, offers cool and comfort in equal measure. saltine.co.uk

Mambow
Abby Lee's Malaysian concept Mambow moved into a permanent site in Clapton, East London, in late 2023, following several pop-up stints. And it's proved to be an instant hit, with an early critic review in the *Evening Standard* declaring that Abby "has a triumph on her hands". The menu, inspired by Abby's upbringing in Singapore, brings together a broad range of Chinese and Indo-Malay flavours: especially brilliant are snacks of *lor bak* — crispy fried slices of pork and prawn roll with chilli vinegar jam — and the *otak-otak* prawn toast wrapped in betel leaves. A line-up of juicy natural wines and a thumping soundtrack ensure there's always a fun vibe, too. mambow.co.uk

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