Malaysia’s win at World Pastry Cup a story of determination and hard work

By Milad Hassandarvish

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 — “Never give up” wasn’t just a catchphrase for chef Patrick Siau who constantly used it to motivate his team of three talented chefs at the World Pastry Cup in Lyon, France last month.

Team Malaysia went on to make history by winning the prestigious World Pastry Cup (or Coupe du Monde de la Patisserie) for 2019.

The team led by Siau, who is also the head chef cum teaching fellow at Sunway University’s School of Hospitality, was made up of Tan Wei Loon, Otto Tay and Loi Ming Ai.

They beat teams from Japan, Italy and 18 other countries from around the world at the competition to proudly fly the Jalur Gemilang.

“It was truly a rewarding experience for all of us to hear our national anthem after winning the top prize at such a world-class tournament.,” Siau said.

“We finally put Malaysia on the world map of pastry and proved to the world that Malaysia Boleh,” he added.
The road to sweet victory for the team was paved with hundreds of hours of hard work, practice and rehearsals.

Prior to the finale, contestants had to go through a stringent selection process that involved more than 50 national rounds and four continental selection events in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

Siau said Team Malaysia was crowned Asian champion at the continental qualifying round which was held in Singapore last year.

The victory granted Malaysia the ticket to the world cup tournament.

Fired up by the dream of becoming world champions, the team returned home from Singapore and began to vigorously prepare themselves for the tournament in Lyon.

For the uninitiated, the World Pastry Cup is an international pastry competition which brings the best pastry talents in the world to Lyon every two years.

This year’s edition, which was held from Jan 27 to 28, marked the 30th anniversary of the competition.

Unlike previous years where there were no set themes, the organiser set one for this year’s landmark competition.
Siau said the theme — “Nature, Flora and Fauna” — introduced a few challenges to keep the contestants on their toes.

“What made it even more tricky was the short timeframe as we received the competition criteria only last June,” he added.

Armed with almost a ton of ingredients and pastry-making equipment, the chefs together with a support team of about 20 people left Kuala Lumpur for Lyon a week before the competition.

“We decided to be there slightly earlier to get used to the cold weather, and also run a full rehearsal round before the big day.

“We took it very seriously because we were very determined to rank at the top,” said Siau.

On the tournament day, the chefs were given 10 hours to produce three chocolate desserts with Valrhona grand crus, three frozen fruit desserts from the Ravifruit range and 15 identical desserts on plates as well as artistic creations made of sugar, chocolate and sculpted hydric ice.
Other challenges included having to create a 100 per cent vegan dessert that does not use any product of animal origin, a chocolate dessert with a biscuit made of honey and at least one transparent item made with blown sugar.

They had to prepare the dishes concurrently to meet the tight deadlines.
“Each dish had its own deadline and we had to present it to a pool of 20 judges. Interestingly, the jury team were only given less than three minutes to mark each dish based on their first impressions,” explained Siau.

However, what truly stole the show was the Malaysian team’s artistic creation of three hipster-looking monkeys for the buffet set up.

“We wanted something lively and of course relevant to Malaysia as we have orangutans here,” he said.