

Edible works of art

Food on the table by participants is a visual feast

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FROM plain old fruits and vegetables to masterful pieces of art. What seemed like a magical transformation was actually down to the creative skills showcased by participants of a recent Fruit & Vegetable Carving Competition at the Penang Times Square.

Held as part of the mall's Yummy Feast event at the Open Plaza, the competition was open to those aged 16 and above with their handiwork judged on creativity, technique, degree of difficulty, presentation and general impression.

Walking away with the first prize was 41-year-old Mohd Sahar Omar, a chef at the Equatorial Hotel who had the benefit of more than 20 years' experience fashioning beautiful fruit and vegetable displays on his side.

A regular participant of similar contests, he had grabbed top honours numerous times before.

Making use of watermelons, honey

dews, papayas, zucchinis and plums, he mounted his 'Crystal Vegetables' display on a framed mirror, creating a beautiful reflective effect.

"Before I came, I had already visualised how I wanted my display to look like. I was quite confident at first, but after seeing the work of the other participants, I wasn't so sure. But thankfully, I managed to win.

"Working in a hotel kitchen, this is something I do regularly, so it

helped. It's not something that's easily mastered, so one needs to have an interest in it as well as creative flair. More important, your hand also needs to be soft," Mohd Sahar said.

In second spot was 31-year-old Celine Cheah See Peng whose 'Beginning of Life' display depicted a mother turtle and her little offspring on a bed of sand.

Cheah, who was encouraged by friends to join the contest, said she loves arts and craft, and learned the skills of fruit carving on her own.

She usually joins contests just for the fun of it and was pleasantly surprised when she emerged second.

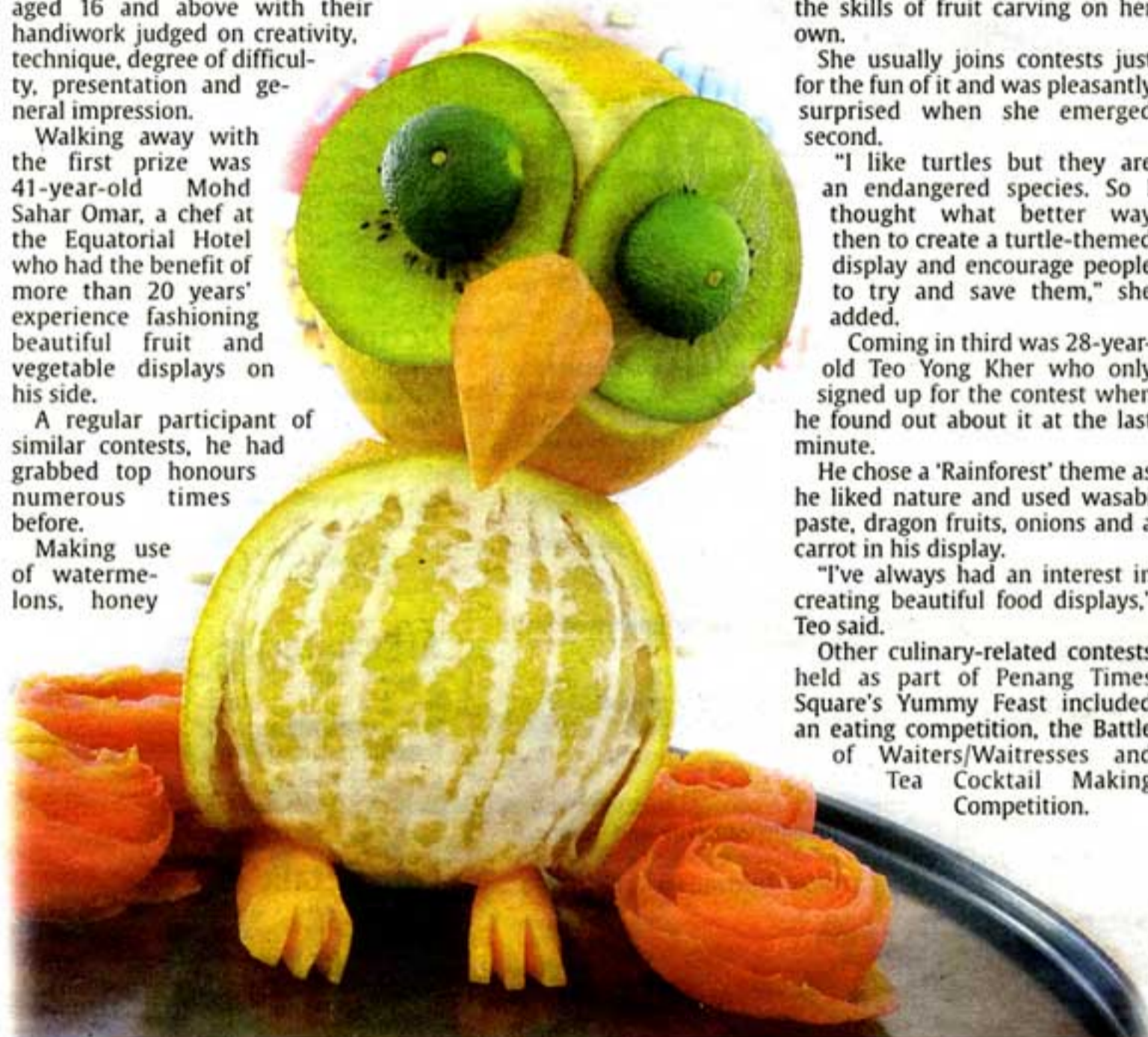
"I like turtles but they are an endangered species. So I thought what better way then to create a turtle-themed display and encourage people to try and save them," she added.

Coming in third was 28-year-old Teo Yong Kher who only signed up for the contest when he found out about it at the last minute.

He chose a 'Rainforest' theme as he liked nature and used wasabi paste, dragon fruits, onions and a carrot in his display.

"I've always had an interest in creating beautiful food displays," Teo said.

Other culinary-related contests held as part of Penang Times Square's Yummy Feast included an eating competition, the Battle of Waiters/Waitresses and Tea Cocktail Making Competition.



Top-notch: Mohd Sahar's Crystal Vegetables (above), which emerged winner in the Fruit and Vegetable Carving Competition.



Top three: The winners of the Fruit and Vegetable Carving Competition, (from right) runner-up Cheah, champion Mohd Sahar and Teo.