

My dear grandma used to always say "Eating is for oneself; dressing is for others". Now I reflect on it, and there is such a profound truth to her words. Eating is a common need for our daily lives. But dressing up, is often done to impress and please someone around us.

The same goes for food, a great seasoning always make the food unique. Later, I found out my grandma catchphrase is from one of the Hakka chef, Mr Qin of the family-owned restaurant "Wing Yan Gwon" In the busy kitchens, we always called the master chefs by their surname, Chef Lai, Chef Chan or Chef Tam. Nevertheless, Mr. Qin was always referring himself as "Sir", placing him apart from the rest of the master chefs in the kitchen. He never wears a chef uniform, which presents himself a humble appearance. But what really caught my attention, is that not only did he appear us a master chef, he is as well as a great artist and a great poet, with absolutely no reason to be bothered with such affairs as pots and pans.

You see, Mr Qin always taste the food before he delivered. In the most hectic kitchen, he would just sit behind the counter, tasting every food before they have been delivered to ensure the satisfaction of the customers. And most of the time, he constantly reads cookbook from different cultures, always making comments like "Ah, I should try to add some Northern seasoning in our Hakka traditional food. Although he has read dozens of cookbooks and has already specialized in Sichuan and Peking seasoning, sometimes Mr Qin would philosophize "All food is the same at the end. Just one tongue tasting four flavours of the seasonings." A simpleton child I was, all I knew of were the simple thrice, sugars, salts and spice.

Whenever I asked about what about the fourth seasoning. He would always reply dismissively, "Haha you will soon know it after you understand the role of the food". At that time, I was frustrated and mad at the same time. I couldn't understand why they paid so much for a person who only ate and talked who never cooked a single dish that I could see. Until now, I finally realized that Mr Qin's gastronomic acumen was beyond my young mind's comprehension. The Wing Yan Gwon has closed down now. But upon every visit of the same place. I seem to appreciate the subtlety he spoke of the fourth seasoning-the cultural blend that is tasteless but present in the role of Hakka food's unique tradition.