

THE MAGIC IN BIRD'S NEST

I am on my way to a swiftlet symposium. Maybe the Malaysian think that I know a lot about swiftlet nests, so they ask me to make a speech in an international Conference in Kuala Terengganu.

Swiftlet nest is closely link to health. Or is it not? Well, I think it is all about believing on something. My colleague Yeni refuses to consume swiftlet nests because she knows that swiftlet nests is made of spits of birds and thus when we consume it, spits will meet spits. Bird's spits meets ours. How yucky and disgusting, don't you think?

But again, it's all about belief. Some or maybe many believe that swiftlet nest, made of birds' spits, is a magic. In a nutshell, it can make u healthier, prettier, and live longer.

It all began with a legend in T'ang Dynasty. The year was about 600 Anno Domini. That's more than 1,400 years ago! Legend said that consuming the bird's nests will heal various diseases and keep your health in the utmost condition. Only Emperor, kings, and the royal families could afford to buy them, as the price has been extremely expensive (until now, of course).

Do I belief in the magic ingredients within swiftlet nests which makes me healthier, prettier (looks younger), and add more productive years of my life? Well, for one thing, I cannot afford the price. If you have USD 2500 to buy 1 kg (about 120pcs) of swiftlet nests, then you may (or may not) start believing about the magic, secretive, unveiled ingredients within swiftlet nests.

Another important thing is that I do not belief the magic of swiftlet nests. But I have been trying to understand why people believe on it. The belief to some extent is good for us, I mean as a nation. Otherwise, nobody will buy swiftlet nests from us. My good friend who owns tens and maybe hundreds of swiftlet houses told me that our swiftlet houses all over Indonesia are capable to produce 400 tons a year! What a fantastic number. Almost all swiftlet nests from Indonesia go to China via Hong Kong, Malaysia or Singapore. Some may be bought by those three countries before shipped to the final destination (and maybe claimed by them as their products).

People are willing to spend a lot of dollar in pursue of health. It was a bit hard for me to understand when I was younger. Now I understand and in fact I, belief it or not, I have to admit that I might be doing the same thing now when my age is unavoidably above fifty!

Let's go back to swiftlet nests. The swiftlet nests is a big business, involve a huge amount of money. But research about swiftlet and swiftlet nests is extremely rare, including research to reveal the secret chemical compound that makes the price soaring high. What happen if it turns out that is contain only saliva, just like ours?

Maybe the secret is better to be a secret, just like a Padora box, which meant to be always closed....

KLIA, en route to Kuala Terengganu. Saturday, 16 July 2011. 2:40 pm local time

