

FoodPicks

Tan Hsueh Yun Food Editor recommends

DELICIOUS AND VEGETARIAN
Have you got friends who go meatless on Mondays? I do and, for many years, I would wonder – why?

Now I kind of, sort of, get it. As I get older and want to be kinder to my body, it makes sense to, as American author Michael Pollan writes in his 2008 book, *In Defence Of Food*: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

I'm not ready to give up meat, but a vegetarian meal once a week is not difficult, especially when I can go to La Bussola in Portsdown Road for vegetarian and vegan Italian food.

The restaurant opened about three months ago and the people behind it are the owners of Pietrasanta, just across the courtyard.

Chef Loris Massimini, 45, of Pietrasanta, was inspired to open La Bussola because he saw the good healthy eating can do.

La Bussola's chef, Carlo Alberto Castellini, 36, went vegan six months ago and his blood pressure went down. Massimini's brother, Giuseppe, 51, cut out red meat, started eating more vegetables and seafood, and saw his blood pressure levels improve too.

A meal at the restaurant does not have to be austere.

Ravioli di Burrata (\$22, right above) comes with six plump pasta dumplings filled with creamy buffalo milk cheese and a fresh-tasting and light tomato sauce. The pasta is a little too thick, but I love the contrast between rich filling and zesty sauce.

Even better is Funghi Alla Cacciatora (\$23), a crock of fresh monkey head mushrooms stewed with tomatoes, celery, carrot, olives and perfumed with rosemary. The mushrooms are thick and have a meaty texture and the dish is so hearty, I do not miss the meat. Rosemary is far from my favourite



herb, but it works very well here.

For dessert, Pistocchi Classica (\$15) is rich enough to be sinful. But the dark chocolate cake, really more of a ganache, comes in a small enough serving that I don't feel guilty polishing off the whole thing. I share it with a friend, but really want to have it all.

Budino di Riso (\$14), a rice pudding, comes in a crisp tart shell. And here is the only time I miss richness in the meal. The pastry should really be

made with butter and the rice pudding needs a bit more sugar so that it is identifiable as a dessert.

Perhaps next time, I'll opt for the cheese platter (\$24), panna cotta (\$14) or chestnut cake (\$17).

WHERE: La Bussola – by Pietrasanta, 01-04, 5B Portsdown Road

MRT: one-north **TEL:** 9114-5087

OPEN: 11.45am to 2.30pm, 5.45 to 10.30pm (Wednesdays to Mondays), closed on Tuesdays **INFO:** www.ristorante-pietrasanta.com

ST PHOTOS:
TAN HSUEH YUN



FLAVOURFUL SOYA SAUCE CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS

The good thing about hawker centre dining is that if the dish you set out to eat is disappointing, there are plenty of other choices.

And that is how I discover Xiang Jiang Soya Sauce Chicken at Alexandra Village Food Centre.

The noodle dish I'd gone there to eat was unimpressive. I join the queue in front of Xiang Jiang because I walk past a couple, see giant shrimp dumplings winking at me from their bowl and ask where they are from.

"There," she says, pointing at the stall.

The wait is interminable, even on a quiet Sunday, but the big, beautiful dumplings (80 cents each, above left) are worth queuing for. I love that the filling is not too tightly packed, despite the fact that there is a lot in there – minced pork, prawns and strips of black fungus.



As with all things delicious, fat is the key. There is enough of it in the filling to make every bite swoonworthy.

Better yet is the Soya Sauce Chicken Noodle (from \$4, above right). A sign on the stall suggests you order mee pok, but I prefer mee kia, and pay an extra \$1 for a chicken drumstick. The flavourful braising sauce and meat that is just a little blush pink near the bone make this one of the best versions of soya sauce chicken I have tasted.

My mother and I tuck in. Silky chicken flavoured with cinnamon and star anise. Noodles with bounce.

Our heads bob up in happy surprise. "Wow," we say in unison.

Why didn't I order half a chicken? Or a whole one?

WHERE: Xiang Jiang Soya Sauce Chicken, 01-77 Alexandra Village Food Centre, 120 Bukit Timah Lane 1 **MRT:** Queenstown **OPEN:** 7.30am to 2.30pm (Wednesdays to Mondays), closed on Tuesdays

DEEP-FRIED TREATS

Ngho hiang guan chiang, that hawker dish of deep-fried meat rolls, fish cake, sliced pork sausage and prawn crackers, is never on my food radar. But a friend tells me about her favourite stall in Sembawang Hills Food Centre with such a gleam in her eye that I have to check it out.

Sin Sin Ngor Hiang Prawn Cracker has been in business for over 40 years and a line quickly forms once the signboard lights up – even though the 1.30pm opening time is usually past the lunch-time peak.

But, oh, the offerings are terrific and miraculously grease-free despite the double deep-frying.

Zoom in first on the prawn cracker (\$1.20), palm-sized, with a tiny prawn embedded in the middle. The filigree batter is phenomenally crisp. Another must-have is the guan chiang or pork sausage (\$3), which comes in shades of pink not normally found in nature. Sin Sin's is lean, but manages to be soft and pliant. The classic meat roll (\$1.20) or ngho hiang has a decent amount of meat and good spicing, but I'll save my calories for the prawn cracker.

As dipping sauces go, this one is good but not mind-blowing. It has the requisite tartness, but needs a little sweetness and heat for balance.

My friend lets slip that the stall's fried beehoon (\$1) is also good. I get it to go and it is; simple and unadorned.

WHERE: Sin Sin Ngor Hiang Prawn Cracker, 01-21 Sembawang Hills Food Centre, 590 Upper Thomson Road **MRT:** Yio Chu Kang **OPEN:** 1.30 to 9.30pm (Fridays to Tuesdays), closed on Wednesdays and Thursdays



PRESSURE-PERFECT

There are many places to go for a good meal in Little India, but I'll bet not many are as quiet, cool and serene as Urban Roti in Syed Alwi Road on a weekday afternoon.

Its owners must love hexagons – the shape pops up in the floor tiles and wall hangings.

But I am there for one dish, Cooker Me Kukkad (\$16, right). It is such a good idea, I wonder why all the main dishes on the menu are not cooked this way.

Chicken with an aromatic but not too hot gravy is cooked in a mini pressure cooker, and the server appears at the table with the pot, releases the steam with a bit of dramatic flair, and then diners tuck in.

Pressure and multi-cookers are all the rage among home cooks these days and I wish I could get the mini one the restaurant uses. I dream of whipping up stews and flavourful soups in no time at all.

They might taste half as good as Cooker Me Kukkad. Pressure allows the spices to permeate the meat and, at the same time, makes the chicken tender.

Not that chicken needs that much help. I'd like to put that cooker to work on mutton.

You can order naan, of course, to mop up the gravy, but I decide to try something different. Appetisingly brown Taftaan (\$6) and slightly puffy, mint-studded Laccha Paratha (\$5) are flatbreads that do the job superbly.

WHERE: Urban Roti Indian Grill And Bar, 101 Syed Alwi Road **MRT:** Farrer Park **TEL:** 6209-5545 **OPEN:** 11.30am to 11.30pm daily **INFO:** urbanroti.com.sg



FOOD

PROMOTIONS

Pasta Frenzy At Blue Potato

This month, pasta lovers can enjoy the Italian staple prepared in various styles at Blue Potato. Start your meal with the Artichoke Shell Pasta Salad (\$24++), which comprises artichoke, shell pasta, red onion, capsicum, cherry tomatoes and goma dressing. Other choices include Spicy Penne Shrimp Puttanesca (\$28++); Fettuccine Alla Sorrentina (\$24++); Linguine Al Limone Spinach (\$24++); and Farfalle Pancetta with Mushroom (\$26++), bow tie pasta with bacon, button mushrooms, cream sauce and parmesan cheese.

WHERE: Level 2 Swissotel Merchant Court Singapore, 20 Merchant Road **MRT:** Clarke Quay **WHEN:** Till Aug 26, noon - 3pm, 6.30 - 10pm **PRICE:** \$24++ - \$28++ **TEL:** 6239-1847/1848 **INFO:** E-mail dining.merchantcourt@swissotel.com

Ce La Vi Sky High Brunch

Ce La Vi's Sky High Brunch makes a comeback at the Restaurant and SkyBar. The Raw Bar offers seafood, including Atlantic oysters, tiger prawns and New Zealand mussels. The Grill section has dishes such as Chiang Mai sausage, mini sliders with kimchi and assam sauce and smoked pork ribs with Korean BBQ glaze. At the Dessert Bar are classics, including mango cheesecake. The spread is complemented by a four-hour flow of Veuve Clicquot Yellow and contemporary cocktails such as Bacardi Limon Mojito, Belvedere Spritz, Jose Cuervo Margarita and the Ce La Vi Caipirinha.

WHERE: Tower 3 Marina Bay Sands, 1 Bayfront Avenue **MRT:** Bayfront **WHEN:** Aug 18, noon - 4pm **PRICE:** \$178 - \$188, tickets from clvskyhighbrunch.peatix.com **TEL:** 6508-2188 **INFO:** E-mail reservation-sg@celavi.com

Morton's 40th-Anniversary Menu

For its 40th birthday, Morton's of Chicago is offering a three-course promotion this month at \$88++. Diners can choose a starter, a main course and a side, and dessert. Starters include Caesar salad and prosciutto-wrapped mozzarella. For mains, choose the 170g filet mignon or non-steak options such as honey-balsamic glazed Ora King salmon, chicken bianco or shrimp scampi capellini. Lyonnaise potatoes, mashed potatoes and creamed spinach are available as sides, while key lime pie, chocolate mousse or mixed berries with whipped cream are the dessert choices.

WHERE: Level 4 Mandarin Oriental Singapore, 5 Raffles Avenue **MRT:** Promenade **WHEN:** Till Aug 31, 5.30 - 11pm (Mon - Sat), noon - 9pm (Sun) **PRICE:** \$88++ **TEL:** 6339-3740 **INFO:** mortons.com/singapore

PastaMania Launches Otak-Otak And Thai-Style Pastas

PastaMania's two new dishes will be available for a few months. The Spicy Creamy Otak-Otak pasta is tossed in cream sauce, with a burst of smoky-fish flavour, coconut milk and the spicy, garlicky flavour of belacan. The Thai-style Aglio Seafood is inspired by the classic pad thai recipe and captures the vibrant flavours of Thailand with fish sauce, tamarind paste and basil leaves.

WHERE: PastaMania outlets islandwide (go to pastamania.com.sg/locations) **WHEN:** Till Sept 30 **PRICE:** \$13.90 nett **INFO:** pastamania.com.sg

Okinawa Summer Fair At Sun With Moon

Enjoy favourites from Okinawa on the special seasonal menu at Sun With Moon Japanese Dining & Cafe, with the restaurant's signature kamameshi getting an Okinawan interpretation. In Rafute Kamameshi (\$24.80++), Okinawan-style braised



pork is marinated in Awamori liqueur, brown sugar and served with marinated egg, steamed in a metal pot with seasoned steamed Japanese rice. Other highlights include Mebachi Maguro, where the freshly caught bigeye tuna is served sashimi-style in a seafood salad or in chirashi don (\$5.80++ - \$25.80++); and Beni Imo Croquette (\$8.80++), made from the famous purple sweet potato from Okinawa.

WHERE: 03-15 Wheelock Place, 501 Orchard Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Till Sept 12, 11am - 2.45pm, 3 - 5.15pm, 5.30 - 9.30pm **PRICE:** From \$5.80 **TEL:** 6733-6636 **INFO:** E-mail info@sfb.com.sg

Four Hands Kitchen At Gattopardo Ristorante Di Mare

Chef Lino Sauro from Gattopardo will host Sydney-based guest chef Federico Zanellato from two-hatted restaurant LuMi Bar & Dining for a six-course menu that combines the culinary prowess of both chefs. It also showcases chef Zanellato's creativity in bringing Japanese influences to Italian cuisine.

WHERE: 36 Tras Street **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Aug 28 - Sept 1, noon - 2.30pm (dinner is sold out) **PRICE:** \$80.04 (\$64.03 for Citi card

Mini snowskin mooncakes from Hua Ting. PHOTO: ORCHARD HOTEL

a green apple filling and a white chocolate core infused with Hua Ting's premium tea; and the Mini Salted Egg Custard, which has a velvety custard paste and a salted egg. The traditional baked mooncakes include low-sugar classics such as white lotus paste (\$69+, box of four pieces), white lotus paste with single/double yolks and macadamia nuts (\$73+/\$75+, box of four pieces), as well as the signature Seeds of Harmony (\$73+, box of four pieces). The Treasures Gift Box (deluxe: \$73+, premium: \$98+, box of four pieces) has a version that features LED lights and a Bluetooth speaker that doubles as a lamp.

WHERE: Lobby Kiosk, Orchard Hotel, 442 Orchard Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Thu - Sept 24, noon - 8pm **PRICE:** Snowskin: \$69+ (box of eight pieces), traditional: \$69+ - \$98+ (box of four pieces) **TEL:** 6739-6577 **INFO:** E-mail mooncake.ohs@millenniumhotels.com or go to bit.ly/MillenniumMooncakes2018

Beyond Singaporean Fare At Tiffany Cafe

Enjoy local gems with a twist, such as oyster omelette, Indian rojak, Singapore laksa and stewed claypot crab with dried chilli. International cuisine includes crab bisque or seafood and shell pasta soup, mixed seafood in spicy coconut broth, and spaghetti and capsicum with black pepper sauce.

WHERE: Furama City Centre Singapore, 60 Eu Tong Sen Street **MRT:** Chinatown **WHEN:** Till Aug 31, noon - 2.30pm, 6 - 10.30pm **PRICE:** Lunch: \$53.80++ an adult/\$28.80++ a child; dinner: \$65.80++/\$28.80++ **TEL:** 6531-5366 **INFO:** E-mail tiffany.citycentre@furama.com

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

Bluetooth Speaker Gift Box From Hua Ting

The Millennium Mooncakes by Orchard Hotel's Hua Ting Restaurant feature handcrafted snowskin offerings (\$69+, box of eight pieces), such as the Mini Fruity Noon Tea with

orders by Aug 31, extra 5 per cent off online **TEL:** 6825-1131/1132 **INFO:** E-mail sinhb-festive@ihg.com

WINE EVENTS

Acqua E Farina Signatures And The Wines Of Frescobaldi

Taste the distinctive culinary styles from various regions of Italy with a four-course menu featuring the signatures of Acqua E Farina, such as Italian burrata from Puglia served with summer truffle and grissini, and oven-baked lamb rack, slow-cooked and served with zucchini, potatoes and rosemary sauce. The dishes will be paired with wines from Frescobaldi, such as Pomino Benefizio Bianco Riserva DOC 2016, Nipozzano Mormoreto Toscana IGT 2013 and Pomino Vin Santo DOC 2008.

WHERE: Acqua E Farina, The Rail Mail, 400 Upper Bukit Timah Road **MRT:** Hillview **WHEN:** Aug 21, 7pm **PRICE:** \$108 a person (\$86.40++ for HSBC cardholders) **TEL:** 6319-4038 **INFO:** E-mail gustoitaliano@sph.com.sg

Californian Wine Dinner at Adrift

Adrift by David Myers will be hosting the first wine dinner of its Chef's Table Series, which pays homage to chef Myers' home town in California. Diners can journey through different Californian vineyards and enjoy an eight-course dinner tasting menu with wine-pairing. The menu includes crab blini, salted wagyu, oyster and melon, sea urchin toast and Japanese blue mackerel with smoked buttermilk nasturtium grilled over apple wood. Wines include the 2013 Chateau Montelena from Napa Valley and 2014 Flowers Pinot Noir from Sonoma County.

WHERE: Hotel Lobby Tower 2, Marina Bay Sands, 10 Bayfront Avenue **MRT:** Bayfront **WHEN:** Aug 23, 6pm **PRICE:** \$125++ a person (add \$73++ for wine-pairing) **TEL:** 6688-5657 **INFO:** E-mail adrift.reservations@marinabaysands.com