



Inn the Park in St James's Park, London, is open from breakfast to dinner

Take a chance on the British summer with suggestions from the *GFG* for *al fresco* dining

Fresh air feasts

In Italian, *al fresco* means 'in the slammer', but to the British it conjures up images of picnics on a tartan rug, or fine china, sparkling glasses and crisp white linen under a pergola. The moment we spot a patch of blue sky we're off – despite the fact that in Britain it's often a little more 'fresco' than we would like. But then a sweater is usually part of our inventory.

Thankfully, restaurateurs and publicans are putting more and more effort into making eating outside both elegant and comfortable. *Al fresco* diners are no longer restricted to a ploughman's lunch on hard wooden picnic benches overlooking the car park. From European-style street cafés and

idyllic country pub gardens to fabulous waterside terraces, there's plenty of choice.

Note that many places offering outside dining have created simpler, inexpensive terrace or garden menus, which are worth looking out for. These include cheaper and suitably lighter dishes for warmer weather. This also makes things easy for the kitchen – keeping pressure to a minimum at a time of maximum numbers, and helping service run smoothly.

So whether you're looking for full-on fine dining or simply somewhere to soak up the sun with drinks and a snack, we've selected 10 of the best places that combine good food with a memorable setting.

Top 10 outdoor eating venues

Prices are an average for three courses per person without wine

- **Cherwell Boathouse**
50 Bardwell Road, Oxford OX2 6ST, 01865 552746, www.cherwellboathouse.co.uk
Oxford riverside restaurant famed for its terrace. £25
- **Crab House Café**
Fleet Oyster Farm, Ferryman's Way, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 9YU, 01305 788867, www.crabhousecafe.co.uk
Real charmer seaside café on Chesil Beach. £23
- **Inn the Park**
St James's Park, London SW1A 2BJ, 020 7451 9999, www.innthepark.com
There are few finer places for a summer lunch in London. £30
- **Oyster Shack**
Bigbury on Sea, Devon TQ7 4BE, 01548 810876, www.oyster-shack.co.uk
Laid-back hotspot for fresh seafood. £26
- **Porthminster Beach Café**
Porthminster Beach, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 2EB, 01736 795352, www.porthminstercafe.co.uk
As locations go, this one would be hard to beat, overlooking the sands and the bay. £33
- **Seafood Restaurant**
16 West End, St Monans, Fife KY10 2BX, 01333 730327, www.seafoodrestaurant.com
Top-notch seafood, dramatic seascapes and superb terrace. £36
- **The Star**
High Street, Harome, Yorkshire YO62 5JE, 01439 770397, www.thestaratharome.co.uk
Ancient pub with garden and new dining terrace. £30
- **Three Mackerel**
Swanpool Beach, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 5BG, 01326 311886, www.thethreemackerel.com
Vibrant cooking with a Mediterranean slant in this buzzy café. £24
- **Tilbury**
Watton Road, Datchworth, Herts SG3 6TB, 01438 815550, www.thetilbury.co.uk
Local produce and great garden with weekend barbecues. £27
- **White Horse**
Brancaster Staithe, Norfolk PE31 8BY, 01485 210262, www.whitehorsebrancaster.co.uk
You can gaze across the tidal marshes from the sun deck. £23

The Good Food Guide 2009 will be published in September, when all members will be offered a special discount. Watch this space for more details.