

Trendy Oriental Flavours

There is sex in the City if you adore Thai cuisine. Renn Thai Restaurant serves up a menu that left **Low Yit Leng** hankering for encores.

THOSE WHO HAVE been too busy indulging in the various sales in town could be forgiven for not noticing a recent change in the line-up of restaurants on the fourth level of Ngee Ann City. The recent addition is Renn Thai. Despite the change of owners and name of the restaurant, Renn Thai, which opened in the space left by another Thai restaurant in March this year, has basically kept much of the interiors of the outlet intact. The large wooden screen that shields the elegant inner sanctuary has remained at its original post and the teak beams continue to quietly support the interior of the restaurant, which is punctuated by well-placed carvings of Thai origin and miscellaneous Thai artefacts. Diners are accorded their full privacy while they partake of their meal by the unobtrusively placed wooden latticed-screens hugging the full-length glass walls.

The restaurant, strategically located in Takashimaya Shopping Centre, offers a varied menu that would satisfy the most discerning of palates. If you feel overwhelmed by the 'mind boggling' choices, fret not as the service staff are friendly and well-versed about the dishes. The fiery intensity associated with most Thai dishes may be adjusted to suit one's palate — just inform the service staff when you place your order.

For starters, there are nine appetisers to whet your appetite. One of the more delectable selection is the rice crackers served with a special dip made of minced chicken and prawns. Perhaps someone should distil this wonderful combination of flavours into television snacks! Another highly recommended appetiser is the dried fish and green mango salad doused in

RIGHT
Different views
of the interior
of Renn Thai
highlighted by
a rich collection
of artefacts



frequently spotted at top fashion shows, has two children, Audrey, 11, and Victor, 14. Dressed in jeans and the latest and most-coveted Louis Vuitton bohemian blouse, she cuts a winsome and willowy figure.

The comprehensive menu appeals not only to discerning local families but also to businessmen and tourists, judging from the weekday crowd. The starter of crisp rice crackers served with minced chicken and prawn dip was a hit. Another appetiser to whet the appetite is the boneless chicken wing stuffed with minced chicken and herbs. Served with a sweet chilli dip, it was more appealing than poo ja – a mixture of crabmeat in shells topped with salted egg yolk – which was a tad dry.

Fresh salads, always a mainstay in a Thai meal are well represented on the menu. We eschewed the ubiquitous pomelo and mango salad for a dry fish salad. Served with shredded green mangoes in a spicy dressing made with purple onions and peanuts, it was refreshingly tart and piquant. Tom yam goong with prawns infused with lemongrass and a vigorous dash of roasted chilli paste was enjoyed with no complaints. However, the spicy and sour soup with prawns and young coconut meat made for a lively debate with its unexpected sweet milky flavour. Think “savoury coconut soup.”

UK law-trained Liz, who is the daughter of Linda Quek, a prominent personality on the social scene, has recently started work in finance after a brief hiatus from working to do her Masters degree. Finance, she says pensively, is fraught with its own challenges. But these are brushed aside with the arrival of the Thai-style fish otak. Cooked in an adorable clay multi-dish with sweet basil leaves and kaffir lime, it is smooth and moist with a delightful texture.

Eunice, who is married to Siek Tjiep Hoe and has lived in Singapore for more than 15 years (and is known to be a connoisseur of Chinese cuisine), is quite partial to chilli and spice. She savours the simple clean taste of a fresh red groupa which has been steamed with lemongrass, fresh lemon slices, coriander, garlic and shallots.

By this time, we are ready to call it a night. But the popular house favourite, deep-fried tiger prawns with curry leaves with a butter sauce technique second to none, is too irresistible to pass up. The dish has a light and fluffy texture and is truly unique. Also a pleasant choice is the eggplant with minced chicken and basil leaves: uncomplicated and effective. We end on a high note with an assortment of desserts including hand-crafted bean cakes shaped into mini fruits, mini water chestnut and corn jellies and a favourite with Eunice: melt-in-the-mouth crushed yellow beans encased delicately in glutinous rice flour topped with grated coconut.

Discussing how to lose the weight gained tonight, Liz, who is working on her waltz, tries to convince Eunice that the tango is a great way to exercise. Of the meal, she says: “The experience, like the flavours, was intense and fiery. I think that Chinese food is a stately dignified waltz, but Thai food is more of a Latin dance, a samba or rumba. As such, this restaurant creates flavours that tantalise and incite the taste buds to a fiery and sensual tango.” ■

right An assortment of colourful Thai desserts

below right
Peek gai sod sai –
stuffed chicken wing with
herbs and spices

below left Robust red curry
with roast duck



Renn Thai

391A Orchard Road, #04-23
Ngee Ann City. Tel: 6735 5562.
Lunch: 11.30am-3.00pm daily.
Dinner: 6.00pm-11.00pm daily.

