



the ultimate A-Z destination guide



HOME DESTINATIONS MAGAZINE FEATURES BLOG TRIED & TESTED DIRECTORY

BLOG

AUTHORS

ALEX COXON

AMELIA DUGGAN

AMY MCNICHOL

ANDREW EAMES

ANDREW
THRELFALL

ANDY JAROSZ

ANTHONY
LAMBERT

BARTON
MATHEWS

BEN LERWILL

CAROLINE BISHOP

CATHY WINSTON

CHRIS
LEADBEATER

CHRIS PEACOCK

CHRISTOPHER
BEANLAND

CONNOR
MCGOVERN

DANIEL ALLEN

DAVE
RICHARDSON

DAVID ATKINSON

DAVID WHITLEY

DEBBIE WARD

DONALD
STRACHAN

ELEANOR ROSS

HONG KONG FOODIE



Sham Shui Po, Hong Kong

A tasting tour in an authentic Hong Kong neighbourhood offers Jo Fletcher-Cross some surprises

“Go on. Eat it. Just try. Not so bad,” implores the guide. I look down at the bowl. I know that *congee* is a staple Asian breakfast food. I know if I just close my eyes and try not to think about it too much I can probably swallow the glutinous porridge. It’s not that that’s the problem; it’s what’s nestled among the gruel that’s giving me pause.

“They’re not really 100 years old.”

That doesn’t really help. The century eggs sitting in front of me are black, with a pattern that’s almost beautiful if you think about it in an abstract fashion, like an intricate tree bark. They’ve been preserved for about a month, in a solution of clay and salt, causing the yolk to become creamy and cheese-like, and the whites to turn into a dark jelly.

I can’t do it. I try. I even put my spoon in the bowl. But I can’t bring myself to bring that spoon to my lips. My companion goes through with it; her eyes go wide and the accompanying shudder convinces me that I made the right decision.

All around us in the canteen-like surroundings of Hop Yick Tai are Hong Kongers eating breakfast, most of them indulging in the dish we’d headed here to try — rice rolls. A thin roll made from rice milk, it’s smooth and slippery and almost tasteless. I hate it. Though at least I manage to swallow it.

We’re at the beginning of a foodie tour through Sham Shui Po, a working-class Hong Kong neighbourhood that’s home to plenty of tiny eateries serving up traditional eats to locals. I feel like crying. The tour *should* have started at Kowloon Restaurant, with milk tea and pineapple buns — a gentle and (I later find out when I finally get my hands on a pineapple bun) delicious beginning to the day. But it’s closed for renovation, so it’s straight into the rice rolls and the extra special treat of congee with century eggs.

Still, things can only get better from here, right? Wrong. Next up, it’s the A1 Tofu Company for a choice of soybean milk or tofu dessert. I

EMILY BAMBER**EMILY LAURENCE
BAKER****EMILY ROSE
MAWSON****EMMA HIGGINS****EMMA RUBACH****FARIDA
ZEYNALOVA****GARY NOAKES****GEORGE SHANKAR****GLEN MUTEL****HALIMA ALI****HANNAH
DOHERTY****HEIDI FULLER-
LOVE****JACK SOUTHAN****JO FLETCHER-
CROSS****JO GARDNER****JOHN LAW****JOHN
MALATHRONAS****JOSEPHINE PRICE****JULIA BUCKLEY****KAREN MACRAE****KARL CUSHING****KATHRYN LISTON****KATHRYN
MOXHAY****LAUREN HILL****LAUREN RAZAVI****LIZZIE ENFIELD****LOUISE
DRANSFIELD****LUCY GREWCOCK****LUKE ABRAHAMS****MARIA PIERI****MARK EVELEIGH****NICKY TRUP****OLIVIA
GREENWAY**

go for the dessert. Now, if you like tofu, this is probably delicious. We stand at a tiny counter and everyone tucks in with gusto. I don't like tofu. I take tiny spoonfuls of the still warm, silky bowlful and hope I can get away with it.



Market stall, Sham Shui Po

We step outside, back into the staggering humidity of a September day. Our guide, full of boundless energy and optimism, searches our faces for reactions. I try to hide mine, to no avail.

“What is your impression so far?” comes the cry. I think. “Erm... gelatinous?” “Yes! We have a lot of gelatinous food!” is the delighted reply. Nailed it.

Walking through the streets of Sham Shui Po is fascinating, and our guide points out so many things I'd never have found on my own, from the high counter of a discreet pawn shop to a shop full of buttons glistening like sweets. Despite the overwhelmingly, well, gelatinous nature of the food so far, and the heat, and the general chaos around me, I'm thoroughly enjoying myself.

Things look up at the next stop: Lu Goose Restaurant. I love goose. We're served thick slices of meat and I take a large bite, before freezing mid-chew. It's — you guessed it — gelatinous. Served lukewarm, it's fair to say it's not quite to my taste. However, the rest of the meat on my plate is deliciously braised, with a fragrant marinade. There are dozens of geese in the window, splayed out and looking rather tragic, but I can't feel much sympathy: they taste amazing.

We're on a roll now. Next stop is the Eight Angels Cake Shop where we stop for short, crisp almond and walnut cookies, which are delicate and moreish. The mid-autumn festival is fast approaching, so we're lucky enough to be offered mooncakes, traditionally filled with egg yolks and lotus seed paste. We also try a red bean paste version that's equally rich and tasty.

By now we're fairly stuffed, but there's one more stop: Lau Sum Kee Noodle, which began as a mobile stall in the 1940s and where noodles are still made in the traditional manner. We watch a YouTube video of this while we're waiting for our order. One end of a bamboo pole is attached to a table, and the noodle maker then straddles the pole on the other end, bouncing up and down to knead the dough, like a noodle-producing see saw. It looks like brilliant fun. Lau Sum Kee is famous for its dried shrimp roe noodles: a pungent powder sprinkled over the springy noodles gives a very strong flavour. It's an acquired taste, certainly, but I loved it.

So we headed back out into the sunshine, full of genuine Hong Kong food; the memory of the century eggs not forgotten exactly, but perhaps forgiven.

hongkongfoodies.com

POSTED ON 16 MARCH 2016

[NEXT BLOG](#)