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# MUNCH YOUR WAY THROUGH MACAU

As the gambling capital of the world, Macau is best known for its casinos, but with its unique fusion of Portuguese and Chinese cuisines, it's also a great addition to any foodie's itinerary



## WHEN THE PORTUGUESE

started settling in Macau in the 1500s, they struggled to recreate their favourite dishes from home and had to make do with the available Asian ingredients. For example, dairy products were a rarity, so coconut milk became a useful substitute. The sailors and their families also introduced spices they'd come across in their travels, such as cinnamon and turmeric, as well as European cooking methods, including baking. The result: a delectable Chinese and Portuguese mash-up that's still enjoyed today.

Popular Macanese dishes include *Galinha à Africana* (African chicken) and the pork

chop bun. Although its origin is uncertain, African chicken seems to have got its name because the dish is prepared with a healthy dose of peri-peri (from bird's-eye chillies), brought to Macau from Mozambique. The sauce contains coconut milk and peanuts, which introduce the Asian flavours, although visitors will find that every eatery serves a slightly different take on the dish. Try one of the better versions at Henri's Galley in Avenida da Republica.

The pork chop bun is a Macanese take on the Portuguese *bifana* – a pork cutlet “hamburger” of sorts. Some are served boneless (which makes for easier eating), but the bone-in version at Tai Lei Lok Kei in Taipa comes highly recommended and is served on a crusty roll with a soft middle. Expect to queue for one of these!

### GETTING THERE

SAA flies to Hong Kong seven days a week. From there it's a 50-minute speed-ferry trip to Macau. Visit: [www.flysaa.com](http://www.flysaa.com)

**ABOVE LEFT:** Crab congee and Macau Beer at Wong Kun Sio Kung.  
**ABOVE:** The historical centre of Macau.  
**OPPOSITE:** The egg crisp vendor at Senado Square.

If you're planning a trip to Macau, find out about upcoming events and the latest Macau foodie news and reviews at: [www.macaulifestyle.com](http://www.macaulifestyle.com) and visit the Macao Government Tourism website: [www.en.macaotourism.gov.mo](http://www.en.macaotourism.gov.mo)

## BAKED TREATS

Macau's most famed snack is the humble egg tart, sold on almost every street corner, although Lord Stow's Bakery is the best-known spot for them and has several outlets throughout Macau. The filling is slightly sweet and deliciously creamy, with a caramelised top layer. They're best eaten warm.

Macau is also known for almond cookies (often called almond cakes) and if you're travelling back to Hong Kong after a trip to Macau by ferry, you'll notice that almost everyone boarding the boat is loaded with boxes from one of the 21 Koi Kei outlets in Macau that specialise in these goodies. Choose from savoury options made with lard, salt or even shredded pork, or sweeter choices containing egg or sesame seeds.

Koi Kei also specialises in peanut and ginger delicacies and the popular Chinese snack *bakka* – sheets of sweetish, salty, dried meat (usually pork). If you're a little wary, Koi Kei offers samples of most products to entice you to buy.

## STREET EATS

If you're lucky, you'll find the street vendor who sets up his *kam chinbeng* (egg crisps) cart on the edge of the historic Senado Square. Apart from the fact that these simple, crunchy treats are delicious straight off his small coal stove, it's worth paying the 10MOP per 100g just to watch them being made, as he turns out batch after batch in minutes.

*Serradura*, which translates to “sawdust”, is far more appetising than it sounds. It's a dessert comprising layers of finely



crushed biscuits (that resemble sawdust) interspersed with layers of chilled, sweetened condensed milk mixed with whipped cream or ice-cream. Try it at Gelatina Mok Yi Kei in Taipa. Or if you're brave, opt for the durian ice-cream instead, made with the pulp of the notoriously smelly, but delicious durian fruit.

## RESTAURANT DINING

While it could be argued that much of Macau's best food is served on the streets or as take-aways, it also offers a thriving restaurant scene.

For low-key, affordable dining near Macau's historical city centre, visit the Michelin-recommended Wong Kung Sio Kung in Rua do Campo. The sea crab congee is excellent and the traditionally pressed bamboo noodles with dried shrimp roe are also very popular. Wash your meal down with a Macau Beer.

Restaurante Fernando is a relaxed Portuguese establishment in Coloane, complete with red checked tablecloths. It's located next to the beach and is known for its Portuguese seafood dishes and suckling pig.

For a fine dining (and somewhat pricier) Portuguese experience, reserve a table at the Michelin-recommended Antonio's, which is also endorsed by Anthony Bourdain.

Antonio is the owner and chef, and his speciality dish is seafood stew. He also has a range of Portuguese wines on offer and apparently his party trick is to open champagne bottles with a sword.

## MODERN MACAU

Macau, also spelled Macao, is an autonomous Special Administrative Region (SRA) of China and the former Portuguese colony, which lies roughly 60km west of Hong Kong – just a 50-minute speed-ferry trip away. Yet, with its cobblestone streets and Portuguese signage, it feels at times like a misplaced piece of Europe.

Macau comprises a narrow peninsula that juts out from the mainland Chinese province of Guangdong into the South China Sea. It includes the islands of Taipa and Coloane, joined by the reclaimed land area known as Cotai, where the “Cotai Strip” of casino developments has been constructed in recent years.

As SRAs, Macau and Hong Kong both have their own governments, immigration policies and currencies (Macau's is called pataca, abbreviated to MOP, although Hong Kong dollars are also legal tender). While Macau came under China's control in 1999, the influence of its Portuguese history is still evident in its food, language and historical sites, such as the Monte Fort (formally Fortaleza do Monte) and the Ruins of St Paul's.

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