

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



四川飯店

SHISEN HANTEN
by CHEN KENTARO

AN ILLUSTRIOUS NEW CHAPTER

The relaunch of 1-MICHELIN-starred Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro promises a fresh, elevated experience for lovers of the unique cuisine of Chūka Szechwan Ryori



SINGAPORE, December 2024 · Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro is a stirring ode to family legacy. Built on three generations of gastronomic excellence, this restaurant seamlessly connects the culinary traditions of China, Japan, and Singapore while paving the way to the future. It stands testimony to continuity and renewal; to the past shaping the present; and to tireless devotion to grace and hospitality.

This revered brand was introduced to Singapore by third-generation heir, Chef Chen Kentaro; and for ten years hence has delighted local audiences with its unique *Chūka Szechwan Ryori* (中華四川料理), a form of Szechwan cuisine adapted to Japanese tastes. Now, its relaunch brings the journey to a new level; with transformed interiors and a new menu promising a more enriched, refined and elevated experience for diners.



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Legacy of *Chūka Szechwan Ryori*

Behind the flavours of *Chūka Szechwan Ryori* cuisine is the story of the Chen family itself. Kentaro's grandfather, Chen Kenmin, was born in Szechwan, China, in 1912. Amid the unrest of the Chinese Civil War, he journeyed abroad and eventually arrived in Japan in 1952. As he was always passionate about cooking, learning to cook since the age of eleven, he tried to recreate the flavours of his hometown but was stymied by the lack of authentic Szechwan ingredients in Japan. So, he adapted; turning local ingredients into seasonings and dishes that captured the spirit of Szechwan cooking while appealing to the Japanese palate. Among his innovations was adjusting the use of traditional Szechwan spices, like miso to replace stronger flavours, and sansho pepper to evoke the numbing spice of Szechwan peppercorns. This marked the beginning of the cuisine known as *Chūka Szechwan Ryori*.

In 1958, Chen Kenmin opened his first restaurant, Shisen Hanten, in Tamuracho, Tokyo, where he blended authentic Szechwan flavours with Japanese influences. A standout dish in his repertoire was Prawns in Chili Sauce – later renamed Ebi Chili Sauce (エビチリソース). The other was Mapo Tofu, one of the first Szechwan dishes Kenmin brought to Japan, and a staple of the Shisen Hanten menu to this day. Kenmin came to be known as the "Grandfather of Szechwan Cuisine" in Japan.

Upholding The Family Heritage

Chef Kentaro's father, Chen Kenichi, was born in 1956. Although he studied Economics in university, Kenichi chose to devote himself to the family business, strengthening the brand legacy by committing fully to serving *Chūka Szechwan Ryori*. He also refined his father's recipes of Mapo Tofu and Prawns in Chili Sauce (Ebi Chili) by incorporating *dou ban jiang* (豆瓣醬), a fermented broad bean paste central to Szechwan cooking. To maintain authenticity, he visited numerous factories in China to understand the best production techniques and sought collaboration, eventually sharing Shisen Hanten's own recipes for replication and manufacture so that he could control the quality. This focus on excellence continues today, with key seasonings like 辣椒油 (chilli oil), 甜面醬 (sweet sauce), miso, vinegar, and soy sauce being crafted in-house.

Over time, Kenichi came to be known professionally as Japan's "Szechwan Sage" (料理の鉄人), and to the wider population as one of Japan's most celebrated 'Iron Chefs'. He appeared on the popular TV cooking competition series for six years, becoming the longest-serving Iron Chef. He also headed the Shisen Hanten group, which by then operated in Tokyo's Akasaka, Ikebukuro, and Roppongi districts, as well as in Tokushima City (Tokushima Prefecture), Kure (Hiroshima), Matsuyama (Ehime), and Hakata-ku (Fukuoka).



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Honouring Tradition, Embracing Evolution

As the group's current steward, Chen Kentaro embraces his illustrious pedigree while forging his own path. Like his father, Kentaro did not attend culinary school, yet developed an intense love for cooking.

Initially considering a career in French cuisine, Chef Kentaro pursued French studies at university. But watching his father, Chen Kenichi, reach the finals of Iron Chef inspired him to carry on the family business instead. So he began his culinary journey, from the fundamentals. Chef Kentaro studied the Chinese language at a university in Cheng Du, immersing himself in the language and culture. In the afternoons, he returned to work in the kitchen, where he gained a deep appreciation of regional Chinese flavours and ingredients—the foundation of his approach to *Chūka Szechwan Ryori* at Shisen Hanten today.

In 2014, with the blessings of his family, he opened his own restaurant in Singapore in partnership with OUE Restaurants – Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro – which he operates as a brand entity separate from the family business. Kentaro, too, had to learn to adapt to local circumstances, widening his sources to both Japan, China and the region. Like his father before him, Kentaro uses ingredients sourced from suppliers he personally knows and visits – people he trusts for quality, freshness and peak seasonality.

To suit Singaporean preferences, he reduces sodium and oil, and adjusts levels of spiciness. A notable refinement is the use of fermented black bean sauce from the Pidu district of Cheng Du; aged for three years, this sauce helps enhance the depth of flavour in signature dishes like Mapo Tofu. In his new menu his grandfather's and father's legacies endure, as timeless signature dishes and recipes that have evolved over three generations are celebrated alongside fresh creations rooted in the essence of *Chūka Szechwan Ryori*. For Kentaro's efforts, the restaurant was awarded two Michelin stars in 2016, making it the highest Michelin-rated Chinese restaurant in Singapore, a status it maintained until 2023.



Signatures at Shisen Hanten



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A Fresh Era for Shisen Hanten



Now, the unveiled refurbishment bring this 66-year legacy to even more vivid life with main halls exquisitely reimagined; a beautiful chef's table and luxurious private rooms installed; and striking artworks specially commissioned to symbolise milestones in the restaurant's storied history. Within this revitalised space, Chef Kentaro showcases his love for his family's cuisine as he actively nurtures the next generation of chefs. Because he never forgets the ethos handed down to him over three generations:

*"The heart of cuisine is love; cook with your heart.
菜心是愛，用心做菜."*

Each day, just before opening, Chef Kentaro gathers the entire team to greet the first arriving guests. He is resolute in seeing this familial attitude extend to all staff and guests alike - to the entire work environment. In his mind, "coming to Shisen Hanten is like coming home." And people have taken this warmth to heart; since opening in 2014, the restaurant has seen many of its customers become firm friends. In line with the revamp, the team has been additionally coached in the nuances of Shisen Hanten's heritage and brand culture, ensuring that their interactions would be even more heartfelt, authentic, and embracing.

Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro, with its celebrations of humility, artistry, and hospitality, invites diners to be part of a legacy, and experience an evolving journey. This relaunch marks an exciting new chapter in a remarkable story spanning three generations. The work of the Chen family is far from over.





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A New Transformation in Spaces and Artwork



Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro steps into a new decade with a revitalised interior that bridges the past and present, weaving together stories from Japan, China and Singapore, while celebrating the harmony of diverse cultures.

The redesigned main dining hall features a striking large hanging artwork, which serves as the centrepiece of the space, and sets the tone for the refined yet dynamic atmosphere within. Jade-hued Japanese washi paper (和紙) adorn the walls, while soft fabric curtains (布窗帘) gently filter natural light from the windows. Another highlight is a wall with a gradient of light flowing like cascading water, reminiscent of the region's iconic waterfalls. Wooden fins arranged at random angles further enhance the dynamic play of light.

The new seating arrangement balances intimacy with openness through the careful control of sightlines from every seat for a more tranquil, focused environment. Tables and chairs are made of a combination of woods and are designed to match the overall colour tones of the room, ensuring a cohesive and refined aesthetic. Layout is flexible, with a variety of group sizes seated at tables for four to ten persons.

The main dining room features a thoughtfully arranged layout to accommodate various group sizes. The main central section offers four tables seating four guests each, alongside two tables for six guests. On the left, three six-seater tables provide a more intimate setting, while the right dining space boasts three spacious eight-seater tables, each comfortably accommodating up to ten guests. An artfully designed semi-private dining room for six guests offers privacy within the vibrancy of the main dining hall.



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In addition to the main dining area, the restaurant presents four elegantly appointed private dining rooms, each named after iconic cities in Szechwan. The intimate 乐山 (Le Shan) Room accommodates up to six guests; while the 重庆 (Chong Qing) Room provides space for eight guests and is perfect for close-knit celebrations. The 天府 (Tian Fu) Room seats ten for slightly larger gatherings and grander events; while the spacious 成都 (Cheng Du) Room hosts up to 20 guests; in all offering an exclusive and luxurious dining experience tailored to every group's needs. For gatherings of up to 30 guests, the Tian Fu and Cheng Du rooms can be combined into one majestic space.

The new Chef's Table seats eight and offers a close-up, exclusive opportunity to interact directly with the chefs, and witness the intricate techniques behind *Chūka Szechwan Ryori*. In its new incarnation, Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro provides a dramatically stunning backdrop to all manner of occasion - corporate entertainment, celebrations, or intimate gatherings – and is poised to delight serious gourmands and casual diners alike.

The wine cellar at Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro features an elegant, glass-enclosed design with a meticulously arranged wall holding up to 1,740 bottles. Warm lighting highlights each bottle, enhancing the luxurious ambience and inviting guests to explore the extensive selection. In addition to showcasing Coravin devices and decanters, the counter space displays limited and rare whiskies from Scotland and Japan, as well as exclusive Armagnac and Cognac. Suspended pendant lights add a touch of sophistication, making this an impressive focal point in the dining area.

Commissioned Artwork

Art is a major component of this transformation, weaving the story of Shisen Hanten's three-generation legacy – each piece symbolising a milestone in the evolution. The following outstanding pieces by Japanese and Chinese artists are worth looking out for:

Stone on Boundary Singapore, 2024

Yasuaki Onishi - A Japanese artist working in the mediums of installation and sculpture

Stone on Boundary Singapore, 2024 by Yasuaki Onishi symbolises the Chen family's culinary legacy, shaped over three generations. The stones, gradually moulded by time and the flow of a river, reflect the milestones of each Chen chef—honouring the balance between tradition and innovation that defines Shisen Hanten. The copper foil tracing the stones evokes the layers of experience and knowledge passed down, while its incomplete impressions signify the humility of an ever-evolving journey. Through this artwork, the enduring craftsmanship and unseen values underpinning Shisen Hanten are brought to vivid life, connecting past, present, and future.



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Stone on Boundary Singapore

Resonance, Singapore 2024

Beili Liu – A visual artist from China who creates material-and-process driven, site-responsive installations and performances

Resonance, Singapore 2024 by Beili Liu celebrates Shisen Hanten's legacy as a *Chūka Szechwan* restaurant, honouring its heritage and evolution. Inspired by the serenity of water, the installation reflects the restorative power of shared culinary experiences, fostering warmth and connection among guests. Composed of translucent pebble-like forms in shades of blue and silver, it evokes calmness and the diversity of shared moments, much like the flavours of the restaurant's dishes. As a striking centrepiece, it symbolises regeneration and transformation, embodying Shisen Hanten's commitment to community, tradition, and the evolving journey of its cuisine.

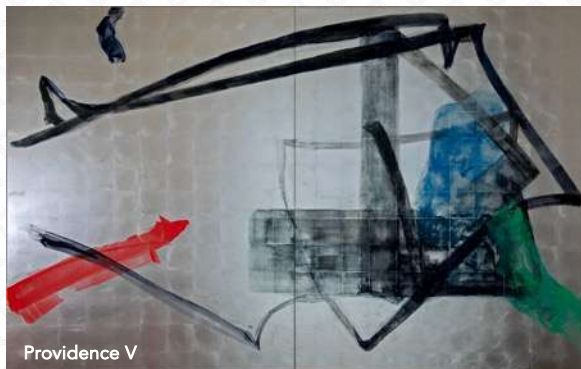


Resonance, Singapore



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Providence V



Bamboo Rock

Providence V, 2024

Kiyo Hasegawa – A Japanese artist that works with traditional materials of Nihonga such as black ink, mineral pigments and handmade paper

Providence V, 2024 by Kiyo Hasegawa embodies Shisen Hanten's culinary philosophy of simplicity and depth. With Zen-like minimalism and evocative negative space, the artwork mirrors Chef Kenmin's ethos of using few but carefully selected ingredients to create layered, profound flavours. The platinum leaf and charcoal ink, like Shisen Hanten's traditional sauces, are used sparingly yet with great reverence, honouring age-old traditions. Both the art and cuisine embrace restraint, balance, and the timeless wisdom that true beauty and flavour lie in mastering the essentials.

Bamboo Rock, 2024

Yuefeng Ha – A Chinese artist who is devoted to traditional craftsmanship such as lacquer, bamboo, wood, pottery and metalworking

Bamboo Rock, 2024 by Yuefeng Ha symbolises the resilience and adaptability of bamboo, values reflected in Shisen Hanten's culinary journey. The intricate weaving of bamboo and lacquer mirrors the Chen family's blending of tradition and innovation, where time-honoured recipes are elevated with refined techniques across three generations. The artwork's balance of strength and elegance parallels Shisen Hanten's philosophy of simplicity, where minimal yet carefully selected ingredients create layers of rich flavour. Just as Bamboo Rock evolves into a harmonious form, Shisen Hanten's cuisine continues to grow, honouring its legacy while embracing the future.



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Chūka Szechwan Ryori



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Singapore's Sole Destination for Chūka Szechwan Ryori

At Shisen Hanten, Chef Chen Kentaro brings to the table *Chūka Szechwan Ryori* (中華四川料理), a style of Szechwan cuisine adapted to Japanese tastes. This culinary tradition was pioneered by Chen Kenmin, who introduced complex flavours of Szechwan to Japan at a time when they were virtually unknown. Facing challenges in sourcing authentic Szechwan ingredients upon his arrival in Tokyo, he creatively adapted by crafting his own seasonings with Japanese ingredients, such as using sansho pepper in place of Szechwan peppercorns. Iconic dishes like Shisen Hanten's style of Mapo Tofu (麻婆豆腐) and Twice-cooked Pork (回锅肉) emerged from this ingenuity. By blending traditional Szechwan techniques with local Japanese influences, Chen Kenmin captivated the Japanese palate, giving rise to the unique fusion that defines *Chūka Szechwan Ryori* today.

While Shisen Hanten's beloved guest favourites and signature dishes remain central to the menu, Chef Kentaro also brings in fresh inspirations shaped by his experiences and deep understanding of *Chūka Szechwan Ryori*. With the unveiling of his new menu, Chef Kentaro seeks to preserve authentic flavours while creating modern interpretations. One example is the **Steamed Kinmedai with Hot and Sour Sauce with Fresh Yuba**, in which *Kinmedai* (golden eye snapper), a premium Japanese fish rarely seen in Chinese cuisine, is teamed with Szechwan *suan la* (酸辣) sauce and finished with fresh Japanese yuba for added texture and a layer of flavour.

Chef Kentaro places a strong emphasis on using only the finest seafood, whether dried or fresh. He is deeply committed to sourcing exceptional ingredients, often visiting the fishermen to not only inspect the catch but to gain a deeper understanding of the fish, the environments they inhabit, and the optimal seasons for harvest. Over the years, he has forged meaningful relationships with his trusted suppliers, connections he truly values and nurtures. This dedication shines in seasonal dishes like **Monkfish Liver Xiao Long Bao** – highlighting *Ankimo* (monkfish liver), a prized Japanese delicacy at its seasonal peak, paired with the delicate craft of dim sum. The **Szechwan-style Osashimi with Homemade Fermented Chilli Pepper Soy Sauce** features *Madai* (sea bream, 真鯛), sourced from Shikoku, Japan, where it is currently in season.



Xiao Long Bao



Osashimi with Homemade Fermented Chilli Pepper Soy Sauce



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Low-Temperature Cooked A5 Miyazaki Wagyu with Green Peppers



Szechwan-style Stir-fried Mangalica Pork, Cabbage and Piman

And while his sources span both local and international origins, Chef Kentaro takes particular pride in introducing Singaporean diners to the exceptional produce of Japan. His deep connections with fishermen and farmers is central to this philosophy, as he values the trust and quality that come from these relationships. These may include exceptional produce such as Hokkaido Tokachi Mangalica pork, monkfish and madai (sea bream, 真鯛); vegetables such as Japanese spinach and white negi (Japanese leek, 葱白); condiments such as Japanese soy sauce, oyster sauce and sake. Through his close ties with the Mangalica pork supplier in Tokachi, Hokkaido, Chef Kentaro introduces this premium produce to Singapore. Known as the “Kobe beef of pork”, this naturally grazing pig yields meat that is renowned for its sweet, rich flavour and exceptional marbling. A main characteristic of the pork belly is its clearly defined layers of lean meat and fat, giving it an irresistibly indulgent texture. Mangalica pork pairs perfectly with the bold spices of Szechwan cuisine.

At Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro, Chef presents the highly-prized Hokkaido Hiyama sea cucumber in a new seasonal dish - **Braised Hokkaido Hiyama Sea Cucumber with Japanese Leek**. A scarce and rarely exported ingredient, Chef Kentaro prepares the sea cucumber with a time-consuming and specialised technique, making this unique experience accessible to Singaporeans.

While building on the culinary legacy of his grandfather and father, Chef Kentaro also casts an eye on the next generation. Innovative dishes in the menu include **Stir-fried A5 Miyazaki Wagyu Beef Sirloin with Japanese Green Peppers in Low Temperature Cooking Method**. In this updated iteration of a classic, Chef Kentaro showcases A5 Miyazaki Wagyu beef sirloin, prepared using a low-temperature sous vide method.

Twice-cooked Pork (回锅肉) is a well-loved dish at Shisen Hanten, proudly continued by Chef Kentaro as part of the restaurant's legacy. At Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro, guests can savour both the traditional Cheng Du or the distinctive Chen Kenmin interpretation of this dish. Traditionally prepared in Cheng Du with pork and garlic sprouts, this dish was reinterpreted by Chen Kenmin when he first arrived in Japan. He adapted it to Japanese tastes using local Japanese ingredients like cabbage and piman (green bell pepper).



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For fans of Mapo Tofu, the menu offers two options - **Stir-fried Tofu in Hot Szechwan Pepper-flavoured Meat Sauce**, or **Stir-fried Tofu and Wagyu Beef Tendon in Hot Szechwan Pepper-flavoured Meat Sauce**, both served with **Claypot Hokkaido rice**. This signature dish is Shisen Hanten's tribute to Kentaro's illustrious forebears and their iconic Mapo Tofu. For the Chef's Table Experience, the restaurant offers a premium seasonal option – **shirako**, reflecting Chef Kentaro's commitment to sourcing and presenting the best seasonal ingredients to his guests.



Foie Gras Chawanmushi with Crab Roe Soup



Shisen Hanten Five Signature Appetisers

By 'evolving' the old traditions and making them relevant to the times, and by including stalwart dishes and new creations, Kentaro brings to the table a well-rounded culinary experience that bridges the past and present. In the process he hopes to enthuse and educate, both the young talents who would become the chefs of the future, and nascent foodies who would become the enlightened diners of tomorrow.



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About Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro

Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro is celebrated as Singapore's sole specialist in *Chūka Szechwan Ryori*, a distinctive style of Japanese-Szechwan cuisine. At the helm is Chef Chen Kentaro, the third-generation heir of Shisen Hanten. In 2014, he established Shisen Hanten in Singapore as his own venture, carrying forward his family's rich culinary heritage. Drawing from *Chūka Szechwan Ryori*, the restaurant combines Chinese Szechwan flavours with refined Japanese techniques and ingredients. To ensure authenticity, quality, and peak seasonality, ingredients are sourced from skilled artisans in China, Japan, and other regions. Premium finds translate into exquisite dishes that combine the complex flavours of Szechwan cuisine with the delicate nuances of Japanese culinary techniques. Diners enjoy hospitality embodied in the generational ethos of the Chen family, 'The heart of cuisine is love; cook with your heart,' in an interior of luxurious spaces adorned with stunning pieces of commissioned art.

Fact Sheet

Address

Level 35, Hilton Singapore Orchard,
333 Orchard Road, Singapore 238867

Opening Hours

Lunch

Monday to Friday
12.00pm to 3.00pm
(last order at 2.30pm)

Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays
12.00pm to 3.00pm
(last order at 2.30pm)

Dinner
Daily

6.00pm to 10.00pm
(last order at 9.30pm)

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Socials

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