

NG PING-LEUNG

The new-generation farmer

The first thing you notice about Zen Organic is its colourful landscape. The fields are covered in gem green and purple leaves, heirloom tomatoes come in various shades and even the fig trees are decorated in gold, green or yellow fruits. "We grow produce that is different – the types of fruits and vegetables that you can't find at most other farms in Hong Kong. Those are the types that we try here," says Zen Organic's owner Ng Ping-leung. The sprawling, 250,000sq ft space used to be his father's pig farm. When he and his sister Joey Ng Pik-wan inherited it four years ago, they changed the pigsties into covered plots and converted the land into an arable, organic farm.

Coming from a photography background while his sister worked in the fashion industry, Ng recounts that the two of them pretty much started from zero when they launched Zen Organic. But in a few short years, they've become part of a new generation of farmers – one that's integrated modern skills and concepts into traditional agricultural practices. Now, their heirloom tomatoes can be found adorning pastas at Posto Pubblico, while their plump strawberries and golden figs make regular appearances at the Four Seasons hotel where resident pastry chef Gregoire Michaud is a self-proclaimed fan. For Ng, this is a big milestone: "People used to think that locally farmed ingredients couldn't look as good as imported fruits and vegetables. But now we can show them that Hong Kong soil also creates top quality produce."

Zen Organic Farm
Ping Che, Ta Kwu Ling, 6692 2671;
www.zeno.com.hk

20 PEOPLE CHANGING THE WAY WE EAT & DRINK

THERE'S A REASON WHY OUR CITY HAS SUCH A DYNAMIC DINING CULTURE. FROM THE MODERN-DAY FARMERS TO THE MULTI-SKILLED BREAD-BAKERS, WE CELEBRATE THE VISIONARIES WHO ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE WAY WE EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY. BY **DOROTHY SO**.
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CALVIN SIT**

BERTHA LO-HOFFORD & ALEX HOFFORD

The shark savers

When The Peninsula Hotels pledged to ban shark's fin at all of their group's outlets at the beginning of this year, it was a seminal moment for Bertha and Alex Hofford. The husband and wife team have dedicated themselves to shark conservation and have spent the past few years pushing restaurants, hotels and consumers to boycott the luxury ingredient. "Shark finning is a very urgent issue," says Alex. "Experts predict that 90 percent of the world's shark populous will be wiped out in 10 to 15 years." In 2010, Alex published *Man & Shark* with Paul Hilton – a 192-page book filled with gripping, behind-the-scenes images of the shark finning industry. The book created a huge public outcry against shark finning and all proceeds went towards My Ocean, a marine conservation charity that also operates the HK Shark Foundation.

"It's not just about the cruelty of shark finning," says Bertha, programme director at the HKSF. "It's about the sustainability and welfare of future generations." The two have helped organise various awareness campaigns throughout the years, including plank mobs, corporate talks and HKSF's recent 'happy hearts love sharks' wedding competition urging marrying couples to forgo shark's fin at their banquets. As Bertha explains: "Shark fin soup is a tradition in Chinese culture but people need to understand that some traditions are good while other traditions are not so good."

HK Shark Foundation
www.hksharkfoundation.org
Man & Shark
www.manandshark.com



EDDIE MCDUGALL

The man making wine appreciation hip

The Flying Winemaker is anything but your typical wine store. There's rock music playing over the sound system, the staff strut around in casual shirts and jeans and there's a 'Top 12' wall displaying bottles the way a record shop displays its hottest selling hits. And that's only the first floor. Head upstairs and it gets really interesting. Owner Eddie McDougall (who'll be celebrating his 29th birthday as this issue of *Time Out* hits the newsstands) calls it his 'wine lab' and it's in this space that he hosts seminars and tasting sessions designed to broaden our knowledge of reds, whites and everything in between. His 'tongue explorer' classes for example, break down the complexities of wine in the simplest, sensory terms. "It's all about connecting with people through the palate," he explains. An award-winning vintner himself, McDougall also offers 'blend master' classes that lift the veil on the actual winemaking process by giving people a chance to create their own unique blend, complete with lab coats and cool chem-lab equipment. At the heart of it though, what really makes McDougall's classes stand out is the approachability of it all. There's no snobbery, no pretension – it just boils down to understanding wines better and having a really good time while you're at it. As McDougall puts it: "Wine is meant to be fun. Wine is meant to be relaxed. Wine is meant to be for real people." How can anyone argue with that?

The Flying Winemaker
31 Wyndham St. Central,
2522 2187; www.eddiemcdougall.com



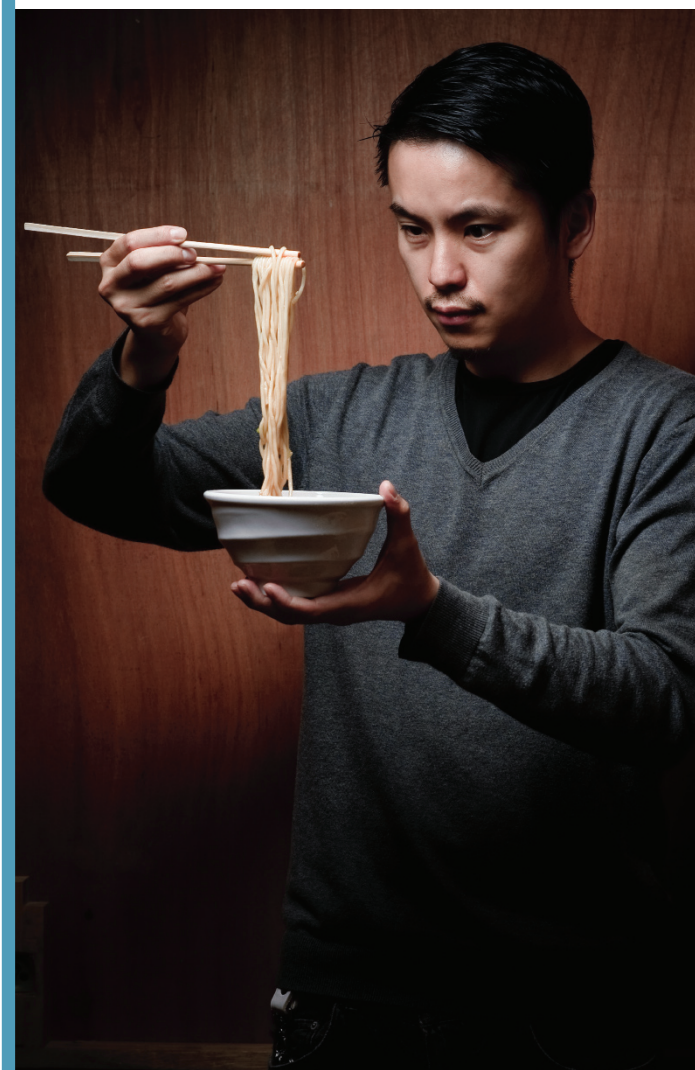


KAVITA FAIELLA

Teaching us to drink beyond Bordeaux

Kavita Faiella is constantly pushing us to broaden our drinking horizons. Since taking on the role of wine director at The Press Group, she's carefully revamped the wine lists at the group's multiple outlets and given each of them a distinct personality. She's opted for organic and biodynamic bottles for The Pawn, and even the all-French wine list at The Press Room highlights lesser known regions such as Jura and Languedoc-Roussillon. But perhaps her most impressive collection is the aptly named 'wine atlas' at The Principal, which lists more than 700 hand-selected bottles from across the globe. It's Faiella's way of getting us to go beyond our comfort zones of Burgundy and Bordeaux and to explore xinomavro grapes from Greece, chardonnays from Israel and rieslings from Slovakia.

The Principal
9 Star St, Wan Chai, 2563 3444;
www.theprincipal.com.hk

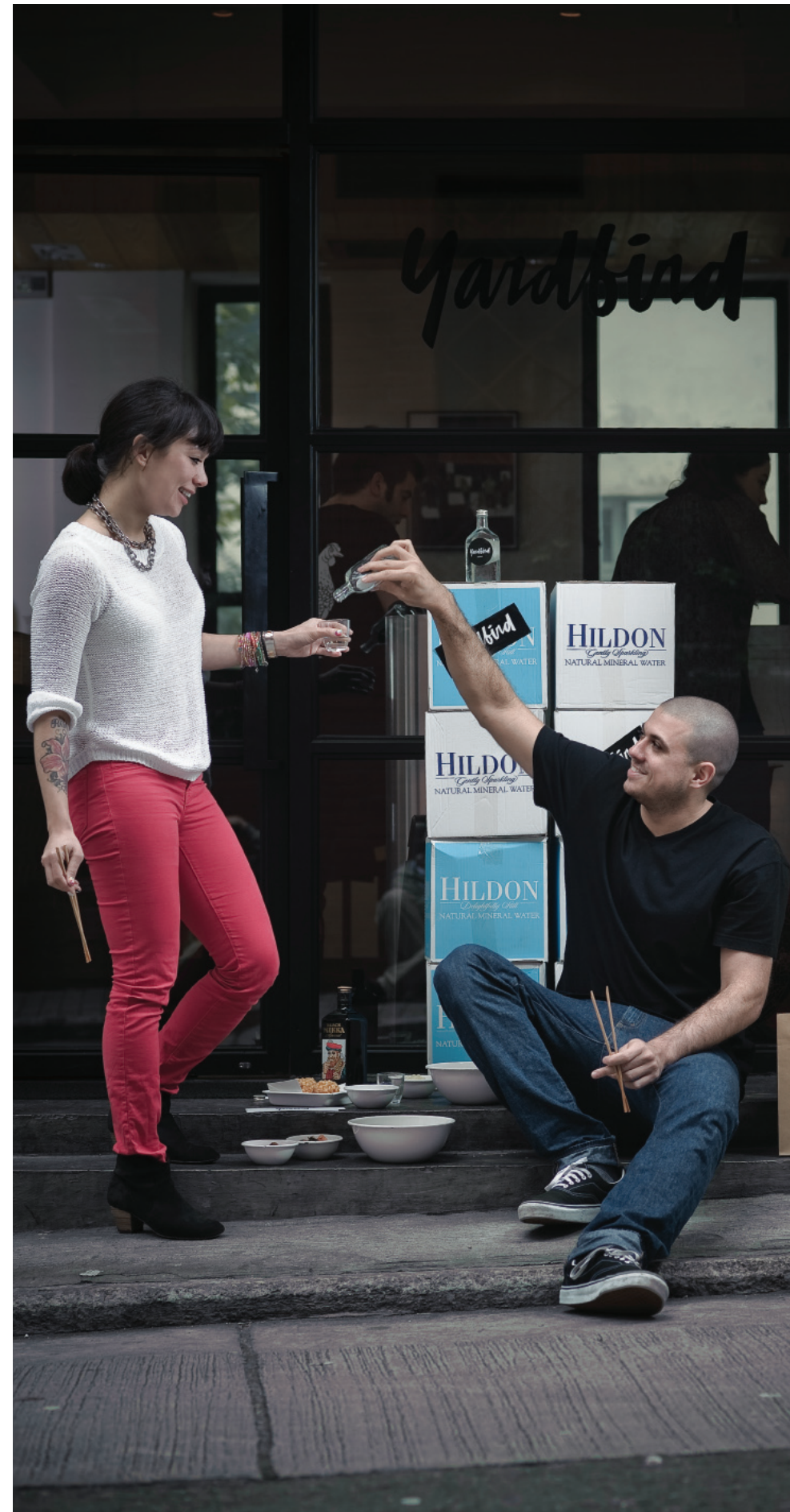


METER CHAN

The undisputed trend-maker

Whatever Meter Chan touches turns into gold. We got a glimpse of this two years ago when he co-founded Butao King – the LKF noodle shack that triggered the city's (still-ongoing) ramen craze. But Chan's not just any type of trend pusher. In fact, he's taken plenty of big risks all for the sake of quality. When soulless ramen chains were pumping out 20 different varieties of noodles, Chan insisted on keeping it to just four at Butao, with no side dishes save the option for an additional slab of chasiu and a half-boiled egg. And instead of profiting from the daily crowds that gathered outside his dingy 15-seater, he limited noodle sales to 200 bowls a day so he could keep track of his kitchen's standards. Chan's no longer associated with Butao and, instead, has gone on to set up Kakurega, which specialises in tsukemen – a trend we already see picking up in other parts of the city. His quality-driven business model is even more extreme here, with only three handmade noodles capped at 150 bowls a day. Yes, it's a little finicky, but it's all for the sake of good food.

Kakurega Ramen Factory
Unit 7083, 7/F, Dragon Ctr, 37 Yen
Chow St, Sham Shui Po, 3487 0989.



MATT ABERGEL & LINDSAY JANG

The dynamic duo of the dining scene

Whether you love their perfectly cooked chicken or loathe their irritating no-reservations system, the dining scene's been all abuzz about Yardbird since it opened its doors last summer. It's mostly thanks to Matt Abergel and Lindsay Jang – the dynamic duo behind the brand. But it's not just about packing in the tables every night; at Yardbird, Abergel (who's worked in the elaborate kitchens of Masa in Manhattan and Zuma in Hong Kong) has stripped away the glitz and glam of conventional fine dining. The food is still top tier (and, let's face it, so are the prices), but the end experience is down to earth and unfussy. Essentially, it's high-end eating for the new generation.

As for Jang, when she's not at Yardbird, she's busying herself with other projects, namely Naked Tables – a start-up consulting company she set up with her other business partner May Chow. They've taken on Library Café at Lane Crawford as one of their first ventures, revamping the menu to focus on the sort of simple, artisanal salads and sandwiches which the city has been missing. With Abergel and Jang's street cred, we were hardly surprised when their one-night-only Mexican pop-up event Hecho turned out to be a smash success last month. It was just tacos, ceviche and beers, but it was what the people wanted. After all, if this duo has taught us anything, it's that good food doesn't have to be fancy. Sometimes, it just needs to be cool.

Yardbird 33-35 Bridges St, Sheung Wan,
2547 9273; www.yardbirdrestaurant.com.
Library Café G/F, Lane Crawford, 3 Canton
Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2118 4530.

KATY YUNG & STEPHANIE TAN

Redistributing the global food balance

Table For Two is built on a philosophy of sharing. The social enterprise was set up in Japan by Masa Kogure in 2007 and has since expanded to cover cities all across the globe. The idea is to address the global food imbalance by involving the community at a tangible level. The organisation partners up with restaurants to create healthy, low-calorie meals and when diners order from these TFT-branded menus, part of the proceeds goes towards providing school meal programmes for undernourished children living in Africa and China. "It's much more effective than adding a dollar to your final bill," says Stephanie Tan, who co-founded TFT's Hong Kong chapter with Katy Yung. Despite only launching at the end of last year, the Hong Kong division has already formed partnerships with close to 30 restaurants and retail outlets including Happy Veggies, Pure Bar + Restaurant and FoFo by el Willy. "Young people have a lot of pent-up desire to give back to the community," says Yung, adding that something like TFT fits right into a city like Hong Kong where people are eating out all the time. Still in its early days, Tan and Yung are focusing on getting the word out there so more people know about TFT's activities. As Tan puts it: "We have to find innovative ways to reach out to the community."

Table for Two
www.tablefor2org.hk



JANICE LEUNG & KC KOO

The city's best food bloggers

In today's social media-dominated dining scene, everyone is swapping restaurant recs or food photos on blogs, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. But there was a time when pulling out a camera at the dinner table would elicit weird looks from those around you. Just ask Janice Leung and KC Koo, who've been uploading their eating exploits long before tweeting became the big bird it is today. Leung's been writing under the name e_ting since 2004 and her English blog and Twitter page both attract thousands of followers who read her up-to-the-moment views about the

city's latest ramen shop opening or the newest hidden private kitchen.

Koo's online legacy dates back even further. A famous personality among Canto-speaking foodies, Gourmet KC (his online handle) got started by writing ruthlessly honest reviews on the online restaurant directory Openrice.com. Since writing his first review in 2001, Koo now has more than 6,500 reviews on OpenRice, as well as a very popular food blog which receives more than 3,000 hits every day.

Both Leung and Koo are also working on other

things beyond the cyber world. Koo published his first Hong Kong restaurant guidebook last summer and rolled out a Macau follow-up edition earlier this month. As for Leung, she's partnered up with Springalicious' Vincent Poon to launch Island East Markets later this year – a giant green market in Tai Koo featuring local organic produce, craft items and eco-focused talks and demos. It's definitely something to get buzzed about.

e_ting the world www.e-tingfood.com.
Gourmet KC www.gourmetkc.blogspot.com.



MAY NG

The Michelin-approved vegetable vendor

Wah Kee easily stands out amid the cacophonous mix of fishmongers, tofu vendors and butchers stretched along Graham Street market. The fresh produce stall has been in operation for more than 60 years, the last 30 of which have been with May Ng at the forefront. Since inheriting Wah Kee from her father-in-law, Ng's turned the humble little store into one of the most reputable fruit and vegetable suppliers in the city. Chefs from neighbouring, high-end restaurants go to her for salad greens and fresh herbs, and her list of customers include Michelin-starred names such as Cuisine Cuisine and Bo Innovation.

Wah Kee's popularity is largely due to Ng's sharp eye for dining

trends. She introduced Western vegetables to her store early on to appeal to chefs working in the area's many European restaurants. And when Hongkongers started to care about healthy and eco-conscious eating in the 1990s, she decided to bring in more organic greens. In recent years, with sustainability being a growing issue, we've noticed more quality local produce (including crisp carrots and some of the sweetest beets we've ever had) showing up at Ng's shop. It just goes to show that, 30 years on, she's still at the top of her game.

Wah Kee
22 Gage St, Central, 2545 7182.



LLOYD MOSKALIK

The urban fish farmer

With its fluorescent, purple lighting, it would be understandable if you mistook Lloyd Moskalik's workplace for some sort of CSI laboratory. After all, no one would have guessed it to be an urban fish farm tucked away in some nondescript industrial building in Fo Tan. Sounds ridiculous, right? And yet there it is, right next to a row of auto repair shops. Moskalik heads the Hong Kong division of OceanEthix – an Australia-based company dedicated to sustainable, live seafood-conserving technology. Species reared through OceanEthix's water-recycling 'atoll system' are all hormone and antibiotic-free, not to mention completely traceable to their first place of origin. This sort of technology is

especially important in an age of dwindling seafood stocks. If you're still sceptical about the operation, then the proof is in the produce. Oysters farmed here are insanely fresh with bellies that swell with clean, briny juices. The facility also produces some of the best mussels we've ever had in Hong Kong. Period. Add sustainable grouper, sea urchin and sashimi-grade lobster to the mix and it's really no surprise that they've made fans out of eco-conscious chefs such as Jaakko Sorsa from FINDS.

OceanEthix (by appointment only)
15/F, Goodman Shatin Logistics Ctr II, 6 Wong Chuk Yeung St,
Fo Tan, 2898 7298; www.oceanethix.com.

WORKING WITH ETHICAL SEAFOOD



Jaakko Sorsa, executive chef of FINDS

SALMON
We sell a lot of salmon. We source them from Norway and it's a clear number one in different preparations. FINDS's 'salmon six ways' includes cold smoked, seared, mousse and pickled salmon, as well as gravlax and golden roe. We also

do a house-smoked salmon salad with salmon, avocado, potatoes, cucumber, mixed leaves and mustard dill dressing.

MUSSELS
At FINDS, we use blue mussels from Boston Bay in Australia. We poach

these with fennel, aquavit and a touch of cream.

OYSTERS
We also serve fresh rock oysters from Ireland. These go well with a little bit of raspberry mignonette, lemon and cocktail sauce.

JONATHAN SO

The dude of suds

Beer guzzling blokes should thank Jon So. When he couldn't find an outlet that properly celebrated quality, craft brews in Hong Kong, he did the next best thing he could think of and invented his own beer festival. Beertopia, as he's calling it, is set to debut on Saturday April 28 at Western Market and he's envisioning it as a way to bring the community together over some genuinely kick-ass beers. For the occasion, So's corralled together more than 90 tasty suds including Little Creatures Pale

Ale from Australia, the jazz-inspired North Coast Brother Thelonious from the US and, of course, Hong Kong's very own Typhoon Brewery English ale. Keeping with the brew-happy spirit, So's also arranged for snacks to flow, prizes to be drawn and live bands to perform on the day. And, dude, get this – they'll also have beer pong. Score.

Beertopia
www.beertopiahk.com (limited tickets available at the door).





FIVE THINGS I'M DRINKING

Charlene Dawes, owner of Tastings Wine Bar, Angel's Share and Quinary

QUINARY BLOODY MARY

It's the new cocktail at my latest establishment, Quinary. We redistill the vodka along with wasabi using a rotary evaporator. This results in a more intense flavour but takes away the sting and burn of the wasabi. It works really well with the fresh tomatoes and blends in with the homemade bloody Mary mix.

LAGAVULIN 16 YEARS

One of my favourite nightcap whiskies. It's peaty but well balanced. The peat sits well in the whisky and is light on the medicinal flavour but with more intense Turkish delight tones and a warm finish.

RHÔNE REDS

Rhône is a less popular French region for Hong Kong drinkers but I love the complexity – and the younger Côtes du Rhône wines are a great way to start the evening.

FILTER DRIP COFFEE

I recently bought a Chemex filter drip coffee-maker from the US and I'm brewing my own coffees. There are easier ways but I enjoy finding the right kind of coffee beans and making a great full-bodied coffee when I'm at home.

PU-ERH TEA

If it weren't for the caffeine, I could drink tea all day. I am a big fan of aged pu-erh teas because they're intense but smooth and complex.



LI KWOK-CHEUNG

The artisanal bread-baker

Rice has always been the staple carb in this city and, if you were raised here, chances are you grew up with bread that didn't have a distinct crust, chew or personality. "Hong Kong-style bakeries don't really pay attention to bread's natural taste. It's all about the filling. People buy sausage rolls for the sausage, or red bean buns for the red bean," says Li Kwok-cheung. Seeing the need for a proper boulangerie in the city, Li opened Levain Bakery and started making artisanal, naturally leavened breads. He spent the first two years working from a tiny storefront in Jordan before moving to his current Aberdeen Street location where his daily moist-crumbed sourdoughs, flaky croissants and namesake levain breads (which are sometimes studded

with lychees and cashews) have garnered a steady following. To satisfy the growing customer demands, Li set up a full-scale bread factory in Cheung Sha Wan six months ago and now supplies to a small number of restaurants in town, including La Parole in Sheung Wan. "The most important thing is to have a passion for whatever you're doing," says Li. And if that passion turns out to be a really good baguette or pain au levain, then that's really something worth celebrating.

Levain Bakery
39 Aberdeen St, Central, 2559 0889;
www.levain-bakery.com.



CHAN SIU-LUN

The father of agriculture

I am happiest when I'm holding up a basket of locally-grown strawberries," Chan Siu-lun says with a giant smile on his face. And, really, if you'd invested the same amount of time and effort as he has on local greens, you'd hopefully be happy too. As the agriculture officer of Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Chan has been shaping the organic farming industry for the past decade. Not only has he established better horticulture technology (such as drip irrigation) to assist local farmers, he's been constantly introducing new crop varieties into Hong Kong soil. He's brought in countless fruits and vegetables, including cherry tomatoes, Japanese musk melon and different breeds of strawberries from Europe and the USA. All new plants are test-grown by Chan and his team to ensure that they're adaptable to the local climate and manageable enough for the average Hong Kong farmer to cultivate. It's a lengthy process with each new crop taking a minimum of two test-growth years before they can be introduced to the local market. But Chan assures us that the results are worth it: "I'm very proud of Hong Kong produce."

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
www.afcd.gov.hk



THE BEST ORGANIC FARMS

Todd Darling & Rob Spina, founders of IHM (Posto Pubblico, Linguini Fini, Homegrown Foods)

ZEN ORGANIC

The owners of Zen Organic are specialty, contemporary farmers. We particularly love their heirloom tomatoes and mix cherry tomatoes, which we use often at Posto Pubblico. They also do awesome sweet peppers and figs. These folks really are one of a kind.

HONG'S ORGANIC FARM

We love the kohlrabies and beets grown here. They're a staple of the contomi sections at our restaurants. The root veggies are beautiful, like candy cane and golden beets. And another prize produce – the cherry tomatoes – sometimes have a truffle-like essence.

HOKTAU ORGANIC FARM

This is an unusual farm run by a brilliant farmer. He's a total purist. Hok Tau has no certifications but his farm utilises techniques which are beyond organic and he keeps a very close relationship with the natural environment. All the veggies here have a unique and potent flavour.



MIKE FUNG
The java junkie

Mike Fung couldn't have chosen a better name for his shop. After all, stepping into Rabbothole feels like entering a wonderland-esque world of coffee paraphernalia. Aside from the long wooden table that occupies the centre of the room, most of Fung's store is taken up by carefully polished espresso machines or towering ice drip coffee makers that look like they're straight out of an alchemist's laboratory. Yes, if you haven't figured it out already, Fung is serious about his coffee. He focuses largely on single-origin beans, which are roasted off-site at Rabbothole's factory facility. And when it comes to brewing a cuppa joe, Fung and his staff practice every step

with the utmost precision. The idea is to draw out the unique flavours, aromas and subtlest nuances of every brew. Take the slowbrewed, hand-dripped Ethiopian Operation Red Cherry coffee for example, which is intensely fragrant with a crisp, berry-like sweetness. It's a completely different experience from having a mocha harrar latte or a flat white. Don't worry if none of that made any sense to you because Fung is more than happy to explain. So have some faith and take a trip down the rabbithole...

Rabbothole Coffee and Roaster
2/F, 26 Cochrane St, Central, 2581 0861; www.rabbotholecoffee.com.



BOBSY & CHRISTIAN G MONGENDRE

The ecopreneurs

As the owner of Bookworm Café on Lamma Island and Life Café in Soho, Bobsy is perhaps one of the city's most iconic eco-conscious entrepreneurs. He's been pioneering ethical, green eating for the past 15 years so when he calls his latest venture 'an evolution of how food is happening', we believe him.

"We're introducing a new form of eating," he says about Mana! – a slow food concept he founded with French-trained chef Christian G Mongendre. The new restaurant focuses on raw, vegetarian dishes served in quick, fast-food style. Their signature flatbreads (or 'flats', as they've dubbed them) are baked in the central brick oven and spread with za'atar (a blend of herbs and sesame) before being topped with a selection of good-for-you ingredients. "A flat satisfies the same sort of cravings as a pizza – but without the grease," Bobsy says

proudly, adding that Mana! also offers vegan desserts that are gluten and sugar-free. But it's not just about serving delicious, pizza alternatives; the core concept of Mana! is to promote the idea of a responsible food culture. "We source most of our ingredients from local farms to reduce carbon footprint," explains Mongendre. They also use furniture made from salvaged and recycled wood, as well as eco-friendly containers, cups and straws that are 100 percent biodegradable. Even the cooking oil is recycled to produce handsoap. "The food industry is the number one source of pollution in the world," Bobsy says, which explains the message they're spreading: "We have to eat like it matters."

Mana! Fast Slow Food
92 Wellington St, Central, 2851 1611;
www.mana.hk.