

132 Mee Pok Kway Teow Traditional Teochew Noodle

MP59 Food House

Block 59 Marine Terrace

#01-105 Singapore 440059

Opening hours: Tue-Sun 7am-4pm, closed on Mondays and third Sunday of the month



TASTE OF NOSTALGIA

Chan Choon Wing of 132 Mee Pok Kway Teow says his customers, in their 70s, say his noodles hark back to old days - PHOTO: YEN MENG JIIN

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132 Mee Pok has changed its address five times, but leave it to its hungry fans to track it down each time. Its current location in Marine Terrace is the stall's sixth address, but a few things remain consistent - the queue snaking out of it, its sweat-inducingly spicy chilli and its day-time-only opening hours.

The stall's second-generation owner Chan Choon Wing, 42, says that if he can find the manpower, the stall would stay open for longer hours; as it is, it has extended them a little each time it has moved.

132 Mee Pok was founded by Mr Chan's father Chan Sek Inn, who started out a tok tok mee seller, meaning he was itinerant, walking through neighbourhoods, announcing his presence by hitting two pieces of bamboo together (hence the tok tok) and taking orders back to where the stall was at. He then set up a permanent stall in the now-demolished Siglap Market in 1969. The number 132, taken from the lot the stall occupied in Siglap Market, has been

retained since then because of its auspiciousness - it sounds like "good business" in Cantonese.

The younger Mr Chan joined the business 12 years ago because he didn't want the legacy of the original mee pok man of the East - as foodies nicknamed his dad - to be lost.

"This is heritage - once it's gone, you can't get it back," he says. The senior Mr Chan retired in 2007, but the stall has followed his strict standards of using only fresh ingredients to this day. When we visited, it was not serving its handmade meatballs because Mr Chan says they couldn't get the pork needed to make it that morning - not that it mattered, because the bowl of noodles we ordered still tasted as good without it. The mee pok was as springy as the fresh, medium-sized, peeled prawns and fishballs were.

But because the noodles aren't as oily, it dries up quickly; it has to be constantly tossed to prevent clumping. Having to do this was fine by us, since it was also the best way to spread the crunchy bits of pork lard around so they soak up every drop of the stall's secret punchy chilli sauce, widely rumoured to be made with buah keluak.

132 Mee Pok's consistency is one of the reasons its customers track it down no matter how many times it moves.

As Mr Chan puts it: "When some of our long-time customers who are now in their 70s eat it, they tell us the taste brings them back to a familiar place and time."

By Dylan Tan

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