

PRIME NEWS

Johor cuisine book a hit

HERITAGE:

Cookbook featuring 240 Johorean dishes wins Best Culinary Heritage Book award

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PUBLISHING company owner Datin Kalsom Taib never thought her diligence in jotting down her mother's and grandmother's recipes would turn out to be one of the best things she ever did.

The recipes, some of them written by Kalsom's mother in Jawi, were the basis for a cookbook containing 240 recipes that she penned with her cousin, Datin Hamidah Abdul Hamid, titled *Johor Palate: Tanjung Puteri Recipes*.

The book beat out publications from eight other countries to win

the Best Culinary Heritage Book at the Gourmand World Cookbook awards in Yantai, Shandong province, China on May 29.

The book contains a foreword by Permaisuri Johor Raja Zarith Sofiah Sultan Idris Shah, and its publication was sponsored by Johor Corporation.

Kalsom, 74, said most of the recipes were passed down for generations in her family, and featured uniquely Johorean fare, such as *Laksa Johor*, *briyani gam*, *mee rebus*, *mee bandung* and *harissa*.

Describing their literary collaboration, Kalsom said Hamidah, 66, was the cooking aficionado, while she was the wordsmith.

"My cousin is an expert at cooking. I am not much of a cook, but I love collecting recipes. When I lived with my grandmother in Muar after university, I wrote down all her recipes. My mother also had recipes written in Jawi, which I later rewrote," said Kalsom, who is from Muar.

Her family manages Don's Warong in Plaza Damas, Sri Hartamas in Kuala Lumpur.

The cousins embarked on 2 ½

years of research for their cookbook.

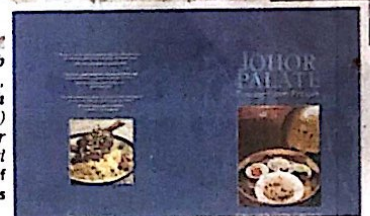
"We visited relatives in Batu Pahat to find out how they made *bubur asyura* and *bubur lambuk*, and I found people who made *kulih kepal*, *telur pindang*, *halwa maskat*, *dodol megan* and *burasak* the traditional way."

Kalsom also met Tunku Puteri Johor Tunku Kamariah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah Sultan Iskandar, who shared recipes for fruit cake, durian fritters and Bludall Dutch cake from the Johor palace.

"Johor is a melting pot and its cuisine has Bugis, Javanese, English, Indian and Arab influences.

"My aim is for every family in Johor to have this book because it is about Johor and its heritage. I

Datin Kalsom Taib (left) and her cousin, **Datin Hamidah Abdul Hamid**. (Inset) The cover of *'Johor Palate: Tanjung Puteri Recipes'*. Pix courtesy of Datin Kalsom Taib's Facebook page



am not asking them to cook, but they should at least understand our culinary heritage," she said.

Kalsom said the history behind Johor dishes was explained in the book, such as the use of spaghetti in Laksa Johor.

"The late Sultan Abu Bakar loved to eat pasta, especially spaghetti bolognese, during the ruler's travels to Italy.

"Sultan Abu Bakar noticed the texture of the spaghetti sauce was

similar to that of *laksa* sauce.

"When he returned home, he told his cook to do away with rice noodles and use spaghetti for the laksa instead," Kalsom said.

She said her publishing company would launch a Bahasa Malaysia version of the cookbook in September.

For details on where to purchase the book, visit the *Johor Palate: Tanjung Puteri Recipes* Facebook page.