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## New Year Yu Sheng in a New (Truffle) Twist

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The menus are out for spreads of sumptuous dumplings, steamed cakes, sucking pig, spring rolls and sweet treats that are tasty, traditional and auspicious to celebrate the coming Year of the Goat on the Chinese Lunar calendar.

Of course, no Chinese New Year festive feasting is complete without the Yu Sheng, a plated prosperity ritual to ensure good fortune in the New Year.

Also known as *Yeessang* or *Lohai*, the menu must-have, like many other Chinese traditional palate pleasers, has undergone make-overs by chefs challenged to continue to tease the taste buds of diners after countless Yu Sheng over the 15 days of feasting.

While sticking to the traditional salad medley of raw fish, a variety of shredded vegetables, and an assortment of sauces and condiments that convey good tidings as well as taste, restaurants in Singapore are tossing in some new elements to have not just the god of fortune, but patrons as well, smile on them in the New Year!

**Yu Sheng not to truffle with**

ME@OU's Black Diamond Yu Sheng is available until 7 March. (Photo: ME@OU)

The Black Diamond Yu Sheng is the centerpiece at ME@OU this Lunar New Year.

The restaurant, which is known for its Japanese, French and Chinese cuisines, decided to mix up all three for a successful plate.

Digging in to the Black Diamond Yu Sheng rewards diners with premium ingredients, including hokkigai (surf clam), salmon trout sashimi, ikura (salmon roe), daikon cress and enoki.

But the star of the dish is the black winter truffle from Italy.

"Every year we get truffle from different places, sometimes from France," says ME@OU's executive chef Sam Chin. "This year... [is] one of the best years for Italian winter truffles. So we chose Italian."

There are three types of textures that can be obtained from the truffle — shaved truffle, truffle powder, and truffle oil. All three types are used in the Black Diamond Yu Sheng. Chef Sam adds that the truffle sauce goes very well with the sweet and sour plum sauce that is commonly used in the Yu Sheng.

"That is the key thing — the plum sauce and the truffle, it's like a perfect match. When you combine those with the crispy vegetables, the crunchy crackers and fish skin, when you put the different textures in your mouth, it's like 'wow,' a lot of elements inside your mouth," gushes Chef Sam.

And true to the tradition of the toss, each main ingredient represents a New Year greeting.

The salmon trout sashimi is *Nian Nian You Yu*, meaning abundance through the year in Mandarin; the surf clam is *Hong Yun Dang Tou*, meaning good luck is approaching; the ikura represents *Zi Sun Man Tang*, meaning may you live to be a ripe old age and have dozens of grandchildren.

While most other Yu Sheng dishes will add crispy crackers to the mix, the Black Diamond Yu Sheng features crispy fish skin which conveys *Jin Yin Man Wu*, meaning a household full of treasures; while the black winter truffle is *Bian Di Hei Zhuai*, meaning the streets are paved with money.

And speaking of money, the Black Diamond Yu Sheng will leave spare change for a generous money gift (*Hong Bao*) or two, with a small dish at just \$598++, and \$3188++ for large, adding the significance of the 8 which in Mandarin reverberates of luck, especially for the creative chef and ME@OU! Available until 7 March and for dine-in only, orders must be placed at least three days in advance.

**Refreshing blend of East and West**

Stellar at 1-Altitude's Yu Sheng Goes West is available until 5 March. (Photo: Stellar at 1-Altitude)

Call it a cheeky take on the Chinese fable *Journey to the West* (or *Monkey Goes West*) with the new year menu from Stellar at 1-Altitude featuring *Yu Sheng Goes West*.

While staying true to tradition by keeping premium ingredients such as fresh salmon sashimi and shredded carrots, executive chef Christopher Millar blends in a Western twist into the mix by adding persimmons, pistachios and luscious truffle sauce.

"Yu Sheng is a big element of fun. So as a Western gastronomic restaurant, we thought it would be fun to have our own version," says Chef Millar, who personally likes the Yu Sheng for its fresh flavours. And when mixed with lime, chilli and peanuts, he adds, offers "a very fresh Thai or Vietnamese flavour to it" (so those planning a home Yu Sheng, consider this version).

But the Aussie-born, decade-long Singapore resident also points out in true Asian spirit: "The elements must all stay true to the meaning of the Yu Sheng, thus, the ingredients have been specifically selected."

In his auspicious dish, there's a drizzle of truffle sauce to signify wealth; a garnishing of brightly coloured persimmon, daikon and French radish to symbolise luck, fortune and success; sprinkles of parmesan crackers, pine nuts and pistachio to represent prosperity; and lashings of tuna, salmon and scallop sashimi are added for abundance.

And again, the number 8 pops up, with *Yu Sheng Goes West* plating at \$538++ for a 4-person serving.

Yu Sheng can be enjoyed at any time over the 15-day Lunar New Year celebration, that begins on 19 February. So start planning your best, new *Fat Goat* blessing to take to the Yu Sheng table that's always rumbustious, messy but fun, whether with family, friends, or business associates.


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