



Waitrose Good Food Guide 2017

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Waitrose Good Food Guide to... gourmet youngsters

As restaurants nationwide start to realise that children might want to try what their parents are eating, the sausage-and-chips formula is looking decidedly passé

For decades, high-street chains have been the go-to for adults with hungry children in tow. The guarantee of child-entertaining extras, swift service and a stack of highchairs used to override the quest for a good meal.

But chains are upping their game, while many of the UK's best independent pubs, brasseries and high-end destinations are also providing better dining for young tums.

The 2015 *Out To Lunch* report, published by the Soil Association, revealed that 69% of parents think children's food in restaurants would be improved if they offered a child's portion of adult meals.

Some food writers have even called for the ubiquitous child's menu to be scrapped because of its lack of imagination and excluding children from

'the world of adult food'. But many chefs and parents argue that a separate menu of familiar and loved foods makes for a happier child and a more relaxed meal for parents.

Where they all agree is that the quality of food on children's menus is often woeful. Why should your child be stuck with fish fingers or reconstituted chicken while you're enjoying an exquisite bouillabaisse? And what about some fresh fruit for dessert?

Of the many restaurants putting freshly cooked and nutritionally balanced food on their children's menus, blazing a trail at the top end is Marcus Wareing. His 'Culinary Kids' tasting menu at Tredwell's (London) features the likes of calçot onion, romesco sauce, sherry vinegar aioli or crispy buttermilk chicken, pickled cucumber, bergamot and radish.

Elsewhere, mid-range pubs, restaurants and brasseries such as Lussmanns in St Albans realise a happy child means a happy parent and, therefore, repeat custom, and a deep-fat fryer isn't the answer.

High-profile restaurateurs such as Mark Hix and Theo Randall are vocal in their support for better children's menus, and most chefs agree that fresh, nutritious, simple food and smaller portions from the main menu keeps everyone happy.

Underestimating a child's appetite for adventure in food, and readiness to eat what's on their parent's plate, is bad for business, it seems.

Treat Yourself £££

Theo Randall At The InterContinental

London
theorandall.com
Theo Randall's education in Italian food began on childhood trips. At the five-star InterContinental he transports you to southern Europe. While you delve into lamb with artichokes, a clump of fresh veg and salsa d'erbe, young companions can opt for a sophisticated yet simple ravioli of cime di rapa, ricotta and sage butter or roasted bream fillet with zucchini fritti, finishing off with clementine sorbet.



The Sportsman

Kent
thesportsmanseasalter.co.uk
For astonishing food in the most congenial family-friendly pub, Stephen Harris's enterprise is hard to beat. The Sportsman is Kentish to its fingertips and the daily menu inclines more to the refined than the rustic, featuring perhaps roast gurnard with green tapenade in shellfish sauce, or Monkshill Farm Lamb with mint sauce (above). Children are encouraged to have half portions of mains at half the price.

Great value ££

Galvin Brasserie De Luxe

Edinburgh
galvinbrasserie deluxe.com
The kitchen at this Edinburgh reimagining of the Galvin brothers' London original belts out cracking French regional classics. The Children's Selection (£15 for three courses)

is tailored to young appetites: Galvin cure smoked salmon with green salad to start, perhaps, followed by chicken breast, mashed potato and fresh beans. Apple tarte tatin and ice cream makes for a fitting Gallic close.

Lussmanns

St Albans
lussmanns.com
The confidently simple dishes on offer at this neighbourhood

brasserie make it a boon for locals and a big draw for anyone passing through. Lussmanns is proudly vocal about its support for welfare-driven producers, and the sensibly priced menu has lots to offer younger palates, such as a house fishcake (right) with baby spinach, parsnip and beurre blanc or oven-baked paella with chargrilled vegetables and local halloumi,



followed by seasonal fruit and rosemary crumble with clotted cream ice cream.

Budget £

Rockfish Seafood and Chips

Dartmouth
therockfish.co.uk
Mitch Tonk's seafood haven overlooking the River Dart is the kind of place everyone loves. Part of a small group (other branches are in Plymouth, Torquay and Brixham), Rockfish is on the money when it comes to local and sustainable sourcing and fresh and forthright flavours. Come for first-class fish and chips, dressed crab, or seafood rolls, while the kids dig into crisp fried cod, prawns or calamari, grilled chicken breast in a brioche bun, or homemade fish finger wrap finishing with a knickerbocker glory or fried churros with chocolate sauce. Happy faces all round.

Tayyabs

East London
tayyabs.co.uk
People have been beating a path to Tayyabs' door since 1972. It's tucked away, but this Punjabi canteen is easy enough to find if you follow the crowds. The lively atmosphere suits family dining, and grilled meats, curries and kebabs are the mainstays of the menu. As with many ethnic restaurants, there is no separate menu for children; the main menu offers plenty to suit them, however. Resisting the fluffy naan breads will prove futile, and if they tire of the protein, well-priced vegetarian dishes prove there's more to the place than hunks of meat and poultry.



SMALL FRY Restaurants shouldn't underestimate a child's willingness to try new tastes and eat what's on their parent's plate

Meet the chef Jeff Galvin

Galvin Brasserie De Luxe, Edinburgh

Restaurateurs extraordinaire, Jeff and his brother Chris opened their Edinburgh brasserie in 2012 and make a point of welcoming families. 'We're always trying to get away from formality,' says Jeff (right). 'And if we



can make children comfortable in our restaurants, they're our customers of tomorrow.

'It's only in the last 12 years, since I've been a parent, that I've realised what it's like out there. A lot of high street chains do a great job, but if you want to enjoy good food, you may not want to go to chains. But at the other end of the scale, a lot of high-end restaurant food can be too challenging for a child.'

Brasserie De Luxe offers a children's menu and the option to order from the main menu. About 80% of the

dishes at Brasserie De Luxe are available in small portions.

'We take the same care making the children's food as we do the main dishes. There's something to do, drinks are dressed up to resemble mini cocktails, and desserts are always fun.'

As a member Of The Royal Academy of Culinary Arts, Jeff is a passionate advocate of its 'Chefs Adopt A School' programme, and visits classes to interest children in cooking. 'I take in a crusty baguette, and without us saying anything they're touching it and smelling it, so we talk about the senses. By the third session we're making bread.'



SPECIAL GUESTS Small portions, mini 'cocktails' and activities help make children feel at home

SIGNATURE DISH

Chargrilled cod, crushed potatoes and green salad

'We take a very fresh piece of cod or organic salmon and cook it on our charcoal grill, give it a squeeze of lemon juice, and serve it with a nicely dressed crisp salad and some crushed new potatoes. It's something that I would really enjoy eating myself, and although it's not gimmicky it shows young children how amazing naturally simple food tastes when it has not been processed.'



BOOK IT NOW

Quentin Letts

The theatre critic's guide to what's on



The Dresser

Duke of York's Theatre, London

A few weeks ago I mentioned briefly that this production of Sir Ronald Harwood's melancholy comedy *The Dresser* was touring the provinces. Now it has opened in the West End and it is a cracker. Reece Shearsmith and Ken Stott (both above) take the two lead roles and give award-worthy performances as an old theatre grandee, 'Sir', and his long-serving manservant Norman.

The play is set in the Second World War. Bombs are falling, but a performance of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is about to get underway, undeterred. The only thing that could stop it is the eccentricity and self-pity of its lead actor. 'Sir' is a fruity old ham, his character in part based on 1950s actor Sir Donald Wolfit, for whom Harwood was once dresser. 'Sir' spends much of the first half-hour sobbing. How will he ever be ready?

A dresser helps a star performer prepare for his or her nightly ordeal, combing wigs, ironing clothes and generally acting as a gofer/sympathiser/amateur shrink. Camp Norman is the only person who truly understands 'Sir'. He entices him out of his downcast mood, reminds him of his lines and guards the dressing room door. Norman is 'a miracle worker'. 'Sir' eventually makes his entrance as Lear and the day has again been saved by the undervalued Norman.

Shearsmith is brilliant, showing us all of Norman's pride and jealousy – and the tragic lack of gratitude he is shown by Stott's doubt-riddled 'Sir'. Stott's voice is a remarkable, resonant horn these days – few stage actors have a larynx to rival it. Sean Foley's production, faithfully staged, is helped by fine supporting performances from the likes of Selina Cadell and Harriet Thorpe. Suitable for all. Runs until mid-January.

Sand In The Sandwiches

Oxford and touring

Edward Fox opens at the Oxford Playhouse next week in a charming-sounding one-man show about that most English of poets, Sir John Betjeman. We are promised a mixture of Betjeman biography and his glorious verses. It will be interesting to see if the rugged Fox tries to project Betjeman's undeniably portly, agreeably untidy character. In Oxford until 29 October, then to Chichester, Guildford, Exeter and Salisbury.

BalletBoyz

Colchester and touring

Ten lithe lads make up the exciting BalletBoyz company. If you think dance is just pretty-pretty tippy-toeing about in pink tutus, stand by for a shock. These boys hurl themselves under and over a barre, their movement tightly drilled. One critic accused the show (called *Life*) of teetering on pretension, but there's no mistaking the energy and modernity. At Colchester's Mercury Theatre until Saturday, moving to Leicester next week. Tours until mid-November, including dates in Swindon and High Wycombe.



JUST DESSERT Tredwell's offers tasting menus for children