

Shanghai's best desserts

From egg tarts to pavlovas, via cookies, cakes and cream puffs, Time Out presents your ultimate guide to the city's sweeter side



Warm chocolate cake, seasonal fruit tea and white chocolate ice cream at Table No. 1

ZHENZONG LVDOU BING (1.40RMB/EACH; 14RMB/JIN)

at Jianlilai Lvdoubing

There's always a long queue at this hole in the wall sweet shop selling just one thing: golden brown green bean *bings* still warm from the oven. The pastry is flaky, crumbly, and unapologetically thick. The mix is slightly sweet with a mild, faintly grassy green bean flavour. According to TCM, green beans are cooling, contain three times as much protein as rice, and



cure poisoning, but even if you don't work in a toxic environment you'll enjoy eating them. No 31, 1725 Gonghexin Lu, near Yanchang Lu, Zhabei district (159 2121 4238). Open 8am-9pm daily. ☎ Yanchang Lu. 健利来绿豆饼 闸北区共和新路1725弄31号, 近延长路

SESAME BALLS (4.50RMB)

at Shanghai Magnolia Bakery

The first thing you notice when you buy a sesame ball (*maqiu*) from this time-honoured bakery with a history of almost

20 years is how heavy it is – it's nearly as big, as round, and as heavy as a baseball. Magnolia's sesame balls are incredibly chewy thanks to the high quality sticky rice flour. Dense, sticky yet not too sweet – they're the best version of this traditional sweet we've tasted. 100 Tianyaoqiao Lu, near Xingeng Lu, Xuhui district (6438 5612). Open 8am-9.30pm daily. ☎ Xujiashui. 白玉兰面包房 徐汇区天钥桥路100号, 近辛耕路

DURIAN CAKES (5RMB/THREE CAKES)

at Shanghai Chic

This always-packed Shanghainese restaurant is one of the few venues to make it onto both

our 50 Best Dishes list (for their glorious *hongshao* pork) and this desserts list. One portion provides three cakes, each delicately encased in buttery, flaky pastry with a crunchy sesame-seed underbelly. Bite in to release an ooze of gooey molten durian custard. While the fruit has a reputation for smelling like old socks, even durianphobes can be converted by this mild yet luxurious pastry. See Top 100, page 40, for details.

EGG TART (5.50RMB) at KFC

To the many adherents of Lillian's renowned Portuguese-style egg tarts, the suggestion that theirs are not the best in Shanghai is near-treasonous. So, imagine the reactions when our blind tasters unanimously voted for KFC's egg tarts over the hometown favourite. 'I've been tricked! Tricked!' yelled our Guangdong office manager, who couldn't believe she'd picked KFC over Lillian. Yet the fast-food chain won by a landslide thanks to a creamily eggy filling and buttery, flaky pastry. Locations across town.

COCONUT TART (6RMB)

at Tsui Wah

Just inside the door of bustling popular Hong Kong import Tsui Wah is a small counter selling classic Cantonese pastries. We love their small coconut tarts with crispy short crust pastry surrounding a fluffy coconut sponge cake that's topped with half of a glace cherry. Simple and delicious. 251 Xizang Nan Lu, near Huaihai Zhong Lu, Huangpu district (3366 2636). Open 11am-midnight daily. ☎ Dashijie. 翠华餐厅 黄浦区西藏南路251号, 近淮海中路; 291 Fumin Lu, near Changle Lu, Xuhui district (6170 1282). Open 10.30-2.30am daily. ☎ Changshu Lu. 徐汇区富民路291号, 近长乐路



Taiyaki at Usukawa Taiyaki Taimu

ORIGINAL GLAZED (6RMB) at Krispy Kreme

This 1937 recipe from Winston-Salem, North Carolina is a phenomenon that has spanned decades and international borders. The yeast-based donuts must be eaten right out of the fryer for the magical combination of puffy interior and liquid sugar coating to meld on the tongue in a gratifyingly sinful duo of sugar and oil. Despite many competitors, KK is still king. Unit 142, In Point, 169 Wujiang Lu, near Shimen Yi Lu, Jingan district (5228 9727). Open 8am-10pm Sun-Thur; 8am-11pm Fri-Sat. ☎ Nanjing Xi Lu. 卡卡圈坊 静安区吴江路169号四季坊142单元, 近石门一路

CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES (8RMB) at Marks & Spencer

These unapologetically heavy cookies leak oil right through the paper bag. But that's the kind of moisture which gives these giant, flat pucks a wickedly soft, chewy bite and the perfect crumbly edge. Their intense sweetness and generous milk chocolate chunks left our office staff with satisfied, if guilty, grins on their faces – and an oily slick on their fingers.

863 Nanjing Xi Lu, near Shimen Yi Lu, Jingan district (6218 2558). Open 10am-10pm daily. ☎ Nanjing Xi Lu. 玛莎百货 静安区南京西路863号, 近石门一路

STRICTLY CHOC CHIP COOKIES (8RMB/ONE; 15RMB/TWO) at Strictly Cookies

At the other end of the cookie spectrum from M&S's guilt-inducing offerings are these hearty, thick and chewy cookies which look and taste as wholesome as if they were just pulled from the oven at home. American founder Lexie Comstock is indeed doing the baking herself, and following a family recipe. Says Comstock: 'I chose this recipe because it's the chocolate chip cookie I grew up eating. My mum always stressed using high quality ingredients because the difference is in the details, and that's something I remain very serious about



“
Our blind tasters
unanimously voted for
KFC's egg tarts
over Lillian's

when baking. 'We're seriously convinced. www.strictlycookies.com; Available at Pantry by the Co-op 90 Nanyang Lu, near Xikang Lu, Jingan district (3255 7271; http://bytheco-op.com). Open 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri; 8.30am-5pm Sat-Sun. ☎ Nanjing Xi Lu. 静安区南阳路90号, 近西康路

TAIYAKI (8RMB) at Usukawa Taiyaki Taimu

These traditional Japanese desserts made in the shape of sea bream are as delightful to look at as to eat. Our favourite versions of these custard-filled cakes are sold from this tiny stall under an escalator in Metro City. Waffle-like batter is poured into molds then pumped with a variety of fillings, both savoury and sweet, but our favourite is the thick chocolate custard with subtle vanilla tones. B1, Metro City, 1111 Zhaojiabang Lu, near Caoxi Bei Lu, Xuhui district (www.obnchina.com). Open 10am-10pm daily. ☎ Xujiashui. 大一梦薄皮鲷鱼烧 徐汇区肇嘉浜路1111号美罗城B1楼, 近漕溪北路

CREAM PUFF WITH CHOCOLATE ICING (9RMB)

at Beard Papa's

So simple but so effective, the cream puff with chocolate topping is the ideal shopping trip indulgence – your teeth smash through choux pastry shell to meet gooey vanilla custard; it's like a giant profiterole. Basement, Jiuguang, 1618 Nanjing Xi Lu, near Huashan Lu, Jingan district (400 889 2828; www.beardpapa.com.cn). Open 10am-10pm daily. ☎ Jingan Temple. 贝儿多爸爸泡芙工房 静安区南京西路1618号B楼, 近华山山路 See website for more locations.



“
Dessert bar Secret Recipe has an array of cheesecakes, but it's the blueberry that stands out

CARROT CAKE (16RMB/SLICE) at Baker & Spice

With two inches of moist, cinnamon-enriched, walnut-scattered sponge that's neither too sweet nor too oily, plus a generous layer of orange zesty icing that peaks in waves on top, Baker & Spice have created carrot cake perfection. The best carrot dessert in town by a wide margin. *195 Anfu Lu, near Wulumuqi Lu, Xuhui district (5404 2733; www.bakerandspice.com.cn). Open 7am-8.30pm daily.* *Changshu Lu. 徐汇区安福路195, 近乌鲁木齐路 See website for more locations.*

BLUEBERRY CHEESE (18RMB/SLICE; 180RMB/WHOLE CAKE) at Secret Recipe

Dessert bar Secret Recipe's speciality is cheesecake (though they drop the 'cake' part in their product names) with an array of varieties including Oreo cheese (not as tasty as it sounds) and New York cheese (with a chocolate base). But it's the blueberry which stands out. A thick wedge of light, creamy filling is perched upon

a thin but crunchy base, topped with a deliciously sweet blueberry jam and finished with a squirt of whipped cream down one side.

B1, Raffles City, 268 Xizang Zhong Lu, near Fuzhou Lu, Huangpu district (6340 3071). Open 10am-10pm daily. People's Square. 食之秘 黄浦区西藏中路268号来福士B1, 近福州路; B1, Parkson, 918 Huaihai Zhong Lu, near Shaanxi Nan Lu, Huangpu district. Open 10am-10pm daily. Shaanxi Nan Lu. 黄浦区淮海中路918号百盛购物中心B1, 近陕西南路

BROWNIE (20RMB) at OMG Bakery

Goopy, sticky, caramelly – that's the flavour profile of this decadent brownie from OMG. Though best known for her cupcakes, American Jenna Suharto's brownie is a glorious winner. She says the main ingredients are simply 'chocolate (and lots of

it), butter, eggs and sugar'. It's a simple but deliciously compelling recipe. *See Strictly choc chip cookies at Strictly Cookies above for details.*

TARO ON SHAVED ICE (20RMB) at Xian Yu Xian

The queues are notorious. They stretch toward the door, or wind back and forth like a hungry snake. This hugely successful Taiwanese brand (named Meet Fresh in English) recently entered Shanghai and it didn't take long for their renowned taro desserts to bewitch the masses. Served in a paper bowl, the taro sits atop a bed of shaved ice doused in caramel sauce and thick condensed milk. But it's the pale purple root that's the star of this dessert, with the hunks of freshly peeled taro firm on the outside yet simultaneously chewy and creamy on the inside.

B2-03, Réel Kitchen, 1600 Nanjing Xi Lu, near Changde Lu, Jingan district (6051 2292). Open 10am-9.30pm daily. Jinan Temple. 鲜芋仙 静安区南京西路1600号越洋广场美食街B2楼03号, 近常德路

BANANA ROTI PLANTA (25RMB) at Food Fusion

Food Fusion is one of the most popular destinations for Southeast Asians in Shanghai searching for authentic home cuisine. Their banana roti planta contrasts

crispy golden-brown fried roti with a layer of squishy banana running through the middle. The serving is generous and, when topped with a ball of vanilla ice cream (add 5RMB), makes for a mouth-watering melange of textures and temperatures. *See Top 100, page 40, for details.*

ÉCLAIR CARAMEL BEURRE SALE (28RMB) at Chez Shibata

While Chez Shibata's most popular dessert remains La Venus – a chocolate and custard creation built atop a whole, stoned cherry – we prefer the sophisticated, semi-deconstructed CBS. This long, caramel-cream filled éclair is topped with a slick of dulce de leche glaze and two or three cubes of butter (depending on which branch you go to), each crowned with a few jewels of Maldon sea salt. (The name CBS is taken from the French for 'caramel', 'butter' and 'salty'). The éclair is light, and the very slightly salty caramel cream manages major toffee taste with only minor sweetness. Instead, most of the sugar is in the glaze. With the best bites of the CBS, the ones that include those intimidating butter bricks, the dairy arrives on the palate in the third act of each mouthful, creamy and triumphant, restoring balance with the sweet and the salty. Established in Nagoya in 1995, Chez Shibata specialises in French-style pastries and desserts. We call it the best cake shop in Shanghai. *See Top 100, page 42, for details.*



Matcha latte with sticky rice balls at Nana's Green Tea



Black glutinous rice with durian pulp at Honeymoon Dessert

TAPIOCA PUDDING WITH COCONUT CREAM IN PANDAN LEAVES (28RMB) at Thai Gallery

This Thai classic, also known as tako, is the star dessert at this chic, modern Thai restaurant decorated with local artwork. One serving gives four matchbox-sized, coconut cream parcels, delicately wrapped in dark green pandan leaves. These chilled morsels can be made with coconut milk to reduce the fat but Thai Gallery uses coconut cream, making for a silky-smooth, rich mouthful that glides across the tongue – you don't even need to use your teeth. This contrasts exquisitely with the shredded water chestnut and tapioca layer, culminating in a crunchy yet jelly-like sensation. *See Top 100, page 46, for details.*

BLACK GLUTINOUS RICE WITH DURIAN PULP (32RMB) at Honeymoon Dessert

This is a star dish at beloved Hong Kong chain Honeymoon Dessert. The presentation is brilliantly colourful and unselfconsciously kitsch. One frozen ball of creamy pulped durian, slightly bigger than a golf ball, and a twin of black sticky rice

sit in a bath of ice-cold coconut ice cream. The normally overpowering durian fruit is neutralised by the cold temperature, making for a mild flavour that gently slides down your throat. This dish is all about complex but harmonious flavours, so take a bite of everything at once. *Unit 102, First Floor, 169 Wujiang Lu, near Taixing Lu, Jingan district (6267 3561; www.honeymoon-dessert.com). Open 10am-11pm daily. Nanjing Xi Lu. 满记甜品 静安区吴江路169号四季坊商场1楼102号单元, 近南京西路 See website for more locations.*

MATCHA LATTE WITH STICKY RICE BALLS (32RMB) at Nana's Green Tea

Like the myriad matcha (powdered green tea) items on Japanese import Nana's menu, the green tea milk at the base of this dessert drink (*mocha xueding baiyu*) is algae green and slightly bitter. As the iceberg of matcha-flavoured soft serve melts, however, the mix sweetens slightly, and you can position your straw at different depths to slurp mouthfuls with varying ratios of ice cream run off. The unsweetened rice balls are a purely textural complement, something to chew on, to eat without tasting. Nana's spectacular parfaits (35-40RMB) contain more elements – chocolate cake, matcha cake, cream, wafer, cornflakes and grass jelly – but they lack the latte's elegant integrity. *B1, Metro City, 1111 Zhaojiabang Lu, near Caoxi Bei Lu, Xuhui district (6426 7778). Open 10am-10pm daily. Xujianghai. 七叶和茶 徐汇区肇嘉浜路1111号美罗城B1楼五番街, 近漕溪北路; 185 Madang Lu, near Zizhong Lu, Huangpu district (6336 6899). Xintiandi. 黄浦区马当路185号, 近自忠路*



“
hoF's tantalisingly moist orange chocolate mud cake has an almost cult-like following

CHOCOLATE ALMOND CAKE (35RMB)

at Buttonwood

A chunky single square of milky cocoa cake layered with whole flakes of almond, this dessert from newly opened hoFesque café Buttonwood is more of a brownie than a cake, but that doesn't stop it being one of the most indulgent chocolate puddings on this list. The flaky crust is followed by a toothsome bite of dense, sticky chocolate and its intensity is balanced out by the crunchy nutty texture, making it a must try. 438-2 Shaanxi Nan Lu, near Fuxing Zhong Lu, Xuhui district (6468 2688). Open 11am-1am daily. ☎ Shaanxi Nan Lu. 徐汇区陕西南路438-2号, 近复兴中路

PEANUT SMOOTHIE (35RMB)

at Charmant

This jumbo dessert is one of the most popular at Charmant, the go-to Taiwanese restaurant. The secret to the texture is the ice making machine which pumps out soft airy crystals. There's no cream in this dessert, the main ingredients are just peanut butter, peanuts (which they boil and chop daily) and water. Healthier than ice cream but just as luscious. See Top 100, page 42, for details.

ORANGE CHOCOLATE MUD CAKE (36RMB)

at hoF

While many cafés have tried to copy the hoF formula, owner and experienced pastry chef Brian Tan's exacting standards mean his desserts have little real competition. Of these, the tantalisingly moist orange chocolate mud cake has an almost cult-like following and is continually lauded as one of the best desserts in Shanghai. The dense cake (made with 64 per cent dark chocolate) is topped with a caramel glaze, candied orange rind and a sprinkling of sea salt that lends a surprise kick. See Top 100, page 43, for details.

TRIO CHOC MOUSSE CAKE (38RMB)

at Choc Republic

This new temple to all chocolate-related consumerables has gone straight to the top of the chocolate cake charts with its trio choc mousse cake. Elegantly presented on a large plate with squiggles of chocolate sauce and flakes of chocolate sticking out on top, the cake is three sturdy layers of milk, white and dark chocolate mousse on a thin cake base, sprinkled with a light dusting of chocolate flake bits. Unadulterated chocolate goodness. 88 Yuyao Lu, near Haifang Lu, Jingan district (3255 6883). Open 2pm-midnight daily. ☎ Changping Lu. 巧克共和 静安区余姚路88号, 近海防路

Peanut smoothie at Charmant

DURIAN PENGAT (39RMB)

at Tang Pin

Brian Tan's newest dessert café is already eclipsing his madly popular hoF with people lining up out the door for treats like durian pengat. Unlike some other durian entrants on this list, this is not mild, not subtle and not a good choice for that friend you want to convert to durian. However, if you are a fan of the pungent, creamy fruit, you have found your manna. To make it, the durian flesh is mashed with a spoon, mixed with coconut milk, sweet corn and *nata de coco* (coconut juice jelly) cubes for texture, and topped with durian ice cream. Brian Tan calls it 'a double killer'. For durian wimps, Tang Pin is still worth a visit. Get the gorgeous wobbly *doufu hua* (tofu custard) which Tan makes from in-house stone ground beans and tops with a shot of Bailey's. Choose from pandan syrup, palm sugar syrup or crushed caramel sugar toppings. No 7, First Floor, Novel Plaza, 135 Xingeng Lu, near Tianyaoqiao Lu, Xuhui district. Open 4-10.30pm Tue-Sun. ☎ Xujianghai. 糖品 徐汇区辛耕路135号永新坊1楼7号, 近天钥桥路

UPSIDE DOWN (45RMB)

at Whisk

With the tagline 'chocolate has an address' and one of our favourite hot chocolates in town, it's not surprising that Whisk would also serve up one of the most sumptuous chocolate desserts we've tasted in the city. The Upside Down is an oh-so-light and fluffy chocolate soufflé with an oozy, messy centre that melts on the tongue. Served in its own adorable ceramic dish with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, it's a rich gooley pot of chocolatey richness that you'll want to go back for over and over again. 1250 Huaihai Zhong Lu, near Huating Lu, Xuhui district (5404 7770). Open 10.30am-11pm Tue-Sun. ☎ Changshu Lu. 威斯克 徐汇区淮海中路1250号, 近华亭路



CHU! CHURROS (50RMB)

at Maya

This traditional Spanish snack of deep-fried, sugar-coated doughnuts dunked in hot chocolate (pictured above) can all too often be a claggy, over-oily disappointment. The secret, apparently, is a feather-light batter and oil heated to a blistering temperature. Maya's churros succeed on both counts: the three dough 'sticks' come out piping hot, the crunchy sugar coating giving way to a cloud-like interior which melts on the tongue. In place of the standard accompaniment of thick, molten chocolate, you get a trio of dipping sauces: freshly-whipped vanilla cream, tequila-laced chocolate and a sweet-tart strawberry coulis which cuts through the grease, making what's effectively a heart attack on a plate taste almost healthy. See Top 100, page 46, for details.

STICKY DATE PUDDING WITH BUTTERSCOTCH SAUCE (58RMB)

at Mr Willis

It's devilishly sweet, but this tennis ball-sized island of soft sponge in a small reservoir of butterscotch sauce (which is covered in single cream once it arrives at your table), is irresistible. The light yet perfectly firm sponge only has a mild hint of date, but that just serves to reinforce its purpose: to mop up the lip-smackingly delicious butterscotch that surrounds it. See Top 100, page 44, for details.

VANILLA-BOURBON ICE CREAM WITH ESPRESSO AND CANDIED CORN FLAKES (60RMB)

at Fulton Place

Despite the long name, this is a version of the traditional Italian dessert of ice cream and espresso called *affogato*, which means 'drowned'. Fulton Place serves a gorgeous variation: oval dollops of vanilla and Four Roses-bourbon ice cream and a single serving of hot Nespresso, poured ceremoniously tableside (usually) by restaurant owner Nat Alexander. The real surprise is the salty, sweet candied cornflakes scattered in the mix, creating a complex dessert that is at once sweet, bitter, salty and crunchy. Chef Marc Johnson puts it perfectly: 'It's a dessert good enough to have for breakfast'. See Top 100, page 43, for details.

“
Choc Republic has gone straight to the top of the chocolate cake charts with its trio choc mousse cake

WARM CHOCOLATE CAKE, SEASONAL FRUIT TEA AND WHITE CHOCOLATE ICE CREAM (63RMB)

at Table No.1

Created by Gordon Ramsay's protégé Jason Atherton, Table No. 1 has become known for unpretentious and innovative quality cooking since opening last year. Their typical dessert takes a classic dish, deconstructs it, then rebuilds it with a big serving of imagination. This unconventional chocolate cake designed by chef Scott Melvin and pastry chef Kim Lyle, who were recruited from Ramsay's Maze in London, arrives with a toy-sized Perspex teapot filled with seasonal fruit tea (apricot on our latest visit). This is drizzled over the bitter chocolate and white ice cream tower that's garnished with foamy 'apricot air' so light it evaporates on the tongue. The bitter chocolate slices through the natural sweetness of the apricot so well it's a wonder this combination hasn't been copied elsewhere. Table No.1's ingredients are locally sourced so the fruit changes depending on the season. See Top 100, page 44, for details.





BANANA CHEESECAKE (70RMB)

at Char

Aussie chef Julie Donohoe has been making banana cheesecake for years, but when she came to Shanghai to open Char at Hotel Indigo, she wanted to come up with a unique way to serve this cream cheese and fruit dessert (pictured above). She was inspired by the traditional brie cheese box and now has the round boxes custom made just for her cheesecakes. This luscious, creamy cheesecake is infused with the fragrance of banana, has an indulgent almost sticky texture and comes in a delightfully generous portion. If you can't finish it, just pop the cheese box lid on and take it home.

See Top 100, page 43, for details.

KAORI CAKE SELECTION (88RMB)

at Fount

Served on a flat, white ceramic sheet, the Kaori plate includes a matcha lava cake, an almond cream pudding, a thumb-sized cream puff on a rail of matcha powder, and scoops of green tea and mango ice cream served on beds of cookie crumbs. It's a distinctly Japanese dessert set created by a chef who previously worked at Nobu and the InterContinental in Tokyo. The lava cake's prevailing quality is its butteriness, which the bitter matcha flavour complements rather than overwhelms. Likewise, you can season the rich custard within with the perfect amount of green tea by dipping it in the matcha powder. The almond cream with diced fruit jam is a pleasant but quieter dessert, in marked contrast to the mango ice cream, which is almost synesthetic, its flavour as vibrant as its colour.

No 1, Bldg 5, Surpass Court, 570 Yongjia Lu, near Yueyang Lu, Xuhui district (6073 7785). Open 11.30am-2pm, 6-10pm daily.
 ☎ Hengshan Lu. 日本料理 徐汇区永嘉路 570号永嘉庭5号楼1号, 近岳阳路

M'S VERY, VERY FAMOUS PAVLOVA (98RMB)

at M on the Bund

Australian owner Michelle Garnaut brought this dessert (pictured below) with her from the South Pacific, where it was invented. The oversized meringue with a wobbly centre was named after the elegant Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova when she travelled through the region with her own company in the 1920s. M's version is a tall wedge piled even higher with fresh cream and fruits that may include pineapple, papaya, dragonfruit, kiwifruit (a nod to the dessert's origins), and a single raspberry. The whole thing sits in a spill of passionfruit sauce. Pavlovas always smack of scientific experimentation, with the crunchy exterior transubstantiating as you near its centre. To some tastes, the texture of M's pavlova changes a touch too quickly from its crisp, almost powdery crust to its cumulonimbus cloud centre without passing through that chewysphere where angels fornicate. But we're adherents. This is an outstanding dessert.

See Top 100, page 44, for details.



LEMON AND LEMON TART (100RMB)

at Mr & Mrs Bund

Paul Pairet's lemon tart invention (pictured right) is at once simple and complex. It appears at the table like a single, shining, undisturbed lemon (pictured right). However, this lemon has been meticulously taken through the paces in the kitchen – all the innards have been scraped out through a tiny hole and it's been simmered for six hours. Not once, but three times (yes, that means 18 hours). It's then carefully tucked full of delicacies including lemon sorbet, sable, vanilla chantilly and jewel-like segments of lemon, lime, grapefruit and orange. Fork into it, place the candied peel and a collection of the fillings in your mouth, look skyward or close your eyes and you'll think, yes, it was all worth it.

See Top 100, page 44, for details.



BLACK FOREST CAKE (110RMB)

at Stiller's

Chef Stefan Stiller's artful, modern reboot of this classic from his native Germany (pictured above) is a potent reminder of what a straightforwardly devastating combo well-selected chocolate, cherries and cream can make – when done right, of course. He doesn't wander too far from the original assembly with the Kirsch, a clear cherry brandy (also available here as a digestif, 120RMB), lending the cake that satisfyingly boozy, almond-bitter funk. It also serves to balance the sweet, dark Valrhona chocolate and cream with which Stiller creates a dense, fudge-like consistency instead of the foamy, squirt-cream rehashes you may have had before. Stiller spraycoats the whole cake with chocolate and serves it with Kirsch eau de vie-flavoured ice cream. From a pared-down list of only five afters, this is clearly his statement piece. And we're smitten: full marks.

See Top 100, page 44, for details.

