

**MUST
EAT
AMSTERDAM**

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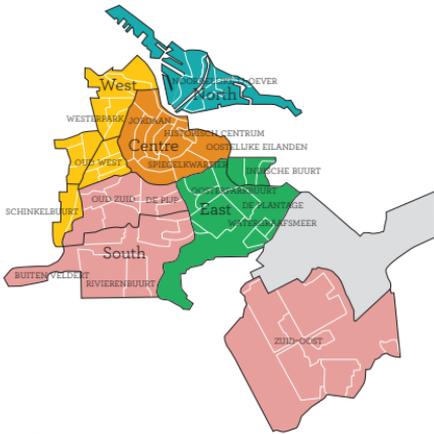
AN ECLECTIC SELECTION OF CULINARY LOCATIONS

LUC HOORNAERT
PHOTOGRAPHY: KRIS VLEGELS

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CENTRE

MAE SOMJAJ

Koningsstraat 25 - 1011 ET Amsterdam
T +31 6 511 75 049 - www.maesomjai.com

Tue.-Sun. 12.00-21.00



Thai food is one of the most widely appreciated foods in the world. It is a perfect fusion of its neighbouring regions, India and China. This results in complex flavours, which please many palates.



Laab Kai

a real Thai experience

Thai chefs work hard to balance all the flavours and influences they put into a dish, and this is not an easy task, especially for someone who is not from Thailand. Thai food charms with its freshness and subtle spiciness, and is mostly composed of healthy ingredients.

Often with gastronomical cultures, a lot of focus gets lost once the food crosses the border, and Thai food is no exception, so that eating at a Thai place in Holland is rarely an exciting experience. Luckily, however there are exceptions, such as this small, humble place in the Koningsstraat.

The restaurant is filled with objects and pictures that remind the guests and the owners of home. A lot of Thai people eat here which, in my opinion, is a good sign, especially in terms of authenticity and taste. The kitchen staff is women only, and I've rarely seen more dedication and focus than

in this tiny kitchen. All the sauces and dips are made to order using a mortar and pestle to obtain exactly the right texture. In an era of hi-tech kitchen equipment, this is a real statement. A second statement is the restaurant's refusal to adapt Thai flavours to the Western palate.

Mae Somjaj is proud of her Thai dishes and when eating here you definitely understand why. Don't come here if you're in a hurry because at Mae Somjaj everything is made from scratch. No fast-food versions of Thai classics, but precision and depth of flavour. The ever-popular Laab Kai, or spicy minced chicken salad, is a real stunner and has a balance close to perfection. Balance is, in fact, the key word at Mae Somjaj.

Your taste buds will never forgive you if you don't go for the authentic Thai experience in this humble grand eatery.



CENTRE

KAAGMAN EN KORTEKAAS

Sint Nicolaasstraat 43 - 1012 NJ Amsterdam
T + 31 20 233 6544 - www.kaagmanenkortekaas.nl
Thu.-Sat. 18.00-22.30



Friends Bram and Giel proved that you can open a restaurant in the centre of Amsterdam and turn it into an overnight success. Both partners are bursting with talent. Bram takes care of the guests and Giel is the chef.



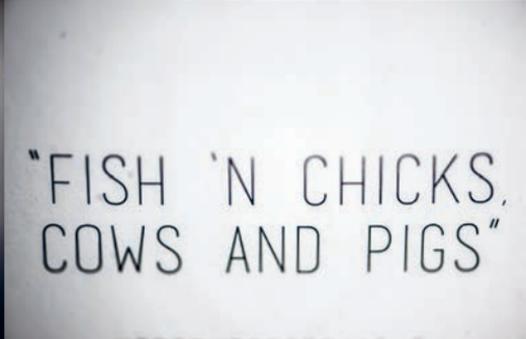
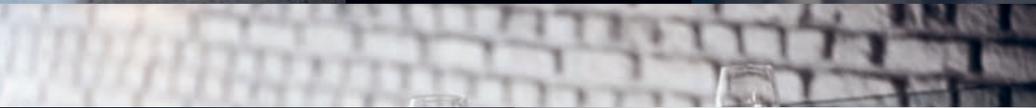
Daily changing menu

Besides being a great and talented chef, Giel is also a true artisan. He's been working in kitchens in Belgium and Holland since he was 12. His two main sources of inspiration in Amsterdam are the top-notch Italian restaurant Toscanini and Will Demandt of the iconic Bordewijk restaurant, where he was a chef for many years.

Giel has an insatiable hunger for knowledge about artisan gastronomy and has become a great all-round chef. He excels at making charcuterie (cold meat) and is truly great at adding the excitement factor to simple, informal dishes. He transforms simple, everyday dishes into real gastronomical delights. The experience he gained at Toscanini

taught him to keep dishes overall natural, without fancy frills, and no nonsense—the Italian way.

Reading through the menu at Kaagman & Kortekaas, it's hard to make a choice: every dish looks tasty and tempting. Giel's cooking is refined but raw, enticing, and teasing, with a lot of feeling for precision and elegance. He's one of those chefs who is happy enough to have found his own language, his own style, and who always has one of his two guardian angels looking over his shoulder. He will never copy Toscanini or Will Demandt, but he will use their wisdom to season his own creations. His cuisine is the ultimate combination of contemporary raw cuisine and artisan classic.



CENTRE

GUTS&GLORY

Utrechtsestraat 6 - 1017 VN Amsterdam
T +31 20 362 0030 - www.gutsglory.nl

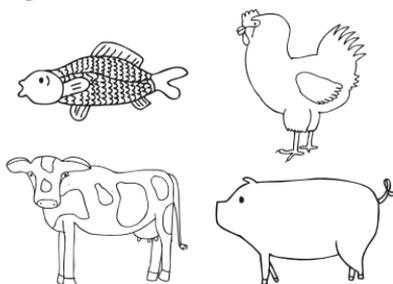
Daily 18.30-22.00, closed on the first Monday of the month



Many new restaurants open with a so-called new or innovative concept. It is a pity that most of those seem to be warmed up leftovers of an already old and dry concept. This is not the case at Guts&Glory.



4 MONTHS



Free range Polderhoen

Guillaume de Beer and Freek Van Noortwijk are the creative chefs behind sister restaurant Daalder in the Jordaan. They came up with 'Fish and chicks, cows and pigs' as a concept. Their idea is as simple as it is brilliant. By focussing on a different animal every four months, they create a new and exciting restaurant every season. It is not only exciting for the patrons but also for the chefs who can focus completely on how to get the best out of the chosen ingredient.

Chapter 1 is Polderhoen, a free-range breed of chicken. This French breed, the Hubbard JA757 to be precise, was chosen because it grows very slowly with the result that the flesh is tight and full of flavour. The chickens are bred in a pure organic setting, allowing them time to grow as slowly as possible, which is better for the animal and better for the meat that will eventually end up on our plates.

This first chapter is all about this infamous chicken in all its forms and trans-

formations. Who can resist the sight of a chicken roasted to perfection? These Rolls-Royce free-range chickens are soaked in homemade aromatic brine prior to preparation to boost the flavour. Then there's a choice between the classical approach, a whole Polderhoen roasted to perfection accompanied by sublime French Fries and a crispy fresh salad. Or you can go for the more creative approach in which every part of the chicken is featured in tasty original dishes. How about the delicious thighs, served as pulled chicken with hoisin, spicy black beans and sour cream? The Polderhoen-dog was created by Brandt & Levie and is served with sauerkraut, fried onions and homemade pickles.

For Chapter 2, Guillaume and Freek are considering fish in all its expressions. Autumn will be entirely dedicated to beef whereas winter will be all about pork.

I can hardly wait...



EAST

MERKELBACH

Middenweg 72 - 1097 BS Amsterdam
T +31 20 423 3930 - www.restaurantmerkelbach.nl
Tue.-Sat. 8.30-23.00, Sun.-Mon. 8.30-18.00



In the wonderful park that also hosts the De Kas restaurant, you can find the last remaining country estate within city limits: Huize Frankendael. It was built in the 17th century and is surrounded by a romantic park which has two historic gardens, a period garden and a landscape garden.



Ballotine of Chaamse hoen with ramsons

The impressive Huize Frankendael is in the middle of the park and the restaurant is located in the right wing coach house. Although the rapid and dramatic urbanization of Amsterdam now has the park completely surrounded, you can still enjoy the sound of silence and the combination of nature, gastronomy, and culture.

The restaurant is named after former city architect Ben Merkelbach. However, the first impression of the restaurant may be quite different to what you actually get. You will find here a very passionate and talented chef, Geert Burema, who is a true purist. He embraces Slow Food in its purest form, and he co-founded the Slow Food Chefs Alliance in The Netherlands. Great food is in no way elitist. The restaurant has to be a place of social lubrication, where knowledge can be spread like the gospel. Diners can appreciate where the food is actually coming from. Delicious, pure, and honest dishes from sustainable seasonal and local quality products are his mantras. Geert is a brilliant authentic chef with great vision throughout his dishes. He's a 'nose to tail' aficionado and the 'Goede Vissers' from Lauwersoog provide him with great fish from their daily catch.

One of his major projects is intense collaboration with a small farm in order to breathe new life into the Chaamse hoen,

a nearly extinct chicken breed. The idea is as simple as it is brilliant. By putting the Chaamse hoen back on the menu, you create a demand, hence saving it from extinction. How it was developed is not very clear, although we are quite sure it originated from Campine (De Kempen) fowls. Throughout the centuries these Campine breeds with their specific characteristics spread from the coastal areas far into the Ardennes, mainly through monasteries located throughout the country.

In those days, it was quite common to name each breed after its area of origin. References to area-specific Campine breeds like the Hoogstraatse hoen and the Kempische hoen may be found in a number of old books, along with the Chaamse hoen, Chapons from Breda (read: Chaamse hoen). The Bertram Company from Breda raised and slaughtered birds known to be Chaamse hoen, because of the fineness of their meat and the superior flavor. The Chaamse hoen was so popular, it was often on the menu of the Royal family, and in 1881 King William III ordered a large flock of Chaamse hoen from the Bertram Company. The Chaamse hoen was standardized around 1909-1911 and in 1911 the breed was accepted into the Dutch Poultry Standards. And now this once so popular race needs help and Geert is cooking phenomenal dishes with it.

Colophon

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