Cookbook serves up $1.2m for charity

Book features recipes of Mrs Wee Kim Wee, wife of late president

BY HUANG LIJIE

A COOKBOOK featuring recipes of the former president’s wife, Mrs Wee Kim Wee, was unveiled yesterday and it raised $1.2 million in charity proceeds.

The book, Cooking For The President, was launched by President S R Nathan at the Raffles Hotel ballroom.

It was written and self-published by Mrs Wee’s daughter, Ms Wee Eng Hwa, who also photographed all the dishes. Local publisher Epigram was the publishing consultant.

Ms Wee, 68, the fifth of seven children, told The Straits Times: “My father always had in his heart the desire to help the underprivileged and the less fortunate, and my mother and I felt the launch of the cookbook would be a good opportunity to follow in his footsteps and raise funds for charities.”

Mrs Wee chose five beneficiaries for the fund-raising drive:

- The Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund for the Nanyang Technological University’s Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information;
- Girl Guides Singapore;
- Jamiyah Home for the Aged;
- Life Community Services Society;
- Trybe Limited, an organisation that aims to inspire young people through its leadership and personal development programmes.

Donations poured in from more than 60 donors who contributed amounts ranging from $2,000 for a copy of the book signed by Ms Wee, to $100,000 for a copy of the book signed by Ms Wee, Mrs Wee and President Nathan.

Eighty per cent of the funds raised will benefit the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund, which offers scholarships and bursaries to students at the journalism and media school, as well as supports its students on overseas reporting programmes.

The rest of the funds will be divided among the other four charities.

About 400 guests attended the book launch, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s wife, Ms Ho Ching; and former Indonesian president Suharto’s daughter, Siti Hutami Endang Adiningtih “Mamiek”.

The 544-page cookbook boasts 230 recipes, including dishes such as mee siam (rice vermicelli in spicy gravy) and kueh ko swee (steamed rice flour cakes flavoured with palm sugar) that were served to guests hosted by the late Mr Wee during his years as president, from 1985 to 1993.

The book also includes a biography of Mr and Mrs Wee.

It took Ms Wee, a lawyer, 21 years to put the book together.

When Ms Wee, 94, was asked if she was happy to see her Peranakan recipes published, she smiled and nodded her head.

The book will be available soon at leading bookstores for $115.56 (including GST).