



Macao

澳門

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

The magic of Macanese
cuisine and street food

55 new additions to Macao's
Intangible Heritage Inventory

MOP 50 billion economic
recovery package unveiled
by the government



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Macao loves food – the city's status as a UNESCO-designated Creative City of Gastronomy highlights its passion for all things culinary. To honour this, we delve into the history of Macanese cuisine and discover who's keeping the world's first fusion food alive today. We also flick through the menus at a handful of Macanese restaurants across the globe before hitting the streets and meeting the SAR's last few traditional hawkers. **p.24**



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Cover image Macanese minchi with a fried egg on top
by Ant nio Sanmarful



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From the Editor

Our tasty offering

Macanese cuisine has been promoted in the city and abroad ever since Macao became a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in 2017. This promotion and preservation of the world's first fusion cuisine, which was reinforced as part of Macao's government policy earlier this year, has just been strengthened once again as the city's Intangible Heritage inventory went from just 15 items up to 70. Macanese gastronomy was already on the list but now specific local food items have been added, giving more protection and promotion to our city's colourful culinary heritage.

As a result of the new additions – and as travel restrictions for tourists from the Greater Bay Area are starting to ease – this issue is dedicated to Macanese gastronomy. We focus on the past, present and future of the cuisine, as well as Macanese restaurants abroad. Street food – which, over hundreds of years, helped put Macao on the global al fresco dining map – is also a culinary art we tuck into. We talk to the hawkers who keep this tradition alive and discover the stories behind their food trolleys.

Also in this issue is the city's Military Club, which celebrates its 150th birthday this year. This is a local institution that's rich with culture and history. The institution has seen momentous change over the past century and a half but its food – some of the best Portuguese dishes available in Macao – still

plays the same important role it once did.

At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic in Macao has stabilised, we detail the financial support of almost MOP 50 billion (US\$6.26 billion) given by the government to the local population, be it for businesses, freelancers or senior citizens, with the aim of gradually restoring and boosting the local economy. At a recent Economic Development Council plenary meeting chaired by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, he said: "We [the government] have to make good use of the advantage of the 'One Country, Two Systems' system, so as to be well prepared for [Macao's] active participation in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and lay a more solid foundation for Macao's sustainable development in the long term."

The worldwide battle against the novel coronavirus is still ongoing and in Portugal, we interview cousins Dr T nia  vora and Dr Sara  vora, who are fighting on the frontlines far from their home city of Macao. They share how thankful they are for their close connection to the city as they claim that knowing the moves made by the government in their hometown meant they became better informed during the initial phase of the pandemic. Macao, though a city of only 32.9 square kilometres with a population of less than 700,000, is a city of perseverance – shown by its people, its history and, of course, its unique gastronomy.

Gonalo C sar de S 
Editor-in-Chief

POLITICS

New government faces

Members of the government have just taken over the posts of director or president of four government departments. Meet this quartet of civil servants.



Chan Lou 陳露

Director of the Government Information Bureau (GCS) as of 1 July

ABOUT GCS The Government Information Bureau co-ordinates, researches and provides technical support to the Macao government in matters relating to the media. It works directly under Macao's Chief Executive.

EDUCATION Bachelor of Land Surveying and Planning, South China Normal University; Bachelor of Computer Science, Jinan University; Master's degree in Public Administration with a major in International Relations, offered jointly by the University of Macau and Portugal's National Institute of Public Administration

LANGUAGES Cantonese, Mandarin, Portuguese and English

PREVIOUS ROLES Chan joined the civil service in 1990 working for the Cartography and Cadastre Bureau. She joined the Macao Government Tourism Office in 1994, serving in such positions as Assistant Head of the Research and Planning Department, Head of the Administration and Finance Division and most recently Head of the Licensing and Inspection Department, a position she held from 2001 to earlier this year. She has also been a member of the Preparatory Committee for the Office of the Macao SAR in Beijing, the Working Group on Food Safety Cooperation between Guangdong and Macao, the Joint Working Committee on the Development of Macao into a World Tourism and Leisure Centre, and the Tourism Crisis Management Office, among other roles.

REPLACES Chan Chi Ping, Victor

“ Chan said during a TDM interview: “We need to know what citizens are thinking and let them know the government's ideas, as well as what the government wants to tell citizens. During this process, news organisations play an important link between the government and members of the public. Facilitating sound interaction between the government and the public is of primary importance. I will do my best to keep the dignity and professionalism of journalists. GCS is an organisation that supports everyone's work, not one that controls everyone.”

? DID YOU KNOW During Chan's free time, she likes to read and spend quality time with her family.



Hon Wai, Wilson 韓衛

Director of the Social Welfare Bureau (SWB) as of 20 June

ABOUT SWB The Social Welfare Bureau cares for the city's most disadvantaged communities. Founded as the Public Relief Society in 1938, it is one of the oldest government bureaus. Its services include social assistance to vulnerable citizens, drug rehabilitation programmes, the prevention and treatment of problem gambling, social reintegration and many more. It operates under the Office of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture.

EDUCATION Bachelor of Psychology, Taiwan University; Master of Psychology, Taiwan University

LANGUAGES Cantonese, Mandarin and English

PREVIOUS ROLES

- **December 2019 - early June 2020**
Interim Director, Social Welfare Bureau
- **2016 - early June 2020**
Deputy Director, Social Welfare Bureau
- **2011 - 2015**
Department Head, Department of Prevention and Treatment of Drug Addiction at the Social Welfare Bureau
- **2010 - 2011**
Deputy Department Head, Department of Prevention and Treatment of Drug Addiction at the Social Welfare Bureau
- **1999 - 2010**
Division Head, Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Division, Social Welfare Bureau
- **1997 - 1999**
Supervisor of the Therapeutic Technology Centre, Office for Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependence at the Social Welfare Bureau
- **1995 - 1997**
Senior Officer, Office for the Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependence

REPLACES Vong Yim Mui, Celeste

“ Hon said in a recent interview: “The Social Welfare Bureau is a support service for those most in need. Its work is not just the icing on the cake but a timely supply of services to those most in need. In good times, we should take care of the vulnerable and in bad times we should provide timely and appropriate support so as to accurately use our resources in the right places.”


? DID YOU KNOW After work or at weekends, you can often find Hon playing piano, the drums or the guitar. Rock climbing is also another one of his favourite hobbies, whether he's climbing around the world or in Ka-Ho, Coloane. Both of his hobbies, he says, are closely related to his work at SWB. He says: “It's often hard to find common values when working with recovering drug addicts but music is where we connect. They love music and I love music. They like singing Hong Kong band Beyond's tracks. I know how to play Beyond's music too. Music is our common language.” Besides being able to bring the benefit of these hobbies to the workspace, Hon often 'jams' with his wife, his 22-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter, all who play different instruments. He calls these moments his 'happiest times'.




Adriano Marques Ho 何浩瀚

Director of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) as of 10 June

ABOUT DICJ Operating under the Office of the Secretary for Economy and Finance of the Macao SAR, the DICJ is the city's gaming regulator. It supervises and monitors the activities of the city's concessionaires and is the bureau responsible for setting out the requirements and bidding process for the city's upcoming 2022 gaming concessions contracts. It also provides guidance and assistance to the Chief Executive on the execution of economic policies for the operations of casino games of fortunes.

 **EDUCATION** Bachelor's in Law, The Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST)

 **LANGUAGES**
Cantonese, Mandarin, Portuguese and English

 **PREVIOUS ROLES**

- **2014 - June 2020**
Advisor to the Office of the Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak
- **2012 - 2014**
Head of Gaming-related and Economic Crimes Investigation Department
- **2010 - 2012**
Head of Criminal Investigation Department of the Judiciary Police
- **2004 - 2010**
Head of the Macao Sub-Bureau of the China National Central Bureau of INTERPOL
- **1988 - 2003**
Criminal investigator at the Judiciary Police

 **REPLACES**
Paulo Martins Chan




During Ho's swearing-in ceremony, he said that he promised to implement the SAR's governance and that he was committed to leading the DICJ staff to do their best – with honesty and integrity – to monitor and inspect the gaming sector. He also said he would strengthen the use of information technology in DICJ's daily operations with a view to increase the bureau's efficiency.




Lau Wai Meng 劉偉明

President of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) as of 27 May

ABOUT IPIM Operating under the Office of the Secretary for Economy and Finance of the Macao SAR, IPIM is responsible for researching and formulating economic policies in the areas of promoting external co-operation, investments, MICE and economic and trade co-operation between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries. It assists both local and overseas enterprises to gather all the necessary market data to grasp business opportunities while promoting external trade and attracting investment.

 **EDUCATION** Bachelor of Business Administration, University of Macau; Master of Public Administration, University of Sun Yat-sen, Guangzhou

 **LANGUAGES**
Cantonese, Mandarin and English

 **PREVIOUS ROLES**

- **2016 - May 2020**
Deputy Director of the Economic Bureau
- **2013 - 2016**
Deputy Director of the Labour Affairs Bureau
- **2011 - 2013**
Deputy Director of the Human Resources Office
- **2007 - 2011**
Deputy Director of The Commission of Audit
- **2000 - 2007**
Senior technician, auditor and senior auditor of The Commission of Audit
- **1990 - 2000**
Senior technician at the Statistics and Census Service and Financial Services Bureau

 **REPLACES**
Va Kuan Lau, Irene



During Lau's swearing-in ceremony, he expressed that he would strive to scrupulously comply with the SAR's governance philosophy and lead his team in a unified way. He also said that the work to be carried out in the future will follow the plans stipulated in the policy guidelines, namely with regard to revitalising the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic by boosting the development of industry and commerce and optimising the investment environment.

ECONOMY

COVID-19: Macao's economic relief

Macao's government vows to invest around MOP 50 billion (US\$6.26 billion) into the city to help with its economic recovery.

Text **Christian Ritter** and **Gonçalo César de Sá**



The Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, chairs the 2020 plenum of the Economic Development Council

While much of the world still battles the COVID-19 pandemic, Macao has recorded no new cases of the virus over the past couple of months. The way the city has succeeded in keeping the number of cases down to just 46, with no recorded deaths, has been praised both locally and across the globe. But due to it being locked down during the pandemic, as well as experiencing a lack of tourists for many weeks now, the SAR has registered a significant shortfall in its economic fortunes. Macao's government, as a result of these losses, has dug deep into its public coffers in a bid to get the city out of this trough and to help local residents and businesses who have been hit hard. There is possibly no other government in the world that has dug so deep to help its people.

All this is possible because of two decades of prudent management of public finances by the government, thanks to which it has been able to pile up huge 'rainy day' reserves of well over MOP 500 billion (US\$62.6 billion) and the fact that Macao has no public debt. The government's generous but prudent pecuniary support

measures for virtually everyone in the city – including children, students, the elderly, freelancers, consumers, employees and companies – have been welcomed by the population and business community.

The government's determination to ensure that residents are well protected against the viral threat has meant that more than 100 million face coverings have been bought by the authority since late January. Residents and non-resident workers are entitled to buy 10 facemasks every 10 days at the fixed price of just MOP 8 (US\$1). The government has spent considerable amounts of money on the public health sector to make sure that local residents are well protected from the novel coronavirus. Foreign observers have described Macao as one of the world's safest places as far as the COVID-19 threat is concerned – and this includes the government's largesse in propping up the economy.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng told the annual plenary meeting of the Economic Development Council (CDE) on 9 July that the most important task for the government now is Macao's economic recovery. In response to the COVID-19



Government workers prepare masks for distribubtion (left); newly-installed screens in the city's CBD display COVID-19 prevention messages

menace, his government has launched a wide range of pecuniary support measures for a population of almost 700,000, worth around MOP 50 billion (US\$6.26 billion) which consists of MOP 38.95 billion (US\$4.88 billion) from the government's financial reserves and MOP 10 billion (US\$1.25 billion) from the Macao Foundation, which is a corporate public body that aims to promote the city. The government has indicated that, if needs be, it is ready to dig even deeper into the public coffers. Its declared aim is to protect the public against the pandemic.

Moreover, the government has launched an 'active fiscal policy' and strengthened its public investment projects. It has also rolled out a string of tax deductions and waivers, as well as a raft of financial support measures for residents and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with the aim of getting the local economy back on track as soon as possible. The government's goals include a host of measures such as lowering residents' tax payments, implementing credit assistance mechanisms for businesses, reviving consumption, ensuring people's livelihoods and stabilising commodity prices. "The COVID-19 epidemic has once again exposed the uniformity of Macao's industrial structure, [the city's] overdependence on the gaming industry and its lack of economic resilience," Ho, known to not mince his words, warned at the plenary meeting.

Ho also said that his government would push ahead with its economic diversification drive, particularly by making good use of the advantages created by the

'One Country, Two Systems' principle, so as to be well prepared for Macao's proactive participation in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and lay a more solid foundation for the city's sustainable development in the long term. He also noted that Macao's economy, which mainly consists of services, had not been spared the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic so that it suffered a major decline in the first half of this year.

Ho pointed out that Macao's different business sectors have been seriously affected by the pandemic and local companies – large, medium and small-sized – have been facing a plethora of difficulties and challenges. The 63-year-old acknowledged that Macao's economy in the second half of this year 'is expected to continue to face considerable pressure amid the continued increase in global uncertainties'. "We [the government] have to speed up studying policies of improving Macao's economic structure and promoting its adequate economic diversification, as well as ensure the realisation [of these goals]," said the Chief Executive.

Ho said that promoting Macao's economic recovery was now the government's most important task as the city's COVID-19 epidemic has, generally speaking, been brought under control. He noted that the 'phased' achievements in Macao's COVID-19 prevention and control measures have been due to the joint efforts by the government and various segments of civil society. He also said that the city has benefited immensely from the efficient support by the central authorities in Beijing. ●

The relief package



A breakdown of the government's financial support to the economy

Total package
MOP 48.95 billion (US\$6.12 billion)

Wealth-sharing handouts during this year

Number of beneficiaries: 724,000	Total amount: MOP 7.06 billion (US\$884 million)
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Consumption cards worth MOP 8,000 (US\$1,000)

Number of residents: 658,768 residents (As of 9 July)	Total: MOP 5.3 billion (US\$664 million)
--	--

Subsidy of MOP 15,000 (US\$1,878) for local employees registered with the Financial Services Bureau

Number of workers: 270,000	Total: MOP 4.1 billion (US\$500 million)
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Company subsidies of between MOP 50,000 and 200,000 (between US\$6,260 and 25,000) for firms with employees

Total: 38,000	Amount: MOP 2.5 billion (US\$312 million)
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Company subsidies to firms without employees in a one-off grant of MOP 15,000 (US\$1,878)

Total: 16,000	Amount: MOP 240 million (US\$30 million)
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Tax refund (2018 personal income tax)

Total: 167,000 taxpayers	Amount: MOP 1.19 billion (US\$149 billion)
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Special interest-free loans to SMEs operating less than two years

Total SMEs approved: 4,638 (As of 7 July)	Total loans approved: MOP 1.68 billion (US\$210 million)
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Tax relief on tourism income (April to September 2020)

Total businesses: 854	Total: 67.2 per cent or MOP 730 million (US\$91.4 million)
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Tax relief on property tax

Total: 27 per cent reduction or MOP 298 million (US\$37.3 million)
--

Health vouchers for permanent residents this year

Total: MOP 421 million (US\$52.7 million)



*All figures sourced from Financial Services Bureau and Macao Economic Bureau



Rafael Lopes

COVID-19

A tale of two doctors

Cousins Dr Tânia and Dr Sara Évora, both from Macao, have been fighting COVID-19 in Portugal for the past five months. They once felt ‘real fear’ but have now adapted to the challenge of life on the frontline.

Text **Raquel Dias**

The COVID-19 pandemic has been raging on for more than six months now and when it will all be over is anyone’s guess. Macao has fought a successful battle against the virus, however many European countries have not been so lucky. And that includes Portugal, which, as we went to print, had more than 50,000 confirmed cases and had experienced more than 1,700 deaths. Life has been tough on the frontlines for the nation’s medical staff.

Two cousins who are originally from Macao are among those thousands of medical personnel on

Portugal’s frontlines. Dr Tânia Évora and Dr Sara Évora have been battling the virus in medical zones in and around Lisbon since the first cases were recorded in the country on 2 March. Dr Tânia, based at a Family Healthcare Unity centre in the Costa do Estoril, a coastal area to the west of Lisbon, and Dr Sara, based at an FHU centre in the parish of Matriz in the district of Évora, which is about an hour to the east of Lisbon and shares the cousins’ family name, have not had it as tough as many medical professionals in the big hospitals but it’s nevertheless been a challenging time for them.

Cousins Dr Tânia (left) and Dr Sara Évora during a break from the frontlines



Life at the front inside a COVID Dedicated Area in a military-grade tent. Dr Sara Évora (far right) works alongside nurse Maria Arnaud (left) and Dr Tiago Mendes (centre)

Image courtesy of Dr Sara Évora

able to deal with the virus patients as well as the regular ones out in the field. “We are routinely assigned to a COVID Dedicated Area [CDA] for a week, depending on our district,” she says, adding that these zones are in isolated locations and are often set up in temporary military-grade tents. She says that any member of the public who suspects they have caught the virus – either because they are showing symptoms or because they’ve been in contact with someone who’s tested positive – will be directed by their doctor or by personnel on Portugal’s 24-hour COVID hotline to visit a CDA.

Inside the CDA, says Dr Sara, the patient is tested and, if the results come back positive, professionals like the two doctors must follow up – meaning they need to ‘make daily individual phone calls’ to them, taking notes of their temperatures and the ‘overall state of their symptoms’. “In some cases,” adds Dr Tânia, “we might need to do house calls, although those are exceptions to the rule.” The cousins both agree that the job, under the circumstances, is anything but easy but it’s become a necessary part of life on the frontline.

“I felt real fear in the beginning,” admits Dr Tânia, who has a four-year-old daughter, “but it was not for myself. It was for my family – especially for my father and grandmother in Portugal because they are older and could be vulnerable to the virus. At home, my

partner and I decided, after much consideration, that we were not ready to give up family life, so I have been extra careful when I get home to ensure that I do not bring anything back from my job. Some doctors opt to not go home when they’re working in the CDAs.”

For Dr Sara, there has been less pressure on her home life during the pandemic. “I live alone in Évora and my partner is staying in Lisbon,” she says. “I try to come to Lisbon every weekend, when possible. It has helped a lot that my father, who is still in Macao, has been relatively relaxed when it comes to this ordeal. The first time I spoke to him on the phone about this, he calmed me down. My main worry is our grandmother in Portugal, so I haven’t seen her since the lockdown started in March.”

Making a difference

Long before the pandemic began, both women chose to specialise in general and family medicine as they felt it gave them ‘the best tools to help make a difference’. “As family doctors,” says Dr Tânia, “we get to accompany patients during their lifetime. We are their first encounter with healthcare.”

Medicine is in the cousins’ family. Dr Tânia’s father, Dr Humberto Évora, specialises in sports medicine and Dr Sara’s dad, Dr Mário Évora, is a cardiologist. Their family connection to Macao goes back to the 1940s

when their maternal grandparents first arrived in the city from Cabo Verde, a Portuguese-speaking country in Africa. A few years later, the grandparents’ daughter and her husband joined them, bringing their first-born, Dr Humberto, with them. Dr Mário was born in the city

shortly afterwards. Dr Tânia was born in Macao in 1985, however Dr Sara was born in Portugal and moved to the territory three years later, aged just six months old, as her side of the family had briefly relocated to Europe. Both women consider themselves to be ‘Macao-Portuguese’.

Due to the Portuguese government’s restrictions on social gatherings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cousins meet us in Poets Park on the outskirts of Lisbon and describe their lives on the frontlines over the past five months. In the hospitals, doctors have been dealing with the severe cases and the deaths. But the Évoras only deal with ‘patients with light to moderate symptoms who don’t need to be admitted to hospital’, says Dr Sara, who adds that these patients ‘make up about 80 to 85 per cent of all the cases in Portugal’. “In this country,” she says, “we have around 1,900 patients per family doctor. We need to care for the positive and suspected COVID-19 patients – who we deal with every day

– but we also need to continue our care for the other patients too. It’s a challenging time for all of us.”

**“
I wore a facemask
in a supermarket
in Portugal. People
thought I had the virus.
I felt a bit like an alien.**

Dr Tânia says that ‘thanks to an intricate system put together quickly and efficiently on the part of the authorities’, the cousins have been

The situation in Portugal

Portugal, which has a population of 10.28 million as of 2019, boasts one of the highest COVID-19 test rates in the world. The 92,212 square-kilometre country sits outside the top 40 countries of the globe in terms of the number of cases. But it’s nevertheless been in a general ‘state of alert’ for months, with facemasks compulsory in all public indoor spaces and transport. As we went to print, these were the figures...

Confirmed COVID-19 cases: **50,164**

COVID-19 deaths: **1,717**

Patients who have recovered: **35,217**



Scan QR code for Portugal’s COVID-19 statistics
(in Portuguese but figures can be easily understood)

*All figures sourced from Portugal’s Directorate-General for Health

The doctors moved to Portugal to complete their medical degrees a few years ago. While Dr Tânia opted to live in the capital, Dr Sara moved to Évora. Both women undertook four-year residencies in Portugal, although Dr Sara spent a part of hers in Macao, finishing earlier this year. With medicine in their blood, it is not surprising that they both felt drawn to the subject from an early age. Dr Tânia says she ‘wanted to be a doctor since she was a child, always asking her parents for books on health and the human body’. It was ‘slightly later’ when Dr Sara became interested in human medicine but she does admit she had ‘wanted to be a veterinarian since she was a little girl’.

Learning from Macao

Both cousins are thankful for their close connection to Macao as they claim they became ‘better informed during the initial phase of the pandemic’. “We felt we were two months ahead in terms of information,” says Dr Tânia. “This is not only because events developed earlier in Asia but the fact that we had lived through the SARS pandemic in 2002 also helped us calm down and face the problem head on.” The 35-year-old, at the start of the pandemic, went to the supermarket wearing a mask. She says people were afraid of her. “They thought I had the virus,” she says. “In their minds, why else would I be wearing a mask? This

was about a month before the usage of masks indoors became mandatory in Portugal. I felt a bit like an alien.”

For Dr Sara, who is 32 years old, her close ties with Macao helped her feel more secure. “I remember that everyone at work was in a state of panic,” she says. “People who knew I had family in Macao often came to me for advice. Macao has dealt so effectively with COVID-19.” Both women were also pleased about another connection with Macao: when they were short of personal protective equipment (PPE), their families sent items like facemasks to them. In fact, Dr Mário Évora, who is the president of the Macao

Cardiology Association’s board of directors, sent PPE like surgical masks, gloves and thermometers to the FHU in Matriz at one point. “We distributed them not only to staff,” says Dr Sara, “but also to kindergartens and elderly homes.”

“It’s been a scary time for people across the world,” says Dr Tânia. “It’s no different in Portugal. But there are signs of hope that the first part of the battle is being won and we all hope we will learn from it in the future. I’m just happy to have played my part.” “And so am I,” agrees Dr Sara. “We are thankful we became doctors and have been able to help save lives.” ●



Dr Tânia Évora and her team are fully protected

Image courtesy of Dr Tânia Évora

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The godfather of gaming

Stanley Ho died just two years short of a century on 26 May. We look back on the life of one of the most influential and recognisable people in Macao's history.

Text **Matt Fleming**

On 26 May, Macao lost one of the most important and influential figures in its recent history. Stanley Ho, the charismatic and flamboyant 'godfather' of the city's gaming industry, died in Hong Kong, aged 98 years old. Family, friends and fans across the world went into mourning following the news, however, almost two months later, we've had a chance to reflect on the life and times of this fascinating man who – almost single-handedly – helped Macao's gaming industry to eclipse even the heady heights of Las Vegas in the US.

In 1921, Stanley Ho was born in Hong Kong into a wealthy and politically well-connected Eurasian family, but during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the family fell on hard times. As a result, Ho moved to Macao towards the end of 1941, just before the Japanese captured the territory in the Second World War. He once said in an interview that he arrived in Macao with just a few dollars, which he'd earned working with the air raid administration in the week before Hong Kong's capture, adding that he was 'a very poor man' at that time. He said: "I started with only HK\$10. That was my capital."

Ho turned those fortunes around. He went on to control some of the most iconic casinos in Macao and became a major philanthropist and construction magnate whose business empire spanned the globe. He was once credited with bringing in about half the region's tax receipts via the 'Las Vegas of Asia' and was personally worth almost US\$7 billion (MOP 55.8 billion) at one point. He built up the gaming industry in Macao under a

monopoly licence until 2002, when the arrival of foreign investors initiated a boom which resulted in gaming takings contributing to about 80 per cent of the city's annual revenue. He worked practically all of his life, eventually retiring at the ripe old age of 96 years old.

A tough start

Born Ho Hung Sun on 25 November 1921, Ho had a tough upbringing in Hong Kong. His large family – he had eight older siblings before him and more to come after he was born – had been wealthy and influential but his father went bankrupt while he was young and two of his brothers committed suicide. He had to deal with trauma and loss at a young age but he was also bright and determined.

He received a scholarship from the University of Hong Kong as a young man. He attended the prestigious university but did not have the chance to finish his science degree as his family fled to Macao when the Japanese invaded.

In Macao, Ho started working at an import-export business and, later, he started a kerosene – a flammable hydrocarbon liquid commonly used as fuel – company as well as a construction firm in a bid to establish himself as an important businessman in the city. It worked, however his big break didn't come until 1962. Macao changed in that year, when the city's first big gaming monopoly was awarded. Gaming had been legal in the city since 1849 and there had been monopolies before – but this one would change the fortunes of the territory.

Gastro king

As this is our gastronomy issue, here are some Stanley Ho food and drink facts...

- In 2008, Michelin named Macao's first three-starred restaurant: Robuchon a Galera, managed by French celebrity chef Joël Robuchon. It was at Stanley Ho's Hotel Lisboa. It has since moved to the top of the Grand Lisboa and is now called Robuchon au Dôme.
- In 2005, French wine experts recorked the last of a batch of more than 500 bottles of rare 1961 Bordeaux vintages at Ho's Hotel Lisboa, wrapping up the largest restoration exercise of its kind.
- Asia's largest wine collection lies in a Grand Lisboa cellar. More than 100,000 bottles are said to be stored across 14 rooms. Offering 17,000 different labels, the wine list alone is 585 pages long.
- Ho also loved expensive fungi. It's said he spent more than US\$500,000 (MOP 3.9 million) on white truffles at charity auctions in his life. In 2007, he paid a record US\$330,000 (MOP 2.6 million) at an auction in the Grand Lisboa for the largest white truffle found in half a century. It weighed 1.5kg.
- Hong Kong tourist spot, the Jumbo Kingdom floating restaurant in Aberdeen, was established in October 1976 by Ho after it had taken four years to design and build. It was made in the style of an imperial palace and has served some of the world's biggest names over the years, including Queen Elizabeth II. As we went to print, it had been closed since March due to COVID-19.

Private Collection



Stanley Ho sits at a casino table with his first wife Clementina Angela Leitão (far right) in 1980

Ho joined with his partners – future gaming entrepreneur Yip Hon, future Macau Grand Prix driving force Teddy Yip and future ultra-wealthy Hong Kong businessman Henry Fok – and the quartet put together an incredible bid for the new licences. They were up against stiff competition but they promised gaming revenues and to build a better infrastructure in the city to improve Macao as an important Asian tourist destination. Their company, Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM), was awarded the monopoly and for decades the syndicate controlled the city's gaming and helped bring it economic success.

STDM introduced Western-style games to Macao and brought in millions of tourists every year, leading to its contract being extended in 1986 for another 15 years. Trading under the Sociedade de Jogos de Macau (SJM) arm of STDM, the company still owns 22 different casinos in Macao. It wasn't until the new millennium that another licence was awarded but SJM – the only gaming concessionaire with its roots in Macao – is still one of only six companies authorised to operate gaming establishments in the city. Prior to 2002, STDM was the largest employer in Macao and in 1998 alone it contributed some 60 per cent of total tax revenue to the local government.

Empire building

Ho's entrepreneurship served as an important cog in Macao's immense success as a gaming hub. But he was an ambitious man who was not satisfied with just revenue from his casinos. He wanted an empire, so he used profits from his gaming ventures and put them into other investments, like banks, hotels, airlines and entertainment companies. In the early 1960s, he set up Shun Tak Holdings Ltd – its TurboJet subsidiary owns one of the world's biggest high-speed jetfoil fleets which ferry passengers between Macao and Hong Kong. Also in the early 1960s, his companies built a harbour in Macao – it is estimated that his businesses once employed almost a quarter of the workforce in the city. His portfolio became diverse – and his interests didn't just lie in Macao. He had projects in Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and Asia – not to mention Portugal itself – and he also ventured further into China, as well as countries like Canada and Indonesia. He created a global group of companies under his

name, rightfully laying claim to a hugely successful business empire.

In 2011, business-focused global media company Forbes ranked Ho the 13th richest man in Hong Kong. SJM is behind some of the most iconic casinos in Macao, including the landmark Grand Lisboa, however Ho will sadly not be alive to see the majestic Grand Lisboa Palace open. Its launch has been pushed back due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stanley Ho was certainly one of the most recognisable figures Macao and Hong Kong has known for many years. Once labelled 'The King of Macao', he was always incredibly well-dressed, flamboyant and charismatic. And he was far more than just a businessman – he was a philanthropist too, as well as a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the advisory body to the legislature in the People's Republic of China. In 2007, he spent US\$8.84 million (MOP 70.5 million) on a Qing dynasty bronze sculpture of a horse's head, which he donated to the Chinese government. In 2003, he donated a Qing dynasty bronze boar's head to China's Poly Art Museum in Beijing.

Stanley Ho next to the Qing dynasty bronze sculpture of a horse's head which he donated to the Chinese government in 2007



Private Collection



Stanley Ho poses next to Macao's Dr Stanley Ho Avenue sign

Dancing king

Ho was also an accomplished ballroom dancer, excelling in tango, cha-cha-cha and waltz. He danced in a handful of TV charity fundraisers and sponsored many dance performances in Macao and Hong Kong, including the Macao Arts Festival. And in sport, one of his thoroughbred racehorses, Viva Pataca, named after Macao's currency, won top Hong Kong races in 2006 and 2007. Add to this the fact that he became the first living Chinese person in history to have a street named after him in Macao when Dr Stanley Ho Avenue was unveiled in 1998, it's obvious to see why his name will live on for a long time in the SAR.

An honorary citizen of a number of Chinese cities, including Guangzhou, Foshan and Beijing, Ho had honorary doctoral degrees from the University of Macau and a handful of higher education establishments in Hong Kong. He had 17 children in his life, which he fathered with four wives. His children include Pansy Ho, the chairman and CEO of Shun Tak Holdings and major shareholder at both MGM and SJM, Daisy Ho, the chairman and executive director of SJM Holdings, Lawrence Ho, the CEO of Melco Crown Entertainment in Macao, and Josie Ho, a Hong Kong popstar. He had been in good health before 2009, when he suffered a fall at his home that required brain surgery but he later used a wheelchair and recovered. He died on 26 May at the Hong Kong Sanatorium and Hospital. His funeral was held in the city on 10 July with many well-known politicians and elites in attendance.

Following Ho's death, president of the Macau Lawyers Association, Jorge Neto Valente, told local news channel Teledifusão de Macau (TDM) that the 'interesting, generous and great entrepreneur' had done 'a lot for Macao'. Valente said there was 'no big project in Macao in which he was not involved' and that 'Macao owes him a lot'. He said: "I think he developed the industry up to the point where it was possible in those days. Today, we have different means and we have different instruments but at that time, he was a pioneer." Valente added that after the formation of STDM, 'Macao started to develop at the pace that had not been seen before' and he said it was unfortunate that Ho 'will not be around to see' the city's future development.

All in all, Stanley Ho had the sort of life that most people only dream of – but he worked hard for it from difficult beginnings and gave back to society throughout his career. Many people make Macao what it is today but one fact is universal: Stanley Ho was a key player in the success of this bright, bustling city that's made its recent fortune through gaming, tourism and forward-thinking entrepreneurship. ●

Honourable mentions

Stanley Ho received an overwhelming number of awards, merits and honours throughout his long life. Here's a flavour of those recognitions...

- **Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur** In 1983, the French government gave him this honour.
- **Commander of the Most Venerable Order of St John of Jerusalem** The UK gave Ho this award in 1983.
- **Commander of the Order of Prince Henry the Navigator** From the Portuguese government in 1981.
- **Eqvitem Commendatorem Ordinis Sancti Gregorii Magni by His Holiness Pope John Paul II** In 1989, he was given the honorary papal insignia.
- **Gold Medal of Merit in Tourism** Given to him by the Portuguese government in 2001.
- **Grand Bauhinia Medal** In 2010, in recognition of his contributions to the overall wellbeing of Hong Kong, he received this highest civilian award.
- **Grand Medal of Lotus Flower** The highest possible honour in Macao. Ho was recognised for his lifelong contribution to the city in 2007.
- **Great Cross of the Order of Prince Henrique** The highest order granted to a civilian by the Portuguese government. Ho received it in 1995 for his contributions to society. He is pictured below receiving the award from the then President of Portugal, Mário Soares.
- **Honourable Medal of Golden Lotus Flower** Awarded in 2001 for his commitment to voluntary service in Macao.
- **Honourable Order of the Crown of Perak** Awarded by the government of Malaysia in 1990.
- **Officer of the Order of the British Empire** Ho received the British OBE in 1990 for his contributions to Hong Kong society.





OUR CULINARY HOTSPOT

Tuck into two delicious features on Macanese cuisine at home and abroad before hitting the streets and meeting Macao's surviving hawkers. Celebrate the city's rich gastronomic history with us...

Image by António Sanmarful. Thank you to Elisa M Gonçalves Pedro for supplying the 'genetes' (cornstarch cookies) and to the Grand Lisboa for the 'fios de ovos' (bride's hair) featured on this page

Reclaiming Macanese cuisine

Macanese cuisine was the world's first-ever example of fusion food. We look into the origins and evolution of this centuries-old tradition that must overcome modern challenges to stay alive. Find out who is fighting to 'reclaim' Macao's iconic gastronomic heritage.

Text Sam Sinha

Few culinary traditions can boast they were a 'global first'. But Macanese cuisine can claim it was the world's first example of 'fusion food' as, over more than 400 years, it fused culinary influences and ingredients from a range of cuisines, primarily Portuguese and Chinese but also Malaysian, Indonesian, African and many, many others. It is a unique cuisine with a long history which has, over the years, become one of Macao's most cherished cultural treasures, enjoyed by thousands of hungry diners every day.

Macanese cuisine has become so treasured that it became officially protected in 2017 when Macao was given UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy status. The cuisine, which is also protected as an example of intangible heritage by the government, impressed the UNESCO judges who noted that the SAR 'identifies gastronomy as a key lever for nurturing cultural diversity and supporting sustainable economic growth'. That statement referred to all gastronomy in the city, however Macanese cuisine has been a key traditional player in the city's culinary success.

From the days when Macao was an important trading hub, inviting in cultural influences from across the globe, to today, with its status as an international tourism hub, Macanese cuisine has developed, improved and impressed. But since those early days, when some ingredients were hard to come by and others were far more prevalent, there's a treasure trove of stories to explore before we

can fully understand what the cuisine represents today.

Given the relatively small number of people who safeguard its unique traditions, Macanese cuisine has faced – and still faces – many challenges. It is a tradition largely passed down through generations of cooks who descended from the territory's original Portuguese settlers and has been adapted

**“
Tourists come to Macao
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and refined over the centuries to become what we know today. Globally speaking, it is a niche cuisine that will need the younger generations in Macao to keep it going and continue its evolution. With global culinary influences pouring into the city, this can be an enormous challenge, so there's a need to 'reclaim' the cuisine and make it appealing to the younger generations of chefs and diners.

But the challenges can be

met, as they were in 1999, when the administration of Macao was transferred to China. Some people feared that Macanese cuisine could be on its way out as the territory's culture changed. But this did not happen and, if anything, Macao has done more to preserve its unique cuisine over the past 20 years. This was highlighted on 21 January at a special lunch offered by representatives of the Macanese community. At the lunch, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng expressed the government's commitment to 'Macao's harmonious co-existence and multicultural society'. "Ethnic harmony and cultural harmony are an important part of social harmony and stability in Macao," he said. "The SAR government has always respected the language and culture, life customs and religious beliefs of the Macanese community and will continue to support it." With Macanese cuisine so central to the 'life customs' of the Macanese community, statements like this show the city's dedication to preserving this gastronomic tradition for the future.

With the government behind the safeguarding of the traditions, we take a look at some of the players involved in preserving and taking Macanese cuisine forward into the 21st century, from the Macanese cultural groups to the next generation of local chefs. But first, we dive into the history of Macanese food to find out how such a unique blend of influences evolved into the cuisine we know and enjoy today.

Dine out

Our pick of the most iconic Macanese dishes and where to eat them in the city

Tamarind-braised pork at Riquexó

The ‘Godmother of Macanese Food’ Aida de Jesus’ favourite dish. Made with pork shoulder or neck that’s braised with tamarind, balichão and wine, this dish has its roots in the vindaloo of Goa, which itself was a product of the fusion of Portuguese and Indian cuisines. Try porco tamarindo at Aida de Jesus’ iconic Riquexó – meaning ‘Rickshaw’ – restaurant.

African chicken at Restaurante Litoral

Galinha Africana is said to have been invented by the late chef Americo Angelo at the Hotel Pousada de Macau in the 1940s after he was inspired on a trip to Mozambique. Reminiscent of Portugal’s peri-peri chicken, the dish sees a spice-laden marinade on the grilled bird which is combined with a soothing coconut milk sauce. Authentic Macanese haven Restaurante Litoral in Taipa Village does a marvellously juicy version of the dish.

Minchi at La Famiglia

Made with minced pork or a mix of beef and pork, minchi is perhaps the most iconic of Macanese dishes. La Famiglia in Taipa Village, currently under the expert eye of chef Florita Alves, has been serving the dish for 44 years. The pork is seasoned with light and dark soy sauce and served with crispy cubed potatoes with a fried egg on top.

Fat tea at The Manor

Macao’s lavish version of an afternoon tea, ‘chá gordo’ was, is and probably always will be the city’s quintessential example of the fusion of influences that makes Macanese food so unique. Combining the idea of the British high tea, the Cantonese ‘yum cha’ and the Anglo-Indian tradition of afternoon ‘tiffin’, ‘fat tea’ is a resplendent celebratory meal of epic proportions. Dig in with friends at St Regis Macao restaurant The Manor.

A rich history

The Portuguese established settlements across the globe from as far back as the 15th century. These territories – none of which are now controlled by the European country – were usually along trading routes and once included communities like Mozambique in Africa, Goa in India, Brazil in South America and, of course, bordering China in the case of Macao. Each of these settlements across the world fostered unique cultures and traded influences and traditions as much as spices and precious metals. They were founded by merchants and adventurers who braved the high seas in search of new lands and trading opportunities. Many of these men married local women and set up home in these new communities, creating a melting pot of cultures in each port.

To understand the building blocks of Macanese food, we have to go all the way back to 1492 and the end of the 781-year occupation of the Iberian peninsula – modern-day Portugal and Spain – by Muslim forces from Africa, commonly known as the Moors. These Muslims, who revolutionised Europe with their progressive ways of thinking at the time but left the continent after their last leader surrendered to united Christian armies, left behind a cuisine that was rustic, regional and based on locally abundant ingredients. Seafood was an obvious centrepiece to Portugal’s cuisine at the time, as well as ‘a variety of vegetables, potatoes and meat products’, according to historian António M Jorge da Silva in his book ‘Macaense Cuisine – Origins and Evolution’. Portuguese food, which had also been influenced by Judaic, Arabic and Roman cooking traditions, swiftly grew distinct from Spanish cuisine despite some common similarities they both still share today.

In the years after 1492, the Portuguese, without the resources at home to feed their growing population, set out to find new lands, establishing sugar plantations in Madeira and across the Caribbean, as well as territories in South America and Africa. In an extensive study of Luso-Asian populations across Asia, culinary historian and former head of the United Nations University Press, Janet P Boileau, describes the earliest voyages from



António Sanmarful

Stuffed crabs served at
Restaurante Litoral in Macao

Lisbon, around Africa and onwards to Asia. “The Portuguese voyages of exploration,” she says, “were undertaken by a small, economically challenged nation filled with Catholic zeal inspired by its liberation from centuries of Muslim rule. Discovery of India and the Spice Islands generated the profits that allowed a wealthy colonial society to develop.” Along with the explorers went olive oil, wine and other European staples, as well as cooking techniques and foods like corn, tomatoes, potatoes and chillies from the Americas, then known as the New World. These foods travelled east with the Portuguese as they were easily transported on long sea voyages and carried growing cultural significance to the explorers.

Life on the seas for Portuguese

crews was far from idyllic. Rats ran amok through food supplies, bed bugs were rife and supplies were often so low, the sailors had to subsist on stale biscuits riddled with worms. The ruling classes on board, meanwhile, enjoyed most of the landed luxuries to which they were accustomed, often entertaining leaders they encountered on the voyages. As a result, many elite ingredients like port, elaborate pastries and expensive meats also made the trip. Much of the food that made it to the final destination – and in Macao’s case, this really was the end of a ship’s monumental journey across the globe – was dried, preserved in salt or sugar, or otherwise protected from spoiling. This impacted the types of foods that

ended up being used in Macao, which was established in 1557. Dishes based around vinegar, spices and treats like ‘bacalhau’ – salted cod – became, it could be argued, the first examples of Macanese cuisine in history.

DID YOU KNOW?

It was the Portuguese who first brought chillies to Asia in the 16th century. These fiery peppers which originated in Mexico went on to define many of the continent’s best-loved cuisines – from fiery Sichuan stir-fries to Indian and Indonesian curries. Macanese food, of course, uses chillies to perfection.



Fish and seafood were important in all the coastal communities that the Portuguese seafarers set up over the years. Other Portuguese staples including pork, salt, bread, sugar and vinegar played an equally important role and were added to the ingredient stable along with local ingredients unique to each trading port like Ceylon cinnamon – from Ceylon, now Sri Lanka – and coconut milk from Malacca, which is now part of Malaysia. But in Macao, how did this heavy Portuguese influence become the multi-layered Macanese cuisine of today?

Enter the dragon

Following its establishment in the 16th century, Macao was unlike any other Portuguese territory in the world. It was small and lacked arable land. Therefore, from day one

the city learned to rely on imports, just as it does today. And the most readily available imports? Chinese food, from just over the border. Early Macanese cooks relied heavily on food coming in from China, thus contributing to the Chinese influence inherent in the cuisine even among the early Portuguese settlers. And it's here that it can be argued that the 'world's first fusion cuisine' began in earnest.

Boileau argues that the Portuguese – more than other European explorers at the time – were open to the new foods and traditions they encountered. Although they arrived in these foreign lands ill-prepared for the novel plants, ingredients and customs, they were more able to adapt than their northern European counterparts. This may be why we still see more of the Portuguese

legacy in their former territories to this day. Boileau suggests they also had an easier time acclimatising to warm, humid conditions as they were used to the southern European climate. And she notes they were more open to racial mixing and the blending of cultures. Boileau explains: "Portuguese marriages with indigenous women helped demystify and destigmatise local foods while [the] native skill in preparing them increased palatability."

The Chinese influence shaped Macanese cuisine from its birth. Bread was particularly important in Macao where it was 'readily available and cheap', according to 17th-century merchant and writer Peter Mundy, who Boileau cites as a source. But there was far more in the way of carbohydrate-laden food to draw from in Asia. In short, a rare combination of openness to new

experiences and a proud cultural persistence gave rise to a truly unique cuisine in Macao. Macanese cuisine took on all the elements of the spice routes and of Chinese cuisine, yet managed to also retain its strong link to the Iberian world.

Girl power

Today, Macanese cuisine faces challenges. For example, 'balichão' was a shrimp paste often made with krill crustaceans that originated after the Portuguese brought pastes from other ports to Macao. Locals in the city developed it as a special variant for the basis of countless dishes and it became, for hundreds of years, perhaps the most important of all Macanese concoctions. It was neither fully Chinese nor Portuguese, a true fusion of cultures that gave a unique taste to many classic Macanese dishes. But today, it's largely disappeared from culinary creations. Maria João Ferreira, a board member at Casa de Macau, a Portuguese members' club in Lisbon, describes balichão as 'a very dear seasoning of the Macanese cuisine which is, sadly, about to disappear'. Some see it as a condiment that's facing extinction due to, according to Ferreira, the lengthy fermentation process involved in its creation and the inconvenience of sourcing the tiny shrimp, which are the main ingredient, live from wet markets. As a result of culinary challenges like this, many cooks are now reaching for more readily available alternatives on supermarket shelves. Ferreira is concerned that, as a result, some Macanese recipes are becoming endangered,

as the balichão is 'the main sauce and seasoning' which she claims Chinese fishermen taught the early Portuguese settlers to make.

Rufino Ramos, secretary-general of the International Institute of Macau, has been delving into the city's historic recipes and speaking to Macanese families to discover the secrets of the past. He has not only been preparing foods but trying to find out why they evolved as they did. "You have to understand the cultural environment 150 years ago," he tells us. "What was the role of women in the household?" Noreen Sousa is well placed to answer that question. The Macanese great-grandmother comes with a mighty reputation. She is an encyclopedia of Macanese cuisine

and her recipes are frequently published in historical books.

"Many of these [Portuguese] sailors," says Sousa, "intermarried with Chinese women from Macao, as well as Goan and Malay women. Many also married Southeast Asian women. The wives would cook their own dishes but also to try to please their husbands. They would make do with what they had to replicate the dishes their husbands were used to." As a result, explains Sousa, the husbands and wives learned from each other's cultures and used local ingredients as well as what was transported on the ships to create new dishes. Gradually a new cuisine was formed in the homes of Macanese families.

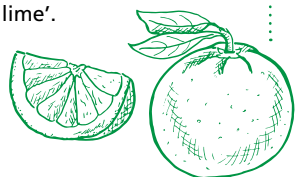
Image courtesy of Macao Government Tourism Office



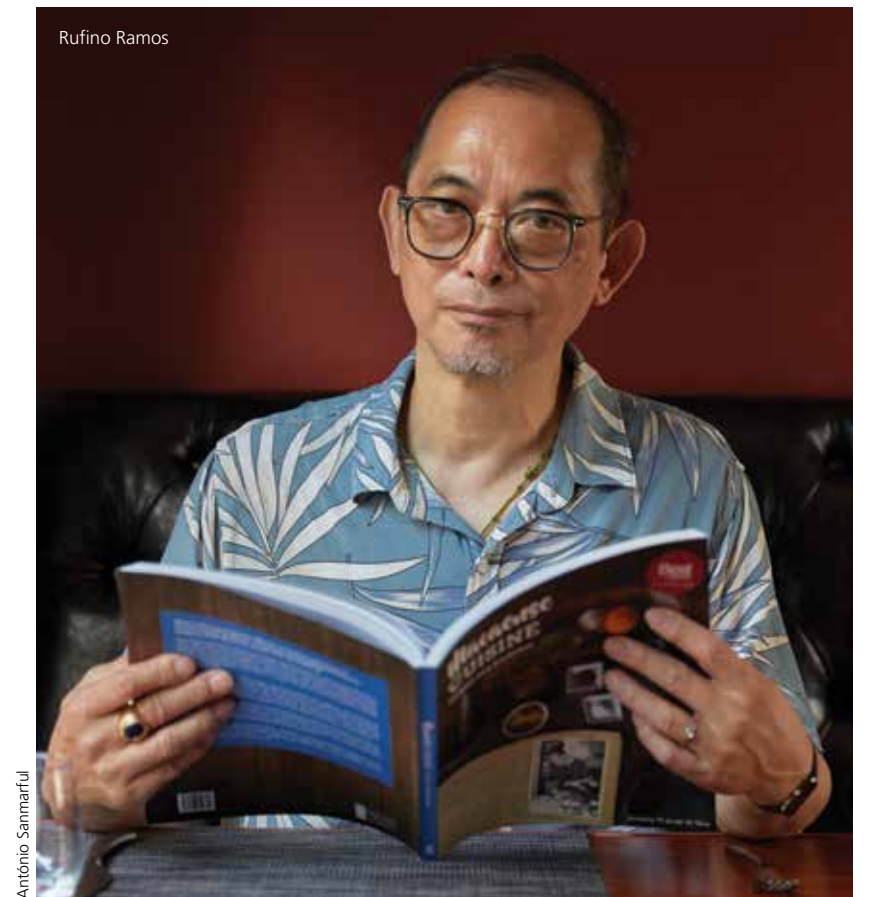
The Macanese-style Portuguese chicken is one that's unique to Macao

DID YOU KNOW?

A lack of vitamin C for sailors who had to subsist on dry ship's biscuits and salted cod for months at a time meant that scurvy was a big problem on long sea voyages for world explorers in the 16th century. Some scholars argue the Portuguese were the first to discover that eating citrus fruits prevented them from falling ill onboard. Janet P Boileau recounts from historical texts that the locals in Ceylon were 'astounded the Portuguese would give a gold coin for a lime'.



Rufino Ramos



António Sammarful



All images on this spread courtesy of St Regis Macao Cotai Strip

Ramos also sees the wives of early settlers driving the evolution of the cuisine. “The ladies,” he says, “because they didn’t need to work, they dedicated all their time to cooking. And they were competing with their neighbours, so they had to do the best, most elaborate dishes possible. They used very complicated ways to produce the dish, just to make it good.” Ramos says that the most important ingredients as Macanese cuisine evolved were balichão and tamarind – a tart fruit from the tamarind tree which is used as a spice and souring agent in curries, chutneys and bean dishes – but he too concedes that these ingredients are gradually being used less as they are now nowhere near as readily available as they once were.

“The Macanese curry used to have balichão and tamarind as two of its main ingredients,” says Ramos. “and they used fresh coconut milk which has a better taste than canned. But why coconuts when there are no coconut trees in Macao? Because they came from Malaysia.” Ramos says that these days, the legacy of the culinary rivalry between households makes it harder to move the cuisine forward. “Many of the families didn’t want to reveal their secrets,” he explains. “I’ve requested many families to reveal their dishes but many say that they are their grandmother’s recipes and they treasure them. It’s a very precious thing. Many of those secrets get lost.” Ramos gives the example of a grandmother putting Chinese wine in a fish pie to finish the dish – but only when no one was looking...

Minchi could be labelled the

unofficial national dish of Macao. Believed to have descended from both the English and Goan communities in the city, the centuries-old creation features minced or ground beef or pork which is flavoured with molasses and soy sauce, and usually comes with a fried egg on top. It’s so iconic in Macao, we’ve put it on our front cover for this special gastronomic issue. Other classics we think of as quintessentially Macanese today – like tamarind-braised pork, perhaps – are only a fraction of the many unique dishes that once made up the world’s first fusion cuisine. Much has been lost to history, so only the recipes that were best translated into restaurant dishes in the city or appealed to the younger generations now comprising the Macanese cuisine that’s known and enjoyed across the SAR every day.

Generation next

Chef Antonieta Fernandes Manhão, commonly known as ‘chef Neta’, runs cooking classes to promote Macanese food in the city. She is an expert on the cuisine and has been, over the past 10 months, collaborating on a special ‘chá gordo’ menu with The Manor restaurant at the five-star St Regis Macao hotel in Cotai Strip. The tradition of ‘chá gordo’, which literally means ‘fat tea’ in Portuguese, became famous in Macao over the years due to it being seen as a grand take on the traditional high tea but often with more dishes and more gusto. And despite being uniquely Macanese,



Chef Antonieta Fernandes Manhão

the tradition takes influences from all over the Portuguese trading routes. Boileau sees it as an archetype of the openness to new ideas that helped create Macanese cuisine in the first place. “Chá gordo exemplified the processes of culinary creolisation that lay at the heart of Luso-Asian cuisine,” she says.

Chef Neta knows all too well the importance of the feast, describing it as ‘one of the unique and rare cultural practices that we have to preserve’. She explains that after her grandmother passed away, she dedicated herself to studying and cooking Macanese food because she didn’t want to lose the family knowledge. “We don’t want the cuisine to disappear in the future,” she says. “If we do nothing, in 10 years it will be gone. Tourists come to Macao and eat Portuguese food and think they have tried Macanese food – but it’s not the same. We need to educate them on the real Macanese food.”

The ‘Godmother of Macanese Food’, centenarian Aida de Jesus, is

part of the older generation passing on the traditions with absolute authenticity at her famous Macanese restaurant Riquexó, which sits next to Guia Municipal Park. She says: “All the Portuguese [who frequent here] know what they will get. If I die, they know all the dishes [here] and these dishes will continue.” Aida de Jesus’ daughter, Sonia Palmer, who runs the restaurant on a day-to-day basis, explains that the Macao government is trying hard to introduce Macanese food to tourists. She says that, bit by bit, more people are discovering what Macanese food really is all about. “I’m happy to see that nowadays, more restaurants are opening and making Macanese food,” she explains. “It will go on because it’s young people who are opening them. But I don’t think it will be on a very grand scale like French or Italian food.”

DID YOU KNOW?

The Portuguese settlers were keen horticulturalists who established flourishing vegetable gardens, vineyards and olive groves across their territories. Even in Macao, where land is such a precious commodity, they found a way. Historian Peter Mundy described the houses of the Macanese ‘with their galleries and terraces covered with plants and small trees growing in flower pots of different shapes and sizes and planters filled with stones and water’.





(From left) Rufino Ramos, chef Florita Alves and chef Tertuliano de Senna Fernandes

Another chef carrying the torch is Tertuliano de Senna Fernandes, who was born into a Macanese family with more than 250 years of heritage in the city. He says this makes him ‘proud to continue the Macanese traditions’. As a chef consultant in Macao and on the Mainland, he helps to preserve the traditions by passing them on faithfully to other chefs and restaurateurs. He is also the founder and chairman of the ‘Associação de Gastronomia Internacional de Macau’ – the Macao International Gastronomy Association – an organisation that promotes Macanese food traditions around the world. “Being a chef,”

he says, “my passion is food and, in particular, Macanese food. So I try my best to learn and promote as many traditional recipes as possible. I put all my efforts into promoting Macanese food and traditions. I hope to see more Macanese restaurants in Macao and around the world.”

“If we stop preserving our culture,” continues Senna Fernandes, “then it will just disappear.” But he is positive about the future for Macanese cuisine, adding: “In the modern world, we record everything we do, so I’m hopeful our culture will continue to live on and inspire future generations.” Noreen Sousa is similarly optimistic that the

cuisine will continue to be passed down. “I have a feeling it will continue through the family,” she says. “My children are passionate about maintaining their culture and connection to their roots. Even my grandkids are very keen. We made our own balichão this year. That was a lovely day, sharing the knowledge with the whole family.”

Luis Machado, president of the Confraria Gastronomia Macaense – literally meaning the ‘brotherhood of Macanese gastronomy’ – believes that preserving the cuisine is not a simple task but he says there is a huge global effort underway to keep the tradition alive. “For the past 13

years,” he says, “since the foundation of our association, we have been promoting Macanese food locally and in Europe with the help of the Macao Government Tourism Office. With the help of local Macanese chefs we are trying to teach young Macanese generations to learn how to cook as their ancestors did.”

Machado accepts that no one can predict the future but he is optimistic about what can be achieved. “I’m sure that Macanese cuisine will prevail,” he says. “It will be strongly supported by everyone in the hotel restaurant industry and with the efforts of the Macao government to preserve a unique culture in the region.”

Rufino Ramos believes the key to keeping the cuisine alive is to pass the wisdom of the elders on to the next generation and allow them to add their personality to the recipes while preserving the fundamentals of the tradition. He adds: “What we need is to train the younger generation. Stimulate the interest to understand the Macanese food culture and try to devise some regenerated recipes. Organise some sessions and try to exchange some recipes with them – or even some secrets.”

Macanese cuisine, the world’s first fusion cuisine, is still enjoyed and celebrated in the city (and abroad – see our next feature over the page) after hundreds of years of evolution. It won’t go down without a fight as the younger generations seek to ‘reclaim’ this important – and tasty – pillar of Macanese culture, heritage and history. Multiple organisations, the government and a new generation of chefs are doing all they can to preserve the traditions born of such unique conditions. Their skills and knowledge are matched only by their passion for preservation. In these capable hands lies the fate of this storied culinary culture. ●



Not quite Macanese

Two iconic Macao street foods that are hardly traditional Macanese but nevertheless deserve an important mention

Egg tarts at Lord Stow’s Bakery
Based on the Portuguese ‘pastéis de nata’ from the parish of Belém, near Lisbon, egg tarts were actually introduced to Macao by an Englishman, Andrew ‘Lord’ Stow, in 1989. Hardly traditional Macanese cuisine but they have become so ingrained into the fabric of the city that they can be said to be one of the cuisine’s most recent examples. Hand-moulded pastry cases are filled with a decadent mix of egg yolks, cream and sugar, and baked until crispy and caramelised on top yet still wobbly and unctuous in the centre. Of course, try them at Lord Stow’s Bakery in Coloane.

Pork chop buns at Tai Lei Loi Kei
Prepare to queue at Tai Lei Loi Kei in Taipa Village. This humble eatery has been serving delicious pork chop buns to the people of Macao for more than 50 years. Said to have originated from the ‘bifana’, a pork cutlet sandwich found all over Portugal, Macao’s version sees a juicy, well-seasoned slab of pork served in a freshly baked crusty roll. This popular snack is a street food staple for Macao locals and tourists alike.

A global gastronomy

In countries across the world, you may ‘head out for a Chinese’ or ‘get an Indian takeaway’ but ‘going for a Macanese’ is a rare thing indeed. However, there are a few celebrated restaurants that pay homage to Macao’s homegrown cuisine out there. You just need to know where to look...

Text Sam Sinha

Aolfo Felix

The world’s first fusion cuisine with more than 400 years of history. Logic dictates that Macanese restaurants and takeaways should be a feature in every city across the globe. However, the reality is that they have been few and far between. And since COVID-19 struck earlier this year and countries across the world went into lockdown, with serious economic ramifications for restaurants, bars and hotels, it’s become tougher than ever for the handful of Macanese eateries in foreign countries to survive.

Discounting restaurants that call themselves Macanese but actually just serve up a version of Chinese food that’s been adapted by the owners for their local audience and small takeaway stands in Chinatowns and markets in major cities, by our estimation, there is only a handful of restaurants serving real Macanese food outside of the city, including one in Scotland, another in Malaysia and a third just across the bay in Hong Kong. So why hasn’t Macanese cuisine gone global over the years?

Other niche fusion cuisines, like Nikkei, the unique blend of Japanese and Peruvian traditions, have taken off internationally with representation in most major cities. But ‘going for a Macanese’ is a seldom-heard phrase due to the lack of restaurants representing the cuisine outside of its home city. However, it’s worth getting to know the restaurants that do still stand before learning what the experts say about the lack of Macanese representation out there...

Macau Kitchen, Scotland

Far from the subtropical heat of Macao, over in the cobbled alleyways of chilly Edinburgh’s Old Town sits a temple to all things Macanese cuisine. The Scottish

capital may not seem like an obvious location for a Macanese restaurant but Macau Kitchen, which opened one and a half years ago, has become a hit with diners in the city – especially during the UK’s COVID-19 lockdown when it prepared takeaways for locals. The restaurant has since reopened and it is well worth a visit. The cosy dining room is complete with trinkets, photos, newspaper clippings and works of art telling the story of the historic cuisine’s evolution.

Chef Kei de Freitas is the founder of Macau Kitchen. He’s a proud storyteller to each and every guest in his role as UK gastronomy ambassador for the Korsang di Melaka, a group which promotes Portuguese cultural heritage around the world. Born in Portugal, with a mix of Portuguese, Goan and Malay heritage, he is well placed as a cheerleader for the cuisine that takes influences from all of these communities. He says that he got involved due to his love of Macanese cuisine. “You’ve got the whole spice trade in Asia,” he explains. “Macao is really the last stop. That’s where everything is happening. And because it was connected to Portugal until the last 20 years, the culture is still alive.”

The Edinburgh restaurant serves classic dishes like minchi, ‘balichão’ pork and creamy dessert serradura, as well as a number of curries and specials which might borrow in turn from Goan or Malaysian traditions. De Freitas explains with proud enthusiasm: “Cantonese and Macanese people get excited and come here with memories of these dishes.” He says that the restaurant’s mission is to promote Macanese cuisine as authentically as possible, which means frequent trips back to Macao to dine with friends and exchange recipes. “When we serve the dishes here, we tell people about the history,” he says. “So it’s not just about serving the food – it’s about telling the story of the Macanese.”

Fat Tea, Malaysia

Co-owner and head chef of Fat Tea, Susana Batalha, grew up immersed in Macao's food and culture after being born in the city to a Macanese father and a Portuguese mother. Much later, she followed her partner to Malaysia and set up Fat Tea in Kuala Lumpur in 2016 with her friend June Yap, a Malaysian-Chinese entrepreneur with extensive experience of opening restaurants in Malaysia. Both women were keen to bring new ideas and a taste of Macao to the restaurant scene in the Malaysian capital. The popular eatery has a spacious dining room and its white walls are adorned with antique chairs and plenty of greenery. It serves refined Macanese street food as well as classic dishes like fried lacassá – a rice vermicelli stir-fry – and a range of fresh pastries from its on-site bakery.

Batalha has said in previous interviews that the heritage of Macanese cuisine has 'primarily been handed down only through word of mouth' and, as she is a seventh-generation Macanese woman, 'we try to preserve' the age-old recipes at the restaurant. She tells us: "The strong flavours of Macanese food are well received by local Malaysians – especially Chinese Malaysians but by non-Malaysians too. I think that there is a great future for Macanese food as it is so diverse and considered one of the world's first fusion foods."

Macau Restaurant, Hong Kong

Much closer to home is Macau Restaurant in Hong Kong's Tsim Sha Tsui district, a Macanese eatery that's been going since 1998 and resembles a classic Hong Kong cha chaan teng – booth seating, simple surrounds and a large laminated menu – and boasts fine Macanese baked pork chops with rice and tender Macanese-style beef. Its manager, Matthew Au, explains that although the chefs stick to authentic recipes here, their style of Macanese food is given more of a Hong Kong influence. He says that the eatery's beef brisket curry is a typical dish found in cha chaan tengs but his family's version uses a homemade Macanese curry sauce recipe. There were two Macau Restaurants run by the Au family in Hong Kong until the end of last year when the better known of the two, which was located inside the Hong Kong-Macao ferry terminal, closed due to 'a lack of foot traffic', according to Au.

A distinctly Macanese curry at Edinburgh's Macau Kitchen; (below) Susana Batalha creates traditional Macanese desserts at Fat Tea



Image courtesy of Macau Kitchen



Image courtesy of Fat Tea



Image courtesy of Sam Sinha

The Macanese egg tarts are a hit at Hong Kong's Macau Restaurant

Recent closures

The Macau Restaurant in the ferry terminal isn't the only Macanese culinary hotspot across the world that has been forced to shut up shop over the past year. Since that closure, it has not been a good year for restaurants globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic – and the closure of Macanese eateries shows the fragility of such a niche cuisine on the global stage. For instance, Taberna Macau, a former outpost in Lisbon, and Macau Asian Tavern, which opened in 2018 in Cape Town, South Africa, and was known for its stylish presentation of classic Macanese dishes, have both recently shut their doors. Fat Rice in Chicago, once a much-loved figurehead for the cuisine in the US, is the latest to succumb to closure.

What do these closures mean? Can they be explained away as yet more casualties of the pandemic or is there something fundamental about Macanese food that makes it difficult to export successfully? Rufino Ramos, secretary-general of the International Institute of Macau, believes that it is a uniquely difficult cuisine to sell 'not only commercially but as an art'. "Macanese cooking was always a homemade gastronomy," he explains. "It's very difficult to present the dishes nicely, like French or Japanese food. So we need to think of

ways to make it a viable commercial operation."

Chef Florita Alves, who is a keen promoter of the cuisine, believes there are many factors at play. She agrees that Macanese food has always been a 'home food'. She says: "It's a slow food that takes time to make and a big effort is required to turn a home-style kitchen into a professional one, like a restaurant. Less and less people are cooking it because most people don't have the time for elaborate food nowadays." Alves adds that it's difficult for Macanese cuisine to compete globally given the small community of Macanese chefs in the city. "Being such a small place," she continues, "we have a large variety of cuisines, making the survival of Macanese food all the more difficult. This diversity is also why Macao was named a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. Macanese cuisine has predominantly Chinese food and other cuisines to compete with – and that makes it very hard to stand out."

Dag Hartman, project co-ordinator for UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, believes that Macao should leverage its rich history to promote its culture to the world. He advises: "Open up your colourful past and make your citizens interested and proud of what they contributed to the world regarding food and culture. The key word is authenticity. You [in Macao] have great assets. You just have to make them visible to the world." ●

Eats on the streets

Street food is woven into the fabric of Macao's culinary heritage. But over the years it has become beset by many tough challenges – now a new generation of young hawkers is stepping in to keep the traditions alive.

Text **Rafelle Marie Allego** and **Kary Lam**

Once upon a time, the fast food scene in Macao was vastly different to what we see in the city today. Food carts lined the streets and lanes, selling anything from ice-cream and soup to Chinese tea eggs, dragon's beard candies and maltose crackers. There was seemingly at least one trolley on every busy thoroughfare, making Macao look like a huge – and hugely tempting – food court. But all this is just a distant memory in the age of the fast food takeaway.

Today, there's still a handful of street hawkers – those people who sell food or merchandise in trolleys that were once easily transported but are now fixed – out on Macao's lanes and plazas, keeping the old culinary traditions alive. They may be few and far between but these street vendors nevertheless remain popular with both locals and tourists. The same goes for those hawkers who have ditched the trolley and set up shop in small spaces dotted across the city. But in the days of McDonald's

and Kentucky Fried Chicken, will this tradition – that is beset by many challenges – soon die off? Or is there hope for the street hawkers yet?

For hundreds of years there have been street hawkers in Macao. Records are scarce when it comes to exactly how many but we do know that in the 1980s, the numbers had increased into the thousands. In 1987, the government established an administrative department that was dedicated to the affairs of the hawker community and it passed new regulations on hawker licences which included a key change from the old days: the mobile vendors had to keep their carts in fixed locations and keep opening hours to fixed schedules. Street food hawkers once came and went wherever and whenever they liked but the regulations, which are still in place today, meant that those who stayed in business had to remain stationary. This is why, if you now want a street snack from a hawker, you have to find them, rather than the other way around. Although this

move drove many mobile vendors out of business or forced them to buy up stalls and shops, today some are still operating. In 2008, for instance, there were still 1,200 hawkers running trolleys or small stalls in the city. Now there are just 892, according to the Municipal Affairs Bureau's (IAM) June 2020 numbers which group together those operating in hawker buildings and cooked food centres. But these survivors have kept the traditions going and they've been feeding their communities, as well as visitors to the city, for many years now.

“Good street food must first be ‘down to earth’ because street food should represent the intimacy between food and people,” says popular Macao food Instagrammer Memo Foodie, a local gastronome who doesn't reveal his real name. “This brings out the uniqueness of the simple and delicious street food culture.” Memo Foodie adds that street food should also have a ‘memorable taste’ – another key for a hawker's success.



Cheung Kui Yuen's stall next to Alegria Cinema;
(opposite page) Ng Sio Vo manning his family's
Sister Congee cart next to Macau Square

Meet the hawkers

Some of the city's surviving street food hawkers are keen to speak to Macao Magazine. One of them is Cheung Kui Yuen, who runs a trolley next to the Alegria Cinema at the intersection of Travessa da Corda and Estrada do Repouso. The speciality at the cart, which is open between 4pm and 7pm every day, is imitation shark fin soup, a concoction that looks like the real deal but is instead made with chicken shreds and glass noodles in egg drop soup. A big bowl costs MOP 15 (US\$1.88) and a smaller portion costs MOP 11 (US\$1.38).

Cheung has been selling his soup at this same spot since October 1985. He chose the pitch simply because it was near his home. The 67-year-old moved to Macao from Hong Kong prior to launching his business so he could be with his wife but he admits he found it difficult to get a job because he is disabled with only one arm. He tried selling a number of different items on the streets first until he realised that imitation shark fin soup hadn't yet reached the city in the mid-1980s. "So," he says, "I decided to bring it to Macao."

"When I first sold the soup," continues Cheung, "no-one knew what it was. Some people even asked if it was a dessert. They asked if it was sweet or salty." He says that, over the following 35 years, Macao's street food diners have acquired a taste for his creation, adding that before the pandemic hit, he was selling up to 220 bowls of it a day. COVID-19, however, has hit his revenue by up to 40 per cent, he claims, despite him still preparing his soup at 9am before setting up his trolley at 4pm every day. Now, he only sells up to 160 bowls a day. "Due to COVID-19," he says, "there are no more tourists and locals are eating out less."

Big sister

Located opposite Macau Square in the city's CBD district, another age-old trolley lights up between 6pm and 1am on certain days of the week. Sister Congee (蓮姐粥品) has been open for 40 years and is now run by 49-year-old Ng Sio Vo, the eldest of his family's second generation. His father, Ng On On, established the trolley – which has sat in the same spot ever since he received the cart's licence – to provide for the family. When Ng senior passed away, his wife took over, with the young Ng Sio Vo helping out. Gradually, the youngster

took over from his mother.

In normal times, Sister Congee sells about 100 bowls of congee and 120 plates of 'cheung fun' – or rice noodle rolls – on a good night. But since COVID-19 hit the city, Ng says there's been an 80 per cent drop in business so he's trying to come up with ways of saving the enterprise. He says he could start delivering. "But we don't have enough people for this," he admits. "There's only me and my wife." Ng says that the business used to have more customers in the past, adding that it used to open at 9pm and traded until dawn the next day. But regulations changed along the way and it was

then required to close at 1am. Ng says he adjusted his business hours, opening at 7pm every day – but this missed too much trade. So he switched to the current hours. Ng says it takes two to three hours to prepare the congee at home. "We can open at any time," he says, "but we must close at 1am."

Ng says that he and his wife have met all sorts of people over the years as they have manned Sister Congee. "There was a time when a drunk guy just paid MOP 1,000 for a bowl of congee," he recalls. "He told us that no change was needed. There have also been people who have refused to pay or have said they'd pay next time..."



Keeping the traditions

Both Cheung and Ng's trolleys once sold foods that were pretty hard to find around town. But now, many restaurants also serve the likes of imitation shark fin soup and cheung fun, so competition is stiff. Both men admit this has been challenging – and they both also say they are unwilling to pass the burden of their businesses on to the younger generation. “It's a pretty tough job,” says Cheung, who says he'd like to retire soon. “It doesn't matter whether it's sunny or rainy and cold or hot. Sometimes there's no business.” Ng echoes his sentiments, adding that he's not sure who would take over from him in his family. He says he ‘honestly doesn't want any of them taking over the business’.

Some young people, however, are dedicated to carrying on the street hawker traditions despite the challenges. Cheong Ka Hong is one of these people. He runs the Chak In Kei (澤賢記) trolley in the Broadway Food Street next to the Galaxy Macau entertainment resort. This business is actually 75 years old and once stood in the Praça de Luís de Camões, a square just down the road from the Ruins of St Paul's. It was opened by Cheong's grandad, Cheong Chak In, who is now 98 years old and originally moved to Macao from Hong Kong. He sold egg balls – like Hong Kong's egg waffles but rounder, bigger and chewier – so he could feed his family of six. It once did a roaring trade but his son didn't take over the business – he became a firefighter instead – and so he closed Chak In Kei and retired in 1986. But in 2018, his grandson started it up again in Broadway Food Street after he learned how to recreate his grandfather's magical recipes.

Cheong Ka Hong has experimented with flavours at his trolley. His egg balls

that are combined with Portuguese egg tarts have become a popular local snack. It takes the 29-year-old and his team seven hours to prepare the mix, however Cheong can sell more than 600 pieces every day. The business has done so well that Cheong has since opened five stores across town, each selling egg balls that come in an assortment of flavours, including salted egg, purple sweet potato, fruit oolong tea, wild cheese and fondant chocolate.

Another young man keeping the traditions going is Kenny Yuen,

who runs the Yau Kei Dragon's Beard Candy booth in the Rua de Fernão Mendes Pinto hawker area in Taipa. The stall was founded by Yuen's father, Yuen Tin Yau, more than 40 years ago but now his 38-year-old son and his partner, PR manager Wong Ka Kei, manage the business. They've done so well selling the peanut-filled fluffy white candy – which has just been added to the government's new Intangible Heritage list, see page 50 – they opened a shop in St Lazarus district two years ago.

MacaoLink



Chak In Kei's popular Portuguese egg tart-flavoured egg balls

MacaoLink



Kenny Yuen at his Yau Kei Dragon's Beard Candy stall; (right) the founder of Yau Kei Dragon's Beard Candy, Yuen Tin Yau, practices the traditional art



Image courtesy of Yau Kei

Government support

The government has supported the street hawkers over the years through efforts spearheaded by the Municipal Affairs Bureau under the Division of Hawkers Affairs. This team has provided better facilities and stalls for the hawkers and also ensured that sanitation is quality. Hawkers can rent spots from the government after following an application process. Depending on where they rent, the annual licence fee costs between MOP 2,420 and MOP 2,530 (US\$303–316), which is cheaper than most commercial building rents. The most recent IAM renovation and relocation project was completed in April when the hawkers who are licenced to trade around the three-storey Red Market building in Santo António were given newly designed spacious stalls.

Yau Kei Dragon's Beard Candy is one business that has benefitted from these stalls from the government. Wong Ka Kei sees the potential in small businesses like his and reveals that he and Kenny Yuen are looking for young people in Macao who are interested in learning the trade to join their team and help promote the traditional candy. Wong says the enterprise sells around 2,000 boxes every month and adds that they are innovating new flavours ‘such as ice-cream and durian’ to ‘bring creativity and add new elements to this tradition’.

Cheong Ka Hong is likewise optimistic about Chak In Kei's future, revealing that he has plans to open a restaurant. When asked if he expects the fourth generation of his family to continue the business, he admits ‘it depends on their will’. “They can add their own new ideas,” he says. “In this way, our egg balls will accumulate

the wisdom of generations and become the favourite food of different generations in Macao.”

While some veterans are ready to retire, they have paved the way for this new generation of street food hawkers in Macao who are not only keeping the traditions alive but also evolving and updating the old foods and recipes and making them their own. There may not be street hawkers and their trolleys peddling their wares in every road, square and alleyway anymore but the scene is nevertheless still alive and attracting a new wave of hungry locals and tourists, despite the many challenges faced every day, particularly after COVID-19 hit the city. As Memo Foodie concludes, Macao culture is reflected in its street food. ‘Different people with different professions in different industries value it – and that does not only mean locals but people from around the world’. ●

Dragon boat racing is one of the new additions to Macao's inventory of intangible heritage



HISTORY

Preserving the legacies

In 2017, Macao's government named 15 items of intangible cultural heritage in the city that it vowed to protect. Over the past couple of weeks, it has added another 55 items to the list. We take a look at these new additions – and find out why we must preserve our traditions.

Text Cathy Lai

A statue of goddess A-Ma stands high above Macao. The 'belief and customs of A-Ma' was added to the inventory in 2017



Eric Tam

Most people know what tangible heritage is – a city's physical history, such as its archaeological sites, historic monuments, ancient buildings and old artifacts. But equally important is a city's intangible cultural heritage – its local beliefs, customs, events, festivals, foods, rituals, arts and crafts that have been passed down over many generations, sometimes over hundreds of years. In Macao's case, some traditions have been passed down over the past 450 years.

Macao has many examples of tangible heritage – not least with its historic centre, which earned official recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005 – but it also has a plethora of intangible heritage examples. And the government is committed to preserving them for generations to come. "Intangible cultural heritage is a cultural lifestyle and a spiritual phenomenon that has been circulating a long time but is still alive and developing," says Professor Zhu Shoutong, director of the Centre for Chinese History and Culture, which is based at the University of Macau. "It vividly connects tradition and reality – and it continues to impact people's lives in the future."

For the purpose of preservation and inheritance, the city's Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) published an inventory that listed 15 items of

Macao's intangible cultural heritage in 2017. On it were a handful of Taoist customs, a couple of Christian processions, a type of Cantonese opera, the entirety of Macanese gastronomy and a few other items of local importance. And these items stood alone for three years until last month, when another 55 were

**“
These new items
reinforce our
responsibility to bring
out these traditions
from the past to the
present. Otherwise,
they will fade away
and be forgotten.**

added, bringing the total number of items that the government wants to preserve up to 70. When the IC announced the additions, it said it pledged to continuously 'promote the studies and research on Macao's intangible cultural heritage' and to 'update the inventory in order to reinforce protection and inheritance of the precious heritage of Macao'.

Dragon's beard to dragon dances

The 55 new additions to the inventory are as diverse as they are comprehensive, seemingly covering every intangible piece of history that collectively make Macao unique. There's dragon and lion dances, folk dances and songs, many Catholic and Taoist festivals, martial arts, artisanal skills and all sorts of traditional foods like dragon's beard candy and egg tarts. "It's such a big move that the IC announced the addition of 55 new items at one time," says Prof Zhu. "Not only does it demonstrate the bureau's increasing attention to the protection of intangible cultural heritage but it also shows that they already have a deeper understanding about intangible cultural heritage and that their work on cultural management has become more professional and proactive."

According to Prof Zhu, this addition of 55 new items to the inventory is 'a testimony to Macao's profound cultural accumulation' and its 'identity as an important base for the exchange of Eastern and Western culture'. He says: "The inventory has truly reflected the cultural charm and uniqueness of Macao, where various cultures and traditions can thrive alongside the dominant Chinese culture."

As this is our Gastronomy Issue, it's important to note quite how

many new items on the inventory are of a culinary nature. Macanese gastronomy as a whole was already inscribed on the list but some of the new food items originally hailed from the East, like dragon's beard candy, a traditional fluffy snack that dates back more than 1,000 years in China and is still sold as street food today (see our Street Food feature on p40), or from the West, like 'alua', a dessert that's mostly eaten during Christmas in Macao and originated in Portugal. Egg tarts, which also came from Portugal before being given a particularly local style, are now included in the inventory, as are Chinese pastries and sauces, almond biscuits and preserved fruits.

Some of the new festival items also hail from both the East and the West. From the East, dragon and lion dances are obvious activities at many festivals but specific events include the annual Tung Ng or Dragon Boat Festival which sees colourful boat races in the city's waters and a raft of birthday celebrations for Taoist deities like Seak Kam Tong, Pao Kong and Kun Iam. From the West, many Catholic processions, feasts and events have been added like the Procession of the Dead Lord, which commemorates the death of Jesus, and the Procession of St Anthony of Padua, the patron saint of lost people. Plus, there are purely local events that have been added, like the Feast of St John, which celebrates, with a day of music, dancing and a lively bazaar, a saint who was believed to have 'given a helping hand' to the successful Portuguese defenders of Macao when more than 800 Dutch invaders were thwarted in 1622.



Wooden religious figure carving was highlighted on the original inventory in 2017; (opposite page) the Procession of the Passion of Our Lord, the God Jesus, has also been on the inventory for the past three years

Cheong Kam Ka

Martial arts like tai chi and Wing Chun are now on the list, as are the 'conventional skills and techniques of traditional handicrafts' like the manufacture and painting of Portuguese tiles, the making of Chinese wedding dresses and the manufacture of Chinese porcelain. Some of these old crafts, including the manufacture of incense sticks, were once boom industries in Macao, however by placing them on the inventory, more protection may be given to these traditions in the future.

Traditional music and art also appear on the new-look inventory, including Portuguese folk dancing and saltwater songs, which are oral expressions that reflect the culture of the fishermen in Macao. Baatyam percussion is also one of the new items. This is a type

of Taoist music that's performed at occasions such as weddings, festivals and funerals. According to William Ng, the president of the Macao Taoist Association and the 'inheritor' of the Baatyam percussion tradition in Macao, the new items have gone through careful evaluation and assessment by the IC over the past few years. Now that they are inscribed on the inventory, Ng believes that it's more important than ever for 'inheritors' like him to promote and 'rescue' these diminishing traditions. "The inscription is a recognition that these items are native traditions," he says. "It reinforces our responsibility to bring out these traditions from the past to the present so we can let more people know about them. Otherwise, they will fade away and be forgotten."

Passing on the past

Prof Zhu agrees that it's important to preserve the city's intangible heritage items as their passing down reflects the cultural awareness of people in a society. "Just like tangible cultural heritage," he says, "intangible cultural heritage represents the precious memories of a place, a city and a group of people from a certain era. Its inheritance is the fruit of the endeavour of more than one generation."

Under the city's Cultural Heritage Protection Law, the relevant government departments – in practice this means principally the IC – are responsible for providing financial aid and other forms of support to the promotion of the items. Prof Zhu believes that the new-look inventory will give new meaning to the preservation of Macao's intangible heritage by uniting the efforts of the city's entire society. He says he believes that

'the government will implement some specific protective measures to support the inheritance of the intangible cultural heritage'. Ng says that the IC already provides subsidies to his music group and its classes every year. Prof Zhu adds: "Local associations, groups and companies with social responsibility will also render their contributions to protecting these items."

Prof Zhu says Macao can learn from the success of Mainland China. He cites 'encouraging young people to take part in the maintenance and inheritance of these traditions' as an example of a practice on the Mainland that can be replicated in Macao as a way to help preserve the items for future generations. "Moreover," he adds, "I believe that each item should have one or several corresponding associations which associate their activities with protecting, developing and inheriting the item."

Echoing Prof Zhu's suggestion, Ng says that the Macao Taoist

Association has been preserving Baatyam percussion by recording all the tradition's existing music scores and publishing books about the subject. The association's music group, the Macao Taoist Orchestra Association, regularly performs in local schools in order to attract more young people to the art. Thanks to the support of the IC, the association is now able to offer the first 10 lessons without charge for anyone in the city who is interested in learning Taoist music. The orchestra association has more than 30 members and most of them are primary and secondary school students. Some are as young as seven years old.

"We often tell our students that, as Macao residents, we need to uphold the responsibility to preserve and pass down the native music of the city," concludes Ng. "It's not about [whether you believe in] the religion or the rituals. It's about protecting our own traditions and cultures." ►



Eduardo Martins

The magnificent 70

The new-look Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Macao in all its glory...

ADDED IN 2017

ART EXPRESSIONS AND ITEMS OF PERFORMING NATURE

Yueju Opera (Cantonese Opera)

Prevalent in Cantonese-speaking regions including Macao and Hong Kong, Yueju Opera features bright make-up and exquisitely embroidered Cantonese costumes.

Cantonese Naamyam (narrative songs)

Originating from the Pearl River Delta region, these songs were originally performed by blind people. They tell great stories and have been known to last many weeks.

Taoist Ritual Music

The ritual music of Taoism is an integral part of traditional Chinese folk music. Nearly 500 items of this music have been preserved in Macao.

Patuá Theatre

Patuá is a language system that was once formed by Portuguese immigrants in Macao. Patuá theatre expresses the unique characteristics of the language on the stage.

SOCIAL PRACTICE, RELIGIOUS PRACTICE, RITUALS AND FESTIVE EVENTS

Festival of the Drunken Dragon

On the evening of the seventh day of the fourth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, Macao's fishmongers gather for this colourful feast and dance with a 'drunken' dragon.



Yueju Opera

Eric Tam

Belief and Customs of A-Ma

Macao celebrates the Festival of A-Ma on the 23rd day of the third lunar month by burning incense sticks, hanging ornate lanterns and hosting Chinese operas at the A-Ma Temple.

Belief and Customs of Na Tcha

Na Tcha is a child god in Taoism. Many local activities are dedicated to him, including parades, the making of 'Na Tcha lucky charms' and firecracker-grabbing races.

Belief and Customs of Tou Tei

This deity is seen by some as protecting the life and health of residents. In Macao, Tou Tei is honoured with altars, temples and a festival on the second day of the second lunar month.

Belief and Customs of Chu Tai Sin

This deity of medicine is the focus of the only water-based 'jiao' – a ritualistic ceremony – in the city. It's held by the fishing community in the fifth month of the Chinese calendar.

Procession of the Passion of Our Lord, the God Jesus

Taking place on the first Saturday and Sunday of Lent in February or March, this two-day Christian procession recalls the experiences of the Passion and the death of Jesus as depicted in the Bible.

Procession of Our Lady of Fatima

This procession takes place on 13 May and features two girls and a boy who represent the young shepherds who witnessed the Virgin Mary in Portugal during the First World War.

CONVENTIONAL SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES OF TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFTS

Herbal Tea Brewing

Herbal tea is made from purely Chinese medicinal herbs. It remains popular in Guangdong regions including Macao and Hong Kong.

Woodwork – Religious Figure Carving

This is a real skill and art that has been handed down from generation to generation for almost a hundred years in Macao.

Macanese Gastronomy

The world's first fusion food and the subject of our main feature in this issue. Turn back a few pages and find out why Macanese cuisine more than deserves to be protected.

Craft of Bamboo Scaffolding

This is certainly an art form in Macao, whether the scaffolding is being used in the construction of big buildings or small arches.



Leonor Rosário



Cheong Kam Ka



Cheong Kam Ka

Herbal tea brewing in Macao; (middle) the Festival of the Drunken Dragon; (top) Patuá Theatre



Lion Dance

Cultural Affairs Bureau

ADDED IN 2020

ART EXPRESSIONS AND ITEMS OF PERFORMING NATURE

Dragon Dance

One of the most beloved performances in local folk festivals and celebrations in Macao. The dance's shape, composition and movements reflect the people's worship of nature and convey blessings.

Lion Dance

An auspicious display in traditional Chinese culture, lion dances are performed during temple fairs, weddings and folk festivals to enhance the festive atmosphere.

Portuguese Folk Dance

This dance originated in Portugal's rural areas as an artistic performance that combines traditional folk dancing, singing and music. It was introduced to Macao hundreds of years ago.

Saltwater Songs

Sung in the Guangzhou dialect, saltwater songs are traditional oral expressions that reflect the culture and daily life of the fishermen in Macao.

Baatyam Percussion

This is part of the traditional Chinese performance art quyi and features Cantonese opera songs that are played using Chinese wind, bowed string, plucked string and percussion instruments.

SOCIAL PRACTICE, RELIGIOUS PRACTICE, RITUALS AND FESTIVE EVENTS

Procession of the Dead Lord

A parade held by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Macao on the Friday before Easter every year to commemorate the death of Jesus.

Procession of Saint Anthony

A parade held by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Macao around 13 June to celebrate the life of St Anthony of Padua, the patron saint of lost people, items and spiritual goods.

Feast of Saint John

Held in June, this traditional festival commemorates the Portuguese victory against Dutch invaders in 1622. Saint John was believed to have 'given a hand' to the brave defenders of Macao.

Procession of Saint Roque

This procession, held in July, pays tribute to Saint Roch, a Frenchman who, it's believed, performed miracles and saved the sick during the plague in Europe in the 14th century. The local parade originated during a 19th century plague in Macao.

Feast of Saint Martin

Held on 11 November, this is a traditional festival which celebrates an act of kindness by Frenchman Saint Martin, who cut his cloak in half to share with a beggar during the fourth century.



Feast of Saint John

António R. J. Monteiro



Rice dumplings are traditionally eaten during Tung Ng



Rice balls are traditionally eaten during Winter Solstice

Litchina

Gu Min

Feast of Immaculate Conception

Celebrated in Macao since the early 19th century, this day marks the Roman Catholic belief that Mary, mother of Jesus, was preserved from original sin from the moment she was conceived.

Spring Festival

This festival is mainly derived from old customs in the Lingnan area. It's been developed to include activities like thanking the Kitchen God, New Year's Eve dinner and the New Year's Eve Flower Market.

Lantern Festival

Held on the 15th day of the first lunar month, the lantern festival is known as the Chinese Valentine's Day. Celebratory activities include guessing lantern riddles and making lanterns.

Sacrifice Offering to the White Tiger on Insect Awakening Day

Originating from Guangdong and carried out in temples and shrines on 5 or 6 March, this folk custom sees people praying for the safety of their family and to drive away bad luck and sickness.

Cheng Ming (Day of the Departed)

Observed in early April, this traditional custom starts in the morning by paying respect to distant ancestors. Other activities include visiting the graves of close relatives and burning paper money.

Tung Ng (Dragon Boat Festival)

On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, Macao celebrates this important festival by hosting dragon boat races in the city's waters, eating rice dumplings and swimming.

Dragon Boat Racing

Dragon boat racing, part of the Dragon Boat Festival, is usually held in June and it's a massively popular traditional event. Today's fast-paced international competition is hosted by Macao's Sports Bureau and other local associations.

Qixi (Single Girls Feast)

A Chinese festival that celebrates the annual meeting of a cowherd and a weaver girl in mythology. People (mostly women) pray for wisdom and a good marriage on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month.

Yu Lan (Hungry Ghost Feast)

During the seventh lunar month, Chinese people in Macao pray for the safety of their homes and families by offering up food and burning paper money for their ancestors and other ghosts.

Chong Chao (Moon Cake Festival)

On the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, the Chinese families in Macao gather together to appreciate the full moon, eat moon cakes and enjoy valuable time together.

Chong Yeong (Worship of the Ancestors)

The Chong Yeong festival, which falls on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, sees people worshipping their ancestors and praying for blessings. They also host chrysanthemum exhibitions in parks and organise tea parties.

Winter Solstice Festivities

Between 21 and 23 December, the Winter Solstice symbolises the new beginning of the cycle of all living things. Family dinners and the eating of rice balls is traditional in Macao.

Seak Kam Tong Celebrations

On the seventh day of the first lunar month, worshippers celebrate the birthday of Seak Kam Tong, a Taoist deity who wards off evil, eliminates disasters and protects families.

Opening of Kun Iam's Treasury

On the 26th day of the first lunar month, worshippers visit the temples dedicated to Kun Iam, the Chinese Buddhist goddess of mercy, to pray and 'borrow money' from her.

Tai Wong Celebrations

On the 23rd day of the first lunar month, fishermen celebrate the birthday of Tai Wong, a god of the sea, by burning incense, sharing meat, performing lion dances and setting off fireworks.

Pao Kong Celebrations

Pao Kong is a deity and a symbol of justice due to his honesty when he was a politician during China's Song dynasty. Today, worshippers in Macao celebrate his birthday on the 15th day of the second lunar month in temples dedicated to him.

Festivities of Kun Iam

Kun Iam has a lot of worshippers in Macao. During her birthday on the 19th day of the second lunar month, worshippers visit temples dedicated to the goddess to chant sutras and burn incense.

Pak Tai Celebrations

Pak Tai is a Taoist water god. Worshippers pray to the deity for good weather and protection against disasters and obstacles during his birthday on the third day of the third lunar month.



Opening of Kun Iam's Treasury



Pak Tai Celebrations

Festivities of the Day of Buddha

Falling on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, this day celebrates the birth of the founder of Buddhism. Buddhist temples in Macao organise rituals such as chanting sutras, 'bathing the Buddha' and fascinating lectures.

Tam Kong Celebrations

This Taoist deity is seen as the protector of fishermen. Festivities are held to celebrate his birthday on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month. Expect Chinese operas that are aimed at entertaining both the gods and us humans.

Sin Fong Celebrations

On the sixth day of the sixth lunar month, worshippers celebrate the birthday of this Taoist deity and pray for his blessing and protection against disasters.

Lou Pan Celebrations

This Taoist deity is regarded as the protector of craftsmen, carpenters and cement workers. On the 13th day of the sixth lunar month, workers' unions host rituals and gatherings at temples to celebrate his birthday.

Kuan Tai Celebrations

Kuan Tai is regarded as a Taoist god for his loyalty and courage. He's seen as the protector of various industries. On the 24th day of the sixth lunar month, activities such as lion dances are held at temples to celebrate his birthday.

Hong Chan Kuan Celebrations

Local temples celebrate Taoist deity Hong Chan Kuan's birthday on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month by holding lion dances, ribbon cuttings and communal 'poon choi' feasts.



Tai Chi Martial Arts

Va Kong Celebrations

Va Kong is regarded as the god of fire. Local temples celebrate his birthday on the 28th day of the ninth lunar month with lion dances, fairs and Chinese operas.

KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE REGARDING NATURE AND THE UNIVERSE

Tai Chi Martial Arts

Tai chi is a popular martial art in Macao that's practiced as much for its health and meditative benefits as it is for defence training. Many classes and groups are held by organisations and sports clubs in the city.

Wing Chun Martial Arts

This traditional Chinese martial art that dates back to the Qing dynasty is mainly promoted by martial arts organisations and sports clubs in Macao. It's a style of self-defence that champions softness and performing its techniques in a relaxed manner.

Choi Lei Fat Martial Arts

Originating in Xinhui, Guangdong, this martial art has been practiced by people in Macao since the 1920s. It emphasises the pursuit of truth, justice and other traditional moral virtues.

CONVENTIONAL SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES OF TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFTS

Manufacture and Painting of Portuguese Tiles

Some street signs, churches and other buildings in Macao retain the old Portuguese tile paintings. Those who still create these beautifully ornate tiles in the city are highly skilled.

Manufacture of Cantonese Porcelain

The styles of the Cantonese porcelain produced in Macao are diverse. They include hand-painted patterns characterised by Lingnan folk customs and paintings that cater to Western tastes.



Painting of Portuguese Tiles

All photos on this spread courtesy of the Cultural Affairs Bureau



Cultural Affairs Bureau

Making Chinese Wedding Dresses

Microgravure in Porcelain

A skilled combination of calligraphy and engraving makes up the elaborate art of microgravure when it comes to porcelain. The artist must carve extremely thin lines on the hard material.

Mass Figure Sculpture

A Chinese folk art that uses steamed dough to create sculptures of mythical characters and figures through techniques like rubbing, kneading, cutting and colouring.

Manufacture of Incense Sticks

Incense sticks are mainly used for worshipping, particularly in religious ceremonies. They've been manufactured for more than a century in Macao, with a major boom in the local industry between the 1950s and 70s.

Seong Ka Carpentry

Seong Ka means 'construction industry' in Cantonese, so its carpentry refers to the traditional large-scale woodwork which is commonly used in Chinese-style buildings such as temples and residential houses.

Making the Chinese Cheongsam

The beautiful, feminine, body-hugging cheongsam is celebrated today. Many people have made the traditional Chinese costume in Macao over the years using techniques like cloth cutting, soaking, drying, shaping and sewing.

António Sammarful



Confection of Almond Biscuits

Making Chinese Wedding Dresses

Many people have also made Chinese wedding dresses in Macao over the years. They have to be entirely handmade by only one person so that the pattern remains symmetric and the exquisite embroidery stays consistent.

Macanese Gastronomy – Confection of the Alua

Symbolising the baby Jesus' mattress, 'alua' is a dessert that's mostly eaten during the Christmas period in Macao. It's made with glutinous rice flour, coconuts, sugar, almonds, pine nuts and plenty of butter.

Confection of Custard Tarts

Custard tarts – also known as egg tarts – are incredibly popular in Macao. They are made from flour, butter, eggs, milk, cream and sugar, and were originally introduced by the Portuguese.

Confection of Dragonbeard Candy

Dragonbeard – or dragon's beard – candy is a traditional snack made from glutinous rice flour and maltose syrup, and contains fillings like peanuts, sesame and shredded coconut. Its history dates back 1,000 years in China and it's cherished in Macao.

Confection of Chinese Pastries

Chinese pastries vary in different regions according to the local culture. The most common types in Macao include almond cakes, white sugar sponge cakes, banana cakes or walnut cookies.

Confection of Almond Biscuits

Almond cake is one of Macao's most popular Chinese pastries. It originated in the Xiangshan region of Guangdong and was introduced to the city in the early 20th century. It is named after its almond shape and almond flavour.

Confection of Traditional Chinese Wedding Cakes

These cakes are traditional wedding gifts in Macao. Options include the dragon-and-phoenix bride cake, and the red twill and white twill wedding pastry cakes.

Making of Traditional Chinese Sauces

Sauces have a long history in Macao. Years ago, they were all handmade by skilled cooks. Popular varieties still include soy sauce, soybean paste and chilli garlic sauce.

Confection of Preserved Fruits

Preserved fruits are traditional snacks in Macao. They come from the fine tradition of farmers storing and marinating a variety of fruits.

Confection of Jook-Sing Noodles

Exclusive to China's Pearl River Delta region, jook-sing noodles are made by hand with eggs – traditionally duck eggs. Historically, the chef used to ride a bamboo log like a see-saw so he could press all the ingredients together. ●



Cultural Affairs Bureau

Confection of Dragonbeard Candy



Confection of Custard Tarts

Natalia Mylova



António Leong

HISTORY

Soldier of culture

As the Macau Military Club turns 150 this year, we look into this venerable institution's colourful past and discover why it's still as relevant to city life today as it has been for the past century and a half.

Text **Paulo Figueiredo**

Macao has slowly transformed since the Portuguese first established a settlement in the territory more than 450 years ago. Tourist hotspots like the Ruins of St Paul's and the Mandarin's House still proudly stand in the centre of the city but many buildings, institutions and cultural ways of life have come and gone over the years. One historical venue, however, isn't just still standing – it's still being used as an important cultural hub. Welcome to the Macau Military Club, a beacon of traditional values and modern thinking that celebrates its 150th anniversary this year.

Few institutions in Macao have managed to preserve their importance and place in the city quite like the Military Club – known in Portuguese as 'Clube Militar'. The building houses a club and restaurant that sit in Avenida da Praia Grande opposite a structure that couldn't look any different if it tried: the sky-high, majestic Grand Lisboa. But where the Grand Lisboa stands as a symbol of Macao's recent economic and tourism success, the Military Club is a symbol of how an older way of life in the city can successfully adapt to modern times.

“

Nothing remains of the club's historic library. It was stolen, eaten by white ants or burned, as it was, in the back of the building.

Since its beginnings in 1870 as an exclusive social venue for members of the Portuguese military and their guests, the club – then known as the Military Guild or ‘Grémio Militar’ in Portuguese – has reinvented itself by, over time, opening its doors to both civilians and foreign visitors. As a result, it has continued to thrive and become much more than just a pretty landmark – it has become a crossroads of history and culture. Many notable historical figures from the city, as well as China and Portugal, have mingled in the club's dining room and salons over 150 years. For instance, the ‘founding father of the Republic of China’, Dr Sun Yat-sen, who once lived and worked in Macao, was honoured at the club in May 1912 – the same year the Republic of China was formed – while on a personal visit to the city.

Another famous man to grace the club was Portuguese symbolist poet Camilo Pessanha, who gave a conference on ‘the pleasures of learning the Chinese language and culture’ inside the club's walls in March 1915. Pessanha, who went on to write his most celebrated poems in Macao which were compiled in the ‘Clepsydra’ collection, was once a district judge in the city. He lived in Macao for 32 years and died here in 1926.

According to the club's records, in 1872, just two years after it opened, any ‘gentleman who has been granted military honours’ could also use the facility. By 1890, around a third of the club's members were non-military, with seven of them being British. And in 1953, it was decreed that ‘civilians and foreigners, for their social position and education’ then had ‘the right to be admitted to the facilities’. Macao military history researcher Ricardo Borges says the club has been able to adapt to the many changes over its history by welcoming in civilians.

Borges, whose military and fortress knowledge in Macao is extensive, speaks to us in the club's lounge as we sit among the lush tropical plants under swirling wooden fans. He tells us that for many years, the patrons of the institution were the ‘intelligentsia’ of the city – those people seen as the educated ‘movers and shakers’ of the day. Grandson of Manuel de Mesquita Borges, a former member of the club's board in the 1950s, Ricardo Borges, recalls the ‘great social role’ that the military served in Macao for more than 100 years since the club's opening – but he adds that important civilians and, of course, the city's Governor, were equally paramount to the club. “For decades,” he says, “the club was where all these intelligent people gathered to discuss current events and the geopolitics of China and Europe. This was where the brilliant minds of Macao got together.”

A cultural hotspot

The club hasn't just been known for its famous and important patrons over the years. It's also been known as a premier place in Macao to enjoy the arts. Shortly after it opened, it started organising conferences and then ‘soirées’ – evening parties featuring an array of music and entertainment – were the order of the day. These often starred opera and aria singers like Annie Loureiro, who excelled at interpreting the works of opera composers such as Italy's Gaetano Donizetti. Banquets were also frequent attractions, often held in honour of important visitors from Portugal, China or Hong Kong. In the early years of the club, it was said that these banquets ‘rivalled’ the ones held by the Governor at his residence.

Image courtesy of the Military Club



General Vasco Rocha Vieira, Dr Mário Soares and Dr Durão Barroso at the club's inauguration in 1995

Image courtesy of the Military Club



The Military Club at the end of 1916



Guests at the Military Club enjoy a ‘chá gordo’ feast in the 1930s

António Sammarful



Manuel Galdes

In more recent times, the club has had its own chronicler. Historian and priest Father Manuel Teixeira, who has authored more than 120 books on Asian lands, spent most of his life in Macao. Even today, locals still remember him, with his long white beard hanging from his face, regularly crossing the bridge from Macao to Taipa in the 1980s. His book on the Military Club, ‘Clube Militar de Macau’, which was published in 1982, is still one of the best sources out there that charts the institution’s long history. In it, he clearly distinguishes ‘two generations and mindsets’ – the 1870-1950 generation and the generation from 1950 up to modern day. He notes that the first generation’s purpose was to promote knowledge in Macao by assembling a library in the club that contained books on history, science, military topics and newspapers, all ‘for the purpose of the enlightenment and entertainment of members’.

Over the club’s first 80 years, according to Teixeira, members enriched the club’s library with a plethora of rare books, including first editions of works by some of Portugal’s most celebrated writers. In 1983, during the club’s 113th anniversary conference, the Macanese writer Henrique de Senna Fernandes said that as a young man he was an assiduous reader of those rare and valuable first editions. “Nothing remains of that library,” said Senna Fernandes in 1983. “[It was] stolen, eaten by white ants or burned, as it was, in the back of the building.” But, despite there once being a much-treasured library in the club, Teixeira is critical of the post-1950s generation in his book. He claims the mantra was altered, with the ‘order’ of its aims switched, meaning it became ‘entertainment’ first and ‘enlightenment’ second. He says that sports activities, along with general celebrations, became more commonplace as a result.

That aside, some of the most remarkable pages of the history of old Macao have been written in the club. For instance, during the Pacific War, between 1941 and 1945, Hong Kong was occupied by the Japanese but Macao housed thousands of refugees from the neighbouring territory. Teixeira, in his book, argues that members of Macao’s military forces were scandalised by the Hongkongers during this period as the refugees used the club’s piano to stage cabaret sessions. This sort of lively event was unheard of in the city at the time and, as a result, the piano was soon put under lock and key in the nearby São Francisco military barracks. But the damage, for the austere military leaders in Macao at least, was done. This was the start of a new dawn for the club, which was used by the government’s Treasury Department for a few years after the war before being returned back to the members. It would swiftly become more open-minded and inclusive of new forms of entertainment, laying the foundation for its ability to change with the times and stay relevant.

Famous guests

Today, the Military Club’s walls are adorned with black and white photographs of celebrations involving Portuguese, Macanese and Chinese people. There are also plenty of colour photos that feature former presidents and prime ministers of Portugal together with dignitaries from China. Alongside these images are paintings by renowned local artists like Nuno Barreto or Konstantin Bessmertny. And that’s just the walls. Today, the club’s guest book reads like a ‘who’s who’ of modern China and Portugal. There are messages from former European Commission president José Manuel Durão Barroso – who, as Portugal’s foreign minister, attended the re-opening of the club in 1995 after a renovation project – and also from Li Yuanchao, who, in 1997, signed in as China’s vice-minister for culture before he went on to become vice-president of the People’s Republic of China in 2013.

Another well-known name at the club is one of the senior members of its board, Manuel Galdes. Over the past 30 years, he has been a constant presence at the institution, helping to oversee some of the more recent turning points in its history, including the moment that Macao’s administration was transferred from Portugal

to China in 1999. As the city prepared for the change in administration over the preceding years, the club building underwent possibly the most important renovation in its long history. Between 1994 and 1995, around MOP 27 million (US\$3.39 million) was spent on the renovation, which saw works done to the club’s exterior and a total reconstruction and enlargement of the inside.

The goal of the ambitious renovation project, Galdes tells us, was to ‘leave a legacy for the future, with an inspiration from Portugal’. The project mobilised the club’s board, the local government and entrepreneurs in the city, including Edmund Ho Hau Wah, who became Macao’s first Chief Executive in 1999. As the project was underway, Edmund Ho – who, in 1991, was recorded as being club member number 888, an extremely lucky number in Chinese – followed its progress closely.

Local businessmen and companies contributed greatly to the MOP 27 million. One of these benefactors was Stanley Ho, who died just two months ago (read our piece on his life on p10). The late entrepreneur, who was member number 21 in 1991, said at the time of the renovation that he was pleased to support the club’s role in promoting future ‘understanding between the Portuguese and Chinese communities’.

All of the changes over the years – particularly the transformations in Macao’s demographics and the gradual relaxing of the club’s membership rules – have meant that today the majority of the club’s 700 members are non-Portuguese. “We at the club are at a crossroads of China and Portugal,” says Galdes, adding that the club can be a ‘doorway’ to Chinese culture, particularly as important people from the Mainland regularly use the facility. But how could a Portuguese club with military roots remain relevant in Macao under the post-1999 Chinese administration? This was the conundrum faced by Galdes and his board at that time. But they came up with an aptly Portuguese and Chinese solution which would not just make the club more relevant but also more financially sustainable. Galdes was once a military officer in Portugal and, from those days, he gained a lot of experience in food logistics. He is also a lover of fine dining and wines. So he and his team came up with the idea of focusing the club’s attention on people gathering around a table for a good meal – the Portuguese and Chinese way. They transformed the club restaurant into one of the city’s best.



Food, glorious food

Geraldes recalls that Edmund Ho was a key player when it came to deciding upon the new culinary direction of the club. He says that the two men had multiple conversations at that time about the project. “Ho asked me ‘how many Chinese restaurants are there in Macao?’,” claims Geraldes. “He also asked ‘how many are very good?’ and ‘how many very good Portuguese restaurants are there?’.” Geraldes realised that the answer to that last question was ‘very few,’ so he says the logical decision was made to dazzle guests with delicacies from Europe’s westernmost country.

Today, the club’s Portuguese restaurant, which opened to the public in 1995, does indeed dazzle and it really has become the centrepiece of the modern institution. But it wasn’t like that on day one – it’s been the result of a long process of trial and error. For instance, it was reported that an early move to concession it to one of Portugal’s most well-known restaurants hit the rocks after disagreements between chefs and kitchen staff. But Geraldes and his team eventually brought in an army chef he had once worked

with called Firmino Pinto, who went on to train the mostly Filipino staff in basic Portuguese cooking. The training went so well that Pinto later returned and, today, most of the club’s kitchen staff has been trained by him. The curry recipe on the club’s menu is Pinto’s.

In 2000, Geraldes and his team started a residency programme with top chefs from Portugal in order to show off the European country’s exceptional contemporary cuisine. The chefs would join the club restaurant for three months at a time. The first was Vítor Sobral, a multi-award winning culinary master who also left several dishes on the menu. Today, the restaurant still retains some visiting chefs and also boasts fado music – a profoundly melancholic and expressive form of Portuguese singing – in the background, as well as a decorative spirit that sees tableware from famous Portuguese ceramics studio Bordallo Pinheiro set against elaborate Chinese folding screens. Many local academics and businesspeople meet here for lunch and its wine list has earned accolades from industry magazines for its incredible Portuguese vintages. From last month, the list includes Portuguese wines ‘Chamelaria’ red and ‘Amplo’ premium red,

produced by Quinta da Marmeleira which is led by Macao businessman Wu Zhiwei.

It is difficult to keep up the creative standards at the restaurant, concedes Geraldes. “Running a restaurant demands discipline and constancy,” he says. “I usually tell the staff that for a restaurant to flounder, all it takes is one meal.” But the establishment has nevertheless been a success and it’s become a shining light in Macao’s culinary scene. In terms of the club’s financial sustainability, it has also been an important cog, adds Geraldes. “[The residency programme] was my secret recipe,” he says. “Portuguese culture starts at the table.”

A plethora of culinary stars from Portugal have donned the club’s apron over the past decade, including celebrated maestro Fausto Airoidi in 2011 and multiple Michelin star winner Henrique Sá Pessoa in 2013. Veteran pioneering chef Miguel Castro e Silva also cooked up treats in 2015 and 2018, and a female chef known for ‘reinventing good Portuguese cuisine’, Justa Nobre, created a series of delights in 2012 and 2016. All of these chefs left a signature dish on the menu, making the club the only restaurant in the world where you can taste creations from such an esteemed portion of Portugal’s best contemporary masters.

Noélia Jerónimo, who owns the multi-award-winning Restaurante Noélia & Jerónimo in Cabanas de Tavira on the south coast of Portugal, is one of the most recent resident chefs at the club’s restaurant. The maestro, known for her exceptional seafood dishes, calls the club’s menu ‘a Portuguese food bible’ due to the quality and originality of the recipes – these are not traditional dishes but creative contemporary masterpieces that use local, regional and Portuguese ingredients. During Jerónimo’s stays in Macao, first in 2018 and again at the end of last year, the only problem for the chef has been the need to write her recipes down. “I was told to put the recipes down on paper,” she says, “but I never do anything like that. I keep everything in my head.” Everything else, though, has impressed Jerónimo, including the ‘warm-heartedness’ of the cooking staff and the quality of the local ingredients and dishes.

Along with its regular chef residencies and food festivals, the club has also frequently featured exhibitions of works by artists from Portuguese-speaking countries since 1999. Book launches and conferences have also been often, however in recent months the COVID-19 pandemic has obviously put these on the shelf for a period.

(Opposite page) The club’s ornate, spacious and relaxed dining area; (below, top) the club’s version of clams with lemon and garlic in ‘bulhão pato’ sauce, which uses fresh coriander as a main ingredient; (below, bottom) ‘Bacalhau à Brás’: salted dry codfish with onions, potatoes and scrambled egg



All photos on this spread by António Sanmarful

The most important dates in the Military Club’s 150-year history

- 1870
- 20 April The ‘Military Guild’, which will later become the ‘Military Club’, is founded.
- 1872
- June The construction of the club building is concluded.
- 1873
- May The club holds its first conference. A lieutenant in the Portuguese navy, José Maria Teixeira Guimarães, who would go on to become the Secretary General of the General Government of India, Macao and East Timor, talks about ‘artillery and armour’.
- 1912
- May The ‘founding father of the Republic of China’, Dr Sun Yat-sen, is honoured at the club.
- 1915
- March A conference on Chinese language and culture is hosted at the club by celebrated Portuguese writer Camilo Pessanha.
- 1941
- The government takes possession of the club building to accommodate refugees from Hong Kong as the Second World War grips the world.
- 1952
- The club enjoys a re-inauguration ceremony after the government gives it back to members. There is also a big renovation of the building this year.
- 1953
- For the first time, civilians are allowed to become members and frequent the club. The name is officially changed from ‘Guild’ to ‘Club’ and there’s a shift in its mission to a more ‘entertainment and learning’ direction.
- 1994
- April A major reconstruction of the club’s building, both interior and exterior, begins.
- 1995
- The club reopens after the renovation project. The then President of Portugal, Mário Soares, is joined by Portugal’s then minister of foreign affairs José Manuel Durão Barroso and Edmund Ho, the future Chief Executive of Macao, in celebrating the reopening.
- 2020
- The club toasts its 150th anniversary. Expect celebratory and commemorative events later this year.

Reflecting Macao’s evolution

The Military Club building is an architectural gem. The blush-coloured colonnade building and the adjacent São Francisco garden feature in many iconic images of old Macao. When it opened, it actually sat next to the waters that surrounded the city. Patrons could sit in the shadow of the porch and listen to the sounds of the sea as the Portuguese ‘lorcha’ sailing vessels floated past. But a century and a half later, the club is almost a kilometre away from its nearest waters at Nam Van Lake. It’s as if it has travelled inland as Macao has grown, reflecting the evolution of the city’s urban landscape.

Bruno Soares and Irene Ó, co-founders of Macao’s O.BS Architects, were behind the 1994-1995 renovation project. Soares tells us that the club’s iconic façade is the only original element left from 1870, along with its chandeliers and a few interior decorations. He says that the interior, in fact, was entirely reconstructed in the project and two new floors were added. When he was asked to do the project, Soares admits he ‘immediately said yes’ – but was also concerned due to ‘the very unique charisma of the building’. However, he says the architects created ‘an environment that had to do with the history of Macao’ with ‘no modern or impactful interventions’. So their ‘subtle and light’ solution was to take exterior decorative elements and ‘transport them to the inside’ to create a sense of ‘unity’. “It was a work of love,” he says, “and of a very intimate connection to the history of the building and to Macao.”

Many architects worked on the club’s interiors over more than 100 years prior to 1995. “They were completely mismatched,” says Soares, pointing out that the restaurant was once adorned with Portuguese ‘azulejo’ tiles and wooden beams – which he describes as ‘forced Portuguese suave’ – while the bar was all brickwork. “It was totally incoherent,” he recalls, “neither Portuguese nor Macanese.” But the style that was adopted in the renovation, says Soares, is in harmony with the exterior, which was originally designed by the Baron of Cercal, António Alexandrino de Melo. Soares says it’s a ‘colonial style with features of Portuguese architecture’, using classical elements ‘in a very original form’. Due to the inside now seamlessly mirroring the outside, ‘most people who go there today think the interiors are original’, he concludes.



Humble beginnings

The first leaders behind the Military Club

The Military Guild – or ‘Grémio Militar’ in Portuguese, later changed to ‘Clube Militar’ – was founded on 20 April 1870. According to its first record, the new institution was to serve not only as a place for gatherings of Portuguese military personnel who were stationed in Macao but ‘most of all to establish a library of books on the military, science and other topics’. Its first president was Captain Manuel Azevedo Coutinho. His assistant was Lieutenant Henrique Augusto Dias de Carvalho and his secretary was Rafael das Dores. All three men served in Macao as well as in Timor-Leste and other Portuguese territories in Africa. Das Dores was an avid collector of newspapers and magazines published in Portuguese in Asia. He also published a dictionary of tetum, the Timor-Leste dialect. According to the club’s records, it was das Dores who proposed to create the club in the first place.

Image of Captain Manuel Azevedo Coutinho (above) courtesy of the Military Club

“

The club is not only a time-honoured Luso-Chinese cultural icon but people visit it for a cultural experience which they could not find anywhere else in the city.

The club's décor mixes traditional elements from Portugal – like ornate wooden furniture, embroidered Arraiolos rugs and the 150-year old chandeliers – with traditional Chinese elements like valuable vases. Soares ranks the club as among Macao's most iconic civilian buildings, a list that includes the Portuguese Consul's residence in the former Hotel Bela Vista and the Government House. But, he adds, it's the one that best communicates with the public because it's central and is open to visitors from across the world.

A landmark moment

An iconic building with an important history deserves an incredible celebration as it hits its 150th anniversary. However, COVID-19 has done its best to scupper plans this year. Some of the 150th events have already been scrapped – but the club still expects to launch a commemorative book and hold a photo exhibition of 150 historical images towards the end of the year. There will also hopefully be a 'Macau Artists Salon' at the club which will bring together local artists to celebrate the anniversary. Regular events, such as food festivals and art shows by people from Portuguese-speaking countries, may yet be cancelled this year but the club's team are working hard to keep the events running if they can.

COVID-19, however, won't sour the club representatives' celebratory mood. Ambrose So, the club's president, highlights the fact that the institution has retained its 'great historical relevance in the city' over the past 150 years. "It is still the case today," he says. "The club is not only a time-honoured Luso-Chinese cultural icon but people, both local and foreign, visit it for its Portuguese ambience and for a cultural experience which they could not find anywhere else in the city." So, the chief executive of Macao gaming operator SJM Holdings Ltd, adds that the pre-1999 renovation 'transformed the club into what it is today'.

"The club," concludes So, "remains a platform for East-meets-West in a property which distinguished itself with Sino-Latin and, in particular, Portuguese culture. In recent years, it has become a brand name in the region which promotes interaction between artists from Chinese and Portuguese-speaking countries in [the form of] paintings, sculptures and other art forms. In light of Macao's aspiration to become a world centre of tourism and leisure in the Greater Bay Area in the years ahead, the unique characteristics of the club will surely, alongside other important cultural attractions, help the city realise this aspiration." If Ambrose So is correct, then the fascinating, iconic Macau Military Club should be entertaining visitors from across the globe in another 150 years from now. ●

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Agri-food is equally important
to both China and Brazil as their
trade relationship strengthens

PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Growing together

China is strengthening its agriculture and agri-food partnerships with Brazil – and the COVID-19 pandemic doesn’t seem to be affecting this close relationship.

Text **Paulo Figueiredo**

For more than a decade, China and Brazil have been strengthening their trading ties. In 2009, China became the South American giant’s largest trading partner, leading some media voices in the country to dub China as Brazil’s most promising business partner in the world – as well as a strategic ally – due to the Asian nation’s rising demand for raw materials and agricultural produce. Since then, China has become the biggest importer of Brazilian products in the world as well as one of the biggest exporters of its own goods and services to the colourful South American nation. And agriculture and agri-food are at the heart of this ever-growing trade relationship.

Despite this deeply rooted relationship, however, last month Yang Wanming, the Chinese

ambassador to Brazil – which boasts South America’s largest economy – said there was still a ‘large margin for growth in trade’ between the two countries, as well as the potential for new bilateral business ventures and tourism and education partnerships. “I see room for growth in partnerships in infrastructure, agribusiness, energy and health,” said Yang during a forum that was organised by Brazil’s Group of Business Leaders (LIDE). The diplomat’s view is well in line with the general confidence among key actors in trade and investment links between the two countries in the food production chain. Momentum is higher in the agribusiness sector – more than in any other. Initially, the COVID-19 pandemic brought fears that trade links could suffer because of a global economic downturn and slowing demand for all sorts of

products. Instead, it seems that links have actually been bolstered.

China is the principal destination of Brazilian agricultural exports, representing one-third of the almost US\$100 billion (MOP 801 billion) worth of produce that was exported by the South American country last year in this sector, according to ‘China-Brazil Partnership on Agriculture and Food Security’, a new book published in June by the University of São Paulo’s Luiz de Queiroz College of Agriculture (ESALQ) and the China Agricultural University’s College of Economics and Management. Today, as the book – edited by Sílvia Galvão de Miranda, Marcos Jank and Pei Guo – suggests, Brazil is the main supplier of agri-food products to the Asian giant – nearly 20 per cent of China’s imports – and ranks number one in the trade of soybeans, beef, poultry, cotton, sugar and cellulose pulp.

Image courtesy of DINO



Yang Wanming, the Chinese ambassador to Brazil

Image courtesy of Fiagril



Brazilian soybean company Fiagril

Important exports

The Foreign Trade indicator (Icomex) of Brazilian think tank Getulio Vargas Foundation, which analyses the country's trade every month, confirmed a trend in May that had already been signalled in the previous months. The data showed there had been an increase in Brazilian exports based on commodities for the Asian market, including agricultural and mineral products that are sold on the international market. It also showed a recent slump in some markets, including the US, Mexico and Argentina markets, thus making Brazil's trade links with China all the more important.

In May, the volume of agricultural and mineral products, as well as other important commodities, exported by Brazil to China grew by 64.7 per cent more than in the same month in 2019. In comparison, Brazil exported fewer products to Asia in general during the same time. Soybeans accounted for a total of 52.8 per cent of all these exports to China, with iron ore and oil accounting for 13.4 and 12.2 per cent respectively. Other exports included beef, pork and chicken, which collectively accounted for about 9.5 per cent of the total. In all, according to Icomex, between January and May, China accounted for 32.5 per cent of all Brazilian exports, mostly agriculture and mineral products, and 20.8 per cent of all the country's imports, which primarily included manufactured goods, drilling or exploration platforms and electronic components.

According to the Brazilian Association of Animal Protein (ABPA), Brazilian poultry and pork exports to China may break a new record this year, surpassing one million tonnes by the end of the year compared to the 834,000 tonnes that were shipped last year. And even though international trade is slumping in general due to the global economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which primarily deals with trade, investment and development issues across the world, this year Brazil should be able to maintain its levels of exports to the world's second

largest economy. Economist Marco Fugazza, author of April's UNCTAD study 'Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Commodities Exports to China', estimates that a drop in Brazilian exports of crude oil and minerals – caused by a drop in oil prices and consumption – is expected to be offset by increased exports of agricultural products like soybeans.

Not all the news may be good in the short term, however. Due to the global pandemic, some concerns are being voiced. For instance, in June, the Brazilian Embassy in Beijing wrote to the South American country's private sector after a warning was made by Chinese health officials. They warned that

Brazilian meat companies that have detected COVID-19 on their premises should suspend exports – and if they don't, it would risk China barring meat exports from the country to its shores for a period. According to the 17 June letter, quoted in the Brazilian press, local authorities in Brazil are now 'adopting preventative measures that could affect Brazilian exports of meat products to the Chinese market'. Late last month, four export licences to China were suspended by both countries because of health concerns, according to the Brazilian newspaper 'Valor Econômico'. More could suffer the same fate in the near future.



Cereal harvest in Mato Grosso

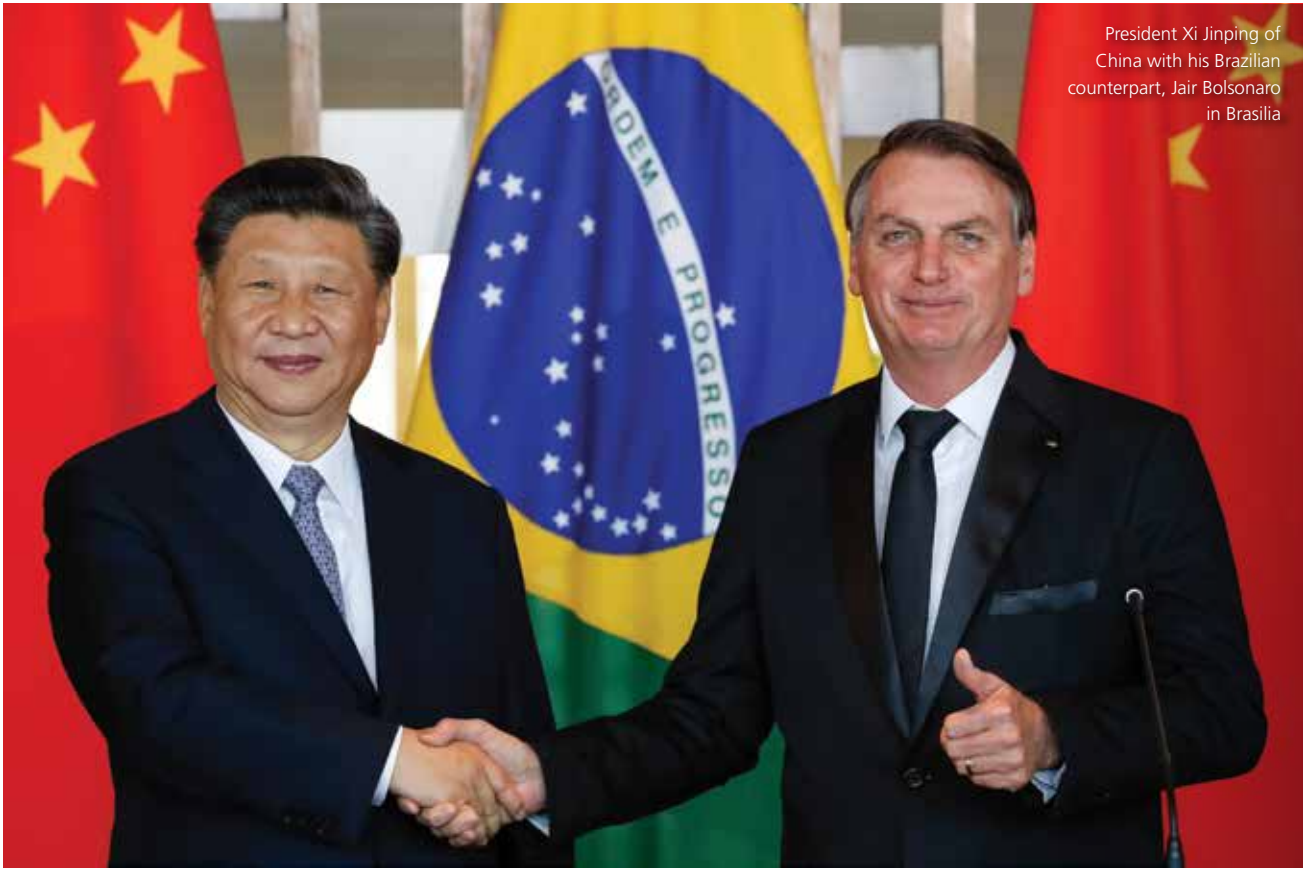
Image courtesy of BRT

A history of friendship

Close China-Brazil ties have been forged for more than 200 years

- The first Chinese community was established in Brazil in 1812, before the South American country became independent from Portugal, according to Brazilian historian Eduardo Bueno. He claims that a group of more than 200 farmers were brought from Macao at that time to introduce tea plantations in Rio de Janeiro's Botanical Garden and at Santa Cruz Imperial Farm. They were not successful, however, and Bueno says the projects were disbanded.
- Later in the 19th century, Brazilian envoys to China, Eduardo Callado and Arthur Silveira da Motta, negotiated the establishment of formal relations between the Empire of Brazil and China's Qing Dynasty. In September 1880, a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation was signed. The Chinese refused, however, to permit Brazilians to hire Chinese people as contract labourers, knowing that non-white labourers were treated 'as machines or as cheap labour'.
- A fresh wave of immigrants from China settled in Brazil's São Paulo area in 1900. Today, more than 200,000 Brazilians are considered to be of Chinese descent, including members of parliament, military officials and scientists.
- Formal relations ended between the Republic of China and Brazil following the Chinese Civil War from 1945 to 1949. They were re-established in 1974.
- An official visit to China by Brazil's minister of foreign relations, Ramiro Saraiva Guerreiro, in 1982, paved the way for another, two years later, by President João Baptista Figueiredo. Also in 1984, Chinese foreign minister Wu Xueqian visited Brazil.
- The China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellites programme, still ongoing today, was launched in 1988, leading to several satellite launches between 1999 and 2019.
- The Brazil-China Strategic Partnership was established in 1993 during a visit to Brazil by China's then first vice premier, Zhou Rongj. In November 1993, the then Chinese President Jiang Zemin made a historic visit to the South American country.
- Brazil officially recognised China as a market economy in 2004. The then Chinese President Hu Jintao said in his address to the Brazilian Congress on 12 November 2004, that 'both Latin America and China have similar experiences in gaining national liberation, defending national independence and constructing the country'.
- China became Brazil's largest trading partner in 2009. Bilateral trade massively increased from US\$6.7 billion (MOP 53.7 billion) in 2003 to US\$36.7 billion (MOP 294 billion) in 2009. In the same year, the then Chinese vice-president Xi Jinping visited Brazil.
- In 2010, the second BRIC – Brazil, Russia, India and China – Summit was held in Brazil, with proposals made for increased co-operation between Brazil and China on political and trade-related issues as well as energy, mining, financial services and agriculture.
- Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Brazil in his current capacity for the first time in 2014, taking part in the sixth BRIC Summit.
- Last year, the two countries celebrated 45 years of diplomatic relations with visits by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to China in October and Chinese President Xi Jinping to Brazil during the 11th BRIC Summit in November. Xi vowed to further bolster the 'extraordinary' bilateral relationship between the two countries.
- Today, relations are stronger than ever between both countries and trading ties, despite the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, are booming.

Alan Santos/PR



President Xi Jinping of China with his Brazilian counterpart, Jair Bolsonaro in Brasília

Mutual relations

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro visited Beijing in October last year. At the end of his stay, the two countries signed a series of agreements, including one for the export of thermo-processed meat from Brazil to China. Also agreed were regulations for the export of cottonseed meal, which is used for animal feed. China imported US\$4 billion (MOP 32 billion) of cottonseed meal last year. During the meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Bolsonaro underlined his

country's interest in strengthening trade relations. "Today," he said, "we can say that a considerable part of Brazil needs China and China also needs Brazil." Xi said that China stands ready to 'import more quality Brazilian products' and 'products with high added value', as well as to expand co-operation in the areas of agriculture, energy, mining, aerospace and infrastructure construction.

With China's diplomatic relations with the US and Australia – both historically important trading partners in the agricultural sector – strained for multiple reasons

including accusations related to the pandemic as well as some rises in trade tariffs, a handful of analysts expect that China's trade with both nations will suffer this year. But that could be good news for Brazil as it could see its market share substantially increase in the Chinese food market, with products like exported beef. According to CNN Brasil analyst Lourival Sant'Anna, Brazil could replace 'Australians in the export of commodities, especially meat' to China as the Asian giant enters 'what could become a trade war with Australia'.



Image courtesy of Alan Santos/PR

Marco Fugazza



Image courtesy of Sílvia Galvão de Miranda

Sílvia Galvão de Miranda



Image courtesy of Marcelo Camargo/Agência Brasil

Tereza Cristina

Brazilian meat exports were favoured by the Chinese and there was a ‘greater opening’ of the Chinese market to the South American country last year, according to André Pessôa, president of Brazilian agribusiness consultancy Agroconsult. In a recent article, Pessôa highlighted ‘the management of the skillful and competent minister [of agriculture in Brazil] Tereza Cristina, who was able to negotiate personally the qualification of many Brazilian slaughterhouses’ to export to China over the past year. According to ‘Valor Econômico’, Tereza Cristina created, at the end of last year, a new special unit to handle relations with China. It’s called ‘Núcleo China’ – literally ‘China Nucleus’ – and its formation underlines the growing importance of Sino-

Brazilian trade relations when it comes to the country’s food exports. It’s headed by Larissa Wachholz, the former director of business and investment consultancy Vallya and a master’s degree holder in contemporary China from the Renmin University of China. Wachholz has already established four priority areas of activity for the unit: commercial openings, the attraction of investments, an information centre and both innovation and sustainability.

Investing and growth

It isn’t just imports and exports on the table. China is looking at Brazil’s agri-food sector as a place to invest. It is increasingly ramping up its investments in a bid to become a key grower in the South American giant’s rich fields. China’s

Pengxin Group has been leading the charge, through its subsidiary Dakang International. Founded in 1997 by Jiang Zhaobai, Pengxin has grown from a real estate developer to a worldwide buyer of agricultural businesses and it is now expected to become one of the globe’s leading grain trading groups. In 2016, the group paid US\$290 million (MOP 2.3 billion) for a 57 per cent stake in Brazilian soybean company Fiagril, based in Mato Grosso state, as well as US\$253 million (MOP 2 billion) for 54 per cent of Belagricola, which is one of Brazil’s largest grain trading companies. Dakang vice-president Richard Fan told the Brazilian press recently that in the 2019-2020 harvest the firm plans to export directly – without the use of trading companies – two million tons of soybeans to China, which is four

times as many as it exported in the 2018-2019 harvest.

More recently, China’s largest grain, oilseeds and food company COFCO – which stands for China Oil and Foodstuffs Corporation – has taken a central role. With Brazil’s agriculture minister in attendance at the 2019 Brazilian Agribusiness Congress in August last year, Johnny Chi, chairman of COFCO International, said ‘the long-term relationship’ between the two countries and each others’ businesses ‘looks very solid’. According to COFCO, over the coming years it plans to increase its investment in new infrastructure, demonstrating the company’s intentions towards Brazil. Most of this investment, according to the firm, will go into logistics and storage. Chi also said that COFCO, in the future, ‘is keen to discuss further investment into Brazilian farms and farmers’, including ‘through financial credit for agriculture inputs’ – which are products permitted for use in organic farming like feedstuffs and fertilisers – ‘and technology’.

COFCO intends to ‘build its partnership with Brazil beyond soybeans’, according to the firm, and it also wants to support Brazil’s transition to more sustainable agriculture. In particular, the group is looking at ways to channel long-term financing to support the expansion of soy production on degraded land. According to COFCO, Brazil has more than 25 million hectares of open land that could be used for soy production. “We hope,” said Chi at the event, “to offer appropriate financial incentives for sustainable production.”

More to come

The new book, ‘China-Brazil Partnership on Agriculture and Food Security’, says that as well as being Brazil’s major food client, China ‘has also become an increasingly important investor within Brazilian agribusiness’. “A large share of the Brazilian supply of agricultural and food products,” it explains, “is ‘married’ to Chinese import demand and both parties are very aware of their mutual dependence”.

According to ESALQ researcher Sílvia Galvão de Miranda, one of the editors of the book, conditions are now ripe for Brazilian food exports to China to maintain their positive momentum in the short and medium terms. Recent boosts to this relationship, Miranda tells Macao Magazine, have come about following the African swine fever

crisis that hit China in 2018 and last year, representing a significant threat to the pig production industry as no vaccine or treatment was available for the disease. Also, she cites the instability in the commercial and political relationships between China and other food importers like the US as another reason for the strengthening of Brazilian-Chinese trade relations in this sector.

Miranda says that exports from Brazil to China, while currently ‘strongly concentrated’ on soy and meat products, ‘can and should be diversified’, in the interest of both countries. From the point of view of Brazil’s strategy, she underlines that effort is needed to ‘identify opportunities for exports of higher added value products’ further up in the industry chain. “Brazil can further consolidate its space in the meat market in China,” says

EXPORTING CONFIDENCE

Last year, China took more Brazilian agricultural exports than the nine other biggest markets combined

China 32%	Spain 2.3%
US 7.4%	Germany 2.2%
The Netherlands 4%	Hong Kong 2.2%
Japan 3.5%	Belgium 2.1%
Iran 2.3%	South Korea 2.1%

*Figures show the top 10 Brazilian agricultural export markets, 2019 (in percentage of total products exported). Source: AgroStat Brasil, based on Ministry of Economy data, January 2020.



Agro business in central Brazil

the researcher at the University of São Paulo, “in dairy products, fruits and processed food products with higher added value.” She also underlines that public and private sector participation is ‘essential’ to planning and solving logistical bottlenecks, as well as other issues that could ‘constrain trade growth’. In the dairy sector, she points to the increase in consumption of dairy products in China as opening opportunities for companies in her homeland. But, she cautions, firms ‘will need government support in terms of access to the market and health requirements’.

Brazil and China are not just becoming increasingly linked in the way of trade and investment. They are also becoming increasingly

linked in the way of knowledge sharing, particularly when it comes to agriculture. For instance, both the University of São Paulo and the China Agricultural University are part of the ‘A5’ alliance – a group of five universities with some of the best rankings in terms of agri-food and agricultural sciences in the world. Within the scope of this alliance, strategic areas of co-operation between the universities are well defined so that they work together on research projects, including in the areas of agroindustrial economics and on issues related to environmental policies. The University of São Paulo and the China Agricultural University do just that. Relevant issues for both countries, such as water resources,

the management of agrochemicals and the management of soil and biodiversity are topics ‘where there is potential for synergies’, says Miranda.

Over the coming years, the relationship between China and Brazil has the potential to become much stronger than it is right now – and it is clearly strong right now. Miranda suggests that the growing bonds between both countries in the agri-food sector are expected to grow on ‘a sustained basis’. “Certainly,” she concludes, “as it accounts for more than a quarter of all Brazilian exports, this trade relationship is strategic for the agribusiness sector. In this pandemic period, the relationship has become even more relevant to Brazil’s GDP and trade balance than it ever was before.” ●

Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute All-round Services for You



The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) is the department designated by the Macao SAR Government to promote external trade, attract investment, nurture the development of local MICE industry and motivate external economic and trade co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries. With its “One-stop Service” for Investors, “One-stop Service” for MICE Bidding and Support in Macao, trade promotion events, Portuguese-speaking Countries services, IPIM strives to create better environment for business and investment for local and overseas enterprises, investors, and craft Macao to be an ideal stage for MICE events.

Macao’s Investment Environment

- “One Country, Two Systems”, free port and separate customs territory
- Macao is one of the core cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, positioned as a “World Centre of Tourism and Leisure”, a “Commercial and Trade Co-operation Service Platform between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries”, and a base for exchange and co-operation where Chinese culture is the mainstream and diverse cultures coexist”
- Simple and low taxation system with enterprise profits tax capped at only 12%
- Reaching eight Portuguese-speaking Countries and global market network
- All-round convention and exhibition facilities, well developed internal and external transportation, and the newly launched Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge



“One-stop Service” for MICE Bidding and Support in Macao and Trade Promotion Activities

Through the “One-stop Service” for MICE Bidding and Support in Macao, IPIM provides all-round supports for professional congress organisers intending to stage events in Macao.

- Major trade fairs and exhibitions organised and co-organised by IPIM:
- Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition
 - International Infrastructure Investment and Construction Forum
 - Macao Franchise Expo
 - Guangdong & Macao Branded Products Fair
 - Macao International Trade and Investment Fair
 - Portuguese Speaking Countries Products and Services Exhibition (Macao)

IPIM also partakes in various major trade events and exhibitions in Mainland China, Macao and different parts of the world. In addition, IPIM organises outbound business missions for Macao companies and receives delegations from Mainland and foreign countries, so as to nurture the exchange and collaboration between Macao’s business sectors and their counterparts worldwide.



Services for Lusophone Markets

The Lusophone Markets Economic and Trade Promotion Department of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute provides a variety of services, which aim at assisting PSCs enterprises in tapping Mainland markets, as well as helping companies from Mainland China, Macao and other regions which are interested in launching businesses in PSCs. The services include:

- Organising business delegations to visit PSCs
- Staging PSCs markets business promotion events
- Implementing the China-PSC Biz Compass programme as well as online and offline promotion for PSCs enterprises and products
- Portuguese-speaking Countries Food Exhibition Centre
- Economic and Trade Co-operation and Human Resources Portal between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (www.platformchinaipim.mo)

“One-stop Service” for Investors



IPIM offers Investor’s “One-Stop” Service, which provides investors with a full range of support and assistance for the implementation process of investor’s projects launched in Macao. In addition to appointments, internet and phone calls with investor, IPIM designates personnel to assist from the stage of initial enquiry, conduct comprehensive project follow-up which helps facilitate the implementation of investment project in Macao as well as the proceeding of relevant administrative procedures. Service Fields:

- Information and advice about the investment environment in Macao
- Notary service for company registration
- Follow up assistance in administrative procedures for licence application
- Legal consultation for investment in Macao
- Business support and service information
- Online business matching service platform
- Provide supporting services such as temporary offices

Representative Offices of IPIM in Mainland China



- Hangzhou Representative Office
- Chengdu Representative Office
- Shenyang Representative Office
- Fuzhou Representative Office
- Guangzhou Representative Office
- Wuhan Representative Office

Major functions and services are:

- “One-stop Service” for Investors and Macao commercial registration facilitation services for mainland investors
- “One-stop Service” for MICE Bidding and Support in Macao, event organising consultation, assistance in hosting MICE events in Macao for mainland enterprises and organisations
- Portuguese-speaking Countries (PSC) business navigation and information on PSC business environment and investments.
- Cross-departmental collaboration under the Secretariat for Economy and Finance, case transferal, policy consultation, document forwarding services. E.g. consultation regarding “China-Portuguese Speaking Countries Co-operation and Development Fund”
- Support for Macao youngsters to have internship, work and start businesses in Mainland China. E.g. “Internship Programme for Macao Students in Mainland China to Work in Mainland Enterprises”, “Programme of Macao Interns and Students to have Part-time Jobs at Macao MICE Events”
- Visits to mainland enterprises, chambers of commerce and government departments; Supports for enterprises intending to invest in Macao



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Festival life: the return

Text **Rafelle Marie Allego**

That headline is not the title of a new movie sequel. It's an expression of celebration from everyone in Macao as, after months of cancelled events during the COVID-19 pandemic, festivals, art shows and other events have come back to the city as it eases into 'normal life' once again. We focus on four events that have taken place over the past few weeks: art collective TeamLab's immersive space at The Venetian Macao, the annual Dragon Boat Festival on Nam Van Lake, the New Woman Festival that was held at co-working space Hub Macau and an extravaganza that celebrated the 15th Anniversary of the inscription of the historic centre of Macao on UNESCO's World Heritage List at the Mandarin's House and Largo do Lilau.

Stunning interactive digital installations have been wowing visitors to The Venetian Macao since TeamLab's 5,000-square-metre 'SuperNature' exhibition opened on 15 June. This image shows one of the pieces in the 'Born From the Darkness a Loving and Beautiful World' section, where the artworks mix elegant calligraphy with immersive sound.



An image from the 'Valley of Flowers and People: Lost, Immersed and Reborn' section of TeamLab's exhibition, which features seasonal change over the course of a year. Not pre-recorded, this installation is programmed to continuously render new images in real-time, offering a unique experience with each visit.



The TeamLab exhibition's 'Multi Jumping Universe' section offers visitors an interactive experience under the stars. You can 'jump' or 'sink' with other visitors as new stars are born when the installation's surface becomes distorted.



All images courtesy of the Sports Bureau of Macao

One of the biggest events to be staged last month was the annual Dragon Boat Festival. Hundreds turned out on 20 June to watch the first day of the epic races that serve as a prequel to the festival. Here, the boats are lined up before the races begin and there's a family carnival underway at the Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre in the background.



The final day of the races on 25 June was the actual Dragon Boat Festival. This was the big day on the water and included the 500-metre Macao Standard Dragon Boat Race. Here, a team is waved on by supporters on the shore.



The action heats up in the water during the second day of the races on 21 June. This day saw the Macao Small Dragon Boat Race, the Open Category, the Women's Category, the Macao Public Entities Small Dragon Boat Race and the Macao University Student Small Dragon Boat Race.



Someone must have done well in the races! There's a celebratory mood in the air during the entire festival.



Women's diversity and power were celebrated during a special event at Hub Macau, a co-working space in Avenida de Venceslau de Morais, on 28 June. The New Woman Festival, which covered women's physical and mental health as well as the beauty of all females, attracted visitors from across the city.



Hosted by the Cultural Affairs Bureau, the 'Celebrating the 15th Anniversary of the Inscription of the Historic Centre of Macao on the World Heritage List' festival took place on 11 and 12 July at the World Heritage Youth Education Base at the Mandarin's House and Largo do Lilau. It was a time to celebrate the city's heritage.



Dance and music featured in the New Woman Festival. This image is from a performance called 'The Agony Is Exquisite', a piece inspired by the spinster Miss Havisham from Charles Dickens novel 'Great Expectations'. It explored the dark side of vicarious revenge.



Emcees introduce the World Heritage List festival during its opening ceremony on 11 July, right outside the Mandarin's House.



There were lively performances for visitors at the World Heritage List festival, including this traditional dance which was performed on a stark red floor.



The festival wasn't just for the adults. Children also enjoyed the educational booths, activities and games. For Macao, this was a time to celebrate both its heritage and the fact that events and festivals were back in town. The city was returning to normal.





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