Loon Tao: Treats On The Beach

Posted on

‘Chinese Seafood on the Beach’—an impressive tag line sums it all up. Loon Tao serves its signature Chinese food with a zest that combines authentic cuisine with excellence in product and service delivery. And this is a treat for Sri Lankans, whose love for Chinese food is well-known.

Words Jennifer Paldano Goonewardena **Photographs** Indika De Silva

One couldn’t ask for more with Loon Tao and its all too popular distinctive Chinese cuisine. Spread across 40 perches of land, situated on the famed shoreline of Mount-Lavinia, Loon Tao stands out for its legendary authentic and delicious Chinese food. True to its tag line, Loon Tao emphasises on giving its patrons a treat on the beach, be it under the open sky or a tropical hut that gleams in the brilliance of the day and serenades in the glow of the moonlight and the call of the waves. Loon Tao serves the finest Chinese dishes selected especially to suit the palate of Sri Lankans from the four provinces of Sichuan, Peking, Shanghai and Canton. There is more to this delectable epicurean site. All dishes are prepared by Chefs from Mainland China, specialising in the gastronomical specialities of the four provinces. The very friendly stewards serving the patrons are from different parts of the world.

They bring in a high measure of efficiency and courteous service required to serve a discerning clientele that look upon for a gastronomically lip-smacking take-off of authentic Chinese food.

The ambience at Loon Tao is basically Balinese, a combination of unfussy tastefulness and modest elegance. The restaurant's founder and owner, Janaka Wimalananda stresses on the extraordinary atmosphere of dining in the outdoors with the breathtaking landscape of the limitless ocean. According to Janaka, patrons seek the freedom of the outdoors because the boundless openness of the beach and the ocean beyond, combined with the gentle wind generates a feeling of buoyancy. The sound of curling waves and the drifting breeze merge with the live acoustic music playing in the restaurant, an ideal tonic that after all makes restaurant dining an experience that invigorates a person from the hectic events of daily life. An evening of dining on the beach is a relaxing experience under dimly lit lanterns blending with the light wafting from the restaurant.

"After six years in operation, Loon Tao is synonymous with several signature dishes that never fail to excite the diners. The Singapore Chilli Crab is one of the most excellent and sought after dishes, so much so even the South East Asians who savoured this dish have claimed that we prepare it better than in their native land," says Janaka Wimalananda. Hot Butter Cuttlefish is made using tender and young meat, which makes it soft in texture unlike the all too familiar rubbery cuttlefish that is served in many so called Chinese restaurants. The Barbecued Bamboo Rice is another speciality. It involves the lengthy process of cooking and preparing fried rice, which is inserted into a bamboo culm and steamed again before being barbecued.

Janaka Wimalananda takes immense pride in showcasing his Chinese seafood restaurant as a one-off place. This self-confidence has stood in good stead to spread the word around. He acknowledges that his best advertisement comes through word of mouth. This is not surprising, because the emphasis on quality and good food naturally boosts Loon Tao's image to an amazing level. Getting away from the all too familiar 'bottle to wok' style of cooking, at Loon Tao all dry ingredients from rice, noodles, sauces, dry vegetables, dry scallops, dry fish, pepper to chilli powder are brought from China. Authentic Chinese food is a blend of a large number of ingredients rather than simply pouring a heap of sauce just for taste. Seafood tastes best when cooked fresh, so all meats for seafood is purchased on a daily basis. In addition to specialising in Chinese seafood, the restaurant also serves chicken, beef, lamb, and duck meat. Thirty varieties of vegetables are served at Loon Tao, quite

often in blends with bean curd, green beans, varieties of mushroom and vegetables purchased from the local market. Each dish is made to order and never in bulk, thereby ensuring that taste and texture of a dish is preserved every time it is prepared afresh.

Satisfying its patrons being a priority, Loon Tao will be offering banquet facilities, a venture that was undertaken to meet with continual requests for such a service. In the meantime, Loon Tao seems to be overwhelmed in ‘Waves of Prosperity’, as its name implies.

43/12 College Avenue,

Mount Lavinia.

Tel: (+94 11) 272 2723

loontao.com