

CULINARY INTEGRATION



THE MAIN DINING ROOM OF ST. GEORGE, HULETT HOUSE'S SIGNATURE RESTAURANT

"Cha chaan teng have long borrowed ingredients from the West, such as ham and macaroni; people like it, and it has been embraced as part of the cuisine served at these places," says Mok Kit-keung, executive Chinese chef of Shang Palace at Kowloon Shangri-La.

However, Mok is adapting Chinese cuisine with Western elements at a more refined level. Take the dish, braised abalone, home-made bean curd and sliced black truffle with oyster sauce. The obvious non-Cantonese ingredient is the truffle from France, which Mok uses in a range of dishes. So that it retains its Cantonese identity, the cooking techniques, aroma and flavour profile stay true to the cuisine's roots.

"One way I ensure that the taste remains true is by only using a limited amount of Western ingredients in any one dish," Mok says. The chef even borrows ways of presenting dishes from western cuisines with some dishes served with a

knife and fork. "The dishes remain Cantonese because the basic building blocks are Cantonese."

Mok enjoys adding Western ingredients and plating methods as they allow him to bring a modern sensibility to an ancient cuisine.

Felix chef Yoshiharu Kaji works in a similar way. His cuisine is modern European, yet the dishes often feature ingredients from his native Japan. "All dishes begin with inspiration from traditional European dishes," he says, "then I think about what I will do to the dish and how to make it seasonal and modern, and finally any non-European element comes into play."

Kaji says it is about balance, with the introduced ingredients kept to a minimum and largely playing a seasoning role in the dish more than a core component taste role.

For example, the seaweed in the pot-au-feu-inspired grilled Kurobuta pork belly with lemon-

