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**Best of New England**

WRITTEN BY JAFRI M  
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No prizes for spotting the new kid on the block. It is just 5pm, opening time for barely two-month old Pince & Pints Restaurant and Bar on Duxton Road, and already the queue, made up of fashionistas, has started.

Serving up classic lobster dishes reminiscent of New England's cuisine, the charming eatery, set in a historic shop-house, is cosy, with accents of dark wood and red banquette seating. Abuzz with big band music, the crowd's youthful, executive-chic persona adds to the lively ambience, as do chirpy, freshly minted servers. The bar counter seats eight and the dining area accommodates 38 diners.

The cheery arty menus too are in perfect sync with the fare, featuring informative lobster graphics, and embellished with wood and metal snippets from lobster crates.

The menu is compact, deliberately distilled to just three main lobster offerings (all priced at \$48). Each dish uses a whole live wild-caught lobster of about 600g. First, there is a live whole lobster served either steamed or grilled, and accompanied with mesclun salad, sour cherry and balsamic dressing, shoestring fries, and herbed butter.

The plating is generous and amply filling, and with the pared-down preparation, the freshness and flavours of the lobster come through rather well.

Then, there is the lobster roll, chock-a-block with fulsome portions of juicy lobster flesh coated with rich, creamy mayonnaise and accompanied by a white bun, enticingly butter fried. This dish demands that one forget thoughts of dietary restrictions.

Finally, there is the chill lobster, a refreshing twist on the classic and dependable, if ubiquitous, Singaporean chill crab dish. With the spiciness nicely balanced, the dish is served with golden-hued, well-crustied mantou buns. Certainly, the rather ample lobster morsels give this much-loved recipe extra bite.

Some responsible food for thought here. Only American lobsters, notable for their durability and availability all year round, are used, and sourced from seafood suppliers in key areas such as Maine and Boston.

To ensure they are healthy and robust, the lobsters are imported from fisheries and harvesters that adhere to strict fishing regulations. For instance, female lobsters bearing eggs must be released by law, so, cutting a small v-notch in the female's tail prior to release is done on a voluntary basis and identifies the lobster for future release by other fishers.

There is also a minimum size limit, which allows juvenile lobsters the chance to mature and reproduce before they can be harvested. Also, the total number of traps per harvester is limited by both the state and individual lobster zones. Harvesting is by trap only, with no dragging or diving allowed. Traps include escape vents for undersize lobsters as well as biodegradable escape hatches to free lobsters in lost traps.

In fact, restaurant owner, Frede rick Yap, who is in his late 20s, has established a 1,000 sq ft holding facility in Bedok that can store about 1,200 lobsters flown in live from both the US and Canada. At present, about 1,000 lobsters are flown in thrice weekly.

Then later, at the Duxton restaurant, which has a tank capacity for about 200 lobsters, they are kept in cold waters of 5°C to help them hibernate.

Besides the assured freshness, Yap explains that, by minimising middleman costs through self import, he is also able to keep his prices low and thus make his food more accessible.

The gregarious entrepreneur, who is also co-founder of successful fashion e-tailer Love, Bonito, has his long-term business strategy all mapped out for Pince & Pints, his first F&B venture. He shares that Pince & Pints, which cost almost \$1 million to set up, was inspired by London's successful Burger and Lobster set-up.

He has already created a distribution network to supply to restaurants, and plans to set up a retail outlet at his Bedok facility.

More local Chinese dishes will be adapted and incorporated into the menu, the restaurant's dining hours will be expanded and there will be a active support for local traditional food businesses, for instance, using items such as buns from an old Chinatown bakery. He hopes to expand regionally eventually with his restaurant brand.

All that business talk just ups the thirst quotient, which is all good because, beyond the lobsters, there are cocktails and mocktails, with cold-pressed fruit and homemade syrups, judiciously edited for a quirky balance of classic favourites and new-fangled modern concoctions.

There is the refreshing Bee's Knees (\$14), with gin, fresh lemon, and organic manuka honey syrup, as well as the classic Cosmopolitan (\$13), with 30-day citrus vodka infusion, Cointreau, cranberry, fresh lime and sugar. And among the mocktails, try the Melon Soda (\$7), a rather exuberant offering of fresh cantaloupe, dill, cilantro and sugar. It is a good way to start off and end your meal, and all in keeping with the Pince & Pints spirit, yes?

**PINCE & PINTS**  
32/33 Duxton Road, Singapore  
**Opening hours:** Monday to Saturday (5pm to 11pm) — dinner only  
Open on public holidays  
**Tel:** 6225 7558  
**Website:** www.pinceandpints.com  
No reservations; walk-in only



Image:  
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*Jafri M is a freelance writer who covers dining, business and luxe travel with fervent indulgence*

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