

Drawing on influences from China, India and Thailand, Malaysian food appeals to all the senses. This week we ventured down a narrow alleyway to Temasek, a treasured local institution.

Feast on the traditional flavours

Samantha Day

FROM the doorway of her kitchen, Susan Wong (pictured) has watched as generations of diners have savoured meals in her restaurant. Some have come in as children to slurp laksa and, soon enough, as adults they move on to more assertive dishes like char kway teow and Singapore chilli king prawn.

Temasek has been serving up traditional Malaysian meals for 19-years but Mrs Wong's journey to the restaurant was decades in the making.

It began in Singapore when, as a child, she would accompany her widowed mother to the local markets to fetch food to feed her eight siblings. Feeding the family became her responsibility when her mother started work as a cook in a factory outlet after the death of her husband.

"I have always loved food and cooking," the 62-year-old said. "My mum, who is a great cook, taught me to cook from a young age so I could provide for my brothers and sisters. We never had recipes, we just worked from taste, smell and touch."

Mrs Wong moved with her husband, sons and mother to Sydney in 1985. After working in securities with the National Australia Bank for seven years she decided to throw in the towel and take up a career in food.

■ YOU'LL NEED

- 1.2kg whole chicken
- 2 stalk pandan leaves – (Flemington Markets)

RICE

- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 4 cups Thai jasmine rice
- 1 garlic clove, finely sliced
- 1 thumb-sized piece of ginger, finely sliced
- 1 1/2 tbsp salt
- 6 cups chicken stock (taken from water chicken is poached in)
- 3 stalk pandan leaves

SOYA SAUCE

- 3 tbsp thick black soya sauce
- 1 tbsp light soya sauce

CHILLI SAUCE

- 15 red chillies (large)
- 10 red chillies (small)
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 thumb-sized piece of ginger
- 4 lemons, juiced
- 3 tbsp sugar



HAINANESE CHICKEN RICE

■ Serves four to six people

1: Bring a pot full of water with two stalk pandan leaves to the boil. When water is boiling, place the whole chicken in pot. Make sure the water covers the chicken. Boil on high heat for five minutes then simmer chicken on low heat for 40 minutes.

2: Once chicken is cooked, place in cold, iced water until skin is firm and you are ready to serve. Reserve cooking water for stock.

3: For the rice, add oil to a wok and saute garlic, ginger and pandan leaves. Add rice, stock from pot and salt and stir on a high heat for 10 minutes. Cook for a further 20 minutes or until rice is cooked and stock has been absorbed.

4: Mix soya sauce ingredients together and pour into a serving dish.

5: Place chilli sauce ingredients in a blender, pulse until it forms a smooth paste and spoon into another separate serving dish.

6: Remove chicken from iced water, slice, rub with a few drops of sesame oil and serve at room temperature with rice and accompaniments.

"It was a stressful job and I worked a lot of hours," she said. "After three years with the bank I started cooking for parties and home catering with my sister. Soon my brother-in-law suggested that I open a restaurant and in 1992 I bought this little place."

The menu at Temasek has

grown over the years but many of the clientele remain the same.

Mrs Wong said she has watched children grow up in the restaurant and local identities such as David Borger go on the "up-and-up" over the years.

The most popular dishes remain the Hainanese chicken rice, beef

rendang, laksa and nasi goreng. Mrs Wong's son, who left a job as an accountant to work as a chef in the kitchen, has added oyster omelette and kecap mani sotong (fried calamari in sweet sauce) to the menu.

"My style of Malaysian food is what I grew up with – nonya

cooking. I use fresh spices like lemongrass, galangal, chilli rather than dried to create rich flavours that aren't overly spicy," she said.

■ Do you have a favourite local restaurant whose recipes you want to try? Contact us at parramattaadvertiser.whereilive.com.au