

FOOD AND ENTERTAINING ANNUAL

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ISSUE I

MONOCLE

Drinking & Dining Directory

Ⓜ AFFAIRS: Tasty hijinks abound on the US-Mexico border **BUSINESS:** Food entrepreneurs **ESSAYS:** Opinions on tap
DESIGN: Dining details **ENTERTAINING:** Back to the buffet **SCOOPS:** Biscuit barons and South Korea's Chicken Alley+

Starter's orders

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SETTING OUT OUR TABLE

An array of culinary morsels, tidbits of food news and a saucy opinion or two from our ever-hungry correspondents and editors.

IN THE KITCHEN WITH...

Yotam Ottolenghi
Chef

Where: Nopi, London

What: Turmeric latte with almond milk

Yotam Ottolenghi has a cold. It's the reason why, he explains somewhat apologetically, he's sipping a turmeric latte in his London restaurant Nopi. "I'm not sure I'm loving it but I am sure it's good for me," he says, with a momentarily glum gaze.

The Jerusalem-born chef is well known for making vegetables covetable, with crunch and colour and without the abstemiousness or somberness of other renditions (and the odd ubiquity of pomegranate seeds in salads). That said, the notion of eating something *because* it's good for him is at odds with Ottolenghi's take on food. The reason for his love of vegetables is, it turns out, more prosaic. "I grew up in the Middle East where it's common to eat a vegetarian diet: pulses, grains, seeds and fresh vegetables. I remember that my first real experience of cooking was going to the market and being overwhelmed by the sexiness of [all] the vegetables," he says, shrugging off the suggestion that his highly visual style has changed the way we eat today. "For me that's what food is all about: sensuality. If you forget about the senses you might as well go back 30 years and eat horrible food as fuel."

Ottolenghi's influence spreads far beyond the kitchen in which we're sitting. Not least because of his five cookbooks, plus a new restaurant, Rovi, opening in June in London's Fitzrovia. He no longer works regular shifts in his kitchens, though he is a familiar sight to staff. Most mornings, before he heads to his test kitchen in north London, the 49-year-old can be spotted popping into Nopi, checking over food prep and nattering with the sous chef about different ideas and ingredients.

This morning he's taken with the plump yellow squashes piled high on the counter; an enthusiastic discussion ensues about what sort of syrup could best eke out the tuber's sweet, fleshy flavours.



Surprising pairings are something of a hallmark, as is forging a connection between cultures and cuisines on the plate. Sami Tamimi – one of his business partners, who co-authored *Jerusalem* – also hails from Israel but grew up on the opposite side of the divided city. The pair wrote the cookbook with the aim of highlighting how food can start conversations across deep cultural and political chasms.

"We talk about the hummus wars and the falafel disputes but if you look at food from a different angle and try to look at a bigger picture you see that this is actually something that people have in common," he says. "If people can get together, cook and eat, it's always a good thing." As long as there are no turmeric lattes in sight, of course. — MJG

Hot shorts: *Dispatches from the dining table*

Restaurateur Riccardo Giraudi's meaty empire is a cut above the competition.

"I wanted to educate my customers about new products, to offer them meat as a sommelier may offer wine," says restaurateur Riccardo Giraudi as his polished black brogues kick up dust on the floor of a space destined to become his next restaurant. We're on a building site in the 8th arrondissement, just off the Champs Elysées, and this will be Monaco-born Riccardo's 15th restaurant.

It's one of four under his Beefbar banner that's mooted to open this year; the others are in Dubai, Mykonos and Riyadh. Riccardo is polished and put-together as he shows us round the vast space to be fixed up by architecture firm Humbert & Poyet. He fits the part of impresario but the roots of his success can be traced back to a humbler origin: a meat-import business founded in 1960. His father, Erminio, was the first to bring hormone-free Black Angus from the US and turn it into a brand while Riccardo was among the first to import certified Japanese Kobe beef to

Europe. It's a lucky connection that allowed the young restaurateur access to the best cuts that money can buy.

Riccardo's original Beefbar in Monaco became an institution after opening in 2005 and as the openings piled up, his staff grew to 300. Despite the expansion, he considers his company a "big-small group" and "wants to keep business at a human scale" for fear of losing touch with what people want from their restaurants.

But the opening in the French capital will be a test of whether Riccardo's skills remain a cut above the rest. The meat-minded restaurateur will be bucking the prevailing tide of meat-light openings as well as attempting to crack the famously fickle Parisian restaurant scene. If he can get the mix right, the rest of this year's openings will be rich pickings for the Monégasque magnate. — **DHZ**



Achieving harmony: Pairing music and drink well is often overlooked. Jazz and whiskey make a good team. Cocktails and disco work. House is fine for the dance floor. Try a schooner and Scandipop to keep toes tapping. — **PN**



Bean and gone

Would you rather be a physicist or a barista? For young Aussies it's a no-brainer. A study in New South Wales found that more children want to be a barista than a physicist or engineer. It shows the depth of the nation's affection for coffee but also a commitment to good service. Coffee culture is a premier soft-power export and why many London, New York and Paris cafés are filled with Antipodean twangs. — **JSW**

More to the point

BY *Sean McGeady*

If you opened your preferred Sunday supplement to find a spread on a hot new seven-seat Soho diner, whose chef went on a six-month voyage of discovery to decide on the five herbs used throughout his four-dish menu, which features impossibly local produce (he nicks it from your garden at night) cooked in his 3 sq m kitchen (it's just a camping stove and a saucepan), would you be surprised? While it's true that the race for regional produce and more exclusive spaces has led to stellar spots such as Tokyo's Blind Donkey and New York's Okonomi (see page 149), a city cannot be serviced by small restaurants alone.

London's answer to this overcooked trend is Centre Point. The transformation of the 34-storey office tower on New Oxford Street into luxury homes will also deliver of seven new – and vast – dining spots at the base of the building. Italian firm Vapiano, dim-sum doyen Din Tai Fung (a MONOCLE favourite) and Street Market, a new venture from the US team behind

Sushisamba, are all going big. Vivi, a new venture from London catering company Rhubarb, will be the largest of the new openings, occupying a space of more than 120 sq m with some 290 covers, but all are on a pumped-up scale.

London restaurateur Oliver Peyton opened the Atlantic Bar & Grill in Piccadilly in 1994, a time when large-restaurant dining was also having a moment. He sees Centre Point as an interesting return to a tried-and-tested idea. "The London restaurants scene is in constant transition," he says. "There is a market for large restaurants in London. Queuing for kimchi is *not* my idea of a night out. With the way London is now, I think we're going to return to a greater field of hospitality. People are feeling unsure again and restaurants need to respond to that and make people feel welcome."

Set to reopen this September, Centre Point could, mercifully, offer respite from endless queues and elbow-to-elbow seating that have come to define dinner in nearby Soho. When it comes to portions, kitchens and elbow room, size matters – and sometimes bigger is better. — **(M)**



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