

# Reservations for hotel spreads ringing off the hook

**NATION** 

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GEORGE TOWN: Although Penang is known internationally as a street food paradise, people in the state also have a longstanding secret love affair with restaurant buffets.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of hotels in the state offered a range of all-you-can-eat spreads every day.

Reservations at Sarkies at the E&O Hotel then were essential if one wanted a seat in the famed eatery by the sea.

E&O general manager Alison Fraser said the restaurant had been closed since March 18 – the first day of the movement control order (MCO) – but it is scheduled to reopen its doors later this week.

“We have been receiving a lot of calls on a daily basis from our regular guests who are eagerly awaiting to dine at Sarkies again.

“After careful deliberation and implementation of enhanced sanitisation and social distancing measures, we are pleased to announce the reopening of Sarkies this Friday.

“However, as per the state government’s guidelines, we will only be open on weekends and will not be serving buffet (yet),” Fraser told The Star.

Guests will, however, get to enjoy again dishes from the buffet line through an a la carte menu of Sarkies’ crowd favourites.

The 20 kitchen and service workers who previously needed to run an average lunch or dinner shift are undergoing service training to prepare for the reopening under modified conditions.

“Currently, we will have to wait for further directives from the state government as to when buffets can resume operation.

“However, we do hope to be able to serve our Christmas buffet as per usual at the end of the year.



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Over on the northern tip of Penang island, Spice Market Cafe at Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort and Spa is beloved by its regulars.

The informal buffet restaurant set among aged rain trees was packed on weekends, and good news is on the cards – it's ready for a restart as soon as authorities give the green light.

Resort communications director Suleiman Tunku Abdul Rahman said the hotel had used the downtime in the restaurant operations to give the place a facelift.

"The kitchen has had a thorough cleaning and in the dining area, we've taken the opportunity to do maintenance work like touching up the tiles and painting.

"The place is definitely better than it was before. We are observing and complying with both ministry and state directives and SOP, along with our own strict guidelines under the 'Shangri-La Cares' initiative.

"From providing guests with envelopes to store face masks and having menu QR codes, these go beyond the standard guidelines of sanitising hands and keeping a safe distance apart," Suleiman said.

The new guidelines will halve Spice Market Cafe's capacity from its original 190 seats to ensure all patrons are well-distanced and comfortable.

"Once movement control restrictions are lifted, we are ready to open Spice Market Cafe without delay," Suleiman added.

Eastin Hotel Penang is also looking forward to welcoming buffet guests back to its Swez Brasserie.

It last welcomed buffet guests on Feb 16 – almost four months ago.

Hotel assistant marcom manager Adeline Lesslar said the restaurant had branched out into pickup and delivery during the MCO, with its cakes being especially popular.

"The response has been very encouraging, especially for our Japanese cheesecakes. We've added to the menus and have a wider selection of Japanese cheesecakes.

"We have also expanded our delivery services to cover the George Town area," she said.

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