



SAVINGS FIRST FOR MEGAN
Megan Fox doesn't want to have kids until she has an adequate bank balance. "I have a number in my mind of what I want in the bank so that I can protect the child's future"

FEATURES

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THE BRITISH CONNECTION

It was a special night for British expats at the Grand Hyatt where they were treated to authentic English cuisine, which they may be missing far from home



British cuisine will be on offer every Monday night (Muscat Daily)

Our Correspondent

Muscat
For most, living in a foreign land means missing the true flavour of their home town cuisines. If some miss authentic ingredients, others desperately seek solace in expert cooks and chefs. It often happens that they meet with disappointment.

Realising this void and to fill it, Grand Hyatt Muscat on Monday launched British Night at its Mokha Café. An every-Monday feature, British Night presents an array of food that reminds one of

the kitchens in the UK, Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

At the launch, Christoph Franzen, general manager, Grand Hyatt Muscat, accompanied by his wife Rachel Franzen, who was dressed in the colours of the British national flag, enjoyed the spirit of the night.

Franzen said, "We do a lot of theme nights and now we have added another feather to our cap with British Night. We wanted to connect with British expats and locals so we arranged the buffet to give them the feel of home food. This is a night for our

guests and a great way to communicate with them along with food and music."

Among the salads and appetisers were Scottish salmon station, smoked mackerel, peppered mackerel, cured and hot smoked salmon, honey dill dressing, horse radish, capers and silver onion.

The main course offered Su's British beef stew, dumplings, mashed potato, runner beans, mushy peas, fish and chips ham-mour and Cornish pasties.

Other dishes were jersey royal potato salad, shrimp cocktails,

potted crab, Scotch eggs, onion jam and duck pate among others.

The guest seemed surprised and happy with the meticulous preparation techniques chefs at the hotel followed to lay out the fare. Hillary, a British expat said, "The layout of the buffet is fantastic. The chefs have taken adequate care to prepare the dishes using the correct ingredients to bring out the authentic flavour."

Gordon Mackenzie, managing director, Alive Entertainment, one of the

guests at the night, said, "Bringing the taste of home to a foreign land is a great idea and we are enjoying the concept and the vast array of dishes." The ambience oozed British hospitality and added glamour to the dining experience.

While guests enjoyed Loch Fyne oysters and Scottish salmon, instrumental music by the Beatles and songs by George Michael and Robbie Williams played. Every table had cards with photos of celebrities, sportsmen and famous personalities from Britain. Waiters sported blue-red aprons and black hats. Some waitresses wore uniforms in colours of the UK flag while others were in black aprons and checked skirts.

The decoration, music and the school dinner theme had been conceptualised by the hotel's food and beverage team.

Marin A Leuthard, executive chef, Grand Hyatt Muscat was seen interacting with the guests and helping them choose their dishes. Speaking about infusing culture into the dishes, Leuthard said, "A lot has gone into the preparation of the dishes by choosing authentic ingredients flown in from different parts of Britain. Approximately, a quarter tonne of food has been flown in to set the buffet right."

British homemakers, too shared their expertise with the hotel staff on bringing out the authentic flavour, concluded Leuthard.



GREEN PEA AND HAM SOUP

Ingredients

- 85g (3oz) unsalted butter
- 1 large onion, peeled and finely diced
- 900g (2lb) frozen peas
- 1 small bunch fresh mint, tied together
- 85g (3oz) plain flour
- 300ml (10fl oz) double cream
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- For the ham stock
- 1 ham hock, about 900g (2lb) in weight
- 3.4 litres (6 pints) water
- 2 carrots, trimmed
- 2 onions, peeled
- 1 head celery, washed
- 12 black peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf

Preparation

To start the stock, soak the hock for 12 hours in cold water. Drain off the soaking water, and cover the ham hock with the measured cold water. Bring to a boil and skim off any scum. Add the carrots, onions and celery, all whole. Leave gently to simmer for about 20 minutes. Add the peppercorns and bay leaf. Gently simmer on for 1 1/2 to two hours

until the ham is cooked through. Watch it; you don't want the liquid to reduce too much. Strain off the stock for the soup - you will need 1.7 litres (three pints). Put the ham to one side and discard the vegetables and flavourings.

Melt the butter in a heavy-bottomed pan, add the finely diced onion and half of the frozen peas. Add the mint, and put the lid on the pan. Leave to gently stew for three to five minutes.

At this point add the flour, and stir in carefully, possibly taking the pan off the heat to prevent it from sticking. Return the pan to the heat, and cook the pea roux for two minutes. Do not let it colour.

Slowly add the measured hot ham stock to the roux, beating well with a wooden spoon after each addition to get rid of any lumps of flour. When the stock is all added, make sure that the bottom of the pan is clear of everything. Leave to simmer for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, blanch the remaining peas in boiling water for just two minutes.

Plunge into a bowl of iced water, which will retain the bright green colour.



Christoph Franzen with Rachel Franzen

BRILLIANCE CAPTURED

Glowing Spectra 2011 is showcasing the best works of 41 lensmen who have frozen human emotions and nature's beauty on their cameras

Swati Hora

Muscat
On his way back from Sur, Ahmed Salim al Kindi met an old man whose smile made way through his wrinkles to his eyes. A compelling urge to capture that striking smile led Kindi into a conversation with the man to seek permission for a photograph. It took him several minutes to persuade the old man but the effort

paid off. The expression captured by Kindi's lens and many such moments by other photographers have been showcased

This is the third edition of the annual exhibition. This year the show has 80 photographs by 41 lensmen of the society's Photog-

raphy Club on display. The limitation of a competitive exhibition. Here, we just invited the best pieces from individual members and selected not more than four from each one of them," said Rashad Mansoor al Wahaibi, a contributor and one of the club's organising members.

Pictures of landscapes, seascapes and wildlife stand out among portraits and captured fleeting moments. All photographs have been printed on canvas, giving them the look of a painting.



Only four photographs by each of the 41 participants were selected for the show
Rashad Mansoor al Wahaibi

at Glowing Spectra 2011, a photography exhibition at the Omani Society for Fine Arts (OSFA).

raphy Club on display. "The exhibition's aim is to not bind the photographer to prescribed subjects, which is often



Visitors at the exhibition being held at the exhibition being held at the Omani Society for Fine Arts

Ahmed Abdullah al Shukaili's photograph which captures a sunrise in Salalah after khareef is stunning. The hues and colour gradations within the photo were digitally attained by blending five photos of the same spot shot from different angles, he said. "I usually take a break from work and with a group of friends, head to any spot in Oman and camp there to observe nature and shoot its beautiful moments. Although life is hectic, we try travelling together for photography, at least once in a year," said Shukaili.

Winner of several international and national photography awards including a gold medal at the Southampton Interna-

tional Contest held in the UK this year, Hamed Salam al Sulaimi, showcased photographs from his wildlife collection.

"I like everything beautiful. Every country has a different landscape and has its own charm. In Oman, Salalah is one place where you can find everything, a desert, a wadi and a waterfall. The two photographs of flamingoes and nawras (a type of gull), have been shot at the same place in Salalah but in different years," said Sulaimi.

Wahaibi said that the Photography Club, which began in 1993, has seen a lot of activity take place over the last few years.

"Since the first exhibition held

three years ago, the standard and quality of photography have improved. A lot more workshops and seminars are being organised for members. We primarily share our experiences and what we learn with each other and sometimes, invite experts to conduct workshops. About a year ago, we started a photo clinic for beginners.

"That has been a great step as a lot of people found it difficult to attend classes with those at an advanced level. The initiative has led to an increase in the number of members at the club," said Wahaibi.

The exhibition will run till September 21 from 9am to 2pm and 4.30pm to 8.30pm.



L-R: Photos by Salim Hamed al Wardi and Hamed Salam al Sulaimi