

FOOD

A country feast for the senses

Cocotte's all-Singaporean kitchen serves up some of the best French country cuisine on the island

AT THE mention of French country cuisine, most people think wrought iron chairs, small round tables and framed posters of cancan girls (circa 1830). Well, that's what you won't find at Cocotte.

While this quirky restaurant serves some awesome country French cuisine, it is hardly your average bistro. Cocotte, after all, is located on the ground level of Wanderlust, the latest boutique hotel by lawyer-turned-purveyor of Singapore's hippest hotels Loh Lik Peng.

To appoint this cheerful space, Loh roped in Asylum's Chris Lee, who mixed timbre floors and old wine crates with colourful metal furniture and an arresting Moooi Dear Ingo lamp (for a touch of

stylish modernism).

The restaurant's namesake (those fire-proof dishes in which food is cooked, not the other, less appetising, lady-of-the-night kind of cocotte) can be spotted all over the space in bright Le Creuset colours.

But enough about the decor. The food — dished out by head chef Anthony Yeo (formerly of the private chef outfit, Funky Chefs) and his team (a few are his classmates from At-Sunrice Culinary Academy) — is equally spectacular.

This is not the place to dine if you're watching your weight. Countryside cuisine of any ilk is, by its very nature, hearty. And it is no different here.

There is cream and butter and anchovies galore. Terrines, chicken liver mousse, beef tartare and ice cream, cheese mousse and chocolate cake.

Unless you're vegetarian, it is simply impossible to ignore the deep fried tripe



Roast Pork Collar



Escargot Gougeres



Chocolate Souffle Cake

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(\$10) calling from the appetiser menu. Slivers of the cow's stomach are first braised in court bouillon till meltingly tender then breaded and fried to a beautiful crisp. In one bite, there is first crunch and then the soft, flavourful yield of the tender tripe. Such are some of life's simplest pleasures.

The escargot gougeres (\$19) was more promising on paper. The snails are cooked in butter then laid between choux pastry spiked with Gruyere cheese and anointed with a spot of tomato coulis.

The gougeres (or cheese puffs) were a tad dry and deflated, not the proud puffy pillows that I was hoping for. They could have also used the kick of more Gruyere.

But it was the roast pork collar in Dijon mustard (\$27) that stole the show for me.

The meat is first braised in stock and white port reduction before it is slathered with cream and Dijon mustard. The result is a slab of pork that gives easily to the prodding of a fork and that is intensely tasty with the myriad flavours of stock and creamy, delicious mustard. The crushed potatoes served alongside are also

devastating to the waistline but infinitely difficult to resist.

Pastry chef Karyn Chung's signature dessert of chocolate souffle cake duo (\$10) is nothing like its name. It is essentially two slices of the same flourless chocolate cake, one served hot and the other served cold. The cold cake is dense and fudgy and akin to ganache. The hot cake is lighter, but in no way a souffle.

The homemade vanilla ice cream that I tried that day was also disappointing — almost buttery from too much churning and severely lacking in sugar.

I suspect that there might be better dessert offerings on the menu (like a promising sounding lemon tart), but my expanding belly could take no more that afternoon. Which just means that I will have to return again. **ANNETTE TAN**

Cocotte

Where: No 2 Dickson Road

Telephone: 6298 1188

Opening hours: Noon to 2pm and 6.30pm to 10pm (Sunday to Thursday); noon to 2pm and 6.30pm to 10.30pm (Friday and Saturday)

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