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Food spy

Time for tea

Ladies who lunch take note: **Mike Blyer** has found a spot you might like to try

My mother-in-law is a lady who lunches. She would argue that she does a lot more than lunch, and she'd be right. The other stuff, however (caring for elderly relatives, cooking for grown-up kids, remodelling of her house and purchasing of soft furnishings) all centres on three key points in the day: morning coffee, lunch and afternoon tea.

Coffee is taken out of doors (she lives in a climate conducive to this) and normally between 10 and 11 in the morning. A full face of make-up is carefully applied, hair delicately coiffed, and sunglasses perched carefully either on the bridge of the nose or just above the hairline, depending on the strength of the sun's glare.

Lunch is at one of three eateries, chosen on the basis of three generations' trial and error. Salad or fish is eaten, always light, always something green, and sometimes, when she's been good, a glass of white wine.

Gossip fuels each meal. The tastiest is reserved for afternoon tea, taken in the privacy of their own homes on a strict rotational basis. A detailed and long-winded dissection of the events of the day, the political outlook and who's behaving disgracefully might last 60 minutes before farewells are said and plans to meet for coffee in the morning are made.

If she lived in Belgium, she would take her tea and eat at Tea and Eat.

Tea and Eat serves breakfast, lunch and tea. I went to their outlet at the Woluwe Shopping Center for lunch. It's a lovely looking place, reminiscent of a posh wintergarten, with a three-storey glass façade all along the front, verdant foliage and well-spaced tables.

The clientele were a mixture of well-heeled, well-dressed and well-spoken Belgians. There were businessmen, presumably taking advantage of the ample parking, and a large collection of ladies

who lunch, putting the world in its rightful place over mouthfuls of salad.

My companion, a Belgian business lady who lunches, and thus ticks all the boxes, went for the chicken Caesar salad, which cost €15 and was sufficient. It wasn't a salad you'd get excited about. There was



SHUTTERSTOCK

Tea and Eat
www.tea-eat.be

a lot of lettuce, and the chicken "could have been tougher", which I think means "was slightly soggy". The dressing was served on the side, as dressing should be, and the meal filled a

Caesar salad-sized hole. I had ravioli stuffed with langoustine. There were about six, fat, heavy ravioli drowning in a thick approximation of a warm and fishy thousand-island dressing and a generous sprinkling of rocket leaves. A good bowl of pasta doesn't need greenery, but it was in keeping with the look of the place. The ravioli were ok, with a recognisable prawn stuffing. The sauce was heavy, however, like the pasta dough, which was so thick that the ravioli was almost a paste.

The bill for two, no booze, came to €47. It wasn't too noisy, was well lit, and we got what they said we'd get. It lacked a certain lightness of touch, but I could picture going back for lunch. In fact, I think I'll be going back with my mother-in-law. She'd love it.

You can contact Mike Blyer at
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Hot
 off the
 press

with Stephanie Duval



100% Belge

First singer-songwriter Axelle Red did it for Hampton Bays; now Flemish radio and TV presenter Roos Van Acker does it for **By Soto**. Belgian brands love to flaunt their roots by choosing a Belgian face for their campaigns. By Soto is the youngest and most dynamic label within the Bruno Antognini group, but it is still often overlooked. By choosing the

spontaneous Roos as their ambassador, the brand hopes to reach fans of a casual yet chic style. The designers behind By Soto are Sophie Renard, daughter of founder Suzy Cordeel, and Tommy Fjordside, who once interned at that other dynamic Belgian brand, Dirk Bikkembergs. For Belgian retailers, call 03.771.48.68 or visit www.bysoto.be.

In the know

- Don't just call it a casino! With **Viage**, Brussels has a new 'entertainment centre', and a stylish one at that. Hasselt designer Stijn Helsen clothes the staff at the complex in the Anspach Centre (30 Avenue Anspach).
- Technology and luxury meet at Brussels' newest wellness centre **L'Arène des Sens** (47-49 Rue des Petits Carmes, www.larenedessens.com).
- Magali Desson opens her lifelong dream on March 29.
- Come April, **Elvis Pompilio** not only opens the doors to his universe in the form of his Boutique Atelier (67 Rue Lebeau, Brussels), he also lets you get to know him through his biography *Vie Privée*, written by Jean-Paul Masse de Rouch.
- Antwerp has a new hot spot for handbag addicts: Belgian brand **Vive** opens its flagship store at 5 Leopoldstraat on March 25.
- This weekend, go to Antwerp to celebrate the very first edition of **South Out Fashion Weekend Antwerp**: an event organised by concept stores Hospital and Clinic on De Burburestraat. Expect events, drinks, music, a 10 percent discount in both shops and a fashionable atmosphere!

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Stijn Helsen kits out the casino

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