

LIFE & TIMES **LIVING**

Warm from the heart

Spread the love this Hari Raya by baking your loved ones something special, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**

BAKING simply makes people happy. It tickles each sense, from eyes to nose to palate and lives on in the memory as one of life's good bits. It doesn't matter who bakes, it will be a love letter all the same," says Chef Kamarul Hasni Che Rose prior to his presentation.

While there are more women than men at The Cooking House in Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur, the focus of the exclusive baking session with Kamarul is on recipes that men can handle. The aim, he says, is to enable men to "spread the love with family and friends this Hari Raya".

Kamarul peppers what he says with tips. "Usually, men who are interested in baking will start with recipes that are simple and easy to follow. I feel that they shouldn't

do this. Instead, they should try to bake something they cannot wait to eat. This will encourage them to enjoy the baking process from start to finish."

As he sets out the ingredients for the two recipes he wants to share,

he explains: "I rely heavily on certain ingredients." One of his choice ingredients is Buttercup. He feels that because of its great taste, distinctive buttery aroma and smooth texture, he is able to achieve great results in baking.

HOTSTUFF

CHEF Kamarul Hasni Che Rose, 37, confides that he has many fond memories of his mother and grandmother baking cookies for Hari Raya.

"For me, baking and cooking have been a lifetime of learning. While other children had Lego sets, I played with blocks of butter. My mother was a caterer. I have four brothers and one sister.

"Every day, before I went to school, I would visit the *pasar borong* with my mother. By the time I was 8, I already knew what type of fish and vegetables to buy. After school, I would help my mother in the cafeteria in Tapian Gelangan in Ipoh."

Suddenly, he raises his finger and swiftly adds: "This is a warning. Don't try what I'm about to tell you at home."

Having created intrigue, he says: "One day, when I was 8 years old, I decided to make *nasi goreng*. I put the oil in the *kuali* and waited for it to become hot. The oil started to spit. So, I put

water into the hot oil to cool it down."

The black mark from the near explosion on his mother's kitchen ceiling is still visible. "My mother refuses to paint over it," says this father-of-four. "She says it reminds her of what I used to be like. I also show it to my children when we visit my mother's home."

Kamarul recently returned from Australia where he had been completing his PhD in hospitality. "My thesis is about consumer behaviour and intention towards ethnic restaurants focusing on Malaysian and Japanese restaurants. I sent out an online query to about 6,000 participants in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. I wanted to investigate the attributes of these restaurants and why Australians chose to go there."

His findings are interesting. "Some visited a Malaysian restaurant because they're Malaysian or have family and friends who are Malaysian. Many visited Japanese restaurants because of the food they



Learning to spread the love.



Kamarul has fond memories of his mother and grandmother in the kitchen.

BUTTERCUP SEMPERIT

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 15-20 minutes

Ingredients

375g Buttercup
1½ cups Wheat Flour
1 cup Custard Flour
2½ cups Corn Flour
1½ cups Castor Sugar
3 eggs Egg yolk
1tsp Vanilla Essence
1 tsp Cocoa powder
1 cup Chocolate sauce

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Place corn flour, wheat flour, custard flour and cocoa powder in a bowl. Sift this mixture of flour. This allows you to get rid of any clumps and foreign material that might be in the flour. It also ensures the dough rises more evenly when it's baked.
3. Beat butter (which should be at room temperature) and castor sugar together in a bowl.
4. Add egg yolks and vanilla essence and mix well.
5. Add flour mix and continue to fold it until it becomes soft dough.
6. To create a "marble" effect of the semperit, add cocoa powder to a small mixture of the dough.
7. Insert both plain and cocoa-flavoured dough into a plastic icing tube with a semperit mould screwed in at one end.
8. On a baking tray, squeeze out approximately 4cm of dough at a time.
9. Bake in a preheated oven for about 15-20 minutes.



10. Remove the tray from the oven and let the semperit cool.
11. Serve the semperit or place them in an airtight container.

serve. The assumption is that Japanese food tends to be healthier.

"Malaysian cuisine is more challenging. Interestingly, one person said he likes to visit Thai restaurants because of the greeting he receives. When diners are greeted with *Sawadika*, they feel like kings."

As he reflects on his days in academia, he says: "People love you if you bring food or can cook something for them. What I like about Australia are the fresh ingredients. But being away from home also filled me with nostalgia."

This lecturer at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia's Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism in Penang adds: "It's a good investment to cook with children. Take me, for example. When I remember my mother, I think of the *ayam tanjung* that we used to make and I miss her. I want that same thing for my children. I want them to remember us cooking together, having fun. Of course, I supervise them. After all, they're handling hot stuff."

Shaking his head and smiling, he asks: "Who would have expected an average student to be doing his PhD? It's the highest qualification in academia. So, who knows what can happen? You may become a chef who cooks for very important people. Or you may end up cooking for your family. What is important is your passion and doing what you love."

BUTTERCUP CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES WITH NUTS

Preparation Time: 10 minutes
Cooking Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

200g Buttercup
1½ cups self-raising flour
¼ cup castor sugar
½ cup condensed milk
250g dark chocolate chips
½ cup chopped almonds
¼ cup chopped pistachios

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Beat butter and sugar until smooth and creamy.
3. Pour in condensed milk and mix well. (Kamarul adds condensed milk rather than more sugar to make his biscuits crispier.)
4. Add flour a little at a time until the mixture is smooth.
5. Add chocolate chips, almonds and pistachios to the mixture.
6. Use an ice cream scoop to place equal amounts of mixture on a baking tray. Be sure to keep a reasonable amount of space between each pre-cooked biscuit.
7. Bake in a preheated oven for about 15-20 minutes.
8. Remove and let the biscuits cool on a wire rack.



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