



presents

# dessert in the desert



As you find yourself drawn to the irresistible chocolate mousse, fruit tarts or gateauxs in the display, be sure of one thing -

*Chef Christophe Sapy,*

Executive Pastry Chef, Le Meridian Hotel,

Airport, likes to keep it simple. He shares his

tips and tricks with Gulf Gourmet.

By Natasha Shrimanker



“I was always fascinated when I played with dough. I loved getting the end result of my creations immediately,” shares Chef Christophe Sapy, Executive Pastry Chef, Le Meridien Hotel, Airport. “My passion for cooking grew with time, and I realized by the age of 14 that I wanted to be a chef,” he adds.

Chef Christophe is the first in his family to take on this profession. “But my family had been very supportive of my decision, and that encouraged me to do better,” he smiles. Initially, he started baking cakes for family and friends on occasions, which was hugely appreciated. Graduating from France’s renowned hotel management school, Le Renouveau, Chef Christophe has built a strong foundation through his professional and educational experience. He specialised in Plated Dessert at the Valrhona Formation, later acquiring a diploma for Advanced HACCP Management.

He loves travelling to different parts of the world to work. After spending two years in USA working for the Michelin group, he learnt to cook for different cultures. “America is a giant melting pot, where people around the world meet. I learnt about different tastes there, and was introduced to a variety of ingredients,”

he states.

When asked about his signature dish, he finds it hard to hide his passion for soufflés. “Be it any flavour, I love creating them, especially chocolate, as it’s my favourite. I love making this because it is simple and tasty, and loved by all generations!” he says gleefully.

But Chef Christophe also believes in the adage that ‘lesser is better’, and feels that when you use more ingredients and décor for one pastry, you end up losing the actual essence of the dish.

This maxim is using less also applies to the fat content in his creations. For, sweet does not necessarily have to be calorific. So Chef Christophe tackles that problem by using more fruits in his pastries, as they contain natural sugars that are not harmful to the body. And that explains the variety of fruit cakes, tarts and soufflés on the menu at Le Meridien.

Chef Christophe does not have an easy job. In charge of a team of 30, and catering to 21 restaurants, he is constantly on his feet. “I love working as a team player, allowing all my team members to voice their ideas,





which we implement right away. We rely heavily on customer feedback, to understand our strengths and weaknesses better," he explains.

But his work is never a problem, as his experience helps him tackle the most trying situations. One such experience was when he was in France. "We had to prepare a luncheon for a football event, catering to 600 guests. We were busy boiling two huge pots of water; one was to be used for onion soup, and the other for tea. By mistake, I put in salt in the pot that was to be used for tea. Nobody realised it until at least 100 guests were served sour tea. We all had a good laugh after the damage was controlled. This is something I shall never forget," he laughs.

Incidents like these, believes Chef Christophe, give you a strong foundation, which is the first step towards becoming a great chef. "My inspiration has always been Chef Pierre Hermes and Chef Christopher Gasper, who have taught me everything I know today. They are veterans in creating exotic, finger-licking pastries. They would pick fresh ingredients on their own, spending hours on developing a novelty into perfection. I was taught the relevance of simplicity, and was highly influenced by their passion for food. If I have to cook for anyone, it would be for them. If I am able to impress

them with my delicacy, then I know I have done justice to their hard work and training," he states.

When not cooking, Chef Christophe likes to travel. "I have always wanted to visit Australia and different parts of Asia. I want to learn their cultures and ingredients. This would be a challenge which I might take up when the opportunity arises," he says.

And these travels may just culminate into a book. "I am still very young - only 27. I have a long way to go and learn. But yes, I would like to combine my travels with work, and develop a book on desserts and travel. But it's all still an idea, nothing in the pipeline currently," he clarifies.

At this time, Chef Christophe is happy creating deliciously decadent desserts for his consumers, and spending time with his wife Rose and daughter Maylis, who have always been there to support and encourage him.

"As a chef, it's important to realise your passions, and put them to good use in the right direction," he concludes, putting all of his into the bowl of chocolate he is whipping up. 📸

