

DESTINATION: DEGUSTATION

From acclaimed new openings to all-time classics and reinvigorated favourites, these fresh global dining experiences are well worth the journey, writes Chris Dwyer.

People don't just have lunch or grab dinner anymore – now, it's all about 'culinary experiences'. If that feels a bit too much like Ralph Fiennes strutting the dining room with his meat cleaver, fear not. These global gourmand capers are all more than legit – and all distinctly delicious. Book a flight, make a reservation and take off for 'destination: degustation'.

Da Nang

La Maison 1888 at InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort

This resort has drawn in-the-know gastronomes since opening thanks to a smorgasbord of first-class dining concepts, but the latest addition marks an enormous coup. La Maison 1888, an Indochinese mansion from the maverick mind of designer Bill Bensley, has just announced Christian Le Squer from three-Michelin-starred Le Cinq in Paris as the new name above the door. Chef de cuisine Florian Stein ensures that Le Squer's dishes seriously wow in

Central Vietnam, notably the ingenious 'Standing Spaghetti' – which may just make you think you've been nipping at the claret just a little too long. danang.intercontinental.com

Istanbul

Serica Restaurant at The Bank Hotel

Istanbul is incontrovertibly one of the world's finest food cities but doesn't always get the respect it merits. Thankfully neo-Turkish restaurants such as Serica are changing perceptions with thrilling influences from Anatolia, the Black Sea and beyond. From the menu, a Jenga-esque rectangle of crisp bread comes decked in marinated anchovies, bottarga and enough garlic-rich aioli to scare off Vlad Dracul himself. Cool lettuce is then buried under an avalanche of local ewe's cheese, before lamb shoulder cooked in the tandoor with stuffed onion and apricot purée marks the perfect crescendo. Views over the mosques of Sultanahmet add to the sense of Turkish delight. thebankhotelistanbul.com



“Plates are so redolent of the Italian Riviera that you struggle to remember you’re in Mauritius and not on set of ‘The Talented Mr. Ripley’”

Bangkok

Arva at Aman Nai Lert

The fact that high-end hotels tend to choose Japanese and Italian as their key culinary calling cards reflects the unwavering popularity of the two food behemoths. But when executed impeccably, as at Arva in the new Aman Nai Lert Bangkok, you really appreciate why. Arva is Italian for ‘harvest’, so you can bet your last euro that ingredients served up are of the finest quality going. Its cavatelli cacio e pepe is one of the finest versions east of the Tiber, while seared turbot with parsnip and roasted shallot marks a maritime masterclass. aman.com

Hong Kong

Lai Ching Heen at Regent Hong Kong

Restaurants with great views frequently disappoint on the plate, but happily Lai Ching Heen at Regent Hong Kong blows that premise out of the water. The recently re-opened dining room, decked out in exquisite antiques and jade, gazes over Victoria Harbour towards the beckoning neon of Hong Kong Island. One of the world’s finest Cantonese restaurants, holding two Michelin stars, it is run by veteran Chef Lau Yiu Fai who works his magic in creations including an insanely tasty stuffed crab shell or flawless dim sum reflecting mind-bending technique. hongkong.regenthotels.com

London

Restaurant Gordon Ramsay High

It may sound like a TV cooking show set in a school, but Restaurant Gordon Ramsay High is one of London’s hottest new tables thanks to a combination of just 12 communal seats, fork-dropping panoramic views over the British capital and a stellar tasting menu crafted by executive head chef James Goodyear. Although the restaurant’s DNA is more French than a Citroën 2CV, Goodyear also riffs on neo-Nordic and Japanese flavours in tasting menu dishes such as scallops from the Isle of Skye with pumpkin, nori and a pine crème. gordonramsayrestaurants.com

New York

La Tête d’Or by Daniel Boulud

There’s something undeniably sexy about a steakhouse done truly right, so when French culinary legend Daniel Boulud is at the helm, you know you’re in for a glamorous soirée. La Tête d’Or – named for a park in Boulud’s hometown of Lyon – is a 120-seater in the Flatiron designed by David Rockwell in reassuring steakhouse materials of leather, velvet and polished mahogany. As you’d hope, Caesar salads are prepped tableside with theatrical aplomb, plateaus of fruits de mer dazzle and trolleys are decked in impossibly large porterhouse steaks. Save room for sundaes, already a signature. latetedorbydaniel.com

Mauritius

Riva at One&Only Le Saint Géran

Despite a location overlooking a shimmering turquoise pool on a dream-like Indian Ocean island, at Riva, real-deal plates from chef Roberto Macigno are so redolent of the Italian Riviera that you struggle to remember you’re in Mauritius and not on set of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. A signature eggplant Parmigiana delivers the umami tsunami you’d hope for, while orecchiette with pesto Trapanese – including almond, pistachio, tomato and basil – is a revelation. With former guests at the legendary resort including Nelson Mandela, rest assured you’re following in the finest of footsteps. oneandonlyresorts.com





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02 Good looking out at Salsify, Capetown © Jan Ras Photography 03 Kitchen viewin' at Eeuwen, in the brand-spanking-new Rosewood Amsterdam
04 A fried rice delight at Lai Ching Heen, Hong Kong 05 Graduate to a seat at the exclusive Restaurant Gordon Ramsay High, London

Barcelona

Il Milione at Monument Hotel

Il Milione is the distinctly meta notion of a restaurant within a three-Michelin-starred restaurant, a private dining experience playing out in a blacked-out room as chefs Martín Berasategui and Paolo Casagrande lead diners on a dining rollercoaster. *Oohhhs* come from an outrageous mille-feuille of foie gras with eel and apple, while *ahhhs* ring out following the odd but inspired melange of venison and blueberry juice. Theatrics including synchronised lights, soundtracks and fragrances – and your own tin of caviar – help explain the cool €480 (AUD\$840) per person price, sans drinks. restaurantlasarte.com/en/il-milione

Cape Town

Salsify at The Roundhouse

Cape Town is a dining destination offering stunning value, and the new seasonal menu at Salsify typifies the city's outstanding cooking, knockout views and decidedly wallet-friendly price points. Executive chef Ryan Cole works his magic at The Roundhouse, a national monument dating back to 1786, across dishes celebrating the local terroir, including the biggest foraged porcini we've ever seen. Dishes and stories are served up across different locations, with standouts including salt-baked beetroot with pickled guava and an epicly tasty 'Salsify Chocolate Bar' to wrap. Oh, yes. salsify.co.za

Amsterdam

Eeuwen at Rosewood Amsterdam

The signature restaurant at the new Rosewood Amsterdam, Eeuwen is Dutch for 'centuries'. This reflects not only the historic nature of the circa-1665 edifice, but a focus on slow dining where dishes are meant to be enjoyed in a leisurely fashion. This antithesis of fast food comes from chef de cuisine David Ordóñez, someone who brings serious Michelin props to the party. Every plate distills and highlights the essence of each ingredient such as Oesterij oysters from the Dutch village of Yerseke or seafood from Zeeland that features in a memorable plate of cod with razor clam sauce and a walnut sauce vierge. rosewoodhotels.com ♦