



TimeOut

Hong Kong

2011

FOOD  
&  
DRINK

AWARDS



This was a year of plenty for Hong Kong's dining scene with newcomers and old favourites all stepping up their game to new gastronomic heights. Now let's take time to celebrate the food, the drinks and the people who make it happen.

By **Dorothy So.**

Photography by **Calvin Sit**



Star of Canton Steamed flower crab in Shaoxing wine

## BEST CANTONESE

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# THE CHAIRMAN

Meats drowned in preservative-laden sauces, defrosted fish that tastes more like steamed plastic... The Chairman will have none of that stuff. Since opening this 70-seater in late 2009, owner Deng Sung-tian (left) and his partners have made it a point to revert to the good ol' days of Canto cuisine when fish tasted like fish and chicken tasted like chicken. Frozen meats? Forget it. MSG? Don't even dare. At The Chairman, it's about fresh, honest ingredients and real umami flavours. After all, if we're going to gorge, we'd rather do it on local, free-range poultry that's been blessed with all-natural medicinal herbs or fresh, steamed flower crab that's had its sweetness enhanced by chicken oil and Shaoxing wine. Now, that's real Cantonese food. 18 Kau U Fong, Sheung Wan, 2555 2202; [www.thechairmangroup.com](http://www.thechairmangroup.com). Daily noon-3pm & 6pm-11pm.

### *Runner up* Hoi King Heen

We love the intricate and clean-flavoured Cantonese dishes that chef Leung Fai Hung plates up. B2/F, InterContinental Grand Stanford, 70 Mody Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2731 2883. Mon-Sat 11.30am-3pm, 6.30pm-11pm & Sun 10.30am-3pm, 6pm-11pm.

### *Readers' choice*

Roast goose specialist **Yung Kee** may be an oldie but it's still a goodie in your books. 32-40 Wellington St, Central, 2522 1624; [www.yungkee.com.hk](http://www.yungkee.com.hk). Daily 11am-11.30pm.



## BEST REGIONAL CHINESE

### YAU YUAN XIAO JUI

We literally tossed and turned for nights trying to decide who to give this award to. In the end, it was this one humble eatery that left the biggest impression on us this year, winning us over with its unique Shaanxi dishes and its charming homestyle preparations. Don't come here if you're queasy with your calories – Shaanxi cuisine is proper working's man food loaded with carbs, meats and flavoured oils. We're especially crazy about the chewy 'biang biang' noodles – wide, half-metre-long flour sheets that are slicked in homemade chilli oil with scallions, spices and sprouts. It's beautiful with a side of slow-cooked spare ribs. We'll also wax lyrical about the minced mutton and shallot dumplings, which are swelled with a healthy spell of meat and scallion oil. Yes, we love our Shanghai, Beijing and Sichuan restaurants but we're especially thankful to Yau Yuan for bringing a different taste of China to our dining scene. 38 Ferry St (entrance on Sai Kung St), Jordan, 5300 2682. Daily 11am-10pm.

#### Runner up Liu Yuan Pavilion

Liu Yuan pays tribute to traditional Shanghainese food and it does so magnificently. The smoked eggs with liquid yolks are a must. 3/F, The Broadway, 54-62 Lockhart Rd, Wan Chai, 2804 2000. Daily noon-2.30pm & 6pm-11pm.

#### Readers' choice

We're not surprised that it was a toss-up between Shanghai and Sichuan. Your pick? **Crystal Jade** for the former (citywide, including shop B221A, B2/F, Times Square, 1 Matheson St, Causeway Bay. Hours vary by location) and **Chilli Fagara** for the latter (51A Graham St, Soho, 2893 3330; www.chillifagara.com. Daily 11.30am-2.30pm & 5pm-11.30pm).



Regional gem Shaanxi  
'biang biang' noodles

## BEST DIM SUM

### DIMDIM SUM DIMSUM SPECIALTY STORE

This place has several things going for it. First, there's the extensive dim sum menu, which mixes classic items with quirkier house specialties (try the 'real' pineapple bun filled with small chunks of actual fruit). Second, everything served to the table is steamed/baked/fried fresh-to-order. Third, we're enamoured by the shrimp rice flour rolls that come with an extra layer of crisp, deep-fried rice paper around its filling. Last but not least, this place serves dim sum until one in the morning. How can we not love it? 21-23 Man Ying St, Jordan, 2771 7766. Daily 10.30am-1am.

#### Runner up Crystal Lotus

Where else can you find seafood pancakes in the shape of Mickey Mouse, or steamed chicken buns that look like Little Green Men? Aside from the cute, novelty dim sum, this restaurant also offers a solid lineup of traditional yumcha items. L/F, Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel, Lantau, 3510 6000. Mon-Fri noon-2.40pm, 6pm-10.30pm & Sat-Sun 11am-3pm, 6pm-10.30pm.

#### Readers' choice

The novelty of the push cart hasn't waned over the years. After all, isn't that why **City Hall Maxim's Palace** is still the perennial dim sum darling with the public? 2/F, City Hall, Low Block, 5 Edinburgh Place, Central, 2521 1303. Mon-Sat 11am-3pm, 5.30pm-11pm & Sun 9am-3pm, 5.30pm-11pm.

# BEST OF THE EAST



## INDIAN Guru

Three words: blue, mango, chaat. The profound dish pits soft and fleshy fresh mangoes against crunchy whole wheat crisps then sweetens the deal with tangy yoghurt, tamarind chutney and a touch of mint. We could eat this all day, every day. We'll also name-drop the Mangalorean fish curry. This South Indian specialty comes with cubed fresh mackerel simmered in a delicate curry base spun from coconut milk, tomatoes, chillies and an extra punch of mustard seeds. 13 Lower Elgin St, Soho, 2547 9998; www.gurudining.com.hk. Daily noon-3pm & 6pm-midnight.



## KOREAN Go Koong

The banchans here are plentiful and the cucumber soju served from a teapot is super yum. Other things worth getting excited over? How about the insanely delicious steamed pumpkin with short ribs, the chewy makguksu noodles, or the enormous patbingsoo shaved ice dessert loaded with ice cream, fruits, dduk (rice cake) and chewy candy bits. Shop 202, 2/F, Toyomall, 94 Granville Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2311 0901. Mon-Sun 11am-4am.



## MALAYSIAN Sabah

Wan Chai's Sabah still reigns supreme when it comes to authentic, Malay cuisine. Everything from the roti and bak-kut-teh (served with chunks of deep-fried dough) to the tamarind-spiked assam laksa come with all the proper seasonings and spices. 98-102 Jaffe Rd, Wan Chai, 2143 6626. Mon-Sat 11am-11.30pm & Sun noon-10.30pm.



## THAI

### Chai Rung Thai Food

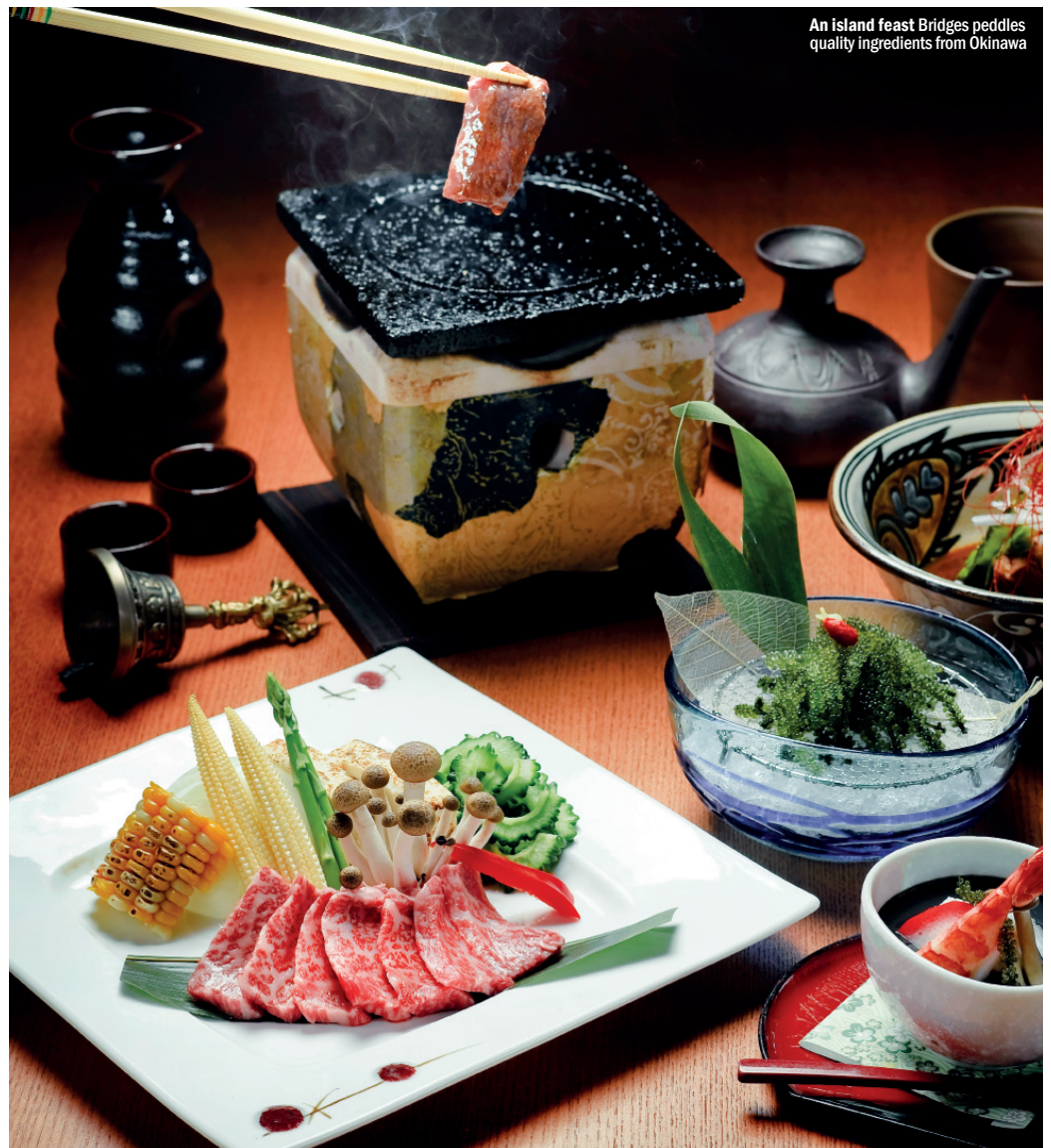
Known fact – the best Thai food in town resides in Kowloon City. But the best Thai dish? You'll find that at Chai Rung. It's a charcoal grill surrounded by a moat of clear broth. Cook your meats on the grill while you boil your vegetables and vermicelli in the soup. Best. Invention. Ever. 33A Nam Kok Rd, Kowloon City, 2718 6588. Daily 4pm-late.



## VIETNAMESE Tim Kee

We've given in to the fact that there isn't any amazing pho in Hong Kong (yet). So when choosing the 'best of' in this culinary category, we turned to Vietnam's other national favourite – bánh mì. Our place of choice is still Tim Kee and we'd happily make the trek out just for one of its pâté-smearred, meat-stuffed, crusty baguette sandwiches. 30A Man Yuen St, Yau Ma Tei, 2385 7939. Daily 11am-midnight.

## BEST JAPANESE



An island feast Bridges peddles quality ingredients from Okinawa

# BEST JAPANESE BRIDGES

Hong Kong has no shortage of great sushi and sashimi spots but, this year, Bridges really made us sit up and pay attention to Okinawa's underrated yet brilliant cuisine. The restaurant is backed by the Okinawan government, which means it gets first dibs on all the freshest meats, fish and greens from the Ryukyu Islands. Native dishes such as umibudo (a crunchy, caviar-like kelp) and stewed Agu pork belly are all delicious. And trust us on this – you haven't had good Japanese wagyu until you've tried the grilled Motobu beef here. Go for Bridges' seasonal kaiseki sets and you'll be rewarded with some of the best ingredients Okinawa has to offer. 6/F, Cubus, 1 Hoi Ping Rd, Causeway Bay, 3428 2131. Daily noon-3pm & 6pm-11pm.

### Runner up Inakaya

This Ginza import brought top-notch Japanese dining to new heights when it opened its doors late last year. Expect to pay a premium but the robata-yaki and the killer view is worth the moolah. Shop A, 101/F, International Commerce Ctr, 1 Austin Rd, West Kowloon, 2972 2666. Daily 11.30am-3pm & 6pm-11pm.

### Readers' choice

It's **Sushi Kuu** all the way for you, especially when the chef is as cool as Satoru Mukogawa. 1/F, M88, 2-8 Wellington St, Central, 2971 0180. Daily noon-3pm & 6pm-11pm.

Cool kid's coffee The creative team behind Unar



## BEST COFFEE HAUNT

## UNAR COFFEE COMPANY

Opened by a team of young designers, this jet-black java bar stands out as the cool kid of Hong Kong's coffee scene. We love the laid-back neighbourhood vibe and we also credit UNAR's minimalist seating arrangement (a long communal bench and a few chairs scattered outside the shop) for creating a hip street corner community where patrons mingle on the sidewalk over cups of coffee. And when it comes to beans, UNAR uses only the finest from Italy's award-winning Barbera coffee company. If we didn't make it clear enough already, say hello to our favourite coffee spot of 2011. 4 Second Lane, 2838 5231. Open from 3pm. Closed Mon.

*Runner up*  
Cafe Loisl

Cafe Loisl is cute. Very cute. It's brought artisanal Viennese coffee culture to our city and, for that, we are eternally grateful. Shop A, 8 Tai On Tce, Sheung Wan, 9179 0209; [www.cafeloisl.com](http://www.cafeloisl.com). Mon-Fri 8am-7pm & Sat-Sun 9am-8pm.

*Readers' choice*

**Fuel Espresso** remains your number one spot for a quick caffeine fix. Shop 3023, IFC Mall, 8 Finance St, Central, 2295 3815; [www.fuelespresso.com](http://www.fuelespresso.com). Mon-Fri 7.30am-7pm & Sat-Sun 10am-7pm.


 BEST VEGETARIAN  
 HAPPY VEGGIES

We appreciate Happy Veggies for: a) feeding us delicious, MSG-free vegetarian food and b) teaching us to become fitter, happier, more socially responsible people. Aside from peddling a healthy, low-carbon menu padded with mashed taro cakes, pan-fried lotus root patties, meatless spring rolls and assorted veggies braised in pungent, fermented bean curd, the restaurant doubles as a social enterprise, providing job opportunities for those with hearing impairments. It's food for a very worthy cause and we're proud to call this our best vegetarian restaurant of the year. 1/F, Bayfield Bldg, 99 Hennessy Rd, Wan Chai, 2529 3338. Mon-Sat 11.30am-2.30pm & 6.30pm-9.30pm. Closed Sun.

*Runner up*

## Branto Pure Veg Indian Food

The thali here will leave even the most carnivorous diner feeling fully sated. We're also fans of the masala dosa filled with spiced potatoes. 1/F, 9-11 Lock Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2366 8171. Daily 11am-3pm & 6pm-11pm.

*Readers' choice*

You've voted for the same place in this category for three years in a row now. So it seems that it's **Life Café** or bust when it comes to veggie food with our readers. 10 Shelley St, Soho, 2810 9777; [www.lifecafe.com.hk](http://www.lifecafe.com.hk). Mon-Fri noon-10pm & Sat-Sun 9am-4pm, 6pm-10pm.

## BEST OF THE WEST



### BELGIAN

#### Frites Belgium on Tap

It's all about the mussels here. The plump bivalves come with a variety of condiments but we prefer the traditional moules marinière with white wine, garlic and herbs. The beer selection is also impressive, especially when it comes to quality Belgian draught brews. *Multiple branches, including shop 1-2, 1/F, Queen's Place, 74 Queen's Rd Central, 2179 5179. Hours vary by location.*



### BRITISH

#### Limehouse

For non-Brits, Limehouse might just come across as any other restaurant. But for those hailing from England, this cosy eatery does delightfully quaint dishes that have quelled many a homesick stomach. Our recommendation? Get the fish and chips or shepherd's pie before capping off your meal with a slice of lemon tart. *t35 Ship St, Wan Chai, 2528 5818. Mon-Sat noon-2.30pm & 6.30pm-11.30pm.*



### FRENCH

#### Saint-Germain

This brasserie would make a great backdrop to any arthouse Parisian film. But aside from looking the part, Saint-Germain also offers some of the homiest, heartiest French fare in town. Stick with the classics, such as escargots de Bourgogne and grilled beef fillet and you'll see why this place is such a favourite with the local French community. *1A Wong Nai Chung Rd, Happy Valley, 2836 6131. Tue-Sun noon-midnight.*



### ITALIAN

#### 8½ Otto e Mezzo

We've said it a thousand times before but we'll happily say it again: the pastas here are amazing. The silky, al dente noodles speak volumes of exec chef Umberto Bombana's culinary skills and despite the obvious fine-dining aesthetics of this restaurant, Bombana's stayed true to the comforting and rustic flavours of his native country. *Shop 202, 2/F, Alexandra House, 18 Chater Rd, Central, 2537 8859; www.ottoemezzobombana.com. Daily noon-2.30pm & 6.30pm-10.30pm.*



### SPANISH

#### FoFo by el Willy

FoFo is a ray of shining light in a town that's still quite devoid of good Spanish options. The food might not be the most traditional (consulting chef Willy Trullas Moreno prides himself on his whimsical rehashes of classic tapas) but that doesn't make the scallop ceviche with crispy shallots or suckling pig with red pepper sauce any less delicious. *20/F, M88, 2-8 Wellington St, Central; www.fofo.hk. Mon-Sat noon-2.30pm & 6.30pm-11pm. Closed Sun.*



Sweet and sinful Ms B's decadent desserts

## BEST DESSERTS

### MS B'S CAKERY



Let's all agree on one thing: Ms B's makes kickass cakes. Opened by Sewva owner Bonnie Gokson (left), the pâtisserie's decadent, over-the-top creations are crafted only from the finest, all-natural ingredients. The results are stunning, from the signature Madame Butterfly (layered chocolate, pistachio and beetroot chiffon with apricot compote and fresh cream), to the whimsical Whoopie red velvet cake slathered in vanilla cream cheese frosting and colourful sprinkles. And just in time for this awards issue, Ms B's expands with its first sit-down café C'est La B this fortnight, which will serve an extended desserts menu and a small selection of savouries. Talk about the icing on the cake. *39 Gough St, Sheung Wan, 2815 8303; www.msbscakery.hk. Daily 11am-8pm.*

#### Runner up Mitsukiya

We're head over heels in love with Mitsukiya's delicate wagashi (Japanese confectionaries). The selection is seasonal but if it's on the menu, be sure to try the chakin shibori stuffed with taro or sweet potatoes. *15 Tsing Fung St, Tin Hau, 2806 3389. Daily 4pm-12.30am.*

#### Readers' choice

The fanfare for **Sift** is as loud and proud as ever. And may we say a big, loud 'mmm' to its red velvet cupcakes. *Citywide, including 46 Graham St, Soho, 2530 4288; www.siftdesserts.com. Hours vary by location.*

# BEST RESTAURATEURS

## INTEGRATED HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

Todd Darling and Rob Spina Jr started off as best childhood buddies, then became successful restaurateurs in their own rights, and then joint owners of Posto Pubblico. Now they've gone one step further, being the brains behind the insanely successful Integrated Hospitality Management company (IHM). They're responsible for multiple projects (Posto, Homegrown Foods, Cantopop, Linguini Fini) but they haven't turned into one of those cash-counting vampires who sit in the comforts of the air-conditioned office. Darling's down at the company farm every chance he gets while Spina mans the floors at one (or all three) of their restaurants on any given evening. Yes, these guys actually give a damn about what they're doing, and they're doing it well.

### Runner up

## The Press Room Group

Alan Lo, Arnold Wong and Paulo Pong redefined casual, bistro-chic dining in Hong Kong when they opened the first Press Room restaurant and Classified cheese room. Their restaurant empire (which also includes The Pawn, SML, The News Room and soon-to-open The Principal) keeps on growing and we're excited to see what else they'll bring to the dining scene in 2012.

### Readers' choice

Yeah, we like the guys at **Integrated Hospitality Management**... and it looks like you do too.



Partners in crime Rob Spina and Todd Darling smile for the cameras

## 5 FOODS WORTH THE CALORIES...

### CHOCOLATE CAKE BLT Burger

BLT Burger's Valrhona chocolate-praline cake means serious business. It's constructed from multi-layers of dense, dark chocolate cake, praline and chocolate mousse set under a glossy blanket of chocolate ganache. It's served à la mode (of course) so remember to make room for it at the end of your meal. *Shop 301, 3/F, Ocean Terminal, Harbour City, 17 Canton Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2730 2338. Daily 11am-11pm.*

### PIZZA

#### Pizzeria La Gondola

The thin crusts here are exceptional – crisp with a slight doughy chew and just a little burnt and browned around the edges. Go for the Four Seasons pie, which starts with a tomato sauce base loaded with ham, 'shrooms, peppers and oregano. It's then covered in mozzarella and the final touch of a soft-boiled egg. *2-4 Mee Lun St, Noho, 2581 9555. Daily 11am-2pm & 5pm-11pm.*



### SANDWICH Paisano's

Everyone raves about Paisano's pizzas but we're actually most impressed with the sandwiches here. The super sub is a monster sarnie crammed with ham, mortadella, salami, provolone and the works. We love the toasted bread and the savoury paunch from the olives and pickles. It's a little pricier than your average sub but, hell, this is enough to make a meal on its own. *Citywide, including 5 O'Brien Rd, Wan Chai, 2573 4554; www.paisanos.com.hk. Hours vary by location.*



### PORK BELLY NUGGETS Blue Smoke

As if pork belly wasn't rich enough already, the guys at Blue Smoke slow roast the fat-laden chunks then toss them into the deep-fryer. It's a total guilty pleasure served with a side of honey barbecue sauce. *3/F, Grand Progress Bldg, 15-16 Lan Kwai Fong, Central, 2816 9018. Daily noon-3pm & 6pm-11pm.*

### DEEP-FRIED CHEESE Linguini Fini

Fini's white gold bars are dangerously addictive. It's hand-pulled mozzarella rolled in breadcrumbs and herbs then deep-fried to a sun-kissed golden brown. Dunk one end in marinara sauce and tell yourself you'll hit the gym up later. *1/F, The L Place, 139 Queen's Rd Central, 2857 1333; www.linguinifini.com. Mon-Thu noon-10.30pm, Fri-Sat noon-11pm & Sun noon-4pm, 6pm-10.30pm.*



Best brew Typhoon churns out awesome suds

## BEST DOMESTIC PRODUCT

### BEERS BY TYPHOON BREWERY

Who ever thought that our tiny little city could produce world quality craft beer? The owner of Lantau's Typhoon Brewery did and he was right. A pilot by trade, Pierre Cadoret turned his love of suds into a proper business when he opened Hong Kong's first microbrewery to specialise in English cask ale. Typhoon's created several brilliant brews since opening in late 2009, including its signature T8 – a honey-hued English bitter that's available on tap at The Globe. Special mention also goes to the brewery's Eastern Lightning golden ale, which was named one of the winners during this year's Hong Kong International Beer Awards. *Shop A, Sea View Bldg, 1 Ngan Wan St, Mui Wo, Lantau Island, 9045 3566; www.typhoonbrewery.com.hk.*



#### *Runner up* O' Beans Soymilk by New Life

This organic soy bev is made by recovering mental illness patients as part of New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association's social enterprise ventures. It's delicious, healthy and benefits the community. What more could you ask for? Available at IKEA, ThreeSixty and New Life's social enterprise establishments, including *Farmfresh 330, Shop C, 2 Wun Sha St, 2881 7213; www.eshop330.hk.*

#### *Readers' choice*

You named **Yat Woon Min**'s wide, fettuccine-like noodles your favourite locally made ingredient. *93 Wharf Rd, North Point, 2578 0092. Daily noon-9pm.*

## BEST TREND

### NOSE-TO-TAIL DINING

At a time when food wastage is becoming an increasing global phenomenon, nose-to-tail dining is one of the most honest and eco-responsible culinary philosophies to crop up in a while. For the benefit of foodies, this trend also encourages chefs to become more innovative. Take Linguini Fini for example, where chef Vinny Lauria churns out a profound Bolognese made from pork jowl, veal shoulder and oxtail, and also does a 'beast feast' menu featuring a whole rotisserie duck. Joining Lauria, chef Jordi Villegas (JW's California) and Vicky Cheng (Liberty Exchange and Liberty Private Works) also showed they were fans of this budding trend when they did their own unique snout-to-tail pork menus this year. Both menus were only available for a limited time but in the coming months we hope this trend becomes a permanent fixture in our dining scene.

#### *Runner up* Artisanal noodles

This was a great year for quality noodles, whether it was handcrafted pasta or slippery Japanese ramen served in rich tonkotsu broth.

#### *Readers' choice*

You said everything from frozen yoghurt to pop-up restaurants but your favourite new development is the steady rise of **sustainable, organic produce**.





The perfectionist Masayuki Uchida poses with his prize

## BEST BAR

# BUTLER

There are flashier bars in town but Butler edges out the competition with its clean-cut service and, more importantly, its spot-on cocktails. Owner and veteran bartender Masayuki Uchida stocks more than 200 liqueurs and spirits behind his polished bar and he shakes, stirs and sometimes swivels them into one of the best Moscow Mules we've ever experienced (served in a traditional copper mug), or rum-spiked highballs loaded with fresh fruits, herbs and Japanese liqueurs. Don't come here if you're looking to pick up some arm candy, or wanting to get super-hammered on gin and tonics; Butler is all about enjoying a tippale that's worth getting tipsy on. 5/F, Mody House, 30 Mody Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2724 3828.

### Runner up 001

Housed in a decidedly obscure location (in the middle of a wet market), 001 combines an awesome cocktail list with a speakeasy-esque indie ambiance. Oh, and before we forget to remind you: please order the grilled cheese sandwich. Unmarked black door near junction of Graham St and Queen's Rd Central, 2810 6969.

### Readers' choice

So maybe it didn't win the grand title but **001** is a firm favourite with the public. We'll drink to that.

## WE'LL DRINK TO THESE...

### BEST DIVE BAR Sense 99

We consulted you, readers, on this one and Sense 99 rose above as the clear favourite. This bar-lounge-gallery brings in an eclectic crowd and when it's open on Fridays and Saturdays, everyone and their mother is welcome to get up on the stage and jam. Essentially, it's the laid-back, chilled out vibe that makes this place awesome. 2/F, 99F Wellington St, Central, [www.sense99.com](http://www.sense99.com).

### BAR FOOD California Vintage

Aside from its 80-plus West Coast wine list, this Wyndham bar boasts a dedicated kitchen team that slings fresh, drinks-friendly Californian cuisine. Baja fish tacos with sour cream and pico de gallo and porchetta-filled sliders are just some of the things that keep us sober while we sip. 77 Wyndham St, Central, 2525 9808; [www.cvwinebar.com](http://www.cvwinebar.com).

### BEST BAR WITH A VIEW Sugar

Sugar showed us Hong Kong's magnificent skyline in a whole new angle and it made us fall in love with the city all over again. The delicious cocktails don't hurt either, especially when it's something like the Pear-Tea-Ni (Tanqueray Gin, pear, lemon and Earl grey tea syrup). 32/F, East Hotel, 29 Tai Koo Shing Rd, Tai Koo, 3968 3738; [www.sugar-hongkong.com](http://www.sugar-hongkong.com).

### BEST SPOT FOR HARD LIQUOR Angel's Share

Angel's Share may not have the most extensive whisky list (this honour still belongs to The Chinnery at The Mandarin Oriental) but it does have some of the most interesting selections. The Samaroli No Age Vatted whisky is an exceptionally rare find, as are any of the bottles from Japan's now-defunct Kawasaki and Hanyu distilleries. 2/F, Amber Lodge, 23 Hollywood Rd, Central, 2805 8388; [www.angelsshare.hk](http://www.angelsshare.hk).

### BEST COCKTAIL Shiso mojito at Butler

It was love at first sip with this beautiful shiso mojito. Masayuki Uchida pours a finger of perilla liqueur into the rum-based highball, then muddles in fresh shiso leaves and tops it all off with filtered sparkling water. It's definitely the most sophisticated drink we've had all year. 5/F, Mody House, 30 Mody Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2724 3828.



Young talent Yvonne Cheung enjoys a glass at The Upper House



## BEST SOMMELIER

### YVONNE CHEUNG, CAFÉ GRAY DELUXE

Café Gray Deluxe's resident wine expert may not look like your typical sommelier but if Yvonne Cheung's taught us one thing, it's to never judge a book by its cover. Oh no wait, we lied. The young and talented Asian-American sommelier (who was formerly wine director at Napa Valley's Carneros Inn) also taught us refreshing new food and tittle pairings and introduced cooler boutique bottles to our usual drinking list. More importantly, Cheung reminds us to enjoy wines just because they're something worth appreciating. Did she just give us the best reason to drink ever? We think so. 49/F, The Upper House, 88 Queensway, Admiralty, 3968 1106; [www.cafegrayhk.com](http://www.cafegrayhk.com). Daily 6.30am-10.30am, noon-2.30pm & 3.30pm-10.30pm.

#### *Runner up*

### Sebastien Allano, Four Seasons Hong Kong

The Four Seasons' soft-spoken Frenchman is one of our favourite sommeliers in town. 6/F, Four Seasons Hong Kong, 8 Finance St, Central, 3196 8860. Daily noon-2.30pm & 6pm-10.30pm.

#### *Readers' choice*

Looks like you agreed with us here. Your picks for best sommelier turned out as a neck-to-neck competition between **Yvonne Cheung** of Café Gray Deluxe and The Four Seasons hotel's **Sebastien Allano**. Spot on.

## BEST WINE SELECTION

### L'ATELIER DE JOËL ROBUCHON

Having won this award once already in our inaugural Dining Awards in 2009, L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon is still the place to beat in terms of wine choice in the city. The Bible-thick, 100-plus page wine menu pretty much maps out all of France's winemaking regions. The restaurant also ventures out of native soil to offer bottles from all over Europe, Australia, America and even South Africa and Lebanon. Shop 401, 4/F, The Landmark, 15 Queen's Rd Central, 2166 9000; [www.robuchon.hk](http://www.robuchon.hk). Daily noon-2.30pm & 6.30pm-10.30pm.

#### *Runner up* Cépage

This Star Street French restaurant runs a close second with a brilliant wine list that includes ultra-rare bottles such as the 1959 Château Lafite Rothschild. Another great thing about the Cépage wine cellar? It has one of the most reasonable mark-up prices of any fine-dining restaurant in Hong Kong. 23 Wing Fung St, Wan Chai, 2861 3130. Daily noon-2pm (last seating) & 7pm-10pm (last seating).

#### *Readers' choice*

**L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon** is the undisputed champion when it comes to reds, white and bubbly.



The A-team Caprice's front-of-house team enjoy a drink after service

## BEST SERVICE

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# CAPRICE

Caprice raises service to a whole different level and sometimes you can't help but wonder why other places in town don't do likewise. Restaurant manager Jeremy Evrard has a lot to do with Caprice's Michelin-approved success (he's been with the French restaurant since it opened in 2005) and he's trained a well-oiled team that manages to tuck you into your chair, recommend a wine, crack a bon mot, memorise your order, ask how your day/family/job/dog is doing, and maybe also throw in a bit of Bernard Antony cheese with such savoir faire that it's impossible not to feel utterly charmed. 6/F, Four Seasons Hong Kong, 8 Finance St, Central, 3196 8860. Daily noon-2.30pm & 6pm-10.30pm.

### *Runner up* Yardbird

Everyone here looks like they've stepped straight out from an American Apparel advertisement. Thankfully, the service attitude is much more sophisticated than the fashion chain and the staff will cheerily pour your sake while complimenting you on your new handbag or hairstyle. Ooh, those silver-tongued devils. 33-35 Bridges St, Sheung Wan, 2547 9273; [www.yardbirdrestaurant.com](http://www.yardbirdrestaurant.com). Mon-Sat 6pm-late. Closed Sun.

### *Readers' choice*

Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name. And for you, that place is known as **Posto Pubblico**. 28 Elgin St, Soho, 2577 7160; [www.postopubblico.com](http://www.postopubblico.com). Daily 7.30am-11.30am, noon-3pm & 6pm-midnight.

Yes chef Richard Ekkebus with his signature foie gras lollipops



## CHEF OF THE YEAR

### RICHARD EKKEBUS, AMBER

Just when we thought Amber couldn't get better than it already was, executive chef Richard Ekkebus (who is also The Landmark Mandarin Oriental's director of culinary operations) shows that he still has plenty of tricks up his sleeves. In the latest of his long list of achievements, the Dutch-born chef led his team to a coveted 37th placing in this year's S Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants list. The last time a Hong Kong eatery made it into the list was back in 2005. His iconic foie gras lollipop encased in raspberry and beet gelée goes without saying and his other signatures – sea urchin encased in lobster jell-O and red amadai with fennel and orange confit – are all smart and sophisticated, if not downright amazing. In the seven (and counting) years that he's been in Hong Kong, Ekkebus has done nothing but impress us and we have an inkling that he plans to continue doing just that. 7/F, The Landmark Mandarin Oriental, 15 Queen's Rd Central, 2132 0066; [www.amberhongkong.com](http://www.amberhongkong.com). Daily 7am-10.30am, noon-2.30pm & 6.30pm-10.30pm.

#### *Runner up*

### Matt Abergel, Yardbird

Ok, we admit it – we love Matt Abergel. Though the Yardbird owner came just short of winning this year's best chef title, we'll happily crown him the coolest cook in town. 33-35 Bridges St, Sheung Wan, 2547 9273; [www.yardbirdrestaurant.com](http://www.yardbirdrestaurant.com). Mon-Sat 6pm-late. Closed Sun.

#### *Readers' choice*

**Vinny Lauria of Linguini Fini** has won you over with his pastas and house-cured salumi. 1/F, The L Place, 139 Queen's Rd Central, 2857 1333; [www.linguinifini.com](http://www.linguinifini.com). Mon-Thu noon-10.30pm, Fri-Sat noon-11pm & Sun noon-4pm, 6pm-10.30pm.



Family portrait The team at Yardbird comes together for the big win

## BEST NEW RESTAURANT

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# YARBIRD

2011 was the first year *Time Out* gave any restaurant a full-star review, so it only makes sense for that restaurant to be crowned our best newcomer of the year. Former Zuma chef Matt Abergel's pad is almost too cool for school, a bi-level building that peddles perfectly cooked yakitori. That means Japanese-style skewered 'n' grilled chicken by the way, and Yardbird's menu goes from shichimi-dusted wings to fatty chicken butts. We also give the restaurant credit for making cauliflower cool (order the 'KFC' if you want to see why) and for getting one of the most attractive and enthusiastic service crew we've seen in a long while. A hands-down sure-fire winner. 33-35 Bridges St, Sheung Wan, 2547 9273; [www.yardbirdrestaurant.com](http://www.yardbirdrestaurant.com). Mon-Sat 6pm-late. Closed Sun.

### *Runner up*

## Grand Hyatt Steakhouse

This sophisticated restaurant solidified its place as our new favourite steakhouse. If you're craving premium beef that's char-grilled to a perfect medium-rare, pick up the phone and dial this number. *Grand Hyatt*, 1 Harbour Rd, Wan Chai, 2584 7722. Mon-Sat 6pm-10.30pm. Closed Sun.

### *Readers' choice*

**Linguini Fini** should have its own fanclub. This New-York Italian is your numero uno newcomer of the year. 1/F, The L Place, 139 Queen's Rd Central, 2857 1333; [www.linguinifini.com](http://www.linguinifini.com). Mon-Thu noon-10.30pm, Fri-Sat noon-11pm & Sun noon-4pm, 6pm-10.30pm.



## BEST RESTAURANT 2011

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# 8½ OTTO E MEZZO

If we could name one restaurant that's consistently wowed us since day one, it'd be this place. Led by master chef Umberto Bombana, Otto e Mezzo takes the glitz and glamour of high-end dining and builds in a solid backbone of precise Italian cooking. The handcrafted pastas are the stuff dreams are made of, whether we're talking about plump, burrata-filled ravioli with tomatoes, or cavatelli blanketed in shellfish ragu and fresh sea urchin. It's amazing – hell, the best pasta in the city. Bombana also does magical things with seasonal seafood, roasting fleshy langoustine and dressing it in a piquant mix of fresh herbs, citrus and capers. Throw in first-rate service, an extensive wine list and bespoke cocktails designed by an award-winning mixologist and there you have plenty of reasons to love this place too. *Shop 202, 2/F, Alexandra House, 18 Chater Rd, Central, 2537 8859; [www.ottoezezobombana.com](http://www.ottoezezobombana.com). Daily noon-2.30pm & 6.30pm-10.30pm.*

### *Runner up* Amber

Richard Ekkebus was close to walking away with two awards this year. After all, Amber keeps stepping up its game and we couldn't be happier to have this restaurant in our own backyard. *7/F, The Landmark Mandarin Oriental, 15 Queen's Rd Central, 2132 0066; [www.amberhongkong.com](http://www.amberhongkong.com). Daily 7am-10.30am, noon-2.30pm & 6.30pm-10.30pm.*

### *Readers' choice*

Last year, we named **Bloom** our favourite new restaurant. This year, you're showing them even more love by crowning it your top choice for 2011. *5/F, LKF Tower, 33 Wyndham St, Central, 2810 6166; [www.lily-bloom.com](http://www.lily-bloom.com). Mon-Thu noon-3pm, 6pm-11pm, Fri noon-3pm, 6pm-2am, Sat 6pm-2am & Sun 11am-9pm.*





# THE DIGESTIF

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We've had some truly magnificent meals in the past 12 months, ranging from the simplest Shaanxi noodles to the finest haute Italian cuisine. While we celebrate all the food and booze we have before us, we're also excited to see how our dining scene can grow in the days ahead. For starters, we're still waiting for someone to bring authentic Peruvian food to our shores (preferably served with a side of aji sauce). And while we're at it, we hope other Japanese noodles – whether it's soba or udon – get just as big as ramen did this year. There's plenty to look forward to...

## Now roll on 2012

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All our content is made from all natural fresh ingredients.  
Please ask our writers for the daily specials.  
(Tip generously)