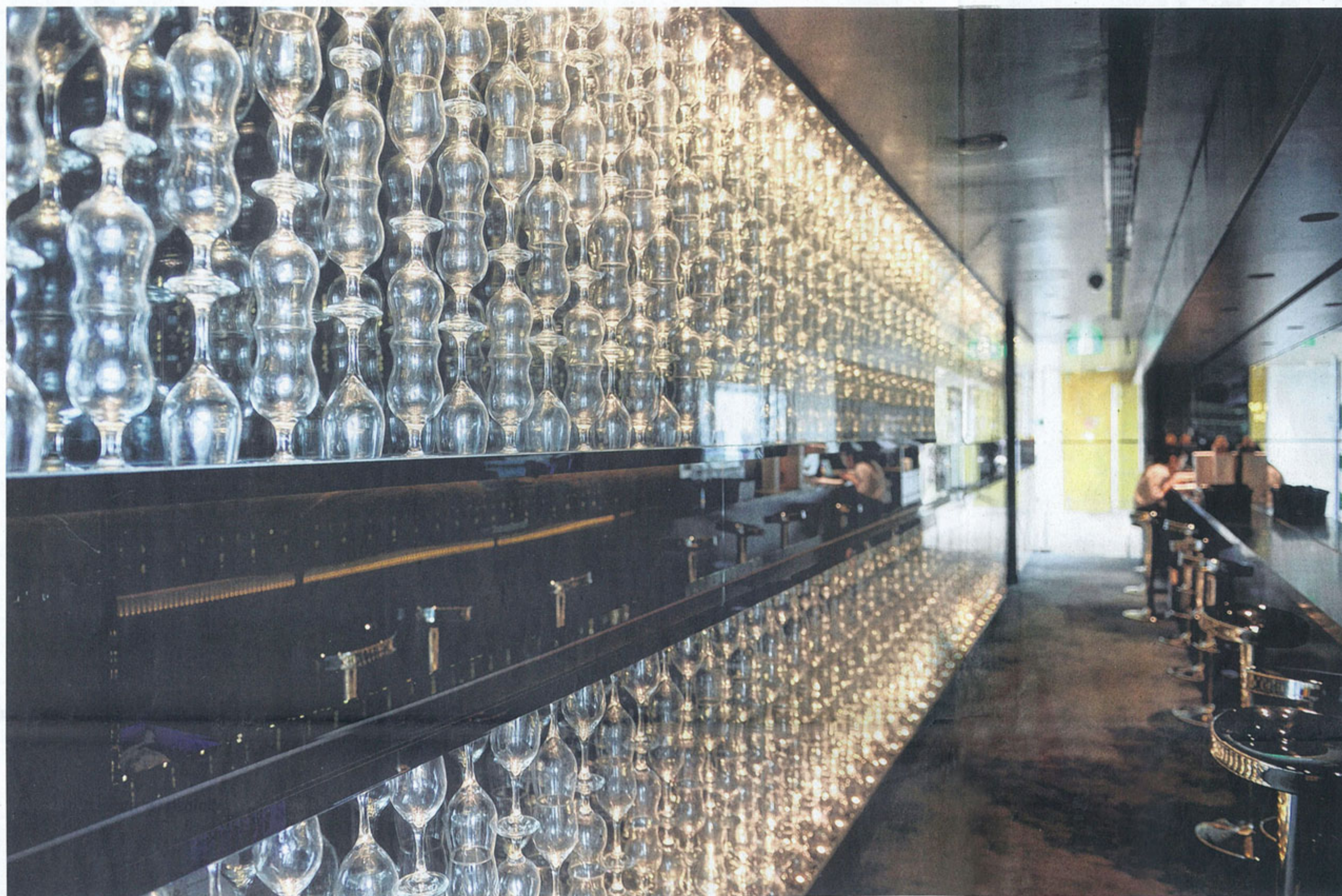


DELICIOUS INTERIORS

Art is not the only thing for viewing at the National Gallery Singapore. The chic interiors of the restaurants are worth a look too. **Alyssa Woo** and **Natasha Ann Zachariah** report

Smoke & Mirrors' hallway (right) has a feature wall of 600 wine glasses stacked atop one another. ST PHOTOS: JOYCE FANG



The stainless-steel bar counter (left) was crane-lifted into the deck and welded onsite. The outdoor sitting area (below) provides guests with ample photo opportunities.

SMOKE & MIRRORS
06-01 City Hall Wing

The uninterrupted views of the Singapore skyline from rooftop bar Smoke & Mirrors cannot be beaten, but it is the circular stainless-steel bar that takes pride of place here.

Reflecting the city's skyline on its polished surface, the 4.7m-wide and 400kg counter had to be crane-lifted in four pieces and welded onsite by a specialist from China.

It was well worth the \$180,000 cost and effort, says Park Hotel Group executive director Tan Shin Hui, 32. "We wanted to create a visually powerful and iconic bar that is modern and stylish. It was fitting that the bar gives guests a sophisticated place to lounge in."

The 65-seater bar is the group's first F&B venture outside its hotels and renovation cost under half a million dollars.

It is located on the sixth floor of the National Gallery Singapore and is accessible from either side of the City Hall Wing.

Singapore design studio Asylum, who was behind the branding of the Gallery, was in charge of the bar's interior design and branding.

The firm's creative director Chris Lee, 45, says: "Since it is at the National Gallery Singapore, we came up with the idea of having a



sculpture that doubles as a bar." True to the bar's name, the mood is intimate and enigmatic, with a lot of reflective surfaces.

The narrow hallway entrance has a mirror running across its length, reflecting the feature wall of 600 wine glasses stacked atop one another. Inside, the space is finished in copper and silver tones.

The stainless-steel bar straddles both the indoor and outdoor areas. But given the spectacular view, most people are likely to be heading outside.

Due to strict guidelines set by the

Gallery, most of the alfresco decor of the City Hall rooftop was left untouched.

When it rains, guests have to vacate the partially sheltered area and move indoors.

The bar's 15 signature tipples by head bartender Yugnes Susela include the New & Old Sling (\$26), a reworked version of the iconic Singapore Sling with whisky, orange, cassia, angostura bitters and prosecco.

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The main dining area of Yan restaurant. ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG

YAN
05-02 City Hall Wing

Since it is located in the National Gallery Singapore, the country's biggest art museum, Chinese restaurant Yan went for an artistic touch in its decor.

Its entrance light fixture is crafted to resemble a Chinese scroll. Further back in the restaurant is a glass ceiling feature of about 400 hand-blown glass vessels, each individually screwed into the ceiling.

While its menu is old-school Cantonese fine dining, the decor is bright and contemporary.

Grey circular booth seats that can accommodate up to six people contrast with red and purple woven silk dividers.

Looking out of the angled wood feature wall, diners get views of the Gallery's rooftop garden.

There are three private rooms in the 2,700 sq ft, 154-seater restaurant. Two are at the back and hidden between a screen of woven Chinese fabric. Each room can accommodate up to 12 people and can be linked by removing the divider. The third private room is to the left of the restaurant's entrance.

Yan, along with rooftop bar Smoke & Mirrors, is the first F&B venture for Park Hotel Group outside its hotels. The restaurant was designed by Singapore design studio Asylum for under half a million dollars.

Ms Tan Shin Hui, 32, executive director of the Park Hotel Group, says they sought to create a space

where people can gather over food. The Chinese character of Yan also refers to "feast".

She adds: "We wanted to go back to the core value of the Chinese, which is unity - where they feel it is important for families and friends to gather and bond over meals."

Helming the kitchen is Hong Kong masterchef Chan Kung Lai, who has more than 20 years of culinary experience. His signature dish is crispy roast suckling pig served in three ways.

The restaurant has introductory set menus for lunch (from \$58+ a person, minimum two to dine) and dinner (from \$78+ a person, minimum two to dine) to coincide with the opening of the Gallery. Go to www.yan.com.sg for more information.



Two floor-to-ceiling sculptures by artist Grace Tan decorate Aura's Sky Lounge. PHOTO: DIOS VINCOY JR FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

AURA
05-03 and 06-02 City Hall Wing

For restaurateur-chef Beppe de Vito, artworks are not just for display inside a gallery. Works from local artists decorate the 9,000 sq ft Aura, a two-level dining concept featuring a 90-seat Italian restaurant on Level 5 and a 200-seat rooftop bar Sky Lounge one floor above.

Singapore art consultant Audrey Png of Asian Art Options picked the commissioned pieces for the space.

Inside the Sky Lounge, there are two floor-to-ceiling sculptures by artist Grace Tan, who was inspired by the Corinthian columns fronting the Supreme Court and American artist Jeff Koons' whimsical style.

Her work has two columns connected to the ceiling in violet and

gold metallic "blobs" that look like splats of water.

Artist Chun Kai Feng brings the heartland to the city with his "neon light triptych", modelled after the retro window grilles found in old HDB flats in the 1970s. They hang in the window of the Sky Lounge.

Chef de Vito, 43, who also opened restaurants IlLido Bali in Indonesia and Osteria Art in Market Street this year, wanted to create "a unique space and setting that would integrate well with the Gallery".

He adds: "It was also our way to support local artists that aren't featured yet within the Gallery, but have already made their mark in Singapore and overseas."

Complementing the artworks are luxe interiors by award-winning architectural agency JPA Design.

In the restaurant, a feature wall of hexagons references a detail on the balcony parapets of the museum's facade. The hexagons, laid on top of one another from big to small, pop out in uniform rows.

Rose-gold mirrored ceiling panels create the illusion of volume. The terracotta booth seats are a mix of fabric and faux leather, while marble partitions add a luxurious touch.

The 6,000 sq ft Sky Lounge's best feature is its unblocked views. When you enter the space from the restaurant, you can walk outside to the deck on your left for a panoramic view of Marina Bay and the central business district. On the right, the view is of shimmering pools and vertical gardens of the National Gallery Singapore and the current Supreme Court's spaceship-like dome.



Violet Oon's personal photographs cover the walls at National Kitchen. ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG

NATIONAL KITCHEN
02-01 City Hall Wing

A genteel old-world atmosphere pervades Ms Violet Oon's new venture National Kitchen.

The design blends colonial influences with Peranakan elements, fitting nicely with the varied Singaporean cuisine the restaurant is offering. Besides Nonya fare, it has local dishes such as Hainanese mutton stew, Eurasian beef semur and Hakka abacus seeds. Vegetable dishes and mains start from \$12.

In the interiors, Western influences can be seen in the dark wood panel mouldings and glass-beaded chandeliers. The floor is covered with colourful Peranakan tiles, bordered by black-and-white floor tiles commonly found in traditional

coffee shops in Singapore.

The chef also displays a bit of personal history. On the restaurant's ash wood-paneled walls are framed photographs from her career as a journalist and chef.

For example, there is a picture of the 66-year-old's first recipe book, which she has kept since she was 16, as well as a black-and-white image of her aunt Nona - her culinary mentor - pounding spices with a stone pestle and mortar.

Ms Oon's daughter Su-lyn Tay, 39, oversaw the restaurant's design. She worked with Singapore interior design firm Laank and the restaurant's co-owner Manoj Murjani, founder of the TWG Tea company. The renovations took seven weeks and cost about \$500,000.

Laank and Mr Murjani had also

worked on the design of Ms Oon's other eatery in Bukit Timah Road, the three-year-old Violet Oon's Kitchen, which has a similar vibe.

National Kitchen has an indoor floor area of 1,300 sq ft and can accommodate 50 people. The 1,700 sq ft verandah, which has views of the Padang, seats 35 people.

Inside, diners can slide into black leather booth seats for privacy or sit at elegant marble-top tables.

At its entrance, traditional Peranakan tableware such as spice pots, bowls and tea jars are displayed on a wooden bookshelf and cabinet. Ms Tay says: "Peranakan culture is warm and hospitable, so we wanted the hallway to feel warm and inviting, like someone's home. That was important to us, rather than just trying to max out seating space."



Artist Dawn Ng's hanging artwork A Theory Of Everything in the dining area. PHOTO: DIOS VINCOY JR FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

ODETTE
01-04 Supreme Court Wing

Modern French restaurant Odette has impressed food critics since it opened a few weeks ago.

But as diners praise fine-dining dishes such as Challans Guinea Fowl and Hokkaido Uni, its interior has also gotten its fair share of Instagram likes.

Push past the heavy Roman arched wood doors and you will enter an intimate, elegant space.

The design elements are clean and understated, with a light palette. Think blush curtains, grey seats and a cracked marble floor filled in with pale pink grout.

Gold accents are found throughout, such as the brass planters and stems of lighting fixtures.

The main dining room seats 32 and a private room can take a dozen. A special chef's table in the kitchen is being finalised.

In the meantime, diners can still watch chef Julien Royer and his team at work in the kitchen via full-height, gold-rimmed glass panels.

Odette is named after Royer's grandmother. The French chef opened the restaurant with The Lo & Behold Group.

The owners turned to London-based Universal Design Studio for the interior design. Lead designer Sacha Leong, 36, who once worked at home-grown architecture firm Woha, says the team drew inspiration from Royer's cooking.

Mr Leong says: "His plates are incredibly delicate, delicious compositions which celebrate the best

ingredients. We felt the space had to have the same understated elegance, but without the strict formality of traditional fine dining."

Prices start from \$88 for a four-course lunch menu and \$206 for a six-course dinner menu.

Artist Dawn Ng, who is married to Mr Wee Teng Wen, managing partner at Lo & Behold, created an art installation for the restaurant called A Theory Of Everything.

For the work, she spent time in the kitchen photographing raw ingredients such as truffles. After treating and printing these images onto archival paper, she stuck them onto thin oak panels, which were later folded into random shapes. These shapes are hung from the ceiling over the quadruple-banquette in the main dining area, hovering like a big mobile.

Garden dining

Summer Pavilion

The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore

☎ 6434-5286

Open 11.30am-2.30pm,

6.30pm-10.30pm daily

Tea Salon opens from 12pm-10pm daily

Summer Pavilion at The Ritz-Carlton recently unveiled a new look, nearly two decades after its opening.

"A revamp was necessary in order for our signature Cantonese restaurant to remain competitive. Diners are now more discerning and apart from good food, they also consider the service and overall restaurant ambience," says Fabien Gastinel, the hotel's executive assistant manager for food and beverage.

At the new Summer Pavilion, diners will feel as if they are dining in a garden. There is a new "moon gate" entrance access, while the main dining room is surrounded by a modern Chinese garden. Colourful Italian porcelain tableware, floral motifs used in the restaurant's collaterals and objets d'art in the restaurant, all play up the summertime experience.

What's new are the four private booth seats in the main dining room, ideal for an intimate meal or business discussions. More private dining rooms have been added, with names inspired by Chinese plants and trees, such as plum and bamboo.

Also new is the Garden Suite, which comes with a separate entrance and can seat up to 30 people, making it ideal for extended family reunions.

Executive chef Cheung Siu Kong continues to helm the kitchen. The menu features Cantonese cuisine, with new dishes such as double-boiled sea whelk soup with fish maw and chicken served in a whole coconut; braised four-head South African abalone; poached rice with lobster, and braised estuary grouper with dried beancurd skin.

The restaurant now also boasts a Tea Salon (below) on its premises. "Tea culture has always been an important part of Chinese culture and tradition. We wanted to enhance the Cantonese fine dining experience for our guests by offering a selection of 10 speciality teas from Tea Bone Zen Mind to pair with their meals," says Mr Gastinel.

In addition to traditional Chinese teas such as Pu Er and Tie Guan Yin, unique blends such as Lychee Oolong and Momo-in-Black (black tea with Chinese white peach) and Jade Oolong are available. These teas and other artisanal tea accoutrements are available for purchase for diners who want to replicate the tea experience at home. **TSC**



GARDEN THEME

The revamped Summer Pavilion has additional private dining rooms as well as new dishes such as poached rice with lobster. Below: It also has a Tea Salon offering 10 speciality teas.

Canton chic

YAN

National Gallery Singapore

1 St Andrew's Road #05-02

☎ 6384-5585

Open 11.30am-2.30pm, Mon to Sat;

2.30pm-5pm, Sat & Sun;

6pm-10.30pm, Mon to Sun

If not for its Chinese name, YAN, meaning feast in Chinese, this could pass off as an European restaurant.

The facade of the restaurant is lined with a semi-see-through oak screen, that allows diners to look out onto the roof top garden.

Several works of art can be seen throughout the restaurant, starting with a grand lighting feature hanging above the reception desk at the entrance. Created by Italian designer Diego Bassetti and architect Andrea Panzneri, the ceiling light resembles a giant Chinese scroll with fine nickel chains cascading down, creating a visual connect into the white gradient treatment of the reception stand.



ELEGANT

At YAN, the food is traditionally Cantonese, with dishes such as dim sum, roast suckling pig and thousand layer tofu, but plated in a refined and deliberate way.



But while its look is distinctively modern and elegant, the food is still traditionally Cantonese, with dishes such as crispy roast suckling pig and braised abalone with vegetables.

Tan Shin Hui, executive director at Park Hotel Group, which owns YAN, says that the cooking is still principally authentic Cantonese as the group believes strongly in the core principles and discipline of traditional Cantonese cooking.

"The provenance of the ingredients, and wok hei remains very important to us. What we have done is to bring a little more refinement into the typically boisterous Chinese restaurant, putting in more effort in the curation of chinaware and the art of plating; bringing Cantonese fine dining to another level," says Ms Tan.

She adds that essentially, the restaurant is still serving up familiar flavours but in the language of today.

Ms Tan notes that in Singapore, Western restaurants have been a lot more progressive in this respect, and there is a gap

in the market for Chinese fine dining that is a little more refined and deliberated. At YAN, they do away with large sharing portions of food. Instead, dishes are mostly individual servings, so that small tables of two or four can still have a meal without dealing with leftovers.

This new approach, says Ms Tan, has attracted a younger crowd, while still getting positive feedback from regular diners.

"We have seen many younger diners bring their parents and even grandparents here; and we do get very good feedback even from the more mature diners," says Ms Tan.

She thinks preference for more modern Chinese restaurants are not the exclusive domain of the younger generation. "We would love to make Chinese dining chic, a place that the young would love to hang out; instead of only being reserved for the occasional multi-generational family dinners," she says. **TSC**

