

Good bites amid treasured landmarks

By Rebecca Saw

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AS its name suggests, the Muzium Negara MRT station provides direct access to the national museum. Five hundred metres away is The Majestic Hotel, the five-star establishment that has been restored to its former glory and reopened five years ago. And opposite the hotel is another historical and architecturally remarkable building — the Kuala Lumpur Railway Station.

All these beloved landmarks are among the most photographed symbols of the city due to their gorgeous facades. With the opening of the Muzium Negara MRT station, tourists as well as locals can benefit from its

proximity to these sites.

Street food, however, is a little elusive.

But all is not lost. A 240-metre, air-conditioned pedestrian walkway links the station to KL Sentral, which makes it possible to head over to Brickfields to satisfy that craving for banana leaf rice or hawker food.

There are also numerous other dining options at KL Sentral and the adjacent Nu Sentral mall. For something more upscale, you could check out The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, The St Regis Kuala Lumpur, KL Hilton, Aloft Hotel and Le Meriden Kuala Lumpur.

While hotel dining can be expensive and well, rather predictable, The Majestic Hotel and St Regis — both merely steps away from the station exit — are worth a visit as they offer unique

experiences that are exclusive to their brands.

For starters, The Orchid Conservatory at The Majestic Hotel is the only one of its kind in the country. Showcasing a hanging garden with various orchids within a glass atrium, the botanical surroundings provide a wonderful backdrop for photography and the perfect serenity for an afternoon tea. The tea set includes sweet and savoury items from the Western and local gastronomy worlds. Then there is The Colonial Cafe, whose design reflects the halcyon days of the planters of Malaya.

Here, you'll find classic dishes like Hainanese chicken rice balls and Hainanese chicken chop. We were informed that the tightly-guarded chicken chop recipe was carefully passed down to the chefs by Puan Sri Kai Yong Yeoh, wife of YTL Corporation founder Tan Sri Yeoh Tiong Lay. Indeed, The Colonial Cafe is probably the only place you would be able to taste these authentic colonial dishes, along with other quintessential British favourites like spotted dick and old style faggots.

For value dining, Contango is known for having one of the best buffets in town, excelling at both quality and quantity. Come nightfall, the descendants of music legend Alfonso Soliano, whose musical traditions date well back to the nation's history, entertain with their classic renditions at The Bar.

No less opulent is the high tea experience at The St Regis. Here delectable cakes are displayed



Hainanese chicken chop at The Colonial Cafe.

in a handcrafted vitrine, while a competent tea sommelier is on hand to make recommendations on tea flavours.

The St Regis also boasts Malaysia's first restaurant opened by a three Michelin-starred chef. The omakase-only menu at Taka by Sushi Saito consists of the freshest sushi with the choicest ingredients sourced from the same suppliers of the original Sushi Saito restaurant in Tokyo.

For meals below RM20, Nu Sentral is your best bet. F&B outlets are located on every level of this modern mall. My personal picks are Sam's Deli for casual, budget meals and Warisan Nasi Kukus for its unique *nasi kukus ayam goreng berempah* sets.

If you are sharing, I'd recommend the seven-rice set which comprises *nasi kukus biasa* (normal steamed rice), *nasi kukus lemak* (steamed rice with coconut

milk), *nasi kukus beras perang* (steamed brown rice), *nasi kukus pandan* (steamed rice with pandan leaves), *nasi kukus bunga telang* (steamed rice with butterfly pea flower), *nasi ayam* (chicken rice) and *nasi goreng* (fried rice).

Accompanying the rice and meat are different types of curries, *keropok* (fish crackers), eggs, pickled vegetables and *sambal belacan*. Overall the quality of food here is more than decent and is certainly a worthy dining option if you are seeking local fare.

I also like Kurin for its *poke* bowls and *pokeritto*.

At Sam's Deli, it is grab-and-go or a quick dine-in. Operating on a self-service system, the dining area is clean, the food fresh and most importantly, value for money. From cook-to-order Japanese meals to ready made salads, *sushi*, hot *dim sum* and rice bowls, there is something for everyone.

GETTING THERE

(There are two exits here — Exit A: St Regis and Exit B: Muzium Negara/Jalan Damansara)

1. Contango, Colonial Café, The Orchid Conservatory, The Bar, The Tea Lounge — Majestic Hotel KL

From the station: Take Exit B and once you are on the street level, turn left and walk on until you see The Majestic Hotel on your left.

2. The Drawing Room, Taka by Sushi Saito, Ginza Tenkuni, The Astor Bar and Decanter, Crystal — St Regis Kuala Lumpur

From the station: Take Exit A. Once you are on the street level you are at St Regis.

3. Warisan Nasi Kukus, Sam's Deli, 4Fingers, Nyonya Colors, Aroma Village, Kurin, Dolly Dim Sum, Family Mart — Nu Sentral

From the station: Exit the fare gates but ignore Exit A or B. Follow the sign that says KL Sentral and once you are in KL Sentral, make your way to Nu Sentral.



All manner of dumplings can be had at Dolly Dim Sum.



An assortment of sushi at Nu Sentral.



Warisan Nasi Kukus offers different types of steamed rice.