

B.A.'s Vintry signatures

■ By SHAREN KAUR

CHEF Mazlan, B.A. to his friends, defines himself as an 'accidental chef', picking up tips and developing his talents and ultimately adding little magic touched to traditional cuisine for today's wining and dining generation.

B.A. finds it is most gratifying to see one happy and enjoying food, especially when he has prepared the meal.

"Cooking food is an experiment. When customers enjoy the taste and presentation, it makes you want to cook better without too much improvising," he said. "I've learnt cooking in many ways, mix and matching being my favourite part."

"As a chef, I get to experiment with herbs and spices. I'd rather blend recipes than keep them straight ahead."

"I have friends who sample my food giving me room to improve and improvise on my cooking."

B.A. also reads on food and buy cookbooks for his work. His talent is derived from 15 years in the hospitality industry where he managed yacht charters in Langkawi more than 10 years ago, and also ran a couple of restaurants.

"I used to cook on board for VIPs and for rich-and-famous people like Prince Nasim, the Dutchess of Westminster, Chow Yuen Fatt and Jodie Foster."

"It was most exhilarating, cooking for them. I learnt a lot and decided later to open my own restaurant," said the charming 35-year-old.

B.A. went on to open Mai, a Thai-fusion restaurant in Langkawi in 2000, his first solo run. The restaurant underperformed and doors shut in late 2001.

He then moved to Kuala Lumpur for more experience and landed a job in 2003 to manage the F&B division of The Ascott.

He worked hard for two years, learning new food culture and taste before moving on to manage the Somerset, a sister of The Ascott, in 2005.

Still wanting more, B.A. opened a restaurant called Soiree, serving fusion food, near Aman Club in Kuala Lumpur.

B.A. is currently the man behind the kitchen and general manager of Vintry, a new bottle shop, restaurant and wine bar, located at Jaya 33, Petaling Jaya.

And he's here to stay!



Vintry, which opened last December, serves fusion food, but the food prepared by B.A. is not the only reason why the place sees a healthy regular crowd on most days.

Its the collection of over 1,200 labels of entry level and premium wines priced affordably from RM47, from all over the world.

According to B.A., the most

expensive here is worth a few thousand ringgit or more than RM3,000, bought mainly by V.I.Ps and expatriates.

"We have expensive wines taken away for private collections. Some people even buy in bulk. The selling point here is the wine display. It's like a shopping mall where you can go and pick and choose."

The most popular ones at

entry level are new world vintages from Australia, Chilea and South Africa while the finer wines from Italy are largely preferred by connoisseurs.

Vintry, a warm, cosy and friendly place, can sit 200 people comfortably with different styles of seating. The bar is contemporary with European designs. The background music is light and easy with jazz at the start, moving to higher tempos later at night.

While he enjoyed watching us eat, we enjoyed some of his special concoctions. Lucky I as hungry. B.A. served his favourite nasi lemak or 'coconut rice platter' (RM18), oven-roasted chicken (RM34), kobe-style rack of lamb (RM48) and chicken nachos (RM18), the last being a great signature tarter he's especially proud of.

The dish is basically diced chicken mixed with spices, herbs, chilli flakes and powder, and cream cheese on pizza bread topped with tortilla chips and cheddar cheese, very nice either warm or cold.

"It's a very old Mexican recipe I got from a friend years ago and still use. You definitely won't get it this way in this part of the world," B.A. added.

The nasi lemak platter was a good combination of basmati rice boiled in pandan juice and fresh coconut cream, served with chicken serunding (floss),

anchovies, lamb or chicken rendang.

The nasi lemak is also not oily or too spicy and the traditional Malaysian flavours all are there.

The lamb, coated with lots of black pepper, is cleverly cooked, crisp on the outside and medium inside, juicy and tasty. The sauce that goes with it has been tinged with wasabi to enhance the flavour.

"The owners of Vintry prefer to offer wholesome meals to everyday diners. We offer huge portions for sharing. That way, you have more to savour," says B.A.

Vintry opens from noon to 1am, all week. For reservations, call 03-7960-6737.

