



**Lunch is served:** Smorgasbord of Sailor's sausages including chicken, beef, lamb and South African boerewors.



Sailor's speciality sausage, the wood smoked Russian Montanas.



Sailor's Don and Jeanne Pickers with Heartland Foods co-founder Jacky How.

A couple sailed across the seas in their own boat and end up making African-style sausages in Langkawi.

**S**ERENDIPITY is a funny thing, often leading one to places unexpected and wonderful, down paths unknown and previously not considered. For self-proclaimed foodie Sarah Malik and friends, a chance encounter at a breakfast table led to their discovery of Sailor's sausages.

"We first came across these lovely sausages when we visited some friends who had relocated to Langkawi. Over breakfast, we asked where their sausages came from, and were immediately intrigued when they told us the story of Don

and Jeanne, the couple who produce them," said Sarah, co-founder of Heartland Foods, the distributor for Sailor's sausages.

For Don and Jeanne Pickers, their story of Sailor's is entwined with their own personal journey which began in South Africa.

"We had a farm back home but the situation had become rather untenable then," said Don, referring to the rising violence he and his neighbours were confronted with due to conflicts between warring political factions in their area.

"Then, our daughter Kathryn died, and we felt as if we had lost one of our best friends," he recounted.

It was 2001 and the Pickers had just completed building their own boat – a project Don had taken on at the suggestion of their late daughter who had intended to use it as a means of expanding their family business into tourism-related activities.

When their two other children made moves to leave their homeland, the Pickers decided to do the same. "We left one night, with just US\$2,000 in our pockets and a handful of personal belongings. We just shut the door on our family home, and sailed off," said Don.

Their journey led them halfway across the world to Phuket and eventually Langkawi. "We were novice sailors when we started out, so it's a small miracle really that we got so far. The first night we sailed from South Africa, we got caught in a massive storm off the coast of Mozambique," recalled Don, laughing. The couple even survived the Asian Tsunami of 2004.

When they finally settled in Langkawi, the Pickers found themselves yearning for a taste of home. So they began experimenting with recreating South African sausages, in an effort to assuage their homesickness.

Before long, Sailor's Supplies was born in 2006 and together with their Malaysian partner, Faridah Hussin, the company now produces a range of South Africa-inspired sausages and baked goods that have found their way into many of Langkawi's hotels, restaurants and

grocery stores.

For years now, Sailor's sausages have perhaps been one of Langkawi's best-kept secrets, its quality products well-known to the island's residents but relatively hidden from the rest of the world. The Pickers manufacture their products in their modest facility where every sausage is still stuffed and tied by Don himself.

"Integrity is important to us. We won't make something we ourselves are not happy with, because we know that what we put out there is not just a representation of who we are, but also of our country, where we come from," explained Don.

Sailor's sausages are made using imported South African spices and quality meats, and are preservative- and nitrate-free.

Their products are also Halal-certified.

"When we started out doing this, we understood that it was important to ensure our products were well accepted by the local community. Malaysia being a Muslim country, it only made sense for us to pursue halal certification. Plus, quite frankly, I find that the halal standards in Malaysia are pretty high, which generally means food products that make the mark are required to meet a certain quality standard," said Don.

But the couple's success in Langkawi has meant that their market on the island was becoming quickly saturated. Since end 2013, Heartland Foods has begun distrib-

uting Sailor's sausages at pocket bazaars in malls and special events in an effort to introduce them into the Kuala Lumpur market.

"We wanted to see first of all, if other KL-ites felt the same way as we did about Sailor's products. There is a growing demand in KL for artisanal products, in particular food, and we felt Sailor's sausages would appeal," said Sarah.

Several food and beverage outlets around Kuala Lumpur have now incorporated Sailor's sausages into their menus and consumer delivery orders have been rising.

"At the last pocket bazaar we did in Bangsar Shopping Complex, we even had customers who made the trip all the way from Malacca just to buy our sausages!" exclaimed Sarah.

This September, Heartland Foods will be among vendors participating in Taste: Malaysia International Gourmet Festival 2014. The company is also hoping to get Sailor's products carried in KL-based grocery chains.

"My partners and I are food-lovers and we're also huge supporters of small businesses, as we are entrepreneurs as well. So, collaborating with the Pickers was an easy decision because we felt they share the same values we do, and their products well represent what we'd like to see more of on grocery shelves – quality food made with real ingredients and love."

■ More information at [www.heartlandfoodsasia.com](http://www.heartlandfoodsasia.com).



Sailor's chicken franks.