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## Restaurant review: Jumbo Group's Zui Yu Xuan impresses with refined Teochew cooking



Teochew Braised Duck from Zui Yu Xuan Teochew Cuisine restaurant. PHOTO: ZU YU XUAN

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SINGAPORE - The Jumbo Group, better known for its chain of seafood restaurants, opened its second Teochew restaurant in April at Far East Square.

Like its first Teochew restaurant, Chui Huay Lim Teochew Cuisine, which opened at Chui Huay Lim Club in 2011, the new restaurant serves refined Teochew dishes in a contemporary setting.

Zui Yu Xuan occupies a two-storey heritage building with a courtyard at the entrance. The ground floor has a tight dining area as most of the space is occupied by the kitchen, while the area upstairs is more spacious and includes six private rooms with karaoke equipment.

The menu is like a condensed version of Chui Huay Lim's, featuring classic Teochew dishes such as braised duck and oyster omelette. But there are also a few dishes that are exclusive to Zui Yu Xuan.

One such item is Deep-fried Home-made Puning Beancurd (\$12), a must-try.

Puning, a city in the Chaoshan region in China's Guangdong province, is known for its beancurd. Zui Yu Xuan makes its own and does a very good job of it.

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The deep-fried beancurd has a crisp coat but is soft and smooth inside, a contrast in texture that is amazing. It is traditionally eaten dipped in just salt water flavoured with chopped Chinese chives.

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Deep-fried Home-made Puning Beancurd (\$12) at Zui Yu Xuan. PHOTO: JUMBO

Another dish from the region that stands out is Teochew Puning Fermented Bean Chicken (\$22 for half, \$40 for whole). The steamed chicken, which is marinated with fermented soya beans, is free-range and the meat is tougher than the battery chicken that is commonly served in restaurants here. But it is also more flavourful.

What is unique about the dish is that the chicken comes with pickled vegetables that look like kiam chye, but are more sour and sweet than salty.

Some of the more common dishes are done very well too.

Teochew Oyster Omelette "Gooley Style" (\$13) is, contrary to its name, not gooey. What it actually refers to is the fact that the beaten eggs are mixed with a starch solution, unlike an alternative style where the oysters are fried with just eggs.

Through some masterful frying, the starchy mix forms a very crispy pancake that envelopes some barely cooked and plump oysters. Dip pieces of it in an accompanying piquant chilli sauce and you will agree it is one of the best oyster omelettes in town.

Zui Yu Xuan Teochew Cuisine



PHOTO: JUMBO

130/131 Amoy Street (inside Far East Square), tel: 6788-3637

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

Food: 4 stars

Service: 3.5 stars

Ambience: 3.5 stars

Price: From \$50 a person, more if you order live seafood

Braised Duck With Beancurd (\$18 a portion, \$32 for half, \$60 for whole) is another familiar favourite that does not disappoint. The duck is tender and there is enough fat to keep the meat from drying out.

If you are in a lavish mood, try the Pomfret And Rice Boiled Teochew Style With Dried Shrimp And Crispy Rice (\$108). It is a deluxe version of pao fan, where boiled rice is served in a seafood broth and, at the table, freshly deep-fried rice puffs are added to sizzling effect.

The broth here is delicious and the pomfret has a clean taste that makes the dish come across as light and comforting. The topping of dried shrimp provides bursts of flavour when you bite into the crispy bits.

I am just as happy, though, with a much cheaper dish of carbs. Wok Fried Kway Teow With Diced Kai Lan And Preserved Radish (from \$18) does not boast any expensive ingredients, but when fried well over a roaring flame, it gains a smokiness that is very alluring.

Another indication that this is a good version of the dish is that the flat strands of rice noodles do not stick together, but separate into smooth ribbons studded with bits of the chopped vegetables.



Wok Fried Kway Teow with Diced Kai Lan and Preserved Radish. PHOTO: JUMBO

Tau suan, a starchy sweet soup made with split mung beans, is a dessert you find more often in hawker centres than upmarket restaurants. But the Teochew Tau Suan With Ginkgo Nuts (\$5.20) at Zui Yu Xuan is not your run-of-the-mill version.

Dried orange peel is added to give it a unique flavour. And the sugar level is deliberately tuned way down low to allow the citrusy, slightly bitter flavour of the peel to take centre stage.

I love it.

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