

Copenhagen



Noma may be stealing the spotlight, but it's far from the only place in this city wowing diners. Caroline Baum uncovers the other new Nordic venues that are as thrilling as the country's iconic TV crime drama.



Sankt Annae, open since 1894, is famous for its smørrebrød (open sandwiches) selection. Opposite: Marv & Ben's ymer fromage dessert includes a mousse of ymer (soured milk), rye bread ice-cream and chamomile.

Photography
SIMON BAJADA

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here's a pig's ear on my plate. Crumbed. It looks like a clue that Sarah Lund, the poker-faced Danish detective star of *The Killing* (series 3 is set to screen on SBS this year) might take to a forensic lab for analysis rather than something to nibble on as a starter. There's also a lump of granite on my table that could be mistaken for a weapon. And the walls are blood red. But this is no crime scene. This is Marv & Ben, a smart Copenhagen inn at the forefront of the new wave of Nordic food that is exciting the planet's most jaded palates.

And yet, if you took your cue from Denmark's TV detectives, you could be forgiven for thinking there's nothing much to eat in Copenhagen. While the rest of the world salivates over the gastronomic inventions of superstars like Noma's Rene Redzepi, neither the crime-fighting fraternity nor their suspects seem to stop for a meal.

In *The Killing*, Lund eats the occasional fast-food snack at her desk or half-heartedly stirs soup in a guilty attempt to be a traditional mother to her teenage son. (In real life, Sofie Gråbøl who plays Lund, admits that this is an accurate reflection of her own priorities. When it comes to food, she likes baking birthday cakes for her two kids, but has never been to Noma, though she lives around the corner.)



Nothing about the series hints that its city setting is a food lover's paradise. But there is plenty of evidence to the contrary, even for those who can't get a booking at Noma or any of the other ritzy restaurants that have sprung up from Redzepi's many disciples. Copenhagen is not cheap, but you can still taste the excitement of its produce on a limited budget if, like the best detective, you know where to look.

The city's farmers' market, Torvehallerne, is a great place for clues as to what makes Danish food so distinctive. Opened just over a year ago in the Nørrebro district (where much of *The Killing* was filmed, and which some refer to as Nørrebrox for its cool ethnic mix), it's a slightly self-conscious showcase for local ingredients and dishes. From spring through to early autumn, outdoor stalls sell seasonal mushrooms and wild foods foraged from forests and windswept beaches.

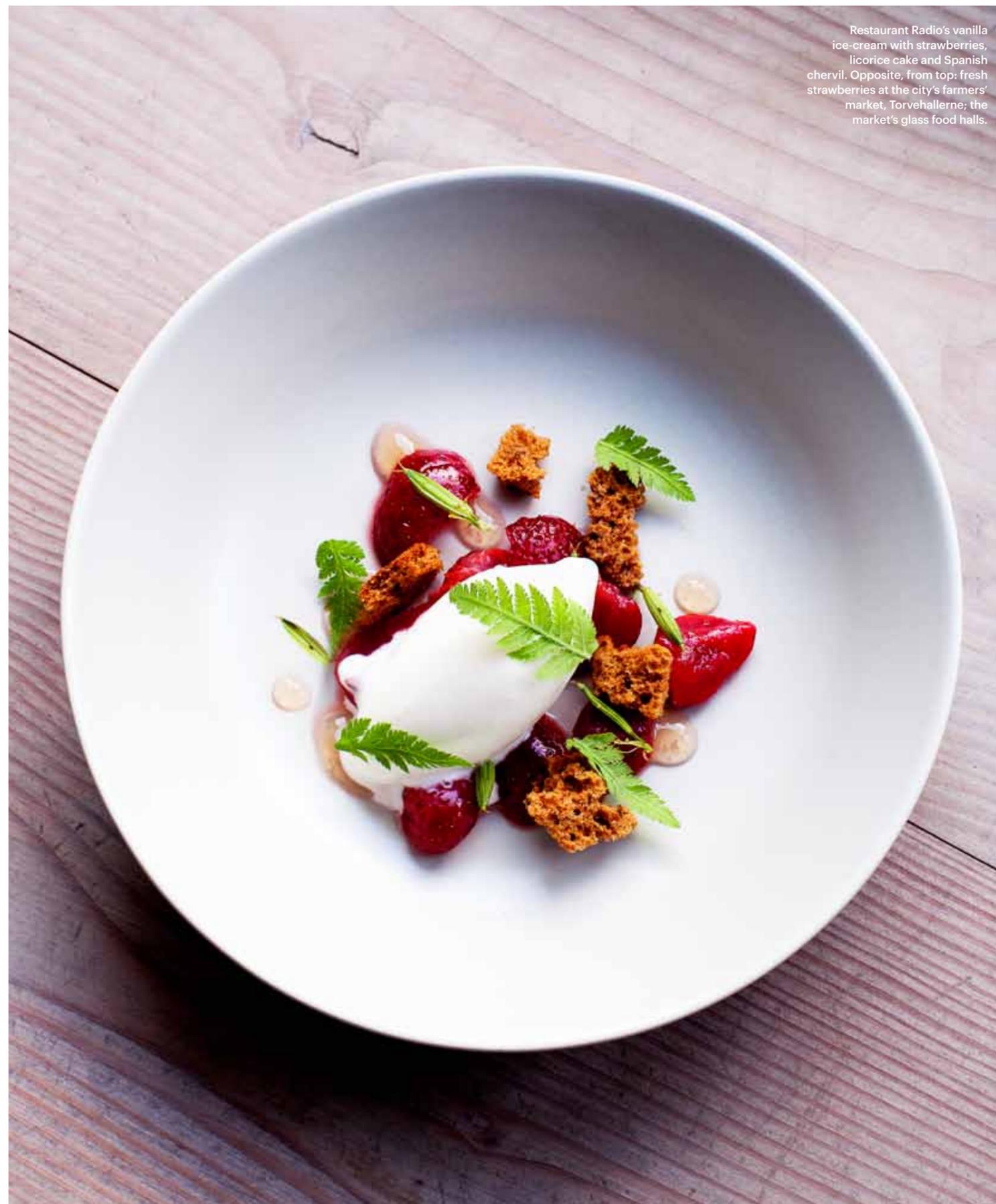
At Vildnis, Lene Ejlersen displays an intriguing haul of berries, leaves and their salty marine cousins, including samphire, sea buckthorn and the sweetly scented woodruff that's used to flavour wine and ice-cream. Everyone speaks enough English to offer snippets of information about provenance and preparation.

Inside the two glass food halls, you can take your pick from the usual suspects of European cuisine (the French Ma Poule stall does a roaring trade in *cassoulet* and other slow-cooked comfort foods), but the best place to sample typically Danish produce is at Hav fish market. Traditional *fiskefrikadeller* (cod and potato cakes) come with a lurid yellow slick of remoulade in curried mayonnaise.

The stall's salad bar tells a very Nordic story, too: you might not think of roasting young parsnips and dressing them with honey and parsley, but the flavour is persuasively nutty and earthy. Medallions of crayfish combined with sweet braised leeks and the tangy tartness of lingonberries is also a favourite. You don't need a search warrant to spot diver-caught Norwegian scallops – they're gigantic. Ask the guys behind the counter and they'll cook them to order, dressed with a robust chipotle vinaigrette. No wonder this place is humming with customers.

Long before Noma, there was one thing we all knew about Danish food: the open sandwich was the country's signature dish. In the »

Restaurant Radio's vanilla ice-cream with strawberries, licorice cake and Spanish chervil. Opposite, from top: fresh strawberries at the city's farmers' market, Torvehallerne; the market's glass food halls.





Fiskefrikadeller with remoulade and Danish strawberry ceviche from Hav fish market at Torvehallerne. Opposite, clockwise from top right: Sankt Annae; Copenhagen life; Restaurant Radio; buying blood sausage at Torvehallerne.





A selection of smushi from The Royal Cafe. Opposite page, bottom: Danish black lobster at Torvehallerne.



'60s, smørrebrød became as emblematic of the country as its sleek furniture, before going stale when people became disenchanted by gimmicky combinations and uninspired mass production.

Adam Aamann is the main perpetrator credited for championing the renaissance of the open sandwich. Since he opened his eponymous deli in 2006, Adam has restored the open sandwich to its place as the national dish and has been winning awards ever since. The secret? His organic sourdough rye, plus a matchmaker's gift for good couplings.

As well as reviving partners with prior convictions, Adam has brokered more unlikely pairings, matching herring in vinaigrette with warm spices and pumpkin compote flavoured with orange, or cured duck breast with roasted celeriac and pickled beech mushrooms.

Next door, Adam has opened Aamann's Etablissement. Its wallpaper pattern of silhouetted farm animals provides important clues to the kind of hearty contemporary Danish cooking on offer. The menu takes diners outside their comfort zone: bread comes with a traditional spreadable smear of herby pork fat, followed by dishes like pickled tomatoes with smoked almonds and fresh goat's cheese, and confit of chicken hearts. Desserts include warm elderberry soup garnished with diced apple and a traditional yoghurt chilled as ice-cream. Flavours are clean and simple, almost medicinal in their honesty.

For a more frivolous take on the open sandwich, The Royal Cafe is the place to go. Entrepreneur Lo Østergaard has pioneered a new concept dubbed the smushi – a sushi-style bite-sized open sandwich that is proving popular with locals and visitors alike, and which he plans to launch globally. Located inside the Royal Copenhagen china shop in the city's most touristy retail precinct, the cafe style is a very feminine funky baroque and the service is desultory, but it's a fun take on an old favourite for a fashionable, diet-conscious crowd.

For a more sedate experience, try Sankt Annae, an elegant lunch-only establishment near the Amalienborg (royal castle) – home of 'our' princess Mary. Famous for its selection of 30 open sandwiches including herrings that come marinated, pickled, spiced, boiled or fried, it recently got a rave from ultra-critical Brit AA Gill. For those who like

tradition, this is a Copenhagen institution, which has maintained its reputation since opening in 1894. But it does not come cheap and its ambience of hushed elegance won't suit you if you like things casual.

But back to the pig's ear on my plate. It's a relief to see the new cuisine has a playful edge and a sense of drama. This slightly sinister but witty *amuse-bouche* at Marv & Ben (Marv & Ben means 'marrow and bone', so you've been warned) is compelling proof that the Danes are the world's biggest consumers of pork, and embrace nose-to-tail eating enhanced by the savvy of preserving food to last through long winters with techniques of salting, curing, smoking and pickling.

The menu here is so adult as to be almost worthy of an X-rating. Moist and textured rye bread comes with a spread flavoured with ox bone marrow; salmon is sprinkled with coal; baked haddock is served with burnt cabbage, Swedish seaweed, cockle sauce and dill. (All this charring is not a case of a closet arsonist in the kitchen – chef Frederik Hvidt is a connoisseur when it comes to the flavour of smoke, experimenting with degrees of singeing that bring out the caramel flavours in vegetables, as well as flesh.)

To extinguish the flames? A dessert of cream cheese fluffed up in a soda syphon, creating a pillowy snow drift around a buried pistachio and sorrel ice-cream topped off with a crisp oat macaroon – all this, and superlatively friendly service, a view of the kitchen on your way in or out, and at a reasonable price. It would be criminal not to eat here if you really want a taste of what new Nordic is all about. »





Inside Aamann's Etablissement.
Left: enjoying purchases from Torvehallerne market. Below: for a cheap eat, try a Danish hot dog.

★★★ THE HIT LIST ★★★

EAT

Aamann's Etablissement
Øster Farimagsgade 12,
+45 3555 3310, aamanns.dk.

Marv & Ben
Snaregade 4, +45 3391 0191,
marvogben.dk.

Restaurant Radio
Julius Thomsens Gade 12, +45 2510
2733, restaurantradio.dk.

The Royal Cafe
Amagertorv 6, +45 3312 1122,
theroyalcafe.dk.

Sankt Annae
Sankt Annae Plads 12, +45 3312
5497, restaurantsanktanna.dk.

Torvehallerne (market)
Frederiksborggade 21, Nørrebro,
torvehallernekbh.dk.

TAKEAWAYS

Danes love hot dogs. Among the best stands in the city are Døp, (next to the Round Tower) which

serves organic hot dogs on sourdough buns, and Harry's Place, a 50-year-old institution where the most popular item is the Børge, served with their secret 'gun powder' sauce (Nordre Fasanvej).

STAY

Airbnb
On a budget? Consider a holiday rental of an apartment, room or home to share. The website lists more than 750 properties in Copenhagen in every price range. The owners' local knowledge is an added bonus. airbnb.com.

Avenue Hotel
A small, centrally located boutique hotel in an 1898 building with an emphasis on contemporary Danish design, that's minutes away from Tivoli and City Hall square. **Åboulevard 29, avenuehotel.dk.**

Series 1 and 2 of *The Killing* are available on DVD. For these and more quality Danish crime drama on DVD, visit sbs.com.au/shop.

