

The GUIDE

*Escargot and baby squid with herb
beurre blanc and lemon foam, as
featured on a recent menu at
DSTLLKY par Christophe Lerouy.*

If there is one constant about Southeast Asia's favorite city-state, it is that there's always somewhere new to eat, drink, and explore. From upcoming exhibitions to the Lion City's most compelling new restaurants, here's the latest scoop.

BY BRIAN SPENCER

Singapore Revisited

NURTURING NATURE

In April, Singapore moved closer to founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew's vision of a "garden city" with the unveiling of Windsor Nature Park, the island republic's latest large-scale green space. Spanning 75 heavily forested hectares, the park is the fourth of five new reserves connected to the massive 2,880-hectare Central Catchment Nature Reserve. At Windsor, the easy network of trails—some of them raised wooden platforms—include the 350-meter Hanguana Trail, where you can view curated native flora, and the Drongo Trail, which winds through lush secondary rain forest. The Javanese flying squirrel, copper-checked frog, and banded leaf monkey are among the park's elusive residents. If you're feeling ambitious, from the park's entrance it's a seven-kilometer hike to MacRitchie Reservoir Park's spectacular TreeTop Walk, a 250-metre suspension bridge linking the Central Catchment's two highest points (mparks.gov.sg).



{local take}



Su-Lyn Tay

Founder and Director of
Violet Oon Singapore

I love browsing the shops along Chip Bee Gardens in Holland Village. My favorite local designer **Ong Shunmugam** (ongshunmugam.com), who makes exquisite dresses, has a boutique there, as does **Bynd Artisan** (byndartisan.com), which is a leather company that makes these wonderful customized books that are perfect for special gifts. You can put them together yourself, including choosing your own color combinations and adding personalized messages. They also conduct interesting leather workshops where craftsmen walk you through some of their old-school techniques. I always tell people to check out **Boutique Fairs Singapore** (boutiquefairs.com.sg), which is held twice annually. I could spend an entire day shopping the amazing collection of housewares, designer fashions, and gorgeous accessories. And one of my favorite restaurants is **Blu Kouzina** (blukouzina.com) in Dempsey Hill. They serve the best Greek food in Singapore; it reminds me of the meals my husband and I enjoyed on our Greece honeymoon.



Mix Masters

These newcomers are shaking up the local cocktail culture.

ATLAS

Head bartender Roman Foltán has landed at this swanky Art Deco gem by way of Artesian, the legendary London cocktail club that once earned "Best Bar in the World" honors for four straight years. Located in the sweeping lobby of Parkview Square, Atlas pairs Foltán's 1920s-inspired tipples with an impressive collection of 1,000 or so gins (atlasbar.sg).

CRACKERJACK

Backed by the folks behind Singapore's renowned 28 HongKong Street, Crackerjack (pictured left) is a marked departure from its moodier sister establishment. Here, a bright space with communal tables encourages lazy lingering over an all-day menu that includes artisanal coffees, hearty eats, and cocktails from award-winning mixologists; try the Water

Malone, made from pisco, watermelon, lemon, and sea salt (crackerjack.sg).

LULU'S LOUNGE

Bright neon street art splashes across brick walls at cozy Lulu's Lounge, which is modeled after a plush mid-20th-century New York drinking den. Open until 6 a.m. daily and hosting periodic jazz and burlesque nights, Lulu's pours 14 signature cocktails, including

a standout Cappuccino Martini (lulus.sg).

NATIVE

At long last, a cocktail mixed with Thai weaver ants. That's the headline ingredient in Antz, one of barman Vijay Mudaliar's imaginative creations at this Amoy Street speakeasy. Mudaliar also works wonders with Sri Lankan spices, Indian whiskies, and foraged fruits and plants (tribenative.com).

COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARKS BOARD; COURTESY OF CRACKERJACK; COURTESY OF SU-LYN TAY

{datebook}

ULTRA

June 10–11; ultrasingapore.com
The nomadic electronic music festival that kicked off 20 years ago in Miami returns with a typically star-studded lineup. This year's headliners include deep-house duo Sasha & John Digweed, Aussie drum-and-bass outfit Pendulum, and American progressive house producer KSHMR.

YAYOI KUSAMA: LIFE IS THE HEART OF A RAINBOW

June 9–September 3; nationalgallery.sg
Groundbreaking Japanese pop artist Yayoi Kusama is still going strong even as she approaches her 90th birthday. This exhibition of more than 120 sculptures, paintings, and other works is her largest thus far in Southeast Asia.



SINGAPORE FOOD FESTIVAL

July 14–30; visitsingapore.com
As one of Singapore's top attractions, it's fitting that the local food culture gets its own two-week celebration. Held at venues across the island, this annual festival sees many of the best local hawkers and chefs flaunting their culinary skills at cooking classes, demonstrations, and other special events.

BEERFEST ASIA

August 17–20; beerfestasia.com
More than 500 different beers are promised for this annual three-day blowout, from everyday lagers to some of the finest craft brews available in Asia. Stand-up comedy, live cover bands, and DJs help keep this boozy bash moving all weekend long.



Above: Counter seating at Open Door Policy. Right: Bincho's yakitori bar.

A DAY IN TIONG BAHRU

While its retro Art Deco-like structures and residential blocks have long lured design and architecture buffs, only in recent years has the old housing estate of Tiong Bahru—just to the west of Chinatown—emerged

as Singapore's coolest stomping ground, thanks to an influx of trendy bars, cafés, and art spaces. It's an ideal place to spend a day on foot, especially if you follow this tried-and-tested itinerary.



COURTESY OF OPEN DOOR POLICY; COURTESY OF BINCHO; © YAYOI KUSAMA, COURTESY OF OTA FINE ARTS, TOKYO/SINGAPORE; VICTORIA HHO, LONDON; DAVID ZWIRNER, NEW YORK; OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF TIONG BAHRU BAKERY; COURTESY OF BOOZE PHARMA-C



9 a.m. Treat yourself to one of French baker Gontran Cherrier's rich almond-chocolate croissants or a perfectly crisped kouign-amann pastry at **Tiong Bahru Bakery** (tiongbahrubakery.com), still one of the neighborhood's most beloved cafés some five years after its opening. For something more savory, try the squid-ink baguette with smoked salmon, assuming it's not sold out already.

10:30 a.m. There's a remarkable collection of rare and signed books to browse at quiet **BooksActually** (booksactuallyshop.com), which is also one of the better places to find works by Singaporean poets and authors. Of particular note, the shop's own imprint, Math Paper Press, publishes a series of titles filled with fascinating stories from local residents about the neighborhoods they've called home for at least a decade.

12:30 p.m. Follow the locals' lead with a casual Singaporean-style lunch at **Tiong Bahru Market**,

the huge open-air hawker center that reopened in May following a three-month closure for significant renovations. Join the lengthy queue at **178 Sharks Meat Lor Mee** for a hot bowl of sticky noodles topped with fried shark meat—it's worth the wait.

3 p.m. Escape the midday heat inside a few of Tiong Bahru's best boutiques. Vintage and alternative vinyl hunters could spend hours rifling through the more than 1,000 records at **Curated Records** (fb.com/curatedrecords). If you're more interested in designer fashions, head to **Nana & Bird** (nanaandbird.com), a one-time pop-up run by two Singaporean women with keen eyes for style.

5 p.m. Attend a current events discussion, join a hands-on workshop, or just browse the curated galleries at **Grey Projects** (greyprojects.org), a nonprofit platform for all things art. Two- to three-month studio residencies for emerging Singaporean artists ensure a steady schedule of new and interesting exhibitions.

6:30 p.m. Kick back with a cold sundowner at **Booze Pharma-C**

(fb.com/boozepharmac), a new bottle shop with a few street-side tables out front. It's one of the only places in the area exclusively offering imported and local craft beers. Look for bottles from **Brewlander & Co.** (brewlander.com), a local brewery that launched in March. Its Wild IPA, a hoppy, somewhat funky ale fermented with wild yeasts, is exceptional.

8 p.m. Though domestic vegetables and herbs unfortunately remain few and far between in Singapore restaurants, **Open Door Policy** (odpsingapore.com) bucks the norm by growing its own greens in its in-house vertical garden. Chef Ryan Cliff's menu features full-flavored dishes like pan-seared crispy quail and king crab orecchiette—you'd never guess everything is dairy- and gluten-free.



10:30 p.m. Head through the nondescript door in the back of an old converted kopitiam to **Bincho** (bincho.com.sg), a multi-concept eatery that by night morphs into an Osakan-style izakaya. Go for one of the bar's Japanese cocktails or rare whiskies; if you're still hungry, chef Asai Masahi's yakitori should do the trick.

WELCOME TO A BRAND NEW HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE

Swissôtel Merchant Court, Singapore welcomes you to a brand new experience designed for the discerning modern traveller. Expect authentic Swiss vitality brought to life by Nyonya Geniality within contemporary rooms designed to inspire and calm. The flagship Ellenborough Market Café, Crossroads Bar and Blue Potato offer culinary adventures crafted to exhilarate the senses whilst indulgence awaits at Pürovel Spa & Sport, the region's first luxury Swiss spa, guided by Alpine wellness philosophy.

For more information, please visit www.swissotel.com/singapore-merchantcourt or call +65 6337 9993

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Clockwise from left: Inside Salted & Hung; dinner bowls at Mojo; egg caviar at The Dempsey Cookhouse & Bar.

SAVORING SINGAPORE

From yakitori to contemporary French cuisine, these are the six places to eat right now.

The Dempsey Cookhouse & Bar
Having already expanded his global food empire to Asia with successful restaurants in Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Shanghai, it was only a matter of time before international food celebrity and Michelin-starred chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten turned to Singapore. At The Dempsey Cookhouse & Bar, part of the handsome new COMO Dempsey development located on the site of old British army barracks, Vongerichten opts for a casual, communal dining approach. The menu features a number of the chef's signatures—including his indulgent caviar creations—alongside other dishes, like lobster with saffron tapioca and passion fruit, that have been given a refreshing Asian twist (comodempsey.sg).

Don Ho Social Kitchen & Bar
Arguably Singapore's hottest food 'hood, the Keong Saik Road area shows no signs of slowing down

with the March arrival of this raucous restaurant from local party planners Sunshine Nation. Decked out, as its name suggests, with leafy plants and tropical designs, Don Ho focuses on modern Australian cuisine divvied into share-friendly plates like ox-tongue sliders, ash-cured ocean trout pastrami, and smoked sweet potato hummus. With one day's notice, large groups can feast on a four-kilogram suckling pig roasted whole. Don Ho's tropical theme extends to the cocktail list, too—sip the Coco Bongo, a mixture of passion fruit, elderflower and vanilla syrup, vodka, and St-Germain (don-ho.com).

Birders

It's all about the yakitori at this trendy new joint festooned with pop art and located in the pretty strip of vintage shophouses on Tras Street, a popular after-work hangout. Launched by local celebrity Adam Chen and the team behind "secret" rooftop car-park bar The Great

Escape, Birders chars its chicken, pork belly, and other skewers in an open kitchen over charcoal grills. The proteins are complemented by a short but considered menu of small plates that includes curry croquettes, liver mousse, and egg tempura (fb.com/birderssg).

Salted & Hung

Brisbane native Drew Nocente heads the kitchen at this buzzy Australian-style bistro, which in March earned "Best New Restaurant" honors at Singapore's annual World Gourmet Summit. A display of hanging charcuterie in the shophouse's front window is the not-so-subtle hint at Salted and Hung's dedication to all things cured and smoked, from kangaroo to lamb leg, hamachi collar, and just about every edible cow part. Nocente does his own pickling as well, and he stocks the bar with an impressive variety of Australian wines and bottled craft beers (saltedandhung.com.sg).



DSTLLRY par Christophe Lerouy
After staking his reputation locally at Singapore's Michelin-starred Alma by Juan Amador, French chef Christophe Lerouy returns to the upscale dining scene with DSTLLRY, a 21-seater discreetly located in Queenstown. Within an open kitchen surrounded by counter seating, Lerouy offers a six- and eight-course *omakase*-style set menu showcasing his artful approach to French contemporary cuisine. The entire menu is refreshed monthly, but expect colorful dishes inflected with seasonal Asian ingredients, like wagyu oxtail and foie gras *bao* with black garlic (dstllryco.com).

Mojo Singapore

Good vibes abound at Mojo, the first food venture from twentysomething Singaporean actor Shane Pow. During the afternoon, when the place is often packed to near capacity with lunching office workers, Mojo serves healthy protein bowls with options like Norwegian salmon and beef steak heaped with quinoa, Thai papaya salad, and other grains and vegetables. Come nightfall, it morphs into an *izakaya* cranking out 12 types of yakitori, Japanese sakes and whiskies, and cocktails like the Niwatoko-Ume, a blend of Campari, elderflower essence, and *umeshu* (Japanese plum liqueur). Save room for Mojo's popular umami bomb, the decadent foie gras *chahan* (mojosingapore.com).

