



It's 10am on a lazy Sunday morning. Somewhere in Zion Road, an ultra chic apartment kitchen hums with activity while the rest of the island is just rousing from sleep. Standing by the handsome kitchen island are the island-city's high profile restaurateur couple Edina and Emmanuel Stroobant, stoically preparing lunch for today's shoot. Emmanuel's lively punk blond locks are the only things that brighten the morning.

In a rare reversal of roles, the bosses are playing host to (guess who...?) their chefs. Clad in tracksuits, they look visibly tired. Both had barely slept the night before, thanks to a very busy schedule that's usually packed back to back. (We found out that the doting hubby is taking Ms Hong out for a Sunday matinee immediately after lunch.)

Understandably, the busy couple, with several F&B outlets under their belts, rarely cooks or dines at home. Faced with gourmet European fare day and night, it's no surprise either to learn that Ms Hong's comfort food is Asian chow, especially

spicy Indian fare. "I need to have spicy food everyday," she lets on. Fittingly, her love for fiery food is a testament to her similarly fiery character. She bristles when we ask if she had toned down the spiciness of the day's dishes, "These days, you can't assume that Caucasians can't eat spicy food!" With a wide grin, Emmanuel chips in, "She once cooked a meal for my family in Belgium. I remember that the whole house was 'chilli-ed out' as most of the dishes were spicy and yes, too spicy for everyone!" These days, we're sure he has no problem chugging fiery fare.

For today's lunch, the menu is a nod towards the pedigree of the cooks behind the dishes: she hails from across the Causeway, he's a French-trained Belgian chef. "I'm serving Asian dishes with a Western twist. Since my chefs are all European, it won't make sense for me to cook anything European for them," Edina explains.

**On the guest list:** her five European staff — Saint Pierre's sous chef Antoine, pastry chef Florent, sommelier Vincent, San Marco's Chef de Cuisine Paul, and business partner Roxan (and friend,

Christopher). Conversation topics are varied, revolving around a big boys' night out, wines, and of course, the recent World Gourmet Summit (where Saint Pierre garnered the Le Cordon Bleu Best Restaurant of the Year award).

**The food:** We've got to admit that we are impressed by the sound pairing of flavours and textures in the twin appetisers of crisp parcels of savoury beef and beef rendang wantons, wonderfully spicy otak otak served cold with mango salad, delicate chicken soto with glass noodles and succulent pork belly stirred through creamy risotto. Dessert is courtesy of Archangel. Dishes are accompanied with fine wines, paired by sommelier Vincent (and given the former's unfamiliarity with Asian food) with some assistance from Edina.

As the lunch proceeds, Edina brightens up, perhaps in anticipation of her afternoon date with Emmanuel. Indeed, with a gorgeous home boasting a to-die-for designer kitchen, a lunch of her favourite kind of food, enjoyed in the company of a doting hubby and five hot-blooded dudes, what more can a woman ask for, really?