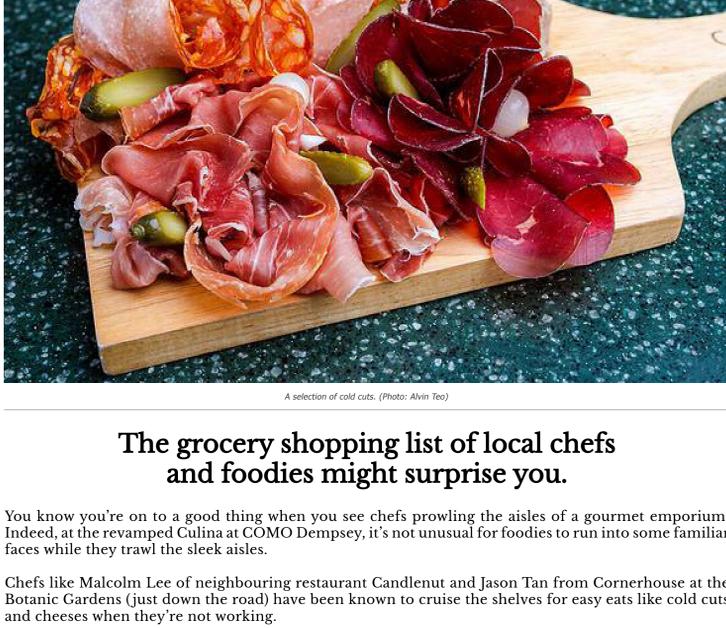


Aspiring home cooks, here's what Singapore's top chefs are buying at Culina

by ANNETTE TAN

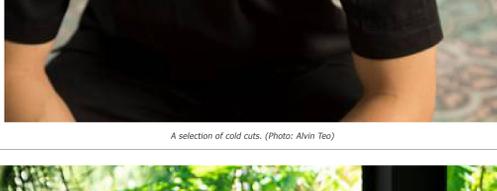


A selection of cold cuts. (Photo: Alvin Teo)

The grocery shopping list of local chefs and foodies might surprise you.

You know you're on to a good thing when you see chefs prowling the aisles of a gourmet emporium. Indeed, at the revamped Culina at COMO Dempsey, it's not unusual for foodies to run into some familiar faces while they trawl the sleek aisles.

Chefs like Malcolm Lee of neighbouring restaurant Candlenut and Jason Tan from Cornerhouse at the Botanic Gardens (just down the road) have been known to cruise the shelves for easy eats like cold cuts and cheeses when they're not working.



A selection of cold cuts. (Photo: Alvin Teo)



A selection of cold cuts. (Photo: Alvin Teo)

"At Candlenut, we use Westholme wagyu in dishes like beef rendang, curries, satays and stir-fries," said Lee. "But (on my personal trips) to the store, I buy things like wines, cheeses, sausages, fresh herbs and vegetables."



Cheese is a favourite pick-up for Malcolm Lee. (Photo: Alvin Teo)



Fresh vegetables are another of Lee's go-to's. (Photo: Alvin Teo)

Director of Food, Beverage and Culinary Operations at the Four Seasons Hotel Singapore, Giovanni Speciale, also heads to the gourmet emporium for ingredients to cook Sunday dinner for his family. "I love the Poussin chicken, which I serve with ratte potatoes and frisee lettuce. I'm always excited to cook with such great produce."



Four Seasons Hotel Singapore's Director of Food, Beverage and Culinary Operations, Giovanni Speciale. (Photo: Four Seasons)



Private dining chef Lee Yum Hwa. (Photo: Ben Fatto 95)

While private dining chef Lee Yum Hwa is renowned for his rustic, made-from-scratch pastas that would rival an Italian nonna's, he is not above buying from the impressive range of dried pastas at Culina. But one of his main reasons for shopping there is the speciality range of beef.



Chef Lee Yum Hwa appreciates the speciality range of beef. (Photo: Alvin Teo)

And it's not just the food that draws these culinarians. Chef-owner of Firebake – Woodfired Bakehouse & Restaurant, Konstantino Blokbergen comes for the selection of Alain Milliat juices. "Especially the chardonnay and pear nectar flavours. You can really taste the quality and freshness, and the flavour of the fruits. We bring home different flavours each time and introduce them to our friends. We also love serving them with sparkling water for an extra refreshing treat," he enthused.



Blokbergen goes to Culina specially for Alain Milliat juices. (Photo: Alvin Teo)

Chef Jason Tan's purchase list for his restaurant may include premium goodies like black truffles from Manjimup in Western Australia and Kaviari caviar, but his personal shopping cart is usually filled with the likes of cold cuts and bubbly.



Chef Jason Tan often picks up a bottle of champagne. (Photo: Alvin Teo)

"When I have barbecues and house parties to go to, I sometimes pick up a few bottles of champagne for the occasion – Taittinger, in particular, as it goes well with almost any food," he said. "Also, cold cuts like lardo and 5J Iberico ham are easy options that I really like as they go well with salads and taste great on their own."

While lazy or, ahem, busy gourmets could put together a sumptuous soiree with the likes of tinned Ortiz tuna and anchovies (another chef favourite), smoked fish and fresh oysters, Tan makes a case for serving up an exquisite dish that requires little more than some top-notch ingredients and steady assembly. This is his recipe for a Wagyu Tartare with Kristal Caviar, with an ingredient list entirely available at Culina. We'll be right here waiting for our invitation.



Tinned Ortiz tuna and anchovies is another chef favourite. (Photo: Alvin Teo)

Wagyu Tartare with Kristal Caviar

Serves 10



Wagyu Tartare with Kristal Caviar, prepared by chef Jason Tan, is made entirely with ingredients from Culina. (Photo: Alvin Teo)

500g Westholme striploin (marble score 6 to 7)

200g banana shallots, finely chopped

1 tsp fleur de sel, or to taste

50g Alain Milliat tomato ketchup

50g Dijon mustard

50g olive oil

5g sesame oil

50g chives, finely chopped

50g Italian parsley, finely chopped

2 tsp light soy sauce, plus more to taste

1/2 tsp ground black pepper, plus more to taste

100g Kaviari Kristal caviar

Dice beef into neat 5mm pieces and in a bowl with the chopped shallots. Add 1 teaspoon of salt and mix well with a fork. Add the remaining ingredients, except the caviar, and mix well. Taste and add more soy or salt if necessary. Stir to mix. Divide the mix into 10 portions. Prepare a ring mould and serving plates.

Place a ring mould on the centre of each plate and pack the mould with one portion of the beef tartare. Carefully remove the ring mould so that the mound keeps its shape after the mould is removed. Gently top each mound of tartare with caviar. Serve immediately.