

*Personal recommendations from a local foodie*

# AMSTERDAM FOODIE'S RESTAURANT GUIDE

BY VICKY HAMPTON





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## INTRODUCTION

I first came to Amsterdam as an ERASMUS exchange student back in 2001. As soon as I stepped off the train, I knew I had fallen in love. The effect was instant. Intoxicating. To this day, I don't exactly understand it. Dutch weather is every bit as terrible as it is in the country I was born in (England). At the turn of the century, the food was not much to write home about. And the first street I stepped onto (the Damrak) is without doubt the most nightmarish in Amsterdam. And yet for some reason, the city exerted an immediate pull on me that was nothing short of irresistible.

Now, over 15 years after I first moved here, when I cycle over a bridge at night and the lights play on the ripples of the canal, my breath still catches in my chest. I am every bit as in love with Amsterdam as I ever was. More so, in fact, because like every relationship that love has matured. I rarely have the heady days of infatuation I experienced when I was younger. Amsterdam and I know each other now, like a long-committed couple who have been through some big stuff together. We bicker and quarrel, and sometimes I'm mad at Amsterdam. But this deep knowledge is like a marriage: it has its up and its downs, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

I started writing about food in Amsterdam in 2006 on my MySpace page (remember MySpace?!), which quickly migrated to an AOL blog and then to my own URL in 2007. I've been writing at least one new review a week ever since, and have been to several hundreds of restaurants in Amsterdam during the time I've lived here. Many have closed down or changed hands several times, but many others have stood the test of time. The food scene in Amsterdam has never been better, and the city is finally holding its own as a serious foodie destination. I couldn't be more proud of Amsterdam's chefs and restaurateurs, not to mention the coffee baristas, mixologists, craft brewers and wine importers who have been revolutionising what we drink, too.

I wrote this Amsterdam restaurant guide – just like I've been writing my blog over the past decade – out of love for a city that has given me the most wonderful home. And fed me some of the best food of my life. Yes, there are overpriced tourist traps ready to lure in the unsuspecting visitor if you don't know where to look. But that's why you have this food guide: so you know where to look.

***Eet smakelijk!***

Vicky x



## DUTCH FOOD AND DRINKS

Most people visiting the Netherlands know little to nothing about Dutch food before they arrive. Depending on where they're from, they may have tried some rubbery imitation Gouda or Edam cheese, or they might be under the impression that everyone eats hash brownies for breakfast. Fortunately, neither of these are the reality. And while Dutch food is still pretty undiscovered internationally, this only makes it more of an adventure for the first-time visitor to try. So if you're coming to Amsterdam, here are the must-eat Dutch specialities.

### Gouda Cheese

Gouda cheese comes from (wait for it...) Gouda! Unlike the rubbery, flavourless imitations that pop up in supermarkets globally, real Dutch Gouda is a thing of intense flavour and majestic beauty. You can eat it young, extra-mature (2+ years) and every age in between – with the young version being sweet and creamy, and the old version being salty and crumbly. The Dutch also like to add spices to their cheese, which means you may see *komijnkaas* (cheese with cumin seeds) or *nagelkaas* (cheese with cloves) on sale – although this may not technically be from Gouda, it has the same texture as cheese from the city itself.

### Herring

The jury's out on the best way to eat herring: the "Amsterdam way" is sliced into small pieces, topped with raw onion, and eaten with a toothpick (preferably with a Dutch flag on top!). The "Rotterdam way" involves tipping your head back and lowering the entire fish into your mouth. First date food, it is not! However, the arrival of the *Hollandse Nieuwe* ("new herring") in June every year is an event in itself, with thousands of people eager to taste the first catch of the herring season. Whichever way you choose to eat it, there are fish stalls and fishmongers all over the city selling raw, brined herring as a typically Dutch snack. If you prefer your fish cooked, try *kibbeling*: small pieces of white fish, battered and deep-fried to golden deliciousness.

### Bitterballen

Searingly hot in the middle, *bitterballen* are best enjoyed with a beer – not least because it'll cool your mouth off in between bites. *Bitterballen* are hard to describe because their recipe is rather mysterious: think beef croquettes but then spherical. The breadcrumbs on the outside are deep-fried to golden perfection, while the mushy, beefy inside heats up to nuclear temperatures. It's best to let them cool down for five minutes before dipping one in mustard and popping it in your mouth. Almost every brown café serves these popular beer snacks, so you'll have no problem finding them!

### Patatje Oorlog

Whether you call them chips or fries, the Dutch are particularly good at frying potatoes till they're crispy on the outside and fluffy in the middle. But don't make the mistake of ordering yours with tomato ketchup. Instead, go to one of the *patat* stands and ask for



“oorlog”. Translating as “war fries”, they come with mayonnaise (so far, so Belgian), peanut/satay sauce and raw onions. You can’t do better at the end of a night out.

### Rookworst and stamppot

Literally translating as “smoke sausage”, *rookworst* is a tasty pork sausage that originates from the Gelderland province. And there are many ways to eat it: go to your local butcher, and chances are they’ll have a few *rookworsten* keeping warm, ready to be popped into a *broodje* (sandwich). Alternatively, eat slices of the stuff dipped in mustard with your after-work beer. Or serve it alongside *stamppot*: potatoes mashed with everything from kale to bacon to sauerkraut. *Rookworst* is a perfect wintertime staple.

### White asparagus

Think of asparagus, and most of us generally think of the bright green variety. But in the Netherlands and Belgium, the fatter white variety of asparagus is more commonly eaten. Known as “white gold”, you’ll find this highly seasonal ingredient all over restaurant menus in May but almost never at any other time of year. The Flemish (our neighbours in the north of Belgium) like to dress it up with butter, eggs and parsley, and sometimes turn it into a full meal with the addition of ham and potatoes. Given the south of the Netherlands’ proximity to Belgium, this is a tradition that’s been steadily creeping north.

### Uitsmijter

An *uitsmijter* is a hearty breakfast dish consisting of three fried eggs on sliced white or brown bread, usually topped with ham, cheese or both (bacon and tomatoes are sometimes options, too). Interesting fact: the Dutch word “*uitsmijter*” literally translates to “out-thrower” and is the same word given to bouncers at bars or nightclubs. But what’s the reason? One theory goes that an *uitsmijter* is very quickly and easily prepared, meaning that a customer ordering it in a café will leave very soon after eating it (therefore being “thrown out” quickly). Either way, you’ll find *uitsmijters* at many Dutch and not-so-Dutch cafés on their breakfast and lunch menus.

### Poffertjes and pancakes

*Poffertjes* are miniature fluffy Dutch pancakes, traditionally prepared with yeast and buckwheat flour using a special cast-iron pan with tiny hollows in which to pour the batter. They became known as *poffertjes* because they puff up during the cooking process. Eat them freshly made at one of the markets, served with icing sugar than melts all over them. Delish.

For those with heartier (or more savoury) appetites, a Dutch pancake makes an excellent brunch option. Thicker than French crepes but thinner than American pancakes, the Dutch *pannenkoeken* are usually the size of a dinner plate and come topped with anything from bacon and cheese to apple and cinnamon.



### **Stroopwafels**

*Stroopwafels* (syrup waffles) may now be ubiquitous at Starbucks the world over, but they started here first. *Stroopwafel* literally means “syrup waffle” and is essentially a spiced wafer, split in half and sandwiched with a layer of caramel. They come from Gouda originally – which makes Gouda officially one of the foodiest places in the Netherlands. Until you’ve tasted a freshly pressed *stroopwafel* from the market, still oozing with caramel goodness, you haven’t lived. For the fresh, warm, real-deal variety, take a trip to Lanskroon bakery, the Albert Cuypmarkt (open Mon-Sat) or Wonder Waffle at the Lindengracht Market (open Sat). You can, of course, buy the packaged variety in the airport on your way home – just don’t let on to your friends and family that they’re eating the sub-standard sort.







### **Pepernoten and oliebolle**

*Pepernoten* and *oliebolle* are an annual ritual in the Netherlands, and you'll see them start to appear in autumn in the run up to the festive season. *Pepernoten* are tiny cookies – hard, crunchy and flavoured with warm spices – that are an inseparable part of the Sinterklaas festival, which means that you'll find them in shops between late October and early December. The custom is that Sinterklaas and his helper, Zwarte Piet, throw handfuls of *pepernoten* as treats for the children. Meanwhile, *oliebolle* (literally translating as oil balls) are an equally seasonal guilty pleasure: akin to doughnuts or beignets and liberally dusted with icing sugar, you can buy them from bakeries or mobile stalls in the run up to Christmas and New Year's Eve.

### **Liquorice**

The Dutch *drop* (liquorice) is an acquired taste that's not for everyone. These black candies come in different varieties, from very sweet to very salty, and tend to divide opinion. I'll leave it to you to make up your own mind!

### **Jenever**

If you haven't heard of *jenever*, you've probably heard of gin. Well, you have *jenever* to thank for the recent trend in G&Ts! *Jenever's* history began 400 years ago, and involved distilling malt wine and flavouring the strong liquor with juniper berries. Legend has it that English soldiers in the Netherlands (in around 1630) were given *jenever* to drink to calm their nerves before battle – hence where we get the expression "Dutch Courage" from. *Jenever* was brought to England, where it evolved into English gin.

### **Beer**

The Netherlands' national drink, there's far more to Dutch beer than Heineken. In Amsterdam alone, there are several local breweries making their own special beer varieties. From easy-drinking lagers and hoppy IPAs to autumnal bock beers and wintry dark beers, there's something for everyone. And one of the best ways to enjoy a glass (not a pint – beer here is generally served in 250 ml glasses) of the local brew is to hole up in one of Amsterdam's local breweries – Brouwerij 't IJ, Oedipus Brewing, or Brouwerij de Prael.



## AND SOME NOT-SO-DUTCH FOODS

Back in the Golden Age, the Netherlands used to have quite the global empire with colonies all over the world. The Dutch famously gave up New York (formerly New Amsterdam) to the British in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in exchange for Suriname. And although its imperial powers dwindled over the centuries, it held onto Indonesia and Suriname (as well as other Caribbean islands) until quite recently. As a result of all this, these countries have exercised considerable influence over “Dutch” cuisine, and the Netherlands now counts several rather spicy, exotic dishes as its own. Of course, as an international city there’s food to be found from all over the world in Amsterdam. But what I’m talking about here are the dishes that have infiltrated the city to the point that they now feel as Dutch as herring.

### Satay

You’ll find chicken or pork satay – cubes of meat on a skewer, slathered in a mildly spicy peanut sauce that originated in Indonesia – on the menu of almost any typical *eetcafe* in the Netherlands. The satay often comes served with fries/chips (don’t forget the mayo) and *kroepoek* – the Dutch answer to prawn crackers. It’s a cheap and satisfying meal that you generally can’t go wrong with.

### Rijsttafel

Literally translating as “rice table”, this is an Indonesian speciality you absolutely must try when in Amsterdam. Although it’s something of a Dutch invention (locals in Indonesia aren’t eating *rijsttafels*), it’s a great way to try lots of dishes in one meal. At any number of Indonesian restaurants, you’ll be presented with dozens of small dishes – ranging from mild to super-spicy – to eat with rice.

### Roti

Roti is a flatbread that’s consumed in many different ways and in many different parts of the world. However, when we talk about roti in Amsterdam, we mean the Surinamese specialty: the flatbread is used to wrap or mop up a sauce-heavy curry (usually chicken), spiced potatoes, boiled egg and *kousenband* (long and stringy green beans). It’s a cheap and satisfying takeaway option that packs a punch when it comes to flavour.



## **DINING TIPS IN AMSTERDAM**

Like every city, Amsterdam comes (or rather, should come) with a user manual when it comes to eating out. Here are a few lessons I've learned along the way...

### **Restaurant opening hours**

The Dutch are very keen on their work-life balance, which means that you shouldn't be surprised if a restaurant is only open in the evenings or is closed completely for three days of the week. It might also close over Christmas or for a few weeks in the summer, without much warning. What's more, many kitchens stop serving after about 9 or 9:30 pm as most Dutch people have started dinner by 7 (there's no culture of late-night dining here, like our neighbours in Italy or Spain). Google usually seems to have a reasonable idea of when establishments in Amsterdam are open, but I'd always advise you to call and check before you go. Better to be safe than sorry!

### **Booking a table**

Good restaurants in Amsterdam tend to get very busy, so I almost always make a reservation – even if it's only a case of calling an hour beforehand (although many restaurants will be fully booked by then). Some places don't take reservations, but most do – so it's always worth a phone call. The following websites also offer online reservations for many dining spots:

- [BookDinners.nl](http://BookDinners.nl)
- [lens.nl](http://lens.nl)
- [Couverts.nl](http://Couverts.nl)

### **Ordering from the menu**

Compared to America, chefs in Amsterdam don't appreciate lengthy lists of dietary requirements or substitution requests. Of course, genuine allergies are different, but don't go to a steak restaurant and expect a selection of vegetarian options. Amsterdam restaurants (and their kitchens) are generally small – order what they specialise in rather than what they don't. It's also rare in Amsterdam to be offered a doggy bag for food you haven't finished; you can try asking for one, but don't be surprised if they're unprepared.

### **Dutch customer service**

Customer service in Amsterdam is known for being terrible. So if you're flailing your arms around for 20 minutes waiting for attention, don't worry – it's nothing personal and it's all part of the experience. With that said, improvements have been made in the last decade so (with any luck) you won't encounter nearly as much bad service nowadays. If you do have a bad experience, feel free to be direct and tell someone – just be aware that they might be just as direct to you in return. In Amsterdam, the customer is not always right...

### **Tipping**

At dinner, if the service has been acceptable, it's standard to leave around 10% as a tip. If you're ordering coffees, drinks or a light lunch/snack, round up to the nearest euro or two.





## AMSTERDAM NEIGHBOURHOODS

Amsterdam's Binnenstad (inner city) is made up of the Centrum, Jordaan, Canal Belt and Plantage neighbourhoods. But it's a very compact city, so the Noord (north), Zuid (south – including de Pijp), Oost (east – including Watergraafsmeer) and West (including Westerpark, Jordaan, de Baarsjes and Oud-West) are all easily accessible too. I've split up my Amsterdam restaurant guide according to the neighbourhoods shown on this map.





## **AMSTERDAM'S BEST RESTAURANTS**

As a truly international city (we count almost 180 nationalities among our population), Amsterdam has a little bit of everything. At least, it does now – it was a rather different place a decade ago. I've therefore structured this section according to the type of cuisine it serves from a geographical perspective, starting with the international restaurants, then the European cuisine that's closest to home, and finally branching out into the other continents: Africa, Asia and the Americas.



For each restaurant, I give the street address with the neighbourhood in brackets afterwards, the phone number and the website. However, please bear in mind that Amsterdam's restaurants frequently change location, contact details and opening hours, so I advise you to call ahead and check before you set off.





## GLOBAL DINING

### Modern international restaurants

Some of the city's top chefs are taking inspiration from their culinary travels, and incorporating everything from Peruvian *ceviche* to Japanese *kaiseki* into dishes that use local Dutch produce. As a result, they're rather un-categorisable, but they're not to be missed. You'll find this kind of modern, creative, internationally accomplished cuisine in this section.

#### *Breda*

I discovered Breda on my fifth anniversary with my other half, which just so happened to be the day we announced our engagement. So my circumstances were not exactly unbiased, but I can honestly say my meal that night was one of the best I'd tasted in months – if not years. From the runner beans that took me straight back to childhood in my parents' garden, to the horseradish and wild-garlic dressing that pepped up otherwise-ordinary greens, to the smoky grilled flavour of rib-eye and corn – everything I tasted was spectacular. It's been just as good when I've been back to Breda since.

Singel 210 (Canal Belt) 020 622 5233 [breda-amsterdam.com](http://breda-amsterdam.com)

#### *Jacobsz*

With impeccably friendly service and creative cuisine, Jacobsz is worth the trip out east to the Watergraafsmeer neighbourhood. When I visited, the starter of pork belly with kale, onion jelly and potato mousse was perfectly balanced in flavour, and the pork belly a divine texture. My main was *skrei*, (Norwegian "winter cod") served with what can only be described as mini Thai fishcakes (tasting of shrimp, lemongrass and kaffir lime), a wafer-thin prawn cracker, and a sauce made of similarly Southeast Asian-fusion ingredients. Dessert was particularly interesting: a creative take on a red velvet cake came with carrot ice cream and a slick anemone of rose and hibiscus. Jacobsz's signature cocktails are also pretty well mixed, and their wine list extensive.

Ringdijk 1A (Watergraafsmeer) 06 4245 4677 [jacobsz.amsterdam](http://jacobsz.amsterdam)

#### *Ron Gastrobar*

Great for sharing and trying new things, Ron Gastrobar is all about fine dining meeting fun – special but informal. The menu offers a couple of dozen small dishes, all priced fairly reasonably (except for the astronomical beef menu – amusingly named "Ron's Meat" – at upwards of €90 for two). You're advised to order three per person (which was fine for two people with hearty appetites) but they can be brought to your table in whatever order you like, meaning that dinner doesn't descend into a free-for-all tapas affair (unless of course you want it to). Think *foie gras* with a twist, yuzu parfait with avocado sorbet, and wild duck with black pudding and red cabbage. Ron Blaauw is one of Holland's great chefs.

Sophialaan 55 (Zuid) 020 496 1943 [rongastrobar.nl](http://rongastrobar.nl)





### *MOS*

Featuring huge windows giving out onto the River IJ and with its unique location on the starkly angular glass-and-steel IJdok, MOS is very distinctive to look at. The food, much like the interior, is both modern and slightly opulent; international but with distinct nods to the chef's Dutch heritage. On the international end of the spectrum, our amuse bouche was North African *baba ganoush* with a crispy tapioca cookie and warmly spiced mayo. Our starter of langoustine with pork belly and pineapple had a sweet, slightly charred, Southern U.S. barbecue flavour to it. Meanwhile, *corvina* (a white, saltwater fish) came with tiny Dutch shrimps and root vegetables; gurnard came with a creamy mousse made of mature Dutch cheese, potato and just-charred cauliflower. Yes, there was a lot happening on each plate – but every dish was well thought out, balanced and not overly heavy. A note also about the service: unlike many Michelin-starred establishments, MOS was neither stuffy nor formal. The waiting staff were knowledgeable about their menu and their (paired) wines, but relaxed in their interactions with customers.

IJdok 185 (Western islands – north of Jordaan) 020 638 0866 [mosamsterdam.nl](http://mosamsterdam.nl)

### *Moon*

Moon's most important USP is its location: on the 19th floor of the recently regenerated A'DAM Toren over the IJ behind Centraal Station. It rotates a full 360 degrees over the course of 90 minutes, giving you panoramic views over Amsterdam in every direction. But luckily for us, the food isn't bad either – with presentation playing as much of a role as taste. There's a distinct fusion theme going on when it comes to the combination of flavours: *foie gras* was served in a moon-and-stars formation (a nod to the restaurant's name), atop beef tartar and served with beetroot and a kaffir lime dressing. Scallop ceviche came with a tangy wasabi cream and green apple sorbet – while not a typical ceviche, the combination of raw fish and zesty horseradish worked well. Great for a special occasion.

Overhoeksplein 3 (Noord) 020 237 6311 [restaurantmoon.nl](http://restaurantmoon.nl)





### *Graham's Kitchen*

Understated and under the radar, Graham's Kitchen is a culinary enclave down an often overlooked street sandwiched between Van Woustraat and the Amstel River. Like many of Amsterdam's best chefs at the moment, Graham Mee doesn't offer much choice: you're invited to order between three and six courses, with the option to take the wine pairings with whichever courses you like. Before the meal proper started, we were treated to a few delightfully unique *amuses bouches*: the highlight was a creative take on the English breakfast (Chef Graham is from Liverpool) featuring black pudding, egg, bacon and the like in an elegant little *potje*. But it was the starter that was possibly my favourite dish: avocado with zesty *corvina* ceviche, earthy quinoa, fiery jalapeno gel, sweet and fragrant pineapple cream, fresh peas, and crunchy corn nuts. It was a zingy delight – a party on my palate. At €38 for three courses, Graham's Kitchen is competitive with restaurants of a similar level.

Hemonystraat 38 (De Pijp) 020 364 2560 [grahamskitchen.amsterdam](http://grahamskitchen.amsterdam)



### *Plek*

Unlike the other restaurants in this section, Plek does not fall into the high-end or fine-dining category, but its menu is distinctly international in flavour. Plek is a charmingly weird place made up of metal containers and a man-made beach, perched on the shoreline of NDSM wharf in Amsterdam Noord. Go there for a casual lunch, al fresco drinks and snacks in the afternoon, or a longer meal in the evening (hopefully replete with sunset). Try the chorizo with chimichurri and a bottle of cold rosé: summer on a plate. For mains, we ordered a hanger steak with ratatouille and potatoes dressed in pesto, and the vege option of a ricotta-stuffed courgette flower with a quinoa and aubergine salad. Both were top notch, and we only sank about €60 into dinner and drinks for two.

TT Neveritaweg 59 (Noord) 020 290 0020 [plek.nl](http://plek.nl)



## Brunch restaurants

While the Dutch were mostly eating bread with *hagelslag* for breakfast until very recently, the last few years have seen a trend in international brunch culture. Spearheaded by the Australian and New Zealand immigrants, there are now a few places serving up breakfast and brunch dishes from the world over. These are the best of the brunch bunch.

### *Little Collins*

I first discovered Little Collins' excellent line in international brunch dishes, from kedgeree to shakshuka. But I later discovered they do dinner as well. The menu is very international, which I would usually avoid, but they do so many things well. The chef is Australian, and of course Australian cuisine is a melting pot of influences from Europe, Asia, America... you name it. I usually order a rhubarb bellini and/or a coffee while I'm waiting for brunch – and you can't go wrong with one of their Asian dishes, like smoked tofu or pork belly with kimchi. At dinner time, their cauliflower dishes are amazing too. Little Collins was the first to bring Antipodean brunch culture to Amsterdam, and a few other copycats have sprung up since – but none are as good as the original!

Eerste Sweelinckstraat 19F (De Pijp) 020 753 9636 [littlecollins.nl](http://littlecollins.nl)



### *Dignita*

As well as serving up an excellent brunch, Dignita is excellently set up for families with kids. I love Dignita's chickpea and courgette fritters with fried halloumi, poached egg, avocado, *dukkah* and a mint-yoghurt dressing. The fritters are moist, the egg perfectly poached, the textures well balanced – all in all, a lovely dish. Their coffees and breakfast cocktails are good too, and even the service is quick. If you are child-free, escape to the stroller-inaccessible mezzanine level at the Vondelpark location. There's also now a new location in Centrum.

See website for locations and phone numbers: [eatwelldogood.nl](http://eatwelldogood.nl)





### *Gartine*

Despite the fact that Gartine is sandwiched between the Kalverstraat and the Rokin in the centre of town, it has its own *moestuin* (allotment) in which they grow much of the produce you'll eat at the restaurant. I should more properly call it a "tearoom", as it's open for breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea, but not dinner. The location is delicate and classy, but in an old-fashioned way – as if your grandma had taken a degree in interior design. The food is likewise: eggs benedict with salmon for breakfast, crayfish rillettes for lunch, and a plethora of tarts and cupcakes at tea time.

Taksteeg 7 (Centrum) 020 320 4132 [gartine.nl](http://gartine.nl)

### *Omelegg*

It's one of my biggest pet peeves, not being able to get a decent omelette in Amsterdam. I frequently seem to be served up thin, dry egg pancakes rolled up with cold stuff in the middle. Omelegg is one of the rare exceptions: whether you're hungover or just hungry, a huge mound of eggs stuffed with everything from sausage to cheese to veggies is sure to set you right. Their original branch is in de Pijp, but they've more recently opened up a second location near Centraal Station too.

See website for locations and phone numbers: [omelegg.com](http://omelegg.com)

### *Theatercafe Mozaiek*

One of the things I enjoyed most about my trip to Istanbul was the incredible Turkish breakfasts. So, if you're looking to get your fix in Amsterdam, you'll be happy to stumble upon Mozaiek. The Turkish brunch I had there included everything from filo-cheese cigars and chorizo skewers to fried halloumi and dozens of dips and toppings for bread. The individual portions weren't huge, but there were enough of them that you certainly didn't go hungry for a very reasonable €13.

Bos en Lommerweg 191 (Westerpark) 020 580 0383  
[podiummozaiek.nl/theatercafe](http://podiummozaiek.nl/theatercafe)

### *Pannenkoekenhuis Upstairs*

You can't come to Amsterdam without experiencing the gluttony that is Dutch pancakes – especially if you have a hangover. These bad boys are the size of dinner plates and as thick as pizzas, with both sweet and savoury toppings. My favourite pancake house is Pannenkoekenhuis Upstairs, which is (unsurprisingly) up an extraordinarily steep and narrow flights of stairs – even by Dutch standards. It's a tiny place, and easy to miss, but worth it once you get inside. Teapots hang from the ceiling in every size and shape, and the pancakes are buttery and satisfying.

Grimburgwal 2 (Centrum) 020 626 5603 [upstairspannenkoeken.nl](http://upstairspannenkoeken.nl)



### **Vegetarian restaurants**

Cleaning eating, health foods, raw food – these are all buzzwords that have only relatively recently entered Amsterdam’s vocabulary. Following the trend for environmental sustainability and personal health, a slew of vegetarian and vegan restaurants have recently opened – most of which defy geography in their style of food. Hence why you’ll find them in this global dining section. These are the few I think are definitely worth a visit. And note to all those of us not on a diet: some of them are gloriously unhealthy too!

#### *Betty’s*

There are very few restaurants I’ll bike 7 km to get to in the freezing cold, and Betty’s is one of them. It’s on the Rijnstraat, which isn’t so far out of town if you live in the south, but if you’re coming from my area (Westerpark) it’s a bit of a trek. Once you get there, however, you’ll be greeted by the friendly couple who run the place – the woman is the chef, her other half is front of house. There’s no menu – you simply let them know if there’s anything you don’t eat and wait to be surprised. The food I ate there was a fusion of many different styles of cuisine, but all vegetarian and mostly vegan too. Think shareable antipasti, spicy dal and rice, pickled root salads, and the most indulgent (non-vegan) desserts. It’s the kind of place where you want to order a bottle of wine, get comfy, and stick around all evening.

Rijnstraat 75 (Zuid) 020 644 5896 [bettys.nl](http://bettys.nl)

#### *Golden Temple*

I’d biked past Golden Temple on the Utrechtsestraat dozens of times before I went in. It looks like a hippie kinda place, and I guess in a way it is – you could well be eating your dinner on a sheepskin rug with a small dog curled up next to you. But the food is something even us meat-eating folk can get on board with. I really liked their Mexican tacos, filled with beans, sweet potato, guacamole and salsa – they were fresh, citrusy and brimming with flavour. The Indian *thali* wasn’t bad either, although if you’re after authentic vegetarian Indian cuisine in Amsterdam you should probably go to Saravana Bhavan...

Utrechtsestraat 126 (Canal Belt) 020 626 8560 [restaurantgoldentemple.com](http://restaurantgoldentemple.com)

#### *Saravana Bhavan*

Which brings us onto some of the best Indian food in Amsterdam. Saravana Bhavan is a global chain of Indian restaurants, although I think there’s only one in Holland. The décor is bright and spartan, which means the ambience isn’t great. But the *dosas* make up for it. If you’ve never had a *dosa* before (or even if you have), this is the place to try one: enormous crepe-like discs are filled with everything from cheese to potatoes to lentils. One of those to yourself would probably fill you up till your next meal for just a few euros. But if you do have room left (I suggest sharing), order one of the *thalis* for a full gamut of Indian flavours.

Stadhouderskade 123-124 (De Pijp) 020 753 1250 [saravanabhavan.com](http://saravanabhavan.com)



### *Marits Eetkamer*

Another veggie spot worth the bike ride is Marits Eetkamer in Amsterdam Oost, which is just what it sounds like it should be: the living/dining room in the ground floor of someone's house – Marit's house, that is. Which is why it's not open every day – just a couple of evenings a week. Much like at Betty's, there are very few menu options: your starter might be a choice of salad or soup (both excellent, when I was there); the main might be a bean cassoulet, and the dessert might be a cheesecake. She has a small but decent wine list and an intimate atmosphere. If I wanted to impress a vegetarian date, I'd take them here.

Andreas Bonnstraat 34 (Oost) 020 776 3864 [maritseetkamer.nl](http://maritseetkamer.nl)

### *De Culinaire Werkplaats*

Blurring the boundaries between food and art is De Culinaire Werkplaats – a creative culinary space just south of the Westerpark that aims to define “the dinner plate of the future”. Again only open a few nights a week, the restaurant bases its dishes around a theme that changes every couple of months. When we were there, the theme was Dutch Flower Power, and co-owners Marjolein and Eric had put their creativity to work coming up with dishes that were either made of flowers or represented flowers in some way. I loved the black risotto that was made with as many dark-coloured ingredients as possible (although not squid ink, for obvious reasons) and represented the famous black tulip. De Culinaire Werkplaats is not cheap, but it's a fascinating experience worth paying for.

Fannius Scholtenstraat 10 (Westerpark) 06 5464 6576 [deculinairewerkplaats.nl](http://deculinairewerkplaats.nl)







## EUROPE

### Modern European restaurants

As a small country, the Netherlands by definition is influenced by its European neighbours – especially when it comes to cuisine. And while French and Italian food dominated in Amsterdam for a long time, there's now a new type of pan-European style of cooking that's really taken the city by storm. I don't think Amsterdam is unique in this – it's happened everywhere from London to Lisbon – but I do think it's something the Dutch capital does particularly well.

#### *Kaagman & Kortekaas*

Opening in 2016, Kaagman & Kortekaas is somewhere I'd happily bring work colleagues for a leaving do, a group of friends for a dinner splurge, or really anyone I wanted to impress food-wise without the atmosphere being either pretentious or overly romantic. The kitchen is creative and modern, using plenty of local game and seasonal ingredients. Oysters are always on the menu, but the night I dined there the rabbit was a hit at my table!

Sint Nicolaasstraat 43 (Centrum) 020 233 6544 [kaagmanenkortekaas.nl](http://kaagmanenkortekaas.nl)

#### *Daalder*

Daalder blew me away with its modern European cuisine back in 2013. When I took my parents and in-laws there in 2016, it transpired that the original chef had left – but the food was no less accomplished. Standout dishes for me were the amuse of tomato sorbet and parmesan foam, as well as the duck breast with a delightful *potje* of potato, beetroot and horseradish that perked up the palate no end. Daalder may not be all *bitterballen* and *Gouda* – but its ingredients are no less local for their international influences.

Lindengracht 90 (Jordaan) 020 624 8864 [daalderamsterdam.nl](http://daalderamsterdam.nl)

#### *Choux*

With two highly popular temporary ventures under his belt, chef Merijn van Berlo finally put down permanent roots just behind Amsterdam's Centraal Station in a roomy, industrial space with a casual vibe. At Choux, you can choose up to seven courses, each of which is described as a list of ingredients – the rest is a surprise. When I ate there a little while ago, one highlight was a starter of black rice, pork and squid sliced so thinly it resembled *tagliatelle* – delicate and salty-sweet. My main course of cod, kale and beetroot was good in flavour and texture, but accented with overly salty dried shrimp that reminded me a little of shrimp paste. Choux offers an excellent pairing of dishes with its raw, organic wines for €7 a glass.

De Ruyterkade 128 (Centrum) 020 210 3090 [choux.nl](http://choux.nl)



### *Marius*

I first visited Marius in 2009, and by now it's become an old favourite. It has staying power: you want to take your parents there for dinner (and get them to pay); and then you want to go back to celebrate that promotion you got a year later (and this time you can afford to pay yourself). Chef Kees hand-picks his produce for the so-called "Market Menu" every day, which costs €47.50 for four courses. It's not cheap, but it's some of the best food (with the friendliest service – also important) that you'll encounter in Amsterdam.

Barentszstraat 173 (Westerpark) 020 422 7880 [restaurantmarius.nl](http://restaurantmarius.nl)



### *Worst Wijncafé*

Next door neighbour to Marius, and arguably more French than truly European, Worst Wijncafé is without doubt one of my favourite restaurants in Amsterdam. It opened in 2012 and quickly became my go-to restaurant, come celebrations or commiserations, brunch or dinner... "Worst" means sausage in Dutch, and that's exactly what you'll find on the menu: deer sausages, lobster sausages, *boudin noir*, even chocolate sausages! All paired with exquisite wines.

Barentszstraat 171 (Westerpark) 020 625 6167 [deworst.nl](http://deworst.nl)

### *Reuring*

If you like to eat with the seasons and aren't a picky eater, you'll love Reuring's well-priced set menus. The evening I dined there was in autumn, and we gorged on seasonal game – partridge and wild duck – with truffles, pumpkin and kale. The service is excellent, too. A good safe bet for any occasion.

Lutmastraat 99 (De Pijp) 020 777 0996 [cafereuring.nl](http://cafereuring.nl)



### *Lastage*

Before Lastage existed, I'd been to one other Michelin-starred restaurant in Amsterdam: La Rive. It was wonderful – but in that grand, stately and somehow pretentious way that many such establishments (especially hotel restaurants) often are. When I first went to Lastage, it didn't have a Michelin star – but it wouldn't be long before it did. In contrast to La Rive, Lastage was small, friendly and as casual as you can reasonably be at that price ticket. It paved the way for what would become the new high-end Euro-Dutch gastronomy.

Geldersekade 29 (Centrum) 020 737 0811 [restaurantlastage.nl](http://restaurantlastage.nl)

### *Wilde Zwijnen and Eetbar Wilde Zwijnen*

Eetbar Wilde Zwijnen is the very epitome of the new European cuisine: local, seasonal, unpretentious and very, very good. Unlike the restaurant of the same name next door, the *eetbar* serves smaller sharing plates – taking the casualness notch up another level. Go with a group of friends and try everything on a menu.

Wilde Zwijnen: Javaplein 23 (Oost) 020 463 3043 [wildezwijnen.com](http://wildezwijnen.com)

Eetbar: Javaplein 25 (Oost) 020 354 4000 [wildezwijnen.com](http://wildezwijnen.com)



### *Beulings*

Calm and dignified, Beulings is the perfect restaurant for when your parents are paying. The Chef's Menu comprises five courses plus *amuse-bouches* for around €60 – take the wine pairing for an extra €37.50. It's not cheap, but it's a lovely experience with excellent, seasonal ingredients used in well thought-out dishes. Great customer service to match.

Beulingstraat 9 (Jordaan) 020 320 6100 [beulings.nl](http://beulings.nl)





### *Lion Noir*

Lion Noir is the kind of place you'd like to go for a high-class hen (bachelorette) party. Its dark decor features impressively masculine antlers, gothic chandeliers, and clientele wearing (wait for it) dresses and heels! Yes, in Amsterdam. It feels ever so slightly debauched without being seedy. And the cocktails are to die for. The last time I ate there it was the night I celebrated my friend's engagement with the rest of our girlfriends – ideal.

Reguliersdwarsstraat 28 (Canal Belt) 020 627 6603 [lionnoir.nl](http://lionnoir.nl)

### *Meneer de Wit Heeft Honger*

Arguably the future of dining, at Meneer de Wit Heeft Honger the vegetarian dishes are more numerous than the non-vege options and are equally creative. I went there for an anniversary dinner, which turned out to be ideal as the restaurant is very romantic, too. We ordered six dishes to share, which was just about perfect for a hungry couple like us (others might stop at four or five). You can pick your own dishes or let the kitchen decide for you – either way, you're in for a treat. Roasted radicchio was my favourite: bitter-sweet, served with *cavolo nero*, *kardoen* and the most creamily decadent wet polenta. Pure autumnal comfort and a wonderful use of seasonal veg. All dishes were excellent, and perfect for date night – especially when one partner is vegetarian and the other isn't.

Witte de Withstraat 10 (De Baarsjes) 020 737 3184 [meneerdewitheefthonger.nl](http://meneerdewitheefthonger.nl)

### *BAK*

Pop-up-turned-permanent restaurant BAK is housed in the top floor of a converted warehouse that's also home to a theatre. It's a unique space, with unique locally-led food to match. There's no menu, but six courses at dinner will set you back €55 – so it's not cheap but it's great quality, and the building gives the experience an interesting atmosphere. There's a clear emphasis on seasonality, organic, local produce, which is something you really taste in the dishes. One stand-out dish for me was a celebration of the humble carrot, which came in four varieties with a citrus oil and crème fraîche dressing, puffed grains of wheat and a light dusting of coffee – grated straight from the bean. Light and joyful on the one hand, earthy and autumnal on the other. In short, BAK is a great choice for a low-key celebration.

Van Diemenstraat 408 (Westerpark) 020 7372 553 [bakrestaurant.nl](http://bakrestaurant.nl)



### Dutch restaurants and eetcafes

There are very few truly Dutch restaurants in Amsterdam, and even fewer genuinely good ones. So this list isn't very long. It does, however, include a couple of *eetcafes*: casual, local, neighbourhood cafés serving up typical fare at reasonable prices. Think steaks, stews, chicken satay, a couple of vegetarian options – nothing fancy.

#### *Lt. Cornelis*

Lt. Cornelis, opening in 2016, might be located right off the Spui in the heart of touristy Centrum. And yes, it may have slightly cheesy reproductions of Rembrandts and Vermeers on the walls. But don't let that put you off trying some of the best Dutch food in town. Standout highlights included the barley risotto with Jerusalem artichokes, BBQ-ed leeks and *messenklever* cheese; continuing the smoky theme was BBQ-ed *spitskool* (cabbage) with crispy-skinned cod and parsnip. Dutch food never looked (or tasted) so cool.

Voetboogstraat 13 (Centrum) 020 261 4863 [restaurantcornelis.amsterdam](http://restaurantcornelis.amsterdam)

#### *Greetje*

The perfect place to take your parents to, Greetje is one of the few places serving truly authentic Dutch food in Amsterdam. Many of the dishes have been charmingly translated (pigeon's hangover, anyone? Or perhaps the yoghurt marbles?), and are as tasty as they are endearing. Think pot roasts, mustard soup, and deer pâté, as well as some fish and vegetarian dishes. It's not cheap, but the service is excellent.

Peperstraat 23 (Centrum) 020 779 7450 [restaurantgreetje.nl](http://restaurantgreetje.nl)

#### *Van Kerkwijk*

Van Kerkwijk is a sort of international *eetcafe*: cosy, yet cosmopolitan. There is no menu as such, so you'll have to remember the list of dishes described to your waiter. The first time I ate there, I went for the pâté, which transpired to be of the smooth, chicken liver variety, and came with very fresh bread and a small salad garnish. Next, I ordered the monkfish wrapped in bacon and rosemary, with a green mustard sauce. The latter was not as overpowering as it sounds, and the fish was sensibly cooked. Van Kerkwijk doesn't take reservations, so arrive early in case you need to queue.

Nes 41 (Centrum) 020 620 3316 [caferestaurantvankerkwijk.nl](http://caferestaurantvankerkwijk.nl)

#### *Zotte*

Technically Belgian but definitely falling into the *eetcafe* category, Zotte is a cosy brown bar serving gazillions of beers and a small but tasty menu. Conveniently located just around the corner from the Leidseplein, Zotte can get crowded – although you can always prop up the bar with a *krug* of sweet dark bock beer while you wait for a table. The quiche is usually a good bet, as are the steaks. Main courses generally come with a generous bowl of chips (as in, fries) and salad. It's pure comfort food.

Raamstraat 29 (Canal Belt) 020 626 8694 [dezotte.nl](http://dezotte.nl)



## French restaurants

When I first moved to Amsterdam as a student in 2001, French restaurants were the height of fashion in Amsterdam. Things have moved on since then, but there's still some good French food to be found if you know where to look. Some of it is more old-school than others, but these are all top quality restaurants.

### *Café de Klepel*

Café de Klepel is a cosy, unassuming little French restaurant in the picturesque Jordaan neighbourhood. It serves classic French/Dutch dishes, great cheeses and organic wines, and the service is professional, too. Take your parents, take a date, take a colleague – it's a great spot for any occasion.

Prinsenstraat 22 (Canal Belt) 020 623 8244 [cafedeklepel.nl](http://cafedeklepel.nl)

### *Ron Gastrobar Paris*

Dutch chef Ron Blaauw owns a few different restaurants in Amsterdam (see Ron Gastrobar in the global dining section above) and most of what he does, he does well. His Parisian menu is split into three different types of dish: entrées priced at €15 each, including things like rillettes and crudités; main dishes priced at €18, including classics like *foie gras*, frog's legs and French onion soup; and desserts for €9. You can also take their Bib Gourmand menu for €37 or get a special deal for pre-theatre dinner. Blaauw's Parisian branch has a well-stocked bar, too: I'd recommend kicking off with an aperitif at the steam-punk-esque bar before making your way to the table.

Kleine-Gartmanplatsoen 11A (Canal Belt) 020 305 2761 [rongastrobarparis.nl](http://rongastrobarparis.nl)

### *Auberge Jean et Marie*

Opening in de Pijp neighbourhood in 2016, Auberge Jean et Marie is testament to the trend that top-notch, high-end French food is making a comeback. The interior is as classic as the food: all white tablecloths, dark wood, classy tones of grey on the walls, and a touch of stained glass. Even the terrace outside looks like a French brasserie spilling out onto the pavement. Culinary highlights for me included the coarsely textured, gamey pâté stuffed with chestnuts and pistachios; and the smooth, coral-coloured bisque that was full of flavour from brown shrimps and deftly sliced fennel.

Albert Cuypstraat 58 (De Pijp) 020 845 2005 [aubergeamsterdam.nl](http://aubergeamsterdam.nl)

### *Wijnbar Boelen & Boelen*

I first found Wijnbar Boelen & Boelen soon after I moved here, when de Pijp was *the* (only) place to go out at night. After a long absence, I recently rediscovered it as a lovely spot for a glass of wine and a plate of cheese or charcuterie after work on a Friday evening. They do good, classic main courses as well: steak, duck and the like. It's not cheap, but it's very good quality French food and the service is extremely attentive.

Eerste van der Helststraat 50 (De Pijp) 020 671 2242 [wijnbar.nl](http://wijnbar.nl)





### *Paskamer*

Paskamer is Dutch for changing room, but the place is a sort of wine bar-cum-restaurant serving food that's loosely French-Mediterranean. So who knows where the name comes from? Because they offer around 50 wines by the glass, you can pair a different one with each dish you order, or just plump for a bottle to split with your pals. The food is almost perfectly designed for sharing: oysters on the half shell were silky and salty. Finely sliced *pulpo* (octopus) was smoky and ever-so-slightly spicy from the smoked paprika and chilli mayo on top. Sweet potato chips were suitably crispy on the outside yet comfortingly mushy on the inside, and nicely salted. Paskamer does a great job in providing a glorious range of French-ish snacks that you can easily turn into a whole meal.

Lutmastraat 132 (De Pijp) 020 362 7468 [paskamer.nu](http://paskamer.nu)



### *Het Stuivertje*

Although Het Stuivertje looks more like a Dutch *eetcafe*, the food is nowadays distinctly French leaning. Owner and chef Bart van Loon previously put French restaurant *Bistro Neuf* on the map, and he's now earned himself a *Bib Gourmand* from Michelin at Het Stuivertje. Food-wise, you'll find classics like *escargots*, *gigot d'agneau* and plates of *charcuterie* on the menu, alongside some more international starters and interesting pasta dishes.

Hazenstraat 58 (Jordaan) 020 623 1349 [hetstuivertje.nl](http://hetstuivertje.nl)



## Italian restaurants

Italian food in Amsterdam still hasn't quite reached the same regional level as it has in Italy (as in, here, Italian restaurants exist. In Italy, only Roman restaurants, Florentine restaurants, Sicilian restaurants, and so on, exist). But, that aside, there's some well-prepared, fresh, homemade Italian cuisine to be found. I've split this section up into pizza, pasta and trattorias to make choosing a bit more efficient – but bear in mind that there is some overlap in many cases.

### Pizza

I've had many a heated discussion with people about where to find the best pizza in Amsterdam, but I'm resolute in my decision. It's **La Perla** – hands down. They import most of their produce from near Naples, and their buffalo mozzarella, 'nduja and *finocchiona* are to die for. La Perla has a pizzeria on one side of the road (where they do mostly takeaway) and a restaurant on the other side (where you can order pizza plus various other dishes). Also high on my pizza shortlist are **YamYam** (get their truffle pizza for pure indulgent pizza pleasure), **Renato's** (a cosy pizzeria in de Pijp) and **Fuoco Vivo** (a bustling place in West). If you find yourself with the pizza-munchies in the vicinity of the Rembrandtplein, you could do a lot worse than popping into **Pizza Heart** – surprisingly good, especially for such a touristy area.

La Perla: Tweede Tuindwarsstraat 14 & 53 (Jordaan) 020 624 8828 [pizzaperla.nl](http://pizzaperla.nl)

YamYam: Frederik Hendrikstraat 88-90 (Westerpark) 020 681 5097 [yamyam.nl](http://yamyam.nl)

Renato's: Karel du Jardinstraat 32 (De Pijp) 020 673 2300 [renatospizzeria.nl](http://renatospizzeria.nl)

Fuoco Vivo: De Clercqstraat 12 (Oud-West) 020 612 4309 [fuocovivo.nl](http://fuocovivo.nl)

Pizza Heart: Reguliersdwarsstraat 51 (Canal Belt) 020 370 5150 [pizzaheart-amsterdam.nl](http://pizzaheart-amsterdam.nl)

### Pasta

Top of the pasta list is the aptly named **Spaghetteria**, now with three locations in Amsterdam and a fourth in Utrecht. Not limited to spaghetti, they serve up three classics that are always on the menu and three other traditional dishes, which change on a daily basis. The ingredients themselves are top quality, and the dishes are both authentic and imaginative. I absolutely loved their slow-cooked deer *ragù* with broad ribbons of freshly made pasta and lashings of parmesan.

Also worth checking out is **Cantinetta** in Amsterdam West, run by two women with a passion for Italian farm-to-fork cooking. I had *linguine con vongole*: the pasta was fresh, the tomatoes sweet (despite it being early March!) and the clams plentiful. Cantinetta offers a well thought-out wine list too.

Spaghetteria: See website for locations: [spaghetteria-pastabar.nl](http://spaghetteria-pastabar.nl)

Cantinetta: De Clercqstraat 105 (Oud-West) 020 737 0149 [cantinetta.nl](http://cantinetta.nl)



### Trattorias and other Italian food

In the picturesque Jordaan neighbourhood, **Koevoet** looks like an ancient brown café, but serves some excellent *primi* and *secondi* – specialising in Sicilian dishes. I particularly like their carbonara and ravioli, but they have plenty of non-pasta dishes that are heavier on the protein side.

Just down the road from there is **DiVino**: more of a wine bar than a restaurant, DiVino is an excellent early-evening place for a glass of wine and a plate of cheese or salami. For the larger appetite, they serve a couple of specials that change regularly, but they're often only available on busier days of the week.

Also flying the flag for *aperitivo* o'clock is **Primi**, where the friendly Italian guys offer free snacks with your drinks between 5.30 and 7.30 pm every day. I tried their Aperol Spritz and Smoky Margarita, and tucked into a board laden with olives, nuts, marinated artichokes, creamy little basil tarts and (my favourites) tiny pizza pockets stuffed with oozing mozzarella and a smidge of tomato sauce. Not stopping there, we ordered various antipasti to share: *arancini* (fried balls of risotto) were tasty. We also tried the excellent *burrata*, which was served with a sort of cold pea soup, and a dish of aubergine *parmigiana* – simply triumphant. Primi also serves pasta dishes, gnocchi, main courses and desserts – but after all the *aperitivo* snacks you'll probably be far too full to eat them all!

Koevoet: Lindenstraat 17 (Jordaan) 020 624 0846 [koevoetamsterdam.com](http://koevoetamsterdam.com)

DiVino: Boomstraat 41a (Jordaan) 020 845 2207 [wijnbardivino.nl](http://wijnbardivino.nl)

Primi: Van der Hoopstraat 96 (Westerpark) 020 737 1468 [primiamsterdam.nl](http://primiamsterdam.nl)







### Spanish/tapas restaurants

I should better re-name this section “first-date restaurants” because when I was single, tapas places seemed to be my first port of call for a casual drink and a bite to eat on pretty much every first date. But, of course, tapas-style food can work on many occasions. Amsterdam is not exactly awash with good tapas, but here are a few places that don’t disappoint...

#### *Madrid*

I first discovered Madrid after leaving a cookery workshop hungry. Yup, you read that right. Desperate for real food after three hours of raw cacao nonsense, we found ourselves at Madrid, ordering our way through the entire tapas menu. Now, it’s my go-to Spanish spot every time I’m in Oud-West. Try everything from the *patatas bravas* to the chorizo to the dates with *spek*.

Bellamystraat 11 (Oud-West) 020 489 9375 [restaurantemadridamsterdam.nl](http://restaurantemadridamsterdam.nl)

#### *La Oliva*

I discovered La Oliva back in 2009: a Basque bar/restaurant specialising in *pintxos*, sort of a cross between tapas and *bruschette*. Ordering works by pointing at what you like the look of: try a selection of these bread-based concoctions, including figs stuffed with blue cheese, tortilla, deer with mushrooms, aubergine with tomato sauce and rocket, asparagus and tuna wrapped in ham, *jamón ibérico*, and roasted vegetables with goat’s cheese. The Rioja is excellent, too. The terrace might not be huge, but its Jordanian location makes pavement dining seem almost Mediterranean.

Egelantiersstraat 122 (Jordaan) 020 320 4316 [laoliva.nl](http://laoliva.nl)

#### *Pikoteo*

“Tapas” may be a little misleading in this case: Pikoteo specialises in a sort of modern, fusion tapas the like of which I’ve not seen before in Amsterdam. It’s Spanish meets South American. The smoked beef carpaccio with truffle and shaved *Idiazabal* cheese is hands-down my favourite dish: bold but delicate, pungent but refined, all at the same time. Plus, they have a good wine and cocktail menu.

Houtmankade 9 (Westerpark) 020 774 8940 [pikoteo.nl](http://pikoteo.nl)

#### *A La Plancha*

The most traditional on this list, A La Plancha is a true tapas experience: popping inside this tiny, narrow little tapas bar makes you feel like you’re in the backstreets of Barcelona. With enormous legs of *jamón* everywhere, and freely flowing wine, you can’t go wrong. Try the flavoursome *manchego* cheese, the grainy melt-in-your-mouth ham, and the tasty seafood salads. The house red wine may be a little warm, but it’s very drinkable.

Eerste Looiersdwarsstraat 15 (Jordaan) 020 420 3633 [alaplancha.nl](http://alaplancha.nl)



### ***ESCOBAR***

Apparently Ron Blaauw's had his cheffy fingers in this pie, which is probably part of the reason why ESCOBAR is so damn good. It used to be a jazz club and was formerly a bath house – which is to say that it's surprisingly large for de Pijp. It therefore has a reasonable amount of pavement seating if the Dutch weather is feeling particularly Spanish when you happen to be there. The tapas are priced between around €5 and €12, with the cold meats and main dishes costing a little more. The evening I went, ceviche was served *leche de tigre*-style, so that the fish was almost milky, but punctuated by a marmalade-y citrus fruit, red chilli and red onion – sweet and sour, citrus meets spice. Hot dishes included *pimientos de padrón*, *albondigas* (the meatballs were pleasantly loose in texture and served with a very fresh and lightly spicy tomato sauce) and *navajas* (razor clams with broad beans). Tacos came stuffed with shredded pork, red cabbage, tomato salsa, smoky pineapple, and spicy mayo – I loved the texture, the heat and the flavours, although I wouldn't recommend them to those who can't handle chilli. ESCOBAR's atmosphere is festive, the service attentive, and the food some of the best tapas in town.

Eerste Sweelinckstraat 10 (De Pijp) 020 845 5640 [escobar.nu](http://escobar.nu)



### ***Pata Negra***

With three locations (in Oosterpark, Zeeburg and Utrechtsestraat), Pata Negra has become something of an Amsterdam institution. Although I don't love it as much as other places in this list, it's relatively consistent and therefore a safe bet for many a group occasion. Try the *pollo alla salsa* (chicken in a lightly spicy sauce), tortilla, Iberian cured sausages, and *pimientos de Padrón* (fried green peppers).

See website for locations and phone numbers: [pata-negra.nl](http://pata-negra.nl)



### Swiss/Alpine restaurants

You probably can't get much less Alpine than Amsterdam: four metres below sea level and as flat as a pancake in all directions. But for those of you craving a taste of the mountains in the lowlands, there are a couple of places to satisfy your appetite. After all, the Dutch do know quite a lot about cheese!

#### *Bistrot des Alpes*

When the long Dutch winter comes around, one of the few solaces of knowing I'm going to be wearing a coat for the next six months is the thought of this Utrechtsestraat bistrot's Alpine comfort food that transports you straight to Switzerland. Think *raclette*, *fondue*, *tartiflette*, *charcuterie*, and as many calories as you can shake a ski pole at. Don't forget to take a selfie in the ski lift that's sitting in the middle of the restaurant!

Utrechtsedwardsstraat 141 (Canal Belt) 020 620 7393 [bistrot-des-alpes.nl](http://bistrot-des-alpes.nl)



#### *Café Bern*

The owners of Café Bern have managed to re-create some of the ambience of the alpine *stübli*; their diminutive menu focuses on what they do well: fondue, meats, salads, simple house wine – unassuming and honestly-priced. Nothing has changed here in years. Café Bern's fondue is a bubbling creamy lava of cheese and wine, with baskets of bread that magically replenish themselves throughout the evening. Despite the fact that (between the six of us) we polished off what looked like a small lake of cheese, we still had room for dessert. These constituted the least satisfying aspect of the meal, but there was something pleasingly retro about the maraschino cherry that topped my chocolate mousse with *chantilly*.

Nieuwmarkt 9 (Centrum) 020 622 0034 [cafebern.com](http://cafebern.com)



### **Turkish and Middle Eastern Restaurants**

The Netherlands has a lot of immigrants from Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East, so it's no surprise that they've brought their cuisine with them. The food from this area of the world is possibly my favourite: varied, full of herbs and spices, and with a great balance of sharing dishes (*meze*, *mezze*, *mazze*, *mazze*, spell it how you will) and grilled meats and fish. All of these countries were once part of the Ottoman Empire, which explains the similarities in their cuisine.

#### *Ali Ocakbaşı*

With a gorgeously decorated interior and excellent service, Ali Ocakbaşı is a classy establishment for a night out. Their selection of starters is brought around in a giant basket from which to make your choice. My favourite is the *çiğ köfte*: finely minced raw beef with bulgur wheat and chilli, hand moulded into sort of knobby cylinders. Eat them wrapped in lettuce leaves with a squeeze of lemon. Delicious.

Herengracht 558 (Canal Belt) 020 233 4588 [aliocakbasi.nl](http://aliocakbasi.nl)

#### *Orontes (West)*

With two locations in Amsterdam, Orontes on the Albert Cuypstraat and Orontes West on the Hugo de Grootplein pay homage to the Antakya region of Turkey. They import hard-to-find products from the area and cook them up into excellent dishes, including succulent lamb skewers, aromatic aubergine dishes, and mixed grills cooked over charcoal. Nesip Can's wine selection is wonderful, too.

See website for locations and phone numbers: [restaurantorontes.nl](http://restaurantorontes.nl)

#### *Beyrouth*

Its name a riff on the Lebanese capital, Beyrouth has been a favourite Amsterdam restaurant for as long as I can remember (owner Kamal Estephan opened it in 1990 when I was just 10). The range of *mezza* here is huge – you can pick from separate dishes or order a selection of as many as 10 or 15 – so I usually fill up on those alone. Their tabbouleh is perfect: green and grassy with oodles of fresh herbs.

Kinkerstraat 18 (Oud-West) 020 616 0635 [restaurantbeyrouth.online](http://restaurantbeyrouth.online)

#### *Hummus House*

Just down the road from the Nieuwmarkt, Hummus House serves officially the best hummus in Amsterdam (according to me). The chickpea goodness I tried came with smoky aubergine and a boiled egg – it's moreishly tasty. Their vine leaves are also meltingly soft, perfectly light, and delicately spiced. Plus, Hummus House even does deliveries. Only downside: they don't serve alcohol.

Sint Antoniesbreestraat 25 (Centrum) 020 341 7118 [hummushouse.nl](http://hummushouse.nl)





### *Hummus Bistro d&a*

The hummus here is also great, and they've come up with the wonderful idea of putting *shakshuka* INSIDE their hummus. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it's called *Hummshuka*! I was a bit less impressed with the non-hummus menu items, however: the minced lamb dish we had (which I believe was called *siniya*) was swimming in too much animal fat, although I enjoyed the pickled onion and green sauce on top for cutting through the richness. The whole head of cauliflower had been well roasted, but lacked flavour – to me, it would have made sense to blanch it in a white wine-based stock first before roasting. But I did love the dip it came with. However, the service was friendly, the prices reasonable, and the wine flowing. Handily, Hummus Bistro d&a now has two locations – one in west, the other in east.

See website for locations and phone numbers: [dna-hummusbistro.com](http://dna-hummusbistro.com)

### *Maydanoz*

With stunningly decorated tiles adorning the walls, walking into Maydanoz is already like a little slice of the Eastern Mediterranean in Amsterdam. Their charcoal grill lends excellent flavour to all their grilled meat, and they're liberal in their use of herbs and spices. (Maydanoz translates as parsley, so that figures.) You can also expect a wide variety of both cold and warm *mezze* dishes to share: I particularly liked their *ispanak*: braised spinach with pepper, tomatoes, pine nuts and raisins.

Ceintuurbaan 9 (De Pijp) 020 676 1195 [maydanoz-amsterdam.nl](http://maydanoz-amsterdam.nl)

### *Bar Fisk*

Bar Fisk is a combination of Middle Eastern flavours, ultra-fresh fish, and killer cocktails. The food is designed to be shared but is larger than tapas-sized portions. Highlights for me were the *corvina* tartar, which was essentially a cross between ceviche, tabbouleh and smoky aubergine: literally three of my favourite things on one plate. Mackerel (cured rather than cooked) was served with roasted cauliflower, chilli and a tahini sauce: again, there were so many of my best-loved ingredients here that I couldn't fail to love the dish. Squid came with earthy beetroot salad and crunchy roasted pecan nuts. Golden fried sardines arrived swimming in a peppery dressing atop a marine blue plate. And pan-fried bream fillets were served simply with some roasted garlic, toasted almonds and yoghurt. For me, it's the combination of Middle Eastern flavours and fresh Mediterranean ingredients that really sets Bar Fisk apart.

Eerste Sweelinckstraat 23 (De Pijp) 020 235 2117 [barfisk.nl](http://barfisk.nl)



## AFRICA

### East African restaurants

Focusing on spicy meat and vegetable dishes – rich in sauce and served atop huge *injera* pancakes – there are a few East African restaurants in Amsterdam worth a visit. Most are modestly priced, casual in décor and ambience, and great for sharing with a small group of close friends. Try checking out **Abyssinia** or **Lalibela** just off Overtoom in Oud-West, **Azmarino** in de Pijp, or **Semhar** on the Marnixstraat. The platters that arrive at your table are a veritable oil painting: an intricate pattern of darkly marinated meat, green spinach, pastes of pulses and yellow spices, and bright flecks of salad all set against a canvas of pale pancakes. Plates and cutlery are not often forthcoming so just dig in with your hands. The sauces are usually spicy but not too hot, the pancakes offering a subtle contrast without being overly sour.

Abyssinia: Jan Pieter Heijestraat 190 (Oud-West) 020 683 0792 [abyssinia.nl](http://abyssinia.nl)

Lalibela: Eerste Helmersstraat 249 (Oud-West) 020 683 8332 [lalibela.nl](http://lalibela.nl)

Azmarino: Tweede Sweelinckstraat 6 (De Pijp) 020 671 7587 [azmarino.nl](http://azmarino.nl)

Semhar: Marnixstraat 259 (Jordaan) 020 638 1634 [semhar.nl](http://semhar.nl)

### North African restaurants

Because parts of North Africa also belonged to the Ottoman Empire centuries ago, the cuisine is not dissimilar to that of the Middle East in the previous chapter. Warm spices, generous selections of dishes to share, and fragrant herbs appear in abundance. For a good budget option in de Pijp, try one of the three dishes served at the **Couscous Club**: couscous with vegetables and lentil sauce; couscous with merguez sausages; or “royal” couscous with one merguez sausage, one lamb kebab and beef stew. The hearty, one-pot dishes cost between €9 and €15, and Chef Wouter will even mix you up a mojito if you ask nicely. If you’re looking for a large but affordable location for a big group, look no further than **Bazar** in de Pijp – it’s a huge establishment with plenty of North African dishes to share with friends.

Couscous Club: Ceintuurbaan 346 (De Pijp) 020 673 3539 [couscousclub.nl](http://couscousclub.nl)

Bazar: Albert Cuypstraat 182 (De Pijp) 020 675 0544 [hotelbazar.nl](http://hotelbazar.nl)

### South African restaurants

As BBQ joints start to take off (more on that in the Americas chapter), it’s hardly surprising that the South African braai concept has recently hit Amsterdam’s dining scene too. The current trend for all things meaty and smoky has meant that the eponymous **Braai** has been well received by locals and visitors. I’ve only been to their most recently opened branch near Westerpark (they have another restaurant near the Vondelpark and a third at RAI) but their smoked chicken, BBQ pork ribs and charred sweet potato were good.

Braai: See website for locations and phone numbers: [braaiamsterdam.nl](http://braaiamsterdam.nl)



## ASIA

### *Asian-fusion restaurants*

Amsterdam is home to immigrant communities from all over Asia, and we even have our own miniature Chinatown. So it's no surprise that there is some good Asian food to be found in the city. Later in this chapter, I'll focus on the country-specific restaurants, but first here's a list of my favourite places that feature cuisine from all over the continent.

#### *A-fusion*

As a restaurant critic, I rarely tend to go back to places more than once or twice. I make an exception for A-fusion, which I've been regularly frequenting since 2008. An always bustling Asian fusion restaurant in Amsterdam's Chinatown, I leave my dining choices in the hands of the kitchen and simply order the chef's menu. Whatever they bring is a delight, but I'd recommend adding some steamed oysters and truffle-beef sushi – because you're worth it.

Zeedijk 130 (Centrum) 020 330 4068 [a-fusion.nl](http://a-fusion.nl)

#### *Geisha*

Geisha is special for two reasons: its chef's menu that allows you to taste a bit of everything; and its cocktails, which are made at next-door sister bar Porem. Our starter was a mix of sushi: tuna and salmon sashimi, a rainbow roll and a regular roll. Geisha doesn't serve a huge range of sushi, so I assume the chef changes up what s/he serves, but you can expect a couple of rolls plus a few pieces of sashimi. Seafood soup was slightly spicy, slightly sour and very good. It came with a few mussels, shrimps and veges, but the stand-out part was the broth itself. Beef tenderloin had been seared and was served raw and very tender, with an umami-rich sauce that was slightly sweet and slightly citric too. Seabass was served with its skin crispy and a sticky soy sauce and spring onions. The service at Geisha is also top notch, making it a great option to take a date or friends from out of town.

Prins Hendrikkade 106 (Centrum) 020 626 2410 [restaurantgeisha.nl](http://restaurantgeisha.nl)

#### *Happyhappyjoyjoy*

According to their website, "Happyhappyjoyjoy serves street food dishes with Thai, Malay, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Chinese and Korean influences." So on my first visit, I set out to try as many of those flavours as I could. *Har kau* (steamed shrimp dumplings) were just as I'd expect, as were the Peking duck *bao*. I was surprised to admit that the *pho* at HHJJ was at least as good as many versions I've had at Vietnamese restaurants in the city. Hot and spicy shrimps were just that, while 5-spiced pork was properly aromatic belly pork with a thin but peppery dipping sauce. We picked our curry based on the fact that we'd never heard of it (*Nyonya*, anyone?) so I can't tell you whether it was authentic or not, but it certainly tasted good. And with two locations now, HHJJ is a funhouse of flavours in a restaurant decked with its own rose-tinted spectacles.

See website for locations and phone numbers: [happyhappyjoyjoy.asia](http://happyhappyjoyjoy.asia)



### Chinese restaurants

There aren't a great many Chinese restaurants in Amsterdam worth writing home about, but if you're craving dim sum head to **Oriental City** in the Red Light District. For Sichuan food, try the eponymous **Sichuan** for ultra-spicy and tasty dishes that are not for the faint of palate. Sichuan now has two locations – one in Chinatown and one on the northern end of the Red Light District. For Chinese street food, head to de Pijp for the bustling atmosphere and big flavours at **Shanghai Bistro** – try the pork “potsticker” dumplings!

Oriental City: Oudezijds Voorburgwal 177 (Centrum) 020 626 8352 [oriental-city.com](http://oriental-city.com)  
Sichuan: See website for locations and phone numbers: [sichuanrestaurant.nl](http://sichuanrestaurant.nl)  
Shanghai Bistro: Van Woustraat 110 (De Pijp) 020 235 8815 [shanghaibistro.nl](http://shanghaibistro.nl)

### Indian restaurants

For a long time, when I craved a good Indian curry in Amsterdam I found myself missing my local curry house in Brixton where I used to live in London. Luckily, while the Indian food scene may not be as extensive as it is in the UK, you can now find good Indian cuisine in Amsterdam too. My favourites include **Mayur**, which is a bit more upscale than your average takeaway joint, and which serves excellent *thalis* and tandoori dishes. Meanwhile, **Surya** specialises in Nepalese food as well as Indian, which gives it the edge if you fancy trying something a little different. And finally, **Saravana Bhavan** is a vegetarian Indian restaurant that makes hands-down the best *dosas* in town.

Mayur: Korte Leidsedwardsstraat 203 (Canal Belt) 020 623 2142 [mayur.nl](http://mayur.nl)  
Surya: Ceintuurbaan 147 (De Pijp) 020 676 7985 [suryarestaurant.nl](http://suryarestaurant.nl)  
Saravana Bhavan: Stadhouderskade 123 (De Pijp) 020 753 1250  
[saravanabhavan.com](http://saravanabhavan.com)

### Indonesian restaurants

As I mentioned in my earlier chapter about Dutch and not-so-Dutch food, Indonesian cuisine (especially the *rijsttafel* – literally, rice table) is a staple in the Netherlands due to the two countries' colonial history. When you're in Amsterdam, you can't leave the city without trying a *rijsttafel*: dozens of small, shareable dishes ranging from mild to spicy, in all colours of the rainbow. My favourite Indonesian restaurants for *rijsttafel* include **Blauw** (a little out of town but worth the trek for the good food, good atmosphere and good service), **Tempo Doeloe** (more central, still good food but a shame about the service) and **Indonesian Kitchen** (on the main canal belt and a little more upscale).

Blauw: Amstelveenseweg 158 (Zuid) 020 675 5000 [restaurantblauw.nl](http://restaurantblauw.nl)  
Tempo Doeloe: Utrechtsestraat 75 (Canal Belt) 020 625 6718  
[tempodoeloerestaurant.nl](http://tempodoeloerestaurant.nl)  
Indonesian Kitchen: Herengracht 287 (Canal Belt) 020 623 0260 (no website)





### Japanese restaurants

Japanese food has been represented for a long time in Amsterdam – not least by *kaiseki* restaurant Yamazato at the Okura Hotel. But fortunately for us, not all Japanese cuisine comes at Michelin-starred prices. Personally, I'm a far bigger fan of the Japanese street food at **De Japanner** where you can get tasty shareable bites with decent wine at a fraction of the price. For sushi, I also like **Sushilee** in the Zuidas business district, and both **Kagetsu** and **Akitsu** in the Jordaan.

Recently, ramen has taken off as the latest trend to hit Amsterdam by storm. While there are probably a dozen restaurants now claiming to cook authentic ramen noodle soups (and who am I to argue?), my favourites are the oldest and the newest. **Fou Fou** has been around for several years, and is so popular it's grown to two locations: one in the Jordaan, the other in de Pijp. Meanwhile, **Umaimon** only opened in autumn 2017 on the Leidseplein but has already won my heart with its Noukou Tori Soba.

De Japanner: Albert Cuypstraat 228 (De Pijp) 020 233 9939 [dejapanner.com](http://dejapanner.com)

Sushilee: George Gershwinaan 534 (Zuid) 06 1546 9008 [sushilee.nl](http://sushilee.nl)

Kagetsu: Hartenstraat 17 (Canal Belt) 020 427 3828 [kagetsu.nl/hartenstraat](http://kagetsu.nl/hartenstraat)

Akitsu: Rozengracht 228 (Oud-West) 020 625 3254 [akitsuamsterdam.nl](http://akitsuamsterdam.nl)

Fou Fou: See website for locations and phone numbers: [foufow.nl](http://foufow.nl)

Umaimon: Korte Leidsedwarsstraat 51 (Canal Belt) 020 261 3880 (no website)

### Thai restaurants

Even when I first moved to Amsterdam in 2006, Thai food was one of the few “ethnic” cuisines that already existed here. Serving the usual mix of curries, stir-fries, Pad Thai and salads, I like **Little Thai Prince** in Chinatown, and **Kinnaree** in the Jordaan. Also fun for a party (AND with good food – think sharing platters, curries and beers) is **SOI 74** in de Pijp.

Little Thai Prince: Zeedijk 33A (Centrum) 020 427 9645 (no website)

Kinnaree: Eerste Anjeliërsdwarsstraat 14 (Jordaan) 020 627 7153  
[restaurantkinnaree.nl](http://restaurantkinnaree.nl)

SOI 74: Van Woustraat 74 (De Pijp) 020 471 0642 [thaifoodcafe.nl](http://thaifoodcafe.nl)

### Vietnamese restaurants

Before ramen, we ate pho – and there are a few places serving up a decent bowl of steaming beef broth in Amsterdam. **Saigon Caphe** is in an unlikely spot just above the McDonald's near Leidseplein, but it serves one of my favourite pho soups (now with two newer locations as well). **Little Saigon** also has two locations, and serves great Vietnamese sandwiches, spring rolls and pho. Finally, **Taste of Vietnam** in the Jordaan is a little more upscale for evening dining.

Saigon Caphe: See website for locations and phone numbers: [saigoncaphe.nl](http://saigoncaphe.nl)

Little Saigon: See website for locations and phone numbers: [littlesaigon.nl](http://littlesaigon.nl)

Taste of Vietnam: Herenstraat 28 (Canal Belt) 020 358 6715 [thetasteofvietnam.nl](http://thetasteofvietnam.nl)



## THE AMERICAS

### BBQ and burger restaurants

A couple of years ago, Amsterdam went nuts for gourmet burgers – especially if served with craft beer. I'm not sure whether burgers claim to be American, but for the purposes of this restaurant guide let's say they are. Some of my favourite burgers are served up at **Troost** (technically a Dutch craft beer brewery, but that's just a minor detail), **The Butcher** (check out The Butcher Social Club in the A'DAM Tower if you like some hip beats and old-school games with your meal), **Lombardo's** (handily close to the Rijksmuseum) and **Smokin' Barrels** (the latter also does great lobster for the surf 'n turf fans).

Likewise on the meaty front, restaurants that sear your steak on the charcoal grill or BBQ your beef low & slow for hours have become more and more common over the last few years. For steak, try **Cannibale Royale** – now with three locations and counting. For real American BBQ, my favourite is **Pendergast** near the Westerpark (their brisket is to die for). I also love **Bulelani Smoke BBQ** – a pop-up that recently turned permanent, you can't do better for their BBQ pork ribs and real-deal Buffalo chicken wings. **Carnivore Smoke BBQ** near the Vondelpark comes a close third and is a great option if you're in the south of the city.

Troost: See website for locations and phone numbers: [brouwerijtroost.nl](http://brouwerijtroost.nl)

The Butcher: See website for locations and phone numbers: [the-butcher.com](http://the-butcher.com)

Lombardo's: Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 50 (Canal Belt) 020 420 5010 [lombardos.nl](http://lombardos.nl)

Smokin' Barrels: Beukenplein 22 (Oost) 020 693 3555 [smokinbarrels.nl](http://smokinbarrels.nl)

Cannibale Royale: See website for locations and phone numbers: [cannibaleroyale.nl](http://cannibaleroyale.nl)

Pendergast: Groen van Prinstererstraat 14 (Westerpark) 020 845 8507 [pendergast.nl](http://pendergast.nl)

Bulelani Smoke BBQ: Kinkerstraat 24 (Oud-West) 06 3988 1925 [bulelanibbq.com](http://bulelanibbq.com)

Carnivore Smoke BBQ: Amstelveenseweg 156 (Zuid) 020 752 9556 [carnivorebbq.nl](http://carnivorebbq.nl)

### Mexican restaurants

Every time I go to the US, I binge on Mexican food – and that's possibly because there's still not much up for grabs here in Amsterdam. For tacos, **Salsa Shop** has a couple of locations and does a good range of toppings (and, of course, salsa). But better still are the pop-ups from **Best Coast Taqueria** – search their Facebook page for dates and locations. For Mexican brunch (think variations on *huevos rancheros*) try **Los Feliz** in de Pijp. And for the best margarita in town, go to Amsterdam's oldest Mexican joint: **Los Pilonos** (don't bother with a lot of the food, though).

Salsa Shop: See website for locations and phone numbers: [salsashop.com](http://salsashop.com)

Best Coast Taqueria: See Facebook for pop-up events: [facebook.com/eatbestcoast](https://facebook.com/eatbestcoast)

Los Feliz: Albert Cuypstraat 88 (De Pijp) 020 773 4905 [lofeliz.nl](http://lofeliz.nl)

Los Pilonos: See website for locations and phone numbers: [lospilonos.com](http://lospilonos.com)



### Surinamese restaurants

While South American food hasn't really taken off yet in Amsterdam (the ceviche trend has yet to bite), the Dutch make an exception for Surinamese food. Not least because Suriname also used to be a colony of the Netherlands. If you want something cheap and filling (and are ok with a bit of spice), you could do a lot worse than order a roti: think curry-type dish with eggs, string beans and a giant flatbread to mop up the juices. My favourite roti (pictured below) comes from **Warung Spang Makandra**, where you can eat in or take away – I've been to their restaurant in de Pijp but they have a couple of other locations too. It might not look like an oil painting but it sure tastes good. **De Tokoman** (two locations) and **Swieti Sranang** are also good bets for hearty, spicy Surinamese sandwiches (like the wonderfully addictive *broodje pom*) and other takeaway items.

Spang Makandra: See website for locations and phone numbers: [spangmakandra.nl](http://spangmakandra.nl)

De Tokoman: See website for locations and phone numbers: [tokoman.nl](http://tokoman.nl)

Swieti Sranang: Brouwersgracht125 (Jordaan) 020 620 4983 (no website)





## AMSTERDAM'S BEST BARS

### Cocktail bars

Ten years ago, you could barely find more than a weak cosmopolitan or an overly sweet mojito in Amsterdam. Nowadays, all sorts of bars are doing cocktails – and doing them pretty well. These are my favourites:

#### *Porem*

Handily close to the Nieuwmarkt, Porem used to be a reservations-only speakeasy but you can now just walk in off the street (so long as you can find the right doorway – it's not exactly clearly marked). Once inside, you'll find excellent service, a refined-meets-relaxed atmosphere, and some expertly made drinks. I'm a fan of the Term Paper – smoky from the Mezcal, fresh from the lime, and luxurious from the chocolate. Also high on my list comes El Mariachi, comprising tequila (always a good pick-me-up!), Chartreuse (which somehow makes me feel like a naughty French girl), pear, lime and nutmeg (oddly, the latter tasted more like pepper, but either way I loved the spice). Porem is a good choice either for a pre-dinner aperitif or somewhere to get cosy on a late-night date...

Geldersekade 19 (Centrum) 06 2261 4496 [facebook.com/poremamsterdam](https://www.facebook.com/poremamsterdam)

#### *Hiding in Plain Sight*

Hiding in Plain Sight is in the style of an old-fashioned American speakeasy, but then with giant windows covering two walls – making it the most ill-concealed “secret” bar ever. But we're happy about that. The bar staff are extremely knowledgeable, and the drinks are all themed according to type. One of my absolute favourites.

Rapenburg 18 (Centrum) 06 2529 3620 [hpsamsterdam.com](https://www.hpsamsterdam.com)

#### *Njoy*

A hidden gem, just off the Leidseplein, Njoy has you doing what it says on the tin. The bar staff know their Lillet from their lychee syrup, and you feel like you've discovered a funky little haven of cool among the Argentinian steakhouses and dodgy night spots. They make an absolutely killer cosmopolitan – it even comes with a warning that two is your max!

Korte Leidsedwardsstraat 93 (Canal Belt) 020 362 0335 [njoycocktails.com](https://www.njoycocktails.com)

#### *Café Panache*

In all honesty, the first time I went to Café Panache I had a fruit juice. I kid you not. I had a Pilates class afterwards, and even a seasoned drinker such as myself is not *au fait* with performing upper-ab curls with a belly full of liquor. Fortunately, a few weeks later, I went back and had a margarita. It was delightful, and so was the venue.

Ten Katestraat 117 (Oud-West) 020 221 1736 [cafepanache.nl](https://www.cafepanache.nl)





### *Tales & Spirits*

I have to admit that the food has gone a little downhill since I first reviewed this back-alley bar and restaurant back in 2012. But their cocktails are still some of the most creative in the city. I get a “Smoke & Mirrors” every time I visit: it comes on a shiny, silver-mirrored platter, topped with a glass dome filled with smoke. The waiter lifts the dome (80s-restaurant style) and the smoke infuses both into the drink and right up your nose. It’s a sipper of a cocktail and I can only really deal with one per evening, but it’s totally worth it for the experience. Other favourites include the “Little Miss Troubles” (because who can resist a name like that?) and the “Fallen Lady” – in honour of the bar’s red-light neighbours of the night.

Lijnbaanssteeg 5-7 (Centrum) 06 5535 6467 [talesandspirits.com](http://talesandspirits.com)

### *Door 74*

Causing more than a stir (possibly a shake?) when it opened, Door 74 owned Amsterdam’s underground scene for – ooh – all of two months. It’s exclusive, but only in the sense that you have to know where it is, and you have to book. There’s no entrance fee, but drinks aren’t cheap. They are, however, bloody lovely. And this is one of the few bars in Amsterdam where you can get dressed up New-York style without feeling silly.

Reguliersdwarsstraat 74 (Canal Belt) 06 3404 5122 [door-74.com](http://door-74.com)

### *Vesper*

Somehow related to Door 74 in a way that I don’t seem to be able to verify via the usual wonder that is Google, Vesper is smaller, cuter and more local. But the drinks are no less fabulous – try their Pornstar Martini.

Vinkenstraat 57 (Jordaan) 06 8724 4056 [vesperbar.nl](http://vesperbar.nl)

### *Flying Dutchmen Cocktails*

The brainchild of award-winning mixologist Tess Posthumus and top bartender Timo Janse, Flying Dutchmen is a new and slightly hard to find cocktail bar in the *grachtengordel* (canal belt). The menu is split up according to drinks that require you to walk, run or fly (not literally), and the flavour matrix on the back plots each cocktail according to its sweetness, bitterness, and so on. All of which I found extremely helpful. As a result, my husband and I tried the Brandy Crusta and Santa Marta, both of which we loved for their bitter notes, smooth alcohol content, and citrus kick.

Singel 460 (Canal Belt) 06 4739 8467 [flyingdutchmencocktails.com](http://flyingdutchmencocktails.com)



## Hotel bars

Hotel bars and restaurants completely fell out of fashion in the 90s, but of late they've been making a comeback. It's a welcome development, because some of Amsterdam's hotels are absolutely beautiful – plus they tend to have more space than many of the city's regular venues that can be a little too cosy at times. Here are a few of my favourite hotel bars – even if you're not staying the night, you're very welcome to pop in for a drink.

The definition of off-the-beaten-path, the **Kevin Bacon Bar** is adjacent to the weirdly awesome Hotel Not Hotel. As you sip your Kevin Bacon Old Fashioned (made with bourbon infused with bacon – what's not to like?), you can gaze out at the camper van or the tent sitting slap bang in the middle of the hotel building. But enough about the crazy hotel: the bar staff do a great job mixing up the perfect martini, and generally charming everyone who walks in. Try the “Pear-shaped Scotsman” or the “Lime Leaf Lemongrass Martini” for Asian-spiced, aromatic drinks that pair perfectly with the bar's Thai food menu.

On the slightly more formal side, **Pulitzer's Bar** at the Pulitzer Hotel, **A Bar** at the Amstel Hotel and **Tunes Bar** at the Conservatorium Hotel all offer some excellent drinks by expert mixologists – but with a price tag to match.

For stunning interior design while you sip your cocktail, try **Bluespoon** at the Andaz Hotel (designed by Marcel Wanders himself) or **5&33** at the aptly named art'otel. If the view outside is more your thing, be sure to check out the **SkyLounge** on the top floor of the DoubleTree by Hilton near Centraal Station. With views across the city, this rooftop bar is best enjoyed in summer.

For a slightly more casual night out (but with drinks that are just as good), try **House Bar** at the Kimpton de Witt Hotel – you can even pop into their restaurant, Wyers, for dinner beforehand. Or while away an afternoon or evening at **Lotti's** – the laidback bar at the Hoxton Hotel.

Kevin Bacon Bar: Witte de Withstraat 38 (De Baarsjes) 020 820 4538 [kevinbacon.nl](http://kevinbacon.nl)

Pulitzer's Bar: Keizersgracht 234 (Canal Belt) 020 523 5282 [pulitzersbar.nl](http://pulitzersbar.nl)

A Bar: Professor Tulpplein 1 (Oost) 020 520 3242 [a-bar.nl](http://a-bar.nl)

Tunes Bar: Van Baerlestraat 27 (Zuid) 020 570 0000

[conservatoriumhotel.com/tunes-bar](http://conservatoriumhotel.com/tunes-bar)

Bluespoon: Prinsengracht 587 (Canal Belt) 020 523 1234 [bluespoon-restaurant.nl](http://bluespoon-restaurant.nl)

5&33: Martelaarsgracht 5 (Centrum) 020 820 5333 [5and33.nl](http://5and33.nl)

SkyLounge: Oosterdoksstraat 4 (Centrum) 020 530 0875 [skyloungeamsterdam.com](http://skyloungeamsterdam.com)

House Bar: Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 5 (Centrum) 020 521 1757

[housebaramsterdam.com](http://housebaramsterdam.com)

Lotti's: Herengracht 255 (Canal Belt) 020 888 5500 [lottis.com](http://lottis.com)



## **Wine bars**

The sound of a cork popping out of the neck and the glug-glug-glug as the bottle is tipped into that first glass... This is perhaps my favourite moment of the day. Here's where to enjoy it:

### *Wester Wijnfabriek*

Part of the converted gas factory complex in Westerpark, Wester Wijnfabriek was an instant hit with me. Order a bottle of sophisticated pinot noir, a sparkling pear cider from Normandy, or anything in between (their wine list is huge). Pair it with a plate of French charcuterie or rillettes, or knock yourself out with a Cuban sandwich. It's all awesome.

Pazzanistraat 10 (Westerpark) 020 261 3818 [westerwijnfabriek.nl](http://westerwijnfabriek.nl)

### *GlouGlou*

Officially the cutest wine bar in Amsterdam, GlouGlou is the very definition of *gezellig*. I can happily while away an evening here, starting with after-work drinks and progressing steadily into late-night "ohhh, just one last round then" territory. I'd like to tell you what to order, but I always seem to go off-menu with some ad-hoc recommendation or other from the nice barman. GlouGlou specialises in natural wines.

Tweede van der Helststraat 3 (De Pijp) 020 233 8642 [glouglou.nl](http://glouglou.nl)

### *Wijnbar Paulus*

No further than a couple of blocks from GlouGlou (which is handy if the former is full), Paulus is a rather more modern, hipster alternative. But no less helpful when it comes to making off-menu recommendations. They also offer a selection of cold cuts and cheeses to keep the tipsiness at optimum level.

Ceintuurbaan 348 (De Pijp) 06 1033 5682 [wijnbarpaulus.nl](http://wijnbarpaulus.nl)

### *Boelen & Boelen*

Also in de Pijp, you could realistically do a wine-bar-crawl of the area encompassing GlouGlou, Paulus and Boelen & Boelen in one evening. I'd recommend finishing up at Boelen, however, because they also do dinner – real dinner, not just snacks. It's not cheap, but it's very good quality French food and the service is extremely attentive.

Eerste van der Helststraat 50 (De Pijp) 020 671 2242 [wijnbar.nl](http://wijnbar.nl)

### *Winehouse SOMM*

Tucked down a residential street in De Baarsjes, you're not going to stumble across Winehouse SOMM by accident – it's the kind of place you've got to know about. Great for a date night, SOMM is candlelit, relaxed and almost every table has a good view of the kitchen – which is important because, while it might call itself a wine bar, the food is what you're really here for. I'd (wrongly) assumed that we'd be having our wine with snacks, but in fact you're looking at a three- to six-course menu that's very reasonably priced. Most



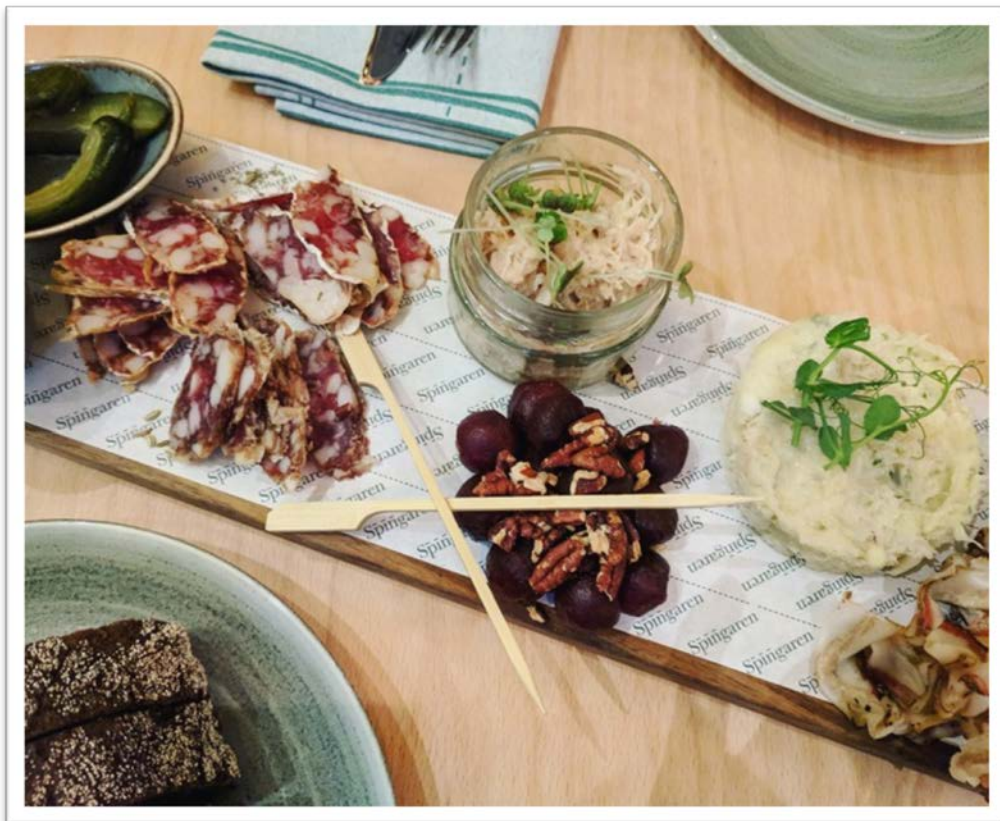
courses seem to be heavy on protein, so this probably isn't suitable for vegetarians unless you plan just to come for the wine. Think oysters, salmon, duck, entrecote – that kind of thing. The wines are fantastic, but in the end play second fiddle to the outstanding food despite the fact that SOMM calls itself a wine bar.

Baffinstraat 1 (De Baarsjes) 06 2414 4708 [winehousesomm.nl](http://winehousesomm.nl)

### *Spingaren*

If you're out shopping in the canal belt and are in need of an early-evening restorative glass of wine and some superior snacks, Spingaren is the answer to your prayers. They open at 5.30 pm, serve several good wines by the glass (plus various G&Ts if that's your poison), and their basic concept is a sort of DIY plank. The menu has various small bites of the animal, fish or vegetable variety, and you can choose as many as you like (I'd recommend four to eight, depending on how hungry you are) to be served up to you on a long wooden plank. Be sure to try their homemade cured sausages with a glass of something fruity and red...

Herengracht 88 (Canal Belt) 020 624 9635 [spingaren.nl](http://spingaren.nl)







## **Beer cafés**

While I like a cold beer on a hot day as much as the next person, I don't consider myself any great hops connoisseur. So for this section, I enlisted the help of my beer-expert friend Shoshannah, author of the wildly popular blog [Awesome Amsterdam](#), and founder of Amsterdam Craft Beer Tours. She knows her stuff!

### *Troost*

Opposite my local wine bar Wester Wijnfabriek (see previous chapter), Troost is another brilliant resident of the Westerpark. They brew their beers right there in the brewery (you can see all the huge metal vats behind the bar as you sip your beer) so you can't get any fresher. My personal favourite is the "Amber Ale", but fans of a bitter IPA, a fresh white beer, or an autumnal bock beer won't be disappointed either. Oh, and they do burgers. And as we all know, beer and burgers are a match made in hoppy heaven.

Pazzanistraat 25-27 (Westerpark) 020 737 1028 [brouwerijtroost.nl](http://brouwerijtroost.nl)

### *In de Wildeman*

In Shoshannah's words: "Classic never goes out of style. In de Wildeman is a traditional *biercafe* with an amazing selection of local and international beers. A haven for the real beer fan. Their selection changes on a daily basis and they regularly host tap takeovers and special events."

Kolksteeg 3 (Centrum) 020 638 2348 [indewildeman.nl](http://indewildeman.nl)

### *Arendsnest*

In Shoshannah's words: "Any visitor to Amsterdam should visit this temple to Dutch beers. They only have beers from the Netherlands at this tasting room but you'll be amazed at the variety. Arendsnest have around 30 beers on tap and more than 100 varieties in bottle. I love the uniformed staff and gleaming copper pipes at this elegant bar."

Herengracht 90 (Canal Belt) 020 421 2057 [arendsnest.nl](http://arendsnest.nl)

### *Oedipus Brewing*

In Shoshannah's words: "An innovative young brewery located in Amsterdam Noord, Oedipus is the place to be on the weekends and for their many special events. These fellows combine their love for beer with their enthusiasm for music, food and fun. Although you can find their beers all over town, the brewery is the place to go for special seasonal beers you can't taste anywhere else."

Gedempt Hamerkanaal 85 (Noord) no phone number [oedipus.com](http://oedipus.com)

### *Delirium*

I'm torn about including this American-style bar near Centraal Station, because the service there leaves a lot to be desired (we waited literally 45 minutes for a beer). When it came, however, it was worth drinking. You can order a flight of five beers that range from light and



summery to dark and caramel-heavy. My favourite was the Delirium Tremens, which I've subsequently spotted (and ordered) in a couple of other places. So if you want to skip Delirium's dodgy service, I suggest you sip on a Tremens while you play a round of bowling at Lovers Powerzone next door.

Piet Heinkade 4-8 (Centrum) 020 811 0381 [deliriumcafeamsterdam.nl](http://deliriumcafeamsterdam.nl)

### *Brouwerij het IJ*

Housed under a windmill in Amsterdam Oost (east of the centre), the brewery serves its own-brewed beers and various *lekker hapjes* (including my favourite sheep's cheese from Dikhove in Ransdorp) between 3 and 8 pm daily. You can take a tour around the brewery too.

Funenakade 7 (Oost) 020 261 9800 [brouwerijhetij.nl](http://brouwerijhetij.nl)

### *Brouwerij de Prael*

In the heart of the Red Light District, de Prael brewery was set up to employ people suffering from psychiatric problems. In the *proeflokaal* (tasting room) in the Red Light District, you can taste the beers named after famous Dutch singers; the brewery itself is located round the corner at Oudezijds Voorburgwal 30.

Oudezijds Armsteeg 26 (Centrum) 020 408 4469 [deprael.nl](http://deprael.nl)

### *Gollem*

Dark and musty, this original beer bar down an alleyway off the Spuistraat demands that you drink out of one of those funny test-tube-shaped glasses in a wooden stand. The beer's called Kwak and you'll spill it everywhere, but it's just sort of tradition. You'll understand when you go there, I promise. Gollem has three locations nowadays, but the oldest one on the Raamsteeg is my favourite.

See website for locations and phone numbers: [cafegollem.nl](http://cafegollem.nl)



## Coffee houses

Not to be confused with the marijuana-selling “coffee shops” (there are different guides out there for those, I’m sure), I’m talking about places you actually go for the coffee...

### *Bakers & Roasters*

I’ve reviewed the food at Bakers & Roasters (and wasn’t entirely impressed), but the coffee is in another league. This might have something to do with the fact that it’s run by Antipodeans who, for some reason best known to themselves, seem to be remarkably accomplished at making divine cups of the brown gold. Their website doesn’t give much away about where their beans come from, but suffice to say the baristas are doing a sterling job of churning out fantastic flat whites, mochas, and other exotic-sounding caffeinated combos (plus, of course, regular black coffees).

See website for locations and phone numbers: [bakersandroasters.com](http://bakersandroasters.com)

### *Drovers Dog*

Like I said, Antipodeans. These guys are Aussies and, like their Kiwi competitors at Bakers & Roasters, they know their caffeinated stuff. (Aside: they do very good juices, too.) I’ve also reviewed their food before, with mixed feelings about the menu, but Drover’s coffee is universally likeable. So there.

See website for locations and phone numbers: [drovers-dog.com](http://drovers-dog.com)

### *Espressofabriek*

Espressofabriek really does serve as my boardroom: I’ve had meetings with dozens of prospective business contacts here, and they do a fine flat white every time. (I didn’t hear great reports about the Americano, however.) If you’re feeling peckish, they also serve muffins and pastries.

Pazzanistraat 39 (Westerpark) 020 486 2106 [espressofabriek.nl](http://espressofabriek.nl)

### *Concerto Koffie*

One for the music geeks, Concerto Koffie is in fact a huge record store and coffee shop in one. So big is it that Concerto spans the ground floor of three buildings (or was it four?) side by side, one of which is devoted to the sale of coffee, breakfast, lunch and cakes. The coffee claims to be single estate, and was tasty enough to this non-expert. I sadly didn’t get the chance to try the food so I can’t vouch for that part, but the coffee was good.

Utrechtsestraat 52 (Canal Belt) 020 261 2610 [concerto.amsterdam/koffie](http://concerto.amsterdam/koffie)

### *Lot 61*

Arguably the king of coffee shops, Lot 61 roasts its own coffee beans and serves its coffee only one of two ways: black or white. It’s small and cosy and a good place to meet a friend or perhaps do a bit of work (free wifi included).

Kinkerstraat 112 (Oud-West) 06 1605 4227 [lotsixtyonecoffee.com](http://lotsixtyonecoffee.com)



## AMSTERDAM'S SPECIALIST FOOD SHOPS

Of course, supermarkets have taken over in Amsterdam just like most cities in northern Europe. But if you're looking for that special ingredient or foodie gift to take home, here are a host of specialist food shops you'll love to visit...

- [Volkskruidtuin](#) (Kinkerstraat 142) – for spices, preserved lemons and all sorts of North African goodies.
- [Kaaskamer](#) (Runstraat 7) – for wonderful cheeses.
- [Dun Yong](#) (Stormsteeg 9) – for sushi equipment, soba noodles, Thai basil and all things Asian.
- [Caulils](#) (Haarlemmerstraat 115) – for polenta, prosciutto and Parmigiano.
- [Hollandaluz](#) (Haarlemmerstraat 71) – for spicy chorizo, *piquillos di pimiento* and other Spanish specialities.
- [Tel](#) (Kloveniersburgwal 13) – for the freshest fish and seafood.
- [Slagerij de Leeuw](#) (Utrechtsestraat 92) – for meat, pâté charcuterie, and so on.
- [Duikelman](#) (Ferdinand Bolstraat 68) – for kitchen equipment (such as my gorgeous Mauviel pan that I use constantly!).
- [Kookboek Handel](#) (Haarlemmerdijk 133) – for cookbooks.
- [Jacqwijn](#) (Spaarndammerstraat 592) – for wine and the best pairing advice.
- [Puccini Bomboni](#) (Singel 184 and Staalstraat 17) – one for the chocolate lovers...
- [Kef](#) (Marnixstraat 192 and Czar Peterstraat 137) – because you can never have too much cheese on a list about Amsterdam food shops.
- [De Turk](#) (Van Woustraat 45) – a Turkish corner shop with a difference.
- [Frank's Smokehouse](#) (Wittenburgergracht 303) – which is busy selling Frank's amazing smoked fish to all the best restaurants in Amsterdam...
- [Ibericus](#) (Haarlemmerstraat 93) – *jamón*, chorizo, *lomo*... need I say more, fellow pork lovers?
- [Bilder & De Clercq](#) (De Clercqstraat 44) – revolutionising the way we decide what to eat for dinner (and selling things like duck confit into the bargain).
- [Marqt](#) (multiple locations) – because we're still grateful this chain of upscale fancy supermarkets exist (even if they do have a habit of stacking shelves at 5 pm, just like Albert Heijn...)





## AMSTERDAM MARKETS

There's nothing better than having a good rummage round a food market on a Saturday morning... or indeed any day of the week if you're on holiday. Chat to the local stall holders, taste the produce, and enjoy Amsterdam's finest markets.

- **Noordermarkt:** Saturdays only, in the Jordaan. Sells organic food and flea-market bric-a-brac. Expensive but worth a trip, and very central to the *grachtengordel* (canal belt). Try also the Lindengracht market just round the corner – cheaper but still generally high quality (especially the fish stall near the start of the Lindengracht closest to the Brouwersgracht).
- **Nieuwmarkt:** Saturdays only, just east of the Red Light District. Farmers' market selling largely organic food, conveniently located.
- **Dappermarkt:** Daily Monday–Saturday, in Oost. This hive of multi-cultural activity sells food and clothing.
- **Albert Cuypmarkt:** Daily Monday–Saturday, in de Pijp. Sells food, clothing and household goods. Be sure also to visit spice shop De Peperbol that spills into the market at Albert Cuypstraat 150.
- **Ten Katemarkt:** Daily Monday–Saturday, in Oud-West. Smaller market selling food and clothing at reasonable prices.
- **Foodhallen:** Huge covered market in Oud-West selling everything from Vietnamese *banh mi* to Mexican *tostadas*. Open daily.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

British-born Amsterdammer Vicky Hampton is a writer, cook and avid foodie who has lived and worked in the Netherlands since 2006. Her website, [amsterdamfoodie.nl](http://amsterdamfoodie.nl), focuses on reviews and recommendations of Amsterdam restaurants, as well as other culinary travel writing. Vicky has written for various publications including *The Guardian*, *New York Times*, *Olive*, *Monocle*, *Rough Guide* and *Michelin Guide*. When she's not eating her way through Europe, she's often spotted hula-hooping in the park wearing a pair of tiger-print leggings.

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### Buying the Cookbook: Vicky Hampton's Working Lunch

Bored of overpriced ham-and-cheese sandwiches and packet soups from the canteen? If your workplace has a surface big enough to fit a chopping board, and perhaps a kettle or toaster at best, *Vicky Hampton's Working Lunch* is here to help. This compact lunch cookbook is for people who are keen to make healthy, simple meals, but who don't have the time to spend hours in the kitchen – whether at work or at home. The book features 50 easy lunch recipes (in English) covering fresh vibrant salads, cool summery soups, spicy couscous and pimped-up sandwiches. Free shipping within Europe!

[Buy the cookbook online](#)

### Taking the tour: A Gastronomic Journey in Amsterdam – audio guide app

Take a culinary voyage through the tastes, sights and smells of Amsterdam. Wander through the city's most picturesque streets and canals, stopping off at shops, markets and buildings that represent the gastronomic must-taste destinations. The tour will take in Amsterdam specialities, including raw herring, smoked *ossenworst* (raw beef sausage), Dutch cheese, *stroomwafels* (caramel-filled wafer-thin biscuits), beer and *jenever* (a relative of gin). This audio narrated walking tour comes with a detailed tour route map and powerful navigation features to guide you from one tour sight to the next.

[Download the app from iTunes](#)



*Eet smakelijk!*

