

food & entertainment



Chefs reign, no matter what their level! We speak to the amazing Executive Chefs of Starwood in Malaysia and find out how they tap into their individual cuisine influences to present their award-winning dishes. Catch up on all the happenings in Southeast Asia, including wine dinners, places to dine, and new restaurants to discover while planning your next getaway.

Chef With A Heart

The award-winning culinary team at Dorsett Regency Kuala Lumpur continues to fill their expanded trophy cabinet with their latest achievements. This time around, the hotel's Demi Chef Gerard Jerome Selvaraj grabbed the spotlight when he won two main awards at the 2nd Glittering Stars of Kuala Lumpur Hotels Awards 2011 held recently in the city.

Initiated by Malaysian Association of Hotels - KL Chapter, the annual event is aimed at recognizing the services and contributions of employees working in Kuala Lumpur-based hotels.

Gerard took home the much sought-after CSR Star Award for his outstanding contribution to community services and for the wellness of others – as well as the illustrious Superstar Award – bestowed upon a hotelier who has single-handedly influenced the entire industry and displayed exemplary standards in major aspects of the profession.

Winning awards is not something new to Gerard since joining Dorsett Regency Kuala Lumpur as a trainee in 2008. His collection of accomplishments from the hotel includes Employee of the Month Award (2010), Dorsett Regency Star Quarterly Award (2011), Group General Manager Certificate (2011), 2nd Quarter Star Award (2011) and Star of the Year (2011).

Gerard also gained national recognition at Culinaire Malaysia 2011 where he won silver medal in the Seafood Main Course category, bronze medal in Remy and Linguini Team category, and helped Dorsett Regency Kuala Lumpur to the overall second runner-up spot in the competition.

But more than just his talents, it was his heart that won him the honours. The 23-year-old chef finds time over the weekends and his off days to volunteer at soup kitchens for the homeless and to serve food to the less fortunate people around Klang Valley. [ha](#)



Chef Li Wields His Knives At Hanoi's Ming Restaurant

Hanoi's reigning dim sum palace has a new sovereign. The May 1 arrival of noted Chinese chef Li Qun Xu at Ming Restaurant marks the finishing touch to a metamorphosis that began more than a year ago at the Sofitel Plaza Hanoi's flagship fine-dining venue.

After a full makeover in 2011, the 158-seat Chinese restaurant reopened with a modern Oriental design, brighter palette and refreshed concept. An elegant tea lounge appeared in one corner, three VIP rooms looked out over leafy Thanh Nien boulevard, and two interactive show kitchens emerged within the seating space.

Now, Ming has called in Chef Li – a born-and-raised Beijing native with 20 years of specialization in Chinese cuisine – to spark a revival in its kitchen.

As Chinese chef at the Sofitel Plaza Hanoi, Chef Li is setting himself a challenge to harness Ming's already-celebrated Dim sum selection, while refreshing the a la carte menu with new dishes that fuse traditional Chinese recipes with Li's own international exposure.

The charge should not be a problem for the 41-year-old chef, whose cooking has been enjoyed by the likes of actor Jackie Chan, the British Royal Family and the current Saudi Arabian monarch. [ha](#)

Above: Demi Chef Gerard Jerome Selvaraj with his awards
Left: Chef Li Qun Xu is going to make Ming more magnificent



Above: Chef Anton Mosimann will be at The Restaurant at The Club, Saujana Resort
Below: Filippo Giunta will bring flair to Senja

A Date With Anton Mosimann

Chef fantastic Anton Mosimann is charming, influential, a hot favourite of royalty and heads of state and now, once more, in Malaysia! Come 17-22 September 2012, gourmets can revel in a specially prepared menu by Britain's most loved celebrity chef. To be held at The Restaurant at The Club, Saujana Resort, the specially designed meal will be served up in a tranquil setting surrounded by lush tropical gardens, with personalized service and elegant surrounds. Mosimann will also be at The Datai Langkawi from 24-27 September.

For a chance at dining with the master, (and perhaps a taste of his famed bread and butter pudding!), make your reservations now at dine@thesaujana.com for the dinner at The Restaurant, or infodatailangkawi@thedatai.com.my.

Prior to the red ticket gastronomy, check out The Restaurant which offers an eclectic menu of modern European cuisine, as well as an extensive wine list and cigar selection. Head Chef, Austrian born Alexander Waschl has already made a solid stamp on his creations. Part of the team that earned 16 Gault Milau points previously in Switzerland, (equivalent to a Michelin Star) Waschl brings an exciting edge to his creations at The Restaurant.

For business lunches, The Restaurant presents an exquisite and elegant dining experience, ideal for the lady who lunches or the chairman of the board because when playing business hardball or celebrating victory, a power lunch is an essential component of success. This impressive venue is the ideal location to seal the deal over a quick prix fixe 3 course power set lunch. Priced at RM88++ per person, the lunch is a seasonal menu that comprises a starter, main course and a dessert – inspired by the season's finest ingredients. [ha](#)

New Chef Reinvents Senja

Senja is redefining and reinventing Italian cuisine as it bids chef Giovanni Ricci adieu and welcomes chef Filippo Giunta to The Saujana Hotel Kuala Lumpur's culinary team.

Giunta has embraced this opportunity to recreate traditional Italian dishes with a fresh and upscale twist. With his fine dining background and extensive European training, Senja is poised to set a new standard in Malaysia with Italian cuisine. Giunta has work in London's best - Dolado, Number Twelve, Zafferano - all headed by Michelin star chefs or which are Michelin starred restaurants. Most recently, Giunta was the head chef at The Oberoi Hotel's renowned Traventino Restaurant. It was named as Best Italian Restaurant in India by Ospitalita Italiana Award 2011. [ha](#)





Treats For Dad

Treat daddy to a wonderful feast this Father's Day at Sheraton Imperial Kuala Lumpur Hotel's signature restaurant, Essence.

Essence will be serving a delightful selection of local and international cuisines to make this year's Father's Day an eventful one. Apart from great food, dads who dine will also stand a chance to win a bottle of premium Johnny Walker Blue Label

Whisky or a Spa treatment worth RM200nett at world renowned Mandara Spa. For further enquiries or table reservations, e-mail restaurants.imperial@sheraton.com. **ha**

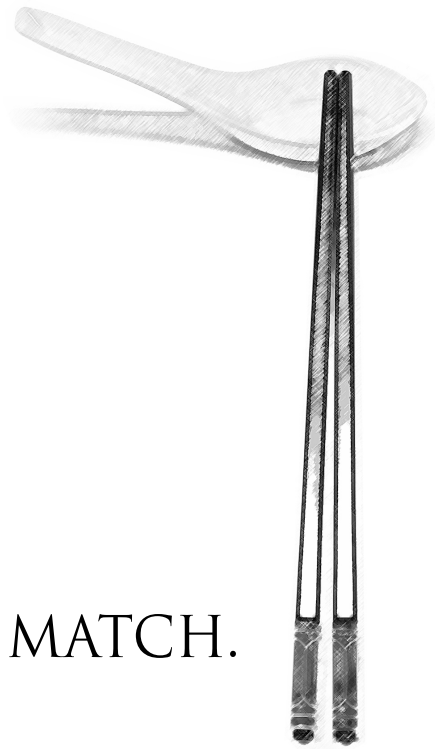
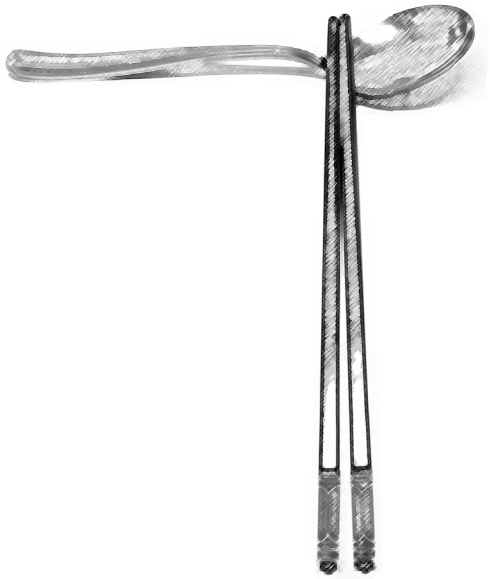
Nordic Trek

Embark on an all-new Scandinavian experience with refreshing Nordic cuisine in the latest installment of the Celebrity Chef Series with A Taste of Finland

With Sara La Fountain presented by American Express and the Asian Food Channel. At publicity event for the series in Malaysia La Fountain shared tips on how to prepare delicious and simple food that tastes as good as it looks at in a live cooking demonstration where La Fountain put her own creative spin on traditional Scandinavian fare with her signature recipes for a new Scandinavian experience.

A celebrity chef within the international culinary scene, and a fashion model, La Fountain runs a catering service and a cooking school. A food columnist for newspapers and magazines in Finland, she also runs her own blog. A popular media personality in Finland, she currently is designing a signature line of dinnerware called *À la Sara* for the Finnish kitchenware company, Luhta Hom and also a line of professional kitchen shoes with colorful prints for the Swedish company Ejandals. **ha**

Delectable appetizer corner at Essence



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Secrets Of Authentic Thai Cooking

Bangkok-based lebua Hotels & Resorts is now offering guests the opportunity to shop and cook like a local with its new Thai cooking package.

The culinary package includes a two-night stay in a Tower Club Suite, a five percent discount card valid for Bangkok's Emporium and Paragon shopping centers, and an exclusive three-hour Thai cooking class at the hotel's poolside Café Mozu.

Conducted by Thai Chef de Cuisine Prayong Khundongling, the three-hour class teaches guests about local ingredients and how to taste and prepare traditional Thai dishes. Hotel guests prepare a traditional five-course Thai meal at Café Mozu, the poolside hotel restaurant. Rates start at \$769.

This package is available through November 30, 2012. **ha**

Going Nuts

KooriMo Premium Kuri Ice Cream will come in six new flavours and sport new packaging and size. Two years after the ice cream was launched FoodServices Inc is giving the chestnut-based ice cream – which is high in Vitamin C, calcium and

dietary fibre – a new taste, look and size.

Coming in new 450ml tubs, the six refreshing new flavours are KuriChoco-Orange (chocolate premium ice cream with orange premium ice cream with chestnut paste and orange peel), KuriCappuccino (cappuccino premium ice cream with chestnut paste), KuriVanilla, KuriBerries (forest fruit premium ice cream with chestnut paste), KuriChocolate and KuriStrawberry. Retailing at \$16 per tub, the new pint-sized ice cream will be available at major supermarkets in May. **ha**

Seychelles' Own Sommeliers And Oenologists

The Seychelles Tourism Academy has embarked on its first ever post-graduate sommelier and oenology advanced certificate. The eighteen months training program, which starts on April 16, 2012, grouping the first batch of fifteen professionals from the Le Meridien Barbarons and Fishermen's Cove Hotels, Constance Lemuria Resort, Hilton Seychelles - Northolme Resort & Spa, and Beachcomber Sainte Anne Resort, will provide a broader spectrum of the arts and science of wine to the post-graduate students. **ha**

Cafe Mozu's pomelo salad is one of the creations budding chefs will discover the secrets of





*Crab Yakimeshi and butteryaki
Angus beef*

Japanese Twist

One of the best social get togethers was hosted at 7atenine Restaurant & Supperclub recently to unveil the new degustation menu by Sous Chef Kamarul Karnan. It was a layering of good on better, beginning with the always luxe venue, fabulous new cocktails, and great company which included Malaysia's First Lady Of Entertainment Hospitality, Michele Kwok, Champagne Billecart-Salmon's representative Sebastien Papin, and Asiaeuro Wines & Spirits Jason Yok and Lee Su Ling.

The outstanding food was paired throughout with excellent champagne, taking 7atenine's Japanese influenced Cosmopolitan cuisine to its most satisfying levels as yet. The offerings included an assortment of sushi and maki, a delectable spread of sashimi, Japanese angel hair rice pasta with enoki, sweet prawn custard, broiled salmon and tempura prawns in wasabi cream, a melt-in-the-mouth butteryaki Angus, and crabmeat and soft shell crab rice. The delicacy of the dishes made the champagne sing, such was Kamarul's deft touch and light hand with the sauces. **ha**

New Fields To Reap

Pizza lovers know classic, melty mozzarella comes from Italy, ideally. But a new entrant into the cheese market - Greenfields Mozzarella - aims to bust the stereotype, by delivering fresh mozzarella cheese from the unlikeliest of sources - Indonesia.

Producers AustAsia, who own a dairy in Malang, Indonesia where their Greenfields-branded milk and cheese is produced, say Indonesia's proximity to major Food & Beverage belts such as Singapore gives them an advantage.

All the processes, from milking to fermentation, packing and shipping, are done under the same roof at Greenfields' Malang dairy. The milk is collected from the herd of imported Holstein cows and brought to an in-house cheese processing plant. After the cheese is packed, it takes about three days for the cheese to be delivered to Singapore. **ha**

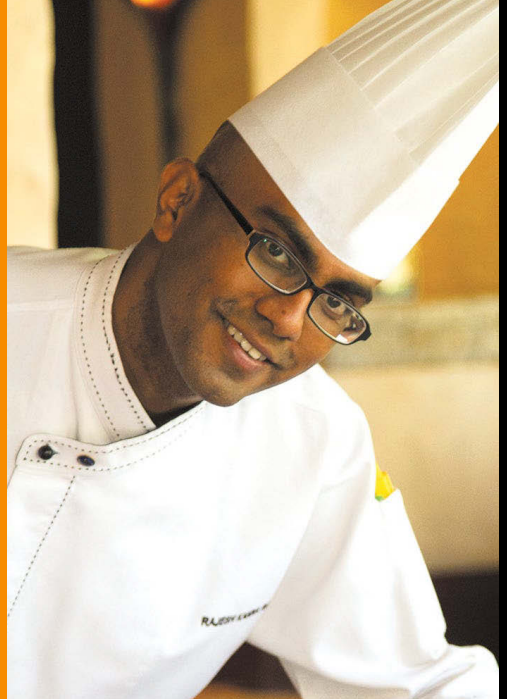
Singapore's First Food Bank Launched

The Food Bank Singapore (www.foodbank.sg) was launched at Food &Hotel Asia 2012. The food bank aims to address the food donation needs of charities and individuals and be the prevailing centralized coordinating organization for all food donations in Singapore.

Acting as a central food depository, Food Bank Singapore will collect, store and distribute food donations from food companies, retailers, charities with excess donations, and home consumers. The donated food will be distributed to members such as voluntary welfare organizations (VWOs), community development councils, soup kitchens, charities, various types of homes, and needy people. It will complement charities' food donation efforts by helping them to obtain better access to excess food. **ha**



They are the high priests of Malaysian cuisine – a disparate group of individuals from many points on the map who are calling Malaysia home for a while, working shoulder to shoulder with talented home-grown talent who themselves are deserving of a few stars.



From Genesis To Revelation

Garth Welsh, The Westin Kuala Lumpur's relatively new Director of Kitchens is the living epitome of a beautiful culinary artist, complete with Australian surfer smile, eyes that lighten to sunlit hazel when smiling, or turn dark as the Irrawaddy when he is focused. And focusing he has been, as he has had to, for a number of reasons. The most intangible, but possibly the heaviest weighing is the spirit of his predecessor, the phenomenal David King, who made The Westin Kuala Lumpur the culinary powerhouse it is. King knew of, met and approved of his successor, but he still casts a long shadow. Yet, Welsh's broad shoulders seem more than willing to shoulder the yoke. Malaysia is the seventh country he has worked in (he has notched up successes in Amanpulo Resort in the Philippines, Fiji's Vatulele Island Resort by Six Senses), but he's not been tried in a property the size of The Westin Kuala Lumpur. Still, change seems to become the dark-haired chef who recently welcomed his first child, a son, with his Thai wife.

"It felt good to take this position on. It is an opportunity to put my stamp on things. In a resort (Welsh was Executive Chef of Sheraton Full Moon Resort and Spa in the Maldives prior to his move to Malaysia) you have a captive audience because you're on an island. Breakfast, lunch and dinner – the diners are all yours. In a city hotel you're only guaranteed a breakfast crowd. So one of the things I am involved in with the Sales and Marketing teams is



getting the word out about what we can do at The Westin. We have good products, I've changed all the menus, so I guess it's time to let people know there's a new sheriff in town," grins the Sydney-sider.

While he is still learning about the Malaysian market, Welsh believes that the world wants to go back to the basics of simple, good food. "This is the post molecular cuisine age, and I am seeing things come back to the way I have been trained, which is to get the best ingredients, respect them and make them work for you," says Welsh. "Coming from Australia, which has every climate in the world – we are a continent! – there is really nothing really new ingredient-wise in Malaysia. What is different is the flavour, especially of the tropical fruit. And ikan bilis! I've been trying it in everything we eat. I never knew there were so many different sizes, grades and varieties! I also love the street food and I am always eating in the little alleys behind the hotel!"

When asked to present a dish which married both his origins and his journey as a chef, Welsh worked with his Malay kitchen to create an Aussie meat pie with Malay-influenced filling. "Australians eat a lot of pies and they always have to have tomato sauce with them, hence the Heinz ketchup being a very important component!," he grins. The pie's latticed top is layered with mashed potato and peas, perfectly underlying the richness of the coconut milk-infused, rendang-style filling. Rib-sticking, heartwarming and completely satisfying, one can only imagine David King tucking into a full sized portion, nodding his approval at the man who is now master of the manor at The Westin Kuala Lumpur.



The Local Legend

The only local in Starwood's Kuala Lumpur-based culinary trinity, Sheraton Imperial Kuala Lumpur's Executive Chef Rajesh Kanna is the antithesis of local chefs. Intensely perceptive, unafraid to speak his mind, constantly absorbing, digesting and recreating, he is near legendary in local culinary circles. After all, what waiter in his right mind would dream of heading the kitchen of a Luxury Collection? As he tells it, "I worked as a waiter in The Westin Singapore. There was no chance to express myself. My job was just to set the tables and clear them. I was henpecked by my supervisor. Those were the days when waiters were not allowed to interact with the guests, so I yearned to be like the chefs who could come out and ask guests about their meal. So one day I walked into the restaurant and told the chef I wanted to be one too. I had never even held a knife! I was scolded and chased out but I insisted and got into the kitchen where I was hit on the head, banged into the refrigerator – all the stuff you'd never do to your commis today!"

Fifteen years down the line Rajesh is looking over job applications to his kitchen ruefully. "Food television has spoilt young people big time!" he proclaims. "A chef's life is not easy, it's not like what you see on TV. In our spare time we still clean pots and wash floors! It is a culture shock to a lot of culinary graduates, and I estimate only 20 percent of kids who go through culinary school even become chefs," he says.

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On whether too much dominance is given to foreign talent in the culinary circles in Malaysia, Rajesh is diplomatic. "Expat chefs and local chefs are good in different things. I've worked and learnt from them for a long time and what I try to do is pass on this knowledge to my own local staff. One important difference between the local and foreign chefs is that the locals will hide in their kitchens and do their thing while the expats are out there talking to the guests. People skill, charm, is what it takes to get your name out there sometimes," he asserts.

Rajesh's own food journey is presented via Wagyu tenderloin with olio aglio and satay cod fish. Like the story teller he is, he relates how he remembers living with his grandmother in Johor and waiting for the travelling satay seller on his motorbike. "I loved satay. I loved the sauce and the fish is my version of this. The olio is something I could eat all day (notably Rajesh helped develop concepts for Prego restaurants throughout the region). It seems simple, but it needs to be done right. If the garlic is not taken off the heat in time, it turns bitter"

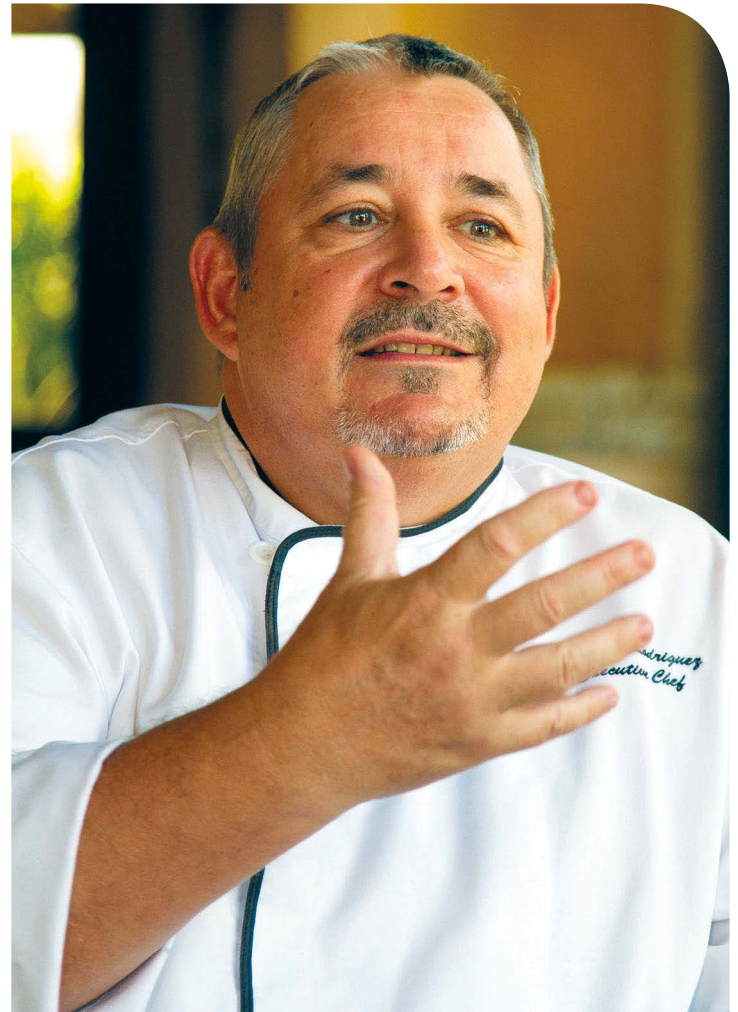
Being Asian Rajesh draws on the vast arsenal of tropical herbs and spices for inspiration. Birds' eye chilli and lemongrass are favourites, but his favourite spice is cinnamon. "You can use it for sweets and savories, in food and in drinks. It lends itself to starters and salads, desserts; you can grate it, soak it, infuse it.. the possibilities are endless!" Seemingly as boundless as his energy and love for what he does best.

The Quintessential Chef

It would be hard going to find an expatriate chef as well liked and respected as Antoine Rodriguez. Comfortingly familiar to the archetypical rotund French chef, Rodriguez has been friend, mentor, cheerleader and trailblazer – sometimes all at once. Young sous who have worked with him sing his praises for his ability to push them till breaking point, then lighten the mood with a joke and a guffaw. Foodies love him because he is a man who loves his food, often tucking into meals with his guests, and making the meal merrier for it.

His 18 years in Asia, including ten in Thailand and four in Sri Lanka, have made him a master of Asian flavours. "It is now second nature for me to use local ingredients in my food. When I go to France I carry chilli padi with me! My wife asks me to vacuum pack galangal and kaffir lime leaves for her. European chefs say I have lost my purity. They are wary of the strong fragrance, but I need zing in my food."

That zing is a trait which comes through even with so traditional a dish as confit. "I grew up in the southwest of France, with foie gras and duck confit. In Malaysia ducks are not fat enough for confit, so I had the idea to use chicken and substitute the duck fat with olive oil. I also added Malaysian aromatic elements – kaffir lime leaves, lemongrass, star anise, green chilli, Sarawak peppercorns. I serve it with a salad of spinach leaves with Thai dressing and local palm sugar, fish sauce, lemon juice and pine nuts instead of peanuts," he says in his signature hearty manner.



"I learnt to cook in the traditional manner where respect for products was important. The rule was not to overpower the ingredients. It is now second nature for me to use local ingredients in my food. When I go to France I carry chilli padi with me!"

"I learnt to cook in 1975, in the traditional manner where respect for products was important. The rule was not to overpower the ingredients. The trend today is to transform food, molecular cuisine. What's wrong with good food? Meat is still very nice when it is served in a way it is recognized, like a steak at Prime. A good potato is still bliss! Asian food also has its place and we see some beautiful presentations and the melting pot variety is amazing, even if the stronger flavours frighten or intimidate some people," squares off the French-Spanish dynamo.

The Beauty Of Regime

Kamarul Karnan was on track to become an architect when he decided his true love lay in the culinary arts. He became a pioneer student of Kolej Damansara Utama's culinary programme, joining the Kuala Lumpur Hilton upon graduation. Two years later he got his first taste of a Japanese kitchen at Santori before moving to Mandarin Oriental, The Westin Kuala Lumpur and Dubai, a post he took in order to learn, share and work with a multinational kitchen brigade. It was in the Emirates where he began carving a niche for himself in Japanese cuisine. "I like the discipline of the art. The details. The synchronicity. The way food is transformed and presented in a way which is symbolic of the ingredients themselves is very exciting to me," he enthuses.

Now Sous Chef at 7atenine, the iconic restaurant and supper club designed by Ed Poole in Kuala Lumpur, Kamarul is defining his own brand of cosmopolitan Japanese cuisine by modernizing sushi with Thai, Malay and Chinese influences, including a rendang roll and foie gras sushi. "A lot of R&D goes into this kind of cuisine. It's not just mixing food around, but coming up with a product which can be enjoyed and not just presented attractively. Everything you touch and see in a Japanese kitchen is pure, and you need to be honest to the ingredient itself. Even vegetables can have their molecular structure upset if they are handled roughly. I believe in the circle of life, where even a vegetable can give its energy to the chef, who in turn prepares it and passes on that energy, which is why even when I carry a fish to the table, I carry it like a baby and not a piece of meat," he stresses.

As creative as the Johorean is, he is firm in his belief that there are some things in Japanese cuisine which should never be experimented with. "Sashimi is the backbone of Japanese dining. Teppanyaki is about skill and showmanship and you just cannot play around with the flavours of this," he says earnestly.

What he does like including into his creations is local salads. "I like the sayur ulam like pennywort. Local salad herbs have characteristics which support sushi and sashimi when served on the side or mixed. Their aromas, their freshness all help presentation so I slot them into a lot of the side salads as often as I can," he enthuses.

He is equally enthusiastic in his praise of his owners, entrepreneurs Fred Khoo and Michele Kwok. "7atenine has given me room to explore. My owners give me a free hand to try new ingredients. I have freedom in my hands. It is one of the best places I have worked!" There is true respect and fondness in his voice when he speaks of his place of work, and he is equally happy to note that the past ten years have been good ones for local Japanese chefs. "Local Japanese chefs are getting better known and respected. They have trained well under masters from Japan, and I dare say 85 percent of them are ready to be true Japanese chefs in their own right."





Toughened By Challenges

He was the eldest of nine siblings growing up in Kelantan. At ten years of age his mother began allowing him to help her cook, letting the young Syed Helmi Hashim pass ingredients to her as she sautéed and stir-fried. After secondary school Helmi joined friends who worked as kitchen helpers at a Japanese restaurant in Kuala Lumpur.

"I was a small town boy, and I saw my seniors owning cars just by being cooks. It made me curious. I had never eaten anything raw before, but was persuaded by the Japanese chef to try some toro (tuna belly). I resisted, but my chef insisted and he told me that if I vomited, he'd pay me compensation. I fell in love with it! The experience changed my mindset about raw fish. I decided then and there that I was not just going to be cooking sweet dishes alone (the Kelantanese are notorious for adding sugar to many of their local dishes). My first apprenticeship was for six years, where I learnt teppanyaki and the showmanship associated with the art. As I learnt, I fell deeper in love. Japanese dishes are unique, every food

item has its presentation and food is always dressed beautifully. I also like the discipline of Japanese cuisine. Because it has a lot of sections, a chef needs to know the order in which to assemble a bento box or kaiseiki," he explains in the manner of a man more accustomed to working than talking.

In his present position as Japanese Sous Chef at Hotel Armada in Petaling Jaya, Helmi is battling his own little bugbears. "Japanese food is very item specific and most items come from Japan and are expensive, so I work very hard on controlling cost. There is a lot of competition because there are many Japanese restaurants and this makes me realize that I need to be creative with the ingredients I have on hand. Also, locals tend to like only the usual items like sushi and sashimi, and so I have to drive demand and create sets and menus which offer choices and variety so as to help educate palates," he shares.

One thing he shrinks from is mixing and matching cuisines. "I love local food as well as local ingredients. After all, they are what I ate when growing up. But I don't think very many of Malaysia's spices or herbs lend themselves to Japanese cuisine," he says firmly.

A few concessions he has made are his garlic fried rice and mochi. "Real Japanese garlic rice is rice fried with garlic. In Malaysia we add egg and vegetables to make it more rounded. Japanese mocha tends to only have filling inside, but in my variety, I coat the outside with peanuts to make it look and taste a bit more interesting," he admits.

Having spent 20 years as a Japanese chef, Helmi believes that there is a good future for this segment of the market. However, he cautions, there needs to be discipline in which success can root. Well-rooted as he is, only greater things are expected of this 38-year-old Zen Master. **ha**

Lashings Of Taste From WIP

WIP has become king of chill out establishments in Bangsar where it has now marked three years in the business with its highly subscribed to atmosphere which borrows from the relaxed elegance of Nice, France and Santorini, Greece.

Known as much for good food as for a great bar selection and ambiance, WIP continues to serve up satisfying soul food from its Western, Asian, Northern Indian kitchen and pizzeria. Not content to simply keep up momentum, WIP recently refreshed their Gobble menu to feature over 30 new dishes, ranging from salads, bar snacks to mains and dessert. Delish eats include fritto misto and mushroom boule from the Bar Snack menu.

Big chow downs call for new dishes like smoked lamb salad, butter baked lobster (available only Fridays and Saturdays), and soft shell crab sandwich. A dinner review served up samplings of more of the good stuff paired with wines from Marques de Caceres of Spain, represented by Asiaeuro. The winery produces a million bottles a year, half of which is consumed in Spain. Marques de Caceres is also the number one selling Spanish wine in North America.



The dinner review saw red curry duck, por daging and wokked black mussels paired with Marques de Caceres Blanco – a potent combination which highlighted the spice of the food and the heavy minerality of the wine. A lighter touch came by way of the Rosado with chicken Maglia, wholemeal naan and deer marsala, while the quasi Tex-Mex sampler of beef quesadillas, chicken chimichangas and kerabu shrimp pasta was downed with the Crianza.

Desserts were the highlight, with a dreamy pavlova and fresh berries, with lava cake which were paired with the Reserva. **ha**



Three For Distilleria Bottega

The results of the 2012 edition of the Decanter World Wine Awards saw Distilleria Bottega gaining three prestigious Bronze Medals with the wines Amarone della Valpolicella Bottega, Brunello Bottega and Bottega Gold.

Amarone della Valpolicella, Bottega is obtained from the dried grapes of Corvina, Rondinella and Molinara produced in the Valpolicella area and belongs among the finest Italian wines.

Brunello di Montalcino, Bottega is one of the most prestigious red wines and is made exclusively from Sangiovese grapes grown in Montalcino. The Brunello is a particularly strong wine for its high alcohol content and for its long ageing time.

Bottega Gold is a wine dedicated to sparkling wine lovers across the world. This wine comes from a selection of grapes picked in the Prosecco area of the Treviso province, located in Eastern Veneto, about 30 miles from Venice. In this area, which has a special vine growing vocation, the soil guarantees a high concentration of minerals. The exposure of the vineyards leads to a considerable temperature range between days and nights, thus creating the perfect condition to obtain the sugar through the photosynthesis. **ha**

*Above (left to right): Marques de Caceres Reserva is best with a heady dark chocolate; Amarone Bottega
Left: The stylish interior of WIP*

Of Beans And Machines

The La Marzocco Out of the Box event held at Taylor's University in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia was designed to not only showcase some nifty coffee making machinery, but also helped participants get an close and personal experience with these machines, to the point of allowing participants to bring their own preferred beans to be ground.

Besides being a sharing session from professionals, La Marzocco representative, Lorenzo Carboni graced the event with his extensive knowledge on La Marzocco and its new technologies in The Strada. [ha](#)

Sand Bar Launched

To commemorate the opening of the new Sand Bar at Hard Rock Hotel Penang, Malaysia more than 300 guests attended an all purple beach party on 19 May 2012. The Sand Bar was created with the idea of offering an alternative place for guests to have a drink and chill-out on the beach.

The launching party began at 7pm with guests enjoying themselves over a game of beach cricket, frisbee and water volleyball. Throughout the night, guests were partying to live music by the entertaining Bongga Bongga band. Australian deejay, DJ LkUk who is known for his house party music took over the stage till the party ended. [ha](#)

DJ Timmy and DJ LkUk

Life & The City

Though much in Vietnam is made of the home-stay in remote hill tribe villages, the usual tourist haunts afford few opportunities to observe traditional life in the country's towns and cities.

That's about to change as La Residence Hotel & Spa opens the door on a new program that introduces guests to residential life in two traditional Vietnamese garden homes, known as nha ruong, and two French villas built by the city's former colonial inhabitants.

Between April 1 and August 1, La Residence is ushering select guests on a one-of-a-kind of exploration of the city's residential life. At US \$295 per person, the Residential Life package includes two nights in a superior room, visits to a pair of traditional Vietnamese homes, visits to two French homes built during the colonial era, cyclo transport and a dinner at Le Parfum, the city's premier fine-dining venue. [ha](#)





Water And Wine Do Mix

TY NANT Natural Mineral Water, internationally famed for its cobalt blue and crimson red bottles are the exclusive water provider for the prestigious International Wine Challenge for the fifth year.

The annual International Wine Challenge is a year long process which begins with wine entrees received globally until the deadline of April when the judging process will begin. The vast number of wine entries are each tasted in categories of grape variety and region and the judges award medals for a balance between fruit intensity and elegance. Throughout the complete process Ty Nant natural mineral water is at hand to ensure a clean, clear palette for each tasting.

Once the judging process is complete, the 2012 medal winners are announced at the London International Wine Fair, where Ty Nant natural mineral water is on hand for the international press and buyers. The year concludes at the prestigious International Wine Challenge awards dinner, which takes place on the 11th September at the Hilton Park Lane, London, where the Champion wines are announced. **ha**



All Mixed Up

Jeffrey Lee, the lead Mixologist from W Taipei stepped in as Resident Mixologist at W Retreat & Spa Maldives from May 2 to May 6 where he indulged guests with his fabulous concoctions. He also mingled with guests and hosted pool-side cocktail mixology classes for those wanting to mix it up. **ha**

Above (from the top): Ty Nant's glass range in the iconic blue and crimson; Jeffrey Lee doing what he does best

*“The will to win
means nothing
if you haven’t the will
to prepare.”*

Juma Ikangaa

*For it is in preparation that you set goals to achieve,
and in achievement you set benchmarks.
With each step, you distinguish yourself from the rest.*

This is the HAPA definition of Excellence.



Setting Industry Standards for Service and Quality Excellence



HOSPITALITY ASIA PLATINUM AWARDS (HAPA) recognizes and rewards the crème de la crème of the hospitality industry at all levels. Focusing on the people who strive ceaselessly to give guests a hospitality experience bar none, this signature soiree has become a much-anticipated event for hoteliers as well as businesses who work with the hospitality industry. Dedicated to recognizing and rewarding personalities and establishments who have shown drive, dedication and passion for the hospitality industry, HAPA award categories are as diverse as the industry it serves, with Personality awards dedicated to service excellence and leadership, to categories ranging from the best experiences to be had in travel, golf, spa, food and entertainment. The Oscars of Hospitality is held annually, with Malaysia and Singapore taking it in turn to host the event.

Victoria's Prosecco Road

By David Bowden

As a wine nation, Australia is complex and in many regions, the wines produced have evolved and been shaped by migrants from Old World wine-producing nations. One of Victoria's lesser-known but rapidly-developing wine regions is the King Valley. This extends from the well-established Brown Brothers Winery at Milawa in the north, southwards to leading wine estates such as Dal Zotto and Pizzini.



*Above (clockwise from the top left):
Brown Brothers Milawa sign; Otto Dal
Zotto Zal Zotto Wines King Valley;*

*Right page (clockwise from the top left):
Sam Miranda Prosecco Milawa; Fred
Pizzini Pizzini Wines King Valley;
Epicurean Centre Brown Bothers Milawa*

Established in 1889, Brown Brothers was one of the first to establish a winery on the Oxley Plains. While Brown Brothers is distinctly Australian in most of what it does, the other two wineries, plus several others in the district are not only Italian in name but also inspiration, heritage and all they stand for. In an effort to distinguish the region from others, one of the most commonly grown grape varieties has been chosen by six of the local wineries to brand and market the area as the Prosecco Road.

Pioneering Spirit

Prosecco was established here by the pioneering Italian grape growers along with several other Italian varieties such as Nebbiolo, Sangiovese, Arneis, Dolcetto, Pinot Grigio and Barbera. The charismatic Otto Dal Zotto grew up in Valdobbiadene in his native northern Italy and always dreamed of replicating the crispness of this fine sparkling wine in his new home in northeast Victoria. He was the first to introduce the variety into Australia and now many others have followed his lead. Each bottle contains a little of the Italian pioneering spirit that has made Australia so culturally diverse.

Dal Zotto was impressed with the similarity of the land he settled on at Whitfield with his homeland of northern Italy. While still actively involved in making his Zal Zotto wines, Otto is now assisted by his two sons who now do much of the winemaking and marketing. Other Italian pioneering wine families in the district have a similar story to relate, with most having arrived in Australia at the end of World War II. Interestingly enough most worked in the tobacco-growing industry that once flourished here. Both Pizzini and Dal Zotto Wineries are located in former corrugated iron tobacco-drying kilns.



A Taste Of Home

Like Otto Dal Zotto, most were impressed and encouraged by the geographical conditions of the King Valley for growing grapes, as well as missing the wines of Italy which were an essential part of their early family lives.

Prosecco is an easy drinking sparkling wine without the airs, graces and price tag of better known sparklers like Champagne. Dal Zotto's enthusiasm for his beloved Prosecco has been formalised in an alliance with five other wineries to market the region as the Prosecco Road. The other wineries making some very creditable Proseccos are Pizzini, Brown Brothers, Chrismont, Ciccone and Sam Miranda.

Food is served in most of these wineries and not surprisingly, rustic Italian is the cuisine of choice. Katrina Pizzini conducts a cooking school that has garnered an excellent reputation and a keen following among visitors.

Wine Touring

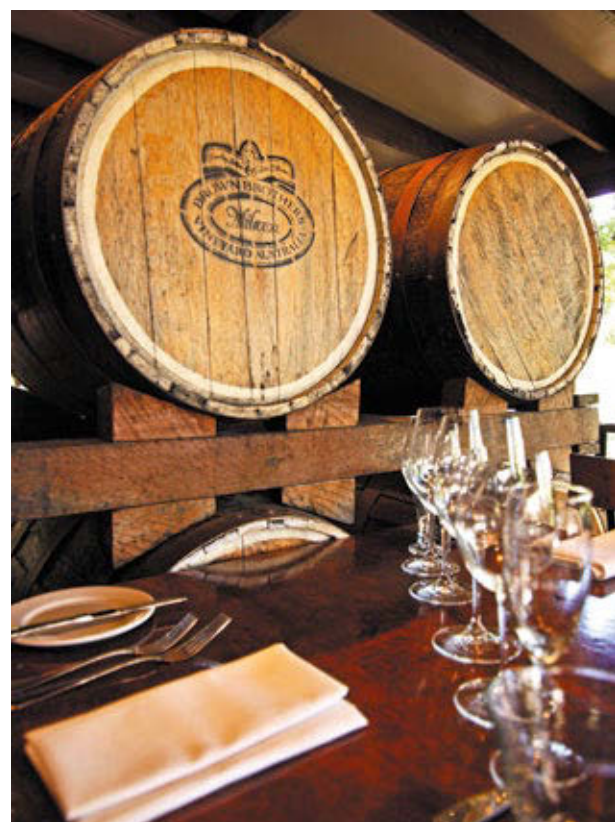
Victoria is well set up for wine touring with an excellent route starting in the Yarra Valley just north of Melbourne, taking in the King Valley and then other regions in the north including Beechworth and the famous fortified region of Rutherglen.

Milawa is an ideal base for visiting the northern wineries; and foodies should investigate the 'Pedal to Produce' (www.pedaltoproduce.com.au) route which enables visitors to explore wineries, mustard producers, the famous Milawa Cheese Factory and olive oil producers on bicycles which are provided free of charge from Brown Brothers.

Merlot Restaurant in Lindenwarrah (www.lindenwarrah.com.au), the smartest accommodation in Milawa, not only has an excellent local wine list but also serves the finest regional produce. Guests can enjoy dishes such as marinated kangaroo fillet with sweet potato chards and Shiraz and juniper berry glaze. Wines offered by glass include Dal Zotto Prosecco, Victorian Alps Pinot Grigio, Dal Zotto Shiraz Barbera and NV Pennyweight Muscat.

Across the road, Brown Brothers winery is also home to the Epicurean Centre Restaurant. In addition to offering one of Australia's most extensive selections of varietal wines, including many Italian grape varieties, the award-winning restaurant matches dishes of locally-sourced produce with wines by the glass from their current and cellar range of wines. The setting, wines and cuisine offered could easily fool visitors into thinking there were in Tuscany rather than rural Australia.

King Valley is carving out its niche as a producer of Italian grape varieties but in Australian climatic conditions – Old World grapes in a New World setting. With some 70 families involved in grape production covering 1,800 ha, the King Valley wine industry is well established. Visitors are assured of Italian-styled wines, rustic Italian-inspired cuisine and possibly a game of bocce with Italian-Australian families who appreciate the finer qualities of hospitality. [ha](#)



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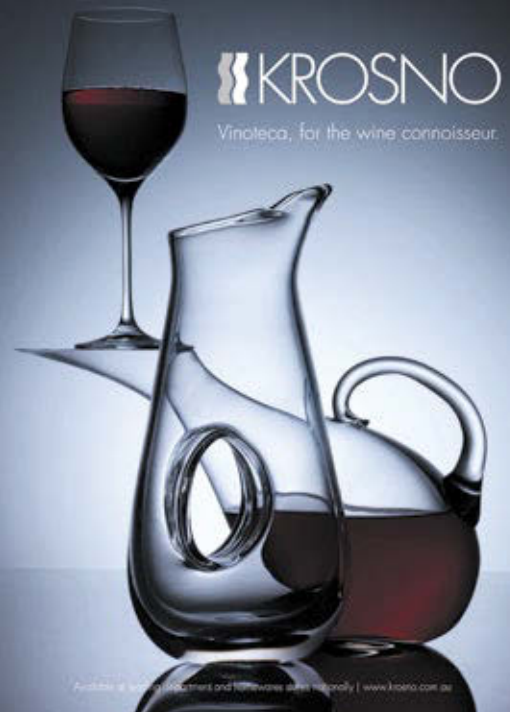


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