

## REGENERATING PUDU

# On the food trail

Stretching from the intersection of Jalan Pudu, Jalan Hang Tuah and Jalan Imbi all the way to Jalan Cheras is what many regard as the old part of Pudu. It has seen less development than the area closer to Puduraya (now Pudu Sentral), and is by and large acknowledged as the area with the best grub.

Start your exploration of the area at the Pudu Market. This was the heart of Pudu back in the day, says Siva Shanker, CEO of Agency at PPC International Sdn Bhd. "Thousands of people thronged it every day."

And by the looks of things, not much has changed — the market located in Jalan Pasar Baru is a hive of activity on the weekend of our visit and it is a veritable warren of stalls selling vegetables, fruits, fish, poultry and meat. The sights and sounds of the market aren't very different from any other wet market — expect to smell it before you see it — but what is unique about it is the variety of produce available and the sheer number of stalls.

You can get anything and everything here to fill your fridge and larder, from fresh coconut milk, spices, medicinal plants and herbs to offal and frogs. And if you feel thirsty or peckish, you can take your pick of the many food and beverage stalls, which serve everything from cendol and rojak to soya bean milk. There are also stalls selling aquarium fish as well as the accompanying paraphernalia, such as pumps, filters, lamps and fish food.

The focal point of the area — the market — which has been around since the 1950s, doesn't just attract housewives doing their weekly shopping but also visitors from other parts of the city, as well as foreign visitors keen to get a taste and sense of a Southeast Asian market.

As busy as the market is, it used to be even busier back in the day, according to Xie Wai Chan, who has been selling fruits there for 10 years. "Now, it is only busy on weekends," the 60-year-old, who was born and raised in Pudu, says.

Once you have had your fill of the market, make your way to Jalan Pasar, acknowledged as the place to buy electrical and electronic gadgets, from entertainment systems for your house or car (or truck) to home appliances. "It connects Jalan Cochrane with Jalan Pudu, and it is really the electronics capital of KL," says Siva.

All the walking and shopping can work up an appetite, and this is when you will be presented with a challenge — there is just so much to eat here that you cannot possibly do it all in one sitting.

If you are in the Jalan Pasar area, head to Jalan Seladang (which is one of the streets off Jalan Pasar) and make a beeline for Chen Chen BBQ Roast Goose & Duck. The stall has been in

business for 50 years and is now run by the founder's son, Chong Foo Chuan. The roast meats (chicken and pork are also available) are succulent and are served with yellow rice (with a faint taste of turmeric) and meatball soup.

If you trace your steps back to the market and head towards Jalan Yew, there are a few eateries that are highly recommended by the locals, the most popular being Heun Kee Claypot Chicken Rice. Established in 1985, the eatery, which prides itself in the use of traditional charcoal cooking, has been attracting foodies from all parts of KL. Apart from claypot chicken rice, it is known for claypot lap mei (waxed meats).

Across the road, closer to the market, is another established eatery. This one is famous for its noodles. The speciality at May King is the lam mee, dressed with shredded chicken, prawns, minced meat and bean sprouts, and drenched with thick flavourful gravy.

If you are after a dish with a side of nostalgia, then there is no better place than Sek Yuen on Jalan Pudu. There are actually two restaurants located side by side. One is the original that opened in 1948, and the other is relatively newer and air-conditioned. The restaurant is well known for its Cantonese fare cooked on wood-fired stoves, and its signature dishes include roast duck and sweet-and-sour pork.

Curry noodle fans exploring the Pudu area should check out Restoran 168 Curry Mee. The hole-in-the-wall located in Jalan Brunei Utara opens from 7am and serves only two dishes — curry noodles and wan tan mee — both done to perfection. The curry may appear a tad watery but it is very fragrant and flavourful, and well worth the wait for a table. If the curry is too spicy for you, wash it down with a bowl of ginkgo barley.

If you find yourself in the neighbourhood in the evening, then another eating spot is Pudu's Wai Sek Kai (Glutton Street) located in Jalan Sayur. Most of the stalls start operating from 5pm, and one of the highlights here is the Hakka noodles.

Jalan Changkat Thambi Dollah is another hot spot for food, particularly cuisine from mainland China. One of the stalwarts is Restoran Hong La Qiao, which has been around for 18 years and serves dishes from Sichuan and Shanghai. The standout dishes here include the dried chili chicken — deep fried nuggets of chicken blanketed with a generous serving of dried chili. Although the numbness one gets from Sichuan peppercorns was missing (they must have left it out to please local palates), the dish still had a kick.

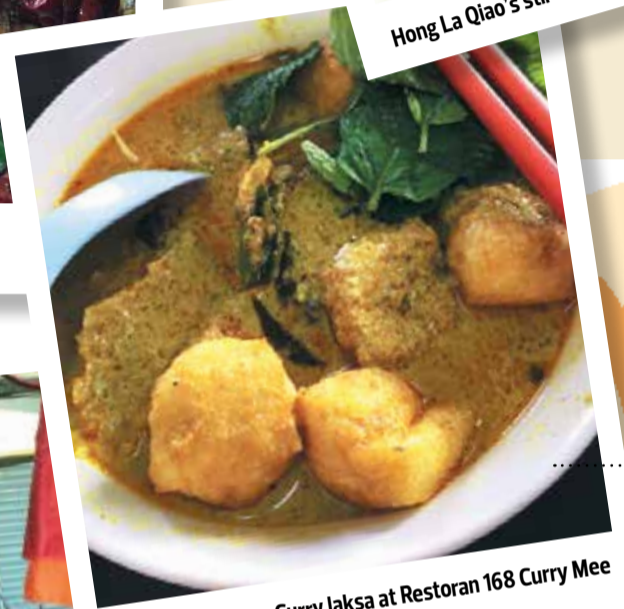
Another speciality is the two-flavoured fish — deep-fried tilapia with sweet and sour sauce on one side and a yummy mix of black beans, ginger and chives on the other. ■



Hong La Qiao's dried chili chicken



Hong La Qiao's stir-fried green chillies



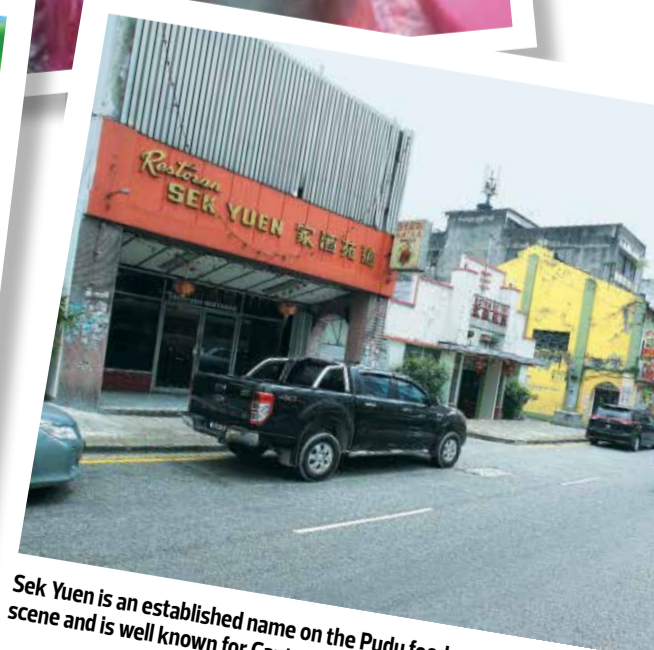
Curry laksa at Restoran 168 Curry Mee



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Cendol



Sek Yuen is an established name on the Pudu food scene and is well known for Cantonese fare



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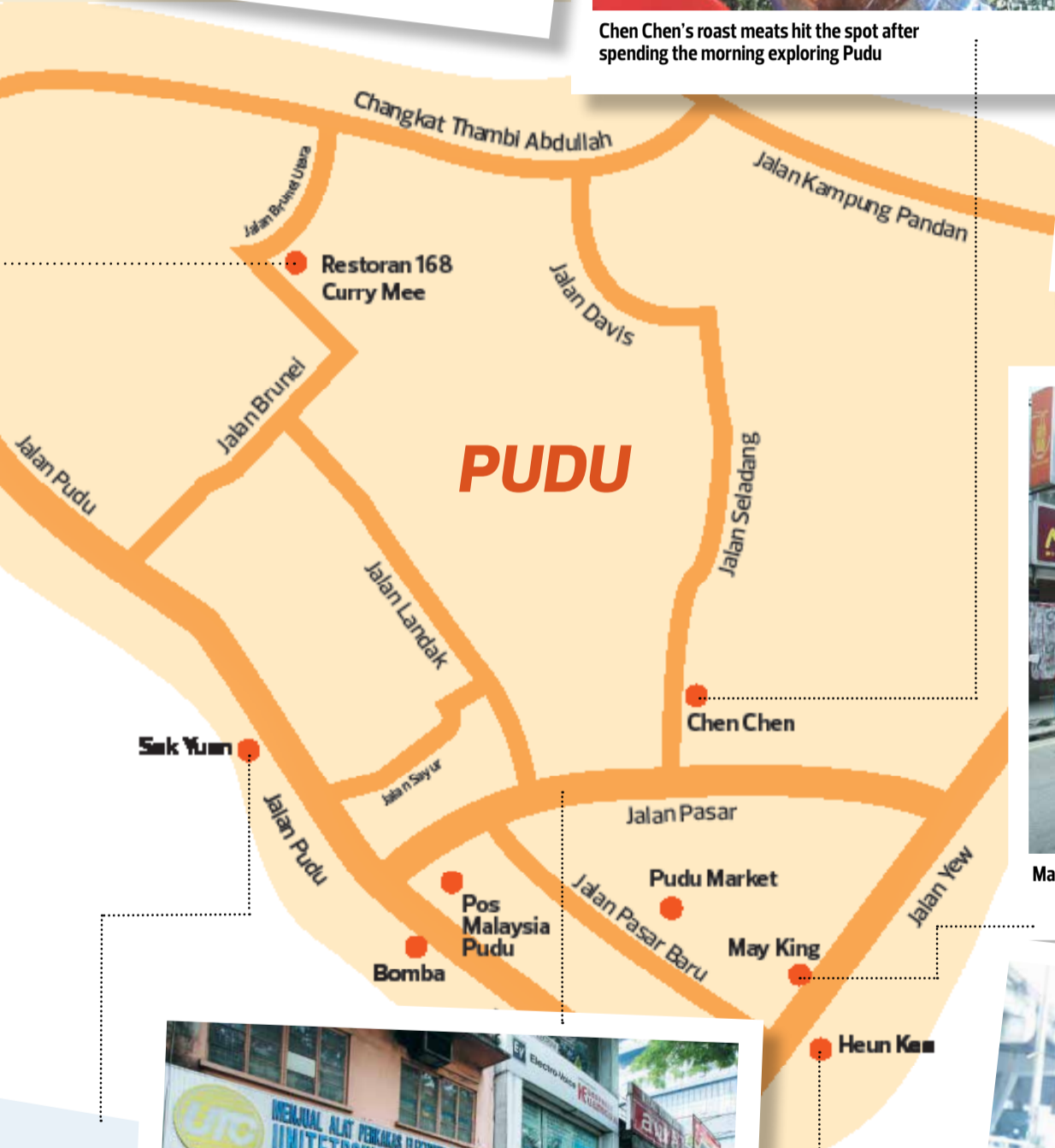
Hong La Qiao's two-flavoured fish



Chen Chen's roast meats hit the spot after spending the morning exploring Pudu



Chong Foo Chuan is the second generation owner-operator of Chen Chen BBQ Roast Goose & Duck



May King is well known for lam mee



Jalan Pasar is the electronics capital of KL



Established in 1985, Heun Kee prides itself on the use of traditional charcoal cooking