



KOH MUI FONG



## Savour *popiah* good enough for presidents

Kway Guan Huat has been dishing it out for almost 70 years

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ITS *popiahs* are so popular and well known that Kway Guan Huat probably needs no further introduction.

The existence of Kway Guan Huat – which is translated as “the flow of prosperity into the Quek family” – spans three generations, and its humble store-front belies a rich history that is easily overshadowed by the delightful fare it’s better known for.

“My father came to Singapore from the village of An Kuei in Fujian, China, in 1915,” said co-owner Macnacgin Quek. “When he came, he brought with him his father’s recipe for making *popiah* skin. He opened this store in 1938 and we have been here since.”

Armed with closely-guarded secret recipes, the Quek family has been making *popiah* skins for close to 70 years now. Their secret, according to Doland Quek, who is also running the family business, lies in the mixing of the dough which takes two to three hours. The Quek family disapproves of the use of machines in making the skins.

“Ours are all hand-made. It is very labour-intensive and tiring,” said Doland, who is Macnacgin’s brother.

But it’s definitely worth the effort. And this author can vouch for that. I’ve bought *popiah* skins from elsewhere which tear easily.

That does not happen with Kway Guan Huat’s.

“The skin is elastic and soft,” said Doland. And it is fragrant, too.

Fortunately for *popiah* lovers, the Queks have also ventured into making the *popiah* filling after much persuasion from customers. It could not have been a more perfect marriage as the recipe for the *popiah* filling came from their mother.

“People of different cultures use different ingredients,” said Macnacgin. “My mother is Nonya. Her recipe contains ingredients such as crabmeat, prawns, *tau kwa*, carrot and turnip – all minced together.”

Kway Guan Huat also makes *popiah* filling for vegetarians, which they call *jie ong*. Mushrooms are used instead of crabmeat and prawns. The non-vegetarian version is called *chai ong*.

You can now sample Kway Guan Huat’s

*popiahs* in the heart of town at The Biztro. Located at Temasek Tower, the eatery has bought the franchise to sell the famous Kway Guan Huat *popiahs*. Here, you can roll your own *popiah* (\$15 for three) or order the ready-made ones (\$3 each).

Rest assured that the standard is comparable to that of Kway Guan Huat’s. The ingredients used are bought directly from Kway Guan Huat and much care is taken to ensure you get your money’s worth.

At The Biztro, the fragrant *chai ong* arrives steaming hot in a claypot while the lettuce and carefully plucked bean sprouts are fresh. The chilli – which isn’t too spicy and overpowering – is a winner in itself.

“We’re very particular in the selection of our franchisee,” said Macnacgin. “The *popiah* filling needs to be heated up to an ideal temperature and the ingredients must be fresh. So our franchisee must be very reliable and passionate about it.”

Back at Joo Chiat, Macnacgin also told me about the other items Kway Guan Huat whips up for its corporate customers and other functions. They include *kueh pie tee*, spring rolls, *ngoh hiang* and *samosas*.

“We’ve had former Singapore presidents, ministers, judges and tourists coming to our store to buy our food,” said Macnacgin. “We always deliver the best quality and the taste of our food is very unique.”

It is no wonder that well-deserved prosperity has been flowing into the Quek family business, and I am sure it will continue to.

Kway Guan Huat’s *popiahs* are also available at Singapore Expo (opposite Burger King) whenever there is an event.

*Do you know of any good eateries or hawk-er stalls? Tell us at food@newstoday.com.sg*

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