



## Have You Eaten Yet?

Where do food writer **Juliana Loh** and her head chef husband, **Guillaume Galliot**, of the Michelin three-starred Caprice at the Four Seasons, dine out in Hong Kong? From cheap eats to high-end, the foodie couple serves us some of their favorites in the city.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Guillaume Galliot at Caprice; food writer Juliana Loh; a classic dining table set for yum cha at Imperial Treasure; Beijing-style jiaozi at Wang Fu.



A COMMON MISCONCEPTION about being married to a chef is that I get to eat Michelin-starred meals every day, but the truth is I do all the cooking at home. Guillaume and I first met more than 10 years ago in Beijing, where I was a corporate hound, but moonlighting as a food writer. Of course, it all started over dinner, at a wine event at the former Beijing Raffles Hotel, where Guillaume was working as chef de cuisine at Jaan restaurant.

Like other parts of our marriage, when it comes to food we always agree to disagree; he makes the fine-dining decisions, and, since I speak Cantonese and grew up on double-boiled soups, I'm in charge of local food discoveries. When we moved to Hong Kong, choosing where to eat became a constant debate. The plethora of options runs from *dai pai dongs* to refined Michelin-starred dim sum. After four years of grazing across the city, several venues have become like second homes, while new restaurants have won us over with their modern flair. These are some of our current favorites.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS; LILIAN YEUNG; COURTESY OF IMPERIAL TREASURE; MO H.

### YAT LOK

**J.L.:** A good Hong Kong barbecue roast is a hallmark of Cantonese cuisine. We'd been coming to this little hole-in-the-wall roast goose restaurant in Central for years before they were awarded their first Michelin star four years ago. I always ask for extra servings of the sweet-and-tart plum sauce to drizzle on my roast goose with rice. Communal tables for sharing with strangers make for an authentic local dining experience.

**G.G.:** I order the goose drumstick over rice or sometimes with noodle soup, depending on how I feel. The skin is crisp; the flesh is moist and full of flavor, without feeling too greasy. I also recommend ordering a side of char siu—it's subtly smoky, with just the right amount of fat—with a plate of blanched kaliaan greens with oyster sauce.

34–38 Stanley St., Central; 852/2524-3882; mains from HK\$56.

### WANG FU

**J.L.:** We met and dated in Beijing when we were both living there, so northern Chinese dumplings (*jiaozi*), whose rice-flour skin wraps are slightly chewy and thicker than the egg-based wonton wraps, always brings back fond memories of the city. I usually order the well-seasoned pork and chive version. **G.G.:** I seldom eat *jiaozi* since I left China, but the mutton and green-onion dumplings here are very flavorful without being too gamey. In Beijing, they eat a lot of mutton and the taste often can be hit or miss. This place is also a good chance to practice ordering in my rusty Mandarin.

65 Wellington St., Central; 852/2121-8006; mains from HK\$40.

### MAK'S NOODLES

**J.L.:** This shop was featured on Anthony Bourdain's *Parts Unknown*



FROM TOP: Prawn wontons from Mak's Noodles; Yat Lok's Michelin-starred roast goose; and its long queues; fish cake and noodles at Tsim Chai Kee.

series, and the fame continues to draw in a crowd. While the portions are small, they do perfect al dente noodles and great shrimp wontons with translucent, delicate thin skin, and juicy prawns.

**G.G.:** The noodles don't have the chemical alkaline powder taste like some places do. The beef brisket is a must order for the tender and gelatinous "mouth feel," as the Chinese describe it.

[maksnoodle.com](http://maksnoodle.com); mains from HK\$40.



### TSIM CHAI KEE

**J.L.:** Tsim Chai Kee serves up generous portions of noodle soup. My go-to version is with king prawn dumplings and fish cakes (they look like large shapeless blobs but feature more fish than processed flour). Add on the spicy chili oil to amplify the taste and flavor.

**G.G.:** I love the light but tasty broth that has the delicate sweet flavors of a seafood and pork base, and garnished with spring onions to serve. The king prawn wontons are fresh and crunchy.

98 Wellington St., Central; 852/2850-6471; mains from HK\$32.





FROM TOP: Belon's whole roast chicken; the restaurant's neo-Parisian interior; order the fish at Imperial Treasure; sea cucumber gets elevated at VEA; watch from the counters.



## BELON

**J.L.:** I joke that this is a chef's canteen as we're always bumping into other cooks on their off-days here. Chef Daniel Calvert does a fantastic job with modern French cuisine. The roast chicken is a signature, but my heart is with the scallops with pomelo, and the scarpinocc burrata pasta. Oh, and you must finish with the chocolate tarte and *mille-feuille*. Every dish is a perfectly balanced taste grenade with subtle layers and textures.

**G.G.:** The pigeon *pithivier* is fantastic and Daniel's *riz au lait* dessert reminds me of my childhood—my mother made the dessert regularly when I was growing up in France. Daniel takes it up a notch with seasonal strawberries.

[belonsoho.com](http://belonsoho.com); mains from HK\$228.

## VEA RESTAURANT AND LOUNGE

**J.L.:** Chef Vicky Cheng marries traditional Chinese cuisine with French cooking techniques at VEA. The beautiful restaurant offers front-row seats at the open kitchen. He brings out the best in squishy sea cucumbers, turning them buttery and gelatinous and balanced with the acidity of aged *huadio* rice wine.

**G.G.:** I like the approach that Vicky gives to his food. Modern technique on French-Chinese cuisine is very distinctive, and Vicky is one of the best in terms of knowledge in this specialty. We also learn a lot about Hong Kong local produce whenever we come here.

[vea.hk](http://vea.hk); tasting menu from HK\$1,680.

## TUNG PO

**J.L.:** We take visitors to legendary *dai pai dong* Tung Po for a kooky experience over good Cantonese-style seafood dishes. It's dinner with a side of entertainment. Robby, the owner, is the live wire of the party and often dances to gos hits from the jukebox, moonwalking in his rubber boots.

**G.G.:** I like the crispy chicken generously topped with fried garlic chips, and the local seafood is really fresh. I often order the sweet giant mantis shrimp simply blanched and served with lemon wedges or the duck-yolk battered deep-fried shrimps, which are sinfully rich and tasty.

2F, Java Road Municipal Services Building, 99 Java Rd., North Point; 852/2880-5224; mains from HK\$90.

## 8½ OTTO E MEZZO BOMBANA

**J.L.:** For special occasions, our default is Michelin three-starred 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana for perfectly executed, refined Italian food. My favorite is the Sicilian prawn pasta, and I love the generous truffle shavings that chef Bombana adds to many of his dishes.

**G.G.:** I love everything here. It's simple, good food made luxurious.

[ottoemezzobombana.com](http://ottoemezzobombana.com); mains from HK\$560.

## IMPERIAL TREASURE

**J.L.:** Dim sum is a regular affair on Sundays. We go to one Michelin-starred Imperial Treasure, a Singapore import to Hong Kong. Get a big party together to share the suckling pig stuffed with glutinous rice.

**G.G.:** The steamed dim sum baskets are a treat—in the *har gow*, the shrimps are crunchy and fresh and the delicate skins are almost translucent. I love the *cheung fun* (steamed rice flour rolls) stuffed



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A modern Sri Lankan spread at Hotel Colombo; New Punjab Club's eclectic space; chef Umberto Bombana from 8½ Otto e Mezzo; Rempah's prawn noodle soup; Singaporean laksa at Café Malacca.

with deep-fried dough sticks and fresh shrimps. It's basically carbs in carbs, but so delicately done.

2F, Crowne Plaza, Causeway Bay; 852/2663-9919; mains from HK\$138.

## SOUTH ASIAN COMFORTS

**J.L.:** We both have a weakness for butter chicken. I can eat that and all the vegetarian dishes at **New Punjab Club** for days. **Hotel Colombo**, with pastel pink interiors, reminds me of a Wes Anderson movie set. You can feast like royalty on authentic Sri Lankan cuisine here without breaking the bank.

**G.G.:** The hoppers at Hotel Colombo are fantastic. Everything is punchy and fresh and though it's spicy, it doesn't overpower the other flavors and textures—you can still taste the ingredients and what you're eating.

[newpunjabclub.com](http://newpunjabclub.com); mains from HK\$148. [hotelcolombo.com](http://hotelcolombo.com); mains from HK\$108.

## SINGAPOREAN AND MALAYSIAN

**J.L.:** I was born in Singapore, so for a taste of home, we go to **Café Malacca** at Hotel Jen. My childhood favorite is *bak chor mee*—minced pork egg noodles dressed in tart black vinegar sauce and pork lard. It's four times the price here compared to home, but certainly the antidote to desperate cravings. The seasoning of this dish is hard to replicate at home for that exact ratio of tart, sweet and savory, finished with just the right amount of lard.

**G.G.:** I like the Penang *char kway teow*, aromatic thick rice noodles with the smoky kiss of the wok at Café Malacca, as well as the laksa, which is rich and very well balanced. Nyonya restaurant **Rempah**, in Wan Chai, also do a satisfying laksa, both in a gravy and a dry version. The gravy is aromatic and just the right consistency. 🍴

[hoteljen.com](http://hoteljen.com); mains from HK\$108. [rempahnoodles.com](http://rempahnoodles.com); mains from HK\$98.



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF BELON (2); COURTESY OF IMPERIAL TREASURE; COURTESY OF VEA (2)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF HOTEL COLOMBO; COURTESY OF NEW PUNJAB CLUB; COURTESY OF 8½ OTTO E MEZZO BOMBANA; COURTESY OF REMPAH; COURTESY OF CAFÉ MALACCA