

# Fork & Field

Play with fire and food, says  
Anastasia Bernhardt



TOWN

## Jikoni, Blandford Street W1

You only have to look at the tables in Ravinder Bhogal's first restaurant to tell that this is not starched tablecloth dining. This is, in fact, vibrantly patterned, mismatched tablecloth dining (sourced from [anokhi.com](http://anokhi.com) if you're too polite to swipe one). Take the prawn Scotch egg with banana ketchup for instance, an unlikely combination, but a highlight of the menu; or the goat's cheese and cherry roulade for pud. These are bold, unashamed flavours that, although sound a little frightening, are pulled off with pizzazz... as are the bubblegum pink walls taken from her childhood home: 'I knew I'd be spending all my time here,' says Ravinder, 'so I figured it should feel like home.' Which, by the way, is exactly what the lightly spiced scrag end pie tastes of. Molten nostalgia. You might be forced to listen to your neighbours' chat, but I think that the elbow-grazing closeness of tables serves to charge the atmosphere. *Dinner for two, around £90.* [jikonilondon.com](http://jikonilondon.com)

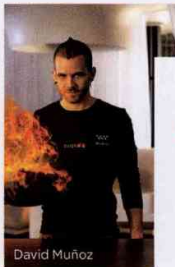


COUNTRY

## The Mash Inn, Radnage, Buckinghamshire

What is it about cooking over an open flame that takes us back to a primeval state? Chef Jon Parry knows just how to tap into our animal instincts, working magic in his truly open kitchen (you can walk straight in and look over his shoulder), where he slaves over a fireplace featuring various grills and hooks that can be winched up and down in the manner of a medieval torture device. But this is no torture; there are sardines on hooks, crackling and licked by flames, a ham slow-roasting in molasses and hassleback potatoes spitting furiously in a thick-bottomed pan, all waiting to be served with veg plucked straight from the earth outside. This is clever food with a sense of place, jazzed up with a spot of pickling, curing and fermenting. Even better is the view across the Chiltern Hills in the cosy dining room which has a faintly Scandinavian whiff that suits his style

of cooking to a tee. *Tasting menu, £45.* [themashinn.com](http://themashinn.com)



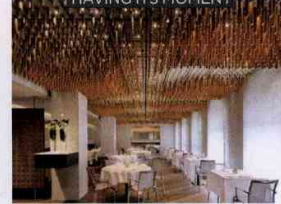
David Muñoz

## THIS MONTH I'M EATING...

**1** An abstract steamed club sandwich at David Muñoz's first London outpost Street XO ([streetxolondon.com](http://streetxolondon.com)). **2** Using the redesign at Gleneagles as an excuse to sample Andrew Fairlie's whisky-barrel infused smoked lobster ([gleneagles.com](http://gleneagles.com)). **3** ... and Hrishikesh Desai's newly acquired Michelin star to justify a trip to the Gilpin Hotel, where he cleverly blends Asian techniques with Lake District produce ([thegilpin.co.uk](http://thegilpin.co.uk)).

## BIG UP THE BASQUE

PART FRENCH, PART SPANISH,  
BASQUE COUNTRY CUISINE IS  
HAVING ITS MOMENT



### AMETSA, SW1

If you ask anyone who has visited San Sebastián for life-changing restaurant recommendations, Arzak is never far from their lips. Elena Arzak has had a hand in the menu here but if you're a purist you won't like it - there's spinach in the pudding and the celery is an illusion - but if that has piqued your interest, book away. Dining here is formal and best at the weekend. [comohotels.com/thehalkin/dining](http://comohotels.com/thehalkin/dining)



### ENEKO, WC2

Eneko Atxa's Azurmendi in Bilbao is equally experimental, and charts somewhere in the top 20 restaurants in the world. Yes, this is a somewhat diluted version of his Spanish restaurant and there's some smoke and mirrors here (dry ice and quirky plating are in abundance) but the produce is beautifully cooked and the subterranean dining area conducive to having a good time that's often so elusive at this end of the Strand. [eneko.london](http://eneko.london)



### SAGARDI, EC2

For a style of eating that's more akin to the Pintxos bars that line the old town in San Sebastián, there's Sagardi, a Spanish chain that has just opened its first London outpost. Here the region's Txakoli wine flows freely and the meat is proudly displayed in all its gruesome glory. All produce is flown in daily from San Sebastián (no points for local) - but it's a solid replication of the raucous and fast-paced bars that the area is famed for. [sagardi.com](http://sagardi.com)