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In foodie heaven

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IF you have always wanted to know how to make pows that fluff up and open in the centre, like those served in dimsum restaurants of repute, the dimsum class at the Teochew Restaurant, Kuala Lumpur, last Saturday was the place to go.

The more than 80 people who turned up for the class - the first of a series organised by Foodies `n' Friends - were eager to learn the recipe and technique from the restaurant's dimsum chef Chen Ah Siew and his assistant Wai Kar Hong.

They were invited up to pleat the pow, as the two chefs showed how. They got to taste the char siu sauce for the meat filling of the pow, and even the pows that they had a hand in making after they were sent in for steaming.

Making Char Siu Pow was only one in four recipes that they learnt in the cooking class. The others were Char Siu So, which required making a light, melt-in-the-mouth pastry, Egg Custard Tarts (which has the same pastry) and Siu Mai.

The pastry-making, a complicated process, was done step by step so that everyone had a good look at the kneading and folding in layers, and then the final rolling out and cutting into pastry shells after the pastry had been chilled in the refrigerator.

The chefs showed how you could fill egg custard tarts without spilling by using a teapot to pour out the egg and syrup filling.

Everyone too tried their hand at filling wantan skin with siu mai filling and squeezing it together using a special technique.

The cooking class was followed by a scrumptious high tea of dimsum, featuring eight varieties, and a claypot of noodles made entirely of fish paste.

Foodies `n' Friends, which will be launched by Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir on May 24 at the Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, is a newly set-up company devoted to organising food events, cooking classes and gourmet tours, among other projects.

The company is headed by its director and principal Hannah Abisheganaden, a former journalist who used to work for Her World, co-ordinating cooking schools, writing food articles and recipe books.

"Our first cooking class at the Teochew Restaurant was a rousing success and it has spurred us to do bigger and better things," said Hannah.

"It was not just a class but also an occasion for people to sit down, have a meal together and make new friends while tasting new dishes.

"From the tremendous response we received, we know that people are eager to learn new things. That's why we are planning ahead."

The next big event will be the Shangri-La Hotel Cooking School to take place at the hotel in Kuala Lumpur from June 18-22.

"We are confident that this will draw not only the locals but tourists and those who are living and working in this country as well," said Hannah.

"They will learn more about Malaysian cooking and culture. They will also get the chance to identify all the local ingredients they are not familiar with.

"Students who are going overseas to study and would like to pick up some cooking skills could also join these classes. The classes will be small, and participants will be led step by step in a hands-on experience."

"This cooking school was a big hit when it was run with Her World and the Shangri-La Hotel a few years ago."

The Shangri-La Cooking School features a well put-together programme of Malay, Chinese, Indian and western cuisine.

Learn how to stretch and flip a roti canai, and drizzle fine nets of roti jala on a griddle pan. Rendang Tok, Murtabak and Mee Jawa are also dishes to be taught in class.

Try your hand at dim-sum making and cooking Chinese dishes like Chicken Rolls with Enoki Mushrooms and Black Pepper Sauce, Braised Vegetables with Superior Stock, among others (you will learn too how to make this special stock).

Learn how to blend Indian spices to make different kinds of masala or paste for curries, and be initiated into making Chicken Vindaloo and pasembor, among other dishes.

Desserts and pastries will be on the programme for the fifth day of the cooking school. Lafite's chef extraordinaire Otto Goh will show how to make Crispy Plum Tart with Homemade Icecream, Banana and Walnut Souffle and Warm Chocolate Cake with Raspberries.

Chinese cooking will be taught by Shang Palace's executive Chinese chef Lau Ching Hai while the hotel Malay chef Shahril Omar will be teaching Malay and Indian dishes.

Those interested in the Shangri-La Cooking School or other food events initiated by Foodies 'n' Friends can contact Hannah at 03-78808916 or 019-2239646, fax: 03-78054362 or email foodies@tm.net.my

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