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# Promoting Penang to the world through curry

The Editor / TheEdge

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GEORGE TOWN: It started out as a small fish-head curry and seafood restaurant operating in Alma, a remote part of Bukit Mertajam on the mainland, in 1993. After seven years of operating the restaurant and having garnered a steady following for its KhimYan ready-made curry paste among locals, Peter Tan decided to venture full-time into producing the curry paste. Since then, KhimYan curry paste has come a long way, making it beyond Malaysian shores into homes of curry lovers all over the world. According to Peter's son, Francis, who is now business development manager for KhimYan Holdings Sdn Bhd, his parents decided to quit the restaurant business and embark on the more profitable paste-making business. So they turned their house into a mini cottage industry for two years before setting up a factory in Permatang Tinggi in 2002. KhimYan is coined from both his parents' last names, with the logo depicting a man and a woman. According to Francis, the company will be changing its name to Global Foodie Network Enterprise soon. From the initial ready-

made curry chicken and fishhead curry wet paste, which are still their best sellers, KhimYan now has more than 15 different ready-made paste. It also produces the same products under the Alisa brand, mostly for the Malay market on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The factory in Permatang Tinggi produces 100,000 packets of 200gm ready-made curry paste each month, of which 60% is exported to Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, China, Indonesia and Gibraltar. Increasingly, the company is receiving orders and enquiries via the Internet from Malaysians as well as overseas exporters and distributors. To cater to growing demand, the company plans to set up a larger production facility to double production. "We will have to increase our production within the next two years as we expect the export market to expand," said Francis. He added that the company is looking at tapping the full potential of foreign markets via distributors. "But before that, we want to focus on quality control and hope to implement good manufacturing practices and attain HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) techniques for our processes," Francis said. KhimYan products are halal-certified. The paste, which has a shelf life of 24 months, is priced between RM3 and RM4 per packet. All the ingredients for the paste are sourced locally while some ingredients for tom yum paste are sourced from Thailand. Currently, the company is developing new products which will include paste for fried rice, noodles and also Japanese curry for the Japan, China and Taiwan markets. Peter, who was a chef at a restaurant and learnt the art of making curries from a chef in Malacca years ago, is the one who comes up with new recipes. One reason the product is popular could be due to the fact that it appeals to the different ethnic groups. "Our paste epitomises the essence of the Malaysian curry. It is not Chinese, Indian, Malay or even Eurasian but a combination of all... "The ingredients used are actually what each of the communities uses for their curries and our curries are a fusion of all these ingredients," said Francis. KhimYan also carries out contract manufacturing of curry pastes for the Australian, Indonesian and China markets. In Australia, the curry paste is marketed under the Oriental Wok brandname, while in China the name KhimYan is maintained. The products have just entered the Indonesian market. "Our ready-made curry paste is also supplied to restaurants and hotels in these countries and also in Malaysia and Singapore," Francis added. Curry transcends boundaries and the proof of this is in the response to the company's website. A web designer who

studied in Hongkong, Francis set up the company's website [www.addicted-to-curry.com](http://www.addicted-to-curry.com) (<http://www.addicted-to-curry.com>) 1½ years ago and within six months, it had a steady stream of visitors, including Malaysians living abroad. He also set up facebook ([facebook.com/KhimyanCurry](https://www.facebook.com/KhimyanCurry)) and twitter ([twitter.com/KhimyanCurry](https://twitter.com/KhimyanCurry)) accounts to interact with curry lovers worldwide as part of efforts to promote the KhimYan brand. The [www.addicted-to-curry.com](http://www.addicted-to-curry.com) (<http://www.addicted-to-curry.com>) website features recipes using KhimYan paste and also invites recipes from fans of KhimYan paste from around the world. "I find social networking a very useful and powerful tool to market our products especially among Malaysians living overseas," said Francis. "Often, they cannot find most of the ingredients needed to make their favourite curries and KhimYan paste is as good as making it from scratch, as the ingredients used are not compromised in any way." Penang is especially famous as a gourmet's paradise and melting pot of cultures, not only in Malaysia but also worldwide and this way, curry lovers will be able to satisfy their yearnings and get their fill without having to hunt for the ingredients or sweat it out in their kitchens. "This is our way of promoting Penang to the rest of the world," he added.

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