

Jumbo restaurant chain has opened a Teochew eatery with mid-market prices

Eats

Wong Ah Yoke



PHOTOS: CHUI HUAY LIM TEOCHEW CUISINE

The Teochew "Puning" fermented bean free-range chicken (above) is served with salted vegetables, while the yam paste (above, left) is smooth and not too sweet.

Join the club

The Jumbo restaurant chain no longer seems to be content with just running seafood eateries. After the success of Jpot, a hotpot restaurant which opened at VivoCity in 2009, it has now branched into Teochew food as well.

Its month-old restaurant at the new Chui Huay Lim Club building in Keng Lee Road also looks more swanky than its other outlets. Called Chui Huay Lim Teochew Cuisine after the club, it boasts an expansive dining hall with a high ceiling and a bright contemporary decor. Touches of the traditional can be found in displays of Chinese classical musical instruments and artefacts. There are also four private rooms of various sizes to cater to diners out for business meals or family celebrations.

The place may look upmarket but prices here are actually mid-market friendly, with average spending at about \$60 a person for dinner. During lunch, there is also a Teochew porridge menu with simpler dishes that brings down spending to an even more affordable \$30 a person.

But what you get is a lot more refined than the fare at porridge stalls. The pre-

served radish omelette (\$10), for example, is plump and fluffy, and a perfect companion to a bowl of clean-tasting rice porridge.

The braised pig's trotters (\$12) and intestines (\$10) are excellent too – tender enough without being too soft. The braised duck (\$14), which I have tried three times – twice on my own visits and the third during an invited lunch – tends to be a bit dry. Braised goose is usually less so but the restaurant is facing difficulties with goose supply.

There are many dishes that are not avail-

able in other restaurants here, such as the Teochew "Puning" fermented bean free-range chicken (\$15). It's poached chicken but served uncommonly with salted vegetables. It's also one of the most authentic-tasting kampung chicken I've eaten in Singapore, with yellowish skin, and firm and flavourful meat.

The a la carte menu has plenty of good dishes, both popular favourites as well as the uncommon.

Among the classics, the steamed pomfret (\$8 per 100g) and the Teochew

cold crab (\$28) are worth ordering. The pomfret is steamed just right, in a delicious broth flavoured with mushrooms, salted vegetables and tomatoes, while the cold crab is packed with rich golden roe.

Chui Huay Lim also follows the traditional way of serving these dishes with their appropriate dips – a soy-based one for the fish and a sweet citrusy one for the crab. But I find the dishes tasty enough on their own and often pass on the dips as well as those that come with other dishes.

But one dish that one must eat with its

CHUI HUAY LIM TEOCHEW CUISINE

190 Keng Lee Road 01-02, Chui Huay Lim Club, tel: 6732-3637

Open: 11.30am to 3pm, 6 to 11pm daily

Food: ★★★★★

Service: ★★★★★

Ambience: ★★★★★

Price: From \$30 a person

accompanying sweet soya sauce is the ngoh hiang roll (\$10). The roll is deep-fried till crispy outside and filled with juicy minced pork and crunchy bits of water chestnut.

For dessert, Teochew restaurants are judged on their yam paste or oih nee. The one here passes the test well. The yam is pureed until silky smooth and is not over-sugared. The accompanying pumpkin was undercooked on my first visit but perfect on my second. The serving is a little small but since it is priced at just \$4, one can't really complain. In this case, good things do come in small packages.

Chui Huay Lim may not be the best Teochew restaurant in town – I think different restaurants here excel at different dishes – but it is definitely a welcome addition to the Singapore dining scene.

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Lifestyle paid for its meals at the eatery reviewed here.