



## An Authentic Hakka Experience

By Chng Zhenzhi



**For** gastronomic athletes craving for a good, hearty meal, it is time to set foot into Moi Kong Hakka Restaurant, the oldest shop at Murray Terrace. This quaint, cosy and unpretentious restaurant has been serving authentic Hakka dishes since 1977.

"I'm a very picky eater myself. Why spoil my appetite by eating low quality food?" says Mr Ricky Wong, the affable restaurant owner who juggles his time between preparing food in the kitchen and interacting with his customers. Mr Wong is not only proud of his food, but also of his heritage. "You must understand the culture before you know how to appreciate the food," claims Mr Wong, in defence of comments that Hakka food is too salty and oily.

The people who became the Hakkas are thought to have fled southwards due to famine and plunderers in the North. Food preservation was of utmost importance during migration, hence the characteristic saltiness and oiliness of Hakka food.

Non-Hakka delectables, such as Sichuan Sour Spicy Soup (\$12) and Crispy Duck Salad (\$30) have also been included into the menu to cater to different palates. Everyone who steps into the restaurant must try its specialty - Stewed Pork Belly. For just \$8, you get a generous serving of succulent three-layered pork slices served over a heap of preserved vegetables. Eat it with a steaming hot bun and savour the flavourful thick gravy that oozes out of every bite.

For a less sinful experience, try the Yam Abacus (\$6), also known as "Suan Pan Zi" in Mandarin. The chewy yam balls stir-fried with ham, mushrooms, black fungus, dried shrimp and bean curd cubes exemplifies Hakka cuisine. Traditionally, this dish is eaten only on the first day of Chinese New Year to symbolize family unity and prosperity.

The traditional Yong Tau Foo (\$4) is unlike anything that I have tasted. The fried bean curd is crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. The

filling was made of fish meat, minced pork and salted fish. The spring roll that came with it filled with water chestnut, fish meat was, minced pork, and black fungus, wrapped in crispy bean curd skin.

Do not forget to ask for the weekly specials not found on the menu, which are special concoctions created by Mr Wong himself. For us, it was sweet soup with winter melon slices, a refreshing end to our savoury meal.

For adventurous foodies, try interesting dishes such as Pineapple with Intestines and Stewed Pork Knuckles. Go ahead and indulge yourself in the authenticity of traditional Hakka food. The pleasure derived from a good dining experience is definitely worth the extra two hours at the gym!

**Moi Kong Hakka Restaurant**  
22 Murray Street, Singapore 079529



*This restaurant is part of the Central Singapore Food Fable Trail. For more details, please visit [www.centraisingsapore.org.sg](http://www.centraisingsapore.org.sg) or call 63709901.*

# Keep these dates

Energy-giving sweetmeats add flavour boost to festive treats

**Every** year when Hari Raya Puasa comes around, we get to binge on dates. They are also a favourite with our Muslim friends when they break fast or buka puasa during Ramadan.

I've written up two recipes using these lovely sweetmeats for the festive season.

The first is a chewy dates and rolled oats cookie that is downright addictive. You can make giant cookies that will satisfy any sweet tooth or make little tempters to tantalise guests during the coming festive periods.

I have also included a hot pudding here - a beautifully moist and tender sticky date pudding, from the Hunter Resort Cooking School. You can serve it as it is, warm, or add a dollop of vanilla ice cream or mascarpone cheese.

But before you start, wash them well. They are harvested straight from date palms and dried in the open sun. You want to rinse them well and pat them dry before de-seeding or pitting them.

Happy baking and Selamat Hari Raya Aidil Fitri!

**By Pauline D Loh, food writer, deputy editor of Today & resident in Ang Mo Kio**



## Dates and rolled oats cookies

### Ingredients:

300g pitted dates  
250g butter, softened  
125g packed soft brown sugar  
125g plain flour  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp salt  
1 large egg, beaten  
1 tsp vanilla essence  
125g rolled oats

### Method:

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees. Chop or cut dates up into small pieces.
2. Melt butter in a saucepan, and remove from heat. Add sugar and stir till dissolved. Sift in flour, baking soda, salt.
3. Stir in egg, add vanilla essence, oats and dates. Fold to combine all ingredients.
4. Drop spoonfuls of cookie mixture onto baking paper lined trays, 3cm apart.
5. Bake cookies 15 to 20 minutes in oven, until they are golden brown. Makes 24 large cookies or 30 smaller ones. (Preparation: 20 minutes)

### Grocery Checklist

Dates (abt \$4.00/box)  
250g butter (\$2.60/block)  
Soft brown sugar (\$2.30/box)  
Plain flour (\$1.20/pkt)  
Rolled oats (\$3.20/pkt)

(All items available at Carrefour. Prices are guides only and may vary with brands.)



## Hot sticky date pudding

### Ingredients:

500g water  
375g dates  
125g butter  
125g sugar  
4 eggs  
2 tsp vanilla essence  
375g self-raising flour  
2 tsp baking soda

### Method:

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees.
2. Place water and dates in a pot and bring to a boil. Simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Cream butter and sugar together till white and fluffy. Add eggs and vanilla essence.
4. Sift flour and baking soda together. Fold into creamed butter and eggs mixture.
5. Add dates and boiling liquid. Stir well to combine. Ladle into lightly oiled individual pudding moulds or muffin tin, 2/3 full.
6. Bake 20 minutes in oven until light golden brown. Serve hot with mascarpone cheese, vanilla ice-cream or whipped cream.

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