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sundaylife!



NEW PUNGGOL JETTY.

Restaurants and bars bring back life PAGE2



KITTY CONFUSIO Is she or isn't she a cat? **PAGE3**



CHICKEN RICE SECRETS Would you pay \$42,800 for his recipe?

PAGE27

HERITAGE EATS Handmade from scratch



DESIGN: TAY CHERN HUI PHOTOS: DIOS VINCOY JR FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES, LIM YAOHUI FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES, SANRIO, LIM SIN THAI, CHRIS TAN

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Century Square

#04-08

Small bites with bite

Tapas bar A.T.O.S. at Royal Plaza on Scotts focuses on Asian flavours





t may be a little late in the game to be opening a tapas bar now, given the number of such small-bite and cocktail places that have opened -

and closed – in the past couple of years. However, Royal Plaza on Scotts plays it a bit differently by focusing on Asian flavours in A.T.O.S., a new tapas bar that opened in the middle of this month next to the hotel's main entrance.

It is a small space adjoining the Carousel buffet restaurant and, in fact, becomes part of the restaurant at lunchtime, when the partition wall is folded away.

But from 6pm, it takes on a life of its own when neon-coloured lights come on and add to the playful atmosphere of a room furnished with small white tables and candy-hued chairs.

The menu plays around with local food flavours in both the drinks and dishes.

The Choco-nut Chendol (\$12), for example, is not a dessert but a cocktail that blends gula melaka and pandan with doses of Malibu rum and creme de cacao. It is a little rich for a drink but nonetheless very

The menu is small, with 12 savoury and five sweet items. And out of these, five – including a dessert – are deep-fried and have a very similar mouthfeel, giving an impression that variety is lacking in the offerings.

Having more varied styles of cooking, such as grilling or barbecuing, would make the menu seem bigger than it is.

Having said that, however, my two favourite items are deep-fried.

The Aromatic Chicken Rice Balls (\$12) are a must-try. Chicken meat is confit in oil flavoured with garlic, shallots, ginger and pandan leaves and then stuffed into balls of rice cooked in chicken stock. The balls are deep-fried to set them and served with a coriander chilli dip.

They look dry but are moist inside and the aroma of chicken rice wafts out when you break them open.

The other deep-fried item I like is the Crispy XO Durian Fritters (\$8). They, too, look dry and hard but break easily between the teeth to reveal creamy durian pulp. There is an accompanying salted gula melaka dip if you like them sweeter, but the fritters taste very good on their own too.

Another item I like is the Smoked Duck (\$9). Diced smoked duck meat is rolled up with strips of pickled vegetables such as carrot and cucumber in an egg crepe similar to the one used to wrap Peking duck. The combination works marvellously, with the acidity in the vegetables brightening up the smoky meat and the

slightly sweet crepe binding the different flavours. Other items, however, can do with more of such

sparkle.

The Salmon Tataki (\$9), which has pieces of raw fish rolled in cha soba and topped with fish roe, certainly has the potential to be a hit, but is let down by a nondescript dressing. Even the shiso leaf it sits on is not

enough to provide a punch on the palate. A stronger flavour - a few drops of ponzu or even a little wasabi, perhaps - would help it to leave a deeper impression.



PHOTOS: ROYAL PLAZA ON SCOTTS The Aromatic Chicken Rice Balls (above) are a must-try, while the Salmon Tataki



(below) needs more punch.

The Chilli Crab (\$12), served as a mini burger with flakes of crabmeat sandwiched in a deep-fried mantou (Chinese bun), is too sweet. Less sugar and a tad more acidity, whether from vinegar or fruit juice, would pep up the chilli crab sauce.

A.T.O.S.

Sunday

tel: 6589-7799

Food: ***☆☆

Service: ***

Ambience: ***

person, without drinks

Royal Plaza on Scotts,

Lobby Level, 25 Scotts Road,

and Saturday), closed on

Price: Budget about \$50 a

SoShiok |

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Wong Ah Yoke

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code for more information.

Open: 6pm to 1am (Monday to

Thursday), 6pm to 2am (Friday

I order both the Crispy Breaded Prawns (\$12) and Fried Oysters (\$12) and find little differentiation between the two. They taste like your average deep-fried bar snacks but the spices are too subtle in both the seasonings and accompanying dips. A bolder touch would make it easier for the diner to identify what Asian dish inspires each item.

What is good about A.T.O.S. is that its prices are relatively reasonable compared with those of other tapas eateries. The most expensive items are \$12 each and a number are below \$10.

With some tweaks and a few more items, it can be a draw. The vibe is more fun than hip, which means it will not be competing with tapas bars in the Central Business District that go after the trendy crowd. Who knows, it may find a whole new market for tapas.

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Follow Wong Ah Yoke on Twitter @STahyoke

SundayLife! paid for its meals at the eateries reviewed here.

Succulent chicken bun



LIME DELI

District - Lime Deli.

Cheap & Good oong Woei Wan

Firstly, it is easier to overcook pork than chicken, which makes a juicy pork chop that much more



Between a chicken chop and pork chop, I would always precious to me. Secondly, I find chicken rather bland. Having said that, I do appreciate Mayson Bakery's first time, when a staff member gave me a bigger heap fail-safe take on the Macau pork chop bun.

The shop replaces pork with chicken in its \$3.90 bun

For a quick meal, grab sandwiches such as grilled

Caribbean veggies (\$6) and lime marinated fish (\$6).

Open: 8am to 9pm (weekdays), closed on weekend

Where: 51 Telok Ayer Street

Info: Call 9192-5232 or go to

www.facebook.com/limedelisingapore

MAYSON BAKERY

01-66/75 Jurong Point Shopping Centre, 1 Jurong West Central 3

Open: 6am to 10.30pm (Monday to Saturday), 7am to 11pm (Sunday). The chicken chop bun is available from about 9am daily Rating: ***

 a succulent chicken chop with sufficiently burnt ends, to be exact.

It also tries to give the bun character. The bread has been toasted such that it is crackly

outside while chewy inside, like a baguette. To strike a balance between dryness and wetness,

the bakery adds coleslaw and chilli sauce in the bun.

I tried the bun twice and it was wetter and better the of coleslaw.

Do bear that in mind, if you like your food moist.

curry goat and coffee jerk striploin steak, are available. Each meal, priced from \$8 to \$14, comes with two **Open For Business**



Caribbean restaurant Lime House in Keong Saik Road

has opened a sister outlet in the Central Business

KKI

Cake shop Kki, formerly at Ann Siang Hill, has found a new home at the School of the Arts with its co-tenant The Little Drom Store, which sells quirky knick-knacks.

Its range of dainty cakes is back, including Souffle Cheesecake (\$8); Nao (\$9.80), a strawberry mousse cake with a pistachio cream centre on a raspberry jam base; and Onigiri (\$9), made with basil milk chocolate and bitter orange.

Tea and coffee are also available at \$4.80. Where: School of the Arts, 1 Zubir Said Drive, 02-01 Open: Noon to 8pm daily Info: Call 6225-6650 or go to www.facebook.com/kki.sweets

SELA

next to Raffles Hotel.

The menu features breads (from \$2.50), salads (from \$7) and Jamaican patties (from \$4). Main course favourites from Lime House, such as jerk beef burger,

PHOTO: LIME DELI

For modern European fare, head to Sela restaurant, Start your meal with salads such as duck rillettes,

seared duck liver, apple compote and rocket (\$18) and grilled asparagus, poached egg and parma ham (\$15.50). Main courses include baked miso Chilean seabass with edamame and sweet peas (\$27), baked

lamb ribs, braised red cabbage and roasted tomato (\$30) and slow-braised Kurobuta pork cheek, potatoes and carrots (\$28). Save space for desserts (\$10.50 each) such as Constructed Eton Mess and Gula Melaka Creme Caramel.

Where: 32 Seah Street Open: 11.30am to 2.30pm, 6.30 to 11pm (Monday

to Saturday), closed on Sunday Info: Call 6337-6358 or go to www.facebook.com/selarestaurant

PAPPARICH PLUS

Malaysian street food chain PappaRich has new outlets in Plaza Singapura and OneKM mall in Tanjong

The restaurants feature Peranakan-inspired interiors and large marble dining tables for big groups as well as more extensive menus which include large plates for sharing.

Highlights include Curry Fish Head; Sambal Aubergine; Ayam Masak Merah, chicken slow-braised in a tomato and chilli paste; Sweet and Sour Chilli Crab Meat Fried Rice; Iced Black Gold Coffee, cold-brewed overnight; and the PappaBun, flavoured with Black Gold Coffee, with a melted butter centre.

A la carte items are priced from \$2.50++ to \$34.90++.

Where: Plaza Singapura, 68 Orchard Road, 01-35; OneKM, 11 Tanjong Katong Road, 01-60 Open: 10am to midnight (Sunday to Thursday), 10 to Tam (Friday and Saturday) Info: www.papparich.com.sg

Eunice Quek and Chris Tan

HOW TO NAVIGATE THE FOOD WORLD LIKE A PRO

Tomatoes

These fruit have become so ubiquitous and essential to cuisines around the globe that it is impossible to imagine a world without them.

■ Commercial vs heirloom tomatoes: All tomatoes originated from a small number of wild South American species. Commercially farmed varieties are usually modern hybrids selected not just for flavour but also traits such as uniformity, fast growth and ability to survive transportation. While there is no single definition of "heirloom", cultivars so labelled typically have long histories or pedigrees, are associated with particular geographical areas or growing traditions, and have a wider range of shapes, flavours and textural nuances.

Red tomatoes: Genetic research has shown that mass-farmed regular red tomatoes bred primarily for their bright colour may end up with the linked trait of lower sugar levels, hence their frequent lack of flavour. Thankfully, tastier red heirloom and



commercial types are now more widely available.

Cherry tomatoes: The annual summer cherry-tomato glut is on at supermarkets. Bred and marketed for their small size, punchy flavour and attractive colours, they often have relatively thicker skins than larger tomatoes and hence keep well. Shown here are yellow tomberries, a trademark Dutch cultivar with very juicy fruit the size of large blueberries.

Vine/truss tomatoes: Sold still attached to their vine, these are hand-picked and handled extra carefully, thus commanding a premium price. Besides the vine's visual appeal, aroma and indication of freshness, its presence does not contribute much to flavour. The plant's genetics, growing conditions and ripeness when picked are still the most important factors.

Plum tomatoes: These thick-fleshed, egg- or oval-shaped varieties are traditionally held to be best for cooking down into sauce or paste. Favoured by producers of canned tomato products. Shown here are Roma tomatoes on the vine.





Catch-all terms for large tomato varieties that can be thickly cut into large slices. They often have defined lobes, an irregular shape and many internal seed compartments.

III Fruit tomatoes: All tomatoes are fruit, but these red or pink Japanese cultivars are named for their high sugar levels which approach those of melons and peaches. Look for them at Japanese supermarkets.



Yellow tomatoes: These often, but not always, have a milder flavour and lower acidity than red tomatoes. A pear-shaped cherry variety is shown here.

Black tomatoes: Varieties with dusky brown-grey skin and flesh, suffused with red, purple or green. Many originate from America and Eastern Europe. They can

have very complex flavours, with umami (savoury) and mineral notes. Shown here is the Kumato, a commercial black tomato cultivar sold at local gourmet supermarkets when in season.





Green tomatoes: Unripe tomatoes are mostly green and sour, but some cultivars are green and flavourful when fully ripe, with a balanced tanginess and firm but juicy texture. Shown here is a "Green Zebra" cherry variety.

■ Bi-coloured tomatoes: Many heirloom varieties are mottled or striped. Shown here is a "Brown Tiger" cherry tomato.

Choosing and storing: Store tomatoes in a brown paper bag at a cool room temperature. Check

frequently to assess ripeness and for signs of spoilage. Refrigerating tomatoes for more than a day or so makes them mealy and bland.

Text and photos: Chris Tan