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# Beeline for buffet table

Hotels see business picking up on second week of fasting



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**PETALING JAYA:** Despite the higher cost of living, most hotels say that customers are still queuing up at their buffet lines this festive season.

It has been a week since Muslims started fasting, and hotels in the Klang Valley are getting a better grasp on how business will be like for them this Ramadan.

Generally, sales figures are showing that this year would be a profitable one for the industry despite the current trend of penny-pinching.

For Mandarin Oriental Kuala Lumpur, business has never been better.

Food and beverage director Michael Groll said the current rate of bookings rivalled that of last year, which was the hotel's best in terms of revenue collected during Ramadan.

His counterpart at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, Alvin Khoo, said despite the implementation of the GST, customers are still dining out.

In fact, reservations for the hotel's festive buffet saw a 15% jump from the previous year.

As the days go by, Khoo expects that trend to continue upwards.

But while sales showed that a lot of Malaysians still spend money on meals outside, hoteliers are aware that spending power had reduced among the general public.

The Westin Kuala Lumpur's director of food and beverage, Maurice Van Wijk, said the hotel saw an increase in reservations for their buffet.

But despite the jump, he said that with many more eateries and hotels to choose from nowadays, pricing played a key role in ensuring their crowd didn't dwindle.

"The market is there. But we all have to



**Delicious treat:** Guests helping themselves to a Ramadan buffet spread. In general, Malaysians are still willing to dine out this Ramadan despite the higher cost of living.

**Times are changing and we understand that we need to provide competitive prices to get people interested.**

Ezani Amir

share the same pie," said Van Wijk.

For GTower Hotel Kuala Lumpur, reservation numbers are good despite a slower than expected start.

Food and beverage director Ezani Amir revealed that on the first day of the hotel's festive buffet, there were only 120 customers, which were lower than half of the buf-

fet's maximum capacity.

But since the beginning of this week, reservations had increased, with an average of 200 customers daily.

Ezani noted the hotel had to change a few things due to the current economic situation.

"Times are changing and we understand that we need to provide competitive prices to get people interested," said Ezani.

JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur's public relations executive Natasya Falina said most people preferred to break their fast at home with their family during the first week and the hotel had always expected that.

She said the bulk of their reservations would only start coming in from the second week onwards.

Hilton Kuala Lumpur recorded no noticeable surge or drop in reservations this year for the first week of Ramadan.

But like previous years, the hotel expects things to pick up soon.