

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

**HERITAGE BUSINESSES IN KATONG-JOO CHIAT TELL STORIES OF FAMILY,
TRADITION, AND RESILIENCE**

Singapore, 18 January 2024 – Katong-Joo Chiat has become known for its charming blend of the old and the new, with its colourful pre-war shophouses and diverse communities co-existing with modern shopping malls and hip cafes. Discover the rich history behind heritage businesses in Katong-Joo Chiat, each with their own story of resilience, innovation and intergenerational piety. From lesser-known anecdotes behind classic delicacies to inspirational tales of intergenerational support and cooperation, they offer insight into the heritage businesses in this vibrant precinct.

2 The National Heritage Board (NHB) is launching ***Street Corner Heritage Galleries: Katong-Joo Chiat*** with six participating businesses – Kway Guan Huat Joo Chiat Popiah, Joo Chiat Fei Fei Wanton Noodle House, Kim Choo Kueh Chang, Guan Hoe Soon Restaurant, Sin Heng Claypot Bak Koot Teh, and D'Bun – inviting visitors to learn more about their origins and how they have continued to thrive and grow. This follows a successful ***Street Corner Heritage Galleries*** pilot scheme that featured four networks of *Street Corner Heritage Galleries* in Balestier (2020), Kampong Gelam (2021), Little India (2022) and Chinatown (2022).

3 The *Street Corner Heritage Galleries* scheme celebrates and documents the rich experiences of heritage businesses and aims to foster a deeper appreciation for heritage in everyday spaces. Under the scheme, NHB works closely with interested owners of heritage businesses with at least 30 years of history to co-create “mini-museums” to showcase the history and heritage of their businesses and trades, through displays of historical documents, photographs and artefacts.

Empowering the Community as part of *Our SG Heritage Plan 2.0*

4 *Street Corner Heritage Galleries: Katong-Joo Chiat* is an expansion of the scheme as part of NHB’s ongoing efforts under *Our SG Heritage Plan 2.0* to empower more Singaporeans to get involved with the celebration of our heritage and support heritage businesses and crafts.

The scheme provides curatorial support and assistance in terms of research and content development, and funding for the fabrication of showcases.

5 NHB will also work closely with the heritage businesses to develop programmes that complement the showcases, and provide opportunities for them to participate in key NHB events to increase awareness of their businesses and offerings. The public can look forward to programmes such as guided trails and workshops that will showcase the *Street Corner Heritage Galleries: Katong-Joo Chiat* during NHB's inaugural **Heritage Activation Nodes (HAN)**, which will be launched in Katong-Joo Chiat and various precincts from this year as part of *Our SG Heritage Plan 2.0*. HAN provides opportunities for the community to develop and implement projects that will increase the number of heritage touchpoints in the heartlands and celebrate the distinctive heritage of their neighbourhoods.

6 Mr Gerald Wee, Director, Education and Community Outreach, NHB said: "We have been encouraged by the success of the pilot *Street Corner Heritage Galleries* scheme over the past three years. Feedback from the business owners has been positive and we hope this expansion of the scheme will allow more heritage businesses to showcase their stories and heritage, and to benefit from increased public awareness and support."

7 For more information on *Street Corner Heritage Galleries: Katong-Joo Chiat*, please visit <http://go.gov.sg/schgkatongjoochiat> and refer to:

- [Annex A](#) – Map of participating businesses for *Street Corner Heritage Galleries* in Katong-Joo Chiat
- [Annex B](#) – List of *Street Corner Heritage Galleries* in Katong-Joo Chiat
- [Annex C](#) – List of artefacts

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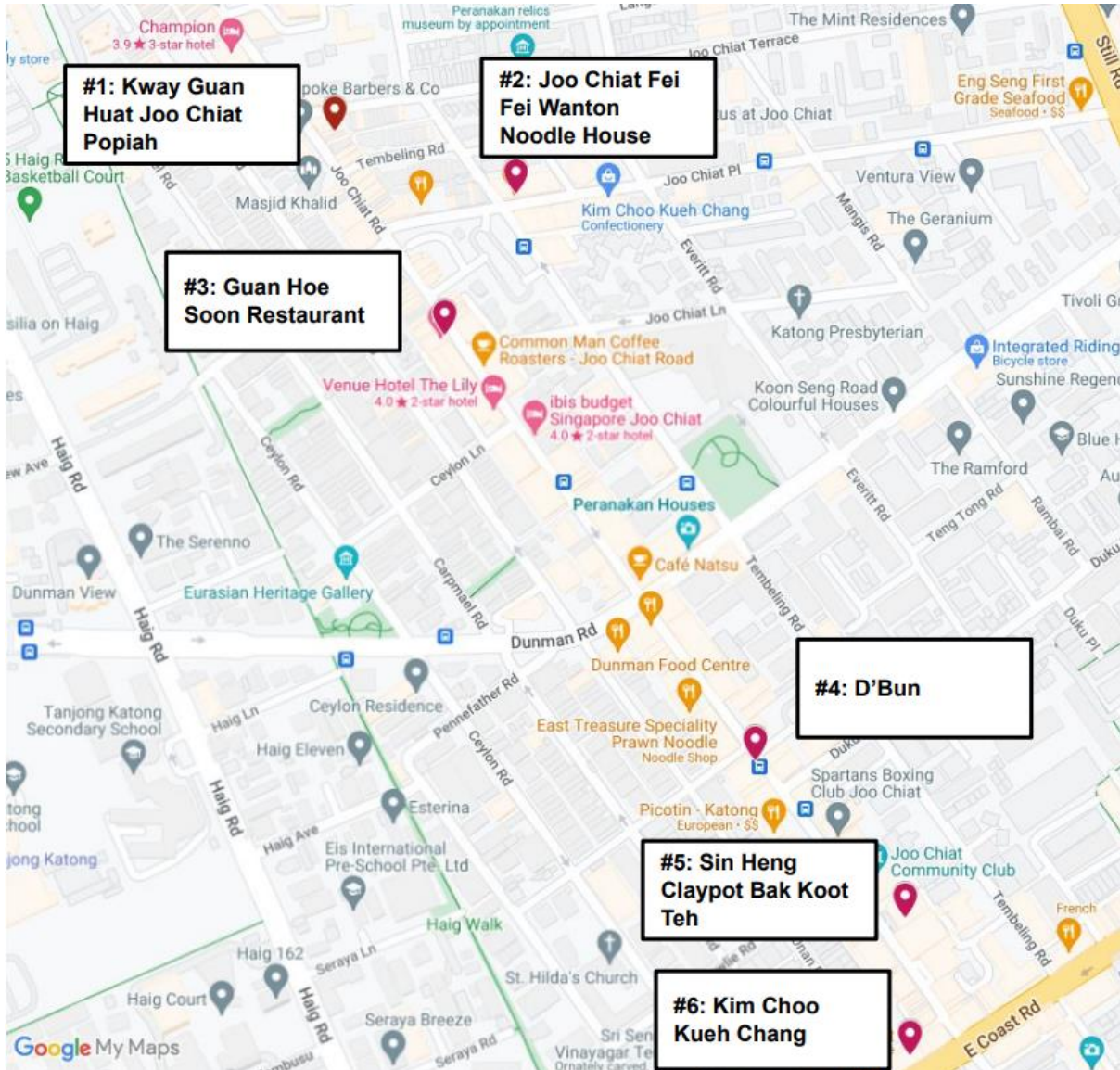


About National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit.

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, safeguards and promotes intangible cultural heritage, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

Map of participating businesses for Street Corner Heritage Galleries: Katong-Joo Chiat



Street Corner Heritage Galleries: Katong-Joo Chiat

1. Three Generations in the Making



Kway Guan Huat Joo Chiat Popiah

95 Joo Chiat Rd, Singapore 427389

One of Singapore's oldest *popiah* and *kueh pie tee* makers, Kway Guan Huat Joo Chiat Popiah was founded at 95 Joo Chiat Road in 1938 by Quek Tren Wen, an immigrant from Anxi, China. *Popiah* consists of finely-chopped vegetables and meat encased in a thin flour skin, while *kueh pie tee* is made of the same filling stuffed into pie-crust shells.

Rising at dawn, Quek would commence the arduous task of kneading the day's dough by hand. The excess dough was repurposed to make *kueh pie tee* shells in the early days, a suggestion from his Peranakan wife, Tan Ah Poh. Initially, Peranakan families made up Quek's primary clientele, but word quickly spread, leading to a surge in orders from Joo Chiat residents as well as from all over Singapore.

All of their 16 children helped in the shop, with the boys trained in making the skins, while the girls, guided by Tan, learned to prepare savoury sweet *popiah* fillings. In the 1990s, Ker Cheng Lye, the eldest son, responded to growing demand by offering *popiah* fillings and sauces for sale, recognising that many customers struggled to replicate the shop's homemade flavours.

Today, led by third-generation steward Michael, Kway Guan Huat is dedicated to preserving their cherished family tradition while also proto-typing new products such as pandan-flavoured *popiah* skins. Though online sales now rival walk-in customers, Kway Guan Huat remains committed to offering fresh *popiah* using the same time-honoured techniques pioneered by their late founder.

2. From Roadside Stall to Peranakan Classic



Kim Choo Kueh Chang

111 East Coast Rd, #109, Singapore 428801

Kim Choo Kueh Chang, a one-stop shop for all things Peranakan, has its roots in a makeshift stall marked by a banyan tree at the intersection of Joo Chiat Place and Everitt Road, which Lee Kim Choo founded in 1945. Unlike most *nyonya* (Peranakan women) then, Lee opened a stall to provide for her family, using culinary skills taught by her grandmother, Tok Siew Neo. Lee's food and kindness quickly endeared her to the Joo Chiat community and attracted customers from across Singapore.

It was, however, the resounding praise for her signature *kueh chang* (Peranakan rice dumplings) with its generous filling that prompted Lee to focus on perfecting this iconic delicacy. In the 1970s, she moved to a shophouse at 60 Joo Chiat Place, where her handcrafted dumplings continue to be sold today.

In 1997, Lee's daughter-in-law Helen Lim introduced bite-sized dumplings, which became popular despite Lee's initial scepticism. Having earned the matriarch's

confidence, Lim, with her husband Wong Sin Min, took over the shop. She introduced other innovations like chicken and vegetarian dumplings filled with mock meat that helped the business overcome the swine and bird flu crises, as well as other *kueh* made using Tok's recipes. As business boomed, Lim set up a shop at East Coast Road in 2003.

Today, the business is run by Lee's grandchildren, who have expanded the shop to showcase Peranakan cuisine and culture by establishing a boutique for bespoke Peranakan wear and a mini gallery, all the while upholding their grandmother's legacy of community spirit and commitment to quality.

3. Satisfaction to the Last Strand



Joo Chiat Fei Fei Wonton Noodle House

45 Joo Chiat Pl, Singapore 427769

Known for its handmade springy egg noodles served with fresh pork dumplings, homemade *charsiew* (Cantonese-style roasted pork) and special chilli sauce, Joo Chiat Fei Fei Wonton Noodle House's story began more than 70 years ago with founder Chan Sin Yam and his humble pushcarts.

Chan, who came to Singapore aged 17 from Guangzhou, China in 1922, first honed his skills at a Jalan Besar noodle factory before relocating to Joo Chiat to sell noodles to hawkers. After the war, Chan turned to hawking, and he would ply Joo Chiat's streets with his sons daily. Leading the way on bicycle was his grandson, Lim Loon Huat, who would announce their arrival and take customers' orders.

In the 1970s, Chan rented a coffeeshop at 72 Joo Chiat Place, which he affectionately named Fei Fei (“fat” in Cantonese) after his two chubby grandsons. Following Chan’s passing in 2000, Lim, who had been working at Fei Fei since the age of 20, took the helm as its current third-generation owner. He decided to keep the business open round-the-clock to cater to the late-night crowd in Joo Chiat.

Over the years, Lim introduced new dishes such as their chicken cutlet noodles and *yong tau foo* (stuffed beancurd), and relocated to 45 Joo Chiat Place in 2023 to offer a more pleasant dining experience. Nevertheless, Fei Fei remains dedicated to making and serving noodles of the same high quality as Chan’s, thereby ensuring that his culinary legacy lives on in every bowl served.

4. Celebration of Peranakan Culinary Tradition



Guan Hoe Soon Restaurant

200 Joo Chiat Rd, #01-01, Singapore 427471

Established in 1953 by Yap Chee Quee, Guan Hoe Soon Restaurant stands as one of Singapore’s oldest Peranakan eateries, where generations of families have enjoyed its signature Hokkien-Peranakan delicacies such as *ayam buah keluak* (chicken with keluak nuts) and *hee ploh* (fish maw soup).

Yap arrived in Singapore from Hainan in 1918. Though not of Peranakan heritage, he honed his culinary skills while working as a housekeeper for various Peranakan families, one of which was the Chew Joo Chiat household. Later, he opened his own coffee shop at 185 Joo Chiat Road. Word of his cooking reached other Peranakan

families and they subsequently invited him and his son Kow Soon to prepare lavish Tok Panjang feasts (a long table of dishes) in their homes.

With their growing clientele, Yap opened a bigger restaurant at 214 Joo Chiat Road in 1953 to cater for occasions ranging from wedding banquets to funerals, and named the restaurant Guan Hoe Soon after his three sons. After his father's passing, Kow Soon's own passion for food prompted him to assume the reins of the reputable establishment, which drew notable patrons such as the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

The restaurant, now helmed by Kow Soon's daughter, Jenny, relocated to 38/40 Joo Chiat Place in 2009 and later to 200 Joo Chiat Road in 2022. Having introduced her own creations like *kuah salat* (pandan-flavoured custard on glutinous rice), Jenny continues to lead Guan Hoe Soon in preparing authentic Peranakan cuisine from scratch and preserving the traditional taste of the food that its customers have come to know and love.

5. Hot Till the Last Drop



Sin Heng Claypot Bak Koot Teh

439 Joo Chiat Rd, Singapore 427652

Established in 1981, this family-owned eatery traces its beginnings to two *bak kut teh* (pork ribs in a peppery or herbal broth) stalls named Sin Heng Bak Koot Teh ("New Fortune" in Hokkien), which sisters Tey Chui Hua and Tey Siew Hua founded at two Bedok coffee shops. The sisters were seamstresses turned avid cooks who shared the dream of making a living from their culinary skills.

In 1983, an opportunity arose to open their own restaurant at 439 Joo Chiat Road with their elder sister Sue Hua, as well as her and Siew Hua's respective husbands Andy Soo and Lim See Kuang. To differentiate themselves from other *bak kut teh* shops, Sin Heng introduced claypots to maintain the broth's sizzling heat till the very last drop – this eventually became their signature dish.

The year 1999 brought another challenge with the Nipah virus outbreak, during which the public shied away from consuming pork, forcing Sin Heng to close for two months. Undeterred, the Teys diversified their menu, introducing new dishes such as sweet-and-sour fish and Thai-style chicken to cater to diverse palates. Today, Sin Heng continues to serve a plethora of popular *zi char* (cooked to order) dishes that complement their *bak kut teh* offerings.

Now run by the family's second generation, Sin Heng stands tall as a cherished culinary spot in Joo Chiat, where families celebrate milestones and patrons return to savour tender ribs in a fragrant broth that has maintained its quality through the years.

6. Fresh Take on Traditional Treats



D'Bun

358 Joo Chiat Rd, Singapore 427603

Founded in 1991 by Lee Mimi, D'Bun is known for its multitude of delightful confections that are especially sought after during festive periods. Motivated by a love of good food, Lee first opened a stall selling traditional snacks in the basement of Parkway Parade.






Inspired by popular cafe names beginning with “D” at the time such as “Delifrance”, Lee chose the contemporary moniker “D’Bun” for her stall. She initially focused on mini-sized buns including their signature *charsiew bao* (roasted pork buns) and *da bao* (sliced pork buns). The overwhelming reception to these products saw D’Bun’s expansion into a full-fledged bakery at 358 Joo Chiat Road later that year. While D’Bun initially relied on a professional baker, Lee’s dedication led her to fine-tune recipes and introduce creations like intricately hand-cut, lotus-shaped *lian hua tao* (longevity buns).


The Nipah virus outbreak in 1999 had a significant impact on sales, as public apprehension led to a decline in pork bun consumption. This prompted Lee to diversify D’Bun’s offerings and to introduce festive treats with a twist, such as durian-filled koi-shaped confections and Chinese zodiac animal buns. This endeavour also paved the way for the introduction of seasonal mooncakes and rice dumplings made fresh daily.

Today, D’Bun has established an annual tradition of unveiling novel creations based on traditional treats, such as pistachio and cheesecake mooncakes. Together with her daughter Serena, Lee continues to innovate with handmade delicacies that infuse modern flavours and add a fresh twist to local culinary traditions.




List of Artefacts



1. Kway Guan Huat Joo Chiat Popiah

| No. | Image | Caption |
|-----|---|--|
| 1 |  | <p>This grater was used to shred <i>bangkwang</i> (Chinese turnip) by hand into fine strips to be used as <i>popiah</i> filling.</p> |
| 2 |  | <p>This clay base, which has a sunken spiral into which an electrical heating coil is placed, is used to heat up the pans on which the <i>popiah</i> dough is cooked.</p> |
| 3 |  | <p>This scraper, retired after nearly 30 years of service, was used to separate the thin <i>popiah</i> skin from the pan after the dough was cooked.</p> |
| 4 |  | <p>This is the copper <i>kueh pie tee</i> mould used to create a pie crust shell. After being dipped into batter, the mould was immersed in hot oil to fry the batter. The fried shells were then left to dry and subsequently filled with sliced carrots, <i>bangkwang</i> (Chinese turnip) and prawns.</p> |
| 5 |  | <p>This is the registration document of founder Quek Tren Wen from the 1940s, which records that he worked at 95 Joo Chiat Road.</p> |




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| <p>6</p> |  | <p>These photographs from the 1990s show how <i>popiah</i>-making at the shop was truly a family affair. Ker Cheng Lye and his daughter would prepare the dough (top), after which the family would prepare the skin and fillings together (bottom).</p> |
|----------|---|--|



2. Kim Choo Kueh Chang

| No. | Image | Caption |
|-----|---|--|
| 1 |  | <p>This pair of <i>kasut manek</i> (beaded shoes) belonged to Lee Kim Choo, who had commissioned them from a sworn sister to help her financially. Today, Kim Choo passes on these skills through public workshops on Peranakan beading.</p> |
| 2 |  | <p>This tiffin container was used by Lee Kim Choo to hold beverages she prepared for her staff at 60 Joo Chiat Place.</p> |
| 3 |  | <p>This photograph taken in 1977 shows the shop's second generation, Helen Lim and Wong Sin Min – the former introduced mini <i>kueh chang</i> (right) to Kim Choo's menu. All of Kim Choo dumplings are tied with food-grade cotton twine, an eco-conscious shift from the previous nylon ties.</p> |




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| 4 |  | <p>This photograph taken in 1978 depicts founder Lee Kim Choo manning a counter with an assortment of dumplings at 60 Joo Chiat Place, which continues to sell Kim Choo products today.</p> |
| 5 |  | <p>This coin was one of the many placed by Lee Kim Choo into the water-filled <i>kueh chang</i> steamer, as they would clink together to alert staff when the water needed replenishing.</p> |




3. Joo Chiat Fei Fei Wonton Noodle House

| No. | Image | Caption |
|-----|---|--|
| 1 |  | <p>This porcelain pot was previously used to hold chopped green chillies, which customers could add to make their noodles as spicy as desired.</p> |
| 2 |  | <p>Adorned with a rooster motif, this bowl was traditionally used to serve soup, while patrons utilised chopsticks to savour the noodles from another dish. The accompanying saucer held chilli and/or other condiments.</p> |
| 3 |  | <p>This pair of large chopsticks and stainless-steel strainer were used to stir and drain the noodles after they were cooked to the perfect level of firmness.</p> |



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| 4 |  | <p>As Chan plied Joo Chiat with his pushcart, he made for a striking figure clad in a pair of clogs and shorts made from a used flour gunny sack similar to these.</p> |
| 5 |  | <p>This bamboo instrument is reminiscent of what Lim Loon Huat used as a child to make loud “tok tok” sounds that announced the arrival of his grandfather’s pushcarts as they moved from street to street.</p> |





4. Guan Hoe Soon Restaurant

| No. | Image | Caption |
|-----|---|--|
| 1 |  | <p>This cutlery set bearing the restaurant’s name and old five-digit telephone number from 214 Joo Chiat Road was used during events such as weddings and birthday celebrations.</p> |
| 2 |  | <p>This photograph taken outside the restaurant at 214 Joo Chiat Road commemorates the joyous wedding celebration of second-generation owner Yap Kow Soon and his wife Lee Lai Chan in 1963.</p> |
| 3 |  | <p>This photograph from the 1960s depicts Lee Lai Chan (left), mother of present owner Jenny Yap, and a relative in front of a food display case outside the restaurant at 214 Joo Chiat Road.</p> |

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|---|---|--|
| 4 |  | <p>This certificate shows the official registration of Guan Hoe Soon as a business in 1974, as well as its opening year in 1953.</p> |
| 5 |  | <p>These stamps were used during founder Yap Chee Quee's time. The metal chop bearing the restaurant's name (left) was used for official documents while the wooden stamp (right) was used to print the name of a menu banquet dish and reads <i>long yan san xi</i>, or "longan dessert to conclude the festivities".</p> |
| 6 |  | <p>These metal cutters were used in founder Yap Chee Quee's time to create intricate garnishes from vegetables such as radishes and carrots for banquet dishes.</p> |

5. Sin Heng Claypot Bak Koot Teh

| No. | Image | Caption |
|-----|---|---|
| 1 |  | <p>This claypot, one of the original pots used by Sin Heng in its early years, allowed diners to enjoy their <i>bak kut teh</i> at their own pace, thanks to its exceptional heat retention.</p> |
| 2 |  | <p>This traditional tea set was favoured by older patrons who enjoyed sipping Chinese tea alongside their <i>bak kut teh</i>, while the younger generation is more familiar with the convenience of glass cups.</p> |

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|----------|---|---|
| <p>3</p> |  | <p>This poster shows two of the many new dishes Sin Heng introduced during the 1999 Nipah virus outbreak, which continue to be popular with patrons today.</p> |
| <p>4</p> |  | <p>This order slip was printed in the early 2000s when Sin Heng extended its service round-the-clock, relying on the popularity of <i>bak kut teh</i> as a supper choice.</p> |
| <p>5</p> |  | <p>This old chopper was used by Lim See Kuang to portion out pork ribs and knuckles. Today, Sin Heng uses machines, ensuring swifter and more sanitary meat preparation.</p> |
| <p>6</p> |  | <p>This photograph shows the Teys and their families at Sin Heng's grand opening at Joo Chiat Road in 1983, marking a significant milestone in their culinary legacy.</p> |

6. D'Bun

| No. | Image | Caption |
|-----|---|---|
| 1 |  | <p>These wooden moulds were used to shape mooncakes and other confections including (clockwise, from left) traditional baked mooncakes, Lunar New Year fish-shaped confections, and modern snow skin mooncakes.</p> |
| 2 |  | <p>This box was used to pack mooncakes, which D'Bun first produced in the late 1990s as part of efforts to expand their offerings.</p> |
| 3 |  | <p>These models show various made-to-order festive novelties produced by D'Bun and they comprise (left) Hua Kai Fu Gui, a confection shaped like a blossoming peony; and (right) Li Man Bao Fa, a bun filled with <i>fa cai</i>, a black fungus eaten for good fortune.</p> |
| 4 |  | <p>This flyer from the early 2000s features D'Bun's first logo and advertises a special range of confections signifying abundance and prosperity.</p> |
| 5 |  | <p>This photograph depicts founder Lee Mimi (centre) and her staff at the shop more than 15 years ago.</p> |