

Cocotte's quaint country interior

# Serendipitously French

Having French at Little India might sound like a dodgy idea, but not if it's at **Cocotte**

It's not easy to find that bit of rustic countryside in the middle of Little India - Dickson Road, to be precise. Our taxi driver loudly declared that we've come to the end of the street, and to kindly offload ourselves. On the corner of Jalan Besar and Dickson, Singapore's latest boutique hotel, whimsically called Wanderlust, literally blends in with its surroundings. Later, we discovered that the façade had been deliberately kept in its original state, and heaved a sigh of relief when we stepped into the industrial-themed air-conditioned lobby.

If you've found Wanderlust, you won't miss Cocotte (pronounced koh-kote). This intimate restaurant uses Le Creuset cookware to present some of their tasty traditional French fare (and perhaps up the ante on French authenticity). But fear not, the fare presented to us was hearty, honest and as colourful as the pots they were served in. Appetizers start from a very decent eight dollars, and include chicken liver mousse (\$9), which goes beautifully with the homemade bread; breaded fried tripe (\$10), which we're happy to report, tastes a lot better than it sounds; and escargot gougeres (\$19), essentially juicy, succulent snails in gruyere puff pastry.

Cocotte builds upon communal dining, and takes comfort that food is best shared among friends. It is helmed by Anthony Yeoh, previously one half of cooking-duo, Funky Chefs. Amid blue-and-white chequered table napkins and quaint utensil holders, the setting feels more like an outdoorsy picnic. At the centre of Cocotte is a massive round dining table which can seat ten, lit by a spider-like Moooi chandelier. The idea of creating such a large contrast between lobby and restaurant belongs to Chris Lee of Asylum, who installed restored timber flooring with old wine crates stacked against walls.

At last, our mains arrived. In large steaming pots, we were served roast pork collar cooked in a Dijon mustard sauce, a melt-in-your-mouth texture tasty enough to have us finish the brussels sprouts accompanying the dish. It has to be mentioned that there is an option to upsize some mains to share. The pork collar runs from \$27 (for one person) to \$98 (for four to five). Next came the poulet roti (starts



Roast Pork Collar

Cold Chocolate Soufflé Cake

Escargot Gougeres

from \$43 for a medium portion; \$64 for a large), an organic chicken marinated for two days before being roasted in herb butter, quite possibly one of the best birds I've tasted in a while. The ability for the dish to be able to retain such tender juiciness has to be commended upon. We also tried a fresh pan-seared sea bass (\$30), that looked slightly underwhelming amongst the other oversized dishes. A meal at Cocotte will hint that the kitchen favours butter, to which we can only figuratively clap Yeoh on the back.

Desserts start from eight dollars and a selection of homemade ice creams and sorbets are available from \$6. Start placing reservations soon before every other foodie gets wind of this cosy hidden gem.

– **Luann Alphonso**

Wanderlust, 2 Dickson Road, tel: 6396 3322, [www.wanderlusthotel.com](http://www.wanderlusthotel.com)