

TASTE BUDS



Isola's sausage offerings include, from left, sauteed luganega and porcini on bruschetta and salamella in white wine jus, while Le Soleil serves traditional Vietnamese sausage with salad and noodle soup.



SPOILED WITH BRATS

Mercy Lo finds some truth in the claim that Germans care more for sausages than loved ones

YOU MAY think you're pig-headed – make that “strong-willed” – but the diverse sausage selection at Brats (Tel: 2549-3088) could make you indecisive.

There is the garlicky gruyere sausage stuffed with both gruyere cheese and emmental cheese, or the juicy bratwurst with marjoram, onion bites and a touch of honey. Which will you sample first? From cheesy to spicy, beef to vegetarian, mild to intense, the restaurant on Elgin Street, Central, offers what is called “Our Awesome Sausage Selections” – delivered from the United States and fresh from the butcher's block.

Sausages often come across as too salty with nothing much to offer, but certainly not at Brats.

“You can actually see and taste what ingredients the butchers put in the sausage,” says owner Isabella Wong Hoi-lam, pointing at the Portobello. “If you cut the sausage up, you can find small bites of portobello mushrooms, dried champignons and porcinis.”

Those who prefer a tango on the tongue can go for the chipotle pork sausage with chopped dried jalapenos and cheddar cheese, or take on the flaming habaneros and finish it with a slight tequila kick.

Fun alternatives could be the lemon chicken sausage mixed with four fruit juices and tarragon and the pizza-esque sundried tomatoes mozzarella sausage.

Mix and match to create your own sampler with four sausages at HK\$228 or eight at HK\$398.

It's easy to associate sausages with Germans, and Berliner's (Tel: 2891-8689) executive chef Markus Rink is proud of it. “In Germany, we take more care of sausages than our loved ones. We have different varieties – grilled, cold-cut, hams, rolls – you name it.”

Rink was born and raised in a small town in southern Germany. He says sausage craze is common in his country and sausages are protected by law.

“Each area in the country has its own sausage recipe, which is why you will find that each sausage is named after the place it comes from.”

Butchers of one area cannot claim to have the original sausage recipes of the neighboring towns, or they will be punished by law. “We have copyrights for sausages in Germany,” says Rink half-seriously.

The sausage platter (HK\$182) at Wan Chai's Berliner contains four popular German brats – the small, thin numberger with marjoram, juicy cheese krainer and regensburger that, Rink says, is best for the Asian palate, as well as the light-colored thuringer.

We are familiar with grilled sausages, but what about the poached ones? Rink recommends the poached white Munich sausage (HK\$118) served with two giant pretzels. The skin remains crispy even after soaking in water, and the seasoning is rich.

While others have sausages made with chicken, beef, turkey and veal, Andrea Magnano, executive chef of Isola (Tel: 2382-8765), says that “the basic rule in Italy is that sausages be made of pork only.”

Magnano has four rules when choosing sausages for the Italian bar and grill in IFC Mall – good (pork) fat content, a well-balanced spice mixture which is every butcher's secret, grinding the pork to the right size, and good casings.

The spicy salamella sausage is sliced and cooked in white wine. Roasted and braised peppers and onions are added for a touch of sweetness (HK\$248).

Luganega on bruschetta (HK\$178) is a fun appetizer for you to nibble away with friends over a glass of white wine.

Break off a corner of the crusty bruschetta and layer it up with a piece of porcini sauteed in balsamic vinegar and bite-sized luganega. The combination offers an almost addictive flavor that will prep your taste buds for more good food.

Although it might not bear any resemblance to the average

sausage, cha lua is a proud Vietnamese version. It's slightly bigger and rounder than the usual sausage and it's often sliced thin in various Viet dishes.

“It's made of lean pork, fish sauce, salt and peppercorns,” says Jason Dao, assistant section head at the Royal Garden's Le Soleil. “You will usually find it served with rice sheet roll, bahn mi and noodle soup.”

Dao says that cha lua is derived from French sausages mixed with local ingredients. Try the classic cha lua in noodle soup (HK\$68) or in salad with fresh mint leaves and veggies (HK\$98).

Thai sausage is so rare you will not find it in most Thai restaurants. However, Lotus (Tel: 2543-6290) on Staunton Street offers sai gork as a complementary snack upon request. “You can easily find sai gork sold by street vendors along the road,” says head chef Rabiab Penmongkol.

The sausage is made of lean pork, lemon grass, kaffir lime leaves, chilies and cilantro. Penmongkol says we take one bite and follow it up with a serving of herbs, veggies, spring onions or ginger slices.

“This helps counter the fattiness of the sausage,” she says.

mercy.lo@singtaonewscorp.com



Choose your sausage and have it in Brats' signature bun.



From left: order some rare Thai sausages at Lotus; Berliner offers German brats in a sausage platter and poached white Munich sausage; while at Brats the sausages make a meal in themselves either as a sausage sampler or as brats and mash with a choice of two sausages and mashed potatoes, says owner Isabella Wong.