

TASTEMAKER

(Counter-clockwise from right) Club Vivre's 1920s American Steak Party; Adrift cocktail Harajuku; Mandarin Oriental can cater for intimate dinners and large banquets held at home



PHOTO: ADRIFT



PHOTO: MANDARIN ORIENTAL



PHOTO: CLUB VIVRE

Culinary travelling at home

Well bitten by the travel bug, affluent Singaporeans are recreating their gustatory experiences

BY RAHITA ELIAS

SINGAPOREANS have become avid travellers, and the rich ones are even more so. According to the *Visa Affluent Study 2015* published in June this year, Singapore's affluent residents average 3.1 trips within a 12-month period. They also said that they intended to travel even more this year – an average of 4.7 trips – making them the most travelled in the region.

Being so well bitten by the travel bug, many are even recreating their culinary travel experience at home in Singapore. These re-creations can be for an intimate romantic dinner for two or an elaborate soiree for over 100 people. The common thread is travel.

According to Andries De Vos, Club Vivre co-founder and CEO: "Such dining-in experiences are no longer booked exclusive for celebrations and special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries and proposals, but also for casual get-togethers with friends or family. The trend reflects a more discerning clientele, who are passionate about food and are interested in being enriched by the culinary heritage and culture influencing different cuisines."

As an on-demand chef service, Club Vivre has several private chefs specialising in various types of cuisine who will come to one's home and cook up a storm. Mr De Vos says people who want to recreate a culinary travel experience "are often seeking a personalised gourmet dining experience in the comfort and privacy of their own home instead of going to the restaurant".

He adds: "People like to host without interruption so they can concentrate on their guests' wellbeing and entertain – all while knowing that there is someone in the kitchen they trust to cook the meal perfectly."

Club Vivre works with a network of supplier partners to offer access to professional butler service, special tableware for the plating of the dishes, suggestions for themed styling touches, a curated list of wines and bar packages. Club Vivre has also been asked to recreate culinary experiences from a wide range of places and regions.

"The fascination for European culinary cultures is still going strong, specifically for romantic favourites such as

French and Italian cities. Mediterranean destinations along the southern coasts and Greece are also increasingly popular with more requests for seafood focused Mediterranean inspired menus.

"We've picked up on a growing interest in Asian cultures too, and customers have been requesting specifically for chefs from Japan or the Middle East so that they can recreate an authentic dining experience in their home. Modern Indian cuisine is the next to look out for, as many who have travelled to India understand there's so much more to the rich culinary culture of that region and its vibrant dining scene in the cities."

Menus start from S\$50 per person, which includes private chef service and food ingredients. The menus can be further customised, while add-ons such as service staff, tableware and drinks are also available at extra cost.

Bespoke dining

Some of the parties have been quite extravagant.

"We've organised quite a number of private romantic dinners on a rented yacht, which included sailing out to sea and docking at neighbouring islands such as Lazarus. We planned one for Valentine's Day where it was a customised Mediterranean degustation experience out at sea, the experience was over S\$600++ per person, and complemented with Italian wine pairing and professional butler service."

Club Vivre has also served a Chinese fine dining menu that featured specialities of various regions of China for its client's VIP guests. A bespoke six-course Grand Tour of China menu was created to showcase dishes inspired by specialities from various dialect groups. Club Vivre also arranged for premium Chinese tea and floral styling to complete the entire dining setting. Mr De Vos adds: "We've been roped in for many other fascinating events, including a 1920s American steak party at a rented art gallery, and a medieval inspired menu boasting Nordic, Mediterranean and Moroccan influences."

Singapore's luxury hotels also offer high-end offsite catering services that can help you relive that memorable travel experience.

Alicia Lee, director of catering at The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore, says the hotel can provide bespoke outdoor catering services at any offsite location. It has catered at a social celebration on a yacht, a high-end luxury fashion runway show in a heritage house, and a wedding celebration in a warehouse. It offers Italian, French, Middle Eastern and Chinese cuisines. A minimum spend of S\$15,000 for 50 guests is required, while two weeks advance notice is recommended.

Mandarin Oriental, Singapore is able to cater for both intimate sit-down dinners and large banquet events held at home. Usha Brockmann, director of communications, Mandarin Oriental, Singapore, recommends that guests take into consideration Singapore's climate and weather, especially if they want to recreate a travel experience from winter experiences or hold an outdoor party during the rainy season.

David Myers, creator of Adrift in Marina Bay Sands, says that those recreating their travel culinary experiences should think of the top three things they really loved about the trip, including the food, scents and experiences of culture. The menu can then have dishes, which are either an exact version or use some of the ingredients from the version experienced abroad. He suggests: "Be sure to start with that first cocktail or wine that you had on arrival and try to buy a candle or flowers that carried the same aroma. Most importantly, invite friends over to share in the stories that make these evenings so special."

On his part, Mr Myers says: "I would first want to know all about what they loved about their trip and what really stood out. Then we would try to recreate it from the ground up including the atmosphere so we can really immerse them in it."

"Now it won't be the same of course, but we would give them a new dimension of the experience that will enhance their already fond memory. This could start with a certain cocktail that recalls a scent that they remember on arrival to the feeling a dish evoked over a certain memorable night. The goal is not to do a replica but to create a new experience based on what they loved." **W**