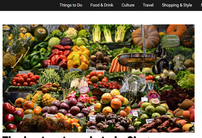

The best wet markets in Singapore

Briny-fresh seafood, variety meats and leafy greens at prices that you won't find anywhere else

Written by Erika Ritzing Sunday 9 May 2021

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Yes, we agree, supermarkets are convenient, what with their long operating hours, pre-packaged produce and jets of air-conditioning that provide a respite from the island's unrelenting heat. But there are just things about a wet market that cannot be replicated. Fend off, you can buy exact quantities of what you need, so there's less wastage overall. Then, there's the personalised service from butchers and fishmongers who will know the meat or fillet the fish according to your needs. Most importantly, the quality and prices at a wet market are unbeatable. So put on those non-slip shoes, grab a market trolley and brave a trip down to one of these wet markets this weekend.

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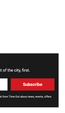
Chinatown Complex Market & Food Centre


Photograph: Chinatown Complex Market & Food Centre

Restaurants · Chinese · Chinatown

A visit to Chinatown isn't complete without a jaunt through its wet market, which houses over 400 produce stalls. It's best known for its selection of live seafood, from wriggling eels in styrofoam boxes to locally-bred fish, frogs and even turtles. You can also watch vendors de-shell jumbo prawns and crayfish right before your eyes, and while the prices here are higher than at other wet markets, we have it on good authority that the quality and freshness is also better. Andrew Walsh (who helms Cure and Butcher Boy at nearby Keong Saik road) is a regular, and his restaurants source fish from the market daily. This massive hawker centre is also home to over 200 stalls, including local craft beer bar Smith Street Taps and the Michelin-starred Hong Kong Soya Sauce Chicken Rice and Noodle.

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Tiong Bahru Market

Photo by Alex Lim

Restaurants · Hawker · Tiong Bahru

Seng Poh Market was a government project built in the 1950s to house the street hawkers eking out a living on the streets. Today, it's known as Tiong Bahru Market, and it's a sprawling two-storey complex that retains much of its timeless appeal despite the burgeoning hip reputation of the small town. There are over 250 wet market and retail stalls in this buzzy complex, and on most mornings, the ground floor of Tiong Bahru Market is a hive of activity, from customers haggling for lower prices to vendors exchanging news and greetings with one another. And lest we forget, it's a celebrity chef magnet as well. Anthony Bourdain had it on his show, it's a favourite haunt of Tetsuya Wakuda, and even Cat Cora (the first female "Iron Chef") has been spotted at the wet market.

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Geylang Serai Market & Food Centre

Photo by Singapore Tourism Board

Restaurants · Hawker · Geylang

Located between the bustling thoroughfares of Changi Road and Sims Avenue, the Geylang Serai Market has been an important social hub for the local Malay community since 1964. It was slated for redevelopment in 2006, and in 2009 was unveiled as a two-storey concrete block with a distinctive three-tiered entryway. To pop homage to its roots, the architecture of the building sees a bunch of sloping roofs, batik motifs and timber panels - features often found in old Malay homes. With 63 cooked food stalls and 302 market stalls, it is presently the third largest hawker centre in Singapore. The wet market is a hub of frenetic activity from sun up to sun down, and local chefs often frequent the place searching for fresh fruits, produce and assorted spices. The airy Geylang Serai food centre sits on the second floor, home to eateries that dish out steaming bowls of sayur lodeh (vegetable curry) and fragrant ayam buliadu (spicy fried chicken).

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Tekka Centre

Things to do · Markets and fairs · Rochor

Tekka Centre is home to one of the best wet markets in town, with a greater offering of halal-slaughtered meats than most. It's also one of the largest wet markets in Singapore, with an astounding 284 stalls. Look out for giant Sri Lankan crabs and other fresh seafood picks, as well as vegetables and herbs often used in Indian, Thai and Chinese cuisine. Tekka Centre's adjoining food centre has also become well-known on the local scene, offering mouthwatering grub from a range of cuisines. A must-try is the biryani, but you might have a hard time deciding between the plates offered by Yakader (#01-235) and Allauddin (#01-297) – the eateries are tangled in a vicious rivalry.

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Ghim Moh Food Centre

Restaurants · Hawker · Buona Vista

The centrepiece of the Ghim Moh estate, the eponymous Market and Food Centre has drawn plenty of foodies to the neighbourhood since it was built in 1977. The produce here is more specialised; its fishmongers stock an ikan Norwegian salmon, cod, and seabass, among other varieties. There's also a butcher who sells beef brisket, oxtail and steak cuts. Among the food centre stalwarts, there's the namesake Ghim Moh Chwee Kueh (#01-54), whose steamed rice cakes ($1.20/ four) are lovingly handmade by the stall owners every morning and not to be missed, as well as Chuan Kee Boneless Braised Duck (#01-04), which received the Bib Gourmand last year.

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Tampines Round Market & Food Centre

Photo by National Heritage Board

Restaurants · Hawker · Tampines · $ ($10)

Recently reopened after two months of renovations, this iconic landmark has been around since 1983, and forms an important social hub for many residents in the east. Its business has been affected by the many megamalls that have opened at Tampines, but in the mornings, the wet market still sees a good crowd. Many vendors have been around for decades, offering selections of fresh produce, variety meats and kampong chicken. The market is also surrounded by many traditional bakeries, salons, and provision shops, as is typical of any neighbourhood centre, but what keeps residents coming back is the food centre's delectable stalls – minced pork noodles, pork porridge, prawn noodles, koloo mee and more.

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Senoko Fishery Port

Things to do · Markets and fairs · Sembawang

Here's something different for a change. Located at the northernmost tip of Singapore, Senoko Fishery Port is open to customers from 2am till dawn. This is where many of Singapore's wet markets vendors and supermarket chains obtain their supply of seafood, so buying directly from the merchants here guarantees fresh seafood and the opportunity to haggle with the crazy Singapore gal. The atmosphere here is also distinctive from ordinary wet markets. Decals of fresh-caught fish are often just strewn along the ground, with baskets of prawns and other shellfish crowding the area and shared ice spilling every which way. There's no bargaining, and the merchants only accept cash, so if you're dropping by for a visit, be prepared, and remember to bring along your photo ID to exchange for a pass at the security post.

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Albert Centre

Photo by MeWee Guide

Things to do · Markets and fairs · Rochor

Yes, Albert Centre has a wet market and a food centre, but what really stands out is its dried goods market on the third floor. Here, you will find the narrow aisles crowded with aunties at any time of the day or week, dipping their hands into the bulk bins to sample the goods on offer, before haggling with the vendors for lower prices. You'll find items like dried tuk chup – which goes great in a soup with pork ribs and congee – pickled cabbage, cans of abalone, dried sea cucumber, fish maw, and all manners of nuts for your baking and snacking needs. Think almonds, cashews, pistachios and walnuts, at bargain prices you won't find in any supermarket. The buzzy atmosphere is a bonus as well, giving this dried goods market an edge over closed competitor Victoria Wholesale Centre.

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Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre

Photo by Sarah Chong

Shopping · Kent Ridge

Not a wet market in the strictest sense of the term, but we'd be remiss if we didn't include this wholesale centre, which is open 24 hours a day. From supermarkets to family-owned restaurants to fine-dining establishments, Pasir Panjang sees a steady stream of customers from morning to night. Produce here is fresher and cheaper than at retail outlets, and if you time your visit right (sometime around the evenings), bidding on unsold fruits and vegetables begins at the auction hall.

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