

# Crêpes, Galettes and A Slice of France

**Mimi Taing is of Far Eastern origin, speaks perfect French and serves a mean fondue at her The Crêpes Bar in Dubai's International City. It's worth risking your waistline for *le vrai goût français***

**Brian Salter**

**I**t seems to be a truism around the Gulf region that no matter what restaurant you go to, or what speciality cuisine is being served, you can all but guarantee that the staff employed will be Asian — particularly Filipino, Indian and Chinese.

So, it came as no surprise when visiting Dubai's latest taste sensation — The Crêpes Bar, located in Dubai's International City, and specialising in French delicacies such as Crêpes, Galettes, Croissants, Baguettes, Quiches and Chocolate Fondues — to see Filipino staff and a Chinese lady in charge. No surprise, that is, until Mimi Taing opened her mouth and the most beautiful soft French accent purred into action, enthusing over the range of specialities on offer in her establishment.

Born in Hong Kong of Cambodian and Chinese parents, Mimi spent most of her formative life in France before going to America to study for an MBA in Ohio. It was there that she met her Lebanese fiancé and together they decided to move to the Emirates. That was six years ago, and although she worked initially as a commercial coordinator for a global cosmetics company, she had a hankering to open her own business. "I didn't feel appreciated for anything

I was doing," she confided to me, when asked why she had decided to leave the safety of employment and set out on her own. "But although I now seem to be working every hour of the day and night, seven days a week, I know I made the right decision," she says.

And that is plain for all to see; the way her face lights up when talking about her crêpes bar says it all. Her infectious enthusiasm has even brushed off onto her Filipino staff and a happier group of workers would be hard to find anywhere in the UAE.

For those who have never tried them, crêpes and galettes come from the region of Brittany, located in the north west of France. Galettes are mainly made of buckwheat flour, water and salt and are usually filled with savoury ingredients such as cheese, egg and ham. Crêpes are richer than galettes as the main ingredients are eggs, milk, wheat flour and sugar, and are delicious when accompanied by sweet ingredients such as chocolate sauce, jam and fresh fruits. Although they are much thinner than the pancakes found in the UK and US, they make a meal in their own right and can be eaten anytime of the day with any filling you can think of. Because of their versatility, the inhabitants of Brittany eat them almost every day, for lunch and dinner, both as main courses and as appetisers.

To ensure she would be able to offer the authentic French taste, Mimi travelled to Brittany to enrol in a special crêpe making course and, on her return to Dubai, signed up for another course to learn everything she possibly could about the various methods of preparing coffee. She then, in her turn, individually trained her staff. Setting up took just over six months. "The paperwork took up most of the time," Mimi explained. "The actual fitting out of the café was the easy part!"

International City — and in particular, the France cluster — was an obvi-



**The yummy Chocolate Extra. Photos/Brian Salter**

ous location for marketing purposes, whilst the large number of potential customers virtually on her doorstep meant that the reputation of The Crêpes Bar spread quickly.

"We already have a number of regular customers, some of whom design their own personal crêpe recipes," continues Mimi, her enthusiasm not diminishing for a single moment. "One Lebanese, for instance, likes his galettes with zaatar, mushrooms and turkey ham and he has nicknamed his creation The Josephine. And we, of course, were very happy to add The Josephine to our varied list of available crêpes."

The most popular Galette served is called Forrêt — mushrooms, parsley, egg and cheese; whilst if it's a sweet crêpe you're after, you'll be in very good company if you go for the Chocolat Extra — Nutella spread with bananas. A wide range of croissants, waffles, baguettes and other bakery items, togeth-

er with coffee attract the breakfast and take-away trade from as early as 7am, whilst the café also offers free delivery anywhere within International City.

In keeping with its youthful image and Mimi's commercial background, The Crêpes Bar has its own web site ([www.thecrepesbar.com](http://www.thecrepesbar.com)) telling you all you could ever want to know about its products and services, whilst its dedicated Facebook group even allows you to send virtual crêpes to your friends ... and within five weeks of opening, over 7,000 people have done just that!

Finally, a word of warning. Mimi's crêpes are addictive, as some of the Facebook postings testify. "Wow! Count me in as a fan...and a regular customer from now on," says Robert W; whilst a lady called Radouanne even suggests "You know what? I think the government should pay these people because they make our life délicieuse!"

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**Mimi Taing doling out her French delicacies.**