

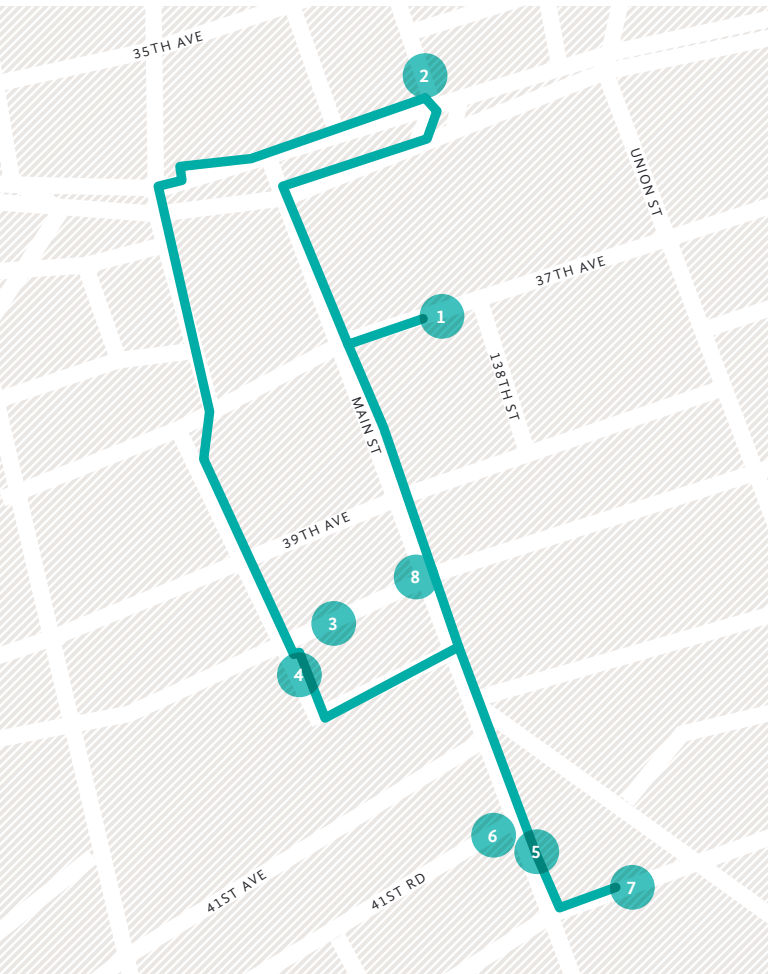
# FLUSHING'S CHINATOWN SELF-GUIDED DUMPLING TOUR



avital: LOCAL TASTES  
LOCAL TOURS

# SELF GUIDED TOUR STOPS

- 1 **Course 1: Joe's Shanghai** • 136-21 37th Ave
- 2 **Flushing Town Hall** • 137-35 Northern Blvd, 4  
(Open 12pm-5pm)
- 3 **Ten Ren Tea & Ginseng Co.** 135-18 • Roosevelt Ave
- 4 **Course 2: White Bear** (Except on Wednesdays) •  
135-02 Roosevelt Ave
- 5 **Golden Shopping Mall** • 41-26 Main St
- 6 **Course 3: Tianjin Dumpling House** • 41-28 Main St
- 7 **Free Synagogue of Flushing** • 136-23 Sanford Ave  
(9am-2pm, except Friday, Saturday, Sunday)
- 8 **Dessert: New Flushing Bakery** • 135-45 Roosevelt Ave



✓ **THIS ROUTE IS AVAILABLE EVERY DAY FROM 11AM-7PM, THOUGH IF YOU CHOOSE TO SKIP DESSERT YOU'LL FIND MOST OF THE RESTAURANTS ON THIS SELF-GUIDED TOUR ARE OPEN UNTIL 10PM OR LATER. ESTIMATED TIME IS 3 HOURS.**

💰 **ESTIMATED COST PER PERSON IF MINIMUM 2 PEOPLE ON TOUR: \$20**

On the self-guided experience, you'll get to enjoy a part of New York that many refer to as "the real Chinatown". You'll taste a variety of dumplings from different restaurants, underground food courts, and amazing little hole-in-the-walls.

Let us help you discover the culinary gem that is Flushing's Chinatown!

**Here are some tips to keep in handy before you start your experience:**

- All of the selected dishes we recommend eating at each restaurant only budgets the base price; tax and tip are not included
- Many of the restaurants and stores are cash only, so be sure to stop by an ATM. There are ATMs around, but bring at least \$50 to buy food, drinks, and anything else that catches your eye.
- Don't be intimidated by how busy the neighborhood is. There's lots to explore besides good food such as shops full of beauty products, cafes, and Asian grocery stores.
- Many of the restaurants are very casual and have minimal seating. Sometimes you may need to wait until spots open up to sit down and often the tables are communal seating. There's always the option to take it to-go and eat outside if the weather is nice.
- Don't be afraid of the language barrier, most merchants speak great English.
- How to say thank you: Xiexie (pronounced shi-eh shi-eh).
- Parking is tough here. Metered parking and garage parking can be pricey. We recommend taking public transportation.
  - » 7 Train
  - » Q66 Bus
  - » Long Island Railroad

- Wear comfortable shoes. This route is a little over 1.25 miles, but there are plenty of places to stop in between.
- Dress appropriately, especially if you need to stand outside for a little bit. Keep an umbrella with you just in case. New York City weather can be unforgiving!
- This may seem silly, but we don't recommend wearing white since you're going to be eating soup dumplings. While delicious, they can be quite messy!

## THE AVITAL PHILOSOPHY

Remember to **#BreatheCuriosity** - step away from the fears of the language barrier, overpopulation, and most importantly, unknown foods, and let us show you what's so great about this neighborhood. Try something new.

Interact with the community members, ask merchants about their history in this neighborhood, and be ready to share a family style table with people you may not know - **#CreateCommunity**

When walking down the streets, **#EmbraceQuirky** - you will pass by many stores unfamiliar to you. Fruit stands with unique fruits and veggies, tea parlors serving jasmine tea, and shops filled with products you've never seen before. The atmosphere is similar to NYC's Chinatown, but on a larger scale. It's what makes Flushing's Chinatown stand out as culinary gem.

This guide contains a lot of recommendations curated by Avital Tours. If there's somewhere in here that you are not interested in going to, or want to step away to explore something else, **#SeizeOwnership**. Own your experience, embrace it the way you want to.

And finally, at Avital Tours, it's our priority to **#BuildAwesomeExperiences**. The sole purpose of this guide is to showcase Flushing's Chinatown as a worthy place to travel to for some great food. We want you to experience this neighborhood and shift your perspective.

In this guide, you will find a self-guided tour, some tips to keep in hand before starting your experience, and some additional stops we recommend you check out if you have a little more time.

# INTRODUCTION

Most people know about Manhattan's Chinatown, sprawling from the famous Canal Street to East Broadway, creeping its way into Little Italy and the Lower East Side. But if you ask a native New Yorker or someone who's been living in New York long enough, chances are they'll tell that you need to go to Flushing's Chinatown for some authentic cuisine.

Those who are intrepid enough to travel just a bit further past Citi Field, home of the Mets, will be rewarded with a neighborhood that is full of rich history and delicious food. The borough of Queens is the most ethnically diverse urban area in the world, and Flushing's Chinatown is a fraction of that. The celebration of diversity is not a recent development for Flushing, however. Let us tell you how Flushing came into existence as the home of refugees, formed New York's largest Chinatown, and is still going strong today.

The first settlers in the area were the Native American tribe, the Mantinecocs. Dutch colonization caused the tribe to be ousted, and the Dutch settled in the area 1645. They called their colony "Vlissingen", which would eventually become "Flushing" over time. When the Dutch handed their New Amsterdam over to the English, New York was born, as was the Town of Flushing.

One of the most important aspects of Flushing's history is its significance as a place of religious freedom and tolerance. In 1656, Peter Stuyvesant, governor of New Netherland (present day Manhattan), made it illegal for anyone to accept members of the Society of Friends, more commonly known as the Quakers. Those discovered practicing any religion outside of the Dutch Reformed Church were often tried, jailed, and even exiled. The residents of Flushing were not happy with this, and in petition wrote, signed, and sent what is known as The Flushing Remonstrance to the governor. It's important to note that these Dutch citizens were not practicing Quakers.

The authors of The Flushing Remonstrance didn't have to write it at all. There weren't any discernible benefits for them as they weren't Quakers, and they were also Dutch citizens. However, The Flushing Remonstrance made it clear that Flushing residents didn't operate on intolerance and they wouldn't let others be persecuted for having

different beliefs. It's considered to be a forerunner of the freedom of religion provision in the Bill of Rights. Because of this document, Flushing became known as a place where religious freedom could be celebrated.

The foundation was laid for an open-minded neighborhood that welcomed all sorts of cultures. This of course includes making room for a Chinatown that found its way from Manhattan to Queens. In the 1970s, a wave of Taiwanese immigrants settled in Flushing. They couldn't relate to the predominantly Cantonese Chinatown in Manhattan, so starting anew in Flushing was their next best option. These immigrants spoke Mandarin and Taiwanese, giving the area along Main Street the name Little Taipei or Little Taiwan. South Korean immigrants also called the area home.

Eventually as word spread, more Mandarin-speaking immigrants made their way to Flushing. This led to the creation of Mandarin Town, and is the Flushing Chinatown we know today. It runs along Main Street and also Roosevelt Avenue, but is extending to Kissena Boulevard as well. Flushing Chinatown is expanding rapidly, and is considered one of the largest and fastest-growing Chinatowns in the world.

These immigrants may not have been able to bring all their favorite restaurants, bars, and cafes with them, but they could bring the recipes and the memories. When a person takes a chance and opens up a restaurant serving food from their home country, they are serving it to give people a taste of what they might miss, of what they are used to eating. Hand-pulled noodles coated in a spicy sauce, plump dumplings, and sweet and sour fermented vegetables are all just small examples of delicious discoveries you can make while in Flushing. This is the neighborhood where you can get your boba tea fix and sample homemade, authentic cuisine. When you're in Flushing's Chinatown, you'll really understand why this is the place to come for good food.

Now that you know a little bit more about Flushing, it's time to make your way to your first stop. Joe's Shanghai went viral before viral was even a thing, giving New Yorkers one of their greatest obsessions: soup dumplings.

## JOE'S SHANGHAI (COURSE 1)

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-  **LOCATION: 136-21 37TH AVENUE FLUSHING, NY**
-  **WHAT TO EAT: CRAB MEAT WITH PORK MEAT SOUP DUMPLINGS (8) AND PORK MEAT SOUP DUMPLINGS (8)**
-  **HIGHLIGHTING: A NEW YORK CITY OBSESSION AT A LONGTIME FAVORITE**
-  **COST: \$9.95, CASH ONLY**
-  **OPEN: MON - SUN 11AM - 10:30PM**

Making your way down from the Main Street subway stop, you'll start to take in just how special Flushing is. There are countless bubble tea cafes, specialty grocery stores, Asian beauty products, and much more. The walk to Joe's Shanghai will set you up for a feel of this neighborhood and prepare you for all of the excellent sights and smells to come.

When you ask New Yorkers where to get the best pizza or bagels, they'll definitely have opinions. The same is true for soup dumplings. Joe's Shanghai opened with its iconic green awning in Flushing in 1994 and their soup dumplings, or "xiao long bao", quickly became one of their most popular items. Joe's Shanghai is also credited with popularizing these "little juicy buns" in New York City. They offer two varieties: crab meat with pork soup dumplings or pork meat soup dumplings. These are not vegetarian friendly, but they do offer other vegetarian dishes on the menu. The tables are communal, so be prepared to sit with another group.

Dumplings take a lot of patience to make, but this is especially true when it comes to soup dumplings. Not only should the skin still be thin and loose, but also strong enough to hold the filling. Then, the chef has to gather the edges to hold the dumpling together. A typical Shanghainese dumpling has 14 pleats, and owner Joe Si of Joe's Shanghai claims he can make a soup dumpling with 20 pleats. There's also an art when it comes to eating a soup dumpling; though they might look like a little delicate purse with a daisy pattern on top, these dumplings are made-to-order and served HOT. This means the soup inside, all perfectly warmed and flavorful, will burst in your mouth or all over your clothes with the wrong bite. The trick is to place the dumpling in your spoon, take a small bite of the dough, and suck the soup out or tip it onto your spoon. You'll get a warming sensation as the flavors hit your tongue. Then you can safely eat the rest of your soup dumpling. You can check out this [comic for tips](#).

We're starting the tour at Joe's Shanghai because this restaurant is popular. Many celebrities and pop stars from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China have visited this restaurant. The Joe's Shanghai in Chinatown almost always has a line. There are even locations in Japan, and they supply soup dumplings on the Cathay Pacific flights from New York to Hong Kong in the First Class section. It's best to get here early and whet your palate for the rest of the tour.

Next you'll get a glimpse of Flushing's rich history and culture at the Flushing Town Hall.

## FLUSHING TOWN HALL

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If you've ever wanted to listen to the music of Nat King Cole, catch a performance from a traveling Korean band, or wanted to try live drawing, Flushing Town Hall is the place to go. It was in 1990 that Queens Borough President Claire Shulman decided to reclaim the run-down building, so she looked for a non-profit to take over the space. The Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts was chosen to restore the space and turn it into a thriving visual and performing arts center. This former courthouse and jail now hosts all sorts of cultural events each month, has a 308-seat concert hall/theater, garden, offices, and a gift shop.

When the building was built in 1862, it served as Flushing's Town Hall. During the Civil War, soldiers from Long Island were sworn into the Union Army here, as well as



other civic operations taking place. However, it was also home to cultural events during the late 19th century. An added extension served as a place for light operas and traveling theatrical productions. At one point the infamous P.T. Barnum was the impresario at Flushing Town Hall. Performing arts may be thriving at Flushing Town Hall now, but it's certainly not a new concept for the building.

As Flushing and Queens was incorporated into New York City, the building saw many of its evolutions. It became a courthouse, jail, meeting space, and bank branch. It received protected status in 1967, but from this time until the late 1980s is when the building fell into disrepair.

You'll see now that the institution is doing just fine, thanks to the Flushing Council on Culture and Arts (FCCA). One of the primary goals of the FCCA is to recognize Queens as the home of many jazz legends, hence the jazz events it puts on each month. But the FCCA also recognizes how the neighborhood has evolved. To support the diverse community, they've created the Chinese Cultural Committee and the Korean Cultural Committee. Additionally, other events to support the Latin American and South Asian communities also exist. Their goal is to "foster a mutual respect that and understanding that can help build the community".

Notice that the Flushing Town Hall is part of the Flushing Freedom Mile, a walking tour that celebrates Flushing's history. We recommend checking it out another day, and as an excuse to come back to eat more dumplings. Now, let's head to your next destination. It's a little bit of a walk, but it will definitely make you hungry for your next course.

## TEN REN TEA & GINSENG CO.

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The whole reason dim sum came into existence was because it was served at tea houses, like we mentioned. Once it became common knowledge that tea aids in digestion, tea house owners began to serve food. And since you're going to be eating a lot of dumplings today, a visit to Ten Ren Tea & Ginseng Co. will certainly help. This global Taiwanese tea company has multiple locations in New York, and has many different varieties of tea, like green tea, oolong, jasmine, and specialties like Pu-Erh tea, a post-fermented tea.

After browsing all the different kinds of tea, you can also order a hot tea, or some bubble tea. You'll find many spots around Flushing to try bubble tea, but be careful- it's filling.

We don't recommend getting a bubble tea just yet. A hot tea will do just fine, and will get you ready for your next stop just around the corner. It's best to save the bubble tea for after the tour.

## WHITE BEAR (COURSE 2)

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 **LOCATION: 135-02 ROOSEVELT AVE, FLUSHING, NY 11354**

 **WHAT TO EAT: WONTONS WITH HOT SAUCE (12), DUMPLINGS WITH HOT SAUCE (12), VEGETARIAN FRIENDLY**

 **HIGHLIGHTING: FLAVORFUL CHILI OILS THAT WILL HAVE YOU ASKING FOR MORE**

 **COST: \$7.00 PER ORDER, CASH ONLY**

 **OPEN: MON - SUN, 9AM-8PM, CLOSED WEDNESDAYS**

For being as popular and well-known as it is, White Bear is about as hole-in-the-wall, mom-and-pop as it gets. But it's the wontons in chili oil that keep the people coming back for more. Inside the tiny restaurant, you'll see a paper menu taped to the wall, and two people in the kitchen. The older woman who runs the place already knows what you want: Number 6, Wontons in Hot Sauce, ok, sit down. The perfect little pouches are stuffed with pork, boiled, and then covered in a secret chili sauce. No, you may not buy it and bring it home, do not ask, though you can grab some frozen wontons and dumplings to bring home! Vegetarians will find also find a dumpling option here.

The spiciness of the chili oil isn't very strong, but if you're sensitive to heat, the wontons in soup will do just fine. You'll still get to enjoy these juicy little morsels. The chili oil that blankets these wontons is more of an extra layer of flavor rather than a heat source. Feel free to ask the woman behind the counter to make it a little spicier for you, and she'll do it if she's feeling up to it. Wontons are traditionally served in a broth or chili oil since they have a thinner skin than traditional dumplings. And yes, wontons are technically a type of dumpling. It's the thin dough and triangular shape that differentiates them from those crescent moon-shaped delectables that we recognize as dumplings. The name "wonton" comes from the Cantonese name "won ton", so the English name stayed the same.

There's a lot about White Bear that's left to be discovered. There isn't a website, there's only the paper menu taped to the wall and word of mouth. Social media has increased knowledge of this beloved hole-in-the-wall, but it stays true to its roots. At White Bear, you're guaranteed consistency and authenticity every time you visit. It's one of the reasons we love trekking out to Flushing for these wontons in hot sauce.

Now you'll make your way over to the Golden Shopping Mall. There are plenty of food courts in Flushing to choose from, and the newer, more modern ones popping up can overshadow the older mainstays. Golden Shopping Mall is not only where you'll find your next dumpling location, but also lots of other yummy snacks.

## **GOLDEN SHOPPING MALL**

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You might miss it if you passed it, but not because it's tiny and unnoticeable. This block is full of hustle and bustle, filled with all sorts of goodies to buy. There's fruit stands outside with exotic fruits like durian and dragon fruit for sale, a place to get your shoes repaired, renew your cell phone plan, and much more. Freshly baked pork buns, Sichuanese street food, Chinese doughnuts, and even pig's feet can be ordered if you're feeling up to it. Inside you'll find stands with smells both familiar and new, watch cooks hand pull noodles, and find people waiting in line to sit at tiny table or right in front of the counter. As Flushing's oldest food court, the Golden Shopping Mall is a place not to be missed.

Food courts in Flushing serve as a reminder of home and culture, a one-stop shop for all of your cravings. Golden Shopping Mall has a first floor and a basement, and every time you eat there you could try something new. The late Anthony Bourdain came here to eat at Xi'an Famous Foods, and visited the spot again after filming there. Danny Bowien of Mission Chinese has also been spotted enjoying Sichuan food with his kitchen staff at Chen Du Tian Fu.





Don't be intimidated by the action, unfamiliar foods, or Chinese menus. Find a stand or small restaurant that appeals to you and go for it. You might also get the chance to make new friends, or sit with some friendly locals who will tell you what to order. Your stomach will thank you in the end.

Again, there are many great stalls to check out in the Golden Shopping Mall. We also like Yoz, which has cheap lunch deals, good soup dumplings, and other items. But for our next stop, we're heading into the basement and to Tianjin Dumpling House.

### TIANJIN DUMPLING HOUSE (COURSE 3)

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-  **LOCATION: 41-28 MAIN ST, FLUSHING, NY 11355, IN THE BASEMENT**
-  **WHAT TO EAT: LAMB AND GREEN SQUASH DUMPLING (12), VEGETARIAN FRIENDLY**
-  **HIGHLIGHTING: TIANJIN CUISINE THAT STICKS TO ITS ROOTS**
-  **COST: \$6.00, CASH ONLY**
-  **OPEN: 9AM-10PM**

As you make your way downstairs past the other stalls, you'll find Tianjin Dumpling House. Originally called Xie's Home Cooking, owner Helen You rebranded around 2013 with a customizable dumpling menu. The dumplings to order are the lamb and green squash dumplings, but if you're vegetarian or feeling a little adventurous, try making up your own combination. The dumplings are made and filled to order, so if you'd like to add a little cilantro, dill, or tomato, go right ahead. If you choose to get the dumplings pan fried, you'll be rewarded with a crispy lace on the bottom, often seen on gyoza (Japanese-style dumplings).

These dumplings are plump, juicy, and go great with a little added minced garlic, chili oil, and soy sauce if you're feeling it. The filling is almost a golf ball-sized amount, and the lamb isn't too gamey. The crunch from the lace helps hold the dumpling together and add texture to the meal. If you choose to create your own dumpling, you'll find you can make up tons of combinations. There are eight different proteins, like egg and squid, plus sixteen different types of vegetables. You can create your own dumpling masterpiece! Then, return to make another one.

There are other restaurants that serve Tianjin cuisine in Flushing, a major port city in Northeastern China. During the 13th Century, grain was stored here and Tianjin was known as "The Bread Basket of the China." Because of the mixture of cultures that came in and out of Tianjin, a rich and diverse cuisine developed. Other popular dishes from the area include a sausage that resembles kielbasa, a dough soup that looks like spaetzle, and lamb stew. Chinese food is amazing in the sense that one city can develop and cultivate its own special cuisine, and that's why Tianjin Dumpling House is on our list.

Flushing itself is like Tianjin, with many cultures calling the area home. Just up the road from the Golden Shopping Mall is the Free Synagogue of Flushing, the oldest liberal reform synagogue in Queens.

## FREE SYNAGOGUE OF FLUSHING

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It may seem strange to find a synagogue not too far away from a bustling Chinatown, but it goes to show how much Flushing has evolved and has always been a home to diversity. Like we mentioned in the introduction, Flushing was a place where anyone could practice whatever religion they wanted.

The Hebrew Women's Aid Society founded the Free Synagogue of Flushing in 1917. They were inspired by the free synagogue established by Rabbi Stephen Wise in Manhattan and wanted to bring that philosophy to Queens. Rabbi Wise called the free synagogue a place where the pulpit could be "free to voice without free or scruple the high moral and spiritual teachings of the synagogue". The Free Synagogue of Flushing maintains those principles and is a place of social activism.

The original synagogue was housed in a white mansion. However, membership grew so large that the Hebrew Women's Aid Society commissioned architect Maurice Courland to design the new synagogue. The result is what you see today: a beautiful brick building, with white pillars adorning the front. Inside you'll find lovely stained glass windows and other Judaic motifs. Admire from the outside, and if you're there during opening hours, take a look inside. The Free Synagogue of Flushing is a reminder of New York's extensive Jewish influence, but also that New York truly upholds its melting pot reputation.

On your way back to the subway and to your last stop, take a final look around. Make mental notes for your next visit to Flushing. Explore other cuisines in the neighborhood, like Korean, Indian, Thai, Mexican, and Mongolian. If you like, stop in in the New World Shopping Mall. This mall opened in 2014 and is one of Flushing's most famous malls in the area. It's definitely worth a visit. Though you didn't stop in there for dumplings today, the food court boasts its own popular spots. Fish Dumpling will give you a break from traditional pork dumplings and Joong Han Boon Sik is a Korean Chinese restaurant that serves a radish salad similar in flavor to kimchi with your dumplings. Plus, grocery store J Mart has all the Asian specialty items for you to take home.

Right outside the Main Street subway stop is your last destination: New Flushing Bakery.

## NEW FLUSHING BAKERY (DESSERT)

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-  **LOCATION: 135-45 ROOSEVELT AVE, FLUSHING, NY 11354**
-  **WHAT TO EAT: PORTUGUESE EGG CUSTARD TART**
-  **HIGHLIGHTING: A CROSS-CULTURAL DELIGHT**
-  **COST: \$1.25 PER TART, CASH ONLY**
-  **OPEN: MON-SUN 6AM-7PM**

Flaky crust, creamy inside, bruleed top. This may not sound like the description of a popular Chinese dessert, but it is, and New Flushing Bakery gets Portuguese Egg Tarts right. They bake these little magical tarts throughout the day, so if you're lucky, you might get a warm one. There are other baked goods to try as well like pineapple buns and Hong Kong style egg tarts, but we recommend sticking to the Portuguese Egg Tart. The amount of sweetness is perfect, and the filling isn't so dense that it will push you over the edge after all of those dumplings. If you're too full, taking them to go is totally an option.

You may be wondering how a Portuguese Egg Tart became a popular Chinese snack. The tarts are indeed inspired by the pastel de nata that come from Portugal. So, how did they make their way into Chinese cuisine? An Englishman living in the then-Portuguese colony of Macau, of course.

Former British colony Hong Kong already had their own version of the egg tart, or dan tat, inspired by British egg tarts. These could also be found in Macau, but weren't very popular. Andrew Stow came to Macau to work as an industrial pharmacist, but then found himself baking egg tarts later on. On a visit to Portugal, he noticed the way the Portuguese enjoyed a pastel de nata with an espresso. He wanted Macau to have that as well, so he opened up Lord Stow's Bakery in 1989. He came up with a hybrid version, a cross between a Portuguese and English egg tart. Initially his tarts weren't popular, but eventually they caught on and started a tradition that's still going on in Macau today. The Portuguese Egg Tarts that you'll find at New Flushing Bakery pay homage to that legacy left behind by Stow and cross-culturalism.



## CONCLUSION

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Avital Tours wants to thank you for taking the the time to let us show you exactly why we love Flushing's Chinatown. This neighborhood has changed a lot over the years, but it truly houses some wonderfully authentic cuisine that's worth traveling for. We hope you enjoyed our recommendations and received a glimpse into how current day locals live in Flushing. If you enjoyed this self-guided tour, we encourage you to tell your friends and family to try it out for themselves. Did you take any awesome photos? Post it to our facebook page @ AvitalTours! And join us in Williamsburg, the East Village, or Flatiron for a progressive meal with other like-minded foodies.

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