



SPRING normally heralds the start of Hong Kong's hot and steamy season, so why not check in to **Hotal Colombo**, a refreshing canteen-style eatery with vibrant splashes of pink and baby blue to lift the spirits (and cool you down)? Bringing a breath of fresh air to Hong Kong's saturation of Italian, Spanish and Japanese restaurants, Hotal Colombo champions the diversity of Sri Lankan culinary traditions, with small plates and sharing platters courtesy of Sri Lankan native **Gisela Alesbrook**.

Its casual style is inspired by working-class, family-run eateries which populate

the streets of the Sri Lankan capital, often referred to as "hotals". The flavour-packed menu includes everything from fragrant curries to meat and seafood platters, and local snacks such as the masala dosa (lentil pancakes), all washed down with tropical-inspired cocktails. Hotal Colombo, 31 Elgin St Central, Hong Kong; phone +852 2488 8863.

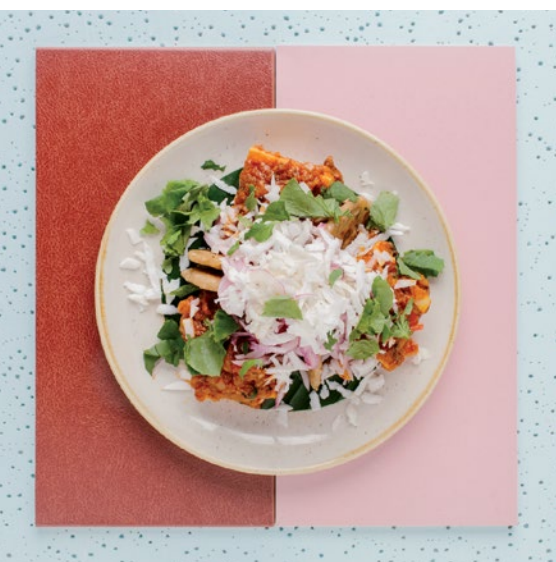
Hong Kong has gone burger mad. With the openings of Shake Shack, Honbo and Electric Avenue and new branches of Beef & Liberty popping up everywhere, one can't help but fall over a new trendy joint at each street corner, populated with groups of sleek-looking people heartily tucking into burger behemoths. But there might be a new sheriff in town, in the form of **Five Guys** which has finally opened in Wan Chai.

The fantastically popular American chain was founded in Virginia by the five Murrell brothers in 1986, and its latest incarnation now occupies a large diner space, complete with Five Guys' iconic red-and-white checkered design. If you really can be bothered and have time to kill, brave the queues for its signature down-and-dirty burger - two patties (choose from hamburger, cheeseburger or bacon burger) loaded up with your choice of up to 15 toppings all stuffed between a warm

and squashy potato bun. Go on your cheat day, as the burgers come with a mountain of hand-cut fries and are best washed down with the creamy milkshakes. If you really need to push the boat out, you can also wade into the hot dog menu, grilled cheese or BLT sandwiches. Five Guys, Shop 1B, G/F, J Residence, 60 Johnston Rd, Wan Chai, Hong Kong; phone +852 3618 9122.

For something a tad more refined, perhaps, head to the latest restaurant from ZS Hospitality Group, **AHA Restaurant & Bar**, which flirts with European and Mediterranean cuisine, serving up home-style dishes inside an eclectic, playful dining room in the heart of Central. The welcoming and unstuffy atmosphere is furthered by an airy façade and a cool central bar in the shape of a pipe organ with vintage stained glass mirrors, and over a dozen beehive-shaped pendant lamps hovering from the ceiling for a quirky touch.

The menu swings between East and West, with comfort fare being the overarching theme in bistro-style dishes such as jumbo lump crab cake, Mediterranean seafood stew and rotisserie French chicken. Herbivores are likewise well catered for with a large meatless selection, from the portobello mushroom burgers topped with a secret tofu paté recipe and served with potato gratin; to the earthy and satisfying porcini and black truffle orzo. A semi-buffet set lunch is served from 12-2.30pm, with wallet-friendly prices starting at \$HK158 (\$A28); bar snacks can be had from 3-6pm daily alongside a range of artisan spirits and rare whiskies. AHA Restaurant & Bar, G/F, The Wellington, 198 Wellington St, Central, Hong Kong; phone +852 2881 1811.



Top Left: Food from AHA Restaurant & Bar.
Bottom Left: Food from Hotal Colombo.
Bottom Right: Food from Five Guys.