

PINCR MOVEMENT

An oversupply of Boston lobster has put the delicacy on the tables of restaurants all over town, write **Mischa Moselle** and **Vanessa Assarasakorn**

Lobster fans are enjoying a glut of the previously pricey delicacy as it turns up on menus from the expected fine dining establishments to more casual burger joints.

Bad weather in the North Atlantic, strict management of its fisheries and low numbers of predators such as cod are all responsible for the booming lobster population.

Galaxy Cheung, a sales executive at food services company Angliss Hong Kong, says Canadian fishermen had been "afraid to fish" in bad weather, leaving undisturbed populations to grow.

The resulting bounty means low wholesale prices for the delicacy from along the New England and Canadian east coasts.

While Francesco Gava, the executive chef of Assaggio Trattoria Italiana in Wan Chai and a native of Piedmont in Northern Italy, says lobster from the Adriatic Sea is considered top of the line



Fried lobster in salted egg yolk (above); and lobster, scallops and crispy rice in superior lobster broth (below) from The Chinese Restaurant.

quality, he's still happy working with Boston lobster. Gava says chefs in any tradition should be looking for lobster meat that is fresh and sweet.

"Lobster meat has to be delicate but, most importantly, the taste should remind you of the sea," says Gava.

The chef says the Adriatic lobster is naturally salty, and salt is a great flavour enhancer for all seafood. "They're only in season

in July when they come up closer in the waters, so we use Atlantic Boston types in our dishes," he says.

The lobster Sunday brunch at Gava's restaurant offers a range of hearty dishes, ranging from a simple lobster pizza to aromatic herb butter-glazed lobster. "This herb glaze matches very well with seafood, and all crustaceans taste great with butter. But best for me is lobster with extra virgin olive oil and a pinch of salt, paired with white wine, chardonnay, or even a glass of prosecco Ferrari – something dry is perfect," says Gava.

The stunning show-stopper on the brunch menu is the lobster lasagne, consisting of a lobster ragu layered with bechamel sauce and freshly made pasta, with a nice crunchy crust of parmesan and mozzarella cheeses.

It's not the only restaurant to break the Italian rule about not marrying seafood and cheese. At Jamie's Italian, diners are being offered roasted lobster in a parmesan sauce with spaghetti pomodoro.

Simpler offerings are available – The Butchers Club Deli is offering lobster from Nova Scotia on its Friday burger and lobster nights, either in the form of a lobster with garlic butter or as a roll. Traditionally, the roll is a lobster mayonnaise with celery in a hot dog bun, but here the thick chunks of lobster come in a brioche bun and are dressed

with garlic butter and deep-fried pickles.

Fans of fine dining might like head chef Lo Kwai-kai's lobster dishes at The Chinese Restaurant at the Hyatt Regency Hong Kong, Tsim Sha Tsui. Lo prefers lobsters from Southeast Asia for their firm, meaty structure. "These lobsters have lots of meat with a crunchy texture and strong aroma. In Cantonese dishes, meaty lobsters are the preferred choice as it is much more flattering to serve opulent amounts."

Lo's aim is to move away from the traditional combination of shellfish with cheese, green onion and garlic flavourings.

The stir fried lobster in salted egg yolk is luscious and delightful. The savoury egg white batter is delicate yet crunchy, while the saltiness of the egg yolk elevates the lobster flavour without overpowering it. The

lobster, scallop and crispy rice in superior lobster broth is rich and aromatic, filled with tender lobster morsels and Canadian scallops. Lo adds a spoonful of steamed rice as a contrast to the texture of the crispy rice.

Lobster is also on the menu at the newly opened Tycoon Tann, which serves it two ways – sautéed with black truffles, and with crispy rice toast.

Japanese restaurant Fukuji on Lyndhurst Terrace is offering an extended take on surf 'n' turf with a Teppanyaki lobster wagyu set that features the

crustacean presented in a cream and white wine sauce and in a miso soup as part of a nine-course menu featuring delicacies such as Hokkaido king crab and A4 grade wagyu beef.

The summer degustation menu at Akrame, two-Michelin-

star chef Akrame Benallal's Wan Chai fine dining spot, is heavy on seafood. The lobster comes to the table raw with a garnish of lentils and is then cooked in a tarragon consommé in the diner's bowl.

It seems this year lobster is putting the glut in gluttony. mischa.moselle@scmp.com



Lobster lasagne (above); and herb butter glazed lobster (right) from Assaggio Trattoria Italiana.
Photos: Bruce Yan