

DON'T try this at home

The ideas and effort behind these show-stopping dishes make it worth spending your hard-earned cash in a restaurant: here are 10 to add to your hit list Words ROSIE BIRKETT



1 Omakase sashimi

Yasuhiro Mineno, Yashin, Ocean House

Yashin Ocean House in London's South Kensington takes an adventurous

approach to Japanese seafood. Its entirely fish and seafood-based menu explores a 'head to tail' ethos, utilising every aspect of the fish, from the roe, to the flesh and skin. At the restaurant, classic Japanese flavours and techniques are given a modern, European interpretation by ex-Nobu chef Yasuhiro Mineno and sous Daniele Codini, formerly of the Fat Duck.

As such, Mineno's signature dish of omakase sashimi comes readily and intricately seasoned by him, breaking from the Japanese ritual whereby diners dip fish in soy sauce themselves. 'Our sashimi is based on the concept "without soy sauce",' he explains. 'We apply just the right amount of a particular pre-seasoning to the fish, using the citrus fruit yuzu, yuzugosho (a citrus pepper), a Japanese yuzu chilli, the Japanese plum ume, and sansho Japanese green pepper. "Omakase" means "chef's daily choice", which allows us to use wild produce such as seabass and mackerel from Cornwall, and red sea bream and red snapper from France, making our sashimi really special.'

Every fish in the sashimi selection is served with a different modern topping that complements and amplifies its natural flavour, so you might find a truffle and ponzu jelly, a tosazu (bonito-flavoured rice vinegar dressing) gel, and more. The dish is served spectacularly, with dry ice placed at the bottom of the glass plate, and then a yuzu-flavoured water poured over to release a cloud of the wonderfully aromatic Japanese citrus while you enjoy your sashimi.

yashinocean.com

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with
'Mark Hix's Swainson House Farm roast chicken at Tramshed. It is a very simple dish, but it's not as easy as it looks.'



2 Coconut & mango soufflé with Malibu

Paul Blackman, Le Talbooth, Colchester

'We sell soufflés like they're going out of fashion,' says Paul Blackman, Le Talbooth's pastry chef for the past seven years. His French-Caribbean dessert of Malibu-spiked coconut soufflé with fresh mango and mango jelly is a bestseller at the restaurant. 'The flavours really harmonise,' he says. 'The soufflé is made with coconut milk and a splash of Malibu, and there is some desiccated coconut at the bottom for a bit of crunch. The mango jelly is made with agar agar, a seaweed gelling agent that retains its structure even when heated, so it doesn't just melt.'

Blackman was inspired by the flavours of his Barbadian roots. 'I was the first of my siblings to be born in the UK, and when I was growing up you couldn't get mangoes and coconuts in this country. When my family and friends went home they'd bring these fruits back and we'd fight over them because they were a real delicacy, so now I like to use them at work as much as I can.'



Although many of us may dismiss Malibu as a sickly reminder of our student days, Blackman taps into the coconut liqueur's sweetness for his dish. 'My desserts are not too heavy on sugar, so I just use a splash, and the whole rum-liqueur thing works with those Caribbean notes.'
milsomhotels.com/letalbooth

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with
'Gary Rhodes' Jaffa cake pudding, made with Seville oranges.'



3 Black olive and banana praline ice cream with pistachio cake

Steve Drake, Drake's, Ripley

An excitingly modern approach and innovative flavour combinations underpin Steve Drake's Michelin-starred cooking at Drake's in the small village of Ripley, Surrey. The chef has worked with the avant-garde French chef Marc Veyrat, and takes much of his inspiration when devising dishes from reading widely around cooking. 'I tend to read an awful lot,' he says, 'And I noticed that a lot of chefs were trying a parsley and banana combination so, in my mind, it was natural to match banana with another, different, earthy flavour.'

'The original idea stemmed from when I was experimenting with pralines and I tried a number of different nut and sugar combinations, adding salt to taste. Then it struck me that an olive praline might work... wow! This was a really good base idea, but

'While it might seem like a strange pairing, the flavours really work together'

I had to find a way of incorporating it into a recipe.'

Combining the olive praline with banana and working it into an ice cream was Steve's solution. 'After considerable experimentation over a few months, the result was a banana and black olive ice cream, which we now serve with a pistachio cake. I think this is a completely original idea, and it's one I'm particularly proud of because, while it might seem like a strange pairing, the flavours really work together.'

drakesrestaurant.co.uk

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with 'Lobster with white port and ginger, created by Michel Roux. What a dish! It has incredible flavours and is truly inspirational.'



4 Sole Véronique
André Garrett, at Cliveden, Berkshire

'There's continual invention in cheffing, but sometimes it's nice to bring back forgotten things and reinvent them,' says Garratt, whose signature dish of sole Véronique is a modern update of a classic dish by the legendary French chef Auguste Escoffier.

'It's one of those dishes that is truly iconic. It's lovely to hark back to what really works, to something fundamental. You've still got the flavours of the original dish – those combinations and textures are timeless and always there – but I've reinvented them in a way that's not so heavy or old-fashioned.'

The textbook version is a whole Dover sole poached in a white wine bouillon that is then used to make a very rich beurre blanc, served over the fish with peeled grapes. In Garrett's version, the fish is taken off the bone and rolled into a boudin, poached in a waterbath and served with a beurre blanc made with verjus.

'I use verjus rather than wine, because it's more acidic, but it still gives that essence of the original sauce. Rather than just peeling our



grapes, we bring them halfway to raisins, intensifying their flavour. Then I add some pine nuts that have been cooked in a stock syrup and deep fried for a nice crunch'.

clivedenhouse.co.uk/restaurant/andre-garrett

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with 'Guy Savoy's artichoke and black truffle soup – it's unbelievable.'

FOR A VIDEO RECIPE OF SOLE VERONIQUE GET THE APP! See page 67



5 Baked skyr with skyr ice cream and seasonal fruit

Agnar Sverrisson, Texture, London W1

'I remember my mum making me skyr (similar to strained yoghurt) for breakfast, stirred with sugar and served with lots of blueberries,' says Agnar Sverrisson. 'It's been a part of Icelandic food culture for thousands of years, made by cooking skimmed milk for about two days at a very low temperature so it turns into a thick paste. It's got very little fat in it, but you wouldn't know because it's so thick.'

At Texture, Sverrisson mixes skyr with sugar, lemon juice and milk, and bakes it softly for about an hour to create a warm, set-custard-style dessert. He serves it with a sharp ice cream also made of skyr and, depending on season, strawberries, raspberries or blueberries. 'Skyr is traditionally a breakfast dish – a cross between soft cheese and yoghurt, and you have to mix it with sugar, otherwise it can be bitter. We've taken it to another level in this dessert: you'd never usually find it in an ice cream.' texture-restaurant.co.uk

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with 'I wish I could have invented gravadlax. Otherwise it would be Raymond Blanc's confit salmon cooked in olive oil with lemon.'



6 Rabbit, marmalade, carrots & soil

Tom van Zeller, Van Zeller, Harrogate

'I'll admit, it's a bit of a play on the whole Bugs Bunny thing,' says Tom Van Zeller of his mischievously named signature dish.

Though carrot may seem a rather prosaic ingredient, in Van Zeller's hands, it's anything but. 'Carrot is a great accompaniment and wonderfully vibrant, especially if more than one variety is used. We use a heritage mix, giving a good array of colours, shapes and sizes: some we cook, some we pickle and some we shave and serve raw.'

To link the two ingredients together, Van Zeller makes a 'soil' by blending a biscuit base with mushroom powder. 'The soil connects the carrots to the rabbit,' he says. 'It's like a little veg garden growing from a plate: carrots, rabbits and soil, it all works together nicely. We use the rabbit loin, and also make a little parfait from the liver and a consommé from the legs, which we turn into a jelly for the parfait. We very gently poach the loin in a marinade with star anise, pepper and carrot oil, which we make by cooking carrots slowly in oil.' The chef also uses baby carrots and nasturtiums from his own allotment to garnish the dish. 'It's a fabulous, local, homegrown, organic, free-range dish.' vanzellerrestaurants.co.uk

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with 'Pierre Koffmann's hare à la royale. I love game.' ➔





8 Charred mackerel, kombu braised daikon, ginger and champagne

Kenneth Culhane, The Dysart, Petersham

'I'm interested in the anthropology of cooking – taking the best bits from different food cultures,' says Kenneth Culhane, The Dysart's head chef. Culhane won the Roux Scholarship in 2010, which has led to extensive travel opportunities. 'Every two years the Roux Scholars meet up and make a trip to visit two- and three-Michelin-starred restaurants for inspiration,' he explains. 'We went to Japan last year, and the food blew me away. I wanted to create a simple dish drawing on ideas from Japan's kaiseki cooking, which represents a moment or season, through a multi-course tasting menu.'

Culhane's charred mackerel with kombu-braised daikon, ginger and champagne taps into this sense of transience. The charring of the mackerel nods to the use of charcoal grills in a lot of Japanese cooking, while daikon is also a staple. 'We cook it with kombu (edible kelp) and bonito (a mackerel-like fish) in a base stock, dashi, which gives a nice freshness. It has an acidity and balance that really gets you going, so it's a great starter.' thedysartpetersham.co.uk

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with

'I worked for the Japanese chef Tetsuya Wakuda in Sydney, and his Tasmanian ocean trout confit with trout eggs, kombu and fennel is one of the best dishes I've eaten.'



SEPTEMBER 2014



9 Beef fillet (ashed)

Adam Handling, Caxton Grill, London SW1

Still just 25 years old, Adam Handling has spent years tinkering with a recipe he had for beef cooked in ash, but it wasn't until he visited Massimo Bottura's Osteria Francescana in Modena, Italy, that the pieces really fell into place. 'I was there filming for *MasterChef*, and I asked [Bottura] about it. I had been making the ash with leeks and onions, but I was finding it grainy. He said, "Start using soft herbs – they're mostly water, so they'll make for a much smoother ash".'

'It's much more time-consuming and costs a lot more, but I now use mint, parsley and tarragon to make the ash, and the flavour is just phenomenal. We make the ash, powder it, put it through a tea strainer, then take a 45-day-aged beef fillet, dust it in the ash and cook it sous vide.'

Because of the seasonally driven nature of his cooking, while the key part of the dish – the beef cooked in ash – remains the same, the garnish changes over time. 'In winter it's served with foie gras and truffles with olive oil purée, and in spring it's wild garlic, barley, pickled micro girolles and red watercress.' caxtongrill.co.uk

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with

'Beef Wellington – it's so simple, so classical. I'd happily eat it every day.'

SEPTEMBER 2014



10 Roasted venison with heritage carrots and beetroot

Matt Worswick, Warehouse Restaurant, Southport

'There's a lot of snobbery in food, and I don't think it's warranted,' says Matt Worswick, the 26-year-old chef at Warehouse Restaurant in Southport. 'I'd rather go to a brasserie and have a great meal than eat a mediocre one in a fine dining restaurant.' He describes the offering at Warehouse as 'ambitious food at brasserie prices. We do really bold food, quite simple dishes centred on local British flavours

– stuff people can really appreciate and relate to. We're a neighbourhood restaurant, and people like a proper northern portion here.'

That doesn't stop Worswick's food being stylish, on-trend and highly technical, though, as demonstrated by his signature dish – heritage carrots with venison. 'We use heritage purple, orange and white carrots, baked in a salt dough with cumin seeds so that they retain all their flavour, and we also make a carrot purée with roasted cumin seeds.'

Once baked, the carrots are pan-roasted with butter, garlic and thyme before being served with the pan-roasted venison loin and a faggot of minced venison and pork fat that's been wrapped in crêpinette (pork caul) and fried. Beetroot purée and a crunchy, aromatic juniper berry garnish the dish, along with bright green carrot tops. 'It's an autumnal dish, and it's been on the menu for a year and a half. The customers love it.'

warehouserestaurant.co.uk

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with

'I worked with David Everitt-Mathias at Le Champignon Sauvage, and his bergamot orange parfait with liquorice cream is perfect.'

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7 Crab cannelloni

Mark Greenaway, Restaurant Mark Greenaway, Edinburgh

Scottish chef Mark Greenaway's signature dish was waiting for him in a cupboard. 'The original idea came from the glass it's served in,' he says. 'I found these very unusual, two-part glasses sitting in a cupboard at the restaurant. They are martini chillers - you put ice in the bottom and your martini in the top, and it keeps the martini cold.'

'At the same time, I got the brief through from Great British Menu, which was all about being innovative and pushing boundaries, so when I found the glasses I thought it would be cool to fill it with a two-part dish. Then my fishmonger came in with some really great crab, so I tried to develop a dish along those lines. It's been on the menu for three years and it's our biggest-selling dish by far.'

The crab cannelloni comes in two layers. On the bottom is a smoked cauliflower

custard topped with freshly picked crabmeat with home-made lemon caviar. Greenaway fills the bottom glass with an applewood smoke, encasing it with the top glass, which holds baby gem lettuce and the crab cannelloni: a crab mayonnaise coated in a herb butter – there's actually no pasta involved.

'I was trying to do a very upmarket version of a crab salad. Crab goes well with cauliflower because cauliflower itself is quite sweet, and the lemon cuts through the fattiness of the cauliflower custard and the richness of the crab, so it all works in harmony together.' markgreenaway.com

An iconic dish I wish I'd come up with

'Brett Graham's brown sugar tart with stem ginger ice cream at the Ledbury. The balance of the whole dish is outstanding.'

'It's been on the menu for three years and it's our biggest-selling dish by far'