

A Vegetarian's Guide to Singapore

Preconceived notions are the worst way to kill any experience. Owing to its reputation as a country with large numbers of meat eating people, Singapore doesn't often find a place in a vegetarian's list of destinations to travel to.

When I travelled to this vibrant island, I was warned about the food I can expect to find here. I ate just a few things from the entire pantheon of options available to meat eaters, for you never know what you may find in your innocuous looking meat dish. So I thought it prudent to avoid meat and stick to the vegetarian side of the menu. I must say I was delighted with the choices available. Even though it was tough to just eat vegetarian food in Singapore, there is no dearth of choices.

Basilico: For the Italian Experience

Regent Singapore's Italian restaurant, Basilico, is a sought-after stop for its elaborate buffet. However, what goes largely unnoticed are a few but scrumptious vegetarian options on its menu. My dinner buffet at the Four Seasons Hotel's plush restaurant was overwhelming: antipasti, main course and desserts. While I quietly overlooked the cold-cuts, I loved the elaborate antipasti spread of tomatoes, mushrooms and cheese that

were probably the best I have eaten anywhere. The Asparagus Gratin and Braised Umbria Castelluccio Lentils were delightful. Made with seasonal fruits, the gelato and sorbet are a must-try. The other attractions on the dessert counter included the famous Tiramisu, a variety of cheesecakes, and Creme Brûlée. **Best for:** The homemade gelatos. **Where:** 1 Cuscaden Road, Regent Singapore regenthotels.com/EN/Singapore



Basilico serves homemade gelatos with toppings of your choice

ESL digs out restaurants that serve plant-based gourmet cuisine in the city known for its love for meat and seafood.

JPOT: For Singapore's Steamboats

Steamboat, or the native stew dish, is also referred to as 'hot pot' in Singapore. Its cooking technique challenges a chef's creativity as ingredients are added to a simmering pot of stew. Vegetarian ingredients include the choicest of vegetables, mushrooms and leafy greens. Dips are a common accompaniment.

Not only did the steamboat allow me to experience an authentic Singaporean meal, but I

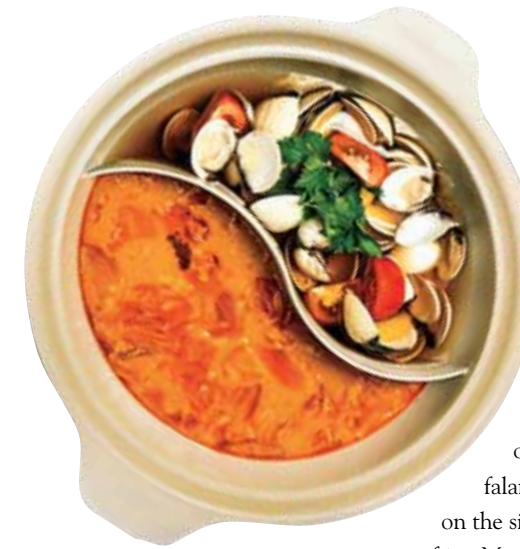
also got a chance to pick my favourite vegetables—spinach, cauliflower, Napa cabbage, lettuce, bok choy and choy sum, and five varieties of mushrooms. The condiments included soy sauce, vinegar, chilli paste, sesame oil and chilli pepper. Pick your favourites and make magic!

Best for: Anything your imagination can create.

Where: 1 Harbourfront Walk, #01-53, VivoCity jpot.com.sg/en

LingZhi: A Vegetarian-Only Restaurant

Popular as one of the very few vegetarian-only restaurants in Singapore, LingZhi's wide array of Chinese food is responsible for its healthy reputation. My favourites were the Stir-fried Long Beans with Shiitake Mushrooms and the Pineapple Fried Rice, both world-class in



Steamboat is a popular local stew dish

taste. The menu also included the experimental Deep Fried Lotus Roots with Golden Mushroom Rolls, the very different House Tofu with Edamame Beans, and the safe Vegetable Curry. LingZhi rarely goes wrong with its food.

Best for: The High Tea Buffet. **Where:** Novena Square Mall, Thomson Road

lingzhivegetarian.com/home.php

Pita Pan: For Healthy Mediterranean

Pita Pan again serves only vegetarian food and its expertise lies in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean dishes made out of fresh ingredients. Claiming to procure their ingredients from the Middle East, Pita Pan ensures these dishes are as authentic as possible.

The focus of the menu is on the Falafel Pockets that come as part of a platter and are quite wholesome. Try the Pocket Falafel Meals (full or half) served with falafel balls, salad, sauce on the side, and French fries. My favourite was the Mediterranean Platter with Falafel, which tasted as good as it looked. It had the richness of delicious falafel pockets packed with freshly prepared hummus, crunchy salad, soft falafel balls, baba ganoush, and the essential pickles.

Best for: The wholesome platters. **Where:** The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands, 2 Bay Avenue. pitapan.com.sg

Toast Box: For a Traditional Break

Singapore's famous Kaya Toast is actually a Malaysian delicacy. The lightly toasted bread is smeared with a layer each of Kaya (young coconut, eggs, milk and butter), and should be accompanied by a cup of Kopi (coffee) or Teh (tea). Toast Box is an ideal café for a quick snack or a coffee break.

Best for: Kaya on toast with



Falafel Pockets at Pita Pan make for a healthy meal

your favourite hot beverage. **Where:** Across Singapore. toastbox.com.sg

Old Chengdu Sichuan: For Authentic Chinese

Chinatown has the right mix of colours, grit and grandeur. You are likely to get lost in its sprawling maze of shops, restaurants and cafes. Old Chengdu Sichuan Restaurant is a common choice for authentic

Chinese food. The flavourful Stir-fried Long Beans, Sour and Spicy Noodles with chilli, garlic and soya sauce and the Stir-fried Eggplant I ate were unexpectedly delicious. My recommendations include the Glutinous Rice Balls and the Sichuan Jelly Noodles made of translucent noodles.

Best for: Sichuan cuisine. **Where:** 80, Pagoda Street, Chinatown.



Toast Box recreates the warm atmosphere of local Nanyang coffee shops of the '60s and '70s



Colourful Ginger Dim Sum buffet at LingZhi

