

# Local Catch

BY BILL FINK

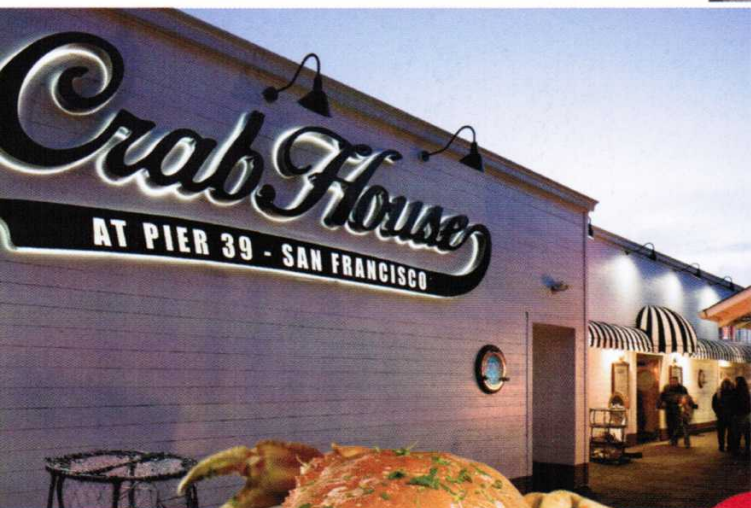
*Flavors of the world, one port at a time.*

When making a first stop in a foreign land, some people start with a historical tour, others rush to a scenic viewpoint, a famous temple, or an art museum. But everyone has to eat.

Food is more than just fuel for travelers; it is an essential ingredient to fully experience a destination. Local cuisine provides sweet and savory tastes of a foreign culture that become as much a memory of a trip as any sightseeing tour. So expand your horizons and try something new, whether at a humble streetside stall or in a gourmet restaurant. As the following food guide to four of Azamara's port cities shows, local tastes of the world are as varied as the fish in the sea. So put down the granola bar; pick up some *smørrebrød*, *okonomiyaki*, or *paratha*, and feast on your travels.



*Nature's Bounty*  
A dish of beets  
and apples from  
Copenhagen's Noma,  
ranked as one of  
the world's top  
restaurants.



*California Cuisine*  
*Scenes from the Crab House at Pier 39. Below, Fisherman's Wharf.*

## *San Francisco, USA*

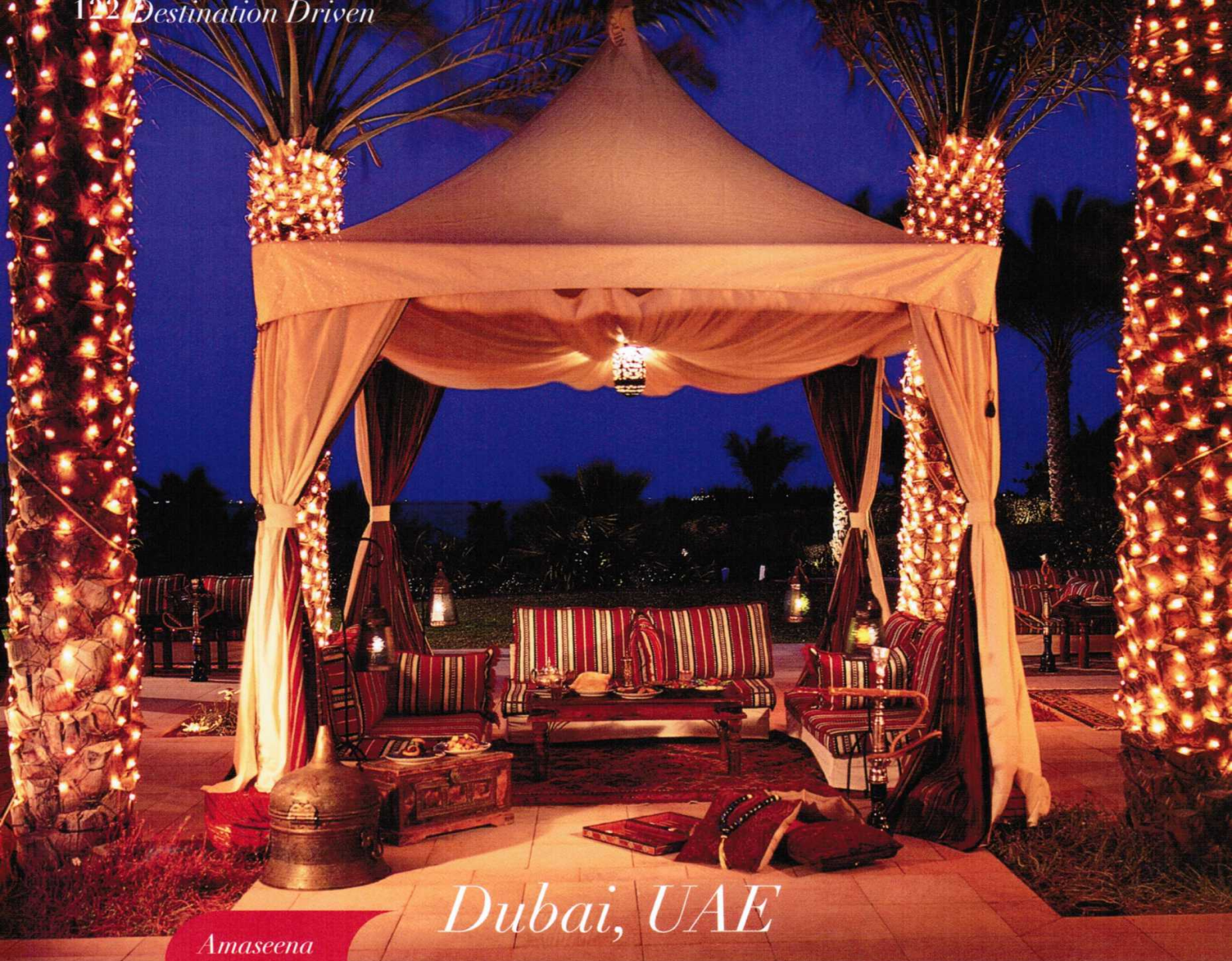
### *From Bread Bowls to Haute Cuisine*

Like the city itself, food in San Francisco is a blend of its rough-and-tumble past and its sophisticated modern edge. The 1850s Gold Rush era saw miners and sailors shoveling mouthfuls of fish stews in the seedy seaside dining halls of the Barbary Coast, while nowadays Internet-rush-era executives savor delicate California cuisine creations in upscale Financial District restaurants that cover the same area.

Sitting on the docks of the bay, sea lions bark greetings to visitors and fishermen to Fisherman's Wharf, where since 1957, the Franciscan Crab House has been serving the best of the local catch in ways even an old miner would appreciate. The restaurant, with sweeping views of the bay and Alcatraz Island, offers crab prepared in every imaginable style, from whole, garlic-butter-soaked two-pound behemoths in the shell to sandwiches, soups in sourdough bread bowls, crab cakes, crab cocktails, and cheesy bubbling pots of crab fondue.

Across town in the colorful Mission District, the serene, laid-back Michelin-starred Range restaurant serves California cuisine interpretations of locally sourced ingredients from both land and sea. The changing seasonal menu features original and filling combinations such as local albacore confit with freekeh, baby artichokes, and navel oranges; and local king salmon with ratatouille, kalamata olive tapenade, and wild arugula.





## Dubai, UAE

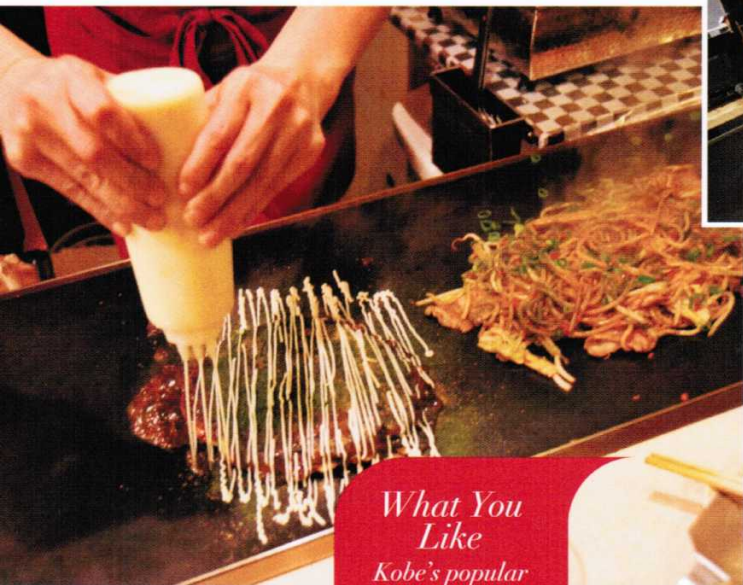
*Amaseena  
The lavish setup  
at the restaurant at  
the Ritz-Carlton,  
Dubai.*

### *Buffet at the Crossroads*

Dubai's location at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and Africa in a quiet corner of the Middle East has attracted a population made up of 80 percent foreigners. This means the local cuisine is truly the food of the world. The results can be as varied as a cheap roadside barbecue for a weary traveler at a crossroads or a desert feast fit for an Arabian prince.

Amaseena restaurant at the Ritz-Carlton, Dubai is set up in the sand under the stars like a Bedouin-tented camp. To call it a buffet is an insult—it's more of a gourmet global feast featuring what seems like an endless line of grill stations, salad bars, and tables heaped with fresh seafood, meats, sweets, and, of course, after-dinner hookah pipes packed with exotically flavored shisha tobaccos.

At the other extreme is the Bu Qtair, a dark beach shack with plastic chairs, chipped dishes, and some of the best seafood in town. Diners queue up and point to their fish, a sauce, and bread, rice, or Indian *paratha* flatbread. They await their name shouted to gather their meal and retreat to a corner to eat with fingers as often as not, humble travelers enjoying the fruits of the sea.



*What You Like*  
*Kobe's popular pan-fried dish is cooked to order.*

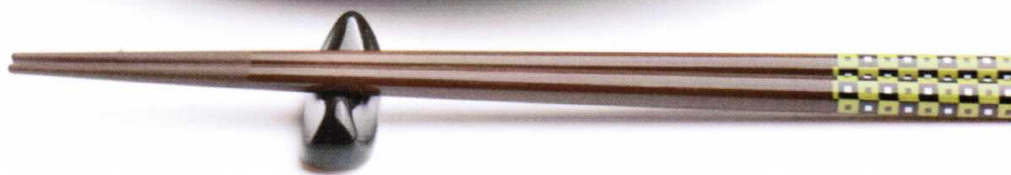
## *Kobe, Japan*

### *Fried How You Like It*

Most people think of Japanese food as some sort of combination of sushi, noodles, and pricey Kobe beef. But walk the streets of Kobe, Japan, and you'll smell something else sizzling. The pop of oil and batter frying at streetside stalls signals not only summer festival season but the savory treat of *okonomiyaki*. This pancake-like mix of "whatever you like, fried" (the name translated) is as popular and varied in Japan as pizza is in Naples. Okonomiyaki became favored in the 1940s after rice shortages inspired these alternative dishes where people basically just fried up in a batter whatever they could find.

Nowadays, with plentiful toppings available, Kobe-style okonomiyaki is made with a base of eggs, flour, yam, and cabbage, and combined with squid, fish, pork, or beef, topped with a brush of Worcestershire-type sauce and squirts of mayonnaise. Then it's sprinkled with dried seaweed and *katsuobushi* fish flakes that dance in the heat of the grill as if alive.

Whether served alfresco in a park, at the famed third-generation family-run Mizuno restaurant in nearby Osaka, the tourist-friendly Fugetsu chain, or simply ordered in the cafeteria of a department store, okonomiyaki can always be "what you like" in Kobe.





## Copenhagen, Denmark

### More Than Just Herring

Nordic cuisine used to be considered an oxymoron, evoking visions of dry black bread topped with pickled herring and small, shriveled vegetables pulled from the Arctic tundra. But a recent surge in both ingredients and creativity by local chefs has given rise to the “New Nordic Cuisine” dining movement. Fresh fish from the surrounding North Sea; mushrooms, herbs, and berries foraged from the forests; and locally produced cheeses highlight the menus of expensive, ultra-hip restaurants like Copenhagen’s Noma, consistently ranked No. 1 in S. Pellegrino’s “World’s 50 Best Restaurants” awards. For a more relaxed and affordable New Nordic option, try Kødbyens Fiskebar (“fish bar”) with local varieties of fresh fish and shellfish, good wine pairings, excellent cocktails, and a lively atmosphere spilling outdoors onto lounge chairs until two o’clock in the morning on summer weekends.

The traditional Danish lunch snack is *smørrebrød*, their version of the open sandwich. With a near-infinite possibility of toppings, *smørrebrød* is taking its own place in the New Nordic Cuisine movement. While many locals simply top their bread with ingredients from a market for a picnic, Copenhagen restaurants like the Aamanns Etablissement create artistic and extremely tasty combinations based around organic vegetables, free-range beef and pork, and, yes, even herring. Combine with paired tastings of their homemade herb-infused “snaps” alcohol, and you’ll be warmed even on a chilly Nordic night. **12**



*New Nordic*  
Opposite page,  
*Smørrebrød*  
spread. Center,  
*Noma* restaurant.  
Right, *Aamanns*  
*Etablissement*  
restaurant.

# PLACES

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## *A TASTE FOR ADVENTURE*

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*ANTHONY BOURDAIN*

