

This is where I would spend my own money

HERE is the second half of the list of 50 restaurants where I would happily spend my own money — a meaningful definition of “Best”. With openings imminent of — to mention a few — Claude Bosi’s Hibiscus, Alan Yau’s Sake No Han, Rowley Leigh’s Le Café Anglais and Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, it is worth pointing out that lists of restaurants are never carved in stone.

From the finest buffalo mozzarella to fiery Sichuan hotpots and the freshest seafood — **Fay Maschler** names the final 25 of her top 50 restaurants

TRINITY

4 The Polygon, SW4 (020 7622 1199) £46. Chef Adam Byatt made his name at a Clapham restaurant called Thyme. Then, as in some portentous parable, he sought glory in the bright lights of the West End — and lost his way. Back in Clapham, he is cooking extremely well again. The love of small courses has gone but dedication to seasonal ingredients is heightened. Diversion and decoration are on the plate; surroundings uncompromisingly plain.

VEERASWAMY

Victory House 99-101 Regent Street, W1 (020 7734 1401) £50.

Camellia and Namita Panjabi have created some of the best Indian restaurants in London, namely Chutney Mary, Amaya, the Masala Zone chain and the renaissance of the historic Veeraswamy. A second go at styling the interior has better captured the acceptable face of Raj nostalgia but the cooking, carried out by experts from various regions, is wholly modern in its accomplishment.

THE WELLS

30 Well Walk, NW3 (020 7794 3785) £40. Is it nepotism or is a love of good food in the blood? My sister Beth Coventry

owns this charming Georgian pub between Hampstead village and the Heath. That is one reason that it is in my Top 50. Others are the carefully considered cooking, the staff, some of whom seem part of the family, the welcome to children and the pleasure of the leafy position a few doors down from where Constable lived.

WILD HONEY

12 St George Street, W1 (020 7758 9160) £48. Anthony Demetre and Will Smith opened Arbutus in Soho to great acclaim and various awards. The surprise expressed at the fact of skilled bourgeois French cooking partnered with fairly priced wines sold by glass and carafe seemed almost ingenuous. Colin Kelly is chef at their recently opened Wild Honey which — inheriting the oak-panelled décor of Drones Club — has added comfort and sexiness to the formula. The dependence on sous-vide cooking could, however, be usefully contained.

THE WOLSELEY

160 Piccadilly, W1 (020 7499 6996) £48. Clever operators Christopher Corbin and Jeremy King delighted customers at Le Caprice and The Ivy with menus that indulged any mood and appetite. Their beautiful Wolseley takes that empathetic flexibility to its logical conclusion, staying open all day and providing breakfast, dinner, lunch and tea; “all the human frame requires”. Only a certain number of

tables are bookable but habitués — of which I am one — know when there is less pressure.

YAUATCHA

15-17 Broadwick Street, W1 (020 7494 8888) £50.

Owner Alan Yau is a stickler for detail and the dim sum served in this basement palace of dumplings is probably the best in London. Dim sum, which you could translate as bundles of joy, is intended as interim nourishment, presumably the reason for the 90-minute time limit on a meal. Prices and the availability of main-course dishes make that something of an irritant. But I love Yauatcha nevertheless.

ZAFFERANO

15 Lowndes Street, SW1 (020 7235 5800) £56.

The site where Giorgio Locatelli won a Michelin star and where English chef Andy Needham has held onto it is, after expansion, more spacious and comfortable. Nothing jars between the surroundings and the cooking which is exemplary in that way which can happen when an enthusiast approaches an originally unfamiliar subject with extra erudition and dedication. Enzo Cassini runs the dining rooms with warmth and skill.

■ Prices above estimate a meal with wine for one.



Little bundles of joy: the dim sum at Yauatcha is probably the best in London