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# WHITE NIGHT

"EWALD NOTTER IS BEST IN SUGAR WORK, IN THIS WORLD. HE IS GOD. NO ONE CAN BEAT HIM," SAYS ASIAN PASTRY FORUM PARTICIPANT SUGIH MULIANA, 34, PASTRY CHEF AT THE PACIFIC SUTERA HOTEL, KOTA KINABALU, MALAYSIA. "IT IS A UNIQUE CHANCE, TO BE ABLE TO MEET A CHEF AS EXPERIENCED, EXCELLENT, AND ELITE AS CHEF NOTTER," SAYS FELLOW FORUM PARTICIPANT YU YUAN YUAN, 32, PASTRY CHEF FROM KUNMING, CHINA. "CHEF NOTTER IS A FAMOUS CHEF," SAYS LAWRENCE CHEONG, 28, PASTRY INSTRUCTOR AT ACADEMY OF PASTRY ARTS, MALAYSIA. "PREVIOUSLY I HAVE ALREADY READ A LOT ABOUT HIM IN PASTRY AND BAKING MAGAZINES." INDEED, AFTER SPENDING A COUPLE OF HOURS WITH HIM, I HAVE GLEANED NOT JUST SKILL, BUT ALSO SOMETHING INTANGIBLE. LET US START WITH THE TANGIBLE.



# 甜蜜艺术

Chef Ewald Notter's classes are really fun. He never stops moving, but he never stops sharing, either. And no matter what he is doing, everyone in the vicinity just gets drawn into his circle – and it is a very inclusive, embracing one. No one is left behind. Everyone follows clearly what Chef Notter is doing. So while he is pouring the isomalt into the pot, or colouring bits of isomalt with blue or yellow or red, or asking for the oven temperature, or explaining to you what he is going to do – “I’m going to blow a fish, and then air-brush,” while he is talking, his eyes search yours to see if you’re listening. You can tell he loves teaching. “Each person is gifted in some way. Some are creative, some are into production. In Canada and everywhere, the kids are under stress. For me, you don’t have to be the best in one day. It’s alright to take a picture of your neighbour’s piece, and next time, you give all you can. I think you should be free, and you should let go. I want to see your shine. I want to see your personality. Technique is one thing, and technique is simply a means for you to express yourself. Sometimes students get frustrated, but it’s never a problem, I like that too, and I learn along too. Why? Because I think like a 50-year-old. I want to hear how the 20-year-olds think. Because, yours is the world of tomorrow. I love it.”



Pastillage, rainbow isomalt, cast sugar and natural shape.



When painting this side, make sure the eyes are at the same spot – not upside-down.

The three kilogrammes of isomalt have been boiled to 170°C. Chef Notter explains that when he first started, he could never figure out why boiling one pound of isomalt at 165°C, it would be flexible, but boiling two kilogrammes of isomalt at the same temperature, it would be brittle. Then he found out that the longer you boil, the more water evaporates. So it doesn’t matter what temperature you boil it at, a larger quantity would always end up being stiffer. And often sugar boiled on gas in a copper pot would give a yellowish colour, whereas sugar boiled on induction heat is white. There is nothing wrong with a warm, friendly colour, just that it is difficult to get the blue, because it would always end up being green. Chef Notter has encountered some brides who are pretty determined when it comes to the colour for their wedding cakes, and he explains that in this case, he needs another skill – which is to convince her that if we cannot get that exact colour, we could do something else.

Chef Notter gives us more background on isomalt, with which it is easier to get white than sugar, which tends to turn yellowish from 160°C onwards. “Isomalt has been around since the 90s. It was used mostly for cough drops, like Ricola. It melts slowly, has more flavour, and shelf-life is longer. So it is ideal for countries like Malaysia, where it’s humid. Sugar absorbs humidity; as it melts, it turns sticky. But if you want a shine, it is more difficult with isomalt, than with sugar. Also, when you get burned, isomalt is nastier than sugar. If it is humid, you can protect the showpiece by putting it in a showcase, with a silicon chip, or you can spray it with lacquer. Humidity affects our profession a lot, not just isomalt, but chocolate as well. But I’ve heard it’s good for your skin, you don’t get wrinkles.” He guffaws.



## Psychedelic Colours

He is now making some blue colour. "When I did my apprenticeship, blue was never the colour. But I love this blue." He has Sugih cast the base, reminding him to make sure it runs to the edge. Some bubbles have appeared, and he alerts Yu to it. "Yes, torch it just a little bit." The bubbles are gone. "Now, you make the drawing," he says as Yu creates some whirls in the base. "See, you can't go wrong. Every time you do it, it looks different." Now Chef Notter is doing a natural shape, pouring molten isomalt around a pan of isomalt powder. "It's a tricky thing, because it's hot, you got to be careful. See how I manipulate the shape, being careful not to get burned."

( Sugar is a craft that requires a fearlessness of heat. Chef Ewald Notter's life-like figurines challenge me to master molten sugar. *Lawrence Cheong* )

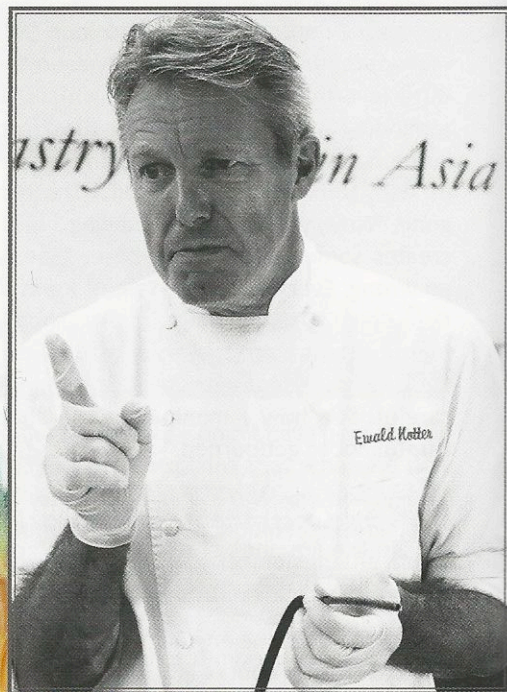
"Burrrrr..." goes the engine of the air-brushing pen, and Chef Notter pours a little orange into the funnel. "Because you have blue, the opposite of blue is orange." He sprays some pastillage with the air-brush, coating them orange. Pastillage is a dough made out of powdered sugar, corn starch, gelatine, and water. To make it shiny, he has Cheong dipping them for a coating. "It look easier than it really is, but I know we have talented students here," says Chef Notter. Yet, the moment Sugih tries to do it, it gets stuck. "I tell you why it happens," says Chef

Notter. "My fork is not in the middle, like yours. If you move the stone from the middle of your fork, to the end, it would be easy to lay it on the mat. I'm sorry, I've done it so many times, I don't even think about it anymore." Now that Sugih has gotten the hang of it, Chef Notter says, "With the coating, you can make it shine. I love it. The colour really pops in your eye."

The isomalt from the oven has just been retrieved, and Chef Notter exclaims, "Oh my God, I'm happy. Nice rainbow colour. It's beautiful." Cheong has a question for Chef Notter. "Chef, what is the best temperature to cast the sugar?" "Not very cold," says Chef Notter. "Sometimes you go to a competition, it's three or four o'clock in the morning in winter in New York. Then you use the blowtorch, and you boil. You dip it, the whole piece cracks. There are different ways to do it, you can use a hair-dryer, or you can bring it up to temperature in an oven." When he has cast it, he holds it up, and shakes it. "People think I'm crazy, but I have seen too many pieces shattering, because they don't put enough sugar. So I have to make sure that I melt this here, then cast." The amazing thing is, when Chef Notter tests it, the natural shape seems intent on falling off from the frame. "Oh my God, this is going to be a disaster," says Chef Notter. "So, sometimes it's good that it happens, right? Then you respect it. If everything goes together, you lose the respect."







Sometimes it's frustrating. But if you do it many times, you get the feeling. Ewald Notter

### 腾飞的白糖艺术

当说起白糖，很多人会联想到的是和饮料，或者说和日常膳食必不可少的调味品之一有关联。新马一代小贩的饮食文化也肯定少不了。为了让读者们对白糖有进一步的认识，我们杂志社特别拉队到吉隆坡的八打灵再也的甜点学院采访甜厨Ewald Notter并观看他把平淡无奇的白灵注入艺术的灵魂。在观看他的制作过程中，他也和我们分享他对糖的了解，以及制作白糖艺术的技巧和“功夫”。Notter甜厨对白糖艺术的执着，想法，还有对于新一代的栽培都不遗余力，只因为希望这艺术能传承下去。在工作室，Notter现场为亚洲美食与酒杂志和在场的同学展示了糖塑的创作。他摆好了各种制作工具后便开始化糖，糖浆熬得差不多后，他熟练地把糖浆向铺设在台上的架模浇注，之后再加上些颜色，接下来便是一系列的技巧和手艺了。大约三小时之后，一个活灵活现的糖塑成品终于出炉，甜厨说：虽然长时间的集中精神相当累人，但看见成品的完成再累也值得。志伟



## Under The Sea

Now, Chef Notter is going to blow a fish. He folds the sugar to cool the sugar down, because if it is not evenly warmed, when it expands, the parts that are warmer might grow too thin, and develop a hole. "Blowing a fish is not like blowing a horse. That takes half an hour, just to pull out the leg. This is quite simple – well, maybe I shouldn't have said it!" The entire class laughs. Chef Notter then talks about those who blow sugar by mouth. "I think Chinese people are amazing. I could not believe it, I once saw at a competition, they make a blowing tube out of sugar, and put the lump of sugar at the end. I was blown away. It is so simple. The more simply you work, the more attractive it is. The problem is, I'm not Chinese." He chortles. "So blowing is not difficult. You try a few times, and get the feeling. I cannot tell you what temperature it is at, sometimes it is frustrating. In pastry, a lot of skills, you have to get the feeling. You have to do it, say, 15 times, then you'll start to get it." He is now adding the tail to the fish. "That's my favourite part, blowing the tail. Get a nice and even temperature. It's like giving a hairstyle to the fish. I want the shape, right? I can model the tail." He adds some yellow, hints of red, edges of blue. And the magical underwater world is completed.



Air-brush pen and cold spray.

The technique of sugar is tougher than it looks. Chef Ewald Notter has so much he wants to share with us, but, so little time.

Sugih Muliana

## Humility Brings Honour

"Chef Notter does really nice sea creature showpieces," says Chef Cheong. "He inspires me. I would like to participate in World Pastry Cup in Lyon within the next two to three years." "What is priceless is to see the way Chef Notter comes up with his idea, does the sketch, thinks about the elements, the theme, the colours, the overview, and then, as he starts to work, and new ideas come up, and get incorporated in," says Yu. "I want to be, well, maybe not as famous as Chef Notter, but



Molten sugar being poured into desired shapes.

Because Chef Ewald Notter is experienced, by understudying him, you can pick up tips and tricks that turbocharge your level of finesse.

Yu Yuan Yuan

somehow be really good, and be known, for sugar work." "In this world, everybody knows who Chef Notter is. Chef is a nice person, he likes to joke with us, and he has so much that he wants to impart to us within these three days that, by right, would take six months to learn properly," says Sugih.

"Lawrence assisted me in the class, and I really appreciate his help," says Chef Notter. "I can see he likes to think ahead of me, anticipating, yet very kind, respectful, and doesn't get in my way. I couldn't ask for a better assistant." Of Yu, he says, "I can tell she has travelled a lot. She is open-minded, and not shy. She's always the first to volunteer herself. I like that she's so eager to try." And of Sugih, he says, "He's funny, I like having him in the class, Yu and him, they always make fun about each other. I like to have people in the class like them, it makes it memorable and fun. A class can be frustrating, because the techniques are so difficult. It's a joy to be here, and to teach people like them. I feel connected here, and I'm looking forward to coming back."

"If there is one thing I want them to remember, always, it is that while you need to have good hand skills, what is more essential is to have people skills, and that you are humble. Never get a big head. Because when you travel, you never know what kind of materials you can find, and you do need the help of others. Saying 'thank you' once in a while doesn't hurt. I feel comfortable here. I don't have the feeling of students being reserved here, the atmosphere is wonderful, it's a great learning experience. When you are humble, you can make a mistake, and you should be open about it. Be honest, and deal with it. That's probably the most respectful thing you can do." QL