

# Johor eatery's royal claim to fame

## King among family-owned asam pedas restaurant's most loyal patrons

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**JOHOR BARU:** It would be tough for anyone to top Lee Wen Hao's claim to fame.

From the time he was just a young boy, Lee has had the privilege of having His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia coming in as a customer at his family-owned asam pedas restaurant.

Other members of the Johor royal family, especially the Regent of Johor, Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim, have also been frequenting the restaurant.

"They are our loyal customers who come here to eat once or twice a week," said Lee, 30.

And on Monday, he got to serve the King, Tunku Ismail, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi, state Secretary Tan Sri Dr Azmi Rohani and Johor police chief Comm Datuk M. Kumar.

Lee, who is now the restaurant's third-generation owner, said it was the first time he and his family were given the opportunity to serve someone who has gone on to become the King.

"His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim has been coming here since Tuanku was young, especially during His Majesty's years as the Tunku Mahkota of Johor.

"However, we have not received a visit from His Majesty since Tuanku became the Johor Sultan as His Majesty became busier and had more responsibilities to fulfil as the Johor Ruler.

"We did not expect His Majesty to be able to make his way here now that Tuanku is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong since His Majesty now has to look after the whole country," Lee said in an interview.

Excitedly recounting Monday's lunch, Lee said: "We kept the res-



**Hearty lunch:** His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim dining with Tunku Ismail and Anwar at Lee's asam pedas restaurant. - Picture courtesy of Sultan Ibrahim Facebook

taurant open especially for them. They had their meal here from around 11am to 1pm."

"Among the food they ordered was the 'asam pedas' fish, which is what we are known for, fried fish, squid and bean sprouts," he said.

Lee described the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as a down-to-earth and humble person.

"Despite being the King of Malaysia, His Majesty's character

did not change. His Majesty remains humble.

"This takes away the nervousness of serving such an important person," he said, adding that he was proud to be given the opportunity to serve the Ruler.

"It was also the Prime Minister's first visit to our restaurant," Lee said.

Yesterday, the restaurant was back to attending to the public,

who are mostly regulars.

Sculptor Seo Ton Yong, 56, has been frequenting the eatery since the 1980s.

"I have been coming here about once a month since I was young. I really enjoy their asam pedas fish. The taste is different from the ones served elsewhere," he said.

Seo said he would normally come in the morning to avoid the crowd.

Another frequent customer was businesswoman Farhana Ahmad, 38, who has been coming to the restaurant for over a decade.

"Although they are famous for their asam pedas, my favourite is actually their fried fish. I don't know how they do it but it is definitely better than the ones I have had anywhere else," she said.

"I would come here once or twice a month," Farhana added.