



FROM LEFT
Basic egg dishes are taken up a notch at the brunch served at The Principal Hong Kong with fancy table-side service.

BELOW
The Modern Pantry in London's trendy Clerkenwell neighbourhood is a favourite with the area's creative entrepreneurs for its modern fare featuring an Asian twist.

OPPOSITE PAGE
Seasonal vegetable tempura is one of the offerings at The Principal Hong Kong.

BRUNCHES HAVE EXPLODED IN POPULARITY IN CITIES AROUND THE WORLD. THIS LATE-MORNING MEAL NOW RIVALS LUNCH AND DINNER AS THE MOST CREATIVE CUISINE OF THE DAY, NOT JUST ON SUNDAYS BUT THROUGHOUT THE WEEK. SO HOW DID THIS DINING PHENOMENON TAKE OFF?

Nick Falla, General Manager of The Modern Pantry in London, reckons it all comes down to brevity and price. "Brunch allows customers to spend as much time and money as they desire – unlike other meals which may determine the cost and time spent," he says. Brunch is usually a better value for time and money than lunch at the same venue."

Perhaps, the most surprising trend has been the all-week brunch. Breaking out

from its once-rigid Sunday confines, brunches are being used to conduct business meetings through the week. In big cities across the globe, it is now the meal for entertaining clients, exchanging ideas and signing deals.

Nick Andere, Executive Chef at Maialino in New York, isn't surprised, as he thinks mid-week brunches are ideal for business. "You've always got the rest of the day ahead of you when you set up a productive brunch meeting. There's also something civilised about it; I find it easier to get work done over a small plate of eggs or breakfast muffin, rather than a fully-fledged lunch with all the fixings," Andere says.

Informal, uninfluenced by alcohol, and taking place earlier in the day, it's easy to see how a business brunch

Out to brunch

TEXT: JOSEPH REANEY IMAGES: ELLEN SILVERMAN / JOSEPHINE ROZMAN

No longer just the weekend breakfast option for late-risers, all-week brunches that mix business with leisure are in vogue in global cities.



can prove to be more conducive to getting things done as opposed to the more elaborate trappings of a formal dinner affair.

Eddie Goh, Executive Chef at The Marmalade Pantry in Singapore, succinctly explains the trend towards business brunches when he says: "It is a safe bet that many more great ideas have been hatched over toast, juice and coffee, than over soup, steak and wine."

Meanwhile, others argue that its most favourable attributes are convenience and timing. "Brunch is a meal period where you can satisfy a broader range of cravings for that time of day," claims Daniel Doherty, Executive

Chef at Duck & Waffle in London. "I have no idea what I'll crave tomorrow at 11am, so it's good to have a variety of dishes to choose from."

But as brunches have become all-day affairs, could it be that diversity, rather than timing, is really the key factor? Goh believes so, claiming that a brunch offering will bring diners into restaurants "from morning till afternoon."

Fabrice Monot, Executive Chef at Miss Ko in Paris, believes that a fine dining brunch must go beyond the food. "The global concept of brunch includes an atmosphere and some extra activities. Essentially, brunch means relaxation



GLOBAL BRUNCH HOTSPOTS

THE MARMALADE PANTRY, SINGAPORE

Must-try: Chorizo frittata with wood-roasted red pepper and baby potatoes
themarmaladepantry.com.sg

NOJO, SAN FRANCISCO

Must-try: Japanese-inspired fried spam and egg, beansprouts, Nori sauce and steamed rice
nojof.com

DUCK & WAFFLE, LONDON

Must-try: Grilled Cornish sardines with peperonata (Sicilian dish made of stewed bell peppers, onions and tomatoes), wild garlic and charred sourdough bread
duckandwaffle.com

THE PRINCIPAL, HONG KONG

Must-try: Roasted suckling pig served with Korean kimchi and a ginger-scallion sauce
theprincipal.com.hk

MAIALINO, NEW YORK

Must-try: Fagioli e Salsiccia (pork with beans) or blood sausage, heirloom beans, tomato and sunny-side eggs
maialinonyc.com

MISS KO, PARIS

Must-try: Poached eggs, leek lemongrass fondue, brioche toast, hollandaise, yuzu (Japanese citrus fruit) sauce and salad
miss-ko.com



and pleasure," he says. "It's different from any other meal as it combines everything people are craving."

"For brunch, guests look to indulge in a great meal and take their time," explains Jonay Armas, Executive Chef of The Principal in Hong Kong. "The experiential element is very important. [Diners] don't only look at the menu, but also at the vibe of a restaurant. We serve a six-course degustation-style brunch evoking the spirit and flavours of a Spanish market. It has the hallmarks of fine dining; but is for sharing." It's an idea that wouldn't work for breakfast, where speedy buffets rule, or dinner, where formality is preferred.

Unsurprisingly, to understand the unique role

that brunch plays, chefs are willing to go the extra mile. Generally seen as a comfort meal, brunch menus are typically simple and casual. Yet chefs are increasingly finding ways to be more creative with their brunches, crafting dishes entirely distinct from their breakfast and lunch offerings.

"Brunch menus can be very creative, but in a more rustic way," says Doherty. "Evening allows for a refined approach, but for brunch it is taking an Eggs Benedict and switching the ham for slow-braised ox cheek." He advocates serving recognisable brunch dishes but with small twists. Evolution, not revolution.

On the other hand, Armas claims you can push the



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envelope further. "In Hong Kong, we see a lot of unique brunch concepts, from Asian offerings like modern izakaya fare and Chinese dim sum, to themed packages like seafood feasts or vintage champagne brunches. While this can be attributed to the diversity of cuisines here, the industry is also very competitive, which pushes chefs to innovate and create original concepts."

Andere also loves to surprise diners. "We take chances and creative liberties, using foods rarely associated with brunch, like swordfish, mushrooms and gorgonzola."

Whether it comes down to their convenience, their informality, their creativity or their business benefits, brunches continue to flourish. This late-morning revolution is just beginning...

ABOVE
Executive chef Daniel Doherty of Duck & Waffle, the highest restaurant in the UK, has included such exotic items on the menu as spicy ox cheek doughnut.

RIGHT
The dessert selection is an important part of brunch at The Principal Hong Kong.

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP
The Marmalade Pantry Stables serves such hearty brunch dishes as steak with poached eggs; the chic interiors of The Marmalade Pantry Stables in the lush environs of Bukit Timah Saddle Club is a major draw for brunch lovers in the city.