

OVER THE MOON

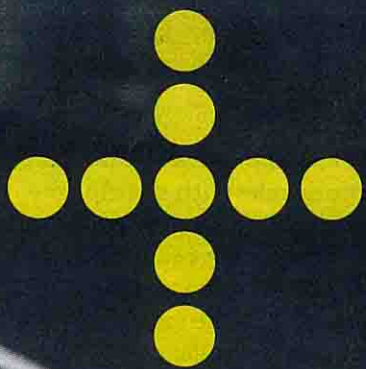
VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE —
AND OF MOONCAKES TOO >>T2

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TODAY

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WINE & DINE

Mid-Autumn melange

More reasons to go gaga over this year's mooncake varieties



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I HAD my mooncake epiphany with a certain Parisian marquise of sorts some years ago. And as tempting as it is to follow the assertion with a flurry of cheeky allusions, I must insist that the said encounter was purely gastronomic in nature.

The confection in question was a French chef's avant-garde tea-infused mousse adaptation of the conventional "snow skin" delicacy, which some might argue is already a progressive alternative to baked mooncakes. But that's semantics.

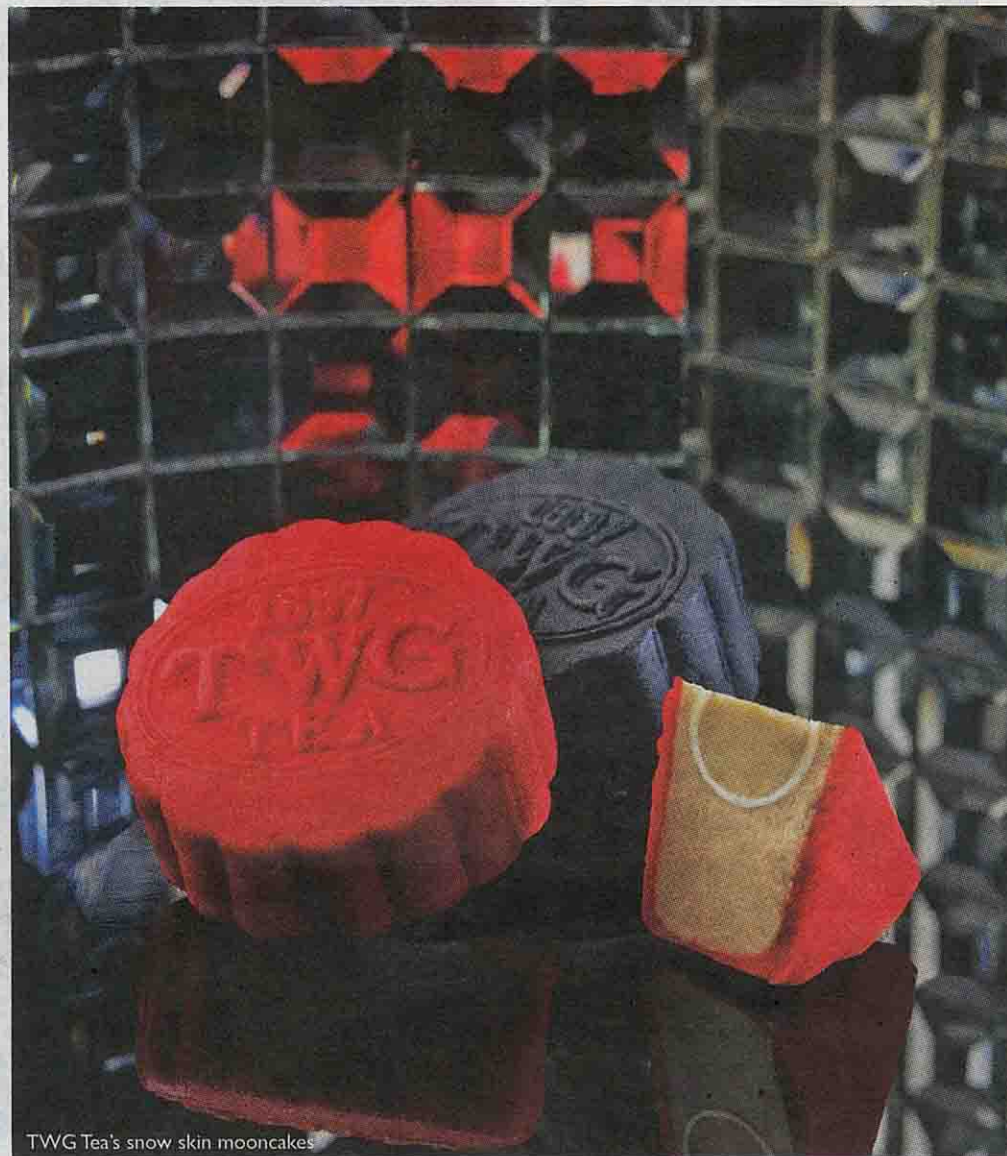
More decisively, today's growing plethora — though still only made in conjunction with the enduring traditions of the Mid-Autumn Festival — is anything but expected. That is, unless you choose to differ, submitting the now commonplace option of, say, the champagne truffle snow skin mooncake as evidence. Again, it's semantics.

I will, however, concede that the seemingly unconventional — such as the many snow skin mooncakes with liquored truffle hearts — has grown a tad trite. A snow skin mooncake with a black garlic centre, now that's boldly going where few would dare imagine, let alone serve in a dessert.

My initial thought was that this might be on par with trying to hawk a blue cheese ice cream at Laduree in Paris, should one of its pastry chefs be so valiant. (And why not? A few notable British chefs have tried it with Roquefort and gorgonzola.)

As for mooncakes, who's to say that a pairing of the less-than-pungent, even mildly sweet flavour of the prized (not to mention pricey) fermented garlic with sweetened white lotus seed paste served chilled won't have you howling at earth's natural satellite for all the right reasons?

With that bombshell, here is a quick look at a bunch of other novel reasons to indulge in this year's creations with newfound fervour.



TWG Tea's snow skin mooncakes

For those who:

... LOVE THEIR TEA

Bamboo charcoal snow skin mooncake with aromatic tea chocolate truffle and oolong tea paste; S\$62 (box of 8) from Cherry Garden, Mandarin Oriental (Tel: 6885 3541)

This new inclusion pairs the fragrant jasmine tea with the earthy full-flavoured oolong tea.

Mini snow skin mooncakes with imperial bird's nest and white lotus paste with vintage pu-er; S\$68 (box of 8) from Feng Shui Inn, Resorts World Sentosa (Tel: 6577 8888)

Aside from its earthy, sometimes elemental characteristic, vintage pu-er is said to flaunt a light floral scent.

Celebration, Talisman and Festive Night; S\$60 (box of 4) from TWG Tea (Tel: 6735 1837, Ion Orchard)

The Celebration mooncake, draped in a rich mahogany skin, is filled with chocolate mousse and a salted caramel heart infused with Tea Party Tea. In contrast, the new

crimson-skin Talisman is filled with fragrant cinnamon and orange mousse that reveals a truffle chocolate heart infused with the brand's Lucky Tea. Even its traditional bakes get a bold lift of flavour and colour. The Festive Night, for example, features lotus paste infused with Jade Temple Tea.

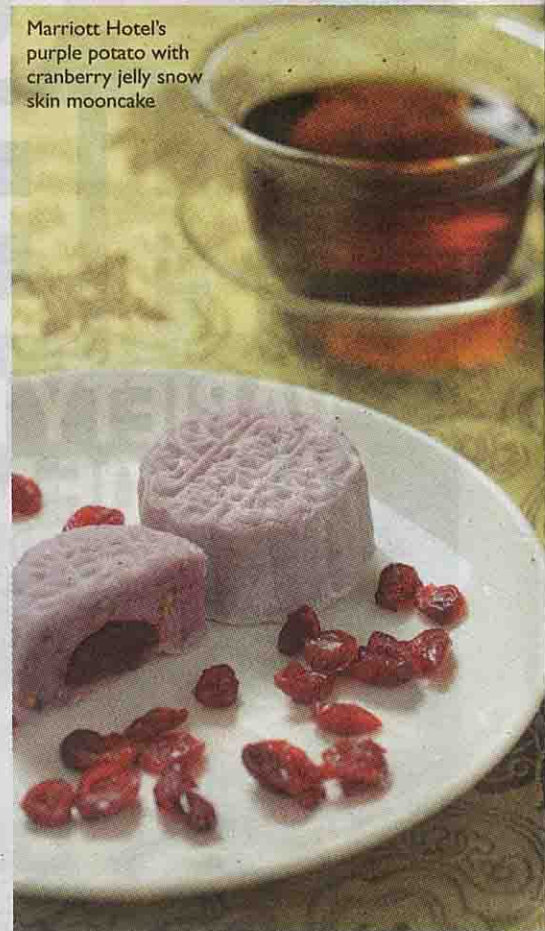
Mini marigold snow skin mooncake; S\$46 (box of 8) from Carlton Hotel (Tel: 6349 1292)

A delicate combination of an oolong tea-infused skin, osmanthus lotus paste filling with a heart of marigold — a crunchy ganache made with German marigold oil, petals and hazelnut crisp.

Green tea paste with Dragonball Jasmine snow skin mooncake; S\$46.80 (box of 4) from Man Fu Yuan (Tel: 6820 8519)

A new addition to its celebratory selection, this ode to the pleasures of tea pairs a green tea mooncake paste with Dragonball Jasmine tea-infused skin. A mildly heady yet aromatic combination.

Marriott Hotel's purple potato with cranberry jelly snow skin mooncake



... LIKE THEIR SPUDS AND FRUITS

Purple potato with cranberry jelly snow skin mooncake; S\$52 (box of 8) from Singapore Marriott Hotel (Tel: 6831 4708)

The natural creamy texture and rich flavour of this royal coloured spud shines through in this balanced and not-too-sweet construction. A new but quietly moreish pick.

High Mountain sweet potato snow skin mooncake with champagne chocolate; S\$46.80 (box of 8) from Man Fu Yuan (Tel: 6820 8519)

Back by popular demand is the restaurant's signature marriage of the properly nutritious and equally indulgent.

Mango pomelo with sago, honey pineapple, chocolate banana with chocolate chips, and durian red bean snow skin mooncakes; S\$55 (box of 4) from The Fullerton Shop, Fullerton Hotel (Tel: 6877 8178)

This clear ode to tropical fruits is commendable, if not a tad expected.

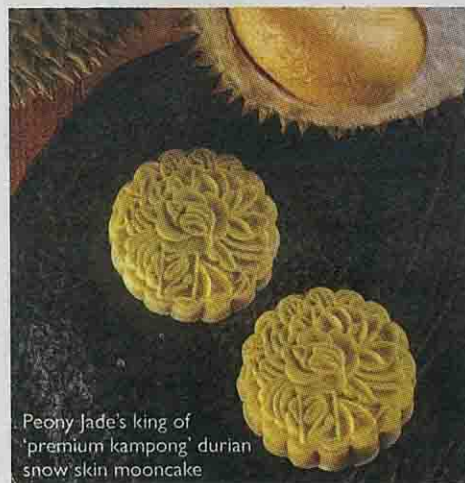
Persimmon paste mini snow skin mooncakes; S\$49 (box of 8) from The Regent Singapore (Tel: 6725 3239)

Besides its naturally sweet custard appeal, the fruit is rich in vitamins and antioxidants. (Why, sure it matters.)

WINE & DINE

Mid-Autumn melange

» Continued from T3



Peony Jade's king of 'premium kampong' durian snow skin mooncake

... LIKE IT THORNY

Mega Mao Shan Wang snow skin mooncake; S\$50 each (while stocks last) from Goodwood Park Hotel (Tel: 6730 1867/6)

Inspired by the success of its inaugural "Mao Shan power puff", which was launched in June, the kitchen team apparently decided that it pays to go big. Well, 12cm in diameter for a mooncake filled with lush durian pulp, presented in a gold silk drawstring pouch is big — and on luxury, too. Limited quantity available.

King of 'premium kampong' durian snow skin mooncake for S\$33 (box of 2) and S\$60 (box of 4), and premium pure Mao Shan Wang durian in organic pandan snow skin mooncake for S\$37.50 (box of 2) and S\$68 (box of 4); from Peony Jade (Tel: 6659 8871 / 6570 5604)

Only 4,000 pieces of the former are available, while the latter sold out in record time last year. It is again arguably one of the best durian mooncakes available this year, and there aren't many to begin with.

The Divine Queen; S\$53 (box of 8) from Szechuan Court, Fairmont Singapore (Tel: 6338 8785)

Pastry chef Mandy Yeo finally gives in to a strong demand and whips up her very own mini snow skin durian mooncake.

... FANCY A LITTLE NOSTALGIA

Teochew yam paste mooncake; S\$10.50 per piece, S\$40.00 (box of 4) from Cathay Restaurant (Tel: 6732 7888)

A light, nicely flaky and aromatic crust house a moist filling reminiscent of the traditional Teochew dessert.

Original Ex-Crown Prince Hotel flaky Teochew premium white lotus mooncake; S\$27 (box of 2), S\$50 (box of 4) from Peony Jade (Tel: 6659 8871 / 6570 5604)

This old favourite, with melon seeds and a single yolk, returns courtesy of consultant chef Oh Kwee Chye, who was the hotel's

dim sum chef for 19 years.

Ginseng with melon seeds baked mooncake; S\$58 (box of 4) from Eu Yan Sang (Tel: 6749 8830)

Available at all Eu Yan Sang outlets islandwide, this local rendition is bound to lure the health conscious.



Majestic Restaurant mini snow skin mooncake with kopi luwak

... EMBRACE THE WEIRDLY WONDERFUL

Mini snow skin mooncake with Korean black garlic; S\$56.80 (box of 4) from Jewels Artisan Chocolate (Tel: 6509 8998)

Think of this as dessert with conscience — the pricey black garlic is after all a great source of antioxidants. Its mildly herbal essence, notably with the first bite, may not be everybody's cup of tea, but it does provide a welcome savoury counterbalance to what is a predominantly sweet confection.

Dark chocolate with black truffle and white chocolate with white truffle 'petite' snow skin mooncakes;

S\$43 (box of 8) from Paradise Group (Tel: 6509 9660, Taste Paradise)

To be clear, these boast a rare truffle in a truffle combo — dark and white chocolate truffle centres infused with the uniquely aromatic oils of those famed black and white fungi. An acquired taste that might catch on.

Mini snow skin mooncake with kopi luwak; S\$50 (box of 8) from Majestic Restaurant (Tel: 6511 4718)

Aside from its expected full-bodied flavour, the rare Indonesian coffee — sometimes referred to as civet coffee for good reason — is said to lend a unique bouquet to this new addition.

... DON'T MIND A WESTERN SPIN

Dark chocolate orange and salted caramel crunch snow skin mooncakes; S\$59.90 for 8, S\$29.95 for 4 from SweetSpot Marina Bay Sands (Tel: 6688 8588)

Executive pastry chef Alejandro Luna not only incorporates two classic western dessert pairings in these snow skin mooncakes, but also makes the traditional version, with white lotus paste and double yolk.

Marron glaces mooncake; S\$38.50 (box of 4) from Cova Pasticceria-Confetteria (Tel: 6733 0777)

This is what detractors would dub a stranger in disguise. But the quality candied chestnut cream is imported from Milan.



Cova mooncakes

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WINE & DINE

... LIKE TIPPLE IN THEIR CAKE

Seven Perfumes mini snow skin mooncake with Martel Cordon Bleu cognac truffle and white lotus paste; S\$62.80 (box of 8) from Yan Ting, St Regis (Tel: 6506 6893)

The classic use of cognac in a sweet confection clearly works, but it is the lingering nuances of this creation's perfume snow skin that keeps it light and moreish.

Caramel VSOP mini snow skin mooncake; S\$48.80 (box of 6) from Hilton Singapore (Tel: 6730 3392)

Inspired by the champagne truffle's success, the hotel's chefs have come up with a brandy truffle variation, a fitting bitter-sweet complement to its luscious caramel centre.

Heavenly Collection mini snow skin mooncakes; S\$48 (box of 4) from Bakerzin (Tel: 6333 6647, Paragon)

This collection offers a diverse selection. These are lotus paste snow skin delights with truffle hearts imbued with brandied cherries, pink champagne, rum and raisin, or single malt whisky. Each box is filled with two of each flavour.

Snow skin mooncake with champagne truffle and ganache; S\$60 (box of 8) from Raffles Hotel (Tel: 6412 1122)

For the benefit of those who have yet to give this elegantly intoxicating design a try, the now ubiquitous flavour pairing of champagne truffle with creamy white lotus paste remains the hotel's perennial pick of the crop.

Red wine and cranberry mini snow skin mooncake; S\$36 (box of 8) from Crystal Jade (Tel: 6512 0800)

Apparently, wine lovers are not forgotten this year. This pairing promises to be a full-bodied experience.

Almond snow skin with advocaat truffle and black sesame paste; S\$58.80 (box of 8) from

St Regis (Tel: 6506 6893)

There is good reason why this particular liqueur mooncake is once again hot on Yan Ting's concise line-up. Its cleverly savoury-sweet concoction flaunts the European egg liqueur next to salted egg yolk in white chocolate enveloped in a light, nutty black sesame paste.

» Continued on T4



THE RiceTable
INDONESIAN RESTAURANT

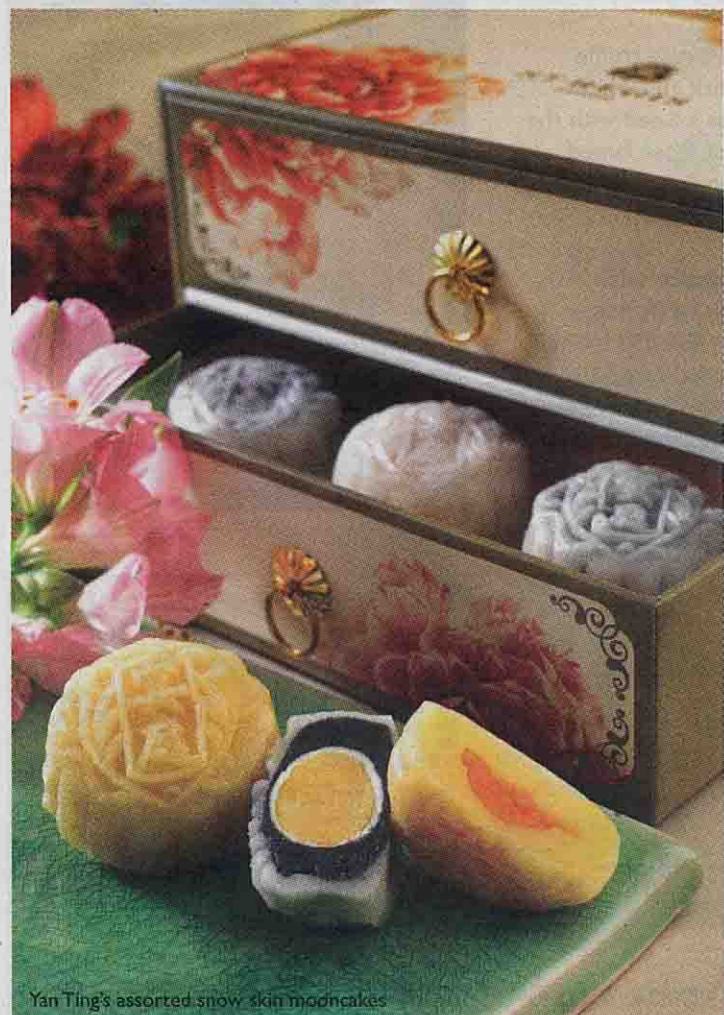
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HE SAID

Today's growing plethora of mooncakes is anything but expected.



Yan Ting's assorted snow skin mooncakes

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