



An interior mural at the Goa Nights in Taipa Village.



Portuguese egg tarts from Lord Stow's.



A view of a "food street" in Taipa Village.

Eating around the World in Macao

By DAVID BOWDEN

DINING out in Macao (the preferred spelling for what many know as Macau) means enjoying many different culinary styles from around the globe. Macao's history ensures that Portuguese, southern Chinese and the fusion of two called Macanese, proliferate in the historic UNESCO World Heritage area of central Macao and the adjoining islands of the territory.

While the expansion of resorts over the past decade has seen more global cuisines offered, it is traditional food that captures the imagination of many who travel to eat.

Eating Local

Macanese cuisine is one of the world's first fusion styles that resulted from local southern Chinese food incorporating Portuguese styles and ingredients. Being the seafaring nation that Portugal was, the Portuguese style had already adopted and incorporated

spices and ingredients from the countries that they colonised. This meant that South American, African and South East Asian ingredients were introduced to Macao and were included into the existing Chinese food.

Seasoning and ingredients such as coconut milk, turmeric, cinnamon and balichao (salty sour shrimp paste) created the unforgettable tastes and aromas of Macanese cuisine. While the signature dishes are Macanese chilli shrimp and galinha africana (African chicken), there are others to tempt inquisitive diners.

Some of the acclaimed local restaurants (or restaurante) include Litoral, Espaço Lisboa, Alberque 1601 and Riquexo. Tantalising dishes served in these restaurants include baked crab, grilled sardines, bacalhau (salted cod) and, egg yolk soufflé.

On my most recent visit to Macao I discovered a wonderful dining experience in the IFT Educational Restaurant where students studying the culinary arts are able to showcase their skills to guests under the watchful eye of industry professionals.

Tapas de Portugal by António in Taipa Village serves delicious small plate portions. Exploring Taipa Village is a must as there are many treats to be discovered including a small local market, local coffee at Sei Kee Café, Portuguese dishes at Portugalia Restaurant and, local ice cream at DiGreen (try the salted rose).

Eating Global

New resorts and entertainment outlets plus Michelin star ratings have seen a rapid

growth in new global dining concepts as each new outlet strives to out-do the competition and raise the bar.

For example, the hotel I chose to stay in, the impressive and brand new MGM Cotai has managed to attract several celebrity chefs. These include Graham Elliot (MasterChef USA) and his outlet named Coast, Matsuhara Tsumura (Aji in MGM Cotai and owner of Maido Restaurant in Lima Peru rated the world's eighth best restaurant) and, Mauro Colagreco (Grill 58 in MGM Cotai and owner of Mirazur in France, rated the world's fourth best restaurant). Other restaurants offer Cantonese, Sichuan and regional Chinese cuisines. There are other concepts in the shopping precinct and the discrete and sophisticated Bar Patuá in the hotel.

Opposite, The Parisian Macao is home to Brasserie where the foie gras is as authentic as the surroundings and Bordeaux wines. In Taipa Village, the just-opened Goa Nights impresses for its Indian cuisine with a twist and creative cocktails. Nearby, the Italian chef at Bella Taipa maintains Italian authenticity in all his dishes.

Specialty Outlets

Many visitors love to stock up on cookies and there are several stores where patrons queue up to sample and buy the tasty treats. There are many varieties but mung bean flour tends to dominate to create a nutty texture. Koi Kei Bakery is the best known of the cookie outlets and there are several stores scattered throughout the territory.

Portuguese egg tarts or pasties de nata are another treat that visitors stock up on to take back home. They are similar to Chinese egg tarts with a rich creamy egg filling within a soft flaky pastry. However, those in Macao differ in that they have more sugar especially



Charcoal grilled Spanish red prawn with black garlic dressing at Grill 58 in MGM Cotai.



People sample cookies at the Koi Kei Bakery.

sprinkled on top so that they caramalise to a dark brown top. Lord Stow's Bakery did not invent these tarts but has taken ownership of them and most aficionados flock to the main outlet in Coloane Village for takeaway supplies or to dine around the corner in a semi-formal café (there is an outlet in Taipa Village too).

Not surprisingly, Portuguese wines are the most commonly served wines in the territory with vinho verde being a unique style. These 'green wine' refer to them being young wines rather than mature wines and they tend to be slightly bubbly, light, fresh, crisp and easy to drink making them perfect for spicy Macanese food.

Macao is definitely a place for those who travel to eat with a global smorgasbord of culinary styles but the most unique being the fusion of Chinese and Portuguese styles called Macanese cuisine.

Contact: Macao Government Tourism Office (www.macaotourism.gov.mo)



Foie gras with Perigueux sauce from the Brasserie at The Parisian Macao.

