



WISH DISH
Pao de queijo, Brazil

Plate up
You have to love a dish with a name that just tells you what it is: pao de queijo, or cheese bread. No room for misinterpretation there. However, the further you dive into this ubiquitous Brazilian snack, the more interesting it becomes. Because, yes, it is bread with cheese, but that bread isn't made from wheat flour, as you might expect. It's made from two types of cassava flour, one sweet, one sour. The sweet flour is a standard flour, similar in texture to cornflour, while the sour one is fermented, and thus has a stronger, sharper flavour. These two flours are blended with oil, eggs, milk and salt, plus cheese – maybe mozzarella, or local minas or canastra cheese – to form a dough, which is then shaped into balls and baked. The result is a light, puffy bread that pairs perfectly with morning coffee, and marks the beginning of the day for many Brazilians.

First serve
As with so many classic Brazilian dishes, pao de queijo's history speaks of the country's many influences over the centuries, from indigenous cultures to African slaves to European colonists. The genesis of this cheese bread can be found in the south-eastern state of Minas Gerais, where the Guarani people had been using cassava flour long before colonists arrived in the 1500s. When those settlers did arrive, they brought slaves with them, who began using cheap cassava flour to make small bread rolls. By the late 1800s, slavery had been abolished, cheese and eggs were added to the rolls, and the popularity of pao de queijo spread.

Order there
In Belo Horizonte, in the heart of Minas-Gerais, feast on pao de queijo at the ever-popular A Pao de Queijaria (apaodequeijaria.com.br).

Order here
In Sydney, grab coffee and pao de queijo at Oba Cafe in Matraville ([instagram.com/obacafesyd](https://www.instagram.com/obacafesyd)). In Melbourne, head to Bossa Nova Cafe in Carlton (bossanova.com.au). And in Brisbane, try O Brasileiro (obrasileirorestaurant.com.au).

One more thing
Cassava root, untreated, is poisonous – it contains cyanide. It's made edible by being peeled, grated, soaked in water and then dried. The end product is also referred to as tapioca.

Ben Groundwater

SPOTLIGHT

Just one moment

When Alba Thermal Springs and Spa on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula opened three years ago, it cemented the region's reputation as serious wellness territory, with a different offering to already established properties. Just an hour south-east of Melbourne but popular with an increasing number of Sydneysiders making a long weekend of it, guests all dressed in a uniform of love of a white robe are encouraged to "take a moment". That moment can be in the striking corrugated concrete centrepiece building which is set into the hillside and houses a day spa, restaurant and changing area. Or along winding pathways surrounded by carefully designed native landscapes giving way to one of 30-plus pools that vary from 41-degree geothermal waters to a bracing cold plunge. Further adding to Alba's respite

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credentials is the opening of The Sanctuary accommodation onsite taking it from day spa to stay spa. Set on the highest point of the 15-hectare property, five villas and two studios of muted tones and gentle lighting are kitted out by designer and peninsula local Kate Walker, some with standalone baths and accompanying native botanical salts. Balconies offer views either of the peninsula and city, or towards the pools, where the distant laughter of guests enjoying a nighttime soak float about. Designed for maximum privacy – singer Dua Lipa during a pit-stop at Alba was said to be interested in a stay at the not-quite-finished accommodation during her March tour – and the complimentary mini bar is stocked with local favourites including wines from Ten Minutes by Tractor and beers from St Andrews Beach Brewery. As part of The Sanctuary stay a dedicated

concierge is on speed dial - to stoke the in-villa wood fire or deliver all-day dining from restaurant Thyme and a menu created by Karen Martini and overseen by head chef Mario Di Natale. The ultimate Sanctuary indulgence, however, is the valet service by golf buggy back and forth to the pools. Early risers will be rewarded with the place almost to themselves while moonlight bathers are whisked back to their bolthole in a flash. Rooms are from \$650 a night and villas from \$950 including accommodation, breakfast daily and full use of Alba including private change area, entry to the day spa and a private pool session. See albathermalsprings.com.au
Jane Reddy
The writer stayed as a guest of Alba.