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Special Features: Top 70 Coffee Bars in Europe, City Guides Paris & Copenhagen



Photos Noma: Ditte Isager



Noma



Sticks'n'Sushi

Copenhagen: Food and the City

At one time it was considered a bad joke that the best restaurant in the world – The Fat Duck at the time – was located in the UK, a country not exactly known for its culinary tradition. The joke is still the same, it has just moved location. The basic culinary tradition in Denmark was never much better than what you would find in the UK. It is a meat and potatoes kitchen – possibly with the one exception that did gain international notoriety, the Danish open-face sandwich. But not only does Denmark now host the world's best restaurant (Noma) and the world's best chef, Rasmus Kofoed (Bocuse d'Or 2011), Copenhagen also has more Michelin stars than any of the other Scandinavian capitals (14). A City Guide by Mike Hohnen.

René Redzepi, Noma



Sticks'n'Sushi



Noma

No portrait of current restaurant trends in Copenhagen would be complete without mentioning restaurant **Noma**, but at the same time it is probably the most well-covered gastronomy subject in the city since it was selected as the winner of the S.Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants in 2010 (and again in 2011). Noma not only attracts gourmet tourism in droves, but it has also opened the world's eyes to a lot of the other interesting stuff that is happening in Copenhagen.

Noma has been around since 2004, when it opened as one of many creative ideas that have enriched Copenhagen over the past 15 years and that all have Claus Meyer as at least one of its 'parents'. Noma is all about going back in time in search of the root origin of Nordic cooking, before industrialization, high yield farming and global sourcing changed the landscape. This almost archaeological expedition by chef René Redzepi into the past and subsequent focus on simplicity has influenced a whole generation of young Danish chefs and, in that sense, Noma has not only had a huge influence on creativity and menu development in the industry, but also made the metier wildly fashionable and attractive in itself.

The story about Noma – the short version – is about an idea, new Nordic kitchen and its origins that step by step, over the past seven years, have been developed, refined and tweaked with infinite patience that resembles the Japanese philosophy of Kaizen. And, in that process, the restaurant has gone from strength to strength – it is today an established classic and Copenhagen's only 2-Michelin star establishment. www.noma.dk

It's hard to imagine Copenhagen without **Sticks'n'Sushi**; they are part of the city fabric and a darling of Generation X. The concept is the creation of founder Kim Rahbek Hansen and is a clever combination of what in Japan are two very separate and distinct concepts: traditional Sushi and

grilled Yakitori spits. It's about complementarity and interesting pairs: fish or fowl, cold or hot, Japanese and Nordic. The result is a sushi restaurant that is attractive even for those that don't like fish. It's sushi with an attitude – they call it 'sushistainability'. The menu focus is on providing bite-size delicacies. The first restaurant was opened back in 1994 and the company has grown at a steady pace. Today they have nine Sticks'n'Sushi addresses in central Copenhagen and the goal is expanding that to also cover other urban areas in Denmark. But they have set their sights higher than that – London is next on the horizon, where the first restaurant opened on Wimbledon Hill road in March. www.sushi.dk/en

In the bar and nightclub business, there are two main schools of thought on how to attract business. One is employ pretty females behind the bar and you will attract the heavy drinking males. The other is to employ some really cool and good-looking males behind the bar, and they will attract some gorgeous females, who in turn eventually will attract some heavy drinking males. Kaspar Basse, the 39-year-old founder of **Joe & The Juice**, chose the latter strategy for his first juice bar when he opened ten years ago. He and his team have created a special culture around what they call 'the juicer' – the equivalent of the coffee barista. The juicers have fun while they work creating a vibrant high-energy atmosphere, accompanied by loud music in a stylish lounge setting. There are 23 juice bars in total, with new ones popping up all the time. And with no lack of self-confidence, three new stores have been opened in London, with one more under construction, three are announced for Hamburg, Germany, and a first stake has been planted in Miami, USA. The juices on the menu come in several sizes and have fun names that help patrons find what they are looking for: Hang over Heaven, Sex-me-up, Sweet Kiss or Art Away for those that need their ar-

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Photos Kødbyens Fiskebar: Mikkel Bo



teries flushed for calcium. The immediate goal is to triple in size over the next few years to 75 units, but ultimately Kaspar Basse is very clear he aims to be the Starbucks of the juice business – and the tattooed Joe & The Juice logo on his left arm could indicate that he really means it. www.joejuice.com

Not a restaurant, not a café, maybe a people's kitchen except for the pricing, **BioMio** is hard to categorise. But the purpose is clear: to serve healthy and nutritious food with deep bow to the environment that surrounds us. So not only are the carrots and everything else you will eat bio, but so is the cotton in their uniforms and the wood used to make their high chairs and long tables that seat 250 people. No doubt inspired by German Vapiano is the very large open kitchen where you order directly from the chef. Patrons pick up a plastic card at the entrance and fetch what they need at the various stations. With one small but important change: you don't wait for your food to be ready at the counter, you just order and it will then be brought to your table when it is ready.

From the menu: Happy Pork on Your Fork – protein rich and lean pork marinated in herbs, grilled and served with root crops, sun dried tomatoes and cold tarragon sauce for DKK185 (€25). The restaurant is not vegetarian as such, but there are lots of options for non-meat dishes or selecting versions without meat. In the dishes that do contain meat, the aim is for that meat to be only 30% of the dish – leaving plenty of room for interesting grains and vegetables. www.biomio.dk

Copenhagen has its fair share – if not more – of pizza places. But nothing really new there, except for one – **Mother**. Opened in 2009 and located in an old butcher shop in the Meatpackers' District, where the most obvious change since the time when you could purchase a whole side of beef here is the beautiful whitewashed beehive of a pizza oven in the middle of the open kitchen.

The oven plays the lead role in the production and everything else literally orbits around it. The main show is of course the pizza here in a sourdough raving reviews from most of the local press. The simple pizza margarita is DKK90 (€12) and more elaborate versions with a light spread of prosciutto and rucola will set

you back DKK120 (€16). Daily specials – roast lamb or lasagne – are often also available, but there is no large set menu. Zen-like simplicity is the order of the day – if it will cook in the oven we can do it. Mother is owned and run by a diverse trio: Theo Langley, Nick Pound and the Roman chef David Biffani, a diversity that is also reflected in their rest of the staff where you will rarely find a person who actually speaks Danish.

www.mother.dk

Copenhagen's most interesting fish restaurant, **Kødbyens Fiskebar**, is also located in the heart of the Meatpackers' District. Set in raw minimalist concrete setting with the most unimposing facade you can imagine, this relatively small fish bar has attracted the attention of the world press. Wall Street Journal has it among the best ten fish restaurants in the world. The decorative piece de resistance is a large fish tank in the centre with an interesting collection of – no, not lobster in pain – but jellyfish. The menu is new Nordic – of course –, there is a trail from the owner Anders Selmer's past back to Noma where he once worked, but here the focus is on fish – fresh, local and, most of all, simple. The menu has dropped the formality of starters, mains and desserts and is instead divided into 'raw' smaller delicacies including oysters, 'medium' and 'larger' dishes including baked cod, and even a steak for those not in the mood for fish. The easygoing informality is also reflected in the décor. You can choose to book a table formally, but there is also the possibility of just enjoying a few oysters and a glass of white wine on lounge style sofas on your way to a fun night in town. Or drop by in the later part of the evening and enjoy a light meal from your barstool – maybe 'fish lounge' would be an even more appropriate name. www.fiskebaren.dk

Nose2Tail is an innovative new concept started by three young idealists on a mission. They call themselves a food pub – in Dan-

ish, 'mad bodega' – the pub part has to do with the informal atmosphere and the rustic décor. The original white 60x60 Raca tiles (standard tiles issued when building food facilities in Denmark for as long as anyone can remember) are still on the walls, as well as the well-scrubbed terrazzo flooring with the worn-out wrought iron grids. The furniture must have been sourced in a we'll-take-it-all deal from a second-hand shop that wanted to clear its stock – a small scale but very sincere protest against all that waste that takes place in modern society. Sustainability is the new black in Copenhagen. Which is why the overall idea here is 'no waste'. So they put everything – nose to tail – on the menu one way or the other. On the menu you find Animal of the day (ask your waiter) and Fish of the day (ask your waiter). Vegetables are all of the organic variety and sourced from friends and family – meaning people that the owners know personally and trust. This whole approach also helps keep prices reasonable and so the main dish of the day will typically be around DKK150 (€20) and fun starters such as pork crackling with tarragon mayonnaise – sustainable is not necessarily health conscious – at DKK50 (€7). <http://nose2tail.dk>

Talk of the town has for a while been all about the newly opened restaurant **Geist** – the word in Danish means enthusiasm and plus energy. And there is no doubt that chef Bo Bech has just that when it comes to food. Food enthusiasts will recognise his name from restaurant Paustian, where he was for some years the head chef and secured a Michelin star for the restaurant. But all that is now history. Geist is a large restaurant that seats 150 people and could easily have been inspired by L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon in Paris. If the trend at the moment has been towards very simple concepts with a narrow menu focus – Geist goes exactly the opposite way. Here there is more than plenty



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Les Trois Cochons



Radio



Kent Kaffe Laboratorium



Kent Kaffe Laboratorium

■ ■ ■ Navigating the City ■ ■ ■

Copenhagen's current **downtown** area corresponds to what was at one point the medieval city. The city's restaurant and café life started here in the early eighties with a wave of mostly Mediterranean inspired restaurants, bars and cafés. Today the city area is also where space is difficult to find and, if you do, the rent is high; so, with a few exceptions, most of what is in the city today is relatively well-established and has a traditional approach. Thus, as with so many other things, the interesting stuff tends to happen at the edge. The **Nørrebro** area was the first to develop significantly during the late 80's. And in the early 90's this was the area of town where the fun new stuff was happening – typically bars, cafés and music venues in a combination with very affordable ethnic food places. It is still an interesting area, but not considered as cutting edge as it once was.

The next area to catch the attention of what the French so precisely call 'La Clientèle Locomotive' was the **Østerbro** area – but now with café/restaurant concepts aimed at slightly more affluent patrons corresponding to the general increase in economic activity in the capital. Østerbro became and is still to some the more 'chic' area.

Since around 2005, the new area of interest and where most of the cutting-edge concept development is happening is in the area known as **Vesterbro** and in two hot spots bordering that area. One is the old **Meatpackers'** area where the city borders the west area – for years a smaller ver-

sion of Les Halles in Paris. Today, the area is home to a myriad of small businesses in every imaginable sector, from architects to filmmakers and, of course, new creative food and beverage concepts. The other is the intersection between the harbour, city and the west area known as **Islands Brygge** – the old wharf area which is now largely residential and as result has all sorts of fun stuff popping up in order to cater to the influx of tenants.



of choice – between 30 and 40 items on a given day. The portions are small and delicate, although not quite as small as traditional tapas, more like large starters – the challenge really is to decide what not to have. Prices range from DKK80 (€11) up to DKK165 (€22).

The idea is that you compose your own tasting menu, but you are also welcome to have just a snack and a glass of wine. For a foodie, the main attraction is sitting in the bar/kitchen with a full view of proceedings – Bo Bech, a huge man, towers in the centre and calls out the tickets in a surprisingly low voice as they come in – but that is the only sound you hear which is remarkable in a kitchen this size, rolling out 4- and 5-course menus of the highest culinary standard to a full house. www.restaurantgeist.dk

The location in the intersection between the west and northeast section of the city, close to where the Danish broadcasting corporation used to have their headquarters for many years, has given the name to Claus Meyer's latest venture restaurant, **Radio**. Together with what he describes as his two food mates Jesper Kirketerp and Rasmus Kliim, they have developed the idea to focus on vegetables, the new Nordic way but at more accessible prices – not to the extreme that this is a vegetarian restaurant. Meat is served, but it has a less prominent role to play than is normally the case.

There are two reasons behind this: one is sustainability, i.e. the belief that we need to appreciate vegetables more and reduce our consumption of meat. The other: a lot of what grows in Denmark does so at the limits of what is climatic possible. This means that sometimes more interesting tastes, smells or colours occur than is normal in their prime habitat. The 50-seat restaurant offers a 5-course menu at DKK400 (€54) or 3-course at DKK300 (€40). What is served truly depends on the season and relates directly to what is coming out of the ground at Grantoftegaard, the farm near Copenhagen that supplies them. Meyer's ambition is that the New Nordic diet, as he calls it, will be to the 21st century what the Mediterranean diet has been to the 20th century – nothing less. www.restaurantradio.dk

In 2012 Claus Meyer's is going to partner with the Singapore/Danish couple Michael and Tin Pan-Larsen to open a



Claus Meyer

restaurant with the name **NamNam** in the new vibrant west part of Copenhagen. The 190-seat restaurant will feature the Peranakan cuisine – an Asian fusion cuisine with 500 years to its credit that combines flavours from China, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. The menu includes items such as octopus with sambal and ginger flower, hang roasted lamb and stir-fried pork with tamarind and palm sugar. The dishes and presentation are designed to share in the Asian way – but if guests prefer, individual portions can also be served.

www.clausmeyer.dk

You will find espresso bars all over Copenhagen – the Danes have taken to Caffè Latte, Macchiato or Cortado and the rest of the Mediterranean coffee menu in the same way that most other urban areas have. Coffee to go is booming and coffee bars sprouting everywhere.

One exception to the mainstream approach is newly opened **Kent Kaffe Laboratorium** located in a 200 sq m basement just off the Nørreport subway station, who have made it their mission to convince the Danes that adding hot milk to your coffee spoils the real pleasure of drinking coffee. Kent Coffee therefore offers a large variety of more or less complicated brewing methods and a large variety of beans and roasts. You can choose Haio Siphon that brews using a vacuum principle, the V60 filter brewer or ice coffee brewed on cold water or the high pressure Trifecta machine. It does not make the decision process any easier, but definitely adds to the experience and guests' understanding of how different coffee can taste – and that is the main point. If you insist, they will make

you a traditional espresso the same way everybody else does.

www.kentkaffe.com

When investigating the Copenhagen restaurant scene, there is one name that will keep popping up: Copenhagen Food Consulting generally known as CoFoCo. Started by a young chef, Torben Klitbo, in 2003, the red thread that runs through everything they do seems to be 'KISS – keep it simple, stupid'. Under this motto CoFoCo have developed nine restaurants in the city, a catering division, two banqueting facilities and a charming auberge in the south of France (two more openings are announced for 2012).

The first restaurant was named **CoFoCo** and offered a 4-course dinner 'surprise', in the sense that the menu changes daily. In addition, there are nine items on its menu – all smallish portions more like starters than main courses that can be combined as add-ons to the menu. A 4-course dinner is DKK275 (€37) and a 5-course or more from the menu is DKK50+ (€6.5) for each. The restaurant was an immediate hit when it opened and you would soon need to book two to three months in advance to get a table.

Realising they had struck a raw nerve with the local population, they quickly opened their second restaurant, **Les Trois Cochons** – slightly different, but again very simple. A 3-course dinner at DKK295 (€40) – the starters, a selection according to the mood of the chef – the same served for the whole table, a choice of three mains, Fried Plaice, Confit de Canard or with a supplement Cote de Boeuf at DKK50 (€6.5). All main courses must be ordered by minimum two people at the table and are served with mashed potatoes and 'haricot verts'. As dessert, 'Assiette gourmandise'; if you feel like it, you can add a cheese plate at DKK75 (€10). The wine list reflects the same simplicity – a decent house wine and a selection of 4-5 white and red wines at moderate prices.

Continuing along the same vein, they have subsequently opened:

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Wagamama

two **Scarpetta** Italian restaurants with menus along the same principles as the original CoFoCo restaurant, but with classic Italian items; the restaurant **Spuntino**, again auberge-style but with an Italian accent; **Vespa**, a more upmarket Italian 3-course dinner place, testing a price range of DKK400 (€53); and the CoFoCo version of the classic surf and turf theme called Oysters&Grill. For starters: oysters, mussels or langoustines at prix du jour; main course: three types of steak or a grilled sea bass; three desserts, one of them being cheese. And the restaurant does not accept cash – only credit cards to keep it simple. Finally, they have also launched a new magazine: ‘Copenhagen Food’ with chef interviews and tips and tricks for the home gourmet, and of course a few ideas where to go in town if you don’t feel like cooking it yourself. www.cofoco.dk

Originally, there were three partners at CoFoCo – but then one partner, Anders Aagaard, broke out and started **Madklubben** (the Food Club). The conceptual relationship comes through clearly in that the Food Club also targets that apparently magic formula of achieving a 3-course dinner in the DKK200-300 price bracket. But there is a difference when you look closer. The Food Club is more purpose-driven and in a sense even more minimalist than CoFoCo. There are five restaurants in the group: **Madklubben**, **Madklubben Tivoli**, **Madklubben Steak**, **Tony’s** and **Frankie’s Kitchen**. All the menus have the same basic bistro design – including the all important manifesto that outlines why they do it the way they do.

At Madklubben, guests choose one, two, three or four courses and pay DKK100, 150, 200, or 250 accordingly. But several of the menu items have add-on prices of DKK25, 50 or even 100. The main courses are as no-nonsense as everything else: Steak, Duck, Pork, Fish or Roots (for the vegetarians). Tony’s is same principle, but based on an Italian menu interpreted in a New York style. Frankie’s Kitchen is ... well, just Frankie’s kitchen because, as Anders Aagaards says, all really good parties end up in the kitchen – so this restaurant idea is a homage to his friend Frankie, who is known for organising the best private parties in town. They call it ‘international bistro’, which means that basically anything goes. Again, guests pick 3 courses for DKK200 or 4 for DKK250 – a further DKK50 or 100 per

item might be added depending on the choice. www.madklubben.info

One part of Copenhagen City that is a restaurant area all to itself is the Tivoli gardens. The portfolio of concepts that the park operates itself spans an impressive range, from simple hot dog stands to the **Herman**, the one-star Michelin restaurant. Most of the Tivoli concepts are developed internally. From pirate ships to cool lounge bars and top of the range fine dining. The only exception is **Wagamama** where Tivoli is a franchisee and has one unit in the park, and for a few years now has been rumoured to be on the look-out for additional sites outside the park.

Tivoli also houses and operates Copenhagen’s possibly most exclusive hotel, the 15-room **Nimb**. The hotel is part of a larger Nimb complex in the section of the park facing Copenhagen central station, where you will also find the one-star restaurant Herman and the newly opened New York inspired **Bar’n’Grill**, as well as the large Scandinavian version of the traditional French brasserie built up around three beautiful cast iron Molteni stoves in the open kitchen called **Nimb Brasserie**. www.tivoli.dk

The newly opened **Bar’n’Grill** is a classy interpretation of a New York style up-market steak house, including a bar that serves serious size drinks. Just like its role models in the Big Apple, this is not a culinary temple but a well-executed and no-nonsense high-quality cuisine. The menu has a number of tempting appetizers like oysters, petite friture with aioli dip or even Oscietre Selection Caviar for the big spenders. But the main items are the steaks. They range from a whopping 600-g Cote de Boeuf at DKK435, over the classic Rib Eye steak to smaller more modest cuts from the flank 250-g for DKK200. Seafood suitable for grilling is also an option, including lobsters, langoustines, tuna or turbot also in the DKK250-300 range per main course. www.tivoli.dk/composite-9583.htm

What to include and what to leave out in a city portrait like this is not easy. Copenhagen definitely has more to showcase than one can fit into one article. Those who want to take a tour of the town themselves should do so in summer, when the city is infinitely more friendly than in winter. ■