

olive's 21 British Food Adventures

Get exploring with **olive's** guide to the most interesting, exciting and inspiring food experiences in the UK

Words EMILY KERRIGAN



Oysters at the Company Shed

1 *catch fish and* eat it

ARGYLL: Always wanted to catch your own fish, then prepare and cook it yourself? You couldn't dream up a more scenic setting than the luxurious **The Lodge on Loch Goll** (pictured right), sloping down to its own secluded sea loch. Spend several hours on the water hooking trout and mackerel, then head ashore to fillet and cook your catch on the outdoor wood-burning stove, all under the experienced eye of head chef Donald Munro. From £125 for a one-day course, £275 for a package at The Lodge including afternoon tea, dinner, bed and breakfast. (thelodge-scotland.com)

2 *make your own* chocs

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: Get down to the serious business of making your own chocolate bars and truffles at **The School of Artisan Food**, deep within Sherwood Forest. You'll learn how to temper and shape chocolate, then give your personal confections a modern twist by introducing savoury flavours as well as sweet. Day course, £150. (schoolofartisanfood.org)

3 *oysters* on the beach

COLCHESTER: At the end of a walk along West Mersea beach is shellfish heaven: a dozen rock oysters, £8.40, at the brilliantly no-frills **Company Shed**. Washed down with pints of pale ale and eaten off Formica tables, these salty half-shell shooters are so good they need no frippery. (129 Coast Road, West Mersea; 01206 382700) 🦪

PHOTOGRAPH: MATT MUNRO. ALL PRICES ARE PER PERSON AND CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS



The Lodge Tree House on Loch Goll

4 PYO asparagus

BERKSHIRE: Eat the freshest asparagus of your life by picking it yourself at **Copas Farm PYO**, in Cookham, Berkshire. Drift through the field of stalks searching for the perfect spears, safe in the knowledge you're getting great value too – throughout May you can fill a basket with spears for around a fiver. Ideal for wrapping in Parma ham and throwing on the first barbie of spring. From June you can also PYO strawberries, cherries, broad beans and much more. Minimum charge, £2. (copasfarms.co.uk)



5 plan the perfect picnic

ISLE OF WIGHT: Head to the Michelin-starred restaurant at boutique bolthole **The Hambrough**, order one of chef Robert Thompson's picnics and walk along the cliffs to the beautiful and secluded beach at Steephill. The Hambrough's unbeatable seasonal hampers include Bellini cocktails, pea and truffle soup, Ventnor crab cocktail, root veg crisps, free-range chicken with asparagus, homemade bread, rhubarb tarts and chocolate, orange and vanilla shortbread. Two nights' b&b, picnic and return ferry tickets, £195. (thehambrough.com)

6 get to grips with meat

WILTSHIRE: Get wholeheartedly in touch with where your meat comes from with a £130 **deer in a day** course. *MasterChef* 2009 winner and restaurateur **Mat Follas** calls tutor Joe O'Leary the UK's unsung wild-food hero. 'His course is brilliant. It's all out in the woods. You each get to skin a whole deer then cut it into easy-to-cook joints, as well as prepping venison jerky and burgers to take home,' he tells **olive**. A foraged lunch by the campfire is included and you'll leave clutching a coolbox loaded with super-fresh meat. (wilderness-survival.co.uk)



Deer in a day course, Wiltshire



Roasted squash and beetroot salad, Riverford

7 get down on the farm

DEVON: Tour bountiful fields of organic produce, seeing at source the cornucopia that goes into **Riverford's** award-winning veg boxes, then head back to HQ, pull up a stool at the open-plan kitchen and watch as Jane Baxter (ex-River Café) transforms it all into her inspired veg-based dishes. Afterwards, sit down to a hugely generous communal lunch featuring one meat dish alongside bowl upon bowl of simply brilliant veg: spring greens with caraway, cauliflower in brown butter with almonds, glazed chicory with orange – the menu changes daily according to what's been picked. Guided tours in May with cookery demo, lunch and wine, £75. (riverford.co.uk)

8 make cheese

SUFFOLK: At the independent **Suffolk Farmhouse Cheeses**, Katharine and Jason Salisbury run the entire operation, milking their Guernsey cattle on-site to produce two award-winning cheeses, a semi-hard and a blue. For £150 you can join them for a cheese-making demo and tour of the dairy, organised by Food Safari. You'll help milk the cows, then make your own soft-curd cheese to take home. Picnic lunch included, featuring cheese centre-stage alongside local wines and produce. (foodsafari.co.uk)

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, ROGER STOWELL

9 master the beekeeping basics

GLOUCESTERSHIRE: Ever considered beekeeping? **Daylesford Organic Farm School** has introduction courses, beginning in May. Learn the ins and outs of hive life, then don a suit and handle the hives under the guidance of a local apiarist. Afterwards, a Daylesford pastry chef will demonstrate tempting uses for home-grown honey. Day-course, £90 with lunch. (daylesfordorganic.com)

10 take tea

EDINBURGH: A good afternoon tea is a thing of beauty. For the full-on, decadent clotted cream, scones, sandwiches and cake extravaganza, head to **Harvey Nics** in Edinburgh, says food writer and café owner **Rosie Lovell**. 'The views from the top-floor terrace are great – it feels like a real treat.' Smoked salmon herbed salad with horseradish cream, £8, champagne cocktails, £11. (harveynichols.com)



Forth Floor Restaurant at Harvey Nichols, Edinburgh



11 adopt a lobster

PADSTOW: See baby lobsters released into the wild and find out how Cornish conservationists are maintaining a healthy lobster population at Padstow's **National Lobster Hatchery**, £3. Former *MasterChef* champ **James Nathan** likes to support their work and often calls in at the hatchery before going to buy sustainably sourced lobsters from Padstow Fisheries, opposite (01841 532763): 'Don't visit without adopting a baby lobster,' he says. 'It's only £1.50 and that way, you can enjoy lobster thermidor guilt-free.' (nationallobsterhatchery.co.uk)

12 visit an English vineyard

CORNWALL: **olive's** wine expert **Sarah Jane Evans MW** recommends a visit to Cornwall's **Camel Valley** vineyard, an International Wine Challenge gold medal-winner: 'It's brilliant – there's no flouncy wine-speak. They'll show you round the winery then sit you down on the terrace for a series of tastings as the sun sets over the vines.' Grand tour and tasting, every Wednesday at 5pm (between Easter and 30 October), £10. (camelvalley.com)



Camel Valley vineyard, Cornwall

13 go food shopping

CANTERBURY: Food shopping can be a glorious experience once you escape the confines of the supermarket. For the ultimate shopping trip and a great day out, head to Canterbury farmers' market (seconds from Canterbury West station), the **Goods Shed**, winner of Best Food Market in Radio 4's 2009 Food & Farming Awards. You'll be spoilt for choice, but our tips for lunch are the buttery 70p sausage rolls at Patrick's Kitchen paired with some Kentish Winterdale Shaw cheese from Tom's, £8.60/lb, and quince jelly from Patriana, £2.95/110g. Murray's General Store sells five Whitstable beers for a tenner. Don't forget the bottle opener. (thegoodshed.net)



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Islay, Inner Hebrides

follow the whisky trail

INNER HEBRIDES: Want to trace the origins of your single malt? **Matt Bolton**, award-winning writer for *Lonely Planet Magazine*, recommends a whisky trail on the isle of **Islay**. B&B in the **Harbour Inn** (harbour-inn.com) starts at £130, from where you can tour Islay's seven distilleries, name-checking the whisky world's *Who's Who*, from Laphroaig to Lagavulin. Matt's top choice is artisan maker **Bruichladdich** (bruichladdich.com), where the quadruple-distilled Octomore is refined according to traditions perfected in 1695. A 45-minute tour explores the milling, mashing and fermenting process, plus there's a dram to finish, £5.



Michel Roux Jr,
Le Gavroche

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great-value lunch

LONDON: Think that a chef with two Michelin stars automatically means a three-figure bill? Think again. **olive's** best bargain on any day of the year is the set lunch at **Le Gavroche**: three courses of knock-out food from *MasterChef Professional* judge Michel Roux Jr, a half-bottle of wine plus water for £48.90 (available Monday-Friday). (le-gavroche.co.uk)



Fish and chips
from Eddie Gilbert's

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fish and chips on the beach

KENT: They don't get better than the battered beauties at **Ramsgate's** award-winning **Eddie Gilbert's**, says food writer and critic **Marina O'Loughlin**. 'They use fresh fish hoiked from the sea minutes away. Which is great. But best of all, they offer you fat chips cooked in your choice of vegetable oil or beef dripping (answer: always beef dripping). Eat in the cute restaurant or takeaway and saunter round England's only royal harbour.' Haddock and chips, £7.50. (eddiegilberts.com)

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make bread

DORSET: At **Cann Mills**, artisan baker Paul Merry teaches basic and advanced breadmaking from start to finish, working with organic Stoate's flour, which is milled on the premises. Try his one-day course, including lunch and a tour of the watermill, £160. (panary.co.uk)

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do a pub crawl

EDINBURGH: We don't mean a student-style binge-drinking session, but a refined booze-with-views gastro-crawl along Leith's regenerated shoreline. Start with a glass of the excellent Blanc de Mer, £5.25, and fat Gordal olives, £2.50, at classic wine bar **The Shore** (theshore.biz). Next hit the stylish **Ship**, a few doors down, for fizz and oysters, £11.50 (theshipontheshore.co.uk), followed by old-school boozier the **King's Wark**, (36 The Shore, 0131 554 9260) where plump fishcakes ring the tills at £6.95. From here, slip across the bridge to the quirky **Roseleaf** (roseleaf.co.uk) for a one-for-the-road 'pot-tail' served in a china teapot, try the ginger Jerry – ginger beer with glugs of Sailor Jerry, £4.40. To soak it all up, there's a £4.95 cheeseboard laden with brie, applewood, gorgonzola, onion jam, organic bread and oatcakes.



Roseleaf, Edinburgh

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relax on a food farmstay

LANCASHIRE: A stay at **Dolphinholme House** farm is a breath of a fresh air for back-to-basics foodies. Make pizzas in the brick oven topped with cheese courtesy of the farm's goats and eggs laid fresh at the henhouse, or hire a barrel to smoke your own fish. Four nights in a six-man tent, from £235. (featherdownfarm.co.uk)

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do a day at spherification school

SHEFFIELD: Pack a white coat for a one-day spherification course at **MSK**, suppliers of gastronomy gelling agents and foams. Learn the process developed by pioneering chef Ferran Adrià of el Bulli, which turns a liquid into a sphere using sodium alginate and calcium chloride. Tutor Vicky Endersen has worked in the UK's top kitchens, and she will tailor her class to whatever eye-popping techniques capture your imagination. Get together a group of six, pay £450 between you, and try your own food experiments. (msk-ingredients.com)

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sip cocktails at the bar

LONDON: Try a superlative martini or two (although the advice is no more than that), mixed exactly how you like, at the intimate bar within Mayfair's **Dukes Hotel**. From £14.90. (campbellgrayhotels.com)