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Eating

Eating

In the past decade, Moscow has blossomed into a culinary capital. Foodies will be thrilled by the plethora of dining options, from old-fashioned *haute russe* to contemporary fusion. Young chefs are breaking down Soviet stereotypes and showing the world how creative they can be. They're importing exotic ingredients, rediscovering ancient cooking techniques and inventing new ones. And Moscow diners are eating it up. Literally. Restaurants are packed with patrons eager to sample world cuisines, sip expensive wines, share small plates, eat raw fish, taste exotic fruits and smoke hookahs.

So when you tire of borscht (beetroot soup) and beef stroganoff, you'll be able to find excellent European, American and Asian cuisine. Many of these restaurants have foreign-trained chefs, foreign management and standards, and foreign prices to match. Cuisine from the former Soviet republics – such as Georgia and Armenia, Uzbekistan and Ukraine – is also ubiquitous and delicious (see the boxed text, p13, for more on Russian food).

Because of the explosion of eateries in Moscow, restaurateurs are desperate to entice diners.

Themed restaurants are all the rage, so your dinner experience might include picking out produce at an Asian market (see p127), sharing company with farm animals (p133) or watching a belly dancer shake her thang (p125). The effect is sometimes classy, sometimes comical, but always interesting.

The good news is that the best restaurants still manage to keep their focus on the food, producing ever more innovative cuisine for an ever more informed clientele (see the boxed text, p131).

Opening Hours

Many eateries are open from noon to mid-night daily, often with later hours on Friday and Saturday. For this book, hours are listed only when they vary from this standard.

Discounts of up to 25% are often available for dining before 4pm or 5pm. Alternatively, many places offer a fixed price 'business lunch' during this time. This is a great way to sample some of the pricier restaurants around town.

How Much?

Sudden wallet-thinning shock is common at many Moscow restaurants, where prices are geared to free-spending New Russians and flush expats rather than the average person. The situation is improving, though. Muscovites are eating out in droves, and restaurants, cafés and kiosks are opening up left and right to cater to them.

While diners with deep pockets might spend upwards of R2000 at upmarket Moscow restaurants, most visitors can expect to pay about R600 to R1000 per person for a meal in the capital. 'Business lunch' specials are usually R200 to R500, offering excellent value for a midday meal (usually three courses). Frequent the places listed under 'Cheap Eats' for meals that cost R200 or less.

Some restaurants set their menu prices in *uslovie yedenitsiy* (often abbreviated as *y.e.*), or standard units, which is equivalent to euros or US dollars (although you will have to pay in roubles calculated at the exchange rate of the day). Prices in this chapter are quoted in roubles, regardless of the currency quoted on the menu. Credit cards are widely accepted, especially at upmarket restaurants.

TOP FIVE EAT STREETS

- Kamergersky pereulok (p129), Tverskoy District. Trendy and pedestrian-friendly.
- Tverskaya ulitsa (p129), Tverskoy District. Main street Moscow offers plenty of options for a feast.
- Ulitsa Petrovka (p126), Petrovsky District. Shopping and spending works up quite an appetite.
- Spiridonevsky pereulok (p131), Tverskoy District. Exceptional eating on a tiny strip near Patriarch's Ponds.
- Ulitsa 1905 goda (p132), Barrikadnaya. Moscow's most over-the-top themed dining.

COFFEE MANIA

Moscow's temperatures occasionally call for a warming drink, so it's nice to know you are never far from a freshly brewed cup o' joe. With bohemian coffee houses seemingly opening on every corner, Moscow might be called the Russian Seattle; and what, you ask, might be the Russian Starbucks?

You could claim that *Coffee Bean* started the coffee thing off in Moscow, as the original outlet on Tverskaya ulitsa has been around for years. It's still the coolest café in the city, with high ceilings, fantastic architectural details and large windows looking out on to the main drag. Coffee drinks cost around R100; it's one of the rare places that does not allow smoking. Not quite as bohemian as *Coffee Bean* (and who can be surprised with a name like this?), *Coffee Mania* is a trendy spot, and the menu includes tasty soups, salads and sandwiches as well as coffees. The *Bolshaya Nikitskaya* branch in the Arbat district has a delightful outdoor seating area in front of the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory.

A French café that feels more European than its counterparts, *Le Gateau* has dark leather furniture and richly coloured walls. The attempt to bring Paris to Moscow carries over to the menu, which features dark coffee and fresh croissants. This is a charming place for breakfast (R85 to R135), lunch (R165 to R180) or a dose of caffeine, any time of day.

Formerly *Zen Coffee*, *Montana Coffee* offers breakfast and a business lunch, besides the double espresso decaf cappuccinos. It is physically impossible to do a serious stroll of the trendy pedestrian strip on Kamergersky pereulok without stopping to sip a drink at this outlet. Those with a sweet tooth will not be able to resist *Shokolodnitsa* for coffee and desserts; it's also popular among night owls.

Kitay Gorod & Chistye Prudy

Coffee Bean (Map pp248–9; ☎ 207 4043; ul Sretenka 22/1, Chistye Prudy; h 8am–10pm; m Sukharevskaya)

Coffee Bean (Map p254; ☎ 923 9793; ul Pokrovka 18, Kitay Gorod; h 8am–10pm; m Chistye Prudy)

Shokolodnitsa (Map p254; ☎ 924 2843; ul Myasnitskaya 24/7, Chistye Prudy; h 24hr; m Chistye Prudy)

Petrovsky District

Coffee Mania (Map pp248–9; ☎ 924 0075; Pushechnaya ul; h 8am–11pm; m Kuznetsky Most)

Le Gateau (Map pp248–9; ☎ 725 6876; Sadovaya Samotechnaya ul 24/27; h 8am–1am; m Tsvetnoy Bulvar)

Shokolodnitsa (Map pp248–9; ☎ 937 4639; Pushechnaya ul 7/5; h 24hr; m Kuznetsky Most)

Tverskoy District

Coffee Bean (Map pp248–9; ☎ 788 6357; Tverskaya ul 10; h 8am–11pm; m Pushkinskaya)

Le Gateau (Map pp248–9; ☎ 937 5678; Tverskaya ul 23; h 24hr; m Pushkinskaya)

Montana Coffee (Map pp248–9; ☎ 234 1784; Lesnaya ul 1/2; h 8am–midnight Sun–Tue, 24hr Wed–Sat; m Belorusskaya)

Montana Coffee (Map pp248–9; ☎ 292 5114; Kamergersky per 6; h 9am–11pm; m Teatralnaya)

Barrikadnaya & Arbat Districts

Coffee Mania (Map pp248–9; ☎ 290 0141; Kudrinskaya pl 46/54, Barrikadnaya; h 8am–midnight; m Barrikadnaya)

Coffee Mania (Map pp248–9; ☎ 775 4310; Bolshaya Nikitskaya ul 13, Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Arbat District; h 8am–1am; m Aleksandrovsy Sad)

Le Gateau (Map pp248–9; ☎ 981 4940; Novinsky bul 31, Barrikadnaya; h 10am–10pm; m Krasnopresnenskaya)

Shokolodnitsa (Map pp248–9; ☎ 241 0620; ul Arbat 29, Arbat District; h 8am–11pm; m Arbat'skaya)

Zamoskvorechie

Coffee Bean (Map pp252–3; ☎ 953 6726; Pyatnitskaya ul 5; h 8am–10pm; m Tretyakovskaya)

Le Gateau (Map pp252–3; ☎ 937 0532; Paveletskaya pl 2; h 8am–1am; m Paveletskaya)

Montana Coffee (Map pp252–3; ☎ 235 5282; Paveletskaya pl 1; h 8am–11pm Mon–Fri, 9am–10pm Sat & Sun; m Paveletskaya)

Shokolodnitsa (Map pp252–3; ☎ 238 2734; ul Bolshaya Yakimanka 58/2; h 24hr; m Oktyabr'skaya)

Booking Tables

Most of the fancier places require booking in advance for dinner, as well as for lunch or brunch on weekends.

Tipping

The standard for tipping in Moscow is 10%, while a slightly lesser percentage is acceptable at more casual restaurants. The service charge is occasionally included in the bill, in which case an additional tip isn't necessary.

Self-Catering

If you want to eat like an old-time Muscovite, you'll buy your own food and cook it at home. Even if cooking in Moscow isn't feasible, the local exotic food and drinks are among the most interesting and affordable items by which to remember Russia. Most characteristic are vodka and caviar, the *zakuski* (appetisers) of the tsar's court and the Soviet politburo. High-quality vodka is packaged in a wide variety of decorative bottles, some with historical or regional themes. Vodka connoisseurs admire the design and shape of the bottles almost as much as the fiery brew itself.

The Russian sweet tooth is notorious (a fact that's evident from the profusion of gold teeth). Russians adore confections and chocolate, and without fail prefer locally produced treats over any old Belgian or Swiss chocolate. Never mind that the major Russian confectionaries are largely owned by Cadbury or Nestle, eating Russian chocolate is a matter of national pride. (Keep this in mind when buying chocolate for Russian friends.) Many companies produce beautiful pieces with fancy wrapping and colourful boxes in honour of local events, holidays or historical places. The Krasny Oktyabr factory on the banks of the Moscow River is widely considered the best confectioner around. Sample some of its wares at Confael Chocolate (p160).

FARMERS' MARKETS

The Russian market (*rinok*) is a busy, bustling place, full of activity and colour. Even if you're not shopping, it's entertaining to peruse the tables piled high with multicoloured produce: homemade cheese and jam; golden honey straight from the hive; vibrantly coloured spices pouring out of plastic bags; slippery silver fish posing on beds of ice; and huge slabs of meat hanging from the ceiling. Many vendors bring their products up from the Caucasus to sell them in the capital. Prices are lower and the quality of product is often higher than in the supermarkets. Bring your own bag and don't be afraid to haggle.

The Dorogomilovsky market (Map pp252-3; ul Mozhaysky val 10, Khamovniki; h 10am-8pm; m Kievskaya) is among Moscow's largest, with overflow spreading along Kievskaya ulitsa to Kievsky vokzal (Kyiv station). Other centrally located farmers' markets include Danilovsky Market (Map pp246-7; Mytnaya ul 74, Zamoskvorechie; m Tul'skaya) and Rizhsky Market (Map pp246-7; pr Mira 94-96; m Rizhskaya).

SUPERMARKETS

Gone are the days when shopping for food required waiting in a different line for each item. These days, Moscow boasts several Western-style supermarkets, complete with prepackaged foods, Western brands and shopping carts. The selection is impressive, compared to what stocked the shelves in the early 1990s. Unless you stick to Russian brands, prices tend to be as high as – if not higher than – prices in the West.

Once a Scandinavian haven in Moscow, Kalinka Stockmann (Map pp248-9; % 785 2500; Smolensky Passage, Karmanitsky pr, Arbat District; h 10am-10pm; m Smolenskaya)

THIS IMAGE
NOT AVAILABLE
IN PICK & MIX

has a pricey foreign-goods supermarket in the basement. The ABCs of Taste (Map pp248-9; Sadovaya-Triumfal'naya ul 22/31, Tverskoy District; h 24hr; m Mayakovskaya) is a Russian chain of deluxe markets, selling premium quality (mostly imported) goods.

The Turkish-owned Ramstore (www.ramstore.ru; h 24hr) includes eight shopping malls, as well as a number of supermarkets in and around Moscow. 'Club card' (membership R25) holders are eligible for discounts of R20 to R30 on some products. The selection available is impressive, but these places can be overwhelming due to their size and the number of shoppers they attract. Of the many Ramstore outlets around the city, these are the most convenient:

Barrikadnaya (Map pp248-9; % 255 5412; Krasnaya Presnya 23; m Ulitsa 1905 Goda)

Chistye Prudy (Map p254; % 207 3165; Komsomolskaya pl 6, Moskovsky Univermag; m Komsomolskaya)

Khamovniki (Map pp252-3; ul Usachyova 35; m Sportivnaya)

The well-stocked Seventh Continent supermarkets (% 777 779; h 24hr) are the most convenient and reasonable places to stock up on foodstuffs. You can grab a cart and peruse the aisles just like at home. Products available are Russian and imported – it's still expensive, but not prohibitively so. Branches around the city:

Arbat District (Map pp248-9; ul Arbat 54/2; m Smolenskaya)

Kitay Gorod (Map pp248-9; ul Bolshaya Lubyanka 12/1; m Lubyanka)

Kropotkinskaya (Map pp252-3; ul Serafimovicha 2; m Kropotkinskaya)

SPECIALITY SHOPS

Peek inside the Yeliseev Grocery Store (Map pp248-9; Tverskaya ul 14, Tverskoy District; h 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya) for a glimpse of prerevolutionary grandeur, as the store is set in the former mansion of the successful merchant Yeliseev. It now houses a market selling caviar and other delicacies.

For all things from India, from nan to curry to basmati rice, visit India Spices (Map pp248-9; % 207 1621; ul Sretenka 36/2, Chistye Prudy; h 9am-9pm; m Sukharevskaya).

CITY CENTRE

You might wonder where all the government officials eat, considering the shortage of restaurants in the city centre. (Head over to GlavPivTorg, on Lubyanskaya ploshchad, and you might just get your answer.)

Moscow has come a long way in developing a consumer culture, but the dining options in the city centre suggest the capital still has a way to go. The area where the vast

majority of tourists spend the majority of their time is markedly void of eateries. Pack a picnic on the day you visit the Kremlin – otherwise, you can check out the few places around Lubyanskaya ploshchad (Lubyanka Square).

RED SQUARE

ONE RED SQUARE Map p258 Russian
% 292 1196; www.redsquare.ru; Red Square (Krasnaya pl) 1; business lunch R360-480, meals R800-1000; m Teatralnaya

This place is located in the State History Museum. Appropriately, chef Alexander Filin is something of a historian, and he successfully re-creates the cuisine that was enjoyed in the days of yore, complete with old-fashioned ingredients and some old-fashioned names. For real culinary history buffs, check out the schedule of historic dinners, re-creating specific meals in history, such as Nicholas II's Easter dinner in 1900. The only drawback is the dark basement setting – a drab venue for an otherwise exciting eating experience.

TOP FIVE MEALS WITH A VIEW

- Loft Café (p124), City Centre. Lofty views of Lubyanskaya ploshchad (Lubyanka Square).
- Panorama at the Golden Ring Hotel (p169), Arbat District. A 360° panorama from 80m up.
- Pavilion (p132), Tverskoy District. Picture windows facing Patriarch's Ponds.
- Red Bar (p133), Barrikadnaya. See the city skyline from the top of this new skyscraper.
- Tent (p126), Chistye Prudy. Watch the sun set over the Chistye Prudy.

LUBYANSKAYA PLOSHCHAD

GLAVPIVTORG Map pp248-9 Russian

% 928 2591; ul Bolshaya Lubyanka 5; business lunch R125-195, meals R600-1000; m Lubyanka At the 'central beer restaurant No 5', every effort is made to re-create an upmarket ap-paratchik dining experience. The Soviet fare is authentic, but not too authentic. So you might get a side dish of peas, but the peas will be fresh and sweet. Add three varieties of tasty beer brewed on site, and you've got a restaurant to suit any ideology.

LOFT CAFÉ Map pp248-9 Fusion

% 933 7713; Nikolskaya ul 25; meals R800-1000; h 9am-midnight; m Lubyanka On the top floor of the Nautilus shopping centre, next door to the luxury spa, you'll find this tiny, trendy café. An even tinier terrace gives a fantastic view of Lubyanskaya ploshchad. Innovative dishes fuse the best of Russian cuisine with Western and Asian influences – for example, grilled salmon with spinach, pine nuts and caviar sauce.

SHIELD & SWORD Map pp248-9 Russian

% 222 4446; ul Bolshaya Lubyanka 13/16; meals R400-800; m Lubyanka In an all-too-appropriate location opposite the former Lubyanka prison, this novelty place is also known as the 'KGB bar'. You can't miss it, with the emblem of the former security service hanging prominently in the windows. Inside, the Soviet paraphernalia continues: the centrepiece in the dining room is a replica of the Felix Dzerzhinsky statue that once graced Lubyanskaya ploshchad. The menu features Soviet specials – mains such as chicken Kiev and *pelmeni* (dumplings), served more often than not with 100g of vodka. The place is total kitsch, but it actually attracts real-deal old-timers, perhaps longing for yesteryear.

SUSHI VESLA Map pp248-9 Japanese

% 937 0521; Nikolskaya ul 25; sushi R100-200 each, meals R600-800; h noon-1am Sun-Thu, noon-3am Fri & Sat; m Lubyanka Sushi is all the rage in Moscow these days. To get in on it, head to this hip Japanese café in the basement of the Nautilus centre (enter from Teatralnaya proezd). Dishes are colour-coded to specify price; at the end of

the meal the server clears the empty plates and uses them to calculate the bill.

KITAY GOROD

Although the streets immediately east of Red Square do not contain many eateries, Kitay Gorod boasts its fair share of culinary choices. Head into the less explored area on the east side of Staraya ploshchad. It is a refined residential area with dining to match the clientele, plus a few extravagant, themed restaurants just for fun.

CHE Map pp248-9 Tex Mex

% 921 8117; Nikolskaya ul 10/2; meals R800-1000; h 24hr; m Lubyanka The revolution lives on at this popular, divey bar. The walls are covered with revolutionary graffiti and photos of the iconic hero. Patrons get their groove on the dance floor to salsa and meringue music. The cuisine is obviously more Tex-Mex than Cuban, but nobody is complaining about the huge plates of nachos and the spicy chilli. Bartenders also mix a mean *mojito* (rum drink with lime, sugar and mint) with Havana Club rum.

CHEESE HOLE Map p254 European

% 917 1676; Pokrovsky bul 6/20; meals R600-900; m Kitay Gorod Fondue, fromage plates, and other cheesy specialties are the highlights of the menu at this hole-in-the-wall. Besides the warm basement with windows looking on to the Boulevard Ring, there is also a summer terrace out the back. Both are perfectly delightful settings for a romantic date or even a solo meal. The place is Swiss-owned, which means French, Italian and German fare all show up on the menu.

EXPEDITION Map p254 Russian

% 775 6075; www.expedicia.ru; ul Solyanka 11/6; meals R1000-1500; m Kitay Gorod This outrageous themed restaurant takes diners on an expedition to the great white north, capturing the adventure and excitement of Siberia. You can imagine you arrived by helicopter, as the vehicle is the centrepiece of the dining room. Feast on typical 'northern cuisine' – famous Baikal fish soup (*ukha*); *pelmeni* stuffed with wild boar or Komchatka crab; and venison

stroganoff. There is also an expensive but authentic Siberian *banya* on the premises (see p150).

KHODZHA NASREDDIN IN KHIVA

Map p254 Uzbek
% 917 0444; ul Pokrovka 10; meals R1000-1500; m Kitay Gorod Khodzha Nasreddin is an Uzbek literary folk hero who epitomises the exoticism and eroticism of the mystical East. The restaurant attempts to do the same, providing a sensory experience that overwhelms. For the full effect, dine upstairs, where you will be invited to remove your shoes and recline on plush pillows around low tables. The showcase of the evening entertainment is, of course, belly dancers. The house specialty is undoubtedly the *plov* (pilaf rice with diced mutton and vegetables), the traditional dish of rice and lamb, subtly spiced with cumin and sprinkled with raisins.

MAHARAJA Map p254 Indian

% 921 7758; ul Pokrovka 2/1; meals R600-1000; h 12.30-11pm; m Kitay Gorod Moscow's oldest Indian restaurant features lots of spicy Tandoori specialties, including several variations of kebabs and rotis hot from the tandoori oven. Vegetarians have no shortage of options. The décor of the lower-level restaurant is understated – a welcome change from the over-the-top theme restaurants that dominate Moscow's dining scene.

NOAH'S ARK Map p254 Armenian

% 917 0717; Maly Ivanovsky per 9; meals R800-1000; m Kitay Gorod This Armenian grill features many varieties of shashlyk, many more varieties of cognac and an Armenian orchestra every night. The dining hall is aromatic and atmospheric, thanks to the meat roasting over charcoal in the central brazier.

CHISTYE PRUDY

Pondside dining is certainly an option in this neighbourhood known as 'Clean Ponds'. Choose the plush French affair for a special occasion, or the crazy, crowded Annyushka tram restaurant for a kick. In summer, take 'pondside' to a new level at the trendy Tent. Other options in the area

are diverse, including one of the capital's few vegetarian-only restaurants.

ANNYUSHKA Map p254 Russian

Chistoprudny bul; cover R20, mains R150-200; h 2pm-midnight; m Chistye Prudy Annyushka is actually a tram that circles the Chistye Prudy. Patrons can get on at several stops along the way, the easiest being at the island at the intersection of Chistoprudny bulvar and Myasnitskaya ulitsa. The food is simple fare – obviously, the cooks prepare it on a tram – but the bar is fully stocked. It's a fun concept, but karaoke is uncalled-for in such close quarters.

AVOCADO Map p254 Vegetarian

% 921 7719; Chistoprudny bul 12/2; breakfast R35-65, business lunch R140, meals R200-400; h 10am-11pm; m Chistye Prudy Less atmospheric than Jagannath (see p127), Avocado has a more diverse menu, drawing on dishes from cuisines from around the world. Meatless versions of soups and salads, pasta and *pelmeni* are all featured. Grab a seat near the window to watch the passers-by on the boulevard, because the place is otherwise rather austere.

CIBO E VINO Map p254 Italian

% 924 0377; ul Pokrovka 21; meals R600-800; h 10am-midnight; m Chistye Prudy Italian for 'food and wine', Cibo e Vino is a classy but unpretentious restaurant and wine bar. The menu is brief and selective – a few modern dishes accompanied by a modest selection of French and Italian reds and whites. The understated dining room is intimate enough to bring a date, but comfortable enough to dine alone (especially considering the free wi-fi access). After dinner, slip downstairs to the exotic chill-out room to sip an after-dinner drink or smoke a hookah.

LA CASA Map pp248-9 Italian

% 923 6687; Ul Sretenka 4/1; meals R1600-2000; m Chistye Prudy or Lubyanka This airy, elegant trattoria serves high-class (and high-priced) Italian fare – fresh pasta with homemade sauces, grilled seafood and steaks – with a wine list to match. The place is lovely: neutral tones, tiled floors and plush couches create a sophisticated Mediterranean setting. However, you might

TOP FIVE KIDS MEALS

- **American Bar & Grill** (p130), Tverskoy District. The playroom is open daily, while a clown engages kids with games between 3pm to 8pm on Saturday and Sunday.
- **Il Patio** (p136), Kropotkinskaya. Have fun with crayons, cartoons and pizza cut into crazy shapes. Kids can also learn how to make their own pizza!
- **Khodzha Nasredin in Khiva** (p125), Kitay Gorod. Kids of all ages get to kick off their shoes and sit on the floor. There are clowns, cartoons and puppet shows from 1pm to 7pm Saturday and Sunday.
- **Parizhsk** (p137), Khamovniki. Parents can dine in peace while their kids stay busy playing computer games. The spacious interior allows young 'uns room to play. There's a kids' party between noon and 5pm Saturday and Sunday.
- **Tinkoff** (p135), Arbat District. Offers a children's menu and cartoons. A clown supervises a kids' playroom from 2pm to 8pm Saturday and Sunday.

get some attitude from the staff if they feel you don't complement the décor.

MODEST CHARMS OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Map pp248-9 **International**
% 923 0848; ul Bolshaya Lubyanka 24; meals R400-600; m Chistye Prudy or Lubyanka
The main draw of the 'Bourgeoisie' is the cool, casual setting. It's an attractive space, with its arched ceiling, tiled floor and sun motif – ideal for settling into the comfy couches and reading the newspapers that are left lying about. The menu is reasonably priced and wide-ranging, from pizza to sushi and nice fresh salads, but don't expect gourmet fare.

NOSTALGIE ART CLUB **Map p254** **French**
% 916 9478; Chistoprudny bul 12A; business lunch R600, meals R1500-2000; m Chistye Prudy
One of Moscow's most beloved mafia hangouts. You will recognise it from the plush velvet interior, the decadent menu and the row of big black cars out front. Despite its 'New Russian' reputation, this place knows food and wine, as evidenced by the on-site sommelier school. Nostalgie also publishes *Vino*, Russia's first magazine for oenophiles.

SIMPLE PLEASURES

Map pp248-9 **International**
% 207 4043; ul Sretenka 22; meals R800-1000; m Sukharevskaya
The chef is American, but the menu is wide-ranging, including dishes from Italy, Spain and the American South. The common denominators are fresh ingredients and simple cooking techniques, an ideal match for this comfortable, uncluttered space.

SIRENA **Map p254** **Seafood**
% 208 1412; www.sirena.su; Bolshaya Spasskaya ul 15; meals R2000-2800; m Sukharevskaya
Restaurant emperor Arkady Novikov strikes again, this time serving the freshest of seafood in a seafaring setting. The décor features large fish tanks, filled with colourful fish, peacefully swimming to and fro. The fish on the plates are not so happy, but they are equally lovely – prepared to perfection. The chef incorporates plenty of fresh, seasonal vegetables, calling on Asian and Mediterranean influences to provide a delectable seafood experience. By the way, the menu does feature a few items such as stuffed rabbit and rack of lamb for the landlubbers.

TENT **Map p254** **International**
% 916 9486; Chistoprudny bul 12A; meals R600-800; h 24hr; m Chistye Prudy
Step into this tent-like structure, and step inside a Bedouin camp, right on the shores of Chistye Prudy. Lounge on comfy cushions and feast on grilled meats, à la the *Thousand and One Nights*. This place is surprisingly democratic (in terms of prices and face control), but still manages to retain its supercool status. It's open in season, approximately May to September.

PETROVSKY DISTRICT

Who could be surprised by the plethora of dining options in this smart shopping district? The range of prices, cuisines and themes is vast. Food in Moscow does not come much simpler or cheaper than at Pel-meshka, while Gallery represents the other end of the scale. Happily, Petrovsky District includes just about everything in between, as well as some interesting and innovating

themed restaurants. So if window-shopping and people-watching works up your appetite, you'll find a restaurant to sate it.

BEIGE CAFE **Map pp248-9** **European**
% 925 6990; ul Rozhdestvenka 12/1; meals R600-800; h 11am-midnight; m Kuznetsky Most
Beige might sound boring, but subtle lines and soft colours render this romantic café anything but. The sensual setting is due in part to the circular room, arched doorways and rounded ceilings. The lack of sharp angles is cosy and comfortable, but still sophisticated. Dine on grilled fish and steaks, pasta, soup and salad, with an emphasis on fresh vegetables – this place is a great find for the health-conscious.

CHEESE **Map pp248-9** **Italian**
% 209 7770; Sadovaya-Samotechnaya ul 16/2; meals R1200-1500; m Tsvetnoy Bulvar
Not to be confused with its French neighbour, Cheese Hole (see following), this place also has an interior resembling a block of cheese. The décor might seem silly, but the pizzas, pastas and other Italian dishes are expertly prepared. The salad buffet is hard to resist, overflowing with vegetables, olives, cured meats and cheeses – all the elements of antipasto. If the mouse's perspective doesn't sound atmospheric, request a table on the patio, shaded by umbrellas (yellow, of course) and flanked by potted plants.

CHEESE HOLE **Map pp248-9** **European**
% 209 1007; ul Bolshaya Dmitrovka 32; meals R600-900; m Chekhovskaya
Where the original in Kitay Gorod is quintessentially quaint, this newer, second location is self-consciously stylish. The avocado and indigo colour scheme is bold, contrasting with the pale yellow walls and arched ceilings that evoke the inside of a cheese hole. This outlet is meant to be French, as opposed to Swiss, but that does not result in a dramatically different menu. It still features deliciously aromatic fromage in all its forms, including fondue, quiche, sandwiches and cheese plates.

GALLERY **Map pp248-9** **Café**
% 937 4544; ul Petrovka 27; meals R800-1500; h 24hr; m Chekhovskaya
An ultrahip place to see and be seen. Besides the cool music and hot clientele,

this elegant café offers an eclectic menu, from the classic chicken cutlet to more sophisticated items such as Chilean sea bass and leg of lamb. The service is surprisingly friendly – sometimes an anomaly at the capital's hotspots.

JAGGANATH **Map pp248-9** **Vegetarian**
% 928 3580; Kuznetsky most 11; meals R300-500; h 10am-11pm; m Kuznetsky Most
If you are in need of vitamins, this is a funky, vegetarian café, restaurant and shop. Its Indian-themed décor is more new-agey than ethnic. Service is slow but sublime, and the food is worth the wait.

KITEZH **Map pp248-9** **Russian**
% 209 6685, fax 924 8448; ul Petrovka 23/10; meals R600-800; m Chekhovskaya
The Kitezh is named after a legendary town which – as a defence mechanism – could magically disappear from the sight of an enemy at the sound of a bell. This welcoming eatery re-creates a 17th-century interior in the basement of a building near the Upper St Peter Monastery. The Russian standards are tasty and reasonably priced.

MARKET **Map pp248-9** **Seafood**
% 200 2905; Sadovaya-Samotechnaya ul 18; meals R1200-1500; m Tsvetnoy Bulvar
This innovative restaurant evokes a market in Southeast Asia – you're invited to take

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topped with fresh ingredients. One of the highlights of this spot is the *konditerskaya*, or dessert bar, with an irresistible selection of sweets and pastries. The pizzeria is a small version of the larger (and pricier) restaurant on Kutuzovskiy prospekt (see p135).

TIBET Map pp248-9 Asian
% 923 2422; Kamergerky per 5/6; mains R400-600;
m Teatralnaya
On one of the trendiest streets in Moscow, this place will whisk you away to Lhasa. The Dalai Lama surveys the cosy basement, which is otherwise decorated with traditional arts and crafts. Tibetan food comes in ample portions for reasonable prices, with loads of options for vegetarians.

PUSHKINSKAYA PLOSHCHAD
CAFÉ PUSHKIN Map pp248-9 Russian
% 229 5590; Tverskoy bul 26A; business lunch R525, meals R1500-2000; h 1st fl 24hr, h 2nd fl noon-midnight; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya
This is the *tsarina* of *haute-russe* dining, with an exquisite blend of Russian and French cuisine. Service and food are done to perfection. The lovely 19th-century building has created a different atmosphere on each floor, including a richly decorated library and a sunny rooftop café.

MAKI CAFÉ Map pp248-9 International
% 292 9731; Glinishchevsky per 3; meals R400-600;
m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya
With a menu ranging from its namesake *maki* rolls to fresh green salads to Italian soft drinks, the theme at the Maki Café is diverse. The café is complemented by its minimalist, industrial décor – clunky light fixtures, lots of brick and metal. It appeals to a hip, urban crowd, who appreciate the unusually reasonable prices. The service is efficient but you still may have to wait for a table in the evening.

MEETING PLACE Map pp248-9 European
% 229 2373; Maly Gnezdnikovskiy per 9/8/7; business lunch R300, meals R600-800;
h noon-5am; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya
The name aptly describes this restaurant-club, which attracts a constant stream of regulars. The food gets mixed reviews, but it's filling and affordable; the many varieties of *pelmeni* are particularly popular. Most

TVERSKOY DISTRICT

The Tverskoy District – like the bustling street for which it is named – offers something for everyone. This district covers a large area, and it contains a vast array of eating options. We have divided the district into smaller geographic units: Lower Tverskaya ulitsa, including Kamergerky pereulok; Pushkinskaya ploshchad; Triumfalnaya ploshchad; Patriarch's Ponds, including Spiridonevsky pereulok; and Around Belorussky vokzal.

LOWER TVERSKAYA ULITSA CAFÉ DES ARTISTES

Map pp248-9 European
% 292 4042; www.artistico.ru; Kamergerky per 5/6; business lunch R500, meals R1000-1500;
h 11am-1am; m Teatralnaya
A restaurant and art gallery in one, this Swiss-owned establishment is an interesting and elegant place to enjoy a meal. The glitzy interior has rich red tapestries, marble walls and a frescoed ceiling. Even better, the leafy summer café is possibly Kamergerky pereulok's loveliest outdoor setting. The menu is full of delicious options, but the specialities of the house include cream of spinach soup and fresh oysters. Art exhibitions held here range from traditional crafts to contemporary photography.

DROVA Map pp248-9 Russian
% 229 3227; Bolshaya Dmitrovka ul 7; meals R200-400, buffet R350; h 24hr; m Teatralnaya
The self-serve buffet ranges from *solyanka* (salty soup) to sushi to sweet-and-sour pork. It's not the best place to sample any of these items, but the price is right. Hungry student types really take advantage of the 'all-you-can-eat' option, and the sight is not always pretty. There are additional outlets at Chistye Prudy (Map p254; % 925 2725; Myasnitskaya ul 24; m Chistye Prudy) and in the Arbat District (Map pp248-9; % 202 7570; Nikitsky bul 8A; m Arbatskaya).

PINOCCHIO Map pp248-9 Italian
% 229 7361; Kamergerky per 5/7; meals R600-1000;
m Teatralnaya
This little pizza café evokes the hospitality and conviviality of the Mediterranean, complete with free-flowing wine and crispy pies

YAKITORIA Map pp248-9 Japanese
% 921 2591; ul Petrovka 16; meals R400-800;
h 11am-6am; m Chekhovskaya
In recent years, this chain of sushi restaurants has expanded rapidly throughout the capital (and beyond), drawing rave reviews for efficient service and excellent, fresh fish. This branch features an actual sushi bar, which is ideal for solo diners, who can entertain themselves watching the chefs prepare their meal. Otherwise, the woody dining room is slick and modern, with a more upmarket atmosphere than the other branches.

Cheap Eats
PELMESHKA Map pp248-9 Russian
% 292 8392; Kuznetsky most 4/3; breakfast R60, lunch R125, meals R150-200; h 11am-midnight;
m Teatralnaya
Pelmeshka is a clean, post-Soviet *stolovaya* (cafeteria), serving many different kinds of *pelmeni*, the most filling of Russian favourites. This place is packed with patrons at lunchtime, a sign that the food is tasty as well as cheap.

PIROGI Map pp248-9 Café
% 951 7596; Bolshaya Dmitrovka ul 12/1; meals R150-300; h 24hr; m Teatralnaya
This low-key, bohemian place, serves coffee, beers, nibbles and even books, which you can buy, or just peruse while you have a drink. The air is smoky and service is slow, which somehow adds to the intellectual appeal.

YOLKI-PALKI Map pp248-9 Russian
% 928 5525; Neglinnaya ul 8/10; meals R200-400;
h 11am-midnight; m Kuznetsky Most
This excellent Russian chain is beloved for its country cottage décor and its well-stocked salad bar. Outlets all over the city specialise in traditional dishes and cheap beer. This particular location boasts an outdoor seating area that is often packed at lunchtime. Locations of the other branches of Yolki-Palki include: Arbat District (Map pp248-9; % 291 6888; Novy Arbat ul 11; m Arbatskaya); Zamoskvorechie (Map pp252-3; % 953 9130; Klimentovskiy per 14; m Tretyakovskaya); and Zayauzie (Map p255; % 912 9187; Taganskaya pl 2; m Taganskaya).

your wicker basket and shop among the displays of colourful produce and fresh fish, choosing the ingredients of your meal. The chef will then cook it up according to your instructions. Or, if you don't trust your culinary instincts, choose from the à la carte menu, which fuses contemporary European and Asian elements to show off the same ingredients. The brains behind this unique place is Arkady Novikov – a restaurant mogul in Moscow.

PANAME Map pp248-9 French
% 229 2412; per Stoleshnikov 7/2; meals R800-1200;
m Chekhovskaya
Warm lighting and a wide, wooden bar set the stage for classic French fare: this convivial brasserie feels like Paris. The Art Deco painted ceiling and the crooner tinkling the ivories in the corner only enhance the ambience. The menu features traditional dishes from the French regions, as well as specialities such as salmon tartare (R450) and foie gras (R700). A cheaper 'bistro' menu is available, offering favourites such as quiche Lorraine (R250) and *croque monsieur* (ham-and-cheese sandwich, R210). Enter from the courtyard.

TARAS BULBA Map pp248-9 Ukrainian
% 200 6082; ul Petrovka 30/7; meals R400-600;
m Chekhovskaya
Servers here dress up in traditional embroidered outfits, while Ukrainian tapestries and wood floors provide a homey atmosphere. There's no salad bar, but specialities such as pork stuffed with vegetables and spicy smoked beef are tender and tasty. Other branches include one at Zamoskvorechie (Map pp252-3; % 951 3760; Pyatnitskaya ul 14; m Tretyakovskaya).

WHITE SUN OF THE DESERT Uzbek
Map pp248-9
% 209 7525; Neglinnaya ul 29/14; meals R1500-1800; h noon-3am; m Tsvetnoy Bulvar
Based on a Soviet cult film of the same name, this place lends a comic touch to traditional Uzbek fare. The dancing sturgeon and Kalashnikov-toting mannequin are all featured in the film, in case you are confused by the incongruous décor. This is one of Moscow's oldest Uzbek restaurants, tribute to its extensive salad bar and delectable *plov*.

people come for the friendly atmosphere, summertime garden café and free wi-fi access.

PEKING DUCK Map pp248-9 Chinese

% 755 8401; Tverskaya ul 24; meals R500-700; Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya
The décor is simple, modern, even nondescript. That's because the focus is on the food. The namesake house special (R555 for two people) is served the traditional way – with paper-thin pancakes, scallions and plum sauce. It is a delectable experience. Alternatively, a wide selection of vegetarian and other mains is available for about R300.

SCANDINAVIA Map pp248-9 European

% 200 4986; Maly Palashevsky per 7; business lunch R490, meals R1500-2800; Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya

There is no better place to indulge in *Shvedsky stol*, or 'Swedish table', than a place called Scandinavia. The cold cut buffet (R600), however, is just the tip of the iceberg at this expat favourite. A delightful summer café features sandwiches, salads and treats from the grill. Inside, the dining room offers a sophisticated menu of modern European delights.

TRIUMFALNAYA PLOSHCHAD AMERICAN BAR & GRILL

Map pp248-9 American

% 250 9525; 1-ya Tverskaya-Yamsakaya ul 2/1; meals R600-800; 24hr; Mayakovskaya
One of Moscow's oldest expat hang-outs, this place has lost some of its lustre over the years. With classic fare such as big burgers and spicy chicken wings, it does not draw the crowds it once did. Nonetheless, it's always a pleasant place for cold beers, and you're bound to meet some other *innostrantsy* (foreigners) who are quaffing them, too. The branch at Zayauzie (Map p255; % 912 3615; ul Zemlyanoy val 59; noon-2am; Taganskaya) still has a great outdoor terrace.

CITY GRILL Map pp248-9 International

% 299 0953; Sadovaya-Triumfalnaya ul 2/30; meals R500-700; noon-2am; Makakovskaya
Loud music and large-screen TVs don't make for the most atmospheric restaurant

in the capital, but this long-standing bar and grill still has fans. Its appeal is old-fashioned – reliably good and filling food. With food items ranging from the classic Caesar salad to more unusual dishes such as wild boar and pad Thai, there is something for everyone on this menu.

GINGER Map pp248-9 Asian

% 250 0029; 1-ya Tverskaya-Yamskaya ul 16; meals R1000-1200; Mayakovskaya
Seafood is the speciality here, and the Asian influence is what makes it special. Ginger's blending of sweet and savoury is an art form, perfected in dishes such as spicy coconut soup, succulent sea bass with caramel sauce, and the famous crab-stuffed orange. Ginger's exotic interior – red walls, gold ceiling – is the perfect venue for such decadence.

GORKY Map pp248-9 European

% 775 2456; 1-ya Tverskaya-Yamskaya 3; meals R1500-2000; Mayakovskaya
Gorky – referring to 'hills', not to the writer – is a grandiose space, filled with heavy wooden furniture, plush chairs and marble columns. The stylish setting is perfect for the even-more-stylish guests, who look nothing less than fabulous while nibbling fresh pasta and other contemporary cuisine. The menu is primarily Italian, but the clientele is just about all-Russian.

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RUSSIAN FUSION Kathleen Pullum

'Fusion' is a word you'll hear often in Moscow dining circles. The word may refer to a café with a sushi menu in addition to its normal Italian fare or, in the case of many of Moscow's newest and best eateries, it refers to a highly evolved assortment of dishes conceived with several national cuisines in play and integrating the best qualities of each.

With a menu consisting of original dishes with European, Chinese, Russian and other international influences, Pavilion (p132) became an immediate hit when it opened in spring 2005. Centrally located on Patriarch's Ponds, the café is housed in a gorgeously restored 19th-century boathouse standing guard at the head of the pond. Large bay windows looking on to the water and plush couches lend the aura of dining in your living room with the neighbours.

Among Russian standards such as *salat olivye*, *pelmeni*, and grilled salmon, the menu boasts innovative dishes such as the heavenly cream of white root soup, served in a hollowed loaf of black bread (R180). A range of Chinese-influenced selections incorporate noodles freshly made on the premises; and the café's delectable bakery items are all homemade.

Olya, Pavilion's PR manager, lovingly explains that the initial concept for the establishment is to serve delicious, healthy food in a tasteful, modern setting for reasonable prices – in short, to raise the bar for Moscow dining.

Pavilion's popularity among young couples and families demonstrates how the next generation quickly picks up new trends. Now that Pavilion has helped open the gate – and others like it have begun to follow – it will be interesting to observe how Russian cooking is reclaimed and how it evolves in the near future.

Kathleen is the editor of element magazine

MON CAFÉ Map pp248-9 European

% 250 8800; 1-ya Tverskaya-Yamskaya ul 4; meals R800-1200; 24hr; Mayakovskaya

The hot-to-trot clientele is the décor at this otherwise minimalist French café north of the Mayakovskaya metro. Otherwise, the vaguely European fare is tasty, if overpriced. Don your short skirts or black shirts and take a seat on the upper level for the best view of the activity below.

STARLITE DINER Map pp248-9 American

% 290 9638; Bolshaya Sadovaya ul 16; meals 500-700; 24hr; Mayakovskaya

The outdoor seating and classic diner décor make this a long-time favourite of Moscow expats. The extensive brunch menu includes all kinds of omelettes, French toast and freshly squeezed juice. Otherwise, you can't go wrong with its burgers and milkshakes, any time of day or night. A second location in Zamoskvorechie (Map pp252-3; % 959 8919; ul Korovy val 9, stroyeniye A; Oktyabrskaya) lacks the outdoor seating.

TANDOOR Map pp248-9 Indian

% 299 4593; Tverskaya ul 30/2; meals R500-700; noon-11pm; Mayakovskaya

The interior features colourful carpets and exotic sculptures, creating an enticing atmosphere. The food is authentic, spicy and delicious, with lots of vegetarian options. It offers a business lunch.

PATRIARCH'S PONDS

CAFÉ MARGARITA Map pp248-9 Russian

% 299 6534; Malaya Bronnaya ul 28; meals R400-600; Mayakovskaya

With walls lined with bookshelves and a location opposite Patriarch's Ponds, this off-beat café is popular with a well-read young crowd. These bookworms are pretty quiet during the day, but the place livens up in the evening, when it often hosts live music.

DELIS Map pp248-9 Café

% 730 5200; Spiridonievsky per 12/9; meals R300-500; 8am-8pm; Mayakovskaya

You might go inside this café just to get a cup of coffee; and who could blame you, as it is rich, dark and addictive. But once your eyes light on the display window filled with salads and pastries, you're likely to stay for lunch. Besides the items you can see, the menu features a few simple mains – grilled salmon, tiger shrimp in garlic and lemon sauce etc. Fresh ingredients guarantee delicious results, as promised by the name.

DONNA KLARA Map pp248-9 Café

% 290 6974; Malaya Bronnaya ul 21/13; meals R300-500; 10am-midnight; Mayakovskaya

Specialising in flaky pastries and dark coffee, this little café is a regular stop for the French community that lives in this area. Homemade soups, sandwiches and quiches make it an ideal lunch spot after strolling around Patriarch's Ponds.

FISH Map pp248-9

Seafood

% 209 4410; Bolshoy Kozikhinsky per 12/2; meals R1500-2000; m Mayakovskaya
‘Finish your Fish!’ reads the restaurant’s menu. The more difficult task is not finishing the fish, but ordering it. You choose from the vast selection of slippery, silvery creatures, posing on ice at the back of the dining room; decide how you’d like it prepared – grilled, fried, baked, steamed or smoked; then pick from one of many accompanying sweet or savoury sauces. The result will delight any seafood lover. The whole experience takes place in a sophisticated, shimmering setting, featuring large picture windows overlooking Spiridonovskiy pereulok.

PAVILION Map pp248-9

Cafe

% 203 5110; Bolshoy Patriarshy per; meals R600-1000; h 24hr; m Mayakovskaya
With a prime location overlooking Patriarch’s Ponds, this new place promises to be prominent on Moscow’s thriving café scene. While the pavilion dates from the 19th century, the interior is chic and contemporary. See the boxed text, p131 for more information.

SAFFRON Map pp248-9

Lebanese

% 737 9500; Spiridonovskiy per 12/9; meze R100-300, meals R600-800; m Mayakovskaya
While ethnic restaurants in Moscow tend to be overdone, Saffron is understated and sophisticated. Strewn with colourful pillows, it is otherwise simply decorated. Arabic music wafts through the air, but does not obstruct conversation. The menu includes a wide range of hot and cold meze (small plates), as well as a selection of kebabs, all expertly prepared and perfect for sharing.

BELORUSSKY VOKZAL AREA**EAST BUFFET** Map pp248-9

Chinese

% 937 1350; Novoslobodskaya ul 16; meals R600-700; m Novoslobodskaya
The key word here is ‘buffet’, as in unlimited. For R450 (R550 after 6pm), you are invited to help yourself to all-you-can-eat sweet-and-sour pork, cashew chicken and shrimp tempura. Then you are invited to go back and do it again. The selection is vast, including enough greenery to sate vegetarians.

SILK Map pp248-9

Chinese

% 251 4134; 1-ya Tverskaya-Yamskaya ul 29/1; meals R600-800; h 11am-5am; m Belorusskaya
Not too expensive, but still stylish, Silk is popular for authentic Chinese fare. Connoisseurs credit this to fresh ingredients and bold spices, not to mention the chefs hired straight from China. ‘Bamboo Fire’ comes highly recommended for those with a tough palate.

SOUP Map pp248-9

Cafe

% 251 1383; Brestskaya 1-ya ul 62; soups R70-100, meals R250; h 24hr; m Belorusskaya
This aptly named restaurant takes the most appetising element of Russian food to new heights, offering 12 hot and six cold varieties on any given day. The atmosphere is loungey; dim lights, modern furniture and DJs spinning house music from 9pm.

VREMYA YEST Map pp248-9

Russian

% 250 9764; Lesnaya ul 1/2; meals R300-600; h noon-5am; m Belorusskaya
It specialises in cold beer and unusual cocktails. If you can’t decide, try the ‘*pivovar*’, which mixes vodka with beer. This place is deservedly popular, considering the free-flowing drinks and reasonably priced food. During dinner hour, expect to wait for a table – an excellent excuse to sidle up to the bar and check out that cocktail menu.

YAKITORIA Map pp248-9

Japanese

% 250 5385; 1-ya Tverskaya-Yamskaya ul 29/1; meals R400-800; h 11am-6am; m Belorusskaya
This is the first of 10 branches around Moscow serving sushi and other Japanese fare. Big windows look out to busy Tverskaya-Yamskaya ulitsa: the focal point of the interior is the fresh fish, as it is sliced and diced by sushi chefs in the open kitchen. If raw fish is not for you, try the namesake dish, *yakitori* (R230 to R345), which is shashlyk from chicken breast, liver and heart.

BARRIKADNAYA

Loud, crowded Kudrinskaya ploshchad might seem an unlikely spot for a pleasant dining experience, but you will be surprised. The shiny new shopping centre, Novinsky Passage, is home to several touted eateries; elegant houses on the quiet

streets east of the Garden Ring offer an exquisite atmosphere for sharing a meal; and the World Trade Centre, further south, has its own strip of extravagant themed restaurants featuring excellent cooking. All this, plus it has one of Moscow’s favourite expat hang-outs.

CORREA’S Map pp248-9

European

% 933 4684; Bolshaya Gruzinskaya 32; brunch R400-600, sandwiches R200-300, meals R600-1000; h 8am-midnight; m Barrikadnaya
It’s hard to characterise a place so simple. Correa’s is a tiny space – only seven tables. Large windows and an open kitchen guarantee that it does not feel cramped, just cosy. The menu – sandwiches, pizza and grills – features nothing too fancy, but everything is prepared with the freshest ingredients and the utmost care. There’s also a Correa’s in Zamoskvorechie (see p137).

GOODMAN STEAKHOUSE

Map pp248-9

American

% 981 4941; Novinsky bul 31; business lunch R360, meals R900-1500; m Krasnopresnenskaya
Inside the Novinsky Passage shopping centre, this classic American steakhouse is done up in leather and wood, with black-and-white photos on the walls and old movies running on the big screen. It gets rave reviews for filet mignon and rack of lamb. Also Goodman’s claims Moscow’s best burger for the bargain price of R360.

KARETNY DVOR Map pp248-9

Caucasian

% 291 6376; Povarskaya ul 52; meals R600-800; m Barrikadnaya
Moscow’s most popular Caucasian place has a simple, relaxed interior and a green, leafy courtyard – both welcoming. Go for classic Azeri fare such as dolmas in grape leaves and lamb kebabs, accompanied by a bottle of Mukuzani (red wine).

LE DUC Map pp248-9

European

% 255 0390; www.leduc.ru; ul 1905 goda 2; meals R2000-2400; m Ulitsa 1905 Goda
Le Duc is one in a row of fancy themed restaurants along a stretch of ulitsa 1905 goda. This one re-creates the interior of a medieval castle, while serving diners exquisite French food and wine. Vaulted ceilings, stained-glass windows and staff in costume lend this restaurant a Disney-esque air;

but, fear not, this place takes cuisine very seriously. You won’t be disappointed.

REAL MCCOY Map pp248-9

International

% 255 4144; Kudrinskaya pl 1; business lunch R180, meals R500-1000; h 24hr; m Barrikadnaya
The main features of this ‘bootlegger’s bar’ are walls plastered in old newspapers and a dining room crowded with expats. The menu is not too memorable, except it includes BBQ ribs and seafood curry and everything in between. Nonetheless, this is a popular spot for drinking, especially the two-for-one happy hour specials (5pm to 8pm).

RED BAR Map pp248-9

Fusion

% 730 0808; 22-24 Kutuzovskiy pr; beers R175, meals R1400-1750; h noon-3am; m Kievskaya
On the 27th floor of a skyscraper overlooking the Moscow River, Red Bar features funky décor and a fabulous view. The name refers to its colour, not its politics: the whole place is draped in swanky red, except the glistening white piano. The menu is mostly small plates – overpriced, but tasty. The real draws are the floor-to-ceiling windows and views of the city skyline. Come for a sun-down drink before heading out to paint the rest of the town red.

SHINOOK Map pp248-9

Ukrainian

% 255 0204; ul 1905 goda 2; meals R800-1200; h 24hr; m Ulitsa 1905 Goda
In case you didn’t think Moscow’s themed dining was over the top, this restaurant has re-created a Ukrainian peasant farm in central Moscow. Servers wear colourfully embroidered shirts and speak with Ukrainian accents (probably lost on most tourists). The house speciality is *vareniki* (the Ukrainian version of *pelmeni*). As you dine, you can look out the window at a cheerful babushka while she tends the farmyard animals (very well taken care of, we’re assured).

TSDL Map pp248-9

Russian

% 291 1515; Povarskaya ul 50; meals R1500-2000; m Barrikadnaya
The acronym stands for Tsentralny Dom Literatov, or Central House of Writers, which is the historic building that houses this fancy restaurant. A glittering chandelier above, plush carpets underfoot and rich oak paneling all around create a sumptuous setting for an old-fashioned Russian feast.

ARBAT DISTRICT

Ulitsa Arbat practically introduced the pavement café to Moscow. Considering that, the selection of restaurants in the Arbat today is mildly disappointing (although there is no shortage of cafés). That said, strollers and shoppers have options to ease their hunger, whether on ulitsa Arbat itself or tucked into the surrounding streets. Novy Arbat ulitsa, to the north, is lined with decent Russian chain restaurants that offer dependably tasty and hearty food.

BUKLOE Map pp248-9

Café

☎ 291 6538; ul Arbat 27/47; meals R200-400;

☞ Arbatskaya

This little light-filled shop is something of a boutique café, selling trendy clothes alongside soup and sandwiches. The fare is varied, but the menu has a Georgian twist, including favourites such as *khachapuri* (cheese bread or cheese pie), *kharcho* (mutton with garlic) and dolmas. Unlike most Caucasian restaurants, this place keeps it light, so you still just might squeeze into that miniskirt on the mannequin.

DIOSKURIYA Map pp248-9

Georgian

☎ 290 6908; Merzlyakovskiy per 2; meals R400-600; ☞ Arbatskaya

This little house just off Novy Arbat ulitsa is famous for its delicious *khachapuri*, but all the food is highly regarded, especially for the price. The music – a trio of a cappella vocalists – outclasses the standard Georgian restaurant band.

EASTERN QUARTER Map pp248-9

Uzbek

☎ 241 3803; ul Arbat 42/24; meals R400-600;

☞ Smolenskaya

Uzbeks cooking in the open kitchen and more Uzbeks filling up the dining room are the signs that this Central Asian eatery is serving some of Moscow's best ethnic cuisine. The speciality: tasty, filling rice *plov*.

HARD ROCK CAFE Map pp248-9

American

☎ 244 8970; ul Arbat 44; sandwiches R250-300, meals R600-800; h 24hr; ☞ Smolenskaya

At long last, those souvenir T-shirts reading 'Hard Rock Cafe Moscow' actually mean something. This is the real deal, complete with framed guitars, chicken wings and a gift shop. The rock'n'roll memorabilia does not include enough representation from Russian rock stars, but there are a few notable exceptions. There's live music on weekends.

JEAN-JACQUES Map pp248-9

French

☎ 290 3886; Nikitsky bul 12; breakfast R50-150, meals R200-600; h 24hr; ☞ Arbatskaya

In a prime location on the Boulevard Ring, this friendly wine bar welcomes everybody wanting a glass of wine, a bite to eat, a few songs and a few smiles. The basement setting is cosy but not dark, making it an ideal spot to share a bottle of Bordeaux and nibble on brie. Bottles of wine start at R350, although most are priced around R1000 – still refreshingly reasonable in this town where wine is usually ridiculously overpriced.

KISHMISH Map pp248-9

Uzbek

☎ 290 0703; Novy Arbat ul 28; meals R300-500;

h 11am-1am; ☞ Arbatskaya

It serves simple spicy standards such as shashlyk and *plov* at the cheapest prices you will find. The *dastarkhan*, or salad bar (R200), is chock-full of veggies and salads to fill up the herbivores. This place is decked out like an Uzbek *chaikhana*, or teahouse, complete with plush Oriental carpets, staff in national costume and painted ceramic place settings. Everything was imported from Tashkent (except the staff, presumably). There's another outlet near Barrikadnaya (Map pp248-9; ☎ 202 1083; Barrikadnaya ul 8/9; h 11am-midnight; ☞ Barrikadnaya).

MEKHANA BANSKO

Map pp248-9

Bulgarian

☎ 241 3132; Smolenskaya pl 9/1; business lunch R280, meals R600-800; h noon-11pm Sun-Thu,

noon-2am Fri & Sat; ☞ Smolenskaya

Mekhana Bansko – named for a town in Bulgaria – evokes the atmosphere of a holiday festival in the countryside: colourful table settings, loud folk music, and free-flowing drinks, all set around a big old stone fireplace. The lengthy wine list features many Bulgarian brands, including the restaurant's own label.

PINOCCHIO Map pp248-9

Italian

☎ 243 6588; Kutuzovskiy pr 4/2; meals

R1000-2000; ☞ Kievskaya

This classy trattoria evokes 1930s Italy, with its black-and-white tiled floors, comfy leather armchairs and sky-high ceilings. Music from the era imbues the neoclassical dining room, creating a luxury setting to sip wine and feast on pasta and grills.

SHESH-BESH Map pp248-9

Caucasian

☎ 290 1922; Novy Arbat ul 24; meals R400-600; ☞ Smolenskaya

Following the newest trend in restaurants – rhyming names – Shesh-Besh is a chain offering hearty Azeri fare. The thick soup is easily a meal in itself, as is the extensive salad bar. The place is not overly atmospheric – this being the TGI Friday's of Azeri cuisine – but the food is still spicy and prices are affordable. Caution: don't confuse Shesh-Besh with nearby Kishmish, which is Uzbek. There are additional rhyming restaurants in Zamoskvorechie (Map pp252-3; ☎ 959 5862;

Pyatnitskaya ul 24/1; ☞ Novokuznetskaya) and Zayauzie (Map p255; ☎ 911 6655; Tovarishchesky per 1; ☞ Marksistskaya).

TINKOFF Map pp248-9

European

☎ 777 3300; Protochny per 11; 500ml beer R129, meals R600-800; h noon-2am; ☞ Smolenskaya

Moscow's branch of this nationwide micro-brewery features sports on the big screen, lagers and pilsners on draught, and a metre-long sausage on the menu (yikes). The modern interior and excellent food attract a slightly older, upmarket crowd, who come for the impressive line-up of international DJs and bands. It's a classy place for a beer.

Cheap Eats

MOO-MOO Map pp248-9

Russian

☎ 241 1364; ul Arbat 45/23; meals R100-200; h 9am-11pm; ☞ Smolenskaya

You'll recognise this place by its black-and-white Holstein-print décor. This chain of clean, cow-themed cafeterias is spreading rapidly throughout the capital. The self-service offers an easy approach to all the Russian favourites. There are additional outlets at Lubyanskaya ploshchad (Map pp248-9; ☎ 923 4503; Myasnitskaya ul 14; ☞ Lubyanka) and Khamovniki (Map pp252-3; ☎ 245 7820; 26 Komsomolsky pr; h 10am-11pm; ☞ Frunzenskaya).

KROPOTKINSKAYA

This neighbourhood – crowded with art galleries and dominated by the massive cathedral – has an eclectic array of eateries. The restaurants complement their surroundings: the whimsical Artist's Gallery inside the Tsereteli Gallery; extravagant Vanilla, opposite the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, which fits the same description; and Tiflis, one of Moscow's top Georgian restaurants, housed in a gorgeous Georgian manor house.

ARTISTS' GALLERY Map pp252-3

European

☎ 201 2866; ul Prechistenka 19; business lunch R240, meals R600-1000; ☞ Kropotkinskaya

This fantastical restaurant inside the Tsereteli Gallery is everything that you would expect from this over-the-top artist. The five rooms follow different themes, all equally elaborate; it culminates in a huge, light-filled

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atrium that is wallpapered with stained glass and primitive paintings. The place certainly lives up to its name. The menu is a fusion of European and Asian influences. While secondary to the art, the food is well prepared and artistically presented.

FIVE SPICES Map pp248-9 Chinese
% 203 1283; Sivtsev Vrazhek 3/18; meals R500-700;
m Kropotinskaya

It's a long-time favourite for spicy Chinese food. Five Spices is not the fanciest place in town, but the fanciest place does not serve such consistently tasty sesame chicken and shrimp fried rice for such reasonable prices. The menu is like a Russian novel and includes lots of vegetarian options, including a delectable crispy spring roll.

IL PATIO Map pp252-3 Italian
% 298 2530; ul Volkhonka 13A; business lunch
R190-280, meals R400-500; m Kropotinskaya

Patio Pizza has gone upmarket, with a new, more Italian name, and a new, more stylish look. Wood-oven pizzas and fresh salad bars are still the highlights of the menu, and fortunately it still has a slew of outlets, each one depicting a different Italian city. The outlet inside the Novinsky Passage at Barrikadnaya (Map pp248-9; % 785 6553; Novinsky bul 31; m Barrikadnaya) is a great place to bring your kids, who can watch cartoons or even learn how to make their own pizza. There's another branch in Zayauzie (Map p255; % 230 6662; Taganskaya ul 1/2; h 8am-11pm; m Taganskaya).

MONKS & NUNS Map pp248-9 European
% 203 6841; per Sivtsev Vrazhek 3; meals R500-700;
h noon-midnight; m Kropotinskaya

In case you can't tell from the staff, looking mildly embarrassed in their habits and cassocks, this 'beer cellar' aims to re-create a medieval monastery. Don't let the monastic atmosphere derail you from indulging in the huge choice of Trappist ales and beers.

TIFLIS Map pp252-3 Caucasian
% 290 2897; ul Ostozhenka 32; meals with wine
R1000-1500; m Kropotinskaya

The name comes from the Russian word for the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, and when you enter this restaurant, you might think you are there. Its airy balconies and interior courtyards recall a 19th-century Georgian

mansion – a romantic and atmospheric setting. Tiflis takes Caucasian cuisine upmarket. All the menu items are particularly delectable when accompanied by the house wine, produced by the restaurateur's winery in Georgia. According to Moscow foodies, Tiflis counts among its regular customers the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Igor Ivanov, who happens to be of Georgian descent.

VANILLA Map pp252-3 Asian
% 202 3341; ul Ostozhenka 1; meals R1200-3000;
m Kropotinskaya

It's hard to say which is more grandiose: the glitzy interior of this ultrafancy establishment; or the Christ the Saviour Cathedral across the street. Actually the views of the cathedral through the restaurant's picture windows are a perfect complement to the crystal chandelier and giant gold-framed mirror in the dining room. The modern Asian menu features sushi and other seafood dishes – all prepared with delightful innovations. The service is top-notch. Don't be put off by the row of Mercedes parked out the front; you will be treated well here, even if you show up on foot.

KHAMOVNIKI

Mama Nina and Mama Zoya are Moscow institutions, famed for filling up poor students and tight-fisted expats with spicy Georgian specialties. The newest Khamovniki addition, Parizhsk, is also affordable. These good-value eating options are representative of this quiet district that is a little way from the centre. These places are worth the trip if you are hungry or broke (or – especially – both).

TOP FIVE SUNDAY BRUNCHES

- **Baltchug Kempinski** (p179), Zamoskvorechie. Splurge on a buffet breakfast.
- **Correa's** (p133), Barrikadnaya. Think fresh fruit and homemade omelettes.
- **Nostalgie** (p126), Chistye Prudy. Brunch with blue notes.
- **Simple Pleasures** (p126), Chistye Prudy. The name says it all.
- **Starlite Diner** (p131), Tverskoy District. Classic Amerikansky breakfast fare.

MAMA NINA Map pp252-3 Caucasian
% 201 7743; Sechenovskiy per 8; meals R200-400;
m Park Kultury

Formerly Mama Zoya, this dark and divey place has changed its name but little else. This Moscow institution serves up tasty, filling Georgian food – possibly the cheapest in town. It's famed for slow service and bad music, which is all part of the charm.

MAMA ZOYA Map pp252-3 Caucasian
% 242 8550; Frunzenskaya nab 16; meals
R200-400; m Park Kultury

See the review for Mama Nina. These two Mamas have been serving cheap shashlyk and other Georgian favourites for years. This place is on a floating platform on the Moscow River, opposite Gorky Park.

PARIZHSK Map pp252-3 French
% 247 0912; Zubovskiy bul 13, bldg 2; business
lunch R180, meals R400-800; h 24hr, happy hr
4-7pm Mon-Fri; m Park Kultury

Targeting Muscovites who are nostalgic for Paris, this quaint café draws them in with old-fashioned ad posters and worn wooden furniture, as well as cold beers and hot onion soup. New in 2005, some early reports complained of slow service, but we hope the staff has improved with practice. Otherwise, the friendly café is ideal for solo diners, who can play computer games or watch the running video footage, as well as for groups, who can take advantage of two-for-one happy hour specials. Live music from Thursday to Saturday guarantees Parizhsk will be a popular nightspot, too.

ZAMOSKVORECHIE

The cafés and restaurants in this charming area are outnumbered only by the churches. While Zamoskvorechie is less developed and offers fewer eating options than the districts north of the Kremlin, this situation is rapidly changing: new eateries are opening on a regular basis (which is not the case with the churches).

CORREA'S Map pp252-3 European
% 725 6035; ul Bolshaya Ordynka 40/2; brunch
R400-600, sandwiches R200-300, meals R600-1000;

h 8am-midnight; m Tretyakovskaya
This new outlet in Zamoskvorechie offers the same fresh ingredients and straightforward fare that regular customers have come to love from the namesake restaurant near Barrikadnaya (p133). The distinguishing feature here is its roomy bar area – a nice contrast to the cramped quarters at the original restaurant. Making a reservation is still recommended for Sunday brunch.

GARDEN Map pp252-3 Café
% 239 9115; Bolshoy Tolmachyovskiy per; breakfast
R60-100, meals R500-800; h 24hr;

m Tretyakovskaya
This appropriately named café is set in the midst of flowering trees in the courtyard opposite the Tretyakov Gallery, drawing a bohemian, artsy crowd. The wooden floors and antique furniture contrast with the modern, jazzy music and contemporary cuisine.

LOS BANDIDOS Map pp252-3 Spanish
 % 953 0466; ul Bolshaya Ordynka 7; tapas
 R350-800, meals R1000-1500; ☞ Tretyakovskaya
 Widely planked floors and dark-stained
 wood – not to mention the *jamon* (ham)
 suspended from the ceiling – create the
 romantic atmosphere associated with
 Andalusia. The menu does not disappoint,
 offering a wide array of Spanish red wines
 and lots of traditional tapas. The paella
 (R800), chock-full of spicy shellfish, can
 feed two.

PANCHO VILLA Map pp252-3 Mexican
 % 238 7913; ul Bolshaya Yakimanka 52; business
 lunch R120, meals R300-600; ☞ 24hr;
 ☞ Oktyabrskaya
 In a new location near Oktyabrskaya
 ploshchad, this is still Moscow's top choice
 for Meksikansky food. If the fajitas and
 margaritas aren't enough of a draw, come
 for breakfast burritos, happy hour specials
 (Monday to Thursday) or live Latin music
 nightly (from 9pm).

OUTER MOSCOW

These days, excellent restaurants are found
 all over Moscow, not just in the areas sur-
 rounding the city centre. Most eateries in
 outer Moscow cater to the residents of their
 immediate neighbourhoods, but some are
 worth a special trip. If you are craving some
 spicy world cuisines, some of the best op-
 tions for Indian, Georgian and Korean are
 here.

NORTH & EAST OF

THE CENTRE

PRISONER OF THE CAUCASUS

Map p254 Caucasian
 % 280 5111; pr Mira 36; meals R800-1200;
 ☞ Prospekt Mira
 Moscow's favourite Georgian restaurant is
 this joint, named after a popular Soviet film.
 Feast on *lavash* (flat bread) straight from
 the oven, cheeses from the restaurant's
 own dairy, and shashlyk from seemingly
 every animal (R700). Come with a group
 and enjoy the classically cheesy Georgian
 music.

VAPIANO Map p254 Italian
 % 937 8809; pr Mira 26; meals R600-800;
 ☞ Prospekt Mira
 Crispy, thin-crust pizzas and 'zillions' of
 kinds of homemade pasta are ample re-
 ward for any diner making the trek out
 to Vapiano. This place is stylish, but not
 snobby; comfortable, but not crass. The
 highlight of the interior is the open kitchen,
 where patrons can watch the pasta being
 made. The atmosphere is enhanced by
 stressed wood furniture, subdued colours,
 and jar upon jar of uncooked pasta. The
 latter is also available for purchase by the
 half-kilo, for those who wish to play Italian
 chef at home.

YAR Map pp246-7 Russian
 % 960 2004; Leningradsky pr 32/2; meals
 R1200-1500; ☞ 10am till last guest; ☞ Dinamo
 The 90-year-old restaurant was once a
 favourite among Moscow's elite, including
 the opera singer Fyodor Shaliapin and the
 merchant Savva Morozov. These days, an
 evening at Yar means dining on gourmet
 fare and taking in a glittering cabaret, com-
 plete with showgirls. Even if you don't stay
 for dinner, stop by this historic spot for a
 peek at the gilded, chandelier-strewn dining
 room inside the Soviety Hotel (see p180).

SOUTH & WEST OF

THE CENTRE

DARBAR Map pp246-7 Indian
 % 938 8228; 38 Leninsky pr; dinner without alco-
 hol R600; ☞ noon-midnight; ☞ Leninsky Prospekt
 The Darbar is filled with Indian families
 enjoying spicy Indian cuisine, so you can
 tell it's on the mark. The samosas, curries,
 and dhal all get raves. Our only complaint
 was a loud Indian orchestra. Darbar is off
 the lobby of Hotel Sputnik (see p182).

WOORI GARDEN Map pp246-7 Asian
 % 939 8864; ul Kosygina 15; meals R300;
 ☞ Leninsky Prospekt
 This is one of several Korean restaurants
 in Hotel Orlyonok (see p182), which might
 also be called Little Korea. The place is out
 of the way, but good value for a unique,
 authentic food experience.

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