

UCSI team wins 13 accolades at Battle of the Chefs

KUCHING: UCSI University's culinary arts team recently took part in one of Malaysia's most prestigious culinary competitions, the Battle of the Chefs 2016, and won a total of 13 accolades – a silver medal, four bronze medals and eight diploma awards – in seven cooking categories.

The competition, organised by Penang Chefs Association, was held over three days at Spice Arena, Penang.

The team from UCSI comprised six lecturers and 14 culinary arts students from its Kuala Lumpur and Sarawak campuses. They competed against more than 1,000 students and professionals in the Malaysian hospitality, tourism and culinary industry.

Dylan Chan, who is currently studying for the Diploma in Culinary Arts programme in the Sarawak campus, bagged a bronze medal in the Main Course V – Norwegian Salmon Category. His winning dish was 'pan-seared salmon served with sautéed potato, green peas, mushrooms, carrot and cream dill sauce'.

This was Chan's first participation in a major competition and he was elated by his win. The budding culinarian said he did not expect to receive a medal but certainly was humbled by the judges' decision.

"The experience was nerve-racking. As a first timer with no working knowledge about the proceedings of a culinary competition, I depended a lot on my lecturers' guidance and coaching to prepare myself. I truly owe it to them for improving my skills and boosting my confidence," he said.

A fellow student who bagged another bronze medal in the same category is Batrisya Amiruddin. Her winning dish was 'pan-seared mackerel and trout served with purple sweet potato puree, sautéed vegetables and honey mustard sauce with rocket and snow crab

salad'. The young lady said her achievement could not be compared to the learning experience that she has gained from taking part in the competition.

"I wanted to produce a dish that will leave a unique taste on your tongue; winning is a bonus. I'm very grateful for the experience and the lessons that I've learned throughout the preparation process as it will serve me well in the future," she said.

To prepare for the competition, the students worked hard since June under the guidance of their lecturers, meeting at least three times a week in addition to their already demanding study schedule. The team also dedicated a certain portion of their time every day to practise and perfect their skills during the final week before the start of the competition.

According to UCSI Sarawak Hospitality and Culinary Arts department head Christopher Wan Sageng, a competition such as this played a fundamental role in training culinary arts students. He said it was important for the students to have the opportunity to put their skills and knowledge to the test in a competitive setting.

"The students have gone above and beyond to improve themselves. They did their level best in the competition and we are truly proud of them. Their ability to stay calm and confident under immense pressure was also impressive to witness.

"We are proud of our team. Watching everyone in action was a thrill and winning several awards from this competition speaks volumes of our quality and commitment towards producing the best talents for the industry," he said.

The victory of both the lecturers and students was truly a joyful moment and is a testament to UCSI's teaching and learning excellence.