

THE FOREST SIDE

A

CUMBRIA NEW OPENING

On arrival at this gothic mansion in Grasmere, you can't fail to spot the kitchen garden's raised beds – there are 120 of them. The head chef, Kevin Tickle, was previously at L'Enclume, the Lake District restaurant famous for converting hedgerows into haute cuisine – and earlier this month, he picked up his own Michelin star. Don't consider anything other than his Grand 'Un, a 10-course gastronomic ode to the Cumbrian landscape, which might include venison pastrami with pickled allium flowers, or Herdwick hogget with meadow clippings. The easy charm of the mainly French staff elevates the experience to a special occasion. The bedrooms, too, do a nice line in contemporary luxury, and the herbal bath infusions are welcome after a hike up Helm Crag. It does lack one thing: a lake view. Doubles from £189, B&B; 10-course tasting menu £85pp; theforestside.com

OUR
WINNER

Pass masters
The kitchen at the Forest Side, in Cumbria, where Kevin Tickle was recently awarded a Michelin star

FOODIE
THE BEST POSSIBLE TASTE

COOMBESHEAD FARM

CORNWALL NEW OPENING

Tom Adams, 27, graduated from a food truck to a farm-to-table restaurant in London, and now he's on the farm itself – a lovely one, too, in oak-lined meadows outside Launceston. April Bloomfield, the toast of New York's dining scene, is a co-owner, and cheffy chums such as Nathan Outlaw pop in to cook, say, a suckling pig. After tucking into pigskin and green rhubarb, lamb sweetbreads or mussels, tuck yourself into one of the six pared-back bedrooms. Doubles from £175, B&B; dinner £50pp; coombesheadfarm.co.uk

GLAZEBROOK HOUSE

DEVON

One bedroom has a sheepskin bed frame, another mirrors made from aircraft engines. The food is no less dramatic, cooked by the 2012 winner of MasterChef: The Professionals, Anton Piotrowski. Go for the eight-course menu: we were wowed by the herb-coated venison and the caramel chocolate pud with salted caramel ice cream and banana. Doubles from £219, B&B; tasting menu £64pp; glazebrookhouse.com

THE WHITEBROOK

MONMOUTHSHIRE

The tables here overlook a secluded sliver of the Wye Valley, from which the affable chef, Chris Harrod, takes inspiration (as well as ingredients – he even runs occasional foraging expeditions). He won a Michelin star within months of opening two years ago for dishes such as suckling pig with blackened onions and wild garlic, violet parfait and woodruff macaroons. Most of the eight bedrooms overlook the brook, and all have sleigh beds. Try to nab the huge Room 2. Doubles from £223, half-board; thewhitebrook.co.uk

NO 131

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

35% OFF Feeling sociable? Shuck oysters at the Crazy Eights bar. Feeling restrained? Have afternoon tea in one of the genteel sitting rooms. Feeling smoochy? There's candlelight and romance in the main restaurant. And, eventually, there are 11 delightful bedrooms at

this gem in Cheltenham, with artwork by David Hockney and Peter Blake. A pre-breakfast plate of croissants and tea is left outside your door. Doubles from £140, B&B; three courses from £35pp; no131.com. Readers can get 35% off this hotel; see thesundaytimes.co.uk/mrandmrsmith



THE DOG & BADGER

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

NEW OPENING

In June, six high-spec suites were added to this restaurant in Medmenham. Start a filling weekend with killer cocktails in the hobbit-like snug, where a life-size cuddly bear lurks. The breast of the roast chicken for two is served first, with a mountain of vegetables, followed by the legs with salad. Wines start at £19. The cracking breakfast runs until noon, when you might just be hungry again. Doubles from £195, B&B; dinner from £33pp; thedogandbadger.com

THE BARN AT ROUNDHURST

WEST SUSSEX

At this 300-year-old oak-framed barn outside Midhurst, the sculptures are eye-catching and the coffee tables sag with glossy mags. Dining is an intimate, candlelit affair that makes full use of the farm's meats and the local woodland larder: beef with wild mushroom, panna cotta with summer berry ice cream. The six rustic-chic bedrooms cluster round a flower-filled courtyard, where you can breakfast on sunny mornings. Doubles from £98, B&B; four-course dinner £40pp; thebarnatroundhurst.com

THE CONNAUGHT

LONDON W1

Grande dame glamour combines with an offbeat sense of humour in Mayfair. There are no boring printed menus in the Michelin-starred Hélène Darroze restaurant: marbles on a solitary board bear the names of the dishes. Retire to a traditional room in the main house or a glossy one in the new wing. Doubles from £540, B&B; three courses from £52pp; the-connaught.co.uk

THE DUKE WILLIAM

KENT NEW OPENING

If you can get past the fact that the four rooms are called Gordon Ramsay, Rick Stein, Marco Pierre White and Keith Floyd (they're the chef Mark Sargeant's heroes), this pub in Ickham has all you need for a gourmet escape: cosy country charm and cracking steaks. If you go to bed before closing, it is – like those chefs – noisy, but earplugs are provided. Doubles from £100, B&B; dinner from £25; thedukewilliamickham.com

GLENEAGLES

PERTHSHIRE

This 850-acre country playground has had a makeover, and the new bedrooms and public spaces achieve what Andrew Fairlie already does so well in his two-Michelin-starred restaurant: a mix of classic and contemporary. You can see the crossover in dishes such as pan-fried scallops with coconut-marinated cauliflower purée. Doubles from £365, B&B; three courses from £95pp; gleneagles.com

Above, asparagus at the Whitebrook. From left, the Forest Side's venison pastrami; dinner at Gleneagles; and the refined No 131

HOW TO MAKE
A TIP-TOP TEA

We don't generally feel the need to shoehorn in an extra meal between lunch and dinner, but when we're away for the weekend, everything – the walk, the croquet, the hot-stone massage – stops for afternoon tea. André Garrett, executive chef at the posh Clivedon House country hotel, told us how it should be done



THE CHINA Put your Sports Direct mug in the bin. Afternoon tea has to be sipped, pinkie out, from a fine bone-china cup with a saucer, Garrett says, preferably one crafted by William Edwards, of Stoke-on-Trent (cup and saucer from £25; williamedwards.co.uk).

THE TEA A robust Assam is *de rigueur*. "It is full-bodied, with an aromatic character," Garrett says. "I also like a delicate, flowery earl grey. I have it black, but milk's fine, too." Feel free to have coffee – if you can handle the disapproving glances. The sugar rule is lumps for tea, granulated for coffee. There's not enough time for a sugar lump to dissolve in an espresso.

THE BREAD For the sarnies, a mix of white, brown and seeded, always thickly cut and crustless.

THE FILLINGS No egg and cress, no fish paste. "I use white bread for the roast beef with horseradish mayonnaise and the coronation chicken, but the texture of seeded bread works better with ham – it has to be York ham – served with wholegrain mustard and cream cheese," Garrett says. "I prefer brown for salmon, which should be poached and smoked, and served with lemon and dill. Finally, you have to have a cucumber sandwich. I team it with crème fraîche and radish on brown." He uses butter, French and unsalted.

THE CAKES Garrett serves poppy seed cake, chocolate tiffin, Battenberg, a choux bun and a pistachio and raspberry macaroon, with a Jammie Dodger-style biscuit in place of a strawberry tart. "The French are great at patisserie, but we're no slouches."

THE SCONES A mix of fruit and plain served warm, with homemade preserves, on the third tier of your tea stand, which means they should be eaten last. The Somerset-born Garrett is definitive on one point: "It's clotted cream first, then jam. The other way is just wrong."

• Tell us what you'd have in your perfect afternoon tea at travel@sunday-times.co.uk