

Horseshoe Crab: 'Princely' dish a hit at eatery

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BUSINESS at Belangkas Mahkota in Kota Tinggi is brisk as it offers a meal of belangkas (horseshoe crab) cooked in curry, which is a favourite among its patrons. The eatery is operated by Abdul Hamid Musa, 68, his wife, Mariam Arif, 58, and their three sons.

Abdul Hamid of Tanjung Buai, a fishing village situated at the estuary of Sungai Johor, said his patrons comprised locals as well as those who came from as far as Perak and Kuala Lumpur.

"The Tunku Mahkota Johor was the one who named the eatery after dining here in 2005," Abdul Hamid said.

He used to serve the dish to guests at his house. It was their encouragement which prompted Abdul Hamid to start his business in Jalan Tun Sri Lanang, Kota Tinggi in 2001.

From a small stall, the business thrived to an eatery which can seat about 100 patrons and opens from 10.30am to 2.30pm on weekdays. On weekends, the eatery may not be open if the couple is called away to cater for weddings or other events.

Abdul Hamid gets his supply of belangkas at RM5 each from a local supplier, who also exports the horseshoe crab to Thailand. The supplier gets his stock from fishermen who catch in the coastal area of the district.

"I have known the supplier for many years so I always get my supply of belangkas. Nevertheless, I have to cap the number of dish to a serving of 25 per day to ensure there is enough supply for the next day.

"Although we also serve an array of clams, snails, fish and chicken dishes, patrons are not happy when we tell them we have run out of belangkas dishes."

A serving of belangkas is priced at RM10 per plate although this varies according to the size of the serving.

Abdul Hamid said if the belangkas was not thoroughly cleaned, especially of its faeces, it could cause dizziness to one who consumed it.

A patron, Mohd Salleh Abdul Rahman, 50, said he liked the dish because he had read that the blue-coloured blood of belangkas had cancer-curing abilities.

"It is not only delicious but also good for health," said Mohd Salleh.