

HONG KONG

Cheap, Chic Eats in Hong Kong. Still have the credit-crunch blues? Here, five new restaurants where you can feast well without breaking the bank. *By* LAURA MILLER



Eating Well for Less
From top: The dining room at Mrs Jones; Vietnamese fare at Rice Paper; beef carpaccio at Mrs Jones.

NAGOMI

Meaning “cozy” in Japanese, this tiny eatery consists of just five tables, usually occupied by regulars who order without glancing at the menu. Chef Peter Ri honed in his sushi-making skills at the Island Shangri-La’s acclaimed Nadaman restaurant, and his creations are straight-from-the-sea fresh. The charming owner, Carlina Yu, is both hostess and waitress, and never forgets a customer’s favorite dishes. **What to Order** You can’t go wrong with the rolls, including the spicy tuna maki rolls and the soft-shell crab handrolls. But the star of the menu is the beef inaniwa udon—silky noodles and tender beef in a fragrant broth that’s guaranteed to fill you up. *Ground floor, Yee Fung Building, 1 Village Rd., Happy Valley; 852/2838-3848; dinner for two HK\$300.*

DINING WOK

Hankering for a taste of Chinese-American classics like General Tsao’s chicken? Then drop by this quirky, three-story eatery located in a vintage 1940’s tenement building in Wanchai’s scene-y Star Street area. The ground floor is kitted up to look like a Chinese take-out joint with chefs deftly wielding their woks. On the top floor are a karaoke lounge and a private terrace. **What to Order** Forget about getting a taste of authentic regional cuisine and head straight for those Chinese-American clichés. Vegetable spring rolls, pan-fried pork dumplings, and sweet-and-sour garoupa are delectable here, as is the moo shu pork—a succulent stir-fry served with paper-thin pancakes. *12 St. Francis St., Wan Chai; 852/2861-2722; dinner for two HK\$400.*

MRS JONES

A brightly lit space with lemon-hued walls, this casual Italian restaurant might be located on prime real estate, but you don’t need to take out a second mortgage to eat here. Richly colored murals by installation art whiz Steve Yau decorate the walls, while the large windows on the façade overlook picturesque, cobbled Pottinger Street. Swing by on Saturdays, when a jazz band livens up the scene. **What to Order** For real value, order one of the 10 pasta and risotto dishes—all priced under HK\$95. Vegetarians might favor the *ravioli di zucca*: plump parcels filled with sweet pumpkin and mascarpone and doused in fragrant sage



butter. Omnivores will love the *gnocchi al ragù*—house-made gnocchi served with a slow-braised lamb ragù. *79 Wyndham St., Central; 852/2522-8118; dinner for two HK\$470.*

RICE PAPER

In Hong Kong, a spectacular view usually means dearer prices. That’s not the case with this stylish Vietnamese spot, which commands a fine vista of Victoria Harbour. Though three years old, the chefs have revamped the menu after a recent trip to Vietnam. Slide into one of the cozy red booths for a romantic tête-à-tête. **What to Order** The fresh rice paper rolls are exceptionally good, but the real standouts are the soft-shell crab rolls with smooth avocado and a tangy citrus sauce. The healthy chicken and banana blossom salad is expertly executed here. Finish your meal with the decadent sticky banana pudding. *Shop P413-418, World Trade Centre, Causeway Bay; 852/2890-3975; dinner for two HK\$380.*

BLUE GINGER

Tiny and always packed, this Thai eatery has quickly become a favorite among lunchtime diners. Service is rudimentary but efficient: order at the counter and then wait a few minutes for good, well-priced Siamese classics. There’s seating indoors and out, but good luck finding a table. **What to Order** Their curries are exceptional, and at HK\$45, a real bargain. Choose between red, green, yellow, Panang and Massaman curry with chicken, beef, duck, pork, prawn or fish, then pick your rice—white, red or lemongrass-scented. *Ground floor, 92 Wellington St., Central; 852/3101-1433; lunch for two HK\$90. +*



Cheerfully Cheap
From top: Nagomi, a small sushi spot in Happy Valley; the spicy tuna roll at Nagomi; inside Dining Wok; Blue Ginger in Central fills up at lunch.

