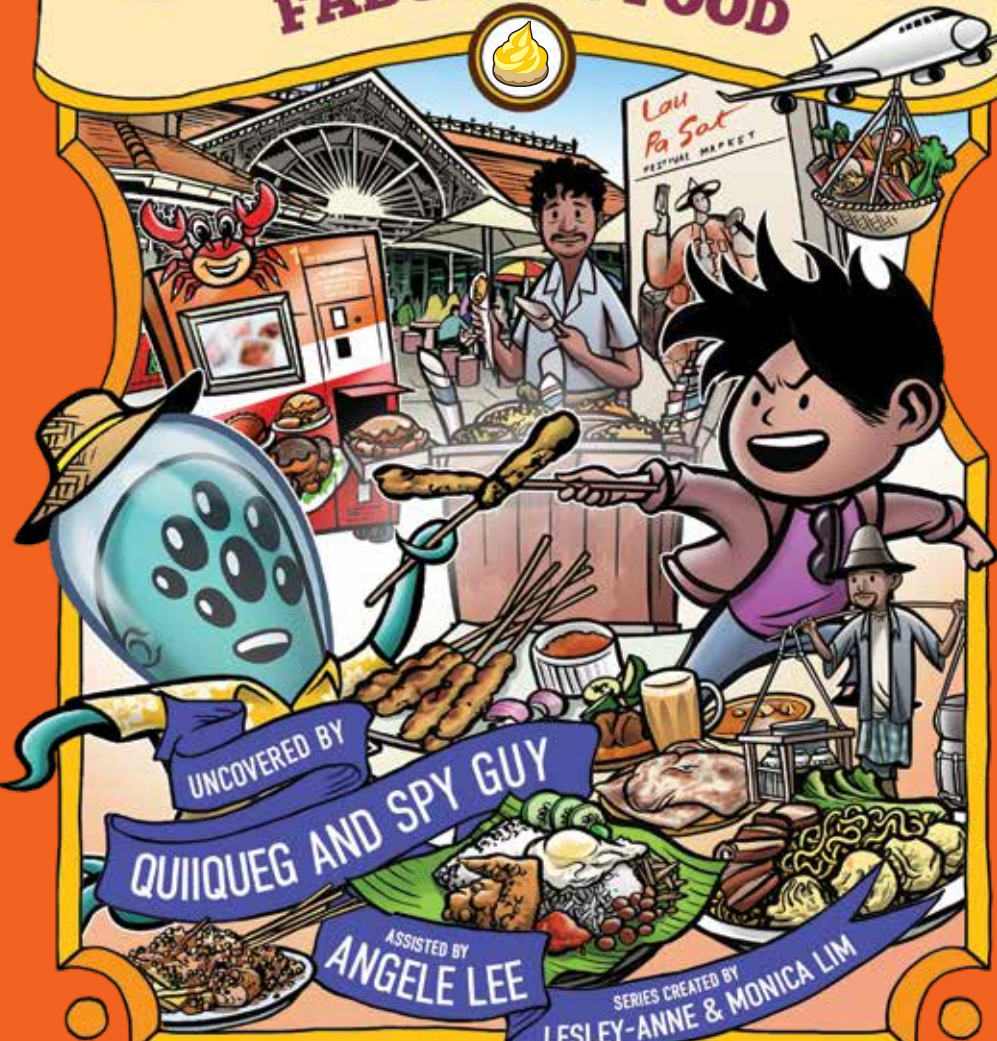


AWARD-WINNING SERIES

SECRETS OF SINGAPORE

FABULOUS FOOD



UNCOVERED BY
QUIQUEG AND SPY GUY

ASSISTED BY
ANGELE LEE

SERIES CREATED BY
LESLEY-ANNE & MONICA LIM

SECRETS OF SINGAPORE

FABULOUS FOOD



SECRETS OF
SINGAPORE
FABULOUS FOOD

written by
Angèle Lee
illustrated by
Elvin Ching

E

EPIGRAM

*For Seb, Best Husband Ever,
and J&J, my Preciousssssss*

Text copyright © 2022 by Angèle Lee
Illustrations copyright © 2022 by Elvin Ching

Published in Singapore by Epigram Books
www.epigram.sg

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher.

National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Name(s): Lee, Angèle. | Ching, Elvin, illustrator.
Title: Secrets of Singapore : fabulous food /
written by Angèle Lee ; illustrated by Elvin Ching.
Description: Singapore : Epigram Books, 2023.
Identifier(s): 978-981-49-8465-2 (paperback) |
978-981-49-8466-9 (ebook)
Subject(s): LCSH: Food habits—Singapore—Juvenile literature. |
Food habits—Singapore—History—Juvenile literature. |
Singapore—History—Juvenile literature.
Classification: DDC 959.57—dc23

First edition, December 2022.

PSSSSTTTT!

Hey you! Over here!

No, over here!

Not there, here!

Oh, just turn the page...



Did you see a funny looking kid hanging about? Ah, there he is...

*Hi! My name is Quiiqueg!
I signed up on a multiverse random holiday generator and this is where the Metaverse sent me!*

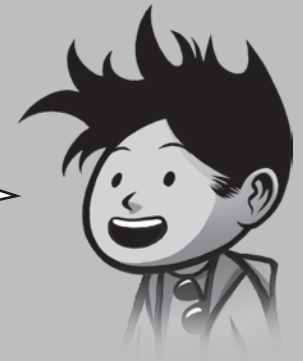
SHHHHH, you don't have to let the whole world know! I'd tell you my name too, but I prefer to keep it secret. 'Cos I'm the Collector of Secrets, see? I know all kinds of stuff about all kinds of stuff.





That's great, Secret Sir! Then you can tell me what's good to eat, 'cos it was a long trip here and I'm famished!

Food? You wanna know about food? I can tell you all about it. Stick with me, kid!



CONTENTS

SECTION 1: WHAT WE EAT

Same Same but Different	2
Pop Food Pop Quiz!	8
Tourist Must-tries	16
Fab Food Fads	25
Now You Eat Me, Now You Don't	41
Cultural Quirks	50

SECTION 2: PLACES WE DINE

Fantastic Foods and Where to Find Them	71
Hawker Heroics.....	75
Other Neat Places to Eat	95
Catchin' Up on Kitchens	109

SECTION 3: FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Safe to Eat	125
Waste Not, Want Not	144
Coming Soon to a Market Near You.....	156

SECTION

1

What We Eat

First off, you should know that we're obsessed with food in Singapore. We talk about it, watch shows about it, take pictures and blog about it, accost complete strangers about it... Heh, we even write books about it.

Food is the national pastime. And it's how we make friends and bridge differences.



Same Same but Different

We are a people of many different cultures, but we have got a lot in common, especially when it comes to food. I'm talking about familiar foods that we all eat, everyday fare like:

Rice

THE staple in all our cuisines! With 40,000 varieties in the world, you could go *starch*-raving mad making a choice, but it just boils down to whether you like your grains fluffy or sticky or wet, plain or flavoured or fried.

Plain rice and porridge go great with side dishes, so it's no surprise that they are what we eat most at home. When dining out, you will find this home-style cooking at Chinese "economy rice" or caifan stalls, Teochew muay (porridge) stalls and Malay nasi padang stalls.

Indian biryani, Malay nasi lemak and Hainanese chicken rice are perennial favourites. And you're just as likely to find Chinese fried rice as you are Italian risotto, Japanese donburi or Spanish paella (it's pronounced "pah-EY-yah", however much we Singaporeans are tempted to say "pah-eh-LAH"). Got a sweet tooth? Pulut hitam, assorted Nonya and Malay kueh and Indian kheer all *rice* to the occasion. See how mesmerizing it all is?

In Singapore, jasmine rice is the most common variety, while basmati usually accompanies Indian and Middle-Eastern dishes. In the meantime, the Health Promotion Board is trying to popularise healthier versions, like brown and red rice.



FUN FACT

In 2021, “The Caifan Song” by Annette Lee and Benjamin Kheng, about the stress and joy of ordering caifan, reached number one on a local radio station and was later counted at #24 on its list of Top 100 songs of the year. It has over a million views on YouTube. But love songs glamourise the humble grain go back to the 1970s—Dick Lee’s “Fried Rice Paradise” (with lyrics like “nasi goreng, very nice”) was also a huge hit then!

Noodles

Locals love noodles, and we prepare them in oodles of ways! Did you realise that in Singapore, the Malays, Chinese and Indians call noodles “mee”? Our gastronomie includes mee siam, mee rebus, mee soto, prawn mee, wanton mee, mee goreng and more. And we haven’t even talked about dishes made with other types of noodles, like kway teow and bee hoon and udon and pasta.

Yum-mee!



*I'm unravelling the **mee**stery of instant noodles!*

- Instant noodles were invented in Japan in 1958.
- They get curly during the dough-cutting process because of the different speeds between the conveyor belt and the rotary blades.
- They cook quickly because they are steamed and fried before being packed.
- There is an organisation known as the



World Instant Noodles Association! In 2021, they declared that Singaporeans had slurped up 130 meillion servings!

Curry

Nothing represents Singapore’s unity in diversity quite like curry. It seems like every ethnic group, whether it’s Indian, Malay, Chinese, Eurasian, Indonesian, European, Thai or Japanese, has their own version of the spicy dish. We’re spoilt for choice!

We even tried to celebrate it! In 2011, there was a movement to establish a National Curry Day, following a grassroots “Cook and Share a Pot of Curry” campaign to welcome new immigrants. There was really good *korma* around it, but it didn’t *curry* on.

**Too bad, I really like
curry...but only in
small dosais.**



The word “curry” comes from the Tamil word “kari”, which refers to sauce eaten with rice. And while Indian curries (the original!) always included a blend of numerous spices, chilli wasn’t one of them until the 16th century. That was when the Portuguese turned



**Spies like me
like spice!**

up in Asia, with chillies from Mexico. Today, curries range in spice levels from mild to **yeeaaaaarrgghh-my-mouth-is-on-fire!**

HOT PLOTS AND SPICY SCHEMES

In 1987, local police received a tip-off about a murder from three years before. The victim had been declared missing, but there had been no cause to suspect foul play at the time. However, the story got *curryouser* and *curryouser* – it was said that the victim had been brought to the church where his wife worked, was clobbered by his brothers-in-law, then chopped up and cooked in a curry! His remains were then disposed of as “leftover food” in roadside bins. The so-called Curry Murder was hot news. Though the accused were charged, there wasn’t enough evidence to convict them. For all you know, they are *curryently* still living among us...

POP FOOD POP QUIZ!

*These are some of
Singapore's classic dishes.
Do you know which culture
each one is associated with?*



1. Hainanese
Chicken Rice



2. Mee Siam



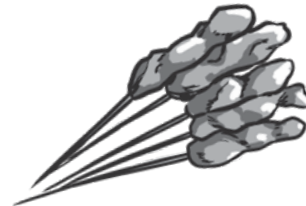
3. Mee Goreng



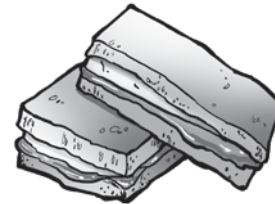
4. Roti John



5. Laksa



7. Satay



9. Kaya Toast



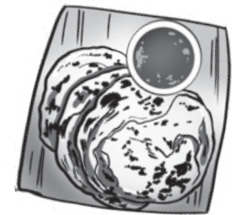
11. Fish Head Curry



6. Kari Debal /
Devil Curry



8. Rojak



10. Roti Prata



12. Teh Tarik

About the Author



After having a tonne of fun as an industrial engineer, Angèle Lee has returned to her first love, writing. She adores telling stories—almost as much as she adores her husband and two boys, potato crisps, corgis and dodgy puns. Angèle earns her keep writing for businesses, but has also written a short story for the Istana’s *Open House Adventures* series of children’s books.

About the Illustrator



Elvin Ching is an illustrator and storyboard artist in Singapore. He is the illustrator of several Danger Dan and Gadget Girl books and the Secrets of Singapore series; his cover for *Secrets of Singapore: National Museum* won best children’s book cover at the Popular Reader’s Choice Awards 2017. He likes to create his own little comics in his free time and has so many comics at home that he hasn’t found time to read them all yet!

DID YOU KNOW THAT OVER 90 PERCENT OF SINGAPORE'S FOOD IS IMPORTED? YOU *BUTTER* BELIEVE IT!

IN *SECRETS OF SINGAPORE: FABULOUS FOOD*, *SPY GUY* AND THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL *QUIIQUEG* UNCOVER THIS AND LOTS MORE ABOUT SINGAPORE'S MAKAN PARADISE!



DISCOVER THE CLASSIC DISHES THAT ARE UNIQUELY SINGAPOREAN (THERE ARE *LAKSA* THEM) AND THOSE THAT AREN'T (SINGAPORE FRIED RICE?). EXPLORE THE NEWEST FOOD FADS (UNICORN POOP, ANYONE?) AND REVISIT THE OLDIES BUT GOODIES (ICE KACANG IS THE OG!).

HUNGRY FOR MORE?

PEEK BEHIND THE SCENES AND DISCOVER WHERE ALL OUR FOOD COMES FROM, AND HOW THEY'RE STORED SO THEY STAY FRESH, CLEAN AND YUMMY FOR LONGER (EVER HEARD OF A FOOD SAFE?). THEN FIND OUT HOW WE DEAL WITH ANY LEFTOVER FOOD (THERE'S TOO MUCH) TO MINIMISE WASTE!

TAG ALONG WITH *SPY GUY* AND *QUIIQUEG* ON A SOUPED-UP TOUR OF FABULOUS FOOD. YOU'LL BE ONE SMART COOKIE BY THE END!



MIDDLE GRADE

ISBN 978-981-49-8465-2



9 789814 984652

www.epigram.sg