

Eating Out

THE RITZ

150 Piccadilly, W1J 9BR
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It is truly an experience in itself to visit The Ritz, London, and if you are celebrating a special occasion or enjoying a well-deserved treat, I cannot recommend the restaurant highly enough. There is an opulence about the dining room that puts you in mind of one of the great palaces; vast floor to ceiling windows, gold statues and dazzling garlands of chandeliers. The charming atmosphere is enhanced by a grand piano, providing background music throughout the meal. The Executive Chef, John Williams, has evidently worked hard to create an extensive and mouth-watering dining experience. The service was second to none. The waiters, dressed in tailcoats, could not have been more attentive or helpful. They made excellent recommendations, explaining each dish in detail, and once we had made our choices, the Sommelier suggested the perfect accompanying wines to complement each dish.

To start I chose the Native Lobster salad, with sweet lemon and fennel (£27). My partner chose Hay Baked langoustines served with Cep ravioli (£25). We were both extremely happy with our choices, as they were not overpoweringly fishy, and the sauces complemented them well. As an



interim course we were served Roasted Sea Bass with salted lemons and olives and we both agreed that this was one of the best fish courses we had ever eaten! For the main course I chose Cutlet and fillet of Lamb (£36); perfectly cooked and beautifully tender, this was served with shallot puree and sweetbread ravioli. My partner chose Tournedos of Beef with a creamed Girolles (mushroom) sauce (£39). By this stage of the meal our appetites were well and truly sated, but we couldn't turn down the offer of the cheese course (£17) along with a glass of Tawny Port. There was an impressive selection of cheeses, crackers and accompaniments from Britain and the continent, brought to our table and served by the waiter. The stilton, a traditional English favourite, was particularly good. Finally, waist bands adjusted, we were persuaded to end our meal with Crepes Suzettes (£34 for two). This is prepared and served at your table and provides an impressive sight as large flames leap from the pan whilst liqueur is poured liberally over the pancakes. Having missed this dessert first time round, at its peak of popularity back in the seventies, we found it a delicious alternative to the usual chocolate or lemon based desserts we often choose.

We enjoyed several different wines with our courses. Most notable were a 2005 Chateau-Belle-Vue (red) from Lebanon, perfectly matched with the beef course, and the delicious dessert wine served with the Crepes Suzettes; a 2008 Orange Muscat from California. The wine menu is a very heavy volume with literally hundreds to choose from, ranging in price from £15 a glass upwards. Unless you are a wine expert seek

advice from the incredibly knowledgeable Sommelier when making your choice!

We chose from the à la carte menu, but there were two alternatives available: 'Today's Dinner Menu' £48 for 3 courses or £65 for four courses, representing very good value, in my opinion, considering the quality of food and impeccable service. Also available was the 'Sonnata Menu' £99 for 6 courses or £150 including accompanying wines- perfect for a celebration!

The Ritz has a reputation for its elegance and excellence. Deservedly so! This was, without doubt, the very best meal I have ever eaten in a restaurant.

ALL STAR LANES

The Clockhouse, 91 Brick Lane,
London, E1 6QL
Telephone: 020 7422 8370



I think my love of bowling goes back to the time when I was 8 and my dad first took me bowling and I embraced the bizarre concept of throwing a very heavy ball down an alley, which I always found too long, to knock down oddly shaped pins! Whatever started that love affair was relit the other night as I visited the All Star Lanes in Bayswater. If you want great bowling and drinks in a genuine environment, it doesn't get much better than this, and is a delightful reminder

of how things were back in the 50's. This 50's vibe isn't just restricted to the decor but includes the service which is impeccable and friendly, which is sadly lacking in many other establishments. I think it best to draw a veil over my score when bowling, suffice to say I was not going to win the prize that is offered every month for the highest score, but luckily my companion was equally as adept as me and as we finished our 3rd cocktail we put it down to the fact that the lane was clearly too long!

Whilst bowling, drinks are served by waitresses, and I would recommend taking a long look at the cocktail list as not only are they delicious, I find them an excellent justification for why my score was lower than the 8 year old on the next lane! There are 6 lanes at Bayswater and this gives a very cosy feel to bowling as the restaurant is situated behind the lanes adding to the atmosphere when you are eating as you can hear the sound of the pins being skittled.

The bar is extensive and it is well worth arriving early and having a few drinks to soak up the atmosphere. In fact at one stage I was expecting Biff and Marty McFly to walk in, it is that authentic. The food is a cut above any bowling alley I have ever been to and endorses the idea that this is not a bowling alley with food, but an authentic American diner with bowling.

My companion had Salt and Pepper Popcorn Squid with Aioli and I had the Chicken Quesadilla for starters and both were definitely strikes. The squid must be some of the best I have tasted in London with the seasoning and light batter expertly complementing the fresh squid. The quesadilla were light and well seasoned and again highly recommended. For the main course there is almost too large a choice and I suspect, like us, it will take you a considerable time to decide what you want as everything sounds so good. From my experience you shouldn't worry unduly as anything you choose will be good. The chilli is highly recommended (£10.50) as is the Macaroni Cheese (£9.50) but I chose the Bourbon Glazed Baby Back Ribs apple and slaw (£14.50) and my companion had the All Star Prime Beef Burger and fries with all the trimmings (£8.95). The burger truly deserves the accolade of one of the best burgers in London and the ribs were suitably meaty but fell off the bones the moment my knife touched them. Next time I visit, which will be soon, I am determined to try the Jerk Chicken with rice and black eyed peas (£12.50) as this

is a dish that never fails to transport me back to a sunny Jamaica.

Puddings are a real treat with a deliciously indulgent Sin City Chocolate mousse (£6) and a Rocky Road Sundae (£6.50) suitably dispatched with little trouble. With the choice offered it is vital you save room as the desserts are a sweet toothed persons heaven. The wine menu is extensive, catering for everyone's tastes, and is well priced.

There is live music on a Friday and Saturday and there is a private function room (with its own 2 bowling lanes) available for hire which you can book with the knowledge that everything will be looked after and you will be treated like a king.

I think the best way to describe my experience at the All Star lanes is to quote Jarvis Cocker, the lead singer of Pulp, who signed one of the pins with the very true sentiment, 'you bowled me over'. I was, and I will bet you will be when you visit.

Reader Offer

As a special offer to 'American in Britain' readers, All Star Lanes would like to offer you an 'Eat Drink Bowl' package that includes a 2 course meal, a delicious cocktail and a game of bowling for £26. Simply quote 'American in Britain' when booking between January and February to take advantage of this special offer.

SIAM FOOD GALLERY

95 97 High Street, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9QE
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Thai food is rapidly becoming one of Britain's most favourite foods based on their fragrant curries and extensive range of dishes to suit all tastes. To satisfy this increase, many Thai restaurants are springing up and The Siam Food Gallery is one of the best kind. They have restaurants in Esher and Virginia Water and it was on a cold and damp winter's evening in December that I visited the Esher restaurant.

The first thing that strikes you is the subtle and authentic way the restaurant is decorated and the clever use of wood and cane transports the diner over the water to Thailand. Orchids adorn each table and they are suitably spaced and positioned to enable diners to enjoy a romantic experience.

For starters my guest and I had the Siam Gallery Platter (£18) which provides you with a great selection of starters including Chicken Satay, Royal Thai dumplings, Galloping

Horse, Duck Spring Rolls, Golden Bags and Thai fish cakes. Galloping Horse is another name for a delightful combination of chicken, shallots and peanut with pineapple, and Golden bag is potato, onion and lotus seed encased in crispy golden pastry. I would recommend this simply because the choice on the menu is such that once you have read the choices you will want to eat everyone and this is the best way to do this without spoiling the rest of the meal by ordering too much to begin with. That extensive choice continues with the main courses which includes Salads with Grilled King Prawns (£9.95) and Crispy Fish with Thai herbs (£8.95), Chicken and Pork dishes and the signature Thai curries. These curries include Gaeng Garee Kai or Chicken Yellow Curry to you and me (£10.95) and Gaeng Hung Lay Moo (Pork Hung Lay curry) which is a traditional northern curry at £10.95. I would recommend every one of the dishes we had as all were delightfully spiced with each having a distinct character of their own. My particular favourites are the Kai Med Mamuang, Chicken with Cashew Nuts (£9.95) which surprised me by having a slight kick which put a new twist to a standard dish, and Pla Rad Prik Sam Rod, Crispy Spicy Sea Bass (£18.95) which will quickly become one of your favourites.

If you still have room then the desserts are not extensive, but compliment what had gone before perfectly. My guest had Coconut Ice Cream whilst I had a delightful Chocolatey Dessert. Although many feel that beer is the best accompaniment for curries of any sort, and The Siam Food Gallery won't disappoint here!, there is also a good choice of wines which do supplement the dishes well. There is also a private room upstairs that can seat up to 25 which is ideal for those special occasions.

Esher has many fine restaurants and The Siam Food Gallery is a welcome newcomer to that fold and I am sure it will soon become a firm favourite with the food efficianados of Esher and the surrounding area.

