

## Family-Friendly Dining

London has gone from culinary laughingstock to one of the world's food capitals in a relatively short space of time. Part of its appeal is its cosmopolitanism—you can enjoy about every cuisine under the sun here, from Moroccan to Vietnamese. However, “Modern British” has also made its mark (classic fare souped up with flavors and techniques from around the world), and traditional British cooking—such as bangers and mash, shepherd's pie, apple crumble, and custard—has made a comeback. The attendant stuffiness has gone out of the restaurant scene, including dress codes, and the emphasis now is on healthful food, variety, and flexibility in a relaxing environment.

All of this is great news for families, but it means that the competition for space in this chapter was fierce. As a result, many places you'd expect to see here might not be reviewed. You don't need to be told about such global chains as **Planet Hollywood**, **TGI Friday**, and **Hard Rock Cafe**—suffice it to say that I've been there and I won't be going back in a hurry. Just because a company sets out to woo kids doesn't mean there aren't better places to go.

Don't assume that a place offering a **kids' menu** is the best option: Children quickly get bored of choosing among chicken nuggets, pasta, and pizza. It's possible to order imaginatively from adult menus, either by selecting from the starters and sides, or by consulting the

staff on dishes in child-sized portions. Children also love the social aspect of sharing a lot of smaller dishes with their parents: Restaurants serving Lebanese *meze* and Spanish tapas are ideal for this sort of family dining.

This guide focuses on places where you can get good food and a genuine welcome without breaking the bank, though London is a very expensive city when it comes to dining out. Venues classified as “**Inexpensive**” are those in which a family of four can conceivably eat and drink for less than £35 (\$67), but these are in short supply. At restaurants classified as “**Moderate**,” a meal should cost you £35 to £60 (\$67–\$114), and this is the category on which this guide focuses. Anything upwards of that is “**Expensive**.” If these figures make your vacation seem impractical, consider staying someplace with self-catering facilities, whether it be an apartment or a youth hostel. Or take packed lunches or picnics out with you (p. 115) as often as possible.

Other good ways to save money are to **breakfast** in a cafe rather than at your hotel, and to take advantage of early-evening **pre-theater menus**, or of “**lunch**” **deals**, which often go on till 5 or 6pm. You probably want to feed the kids early anyway, and you can always order room-service snacks after they've hit the sack.

**Afternoon teas** are an alternative for those who want to eat early, serving kiddy-pleasing fare such as finger sand-

wiches, scones, and cakes (leaving parents to enjoy a civilized dinner after the children are asleep). Yet these are not a money-saving option, with an average cream tea costing upwards of £20 (\$38) at a posh hotel, such as **The Ritz** (150 Piccadilly, W1; ☎ 020/7493-8181), **Claridge's** (p. 118) and the **Dorchester** (Park Lane, W1; ☎ 020/7629-8888), which is one of the last places in London serving old-fashioned high teas (substantial meals that can replace dinner; dishes include scrambled eggs and smoked salmon). Note that you have to book about 6 weeks ahead for The Ritz, even though there are five sittings daily. Posh hotels are usually the best places in which to enjoy teas, although the cafe-restaurant **The Wolseley** is an atmospheric newcomer that attracts celebrities in droves.

**Pubs** are often good places to find relatively inexpensive, home-cooked food. Many “**gastropubs**” (converted pubs serving upscale food, often Modern British) welcome families, although you'll pay more in such establishments. Some pubs don't allow children at all, but many have certification allowing kids in between specific hours (usually not after 9:30pm), when accompanied by an adult. The best way to find out is to ask; [www.pubs.com](http://www.pubs.com) also offers guidance on family-friendly pubs in London.

If in doubt, head for an **Italian** restaurant. Whether it be a family-run trattoria or an Italian-inspired chain such as **Pizza Express** (p. 110), they generally ensure a warm welcome and convivial family atmosphere; simple, child-pleasing food; and fair prices.

**HOURS** It's a rare London restaurant or cafe that closes for Sunday these days (though you'll find some fish specialists closed on Mon); Christmas is the only time when a number of places close. Many now serve food throughout the day, without a break between lunch and dinner, especially when they pride themselves on catering to families. Hours of service are listed in the descriptions below.

**RESERVATIONS** Most places, except pubs, cafes, and fast-food joints, prefer or require reservations, and you nearly always get a better table if you book ahead. For famous or very trendy places, you might need to reserve weeks in advance, but even if you haven't, it's worth trying to get in if you are in the area.

**TAXES & TIPPING** All restaurants and cafes are required to display the prices of their food and drink in a place visible from outside. Charges for service, as well as any minimums or cover charges, must also be made clear. For advice on tipping, see p. 59.

## 1 Restaurants by Cuisine

\$ = Inexpensive; \$\$ = Moderate; \$\$\$ = Expensive

### AFTERNOON TEA

Café in the Crypt (Trafalgar Square, \$, p. 112)

The Original Maids of Honour ★ (Kew, \$, p. 131)

The Refectory@Southwark Cathedral ★ (Southwark, \$, p. 128)

Yauatcha (Soho & Chinatown, \$\$, p. 111)

### AMERICAN

Big Easy (Chelsea, \$\$, p. 119)

Harlem Soul Food ★★ (Bayswater, \$, p. 124)

Rainforest Café ★ (Piccadilly Circus & Leicester Square, \$\$, p. 109)

Smollensky's on the Strand ★ (Covent Garden & the Strand, \$\$, p. 107)

Sticky Fingers (Kensington, \$\$, p. 114)

Texas Embassy Cantina (Trafalgar Square, \$\$, p. 112)

**ASIAN (MIXED)**

Tiger Lil's (Islington, \$, p. 135)  
 Yellow River Café ★ (Islington, \$,  
 p. 135)

**BELGIAN**

Belgo Centraal (Covent Garden & the  
 Strand, \$, p. 107)

**BREAKFAST**

Bluebird Restaurant (Chelsea, \$\$\$,  
 p. 118)  
 Boiled Egg & Soldiers (Clapham, \$,  
 p. 130)  
 Café Mozart ★ (Hampstead, \$,  
 p. 137)  
 Lazy Daisy Café ★ (Notting Hill  
 Gate, \$, p. 126)  
 Smiths of Smithfield ★★ (Clerkenwell,  
 \$\$, p. 132)

**BRITISH (MODERN)**

Boxwood Café ★★ (Belgravia, \$\$\$,  
 p. 118)  
 The Engineer ★ (Camden Town, \$\$,  
 p. 133)  
 Julie's Restaurant & Bar ★★ (Holland  
 Park, \$\$\$, p. 127)  
 Quod Restaurant & Bar ★ (Piccadilly  
 Circus & Leicester Square, \$\$,  
 p. 108)

**BRITISH  
(TRADITIONAL)**

Porter's English Restaurant ★ (Covent  
 Garden & the Strand, \$\$, p. 107)  
 S&M Café ★★ (Ladbroke Grove, \$,  
 p. 126)

**BURGERS**

Babes 'n' Burgers (Ladbroke Grove, \$,  
 p. 124)  
 Ed's Easy Diner ★★ (Hampstead, \$,  
 p. 137)  
 Gourmet Burger Kitchen ★★  
 (Bayswater, \$, p. 124)

**CHINESE**

Royal China ★ (Marylebone, \$\$,  
 p. 102)

Yauatcha (Soho & Chinatown, \$\$,  
 p. 111)

**CREPES**

La Galette (Marylebone, \$, p. 103)  
 My Old Dutch Pancake House  
 (Bloomsbury, \$, p. 104)

**FRENCH**

Chez Kristof ★ (Hammersmith, \$\$\$,  
 p. 121)  
 Le Bouchon Bordelais ★★ (Clapham,  
 \$\$\$, p. 130)  
 Lou Pescadou ★ (West Brompton,  
 \$\$, p. 120)

**GLOBAL**

The Blue Kangaroo ★★ (Fulham,  
 \$\$, p. 122)  
 Giraffe ★★ (Marylebone, \$\$,  
 p. 99)  
 The Naked Turtle (Richmond, \$\$,  
 p. 131)

**GREEK**

Lemonia (Primrose Hill, \$\$, p. 133)

**INDIAN**

The Ginger Garden ★★ (The City,  
 \$\$, p. 131)  
 Masala Zone ★ (Earl's Court, \$,  
 p. 121)  
 Veeraswamy (Mayfair, \$\$, p. 114)

**ITALIAN**

Bar Italia (Soho & Chinatown, \$,  
 p. 112)  
 Buona Sera at the Jam ★★ (Chelsea,  
 \$, p. 120)  
 Carluccio's Caffè ★★ (Fitzrovia, \$,  
 p. 103)  
 Frankie's Italian Bar & Grill ★  
 (Knightsbridge, \$\$, p. 118)  
 Frizzante@City Farm ★★ (Hackney,  
 \$, p. 138)  
 La Famiglia ★★ (Chelsea, \$\$, p. 119)  
 La Spighetta ★★ (Marylebone, \$\$,  
 p. 102)  
 Loco Mensa (South Bank, \$\$, p. 128)  
 Locanda Locatelli ★ (Marylebone,  
 \$\$\$, p. 99)

Metrogusto ★★ (Islington, \$\$\$,  
p. 134)  
Quod Restaurant & Bar ★ (Piccadilly  
Circus & Leicester Square, \$\$,  
p. 108)  
The River Café ★★ (Hammersmith,  
\$\$\$, p. 122)

## JAPANESE

Wagamama ★ (Bloomsbury, \$,  
p. 105)

## KOSHER

Blooms ★★ (Golders Green, \$\$,  
p. 137)

## LEBANESE

Fresco (Bayswater, \$, p. 123)

## LUNCH & SNACKS

Bar Italia (Soho & Chinatown, \$,  
p. 112)  
Boiled Egg & Soldiers (Clapham, \$,  
p. 130)  
Bush Garden Café & Food Store ★★  
(Shepherd's Bush, \$, p. 127)  
Café Mozart ★ (Hampstead, \$,  
p. 137)  
Café in the Crypt (Trafalgar Square,  
\$, p. 112)  
Lazy Daisy Café ★ (Notting Hill  
Gate \$, p. 126)  
The Original Maids of Honour (Kew,  
\$, p. 131)  
The Refectory@Southwark Cathedral  
★ (Southwark, \$, p. 128)  
Smiths of Smithfield ★★ (Clerken-  
well, \$\$, p. 132)  
Zoomslide Café (Piccadilly Circus &  
Leicester Square, \$, p. 109)

## MEDITERRANEAN

Draper's Arms ★★ (Islington, \$\$,  
p. 135)  
Sarastro ★ (Covent Garden & the  
Strand, \$\$\$, p. 105)

## MEXICAN

Café Pacifico (Covent Garden & the  
Strand, \$, p. 108)

## MODERN EUROPEAN

Bank Aldwych ★ (Covent Garden &  
the Strand, \$\$, p. 105)  
Bluebird Restaurant (Chelsea, \$\$\$,  
p. 118)  
The Prince Alfred & Formosa Dining  
Room ★★ (Maida Vale, \$\$,  
p. 123)

## MOROCCAN

Original Tagines ★★ (Marylebone,  
\$\$, p. 102)

## PIZZA & PASTA

Italian Graffiti ★★ (Soho &  
Chinatown, \$\$, p. 109)

## PORTUGUESE

Lisboa Patisserie (Ladbroke Grove, \$,  
p. 126)

## SEAFOOD

Café Fish (Piccadilly Circus & Leicester  
Square, \$\$, p. 108)  
fish! ★★ (Southbank, \$\$, p. 128)  
Fishworks ★★ (Marylebone, \$\$\$,  
p. 99)  
Lou Pescadou ★ (West Brompton,  
\$\$, p. 120)

## SPANISH/TAPAS

Café Kick (Shoreditch, \$\$, p. 133)

## THAI

The Blue Elephant ★★ (Fulham,  
\$\$\$, p. 121)  
Thai Pavilion ★ (Soho & Chinatown,  
\$\$, p. 110)

## TURKISH

Sofra (Mayfair, \$, p. 114)

## VEGETARIAN

Manna ★ (Primrose Hill, \$, p. 134)  
The Place Below ★★ (The City, \$,  
p. 132)  
World Food Café ★ (Covent Garden,  
\$, p. 108)

## VIETNAMESE

Green Papaya (Hackney, \$, p. 138)

## 2 Central London

### MARYLEBONE, REGENT'S PARK & FITZROVIA

#### EXPENSIVE

**Fishworks** ★★ SEAFOOD This second but most central London branch of an award-winning fish restaurant/fishmonger chain—the other is in Chiswick—gets madly busy on evenings, so if you don't have a reservation for dinner, get here at six on the dot. In the bright, modern surrounds, you can choose from a well-judged menu of classic seafood dishes, or splurge on the freshest oysters, a monster shellfish platter, or a whole fish from the shop counters up front. Kids can get a half-portion of anything on the menu for half-price, or choose from their own menu of fishcakes or—highly recommended and totally unlike the frozen stuff—fish fingers. Fries aren't part of the deal; instead there are superior side orders such as braised fennel or potatoes with butter and fresh mint. If you're in a hurry or think the little ones might get fidgety, make sure the dish you're ordering doesn't take long to cook, although your server will probably proffer this information. (Ours couldn't have been more concerned to keep the kids happy.)

**Insider tip:** If you're trying to keep the bill down and don't want to order starters, ask for the appetizer of gorgeous fresh-made *taramasalata* (dip made from fish roe, olive oil, garlic, and breadcrumbs). It comes with a couple of extra dips and enough bread to keep everybody munching while you wait for your mains, and is a real bargain at £1.95 (\$3.70). A new branch opened in Islington (☎ 020/7354-1279) in late 2005, and there's now a Fishworks bar at Harvey Nichols in Knightsbridge.

89 Marylebone High St., W1. ☎ 020/7935-9796. www.fishworks.co.uk. Highchairs, kids' menu. Reservations recommended. Main courses £8.50–£25 (\$16–\$40); kids' dishes £4.95 (\$9.40) or half-price from rest of menu. AE, MC, V. Tues–Fri noon–2:30pm and 6–10:30pm; Sat and Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Baker St.

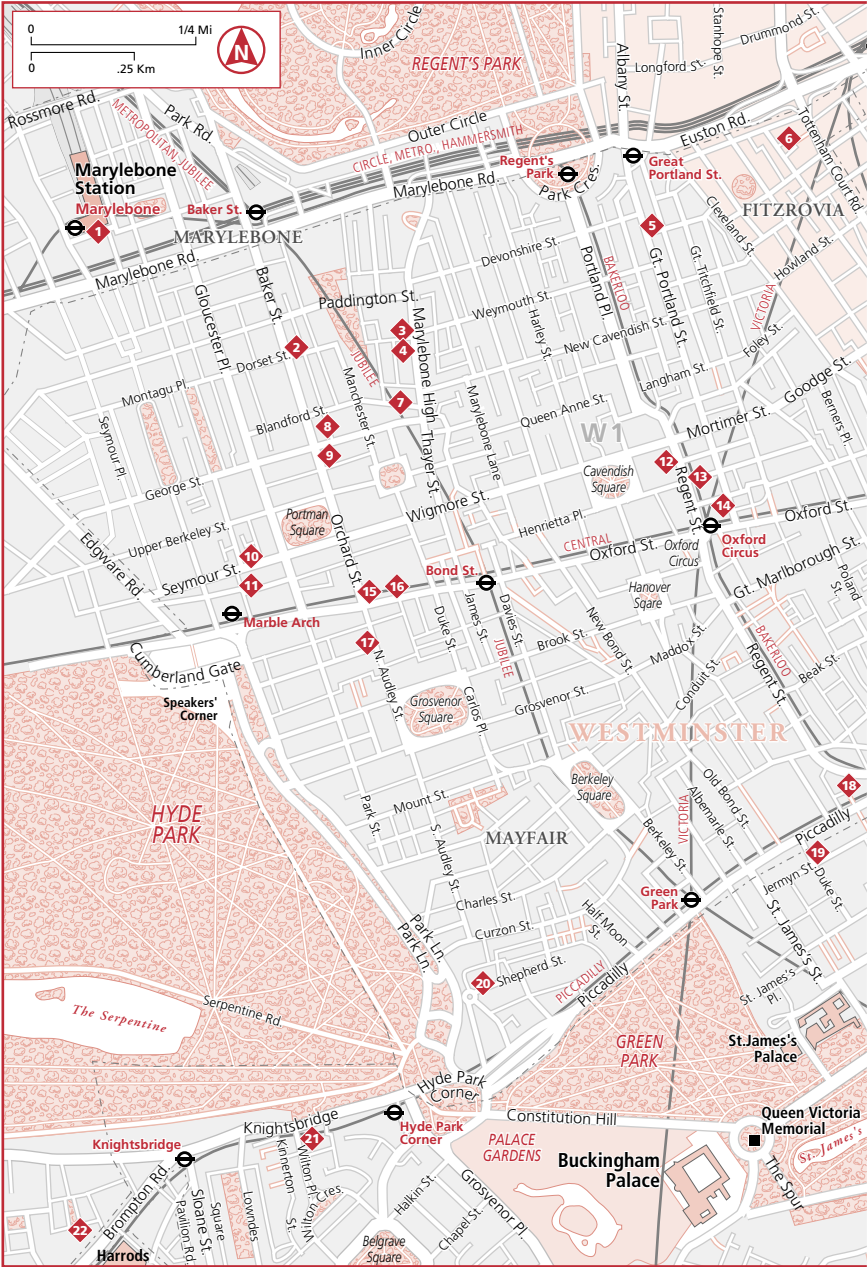
**Locanda Locatelli** ★ ITALIAN A few years down the line, this is still one of the most glamorous addresses in town, although complaints about slow service haven't let up. Ever since celeb chef Giorgio Locatelli fumed to the press about the sniffy attitude of many British restaurateurs towards kids, you can at least count on a typical Italian welcome here (and the most stylish highchairs in town, clad in beige leather so as not to jar with the rest of the sleek decor). Before the restaurant opened, its staff received special training in keeping junior diners happy, including inviting them into the kitchen to see their desserts being prepared. Food-wise, you're about as far from nuggets and pizza as possible. There's no kids' menu as such, but the kitchen will rustle up kid-friendly goodies such as homemade spaghetti with tuna balls, and desserts like chocolate and banana beignets. The sublime adult fare includes the likes of tagliatelle with kid goat ragù and white chocolate soup with pistachio ice cream. Locatelli's fellow TV chef and “domestic goddess” Nigella Lawson is said to regularly bring her offspring for lunch here, which is the greatest endorsement you can get, but just be warned about those infamous waits—if you've got a fidgety kid, this place may not be for you. On the other hand, as of September 2005, it extended its opening hours to embrace Sunday lunch and dinner—a great time for family dining.

8 Seymour St., W1. ☎ 020/7935-9088. www.locandalocatelli.com. Highchairs. Reservations required. Main courses £20–£29 (\$37–\$55). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs and Sun noon–3pm and 7–11pm; Fri and Sat noon–3pm and 7–11:30pm. Tube: Marble Arch.

#### MODERATE

**Giraffe** ★★ GLOBAL This is the kind of restaurant every parent wishes you had at the end of your street: bright but stylish in decor, with a funky world music soundtrack,

# Where to Dine in Central London & Clerkenwell







cheerful and endlessly patient young staff, a good-value kids' menu, and an eclectic, globally inspired main menu on which everyone is guaranteed to find something to suit their mood, from tasty southeast Asian curries to burgers and excellent fries. Best of all, if you're not feeling virtuous enough to join the kids in the luscious fruit smoothies or steaming mugs of hot chocolate with melting marshmallows, you can pick from a superb range of cocktails (from chocolate martinis to a killer Bloody Mary), beers, and wines by the glass or bottle. Each of the 11 (and growing) nonsmoking branches of this "herd" is well situated for family activities, be it kite-flying on Hampstead Heath, petting animals at Battersea Park Children's Zoo, or catching some culture at the Royal Festival Hall. There's even a location at Heathrow airport now. **Insider tip:** Weekend brunches are superb but can be hellishly busy; weekdays are quieter, and you can take advantage of special deals for both kids and adults. Note also that Giraffe opens early, making it a great breakfast option.

36–8 Blandford St., W1. ☎ 020/7935-2333. [www.giraffe.net](http://www.giraffe.net). Kids' menu, highchairs. No reservations Sat and Sun lunch. Main course £6.95–£11 (\$13–\$21). Kids' deal Mon–Fri £4.95 (\$9.40) for main, dessert, and smoothie or juice. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 8am–11pm, Sat 9am–11pm, Sun 9am–10:30pm. Tube: Baker St.

**La Spighetta** ★★ ITALIAN This excellent restaurant, easily overlooked in its basement location beneath a sushi bar, is well worth seeking out for its simple, well-priced Italian fare and friendly staff, who are happy to organize kids' portions of unfamiliar but addictive dishes such as Sardinian *malloreddus* (shellfish-shaped pasta) with homemade sausage and tomato sauce. The northern Italian–style pizzas here are something else, whether it's the sophisticated (wild boar prosciutto, rocket, and goats' cheese dressing) or the gimmicky (half-calzone, half-pizza); the semi-open kitchen allows you to watch them being made. The dessert list is heavy on the booze, but servings of real ice cream won't leave anyone feeling cheated.

43 Blandford St., W1. ☎ 020/7486-7340. [www.spighetta.co.uk](http://www.spighetta.co.uk). Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £13–£16 (\$24–\$30). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs noon–2:30pm and 6:30–10:30pm; Fri and Sat noon–2:30pm and 6:30–11pm; Sun 12:30–3pm and 6:30–10pm. Tube: Baker St.

**Original Tagines** ★★ MOROCCAN This cozy little restaurant on a quiet road off Baker Street lures you in with its tempting aromas and warm North African decor. You'll be glad you succumbed: The food is divine, from traditional starters such as hummus, and *b'stilla* pastries (filled with pigeon, lemon-flavored eggs, and almonds), to full-blown dishes like couscous Imperial loaded with lamb, chicken, *merguez* (spicy North African sausage), and vegetables. Many of the *tagines* (stews) are cooked with fruit—lamb with caramelized pear, for instance, or chicken with prunes and almonds—and go down very well with kids, who can get smaller portions. Best of all, though, are the divine desserts—don't leave without at least sharing a bowl or two of the rice pudding with orange blossoms. **Insider tip:** The set lunches are a good bargain.

7a Dorset St., W1. ☎ 020/7935-1545. [www.originaltagines.com](http://www.originaltagines.com). Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £9.50–£12 (\$18–\$23). MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6–11pm; Sat 6–11pm. Tube: Baker St.

**Royal China** ★ CHINESE Relocated since 2004 from its previous, smaller site farther up the street, the Royal China has eschewed its former rather 1970s slick black decor in favor of something a little more up to date. The look is still luxurious, but don't be put off—this place is surprisingly accommodating for kids, even the very young, and the chefs don't mind if you order off-menu. (They may embellish an order of, say, plain omelets, with pork, so do say if you are vegetarian.) Even more remarkably, given the notoriously indifferent service of many Chinese restaurants in London, those with



babies may find them being whisked off for a tour of the kitchens or passed around the cooing staff while you enjoy their meal, which may include meaty pan-fried eggplant with minced shrimp or subtly flavored salted prawns with vegetables. Make sure the little ones save space for the delicious desserts, such as chilled mango pudding. Despite its cavernous size, this place is hugely popular, especially for the dim sum brunches (the best in London, some say), so try to book ahead. Prices are very reasonable, given the West End location. Note that there are further branches in Queensway, St. John's Wood, and Docklands; the last has an open-air seating area overlooking the river.

40–42 Baker St., W1. ☎ 020/7487-4688. www.royalchinagroup.co.uk. Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £7.50–£32 (\$14–\$61). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs noon–11pm; Fri and Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun 11am–10pm. Tube: Marble Arch.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Carluccio's Caffè** ★★ ★ *Value* ITALIAN If you don't like bustle, don't come to one of Carluccio's hectic all-day eateries. You'll miss out, though—despite being a rapidly growing chain (there are about 20 branches total, most of them in London), Carluccio's is a breath of fresh Italian air. This most central branch, in a quiet square just a few steps from Oxford Circus, is very useful if you're shopping in the West End. All of the authentic regional dishes offered in the bright, modern space are on the smallish side, making them ideal for hungry kids (prices are in keeping with the size), but smaller portions of many of the dishes are available. There's also a wonderful, great-value “Per I Piccoli” menu, starting off with *grissini* and a soft drink; progressing to your choice of a superior plate of cold meats, chicken breast with rosemary potatoes, or spaghetti dishes; and finishing with a scoop of ice cream. Highlights of the main menu are the rich wild mushroom soup studded with pancetta, and homemade spinach and ricotta ravioli with butter and sage. Staff don't mind if you're just here to linger over a thick Florentine chocolate drink. As you'd expect from an Italian operation, the staff are also marvelous with kids. **Insider tip:** Come for an early lunch to avoid the sussed-up office hordes (you can't book during the day), and to get an outside table that will really make you feel you're on vacation if the sun is shining.

8 Market Place, W1. ☎ 020/7636-2228. www.carluccios.com. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations for evening tables only. Main courses £4.95–£11 (\$9.40–\$21), kids' menu £4.50 (\$8.60). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7:30am–11pm; Sat 10am–11pm; Sun 10am–10pm. Tube: Oxford Circus.

**La Galette** CREPES It's handy to know about this place, just off the northern end of Marylebone High Street, serving authentic, child-pleasing, savory buckwheat Breton pancakes from morning to late evening. Variations can be as simple or as complex as you like—try one plain with Normandy butter; or another *super complète* with ham, cheese, egg, onion, and mushrooms; then a basic dessert crepe with lemon and sugar or a more fanciful confection with caramelized apple and crème chantilly. Non-galette options include *hors-d'oeuvres* such as country terrine with toast and cornichons, good peasant salads, sorbet, and ice cream. Parents shouldn't miss the traditional accompaniment to galettes—a *bolée* (porcelain cup) of Breton or Normandy cider.

56 Paddington St., W1. ☎ 020/7935-1554. www.lagalette.com. Highchairs. No reservations for groups of less than 6. Main-course galettes £3.50–£8.20 (\$6.70–\$16). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 9:30am–11pm; Sat and Sun 10am–11pm. Tube: Baker St.

## BLOOMSBURY & HOLBORN

Although this is a good area for budget accommodations, restaurants tend to be touristy, overpriced, and of poor quality. That said, various decent chains (p. 110)

## Food on the Go: Takeouts & Deliveries

Staying in an apartment is a good way to save money on restaurant bills, but you don't want to spend the entire time slaving over a hot stove. The following are some noteworthy choices for takeout service:

**Basilico:** This award-winning, five-strong Italian chain, with branches in Hampstead, Islington, Fulham, Clapham, and Richmond, has won plaudits for its handmade pizzas baked in wood-fired brick ovens. Its salad and juices are first-class, too, and delivery is free for orders over £10 (\$19). ☎ 0800/3162656; [www.basilico.co.uk](http://www.basilico.co.uk).

**Deliverance:** This is a very handy service for families who can't agree on what kind of cuisine they want: It offers European, North African, and Asian fare, which means Dad can have good old English shepherd's pie, Mom can have a Thai stir-fry with sticky rice, and Junior can feast on outstanding pasta dishes such as penne with organic smoked salmon and baby spinach. Note that if you order via the website, you must enter your full postal code such as W1H 4NE; otherwise the system will try to spit you out. ☎ 0800/019-1111; [www.deliverance.co.uk](http://www.deliverance.co.uk).

**Room Service:** This outfit can deliver meals from more than 80 London restaurants to your apartment or hotel within about an hour. Restaurants include Ed's Easy Diner, Planet Hollywood, and Sticky Fingers. Request a brochure online, or order directly through the website. ☎ 020/7644-6666; [www.roomservice.co.uk](http://www.roomservice.co.uk).

have outlets here, including **Strada** on Great Queen Street; **Pizza Express** on Coptic Street, High Holborn, and Southampton Row; **Ask** on Southampton Row; and **La Porchetta** on Boswell Street. The British Museum also has a variety of good eating options in its atmospheric **Great Court** (p. 129). For a fashionable but family-friendly Spanish restaurant, try **Cigala** (p. 194). Order a traditional “chippie” at **North Sea Fish Restaurant** (p. 194).

## INEXPENSIVE

**My Old Dutch Pancake House** CREPES This clean and airy space sparingly decorated with Dutch-themed posters has been going strong for years, so it's clearly doing something right—filling diners with its wide range of genuine Dutch pancakes, which are slightly thicker than crepes. Pancakes range from savory vegetarian options; to home classics; to specials such as the highly recommended Amsterdammer with smoked bacon, apple slices, and maple syrup; to sweet confections served relatively plain (with vanilla sugar and slices of lemon) or wondrously and teeth-rottingly over-the-top (for instance, with banana, sultanas, coconut, and cacao sauce). All are served on enormous traditional blue and white tableware. You can also get salads; oddities such as *bitterballen* (a traditional starter made of breadcrumbs, onions, cheese, and garlic, served with sour cream), waffles, and other desserts. There's no kids' menu, but this is definitely a sharing kind of place; portions are huge so three pancakes should be enough for four unless you're ravenous. There are other branches on the King's Road in Chelsea and in Ealing, W5.

132 High Holborn, WC1. ☎ 020/7242-5200. Highchairs. Main courses £6–£8.95 (\$11–\$17). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Holborn.

**Wagamama** ★ *Value* JAPANESE This phenomenally successful stable of noodle joints based on Japanese ramen bars is a great place for an inexpensive and convivial family meal—they're so noisy and hectic, nobody bats an eyelash if your kids decide to raise the roof. Eating takes place at long communal tables with bench seating, which adds to the fun while it discourages you from lingering. (This is fast food, after all—in fact, the dishes arrive so quickly there's barely time for kids to make use of the crayons and paper provided.) Kids love being able to see the chefs at work and are fascinated by the electronic handhelds with which the waitstaff punch orders and zap them through to the kitchen. The side dishes and mains (there are no starters) are brought out as soon as they're ready, which means some members of the party get their order before others; share what's brought out and don't worry about who ordered what. The emphasis is on "positive"—healthy—fare, and the punchy noodle dishes (in soup, in sauces, or cooked on a griddle) certainly put a spring in your step, as do the zingy fresh-squeezed juices. Kids 10 and under enjoy their own keenly priced "mini-menu" of three scaled-down noodle dishes and one chicken-and-rice dish, which go down well supplemented with yummy steamed duck, chicken, prawn, or vegetable dumplings with dipping sauces. At the time of writing, there were 20 branches of Wagamama in London, including Marylebone, Camden, Kensington High St., Covent Garden, Leicester Square, Islington; and the Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank.

4a Streatham St., WC1. ☎ 020/7323-9223. www.wagamama.com. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations not accepted. Main courses £5.75–£9.60 (\$11–\$18); kids' dishes £2.75–£3.95 (\$5.20–\$7.50). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11pm; Sun 12:30–10pm. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

## COVENT GARDEN & THE STRAND

Many restaurants in this theater district exist purely to sell substandard fare to unwary tourists, but there are also some very fine choices here, some of them offering good-value pre-theater menus, including the restaurants at swank hotel One Aldwych (p. 71).

### EXPENSIVE

**Sarastro** ★ MEDITERRANEAN This flamboyant place, which bills itself as "the show after the show," is a great spot for a celebration meal—it's laid out like an opera house, with rich draperies, theatrical knickknacks, and even a number of gilded opera boxes in which diners can sit. It's trashy, but enjoyably so. Families are best off coming for the Sunday "opera cabarets," which kick off at 1:30pm. For £20 (\$37) per person, or half that for kids, you can watch performances by young talent and students from leading opera houses, including the Royal Opera and English National Opera nearby, while enjoying a three-course menu that includes Turkish/Greek hors d'oeuvres such as cheese *borek* (stuffed filo pastries), mains such as Anatolian-style lamb and, for dessert, a choice of fresh fruit or *sekerpare* (a pastry cooked in honey sherbet and topped with pistachios).

126 Drury Lane, WC2. ☎ 020/7836-0101. www.sarastro-restaurant.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses £8.50–£16 (\$16–\$30). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight. Tube: Covent Garden.

### MODERATE

**Bank Aldwych** ★ MODERN EUROPEAN This airy modern restaurant, with its Coney Island murals, bright funky furniture, and startling chandelier made of 3,000 glass slates and covering the entire ceiling (it takes a week to clean, with people working

through the night), is a pleasure to visit at any time, but hip young families flock here for the relaxed Sunday brunches lasting till 5pm, when kids can doodle away at a table set up in the corner while parents sit back and enjoy the live jazz and Modern European food. The menu ranges from light dishes such as risotto, or eggs on toast, to hefty roasts, fish, and more. Kids get their own two-course menu featuring the likes of chipolatas (long thin sausages) and mash, fish and chips, linguine, sticky toffee pudding, and milkshakes. Most dishes are well cooked and tasty, but avoid the uninspiring Caesar salad. There is also an interesting range of breakfast choices during the week. Note that there's a Westminster sister restaurant with a smaller kids' menu, but it's closed on Sunday.

1 Kingsway, WC2. ☎ 020/7379-9797. [www.bankrestaurants.com](http://www.bankrestaurants.com). Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £13–£21 (\$30–\$40); kids' menu £7.25 (\$14). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7.30–11am, noon–3pm, and 5:30–11:30pm; Sat 11:30am–3:30pm and 5:30–11pm; Sun 11:30am–5pm Tube: Holborn.

## Food on the Go: Sandwiches & Snack Stops

There'll be days when you don't have the time, money, or inclination to sit down for a full lunch, especially if you're dining out in the evening. If it's just a sandwich you're looking for, one of the best chains is **Pret a Manger** (298 Regent St.; ☎ 020/7932/5219; [www.pret.com](http://www.pret.com)), with scores of branches selling its handmade, no-additives sandwiches, plus sushi, salads, pastries, and desserts. High points are the crayfish with rocket salad and the carrot cake. Also first-class are the juices and smoothies. A similar but slightly less ubiquitous place is the simply named **Eat** (319 Regent St.; ☎ 020/7637-9400; [www.eatcafe.com](http://www.eatcafe.com)), with great handmade sandwiches (try the tuna crunch), pies, salads, and desserts. This is also a fine spot for a cheap breakfast, whether it be muesli with fruit, or bacon butties (bacon sandwiches, usually with sliced white bread).

Bagel aficionados can get your fix at **Oi!Bagel** (☎ 020/7723-7321; [www.oibagel.co.uk](http://www.oibagel.co.uk)), which has branches at Marylebone Station, W1; in the West One Shopping Centre on Oxford Street, W1; and elsewhere. Their fresh handmade bagels come in a variety of guises; the breakfasts and lunch boxes serving four to five people (£10–£20/\$19–\$38) are a particularly great option for families. If you're in the East End, it's worth seeking out the almost legendary (and much cheaper) **Brick Lane Beigel Bake** (159 Brick Lane, E1; ☎ 020/7729-0616), open round the clock and producing more than 7,000 bagels a night, which you can enjoy filled with smoked salmon, salt beef, chopped liver, and more. Prices range from just 15p to £1.50 (25¢–\$2.85). Other traditional Kosher breads are sold there, too.

For something a little more hearty, **Square Pie** (☎ 020/7377-1114; [www.squarepie.com](http://www.squarepie.com)) sells traditional and modern pies at Spitalfields Market, Selfridges' food hall, and Canary Wharf. Choose from classics such as steak and mushroom, or from more adventurous takes such as jerk chicken with sweet potato. Prices start at about £5.95 for a takeout pie with gravy, great mash, and mushy or garden peas. It's also worth knowing about the family-size "Take Me Home and Bake Me" pie.

**Porter's English Restaurant** ★ TRADITIONAL BRITISH This is a firm family favorite for its traditional, and calorie-laden, English food—think lamb and apricot pie, beef with herb dumplings, and the kind of stodgy desserts you imagine are served up at British boarding schools. Kids under 12 get their own menu of hearty fare such as sausage, mash, and beans, but make sure they save room for the old-fashioned desserts such as trifle and syrup sponge pudding. They also get their own great cocktails, including one made from orange juice, ginger ale, and strawberry syrup. The traditional English teas are another reason to visit—just make sure not to come dressed in your tightest trousers. Decor-wise, you may have hoped for something a little more classy given that it's owned by the Earl of Bradford. Still, kids are entertained by tacky touches such as the old porter's cart dangling from the ceiling. Note also that the restaurant offers deals combining dinner with a trip on British Airways' London Eye, or with West End shows such as *Mary Poppins* and *The Lion King*.

17 Henrietta St., WC2. ☎ 020/7836-6466. www.porters.uk.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses £9.95–£16 (\$19–\$30); kids' main courses £6 (\$11). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Covent Garden.


**Smollensky's on the Strand** ★ AMERICAN This is one of those places you expect to hate but come away from feeling grateful it exists, even if you wouldn't want to come here more than once in a while. It's touristy, sure, but the American diner-style food is actually very good, especially the steaks, and there's a special kids' menu (with pizza, ravioli, hot dogs, mini-steaks, desserts, and cocktails). Come on the weekend, ideally, when there's a "Family Fun Day" noon through 4pm, boasting a play area involving clowns, face-painting (for £3/\$6), goody bags, and competitions. And don't leave without sharing one of the popular chocolate brownies. There are other branches at Tower Bridge (with great views), Canary Wharf, Hammersmith, and Twickenham, but they're not so kiddie-oriented. There are plans to modernize the decor here in 2006.


105 The Strand, WC2. ☎ 020/7497-2101. www.smollenskys.com. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £8.25–£20 (\$16–\$38); kids' main courses about £4.95 (\$9.40). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Wed noon–11pm; Thurs–Sat noon–12:30am; Sun noon–5:30pm and 6:30–10:30pm. Tube: Covent Garden.


## INEXPENSIVE


**Belgo Centraal** BELGIAN The food here has slipped a notch or two in recent years, but Belgo is still a fun place to bring the kids, who find it entertaining that the waiters dress in monks' habits (presumably a reference to the Trappist-brewed beers served here). The descent to the basement in the clanking industrial lift is a thrill, and the beer hall atmosphere a laugh. Where parents are concerned, the main draw is that two kids ages 12 or under eat from the mini-Belgo menu, for each adult who orders a main course from the à la carte menu. The kids can choose from rotisserie chicken with apple sauce, pork and leek sausages with mash, and deep-fried cod in bread-crumbs, followed by homemade ice cream. For adults, the mainstay of the menu is mussels and fries, cooked in a variety of sauces, but there are other traditional Belgian dishes for those who aren't fans of sea critters, including *waterzooï* (chicken in creamy sauce) and wild boar sausages with *stoemp* (mash with cabbage). There's another branch, Belgo Noord, in Camden.

50 Earlham St., WC2. ☎ 020/7813-2233. www.belgo-restaurants.co.uk. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £9–£18 (\$17–\$34); kids' menu free with adult main course. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs noon–11pm; Fri–Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Covent Garden.

**Cafe Pacifico**  **MEXICAN** They didn't go light on the Latino theme when they set this place up a quarter of a century ago, but big and loud is sometimes just what you want when dining *en famille*, together with ample portions of gutsy cooking (and, for parents, great margaritas). If you're not sure what you fancy or are unfamiliar with Mexican food, the Degustación del Pacifico combines a taco, an enchilada, and a quesadilla, served with guacamole, sour cream, rice, and beans—a couple of hungry kids could share one of these. Alternatively, the great-value kids' menu comprises soft drink, juice, or milk; main course (quesadilla with melted cheese, guacamole, and sour cream; chicken nuggets; or fish fingers with fries), and ice cream or sorbet. The charming staff members are always keen to offer suggestions.

5 Langley St., WC2.  020/7379-7728. [www.cafepacifico-laperla.com](http://www.cafepacifico-laperla.com). Kids' menu, highchairs. No reservations Fri or Sat. Main courses £8–£16 (\$16–\$30); kids' menu £2.75 (\$5.20). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11:45pm; Sun noon–10:45pm. Tube: Covent Garden.


**World Food Café**  **VEGETARIAN** This lovely, light-filled, and friendly cafe serves inexpensive veggie and vegan snacks and lunches from around the globe to a world-music soundtrack. You'll find everything from Mexican chili to Thai yellow curry to Indian thalis to Middle Eastern *meze*. The owner is a travel writer and photographer, and many of the recipes have been picked up during his perambulations; they're good enough to have spawned a cookbook. There's no kids' menu, but most of the food is colorful and appealing to junior palates. If they only want a snack, kids can tuck into such healthy delights as mango and cardamom ice cream and fruit *lassis*, while watching the activity in the semi-open kitchen or peering down into the hippie haven of Neal's Yard below. Try to come off peak, though, as it can get very busy.



14 Neal's Yard, WC2.  020/7379-0298. Highchairs. Main courses £5–£8 (\$9.50–\$15). MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–4:30pm. Tube: Covent Garden.

## PICCADILLY CIRCUS & LEICESTER SQUARE

### MODERATE

**Café Fish** **SEAFOOD** This relaxed fish joint is split into a ground-floor rapid-service canteen with wooden benches and long tables (perfect if you need a quick bite before catching a show), and a more leisurely first-floor restaurant. If you can't make it to the coast, this is the next-best place to try British seaside classics such as cockles and whelks, or the catch of the day, simply chargrilled or pan-roasted, although there's plenty of more sophisticated fare, such as pan-fried sea bass with crevette linguine. Kids get their own menu featuring cod and chips, fishcakes, or pasta, plus ice cream with chocolate sauce and a soft drink of their choice. You can also get good deals for two-course pre- or post-theater dinners combined with tickets to shows.

36–40 Rupert St., W1.  020/7287-8989. [www.santeonline.co.uk](http://www.santeonline.co.uk). Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £8.75–£15 (\$17–\$29); kids' menu £5.95 (\$11). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–9pm. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

**Quod Restaurant & Bar**   **MODERN BRITISH/ITALIAN** Quod is a god-send in an area where affordable, non-touristy restaurants are like gold dust. The kids' menu doesn't offer anything out of the ordinary (spaghetti with tomato sauce, or hamburger or chicken nuggets with chips, followed by ice cream), but it is a fantastically good value. If your child would prefer something more inspired, a starter portion from the pasta and risotto menu, such as potato gnocchi with cherry tomatoes and basil, will only set you back a couple of pounds more. Adults can enjoy everything from classic lasagna to roast belly of pork with Oxford black pudding. If you're on a tight



budget, time your visit to take advantage of the pre-theater menu, available from 4 to 7pm Monday to Saturday and 5 to 7pm Sunday. This is also a handy spot for pastries and drinks from 10am during the week, or for afternoon tea from 3 to 5:30pm (except Sun), and it's so big (it's in a former banking hall) that you're never likely to have trouble getting a table. The eye-catching outsize portraits adorning the walls, showcasing contemporary British and modern artists, add drama.

57 Haymarket, SW1. © 020/7925-1234. www.quod-london.co.uk. Kids' menu, highchairs. Main courses £8.35–£18 (\$16–\$34); kids' menu £3.95 (\$7.50). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 10am–midnight; Sat noon–midnight; Sun 5–10:30pm. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

**Rainforest Café** ★ AMERICAN It's your parental duty to take your offspring to one of these jungle-themed extravaganzas at some juncture, so you may as well grit your teeth and get used to the idea. Actually, if you enter into the spirit of things, it can be good fun—unless if you have a child of a nervous disposition, in which case you're better off staying away (many have to be whisked out in a hurry). Most kids, though, love the animatronic, growling wildlife and quickly get used to the rather disconcerting tropical storms that rumble over your heads as you sample gimmicky-sounding but reasonable fare such as Rasta Pasta (pappardelle—flat pasta—with chicken and walnut pesto) and Major Mojo Bones (sticky BBQ ribs). The Rainforest Rascal menu is a whole lot more expensive than most kids' menus, but the range of choices is unusually wide, and—surprisingly—half of the main courses are organic. There are also heaps of goodies thrown in to keep the kids occupied while you wait. If you're trying to stick with healthy options, stay away from the kids' smoothies, which taste overwhelmingly sugary. Otherwise, save the good intentions for tomorrow and get your teeth around some of the immensely gooey desserts. You have to pass through the ground-floor shop on your way in and out, but the merchandise turns out to be both good-quality and fairly priced. *Insider tip:* Avoid weekends at all costs, when reservations aren't taken and you can expect to queue for up to 2 hours.

20–24 Shaftesbury Ave., W1. © 020/7434-3111. www.therainforestcafe.co.uk. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations ("priority seating requests") recommended Sun–Fri. Main courses £9.95–£16 (\$19–\$30). Kids' menu £10 (\$19). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Wed noon–10pm; Thurs and Fri noon–8pm; Sat 11am–8pm; Sun 11:30am–10pm. Tube: Leicester Sq.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Zoomslide Café** Finds LUNCH & SNACKS This funky cafe in The Photographers' Gallery offers a respite from the fury of surrounding Leicester Square and Covent Garden. You'll feel instantly calmer as you step into the airy, whitewashed space and peruse items in the chiller at the front, which include sandwiches, freshly made salads (available in portions to suit both kid and adult appetites), and home-made cakes. Afterwards, you can settle at one of the communal tables (I've never known it to be busy, so you won't get any elbows digging into you) and enjoy the photography, which is displayed here as well as throughout the gallery itself.

5 Great Newport St., WC2. © 020/7831-1772. www.photonet.org.uk. Highchairs. Main courses £2–£5 (\$3.80–\$9.50). No credit cards. Mon–Wed and Sat 11am–5:30pm; Thurs 11am–7:30pm; Sun noon–5:30pm. Tube: Leicester Sq.

## SOHO & CHINATOWN

### MODERATE

**Italian Graffiti** ★★ PIZZA & PASTA People return again and again to this cozy family-run venue for its superb (and enormous) crisp-based pizzas, which are cooked in a wood-fired oven. Adding to the ambience are the open fireplaces, in which fires flicker when the weather is inclement; the large windows from which you can observe

## The Chain Gang

With almost 100 branches in every nook and cranny of the capital and a couple of hundred more around the country, **Pizza Express** (30 Coptic St., WC1; ☎ 020/7636-3232; [www.pizzaexpress.com](http://www.pizzaexpress.com)) has obviously been getting it mostly right over the past 40 years, though no one disputes that you'll get better, more Italian pizzas elsewhere. What you come here for, really, is familiarity and consistency—everyone has their favorites among the 20-plus classic pizzas, the handful of pasta dishes and salads, and the desserts (nicely expanded as part of birthday celebrations in 2005). Staff members are definitely more on the ball in some branches than others, but kids are always kept out of mischief with a pack of games and activities. Kids don't have their own menus because the bigwigs in charge think they feel more grownup if they're allowed to choose from the adult menu (they may have a point), but virtually any dish can be customized to take individual likes or whims into account. Kids' portions are provided (the pizzas aren't so huge, though—most kids will be able to tackle one). You're unlikely to spend more than £50 (\$95) for a reasonably hungry family of four, including drinks. Unusually for a chain (especially such a large one), the branches are individual in feel, often because they're housed in an interesting old building that has retained some of its original features (in the case of the Bloomsbury branch, a dairy with old tiling).

Not content with the spread of its empire, Pizza Express owns the **Café Pasta** mini-chain (184 Shaftesbury Ave.; ☎ 020/7379-0198), as well as outlets at Covent Garden, Belsize Park, and Richmond); it's another reliable stop-off for pizzas and pasta. Weirdly, it embraces the swank **Kettner's Restaurant & Champagne Bar** (29 Romilly St.; ☎ 020/7734-6112; [www.kettners.com](http://www.kettners.com)), one of the oldest restaurants in town, opened in 1867 by Napoleon III's chef and still

the bustle of Soho; and the big-hearted staff, who sometimes whisk kids away as honored guests to show them how to make pizza. Portions are enormous (a starter would suffice as a main course for an adult, never mind a child), so be conservative when you order or you won't have time for traditional desserts such as pannacotta and cassata.

163-5 Wardour St., W1. ☎ 020/7439-4668. Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £7-£15 (\$13-\$29). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon-Fri 11:45am-3pm and 5:45-11:30pm; Sat 11:45am-11:30pm. Tube: Oxford Circus.

**Thai Pavilion** ★ *Finds* THAI It's worth calling ahead before visiting this slightly chintzy but very likeable Soho Thai to check that the second-floor Sawasdee Room isn't booked by a party—kids love the novelty of sitting on the traditional floor cushions and eating from low tables. If it's full, or if you have a baby or toddler in a high-chair and thus need to sit at a full-height table, ask to be seated in the first-floor dining room, where little ones enjoy watching the waterfall and peering down at the bustle on Shaftesbury Avenue. Refreshingly, the kids' menu here isn't limited to European or American standards—although they can get fish or grilled chicken with fries if they so desire. There are also starters of chicken satay sticks, spring rolls, and potato with sesame seeds, as well as mains of chicken tempura with ketchup or mild yellow

boasting gilded mirrors and a grand piano—here you can enjoy similar pizzas as well as classy but well-priced seafood, burgers, and all-day breakfasts.

Other Italian-inspired chains worth knowing are **Est Est Est** (57 Upper St., N1; ☎ 020/7359-9198; www.estetest.co.uk; plus outlets on Chiswick, Wandsworth, and Wimbledon), where kids can wear chefs' hats and assemble their own pizzas. **ASK** (48 Grafton Way, W1; ☎ 020/7388-8108; www.askcentral.co.uk;) has more than 20 branches. Its slightly more upmarket sibling **Zizzi** (33–41 Charlotte St., W1; ☎ 020/7436-9940; www.zizzi.co.uk) has 13 other branches; **La Porchetta** (141 Upper St., WC1 (☎ 020/7288/2488), has three other branches); and **Strada** (4 St. Paul's Churchyard, EC4; ☎ 020/7248-7178; www.strada.co.uk), has more than 20 branches.

Non-Italian family-oriented chains include **Tootsies** (107 Old Brompton Rd., SW7; ☎ 020/7581-8942; www.tootsiesrestaurants.co.uk; with 13 other branches), which is strong on burgers and organic kids' dishes but leaves something to be desired in the service department; and **Café Med**, some of which, as we went to press, were being turned into new "U.S. Collection" restaurants (including **Hudson Grill** at 184a Kensington Park Rd., W11; and **Brooklyn Bar & Grill** at 320 Goldhawk Rd., W6). Other chains are staying, as is the branch at 21 Loudoun Rd., NW8; ☎ 020/7625-1222; and a new Café Med slated to open on Campden Hill Road off Notting Hill Gate. Regardless of the name, all will continue to offer more or less the same kids' menu (quality burgers, popcorn chicken, and salmon fishcakes, plus a soft drink and dessert, for about £5 (\$9.50).

For reviews of noodle chain **Wagamama**, the globally inspired **Giraffe**, and bustling Italian **Carluccio's Caffè**, see p. 105, 99, and 103.

chicken curry served with rice. For dessert, mango mousse is offered alongside sorbet and ice cream for an additional £2 (\$3.80). The main menu has a wide range of fresh light soups, salads, curries, and stir-fries at decent prices, given the central location. There's another location, Thai Pavilion East, designed by a modern architect and also offering a kids' menu, which is handy for a visit to the Imperial War Museum.

42 Rupert St., W1. ☎ 020/7287-6333. www.thaipavilion.com. Kids' menus, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £6.35–£13 (\$12–\$25); kids' menu £6 (\$11). AE, MC, DC, V. Daily noon–11:30pm. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

**Yauatcha** AFTERNOON TEA/CHINESE If you've got a budding Carrie Bradshaw as a daughter, a visit to this almost unspeakably chic restaurant is a must—you can almost imagine Sarah Jessica Parker and her *Sex in the City* cohorts sitting at one of the designer tables surrounded by shopping bags. Depending on what time of day it is, and on your level of hunger, you can choose between sophisticated dim sum in the basement with its tropical aquarium running the entire length of the bar, and divine cakes and patisseries with an Asian twist in the ground-floor teahouse, accompanied by exotic brews. Customers have complained of snooty service and of being

rushed (there's a strict 90-min. table allocation), but most people agree the food is worth it. Avoid the crowds by coming for a late breakfast or afternoon tea.

15 Broadwick St, W1. ☎ 020/7494-8888. Reservations essential. Dim sum dishes around £4 (\$7.60); set tea £19 (\$38). Mon–Sat 9am–11pm; Sun 9am–10:30pm. AE, MC, V. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Bar Italia** ITALIAN/LUNCH & SNACKS This classic Italian cafe, here since 1949 and a Soho institution, is a great place to bring soccer-mad kids. Even if they don't support one of the Series A league teams whose matches are screened, the atmosphere during a game is electric. The rest of the time, the bar is visited all hours of the day and night by a cast of Soho characters, some arriving on their Lambrettas or Vespas (the bar has its own scooter club, which meets every Sunday at 6pm—anyone is welcome to attend), who enjoy good panini, pizzas, juices, and coffees. Kids are welcome, but try to avoid very busy times, as the place is cramped to say the least (indoor seating is scarce, and generally consists of high stools, while the handful of outdoor tables are hotly fought over). By the way, the blue plaque on the outside wall beside the first-floor window bears witness to the fact that inventor John Logie Baird lived and worked here—indeed, this is where he first demonstrated a fully working TV prototype to members of the scientific community. So you get a double whammy of history for your money.

22 Frith St., W1. ☎ 020/7437-4520. www.baritaliasoho.co.uk. No reservations. Panini/pizzas about £3.50–£9 (\$6.70–\$17). Mon–Sat 24 hr.; Sun 7am–4am. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Leicester Sq.

## TRAFALGAR SQUARE

### MODERATE

**Texas Embassy Cantina** AMERICAN This is another loud but proud (read: heavily themed) joint with a cheerful vibe that appeals to family groups—parents can survey the mayhem over the rims of some of the best margaritas in London, while kids get crayons to entertain them while they wait for taco dinners, hot dogs, or more from a pleasingly varied children's menu. For dessert (£2/\$3.80) there's ice cream, with or without apple pie. The adult dessert menu, featuring the likes of *sopaipillas* (Mexican pastries made with cinnamon and honey), chocolate peanut-butter-cup pie, and Key lime pie, is far more interesting. The waitstaff is friendly, if not always up to the mark when it comes to speaking English—you might find yourself explaining something more than once.

1 Cockspur St., SW1. ☎ 020/7925-0077. www.texasembassy.com. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £8–£19 (\$15–\$36); kids' main courses £4.75 (\$9). Mon–Wed noon–11pm; Thurs–Sat noon–midnight; Sun noon–10:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Charing Cross.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Café in the Crypt** AFTERNOON TEA/LUNCH & SNACKS It's not the food that draws people to this award-winning cafe, but the atmosphere—as the name suggests, you're in the crypt of a church, complete with centuries-old stone pillars and brick vaulted ceilings. It's all very Gothic, perhaps even spooky in feel, yet relaxing—you'd never guess you are seconds away from the bustle of Trafalgar Square. Any potential traffic sounds are soothed away by classical music. Full meals, snacks, and afternoon teas are available from a self-service counter, with most dishes prepared daily on-site. Note that as well as a brass rubbing center on-site (p. 185), the crypt houses a gallery hosting changing exhibitions of painting and photography. Call ahead, since at press time the church had entered a huge building project that may see temporary closures in 2006. **Insider tip:** If you have a child in a stroller, you'll find it easier to

get into the cafe from inside the church (though there's still no lift) than down the narrow stairs leading directly into the cafe from the street.

St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Sq., WC2. ☎ 020/7766-1100. [www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org](http://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org). Highchairs. Main courses £6–£9 (\$11–\$17). Mon–Wed 10am–8pm; Thurs–Sat 10am–11pm; Sun noon–8pm. No credit cards. Tube: Charing Cross.

## ST. JAMES'S & MAYFAIR EXPENSIVE

**The Fountain** restaurant at upper-crust department store Fortnum & Mason is famed for its ice-cream sundaes (p. 221).

### Park Life

As well as providing the city's best picnicking spots, London's parks are graced with wonderful and family-friendly restaurants and cafes, all of them with terraces that take advantage of fine weather. One of the best is **Inn the Park** (☎ 020/7451-9999; [www.innthePark.co.uk](http://www.innthePark.co.uk)), which opened in St. James's Park (p. 204) in 2004. Set in a striking grass-roofed building and affording views of Duck Island and the surrounding palaces from its decked veranda, its posh restaurant area offers both upscale cafe fare, including children's lunch sets, and seasonal British cuisine. Come for bacon sandwiches, afternoon tea, a warming glass of some of the best hot chocolate in town, or a family winter feast of whole roast organic goose with caramelized Gloucester apples (both lunch and dinner are served). Note that they sell hampers in the summer, for picnics in the park.

In west London, the newly renovated and expanded cafe in the pavilion in the center of **Queen's Park** (☎ 020/8960-6946; p. 204) is a real haven for local families, with a kids' menu of simple dishes such as rarebit for £3 (\$5.70); treats such as Portuguese custard tarts and mugs of hot chocolate with whipped cream, marshmallows, and sprinkles; and plenty of space for them to run around. For moms and dads, the breakfast menu runs from homemade muesli with yogurt and honey to full English, and there are daily specials for lunch. Come during the week to take full advantage of the light and airy space, although at lunchtimes it still gets chaotic (and muddy if it's raining).

South of the river, **Cicero's on the Common** in Clapham (2 Rookery Rd., SW4; ☎ 020/7498-0770) is a friendly, slightly hippyish spot for veggie food. Children and animals are welcome. You can sit inside amidst lanterns, or outside in the courtyard, to enjoy the wholesome breakfasts, cakes, salads, and lunch specials. A little further south, **Brixton Beach Cafe** (☎ 020/7274-6276) at Brockwell Lido (p. 214), which derives its name from the fact that this Art Deco outdoor pool is known locally as Brixton's Beach, is a child-friendly place to cool down over snacks and drinks.

Lastly, in north London, on Hampstead Heath, the charming **Brew House** in an old stable block adjoining historic Kenwood House (p. 142) is a gorgeous spot for breakfasts, lunches, cakes, and afternoon teas, especially when the sun lights up its huge terraced garden.

**MODERATE**

**Veeraswamy** INDIAN Britain's oldest Indian restaurant, established in 1926 and graced, over the years, by Charlie Chaplin, Marlon Brando, and Indira Gandhi, was revamped in the 1990s and lost some of its shabby colonial-style charm. That said, the vibrant purple walls and gold-leaf decoration make it a welcoming spot. It's still a great place for a family meal, particularly on Sunday, when there's a good-value, three-course lunch of Indian family favorites for £16 (\$30). For kids whose taste buds don't yet welcome such treats, there's an accompanying under-12s three-course menu of nonspicy dishes such as fish fingers, burgers, and ice cream. The pre-theater menu (to 6:30pm Mon–Sat) is also worth checking out. Highlights of the North and Western Indian menu are Malabar lobster curry with fresh turmeric and unripe mango, tandoori baby squid filled with cod and, for dessert, Gujarat *shrikand* (saffron-flavored strained yogurt with berries). It's run by the same folks who run Masala Zone (p. 121); they also own a couple of other award-winning (but more adult) Indian restaurants.

Mezzanine Floor, Victory House, 99 Regent St. (entrance on Swallow St.,) W1. ☎ 020/7734-1401. Kids' menu (Sun), highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £14–£23 (\$27–\$44); kids' 3-course menu (Sun) £8 (\$15). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 5:30–11pm; Sat 12:30–3pm and 5:30–11pm; Sun 12:30–3pm and 5:30–10:30pm. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

**INEXPENSIVE**

**Sofra** *Value* TURKISH This Middle Eastern chain has downsized over the last couple of years, after over-energetic expansion, but it still offers one of central London's best bargains in the form of the exceptionally well-priced set lunches (to 6pm). For just £7.95 (\$15) you get two courses that might include a mixed *meze* plate for starters, and *köfte* (meatballs), salmon with bulgur risotto, sea bass, or moussaka for the main. You'll probably spend a bit more once you see the extensive desserts menu, which features baklava, fruit crumble, brownies, and such oddities as tahini ice cream. This branch is in a delightful, villagey part of Mayfair known as Shepherds Market; there are four more, equally pleasant spots situated in Marylebone, St John's Wood, Covent Garden, and Clerkenwell, plus the very central sibling **Özer** (Langham Place, W1), offering a kids' menu with the likes of *köfte* or chicken and chips for a fiver (\$9.50).

18 Shepherd St., W1. ☎ 020/7493-3320. Highchairs. Main courses £7.45–\$16 (\$14–\$30). Daily noon–midnight. AE, MC, V. Tube: Green Park.

**3 West London****KENSINGTON & SOUTH KENSINGTON**

The “Big Three” **museums**—the Victoria & Albert, Natural History Museum, and Science Museum—contain some of the most family-friendly cafes and restaurants in this area. You can also get a great afternoon tea in the gorgeously atmospheric **Orangery** restaurant behind Kensington Palace, or snacks at **Café Boardwalk**, by the Diana Memorial Playground (p. 207). A picnic in Kensington Gardens is another option.

**MODERATE**

**Sticky Fingers** AMERICAN Co-owned by Bill Wyman, formerly of The Rolling Stones, Sticky Fingers excels in its assault on the ears and the eyes, unless you happen to love creaky old rock tunes and garish memorabilia. Many teens do, and that's why you're more likely than not to end up here at some point. Luckily, the kitchen does a



## **Tips Moveable Feasts**

Some of the best places to shop for exciting picnic fare are department-store food halls. Two of the most famous are Harrods and Fortnum & Mason (p. 221). Good, non-messy ideas for outdoor eating are the great bread, cheeses, dips, chunky Spanish-style omelets, cakes, and bottles of concentrate (elderflower is lovely for summer). A cooler box is essential; you may already have one for car journeys, but if you don't want to invest in one, most supermarkets now sell cooler bags that will see you through a picnic or two. Many hotels will also provide hampers for you with a little advance notice.

If you're heading to Hyde Park, try **Selfridges'** wonderful food hall (p. 222) or, 2 minutes' walk away, the splendid **Truc Vert** (42 N. Audley St., W1; ☎ 020/7491-9988), a deli and brasserie selling top-notch charcuterie and farmhouse cheeses, as well as superior picnic fare—sandwiches on artisanal bread, a daily quiche, and great chocolate-orange brownies. On the other side of Kensington Gardens, **Clarke's** (124 Kensington Church St., W8; ☎ 020/7221-9225; [www.sallyclarke.com](http://www.sallyclarke.com)) is famous for its fresh baked breads, and also sells amazing pastries, tarts, cakes, pizza, and focaccia, plus jams, jellies, pickles, and chutneys.

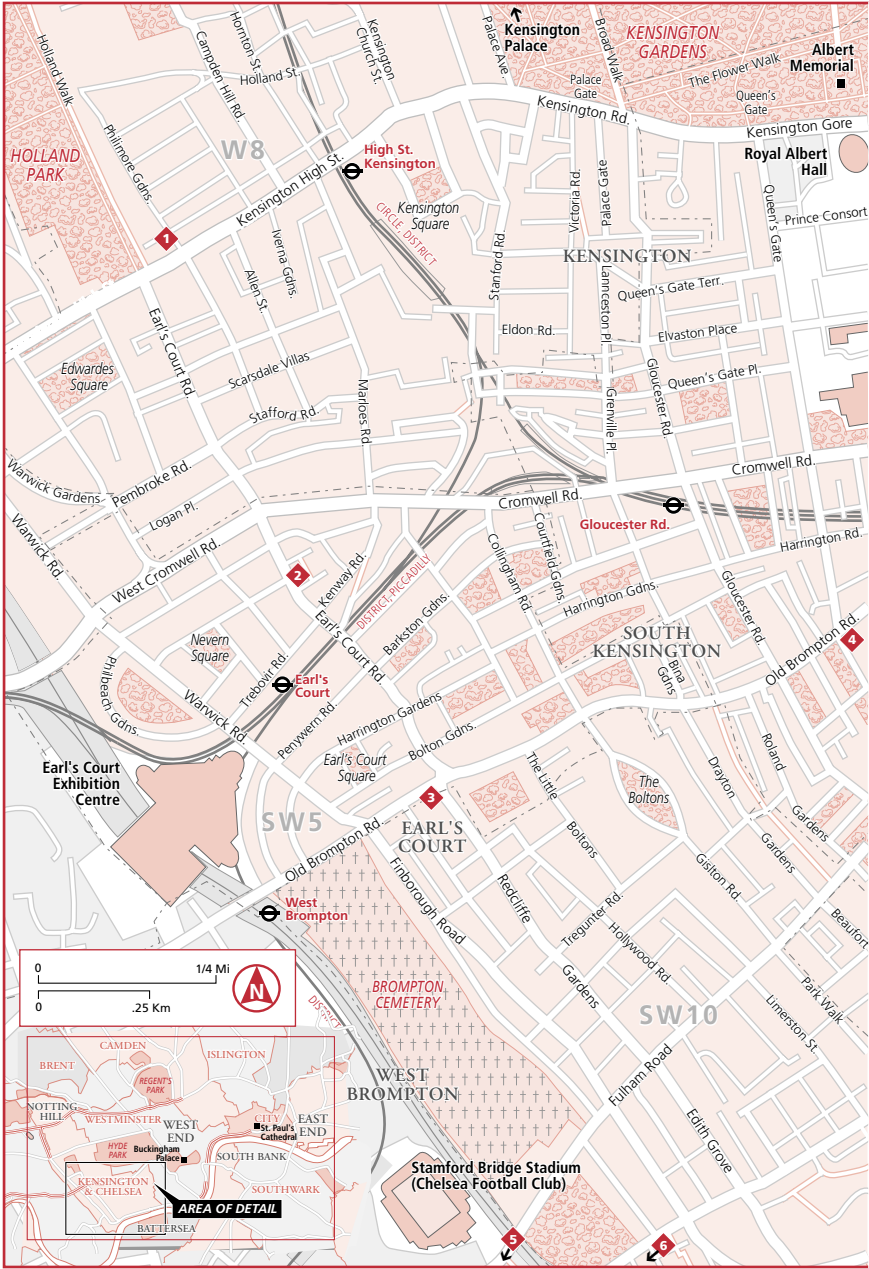
Farther east and very handy for Regent's Park, **Villandry** (170 Great Portland St., W1; ☎ 020/7631-3131; [www.villandry.com](http://www.villandry.com)) is another gourmet food store with a restaurant and bar tacked onto it. Most of the ready-prepared items at the takeaway counter come directly from its own kitchen, while everything in the bakery is produced with organic flour, from the walnut bread, cheese straws, and buttery croissants to the Mexican wedding cookies and to-die-for orange-scented cheesecake. This is food worth getting fat for. If you're in too much of a hurry to browse, call ahead for a seasonal hamper.

Less obvious places to picnic in the capital are Thames Barrier Park to the east of the City (p. 155), and Postman's Park close to St. Paul's Cathedral and the Museum of London (p. 168). For the latter, stop off at **Comptoir Gascon** close to Smithfield market (63 Charterhouse St., EC1; ☎ 020/7608-0851), which sells unbelievable French pâtés, cold meats, cheeses, pastries, breads, cakes, jams, honeys, and more. Don't miss the chocolate-covered walnuts. Alternatively, get veggie takeout from **The Place Below** (p. 132).

very creditable job of turning out the obligatory fajitas, steaks, ribs, fries, and onion rings, plus a somewhat expensive kids' menu featuring pasta dishes, burgers, and shakes. During weekend lunch, a face painter and a magician keep kids entertained. Avoid the place during the evening, though, when the cocktail crowd takes over.

1a Philimore Gardens. ☎ 020/7938-5338. [www.stickyfingers.co.uk](http://www.stickyfingers.co.uk). Kids' menu, highchairs. Main courses £7.25–£20 (\$14–\$38); kids' menu £7.50 (\$14) Mon–Sat 11am–11:30pm; Sun 11am–11pm. AE, MC, DC, V. Tube: High St. Kensington.

# Where to Dine from Knightsbridge to Earl's Court





## KNIGHTSBRIDGE, BROMPTON & BELGRAVIA

### EXPENSIVE

**Boxwood Café** ★★ MODERN BRITISH When is a café not a café?—when it's the Boxwood Café at the super-plush Berkeley hotel in Belgravia (p. 75), with its handmade silver- and gold-leaf wallpaper, and its stone floor with mother of pearl ground into it. Although overseeing chef Gordon Ramsay—he of the famously fiery temper—supposedly banned his own four kids from his eponymous restaurant at Claridge's because he didn't want them to grow up as food snobs, here children are welcomed with open arms. It seems a bit inconsistent, but who are we to argue? On arrival, each kid gets a Scooby Doo pack of crayons and coloring paper. The changing kids' menu may not sound that exciting—roast breast of farm chicken and chips or pasta, tomato sauce, and grated Gruyère cheese, for example—but, as with the standard dishes, the emphasis is on the best of seasonal British produce, prepared simply and without fanfare. Adult highlights have included a starter of fried oysters with fennel and lemon, and for the main course macaroni and cheese with roasted porcini mushrooms. Roast loin of suckling pig with cocotte potatoes and grain mustard sauce are backed up by equally comforting side dishes such as fried onion rings and creamed spinach. Don't deny yourselves the Valhrona hot chocolate fondue with marshmallows, banana, and biscotti for dessert.

The Berkeley, Wilton Place, SW1. ☎ 020/7235-1010. www.gordonramsay.com. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations required. Main courses £14–£28 (\$27–\$53); kids' menu £7.50 (\$14). Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6–11pm; Sat and Sun noon–4pm and 6–11pm; Sun noon. AE, MC, V. Tube: Hyde Park Corner.

### MODERATE

**Frankie's Italian Bar & Grill** ★ *Finds* ITALIAN This upmarket Italian place, opened in 2004, resulted from a collaboration between championship jockey Frankie Dettori (who already had his own supermarket pizza line) and “bad boy” chef Marco Pierre White. The look is glitzy—outsize glitter balls, a leather-look ceiling, and mirrored walls—but the emphasis is on casual, Italian-style family dining, especially during weekend lunches, when kids take over the place, and a magician does table rounds. Kids also get their own menu, featuring fishcakes, burgers, and spaghetti bolognese. However, the crisp-based pizzas are the real draw here—the basil, cherry tomato, and fresh mozzarella demonstrate how simple things can work best when top-rate ingredients are used. They're on the pricey side, but kids can share one, supplemented by deep-fried courgette batons. There are also a handful of perfectly decent pasta dishes and grills, as well as fab desserts, among them an unforgettable pavlova (meringue with marshmallow-y inside).

3 Yeoman's Row. ☎ 020/7590-9999. Kids' menu (weekends), highchairs. Reservations recommended. Mains £10–£15 (\$10–\$29); kids' menu (weekends only) £6.50/\$13. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm; Sat and Sun 1–4pm and 6–11pm. AE, MC, V. Tube: Knightsbridge.

### CHELSEA

### EXPENSIVE

**Aquasia** restaurant in the Conrad London hotel (p. 78) is popular among local families for its Asian/Italian buffet brunches in a waterside setting.

**Bluebird Restaurant** BREAKFAST/MODERN EUROPEAN This enormous, stylish, and highly convivial space attracts young Chelsea families in droves, particularly on weekends, when leisurely brunches (noon–4pm) include a strong kids' menu

that might be a smaller serving of the roast of the day, tomato macaroni, or fish and chips. The best thing about the brunches is the sheer wealth of choices you have—you can refuel relatively cheaply on items from the bakery section, including American pancakes with maple syrup and vanilla ice cream, or on traditional brunch dishes such as eggs Benedict (available in both starter and main-course sizes, so it's another option for the kids). Or go whole hog on a superior roast of the day (on my last visit, it was seared Loch Duart salmon with caper butter) or on a decadent seafood plateau from the crustacean bar. It's the same for drinks—chocolate and hazelnut milkshakes and mixed-berry smoothies vie for your attention with classic cocktails and jugs of sangria. The restaurant is part of a “gastrodome” with a good ground-floor cafe serving breakfasts, lighter meals, and afternoon teas; a large delicatessen; a cookware store; and a flower market. Though bird motifs punctuate the decor, the Bluebird is actually named for a brand of sports car that broke the world land speed record in the 1920s—this building, once Europe's biggest motor garage, is thought to have been where the model was assembled.

350 King's Rd., SW3. © 020/7559-1000. [www.conran.com](http://www.conran.com). Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £9.50–£30 (\$18–\$56); kids' menu £6.25 (\$12). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 12:30–3pm and 6–11:30pm; Sat noon–3:30pm and 6–11pm; Sun noon–3:30pm and 6–10pm. Tube: Sloane Sq.

## MODERATE

**Big Easy** AMERICAN This barbecue-and-crab shack prides itself on its down-home, American cooking, which means lots of steak and seafood served in trencher-like portions. If it works for princes William and Harry, or for Sheryl Crow, it'll probably work for you—not least because children are made really welcome. To start with, they get crayons, coloring sheets, and paper, with the resulting artwork entered into a competition that's sometimes displayed in the gallery section. Then there's the Urchins' menu of burgers, hot dogs, ribs, and fish fingers, accompanied by fries and a soft drink; alternative beverages are fresh juices, ice cream shakes, sodas, and kiddie cocktails. It's worth considering the Grand Appetizer Platter, large enough for four or even six people to share—a sociable way to start a meal. Note that the good-value two-course “Lunch on the Run” takes place till 5pm during the week.

322–4 King's Rd., SW3. © 020/7352-4071. [www.bigeasy.uk.com](http://www.bigeasy.uk.com). Kids' menu, highchairs, booster seats. Main courses £9.40–£20 (\$5–\$11); kids' menu £4.95 (\$9.40). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs noon–11:30pm; Fri noon–midnight; Sat 11am–midnight; Sun 11am–11pm. Tube: Sloane Sq.

**La Famiglia** ★★ ITALIAN Run by a father-and-daughter team, this wonderfully unpretentious and welcoming Tuscan restaurant has remained down-to-earth despite attracting a higher-than-average quotient of celebs. On Sunday you can almost believe you're in Italy, the family ambience is that strong—indeed, the cheerful, blue-painted exterior and quaint, partly tiled dining room with its black-and-white photographs and family portrait make you feel like you've stepped into someone's home while vacationing in Tuscany. The seasonal dishes, based on recipes handed down through the generations, are as far from standard trattoria fodder as you can imagine: In spring or summer (when you can sit out in the large garden), you might try Florentine-style tripe with tomatoes, onion, and Parmesan; salami cooked with lentils; or fresh home-made pasta with turnip tops. There's no kids' menu, but many of the dishes, especially the pasta, can be served as half-portions. Note that there's a newer Clapham offshoot, **Grano**, which serves favorites from the parent restaurant, but also offers great pizzas, plus a “small people's” menu.

7 Langton St., SW10. ☎ 020/7351-0761. www.lafamiglia.co.uk. Highchairs. Reservations recommended evenings and Sun. Main courses £11–£21 (\$6–\$40). Daily noon–2:45pm and 7–11:45pm. Tube: Fulham Broadway.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Buona Sera at the Jam** ★★ ★ *Finds* ITALIAN The novelty value of this well-located and extremely friendly Italian restaurant lies in its diminutive size—that may sound like a nightmare for those with kids, but little ones just love climbing the bunk bed–style ladders up to the tables under the roof (which feel both more secluded and more roomy than those at ground level). Staff have to ascend and descend the ladders several times over the course of the meal, especially when laden with plates. Don't come at peak times, though, or you'll have a long wait for one of these “cabins in the sky,” which have the added attraction of your own control of your lighting and music volume. Kids can have any of the authentic pizzas, risottos, pastas, and fish or meat dishes for half-price, which makes it a rare good-value spot if you're shopping on King's Road. If the selections don't appeal to your kids, the charming, endlessly patient staff will cater to reasonable off-menu requests.

289a King's Rd., SW3. ☎ 020/7352-8827. Main courses £6.50–£12 (\$12–\$23). Highchairs. AE, MC, V. Tues–Fri noon–3pm and 6pm–midnight; Sat and Sun noon–midnight. Tube: Sloane Sq.

## WEST BROMPTON & EARL'S COURT

### MODERATE

**Lou Pescadou** ★ FRENCH/SEAFOOD Lou Pescadou is a rare bright star in the culinary desert of West Brompton, with a loyal local following that proves you're on to a good thing. Here you can relax over a ceramic jug of chilled white wine while the kids admire the nautical decor. The kids' own menu features fish, chicken, and vegetarian

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## What's in Store?

Department stores (see chapter 9) can be great, family-friendly places in which to grab a bite: Most have several cafes and restaurants catering to a range of pockets, as well as parent facilities and toy sections right nearby. An outstanding example is the **Top Floor at Peter Jones** *Finds* (Sloane Sq., SW1; ☎ 0845/345-1723; www.johnlewis.com), where breakfast, lunch, pastries, or afternoon tea come complete with panoramic views over the capital. The kids' menu features excellent home cooking such as fisherman's or shepherd's pie with French beans, all at pleasing prices (£2.50–£3.95/\$4.80–\$7.50). Young visitors can help themselves from a goodie box of paper and crayons; adults can enjoy anything from eggs Benedict to seared salmon with Thai red cabbage. On your way in or out, the nursery and toy departments are as good as you'd expect from this little sister of John Lewis, but note that although the store is open on Sunday, the restaurant is closed.

For an altogether more exotic experience, **Momo at Selfridges** (400 Oxford St, W1; ☎ 020/7318-3620; www.selfridges.com) is an offshoot of the hip Moroccan restaurant within the fashionable Oxford Street department store. Kids love the souk atmosphere of this tearoom and restaurant. The *meze*-style menu means you can order lots of smaller dishes for tasting, although staff are happy to provide special dishes such as breaded chicken with fries, or small bowls of couscous with meat. The futuristic Kids Zone (toys and clothing) is one floor up.

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dishes, accompanied by good fries and followed by ice cream. The French take their food very seriously, so you can expect top-notch fish soup with *aioli* (garlic mayo) or main courses such as scallops Provençal. In fact, it's so authentic, the highly attentive staff even answer the phone in French.

241 Old Brompton Rd., SW5. ☎ 020/7370-1057. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £8–£15 (\$15–\$29); kids' menu £5.50 (\$10). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 7pm–midnight; Sat and Sun noon–3pm and 6:30pm–midnight. Tube: Earl's Court.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Masala Zone** ★ *Finds* INDIAN This third branch of the casual, canteen-style Indian (the others are in Soho and Islington) opened in April 2005 and is a useful budget eatery in an area known for its inexpensive accommodations but poor restaurant options. Despite the keen prices, the food is totally authentic—much of it is the type of thing you might find at Indian street stalls. Don't miss the Bombay-style beach snacks or the brilliant *thali* plates, which combine lots of little dishes, dips, and accompaniments for an average of £8 (\$15) and are perfect for sharing. At lunch you can order salads and sandwiches, too. You can either eat in or take out.

147 Earl's Court Rd., SW5. ☎ 020/7373-0220. www.realindianfood.com. Highchairs. No reservations. Main course £6–£12 (\$11–\$23). MC, V. Tube: Earl's Court.

## HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

For the **Old Ship Inn** with its riverside terrace, see p. 198.

## EXPENSIVE

**The Blue Elephant** ★★ THAI This well-known Thai restaurant (part of a global chain with outposts in Paris, Beirut, Bangkok, and other cities) wows kids with its jungle interior of trees, ponds, and waterfalls studded with statues and baroque ornaments. Kids like the imaginative dishes and—most of all—its Sunday buffet brunches with displays of exotic fruit carved into spectacular shapes, free face-painting, and sugar-spinning demos. The buffets cost £22 (\$42) for adults, half that for kids, with no limit on the amount of times you can refill your plate. Last orders are taken at 3:30pm, but you're welcome to stay till 5pm. The standard menu, which includes such adventurous fare as Running Crocodile (stir-fried crocodile meat with chili, basil, and hearts of palm) and *mieng kahm* (betel leaves filled with dried shrimp, roasted peanuts, lime, and ginger) is handily coded so you can see at a glance how hot each dish is. There are plenty of non-spicy options for kids. Note that the Blue Elephant's Indian sibling, **La Porte des Indes** in Marylebone, hosts a similar Sunday brunch with kids' entertainment, plus live jazz, and cooking demonstrations, at the same price. Football fans might be interested in the special Saturday lunch menu for those coming to catch a game at nearby Chelsea FC stadium.

4–6 Fulham Broadway, SW6. ☎ 020/7385-6595. www.blueelephant.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses £10–£28 (\$19–\$53). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 7pm–midnight; Fri and Sat noon–2:30pm and 6:30pm–midnight; Sun noon–3:30pm and 7–10:30pm. Tube: Fulham Broadway.

**Chez Kristof** ★ FRENCH The younger sibling of a couple of fashionable and highly successful eastern European restaurants, Chez Kristof offers classy but comforting French classics with a twist, such as *aschoucroute* with honey-glazed ham hock. On my last visit, "Les Petits" kids' lunch menu offered upscale burgers and frites and spaghetti Bolognese, as well as interesting cocktails like apple and elderflower fizz. This menu is gradually being revised, however, to include healthier dishes made from

## The Sweetest Thing

If you're in town the first week of November, you're in luck—this is **Chocolate Week** ([www.chocolateweek.co.uk](http://www.chocolateweek.co.uk)), when chocoholics can enjoy a host of activities around the city, including chocolate afternoon teas, competitions, exhibitions, special window displays, a family chocolate carnival at Hampstead Theatre, and scores of tastings. In 2005 the event embraced the first World Chocolate Awards.

Alternatively, some of London's most interesting candies are the traditional Indian and Pakistani confections that can be sampled daily at the top of Tottenham Court Road, on Drummond Street, NW1. Try **Ambala Sweet Centre** (no. 112-4; ☎ 020/7387-3521) and **Gupta Sweet Centre** (no. 100, ☎ 020/7380-1590).

organic ingredients. It's best to bring the family for Saturday or Sunday lunch, when food is served till 4pm. If there's a group of you with older kids, you can book the private screening room downstairs, where a library of children's movies is available. (The restaurant has an affiliation with Disney around the corner, and movies are frequently open to the public in the screening room.) **Insider tip:** The adjoining deli with its long shared dining room, around which local mums congregate with their babies and kids, is open for more casual dining from 8am on weekdays, 8:30am weekends. Set lunches are available that should bring the cost down.

111 Hammersmith Grove, W6. ☎ 020/8741-1177. [www.chezkristof.co.uk](http://www.chezkristof.co.uk). Kids' menu (lunch), highchairs. Main courses £12–£17 (\$22–\$31); kids' menu £6 (\$11). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6–11:15pm; Sat noon–4pm and 6–11:15pm; Sun noon–4pm. Tube: Hammersmith.

**The River Café** ★★☆☆ ITALIAN Few people would disagree that this famous Thameside spot serves the best Italian food in London—millions of cookbook sales and the required advance booking (1 or 2 weeks) nearly 20 years after it opened are proof, should you need it. The converted 19th-century warehouse, designed by Sir Richard Rogers, husband of co-owner Ruth, offers a stunning view of the expansive lawn area and the river beyond it from the floor-to-ceiling windows. In summer you can sit outdoors on a lovely big terrace (try to get a shaded table under the trees). It all makes for a memorable family eating experience. The food lives up to the hype: Fresh market ingredients sourced from France and Italy, along with homegrown produce, are used to concoct the likes of smoked eel with fresh horseradish and crème fraîche (heavy, fermented cream). There's no kids' menu, but the amiable staff go out of their way to prepare something to please everyone, whether it be simple pasta with cheese or tomato sauce for toddlers, or an adaptation of one of the existing dishes for older kids.

Thames Wharf, Rainville Rd., W6. ☎ 020/7386-4200. [www.rivercafe.co.uk](http://www.rivercafe.co.uk). Highchairs. Reservations required. Main courses £26–£31 (\$49–\$59). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 12:30–3:30pm and 7–11pm; Fri and Sat 12:30–3:30pm and 7–11:20pm; Sun 12:30–3:30pm. Tube: Hammersmith.

## MODERATE

**The Blue Kangaroo** ★★☆☆ GLOBAL This unique venue is the only place I know of in London that combines full-on children's facilities—in this case, an entire basement area given over to soft play areas for three different age groups up to age 7—with a menu of high-quality, “proper” food that won't leave grownups feeling hard up. A

huge plasma screen in the ground-floor restaurant means you can keep an eye on your kids as they run riot downstairs (a 90-min. session costs £3–£4.50/\$5.70–\$8.60, depending on the child's age; those under 9 months go free). If you'd rather supervise them more closely, the basement has a cafe area and a counter selling good cakes and drinks. It's all very flexible, in that kids can eat upstairs with you and then wander off when they've had enough of your company, or you can eat downstairs while they play and you chat, browse the stash of newspapers and magazines, or—football fans are you listening?—watch Sky Sports. The kids' menu is a good value at around £5 (\$9.50) for the likes of scrambled eggs with cheese and toast, and penne with creamy chicken, plus a soft drink; you can also get vegetable sides for just £1 (\$1.90). More organic dishes were being added at our last visit. Adults get tons of choices; I can recommend the lovely butternut risotto (which a child might enjoy in a starter portion) and the wild mushroom tagliatelle. Every Sunday a traditional lunch roast is served with Yorkshire pudding, potatoes, and vegetables. Note that there are weekly activities (music classes, art parties, balloon modeling) plus special events such as Valentine's and Halloween discos and storytelling/book signings. Note, too, that the place is open for late breakfasts. The waitstaff are the essence of unflappable geniality.

555 King's Rd., SW6. ☎ 020/7371-7622. www.thebluekangaroo.co.uk. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main course £6.95–£16 (\$13–\$30); kids' menu £4.95 (\$9.40). AE, MC, V. Daily 9:30am–8:30pm. Tube: Fulham Broadway.

## BAYSWATER, PADDINGTON & MAIDA VALE

### MODERATE

#### The Prince Alfred & Formosa Dining Room ★★ *Finds* MODERN EUROPEAN

One of the most colorful pubs in London, the Prince Alfred occupies a hip modern space that's retained its wonderful Victorian features—etched glass, carved mahogany, and five separate “snugs” divided by wooden partitions. These snugs were created to segregate drinkers from different social strata in the 19th century—each has its own entrance from the street, as well as half-height doors into neighboring snugs through which the cleaners gained access. If you come for an early-evening meal (before 6pm) when the more minimalist restaurant area is closed and the pub as a whole isn't busy, staff should let you have a snug to yourself, which makes for a lovely, private venue for a family meal. The menu outside the main restaurant hours is compact but tasty and comforting fare—sausages and mash, mushroom risotto, sticky toffee pudding, that kind of thing. Make sure to order some of the gorgeous bread to nibble with your soft drinks or real ale, served with dipping bowls of rich olive oil and balsamic vinegar. In the restaurant, the calf's liver, lamb shank, and duck always go down well, and this is a great place for a Sunday roast, which you can walk off with a stroll along the canal banks of Little Venice just a couple of minutes away.

5a Formosa St., W9. ☎ 020/7286-3287. Highchairs. Reservations recommended (restaurant). Main courses £8.50–£18 (\$16–\$34). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Warwick Ave.

### INEXPENSIVE

**Fresco** *Finds* LEBANESE This little Middle Eastern diner is so good, you almost want to keep it a secret. There's nothing fancy about it—its charm lies in its breezy staff and fantastically fresh, cheap food, much of which is displayed in a cabinet upfront so you can see what you're getting. Kids are very welcome; there's no separate menu for them, but this is exactly the sort of cuisine that is suited to family eating, especially if some of you are into veggies and some are carnivores. Among the choices

are wraps, hummus, baba ganoush, falafel, and gooey baklava: your best option by far is to order a *meze* plate, so that you can try a bit of everything. The massive choice of fresh juice combinations is worth stopping by for even if you're not hungry. There are less than a dozen tables, but if it's crowded, you can get takeout for a picnic in nearby Hyde Park.

25 Westbourne Grove, W2. ☎ 020/7221-2355. Highchairs. Main courses £6–£10 (\$11–\$19) Mon–Sat 9am–11:30pm; Sun 9am–10:30pm. MC, V. Tube: Bayswater.

**Gourmet Burger Kitchen** ★★ BURGERS London's burger scene took a massive stride forward when this chain took flight a couple of years back—the classic and exotic combinations (simple beef burgers, a Jamaican version with mango and ginger sauce; a Kiwiburger with beetroot, egg, pineapple, cheese, and relish; and a chorizo-and-sweet-potato number) were designed by New Zealand chef Peter Gordon, who had already made his mark on the London dining scene with the much-missed, now-closed Sugar Club. Despite this illustrious pedigree, and although they are made from the finest, freshest ingredients (including artisan-made sourdough buns and juicy Aberdeen Angus Scotch beef), prices here are refreshingly low—partly because diners order and pay at the bar, which keeps costs down. Kids enjoy watching the chefs at work in the clearly visible kitchens. There are junior incarnations of the chicken burger, plus great fries and heavenly shakes (the lime should not be missed). At press time there were seven other branches, in Chiswick, Fulham, Battersea, Putney, Richmond, West Hampstead, and Belsize Park.

50 Westbourne Grove, W2. ☎ 020/7243-4344. www.gbk.co.uk. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations not accepted. Main courses £5–£8 (\$9.50–\$18), kids' menu £3.95 (\$7.50). MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–11pm; Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 11am–11pm. Tube: Bayswater.

**Harlem Soul Food** ★★ AMERICAN This trendy place serving “soul food redefined New York style” gets a little too raucous for families at night, when a DJ takes to the decks from 9pm (it's owned by the famous record producer Arthur Baker). It's at its laid-back best during the day, when you can take your time over excellent and fairly priced breakfast and brunch dishes, including homemade granola; pancakes with blueberries, pecans, cinnamon, or other toppings; and a monster Harlem Downtown Brunch of sausage patties, bacon, Boston beans, tomatoes, home fries, and eggs any style. The lunch menu of burgers, steak sandwiches, salads, and more is supplemented by a good-value kids' menu comprising buttermilk fried chicken and Harlem fries, a classic burger, fish and chips, or macaroni and cheese, finished off with buttermilk pancakes with maple syrup. In 2005 a second branch opened in Brixton, SW9.

78 Westbourne Grove, W2. ☎ 020/7985-0900. www.harlemsoulfood.com. Kids' menu. Reservations recommended. Main courses £2.50–£14 (\$4–\$26); kids' menu £4.95 (\$9.40) AE, DC, V. Daily 10:30am–midnight. Tube: Notting Hill Gate.

## NOTTING HILL GATE & LADBROKE GROVE INEXPENSIVE

**Babes 'n' Burgers** *Overrated* BURGERS As the name implies, there's not a great deal that's subtle about this burger bar, which opened toward the end of 2004 in the hope of snaring trendy young local parents as well as visitors to Portobello Market. It's largely succeeded, if weekend queues are anything to go by, although not because of the unexceptional organic burgers and home-grown fries. What people really come for is the supervised play area at the back of the small dining room, where you can park your youngster, keeping an eye on him or her from CCTV monitors on the larger tabletops. Giant plasma screens elsewhere relay MTV or big soccer games at low volume, and on

## Where to Dine from Bayswater to Kensington



Clarke's **14**  
Babes 'n' Burgers **4**  
Bush Garden Café  
& Food Store **17**  
Café Boardwalk **15**  
Cockneys Pie & Mash **1**  
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Geales **13**  
Gourmet Burger Kitchen **8**  
Harlem Soul Food **7**  
Hudson Grill **10**  
Julie's Restaurant & Bar **12**  
Lazy Daisy Café **11**  
Lisboa Patisserie **2**

Oporto **3**  
Orangery **16**  
The Prince Alfred  
& Formosa Dining Room **6**  
S&M Café **5**  
Sticky Fingers **18**

Friday afternoons the toy area shows kids' movies. Back to the burgers, though—they come in beef, chicken, or tofu incarnations, available with extra bacon, cheese, or avocado; the regular size is small enough for kids, while hungrier adults will probably have to double up. Kids can also get their own burgers, as well as the like of haddock fingers with crudités or just plain beans on toast. Brunch dishes such as chicken Caesar salad are also featured on the main menu. Some of the staff lend new meaning to the word “unfocused,” which takes some doing in this laid-back area of town.

275 Portobello Rd., W11. ☎ 020/7727-4163. www.babesnburgers.com. Kids' menu, highchairs. Main courses £3.50–£8.50 (\$6.70–\$16), kids' menu £1–£4 (\$1.90–\$7.60). MC, V. Mon 9:30am–11:30am; Sun 11:30am–10:30pm. Tube: Ladbroke Grove.

**Lazy Daisy Café** ★ *Finds* BREAKFAST/LUNCH & SNACKS There's no sweeter place in London to bring your kids, especially if they're tiny, than this petite cafe hidden behind a sunny little courtyard—a perfect place for kids to play in fine weather. The decor inside is child-friendly, with a toy corner and a baby-changing facility that boasts free wipes and toddler-height sinks. The waitstaff is totally at ease with tots running (or crawling) around; they even welcomed my oldest into the kitchen, where he helped sweep the floor (way to go, boy!). Food ranges from sandwiches and excellent cakes via all-day breakfasts and brunch fare to lunch soups, quiches, jacket potatoes, salads, and pasta dishes; there are also kids' meals (such as fish fingers and beans), reduced-size portions, and organic baby food. Just don't come on weekends, when the entire parent brigade of Notting Hill shows up.

59a Portobello Rd., W11. ☎ 020/7221-8416. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations not taken. Lunch dishes £5 (\$9.50), kids' menu £1.95–£3.50 (\$3.70–\$6.70). Mon–Sat 9am–5pm; Sun noon–2:30pm. No credit cards. Tube: Notting Hill Gate.

**Lisboa Patisserie** PORTUGUESE It's almost obligatory, when shopping at Portobello Market (p. 231), to stop off at this authentic Portuguese patisserie for a *pastei de nata* (an Lisbon egg custard tart with a singed top). There's a wide range of other cakes if you feel like branching out, including *castanha de ovo* (a wobbly egg cake) and orange and coconut tarts. If you need something filling before progressing to the sweet stuff, sandwiches and rolls are good and cheap. Coffee is served in glasses, in the Iberian way. This is a bit of a Portuguese enclave, so if Lisboa gets too crowded (which it often does—it has far too many tables for the restricted space), **Oporto** at no. 62a is a similar option, with the advantage of a highchair for those with babies. Note that Lisboa also has a traditional deli at no. 54, selling fresh-baked bread, cheese, olives, and more, as well as other patisseries in Camden, Chelsea, and Lambeth.

57 Golborne Rd., W11. ☎ 020/8968-5242. Cakes and pastries from about £0.50 (\$0.95). No credit cards. Mon–Sat 8am–8pm; Sun 8am–7pm. Tube: Ladbroke Grove.

**S&M Café** ★★ TRADITIONAL BRITISH Don't be scared by the name—there's no kinkiness about this growing diner chain, which serves what it terms “the world's number one comfort food” (sausage, that is, along with mash) in a variety of guises, and even caters to vegetarians. Depending on your mood and the daily specials, you can choose from the likes of Lincolnshire lamb and mint, spicy Tunisian, and mushroom and tarragon sausage, with kids getting their own portions (or fish fingers or chicken nuggets if they prefer, with beans or peas), plus a glass of juice and a dish of chocolate or vanilla ice cream. The best part of the deal is that you don't have to stick to one type, but can combine up to three varieties of sausage on one plate. The mash



is a fluffy bowl of heaven, the gravy—you get a choice, including sweet tomato and basil—perfectly seasoned. Other mains are toad-in-the-hole (sausage baked in Yorkshire pudding), steak-and-kidney pie, fishcakes, and salads. It's unlikely you'll have room for one of the old-school desserts, but a steamed hot chocolate pudding is worth sharing. Don't miss the great soft drinks either, including Victorian lemonade and Seville orange jigger. The diner is also open for breakfast, from bacon sandwiches to full English. The cafe premises are pleasingly down-to-earth; the branch on Essex Road in Islington, N1, is worth visiting for its original 1920s interior. There is a further branch near Spitalfields Market, and more are surely to come.

268 Portobello Rd. ☎ 020/7359-5361. www.sandmcafe.com. Kids' menu, highchairs. Main courses £5.95–£7.95 (\$11–\$15); kids' menu £4.95 (\$9.40). DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 9am–11pm; Fri and Sat 9am–11:30pm; Sun 9am–10:30pm. Tube: Ladbroke Grove.

## HOLLAND PARK, SHEPHERD'S BUSH & FURTHER WEST EXPENSIVE

**Julie's Restaurant & Bar** ★★ MODERN BRITISH Lord knows parents need to treat themselves once in a while, and this is a good place for it. Perennially fashionable Julie's is the unlikely home of one of London's first restaurant nurseries, which is in operation on Sunday between 1 and 4pm. Kids ages 2 to 12 are served their meal (either organic roast chicken with roast potatoes and vegetables, fresh organic pasta with tomato sauce, or house sausage with homemade chips and vegetables, followed by sorbet or ice cream, plus a soft drink) with the parent's first course, before being whisked away to be entertained by the fully qualified staff. The adult set-price menu, available as two or three courses, offers the likes of fresh Dublin Bay prawns with chili mayo; roast beef; lamb, pork, or chicken with accompaniments; seared salmon and, to round it all off, chocolate Bailey's cream mousse or warm apricot rice pudding. At about £85 (\$162) per family of four, including drinks, it's a surprisingly good value given the quality of the food, the sumptuous surrounds (the romantic space is divided up into a number of cozy rooms, including a plush white conservatory with a removable roof for summer, a former forge with twinkling fairy lights, and the atmospheric Gothic Room with its tables tucked into alcoves), and the childcare element.

135 Portland Rd., W11. ☎ 020/7229-8331. www.juliesrestaurant.com. Kids' menu (Sun), highchairs. Sun set menu, 2 courses £22 (\$42), 3 courses £26 (\$53); kids' menu £10 (\$19) including nursery. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 12:30–2:45pm and 7:30–11:15pm; Sat 7:30–11:15pm, Sun 12:30–3pm and 7:30–10:15pm. Tube: Holland Park.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Bush Garden Café & Food Store** ★★ LUNCH & SNACKS This homely lunch bar and organic grocer offers a menu of simple kids' favorites such as beans, eggs or Marmite on toast, great cakes (some of them from trendy bakery Konditor & Cook), and a friendly staff. There's also a partly covered garden complete with a playhouse and toys, in which the kids can run riot while you enjoy homemade sandwiches, soups, quiches, and daily hot specials, plus fresh juices and smoothies. (If parenthood has left you feeling a little frazzled, ask for a shot of wheatgrass to perk you up.) Despite the low prices, you might find that portions outstrip your appetite. The garden is equipped with heaters to extend the fun into the cooler months. There's space for strollers by the baby-changing toilets.

59 Goldhawk Rd., W12. ☎ 020/8743-6372. Highchairs, kids' menu. Lunch dishes around £4 (\$7.60); kids' menu £1.50 (\$2.90). MC, V. Mon–Sat 8am–6pm. Tube: Goldhawk Rd.

## 4 South London

### SOUTH BANK TO ROTHERHITHE

#### MODERATE

**fish!** ★★ SEAFOOD This is the original restaurant and sole survivor of a chain that over-expanded and imploded pretty rapidly, and it's all the better for being a stand-alone restaurant again. Stunningly situated beneath the railway arches of Borough Market, it's a theatrical space in which diners sit around a central open kitchen to watch the chefs strut their stuff. (On a sunny day, though, it'd be a crime not to sit out on the lovely decked terrace.) Kids love the drama, the crayons and paper provided, and the very good children's menu. This basically consists of spaghetti tuna bolognese, or strips of fish or chicken breast with fries, a soft drink, and ice cream, but—unlike in many places—it's very flexible, so they can get you new potatoes or mash instead of fries, and small filets of swordfish, cod, or certain other fish in season. Adults can go for classics such as fish, chips, and mushy peas or for more exotic dishes such as Thai crab cakes. The best option, though, is to try one of the catches of the day, steamed or grilled; your waiter will advise you on which of the five sauces will do it the most justice. Strangely, prices seem to have dropped a tad since this place opened in 1999, which makes it a relative bargain. It's also the only restaurant I know of with a mom's menu, clarifying what kind of fish they can eat before and during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

Cathedral St., Borough Market, SE1. ☎ 020/7407-3803. [www.fishdiner.co.uk](http://www.fishdiner.co.uk). Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £9.95–£17 (\$19–\$32); kids' menu £6.50 (\$12). AE, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11pm. Tube: London Bridge.

**Loco Mensa** ITALIAN A relative newcomer situated behind the County Hall building (making it a handy address after a morning spent riding the BA London Eye and visiting the London Aquarium), Loco is part of a mini-chain that also embraces **Loco Locale** (neighborhood restaurants in Fulham and Blackheath) and **Loco Pronto** in Borough Market, selling Italian street food to go. It's not the greatest Italian food in the world, granted, but I can't fault any of the dishes I've ordered. On a recent visit, my waitress was an absolute delight, especially given the rowdiness of the kids in the party (whether she'd have been as calm had the place been fuller is a moot point). In any event, there's a sofa and coffee table corner where staff seem happy enough to let kids play between courses. The children's menu is rather limited (there's just spaghetti bolognese or pizza Margherita, soft drinks, and ice cream). You may prefer to order a selection of starters to share with your kids: the white bean, rosemary, and garlic purée with crostini, for instance; or the cherry tomato focaccia. Pizzas are available by the square from the pizza counter, too, or you can order starter portions of nearly half the pasta or risotto dishes. Desserts are excellent: I know three little boys who were made very happy by the chocolate and hazelnut tart.

3b Belvedere Rd., SE1. ☎ 020/7401-6734. [www.locorestaurants.com](http://www.locorestaurants.com). Kids' menu, highchairs. Main courses £7.95–£15 (\$15–\$29); kids' menu £5.95 (\$11). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–10:30pm; Sat and Sun 10am–10:30pm. Tube: Waterloo.

#### INEXPENSIVE

**The Refectory@Southwark Cathedral** ★ *Finds* AFTERNOON TEA/LUNCH & SNACKS This atmospheric choice opened as part of this small Gothic cathedral's millennium celebrations, and combines a bright modern dining space with original concrete vaulting. The arches are embellished with tiles based on Roman originals in

the churchyard wall, and changing artworks are displayed. It's a bit of a local secret that's worth knowing about for its well-priced, home-cooked snacks, lunch fare, and afternoon teas, including pastries, salads, and noodles (which can be served in kids' portions upon request). The soup and cakes are particularly great—don't miss the almost legendary lemon pancake torte. In fair weather there's a gorgeous cobbled courtyard, just steps from the river, and occasional summer barbecues. Alternatively, buy picnic supplies at nearby Borough Market, a gourmet food haven (p. 233), and

## Meals in Museums

Before setting out in search of a child-friendly eatery, it's always worth finding out what's on offer right under your nose—most of London's museums and galleries are top-notch when it comes to family facilities, right down to their restaurants and cafes, many of which I've mentioned or described in the relevant reviews in chapter 6, "Exploring London with Your Kids." You might pay a little more to eat on-site, but it's usually worth it for the sheer convenience.

One of my favorites is the **Tate Modern Café** (☎ 020/7401-5014; [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)) on level 2 of the brilliant contemporary art museum dramatically sited in a former power station on the South Bank (p. 177). This takes full advantage of its Thameside setting, offering diners great river views while they plough through breakfasts, lunches, afternoon tea, and light evening meals. Especially popular with kids (who get crayons to create their own mini-masterpieces in homage to the artworks they've seen) are the organic raspberry and white chocolate muffins, and the carrot and pineapple cake with orange sauce.

In a 2004 assessment of children's food at some of Britain's top tourist attractions, the British Museum (p. 158) scored highly, especially in the self-service **Gallery Café** with its kids' lunchboxes, and in the more posh **Great Court Restaurant** (☎ 020/7323-8990; [www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)) nestled beneath the stunning glass-and-steel roof of the Great Court and overlooking the famous 19th-century Reading Room. Serving morning coffee, hot and cold lunches, afternoon tea, and dinner (the Great Court remains open later than the museum itself), it offers kids smaller portions of any main course for half-price (about £4.50–£6/\$8.60–\$11), or a good penne pasta or pizza followed by chocolate mousse for £4.95 (\$9.40). **Insider tip:** Book an early lunch table on a weekday and you save 20% on your bill (you'll need to take along a printout of the website offer).

A more offbeat choice is the cafe at **Camden Arts Centre** (☎ 020/7472-5516; see p. 174), a fashionably minimalist but relaxing oasis after the pandemonium of the nearby O2 Centre (p. 255), with a garden and kids' portions of daily specials such as fishcakes, as well as comfort food faves such as toast with Marmite, brownies, almond *cantucci* (cookies), and organic chocolate bars. The art's not bad, either, although check what's on ahead of your visit, as some of the shows can be a little risqué.

eat your food in the lovely, lavender-scented cathedral gardens in the company of local office workers. The cathedral's worth a look, too, with its bronze of Shakespeare (whose brother Edmund was buried in an unknown grave here) and stained-glass window with scenes from some of his plays.

Montague Close, SE1. ☎ 020/7407-5740. [www.southwark.anglican.org/cathedral](http://www.southwark.anglican.org/cathedral). Highchairs. No reservations. Main courses about £5 (\$9.50). MC, V. Daily 10am–5pm. Tube: London Bridge.

## BATTERSEA & CLAPHAM

Though you're unlikely to stay in this area, there is a very child-friendly enclave around Northcote Road and Battersea Rise, with lots of family-oriented eateries—perfect after a day out in Battersea Park 10 minutes' walk away—including branches of **Giraffe** (p. 99) and **Gourmet Burger Kitchen** (p. 124).

## EXPENSIVE

**Le Bouchon Bordelais** ★★ *(Finds FRENCH)* A relatively long-standing neighborhood brasserie, Le Bouchon Bordelais has been given a shot in the arm by its new co-partner, super-chef Michel Roux (whose dad and uncle opened the legendary Le Gavroche in Soho). But its main appeal for parents is the free nursery during weekend lunches (by request on other days)—a rare commodity in a restaurant of this quality. After speeding through their own fairly conventional but high-quality and extremely good-value menu (fish fingers, chicken breast, or Cumberland sausage with peas, fries or mash, and salad *coquillettes* (shell-shaped pasta) with ham, plus a soft drink and an ice cream), little ones ages 1 to 9 can go make mischief in a supervised play area amply stocked with games, coloring books, and videos. Meanwhile, adults can tuck into well-executed French classics such as lobster soup, snails in garlic and parsley butter, foie gras, steak frites with sauce béarnaise, and—Atkins dieters look away—profiteroles with vanilla ice cream and chocolate sauce. In fine weather there are tables outdoors on a terrace. The adjoining bar is a great place for French breakfast and brunch dishes, including *viennoiseries* (breakfast rolls) and *croques* (grilled cheese on toast); for cheapish lunches such as omelets, fish cakes, steak baguettes, and Toulouse sausage with mash; or for lighter dinners. There's a branch, Le Bouchon Lyonnais, on nearby Queenstown Road; it doesn't have a nursery but is a fun place to watch Wimbledon French and English rugby and football matches.

5-9 Battersea Rise, SW11. ☎ 020/7738-0307. [www.lebouchon.co.uk](http://www.lebouchon.co.uk). Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £12–£25 (\$23–\$32); kids' menu £4.95 (\$9.40). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11pm; Sun 12:30–10:30pm. Train: Clapham Junction.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Boiled Egg & Soldiers** BREAKFAST/LUNCH & SNACKS This tempting spot is at its sunny best at breakfast or at brunch when the comforting favorites include—surprise!—boiled egg with toast soldiers, Marmite and toast, pancakes and muffins, and Fluffies (hot milk with chocolate foam), in which you can indulge at the outside tables on sunny mornings. In fact, you can get breakfast all day long, so there's no need to rush here. The decor is characterized by bold strokes of color, the staff are friendly and tolerant of kids, and parents can treat themselves to steak sandwiches, smoked salmon, champagne, and cocktails, should the nursery fare not appeal.

63 Northcote Rd., SW11. ☎ 020/7223-4894. Highchairs. Main courses £5–£10 (\$8–\$19). No credit cards. Mon–Sat 9am–6pm; Sun 10am–5pm. Train: Clapham Junction.

## WIMBLEDON, RICHMOND & KEW

For **The Victoria** in Richmond, see p. 89.

### MODERATE

**The Naked Turtle** *(Finds GLOBAL)* With its singing waitresses, cartoon sketches of turtles on its vibrant red walls, and spacious front deck and rear sun-trap garden, this friendly little place feels like an offbeat neighborhood hangout. The food could almost be an afterthought, but instead it continues the zany theme—expect bison steaks with black cherry sauce, zebra steak with chocolate sauce, and the renowned specialty, Roo Platter, comprising “bites” of kangaroo, crocodile, and ostrich with dipping sauces. (There’s also less outlandish fare such as seafood with pasta and filet steak for the faint-hearted.) The live jazz nights are great for teens, with occasional vocals by the same lovely waitresses, some of whom are trained classical singers. On weekends, when kids ages 12 and up get free lunches (and face painting), there are traditional roasts. Prices are on the high side, but remember that you’re not paying extra for the entertainment. (They do appreciate tips though, which supposedly go towards their singing lessons.)

505 Upper Richmond Rd. W., SW14. ☎ 020/8878-1995. www.naked-turtle.com. Highchairs. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main course £8–£15 (\$15–\$29), kids free Sat and Sun lunch. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight. Tube: Richmond.

### INEXPENSIVE

**The Original Maids of Honour** ★ AFTERNOON TEA/LUNCH & SNACKS

The word traditional takes on a whole new dimension when describing this cozy tea-room with its oak paneling and leaded-glass windows, situated across the street from the Royal Botanic Gardens (p. 188). Set up in the 18th century to sell the famous Maids of Honour cake (a sort of mincheesecake with puff pastry thought to have been named by Henry VIII when he saw Anne Boleyn and other maids of honor eating them at his royal palace at Richmond), it’s now run by the fifth generation of the same family. It’s one of those places where you can find something to suit your mood or appetite at any time of day: Breakfast pastries, baguettes and open-face sandwiches, full roast lunches, and—best of all—traditional afternoon teas featuring delightfully light scones with dollops of clotted cream, butter, and jam; cream cakes; and Maids of Honour. A bargain compared with the teas served at swanky London hotels, teas here can be enjoyed on the terrace in the summer.

288 Kew Rd., TW9. ☎ 020/8940-2752. www.newens.co.uk. Highchairs. Afternoon tea £6.25 (\$12). MC, V. Mon 9am–1pm; Tues–Sat 9:30am–6pm. Tube: Kew.

## 5 The City & Around

### THE CITY

City restaurants tend to cater to expense-accounters; this is the business district, after all. However, there are some colorful (and cheaper) options worth seeking out while you’re exploring the area. For **Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese** pub, see p. 195; for **Bevis Marks** in the country’s oldest synagogue, see p. 197.

### MODERATE

**The Ginger Garden** ★★ *(Finds INDIAN)* This unique space—close to the Tower of London—nestles up to the Café Spice Namaste, one of Britain’s finest Indian restaurants, of which it is a part. The restaurant itself is set in a 19th-century courthouse where warrants were once issued for Jack the Ripper; the imposing historic facade contrasts

with the bright decor of pinks, purples, and gold. It's a lovely spot for Bombay snacks, naan wraps, panini, and experimental dishes cooked on an outdoor tandoor, amidst a setting of Parsee murals, mosaics, hot colors (saffron, cinnamon, and kasbah blue), tropical plants, and decking. Child-friendly items include sizzler sticks of lamb, chicken *tikka*, and vegetables; also try the duck *tikka*, mango, and cheddar sandwiches. Ingredients are organic where possible. Note that, for obvious reasons, the garden is open in summer only. (There are heaters and canopies for cooler or wetter days.)

Magdalen Passage, E1. ☎ 020/7488-9242. www.cafespace.co.uk. Highchairs. Snacks about £5–£11 (\$9.50–\$21). AE, DC, MC. V. Mon–Fri noon–9pm. Tube: Tower Hill.

## INEXPENSIVE

**The Place Below** ★★ *Value* VEGETARIAN Heavy on atmosphere, The Place Below is set in the Norman crypt of St. Mary-le-Bow, one of Sir Christopher Wren's best churches and the one by which Cockneys are defined. (To make the cut, you need to have been born within earshot of its bells, which you can hear for 30 min. before major services or on special occasions such as the Lord Mayor's Parade; see p. 22). Kids love to watch the speedy juicing machine produce a glass of beautifully scented Valencia orange juice, while parents can enjoy what must be the cheapest cup of real coffee in the City, at just £0.80 (\$1.50) if purchased with breakfast. The latter consists of porridge with maple syrup and cream, homemade muesli with apples and honey, or croissants and pain au chocolate from Comptoir Gascon (p. 115). Sandwiches are a highlight: Try the grilled field mushroom with garlic butter and Camembert, or aubergine salad with dill pickle and tahini dressing. **Insider tip:** you get a full £2 (\$3.80) off the main hot dish, salad, or quiche of the day if you have an early or late lunch (11:30am–noon or 1:30–2:30pm), though they're cheap enough as they are. There's a courtyard with outdoor tables; or any dish can be sold as takeout—perhaps for a picnic in Postman's Park (p. 198).

Cheapside, EC2. ☎ 020/7329-0789. www.theplacebelow.co.uk. Main courses £5–£5.50 (\$9.50–\$11). MC, V. Open Mon–Fri 7am–3pm. Tube: St. Paul's.

## CLERKENWELL

For **The Zetter Restaurant & Rooms**, see p. 89.

## MODERATE

**Smiths of Smithfield** ★★ BREAKFAST/LUNCH & SNACKS With its industrial chic (steel, concrete, and sand-blasted brickwork), the warehouselike ground-floor cafe at this three-story restaurant, bar, and club doesn't look like the most promising spot for families, but its weekend brunches draw them in from afar to feast on the likes of eggs Benedict on English muffins. It's also a great spot for breakfast or lunch any day of the week, including big breakfasts served all day. (Smaller versions might be waffles with maple syrup, or fresh fruit salad with yogurt, muesli, and honey.). Alternatives include imaginative hot and cold sandwiches, salads, meat pies, and a daily soup, using organic ingredients where available. There's almost an embarrassment of choices, although I discourage you from ordering the porridge (on the other hand, don't miss the fresh-squeezed Asian juice with ginger, lime, lemon grass, pineapple, and mango). The atmosphere is laid-back, with leather armchairs and sofas, or seating at long, bench-style tables.

Sunday bunch is also available in the fairly expensive top-floor Restaurant with its views over the City. The second-floor Dining Room is a more relaxed spot, offering Modern European dishes at surprisingly fair prices (£11/\$20 for a main course).

67–77 Charterhouse St., EC1. ☎ 020/7251-7950. www.smithsofsmithfield.co.uk. Highchairs. Main courses £3.50–£8.50 (\$6.70–\$16). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 7am–11pm. Tube: Farringdon.

## SHOREDITCH MODERATE

**Café Kick** SPANISH/TAPAS Kids are welcome till 4pm at this “babyfoot” bar, where you can hire a foosball table and spend the afternoon enjoying a match or two, stopping to refuel on quality tapas, charcuterie and cheese platters, salads, or sandwiches, washed down with juices, smoothies, or chocolate milk (for moms and dads there’s a great range of beers and cocktails). If you’re feeling up for some teamwork, share a large Kick Platter of Spanish cheeses, cured meats, salad, and bread, supplemented by tapas dishes such as bruschetta or chorizo with roasted peppers.

43 Exmouth Market, EC1. ☎ 020/7837-8077. www.cafekick.co.uk. Main courses £4–£7 (\$7.60–\$1). MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–11:30pm. Tube: Farringdon.

## DOCKLANDS

This largely business district has a string of family-friendly restaurants along the river-side, some with attractive terraces lit up by fairy lights in the trees; they include branches of **Royal China** (p. 102) and **Zizzi** (p. 111).

### 6 North London

## CAMDEN TOWN & PRIMROSE HILL MODERATE

**The Engineer** ⚡ MODERN BRITISH One of London’s original “gastropubs” (old boozers converted into chic modern pub/restaurants), The Engineer remains one of its best. It offers kids a first-rate menu of free-range ham, battered fish, or free-range poached egg (served with choice of wonderful baked fries, sautéed spinach, or mash). Or your kids can order penne with tomato sauce, followed by organic Rocombe Farm ice cream. In return, The Engineer asks that young ones stay at the table, since this is quite a small, closely packed, and bustling environment. (The staff helps them keep their end of the deal by handing out crayons and coloring books.) Parents enjoy more complex dishes such as aromatic baby chicken with plum sauce and cucumber relish—Modern British with more than a hint of Pacific Rim. If that all sounds too fancy, come for a relaxed summer breakfast in the gorgeous garden with its orange trees and lilac bushes; the choices extend from a fresh fruit plate, homemade beans on toast, or waffles, to a full English breakfast. Make sure to ask for a highchair when you book, as they can be in short supply.

65 Gloucester Ave., NW1. ☎ 020/7722-0950. www.the-engineer.com. Kids’ menu, highchairs. Main courses £10–£16 (\$20–\$30); kids’ menu £5.95–£6.95 (\$3–\$4). MC, V. Mon–Sat 9am–11pm, Sun 9am–10:30pm. Tube: Camden Town.

**Lemonia** GREEK I’d hazard a guess that many people who pitch up at this taverna do so in the hope of seeing local celebs such as Kate Moss or Jude Law and their respective broods chowing down on plates of grilled *halloumi*, fish croquettes, or *kefiedakia* (that’s deep-fried minced chicken to you and me). Be that as it may, Lemonia is unpretentious in both setting and food, and this is a long-standing favorite among families, who come to share vast *meze* platters and juicy kabobs, or to sample more sophisticated dishes such as octopus salad, red mullet, or quail. Vegetarians won’t feel hard up here, with the stuffed peppers and other meat-free offerings. The staff



## Ice Time

It's no surprise that the best ice creams in town are to be had at an Italian joint—namely **Marine Ices** (8 Haverstock Hill, NW3; ☎ 020/7482-9003), a 1930s institution now run by the founder's grandsons. Its 20-plus flavors, smooth and creamy without being too rich or sickly sweet, are sold simply in wafers (savor them as you stroll to nearby Primrose Hill), or in fluted dishes embellished with sauces and other toppings. Good pizzas and pasta dishes are on offer, too.

A good second is **Gelateria Valerie** (9 Duke of York Sq., SW3; ☎ 020/7730-7978), a new ice-cream cafe opened in Chelsea by one of London's best cake houses, Patisserie Valerie (p. 233), with a huge choice of fantastic Italian-style *gelato* (try pistachio or Nutella) and a terrace well placed for people-watching on fashionable King's Road. Or try **The Fountain** restaurant in Fortnum & Mason (p. 221) on Piccadilly for awesome sundaes.

copers with it all admirably, though you'd be best advised to avoid weekends, when madness descends. (You'll probably have to wait for a table in spite of booking and despite its size.) Weekday lunchtimes, you can take advantage of excellent-value two- and three-course menus. Hope for a sunny day, when tables spill out of the conservatory onto the sidewalk, inducing a real holiday atmosphere.

89 Regent's Park Rd., NW1. ☎ 020/7586-7454. Reservations essential. Main courses £9–£14 (\$17–\$26). DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 6–11:30pm. Tube: Chalk Farm.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Manna** ★ VEGETARIAN This multi-award-winning vegetarian restaurant, one of the oldest in Europe, has an ardent following for its exciting, globally inspired dishes made from mainly organic produce. You might enjoy a banana leaf parcel containing smoked tofu, lotus root, and mizuna or a bowl of *pho* (spicy Vietnamese noodle soup). Follow one of these dishes with the baked rhubarb on hazelnut meringue, served with pomegranate seeds. The kitchen is more than happy to provide reduced-priced kids' portions on request, though some dishes are more suited to this than others—the daily pasta is a handy fallback. As all dishes are prepared fresh to order, there can be a bit of a wait when it's busy, although the friendly staff members don't take it badly if you ask them to speed things up a little because of the kids. (Staff don't like them wandering around after things start to get busy at about 7:30pm.) It's just a shame that Manna is not open for lunch other than on Sunday.

4 Erskine Rd., ☎ 020/7722-8028. www.manna-veg.com. Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Mains £9.25–£13. MC, V. Mon–Sat 6:30–11pm; Sun 12:30–3pm. Tube: Chalk Farm.

## ISLINGTON

### EXPENSIVE

**Metrogusto** ★★☆☆ ITALIAN "We are an Italian restaurant!" exclaimed the proprietor when I asked if he could provide kids' dishes, going on to explain that the lack of tablecloths in his attractive dining room with its bright modern artworks was calculated to avoid "dramas." Indeed, in spite of the brilliantly executed progressive Italian fare served here (think guinea fowl in hazelnut and saffron sauce with beetroot, or grilled venison with cinnamon sauce and chickpea fritters), this is a very child-friendly spot with a real neighborhood feel. Pasta and risotto dishes are more classic—fettuccine might come with sour cream and wild mushrooms, maltagliati with smoked ham,

sage, and Parmesan—but parents (or kids) are encouraged to discuss their requirements with the very obliging waiting staff. A simple plate of pasta with tomato, fresh basil, and mozzarella, for instance, will cost £7.50 (\$14); or the kitchen can prepare a rice-based dish. Don't let them overdo it, though, as the desserts are a marvel, and eminently suitable for kids—thin apple tart with Parmesan ice cream, for example.

13 Theberton St., N1. ☎ 020/7226-9400. www.metrogusto.co.uk. Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses £11–£17 (\$21–\$32). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 6:30–10:30pm; Fri and Sat noon–3pm and 6:30–11pm; Sun 12:30–3pm. Tube: Angel.

## MODERATE

**Draper's Arms** ★★ MEDITERRANEAN A beautiful, bright, bohemian-feeling gastropub on a quiet street in an affluent family area, Draper's attracts its fair share of minor local celebs, who like to spread out on the fashionably worn leather sofas or sit in the cute paved garden. (There's a smarter restaurant area upstairs, which does have the advantage of being nonsmoking.) The menu, which changes every month and includes lighter lunch dishes, is eclectic to say the least—burgers, steak sandwiches, and brunch dishes such as eggs royale are offered alongside the likes of chilled squash and fresh ginger soup. Kids' portions are provided—risotto, fishcakes, and toad-in-the-hole are favorites—and if you snare one of the front or rear sofa areas, little ones have lots of room to play on the low coffee tables. Sunday brunches are a highlight—try bubble and squeak (a dish made from leftover roast vegetables, often served with cold roast) with poached egg; or a full veggie breakfast of creamed mushrooms, halloumi cheese, fries, eggs, tomatoes, beans, and toast, which should set you all up for a romp on nearby Highbury Fields (p. 206).

44 Barnsbury St., N1. ☎ 020/7619-0348. www.thedrapersarms.co.uk. Highchairs. Reservations recommended (restaurant). Main courses £7.50–£15 (\$14–\$29). Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 7–10pm; Sun noon–3pm and 6:30–9:30pm. Train: Highbury and Islington.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Tiger Lil's** *Value* ASIAN This shrinking chain (it now only has this branch and one in Clapham) remains a good bet when the kids are restless and in need of diversion, which it provides in the form of flaming woks used by the chefs to stir-fry the ingredients, sauces, and garnishes chosen by the diners (staff are trained to guide kids through the selection). As well as special chopsticks, each child gets a badge; a large placemat with word games, puzzles, jokes, and more; and returnable pick-up sticks. They love having their own cocktail menu, too, with the likes of Red Dragon (strawberry, banana, and ice cream) and Ancient Temple (ginger ale, passion fruit, and grenadine). Under-5s eat free with an adult, and under-12s eat for little more than £5 (\$9.25), including a stir-fry bowl, a soft drink, and an ice cream. Adults can take advantage of a "Try it All" three-course deal for less than £12 (\$23).

270 Upper St., N1. ☎ 020/7226-1118. www.tigerlils.com. Kids' menu, highchairs. Main course £7.90 (\$15), kids' menu £5.60 (\$11). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 6pm–midnight; Fri noon–3pm and 6pm–midnight; Sat and Sun noon–midnight. Tube: Highbury and Islington.

**Yellow River Café** ★ *Value* ASIAN Star-chef Ken Hom has long been an advocate of encouraging kids to eat healthy food—a principle he puts into practice in this chain of family-friendly modern restaurants, which serve very reasonably priced southeast Asian and regional Chinese food. (This is the lone London branch.) Kids are usually delighted with their own cute bento boxes containing prawn crackers, a starter, a main course, and noodles or steamed rice. Much of the menu is tempting, including starters

of *pakor*as (potato fritters with cucumber and yogurt dip) or sesame prawn toast; mains of lemon-grass chicken with pieces of fresh mango; and desserts such as lotus crepe with ice cream. Drinks-wise, the kids can sample luscious smoothies and lassis, and parents can choose from tropical thirst-quenchers such as mango daiquiris.

## Only in London

A trip to Britain wouldn't be complete without at least one **fish and chip supper**, laced with salt and malt vinegar and accompanied by pickled onions, mushy peas, and/or pickled eggs (although I still contend that they're best enjoyed on the seafront, straight from the paper they were wrapped in; for Whitstable, see p. 268). Many of London's fish and chip shops have gone downhill of late. If in doubt, look for ones with London taxis parked outside, as the city's cabbies have an unerring instinct for good-quality, good-value haunts. One such spot is **Fish Central** (149–52 Central St., EC1; ☎ 020/7253-4970), with cheery staff, kids' portions, and a patio for fine weather. It's been trendified of late, and offers little extras you won't see in a run-of-the-mill "chippy" (such as homemade bread, fresh vegetables, fish soup, pasta dishes, and wonderful desserts), but you're best off sticking to the spanking-fresh traditional battered cod or haddock with lip-smacking chips and tasty mushy peas. Another option a little farther into the center is **North Sea Fish Restaurant** in Bloomsbury (p. 194).

One of the longest-standing and most famous chippies, **Geales** in Notting Hill Gate (2 Farmer St., W8; ☎ 020/7727-7528) has been serving first-rate cod, haddock, and plaice since before World War II, plus fishcakes, fish pie, salmon, skate, oysters, and even caviar. Kids are welcome (and get their own menu), but vegetarians should be warned that the fish (not the fries) is cooked the traditional way, in beef dripping. The place is great on a balmy summer evening, when they open the big front windows.

A little more of an acquired taste than fish and chips, the eels sold at London's few surviving traditional **pie and mash shops** are eaten cold and jellyed, or warm in a stew, with a splash of vinegar or parsley "liquor." Sounds hideous, doesn't it? If you can't bring yourself to try this most working-class of dishes, come to a shop anyway, for the mash, the beef and gravy pies, and—most of all—the surroundings. Dating from the 19th or early 20th century; the shops are atmospheric, family-fun places boasting their original tiled walls, wooden benches, and marble-topped tables. A meal of this kind will cost you little more than a fiver (\$9.50). One of the best (and most central) is **M Manze** on the South Bank (87 Tower Bridge Rd., SE1; ☎ 020/7407-2985; [www.manze.co.uk](http://www.manze.co.uk)), established in 1902 and also serving veggie pies. The non-related **Manze's** at 76 Walthamstow High St., E7 (☎ 020/8520-2855), is a good place to fill up after a visit to another East End institution—the greyhound racing at Walthamstow Stadium (p. 258). In west London, try **Cockneys Pie & Mash** at 314 Portobello Rd., W10 (☎ 020/8960-9409).

206 Upper St., N1. ☎ 020/7354-8833. www.yellowrivercafes.co.uk. Kids' menu, highchairs. Main courses £5.95–£9.50 (\$11–\$18), kids' bento box £5 (\$9.50). Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6–11pm; Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Highbury and Islington.

## HAMPSTEAD & GOLDERS GREEN

### MODERATE

**Blooms** ★★ KOSHER You don't get much more traditional than this kosher deli-restaurant with its family atmosphere and wonderful staff, some of whom have worked here for decades (perhaps they even remember the visits by Charlie Chaplin and Frank Sinatra). The food is everything you'd expect of a place this iconic, from the faultless hors d'oeuvres of chopped liver, egg, and onion; gefilte fish; or chicken soup with matzo; to mains such as *gedempte* (braised) meatballs. "Kiddies" are very well catered-to with a high-quality menu of turkey schnitzels, hot dogs, burgers, or pasta, all served with fries and a soft drink and followed by ice cream. If you're in a hurry to get to the nearby Heath, stop at the deli instead for salt beef sandwiches, potato salad, and a few treats from the pickle bar, as well as *lockschen* pudding (egg noodle pudding).

130 Golders Green Rd., NW11. ☎ 020/8455-1338. www.blooms-restaurant.co.uk. Kids' menu, highchairs. Main courses £7.50–£18 (\$14–\$33), kids' menu £6.95 (\$13). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs and Sun noon–10:30pm; Fri noon–3pm. Tube: Golders Green.

### INEXPENSIVE

**Café Mozart** ★ BREAKFAST/LUNCH & SNACKS There's no finer spot to warm up after a gusty morning on the Heath or a performance in Waterlow Park (p. 253) than this charming café with its cozy outdoor terrace warmed by heaters (a better bet than the rather cramped interior). Come for breakfast and brunch in a variety of styles (English, Parisienne, and vegetarian to name just three), be it pancakes, sandwiches, or eastern European dishes such as *schnitzel Holstein* (chicken escallops) or beef goulash. Or forget all of those in favor of the real standout here—handmade European cakes and cookies, including *mohn torte* (with poppy seeds) and vanilla *kipfël* (walnut cookies with jam). Moms and pops can accompany the treats with a range of luxurious coffees and teas, or with beers, wines, or champagne. For Junior there are babycinnos (frothy milk sprinkled with chocolate) and winter warmers such as hot cranberry juice, in addition to the more usual soft drinks.

17 Swains Lane, N6. ☎ 020/8348-1384. Highchairs. Cakes £1.10–£2.50 (\$2.10–\$4.80); main courses £2.95–£7.95 (\$5.60–\$15). MC, V. Mon–Fri 8am–10pm; Sat and Sun 9am–10pm. Tube: Archway.

**Ed's Easy Diner** ★★ BURGERS Not all branches of this popular retro American diner (based on Los Angeles's Apple Pan Diner) are child-friendly—the original one in Soho, in particular, is tiny and cramped, and staff seem to think that by studiously ignoring people with kids, they will drive them away (actually, they're not wrong). On the other hand, I couldn't be a bigger fan of this large branch in the O2 entertainment mall (p. 255)—it's perfectly located for refueling before or after visiting the Children's Gallery of International Art, expending energy at Gymboree (p. 216), or catching a movie in the multiplex cinema. It's corny on the surface, sure—there's a jukebox playing rock 'n' roll, lots of hokey signs adorning the walls, and a heavily themed decor, but the burgers really are top-notch, as are trimmings such as onion rings and shakes (the banana and peanut butter malted should be on anyone's "last meal" list). The under-12s Junior Bites menu of burgers, hot dogs, or chicken filets, all served with the excellent fries, will cost you about £5.50 (\$10) if you add a Mini Moo shake or a Baby

sundae on top. There are further branches in Piccadilly Circus, Covent Garden, Chelsea, and the Bluewater shopping mall (p. 238).

255 Finchley Rd., NW3. ☎ 020/7431-1958. [www.edseasydiner.co.uk](http://www.edseasydiner.co.uk). Kids' menu, highchairs. Main courses £4.45–£7.95 (\$8.50–\$15), kids' menu £3.95 (\$7.50). AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–11:30pm. Tube: Finchley Rd.

## BETHNAL GREEN & HACKNEY INEXPENSIVE

**Frizzante@CityFarm** ★★ ITALIAN A true curiosity, this is a genuine Italian cafe set slap bang in the middle of a farmyard, complete with clucking chickens and a garden with a kids' play area, as well as a handful of outdoor tables. The superbly simple homemade fare, cooked by chefs from three different regions of Italy, includes all-day weekend breakfasts with eggs from those same chickens, great pizzas and pasta dishes, and superb cakes and puddings. Kids' portions can be laid on as required, with pasta dishes costing about £2.50 (\$4.70). All of the fruit and vegetables used are organic. Try to coincide your visit with some of the many activities run at the farm, including animal feeding (daily at 4pm), parent's and kids' pottery classes (Wed), music and movement classes for under-4s (Thurs and Fri), and massages for adults (Thurs). And stock up on your way out with farm produce (those eggs again) or cakes; this makes for a handy picnic stop on the way to the National Museum of Childhood.

Hackney City Farm, 1A Goldsmith's Row, E2. ☎ 020/7739-2266. [www.hackneycityfarm.co.uk](http://www.hackneycityfarm.co.uk). Highchairs. Main courses £4–£7 (\$7.60–\$13). No credit cards. Tues–Fri 10:30am–4:30pm, Sat and Sun 10:30am–5:30pm. Tube: Cambridge Heath.

**Green Papaya** VIETNAMESE Of the numerous good Vietnamese restaurants and canteens in this area, Green Papaya stands out for its lovely garden, where you can eat in good weather (in summertime they string up fairy lanterns). It's almost impossible to choose from the large menu of modern but authentic Vietnamese dishes, but prices are so low you can afford to spring for a whole host of little starter dishes to share. (Try the green papaya or banana flower salads or the *banh xeo* pancakes filled with meat or vegetables.) From the mains, rice noodle soup with fishcake is a surefire winner with most kids. Note that all dishes are prepared to order, so come for an early dinner or expect to wait a bit. Though there aren't desserts, you can stop off at one of the nearby Vietnamese supermarkets if you need a sweet fix.

191 Mare St., E8. ☎ 020/8985-5486. [www.greenpapaya.co.uk](http://www.greenpapaya.co.uk). Highchairs. Main course £5–£8 (\$9.50–\$15). DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 5–11:30pm. Tube: Bethnal Green.