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THE LOOK *of* PROVIDENCE

Some of the city's most fashionable
people on what defines PVD's style



Natalie Spingold of Shoppe Pioneer

Bao Down

Tom's BaoBao brings a new dumpling to Providence, finally

In a town that drools over every new restaurant, a long-awaited addition is finally opening this month: Tom's BaoBao. Tom's is taking the space next to The Malted Barley with a focus on bao. Bao (bao bao or baozi) is a Chinese steamed bun that is similar in shape to a dumpling, but much larger in size with a softer, fluffier dough. There are tons of varieties of bao in China. Tom's is making a variation popular in Shanghai.

"Our two most traditional bao offerings are the Vegetarian and Juicy Pork Bao," says CEO and founder Tom Tong. "The Vegetarian is made with bok choy, shitake mushrooms and fried tofu, and is very popular in China for breakfast and lunch. The Juicy Pork is a delicacy in China, and our most popular item. Either of these flavors would make a great introduction to the world of bao." They've even made a special bao to commemorate their arrival in New England: the seasonal Lobster Bao.

But when it comes down to it, it's all about the dough, and he keeps his very simple: Chinese winter wheat, a bit of whole grain, yeast and water.



These Juicy Pork steamed dumplings (bao) from Tom's BaoBao are filled with pork, scallion and ginger

For Tom, the texture is unlike any other dough you can find in America. "It is incredibly soft and stretchy, and springs back into place when pushed against," he says. "In order to pack as much goodness into each bao as we can, we need a dough that can be worked by the skilled hands of our baoists and a dough that stands

up to the steaming process. Inferior dough equals leaky bao, and nobody wants that." Most of all, Tom and his team are excited to introduce diners to something new and hope that they will come in, ask questions and eat it until they are as crazy about bao as they are. 326 Westminster Street. TomsBaoBao.com