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Title: Battle of the baguettes

Summary High on a new wave of European-style bakeries to open around town, Natasha Hong leads Time Out Singapore team through blind taste test to find the city's best baguette. Tiong Bahru Bakery A stick the team found pleasantly salty, Tiong Bahru Bakery's baton is about as traditional as far as Gontran Cherrier's bread go.

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Title: Battle of the baguettes

Eat Out

Edited by Berwin Song

Eat Out

Battle of the baguette

High on a new wave of European-style bakeries to open around town, **Natasha Hong** leads the Time Out Singapore team through a blind taste test to find the city's best baguette



Bakery Artisan Original (BAO) Traditional at The Providore, \$3.80

★★★★★

Made on contract in a quiet kitchen in the Kallang boondocks by chef Christophe Gilo (once the executive pastry chef at Canelé Pâtisserie Chocolaterie), this baguette, coloured a dark gold, is perfection in a bite. Besides sporting the ideal textural ratio of crumb and crust, each morsel tastes of cornflakes and wheat. Only available on weekends at The Providore, the wait makes it all the more worth it.

Two outlets, including #05-03 Tan Boon Liat Building, 315 Outram Rd (6221 7056, www.theprovidore.com). Daily 10am-8pm.



Tiong Bahru Bakery, \$4.50

★★★★★

A stick the team found pleasantly salty, Tiong Bahru Bakery's baton is about as traditional as far as Gontran Cherrier's breads go. We liked that it's still as good as ever with a robust mouthful of off-white crumb and a thick, crackly crust baked at low temperatures to counter our humid climes.

Two outlets, including #01-70, 56 Eng Hoon St (6220 3430, www.tiongbahrubakery.com). Daily 8am-8pm.



Madame Patisserie Baguette, \$5

★★★★★

Available on request (call at least one working day in advance to book a loaf), Boat Quay's new pastry joint proves that it too has a solid foundation in bread making. Voted the best looking stick at our tasting for its mouth-watering golden outer, its white bread-like flavour was so loved that it made up for the lack of a crunchy crust. Traditionalists, look elsewhere.

#01-76, 76 Boat Quay (6536 7028, www.madamepatisserie.com). Daily 8am-11pm.



Artisan Boulangerie Baguette, \$4

★★★★★

This polarising stick made in Paris' gruelling Grand Prix de la Baguette finalist, Eran Mayer's new Singaporean outpost bears a distinct salty taste. Its lovely rustic-ky bronze outer produced the loudest crunch audible outside most mouths, and revealed deep notes of malt and rye on the palate. #01-01, 118 Killiney Rd (6444 8130, www.artisanbakery.com.sg). Daily 8am-10pm.



The Bread Table Country Baguette, \$2.90

★★★★★

Nicely balanced with a crunchy and thick crust and fluffy inners, this brand new bakery staffed by bakers from the French Culinary Institute in New York and Le Cordon Bleu in Paris lives up to the European standards it aspires to.

14 Jln Kuras (6100 1345, www.thebreadtable.com). Mon-Sat 11am-8pm.



Four Leaves Baguette, \$2.20

★★★★★

Our favourite 'neighbourhood bakery' bread on the list, each bite of Four Leaves' breads sports the right amount of crispiness on the crust and airiness inside. Some on the panel liked the slightly sour complexity while others didn't – either way, it's a great value loaf you can get easily around town.

15 outlets, including #B1-57 Anchorpoint, 370 Alexandra Rd (6473 3801, www.fourleaves.com.sg). Daily 10am-10pm.



Freshly Baked by Le Bijoux Baguette, \$2.70

★★★★★

The bread best eaten on its own, we detected a milky, slightly funky cheese flavour in this loaf by Freshly Baked's cooking instructor/baker/owner Audrey Tan. The recipe though, is just straight up baguette. Interesting. #01-01, 57 Killiney Rd (6735 3298, www.freshlybaked.com.sg). Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 8am-6pm, Sun 8am-2.30pm.

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THE WINNER

Maison Kayser Campagne, \$4.80

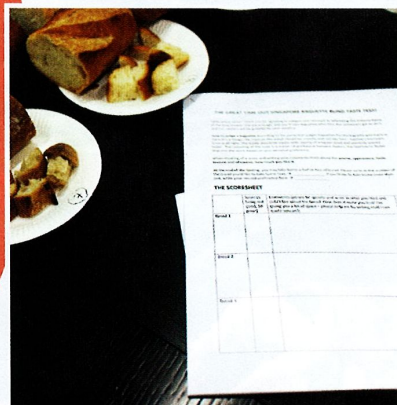
★★★★★

One of master baker Eric Kayser's signature breads, the Campagne is the country-style counterpart to his famous Monge baguette (which didn't fare as well in our taste test). Receiving top marks all around, this baguette was notable for its large and uneven alveoles (the holes on the inside of the bread) – always a sign of a good loaf – and strong malt flavours from the added rye.

Four outlets, including #B1-09 Scotts Square, 6 Scotts Rd (6636 3672, www.maison-kayser.com). Daily 8am-9pm.



Eat Out



HOW WE DID IT

■ Baguettes were bought anonymously, direct from the bakeries and tasted on the same day – we requested for the freshest breads possible.

■ The taste tests were done blind – each loaf was given a number, and tasters filled out a questionnaire giving feedback about each stick.

■ Scores were tallied and averaged to derive each loaf's starred rating.

Drips Bakery Café Baguette, \$2.20

★★★★★

Drips' half baguette is perfect for beer drinkers – the loaf has a bubbly crust that's the right kind of flaky, and a distinctively yeasty and malty aroma that smells just like a lager. One bite in, and we tasted a crumb that's more bitter and a pucker on the tongue than the others.

#01-05, 82 Tiong Poh Rd (6222 0400, www.facebook.com/dripsbakerycafe). Sun-Thur 11am-9.30pm, Fri & Sat 11am-11pm.



Maison Kayser Monge, \$4.10

★★★★★

Regarded as one of the top baguettes in the world, our tasting of master baker Eric Kayser's signature Monge bread – the loaf that gave the boulangerie its fame in Paris – didn't match the hype. While fluffy on the inside, the charred crust overpowered each bite with bad memories of burnt toast.

Four outlets, including #B1-09 Scotts Square, 6 Scotts Rd (6636 3672, www.maison-kayser.com). Daily 8am-9pm.



Sophie Half Baguette, \$1.70

★★★★★

A welcomed addition to the scene earlier this year, Sophie's half baguette from its Telok Ayer branch – baked daily according to its staff – severely disappoints with what can only be kindly described as 'stale'. Dense, tough and rubbery on the inside, it finished sticky and was hard on the chew.

Three outlets, including 167/169 Telok Ayer St (6224 6243, www.sophiebakery.com). Mon-Fri 7.30am-8pm, Sat & Sun 7.30am-5pm.



Nick Vina French Baguette, \$5

★★★★★

This Tras Street wand is a little too much of everything – salty, dry and tough with a sour aftertaste. Texture-wise, it's everything chef Nick Chua's Granny Sticks (a softer bread designed for the elderly) isn't – chewing it was like wrestling cardboard in the mouth. Not remotely worth it for \$5.

#01-54/55 Icon Village, 12 Gopeng St (6224 7848, www.nickvina.com). Mon-Fri 7.30am-8pm, Sat 8am-3pm.



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