



Department of Tourism
Park View Thiruvananthapuram 695 033
Kerala India Fax: +91-471-2322279
Tel: +91-471-2326579 2321132
Email: info@keralatourism.org
marketing@keralatourism.org
www.keralatourism.org

Press Release

Spice Route Culinary Festival Hits the High Note

Festival's centerpiece international cooking competition whets public's appetite, leaves crowd, contestants wanting more of the same

Kochi, Sept 25: If the old adage about too many cooks spoiling the broth is the rule, Sunday proved an exception with the international cooking competition – the centerpiece event of the Spice Route Culinary Festival – laying out a bevy of delectable dishes.

Envisaged as a fresh beginning to the ambitious Spices Route project – an initiative of Kerala Tourism in association with UNESCO and the Union Tourism Ministry, the festival has proved to be that and more.

The international competition was kick started by Shri S. Sharma, Honourable MLA, Vypeen, with the lighting of a traditional lamp at Bolgatty Palace and Island resort in the morning.

The MLA invited the 15 participant countries to explore and discover not just the cuisines but also the cultures of the Spice Route.

The inauguration was attended by Ambassador of the Netherlands to India H.E. Alphonsus Stoelinga, Mr Shigeru Aoyagi, Director and UNESCO Representative to Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, Ms Moe Chiba, Culture Head at UNESCO India and Shri U.V. Jose, Kerala Tourism Director.

“Food is a part of culture and helps to connect people. The Dutch government welcomes this wonderful initiative and will support efforts to promote the heritage shared by the countries of the Spice Route,” the Dutch Ambassador said.

Noting that chefs are transmitters of culture, Mr Aoyagi said, “The Spice Route initiative celebrates not only our common legacy, but also our differences.”

Delivering the vote of thanks, Shri Jose thanked the chefs and dignitaries from participating countries for being part of this unique event.

“This Culinary Festival is a great beginning to the Spice Route initiative. It is the first step to realising the true potential of the ‘Spice Route’ as a viable tourism offering for the state. Let us now take this forward through similar projects,” he said.

The crowds milling at the competition venue were treated to dazzling displays of culinary prowess and a selection of the choicest cuisines from along the historic Spice Route.



Department of Tourism

Park View Thiruvananthapuram 695 033

Kerala India Fax: +91-471-2322279

Tel: +91-471-2326579 2321132

Email: info@keralatourism.org

marketing@keralatourism.org

www.keralatourism.org

Leading chefs from Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Thailand, Oman, Turkey, Qatar, Netherlands, France, Malaysia, Italy and Japan poured their formidable kitchen talents into cooking three dishes – an entrée, main course and dessert – within the three-and-half hour allotted period.

With the competition's all-star judges – noted chefs Vijay Nagpal, Debraj Bhaumik and Montu Saini, the executive chef to the President – doing the rounds, the 17 teams had to pull out all the stops to stand out.

The prizes merit such effort: the first place team gets a 15-night holiday voucher, the second prize is a 10-night holiday voucher while the third prize is a seven-night holiday voucher. The winning teams will all receive two airline return tickets in addition to a memento and certificate for each member.

The team from Turkey fired the first salvo, tabling their appetiser – an Ottoman Almond Soup – setting off a chain reaction of raised hands and shouts from the other contestants to draw the judges' attention.

As the day winded down, murmurs about who would come out on top could be heard. That question will be answered at an award ceremony ahead of the valedictory function on Monday (September 26).

Before that, however, the finals of the 'Kerala Chef' competition – an initiative to promote local culinary flavours and talent from across the state – will round out the morning's proceedings.

ENDS

Side Stories

10 Spice Route nations promote tourism through food, souvenirs

The Sunday crowds enthusiastically devoured the *kahwa* and cookies that were served at tourism stalls manned by representatives from the countries participating in the Spice Route Culinary Festival on the Bolgatty Palace premises.

Every stall served products unique to the represented country. Qatar treated the visitors to kahwa, a traditional tea, and savouries made of dates. Turkey served an array of ethnic Turkish halwa.



Department of Tourism

Park View Thiruvananthapuram 695 033

Kerala India Fax: +91-471-2322279

Tel: +91-471-2326579 2321132

Email: info@keralatourism.org

marketing@keralatourism.org

www.keralatourism.org

Cookies were a big draw at the Netherlands stall. “These cookies are traditional to our country,” said Netherlands Ambassador H.E. Alphonsus Stoelinga. “The main ingredients are jaggery and flour, but it is not too sweet as some cookies.”

The stall also had miniatures of the wooden clogs used in the European country. “We have marshy land and usual shoes cannot be used. Hence, we use wooden shoes there,” said Stoelinga.

The stalls also handed out recipe books of traditional dishes from each country.

Spice Route Culinary Festival: Italian Chef brings personality

Even amongst the standout chefs cooking up a storm at the international cooking competition on Sunday, Gianluca Mennella has no trouble separating himself from the rest of the pack.

The 26-year-old Italian chef – the youngest and brashest participant in a pool of veteran culinary masters – was the fastest to finish, tabling his dishes for the judges at 1 hour 17 minutes. Contestants were allotted three and a half hours to cook three dishes: an entrée, the main course and a dessert.

“Timing in the kitchen is very important, but the most important subject is the dish. If the dish is ready, if the dish already has life, why should I spend more time trying to make it better?” said Mennella, a tattooed, blond self-described “food artisan”.

After serving up a Crudit  of King Prawns and Kiwi for an appetiser, Mennella followed up with a three-culture risotto main course that married Italian food with Indian spices. For dessert, a tiramisu garnished with saffron, cinnamon, curry leaves and vanilla.

Whether he comes out on top tomorrow when the jury picks the best entries, Menella is satisfied because he accomplished what he set out to do.

“Talent is written in ranks or numbers. For me, it is more crucial is to make an honest impression. The dishes I prepare have to reflect my personality: a sort of bi-polar balancing of brightness and the dark. It’s my signature,” he said.

Student Volunteers learn the ropes



Department of Tourism

Park View Thiruvananthapuram 695 033

Kerala India Fax: +91-471-2322279

Tel: +91-471-2326579 2321132

Email: info@keralatourism.org

marketing@keralatourism.org

www.keralatourism.org

Besides showcasing the choicest cuisines from 15 nations on the ancient maritime tradeway, the ongoing Spice Route Culinary Festival serves as an introduction to best practices and prowess in the kitchen for the next generation of Indian chefs.

Around 34 young chefs-in-training from the Food Craft Institute (FCI), Kalamassery and the Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology (IHMCT) at Kovalam are volunteering as guides and assistants to the international chefs.

From helping the chefs source fresh ingredients from the local markets on Saturday through to plating the final dishes for the international cooking competition on Sunday, the students have been learning at their assigned chef team's side.

"It has been like an internship. I learned how to translate the skills taught to us into a real professional kitchen. I wish to take part in more such valuable experiences," said Peter Deepak, an FCI student, who helped out a team from the Netherlands.

Rohan Tonpe, an IHMCT student volunteering with the Malaysia team, echoed the sentiment. "The experience of working together in a kitchen from internationally renowned chefs has motivated me. I want to represent India on the big stage one day like these chefs are representing their countries," he said.

Anandhu Gopal, who was co-ordinating the student volunteers, said, "The stress of working against the clock and seeing the techniques used in the kitchen has been good preparation for when we audition for placements in the industry."

Voicing appreciation for the volunteers' efforts, Iranian chef Samira Janatdoust said, "They were very helpful in the kitchen. I'm sure they picked up a few tricks from working with professionals that will help them in their careers."

ENDS