Netizens argue over origin of dishes after M'sia plans to stake claim

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PETALING JAYA: A "food fight" is brewing, especially in cyberspace, following Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen's statement of Malaysia's intention to lay claim to several dishes.

The story has been widely picked up by news portals, online forums and blogs worldwide after Dr Ng said that nasi lemak, laksa, bak kut teh, chilli crab and Hainanese chicken rice are Malaysian.

Catherine Deshayes, who is from Britain's *TheMoveChannel.com*, said it would be interesting to see how Malaysia would go about branding these famous dishes.

"The country is set on ensuring that visitors are aware that these dishes originated in Malaysia although they are popular all over the world.

"Variations of the dishes listed are available in several other Asian nations, particularly Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Thailand and China," she wrote.

Dr Ng's statement did not go down well with some Netizens in the region, especially Singaporeans, who had come to consider Hainanese chicken rice and chilli crab their own.

The more diplomatic ones shrugged it off as "a promotional exercise" but not everyone was as kind.

"She might as well claim that steamed white rice is also Malay-sian," said a reader on Singapore's *Straits Times* online discussion board.

Another post read: "Laksa, nasi lemak, Hainanese chicken rice, chilli crab and bak kut teh – how many Malaysian outlets' food is as tasty as the ones found in any food court here? Come and taste the originals by Singaporeans".

"Countries of origin? Just cook and eat to your hearts' content. It is how it is cooked and what makes tourists keep coming back to them that matters!" said another respondent on the forum.

Singaporean blogger TheBrother-hood questioned how Malaysia would make their claim on the dishes official.

"The principle of food sovereignty would be hilarious, if only it wasn't taken so seriously. Tell me is chilli crab Malaysian or Singaporean? What about laksa, is it ours or theirs? Are we going to the Hague (International Court of Justice)?" he asked.

However, Malaysians are not taking the blows lying down and have hit back.

"Yes, Hainan is one of China's provinces but I think my grandfather told me it was a recipe created by the Hainanese from Malaysia," said a respondent on *The Star's* Citizen blog.

N.K. Khoo, a Malaysian blogger from Ledang, Johor said: "Bak kut teh is truly a Malaysian dish, which originated from Klang. Singapore is hijacking it from Malaysia and claiming bak kut teh as theirs". - The Star

Look what Ng Yen Yen started...
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Picture / Sarawak laksa by Amao79

You can read more about these dishes from Wikipedia:

1) Laksa

2) Bak kut teh

3) Nasi lemak