

THE FOOD TALK BY TASKIN RAHMAN



Shing Heong

WHEN it comes to Chinese cuisine, there are two names that are synonymous with authentic flavours in Dhaka and one of them is Shing Heong located at Banani, House 153, Road 11.

The food is exceptionally good but a word of caution – this is not the tailoured to our tastebuds' 'Bangla Chinese' that you get everywhere else. Their cold beef that comes with a chilly sauce is a signature dish and is definitely worth trying and among Shing Heong's clay pots, their chicken clay pot and seafood clay pot are the best. These dishes are usually slow cooked for which they take about 15-20 minutes extra to serve but the flavours of clay pots are worth the wait. Seafood fried rice and dry beef noodles are among the carbs that are a must try. Their dry beef noodles tastes pleasantly different with a chilly paste and deliciously cooked beef in it and one of their best dishes is the sizzling chicken as it has the right gravy and balance of flavours to go with the rice. They also have a hot pot dinner that is priced at 900 Tk/person and it serves at least two people with a range of items that includes kangkon and dumplings.

The staff is extremely well informed and



knowledgeable about the menu. They will be able to guide you if you tell them what type of taste or dishes you are looking for and talk you through new dishes on the menu. They usually serve all of their courses on time unless you have ordered duck.

However, similar to other Chinese restaurants that serve authentic cuisine, the décor at Shing Heong is nothing to write home about. Their interiors consist of red tiled floors, circular tables and dim lighting. If you are taking someone here on your first date, he/she might judge your choice unless your partner is a food enthusiast. Perhaps for this décor, this is not a place that enjoys a lot of

"check-ins" on Facebook but it does enjoy a lot of repeat customers.

Prices do not include VAT and service charge so your actual bill will be higher than what appears from an initial glance at the menu. But if you are eating in a group, it is a well-priced place as the portion sizes are enough for at least 3 people.

Rating 3.8

Taste of Food 4.25

Quality of Service 4

Décor and Ambience 3

Price 4

Presentation 4

Photo: Taskin Rahman

RESTAURANT REVIEW

New players in town

Food places have been popping up in the city like mushrooms on the forest floor recently, and why should they not? They are lucrative ventures and everyone wants in on them. The reason for this popularity lies with the average outgoing citizen of Dhaka. See, recreational facilities in our fair city are quite limited to almost nonexistent, so obviously, there is only one place to go when people want to go out somewhere: restaurants.

SUCH is the demand for restaurants that many areas and streets house only restaurants and very little else. Places like Baily Road, Banani, Gulshan and even Uttara are jam-packed with good places to eat. Problem is, people get bored with things pretty quick and the above mentioned areas have already been played out by foodies, dating couples, friends hanging out and family outings. So where to go next? Well, seems like there's a new contender to take up the challenge: Sahid Baki Road, Khilgaon or Taltola as it is more commonly known by the locals and visitors. Haven't heard of it yet? Well then maybe you need to start asking your friends or check all foodie groups on Facebook because they won't have any shortage of feedback on shops in this area. Don't feel too bad however, as all this happened almost overnight.

Spin the clock back a year or two, and this place was just like any other section of an old, slightly undeveloped area well below the radar of most people except those living there. Now though, the once empty streets are bustling with life: teenagers hanging out after classes, couples on their dates, children on their day out with families etc. have all found their way here. Anyone who has been to Baily Road during its hay day would feel instantly familiar.

The number of restaurants is still not that high, but most of the ones that are up and running have three important things that all customers want nailed: quality, décor and value for money.

CAFÉ CHERRY DROPS

Let's start with décor. Of all the restaurants there, this seems to be the only one that has given interior décor a very high priority. The idea of using pot covers, bottle ends and other seemingly uninspired things to make the interior snazzy was a stroke of genius. Plus, the interior is nicely lit without making you feel like you are on stage under a spot light.

Food is another nice surprise. Quality of the food is as good as it gets and price-wise, you won't feel like you lost your wallet.

ALFRESCO

This is another place which has environment as its trump card against the others. This is a rooftop restaurant, giving customers a chance to enjoy their meals in a nice open environment.

The food is also good here. The menu is very similar to the Cherry Drops menu, with a few items here and there. The American Chop Suey and the items in the appetiser section are worthy of mention. As for pizzas, Cherry Drops may give you a better value, so if you have your beige trousers on, that's where you go if you want pizzas. Other than the price difference in pizzas, most of the

items on the menu are still a good value compared to some pricier places in Gulshan or Banani.

APON COFFEE HOUSE

This place can be described in one word: sensation. The popularity that Taltola has gotten recently can almost be singlehandedly credited to Apon's success. Granted their interior isn't going to win any awards anytime soon and you won't be served by waiters in matching uniforms and the cups they'll serve won't feel like a work of art, but then again, their customers don't care. They buy their coffee, go out and drink it outside in the fresh air. And when it comes to value for money, very few coffee shops can even think of matching it.

PETUK

Another attraction of the Taltola area, this place specialises in chaap and kabab and the quality of the food is amazing. This then goes toe to toe against another famous establishment specialising in the same kind of menu such as Chaap Shamlao.

These are just the headliner stores in this area and more are popping up day by day to hopefully cash in on this newfound popularity that this area is experiencing now, so it'll take a while before this place can be considered played out as it's only just begun.

By SM Intisab Shahriyar

FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD

BY KANISKA CHAKRABORTY



Warung warriors – III

HAVING experienced a warung where no one spoke English and there were no menus, we decided to try the high end of warungs. We found one close to our hotel. Come to think of it, everything was close to our hotel.

Warung Blanjong! It had a definitely chic air about it. Very clean, modern furniture, on the corner of a busy thoroughfare. Busy is a relative term. It was as busy as early Sunday morning traffic in Calcutta.

The place had an inviting look about it. Inside was airy, spacious with highlights of the menu written on blackboards. We found an interesting testimonial as well. Seemed like a quintessential place for foreigners with leaflets for yoga classes and cooking classes.

I ordered a menu special. Fish baked in a banana leaf parcel. M ordered a fish and chips and a chicken stir fried with veggies. Beats me why she ordered fish and chips in Bali but so be it.

I walked into the open kitchen and was glad to find it spotless. M's fish and chips were being fried. They had already cut a very fresh looking salad ready.



Food arrived. A large bowl full of chicken and veggies. Apparently stir fried chicken is equivalent to a soup there. Two large fillets of fish came with some good-looking French fries. They said it was snapper.

My fish in banana leaf parcel turned out to be a brilliantly cooked piece of, yes, snapper.

It was basted with Balinese spices, read lemongrass and chilli. But the good thing was nothing was overpowering. We ended the meal with great Balinese coffee. And we thought that we had our fill of warungs and we needed to explore other food options.

That story another day.

Photo: Kaniska Chakraborty