

# Zi Char

## Conquest!

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There are plenty of hidden (and not so hidden) treasures in Singapore when it comes to *zi char* food. Here are 12 stalls which are worth checking out in the New Year (not in order of ranking)! More details about each stall can be found on my website.

May you find something worth spending your calories on!

### 1 Keng Eng Kee

Blk 124 Bukit Merah Lane 1,  
#01-136, Singapore 150124

Our first stop is Alexandra Village where we visit Chef Wayne for his Moonlight *Hor Fun* (月光河). If there is ever a dish to order to gauge the chef's wok skills, it has got to be *hor fun*. This very simple dish of rice noodles, fried with lard and dark sauce topped with an egg, is simply irresistible when the chef has managed to capture the breath of the wok (*wok hei*)!



KENG ENG KEE

### 2 Kok Sen Restaurant

30-32 Keong Saik Road,  
Singapore 089137

**Kok Sen** is one of those venerable *zi char* stalls that have served three generations of Singaporeans. They have a couple of signature dishes, but if I were to order just one, it would have to be their *yong tau foo*. They make their own stuffing from squid and prawns, and the items are braised in a wonderfully moreish sauce so tasty that you would break your low-carb diet and order a bowl of rice to go with it!

### 3 Quan Ji

Amoy Street Food Centre,  
7 Maxwell Rd, Singapore 069111

A French cook might be whacked over the knuckles if the surface of the omelette turns brown, but the Chinese won't have any of that. The best way to cook an omelette is with lots of lard at high heat, so that the eggs become really puffy and develop that nice crust on the outside. Then all you need is a bit of fish sauce and you would realise how tasty eggs can be! It's even better when it's served atop a mound of eggy noodles! This old school dish isn't easily found anywhere else, making it well worth the trip.



KOK SEN

### 4 Sik Bao Sin

592 Geylang Road,  
Singapore 389531  
(between Lorong 34 and 36)

I have been enjoying Desmond's wok skills ever since he was still cooking at his father's restaurant, **Sik Wai Sin**, which has been around for almost five decades. Desmond has gone on to open his own eatery just down the road at **Sik Bao Sin**. My must-order dish here is the tofu prawns, which is one of those dishes that is really bad when you are on a low-carb diet, because the sauce truly begs for a big bowl of rice!

### 5 Eastern House of Seafood Delicacy

46 Geylang Lorong 23,  
Singapore 388375

Also in Geylang is **Eastern House of Seafood**, which has recently relocated from Chai Chee. With the relocation, they have introduced the lobster *hokkien mee*, which is much like our usual hawker version except better, as it comes adorned with the crimson shell of a live (cooked by then) Boston Lobster! Their smoked chicken is also very unique and definitely worth a try!



**JB AH MENG**

## 6 JB Ah Meng

534 Geylang Road,  
Singapore 389490

Yet another *zi char* stall in Geylang is one that stays open till the wee hours of the morning. It is the haunt for many chefs who come here for supper after closing their own restaurants! The white pepper crabs here are really tasty and so is their *san lou bee hoon*! This is the red light district, so try not to wander down the even-numbered *Lorongs* (small streets) on the left side of the main road!

## 7 Whampoa Keng Fish Head Steamboat

116/118 Rangoon Road,  
Singapore 218394

It's a shame that fish head steamboat isn't usually mentioned in the same sentence as chicken rice or chilli crabs when it comes to iconic local dishes. Most of the time, it is relegated to the "B" list of foods to try in Singapore. But this dish is well loved by the locals and the stall that I find myself going back to the most is Whampoa Keng. The soup is very tasty and I also like the *san lou hor fun* which has got that *wok hei*.



**WHAMPOA KENG  
FISH HEAD STEAMBOAT**

## 8 Ocean Curry Fish Head

Blk 92 Toa Payoh Lorong 4,  
#01-264, Singapore 310092

Fish head curry was invented by an Indian man who wanted to attract a Chinese crowd to his curry stall. I am not kidding! It's true! Anyway, there are many places where you can enjoy fish head curry, but the one that stands out from the rest is **Ocean Curry Fish Head**. The gravy is very nicely balanced and you can get really good quality wild-caught fish there if you request for it.

## 9 Dynasty Ipoh Seafood

Blk 151 Bishan Street 11,  
#01-195, Singapore 570151

This stall in Bishan sells fried porridge. Yes, you heard that right. Fried porridge! How does someone actually come up with the idea of fried porridge? I don't know. How does it taste? Well, there is only one way to find out! They also have a very good Kuala Lumpur *hokkien mee* that is worth a try!



**DYNASTY IPOH SEAFOOD**

## 10 Hao Kee Seafood Deluxe

Blk 203 Toa Payoh North,  
#01-1097, Singapore 310203

Hao Kee's deep fried kailan with pork floss is the perfect way to introduce kids (and adults who won't eat veggies) to start enjoying vegetables. It isn't exactly health food, but it is quite tasty. The *zi char* stall is helmed by a young Singaporean chef who really knows how to catch the breath of the wok, and his *chye poh hor fun* and *chao tar bee hoon* are always well worth ordering!



**YOU HUAK SEAFOOD  
WHITE NOODLES**

## 11 You Huak Seafood White Noodles

22 Jalan Tampang,  
Singapore 758966 (opposite  
Sembawang Shopping Centre)

When I first wrote about You Huak's white *bee hoon* in 2011, they were just about the only ones famous for the dish. Since then, seafood white *bee hoon* stalls have opened up all across Singapore. Nevertheless, I still think that You Huak serves the best version of the dish.

## 12 Zai Shun Curry Fish Head

Blk 253 Jurong East Street 24,  
#01-205, Singapore 600253

**Zai Shun** is the best place in Singapore for steamed fish. Not only is the fish fresh, the prices are also very reasonable. They even have fish like empurau and humpback grouper, which are not easily found elsewhere! Make sure you order the salted egg bitter gourd omelette while you are there! ♦

Dr Tay is currently practising as a family physician at Karri Family Clinic. When not at the clinic, he is looking for good food and writing about it on his blog, <http://ieatishootipost.sg> and social media sites. He has authored two books on Singapore Food and is widely regarded as an expert on local food.

