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Press Release

Kerala embarks on voyage of Flavour and Friendship

Path-breaking Spice Route Culinary Festival, featuring choicest cuisine from 15 nations along the ancient maritime tradeway and Kerala, gets underway

Kochi, Sept 23: A first-of-its-kind coming together of formidable international culinary talents from 15 nations added seasoning to an engrossing high tea discussion on the ancient linkages and rich gastronomic heritage unique to the ancient Spice Route here on Friday.

An interactive 'Meet the Chefs' session headlined the opening day of the Spice Route Culinary Festival, setting the tone for the four-day celebration of flavours and friendship. Prominent chefs from Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Thailand, Oman, Turkey, Qatar, Netherlands, France, Malaysia, Italy and Japan participated in the discussion at Bolgatty Palace and Island Resort.

Topics as eclectic as eating insects, commonalities between the cuisines and cultures of the Spice Route countries, trends towards vegetarian diets, supporting local food producers and small businesses, responsible consumption, respect for different culinary traditions besides the role of food as agent of cultural exchange were discussed.

"Food is perhaps the most profound mode of cultural exchange. By accepting each other's food – as we do with this important festival – we are showcasing the highest form not only of praise but friendship," said Ms Moe Chiba, head of UNESCO's Culture Unit.

"The goal of the festival is to develop a new cultural relationship within the Indian Ocean Zone. Kerala was the historical centre of the Spice Route and today it reclaims its place," said Chiba, speaking at a media briefing ahead of the chef interaction session.

Organised under the aegis of the 'Spice Route' initiative helmed by Kerala Tourism in association with UNESCO and the Union Tourism Ministry, the culinary extravaganza is intended to rekindle a shared legacy of culinary distinction, commerce, connectivity and cultural exchange.

"It is indeed heartening that a first-time initiative has drawn such enthusiastic participation with 15 out of the 31 countries along the Spice Route represented here. It goes to show food is a subject that can connect and that chefs are keepers of culture," said Shri U.V. Jose, Director, Kerala Tourism.

The festival, which will run till Monday, September 26, at Bolgatty Palace and Island resort, will have 17 chef teams face off against each other in an international cooking competition on Sunday



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(September 25). The second day of the festival (Saturday, September 24) will see the chefs visit markets in Varapuzha and Ernakulam to source local ingredients for the dishes they will table at the international cooking competition. The competition will be open to the public.

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