

Relax, go out for Sunday lunch

No cooking, no washing-up — just time with family and friends. **Rachel Walker** rounds up the top venues in the country for that British institution: a roast with all the trimmings



When I was growing up, my mum would happily fill our family's plates with delicious food during the week, but, from time to time, she'd claim Sunday as her day off and hand over the reins to my dad. His attempts to cook a roast were not conducive to family harmony, so we'd jump in the car and head to the Leicestershire village of Medbourne for lunch at the Nevill Arms. It always felt like an enormous treat — not just because of the roast, but because the pub was on a river bank. My brother, sister and I would wolf down our lunch, then position ourselves on the bridge, mechanically lobbing slice after slice of stale bread at mallards. As an adult, I've come to prioritise different things over a restaurant's duck-feeding potential. But one aspect that remains important is having the kind of relaxed atmosphere that encourages duck feeding if some happen to be loitering nearby. A good pub or restaurant has this at the front of their mind when it comes to Sunday service.

It's rare for Britain to show so much cohesion, given that most of our dishes are distinguished by regional variations, but nationwide, there's a real respect for the Sunday roast. It's generally agreed that Yorkshire puddings should be large and fluffy, potatoes roasted until crisp, all the trimmings present and the gravy plentiful. Local meats can distinguish a roast: Sutton Hoo chicken in Suffolk, Aylesbury duck in Buckinghamshire or venison north of the border. This is a meal about family or friends coming together, slowing the pace on this day of rest and eking out a long lunch well into the afternoon.

LONDON AND THE SOUTHEAST

WORK UP AN APPETITE
The Bull & Last, Highgate, London NW5

What better way to develop an appetite than a stroll round Hampstead Heath, before seeking sustenance at the Bull & Last. This old-school wood-panelled pub does a great lunch in relaxed surroundings — top marks for the gravy.

thebullandlast.co.uk

THE SUNDAY GAME

The Jugged Hare, Barbican, London EC2

Toying with vegetarianism? Give the Jugged Hare a wide berth. Not only because of the wood pigeon, venison or boar on the menu, but also on account of the impressive taxidermy collection on the walls. Enthusiastic carnivores will be in heaven — especially when they set eyes on the kitchen's eight-spit rotisserie or one of the signature game pies.

thejuggedhare.com

FLOWER MARKET

Brawn, Bethnal Green, London E2

Sunday in this light-filled brasserie guarantees a front-row view of the chaos of Columbia Road flower market. There's an elegant set menu (£28), and by the time you've finished dessert, the market will be emptying

and you can pick up a bargain bunch of hydrangeas on your way home.

brawn.co

NEIGHBOURHOOD PUB

The Morgan Arms, Bow, London E3

If you're fatigued by the fast pace and fuss of London dining, then try this friendly neighbourhood boozer for a solid Sunday roast. I ate pork belly with black pudding (always a welcome addition). Crisp roast potatoes, plenty of root vegetables and a fluffy Yorkshire pudding seal the deal.

morganarmsbow.com

SUBSTANTIAL SUNDAY ROAST

Hawksmoor, Knightsbridge, Covent Garden, Moorgate, Piccadilly, Spitalfields (all London) and Manchester

For bone marrow in your gravy and roast potatoes cooked in duck fat, head to Hawksmoor, where they offer just one option: beef. Not just any beef, though, but thick slices of longhorn rump cooked to a beautiful blush pink with a tasty char. Don't make dinner plans for the evening — you won't eat again until Monday.

thehawksmoor.com

TASTING MENU

The Sportsman, Seasalter, Whitstable, Kent

Tasting menus aren't an obvious route to go down for a Sunday

PHOTOGRAPHY: ELENA HEATHERWICK FOOD STYLIST: OLIVER ROWE PROP STYLIST: ALEX ORTIZ

lunch — they can induce a starched formality — but the Sportsman is so relaxed and the tasting menu so tempting, it's hard to resist. The seafront pub is a couple of miles along the Kent coast from Whitstable. The dishes are inspired by the produce on its doorstep — fresh fish, local lamb and hedgerow-inspired puds such as rosehip ice lolly or bramley apple soufflé. Follow lunch with a coastal walk to aid digestion.

thesportsmanseasalter.co.uk

MICHELIN-STARRED

The Hand and Flowers, Marlow, Buckinghamshire

This was the first pub to receive two Michelin stars. What the chef Tom Kerridge does is different to your standard pub grub — and that's reflected in the prices. But when you can sit down to crispy pig's head, rhubarb and pancetta, what's to complain about? The ingredients are cooked to perfection in imaginative dishes, making this a top choice for connoisseurs. If you can't get a table, try its sister restaurant, the Coach, which doesn't take bookings.

thehandandflowers.co.uk

NEIGHBOURHOOD DREAM

The Pot Kiln, Yattendon, Berkshire

I often think of the fallow deer with roasted bone marrow that I ate at the Pot Kiln: a huge portion of tender pink meat with a nicely charred outside. The sister to the famous Harwood Arms in Fulham, this is the kind of pub that you pray might set up at the end of your road. Great wine list, strong ale selection, killer bar food (the big deer dog is an 11in venison-and-boar hot dog) and a relaxed atmosphere. Plus staff will even bag up the leftovers for you.

potkiln.org

CHAMPIONING LOCALISM

The Pig, New Forest, Hampshire

The Pig and its sister establishments are famed for sourcing their ingredients from within a 25-mile radius. A long lunch in the orangery is a reminder of what a bounteous radius it is — duck egg and ceps, followed by wood pigeon and New Forest strawberries. The hotel runs foraging courses for guests to see



what can be harvested on the nearby coast, hedgerows and forest floor.

thepighotel.com/
hotel-in-the-new-forest

WEST AND SOUTHWEST PUB GARDEN

The Perch, Binsey, Oxfordshire

The beer garden here is the perfect place to sprawl out in the sunshine (looking over the Isis river). The best seats are on the restaurant terrace, under the wisteria-draped pergola, where diners can enjoy a Sunday roast with buttered potatoes, cauliflower cheese, Yorkshire puddings and vegetables. Book in advance if the forecast is good.

the-perch.co.uk

HOME FROM HOME

The Cowshed, Bristol

This is the roast I aspire to cook at home. Its fuss-free aesthetic makes it seem achievable, only the West Country sirloin is sourced from the butcher's next door, having been aged for 31 days, and each diner gets their own jug of gravy — creating more washing-up than a home cook would ever put up with. The thick slice of beef was pink and potatoes were piled high. Clever chefs —

beautiful ingredients and generous portions make happy diners.

cowshedrestaurants.com

FAMILY FRIENDLY

The Beckford Arms, Wiltshire

This pub has all bases covered — a hose for washing muddy dogs in the garden, hammocks, a pétanque piste and children's games. If the sun's out, bag a seat on the terrace and order a whole chicken to carve at the table. It's like home, only more relaxed.

beckfordarms.com

SEAFOOD SUNDAY

The St Tudy Inn, Cornwall

If a traditional Sunday lunch leaves you cold, let the seafood-focused menu at St Tudy inspire you. The chef, Emily Scott, favours simple but delicious dishes such as lemon sole with herb dressing or Doom Bar battered gurnard. If it's scallop season, the local fist-sized offerings are a must — they make supermarket scallops seem pitiful.

sttudyinn.com

NORTHWEST ART HOUSE

Camp & Furnace, Liverpool

There's a "morning after the night before" feel at Camp &

Furnace. The dockside warehouse winds down around 2am, but fires back up in time for lunch service at noon. The Sunday-roast experience is like being embraced by a big family — you sit at trestle tables that have been shoved together in lines and joints are carved in front of you. There are often projector displays or a live band. Children can play in one of the caravans that are parked up inside and fully stocked with games. Leave room for pudding — the giant sticky toffee pudding is sinfully good.

campandfurnace.com

MODERN CLASSIC

The Parlour, Chorlton, Manchester

For proof that Sunday lunch isn't restricted to countryside pubs, pop by the Parlour on a Sunday afternoon. It has an urban aesthetic, with stripped floorboards and salvaged furniture, and lies in Manchester's suburbs, so there's quite a local crowd. Choose from pork, beef or nut roast with veg and gravy and topped with a whopping Yorkshire pudding, a snip at £12.95. The roast starts at noon and keeps going until they run out, usually sometime near 4.30pm



after about 175 happy customers have passed through the doors.
theparlour.info

COMMUNITY-CONSCIOUS
The Eagle and Child,
Ramsbottom, Lancashire

From Morecambe crab to Bowland beef and a Pennine cheese slate, the proprietor, Glen Duckett, takes pride in local Lancashire produce, as well as being responsible for the working allotment in the pub garden. His Eat Pennines social enterprise launches 16- to 25-year-olds into the hospitality and horticulture industries. He also offers kiddie-sized roasts to ensure that Sunday lunch remains a family affair.
eagle-and-child.com

LOCAL PRODUCE
George and Dragon, Clifton,
Penrith, Cumbria

The traditional ales, roaring log fire, flagstone floor and pack of dogs happily relaxing in the bar is a vision of a happy Cumbrian pub. The owners, Charles and Juno Lowther, should know — their Cumbrian lineage can be traced back to the 13th century, and they take enormous pride in their heritage and all the things Penrith has to offer. The

Anyone for seconds? Seven hundred years of tradition at the Rose & Crown in Snettisham, Norfolk, above, and a relaxed atmosphere at the Camp & Furnace in Liverpool

George and Dragon cultivates most of its vegetables in the kitchen garden at nearby Askham Hall and sources its meat from a local farm in Maulds Meaburn. The Sunday menu includes roast beef or roast pork, served with all the traditional trimmings.
georgeanddragonclifton.co.uk

EAST, MIDLANDS AND NORTHEAST

TRAVEL BACK IN TIME
The Rose & Crown,
Snettisham, Norfolk

This 14th-century rose-covered inn has been looking after hungry and thirsty travellers for 700 years. The period fireplace, exposed beams and unchanged surroundings of the nearby Snettisham nature reserve could have existed in a number of eras. There's one solid roast option, usually beef, which is served alongside the standard à la carte menu — a timeless lunch.
roseandcrownsnettisham.co.uk

CRICKETERS' CHOICE
Larwood & Voce, West
Bridgford, Nottinghamshire

On Sundays, groups who have flocked here for the notorious breakfast give way to friends and families arriving for a slap-up lunch. The pub is

attached to Trent Bridge cricket ground, making it a favourite with both Nottinghamshire players and fans, who are no strangers to the “proper roast” — an impressive medley of beef, lamb and pork belly from the pub's own rare-breed pigs.
molefacepubcompany.co.uk

YORKSHIRE'S FINEST
The Star Inn, Harome,
North Yorkshire

The chef Andrew Pern's signature starter sets the tone at this 14th-century inn on the edge of the North Yorkshire moors: black pudding and foie gras with a scrumpy reduction. This is classic food with an indulgent feel. The Sunday menu is the normal à la carte with two options substituted for a delicious roast, best rounded off with a selection of cheeses from “God's own country”, served with stewed grape chutney.
thestaratharome.co.uk

WALES, SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

CLIFFTOP VIEW
Druidstone Hotel, St Brides Bay,
Pembrokeshire

The Druidstone hotel is perched on the clifftops above Druidston Haven beach, overlooking St Brides Bay. The informal, bohemian atmosphere divides opinion between those who find it enchanting and those who find it frustrating. I certainly fell into the first camp and was more than willing to overlook a little wear and tear for the magical view as well as dining-room tables overflowing with garden flowers and laden with delicious food.
druidstone.co.uk

BLOODY MARYS AND BEEF
Butchershop Bar & Grill,
Glasgow

This old-fashioned steakhouse has built its reputation on grass-fed, dry-aged Scotch beef, which is butchered on site and cooked hard and fast. Butchershop is in the heart of Glasgow's West End, near the university. It's a cosmopolitan joint where a bloody mary or New York sour suddenly seems the perfect accompaniment to a Sunday roast.
butchershopglasgow.com

BEAUTIFUL GARDENS
The Gardener's Cottage,
Edinburgh

If a heavy roast isn't to everyone's taste, then the Gardener's Cottage offers an à la carte alternative that showcases Scottish produce. A garden salad followed by roe deer with walnut pesto and elderflower and nettle jelly made a lovely change from the traditional Yorkshire pudding and gravy. What's more, the restaurant is located in an old gardener's cottage dating back to 1836 inside Royal Terrace Gardens. The atmosphere is relaxed, with three communal dining tables each accommodating 10 people.
thegardenerscottage.co

OLD-WORLD GLAMOUR
Boath House, Auldearn, Nairn

This place will set an elderly aunt's heart aflutter with its wood panelling, starched linen and crimson tartan. The menu matches the Georgian country-house grandeur — think roe deer and halibut with precise little puddings. There's a whiff of Michelin around the odd foam, but the two roast options added to the menu on Sundays are served with the full trimmings, and there's no foam in sight. After lunch, stroll round the sprawling landscaped gardens and embrace the romance of the ornamental lakes and parkland.
boath-house.com

CHAR-GRILLED
The Bar + Grill at James St
South, Belfast, Northern Ireland

The char-grilled cuts here are already crammed with flavour, but you can ramp things up further with their whopping condiment menu: béarnaise sauce, garlic butter, peppercorn sauce, blue cheese, horseradish cream, red-wine gravy. It's not all about steaks in this converted linen mill, though. The pork fillet with Clonakilty black pudding and baked beans is a delight, and it's definitely worth saving room for the signature dessert — baked Alaska.
belfastbargrill.co.uk

For 10 more of our top picks and for the recipes used in these pages, go to thesundaytimes.co.uk/food