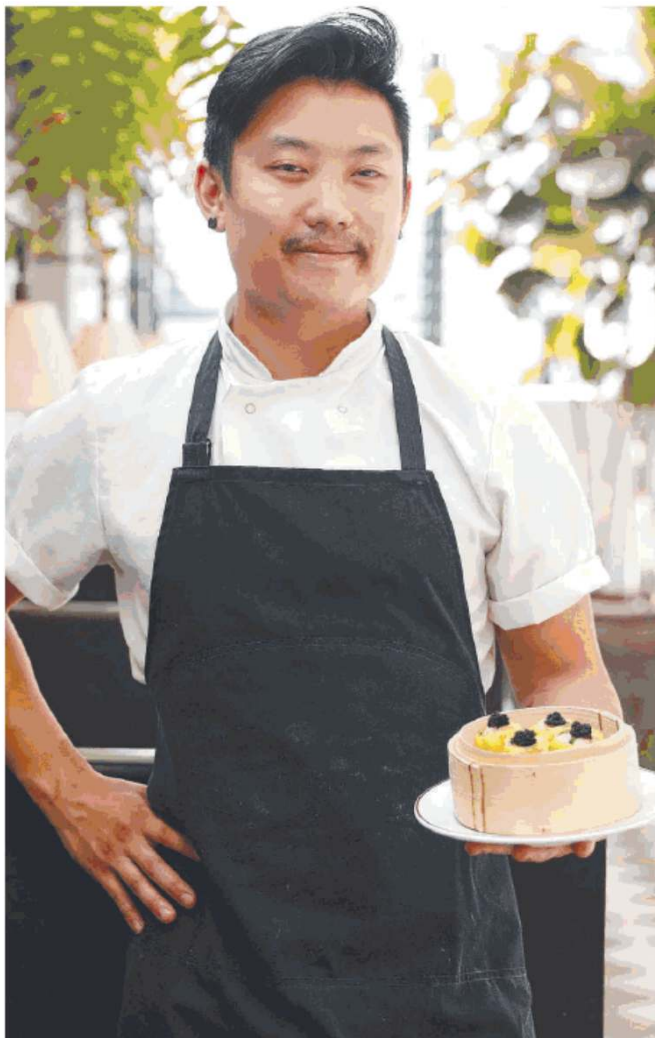




10 Nov 2019
Author: Amy Harris
Article type: Publication
Page: 30
Sunday Telegraph, The
Readership: 816000
AVE: \$6109.9
Circulation: 359287

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Oliver Hua with his signature caviar dumplings. Picture: Sam Rutty

Dumplings

From Bunnings sausage to banana pie, Sydney has gone crazy for wacky new flavours

EXCLUSIVE

AMY HARRIS

FANS say that even a bad dumpling is a great one — but a wave of Sydney restaurants are pushing that idea to its limits with a range of wacky new flavours.

Forget the pan-fried pork and chives, now you can try a “Bunnings sausage sizzle” dumpling, eggs Benedict, carbonara, banana or even caviar.

Purists may shudder but it’s simply a case of “supply and demand” according to New Shanghai restaurant boss Anthony Tan, who recently added a number of “left-field” recipes to his dumpling menu.

Tan said he literally opened the suggestion box to diners and whittled about 700 diner suggestions down to eight new flavours.

Among them are the Aussie pie dumpling made with beef mince and tomato sauce, the banoffee pie dumpling of caramel and banana, a carbonara dumpling of bacon, cheese and egg and — the most popular — the Bunnings dumpling of sausage mince mixed with caramelised onion and mustard.

“I just found that diners were coming to me with all these ideas,” said Tan, who had his team of chefs work through many possibilities.

“Some of the ideas looked great on paper but didn’t work on the plate.

“But then others were the opposite. What we realised was that the old rules of what constituted a dumpling just didn’t really exist any more.”

Acclaimed Sydney vegan dumpling house Bodhi also recently threw off the shackles and began experimenting with native Australian ingredients such as lemon myrtle, wattle seeds, kakadu plums, quandongs and native limes. One of their more popular new additions, says owner Heaven Leigh, is a surprise combo of beetroot and smoked tofu.

“It is an obsession,” she said of Sydney’s never-ending demand for the dumpling. She reckons it “one hundred per cent” stands as the city’s “unofficial official dish”.

“It doesn’t matter how many we make, we sell out every night,” she said.

Restaurant owner Billy Wong said he leans to the more traditional Cantonese recipes at his family’s cult eatery Golden Century.



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have gone truly bananas



"But I really don't think you could put a limit on the combinations that you can have in a dumpling ... it's never ending," he said.

"I would try a banana dumpling. Why not?"

"The dumpling thing is kind of like what has happened in Sydney with fried chicken over the past few years.

"We are seeing people taking a basic type of food and seeing how far they can run with it."

Queen Chow head chef Oli Hua, who sends out one of Sydney's most decadent offerings in the steamed seafood and black caviar dumpling, said there's no longer such thing as an "off limit" ingredient.

"Basically I think you could use anything depending on how it's prepared and what it's paired with," said Hua.

"We try to stick to the classic Cantonese style but we make an effort to make things our own," he said.



Cheney Jin tackles the Bunnings dumpling at New Shanghai Restaurant. Picture: Tim Hunter