

The resident

Marcus Wareing's
culinary journey

Discover the best
afternoon teas
for Mother's Day



**SOPHIE
CONRAN**
on a life in design and
her love for west London

March 2014

Bunga Bunga has kept west London on its toes



DINNER is served

From Dirty Bones to Yashin; Olivia Palamountain discovers the new west London restaurants that are revolutionising the way we eat



Yashin takes sushi to a new level



West London has it all – the heritage, the cache, the cash. We’ve claimed the crown of being London’s most desirable area for years, but recently, this neighbourhood has seen some stiff competition infiltrating from the east. And in one area, at least, we’ve been trumped: the kitchen.

We may have the Michelin stars, but Londoners are now looking for a very different sort of restaurant. Where the epitome of on-trend dining was once starched tablecloths, then gastropub grub, today diners want eccentric snacks – we want everything and anything served in jam jars, and to eat with our hands.

The new food wave began in the east end and in Soho, spearheaded by the likes of Russell Norman and his New York-inspired joints. No reservations, no frills, and no nonsense was suddenly all the rage. Restaurants now have to sell so much more than just food; it’s all about

bespoke experiences.

Where’s buzzing? Pitt Cue, Spuntino, and Patty & Bun still lead the delicious dirty food pack, but there’s also Jackson & Rye and Duke’s Brew & Que, as well as an Asian contingent: Bone Daddies, Flesh & Buns and Yum Bun are all superb.

Locals hungry for this sort of experience have had to travel the length of the central line for sloppy joes and jumped-up pad Thai, but finally, we have the option to sample this on our doorstep.

It wouldn’t be fair to say that this part of town has been completely dry of atmosphere, with Charlie Gilkes, stalwart of the experiential club and restaurant scene, opening groundbreaking speakeasy Bart’s in Chelsea Cloisters five years ago. A pioneer of unusual nights out (think Bunga Bunga and new venue ‘Beavers’), Charlie understands west London’s reluctance to embrace the new and the next better than most. He says, ‘This part

FISHBone has turned seafood into fast food at Kensington Place



It's out with tradition and in with street food, small plates and simple things done really well

hostess and she'll show you the way to boozy heaven, where you'll find absolution in the awesome cocktail list and bar bites. Don't bother looking it up online as CPR doesn't even have a website – it's that kind of place.

What's in a name? Well, Dirty Bones, Kensington's popular new hangout says it all. Encapsulating the essence of new wave dining, there's a no-reservations policy, retro record players, and a menu of inventive fast-food. Then there is Yashin, a stylish new sushi joint complete with the neon signage, a 'no soy' policy and a new branch in SW7. And just up the road, enduring favourite Kensington Place has also been keen to prove its street-cred, opening pop-up diner FISHBone, offering a twisted take on fish dishes, such as their scallop hot dogs, and is already making waves.

In fact, the pop-up trend of a few years

back has evolved into 'residencies', as short-term success stories look to stay put while the crowds keep coming. Kurobata on the King's Road was supposed to be serving until Christmas, but it's still in open. Chelsea continues to rave about its modern Japanese menu, which includes 'junk food' – wagyu sliders and sashimi pizza – alongside robata grills. It also happens to be on the site where Jimi Hendrix allegedly spent his last night.

Even Mayfair has embraced informal eating. Peyote is a new Latin restaurant with a spirit of spontaneity and a no-reservations taco bar that has managed to retain the hallmarks of a chic W1 eatery. According to manager, Tarun Mahrotri, it's simple. 'Diners are looking for fun and innovation.'

And west London is now where you will find exactly that; we're bringing sexy back to the dinner table.

of town has long been more conservative and institutional, often eschewing new concepts in preference of old-school local restaurants.' But the new generation has voted with its feet and, as Charlie confirms 'it's out with tradition and in with street food, small plates and simple things done really well.'

Charlie's thoughts are echoed by Mark Cutler, the brains behind Honky Tonk. He's quick to see the potential in bringing the east end to the westside, since 'some people just will not travel there,' but is aware that there would have to be some tweaks for this audience. 'West Londoners demand more comfort. They expect an excellent product, comfortable but with a hint of raw, delivered at a competitive price point.'

It's a tough brief to follow, but at last restaurateurs are up to the challenge, with a spate of seriously exciting offerings already open and more on the horizon.

Although it's hidden above the Fulham Road's revamped Goat, hot drinking den the Chelsea Prayer Room is most definitely underground. Confess your sins to the



Peyote has added a little Mexican spice to Mayfair