

# Master chef

The BRATs go behind the scenes with Foh San head chef Chan Kam.

VETERAN dim sum chef Chan Kam, 64, is a busy man.

Every day, he coordinates a team of 25 chefs and kitchen supervisors at the Foh San dim sum restaurant to produce over 150 different types of dim sum.

Still, Chan was kind enough to take some time off to bring a group of us from the BRATs Ipoh & Taiping 2014 workshop into his kitchen, so we could have a better idea how dim sum is made.

"We have to be in the restaurant before 6am every day except Tuesdays, when the restaurant is closed," said Chan. And that includes weekends, their busiest days. "Most young people aren't willing to do this kind of work these days."

Chan himself started learning the art of making dim sum when he was 14 to help support his family. But what started out as a job eventually grew into a passion for Chan.

He went on to work in a few different restaurants and was an apprentice to many other dim sum chefs before he came to Ipoh 30 years ago to work in Foh San.

In that time, Foh San has grown to become one of Ipoh's most famous restaurants, drawing throngs of locals and tourists every day.

As head chef, Chan has also had to identify the customers' changing preferences throughout the years. "Thirty years ago, customers don't mind oily and strongly-flavoured dim sum. Now, people want everything to have less oil, less sugar and less salt, and no preservatives."

His team of chefs regularly travels to China, Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan to find



Chan Kam started learning how to make dim sum to support his family, but he quickly developed a passion for his craft, and he eventually became Foh San's head chef.

new types of dim sum that can be localised and added to Foh San's menu. They try to create one new dish every month.

The dim sum industry can be a lucrative one, as clearly demonstrated by Foh San's incredible success, which has seen it export its products across the world. According to Chan, however, that hasn't stopped young people from losing interest in the art of making dim sum.

"There are still some young people who are learning with us here, but in general, we don't have enough young talent to meet the industry's demands," he said.

"It's a tough job, but back in the day we had no choice. We had to help our families put food on the table. Now, things are different."

But no matter how tough things get, Chan said he will always enjoy making dim sum – and he has already been doing it for 50 years!



The art of making dim sum requires commitment and dedication.