



Department of Tourism
Park View Thiruvananthapuram 695 033
Kerala India Fax: +91-471-2322279
Tel: +91-471-2326579 2321132
Email: info@keralatourism.org
marketing@keralatourism.org
www.keralatourism.org

Press Release

Spice Route Culinary Festival: Chefs comb city markets for ingredients

Kochi, September 24: There is no place quite like the traditional market when it comes to sourcing fresh, locally-grown produce. It is a truism whether one is a cooking enthusiast or culinary professional.

As they strolled through the aisles of local markets in Kochi today, leading chefs from 15 countries discovered a range of ingredients for the signature delicacies they will table on Sunday when the International Chef competition – the centerpiece of the ongoing Spice Route Culinary Festival – gets underway.

Before the 17 teams of chefs wow the public with demonstrations of culinary prowess, they traversed the city’s marketplaces – guided by a team of young volunteers – and had a first-hand experience of Kerala’s local markets and diverse food culture.

“For a cook, it is like arriving in paradise. I am impressed with the wide array of seafood on display at the market and Kerala sure can boast about it,” said Samira Janatdoust, a chef from Iran said.

A tour of the Varappuzha and Ernakulam markets, which are well stocked with fresh vegetables, fruits, seafood, meats and, of course, spices, was on top of the itinerary of the visitors as they set out to procure the ingredients in the morning.

As per the guidelines for competition, the chefs have to source all the ingredients for their dishes from these two local markets.

“We are thrilled to experience the sights, smells and sounds of the market, of vendors calling out, the fish, meat, and vegetables stacked up, and shoppers trying to find the best bargains,” said GianlucaMennella, a chef from Italy.

“Kerala does have a wide choice of seafood; there are many types of fish here which are not available in our country. We are also grabbing some vegetables for a vegan treat,” said Bob Burger, a chef from the Netherlands.

The chefs also soaked in the unique ambience and offerings of the traditional Kerala marker. NaifBagi, a chef contestant from Turkey, even tried his hand at the Kerala-style “one meter chayaadi”, a skilful tea mixing stunt that tea shop owners in ‘God’s Own Country’ are often proud to display to awestruck customers.



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Prominent chefs from Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Thailand, Oman, Turkey, Qatar, Netherlands, France, Malaysia, Italy and Japan will go head to head on Sunday at the international cooking competition, which is open to the public.

The Spice Route Culinary Festival – a first-of-its-kind celebration of the fiery flavours traded along the over 2,000-year-old maritime route organised by Kerala Tourism in association with UNESCO and the Union Tourism Ministry – will run until Monday, September 26, at the Bolgatty Palace and Island resort.

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