



Top new restaurants

Which were the UK's brightest newcomers in 2006? **Square Meal** delivers its verdict

££ **ABODE CANTERBURY**

High Street, Canterbury (01227 766266), open Mon-Sat noon-2.30pm 7-10pm
The Michelin-starred chef Michael Caines and the hotelier Andrew Brownsword have brought a huge dollop of urban chic to Canterbury with the opening of their latest Abode hotel. Here you'll find the assuredly civilised MC Restaurant serving up finely wrought cuisine in an attractive dining room that makes good use of light and space. The kitchen takes inspiration from great local ingredients — think locally caught fish, Kentish beef and Romney Marsh lamb.

£ **BLACKSTONES**

2-3 Queen Street, Bath (01225 444403), open Tues-Sat 10am-10.30pm; Sun 9am-4pm
After their storming success with Blackstones Kitchen, which offers robust home cooking to take away, Daniel and Rebecca Blackstone have expanded to a restaurant across the road. Things kick off at 10am with the kind of breakfast that sets you up for the day, while lunch and dinner are more cosmopolitan — anything from spinach and goat's cheese chicken involtini to Asian chickpea stew.

THEBIGEAT

The Kitchin

££ 78 Commercial Quay, Leith, Edinburgh (0131-555 1755), open Tues-Sat 12.30-2.30pm, 7-10.30pm

Launched in the summer in premises that were once home to The Rock and then Palourde, The Kitchin uses fresh seasonal ingredients to fabulous effect. The lunch menu may sound simple (squid to start, halibut as a main), but it displays real underlying complexity and craft: the aforementioned squid, for example, is teamed with mussels and

cauliflower to form a central island in a gorgeous bouillon, while the beautifully seared halibut — topped by olives, lemons and capers — sits on moist spinach with hot sautéed potato on the side. The à la carte menu has the same approach, but with a wider choice, while the wine list is far from intimidating. The restaurant forms part of an old converted warehouse: you enter via a modern, airy conservatory with the darker dining space to the rear.

££ **BORDEAUX QUAY**

V-Shed, Canons Road, Bristol (0117-943 1200), open Brasserie: Mon-Sun noon-11pm. Restaurant: Mon-Sun noon-3pm, 6-10.30pm
Le Quartier Vert chef Barny Haughton has brought his gastronomic passion to an even more exciting project in Bristol. Bordeaux Quay, an attractively converted, open-plan warehouse on the waterfront, houses a bar, café, brasserie, delicatessen, restaurant and cookery

school. Haughton also plans to make it a zero-waste, ethical and environmentally aware restaurant. This manifests itself in plenty of ways, from the rainwater collected on the roof for flushing the loos to the "within 50 miles" food sourcing policy.

£ **DEVONSHIRE ARMS**

Devonshire Square, Beeley, nr Matlock (01629 733259), open Mon-Sun noon-9.30pm (snack menu 3-6pm)
The Devonshire Arms has

recently been renovated, but the rural charm of this row of mid-18th-century cottages remains, with beams, exposed stone and log fires contrasting well with the bold colours and contemporary furniture. Diners are drawn by the very good cooking, which makes use of fresh ingredients to good effect. Far reaching menu options range from lobster and prawn cocktail to more sophisticated specials such as salt and pepper squid with noodle salad.

££ **HANSONS AT THE CHELSEA RESTAURANT**

17 St Mary's Street, Swansea (01792 464068), open Tues-Sat noon-2.15pm, 6.30-9.30pm
The chef Andrew Hanson has exported many aspects of his winning fish restaurant on Swansea marina to this new venture. The restaurant is a peaceful, cosy retreat overseen by a superb front-of-house team. Blackboard menus prove that fish is still a vital part of the repertoire, and quality and freshness are second to none. Don't miss desserts such as chocolate torte or a wonderfully sharp and fruity baked lemon tart.

£ **HOLE IN THE WALL**

2 High Street, Little Wilbraham, Cambs (01223 812282), open Tues-Sun noon-2pm; Tues-Sat 7-9pm

This part of the country is bereft of good places to eat, and in just a few months this pub has become deservedly popular. The modern British menu has two distinct sides: there's the hearty pub fare with real ales on tap and blackboard lunch specials, but there's a more refined aspect, too, involving the likes of a beautifully presented smoked chicken, cashew nut and pickled ginger spring roll to start, followed by deep-fried scallops with garlic and saffron mayonnaise.

££ **J BAKER'S BISTRO MODERNE**

7 Fossgate, York (01904 622688), open Tues-Sun noon-2.30pm, 6-10pm
Baker's first solo venture is all about using simple, local ingredients to try to woo the locals as well as Minster-visiting tourists. He held a Michelin star at Pool Court for ten years, so there's no doubting the Middlesbrough chef's pedigree. The grazing menu, available by day and early evening, might include Scarborough woof

with pea shoots and real mayo, macaroni with oxtail and young spinach, and sour cherry sorbet and warm cinnamon doughnuts, while a fixed price à la carte is offered after 7pm.

££ **THE OLD SPOT**

12 Sadler Street, Wells (01749 689099), open Wed-Sun noon-2.30pm; Tues-Sat 6.30-10.30pm
Ian Bates's bright, unfussy eaterie, all bare wood tables and floorboards, serves fantastic food that's as intrepid and unpretentious as its surroundings. Mussel and saffron risotto, roast partridge, pommes Anna, beetroot and wild mushrooms are among the choices, delivered with efficiency, and a wine list provides the right bottle for a reasonable price. Put it all together and you have a place that's very easy to like.

££ **PINTXO PEOPLE**

95-99 Western Road, Brighton (01273 732323), open Restaurant: Mon-Sun noon-3.30pm (Fri-Sun -4pm), 6.30-10.30pm (Fri-Sat -11.30pm). Tapas: Mon-Sun 10am-11pm

This Brighton venture brings big-city pizzazz to the South Coast. An informal downstairs deli dishes out pintxos (the bite-sized morsels served in the Basque region of Spain), wine and sangria, while an upstairs restaurant, opulently furnished in black and red, places full-size modern Catalan dishes in the centre of the table for sharing. Excellent service, a mostly Spanish wine list and very good prices are further pluses.

PRICE GUIDE

£££ Above £45

££ £30-£45

£ Under £30

Price ranges are indicative of one two-course à la carte meal, plus half a bottle of house wine, coffee, cover charge, service and VAT. Restaurant reviews compiled specially for *The Times* by Square Meal, for 16 years the London and UK eating-out experts. Opinions are based on the experiences of the Square Meal team of inspectors and of thousands of readers, who are surveyed throughout the year. You can find more reviews and news on their website.

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