

Ong Jin Teong - An Introductory Note

Dr Ong Jin Teong is a retired professor from the Nanyang Technological University's College of Engineering.

He is the author of the recently published book, *Penang Heritage Food*, which gives a Nonya perspective of traditional Penang dishes. Hence the book has two chapters on the two dominant Malay and Hokkien influences on traditional Penang food as well as Thai and South Indian influences which distinguish Penang Nonya food from that from Singapore or Malacca. His book also gives an insight into the Hainanese and English influences on Penang heritage food.

Penang Heritage Food is not just about cooking, it about heritage related to Penang food, giving a new dimension to the Penang Heritage. It gives an insight into the historical background of the dishes, and a personal perspective on how many of the dishes were prepared by the author's mother, grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousins in his younger days.

Old photographs of traditional objects used for cooking as well as photos from the author's family collection give this book a nostalgic flavour.

All the dishes shot for the book were personally cooked by the author himself.

Jin Teong was born into a Penang Nonya family. He was exposed to cooking at home at an early age. His mother gave cooking demonstrations to members of the Penang YWCA and the Penang MGS Old Girls Association. As an active member of the Scout movement, he learned to cook his first full course meal while earning his cookery badge.

He went to London to study Electrical Engineering in 1963, where he extended his range of cooking. It was difficult in those days to find Malaysian food, so he resorted to cooking Penang food, drawing on his observations of food preparations at home and at hawker stalls in Penang. The time spent standing by the hawker stalls, waiting for food to be prepared came in useful. Recipes from his mother's cooking demonstrations also came in handy. He even made poh piah skin.

Dr Ong is now working on another book on traditional implements used for cooking South East Asian food, particularly those from Penang. He is documenting heirloom recipes and learning to cook nearly forgotten dishes from older relatives and friends. As part of his research, he has been collecting old cooking implements and old recipes.

He has given talks with demonstrations on Penang Heritage Food/What has Engineering got to do with Cookings to various organisations. He also conducts cooking classes at the Shermay's Cooking School and is the first man to conduct a cooking class for the Penang MGS Old Girls' Association.