

Volume 1 | 2025-2026

Complimentary Copy

Palate

Dining Guide

Canvas To Kitchen

Shaping Malaysia's culinary scene

Palate
Approved
THE BITES THAT
MADE THE CUT





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In my nearly two decades in publishing, I've worn many hats and told countless stories. For a time, I thought I had done it all. Yet when the opportunity arose to spearhead *Palate* from the ground up—to imagine it, shape it, and be entrusted with *carte blanche*—I knew it was a chance too rare to pass up. Today, I have the deep satisfaction of placing something tangible in your hands: the very first *Palate Dining Guide*. There is a particular joy in building something from nothing. In seeing a concept take shape, find its voice, and claim its place in the world. Perhaps it is because, in those moments, you witness ideas become experiences—a reminder that creativity is only complete when it is shared. *Palate* is the only media brand of its kind here in Malaysia, and my mission, as always, is to honour the bites, sips, and people who define the dining landscape.

With the *Palate* team, we have crafted new content pillars to reflect the richness of that world—from Palate Approved selections to intimate conversations with chefs, restaurateurs, and even art collectors. Why? Because food is never just what's on the plate; it is the people, passions, and stories that bring it to life.

This annual *Dining Guide*, published alongside our quarterly print editions, casts its net wide: celebrating not only Kuala Lumpur's finest tables, but also the flavours, talents, and traditions from every corner of Malaysia. Dining is about culture, craft, and community. It is about the connections forged over shared plates and the memories made between courses.

May this guide lead you to meals worth savouring and moments worth keeping.

Bon appétit. Here's to every bite, every sip, and every story still to come.



The thrill of something new

Tengku Zainab Ajlaa
Tengku Zainab Ajlaa
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Palate.

Dining Guide

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On the COVER



Yellow Counter Top (2005)

YAU BEE LING
Oil on canvas

EVERYDAY OBJECTS, EXTRAORDINARY CANVAS

In *Yellow Counter Top* (2005), foremost Malaysian artist Yau Bee Ling turns the ordinary surface of domestic life into a site of tension and revelation. Known for exploring femininity, motherhood, and identity in her practice, she reclaims the kitchen counter as more than a backdrop to daily rituals—it becomes a stage where objects bristle with life and labour. Utensils, baskets, bottles, and produce spill forward on a striking yellow plane, flattening perspective and resisting the stillness of traditional still life. This vivid tableau, busy with brushstrokes and noise, reflects Yau's ongoing negotiation between private and public selves, and her refusal to separate the personal from the artistic. In giving visibility to the countertop, she elevates the unseen rhythms of care, work, and womanhood into the language of painting.



Surti Anda Ghotala

Growing up in a household where his grandfather ran a local restaurant in Udupi, India's southwestern coast, Chef Hari Nayak was surrounded by stories steeped in spice and flavour. Though his father chose a different path, tales of the family's culinary legacy shaped his earliest memories. "The first time I stepped into a kitchen, that was the moment I fell in love—I knew I was going to be a chef," he says.

Now an acclaimed chef with global experience—from working under culinary icons like French chef and restaurateur Daniel Boulud to publishing the groundbreaking book, *Modern Indian Cooking*, Chef Nayak has spent the last 25 years reimagining Indian cuisine. At first, he tried to escape it. "When I moved to the US to study at the Culinary Institute of America, I wanted to cook everything but Indian food," he laughs. "My early experiences in Indian kitchens weren't great. Peeling 50kg of onions isn't exactly inspiring."

But eventually, his roots caught up with him. After years in fine dining Western kitchens, Chef Nayak returned to the cuisine of his homeland—not to modernise it, but to honour it. "Indian food doesn't need to be reinvented. It just needs to be presented with care and clarity."

That ethos shines through at Jhol KL, his newest restaurant in collaboration with Clifftop Group Asia. An extension of his beloved Bangkok outlet, Jhol KL celebrates coastal Indian cuisine—from Tamil Nadu and Kerala to Odisha and Goa—offering diners a regionally rich, insightful, and spice-forward experience that's both grounded and unexpected.

The menu dances between homage and innovation to his home country's most beloved dishes. Highlights include the Calicut Pepper Crab, a fiery crab toast brightened with garlic-yoghurt pachadi, and Masala Muska Buns, a riff on Bangalore's bakery favourite, filled with spicy potato and served with *pav bhaji* and curry leaf butters. Then there's the Berhampur Fried Chicken—deboned, double-fried wings dressed in hot sauce and chutney, crisped to perfection and royal in indulgence.

Other standouts include the Surti Anda Ghotala, a chilli cheese toast topped with truffle, and the Kundapura Ghee Roast Chicken, slow-cooked and served with a crisp cone dosa and coconut chutney. The Alleppey Fish Curry, paired with *kappa* (tapioca) and matta rice, is a tangy, creamy finale before dessert—Tender Coconut Payasam with jaggery sesame snap and mango sorbet.

Jhol KL is where coastal nostalgia meets culinary craft, with every dish carrying the rhythm of the spice routes. "If I wouldn't eat it twice a month myself, it doesn't go on the menu," says Chef Nayak. It's a philosophy that turns the menu into one worth revisiting—again and again. jholrestaurantkl.com P



Spice Route

WITH JHOL, CHEF HARI NAYAK PRESENTS A LOVE LETTER TO INDIA'S SPICE-LADEN COASTLINES, NOW UNFOLDING IN KL.

Words: PATRICK LOH

STEFANIA
RISTORANTE ITALIANO

Where Roman Elegance Meets Italian Dining

Step into Stefania, where the charm of Rome unfolds in every detail. From handmade pastas to Josper-grilled perfection, every bite celebrates heritage, indulgence, and the timeless art of La Dolce Vita.

Stefania Restaurant
Unit 1.02, G floor, NAZA Tower, Platinum Park,
50088 Kuala Lumpur,

Open daily
12pm to 10.30pm

Instagram [@stefaniarestaurant](https://www.instagram.com/stefaniarestaurant)
www.stefaniarestaurant.com



Sundae BEST

From Daifuku-wrapped scoops to boozy swirls and fruit-forward sorbets, these seven ice cream bars in KL are giving frozen treats a creative twist.

Words: VANESSA L

SCOOP, THERE IT IS

Inside Scoop

You can't talk about ice cream in Malaysia without mentioning Inside Scoop. Instantly recognisable by its cheerful yellow icon, this homegrown favourite has become something of a modern classic—celebrated not only for its playful spirit but also for its unwavering commitment to quality.

Founded on a love for frozen desserts and the joy they bring, Inside Scoop draws from globally sourced ingredients to craft flavours that resonate with Malaysian palates. Its Flavours of Home series nods to nostalgic local desserts with inventive takes like Cendolicious and Ais Ais Baby, while perennial favourites such as Durian and Valrhona Chocolate remain staples.

Whether you're after something culturally rooted or purely indulgent, Inside Scoop continues to offer both—with a swirl of fun and familiarity in every scoop.

insidescoop.com.my

DOLCE & GELATO

Paolo Paolo Gelato

Tucked into The Five in Bukit Damansara and within the bustling The Exchange Mall at TRX, Paolo Paolo Gelato is hard to miss. Its signature red signage catches the eye before its flavours win you over—an open invitation to step out of the heat and into a cool, creamy moment of indulgence. Its cult-favourite Pistachio channels roasted Italian nuts into a rich, crisped creaminess that lingers on the palate, while Bacio pairs deep dark chocolate with Piedmont hazelnuts in a nod to its Northern Italian roots. Alongside these signatures, you'll find a rotating cast of seasonal flavours—both in classic gelato and soft serve form—crafted using ingredients sourced locally and abroad.

From buttery milk buns to fresh-baked brownies, their add-ons make each serving a little more decadent. Whether in a cone, on a waffle, or nestled in a warm brioche, Paolo Paolo Gelato turns an everyday dessert into a full-blown treat.

[instagram.com/paolopaologelato](https://www.instagram.com/paolopaologelato)



TAFFILY EVER AFTER

Taffy Gelato

At Taffy Gelato, flavour takes a playful turn. Known for its community spirit—hosting everything from pop-ups to parties—this gelateria is built on the simple idea that dessert should make you happy. Located at The Campus Ampang, its indoor-outdoor surroundings invite you to grab a cone, a croissant, or even a brioche bun, and enjoy gelato the way it was meant to be: fun, flavourful, and never fussy.

The flavours are bold, diverse, and occasionally unexpected. Vanilla Madagascar is pure and indulgent, while Hazelnut Rocher channels that iconic confection in velvety, nut-studded form. Those craving something bright will find comfort in the Mixed Berries Sorbet, while the Lemon Blue Pea Butter Biscuit leans citrusy and floral.

However, the signature Knafah Gelato, served in a croissant, is a standout—rich, textural, and layered with Middle Eastern flair.

Whether you're in the mood for something classic or unconventional, Taffy Gelato delivers cool satisfaction with a side of personality.

seraigroup.com.my

BATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

Piccoli Lotti

Named after the Italian phrase for 'small batches', Piccoli Lotti is built on thoughtfulness—from the 16 to 18 hand-crafted flavours made fresh each week (so as not to create a surplus), to the calm, minimalist interiors inspired by Scandinavian and Japanese design. It's a neighbourhood gelateria where pace and palate align, offering just enough to keep things interesting, without ever feeling excessive.

Signature flavours include the Peruvian Single Origin Dark Chocolate, crafted with couverture from an organic plantation in Peru that's rich, intense, and uncompromising in quality. For something closer to home, the Pulut Tai Tai is a local favourite: a Nyonya dessert reimaged as gelato, blending glutinous rice, creamy santan, and home-made kaya, with butterfly pea flower lending its signature hue.

In addition to cones and waffles, Piccoli Lotti also serves beautifully crafted gelato cakes—perfect for celebrations or simply sharing something special. True to its name, this is a place where the little things are done with love and intention.

[instagram.com/piccolilotti.my](https://www.instagram.com/piccolilotti.my)



LICKED & LOADED

The Ice Cream Bar

For those who like their dessert with a dash of drama, The Ice Cream Bar delivers the perfect blend of indulgence and intrigue. A literal and figuratively spirited sister to Inside Scoop, this artisanal parlour made its debut in Desa Sri Hartamas with a focus on liquor-laced recipes that push the boundaries of traditional ice cream. They now have multiple locations.

The signature Rum & Raisin is anything but standard—steeped in Captain Morgan Original Spiced Gold and loaded with rum-soaked raisins, it's rich, smooth, and undeniably seductive. Meanwhile, Crunchy Coffee Whisky brings together smoky espresso notes with the sweetness of Kentucky bourbon, finished with dark chocolate drizzle and crisp chocolate-coated cone bits for texture and contrast. From silky blends to bold finishes, The Ice Cream Bar brings a grown-up twist to the frozen treat, where every churn comes with a cheeky kick and a refined edge.

theicecreambar.com.my



UGLY DELICIOUS

TUG Gelato by The Unusual Greens

With a mission to rescue the overlooked and the imperfect, TUG Gelato turns sustainability into something irresistibly sweet. This gelateria champions 'ugly' produce—fruit that's often discarded for its less-than-perfect appearance—and transforms it into inventive gelato that's as thoughtful as it is flavourful. As a subtle nudge to try something unexpected, their fruit-based flavours are priced a touch lower than their classic offerings.

Highlights include Soursop Calamansi, a zesty and revitalising sorbet with bright tropical energy, and Avocado Pistachio, which delivers a velvety richness punctuated by the crunch of roasted nuts. For a more delicate profile, White Chrysanthemum blends floral notes with creamy white chocolate and crystallised cacao nibs, resulting in a scoop that feels both meditative and indulgent.

Best of all? You can enjoy your gelato wrapped in soft Daifuku mochi if you so desire—proof that sustainability and surprise go hand in hand.

heunusualgreens.com



CONSCIOUS CHURNS

Kind Kones

For the discerning sweet tooth with a mindful palate, Kind Kones offers a gentler take on indulgence—plant-based, all-natural, and free from dairy, eggs, refined sugar, and artificial additives. What began as a homegrown project has evolved into a full-fledged dessert destination, churning out small-batch ice creams that are as kind to the planet as they are to your gut.

Each scoop leans into flavour without compromise. The Pandan Gula Melaka delivers coconut richness layered with aromatic pandan and palm sugar, while Almond Brittle Fudge offers crunch and creaminess in equal measure, blending coconut and cashew milk with cacao nibs, chia seeds, and dairy-free chocolate chips. Even their cones are gluten-free, adding a satisfying crunch to every swirl. In a city where indulgence often comes with a caveat, Kind Kones makes the case for ice cream that's thoughtful, flavour-forward, and entirely plant-powered.

kindkones.com



A Taste of IDENTITY

From kitchens to exhibitions, Aliya and Farouk Khan of The AFK Collection examine how food and the everyday can be reframed as cultural artefacts in their own right.

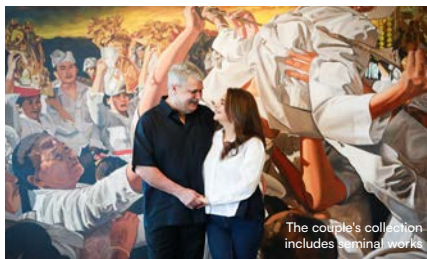
Words: TENGKU ZAI; Photography: KEVIN KHAW

As the custodians of the world's most significant repository of Malaysian art, Aliya and Farouk Khan have spent decades safeguarding the nation's creative legacy through The AFK Collection. For the first *Palate Dining Guide* cover, the couple have graciously extended the use of *Yellow Counter Top* (2005) by celebrated Malaysian artist Yau Bee Ling—a vibrant kitchen tableau that bridges the intimacy of domestic life with the universality of food.

Though Singaporean of Pakistani descent, the couple have made Malaysia their home for many years. In that time, they have become deeply entwined with its cultural fabric, not only as art collectors but also as advocates for presenting Malaysian art on the global stage. In their words, food and art are not simply aesthetic pleasures, but vessels of memory, markers of identity, and shared expressions of community.

CURATING THE EVERYDAY

Collecting art has never been about amassing objects for Aliya and Farouk, but about tracing the story of a nation through its artists. Their interest in *Yellow Counter Top* is emblematic of this philosophy. "What first caught our attention was the colour," Aliya explains. "The bright, dynamic yellow pulls you in immediately. But beyond that, we saw in Yau Bee Ling's strokes the evolution of her style. The table motif had appeared in her earlier works, but here it takes on a more expressive presence." As collectors, the couple have always sought to follow artists through their tenures, to show not just individual masterpieces but the unfolding of their practice over time. "This is how the collection documents the larger narrative of Malaysian contemporary art history," she adds.



For the Khans, art that captures the everyday is often the most enduring. A kitchen scene, a *kopitiam* breakfast, a plate of crackers. Such images may appear ordinary, but they preserve the cultural details of how Malaysians live, eat, and gather. These quotidian subjects become part of a much larger story, one that binds past, present, and future.

FOOD AS ART, ART AS FOOD

It's no coincidence that so many Malaysian artworks feature food as subject or motif. Just as dishes carry the weight of memory, so too do paintings. "Food, like art, is a vessel of memory," says Farouk. "A single dish can take you back to your mother's kitchen, just as a painting can transport you to a moment in time."

Both acts—cooking and painting—require raw materials, skill, intuition, and intent. Both are layered with history and meaning. "We can definitely parallel the way a cook layers flavour with how an artist layers colour or texture," Aliya reflects. "And both are acts of generosity: a painting lives when it is seen, just as a meal comes alive when it is eaten together." And in both, creation is incomplete without an audience.

From Hamir Soib's *Rapuh* (2007), where humble crackers become a metaphor for independence, to Chin Kong Yee's *Breakfast at Penang Kopi Tiam* (2005), which captures the rituals of communal dining, Malaysian artists have long recognised food as a rich language for storytelling. At their best, such works remind us that what nourishes the body also nourishes memory and identity.



A MALAYSIAN VOICE

Though not Malaysian by birth, Aliya and Farouk speak of food and art as central to their own sense of belonging here. Malaysia's cultural and social fabric, they observe, is never static and ever-evolving.

"Just as Malaysian food carries the imprint of centuries of migration and exchange, local art history reflects a similar layering of influences," says Farouk. He recalls how the first generation of contemporary Malaysian artists returned from studies abroad, bringing new techniques and ideas that sparked a movement. "That exchange of ideas was a factor in creating something unique to its denizens, much like how local cuisine blends Malay, Chinese, Indian, and countless other traditions into dishes that feel entirely Malaysian."

And just as food traditions thrive most when shared, so too does art. "When people encounter these works, they learn about Malaysian culture and we develop a sense of pride in it," Aliya stresses. The AFK Collection has championed this principle through exhibitions, publications, and digital platforms, ensuring Malaysian art can be appreciated both locally and abroad.

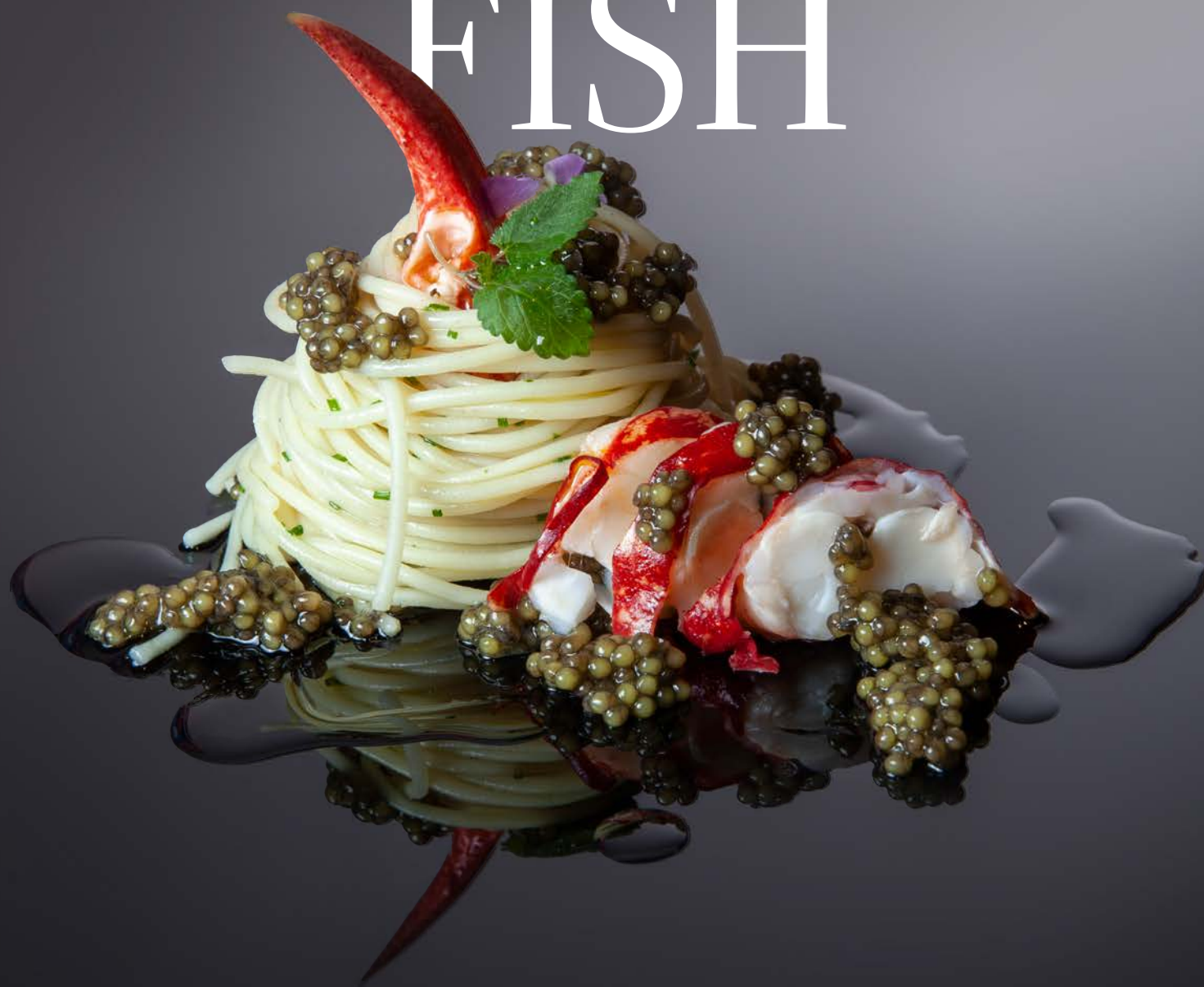
Their most recent exhibition at the Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation offered proof of this vision. "To see international audiences genuinely blown away by the quality of Malaysian art was very moving," Aliya recalls. For Farouk, it marked a milestone: "It positioned Malaysian contemporary art not just as local heritage, but as part of a global conversation."

At the heart of that conversation lies a simple but profound truth: food and art, in all their layered complexity, are mirrors of who we are as a people. They preserve our memory, spark dialogue, and ensure continuity. For Aliya and Farouk Khan, they are also reminders that the everyday—the yellow counter top, the humble meal, the familiar ritual—can be the most extraordinary expression of culture. afkcollection.com



The AFK Collection is one of the world's largest and most significant repositories of Malaysian contemporary art

GO FISH



When it comes to the world of fine dining, precision is the absolute minimum requirement. Aristocrat Caviar has been quietly perfecting that secret for 25 years.

What ingredient comes to mind when you think of fine dining? For many, it's caviar—a delicacy that has, for one reason or another, become synonymous with haute cuisine. But caviar certainly doesn't come all equal, and if you're going to be paying top dollar, it follows that you'd want only the best on your plate. But where exactly would you get that? That's a question Aristocrat Caviar has been answering in impeccable fashion for the last 25 years or so.

An indispensable ingredient in some of the finest kitchens around the city, and proudly stocked by some of the most luxurious gourmet retailers around, it's safe to say that Aristocrat Caviar's standing in the industry is not without merit. While convention dictates the best caviar hails from Europe, you'll find that Aristocrat Caviar's offerings prove that the luxury roe of closer shores, when selected with the utmost scrutiny and harvested with fastidious care, can be every bit as good.

So what is it that makes their sturgeon pearls so good? To understand that, we first have to cast our eyes to its source—the icy waters of Harbin in northern China. Sturgeons are a sensitive bunch, and that, in part, is what makes cultivating their eggs such a delicate process. The slightest bit of pollution or any

mineral imbalances in the water can upset the fish, leading to compromised vitality and decreased quality of roe. Sturgeon also requires high levels of dissolved oxygen and slightly alkaline water that ranges between pH 7.5 to 8.5 to stay healthy and support proper egg development. The pristine waters of Harbin, then—largely untainted and ideally balanced—provide the perfect conditions for these sensitive denizens of the deep to thrive and survive. And, in turn, produce caviar of the utmost quality.

It also needs to be said that with sturgeon being a species native to cold freshwater rivers, the frigid temperatures of Harbin replicate the optimal conditions for the fish to mature in. These lower temperatures serve to slow the growth rates of the fish, and it's this extended maturation period that helps the roe develop the smooth texture and complexity of flavour characteristic of exceptional caviar—tiny treasures that are briny, glistening, and impossibly decadent in every way.



But to have the best sources is only one part of the equation; what comes after is just as vital to the finished product sitting pretty on top of your plate. Aristocrat Caviar has distilled this process down to a science, keeping themselves highly involved every step of the way. Selective partnerships with long-trusted producers make for a product uncompromising in its quality, with every fin leaving the Aristocrat Caviar premises the result of a scrupulous process that sees the opulent gourmet globules hand-harvested, delicately salted, and carefully aged. The payoff? A caviar with a buttery, nutty complexity that melts decadently on the palate.

If you'd like to savour some yourself and rearrange your expectations of what constitutes good caviar, you can get a taste at several of the standout restaurants in the city, with our pick being N.I.C.E Bistrone, where the Executive Chef, the brilliant Andy Choy, pairs it with delicate seafood dishes and a refined wine selection to make for a sumptuous dining experience. If you fancy yourself a bit of a dab hand in the kitchen and would like to see what you can whip up with it, you'll be able to pick up a tin or seven at selected Village Grocer, BIG, and BSC Fine Food outlets, courtesy of exclusive importer Inalca Food & Beverage Malaysia, a subsidiary of a multinational group headquartered in Italy.

Visit their website to learn more
inalcafb.com.my



WHEN IN KL, DO AS THE ROMANS DO



The dynamic duo behind Stefania

If you're tuned into KL's evolving food scene, you've probably heard of Stefania, the city's hottest new Italian joint. Amid many Italian eateries, Stefania stands out with its authentic Roman flavours and ingredients. The décor echoes this too, with Roman art and design that will transport you to cobblestone streets and the Colosseum.

But beyond the food and atmosphere are the two men behind it: Chef Diego Realí, a fourth-generation Roman chef rooted in family tradition yet open to fresh interpretations; and Kesavan Purusotman (KC), founder and CEO of the Continuum Hospitality Group, who brings a sharp sense of culture, design, and experience to life.

They say that all roads lead to Rome—and these two have just created a shortcut for KL locals. Here, they share their vision.



KESAVAN PURUSOTMAN (KC)

What's your favourite kind of emotional vibe to set when creating a new space?

It really depends on the concept. We always start with the product and the kind of experience we want to deliver, then build the energy and ambience around it. With Stefania, for example, the goal was intimacy, so we leaned into Roman décor and details

KL feels a little closer to Rome, thanks to Chef Diego and Kesavan Purusotman (KC). The two driving forces behind the city's most talked-about new Italian spot share their take on what makes them tick.

that would make guests feel like they were dining in the heart of Italy.

How do you decide what you'd like to work on next?

Traditionally, most entrepreneurs move towards the safest direction and scale what already works. For me, it's the opposite. I thrive on venturing into new genres of cuisine, nightlife, and experiences. Doing the unexpected is what excites me most and keeps the journey meaningful.

From nightlife to food and events, what keeps you curious and drives your ideas?

I've always been fascinated by how people respond differently to a product or space. The same concept can spark joy, nostalgia, or curiosity depending on who experiences it. That's why I love experimenting.

Which of your venues would surprise people the most if they knew the origin story behind it?

Definitely Cili Kampung. During lockdown, nightlife businesses couldn't operate, and it felt like I had hit a roadblock. I went to Langkawi to clear my head, and in the middle of that low point, I stumbled on what turned out to be the best Malay food I had ever tasted. That experience completely shifted my perspective. What started as a trip to reset became the spark for Cili Kampung.

What's something people would be surprised to learn about you?

On the outside, I may come across as serious, but those who know me well discover that I enjoy a good time and a good laugh with great company. That balance between intensity and lightness keeps me grounded.



CHEF DIEGO REALÍ

What's one technique you learned from your family that you insist on preserving at Stefania?

Flavour. My family taught me that cooking isn't just about the ingredients—it's about how you treat them. We taste constantly, adjust gently, and believe that less is more. Let the quality of the ingredients shine. At Stefania, I still follow that philosophy: slow-simmered sauces, pasta finished in its sauce, and patience at every step. That's how true flavour is built.

Walk us through the process of adjusting your dishes to better suit local palates.

I start by trying local food and understanding the flavours that people here enjoy. From there, I experiment, tweak, and sometimes combine ideas. Having a strong team is important—we work together on R&D, exchange feedback, and refine the dishes until they feel just right for our guests while still staying true to Roman tradition.

Can you remember the moment when you realised that this is what you want to do for a living?

Honestly, I never initially wanted to be a chef. I grew up in a family with a restaurant background—a line of restaurateurs—so it came naturally. Some might call it talent in the family, but for me, the passion grew over time as I worked and cooked. The real reward is the satisfaction when someone enjoys the food and flavours you've created. That said, I never suggest anyone take up this career unless they truly love it. The hours are long, and you often miss special occasions with loved ones because you're behind the scenes making someone else's

celebration memorable. It's a beautiful job, but it's a tough one—you really have to be sure before walking this path.

Working long hours can be really grueling—how do you unwind after a hard day in the kitchen?

I like to spend time with my wife, go on holidays when I can, and enjoy a good meal with loved ones.

Where do you see your cooking journey going next?

Wherever the journey takes me. I'd love to do more collaborations in other countries, learn, and share with chefs from different backgrounds. Here at Stefania, my hope is to build a strong, capable team so that one day I can slowly step back, focus on mentoring them, and empower the next generation of young chefs.



Putting the finishing touches on a dish



Chef Diego at the Jospier oven, firing up his signature dish.

AROUND *The* World

Venture off the beaten culinary path and savour bold, globally inspired dishes right here in KL. From vibrant Peruvian plates to polished Swiss delicacies, these dining destinations promise to excite and delight even the most well-travelled palates.

Words: PATRICK LOH

Peruvian Passion At **Feliz KL**

Sitting at the very top of Avenue K, Feliz KL is giving Peru its long-overdue space in the spotlight. Blending traditional cooking methods with Latin American fire, the menu leans confidently into its Peruvian roots, offering a dining experience that's both adventurous and accessible.

Step inside, and the mood is set: a kaleidoscope of patterned tiles dance beneath your feet, while a sculptural crimson light floats above the bar like a fiery halo. From the kitchen comes a standout ceviche and *tiradito*, paired unexpectedly with *tacacho*—a traditional Peruvian breakfast of mashed roasted plantains. Equally memorable is the grilled beef tenderloin, a refined take on Lomo Saltado served with silky potato Robuchon, the lamb shoulder slow-stewed in coriander sauce with Peruvian salsa, salmon cooked in a Josper oven, and a flavour-packed Peruvian-style seafood fried rice.

Also not to be missed: Feliz's signature rice dish, layered with bold seafood flavours, aji amarillo spice, and cilantro. Ultimately, Feliz KL is more than the food—it's about feeling. The flavours are bold, yes, but so is the spirit behind them: generous, soulful, and deeply rooted in culture. *Tel: +6011-1771 7742*



The Arroz Con Pato
is made for sharing

Vantador Brings Argentine Fire

In a city brimming with steakhouses, each with its own claim to flame and fame, Vantador sets itself apart as a sanctuary for Argentine fire and flavour. While signature steaks take centre stage, the menu ventures further into a bold repertoire of refined dishes and indulgent desserts.

At the heart of Vantador's philosophy lies a reverence for time and terroir. Founder Leon Gee teamed up with José Gordón—the master of maturation from the windswept plains of northwestern Spain—who's raised his cattle in near-wild conditions for over a decade. This slow stewardship allows nature's rhythm to seep into every sinew, imbuing the meat with extraordinary depth. Vantador is the first restaurant in Malaysia to collaborate with Gordón, bringing his revered legacy to local plates.

Dry-aged for 50 days in the ancient caves of El Capricho, then rested for up to two weeks in KL, each cut develops layers of flavour with time as its most powerful seasoning. At Vantador, Chef Emir and his team finish each piece over a fire stoked with acacia, rubberwood, and binchōtan, an homage to the traditional asado, reinterpreted with precision and finesse. This results richly marbled meat, tender yet complex, with a core that blushes crimson. Each bite brings a crescendo of flavour: the earthiness of aged mineral, the velvet of rendered fat, a flicker of blue cheese, a whisper of toasted hazelnut.

But Vantador isn't content to rest on Gordón's legacy. The menu stretches its wings, inviting diners on a full culinary voyage from flights of raw, roasted, and cured beef to wagyu-and-prawn skewers, dry-aged Turken chicken, and coral trout. Finally, the journey ends on a high with the Lemon Mirage, a dessert as artful as it is delicious. *Tel: +6012-675 5868*



José Gordón
premium steak



Sabayon offers the best views and plush interior

Sabayon Plates Swiss Sophistication

Perched on the 51st floor of EQ Kuala Lumpur, Sabayon isn't just a restaurant—it's an experience suspended between sky and skyline. With sweeping views of the city, including the shimmering Petronas Twin Towers, Sabayon invites diners to elevate their senses, one course at a time.

Its culinary philosophy blends modern Swiss-European finesse with thoughtful Asian influences, all plated with elegance and precision. Whether you opt for the multi-course dégustation or the equally considered vegetarian menu, every dish is a showcase of premium ingredients—imported and locally sourced—cooked with intention.

The interiors are just as dazzling. Gleaming bronze and copper accents reflect the warm city glow, while soaring ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows add a cinematic drama to the setting. On Sundays, the Sky Brunch brings a more relaxed kind of indulgence, where sparkling wine flows, and brunch classics get a luxe reinterpretation.

Whether you're marking a milestone or simply chasing an unforgettable night out, Sabayon turns every dinner into an occasion, framed by KL's glittering skyline. *Tel: +603-2789 7777*



Mediterranean yoghurt bowl

A Mediterranean Kiss From Quivo

At the lively open-air boulevard of Pavilion KL, Quivo invites you to slip away from the city's pulse and into a sun-kissed world of Mediterranean indulgence. Simply put, Quivo feels like a passport to warmer and sunnier coasts. From Greece to Morocco, Italy to Lebanon, its menu weaves a story of spice, flavour, and fire, all deliciously tailored for the local palate.

Laid-back luxury awaits inside with patterned tiles underfoot, olive tones against natural woods, and a buzzing semi-open kitchen. And with a breezy al fresco terrace overlooking the Pavilion boulevard, Quivo offers a front-row seat to the city's style scene.

Start light with sharing plates like the Seafood Pesto Pizza, where scallops, prawns, and crab meat ride on a crisp base of basil and coriander pesto. Or take the pasta route with Angel Hair Aglio Olio tossed with king freshwater prawns, garlic and smoked pepperoncino. For something heartier, the Braised Beef Brisket And Wild Mushroom Risotto wraps up comfort in every bite, while the Za'atar Chicken Kebabs—served with saffron couscous and truffle aioli—bring bold Middle Eastern flair to the mix.

The bar menu is just as playful. Go tropical with a Mangosteen Mai Tai or keep things cool with the Jungle Juice mocktail, a citrusy blend of orange, hibiscus, and fizz. Don't skip dessert: the Sizzling Brownie, drenched in chocolate and topped with melting vanilla ice cream, is a spectacle of sweet satisfaction. *Tel: +603-2141 7711*

Salted Brings Borneo To The Big City

In a city where culinary trends come and go, Salted stands out by celebrating a cuisine that's rich, rooted, and remarkably underrepresented in KL: the bold and earthy flavours of East Malaysia.

Located in Mutiara Damansara, Salted is named after one of the region's most beloved staples—salted fish. Many ingredients here are sourced from small producers and indigenous farmers, spotlighting unsung gems like *terung asam*, *dabai*, and *belacan* Sarawak. The moment you walk in, Salted's rustic charm meets you at the door. Woven rattan panels, earthy tones, and soft lighting create a setting where the scent of fermented durian and smoked bamboo triggers nostalgia and intrigue.

Start with the *Hinava*, a citrus-cured mackerel dish from the Kadazan-Dusun people of Sabah, that's delicate, zesty, and invigorating. Follow it with Manuk Lulun, a traditional Iban chicken dish slow-cooked in bamboo, lemongrass, and torched ginger. Also, don't miss the Sup Terjun, a rich, peppery beef broth that locals swear by for both hangovers and heartaches. Next, the Umai Prawn Tartlets offer a playful take on Sarawak's traditional ceviche, reimagined into bite-sized tart shells for a fine-dining twist that stays true to its roots.

To complement the bold dishes, Salted's offers the likes of Tuak Sangria, Sabahan Ginger Fizz, and Pandan Pineapple Spritz. Every sip is meant to refresh, but also reflect the terror of Borneo's wild, fertile lands. *Tel: +603-7493 5266*



Sarawakian Kolo Mee

Joloko Dishes Out Afro-Caribbean Heat

Rooted in Afro-Caribbean heritage, Joloko brings culture, flavour, and personality to the table. Inside, bold prints, saturated colours, and low, steady beats set a mood that's unmistakably its own. The name—taken from the Yoruba word for “celebrate”—isn't a mere moniker. It's a statement of intent, reflected in every choice, from the menu to the music.

The menu is a soulful journey through Afro-Caribbean cuisine, a tapestry woven with spices, smoked flavours, and tropical freshness. Start your feast with Jerk Chicken Wings marinated in fiery Scotch bonnet peppers and allspice, then grilled to smoky perfection. You can also opt for the savoury Ackee and Saltfish, a Jamaican classic bursting with texture and zest.

Seafood lovers will relish the Curried Crab, while the Plantain Fritters strike the perfect balance of sweet and savoury to complement every bite. The bar, a centrepiece in itself, crafts island-inspired cocktails that tell stories through the smoky Rum Punch and the refreshing Sorrel Mojito.

Beyond serving a meal, Joloko KL is an immersive cultural experience. Regular live performances feature reggae and Afrobeat rhythms, while curated art installations celebrate the diverse legacies of African and Caribbean communities. In a city famous for its myriad cuisines, Joloko adds a vital new voice. *Tel: +6011-6426 2645*



Afro-Caribbean beef stew and rice



THE Great ESCAPE

Away from the Klang Valley's clatter, these 11 restaurants are worth the drive for offering refined cuisine, regional character, and a reason to go the distance.

Words: Vanessa L



JOHOR

Fire Pitz, *Johor Bahru*

Touted as Johor Bahru's pioneer in flame grilling, Fire Pitz approaches cooking as both craft and spectacle. Anchored by an open-flame kitchen, the space exudes a smoky allure from the moment you walk in. Think expansive interiors grounded in timber tones—a stylish fusion of flora and firewood that feels both primal and polished. The menu defies easy classification. It's neither European nor Korean, and it resists the gimmick of fusion. What you'll find instead is a focused devotion to woodfire cooking, where quality speaks through restraint. Only thoughtfully sourced cuts are allowed near the flame, and the result is meat that carries the quiet complexity of real smoke that's subtle, slow, and deliberate.

Tel: +6018-988 3188

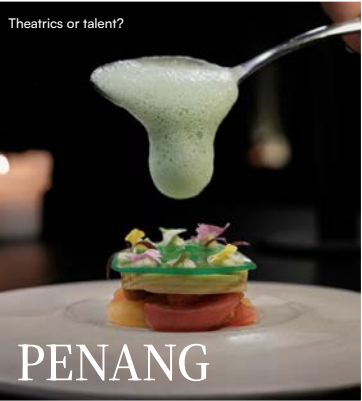


SABAH

Kinsly, *Kota Kinabalu*

Charcoal and precision define the experience at this Sabahan steakhouse, where variety cuts—especially charcoal-grilled steaks—take centre stage. For those seeking a finer dining option in the city, Kinsly offers chic interiors, well-crafted cocktails, and expertly seared meat in a setting that's equal parts polished and inviting. Prime selections like filet mignon and ribeye are mainstays, but the menu extends well beyond. Seasonal specials and off-menu offerings keep things fresh, so diners can satiate their hunger for discovery. When the mood calls for something livelier, Kinsly shifts gears, serving up barbecues and bold rounds at the bar.

Tel: +6012-829 3989



PENANG

Curios-City, *George Town*

Tucked away with little fanfare, this understated spot leaves a stronger impression than its quiet exterior suggests. The menu at Curios-City is contemporary yet contemplative, and flavour is favoured over flair. Seasonally sourced Penang produce forms the backbone of the kitchen's creations, with a handpicked, ever-evolving *carte du jour* that keeps things refreshingly unrepeatable. There's no need for theatrics here. Expect an honest dedication to flavour, freshness, and the kind of dining that rewards those looking for something novel.

Tel: +6014-210 5236



NEGERI SEMBILAN

Restoran Loon Sing, *Nilai*

In Nilai, there's a place where tradition is served at scale, but never at the expense of detail. Restoran Loon Sing doesn't play about their Chinese—specifically Fuzhou—cuisine, showcased through palatable, time-honoured dishes under the grand gleam of a banquet-styled space. This is as close as it gets to tasting traditional signatures crafted under a chef's fluent hands, each dish executed with the kind of confidence that comes from years at the wok. The food is as ceremonious as the occasion, and authenticity isn't claimed but simply practised.

Tel: +606-799 7787



TERENGGANU

KBB Burger & Steak, *Kuala Terengganu*

Best known for their signature butter-aged steaks, this restaurant takes a distinctive approach. House-made herb butter encases each cut, dry-ageing it to an exceptionally tender finish. The process is elevated further by the use of a Jospier grill—an impressive piece of equipment that sears both red and white proteins over charcoal, delivering a precise and flavourful char. For those less carnivorous, the menu also offers pasta and hamburger steaks. It's a kitchen that balances technique with broad appeal, ensuring there's something for every kind of appetite.

Tel: +6010-254 1001



MELAKA

Campong O'looo, *Melaka*

Smack bang in the heart of Melaka's old town is Campong O'looo, named after a British transliteration of the area's archaic moniker. It's a study in cultural interplay, where Asian and European sensibilities meet not in fusion, but fluent dialogue. Founded by seasoned food entrepreneur, Eli, the restaurant has grown into a legacy project that speaks to continuity, preservation, and an evolving Melakan identity. The philosophy here is measured: honour the past, but present it with precision. So, recipes are guarded not out of secrecy, but reverence. The Oxtail Soup, for instance, delivers more than flavour. It stirs memory, comfort, and a sense of place. And that, in itself, is a quiet triumph.

Tel: +606-288 2199



KEDAH

S'moll Private Dining, *Alor Setar*

In Alor Setar, refinement finds an unlikely address. Here, local flavours are treated not as heritage props, but as living elements interpreted through a cosmopolitan lens that's both respectful and refreshingly unsentimental. The dining space is intimate, the atmosphere pared back yet polished, and the experience built on precision rather than pomp. Even the drinks echo the restaurant's clarity of vision—take the Amber Smith, a sparkling mocktail that's more composition than concoction. Designed for smaller gatherings and discreet occasions, the space doesn't shout for attention. Everything has been placed, plated, and paced with purpose.

Tel: +6019-945 1484



PERAK

Four Seasons Restaurant, *Kota Bharu*

Since 1998, this establishment has quietly held its place as both a culinary anchor and a cultural bridge for locals and tourists. Though rooted in Chinese cuisine, the menu at Four Seasons Restaurant celebrates local flavours, has halal certification, and an openness to adaptation; all of which speak to a kitchen that understands tradition without being beholden to it. Its longevity is no accident. The food is honest, assured, and simply delicious. Take the Four Season Style Steamed Fish—a dish that may come at a premium, but more than earns its place at the table. It’s less about indulgence and more about intention: quality food served without fuss.

Tel: +6019-911 8282

Jeff’s Cellar, The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat, *Tambun*

In the lush greens and groves of Ipoh lies a dining experience unlike any other. Set inside a natural limestone cave, this space is less restaurant, more reverie—complete with stalactite formations and the soft sound of water threading through stone. Downstairs, a private wine cellar sets the tone; upstairs, a bar carved into the rock awaits. Glinting limestone walls make for a spectacular backdrop for a meal featuring a degustation menu that’s ever-evolving and leans into European technique while honouring Malaysian ingredients.

Tel: +605-210 7777



KELANTAN



SARAWAK

Zinc Restaurant & Bar, *Kuching*

French, Italian, and Spanish influences come together under one roof at Zinc—where the natural beauty of Borneo meets a restaurant and bar. Here, the culinary fire is real, thanks to a Jospier grill that brings boldness to the plate. Expect all things good from spicy chorizo sausages to fresh seafood and perfectly charred premium steaks. Begin your evening with one of their inventive alcoholic concoctions, designed to pair with both the menu and the mood. With occasional live music adding to the atmosphere, Zinc delivers not just a meal, but a full-sensory night out in Kuching worth repeating.

zinc.restaurant

Ms. Elliot at Hock Bee, *Kuantan*

Halal-certified, humble, and homespun—this architectural gem offers more than meets the eye. Nestled along a quiet Kuantan street and housed within the city’s tallest structure, the Hock Bee Building, Ms. Elliot leans into memory and modernity. The café pays homage to Pahang cuisine, grounding its menu in local identity while occupying a space steeped in architectural heritage.

To Kuantan locals, Ms. Elliot feels like an old friend; one whose presence has endured, even as its interiors have been reimagined. For mains, the Daging Salai Carbonara is a signature worth pausing for—smoked over coconut husks or firewood, the beef folds gently into a creamy, confident take on a classic.

Tel: +6018-389 0337



PAHANG

STICK IT TO TRADITION

At Akami Izakaya, the soul of Japanese pub dining is honoured, allowing conversation, culinary craft, and a perfectly poured drink to come together in harmony.



PALATE RECOMMENDS

- 1. Tamago Mentai Don
- 2. Fried Chuka Idako
- 3. Chicken Katsu

\$ RM6 - RM188



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

- Pair sake or highballs with skewers in true Japanese fashion—guided, of course, by your server's knowing hand.



BOOK
A TABLE

Akami Izakaya is quietly shaping its own identity in KL. The restaurant leans into the energy of a Japanese *izakaya*—those lively gathering places where food and drink fuel conversation—but with an elegance and polish that make it feel distinctively local.

Walking in, the space immediately feels like a careful translation of Tokyo nightlife. Wooden panels, soft light, and an open kitchen anchor the room. But what makes Akami Izakaya more than another city dining spot is the way it builds connection: between guests and chefs, between food and season, and between Malaysia and Japan.

SKEWERS AT THE HEART

The *izakaya* philosophy is simple—food meant to be shared, paired with drinks, and enjoyed without pretense. Akami delivers that spirit, but with layers of thoughtfulness in each dish. The menu moves beyond bar snacks, presenting a series of plates that shift between comforting and surprising.

A good place to start is with the grilled items, the heartbeat of most *izakayas*. Here, skewers are treated with precision: chicken thigh brushed lightly with tare sauce, smoky and savoury without being overpowered; chicken wings, king oyster mushrooms, and okra. The kitchen is unafraid to use char as an ingredient—those crisped



edges and caramelised notes add depth without masking freshness or texture.

Here, seafood plays a starring role, too, and for good reason. The kitchen has access to some of the best markets in Japan, and it shows in dishes like the *hamachi* (young yellowtail) sashimi, sliced thick for texture, or the seasonal mackerel, marinated in vinegar to highlight its natural oils. A standout is the *akami* (lean tuna), from which the restaurant takes its name. Served lightly seared or as part of a rice bowl, it embodies the balance the restaurant is after: clean, restrained, but memorable and without pretense.

Beyond the classics, Akami nudges Japanese pub tradition forward. One evening's special saw Amaebi, the crunch giving way to a delicate sweetness inside. Other unique dishes are the Engawa, Fried Chuka Idako, Mizuna salad, and Spicy tuna with wantan skin. That interplay of the new and the known is what draws regulars back. It reflects the kitchen's commitment to balance—never overwhelming with novelty, but always introducing something unexpected. Each course is designed for consistency.

DRINKS TO MATCH THE MOOD

Of course, no *izakaya* is complete without drinks. The sake list here is curated to encourage exploration, with everything from

when needed. It reflects the restaurant's broader philosophy: dining should feel human, not choreographed.

Needless to say, KL has no shortage of Japanese dining, from sleek omakase counters to casual ramen shops. What sets Akami apart is its ability to occupy the middle ground with confidence. It offers the accessibility of an *izakaya*, the refinement of a modern restaurant, and the warmth of a neighbourhood spot you might return to again and again.

crisp, dry *junmai* to more aromatic *ginjo* styles. There are also highballs, *shochu*, and a thoughtful selection of Japanese whiskeys. Staff are quick to recommend pairings, and the experience of sipping while nibbling makes the evening feel unhurried.

The rhythm of dining here is flexible. Some come for a quick skewer and a drink after work, while others settle in for a longer evening, moving from small bites to heartier dishes like grilled salmon or a steaming bowl of don. This fluidity is really what forms the basis of Akami's charm.

BY WAY OF THE JAPANESE

However, what truly anchors an evening spent here is the hospitality. The staff strike a balance between attentiveness and ease, never rushing guests yet always appearing

At TS Law Tower, where new dining concepts continue to emerge, Akami Izakaya holds its own by not over-complicating things. It takes a familiar template, injects it with sincerity, and layers in enough creativity to keep things interesting. Every visit can be different from lunch to dinner: a round of skewers and sake with friends for noon, a quieter dinner of sashimi and grilled vegetables the next evening.

In many ways, Akami Izakaya succeeds because it doesn't chase spectacle. It understands that great dining is about balance—between flavour and restraint, energy and intimacy. Thus its character is one that feels distinctly at home in KL's dining scene.

WHERE TASTE MEETS “RYTHYM”

With live seafood, bespoke cocktails, and a sonic soundtrack that wakes the night, Annabell KL is a dining lounge that feels modern, expressive, and alive.



PALATE RECOMMENDS

1. Japanese Miyazaki A5 Wagyu
2. Goulburn Valley Lamb Rack
3. Grilled Galician Octopus

\$ RM28 - RM299



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

- At the bar, sip on the Rosso Romance or the inventive Sexy Annabell, that are designed to delight.



BOOK
A TABLE

From the moment you step off the elevator at TS Law Tower and ascend to Level 11, Annabell KL greets you with a vision that aligns food, design, and sound in one immersive space. At its heart stands a luminous bar wrapped by an installation of bell jars, each cradling exceptional and rare spirits. More than a statement piece, consider it your invitation to marvel and indulge your curiosity.

The décor borrows from classical elegance, dressed in wallpaper alive with tropical flora and fauna—an evocative echo of Anna’s entrance into a Siamese court in the 1999 film *Anna and the King*, reimagined for today’s KL. Plush seating and soft lighting beckon the unhurried, while soaring ceilings and rice-white drapes edged in muted gold lend a tastefully restrained grandeur, setting the stage for lingering conversations.



Devasa Rib Eye

Annabell’s sets the stage like a living canvas, where freshness is pulled straight from the tanks and plated with flair. Picture Boston lobster baked to perfection, bathed in garlic butter and molten mozzarella. Then there’s the Devasa Rib Eye, a classic paired with golden shoestring fries and a pat of herb butter that melts right into the charred succulence of the steak.



Grilled Galician Octopus

Savour the Goulburn Valley Lamb Rack—free-range, tender, and beautifully elevated with miso pumpkin purée, earthy maitake mushrooms, and a rich French onion jus that ties it all together. Each bite carries a balance of sweetness, umami, and depth, a nod to thoughtful craftsmanship on the plate and palate.

For pure comfort, the roasted bone marrow emerges golden and bubbling, paired with focaccia, finished with a sprinkle of sea salt. Simple at first glance, yet layered with indulgent flavour that lingers long after the last bite. But Annabell doesn’t end with plates and chord lines—the bar pours intention into every glass. Rosso Romance pairs gin



Truffle Cream Fettuccine

with lychee liqueur, strawberry, basil, and lemon for a botanical sip. Sexy Annabell teases with aged rum infused with pandan, Campari steeped in chrysanthemum, and a bright hit of pineapple and lime, a cocktail that feels sultry in a single sip.

Just when the conversation might lull, Annabell shifts the energy and the lounge pulses until late morning hours. Meanwhile, the kitchen stays open—because wine and live music demand more than silence. Plates continue to glide out, cocktails sparkle under the glow of low lights, and laughter lingers like the last note of a jazz refrain. It’s the kind of place where time feels elastic, stretching effortlessly between dinner and drinks.

Annabell is not about one moment—it’s a sequence. A sidestep of playfulness, a twist

audaciously itself, unapologetically bold in mood and flavour. Each corner seems to hum with its own rhythm, from the intimacy of candlelit tables to the thrum of the lounge, making every visit feel like the start of a story worth retelling.



Bone Marrow

TALES TOLD IN SPICE

From decadent biryanis to delicately spiced curries, Frangipaani takes diners on a refined voyage through India's culinary soul—complete with heritage ambience and contemporary flair.



Located in the posh neighbourhood of Bukit Damansara, Frangipaani marries Indian culinary nostalgia with colonial elegance. Its British India-inspired architecture sets the stage for an atmosphere both regal and relaxed. Inside, a warm palette of deep wood, mosaic tiles, and marble tabletops is softened by antique mirrors and lush foliage. Potted palms nod gently under a skylight, while the gentle hum of live piano—performed weekend evenings in the main dining area—adds a feeling of romance.

SMALL PLATES, BIG PERSONALITY

From North to South, Frangipaani's menu is a map of India's many moods—cosy, vibrant, and unexpected. Each dish is thoughtfully crafted, honouring traditional roots while offering contemporary elements that resonate with today's discerning palate.



Then there's the Crab Rasam, a soulful Southern Indian broth, deep maroon in colour, layering tomatoes, lentils, warming spices, and sweet crab meat into a steaming bowl of umami-rich bliss. A whole crab leg perches dramatically across the top because Frangipaani doesn't just serve dishes but frames them like art.

Vegetarian dishes are anything but an afterthought. The Malai Kofta, for instance, sees paneer and potato dumplings in a velvety cashew gravy that's equal parts indulgent and comforting. The sauce is sweet, nutty, and elegantly rich. Paired with hot, buttered naan dusted with black sesame, it's the kind of dish you'll remember days later.

THE MEATY TREAT

Frangipaani's meat-forward offerings are generous, bold, and unapologetically indulgent. The Signature Butter Chicken Stracciatella is creamy, tomato-rich, and delicately laced with cardamom.

The Lamb Rogan Josh pays homage to Awadhi tradition, with lamb simmered in a rich gravy of tomato, ginger, and coriander until it melts on the tongue. For something a little more decadent, try the lamb chops marinated overnight in spiced yoghurt and finished in a velvety masala curry. Next, there's the Mutton Dum Biryani, the undisputed crown jewel. Prepared Dum Pukht-style, it's a slow-cooked symphony of fragrant rice, saffron, rose water, and fall-apart mutton, layered with care.

And let's not forget the naan. Golden and crisp-edged, it becomes your edible utensil, perfect for sopping up every last bit of those addictive sauces and curries.

COCKTAILS THAT WHISPER

At Frangipaani, the curated cocktails are as daring as the dishes. The Chai Martini



takes your grandmother's masala chai and reimagines it for the cocktail hour. It's made up of vodka swirled with ginger, star anise, cream, and a touch of Bailey's.

If spice is your vice, go for the Indian Passion. This tropical tease blends vodka with passion fruit and *jajira* spice, served chilled with a salty-sweet rim and a cheeky chilli finish. Bright, peach-hued, and flirtatiously balanced, it's a drink made for sunset toasts and sultry conversations.

From its lush, colonial-inspired interiors to its deeply satisfying plates, every element of your meal at Frangipaani is designed to transport, tantalise, and linger long after the final bite. Whether you're wooing a date or treating yourself, it's an affair to remember.



Start with the Aloo and Moong Sprouts Chaat, a zesty ode to Delhi's street fare. Here, diced potatoes and moong sprouts await a squeeze of lime and a pour of mint chutney. Papads accompany the dish, for a crunch that bridges salad and snack, with a finish as vibrant as its presentation.

Walk through the doors of Frangipaani at The Republik KL, and you're not just entering a restaurant but stepping into a love letter to India. Here, the blend of spices is as smooth as poetry and every dish tells a rooted story from the heart of the subcontinent. Royal recipes of the North, sun-soaked Goan coastal fare, and dishes with an authentic influence from the South, Frangipaani weaves an epicurean tapestry that celebrates India's rich, layered culinary soul.

PALATE RECOMMENDS

1. Multani Seekh Kebab
2. Chicken Madras
3. Biryani

\$ RM50 - RM250



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

Although the dishes here bring the heat, they pair perfectly well with wine. Just ask the sommelier.



BOOK
A TABLE



"Indian food is an emotion. Every spice and every simmered sauce at Frangipaani tells a story of heritage, heart, and home."

—Chef Faruk Atiyar Tarafdar

FLAVOURS ON FIRE

In a riot of colour and flavour, La Chicá is where you get your fix of Mexican soul—with smoky meats, zesty tacos, and cocktails that sparkle with spice.



Born in the vibrant heart of Changkat Bukit Bintang, Leslie Gomez's brainchild quickly gained fame for its fiery flavours and festive atmosphere. Its success paved the way to Straits Quay, Penang, where the second outlet became a beloved neighbourhood hotspot. Within months, demand sparked the launch of a third location at Jalan Bangkung in Bangsar, followed by a fourth at The Square, Jaya One in Petaling Jaya.

La Chicá also recently opened its fifth outlet in Kota Kinabalu at Imago Shopping Mall, bringing its signature energy to East Malaysia. It offers a spirited taste of Mexico, where margaritas meet bold Latin flavours crafted for local palates. This lively Mexican hideaway is a passport to scrumptious empanadas, authentic tortillas, and pastas served with spice, soul, and sunshine.

PALATE RECOMMENDS

1. Trio Fajita
2. Gambas al Ajillo
3. Taco Platter

\$ RM25 - RM150



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

1. Order the Margarita by the pitcher. It's served in a tower of glasses, and you can even play mix and match with the flavours.



BOOK
A TABLE



chef's
INSIGHT

"At La Chica, every ingredient has a purpose, every dish has a heartbeat, and every bite tells a story of passion."

—Chef Mohd Alif Asyraf

Frenetic with colour and full of character, the Jaya One outlet doesn't whisper 'Mexican' but shouts it out loud. Think hand-painted murals, hanging rattan lanterns, and bursts of foliage in every corner. The kind of place where chairs creak with stories, and the air hums with mariachi magic. What makes this space better, is that your fur babies are welcome, too. The open-air veranda is made for leisurely afternoons, slow sips, and the clink of good company.

CULINARY SIESTA, THEN FIESTA

The menu is a love letter to Latin America, tailored to tempt Malaysian's taste buds. Expect familiar comfort in unfamiliar names—Huevos Rancheros, Croquetas de Pato, Anticuchos—each plate a postcard from a faraway place.



The delicious Gambas al Ajillo is a must-try

Start bold with the Gambas al Ajillo, where tiger prawns bask in a bubbling garlic olive oil bath. Plump, juicy, and wickedly fragrant, the prawns arrive with bread meant for dunking—though you may find yourself abandoning etiquette and going in with your fingers.

If you're craving something hearty, the Rabo de Toro—Spanish-style oxtail slow-cooked to falling-apart tenderness—is a must. Served atop a cloud of cheesy mashed potatoes, it's a dish that soothes as much as it seduces.

Then, if you deem yourself a spice lover, the Cordera Picante En Rodajas turns up the heat with slivers of lamb seared with habanero, refried beans, and onions. Fiery and moreish, it's the kind of plate that disappears before your drink does.

Vegetarians, too, are well-fed at La Chicá. The Chuleton de Maiz Especiado offers corn riblets dusted in caliente powder and brightened with queso fresco and lime. It's a snacky, tangy detour that's perfect for grazing and sharing.

TACO THE TOWN

Of course, no Mexican experience is complete without tacos, and La Chicá doesn't disappoint. The Poppers de Carne Jalapeño features marinated beef and jalapeño poppers wrapped in soft tortillas, delivering savoury heat and smoky depth.

For something lighter but no less exciting, the Pescado con Pimiento Rojo brings crispy fish, creamy avocado, and zingy red pepper salsa into perfect harmony. It's surf meets salsa in all the best ways. Then there are the fajitas. The Pollo Fajita arrives sizzling with grilled chicken, sautéed peppers, and warm tortillas waiting to be filled.

SWEET ENDINGS, SPIRITED SIPS

Don't leave La Chicá without trying the Flan. Silken, caramel-laced, and comfortingly sweet, it tastes like a childhood memory. Then, wash it all down with a Margarita ... or five. After all, you can choose from tropical twists like basil mango or kiwi jalapeño. Each one packs just enough kick to keep the conversation flowing.

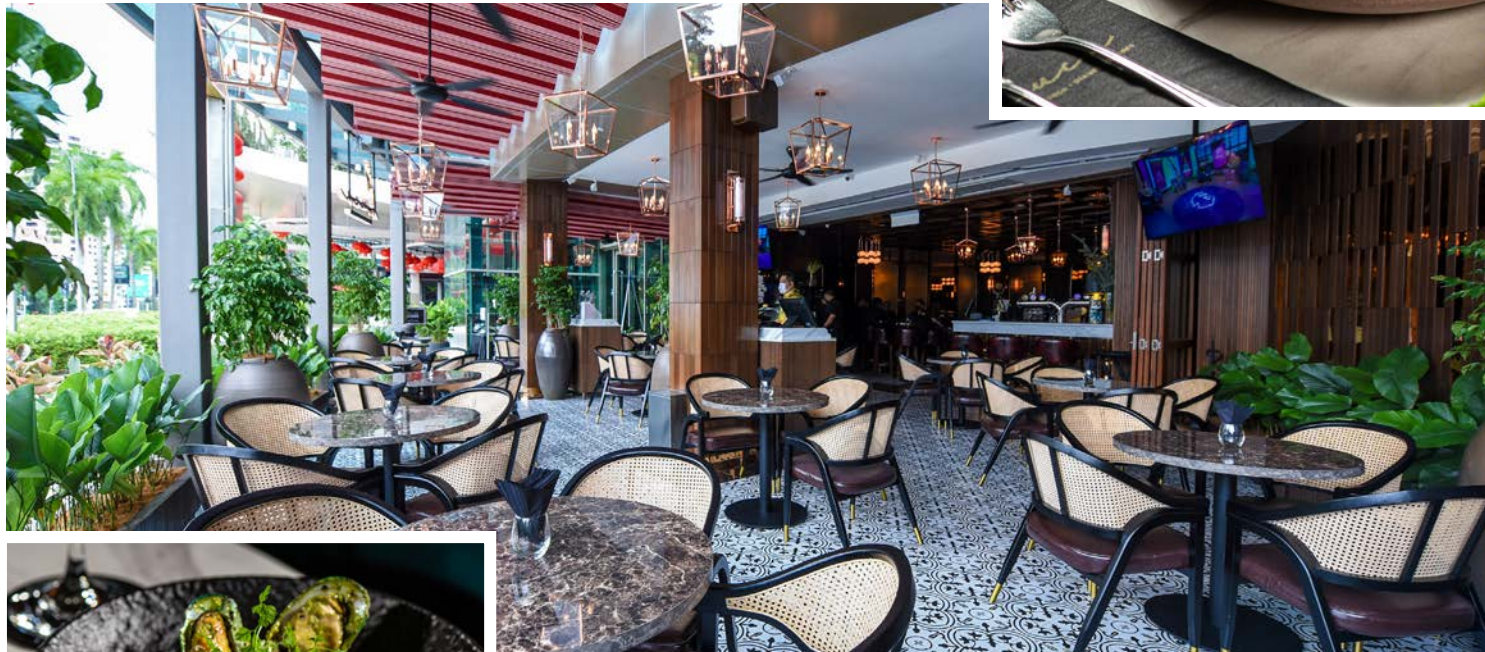
Spending the evening here, you'll soon learn that La Chicá is a space to escape, lounge, laugh, and fall in love with food all over again. Come for the tacos, stay for the vibe, and leave with a little more zest in your step.



Taco platter

TANDOOR AND TRUFFLE

Where spice, soul, and style collide. Luca redefines all-day dining with a menu that brings Indian flavours and European finesse to the heart of Bangsar.



From morning coffee catch-ups to evening wine dates, Luca adapts gracefully to every mood. The space is split into two distinct zones: a warm, refined dining room ideal for lunch meetings or cosy dinners, and a more relaxed bar and al fresco section perfect for casual grazing or sundown cocktails.



Meanwhile, over on the European end of the spectrum, the Ragu Beef Ribs Rigatoni delivers pure comfort. Slow-braised beef ribs are tossed with *al dente* rigatoni and finished with peppery arugula and aged pecorino. Another strong contender for main course glory is the Pan-Seared Seabass with Quinoa.

WINE, ELEVATED

With over 50 labels from France, Italy, and beyond, Luca's wine line-up is both robust and refined. Whether you're nibbling on some tapas or diving into a spiced main, the in-house team is ready to guide you on a pairing journey that elevates every bite.

Luca doesn't just look the part—it delivers on the plate, too. From burrata-laced butter chicken to smart twists on modern European comfort food, the menu balances richness with restraint. Add to that a well-curated wine list and a space built for lingering, and you've got a dining experience that's relaxed but considered.

FAMILIAR, YET FEARLESS

Luca's recently refreshed menu is a globe-trotting culinary journey reimagined with comfort and creativity. Spanning European-style mains and Indian-inspired favourites, expect to see options of pizzas, pastas, naan, and the Kebab Platter, perfect for pleasing adventurous eaters and comfort-seekers.

One standout dish is the Burrata Butter Chicken. This charcoal-grilled chicken tikka rests in a rich, velvety Makhani gravy, crowned with a whole burrata that melts luxuriously into the sauce. Equal parts indulgent and inventive, it's best enjoyed with Luca's signature flatbreads or a side of their aromatic biryani.

Next, the Jharkhand Aubergine is a delight—a modern reinterpretation of smoked Baingan Bharta that showcases the vegetable two ways, where a creamy mash forms the base crowned with delicate crisps of aubergine creating a striking interplay of textures and layered flavours.



PALATE RECOMMENDS

1. Premium Grass-Fed Tomahawk
2. Luca Butter Chicken
3. Kebab Platter

\$ RM50 - RM250



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

Luca's vibrant flavours find perfect harmony with its thoughtfully curated wines from France, Chile, Spain, and beyond.



BOOK
A TABLE



"Step into Luca, where curated cuisine, crafted ambience, and genuine hospitality blend seamlessly into an unforgettable dining experience."

—Chef Fazil Shahreen @ Jjay

FLAVOURS WITHOUT BORDERS

Where altitude meets attitude, Mesa on 51 delivers a seamless blend of Spanish flair and Asian depth—elevated, quite literally.



At Mesa on 51, Spanish traditions and Japanese finesse come together in a culinary narrative that's both unexpected and deeply intentional. The latest concept by The Marini's Group, this high-rise dining destination redefines fusion with confidence, creativity, and a deep respect for both cuisines.

PALATE RECOMMENDS

- 1. Miso Cod Fish
- 2. Wagyu Chuleton
- 3. Cantábrico Pizza

\$ RM20 — RM1,280



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

Whisper your zodiac sign to our bartenders and surprise yourself with a bespoke cocktail customised just for you!



BOOK
A TABLE



"Mesa on 51 is a chic rooftop haven where you can soak in the cosmopolitan vibes in luxury and comfort."

— Elizabeth Marini,
Vice President of
The Marini's Group



Located on the 51st floor of the Permata Sapura Tower, Mesa on 51 is divided into three distinct spaces, each offering its own mood and menu. At The Restaurant, bold Spanish dishes take the spotlight from tapas to paella, and charcoal-grilled meats to octopus. Just next to it, the Nikkei Lounge showcases Japanese precision and flair, featuring pristine sushi and sashimi alongside one of the city's most impressive whisky collections. Finally, The Terrace Bar is open-air and softly lit, offering a front-row seat to KL's iconic skyline best enjoyed with a cocktail (or three) in hand.

The space reflects the group's signature philosophy: culinary innovation elevated by atmosphere. Like its predecessor, Marini's on 57, this sky-high venue frames KL's architectural marvels, including the Petronas Twin Towers, KL Tower, Merdeka 118, and The Exchange 106 through every window—even those in its three private rooms and lounge. For The Marini's Group, the goal is simple: to match bold, unforgettable flavours with a spectacular view that speaks for itself.

EAST MEETS MED

That philosophy plays out on the plate. The evening typically begins with a dramatic sashimi and sushi boat—a visual and textural prelude that sets the tone. Toro and maki are served fresh and unadorned, letting the quality of the fish do the talking.

Nigiri topped with A5 Miyazaki Wagyu sirloin, gently torched, is as indulgent as it sounds. Alongside it, Patatas Bravas—a humble Spanish classic—are elevated with a triple-cook crunch and cloud-soft centre.

From there, the Spanish signatures roll out. Gambas al Ajillo—prawns in garlic oil—come alive with buttery sweetness and a whiff of brine, made for dipping with crusty sourdough. Pulpo Canario, tender

a slow-roasted Spanish lamb shoulder, yields effortlessly to the fork, its richness underscored by a melt-in-mouth texture. Still, the star of the evening may just be the miso-glazed cod that's buttery, silken, and deeply umami, accented with yuzu-marinated cucumber. We'll gladly take it with a bowl of rice and nothing else.

DINNER TO DJ

And while the food may be the main draw, Nikkei Lounge and Terrace Bar each offer compelling reasons to stay. The lounge features immersive light installations and a VOID-powered sound system, making it a sleek hideout for after-dinner drinks. The open-air Terrace Bar, on the other hand, brings a more relaxed vibe—think al fresco dining with a DJ set, hand-crafted cocktails, and a breeze that carries the city's pulse just softly enough.

From impeccably sliced sashimi to velvety sangria and skyline views that never get old, Mesa on 51 delivers a dining experience that feels at once elevated and grounded, dramatic and considered. For those seeking something different yet deeply satisfying, this may just be your next table in the sky.



Tapas, Ceviche, Escalivada, Polpo Canario, and Ocean Trout

octopus grilled to a perfect char, follows with deep sea flavour balanced by the smoky kiss of the grill.

The kitchen also serves a duo of paellas: a rich, truffle-scented Paella de Pato with duck confit, and a striking Paella Negra, ink-stained and studded with cuttlefish and prawns. The grains are toothsome, the seafood just-cooked, and the flavours are layered and arresting.

Of course, the final wave of mains leans hearty. The Paletilla de Cordero,



Paella de Pato, Paella de Verdura, and Paella Negra

TICKING ALL THE BOXES

An ode to Indian culture and modern creativity, Shuruti Box's daring menu and atmospheric charm make it a must-visit for diners seeking a fresh, offbeat experience.



Kashmin Chilli Mango



Vendhiya Curry Lasagna



Saffron Chicken

Shuruti Box opened in 2020—that's right, in the middle of the pandemic. It was about as bold a time as any to open a restaurant, but fittingly so, because this is one establishment that doesn't want to play it safe. It first started as an idea in the mind of Siva Shankar, who set out to establish a space that takes the traditionality of South Indian heritage and expresses it through a contemporary lens. Named after a classical drone instrument, Shuruti Box, the moniker was chosen with intention to symbolise both harmony and tradition, tenets central to the brand's identity.

PALATE RECOMMENDS

1. Lamb on Curd Rice
2. Baramundi in Rasam
3. Saffron Chicken

\$ RM14 — RM 98



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

1. Order the Masala Chai Mudslide. It's a boozy rendition that's every bit as decadent as it sounds.



BOOK
A TABLE



chef's
INSIGHT

"Every plate is a passport —
Indian roots, global soul."

— Chef Uvaraj



Vallathandu Cannelloni

OF BEATS AND BOXES

Billed as Malaysia's first Tamil bar, Shuruti Box fully embodies this concept, bringing the culture, along with the rich food and music it produced, into a singular space. The music plays a key role in setting the mood: a predominantly Tamil soundtrack floats through the air, readying you for the experience ahead. On the outside, the exterior nods to heritage architecture; while on the inside, minimalist colonial aesthetics predominate. The monochrome palette and open, airy layout form an unobtrusive canvas, allowing all other elements in the restaurant to take centre stage.

Stepping into the space feels like you've arrived to do more than just eat. Live performances—or soft ambient music during quieter times—dovetail with the social camaraderie to create an environment akin to a cultural venue that just so happens to serve outstanding food and drink. The menu, while distinctly different, retains a warm familiarity. Rooted in South Indian flavours, it dresses time-honoured tastes in global sophistication. Tapas-style small plates allow diners to sample a variety of flavours in neat, bite-sized portions, while the mains—inventively conceived and assembled—demand a bit more attention.

The food at Shuruti Box somehow performs the nuanced trick of subverting expectations, all while staying true to its roots and preserving cultural integrity. Meanwhile, the kitchen's desire to experiment, and to continually offer novel experiences, means that the menu rotates frequently—the only constant being its focus on boldly reinterpreting classics.

TRADITION REIMAGINED

Shuruti Box's East-meets-West ethos shines in dishes like the Vallathandu Cannelloni, which wraps banana flowers and lentils—staples of Indian cuisine. The Barramundi in Rasam, served with garlic bread, cleverly blends South Indian flavour and Western presentation. This cultural melding extends to desserts, as seen in the Masala Chai Crème Brûlée and Payasam Pannacotta—both confident fusions that never feel gimmicky.

That same spirit of creativity extends to the cocktails. The drinks menu pairs traditional Indian ingredients with contemporary mixology, resulting in a lineup that sets itself apart. Those with a bit of a sweet tooth will love treats like the Masala Chai Mudslide, Betel Leaf G&T, and Beetroot Lassi, which straddle the line between cocktail and dessert. And just like the food, seasonal cocktails and spirit infusions make regular appearances, keeping things fresh and the guests guessing.



Lamb on Curd Rice



Kashmiri Gambas

If you had to sum up Shuruti Box, you could say that it's—pardon the turn of phrase—out of the box. Framed by identity but not encumbered by it, they're not afraid to switch things up while always preserving that wide-ranging appeal. They don't shout about what they do, and that's because they don't have to. Shuruti Box invites you in and lets everything—the space, the food, and the music—do the talking.



Payasam Pannacotta

SIP, SAVOUR, SOAR

Beyond the breathtaking views and impeccable interiors, Sol at Level 40 ignites KL's dining scene with a bold Latin flair.



Wood-fired Pacific Oyster

KL just got a whole lot hotter. Rising from the 40th floor of The Met Corporate Towers in Mont Kiara, Sol—Latin for “sun”—is setting the city skyline ablaze with the spirit of Latin America. The fiery brainchild of Leslie Jerome Gomez, Managing Director of The Olive Tree Group, Sol marries wood-fire cooking with sultry rhythm and soulful flair. Think bold, bright, and unapologetically Latin—just the way good nights should be.

PALATE RECOMMENDS

1. Grain-Fed Tomahawk
2. Wood-Fired Golden Snapper
3. Claypot Seafood Paella

\$ RM50 - RM250



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

1. Request for a sommelier and chef to personalise wine and food pairing, or opt for a tasting menu if you're just starting out.



BOOK
A TABLE



chef's
INSIGHT

“I don't just cook Latin American food. I compose it. Bold like salsa, layered like folklore, and always dancing on the tongue.”

—Chef Sam Gazo

Octopus and Chorizo Skewer with Pomegranate Chimichurri



DESIGNED FOR DRAMA

Sol's interior strikes a bold balance between elegance and sunlight, with every detail steeped in drama. From floor-to-ceiling drapery that softens the space to fiery marble pillars that anchor the room, its design makes a statement. Overhead, undulating wave-like ceilings evoke motion, adorned with lush ferns and cascading chandeliers that glimmer through the foliage, creating a layered, almost cinematic ambiance. Gold-hued lighting warms the space, complemented by a vibrant disco ball that scatters reflections across velvet textures and polished surfaces.

Sprawling a whole 6,000 square feet, Sol's interior spills out onto an al fresco terrace made for golden hour reverie. At 40 floors above the city, with sweeping views of KL's skyline and its iconic towers, sunset here is a moment best savoured with a chilled glass of white or a salt-rimmed margarita in hand.

FLAME, FLAVOUR, AND THEATRE

In Sol's open kitchen, helmed by Chef Sam Gazo, fire meets finesse. The culinary journey begins with light, but elevated bites, such as the charcoal-fired sourdough served with smoked garlic paste and umami butter. For a punch of flavour, opt for the crispy Spanish-style potatoes, indulgently laced with black garlic aioli.

The menu eases into a symphony of Latin starters like wood-fired Pacific oysters and pulled beef empanadas. From the sea, standouts like Charcoal-Seared Halibut and Wood-Fired Golden Snapper are executed with smoke-kissed precision. For those craving heartier fare, must-tries like the Octopus and Chorizo Skewer with Pomegranate Chimichurri, Six Hours Pulled Lamb Shoulder, and Shepherd's Pie are not to be missed.

LIGHTS LOW, SPIRITS HIGH

Back inside, all eyes are drawn to Sol's striking centrepiece—a circular, backlit bar that glows like a halo of hedonism. It's the first architectural statement to greet guests, inviting them to gather, sip, and settle into the rhythm of the space.

Suspended above is a lavish chandelier, casting a soft, golden shimmer that sets the tone for your meal. Whether for a pre-dinner ritual or a post-meal indulgence, the bar



Wood-fired Golden Snapper



Wagyu Tomahawk MB 6-7, Marrow Butter, Beef Jus, Charred Mexican Chilli

Half Charcoal Chicken, Spice Rub, Burnt Carrot Crema, Pickled Peppers 2

offers signature cocktails like La Selva, Sol de los Andes, and Bossa Nova.

Just beside the sculptural bar, the DJ deck adds a pulse to Sol's polished ambience—a subtle shift from fine dining to nightlife. On select evenings, the energy transforms as resident DJs and guest performers hit the deck and stage, curating soundscapes that move from sultry Latin rhythms to upbeat lounge mixes. From Wednesday to Saturday, themed nights keep the vibe elevated, blurring the lines between dinner service and dance floor.

SIPS WITH A LATIN SWING

Latin heritage flows seamlessly into Sol's cocktail menu. A vibrant line-up of agave-based classics awaits, while tucked away in a sleek corner, a wine cellar showcases an impressive collection of New World and Old World gems. Secured by fingerprint-only access, this curated haven boasts over 100 labels while dedicated sommeliers are on hand to guide you through perfect wine and food pairings. For teetotalers, inventive mocktails ensure every palate is delighted and no one is left out.

A NEW LAYER TO THE PYRAMID

Rising from the retail heart of Sunway Pyramid, Terrace is a bold new dining destination made for long lunches, lively dinners, and everything in between.



The way we dine is changing. Across the Klang Valley, dedicated dining hubs are quietly redefining how we eat, connect, and unwind. These curated spaces bring together multiple culinary concepts under one roof offering variety without the chaos, and convenience without compromise. Enter Terrace at Sunway Pyramid—a sleek, three-storey enclave tucked between the bustle of the New Pantai Expressway and the mall's iconic lion head.

Spanning 30,000 square feet, Terrace is home to five distinct eateries, each offering its own take on flavour, culture, and comfort. Whether it's a quick breakfast, a slow lunch, or a sweet nightcap, this bustling new dining destination meets every appetite all day long.

PALATE RECOMMENDS

1. Tulang Rusuk Bakar at Cili Kampung (seasonal special)
2. Sop Ikan Goreng Sanur at Seminyak by Warung Eropa
3. Cocoa and Tiramisu Soufflé at Come True Café

\$ RM10 - RM 85



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

1. The Terrace at Sunway Pyramid is the area's best-kept secret with five culinary concepts in one space.



VISIT
FOR MORE



"The unveiling of this vibrant new zone — along with the rebranding of Boulevard — is part of our ongoing commitment to delivering exceptional, multi-sensory experiences for our visitors."

—Jason Chin,
Sunway Malls Selangor



SEMINYAK BY WARUNG EROPA

Marking its Malaysian debut, Seminyak by Warung Eropa brings the warmth of Bali to KL. The restaurant's laid-back design, inspired by beachside cafés, sets the tone for a menu steeped in authentic Balinese fare. The Nasi Jinggo Bowls and Ayam Kampung Goreng Kremes are standouts, allowing diners to customise their plates with a choice of proteins and sambals. Exclusive to The Terrace location is the Sop Ikan Goreng Sanur—crispy fried fish served in savoury broth. Also unique to this outlet is the Crispy Duck Pancake, featuring tender, flavour-packed duck wrapped in a soft pancake. It's as bold in flavour as it is in texture.



CILI KAMPUNG

From Langkawi to the Klang Valley, Cili Kampung has built a loyal following with its honest take on kampung-style cooking. Now at The Terrace, the restaurant continues to honour traditional Malaysian flavours in a contemporary setting. The Masak Lemak Beef is a deeply spiced dish that reflects the

heart of Negeri Sembilan cuisine, while other favourites including Sambal Petai Prawns, Terung Goreng Belacan, and Asam Pedas Tenggiri round out a menu that's both comforting and celebratory. With ample space for large gatherings, it's an ideal pick for family meals and festive get-togethers.



POKOK

Long associated with its breezy, glasshouse vibe and photogenic plates, Pokok KL brings its distinctive charm to the Sunway food scene with a menu that blends East and West. Staples like the Nasi Lemak Bomb, Mediterranean Salmon Salad, Chili Padi Pesto Pasta, and hearty Pokok's Beef Burger remain crowd-pleasers. What sets this outlet apart is the Lionhead view diners get to enjoy—an inventive, layered take that reflects Pokok's reputation for culinary creativity.

COME TRUE CAFÉ

With roots in Taiwan and an eye for detail, Come True Café makes its third Malaysian appearance at The Terrace. This halal-friendly café explores global influences through a fusion menu that never loses focus. While their savoury options are strong, the true draw lies in their signature soufflés—light, cloud-like, and rich in flavour. Only at Sunway Pyramid can you try the Tiramisu Soufflé, a soft, elegant dessert that's equal parts indulgent and delicious.



AFTERMEAL

Known for reinventing traditional desserts with modern flair, Aftermeal finally arrives in Sunway Pyramid, bringing with it a cult following. The Iron Lady Milk Tea Kakigori remains a firm favourite, made with finely-shaved Tieguanyin oolong ice and layered with jellies, taro, and sweet potato mochi. Also worth the calories are the Dark Milo Kakigori and the hot Royal Matcha Latte for a finish that's icy, indulgent, and entirely worth it.



RING MY BELL

Sushi Bell KL is shaping a new rhythm for Japanese dining in the city, blending precision, seasonality, and a quiet reverence for craft.



PALATE RECOMMENDS

1. Uni Hand Roll
2. Seasonal Shell Item
3. Hon Maguro (Bluefin Tuna)

\$ RM168 - RM888



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

- True to its name, a sleek brass bell rests on the counter. Ring it, and let the surprise unfold.



BOOK
A TABLE

In the heart of KL's city centre, where tall gleaming towers often dictate the rhythm of urban life, Sushi Bell KL is finding its own beat. Within TS Law Tower, the restaurant makes an immediate impression with its understated interiors—sleek wood and a calm palette designed to fade into the background so that the food can take centre stage. There's little excess, no noise—just the anticipation of what's to come.

The restaurant's name itself hints at rhythm. Just as a bell signals the start of something ceremonial, each course here feels like a note in a wider composition. The meal unfolds not in haste but with intent, balancing the familiar traditions of sushi with a more modern, seasonal cadence.

A DIALOGUE WITH THE SEASONS

At the helm is a team of chefs who take pride in sourcing ingredients with near-obsessive detail. Each day begins with shipments flown in from Tokyo's Toyosu Market, ensuring the freshest catches land on the counter by evening service. But it's not just about what arrives from Japan; the restaurant also celebrates Malaysia's own waters, weaving local produce into the mix.

This dual focus brings unexpected combinations to the table: a slice of wild Japanese grouper layered with yuzu koshō or *kampachi* (amberjack) accented with a brush of soy that enhances rather than masks its natural sweetness. Each bite feels deliberate, as if the chef is inviting diners into a quiet conversation about taste, time, and place.

THE OMAKASE EXPERIENCE

Omakases here are not a rigid sequence, but more of a flowing performance. Diners settle into the counter, facing the chef directly, and the first few courses arrive almost like an overture—clean, refreshing, and designed to awaken the palate. Think translucent hirame touched with ponzu, or a delicate hand roll filled with chopped toro, its richness cut with a sharp hint of pickled radish.

From there, the pace shifts. Nigiri comes one by one, placed with care in front of each guest, the chef explaining the origin and preparation of the fish. The rice—slightly warm, lightly seasoned with red vinegar—anchors each piece, a quiet reminder that sushi is as much about grain as it is about seafood.

A standout from a recent menu was the *uni* (sea urchin) and *ikura* (salmon roe) duo. The *uni*, creamy and oceanic, melted into the briny pop of *ikura*, a balance of textures that felt almost orchestral in its layering. Another highlight was the Kamatoro (tuna cheek), its skin charred to a crisp while the flesh remained buttery and delicate. Served with a wedge of lime, it needs nothing more.

BEYOND THE COUNTER

While the sushi counter experience is the restaurant's heart, Sushi Bell also offers a curated selection of cooked dishes that showcase the team's wider culinary range. Chawanmushi arrives laced with seasonal crab, the silky egg custard carrying an umami depth.

For those looking to extend the evening, the drinks programme is just as considered. The sake list is neatly structured, guiding guests from crisp *junmai* to more complex *daiginjo*, each pairing suggested with a gentle hand rather than rigid rules. The cocktail list, too, carries Japanese accents—think shiso-

infused gin, yuzu spritzes, and a playful take on the whisky highball that quickly became a crowd favourite.

SPACE FOR CONTEMPLATION

The design of Sushi Bell KL mirrors its culinary philosophy: refined but never showy. The dining counter is crafted from a single length of hinoki wood, its pale surface soft to the touch. Lighting is warm but precise, spotlighting the food without overwhelming the room. Background music is subtle—more suggestion than soundtrack—allowing the cadence of chopping, torching, and plating to create the evening's rhythm.

In many ways, the restaurant resists the temptation of spectacle. Instead, it draws



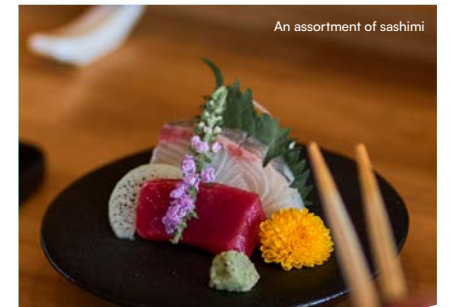
Chawanmushi

diners inward, asking them to slow down, pay attention, and savour each transition from one dish to the next. It is less a performance than a meditation, though one punctuated by plenty of surprise and delight.

A QUICK STATEMENT IN THE CITY

In KL's dining scene, where grand openings and lavish concepts often dominate headlines, Sushi Bell KL is making its mark with a quieter confidence. It doesn't need fireworks—it relies on craft, consistency, and a steady respect for its ingredients.

At TS Law Tower, amid the rush of the city, the omakase at Sushi Bell isn't just a sequence of courses, but a quiet dialogue between chef and diner—one that lingers well after the last bite. Each plate arrives like a whisper, carrying both precision and personality. It's dining that feels less like performance, and more like a conversation.



An assortment of sashimi



Fish is regularly flown in fresh from Tokyo's Toyosu Market



Chutoro topped with truffle pearl

REWRITING THE RECIPE OF PLACE

In a bold reclaiming of space and spirit, TUAH 1895 rises at the grounds of the former Pudu Jail site, blending homegrown talents, global icons, and gastronomic ambition across 45,000 square feet.



No longer nascent, KL's dining landscape is evolving rapidly. What was once dominated by street food and trend-chasing cafés is now making room for deeper expressions of Malaysian identity. At the forefront of this shift is TUAH 1895, a new dining and lifestyle destination located at Bukit Bintang City Centre (BBCC). Framed by the original Pudu Jail archway, TUAH 1895 reclaims the past while shaping the city's culinary future.

Across its two levels and 45,000 square feet, the space brings together a thoughtful mix of homegrown talent and internationally acclaimed names, creating a rich, layered dining experience that's as diverse as the city it calls home.

PALATE RECOMMENDS

- 1. Ministry of Crab
- 2. Chef Kecik Boulangerie
- 3. Ting Shan

\$ RM10 - RM1,188



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

- Get a taste of TUAH 1895's Instagram-worthy charm, where every dish tells a story and every corner invites discovery.



VISIT FOR MORE



"TUAH 1895 is more than just a dining destination—it's where heritage and modern lifestyle come together to create a truly distinctive experience in the heart of Kuala Lumpur."

—Sri Ram Sivasambu, CEO of BBCC



Ministry of Crab



Ting Shan

A CULINARY COLLECTIVE

Located along Jalan Hang Tuah, TUAH 1895 is a bold new culinary collective that brings together the best of Malaysia and beyond. With two carefully curated floors, a central fountain plaza, a breezy mezzanine, and direct access to LaLaport BBCC, it's built for both spontaneous meetups and planned nights out—from morning kopi to midnight cocktails.

Among the standout offerings is Ministry of Crab, the internationally acclaimed Sri Lankan seafood destination is now making waves in KL with its iconic mud crabs and colossal river prawns. Chef Kecik Boulangerie adds a patisserie flair to the mix with French-style pastries imbued with Malaysian character, crafted by Chef Rahmat Bahaudin. Come Q3 2025, AS I AM by Bangkok-based Michelin-starred Chef Ton will unveil a fresh expression of Thai cuisine, paired with curated live entertainment for a multi-sensory experience. At Ting Shan, refined non-halal Chinese cuisine is served in a space that balances intimacy and openness, while Hock Kee Kopitiam delivers nostalgic Malaysian comfort food, prepared with care and consistency. For pork-free diners, Pak Tok Signature brings together the best of Nyonya and Malay cooking with flavours that feel both familiar and fresh. Capping it all off is Crafty's Bar & Lounge, a rooftop hideaway perfect for cocktails, film nights and live sports screenings in a relaxed yet elevated setting.

BALANCE THE FEAST WITH A LITTLE FITNESS

Balance indulgence with intention, Morph by Kamileon offers a wellness experience tailored for the modern urbanite. This boutique fitness studio, housed within TUAH 1895 delivers high-performance programming—from Hyrox training and Pilates to results-driven conditioning—within a striking, design-led environment. It's a space where form meets function, lifestyle meets longevity. Every session is rooted in discipline, shaped by intention.



Ayam Goreng Berempah at Pak Tok Signature

EXPANDING THE BBCC ECOSYSTEM

A short stroll from TUAH 1895 and within BBCC, lies The Labs—a 250,000-square-foot hub for entertainment, culture, and art that adds a dynamic new layer to the BBCC experience. Designed as an integrated leisure destination, it brings together a range of standout attractions.

Among them is Immersify KL, Malaysia's first multi-dimensional media art gallery inspired by the experiential museums of Japan and South Korea. For more entertainment, Golden Screen Cinemas offers cutting-edge projection and sound for a premium movie-going experience, while Zepp KL—a 2,500-capacity concert hall managed by Sony Music Entertainment Japan—hosts some of the city's most anticipated live performances.

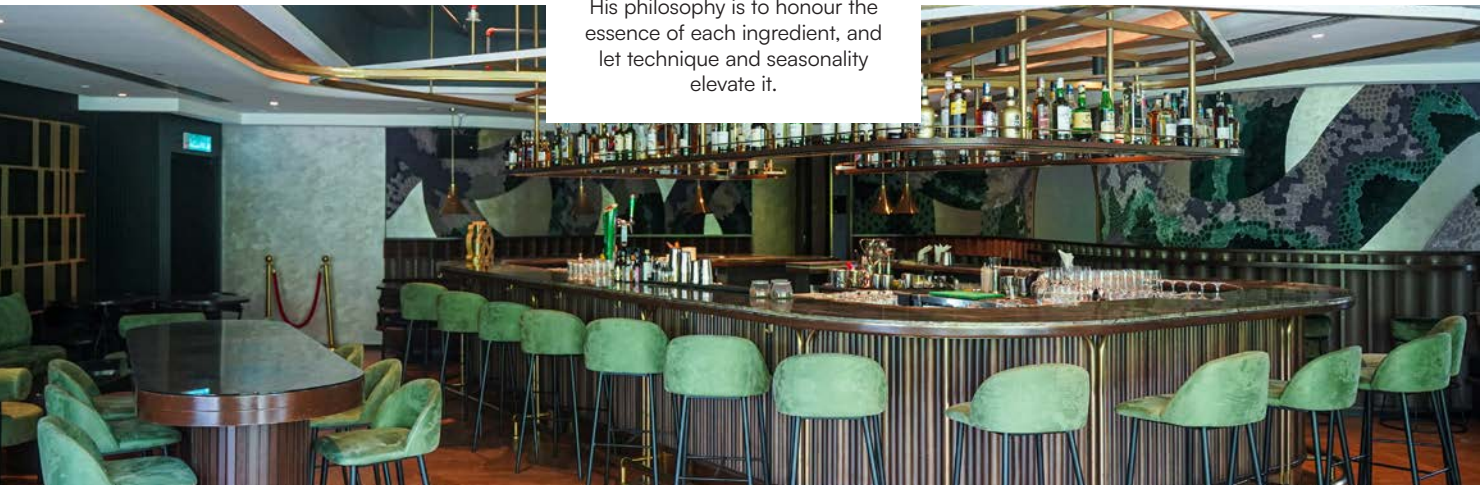
For grand occasions, the Andaman Grand Ballroom KL caters to large-scale events and formal celebrations. Dining options include Food Empire and Padi House, while LSL Family Arcade provides a lively space for family-friendly fun. Together, TUAH 1895 and The Labs mark BBCC's evolution into a vibrant urban destination—where food and culture converge.



Hock Kee Kopitiam

PASTA, PASSION, PROVENANCE

Bringing modern Italian cuisine into focus, Zenzero offers KL diners a seasonal, soulful menu steeped in experience and elegance.



A fresh wave of energy is coursing through one of KL's most beloved Italian dining spots, Zenzero. At the helm is a chef from Italy, whose cooking is rooted in tradition but unafraid to evolve. His philosophy is to honour the essence of each ingredient, and let technique and seasonality elevate it.

PALATE RECOMMENDS

1. Eggplant Parmigiana
2. Pan Fried Barramundi Fillets
3. Lamb Stew

\$ RM28 - RM298



KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

1. The must-try tiramisu is assembled tableside, as their dessert maestro wheels over a cart for the final flourish.



BOOK
A TABLE



CEO's
INSIGHT

"I believe that authenticity in Italian cooking isn't about slavishly following recipes, it's about honouring the spirit of the ingredients and the traditions they represent."

—Roberto Guiati,
CEO & Founder



Black Angus Beef Carpaccio

Founded by Roberto Guiati, Zenzero has long carved out a space for honest, refined Italian fare in the heart of the city. Established in December 2013, Zenzero—which means ginger in Italian—pays homage to the spice's versatility and global presence, mirroring the restaurant's own balance of heritage and modern flair. Guiati's vision was to create a space where guests could enjoy thoughtfully made Italian food that's accessible yet uncompromising on quality.

OLD WORLD SOUL, NEW WORLD SUBTLETY

Strategically located beside the iconic KL Tower, Zenzero draws discerning diners with more than just its enviable address. The space is modern yet warm—where polished finishes meet the comforting aroma of baked focaccia and slow-simmered sauces. Its seasonally driven menu reflects both restraint and imagination, weaving together regional Italian traditions and inventive signatures that cater to loyal regulars and curious first-timers alike.

On the plate, Zenzero balances rustic familiarity with subtle reinvention. The Scallop Carpaccio is light yet layered, with delicate slivers of scallop paired with cool fennel jelly, a hint of wasabi mayo for sharpness, and crisp radish for texture.

The Vitello Tonnato, a Piedmontese classic, is executed with quiet confidence: thin veal, silky tuna emulsion, capers, tomato, and delicious basil caviar come together in elegant harmony.

Ravioli stuffed with lobster and burrata is a study in craftsmanship—intertwined pasta hues that nod to both aesthetics and precision. The lobster is tender, the seasoning restrained, and the pasta cooked to perfection. Equally memorable is the Lamb Loin with Pistachio Crust, where gentle acidity from apricot, sweetness from pistachio, and a medium-rare cook on the lamb are brought together with vegetables treated with the same level of care.

Elsewhere, the Wagyu Beef Tartare shows the chef's reverence for quality. Made with buttery M7-grade wagyu and punctuated by

thing of a living cellar. Each label represents a chapter of Italy's viticultural heritage, from the misty vineyards of Piedmont, known for its elegant Barolos and Barberas, to the sun-drenched coastal plots of Puglia, where bold reds thrive.

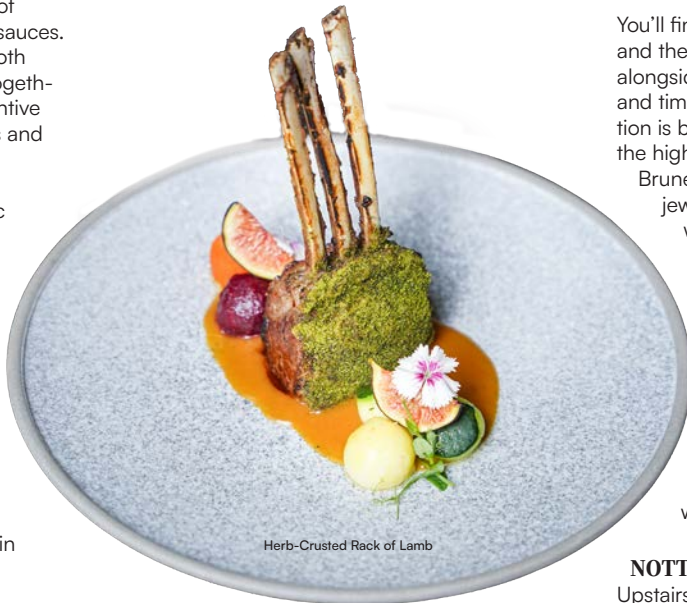
You'll find the mineral-rich whites of Abruzzo and the hearty varietals of Emilia-Romagna alongside the volcanic expressions of Sicily and timeless terroirs of Tuscany. The collection is both expansive and intimate. Among the highlights are a refined selection of Brunello di Montalcino, Tuscany's crown jewel and one of the most esteemed wines in the world. Known for its complexity, age-worthiness, and pure expression of Sangiovese, Brunello anchors the list with a robust and quiet authority.

Whether you're a casual enthusiast or a seasoned collector, the wine list at Zenzero offers a chance to travel Italy by the glass, guided by the care of professionals who live and breathe its traditions.

NOTTE BY NIGHT

Upstairs, Notte by Zenzero, the restaurant's elegant private dining and lounge area, sets the space for more intimate gatherings. With a striking bar as its centrepiece, this space—available without extra booking fees and no minimum spend—offers a sleek backdrop for special occasions, from celebratory dinners to discreet business meetings.

In a city where restaurants come and go with predictable frequency, Zenzero has remained a steady presence by doing what it does best: delivering thoughtful, seasonal Italian cuisine. Its appeal is in consistency, its assured sense of self, and refusal to compromise on the fundamentals.



Herb-Crusted Rack of Lamb

sharp mustard, it's finished with a deep-fried egg yolk—molten in the centre—echoing a technique the chef picked up early in his training in Italy.

WELL, WINE NOT?

A curated wine list rounds out the experience, featuring thoughtful selections from across Italy and beyond. It's a narrative told through bottles that speak of soil, sun, and centuries-old tradition. This sleek, sunlit space is lined with floor-to-ceiling displays of wine, transforming the restaurant into some-

Some Like It Haute

FROM CHEF'S TABLES TO WHITE-LINEN CLASSICS, THE *PALATE* TEAM REVEALS THE RESTAURANTS SERVING HAUTE CUISINE THAT HAVE LEFT US SWOONING.

Words: TENGKU ZAI

Once upon a time, just 20 years ago in fact, KL's fine dining scene was still finding its footing. No longer nascent, today, it stands tall and impossible to ignore. With so many stellar kitchens now calling the city home, narrowing down favourites to just one restaurant feels almost cruel. Yet here we are, plates polished and palates pleased, ready to share the restaurants that have earned a permanent place in our hearts (and diaries), with one worthy outlier from Sabah proving great taste knows no postcode.

Terra Dining begins each meal with an amuse-bouche trio representative of Malaysia's three major cuisines



Heirloom tomatoes make the heart of the *rasam* course

TERRA DINING

Loved by: Tengku Zai, Editor-in-Chief

As much as I'd like to gatekeep, I really shouldn't. Terra Dining in TTDI is far too exceptional to keep to myself. My favourite dish is Chef YC's nuanced reinterpretation of the traditional *rasam*, made with heirloom tomatoes grown in our Pahang highlands. There's a guided way to savour it, and that final bite—concentrated, layered, and explosive—is a flavour bomb that quite literally blows my mind.

The menu has evolved over time, yet it remains steadfast in its mission to elevate nostalgic flavours. It calls to mind how Gaggan Anand once reframed Indian cuisine at his original eponymous Bangkok restaurant: deeply rooted, yet boldly progressive. Even dessert honours this philosophy, transforming the likes of *ais potong* and Apollo Layer Cake into delicate *petit fours* that make for magical memories rendered with sophistication.

In other words, these are your favourite foods all grown up and accompanied by an erudite zero-proof pairing from Beca Tea, if you so please. What I admire most is how Terra balances familiarity with surprise, delivering a meal that's both cerebral and deeply comforting.

Tel: +6011-7072 7777

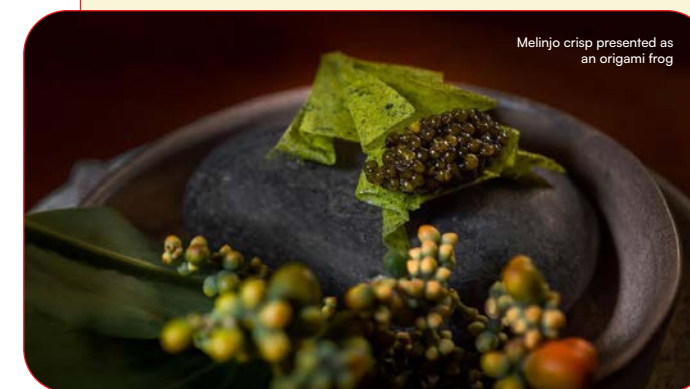
DEWAKAN

Loved by: Patrick Loh, Deputy Editor

Dining at Dewakan will always be special to me. As a food enthusiast, it was where I had my very first fine dining experience years ago at its original location, shared with some of my closest friends. Back then, it was a hidden gem in the outskirts of the city. Today, it proudly stands among KL's most celebrated fine dining destinations.

Helmed by Darren Teoh—a former lecturer of molecular gastronomy at Kolej Damansara Utama—this two-Michelin-starred and Green Star restaurant is his edible love letter to Malaysia. Every plate celebrates the nation's bounty, crafted with a deep respect for our land and its produce.

As someone who cares about the planet, I love knowing that Dewakan is built on the principles of sustainable gastronomy. Chef Darren works directly with local, responsible producers, reducing waste and emissions while showcasing indigenous ingredients—some familiar, others wildly unexpected. His philosophy is simple: take the very best of what grows here and let it shine. But in his hands, 'simple' becomes extraordinary—complex layers of flavour, surprising textures, and plating so artful it feels almost criminal to disturb it.



Melinjo crisp presented as an origami frog

Now perched on the 48th floor of Skyviews, Naza Tower, Dewakan offers sweeping views of the city to match the fireworks on the plate. The dining room holds just eight tables and one private room, so each meal feels personal. Like you've been invited into something rare.

Every course feels like a chapter in a story; some bold, some whisper-soft. And just when I think I've found my favourite, the next plate arrives and changes my mind. Each visit keeps me curious, keeps me guessing, and leaves me wanting to return.

Tel: +6012-789 6720

SKILLET KL

Loved by: Colin Gomez, Features Editor

It's said that familiarity breeds contempt, but that's certainly not the case here. In fact, one of the principal reasons I've picked Skillet is because I've had the good fortune to dine there on several occasions now, with the menu impressing each and every time. Evolving in some aspects while remaining comfortingly steadfast in others, it gives diners something to get excited about, all the while anchoring the experience with a couple of old favourites.

The longan bread is one of those aforementioned constants I'm so fond of, and—novelty be damned—it's something I hope they never change. Softly sweet and served piping hot (impatient fingers, beware), the pillowy dinner roll was love at first bite and remains the finest I've ever encountered. The Texture of Chocolate is another mainstay of the menu, and regulars no doubt look forward to bookending every meal by cracking open that dry-ice-mist-shrouded chocolate dome and discovering the delights hidden within.

As you flit from course to inventive course, the dutiful wait staff are ever-present, keeping your laces tied to the ground as you let the flavours whisk you away to culinary nirvana.

Tel: +6019-212 1240



Corn-fed Chicken

FISHERMAN'S COVE, GAYA ISLAND RESORT

Loved by: Vanessa Lim, Writer

Perched in a gazebo hideaway, reached only through a winding staircase, is Fisherman's Cove at Gaya Island Resort. Much like those enchanting escapes found in fairytales, this one's lifted atop the most gorgeous of cerulean shorelines. Of course, come nightfall, the space transforms into a romantic candlelit respite under a gazebo's sky-hat. The restaurant reveals private and public arrangements awaiting to bait you in. I've had the pleasure to taste the ocean in the former setting.

This draws in the handsome seafood setup lined up just by our gazebo—a tidal tasting that moored us to our seats, later cooked up into a sumptuous feast as the night went on. Splashingly fresh is The Gayan Bouillabaise; this was a show-stopper from the sea. Every course is fresh from tide to table, as you are reeled in with locally wild-caught grouper, juicy lobsters, tender tiger prawns, and briny clams. Crisp, and coast-inspired, in between embracing the seascape scene together with the cadence of the current, you're swept into small savouries like charred, crisped calamaries.

The evening unfolded as a tableside affair, with the chef crafting each course before our eyes. Talk about a boutique catch, and even more a buoyant repose to dock your night at.

Tel: +6018-939 1100



The Gayan Bouillabaise

ENTIER FRENCH DINING

Loved by: The entire Palate team

Entier has welcomed us more times than we can count, both as invited guests for events and in personal capacities as diners returning simply for the pleasure of a good meal. Over the years, we've enjoyed exceptional plates from Chef Masashi Horiuchi and Chef Romain Fabre, each dish showcasing precision, seasonality, and a confident sense of flavour. And even outside of those hosted occasions, Entier remains one of our personal favourites.

Their lunch menu is, without exaggeration, one of the best-value fine dining offerings in KL—generous in portions, considered in composition, and consistently excellent. The private room has also become a regular choice for family celebrations, offering the intimacy we need without compromising on service or atmosphere.

Refined without being pretentious, Entier is the rare restaurant that feels equally right for a milestone toast or an unplanned weekday indulgence—and that's why we keep going back.

Tel: +603-2268 3819



The octopus, prawn, and escargot are crowd favourites



A decadent starter featuring Spécial Fine de Claire No. 2 oysters from Marennes-Oléron with Amur caviar



Entier's private dining space



Whole Sole à la Meunière



APW

From charred claypot rice to chilled deli cuts, APW plates culture with community.



OLIVIA DELI

Spanish & Southern European

Into the far-left, past the wine buffs at happy hour, is a quiet corner that sits Olivia Deli. Recognisable by vibrant murals and bold bell peppers, this delicatessen brings the familiar flavours of Spain and Portugal to life in the relaxed sprawl of APW. A full kitchen and Mediterranean-stocked shelves set the tone for casual indulgence—think chef-selected cold cuts, cheeses, and small bites enjoyed under the tropical sun. With around 30 seats, it's as welcoming to families as it is to solo diners. *Tel: +6012- 911 2537*



BOU CLAYPOT RICE & SUCH

Chinese/Cantonese

Bou Claypot Rice & Such brings the spirit of Hong Kong's dai pai dong to APW Bangsar, flaming up comfort food with a soulful, smoky twist. The star: classic *bao zai fan* with signature char siew and crispy rice crusts.

Try the Three Heavenly Kings, a trio of *lap cheong*, goose liver sausage, and pork salami, or opt for seafood, beef, chicken—or even vegetarian. At Bou, it's all about that charred bottom layer: the heart of one-pot Cantonese flavour. *Tel: +6012- 280 2964*



GRANO PASTA BAR

Italian

The menu at Grano is focused—handmade pasta, a handful of sides and salads, all rooted in traditional Italian techniques. You're greeted not just by flavour, but by the comforting aroma that sets the tone for what's to come.

Grano's soulful take on the classics gives familiar dishes an unexpected lift. Many of their pastas are meat-free, yet no less satisfying. Take the *reginette*—ruffled ribbons cooked in white wine and chicken broth, topped with free-range chicken and pancetta crumbs. It's lighter, not creamy, and deeply nostalgic. Like something Mum would make if she trained in Rome. *Tel: +603-2201 3613*

BAMBOO HILLS

Snug in a leafy pocket of the city, Bamboo Hills offers a serene, design-led escape with standout dining to match.



POTAGER

French

Potager—French for kitchen garden—is more than a restaurant; it embodies a gusto for homegrown produce and its provenance. With culinary finesse and creative flair, Potager blends revered French flavours while championing local artists and agriculturalists.

The open kitchen invites you to savour the artistry up close, while a private dining room offers a tranquil escape. For wine aficionados, Oeno, Potager's wine lounge, boasts over a thousand labels, each curated to harmonise with your palate and elevate the dining experience. potagerkl.com



THE QING

Chinese

Rooted in Qing dynasty heritage, The Qing brings a modern pulse to Chinese cuisine at the heart of Bamboo Hills. Here, textures and flavours are layered like the elements—earthy, refined, and in perfect harmony.

Designed to break from tradition, The Qing offers a striking, contemporary space with an equally thoughtful, pork-free menu and Muslim-friendly *dim sum*. Much like its ipseity, The Qing seeks to unite all distinctive cultures. theqing.com.my



KAMPAI YAKINIKU

Japanese

Tucked in the lush surrounds of Bamboo Hills KL, Kampai Yakiniku is a master of Japanese grilled meats—and the perfect place to raise a glass. *Kampai*, or “cheers,” sets the tone for an evening of sake and premium Tokushima-farmed wagyu, prepared by two skilled Japanese chefs.

Dine al fresco with views of Bamboo Hills’ greenery and Kampai’s own cascading waterfall, where sizzling meats meet a serene setting. Choose from buffet or à la carte menus featuring specially curated cuts, with seafood and chicken rounding out the feast. +6010- 525 2525

THE FIVE

Here in the heart of Damansara Heights is where tastes nod to trend.



NOURISH BY KENNY HILLS BAKERS

Mediterranean/Malaysian

Discover Nourish, the latest venture from Kenny Hills Hospitality Group, where, like its name suggests, every dish is crafted to nourish both body and soul with myriad options. Nourish by Kenny Hills Bakers champions “better eating without ever having to compromise on taste.” Suffice to say, this is where you’ll find yourself torn between flaky pastries, hearty Mediterranean plates, and comfort foods laced with familiar Malaysian flavours.

Start with the signature Crab Cake Benedict—a golden crab cake nestled in a sweet sandwich bun, topped with a poached egg and spicy harissa hollandaise, all balanced by a peppery rocket salad. For local flair, the Nourish Chilli Pan Mee slaps, while the Hearty Beef Stew comforts with slow-cooked braised beef, mash, peas, carrots, and crusty sourdough. With gluten-free options and inventive twists on everyday favourites, the fare at Nourish is as creative as it is comforting. +6012-261 6990



JWALA

Indian

Named after the Sanskrit word *jwala*, meaning flame or fire, Jwala KL ignites a Northern Indian culinary experience with flair and finesse. Its sleek open kitchen is anchored by three copper tandoor ovens, specially commissioned from New Delhi, and fuelled by Sarawak mangrove charcoal, ensuring that every dish carries the restaurant’s signature smoky depth.

One standout is the Awadh Dum Biryani. This theatrical claypot dish is layered with fragrant *basmati* rice (aged up to three years) enveloping your choice of protein—chicken, lamb, vegetables, or prawns—resting on an ambrosial broth. This dish, the epitome of Jwala’s offering, embodies both drama and depth in every bite. +6012-947 9100



BAKUL DIMSUM

Chinese

Bakul DimSum draws attention for achieving Halal certification while staying true to its Chinese culinary roots. It’s one thing to uphold such standards, but another to do so with impeccable quality—and Bakul does it with ease. Entirely pork-free, the restaurant in Bukit Damansara brings a modern twist to dim sum, paired with a curated tea experience.

Take the Sichuan dumplings, for example: served in threes, each comes with a dropper of soy-broth to balance the numbing spice. Or the black pepper beef buns, shaped like mushrooms, that are playful in presentation, while bold in flavour. In short, Bakul DimSum is a name worth knowing, and a taste worth seeking. +6012-233 1805

THE CAMPUS

Here are the top spots to fuel your day at Ampang’s bustling new mall, The Campus.

UNIVERSAL BAKEHOUSE

European

Universal Bakehouse really lives up to its name—a warm, inviting spot born from a simple passion: bringing people together. Tucked in the heart of The Campus, it’s quickly become the go-to for anyone who loves brunch or just can’t resist good pastries. Step inside and you’re met with the comforting smell of freshly baked goodness. While Malaysian-owned, their menu takes a delightful detour through European favourites—Italian focaccia, buttery scones, airy choux, and their much-loved sourdough. But the real magic? Local twists like Gula Melaka Sea Salt Croissants and Cempedak Muffins that feel like a tasty hug from home. +6011- 3332 7581



Universal Bakehouse

COR BLIMEY! TO GO

British

Cheers to Cor Blimey! British expat Adam Joseph Hanrahan brings a true taste of the UK to The Campus with his classic fish and chips. Inspired by his frequent travels and family roots in Malaysia, Adam serves up crispy, golden fish alongside chunky chips, mushy peas with a refreshing hint of mint, and, naturally, malt vinegar on the side.

However, Cor Blimey! stands out not just for its authentic flavours, but also as a Muslim-friendly spot where locals can enjoy a proper British chippy experience—complete with vintage tunes and British-themed décor that feels like a cheeky nod across the pond.+6019- 623 8955



Cor Blimey!

YAKI YAKI

Japanese

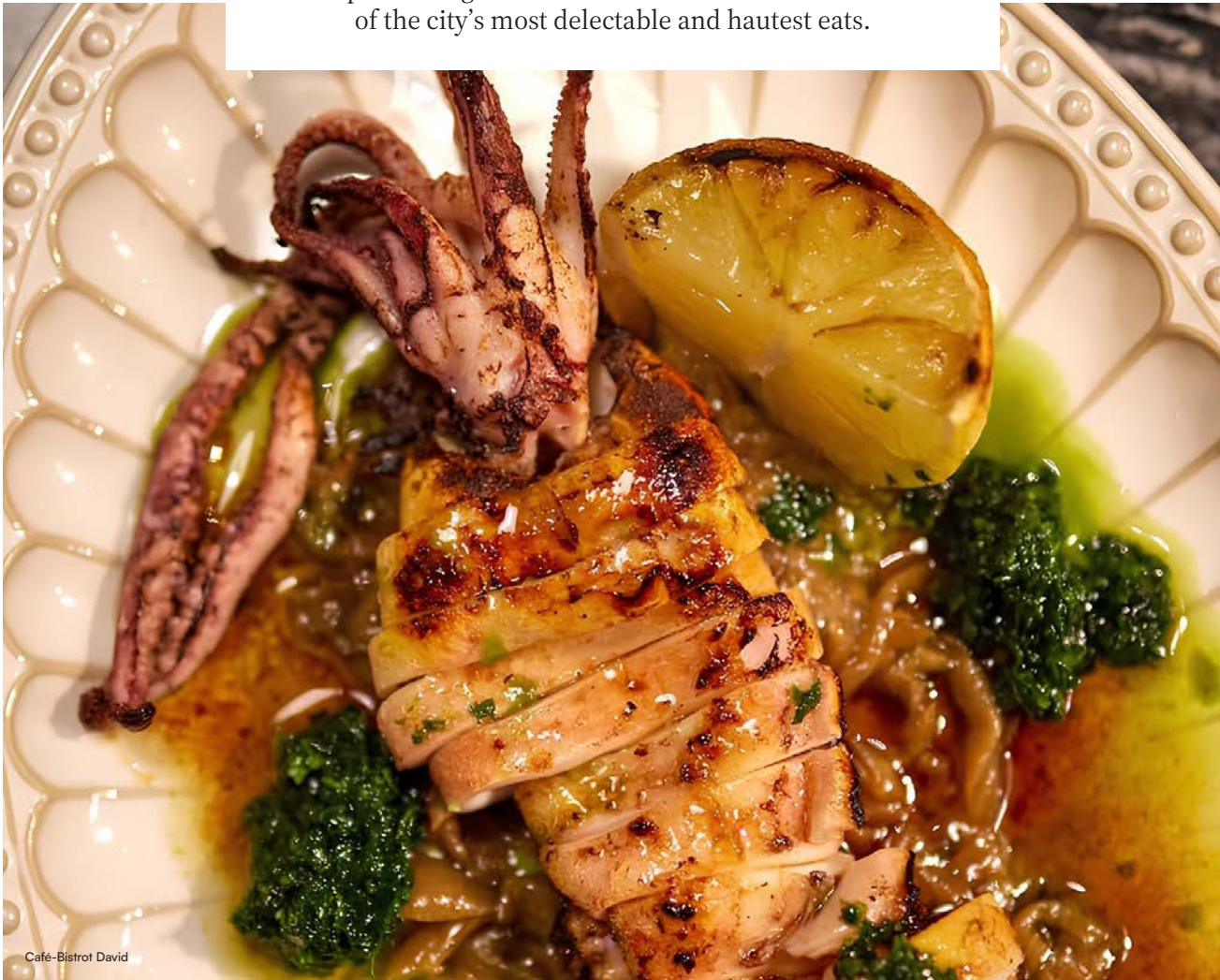
Nestled at the Second Drop Off, the good people of Super Boring Club invite you on a flavourful journey through Japanese traditions with Yaki Yaki. Here, glowing lanterns evoke old school izakayas and beckon you to enjoy a refreshing Asam Boi Sour to escape the heat. Food highlights include the Champion Hand Roll and all-time classics like the Yaki Soba; both of which pair perfectly with their signature sake-based cocktails. +6011- 6066 5277



Yaki Yaki

TAMAN TUN DR. ISMAIL

This upscale neighbourhood on KL’s outer rim offers some of the city’s most delectable and hautest eats.



Café-Bistrot David

CAFÉ-BISTROT DAVID

European fusion

This upscale township is a familiar haunt for KL’s discerning diners and Café-Bistrot David is one of its brightest draws. Entry begins with a slip past the red velvet rope and into a space styled with Parisian flair. The restaurant’s foyer opens into a warmly burnished dining room where spirited conversations bounce off ochre walls, setting the tone for what’s to come.

A reservation is highly recommended, though the bar offers an equally tempting vantage point. Spanning nearly half the restaurant, it’s a front-row seat to the dessert station and the chef’s table, where dishes get last-minute flourishes. The menu, shaped by Chef David Chin himself, is guided by one central philosophy: make it taste good. Seasonal ingredients are at the heart of it, with a strong European sensibility throughout.

Begin with the CBD Original Burrata—a standout starter that pairs lightly broiled tomato *confit* with creamy Puglian burrata. For a heartier course, David’s Roast Chicken with Tarragon Sauce delivers. Sourced from Bukit Mertajam, the free-range *kampung* chicken is roasted until golden, then served with a velvety *velouté*. For something more casual, the Bao Series takes European fusion in a fun, handheld direction. cafebistrotdaniel.com

THE OTTOMAN KL

Balkan cuisine

Tucked inside TTDI's Menara Ken, The Ottoman KL introduces local foodies to the rich, layered flavours of Balkan cuisine, shaped by the culinary legacy of the Ottoman Empire. It's the first of its kind in the city and a standout, as Head Chef Behzo brings decades of experience to the table, weaving Balkan roots with Ottoman nuances.

Start with the Turkish Olive Salad: a vibrant mix of olives, tomatoes, onions, and walnuts, dressed in pomegranate honey and olive oil. Then, a surprise star—the Vegetarian Bean Soup. Humble in name, bold in taste, it's a warming blend of beans, sweet onions, and capsicum, served with house-baked bread. For something heartier, go for the Govedi Medaljoni that sees grilled beef medallions finished in a creamy paprika sauce, plated with chef's choice sides. And if there's room, the desserts are worth the flip of the menu. At once soulful and surprising, The Ottoman is a compelling reason to venture off the beaten culinary path. theottomankl.com



GAI BY DARREN CHIN

Thai

Rooted in the culinary traditions of Thailand's North and Northeast, the restaurant is led by a warm, wedded duo—Mama Nuanta and Papa Suwit—whose recipes find new life under the stewardship of their daughter Nana and son-in-law Darren Chin. Here, the meals are less about fiery spectacle and more about nuance. While many recipes may be familiar, what Gai offers is an elevated reintroduction to Northern Thai cuisine.

A humble Lanna-style yam salad might surprise with its quiet complexity, while Grilled Giant River Prawns arrive delicately charred, their sweetness offset by a punchy seafood *nam jim* sauce. The Signature Crab Omelette by Darren Chin (Version 1) is a rare treat—available only when Darren is personally helming the kitchen. A golden dome of egg envelops generous chunks of crab, crisped at the edges, soft within. For something with heat and heft, try Nana's Signature Tom Yum Seafood. Brimming with jumbo Hokkaido scallops and snappy prawns, it's a broth that hums with clarity and brightness. gai-kl.com



TBC

European

TBC—The Beginning Chapter by Chef Patrick Lim was sparked by passion and shaped by culinary creativity and custom. A visit here is a gentle step into contemporary Malaysian cuisine brushed with European finesse. To illustrate their philosophy on the plate, the Grilled Galician Octopus—kissed by the grill and paired with garlic aioli—offers a bold nod to the Atlantic. Savour each slice with bravas sauce, cushioned by soft potato and olive salad.

The New Zealand Lamb Rack, set atop a lacquer of piquant pea and mint purée, arrives bronzed and yielding, with plush potato *dauphinoise* at its side. Finally, a rich lamb jus crowns the succulent staple. For those seeking the full experience, TBC also presents a five-course set menu, best enjoyed when dining en masse. +6017-304 7851

CHINATOWN

Downtown KL has evolved beyond heritage. With chef-led kitchens behind shophouse facades, Chinatown now brims with culinary style and substance.



UPPER HOUSE *Modern Asian*

Upper House KL by the KARLS Group is nothing if not playful—both in location and on the plate. Perched on a rooftop with sweeping views, this contemporary Asian restaurant and bar isn’t just about height, but also about flair.

Known for putting a modern spin on Chinese flavours, Upper House KL delivers dishes that surprise and satisfy. The Premium Upper House Rice Bowl is one to try—slow-cooked in a classic claypot and luxuriously topped with sweet-salty abalone, foie gras, dried shiitake, and *lap cheong* chicken sausage. For your dose of greens, the Upper House Salad is the way to go with baby romaine tossed with sea bird’s nest, calamansi, bird’s eye chili, roasted peanuts, and unexpected hits of dried fig. “A salad like no other,” and they mean it. In short, Upper House KL knows how to turn up the flavour—and the view—in all the right ways. +6012-835 6610

RAW *Latin-Asian*

Tucked at the base of Else Kuala Lumpur, Raw (formerly known as Raw Kitchen Hall) is a dining-living hall made for the curious. This is a space where Asian flavours meet Latin fire, and comfort food is reimagined across borders.



Enter the scene-stealer: Raw’s Famous Duck Leg glazed in a balsamic-soy reduction, resting on a soft bed of potato leek fondue, finished with grana padano and a scatter of chives for balance and bite. Then there’s the Black Mamba—a show of dark indulgence that’s really squid ink sofrito rice layered with fermented chilli sambal, topped with tiger prawns, crisp bean sprouts, and a glowing egg yolk nestled in the centre.

Sometimes, food is best shared, and for this the Crispy Eggplant and Mascarpone is an addictive pairing of crunch and cream, soaked in a savoury donburi sauce and finished with tempura flakes and spring onions. A table favourite for good reason. At Raw, flavour travels—and every dish is a passport to somewhere new. +6018-211 1356



ESCA KL *Global Cuisine*

“Enjoy irresponsibly”—the cheeky mantra of Esca KL, and a fitting introduction to this lively Chinatown newcomer. A younger sibling to the refined Terra Dining in TTDI, Esca trades tasting menus for a dose of culinary mischief. Also at the helm here is Chef Chong Yu Cheng, better known as Chef YC, whose spontaneity shows up in every unexpected bite.

Start with the Grilled Octopus—smoky from the grill, elevated by a fiery *sambal matah*, and cleverly paired with salted devilled eggs for a seafood snack with punch. Then there’s the Prawn Toast, stacked like a pyramid: golden, crunchy bread layered with ebiko mayo, pickled shallots, and slivers of cornichon for bite. From the grill, the Lamb Saddle makes an impression—tender ribs served over *begedil* carrot purée, with a dried shrimp—orange sambal that ties it all together with savoury heat.

Unruly, inventive, and rooted in flavour, Esca KL makes breaking the rules taste really, really good. +6017-982 5753

PICKLE DINING *French Fusion*

At Pickle Dining, pickling isn’t a side act, but rather the main storyline. Tucked inside a pre-war shophouse on Petaling Street, this inventive spot by Malaysian chef Danial Thorlby reimagines age-old preservation techniques through a modern lens of mainly French fare.

The space is intimate and communal, reflecting Thorlby’s fascination with tradition—from fermentation to curing and beyond. His Lacto-Fermented Tomato is a vivid example: marinated in shiitake and local asam boi, then served with pickled snake fruit and crisp buckwheat for texture and tang. For something richer, the Sunchoke Espuma with Pear Compote pairs earthy and sweet with elegant precision. The Chicken Vol-au-Vent is another standout—a refined take on comfort food, featuring tender chicken breast on a 36-hour reduction.

Pickle Dining also offers three tasting menus—Feed Me, Vegetarian, and Alternative—allowing guests to explore different expressions of Thorlby’s creative, time-bending approach to flavour. +6014- 797 7631



Palillos Yakitori Bar

CHANGKAT BUKIT BINTANG

Long known for its nightlife, Changkat’s dining scene has come into its own—where polished plates meet buzzy energy, and dinner easily turns into drinks.

PALILLOS YAKITORI BAR

Spanish-Japanese

Pick up your *palillos* and get ready to dive into Japanese-Spanish fire. Tucked along Jalan Mesui, this offshoot of Pinchos Tapas Bar may be quieter than its Changkat sibling, but it hums with smoky energy and sizzling skewers. The open-flame grill perfumes the air, pulling you into a hidden courtyard where the *sake* flows and the sticks keep coming.

Expect a seasonal menu that straddles Spain and Japan, served in a setting of clean architectural lines and warm, communal buzz. Charred firefly squid, Japanese garden greens, torched artichokes, and deep-fried seafood all make appearances, but it’s the robust totem of Argentinian Angus short ribs, corn-fed and cured for 40 days, that leaves a lasting impression.

Don’t sleep on the specials: grilled oysters wrapped in *shiso* and bacon have been known to sell out fast. Spanish red carabinero prawns, Serrano ham with melon, and a cheeky salted cod sushi round out the East-meets-West narrative. For something even more indulgent, try the temaki-style Iberico pork. A place for smoke, sticks, sushi, and spirited conversation, Palillos Yakitori Bar is where two culinary worlds collide and taste better for it. +6016-472 3635



Ferria KL

PINCHOS TAPAS BAR

Spanish

Since 2008, Pinchos Tapas Bar has been serving up an uncompromising taste of Spain, and unlike its more fusion-forward sister, Palillos Yakitori Bar, this Changkat mainstay keeps things authentically Iberian. With ingredients imported from Spain and a menu rooted in tradition, Pinchos is widely considered one of the city’s top destinations for tapas done right.

Here, the portions may be small, but the flavours are anything but. The vibe is intimate and unpretentious, with warm lighting and rustic charm that sets the tone for a leisurely evening. Begin with the Jamón y Queso—a platter of cured chorizo, fine Spanish cheeses, marinated olives, and tomato-smeared toast. Next up, the Pinchos de Hummus features toasty bites layered with creamy hummus, grilled aubergine, and crispy chorizo. For something heartier, the Cerdo Ibérico delivers grilled boneless Iberico pork ribs with golden potatoes on the side—a dish that keeps regulars coming back. In a city full of culinary noise, Pinchos remains a quiet masterclass in how to do Spanish food. +603-2145 8482

FERRIA KL

Seafood Grill

Time to wild out. Set within a lush, Amazonian-inspired escape, this tropical hotspot in the heart of KL lures in the bold and the hungry. As dusk falls, Ferria turns up the heat, beat, and bite as a sensory jungle where vivid florals, moody lighting, and portraits of parrots, peacocks, and cheetahs create an immersive backdrop. Inside or out on the al fresco terrace, the vibe is unmistakably wild.

Whet your appetite with the Grilled Smoked Corn—charred pearl corn glazed with chicken lard for an addictive, crackly crunch, and the Watermelon Poppers—icy cubes of fruit spiked with a citrus trio of yuzu, lemon, and lime. Then tuck into the Freshwater Prawn Roll that’s pure indulgence crowned with a burst of ikura. Craving carbs? Ferria’s woodfired pizzas are made to share, but for something with bite, the Tarzan Arrabiata delivers with a fiery plate of tiger prawns, softshell crab, and Chilean mussels tangled in spicy arrabiata pasta—hearty, punchy, and unapologetically primal. +6010-303 1122



Pinchos Tapas Bar

POBLANO KL

Latin American

Okay, so this is a little bit of a stone’s throw away in Old Malaya. Set within a century-old building, Poblano KL is where Latin American and Mexican flavours meet fire, flair, and a touch of nostalgia through bold tapas, tacos, toasts, and fajitas.

Ease into the evening with the Gambas al Ajillo—plump tiger prawns swimming in a garlicky tomato broth, served with crusty bread made for soaking up every last drop. Then dive into the Hongos Fundidos—a bubbling skillet of melted cheese, wild mushrooms, and charred peppers, paired with golden tortillas to scoop and savour. It’s rich, rustic comfort for cheese lovers. If you’re craving serious heat, the Poblano Pizza brings it. Topped with homemade chili con carne, molten mozzarella, and sharp slices of jalapeño, this spicy, stretchy pie hits all the right notes. +6012-731 7336



Poblano KL

Streetside to Soul

Southeast Asian cuisine is more than just a journey of taste—it's a deep dive into history, heritage, and heart. From bold, back-alley bites to refined regional plates, here are nine places in KL where the region's diverse flavours truly come alive.

Words: VANESSA L

Braised Crab Meat Broth
with Hokkaido Scallop
at Jade Pavilion

Bao Down

A native tongue in the dialect of rice and noodles, **Jade Pavilion** reimagines Cantonese cuisine within Great Walls built not of stone, but of *dim sum* and duck. Perched on the eighth floor of Pavilion Hotel Kuala Lumpur, this is where the wok meets modern wonder—offering true Cantonese flavours without straying far from tradition. Muslim-friendly and pork-free, Jade Pavilion opens its doors to all for an experience that is both authentic and precise.

Their open *dim sum* kitchen doubles as a stage, where Dim Sum Chef Dino Lee handcrafts *à la minute* creations with finesse. The Spinach Har Gow boasts a finely pleated skin encasing springy shrimp. The Siu Mai, brimming with chicken and shrimp paste, speaks in structure.

Besides the bamboo-basket gems, the Pan-Seared French Foie Gras with asparagus and velvet-smooth abalone essence is a must-have. For parties of more than two, Jade Pavilion offers the Hibiscus, Emerald, Sapphire, and Gold Diamond set menus—each a feast that evokes a Cantonese renaissance. +603-2117 2888

Steamed Xiao Long Bao



Bún Cha

Phở Real Flavour

Ăn Việt invites more than just a taste—it deserves a second look for both the herb-laced heat in its dishes and its mission to reduce global food waste. In Vietnamese cuisine, where every bite strikes a delicate balance from broth to garnish, this restaurant champions mindful dining over the mindless discarding of ingredients.

The Hanoian-style grilled pork with vermicelli (*Bún Cha*) is a refreshing, nourishing tumble of grilled meat and fresh herbs. Or opt for the *Bánh Mì* with grilled pork chop—a flavourful feast of caramelised meat layered with a sweet hit of pork *pâté*, all snug in a crisp Vietnamese baguette. +03-8080 9935

Performance on A Plate

Dubbing itself a treasure trove of Malay-Indo cuisine in the heart of KL, **Dancing Fish** now has a home at The Campus in Ampang, though its roots lie in Bangsar. The restaurant stays true to its origins with a bold showcase of Malay-Indonesian flavours, embracing a regional identity that blends local familiarity with Indonesian soul. No MSG, no preservatives; just carefully honed techniques and a commitment to fresh, quality ingredients.

As the name suggests, the house specialty is the Dancing Fish: a whole *ikan nila*, fried to crispy perfection so that every bite, from head to tail, is gloriously edible. Slathered in *sambal* and soy sauces, it's rich, spicy, and satisfying. Prefer something other than fish? Try the Bebek Panggang—a duck dish marinated for 24 hours in a heady mix of herbs and spices, then grilled over open flames. It comes with four signature sauces, like a punchy pickled chilli that brightens every bite.

+603-2011 2743



Dancing Fish with Curry Keluak



Grilled Chicken with Mango Relish and Coriander Pesto

Tale Of Two Traditions

Born from a serendipitous encounter at a London restaurant, **Reuben's** is the namesake venture of Reuben Devanesan—a chef whose culinary instincts bridge Southeast Asian soul with European finesse. The result? A menu that's both grounded in flavour and elevated in execution. Billed as “a contemporary dining experience,” Reuben's blends modernity with warmth. Expect al fresco or indoor seating, craft cocktails, and even a pet-friendly welcome.

Standouts include the Fish Amok, where barramundi is gently cooked in a fragrant Cambodian Amok sauce served with Japonica rice. The Steak Nusantara, meanwhile, brings together Argentinian grain-fed ribeye, roasted garlic potatoes, and Reuben's own signature sauce. There are also pastas, pizzas, and grilled classics with a European edge—but the star is the balance of boldness and restraint. “Elegant, minus the frills” might be the tagline, but it's also a promise that Reuben's quietly lives up to, plate after plate.

+6019-233 0270



Ayam Panggang Berlado

A Game Of Flavour

Tucked within The Curve, one of PJ's most well-loved malls, **Congkak** invites diners on a nostalgic journey through the rich flavours of the Nusantara. Guided by its motto, “Keeping traditions alive”, the restaurant honours Malaysian heritage through time-honoured recipes and communal dining.

Start with the Tauhu Telur, one of Congkak's stand-out dishes—a golden tower of egg and tofu drizzled in rich *rojak* peanut sauce, made brighter with crisp cucumber and radish. For something more indulgent, the Nasi Ambeng delivers both variety and ritual. Served in generous platters for sharing, it features tender chicken or beef *rendang*, velvety chicken curry, steamed white rice, and Javanese fried *sambal* with vegetables that speaks to Malaysia's rich, cross-cultural roots. Here, dining is a shared celebration of memory, flavour, and heritage—a delicious game worth sitting down for.

+6019-289 7008

Once the sister restaurant to The Narra, **Khatulistiwa Skyline Dining** now stands tall on its own. Quite literally, too, perched atop the 10th floor of Bintang Collectionz Hotel. Here, Filipino flavours take centre stage, uplifted by a broader South-east Asian fare, taking you on a flight of flavour on a plateful rather than on a plane.



Beef Kare-Kare

The setting is effortlessly scenic, with city lights, cocktails, and live music creating an open-air buzz. The menu, meanwhile, is pork- and lard-free, reimagining classics like *sisig* with a twist. Instead of the usual pork, the Sizzling Bangus features marinated milkfish seared with onions, chillies, and finished with a creamy sizzle. The Beef Kare-Kare is another stand-out—slow-cooked beef chuck in a rich peanut stew, best enjoyed with rice and quiet satisfaction. Khatulistiwa in sum, is the perfect surrounding to bask in with *shisha*, live music, and a beer in hand. +603-2011 2743



Tom Yum Het/Pak

Salt, Spice, And All Things Nice

Behind an unassuming doorway beneath a stately roofline, **Malai Thai** invites you into a space where Thai culinary tradition is honoured with quiet elegance. Hand-carved woodwork pays homage to the country’s rich agricultural roots, while thoughtful interiors bring comfort to the table.

The menu is a curated journey through authentic Thai flavours, each dish refined with care. Standouts include the Seafood Tom Yum with Noodles, a bold and aromatic signature, and the Thai Red Curry, layered with heat and harmony. For a sweet finish, the vibrant Red Rubies Dessert delivers a refreshing crunch in every jewel-toned bite. Suffice to say, this is a place where the familiar is reimagined for the better. +03-2181 2505



Tom Sap Pla Chong

Bold Bowls, Gentle Spirit

Yan Wo Thai keeps things simple—clean lines, unadorned tables, and a quiet energy that lets the food do all the talking. Rooted in tradition and layered with heat, this understated spot brings Thai flavours into sharp, unapologetic focus.

Start with Gaeng Som, a tangy, chili-laced snakehead fish soup accented with ginger root, basil, and lime. Or go for Naam Prik KaPi, a punchy shrimp paste dip served with crisp vegetables, that’s humble in appearance, but rich in flavour. There’s no need for frills here; Yan Wo Thai delivers the depth, balance, and brightness that defines Thai cuisine. +6012-897 8687



Tamarind Chili Barramundi

Comfort Food

Set within a century-old colonial building, **Manja** offers a thoughtful approach to Malaysian cuisine, with subtle influences from British culinary history. The name ‘Manja’, that translates to ‘affectionate’, reflects the restaurant’s focus on care and attention, creating an inviting space grounded in Southeast Asian flavours.

Manja’s scratch kitchen approach means dishes are made entirely from raw ingredients, without artificial additives. The Shiitake & Beetroot Steak served with turmeric coconut *basmati* rice showcases local produce and quality proteins from their butchery. Then, the Curry Leaf Burnt Grouper Fish, prepared with crispy skin and paired with vibrant eggplant sides, offers a flexible dish cooked in three different ways with three side options. +6012-373 7063



Tasting platter

The Art of Dry-Aged Steak

See it around a lot and thinking of giving it a go? Here's what you need to know before you take your first bite.

Words: PATRICK LOH

1 WHAT IS DRY-AGEING?

Dry-ageing is a technique where prime cuts of beef are aged in a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment. Over weeks, natural enzymes tenderise the meat while moisture evaporates, concentrating the flavour.

2 IS IT WORTH THE WAIT?

Expect deeper, richer, almost nutty flavours compared to a regular steak cut. The texture becomes buttery, with an intense beefiness that any true meat-lover will appreciate.

3 HOW LONG IS JUST RIGHT?

21 Days: Subtle funk, tender texture—perfect for first-timers.

45 Days: Bold, earthy, and deeply savoury—balanced complexity.

60+ Days: For aficionados. Intense umami, blue cheese notes, and a real punch of flavour.

5 PAIR IT WITH ...

A bold Italian red like a Barolo or Brunello. For cocktails, try a smoky Negroni to match the steak's intensity.

4 BEST DONENESS?

Medium-rare is the gold standard. It lets the marbling melt just right, amplifying that dry-aged magic.



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