Smithfield - a new London village

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London, rather romantically, is still considered a series of 'villages' with Hampstead, Kensington, Chelsea and Soho the most frequently mentioned and sought after.

In reality with congested roads and unreliable public transport it can take as long to get between any of these neighbouring villages as it takes to have a good lunch so it is increasingly important to know where precisely you can find a wide choice of good places to eat and drink.

This is how Soho first made its mark in the 1950s and 1960s before losing out to Covent Garden, and then making a significant revival.

But today the most exciting London village for eating and drinking is undoubtedly Smithfield, London EC1, the area around the famous meat market. On the rise for the past five years, Smithfield has, thanks to the market which starts at midnight, its proximity to the City which keeps it busy during the day and early evening, and clubs such as Fabric (in a former meat cold store) which closes at 3am, suddenly emerged as London's first 24-hour village. Try the following.

- **Fantoni**, **Ferrari**, **Butts**, the busy cafés that feed the market porters, or **The Hope & Sir Loin**, or **Fox & Anchor** pubs with meat restaurants attached and a licence from 7am.

- **Rudland & Stubbs** (020-7253 0148) or **Stream** (020-7796 0070) for fish, oysters and, at Stream, cut price champagne; **Jamies** (020-7600 0700) next to Stream is a new wine bar with keen wine prices.

- for chef Fergus Henderson's really gutsy British food, head for the bar, bakery and restaurant at **St John** (020-7251 0848); for food of a similar style but with more cosmopolitan influences (chef John Torode is Australian) visit the multi-layered **Smiths of Smithfield** (020-7236 6666), whilst on the south side of the market chef Pascal Aussignac offers an extraordinary range of flavours and wines from his native south-west France at the restaurant **Club Gascon** (020-7796 0600) and the wine bar **Cellier Gascon**, next door.

Finally, for anyone who wants to appreciate what Smithfiled was like before it became this 24-hour village do visit the church of Saint Bartholemew the Great built in 1123 whose entrance is next door to Club Gascon and whose small garden is, as far as I know, the only place in Smithfield where alcohol is banned.