

hong kong grapevine

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IT'S the absolute height of summer in hot and humid Honkers and everyone desperately tries to minimise any time spent outside; thinking of increasingly ingenious ways of getting from bar to restaurant to bar again without working up a modicum of sweat.

The new **Elia**, in Tsim Sha Tsui East, fits the bill, as not only is it located somewhere accessed by airconditioned undercover walkways, but it also has an outside terrace for those reckless enough to brave the elements.

There appears to be a bit of a renaissance happening in Hong Kong at the moment to do with summery nautical dining. Elia likes for its diners to think they're on a Spanish galleon with its paddle-filled ceiling, hulking ironworks and all manner of heavy wood and blue hues strewn everywhere. With 30 years of experience dotted around Spain, France, Mexico and Germany, Michelin star chef **Miguel Lopez** has introduced Spanish coastal dining to this harbour corner of Hong Kong with fresh seafood plus hearty doses of land-dwelling dishes. Highlights include the lamb with roasted Gazpacho, Coquelet, a happy amalgamation of prawns and chicken marinated in a mix of

herbs and spices and stuffed into homemade cheese bread, and all permutations of exceptionally well-executed paella. Elia is a new take on classic Spanish seafood and its 186sq/m of space means you're always guaranteed a table - inside or out. Elia, Shop 1, G/F, Wing On Plaza, 62 Mody Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui East; phone 2721 3600.

Unlike most places which open in foodie-focused neighbourhood of Kau U Fong, **Beet** was a relatively modest opening, with no PR fanfare or clatterings on Instagram. Right from the start it built up hype organically. Chef **Barry Quek**, who honed his skills at Joel Robuchon in Singapore, and bar manager **Raphael Holzer**, who was previously the beverage director at Hong Kong favourite Yardbird are a formidable duo, but again, humble with it. Plump straight for Quek's Tasting Menu with snapper ceviche and chicken livers making for zesty and hearty ways to introduce the Alice in Wonderland rabbit hole of textures and flavours you will gladly fall down for. Unsurprisingly, the often unassuming beetroot plays a starring role. Served with homemade goat's curd and buckwheat, the complex and superb quality ingredients make for an impressive take on what is normally

a rather run-of-the-mill warm salad. Beet's beauty lies in its modest but well-executed dishes and with extremely humble pricing, it looks set to be one of the more welcome new joiners of Sheung Wan's dining scene. Beet, 6 Kau U Fong, Central, Hong Kong; phone +852 2824 3898 or visit beetrestaurant.com.

It's all change at **Le Comptoir's Bibo** where contemporary art meets French-Japanese fine dining. The upscale restaurant group has hired **Nicolas Chew** to take over as executive chef, with former executive chef Mutaro Balde moving on to become the head chef of the entire Le Comptoir group (think Djapa, Hotshot, The Ocean, TRi, UMI). Chef Chew used to man the hobs at recently shuttered Serge et le Phoque, which had been crowned with a Michelin star for the past three years. **Bibo's** bar is also getting an overhaul, changing from a cocktail bar to a wine bar offering the largest collection of wines by the glass in Hong Kong, overseen by head sommelier **Sebastien Chevalier**. The whole space has been reconfigured with new art pieces and installations and will be looked after by new general manager **Gilles Dubreuil** from Michelin-starred Apicius in Paris.

Some highlights of the new a la carte menu include the deep fried burrata with polenta and Japanese fruit tomato and the delicious, seasonal celeriac risotto with mango and French truffle. Don't miss the pigeon with anchovy and brussels sprouts and save room for the dacquoise with strawberry and ash cream, a refreshing way to combat Hong Kong's sky-high humidity. Bibo, 163 Hollywood Rd, Sheung Wan; phone 2956 3188 or visit lecomptoir.hk. 



Top: Food from Bibo restaurant.
Left: Food from Beet restaurant.