



SWEET REVIVAL

Without a hole and made with natural ingredients, this is the donut that has taken over the best pastry shops in London.

TEXT ANA VALLS _ PHOTOGRAPHY CARLOS ALBA

WHITE SOURDOUGH 400
WHITE STICK 200
BROWN LOAF 350
BROWN SOURDOUGH 400
LIGHT RYE 350
RAISIN LOAF 420

ECLES CAKE 250
MINI TART 150
LARDY CAKE 150
BROWNIE 250
GRANOLA 400

WELSH RAREBIT 550
ANCHOVY TOAST 550
BREAD & BUTTER 200
OLIVES 350
SEED CAKE & MADEIRA



Nope, not cupcakes, nor cronuts (what the hell was that!), nor cookies; now the donut is the king of London's pastry scene, at least this month. We are not talking about the ones you used to eat during recess or after school, the ones with a hole in the middle and of a very questionable quality. We are talking about the chubby and sexy ones—because of course a donut can be sexy—made with a light dough, outstanding filling and no hole. In a city where trends mean everything and nothing lasts forever, this sweet treat seems to be here to stay. With a debatable birthplace disputed among the U.S. and the UK, and varying appearances in history books and recipes that go back to the nineteenth century, the donut (or *dough+nut*) is now being reinvented by several pastry shops that are determined to revive their supposedly original shape—with no hole—and make creative fillings like caramel, sea salt and banana or peanut butter and raspberries.

Among the numerous shops selling donuts in the British capital, St. John's Bakery (stjohnsgroup.uk.com) is undoubtedly the place to go to. Owned by the group under the same name, St. John was created by two key figures in the country's gastronomy circle. The first, Fergus Henderson, reinvented French House restaurant in Soho, the neighborhood where writers, artists, actors and the few bohemians who still survive today have been meeting for decades. The second star of London's kitchens is Trevor Gulliver, whose name is behind some of the best British restaurants like The Fire Station at Waterloo. Together, they've turned St. John's two restaurants, patisserie, winery, and space inside the luxurious Selfridge's department store into

an essential stop in the city's culinary route for the past 20 years. One of the reasons behind their success is a menu filled with pork (their hero and true love, which comes as no surprise when you look at their logo) and offal, which until recently didn't enjoy the culinary status it does now.

Keeping their taste for originality, St. John's passion for donuts isn't just a product of the sugar-filled trend that is now spreading like wildfire across London; they have been serving them for more than a decade. Just take a walk on a Saturday morning to one of their locations near the popular Borough Market and next to the lesser known, but equally excellent, Maltby Street Market. What you'll find is a queue of loyal clients waiting to enjoy one of the 400 donuts sold in the first five hours after the shop opens, at a price of three euros each. Some have been coming here for years, especially families with kids and young people. All their regular customers fear the day St. John's donuts will become a tourist attraction. Although luck isn't on their side since it is featured in London's *Time Out*.

But what's so special about these pastries that make customers fear the arrival of tourist masses? Their pastry chef, Tom Trubshaw, the same man who made a career for himself within the group, gives us the inside scoop and invites us to taste the original recipe, the same one that was used when Fergus Henderson was head chef (he was diagnosed with Parkinson's a few years ago, which is why he has distanced himself from the kitchen). The flavors depend on the season. Right now, lemon and rhubarb are the perfect fillings for a light donut (who knew donuts could be light!) covered with a fine layer of sugar. In winter, it is time for ginger and cinnamon, while in summer, strawberries and cream, and lemon curds make their triumphal entrance.

Everything is made with products from small local producers such as from Yorkshire county. "The ideas for many of our donuts' fillings come from the flavors we make in our restaurant. For example, if we make an apple crumble, we try it out on a donut. If it works, we use the flavor that very same day. Fillings change daily," says Trubshaw. Some even fit in our deluxe category, like the one that mixes rum and raisins or chocolate and brandy, or the one made in honor of Dr. Ferguson's popular cocktail, made with the Italian liquor Fernet-Branca and mint.

As for the question of why St. John's opts for the 'holeless' donut, the chef reminds us that "it's the most traditional donut there is and the one which

Some clients have been coming to St. John's for years and refuse to let their donuts become a tourist attracttion



began in England. The donut with a hole is a more modern invention coming from the United States," he comments, trying not to make a direct reference to franchises that serve them with more than plentiful sugar layers. For Trubshaw, his donuts' fame has been a product of word of mouth. "We don't make huge quantities or have publicity. We offer a quality product with the best ingredients and we simply make things we enjoy eating," he says. Besides the pastry shop on Druid Street on Saturdays and Sundays, St. John's donuts can be found at their shop located in the wholesale market in Smithfield (it's all about location, location, location) every day of the week.

In a time when all diets seem to be based on organic kale, chia seeds and healthy smoothies, it is quite curious that donuts—considered up until recently to be an industrial pastry packed with empty calories and sold at franchises—can become so exclusive. The pastry chef at St. John is one of those who believes that "everything in moderation is possible. As long as they are made with quality ingredients, you have to reward yourself with some treats once in a while." In St. John's case, they only cook 40 donuts a day from Monday to Friday, "because we want to maintain a level of quality and for people to keep considering our products as unique and not mass-produced," says the chef.

Trubshaw avoids revealing any secrets about their recipe, but does give us some clues to help us make our own donuts at home: "Play with a bunch of recipes and practice a lot. If you know how to make bread, you already have half the job done because the process is very similar." Another option is to buy the book *Bread, Cake, Doughnut, Pudding* (Fig Tree) by Justin Gellatly, St. John's previous pastry chef and

"Everything in moderation is possible. You have to reward yourself with some treats once in a while and choose those made with the best ingredients," says the pastry chef

whose departure, as critics claim, took away part of the donut's charm. In his book, he gives us the recipe to achieve a light dough and the key to making St. John's traditional, and most demanded filling: the legendary custard. Whatever it takes to eat a different donut every single day. ©

OUR ESSENTIALS



LONDON BOROUGH OF JAM

This small store located in the hipster neighborhood of Hackney, in northeast London, sells donuts made by St. John but customized with delicious jam fillings made by its owner, Australian Lillie O'Brien. The stars here are the fig and plum jams, which draw in a multitude of visitors every weekend, although they can also be purchased Monday through Friday at several other spots they supply to (all of them can be found on their web). They also sell several other delicatessen products like teas, oils and coffees, all made with artisanal methods, as well as recipe books and rustic kitchen utensils for those who enjoy giving a natural touch to their kitchens.

Address: 51d Chatsworth Road, Clapton, Hackney E5 0LH. **Opening hours:** Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 5pm.
Web: londonboroughofjam.tumblr.com



BREAD AHEAD

At Bread Ahead, you can buy some of the best bread and cake in town and also partake in classes, as it is a popular baking school where Matt Jones, Aidan Chapman and renown Justin Gellatly (St. John's former pastry chef) share their knowledge with students and clients in different workshops and courses. They sell their donuts near Borough Market at their own stand, where it is quite difficult to place an order on a Saturday morning due to the amount of people doing the same thing as you.

Address: 3 Cathedral Street, SE1 9DE (pastry shop and school). Borough Market (stand).

Opening hours: Monday to Saturday from 08:00 to 17:00 (Friday until 18:00).

Web: breadahead.com



YOU DOUGHNUT

This small company specializes in the creation of light, cinnamon and sugar covered, bite-size donuts. Founded by Jo and Betsy in the summer of 2012, You Doughnut's best sellers among their growing clientele are flavors such as maple syrup, salted caramel and compotes made with seasonal fruits, as well as the oh-so-popular toffee apple and butterscotch. These mini donuts are served in small paper cups and covered with all kinds of appetizing glazes and toppings, from marshmallows to chocolate shavings. Members of KERB, a community of London's street food stands, their donuts can be found in several food markets around the city and gastronomical events. Although your best bet is to take a look at their Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages, where they publish their upcoming destinations (besides making us hungry).

Web: youdoughnut.co.uk

Facebook: facebook.com/youdoughnut

Twitter: @you_doughnut

Instagram: instagram.com/you_doughnut

CROSSTOWN DOUGHNUTS

Wherever you go, be it a coffee shop filled with beards and MacBooks in the east part of town, Piccadilly Circus or downtown London, or the Whole Foods supermarket in the upscale area of High Street Kensington, Crosstown Doughnuts will be there. Relatively new to the business, the brand boasts a modern aesthetic and different varieties of donuts like the impressive *crème brûlée* and the not-so-common “hole” donut. They are also about to open up their own store in Soho this year, more specifically in Broadwick Street, near Carnaby, and at several other popular pastry shops like Gail's or Hummingbird Bakery. If the donut craze is the follow-up to the cupcake, then this brand will undoubtedly become a national chain in the coming years.

Address: Until they open in Soho, our favorite stand is in Piccadilly Circus tube station.

Opening hours: Monday to Sunday from 7am to 7pm (weekends from 9am).

Web: crosstondoughnuts.com