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MAY 2025

THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

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volume 20, issue 5



Judging with Grace

Chef **Otto Weibel** on his connection with Singapore and how he wields the taste verdict responsibly

ARTISAN BAKERY COMPETITION

A deep dive into the second edition of the Sounbula Mills bakery competition with **Karim Al Azhari** and Chef **Jurgen Ellenbeck**



WHO'S ON THE PANEL

Meet the judges behind the tough calls. And check out the complete set of rules and regulations for Salon 2025



THE QUIET KIND OF BRAVE

Bulgarian roots, innate talent, and quiet conviction, Chef **Saniya**'s journey is a confluence of self definition through food





*Dinner Bell
Cheese*



*Gustodoro
Tomatoes*

ELEGANCE IN EVERY BITE



SAVOR THE CREAMY MELT OF DINNER BELL CHEESE BETWEEN GOLDEN, TOASTED SOURDOUGH, PERFECTLY COMPLEMENTED BY A SIDE OF RICH GUSTODORO TOMATO SAUCE FOR DIPPING. A SIMPLE, LUXURIOUS BITE AWAITS.



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Keep it Cooking.

Sometimes, caught up in the everyday rush, we lose sight of why we started in the first place. But keep on going, because your everyday hard work adds up to something bigger than a shift or a service. And perhaps this is the best time to keep going and stay in the industry. Things are shifting, opportunities are opening up, and we are feeling good about where the UAE tourism is heading.

Recent industry reports show that Dubai's hospitality sector experienced steady year-on-year growth in 2024, welcoming millions of visitors and setting new records along the way. This is great news for our chefs, as there is growing demand for culinary talent across borders, everyone is looking for skilled hands and inspired menus.

And speaking of talent, this issue is full of it. Our cover story this month is an exclusive chat with Chef Otto, the godfather of Singapore's culinary scene. His story on judging competitions may give you great insights to view your dish from your eyes of creativity and also through the lens of judges. You will come to understand that when you love what you do, besides just winning the competition, you will win in ways that matter most, which is through personal growth, mastery, and lasting connections.

Also inside is a great feature on Sounbula Artisan Bakery Arena Class. Chef Jurgen and Mr. Karim talk about the magic of good flour, how baking is

both an art and a science, and why this platform is amazing for young bakers. If you still find joy in creating things from scratch, this is a must-read.

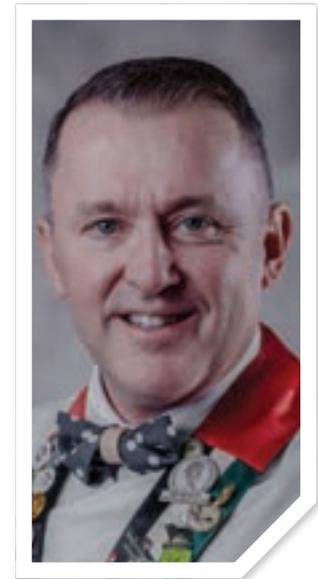
And do not miss our pastry spotlight on Chef Saniya. She talks about exploring various paths within hospitality, not only for professional growth but also for self-discovery. Her story talks about the workplace environment, which again, is crucial, especially as we head towards the tech era where human connections dwindle.

May is a special month in Dubai. EXPO Culinaire 2025 has officially opened its doors to the world. Some are on the front lines, while others contribute through the food stalls, catering and more.

Simply put, if you believe you have experienced all the flavors the world can offer, think again. The EXPO Culinaire will see chefs from across the world making their finest dishes and setting new standards, right here in the UAE.

We still have exhibition spaces open. To reserve your spot, reach out to the Emirates Culinary Guild at emiratesculinaryguild@gmail.com or Purple Kitchen at joanne.cook@purple-kitchen.com. This is not just any competition or event, it is a culinary celebration.

Visit gulfgourmet.net to flip through previous issues. Stay updated via emiratesculinaryguild.net and do not forget to follow us on social media to



connect with talented chefs from all around the world.

Take a moment to read the company profiles of our corporate members. Also do look at the Friends of the Guild pages to see all of our amazing supporters. These are the people and companies that help us keep the spotlight where it belongs: on chefs.

A heartfelt thanks to all our advertisers and partners. Your support lets us focus on culinary while keeping up with the latest trends and innovations.

So yes, this issue is full. If there are stories you want to see in future editions, feel free to email me. Let us keep cooking and keep showing the world what passion looks like.

If you have any questions about the events? Just reach out to us at emiratesculinaryguild@gmail.com. Thank you for being part of our culinary community.

Good luck to all the competitors, and enjoy the culinary journey that awaits you through the pages.

Culinary Regards,
Alan Orreal



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SALON CULINAIRE SUMMARY SCHEDULE

Class Description	Date	Start	Judging Start	Clear Time	Location
	21st to 23rd May		0900	1800	HALL AREA
PASTRY & BAKERY SHOWPIECE					
SHOWPIECE ARTISTIC DISPLAYS					
GOURMET STATIC DISPLAYS					
PRACTICAL CLASS		0830	1030	1800	PRACTICAL AREA
Practical Cake Decoration					
Practical Soup & Sandwich Student Challenge					
Dressed Chicken & Fish - Practical Butchery					
Primal Lamb - Practical Butchery					
Practical Cake Decoration					
Practical Fruit & Vegetable Carving					
Individual Ice Carving					
ESC LIVE COOKING		0715		1730	KITCHEN A & B
US Beef					
Chicken					
Fish/Seafood					
Arabic Mezzeh					
Syrian Cuisine Traditional & Modern Plated Powered by Boody's					
Chicken					
Savory Potato Creations Powered by Potatoes USA					
Plant Based Appetizer & Main Course Student Challenge					
Emirati Cuisine					
Syrian Three Kibbeh Plated Powered by Boody's					
GLOBAL CHEF CHALLENGE (UAE FINALIST TO COMPETE AT WALES CONGRESS 2026)					
Global Chef Challenge Young	Wed 21st May	0715	0815	1400	A1 - A4
Qatar / UAE / SYRIA					
Global Chef Challenge Vegan	22nd May	0715	0815	1400	A1 - A4
Egypt / Qatar / Syria / UAE/ Morocco					
Global Chef Challenge Senior					
Namibia / South Africa / UAE / Syria					
Morocco		1000		1300	A7
Global Chef Challenge Pastry	22nd May	1300		1600	A7 - A8
UAE / Morocco					

NATIONAL CUISINE TEAMS

Team	Date	Class Description	Registration	Start	Location
Italy / India/ Sri Lanka / Indonesia	21st May	Sounbulla Mills Bakery Arena	Prep time	0800	Bakery Artisan Kitchen
China / South Africa / Thailand / Nepal	22nd May			1300	
Malaysia / France / Syria	23rd May				
ESC DAILY AWARDS CEREMONY - 1800	21st & 22nd May				EXPO SHJ STAGE
ESC GRAND AWARDS CEREMONY - 1800	23rd May 2025				EXPO SHJ STAGE
GLOBAL CHEFS CHALLENGE AWARDS CEREMONY	23rd MAY				JCH BALLROOM

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EXPOCulinaire

FOOD & EQUIPMENT FOR CHEFS | PASTRY CHEFS | BAKERS | HOReCa PROFESSIONALS
FEATURING THE 28TH EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINAIRE
21-23 MAY 2025 | EXPO CENTRE SHARJAH, UAE

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



ExpoCulinaire 2025

A Complete Culinary Experience for Industry Professionals

ExpoCulinaire 2025 returns to the Expo Centre Sharjah from May 21–23 for its 6th edition, providing a premier platform for leading suppliers to the HoReCa and foodservice industry, alongside top Culinary Competitions.

With a focus on culinary excellence and innovation, the event offers a space where suppliers, chefs, and foodservice professionals can converge, exchange ideas, and shape the future of the industry.

Organized in collaboration with the Emirates Culinary Guild and endorsed by the World Association of Chefs Societies, ExpoCulinaire continues to set the regional standard for industry engagement and culinary excellence.

Powered by Industry Leaders

This year's edition is powered by five headline sponsors: PRISTINE, ARAMTEC, AL GHURAIR, UNOX, and IRCA GROUP, household names within the culinary and food service sectors. These companies are recognised not only as trusted suppliers, but as strategic partners in shaping the region's culinary future. Their presence at the show reflects a shared commitment to innovation, quality and professional development across the foodservice sector.

Industry Supporters

In addition to the headline sponsors, other confirmed companies include Del Monte, American Garden, Paramount, Barakat, SAT Hospitality Global, Taaza, Al Razana, ANGT, Switch, Hearty Mart, German Ice Cream Factory, Al Jazira, and MA Hawa, alongside long-time supporters US Meat, Potatoes USA and California Walnuts. Their presence offers the opportunity to meet directly with suppliers and explore new product offerings and solutions that can be implemented in professional kitchens.

Culinary Competitions at the Heart of the Event

At the heart of ExpoCulinaire is the Emirates International Salon Culinaire, the region's largest culinary competition, hosted by the Emirates Culinary Guild. With 1,000+ chefs competing live, the Salon includes both individual and team categories, such as the Artisan Bakery Arena, National Cuisine Heritage Challenge, and the Global Chefs Challenge Continental Semi Final. These competitions are more than just a showcase of skill – they attract culinary professionals who source, specify and make decisions. Trade visitors can expect a dynamic atmosphere with live judging, tastings and interaction with competitors and jury members from across the globe.

Interactive Learning and Live Demonstrations

Visitors can attend Expert Demo Sessions and Certified Education & Training Programmes, all free of charge. Led by industry experts and supported by Culinary Institutes such as ICCA, CIC and DCT - these sessions provide practical insights into modern culinary techniques, product applications and professional kitchen innovation.

A Gathering for the Industry's Future

ExpoCulinaire 2025 is more than a trade show – whether you're a chef, F&B manager, procurement specialist, educator or student – ExpoCulinaire is designed to deliver relevant content and real value. It's an immersive industry event combining trade opportunity, competition and education

Register Now

For more information and to register, visit [www.expoculinaire.com/register]

For exhibition inquiries, contact:

sales@purple-kitchen.com
or call +971 (0)58 597 8803.

(<http://www.expoculinaire.com/exhibit>)

To get your chef or company related news featured in this section, email editor@gulfgourmet.org

May 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

EXPO *Culinaire*

FOOD & EQUIPMENT FOR CHEFS | PASTRY CHEFS | BAKERS | HORECA PROFESSIONALS
FEATURING THE 28TH EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINAIRE
21-23 MAY 2025 | EXPO CENTRE SHARJAH, UAE

The 2025 ExpoCulinaire JUDGES

The 6th edition of ExpoCulinaire brings together the best of the best from the industry. From seasoned chefs to culinary veterans, these powerhouses are now gracing the judging panel, all driven by a shared passion for the culinary arts

INTERNATIONAL JUDGES



Andreas Muller



Andy Oh



Ann Brown



Benny Dong



Eric Low



Clinton Zhu



Jerome Valencia



Bernd Uber



Fernando Aracama



George Damianou



Iztok Crtomir Legat



Karl Heinz Ney



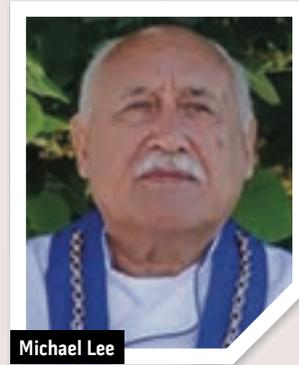
Karlheinz Haase



Kristine Hartviksen



Martin Kobald



Michael Lee



Uwe Micheel



Rick Stephen



Otto Weibel



Neil Thomson

UAE LOCAL JUDGES



Amro Al Yassin



Atim Suyatim



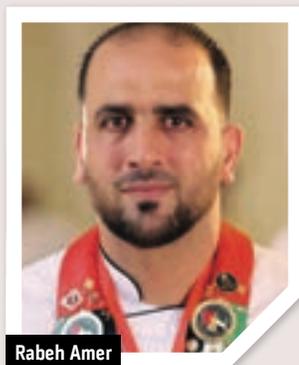
Dilantha Fernando



Elsaid Eldimiry



Suresh Babu



Rabeh Amer



Vivek Huria



K.A.C Prasad

WRITING THE NEXT CHAPTER ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD AND LEARNING...



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Foodverse

Unleashing the Potential of People and the Industry in Food

Imagine a world where chefs could effectively build their careers, find mentors to guide their growth, showcase their talent and skills to a global audience, and have their craft recognized and rewarded.

Well, all this is no longer a distant dream. It's right here and it's called the Foodverse.

Foodverse, a connected ecosystem

It's a first-of-its-kind platform that connects, enables, and empowers chefs, food enthusiasts, and industry brands within a unified digital ecosystem, where learning, creativity, connectivity, and commerce happen across every corner of the world.

- ◆ **Chefs for the Industry** – Culinary learning for aspiring chefs,
- ◆ **Chefs in the Industry** – Connecting, supporting, and empowering chefs on their professional journey,
- ◆ **Industry in Food** – Holistic influence and meaningful market engagement,
- ◆ **Food Enthusiasts** – Food as the universal language to connect the world

Foodverse, a journey that began with a big idea

The International Centre for Culinary Arts, ICCA Dubai, the Middle East's leading culinary school, with its two-decade long legacy, envisioned a future for those in food through a digitally integrated platform.

Along this journey, it became clear that technology alone wasn't the answer. What the industry needed was a seamlessly connected community to address real-world challenges. The solution was to build that foundation and then layer in application-focused,

outcome-driven technologies to create lasting value. That vision led to the creation of Foodverse, the future of food.

Foodverse, for everyone and everything

The platform offers tools that are designed for to create real impact:

◆ FV Profile

Make your profile your identity

Showcase your skills, creativity, and story to gain visibility among chefs and across the wider industry.

◆ FV Learning

Foster continuous development

Culinary growth extends beyond the classroom through professional development programs and standardized, application-focused education.

◆ FV Jobs

Enhance career opportunities

Explore openings matched to your aspirations from 20+ global job portals and connect with expert consultants and credible employers.

◆ FV Mentors

Engage with industry leaders

Gain valuable advice, insights, and guidance from mentors invested in your growth.

◆ FV Loyalty

Transform passion into profit

Showcase product applications, make brand recommendations, and earn rewards at every milestone.

Foodverse (FV) Compete: An incredibly credible competition module

Competitions have long been vital proving grounds for chefs. FV Compete reimagines that tradition for the digital world, offering fair judging standards, real-time scoring, and seamless digital management.

It has already delivered a new level of competition experience and engagement at prestigious events. Now, it will power the Emirates International Salon Culinaire 2025 at ExpoCulinaire Sharjah — one of the region's largest and most respected professional culinary competitions. Hundreds of chefs from around the region will compete, using FV Compete ensuring transparent judging and credible scoring.

Through FV Compete, Foodverse is setting new standards for how culinary excellence is validated, celebrated, and shared globally.

Foodverse, more than a digital platform; it's now a movement!

Welcome to Foodverse — where every dream and every journey in food belongs.

For more information, visit www.Foodverse.io or download the app

(Available globally on iOS and Android.)



FOOD
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A PLATFORM WHERE CHEFS, ENTHUSIASTS,
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THE INDUSTRY**

Culinary Learning and
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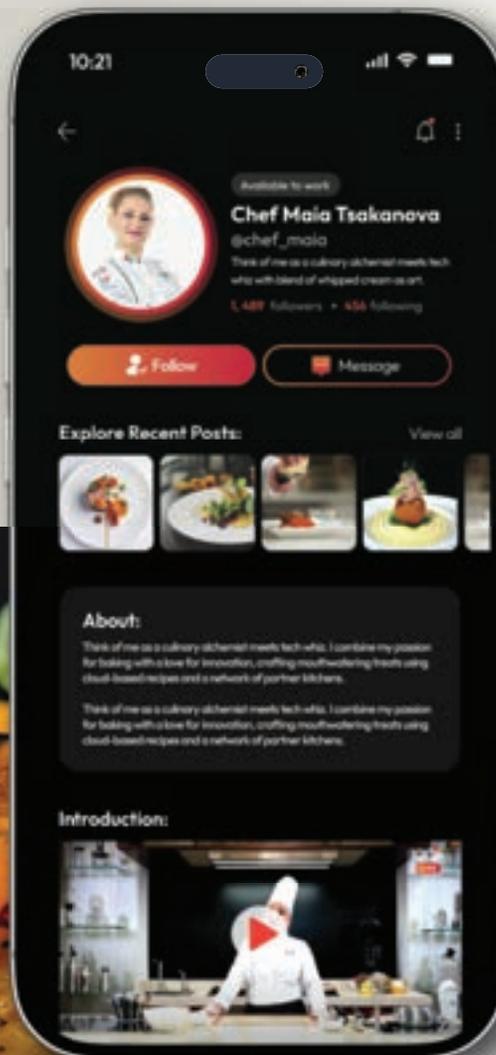
Connecting and Enabling the
Industry Chefs to Grow, Network,
and Enhance their Expertise.

**INDUSTRY
IN FOOD**

Holistic Product Marketing, Brand
Awareness and Industry Engagement.

**FOOD
ENTHUSIASTS**

Creating and Supporting a Global
Community of Food Lovers.



Fearlessly Redefining Success

Chef **Tarryn-Leigh Green** shares her insights from **Amy Wilkinson's** inspiring talk with The Guild's Women's Culinary Chapter

During the Women's Culinary Chapter session in April, Amy Wilkinson, the founder of Fearless Foodies, shared nothing short of transformational wisdom. Her words struck a chord, unlocking raw emotion, powerful reflection, and a renewed sense of purpose among our members. There was laughter, a lot of nodding, quiet contemplation, and even a few tears, all stemming from the simplicity and power of her message.

Amy reminded us that building resilience is not something we are born with; it is a skill, and like any skill, it can be cultivated. In a world where women often juggle multiple roles, the idea that resilience can be learned and strengthened gave us hope and agency. It is not about having all the answers but about continuing to show up, even when things get hard, especially when things get hard.

Amy said plainly that as women, our form of resilience leads us to so often struggle to ask for help or even to pause. We push through exhaustion, piling pressure on ourselves, convinced we must do it all, all the time. But part of this revolutionary journey of self-discovery and self-ownership is acknowledging when it is just too much. We need to give ourselves permission to put down our tools, take a breath, and reflect.

We were challenged to reframe what success really means. Not society's version, nor our parents', spouse's, or boss's, but our own. In the hustle of modern life, it is easy to lose track of what we want. Hearing these words was a stark



but empowering reminder that you do not have to be the Executive Chef of a five-star hotel to have achieved success. Unless that is your dream, why are you chasing it?

Ask yourself: Why am I here? Am I happy? If not, why? Have you reached your joy, or are you perhaps chasing a dream created not from your own heart but from expectations: your own or those you believe others have for you? If the path you are on does not lead you to joy, then you are on the wrong path. Stop. Reassess. Realign. It takes courage to acknowledge that something is not working, but it is the first step to creating a life that truly fulfills you.

These concepts may sound simple, but they are deeply profound. And for many women, regardless of age, nationality, education, or religion, they are incredibly hard to live by. We are often our own worst critics and our harshest taskmasters. Amy's talk was a stark reminder that it is not selfish to slow down, seek help, or change course. It is smart. It is necessary. And most

importantly, it is powerful.

The most liberating takeaway was this: you can have it all, just not all at the same time. As women, we do play important roles in our families and communities. That is not a burden; it is a part of our identity, and how we view those roles can either confine us or become our greatest strengths. This was a turning point in the discussion: our responsibilities do not have to limit us; they can empower us.

Once we accept this, we become the authors of our own stories and the lead role in our lives. That idea hits home. It is not just about reclaiming our careers or our ambitions; it is about reclaiming our narrative.

We left the session with more questions than answers, which is exactly the point. The real magic lies in the reflection. The bravery to stop. To change direction and chase joy. To live a life shaped not by obligation but by intention.

Amy urged us to be brave. To take the leap. To do what scares us. To embrace the butterflies in our stomachs because that is where growth begins. If we fall, we get up and grow stronger with each step. The mistakes we make are just part of the story. They add texture and depth to the beautiful, chaotic, colorful tapestry of our lives.

Thank you, Amy, for your honesty, your heart, and your courage. You gave us permission to dream differently and to do it fearlessly. ■

Championing Inclusivity in the Kitchen (Part II)

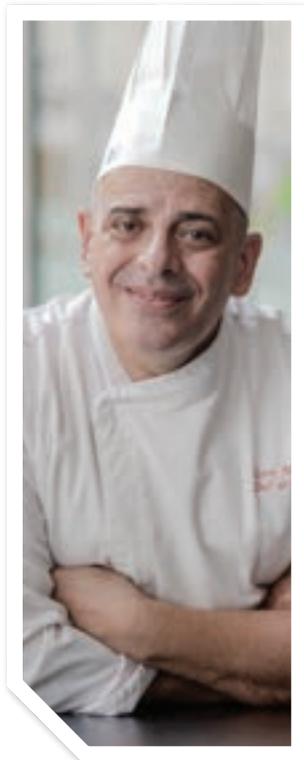
Talent has no gender, writes Chef Tarek Mourieess

The culinary world is shifting. The industry is on the compassionate route, and women are now making headlines. One of the shining lights of our community is found in the voices of women who lead, speak, and create change. It does not matter which walk of life they come from; their contributions are worth their weight in gold.

At DWTC, we are fortunate to have women who are not just present but also leading from the front. I am proud to work alongside 24 incredible women on our culinary staff, young interns, and seasoned pros, all working with dedication. They each bring something valuable to the table, and the insights they share make our team better.

As I mentioned in part one, we should learn from history, which is filled with examples of outstanding female leaders who have broken barriers. Michelle Obama has made efforts to promote quality education and healthy eating. Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo, showed that women can excel in leadership. And beyond the well-known names, many women shape families, communities, and workplaces with powerful impact.

For me, this truth is not just something I read about; it is something I have lived. I am grateful for my mom and grandma, who have had a strong impact on my life. My mother was the chief nurse at one of Cairo's largest hospitals, working 15-hour shifts while raising me on her own. She faced long days, heavy pressure, and personal challenges but still showed up with strength and a smile. My grandmother also inspired



Competence has no gender. A woman's presence isn't a favor—it's a reflection of capability

me; she rose at four in the morning to prepare meals for nearly 25 people. When we worked in the fields, she assigned us tasks and, at the end of the day, shared stories over crusty bread

and black tea. I see that same strength in so many women around me. I saw it in the mother of my sons and now in the women I work with. They act not from duty but from love. Many women I know work long hours for modest pay to keep their children in school.

Sometimes, I hear men expressing that life is hard, exhausting, and overwhelming. While I don't undermine their struggles, I do think it is important to acknowledge that women have faced more, carried more, and still stood tall.

Some chefs might say, "I'm not sure about having a female chef on the team." But honestly, that just doesn't hold water. If a woman needs to push a trolley loaded with 50 kilos of food, she will need a helping hand, just like anyone else would. It's all about common sense, not bias. Physical strength varies from person to person, regardless of gender.

Competence has no gender. A woman's presence in the kitchen, or any workspace, isn't a favor or a diversity checkbox; it reflects her capability. When we start seeing people for who they are and what they bring, rather than stereotypes, we build stronger teams and better families.

In a sense, women's leadership is gaining recognition, and many of us support this movement. Championing inclusivity in hospitality and corporate workplace culture creates a fair work environment. As we move forward, let's stay committed to a clear, actionable vision for diversity because, as Jesse Jackson wisely said, "When everyone is included, everyone wins." ■

The Pressure Cooker

The Burnt Chef Project draws attention to the importance of understanding burnout in professional kitchens

The kitchen has long been romanticized as a place of creativity, camaraderie, and adrenaline-fuelled excellence.

However, for many hospitality professionals, it can also become a high-pressure environment where physical and mental exhaustion quietly simmer beneath the surface. In an industry that celebrates resilience and speed, burnout is too often seen as a badge of honor rather than a warning sign.

What is burnout?

Burnout is more than just tiredness. It is a state of chronic emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive stress. In hospitality, it often presents as irritability, fatigue, detachment from work, reduced performance, or even physical symptoms like insomnia and headaches. Left unchecked, burnout can lead to serious mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and long-term disengagement from the profession.

Why is burnout so common in hospitality?

The structure and culture of many kitchens contribute to burnout. Long, unsociable hours, tight margins, high staff turnover, and an expectation to 'push through' create a breeding ground for stress. In the Gulf region, where culinary standards are incredibly high, and many chefs work far from home, these pressures can be magnified. Language barriers, cultural expectations, and isolation from support networks add to the emotional load.

Breaking the silence

For too long, speaking up about mental health in kitchens has been considered a sign of weakness. But the tide is turning.



At The Burnt Chef Project, we are seeing a growing willingness within the global hospitality community, including in the Middle East, to engage more about mental well-being openly. Recognizing burnout as a legitimate challenge is the first step toward creating healthier working environments.

What can chefs and leaders do?

Awareness is key. Team leaders and head chefs can make a significant difference by learning to recognize the signs of burnout and creating a space where their teams feel safe to talk. Encouraging regular breaks, listening without judgment, and sharing your experiences can open the door to more honest conversations. For individuals, it is crucial to check in with yourself regularly. Are you constantly exhausted? Finding it hard to care? Struggling to switch off, even on your days off? These are signs you may need to slow down and seek support.

Support is available

The Burnt Chef Project offers a range of tools to help individuals and businesses address burnout head-on. From free, confidential mental health support to our ambassador network and practical training on our online app, help is never far away. We also work with employers to implement long-term well-being strategies and Employee Assistance Programmes that promote sustainable culture change.

The hospitality industry thrives on passion, skill, and dedication, but not at the cost of health. By recognizing burnout and taking steps to address it, we can begin to build kitchens that are just as strong in support as they are in service. ■

For more information on The Burnt Chef Project, please visit www.theburntchefproject.com

May 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

Judging with Grace

In a tête-à-tête with **Amaresh Bhaskaran**, Chef **Otto Weibel** recounts his judging experience, connection with Singapore, challenges the hospitality industry faces, and how he wields the taste verdict responsibly



The best way to predict your future is to create it. Though a cliché, the thought rings loud and clear when you meet Chef Otto Weibel. Throughout his career, he did not wait for opportunities to knock. Instead, he created them, writing his own playbook with patience, bold choices, and faith in his efforts.

Every day for him is a practice of mindfulness. Though his life appears wrapped in flights, judging competitions, and handling restaurants, beneath it all lies a man of gentle rituals. He rises at 7 am, unhurried, and begins his day with a quiet breakfast. Then it is out the door, sometimes for a long walk that clears the mind, and when the mood strikes, he heads to the golf course. Lunch is a chance to socialize and meet people who bring different stories from their lives. And unless duty calls him, his evenings are typically spent at home, leading a fine life.

A highly regarded name in the culinary world, he held the presidency of the Singapore Chefs' Association for 15 years, and now, as the Honorary President



The best way to predict your future is to create it

Mentor, he remains closely connected with the current leadership of the association. He has also been involved in numerous culinary competitions around the world, judging in Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Germany, Dubai, and beyond. Under his leadership, the Singapore national culinary team won multiple victories, establishing their presence in the global culinary arena. "It is a dream come true. However, I could not have done it alone; it was also teamwork."

Through it all, mentoring students and guiding teams through intense culinary competitions, he earned the moniker Godfather of the Singapore food scene. "And I will keep on guiding young chefs and support culinary schools. This is my mission until the end," he affirms.

The pre-Google era, when career choices came from lived experiences, not online searches, was when Chef Otto made the decision of his life. He does not remember the exact moment when food became his language, but being surrounded by it was enough to hook him.

His parents ran a restaurant on their farm, so he was never idle from the get-go. After school, he would get busy chopping potatoes for French fries, restocking the buffet, and always lending a hand. It was work, yes, but it was also life. At 13, when his teacher asked them to pen their dreams, he answered it with ease. "I wrote that I wanted to be a chef and open the biggest hotel in the world."

At just 16, he set sail to achieve his dreams, beginning with an apprenticeship in Switzerland, where he worked for three years before moving on to top hotels across the country. Eventually, he relocated to London and found himself at the Three Cent. He remembers it well, "It was one of the busiest restaurants I have ever seen. We used to make two thousand covers in a day. It was a crazy experience."

And as the saying goes, it takes a few sojourns to find where you belong.



Whatever you do, never forget the fun part. We have to be serious, but we also have to enjoy ourselves

After spending a year aboard the Norwegian American Line, joining the crew, cooking, and traveling to far-flung places like Hong Kong and Korea, it was a syzygy of the universe that Singapore

captured his heart. "I fell in love with Singapore and knew I needed to return and find my place there."

However, just as he was about to find his roar in the Lion City, his former employer opened the biggest hotel in Switzerland. "They said, why don't you come and help me? So, what was supposed to be a three- to four-month stint turned into a year and a half before I got a job in Singapore."

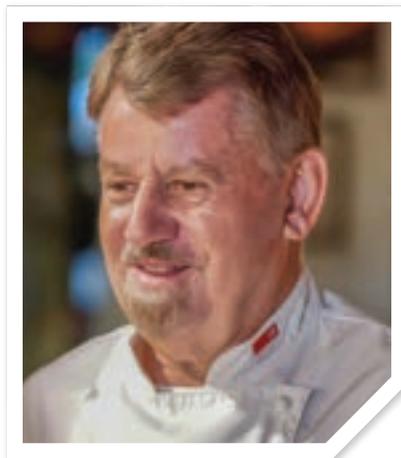
When he replays 1973, he sees him joining the Shangri-La Hotel as the sous chef. As he gradually rose through the ranks and proved his mettle, the company sent him to the Philippines.

May 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

In 1980, he helped open the Kowloon Shangri-La in Hong Kong, and five years later, he returned to Singapore to join the Westin Plaza (now the Fairmont Singapore) as director of kitchens. Over those decades, he built his career brick by brick. "It was with the same company for a long time, some 26 years, and the company provided me with numerous opportunities," he says, describing experiences that have been like gold dust for growth and development.

Opening a hotel, he says, can feel like an emotional roller coaster. The Center of this endeavor is carrying your own style and breaking away from the ordinary. "When the hotel finally opens, and everything runs smoothly, you feel you have done well. But the journey is far from simple. Bringing your style to a new establishment is more difficult than expected, as you are trying to convince everyone to adapt your new style," he explains, adding about having patience during the process.

In overcoming such hurdles, the power of a strong team lights the way. "You are only as good as your team," he states. "Surround yourself with talented chefs and staff because, without your team, you are nobody."



I will keep on guiding young chefs and support culinary schools. This is my mission until the end

Nostalgia, the soul's mirror, and the silver in his hair still pulls him back to 1985. "When I returned to Singapore in the eighties, I saw the winds of change in the dining scene. Earlier there were not many standalone restaurants and the restaurants were all in the big hotels. But it all changed as more standalone restaurants emerged, which continued into the 90s, marking a creative explosion."



The zeitgeist of that era still lives on in him. "In those years, European chefs brought fresh perspectives, and by the 2000s, hotels started to awaken again when they started losing their ground against standalone restaurants and began to revamp and come up with new concepts."

From there on, Chef Otto led hotel openings in Hong Kong, the Philippines, Japan, and Tokyo, overseeing operations across multiple countries. Gradually, he held key roles at the hotel chain, rising to the position of Corporate Chef for Asia.

Even after stepping away from the heat of hotel kitchens, Chef Otto never really hung up his apron. Describing the motivation behind launching his restaurants, Chef Otto says, "I think it is every chef's dream at one time to have his own restaurant." So, in his mid-sixties, he finally faced the music of running the restaurants he had long envisioned.

When he finally stepped into the ring, it came as a reality check wrapped in stainless steel. "It was very different from working in a hotel. In a hotel, you have departments and systems, but in your own place? You are managing a small kitchen and juggling so many tasks." Despite the hurdles, the experience is rewarding. "If the business goes well and people appreciate your food, they will return. You feel great satisfaction, knowing you did something right."

Buoyed by the momentum of accomplishment, what started as one restaurant did not stay solo for long. One turned into two, then three. "We had the Black Marble restaurant, White Marble, and then I worked with Chef Scott Webster to open Osia Steak & Seafood Grill, a restaurant in Sentosa."

It was all rosy until the fickle tides of the restaurant world caused an impediment that led to both White Marble and Black Marble closing their doors. "It was also due to staffing challenges. In Singapore, you need three locals for every foreign

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worker, and many locals are reluctant to enter our industry. This staff shortage is an issue affecting the entire food sector."

Running a restaurant and judging competitions requires multitasking, something Chef Otto does in an inimitable way. "His judging oeuvre spans from the early days of the Guild, 'I started judging full competitions at the Olympics in Frankfurt, which opened doors for me globally, inviting me to judge across the world." His adventures as the approved judge of the World Association of Chefs' Societies have taken him to more places than most people could ever pin on a map.

Having witnessed Dubai's transformation into a culinary juggernaut, he credits strong government support and Chef Andy Cuthbert and Chef Uwe Micheel for the evolution.

"The Expo Culinaire has become bigger, better, and more global over the years. It brings the entire Middle East together, even attracting talents from Asia and Europe. I still remember my first visit to Dubai, when Expo Culinaire, as we now know it, was just a small competition. It was during the time of Chef Alan Thong, with only six or eight judges, and it felt like family.



If you don't try and learn from your mistakes, you will never go anywhere

We always had a great time working together," he says, adding since its inception, Chef Otto has only missed one whole competition.

With years of judging under his belt, he holds the view that a good culinary judge should have virtue in food trends before giving a verdict. Staying attuned to different culinary styles, aromas, and flavors of dishes and a know-how of how

ingredients can complement one another doesn't hurt either. "I have had the chance to judge all over the world, and that has given me a wealth of exposure," he explains about his global perspective.

His decision-making empathy is unmistakable as he urges judges to listen to the competitors. "You have to listen and ask them what their idea behind this dish is. Because what they present must be exceptional, and we may understand what they want by looking at the dish's presentation, but what they are thinking behind it is just as important to get the whole picture."

Sportsmanship is his creed, as he always advocates that competitors feel both valued and encouraged. "Give feedback and write notes on both strengths and weaknesses of the dish. You have to tell the competitor what is good," he suggests. "And do not just point out the mistake. Explain why it is not good enough. Help them understand. Be polite and supportive. After all, we want them to come back next time."

With the world of cooking evolving rapidly, we ask him if there is still a reason for a young person to wake up and say they want to become a chef tomorrow? After a thoughtful beat, he says, "Times have certainly changed, but the passion remains. "I have seen it all, from the long hours of hard schooling and foundational learning to today, where many chefs do not come from formal culinary schools. Some have had that traditional education, but it is a different talent pool now."



He continued, "We worked our way up through the ranks," he explains, noting that it wasn't uncommon to reach a position where you could call yourself a chef by your late twenties. "Today, you see chefs in the kitchen at just 22, but sadly, many lack that solid foundation," he sighs. "That is why you see the quality of food varies."

Yet, he remains optimistic. "Not all is lost," he pauses. "Many young chefs still have that fire in their belly and give their best."

The problem, he explains, arises when chefs idolize the glamorous world portrayed in cooking shows, unaware of the hard work behind the scenes. "To become someone in this industry, you need to do hard work. It is about education; you need to put your head in there, put your feet on the floor, and then you are going to be somewhere." His message did not revolve around shortcuts to success but centered on the relentless pummeling the kitchen delivers, the grind that forges real chefs.

Talking about his advice for the current crop of chefs, he gets real, saying that he is not the teacher; mistakes are the



Cooking isn't just about the task; it's about the joy in it

ones doing the teaching. "If you don't try and learn from your mistakes, you will never go anywhere."

While the latest technology and artificial intelligence make a strong volte-face in the industry, he believes fully integrating these tools will take time. "The equipment we have today

is high-tech; it has changed how we cook," he acknowledges. "Before, it was about the oven, but now there are different tools to make the job easier. Though, in the end, full reliance on these would take time, and you will still need a human touch."

Continuing to trace the broader industry shifts, he weighs in from his vantage point on both Singapore and Dubai. "In Singapore, last year alone, nearly two thousand restaurants closed, but about a thousand new ones have opened. The landscape feels uneven due to labor shortages and an increasingly saturated market." Dubai, on the other hand, tells a different story. "With an influx of global talent and a clientele ready to indulge, increasing Michelin-starred restaurants, the city's restaurant scene is growing. People are more liberal with spending here."

A thought leader, with a face creased with the filigree of a lifetime in judgment, he has found that any work is done best when balanced with focus and joy. "Cooking isn't just about the task; it's about the joy in it," he continues. "Whatever you do, never forget the fun part. We have to be serious, but we also have to enjoy ourselves."

Now, well into his 70s, Chef Otto refuses to let go of his indomitable love for learning and mentoring, continuing to defy the digits of his age. He still keeps that passion which is beyond any title, something that has marked the arc of his life. ■



May 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

Sounbula Mills Artisan Bakery Competition Returns

The Emirates Culinary Guild, in partnership with Sounbula Mills, is bringing back the second edition of its hands-on bread competition, a platform for bakers who still believe in doing things from scratch. Set to run from 21–23 May at the Emirates Salon Culinaire 2025, the competition marks a return to real baking, says Master Baker **Jurgen Ellenbeck**

It was a remarkable moment for baking and maybe for the culinary world at large. Last year saw the launch of the Sounbula Mills Artisan Bakery Arena at the Emirates Culinary Guild's headline event, ExpoCulinaire. The first edition concluded with a resounding success, with chefs putting their baking skills to the test by preparing a lineup of breads and pastries, such as French baguettes, sourdough, croissants, pain au chocolat, Danish pastries, and puff pastries.

"It is a rare concept for the competition, and now we are preparing for the second competition, which will be more refined than the first," says Chef Jurgen Ellenbeck, Master Baker and Master Pastry Chef Owner of Home of Breads.

In a time dominated by convenience-centric thoughts and tech-fueled

shortcuts, one can feel despondent about traditional baking still holding weight. As the rhetoric of innovation grows louder, the need to cast light on bakers whose brilliance lies in preparing everything from scratch has never been more irrefutable. "In this era, a lot of times, bakers go unnoticed. We want to change that," expresses Chef Jurgen. Setting the tech clamor aside, he speaks with sanguinity for what lies ahead. "We are seeing gradual change. I mean, last year, these bakers appeared on the cover of Gulf Gourmet for the first time. This is the recognition to fight for. It is not just baking. This is a revolution."

Technology plays a part. In the background, there is a complex interplay of ovens, proofers, and mixers. Yet, nothing supersedes the artistry of baking. "You cannot put a price on human skill. Baking is more than mixing

ingredients. We cannot forget the sweat of the artisan and the generations that passed down secrets and techniques. That raw, human touch is irreplaceable."

Return of Real Baking

For chefs, the competition conjured up something more than wins and creativity. Chef Jurgen recounts his discussions with Chef Andy and Chef Uwe on what planted the seed of this competition. "We had several brainstorming sessions, and later, I came up with the bakery committee. The idea was to revive the artistry of traditional baking, so we partnered with Sounbula Mills and Miwe. Then we created regulations for a live baking competition where participants used only salt, water, and flour."

As much as the first edition turned heads, the second is set to keep people watching. "We are expanding the



upcoming edition not just in terms of the space, but we are amplifying the heartbeat of artisanal baking. Bigger, yes, but the concept remains unchanged," says Chef Jurgen. "We will have the same terms and conditions of no additives, no pre-mixes, no bread improvers, no bakery ingredients and enhancers in all the recipes. The whole competition will be a bit extended in terms of space, passion, and dedication."

The competition, which is set to last for three days, will see young chefs demonstrate their skills to the judges of the World Association of Chefs societies and locally based professional judges. Renowned German baking equipment company Miwe will import state-of-the-art equipment exclusively for the Guild. Meanwhile, Sounbula Mills, the flour partner, will provide custom-made flour for all baking applications.

Part of growing up is to read the signs every day, and for Chef Jurgen it started in a warm kitchen, watching his mother and grandmother knead stories into dough. "From the beginning, I dreamed of becoming a baker or a pastry chef," he says, looking back at 48 years of experience. "So, I completed an apprenticeship in 1979, later pursued two Master degrees in Bakery and Pastry Handcraftship and built a career across different establishments."

Over time, his path took him to kitchens and bakeries around the world, including



Baking is more than mixing ingredients—it's human artistry

the 5*4Mast Bark, Sea Cloud, for 6 years, sailing the seven seas, before he went on to establish Home of Breads.

Years into the industry, Chef Jurgen believes young chefs need to understand bread. "The quality of artisanal baking and talent involved is not something you can compare with what you get at the supermarket," he says, adding that artisan baking is a language that cannot be rushed, faked, or mass-produced.

This wisdom, to him, has come with failing, listening, showing up every day, and caring enough to do it right. "Learning never stops. You watch and listen to the seniors and absorb the techniques. Do not forget the traditions,

but improve your skills by learning new techniques. Move forward, push boundaries," he takes an interminable pause to articulate. "The biggest fear is failure. But you never fail. You do not know where you stand if you do not take the chance to compete. Everyone has their own fights, fears, and talents. And so when you participate in a competition, you are already a winner."

As a senior judge, Chef Jurgen has seen firsthand how competition platforms nurture talent. "It is all about raising the bar. The tremendous effort by the Emirates Culinary Guild in making this a reality. The UAE has been looking to Singapore, London, and Europe for culinary trends, and now it is a place to look out for when it comes to culinary innovation, sustainability, and competition. The Sounbula Mills Artisan Bakery competition has become a premier competition on the global stage. When it comes to the art of traditional bread making, there is nothing quite like it," he remarked.

To the young chefs stepping into the fire of competition, he asks them to have patience and respect the process. "It is not about adding 'just a little bit of salt' or 'some flour.' Baking is science. Factors like temperature, quantity, and time impact the quality. You cannot just play it by ear. No estimation. A recipe is a roadmap. If you take a wrong turn, the bread won't lie for you."

Within the frenzy of impatience touching off the proverbial minefield, kickstarting countless lessons, his message percolates with weight as excellence is found not in haste but in patience and precision. ■



Bake Masters

Say hello to the judges who know when it is baked to perfection



Atim Suyatim, Indonesia



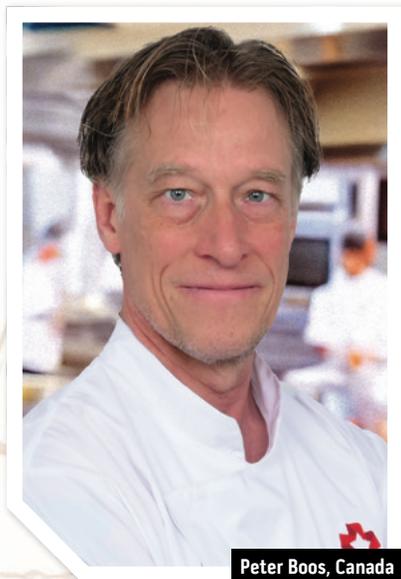
Bernard Charles, Mauritius



Gunther Koeffer, Sweden Head Bakery Judge, current president of UIBC (International Union of Bakers and Confectioners)



Romel Hernandez, Philippines



Peter Boos, Canada



Jurgen Ellenbeck, Germany

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINIARE 2025

May 21st till May 23rd 2025
 Expo Centre, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Sounbula Mills Artisan Bakery Arena Class 2025

The Emirates Culinary Guild in association with its Flour Mill partner Sounbula Mills, announce the second edition of a Practical competition for Bakers of traditionally made breads from scratch that will be launched at the Emirates salon Culinaire 2025, 21st to 23rd May at EXPOCULINAIRE 2025 in Expo Centre Sharjah United Arab Emirates.

The owner and Managing director of Sounbula Mills, Mr. Karim Al Azhari, said that this is an exciting time for the Sounbula Mills brand and being associated with The Emirates Culinary Guild and its committee of professional bakers led by Master baker Jurgen Ellenback will be an important step to uphold traditional baking techniques and teaching to young bakers and



professional alike". He added The Sounbula Mills are also in collaboration with bakers to develop custom made flour types to be used in all applications of the baking of bread.

The competition will be held across the full 3 days and the teams will be required to demonstrate their skills and talents to the judges of the World Association of chefs societies and locally based professional judges all of whom will be called upon to assist in this competition.

The ECG and Sounbula Mills are also

working with the professional German baking equipment company Miwe to bring to the competition a fully equipped professional bakery that will be used by the bakers at the competition. Miwe the worlds leading baking technology company.

Class Rules and regulations

The competition is open to all professional bakers or pastry chefs working in the United Arab Emirates and GCC and the competition will follow Worldchefs judging guidelines and practical cookery regulations.

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Notes on the Practical Cookery Classes

These notes pertain to all practical cookery classes. They must be read in combination with the brief of the class entered

1. The preparation, production and cooking skills of each team must be demonstrated during her/his time in the kitchen.
2. Waste and over-production will be closely monitored. Please refer to the ECG Sustainability Guidelines on the website
3. Teams are to avoid the use of single use plastics, acceptable items are reusable, recyclable, compostable, bio-degradable, items for ingredient containers etc., reusable tasting spoons to be used.
4. There is a point penalty deduction for wastage or over-production.
5. Timing is closely monitored.
6. There is a 2-point penalty deduction for each minute that the meal is overdue.
7. All food items must be brought to the Salon in hygienic, chilled containers: Thermo boxes or equivalent.
8. Failure to bring food items in a hygienic manner will result in disqualification.
9. Unless otherwise stated, teams must supply their own plates/ bowls/platters with which to present the food.
10. Teams must bring with them all necessary mise-en-place prepared according to WORLDCHEFS guidelines in the hot kitchen discipline (www.worldchefs.org).

- Please see below details rules to be followed for the class.
11. No premix flours/bread mixes will be allowed to be brought into the competition kitchen only sponsored flours to be used.
 12. Teams to ensure they read the latest Food safety guidelines from Worldchefs'
 13. Teams are to provide their own pots, pans, tools and utensils if required.
 14. All brought appliances and utensils will be checked for suitability. The use of any additional equipment must receive prior approval before the competition from the organizers.
 15. The organizers shall provide a professional commercial equipped bakery kitchen for the competition, please see attached drawing and list of equipment available in the kitchen for use.
 16. The following types of pre-preparation can be made for the practical classes:
EXPLANATION (what foods are permitted to be brought into the kitchen)
 - a) *Fruit pulps – fruit purees may be brought in but not as a finished filling.*
 - b) *Decor elements – 100% must be made in the kitchen.*
 - c) *Custards and related to be prepared in the competition kitchen*
 - d) *Savory fillings allowed*
 17. No pre-cooking, poaching, marinating etc. is allowed.
 18. No ready-made products are allowed.

19. No pork products are allowed.
20. No alcohol is allowed.
21. Within 10 minutes after the end of the competition, teams must have the kitchen thoroughly cleaned and tidied and ready for the next team to use.
22. Two copies of the recipes - typewritten - are always required.
23. Submit one copy of the recipe/s to the clerk when registering.
24. Submit one copy of the recipe to the duty marshal at the cooking station.

Class brief

- > Two bakers per team, each with corresponding tasks working as a team, any level of baker can be on the team
- > Competitor to bring all ingredients except sponsored flour product available in the competition kitchen on the day of the event.
- > Competitor to bring their own baking tools, including molds, baking tins, parchment paper, display baskets, etc.
- > Each team will compete over 2 days, day 1 for dough preparation and day 2 for baking All products shall be tasted as part of the judging criteria and remaining items shall be used for the National cuisine challenge class if possible during the Salon Culinaire.
- > The following equipment shall be available in the kitchen: deck oven w/ proofer, proofer chamber, planetary mixer, dough sheeter, tabletop spiral kneader, tabletop mixer, induction cooker, upright chiller, upright freezer, tables

Timings as following

Day 1	21st May	07:00 till 12:30 hrs	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	
		12:30 till 18:00 hrs	Team 4	Team 5	Team 6	
Day 2	22nd May	07:00 till 12:30 hrs	Team 7	Team 8	Team 1	Team 2
		12:30 till 18:00 hrs	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Team 6
Day 3	23rd May	08:00 till 14:30 hrs	Team 7	Team 8		
9 Teams					Prep	
					Finish	

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and kitchen sink, ice cubes.

All equipment shall be shared between teams

- > Training sessions from the ECG Bakery development committee shall be done during 5 months prior to the competition. These sessions are open to all competitors as first right of refusal.
- > Typed written recipes and presentation cards to be provided by the team
- > All items shall be cut and tasted as part of the judging criteria

Each competing team is to produce the following products in the competition kitchen:

NOTE: STRICTLY NO ADDITIVES, NO PRE-MIXES, NO BREAD IMPROVERS & NO BAKERY INGREDIENTS ENHANCER ON ALL THE RECIPE FORMATION

1. Traditional French Baguette, Sourdough Baguette

- Competitor to prepare from scratch three (3) pcs identical traditional baguette or sourdough baguette.
- Baguettes should weight 280gms – 320gms after baking.
- Competitor choice of free hand or baguette molds are allowed.

2. Artisan Bread Loaves

- Competitor to prepare from scratch; whole meal bread loaves, sourdough bread loaves & seeded bread loaves, three (3pcs) identical portions of each kind.
- Bread loaves should weight 450gms – 500 gms after baking.
- Competitor choice of free hand or tin molds are allowed.

3. Selection of Dinner Rolls

- Competitor to prepare from scratch three (3) kinds of dinner rolls of their choice, six (6pcs) identical portions of each kind.
- Competitor can use the bread loaves dough if deem necessary.
- Dinner rolls should weight 30-40 gms after baking.

- Only free hand shaping, molds is NOT allowed.

4. Braided Sweet Bread

- Competitor to prepare two (2) pcs of free size braided sweet bread.
- Present braided sweet bread either glaze before or after baking.

5. Viennoiseries/Croissants

- Competitor to prepare two (2) types of croissants preferably Butter Croissants & Pain au Chocolat, six (6) identical portions of each kind.
- Weight of each croissant should be 50-60 gms after baking.

6. Danish Pastries

- Competitor to present three (3) types of Danish pastry of their choice, three (3pcs) identical portions of each kind.
- Weight of each Danish should be 50-60 gms after baking.
- Croissant dough is allowed if deemed necessary.
- Extra points given if Danish dough was used.

7. Puff Pastry Butter

- Competitor to present six (6) identical portions of free size palmier.
- Competitor to present two (2) kinds of savoury puff of your choice, three (3pcs) identical portions of each kind.
- Competitor can bring their own choice of filling for the savoury puff.

Judging and judging points

A team of International and regional Worldchefs Accredited pastry/bakery chefs shall judge the competition, in conjunction with Master bakers from the Emirates Culinary Guild. Judging point system shall be based on Worldchefs standards

Medals

Gold with Distinction	100 Points
Gold	99-90 Points
Silver	89-80 Points
Bronze	79-70 Points
Diploma	69-60 Points

Judging Points: Total points achievable 100

- > Mise en place and cleanliness 5 points
- > Hygiene and food waste 10 points
- > Correct professional Preparation Work skills 20 points
- > Service on time 5 points
- > Presentation 10 Points
- > Taste 50 points

Trophy

A special trophy shall be awarded by Sounbula Mills to the highest points achieved by a single team of bakers of the competition, "The SOUNBULA MILLS UAE Bakery team of 2025"

May 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

The Flour Test

Shreya Asopa speaks to the Managing Director of Sounbula Mills, **Karim Al Azhari**, on what makes this competition more than just a contest; a call to keep the art alive

Milling flour is the symbiotic relationship between nature. Watching the grain get crushed, ground, and sifted into fine flour is elemental. It is a living dialogue between man and nature. Karim Al Azhari understands this better than anyone.

In this age, the dream of making something from scratch feels like a distant mirage, obscured by speed and crushed by convenience. Another perspective, carried forward by Sounbula Mills, centers on preserving the art of creation.

"Sounbula Mills is young and forward-thinking, leveraging technological advancements to produce flour that respects the tradition of flour. Stone grinding, quern-stones, and primitive hand mills are not forgotten, but our technology exceeds what we had twenty years ago. We benefit from the technology to prepare our flour, and in some ways, we push the boundaries of what is possible in baking," says Al Azhari.



Marauding through global markets, weather patterns, and logistical nightmares to find quality wheat is a tricky track where his skills step in. "I bring my life experience along with my expertise in automotive into the milling industry," he explains. "We source the world's best wheat from nature. Nature keeps moving; there are interesting cycles and patterns. But with

globalization, we are very fortunate in the UAE that we are able to import from all over the world. We are also lucky to be in a prime location of the Jebel Ali Free Zone, which is among the world's leading free trade zones."

But do not mistake access for ease. A half-smile appears slowly, one that has seen what happens when people cut corners. "Our specialty at Sounbula Mills is not about taking the easy route. We chase the best wheat," he says. "We go into details," he says, not with theatrical awe but the matter-of-fact tone of someone who has done the work, seen the mechanics, and knows that turning wheat into flour is a process born of a respect for nature's temperament.

Bucking the trend of throwing in technically dense processes or products, he concentrates on enhancing, not disrupting. "We do not want to surprise chefs with something beyond their process. It is about respecting the work within the parameters set by chefs, without overwhelming them with tech that feels alien."

"There is a certain joy in this process," he continued. "After all, bread is one of the oldest foods known to humanity. In the hands of the world's best bakers, they create something that still matters. There is still something radical about starting from scratch and finishing with something tangible."

Some stories begin in the adrenaline haze of race day. Born in Abu Dhabi, Mr. Al Azhari found his edge on the racetrack, which in time saw him become





president of the Porsche Club UAE. Dotted with lessons learned from the roar of engines and the burn of rubber, his life has always moved fast. A fan of speed, a spirit of an entrepreneur and in command of his career trajectory. To a certain extent, he always was. As a race driver, he spent years working with strong teams and realizing that achieving success is no solo effort. "I was fortunate to work with great people. That is how I learned that for any good result, you need a strong team behind you."

Now, he sees the same drive in the chefs preparing for the Artisan Competition. "Coming from motorsport, I understand that if the competition is eight hours, the preparation is 80. It is a pleasure to support people who bring that kind of motivation into the kitchen," he remarked, admiring the parallels.

He zeroes in on the upcoming edition of the Artisan Bakery Competition. In the throes of live competition, every fold of dough happens under the spotlight. Mr. Al Azhari observes that while many chefs thrive in their own kitchens, performing under pressure in front of judges is a different challenge. They are on tenterhooks from the moment the clock starts ticking.

"The chefs competing show incredible strength. Last year, I was genuinely impressed by how they held it together under that kind of pressure. The competition is a wonderful platform for chefs to create magic from scratch, and everyone gets to see it unfold in real-time. Nothing is hidden," he says.

There does seem to be a shift in the outlook about the competition, minuscule but noticeable. He recalls that chefs were initially amazed when they first worked with the flour, and the judges raved about its quality in the bakes. "After the first edition, many chefs



Milling flour is a living dialogue between man and nature

started calling me asking if they could get Sounbula flour to practice, and it is a pleasure to send it. If they want to train hard, we will support that. Every time."

On his planning board, he explains, there is always a note on pushing for better. Be it in motorsport or milling. "It's the chefs who keep us on our toes. They have an eye for flavor and texture, which also helps us improve." Over the past few years, Sounbula Mills also sponsored culinary competitions, including supporting the UAE team for the Culinary Olympics and wagering on young talents who return with medals and creative flair. "They come back with their dreams," says Al Azhari. "And that drives us."

"Our flour is more than just a product," he adds. "We are making a difference in the community." His eyes held earned grit. His face told the rest, this was not just business. "That's why we've teamed up once again with the Emirates Culinary Guild for the second Artisan Bakery Competition. Because when you know the grind, you respect the craft."

At one point, the conversation tips toward his mantra. Mr. Al Azhari's life is read in two acts. The first is full of pushing limits and adrenaline. The second one is closer to technology and nature, which demands different know-how. He rattles off a stream of points on balancing the two.

"For me, it has always come down to staying calm." Not the kind you swan into the box with, polished and prepped for the cameras. No, this is the tunnel-vision kind that only comes from living in high-pressure environments.

It is the same advice he gives young chefs bracing for the competition floor. "Keep calm, enjoy the experience. Absorb the energy around you because you will look back at this and remember it as a beautiful moment. Do not let stress steal that. You have already done the hard work. That is why you are here."

All of this is to say, atmosphere matters. Surround yourself with the right people, and you will see yourself pushing forward. "We are fortunate that the ecosystem of leaders, the Emirates Culinary Guild, and the support of the UAE government are helping build the next generation of talent in this country," he adds.

So...what if you stepped into the heat to cook and compete?

"No, I cannot even imagine that," he answers with amusement. "Honestly, I would not even know where to begin. These chefs are extremely skilled, having spent a lifetime creating their culinary products." It is a humble admission. "I think I am lucky to be on the other side," he chuckles softly, "...which is to support chefs and make their work easier with the best possible flour that lets their talent speak louder." ■



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Refining the Craft of Meat Cutting

Sulemana A. Sadik breaks down techniques that improve the flavor and tenderness of meat

With a lifelong dedication to agribusiness and meat science, my journey has taken me from the fields of Ghana to the cutting rooms of Australia. There, through specialized programs like those offered by AUS-MEAT, I deepened my knowledge of meat processing, quality grading, and the vital skills that define excellence in this industry.

The Importance of Meat Cutting Techniques

In the world of premium meat, how a cut is prepared is just as important as its origin. Effective cutting techniques do more than improve presentation — they directly impact tenderness, flavor, and overall eating quality. One core principle is slicing against the grain, but true mastery involves understanding when and how to apply various cutting methods for optimal results.

Every piece of meat contains muscle fibers that run in a specific direction, commonly called the "grain." By cutting across these fibers, you shorten them, making the meat significantly easier to chew. This is especially important for tougher cuts, where improper slicing can turn a flavorful steak into a chewy disappointment.

Best Cuts for Grain-Based Slicing

Some cuts benefit greatly from being sliced against the grain. These include:

- ♦ **Flank Steak** – A lean and fibrous cut that becomes significantly more tender when sliced across the grain.
- ♦ **Skirt Steak** – Bold in flavor and long in muscle fibers; slicing it right



makes a noticeable difference.

- ♦ **Brisket** – Slow-cooked to break down connective tissue, then sliced against the grain for ideal tenderness.
- ♦ **Round Steak** – Lean and firm, but cutting it properly helps reduce chewiness.
- ♦ **Chuck Roast** – Rich in marbling and texture; slicing against the grain maximizes its tenderness.

On the other hand, naturally, tender cuts require less attention to slicing direction:

- ♦ **Tenderloin (Filet Mignon)** – Minimal grain, inherently tender. Slicing against the grain helps, but it's not critical.
- ♦ **Ribeye** – High in marbling and soft texture; slicing direction plays a minor role.

Understanding slicing is only one piece of the puzzle. These advanced cutting methods also play a vital role:

- ♦ **Butterflying** – A method where thicker cuts are halved and opened flat, ensuring even cooking without sacrificing moisture. It is ideal for thick lamb loins or chicken breasts.
- ♦ **Cubing** – Dicing meat into consistent chunks helps with uniform cooking — essential for stews, skewers, or stir-fries.
- ♦ **Scoring** – Light incisions across the surface allow marinades or spices to penetrate deeper. This is particularly effective with fatty meats like duck or pork belly.
- ♦ **Pounding** – Flattening cuts using a meat mallet can improve tenderness and reduce cooking time — perfect for schnitzels or cutlets.

The Gateway to Flavor

What you do before cooking is just as important as the cut itself. Consider these:

- ♦ **Marination** – Combining acids (like vinegar or lemon), oils, and herbs helps tenderize meat and infuse it with layered flavor. It also improves texture and juiciness.
- ♦ **Slow Cooking** – Gentle, extended cooking at low temperatures helps melt collagen into gelatin, transforming tough cuts into mouth-watering experiences.

Meat preparation is an art that combines science, technique, and passion. Whether slicing a flank steak or preparing a whole brisket, knowing the right approach unlocks flavor and elevates every dish. As someone invested in the evolution of agribusiness and meat processing, I know these skills are essential for chefs and anyone committed to delivering quality at every level of the food chain. ■

The Me-First Consumer

A Rant with a Side of Eye-Roll!

In a world where public decorum seems to be fading, Chef **Helen Morris** takes a humorous yet poignant look at the "Me-First" consumer



Sometimes, all it takes to reclaim peace is a pair of headphones and a little consideration

This month's article is less of an informative piece and more of... well, a therapeutic rant. I am not here to educate, inspire, or uplift — I am here to vent. Loudly. Because, quite frankly, I have had enough.

What kicked it off? Oh, just a casual read of an article by Keane Designs on the "Me First" consumer. You know, the one on a UK train watching a video out loud without earphones, proudly broadcasting their content like they are Netflix's latest public service. And suddenly, I felt seen. Not in a warm, fuzzy way; someone understands me in a kind of way, no, more like a "wait, it is not just me losing the will to be polite in public spaces" way. This pandemic of public inconsideration is real.

So, grab a drink (or a noise-canceling headset) because I have got stories. Let us rewind a bit. Recently, I treated myself to a short break. You know, one of those rediscovers your will to live kind of trips. Doha to Dubai - Belgrade to Doha. Sounds very exciting, right? Except, instead of finding peace and serenity, I found exhibit A through Z of the Me First mentality in full technicolor surround sound. Ok, I did have a blast of a vacation and refused to be distracted by other people's inconsideration.

Let us begin in Dubai. Picture this: I am dining with a stunning view, the kind you would sell a kidney to post on Instagram. I am mid-bite, enjoying the serenity, and

then BOOM. A gentleman behind me, let us use the term "gentleman" loosely, decided this was the perfect moment to watch a video. Not for his child, who was resting in a stroller next to his wife. No. For himself. On his iPad. At full volume. The audacity? Olympic level.

I did not even have to utter a single word. I simply turned around and gave him the patented British death stare, a look forged in decades of public transport etiquette and repressed rage. To his credit, he got the message and switched it off—small win.

Next — Enter the Influencer Couple. Romantic dinner, skyline backdrop, and perfect lighting. A couple out for what should have been a romantic dinner. Were they talking? Laughing? Looking into each other's eyes? Of course not! She was too busy meticulously crafting her Instagram reel. Selecting music, syncing transitions, rewatching it five, six, seven times, with the sound on full blast. I mean, why wouldn't she? The rest of us clearly wanted to hear her soundtrack choices over our delicious bites.

At what point, I ask you, do restaurant staff step in? Where is the "No loud reels, no iPads, no calls without headphones" sign? We have dress codes, late arrival rules, and policies about paying in advance, but nothing that says, "Please don't turn this into your personal cinema." After all, are we in an era of immersive dining? Well, I want to be immersed in

my own restaurant experience and not another table life story!

Restaurant managers, I beg you. Add this to your house rules: "No video playback without headphones." It's not controversial. It is common courtesy. Let people enjoy their overpriced truffle pasta in peace.

Next, I flew to Belgrade, a city that oozes culture and quiet corners to reflect and sip coffee like a local. I was in one of the oldest restaurants in the city, absorbed in the atmosphere, admiring the architecture and gently fading wallpaper that had clearly seen more civil behavior than I had. Enter a sweet family, two adults, one child about seven, and a toddler in a pram. Lovely, I thought. Nothing warms my heart like seeing families dine out together.

Until...

Before the waiter could even hand them menus, the iPad was out, streaming cartoons at full volume. No attempt to lower it. No "Hey, do you mind if we make your dining experience feel like you are trapped in a daycare center?" Nope. Just full-blast animation, right next to my lovingly slow-cooked Serbian lamb.

Look, I get it. Kids need entertainment, especially these days. But how about coloring books? Games? Talking to your child? Teaching them to sit at a table for more than four minutes without needing a screen? Or... at the very least, teach them consideration – headphones on!

Again, I gave the "polite British death stare," and they did lower the volume. Progress? Maybe. But the question lingers: when did this become normal? When did parenting become synonymous with screen babysitting at full volume?

But my favourite chapter? Back in Doha. I am at a hotel for a meeting, and there it is again. A man in his 60s, proof this is not a Gen Z problem, on a full-blown video call in a public space. Not even



There's joy in dining, beauty in silence, and magic in shared respect

pretending to whisper. Zero self-awareness. It took several dagger-like glances before he finally put the phone to his ear like a civilized human.

So, What is the Point of This Rant?

I am glad you asked. The point is this - Can we stop being so inconsiderate? Please?

I do not want to hear your video call. I do not want to listen to you curating your Instagram reel. I do not want to be an unwilling extra in your child's cartoon marathon. I just want to eat my dinner, sip my coffee, or sit in an airport lounge without feeling like I am trapped in someone else's living room.

We live in a world where technology is everywhere, sure. But must it be on loudspeakers in public spaces?

If you are one of the people I am talking about, no hard feelings. I am just asking, from one human to another, please think of the rest of us. And if you ever catch me doing this, call me out. I will deserve it.

To the restaurant managers, be brave. Set the boundaries. Make it a policy. Your diners will thank you. I mean, we have all accepted rules about everything else: shoes, shirts, time limits, allergies, tipping; surely we can agree not to bring the cinema to the table?

Now, for those who have not yet read the Keane and Canvas8 article, do. It outlines the shift from fitting in to standing out, even if that means being the human equivalent of a foghorn on public transport. Because apparently, being considerate is so last season. Actually, the article is more than that, and it is worth a read.

So next time you are tempted to play a video out loud in public, ask yourself, do I want to be the main character, or do I want to be decent?

Choose wisely.

Until then, I will travel with a book, headphones, and a big sigh. ■



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Flavors, Functions and Future of Food

An Insightful Exploration by Prof Vinod Huria



For nearly forty years, within the heart of India's most crucial institutions, I have witnessed the incredible journey of the food and dairy industry. The Operation Flood program, implemented by NDDB Anand, transformed India into the world's biggest and most advanced dairying nation and Amul into the largest global dairy brand.

Food is a storyteller, transporting us into memories, comforting us, and bridging cultures. It is not about sustenance; it is about stories whispered on the tongue, flavors unlocking memories, and the profound way cuisine shapes culture.

A kitchen is a vibrant space where nature's bounty comes to life. Imagine the energy of sun-kissed fruits and colorful vegetables, the earthiness of roots and tubers, and the nourishing power of nuts and seeds, enriching both body and mind. Within these walls, culinary magic unfolds! Picture freshly baked bread with a golden crust, rising from the transformative Maillard reaction, or sugar translating into complex flavors through caramelization. Cooking is a captivating combination of science and art, where the Chef's creativity intertwines with nature's brilliance to craft unforgettable tastes and textures.

Your kitchen is far more than just a space where food takes shape for serving. It is a lively hub of health, creativity, and sustainability. Every dish you prepare is a step toward enhancing your well-being, conserving resources, and nurturing our beautiful planet. Pair this with the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda, the science of life, and you have the perfect recipe for vitality, flavor, and longevity, much like the Mediterranean or Okinawan diets.

Our dietary foundation rests on four crucial pillars: the energy-providing macronutrients - carbohydrates, proteins, and fats - and the vital micronutrients, vitamins, and minerals. And, of course, water, which comprises about 70% of our body and is essential for every bodily function.

Carbohydrates (4 calories/gram) are the body's primary energy source. Complex carbs containing fiber offer sustained energy, while fruit sugars provide a quick boost. Proteins (4 calories/gram) are vital for building and repairing tissues, strengthening the immune system, and providing backup energy. Fats (9 calories/gram) deliver concentrated energy, aid vitamin absorption, protect organs, and serve as a long-term energy reserve. These three macronutrients are essential for overall health and function. For optimal well-being, aim for a balanced daily calorie intake, with approximately 60-70% of calories coming from carbohydrates, 10-15% from protein, and 20-25% from healthy fats.

Beyond essential macronutrients lies the dynamic world of micronutrients. From Vitamins A, B, C to the trio of D, E, K, along with antioxidants, these micronutrients support our body's peak performance. Superfoods, such as aromatic spices (high in ORAC), blueberries, and avocados, deliver powerful health benefits. Micronutrients are found in fruits and vegetables, with vitamin C from oranges and strawberries boosting immunity and beta-carotene from golden carrots serving as nature's elixir for radiant skin and vision.

Water is essential for maintaining seamless cellular function, efficient digestion, and robust energy production.

It acts as a vital highway, maintaining the delicate balance of electrolytes, salts, and sugars that keep us functioning optimally.

Isn't it amazing how comfort foods can instantly transport you back to cherished memories? I still cherish those childhood moments of eating a banana held in one hand and a bread slice in the other, or relishing those delicious and crisp cutlets with plain rice, and dal savored as a soup. Equally comforting is a habit I embraced over 50 years ago: starting my mornings with 2-3 glasses of warm water. It is incredible how this simple step significantly improved my hydration and well-being, highlighting the transformative power of even the most basic habits and proving how they can yield the greatest rewards.

Unlock the Secrets of Your Plate through **Food: An Insightful Exploration**

Step into a world where centuries of culinary wisdom meet the bold innovations of tomorrow. My decades of work in India's vibrant food industry offered me a front-row seat to this evolution. Now, I invite you on a voyage to unlock the captivating secrets held on your plate.

My fast-selling book, born from years of dedicated research and development, is your compass through this extraordinary landscape. It bridges the diverse connections between science, technology, nutrition, culture, history, psychology, sustainability, and the future of food. Begin your flavorful adventure today. **Food: An Insightful Exploration** is available on Amazon. For further discussion on food science, safety, modern diets, and more, feel free to reach out at vinodhuria1@gmail.com. ■

The Vanishing Art

Outsourcing is changing the meaning of craftsmanship. **Carl Shi** argues that if we are not careful, we might wake up one day and realize that being a chef does not mean what it used to be

Last month, I walked into a five-star Sydney hotel kitchen to research operations and food waste management. What I discovered went beyond simple workflow changes—I witnessed a fundamental shift in the culinary profession itself. The kitchen operated entirely differently from those I knew years ago, revealing something more concerning: a gradual erosion of skill where convenience quietly replaces craftsmanship.

During my observations, I saw chefs grappling with modern challenges—sky-high labor costs, rapid staff turnover, and relentless pressure to cut costs. Outsourcing pre-cut meats and pre-portioned fish appears to solve these problems, but it comes at a hidden cost: the stunted development of young chefs. Critical skills like butchering, stock-making, and whole-ingredient preparation disappear from daily practice, ultimately compromising the quality guests expect from luxury dining.

Twenty-five years ago, the hotel kitchen I trained in buzzed with hands-on work—chefs breaking down whole fish, butchering primal cuts of beef, transforming vegetable scraps into rich stocks. As a young apprentice, I participated in the hotel's "Back to Basics" program, where I learned to slaughter, clean, and butcher chickens before turning them into various cuts. I spent hours studying herbs and spices, mastering how flavors layer and build in dishes. While these skills may not have directly boosted profits, they gave every young chef something irreplaceable: a deep, intuitive understanding of



A dish made with intuition tastes better than one made with instruction

ingredients.

Today, that foundational knowledge is vanishing. Pre-portioned meats, boneless fillets, and pre-cut vegetables dominate kitchens. On the surface, the logic seems sound—labor costs drop, training time shrinks, and consistency improves. But as I watched chefs assemble dishes rather than truly create them, I realized this shift isn't

just changing kitchen operations—it's redefining what it means to be a chef. The artistry, the problem-solving, and the connection to ingredients are fading in favor of efficiency. And once lost, these skills may never return.

The Lost Lessons of Butchery and Improvisation

When I was trained, breaking down a whole chicken was not just about making neat cuts—it was about understanding the animal, knowing which parts were best for roasting, which for braising, and which for stock. Today, most young chefs will never touch a whole bird. Why would they? The supplier delivers perfectly portioned breasts and thighs, ready to cook. It saves time, but at what cost? That "Back to Basics" training taught me more than technique—it taught me how to think like a chef. Now, I worry that the foundation is disappearing.

I spoke with one of the junior cooks, who admitted he had never deboned a fish. "We get them filleted," he said. "It's easier." Easier, yes—but what happens when he moves to a restaurant where whole fish is the standard? What happens when he needs to improvise with off-cuts, turning scraps into something delicious? These skills are not just technical; they are the foundation of creativity in cooking. Without them, chefs become assemblers, not craftsmen.

The Hidden Waste of Convenience

One of the most surprising things I noticed was how much more food was being thrown away. Eighteen years ago, nothing went to waste. Carrot tops

went into stocks; fish bones became fumet; meat trimmings were ground for sausages, and tomato off-cuts slow-cooked into ragù. With everything arriving pre-portioned, the kitchen has lost control over its scraps. The off-cuts—the very things that used to be transformed into soups, sauces, and staff meals—now go straight into the bin.

I asked the sous chef about it. "We don't have time to deal with scraps," he said. "It is cheaper to order what we need and toss the rest." But is it really cheaper? The hotel might save on labor but is paying for ingredients it never fully uses. Worse, it is losing something intangible: the resourcefulness that once defined great kitchens.

The Standardization of Flavour

There was a time when two chefs could prepare the same dish, and you'd taste the difference. One might use a little more thyme, and another might caramelize the onions longer—small choices that give food personality. Now, with pre-portioned ingredients and pre-made bases, everything tastes the same. Consistency is the goal, but we have sacrificed individuality in chasing it.

I watched a chef searing a piece of chicken supreme. It looked perfect—nice, caramelized skin, moist flesh—but when I asked how he seasoned it, he shrugged. "There's no need; it's pre-marinated," he said. That moment stuck with me. When did we decide convenience was more important than a chef's touch? When did we accept that outsourcing seasoning was progress?

Is This Really Better for Chefs? Or Just Easier for Management?

The argument for outsourcing is always financial: it cuts labor costs, reduces training time, and minimizes errors. But who does it benefit? The hotel saves money, but the chefs lose skills. The supplier's profit, but the industry loses depth. And the guests? They get a meal



Every cut of meat, every handful of herbs, carries a lesson—if we choose to learn it

that is technically correct but lacks soul.

I thought about the young cooks I met, the ones who will never learn to break down a duck or make stock from scratch. What happens to them when they leave this kitchen? Will they be ready for restaurants where skill matters more than speed? Or will they be trapped in a system that values efficiency over expertise?

The question is not whether outsourcing works; it clearly does, at least on a

spreadsheet. The real question is whether we are willing to accept what we are losing. Cooking is more than following steps; it is about judgment, intuition, and respect for ingredients. When we let suppliers do the work, we are not just saving time but handing over part of the craft itself.

I do not blame the chefs. They are working within a system that rewards speed over skill. But I do wonder: if this is the future of professional kitchens, what happens to the art of cooking? Will the next generation of chefs even know what they have missed?

As I left the hotel, I thought about my training—the long hours, mistakes, and moments of discovery. Those experiences shaped me as a chef in ways no pre-portioned ingredient ever could. If we are not careful, we might wake up one day and realize that being a chef does not mean what it used to be. And by then, it might be too late to get it back. ■



The Quiet Kind of Brave

Bulgarian roots, innate talent, and quiet conviction, Chef **Saniya's** journey is a confluence of self definition through food

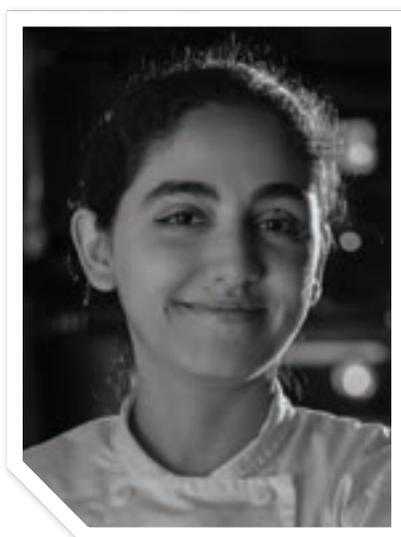
The town of Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, settled in the west of the Iskar River, is alive with a history of goldsmithing and warrior culture from the age of the Thracians. This city, a kaleidoscope of tradition and Balkan gastronomic gems provided the rising wind that pushed Chef Saniya's culinary dreams forward.

As a kid, she lingered near her mother and grandmother, watching them cook and sneaking ingredients from the kitchen to sculpt tiny replicas of their dishes out of modeling clay. By nine, she was trying her hand at real dishes, inspired by TV cooking shows and dreaming big.

"Everything changed when I had the opportunity to tour a professional kitchen led by a chef I admired. Learning from the chefs on TV, the ones you hope to be like one day, to finally observing a professional kitchen was unreal," recalls the 23-year-old.

Smoky aromas of grilled meats, kebabs, some of the world's finest cheese and yogurt, and fresh, simple ingredients became part of her earliest food memories. "One of my favorite foods is Mishmash. It is made from tomatoes, bell peppers, and cheese and kind of close to shakshuka, but with its twist."

Once she tossed her graduation cap skyward, she then seized the time to experiment in the kitchen. This phase of clarity became a precursor to her finding the sweetest joy in watching



Food became my language—and my way through

ordinary dough turn into a pastry that lights up someone's face.

"Even before my diploma, I worked on small projects, like participating in Expo Dubai, representing an organic food company focused on fusion taste." There were dishes to prepare, like breads of all kinds, dressed up with an array of sauces and spreads. "I also wrote some recipes for my blog; at present, it lies in hibernation," she chuckles. "Maybe

it's time to give it another go," she says, explaining that it was her version of a culinary boot camp.

In 2020, right on the brink of the global chaos we now know as the pandemic, she was bombarded with a cascade of conventional career path questions. Coming from a lineage of academia and medicine, her mother – a university teacher, and her father - a doctor. They hoped she would take the same route. "My father always wanted me to don the white coat like him, but my passion lay elsewhere. I told him, 'I might wear a white uniform one day, but it will not be that of a doctor.'"

Although resolute in her ambitions, a low hum of niggles occasionally infiltrated her thoughts. It was not from her family but from watching her friends pivot to other careers and contemplating whether it would be easy for a girl in the kitchen. However, in her heart, she knew that everything would fall into place if she listened to her heart. With full-tilt courage, she moved forward, and her remaining fears narrowed when she enrolled in the online undergraduate degree program offered by Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts. "It was an international gastronomy degree. They launched their online program, which included both culinary arts and practical skills. I learned from knowledgeable instructors who recognized my passion compared to some peers who took the program as a hobby. It is imperative to surround yourself with supportive individuals who tell you about the right and wrong."

Finding Clarity In The Cracks

She learned countless lessons during a year and a half of her degree. A memorable experience for her was working on a project where she created a menu inspired by a restaurant in Copenhagen. "It was a fully vegetarian, cruelty-free, and animal-friendly restaurant," she says, adding that she didn't know destiny would lead her there years later.

Then came the luminous city of Dubai. Having visited the city as a tourist before, she found it one of the best environments for young chefs to grow. "On one of those trips, I visited the International Centre for Culinary Arts (ICCA) and met some students who looked happy, all eager to advance their culinary careers. So, ICCA became one of the reasons I came to Dubai."

After that, she took on a few different roles, starting as an Instructor's Assistant in Patisserie and helping classes. Following that, she did a seasonal internship at Al Muntaha Restaurant. "I loved the team, and being on the 27th floor of the Burj Al Arab, surrounded by those views, made it a dream to work there." She accrued a wealth of lessons working under the guidance of pastry chefs, but she sensed a spark was missing. Seeking to shatter the impasse, she took a part-time position in restaurant marketing, but that, too, fell short of her expectations. "I always enjoyed being in the kitchen, but not so much the parts that connected to the restaurant side of things. But it is good to try different things to see if you're choosing the right option. It helps you know what you want. Eventually, I thought of no more trials and decided to stick to what I love."

Finding her niche in hospitality, she was back in her element as a chef. "You know what they say; if you love what you do, it does not feel like work," she smiles. What happened next astonished her and confirmed her life had come full circle.

Last spring, she decided to spend time in Copenhagen interning at one of the



Respect is not a hierarchy—it's a kitchen culture

top restaurants in 2022, Geranium. It had been on her radar for three years since she worked on a menu design project inspired by the city. "I had the privilege to see from close and work at the restaurant I wrote about years ago, and it didn't just meet but exceeded my expectations. It was really worth it!"

At Geranium, she experienced a reverent culture of respect. With a team of 40- 50, they would typically cover 40 to 50 guests per service. Mesmerized by the family feeling, she jumped in from day one, working alongside the chefs and fully joining service. "I was a pastry chef intern there, but I never felt like one," she recalls, adding that the team treated one another as equals, driving home the point that respect is in their ethos. While clear distinctions of

roles existed, she notes, the reality was grounded in mutual respect.

Interestingly, the head chef placed a premium on their perspectives. "The chefs valued the opinion of the team. I still remember him asking what we thought about a dish. This kind of open communication is rare."

Taking this yardstick of culture, she completed her internship and returned to Dubai with newfound clarity. "After this great kitchen experience, I realized you do not necessarily have to keep working in a toxic kitchen environment; I was ready to take on bigger challenges." With that shift in mind, she participated in two competitions at the Salon Du Chocolat, spending a month practicing her idea. Perfecting the concepts resulted in her winning two bronze medals. "Everyone hoped I'd win gold or silver, but bronze was a fantastic start, especially competing against chefs with 30 years of experience," she reflected.

In the months that followed, she explored a range of projects. "To be honest, a couple of months felt wasted," she admitted. "But that's alright because

you figure out how different things work. It taught me what's worth pursuing and what mistakes to avoid next time."

Ode to Bulgaria

Since January, Chef Saniya has been brewing the idea of launching the supper club that ladles out the flavors of Bulgaria. "It is called Taste of Bulgaria, and I want to create the first Bulgarian cuisine experience in the UAE. It would be like the real atmosphere of a working restaurant. The menu may feature classic, authentic options and maybe afternoon tea. The focus will be on the ingredients like rose, rosehip, and lavender."

Eventually, as the regular guests come knocking, she plans to introduce elements where dinners tiptoe outside the classic options. She dreams of a demo kitchen, an open space where people can gather around a big table. It is a place where guests feel they belong, where every visit feels like returning to something familiar. With the vision in place, she's eyeing a launch in the upcoming months, aiming for the debut around September.

For the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition, she is giving an ode to



Bulgaria by incorporating ingredients and familiar flavors from her homeland. It has multiple elements like cream cheese reduction, stewed apples, cheesecake mousse, caviar, sable crumbs, and Bulgarian rose petals for the finishing. It is also a dish she plans to feature at her supper club, amidst the dessert lineup she is already taking shape in her mind. "I would like it among the desserts served at the afternoon tea at the supper club. So, maybe the accent of this dish will be there."

No more skirmishes over career choices;

Chef Saniya says the journey has been a chest of lessons. "You just have to push for your dreams. Her family's support is critical, support that comes gradually after you believe in your work. Even my family encourages me now, and they are happy," a raw honesty lacing her words.

"I still remember the moment I chose culinary as a career. In those times, things were slowly changing, but when people used to hear the word 'chef,' they would associate the role as just someone who cooks or cleans dishes and not see artistry behind it."

Contemplating the developments within the culinary world, one can mine the history and the meaningful stories of chefs who helped shape it. A cursory look reveals that while there are many advancements, challenges, and implicit bias persist. We live in a world that tells us to jettison what matters most, sometimes even our passion, and holding on to it takes quiet courage. Food has become Chef Saniya's language, her way through. And like a phoenix, she has risen from her trials, finding clarity, strength, and a voice that is unmistakably her own. ■

Rose Blossom

Bulgarian Rosehip, Rose Cheesecake with Rose, Raspberry Caviar and Crispy Autumn Leaves

Sponge

Caster Sugar (for the yolks)	15g
Caster Sugar (for the egg whites)	35g
Corn starch	15g
00 Flour	35g
Vanilla essence to taste	

Large organic eggs (separated – yolks and egg whites) 2

Method

- ◆ Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F) and line a baking tray with parchment paper.
- ◆ Whisk the egg yolks with 15g of caster sugar until thick and pale.
- ◆ In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites

- with the remaining 35g caster sugar until stiff peaks form.
- ◆ Gently fold the egg whites into the yolk mixture, being careful to keep the batter light and fluffy.
- ◆ Sift the corn starch, flour, and vanilla essence into the batter and fold in until just combined.
- ◆ Spread the batter evenly onto the prepared baking tray and bake for 10-12 minutes, or until golden and firm to the touch.
- ◆ Allow to cool, then cut into 6 rounds (each 5cm in diameter).

Cheesecake Mousse

Arla Pro Cream Cheese	300g
Powdered Sugar	120g

Arla Pro High Stability

Rosehip Concentrate Or Marmalade	150g
----------------------------------	------

Rose Water	30ml
Organic Rose Essence	1tsp
Gelatin Powder (1 sachet), soaked in 50ml cold water	10g

Method

- ◆ In a bowl, mix the Arla Pro cream cheese and powdered sugar until smooth.
- ◆ In a separate bowl, whip the cold Arla Pro high stability whipping cream until soft peaks form.
- ◆ In a saucepan, gently heat the rosehip concentrate, rose water, and rose essence. Do not allow it to boil. Dissolve the soaked gelatin in the mixture.
- ◆ Fold the rose mixture into the whipped cream and cream cheese mixture until fully combined.
- ◆ Pipe the mousse into 6 silicone molds (each 6cm in diameter).

- ◆ Place the sponge layer in the center of each mold.
- ◆ Fill up to the maximum and smooth it out.
- ◆ Let it sit in the fridge overnight, then place it in the blast freezer for 2 hours before serving (or put straight into the blast freezer for 5-6 hours).

Caviar

Water	110ml
Rose Water	40 ml
Raspberry Essential Oil	5 drops
Agar Agar Powder	1 tbsp

A glass of sunflower frying oil (for setting caviar)

Method

- ◆ In a saucepan, heat the water, rose water, and raspberry essential oil together.
- ◆ Stir in the agar agar powder and bring to a boil. Simmer for 2 minutes (120 seconds).
- ◆ Transfer the liquid to a squeeze bottle and drop it into a bowl filled with very cold sunflower frying oil to form small pearls of caviar. Allow them to set in the oil for 3-4 minutes before draining.
- ◆ Use a high glass or container so that the caviar sets well.
- ◆ Use frying oil to avoid any flavor contamination.
- ◆ Place the caviar in a container in the fridge until serving.

Sable Crumbs

Arla Pro Unsalted Butter	60g
Powdered Sugar	50g
Arla Pro Heavy Cream	1 tbsp
Organic Vanilla Extract	½ tsp
All-Purpose Flour	100g
Baking Powder	½ tsp
Pinch of salt	

Method

- ◆ Mix the butter, powdered sugar, heavy cream, and vanilla extract together until smooth.
- ◆ Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt into the mixture, and gently mix until a dough forms.
- ◆ Roll the dough and chill overnight in the fridge.
- ◆ Roll the dough slightly thinner, cut into small pieces, and place them on a baking sheet.
- ◆ Preheat the oven to 170°C (340°F).
- ◆ Bake for 10-12 minutes or until golden.



Let them cool before crushing them into fine crumbs.

Leaves

Egg Whites	50g
Caster Sugar	50g
Arla Pro Unsalted Butter	50g
Plain Flour	50g
Red, Blue, And Pink Food Coloring (For Leaf Decoration)	

Method

- ◆ Whisk together the egg whites and caster sugar to form stiff peaks.
- ◆ Fold in the melted butter and sifted flour to form a smooth batter.
- ◆ Divide the mixture into separate bowls and add food coloring to each.
- ◆ Pipe the batter into leaf-shaped molds on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
- ◆ Bake at 160°C (320°F) for 10-12 minutes until crisp and golden.
- ◆ Carefully remove the leaves from the molds with tweezers and let them cool.
- ◆ While still warm, you can place them on a rolling pin to make them slightly curved.

Stewed Apples

Green Apple	1
Arla Pro Unsalted Butter	50g
Sugar	2 tbsp
Rosehip Concentrate	1 tbsp
Lemon Juice	1 tsp
A Pinch Of Cinnamon Powder	

Liquorice Powder	½ tsp
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Method

- ◆ Dice the peeled apple.
- ◆ Melt the butter in a pan over medium heat and glaze the apple.
- ◆ Add all the dry ingredients.
- ◆ Cook for 5-7 minutes.
- ◆ Add the rosehip concentrate and cook for another 5 minutes.
- ◆ Cover the pan/container tightly and let it cool and infuse until cooled down.

For Decoration

Edible Gold Leaves	2
Edible Flowers of your choice	
Crushed Ruby Chocolate (preferably organic white chocolate with raspberry and rose flavor)	50g

Method

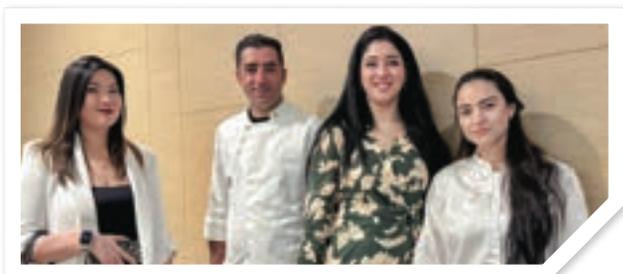
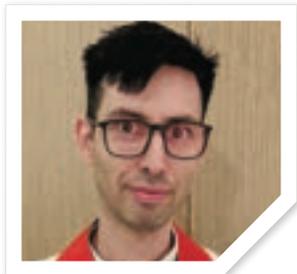
- ◆ Once the cheesecake mousse has set, spray it with white chocolate velvet spray before serving.
- ◆ Start plating: place a spoon of sable crumbs, a spoon of stewed apple cubes, and then top with one cheesecake per portion.
- ◆ Decorate with the caviar, golden leaves, and edible flowers on the sides. Sprinkle the ruby chocolate crumbs on top.
- ◆ Spray edible gold dust on top of the leaves and place 3 crispy leaves per portion (1 blue, 1 red, and 1 pink).



The Guild Meet

The Emirates Culinary Guild's monthly meeting took place on April 8th, 2025, and was hosted by Chef Grant Marais, Executive Chef at Holiday Inn & Suites Dubai Science Park







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May 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

EXPO *Culinaire*
 FOOD & EQUIPMENT FOR CHEFS | PASTRY CHEFS | BAKERS | HORECA PROFESSIONALS
 FEATURING THE 20TH EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINAIRE
 21-23 MAY 2025 | EXPO CENTRE SHARJAH, UAE



AN OVERVIEW OF THE EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINIARE 2025

May 21st till May 23rd 2025 | Expo Centre, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

The Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG) (www.emiratesculinaryguild.net) is the association of professional chefs of the UAE.

The aims of the ECG, broadly, are

- ◆ To encourage and inspire young chefs through training and competition.
- ◆ To enhance internationally the culinary prestige of the UAE.
- ◆ To encourage UAE nationals to consider a career within the hospitality industry.

The Emirates International Salon Culinaire (ESC) is a series of practical and display-based culinary competitions and fully Endorsed by the World Association of chefs Societies, Worldchefs; entry to which is open to professional chefs, pastry chefs, cooks and bakers and culinary students. Some of the competitions are designed for entry by a single competitor; others are designed as team events. Each competition is called a class.

The ESC shall take place in during the Expo Culinaire exhibition for Chefs, Bakers, Pastry chefs and cooks and which will once again be the home of the Emirates Salon Culinaire and is a fully endorsed competition from Worldchefs. To exhibit or sponsor at Expo Culinaire please visit <https://www.expoculinaire.com/>

All this - coupled with three days of real-time, hectic, and thrilling cookery competitions - fought against the constraints of time, makes the salon a stimulating event that will become a major attraction at the Expo Culinaire exhibition for Chefs, Bakers, Pastry chefs and cooks. This year the education arena is not to be missed as a special feature of the exhibition. Demonstrations and interactive sessions will be another highlight of the Expo Culinaire exhibition.

Social media plays a large part in the Guilds self-promotion and

the Gulf Gourmet magazine drive awareness around the globe. www.emiratesculinaryguild.net/, www.facebook.com/Emirates-Culinary-Guild-763644223697376/timeline/, www.facebook.com/gulfgourmet?fref=ts, follow these links for more information on the Emirates Culinary Guild.

In 2025 the Emirates International Salon Culinaire and Expo Culinaire exhibition shall run alongside a new culinary competition named Indigenous Cuisine Team challenge featuring 18 global cuisines with teams of 4 chefs competing for the trophy. All this activity will make this the chefs event of the year.

Membership of the ECG is open to all of those professionally and solely involved in the preparation of food. Anyone interested in the Emirates Salon Culinaire to compete or sponsor, please contact us below.

The Emirates Culinary Guild

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 Tel: + 971 56 8014089.
emiratesculinaryguild@gmail.com

Briefs of the Classes for Entry Class No. - Class Description

Pastry and Bakery

- 01 Cake Decoration – Practical Powered by Felchlin Switzerland
- 02 Wedding Cake Three-Tier- Powered by Pristine
- 03 Four Plates of Dessert – Powered by Arla Pro
- 04 Pastry Showpiece
- 05 Bread Loaves and Showpiece Powered by CSM ingredients& Schapfen Muehle Germany
- 06 Petites Fours, Pralines Powered by Marguerite & Candia Professional France

Showpiece Artistic Displays

- 07 Chocolate Carving Showpiece

Powered by Veliche Chocolate Belgium

- 08 Fruit & Vegetable Carving Showpiece Powered by Barakat
- 09 Open Show Piece Powered by Shmesani

Gourmet Static Display

- 10 Five-Course Gourmet Dinner Menu Powered by USMEF
- 11 Sustainable Three-Course Vegetarian Lunch Menu
- 13 Four Plated USAPEEC Chicken Dishes –Powered by USAPEEC (TBC)
- 23 Savory tartelette Creations Powered by HUG
- 24 Sweet tartelette Creations Powered by HUG
- 28
- 34 Sweet Creations by Potatoes USA

Practical Artistic Carving

- 15 Individual Ice Carving
- 16 Ice Carving Team Event
- 17 Practical Fruit & Vegetable Carving Powered by Barakat

Practical Cookery

- 19 Arabic Mezzezh - Practical Cookery Powered by Rahma
- 20 Fish & Seafood - Practical Cookery Powered by The Deep Seafood Company
- 21 Beef - Practical Cookery Powered by USMEF
- 22 Emirati Cuisine – Practical Cookery
- 25 Dressed Chicken & Dressed Fish Practical Butchery
- 33 Savory Potato Creations Practical Cookery Powered by Potatoes USA
- 27 Chicken - Practical Cookery – Powered by USAPEEC
- 30

The Student Challenge Powered by THRYVE Plant Based

Open to Culinary school students and kitchen trainees/interns only Classes

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35 and 36 only competitors must enter both classes

Entry to the class must be accompanied by a current student card issued by a recognized culinary school or letter from Human resource department stating trainee or culinary intern

- 35 Plant based Practical cookery appetizer and main course Powered by THRYVE
- 36 Soup and Sandwich Practical cookery Powered by Chefs Palette
- 37 Lamb Primal Cuts Practical Butchery
- 38 Syrian Cuisine Modern Main courses Practical cookery Powered by Boody's
- 39 Syrian Three Plates of Kibbeh Practical cookery Powered by Boody's
- 40 Sounbula Mills Artisan Bakery Arena Practical Cookery
- 41 The National Cuisine challenge powered by TAAZA.

ADDENDUM

VENUE & ENTRY FEES

1. The Emirates Salon Culinaire will be held during the Expo Culinaire 2025 from May 21st till 23rd May 2025.
2. The venue is at the Sharjah National Exhibition Centre
3. The entrance fee for all single entries is Dhs.100 (AED. One Hundred) per person per class, unless otherwise stated in the Rules and Regulations or the Class Briefs.
4. Entry applications are via the foodverse APP available in the app and google play store and here <https://www.foodverse.io/> competitors must sign up to the APP to gain access to the foodverse and the competition entries. No paper based entries or emails will be entertained.
5. The fee for entry to the trophy classes is as follows:
 - i. **Best Cuisinier – The Emirates Salon Culinaire- Dubai 2025** AED:500/- per person
 - ii. **Best Pastry Chef – The Emirates Salon Culinaire- Dubai 2025** AED:400/- per person
 - iii. **Best Artist – The Emirates Salon Culinaire- Dubai 2025** AED:500/- per person
 - iv. **Best Arab National – The Emirates Salon Culinaire- Dubai 2025** AED:300/- per person

- v. **Young Chef of the Year – The Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2025** AED: 300/- per person

CLOSING DATE

6. Closing date for entries is April 28th 2025 However, many are often fully subscribed and closed well before the closing date.

TROPHY ENTRY

Entrants to a trophy class must enter and finish in all and only those classes that pertain to the trophy for which they are entering. No other classes may be entered into by a trophy entrant. Trophies are awarded on the highest aggregate judging points from all classes pertaining to the trophy being awarded. The required classes are:

BEST CUISINIER

- i. **Class #10. Five-Course Dinner Menu**
- ii. **Class # 21. Beef Practical Cookery**
- i. **Class # 27. Chicken Practical Cookery**

In order to qualify for inclusion in the points tally for Best Cuisinier Trophy a competitor must win three medals, at least one of which must be a gold medal.

BEST PASTRY CHEF

- i. **Class # 01. Practical Cake Decoration**
- ii. **Class # 03. Four Plates of Desserts**
- iii. **Class # 06. Friandises, Petites Four**

In order to qualify for inclusion in the points tally for Best Pastry Chef Trophy a competitor must win at least two medals one of which must be a gold medal.

BEST ARTIST:

- i. **Class # 07. Chocolate Showpiece**
- ii. **Class # 09. Open Showpiece**
- iii. **Class # 15. Individual Ice Carving**
- iv. **Class # 17. Practical Fruit & Vegetable Carving**

In order to qualify for inclusion in the points tally for Best Artist Trophy a competitor must win at least three medals one of which must be a gold medal.

BEST ARAB NATIONAL CUISINIER

- i. **Class # 27. Chicken – Practical Cookery Arabic Style**

- ii. **Class # 19. Arabic Mezzeh - Practical Cookery**
- iii. **Class 22: Emirati Cuisine - Practical Cookery**
- iv. **In order to qualify for inclusion in the points tally for Best Arab National Trophy a competitor must win at least one Gold medal and be an Arab National.**

BEST BAKERY TEAM

1. **Class 40 Sounbula Mills Artisan Bakery Arena Class "The SOUNBULA MILLS UAE Bakery team of 2025"**

YOUNG CHEF OF THE YEAR

See Classes for Entry Document. Classes

The National Cuisine Challenge by TAAZA

1. A new class dedicated to the National Cuisine of 18 countries, 1st, 2nd and 3rd place trophies shall be awarded.

JUDGING AND THE AWARDS SYSTEM

A team of WorldChefs (The World Association of Chefs Societies) approved international Judges will adjudicate at all classes of the competition: using Worldchefs-approved methods, criteria and documents www.worldchefs.org After each judging session, the judges will hold a debriefing session at which each competitor attending may learn something of the thinking behind the judges' decision.

Competitors will not be competing against each other: rather, they will be striving to reach the best possible standard. The judges will then apportion marks that accord with their perception of the standard reached. The competitor will then receive an award commensurate with his/her points tally for the class.

In theory, therefore, everyone in a particular class could be awarded a gold medal. Conversely, it could be possible that no awards at all are made.

The scaling for awards in all classes is as follows

100 Points	Gold Medal with Distinction with Certificate.
99 – 90	Gold Medal with Certificate.
89 – 80	Silver Medal with Certificate.
79 – 70	Bronze Medal with Certificate

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60 – 69 Certificate of Merit
Thereafter Certificate of Participation

Corporate and Establishment Trophies

The corporate and establishment trophies available are:

Best Effort by an Individual Establishment – The Emirates Salon Culinaire

This trophy is awarded to the establishment whose competitors gain the highest total combined points from the medals won from all of their entries.

Best Effort by a Corporation – The Emirates Salon Culinaire

This trophy is awarded to the corporation whose competitors gain the highest total combined points from the medals won from all of their entries.

Point Value of each Medal Won:

Gold Medal with Distinction	6 Points
Gold Medal	5 Points
Silver Medal	3 Points
Bronze Medal	1 Point

Winners where a sponsored trip is awarded are restricted to winning the trip once per life time. In a case where the overall winner has participated in a sponsored trip previously the trip shall be awarded to the 2nd place winner. If no Gold Medals are awarded to competitors in the trophy classes then there shall be no trophy given at the competition.

Rules and Regulations for Culinary Competitions

- Please read** the following regulations carefully. The instructions contained herein are mandatory. Non-compliance with any of the points mentioned could lead to loss of marks or complete disqualification.
- The Briefs of the Classes** for Entry document also forms part of these Rules and Regulations and must be read in conjunction with this document. More details can also be found at www.worldchefs.org for Worldchefs rules and judging.
- Other regulations** relevant to a particular competition would appear on the last page/s of this document.

PARTICIPATION

- Participation at competition is open to anyone professional employed in the preparation of food.
- Unless the organisers specifically mention a class as being a team event, all classes are for entry by a single competitor.
- Competitors are restricted to one entry per class
- Competitors must attend and participate on the date and at the time allotted to them no date changes will be allowed.

COMPETITION ENTRY

Entry applications are via the foodverse APP available in the app and google play store and here <https://www.foodverse.io/> competitors must sign up to the APP to gain access to the foodverse and the competition entries. No paper based entries or emails will be entertained.

- Complete the entry-form on the foodverse app according to the instructions on the foodverseapp. www.foodverse.io
- Submit the completed form to the organisers via the app
- Entry is paid but pending final decision.
- Entries are accepted strictly on a first-come, first paid-accepted basis
- Competitors must be 18 years old and above

CERTIFICATES AND LETTERS OF PARTICIPATION

- Ensure that your name on your entry-form exactly as you would wish it to appear on any certificate, letter of participation or posting of results.

HYGIENE

- A professional food-safety company will oversee all aspects of hygiene practice at the competition.
- It is quite possible that the Municipality Food Control Section will conduct its own hygiene inspections as and when it sees fit.
- The organisers have no control over these two entities. Should either raise an objection to the standard of hygiene of any particular person or team, that person or team will not be allowed to compete

THE SECRETARIAT

- The Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG) is the body responsible for the creation, organisation and administration of the competition.
- The competition is governed by and construed according to the rules of the organisers.
- The organisers have sole authority to adjudicate on any matters pertaining to the competition.
- Entrants' acceptances of participation in the competition are construed as confirmation of their undertaking to submit unconditionally to the jurisdiction of the organisers in regard to all aspects of the Emirates Salon Culinaire.
- The address of the ECG for all correspondence and inquiries referencing culinary competitions is: The Emirates Culinary Guild, PO Box 454922 Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Tel: + (97156) 801 4089. Email: emiratesculinaryguild@gmail.com

COMPETITORS AND HELPERS

- Each competitor is allowed one helper to assist with carrying equipment. No other help is allowed to a competitor within the preparation area.
- A helper must be junior in rank to the person he/she is helping.
- A competitor must wear full; freshly laundered chef's uniform with appropriate headgear and footwear when attending at the exhibition.
- A competitor's helper must wear full; freshly laundered chef's uniform with appropriate headgear and footwear when attending at the exhibition.
- Competitors that are incorrectly dressed at a competition will not have their exhibits judged.
- Helpers that are incorrectly dressed will not be admitted to the exhibition.
- Logos, marks and identifying colors provided by the organisers must be worn by competitor throughout the competition in the position indicated to them by the organisers at the time of registration.
- Logos, marks and identifying colors

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provided by the organisers must be worn by helpers throughout the competition in the position indicated to them by the organisers at the time of registration.

30. A competitor entered in a practical competition must register at least thirty minutes before the commencement of the competition otherwise the competition slot will be given to a waitlisted competitor.
31. Any competitor not in place and ready to start at least five minutes before the time a competition commences, will be disqualified.
32. Competitors and helpers are forbidden from approaching or speaking with or at a judge without the express permission of the organisers.

EXHIBITS

33. Each exhibit must be the bona fide work of the entering competitor. It must be solely the work of the competitor and must be certified as such by his Head of Department or General Manager.
34. Each exhibit must be a completely original work, it must not have been displayed previously (in whole or in part) in any competition or exhibition whether private or public.
35. All exhibits must be of edible substance except for framing, socles and stands where they are allowed.
36. It is forbidden to use any living entity whatsoever as part of an exhibit (e.g. tropical fish).
37. It is forbidden to depict religious, nude, semi-nude or political themes in an exhibit.
38. All exhibits must be suitable for presentation as a decorative item in a restaurant or banqueting setting.
39. An exhibit must not carry any logo, label or mark of identification; however, competitors must be able to identify their exhibit if required.
40. Competitors are responsible for their exhibits and should ensure that they are available in their proper place for judging on the day and time specified.
41. No preparation or finishing of exhibits is allowed in any area except

the designated preparation area at the rear of the competition area.

42. Finished exhibits must be placed in the position indicated by the organisers.
43. No interference with an exhibit is allowed once the organisers have deemed it as submitted for judging.
44. Competitors must leave the judging area as soon as their exhibits are in place or when instructed to leave by the marshals, whichever is the sooner.
45. Exhibits may, at the discretion of the organisers, be moved to a separate enclosure, there to remain for part or for the duration of the exhibition.
46. Failure by a competitor to register or exhibit at the specified time could result in disqualification. The competitor entered must place his or her exhibit themselves this task cannot be done in absentia
47. Exhibits which are removed by competitors without permission of the organisers will not qualify for any kind of award.

COMPETITION MARSHALS

48. A Marshal-at-arms will be recognizable by a badge displaying the logo of the Emirates Culinary Guild and the legend 'Marshal'.
49. Marshals are charged with ensuring that the rules and regulations of the competition are observed by all concerned.
50. Competitors, helpers and visitors are all obliged to cooperate with the marshals - without question, at all times. If a competitor is disrespectful to any member of the organizing committee, judges or marshal they will be disqualified and banned for life from future competitions organized by the ECG and reported to their General Manager.

AWARDS

51. Gold, silver and bronze medals and certificates and certificates of merit are awarded solely at the discretion of the judges.
52. The decision of the judges is final and each competitor is required to abide by it without comment.
53. Medals will normally be presented

at 17:30 each day. This may change according to circumstance.

54. Any medal or certificate that is not accepted by the competitor or his/her helper at the presentation ceremony for that day will be forfeit, unless prior arrangements are made with the organisers.
57. A competitor or his/her helper must be correctly dressed as stipulated in the rules when collecting medals or certificates. Chefs uniform NO JEANS
58. Incorrectly dressed competitors/ helpers will not be allowed access to the awards area.

COPYRIGHT

59. All exhibitors and competitors assign all rights concerning videos, photographs, menus, recipes, exhibits, sound recordings etc. to the Emirates Culinary Guild.

DISCLAIMER

60. The organisers are entitled to cancel or postpone the Salon, or to alter the duration, timing or schedule of any event.
61. The organisers reserve the right to cancel any classes or limit the number of entries or extend, modify or revoke any of the rules and conditions without being held liable for any claims for compensation whatsoever.
62. The organisers will not under any circumstances be held liable or responsible for the loss or damage of any exhibit, equipment, goods, persons or personal effects.
63. By entering the competition, the competitors give their permission to the organizer the right to use their submitted personal information as required as part of the Guild activities.

QUERIES

64. All queries must be submitted by email to: emiratesculinaryguild@gmail.com the question and answer to each query will be broadcast to all entrants.

ENDS 2025

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May 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

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THE EMIRATES CULINARY GUILD APPLICATION FORM

Date of Application:

Family Name:	First Name/s:	Ms/ Mrs/ Mr/ Other:
Nationality:	Civil Status:	Date of Birth: dd/mm/yyyy
Employee/ Business Owner:	Name of Business:	Designation:
Work Address:	Email Address:	Contact Number:

Type of Membership: (please tick)	
SENIOR: (Above the rank of chef de partie/ senior chef de partie on executive chef's recommendation).	AED350 joining fee/ AED150 renewal fee Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar
MEMBER: (Below the rank of chef de partie 29 years old and over).	AED150 joining fee/AED75 renewal fee Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar
YOUNG MEMBER: (under 28 years)	Free Includes certificate; member-pin

Declaration to be Signed by Applicant:

I wish to join The Emirates Culinary Guild in collaboration with The Women's Culinary Chapter.

I have read the ECG Constitution and By-laws. I agree to be bound by the requirements of the constitution. If elected, I promise to support the Guild and its' endeavours to the best of my abilities.

Signature:

Proposed By:	Signature:
Seconded By:	Signature:

For Official Use Only

Remarks:

Payment Received?		
Certificate Given	Pin Given	Medal & Collar Given
Approved by President:	Signature:	
Approved by Chairman:	Signature:	

Note: The membership is only applicable to those who are working in the UAE as professional chef or with a background related as Chef in the hotel and restaurant industry.

The WCC is in collaboration with the Emirates Culinary Guild, which is a member of the World Association of Chef's Societies



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May 2025 Gulf Gourmet

newmembers



Representatives from Harvey and Brockless Foodstuff Trading LLC Back row, left to right: Denys Tukov – Sales Manager, Trevor Bryant – Managing Director, George Stamp – Sales Manager; Front row left to right: Marie-Lyne Selwan – Sales Manager (Technical), and Julie Caulton – Sales Director with the Emirates Culinary Guild membership certificate.

HARVEY AND BROCKLESS FOODSTUFF TRADING LLC

Harvey & Brockless Dubai and the UK sites produce and distribute exceptional dairy and speciality products, working in partnership with artisan food producers from across the globe.

Our appetite for good food is reflected in our vast range, which covers everything from essential daily cheeses, including vegan alternatives, premium and artisan cheese and chutney, sauces, crackers and snacks, butter, antipasti, oils, olives, and creams. Since being acquired by The

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the fine food co.

Compleat Food Group, this now allows access to the group's brands such as, Vadasz Deli and Unearthed.

With our diverse range of premium products, we have the largest European cheeses available in the UAE, that we then supply daily to a UAE-wide network of clients from large catering clients, airlines, restaurants, food manufacturers to 5-star hotels and major retailers .

Harvey & Brockless slice, dice, grate and pack portions to suit client requirements and brand messaging from our processing facility in Dubai Investments Park. As a one-stop shop Harvey & Brockless provides seamless service and delivery, with the highest quality and rapid turn-around times.) ■



Erickson Daiz, Sales Manager, and Chandrakanth Pathi, Area Manager, Robot Coupe Middle East, receive the ECG membership certificate from Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG.

ROBOT COUPE

It was in the Burgundy region of France, known for its gastronomy, that Robot-Coupe invented the Food Processor more than 40 years ago.

As both a precursor and undisputed leader in the food preparation equipment sector, Robot-Coupe manufactures a range of appliances to meet the specific needs of the culinary trades (catering, restaurants, delicatessans, baked goods, pastries, confectioners.

From mixing the most delicate ingredients to grinding almonds and spices, from emulsifying to cooking, Robot-Coupe has a solution for any of chefs' needs!

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A continuous quality Improvement and launching of new concepts of kitchen machines made Robot-Coupe the leading manufacturer in this field with worldwide operation and service centres.

Today Robot-Coupe produces over 90 models and 6 main groups of equipment: vegetable preparation machines, cutters, kitchen processors, Blixers, hand mixers and juice extractors. Robot-Coupe equipment is trusted by the professionals of food preparation all over the world for its quality, robustness, productivity and design.

One of the latest inventions – the first professional Cooking Cutter-Blender - the Robot Cook, has been appreciated by many professionals for being an ideal assistant for preparation of a multitude of attractive, hot or cold, savoury or sweet recipes.

The biggest operators at the market of food service equipment trust Robot-Coupe and maintain a long-term relationship in order to meet the most sophisticated needs of professional chefs, artisanal, kitchen planners, and many other clients.

Robot-Coupe equipment and service allow professionals to express their creativity, imagination and talent. ■

Culinary Trends Express

Simon Martin, Executive Chef at Kerry Taste & Nutrition (Food Service), has been sharing trends for our region since 2016



Welcome back to Trends Express. Without further ado, let's jump on board the "Trends Express" and see what's hot and appearing in our region. Remember, "LIKE IT, BUY IT, SNAP IT, SHARE IT."

They're not complicated, but just a few simple ingredients will rock your culinary planet

Some things break all the rules, like a Hot Fruit.... Yes, I am talking about chili peppers, but what is new in terms of trends? Well, Shaqra Chilli is fast becoming the new kid on the block, driving the profile of sweet followed mild spice that is local to our region. Grown across the UAE and KSA, we have seen this appearing not only in shawmers and pizzas but in sandwiches and even as a post-cook seasoning. Local Shatta sauces benefit from these locally sourced ruby-colored jewels of



deliciousness. I saw them as candied-sliced Shaqra chillis on ice cream last week. What next? Maybe a candy bar or a mocktail. We all know someone with the "hurts so Good" philosophy, always searing out the thrill of the chili burn. Embracing heat is part of our region's DNA, as many of us love the tingling heat from the pungent notes of capsicum. So why not champion local profile and bring the chillis home?

One trend that is never going away, which takes so much effort to produce yet we take for granted, is the golden nectar, with a rich history of millennia or more. HONEY is back and hitting every part of the menu, from entrees to beverages. Did you know bees need to fly approximately 194731 kilometers to produce 1 kg of honey? That is nearly five times around the world...Yet all that hard work pays off as these amazing workers produce almost three million tonnes globally each year. It appears on pizzas and poultry as a suitable replacement for refined sugar. Enhancing deserts, vegetables, and beverages alike. It is now not only with chili but also with ginger, lavender, cumin, and black pepper. My favorite this year has been black cardamom and star anise honey served on dark rye bread with a dairy spread. It is amazingly simple but bang on trend. What new types of honey have you come across?

Finally, something that is globally big and coming here is KEDEREE, yes, the combination of mild curry madras spices, basmati rice, parsley, soft-boiled eggs, and smoked fish that was first recorded as far back as 1790 in a cookbook. We are

seeing lentils, salmon, mushrooms, and even snails take this humble breakfast dish into all-day dining, the top ones using fresh cream or truffle. Inspired by the Indian sub-continent known as Khichdi. Could we see a version using Balaleet? Or even a Samak Harra version, who knows? However, I have seen versions now not only on a plate or bowl but encased in flat bread as a wrap and salad. As this trend grows, we will see this evolve to all menus across our region as the synergies of the flavors and textures with the Gulf are aligned to make this the star of your menus.

It has been a great month for trying new food in our region, from Cheetos Flamin hot ice cream to New Orleans famous dirty rice. But the dish of the month has to be Frejon, a coconut and black bean dish from Lagos with Brazilian roots flavored with cocoa and served in a fish stew; Nigerian food has been my go-to this month. Have you tried any? If so, what is your call?

Finally, looking at trends, our corporate partners at the Emirates Culinary Guild are also helping define the landscape of trends with their visions. Their foresight to avail their latest products to us at our monthly meetings, reflects both innovation and current market trends. Stay ahead of the curve, talk to them, and try their products. Join them and us in driving the trends in our region. ■

Kerry Foodservice provides custom-made solutions (coatings, sauces, beverages, etc.) and branded solutions such as Chefs Palette and DaVinci Gourmet to global and regional chains, QSRs, and casual diners across the region.

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