

Flavours of Latin America in KL

(19 JUNE 2023) *thstar*, p7

Visitors introduced to culture and cuisine of nine countries at festival's 14th edition



Visitors thronging the 14th Latin American Festival at Commons KL. (Right) The joropo is a traditional dance from Venezuela. — Photos: AZMAN GHANI/The Star

By JAROD LIM
jarodlim@thestar.com.my

THE 14th Latin American Festival allowed visitors to get a feel of the vibrant culture of nine countries.

Whether it was the tango from Argentina and Uruguay, Capoeira from Brazil, the rhythms of Cuba or a Mexican folk dance, those present were caught up in the lively celebration.

Held at Bukit Bintang Park in Commons KL, the festival also offered a tantalising taste of Latin American cuisine at various booths.

They included Argentine Lomito beef sandwiches and Brazilian beef skewers, as well as a range of beverages.

Yusoof Shah, who was on his maiden visit to the festival, was

surprised that there was such an event in the heart of the city.

"It is fun and lively. I get to see dances from the different Latin American countries here.

"However, the large crowd is preventing me from checking out some of the booths.

"I will make sure to visit them when there are fewer people," said the 30-year-old business owner who enjoyed a plate of Lomito beef sandwich that he bought from the Argentinian booth.

Diana Lecorne, 42, from Chiapas in southern Mexico, was dressed in a traditional outfit of vibrant colours and represented Flores de Mexico in performing a dance on stage.

Flores de Mexico is a Mexican Folkloric Dance Group in Malaysia.

"This is the traditional costume that I wear in Chiapas.

"Mexico has 32 states and each state has its own costume," she said, adding that this festival is a great opportunity for Malaysians to learn about Latin American cultures and traditions.

The festival was jointly organised by the Embassies of Latin American and Caribbean Countries Group (Grulac) together with Plaza Low Yat, Federal Hotels International, Latin Women's Association of Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL).

Nine countries were featured, namely Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Argentinean ambassador Manuel Balaguer Salas, who is also Grulac dean, said they are

proud to organise the event.

"It is not only a cultural and gastronomic event, but also a celebration of unity and diversity that binds us to Malaysia," he said.

He added that the festival is also a charity event where proceeds go to a charitable organisation.

This year the beneficiary was Selangor Cheshire Home where proceeds will go to training youth with disabilities and support their future employment in the hospitality industry through "The Food Cabin Cafe".

Deputy Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan, who was also present, said more such festivals should be held in Malaysia for local and international tourists alike.

"Tourists will not only see the beauty of Malaysia but also appreciate our culture as well as that of other countries.

"This programme can strengthen the relationship between locals and Latin American expats.

"Perhaps we can learn a thing or two from them through this event," he said.

Federal Hotels group marketing, sales and business development and operations director Ooi Lee Ping, Selangor Cheshire Home president Datin Paduka Khatijah Sulaiman, Low Yat Group executive director Datuk Low Gee Teong, Latin Women Association president Cristina Gutierrez as well as ambassadors and representatives from participating Latin American countries were also present.



Some arts and crafts on sale at one of the booths.



A decorated skull at the Mexican booth showcasing their Day of the Dead.



Lecorne came dressed in her vibrant traditional costume from Chiapas in southern Mexico. (Right) Yusoof, with a Lomito beef sandwich from the Argentinian booth.



A boy enjoying churros.

