



PHOTOS: SAMUEL

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He speaks in metaphors. "People who make music create symphonies each day. But there are times when they might travel to another country and hear music that they have never heard before. Well, it is the same with Chefs too. And that aspect of my job makes me love it," laughs Chef Christopher Koete warmly.

And once we get him started on talking about Indian cuisines, he doesn't stop. "Oh! I have tried a lot of dishes on my previous trip to India. And I was completely blown away by the food here. Despite being a renowned Chef back home, there were flavours I had never been acquainted with before. The flat breads are perfect and wholesome. Especially the lachha parathas. I have tried those in Jaipur and I couldn't get enough of it, so I asked the Chef to make some more for me," recounts the Chef who was

**IT'S TIME TO TAKE OUT YOUR CULINARY TOOLS AND BRACE YOURSELVES TO LEARN THE ART OF COOKING AS DAILY LIFE TAKES YOU THROUGH CHEF CHRISTOPHER KOETE'S MASTER CLASS THAT HE DEMONSTRATED AT HOTEL JW MARRIOTT, CHANDIGARH ON TUESDAY**

at Hotel J.W. Marriott, Chandigarh on Tuesday.

If you thought he was in town to demonstrate a complex dish with a tongue twister for a name which would leave you wanting for more, you are absolutely...WRONG. Let's hear it from the Chef's mouth himself. "I will be taking you through a journey of 4 years at Kendall College School of Culinary Arts (Chef Christopher is currently

serving as the Vice President at Kendall College).

The Chef commences the Master Class by asking a crucial question, "What makes one a successful chef?" and prompt come the answers, "Satisfaction of customers...good food...passion for food."

Taking a deep breath, he says, "All of you just gave me a description of your grandmothers. Let me put it this way. At the end of the day, what

# The Culinary Master

the Chefs execute in their respective kitchens should be able to generate profit."

Once he is past explaining the art of culinary skills in terms of business, he gets down to giving the 'prospective students' more than just a glimpse of the art itself.

"A Chef better be passionate about food, if he intends to make it big in the culinary world. Otherwise, his career is over before he has even started. Next in line is discipline. And lastly, one's foundation is based upon intensity."

He further adds, "The kitchen is an intense place. A chef cannot smile when he is cooking. And one cannot think about relaxing. Let's begin by learning the technique of holding a knife first. The thumb and forefinger should be on the knife and the other fingers on the handle. The tip goes down and the back is up and the cut should be smooth. Secondly, one must keep in mind the accuracy while chopping. And third and the most important aspect of cooking is the speed.

Remember if placed correctly, the safest way of chopping vegetables is when the knife touches the knuckles and fingers of the guiding hand. However, do not try this without proper guidance."

Koete introduces us to not only culinary skills but he also lends an insight into the flavours and spices from his part of the world, which includes a demonstration of cooking duck breast and braized duck leg, Chow Chow (a version of pickle), wild rice (these are not rice but grass) and the technique of making maple syrup sauce.

Despite displaying his culinary abilities for 36 years now, the Chef feels that there is a lot more that is waiting for him to be explored, and that his is a profession where one keeps growing. "But, it isn't possible to know it all, is it?" smiles Christopher while signing off.

## RECIPE BRAISED DUCK LEG Serves 4



### INGREDIENTS

- 4 Duck Legs
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup finely diced onion
- 1/4 cup finely diced celery
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme leaf
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 cups dark stock (made from chicken, duck, etc)
- 1/2 cup red wine

### PROCEDURE

- In a large saucepan, sauté duck legs to brown them in olive oil. Remove and reserve.
- In the same saucepan, sauté the onion and celery adding more olive oil if necessary. When tender (about 5 minutes), add garlic and cook for another 1-2 minutes.
- Add the duck legs, along with thyme, black pepper, stock, and red wine in the saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer for 2 hours or until the legs are very tender.
- Remove the duck legs from the cooking liquid and when cool enough to handle, remove the meat from the bones and shred. Reserve the meat.
- Meanwhile, reduce the cooking liquid over high heat until about 1/4 cup. Strain liquid.
- Combine the shredded meat and the reduced cooking liquid. Season with salt and additional black pepper.