

There are all sorts of benefits in consuming organic food. This is something restaurants can take full advantage of.

By ALICE CHING

Of late, the interest in organic food seems to be gathering momentum as more organic product retail outlets make inroads in major towns. Suppliers like Protech Yu and Alce Nero have started to capitalise on this largely untapped market. Both have collaborated with restaurant chefs to raise awareness of their organic products.

Protech Yu prides itself as the first Malaysian company to specialise in organically "grown" fish using a land-based aquaculture technique from Australia known as the Fish Protech Controlled Aquaculture System (Fish Protech CAS in short). For the past three years, the company has successfully bred specific pathogen-free Australian Barramundi at fish farms in Kuching, Sarawak, and Sepang, Selangor. The company's organic fish are supplied to restaurants, supermarkets and hotels in the Klang Valley.

Colin Ng, head of corporate investment at Protech Yu's parent company, Goldis Berhad, said the fish is reared for four months under stringently controlled growing conditions — the fish are kept in fibre glass tanks filled with temperature-specific, filtered water and fed with nutrient pellets from Taiwan.

"The controlled environment ensures our fish are free from contamination and other forms of pollutants. The tanks are not overcrowded to reduce stress on the fish which may impede their growth. Best of all, our operations are environmentally friendly as any waste water from the fish tanks is used to water beds of tomatoes and chillies nearby."

Ng envisaged this is the sustainable way forward as the world is already grappling with depleting fish stocks.

Protech Yu roped in Barra Restaurant and Bar to create contemporary dishes of Australian Barramundi. Chef Alwi Mahfodz's creation of Steamed Barramundi with Roast Soya-infused Pepper Coulis and Ginger-crust Tofu aptly showcased the fish's delicate sweetness and fine texture.

Chef Alwi used his own ingenuity to conjure up Barramundi Sashimi with Orange Segments, Glazed Prune, Smoked Chicken and Grated Lemon. The refreshingly tangy appetiser reminded me of *umai*, a tantalising Sarawakian raw fish salad. The dish went down as a real treat.

Waste not, want not adage came to mind when we sampled the Barramundi Belly *Bouillabaisse*, a French-style creamy seafood soup in which the chef added fish belly slices as the soup's main ingredient. Another imaginative dish is Pan-fried Barramundi with Asparagus and Diced Pumpkin tossed in Olive Oil and Lemon Juice.

Response to Protech Yu's organic fish has been so positive that Barra even included Chef Alwi's Fried Barramundi with Deep-fried Tofu, Vegetable Rolls and Dill Butter as one of its signature dishes. If you wish to sample this speciality, make your way to Barra Restaurant and Bar, located at the Ground Floor of Kuala Lumpur Tower or call (03) 2078 1287 for reservations.

Protech-Yu's organic Barramundi can also be purchased from selected supermarkets and organic food retailers in the Klang Valley, Seremban, Johor Baru and Penang. Check out www.protech-yu.com.my for outlets.

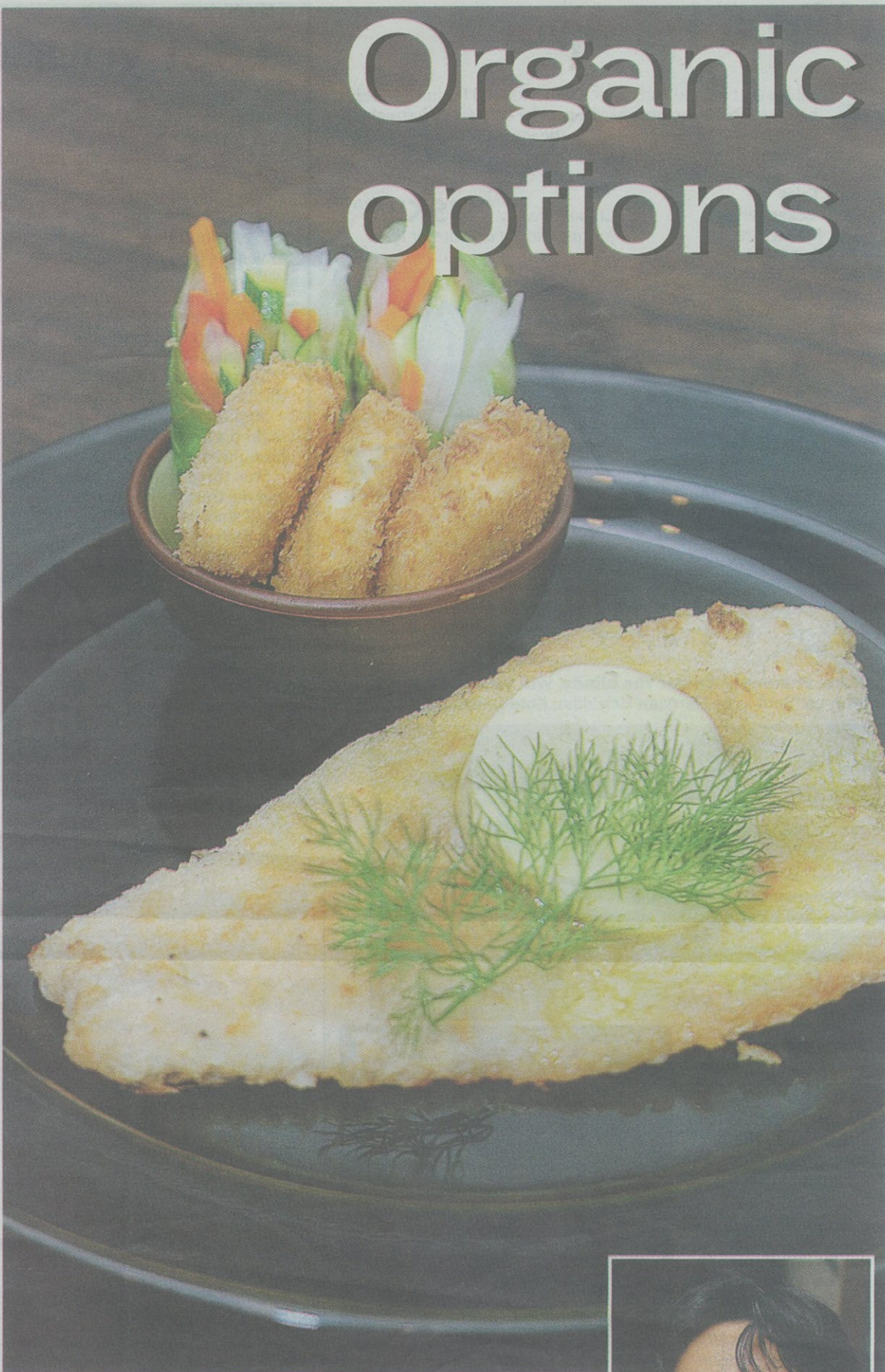
Organic products from Italy

Italian cuisine has also gone organic with the debut of Alce Nero products from Italy.

One of the first companies to practise sustainable agricultural techniques in Italy as early as 1973, Alce Nero combines old farming methods with the most advanced research on environment and health.

The name Alce Nero is the Italian translation of "Black Elk", a famous Native American Sioux medicine man and one of the first pioneers of ecology. Black Elk advocated that human beings should live in harmony with nature and it is his eco-friendly philosophy that forms the backbone of Alce Nero's operations. This means raw ingredients such as wheat, tomatoes, olives and rice are grown in a pollution-free environment. Their farms are free from

Organic options



Snazzy catch: Fried Barramundi with Deep-fried Tofu, Vegetable Rolls and Dill Butter is one of Protech Yu's signature dishes.



Innovative: Chef Alwi Mahfodz.



Variety: Organic products that are available in the market.

pesticides or chemical fertilisers. Its organic certification is awarded by the European Organic Certifier, the world's most established and well-respected regulatory body.

According to Alce Nero Asia-Pacific Manager J F Torrelle, the established Italian brand for organic food offers a wide range of organic products such as wholemeal and organic pastas, tomato sauce and purée (natural or with herbs or vegetables), extra virgin olive oil, vinegar, pesto sauce and honey.

"Quality organic food can taste great without the addition of sugar and with very low level of salt," he said.

Since the proof of the pudding is always in the eating, Chef Jean-Michel Fraisse from the French Culinary School in Asia cooked up several delicious dishes using Alce Nero's pasta, tomato purée, pesto and tomato sauces, honey and olive oil.

Health-conscious consumers can opt for the low glycemic index (GI)

wholemeal pastas which are rich in fibre, proteins and minerals or the gluten-free kamut pasta. The latter has a firmer texture and a pleasant, subtle nutty taste. The organic honey, apple cider vinegar and balsamic vinegar make great additions to salads, dessert and savoury dishes.

Look out for Alce Nero organic products from major supermarkets or retailers like Gourmandines. Visit www.gourmandines.com for more information.