



Modern Art Deco interior at The French Window



Avocado shrimp with lemon cream and caviar

## FOODSTUFF

New restaurants, gourmet menus, top chefs & more for the perfect meal out

BY ANDREW DEMBINA



Lemon tart meringue



Pan-seared lamb tenderloin with fondant potatoes

### WINDOW TO A FRENCH SOUL The French Window

3101, Podium Level 3, i/c Mall, Central, tel: 2393 3812, website: www.thefrenchwindow.hk

The space previously occupied by Sichuan eatery Lumiere has been given a complete makeover to become modern fine-dining Gallic restaurant The French Window. Distressed barn-like wood panels clad much of the walls, particularly along the long corridor from the entrance that builds a sense of occasion before you reach a brown and white open dining room with a killer harbour view.

The menu draws on French tradition with modern interpretations. This restaurant is part of the Miramar Group and Justin Quek (who founded Whisk at the Mira Hong Kong) is the consultant chef, but the menu is mostly the inspiration of young resident executive chef Mickael le Calvez, who worked at three-Michelin-starred L'Aubergade in Puymiroir, southwest France. And he goes for some bold aesthetics.

Take the starter of modern avocado shrimp with lemon cream and caviar: perfect apple green spheres and contain mashed seasoned shrimp. Topped with caviar and presented on plates with small paisley-like dollops of aerated lemon sauce, this conversation piece is big on complementary flavours. Likewise, the signature starter of beef carpaccio Rossigny layers rectangular slivers of red beef and foie gras, which are topped with a trench of garden leaves and disks of black truffle to great flavourful and visual effect.

The best way to enjoy a meal here is to opt for

a tasting menu – available in either five- or eight-course versions, with or without wine pairings. These menus change every two or three months. But before you embark on this or a la carte, enjoy one of the best and most varied breadbaskets Foodstuff has experienced for a while – six oven-warm varieties, with top grade Philippe Olivier butter, unsalted and salted. Simple pleasure at its best. The restaurant also serves the cheese of this high-grade boutique dairy.

Of the mains, Wagyu beef cheek a la Bourguignon with confit carrot and red wine sauce is superb – the succulent meat is marinated overnight and the baby carrots add sweetness. It is perfect with a glass of soft tannined Bordeaux, such as Chateau Lalande de Borie 2005 St Julien. Another tasty red meat dish is pan-seared lamb tenderloin with fondant potatoes and Arabic pesto; the lamb is served in a crispy wafer-thin tunnel of potato.

Dessert signatures include strawberry ravioli with balsamic reduction and verbena (a South American herb) ice cream and a very light lemon meringue tart.

**Decor** Mod Art Deco

**Best for** A memorable gastronomic indulgence

**Best dish** Wagyu beef cheek a la Bourguignon

### SUPERIOR SEASIDE SERVINGS

#### Rocksalt

25 Stanley Market Road, Stanley, tel: 2899 0818

Setting out to bring quality cuisine to the Stanley waterfront, this restaurant opened its doors and slid back its large glass windows a few months ago. Rocksalt, founded on modern Australian principles, lets the ingredients do most of the talking, using fresh international produce enhanced with flavouring rather than doused in it. Southeast Asian notes appear here and there. Given its location, there is plenty of seafood on the menu, with a chalkboard noting the catch of the day and other specials. A central transparent iced raw bar allows guests to see what seafood is in the house, and staff elaborate on how it can be included in dishes.

Handily, for those not carefully clock-watching, specials and a la carte are available all day and evening. From the latter's starters, tuna sashimi on

a bed of baba ganoush (roast eggplant dip) is served with very crispy thin toast. Tomato tart uses sun-dried and fresh roast cherry tomatoes, and crab cakes come with homemade mayonnaise dip. Or there are seasonal oysters, served with three house dips and a lemon wedge – Coffin Bay (from South Australia) and Bruny Bay (Tasmania) are available year-round.

Mains include Rocksalt seafood bouillabaisse, which features whole crab, prawn, mussel, squid and fish, and veal rack with ginger butter, sweet potato puree and ginger and sesame jus. Fish signatures are 'paperbark' (wrapped) roasted salmon fillet with baby mushrooms, bak choy, ginger and onion, and Rocksalt baked blue-eye cod fillet with baby potato salad, olive and rosemary oil. Fish of the day can be

of Australian snapper roasted in foil with mushroom, asparagus and chopped chilli.

Pastas and pizzas are also offered. Salmon, rocket, salsa verde and bocconcini (cheese) sounds a cut above the usual pizza toppings. Set lunches represent good value: two courses start at \$128, with prices varying according to main course selection; dessert adds a modest \$20. An evening tasting menu priced at \$398 presents several a la carte items in smaller portions. Children's menu and colouring-in diversions are provided. And the wine list offers plenty by the glass.

**Decor** Blonde wood and bay-view glass walls

**Best for** An above-average seaside meal

**Best dish** Baked fish of the day



Open to the sea air



Seafood platter at Rocksalt

## FOODIE HIGH-FIVE

**Jeannie Cho Lee**, first Asian Master of Wine, locally based author of *Asian Palate*, journalist, wine judge and educator, is always happy to indulge her taste buds. Here are her top five restaurants for comfort cuisine in Hong Kong.

#### Yung Kee

32-40 Wellington Street, Central, tel: 2522 1624

"A Hong Kong treasure – you can't get better than Yung Kee for delicious Cantonese roasted meats. The barbecue suckling pig and the signature roast goose pair well with its Crozes-Hermitage 2006 or 2007 house red wine."

#### Bonheur

6/F, The Pemberton, 22-26 Bonham Strand, Sheung Wan, tel: 2544 6333

"This private kitchen captures the simple and sophisticated French bistro feel. There is no corkage for wine or champagne at dinner, which means I can bring along more of my favourite bottles."

#### Kaetsu

M/F, Grand Hyatt, 1 Harbour Road, Wanchai, tel: 2584 7722

"In this authentic Japanese restaurant, the food is always good and with over 40 types of sake it's impossible to get stuck for choice. The chef uses wonderful seasonal ingredients in addition to serving reliable sushi and sashimi."

#### Cepage

23 Wing Fung Street, Wanchai, tel: 2861 2833

"This is the perfect place for an elegant meal with close friends. The signature celeriac and Japanese organic egg yolk ravioli with truffle jus and Japanese mushrooms is worth a try. The



wine list is one of the most impressive in Hong Kong with an exceptional Burgundy selection."

#### Myung Ga

Shop P301-302, World Trade Centre, 280 Gloucester Road, Causeway Bay, tel: 2882 5056

"Being born and raised in Korea, it's important that I satisfy my kimchi and spicy tofu craving. This place is great for heart-warming Korean classics, including stinky fermented soybean soup and spicy soft tofu stew. An added benefit is that corkage is low, making it perfect for wine lovers."

## TABLES TALK



**Le 188° Restaurant & Lounge** atop the **Harbour Grand** (23 Oil Street, North Point, tel: 2121 2693) offers stunning views, a loungey romantic ambiance and superb modern European food from innovative executive chef **Jeno Friedl**, especially on the last Tuesday of the month when the young Hungarian, who is keen on surprising pairings in the molecular manner, presides over a chef's table. Priced at \$1,288 per person (an additional \$588 for wines), 12 courses amaze with their range of ingredients and intricate cooking methods – foam and nitro frozen presentations are Friedl favourites. Previous Tuesday feasts have featured gold-coated warm scampi with clear bouillabaisse and citrus granite; ark shell ravioli with pickled turnip and wasabi; Bresse chicken cassoulet with truffle popcorn, rosemary jelly and fava beans, and wild strawberry with port ice cream, chocolate paste and macadamia snow.



The Peninsula has close competition for its top-notch afternoon tea. **The Parlour** (1/F, **Hullett House**, 2A Canton Road, Tsimshatsui, tel: 3988 0101) serves a three-tier selection at \$398 for two (\$238 for one). Choose a table under whirling fans on its long veranda or within its dark-wood interior. There are flavourful smoked salmon, cucumber and yoghurt finger sandwiches, mini leek quiche, scones and pastries. Special mentions go to the luscious homemade strawberry preserve, mini turkey burger, white chocolate mousse and Hullett House tea blend – black tea with passion fruit and rosehip. New at the same venue: Saturday and Sunday champagne brunch prepared by Michelin chef **Philippe Orrico**. Priced at \$528, it includes bottomless Veuve Clicquot champagne, coffee, tea and soft drinks.



The recently launched weekend 'semi-buffet' brunch at **Domani** (Level 4, Pacific Place, Admiralty, tel: 2111 1197) features a help-yourself selection of appetisers and desserts plus a main course from the a la carte menu. Its well-spaced outdoor terrace garden tables are a good draw for those with young children. Highlights from the antipasti buffet are fresh soups, tuna carpaccio with parmesan, marinated smoked salmon, cold slices of veal in white wine cream sauce, roast vegetables and salads. Hot buffet dishes include sauteed lobster, and pork and lentil stew. Prices depend on the main dish selected, with pizza options at \$348. Pasta, risotto, meat and seafood are offered. The dessert table presents mini cakes, mousses and tarts and sliced fresh fruit. From noon to 3pm; add \$198 per person for free flow of soft drinks, beer, prosecco or house red or white wine.

At **Sha Tin 18 (Hyatt Regency Hong Kong, Sha Tin Hotel)**: 18 Chak Cheung Street, Shatin, tel: 2723 1234) northern Chinese and Cantonese cuisine is meticulously prepared by a team of top mainland chefs within glass-walled kitchen stations. Handmade noodles are stretched and cut; large woks fry and boil, and at the dessert counter an oven bakes. The cold starter platter is exceptional; served with specialty house-made sauces it features jellyfish head with fungus and a very delicate roast pork belly. Roast Peking duck is carved tableside and served as three courses – the skin wrapped in pancakes with plum sauce; stir-fried chopped meat with lettuce, and a light broth with bean curd and vegetable.



**Spasso** (Shop 403, Level 4, Ocean Centre, Harbour City, Tsimshatsui, tel: 2730 8027) presents a beef-inspired culinary journey with its new five-course gastronomic tasting menu. Deluxe Scottish cuts are highlighted (though non-meat choices are available too): a starter of hand-flattened Scottish tenderloin served Piedmont-style, with a light anchovy sauce, marinated mushrooms and parmesan, and a main of pan-fried filet mignon, sauteed porcini mushroom and Yorkshire pudding with grana padano cheese and horseradish cream. Also on the set menu is chickpea and octopus soup with rosemary; monkfish tail osso bucco stew with fresh tomato and vegetable and saffron mashed potato, and half rigatoni pasta tossed with ragout of rockfish, lentil and Nduja sausage. Price starts from \$548.

### SUMMER RUM DEAL

**Armani Bar / HK** (2/F, Armani/Chater House, 11 Chater Road, Central, tel: 2805 0028) presents the perfect summer cooler collection – the **Fruits Mojito**. The classic Cuban highball is redressed for summer with the tempting sweetness of seasonal fruit – choose from raspberry, lychee, mango, watermelon, pineapple, strawberry, passion fruit, apple, blueberry, peach, lemon or a grand Mojito Royale. It makes a refreshing afternoon cocktail or a fruity after-work pick-me-up.

#### How to make a fruit mojito, Armani Bar style:

- Muddle together four or five slices of fresh lime with the fruit of your choice (raspberries, strawberries and so on) and a spoonful of sugar (according to the sweetness of your tooth)
- Slap 8-10 fresh mint leaves into a tall glass and add the fruit mixture on top
- Add a measure of rum, a squirt of fresh lime juice and liquid sugar to taste
- Fill with crushed ice to the top of the glass and stir
- Top with a spritz of soda water

