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Cooking up a storm for Foster

Geraldine Albela

BEING chef to the rich and famous would certainly put one on the Who's Who list, but this hasn't turned Philip Chang's head at all.

Chang is the personal chef to actress Jodie Foster for the entire eight weeks of the shooting of Anna and the King in Ipoh. He was recommended by friends and was initially supposed to cook for director Andy Tennant.

However, since Tennant's wife was accompanied by four nannies, they preferred to cook themselves. It was then that Chang's name was mentioned to Erin O'Donnell, Foster's personal assistant.

Chang, 52, presented a basket of local fruits to Foster on her arrival in Ipoh, and also gave a cake as a welcoming gift to the production staff.

He said his selection was an honour and privilege and a boost for Perak.

He worked at the Casuarina Parkroyal Hotel for over six years and also at the Hotel Equatorial in Penang and Shangri-La Hotel in Hong Kong.

Chang has also catered for the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Azlan Shah, and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali at Perak Umno functions.

Chang and two assistant chefs do the cooking at Foster's bungalow at an undisclosed location in Ipoh.

He mainly cooks dinner and provides cakes and bread rolls. He also stocks the refrigerator with fruits, vegetables and organic food.

Foster told Chang that the food is the best she's ever tasted while on location.

She even asked him for cooking lessons. Chang said he is grateful that Foster makes it a point to thank him and compliment him on the food, and talk to his staff every day.

"It's enough to see her gesture and exclaim, 'Fantastic', after tasting my food," says Chang.

Dinner, which he cooks five days of the week, contains high fibre, low fat, low cholesterol fish or meat dishes and fresh vegetables and fruit with white wine.

Dessert is usually local fruit and cake. Foster's favourite cake is carrot cake which Chang prepares with chopped roasted walnuts.

So far, he has cooked different Western dishes. However, he does not cook spicy food.

"I prepare a potato leek soup with no cream. Potatoes are served cordon bleu style, while vegetables are roasted with herbs, Italian-style, which make for a wholesome meal."

While most of the preparation is done at Beacon Point, Chang's baking and training school and cafe in Ipoh Garden East here, he does most of the cooking at Foster's bungalow.

He describes Foster as "unbelievably friendly and accommodating", adding that it isn't difficult to cook for her.

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