

Same place, new name

The menu at Renn Thai is extensive, with almost all the classic dishes

WHEN you next walk through the fourth floor of Ngee Ann City where many of its restaurant tenants are, take a look at the Thai restaurant.

At a glance, it appears unchanged from when it opened together with the shopping centre some years ago, but the name is different.

It used to be called Baan Thai, an elegant restaurant whose walls were covered in wood panels and traditional Thai artworks.

It looks that way still but Baan Thai is gone. Now, the name of the restaurant is Renn Thai, which means a traditional Thai house.

The reason is a takeover about a year ago by Mr Alan Goh, who also owns the Bali Thai foodcourt chain of stalls.

With the new management came a new team of chefs, a Thai assistant manager from Bangkok and, of course, a new menu.

The menu now is extensive, with almost all the classic Thai dishes. For example, for salad alone, you get a choice of pomelo, mango, papaya, vermicelli, dry fish, beef or lemongrass with prawns.

And the curries — apart from the usual red and green ones — include varieties that are more commonly available in Bangkok restaurants than here, like the wild-tasting jungle curry and the dry yellow curry.

On top of the *a la carte* menu, there is also a separate list of



Special dishes include steamed scallops and king prawns.

monthly specials. And this is where the chef shows off his creativity and showcases some even less commonplace dishes.

For this month, there are four special dishes. I tried two and both turned out to be very good.

The steamed king prawns with lemongrass (\$28 for four prawns) is a case of how a good dish need not be complicated as long as you have the right ingredients. Here, the fresh huge prawns form the basis for the dish's success with the chopped lemongrass and fried garlic enhancing their succulent sweetness.

The other special dish — steamed scallops on earthen tray (\$18) — makes an attractive appearance, with the scallops covered under earthen cones. The shellfish is wrapped in a patty of minced pork before being steamed, allowing it to steep in the juices and remain moist and tender.

The dishes from the *a la carte* menu do not disappoint either. The curries, for example, are delicious. I tried two — pineapple curry with

prawns (\$16 for small) and jungle curry with chicken (\$14). Both are tasty without being overly fiery. While curries carry the notion that they must be chilli hot, in Thai cooking, they need not burn the tongue. Instead, it is the *tom yam* soup that really holds the torch.

Another winning dish, the pomelo salad (\$3.50 per piece), comes inside a hollowed-out orange. It looks pretty and tastes good. Unfortunately, oranges are not very big, which means you do not get much salad.

The verdict on Renn Thai is that the cooking is good and authentic. The trend may be for Vietnamese now, but with the Singaporean's penchant for spice, Thai will never die. Not as long as good eateries like Renn Thai continue to open here.

Renn Thai

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Opening hours: 11 am - 3 pm,
6 - 11 pm

Food: ★★☆☆☆
Service: ★★☆☆☆
Ambience: ★★☆☆☆

EATS
By Wong Ah Yoke