



Mayfair

★ Momo (100)

25 Heddon Street, W1B 4BH (7434 4040,
www.momorestaurant.com). Piccadilly Circus tube.

Lunch served noon-2.30pm Mon-Sat. **Dinner served** 6.30-11.30pm Mon-Sat; 6.30-11pm Sun.

Main courses £13-£15. **Set lunch** £15 2 courses, £19 3 courses. **Credit** AmEx, DC, MC, V.

Momo is still London's most glamorous Moroccan restaurant. You'll find a funky atmosphere here and some great cooking, but service can be patchy or downright abrupt. It's a fun venue, with a signature Maghrebi soundtrack, though the music is loud; don't expect intimate conversations. The tables are very close too. The menu offers a mix of time-honoured Moroccan dishes (like zaalouk, prawn or seafood pastilla and the extremely well-executed tagines) with contemporary recipes using traditional ingredients or treatments (such as juicy king prawns in a feather-light tempura-type batter on a bed of lemony avocado and tomato). Lamb tagine was spot-on with its sweet reduction of prunes, pears and almonds. Don't miss the sublime couscous – you'll find nothing better this side of the Channel. Tender, sliced chicken breast comes with silky fine couscous plus a fragrant, lightly spiced coriander-infused broth, vegetables cooked to just the right tenderness, and a pot of harissa (served separately, should you want more kick). So, the food is first rate, but a little more comfort in the dining room wouldn't go amiss.

Available for hire. Babies and children admitted.

Booking advisable weekends. Disabled: toilet.

Tables outdoors (14, terrace). Vegetarian menu.

Map 17 A4.

For branch (Mô Tea Room) see index.

Interview

MOURAD MAZOUZ



Who are you?

A restaurateur with involvement in **Momo** (see left), **Sketch** (see p131, p158 and p289) and **Club Gascon** (see p92) in London, plus 404, Andy Wahloo and Derrière in Paris.

How did you start in the catering business?

By mistake. I was travelling and, at the age of 26, I decided to open a small restaurant in Paris. I was going to sell it quickly in order to carry on travelling, but instead I became consumed by the *melée* of the restaurant business.

What's the best thing about running a restaurant in London?

Running a restaurant is the same in every country. The thing I appreciate most is that you have to have the ability to express your generosity. You must be able to deal with everything, including food, employees, administration, accounts and maintenance. You must also be able to think creatively about decor, lighting and fabrics.

What's the worst thing?

Whether people like your restaurant or not, they will never tell you to your face what they really think – they only write letters.

Which are your favourite London restaurants?

I like a lot of places, depending on the day, my mood and the company.

What's the best bargain in the capital?

Busaba Eathai (see p249).

What's your favourite treat?

A dessert from Pierre Gagnaire.

What is missing from London's restaurant scene?

Restaurants that are innovative with cuisine, that are forward-thinking rather than reproducing what exists already.

What does the next year hold?

At the moment, the restaurant industry is like the fashion industry. Certain restaurants are popular because they are on trend, not because of the quality of the food or their creativity. For about eight years, it was all about Japanese or Asian restaurants; now we've moved on to pseudo-organic restaurants.