

SINGAPORE'S TOP 10 VEGGIE DELIGHTS SHALU ASNANI

➤ **Rojak** A savoury fruit salad of cucumber, pineapple, mango, fried bean curd and other ingredients, tossed in a piquant dressing of tamarind, prawn paste (which can be left out for a veggie version), sugar, chilli, lime juice and a generous topping of crushed peanuts. The mix of flavours is truly tasty and incredibly fresh.

➤ **Roti prata** A light, fluffy puff-pastry pancake which is impressively flipped and twirled before being pan-fried till crispy. Being an Indian speciality, it's typically served with curry but you get exotic variations with cheese, mushrooms and even banana or chocolate! Goes great with a mug of *teh tarik* (hot, frothy milk tea).

➤ **Popiah** Fresh spring rolls made from thin wrappers stuffed with turnip, jicama, bean sprouts, shredded carrots, and other fillings depending on the individual vendor. The fillings are usually steamed, and the popiah is dressed with a sweet-spicy bean sauce and an optional chilli paste.

➤ **Mee goreng/nasi goreng** Fried noodles or fried rice. Introduced by Chinese immigrants to Singapore and to which the Malays and Indians added their own twist. What results is yellow noodles or cooked rice stir-fried with garlic, onions, chilli, vegetables, tomatoes, egg and sometimes tofu and a medley of different sauces. Usually served with a side of sliced cucumber with tomato ketchup!

➤ **Nasi padang** Originates from Indonesia and consists of a portion of steamed rice with a choice of various meat or vegetable dishes to go along with it. My favourite version is with *sayur lodeh* (vegetable coconut curry), *sambal tofu-tempeh* (spicy tofu and fermented beans) and *achar* (pickled carrot and cucumber). This dish is available at food stalls across Singapore, but go to Geylang for an authentic experience.

➤ **Gado-gado** Another outstanding salad, this one Indonesian-style. Typically made with green vegetables, fried tofu, tempeh, cucumber, steamed rice-cakes, bean sprouts and sometimes hard-boiled eggs, tossed in a spicy peanut sauce and topped with crispy tapioca crackers.

➤ **Ice kacang** Literally means 'iced beans'. It starts with layers of red beans, jelly, sweet corn and *attap chee* (palm seeds) topped with a mountain of shaved ice and dressed with different colours of syrup and sweetened condensed milk.

➤ **Dosai** Thin, crispy south Indian savoury crêpe made from rice flour, usually served with dhal (lentil curry), vegetable curry and coconut chutney. There are variations stuffed with potatoes, vegetables and spices.

➤ **Goreng pisang** Popular snack food of piping hot deep-fried banana fritters. The best goreng pisang vendors use pisang raja, which are small, sweet bananas. Nowadays, restaurants churn out fancier versions served with vanilla ice-cream or chocolate sauce, or a dusting of cinnamon and icing sugar.

➤ **Carrot cake** The most confusing Singaporean dish! Carrot cake does not contain any carrots. It's made from a combination of radish, rice flour and water which is then steamed into cakes, diced and stir-fried with eggs, pickled radish, garlic, and spring onion. You usually have a choice of 'black' (with sweet soy sauce) or 'white' (plain). Ask for some chilli for that extra kick.

This lip-smacking list was compiled by Shalu Asnani, a vegetarian chef and the proprietor of Little Green Cafe (www.littlegreencafe.com.sg). She regularly conducts vegetarian cooking classes in Singapore.

Head to Little India to experiment with Indian sweets: *burfi*, *ladoo*, *gulab jamun*, *gelabi*, *jangiri*, *kesari* and *halwa*, to name a few, are made with ingredients that include condensed milk, sesame and syrups.

Nonya (Peranakan) desserts are typified by *kueh* (colourful rice cakes often flavoured with coconut and palm sugar) and sweet, sticky delicacies such as miniature pineapple tarts that are sold everywhere in small