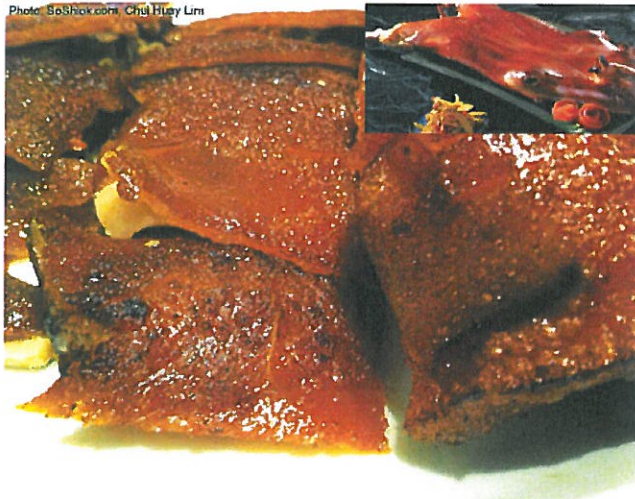


Superb roast pig at Chui Huay Lim is worth the splurge



Chen Jingwen | SoShiok.com | Sun Nov 20 2011

Photo: SoShiok.com, Chui Huay Lim



The crispy roast pig is among many delicious dishes at the new Teochew restaurant in Keng Lee Road.

Singapore, November 20, 2011

Chui Huay Lim Teochew Cuisine
190 Keng Lee Road

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When Jumbo Seafood Group, famous for its Singapore Chilli Crab, opened its first Teochew (Chaozhou) restaurant recently, many people expressed surprise.

They wondered whether their chefs could produce authentic Teochew braised duck, steamed pomfret and yam paste dessert.

But those of us who know that the owners of Jumbo are Teochews were not surprised at all. Also, seafood is a key feature of Teochew cuisine.

Furthermore, there are already some Teochew dishes on Jumbo Seafood menu, and the Group's central kitchen produces the Teochew fare for Ng Ah Sio Bak Kut Teh, whose Teochew founder is chairman of Jumbo.

So the connection is far stronger than tenuous.

And the Jumbo owners must be already members of the exclusive Teochew club - Chui Huay Lim, when they were invited to set up the restaurant in its new \$70million club premises in Keng Lee Road, just off Newton Circus.



The restaurant, which will be officially opened next month by a Teochew VVIP, is open to the public. But many rich and famous Teochews have been making regular pilgrimages to their new dining temple.

days till today.

Decor wise, it's a smart-casual contemporary restaurant with traditional ethnic touches that are more artistic than opulent. More functional than evocative of its alluring Chinese name that seems to allude to poetic imagination of a blissed out life.

In Chinese, Chui Huay Lim loosely means "Drunk Flower Forest". It could mean "ecstasy in a flower forest". I might be wrong so I hope the owners could enlighten me on this.

In any case, I wasn't totally charmed by the decor although I did appreciate the display of Teochew music instruments and tea porcelain.

Any semblance of a forest was far and few in between. Neither was there any bonsai or flowers.

I thought the function rooms were rather drab.

Then my senses were awakened by the intoxicating floral scent of Fenghuang Dancong, a Teochew tea prepared by the female tea brewer from Chaozhou.

After several cups of this fantastic tea, I was sufficiently 'inebriated' to start a sensory pleasure of enjoying a Teochew feast, spiced with nostalgia, taste, aroma and colour.

In Chinese tea culture, connoisseurs do discuss about the pleasure of getting 'high' on tea.

Flavour wise, Chui Huay Lim's menu combines traditional Teochew fare that we are familiar with in Singapore and culinary influences from Chaozhou in China - thanks to input by a food consultant from the region.

It's not Hong Kong-style Teochew cuisine served at Singapore-Hong Kong restaurants like Crystal Jade Golden Palace though they do share many similarities.



Teochew Specialties

Braised Duck (from \$14): Neatly sliced, well braised with a nice bite favoured by traditionalists. Braising liquid was well spiced and had bold 'meat' flavour. Some might find the meat a bit dense and dry. But I don't mind it as long as the duck flavour is prominent and not gamey. (Rating: 7.5)

Cold Crab (\$28 each): The double-shell crabs were packed with sweet meat and 'mustard'. Delicious with the sweet-salty tangerine sauce. (Rating: 8)

Prawn Balls (\$12 a plate): Sizeable, bouncy and juicy. But boring after two balls. (Rating: 7/10)

Deep-fried Nghoh Hiang (\$8 a plate): Flavoured with Chinese five-spice powder, it's meaty, juicy and aromatic. Better than many versions. (Rating: 8/10)

Teochew Liver Rolls (\$8 a plate): Meaty and juicy but not too 'livery' or porky. One of the better ones I've had. (Rating: 7.5)

Pig Trotter Jelly (\$8): Well made but it seemed more cooking gelatin was used and the colour was too dark for it to look natural and appetising. The use of more natural gelatin from the trotter and pig skin would make it meltingly delicious like Ah Orh's version. (Rating: 6.5)

Braised goose web and wings (\$32 and \$16): They were braised till tender enough with a bit of bite, but not fallen-off-the-bone. (Rating: 7.5)

Teochew wok-baked crabs (seasonal price): The sweet Sri Lankan crabs were cooked with salty fermented soybeans and copious amounts of garlic. Enough to freak out garlic haters and vampires. But actually the dish wasn't too intimidating - the garlic cloves had been well caramelised by the cooking, oozing a sweetness that enriched the slightly salty-savoury sauce. (Rating: 7.5)

Teochew Roasted Suckling Pig (\$168 for whole pig): This was the star of the feast at both my visits. Aromatic from charcoal-roasting, the pig boasted thick and crispy skin. So the crunch was a sheer delight. The lip-smacking flavour was propped up by the underlying thin layer of meat that had been flavoured with bean paste and spring onion. It's cheaper than suckling pigs at hotel eateries. (Rating: 8/10)

Teochew Steamed Pomfret (\$8 for 100g): It was the average 'silver' pomfret that's available in Teochew eateries. Whatever happened to the premium pomfret that we used to enjoy? Anyway, it tasted decent enough. The sauce was too tomatoey at my first visit but okay at the next when the tangy plum flavour was sharper. But the flavour still lacked the natural sweetness and depth of a good ocean pomfret. Also the use of commercial frozen lard in place of sliced pork fat failed to

Teochew Puning Steamed Chicken with fermented beans (\$15 for half): Using free-range kampong chicken, the dish was flavoured with salted soybean paste and spring onion. The meat was tastier than normal farmed chickens. Puning is a county in Chaozhou. (Rating: 7/10)

Braised conpoy with eight vegetarian treasures (from \$28): The well-braised vegetables were flavoured by the dried scallops and a modest amount of dried sole powder, which gave it a depth of 'sundried fish' flavour. A bit more would give the dish a wow factor. (Rating: 7/10)

Claypot Stew of pork belly and bittergourd (from \$18): The gourds were braised till melt-in-the-mouth tender with most of the bitterness gone. Great accompaniment for porridge. (Rating: 7/10)

Teochew Fried Kway Teow with Kai Lan (from \$12): Inconsistent with varying amounts of preserved radish and frying heat for both occasions. (Rating: 6/10)

Teochew Fried Kway Teow with cockles (from \$14): Definitely not Teochew style as it was overly salty and sweet from overuse of sweet bean sauce. The pathetic cockles were the frozen-to-death type. The restaurant should use the 'chilled' type that many hawker stalls rely on when they don't have time to shuck live cockles. (Rating: 5.5/10)

Teochew Fried Oyster Omelette (\$12): This was quite good like Singapore hawker style. Goey, crispy, greasy and flavourful. The quality of the oysters could be better. (Rating: 7.5)

Preserved radish omelette (\$10): Flavourful with 'chai poh', this thick and fluffy omelette is a must order to go with the rice porridge. (Rating: 7.5)

Sugar-crusted yam (\$10): Deep-fried to a crisp, this snack could be addictive if you're hungry but not at the end of a big meal. (Rating: 7/10)

Sweet Yam Paste with Pumpkin and Gingko nuts (\$7.80 a portion): Very good 'orh nee'. The texture of the yam paste was just right. (Rating: 7.5)



The restaurant's large menu, seasonal and promotional dishes require repeat visits.

Hopefully it will roll out delicious fish like the roe-packed yellow fish or mullet and braised goose using premium birds from Russia soon.

Said one Teochew restaurateur: "Apparently it's the best tasting goose. Better than China ones that are not allowed by AVA here."

Our lips are smacking. We can't wait.

Overall Rating: 7.5/10

Chui Huay Lim Teochew Cuisine
 190 Keng Lee Road
 #01-02, Chui Huay Lim Club
 Singapore 308409

Tel: (65) 6732 3637

Lunch: 11.30am to 3pm. Dinner: 6pm to 11pm

Budget about \$25 to \$30 per pax for lunch and \$50 to \$60 per pax for dinner if you're dining with another person.

Click on thumbnails below to see top dishes at Chui Huay Lim:



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