

The Krug Room at the Mandarin Oriental in Hong Kong offers an innovative menu.

# 6 EXCLUSIVE TASTING MENUS AROUND THE GLOBE

THE STUFF FOOD LOVERS' DREAMS ARE MADE OF

Stimulate your palate with a foamy amuse-bouche. Finish your multi-course meal with a silky chocolate dessert. Often presenting delicacies like foie gras, sweetbreads, and Wagyu, tastings allow gifted chefs to show off their cooking chops.

What gourmet dreams are made of, the tasting menus at the following restaurants might not be on your radar—but should be.

## 1 MESA 1, RIVIERA NAYARIT, MEXICO

Location is everything, and that's never more apparent than at the chef's table set on an idyllic private island at the W Punta De Mita. Seven courses come with expert wine pairings, optional mescal tastings, and house-made sangrita (a cilantro-based chaser). King-crab tartare with green gazpacho, Chilean sea bass with pumpkin purée, and lamb steak with pistachio mole are menu highlights.

With just one seating per night, Mesa 1 caters to preferences, encouraging a one-of-a-kind tasting adventure for the most discerning diners.

## 2 VINTAGE CAVE, HONOLULU, HAWAII

Food marries art in this moody cavern and private club that's also open to the public. The secret entrance is through Ala Moana Center's basement, but once you arrive, you're in for a four-hour feast. Vintage Cave hosts a multiplate Japan Wagyu Course in the Grand Dining Room, and a 20- to 25-course Kaiseki menu at a six-person sushi counter. Exquisite Old World wines enhance the culinary journey.

Be sure to tour the cave and appreciate Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* and other works in the world-class collection.

## 3 KAAGMAN & KORTEKAAS, AMSTERDAM

Giel Kaagman steers the kitchen, and Gram Kortekaas manages the front of the house and wine program at this Paris-inspired restaurant situated in Amsterdam's Old Town. Ask for the "surprise menu"—a bold lineup of six courses ranging from sunflower seeds with kohlrabi to pheasant with haccala. Kaagman practices the nose-to-tail approach when he cooks (kidney, liver, and brain are common), hence diners should trust whatever hits the plate.

Expect unique flavors, flawless timing and Dutch wines curated by Kortekaas.

## 4 THE KRUG ROOM, HONG KONG

Tucked in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, this intimate dining room—styled to resemble a railway car—is where opulence meets innovative cuisine. Executive chef Robin Zavou works

magic when preparing the likes of langoustine with sea urchin; cauliflower and soy; and kinmedai with abalone, liver, and lemon—along with a parade of other delicious courses.

All dishes pair beautifully with select bottles of bubbly from the most extensive collection of Krug Champagne in Asia.

## 5 HOUSE OF TIDES, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE, ENGLAND

If carrot meringue, mussels with leeks and caviar, and salt-aged venison rouse your taste buds, then a meal at this Michelin-starred restaurant in northeast England should be on your short list. Chef and Newcastle-upon-Tyne native Kenny Atkinson helms this informal albeit fine-dining establishment, focusing on seasonal and sustainable ingredients.

Choose from eight or 10 courses, with an optional cheese tasting. Wine pairings are a must—bottles hail from the Old and New World, including small and emerging producers.

## 6 THE TEST KITCHEN, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Chef Luke Dale-Roberts' cutting-edge eatery shows off his inventive approach to cuisine. Meanwhile, the interior design plays an essential role in the culinary journey. Guests dine in the Dark Room, where starters paired with cocktails reflect cuisine from all seven continents. This is followed by the Light Room, where an open kitchen takes center stage as chefs flutter about preparing eight decadent courses. ■



Mesa 1 in Mexico offers views as impressive as its food. Top: A dish at The Krug Room, below.



The Krug Room (2). Image: iStock