



TOBY YOUNG IS THE...

Restaurant Spy

Toby Young's highlights of a well-fed 2006, and two he's greedily anticipating

CECCONI'S

5A Burlington Gardens, W1 (020 7434 1500)
Nick Jones's latest acquisition proves that the founder of the Soho House empire hasn't lost his Midas touch. Jones and his designer, Ilse Crawford, have transformed this moribund Italian on Burlington Gardens into a worthy rival to The Ivy and Le Caprice.

L'ATELIER DE JOEL ROBUCHON

13-15 West Street, WC2 (020 7010 8600)
You'd expect an expensive new restaurant fronted by a Michelin-starred chef in the West End to be incredibly stuffy - particularly as the chef in question is a Frenchman. In fact, this is enormous fun and one of the most exciting additions to the London restaurant scene since The Wolseley.



PORTAL

88 St John Street, EC1 (020 7253 6950)
This Portuguese restaurant in Clerkenwell didn't hit the headlines until a listening device was discovered in the main dining room - and the press immediately linked it to Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho, even though he'd never actually been there. Fortunately, proprietor Antonio Correia was ready for his close-up - both the décor and the food are first class - and Portal has been packed ever since.

QUIRINALE

1 Great Peter Street, SW1 (020 7222 7080)
Finally, a decent restaurant within walking distance of the House of Commons. It may be in a basement, but the interior is light and airy and the food - from Italian chef Stefano Savio (left) - is top-notch. Can it be long before proprietor Nadine Gourgey opens another?



GALVIN

66 Baker Street, W1 (020 7935 4007)
The decision of Chris and Jeff Galvin (above) to open this charming French bistro was prompted by a trend across the Channel whereby Michelin-starred French chefs have abandoned haute cuisine to open 'bistrot modernes'. The result is one of the most celebrated new restaurants of the last five years.



THE FAT DUCK

1 High Street, Bray, Berkshire (01628 580 333)
I was sceptical when I first sat down in this temple to molecular gastronomy. Could this really be the best restaurant

in the world? Fourteen courses later - which included the famous bacon-and-egg ice cream - I was completely won over. Heston Blumenthal is a bona fide culinary genius.

HOT STUFF

19 Wilcox Road, SW8 (020 7720 1480)
Shamefully, I'd never visited this legendary Indian in Vauxhall before, but it was worth the wait. At a glance, you'd think that someone had simply decided to open a restaurant in their front room - and that's more or less what happened. In terms of value for money, this is probably the best Indian in London.



BELLAMY'S

18-18A Bruton Place, W1 (020 7491 2727)
This new brasserie from Gavin Rankin, the former general manager of Annabel's, received the ultimate seal of approval earlier this year when the Queen dropped in to celebrate her 80th birthday. Many restaurants claim to be 'posh', but this is the real McCoy.

THE GUINEA GRILL

30 Bruton Place, W1 (020 7499 1210)
This up-market watering hole in the heart of Mayfair has prided itself on the quality of its grub since it opened in 1952 - which may make it Britain's first ever gastropub. If you like your meat red and your fellow diners true blue, this is the place for you.

FOXTROT OSCAR

79 Royal Hospital Road, SW3 (020 7352 7179)
Foxtrot Oscar may be upper-class slang for f*** off, but this Chelsea perennial still attracts Hooray Henrys and Henriettas like bees to a honeycomb. One of the few restaurants cited in *The Official Sloane Ranger Handbook* that's still in business - and deservedly so.



TWO TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2007

ST ALBAN

Rex House, 4-12 Lower Regent Street, SW1 (020 7499 8558)
This new offering from Chris Corbin and Jeremy King - owners of Le Caprice, The Ivy, J Sheekey and The Wolseley, at one time or another - promises to be the hottest restaurant of 2007. The interior has been part-designed by conceptual artist Michael Craig-Martin, so expect it to be very modern and uncompromising.



BARRAFINA

54 Frith Street, W1 (020 7813 8010)
This new tapas bar on Frith Street promises to be one of the hot openings of 2007. It's the second restaurant from Sam and Eddie Hart, the joint owners of Fino and, by common consent, purveyors of the finest tapas this side of Madrid.



Mark C O'Flaherty, Danny Elwes, John Lawrence, James Lipman, Andy Blackmore, Oliver Lim, Murray Saunders