

Top Tables

The best restaurant, pub and hotel recommendations – tried and tested by the *GBF* team

GREAT ESCAPES...

THE MAY FAIR HOTEL, LONDON

Nestled alongside Mayfair's more traditional (occasionally stuffy) hotels, The May Fair – with its playful décor, chic rooms and exciting food – comes as a real breath of fresh air. Shameless decadence is the order of the day here; stand-out features include a cinema with seating for 200, an on-site casino and a glitzy bar serving all kinds of dramatic cocktails. It was opened in 1927 by King George V and Queen Mary, but underwent a complete overhaul in 2004, transforming it into a buzzing hub of activity with a contemporary edge. It's the official hotel for London Fashion Week and London Film Festival (so the bar is a great spot for people watching during these events!), but all guests will get a thoroughly warm welcome from the lovely staff.

And the food?

Hotel dining in London is always a bit of a hard sell, especially considering some of the city's top restaurants are a stone's throw away, but we were seriously impressed with the food at May Fair Kitchen. Serving up mouth-watering small plates of Spanish, Italian, Mexican and Peruvian tapas in a slick but relaxed environment, it's a lively spot that clearly attracts Londoners and tourists alike. Considering the varied menu, it's a real testament to the skill of the kitchen staff that they manage to turn out perfectly made plates of dishes as diverse as punchy seabass ceviche, a gloriously rich wild mushroom risotto and seriously moreish Spanish-style garlic prawns. The lavish hot and cold breakfast buffet is also impressive; tables

are piled high with warm pastries, homemade bread, fresh fruit and smoothies, smoked fish and all you could need for a hearty DIY fry up. themayfairhotel.co.uk

THE CHAIN LOCKER, FALMOUTH

Arguably Cornwall's cultural centre, Falmouth is famous for its maritime heritage, creative buzz and fantastic food. The Chain Locker, a traditional pub with rooms on the town's historic quayside, is one of its most exciting new openings. The building itself is believed to be one of Falmouth's oldest – it's been a popular drinking hole for sailors since the 17th century – and recently underwent a multi-million pound restoration project by St Austell Brewery. It was a real labour of love, indeed the brewery were told the building was so unstable it was likely to collapse within five years without intervention, but the results are stunning. In the quirky downstairs bar, original memorabilia adorns practically every available crevice; each piece was painstakingly put back in its rightful place after the renovation. Upstairs there are six boutique bedrooms all decked out in calming coastal colours with exposed beams, wonderfully comfy beds, plush fabrics, vintage furnishings and maritime-themed art. Four of the rooms boast breathtaking coastal views, so book one of them if you can.

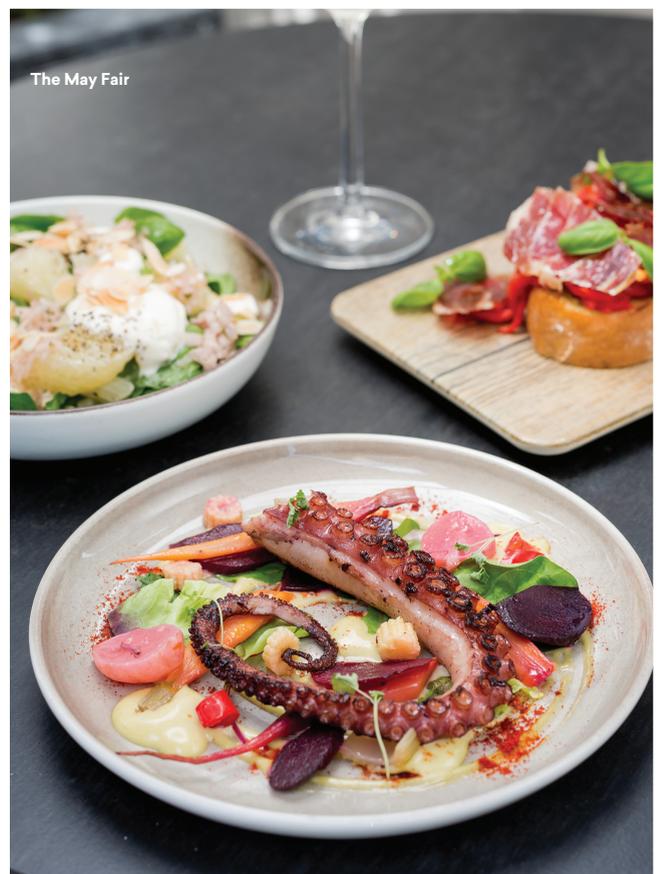
And the food?

A major part of the renovation was the new upstairs restaurant and it's a real beauty – a light and airy space with harbour views from the floor-to-ceiling windows, plus a large terrace and balcony that would be a lovely lunch spot on a sunny day. We settled into a cosy booth and kicked things off with a pint of St Austell's refreshing Korev lager and a local G&T. The restaurant specialises in



The Chain Locker

pub classics with a twist; we loved the slow-cooked game ragu with tagliatelle and venison sausages with mash. As you'd expect, local seafood also features heavily on the menu in dishes like creamy garlic mussels, fish cakes with a zingy pea pesto and a hearty and comforting fish pie. chainlockerfalmouth.co.uk



The May Fair