



# The Malaysian Culture Group



Enak members at Restoran Sek Yuen in Pudu.

## 恭禧發財! Gong Xi Fa Cai!

This year my Chinese New Year's resolution is to learn how to pronounce it properly... Happy Chinese New Year, fellow MCG members.

Helen Mastache, Newsletter Editor



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## Anyvite Advice

We have had many positive comments about the Anyvite system since we started using the program. **Please remember when you RSVP or change your RSVP, it is a two-step process.** Indicate "YES" or "NO", then be sure to click on the "Save RSVP" button.

## MCG Bookmark

Now available for purchase at your next MCG event for RM10.



# Vice President's Message

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Dear MCG Members,

Happy, happy New Year to you all!

By the time you receive this newsletter, you will have recovered from the Christmas and New Year festivities. And, I am sure, you are now looking forward to what MCG has in store for you next.

The website is progressing, slowly but surely. Watch this space for the announcement of its launch. It is intended to be a resource for advertising future events as well as being the repository for all reviews.

The MCG year will soon draw to a close and the Committee has organized a two-in-one, an orator cum writer, to speak to us on Wednesday, 8th April, after the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Do make a note in your calendars and come to Selangor Club, Merdeka Square to listen to what Rehman Rashid, one of the most fascinating writers of our time, has to say on *Whither Malaysia*. Grab a copy of his outstanding book *A Malaysian Journey* beforehand from Kinokuniya, MPH, or Borders and bring it along to the meeting, and he will gladly autograph it for you.

On a somber note, I would like to express my deep concern about the very future of MCG beyond April. Six positions will fall vacant and I sincerely hope some of you will step up to fill the seats. The positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Events Convenor, and Head of Communications will be open. Many of you have been lending outside support to Committee Members to ensure the success of various planned activities, and for this we cannot thank you enough. Please consider carrying the baton forward. A stint on the Committee, apart from being a learning experience, also helps make new friends. So, do think about it.

Ciao...till next month.

Amita Shah  
Vice President

February Lecture

# A Morning with Artist Rafiee Ghani

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**DATE:** Wednesday, 11th February 2015  
**TIME:** 10:00 am for a 10:30 start  
**PLACE:** The Meritz, 19 Jalan Mayang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur  
**COST:** Members RM15, Nonmembers RM25  
**RSVP:** <http://anyvite.com/kvbstylqeg>



Local master printmaker and painter, Rafiee Ghani will talk to us today about understanding the creative art process.

“The key to appreciating modern contemporary art is to put meaning aside. See how the paintings affect you. Does it play in your eyes or does it go deeper? It’s about the mood. People listening to Tchaikovsky never ask what the meaning is. People listening to Bob Marley never ask why he shook the world from that small Caribbean Island. They just felt it. Meaning will come when your eyes cannot leave the paintings and the paintings are beginning to shout at you.”

Please join us for what should be an interesting and stimulating morning.

## February Event

# Chinese New Year in Melaka

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- DATE:** Friday, 27th February 2015
- TIME:** 6:30 am for departure to Melaka and  
3:00 pm departure from Melaka
- PLACE:** To be announced
- COST:** MYR 150 members only (maximum of 25  
participants)  
includes transportation, lunch and tour.
- RSVP:** *Please register via your personal Anyvite  
invitation, which you will receive via email.  
Review your Anyvite carefully for  
administrative requirements for out of town  
tours.*



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**As this event involves transportation, tour and lunch arrangements to be paid in advance, please note that we will be unable to refund the cost if you change your RSVP less than 15 days prior to the event.**

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The MCG events team is delighted to invite you to a day out in Melaka, coinciding with the Chinese New Year (CNY) celebration, as the special guests of Mr. Cedric Tan.

This event will require an early start as we need to be in Melaka by 9:30 am for a special tour of Mr. Tan's home. He will show us the shrine set up for the Jade Emperor prayer and talk us through this particularly significant day in the CNY celebration. We will then be hosted to a presentation on the CNY activities of the Peranakans (baba-nyonyas) at the Persatuan Peranakan Cina Malaysia.

This will be followed by a visit to the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple and Chinatown. Finally, we will be hosted to a traditional Peranakan lunch tok panjang style (long table) of home cooked nyonya food including udang goreng asam (tamarind prawns), telur cincalok (fermented shrimp omelette), ayam buah keluak (chicken in black nut) and otak-otak belanga (fish in coconut gravy).

Definitely a unique event and not to be missed!



## March Lecture

# A Nyonya and her Jewelry with Lily Yew

**DATE:** Wednesday, 4th March 2015  
**TIME:** 10:00 am for 10:30 am start  
**PLACE:** The Meritz, 19 Jalan Mayang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur  
**COST:** Members RM15, Nonmembers RM25  
**RSVP:** Please RSVP to the Anyvite invitation that will be mailed to you next month.

Lily Yew is a nyonya kebaya entrepreneur who is passionate about her nyonya-baba heritage, especially about kebayas, sarongs and vintage jewelry. In her talk she will share her knowledge of these jewelry pieces, which were specially made for nyonyas and babas of yesteryear.

Peranakan jewelry is crafted in a combination of Chinese, Malay and Indo-European styles, and is usually made of gold and diamonds. Other gemstones such as jade and pearl are also popular with the nyonyas.

Peranakan jewelry is eclectic, and known for its complex design and ornamental charm. Originally handmade by Ceylonese craftsmen, and later by Chinese craftsmen, a single fine and intricate piece can take weeks, or even months to produce.

Mrs. Yew was born and raised in Penang but now calls Kuala Lumpur home. She is a mother of two and grandmother of three.

Additional content from [www.peranakanjewellery.com.sg](http://www.peranakanjewellery.com.sg)



Mrs. Yew's paternal grandparents on their wedding day.



## March Monthly Event: Member's Corner with Suparna Kundu

# The Goroka Festival in Papua New Guinea

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**DATE:** Wednesday, 18th March 2015  
**TIME:** 10:00 am for 10:30 am start  
**PLACE:** The Meritz, 19 Jalan Mayang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur  
**COST:** Members RM15, Nonmembers RM25  
**RSVP:** <http://anyvite.com/b9ooyvg6rh>

Papua New Guinea, commonly known as PNG, is one of the least developed countries on this planet. Situated between Indonesia and Australia, this country remains very much untouched by the modern world. With cannibalism having been practiced in the past, PNG evokes a mixed response from exotic to dangerous.

Member Suparna Kundu's talk will cover the Goroka festival, which she attended last year. This tribal gathering and cultural event is held annually in September in the Eastern Highlands of PNG, and attracts over 100 tribes from the region during the colorful three-day gathering.

If you wish to RSVP for this event please use the link above, or await the Anyvite e-mail, which will be sent the end of February.

# A Look Ahead--Dates to Save

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- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| February 12, 1015 | Enak! at Betel Leaf<br>Hosted by Orla Govaerts and Mary Arafeh                |
| March 4, 2015     | A Nyonya and her Jewelry with Lily Yew  |
| March 12, 2015    | Enak! Hosted by Michelle Speed and Vivin Sjamsir                              |
| March 18, 2015    | Members' Corner with Suparna Kundu<br>The Goroka Festival in Papua New Guinea |
| April 8, 2015     | Annual General Meeting, with speaker Rehman Rashid                            |

Do you have any photos of MCG events or activities that would be fun to include in a slide show at the Annual General Meeting? Please save them for us! Later next month we will be setting up an online folder to collect photos from members. Thank you in advance for your contributions.



Peranakan Necklace

## Review: December Event

# Afternoon Tea at Carcosa Seri Negara

Relaxing in the company of good friends over a drink, and perhaps a bite to eat, is a timeless activity enjoyed by many the world over. But a traditional English afternoon tea in a nostalgic colonial setting takes this pleasurable pursuit to another level.

Carcosa Seri Negara is a boutique hotel comprising two distinctive white mansions; the Carcosa, which is currently closed for refurbishment, and Seri Negara. Both buildings are situated on a hilltop overlooking the Lake Gardens, amid 16 hectares of lush surroundings.

Built in 1896, the first mansion, the Carcosa, was the

official home of the Resident-General of the new Federated Malay States, Sir Frank Swettenham. Seri Negara, formally called the King's House, was completed in 1904 and was to house the Governor of the Straits Settlements and guests of the Malay Federation. When Malaya became Independent in 1957, the Carcosa became the official residence of the British High Commissioner, while Seri Negara was the official guesthouse for Malaysia's most important visitors.

Arriving at the lobby at Seri Negara, we were warmly welcomed by Operations Manager Mr. Gurmit Singh, who was delighted to show us



### ACCOUTREMENTS FOR TEA



CREAM AND SUGAR



SAVORIES AND SWEETS



RASPBERRY JAM AND CLOTTED CREAM



GOOD FRIENDS WITH WHOM TO ENJOY

## December Event

### Afternoon Tea at Carcosa Seri Negara (con't)

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around this charismatic building, steeped in history and intrigue.

Walking through the spacious and airy reception area, we admired the colonial architecture—a splendid backdrop to the vintage décor. The restaurant, famous for fine dining, breathed luxury with its elegant furnishings and romantic soft lighting, while the décor in the bar is in keeping with the traditional style of an old English pub. Although some of the furniture and artifacts had been removed to accommodate a corporate event, it didn't distract from the sheer wonder of connecting with Malaysia's extraordinary heritage.

Ascending the magnificent plush-carpeted staircase, we arrived at the classic Takzim Suite. On entering the room, it felt as if we had been transported back in time, for the charming interior was reminiscent of the era in every imaginable detail—an impressive four-poster bed with side table and lamp; antique writing bureau, chaise lounge, gorgeous full-length curtains made from traditional English-style fabric; even the en suite bathroom, with its gold-plated fixtures and glamorous wall mirrors, oozed charm. Standing on the roomy balcony, taking in the tranquil ambience and scenic view, it was hard to imagine that we were in the heart of a vibrant and bustling city.

A tour of Carcosa Seri Negara wouldn't be complete without a leisurely wander around the wonderful gardens. It was here, among the perfectly manicured lawns and beautiful flowerbeds that we assembled for group photographs. Thankfully, the hotel staff was patient and obliging while assisting us in getting the perfect shot!

Carcosa Seri Negara is a sought-after venue for corporate events, social gatherings, weddings and garden parties and, not surprisingly, the facilities are in great demand during the festive season. Traditionally, afternoon tea is served in the drawing room, but on this occasion our party of 32 ladies were seated in the Gulai House—a delightful high-ceilinged room with tall windows offering a spectacular panoramic view of the gardens.

We were offered a choice between fine English tea and freshly brewed coffee, which our waiter politely poured into the most delicate bone china teacups. Once settled, we were served a delicious array of savoury and sweet treats beautifully presented on an elegant three-tier cake stand. Among the selection were mini buttery croissants filled with smoked salmon; dainty finger sandwiches filled with cheese & cucumber and egg mayonnaise; a variety of cakes and desserts including some festive additions such as nutty mince pies and sticky plum pudding with vanilla custard. The highlight of any afternoon tea is of course, the iconic English scone. And Carcosa Sri Negara didn't disappoint! We were individually served with the most delicious rustic scones, crusty on the outside while soft and moist on the inside, accompanied with strawberry preserve and a good helping of freshly whipped cream.

Our members and their guests enjoyed relaxed conversation with old and new friends, whilst indulging in scrumptious delights in an unhurried and truly enchanting environment. We thank Mr. Gurmit Singh and the staff at Carcosa Seri Negara, for their generous hospitality and outstanding effort in making our English tea an afternoon to remember!

by Chrissie Kemp

Report: Enak!

# Restoran Sek Yuen



ENAK! Thursday, 8th January 2015

313 Jalan Pudu

03 9222 9457 (Non-aircon)

03 9222 0903 (Aircon)

Sixteen intrepid Enakkers, and four guests, made their way to one of the oldest Chinese restaurants in KL, **Sek Yuen**, in the “half jungle” otherwise known as Pudu. One Enakker’s mother’s generation called Pudu *Poon Sam Pah* in Cantonese – this is the origin of the “half jungle” name. Not many trees in sight there these days and no need to don walking boots and leech socks to get there now – the LRT does the job.

Reviewers in *The Star* newspaper and on Google have noted that Sek Yuen is a KL institution on par with the likes of the Coliseum.

The original fan-cooled restaurant, in which we dined, was built in 1948 by the Phang family. In its heyday it was one of THE places to go for Chinese families looking for a wedding venue. Stepping back in time as they entered into what is practically a living museum, all the diners felt the authentic atmosphere of the venue contributed to the nostalgic experience. But it wasn’t all about the location...the food was a delightful revelation, too.

Some members had enjoyed a poultry-fest over Christmas and New Year. Some of us definitely consumed rather large amounts of

## Report: Enak! Restoran Sek Yuen (con't)

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turkey. January's Enak continued this festive poultry theme as we went "animal quackers"--rather than "animal crackers"--at Sek Yuen, feasting on one of its signature dishes, the crispy roast duck! Served with a special plum sauce, the roast duck boasted crackly skin and tender meat imbued with the flavour of the smoky firewood that is still used for cooking there. A *Time Out KL* reviewer has said that "If all duck restaurants in KL were to play the game of thrones, Sek Yuen would be sitting right at the top!"

For most of the Enakkers, the duck was probably the highlight of the meal. But a couple of diners singled out another signature dish, the cold chicken in gelatine (aspic), as their favourite bite. This is an old school recipe rarely found today, and it has long since been abandoned in other restaurants. One member commented that it reminded her of food that was on the table at a 60s retro party she had once attended. I initially tried this with some trepidation, but was surprised at the tangy, delicious taste. The fried crab balls were another speciality. Their dun-coloured, unappetising appearance belied their conversion to tasty morsels when popped into the mouth. In addition to these three specialities, we had delicious fried prawns in hot fluffy batter, sweet and sour pork, baby bok choi with garlic, and mixed

seasonal vegetables. Bowls of white rice and pots of refreshing chrysanthemum tea complimented and completed our gastronomic experience.

After lunch some of us popped into the equally busy air-conditioned branch of Sek Yuen next door. This Austin Powers-style retro original was built in the 1970s. It is complete with the terrazzo tiles, a bar sporting brandy bottles and old style kopitiam industrial fridge. Behind the bar was the fourth generation Mr. Phang. His ancestors built both restaurants, which are still in the family being run as family businesses today.

Let us hope Sek Yuen continues to enjoy a renaissance as online reviews encourage new clientele. Some of our group already have a return visit to the post-war original on their agendas and some can't wait to try an evening meal "a la Austin Powers" in the 1970s venue. Noticeably, most of the grey-haired staff working in the restaurants appeared post-retirement age. So most of all let's hope the original crew get chance to train some youngsters to take over and keep this family gem alive and cooking!

Report by Susan Sawyer



# MCG COMMITTEE



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*Contribute!*  
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*(That's you...yes, YOU!)*

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