

CHEFS SURPRISE

Tastebuds are tingling in anticipation of the 10th World Gourmet Summit, taking place in Singapore this month. *Jenny Tan* tells us what's on the menu.

PUT YOUR DIET ON HOLD if you are in Singapore this month. From April 10 to 28, the island will lay on a spread of sumptuous activities for thousands of foodies, wine lovers and the plain curious at the World Gourmet Summit (WGS). This is the 10th year running that the delicious event is being held.

On the menu are tasty morsels ranging from 'safaris' – food-tasting at different venues – to a 'made to order' dinner filmed for American TV, to workshops by masterchefs. Their names read like a who's who of the food world, like Santi Santamaria (Spain), Philippe Legendre (France), Susur Lee (Canada), Terje Ness (Norway), Michael Ginor, Alessandro Stratta and Laurent Tourondel (US), Gennaro Esposito (Italy), Kevin Thornton (Ireland), Antonin Bonnet (UK), and a team from Hong Kong's Spoon restaurant, all proteges of star chef Alain Ducasse.

Wines to complement the food include the famous Italian Sandrone Wines and those from French vineyards like Chateau Figeac. Connoisseurs can look forward to some rare 1970s vintages from private cellars whose owners or representatives will be extolling their merits at WGS wine workshops.

A matter of spicing up

Critics are now wondering, can WGS sustain people's interest? Yes, says Peter Knipp, managing director of Peter Knipp Holdings and co-organiser of WGS, which he helped to launch in 1997. He is confident that the event – which culminates in the Awards of Excellence honouring the region's best chefs – will never lose its appeal because, well, everyone loves food.

Agreeing is Sam Leong, Director of Kitchens for Singapore's Tung Lok Group. Also a member of Singapore Airlines' International Culinary Panel (a team of renowned chefs who create inflight meals for the airline), Leong says a 'food festival' such as WGS boosts Singapore's image as a gourmet's paradise.

To spice up WGS' activities this year, the event, which used to centre on various hotels around Singapore, will now take a less regulated approach. Restaurants will be participating on their own turf for the first time. Like Saint Pierre, whose

chef Emmanuel Stroobant will serve a 25-course tasting menu of modern European cuisine while WGS is going on.

Eu Yan Sang, a Singapore Traditional Chinese Medicine company (think cordyceps, ginseng, etc) will score a first at WGS this year when they hold a Western dinner using TCM ingredients. Previously, they had organised only Chinese dinners for WGS – their Gourmet Herbal Dinner in 2004 and Five Treasures Dinner in 2005 were a hit.

For the first time, too, Ian Wright, popular host of the programme *Globe Trekker* on TV channel Discovery Travel & Living, will make his appearance at a WGS dinner, presenting and speaking on 'The Food I Like'.

The pie that got bigger

WGS has grown since its inception in 1997 when it had a few hundred guests. This year over 10,000 guests are expected, all wanting a slice of the gourmet pie, whether it is an exclusive French dinner or one highlighting the cuisine of Catalonia. Many are repeat visitors. Herman Iskandar, the Jakarta head of international gastronomic society *Chaîne des Rotisseurs*, has been to the event four times. "This is a boon for people with no time to try all the great restaurants in Europe," he says.

The events spawn business opportunities as well. Take the case of My Humble House at Singapore's Esplanade – Theatres On The Bay. It took root after the Tung Lok Group hosted Zhang Jin Jie, chef-owner of Green Tea House in Beijing, at WGS 2002. After their one-week long working relationship, the Group appointed her as consultant for the chic eatery.

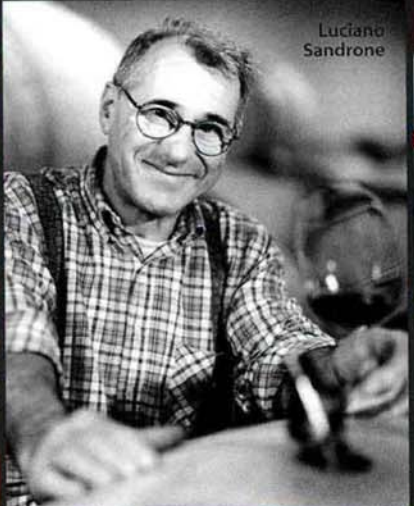
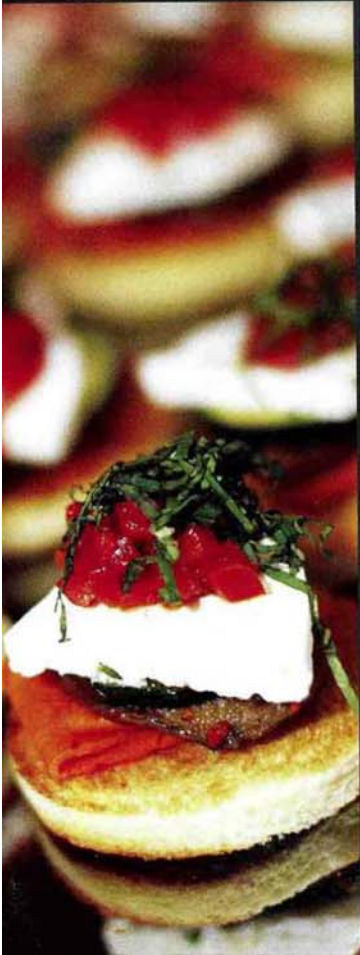
Looking at how the festival has grown, WGS co-organiser Knipp says that it may be time to go beyond Singapore's shores. Sharing his sentiment is Dr Jen Shek Wei, Vice President of the International Wine and Food Society Singapore.

A loyal supporter of the event for the past seven years, Dr Jen says, "I don't see why WGS can't spread its wings. After all, the topic of wine and food – like money – is never-ending. There is always more to look forward to." ■



Alain Passard

CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE: Alain Passard conducting a culinary workshop last year; Eu Yan Sang's gourmet dish with traditional Chinese herbs; Laurent Tourondel, who does great things with steak; Canapes, one of the tasty morsels at WGS; Luciano Sandrone, producer of the famous Sandrone wines from Italy.



Luciano Sandrone



Laurent Tourondel

GOURMET HIGHLIGHTS

- APRIL 10**
Opening reception, Forbidden City Indochine restaurant
- APRIL 15**
Herbal High Tea by Eu Yan Sang, Sheraton Towers Singapore
- APRIL 17**
Ian Wright, award-winning TV host on Discovery Travel & Living, speaks on 'The Food I Like', Grand Hyatt Singapore
- APRIL 19&20**
Masterchef Safaris, food-tasting around Sentosa island
- APRIL 22**
WGS Awards of Excellence Luncheon, with winners receiving the 'Oscars' of the F&B industry, Sheraton Towers Singapore
- APRIL 23**
Piper Heidsieck Champagne Brunch featuring Norwegian seafood, Indochine Empress Place, Asian Civilisations Museum
- APRIL 24**
Made to Order with US celebrity chefs Guy and Michael Rubino, Conrad Centennial Singapore

For more information on the World Gourmet Summit and to book tickets for events, including the ones above, visit www.worldgourmetsummit.com or call (65) 6270 1254.