

## Fancy new digs, same great taste

### NEW RESTAURANT

#### **Funan Weng**

**#01-07 Maxwell Chambers 32 Maxwell Road**

**Tel: 6238 5038**

IN computer-speak, the week-old corner restaurant at Maxwell Chambers is Funan Weng version 2.1. That is, it's the upgraded edition of the well-known Ipoh hor fun stall that was established at Hock Lam Street in 1955 and currently has a space in Ghim Moh market.

The family of owners decided to go upmarket because they wanted to expand the business without simply duplicating the stall elsewhere.

As such, the Tanjong Pagar outlet - like any computer program upgrade - comes with several improvements. For one thing, its setting is far more sleek and comfortable. Instead of greasy tables and chairs, diners sit around black wooden tables on cushy chairs or the banquette that runs around one side of the restaurant. Diners mark their choices on order chits, then pay at the sparkling white cashier counter in the centre of the premises.

Decor aside, the standard of the food has risen a few notches too. The secret family recipe Ipoh hor fun sauce that Funan Weng is so well-known for - that's a light blend of 12 different herbs that have been brewed for about 12 hours - has been retained, of course, but all added MSG has been removed to cater to the area's more health-conscious crowd.

Also, while prices are about twice that of the Ghim Moh stall, higher quality ingredients are used in the food.

Those changes equate to more refined fare, and this was evident at a recent dinner - the Ipoh hor fun with chicken and prawns (\$5.80) was slightly lighter on the herbal taste and less salty, though it was still commendably tasty.



The chicken was tender and the prawns fresh, and the silky smooth kway teow (you can substitute these with thin yellow noodles if you prefer, though those have a rather sharp 'lye water' taste) was cooked soft, but not mushy.

The gourmet dumpling Ipoh hor fun (\$5.20) was equally good - the large dumplings, made fresh daily, were generously filled with peppered minced pork and chopped spring onion, and each contained a whole prawn. What we found slightly disappointing though, was the beef brisket version (\$6.20). While there were a lot of beef cubes in the dish, they had been overcooked so that the meat was a bit dry and stringy.

The restaurant also offers a small range of side dishes to complement its Ipoh hor fun. We particularly enjoyed a starter of vegetables in oyster sauce (\$4), which was very well done. The fresh, emerald-coloured greens were nice and crunchy and the dressing was lighter than traditional-recipe oyster sauce. A generous sprinkling of fried shallots on the top provided extra flavour as well.

That dish perhaps best sums up what Funan Weng is about: simple food done right. It was what the stall was about before, and it's nice to see that the brand is continuing that tradition even in a fancier setting.

**Rating: 7/10**

**By Audrey Phoon**