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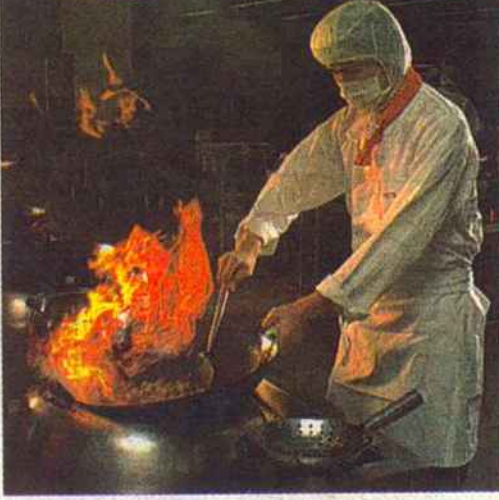
Pacesetters
By Ethel S. Timbol



CPCS ... as huge as 9 football fields.



COLLABORATORS in Cathay Pacific's 'Best Chinese Food' promo: Chef Ho Pui Yung of Spring Moon (left) & Chef Wun Pak Shun of Cathay Pacific Catering Services.



PIPING HOT WOKS

INDULGENCE is eating the "Best Chinese Food In the Air."

Since May 1 this summer, Cathay Pacific has been "indulging" its passengers with the "Best Chinese Food in the Air" in collaboration with Spring Moon Chinese restaurant of Peninsula Hong Kong. The airline shall continue to do so until Oct. 31.

We got a sampling of during a recent trip to Hong Kong, courtesy of Cathay Pacific and the Peninsula Hong Kong ... well, not all 30 dishes now being served inflight at CX.

Four years ago, CX launched its first "Best Chinese Food in the Air" promotion featuring a menu prepared by Yung Kee restaurant. The Yung Kee which is famous for its roast goose, started as a food stall selling roast goose in the 1960s. When its founder Kam Shui Fai moved to a restaurant, Forbes magazine listed it in 1968 as one of the top 15 restaurants of the world.

Cathay Pacific, for its second "Best Chinese Food", binged on provincial cuisine from six regions of China — Peking, Szechuan, Chiuchow, Shanghai and Canton. Six top restaurants in Hong Kong shared their recipes with the airline.

The third time around, in 2002, Cx went back to Yung Kee which was then celebrating its 60th anniversary. The special treat was the so-called Poon Choi, meaning Big Bowl Feast, which it is ... literally.

The story goes that when Emperor Sung visited the Yuen Long district of Hong Kong, his royal entourage was so huge, the villagers had to resort to their wash basins to cook the food. They stacked the ingredients layer on layer in the deep basins — hence the "poon" in — cooked them, including roast goose, chicken, dried eel,



CAKES to bust your diet.

prawns, pork crackling, radishes and fish balls. Soon the Poon Choi dish became a tradition and Cathay Pacific was the first airline to serve it inflight, using specially designed individual bowls for its first class passengers.



A CHOICE of fish fillet.

This year, Cathay Pacific offers its passengers a choice of 30 special dishes prepared from recipes of The Pen's Spring Moon restaurant, including: prawns with 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, steamed sliced sea bass with preserved vegetables.



BEST CHINESE NOODLES

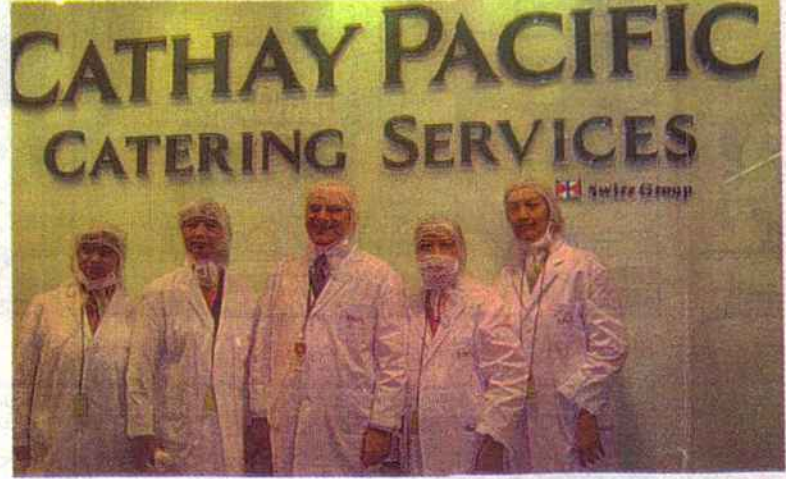
We were lucky. We not only got to get a taste of the best Chinese food inflight, but we did some sampling on ground at the Peninsula Hong Kong, which is a legend by itself in this former British colony.



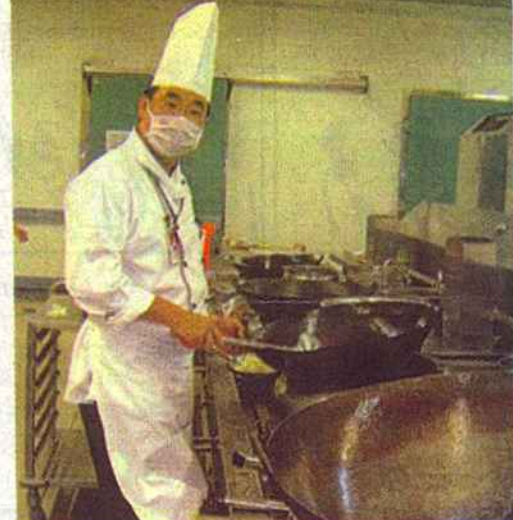
DESSERTS for the sweet-toothed.

The Spring Moon restaurant, one of six eateries in the Pen in-

(Cont'd on page D-4)



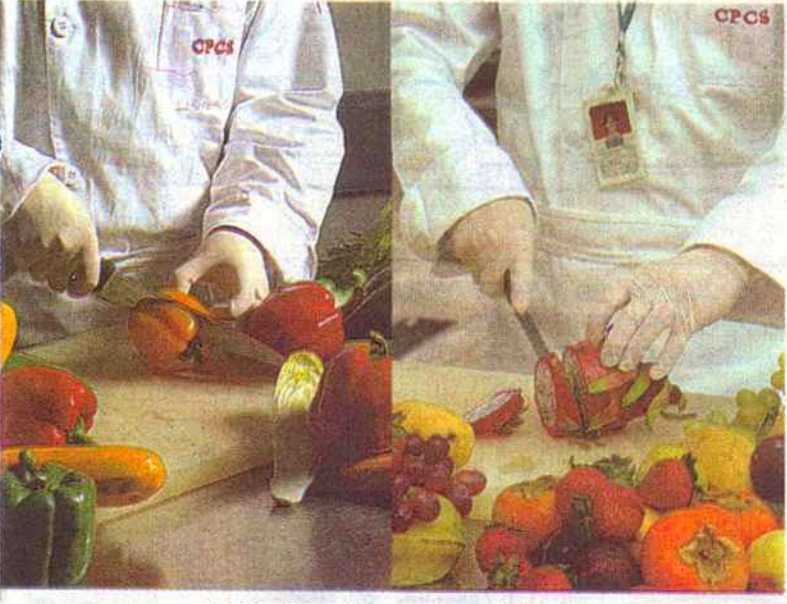
ASTRONAUTS? Just us... Rhoda Capuno of CX Manila, Millet Mananquil, Lesley Bailey of CPCS, moi, Chelo Banal.



CHEF ALEX CHAO, oldest employee.



SETTING UP food trays to go.



CHOPPING, peeling, dicing



THE OMELET MACHINE makes 10,000 omelets a day.



PREPARING 50,000 meals a day needs teamwork.



THE BAKERY SECTION.

PACESETTERS

(Cont'd from page D-1)

cluding the Lobby where they serve a most delightful "high tea" with watercress sandwiches and scones, attracts a devoted clientele who hanker for its roast pigeon flavoured with cinnamon, supreme shark's fin soup with crab meat, and dimsum.

It also serves a six-course dinner priced at HK\$11,000 for one to four people (additional diners pay HK\$2,750 each) and one must book in advance.

The Spring Moon is famous also for its tea counter where 25 selected Chinese teas are served by tea masters. Upon request, they can do a demo on the making of tea and the proper way to serve it.

Spring Moon executive chef Ho Pui Yung worked hand in hand with Cx executive chef for catering services Wun Pak Shun to create this year's "Best Chinese Food" menu.

But it was the tour of the Cathay Pacific Catering Services (CPCS) hub in "Cathay Pacific City" at the Chek Lap Kok airport that gave us a new respect and awe for inflight catering. Never again shall we forego a meal aboard a Cx flight or on any airline for that matter. The work that goes into preparing it boggled this traveller's mind!

Some 1,500 employees work round the clock because of the different time zones, not counting consultants from NASA. Cx is the only flight caterer to have an in-house microbiological laboratory which conducts up to 800 microbiological tests at random each month to prevent problems like cross contamination.

Leslie Bailey, Cx marketing & customers services manager, had us cover up like astronauts with astrocap, mask, white coats and shoe booties before taking us on tour of the catering complex.

Later we met the catering GM Angus Barclay, corporate communi-



THE CUTLERY SORTING MACHINE.



REFRIGERATED hi-loader trucks deliver meal carts to the aircraft.



UNLOADING meal carts to go to ware wash section.



MEALS TO GO... just on time for departure.



THE HIGH BAY warehouse is fully automated.

could be served after 20 hours.

We walked into several freezer rooms which Bailey said reminded him of home (in the UK). But the aromas in the cavernous kitchens were tantalizing, specially in the bakery section where thousands of buns and rolls emerge from the ovens daily.

We watched with fascination the rotating omelet machine which makes 10,000 omelets a day and the cutlery machine which sorts out forks, spoons, knives, teaspoons... all 300,000 pieces a day!

The CPCS has six "flight kitchens" in HK, Taiwan, Vietnam, Canada and one in Cebu, a far cry from 1967 when it was called Air Caterers Ltd.

And then, there are the Cx VIP lounges at the Chek Lap Kok dubbed The Wing and The Pier where Cx passengers can unwind, eat and drink, get a massage at the spa, etc. while waiting for their flight. The Wing has been awarded

World's Ten Best Airport Lounges.

Both have a Noodle Bar, which is the favorite, along with the Long Bar, the Short Bar, the Smoking Bar, and exclusively for first class, The Haven, all of which are operated by Peninsula Clubs under HK's Peninsula Group.

Indeed, if only for the inflight meals and the Cx lounges, I would fly Cathay Pacific.



COZY SPA at The Wing.

cation manager May Lam and corporate comm. executive Julie Lo and Chef Alex Chao who with 30 years is one of Cx's oldest employee at catering.

Escorting us from the Philippines was Rhoda Capuno, asst. marketing manager of Cx Manila (along with Joseph Arias of Peninsula Manila).

At any given time, there are HK\$16 million worth of stock in storage, in use, and in the warehouses.

Catering, we soon learned, involves not food but everything virtually that goes into a flight. This means that from 42,000 to 45,000 items go into every flight not only of Cathay Pacific but of its 32 customer airlines or a total of 140 flights out of Hong Kong a day.

These items include magazines, newspapers and other reading materials, toilet paper rolls, seat covers, and other stuff in the toilets, pillows, blankets, linens, plus beverages, coffee and tea, and a range of 70 wines, etc.

The catering hub produces an estimated 50,000 meals a day (although capable of producing 80,000 meals a day) for economy, business and first class passengers, 60 percent of which are for Cathay Pacific. Naturally, they serve as many types of cuisine as there are a variety of nationalities and religions — including halal, kosher, Muslim, Hindu, Japanese, Chinese, 5 kinds of vegetarian and special dietary needs like diabetics.

Thank goodness for technology, many operations are fully mechanized although the folding of cutlery into the napkins are done painstakingly by hand. So is the sorting out of dishes and glasses to be washed and the actual food preparation, from the chopping, dicing, etc. to the cooking to the placing of the cooked food and salads into meal trays.

Next step is a mandatory chilling period of time below 10 degrees celcius to prevent contamination (which explains why your cutlery is icy cold to the touch) before delivery by refrigerated hi-loader trucks to the aircraft. This keeps the food fresh for long haul trips where meals



CX's famous noodle counter.



AT THE LONG BAR in The Pier.



PRIME ROAST, anyone? ... at the Haven.



BEST CHINESE FOOD is served inflight on Cx.