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## Tooting is officially rooting: SW17's best bars, restaurants and culture

Move over Shoreditch — the hipsters are now hanging in SW 17. For hot chicken, cool bars and new art clubs head to the deep sarf, says Susannah Butter



Hot property: the up-and-coming Little Bar on Mitcham Road

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It has been dubbed "the new Shoreditch". But that's just made Tooting residents laugh. South is not the new east. It's better.

After years out of the spotlight for SW17, the balance is shifting across the river — and Tooting is absolutely rooting.

Keep your London Fields Lido, SDubz has **Tooting Bec**, the biggest pool by surface area in the UK at 100 yards long by 33 wide. There's a great swathe of park and plenty of places to drink, dance and dine. As well as a comical name.

It's about to get another boost. **Chicken Shop**, which is part of the Soho House group, opens on Tooting High Street on

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November 22. No longer will the area be synonymous with Chicken Cottage.

Founder Nick Jones says: "I love south London, having lived in Wandsworth. We had a lot of fun launching Chicken Shop in Kentish Town in 2012 and thought it was time to take it south of the river. South London is a thriving community."

So what sort of a place will Chicken Shop nest in? Stylist and blogger Alexandra Stedman says: "Tooting Broadway is mainly independent shops with BYOB restaurants. Housing is affordable. It has the 'edge' that Shoreditch now lacks."

The latest addition is **The Little Bar**. They don't like the word "cocktail". Instead beer is brewed in the borough and there's a fine selection of negronis. Try the sloegroni — a fabulous mix of sloe gin, Campari and Punt e Mes (dark Italian vermouth) — or an SW17 Champagne cocktail.

It's worth heading across the road to **Rick's**. Run by Rick Gibbs, former head chef at the Chelsea Arts Club, the menu is designed around fresh produce. He says the only thing in his freezer is ice cream.

But old favourites such as rib-eye steak with hand-cut chips and chilli jam and sticky toffee pudding are permanent fixtures, alongside items such as Spanish ham and Irish oysters.



Due south: cakes and sandwiches at Tota in Tooting High Street

Another foodie favourite is **Tota**. After 30 years of cooking around the world, chef Gary Doherty has settled on Tooting High Street to bring the people of south London all sorts of brunch options (apple and cinnamon pancakes are a favourite), fish-finger sandwiches and chocolate salted caramel tart with dulce de leche ice cream as a finale to sophisticated dinner options. There's a good, non-patronising kids' menu. They're all for bigging up south London produce, with ginger beer from a man called Ozzie in Brixton and dessert courtesy of Bermondsey's The Ice Cream Union.

Near Tooting Broadway Tube station, café-bar **Graveney & Meadow** has a sensibly priced tapas menu with chorizo hot dogs and chargrilled swordfish. Bread is baked on site and beers are from local Sambrook's and Hogs Back.

Of course it wouldn't be Tooting without curry. **Radha Krishna Bhavan's** walls are covered with photographs of coconuts on the beach at sunset and their dosas and vellappams (Frisbee-shaped crumpets) are spectacular. There's also Mirch Masala, with succulent chicken jalfrezi, and Lahor Karahi, a Pakistani restaurant that does fragrant chicken and fenugreek Seekh kebabs.

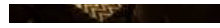
And it wouldn't be London without a new burger restaurant. Try **Meat & Shake** on Upper Tooting Road.

There are plenty of pubs to choose from. **The Gorrington Park** is run by the boys behind The Somers Town Coffee House in King's Cross and does clucking-good jerk chicken. Tootingers are protective of their pubs.

A petition to stop **The Wheatsheaf** being sold to Tesco gained more than 2,000 signatures in three days and has been saved to live another day with more real ale, comedy and gigs.

There's culture too. Rachel Edwards and Sue Dunn are at the helm of **Tooting Arts Club** and are on a mission to give SW17 some theatre. Last show was A Midsummer Night's Dream and they have exciting projects in the pipeline.

**Tooting Tram and Social** is the place to go for dancing and music, underneath a spectacular chandelier. In the daytime there



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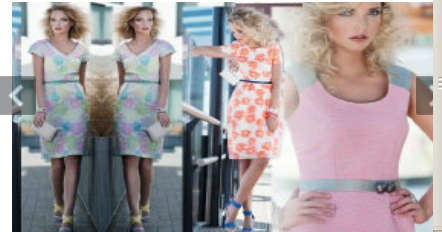
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are art and craft markets and by night everything from drum 'n' bass nights to new classical music.

The 80-year-old **market** is another entertainment hotspot, with regular events. And put November 23 in your diary. It's time to celebrate Thanksgiving with an autumn banquet at the market designed by American food blogger Amy Berman.

Convinced yet? It's only a few stops down the Northern line.

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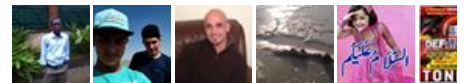
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**Nomfos** 113 days ago

I accept that gentrification happens but why do you have to strip an area of its cultural identity when you try to "rebrand" it? Tooting has a huge Asian community and their presence has shaped the high street. I understand that your "independent shops and byob restaurants" line makes it sound more Shoreditch than the reality of sari shops and curry restaurants, but don't rewrite the Tooting that is familiar to many people who live there just because a posh chicken shop has decided to move in. By the way, it's spelt Lahore.

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