

Hawker food with street cred at fest

World Street Food Congress is back with 23 stalls. **BY RACHEL LOI**

SINGAPORE'S second street food festival will offer not just casual eats from around the world but a platform for people to share ideas about how to preserve our hawker heritage and bring it to the next level.

The "dialogue-hackathon" is one of the highlights of the World Street Food Congress (WSFC), which is back for a second time promising at least 23 different food stalls from 12 cities, plus a food truck helmed by a Top Chef winner from the US. The five-day event is organised by Makansutra, and will take place from April 8 to 12 at the open field opposite Parco Bugis. It is made up of three main components - the dialogue-hackathon, a jamboree and the WSF awards.

Admission to the five-day jamboree is free and visitors will get to savour a variety of dishes - priced from S\$4.50 to S\$12. Five stalls will represent Singapore in the SG Pavilion, serving local favourites such as Chey Sua Carrot Cake, a halal version of satay bee hoon by Alhambra Padang Satay Stall and a *har cheong gai* (prawn-paste chicken) burger by Hong Kong Street Chun Kee. Foodies get to sample international street food as well. There'll be oyster omelette by Hoy Tord Chao Lay from Thailand, churros from Churro Locos from the US, and grilled skewered meats by Restaurant Gustu from Bolivia.

Says Makansutra's founder KF Seetoh: "All the menus are different (this year) except for two stalls. I've put in stuff that you can't get, you've never seen, and are not easily available in Singapore menus." Tickets to the dialogue-hackathon cost S\$450 per pax, and are available from the official website, with various discount op-

tions available. This year's theme is *Engage, Empower and Enterprise* - a call to action for existing and wannabe-hawkers, as well as potential investors and partners. Says Mr Seetoh: "It's about engagement - we don't want fluff on the stage. I've told every speaker to present something that people can act on and react to. Don't just brag about what you're doing, give people opportunities to partner and do things together."

Speakers at the dialogue session include Iron Chef Ian Kittichai from Thailand and Claus Meyer from Denmark who co-founded the acclaimed restaurant Noma, and who will be speaking on topics such as the reinvention of street food to fine dining, and Bolivia as the next street food frontier.

Audiences can also expect some light to be shed on Anthony Bourdain's plans for the Bourdain Market - a Singapore-style hawker centre that will open in New York. After the dialogues will be the hackathon, where the floor will be open for audience members and delegates to share and pitch ideas, raise funds, and build networks. "The hackathon element is a big thing because we're expecting quite a few new ideas for us to follow-up on and then spin off into the following year's events," says Mr Seetoh.

According to him, the next WSFC in 2017 may not be held in Singapore. He says: "Street food is not owned by Singapore although it's a great place to start the conversation. We're talking to China, Indonesia, Philippines and even the West, and the Middle East to hold the congress overseas. (So if we do that) eventually it'll come back around (to Singapore) again."

rachloi@sph.com.sg
@RachelLoiBT



Five stalls will represent Singapore in the SG Pavilion, serving local favourites such as a halal version of Satay Bee Hoon by Alhambra Padang Satay Stall (above) and Har Cheong Gai (Prawn-Paste Chicken) Burger by Hong Kong Street Chun Kee. PHOTOS: WSFC AND MAKANSUTRA

