

restaurant Baan Hom Muen Lee where visitors can find several Yunnanese-style dishes including sauteed *hed khon paa* (wild termite mushrooms), which are sun-dried then tossed in hot oil, garlic and dried chilli.

"This mushroom is only available during the rainy season. Because of the limited ingredients available here in the past, the food must be cooked in such a way that a little of it eaten with rice goes a long way. You only need a small spoonful of this mushroom with a large bowl of rice for a satisfying meal," says Danita, who graduated in fashion design at Rangsit University then returned home to run the family business.

Another returnee is Yupin Cheewinkulthong, 29, whose family has run Wang Put Tan, one of the largest tea plantations at Doi Mae Salong, for three generations. She came back four years ago after graduating in business from East Central University in the US. In addition to running the family business and a restaurant-cum-teahouse, she has opened a boutique hotel.

"After seven years in the US, I started to look back at my origins. Watching the 1990 Taiwanese drama 'A Home Too Far' based on the true story of the 93rd Division taking refuge in Mae Salong, also influenced my decision to come back and help develop my hometown," she says.

In addition to developing blends of Oolong tea, Wang Put Tan also grows Chinese plums, using the fruits for both tea and cider. The brews have proved popular with visitors and the tea leaves are also used in several savoury dishes, among them fried pork belly tossed with fried tea leaves; spicy minced pork salad with fresh tea leaves; and omelette stuffed with minced pork and tea leaves.

A variety of Chinese dishes can be sampled at Suehai restaurant. The signature dishes are *moo nam khang* sauteed with green pepper and onion, stir-fried minced pork with pickled cabbage, and fried goat cheese.

"We only make *moo nam khang* during winter. I use the meat of black pigs that are fed with corn and banana and raised at Doi Mae

Salong. This is then marinated with Chinese herbs and curing salt. After several days, it is air-dried at night and sun-dried during the day for a week. The natural air-drying technique removes almost half of the liquid from the pork, making it tender and tasty. The meat can be kept for six months if stored in a freezer," says owner Suehai Sae Wang.

Yunnan Noodle Shop is the last restaurant to maintain the age-old art of noodle making and Fahlong Sae Suen, 42, makes his fresh egg noodles twice a day – in the morning and the afternoon.

For each session, Fahlong mixes 10 kilograms of flour with 40 eggs and 1.9kg of water. When the ingredients are well mixed and the dough is the right consistency, he straddles a wooden pole, bouncing up and down as if on a see-saw, to knead the dough.

The thin bed of perfectly pressed dough is then placed in machines to further thin it and cut into fine noodles. The whole process takes almost an hour and produces 14kg noodles or about 130 portions. A bowl of noodle soup topped with shredded chicken sells for just Bt40.

CJ Food is popular for its spicy and sour wonton. Choo Hong Tee inherited the recipe from his aunt who lives in Taiwan. The wonton dumplings stuffed with minced pork are seasoned with sour and soy sauce

and tossed with fried garlic, and a spicy seasoning made from fine minced pork, ground peanuts and ground chilli sauteed with oil.

Pantipa Kijvithee, whose family runs the tea plantation Ming Yong and a teahouse called Up to You, has turned favourite comfort food stir-fried minced pork with pickled cabbage into an appetiser.

Inspired by *kanom tuay* (steamed coconut milk pudding in a small-sized cup), the stir-fried minced pork with pickled cabbage is layered in a cup with coconut cream mixed with rice flour and arrowroot and steamed for 10 minutes. It's then topped with fried shallot, chopped spring onion and coriander leaves, dried chilli and crispy pork crackling. Her creation sells for Bt70 for six cups.

"For dipping sauce, I use homemade soy sauce without preservatives. It's then mixed with black soy sauce, pounded fresh chill and lemon juice," says Pantipa.

The more than 10 dishes covered in the book can be served as a tasting menu though bookings must be made in advance.

"We try to encourage local people, particularly the young generation, to be proud of the local wisdom and our origins through our foods. We hope it will also generate additional income for the villagers," Danita says.

## TEMPTING TASTES

- For a free copy of book, contact the Mekong Basin Civilisation Museum, Mae Fah Luang University, call (053) 917 067 or e-mail [mekong-museum@mfu.ac.th](mailto:mekong-museum@mfu.ac.th).
- Baan Hom Muen Lee can be reached at (053) 765 455 or [www.BaanHomMuenLee.com](http://www.BaanHomMuenLee.com).
- Wang Put Tan can be contacted at (053) 765 094 or [www.WangPutTan.com](http://www.WangPutTan.com).
- Call (053) 727 168 for Suehai restaurant
- Call (053) 765 185 for Yunnan Noodle Shop
- Call (080) 775 8827 for CJ Food restaurant
- Call (089) 162 1528 for Up to You teahouse

