

East Devon food trail



Discover the splendour of the East with our trail of foodie shops, restaurants and places to stay. Words by Derryck Strachan.

Shopping

1. Opened in 1988 by Mark and Jude Essame, Joshua's Harvest Store sprang out of the couple's interest in growing organic vegetables and has gone from strength to strength in recent years. There are specialist products for diabetics, gluten-free diets or vegans, homemade 'ready meals' with all the nasties left out, a big selection of Westcountry cheeses and, of course, organic fruit and veg. Eager foodies may also like to note its Joshua's Table café is open seven days a week and you can sample what's in store with its range of tasting platters.

Joshua's Harvest Store, Gosford Road, Ottery St Mary.
Tel. 01404 81547. www.joshuasharveststore.co.uk

2. One of the few remaining working water mills in Devon, Tracey Mill has its origins in the 17th century and was in continuous use for over 300 years until the 1960s. An extensive renovation in 2001 saw flour - and power - back in production. Fed by the River Otter, the mill is also home to one of the South West's best-known trout producers, with fish thriving in a natural environment with no

antibiotics or added oxygen and GM-free fish food. Buy the fish whole, filleted or smoked, or in delicious pâté, fish cakes or gravadlax.

Tracey Mill & Trout Farm, Tracey Road, Honiton.
Tel. 01404 45114. www.traceymill.co.uk

3. An Aladdin's cave of West Country delights, Champers' shelves are heaving with local honey, jams, chutneys, pâtés, cheeses, biscuits, wines and other toothsome treats - you can also pick up your Rod and Ben's veg box here. The purchase and rapid consumption of chocolates and truffles - handmade on the premises - is a virtual prerequisite for any visit here. If you're gasping for a cuppa there's a coffee shop with fresh salads, baguettes and sandwiches, with al fresco seating planned for the summer providing an additional incentive to lounge around drinking coffee - as if you need one!

Champers, 7 New Street, Honiton.
Tel. 01404 42589.

4. Honiton's only fishmonger, this long-established seafood retailer is a family-run business and provides an array of gleaming fresh fish in a traditional blue & white-tiled interior. Feast your eyes on this piscine paradise which regularly features lobster and crab from Beer, scallops from Lyme Bay and local, line-caught sea bass and pollock, and plaice, lemon sole and monkfish from day boats at Brixham. Look out for the homemade pâtés and special seafood platters available to order.

Fishmonger, New Street, Honiton.

Tel. 01404 43464.

5. Ottery St Mary Farmers' Market runs on the first Friday of every month and Honiton Farmers' Market on the third Thursday. Honiton is celebrating its 750th birthday next year (the anniversary of the market being granted its license by Henry III in 1257) and features quality produce such as Ark Poultry, Sweetlands beef and Beechayes Farm beef, as well as horticulture, carpentry and soap. Also look out for the Common Loaf bakery - a firm favourite, some market-goers travel quite a distance just to stock up on these artisan breads, made by a Christian community in Dunkeswell. Honiton also has a street market every Tuesday and Saturday.

For more information Tel. 01404 43280.

Order from home

With origins dating back to 1904, the Red Devon cattle in Gittisham produces simply astonishing beef used by restaurants around the county including nearby Combe House Hotel. The herd was re-established by the current estate owner Richard Marker in 1988 and has since built up a loyal following among chefs and beef lovers throughout the UK who admire the succulence, tenderness, marbling and downright tastiness of this premium meat. Customers can order direct from the estate via its website.

Combe Estate, Gittisham.

Tel. 01404 45576. www.reddevonbeef.co.uk

6. Established 25 years ago by Malcolm Miller as a spin-off from his wholesale vegetable growing business, Miller's Farm Shop combines all of the qualities of a traditional farm shop with a French deli. In extensive premises aimed at serious shoppers coming for weekly groceries, it's just as accommodating to the constant trickle of tourist gift buyers looking for fudge and shortbread. There's a massive variety of local foods, excellent home grown vegetables and French produce brought over weekly from the region around Miller's Farm near Mont St Michel, including wines, cheeses, and cured hams.

Miller's Farm Shop, Kilmington.

Tel. 01297 35290.

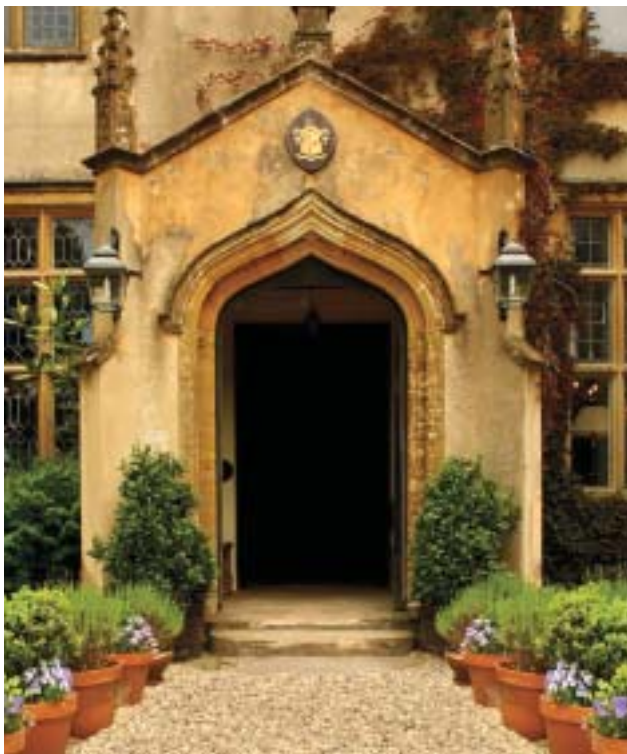
7. Founded on a passion for making real West Country cider, Lyme Bay Winery has since diversified into an astonishing array of eye-catching products including traditional ciders (left), country wines, liqueurs, preserves and vinegars. It's brought back to life traditional tipples that people in the region have traditionally made, many of which have now developed a UK-wide following. So if blackbeer and raisin wine, Dorset ginger cordial or the award-winning butterscotch and brandy cream liqueur take your fancy, pay a visit to the shop or order online.

Lyme Bay Winery, Shute, Axminster.

Tel. 01297 551335.

www.lymebaywinery.co.uk





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Dine and recline

8. With a driveway that's over a mile long, there's plenty of time to drink in the bucolic charms of this 3,500-acre estate before arriving at the stunning Elizabethan manor house that is Combe House (above.) The entrance hall has a grandiosity that's almost overwhelming until the engaging service takes over and you feel immediately at home, transported, perhaps, into some baronial reverie with the aid of an appropriate aperitif - elderflower champagne, possibly? Winner of Taste Of The West's Restaurant Of The Year 2005, there are only a handful of restaurants or hotels in Devon that come close to the level of cooking or comfort to be enjoyed here.

Combe House Hotel, Gittisham, Honiton.
Tel. 01404 540400. www.thishotel.com

9. Somewhere between Axminster and Honiton, the tiny village of Stockland may not have a shop but what it lacks in retail facilities it makes up for in sheer charm. The epithet "the pub's the hub" was never more aptly applied than at the King's Arms - to say it's the heart of the village is not to overstate the case, whether you're there for the fine ale, live music, guest rooms or traditional-style cooking. The food ranges from classics like tournedos Rossini and salmon hollandaise to rabbit, ostrich and er... squirrelfish (that's a form of Australian seafood for those unaware.)

The King's Arms, Stockland near Honiton.
Tel. 01404 881361. www.kingsarms.net



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Eating out

10. Originally a 16th century thatched farmhouse, Home Farm is now a comfortable hotel and fine dining restaurant just outside Honiton. While the buildings retain many original features, there's no olde worlde tweezeness here - interiors and exteriors have been sensitively updated to a bright, modern style reflecting the modern focus of the menu. A typical starter would be foie gras terrine with pistachio nuts and wild mushrooms, while mains might include oven-roasted duck breast with cherry sauce.

Home Farm Restaurant & Hotel, Wilmington, Honiton.
Tel. 01404 831278. www.thatchedhotel.co.uk

11. Located in a village so quintessentially English it's almost surreal, The Mason's Arms has a formidable reputation for good food. Modern, unpretentious gastro-pub fare is the order of the day - Westcountry scallops with lime-marinated cucumber then roast rack of local lamb with coriander and lemon jus, for example. Add to that an enchanting, thatched historic building (which dates back to the 14th century) and a delightful seaside setting, and it's no surprise that booking is practically essential - especially when the sun's out.

The Masons Arms, Branscombe.
Tel. 01297 680300. www.masonsarms.co.uk

12. There's an understated sophistication to this Otter Brewery-owned fashionable town centre restaurant, with light wood floors,



discreet lighting, plain wood tables and chairs and colourful art on the walls. The bar downstairs offers a daily changing tapas menu while upstairs the restaurant proper combines a classic modern British feel with Mediterranean influences. Start with home-smoked salmon with steamed asparagus, deep-fried poached egg and herb butter then continue onto spiced pork tenderloin with vegetable spaghetti and caramelised apples. Frankly you'd be mad not to finish off with a pudding.

The Holt Bar & Restaurant, 178 High Street, Honiton.
Tel. 01404 47707. www.theholt-honiton.com

13. You could be forgiven for thinking that this recently opened gourmet coffee shop is part of a new chain. You'd be dead wrong though - this is a proudly independent café, with warm Mediterranean décor, slick service and homemade food. Alongside the veritable avalanche of fine cakes and light lunches on offer (all made on the premises) there is some truly great coffee, with

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Red Devon Beef Combe Estate Gittisham Honiton EX14 3AB
 Tel 01404 45576 sales@reddevonbeef.co.uk www.reddevonbeef.co.uk

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www.neilsrestaurant.com

unusual servings - from a piccolo latté to mocha; owner Elaine Montgomery spent six months traveling Europe researching her coffee, so you can rest assured it's a good brew. And could this be the only place in Devon that does waffles for breakfast? Yum.

Montgomery's, High Street, Honiton.

Tel. 01404 44666.

Days out

14. Last year's winner of a Taste Of The West Bronze Award for fresh fish, Hollies Fish Farm supplies several restaurants, pubs and cafés in the area including the Holt Bar and Restaurant (left). This family-run farm offers the full fish experience from getting your rod out and landing a whopper to simply enjoying the range of fresh and smoked trout - you can even ask them to smoke it for you. There's a B&B onsite for those who can't tear themselves away from this beautiful spot.

Hollies Trout Farm, Slade Lane, Sheldon.

Tel. 01404 841428.

www.holliestroutfarm.co.uk



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