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Teochew porridge with a difference

By Sharon Ng Kooi Kin

WHAT's the difference between Teochew and Cantonese porridge? After all, both are Chinese and use the same rice ... but the discerning porridge lover will tell you that there is a great difference.

In a bowl of Teochew porridge, the soft rice grains are still whole and swimming in water whereas Cantonese porridge is gooey.

Matang, about 12km from Taiping, boasts one of the more famous Teochew porridge restaurants, Restoran Light House Seafood.

From Taiping, head towards Simpang till you reach Matang, a fishing village renowned for its fresh seafood. After the Ngah Ibrahim Fort, the road splits into two. Take the left fork till you come to a Chinese temple on the left. Opposite the temple is where the bowl of sumptuous Teochew porridge awaits.

Such is its reputation that Restoran Light House Seafood boasts VIP customers, including Tun Dr Hasmah Mohd Ali, wife of former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The porridge is served in a ceramic casserole sitting on a rattan basket. In the soupy rice, swims fresh catch from the sea. Big white fish balls jostle for space with squid and cuttlefish, amidst tong chai (preserved vegetables), spring onion and stringy straw mushroom.

There are trays of fish and prawns for customers to make their own selection. Large prawns, weighing 50 to 60gms each are common offerings. The prawns cost RM60 per kg, pomfret RM60 per kg and tau tay or bawal tambak (silver pomfret) RM80 a kg.

A large bowl, sufficient for four persons, with generous portions of fish and prawns costs about RM40.

Diners can see their porridge being cooked. The cook scoops a ladle of cooked rice into the pan, add stock and the seafood selected by customers. What emerges is a delicious bowl of porridge.

Besides porridge, Restoran Light House Seafood boasts a mean leng chee kang. This dessert has white bok nee (cloud's ears), lotus seeds, dried longan, jelly and dates, served in a bowl and chilled with ice cubes.

For enquiries, call the restaurant at 05-8475408, 016-5329928 (Goh Ah Meng). It is situated at 10 Jalan Cina, Matang. Business hours are from 11am-11pm.

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