

Mad about Malay food

Culinary czar Anton Mosimann looks forward to sampling Singaporean food again while here as Equinox's guest chef

By TEE HUNCHING

WHILE gourmands here cannot wait for the arrival of Anton Mosimann, the culinary wizard is looking forward to sampling Singaporean fare again.

"I can't wait to take in all the seafood. I especially love the Malay food," says the Swiss good-naturedly in a telephone interview from London.

He will be the guest chef at Equinox restaurant from April 8-12 as part of the World Gourmet Summit, which kicks off here on April 7.

The tantalising menu includes his specialities, such as Anton's caesar salad, Anton's bread and butter pudding and *risotto ai funghi*.

The arrangement with Equinox is no accident. His son, Philipp, 26, is the operations manager at the new dining and entertainment complex at Swissotel The Stamford, the former Westin Stamford.

"I arranged it so that I could see him," the junior Mosimann confesses with a chuckle.

"He's very happy, too. He gets to see his son again. Besides, it's easy for me. I just make one call and I get to speak to him. Others have to go through his secretary and all that."

The last time the two met was when Dad flew in for Christmas in 2000 to visit his son.

The latter had taken him to favourite *makan* haunts here such as Tiong Bahru market and the stretch of seafood joints at East Coast Park.

"He loves Singapore a lot because he says there is so much diversity within such a concentrated area. It's such a haven and he eats everything," says the younger Mosimann, his eyes crinkling at the memory.

Much of his childhood, he recounts, was spent zipping in and out of hotel restaurants and kitchens with his mother and younger brother, as his Dad flew in and out of different countries to launch various gourmet promotions.

From Hongkong and Osaka to Los Angeles and Stockholm, the culinary legend

cooked his way around the world.

"It really opened our eyes and enriched our horizons... We learnt a lot of tricks off him," says the son.

It is no wonder then that both he and his brother now work in the food and beverage industry. Mark, 24, is an assistant restaurant manager in San Francisco.

Philipp, who graduated from the highly-regarded Lausanne Hotel School in Switzerland, worked in France, Germany and Switzerland before coming here two years ago.

He left his post as assistant F & B manager of Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel's Pontini restaurant in July last year to join Equinox.

Mosimann senior is thrilled with his sons' overseas job stints.

"I'm very pleased that they have gone away to work," he says. "It's very important to gather the experience and broaden your mind."

Ranked one of the world's top chefs, Mosimann, 54, the former executive chef of London's posh Dorchester Hotel, has cultivated an international following with his two upscale eateries — the legendary Club restaurant at the Belfry London and the romantic Chateau Mosimann in Olten, Switzerland.

He even has an arrangement with Prince Charles, a fan of his cooking, where he handles six events every year for the Prince of Wales.

On the private parties that he used to throw at home, his son recounts with a laugh: "There would be all these famous people — lords, dukes, royalty, famous photographers and so on. But at age eight or nine then, I was very shy when they spoke to me."

"I had no idea that they were famous till many years later. I would come across some of their photographs in the newspapers and go, 'Wait a minute, this guy was at my house!'"

His father, he adds, is neither portly nor high-strung — attributes that people tend to associate with chefs.

"He's amazingly slim because he works out a lot. And he's so calm and natural. There's not one streak of negativity in him. That's why he

has so many friends."

But the famous Mos name can be a disadvantage sometimes. "People are to cook for my brother because they think, guys must eat *foie gras* beef every day. But that's true. Like my father, I eat everything."

"I know we will be getting many, many restaurant eateries when he gets here."

◆ For reservations and enquiries call the World Gourmet Summit hotline on 270-1254 or visit www.worldgourmetsummit.com. Priority booking is open to Citibank Visa and MasterCard members till March 4. They enjoy 10 per cent off published rates for selected events.

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But the famous Mosimann name can be a disadvantage sometimes. "People are afraid to cook for my brother and me because they think, 'these guys must eat *foie gras* and beef every day'. But that's not true. Like my father, we love everything."

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*'Singapore's
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— Philipp Mosimann (inset)
on his father, culinary
wizard Anton (left)

Two make VII heaven Down Under

Chefs Inukai and Sugie have made Restaurant VII Sydney's hottest dining spot

By ONG SOR FERN

CHEFS Harunobu Inukai and Noriyuki Sugie became friends in appropriately culinary fashion.

Recalls Inukai, with a smile: "I cooked for him."

Both were working in Sydney in 1998 — Inukai at Amersand and Sugie for celebrity chef Tetsuya Wakuda — when the latter went to Amersand for a meal.

When the 33-year-old Inukai decided to strike out on his own, he asked Sugie, 29, along for the ride.

The two are now co-executive chefs at Restaurant VII. The acclaimed Sydney restaurant is now the hottest dining spot Down Under, giving even Tetsuya's a run for its money.

Gourmands will soon be able to sample a style that the chefs describe as French tradition influenced by Japanese cuisine. The duo will be guest chefs at Restaurant 360 during April 9 - 12 as part of the World Gourmet Summit.

It is not difficult to see why the two are fast friends. Chatting with Sunday Plus at Res-



WONG MAYE-E

They draw inspiration from French cooking, but Japanese cuisine is equally important to chefs Noriyuki Sugie (left) and Harunobu Inukai.

taurant 360 during a stopover in Singapore recently, it is evident that both are passionate about cooking.

Although Restaurant VII has earned rave reviews, Sugie notes that "we have not yet found our signature dish".

Not if Sydney food critics have anything to say about it. Reviewers have been going gaga over the duo's egg cocotte, served as an appetiser. The dish is a delicate egg custard with dashi jelly and a ginkgo nut, served in an eggshell and topped with gold leaf.

Despite their haute cuisine credentials, the duo have a down-to-earth emphasis when it comes to cooking.

Sugie says: "Before you cook, it is what you buy: The freshest ingredients. If it's fresh, beautiful food, you don't have to do too much. Some chefs do too much."

Although they cook complicated stuff for a living, both confess rather sheepishly that they like plain food. Sugie likes just miso soup and rice while Inukai prefers Japanese cuisine in general because "no fat, no grease, healthier".

The earnest and more serious Inukai reveals in his halting English that he decided to become a chef at 14 after watching his father catch fish from Nagano river to cook for his family. He declares that

the secret to great cooking "is not only food, it is heart".

For Sugie, who resembles a J-pop idol with his spiky hair-do and grungy goatee, dining out is about the experience: "I liked restaurants. My parents would take me, and how exciting it was as a kid. It was a special occasion, you dress up."

"Before learning cooking, I like the restaurant."

Both are entranced by the artistry of the French culinary tradition.

Inukai's first encounter with French food was at the grand old age of 18 as there was no French restaurant in his hometown. His first taste was a culture shock of a high

order. He jokes that it was "like a heart attack. There was a lot of cream".

But the dish of fish changed his life. He was swept away by "the taste and the presentation".

Ask Sugie about the most memorable dish he has ever had, and the answer comes promptly: "In Paris, Pierre Gagnaire's restaurant — French onion soup."

Usually served piping hot in winter, Gagnaire serves it cold in summer. And it is this "different angle" that Sugie admires.

Although they draw from the French cooking tradition, Japanese cuisine is equally important to them. The duo went to Kyoto and Osaka recently to sample traditional Japanese food.

Travelling, Sugie says, is very important for chefs: "We need trips to see what's happening in the world. You cannot see or taste different cultures from TV or magazines."

But whatever cuisine is on the table, it all boils down to pleasing the customer. Sugie says: "Food is fantastic, makes people happy. I like that. I cook to make people happy."

And Inukai nods approvingly.

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