

Here's a toast to better skills

The World Gourmet Summit caters to consumers as well as F&B professionals

By TEE HUN CHING

LOVE your cognac but clueless about its VS, VSOP and XO grades? The Cognac Masterclass is probably your cup of brandy.

Introduced for the first time at the World Gourmet Summit, the two sessions next week will impart knowledge on how cognac is produced and blended, and how to differentiate between its various grades.

The masterclasses will be conducted by Mr Patrick Raguenaud, Martell's Masterblender and "nose" who is solely responsible for blending the drink at the famous French cognac house.

Mr Francis Poulouze, 34, general manager of food and beverage consultancy Peter Knipp Holdings, which is co-organising the World Gourmet Summit with the Singapore Tourism Board, says the idea came about because many drinkers here have misconceptions about cognac.

"Many of them believe if they store their cognac for 20 or 30 years without opening it, it will appreciate in value and taste. But they don't realise that cognacs are spirits, not wines. If not stored well, they are likely to deteriorate."

The World Gourmet Summit, which kicks off here on April 7, is an annual homegrown epicurean festival that is helping to position Singapore as a gastronomic paradise.

During the week-long event, world-class chefs, vintners and F & B personalities are invited here to host programmes such as culinary masterclasses, wine masterclasses, the Masterchef Safari and the World Gourmet Summit Forum.

While the other activities cater to consumers, the one-day forum with six sessions is targeted at trade professionals.

It will be held in conjunction with Food & HotelAsia 2002.

This year's theme will focus on Business Excellence For Hospitality Practices (see other story for details).

Says Mr Poulouze: "Many people here join the industry not out of passion, but because they need a job. So the forum aims to raise the professionalism of the whole industry."

Consumers today are well-travelled and often observe that the service standard in Asia still lags far behind that in the West, he adds.

"For instance, just being courteous alone doesn't do the trick for a waiter. He has to know what dishes and drinks to recommend to customers, read them well and anticipate their needs. He has to be a showman and salesman."

Getting the hang of technology also helps operators "stay on top of their game" as it improves efficiency and yields them more critical information about their own business, he points out.

The speakers invited are often influential leaders of the field, add the organisers.

Says Mr Poulouze: "We always ensure that we get a combination of speakers who are able to address relevant issues which are unique, but complement one another."

◆ For enquiries and reservations, call the World Gourmet Summit hotline on 6270-1254 during office hours or visit www.worldgourmetsummit.com



Get into the spirit of knowing your cognac at the World Gourmet Summit.

WHAT'S IN STORE

MARTELL COGNAC MASTERCLASS

WHEN: April 9 and 10, 6-8 pm
WHERE: The Regent Singapore hotel
COST: \$60 per person

WHAT: Mr Patrick Raguenaud, the Masterblender of the French cognac house, will explain the intricacies behind cognac blending, the pairing of the drink with food and what differentiates the various grades.

WORLD GOURMET SUMMIT FORUM

WHEN: April 11, 9 am-5 pm
WHERE: Singapore Expo, Conference Halls D and E
COST: \$160 per person

WHAT: Six sessions lasting 45 minutes each will focus on two themes — Service Excellence and Information Technology Solutions For Food & Beverage Industry.

◆ Mr Len Pickell, president of James Beard Foundation in the United States, will talk about The Service Aspect Of Restaurant Excellence and explore the two challenges of retaining the best talents and improving their productivity and service standard.

◆ Mr M. P. S. Puri, senior vice-president of operations at Raffles International, will speak on The Art Of Service, a vital component of dining that often makes or breaks the experience.

◆ Dr Ian Whyte, the international academic director of Le Cordon Bleu culinary academy, will focus on Developing Our Future Managers

and how the industry and its related training institutions can prepare future F & B professionals for a changing environment.

◆ Mr Chin Hon-Cheng, general manager of Hewlett-Packard Singapore's commercial customer organisation, will help industry professionals Go Wireless — Get Connected, Get Competitive by explaining how they can tap on wireless technologies to save costs, increase productivity and improve customer service.

◆ Mr Alberto Zanata, president of Italy's Electrolux Professional Foodservice Equipment, will assist in Building The Future by introducing participants to future professional kitchens and the gains of other technological innovations.

◆ Mr Daneel Pang, deputy director of Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, will explore Broadband Possibilities in the Food & Beverage Sector and explain how the industry can ride on these advances to their advantage.

