

Caterers, Cooks and Kitchens!

Apart from the service that cabin crew offer in-flight, an essential part of Cathay Pacific's award-winning service is the quality of the food we offer on our aircraft. And in Hong Kong this comes to us courtesy of Cathay Pacific Catering Services (CPCS). They're the largest Hong Kong based air caterer, also accommodating 30 other airlines, including Singapore Airlines, Emirates, Thai Airways and many more. The 1,650 employees at CPCS produce on average 56,000 meals per day!

What's on the menu today?

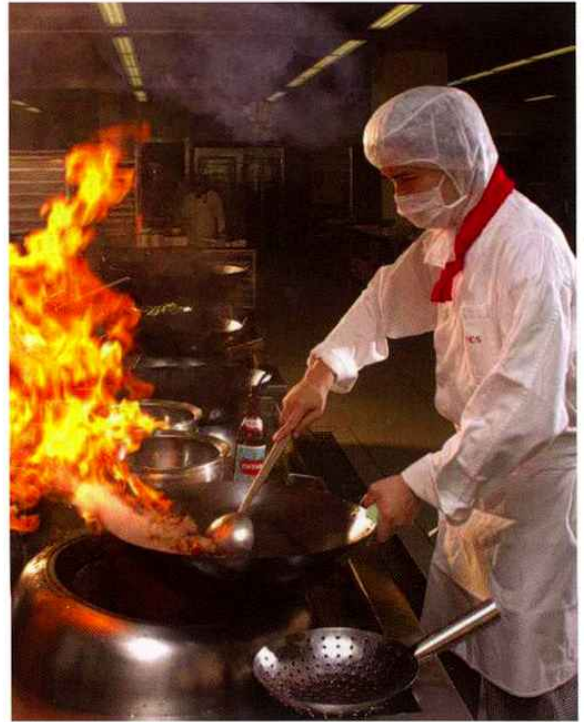
"Relaxing over a good meal is one of life's pleasures," says Angus Barclay, former General Manager of CPCS. "When passengers board an aircraft, they sit back, relax, then look for a menu so they know what's going to be served." Who, then, decides what will be served on board and how does the process work?

Our CX/CPCS Development Team plans each component of every meal offered on Cathay flights. The passenger Reflex ratings are used as a guideline for what needs to be developed, improved or enhanced so caterers can offer the best meals possible within given budgets.

"Meal components are designed and the recipes are cooked, tasted and tested prior to being offered inflight," says Angus. "This process takes place every three months so CX constantly has new and updated dishes in their menus. Cathay then changes the menus on given flights at least once a month. Most importantly, the team designs meals that will retain their quality through the process of refrigeration, followed by re-heating in the aircraft."

Would you care for chicken with rice, beef with potatoes or the vegetarian pasta for dinner this evening?

Many foods do not reheat well after refrigeration, so there's a limit to the sorts of dishes that can be offered inflight. Angus says, "We occasionally re-



ceive unusual requests from private jets catering for royalty, dignitaries and celebrities. Their orders sometimes reveal a yearning for very specific 'comfort foods' like pizzas from Pizza Hut, burgers from Burger King and TGIF Buffalo Chicken Wings! CPCS does not prepare these meals; we arrange for them to be delivered to the aircraft prior to departure. It's part of our service delivery as a caterer.

"We also buy in sliced sandwich bread and Indian breads. However, we produce 95% of our meals in-house, from raw ingredients to the finished meal."

Special religious, ethnic and dietary requirements

Cathay Pacific offers more than 20 varieties of special meals. These can be prepared at a minimum of 24 hours' notice. Choices include vegetarian meals, non-vegetarian religious meals, medical meals and children's meals. The caterers also have a certified and audited Halal kitchen to provide Halal meals.

Food Hygiene

When it comes to inflight catering, all dishes must comply with strict food hygiene requirements. "Food safety is fundamental to what we do," says Angus. "CPCS is the only air caterer in Hong Kong with its own in-house laboratory to support food safety sampling. We conduct 800 food tests per month to ensure our food is indeed safe. We have a regular pest control and cleaning schedule in-house and we conduct hygiene audits on current and potential future suppliers, as well as documentation audits on overseas suppliers. Our staff also receive thorough hygiene training and must pass an annual medical check-up."

Rainy Days

When the unexpected happens, e.g. if an aircraft has an unplanned diversion to HK and needs catering, CPCS has back-up meals on hand, ready to be delivered to a flight at short notice. "Delays and diversions are, regrettably, just a part of the airline industry," Angus says. "We have a dedicated team of professionals to handle such situations."

Amusing moments

"In the past we received feedback from passengers that the blue cheese was apparently mouldy. Of course, this is how blue cheese is meant to be! We also had some passengers complaining of 'dust' on their panacotta desserts. In fact, the tiny black specs were authentic vanilla seeds, indicating that the panacotta was high quality and delicious ... certainly not dusty!"



A word from CPCS

"We'd greatly appreciate more detailed, constructive feedback from crew regarding passenger comments or complaints. Photo evidence helps a lot if anyone has a camera handy. Many comments we receive are rather subjective, as most of our passengers do enjoy their meals. It's important for us to be able to conduct a detailed case investigation if there are any complaints, so we can improve where improvement is warranted."

"Inflight meals are designed to be robust and workable for inflight service. Meals need to be heated according to established heating guides and the food will only suffer if it's cooked for too little time or too much time. I'd ask the crew to please be as careful as possible when re-heating our meals so they can be presented at their best. Thanks so much!"

Our grocery list...

On CX flights in 2005 alone, we served 288,516kg of chicken, 426,665kg of fish, 378,442kg of beef, 152,722kg of pork, 22,478kg of fresh fruit, 624,543kg of fresh vegetables, 78,230kg of ice-cream and 110,166kg of cheese!