

# Food & drink

## 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 honey 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;  
launcestonplace-  
restaurant.co.uk)



## 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](http://aquavitrestaurants.com))



Above: the show-stopping Arctic Nest dessert