

## Lena

★★★★★

Sleek modern Italian in Shoreditch

Neighbourhood Italian restaurants attempt to conjure up faux rusticity and homespun touches – but not when they open in Shoreditch, where nothing short of trend-setting decor will do. At newcomer Lena, the vivid white eighteenth-century-meets-late-1960s look seems to have been nicked from the final scenes of '2001: A Space Odyssey', with sepia-toned pictures and a suitably dark basement bar thrown in the mix.

The cooking, on the other hand, is firmly rooted in trattoria style, but with an upmarket feel and an eye kept firmly on sleek presentation. For example, focaccia squares arrive arranged on chunky, dark-wood chopping boards, while the accompanying Tuscan olive oil had a striking verdant hue as well as a pleasant grassy tang.

Some dishes, such as a starter of Sardinian flatbread layered with a medley of Mediterranean vegetables and goat's cheese, feel too designer-ish and contrived, but others mostly hit the spot with well chosen combinations of seasonal ingredients.

Highlights include beef fillet with porcini mushrooms, pears and parmesan shavings, as well as fettuccine dressed with a wintry, comforting sauce made with sausage, radicchio and almonds.

Sleek presentation aside, portions are



Not a raffia-clad Chianti bottle in sight

generous, leaving little room for manoeuvre when it comes to choosing from the rather conventional dessert list. In this case, a glassful of affogato (vanilla ice-cream topped with espresso) with a few biscotti to dunk over the usual tiramisu and panna cotta.

Lena's cool ambience, polished cooking and smooth service have already proved popular with Shoreditch trendies. But it's best to call for reservations instead of relying on the glossy website, which allowed us to book a table (later confirmed with a text message) on a day when the restaurant was closed. **Elena Berton**  
Lena, 66 Great Eastern St, EC2A 3JT (7739 5714/[www.lenarestaurant.com](http://www.lenarestaurant.com)). Old St tube/rail. Noon-3pm, 5-11pm Mon-Sat. Meal for two including wine and service: around £80.

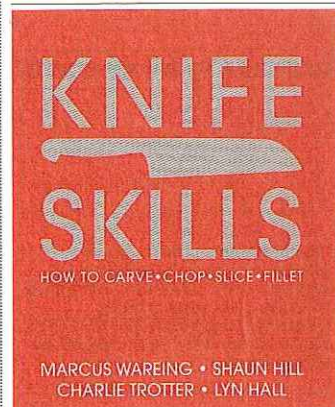
## Side orders

### Shelf life

#### Greensmiths

Lower Marsh in Waterloo has a new supermarket which is a collaboration of several food and drink retailers under one roof. The most conspicuous is Ginger Pig, as its meat counters are visible through the plate glass facing the street. Ginger Pig's usual range of excellent meats, from oxtail and aged beef through to tasty pork rashers, share the front room of this shop with the Old Post Office Bakery, which makes a range of wholesome and appealing baked goods. Through the passage to the next room you'll find the café (still a work in progress) and the Caffè Antica coffee shop; then in rooms below, Solstice vegetables and the Waterloo Wine Company. Solstice is the most interesting of these, being the first high-street retail outlet of a business that usually supplies the restaurant trade. Solstice was founded by former chef Philip Britten, and the quality of veg, from bok choy to fresh herbs, is excellent. All that's missing is a fishmonger. **Guy Dimond**  
Greensmiths, 27 Lower Marsh, SE1 (7921 2970/[www.greensmithsfood.co.uk](http://www.greensmithsfood.co.uk)). Waterloo tube/rail. 8am-8pm Mon-Sat.

### Book of the week



#### 'Knife Skills'

Much of the content is extracted from Dorling Kindersley's whopping 2005 culinary encyclopaedia 'The Cook's Book', but it is expanded with new and more detailed information. The result is a very useful reference with step-by-step photographs that take you from slicing onions to handling sea urchins. You'll learn why it matters how knives are built and sharpened, as well as various ways to grip them safely – all you need, in fact. **Jenni Muir**  
'Knife Skills' is published by Dorling Kindersley at £12.99.

Food & Drink

## So many pubs, so little time

### The Swan, Chiswick



**Where is it?** At the westernmost tip of the legendary 94 bus route. It says 'Acton Green' on the front of the bus but, please, don't mention the 'A' word in these parts. This is Chiswick, people, and that's a fact. **What's it like?** Snug and justifiably

smug, it's a lovely L-shaped local doing a fine line in candle-lit cosiness. It resembles a restaurant at times, but don't worry, they allow imbibers. In fact, they really quite like them.

**Drink?** While the prices won't worry Wetherspoon, the wine list and variety of rotating cask ales is deftly compiled and knowledgeably served (Harveys on our visit). **Food?** Again, hardly credit-crunch cuisine but so good were the risotto and Mediterranean sausages, it muffled the wailing from our wallets. **Best seat?** On entering, turn right towards the more homely half of the pub and sink into the Chesterfields next to the roaring fire. **Bar talk?** Jeremy's putting has gone awry. Apparently it's his feet. One points inwards, the other out.

**Ben McFarland**

The Swan, 1 Evershed Walk, 119 Acton Lane, W4 5HH (8994 8262/[www.theswanchiswick.co.uk](http://www.theswanchiswick.co.uk)). Chiswick Park or Turnham Green tube or South Acton rail. 5-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, noon-10.30pm Sun.



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## Maharani

Always offering you a warm welcome into their family run restaurant which has been established since 1958 on the bustling Clapham High Street. They are proud to offer an interesting menu choice alongside house specialities such as Gosth e Massala and Murg Ki Massala. Visit them on Sundays between 12.00pm and 4.30pm for a delicious buffet where you can eat as much food as you like for £7.95.

117-119 Clapham High Street, SW4

Travel: Clapham Common ⊕  
Open: Mon-Sat 12pm-2.30pm, 6pm-12am, Sun 12.00am-midnight

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