

Langford Fivehead in Somerset. *Opposite*, duck egg and black pudding at The Pig in Hampshire



# WINE, DINE & RECLINE

10 RESTAURANTS WITH ROOMS IN THE UK

AFTER A GREAT MEAL, THERE'S NOTHING BETTER THAN CLIMBING INTO A COMFORTABLE BED. DEDICATED FOODIE RUFUS PURDY GOES FROM THE KENTISH COAST TO THE SCOTTISH ISLES IN SEARCH OF BRITAIN'S BEST PLACES TO EAT AND SLEEP. PHOTOGRAPHS BY SIMON WHEELER

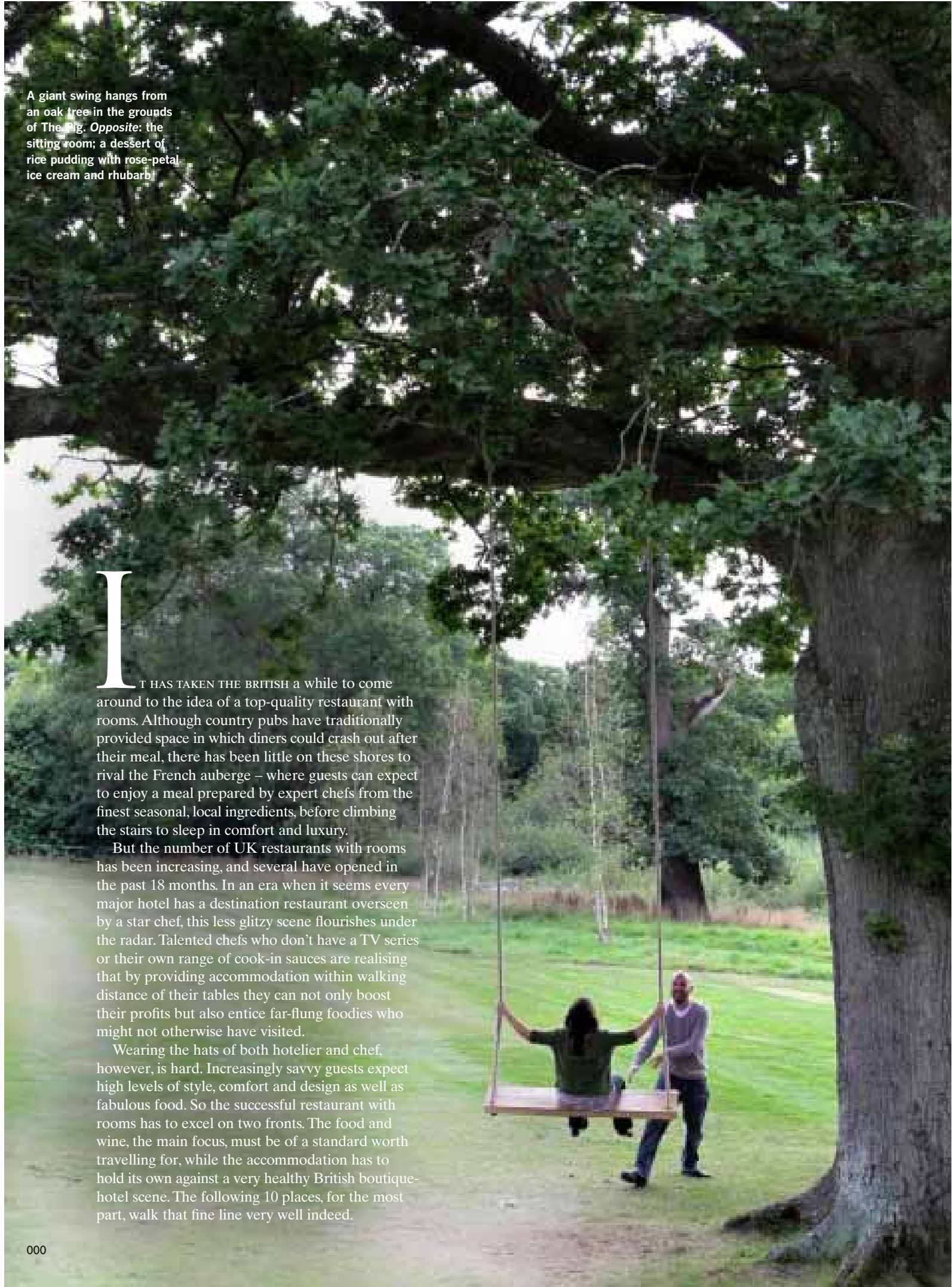


A giant swing hangs from an oak tree in the grounds of The Pig. *Opposite:* the sitting room; a dessert of rice pudding with rose-petal ice cream and rhubarb

**I**T HAS TAKEN THE BRITISH a while to come around to the idea of a top-quality restaurant with rooms. Although country pubs have traditionally provided space in which diners could crash out after their meal, there has been little on these shores to rival the French auberge – where guests can expect to enjoy a meal prepared by expert chefs from the finest seasonal, local ingredients, before climbing the stairs to sleep in comfort and luxury.

But the number of UK restaurants with rooms has been increasing, and several have opened in the past 18 months. In an era when it seems every major hotel has a destination restaurant overseen by a star chef, this less glitzy scene flourishes under the radar. Talented chefs who don't have a TV series or their own range of cook-in sauces are realising that by providing accommodation within walking distance of their tables they can not only boost their profits but also entice far-flung foodies who might not otherwise have visited.

Wearing the hats of both hotelier and chef, however, is hard. Increasingly savvy guests expect high levels of style, comfort and design as well as fabulous food. So the successful restaurant with rooms has to excel on two fronts. The food and wine, the main focus, must be of a standard worth travelling for, while the accommodation has to hold its own against a very healthy British boutique-hotel scene. The following 10 places, for the most part, walk that fine line very well indeed.







## THE PIG BROCKENHURST, HAMPSHIRE

◆ As the brainchild of Hotel du Vin co-founder Robin Hutson, The Pig is every bit as glossy and stylish as you would imagine. Its proximity to London – about 90 minutes' drive down the M3 – means that HdV's core client base has been kept close, while a gorgeous New Forest location ensures the kind of rural seclusion stressed-out metropolitans spend their working weeks dreaming about. And from the moment I arrive – when I'm greeted with Champagne and a platter of homemade sausage rolls, cured hams and pork scratchings – I find myself adoring the place.

The Pig is based around a pretty, ivy-covered mansion and spread over several acres of grounds in which ancient oaks tower over manicured lawns. My room, in the former stable block,

is an expert combination of hip-hotel essentials – free-standing bath, polished floorboards, bold-print wallpaper – and luxurious country-house comforts. As well as the homely wooden furniture, log-burning stove and forest-themed artwork, there's a dog basket and a milk churn out in the porch.

Chef James Golding, formerly of The Ivy in London, creates the Modern British cuisine served in the conservatory-style restaurant. Many of the ingredients he uses come from The Pig's beautiful kitchen garden, and many others are sourced from the New Forest. My starter of home-smoked salmon, served with an apple-and-chard salad, has a wonderful denseness that comes from the oak chips and Brockenhurst honey with which it is infused. My main course – a 38-day-aged rib-eye steak from nearby Pennington Farm – comes with crispy tobacco onions and a selection of mushrooms foraged from

the forest only that morning. The robust flavours are expertly matched and thoroughly satisfying.

The Pig may have been open only a year or so, but it feels as though it's been here for decades. Watch it become one of Britain's most successful country retreats.

*Beaulieu Road, Brockenhurst, Hampshire (01590 622354; [www.thepighotel.co.uk](http://www.thepighotel.co.uk)). Doubles from £125, B&B. Dinner about £75 for two without wine*

## THE THREE CHIMNEYS COLBOST, ISLE OF SKYE

◆ The Three Chimneys is worth the two-hour trip from Inverness – the nearest airport – for the location alone. Ringed by heather-covered mountains and flanked by a glassy loch, it's the kind of Caledonian idyll Victorian artists used to risk worsening their consumption for. The farmhouse-like dining





room is as romantic as any Burns ode.

The food is phenomenal. Locally sourced dishes were the restaurant's USP long before any TV chef started talking about food miles. 'Our menus have always had to make the most of what's around us,' chef Michael Smith tells me. 'It's more economical for Glasgow suppliers to ship ingredients to New York than to send them up here.'

With this in mind, I opt for the Seven Courses of Skye tasting menu, which begins with langoustines lifted from the loch I see rippling beyond the window and ends with a marmalade soufflé infused with Drambuie syrup. In between come Colbost crab risotto, Sconser scallops, Loch Harport oysters and Lochalsh

venison, each beautifully presented, innovative and flavoursome. It's surely only a matter of time before Smith's cooking receives the Michelin star it deserves.

The six suites in the adjacent House Over-By are at the functional end of the style spectrum, and homely in the sense that they feel like the guest bedroom of a very fashionable, wealthy friend. Everything is pleasant and comfortable without being too off-puttingly cool. The X-factor here is provided by loch views through every window and, of course, the food.

*Colbost, Dunvegan, Isle of Skye (01470 511258; www.threechimneys.co.uk). Doubles from £295 B&B. Dinner about £120 for two without wine. Seven Courses of Skye menu £85*

## 21212 EDINBURGH

◆ As a place to stay, there can be no faulting 21212. Chef Paul Kitching's glamorous Edinburgh restaurant with rooms, situated in a Grade I-listed townhouse on the Royal Terrace, wows you with style from the second you open the front door. The high-ceilinged Georgian chambers on the ground floor may have retained their original cornicing, windows and decorative flourishes, but they have been complemented by a 21st-century design theme of primary-coloured discs – seen everywhere from the plant pot beside the entrance to the screen in front of the open kitchen. There are also butterfly-print carpets and metallic wallpaper.

The four bedrooms are breathtaking. My enormous, top-floor room combines serenity – white walls, garden views and skylights – with a cutting-edge feel that comes from its statement bed (with a photograph of a Scottish landscape, printed on a screen divided into blind-like slats, as a backdrop), Renaissance

art-print lampshade and mirrored walls.

The food is equally glitzy. Kitching earned the restaurant a Michelin star within months of opening, and his visually stunning cuisine is a riot of flavours and textures. 'Aye, we do throw the kitchen sink at it,' Kitching tells me. 'It's an expression of my complex personality. And though at its heart it's classical French cookery, I'd like to think we've reinvented it a bit. It's the culinary equivalent of Salvador Dalí – he started out as a classical painter...'

Everything on the five-course menu comes with a bewildering list of ingredients (including – in the case of my beef main – sausage, bacon, gammon, ham, haggis, chestnuts and cranberries), and each dish looks so good you feel churlish eating it. But as the restaurant is filled with a trendy local crowd, many of whom are clearly eager to impress their dates, the panache-filled platefuls hit the spot perfectly.

*3 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh (0845 22 21212; www.21212restaurant.co.uk). Doubles from £175 B&B. Five-course dinner menu £68 per person*





A smoked salmon dish at 21212. *Opposite, from top left:* a private dining area; the restaurant; room-service Champagne; a selection of cheeses; one of the four bedrooms









## LANGFORD FIVEHEAD LOWER SWELL, SOMERSET

◆ Less a restaurant with rooms than an upmarket B&B which offers a table d'hôte, Langford Fivehead warrants inclusion for its superb food and gorgeous accommodation. Communal dining isn't for everyone, but those who book into Peter Steggall and Orlando Murrin's 15th-century manor know what they're letting themselves in for. And guests are happy to get to know their fellow overnighters while enjoying Murrin's stunning seasonal cooking. 'Somerset has always had a great tradition of food production,' Murrin tells me. 'And we're lucky there are so many excellent suppliers close by.'

Langford Fivehead is a medieval building, and the decor is a blend of Dark Ages chic – flagstone floors, hog-sized fireplaces, heavy tapestries – and modern boutique style. My

bedroom, '10 July 1645', has an enormous canopied bed, a honeyed colour scheme and elegant, French-style furniture. My bathroom is spacious and serene, with witty cherub tiles. The combination works because the whole place feels like a personality-filled home.

My fellow guests and I take our seats at 8pm sharp for a pumpkin, leek and blue-cheese risotto. Murrin, a former editor at *BBC Good Food*, talks us through each course, and he puts up an impassioned defence of British veal before serving us just that – pink and tender as a rose, accompanied by garlicky *gratin dauphinois*. Steggall gives an engaging mini-lecture on a selection of West Country cheeses before a dessert of pear frangipani tart with tonka-bean ice cream is brought out to finish.

The dishes may not have the gloss of those in a top restaurant, but it doesn't matter. Murrin's cooking is masterful, and the sense

is of being at a smart house party with friends – albeit one where you are not expected to help with the washing-up. *Lower Swell, Somerset* (01460 281159; [www.langfordfivehead.co](http://www.langfordfivehead.co)). Doubles from £130 B&B. Dinner (Fri and Sat only) £50 per person without wine

## ROCKSALT FOLKESTONE, KENT

◆ The views from Rocksalt are fabulous. Who'd have thought the ferry port of Folkestone could look so enticing when framed in floor-to-ceiling windows? Gordon Ramsay protégé Mark Sargeant opened the restaurant last summer, and its combination of Kentish food and Scandinavian-style design – dark-toned leather furniture, warm wood, linear patterns – is as much of a draw for Folkestonians as it is for itinerant foodies.

Although upmarket, the restaurant serves local food for local people – and at



**From top left: sampling a cocktail on the terrace at Rocksalt; the dining room; a fig tart from the kitchen. Opposite, a bedroom, sitting room and breakfast at Langford Fivehead**



Razor clams with potato  
and sea purslane at the  
St John Hotel. *Opposite,*  
*from top:* the dining room;  
blackberry jelly, whipped  
cream and Breton biscuit;  
the kitchen; a bedroom



reasonable prices, too. Sargeant's inventive take on the cuisine of his home county can be seen throughout the extensive menu, and my starter of dressed crab with harissa is bold and confident. The piquant oiliness of the sauce goes very well with the tender crabmeat, and I have soon cleared my plate. My main course, stir-fried whelks with crispy noodles, gives the local favourite an Asian twist, infusing the rubbery flesh with honey and ginger. My dessert of gypsy tart evokes nostalgic memories of school dinners, though its butterscotch filling is as light as a soufflé.

'The ethos at Rocksalt is seasonality, simplicity and local,' Sargeant tells me. 'We source the best local ingredients, allowing the products to speak for themselves with little fuss.'

The bedrooms, which are above sister restaurant The Smokehouse, just along the quay, also update the raw materials at their disposal with panache. The four cool but cosy chambers have been hewn from a red-brick Victorian structure in which dabs and bloaters were once smoked. The

exposed brickwork that surrounds my antique iron bed is a stylish reminder of the building's past; a state-of-the-art wet room, oversized lamp and stark, floral-print wallpaper are contemporary elements. And the gentle sounds of lapping water and muffled gull-caw prove as soporific as any nightcap in Rocksalt's cocktail bar. 4-5 Fishmarket, Folkestone, Kent (01303 212070; [rocksaltfolkestone.co.uk](http://rocksaltfolkestone.co.uk)). Doubles from £75 B&B. Dinner about £65 for two without wine

## ST JOHN HOTEL LONDON

◆ Fergus Henderson made his name with the nose-to-tail eating concept he pioneered at St John Bar & Restaurant, and the success of his offal-dominated menus has led to several spin-offs. The latest, the St John Hotel, opened off Leicester Square in spring 2011 and provides a handy West End location for visitors who might be reluctant to venture to St John's more easterly outposts.

How much you like the hotel's design depends on



where you stand on spartan decor. Although this works well in the restaurant and bar, where bare walls and simple furniture put the focus firmly on food and drink and give the spaces a cool, functional feel, it's less successful in the bedrooms. My top-floor Long Room, with its white walls and bizarre, green-Perspex floor, feels a little like being shut in a squash court. It isn't somewhere I want to linger.

I feel more comfortable in the small, ground-floor restaurant, where head chef Tom Harris adheres to the St John brand by producing stunning, no-nonsense, Modern British food in an open kitchen. My Dorset crab starter comes with a fascinating chervil twist that gives it real bite, and my main course of grilled Middle White chop is served with deliciously tender Jersey Royal potatoes that taste as though they've been marinated in soft, slippery butter. For dessert, I have a slice of egg-custard tart that seems to defy the laws of physics. It holds its shape solidly, yet pools

into delicately spiced liquid as soon as it enters my mouth. This is assured food that has evolved stylistically over several years; perhaps the hotel needs more time to do the same.

1 Leicester Square, London WC2 (020 3301 8020; [www.stjohnhotellondon.com](http://www.stjohnhotellondon.com)). Doubles from £150. Breakfast about £15 per person. Dinner menus from £22.50 for three courses

## THE YORKE ARMS RAMSGILL-IN-NIDDERDALE, NORTH YORKSHIRE

◆ 'Do you like the bedrooms?' asks chef Frances Atkins, standing over me as I sit on a sofa in the bar of her renowned Dales restaurant. I do. My split-level Superior Courtyard apartment – of which there are four, in a separate building from the main house, set beside a tinkling brook – is elegant and tasteful, I say. It has the ambience of an

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upmarket hotel room rather than a functional, post-dinner crash-pad. 'Oh good,' says Atkins. 'I designed them myself. You're not the first to say that, either. One of our regulars, Alan Bennett, has been most complimentary.'

I'm impressed. Alan Bennett is akin to royalty in these parts and, as a Yorkshireman, I feel honoured to be dining at the same table. The Yorke Arms earned a Michelin star in 2003 for its inspired use of seasonal, local ingredients and has kept the standard up ever since. Unlike some of the more starchy establishments in the guide, however, Atkins's restaurant is welcoming, cosy and relatively informal. With its low-beamed ceilings, creaking floorboards and dark-wood panelling, it feels like a traditional Dales inn.

The food, however, couldn't be more different. Although Atkins insists her menus offer 'food for everybody, from gourmands to locals who come here for a treat', her cuisine is unapologetically high-end. My starter of Whitby crab, dressed with a hint of lemon zest, is matched with a stunning soup of shellfish and salt cod in which flavours stand out but never overwhelm each other. The main course – a slow-cooked leg of hare served with pink medallions of loin, quince, pearl barley and fine-textured black pudding – is as fascinating as it is delicious. This is Yorkshire food reinvented as something delicate, witty and beautiful. It's the culinary equivalent

of Bennett's prose. *Ramsgill-in-Nidderdale, Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire (01423 755243; www.yorke-arms.co.uk). Doubles from £260 including three-course à la carte dinner and breakfast*

### THE CROWN AT WHITEBROOK MONMOUTHSHIRE, WALES

◆ This seasoned performer has been offering food and accommodation in a pretty, 17th-century cottage since 1971. The secret to its longevity seems to be a combination of location – its Wye Valley setting is both idyllic and easily accessible – and wonderful food. Chef James Sommerin's inspired, Michelin-starred cuisine is as soul-stirring as the choral soundtrack that greets you in reception.

The decor here is country-comfortable, and the public spaces have all the leather furnishings, low ceilings and oak beams you'd expect in such a rustic setting. My room, 'Dylan', is something of a shrine to Wales's favourite poet, and he stares down at me from the wall as I flick through his life's work from the bedside bookshelf. Design-wise the room is a little bland, but I find it cosy and charming; and the huge bathroom feels as decadent as a night out with Thomas himself.

The restaurant goes for a more modern look, but

other than some original art, there's nothing to get too excited about. That's where Sommerin comes in. From the *amuse-bouche* of creamed langoustine on a bed of ham hock and starter of crispy chicken pieces on a mushroom *raviolo*, it's clear he is unafraid of using delicate, intricate cooking techniques to coax the best from earthy British flavours. My main course of quail with black pudding and red wine is stunning; I particularly love the deliciously light false 'legs' Sommerin creates by deep-frying balls of minced quail and inserting a sliver of bone into them.

By the time dessert comes around – a walnut-and-banana soufflé with condensed-milk ice cream – I feel as though my tastebuds have been taken into areas previously unvisited. I'm also very full. Thank goodness Dylan is just a stair-climb away. *Whitebrook, Monmouthshire (01600 860254; www.crownatwhitebrook.co.uk). Doubles from £145 B&B. Three-course dinner menu £55 per person*

### MR UNDERHILL'S LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE

◆ There's something of the school dining-hall about Mr Underhill's. Guests are required to take their places for dinner between 7.15pm and 8pm, and are served the same dishes from the nine-course Market Menu (although it can be adjusted to suit guests' dietary requirements). The similarity with school dinners ends there, though. Chef-proprietor Chris Bradley has earned his restaurant a Michelin star for the culinary journeys on which he takes guests, and his inspired creations – which, on the evening I visit, include a filo cone of raw salmon and beetroot, a pot of crème caramel-like duck-liver custard, and a piece of lemon sole topped

with a chorizo crust – are as delicious as they are showy.

'The Market Menu was born out of necessity,' Bradley tells me. 'When we first began, we didn't have the supplier network we do now. Being so far from London, the only way we could get what we wanted was to buy in bulk. For that to work, I had to be sure everything would be used.'

While Mr Underhill's is undoubtedly a favourite of residents of this genteel borders town, its four luxury suites – including two new spa bedrooms with pool baths and steam rooms – mean it also attracts many visitors from afar. Though the food is obviously the biggest draw – 'Our guests know they're guaranteed a fabulous meal at about a quarter of the price of Le Manoir,' says Bradley – the location of Mr Underhill's is not to be sniffed at either. Situated on a weir beneath Ludlow Castle, overlooking the ducks and water-babble of the River Teme, it is a gorgeous spot by day. And at night, when candles are lit in the terraced courtyard garden and fairy lights illuminate the sculptures dotted between arbours and ironwork tables, the whole place feels utterly magical. *Dinham Weir, Ludlow, Shropshire (01584 874431; www.mr-underhills.co.uk). Doubles from £220 B&B. Market Menu £62.50–£67.50*

### RESTAURANT SAT BAINS NOTTINGHAM

◆ There's a lot to get over before you can appreciate Restaurant Sat Bains. Firstly, there's the location. Turn off the A52, drive under a flyover and pylons, and you find yourself at the gates of a low-level, red-brick complex. The backdrop of traffic rumbling along one of the Midlands' busiest

thoroughfares adds little to the scene, and it doesn't help that this restaurant with rooms resembles a motorway service station.

'The majority of gastronomic restaurants have beautiful locations, sweeping countryside, sea views, that sort of thing,' says chef-proprietor Sat Bains. 'We don't, and that's what I wanted. The juxtaposition of the location and what you get on your plate is unique, I think.'

Then there are the rooms. Arranged around a central courtyard/car park, they're OK in a functional, budget-hotel sort of way. Some effort has been made to give them boutique-style gloss – my bed has a ceiling-high purple velvet headboard and a metallic snakeskin blanket – but I find the decor and other furnishings uninspiring.

Where it does work, though, is in the Michelin-starred restaurant. Every one of my seven courses is stunning, a perfect complement of flavour and texture. Highlights include a tender piece of Loch Duart salmon in a robust oyster soup, and soft, pink medallions of mallard served with a cleverly deconstructed Waldorf salad. Every dish is confident and accomplished, and served with a real sense of fun. 'I question everything,' says Bains. 'Why do combinations work? What levels of acidity need to be added to offset fat? How much crunch needs to be introduced to give texture to cream? We research, research and research more.'

Alas, the package didn't work for me. I felt it was a superb restaurant, with rooms tacked on. Forget sleeping here; get them to call you a taxi at the end of the meal. *Lenton Lane, Nottingham (0115 986 6566; www.restaurantsatbains.com). Doubles from £129 B&B. Dinner menu £75 for seven courses, £89 for nine*