



Chopstix and Rice. Relocated and reborn at Suntec City.

Description

This used to be located in the basement of Orchard Towers. It had been there for two decades since 2022. It was located at the corner of the basement. The moment one entered Orchard Towers from along Orchard Road, Chopstix and Rice would be the first stall on the left. It had distinctively blue walls and looked like a very humble unassuming Nasi Padang food stall. It seemed like if you wanted something less pretentious, less classy and hence if you were in your berms and t-shirt, this was the Nasi Padang stall for you. I got to know about this stall because my office is in the office block of Orchard Towers and the stall was just directly below. The old Orchard Towers, while rowdy at night due to the nightclubs, was peaceful in the day with many companies operating in the offices within the building. Hence the lunch crowd was always healthy. This was a place where you could get comparatively affordable food along Orchard Road.

While Chopstix and Rice was by no means the cheapest option in the basement, it always had a healthy queue. I used to patronise them on an almost daily basis. My order always included fried tempeh. I love tempeh and they do it well. Although this was not the healthiest option. I think I ate so much fried tempeh that I put on a few extra kilos. They truly deep fry the one healthy tempeh into something that is so devilish crispy and delicious. However, if you are to eat something wrong, do it right!

For a brief moment, Chopstix and Rice relocated to the opposite stall across the foyer in the basement of Orchard Towers. They took over a Korean food stall that barely lasted for more than a year. Business was decent but it just did not have the same feel. While it was a lot cleaner and brighter, it just did not feel the same. I believe prices did increase a little. The usual order that would cost me \$4.50 would subsequently cost me \$5 or \$5.50 at this new location. My orders consisted of mainly vegetables as I am vegetarian just in case some readers are thinking that the price sounded low for Nasi Padang. The pricier items tend to be the meat dishes. I missed going to the old stall. The complaint that my hair and clothes would smell like the food there was no longer a complaint. The poor ventilation was something that I remembered. The person who usually took my order was Wilson. I only later found out that he is the son of the founder Mdm Loji. On the occasions that I sat in the old outlet, surrounded by the blue gaudy walls to have my meal, my colleagues would comment that they could smell where I went for my lunch! The new stall was clean, well-ventilated, and very nicely

renovated. I did not like it and I patronised it less. Then after about a year, Chopstix and Rice shut down. There went my favourite tempeh dish...

About a year or so later, a hoarding in Suntec caught my eye. Renovations were being made to the space opposite Astons. It was Chopstix and Rice! While I was keen to revisit my love for their fried tempeh, I could remember how the newer outlet caused the standard of their food to drop. Suntec was an even bigger jump. They were no longer the small food stall in the dingy old shopping mall that is Orchard Towers.

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Looking good. A lot more “atas” than the first stall at Orchard Towers.



Huge change. Spoiler alert. The food is also a bit different and definitely more expensive.

So I tried the new reiteration of Chopstix and Rice. The moment of truth came sometime back in December of 2023 when a few friends suggested that we dine at Chopstix and Rice.

Here are some pictures of the food.





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All I can say is that the standard of the food is back to how it first started at its first outlet. For some reason, the flavour profile of the food at Chopstix and Rice is on point. The spices are not too overwhelming. The chilli had this distinctive tangy citrus taste. The fried options were amazing. For some reason, their Sayur Lodeh had a rich and creamy taste even though the gravy looked more soupy. For another peculiar reason, their fried egg tasted amazing. It was something that they were doing in the kitchen that is transforming the usual run-of-the-mill ingredients into something special. The food was just very very good.

Is it good enough to be the best Nasi Padang stall in Singapore? That is a tall order and a statement that I cannot attest to. However, if you are looking for good Nasi Padang, in my personal view, Chopstix and Rice is one of the top 5 Nasi Padang stalls in Singapore. Just don't expect the meal to be cheap. They have gone upscale. A meal among friends would cost in the range of \$15 per pax. They are no longer the unassuming hole-in-the-wall Nasi Padang stall. If you are looking for a casual and affordable Nasi Padang meal, sad to say, Chopstix and Rice is not an option. Oh, and they did not bring back my beloved fried tempeh...

Yours sincerely,

Daryl

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Author

daryllum

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