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DINING

Chef Violet Oon

SINGAPORE & NATIONAL KITCHEN BY VIOLET OON

Nothing beats mama's home cooking, which is why Violet Oon has done very little to tamper with tried and tested, traditional Peranakan recipes. With an undisputed title as the leading authority on Singapore's Peranakan cuisine, Chef Violet's career is impressive to say the least.

Amongst multiple other accolades under her chef's hat, Chef Violet also represents Singapore as a culinary ambassador abroad – she has also published several cookbooks devoted to Peranakan cooking and even co-authored a curry cookbook in German.

The food at Violet Oon's restaurants is testament that home-cooked greatness can indeed exist (and succeed) in an elevated dining setting. The grandeur of her latest venture, National Kitchen by Violet Oon, at the National Gallery Singapore, is proof of that.

While the menu here primarily features traditional Peranakan dishes, the National Kitchen pays tribute to the multi-dimensional aspects of Singapore culture by also featuring national favourites, right down to the décor. Original Peranakan tiles add a dose of vibrancy and heritage to the colonial styled modern interior, while a row of chandeliers illuminate the elegant space.

Expect familiar delights like *Kuay Pie Tee* (a crispy pastry shell filled with turnip, bamboo and prawn) and perhaps less known dishes like *Buah Keluak Ayam* (chicken stew). The Cod in Creamy Laksa Sauce is especially worthy of note, as a baked fillet is bathed in an orange laksa paste, imparting heat into the otherwise delicate flavour of the fish. The humble Chicken Satay defies expectation too, where typically meagre morsels are substituted by hunks of meat, served with the usual trimmings.

For dessert, the *Kueh Beng Kah* (a traditional grated tapioca cake, served with *Gula Melaka* syrup and coconut milk) is a true treat, but more interestingly, is a quiet nod to Singapore's war days, when rice was scarce and tapioca became a staple on the island.

Perhaps most impressive of all is the fact that the kitchen virtually never closes. Every spice paste, pickle and protein is prepped from scratch day in and day out by a devoted team of staff. It reflects an uncompromising pride for heritage cooking.

■ National Kitchen by Violet Oon, 02-01 National Gallery Singapore (City Hall Wing), tel: 9834 9935, violetoon.com

