

# Restaurant Review: Yàn Spotlights Long-Forgotten Cantonese Delights From Days Of Yore - Weekender Singapore

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## Restaurant Review: Yàn Spotlights Long-Forgotten Cantonese Delights From Days Of Yore

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### Chef Lai brings winds of change to the Cantonese restaurant's menu

Yàn has a new chef and he comes with his own bag of tricks.

By tricks, we mean Chef Lai Chi Sum's set of skills that successfully brought back 'private dining style' to the restaurant, an age-old culinary practice that seemed to be snuffed out over time. While seemingly a fancy phrase, private dining style basically zooms in on traditional Cantonese dishes built from seasonal ingredients, before presented in a communal style like in most Chinese restaurants. We daresay that there couldn't possibly be a more fitting culinary wizard than Chef Lai to turn back the Lazy Susan (ha.) of time. With a whopping two decades of experience under his belt, we're convinced that the man surely has seen, tasted and cooked it all.

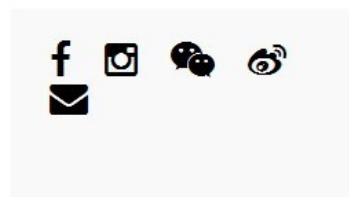
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House Special Bake Pork Ribs with Black Olive (\$13.80 per pax)

And it isn't just sticking to Canton classics that reflects Chef Lai's dedication to tradition. He has gone as far as unearthing a little nugget of buried history in the form of the House Special Bake Pork Ribs with Black Olive (\$13.80 per pax).

While many may be familiar with the traditional Cantonese sweet and sour sauce-glazed pork ribs, or even the localised lip-smacking coffee-rubbed ribs, Chef Lai offers an unheard variation that highlights black olives – an overlooked ingredient used by Guang Zhou farmers in their meats and seafood.

First steamed until tender, the pork rib is deep fried and then sauteed in black olive sauce, before drenched with a honey-plum glaze and crumbed with the same black olive bits. Like a strip search, we tore off the rib till its bare bone, savouring the meat's harmonious profile of sweet, salty, and just a smidge of piquant bitterness.



Baked Crab Shell with Crab Meat and Onion (\$18 per pax)

Another unexplored oldie is the Baked Crab Shell with Crab Meat and Onion (\$18 per pax), a dish Chef Lai mastered in the early 80s when the economy was booming and crazy rich Asians needed an outlet to flaunt their affluence. Presented in its own shell, the amalgamation of fresh flower crab meat cooked in superior stock with onion, mushrooms and bachel sauce is topped with breadcrumbs and baked till golden brown. Even with the welcome frills, the dish still highlights the stringy crab meat distinctly, giving the crustacean its due respect.

Other dishes Chef Lai has introduced include the Steamed Kampong Chicken with Ginger Spring Onion (\$25/\$50), Braised 'Mee Po' with Fresh Mushroom and XO Sauce (from \$22) and the heartwarming Shark Cartilage Broth with Wonton (\$18).





Steamed Thousand Layer Beancurd (from \$22)

Along with the new nostalgic additions, Yàn's signatures are unmoved, untouched and up for wowing newcomers at its National Gallery abode. Great for a large party, order the Signature Crispy Roast Suckling Pig served in three ways, namely: skin, shoulder and the leftover meat baked with lemongrass, Peking Roast Duck (\$45/\$90) served in crepes with the usual cucumber and spring onion garnishes, and the photogenic Steamed Thousand Layer Beancurd (from \$22) that pans out like a Chinese fan.

So if you're of Cantonese descent or a curious foreigner, Yàn is a great place to begin a heritage tour via the tastebuds. Not only will your bellies be filled with great food, but your soul enriched with the dialect's storied past.

*Address: #05-02 National Gallery Singapore 1 St Andrew's Road, Singapore 178957*

*Operating Hours: Lunch: 11:30am to 2:30pm Dinner: 6pm to 10:30pm (Daily)*

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