



Executive chefs Oswald Jochheim and Ashish Deva scrutinise the preparation process at the NHI kitchen. (Muscat Daily)

**CHEF'S SPECIAL**

Braised veal loin with trio mashed potatoes and jus



**For trio mashed potatoes**

**Ingredients**

- ▶ 400gm boiled and mashed potatoes
- ▶ 100gm whipping cream
- ▶ 50gm blanched spinach, ground to make paste
- ▶ 50gm blanched carrot, ground to make paste
- ▶ Salt to taste
- ▶ White pepper

**Method**

- ▶ Add cream, salt and white pepper to mashed potatoes, then divide it in three pans. In

the first pan, add spinach, mix carrot paste to the second and keep the third plain.

**For braised veal**

**Ingredients**

- ▶ 500gm veal loin
- ▶ 100ml extra virgin olive oil
- ▶ 2 large white onions
- ▶ 2 stalks of celery
- ▶ 2 carrots
- ▶ 2 garlic cloves (smashed)
- ▶ 100gm tomato paste
- ▶ 2 cups veal stock
- ▶ 1 bunch fresh thyme
- ▶ 2 bay leaves
- ▶ Pepper
- ▶ Salt to taste

**Method**

- ▶ Season veal loin with salt and pepper. Heat a pan till smoking point and then add olive oil. Place the veal on the pan and sear for about three minutes on all sides, until brown.
- ▶ Take another pot, add olive oil and sauté roughly chopped celery, carrots and onions until golden brown. Add garlic and tomato paste and sauté well.
- ▶ Add the loin and stock followed by fresh thyme and bay leaves.
- ▶ Cover the pot with aluminium foil and cook at 80°C to 90°C for six hours, stirring every 30 minutes. Once cooked, remove the meat. Blend the remaining mixture and strain jus. Serve with jus and mashed potatoes.

(Source: Deepak Singh, demi-chef de partie at Shangri-La's Barr al Jissah Resort & Spa)

# THE GREAT CULINARY CLASH

Jane Borges  
Muscat

It's just about 9am, and it's baffling to see the kitchen at the National Hospitality Institute (NHI) Oman appear so busy at this hour. Twelve chefs move around, rushing between the ovens, gas-stoves and their work stations, occupied in the task of rustling up a winning three-course meal.

The chefs are fighting it out in yet another season of NHI Oman's chef competition. This time's competition saw participation from some of the finest in the business - Shangri-La's Barr al Jissah Resort and Spa, Holiday Inn (Saeib), Dunes by Al Nahda, Rumba Latina at The Cave, City Seasons and Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel - with three participants (two chefs and a waiter) representing each hotel.

"Only three hours before plating begins," judge Oswald Jochheim, executive chef at the Oman Conventions and Exhibition Centre, reminds participants as he scrutinises their every move.

deadline, but they are more than confident of making it.

"It's like any other day at work," says Joselis Montano, chef de partie at Rumba Latina, The Cave. "I think, I can handle this stress," she says, assuring herself, before going back to cleaning her calamari. Joselis is preparing a tangy Latin American appetiser, but she has to do it quick, so that she can help her colleague Brany Bustamante with his veal gravy.

Barely half an hour before preparation time, the six participating teams were given a mystery box, unveiling a combination of ingredients that they had to put together to prepare their menu. In the box were a wide array of basic vegetables, fruits, calamari and veal loin.

"All the chefs here are pretty young, with the highest rank of the participants being that of the chef de partie," said Jochheim. "Usually, the chef de partie, demi-chef de partie or commis chef don't write menus...that's the job of the sous chef or the ex-

ecutive chef to come up with something innovative," he added. Deepak Singh, demi-chef de partie at Shangri-La's Barr al Jissah Resort and Spa, chose to prepare a braised veal for his main course.

Braising is a slow-cooking method, which involves cooking the meat for over 12-14 hours. How will he manage to get it all ready within three hours? "I have a secret technique up my sleeves," says Singh. "It is challenging, but if I manage to do it, the battle is half won."

The judges, however, were wary. "There are a couple of teams that are taking very big risks with the dishes they have chosen to prepare within the given timeframe. I don't think it is impossible, but such tasks are usually pulled off by professionals," said judge Ashish Deva, executive chef at Hormuz Grand.

As a rule, during the competition, names of the participants and the hotels they represent, are shielded to ensure unbiased

Deva and Jochheim judged the teams on the basis of hygiene, creativity on the menu, preparation process, plating and finally, taste. These points were combined with what the invited guests gave them.

The winners were declared later in the afternoon with Rumba Latina bagging the first prize, followed by Holiday Inn and Shangri-La's Barr al Jissah Resort & Spa.

"To be honest, cooking is quite a thankless job and some of the chefs out here put difficult hours at work. Holding such competitions helps raise the profile of the job. It also builds an environment where chefs can showcase their skills," said Robert MacLean, principal of NHI, Oman.

Singh, who had his colleague Mahmood al Shibli help him on the dessert, managed to get his braised veal out on time. His team stood third, but he was just as proud.

"I think it's that perfectly cooked braised veal that did the

