

FRESH START

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." – Mark Twain. What better advice could there be to start a new day, a new month, a new year? Travel to fresh places, do novel things and sample untried foods. Here's to an inspired 2008!

GLOBAL SHOPPER



vaciutca, budapest

The romance of the River Danube flows between Buda, on the right bank and Pest, on the left. Amalgamated in 1873 to become a single city, Hungary's capital Budapest has an elegance reminiscent of a bygone era.

This romantic spa city, hailed 'the city of baths' is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan and is currently the third most popular weekend European destination in the world. One of the best views of the city and over the Danube is from the Fisherman's Bastion at Castle Hill. Nearby is the Ruzswurm cafe, over a hundred years old, which serves the best Kremes (a mille feuille-like cake) in town.

On the Pest side or left bank of the Danube, Vaci Utca, Budapest's most famous shopping street, stretches from Elizabeth Bridge to Vörösmarty Square. The architecture is mainly 19th or early 20th century, and many cafe signs bear the

Art Nouveau style. A buzz of bars, cafes and restaurants line the street, making it easy to sample delicious Hungarian food.

National dishes include Lecso, a fabulous pepper and meat stew, and Palacsinta, pancakes with a savoury filling. The national drink is a slightly bitter liqueur called Unicum, an acquired taste yet easily endearing flavour – you feel as though you're toasting the country, reminded of its rich history.

The famous Hungarian Herend and Zsolnay porcelain can be found at Detre & Ferenczy Antikvitás. Duna Plaza, the first mall in Vaci Utca, hosts over 100 shops, bars and food outlets. For designer fashion, head to Fortuna Department Store. The streets and courtyards neighbouring Vaci Utca are full of book shops, wine shops, art galleries, designer boutiques, restaurants and cafes. At Varosmarty Square, you can sit on the terrace of the 19th century Gerbaud coffee house and watch life unfold.

FRUIT & VEG IN SEASON



SWEET POTATO

(Origin Caribbean, Americas, China)

This root vegetable is a sweet relative of the potato – and equally, if not more, versatile. A truly cross-cultural item, it's delicious in a good old Thanksgiving sweet potato pie, grilled in an Australia barbecue, baked in a *ratatouille*, boiled in a dessert soup in China, or fried as a tasty tempura in Japan. And in Singapore, it is eaten *goreng'd* or floating in porridge. Rich in complex carbohydrates, dietary fibre, beta carotene, vitamins C and B6, it's soul food that's good for anyone from one to 100.

KIWIFRUIT

(New Zealand, United States, Chile, Europe, China)

Native to southern China, and also known as 'the Chinese Gooseberry', the kiwi fruit is an excellent source of vitamin C and beta carotene. How we ended up buying 'New Zealand kiwi fruit' was due to New Zealander Isabel Fraser, a teacher in Chinese mission schools, who brought the fruit home and had it cultivated in 1906. Kiwis are traditionally served

peeled and sliced over a creamy Pavlova, and more recently, on fruit tarts and transformed into refreshing sorbets.



PHOTOS: PHOTO/STOCK.XCHNG

FOOD IN SEASON

MUD CRAB

(Australia, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, India)



The highly-prized, distinct sweet flavour of the Mud Crab, so named for inhabiting mud flats, mangrove forests and sheltered estuaries, permeates its moist yet firm meat. The larger is of a brown or green hue while the slightly smaller one is a reddish colour, yet the flesh is abundant in the body and the claw. It is a versatile meat and can be steamed, salt-baked, deep-fried, wok-fried or char-grilled, and may be accented by seasoning in many ways. Raffles Courtyard is offering a special promo to celebrate the season between 7 to 20 Jan for dinner only. Some of the selections from the special menu are Bamboo Steamed Mud Crab (with diced winter melon and scallop broth) and Char-grilled Mud Crab (with deep-fried sliced garlic in superior dark soya sauce) and Salt-Baked Mud Crab (with rock salt and five spices in banana leaf, lime and garlic chilli dip).

NEW IN TOWN



OLD HONG KONG

WHAT: Old Hong Kong is a teahouse concept eatery from the 1950s, serving authentic Hong Kong dishes and beverages like Trolley noodles, baked rice, Hong Kong noodles, soups and tea with milk. The first outlet in Singapore has been operating in Katong Village since August 2006.

WHAT'S NEW: A 'Cha Chan Teng' counter opens at Marina Square's Food Loft, bringing you the signature Trolley noodles (so named for the Hong Kong noodle-sellers of yore who sold their noodles out of trolleys along the streets) and other temptations like sweet-and-sour spare ribs, spicy meat sauce noodles, baked rice, egg tarts and Hong Kong milk tea.

DON'T GO HOME WITHOUT trying the stall's variety of pre-marinated and pre-cooked toppings for your Trolley noodles (including six Hong Kong-imported sauces: Beef brisket sauce, curry sauce, Hong Kong *satay* sauce, spicy sauce, sweet sauce, teahouse extra spicy sauce). Another all-time-favourite is Old Hong Kong's signature drink – Hong Kong milk tea, made from five different tea leaves, filtered water and evaporated milk. Apparently, this version is so renowned the owners wanted to patent it!

Old Hong Kong, #04-101/102 Marina Square Food Loft. Open from 10 am to 10pm daily. Price from \$1.30 to \$5.80.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right."
~OPRAH WINFREY