

Brighton

From cockles on the Palace Pier to wheatgrass shots in the North Laines, Brighton has something for all tastes. You'll find upmarket chains such as Carluccio's and celebrity chefs, Aldo Zilli at My Hotel (myhotels.com) and Jamie's Italian (jamieliver.com), yet Brighton retains its multi-cultural feel with dozens of independent restaurants, from tapas at Solera D'Tapa (d-tapa.com) to North African cuisine at The Blue Man (bluemanrestaurant.co.uk).

■ EAT

Buzzy café and deli **Bill's Produce Store** uses free-range, organic and local ingredients. Try a breakfast of toast, poached egg, tomatoes, hummus, avocado, mushrooms and sweet chilli sauce (£6.80), or lunch on goat's cheese, spinach, blush tomato and olive tart served with a choice of two salads (£7.80).

(billsproducestore.co.uk)

Jack and Linda Mills of **Brighton Smoke House** have been smoking pollack, sprats and cod from Shoreham and Newhaven in a little black shed on Brighton beach for 13 years. The menu at their hole-in-the-wall takeaway often includes grilled sardines (£2.70) and fresh crab sandwiches (£3.20). Hot fish soup (£2) is made with seasonal veggies and five different fish from the day's catch such as haddock.

(brightonfishingmuseum.org.uk)

A main course of hot, spicy and sweet Sussex oxtail Madras (£10.95) at this stylish but unassuming Indian bistro, **The Chilli Pickle**, will fill you up, but don't miss the starters. Sharing a spiced whole quail with saffron raita and coriander salad (£7.50) is the way to go. Arrive midday Saturday to bag a table for the daytime menu of Indian and Nepalese small plates such as uttapam (rice pancake with shallot, ginger and green chilli, £3.50). Cool your palate with organic silver needle white tea (£3.20).

(thechillipicklebistro.co.uk)

The combination of comfort food and slick, contemporary surroundings at **The Real Eating Company** attract a diverse crowd. About 80 per cent of the menu is

made from local produce including Newhaven smoked haddock and spring onion fishcake with herb mayonnaise (£8). The first-floor deli sells cheeses including Golden Cross goat's cheese from Lewes. (real-eating.co.uk)

The Restaurant at Drakes has dark grey banquettes, exposed brickwork and wooden floors, making this intimate dining room perfect for dinner à deux. Modern British dishes include lamb sweetbreads with celeriac remoulade and maple glaze (£10) and pan-roasted fillet of halibut with squid ink risotto and lobster ravioli (£19). Arrive early for one of barman Fraser Creighton's potent Carole Channing cocktails (£9) made with raspberry eau de vie and Champagne. Ask him for his picks from the wine list and he might pour you a taster. (drakesofbrighton.com)

Ex-Pétrus chef Will Murgatroyd's menu at **The Meadow** epitomises local, seasonal cooking. Meat dishes are a speciality and include tartare of Sussex Red beef served with truffled polenta chips and rosemary salt (£6.50). Vegetarians are well looked after, too, with pasta rotolo with roast butternut squash, spinach, goat's cheese and pumpkin seeds (£12). The three-course £15 lunch menu, Tuesday to Saturday, is Brighton's best fine dining bargain. (themeadowrestaurant.co.uk)

■ DRINK

The tankards hanging above the pewter bar tell you you're in a pub for serious drinkers, albeit it a smart one. Local beers at **Pub du Vin** include Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter (£3 a pint) and Dark Star's Hophead Pale Ale (£3 a pint) and there's plenty of English wine, such as Bacchus Lamberhurst Reserve



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