

Forget 21st-century fine-dining concepts: nostalgia is the unique ingredient that makes Anthony Lo think fondly of Jimmy's Kitchen

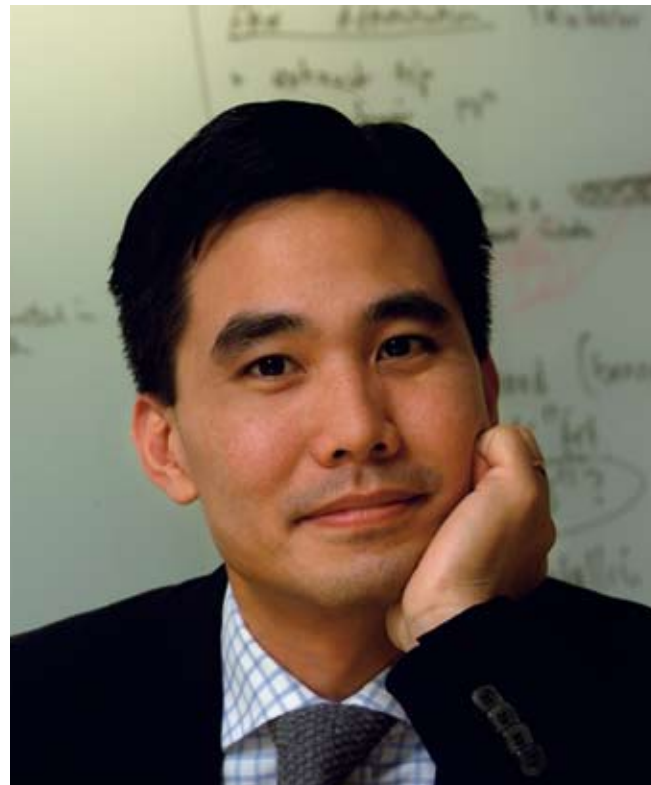
Anthony Lo on Jimmy's Kitchen

Today's impeccably starched white tablecloths, red plush banquettes, slowly revolving ceiling fans and elegant black-and-white floor tiles are a far cry from the early years of Jimmy's Kitchen. Scrubbed wooden tables and naked light bulbs were the order of the day back in 1928 when Aaron Landau set up his first restaurant. It was modelled on a similar establishment in Shanghai and it proved a great success with homesick British soldiers looking for inexpensive food like mother used to make. The concept has long since been gentrified and these days it has two locations, one in Ashley Road in Tsim Sha Tsui and the other in Central on the corner of Wyndham Street.

According to urban myth, descendants of some of the first staff are still working at Jimmy's. Everything else has changed many times over (location, decor) but the menu retains most of the stand-bys of those early years. 'Old China hands' can partake in such staples as the famous steak and kidney pudding, bangers and mash and chicken à la king, rounded off with sherry trifle or baked Alaska. And you will still find borscht, wiener schnitzel, pork knuckle, corned beef and cabbage, beef stroganoff and knackwurst among the hearty Middle European fare that Landau enjoyed so much. Jimmy's baked French onion soup is sacred, thanks to William Holden. The film star was a regular diner during his frequent visits to Hong Kong and during one of his many meals at Jimmy's he endeared himself to the waiters and firemen alike when he insisted on carrying his bowl of soup with him as the restaurant was being evacuated due to a small fire in the fusebox.

Forget about 21st-century fine-dining concepts: nostalgia is the unique ingredient that makes people like Anthony Lo think fondly of Jimmy's Kitchen. Born and educated in Hong Kong, Lo has lived abroad for the past 20 years, ever since he left for London to pursue his dream of designing cars. His ability has made him something of a legend in the industry, and over the years he has worked in Britain, Germany, Japan and Sweden. Now he's back in Germany, based in Frankfurt as European Director of Advanced Design for General Motors. "It just happened, working in so many locations. When a good job and opportunity come around, you take it or stay where you are," he says.

"Wherever I go, food is very important to me. You learn about the local culture through eating local food. When you live in a place, you soon learn where locals go to find the best food. Germany has good restaurants, you can't go wrong with pork



Clockwise from top: Anthony Lo says Jimmy's Kitchen brings back many great memories; shrimp cocktail; the ever popular chicken masala



regardless of what they do with it. There are so many ways to cook pork because it's a very versatile meat. And the sausages are not exactly healthy, but they are so good! I don't really cook, my wife is boss in the kitchen – she loves cooking. My role is always as assistant rather than chef."

As it was for many people in Hong Kong, Jimmy's Kitchen was part of his childhood, says Lo. "Jimmy's Kitchen brings back so many memories of my grandfather. He worked in Central and my mother would take me to see him sometimes and then we would go to Jimmy's for lunch."

Old colonial favourites are still on the menu – the iconic restaurant banks on the oldies but goldies. "I haven't been there in a long time, but they probably haven't changed the menu much. I loved the steak sandwich, it was wonderful. There's a lot of family feeling for me about that restaurant."



EXECUTIVE CHEF PATRICK BARRETT

"Jimmy's is a place that many people have been going to all their lives," says Executive Chef Patrick Barrett of the legendary Central restaurant. "You get third and fourth generations coming; it has community memory." Its traditional dishes include the baked onion and ox-tail soups, Austrian-style pig's knuckle, sirloin and rib-eye steaks, and the beef Wellington special. The menu changes rarely – "About every 30 years," jokes British-born Barrett, who himself has a long family connection with Hong Kong. However, he recently added faggots and Cornish pasties to the menu, reflecting his own West Country heritage, and has even been researching 18th- and 19th-century recipes for inspiration. A personal favourite is the calf's liver with bacon and onion.



JIMMY'S KITCHEN

RESERVATIONS: Necessary **DRESS CODE:** Smart casual **LUNCH HOURS:** 12:00pm - 3:00pm **DINNER HOURS:** 6:00pm - 11:00pm **SET MENU:** Lunch **BUFFETS:** No **VEGETARIAN DISHES:** 10+ **AMENITIES:** Separate bar, private rooms for 15 **CAR VALET:** No **CREDIT CARDS:** AE, V, MC, DC **YEAR ESTABLISHED:** 1928

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