

HIVE OF ACTIVITY: More than 1,000 guests attended the KLIGF launch



YUMMM: Day (left) and Tuanku Naquiyuddin savouring the various treats



ROYAL LAUNCHING: Tuanku Naquiyuddin (fifth from right), Kadir (on his left) and the master chefs of the festival during the launch



Spread of gastronomical delights

The world' cuisine at our doorstep — that's what Malaysians will be able to enjoy with the month-long Kuala Lumpur International Gourmet Festival. JULIA JAAFAR was there to savour its delights

BUSY AS BEES: Staff from Hilton Kuala Lumpur's Iketeru preparing their specialty — blanched and steamed silver Cod fillet with vegetables and dried scallop stew with foie gras rolled sushi

A MIDST thunderous applause, heard above the clang of pots and pans, 23 internationally-acclaimed chefs in starched white stole the limelight at the recently launched Kuala Lumpur International Gourmet Festival (KLIGF).

Representing some of the city's best restaurants, they were masters of their craft who will be cooking up a storm for fine food connoisseurs during a month-long affair ending Dec 8. What a nice move to have them cheered on stage as they would otherwise be 'behind the scenes'.

Guests who included royalty, socialites, corporate figures, celebrities, hoteliers, as well as the media were among the privileged firsts who were invited to sample the treats offered by the 23 participating outlets in this year's KLIGF.

They were, of course, dressed to the nines — the men in suits and the ladies dripping with all manner of bling-bling befitting the fashionable affair.

But no matter how well they stayed calm and composed at the Nov 11 launch at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, no less, nobody could hide their excitement about what the party had in store.

It had everyone in festive mode. The dynamic Asean Percussions Unit (APU), dressed as kitchen staff entertained with their take of the old and new while clowns and men-on-stilts added a carnival-like feel to the whole affair.

A VIP 'enclave' created with a screen of little tea-lights was a sight to behold. This was the safe haven where the

Regent of Negri Sembilan, Tuanku Naquiyuddin Tuanku Jaafar, who officiated the event, Tourism Minister Datuk Leo Michael Toyad, Information Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Datuk Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and other luminaries savoured each bite while sitting comfortably in their seats.

Meanwhile, stalls set up by some of the hotels and restaurants lined the sides of the hall. From some of the city's best — Zipangu to Al Nafourah, Lafite to Soi Twenty Three, the foodfest is truly a gastronomical treat of foods from across the globe.

With Japanese, Lebanese, Chinese, Thai, French, Italian and fusion cuisine of all sorts, you're sure to find something that would tantalise your taste buds.

Displayed in some of the most outstanding styles, there was clearly stiff competition between the participants.

One famous fusion restaurant had a woman dressed as an Indo-Chinese princess elevated above everyone else. She appeared to be floating on air! Two others who seemed like her ladies-in-waiting stood at both sides on the ground.

Creativity was high as each aimed to outdo the next in a bid to attract attention. Some displays were even raised up to varying levels, an inconvenience especially to the ladies who wore high-heels and long dresses. The platforms were also short and narrow and could only hold few people at a time.

As for the queues, they seemed to stretch for miles, reminiscent of buka

puasa buffets, only this event served up delicate bits on much smaller plates!

Many guests gave up staying in line out of sheer frustration. While some were lucky to catch the waiters at hand carrying trays full of the bite-sized delights, others were resigned to just moving on to the less congested booths, hoping to come back when the crowd has subsided.

It was amusing to see some well-known faces letting loose and going for seconds and thirds of the things they really liked!

It does look like the KLIGF has achieved its objective of stimulating and sustaining an interest in the fine dining experience. What used to be 'exclusive' to the high society, tourists and travellers to name some, is now being hugely enjoyed by more people.

That is aside from promoting the talented local chefs, said Steve Day who is the KLIGF organising chairman.

Truly, since it began five years ago, the KLIGF has grown from strength to strength as it saw only 13 participating outlets when it began.

With 10 more this year, it is expected to attract no less than 100,000 people who will take the opportunity to enjoy the various promotions and discounts offered by the city's top dining establishments until it ends on December 8.

It has, in fact, become the country's premier dining events. Who knows, it could even turn the city into one of the world's top dining destinations in the near future.