

Dragon-i treasure pots

> This local Shanghaiese and Hongkong restaurant chain is bringing back its festive pun choy for the Chinese New Year

BY MEI CHOO

DRAGON-I Restaurant Sdn Bhd is bringing back its treasure pots of abundant goodness for takeaway to celebrate the Year of the Dragon.

Called pun choy in Chinese - which literally means "basin filled with food" - the treasure pot started off as a massive meal for the community to gather together and enjoy the many meats and vegetables left to slowly stew and soak up the juices and flavours from the soup and broth that have been braising in the pot.

Today, whole families still gather together to dig into the dish for its many layers of "treasured" ingredients.

This year, Dragon-i is offering two types of treasure pots for takeaway - the Prosperity Abalone treasure pot at RM388+ which serves six to eight people; and the Signature Prosperity Abalone treasure pot at RM688+ which serves up to 10 people.

"We first started to sell our treasure pots in 2008," said Dragon-i chief executive officer Henry Yip. "Last year alone, we sold 10,000 of them, a 10-fold jump from the 1,000 units we sold the first year."

He added that they hope to double that number for the coming Chinese New Year.

Yip believes one reason why Dragon-i's treasure pots have become a favourite among its customers is because the restaurant is synonymous with quality and freshness and its customers get exactly what they pay for.

He personally ensures that there is no compromise on the dishes' ingredients or their quality, and strives to improve on the treasure pot each year, not just in what goes into it but also in its presentation.

The Prosperity Abalone treasure pot overflows with 18 exquisite ingredients such as premium Chilean abalones, Australian sea cucumbers, Japanese dried scallops and dried oysters, Pantai Remis fresh sea prawns, fish maw, roast chicken, roast pork belly and premium mushrooms, among other treasures, which are precooked and left soaking in premium pork bone soup in a light stainless steel pot.

The whole pot is then frozen and vacuum-sealed to ensure the ingredients keep fresh as no preservatives are used in the cooking. The whole pot is then placed in an easy-to-carry cardboard box for takeaway.

"Many of our customers order the pots to be taken back to their hometown for the reunion dinner," said Yip. "That's why we decided to vacuum-seal the pot to ensure the

ingredients remain fresh."

He has also changed the pot from claypot to stainless steel to prevent breakages during transport and the pot cracking on reheating.

Moreover, the steel pot reheats much faster so that everyone can tuck that much quicker into the food. And there is a bottle of soup packed inside the box for top-ups.

"This year, we also came out with the Signature treasure pot because some customers asked for even more premium ingredients," said Yip, adding that they use premium Australian abalones, Japanese sea cucumber, real shark's fin, specially selected fish belly as well as premium Japanese dried scallops and fish maw, among others, for this pot.

There are only 2,000 of this Signature Prosperity Abalone treasure pots for sale.

With every purchase of the Prosperity Abalone treasure pot for takeaway, customers can also enjoy other festive add-ons such as the BBQ meat combination at RM488+ (from RM506+); or the salmon raw fish yee sang at RM428+ (RM456+).

For those who prefer to dine in, they can also reserve the treasure pot (preferably three days in advance).

The treasure pots cost the same but come with an additional service charge and diners do not get the stainless pot to take home.



(from top) Treasure pot overflowing with goodness; the Prosperity Abalone treasure pot takeaway pack; and Yip (centre) with chefs Man Fong Lam (left) and Tai Chee Kong, who helped concoct the treasure pot.

Furthermore, from Dec 15 to Feb 29, the first 5,000 Hong Leong Bank credit cardholders can either get RM18 off their total bill of RM180 and above, or a RM50 discount for any order of the Prosperity Abalone treasure pot when they dine in.

If they purchase the Prosperity Abalone treasure pot for takeaway, they will still enjoy the RM50 discount as well as receive a complimentary food thermometer (which costs RM20) to ensure the food is reheated properly to the right temperature (at least 80°C) before eating.

Visit any Dragon-i (www.dragon-i.com.my) or Canton-i (www.canton-i.com.my) outlets to place your orders at least three days in advance for the treasure pots which are available up to Feb 26.