

# Handmade polish pierogis by a Singaporean chef? It's all thanks to a family recipe



Summer Hill's Anthony Yeoh has launched a new takeaway line of handmade Polish dumplings, inspired by his family. Belle Pierogi is the latest brainchild of the Singaporean chef, who worked together with his half-sister Belinda, who delved into her Polish roots on her mother's side, to come up with a smorgasboard of pierogi flavours.

For the uninitiated, pierogis are stuffed dumplings fashioned little half-moon parcels, made with chewy wheat-based dough and different fillings of both the sweet and

**Summer Hill's Anthony Yeoh worked together with his half-sister Belinda, who delved into her Polish roots on her mother's side, to launch new takeaway line Belle Pierogi**

savoury varieties.

Belle Pierogi boasts four flavours, including Ruskie (mashed potato and cottage cheese), Kapusta

(sauerkraut, dried porcini and minced milk-fed veal) and Szpinak (creamed spinach and mushrooms). They are traditionally garnished

with bacon, caramelised onions and sour cream.

There is also a sweet pierogi option – the Czeresniami is filled with a sweet cherry compote with sour cream. All skins are made from scratch along with the fillings and hand pressed.

Yeoh told CNA Lifestyle that kicking off, he hopes to keep Belle Pierogi as traditional and authentic as he possibly can.

"There will be no modern takes on Polish cuisine here. The idea is to start off with an experience that is authentic, different but also familiar. And dumplings are easy, family-friendly eats in any culture," he shared. "My sister would kill me if I started mixing cheese and kimchi with the sauerkraut filling off the bat."

He added: "I got to film a TV show where we cooked with Polish expats in Singapore, and made hundreds of pierogi for the Polish community here. And they impressed upon me again, that this is not a solitary activity. The entire family comes to lend a hand. And I love that idea - this is something from my family that I'm bringing to yours."

Currently sold as ready-to-eat takeaways, Yeoh aims to develop Belle Pierogi into a retail line and to be sold as frozen for customers to have on hand, ready to drop into a pot of boiling water or pan-fried. The pierogis will also be included on the menu at Summer Hill's new upcoming location on Orchard, which will be announced on a later date.

Belle Pierogi is available for islandwide delivery or takeaway via the Summer Hill app or whatsapp +65 8690 5907. —CNA



## 'I gave birth within 30 minutes in hospital – and both my husband and doctor missed the delivery'

The evening started innocuously enough. I had a dinner date with friends, all of whom had walked this pregnancy journey with me, from those first stirrings of nausea that prompted them to insist I take a DIY pregnancy test. That. Very. Minute., to every change in my baby bump over the last nine months, to where we were today – two days to my estimated date of delivery (EDD).

As I got into my friend Olivia's car, she told me: "Don't worry, I have newspaper and towels in the boot in case you have to give birth in the car."

She was not joking. Hers was the designated "birthing" car, should it come down to that. My friends had been making emergency plans for weeks, just in case I went into labour when I was with them. They were having a lot of fun.

When we arrived at the restaurant at Marina Bay Sands, our friend Seok, whose birthday we were celebrating, informed us that she had already worked out an emergency exit plan with the staff, who had all been made aware that a near-EDD woman would be having dinner tonight.

She showed me a food trolley (yes, really) that I could sit on, in lieu of a wheelchair, should I not be able to walk to the car. I refused. These plans were getting more ridiculous by the minute. Now, it was a food trolley.

She wasn't fazed when I rolled my eyes at her. Turning to the two drivers in the group, she led the way to a lift inside the restaurant that led to the carpark. They refused too. How would they find their cars coming out of a different lift? 'All my 4 kids were born through rapid labour, including 1 at home and another in the car'

Dinner was happily uneventful – until dessert rolled around. I



**Which woman doesn't realise she has given birth? CNA Women editor Penelope Chan was in such pain during labour that she had no idea she had delivered her baby – until the newborn was placed in her arms**

was starting to feel uncomfortable, which I brushed off as sitting for too long. I could feel my belly tightening, which I brushed off as Braxton Hicks contractions, since the baby was close to arriving, and I had been feeling them for weeks. I also felt pressure on my rear end, as if I had to do a number two, which I dismissed.

Was the baby coming? I've had previous pregnancies but, embarrassingly, I wasn't terribly sure about the signs of labour.

Just in case, I started timing the contractions.

"You're very quiet. Are you okay?" Olivia, sharp as ever, asked. Fine, fine, I said.

I continued counting the minutes in between what I still believed were Braxton Hicks contractions. Did they seem just a little closer now?

The writer (left) with her friends Olivia, Josephine, Seok and Audra, on the night her baby was born – at the time the photo was taken, her contractions had not started yet. (Photo: Audra Chow)

Not wanting to alarm my

friends – and cut short the birthday girl's celebration – I hadn't said anything. There was still time, I convinced myself. We would get to the end of dinner and I would figure something out.

"Are you okay?" Audra, the other driver in the group, had noticed me frowning at my phone.

Might as well come clean. "I'm counting," I said.

"Counting what?" she shrieked. "Is the baby coming? How far apart? Do we need to go to the hospital? Need to leave now? Need to leave now or not?! Quickly, say!"

"I think it's about seven minutes."

And yet, I was still reluctant to leave for the hospital. I called my husband. "I think the baby is coming," I told him.

He offered to pick me up from the Marina Bay Sands taxi stand. I estimated that it would be a 25-minute journey from our home, and then another 25 minutes as we rounded back to Mount Alvernia Hospital, where I was booked to deliver.

Given my history of rapid births, I didn't want to take the risk of a 50-minute wait. I decided it would be prudent to simply head to the hospital. If I was truly in labour, I could get an epidural early.

Was it my imagination or were the twinges getting tighter and more intense? It had been only a few minutes. I contemplated texting my gynaecologist but figured it could wait until I arrived at the hospital, where the staff would call him.

The writer's youngest child Gabrielle, when she was eight weeks old.

Weeks ago, my gynaecologist had advised that I should simply head to the hospital once I felt contractions. "If you're on your own, just go. Don't wait. We will meet you there," he said.

He even gave my husband and me instructions on what to do should I have to give birth at home.

I decided it would be faster for my friends to take me to the hospital and for my husband to meet me there. With a loud scraping of chairs, and sorting out of handbags and assorted parcels, we made ready to go – only for two of them to turn back when they realised we had not paid the bill.

I would go in Olivia's car with another friend Josephine, who was the appointed navigator. Audra would drive her car with Seok in it. At her car, Olivia lined the back seat with newspapers and a towel. I thought she was being dramatic – the baby was not going to come in the car – but now was not the time to be snarky since she was my ride to the hospital. —CNA

## Meet Jeong Kwan, Buddhist nun, influential vegan chef and Netflix star



Even through the slightly depressing interface of a Zoom call, not to mention nine hours of time zones and 10,000 kilometres away, an indisputable radiant energy and joy emanates from Jeong Kwan through the screen.

Connection issues initially prevented her from being visible for the start of our call, but being a Buddhist nun (a Korean monk or nun), with 48 years, spent since the age of 17, in Baekyangsa temple south of Seoul, technical challenges are the absolute last thing to prevent a smile being permanently fixed across her extraordinarily youthful face.

Dressed in grey robes and with a permanent cheeky glint in her smiling eyes, there's no better advert for the devotion, philosophy, lifestyle and eating habits that she so gently espouses. Kweong was recently bestowed the Icon Award by Asia's 50 Best Restaurants, sponsored by S.Pellegrino & Acqua Panna. Not for her restaurant – she doesn't have one – but for the impact of her approach to vegan cuisine on the Asian and global food scene. And chances are that you may recognise her from the sixth series of the cult Netflix show Chef's Table, where she wowed culinary legends, including Eric Ripert of New York's three Michelin-starred Le Bernardin.

She cooks for her fellow nun, teaches students and – very occasionally – she hosts chefs. One such occasion came in New York, for diners including Ripert and journalist Jeff Gordinier, who said had said the dishes "easily have passed for plates served at Noma, at Benu in San Francisco... This was as good as any meal you could get from any chef on the planet."

Kwan entered the monastery at just 17, so has spent almost half a century with the produce that she helps to grow, harvest and cook.

In our interview, she tells CNA Luxury about winning the award, her approach to cuisine – and her suggestions on dealing with an increasingly anxiety-prone planet:

"I've been working to let people know about Korean temple cuisine for more than 20 years. The award allows me to meet with many people from around the world, many chefs, and to open doors to meet new people in food. It will allow me to share temple cuisine wider than I could ever have imagined.

Food is the source of my energy to continue my practice as a Buddhist nun. I firmly believe that food plays a role in creating energy by connecting the physical, mental and spiritual. Food changes us, our bodies, our personalities.

Korea has four distinct seasons and through those seasons the food that we eat changes. The different foods connect us physically, mentally and spiritually to nature. People have a past, a present and a future and food is the one thing, the energy source that connects all of those together – that becomes my identity.

Whatever comes from the earth is medicine, it is always good for your body. We must respect all the elements which help the plants grow – the sunlight and moonlight, the rain, the soil, all the nutrition. By not throwing anything away and reducing food waste, eating the entire vegetables – the roots, stems, leaves, fruit, everything – we are contributing to balance and harmony in nature and helping to save the environment. I was lucky enough that when I went to New York, Chef Eric Ripert prepared a 100 per cent vegan menu for me – I especially appreciated the vegan chocolate! I also went with Chef Eric to other vegan restaurants. —CNA

**Netflix viewers might recognise her from Chef's Table – and there's a reason why she's held in high esteem by the culinary world, particularly for her impact on how vegan cuisine is perceived in Asia and around the world**

