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## Restaurant takes waiters off the menu

### BENEDICT MOORE-BRIDGER

A LONDON restaurant that does away with waiters is set to spark a new trend in dining.

German chain Vapiano combines fine dining with McDonald's fast-food principles.

Instead of customers being waited on at their tables, diners use chip and pin technology to order and pay for food.

Vapiano, Germany's fastest-growing restaurant chain, serves traditional Italian food and salads prepared in mini kitchens which allows diners to customise their meals.

The first London outlet — a 300-seater restaurant situated on Great Portland Street — will



**New style:** chefs at work in Vapiano

open next month, designed by celebrated Milanese interior architect Matteo Thun.

Customers are handed a credit-card-style card which they swipe at food stations where their meal is being prepared. On

leaving they hand the card to the hostess to pay.

Called "front cooking", the idea is to blend fast-food techniques with the recipes of a good quality restaurant.

Established in 2002, Vapiano has 31 outlets in Europe and the USA. Ian Daly, UK managing partner for Vapiano, said the "revolutionary" approach could lead to other restaurants following suit.

He said: "In Germany there certainly have been copycat restaurants. There is no one that combines this unique style and quality.

"From experience in other countries it has been a fantastic success."