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Feature Story When Chefs Gather...

The 31st World Association of Cooks (WACS) World Congress in Dublin, Ireland, has now concluded, and suffice to say, a select number of individuals who have been newly initiated into the committee are on their way home with the distinct impression that the real work has only just begun....

A few new faces to watch out for are WACS president elect, Ferdinand E Metz (also president emeritus of the Culinary Institute of America), the new WACS vice president, Edward G Leonard (also president of the American Culinary Federation), the newly instated WACS secretary L. Edwin Brown, and the appointed regional directors of the Pacific rim, Middle East & Africa, Americas, Asia and Europe. Norbert Schmidiger will continue in his current role as treasurer of the association.

As for those from the Pacific Rim countries, Glenn Austin from Australia will be shouldering the responsibilities, Arnold Tanzer from South Africa will manage members from the Middle East and Africa, Jorge E Monti from Brazil will manage the Americas, while their colleagues Reinhold Metz from Germany, Gissur Gudmundsson from Iceland and Fausto Luigi Aroldi from Portugal will jointly manage members from the European continent. And if you are wondering who will be the one overseeing the happenings in Asia, Frank Naesheim from Singapore is all set to make a difference.

The venue for the 2008 WACS World Congress was determined by a resounding majority vote for Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. But closer yet is the 32nd WACS World congress, which will be held in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2006. See you there!

Written by .



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Have you heard? West meets East

When it comes to Chinese cuisine and ingredients, how can the Western culinary style interpret with Chinese cuisine? Well, find out at World Gourmet Summit 2004. Conrad Centennial Singapore will be hosting a dialogue on the Western and Chinese culinary styles in a gourmet herbal dinner presented by Eu Yan Sang, manufacturer for Chinese herbal remedies. With American ginseng, try the Western-style Beijing duck consommé with ravioli pitted against the Chinese double-boiled black chicken soup with sea whelk and Chinese yam. Or try the lamb shank braised with candanopsis spinach and wolfberry flan against boneless quail baked oriental-style with candanopsis root and wolfberries. The dinner will certainly serve as a very educational and healthy event.

And that's not all. Bryan Nagao will also be showcasing his innovative styles of cooking with Japanese flavours at WGS 2004. When it comes to food and restaurants, Japan is probably one of the most cosmopolitan and international countries in world. As general manager and director for Radisson Miyako Hotel Tokyo puts it, "In Japan, it's not all raw fish, rice and noodles." So do have a lookout for him.

Visit <http://www.worldgourmetsummit.com/> for more details.

A Penny for the Hungry?

The hungry don't learn. They eat. It's obvious enough, but the next time you save that extra penny for any charitable organisation, take more care in finding out where it's going. Social and environmental organisations have all the good intentions, but according to Reuters, endangered flamingos are falling prey to "poor rural Venezuelans ... despite attempts by the Environment Ministry to educate residents to protect them."

It's not enough to teach them. It's also about providing the means for survival before education can even play a role in social policies. So as you go about this season enjoying fine wine and cuisine, do so in abundance, but don't forget the hungry. Visit <http://www.worldhunger.org/> to find out how you can help. It's only one of the many websites that can tell you more about world hunger so just do a simple search on Yahoo! or Google to find more.

Chef News



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New blood

The Hong Kong Chefs Association (HKCA) has seen a change of leadership in the first quarter of this year – Perry Yuen, former secretary of the association, is now the president, taking over the reins from Robert Blythe, while HKCA newcomer (but certainly no stranger to the profession in Asia) Rudi Muller, assists him as vice president. Handling the association's finances will be Angus Cheng, while Hans Rudi Nussbaumer takes care of the educational needs of Hong Kong's large culinary talent. Daniel Wettling will handle F&B industry relations, while Stefan Herzog develops the culinary competitions front. Marco Veringa was elected to maintain the official HKCA website and Timothy Tam organises the monthly association newsletter. Eddy Leung will be managing special projects.

Visit their website for details at <http://www.hongkong-chefs.com/>.

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Chef of the Month

Singapore: Randy Chow

Randy Chow has a job that may invite a few quizzical looks. Although his job description may read 'executive chef', his environment and the nature of his job is a little different from other 'executive chefs'. He is the executive chef of Mount Elizabeth Hospital, one of the most luxurious hospitals in Singapore.



His basic job responsibilities are no different from that of an executive chef in a hotel. It still includes building up a team, going through meetings, meeting suppliers, and conducting product and price studies to ensure they receive quality stuff. One who professes to enjoy working alongside his team, he describes himself as one who is "friendly, approachable, firm and concise". The challenges, however, are slightly different when it comes to menu planning. "At the hospital, you are cooking for people with special dietary needs and people who are recuperating from varying degrees of illnesses. So while you strive to cook delicate or cook healthy, you must also cook with taste without the use of conventional 'tasty' ingredients. That is the challenge my team and I face every day - coming up with appetising, tasty, creative meals that do not compromise any patient's dietary needs," shared Chow. Yet he is quick to add, "When it comes to the crunch - in both the standards and quality of food served, we are on par with industry standards. Don't forget, most of us here are from the industry."

Chow has come a long way since the time his first chef ambitions were stirred. "I was six or seven years old and was experimenting with tins cans and milk containers with fire. I started 'cooking' and built a make-shift stove and that experience fired my imagination like nothing else," he recalled. Thirty years down the road and the kitchen still remains his playground, even though he prefers to keep a low profile these days, either spending time with his wife or having a game of soccer with friends. He belongs to the chef generation that changed the concept that not all executive chefs have to be European and that locals can do an equally good job. "I was fortunate to have come under the tutelage of some of the best chefs," he humbly remembered. After his two years of apprenticeship at SHATEC, the following four years at Hilton Hotel exposed him to executive chefs who "emphasised a lot on building our foundation in both kitchen skills and knowledge." It was then that he stepped into the

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international culinary competition field, supported by mentors such as William Han, Philip Neo, Herman Long and Peter Knipp, who influenced him by their sense of professionalism and generosity in sharing skills and knowledge. Not surprisingly, many gold medals in international competitions came his way.

The qualities of his mentors are those that he keeps close to his heart as executive chef these days. "That belief of professionalism has served me well through the years, and it will stay with me for life. I hope to pass on this sense of commitment and dedication. Some of my younger trainees have already risen to executive positions in some of the more reputable hotels because of their unfailing commitment," he proudly shared.

"Inspiration goes both ways, so the person I am going to inspire had better inspire me first with his or her keen attitude to learn!" he added. He recognises that every team member brings to a team his or her own unique styles and strengths, understands where they come from and then capitalises on it by assigning responsibilities best suited for the individual. Setting clear goals and expectations, while balancing being fair and firm at the same time is how he would describe his style. As he shared, "I want my chefs to say what I always say: 'I am proud of what I do for a living. I am honoured to be a chef.'"

by Jenny Tan

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International: Cassian Tan

Cassian Tan is no stranger to the culinary industry in Singapore. In fact, this pastry chef had already carved a name for his fine dessert work, and was justly awarded the Inniskillin Pastry Chef of the Year at the World Gourmet Summit Awards of Excellence 2003. He has, however, since the last year hopped across the Causeway to Kuala Lumpur and is helming the executive pastry chef position at the Shangri-La Hotel KL.



Tan has not forgotten his roots. "I have many mentors, such as Kenny Kong (executive pastry chef, Raffles the Plaza and Swissôtel the Stamford), Vincent Bourdin (pastry consultant, Valrhona), Peter Knipp (managing director, Peter Knipp Holdings), Martin Aw Yong (executive chef, The Regent KL) and many more," he shared. He does draw special attention to the one he admires most – Otto Weibel, director of Kitchens at Raffles the Plaza and Swissôtel the Stamford – a fatherly figure who has imparted in him in the inspiration and desire to push boundaries.

Even though Tan has been noted for dramatic pieces of creation, he still maintains that "to master the basics and be strong on the classical items" is what matters. "If there is one single most important tool to measure my standard of my pastries, it is when it should feel there is 'an explosion of flavours in my mouth and there should not be a lingering taste that lasts too long. It is always the scientific factors that come first, then followed by the artistic involvement. You must have lots of passion for it," he said. Having gone to good pastry schools and trained in numerous places, he still uses the five senses to appreciate." It's not just pastry, it is precision pastry," he added. To date, he has crossed many milestones, and he lists the Inniskillin Pastry Chef of the Year award as one. "I felt honoured and it was a

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wonderful yard stick," he recalled. Even today, he is asked about the award – did he build an edible showpiece or cake? "It's more about the professional culinary impact of not only quality, but consistency and innovation. This award is about the people's choice," he shared.

He has, since then, gone on to other challenges. After eight months in Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, he cites one boon is the ease one is able to get young and energetic staff, something he is thankful for. "If an establishment believes that a candidate for kitchen crew must speak English, something is wrong. I don't speak good French and I can be strong in patisserie and getting better by the day. Why should someone who cannot speak Queen's English be turned away? It is important but ultimately, it is the passion that counts." It is no surprise then, to find out that he is a good teacher, and often encourages young cooks to take part in food competitions and take bigger responsibilities to improve the food standards locally and internationally. He stated, "Guys in the team will then say 'my boss is good because he can cook the best and he also helped put my country on the culinary world map.'"

He is glad for his current team, which he believes is the strongest culinary team so far in the city, with 30 staff in the pastry department to handle 14 F&B outlets. His latest project was the refurbishment of the pastry shop, an extension of the reputable Lemon Garden Café, called Lemon Garden2Go. A unique set up and an area for wedding cake showcase and the first in the region, this concept is the first in the region and as Tan describes, is recognised as "the Louis Vuitton of pastry work".

Good news for all aspiring pastry chefs – Cassian Tan plans to stick to teaching in the future as that is his passion. With this, he ends with a morsel of delectable advice: "I am only as good as my next dessert or edible showpiece creation!".

by Jenny Tan

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Hotel and Resort News

Five-Star Opening in Shenzhen

Shenzhen, China, will see its first five-star hotel in its new city centre, scheduled to open in July 2005. As one of China's first special economic zones and southern gateway to mainland China, Shenzhen is China's key international trading port and its central district, Futian District is poised to become the new Central Business District. It is here that Sheraton Shenzhen Hotel will stand with direct access to the city's new international convention and exhibition centre. The hotel will be managed by Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. – the latter's 18th hotel in its portfolio for China.

Countering price-wars on the Internet

For the hotel industry, the internet is commonly seen as a price-competition tool for users and hoteliers. It's no wonder that Hilton Hotels is investing US\$175 million on revamping the corporation's own web services. According to Chris Hartman of HVS International to eHotelier, the relevance of price competition among airlines may not necessarily apply with hotel room rates.

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Health and Nutrition News

Red Alarm!

Watch out for the bright-coloured foods! They may be the most appealing, but not necessarily the most assuring of foods. According to Reuters, some of the chicken tikka masala dishes in Surrey, southern England, has risen to popularity in Britain because of its "distinctive red hue and spicy, creamy taste." Restaurants have reacted to that, according to a trading standards officer in Surrey to Reuters, by adding "illegal and potentially harmful levels of chemicals" that produce the bright red colour. Excessive consumption of such chemicals may cause health problems such as hyperactivity in children, allergies and asthma.

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Product News

Cutting edge

The global leaders in professional culinary and hospitality education, Le-Cordon Bleu and renowned knife forgers, Wüsthof have put their expertise together to create the new collection of fine blades. The Wüsthof-Le Cordon Bleu Collection is specially carved to meet and exceed the exacting standards of the world's great chefs. It features a single blank high carbon, stainless steel. The attention to ergonomics also resulted in a lighter, more agile knife with impeccable balance and heft. What do you expect from the best?



For more information, contact Razorsharp Pte Ltd at (65) 6227 7515 or fax to (65) 6227 7512. Or visit their outlet at Tan Boon Liat Building, 315 Outram Road #01-03 Singapore 169074.

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Up & About (promotions)

Double Vision

The Vue de monde will be presenting the final event of the Melbourne Food and Wine festival with a Sunday lunch with Shannon and Curtis. The duo has built their careers in restaurants around the globe, picking experience from mentors like Marco Pierre White, Alain Ducasse, Albert Roux, John Burton Race and the legendary Escoffier. The six-course menu pays homage to the culinary masters whom they've trained under. Each course will be accompanied by wines from Australian vineyards like T'Gallant, St Huberts and Hargrave as well as from the international vineyards of Matua (New Zealand) and Beringer Knights Valley (United States). Held at 295 Drummond Street Carlton, Sunday 4 April 2004

12.30pm, the lunch will be priced at \$150 per person.

For reservations, call Anna Curry at (61) 03 9347 0199.

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Opportunities

Positions Open with Leading Airline Catering Company

The globally renowned SATS Catering, which operates two inflight catering centres in Singapore, is looking to immediately fill several positions: Executive Sous Chef for the Western kitchen, two Sous Chef positions (one for Pastry and the other for Bakery) and two Chef de Partie positions for the Chinese kitchen and Pantry Gardemanger.

1. Executive Sous Chef for the Western kitchen

Candidates could be sous chefs willing to adapt to airline catering schedules. This position offers a 5-day workweek with morning shift only, but candidate must demonstrate good leadership qualities, and is able to train staff well.

2. Two Sous Chef positions

One for Pastry and the other for Bakery. They are afternoon or morning shifts, six days a week. Candidates can be chef de parties with at least 2 years working experience. Must be young, dynamic, hands on.

3. Two Chef de Partie positions

Open for Chinese kitchen and Pantry Gardemanger. Candidates ought to be young persons who are flexible and with good training background. They can be current cooks or leading cooks with good team spirit and at least 4 years working experience.

Interested applicants please email your CV and contact details to Detlef Greiert at mailto:Detlef_Greiert@singaporeair.com.sg?subject=Equiry (from Asiacuisine.com E-zine).

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