



## BIGGER AND BETTER

For all the traditional trappings of Chef Chan Chen Hei's culinary expertise and background, the new Chef Chan's Restaurant is in a state of black—black slate ceilings, black walls and even black floors; the works! Black as we know, is not exactly the most auspicious colour for the Chinese, and such bold use of this colour can perhaps suggest a departure from the more stay-in, homely feel of Chef Chan's first outlet in Toa Payoh.

While the new sprawling 8,180 square foot interior does lend a sense of vastness and grandeur, a function hall that is able to accommodate from as few as ten to a maximum of 220, and 18 Chinese panels in shades of red, black and gold that depict chronological real-life accounts of the previous owners of the panels, further augment the restaurant's splendour. Once fashionable among the wealthy of bygone dynasties, each panel averages between \$8,000 and \$10,000, and have a combined history of over a century. Scores of treasured antiques from Chef Chan's private collection, a colossal horse cart as well as antique daybeds adorn the restaurant's interior, making the walk to your table feel like a trip back in time.

The menu has also expanded, and is divided into sections like cold appetisers, entrées, The Famous Ten (such as steamed sliced air-dried eel, Nanjing salted duck, sautéed crab with bitter melon) and the Ten Delicacies (featuring crispy fried sliced pork in preserved beancurd sauce, traditional pumpkin chicken soup and sautéed fish head with ginger and onion).

All dishes are available only in a standard size serving two to five people, to allow greater variety in ordering. Chef Chan's three signature dishes of crispy roast chicken, Australian beef tenderloin fried with black pepper sauce and braised supreme shark's fin soup with crab roe remain, but we love the new cold appetiser dishes like bitter

melon tossed in its natural jus and the refreshing melon strips enlivened with orange juice. Strips of winter melon were boiled al dente thus retaining its firm texture, cut into strips and then soaked in fresh orange juice, and the result is a most invigorating cold dish, complemented by bits of orange pulp. Saucy pork ribs are tender to the bone, with savoury hints of cinnamon that does not overwhelm. Fresh seafood need no complicated preparation, much like our lobster steamed simply with toppings of minced garlic and spring onions.

The much-anticipated dim sum menu with 60 to 100 items was unavailable at time of visit but we had a taste of what is to come with two desserts of egg tart and green tea glutinous rice balls. The egg tart is addictive with its flaky crust and generous egg custard filling; best-consumed warm. With a dim sum chef hailing from Guangzhou to complement the recognised culinary genius of Chef Chan, the new outlet looks poised to be bigger and better than before!—Chew Hui Chin

*Chef Chan's Restaurant, 331 North Bridge Road, #01-02/08 Odeon Towers, tel: 6250-3363*