

spotlight

A Delicious Date

MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND
READY YOURSELF FOR A WEEK OF
EXTRAVAGANCE: THE 15TH RAFFLES
HOTEL WINE, FOOD AND ARTS
EXPERIENCE.

When in Singapore, feed at Raffles. The words written by late 19th century author and poet Rudyard Kipling still holds truth today, especially during that one special week every year, when the Raffles Hotel Wine, Food and Arts Experience takes place.

In that one week, the grande dame of hotels in Singapore puts on her finest threads and jewels to host friends from around the world to a feast like none other. Michelin three-star chefs and winemakers of Premier Cru neartars have graced her annual party, open to all with a taste for the exceptional, and this year, for her fifteenth soiree of food, wine and arts, Raffles Hotel presents not just a lavish lineup of decadent enjoyments, but a wholistic programme showcasing a spectrum of cuisines and wines.

From 27 to 31 January 2010, Raffles Hotel presents a series of feasts for the senses, in the form of lavish wine dinners, long, languid Champagne brunches and exquisite tasting lunches. The meals will be presented by top chefs: from France, Michelin three-star Chef Marc Haerberlin



Marc Haerberlin

PICTURES COURTESY OF AUBERGE DE L'ILL

of Auberge de l'ill located in Illhaeusern, in the Alsace region; from Japan, Michelin two-star Chef Shuzo Kishida of Restaurant Quintessence in Tokyo; from China, Michelin two-star Chef Alvin Leung of Bo Innovation in Hong Kong.

From Chef Marc Haerberlin comes exquisite, classic dishes with a Germanic-Alsatian flair: a fillet of veal with fried egg and crayfish, inspired by the recipe created for Napoleon during the Battle of Marengo; roasted calf kidney with a millefeuille of potato and mustard sauce; le homard Prince Vladimir, a dish of lobster with shallots braised in Champagne and crème fraîche. Situated in a 19th century farmhouse in the quiet village of Illhaeusern, the River Ill, the Vosges Mountains and the produce that

comes from the stunning environment in which the restaurant sits all lend inspiration for the food served at Auberge de l'ill. Inspired by nature and influenced by a strong family spirit — the Haerberlin family has been running the place since 1879 — the cuisine takes on a unique characteristic that has charmed the likes of England's late Queen Mother, Marlene Dietrich and Montserrat Caballe. Despite its glowing list of patrons, this secluded, understated shrine of taste remains known only to the privileged few. The opportunity to sample the cooking of Marc Haerberlin from the fifth generation of the Haerberlin family is a rare one.

For those with a taste for fine, contemporary French cuisine, Chef Shuzo Kishida of Restaurant Quintessence in

Tokyo presents 'a new form of "cuisine contemporain"' and aims to set new standards in French cuisine. At this restaurant, which was awarded three Michelin stars in 2007, the dishes are created with a focus on three factors: using the highest quality raw ingredients and respecting the product; breaking away from standard culinary practices to understand cooking processes and discover the best technique for each product; and seasoning the ingredients so that intricate, natural flavours are lifted rather than masked. With his insistence on excellence and an emphasis on respecting the produce, 35 year-old Chef Kishida, who honed his skills in the Michelin three-star restaurant L'Astrance in Paris as a sous chef, also insists on serving just one



Chef Shuzo Kishida



Alvin Leong



PICTURES COURTESY OF BO INNOVATION

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menu carte blanche each for lunch and dinner so that diners experience nothing but his absolute best. One can also be certain that he will present nothing but the best at the 15th Raffles Hotel Wine, Food and Arts Experience.

Exemplary of fine cuisine yet totally different in nature are the culinary creations by Chef Alvin Leong of Bo Innovation. The self-styled 'Demon Chef' proves that — beneath his tattoo-ed facade — he is both style and substance, when Bo Innovation was awarded two Michelin stars in 2008. Apart from his avant garde ingredient pairings and revolutionary cooking techniques, the chef with an engineering background is also known for his fierce insistence on perfection with precision. Few will believe that this is the same guy who was helping to run his

family's electronics shop just five years ago. With signature dishes such as lup mui fan (claypot rice with wax meat) ice cream, a xiao long bao (Shanghainese soup dumpling) given a molecular twist, and a dish of century egg given a theatrical presentation in a ginger cone, he got the world talking; and he certainly will create a stir amongst Singapore's circle of gourmets when he sweeps into town in his flamboyant rocker gear for the Experience!

The three guest chefs all present a different style of cooking, lending the 15th Raffles Hotel Wine, Food and Arts Experience a multi-faceted dimension and rich diversity. The wine component — always eagerly looked-forward to by the wine connoisseurs from Singapore and within the region — of next year's Experience is fittingly diverse to match.

Raffles Hotel's Wine Director Stefane Soret, newly appointed in August, is the main driver behind the huge wine component of the event. The distinguished 40 year-old — who has been working in the wine trade since he was just 18 years of age — boasts a rich and international knowledge on wines, and is eager to offer guests to the event a sampling of the diversity in wine: from the exquisitely exclusive to the deliciously accessible.

Thus, apart from familiar Old World classics such as wines from Chateau Leoville Las Cases in Saint Julien, Bordeaux and Le Petite Cheval from Premier Grand Cru Classe A winery Chateau Cheval Blanc in Saint-Emilion, the coming event will also feature New World offerings such as Argentinian wine Clos de los Siete — a highly-regarded,

Bordeaux-influenced wine by French wine consultant Michel Rolland, who has put together a group of Bordeaux wine families to invest in vineyards in the Andes foothills south of Mendoza.

Yet Soret assures us that the tradition of presenting Premier Grand Cru wines will be continued in the next installation of the Raffles Hotel Wine, Food and Arts Experience, and a stellar presentation he will be making, in the form of wines from Chateau d'Yquem. For his privileged clientele — most of whom are already familiar with the wines of Chateau d'Yquem — Soret pulls out the stops to bring something possibly more intriguing than the wines: Chateau d'Yquem's revered female cellar master and winemaker Sandrine Garbay, the soul behind the highly-prized wines.

'The idea is not to have a lot of speakers, but a small collective of the best' explains Soret. And certainly the best he has. On his panel of guest speakers is also Mathieu Chadronnier, general manager of French elite wine distributor CVBG, a top Bordeaux wine supplier to Asia and also a partner of Raffles Hotel. Garbay, Chadronnier and Soret represent three aspects of the wine trade: producer, distributor and consumer; and together, the trio promises to lend interesting insight to wine for the event's knowledgeable audience. However, Soret is also a big believer of letting the wines speak for themselves. Speaking from his own experience, he reveals, 'There is nothing that I dislike more than being in a wine dinner where there is a guy in a far corner of the room, telling his

grandfather's story — and sometimes not even in intelligible English. I just want to enjoy my food and wine!' Thus, his focus for next year's wine events will be the diners' enjoyment. 'Our sommeliers and myself will be at hand to answer any questions our guests may have on the wines, but the most important thing is still for them to enjoy it, have fun, and to remember it.'

With a lineup of guest chefs and featured wines that are more diverse and adventurous than ever, the 15th Raffles Hotel Wine, Food and Arts Experience looks set to be a memorable event indeed!

The Raffles Hotel Wine, Food and Arts Experience will take place from 27 to 31 January 2010. Visit rhwfae.com for updates on the programme. 