

Mother & baby

Grace Timothy on swapping her Manolos for motherhood

And baby makes three

When I found out I was pregnant, one of the main things my husband and I agreed on was that it would not change us. One of our main shared pleasures has always been going out for supper - a good bottle of wine (or four), three courses (or five), and always eating the sweets that come with the bill. The only thing to compromise our enjoyment of all three was always the stray child that had been smuggled into our chosen restaurants to make noise, mess and often nick the complimentary confection. In fact, we based most of our venue choices around a lack of kids, and dined as late as 9pm to avoid them. We saw no reason to change this plan when we had our own child. Mainly because we reassured ourselves that our little darling would be far better behaved than these little scamps and would fit into the most sophisticated of environments.

A year later, we've changed. After a slightly unfortunate moment in Harrods' Georgian Restaurant where the buggy tipped over, Emie peed her pants and then had a meltdown over an egg sandwich - who cries in Harrods?! - we've sought out places where a full-scale 'episode' won't be so awkward. We've usually eaten by 6pm, are covered in a multitude of semi-chewed vegetables, and only make it halfway through bottle number one, hurrying out of the restaurant before the waiter notices the pile of soggy rice cakes underfoot. I still refuse to dine in wholly kid-centric places

though - for now - and there are a few places which hold untold pleasure for parents like us who just don't fancy goustons and chips with a side of colouring-in on a Saturday night.

My absolute favourite is Bill's - child-friendly but without compromising on style or delicious food. Ever since I unceremoniously extracted both breasts to feed Emie on a cold November morning, sending my latte flying into the neighbouring booth, the staff have protected me from prying eyes and kept my coffee cup full. There's room for the buggy and highchairs seem to appear before you've even asked for one. Chichester's branch is like a second home, but Brighton and Lewes have also been as welcoming, though not as roomy. Other restaurants have missed a trick where Bill's excels - we new mothers will lunch longer than most and drink more coffee than you thought possible; you should be giving us our own VIP sections.

Elsewhere, I've found The Drift-In (vast salads) and The Landing (vast cakes) in the Witterings to be perfect autumnal lunch venues - though a little more crowded during the summer months, of course, when the Goodwood Bar & Grill comes into its own - loads of room for buggies. There's nothing like Sussex's country pubs for Sunday lunch, and we've found The Partridge, The Earl of March and The Fox Goes Free to be as welcoming of our baby as they once were of our bar tab. Over in Brighton and Hove, The Hub on Church



Road is a firm favourite - the vegetarian breakfast is out of this world - and The Coal Shed will make room for your baby paraphernalia so you can make room for their 400g rib eye. Petworth has a few too - The Hungry Guest is achingly stylish without being intimidating, and Coco Café & Sugar Lounge is perfect for anyone who wants lunch to be a treat for both mother and child - nobody escapes without a few 'oohs' and 'aahs' over the exquisite sweet treats. Worthing's Green Cuisine deserves a mention too, especially if you or your child has any allergies. Fantastic vegan-friendly food, with a separate children's menu so healthy and varied it would even impress Jamie Oliver. ■

Directory

Bill's: bills-website.co.uk

The Drift-In: www.witteringsurfshop.com/pages/drift-in-cafe

The Landing: www.thelanding.co.uk

Goodwood Bar & Grill: www.goodwood.co.uk/eating-and-drinking/bar-and-grill/bar-and-grill.aspx

The Partridge: www.thepartridgeinn.co.uk

The Earl of March: www.theearlofmarch.com

The Fox Goes Free: www.thefoxgoesfree.com

The Hub: www.HubHove.com

The Coal Shed: www.coalshed-restaurant.co.uk

The Hungry Guest: www.thehungryguest.com

Coco Café & Sugar Lounge : 01798 344006

Green Cuisine: www.mentalaboutlentils.co.uk

Aden + Anais Muslin Swaddle

Whether you're breastfeeding, bottle-feeding or weaning, this is an essential bit of kit. Yes, it's a swaddle - a great way to aid sleep in newborns but over for most around the 12 week mark. Then this giant muslin square really comes into its own. Tuck one corner under your bra-strap on your shoulder and it covers you and your baby while feeding, blocking out both distractions and voyeurs. Mop up spills, spit-up and dribble - unlike muslin squares, this can last a whole day or night of feeds. Cover your buggy to protect from the sun, keep cool or just help them drift off. And they are drop dead gorgeous, too - I await the new collections with the excitement once reserved for the Chanel couture show.

www.adenandana.co.uk