

ROMANTIC



LET'S SPOON
Andrew Edmunds,
London W1. Below
right: Tamarind,
London W1

ANDREW EDMUNDS, LONDON

This Soho townhouse tops many an informal poll, thanks to the supporting role it has played in so many London love affairs. It's cosy-to-cramped, with candles, old mirrors and wooden seats, and always full to the rafters.

The food is Modern Euro, such as cod with Puy lentils, aubergine and salsa verde, or veal escalope with purple sprouting and caper sauce; the wine list is helpfully full of well-priced, classy French numbers. Booking's essential – up to seven days in advance.

Table for two Table four by the window, or secluded table one.

How much fun? The atmosphere never failed us yet.

46 Lexington Street, London W1 (020 7437 5708). Mains, £9–£16.



AMAYA, LONDON

Low-lit and liaison-worthy – check. Slinky cushioned bar area – check. The Modern Indian cuisine at this sister restaurant to Chutney Mary and Veeraswamy is far removed from everyday Anglo curry. Diners share small grilled and barbecued dishes, and follow with a rich, oven-cooked biryani. Head chef Karunesh Khanna employs elements of European cuisine to produce dishes such as keema kaleji: lamb mince and liver in a red

pepper marinade. Vegetarians have plenty to choose from.

Table for two Any corner table.

How much fun? The vibe is quiet and sophisticated.

15–19 Halkin Arcade, Motcomb Street, London SW1 (020 7823 1166). Tasting menus, £35.50–£57.

THE PEACOCK AT ROWSLEY, DERBYSHIRE

With a river at the end of the garden, sprucely designed rooms and serious food, the Peacock is just the sort of place you're glad to fall upon between Sheffield and Nottingham. After aperitifs in the firelit bar area, the dining room is crisp and smart; we ate mosaic of smoked and confit duck, eel with apple purée and celeriac remoulade, and a show-stealing beef fillet with snails and ceps. It's no rural outpost, being on a main road, but it is within easy reach of Dove Dale.

Table for two After hiking, it's nice to dress for the dining room...

How much fun? ...but it's more relaxed in the bar.

Rowsley, Derbyshire (01629 733518). Mains, £23.50–£27.50.

LA TROMPETTE, LONDON

Related to Chez Bruce (see page 20), La Trompette offers the same sort of high standards and well-orchestrated ease. The reasonably priced regional French/Med food is often brilliant: ravioli of rabbit and cep with chestnut velouté, or salad of bitter leaves with poached quince, walnut and roquefort, then rump of lamb with baby artichokes and cassoulet. Bring your long-term

love here for a low-key treat.

Table for two Next to the plate-glass window.

How much fun? It's more about relaxed enjoyment.

5–7 Devonshire Road, London W4 (020 8747 1836). Three-course dinner, £35.

WEST STOKE HOUSE, WEST SUSSEX

Don't just rock up for the food – take a room for the night. Every detail pleases: the countryside; the trad decor; and the intimate scale. The rich menu starts with tarte tatin with foie gras or lobster ravioli; then there's venison with chocolate sauce, or bream with bean stew and tempura herbs. Don't worry – you can walk it off on Bow Hill tomorrow.

Table for two Away from the windows in winter.

How much fun? There's room to chase one another around the secluded Bridge Room.

West Stoke, near Chichester, West Sussex (01243 575226). Three-course dinner, £39.

LESTROIS GARÇONS, LONDON

Unique and lovely, with theatrical decor that throws together chartreuse curtains, dark panelling and faded gilt with

chandeliers, a ceramic Dalmatian and exotic taxidermy draped in diamanté. To the sound of Edith Piaf, a very London crowd – City, gay, fashiony – indulges in French cuisine such as seared foie gras with Granny Smith apples, saddle and confit of rabbit with girolles and figs, and tarte fine of garden vegetables.

Table for two By the stuffed tiger.

How much fun? Live out those *Moulin Rouge* fantasies.

1 Club Row, London E1 (020 7613 1924). Mains, £18.50–£32.



TAMARIND, LONDON

Soft metallics, white table linen and chivalrous service give this Mayfair basement a romantic air; there were even red roses on the table when we went. The north-western Indian food is spoiling and refined, with must-try dishes such as the Tamarind salad with melon and kumquats; lamb cutlets with papaya, garlic and crushed peppercorns;

FEAST YOUR EYES
Les Trois Garçons,
London E1. Left:
Amaya, London SW

