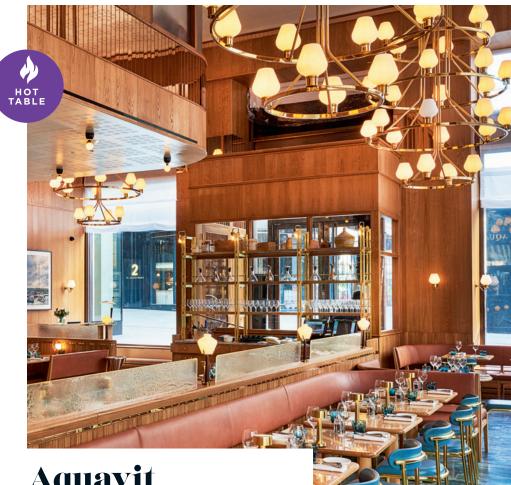
Food&drink



Aquavit

Nordic cuisine is having a moment, but if you're suffering from hygge fatigue and weary of all that is cosy and homespun, take heart: Aquavit, the London outpost of the two-Michelin-starred New York restaurant, is not remotely rustic. With its marble floor, polished brass surfaces and oversized chandeliers it's more Manhattan than Malmö. We kick off with a classic-with-a-Scandi-twist cocktail at the bar. My gin-based Nordic Bramble is spicy and fruity, while my partner's Aurora has a mojito-like freshness. We mix and match starters and smorgasbord plates: the trio of pickled herrings is startlingly good but the riot of textures and flavours in the venison tartare just trumps it. The mains do not disappoint - the duck breast is perfectly cooked and arrives with quince jelly, pickled blueberries and salsify; the turbot in brown butter melts in the mouth, with a pile of grated horseradish on the side to give it a little edge. We share a bottle of South African Chenin Blanc from the extensive wine list, which slides down pleasantly, and we have just enough room left to share a dessert. We can't resist the Arctic Nest, a bravura mix of shredded honey tuile and chocolate shavings, with an 'egg' of ice cream encasing a fruit 'yolk'. A shot of aquavit rounds the evening off in true Scandi style. With food this good, we can totally see why the restaurant was buzzing on a Tuesday night. KTH St. James's Market, 1 Carlton Street, SW1 (020 7024 9848; aquavitrestaurants.com)



Above: the show-stopping Arctic Nest

LONDON Foodie



BEN MURPHY

LAUNCESTON PLACE

When I was a child I wanted to be... a footballer, but I broke my collarbone while on a trial at Queen's Park Rangers.

The first thing I cooked was... pasta. Badly! I was at school in my Food Technology class and really overcooked it.

My kitchen hero is... Pierre Koffmann, I wouldn't be where I am now without him. He was an amazing mentor to me

My fail-safe dinner party menu is... French onion soup, beef Wellington and honev soufflé. I keep it straightforward, so I get a chance to socialise too!

My last meal on Earth would be... macaroni cheese and pizza, washed down with a Coke, followed by a classic English trifle.

When I feel down, I cook... crackers with cheese and piccalilli (I'm not sure that counts as me cooking!)

My favourite London restaurant is...without a doubt, The Ledbury. I have a bucket list of places to try on my days off.

My ultimate London day consists of... breakfast in bed at Claridge's, shopping in Shoreditch and Spitalfields market, followed by lunch and a dip in the pool at Shoreditch House.

Ben Murphy is the new head chef at Launceston Place.

1a Launceston Place, W8 (020 7937 6912; launcestonplacerestaurant.co.uk)

