

## 2-Star Michelin chef celebrates French cuisine



**Eu Hooi-Khaw**

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CHEF Alex Dilling's love of caviar was manifest in his first dish on a curated menu in Sabayon in EQ Kuala Lumpur.

Here was aged Kaluga caviar, a luxurious blanket of it atop smoked Scottish salmon rilette, crème cru, and Dilling's gold leaf signature. It was served with the lightest muffin and the finest cucumber pickles. My spoon sliced through the caviar, touched the cream layer, and into the smoked salmon beneath. Paired with the muffin and cucumber pickle, it was delicate and harmonious perfection.

The chef loves caviar, not as an expensive garnish, but for its mouthfeel and taste. And Kaluga, often known as river Beluga, from the Amur River Basin in China, is his favourite.

Dilling is from the two Michelin-star restaurant named after himself in London. He is in EQ Kuala Lumpur for a culinary showcase, from now till June 15.

His wild mushroom macaroni gratin, 36-month parmesan, black truffle, and vin jaune (yellow wine) was swoon-worthy. It was the most flavoursome macaroni I've had. There were bites of mushrooms within, the aroma of parmesan and its salty tang, the black truffle, and lastly, the wine emulsion came together in a happy marriage.





*Aged kaluga caviar, smoked scottish salmon rilette, and creme cru. – The Malaysian Insight file pic, June 8, 2024.*

The olive oil-poached black cod stood out in the shiny fillet, crowned with black pearls of caviar and tiny cubes of marinated turnip. Smoked eel consommé was poured around it. While the complex, smoky flavour of the consommé complemented the lovely cod, I found it a trifle salty.

Hunter chicken is the chef's signature dish, his refined take on chicken cacciatore, a classic Italian dish. "Cacciatore" comes from the Italian word for hunter, believed to have originated with Italian hunters preparing chicken over an open fire with the ingredients they had on hand. Dilling's famed hunter chicken is covered with a thin, stripy layer of blended chicken mousse, and another of mushroom duxelle, almost like a beef Wellington, then finished with sauce albufera. It's an intensely flavoured, dark, rich meat sauce that delivers the winning touch to the chicken. Hunter chicken was served with a delightful pomme purée and salad with a lemony dressing.





*Hunter chicken with albufera sauce. – The Malaysian Insight file pic, June 8, 2024.*

We were blown away by the dessert – Tainori chocolate, sourdough ice cream, salted caramel, and Pedro Ximénez sabayon. I loved the ice cream, the burst of salt in the salted caramel, the bitter chocolate, and the jelly on it.

Dilling has spent time with Alain Ducasse in New York and Helene Darroze at The Connaught in London.

His restaurant, Alex Dilling at Café Royal, where he presents gastronomic French cuisine in an intimate setting, was awarded two stars within six months of its opening in 2023.



*Wild mushroom macaroni gratin. – The Malaysian Insight file pic, June 8, 2024.*

The London-born Dilling has always wanted to do things in the kitchen since he was 15 and found a passion for French cuisine. Roast chicken, Mexican food, and cheese make him happy; he dislikes beetroot and hard-boiled eggs.

EQ x Alex Dilling is priced at RM1,200+ per head for dinner at Sabayon. The vegetarian menu priced at RM850+. For reservations, WhatsApp +60122789239 or email [dineateqkl@kul.equatorial.com](mailto:dineateqkl@kul.equatorial.com). – June 5, 2024.

*\* Eu Hooi-Khaw has been writing about food for the longest time, covering all aspects, from restaurant reviews to cooking and recipes, as well as the healthy side of it. She has written for major newspapers and magazines, published the cookbook *Fresh Ingredients*, and also writes for her website [hooikhawandsu.com](http://hooikhawandsu.com).*

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