



Potatoes with garlic cacao soil at Restaruant André

TRAVEL

SINGAPORE'S FANCY FOOD REVOLUTION

ITS DINING SCENE IS IGNITING AS JAMIE OLIVER AND THE GANG FOLLOW THE MONEY, WRITES SHIRINE SAAD

Foie gras gelée and black truffle coulis at André. Marinated botan shrimp with sea urchin and oscietra caviar at Waku Ghin. Rare Matsutake mushrooms with wakasagi fish and sweet fishbone sauce at Iggy's. Myazaki beef with hay, corn and sesame at Jaan. For a rather small nation—technically a sovereign city-state—Singapore has a lot of dining options. In fact, its rapidly growing array of fine-food restaurants, mixed in with the sprawling and abundant “hawker” food stalls it has long been

famous for, has made it one of the world's top dining destinations.

Like all things, food follows the money. Singapore, a country roughly the size of Calgary with a population of 5.3 million residents, now ranks among the International Monetary Fund's Top 3 economies in the world. Its per capita GDP is surpassed by only Luxembourg and Qatar. Catering to this concentration of wealth, a slew of luxurious restaurants have opened at the city's over-the-top hotels and resorts in recent years, many of them with star chef names on the awnings:

Joël Robuchon, Mario Batali, Jamie Oliver, and Daniel Boulud have all opened properties in Singapore. In fact, a good portion of them can be found at the ridiculously opulent Marina Bay Sands resort, which boasts more than 30 restaurants, an infinity pool, concert hall and several boutiques and bars in addition to its luxury hotel. If you want further proof that Singapore is a dining town, there's this: last year saw close to 600 new restaurant openings.

While some might sneer that the global creep of celebrity chefs homogenize international cuisine, the stars have sparked a renaissance in Singapore. Homegrown talent and younger international chefs, some of whom trained at the star chefs' institutions, have begun to experiment with local and global influences. “In recent years there has been an explosion of new concepts and trends in Singapore,” explains the award-winning chef Janice Wong, who learned the art of pastry making from Pierre Hermé and Thomas Keller before opening her own haute sweets empire, 2am:dessert bar, in the bustling Holland Village neighbourhood. “Local chefs are now more exposed to international trends and don't need to travel around the world to learn from the best.”

For chef Dave Pynt, who moved to Singapore from Australia last year to open Burnt Ends, a grill-positive restaurant in the trendy Chinatown area, the city's food culture is a constant inspiration. “You can get anything from amazing hawker food to top-end Chinese, Japanese and western. And if you ever need to get away, you have an abundance of countries on your doorstep.”

Still, Pynt hopes there will be a more focused effort to continue the push for a local food movement while preserving the heritage of Singapore's famously multicultural cuisine. “The food scene is evolving very quickly,” he says. “I hope something changes so that we can see the new guard of hawker markets emerge before the culture is lost.”

WHO'S FOOD EMPIRE IS BIGGER?



Jamie Oliver, 38

Restaurants: 55
Countries: 9
Famous for: Waging a healthy “food revolution”



Mario Batali, 53

Restaurants: 26
Countries: 3
Famous for: his orange Crocs



Joël Robuchon, 68

Restaurants: 22
Countries: 9
Famous for: mentoring Gordon Ramsay



Daniel Boulud, 59

Restaurants: 14
Countries: 4
Famous for: making NYC's Le Cirque the place to be seen eating in the 1980s

Restaurant André; David Loftus; AP; Gerard Becheau; Canadian Press; YouTube



REDEYE SPECIAL

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