



The food bloggers' DOSSIER 2017

From London to Melbourne via Amsterdam, here are the must-visit foodie destinations from the bloggers and Instagrammers who know their cities best.

BY MIKE MACEACHERAN



LONDON

FOR BREAKFAST
MICHAEL ZEE, cookbook author and founder of *Symmetry Breakfast*



Long before everyone was a foodie and drank flat whites, London was rocking breakfast. We had the greasy-spoon café selling a full English and a cup of tea for less than a fiver (USD 6.26), but also high-end haunts like Claridge's, The Ivy and The Savoy. Breakfast here is more substantial than in France, but also more refined than what the Americans eat.

The amazing thing is how the mid-market has exploded with talent and diversity in the past decade. Inspired by the likes of Fergus Henderson of St John (26 St John Street; stjohngroup.uk.com), you can find casual, but high quality suburban joints like my locals Rawduck (197 Richmond Road; rawduckhackney.co.uk) and Black Axe Mangal (156 Canonbury Road; blackaxemangal.com) that are really exciting; or incredible bakeries like E5 Bakehouse (395 Mentmore Terrace; e5bakehouse.com). Tucked away under a railway arch on a backstreet, its pastries and Hackney Wild sourdough bread are some of the best I've ever tasted.

One of my absolute joys – and it's not for everyone – is to go to Billingsgate Market (Trafalgar Way; billingsgatefishmarket.org) in the early hours – around 5am – as that's the time to get the best fish.

Another must-visit is The Regency Café in Pimlico (17-19 Regency Street; regencycafe.co.uk). It hasn't changed one bit in 50 years and has been used as a backdrop in many brilliant British films like *Pride*, *Layer Cake* and *Brighton Rock*. Order your food before you take a seat and wait. When it's ready, you'll hear the loudest voice shout your order. You'd better be quick collecting it, or you'll get some pretty hilarious jokes hurled at you.

For more on Michael's food blog *Symmetry Breakfast*, visit symmetrybreakfast.com or follow him on Instagram @symmetrybreakfast.

MELBOURNE

FOR EAST-MEETS-WEST
AGIA SIDI, food photographer and Instagrammer



People are always asking me, 'What is Australian cuisine?'. The answer is a hard one as you can't really define its cuisine as a single type. A plethora of multinational cuisines – that's the real definition of Australian cooking.

For me, Melbourne is the multicultural melting pot of Australia, and the easiest way to introduce its culture is through food. For starters, I'd begin the

day with the city's famous brunch and coffee scene. Top Paddock is renowned for its ricotta hotcakes (658 Church Street; toppaddockcafe.com), as is Kettle Black (50 Albert Road; thekettleblack.com.au) for great food, great ambience and great service. For a little twist, try the signature eggs Benedict at Sir Charles, which come served with sriracha Hollandaise, *bahn mi* and a *kimchi* waffle (121 Johnston Street; sircharlesfitzroy.com.au). It'll never disappoint. For coffee, the standing-room-only Patricia Coffee Brewers (Corner Little Bourke St & Little William Street; patriciacoffee.com.au) is my all-time favourite.

Later in the day, make for Tipo 00 (361 Little Bourke Street; tipo00.com.au), which serves exceptional pasta. How exceptional can pasta be? Well, try yourself and you'll understand just how much. Either bear the long queue or come super early to get a table. And for the perfect blend of what the city represents, never leave Melbourne without having had a meal at Asian dining hall Chin Chin (125 Flinders Lane; chinchinrestaurant.com.au). It offers up bold and festive Asian cuisines, mixed together with Western-style cooking.

Follow Agia Sidi's food adventures on Instagram at @agiasidi



HONG KONG & TOKYO

FOR CHEAP EATS AND SUSHI
NICOLE FUNG, blogger and founder of That Food Cray



Hong Kong is the perfect example of a city with a great food culture. You can find everything from bargain-priced, hole-in-the-wall spots to some of the world's best Michelin-starred restaurants – it's both culturally and economically diverse, which is why the options are endless. You'll find some of the city's best Thai food in Kowloon City, Korean in Tsim Sha Tsui and world-renowned restaurants in Central.

I'm lucky enough to have had the opportunity to eat at an abundance of restaurants, both high-end and casual, all over the world, and travelling has allowed me to expand my knowledge of food and how things are 'supposed' to taste. For instance, my first authentic sushi experience in Tokyo forever changed my perception of what proper sushi should be like. That's why Japan is always in my top five for food. Everything just tastes so much better in Japan – the produce, the perfectly marbled beef, fresh seafood, and fish – it's incredible.

For more of Nicole's recommendations, visit her food blog thatfoodcray.com

AMSTERDAM

FOR NEW DUTCH
MARA GRIMM, food writer, columnist and blogger



The dining scene in Amsterdam is booming at the moment. After years of focussing on French classical cuisine, we – at last – seem to have found our own style. Places you should not miss include Breda (Singel 210; breda-amsterdam.com), Rijsel (Marcusstraat 52; rijsel.com), RIJKS (at the Rijksmuseum; rijksmuseum.nl) and Gebroeders Hartering (Peperstraat 10; gebr-hartering.nl). While for refined dining, two-starred Bord'eau is the place to be (Nieuwe Doelenstraat 2-14; bordeau.nl).



It's wonderful food has become such a popular subject, however, there is also a downside. Since anyone can become a food blogger, and the line between commercial writing and journalism gets thinner everyday, the quality of most blogs could be a lot better. Food bloggers might be extremely influential, but for clever, humorous and well-thought food writing, I still turn to the old-school journalist.

For the past few years, Arabic cuisine has really swept me of my feet. From Lebanon to Abu Dhabi and from Marrakech to Istanbul, the variety is enormous and the explosion of taste and smell is highly addictive. This is why I hope that after focusing on Scandinavia, Japan, Peru and Mexico, the next spotlight will be on the Middle East. I recently participated at Taste of Abu Dhabi by Etihad Airways and I was struck by the high level of cooking. And, of course, I was extremely happy that my fellow countryman André Gerrits won the finals for 't Amsterdammertje in Amsterdam (Rijksstraatweg 119; restaurantamsterdammertje.nl). It proves that after years of struggling, Holland is finally becoming a serious food destination.

For more insight from Mara, visit maragrimm.nl

IMAGES: AASIYA JAGDESH/ITP IMAGES, AGIA SIDI, HEAD SHOT OF MICHAEL ZEE COURTESY OF ANTHONY GERACE, MARA GRIMM, MICHAEL ZEE & NICOLE FUNG

DUBAI & ABU DHABI

FOR DESTINATION RESTAURANTS
SAMANTHA WOOD, founder of FooDiva, a restaurant-review blog



Eating out is a national pastime in the UAE. Supermarket shopping is prohibitively expensive if you're cooking for only one or two people, so it's cheaper to dine out at affordable restaurants.

One of Dubai's most talented chefs is Colin Clague, a Brit who has reinvented Turkish cuisine with a modern, lighter twist on traditional dishes. His restaurant, Ruya at Grosvenor House (Al Sufouh Road; ruyadubai.com), oozes atmosphere and slick service. Alternatively, for something unique, book ahead for The Experience by Chef Reif Othman. From Singapore, he has taken the traditional chef's table to another level by creating a private apartment where he cooks for 12 guests one floor above his restaurant Play at the H Hotel (One Sheikh Zayed Road; playrestaurants.com). His cooking style is Far Eastern, yet he uses many European ingredients.

It may be glitzy, but you also can't miss a meal at Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi, especially for a bite of the sublime jasmine-tea-smoked Wagyu beef ribs at Hakkasan (West Corniche Road; hakkasan.com). If you go between 6–8pm, you'll save a few dirhams and enjoy happy hour with two cocktails and three dim sum for only AED 80 (USD 21.78). ■

Read Samantha's UAE restaurant reviews at foodiva.net

