

Around Town

Joo Chiat Rd

Sweet stalkings

Temptations of the sweet kind await you at Joo Chiat – and we're not talking about ladies of the night.

Michael Franco reveals his confectionery confessions

Joo Chiat Road in the East Coast area might be best known for its collection of candy-coloured pre-war shophouses and the sweetness of the girls who populate its neon-bedecked karaoke bars. But this historic road also offers up an intriguing collection of other confections, in the form of a charming assortment of dessert shops and bakeries.

Start your ramble where Joo Chiat Road meets Changi Road, the site of **Home's Favourite** (266 Joo Chiat Rd, 6272 2028; www.homesfavourite.com). You may have lit upon these cookie, mooncake and pineapple tart purveyors at various locations around town, but this is the source of the magic. The shop has a generous tasting policy so you can sample the rich, buttery cookies that literally melt in your mouth, or buy sample packs for \$2.50 (full boxes run between \$14 and \$27). With flavours like Japanese sweet potato, jackfruit, jasmine green tea and the extremely popular champagne raisin, these are definitely cookies for grown-ups. The durian cookie captures the most pleasant essence of the spiny devil, making it a good way for someone who's been iffy about the whiffy fruit to give it a go. Speaking of durians, the 'Black Gold' durian mooncakes are in high demand during the mooncake season, so you may have to order early.

After all the sampling at Home's Favourite, think of your next stop as a visit to a confectionery gallery, where you can ogle – rather than eat – the delights on offer. The bakers at **Temptations** (400 Joo Chiat Rd, 6440 9200) are true artists, crafting cakes with flair and creativity that makes them look too good to eat (almost). Owner Jeffrey Galistan says his most popular cake is the Chocolate Etoile, a sinful cocoa creation sprinkled with a half-moon of powdered sugar and crowned with a bouquet of chocolate bark, leaves and flowers. Galistan says his bakers can design in any style customers ask for, evidenced by the Barbie cake on display at the front of the store. A variety of alluring ready-made cakes costs around \$21 for the 16cm size and \$33 for 20cm.

Next on your pudding path is a visit to **Obolo** at 452 Joo Chiat Rd (6348 9791, www.obolo.com.sg). As



Durian puffs from Puteri Mas



Temptations' Chocolate Etoile and (right) cupcakes



Obolo's colourful creations



A neater baker Home's Favourite's durian mooncakes (above) and cookies



The durian cookie captures the most pleasant essence of the spiny devil

you step into the icy-cool interior and take in the black polished-tile floors, café tables flanked by clear Lucite chairs and the jazzy, loungy sounds slinking out of the speakers, you'll be overwhelmed with the desire to linger. This is a good thing, as the confections here – produced by husband-and-wife team Mac Woo and June Lee – deserve a proper sit-down. Obolo, which means 'the cake' in Portuguese, also features an impressive variety

of cheesecakes, verrines (desserts served in a glass) and individually sized dome cakes. However, lest you get distracted, the true stars of the show here are the macarons. Consisting of thick butter cream or chocolate paste wedged between crispy clouds of almond meringue shells, they're truly a transporting experience. You'll have a hard time choosing between raspberry, cassis, mango-passion, salted caramel-chocolate and many others, so take home an eight-piece assorted box for \$14.40 or a 15-piecer for \$27. That is of course, after you've tried their 'DYOP' promotion – design your own platter including a cake slice, two macarons and one scoop of ice cream for \$13.50.

If the durian cookies at your first stop didn't satisfy your craving for the King of Fruits, then you'll definitely want to stop at **Puteri Mas** (475 Joo Chiat Rd, 6344 8629). The durian puffs here are famous island-wide – spongy golden cake surrounding generous portions of creamy puréed durian that doesn't shy away from delivering full-force flavour. You'll pay only \$11 for a box of 20.

Finally, because this day really is all about forbidden temptations, you have permission to leave Joo Chiat by taking a left where the road intersects with East Coast Road. At number 180 you'll find **Oompa Loompa** (180 East Coast Rd, 6345 8195, www.oompaloompa.com.sg), a tiny jewel box of a store filled with precious gems of chocolate in flavours such as banana split, orange lemongrass, vodka orange and white rose. Owner Brendan Chin not only imports the finest chocolates from Switzerland, he makes several of his own. A box of chocolate gold will cost you \$17 for 100g (eight to 12 pieces).

With your mission accomplished, the contents of your wallet depleted and cravings sated, it's time to hop in a cab and head home. Or better yet, get walking – you'll have a lot of calories to burn off.