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Singapore's best restaurants: is this Asia's best food city?

No longer just a one-night stand for the stopover traveller, multicultural Singapore is emerging as a top food destination

Kirsty Major | @Kirsty_Maj0r | Friday 5 August 2016 | 6 comments




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Eating is Singapore's favourite pastime, with no end of street stalls on hand to satiate adventurous appetites
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Singapore has long been considered little more than a stopover, but the city state is slowly starting to emerge as a destination in its own right – and its growing reputation as a foodie paradise certainly helps. The first ever *Michelin Guide to Singapore* launched this summer, and is uncharacteristically representative of what the city's diverse scene has to offer, counting everything from **Joël Robuchon Restaurant** to street food stalls **Hong Kong Soya Sauce Chicken Rice & Noodle** and **Hill Street Tai Hwa Pork Noodle** among its sparkling credentials. The latter two serve their now Michelin-starred dishes at about £1.40 a pop.



taste the best of what's cooking. Of course, locals have always known this, describing eating out as the nation's favourite pastime. That claim is borne out by the island's glorious jumble of hawker centres, cafés and restaurants serving Peranakan cuisine, a melting pot of dishes inherited from, and influenced by, its Chinese, Indian, Malaysian and Indonesian heritage. Another great way to taste a little bit of everything on Singapore's menu is to visit the annual **Singapore Food Festival**, where the city's top chefs and hawkers sling cut-price dishes.

Fancy a taste? Here are our tips for sampling Singapore's best eats.



Street hawker Chan Hon Meng has been awarded a Michelin star for his stall, Hong Kong Soya Sauce Chicken Rice and Noodle (Getty)

Tong Ah Eating House (35 Keong Saik Road, 089142)

It doesn't get much more local than this Singaporean equivalent of the English greasy spoon. An unassuming coffee house with no-nonsense plastic chairs and tables, it's filled with locals eating a traditional breakfast of kaya toast (topped with coconut jam,

leaves. Breakfast is served all day from 6.30am to 10pm. Average price for a meal is about S\$5 (£2.80).

Good Chance Popiah Eating House (Block 149 Silat, 160149)

Another all-day casual eatery, Good Chance was founded by local Hou Shen Hu in 1977. Following his retirement, second generation Boon Kaichun began running the establishment. In keeping with the family feel, the signature meal is the everyday household dish popiah, originating from China's Fujian province. The fun thing about Good Chance is that it is DIY – they leave you to make this wrap-like snack yourself. Diners are presented with all the elements needed to build your own: popiah skins (made from papery crêpes), fillings (vegetables, shredded omelette, lettuce etc) and sauces (soy, hoi sin, shrimp paste and chilli). It all makes for a fun, albeit very messy, experience. One serving, which makes about four rolls, costs S\$16.80.



Popiah is a staple Singapore food snack, stuffing as much as possible into a papery crêpe (Getty)

Tekka Centre (Bukit Timah Road)



busy fish market, budget knick-knack shops and dirt-cheap tailors, along with a top food centre. Head for the Indian food stands where you can sample sambal sotong (plates of spicy, saucy squid) and Indian rojak, a mixed salad done South Asian-style – expect a zingy mess of potatoes, eggs, tofu and battered prawns dusted with peanuts, then slathered in sweet-spicy sauce, and served with lime. Or you could swing by one of the Chinese stands for “carrot cake” – though don’t mistake this Singapore favourite for dessert. The soft cakes are made from rice flour and white radish (sometimes called white carrot), cut into cubes and fried with garlic and eggs. Heap generously with soy sauce and scoff. A full belly at Tekka Centre will cost you less than S\$5.

Oven Bird Home Cooking (address supplied on invitation)

Considering Singapore’s food-obsessed culture, it was only a matter of time before some bright spark started a supper club. Oven Bird Home Cooking is an invitation-only affair, so if you’re in town for a while, it’s well worth registering your interest on its [Facebook page](#) three to four weeks in advance for the chance to experience a truly amazing home-cooked meal. We ate a five-course tasting menu of tea-smoked duck, Hokkien-style double boiled chicken and scallop soup, popiah, Singapore peppered crab and pandanmisu – an unusual take on tiramisu using home-made pandan essence. Each course was expertly matched with a wine chosen by the host. Prices range from S\$70 to S\$80.

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Red House Seafood (68 Prinsep Street, 188661)

Red House Seafood, one of the oldest and most established restaurants in Singapore, serves the city’s must-eat dish – sweet



use them to mop up the delicious crab gravy. For those who would rather not get their hands messy, the jet-black takesumi buns (made with bamboo charcoal) stuffed with chilli crab filling are a more refined way to try the dish. The average meal price here comes in at about S\$43.



Singapore's chaotic hawker centres are atmospheric places to sample the city's street food (Shutterstock)

Chatterbox (Level 5 Mandarin Orchard Hotel, 333 Orchard Road, 238867)

Chatterbox has been proudly calling itself “Home of the Legendary Mandarin Chicken Rice” since 1971. Situated on the fifth floor of the five-star **Mandarin Orchard hotel**, this modern restaurant offers a high-end version of the local dish of boiled chicken, rice, chilli sauce, ginger paste and dark soy sauce. Other signature Singaporean dishes include laksa, Hokkien noodles (stir-fried Singapore noodles), satay, rojak and beef kway teow (a satisfyingly greasy beef and noodle number). Expect to pay about S\$27 for the signature dish.



The “haute” but affordable tasting menu at Cure introduces cooking from London, New York and Dublin's kitchens to the Singaporean palate – a perfect example of the “bistronomy” cuisine favoured by Western expats working in Singapore’s financial sector. The highlight of our meal was the 72-hour beef short rib, with oyster and sorrel emulsion and beef tongue croquette. The monthly menu changes to incorporate seasonal produce and prices vary between S\$35 and S\$135, depending on how many courses you can fit in.

Getting there

Singapore Airlines (singaporeair.com) flies direct from Heathrow to Singapore Changi.

Staying there

Kirsty Major stayed at the Vagabond Hotel (hotelvagabondsingapore.com), where rooms start from about S\$229 per night, and suites from about S\$344 per night, including breakfast.

More information

www.yoursingapore.com

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**Fool-Britannia**

185 days ago

The best thing about 'street' food in Singapore is the government food inspection service that ensures food and food preparation meets their health standards.

Personally, I prefer HongKong for Chinese food.

Even SaiGon/Ho Chi Minh City now has rigorous food standards and if a restaurant is closed they often have a police person posted outside to ensure closed means closed.

Always check where a street person gets their water from - pipes or plastic cans. The LATTER is DANGEROUS as is often proved in Bangkok and Ha Noi.

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**ndjwl**

186 days ago

If you want more info about food in Singapore check out www.hungrygowhere.com

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rararara

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While high-end restaurants are excellent, Singapore's "food centres" have become disastrous. Malaysia (especially the KL region and Penang) has indeed far better multicultural street and hawker food, while affordable restaurants are aplenty. Recipes are authentic and every chef has their own tweak. Bad restaurants simply do not survive, while in Singapore tourists keep them alive. Singapore food is essentially Malaysian food, but a "poor" cousin. And yes, Taiwan is excellent, but limited to Chinese food.

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Keira Jak

186 days ago

As someone who travels and lived throughout Asia I can say that while Singapore has some great restaurants. It is in no way "Asia's Best Food City". Real foodies will know that Taiwan has much better and more extensive choices in food.

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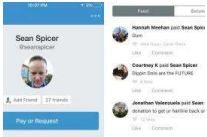
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