

Seniors revisit recipes for a taste of the past



Guest of honour Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim trying his hand at making Bombay curry chicken, one of the recipes from the book, with the help of Jamiyah residents Jambaree Ahmad and Suriah Wakee Yon, and staff member Normal Jamal. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

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Nursing home's book project engages elders, helps preserve S'pore's food heritage

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Over the last two months, residents of the Jamiyah Nursing Home have been enjoying a taste of the past by revisiting recipes passed down to them through the generations.

Working with nursing home staff member Normal Jamal, 49, they whipped up mouth-watering multicultural fare such as rendang mackerel and ginger chicken curry.

Yesterday, the home in West Coast Drive launched a compilation of the recipes in celebration of the International Day of Older Persons on Oct 1.

The Silver Stars Cookbook, features 46 recipes from 20 contributors. Ms Normal described it as a labour of love.

"It was part of our efforts to engage the elderly and to take them down memory lane as food reminds them of family," she said.

Madam Suriah Wakee Yon, 55, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, contributed nine recipes.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Food is a very important part of our lives as Singaporeans... We all grew up with delicious food, taken from our ancestors, our grandparents and our parents. The last thing we want to do is to lose them (the recipes).

DR MUHAMMAD FAISHAL IBRAHIM, on the significance of the book.



Describing herself as "quite a good cook", she said her repertoire includes Malay, Western and Japanese cuisine. She shared her knowledge because "the younger generation should have access to our family treasures cooked by our mothers and grandmothers".

One entry in the book is a recipe for oxtail rendang, which Madam Suriah said was her mother's.

The retired police officer, said: "It is a unique recipe. People usually use chicken or mutton to make rendang... My mother used to serve this dish on special occasions like birthdays or whenever we received guests from out of town."

To ensure the oxtail meat is tender, she recommends keeping it on the stove for three hours.

"If you invest in a pressure cooker, the time is cut down to just an hour," she said.

Contributor Jambaree Ahmad, a resident at the home, used to help out at his family's nasi padang stall in Bras Basah.

Even though he is 80 now, he managed to recall the recipes with ease. He contributed a recipe for sambal tumis ikan bilis.

"Now you use blenders. In those days, we did it by hand - mortar and pestle. I'm very proud that I got to share my family recipe," said the former laboratory attendant.

Guest of honour Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Social and Family Development and Education, said the book project shows "that we should recognise the talents and capabilities of our elderly citizens".

"Food is a very important part of our lives as Singaporeans," he said. "We all grew up with delicious food, taken from our ancestors, our grandparents and our parents. The last thing we want to do is to lose them (the recipes)."

The book is on sale at the Jamiyah Singapore Headquarters in Geylang for \$20. Proceeds will go to the Jamiyah Nursing Home.