

The Sweet Life

Hong Kong has developed a taste for teatime treats at Harbour City

“**T**here are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea,” wrote acclaimed author Henry James. Given the gusto with which Hong Kong’s eateries have taken to this most quintessentially English of meals, it seems the whole city agrees with him.

Legend has it that afternoon tea originated in England back in 1840, when Anna Russell, the seventh Duchess of Bedford, complained of “that sinking feeling” between lunch and dinner. Her solution? A pot of tea and a light snack taken at around 4pm, which became such a habit that soon she invited her friends to join her. The practice quickly caught on with other hostesses and soon fashionable high-society ladies were sipping tea and nibbling cake in the afternoon throughout the land.

Nowadays, typical afternoon tea consists of finger sandwiches, miniature pastries, and scones served with cream and jam. The tradition is still strong in England’s five-star hotels and countryside tearooms. However, nowhere else in the world has embraced the meal quite like Hong Kong, where high-end restaurants and local cafes alike serve their takes on afternoon tea. If you make your way to Tsim Sha Tsui’s Harbour City at teatime, you’ll be spoilt for choice.

The Royal Touch Bakery Café was founded by Carolyn Robb, who previously served as the British royal family’s executive chef and crafted the groom’s cake for Prince William’s wedding. For a classically majestic afternoon tea, indulge in the exquisite set of authentic miniature English pastries, tea and, of course, traditional scones with jam and clotted cream.

Hong Kong’s very own Bonnae Gokson, known as the “Queen of Confections” for her celebrity-favourite whimsical cake creations, offers her unique spin on the meal at her popular cafe-bar **C’est La B**. Featuring miniature versions of her playful cakes and rainbow-coloured desserts, plus a trio of signature finger-sandwich rolls, this truly is afternoon tea done in vivid style.

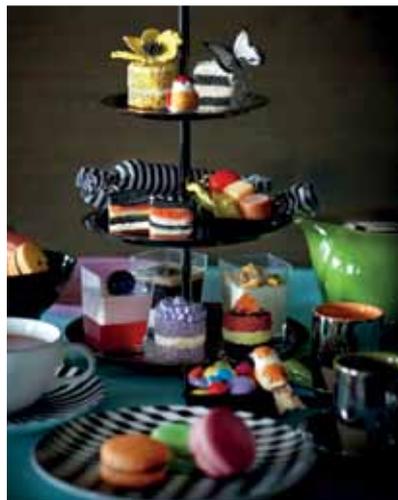
As masters of the pastry world, it’s unsurprising that French restaurants here have also embraced the tradition.

Le Café de Joël Robuchon—the tea-salon arm of the iconic French chef’s restaurant empire—serves a refined Gallic rendition of the teatime treat, decked out in chic red-and-black tones to match the restaurant’s stylish decor. Think foie gras, salmon tartare, Mont Blancs, macarons and madeleines, all served with trademark Robuchon finesse.



AFTERNOON INDULGENCE

Clockwise from top: the Gallic take on the tea set at Le Café de Joël Robuchon; Dalloyau’s version; delectable morsels at The Royal Touch Bakery Café; the signature tea set at C’est La B



Another top option is French patisserie **Dalloyau**, which boasts over three centuries of culinary heritage, including serving under King Louis XIV and Marie Antoinette. The afternoon tea at the cafe includes miniature versions of the signature Opera cake and lemon tart, a lobster black truffle sandwich, and scones served with homemade cranberry confiture and French clotted cream.

With the individual items in these afternoon tea sets changing seasonally, there’s always a good excuse to come back for more. And we think you’ll agree—there’s always time for tea. ■

The Royal Touch Bakery Café: Shop G02, G/F, Ocean Terminal; Tel: 3188 8086

C’est La B: Shop G111, G/F, Gateway Arcade; Tel: 3102 2838

Le Café de Joël Robuchon: Shop 2608-10, Level 2, Gateway Arcade; Tel: 2327 5711

Dalloyau: Shop 403, Level 4, Ocean Centre; Tel: 3185 8338