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## Masterpieces of sweet wishes

Barbara Foong

EVERY year, Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur prides itself on creating edible masterpieces, be they cakes to mark Hari Raya, Chinese New Year or Christmas.

The cakes, created by its pastry team, are presented to some of the city's most prominent personalities.

This year, its executive pastry chef Cassian Tan and his team took two months to conceptualise the cakes for Hari Raya.

For Datuk Seri Endon Mahmood's (wife of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) cake, the team sat down together with the hotel's area director of communications Rosemarie Wee for a brainstorming session. They finally decided to create a cake that reflected Endon's passion for batik.

The result was a beautiful cake featuring lovely floral batik motifs which were handpainted by Tan using icing sugar and edible colouring. Also featured was a Nyonya kebaya with intricate handpainted designs.

For former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the hotel made a huge cake with a picture of Putrajaya encased in sugar while the frame of the picture was made of chocolate coated in edible gold colouring.

Other interesting pieces created by Tan included a lovely cake with a sugar box sprayed in gold and filled with assorted home-made pralines placed on a piece of gold cloth made from marzipan. The entire base of the cake was covered with white marzipan featuring intricate sugar motifs and accentuated with roses made from French sugar.

Another edible work of art was a "book" with the words "Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri" on it. This decorative piece was crafted from sugar and coated in edible gold colouring. Roses made from sugar were used to enhance the regal look of this delectable cake.

There was also an innovative Hari Raya cake featuring a treasure box made from sugar, complete with gold hinges and lock.

Tan, a master craftsman in sugar works, petit fours, chocolate masterpieces and decorative flour confectionery, is regarded as one of the most innovative pastry chefs in the region.

He has more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry and has worked in Singapore, Britain, Switzerland, France and Belgium.

He started as an apprentice in a pastry shop in Ipoh in 1980 before leaving six years later for Westminster College in London to improve his skills in the field.

There, he mastered Anglo-French pastries before moving to Belgium, France and Japan where he refined his skills and nurtured his intuitive sense of confectionery artistry.

Since then, he has won numerous awards, including the Inniskillin Icewine Pastry Chef of the Year award at the World Gourmet Summit Awards of Excellence 2003.

He was voted second in the Best Hotel Food category in Asia and 10th in the world by World Traveler magazine last year, and selected as team captain to represent Singapore at the World Pastry Cup in Lyon, France in 1997, 1998 and 2000.

Tan also took part in the Singapore East-West food promotion in Nurzburg, West Germany in 1992.

He won the Battle for the Lion trophy and was declared overall winner of Food and Hotel Asia 1992. He also participated in numerous competitions

and culinary events in France, Germany, Singapore and Britain.

He also created the sugarwork showpiece for the Singapore culinary national team at the Food and Hotel Asia 2002 Culinary Challenge (cold display table category).

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