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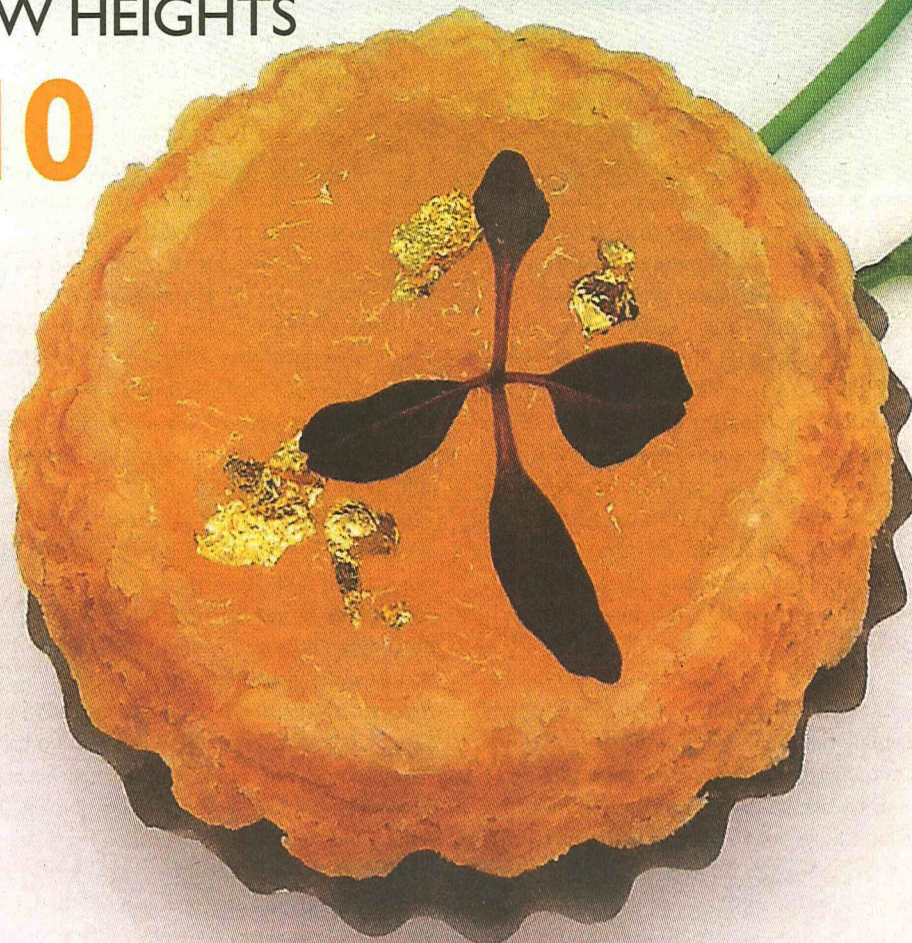
MAY 4, 2012

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# CHINESE ELEGANCE

CANTONESE CUISINE —  
ELEVATED TO NEW HEIGHTS

»»T10



WHY ASIA'S BEST  
RESTAURANTS DON'T  
ALWAYS MAKE THE  
'WORLD'S BEST' LIST

»»T2

RECIPE:  
WILL GOLDFARB'S  
30-SECOND  
SPONGE CAKE »»T6

**CARS**  
MUCH ADO ABOUT  
ELECTRIC CARS »»T12

## FOOD REVIEW

## Above and beyond

Tong Le's revolving dining room offers a wrap-around view of Collyer Quay as you dine on exquisite traditional Chinese fare



Tong Le dining area

ONCE called the Red Lantern, the revolving restaurant along Collyer Quay now has a new inhabitant — one that has pulled out all the stops to ensure that it lives up to the expectations that come with occupying a well-loved heritage building.

The Tung Lok Group, one of Singapore's longest standing Chinese restaurant groups, has turned OUE Tower (which older Singaporeans may remember as Change Alley Aerial Plaza) into its most ambitious restaurant yet.

Called Tong Le (the hanyu

pinyin spelling of Tung Lok), this reservations-only private-dining establishment is the group's crown jewel. And, fittingly, it has done plenty to ensure that the food and service live up to the finest standards.

For starters, the staff here is comprised of assistant managers and above, many of whom are former service crew from Singapore Airlines. Indeed, the service is polished, warm and natural, and wonderfully efficient — a rarity in restaurants of any ilk on our service-parched island.



Braised crystal prawn in superior stock combined with glutinous rice and dried scallops



Pan-fried giant soon hock fillet in spring onion sauce

Like fine-dining restaurants in Hong Kong and Shanghai, the experience here begins the moment you walk through the

building's entrance. A smiling staff checks in your reservation, walks you into the elevator and radios his colleagues on the fifth floor, alerting them of your impending arrival.

From here on out, everyone at the restaurant knows your name, and your pre-selected menu gets on its way.

There are four set menus to choose from, with lunch starting at S\$80 per person for a seven-course meal and dinners starting from S\$180 for eight courses. These are surprisingly reasonable prices in these inflationary times, especially considering the attention to detail and excellent food quality found here.

At a recent lunch, I was served a baked Alaskan crab soup in "tan fu" sauce, served in a young coconut. Perhaps it was because our server had mentioned that the soup was made of pumpkin, but for some reason I had it in my head that it was going to be sweet.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that it was wonderfully savoury thanks largely to the superior stock base made from chicken, pork and conpoy. Some sweetness did come from the fresh crabmeat, which helped to lift the flavours of the velvety soup.

A braised crystal prawn in superior stock demonstrated the kitchen's resoluteness to

offering exquisite fare beyond the expected. Not only had the prawn been shelled, but it had also been stripped of its skin, so that it emerged like a pristine white flower on the plate. Eliminating the skin gave the prawn a purer flavour that was enhanced by conpoy and served with an almost creamy mound of glutinous rice.

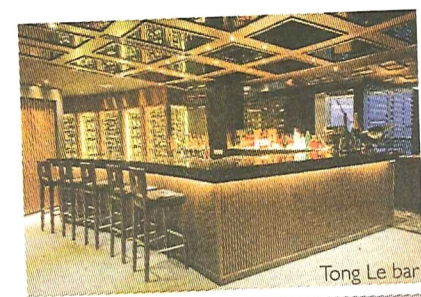
A dish of steamed chicken wrapped in lotus leaf was so succulent and tender it could have easily been mistaken for frogs' legs. There was a lovely balance of flavours with ginger, black fungus, dates and golden mushrooms.

Even dessert was a thoughtful pairing, in my case a pairing of a delicate birds' nest tartlet and hand-ground almond cream. The warm and silky almond cream was a delicious foil to the cool, crisp tart. Together they offered lightly sweet flavours and lots of satisfying textures.

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### Tong Le Private Dining

**Where:** OUE Tower, Level 4 & 5 60 Collyer Quay  
**Telephone:** 6634 3233  
**Opening Hours:** Daily 11.30am – 3pm, 6pm – 11pm  
 Closed on Sundays



Tong Le bar