

The surprising staple

Commonly used to bulk up Oriental dishes, noodles are amazingly versatile

Sam Leong doesn't eat fresh fruit and yoghurt or even toast and cereal for breakfast. He eats noodles.

If he travels overseas it isn't clothes bulking up his suitcase, it's noodles. So it's only fitting the Singaporean chef is at DIFC's Noodle House to celebrate Noodle Month.

Influenced by the movies, Sam, who grew up in a family of chefs and restaurant owners, had wanted to become a policeman when he left school at 15 but was warned against it by his family, who said it was too dangerous. After two years halfheartedly chopping veggies and tossing them in a pan, Sam was sat down again by his father to explain it takes more than good knife skills to be a chef.

"From that day, I really concentrated on being the best chef possible," he says. "My family taught me everything they knew and I learned very quickly. My father was a master in the kitchen and when I was almost 20 he offered me an assistant chef position in my uncle's restaurant in Kuala Lumpur and let me create recipes, hire staff and handle customers." The staple of students around the world and a

food many use to simply bulk up a dish, Sam says we shouldn't underestimate noodles as an easy-to-prepare delicacy.

"In Asia, rice and noodles are a staple but not everyone can make them tasty and delicious. Plus, there's so many different types of noodles and different ways to cook them," he explains.



"There is a flat yellow noodle - we call it 'Mee Pok' in Cantonese - which is normally used in soups. In 1993 I invented a dish using this noodle called 'Braised Mee Pok with XO Sauce' which was very unique at the time and incredibly popular with the guests I was serving. By braising the noodle, it takes on a different texture altogether."

Believe it or not, Sam quite often indulges in the odd packet of cheap supermarket noodles "They're very different from 20 years ago. New technology allows the taste and freshness to be present with packet foods," he says.

"I don't know about Dubai but in Asia there's a wide variety - almost too much to choose from and so many flavours. I don't think they're something for every day but occasionally they're convenient. If I travel to the States or Europe, I sometimes put some instant noodles in my bag!"

Exclusive recipe

CRISPY WASABI PRAWN WITH MANGO SALSA

MAIN INGREDIENTS

The meat of 20 large prawns
1/4 tsp Salt
1/4 tsp sugar
1/4 tsp chicken powder
1/4 tsp sesame oil
Half an egg white
200g corn flour

For the seasoning

3kg mayonnaise
750ml condensed milk
120ml fresh lemon juice
20g gelatin powder
80ml very hot water

For the salsa garnish

200g diced mango
50g shredded shallot
50g chopped mint leaves
100ml Thai chilli sauce

Preparation

Prepare the Wasabi-mayo dressing by mixing the hot

water with the gelatin powder and then combining all the ingredients and chilling for two hours. The prawn meat should then be marinated with salt, sugar, chicken powder, sesame oil and egg white and chilled for two hours. Coat the prawns in corn flour and deep-fry them until they are crisp and golden. Finally, toss the prawns in the mayo dressing and garnish with mango salsa.

