



Chopsticks chef Wee-Hock Lim says sweet and sour pork is a dish with a “special place” in his heart.

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Wee-Hock Lim, head chef of Chopsticks in Fendalton, has a different, yet equally loved, memory of the classic dish.

He had it often when he was a child and has made it himself thousands of times over his 30-year career.

“It’s the most beloved Chinese dish in Malaysia. Everyone, from the young to the old, rich and poor, likes it,” he says.



“The way we cook it has never changed.”

Lim - originally from Muar, often referred to as the Town of Food in Malaysia - says sweet and sour pork has a “special place” in his heart.



The dish has the essence of Cantonese cuisine, Lim says.
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“It’s part of our culture and the most entry-level Chinese dish. Everyone knows it, no need to introduce it to customers.”

He acknowledges “the murky origin” of the dish.



“Some people say it’s originated from Shanghai, and it’s a dish to serve for the emperor, while others say it’s from Canton.”

But as long as it attracts people to Chinese cuisine and Chinese culture, “it’s great as it is”, he says.

Lim’s parents migrated from Xiamen, Fujian province in China, in the mid 1950s, and he worked as a kitchen hand during his teenage years.



Lim’s version of sweet and sour pork at Chopsticks restaurant in Fendalton, Christchurch.

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“I’ve always had the passion for food since my childhood. In my kitchen, we are committed to blending the essence of Chinese cuisine with Western flavours.”

A key step in his sweet and sour pork is “to tenderise the meat”.

Pork typically has a tough texture, but by tenderising it - much like washing clothes - the muscle fibres loosen and the meat becomes soft, he says.