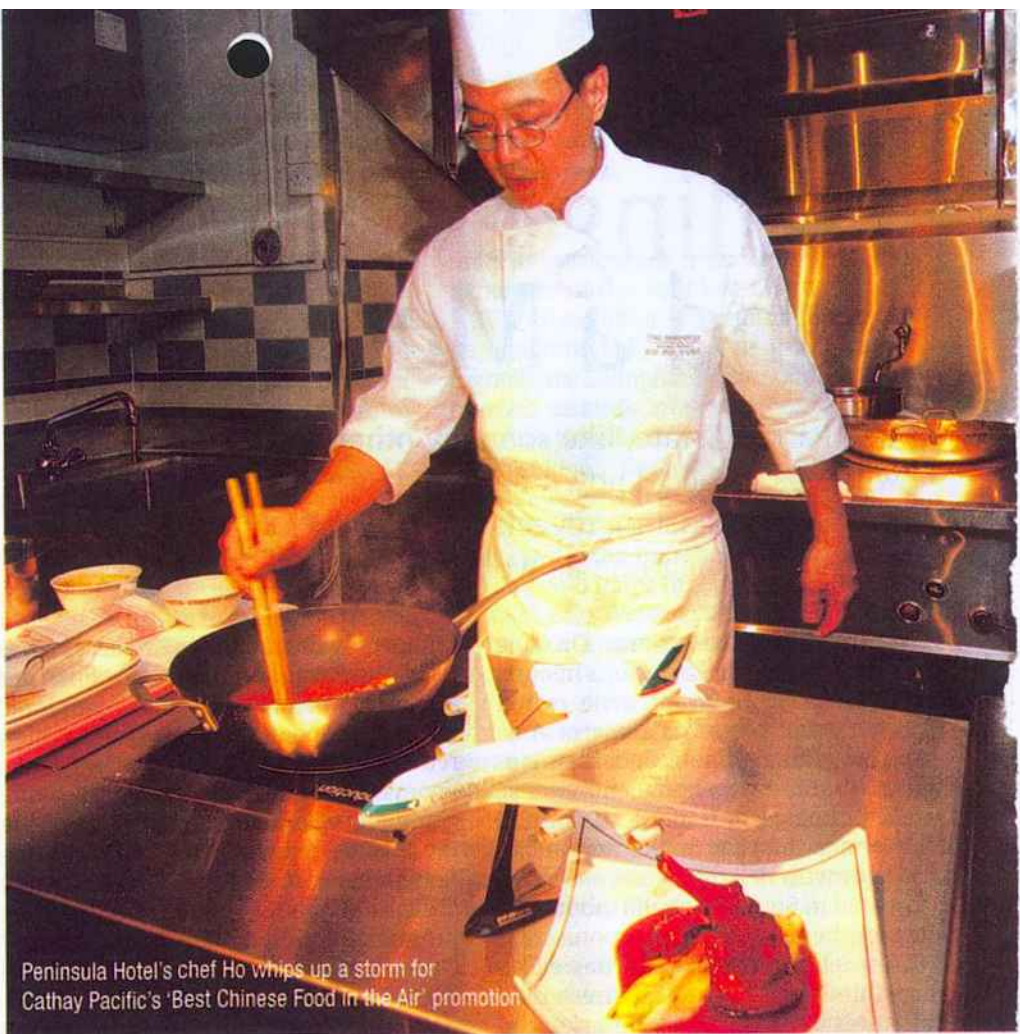


Airborne gourmet DINING

Feeding travellers at altitudes of 12,000m above sea level is no mean feat, especially because our taste buds can be dulled by up to 35% from a combination of low cabin humidity and pressurisation. **Jacqueline Ann Surin** travels to Hong Kong with Cathay Pacific and discovers that at least one airline has cooked up the perfect recipe for travellers' palates.

The 76-year-old Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong is known to be a destination hotel. For a fashionable night out, locals and tourists head to Felix, the hotel's avant-garde restaurant-cum-bar and dance place on the 28th floor. Designed by renowned French architect-designer-inventor Phillipe Starck, Felix not only serves up good food, beverage and music but also offers visitors a spec-

tacular view of Victoria Harbour in a sophisticated setting. The more sedate crowd heads for afternoon tea at the hotel's lobby where queues tend to trail as patrons diligently wait for tables that are given out on a first come, first served basis. The live string music filling the air from noon onwards adds an uplifting ambience to the high-ceilinged and elegant restaurant on the ground floor.



PICTURES COURTESY OF CATHAY PACIFIC

Peninsula Hotel's chef Ho whips up a storm for Cathay Pacific's 'Best Chinese Food in the Air' promotion

One floor above is another of the hotel's acclaimed restaurants — The Spring Moon Chinese Restaurant, famous for its tea counter and signature dishes of Roast Pigeon Flavoured with Cinnamon, Supreme Shark's Fin with Crab Meat in Clear Broth, and Dim Sum selection.

This Cantonese restaurant is also the place where Executive Chef Ho Pui Yung initially put together over 100 dishes for Cathay Pacific's "Best Chinese Food in the Air" promotion.

It was first launched three years ago when the Hong Kong-based airline decided to put dishes from some of the city's most famous restaurants on its in-flight menus. The first restaurant featured was the famous Yung Kee Restaurant while several others, namely Hunan Garden, Peking Garden, Sichuan Garden, Jade Garden, Shanghai Garden and Chiuchow Garden, took part in its second promotion.

And since May this year, the special menu from the Spring Moon Chinese Restaurant has been served on flight. The Peninsula is the first hotel to be invited to participate in Cathay Pacific's food promotion in the air. The airline's Chinese food development catering manager Thomas Chung tells *Options* that as Hong Kong's airline, the carrier was keen to

promote Chinese cuisine to its service network. "In-flight catering is always an essential part of Cathay Pacific's award-winning service and Hong Kong's Chinese food is famous the world over for its quality and diversity," says Chung.

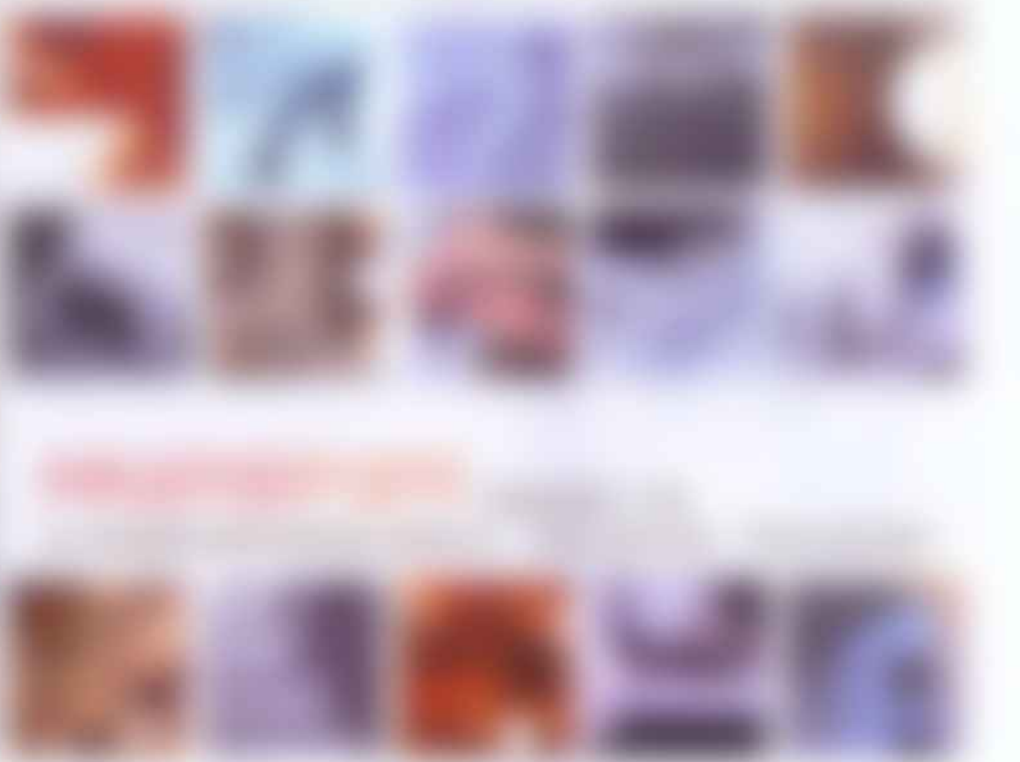
ONLY THE BEST

Peninsula's director of public relations Lamey Chang enlightens *Options* in an interview that from the 100 dishes whipped up by chef Ho, Cathay Pacific picked around 30 to be served on various classes on board its flights.

Among these special dishes are Snow Fungus and Chrysanthemum in Clear Broth, Lamb Chops with Leeks in Gravy, Steamed Prawns with Egg White Sauce, Braised Beef Brisket with Broad Bean Sauce, and Steamed Sliced Sea Bass with Preserved Vegetables.

When the launch of the food promotion with the Peninsula was announced in April, Cathay Pacific said the unusual combination of seafood and chrysanthemum came about when chef Ho — while tasting a new seafood dish — refreshed himself with a cup of chrysanthemum tea. The taste of chrysanthemum and seafood matched perfectly in his mouth, thus inspiring his new soup.

Cathay Pacific Catering Services



Clockwise from bottom left: Lamb chops with leeks in gravy; relaxing with a drink at the Long Bar for Cathay Pacific's business and first class travellers; the Noodle Bar at The Pier and The Wing is a must try; the Long Bar is the longest airport bar in the world; and steamed prawns with egg white sauce.



to the 1950s when Cathay Pacific set up an airline counter at the Peninsula's lobby.

Currently, the airline has a super city holiday package starting from RM2,044 per person on a twin-sharing basis or RM3,201 for a single person, which includes the option of staying at the historical Peninsula, among other hotels, for three days two nights.

MORE PALATIAL DELIGHTS

Whether it's first or business class, Cathay Pacific travellers going to and coming from Hong Kong can enjoy yet another travel perk while waiting to board a flight.

The airline's first and business class lounges, known as The Pier and The Wing, at the new Hong Kong International Airport not only offer passengers a spacious, stylishly designed place boasting long baths and shower stalls to relax in, they also have five different venues for food and drinks.

These include the Noodle Bar, the Long Bar, the Short Bar, the Smoking Bar, and an exclusive first-class restaurant called The Haven.

The food venues are all operated by Peninsula Club and Consultancy Service, a division of the Peninsula Group. Peninsula chefs whip up a range of Asian and European cuisine on site to provide

food to passengers from 6am until the departure of the very last flight.

The Noodle Bar is a definite must try. Its signature dish, Dan Dan Mian, has as ingredients Shanghai-style noodles with crushed peanuts in a spicy hot sauce. It is rich in both taste and texture.

The Noodle Bar also offers more common selections such as wonton with noodles in soup and Japanese noodle soup, while the buffet at The Haven has hot and cold items that include Japanese, Chinese and Western offerings.

And for a spectacular view of planes taking off and landing, especially at night, travellers can sit at the Long Bar which is reputed to be the longest airport bar in the world, sip a drink and be dazzled by the lights.

Jacqueline Ann Surin is a senior writer with The Edge. She was in Hong Kong at the invitation of Cathay Pacific.

The airline flies the Kuala Lumpur-Hong Kong-Kuala Lumpur sector three times a day with one out of those flights departing from and arriving in Penang. For more information, go to www.cathaypacific.com



(CPCS) marketing and customers services manager Leslie Bailey shares that the preparation for the promotion began six months prior to the launch in April.

Selection was stringent in part through a sensory testing panel, and depending on what would work best onboard a plane.

Bailey explains that the Hong Kong-based CPCS, which provides an average 44,000 meals daily, is conscious about the effect that pressurisation and humidity has on the sense of taste.

"We chose dishes that were going to be a little more robust in standing up to being chilled and then reheated in-flight," he says, noting that a meal cooked to perfection on ground will not taste the same when reheated and served in a pressurised, desert-dry cabin environment.

"Although the Peninsula chefs don't prepare the dishes for CPCS or work in our kitchens, the CPCS chefs and the

Peninsula chefs continue to work together during random meal tastings to ensure that the dishes are delivered as specified," he adds.

Since May, passengers have been able to taste these unique dishes in all classes, including economy class, for flights departing from Hong Kong.

From August to October (when the promotion with the Peninsula ends), the food will also be served from a number of other ports including North America, Singapore and Tokyo.

Chang says this is the first time the hotel's dishes are being served on an airline. "The Peninsula Hong Kong and Cathay Pacific are Hong Kong icons. They are two of the city's most recognisable and respected travel brands," she says of the partnership.

The collaboration is not a new one, says Chang. The relationship dates back