

Oh my cooking!

Contestants of the new season of *MasterChef Selebriti Malaysia* include a teacher, an award-winning host and a comeback comedian, writes **Dennis Chua**

ENGLISH teacher Henry Middleton is the star of Astro's popular educational series *Oh My English!* But do you know he can cook pretty well, too?

Henry is played by Zain Saidin, a contestant in the second season of *MasterChef Selebriti Malaysia* which returns to Astro Ria (Channel 104) four days a week (Saturdays to Tuesdays) beginning tomorrow.

Zain says: "It's my first foray into a cookery contest and I'm loving it because I learn new things every week. I learnt to cook from my mother during my teens and while it's not easy as I have to think on the spot, it's fun."

He would love to master Italian and Japanese cooking and he loves food with lots of garlic.

Another cooking enthusiast on the show is singer, actor and producer Cat Farish of *The Fabulous Cats*.

"I couldn't say no to the show as I love cooking especially tofu and fish. My fondest memory of cooking was when I improvised a fish dish at home - fish flavoured with marsh-mallow, cucumber, pineapple and lemon," he says.

Rock singer Radhi Razalli of Sibul, Sarawak, is delighted to make his own dishes as a contestant.

"The one dish I'm most proud of is corned beef and cheese rice. I've never cooked before and I've come to realise it's a new-found passion," he says.

Singer and songwriter Keroz Nazri is another eager participant who describes the contest as educational.

"It's great to learn to cook Italian. I've been cooking since primary school, and I love crispy foods," he says.

Veteran actresses Norish Karman and Lydiawati are delighted to learn Italian cooking.

"I'm very much a fan of Western and Chinese cuisine and *MasterChef Selebriti* has equipped me with the means to prepare these dishes," says Norish.

"I'd love to master Japanese cooking in future too," says Lydiawati.

Comediennes Kenchana Devi and Sharifah Shahora say the show has introduced them to a "whole new world of interesting foods".

"Making the best of prawns and the less known but medicinal silkie (black chicken) is a revelation," says Sharifah.

"I'm happy to pick up baking skills," says Kenchana who appreciates the importance of good timing while cooking.

Actresses Rozita Che Wan and Syanie Hisham are having great fun.

"I'm learning to cook Italian food at last. My two sons love it," says Rozita.

"I've always enjoyed making turkey and lamb for my family. With *MasterChef*, I'm learning new, creative recipes," says Syanie.

Kenchana Devi



Rozita Che Wan and Zain Saidin.

Director Michael Ang and singer-actor Sabhi Saddi have been inspired by the success of first season winner Datuk Fazley Yaakob.

"He's a fine chef in the making. He has proved that men can cook well, so we are giving it a shot," says Ang who has been cooking since his teens.

"The biggest revelation I've had on the show is that coconut can be used for many scrumptious dishes, sweet and savoury," says Sabhi.

There are 19 celebrities on the show, including comedians Sathiya, Enot and Yasin Yahaya of *Senario* fame, 3R co-host Celina Khor, singer Syura, actor Afiq Muiz and award-winning television host

Datuk Aznil Nawawi.

Astro Entertainment Channel group director Azlin Reza Azmi says while the concept is similar to that of the first season, there are now 40 episodes from the previous 26.

"On Saturdays, there is the mystery ingredients box and on Mondays, there is an outdoor culinary challenge. Elimination rounds are on Sundays and Tuesdays," she says.

Astro Ria channel manager Raqim Ahmad Ramli says the contestants were chosen based on feedback by viewers and the three chef judges, Jo (Johari) Edrus, Zubir Mohd Zain and Adu Amran Hassan.

"The contestants are passionate about cooking, and they have strong fan bases too," he says.

Show executive producer Macken-

na Singh says the show tests contestants on creativity, mental strength and time-keeping in the kitchen.

"This time, it is all for a good cause. Each contestant supports a humanitarian organisation," he says.

They are Make-A-Wish Malaysia (Ang), Alzheimer's Disease Foundation Of Malaysia (Sharifah), Child Information, Learning And Development Centre (Kenchana), Educational, Welfare And Research Foundation (Norish), Mercy Malaysia (Cat Farish), National Autistic Society Of Malaysia (Syanie), Rumah Charis (Khor), Rumah Hope (Lydiawati), Mytina Charity House (Enot), Selangor And Federal Territories Mentally Handicapped People's Association (Zain), National Kidney Foundation Of Malaysia (Rozita), Malaysian



Sabhi Saddi



Keroz Nazri



Radhi Razalli

Council For Child Welfare (Aznil), National Diabetes Institute (Sabhi), Malaysian Liver Foundation (Sathiya), Breast Cancer Welfare Association Of Selangor And The Federal Territories (Syura), Persatuan Pengasih Malaysia (Radhi), Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Orang Kerdil Malaysia (Yasin), Malaysian National Animal Welfare Foundation (Afiq) and Yayasan Budi Penyayang Malaysia (Keroz).

"The first season was hugely popular and we are confident the new season will be just as good if not better. Furthermore, the celebrities show how they care for the needy," says Azlin.

Zubir says the new contestants are very creative, not unlike their predecessors. "However, they are more fun-loving too," he says.

Panasonic returns as the show sponsor while Era FM and Sinar FM are radio partners and murai.com the official entertainment portal.

Azlin says there will be a contest for viewers who will be invited to "impersonate" their favourite contestants at work. They can upload their videos on the series homepage. Its website is www.masterchef.com and its Facebook page is www.facebook.com/masterchefmalaysia.

Masterchef Selebriti Malaysia is at 9pm, Saturdays to Tuesdays. Its launch at The Bee, Publika, Solaris Dutamas, Jalan Duta, Kuala Lumpur on April 9 was attended by the contestants and judges, Azlin, Raqim and Mackenna.

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Lydiawati (left) and Norish Karman.

PICTURES BY NUR ADIBA AHMAD IZAM