

BLUELIST¹ (blu,list) v.
to recommend a travel experience.

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EATING

top picks

- **De Burgermeester** (p173)
The best burgers for discriminating burghers.
- **Blauw aan de Wal** (p160)
A rose among thorns in the Red Light District.
- **Bordewijk** (p161)
French & Italian lessons for picky palates.
- **Hemelse Modder** (p161)
Dutch culinary haven with heavenly mousse.
- **Le Petit Latin** (p159)
Formidable fish with Jacques' lovely southern accents.
- **Piet de Leeuw** (p168)
Tender steak and fab *frites* since 1900.
- **Ristorante d'Antica** (p166)
Watch pasta spin in a wheel of cheese.
- **Supper Club** (p158)
Mattress dining with a flair for the dramatic.
- **Tujuh Maret** (p167)
The many side dishes of life: Indonesian rice table.
- **Van Vlaanderen** (p166)
French eatery reaching for the Michelin stars.

Dutch cuisine used to be little more than a contradiction in terms. This harks back to the days when Holland's hard-working merchants saw spices, coffee and cheese more as tradable commodities than something to be enjoyed. The leading Dutch restaurant critic, Johannes van Dam, recently went so far as to say the Dutch would eat anything if it were well presented ('if it had a bow on it').

Seriously, and take it from someone who lived here for years, it's not as bad as all that. A memorable meal awaits if you know where to look. And a major delight is the huge choice of cuisine, including delicacies from the former colonies. (When in Amsterdam, you have to eat an Indonesian rice table – it's the law.)

Another great joy is the visual flair of Amsterdam's restaurants. From the sumptuous interiors of supper clubs to pint-sized designer cafés, you can feast your eyes as well as your stomach.

Restaurants who care will change their menus seasonally, if not daily. Where we have listed individual dishes, they're either always on the menu or a reference to give you a line on the chef's creativity. Most places will have a few vegetarian choices.

Last but not least, don't forget about traditional Dutch cooking. While not exactly refined, with good honest dishes like *hutspot* (hotchpotch) it can be delicious.

SPECIALITIES

You'll find all colours in the rainbow, but Italian, French, Thai and Chinese are so widespread they're practically seen as national cuisines. Spanish-style tapas are all the rage, as is sushi, Pacific-Rim fusion and wok/noodle shops. Dutch chefs fly the flag highest at nouveau cuisine and fish restaurants, but there are also grease vendors like Febo (see the boxed text, p169).

In the De Pijp district, Indian and Turkish eateries are as common as one-speed bicycles, plus there are cuisines you may never have heard of, like Surinamese, a pleasant surprise. Chinese is always a good bet, particularly in the little Chinatown near the Zeedijk.

Dutch

Traditional Dutch cuisine revolves around meat, potato and vegetables. That said, contemporary chefs have made some great strides, and what's now called 'Dutch' often has echoes of far-off, mystical lands.

Some typical dishes include *stamppot* (mashed pot) – potatoes mashed with vegetables (usually kale or endive) and served with smoked sausage or strips of pork. *Hutspot*, similar to *stamppot* but with carrots, onions and braised meat, is a popular winter dish. *Erwtsoep* is a thick pea soup (a spoon stuck upright in the pot should fall over slowly) with smoked sausage and bacon.

Year-round favourites include *broodjes* (filled sandwiches). Quality *broodjeswinkels*

(sandwich shops) are like elaborate delis. Pile hot or cold ingredients onto a choice of breads and rolls, from roast beef or fish salads to cheeses and *osseworst* (raw beef sausage, a Dutch delicacy).

Kroketten (croquettes) are a Dutch classic: a ragout with meat, sometimes even fish or shrimp, that's crumbed and deep-fried. (Van Dam, the culinary maven, just published an encyclopaedic history of this creation.) They are also served as small balls called *bitterballen*, with mustard.

Pannenkoeken translates as 'pancakes', although North Americans will be in for a surprise – the Dutch variety is huge and a little stretchy, served flat, one to a plate and topped with wide combination of ingredients, both sweet and savoury.

There's plenty of seafood at stalls around the city. *Haring* (herring) is a national institution, prepared with salt or pickled but never cooked; your standard model is beheaded, split and filleted, served with diced onion and sometimes sweet-pickle chips as a garnish. *Paling* (eel) is usually smoked. *Mosselen* (mussels) are best eaten from September to April; the classic preparation is to cook with white wine, chopped leeks and onions, and serve with a side of *frites* or *patat* (French fries).

Some typically Dutch desserts are fruit pie (apple, cherry, banana cream or other fruit), *vla* (custard) and pancakes. Many snack bars and pubs serve *appeltaart* (apple pie) and coffee throughout the day – there's a reason Dutch apple pie is so admired.

Indonesian

Whatever you do, you must sample this tasty legacy of Dutch colonial history. Some dishes are concoctions rather than traditional Indonesian, but that doesn't make them less appealing. An Indonesian *rijsttafel* – a dozen or more tiny dishes, some startlingly spicy, with rice – should be a highlight of your visit.

Smaller *nasi rames* (boiled rice) is similar in concept and served on one plate. *Bami rames* is the same dish with thick noodles. *Gado-gado* is lightly steamed vegetables with peanut sauce and hard-boiled egg. A delicious staple is *saté* or *sateh* (satay), marinated barbecued beef, chicken or pork on small skewers.

Other stand-bys are *nasi goreng* – fried rice with onions, pork, shrimp and spices, often topped with a fried egg or shredded omelette – and *bami goreng*, the same thing but with noodles.

Indonesian food is usually served mild for Western palates. If you want it hot (*pedis*, pronounced *p-dis*), say so but be prepared for the ride of a lifetime. You can play it safe by asking for *sambal* (chilli paste), although it may already be on the table. *Sambal olek* is red and hot; the dark-brown *sambal badjak* is based on onions and is mild and sweet. If you overdo it, a spoonful of plain rice will douse the flames.

Surinamese

This former South American colony has dishes familiar to those who know the Caribbean, with African, Indian and Indonesian influences. Chicken features strongly, along with curries (chicken, lamb or beef), potatoes and rice, and a hard-boiled egg is usually in there somewhere. *Roti* are unleavened pancakes. It's a pleasant fire on the tastebuds, and great value.

PRACTICALITIES

Opening Hours

Dinner is the main meal, usually served from 6pm to 10pm. Many restaurants only do dinner, and will fill up by 7pm. Try arriving for the 'second sitting', when films and concerts start, between 8.30pm and 9.30pm. Kitchens tend to close by 10pm and leave late-night grazing to the street vendors.

For lunch your best bets are cafés (see also the Drinking & Smoking chapter, p178). Their meals tend to be reliable, but not life-changing. Many cafés open as early as 10am, and lunch

can be ordered from 11am to 2.30pm. They're great places to hang out, even after the kitchen shuts down. Many lunch cafés may allow you to linger until later afternoon.

Breakfast before 10am can be a problem. Unless your hotel serves breakfast, you may need to wait until the cafés open, or locate a bakery.

Restaurants tend to be open for business daily, but a few take Sunday and Monday off. Some go ahead and take several weeks off in July and August, so phone ahead or risk seeing 'On Holiday' at the front door.

How Much?

Eating out may seem reasonable compared to some other European cities (hello, London and Paris), but know that prices are up sharply since the euro was introduced in 2002.

Lunch will set you back anything from €2.50 for a basic sandwich to €10 for a complicated salad. Main courses will cost €8 to €18, lunch or dinner, at middle-of-the-road restaurants. To cut your bill, look for the *dagschotel* (dish of the day), and hearty appetites might go for a *dagmenu*, a set menu of three or more courses. Except at top-end restaurants, main courses should cost under €25, and three-course dinners are readily available for €25 to €35.

Breakfast tends to be overpriced: at a café, you can expect €5 for coffee, something baked and maybe some orange juice. Consider hitting a bakery the next morning.

A beer will generally set you back around €2, and nonalcoholic drinks are only slightly cheaper. House wines are generally €3 to €5 per glass, although the sky's the limit on full bottles.

Last but not least, many restaurants do not accept credit cards; check in advance.

Booking Tables

Virtually everyone speaks English well. Apart from the busiest upper-crust restaurants, booking a table is rarely a problem. A phone

PRICE GUIDE

This guide is based on the average price of a main course, including tax. See individual listings for prices of set meals where available.

€€€	over €25
€€	€12-25
€	under €12

call a day or two before your arrival should do the trick. Seating at most cafés is first come, first served.

Tipping

If you're from a 'service with a smile' kind of society, service in Amsterdam may be impersonal, off-putting and just plain slow. Don't take it personally, it's not directed at you.

Tax and a service charge are included in the bill, but unless your server really messes up, a modest tip is in order. Round up to the next number, or around 5%; a 10% tip is considered generous. If your bill comes to €9.50, you might leave €10.

If you're paying by credit card or just need change, state the amount you want to pay, including tip, as you hand your payment to your server (this will usually elicit a proper 'thank you!'). Note that servers appreciate being tipped in cash, as they may not actually receive a credit-card tip.

Self-Catering

Amsterdam has some great takeaway shops, known in some quarters as *traiteurs* (caterers). You'll find slick delis, bistros or street windows selling Spanish tapas, Italian tagliatelli, Indonesian skewers and ol' stand-bys like pizza or falafel. Department stores like De Bijenkorf (p138) and Vroom & Dreesman (p138) have good cafeterias.

The chains Volendamers Vishandel (fish, sandwiches and snacks) and Bakkerij Bart (bakeries) can be found in shopping areas. AH To Go has branches in heavy-traffic zones such as train stations. And fish stands selling *broodje haring* (herring rolls) are always fairly close by.

As for supermarkets, Albert Heijn (look for the white AH on blue) is prominent but competitors such as Dirk van den Broek, Edah and Aldi are nicer-priced. Farmers markets are held throughout town (see p151). The chain Gall & Gall sells wine and beer, and is often attached to Albert Heijn supermarkets.

CITY CENTRE

The city centre offers everything from supremely elegant Dutch cuisine to the hippest restaurants and DJ clubs. Some of the highest-end places are where you'd least expect them, such as in the Red Light District. Highlights here are the top-rated Blauw aan de Wal (p160)

as well as the little Asia- and Chinatown at the south end of Zeedijk. The bottom of the street called Nes in the Medieval Centre offers several nice cafés and restaurants outside the slipstream. Nieuwmarkt is one of Amsterdam's liveliest squares, and certainly its loveliest; the surrounds brim with tempting eateries.

MEDIEVAL CENTRE

SUPPER CLUB

Map pp62-5 Contemporary Dutch €€€
☎ 638 05 13; www.supperclub.nl; Jonge Roelensteeg 21; 5-course menu €65; 🍷 dinner

If you're looking for a scene, you've found one. Enter the theatrical, all-white room, snuggle on the enormous mattresses and snack on victuals as DJs spin house music. Shows are provocative and entertaining – if it's lamb night, live sheep may be led through to the kitchen. If it's hospital night, look out.

SEA PALACE Map pp62-5 Chinese €€

☎ 626 47 77; www.seapalace.nl; Oosterdokskade 8; mains €9.60-36, yum-cha courses €13.50-15; 🍷 lunch & dinner

Funny thing about floating Chinese restaurants: they look like tourist traps and may well be, but from Hong Kong to Holland many are admired for good food. The Sea Palace's three floors are busy with people, both Chinese and non, who come not just for the great views of the city from across the IJ. Even if you order dim sum from a menu instead of a cart, the shrimp in the *ha kow* dumplings go pop in your mouth just the same.

LUCIUS Map pp62-5 Seafood €€

☎ 624 18 31; www.lucius.nl; Spuistraat 247; mains €17.50-28, set menus €35; 🍷 dinner

Simple, delicious and consistently full, Lucius is known for both fresh ingredients and not mucking them up with lots of sauce and spice. The interior, all fish tanks and tiles, is workmanlike and professional, just like the service.

D'VIJFF VliegHEN

Map pp62-5 Contemporary Dutch €€
☎ 530 40 60; www.thefiveflies.com; Spuistraat 294-302; mains €20-28, set menus from €39; 🍷 dinner
So what if every tourist and business visitor eats here? Sometimes the herd gets it right.

The 'Five Flies' is a classic, spread out over five 17th-century canal houses. Old-wood dining rooms teem with character, featuring Delft tiles and works by Rembrandt and Breitrer. Some chairs have brass plates for the celebrities who've sat in them.

ORIENTAL CITY Map pp62-5 Chinese €€

☎ 626 83 52; Oudezijds Voorburgwal 177-179; mains €8.50-24, dim sum €2.50-4.50; 🍷 lunch & dinner

This huge Hong Kong-style restaurant with the requisite red lanterns is always lively. Join gaggles of local Chinese for daily dim sum (11.30am to 4.30pm; we like the meaty, flavoursome *cha sieuw bao* pork buns) and a 24-page menu (!) of classic Canto cuisine.

VILLA ZEEZICHT Map pp62-5 Café €€

☎ 626 74 33; Torensteeg 7; mains €3-21; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner

Although you *could* try sandwiches and pastas here, half the patrons seem to be eating the famous apple pie. For €4.50 you get a mountain of apples dusted in cinnamon, surrounded by warm pastry and fresh cream. In warm weather tables are set up on the bridge over the Singel.

HAESJE CLAES Map pp62-5 Traditional Dutch €€

☎ 624 99 98; www.haesjeclaes.nl; Spuistraat 273-275; mains €13.30-20, set menus from €28.50; 🍷 lunch & dinner

Haesje Claes' warm surrounds, a tad touristy but with lots of dark wood and antique knick-knacks, is just the place to sample comforting pea soup and endive *stamppot*. The fish starter has a great sampling of Dutch fishes.

LE PETIT LATIN Map pp62-5 Mediterranean €€

☎ 624 94 25; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 306; mains €11-19.50, set menus €32; 🍷 7-11pm Tue-Sat

Easy to overlook, with its step-down entrance, the 'Little Latin' drips with culinary authority, and it's not just the curled travel posters from the Côte d'Azur. If you can't read the blackboard scrawl, chef Jacques from Marseille will crouch to give you the day's specials – Aquitaine lamb? Fresh mullet flown in from the Riviera? Who can say *non*. The wine list is brief but *formidable*. Reserve or weep.

BRASSERIE HARKEMA

Map pp62-5 Brasserie €€

☎ 428 22 22; www.brasserieharkema.nl; Nes 67; mains €13-18, set menus €25; 🍷 11am-11pm
This cavernous ex-tobacco factory started its career as a restaurant in fine fashion a couple of years ago. Now the hype has subsided, it's just a very good stylish brasserie, with a simple lunch menu and staples such as Caesar salad and *entrecôte* for dinner.

GREEN PLANET Map pp62-5 Vegetarian €€

☎ 625 82 80; www.greenplanet.nl; Spuistraat 122; mains €9.50-16.50, sandwiches & salads €6-10; 🍷 dinner Mon-Sat

This modern veggie eatery cares...about your health, biodegradable packaging, peace, love and decent food. Come for a soup, salad, antipasto or cake. Mains include goulash, dumplings and Indian masala.

GREKAS Map pp62-5 Greek €

☎ 620 35 90; Singel 311; dishes €8-15; 🍷 1.30-9.30pm Wed-Sun

What started as a catering shop has bloomed into one of the city's best-loved Greek restaurants. Low overheads (there's almost no seating) means low prices with high-quality, generous portions of Greek home cooking: moussaka, roasted artichokes, chicken in lemon sauce.

DE KEUKEN VAN 1870

Map pp62-5 Traditional Dutch €

☎ 620 40 18; www.keukenvan1870.com; Spuistraat 4; mains €6-14, 3-course menu €7.50; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat

Thanks to a recent makeover, you'd never guess that this smart-looking place was once a restaurant for the poor. It still keeps up that heritage, though, with decent cooking (think *stamppot* or couscous) at exceedingly decent prices.

PANNENKOEKENHUIS UPSTAIRS

Map pp62-5 Contemporary Dutch €

☎ 626 56 03; Grimburgwal 2; mains €4.50-10; 🍷 noon-5pm

Climb some of the steepest stairs in town to reach this small-as-a-stamp restaurant. The lure? Pancakes that are flavoursome, inexpensive (most under €7.50) and filling. We like the one with bacon, cheese and ginger. It's a one-man show, so service operates at its own pace.

DOLORES Map pp62-5 Organic €
 ☎ 620 33 02; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal; mains €2.75-9; ☺ lunch & afternoon tea
Biologische (organic) is the name of the game at this tiny shop, which resembles a kiddie train station in the traffic island. Try organic burgers, *tostis* (grilled sandwiches), chicken and *frites*. Service has been known to take its time, but it is fun to watch the world go by at the picnic-table seating outdoors. It is on Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal, opposite No 289.

VLAAMS FRITESHUIS
 Map pp62-5 Takeaway €
 ☎ 624 60 75; Voetboogstraat 33; small/large €1.70/2.20, sauces €0.50-0.60; ☺ 11am-6pm Tue-Sat, noon-6pm Sun & Mon
 This hole-in-the-wall takeaway has drawn the hordes for its monumental *frites* since 1887. The standard is smothered in mayonnaise, though you can ask for ketchup, peanut sauce or a variety of spicy mayos. If the queue's too long, consider **Wil Graanstra Friteshuis** (p166) on Westerkerk square.

Also recommended:

Kantjil to Go (Map pp62-5; ☎ 620 09 94; www.kantjil.nl; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 342; dishes €3.75-6.25; ☺ lunch & dinner) Cobble your own Indonesian combo from rice, noodles, meat and veggies.

Van den Berg's Broodjesbar (Map pp62-5; ☎ 622 83 56; Zoutsteeg 4; sandwiches €1.60-4.45; ☺ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) Try *gehakt*, thin meatball slices served warm with killer-hot mustard.

Volendamers Vishandel (Map pp62-5; ☎ 626 33 88; Zoutsteeg 6; sandwiches €2.20-4.50; ☺ breakfast & lunch) This three-table shop has immaculate fresh fish and a great location.

RED LIGHT DISTRICT

BLAUW AAN DE WAL

Map pp62-5 International €€€
 ☎ 330 22 57; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 99; mains €24-27, 3-course menu €40; ☺ dinner Mon-Sat
 Definitely a rose among thorns: a long, often graffiti-covered hallway in the middle of the Red Light District leading to a Michelin-listed garden of Eden. Originally a 17th-century herb warehouse, the white-washed, exposed-brick, multilevel space still features old steel weights and measures, plus friendly, knowledgeable service and refined French- and Italian-inspired

cooking. In summer, grab a table in the romantic garden.

NAM KEE Map pp62-5 Chinese €
 ☎ 624 34 70; www.namkee.net; Zeedijk 113-116; mains €6-16.50; ☺ lunch & dinner
 It won't win any design awards, but year in, year out, Nam Kee's the most popular Chinese spot in town. And why not: there's good roast anything, and service is snappy. A new, fancier location has opened at **Geldersekade 117** (Map pp62-5).

NEW KING Map pp62-5 Chinese €
 ☎ 625 21 80; www.newking.nl; Zeedijk 115; mains €4-16; ☺ lunch & dinner
 If you want Chinese on the Zeedijk but don't want to feel like you're slumming it, New King is about the fanciest on the block. The roast meats may have you asking 'how much is that duckie in the window?' (€24 with the full service of different courses.)

EAT MODE Map pp62-5 Asian €
 ☎ 330 08 06; www.eatmode.nl; Zeedijk 105-107; mains €4-12.50; ☺ noon-11pm
 This smart little fusion diner covers the Pacific Rim in style. Order, take your number and plop down at a New Age marbled-wood table while they whip up your seaweed salad, California spring rolls or Thai tom yam goong soup. Does a booming takeaway trade too.

Also recommended:

Kam Yin (Map pp62-5; ☎ 625 31 15; Warmoesstraat 6-8; mains €4-13; ☺ lunch & dinner) Zero atmosphere, just tasty Surinamese and Chinese dishes.

Skek (Map pp62-5; ☎ 427 05 51; www.skek.nl; Zeedijk 4-8; mains €6.50-13; ☺ lunch & dinner) Trendy student hangout (student ID gets you one-third off) and live bands.

NIEUWMARKT

KRUA THAI Map pp62-5 Thai €€
 ☎ 622 95 33; www.kruathai.nl; Staalstraat 22; mains €6.75-25, set menus €19.50-23; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun
 Top-shelf soups, duck or shrimp curries, and noodle dishes are the order of the day at this sophisticated restaurant with bright art. Note: some locals refer to it by its old name, Tom Yam. A pretheatre menu is available.

top picks

EAT STREETS

- **Utrechtsestraat** (Map pp100-1) Hands-down our favourite dining street.
- **Negen Straatjes** (Map p92) A great place to browse for clothing or lunch, home wares or dinner.
- **Haarlemmerstraat** (Map p92) This newly trendy strip on the way out of town has some cool new spots.
- **Leidseplein and surrounds** (Map pp100-1) Included for quantity if not necessarily quality. Prices are reasonable, and it's minutes' walk from entertainment.
- **Albert Cuypstraat** (Map p119) West of the famous market you'll find a stash of exotic choices including Cambodian, Kurdish and Surinamese.

HEMELSE MODDER

Map pp62-5 Contemporary Dutch €€
 ☎ 624 32 03; www.hemelsemodder.nl; Oude Waal 9; mains €16, 3-/4-/5-course menus €24/28.50/32; ☺ dinner
 A little hard to locate, but worth it. Extraordinary care goes into dishes – you might find pot-au-feu with chicken or polenta soufflé – and you may even find a sprig of mint in your carafe of water. Desserts are wonderful, including the namesake *hemelse modder* (heavenly mud) chocolate mousse. The dining room is spare yet comfy, or snag a table out back on a warm night.

CAFÉ BERN

Map pp62-5 Swiss €
 ☎ 622 00 34; Nieuwmarkt 9; mains €9-14; ☺ dinner
 Indulge in a fondue frenzy at this delightfully well-worn brown café. People have been flocking here for more than 30 years for the *gruyère* fondue as well as the *entrecôte*. Note: it's generally closed for a large part of the summer, but do you really want fondue in hot weather anyway? Reservations advised.

STERK STAALTJE

Map pp62-5 Takeaway €
 ☎ 624 9065; http://sterkstaaltje.com; Staalstraat 12; prices vary; ☺ lunch
 Squarely between the Amstel, the Red Light District and Nieuwmarkt is this handsome, *rustique* takeaway shop with lasagne, savoury pies, and lovely olives and cheeses. Lunch will set you back about €5.

JORDAAN

The restaurants in this part of town exude the conviviality that has long been a hallmark of the Jordaan. The Haarlemmerstraat and surrounds are trendy, but many people still gravitate to the eateries along Westerstraat. You may want to lose your way in the narrow backstreets, where the next hot spot may be opening up.

BORDEWIJK

Map p86 French €€€
 ☎ 624 38 99; www.bordewijk.nl; Noordermarkt 7; mains €22-30, set menus €34-50; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun
 Other places have grander reputations, but some critics dub Bordewijk the king of the hill. The interior is so minimal that there's little to do but appreciate the spectacular French/Italian cooking. The chefs are not afraid to take risks (we once saw lamb's testicles on the menu), but its skilled staff take your wishes with aplomb.

BALTHAZAR'S KEUKEN

Map p86 French-Mediterranean €€
 ☎ 420 21 14; www.balthazarskeuken.nl; Elandsgracht 108; 3-course set menu €26; ☺ dinner Wed-Fri
 Consistently one of Amsterdam's top-rated restaurants. Don't expect a wide-ranging menu – the byword is basically 'whatever we have on hand' – but it's usually absolutely delectable. Plus, there's a modern-rustic look and attentive service (!). Reservations recommended.

RAKANG THAI

Map p86 Thai €€
 ☎ 627 50 12; Elandsgracht 29; mains €17-21, 4-course menus €27-32; ☺ dinner
 Chairs wrapped in straitjackets, bright art on the walls, neckties in the tables (it makes sense when you see it), a *mai pen rai* (no problem) atmosphere and delicious cooking (go for the almost buttery *tom kha gai* soup or crunchy, spicy duck salad) keep it busy here night after night.

JEAN JEAN

Map p86 French €€
 ☎ 627 71 53; www.jean-jean.nl; 1e Anjeliersdwarsstraat 14; mains €17-22, 4-course menu €35; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun
 One of the hottest places in town, this cosy neighbourhood bistro offers honest and affordable Gallic comfort food: soups, meat and fish dishes etc. The setting is understated yet sophisticated, and service is professional.

NOMADS Map p86

Middle Eastern €€

☎ 344 64 01; www.restaurantnomads.nl; Rozengracht 133; mezze plates €3-8.25, couscous €15-21.50, 3-course set menu €45; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sun It's the Supper Club concept on the road to Morocco. Wine, dine and recline on mattresses amid decadent decorations, and graze on platters of mod Middle Eastern snacks while being entertained by belly dancers and DJs. Superbly sexy, and best experienced with a lively group.

LOCAL Map p86

International €€

☎ 423 40 39; www.local-amsterdam.nl; Westerstraat 136; mains €7-19.50; 🍷 dinner This eel's nest of contempo-cool, with long, tall tables stretching its entire length, ensures that you will never eat alone. Go with friends, and it's an instant party. In keeping with the 'long and thin' theme, main dishes are grilled on skewers: there's an international selection from yakitori to beef stroganoff, all served with potatoes, salad and appropriate sauces.

BURGER'S PATIO Map p86

International €€

☎ 623 68 54; 2e Tuindwarsstraat 12; mains €13-19, 3-course menu €25; 🍷 dinner Despite its name, this is no hamburger joint. Rather, an air of easy-going cool permeates the modern interior, and the namesake patio is a fun hideout. Meats are free-range, pastas are popular, and touches like crudité, aioli and tapenade make the prices seem more reasonable than they already are.

JAPANESE PANCAKE WORLD

Map p86

Japanese €€

☎ 320 44 47; www.japanesepancakeworld.com; 2e Egelantiersdwarsstraat 24a; mains €9-19; 🍷 noon-10pm

If the Dutch are famous for pancakes of meat, seafood and veggies, so are the Japanese. At the continent's only shop specialising in *okonomiyaki* (literally, 'cook as you like'), you'll get yours in a hot iron dish with your choice of fillings and topped with flakes of dried bonito. There's a J-pop backdrop and barely two dozen seats.

DIVAN Map p86

Turkish €€

☎ 626 82 39; Elandsgracht 14; mains €13-17; 🍷 lunch Fri & Sat, dinner nightly In a town where 'Turkish' usually means 'takeaway' (or 'pizza'), Divan offers a

calming alternative. For €23.50 you get the *meze* combo starter of 10 assorted dips, skewers and salads, and we loved *ali nazik* (minced lamb with aubergines in yogurt garlic sauce), but it was the gracious, sweet service that will take us back.

MOEDERS Map p86

Traditional Dutch €€

☎ 626 79 57; www.moeders.com; Rozengracht 251; mains €13-17, 3-course menus €24-28; 🍷 dinner

Mum's the word at 'Mothers'. When this friendly place opened, staff asked customers to bring their own plates, flatware and photos of their own mums as donations, and the result is still a delightful hodge-podge. So is the food, including *stamppot*, seafood, Moroccan dishes, a vegetarian frittata and a *rijsttafel* of traditional Dutch dishes.

CINEMA PARADISO Map p86

Italian €€

☎ 623 73 44; www.cinemaparadiso.info; Westerstraat 184-186; mains €9.50-15; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sun

Action! Cinema Paradiso opened in 2002 in a former movie theatre, and glitterati have been appearing in the dining room ever since. Direct yourself to a booth or table near the open kitchen, and enjoy pastas, pizzas, lots of antipasti and stargazing. Go for cocktails and drink in the atmosphere.

DE BOLHOED Map p86

Vegetarian €€

☎ 626 18 03; Prinsengracht 60-62; lunch mains €3.50-11.75, dinner mains €9.50-14.50, 3-course menu €22; 🍷 lunch & dinner

The 'Charlie Brown's' pumpkin patch goes to India! Interior is a nice setting to tuck into enormous, organic Mexican-, Asian- and Italian-inspired dishes; in warm weather, there's a verdant little canalside terrace. Leave room for the banana-cream pie. Veggies swear by it – reserve.

DE VLIEGENDE SCHOTEL

Map p86

Vegetarian €€

☎ 625 20 41; Nieuwe Leliestraat 162-168; mains €9-13.75; 🍷 dinner

Service can be spotty at the 'Flying Saucer', but if you're prepared to take your time in the summer camp-chic dining room, you'll enjoy some of the city's favourite veggie gratins, lasagnes and Indian-inflected meals. There's a decent wine list.

CAFÉ VLINDER Map p86

Café €€

☎ 626 77 08; Brouwersgracht 139; mains €3.50-13; 🍷 breakfast & lunch This window-lined corner place in the Jordaan serves a magnificent, fresh-made breakfast (€12.50), laden with Dutch cheese, pâté, smoked salmon, eggs, coffee and fresh juice. It's also pleasant for afternoon cake and coffee (try the cheesecake or nut tart). We love the sassy service that describes itself as 'straight-friendly'.

MOEDER'S POT EETHUISJE

Map p86

Traditional Dutch €€

☎ 623 76 43; Vinkenstraat 119; mains €3.80-11.50, 6-course set menus €13-15.50; 🍷 dinner Mon-Sat *Moeder* (mother) is in his 60s (yes, *his*...he's big and gruff and probably a sweetheart inside), and he's been serving up solid, inexpensive meals for decades. The tiny kitsch-laden shop serves home cooking: beefsteaks, schnitzels and chicken with potatoes and vegetables (some canned) like your own *moeder* always wanted you to eat. The set menus are a steal.

DUENDE Map p86

Spanish €€

☎ 420 66 92; www.cafeduende.nl; Lindengracht 62; tapas €3.50-9.50; 🍷 dinner Flamenco music (Saturday night), big shared tables and reasonably priced tapas guarantee Duende's popularity. It's great for a party with a big group of friends – or strangers. The front room is the more lively (and attractive) of the two. Note: order at the bar.

DE BLAFFENDE VIS

Map p86

Contemporary Dutch €€

☎ 625 17 21; Westerstraat 118; mains under €8.50; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner Meals at the rowdy, corner 'Barking Fish' are better than they need to be for the price (contemporary Dutch – steak, fish, chicken – changing daily). Students and 30-somethings happily bop and swish beer while listening to music with a beat.

SMALL WORLD CATERING

Map p86

Takeaway €€

☎ 420 27 74; www.smallworldcatering.nl; Binnen Oranjestraat 14; sandwiches €5.45-7.50, other mains €4-6; 🍷 10.30am-8pm Tue-Sat, noon-8pm Sun This Australian-run company is known for quality. Small cases house gorgeous

WE DARE YOU

Amsterdammers love raw fish. Herring season is announced with all the fanfare of the new Beaujolais elsewhere: look for 'Hollandse Nieuw' signs at the fish kiosks around town. The proper way to eat a herring is to dangle it above the mouth and bite bit by bit (don't worry, it's already been filleted for you).

prepared vegetables and meat dishes, and you can get a variety of quiches and sandwiches including fresh tuna, tapenade and artichoke hearts.

WINKEL Map p86

Café €€

☎ 623 02 23; Noordermarkt 43; mains €2.50-6; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner

This sprawling, indoor-outdoor space is great for people-watching, popular for coffees and small meals, and out-of-the-park for its tall, cakey apple pie (€2.50). On market days (Mondays and Saturdays) there's almost always a queue out the door.

Also recommended:

Bloemgracht (Map p86; ☎ 620 20 88; www.restaurantbloemgracht.nl; Bloemgracht 47; mains €21.50, set menu €35; 🍷 dinner Wed-Sun) Quality cuisine in a lovely canal house. Try the grilled tuna with smoked potatoes.

Broodje Mokum (Map p86; ☎ 623 19 66; Rozengracht 26; sandwiches from €2) Great sandwiches – point and they'll tell you the price.

Noodle & Go (Map p86; ☎ 773 09 13; Brouwersgracht 125; dishes €4-7; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Noodles or fried rice, plus meat and a veg, and you're on your way.

WESTERN CANAL BELT

It may not have the ethnic dining diversity of other parts of town, but the Western Canal Belt makes up for it with some interesting and surprisingly fashionable options. Notably, the Negen Straatjes (Nine Alleys) are filled with cafés and small restaurants to match their lovely boutiques.

CHRISTOPHE Map p92

French €€€

☎ 625 08 07; www.christophe.nl; Leliegracht 46; mains €31-53, 4-course set menus €45-65; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sat

Lobster dishes, duck-liver terrine and an unusual elegance keep Jean-Christophe Royer's Michelin-starred restaurant busy every night. However, the excellent, caring

service puts it over the top in our book, making this an extraordinary restaurant by world, not just Amsterdam, standards.

DE BELHAMEL Map p92 French €€
☎ 622 10 95; www.debelhamel.nl; Brouwersgracht 60; mains €18-21, set menu €32; ☎ dinner

In warm weather the canal-side tables at the head of the Herengracht are an aphrodisiac, and the sumptuous Art Nouveau interior provides the perfect backdrop for excellent, French- and Italian-inspired dishes like silky roast beef.

LOF Map p92 Fusion €€
☎ 620 29 97; Haarlemmerstraat 62; mains €18-21, 3-course menu €35; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

Chef Sander Louwerens combines South-east Asian and Mediterranean flavours in complex and complementary ways. This is evidenced in dishes such as pike served with fennel and miso sauce. Schoolhouse-surplus décor manages to feel cool.

STOUT Map p92 Fusion Café €€
☎ 616 36 64; Haarlemmerstraat 73; lunch mains €4.75-13, dinner mains €15-21; ☎ lunch & dinner

Slick, hip couples congregate at this airy, artful café to air-kiss, read design magazines, gossip and share imaginative fusion dishes (carrot and coriander soup with spicy tempeh, Thai chicken burger with kimchi) and fruit shakes. In warm weather, sit on an outdoor cushion and watch the world go by.

CASA PERÚ Map p92 Peruvian €€
☎ 620 37 49; www.casaperu.nl; Leidsegracht 68; mains €12-20

When the weather's good, there's nothing quite like enjoying a *crema de ajo* (cream of garlic) soup or *lomo saltado* (beef with onion, tomato and French fries) while looking out over the Leidsegracht and the Prinsengracht. Indoors, it's busy and homelike.

DE STRUISVOGEL Map p92 French €€
☎ 423 38 17; Keizersgracht 312; 3-course menu €19.50; ☎ dinner

This former kitchen to some large canal houses offers a great deal. It's in the basement (*struisvogel* means 'ostrich'), and yes they do serve the bird, along with a nightly rotating menu – generous portions of more conventional French-inspired choices. It gets crowded; book ahead.

WERCK Map p92 Contemporary Dutch €€

☎ 627 40 79; www.werck.nl; Prinsengracht 277; mains €14-18.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat
Finally, a café that is worthy of the high-profile location between the Anne Frank Huis and Westerkerk. You can choose from sandwiches and snacks (€3 to €8) or steaks and more involved mains; think chicken with smoked bacon or black tagliatelle with morel sauce. Most people come to see and be seen on the crushed white-stone terrace.

CILUBANG Map p92 Indonesian €€

☎ 626 97 55; www.cilubang.com; Runstraat 10; mains €7.25-18, rijsttafel €21-37; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

In the Negen Straatjes, cute, cosy and slightly romantic, celadon-hued Cilubang soothes the stomach and soul with *rijsttafel* and attentive, personal service. It's been at it for 2½ decades. The food is west-Javanese style, and with any luck you'll hear gamelan music too.

DE 2 GRIEKEN Map p92 Greek €€

☎ 625 53 17; Prinsenstraat 20; mains €13-17; ☎ dinner

Craving stewed mountain goat or some juicy lamb chops? This relaxed, family-run bistro caters to your carnivorous desires with great grills and gets 'opal's from locals. In nice weather, grab a seat on the flower-lined terrace out back. If you're a fan of Greek wines, this is the place to go.

ENVY Map p92 Mediterranean €€

☎ 344 64 07; www.envy.nl; Prinsengracht 381; Tapas €4.50-17; set menus €50; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Mon-Tue

This hip, sleek restaurant encourages diners to take a five-course menu of seemingly endless, top-notch tasters. The designer globes are there to light up the media stars here most weekends.

BUFFET VAN ODETTE Map p92 Café €€

☎ 423 60 34; www.buffer-amsterdam.nl; Herengracht 309; mains €3-12.50; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5.30pm Sat, noon-5.30pm Sun

Not a buffet but a sit-down café, Odette and Yvette show how good simple cooking can taste when you start with great ingredients and a dash of creativity. Soups, sandwiches, pastas and quiches are mostly organic, and you might find smart little

SWEET DREAMS

The Dutch craving for sweet things goes back to the Golden Age, when Brazilian sugar poured into Amsterdam's 50-plus sugar refineries to satisfy the demand for confections and sticky delicacies. Calvinist ministers warned about the evils of *lekkerheid*, or the hankering for sweetness, and the nation experienced its first real epidemic of cavities.

The most famous Dutch sweet is the *drop*, sweet or salty liquorice sold in a bewildering variety of flavours and shapes. Familiar ones are *honing* (honey), *munt* (mint), *laurier* (laurel) and *salmiak* (salty). The striped 'Engelse' (English) *drop* is dipped in coconut fondant. You can get your *drop* fix at Het Oud-Hollandsche Snoepwinkelteje (p143), and many supermarkets or drugstores have a self-serve 'carousel' of sweets.

Traditional pastries, cakes and biscuits are prepared for special occasions. December is a good time to sample the spicy *speculaas* cookies or *pepernoten*, the little crunchy ginger-nuts handed out at Sinterklaas (p19). On New Year's Eve the air is thick with the aroma of *oliebollen*, the deep-fried dough balls dished up with powdered sugar (the Dutch brought them to America, where someone added a hole and called them donuts). *Muisjes* (little mice) are sugar-coated aniseed sprinkles typically served on a round *beschuit* (biscuit) to celebrate the birth of a child – blue and white for a boy, pink and white for a girl.

The delicious Dutch *appeltaart* (apple pie) is eaten year-round, along with a raft of cream cakes such as the popular *Tompouce*, which has a pink sugary icing. Now as in the 17th century, traditional favourites like waffles and *pofferfjes* (little pancakes) are covered with a sweet refinement like molasses.

The Dutch have a soft spot for chocolate as well. In 1828 a Dutch chocolate-maker named CJ van Houten invented the cocoa press, and he added an alkalisising agent to cocoa powder so that it would mix more easily with water – a process known today as 'dutching'. The result is a chocolate with a dark colour and mild taste, typical of leading Dutch brands such as Droste or Verkade.

extras like pine nuts in your quiche. Sit by the window for one of the city's prettiest canal views.

FOODISM Map p92 Café €€

☎ 427 51 03; www.foodism.nl; Oude Leliestraat 8; mains €4.50-12; ☎ 11.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun

A hip, colourful little joint run by a fun, relaxed crew. All-day breakfasts (€9), sandwiches like chicken mango and salads make up the day menu; night-time sees patrons tucking into platefuls of pasta – try the 'Kung Funghi' (with three kinds of mushrooms, parsley, walnuts and cream).

HEIN Map p92 Café €€

☎ 623 10 48; Berenstraat 20; mains €4-11; ☎ breakfast & lunch

Hein simply loves to cook, and it shows in her simple, stylish, sky-lit café – you have to walk through the kitchen to reach the dining room. Media types, doing business over brunch, comment that she has a great touch with simple dishes: *croque monsieur* or *madame*, smoked salmon and fresh fruit salads.

GOODIES Map p92 Café €€

☎ 625 61 22; Huidenstraat 9; dishes €3.50-10; ☎ lunch & dinner

This once-country place in the Negen Straatjes with rustic picnic tables has gone

glam with a slick makeover, a bar and even occasional DJ nights. They've joined the tapas wave, but it's still popular for creative sandwiches like grilled chicken with salad and pine nuts.

LUST Map p92 Café €€

☎ 626 57 91; Runstraat 13; mains €3.50-8.50; ☎ breakfast & lunch

Parquet floors and walls, supermod ceiling lamps and Brazilian dance beats animate this glam café. It's a fair bet you'll spot models nibbling focaccia sandwiches, *toastis*, generous salads or the popular grilled chicken club with avocado.

NIELSEN Map p92 Café €€

☎ 330 60 06; Berenstraat 19; dishes €4-10; ☎ breakfast & lunch Tue-Sun

This sunny café, with its bright interior filled with fresh flowers, has a tasty set breakfast – eggs, toast, fruit, juice and coffee (€7.50). During lunch a large variety of salads and sandwiches are served: try the BLT or gigantic chicken club sandwich.

PANCAKE BAKERY

Map p92 Contemporary Dutch €€
☎ 625 13 33; www.pancake.nl; Prinsengracht 191; mains €4.95-11.50; ☎ lunch & dinner

This basement restaurant in a restored warehouse features a dizzying 79 varieties

of this Dutch speciality from sweet (chocolate) to savoury (the 'Egyptian', topped with lamb, sweet peppers and garlic sauce). There are also omelettes, soups, desserts and lots of tourists given its proximity to the Anne Frank Huis.

WIL GRAANSTRA FRITESHUIS

Map p92 Fries €
☎ 624 40 71; Westermarkt 11; fries €1.70-2.40;
🕒 11am-6pm

This little stall near the Anne Frank Huis has been serving up crispy fries with delectable mayo since 1956. Legions of Amsterdammers swear by them. While you're there, ask Wil to do his impression of 'Terminator' Schwarzenegger – it's priceless.

Also recommended:

Koh-I-Noor (Map p92; ☎ 623 31 33; Westermarkt 29; mains €12.50-19.50; 🍴 dinner) Venerable Indian with curries and tandoori close to Anne Frank Huis.

Letting (Map p92; ☎ 627 93 93; www.letting.nl; Prinsensstraat 3; sandwiches €4.50-7; 🕒 8am-5.30pm) Bright, charming snack 'n' sandwich bar, for pit-stopping between purchases.

't Kuytje (Map p92; ☎ 620 10 45; Gasthuismolensteeg 9; sandwiches €2-3.50; 🍴 breakfast & lunch) Tile-lined sandwich shop. Try the pastrami and raw meats.

SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

All roads in Amsterdam seem to lead to Leidseplein, but we don't really recommend eating there. While cheap and cheerful, establishments there tend not to be particularly distinctive. A short walk away, however, you'll find some attractive options.

Much the same could also be said for Rembrandtplein. Instead of eating there, walk a few steps to Utrechtsestraat, the finest restaurant row in town.

VAN VLAANDEREN Map pp100-1 French €€€
☎ 622 82 92; Weteringschans 175; set menus €39.50-55.00; 🕒 6.30pm-10.30pm, closed Sun & Mon

One of our favourite French restaurants in town, with lovely canal views from the raised deck. Owner Bas Verstift will come out to chat and advise on your wine, and the fine nuances of dishes are always surprising – such as tuna carpaccio with avocado, chicken with bacon mousse or langoustines done three ways.

top picks

VIEWS WHILE YOU EAT

- **De Belhamel** (p164) In summer, try for an outdoor table overlooking the canal: you'll have the beautiful Brouwersgracht alongside you and the handsome Herengracht at your feet.
- **La Rive** (below) As if two Michelin stars weren't enough, this restaurant at the Intercontinental Hotel sits right on the Amstel for riverfront views.
- **M Café** (p169) Drink in the views from the top floor of the Metz & Co department store on the Keizersgracht.
- **Sea Palace** (p158) This floating Chinese restaurant is pleasing on the eye, and pleasing on the t.

LA RIVE Map pp100-1 French €€€

☎ 622 60 60; www.restaurantlarive.com; Amstel Intercontinental Hotel, Professor Tulpplein 1; mains €34-55; 🍴 breakfast daily, lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat

Two Michelin stars and a formal dining room with graciously spaced tables and views over the Amstel make La Rive the perfect venue for an out-to-impress lunch or dinner. The menu changes frequently, but standbys include turbot and truffle in potato pasta, or, as you'd expect, a starter of caviar.

RISTORANTE D'ANTICA Italian €€€

Map pp100-1
☎ 623 38 62; www.dantica.nl; Reguliersdwarstraat 80-82; mains €13-39, set menus from €35; 🍴 dinner Tue-Sun

Although D'Antica's three dining rooms get their share of celebrities, you'd be hard pressed to find a more welcoming restaurant in town. There's a familiar selection of pastas and meats, but cognoscenti order *spaghetti al parmigiano* (not on the menu) – and everyone may watch as waiters turn steaming pasta inside a wheel of cheese.

SEGUGIO Map pp100-1 Italian €€€

☎ 330 15 03; www.segugio.nl; Utrechtsestraat 96; pastas €15-17, mains €26-36; 🍴 dinner Mon-Sat This fashionably minimalist storefront with two levels of seating is the sort of place other chefs go for a good dinner. It's known for risotto and high-quality ingredients combined with a sure hand. Book ahead – it's almost always busy.

SLUIZER Map pp100-1 International €€

☎ 622 63 76; www.sluiser.nl; Utrechtsestraat 43-45; mains €14.50-24.50, 3-course menu €19.50; 🍴 dinner

This old-line institution – with its romantic, enclosed garden terrace – historically comprises two restaurants: a Parisian-style 'meat' restaurant (No 43) and a fish restaurant (No 45), though both menus are available in both restaurants. Spare ribs are the speciality of the former and bouillabaisse the speciality of the latter.

RESTAURANT RED

Map pp100-1 Seafood/French €€

☎ 320 18 24; www.restaurantred.nl; Keizersgracht 594; mains €14.50-24.50, set menus €25; 🕒 6.00pm-midnight

For those paralysed by choice, the very sexy Red is for you. It's all about steak or lobster here, and whatever way you're wired, the stylish waitresses will match the right wine. No prizes for guessing the main colour scheme.

TUJUH MARET Map pp100-1 Indonesian €€

☎ 427 98 65; www.tujuh-maret.nl; Utrechtsestraat 73; mains €13.50-23.50, rijsttafel €23.50; 🍴 lunch Mon-Sat, dinner nightly

Dare we say it? Tujuh Maret, next door to Tempo Doeloe, is just as good but attitude-free and cheaper. Grab a wicker chair and tuck into spicy Sulawesi-style dishes like dried, fried beef or chicken in red-pepper sauce. *Rijsttafel* is laid out according to spice intensity; *makanan kecil* is a mini-rijsttafel for €15.

HERRIE Map pp100-1 International €€€

☎ 622 08 38; Utrechtsestraat 30a; dishes €18-23; set menus €39.50-49.00; 🕒 6-10pm Mon-Sat

The name translates as 'uproar' – after all, the chef appeared on a Dutch cooking programme 'Uproar in the Kitchen' – but make no mistake, this skilled team runs like clockwork. Refined creations such as marinated lobster with parmesan cream emerge from the open kitchen with choreographed timing, served in the chic grey-and-black interior. The only drawback is the limited ventilation, irritating if smokers are present.

SATURNINO Map pp100-1 Italian €€

☎ 639 01 02; Reguliersdwarstraat 5; mains €7.50-23; 🍴 lunch & dinner

The menu at this Italian bistro is as long as the phone book in a village in Tuscany.

Stunning gay couples pack the different levels of this Art Nouveau-tiled and styled space for pizzas, pasta and playful flirting, and it's perfect for a low-key lunch with your fashion-industry friends.

TEMPO DOELOE Map pp100-1 Indonesian €€

☎ 625 67 18; Utrechtsestraat 75; mains €19.50-21.50, rijsttafel & set menus €25-35; 🍴 dinner Mon-Sat

One of the best Indonesian restaurants in the city (it charges accordingly), Tempo Doeloe's setting and service are pleasant and decorous without being overdone. Dishes bring out subtle flavours amid the spice, and staff are happy to accommodate vegetarians. Plus, there's an extraordinary wine list. Downside: it's a bit supercilious – you have to ring a doorbell to enter.

TAKE THAI Map pp100-1 Thai €€

☎ 622 05 77; Utrechtsestraat 87; mains €14-19.75, set menus €25-36; 🍴 dinner

This modern restaurant plates up some of the best Thai food in the city. Choose from a variety of curries spiced according to your palate. The Penang beef curry is a winner, as is the fish fried in lemongrass and Thai basil.

PASTA E BASTA Map pp100-1 Italian €€€

☎ 422 22 26; www.pastaebasta.nl; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 8; 3-course menu €34; 🍴 dinner There may be better Italian food in town, but Pasta e Basta is popular with large groups year in, year out thanks to its singing waitstaff, who perform opera, standards and more. Regulars swear by the antipasto buffet and grilled meats. Reserve well in advance.

THAI CORNER Map pp100-1 Thai €€

☎ 320 66 84; Kerkstraat 66; mains €9.50-19.50, set menus €23-28; 🍴 dinner

Don't dismiss this cute little place: it does seriously authentic Thai. Locals and restaurant critics swoon over squid with garlic pepper and tofu with Thai basil, and stare agog at the over-the-top, carved wooden bar at the back. Other restaurants could afford to take lessons from the self-effacing service.

ROSE'S CANTINA Map pp100-1 Mexican €€

☎ 625 97 97; www.rosescantina.com; Reguliersdwarstraat 38-40; dishes €5.50-19.50; 🍴 dinner Even if the Californians and Texans (not to mention Mexicans) among us wouldn't

stamp this place as authentic, it's hard not to love the gorgeous courtyard and fiesta interior. Fajitas, quesadillas and enchiladas are super sized, and margaritas taste good on any continent.

SZMULEWICZ Map pp100-1 International €€

☎ 620 28 22; www.szmulewicz.nl; Bakkersstraat 12; mains €10-19; 🍴 dinner

Szmulewicz's décor is at once slick and breezy (trompe l'oeil marble walls, sculpted lighting), a diversity reflected in its menu of reliable, ever-changing international cooking: pastas, tapas, Greek dishes, beef fillets and vegetarian specialities. In summer, buskers play outside on this quiet block off Rembrandtplein.

PASTINI Map pp100-1 Italian €€

☎ 622 17 01; www.pastini.nl; Leidsegracht 29; mains €9.50-19; 🍴 dinner

With a *gezellig*, rustic-renaissance interior and a can't-beat-it location facing two canals, Pastini wins praise for its looks, pastas and prices. Another speciality is the antipasto starter (€10.25 for five choices), but save room for dessert.

PIET DE LEEUW Map pp100-1 Steakhouse €€

☎ 623 71 81; www.pietdeleeuw.nl; Noorderstraat 11; mains €11.50-18; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner nightly

The building dates from 1900, it's been a steakhouse and hangout since the 1940s, and the dark and cosy atmosphere has barely changed since. If you don't get your own table, you may meet folks from all over (including, admittedly, tourists) at a common table, over well-priced steaks with toppings like onions, mushrooms or bacon, served with salad and piping-hot *frites*.

CAFÉ MORLANG Map pp100-1 Café €€

☎ 625 26 81; www.morlang.nl; Keizersgracht 451; lunch mains €3.50-18, dinner mains €10-18; 🍴 lunch & dinner

Grab a fashion magazine, order tomato soup or tarte tatin, or choose from a rotating menu with influences from Italy to Thailand. The canal-side terrace is fab in warm weather; indoors enjoy the high ceilings and gigantic portraits of staff members painted on the back wall. Friday nights it's a low-key gay hangout – so low-key that you may not realise it.

CAFÉ WALEM Map pp100-1 Café €€

☎ 625 35 44; Keizersgracht 449; lunch mains €4.50-9.50, dinner mains €9.50-17.50; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner

The industrial-mod building by Gerrit Rietveld, two terraces, friendly service and a changing menu keep this place busy. There's a popular *carpaccio* sandwich, mains including fish and duck, a neat line of soups and salads, and coffee from Illy.

LOS PILONES Map pp100-1 Mexican €€

☎ 320 46 51; www.lospilones.nl; Kerkstraat 63; starters €3.50-7.75, mains €12.50-13.75; 🍴 4-11.30pm Tue-Sun

Owners Hector and Pedro consistently set the standard among Amsterdam's handful of Mexican restaurants. If you're looking for wonderfully grilled *bistek*, crispy chicken rolls and fruity margaritas, you're definitely in the right place. No tacos ('we don't do Tex-Mex') but who cares? One of their 60 tequilas will help you get over it.

PATA NEGRA Map pp100-1 Spanish €

☎ 422 62 50; Utrechtsestraat 142; tapas €3.50-15, most under €8.50; 🍴 lunch & dinner

Tapas and only tapas. The alluringly tiled exterior is matched by a vibrant crowd inside, especially on weekends, downing sangria by the jug and all those small plates (the garlic-fried shrimps and grilled sardines are standouts). Margaritas are made with freshly squeezed lime juice, as they should be. Arrive before 6.30pm or reserve.

PYGMA-LION Map pp100-1 African €

☎ 420 70 22; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 5a; mains lunch €5.50-13, dinner 14-25; 🍴 dinner Tue-Sun

This modern South African bistro plates up animals you normally have to go to a zoo to see, like ostrich, springbok and zebra. Squeamish stomachs will still find more domesticated options: vegetarian dishes, 'tipsy' tart and blackcurrant scones.

GOLDEN TEMPLE Map pp100-1 Vegetarian €

☎ 626 85 60; www.restaurantgoldentemple.nl; Utrechtsestraat 126; mains €6.85-14.25; 🍴 dinner

Golden Temple's quietly upscale setting means that you don't have to feel like you're back in school just because you're eating vegetarian food. Its international menu of Indian thali, Middle Eastern and Mexican platters is good and inexpensive. Leave room for the totally wicked banana-cream pie.

FEBO A-GO-GO

The cheesy fast-food chain Febo (*fay-bo*) deserves the Amsterdam sex-and-drugs treatment: before first contact, however delightful, you might as well educate yourself.

With deep-fryers like sewage tanks and a steady clientele of bottom-feeders, Febo is secretly loved for its cheap, filling, heart-clogging treats (mostly €1 to €2). Then there's the presentation – rows upon rows of tiny glass doors like a miniature Red Light District, lined with gorgeous bits that practically wink at you: *kroketten* of veal or beef, *kibburger* (chicken burger), Feboburger (thought to be real beef with BBQ sauce and lettuce) and enough variations to send Ronald McDonald screaming for cover. Insert a coin or two into a slot and open sesame, you've got the greasiest date of your life.

OK, it's down and dirty, but as long as you're in and out quickly, who's gonna know?

WAGAMAMA Map pp100-1 Japanese €

☎ 528 77 78; Max Euweplein 10; mains €8-13; 🍴 lunch & dinner

The long rows of rectangular tables, laid out cafeteria-style, are often filled with hipsters fortifying themselves for bike trips or nights on the town. Staples include chicken ramen, Japanese curries and fried noodles or rice.

M CAFÉ Map pp100-1 Café €

☎ 520 78 48; Keizersgracht 455; mains €4-12; 🍴 10am-5pm

Drink in that amazing panoramic view! The location, high above the Keizersgracht in the top-floor gallery of the ritzy Metz Department Store, gives new meaning to 'high tea' (€12), although other dishes are nothing you can't find elsewhere (soup, salads or sandwiches).

BOJO Map pp100-1 Indonesian €

☎ 622 74 34; www.bojo.nl; Lange Leidsedwarsstraat 51; mains €7.25-11.50; 🍴 lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily (open until 2am)

After a night on the town, there's nothing like a little Indonesian. Bojo is a late-night institution. Clubbers come for sizzling satays, filling fried rice and steaming bowls of noodle soup. The quality may be uneven, but the food is certainly well priced.

ULIVETO Map pp100-1 Takeaway €

☎ 423 00 99; Weteringschans 118; dishes €4.50-10.50; 🍴 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sat

In a capacious, spare atmosphere of understated luxury, this shop is lined with huge crocks of olive oil and splendid displays of Italian specialities. If you prefer to dine in, try the long white marble table when cooking demonstrations or classes are not being held there.

ZUSHI Map pp100-1 Japanese €

☎ 330 68 82; Amstel 20; dishes €3-8.75; 🍴 lunch & dinner

This conveyor-belt sushi shop features post-industrial chic décor (stainless steel, brick and blondwood), club tunes, lighting service, and new grilled dishes. Add up the colours of your plates to figure out the bill.

VAN DOBBEN Map pp100-1 Sandwich Shop €

☎ 624 42 00; Korte Reguliersdwarsstraat 5; dishes €2-7.50; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner

This diner with the hospital-tile décor has been supplying Amsterdam's best *kroketten* (€2) since 1945. Also much beloved for sandwiches, soups and omelettes, and a compulsory stop on a Rembrandtplein pub crawl.

VILLAGE BAGELS

Map pp100-1 Sandwich Shop €

☎ 427 22 13; www.villagebagels.nl; Vijzelstraat 139; bagel sandwiches €2.80-5.50; 🍴 breakfast & lunch

The people who gave Amsterdam bagel-chic are going like gangbusters. You may feel like a New Yorker as you dive into a bagel with salmon, chive cream cheese and capers, especially if you grab the newspaper. But you'll remember where you are at the **Stromarkt branch** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 528 91 52; Stromarkt 2), which has a canal-side terrace.

BAGELS & BEANS

Map pp100-1 Sandwich Shop €

☎ 330 55 08; www.bagelsbeans.nl; Keizersgracht 504; bagels €2.50-5.50; 🍴 breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri, lunch Sat & Sun

Join the crowds for bagels with all the usual toppings, plus some new-fangled

ones (smoked chicken with avocado and pesto). Top it all off with a slice of dense fig cake; it goes exceedingly well with coffee. There's another branch in **De Pijp** (Map p119; ☎ 672 16 10, Ferdinand Bolstraat 70).

BROODJE VAN KOOTJE

Map pp100-1 Sandwiches €

☎ 623 20 36; Leidseplein 20; broodjes from €2; ☎ lunch & dinner

This is Amsterdam's longest-running sandwich bar, although you'd never know it by its appearance (Micky D's has more charm). Still, it stays open for late-night munchies, the quality is solid and you can't beat the two locations (second branch at **Spui 28**, Map pp62-5), right in the heart of the pub 'n' club zone.

Also recommended:

Gala (Map pp100-1; ☎ 623 63 03; Reguliersdwarstraat 38; tapas €6-12; ☎ dinner) Toothsome tapas, each more like a main meal, within Rose's Cantina (p167).

Loekie (Map pp100-1; ☎ 624 42 30; Prinsengracht 705; broodjes €2.25-5.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) Butcher shop with 150 types of fillings to stuff into a *broodje* for you.

Maoz Falafel (Map pp100-1; ☎ 420 74 35; Muntplein 1; sandwiches €2.80-4.30; ☎ lunch & dinner) Its flagship creation is crispy, hot and authentic, with endless salad and toppings

Wok to Walk (Map pp100-1; ☎ 624 29 41; Leidsestraat 96; dishes €4-9.50; ☎ 9am-midnight) For noodly refueling. Shockingly healthy in this part of town.

OLD SOUTH

The refined neighbourhood that hosts the Concertgebouw, major museums and swanky shops is home to some very chi-chi restaurants. Don't be surprised if you bump into tenor Plácido Domingo or violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter as you wait for seating. The eastern part of Van Baerlestraat is less formal, with traditional Dutch and tapas.

BARK Map p110 Seafood €€

☎ 675 02 10; www.bark.nl; Van Baerlestraat 120; mains €13-24; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner nightly

A quick hop from the Concertgebouw, this genteel place does a big pre- and post-performance business. For starters, choose from a long shellfish menu or try the blinis of smoked oilfish. For mains, we like the grilled tuna steak with bacon and balsamic sauce.

COBRA CAFÉ-RESTAURANT

Map p110 International €

☎ 470 01 11; Hobbemastraat 18; mains €5-12; ☎ lunch & dinner

This arty glass cube of a restaurant, full of original works by Corneille and Appel, sure is touristy. But when you're all museumed out and need a salad, a massive club sandwich or a slice of 'Karel Appel taart', you'll hardly notice. The hi-tech toilets are almost worth the €0.50 admission.

SABOR DE MARIA

Map p110 Mediterranean Tapas €

☎ 662 62 76; www.sabordemaria.nl; Roelof Hartstraat 60; mains €6.50-8; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat

This catering shop sells tapas from €1.25 per 100g, such as meatballs, stuffed grape leaves and garlic chicken wings, and main dishes like rib eye with pepper sauce, vegetable lasagne and Spanish chicken. Take it away, or settle at one of the few tables.

SAMA SEBO Map p110 Indonesian €

☎ 662 81 46; www.samasebo.com; PC Hooftstraat 27; rijsttafel per person €27.50, lunch specials €15, dishes €2-6.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat

Sama Sebo looks more like a brown café than a trip to the South Seas, and that's OK. The *rijsttafel* is 17 dishes (four to seven at lunch time), and you can get individual plates if that's too much. It's had the same formula since 1970, so who are we to question?

Also recommended:

La Falote Map p110; ☎ 622 54 54; Roelof Hartstraat 26; mains €6.50-14; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) Home-style Dutch cooking. Wait till the owner brings out the accordion.

Renzo's (Map p110; ☎ 673 16 73; www.renzos.nl; Van Baerlestraat 67; dishes €1.95-2.95; ☎ 11am-9pm) Italian takeaway deli with a popular miniterrace.

VONDELPARK & AROUND

For lazy grazing, the Vondelpark has several cafés whose terraces buzz on a warm summer's day. The streets just north of the park, meanwhile, are a real find for lovers of world food. Look out for exotic dishes from Asia and Africa served in surrounds that are earthy, authentic and refreshingly low-key.

'T BLAUWE THEEHUIS Map p116 Café €€

Round Blue Teahouse; ☎ 662 02 54; www

.blauwetheehuis.nl; Vondelpark 5; lunch €3.50-5, dinner mains €14-19; ☎ 9am-10pm

This functionalist teahouse from 1936 is a wonderful multilevel building that serves coffee, cake and alcohol; its terrace and balcony are great for a beer on a sunny day, even in winter when the heaters are on.

PALOMA BLANCA Map p116 Moroccan €€

☎ 612 64 85; www.palomablanca.nl; Jan Pieter Heijestraat 145; mains €13-16.50; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

The name is Spanish, but the lanterns, dishware and mosaic-top tables are straight out of a Marrakech souk. Try the starter of olives and *brik* (spicy tuna spread), mains of couscous and *tajine* (Moroccan stew) or mixed grills of spicy sausage, lamb cutlets and chicken. It's the only place in town to cook with *smet*, a specially aged butter.

LALIBELA Map p116 Ethiopian €€

☎ 683 83 32; 1e Helmersstraat 249; mains €7.50-13; ☎ dinner

This shop just north of the Overtoom was the Netherlands' first Ethiopian restaurant, and it's still our favourite. Aksumite-hide paintings with Christian motifs hang on the walls. You can drink Ethiopian beer from a half-gourd, and taste your stews, egg and vegetable dishes using *endjera*, a spongy pancake, instead of utensils. Trippy African music rounds out the experience.

WAROENG ASJE

Map p116 Javanese/Surinamese €

☎ 616 65 89; Jan Pieter Heijestraat 180; mains €5-12, rijsttafel €28; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily

This counter-service shop serves *rijsttafel*, but you can get some of the same food in human-sized portions with the *nasi rames* special (€9) – a heaped plate of roasted meats, on skewers or in spicy stews, with stir-fried or pickled vegetables, and a deep-fried hard-boiled egg.

HAP HMM Map p116 Traditional Dutch €

☎ 618 18 84; 1e Helmersstraat 33; mains €5-7; ☎ 4.30-8pm Mon-Fri

Elsewhere €6 might buy you a bowl of soup, but at this wood-panelled neighbourhood place €6 might buy an entire dinner: simple Dutch cooking (meat + veggies +

TOO TIRED TO KOOK?

The **Kinderkookkafé** (Map p116; ☎ 625 32 57; Vondelpark 6; ☎ ring for hours & reservations) lets the kids take over the kitchen with careful supervision. The small fry prepare meals from pancakes and pizzas to Moroccan, write up the menus, and even clean up (well, just a little).

potatoes), served on stainless-steel dishes. Beer is cheap too.

PASTA DI MAMMA

Map p116 Italian/Takeaway €

☎ 664 83 14; www.pastadimamma.nl; PC Hooftstraat 52; sandwiches €3.10-5, antipasti per 100g €2.85-4.90; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, noon-7pm Sun Casual, friendly Pasta di Mamma is supremely located for picking up a picnic to take to the Vondelpark. You can choose from dozens of antipasti, gorgeous salads and more substantial plates. The countrified cafeteria space is also pleasant for eating in.

DE PIJP

Anything can happen on De Pijp's cuisine scene – it's funky, frilly and fashionable, often all at once. West of the Albert Cuypmarkt, the Albert Cuypstraat is lined with unique ethnic spots, while to the north, the streets around Marie Heinekenplein heave with a spirited crowd of local 20- to 40-somethings.

PUYCK Map p119 International €€€

☎ 676 76 77; www.puyck.nl; Ceintuurbaan 147; set menus from €36; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat

This place near Sarphatipark offers neither games nor pretension, just imaginative, sophisticated cooking appropriate for a nice night out. Think baby lobster with lettuce, duck breast in Chinese five-spice, or a white wine-poached pear, all served with flair. If it has the Thai curry sorbet, consider yourself lucky.

MAMOUCHE Map p119 Moroccan €€

☎ 673 63 61; www.restaurantmamouche.nl; Quellijnstraat 104; mains €14.50-22; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

Mamouche gets serious acclaim for modern Moroccan amid minimalism. Exposed flooring, mottled walls and slat-beam ceilings complement the changing selection of couscous, lamb and fish dishes. Check out

the brass fixtures in the loo – if you can find it. Reservations are a must.

KLOKSPIJS Map p119 French International €€
☎ 364 25 60; Hemonystraat 38; mains €19.50, set menus €28.50; ☎ dinner Wed-Sun

Located in an old bell-maker's workshop, this charming, intimate restaurant with a handful of tables makes for a fine end to a day of poking around De Pijp. The three-course menu of, say, smoked duck breast salad, grilled sea bass and strawberry-rhubarb cake is a class act, and the wine selection is small but superb.

BALTI HOUSE Map p119 Indian €€
☎ 470 89 17; Albert Cuypstraat 41; mains €10.50-18; ☎ dinner

One of the best-kept secrets in De Pijp is this exceedingly friendly, quick-serving, always-tasty spot. The butter chicken masala (€12.50) is consistently smooth and tender but the fiery tandooris and biryanis won't disappoint either. Start with a rich mango lassi and a chapatti *amuse-bouche* on the shady terrace.

ZEN Map p119 Japanese €€
☎ 627 06 07; Frans Halsstraat 38; mains €6.50-17.75; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat

Let's be frank: many Japanese restaurants are lovely, elegant poseurs. Zen, however, offers cooking like *okāsan* (mum) used to make: *domburi* (bowls of rice with various ingredients on top), sushi and *tonkatsu* (deep-fried pork cutlet) are just the start. Décor: minimalist Dutch-meets-Japanese. It's also popular for takeaway.

ZAGROS Map p119 Kurdish €€
☎ 670 04 61; www.zagrosrestaurant.nl; Albert Cuypstraat 50; mains €10-15.75; ☎ dinner

Never tried Kurdish food? Neither had we, but we're glad we did. Just as Kurdistan straddles Greece and Persia, so does the cuisine, with grills and stews (mostly lamb and chicken), salads of cucumber, tomato or onion, and starters like hummus and *dumast* (thick, dry yogurt).

CAFÉ DE PIJP Map p119 Café €€
☎ 618 16 69; Ferdinand Bolstraat 17-19; mains €13.50-15; ☎ lunch & dinner

De Pijp, the restaurant, is a fitting emblem of De Pijp, the neighbourhood: bright,

young, cheerful, colourful, reasonably priced and good-looking both outside and in. You might see skinny young things digging into enormous plates of fish paella or tempura-style shrimp.

TURKIYE Map p119 Turkish €
Ferdinand Bolstraat 48; mains €6.75-15.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner

English may not work at this simple shop, but it doesn't matter: the dishes inside the glass case are plenty eloquent. Locals value *Turkiye* for its grilled mains and small plates like stuffed tomatoes and Turkish pizza (€1 to €3.50). Eat-in or takeaway.

BAZAR AMSTERDAM Map p119 Middle Eastern/Fusion €
☎ 675 05 44; www.bazaramsterdam.nl; Albert Cuypstraat 182; mains €8-14.50, 3-course menu €15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner

Beneath a golden angel in the middle of the Albert Cuypmarkt, this one-time Dutch Reformed church has fab-u-lous tile murals and 10,001 Arabian lights to complement the cuisine: from Morocco through Turkey, Lebanon and Persia. Even the plates are gorgeous and exotic. Breakfast and lunch are served all day, or just come for a beer and baklava or coffee and apple pie.

CAMBODJA CITY Map p119 Cambodian €
☎ 671 49 30; Albert Cuypstraat 58-60; mains €3.50-13.50, set dinner for 2 from €24; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

The owner's welcome is warm and friendly, and the flavours are from across Southeast Asia – *loempias* (spring rolls), Vietnamese noodle soups, Thai curries etc. Set menus also reflect the different traditions, and there are fab displays of takeaway foods in case you don't feel like eating in.

ALBERT CUYP 67 Map p119 Surinamese €
☎ 671 13 96; Albert Cuypstraat 67; mains €3.20-8.40; ☎ lunch & dinner

If you're looking for stylish surrounds, turn away now. If, however, you're after quality examples of Surinamese food, take a seat. A colossal portion of *roti kip* (chicken curry, flaky roti bread, potatoes, cabbage and egg) is a fine replenishment after a couple of hours at Albert Cuypmarkt.

DE BURGERMEESTER Map p119 Burgers €
☎ 670 93 39; www.burgermeester.eu; Albert Cuypstraat 48; burgers €4-7.50; ☎ noon-11pm
This sleek little bistro makes the finest burgers in town, bar none. It uses only organic beef (or lamb, falafel or tilapia), in mouth-stretching portions that would pass as a main dish without a bun. Then come the toppings: spicy fusion veggies, bean sprouts, piri-piri mayo and more. The name is a play on 'mayor' (*burgemeester*).

BAKKEN MET PASSIE Map p119 Bakery €
☎ 670 13 76; http://debakkerswinkel.nl; Albert Cuypstraat 51-53; ☎ 8am-6pm Tue-Sat
Say your sweetie hates ethnic food but you desperately want something exotic on the Albert Cuyp. This quietly fancy shop bakes the appropriate bribes like yummy Valrhona chocolate tart (€3.85 per slice) or lemon cake (€6.50 per small loaf).

TAART VAN M'N TANTE Map p119 Sweets €
☎ 776 46 00; www.detaart.com; Ferdinand Bolstraat 10; cakes per slice around €4; ☎ 10am-6pm
One of Amsterdam's best-loved cake shops operates from this uber-kitsch parlour at the entrance to De Pijp: apple pies (Dutch, French or 'tipsy'), pecan pie, and tarts with ingredients like truffles and marzipan with strawberry liqueur. Savouries include the mozzarella-pesto quiche. Hot-pink walls accent cakes dressed like Barbie dolls – or are they Barbies dressed like cakes?

MÁS TAPAS Map p119 Spanish €
☎ 664 00 66; Saenredamstraat 37; tapas per plate from €3; ☎ dinner
While 'tapas' has become Amsterdamese for anything served on a small plate, this cool, whitewashed room serves the real thing and is full of funsters having a garlicky good time. It wins raves from old and new customers alike.

Also recommended:

De Soepwinkel (Map p119); ☎ 673 22 93; 1e Sweelinkstraat 19f; soups €3.50-10) Sleek, airy souper, serving home-made quiches, cakes and tarts.

Gelateria Italiano Peppino (Map p119); ☎ 676 49 10; 1e Sweelinkstraat 16; scoops from €0.90; ☎ 11am-11pm) De Pijp's blue-ribbon ice-cream maker, just off the Albert Cuyp market.

Nieuw Albina (Map p119); ☎ 379 02 23; Albert Cuypstraat 49; mains €5-11.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) More polished than Albert Cuyp 67, but with flavours just as bold.

PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS

The Plantage may be just steps from Nieuwmarkt, but what a difference those few steps make, taking you to an area that's quiet yet close to some important sights. In the Eastern Islands, a lot of our favourite places are by (or in some cases, literally on) the water. Choose from the historic and homely to world-class slick. The Eastern Docklands is the end of the line, but many agree that the trek is worth it for its beautiful eateries and innovative cuisine.

PLANTAGE

PLANCIUS Map p122 International €€
☎ 330 94 69; www.restaurantplancius.nl; Plantage Kerklaan 61a; mains €16-19; ☎ lunch & dinner
Next to the Resistance Museum and opposite the Artis Zoo, this dramatically stylish space (bright red bar at the back) is where TV execs head to cut deals over big serves of upmarket comfort food. Lunch is typically sandwiches, salads and pastas. The menu changes quarterly, and there are friendly, good-looking waiters.

ABE VENETO Map p122 Italian €
☎ 639 23 64; Plantage Kerklaan 2; mains €4.50-12.50; ☎ lunch & dinner
Sometimes you just want a corner place with decent food at honest prices. The pizza menu tops out at €9.50 and has 45 choices – the gorgonzola pizza puts this stinky cheese to excellent use. Other options include pastas, salads and meat dishes. In summer, a terrace is set up by the canal.

EASTERN ISLANDS

A TAVOLA Map p122 Italian €€
☎ 625 49 94; Kadijkplein 9; mains €11.50-20; ☎ dinner
Overlooked by most tourists, this authentic Italian restaurant near the Shipping Museum serves a small but well-chosen menu of meats and pastas that cry out for a selection from its excellent wine list. Even if the service can be a little iffy, the quality of the cooking is consistent and strong. Reservations are a must.

KOFFIEHUIS VAN DEN VOLKSBOND

Map p122 International €€
☎ 622 12 09; Kadijkplein 4; mains €11.50-16.50;
🍴 dinner

This laid-back place began life as a charitable coffee house for dockers, and it still has a fashionably grungy vibe – wood floors, a giant red-rose mural and tall candles on the tables. The ever-changing menu has huge plates of comfort food with ingredients like mussels and *merguez* (a type of spicy sausage), or try the risotto. The Belgian chocolate terrine has fans all over town.

EASTERN DOCKLANDS

VOORBIJ HET EINDE Map p122 French €€
☎ 419 11 33; Sumatrakade 613; mains €24, set menus €33-66; 🍴 dinner Wed-Sat

It means 'beyond the end', and on your trek out here to Java Eiland you may begin to question your judgement. Don't. This place, with its supermod architectural interior (frosted glass walls, lots of right angles), wins high praise for high French in high style – the menu changes every month or so.

FIFTEEN Map p122 International €€
☎ 0900 343 83 36; www.fifteen.nl; Jollemanhof 9; mains €18-22, 4-course set menu with wine €42;
🍴 dinner

'Naked chef' Jamie Oliver has brought to Amsterdam a concept he began in London: take 15 young people from underprivileged backgrounds and train them for a year in the restaurant biz. Results: noble intention, sometimes spotty execution. The setting, however, is beyond question: Fifteen faces the IJ, and the busy, open-kitchen space is city-cool, with graffitied walls and exposed wood beams.

ODESSA Map p122 International €€
☎ 419 30 10; www.de-odessa.nl; Veemkade 259; lunch mains €3.40-8, dinner mains €17-22;
🍴 lunch & dinner

Odessa rocks. Literally. This groovy boat, with indoor and outdoor eating decks and a 1970s-themed 'plush-porno' décor, is just the sort of place where Hugh Hefner would hold a debauched pyjama party – as if to emphasise that fact, DJs take over late at night. The menu changes frequently, and although opinions on food and service run the gamut from 'love it' to 'hate it', there's no denying it's a scene.

GARE DE L'EST Map p122 International €€
☎ 463 06 20; www.garedelest.nl; Cruquiusweg 9; 4-course set menu €27; 🍴 dinner

Gare de l'Est has both the smallest menu in Amsterdam and also the largest. They say that because four chefs (from traditions including North African, Mediterranean and Asian) take turns nightly in the kitchen, and what their course menus lack in length they make up for in variety over the course of a year. Portuguese tiles and glowing Middle Eastern lamps adorn the interior, and courtyard seating exudes good vibes.

PANAMA Map p122 International €€
☎ 311 86 89; www.panama.nl; Oostelijke Handel-skade 4; mains €11-18; 🍴 lunch & dinner

The Eastern Harbour's first grown-up restaurant has an enormous, sleek dining room, Mondrian colour scheme and steel light fixtures; it's a good place to fortify yourself before hitting the nightclub on the same premises. Gucci-garbed couples splurge on oysters (in season) and a weekly changing menu of pastas and grills. Wash it down with the – wait for it – Panamartini (vodka, *crema cioccolato*, espresso).

OOSTERPARK & AROUND

For a whiff of the former Dutch colonies, try the Ekeko restaurant in the Tropenmuseum (p128) or the simple Indonesian and Surinamese takeaways on nearby Linneausstraat and 2e Van Swindenstraat. Further south, the park that embraces the sumptuous Frankendael (p128) is home to one of the Amsterdam's finest restaurants.

DE KAS Map p129 International €€€
☎ 462 45 62; www.restaurantdekas.nl; Kamerlingh Onneslaan 3, Frankendael Park; 5-course menu €42; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat

Admired by gourmets city-wide, De Kas has an organic attitude to match its chic glass greenhouse setting – try to go during a thunderstorm! It grows most of its own herbs and produce right there (if it's not busy you might be offered a tour), and the result is incredibly pure flavours with innovative combinations. Romantic and tony.

OUTER DISTRICTS

BLENDER Map pp58-9 French-Mediterranean €€
☎ 486 98 60; Van der Palmkade 16; mains €18-22;
🍴 dinner daily, lunch Sat & Sun

Way out west of the Jordaan, Blender's cheeky, curvy, 1970s airport-lounge interior (think lots of orange swivel chairs) is just the place to sip cocktails, sample inventive French-Med food and socialise as DJs spin deep house and soul. People love it and hate it for the same reason (self-conscious hipness), but there's no doubt it's a scene.

BETTY'S Map pp58-9 Vegetarian €€
☎ 644 58 96; Rijnstraat 75; mains €17-22;
🍴 lunch Wed-Fri, dinner Wed-Sun

Some consider it the top vegetarian restaurant in the country. The menu's small on any given day, but there's always something new. It's rounded out by tiny tables and a decent wine selection, and everyone says to save room for dessert.

CAFÉ-RESTAURANT AMSTERDAM Map pp58-9 French International €€
☎ 682 26 66; www.cradam.nl; Watertorenplein 6; mains €10-21; 🍴 lunch & dinner

One of the city's hippest eateries is housed in a former water-processing plant near the Westerpark. Expect classic French brasserie cooking (steak bearnaise, mussels, roasted garlic chicken). Note the 30m-high wooden ceilings (with hanging metal hooks and chains) and the huge floodlights rescued from the former Ajax and Olympic stadiums.

RESTAURANT PS Map pp58-9 International €€
☎ 421 52 18; www.restaurant.ps; Planciusstraat 49; dinner mains €14-19, 3-course menu €30;
🍴 dinner Tue-Sat

Run by an unlikely yet vastly experienced pair – an English chef and a Colombian

maitre d' – this new restaurant in the Western Islands, north of the Jordaan, already has an army of devoted fans. Expect reasonable prices, an excellent wine menu and attentive service, plus an artsy interior with mosaics of Venetian glass. The set meals change weekly and feature seasonal ingredients.

PACIFIC PARC Map pp58-9 International €€
☎ 488 77 78; www.pacificparc.nl; Polonceaukade 23; lunch mains €3.50-10, dinner mains €13.50-17, 3-course menu €25; 🍴 lunch & dinner

Among the many venues in the newly refurbished Westergasfabriek, Pacific Parc is the most established and, arguably, the most interesting. Lunch time is typically sandwiches, pastas and salads, although dinner can get pretty adventurous with selections like ceviche and stuffed lamb shanks. Late at night expect to see DJs and guest performers.

GARY'S MUFFINS Map pp58-9 Bakery €€
☎ 412 30 25; Kinkerstraat 140; dishes €1.50-4.50;
🍴 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun

This long-standing bakery serves fresh bagels, chocolate brownies from Gary's grandma's recipe, and sweet and savoury muffins for anyone craving a healthy(ish) minimunch.

SAL MEIJER Map pp58-9 Kosher Deli
☎ 673 13 13; Scheldestraat 45; dishes €2-5;
🍴 10am-7.30pm Sun-Thu, 10am-3pm Fri

This kosher delicatessen has little to no atmosphere, but how can you argue with a refrigerator case lined with pretty scoops of salmon, potato and egg salads? Order the heaping corned-beef sandwich – get it warm, you'll thank us. We love the kicky ginger cake for dessert.

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