



PENANG DELIGHTS

Southeast Asia is known for its variety of mouthwatering street-side quick bites, but few cities take pride in its street treats as fiercely as Penang.



Clockwise from above: Also known as “top hats”, pie tee is one of Penang’s street-side favourites; cendol is a refreshing summer treat; Indian street food such as martabak pancakes can also be found in Penang.

Ask any Penangite and they’ll readily share with you their lip-smacking fascination with the humble-looking, street-side delights, which for many are more irresistible than a fancy restaurant meal. “You can find the best of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Nyonya street food particularly in a morning market, *kopitiam* or hawker centre,” says Low Bee Yinn, a keen food blogger born and raised in Penang. Low and his brother Low Chee Khor operate the Rasa Malaysia culinary tour (www.rasamalaysia.com), which introduces visitors to authentic local treats. “Another thing is that we feverishly preserve the traditional methods of preparing these street foods, for example using charcoal fire instead of gas, handmade instead of mass machine production,” he adds. “These street foods are prepared by vendors, some of whom have been selling the same food for over 30 or 40 years – street vendors who are exceedingly proud of their creations and hence put their heart and soul into every single dish.”

Being the street food capital of the country, Penang has its unique versions of popular Malaysian dishes that offer an exciting mix of rich, fresh flavours. Curry laksa is commonly known here as “curry mee” which is a lighter version with less coconut milk and more spices. Rojak, a salad of cucumber, yam beans, pineapple, jambu (water apple), cuttlefish, dollops of hae ko (shrimp paste), spices and ground peanuts, is served without the yau char kuey (Chinese doughnuts) in Penang and the result is a cleaner, fresher taste. Hokkien mee in Penang refers to a mix of egg noodles and rice noodles served

in prawn soup with chicken, pork, squid, fish cake and greens – a lighter version of its Kuala Lumpur variation involving flat rice noodles stir-fried with dark soy sauce.

Other popular Penang picks include char kuay teow (flat rice noodles stir-fried with soy sauce, prawns, fried eggs, bean sprouts and optional duck egg and crab meat); pie tee (shrimp, shallots, julienned yam beans and carrot in deep-fried pastry shaped like a “top hat”); cheh hu (prawn fritters, tofu and shredded vegetables in a special sauce); and cendol (pandan jelly noodles and red beans topped with palm sugar, shaved ice and coconut milk), a refreshing dessert enjoyed throughout South Asia.

“If you travel to Penang, don’t just limit yourself to the usual suspects, try out as many different dishes as possible,” Low enthuses. “I seriously can’t think of any Penang street food that is not good.”



Low shares his favourite Penang dishes:

Hokkien mee from Kedai Kopi Classic, 126 Jalan Perak

Curry mee from 55 Lorong Seratus Tahun

Laksa from Kek Seng Coffee Shop, 382-384 Jalan Penang

Cheh hu from Padang Brown Hawker Centre, junction of Perak Road and Anson Road

