

FoodPicks

Tan Hsueh Yun Food Editor recommends



ST PHOTOS: TAN HSUEH YUN

CHICKEN MASTER

Some hawkers close shop and disappear into the ether, leaving huge gaps in our lives. I think wistfully of that really good wonton mee in Rowell Road, and beautiful glutinous rice in Chinatown, both gone forever.

My friend had a similar gap in his life when a favourite soya sauce chicken stall in Tiong Bahru closed. But then I found it again, quite by chance, at Chinatown Complex. Hong Kong chef, Wong Keung, 60, worked elsewhere in Singapore, and then in Indonesia, before setting up Yuan Lang Soy Sauce Chicken Master in April last year.

Prices start at \$3 for a plate of soya sauce chicken with noodles or rice. We go for half a white chicken and half a soya sauce chicken (\$12 each, \$24 for the whole bird).

Although they look like garden variety chicken rice chicken, the white version tastes like a salt-baked bird. Yes, it is salted before cooking and that treatment firms up the meat and deepens the flavour. Ask for a bit of the cooking liquid. It is startlingly salty, but the chicken essence is also



intense and so delicious drizzled on rice.

Velvety describes the soya sauce version, even the chicken breast. Of all the stalls in Chinatown Complex that serve this dish, the only one that is on a par is from Fatty Ox.

WHERE: Yuan Lang Soy Sauce Chicken Master, 02-215 Chinatown Complex Food Centre, 335 Smith Street **MRT:** Chinatown **OPEN:** 8am to 7pm, or until the food is sold out (Thursdays to Tuesdays), closed Wednesdays

BURGER IN THE 'BURBS

My friend has been raving about the cheese burgers from Hammees, a new stall at Commonwealth Crescent Market & Food Centre. Sis so nuts about them he eats one pretty much every day. So of course, I had to go try it.

Two very perky people, Kelvin Hong, 31, and Vivian Tan, 25, run the stall, which opened on Nov 29. They used to sell white beehoon at another hawker centre and boy, am I glad they decided to sell burgers instead.

The Hammees Signature Beef Cheeseburger (\$6) is simple but perfectly done. I hang around to watch Mr Hong cook it.

A patty made with a combination of ground brisket and chuck goes on the griddle, then he squirts some beef tallow, rendered in-house, on it. This is tremendous because beef fat gives the thin patty flavour like you will not believe. After flipping it, more tallow goes on the patty. Then he lifts it onto a metal rack, the kind bakers would use to cool a cake, and slaps on a slice of American cheese. A metal wok cover goes over the whole thing.

That step ensures that the cheese wraps around the patty.

"Try it at home," he says. I just might.

Then the patty is placed on a bun spread with "mayo and secret ingredients", and topped with caramelised onions.

Ah, that first bite is phenomenal. The bun is squishy, but has a crackle on the outside. Then comes a flood of luscious flavours, from onions, cheese, beef and beef fat melding together. Squishy bread and thin patties do not usually thrill me, but what makes this burger worth eating is how well all these humble parts come together.

I wonder if they can be persuaded to cook the fries, served alongside the burger, in tallow too.

Another must-order is Hammees Signature Wings (\$4 for five). The mid-joint wings are small, but pack in a lot of flavour. Mostly it comes from fish sauce, which gives the wings deep umami. A lot more garlic, and perhaps a little more spice, would make these great wings even better.

It is tempting to talk up young hawkers because so few people want to enter what seems like a dying trade. Some don't make the grade, let's face it. But I'll give the owners of Hammees an A+.

WHERE: Hammees, 02-93 Commonwealth Crescent Market & Food Centre, 31 Commonwealth Crescent **MRT:** Commonwealth **OPEN:** 11am to 5pm (Tuesdays to Sundays), closed Mondays **INFO:** www.facebook.com/Hammees-346775019221224/



SMALL BITES, BIG FLAVOUR

There are times when I need to flee the office and go someplace chill at lunch time. You lucky people who work in the CBD have Relish at Frasers Tower, newly opened and such a green, comfortable refuge from the cares of the work day.

It is open all day, so drop by for coffee in the late morning, then lunch, then cake and tea, then drinks and snacks, and then dinner.

Pasta, burgers and rice bowls dominate the menu, but I zoom in on the For Sharing part for bright, vivid eats. The flavours are familiar, but chef Willin Low has a way of giving his food interesting twists.

Start with Ma La Papadam Nachos (\$8.50), featuring crisp papadam and minced chicken with plenty of numbing action from the Sichuan peppercorns. You know I am a chilli coward, but I ate pretty much the whole serving without melting. Win. Tandoori Papadam Nachos (\$8.50), featuring minced lamb with more spice than heat, are similarly compelling.

Kaki Furai (\$16) stars juicy Japanese oysters, under a crisp and greaseless panko crust. The green curry mayonnaise needs more character though. I cannot get enough of Har Jeong Gai (\$8.50), which is not prawn paste chicken. Instead, thinly sliced pork belly, marinated with shrimp paste, is cooked until crisp like keropok. I challenge you to stop at one.

If the har cheong frog's legs are on the specials menu, order them. The meaty legs are also marinated with shrimp paste, then deep fried. Gutsy flavour and juicy meat. This is my favourite dish at Relish. **WHERE:** Relish at Frasers Tower, 02-12/13 Frasers Tower, 182 Cecil Street **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **TEL:** 6904-5458 **OPEN:** 11am to 10pm (Mondays to Fridays), 10am to 3pm (Saturdays), closed Sundays **INFO:** www.facebook.com/RelishFrasers/

FOOD

PROMOTIONS

Heritage Dishes With Zander Ng At Clifford Pier

MasterChef Zander Ng takes over the kitchen at The Clifford Pier with his take on Singapore's heritage dishes, including Har Cheong Calamari, Cider-brined Kurobuta Pork Chop and Sticky Date Pudding With Five-Spice. **WHERE:** The Fullerton Bay Hotel, 80 Collyer Quay **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** Till Jan 26, noon - 2.30pm (Mon - Fri), 6.30 - 10.30pm (Mon - Sat) **PRICE:** A la carte: from \$21++, set lunch: \$59++, set dinner: \$69+++ - \$79++ **TEL:** 6597-5266 **INFO:** fullertonhotels.com

Grand Hyatt Launches Plant-based Beyond Sausage

Expanding its range of plant-based options, Grand Hyatt Singapore is launching Beyond Sausage with Green Monday. The 100 per cent plant-based, non-GMO, gluten- and soya-free sausage is made of peas, fava beans, rice, beet and coconut oil. Each sausage contains more protein and less fat (total and saturated) than traditional sausages. **WHERE:** Hotel Driveway, Grand Hyatt Singapore, 10 Scotts Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Thu - Jan 19, noon - 9pm **PRICE:** \$8++ (\$18++ from Jan 21 at Oasis) **TEL:** 6732-1234 **INFO:** singapore.grand.hyatt.com

The Best Of Hokkaido At Keyaki

Keyaki at Pan Pacific Singapore will present two seven-course kaiseki presentations by executive chef Shinichi Nakatake. Highlights include king or snow crab and grilled or simmered kinki fish - one of Hokkaido's premium specialties as the chilly waters allow the fish to develop a delicate layer of fat that gives the meat a sweeter flavour and tender texture. Other seafood highlights include Hokkaido scallop, fresh uni (sea urchin) and anglerfish. **WHERE:** Level 4 Pan Pacific Singapore, 7 Raffles Boulevard **MRT:** Promenade **WHEN:** Tue - Feb 28 (lunch & dinner)

PRICE: Set menus: \$190++ - \$210+++ a person; a la carte also available **TEL:** 6826-8240 **INFO:** E-mail dining.sin@panpacific.com

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Prosperity Yu Sheng At Se7enth

The prosperity yusheng from Se7enth at Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore comes in two sizes. Paired with ingredients such as smoked salmon, smoked snow fish and crispy fish skin and served with housemade sweet plum sauce, the yusheng is available for dine-in or takeaway (it is advisable to order three days in advance).

WHERE: 07-01 OUE Downtown 1, 6 Shenton Way **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Jan 21 - Feb 19

PRICE: \$38.80+/++ (serves up to four people) - \$68.80+/++ (for six - eight people) **TEL:** 6812-6050 **INFO:** E-mail dining.opsg@oakwood.com

Thye Moh Chan's Handcrafted Festive Treats

Teochew confectionery Thye Moh Chan offers a selection of traditional handcrafted pastries, cakes, goodies and hampers for Chinese New Year. One highlight is the new Golden Yam Mochi (\$3 a piece, \$12 a box of four pieces), a pastry with yam filling and black sugar mochi wrapped in a fluffy buttery pastry. Other items include Auspicious Fish, a jelly filled with osmanthus flower, dried longan and wolfberries in the shape of a koi (\$18.80); Thye Moh Chan's signature creation, gula melaka pineapple pastry (\$12 a box of six pieces); bak kwa tau sar piyah (\$2.50 each, \$13.80 a box of six pieces); and Gui Yuan Cake (\$12.80). **WHERE (MRT):** B1-12 Paragon, 290 Orchard Road (Orchard); 01-45 Chinatown Point, 133 New Bridge Road (Chinatown) **WHEN:** Till Feb 19, 10am - 10pm daily **PRICE:** Pastries: from \$2.50 a piece; others: \$12.80 - \$18.80; hampers: \$168 - \$298 **TEL:** 6732-8858 (Paragon)/6604-8858 (Chinatown Point) **INFO:** thymohchan.com

Harmony, Wonderful And Happiness Sets From Shao

Teochew restaurant Shao is offering three set lunch and dinner menus for Chinese New Year - all with prosperity abalone yusheng and suckling pig. Similar items appearing in two of the sets include cold crab, steamed pomfret, eight treasure rice in Teochew style and eight treasure vegetables. Dishes served with only one of the sets are steamed red grouper, roast chicken and chilled mango cream with pomelo (Harmony set); abalone with Chinese mushrooms and spinach, stir-fried broccoli with scallops and orh nee (Wonderful set); and braised shark's fin and almond with peach gum (Happiness set).

WHERE: 117 Frankel Avenue **MRT:** Kembangan **WHEN:** Jan 29 - Feb 4, Feb 7 - 19: Mon - Thu, 11am - 3pm, 5pm - 11pm; Fri - Sat, 10am - 3pm, 5pm - midnight; Sun, 10am - 11pm **PRICE:** \$68+ - \$118++ a person **TEL:** 6610-9233 **INFO:** E-mail info@shao.sg

Prosperity Hua Ting Goodies

Toss to a better year with award-winning Hua Ting masterchef's yusheng creation - smoked salmon yusheng with organic seasonal greens and red plum sauce (\$88+ for small, \$148+ for large). There are also live Australian lobster, salmon roe and abalone yusheng (\$588+ for 10 people), fresh toro yusheng (\$198+/\$388+), sliced abalone yusheng (\$78+/\$138+), fresh hamachi yusheng (\$78+/\$138+) and fresh salmon yusheng (\$68+/\$118+). Other signature favourites include pen cai (\$328+/\$598+), golden pumpkin cake with organic black garlic and Chinese sausage (\$42+) and carrot cake with abalone (\$78+).

WHERE: Level 2 Orchard Hotel Singapore, 442 Orchard Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Jan 21 - Feb 19 **PRICE:** \$42+ - \$598+ **TEL:** 6739-6666 **INFO:** E-mail huating.ohs@millenniumhotels.com

Reunion Lunch/Dinner Buffet At Window On The Park

The Chinese New Year reunion lunch and dinner buffets at Window On The



shellfish fried with garlic, with pieces of lard nestled among them, and topped with a handful of rau ram, what we call laksa leaf.

These large cockles hit the spot and it is worth the trouble of shucking them. I just wish the lard was crisp. But then I might have devoured all those many pieces.

WHERE: SG Pho House, 774 North Bridge Road **MRT:** Bugis **TEL:** 6299-8774 **OPEN:** 11am to 10pm daily

Park at Holiday Inn Singapore Orchard City Centre feature various traditional Chinese cooking techniques. Besides salmon yusheng, there are roasted duck with plum sauce, crispy seabass with Thai chilli sauce and steamed glutinous rice in lotus leaf with Chinese wax meat. Other favourites include grilled pork belly, wok-fried beef with ginger and spring onion, Yang Zhou fried rice, Singapore laksa, roasted chicken with five spiced salt and Cantonese char siew pizza from the Fortune Pizza station.

WHERE: Holiday Inn Singapore Orchard City Centre, 11 Cavenagh Road **MRT:** Somerset/Dhoby Ghaut **WHEN/PRICE:** Jan 22 - Feb 1, Feb 7 - 20; lunch, noon - 2.30pm: \$65++ a person; dinner, 6.30 - 10pm: \$70++ (Mon - Thu), \$96++ (Fri - Sun), Feb 2 - 6: \$104++; all one-for-one pricing **TEL:** 6733-8333 **INFO:** E-mail fnb.hisnorchard@ihg.com

Mui Kee's New Festive Specialities

Hong Kong Cantonese congee eatery Mui Kee has introduced three new dishes for the festive season. Fortune congee (\$10.90) contains dried mussels and moss. Reap An Abundant Harvest (\$16.80) is a medley of lotus root, carrot, snow pea, celery, baby corn, wood ear mushroom and red bell pepper stewed and served in a piping-hot claypot. Treasure Seafood Pot (\$68.80) comes with abalone, Alaskan crab legs, Hokkaido scallops, dried mussels, mushrooms and moss. **WHERE:** 01-12 Shaw Centre, 1 Scotts Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Till Feb 28 (closed on Feb 4 & 5); Mon - Fri, 11.30am - 3pm, 6 - 10pm; Sat, Sun & public holidays, 11.30am - 9.30pm **PRICE:** \$10.90 - \$68.80 **TEL:** 6737-2422 **INFO:** E-mail muikkee@lesamis.com.sg

Pinnacles Of Prosperity Take-Home Treats From Hotel Fort Canning

The culinary team at Hotel Fort Canning has created the Prosciutto di Parma Prosperity Fruit Yu Sheng (\$188+) by incorporating the prized prosciutto into a fruit-centric yusheng dish with finely sliced parma ham. Other versions are Signature

Fortune Salmon Yu Sheng (\$48+ - \$68+), Signature Golden Prosperity Fruit Yu Sheng (\$88+) and Oceans of Prosperity Premium Yu Sheng (\$328+). Other highlights are the Blossoms of Abundance Treasure Pot (\$388+), while takeaway favourites include Golden Crispy Suckling Pig (\$388+) and Imperial Herbal Roast Duck (\$68+). **WHERE:** The Salon, Hotel Fort Canning, 11 Canning Walk **MRT:** Fort Canning **WHEN:** Till Feb 19, collection: 11am - 7pm daily **PRICE:** Yusheng: \$48+ - \$328+; others: \$28+ - \$388+ **TEL:** 6559-6796 **INFO:** E-mail thesalon@hfcingsingapore.com

WINE EVENTS

Cape Mentelle Wines And The Signature Cuisine Of Yantra

North Indian restaurant Yantra's extensive menu is designed with the freshest, hand-picked spices flown in from India regularly. Tuck into traditional favourites such as Chicken Tikka and Martabaan Ka Meat, accompanied by the wines of Cape Mentelle. **WHERE:** 01-28/33 Tanglin Mall, 163 Tanglin Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Jan 30, 7pm **PRICE:** \$79++ a person (\$63.20++ for HSBC cardholders) **TEL:** 6319-4038 (weekdays, 9am - 6pm) **INFO:** E-mail asianmasters@sph.com.sg

The Cuisine Of Chef Mirko Vinci With The Iconic Wines Of Sicilia And Toscana

Grissini is a contemporary Italian grill restaurant that specialises in premium meats and seafood. Its oven, which combines a grill and oven into one, gives classic Italian favourites a twist with a Grissini flair. Indulge in a five-course menu specially crafted by head chef Mirko Vinci, who hails from the Puglia region in southern Italy - accompanied by the iconic wines of Sicily and Toscana. **WHERE:** Grissini, Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, 392 Havelock Road **MRT:** Outram Park **WHEN:** Jan 31, 7pm **PRICE:** \$145++ a person (\$116++ for HSBC cardholders) **TEL:** 6319-4038 (weekdays, 9am - 6pm) **INFO:** E-mail gustoitaliano@sph.com.sg