

the

delectable cook

visit pia's blog – delectablecooks.com – for more inventive, delicious recipes

there is an ancient belief that kindred spirits always recognise one another regardless of time, place or form. just as we at o'gourmet take pride in sourcing the best possible produce for your table, it is equally in our fortune to showcase pia, a gem cook whipping up quite the culinary storm in our midst. one who not only proclaims to share our philosophy for the epicurean lifestyle but believes in the magic and joy that good food brings.

in this edition, we invited pia and her confederate, kit, to breathe a new interpretation to the much touted "yee sang" as an homage to the colours and vibrancy of the lunar new year celebration. this is her story:

every chinese new year, i get invited to eat yee sang, the traditional raw fish salad that marks the beginning of the year. it is an extraordinarily significant salad; with many components, each representing a different wish for the coming year. the salad is tossed together by everyone at the table, amidst cries of yee sang!

i always miss out because, as a vegetarian, there are so few options available. this year, i thought it would be a lovely idea to get creative, and make my own yee sang. but i figured, if i was going to get creative, i might as well go full on - so instead of a savory yee sang, i decided to create this amazingly beautiful - and fun - yee sang cake.

this cake is a showstopper. it is delicious - gorgeously moist, lush and beautiful, and can be adapted to your own personal requirements. the cake itself is a carrot cake to welcome in the year of the rabbit! and the topping of the cake is a plain fondant rolled out, covered by a printed fondant sheet. it's such a wonderful, and personal way of decorating - and really, you are only limited by your imagination.

so, now we have the cake, a beautiful "plate" upon which to place the yee sang salad. for the salad, i opted to go with mainly dried fruits and nuts. let yourself be guided by your own sense of taste and combination here. but because this is a chinese new year yee sang, i decided to go with ingredients that had meaning.

symbolism of ingredients:

(the following items can be found at our food hall)

carrot growth and good health

5 spice powder the 5 elements - water, fire, earth, metal, wood

apricot jam beauty

dried / sugared fruits a sweet life

pomelo abundance. family unity

strawberries red of the fruit - hope for prosperity

mango abundant happiness

dried lychee to have many children, quickly

sesame seeds many family members united

pumpkin seeds proliferation of the family

winter melon seeds family unity. longevity. family wealth through time

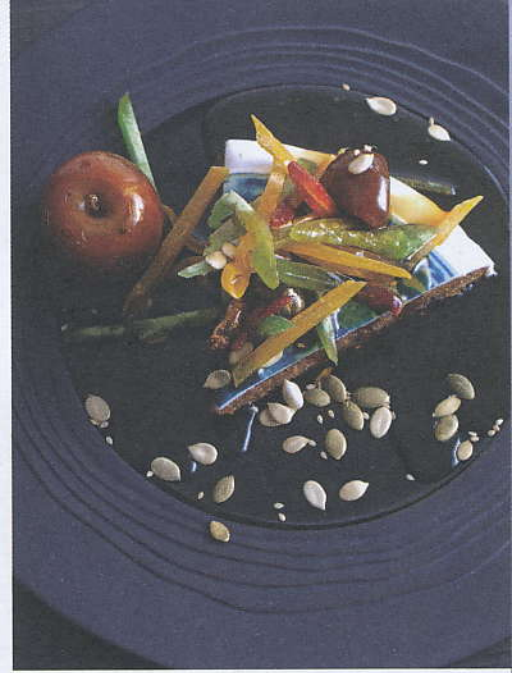
cashews gold ingots and wealth

chocolate almonds completeness and continuity

oranges wealth. prayer or wish for good fortune

apples peace





- 1 1/4 cups light vegetable oil
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups all purpose or pastry flour
- 3 - 4 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons mixed spice
- 1/2 - 1 tsp 5 spice powder
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 eggs
- 5 cups grated carrots

preheat the oven to 175° c

line the base of two 10 inch cake pans with baking paper.

in a large bowl whisk together the vegetable oil and the sugar until the oil is absorbed into the sugar. leave to let the mixture meld for a while.

meanwhile, mix the flour, cinnamon, mixed spice, 5 spice powder, baking powder, baking soda and salt together in a separate bowl. sift half of the dry ingredients over the sugar-oil mixture and blend.

alternately sift in the rest of the dry ingredients while adding the eggs (lightly beaten), one by one.

combine all well, and leave to sit for a bit while you grate the carrots.

add the carrots, and stir to combine.

pour mixture into prepared pans and bake for about 25 - 30 minutes, or until a knife inserted comes out clean.

cool upright in the pan on a cooling rack. unmold the cake before you refrigerate it if you are not using the cake that day. wrap it well in plastic wrap or a clean kitchen towel.

i think this is best made at least 1 - 2 days in advance because it allows the cake to firm up a bit. too fresh a cake makes it very difficult to cut.

- cake rounds
- approx 1/2 cup apricot jam, thinned out with a little water
- fondant - about half a package
- printed icing sheet

prepare the cake rounds by placing them on their serving plates.

thin out the apricot jam with a little water, and brush all over the cakes. this will keep them moist.

roll out the fondant very thin, to about 2 - 3 inches larger than the diameter of your cake. roll the fondant onto your rolling pin, and transfer onto the cake. smooth it along the top and down the sides. trim the edges.

cut the printed icing sheet to scale, and strip off the plastic backing. brush a little water onto the cake, and onto the back of the printed sheet. carefully centre the image on the cake, and press down gently. smooth the image onto the cake firmly, and allow to settle.

the cake is now ready to serve. do not refrigerate, but keep in a cool, dry, dark place, covered for up to 3 - 5 days.

- yee sang salad toppings:
- dried organic fruits: pomelo skin, mango, strawberries and lychee

prepare the dried fruit by slicing it thinly. paint the fruit with gold dust to highlight it. we left the pomelo, strawberries and mango as is because we loved the primary colours, but we felt that the dried lychee was beautiful painted with gold. arrange the fruits individually in pretty serving plates.

- seeds and nuts: sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, winter melon seeds, caramelised cashews and chocolate almonds

place the seeds and nuts, individually, in a plastic bag, and add a pinch of gold dust. shake the bag to just coat the seeds and nuts. place in individual serving bowls.

arrange the caramelized mandarin oranges and candy apples on a plate.

- caramelised miniature mandarin oranges and candy miniature apples

present the yee sang cake, with its "salad" ingredients and encourage your guests to toss and mix the "salad" for good luck.

- gold or silver edible dust

pour over some caramel sauce from the oranges.

cut the cake into slices, and make sure each slice comes with a generous topping of yee sang salad.