

that London eating has come of age. For the sandwich boom to happen, there first had to be a bread boom. It is no accident that some of the greatest sandwiches are coming out of the city's top artisan bakers, such as the divine bacon sandwich served at St John Bread and Wine. To make a great sandwich you must care deeply about

This sandwich renaissance is a sign that London eating has come of age. To make a great sandwich you must care deeply about quality

the provenance and quality of food. Yet a sandwich – unless we are talking about finger sandwiches at The Ritz – is not a snobbish thing.

Almost all of us eat sandwiches (except for masochists on a low-carb diet). On average in Britain, we eat 200 of them per person per year. In other words, we devour them on more days than we don't. Why? We work too hard and never have as much time as we would like for cooking.

We may talk and dream of other foods; of multi-course banquets or leisurely brunches, but most of the time, if we are honest, what we actually end up eating is sandwiches.

So we should rejoice in the influx of great sandwiches in London right now. At this exact moment, this may actually be the best city in the world to eat sandwiches.

The working week can be measured out in lunches. By eating better ones your life becomes, in a small way, significantly happier. You glance at the clock. Lunchtime comes at last. Your mouth waters, anticipating the mingling of flavours, the balance of salty and sour, the heft of the bread. You hold the package in your hand. You unwrap it, savouring the moment ... It's a reward for getting through another morning: a present from yourself to yourself.

■ *Sandwich: A Global History* by Bee Wilson (Reaktion Books – Edible, £9.99).



REBECCA REID

TEN BEST LONDON

1 Op-La-Di steak bánh mì at Banhmi11 (Saturdays, Broadway Market, E8, banhmi11.com)

It doesn't get better than this authentic version of the bánh mì (Vietnamese baguette) – fresh herbs, pickled carrot and daikon, and a choice of pork (they make their own pâté) or marinated tofu. Jamie Oliver rates them. From £2.50.

2 Bocadillo of tomatoes and Iberico ham at Fernandez & Wells (43 Lexington Street, W1F, 020 7734 1546, fernandezandwells.com)

A traditionally French stone baked baguette filled with 36-month cured Juan Domecq ham and plum tomatoes. Made to order, £7.50.

3 Grilled cheese sandwich at Kappacasein (Borough Market, SE11, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, kappacasein.com)

You have to be hungry to finish a whole one. But Kappacasein uses the finest cheddar in the finest bread, toasted until just on the cusp of burning. About £5.

4 The ultimate bacon sandwich at St John Bread and Wine (94-96 Commercial Street, E1, 020 7247 8172, stjohnbreadandwine.com).

SANDWICHES

The bacon is Gloucester Old Spot. The ketchup is homemade. The bread is white, soft and yielding. £5.60.

5 Fried cauliflower falafel wrap at Mr Falafel (Units T4-T5, New Shepherd's Bush Market, W12)

Crisp, golden falafel balls, pickled cucumber, salty pickled turnip, crunchy shredded lettuce and parsley, white tahini and a slash of chilli, all wrapped in flatbread. £4 (medium).

6 Salt beef sandwich at Reuben's (79 Baker Street, W1U, 020 7486 0035, reubensrestaurant.co.uk)

Savour the pumpernickel, too. £7.95.

7 Sausage and mushroom baguette at Rive Gauche (20 Warren Street, W1, 020 7387 8232, caferivegauche.co.uk)

Comes with onions. Master Guy Gumption – allegedly the pioneer of the mini baguette in London – runs a little gem of a place where the sandwiches are inventive and the fillings are incredibly fresh. £3.70 (large).

8 Lamb Keema roti wrap at Delhi Grill (21 Chapel Market, N1, 020 7278 8100, delhigrill.com)

Flat bread wraps with homemade fillings and fresh chutneys sold at lunchtime from a cart outside the restaurant. A diverting meal under £3.

9 Roast beef sandwich at Birley Sandwiches (Cabot Place West, E14, 020 7512 9112, birleysandwiches.co.uk)

As soon as you've taken a bite you'll understand what makes it so good. Generous portion of tender roast beef on proper bread – good hangover cure. £4.95.

10 Punjabi goat mooli at Mooli's (50 Frith Street, W1D, 020 7494 9075, moolis.com)

Punjabi-spiced goat is soft, stewed meat mixed with lettuce, cucumber and tomato, plus pomegranate salsa, all presented in warm, chewy bread in a paper package – a really different taste and not messy. £5 (mini £3.50).

■ By our panel of sandwich experts, Bee Wilson, Fay Maschler and Charles Campion.



Fave flavours: from Mr Falafel at New Shepherd's Bush Market

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