

**25/03/2019 - HELP College of Arts and Technology, Kuala Lumpur**

**It is my great honor and pleasure to be here today representing the Embassy of Italy. On behalf of the Ambassador Cristiano Maggipinto, I would like to firstly thank the HELP College of Arts and Technology, and especially the Vice President Dr Chan Teck Heng, for hosting this initiative, “The Culture of Rice - The Malaysian and Italian Experiences”. I would also like to thank Dr Paolo Aprile and Dr Daniele Santagata from the Italian Institutes Aldo Moro and Francesco Datini, Professors Alessandro Baiamonte and Giuseppe Schifano and Chef Leoniel for their essential contribution to the organization of this event.**

**This is a great opportunity to develop prosperous relations in the field of culinary art between Malaysian and Italian schools of excellence, that have the occasion to take advantage of a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and expertise.**

**Kuala Lumpur has become one of the capitals of International cuisine, thanks to the convergence of different cultures and ethnicities that make the city one of the best expressions of culinary variety in Eastern Asia.**

**On the other hand, Italian cuisine is loved and highly appreciated all over the world. Yet most diners are not aware of the history behind the sophistication and richness of our gastronomic art.**

**From the early Middle Ages to the late nineteenth century, Italy consisted of separate Republics, each with different culinary traditions. These varying cooking practices, which were handed down from generation to generation, contributed to the diversity of the Italian cuisine, enriched also by influences of neighboring countries.**

**Italian cuisine, initially divided according to different regions and cities, then started to have a more mixed distribution. For example, southern Italians introduced pizza to northern Italy while northern Italians introduced risotto and polenta - which is a cornmeal dish - to southern Italy. However, every city in the country still maintains -**

and is proud of - its own peculiarity and tradition and celebrates its favorite dishes in a large number of events.

The Italian cuisine is world-renowned especially for pizza and pasta but has indeed much more to offer. An emblematic example is rice, which not by chance has been chosen by the Italian delegation as the central theme of the visit.

Originating in Asia, rice has been for centuries an essential ingredient of typical culinary practices in the Mediterranean basin and encompasses different traditions of the ancient European, Asian and Arabic cultures. Within the Italian cuisine it may appear less important than the classic pasta, but in reality rice, much appreciated from north to south of the peninsula, is the protagonist of many delicious recipes in almost every region, especially in the form of risotto.

So it undoubtedly represents one of the pillars of both the culinary traditions of Malaysia and Italy for its versatility that makes it suitable for a countless variety of dishes. There could not be a better choice for an event that connects our gastronomic arts.

We believe that initiatives like “The Culture of Rice - The Malaysian and Italian Experiences” play a very important role in further fostering the cooperation between our two countries. We have a lot in common and we are eager to reinforce our partnership at all levels. The Embassy is deeply committed to this, together with all the Malaysian counterparts, as is well demonstrated by our collaboration with HELP College of Arts and Technology and the Italian Institutes for the best possible success of this event.

**Gerardo De Maio**  
**Vice Commissario Economico**  
**Finanziario e Commerciale**  
**Ambasciata d'Italia – Kuala Lumpur**