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Tapas bars

Elisabeth Luard



1. Brindisa

A Spanish corner of Borough Market that is the benchmark by which all others must be judged. Dishes are updated classics: gambas pilpil features juicy tiger-prawns; spinach a la catalana is fresh leaves wilted under a hot pinenut-raisin dressing; croquetas de jamon are soft-centred and crisp-coated, just as they should be.

Borough Market, Stoney Street, London SE1 (020-7407 1036)

2. El Faro

It's in Docklands, but it feels like an ultra-modern Barcelona harbourside bar. Efficient Spanish staff serve city types with updated traditional tapas: sea-urchin with scrambled eggs, tuna carpaccio, pork-belly with apricots.

3 Turnberry Quay, Pepper Street, London E14 (020-7987 5511)

3. Salt Yard

Tapas include black pudding croquetas, air-cured wild boar ham, squid-ink rice, stuffed courgette-flowers, bean-salad with fennel-pollen. Sherries include Pedro Ximenes (raisiny and figgy), a dry oloroso and a palo cortado.

54 Goodge Street, London W1 (020-7637 0657)

4. Fino

Sister-restaurant to Barrafina, Sam and Eddie Hart's place. Tapas include gorgeously fresh sardines, scallops, prawns, razorshells; or go for the clams in garlic and sherry. Excellent wine-list, assured kitchen, terrific lavvies.

33 Charlotte Street, London W1 (020-7813 8010)

5. Eyre Brothers

The gastropub pioneers' new 100-seater in Shoreditch serves foie gras with truffles, iberico from the bone, boned quails in sweet-sour escabeche. The range of sherries is first rate.

70 Leonard Street, London EC2 (020-7613 5346)

6. Barioja

A tapas bar which draws Spaniards as well as Scots. Regular visits to Teruel in Aragon, owner Ignacio Campo's home town, ensure quality supplies. Among the tapas regulars are a tempting selection: gambas pilpil, arroz negro (rice with squid ink), fiery patatas bravas, and dishes with bacalao. Some of the best tapas outside Spain, say the regulars.

19 Jeffrey Street, Edinburgh (0131 557 3622)

7. Ultracomida

Buzzy, beautiful – my very own local. Aren't I lucky? Front-of-shop is deli-goods from Spain, France and Wales: cheeses, serrano and chorizo sliced to order. In the back a newly opened bar-restaurant serves frittered peppers stuffed with cheese, spicy albondigas, pan-tomaquet. Not open after 6pm.

31 Pier Street, Aberystwyth (01970 630686)

8. Pintxo People

Regulars swear that this café-bar and deli serves the best tapas in the south. Pintxos – bits on sticks or popped on toasted bread – are the northern version of Andalusian tapas. Offerings include txoritos (small chorizos) cooked in cider; and escalibada (roasted aubergines and peppers with cumin).

95 Western Road, Brighton (01273 732323)

9. La Plancha

Not only the "hippest bar-rendezvous in the city", the tapas menu is really what draws the crowd. Specials include lamb cutlets with apricots, pork loin with raisins and pinenuts, a vegetarian paella. Round it all off with a slice of almond torta de Santiago.

113 Alcester Road, Moseley Village, Birmingham (0121 449 5430)

10. El Rincon de Rafa

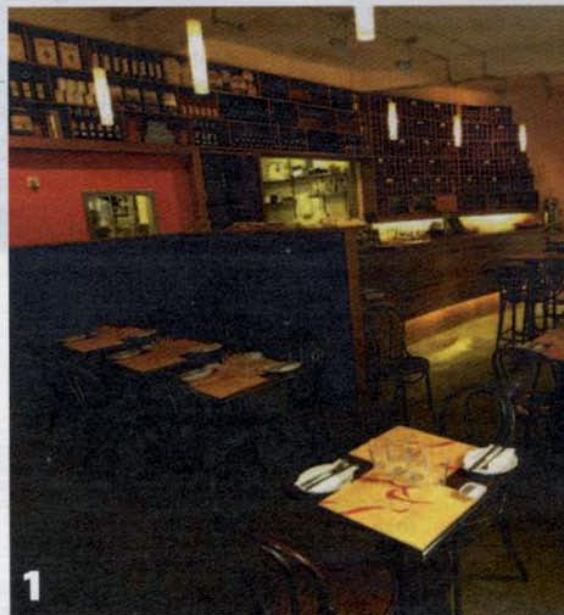
Noisy and fun. Authentic tapas, major on meat, albondigas highly recommended, as is a paella for sharing – perfect with a chilled Cruzcampo or a glass of Rioja.

244 Deansgate, Manchester (0161 839 8819)

Elisabeth Luard is the new Glenfiddich Cookery Writer of the Year. Her book 'The Food of Spain and Portugal' is published by Kyle Cathie, £14.99 →



5



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