

...what he has that's
day. It's best, then, to just
a free hand and see what he
with. Don't expect cutting edge
ere's no breaking of new culi-
ad here — but what he does, he
l gets good play at Les Saisons,
ly in the starter of chilled vi-
(cold creamy potato and leek
ed in a dainty demitasse with
lobster meat in it, alongside a
utterflied langoustine topped
rmesan crisp. The now-com-
ways satisfying foie-gras-and-
o gets a twist with the use of
ear in ginger and caramel
spy seabass and creamy crab
(a minced mixture using crab
traditional salt cod), mean-
yummy juxtaposition of tex-

tures. And even if you don't like pigeon,
the fork-tender farmed version here will
convert you.

Value-wise, the daily set lunch is a
good deal at \$28++ (add \$8 if you want foie
gras with your appetiser). Which perhaps
accounts for the good lunch crowd.

Overall, while you wouldn't notice
what season Les Saisons is in at any one
time, you can't miss Chef Joanny's time-
less cooking style — clean, efficient and
pretty darn fine.

Les Saisons
7 Magazine Road
#01-03 Central Mall
Tel: 6557-0080

Rating: 7.5



Special touch: The foie-gras-and-fruit combo gets a twist with the use of roasted pear in ginger and caramel sauce

**un-fussiness of it
and the quiet skill
behind the food.**

BT's rating guide

- 8 to 10 — excellent to sublime
- 7 to 7.5 — good to very good
- 6 to 6.5 — promising to decent
- 5 to 5.5 — you take your chances

good food at good prices



Worth the money: Canteen is a stylish cafe serving both local and Western food. Try the Hokkien noodles (left) and you find the prawn-and-pork stock is rich and seeps into every strand

ffee- arguably the top French res-
uch- taurant in the city.
ards. Get into the local groove
fare with a tall glass of pandan
oled water — a fragrant conco-
tuek, ction of pandan syrup, water
into and little bits of agar agar, a

throwback to schoolday
"bird's nest" drinks.
There's lychee iced tea for
the more *chi chi* types.
Tuck into the house special —
Hokkien noodles (\$16) — and naturally the de-

bate over paying such
prices for hawker fare will
ensue, but you can be pretty
much ensured that it's
MSG-free, and the prawn-
and-pork stock is rich and
seeps its way into every
strand of noodle. Plus the
fresh, crunchy prawns,
squid and scallops (and of
course surroundings) make
it worth the money.

The Canteen's hamburg-
er (\$15) — available only at
tea-time and dinner — may
well be the best in town. It's
everything you want in a
burger — a good patty done
to your taste, sandwiched
between a fresh bun with
home-made relish, and fat,
crunchy fries. The two or
three course set lunches
(\$22+++ and \$28+++ respec-
tively) are decent enough —
the usual soup/salad, pasta/
meat/fish plus dessert of
the day.

If it's not on the set
lunch, try the pesto broth
(\$7.50) which hits the spot
with its rich chicken broth

and fresh pesto swirled in —
the homemade touch com-
ing from the herbs being
torn and strewn in the soup
rather than blended fine.
The lasagne is also good,
and the pork chops appeal
to some, though they tend to
be on the dry side.

Desserts are commensu-
rate with what any decent
bistro would have — warm
chocolate puddings, tarts,
ice creams and the like. The
Canteen does a good coco-
nut sherbet which you can
get served in a young coco-
nut from which you can
scoop up the flesh and drink
the water served to you on
the side. Very refreshing.

As is The Canteen — bus-
tling, cheery, with good food
at good prices. When all
these elements can be
found, people will follow.

The Canteen
1 Scotts Road
#02-10 Shaw Centre
Tel: 6333-8015

Rating: 7

Big O's tasty cuisine easy on the pocket

By Cheah Ui-Hoon

HEFTY portions without
the hefty prices is the sell-
ing point of the Big O cafe
and restaurant at Wheelock
Place, so do drop in with a
good appetite (walking
three flights up the escala-
tor might help) if you're
headed there.
My partner and I or-
dered six items from the
various categories — start-
ers, entrees, side dishes,
snacks, salads — plus a pot
of tea to share, and we were
pleased to see the bill com-
ing up to only \$83.46. Tech-
nically, we ordered enough
for four diners, but the food
was so yummy that we pretty
much cleaned out the plates.

Big O doesn't
serve up the big-
and-brash type of
formulaic Ameri-
can cuisine but a
generically West-
ern one with inno-
vatively-blended,
mature offerings.
What's notewor-
thy are the clean
taste, and gener-
ous servings of
greens on each
platter which
make you feel like
you're eating pret-
ty healthy fare.

The Million-
aire's Salad which
came well-drizzled
with Big O's special
dressing was topped
with spit-roasted
duck and chicken.
The dressing had a
sharply piquant
vinaigrette base,
although the (dry-
ish) duck and
chicken didn't go
down too well personally,
since I didn't favour
the faint traditional
ngoh hiang (Chinese
five spices) touch.
Snacks and finger
food-wise, the deli-
cious roasted
mushrooms with
herbs were warm
and comforting,
and the chicken
quesadilla was
succulent and tasty,
accompanied with
a luscious avocado
dip. We went with
the recommended
pan-fried cod fillet,
which was a beau-
tifully-done fish
sitting on a bed of
spinach and a fla-
vourful lemon-caper
broth perked up
with sweet raisins.
A feminine dish
if there ever was
one, especially if
contrasted with
the macho mustard
and rosemary
marinated lamb.

Lamb-lovers would
root for this hearty
dish, as it has

"oomph", although
the lamb was tough-
er than expected.
This sat on an ultra-
healthy bed of beans
and pulses.

Unfortunately,
we passed up on the
trademark durian
sponge cake, since
we didn't think
chocolate went
well with the king
of fruits, but this
is the dessert
specialty. The
Love Bug mudpie
we chose turned
out to be an unim-
aginative block
of (hard) ice cream
(macadamia nut
and mocha almond
fudge) and didn't
intrigue the palate
as much as its
description did.

Since the Big O is situat-



Mixed offerings: the recommended pan-fried cod fish fillet was beautifully done, but Big O's desserts were rather lacking

ed right opposite the
NYDC outlet in
Wheelock Place
(its sister establish-
ment), this would
throw up some
comparisons where
choice and execu-
tion of desserts
are concerned.
Personally, I'd
hop over to NYDC
for the sweet stuff,
but for the main
course and snacks,
The Big O is the
penny-wise gour-
mand's better bet.

We finally settled
back with a "sleep-
ing" pot of Ronne-
feldt's peppermint
tea — which had a
mellowed minty
personality rather
than a sharp one —
and enjoyed the
black-and-white
doggie murals on
the wall.

The Big O
#02-04/05, Wheelock Place
Tel: 6338 3526

Rating: 7

Falling short of culinary heights

By Daniel Buenas

KHANA Khazana is a small
place tucked away at Cuff
Road in Little India which
specialises in North Indian
cooking. Stepping into
Khana Khazana, one can't
help but notice the strange
decor — the lights have a
greenish-yellowish hue,
the walls are painted lime-
green, and wooden Indian
and African masks adorn
the walls.

The tables are flanked by
slabstone benches that prove
to be less than comfortable
for prolonged sitting.

Khana Khazana offers a
wide and impressive range
of dishes, and the restau-
rant tries hard to add flair
to typical North Indian
cuisine — with mixed
results. Like most Indian
restaurants, the food was
served in stainless steel
bowls and plates.

Of the dishes that night,
Khana seemed to do partic-
ularly well with its vegetar-
ian food.

Particularly of note was
the Paneer Tikka Masala
(\$8). This dish consisted

of cubes of cottage cheese,
marinated in spices and
roasted in a clay oven.
The cheese is then sim-
mered in a ginger, garlic,
tomato and Indian spice
sauce to a spongy consis-
tency reminiscent of
tofu.

The mild taste of the
cheese blended well with
the more flavorful sauce,
to form a well-rounded
dish.

The Malai Kofta (\$8), which
is mashed potatoes and
diced cottage cheese mixed
with nuts and raisins in a
cashew and cream gravy,
is another good offering.
The gravy is the star of
the dish, adding a mild
elegance to what might
otherwise have been a
lack-lustre dish.

Khana also offers a
number of Indo-Chinese
dishes.

We tried the Gobi Man-
churian (\$6.50), which
consisted of small pieces
of cauliflower deep-fried

and over-cooked and bland.

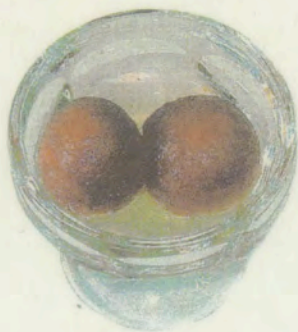
Dessert, though, was
quite delightful.

We sampled the Gulab
Jamun (\$3), which is
clarified milk formed into
balls, deep fried, and then
served in sugar syrup.
The texture of the dessert
was not overly soggy,
and it had a good consis-
tency. Those who dislike
extremely sweet food,
however, should avoid
this dish.

Overall, Khana Khazana
offers



The mild taste of the cheese in Paneer Tikka Masala (above) blended well with the more flavorful sauce, to form a well-rounded dish



Sweet tooth: among Khana Khazana's delightful desserts is Gulab Jamun (below), which is clarified milk formed into balls, deep fried and served in sugar syrup

batter and cooked in
ginger, garlic, green
chilli and soya sauce.

The cauliflower came
out tasting too soft and
soggy, and the saltiness
of the batter over-
whelmed the taste of
the cauliflower — not
something we would
recommend.

The meat dishes were
also disappointing,
especially the Chicken
Tikka Masala (\$9.50),
which was

authentic and decent
North Indian dishes,
at above-average
prices. Decor and
ambiance aside,
the food is definitely
better than your
run-of-the-mill fare,
but it's certainly
capable of more.

Khana Khazana
36B #01-01 Cuff Road

Rating: 6