

TRAVEL WITH
Taste
makers



Oliver Spencer London



Carina Hardy & Tavish Gallagher Bali



Kristina Snaith-Lense Shenzhen



Bill Bensley Bangkok



Joyce Wang Hong Kong



Osman Sezener Izmir



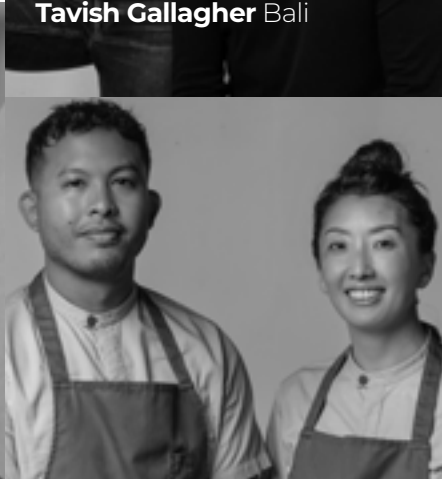
Antonio Fratantoni Sicily



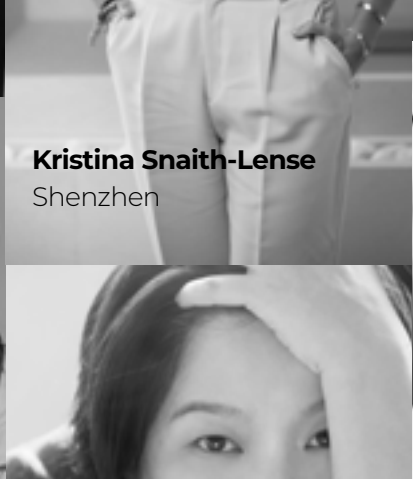
Ardelia Lovelace Brooklyn



Tonya Lewis Lee Martha's Vineyard



Tim Flores & Genie Kwon Chicago



Liya Kebede Paris



Marie-Louise Sciò Rome



Octavia Spencer New Orleans



Cecilia Apelin Tulum



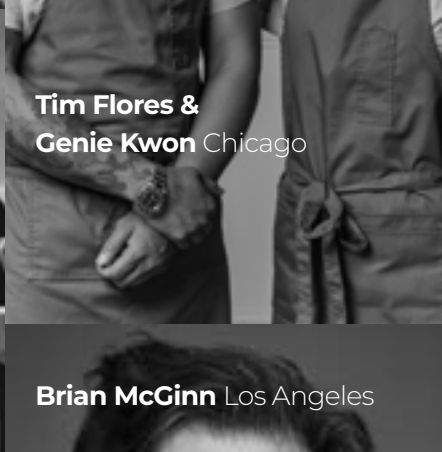
Mimi Thorisson Turin



Hung Huang Beijing



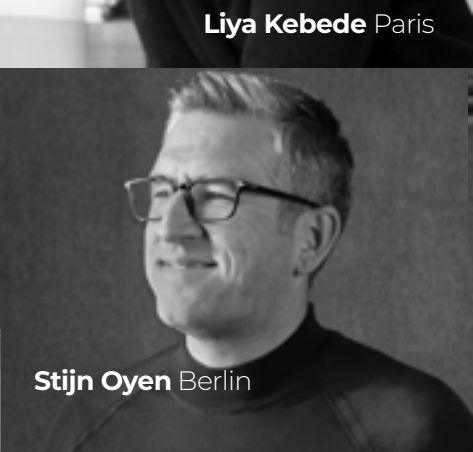
Brian McGinn Los Angeles



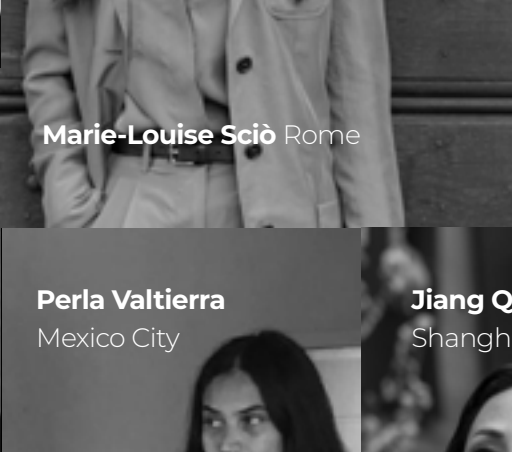
Stijn Oyen Berlin



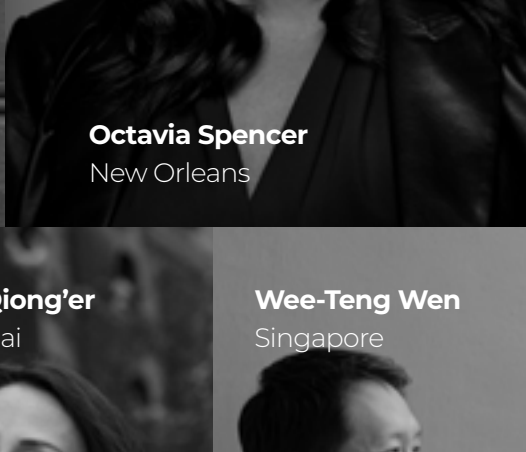
Perla Valtierra Mexico City



Jiang Qiong'er Shanghai



Wee-Teng Wen Singapore



Patricia Mateo Madrid



Divia Thani Mumbai



Suzy Annetta Melbourne



Tina Koyama Kyoto



Lee Anne Wong Oahu & Maui



Divia Thani Mumbai



TRAVEL WITH
Taste
makers

Foreword**Travel with tastemakers**

Want to experience the world through the eyes of chefs, restaurateurs, designers, actors, hoteliers, artists, and storytellers? We asked this special group of tastemakers for their unique “insider” insights to their cities. From the rice terraces of Bali to the backstreets of Berlin, these are love letters to place, memory, and identity from people who know these places best.

In Los Angeles, Chef’s Table producer and director Brian McGinn takes us on a food crawl shaped by the city’s immigrant stories, where unforgettable dishes are often found in unsuspecting strip mall kitchens or behind queues for sourdough bagels and mochi pancakes.

In New Orleans, Academy Award-winning actress Octavia Spencer shares her deep admiration for the city’s cultural richness and culinary legacy. From gumbo at Dooky Chase’s — a restaurant that once hosted civil rights leaders — to turtle soup at Commander’s Palace and Chicken Rochambeau at Antoine’s, her recommendations are steeped in history and flavor.

In Europe, author and cook Mimi Thorisson reveals the quiet charm of Turin, from village panetteria to coastal walks and intimate bistros that celebrate regional tradition. Further north in Paris, supermodel Liya Kebede shares her Fashion Week favorites in the City of Light, offering a glimpse into the cafés, boutiques, and historical cultural spots that inspire her.

In Bali, jewelry designers Carina Hardy and Tavish Gallagher remind us that the island’s spirit lives not in its villas but in its waters, rituals, and daily rhythms — from sacred springs and misty clove farms to morning markets scented with fruit, flowers, and incense.

Across all these stories, we are invited to consider how we move through the world — what we seek, what inspires us, and what stays with us. Travel, they remind us, is not only escape but discovery, perspective, and belonging.

Whether you’re planning your next great escape or simply dreaming of one, we hope this collection inspires you to explore with intention, to travel with heart, and to see the world not just as it is — but as it could be.

Bon voyage!

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Carina Hardy & Tavish Gallagher

Jewelry designers



Carina and Tavish are the creative force behind the Bali-based jewelry brand, Carina Hardy.

Upon meeting, Carina and Tavish immediately shared beauty as their love language. This relationship between love and beauty is fundamental to everything they do together.

Carina has lived between Bali and New York City her entire life. Growing up in a family of jewelers (her father is jewelry designer John Hardy), she was encouraged to push creative limits and trust hand craftsmanship. She studied art history and has created in many media, including plaster, inflatables, ice, and metal.

Tavish grew up in Brooklyn. Both his parents — his mother a modern dancer, his father a sound engineer — optimized his childhood for freedom and creativity. He studied philosophy and started a boutique contracting firm before falling in love with Carina and moving to Bali.

Their entire range is handmade in Bali, where the brand has an in-house wax carver with a workshop in **Celuk**, a hub of traditional jewelry-making.

Bali

“The soul of Bali isn’t found in a villa or a restaurant — it’s in the water, the rituals, and the repetition of beauty in daily life.”

To first-time visitors as well as those who’ve been to Bali many times before, what are the places and experiences that reveal the island’s hidden soul and creative energy?

The soul of Bali isn’t found in a villa or a restaurant — it’s in the water, the rituals, and the repetition of beauty in daily life.

Start at **Tirta Empul**, where the aquifer pushes up through stone and people line up before dawn to pour it over their heads. Follow the river valley to **Gunung Kawi**, carved into living rock in the 11th century — a place that reminds you what permanence feels like in a landscape that’s constantly moving, growing, and pulsing with life.

Take a mountain bike ride along farmer paths and subak channels, the veins of the island. **Jatiluwih** is a perfect immersion — you can trace the ancient irrigation systems that make Bali’s rice terraces so astonishingly fertile.

Go to your nearest local market — **Payangan, Gianyar, Ubud, or Denpasar** — early in the morning, when the air smells of incense, fruit, smoke, and flowers. It’s where the rhythm of daily life hums beneath all the surface beauty. If the market is open past 9am, it’s likely for

tourists; the Balinese go to market early in the morning.

If you want to feel that cultural and ecological philosophy expressed through architecture, visit our family’s resort **Bambu Indah** in Sayan. It’s a place that embodies the Balinese principle of living with, not against, nature — spring-fed pool, homegrown food, a bamboo elevator in the cliff, a breathtaking view, and a haven nestled in a river valley. It’s a place that truly reminds you how beauty and sustainability can coexist.

And if you’re lucky with timing, come for ceremony. Participate — don’t just observe. Whether it’s a **full-moon blessing, Galungan, or Kuningan**, to step inside those moments of devotion — to carry an offering, to be part of the preparation — is the most humbling and unforgettable experience unique to Bali.

If you’re here for **Nyepi**, Bali’s New Year, watch the chaos of the ogoh-ogoh parades the night before — enormous papier-mâché demons marching through the streets — and then wake to absolute silence. That contrast, between collective frenzy and sacred stillness, is the clearest window into the island’s soul.

Those are the moments where Bali moves you from the inside — when you stop spectating and start belonging.

There’s been a lot of concern about the crowds and overtourism in Seminyak, Canggu, and Ubud. Tell us about some of the off-the-beaten-path towns and neighborhoods deserving attention or worth exploring.

More than 90 percent of Bali is still green, you just have to look up from your phone.

We love **East Bali**, especially **Jasri** and **Virgin Beach**, a quiet, white-sand cove on a coast mostly made of black volcanic sand.

In the highlands, **Munduk** is like another planet: clove farms, spring water, hydrangeas, fog rolling in and out. You can smell the air change.

Balian, on the western coast, feels cinematic — wide black sand, coconut trees leaning into the sea, rice fields sliding down to the surf.

And **Tabanan Regency** still has that feeling of distance, even though it’s nearly an hour from anywhere. The best roads are the ones that turn narrow and impossible — the ones that make you slow down.

“Travel for us isn’t escape; it’s calibration. We go to remember what we love about coming home.”



What are your top dining experiences — from warungs to fine dining — and dishes to try?

Our favorite meal in Bali costs about \$1.95.

It’s at **Warung Mek Jewel** in Sayan — a heap of rice with smoked chicken (ayam betutu), vegetable urab of the day (every day it’s different —and oh so good), noodles, a perfect egg, satay, chicken floss, grated roasted coconut, peanuts, sambal matah, and sambal goreng. It’s chaos on a plate and it’s perfect. Every part of your taste buds come to life.

When we want to get away for something celebratory, we drive north to Les to eat at **Dapoer Mula Bali**, a restaurant and homestay run by a priest-chef who cooks the freshest local food and pours his own homemade arak — Balinese moonshine with soul.

Apéritif and **Mozaic** are the grand rooms that never lose their gravity. Or **Locavore To Go** when we’re craving a burger that still feels handmade.

Alchemy has the best build-your-own salad on the island — we always add kale tahini, nori, pilinut rawmesan, and green papaya noodles with sesame-ginger dressing.

And for dessert: **Ettore Gelato** — pistachio or honeycomb — or **Powder Room**, where natural wine meets sourdough soft-serve. Simple pleasures, done properly.

The craftsmanship traditions of Bali are exemplary. What are your favorite specialty stores and artisanal boutiques?

We have to start with our own fine jewelry collection — Carina Hardy because it’s where everything we love about Bali’s handcrafting traditions expresses itself through us in precious metal form. Every piece is carved by

hand, the way it’s been done here since the Majapahit era — the creative spirits of the island flow through our carvers’ hands.

We also love **Tian Taru’s** indigo work, which feels like painting with plant pigments. It’s a blue so beautiful it makes Tibet’s blue skies timid.

KalpaTaru works with reclaimed teak the way some people handle silk — color, grain, emotion. Gaya Ceramics interprets clay with a rare sensitivity, world-class craftsmanship, and a level of precision that feels meditative.

Then there’s Potato Head — a place that feels less like a venue and more like an ongoing experiment. It’s where music, design, food, and sustainability all cross paths and keep evolving. Everything there feels considered but never static — they build, test, and reinvent constantly. It’s alive in the best way.

For something curated: **Namu** — run by an Italian woman with taste as sharp as a blade — everything in there has intention.

Rüsters Concept Store is another curated space where furniture, pottery, and design merge with café culture — every piece chosen for its craft, edge, and chance to surprise.

If you want to see where things truly come from, visit the villages: Bona for bamboo, Mas for wood carving, Celuk for silver, the north for gongs and bone.

What informs your work? Where do you go for creative inspiration?

Beauty is our love language. Not just creating beautiful things, but striving for and experiencing beauty, often in ways not so “quintessentially” beautiful.

Bali has both natural and cultural beauty. The rhythm of ritual gives us structure. The people who live here, the Balinese, fill our hearts with goodness and admiration for humans, for humanity.

We’re faithful to hand craftsmanship. Every design starts with a moment, a series of experiences, a conversation, and then immediately translates into wax carving.

We travel often to Thailand and China for production and material research, and to New York to visit Tavish’s family and our loved ones — we still love New York City.

But the core of it always comes from here, Bali — from watching how a farmer bends a palm leaf, or how a ceremony rearranges a day.

Beauty isn’t a product; it’s a practice, an outlook — pardon us for saying it — it’s a language, a way of life. That’s what we try to make tangible.

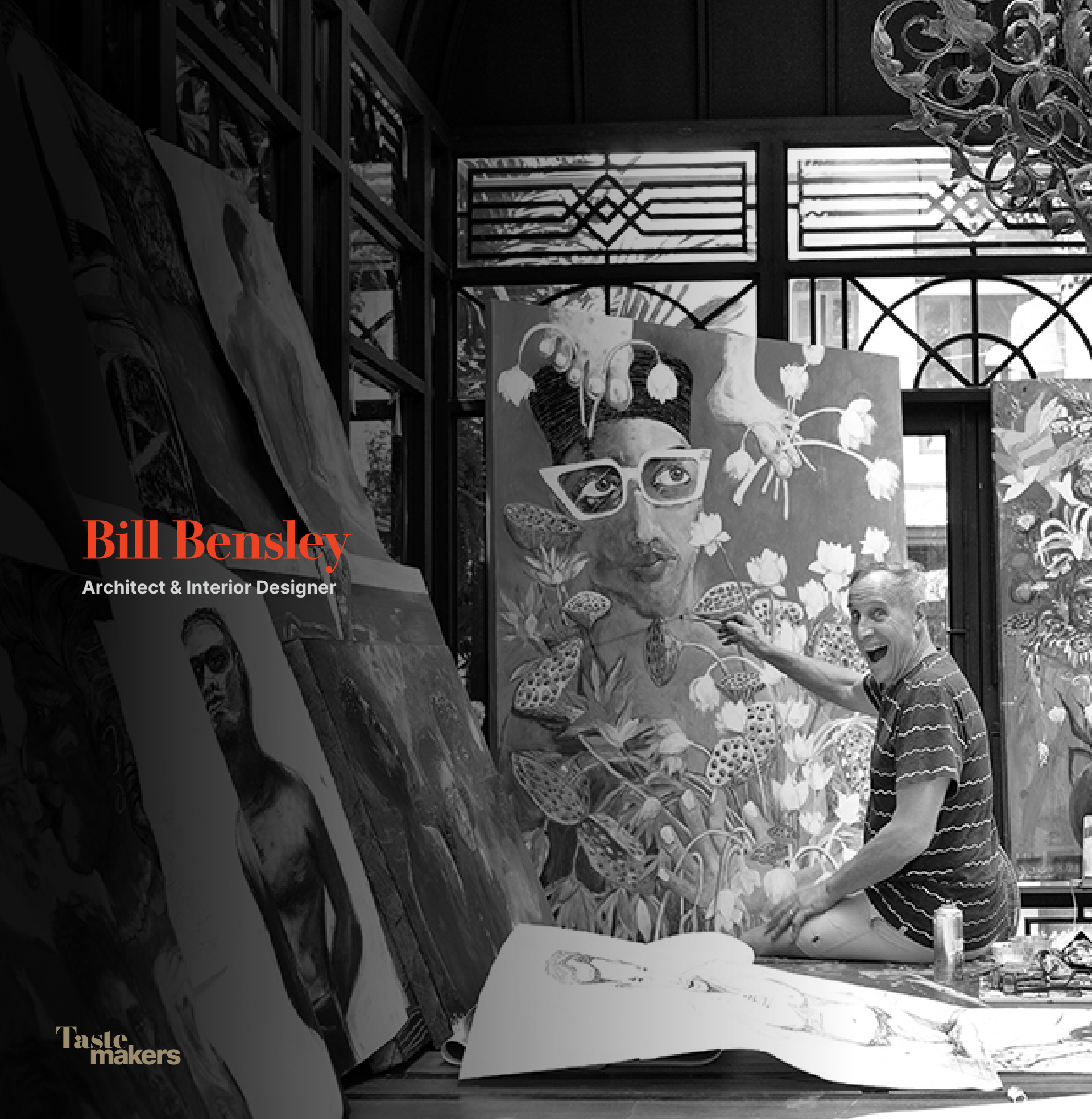
What’s on your travel bucket list for 2026 and beyond?

We want to explore more of Indonesia — Sumba, Flores, Rote — all those places that still run on their own time.

And then Mongolia, Japan, Sweden, Turkey — for immersion in other worlds and to have the fun feeling of discovery for the very first time.

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Bill Bensley
Architect & Interior Designer



Affectionately known as the “Willy Wonka of Design”, Bill is world-renowned for his work on legendary hotels like the **Four Seasons Chiang Mai**, **JW Marriott Phu Quoc**, **The Siam Bangkok**, **Shinta Mani Wild** and **Capella Ubud**. A conservationist and philanthropist, Bill has seamlessly and brilliantly combined his passions to benefit the environments and communities in which he has created his incredible projects.

In 2020, Bill shared the culmination of his life’s work to date in a free-open source white paper, “**Sensible Sustainable Solutions**” for hotel designers, owners and operators to design better hotels, fight climate change and generally make the world a better place. He has also published two exquisite coffee table books on his incredible designs — ESCAPISM and MORE ESCAPISM.

In 2019 after Covid paused his extensive travel schedule, Bill discovered his love of painting. Not a traditionally trained artist, Bill considers himself an “outsider” artist and now runs four **BENSLEY Outsider Galleries** — at his studio in Bangkok, at the **InterContinental Danang in Vietnam**, and at **Shinta Mani Angkor** and Bensley Collection Pool Villas. All proceeds, both for prints and original paintings, go to the **Shinta Mani Foundation** and **Wildlife Alliance**, two causes very close to Bill’s heart.



Bangkok

“Bangkok hums with a unique energy — chaotic, colorful, endlessly inspiring.”



If you have close friends visiting Bangkok for the first time, what are your top unmissable experiences?

*My top must-do would start right at home — our little sanctuary, **Baan Botanica**.*

The gardens and guest house are like stepping into a private wonderland, a world of our own where art, nature, and a touch of whimsy coexist. You can wander among lush greenery, enjoy playful moments with the Jack Russells, and soak up the soul of Bangkok away from the usual bustle.

From there, the **Bangkok General Post Office** — a bastion of Art Deco and International Style architecture built in the 1940s — has been revived as the **Thailand Creative and Design Centre**. Its exhibitions are fantastic and are rivalled only by neighboring warehouses, which were converted to host some of Bangkok’s most novel designers. Wander to the riverside and take a ferry upstream to **Lhong 1919**, a gorgeous mid-19th century Sino-Siamese port on the banks of the Chao Phraya. It melds modern art and crafts shop with its historic past, including a historic shrine. I also love the newly renovated **National Museum**, which presents a beautiful collection of Chinese artifacts — currently including some of the famed terracotta warrior army!

A visit to Bangkok wouldn’t be complete without immersing yourself in the vernacular architecture. I often prefer to avoid the crowds, and in doing so find hidden gems such as **Wat Prayoonwongsawat**, which has a dream of a garden. Another special spot is **Wat Saket - the Golden Mount Temple** - perched on a little hill above Chinatown; the bells which hangs off the edge of the roof chimes in the wind and are the perfect accompaniment to a sunset visit.

When visiting the temples on a budget, I’d recommend getting the **BTS skytrain** to Saphan Taksin and then hopping aboard Chao Phraya Express riverboat - cheap and cheerful with a great river view of all the temples. Should wandering old town get a bit hot, **Rongros** restaurant has charming interiors and a lovely view of **Wat Arun** — The Temple of Dawn. A quirkier alternative is **Make Me Mango** by Wat Pho to get your fill of “mamuang” and sticky rice.

Bangkok is a vibrant and dynamic city with a distinct creative and design pulse. What would you recommend to art and culture aficionados?

Bangkok hums with a unique energy — chaotic, colorful, endlessly inspiring.

For anyone with a love of art, design, and craft, it’s a playground waiting to be explored. My personal recommendation is always the **Red Buildings at Chatuchak Market**. You can happily lose yourself there for hours, not knowing what treasure you might stumble upon. Sellers showcase antiques and curiosities from across the globe, each piece carrying its own story, and often at surprisingly reasonable prices.

Beyond Chatuchak, the city unfolds a rich tapestry of galleries, ateliers, and boutiques. For contemporary art, I’d definitely recommend seeing what’s on at the **Four Seasons Hotel’s MOCA Art Space** and at River City, where I have had the pleasure of exhibiting some of my own works. Both venues are vibrant and ever-changing, offering glimpses of the incredible creativity that thrives in Bangkok.

And then there are the smaller, tucked-away ateliers and workshops — the silversmiths, textile makers, and young designers experimenting with color, form, and material. These are the people who breathe life into the city’s creative soul, blending tradition and modernity in ways that are endlessly inspiring. For me, wandering through these spaces is like reading an unfolding story of Bangkok itself — rich, layered, and utterly unforgettable.

“Travelers often think Thailand is all chaos or vice, but what they’ll discover – if they open their eyes and hearts – is a country brimming with beauty, humour, and elegance, waiting to be experienced on its own rich terms.”

What are your favorite restaurants and dining experiences?

*Bangkok is a city that feeds the imagination as much as the appetite. If I had to pick one restaurant that always takes my breath away, it has to be **Gaggan**; yes, **Gaggan, Gaggan, Gaggan**.* It’s a unique experience, a journey through flavor and whimsy, where every dish tells a story. Dining there is a reminder of how food can be both playful and profoundly moving, and it’s a place that never fails to inspire me as a designer.

In fact, my admiration for Gaggan has taken me on a collaborative adventure — designing a ryokan and restaurant with him near Kyoto, Nara, and Osaka. The project is about translating that same sense of wonder and narrative into architecture and interiors, where each corner, light, and texture enhances the culinary journey. It’s a dream to fuse storytelling, space, and cuisine in a way that feels alive and unforgettable.

Beyond Gaggan, Bangkok offers a cornucopia of dining experiences — from hidden street stalls with fiery, fragrant bowls of noodles to elegant rooftop tables overlooking the Chao Phraya River, where the city lights glimmer like a living mosaic. For me, the best dining moments in Bangkok combine exceptional food with personality, creativity, and a sense of discovery

— whether it’s a tiny, tucked away kitchen run by a masterful chef or a bold, modernist tasting menu that challenges every expectation. One of my all-time favorite dining experiences is far more intimate: simple, soulful Thai, lovingly prepared at home by our brilliant Thai cook, shared with K. Jirachai and close friends. Often, we gather in one of our 17 pocket gardens at Baan Botanica, each a tiny, secret world, where laughter drifts among orchids and bougainvillea. There’s a magic to that — food, friendship, and garden corners merging into an experience that’s entirely our own.

Where else to eat? **Sukhumvit 55** (also known as **Thong Lor**) is a holy grail for food lovers in Bangkok. **Baan Ice** offers authentic Southern Thai food on Soi 5, whilst **Boon Tong Kiat Singapore Chicken Rice** on Soi 16 is frankly divine, especially for under two dollars. One street over on **Ekamai** (Sukhumvit 63), make your way to Soi 17 and ask for **Arunwan**. This hidden noodle house serves the best pork noodle soup — and don’t get me started on the crispy wontons... simply to die for!

Over in Chinatown, **Yaowarat Road** is a classic for street food, be it fresh durian or grilled squid and cockles. Sadly one still sees a fair share of shark fin restaurants here — please join me in boycotting them.

Or **Tor Kor Market** across the road from the unmissable Chatuchak market (MRT Kamphaeng Phet) is one of the best wet markets around. I usually search for satay and massaman curry, as well as fresh mangosteen and rambutans. For a classy night on the town, **EAT ME** in Silom has been serving delicious international cuisine for the past 20 years - don’t leave without trying the date pudding.

White Lotus Season 3 has inarguably rekindled a wave of wanderlust around Thailand. But what’s a common misconception travelers have about Thailand, and what would you say to it?

The White Lotus effect; the photography of the resorts and gardens certainly captured the imagination, but let’s be clear: the story Mike White spun of Thai mafia, violence, and sex-crazed expats is not Thailand. It’s sensational, it’s dramatic, and it makes for compelling television — but it’s far from the Thailand I know and love. The real Thailand is vibrant, warm, and endlessly generous. It’s in the quiet corners of a lotus-filled canal, in the smoky aroma of a street-side curry, in the smiles of people who take pride in their craft and culture.





Your interiors capture mythical worlds beyond our wildest imagination, which your travels help fuel. Can you share some of the destinations that have left a lasting impact on you and your work?

There's nothing quite like travel for stirring the imagination. Africa has always held a special place in my heart. There, the mastery of conserving wild spaces is inspiring; the rhythms of nature, the relationship between humans, land and wildlife. It all informs what we do at Shinta Mani Wild in Cambodia. It's about respecting the environment while creating a place of wonder.

Mexico, on the other hand, is a treasure trove of color, culture, and sophistication. I'm captivated by its long history, its living traditions, the way the past dances seamlessly with the present. Next stop is **Pátzcuaro**, for the Day of the Dead — a festival of remembrance, color, and joyous reflection. I am already dreaming of translating that experience into an art show, opening Friday, March 13th next year in Bangkok, bringing a little of that Mexican magic and mythology to the city.

Travel for me is more than movement; it's about stories, patterns, rituals, landscapes — all of which seep into the design, interiors, and spirit of every project I touch.

Where do you go to recharge your creative well?

I often turn to Japan. There is something extraordinary about the way the Japanese live with design — it's woven into the fabric of daily life, from the meticulous arrangement of a tea ceremony to the graceful lines of a Shinto shrine, from serene Zen gardens to the bustling, neon-lit streets of Tokyo. The Japanese have a way of seeing the world that is both disciplined and playful, minimal yet poetic.

Even the tiniest alley, the curve of a lantern, the ripple of a koi pond, sparks ideas for gardens, interiors, and hidden corners at my resorts. Wandering through its streets, forests, and temples, or simply sipping sake while watching fall leaves fall, is like pressing the refresh button on my imagination. Every visit leaves me brimming with ideas — some whimsical, some profound — all inevitably finding their way into the gardens, interiors, and narratives I create, quietly shaping spaces with a sense of wonder and thoughtfulness.

What remains on your travel bucket list?

There's always more to see, more to discover. Next year, we're embarking on a grand adventure: a 3,500-kilometer journey on the Røros train from Cape Town all the way to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. About a month of landscapes, cultures, and stories rolling past our windows, crossing three countries we've yet to explore. Later in the fall, we'll make our way through **Uruguay** and **Paraguay** en route to the **Falkland Islands** and **South Georgia Island** — a journey that will bring our tally close to 110 countries visited.

And yet, there's always **Madagascar** calling — the forests, the baobabs, the wildlife that seems to exist in its own whimsical world. For me, travel is not just about crossing borders, it's about collecting ideas, moods, and moments that can later bloom into gardens, interiors, and experiences that capture the magic of the places I've been. Each trip fuels the imagination, each landscape whispers stories waiting to be told.

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Hung Huang

Writer, Editor & Cultural Commentator

Beijing

Hung Huang is one of Beijing's most perceptive cultural observers: a writer, publisher and entrepreneur whose influence reaches across media, fashion and the city's creative circles. The former CEO and publisher of iLOOK, one of China's most influential style magazines of the 2000s, she became a defining voice in shaping how a new generation understood fashion, culture, and modern Chinese identity.

Named one of TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People in 2011, she has long championed independent Chinese designers, using her platforms to introduce emerging talent and push conversations around creativity and self-expression. Through her writing, social commentary and online presence, she continues to shape how contemporary China reflects on itself and tells its stories.

Few people understand Beijing's evolution as deeply as Hung does. She has watched the city grow from a maze of courtyard homes and hutongs into a capital of contemporary art, experimental architecture and restless energy. And through all of that, she has remained rooted in the everyday Beijing that doesn't make the headlines.

We invited Hung to share the places, flavors and corners of Beijing that reveal its real character.

You've lived through every chapter of modern Beijing. For someone visiting the city for the first time, what's the best way to get a real feel for its rhythm and everyday life?

In Beijing, the best way to understand the city's rhythm is to spend time in the hutongs.

The word refers to the narrow alleyways that make up the oldest parts of the city, and although many have disappeared, this is still where Beijing's real character lives. I always tell visitors to choose a meal in one of the restaurants hidden inside these alleys. *TRB*, once a temple, is worth it for both the food and the setting. *Yitong* offers straightforward, not-too-spicy Hunan cuisine, and my personal favorite is *Ya*, a small vegetarian restaurant in a hutong that was partly demolished to make room for the Zaha Hadid-designed Galaxy SOHO. These neighborhood spots tell you more about Beijing than any landmark.

As someone who knows Beijing's creative circles inside out, where should visitors go to experience the city's most interesting art, design or fashion scenes right now?

Beijing has a lot of interesting architecture, spanning from the traditional courtyard, to early modern structures from the early 1900s.

For contemporary art, start at 798 Art District. It used to be a Soviet-style electronics factory, and the industrial architecture gives the galleries a unique atmosphere. *UCCA*, founded by Belgian collector Guy Ullens, is the anchor of the district and worth a proper visit. For fashion and design, *Sanlitun* is where you'll see the city's trendsetters. *Taikoo Li* is perfect for people-watching and understanding what's shaping style in Beijing. At the same time, many of the most interesting independent designers still work out of hutongs, so wandering those areas remains essential.

You often speak fondly of Beijing's hutongs. For travelers curious about that side of the city, which neighborhoods still capture their original charm, and are worth exploring on foot?

Houhai is the area that best preserves the atmosphere people imagine when they think of old Beijing.

In the evenings, walking around the lake gives you a sense of how the city slows down at night. I always recommend having dinner in one of the nearby neighborhood restaurants and then taking a stroll.

“the best way to understand the city's rhythm is to spend time in the hutongs.”

Beijing's food scene is incredibly diverse.

“Beijing’s food scene is incredibly broad.”

Beijing’s food culture is endlessly diverse, from family-run noodle shops to elegant dining rooms. Which local spots best express the city’s character for you?

Beijing’s food scene is incredibly broad, but one of the most enjoyable areas right now is along Liangmahe.

The city invested heavily in cleaning up the canal, and restaurants and cafés now line both sides. In summer, locals and tourists swim or canoe there, which adds to the atmosphere. The variety of restaurants on this strip, from casual to refined, is a good snapshot of the city’s culinary diversity.

You’ve described individuality and confidence as the essence of true style. Are there cafés, galleries or boutiques that reflect that same independent spirit; places you’d tell a visitor not to miss?

Norlha Boutique in Sanlitun Taikoo Li North is a must.

It’s a Tibetan brand founded by the Yeshe family, known for beautiful yak cashmere pieces handcrafted on the Tibetan Plateau. For dining, again I would recommend Ya, next to Galaxy SOHO. The chef focuses on Yunnan cuisine, prepared as six-to-eight course menus with drink pairings. It’s thoughtful, independent, very Beijing.

Can you share a book, movie or TV series that has given you wanderlust, and how?

Fan Hua, a TV series by Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai, made me want to go to Shanghai and eat classic Shanghainese dishes. The atmosphere of the show captures the city in a seductive way.

What are your next top three travel destinations on your list?

I want to go to Iceland, Kenya and Peru, in that order.



“Berlin has always been a city that thrives on individuality and experimentation”



Stijn Oyen

Managing Director, Design Hotels

As Managing Director of **Design Hotels**, Stijn spearheads the group's vision for the future and ensures it remains at the forefront of travel and culture. With more than 20 years' experience, Stijn has built a respected career in hospitality, working with some of the world's most well-known brands, including Relais & Châteaux, St. Regis Hotels and Resorts, and W Hotels.

Stijn started his hospitality career in the kitchens as a chef for two Michelin-starred restaurant in Belgium. Since then, Stijn has held numerous roles in hotel operations across the globe — from Warsaw to Stockholm, London to Barcelona — for some of the most iconic properties in the Marriott International portfolio.

In his spare time, Stijn continues to cook up a storm in the kitchen, for his wife and two daughters.

Berlin



“Berlin is full of hidden corners, artistic hubs and local experiences”

For first-time visitors to Berlin, what are your top 10–12 “essential” places and experiences that best capture the city’s hidden soul and creative energy?

Berlin is full of hidden corners, artistic hubs and local experiences that reveal its unique spirit. Some of my favorites include:

Going for a run in Treptower Park

König Gallery, a dramatic platform for emerging artists

Drinks on the canal at sunset

Sofi Bakery in Mitte

Dinner at Grill Restaurant, one of my favorites

Acid Cafe in Mitte, famed for its sourdough

Cafe Tiergarten in Hansaviertel

Neue Nationalgalerie a museum dedicated to 20th century art

Koernerpark, a beautiful green space in the city with hidden soul

Yorck Kino, a cinema which shows English-speaking movies and captures the Berlin of the '20s

Aleppo Supper Club, known for its incredible Arab mezze

Refugee Worldwide for music, talks, etc. they have two spaces in Berlin Neukölln

Name up to 5 ‘must-have’ dishes in Berlin and where to try them.

Berlin has a lot to offer when it comes to food, but I think my favorites would be:

Schnitzel at **Borchardt**

Döner Kebab at **Hasir**

Currywurst at **Curry61**

Chicken Hendl at **Trio**



“Berlin has so many under-the-radar neighborhoods.”

What is the secret to Berlin’s appeal as a hub for creatives?

Berlin has always been a city that thrives on individuality and experimentation. Its liberal mentality means people feel free to express who they are.

What’s a hidden neighborhood that you feel deserves more attention and why?

Berlin has so many under the radar neighborhoods and often these have some of the best vibes. I like Neukölln, for its street art, independent boutiques, and vibrant local culture. Schöneberg is another area that’s historically rich with a mix of alternative culture, charming cafés, and a progressive, inclusive community.

What are the top 5 destinations or cities today shaping or incubating the future of design and architecture and why?

This is a tough one to answer but when it comes to setting the pace, I’d say Milan is definitely on the list. Design Hotels attends Milan Design Week every year and it’s always buzzing with future thinking designers.

Arles is another city at the forefront, home to the incredible Luma Arles, a case study from our recent Further Forecast Trend Report.

Bangkok is definitely on the rise **Kunsthalle**, the arts centre and **Khao Yai Art Forest** that opened earlier this year are reshaping Thailand’s cultural landscape.

Then I’d say other standout cities include Mexico City and Shanghai, both awash with amazing architects, artists and designers that are pushing the boundaries.

Your work takes you everywhere, but what remains on your travel bucket list?

Australia and New Zealand.

A restaurant you dream of going back to, or have yet to try?

I dream of going back to **Desde 1911** in Madrid, my best restaurant experience ever. And I also want to finally go to **893 Ryotei** in Berlin as I haven’t made it there yet.





Ardelia Lovelace

Artist, Actress, Model & DJ

Taste
makers



FINN
PARTNERS

Ardelia Lovelace is a multidisciplinary creative force — artist, actress, model, and DJ — whose work pulses with the rhythm of her native Brooklyn. Raised in the heart of Bed-Stuy, she draws inspiration from the borough's rich cultural tapestry, where Caribbean heritage, community resilience, and artistic expression converge. She first gained recognition for her breakout role in the independent film and series, *Skate Kitchen*, which spotlighted her raw talent and authentic voice.

In this Q&A, Ardelia takes us on a personal tour of Brooklyn, sharing her favorite local haunts, hidden culinary gems, and the places that continue to fuel her creativity. From the Brooklyn Museum to a beloved Jamaican bakery on Utica Avenue, her Brooklyn is vibrant, soulful, and deeply rooted in community.

“Brooklyn is vibrant and soulful.”

Brooklyn

“Community is the foundation of Brooklyn.”

In your eyes, what is it about Brooklyn that makes it so unique?

Brooklyn is unique because of its history, the community, and the food.

I am from Bed-Stuy, which at one point held the largest population of African Americans in all of Brooklyn. Areas like Crown Heights, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Flatbush were run down, but were a landing pad for Caribbean and other POC families working to build a life. Community is the foundation of Brooklyn; Block parties, small bodegas, multifamily brownstones, cookouts, and the West Indian Parade. Brooklyn has always been a large borough that holds so many stories and I love that about it.

What would be your suggested itinerary if someone were only spending 24 hours in Brooklyn?

Start the day at the Brooklyn Museum and/or at the Brooklyn Library.

After, walk on Eastern Parkway to Franklin Avenue. There are amazing food options from Ethiopian to Mexican. Take **RAS Plant Based**, an Ethiopian restaurant with greenery incorporated into its architecture or **Chavela's**, a delicious Mexican restaurant with excellent Mole. Then, head over to **BAM** (Brooklyn Academy of Music), and catch a movie or a show. Finally, finish the evening with some ice cream from **Brooklyn Ice Cream Factory** on the water in DUMBO.

“I am inspired by the people, and not just from Brooklyn. Being from New York in general is inspiring.”

Some of my other favorite gems include:

Fish Cheeks (Bond Street)

A vibrant Thai spot serving bold, authentic flavors with a modern twist. Known for its family-style plates and standout seafood dishes, it's perfect for sharing and savoring in a chic downtown setting.

Nolita Pizza

Classic New York slices done right — crispy crust, gooey cheese, and that unmistakable street-side charm. A go-to for a quick bite that feels like a true city staple.

13 Burger

A burger lover's dream with inventive toppings and perfectly grilled patties. Casual yet elevated, this spot turns comfort food into a culinary experience.

As a DJ, what are some hidden gems for music?

Hi-Fi Bars

Intimate spaces where vinyl reigns supreme. These bars blend craft cocktails with curated playlists, creating a nostalgic yet fresh vibe for true music aficionados.

The Ned (Live Music)

A sophisticated venue offering nightly performances in a luxe setting. Think jazz, soul, and contemporary acts paired with elegant interiors — ideal for an upscale night out.

What's a meal you had in Brooklyn that you still dream of today?

I go to Irie **Caribbean Kitchen & Bakery** on Utica Avenue, my secret spot for Jamaican food. It's a hole-in-the-wall but the food is made fresh every day, super flavorful, filling and affordable.

As an artist, what inspires you about Brooklyn?

I am inspired by the people.

Not just Brooklyn but being from New York in general is inspiring. I loved growing up with people of all backgrounds, learning their food, their culture. The mix and clash of different people remind you how big the world is and that inspiration can come from anywhere.

What are your next top three travel destinations on your list?

I would say Bora Bora, Mexico City and Detroit, MI.

IG: [@dedelovelace](#)



Tim Flores & Genie Kwon

Chefs & Co-owners, Kasama Chicago



Tim Flores and Genie Kwon are the husband-and-wife chefs and co-owners of two-Michelin-starred restaurant, Kasama, in Chicago's Ukrainian Village. Kasama, meaning "together" in Tagalog, is a reflection of Genie and Tim's culinary background. Their eatery, which functions as a bakery and restaurant, serves modern Filipino food inspired by the food Tim grew up eating.

Since opening in 2020, Kasama has racked up accolades. In addition to Kasama being the first Filipino restaurant in the world to get a Michelin star, it was shortlisted as one of Esquire Magazine's Best Restaurants in America, and recently, ranked #31 on the North America's 50 Best Restaurants 2025 list. Tim and Genie have been named "The 50 most powerful people in American Fine Dining" by Robb Report.

But it's their stint on FX's *The Bear* that stands out for many, with its viral breakfast sandwich generating lines around the block.

“Drive up Lake Shore Drive for a great view of the skyline and the water.”

Chicago



“We’d definitely suggest going on a Chicago architecture tour.”

If you have close friends visiting Chicago for the first time, what’s your insider’s guide to the city -- your “must do, see, and experience”?

We’d definitely suggest going on a Chicago architecture tour. It is the one touristy thing we do with visitors every time. There’s a guided boat tour that showcases the city’s iconic buildings and history. Another ‘must’ is a drive up **Lake Shore Drive** for a great view of the skyline and the water. **Lake Front Trail** that runs along Lake Michigan also has incredible views of both the water and the skyline. Chicago is home to so many incredible museums whether you are into art, history, science, animals, culture, you will find it here. See live music at **The Green Mill** and in the summer, a concert in **Millennium Park**.





“Freddie’s Pizzeria for pizza, pasta, gelato and Italian ice located in Cicero and a true Chicago experience.”



Take us on a food crawl of the city. What are Chicago’s signature dishes and where should we try them?

Gene and Judes or **The Wiener’s Circle** for Chicago style hot dogs.

Mr. Beef for the Italian beef sandwich featured in The Bear. We usually order a combo, hot, dipped which is a sandwich with sausage, shaved Italian beef with hot giardiniera dipped in the beef jus.

Las Gorditas Don Angel for the burrito deshebrada. It has shredded beef, potatoes, salsa roja. It is one of those things that is the best thing we’ve ever eaten.

Casa Del Pueblo for cafeteria style Mexican food. They have amazing stews, soups, tacos, and guisados.

Triple Crown for homemade dim sum from one of Chicago oldest family run restaurants in Chinatown.

312 Fish Market for the highest quality sushi that is in a very comfortable and unpretentious setting in 88 Marketplace.

Monteverde for incredible Italian food from Top Chef Alums Sarah Grueneberg and Bailey Sullivan.

Virtue for delicious Southern food from chefs Erick Williams and Top Chef Alum Damarr Brown.

JJ Thai Street Food for northern Thai food in a neighborhood restaurant with the best service.

Trivoli Tavern for an all-around great menu selection with something for everyone from the powerhouse Hogsalt restaurant group. Be sure to order the date cake for dessert.

Freddie’s Pizzeria for pizza, pasta, gelato and Italian ice located in Cicero and a true Chicago experience.

What’s a hidden neighborhood that you feel deserves more attention?

Pilsen is not a secret but Chicago has a large Mexican American population and you will find some of the best Mexican food in the country here.

Your top three travel destinations for 2026?

We visited **Hong Kong** for the first time last year and want to go back. It’s such a vibrant food destination. While in Asia, we’d also like to visit **Singapore** and **Kuala Lumpur**.

A restaurant you dream of going back to, or trying in 2026?
Neighborhood by chef David Lai in Hong Kong.

A black and white portrait of Joyce Wang, founder of Design Wang Studio. She is standing in front of a stone wall, leaning against a vertical architectural element. She has her arms crossed and is looking slightly to the right of the camera.

Joyce Wang

Founder, Design Wang Studio

A vibrant nighttime photograph of the Hong Kong skyline, showing numerous illuminated skyscrapers and buildings reflected in the water. The sky is a mix of deep blue and orange from the setting or rising sun.

“home is Hong Kong, known for its architectural landmarks, dramatic cityscape and a vibrant art and culinary destination.”

Joyce Wang is the founder of Joyce Wang Studio, whose design portfolio includes the **Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park**, **The Berkeley**, **The Magistracy**, **Equinox Hotel NYC**, along with renowned eateries such as **Mott 32**, **Oscuro Cigar Lounge** and **Kyubi at the Arts Club** in London. Taking cues from both cinema and science, Wang infuses an artisanal elegance with enigmatic rigour and wilfully circumvents style signatures, conjuring an emotive and sensorial resonance with each interior environment. While her work is global, home is Hong Kong, known for its architectural landmarks, dramatic cityscape and a vibrant art and culinary destination.



Your design work richly draws from the worlds of art, history, culture, and cinema, which Hong Kong is known for. To first-time visitors as well as jaded travelers who've been to Hong Kong many times, what is your “quintessential” list of places and experiences that best capture the city’s hidden soul and creative energy?

Kiang Malingue Gallery on Sik On Street. I love their curation and interiors great canvas for art.

Star Ferry, ding ding tram, mini bus, Peak tram -- take all of these! For me our modes of transport are quintessentially Hong Kong.

Coastal Defence Museum, hidden gem at the end of tram line, interactive exhibits for Hong Kong history.

Liffee Coffee which is across the street from our studio, has the best coffee however you take it, brewed by Hong Kong barista champ Micheal Mak.

Tai Hang neighborhood -- Cha Chaan Teng “Shun Hing” for classic pineapple bun with chunk of butter (they don’t sell them plain!) and a visit to the ShopHouse for eye candy. Then stop by our favorite bakery Plumcot for ice cream.

Blue House neighborhood in Wanchai, is also home to our studio. Take a tour of the Blue House, go to ABC Bakery for Hong Kong pastries, then visit Yuk Hui Temple and Wanchai Wet Market.

Ap Lei Chau neighborhood, on the southside of Hong Kong island, is a starting point of some great hiking/ coastering along Ap Lei Pai, its main street feels authentic, with shops selling local fresh seafood catch, sauces and marinades, and childhood sweets.

Mott 32, in Central, is our project but also happens to be best place to take out-of-towners for authentic Chinese food.

The Mills or shopping local crafts and visit the CHAT textiles exhibition

Tai Kwun check out all the galleries and exhibitions! Also eat at our designed venues- Magistracy Dining Room/ Prince & Peacock



You're quite a foodie (and baking whizz as well). Hong Kong, without question, is a top culinary destination widely known for its traditional dishes and traditions like dim sum. Name your 'must have' iconic dishes and where you go to have it?

- Pork chop rice/ Char siu faan at **Flower Drum**
- Dim Sum at **City Hall**
- Egg Sandwich at **Australian Dairy Company**
- Childhood sweets at 友和士多
- Pineapple buns at **Cheung Hing Happy Valley**

If you were to concoct Hong Kong's "scent of place", what would its fragrance notes be?

Metallic notes, fresh paint, humid soil, jasmine

Your work takes you everywhere but what remains on your travel bucket list? And why?

Dublin. I have a team trip planned to visit incredible makers of metal, glass, timber furniture, and weavers. I will go where there is combo of good coffee and good cycling bucket list – Ethiopia, Kyoto, Girona

We also have projects opening in Manila, Seoul, Bali, LA, Melbourne, Dubai and Bangkok so these will be on my travel list.

Is there a piece of music, song, or artist you have on loop that you can always count on to put you in a creative mood?

It's been the Lumineers on repeat recently as a visit to Copenhagen meant we overlapped with their tour dates and I got to see them live.



Osman Sezener

Chef and owner, OD Urla



Osman Sezener is a renowned Turkish chef and owner of OD Urla, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Urla, İzmir. Often referred to as the “Tuscany of Turkey,” Urla is a gastronomic gem, boasting an abundance of local ingredients, exceptional olive oil, and a thriving community of winemakers.

Osman opened OD Urla in 2018, embracing the “farm to table” philosophy, where he creates seasonal recipes using the best quality produce from local producers and his own garden. The restaurant, set amidst olive groves, has gained international recognition for its innovative approach to Turkish cuisine, earning a Michelin star and a Green Star.

“Often referred to as the Tuscany of Turkey.”

“Izmir offers a very different energy. It’s calmer, more genuine and deeply connected to nature.”

Istanbul and Cappadocia tend to get the lion’s share of visitors to Turkey. Why should travelers visit Izmir?

Izmir offers a very different energy. It’s calmer, more genuine and deeply connected to nature.

Here you find the real Aegean spirit — the sea, the olive trees, the vineyards and a lifestyle that flows with the seasons. It’s a region shaped by ancient civilizations and still rooted in its land. For anyone seeking authenticity, local flavors and the warmth of coastal life, Izmir is the place to be.

For people visiting for the first time, what is your essential list of things and places to do, see and experience?

Start with the Urla Wine Route, visit the vineyards and taste local wines.

Spend a morning exploring **Kemeraltı Bazaar** for traditional flavors. Visit **Ephesus** and the **House of Virgin Mary** for a touch of ancient history. Don’t miss the local street food like söğüş, kokoreç, midye, boyoz, and end the day with rakı and fresh seafood by the sea. Izmir is all about balance: culture, food and nature in harmony.

For a food crawl of Izmir, what are your top dining experiences, signature dishes and places where foodies should go to try them?

*Start local — try **Özüm Lokantası** in **Çamdibi** for homestyle dishes, **Mahmut Usta** in **Kemeraltı** for traditional soups, and **Kokoreççi Baki** or **Kokoreççi Asım** for real **Izmir-style kokoreç**. In Urla, visit **Atilla Heilbronn’s Narimor** for a nice dining experience, and of course **OD Urla** for a farm-to-table experience that connects you directly with the region.*





If one were to make a side trip to Urla for its natural beauty, vineyards and olive groves, give us your list of places to visit and stay in?

Visit Köstem Olive Oil Museum to understand the heritage of olive oil.

Stop by **Key Urla** for a boutique stay and **Uzbaş Botanic Garden** for a touch of nature. For local cuisine, **Beğendik Abi** is always a must for authentic flavors.

Your top three travel destinations for 2026?

Kyoto for its harmony of tradition and the future.

Mexico for its vibrant flavors and cultural energy.

Napa Valley for its craftsmanship and deep connection to terroir.

A restaurant you dream of going back to, or trying in 2026?

Christian Bau in Germany.

It's a place that has stayed with me since my first visit six or seven years ago. The emotion and balance of his food left a lasting impression. It's the kind of experience that reminds you why you fell in love with cooking in the first place.



Tina Koyama

CEO and Founder POJ Studio



“Kyoto has so much to offer, and so many interesting entrepreneurs building their own small, thoughtful businesses.”

Tina is the CEO and founder of Kyoto-based **POJ Studio**, a homeware brand championing ancient Japanese craftsmanship. Tina is a designer by trade with roots in Japan. She serves as a bridge between worlds: Japan and the West, digital and analog, traditional and modern living. Leading the research and development of culturally embedded products, she drives new business initiatives that bring traditional Japanese goods and experiences to those who appreciate them.

After a fast-paced decade in digital product design across Tokyo and Silicon Valley, she longed for lasting quality, grounded experiences, and a sense of contribution to community. Her mother — a Japanese craftswoman-at-heart — took her to meet artisans across Japan, where she learned many struggled to survive. Those encounters inspired POJ Studio.

Kyoto

“hike along the Kyoto Trail, a refreshing way to experience the landscape beyond the temple.”



To first-time visitors as well as those who've been to Kyoto many times, what are the places and experiences one must do to connect with the city's true soul and creative energy?

The list could be infinitely long — Kyoto has so much to offer, and so many interesting entrepreneurs building their own small, thoughtful businesses. It's one of the many reasons I continue to love this city.

Katsura Rikyu

For anyone who appreciates design at its purest, this is an unmissable destination — touristy, yes, but absolutely worth it. Celebrated by architects like Walter Gropius and Bruno Taut as a model of modern design centuries ahead of its time, it embodies simplicity, perfect proportions, harmony with nature, and innovative modular design.

Tofukuji

One of Kyoto's great Zen temples, and a personal favorite for its garden design by Shigemori Mirei. His modern reinterpretation of Zen minimalism — blending moss, stone, and raked gravel in perfect harmony — turns the temple grounds into a living composition of geometry and nature.

Hōnen-in

Everything about Hōnen-in, from the moss-lined approach to the quiet temple grounds, embodies the subtlety of wabi-sabi. Its weathered gate, simple structures, and naturally aged textures create a sense of beauty that feels effortless, humble, and deeply peaceful.

Kiyomizu-dera

Despite the crowds, Kiyomizu-dera is a must-see. Its vast wooden stage, built without a single nail, is an incredible display of craftsmanship — and it's surrounded by lush nature that shifts beautifully with the seasons. From there, you can easily continue into the hills for a short hike along the Kyoto Trail, a refreshing way to experience the landscape beyond the temple.

Kankakari

If you appreciate impeccable taste in art and space, I can't recommend Kankakari highly enough. It's a quietly powerful gallery in Kyoto, run by the visionary Ryo Suzuki, housed in a beautifully renovated machiya.

Kurasu

One of Kyoto's leading modern coffee roasters, known for its clean aesthetic and focus on Japanese coffee craftsmanship. It's a favorite among locals and visitors alike for its precise brews and curated selection of coffee gear made in Japan.

Pear Press

A beautifully designed café in Kyoto's Kitayama area, serving coffee from the renowned local roaster Style Coffee, run by the same owner. It's a quiet, refined spot with simply delicious snacks and a thoughtful atmosphere — a perfect example of Kyoto's understated approach to quality and design.

Ikehan

Sitting along the Kamo River, offering a refined tea experience that blends architecture, hospitality, and nature. The main tearoom is reservation-only, while the adjoining café welcomes walk-ins with the same impeccable aesthetics and river views. Nearby, their beautifully designed guest houses reflect the same quiet Kyoto elegance.

Lisei

A small, family-run Korean lunch spot in Kyoto's Demachi area. It reminds us that it's impossible to draw borders around culture — Japan and Korea have long shared a deep creative lineage. The warm, charming owner now runs a nearby gallery called Sumomo, while her daughter continues to serve simple, elegant meals in the café with the same quiet grace.

Daiji-in Meditation

Daiji-in, a sub-temple of Daitoku-ji, offers a relaxed and welcoming approach to Zen. The resident monk leads meditation in an easy, refreshing way, followed by tea and conversation — a calm, human experience that feels both grounding and open.

Tea Ceremony by Dairiku Amae

Dairiku Amae, Kyoto-based tea master and founder of Totousha, makes the tea ceremony beautifully approachable through his elegant storytelling in English — blending deep tradition with contemporary warmth and poetic simplicity. Bookable through Kammui.



Kyo Amahare

A refined space in Kyoto that pairs a beautifully curated gallery of contemporary crafts and ceramics with a reservation-only tea room. The gallery highlights exceptional Japanese craftsmanship, while the tea room offers a serene, modern interpretation of the traditional tea experience.

Inoda Coffee

Founded in 1940, Inoda Coffee is a Kyoto institution. Known for its old-fashioned charm, white-uniformed staff, and carefully brewed coffee, it offers a glimpse into a slower, classic side of the city. Many locals still come for the nostalgic breakfast set and the familiar comfort of tradition.

Umeyu, one of Kyoto's oldest public bathhouses, is a charming mix of old and new. The retro tile murals and vintage atmosphere remain intact, but the space has been lovingly revitalized by a younger generation, attracting locals, artists, and travelers alike. It's a perfect place to unwind, soak, and feel a slice of everyday Kyoto life.

While Kyoto is one of the most visited cities in Japan, there must be hidden neighborhoods (areas, streets, etc.) that you feel deserve attention?

It's hard to keep anything truly hidden in Kyoto these days. My best advice is to rent a bike — or, better yet, walk — and let yourself discover things slowly along the way. The real gems in this city are often found between destinations, not at them.

Ohara

A picturesque village in the northern hills of Kyoto, known for supplying much of the fresh produce used in the city's top restaurants. It's also a lovely place to spend a day — visiting Sanzen-in and Hōsen-in, where a 700-year-old pine frames one of Kyoto's most peaceful views.

Kitayama

Okazaki

Umekoji, Tambaguchi

Kuramaguchi to Daitokuji

If you were to create a scent that captured the essence of Kyoto, what would its fragrance notes be?

It's impossible to capture Kyoto in a single fragrance especially in a country that has so many seasons, even microseasons. But one scent that makes me fall in love with this city again and again every year — especially now, as fall arrives after an unbearably hot summer — is osmanthus.

Its gentle, honeyed sweetness fills the air for just a short time each year, and there's a simple happiness

in roaming the streets, catching its scent, and looking for the tiny orange flowers. It never fails to put a smile on my face.

Can you share 3-5 idyllic weekend getaways that's a short 60-90 minute train ride from Kyoto?

It's also worth venturing beyond Kyoto — by car or train — to explore the surrounding countryside and neighboring towns. The pace is slower, the scenery beautiful, and it's where you'll find a quieter, more authentic side of life in this region.

Nara

A short trip from Kyoto, Nara is always worth a visit — not just for its historic temples and calm city atmosphere, but also for the beautiful nature surrounding it. Outside the city, the Murou Art Forest, designed by Dani Karavan, offers a peaceful walk through art and landscape, while the Soni Plateau is perfect for a short hike among rolling fields of silver grass and mountain views.

Miyama, in the mountains north of Kyoto, feels like stepping back in time with its thatched-roof farmhouses, clear rivers, and lush forests. It's also home to the Little Indigo Museum, dedicated to traditional dyeing. A perfect spot for a peaceful day trip or overnight stay.

Kyoto by the Sea, around Amanohashidate and the Miyazu area, offers a completely different rhythm from the city. Known for its dramatic coastal scenery, fresh seafood, and slower pace, it's an easy escape by train or car from Kyoto. Walking or cycling across Amanohashidate's pine-covered sandbar — one of Japan's three most scenic views — gives a refreshing sense of space and calm that contrasts beautifully with the city's temples and crowds.

Kifune Shrine, tucked in the forested mountains north of Kyoto, is a beautiful escape from the city. The approach follows a peaceful stream, and the red lantern-lined steps leading to the shrine feel almost otherworldly. From there, you can hike up to Kurama, a rewarding trail through cedar forests and mountain temples that ends in a small hot spring town — one of the best half-day adventures near Kyoto.

The Miho Museum, located in the Shigaraki mountains about an hour from Kyoto, is as much a work of art as the collection it houses. Designed by architect I. M. Pei, it's seamlessly integrated into the surrounding landscape — reached through a tunnel and suspension bridge that make the approach feel almost cinematic. Inside, the light-filled spaces showcase a mix of ancient artifacts and modern design, offering a quiet, contemplative experience where architecture, nature, and art come together beautifully.

Shigaraki, one of Japan's oldest pottery towns, is about an hour from Kyoto and has been producing ceramics for over a thousand years. Known for its earthy textures and warm, natural glazes, Shigaraki ware is deeply tied to Japan's tea culture and everyday craft traditions. The town is full of working kilns, small galleries, and studios you can visit — a place where you can still feel the rhythm of handmade production and the quiet persistence of true craftsmanship.

La Collina, in Shiga's Ōmihachiman area, feels almost Ghibli-esque — a whimsical, grass-covered world designed by architect Terunobu Fujimori for the confectionery brand Taneya. The organic architecture blends seamlessly with nature, creating a space that feels both magical and grounded. It's worth the short

trip from Kyoto for its imaginative design and beautifully crafted sweets.

Takashima, on the western shore of Lake Biwa, is a peaceful area surrounded by water and mountains — a place where nature feels close and generous. The standout here is Korian, an extraordinary restaurant that draws entirely from what the lake and its surroundings provide. Every dish reflects the season and the landscape, served in a beautifully understated space that feels perfectly in tune with its setting.

Kyoto is also a culinary destination. Can you share with us some of your favorite restaurants and dining places and the signature dishes you recommend?

Katsukura is a Kyoto-born chain that, in my opinion, serves the best tonkatsu in Japan. The pork is perfectly crisp on the outside and tender inside, served with freshly ground sesame and house-made sauce. Just skip the main branch — it's always too crowded — and try one of the smaller locations instead for a much more relaxed experience.

Tenkaippin is another Kyoto-born chain, famous for its ultra-rich tonkotsu-style ramen. The regular version can be a bit too heavy, but the “yatai-style” ramen is my favorite — lighter, more balanced, and still full of that comforting Kyoto ramen flavor.

The **food court on the basement floor of Takashimaya in Kyoto** is a must-visit for anyone who loves Japanese food culture. It's filled with beautifully presented bentos, sweets, and seasonal delicacies — all made with incredible care. I recommend simply buying whatever catches your eye and enjoying it by the river or back in your hotel room, taking a break from a long, intense day. Don't miss

the chance to pick up some of the seasonal premium fruit too — it's expensive, but absolutely worth it.

Yaoichi is a long-established grocer in Kyoto known for its exceptional produce and beautifully arranged displays. It's the perfect place to pick up fresh, seasonal ingredients if you're staying in a guest house and feel like cooking, but don't have time to go all the way to Ohara. Even the simplest vegetables here feel special — a reflection of Kyoto's deep respect for quality and seasonality.

Ototojet

A private, reservation-only spot led by a former designer turned fishmonger and chef. His refined, fish-centered course menu shows exceptional creativity and precision — one of the most unique dining experiences in Kyoto. He also offers bespoke catering with the same artistry and care.

Nanzenji Harada

One of those places that makes you wonder how it didn't exist before in Kyoto. Centered entirely around dashi, it brings out the broth's natural richness in a way that feels both new and natural. Chef Harada strips everything back — nothing but dashi and the ingredients themselves — showing how much flavor can come from simplicity.

Lurra

Lurra, to me, is what Noma would be if it were born in Japan. Chef Jacob Kear's cooking is deeply creative — he blends complex techniques with Japanese ingredients to create a fresh, modern expression of cuisine. Despite the intricacy behind each dish, the result feels focused, and genuinely satisfying.

Any songs, soundtracks, or musicians that put you in a Kyoto state of mind?

I don't listen to much Japanese music, but Joe Hisaishi's soundtracks never lose their power to move me.

What remains on your travel bucket list for 2026 and beyond? (These can be anywhere in the world.)

I don't enjoy traveling as a tourist to places I have no meaningful connection with just for the sake of “seeing the world.” I prefer to deepen my relationship with a culture — to spend longer periods of time in one place, visit repeatedly, and truly live there rather than simply pass through. That's more challenging now with children, but it's still the way I value travel.

At the top of that list for me right now is Korea. There's a complex and often heartbreaking history between Japan and Korea, yet many Japanese roots trace back to the Korean Peninsula, and even further to China. Rather than focusing on the differences, I'm drawn to the shared origins and cultural continuities between us. In my field — traditional Japanese crafts — so much has been shaped by Korean influence.

When I visited Seoul for the first time recently, I was deeply moved by the beauty and intricacy of Korean craftsmanship; it stirred something profound in me. I left feeling both emotional and inspired. I hope to return every year, and I've started studying Korean so that in a few years I can converse directly with craftspeople there and gain deeper insight into our shared cultural heritage.

“My best advice is to rent a bike — or, better yet, walk — and let yourself discover things slowly.”



Oliver Spencer

Fashion Designer & Magazine Co-Founder



“Eclectic, historical, and energetic.”

Oliver Spencer has spent decades shaping a version of London style that feels lived-in rather than designed: attentive to craft, grounded in history, and quietly confident in its contradictions. As the founder of the eponymous contemporary menswear brand Oliver Spencer, and more recently the travel magazine Secret Trips, he moves through the city with the eye of both a maker and a flâneur, drawn as much to basement tailoring workshops and independent streets as to galleries, markets and well-worn pubs. London, in his hands, reveals itself through rhythm rather than spectacle: walks that layer old and new, neighborhoods that reward curiosity, institutions that endure because they evolve. It's a city best understood by moving through it; and Spencer is an instinctive guide to its textures, rituals and enduring creative energy.

London

“There’s no place quite like Savile Row, the home of bespoke tailoring.”

You’ve built two fashion brands that feel distinctly London in their attitude and aesthetic. For someone arriving with fresh eyes, how would you describe the spirit of London in just a few words?

Eclectic, historical, and energetic.

Your close friends are visiting for the first time. What is the best way for them to experience the city’s rhythm and everyday life? What are the experiences that would make your to-do list - for example walks, markets, cafés or neighborhood moments you love?

I would recommend that they start in Piccadilly and visit the Royal Academy which is one of my favorite galleries in London, before walking across the road to Fortnum & Mason, which is the most English of English institutions.

From there it’s a hop and a skip to St James where it would be rude not to have a peek at Buckingham Palace. Walk on to the Houses of Parliament, but cross the river and stand in the middle of the bridge for the best view. Now you’re on the south side of the Thames, you should contrast the old with the new at the Tate Modern. I also love the Columbia Road Flower Market

in Bethnal Green - a really nice way to spend Sunday morning, followed by a pop into our store on Calvert Avenue of course! Try and get a table at Rochelle Canteen while you’re out east too. The food is sublime.

A quintessentially English shopping street is Lambs Conduit Street in Holborn. I’m biased because my studio is based there but it really does offer a unique retail experience, with lots of independents and great cafes and restaurants. You can also visit the John Soane’s Museum and the British Museum which are both just a short walk away.

London has everything from makers’ studios to one-of-a-kind boutiques. Which parts of the city would you send someone to if they wanted to explore that side of London style?

There’s no place quite like Savile Row, the home of bespoke tailoring.

Many of the ateliers still operate from basement workshops with windows that you can see right into, watching the cutters at work. Nearby you also have the Piccadilly Arcade and Jermyn Street, both of which champion unique British brands and artisanal excellence.

You've spent years moving through London's neighborhoods for work and for pleasure. Which restaurants, pubs, or markets do you find yourself returning to again and again, and what is it about them that draws you back?

I've always had a love affair with Portobello Road.

It's where I started my career in fashion. Definitely visit on Friday rather than Saturday to avoid the crowds, followed by lunch at The Cow, still the best pub in London in my mind. Lambs Conduit Street has an eclectic village feel, and is home to Noble Rot, one of my favorite restaurants.

Which London seasons, festivals or yearly rituals do you most look forward to – the moments that, for you, feel most intensely 'London', and why?

The early summer season in London is quite unlike anywhere else in the world, kicking off with the Chelsea Flower Show, then you've got Ascot, Wimbledon, Henley, and so many other events. Frieze is also really fun, and more recently, the 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair Somerset House.

Can you share a book, movie or TV series that's given you real wanderlust, and how?

Well last year I started a travel magazine called Secret Trips so I'm always inspired by where our writers are discovering.

But probably like everyone else, I've been hooked on the idea of exploring Montana, thanks in no small part to the Yellowstone series. The raw expansiveness is something special.

What are the next three places at the top of your travel list, and what draws you to each of them?

Well I'm going to Copenhagen for New Year.

The food is amazing, the people are beautiful, and the museums are excellent. My son is currently playing cricket in Perth so that's a good enough excuse to head Down Under and discover Australia's west coast. I'm stopping in Singapore for two days, somewhere I've never actually been so I'm really interested to experience it. As a model for the perfect city, it seems to tick a lot of boxes so I'm intrigued to get a sense of it myself.



“I’ve always had a love affair with Portobello Road.”

Brian McGinn

Producer & Director, Netflix's Chef's Table

“LA is a unique dining city because of its incredible immigrant communities.”

A film and TV director, writer and producer based in Los Angeles, Brian developed the food series Chef's Table with David Gelb, which has become the longest-running program on Netflix, has been nominated for 11 Primetime Emmys, and has won 5 James Beard Awards.

McGinn is also the writer, producer and director of the acclaimed feature documentary Amanda Knox, the co-creator of the Netflix series Street Food, the executive producer and director of the Netflix series Trial by Media, and the director of the HBO Comedy Special Ferrell Takes the Field, starring Will Ferrell. In 2023, McGinn was a co-executive producer on the second season of FX's acclaimed The Bear.

As a founding partner in the production company Supper Club, McGinn has also produced films for Marvel Studios, Walt Disney Animation, Pixar, LucasFilm, Major League Baseball, and Interscope Records.

If you were to choose up to 10 “essential” dining experiences or restaurants that best capture what makes LA different/unique from other cities, what would they be and why?

LA is a unique dining city because of its incredible immigrant communities. Combine that with the best of California produce, and you’ve got a special city to eat in. But be warned — while we have incredible fine dining restaurants (Somni and Providence just became the first Three-Michelin Star restaurants in the city), LA really excels with casual and mid-range spots.

In no particular order:

1. Mini Kabob - Armen Martirosyan took over his parents Armenian grill and turned it into a mainstay on all the “Best of LA” lists. While you probably won’t get a chance to try their iconic Chicken Cesar Wrap (yes, it’s spelled that way, and yes, it sells out when preorders go live each week Monday at 12PM), their chicken thigh plate is one of the best things you can eat in the city. Insider tip: chop up the charred tomato and jalapeño and mix it into the rice, then scoop the rice and chicken onto some lavash for the perfect bite. Armen’s story is also so typical of LA’s dining scene — the child of immigrants taking over their parents place and taking it to new heights.

2. Komal - One of the best new restaurants in the country also supplies some of LA’s other best restaurants their masa. Fátima Juárez brings in heirloom corn from all over Mexico and nixtamalizes it in house at this tiny shop in the Mercado La Paloma. Her quesadillas are incredible, as are anything she makes with fresh masa. Insider tip: order a half dozen tortillas to go, and you’ll feel like a champ, happily munching on steaming, fragrant corn tortillas as you exit past the hundreds-deep line for LA hot spot Holbox.

3. Sqirl - Jessica Koslow’s iconic breakfast and brunch spot remains an ideal expression of the casual California restaurant experience — a fusion of **Chez Panisse’s** ingredient focus and a variety of ethnic influences. Deliciousness and creativity abound on every plate, and the place has a kind of laid back atmosphere that means you are welcomed in sweatpants or a three-piece suit.

4. Courage Bagels - While the line can be torturous, and the wait after ordering even more so, this hybrid Montreal-California style bagel shop started by Arielle Skye and Chris Moss is a must visit. The bagels are unlike anything anywhere else, full of sourdough flavor, incredible crunchy texture, and artisanal toppings.

5. Yang’s Kitchen - I love breakfast at this Asian American restaurant in Alhambra. The mochi pancake is savory and sweet in equal measure, the lacy edges a sort of platonic pancake ideal, while you can’t miss on either the normal market plate or the Japanese-influenced breakfast set. Dinner is equally creative, fresh and craveable. Don’t skip dessert: the farmers market soft serve sorbet, swirled with Vanilla ice cream, is always a winner.

6. Dunsmoor - Brian Dunsmoor’s temple to open-fire cooking combines the best of Southern food (don’t skip Edna’s Cornbread, topped with a household’s yearly supply of butter) with California’s amazing produce and proteins. Start with the baby albacore, Carolina gold rice, pork and chili stew and aforementioned cornbread, add whatever catches your eye from the ever-changing menu, and don’t skip dessert. While Dunsmoor’s famous cheeseburger is now off the menu on the adjacent bar, Brian’s replaced it with a flank steak topped with peppercorn sauce — still served with the same duck fat fries as the iconic burger. Just don’t call it a “steak frites” if you want to stay in good favor.

7. Funke - Evan Funke’s temple to handmade pasta is a regular on my rotation — that’s why I featured him on Chef’s Table: Noodles. Don’t skip the bolognese, the trofie al pesto, the orecchiette, focaccia, or any of the market pastas that catch your eye.

8. Quarter Sheets - Hannah Ziskin makes the best cake in the United States. There, I said it. Don’t miss her princess cake, or, if you’re lucky, her slab cake, at this delightful Detroit-ish pizza joint Hannah and her husband Aaron run in Echo Park. Start with a few slices of Aaron’s awesome sesame-crusted pizza, pair it with a chicory salad with miso-dressing, and finish with some of Hannah’s creations. Hard to beat.

9. Golden Deli - This iconic Vietnamese spot is known for their egg rolls — behemoths of crusty, crunchy delight, even better wrapped in lettuce and paired with a Vietnamese iced coffee. There are a billion incredible restaurants in the San Gabriel Valley, and Golden Deli could be any of 50 or so that I try to frequent every year; this is just my current jam.

10. Kato - Having not yet eaten at Somni, Kato is my favorite fine dining restaurant in LA. What Jon Yao is doing with his Taiwanese heritage and his CA fine dining background is exciting and delicious. Bar manager Austin Hennelly makes the best cocktails in town, and Ryan Bailey is the consummate host and wine professional; his list is heavy on riesling, which means he’s got the key to my heart. It’s a place that deserves more international attention.





“With LA, I think the way to approach the city is to imagine that you’re actually visiting 25 smaller cities.”

This year alone, you’ve been to Japan, Laos, Thailand, Bornholm, Faroe Islands. You’re clearly drawn to far flung places. What other destinations are still on your travel bucket list for 2026 and beyond??

I’m keen to spend more time in Asia; I’ve somehow never been to China, and that’s something I must rectify.

Then, I really want to visit Bhutan, a place of extreme natural beauty, and I’d love to return to all three of the countries you mention — it’s impossible to ever feel tired of visiting Japan and I found both Laos and Thailand fascinating and culturally deep places to visit. I’d also love to spend more time traveling through Turkey. I had the pleasure of visiting Istanbul for a few days earlier this year, and I thought the food was stunning; to spend a few weeks wandering across the country would be a real treat. Other than those spots, I’m always a happy boy if I end up in Italy, Spain, France, anywhere in Scandinavia, Ireland or the UK. So I think what I’m saying is that I’ll travel anywhere, at any time, thank you very much.

LA’s sprawling layout can be daunting. What’s a hidden neighborhood that you feel deserves more attention and why? And any landmarks or special places you’d recommend folks to check out?

With LA, I think the way to approach the city is to imagine that you’re actually visiting 25 smaller cities — not one big sprawl.

Take Thai Town, in Hollywood, for example. It’s a few blocks long, but you can wander

through hundreds of great specialized restaurants and small grocery stores and foot massage parlors; then you can walk a few blocks further and find yourself in Little Armenia. Then you can hop in the car and head out to the San Gabriel Valley and explore Little Vietnam, or dive deep into regional Chinese food block by block. On the way back, make a quick stop in Boyle Heights for some tacos, then, driving along Pico, you might eventually find yourself in Little Ethiopia, for a second lunch of beyaynetu, injera bread topped with a variety of stews. In short, the best way of exploring LA is deciding what kind of food you feel like, then navigating to the hub of that immigrant community and exploring from there.

Any books or films that have instilled that wanderlust in you? Or films about food that you love?

*In no particular order, my favorite food films are **Big Night**, **The Taste of Things**, and **Tampopo**.*

Those really capture what food’s about to me, the hold it has on all of us that love it and view our lives through its prism. As far as wanderlust, Graham Greene’s books were very influential for me, as was the short story collection Brief Encounters with Che Guevara, by Ben Fountain. Film wise, Lost in Translation captures the melancholy/big hearted feeling that I get from travel, and that is addictive and hard to explain with words. Lastly, if I didn’t mention the late, great Anthony Bourdain, it would be a mistake. He changed the way I — and so many others — think about travel, and is one of my heroes.

Name 3 restaurants you dream of going back to, or want to try for the first time?

I’m going to do this by country, because I can’t narrow it down to three:

Italy: There are a few places in Italy, my second home. **Villa Rosa di Nonna Rosa**, Peppe Guida’s Italian fairy-tale trattoria, high in the hills on the Sorrento Coast, where he makes the best dried pasta dishes in the world. **Amerigo 1934**, in Savigno, outside Bologna, where I gorge myself on tortellini in brood and every other insane fresh pasta dish, Pepe in Grani, undoubtedly the best pizza in the world (see Chef’s Table: Pizza if you’re curious to learn more!), and lastly, **SantoPalato**, in Rome, where my friend Sarah Cicoline makes a carbonara that is so rich, unctuous and delicious that you’re fine with the ensuing heart palpitations.

Paris: I adore **Maison Sota** and **Le Doyenné**, two restaurants that are doing a new style of fine dining — unpretentious, less expensive, more delicious.

Japan: I dream of returning to **Villa Della Pace**, a tiny 8-seat restaurant in Nanao that was recommended to me by Yoshihiro Imai of Kyoto’s monk. A very special place, facing the bay, with impeccable hyper-seasonal, elegant cooking, and a true sense of self. There’s a one-room auberge on site, if you can manage to book it.

<https://prettybird.co/us/talent/creators/brian-mcginn/for-your-consideration/>

IG: @brimcgi

Patricia Mateo

Founder, madrEAT Market, Mateo&co,
and Starter Culture

“it works as a true metropolis: layered, multicultural, constantly evolving, but on a slightly more human scale.”

Patricia Mateo is a Spanish entrepreneur, strategic consultant, and founder recognized by Forbes as one of the Top 50 Women in Gastronomy in Spain and among the most influential figures in the country’s culinary ecosystem. Over the past two decades, she has shaped some of the most relevant gastronomic and hospitality projects in Spain and internationally. She founded and led pioneering platforms such as madrEAT Market and Mateo&co, Spain’s leading culinary consultancy, which were acquired by Grupo Vocento in 2020 and integrated into its gastronomy business unit, alongside Madrid Fusión.

With over 20 years of experience, Patricia has advised world-class chefs, global brands, and institutions across food, restaurants, media, and culture, collaborating with partners like IKEA, World’s 50 Best Restaurants, and Netflix’s Chef’s Table, where she has also served as co-producer on selected episodes. She has developed, invested in, and operated international restaurant concepts and pop-ups with chefs including David Muñoz, Grant Achatz, Mauro Colagreco, and Ana Roš. In 2024, she co-founded Starter Culture, a Europe-focused venture builder for next-generation food brands.

Madrid

“Madrid is finally reclaiming its place as Spain’s true gastronomic capital.”

Take us through a quintessential weekend in Madrid from a local’s perspective – sharing hidden neighborhoods, secret haunts, and ‘must-do’ experiences.

My mornings in Madrid are unhurried.

I usually start on foot, letting the neighborhood set the pace. If I’m in **Salesas**, which is the trendiest neighborhood right now (and where I live) I’ll often stop by **Santo Bakery** first — it’s run by a British man and an American woman, and it’s one of those places that’s quietly raised the bar. Their canelés are probably the best in the city right now, and the savory pastries are just as good. Coffee in hand, standing outside, watching the street wake up.

A few minutes away, on Calle Barquillo, there’s **Acid Café**, which serves my favorite coffee in Madrid. It’s minimal, calm, very focused — the kind of place you go when coffee actually matters to you.

If I feel like sitting down and making breakfast a bit more of a moment, I like **Natif Café**, run by Roberta, who’s Italian, and her husband Juan, who’s Argentine. It’s a great mix of cultures and styles: very Spanish breakfasts done properly — their tomato and olive oil toast is, honestly, the best in Madrid — alongside shakshuka and excellent sweet pastries.

And the bakery scene in Madrid right now is incredible.

Just next door to Natif is **Cientotrenta**, by Alberto Miragoli, who trained at the San Francisco Baking Institute. His kouign-amann is spectacular — the kind of thing that makes you stop mid-conversation.

That’s how the day usually starts: walking, coffee, pastry, small decisions made on instinct. Madrid mornings aren’t about rushing — they’re about warming up to the city.

Vermouth time is almost a ritual in Madrid, and Salesas is very much part of that circuit now.

You can keep it classic and head to **Bodega La Ardosa**, one of the city’s oldest taverns, timeless and always buzzing. Or drift somewhere a bit more playful like **Sidi Bar** or **Casa Macareno** — both feel social, informal, the kind of places where one drink easily turns into two. If you want something more contemporary but still very Madrid, Josefita Bar has great energy and a younger crowd without losing soul.

From there, it’s natural to walk towards the **Barrio de las Letras**, which is still one of the best areas for proper tapas. **Taberna La Elisa** is a favorite — tiled walls, classic dishes, but run by the talented young chefs behind Triciclo, so everything feels familiar yet sharp. Nearby, **Taberna Moratín** leans more bistro in style, with an excellent wine selection and beautifully executed small plates.

If you cross town to **Chamberí**, you have to experience **El Doble**. It’s an institution. Jesús runs the place, the bar is permanently packed, there’s no real chance of sitting down, and you end up gently elbowing your way through controlled chaos. But it’s worth it: some of the best gambas al ajillo in Madrid, and a perfect matrimonio of anchovies and boquerones. Loud, messy, brilliant — very Madrid.



“If you want to really understand how Madrid eats, it’s worth buying food the way locals do.”

In recent years, Madrid has emerged from the shadow of Barcelona as an exciting food destination. If you have close friends visiting you for the first time, what are your favorite dining hot spots?

Madrid is finally reclaiming its place as Spain’s true gastronomic capital. Not only is it the third largest city in Europe, with a metropolitan area of over eight million people, but it also has a uniquely open, integrative character. Madrid has always been shaped by migration — both national and international — and that diversity is now fully reflected in its food scene. Like New York or London, it works as a true metropolis: layered, multicultural, constantly evolving, but on a slightly more human scale.

That energy is exactly what makes my favorite places feel so alive.

Some spots simply become part of your life. For me, **Los 33** is one of them — a go-to for relaxed, fun nights with friends. Open-fire cooking, exceptional-quality meat, and an atmosphere that’s social without being forced. You go for dinner and naturally end up staying much longer.

For lunch, Taberna Verdejo is a wonderful spot. It’s a tiny neighborhood bistro, completely outside the usual circuit, where the food is simple, thoughtful and deeply Spanish, with a subtle twist. The pollo en escabeche, house-made charcuterie and vegetables are the stars, and the atmosphere is warm and genuine. Marian, the chef and owner, together with Cristina, the sommelier, make you feel immediately at home.

When it comes to fine dining, **De 1911** is essential. It’s a masterful balance between classicism, product and modernity, with what I consider the best dining room service in Spain. Abel has just won the Michelin award for service, and it shows. The seafood is exceptional, and their cheese trolley — in terms of quantity, quality and the way artisanal cheeses are presented — is the best I’ve seen anywhere in the world.

For meat, **Lana** stands out as the most complete experience in Madrid right now. As soon as you walk in, you’re met with a butcher-style cutting table next to the open grills, with eight to ten different cuts available each day. You choose your meat there, guided by the team, before sitting down. It’s confident, generous cooking built around fire and product.

And then there’s **El Doble** — an iconic Madrid bar and a personal favorite. Packed, noisy, impossible to sit down, slightly chaotic, and absolutely brilliant. Some of the best gambas al ajillo and anchovy pairings in the city, served in a place that hasn’t tried to reinvent itself — because it doesn’t need to.



What are your favorite market and shopping destinations for souvenirs and gifts?

If you want to really understand how Madrid eats, it's worth buying food the way locals do. Mercado de la Paz, right in the heart of the Salamanca district, is ideal for that. It still feels like a true neighborhood market, but mixed with excellent delicatessen counters and exceptional product. Places like **Álvarez Selección** or **La Boulette** are perfect for sourcing top-quality preserves, some of the best Iberian ham and charcuterie, and for simply watching where and how locals shop.

If you're in Madrid over the weekend and the market is closed, **El Corte Inglés Gourmet** remains a solid alternative — the selection is smaller and it's clearly more commercial, but the quality is reliable and convenient.

In Salesas, **Petra Mora** on Calle Barquillo is a small, beautifully curated gourmet shop with a tight selection of very good things — thoughtful, well chosen, no excess. Doña Tomasa, with its own brand and a strong focus on Spanish gourmet products, is another great place to stock up.

When it comes to fashion, both Salesas and the Salamanca district are the best areas to explore. They're where you'll find Spanish designers alongside international brands, often at very competitive prices compared to other European capitals. It's one more reflection of what Madrid does so well right now: combining local life with a global outlook, naturally and without effort.

For intrepid travelers who want to venture outside Madrid, are there any places or hideaways that you recommend for a getaway?

If you have a few extra days outside Madrid, I'd strongly recommend a short escape into the countryside. One of my favorite weekend getaways is **Abadía Retuerta**, set in the heart of the Ribera del



Duero — one of Spain's most important wine regions. It's a boutique hotel housed in a former abbey, surrounded by vineyards and open landscape. The atmosphere is calm and bucolic, especially in fall, when everything slows down and the light is beautiful. It's the kind of place that invites long walks, good wine and quiet meals.

Another essential gastronomic escape for me is **Restaurante Lera**. It's a true temple of game cuisine. Luis Lera, the chef and owner, is also a conservationist and hunter, and his cooking reflects a deep respect for territory, seasonality and tradition. Game birds, rice dishes, extraordinary menus, his small hotel, the breakfasts — everything about the experience feels thoughtful and deeply rooted. The breakfasts — generous, rich in fats and animal protein, but perfectly understood — evoke those old hunters' mornings, deeply rooted in territory and tradition. There's something grounding and essential about being there. That austere calm of the Castilian landscape, the low winter fog, the sense of time slowing down. It's magical, honestly, and one of my favorite places in the world.

What's on your travel bucket list for 2026 (and beyond)?

I want to return to **Asturias**, which is one of my favorite regions in Spain, together with the **Basque Country** and **Galicia**. For me, those three regions are endless gastronomic destinations. You never stop discovering new restaurants, new interpretations, new voices. Tradition still rules, but it's understood through a contemporary lens, and product is always the absolute protagonist.

In the end, product — and especially protein — is what defines Spain as a country and as a culinary culture. I often joke that Italy is the country of carbohydrates, France is the country of dairy, and Spain is the country of protein. And I truly believe that's the case: Not just culturally, but because of the quality, the excellence, and the devotion we have to that product. It's not about excess — it's about respect.



Tonya Lewis Lee

Filmmaker, author, entrepreneur,
and women's health advocate



“the island has served as a canvas for Black expression, community, and creativity.”

Tonya Lewis Lee is an award-winning filmmaker, author, entrepreneur, and women's health advocate whose work explores the personal impact of social justice issues. An executive producer, she's produced *She's Gotta Have It* for Netflix and *Miracle's Boys* for Nickelodeon. Her creative lens is deeply rooted in storytelling that uplifts, informs, and inspires — a spirit that resonates strongly with the cultural heartbeat of Martha's Vineyard.

With a home on the island, Tonya is part of a vibrant legacy: Martha's Vineyard has long been a sanctuary for generations of African-American families, artists, thinkers, and changemakers. From Oak Bluffs to Menemsha, the island has served as a canvas for Black expression, community, and creativity — a place where history and heritage meet nature and imagination.

In this Q&A, Tonya reflects on the island's enduring magic, the inspiration she draws from its landscapes and people, and the memories that continue to shape her artistic journey.

“the culture of the island reflects the mixture of all people who travel to and live on Martha’s Vineyard today.”

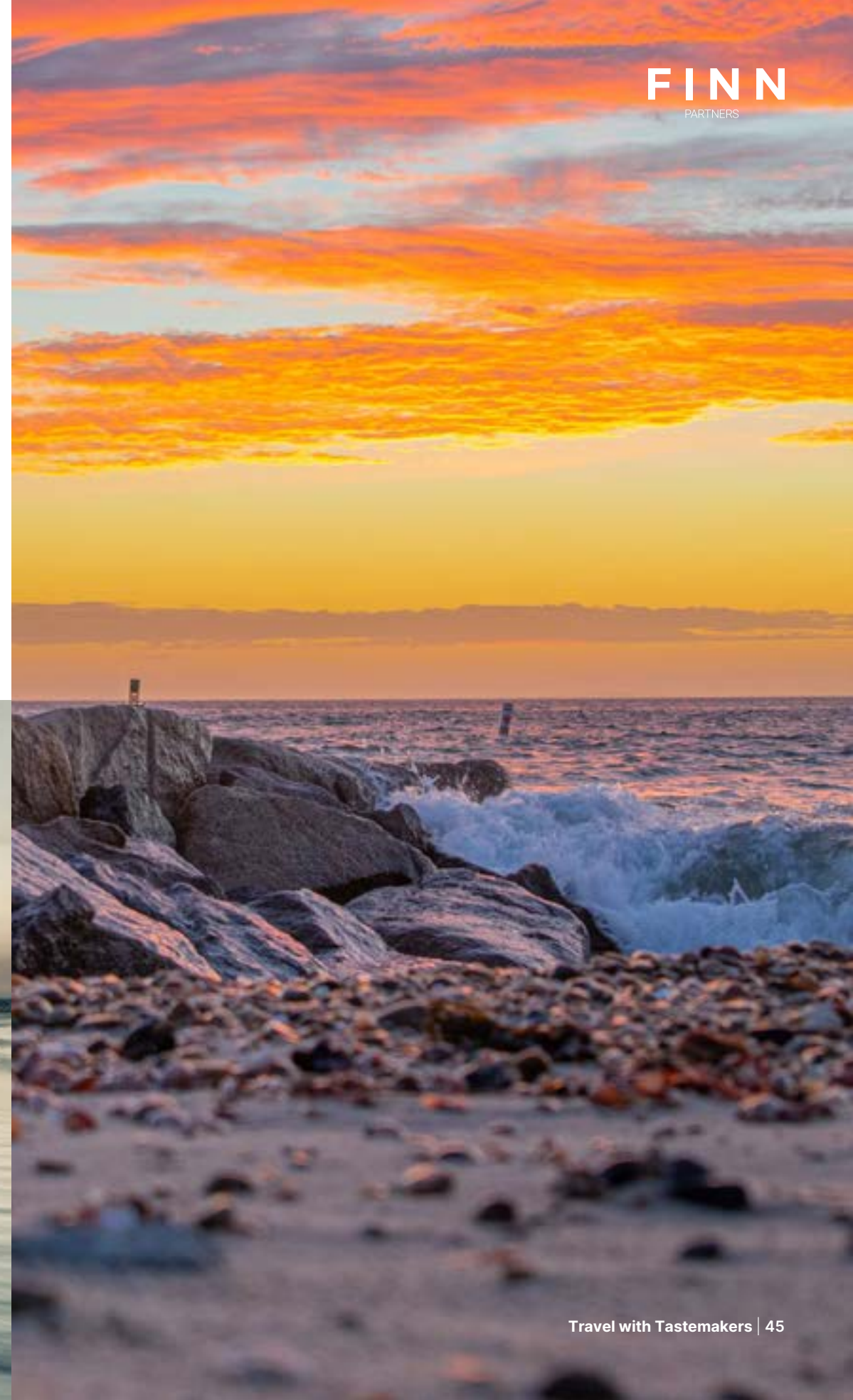
To you, what makes the history of Martha’s Vineyard so unique? And how does it play into today’s culture?

For me, the long history of African Americans spending their summer vacations on Martha’s Vineyard is what makes it so special. There is also a great history of indigenous people on the island so that diversity of spirit is deeply meaningful to me and the culture of the island, reflects the mixture of all people who travel to and live on Martha’s Vineyard today. These days I think people come to the Vineyard looking for a community that has been there a long time, knows who they are and are truly comfortable being home on this small island. With a mixture of artists, educators, politicians, and people from all walks, there is also always space for intellectual stimulation that is relaxed and always inspiring.

That coupled with the beautiful nature is an awesome recipe for creativity that spans far beyond the island.

Where do you go in Martha’s Vineyard to get inspired?

I run along a stretch of State Beach that has the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Sengekontacket Pond on the other...it is beautiful. And Union Chapel Church in Oak Bluffs not only has very special guest pastors during the summer but also hosts numerous inspirational events from guest speakers to dance performances.



What's your most cherished memory at Martha's Vineyard?

My best memories of Martha's Vineyard are summer days spent with my children when they were young...

playing on the beach, running around on hot summer days, eating ice cream from **Mad Martha's** and pies from **Morning Glory Farm**...combing the sand out of my daughter's hair and filling up water balloons for my son for camp...and applauding the sun at sunset on Menemsha Beach. These memories coincide with hanging out with friends at the beach or at someone's home very relaxed and easy with lots of laughter...we didn't have air conditioning and no one threw white parties. Spike used to play softball and Peter Simon played barefoot.

What's a hidden gem there that you feel doesn't get its due?

I've been going to the Vineyard for over 30 years...every year, I discover something new and every year something I loved has moved on or changed in some way.

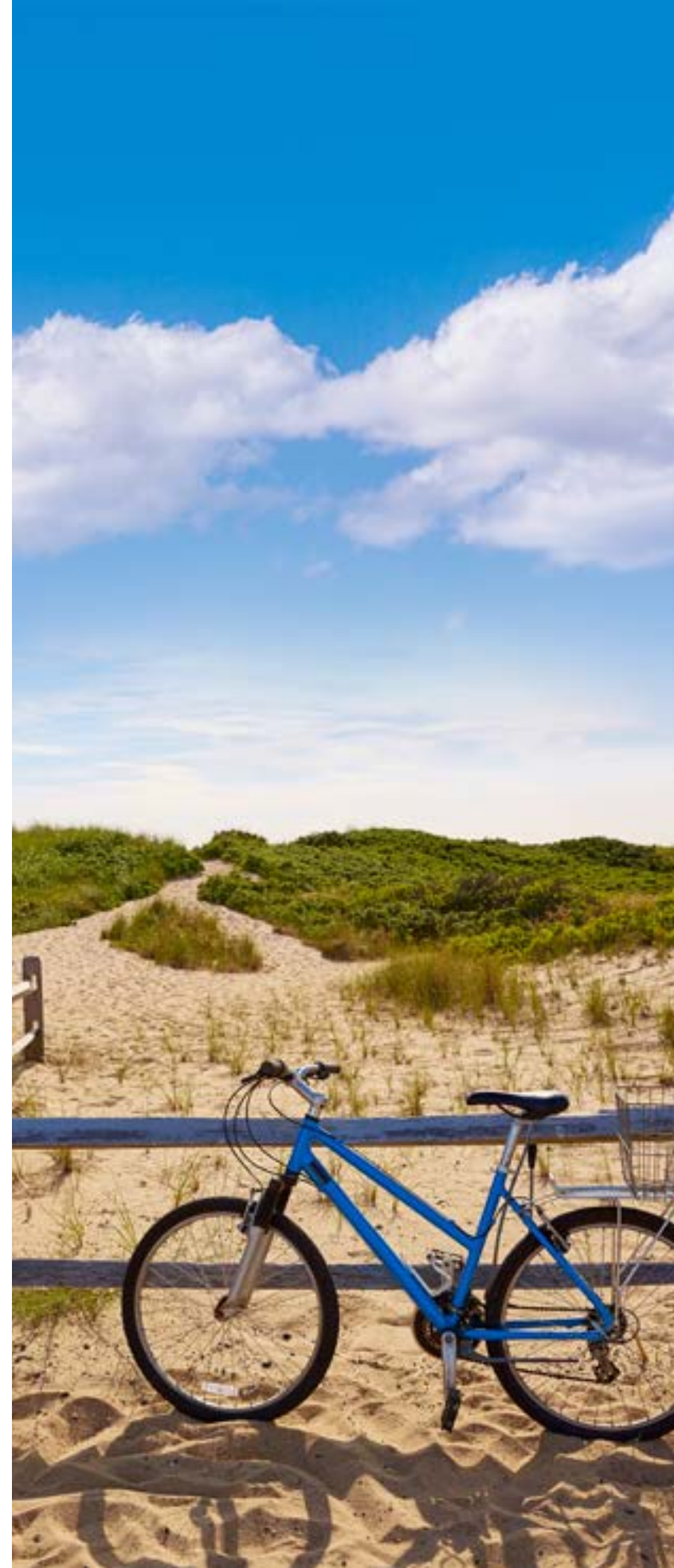
The one thing though that is awesome are the various trails and walks. Martha's Vineyard is a naturally beautiful place. Climbing a trail or walking through the trees until you come upon a beach is the best...especially in the Fall weather.

What would be your suggested itinerary if someone was only spending 24 hours in Martha's Vineyard?

Hmmm, that is hard...I would say drive or bike the island...every town has a different personality.

Check out Edgartown. You might want to stop by **Back Door Donuts** in Oak Bluffs, check out the lighthouse in Aquinnah and get a lobster roll at one of the shops though I'm not sure who makes the best one these days. I hear Cliffhangers makes one of the best!

IG: [@tonyalewislee](#)





Suzy Annetta

Founder & Publisher of Design Anthology

Suzy Annetta is a storyteller of space and substance — a curator, editor, and founder with an unshakable pulse on contemporary design in Asia and beyond. As the visionary behind Design Anthology, a leading magazine documenting creative culture across Asia Pacific, she's spent over a decade amplifying thoughtful design voices and shaping cultural narratives with nuance and depth, whether it's curating a show in Singapore or Ubud, crafting forewords for architecture monographs, or collaborating with global partners like Aesop. Suzy has lived in Japan and Hong Kong, but Melbourne is home.

“There are so many places to choose from in Melbourne.”

“Gertrude Street is always great with a frequently changing roster of Australian artists, designers and makers.”

Melbourne is known for its dining scene and coffee culture. Can you share your top picks for restaurants, bars, and cafes?

There are so many to choose from, and there are always places opening each week. I find it hard to keep track.

I have to say I love the tried-and-true classics though. A few of my faves are **Cumulus** in the CBD, which is just so Melbourne to me from the space to the service and obviously the food. It's somewhere I return to often and recommend to visitors. **Napier Quarter** in Fitzroy is an unassuming little corner terrace that feels so intimate and a bit special. They have a great list of natural wines, and the food is also fantastic. It's a great spot whether rain, hail or shine (or all, because it is Melbourne after all). And the **Carlton Wine Room** is another all-time fave. It's perfect for a bit of a boozy Sunday lunch, preferably before or after catching a film at the indie **Cinema Nova** around the corner.

What's your design lover's guide to Melbourne?

It might be an obvious choice, but I really love the NGV.

There is always something going on, and a show to appeal to all ages and interests, and their permanent art, architecture and design collections are also impressive. If you're in the CBD, then Tolarno always has interesting contemporary art and design shows, as does Craft Victoria (showcasing design, craft, and art from Victorian makers, artists, and artisans), which is not far from Cumulus. If you're venturing a little further afield then **Oigall** on Gertrude Street is always great with a frequently changing roster of Australian artists, designers and makers and always an interesting curation. If you keep walking down Gertrude Street then you'll find **Gertrude Street Market** which stocks Lee Mathews — one of my fave Australian fashion labels. Melbourne is essentially a group of cool neighborhoods, each with a range of interesting high-street shops. **Gertrude Street** and nearby **Smith Street** are pretty great places to start.



You travel everywhere covering global design trends. What are the top five destinations shaping or incubating the future of design and architecture — and why?

In no particular order, I'd start with India.

It's a country we have only really just started to tap into, and still feels somewhat unknown to the outside world in terms of architecture and design. I'm trying to spend as much time there as possible at the moment, and just got back from my first time in Hyderabad — so many incredibly talented designers, craftspeople and architects. I think they will be leading the way in the not too distant future.

I'd also say **Indonesia** is an important destination for me. There is an incredible amount of material innovation happening here at the moment, which is so exciting and something we want to help share with the rest of the world.

South Korea is on most people's radar for K-Pop, skincare, and probably food, but it's also an amazing design and architecture destination. The fact that Design Miami was hosted there earlier this month is a testament to that. I've not been for a few years so I'm desperate to get back again.

Somewhere I've not yet been, but am keen to get to is **Mexico**. The architecture and design that I'm seeing coming from here is amazing, and so unique, too.

And finally, I'm clearly a little biased — I'd also have to say **Australia**. For a small population somewhat geographically distanced from the world, we really punch above our weight in terms of architecture and design. You only need to see what's on at the NGV, events happening during Melbourne Design Week or read any of the local media to see how prolific the creative community here is, and what a distinct voice the designers have.

What's on your bucket list for 2026?

First up is Chandigarh in India.

I've never been, and I'm excited to see the architectural and design legacies left behind by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret in India's first planned city. Design Anthology will be organising and hosting a 7-day design retreat here in March 2026 (keep an eye out for more details - coming soon!) — finishing up with a few nights at the Bijoy Jain-designed Amaya resort. We're also planning similar design-led retreats in **Japan (Naoshima), Penang** and **Sri Lanka** throughout the year. **Mexico** and **Morocco** have been at the top of my personal bucket list for years now...I'm not sure if 2026 will be the year, but I'd love to make that happen!

Your packing essentials and tips for curating a 'design-y' wardrobe on the go?

Despite my frequent flyer miles, I still can't claim to be an expert packer.

I think I'm slowly getting better - but it essentially boils down to making sure I have 'day to night' looks, as I often don't have time to change in between (depending on the trip), plus layers, and jewelery/accessories - a statement piece can take a simple look to something more elevated and if versatile enough can work with a lot of what you bring with you. I also try to pack in color groupings, so I can reduce the number of shoes and accessories I bring with me. And I've lately been seeing more people who really rock an Issey Miyake wardrobe and I think I need to invest in some of his pieces. They seem so easy to travel with, scrunch up in a ball and they don't require ironing, and pretty much look great at anytime, anywhere.





Perla Valtierra

Ceramicist and Designer

Perla Valtierra is a celebrated Mexican ceramicist and designer known for her handcrafted, high-end ceramics that combine traditional techniques with modern innovation. She founded her eponymous brand in 2010 and is inspired by her extensive travels and studies in traditional pottery across Mexico, as well as in Japan, Belgium, and France. Her work is characterized by its focus on artisanal craftsmanship, traditional techniques, and a connection to cultural history. Her handcrafted pieces can be found in some of the chicest boutiques and celebrated restaurants worldwide.



“It’s always fun to visit the markets, which are a very Mexican soul spot.”

Mexico City has been a hot destination for food enthusiasts and design creatives for quite some time now. If you were to take visitors to your version of CDMX, what would be the top “essential” places and experiences that you believe best capture the hidden soul and creative energy of the city?

I’m a person of neighborhoods.

My showroom is in Juárez so I do a lot of my life around there for any type of drink cafe, cocktails or a quick bite, el minutito, then walking around many shops in Juárez. It’s always fun to go to **Ciudadela** and walk all the way to **Alameda Central**, have lunch at **Cana**, but also visit the markets, which are a very soulful Mexican spot. I grew up in the south and the neighborhoods there are nice too — **Centro de Tlalpan** and **Coyoacán**. I love the **San Ángel** neighborhood and visiting Juan O’Gorman architecture corner, where you will find artists **Diego Rivera** and **Frida Kahlo’s studio** and the architect’s own home.

I think discovering the city’s architecture is very interesting, starting with the works of architect Luis Barragán, the first and only Mexican architect to win the Pritzker Prize. Visit his studio and home, **Casa Barragán**, as well as the ones he created for others – Casa Gilardi and Casa Pedregal. And also the **Tlatelolco** district.

For boutiques and shopping, I recommend **MVND0 Varón**, and of course, our own showroom, **Perla Valtierra**, for all folks.

For dining, my top picks would be **Restaurante, Tetetlán** (a fantastic art and dining space next to Casa Pedregal), **Lardo, Rosetta** (a dining institution in the city), and **Campobaja** (for great seafood dishes).





What are some places outside the city that design and craft aficionados should also consider visiting and why?

I think Oaxaca.

It's one of the most known places and totally worth the trip. I would also recommend the state of **Michoacán**, and one of its cities, **Pátzcuaro**, for craft hunting.

What do people often get wrong about CDMX?

Mexico City is huge.

It's giving yourself the time to discover and stroll around neighborhoods like **Coyoacán** or **Ciudad Universitaria**, for its fantastic architecture and green spaces.

After a trip abroad, what's the first meal you crave upon returning?

Salsa!!! Hot and spicy chilaquiles.

What informs your work? Where do you go for creative inspiration?

My friends, and travelling with them. **Japan** is a big source of inspiration, and sometimes just a road trip, and having the time to think without a phone.

What's on your travel bucket list for 2026 and beyond?

I have never been to **Austria** and would love to go. And more surf trips for me.

<https://perlavaltierra.shop/>

IG: [@perlavaltierra](https://www.instagram.com/perlavaltierra)



Divia Thani

Global Editorial Director, Condé Nast Traveler



“Kala Ghoda in South Mumbai is where all my worlds collide.”

Divia Thani is the Global Editorial Director of Condé Nast Traveler, where she shapes the magazine's international vision across markets, platforms and cultural contexts. Before taking on her global role, she served as Editor-in-Chief of *Condé Nast Traveller India* from its launch in 2010, establishing it as one of the country's most influential travel and lifestyle publications and redefining how Indian travel stories are told to the world.

Her career spans some of the most recognized titles in international publishing. She previously worked as Features Editor at *Vogue India*, Lifestyle Editor at *Time Out Mumbai*, and Advertising Manager for *L'Officiel* and *Seventeen Magazine* in India.

Divia shares her Mumbai, from monsoon rituals along Marine Drive and the art-filled streets of Kala Ghoda, to the restaurants, neighborhoods and global destinations shaping her sense of culture, style and travel today.

Mumbai

“Sit down to a cup of hot masala chai and corn on the cob.”

In your first Editor’s Letter as Global Editorial Director at Condé Nast Traveler, you wrote “If you want to fall in love with Mumbai, ask a local about the rain”, referring to the monsoon season. What are your favorite things to do in the city during the monsoon?

Walking along Marine Drive, the longest stretch of Art Deco buildings in the world after Miami, and watching the Arabian Sea waves crash against the city’s iconic tetrapods.

Then get home, shower, and sit down to a cup of hot masala chai and corn on the cob, roasted over charcoal and then topped with lime and red chilli powder — it’s a monsoon staple.

Your close friends are visiting Mumbai for the first time. What neighborhoods do you take them to as their first glimpse of the city’s spirit and personality?

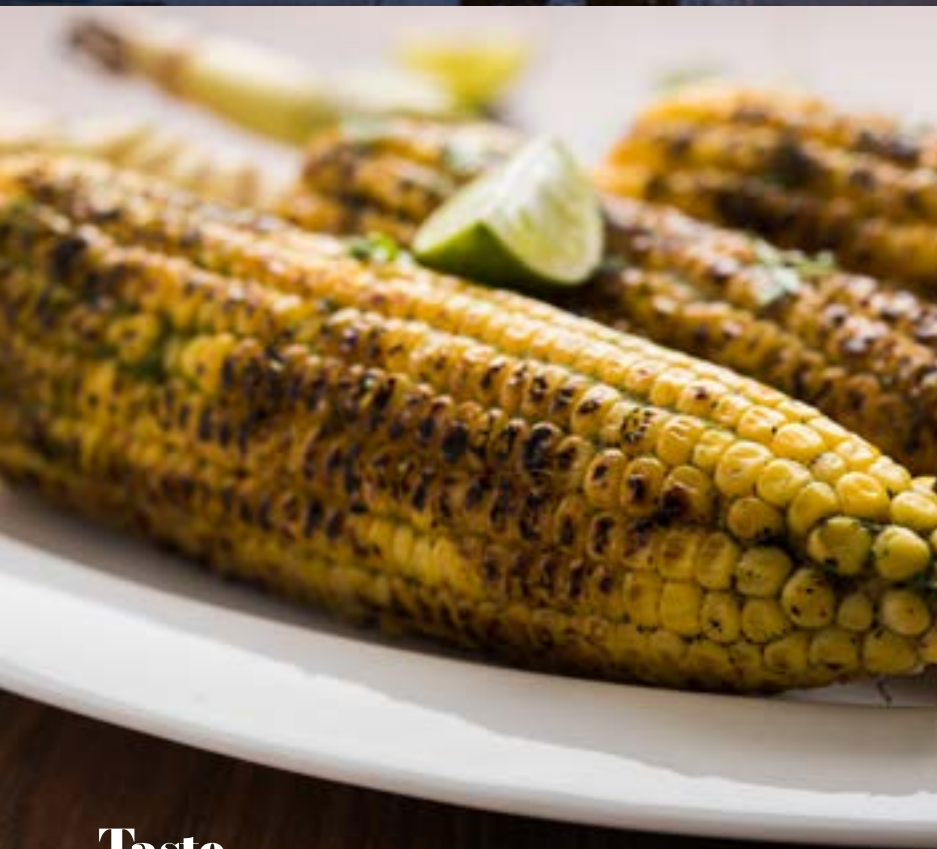
Kala Ghoda in South Mumbai is where all my worlds collide.

The neighborhood is full of old buildings and a great place to take in the city’s Victorian Gothic and Indo-Saracenic architecture. The tour of the Victoria Terminus (CST train station) is also incredible. There’s always something happening on the imposing stairs of the Asiatic Library. The David Sassoon Library and Reading Room have also been restored and is a treat to walk through. It’s also the best area to take in contemporary Indian art: galleries like Chemould, Jehangir, the NGMA, Nature

Morte all showcase young and established Indian artists who are, interestingly, breaking records in terms of prices seemingly every day. It’s a hot art market, and if you can time your visit to the Mumbai art show in November, you won’t be disappointed. Kala Ghoda is also where you can eat brilliantly — Trishna and The Table both feature highly on Condé Nast Traveller’s Top Restaurant Awards list — and the shopping is unbeatable. Every major Indian designer and independent brand has a foothold here; even if you buy nothing, go to Sabyasachi to see the store — it’s an experience in itself, all antique carpets and chandeliers and red roses and a throwback to luxury from the era of the Maharajas.

You often describe food as a window into culture. What are some dining spots in Mumbai that you believe embody the culture of the city — either well-established institutions, or newer restaurants or cafés that you find yourself going back to whenever you’re in town?

Trishna, Tanjore Tiffin, The Bombay Canteen, O Pedro, Paradox, Masque, Izumi, Swati Snacks, Arya Bhavan... the list of my favorite Mumbai spots is long and exciting. Many places showcase regional Indian food that is authentic but elevated. Some are fine dining and others absolutely rustic and simple, but you will eat wonderfully. See our list for more: **Best Restaurants in India 2025**



“Mumbai is an incredibly cosmopolitan city.”

Mumbai is known as a city of reinvention, from the creative pulse of Bandra and Kala Ghoda to the emerging design studios in Byculla and Lower Parel. Which neighborhoods do you believe hint at the new, or next generation in Mumbai’s cultural evolution?

As the heart of Indian cinema, Mumbai has also shaped India’s visual language and sense of style.

You often bridge travel, culture and fashion in your work, and personally champion Indian designers. How has growing up in Mumbai influenced your own sense of style? Mumbai is an incredibly cosmopolitan city. It’s got a unique sense of style because it’s right by the sea, so there is a casual approach to dressing. But it also has Bollywood, so there is an innate sense of glamour. And it’s a busy, bustling city where everyone is always on the go. India is also fascinating because of its extremely rich and ancient textile traditions; it’s one of the only places in the world you see men and women wearing traditional clothing but also western clothing every day, mixing and matching things up easily. You can wear a kurta over your jeans, kolhapuri chappals on your feet, a Chanel handbag on your arm, and custom-made diamond earrings worth a few hundred thousand dollars that belonged to your grandmom. We wear heritage saris with Zara crop tops; we might wear a dozen pure gold bangles every day. That sort of living amongst different worlds every day and wearing it easily is how a Mumbai girl dresses. It’s fun, it’s cool, it’s chic, there’s few rules, except for paying attention to the quality of cotton you’re buying so you beat the heat and stay comfortable.

You’ve said that travel is as much about inner discovery as it is about geography. Is there a destination that recently surprised or changed you in an unexpected way?

I fell in love this year with a couple of places I’d never been before.

One is Kyoto, where I spent the weekend on an e-bike, cycling through cherry blossoms at dawn, before the most beautiful spots become packed with tourists. I don’t do that enough — wake up a couple of hours earlier than normal and instead of reading the news on my phone, get up and go explore and see places in a very different light, both literally and metaphorically.

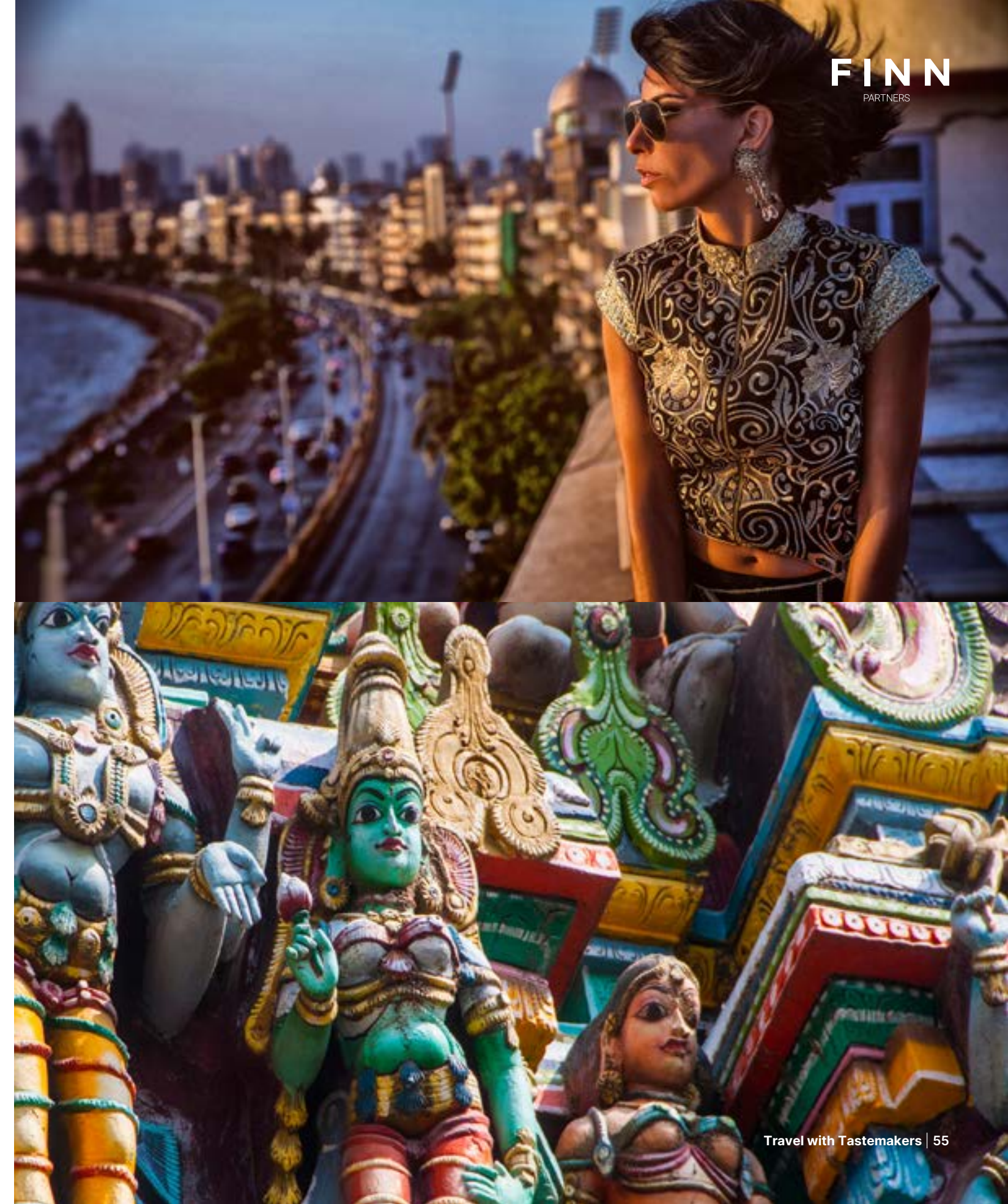
A book, movie or TV series that has given you wonderlust, and how?

*To be honest, I’m much more influenced by words than photos when it comes to travel, so novels transport me and make me want to visit places far more than *White Lotus* would!*

I grew up partly in Nigeria so reading Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie always makes me nostalgic for Lagos. Abraham Verghese’s *The Covenant of Water* made me ache for the backwaters of Kerala. Years ago, I was traveling through Tasmania while reading Nicholas Shakespeare’s *In Tasmania*, which was a delightful experience. I still remember arriving in Freycinet and thinking it was one of the most beautiful places I’d ever seen — and that night, reading in his book that he had the same thought when he came upon it. So much so that he ended up buying a house and moving there! I’d be very happy just to return to Saffire Lodge — it’s one of the most spectacular hotels I’ve seen.

What are your next top three travel destinations on your list?

Egypt, Argentina, Botswana.





Octavia Spencer

Actress, producer, and storyteller



FINN
PARTNERS

“New Orleans is a living mosaic of cultures.”

Octavia is an Academy Award-winning actress, producer, and storyteller whose work spans genres and generations. Known for her powerful performances in films like *The Help*, *Hidden Figures*, and *Ma*, Spencer continues to expand her creative reach — most recently as host of *Family Recipe Showdown*, a new Food Network series filmed in the heart of New Orleans.

Set against the backdrop of one of America's most culturally rich cities, *Family Recipe Showdown* celebrates the soul of Southern cooking and the stories behind cherished family recipes. Spencer, alongside New Orleans culinary icon Edgar “Dook” Chase IV, brings warmth, humor, and heart to the kitchen, spotlighting everyday cooks and the traditions that unite them.



“New Orleans doesn’t just welcome you – it wraps you in its history, flavor, and flair.”

New Orleans, with its deep-rooted blend of French, African, Spanish, and Creole influences, is more than just a location — it’s a character in its own right. The city’s culinary heritage is legendary, from gumbo and beignets to the civil rights-era legacy of **Dooky Chase’s Restaurant**. It’s no surprise that New Orleans was named TripAdvisor’s 2024 Best U.S. Food Destination, ranked No.2 in Travel + Leisure’s World’s Best Awards, and consistently lands in the Top 5 U.S. destinations according to Travel Off Path.

In this conversation, Octavia reflects on her experience filming in New Orleans, the meals that moved her, and why the city’s flavor — both culinary and cultural — continues to inspire.

To you, what makes New Orleans such a unique US destination?

What makes New Orleans unique is the transcendent nature of the city, meaning the cultural blends of cuisine, music, art, and its tumultuous history.

New Orleans is a living mosaic of cultures. The city’s heartbeat is its music — from jazz echoing through Frenchmen Street to brass bands parading through the Marigny. Its architecture tells stories of French and Spanish

colonialism, while its food is a flavorful fusion of African, Caribbean, and European traditions. Whether you’re sipping a café au lait at **Café du Monde** or catching a second line parade, the city’s spirit is unmistakably its own.

What surprised you most about the city while shooting Family Recipe Showdown?

I’m never surprised at how New Orleans welcomes tourists from every corner of the world and when they leave, they’re always planning a return trip!

That magnetic pull is real. New Orleans is a city that invites exploration at every turn — whether you’re wandering through the French Quarter on a haunted bar crawl, hopping on a steamboat jazz cruise, or ducking into a centuries-old chapel tucked between colorful Creole cottages. While filming, Octavia soaked in the city’s sensory richness: the scent of homemade pralines wafting from **Leah’s Pralines**, the rhythm of brass bands echoing down Royal Street, and the stories shared over steaming bowls of gumbo. New Orleans doesn’t just welcome you — it wraps you in its history, flavor, and flair, leaving you planning your next visit before you’ve even left.



“Dooky Chase’s is more than a restaurant — it’s a cultural institution.”

What’s a meal you had in New Orleans that you still dream of today?

*It’s hard to name one: the gumbo or red beans and rice at **Dooky Chase’s**; the turtle soup at **Commander’s Palace**; **Antoine’s Chicken Rochambeau**. So many favorites.*

Each of these dishes is a culinary time capsule. At Dooky Chase’s, the gumbo is a soulful blend of shrimp, sausage, and crab in a rich, dark roux — a dish that once nourished civil rights leaders during pivotal meetings. Commander’s Palace, a Garden District icon since 1893, serves its famed **Turtle Soup au Sherry**, finished tableside with a splash of aged sherry for a touch of drama and depth. And at Antoine’s, the **Chicken Rochambeau** — herb-roasted chicken with smoked ham, savory onion rice, and twin sauces of Rochambeau and Béarnaise — is a decadent nod to the city’s French-Creole roots.

What’s your favorite ingredient or piece of history about New Orleans cuisine and why?

*I love how instrumental New Orleans was as a meeting place during the civil rights movement. Many of those meetings with leaders of all races took place at the legendary restaurant **Dooky Chase’s**.*

Dooky Chase’s is more than a restaurant — it’s a cultural institution. Founded in 1941, it became a safe haven for civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Thurgood Marshall. Leah Chase, the restaurant’s matriarch, known as the “Queen of Creole Cuisine,” used her kitchen as a platform for change. Today, her legacy lives on through dishes like gumbo z’herbes and shrimp Clemenceau, served in a dining room adorned with African American art and history.

What are the next top three travel destinations on your list?

I would love to visit the Swiss Alps, Newfoundland, and Finland.

IG: [@octaviaspencer](#)





Lee Anne Wong

Chef/Partner, Koko Head Cafe

“Our year-round growing climate allows for superior fresh produce.”

Chef Lee Anne Wong honed her skills in some of the city's most renowned kitchens working alongside culinary legends like chef Jacques Pépin. She gained widespread recognition as a competitor on the first season of Top Chef and has since become a regular on the show. Over the years, she has appeared on many other programs, including Iron Chef America, Chopped All-Stars, Unique Eats, Alex vs. America, and Tournament of Champions.

Based in Maui, Wong first moved from New York to Honolulu in 2013 and opened Koko Head Café in 2014, an island-style brunch spot in Oahu's Kaimukī neighborhood. The menu reflects a love for local ingredients and the diverse cultural influences of Hawaii. Specializing in creative brunch fare, Koko Head Café has become a community favorite and garnering both local adoration and national acclaim.



“Oahu, in my humble opinion, is an incredible food destination.”

For first time visitors, what are your top “must do, see, and taste” experiences and why?

Each island in the Hawaiian Islands has its own charm, beauty, history, and vibe.

Oahu, in my humble opinion, is an incredible international food destination. Hawaii’s melting pot of culture embraces a wide variety of culinary genres, including Japanese, regional Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, Thai, and traditional and modern Hawaiian cuisines. Our year-round growing climate allows for superior fresh produce, and the ability to grow exotic and tropical varieties of ingredients... a chef’s dream pantry.

That being said, every visitor should make a point to visit the **Saturday Kaka’ako Farmer’s Market** (8am-12pm). I show up early to snag parking, but you can expect to spend hours cruising over 100 vendors dealing in farm-fresh produce, greenery, meat and seafood products, prepared food and beverage, creative entrepreneur offerings from artwork to jewelry to clothing and more. It’s a great place to meet locals and get the “in the know” recommendations for best poke, malasadas, plate lunch, etc.

What are some common misconceptions travelers have about Hawaiian or local food, and how would you debunk them?

Just because it has pineapple on it doesn’t make it Hawaiian.

Though I am a public fangirl of pineapple on pizza. What most people don’t know is it takes anywhere from a year to two years to grow a pineapple. We try to maximize our use of the pineapple at the restaurant, taking scraps and turning them into tepache, or fermented pineapple syrup for cocktails.

What are your favorite dining experiences that showcase the unique flavors and ingredients of the islands? What makes these places special?

Pig and the Lady is one of the more dynamic and locally sourced dining experiences.

They just moved into our neighborhood in Kaimukī and have been wowing the masses with the Le Family’s modern take on Vietnamese cuisine. For traditional Hawaiian flavors, get in your car and drive East to the **Waiāhole Poi Factory** on the scenic Windward side of Oahu. The Chicken Long Rice, Squid Luau, and Beef Lau Lau are worth the drive, along with the hand-pounded poi and when they have it, always get the smoke meat! It’s a true taste of Hawaiian flavors, showcasing the heart and soul of Old World cuisine: kalo/taro root.



Can you highlight some local chefs from Hawaii who inspire you and who you think deserve more recognition? What do you admire about their work?

I'm a huge fan of Ed Kenney, Sheldon Simeon, Keaka Lee, Robynne Maii, Jon Matsubara, Mark Pomaski, Wade and Michelle Ueoka — and so many more!

The entire Hawaii culinary community is really quite small, and everyone brings their background and hometown roots to their cooking. Not being from Hawaii, I admire and respect all of the local chefs and of course have to acknowledge the Hawaii Regional Cuisine Chefs like Roy (Yamaguchi) and Alan (Wong) for laying the groundwork. I learn so much just by tasting another chef's food and the level of excellence in the Hawaiian islands is inspiring always.

How do you incorporate local, seasonal ingredients into your menu, and how have these ingredients influenced your cooking style and philosophy?

Hawaii is a state that imports 95% of its food supply, so for me it was obvious to support as much local agriculture as possible at Koko Head Cafe.

It keeps commerce within our community, strengthens our relationships with our producers and customers, and inherently, the food is fresher, and the quality is better. We have a daily specials menu at Koko Head Cafe that our culinary team collaborates on daily.

Where do you go to recharge your culinary creativity and find inspiration in Hawaii? Are there specific places or experiences that rejuvenate your passion for cooking?

I live on Maui, so I always love visiting our Saturday Market or the Okoa Farms Store.

The produce is always pristine and demands star treatment.



Liya Kebede

Model, Actress, Entrepreneur
and humanitarian advocate

“Paris is a city that thrives on artistic innovation.”

Liya Kebede is a globally celebrated supermodel, actress, and entrepreneur whose influence spans fashion, film, and philanthropy. Born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, she rose to international prominence as the first Black model to represent Estée Lauder and has graced countless runways and magazine covers.

Beyond fashion, Liya is the founder of the Lemlem Foundation, a social enterprise supporting women artisans in Africa. She splits her time between Paris and other cities, and her Parisian life reflects a deep appreciation for art, culture, and quiet elegance. In this Q&A, Liya shares her favorite spots in the City of Light — offering a glimpse into the places that inspire her, feed her creativity, and bring her joy.

Paris

“Saint-Germain-des-Prés is one of Paris’s most iconic neighborhoods.”



Is there a boutique or neighborhood that’s your favorite in Paris anytime you’re craving some retail therapy (for clothes, textiles, makeup, or skincare)?

Saint-Germain is always a good idea.

Saint-Germain-des-Prés is one of Paris’s most iconic neighborhoods, known for its chic boutiques, historic cafés, and intellectual legacy. Once the haunt of writers like Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, today it’s a haven for fashion lovers and design aficionados. From high-end concept stores to artisanal skincare shops, Saint-Germain offers a curated Parisian shopping experience that blends elegance with authenticity.

Where do you go in Paris to get inspired?

I go to museum exhibits; they have so many here all the time — it’s pretty great actually. I just went to Le Grand Palais to see the Virgil Abloh exhibit.

Paris is a city of endless artistic inspiration, and its museums are at the heart of that. Le Grand Palais, with its stunning Beaux-Arts architecture, regularly hosts groundbreaking exhibitions. Paris is a city that thrives on artistic innovation, and few exhibitions have captured that spirit as powerfully as *Virgil Abloh: The Codes* at Le Grand Palais. As the first Black artistic director of Louis Vuitton menswear and founder of Off-White, he redefined luxury by merging streetwear with high fashion. The retrospective, which opened on what would have been Abloh’s 45th birthday, was the first major European exhibition dedicated solely to his work. It showcased over 20,000 archival pieces — from prototypes and sketches to fashion collaborations and personal collections — highlighting his multidisciplinary genius across fashion, music, architecture, and industrial design.

What’s a meal you had in Paris that you still dream about today?

Hando is one of my favorite places to go for hand rolls and I definitely crave their dishes quite often.

Hando, a modern Japanese hand-roll bar in Paris, offers a minimalist yet flavorful dining experience. Its focus on fresh ingredients and sleek presentation makes it a standout in the city’s vibrant culinary scene. Liya’s love for Hando reflects Paris’s global palate, where traditional French cuisine coexists with innovative international flavors.



Which do you prefer: farmers market or brasserie, and which is your favorite?

I'm not very good with farmers markets. I do love a good brasserie, but I don't have a favorite one. I'm more of a café person and my Parisian favorite is Ralph's Coffee.

While Paris is famous for its bustling farmers markets and classic brasseries, I gravitate toward the café culture — where style meets serenity. **Ralph's Coffee**, housed in a 17th-century mansion, nestled in the Ralph Lauren flagship on Boulevard Saint-Germain is a space that blends classic American elegance with Parisian charm. The menu reflects a fusion of fashion and flavor. Guests can enjoy signature coffees made from organically grown beans sourced from Central and South America and Africa, alongside Mr. Lauren's favorite sweet treats like carrot cake, brownies, and old-fashioned chocolate cake. It's a perfect blend of fashion and leisure, and I love the aesthetic.

What's your go-to fashion week spot?

Le Bristol for everything.

Le Bristol Paris is a legendary luxury hotel that has long been a hub during Fashion Week. Known for its impeccable service, Michelin-starred dining, and serene garden courtyard, it's a cornerstone of fashion history and a sanctuary for the style elite. Located on the prestigious Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, just steps from haute couture houses like Hermès and Lanvin, Le Bristol has long been a favorite among designers, models, and editors during Paris Fashion Week. For me, it's a sanctuary amid the whirlwind of fashion week.

Which destinations are you hoping to visit soon for the first time?

Egypt

lemlem.com

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Marie-Louise Sciò

CEO & Creative Director, Pellicano Hotels Group



“It’s like a living museum wrapped in chaos and beauty at the same time.”

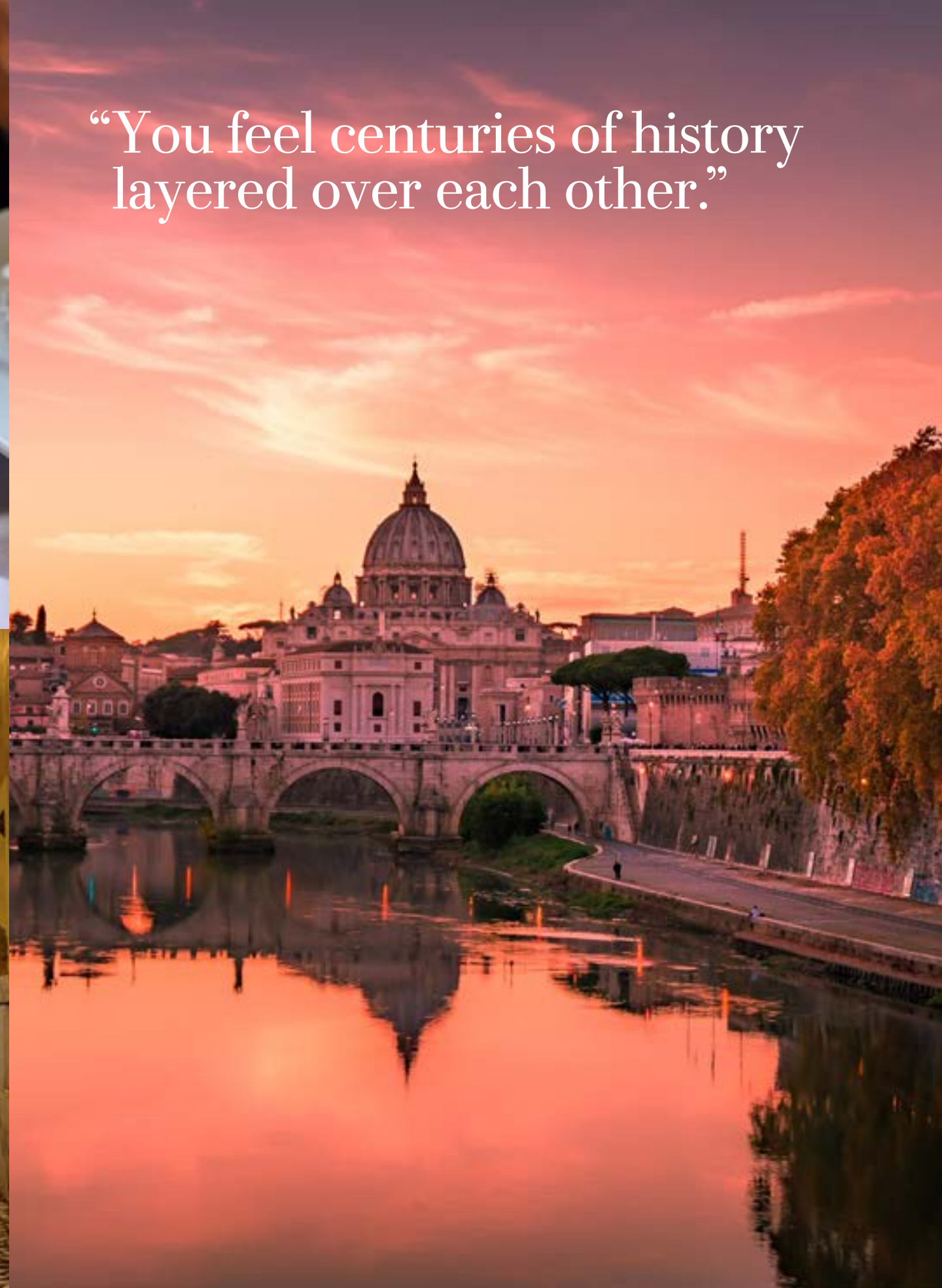
Marie-Louise Sciò is one of Rome’s most influential creative figures, bridging hospitality, design and cultural storytelling through her role as CEO and Creative Director of the Pellicano Hotels Group, which includes Hotel Il Pellicano in Tuscany, La Posta Vecchia Hotel near Rome and Mezzatorre Hotel & Thermal Spa in Ischia. Having studied design and architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design, she began her career in Rome working in interior design alongside Massimo Zompa before returning to the world she grew up in: her family’s legendary hotel on the Tuscan coast.

Her work moves between design, branding, image-making and curation, always guided by a strong Italian sensibility and an instinct for atmosphere and storytelling. She is known for translating the spirit of dolce vita into a living, evolving language, shaping Pellicano not only as a hotel group but as a cultural and lifestyle universe, from its visual identity and interiors to its wider platform, ISSIMO.

Marie-Louise shares with us the Rome she knows best: layered, lived-in, and quietly evolving beyond its clichés.

Rome

“You feel centuries of history layered over each other.”



Imagine someone had never heard of Rome — how would you describe it in a few words?

Rome is majestic.

It's like a living museum wrapped in chaos and beauty at the same time. It's timeless, but never perfect, and that's exactly what makes it so real. You feel centuries of history layered over each other, mixed with emotion and sensuality. One moment you're walking past ruins, the next you're next you're passing a modern café or a designer shop. You can't walk five meters without seeing or feeling something beautiful.

Your close friends are visiting Rome for the first time. What are the top ten “must” do, see, eat, experiences?

1. **Eat at Trattoria Da Enzo al 29 (Trastevere)** — Tiny, unpretentious, utterly delicious.
2. **Wander through the Portico d'Ottavia** — One of the most evocative ancient sites. Perfect for a post-lunch stroll.
3. **Visit Galleria Doria Pamphilj** — A quieter, family-run palace gallery with masterpieces by Caravaggio and Raphael.
4. **Coffee at Sant'Eustachio Il Caffè** — The quintessential Roman espresso bar. Stand at the counter; don't sit.
5. **Visit Galleria Borghese** — Home to Bernini sculptures, Caravaggio paintings, and Renaissance treasures.
6. **Shop at Giuliva Heritage** — Curated Italian fashion with timeless elegance and artisanal craftsmanship.
7. **Eat at Da Cesare al Pellegrino** — Classic Roman cooking with a lively neighborhood atmosphere.
8. **Shop at Percossi Papi** — Exquisite, hand-crafted jewelry made in a tiny atelier near the Pantheon.
9. **Shop at Atelier Bomba** — A quietly magical Roman atelier rooted in craftsmanship and history.
10. **Simply walk** — Rome is best experienced on foot, so wear comfortable shoes and take a camera!

What's a hidden neighborhood that deserves more attention?

Monti, just above the Roman Forum and a short walk from the Colosseum.

It's one of those neighborhoods that feels like a secret, even though you're right in the heart of the city. It has a slightly bohemian energy, with small vintage shops, artisan workshops and family-run trattorias tucked into narrow streets. You can spend an afternoon wandering without a plan, stopping for a coffee on Piazza della Madonna dei Monti, browsing independent boutiques, or watching the life of the neighborhood unfold around you.

What's a common misconception travellers have about Rome — and what would you say to debunk it?

That Rome is stuck in the past.

Yes, it's ancient, but that doesn't mean it's static. The city is constantly reinventing itself in subtle ways — through craftsmanship, contemporary art, and design. You just have to look beyond the clichés of the Colosseum and the Trevi Fountain.

How have your Roman roots shaped your approach to Pellicano Hotels — design, service, cuisine?

Completely. Rome taught me about proportion, light, and beauty in imperfection.

It's why Pellicano Hotels aren't over-designed; they're soulful. I care about how things feel, the quiet luxury of authenticity. Service too. In Rome, hospitality is instinctive. People welcome you like family, not guests. That's what we try to capture: elegance without pretension, warmth without performance.

What are your next top three travel destinations on your list?

Anywhere in Italy really.

Discover more of **Civita di Bagnoregio**, explore more of **Orvieto**. I also want to visit the architectural gem of **Tresigallo**.

A book, movie, or TV series that has given you wanderlust?

Palomar by Italo Calvino — it taught me to see the extraordinary in the everyday.

A restaurant you dream of going back to, or trying?

The Stiacchini Butcher in Castellina in Chianti

“Rome taught me about proportion, light, and beauty in imperfection.”

What's your most cherished moment tied to Rome?

My childhood weekends at La Posta Vecchia with my family.

At the time it was our family home, a Renaissance villa right on the sea, just outside Rome. The house is built on the remains of an ancient Roman port, and it still carries that sense of history everywhere, from the antique furniture to the artworks that line the rooms.



Mina Park

Restaurateur & co-owner of Baroo

“Find a restaurant that has Grandmother in the name and it’s bound to be delicious.”

Mina Park is a Korean-American cook, restaurateur and writer based in Los Angeles. With her husband, Chef Kwang Uh, she owns and operates Baroo, which was named the LA Times Restaurant of the Year in 2024. Kwang and Mina’s approach to cooking and running their restaurants stems from Korean Buddhist principles of compassion and interconnectedness.

Mina practiced law before entering the F&B field in 2013 with her culinary pop-up Sook in Hong Kong. Mina is also an avid art patron. With Seoul fast becoming an exciting art, design and culinary hub, she shares her favorite haunts every time she’s in the city.



Your close friends are visiting Seoul for the first time. What are the “must do” experiences?

Galleries - P21 is a jewelbox, independent gallery run by Sooyeon Choi in Itaewon.

It's a short stroll from the Grand Hyatt Hotel on Namsan. Soo's eye for young emerging talent is so razor-sharp. It's a small space but I always am blown away by the shows there. Nearby is a **BADA Camp B**, the small Seoul space for the work of renowned ceramicist Lee Hun Chung and his family. Their main studio is outside of Seoul and they also have a studio in downtown LA near our restaurant, so it's been a joy spending more time with them all over. If you're in Itaewon, you can keep strolling and easily visit the **Leeum Museum** which is a fantastic private museum.

My other favorite art space in Seoul is **Art Sonje** in Samcheong-dong. It's another private art space with major exhibitions, including international artists, but more experimental and always thought-provoking. While in the neighborhood, I also visit the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul's major contemporary art museum, and a number of major Korean galleries like Kukje and Hyundai galleries. When I'm in the area, I walk around the perimeter of the palace walls to visit **Arumjigi Foundation**, a cultural foundation that researches the history and heritage of Korean architecture, textiles/fashion and, my particular focus, food.

Their restaurant, **Onjium**, is the ultimate expression of their culinary research and has been so deservedly recognized by Michelin and Asia's 50 Best Restaurant lists.

Every trip to Seoul, I stop by as many **ceramic shops** as I can. Most of these shops are more like galleries than typical shops, featuring works of well-respected Korean ceramicists and other crafts artisans. Longtime favorite stops are **Sikijang** and **Choeunsook Gallery**, both in Chungdam-dong. Because they both work with famous ceramicists and other artists, be prepared for a bit of sticker shock. Quality, craftsmanship and heritage are, of course, a luxury in these times.

On recent trips, I've ended up in **Jangchundong** in Jung-gu. My first real memory of this neighborhood was 20 years ago with my stepmother and late father. There is a street known for its braised pork trotters or jokbal. Sharing incredible pork trotters together is a cherished memory with them. There are so many pork trotter restaurants in the neighborhood that it's called **jokbal alley**. Find a restaurant that has Grandmother in the name and it's bound to be delicious. This year, a new outpost of celebrated Korean roastery, Fritz Coffee, opened in a hanoak (traditional Korean house) opened here as well. You'll also find the oldest bakery in Seoul, **Taegukdang Bakery**, founded in 1946, which has such a charming mid-century retro ambience.

“Chefs in Seoul right now are truly masters, and their teams of young cooks are at the top of their game.”

Korean cuisine has been such a force globally. What are Seoul's quintessential dishes and where do you recommend foodies go to try them?

The foundation of Korean cuisine is fermentation and specifically jang, fermented sauces.

The most recognizable jang includes ganjang (soy sauce), doenjang (fermented soybean paste) and gochujang (fermented chili paste). For me, I love seeing how jang is used in contemporary Korean cuisine and Seoul has the highest concentration of fine dining chefs operating at the highest level with the best of Korean ingredients and techniques like fermentation. Chefs in Seoul right now are truly masters, and their teams of young cooks are at the top of their game. It's awe-inspiring to experience. **Mingles**, recently recognized with three Michelin stars, is truly delicious and Chef Mingoo Kang is so masterful in his approach to Korean cuisine. There's **Onjium**, which I mentioned before. And recently, I also loved the dining experiences and cooking at **San**, helmed by chef Seung-hyun Jo formerly the CDC at Benu, and **Bium**, a temple cooking-inspired fine dining restaurant by chef Dae-chun Kim.

For more casual meals, we always stop at **Joongang Haejang**, a famous hangover soup shop near COEX Mall. Their soups are so healing and comforting. Even our five-year-old son will slurp down a bowl of their soup, though of course, he's not curing a hangover! We also love the very popular **Gold Pig**, for their outstanding pork barbecue.

What's a common misconception travellers have about Seoul and what would you say to debunk it?

People talk a lot about how Seoul is difficult to get around, and it's true that traffic can be daunting.

But if you plan your trip carefully by choosing your hotel location well, you can focus on a particular neighborhood for part of the day — or even a whole day — and minimize time spent idling in traffic. Also, the subway system is very reliable and often faster!

For intrepid travellers who want to venture outside Seoul, are there places, and hideaways that you recommend for a weekend getaway?

Jeju Island is hardly a hideaway, but it's still a favorite getaway for us. We also frequently take the express train down the southern province of **Jeollanam-do**, near **Gwangju**, to visit Buddhist nun, Jeong Kwan. Her hermitage is at **Baekyangsa Temple** which is itself situated in a national park with gorgeous hiking.

Your top three travel destinations for 2026?

For 2026, we plan to visit Korea as always.

So, in addition to Korea, my top travel destinations are Hong Kong, which I miss so much! We are also hoping to visit **Provence**, where I lived for one year many years ago, specifically to dine at **Mirazur** in Menton which has been our bucket list for years. I also am dreaming of going to **Lima**, Peru, to experience **Central Restaurante**. A trip to Peru is a stretch for our schedule but I like to dream big! All of my travel destinations for next year center around food.

A restaurant you dream of going back to, or trying in 2026?

I cannot wait for the Noma pop-up in Los Angeles, which opens in March of 2026.

I've never been able to dine at Noma in Copenhagen, so this is a perfect opportunity for us, if we can manage to snag a reservation. Kwang staged at Noma and was able to dine there during his stage, so he's more relaxed but I'll be on my computer when reservations open clicking madly.





Qiong'er Jiang

CEO & Artistic Director, Shang Xia



“Shanghai is full of energy, creativity, elegance.”

Jiang Qiong'er is a contemporary Chinese designer whose work sits at the crossroads of heritage, craft and modern living. Born in Shanghai into a family of artist creators — her father Xing Tong He was the principal architect behind the Shanghai Museum — she grew up surrounded by culture, drawing and architecture. After studying Art and Design in China, she continued her training in furniture and interior design at the École des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, an experience that shaped her creative philosophy and gave her the East-West perspective that defines her work today.

In 2009, after working as Creative Director for Hermès' window displays in China and collaborating closely with Pierre-Alexis Dumas and Patrick Thomas, she co-founded and launched **SHANG XIA** as its Artistic Director and CEO. The brand was created to bring refined Chinese craftsmanship into a modern lifestyle context, celebrating traditional techniques while reinterpreting them through a contemporary design language. Her contribution to cultural exchange has been widely recognized: she was named among Forbes' 25 Most Influential Chinese People in Global Fashion and Lifestyle in 2011, awarded **Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres** by the French Republic in 2013, and later honored with the **Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite** in 2016.

Dividing her time between Shanghai and Paris, Jiang shares her Shanghai, from the evolving cultural landscape of Pudong and the West Bund to the quieter corners of the Former French Concession, and the spaces where Chinese craftsmanship, modern design and everyday life naturally meet.

Shanghai

“Being lost in Shanghai is one of the most beautiful human adventures you can have in the city.”

You divide your time between Shanghai and Paris, both known for their design and elegance. For first-time visitors to Shanghai, what's the best way to experience the city's rhythm and everyday life? Any walks, markets or moments you'd recommend?

I'm an artist and designer born in Shanghai, so I'm deeply attached to the city.

Shanghai is full of energy, creativity, elegance, history and cultural encounters. The best way to experience its rhythm is actually very simple. Have a local friend. Through them, you discover everyday places such as parks, small shops, local streets, neighborhood restaurants and concerts. That is where the real life of the city unfolds. If you don't have a local friend, speak to people who have lived there for years and ask them to share their personal addresses and rituals. Everything changes very fast. Places that felt unforgettable ten years ago might not even exist anymore. What remains timeless are walks in the Former French Concession. Let yourself get lost. Being lost in Shanghai is one of the most beautiful human adventures you can have in the city.

Shanghai's creative energy keeps evolving, from the West Bund art district to independent studios hidden in former factories. Which places best show how the city's design scene is changing right now?

Shanghai's design, art and cultural scene is extremely dynamic at the moment.

The West Bund Art District is already very developed, but the Power Station of Art, Shanghai's major contemporary art museum, is essential, especially during the Biennale, which is consistently impressive and of very high curatorial quality. The Pudong Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art is also worth visiting. Beyond contemporary art, the new Shanghai Museum in Pudong, which opened at the beginning

of 2025, is a major cultural landmark. It is around ten times larger than the former People's Square Museum, and the permanent collection has now moved there. You can easily spend a full day inside. Right next to it is the Shanghai New Library, a striking piece of architecture and a vibrant cultural space with public art and remarkable reading rooms. Places like M50 still exist, but have evolved significantly. Together, these institutions now form some of the fundamental cultural and design pillars of the city.

You've said that Shang Xia was created to bring refinement and beauty into everyday life. Where can visitors find that same spirit in Shanghai? Perhaps a restaurant, tea house or cultural space that feels quietly elegant?

Shang Xia was created to connect past, present and future through a contemporary expression of refinement and beauty in everyday life.

In Shanghai, you can find that same spirit in the growing number of Chinese-inspired contemporary restaurants, tea houses and cultural spaces. Many elegant tea houses are located in the former French Concession area, especially around Hengshan Road and Fuxing Road, a historically layered part of the city shaped by cultural encounters between East and West. If you walk there and allow yourself to wander, you will come across many quiet discoveries. Xintiandi, although often busy and touristic, still offers interesting places to explore, particularly slightly further away from the main zone where it feels more local. You will also find cultural spaces and galleries around M50, as well as newer private museums emerging across the city. This spirit is especially present in central districts like Jing'an District and Huangpu. It is expressed through architecture, restaurants, tea houses and hidden stores, where tradition and modernity naturally meet.



“The Shang Xia flagship store on Huaihai Road is a beautiful destination.”

You’ve long celebrated Chinese craftsmanship. Are there ateliers, concept stores or makers you’d encourage design-minded travellers to discover while in the city?

The Shang Xia flagship store on Huaihai Road is a beautiful destination.

Across its different floors, you can discover finely crafted collections as well as curated exhibitions featuring exceptional limited-edition works. The displays evolve regularly, so each visit feels different. Most traditional ateliers and workshops are no longer based in Shanghai due to high operating costs. They are now mainly located in the countryside or in other cities. However, there is also the Shanghai Craft Museum, near the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. The building itself, along with its garden, is very beautiful. While the scenography could be more ambitious, it is still worth a visit. Inside, you will find rooms dedicated to different crafts such as embroidery, tapestry and jade carving. It is a government-run institution, but an interesting stop for anyone curious about Chinese craftsmanship.

Every city has its quieter corners. Which neighborhoods in Shanghai still feel like hidden gems, or places that reveal its creative side away from the main streets?

Shanghai’s quiet corners are everywhere.

Even in its most crowded and famous districts, if you step away from the main streets, you will quickly find unexpected pockets of calm. That is why I always give the same advice. Let yourself get lost. In doing so, you will discover your own Shanghai, your own creative corners and your own adventure.

Can you share a book, film or series that has recently sparked your wanderlust, and why?

The book I’m currently reading is *Mémoires d’Hadrien*. It is written as the memoirs of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. I’m reading it because I’m working on a project linked to a major historical museum dedicated to ancient Rome. The exhibition will take place in May 2026 at the Musée Narbo Via in Narbonne, in the south of France. Narbonne was a key Roman city and a major hub along Mediterranean trade routes. The museum, designed by Norman Foster, is dedicated to the history and artifacts of ancient Rome. Revisiting this period through the book helps me reconnect with that world and find inspiration for my contemporary artistic work.

And finally, what are the next travel destinations on your list?

At the end of last year (2025), I traveled to London for my solo exhibition at Waddington Custot Gallery.

Then I spent time in California, in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and in Carmel for Christmas, both for a potential project and to be with friends. After that, I will travel to Narbonne to prepare my exhibition next year, then to Montpellier for the opening of Guimet Plus, the satellite of the Guimet Museum, and also to Venice to visit a glass-making workshop. So there are quite a few destinations on my list.



“Shenzhen is such a lively city full of cultural spots, artistic hubs and green spaces.”

Kristina Snaith-Lense

General Manager, Upper House

A seasoned hotelier with a lifelong passion for wellness, Kristina Snaith-Lense began her career with Swire Hotels in 2012, working her way up to the position of General Manager for the award-winning Upper House Hong Kong in 2021.

Recently, Kristina has taken the helm at the new Upper House in Shenzhen ahead of its highly anticipated opening in 2027. This marks Swire Hotels' first new opening in nine years and its entry into one of the fastest-growing cities in the Greater Bay Area of China. Kristina will also oversee wellness projects for Swire Hotels, drawing on her deep expertise and personal passion for bringing wellbeing into every aspect of the guest experience.

Shenzhen



In the last 20 years, Shenzhen has leapfrogged from an industrial city just across the Hong Kong border, to a vibrant leisure destination with luxury hotels, contemporary museums and Michelin-starred restaurants. For those visiting Shenzhen for the first time, what are your top recommendations?

Shenzhen is such a lively city full of cultural spots, artistic hubs and green spaces. Here are some of my favorites:

Shenzhen Bay Park – a lovely seaside park with stunning views and running trails – perfect for my daily run and skoot with the boys!

Design Society — for its thought-provoking cultural programming and exhibitions that test new ideas and foster creative dialogue between design and society.

Shenzhen Bay Culture Park — a new landmark by the renowned MAD. I love the current installations by the Tate and the London Design Museum, especially **‘Chairs: Form, Function, Future’**, which opened in November 2025. The exhibition features 102 chairs from the museum’s collection and is curated by Naiyi Wang, an alumna of the museum’s MA in Curating Contemporary Design, delivered in partnership with Kingston University.

Nantou City — a fascinating mix of heritage and modern design, such as the **new guesthouse designed by Neri&Hu**.

OCT Loft Creative Culture Park — a vibrant, diverse place filled with art galleries, coffee shops, creative markets and more. You can spend an entire afternoon here.

Yantian Seaside Boardwalk — one of the best walkways with great views in the city.

Shenzhen Museum of Contemporary Art & Urban Planning — a good introduction to understanding the city and its evolution.

Lianhuashan Park — another urban green space for unwinding and quite popular as it’s easily accessible and ideal for a spontaneous nature break.

Dapeng Fortress — a 600-year-old coastal fort that showcases preserved ancient architecture that’s still inhabited today, and the surrounding village is a peaceful place to walk with scenic views of Dapeng Bay.

Sea World Culture and Arts Center — one of the best spots to go for art exhibitions and enjoy coffee with a sea view.

Shenzhen’s culinary landscape is equally diverse and exciting, from local eateries to fine dining restaurants. What are some of your favorite dining places and the signature dishes to order?

Fumée — modern Chinese cuisine using ingredients and techniques from all over China. The Tofu Trio is a must-try.

庆春朴门 – fine vegetarian cuisine with beautifully restrained and elegant interior.

本源茶素空间 – another excellent vegetarian option.

Xi Yue House 深圳福田喜公館 for Jiangzhe cuisine and the delicious Peking roasted duck!

Avant — innovative fine dining from Chicago’s Alinea.

BingSheng Pin Wei — a Black Pearl-recognized Cantonese restaurant and one of my favorite spots to savour char siu.

Hope & Sesame – the sister bar of the award-winning Guangzhou counterpart that our Houses love collaborating with. What I love about the SZ location is the newly launched concept The August where unique storytelling and cocktail culture comes to life in a truly unique and deeply personalized way. I can’t wait to see what Andrew and Bastian do next!



“Shopping in Nantou City feels like diving into a treasure chest.”

Shenzhen is synonymous with shopping. What are some of your favorite places?

Shopping in Nantou City feels like diving into a treasure chest, where you can find almost everything from cultural handicrafts to vintage clothing and unexpected accessories.

There are so many hidden gems within the historical neighborhood such as 什獲, a craft store with handmakde pieces and cultural traditions from diverse ethnic groups across China. And if you're into timeless style, 寒鴉雀靜 is the spot for timeless fashion pieces from around the world.

Yuanling Xincun is my another go-to neighborhood where you can find vintage shops, indie bookstores and cozy coffee spots. There's a cool vintage shop called **Swing Vintage** that has everything from vinyl records to retro clothing.

I've always had a soft spot for wellness, so I'm constantly on the hunt towards wellness-centric stores or studios. 梵音未來 is a lovely spot, with curated selection of handmade Nepalese singing bowls and soothing sound healing sessions. A little oasis of calm you won't want to miss!

Your work takes you everywhere but what remains on your travel bucket list?

My bucket list is all about hotels that connect with their destinations! NIHI in Sumba for a surfing and outdoor adventure; Passalacqua is a love letter to Lake Como; and Lanserhof in Tyrol for the ultimate health reset.

What are your wellness tips on the go?

AG1 shaker and travel packs: I start this on the plane to keep my gut health intact. It keeps you hydrated and regular!

Bonasana supplements: I usually travel with a bottle of their Quicksilver Immune charge+ to fight off any germs.

Biodance Sleep masks: it's my go-to any long-haul flight which helps prevent dry skin / dull complexion — I put it on before sleeping and let it do its magic!

Laneige Lip Sleeping mask: no cracked lips from in-flight air con or change of climate.

Essential oils: I love the Subtle Energies blends to uplift and adjust to different time zones.

My custom pocket crystals by Stone & Stars: tiger's eye for protection and grounding.

Portable red-light belt: this is a gift from a great friend of mine and it goes everywhere with me. It helps reduce inflammation in any part of the body after a 15-minute session, which eases any stiffness on the road!

Palo santo/ Sage: This is to cleanse any new space. I love the Sagrada Madre sticks from Slowood – obviously a no to hotel safety, but I will gently cleanse the hotel room or wherever we stay upon arrival. It also smells divine!

Heveya x UP! Health travel pillow: sleep hygiene is so important, and this is great for the spine when sleeping away from the comforts of home!

Asics Gel Kayano running shoes and compression run socks: as soon as I get off the plane, I love to get my steps in as it helps battling jetlag and defogging post flight. It's such a great way to get your bearings in a new city too. Compression socks are a must for me to alleviate post-flight swelling! Ideally, I also love a post-run infrared sauna and cold plunge in the hotel to fully freshen up and reduce inflammation.





“When you grow up here, you see tradition everywhere.”



Antonio Fratantoni

Ceramicist

Antonio Fratantoni is a Sicilian ceramicist whose work blends centuries-old craftsmanship with a contemporary eye, a combination that has made his pieces increasingly visible in some of the most beautiful hotels, homes and cultural spaces across Sicily and beyond. From his studio in Santo Stefano di Camastra, he creates ceramics that are anything but minimal: joyful, richly colored, often playfully exaggerated in shape, and rooted in the bold visual language of the island.

His pieces draw on Sicily's decorative traditions, with vibrant glazes, geometric and floral motifs, and sun-soaked palettes, yet they never feel like replicas of the past. Instead, he reinterprets these elements with a light touch, creating objects that carry the spirit of the island in a way that feels fresh and alive. This authenticity and immediacy have caught the attention of hoteliers and designers who want to bring a true sense of place into their interiors.

We invited Antonio to share the flavors, villages and small rituals that inspire him most, offering a glimpse into the Sicily that shapes his work: colorful, expressive and full of character.

“simplicity is exactly what feels so Sicilian.”

Your ceramics combine Sicilian artisanal tradition with contemporary creativity. How does this dialogue between past and present influence the way you live and tell the story of Sicily?

When you grow up here, you see tradition everywhere. It's in the colors of the houses — those deep terracottas and cobalt blues — in the old wrought-iron balconies, in the hand-painted tiles you walk over without even thinking.

Even the way people set the table, with mismatched ceramics that have been in the family forever, tells a story. My work comes from that world. When I share Sicily with others, I try to show this everyday beauty: the patterns inspired by ancient maiolica, the shapes borrowed from old water jugs or the jars used to store olives. Behind many of the objects I create there is a whole tradition to recount, and at the same time to reinterpret and personalize, so that each piece feels rooted in history but also completely my own. That dialogue between past and present is what keeps the island alive for me, and what I hope people feel when they see my ceramics.

What is one Sicilian experience — big or small — that, for you, best represents the spirit and beauty of the island?

For me, it would be a day on the Aeolian Islands.

You take the boat in the morning and as you leave the coast behind, the water shifts from green to a deep, almost impossible blue. Little by little, the islands appear on the horizon: Lipari, Salina, maybe even Stromboli with its perfect volcano shape. There's a calm that comes from being out there, just the sea and the sound of the wind. You stop in a small cove,

swim in water so clear you can see the rocks on the bottom, then have lunch on board or in a tiny harbour where time feels slower. You talk, you rest, you do nothing in particular. And then in the evening, you return and eat a pizza on the beach while the sun goes down. It's simple, but that simplicity is exactly what feels so Sicilian: being outside, close to nature, sharing the moment without hurry.

Your closest friends are visiting Sicily for the first time. What are the “musts” — things to do, see, taste and discover (restaurants, dishes, places, hidden corners, etc.)?

I would start with the ceramics, because they're one of the most recognizable parts of Sicilian culture.

In the workshops you see how the pieces are made — the molds, the glazes, the traditional patterns — and it gives you a real sense of local craft.

Then I would take them to a few fishing villages that show different sides of the island: Cefalù for its mix of beach and Norman architecture, Marzamemi for its small central piazza and old tonnara buildings, and the Tonnara of Scopello for the cliffs and the historic tuna warehouses right on the water. These are places where you can simply walk around, explore the narrow streets, stop for a coffee, and get a feel for daily life by the sea.

For food, I would recommend trying a cannolo filled on the spot with fresh ricotta — it really does taste different — and pasta with wild fennel and sardines, which is one of the most traditional dishes on the island. Both are straightforward, local classics that tell you a lot about Sicilian ingredients and flavors.



“I would describe Sicily with four simple words: history, culture, sun and sea.”

What village or neighborhood do you think deserves more attention?

I may be biased, but I would say Santo Stefano di Camastra, my hometown.

People know it for its ceramics, but the story goes much deeper. The town was rebuilt in the late 17th century after a landslide destroyed the original settlement, and since then pottery has been part of its identity. You still find workshops using traditional techniques, the same kilns and colors passed down for generations. Even the street signs are made of hand-painted tiles. It's a place where craft isn't a trend but everyday life, and that gives the town a character that feels very Sicilian and very real.

What are your next three dream destinations?

Dream destinations: the Canary Islands, Rio de Janeiro, Marrakech.

A book, film or TV series that made you want to travel?

The Picture of Dorian Gray.

It's not a travel book at all, but the atmosphere of London in those pages fascinated me. The foggy streets, the grand townhouses, the hidden gardens, the salons where art, beauty and conversation were everything. It made me curious about the real city behind that world: the galleries, the old neighborhoods, the feeling of history layered with elegance and a bit of mystery.

A restaurant you dream of returning to, or one you would love to try?

My dream is to taste the typical cuisines of every place I visit.

Imagine someone has never even heard of Sicily — how would you describe it in a few words?

I would describe Sicily with four simple words: history, culture, sun and sea.

What is one Sicilian dish you still dream about today?

The dish I still dream about today is my grandmother's eggplant caponata.

What is one experience that feels deeply local, but is still accessible to someone visiting for the first time?

Enjoying the sunset on the beach and watching the sun go to sleep on the horizon.

What is your most precious memory linked to Sicily?

Lunches at my grandparents' house with the whole family, where a simple meal turned into a celebration.

What is a misconception travellers often have about Sicily, and what would you say to correct it?

In reality, I very often hear people say that Sicily is a wonderful place and that anyone would love to come and live here.

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Wee-Teng Wen

Managing Partner and Founder,
The Lo & Behold Group

“the real Singapore is in its contradictions,
creativity, and subcultures.”

Teng's decision to enter hospitality in 2005 was equal parts mission and serendipity. Stumbling upon an unused rooftop above Odeon Towers, he was drawn to its potential. At the time, Singapore's scene was still young and lacked the cultural confidence of other cities. Determined to create something with a distinctive Singapore flavor, he launched Loof, a rooftop bar that celebrated local idiosyncrasies while providing a platform for the nation's creatives.

Loof's success marked the beginning of The Lo & Behold Group's journey to make the city more lovable through bold ideas and intentional hospitality. A portfolio of 15 venues followed, each adding to the city in its own way: a beach club that fostered a vibrant beach culture (**Tanjong Beach Club**), a three-Michelin-starred restaurant that redefined fine dining (**Odette**), an award-winning boutique hotel that became a portal to local culture (**The Warehouse Hotel**), and a creative cluster home to over 40 independent brands (**New Bahru**).

Teng believes food and hospitality shape the way people experience a city, especially in Singapore where dining is central to life. His approach — part art, part science, and a touch of “secret sauce” — has earned global awards, while a strong focus on people and culture secured the Group's place among Singapore's Best Workplaces since 2024.

Singapore



You've consistently been hailed for celebrating the design, creative, and culinary dimensions intrinsic to Singapore's cultural heritage, which are reflected in the projects you've championed. To first-time visitors as well as jaded travellers who've been to Singapore many times, what is your "quintessential" list of places and experiences that best capture its hidden soul and creative energy?

Nature (For a glimpse of Singapore's most dramatic tropical landscapes)

MacRitchie Reservoir, especially before 8am

Green Corridor

Neighborhoods

Tiong Bahru Market for breakfast classics like Loo's Hainanese Curry Rice, Chicken Rice, Jian Bo Shui Kueh.

Lavender for Moonchild, Chye Seng Huat Hardware, Druggists, Fiasco By Juice and Kallang Riverside Park.

Dempsey — Former army barracks set in an overgrown jungle; most apparent at Claudine, Air CCCC, Ps Cafe, Nowhere Baths.

New Bahru — A former girl's school turned local creative cluster where you can spend hours browsing the very best of Singapore's design and creative talents.

Places

Belimbing — A window into the potential of Singapore's food.

Fico — Its pastoral locale in East Coast Park and Puglian masseria-esque setting, proudly advocates living better, not faster.

Tanchen Studio — A textile studio that designs functional yet artful objects.

In Good Company — A fashion label that feels understated, inventive, and deeply considered.

Singapore is, without question, a top culinary destination widely known for its traditional dishes like bak kut teh, laksa, Hainanese chicken rice and more. Name your ‘must-have’ iconic dishes and where you really go to have them?

Prawn Mee from Da Dong Prawn Noodles

Prata from Mr & Mrs Mohgan’s Super Crispy Roti Prata

Curry Rice from Loo’s Hainanese Curry Rice at Tiong Bahru market

Bak Chor Mee (minced pork noodles) from Bedok 85 Fengshan Food Centre

Fishball noodles from Ah Hua Teochew Fishball Noodle

Laksa from Janggut Laksa @Queensway Shopping Centre

And of course, **nasi lemak** from The Coconut Club!

What do people get wrong about Singapore?

Singapore is often seen as efficient and clean, but not necessarily the most interesting or culturally confident place.

But the real Singapore is in its contradictions, creativity, and subcultures — hiding in plain sight until you dig deeper.

Your work takes you everywhere but what remains on your travel bucket list? And why?

Faroe Islands, it’s amazing to see how a food scene is emerging out of a wild landscape.

More of Mexico. I can’t get enough of how beautiful and delicious things come together so effortlessly in this country.

A restaurant you dream of going back to, or have yet to try?

Tenzushi Kyomachi is a gem.

Just five counter seats where the chef practices “sushi by addition,” layering flavors on the freshest local seafood for an intimate, almost sacred experience. In sharp contrast to the rigid Edomae style, rules are broken, but everything is delicious.



Michael Kaminer

Journalist



Michael Kaminer is an accomplished journalist whose work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Barron's*, *Business Insider*, *Travel & Leisure*, *The Washington Post*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*, among many others. A recovering public-relations agency founder who successfully transitioned into journalism, Michael brings a rare dual perspective on media and storytelling.

Since 2006, he has covered travel, real estate, food, culture, and the arts for leading national and international outlets, with a reputation for insightful reporting and an engaging narrative style. In addition to his feature writing, Michael also curated the Observer's influential PR Power List, one of the industry's most anticipated annual rankings, for more than a decade.

Drawing on more than 15 years in journalism and communications, Michael remains curious about the people and places shaping how we live, travel, and connect.

“Toronto is a vast, fast, energetic city that’s distinctly Canadian, but boisterously global.”

Toronto



“Toronto’s neighborhood festivals are actually about neighborhoods.”

How would you describe Toronto in a few words?

Toronto is a vast, fast, energetic city that’s distinctly Canadian, but boisterously global.

Your close friends are visiting the destination for the first time. What are the top ten “must” do, see, eat, experiences that you invite them to do?

Wander the Kensington Market neighborhood, which manages to retain its boho character in an always-changing, fast-gentrifying city.

Indie businesses like **Moonbean Coffee** are local treasures.

Take the TTC – as locals call the subway -- to the west side’s 400-acre **High Park**. Roam forest paths, bask on a bench, or just people-watch.

Walk through the University of Toronto campus along Hoskin Avenue, where you pass landmarks like the Gothic-Revival **Soldiers’ Tower** and the **Robarts Library**, a terrific (and divisive) Brutalist colossus.

Join regulars and tourists in the inevitable line for weekend brunch at **The Senator**, Toronto’s oldest restaurant, and still the coolest; get the Real Good Plate (C\$32), with two eggs, bacon, sausage, maple baked beans, home fries,

toast, and pancakes or French toast. Coffee’s fantastic, too. Stroll the **Bata Shoe Museum**, one of the world’s only museums dedicated to footwear. It’s smart, fun, and underappreciated.

Grab an espresso at **Jet Fuel Coffee** on Parliament Street in Cabbagetown, where crunchy rock music or heavy metal is usually cranked high.

Ride the 506 College streetcar all the way from the Parkside Road west-end terminus in High Park to Main Street Station at the other end of the line, passing Little Italy, Chinatown, the University of Toronto, and a bunch of fantastic neighborhoods.

Browse **St. Lawrence Market**, one of the continent’s great public markets. Visit Saturday, when the market’s new glass pavilion hosts a farmers market. The main market hall is open year-round.

Visit the **CN Tower** - it’s worth the wait. Or for mind-blowing city views with taste-bud stimulation, dine at Aera, on the 38th floor of downtown’s The Well complex.

At downtown’s perennially packed Eaton Centre mall, shop the new branch of Quebec City-based **Simons**, a

185-year-old department store brand with a phenomenal private label, thoughtful designer selection, and must-have housewares. It’s a proudly Canadian enterprise.

What would be your itinerary if someone was only spending 24 hours in Toronto?

Walk south on Yonge Street from Bloor Street all the way to Queen’s Quay and the water.

Visit a downtown attraction, like the Hockey Hall of Fame or Ripley’s Aquarium. Visit St. Lawrence Market and wander around its neighborhood, one of Toronto’s oldest. If you can snag a table, head to **Sunnys Chinese**, Chef David Schwartz’s retro-swanky hotspot inside a Kensington Market mini-mall. End the night with a spruce-infused cocktail or absinthe at **Bar Chef**, which just opened a branch in NYC; I don’t drink alcohol, and there’s also a great mocktail lineup.

What’s a hidden neighborhood that you feel deserves more attention?

The Danforth, historically a Greek neighborhood, isn’t exactly hidden, but it’s becoming a creative hub as artisans, makers, and visual artists move east from the rapidly gentrifying west side.

What's an experience that's local but still accessible to first-time visitors?

Toronto's neighborhood festivals are actually about neighborhoods – when I lived in New York, street fairs meant vendors from God knows where selling fried dreck and polyester socks. Check the City of Toronto's **Festivals & Events Calendar**. I also love the **Word on the Street** literary festival, the **Taste of India** festival, and, of course, Toronto's gigantic **Pride** festival.

What's your most cherished moment tied to Toronto?

It's a moment I relive all the time: Walking down Spadina Avenue through Chinatown, with the CN Tower and downtown skyline looming in the distance. It's one of those moments that doesn't feel like anywhere else, and especially magical at dusk.

Name up to 5 'must have' dishes in Toronto and where to try them?

Peameal bacon sandwich at St. Lawrence Market's **Carousel Bakery**. Touristy, but great.

Chocolate babka from **Harbord Bakery**.

House-made pastrami with mustard and pickles at **Linny's**, another David Schwartz must-visit.

Green peas with white chocolate at **Ten**, Julian Bentivegna's sublime plant-based restaurant. Note the menu changes constantly, and there are only ten seats.

Manga prawn curry with basmati rice at Indian Street Food Co. inside the terrific Waterworks Food Hall.

What's a common misconception travelers have about your destination and what would you say to debunk it?

People think Toronto's nondescript and homogeneous. It's not.

It's got fantastic design, cutting-edge buildings, and a deep pool of vernacular architecture (though disappearing fast). On the second point: I spent decades in New York, and Toronto feels even more diverse.

What are your next top three travel destinations on your list?

Copenhagen, Shanghai, Santiago

A book, movie or TV series that has given you wanderlust?

Anything set in modern-day Tokyo.

If you were to concoct a "scent of place" for Toronto, what would its fragrance notes be?

Floral or pine (neighborhoods like the Annex are very leafy), coffee (Toronto's a huge coffee city), thyme, basil, or ginger (to evoke Asian cuisines), and snow. It snows a lot here.





Cecilia Apelin

CEO and Co-Founder, Ciel Creative Space

“Tulum is where the jungle meets the ocean and everything slows down.”

Cecilia Apelin is an entrepreneur, creative visionary, and changemaker whose work bridges design, fashion, and art. As CEO and Co-founder of Ciel Creative Space, a 40,000-square-foot sanctuary for artists in Berkeley, California, Cecilia has redefined what it means to create and collaborate.

Her career spans more than two decades across advertising, music, tech, and fashion, producing award-winning campaigns. Driven by a mission to disrupt the creative industry and champion diversity.

For Cecilia, Tulum is more than a getaway — it's a state of mind. A place where jungle meets ocean, ancient energy mingles with modern design, and creativity flows as freely as the cenotes. In this conversation, she shares why Tulum feels like stepping into a softer timeline, her must-do experiences, and the flavors and rituals that keep her coming back.

Tulum



“Floating in a cenote in this little cave all to ourselves.”

Imagine someone had never heard of the city / destination - how you would describe it to them in a few words?

Tulum is where the jungle meets the ocean and everything slows down.

It feels like stepping into a softer timeline. The jungle is alive, the water is unreal, and you can literally roll out of bed and be in nature. It is this perfect mix of ancient energy and modern design, with beautifully styled hotels, incredible food, and DJs from all over the world setting the vibe. Chill, creative, and just the right amount of magical.

What are your top ten “must” do, see, eat, experience in Tulum for first-time visitors?

Swim in Cenote Dos Ojos. The crystal-clear water feels like a baptism for the soul.

Catch sunrise at Tulum Beach. The light glows pink and gold like nowhere else.

Have dinner at Arca. The wood-fired octopus and cocktails are unforgettable.

Eat tacos al pastor at Taquería Honorio. It is the bite you will talk about for years.

Explore the Tulum Ruins. Ocean cliffs, Mayan history, and breathtaking views. Book a sound healing or temazcal ceremony. It is the heart of Tulum’s spiritual energy.

Spend an afternoon at Gitano Beach Club. Music, mezcal, and full jungle chic energy.

Grab breakfast at Raw Love Café. Açaí bowls under the palms.

Bike through the hotel zone. Stop at boutiques, cafés, and art installations along the way.

Have sundown drinks at Casa Jaguar. The most stylish jungle vibes at night.



What would be your ideal itinerary for 24 hours in Tulum?

- 7:00 AM Sunrise swim at the beach.
- 8:00 AM Breakfast at Raw Love Café.
- 9:30 AM Explore the Tulum Ruins before the crowds and heat.
- 12:00 PM Cenote time! Head to Dos Ojos or Gran Cenote.
- 2:00 PM Tacos at Taquería Honorio.
- 4:00 PM Massage + spa at Yáan Wellness.
- 7:00 PM Dinner at Arca (get the tasting menu if available).
- 9:00 PM Mezcal + live music at Gitano or Casa Jaguar.
- 11:00 PM Late-night stargazing on the beach. Perfect ending.

What's a hidden neighborhood that you feel deserves more attention?

La Veleta is this emerging creative pocket with indie cafés, cool new restaurants, boutique homes, and jungle-side studios.

It is where the locals and the long-term creatives actually hang out.

What's an experience that's local but still accessible to first-time visitors?

A temazcal ceremony led by a Mayan healer. It is intense, grounding, purifying, and deeply connected to the land.

What's your most cherished moment tied to this destination?

Floating in a cenote in this little cave all to ourselves, with the sun breaking through the limestone ceiling. We were weightless in this healing, ancient water, completely suspended in quiet. It felt like time did not exist and everything was possible.

Must-have dishes and where to try them?

Cochinita pibil, a smoky, tender, citrus-marinated pork on pillowy bread - Taquería Honorio

Seafood tostada (especially tuna) - Posada Margherita

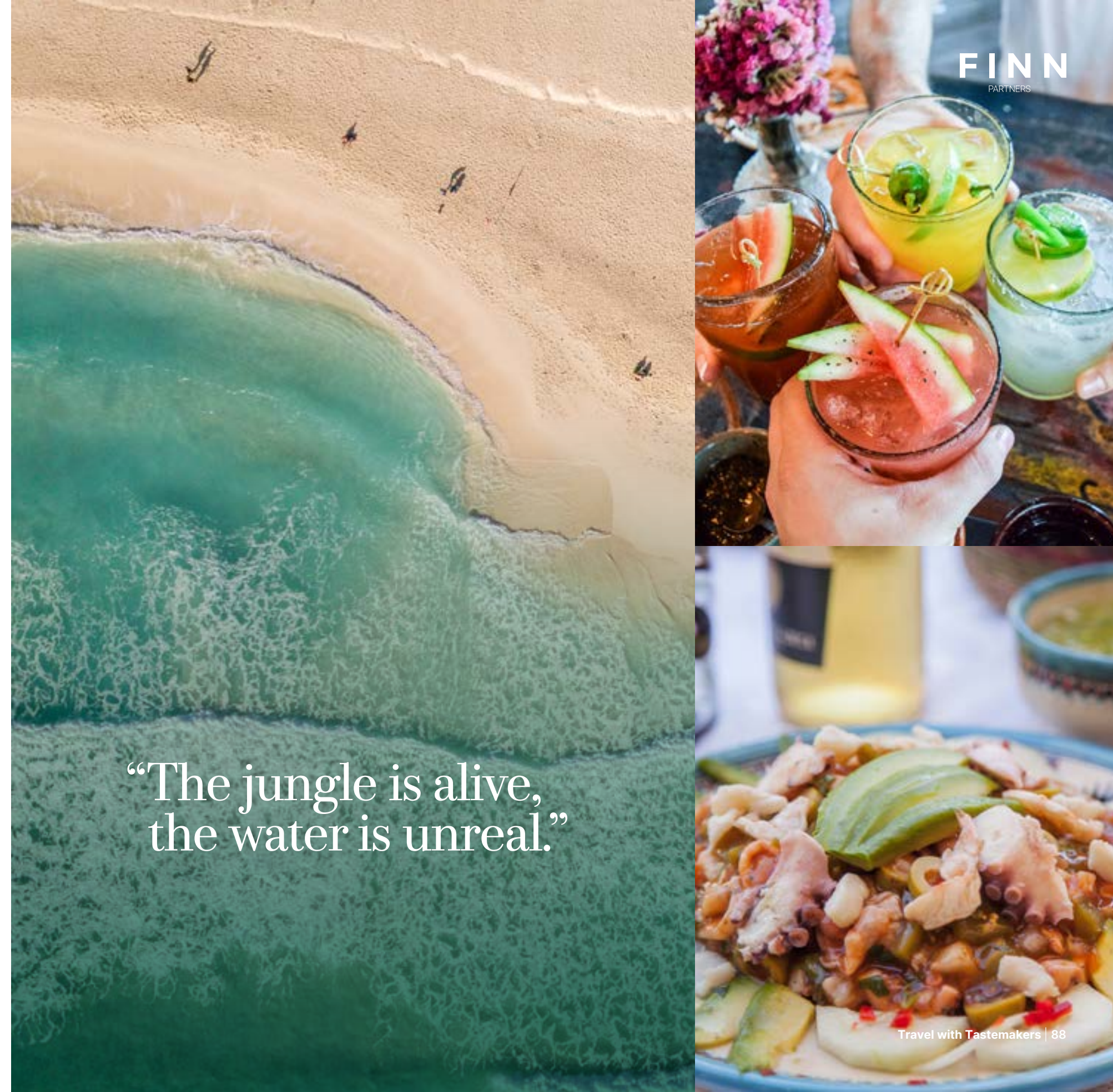
Birria tacos - Safari Tulum

Churros + hot chocolate - La Lupita (for dessert bliss)

What's a common misconception travelers have about your destination and what would you say to debunk it?

"Tulum is only for influencers."

Not true. Tulum has layers. Beyond the beach clubs there is a real community, rich Mayan culture, ancient healing traditions, and food that will seriously change your life. There is so much depth if you actually look for it.



“The jungle is alive,
the water is unreal.”

“it is one of Europe’s most elegant and soulful places.”



Mimi Thorisson

Cookbook Author & TV Personality



Mimi Thorisson is a French-Chinese mother of eight, cookbook author, food writer, and television host celebrated for her elegant, soulful approach to European home cooking. Born and raised in Hong Kong and France, she rose to prominence with her award-winning blog Manger back in 2011, which blended heartfelt storytelling, recipes, and photography by her husband, Oddur Thorisson.

Her books ‘A Kitchen in France’ and ‘Old World Italian’ were both international bestsellers, establishing her as a leading voice in French and Italian cuisine. She also authored French Country Cooking and hosted the popular Canal+ TV series ‘La Table de Mimi’.

Now based in Turin, Italy, Mimi continues to teach, write, and share her love of seasonal, family-centered food through workshops. Her new cookbook, ‘A Kitchen in Italy’, takes readers into her Torino apartment with recipes that have found their way into her family’s daily lives.

Turin

“Turin is a city where tradition and creativity coexist beautifully.”

Turin has been called “Italy’s most underrated destination” by The Telegraph, and “Italy’s secret city” by Forbes. What’s a common misconception travelers have about Turin and what would you say to debunk it?

Many still think of Turin as a grey, industrial city, more about business than beauty. Yet to me, it is one of Europe’s most elegant and soulful places.

It’s a city filled with grace and light, with grand arcades, tree-lined boulevards, beautiful, endless porticos, and the most beautiful cafés in Italy that have kept their Belle Époque charm. The markets are full of life, the air smells of roasted hazelnuts and coffee, and the rhythm of daily life has a quiet poetry. Turin is not a secret; it is simply elegant and refined — a true Italian city. You have to slow down to see it. It was the capital of Italy after all.

To first-time visitors, what is your recommended list of places and experiences one must do that best captures the city’s essence?

*Start your morning in Piazza San Carlo, one of the most beautiful squares in Italy, and have a coffee at **Caffè Torino**.*

From there, wander through **Piazza Castello**, where all of Turin seems to gather. You can visit the royal palace, the **Palazzo Madama** in all its grandeur.

Visit the **Egyptian Museum**, which is extraordinary, and take a slow walk along the Po River and admire all the old-school rowing clubs at dusk, when the Alps shimmer in the distance.

Do not miss the **Mole Antonelliana**, the city’s proud landmark, or the historic cafés such as **Baratti & Milano** and **Caffè Fiorio**, where history and elegance meet.

As a foodie, share with us your favorite restaurants, hidden gems and markets in the city and the dishes one should order in these places.

Turin is a city where tradition and creativity coexist beautifully. It is deeply rooted in its land, yet always curious. These are some of the places I love:

Porta Palazzo Farmers’ Market – the biggest in Europe. Go there for its vibrant soul and extraordinary produce, especially the cheeses and seasonal truffles in late fall.

Al Gatto Nero - we always say it’s one of the reasons we moved to Turin! It’s an exceptional restaurant straight out of the ‘50s. Superb food. The tajarin with tomato sauce is simply perfect and the porcini fritters are perfect.

Ristorante Consorzio – A celebration of Piedmontese cuisine with heart; try the tajarin al ragù del cortile and the bone-marrow risotto.

Tre Galline – One of Turin’s oldest and most authentic restaurants; my favorite bagna cauda (a traditional Piedmontese dish) ever.

Magazzino 52 - a must-try in Turin. Their vitello tonnato is my favorite.

Scannabue – Honest, generous cooking in the San Salvario neighborhood; any gourmet will agree they do the best agnolotti in Italy.

Al Bicerin – The historic café where you must try the bicerin, a perfect blend of espresso, chocolate, and cream. And visit the incredible Consolata church.

Peyrano - Best chocolates in the world.

Caffè Mulassano – Tiny, elegant, and the birthplace of the tramezzino sandwich.



The Gran Balôn antique market held every second Sunday of the month. It's a real gem of a place and true connoisseurs know it's one of the best in Italy. It's where I go to find my antique Ginori dinnerware.

You hold cooking and photography workshops throughout Europe and now in Hong Kong. Your work takes you everywhere but what remains on your travel bucket list?

I have always been fascinated by the Silk Road, that ancient thread connecting East and West, where so many cultures and flavors once met. I would love to travel along it slowly, tasting and learning along the way. **Japan** is another place that continues to call me, for its quiet devotion to craft and beauty, and **Turkey**, for its warmth, its spice, and the poetry of its markets. These are places where food is history and storytelling, and where hospitality still feels sacred.

What do you think are the most exciting culinary destinations in the world today, shaping the future of gastronomy?

For me, China is the most inspiring culinary destination today.

There is a remarkable return to tradition and a rediscovery of its deep, regional roots. At the same time, the country is embracing creativity and refinement in ways that feel both modern and timeless. I also find **Japan** and **Mexico** endlessly inspiring, as both honor seasonality, simplicity, and a profound sense of place. What connects these places is a purity in the way

they approach food, a balance between history and innovation that feels alive and enduring.

Is there a piece of music, song, or artist you have on loop that you can always count on to put you in a creative mood?

When I entertain, I love Chet Baker, Dionne Warwick and Nat King Cole.

And a bit of Opera too, especially Madame Butterfly. But if it's just me cooking away and doing my 'thing' in the kitchen, I am an '80s girl at heart. I have the cutest Roberts radio and switch on Smooth '80s (a radio station) and I am happy. And I can't get enough of George Michael's 'Everything She Wants'!

You make cooking and hosting look effortless and elegant. If you were to give only one tried-and-true advice about how to do it, what would it be?

The secret is to make people feel at home.

True hospitality is never about perfection; it is about presence and warmth. When food is made with love and the table is full of laughter, stories, and generosity, everything else becomes beautiful on its own. When I host, I make sure to make my guests feel part of the family. We end up preparing dishes together and they learn a trick or two or a new recipe. It's all about having fun.

<https://mimithorisson.com/>
IG: [@mimithor](https://www.instagram.com/mimithor)



Bucket lists, hot destinations and menus



Our Tastemakers' Bucket List

Bora Bora

Coral reefs and Polynesian craft traditions offer a deeply place-specific expression of island life beyond its overwater bungalow image.

Chandigarh

A rare chance to experience Le Corbusier's modernist vision at city scale, from concrete civic buildings to everyday residential life shaped by design principles.

Hong Kong

Street markets, a fiercely defined food culture, and a thriving art scene create the cultural identity that is unmistakably its own.

Istanbul

Its cultural richness is expressed through its enduring craft traditions, daily tea rituals are set against an architectural landscape that spans ancient ruins, Ottoman mosques and modernist interpretations.

Kyoto

It remains the spiritual home of Japanese aesthetics, with tea ceremonies, shokunin craftsmanship and hyper seasonal cuisine defining its cultural gravity.

Mongolia

Vast steppe landscapes and enduring nomadic traditions reflect a long-standing, land-based culture shaped by adaptability, community and a deep environmental knowledge.

Naoshima

Its transformation into an art island — featuring Tadao Ando's concrete minimalism and Benesse's museum program — has made Naoshima a global design pilgrimage site.

Penang

Penang's layered food culture, from laksa to char kway teow, reflects centuries of maritime trade and cultural exchange.

Shanghai

Its creative pulse lives in its constant reinvention, where Art Deco façades, alleyway shikumen homes and former factories are reimagined as galleries, cafés and cultural hubs.

Singapore

Singapore's appeal lies in its ultra modern attractions that sit alongside a historically rich food culture.

Silk Road

The Silk Road stands as one of history's most monumental travel corridors, once representing the height of exploration and exchange as it connected East and West.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's cinnamon estates, colonial rail routes and spice driven home cooking place sensory experience at the heart of travel.



Our Tastemakers' Bucket List

Basque Country

An identity anchored in local produce, fishing traditions and a regional cuisine marrying the culinary influences of two iconic cultures, France and Spain.

Canary Islands

The islands' elemental terrain is inspiring a new generation of creatives, contemporary art practices, brutalist leaning architecture and site-specific works.

Civita di Bagnoregio

Accessible solely by footbridge visitors are brought back to a city at human scale with stone streets, slow rhythms and panoramic views for a more deliberate, contemplative way of traveling.

Copenhagen

The city's intimate scale packs an influence that extends beyond restaurants into design-led urban planning and circular sustainability models.

Dublin

Dublin's creative resurgence is visible in contemporary Irish design, alongside its literary and pub centered social traditions.

Faroe Islands

Its dramatic terrain has long shaped the cultural expression and culinary traditions of the region, where methods once rooted in survival have since been reinterpreted as delicacies within the islands' contemporary food scene.

Galicia

Galicia's Atlantic identity is expressed through seafood driven cuisine, stone architecture and pilgrimage traditions of Santiago de Compostela.

Girona

Girona's medieval streets and avant garde dining scene make it both historically rich and creatively progressive.

Iceland

Elemental landscapes — shaped by glaciers, volcanoes and geothermal energy — inspire nature centric travel experiences, and one of the best places in the world to experience the aurora borealis.

Orvieto

Orvieto's subterranean caves, Etruscan history and white wine culture offer a quiet depth away from Italy's major cities.

Provence

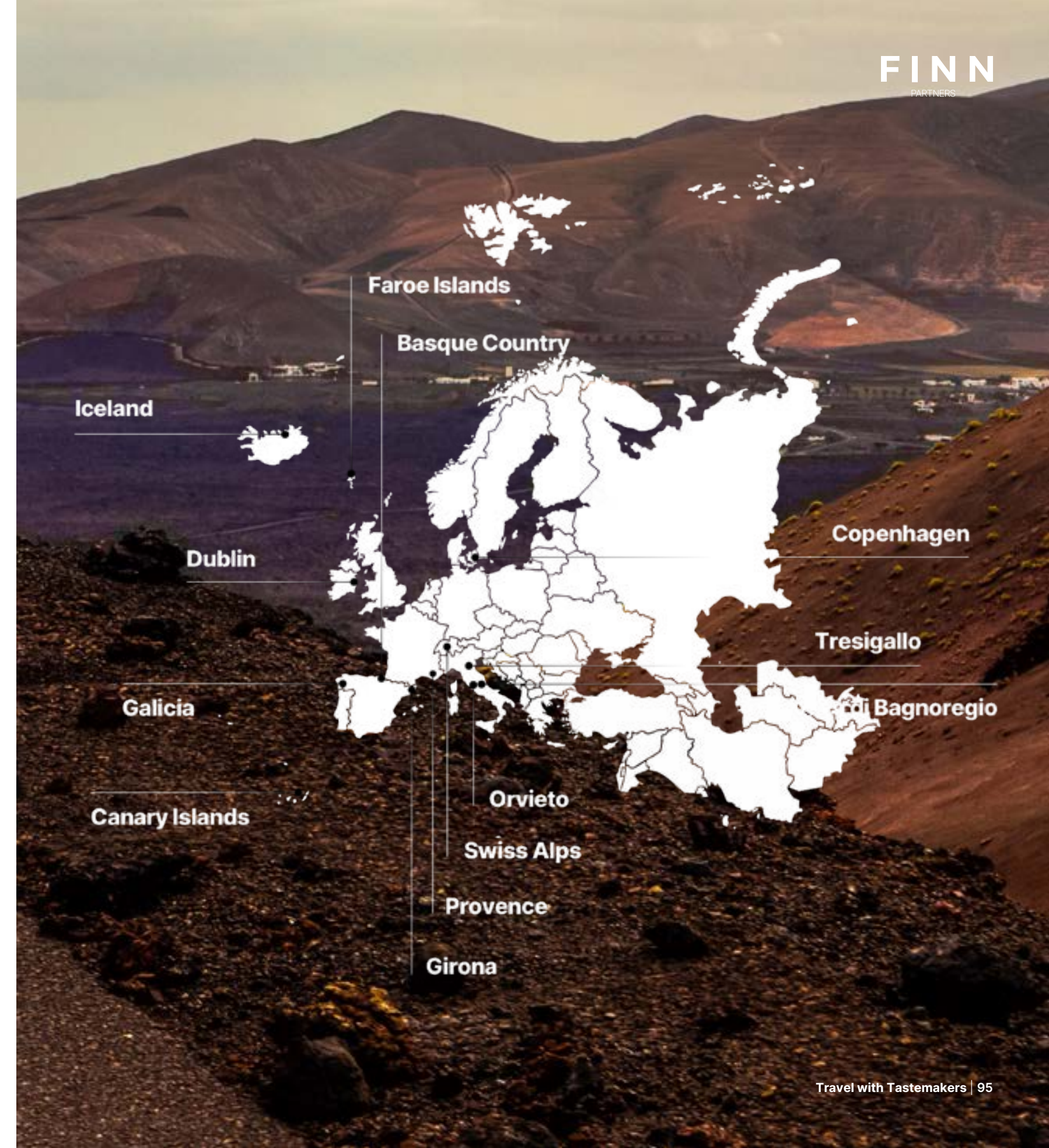
Provence's clay pottery, olive groves, lavender fields and market culture define a lifestyle rooted in terroir and everyday ritual.

Swiss Alps

The Swiss Alps combine precision engineering, Alpine gastronomy and dramatic landscapes into a refined mountain culture.

Tresigallo

Tresigallo's rationalist architecture reveals a lesser known chapter of Italian modernism frozen in time.



Our Tastemakers' Bucket List

Detroit

Its comeback has been an innovative rebirth of industrial architecture, independent galleries and a soul infused food scene that honors Black culinary heritage and art culture.

Mexico City

Pre Hispanic ruins, modernist architecture and neighborhood driven dining that celebrates nixtamalization, regional moles and rich spices.

Napa Valley

Hyper local farming, biodynamic vineyards and chef-led tastings frame the region's agriculture as craft, preserving its longstanding status as a hot destination.

Newfoundland

Newfoundland's stark coastal beauty, cod driven cuisine and oral storytelling traditions offer an emotionally resonant travel experience shaped by both isolation and resilience.



Our Tastemakers' Bucket List

Lima

At the center of global gastronomy, chefs spotlight ingredients like aji amarillo, cacao and Amazonian fruits.

Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro's saturated colors, rhythmic energy and dramatic geography, make it a city that's constantly in motion, expressive and alive.

Santiago

Santiago's creative revival is visible in its art districts and wine forward culinary culture, serving as a gateway to Chile's deserts, glaciers and coastlines.

South Georgia Island

Accessible only by expedition, South Georgia's vast king penguin colonies and sub Antarctic terrain represent the ultimate frontier for wildlife driven travel.



Bangkok

The recent opening of **DIB Bangkok**, Thailand's first major international contemporary art museum, joins a roster of initiatives like **Bangkok Art Biennale (BAB)**, **Bangkok Kunsthalle**, and **Bangkok Design Week** that are cementing the Thai capital's ambition to becoming a true art hub. Adding to this rich tapestry are districts like Chinatown where shophouses are being revitalized into mixed use spaces, local galleries, tucked-away ateliers and workshops championing artisanal traditions – from the silversmiths and textile makers, to emerging designers experimenting with color, form, and material.

Bali

Because craft is built into Bali's DNA with villages known for specific traditions – Bona (bamboo), Mas (wood carving), Celuk (silver), Batubulan (stone), Tohpati (batik), and Kamasan (traditional paintings) -- it's also spawned homegrown brands like **Carina Hardy**, **Tian Taru**, KalpaTaru, **Gaya Ceramics**, **Namu**, **Biasa** and many more creative visionaries on the vanguard of sustainability. To experience how these worlds are converging, visit **Desa Potato Head**, a cultural "village" where a hotel and beach club champion craft, community, and regeneration. For creatives, there's JIA Curated, an immersive weekend of craft, design and culture on Aug 13-17.

Bornholm

Pining for the bespoke tableware of top restaurants? Ceramics lovers flock to the Danish island of Bornholm for its independent potters who use local materials, clay pits (like Pyritsøen, Smaragdsøen), and famous workshops such as **Hjorths Fabrik**. Standouts include Torben Lov of **Lov i Listed**, whose nature-inspired pieces command a long waiting list and can be found at Michelin-starred restaurant **Kadeau; Oh Oak**, who supplies tableware for **KOKS** in the Faroe Islands; and Anne Mette Hjortshøj, whose beakers have been featured on FX's hit show "The Bear."

Hot Destinations for Art, Design and Craft



Naples

Often overshadowed by the art and fashion capitals of Rome, Milan and Florence, Naples' rich history in craftsmanship is enjoying a renewed appreciation thanks to the halo effect of modern design fairs like **Edit Napoli**. This vibrant city sandwiched between the sea and Mt. Vesuvius boasts the best tailors to rival Savile Row, and legendary makers of handstitched leather gloves (**Omega**), umbrellas (Ombrieri Talarico), leather goods (**Tramontano**), the iconic Capri sandals (Pasquale Canè), and coral jewelry (**Museo del Corallo Ascione**). In home design, **Ceramica F. Stingo**, is favored for its majolica tiles and vases. And of course, the ultimate Neapolitan craft collectible is the presepe (the Christmas Nativity scene). Artisanal workshops on Via San Gregorio Armeno have been hand carving these intricate miniature sculptures since the 18th century.

Pátzcuaro

While Mexico City attracts the lion's share of creatives' attention, Pátzcuaro and its surrounding towns in the state of Michoacan is where craft hunters go for artesanía traditions dating back to pre-colonial times. Pueblos like Santa Fe de Laguna are known for their traditional black clay pottery, Santa Clara de Cobre for copper smithing, and Ihuatzio for the pre-Hispanic craft of basket-weaving using the reeds in Lake Pátzcuaro. In San Jose de las Piñas, cooperatives make the iconic pineapple, or piña, in appliquéd ceramics. San Bartolomé Cocucho specializes in the giant burnished pots that bear the same name as the town, cocuchos. The best times to visit would be during the Semana Santa (Holy Week) and Night of the Dead (November 1-2) when fairs abound.

Seoul

From K-Pop to K-Beauty, South Korea has also left its global imprint on the culinary and contemporary arts. The launch of **Frieze Seoul** in 2022, a thriving art gallery scene, and architectural masterpieces have made the city a favorite among the culturati. Now, a fresh crop of artisans fusing tradition with innovation is fueling a new movement: K-Craft. Artists like Hyejeong Kim, Sukkeun Kang, Rahee Yoon, Jung Jisook and Hakmin Lee are giving a new expression to traditional crafts, while interesting cultural spaces like **Arumjigi** have emerged, a cultural foundation that researches the history and heritage of Korean architecture, textiles and cuisine.



Japan

It cannot be overstated that the entire country is steeped in craft, with over 240 traditions officially recognized. Each reflects the natural resources, climate, and historical context of its region. What's fascinating is how these traditions have been deployed to revitalize rural areas, promote sustainability, and preserve cultural heritage against demographic decline. Because of this, new destinations are emerging for intrepid craft hunters. Take Kamiyama-chō in a mountainous part of Tokushima Prefecture on the island of Shikoku

that has struggled with depopulation and aging. Today it's renowned for its vibrant art and craft community, revitalized by initiatives like the Kamiyama Artist in Residence (KAIR) program, with projects promoting local crafts like papermaking (Kamitowa). Kamiyama-chō has served as a template for what's happening throughout Japan, where entrepreneurs are investing in projects to revitalize small towns, and artisanal studios like **POJ** in Kyoto are ensuring craft families and communities thrive into the next generation.



Mapping the Menus

Our tastemakers dish out their favorite hot spots in some of the most exciting culinary destinations today – **Kyoto, Seoul, Madrid, Turin, Chicago, Los Angeles and Toronto**



By Tina Koyama,
CEO and founder of POJ Studio

Kyoto

Kurasu – One of Kyoto's leading modern coffee roasters, known for its clean aesthetic and focus on Japanese coffee craftsmanship.

Pear Press – A beautifully designed café in Kyoto's Kitayama area, serving coffee from renowned local roaster Style Coffee.

Ikehan – Sitting along the Kamo River, offering a refined tea experience that blends architecture, hospitality, and nature.

Lisei – A small, family-run Korean lunch spot in Kyoto's Demachi area reminding us that it's impossible to draw borders around culture. Japan and Korea have long shared a deep creative lineage.

Katsukura – Kyoto-born chain with the best tonkatsu in Japan. Skip the main branch — it's always too crowded — and try one of the smaller locations instead.

Otojet – A private, reservation-only spot led by a former designer turned fishmonger and chef. His refined, fish-centered course menu shows exceptional creativity and precision — one of the most unique dining experiences in Kyoto.

Nanzenji Harada – Centered entirely around dashi, chef Harada strips everything back — nothing but dashi and the ingredients themselves — showing how much flavor can come from simplicity.

Lurra – Chef Jacob Kear's cooking is deeply creative — he blends complex techniques with Japanese ingredients to create a fresh, modern expression of cuisine.

Takashimaya's Food Court – On the basement floor is a must for anyone who loves Japanese food culture. It's filled with beautifully presented bentos, sweets, and seasonal delicacies.

Tea Ceremony by Dairiku Amae – Kyoto-based tea master and founder of Totousha. Bookable through Kammui.

Korian – An extraordinary kaiseki restaurant in Takashima City overlooking Lake Biwa that draws entirely from the lake and its surroundings.



By Mina Park,
restaurateur & co-owner of Baroo

Taste makers Seoul

Onjium – The ultimate expression of Korean culinary research and has been so deservedly recognized by Michelin and Asia's 50 Best restaurant lists.

Mingles – Three Michelin stars, Chef Mingoo Kang is so masterful in his approach to Korean cuisine.

Bium – A temple cooking-inspired fine dining restaurant by chef Dae-chun Kim.

Gold Pig (Geumdwaeji Sikdang) – Outstanding pork barbecue.

San – from chef Seung-hyun Jo formerly the chef de cuisine at Benu, brings his French-trained precision and unique bold flavors to a modern Korean experience.

Fritz Coffee – A popular specialty roaster famous for blending modern coffee culture with traditional Korean aesthetics, particularly in its flagship cafes located in renovated hanoks (traditional Korean houses).

Taegukdang Bakery – The oldest bakery in Seoul founded in 1946, it has such a charming midcentury retro ambience.

Jokbal Alley – A neighborhood known for pork trotter restaurants. Find a restaurant that has grandmother in the name and it's bound to be delicious.

Joongang Haejang – A famous hangover soup shop near COEX Mall.



By Patricia Mateo,
Spanish culinary expert



Madrid

Santo Bakery – Their canelés are probably the best in the city right now.

Acid Café – The kind of place you go to when coffee actually matters to you.

Cientotreineta – For the kouign-amann, which makes you stop mid-conversation.

El Doble – An institution serving some of the best gambas al ajillo in Madrid, and a perfect matrimonio of anchovies and boquerones. Loud, messy, brilliant — very Madrid.

Taberna Verdejo – A tiny neighborhood bistro where Spanish home cooking is treated with care and intelligence.

Los 33 – Open-fire cooking, exceptional-quality meat, and an atmosphere that's social without being forced.

De 1911 – An essential fine dining experience. It's a masterful balance between classicism, product and modernity.

Lana – As soon as you walk in, you're met with a butcher-style cutting table next to the open grills, with eight to ten different cuts available each day.

Mercado de la Paz – A true neighborhood market with excellent delicatessen counters and exceptional product.

Petra Mora – A small, beautifully curated gourmet shop with a tight selection of Spanish gourmet products.



By Mimi Thorisson,
author of "A Kitchen in Italy"



Taste makers Turin

Caffè Torino – A place where espresso is taken seriously, conversations unfold discreetly, and watching the city pass by is part of the ritual. A place that makes you want to linger.

Baratti & Milano – More salon than café, Baratti & Milano is all velvet, mirrors, and chocolate. Even a quick coffee feels indulgent here. Order something sweet — ideally with chocolate — and settle into Turin's most elegant pause.

Caffè Fiorio – Once a favorite of politicians and intellectuals, Caffè Fiorio remains quietly authoritative. Known for its ice creams and perfectly poured espresso, it's old world, dignified, and proudly untouched by time.

Porta Palazzo Farmer's Market – The biggest in Europe. Go there for its vibrant soul and extraordinary produce, especially the cheeses and seasonal truffles in late fall.

Al Gatto Nero – An exceptional restaurant straight out of the '50s. Superb food. The tajarin with tomato sauce and the porcini fritters are perfect.

Ristorante Consorzio – A celebration of Piedmontese cuisine with heart. Try the tajarin al ragù del cortile and the bone-marrow risotto.

Tre Galline – One of Turin's oldest and most authentic restaurants. Try the bagna cauda, a traditional Piedmontese dish.

Magazzino 52 – A must-try in Turin. Their vitello tonnato is my favorite.

Scannabue – Honest, generous cooking in the San Salvario neighborhood. Any gourmet will agree they do the best agnolotti in Italy.

Al Bicerin – The historic café where you must try the bicerin, a perfect blend of espresso, chocolate, and cream. And visit the incredible Consolata church.

Peyrano – Best chocolates in the world.

Caffè Mulassano – Tiny, elegant, and the birthplace of the tramezzino sandwich.

The Gran Balon antique market – Held every second Sunday of the month. A real gem of a place and true connoisseurs know it's one of the best in Italy. It's where I go to find my antique Ginori dinnerware.



By Tim Flores and Genie Kwon,
chefs/owners of Kasama

Gene and Judes or The Wiener's Circle – for Chicago style hot dogs.

Mr. Beef – For the Italian beef sandwich featured in The Bear. Order a combo, hot, dipped which is a sandwich with sausage, shaved Italian beef with hot giardiniera dipped in the beef jus.

Las Gorditas Don Angel – For the burrito deshebrada with shredded beef, potatoes, salsa roja. One of the best thing we've ever eaten.

Casa Del Pueblo – For cafeteria style Mexican food. They have amazing stews, soups, tacos, and guisados.

Triple Crown – For homemade dim sum from one of Chicago's oldest family-run restaurants in Chinatown.

312 Fish Market – For the highest quality sushi that is in a very comfortable and unpretentious setting in 88 Marketplace.

Monteverde – For incredible Italian food from Top Chef Alums Sarah Grueneberg and Bailey Sullivan.

Virtue – For delicious Southern food from chefs Erick Williams and Top Chef Alum Damarr Brown.

JJ Thai Street Food – For northern Thai food in a neighborhood restaurant with the best service.

Trivoli Tavern – For an all-around great menu selection with something for everyone from the powerhouse Hogsalt restaurant group. Be sure to order the date cake for dessert.

Freddie's Pizzeria – For pizza, pasta, gelato and Italian ice located in Cicero and a true Chicago experience.

Chicago



By Brian McGinn,
Netflix Chef's Table
Producer & Director

LOS Taste makers Angeles

Mini Kabob – Armen Martirosyan took over his parents' Armenian grill and turned it into a mainstay on all the "Best of LA" lists.

Komal – Fátima Juárez brings in heirloom corn from all over Mexico and nixtamalizes it in house at this tiny shop in the Mercado La Paloma.

Sqirl – Jessica Koslow's iconic breakfast and brunch spot remains an ideal expression of the casual California restaurant experience.

Courage Bagels – This hybrid Montreal-California style bagel shop started by Arielle Skye and Chris Moss is a must visit. The bagels are unlike anything anywhere else, full of sourdough flavor, incredible crunchy texture, and artisanal toppings.

Yang's Kitchen – Breakfast at this Asian American restaurant in Alhambra. The mochi pancake is savory and sweet in equal measure, while you can't miss on either the normal market plate or the Japanese-influenced breakfast set.

Dunsmoor – Brian Dunsmoor's temple to open-fire cooking combines the best of Southern food (don't skip Edna's Cornbread, topped with a household's yearly supply of butter) with California's amazing produce and proteins.

Funke – Evan Funke's temple to handmade pasta is a regular on my rotation — that's why I featured him on Chef's Table: Noodles. Don't skip the bolognese, the trofie al pesto, the orecchiette, focaccia, or any of the market pastas that catch your eye.

Quarter Sheets – Hannah Ziskin makes the best cake in the United States. There, I said it. Don't miss her princess cake, or, if you're lucky, her slab cake, at this delightful Detroit-ish pizza joint Hannah and her husband Aaron run in Echo Park.

Golden Deli – This iconic Vietnamese spot is known for their egg rolls — behemoths of crusty, crunchy delight, even better wrapped in lettuce and paired with a Vietnamese iced coffee.

Kato – My favorite fine dining restaurant in LA. What Jon Yao is doing with his Taiwanese heritage and his CA fine dining background is exciting and delicious.



By Michael Kaminer



Toronto

Moonbean Coffee – A local treasure.

The Senator – Toronto's oldest restaurant, and still the coolest; get the Real Good Plate (C\$32), with two eggs, bacon, sausage, maple baked beans, home fries, toast, and pancakes or French toast. Coffee's fantastic, too.

Jet Fuel Coffee – On Parliament Street in Cabbagetown, where crunchy rock music or heavy metal is usually cranked high

St. Lawrence Market – One of the continent's great public markets. Visit Saturday, when the market's new glass pavilion hosts a farmers' market. The main market hall is open year-round.

Aera – For mind-blowing city views on the 38th floor of downtown's The Well complex, with taste bud stimulation.

Sunnys Chinese – Chef David Schwartz's retro-swanky hotspot inside a Kensington Market mini-mall.

Bar Chef – End the night with a spruce-infused cocktail or absinthe there's also a great mocktail lineup.

Carousel Bakery – In St. Lawrence Market, go for the pea-meal bacon sandwich. Touristy, but great.

Harbord Bakery – Try the chocolate babka.

Linny's – Another must-visit from chef David Schwartz, try the house-made pastrami with mustard and pickles

Ten – Julian Bentivegna's sublime plant-based restaurant with only ten seats and a changing menu.

Indian Street Food Co. – Inside the terrific Waterworks Food Hall, go for the manga prawn curry with basmati rice.

MEET OUR
Taste
makers

It's often said we live vicariously through those who travel intrepidly. This report celebrates them and the places and experiences that fuel our sense of wander -- whether it's a tip about a gallery tucked behind an unmarked door, a dish that carries generations of memories, or a way to gain a deeper understanding of a city in just a day.



Debbie Flynn
What's your favorite view?

Wadi Rum in Jordan. This spectacular landscape was one of the first places I visited in my early twenties and having been back several times since, the sheer silence and magnitude of these dramatic sandstone mountains never ceases to move me. The scale is part of it but the sense of space is truly overwhelming and as the colors shift depending on the time of day you really feel like time has stopped for just a few moments of real peace.

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Cathy Feliciano-Chon, Managing Partner, Asia Pacific
What's on your travel playlist?

When I'm feeling restless, music has a way of transporting me even if it's only in my head. Songs like *Sodade* by Cesária Évora, *Napule È* by Pino Daniele, *Oran* by Ibrahim Malouf, and *Lagi Bina* by Coke Studio either perfectly capture the spirit of a place or leave you with a sense of longing until you can travel again.

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Gregory Cole, Senior Partner, Luxury, EMEA
What's one destination you consider a hidden gem?

Lake Bracciano, just north of Rome. Hire a small boat and head out to the centre of the lake on a summer afternoon. The water and the sky dissolve into each other, and everything goes quiet. From there you can see three medieval towns on the shoreline: Bracciano, Trevignano Romano, and Anguillara Sabazia - where my partner grew up. Pick up pizza di ferri - cooked on a cast-iron griddle - from one of the towns before you set off, to enjoy on the boat. A day floating between those three shorelines is about as completely relaxed as I have ever felt.

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Leila Roker, Global Account Manager, Global Travel
What's a meal you still dream about?

The oxtail fried rice at Blue Ribbon. Not only because it's based in New York, my hometown, but because of its unexpected harmony of flavors — comforting fried rice elevated by the richness of tender oxtail, topped with a bone marrow omelette so airy yet rich it feels almost decadent. It's a flavor profile I've rarely encountered elsewhere. And while you're there, the sushi is a revelation: impeccably fresh, with clean, nuanced notes that echo the artistry of Japan.

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