

WORD OF MOUTH

ALL THAT'S NEW AND GROUND-BREAKING IN TRAVEL. EDITED BY FIONA KERR



POSTERS AND
FANS, BANGKOK



LHONG TOU, BANGKOK

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD REDUX

ACROSS THE GLOBE, CHINATOWNS ARE BEING RECAST FOR THE NEXT GENERATION



LHONG TOU, BANGKOK



CHATA SPECIALTY
COFFEE, BANGKOK



BAO BEI, VANCOUVER



LHONG TOU, BANGKOK

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BAO BEI, VANCOUVER



WAREHOUSE SHOPS, BANGKOK



BAO BEI, VANCOUVER



CHATA SPECIALTY COFFEE, BANGKOK

BANGKOK

Top-notch street snacks aren't the only options under the colourful signs of the Thai capital's Chinatown, with disused warehouses being turned into shopping destinations.

THE DIM SUM RESTAURANTS

OLD SCHOOL: Hua Seng Hong provides the full Chinatown experience of cackling aunties and flaming woks. Order delicious dim sum, roast duck and steamed crab.

NEW GUARD: At Lhong Tou the Chinese tea is swapped out for third-wave coffee and the rotating family tables are replaced by clever, Tetris-style two-level booths where diners feast on lava buns, prawn spring rolls and comforting staples of congee and wonton soup.

THE PUDDING PARLOURS

OLD SCHOOL: Lod Chong Singapore's *lod chong* – a sweet treat made with rice flour, coconut cream and cubed jackfruit – has been attracting customers to this ramshackle restaurant for more than 70 years.

NEW GUARD: Boutique ice-cream shop Jing Jing offers a boozier alternative, with gin-and-tonic sorbets and rum-raisin coupes alongside tamer blueberry-yogurt and coconut-pumpkin variations.

THE COFFEE JOINTS

OLD SCHOOL: Open since 1927, Eiah Sae affords a glimpse of Bangkok Chinatown's past – chat to one of the Teochew uncles to receive a history lesson. The signature brew is pitch black and tooth-achingly sweet; order the Thai milk tea or lemon iced tea for something more refreshing.

NEW GUARD: Across the street, Chata Specialty Coffee is set in a light-flooded glasshouse next to Baan2459 boutique hotel, making it one of the most photogenic spots in town.



HONOLULU

Long skipped over for its reputation as a former red-light district, this Hawaiian Chinatown is now a hotspot thanks to chefs and artists revitalising the crumbling storefronts.

THE LUNCH SPOTS

OLD SCHOOL: Established in 1945, Char Hung Sut remains the go-to for Hawaiian dim sum. Stuff your takeaway box with *manapua* (steamed buns filled with pork), *ma tai soo* (water-chestnut cake) and pork hash.

NEW GUARD: Lucky Belly takes the original *bao* up a notch with glazed pork belly and sake hoisin. This packed spot has been a key player in the rejuvenation of the hub.

THE SWEET STUFF

OLD SCHOOL: Lee's Bakery & Kitchen still racks up round-the-block queues for its custard pies filled with soft, barely set custard in a perfectly flaky crust.

NEW GUARD: Madre Chocolate makes exotic bars including passion fruit with dark chocolate and amaranth crunch.

THE SOUVENIR SHOPS

OLD SCHOOL: It takes some luck to catch the almost 80-year-old Lai Fong Department Store during its erratic opening hours – but once inside, find antiques from Hawaiiana to elegant chinoiserie.

NEW GUARD: For more up-to-the-minute gear, head to Owens & Co. Proprietor Missy Owens stocks Hawaiian designers and expertly curated finds from Africa and Asia: there are boldly printed textiles, Hawaii-made skincare products and colourful woven baskets.

FRUIT VENDOR,
BANGKOK

LHONG TOU, BANGKOK

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JUKE FRIED CHICKEN,
VANCOUVER

VANCOUVER

Decades-old Chinatown institutions make way for hip dinner spots and stylish cocktail bars, as the diaspora spreads out around this Canadian city.

THE TRADITIONAL RESTAURANTS

OLD SCHOOL: Hole-in-the-wall Gain Wah is one of the few classics left in the neighbourhood – what the bare-bones interior lacks in atmosphere, it makes up for with its home-style cooking.

NEW GUARD: Smarter (and pricier) is Bao Bei, where French-Japanese chef Joël Watanabe turns out bold pan-Asian sharing plates with flavours such as Sichuan cucumbers and dishes including *shao bing* lamb.

THE CHICKEN JOINTS

OLD SCHOOL: The fried chicken wings at Cambodian-Vietnamese Phnom Penh have Vancouverites flocking here – expect to wait for more than an hour.

NEW GUARD: The lines also snake from Juke Fried Chicken, a casually cool Southern-inspired spot on Keefer Street.

THE RETRO DINERS

OLD SCHOOL: The orange booths at family-run New Town Bakery & Restaurant transport guests to Hong Kong. Favourites from the 500-item menu are *char siu bao* and apple tart.

NEW GUARD: Aptly named Chinatown BBQ also channels old-time charm, but the sleek brass touches give away the fact that it's a recent opening. Elderly locals and dinner-snapping creatives alike come for the perfectly roasted pork, chicken and curry with a side of faux nostalgia.

BY CHRIS SCHALKX

GORE AVENUE, VANCOUVER