

# Eat ethnic in BRUSSELS

The Belgian capital's culinary delights extend much further than *moules frites*, taking in exotic cuisines from all over the world. **John Brunton** suggests some top addresses

**BRUSSELS IS A DESTINATION** that surprises when it comes to eating out. French food here can be better than in France, while Belgian cuisine has a lot more to offer than the traditional mussels with chips smothered in mayonnaise. And this is one of Europe's most cosmopolitan capitals, with a kaleidoscope of ethnic restaurants reflecting the different nationalities working around the European Commission headquarters, and the vibrant mix of immigrants from former African colonies.

Eating out in these colourful restaurants tends to be fun, casual and reasonably priced, with options ranging from gourmet Greek and Spanish tapas to exotic Ethiopian, Norwegian and North African. Here are ten of the best.



Hémisphères

## MOROCCO LA KASBAH

Rue Antoine Dansaert is the Belgian capital's "fashion avenue", and in between the designer couture boutiques is this chic Moroccan restaurant. With 120 coloured lanterns, woven carpets and colourful cushions, the mood is more Marrakech medina than downtown Brussels. Although there are grilled meats, *merguez* sausages and a full vegetarian menu, most diners opt for one of the signature couscous or tagine recipes. Below the main restaurant is a series of smaller dining rooms that can be rented out for private functions.

■ 20 Rue Antoine Dansaert; tel +32 2502 4026; lakasbahresto.com

■ Open daily for lunch and dinner. Two courses €25.

## GREECE NOTOS

This elegant restaurant is situated in the heart of the fashionable Chatelain neighbourhood, the preferred residence of European bureaucrats and wealthy businessmen. The friendly owner, Constantin Erinkoglou, is himself an ex-Eurocrat who left a cushy job at the Commission to reinvent himself successfully as a self-trained

Notos



chef. His cuisine is a gourmet interpretation of classic Greek dishes with French influences, such as a *pot au feu* of free range chicken with duck *foie gras*, or tender pork slowly braised with honey, aniseed and orange zest. There is a wide selection of excellent Greek wines.  
■ 154 Rue de Livourne; tel +32 2513 2959; notos.be  
■ Open for lunch and dinner Tues-Sat, and dinner on Mon. Two courses €50 (set lunch €18).

La Laguna





Hémisphères



Kamo



La Kasbah



Kamo

## GLOBAL HEMISPHERES

This centrally located eatery is the ultimate ethnic restaurant in Brussels, showcasing the cuisines of more than a dozen countries amid fabulously exotic décor. This is a cultural venue, too, hosting concerts and exhibitions. You can choose from Middle Eastern mezze, Algerian *chorba* (tomato, coriander and cinnamon soup), lamb kebabs with Egyptian spices or Caribbean chicken with mango, while the dish of the day could be a Brazilian seafood rice or Thai red curry. There is a good choice of wines and a tempting list of cocktails.

■ **29 Rue Leopold; tel +32 2513 9370; hemispheres-resto.be**  
 ■ **Open for lunch and dinner Mon-Fri, and dinner on Sat. Two courses €25.**

## JAPAN KAMO

One of the hot addresses in town right now, this miniscule restaurant has recently been awarded a Michelin star, and it is well worth a taxi trip out to the Ixelles neighbourhood in the south of the city to discover its contemporary take on traditional Japanese recipes. Ask to be seated at the bar/kitchen for up-close cooking, as head chef Tomoyasu Kamo (who previously worked in Brussels' famous Tagawa restaurant) and his sous-chef prepare tempting dishes right in front of diners. These may include a light bamboo tempura stuffed with shrimp tartare, or veal sweetbreads served with red miso sauce. Apart from the usual Japanese beers and sakes, there is also a large choice of *vins naturels*

sulphite-free wines. Reservation in advance is essential.

■ **123 Avenue des Saisons; tel +32 2648 7848**  
 ■ **Open for lunch and dinner Tues-Sat, and dinner on Mon. Two courses €35.**

## ETHIOPIA KOKOB

Situated in a central street lined with lively bars, clubs and restaurants, Kokob is a fun destination dedicated to authentic Ethiopian cuisine. Open only in the evening, a reservation is imperative as the food is inexpensive, portions are huge and the dishes are mouthwatering. The walls are decorated with eye-catching artwork, the place buzzes, and the food for each table is served on a huge communal plate, with everyone helping themselves. Don't miss the *attir kik alicha* (spicy lentils) and *key wot* (tender beef cooked in Ethiopia's signature *berbere* mixed-spice sauce).

■ **10 Rue des Grands Carmes; tel +32 2511 1950; kokob.be**  
 ■ **Open for lunch and dinner Thurs-Sat, and dinner Mon-Wed. Two courses €25.**

## SPAIN LA LAGUNA

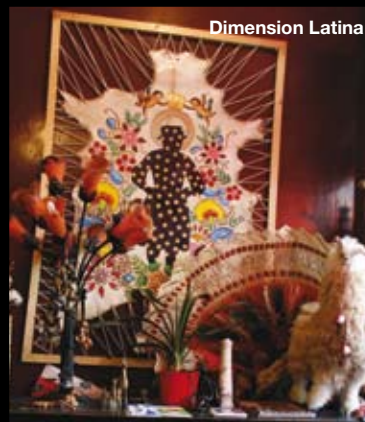
Lovers of Spanish cooking are spoiled for choice as Brussels was a big destination for immigrants in the 1950s and '60s, spawning scores of authentic restaurants. La Laguna opened its doors in 1966, and is renowned for its tapas from the Asturias region. For travellers on the Eurostar, this down-to-earth



L'Horloge du Sud



Up North



Dimension Latina



Up North



Au bon Bol

locale is a perfect stop-off as it is only 100 metres from Gare du Midi station. The décor hasn't changed here in decades, and while the bar is crowded with Spanish speakers, everyone is made to feel extremely welcome. From the tempting list of 35 tapas, don't miss the grilled sardines, octopus *a la Gallega* and piquant *picadillos* – chorizo fried with *pimenton*.

■ 10 Rue d'Argonne;  
tel +32 2523 4785

■ Open for lunch and dinner  
Mon-Sat, and Sun lunch. Two  
courses €20.

## WEST AFRICA

### L'HORLOGE DU SUD

Belgium's colonial involvement in Africa has bequeathed a lively Congolese quarter in Brussels, known as Matongé. Here you'll find late-night dance clubs, live-music bars and restaurants, where you'll invariably end up waiting an age for the food to arrive. The exception is the friendly L'Horloge du Sud, where the service is speedy and diners can choose between recipes from the Congo such as *liboke* (freshwater *tilapia* fish steamed in a banana leaf), Senegalese *yassa* (chicken marinated in lime juice), or *kedjenou*, from the Ivory Coast, a rich guinea-fowl stew.

■ 141 Rue du Trone; tel +32  
2512 1864; horlogedusud.be

■ Open for lunch and dinner  
Mon-Fri, and dinner on Sat.  
Two courses €20.

## CHINA

### AU BON BOL

In the narrow streets around the hip Sainte-Catherine quarter, a booming Chinatown has sprung up. There are a lot smarter addresses than Au bon Bol, but this hole-in-the-wall eatery is unbeatable for a quick, cheap and utterly delicious meal. The owner is from Lanzhou, where the speciality is handmade noodles, and she spends most of the day at a tiny counter looking out over the street, theatrically stretching, pulling and twirling lumps of dough that are finally transformed into artisan noodles. You can order them fried

with honey-glazed pork or shrimps, but the chef's special is in a huge bowl of tasty soup with vegetables and sliced duck.

■ 9 Rue Paul Devaux;  
tel +32 2513 1688

■ Open daily for lunch and  
dinner. Two courses €15.

## NORWAY

### UP NORTH

Every visitor to Brussels passes through the magnificent Grand Place, and although you expect to find the usual Belgian restaurants offering braised endives and beef *carbonade*, a big surprise, tucked down a narrow cobbled side street, is this smart new address specialising in Norwegian food. Chef Egil Haaseth serves classic smoked salmon, marinated reindeer and tasty herrings, but also inventive dishes such as cod cooked with dried lamb and a tangy blueberry sauce. There is a dedicated event space upstairs that can be rented out for meetings, seminars and cocktail parties.

■ 36 Rue des Chapeliers; tel  
+32 2502 7729; upnorth.be

■ Open for lunch and dinner  
Tues-Sat. Two courses €40.

## PERU

### DIMENSION LATINA

There are plenty of funky South American restaurants dotted around Brussels – from spicy Mexican cantinas to lively Brazilian bodegas – but what makes this cosy and central Peruvian address different is that it doubles as an Aladdin's-cave delicatessen of foodie delights from across the continent. The dining room is surrounded by exotic Peruvian folk art and shelves stacked high with a cornucopia of products, and the cooking is taken care of by a mother-and-daughter team from Lima. Specialities include *cabrito a lo norteno* (baby goat roasted with peppers, herbs and chicha berries), and *bolitas de yuca* – deep-fried manioc (a root vegetable) stuffed with cheese).

■ 96 Rue du Midi; tel +32 2512  
2779; dimension-latina.com

■ Open for lunch and dinner  
Tues-Sat, and lunch on Mon.  
Two courses €22.