

FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD

Sharing is caring – at least when it comes to food, and what better way to share as many dishes with as many people as possible than to photograph them with a smartphone and upload to a social media site? Kerri MacDonald takes a closer look at the ‘foodography’ trend sweeping across Asia.

Photos by Kerri MacDonald, Janice Leung and Nicole Fung



ne spin and the cameras go away. That is the rule when Janice Leung goes out for dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Hong Kong with a certain group of friends.

As the dishes are delivered, Leung and her fellow diners rotate the Lazy Susan on the round table.

“It can only go around once,” she says. “We can never go back – there’s no backflow. It goes around once, and if you don’t take a picture quick enough, it’s your fault, and we’re eating it.”

Not that Leung, 29, is against the practice of food photography. She helped found East Island Markets, Hong Kong’s first local farmers’ market. She started blogging more than

10 years ago. Over time, her writing has become increasingly food-focused – and with that, her blog, “e*ting the world,” more photographic. Most of the pictures she posts as @e_ting on Instagram, where she has a following of just over 1,000 people, are about food.

Leung and her group of friends may be exceptional. But as foodies and “foodographers,” they’re not alone in Hong Kong – or elsewhere in Asia. Walk into a restaurant, a café or a food hall and you’ll see someone holding a smartphone over a dish, lifting and tilting it in search of just the right frame. The list of foodographers in Asia – many of them with food blogs – is long.

“I think it just applies to the

family that you grew up in,” says Leung, who was born in Hong Kong and spent part of her childhood and early adult years Australia. “I think in Asia it’s more common because we eat a lot of shared meals. And because you’re sharing, you end up talking about the food you’re sharing.”

In Cantonese, a typical greeting, “*lei sik dzo fan mei a?*,” means, “Have you had rice yet?” or, “Have you eaten yet?”

“Food is a way of life here,” says Malcolm Ainsworth, a photographer who has lived in Hong Kong for 14 years. “People just like sharing – talking about food, inviting you to a restaurant with them, making recommendations.”

Ainsworth has been teaching photography for eight years. Last year, he ran a workshop about shooting food. His students, he says, included “everybody and everybody in between,” from a woman working on a cookbook to a foodie who just wanted to learn how to take decent pictures.

There aren’t many other hobbies in Hong Kong, Ainsworth says. “It’s what people do – they either go eating or go shopping or take pictures.”

In many cases, in Hong Kong and elsewhere in Asia, they do two of the three. Not only do most people have smartphones with solid cameras; many use those phones to connect to social media. It makes sense that the sharing – and the excitement – has gone digital.

“Social media has made some people feel responsible – like, as a foodie, to share what they’ve eaten or share interesting foods,” says Leung. “And one of the easiest ways to share it is a photo.”

Text, after all, is more difficult to digest. “It takes longer,” she says, “A photo, you look at it, you’re gonna have this reaction.”

Nicole Fung, a 26-year old

- 1: CURRY AT VEGGIE SF, HONG KONG
- 2: GARLIC SHRIMP IN HAWAII
- 4: BABY SUKIYAKI AT KU-SUYA RAKUEN, HONG KONG
- 5: LEANING TOWER OF WAFFLES AT SWEET TOOTH, HONG KONG
- 6: VIETNAMESE ON TOP OF THE PEAK, HONG KONG

