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APRIL 2024

THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

gulf gourmet

volume 19, issue 4

CHECK OUT THE
COMPLETE LISTING OF
RULES AND
REGULATIONS FOR
**SALON
2024**

TROIKA

The trio of chefs, **Kameel Eril**, **Kuma Madusanka**, and **Thilina Fernando**, clinch Gold with Distinction at the IKA Culinary Olympics

THE TASTE TREND-SETTER

Executive Chef **Hareesh Gopalan** of Dusit Thani Hotel discusses menu concept development



PASTRY FROM PRINT

Executive Pastry Chef **Saman Sagara** is prepared to bake off at the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Competition



IMAGES FROM IKA

A glimpse of the creations made by the UAE team at the IKA Culinary Olympics 2024





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president's station

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Dear Members and Partners,

Eid Mubarak to everyone. I hope that the holy month of Ramadan was one of peace and family traditions. We saw fantastic business levels across the cities, and this gives us all a positive outlook on the trend for the remaining business months of the year.

The Guild members were invited to the Shees Rest Area in Kalba, nestled in the mountains, to break the fast alongside the citizens of Shees village. It was a wonderful cultural experience for all of us and not something that is often witnessed. We thank Sharjah Tourism for this opportunity.

We are now in full preparation mode for the Expo Culinaire and the Emirates International Salon Culinaire. We are inviting eight teams from across the globe to compete in the Alen Thong Golden Coffee Pot Young Chefs Challenge and the Salon's individual categories.

The Salon is growing every year, and we expect over 700 competitors to participate in the individual categories alone, along with 80 team members competing in the competitions. In addition to that, we have a field of 25 international judges and locally based judges. It's going to be an exciting three days, from 20 to 22 May 2024, at the Expo Centre Sharjah, in partnership with our exhibition partner, Purple Kitchen Events. For those corporate partners and food companies interested in exhibiting at the Expo, please contact

the Managing director of Purple Kitchen events, Ms. Joanne Cook, at joanne.cook@purple-kitchen.com

We have some fantastic ongoing competitions at the moment. The Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Chef of the Year, featured inside the Gulf Gourmet, is just one such event that gives our pastry chefs the opportunity to shine. At the end of the year, the winner will get an education trip of a lifetime, so I encourage our senior chefs to promote this to their pastry teams and provide them with an opportunity to showcase their skills.

In this month's issue, we are featuring our Gold Medal with Distinction winners from the IKA Culinary Olympics. The work from the whole team of young men and women was genuinely remarkable. Congratulations to the team for making the Emirates Culinary Guild and their establishments proud. Well done! Keep reading future magazine editions to know more about the Olympics and Salon competitions.

A big thank you to Chef Jay Williams from the Sofitel Downtown and his team for supporting the March monthly meeting. It was great to be outside this time for a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere.

In closing, once again, Eid Mubarak and I look forward to seeing everybody at the monthly meetings.

With Regards,
Andy Cuthbert
President and Editor



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A Culinary Journey: From Passionate Beginnings and Beyond

Chef **Helen Morris** recounts the tales of hard work and culinary bravado that defined her gastronomic educational journey

Ah, the glory days of my two-year culinary course adventure! Picture me, a bright-eyed and bushy-tailed student at the catering college, conveniently far, far away from my hometown. Now, let me tell you, I lived for those college shenanigans. Not just the learning, but Friday afternoons were practically sacred—we'd wrap up classes, sneak away, and rendezvous by the river venue for some well-deserved cheeky "beverage-based" reminiscing. Ah, the memories!

But college life wasn't all leisure. Oh no, a girl's got to earn her keep, right? So, I took on every odd job under the sun to fund my budding independence at the ripe old age of 16. From waitressing at the local golf club (where I rubbed shoulders with more British TV stars than a red-carpet event...well, sort of ...) to my favourite job just a two-minute walk from our house in a quaint village, a nursing home! But boy, was I hit. My breakfasts, lunches, and afternoon teas were legendary amongst the residents and the owners. They loved the food and the cakes. I loved this job and was disappointed when college started again for the new academic year.

But the pièce de résistance? I worked at the legendary Little Chef, a quick-service restaurant chain that was practically the McDonald's of Britain back in the day. My first shift was like stepping into a culinary tornado—orders flying left and right, customers pouring in like a hungry pack. But hey, those tips were like winning the culinary jackpot!

At Little Chef, I didn't just learn how to flip pancakes or fry eggs. Oh



no, I became a master of numbers, memorising over a hundred menu items faster than you can say "extra side of hash brown." We didn't take orders by name; it was all about the numbers, and we had to learn them!

We spent hours learning dish components, presentation standards, service standards, and logistics. What I learned here was that training is key to everything. But what did I glean from all those hours of culinary boot camp, you ask? Well, my friends, let me tell you: training is the holy grail of everything. So, there you have it: train hard and cook harder.

And then there was Marie, the grill queen herself. She ran that grill like a well-oiled machine, never breaking a

sweat, even during the busiest of times. She ruled that kitchen with an iron spatula and a glare that could curdle milk. Yet beneath her stern exterior lay the heart of a culinary genius. Then, when the day came, I was moved to the grill section. The moment I had been waiting for. Leave the customer interactions to someone else.

After all, I was studying to be a chef. I was her trusty sidekick. Together, we whipped out everything from English breakfasts, burgers, and steaks to maple syrup pancakes faster than you can say, "Check on!"

Working alongside Marie was like getting a crash course in culinary combat. She never flinched or faltered, even when the orders piled up higher than a stack of pancakes. And let me tell you, her pancakes were the stuff of legends, dripping with maple syrup and served with a side of culinary bravado. She was a true legend!

So, while my friends were out enjoying lazy weekends and summer breaks, I was elbow-deep in pancake batter and scrubbing grills. And you know what? I wouldn't have it any other way. After all, who needs downtime when you've got a kitchen full of chaos, grease-splattered aprons, and camaraderie?

Hold onto your aprons, folks, because the next chapter is about to unfold! That's right, college days are over, and it's time to step into the "real world."

So, until we meet again, remember to **play hard and work harder.**

Chef Helen

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friends of the guild



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Ease Selva draws its inspiration from the mystic depths of the forest and invites the serene aura of the woods to the table. The series is composed of six matte glazes which embody the enchanted colours found in the heart of nature. Embrace untamed beauty by adding the magic of lush vegetation, mossy paths, ancient oak trees and turquoise green waters to your tableware.

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April 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

newsbites



Inside the Issue...

As we enter the second quarter of the year, it's the perfect time to savor the flavors of the world and explore the stories of chefs from different backgrounds who find common ground in their shared passion for cooking. This sense of multiculturalism was on full display at the recent IKA Olympics, where three talented chefs of different backgrounds came together to showcase their culinary skills and traditions on a global stage.

Also in this issue is an exclusive list of the rules and regulations for the Emirates Salon Culinaire, which is set to take place between 20 and 24 May 2024, and exclusive interviews from

Chef Hareesh Gopalan, the Executive Chef at Dusit Thani Dubai Hotel and Executive Pastry Chef Saman Sagara of W Dubai The Palm.

Food waste is a significant and daunting challenge for chefs. It poses a risk to the environment and undermines their efforts towards sustainable practices. Our columnist, Chef Carl Shi, touches upon this topic in his latest piece, highlighting the increasing importance of adopting sustainable practices in the kitchen.

We also have some inspiring columns from Chef Helen Morris, who shares her gastronomic educational journey, and Soniya Ashar, Founder and

CEO of NutriCal, who discusses the techniques and technologies adopted by food businesses. And if you're looking for some culinary inspiration, don't miss out on Chef Simon Martin's column, where he shares what's hot and appearing in our region. We also have a food tech piece from Shreya Asopa, where she explores how startups are bringing the vision of fishless fish to the plate.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of our magazine and that it inspires you to try new culinary adventures. As always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions for future editions.

Happy reading!

Valencia Albuquerque appointed Director of Residences

Four Seasons Private Residences Bahrain Bay announces the appointment of Valencia Albuquerque as the Director of Residences. With 17 years of experience within the Four Seasons brand, Albuquerque will oversee the property management and resident experience at the upcoming luxury development.

Talking about her appointment, Albuquerque said, "It's an honor to lead a team that will have such a meaningful impact on the day-to-day lives of our residents in Bahrain Bay while also managing one of their most important assets, their homes. The bond and trust that our team will build with residents ensures we deliver the legendary care, service, and property management that one would expect of Four Seasons."

Albuquerque, who began her journey with the brand in 2007 as a concierge

at Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai, will oversee the creation of a service-rich lifestyle experience in her current role, which includes hiring private chefs and arranging exclusive spa treatments.

Located adjacent to the existing Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay, the newly built Four Seasons Private Residences Bahrain Bay is a collection of 112 bespoke homes offering amenities such as an infinity pool and a private cinema. It is the first Four Seasons-branded residence in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

"Valencia's experience with Four Seasons and her dedication to delivering our genuine and caring service will be key in creating the very best living experience for our homeowners in Bahrain, mirroring the exceptional standards we maintain across our global portfolio of residences," comments James Price, Vice President, Residential Development.



UAE-based lifestyle app Playbook to expand in the UK market



The data-driven technology app Playbook is gearing up to launch 200 London venue listings by April 2024. The app that offers live F&B and leisure experience listings also has ambitious plans to venture into 18 other cities across the UK within the next two years.

Launched in 2022, the homegrown concept emerged as a leading free platform, offering a wide range of deals in food, drink, fitness, and leisure. With an impressive reach in the food and drink industry, with over 50,000 consumers and over 4,000 offerings, the app features global brands such as Pizza Express, Hilton Hotels, and Marriott Properties.

Meanwhile, in the UK, partnerships include TGP International and venues such as Pivot Bar & Bistro, El Ta'koy (both

at Covent Garden), Assembly Mezze, and Skewers, located inside Harrods by award-winning Chef Athanasios Kargatzidis.

Joshua Ashley-Collins, CEO & Co-Founder of Playbook, stated, "We are excited to expand into the UK over the next two years, launching so many venues and rapidly scaling the business. Based on our success locally, our ultimate vision is to give customers globally access to real-time F&B and hospitality outlets and internal offers at the touch of a button."

With the help of the app's advanced filters and data-driven design, users can quickly browse through verified, trending, and geo-located sources to identify precisely what they're searching for. Corporately, businesses can instantly connect with their intended audience, increasing visibility and interaction.

Michelin-starred meals take off to the Stratosphere!

If you think dining at fancy restaurants is expensive, you've yet to hear about SpaceVIP. The company will offer a once-in-a-lifetime dinner experience for six people on a balloon at the edge of space for \$495k per person.

Renowned Chef Rasmus Munk will partner with space travel company SpaceVIP to host a six-hour meal on board Spaceship Neptune. The two-Michelin-starred Chef helms the Copenhagen-based restaurant Alchemist, which offers a unique holistic dining experience.

According to a Forbes report, the SpaceVIP capsule will be carried to the Stratosphere with six explorers and will make its first trip in late 2025.



Photo Credit: Space Perspective

Hospitality Sports League

Chefs and individuals in the hospitality profession who are sports enthusiasts can showcase their athletic skills at the Hospitality League, which is set to take place on June 19 in Dubai.

This exciting one-day tournament across a range of sports is intended to bring together hospitality firms (hotels, airlines, restaurants, travel agencies, clubs, and spas) at the Danube Sports World and foster networking, healthy competition, and friendship.

Free registrations are now open for the Hospitality Sports League.

Exhibit at Middle East's premiere event ExpoCulinaire 2024

Businesses seeking to elevate their brand presence and connect with a targeted audience of industry professionals can secure a space at ExpoCulinaire. This year's ExpoCulinaire, which will take place at Expo Centre Sharjah from May 20 to 22, will feature a HORECA hub where a wide range of brands will showcase their innovations.

The event is a unique opportunity where sales teams can network, companies can display their innovations, and businesses can grow. ExpoCulinaire, which offers exclusive networking opportunities, will bring together thousands of chefs to compete, attend workshops, and have a platform for both food and equipment products.

ExpoCulinaire is the exclusive home to the prestigious 27th Emirates International Salon Culinaire, which also features Alen Thong Golden Coffee Pot and Artisan Bakery Arena. The event is endorsed by accredited Institutes and top culinary education and training centers, cementing its reputation as a must-attend event for anyone in the industry.

With so much on offer, ExpoCulinaire is quickly becoming a highlight of the Middle Eastern culinary landscape. To reserve your spot, visit their website at <https://www.expoCulinaire.com/exhibit>.

ROAR Fitness collaborates with award-winning Japanese restaurant Sumosan

ROAR Fitness, founded by Olympian Sarah Lindsay and body transformation specialist Rich Phillipps, will launch a new menu in March 2024 in collaboration with award-winning Japanese restaurant Sumosan.

Located in the Dubai EDITION Hotel, Sumosan is known for serving sushi and sashimi. Executive Chef Bubker Belkhit and Dubai Head Chef Pavel Li have collaborated to create a unique menu.

Janina Wolkow, the founder of Sumosan, stated, "I was one of ROAR's very first clients and am a huge fan of what they do and the results they achieve. To be able to utilize Sumosan and our amazing chefs to create an innovative, tasty, and healthy menu for the clients of ROAR, is a very exciting endeavor for us."

The ROAR Menu features riceless Maki Rolls that redefine sushi. Options include the reinvented California Maki Roll, which showcases Kamchatka crab meat, and the Japanese Mushroom and Asparagus

Maki Roll, which is harmonized with a spicy teriyaki glaze. Other highlights are thinly sliced Yellowtail with truffle yuzu vinaigrette and Grilled Creamy Kamchatka king crab leg.

The partnership between Sarah Lindsay, Founder of ROAR Fitness, and Sumosan Founder Janina Wolkow is the result of a long-term friendship and mutual respect. "Sumosan has always been a favorite and a restaurant that I recommend to friends and clients all the time! To now be collaborating with them to create a menu for my clients and those who wish to be more conscious of their food intake without compromising on flavor is a proud moment," said Sarah Lindsay, Founder of Roar Fitness. She further emphasized that she sees collaboration as an opportunity to improve the offerings of clients at ROAR Fitness.

The new menu aims to provide clients and consumers with access to delicious, calorie-controlled food that helps sustain a healthy and balanced diet.



Sumeda Yapa appointed as Corporate Chef at HK Gourmet



One of the well-established food brands in the UAE, HK Gourmet, has appointed Chef Sumeda as its Corporate Chef. In his new role, Chef Sumeda will head the expansion and enhancement of the group's culinary offerings. As part of his responsibilities, he will build networks, connect with chefs and managers, discuss the product's requirements, and even offer live product demonstrations.

"HK Gourmet is a well-established brand that started in 1987 by offering A-Z food solutions, including frozen, gourmet, bakery items, sauces, spices, and more. We have a talented sales team around the seven Emirates. Currently, I am working

for the Gourmet vertical to create quality products," said Chef Sumeda, pointing out that with the guidance of the Managing Director, Kulpreet Singh Sahni, he wants to expand the brand's reach.

Talking about his upcoming plans, Chef Sumeda reveals that as a member of the Emirates Culinary Guild and the Sri Lankan Hospitality Professionals Association, he is focused on meeting chefs and forging strong connections. As a senior member of the Emirates Culinary Guild and also a member of the Sri Lankan Hospitality Professionals Association, he plans to build relationships with them regardless of whether they do business with the company.

New Menu and Sourdough Pizza at Vapiano

Italian restaurant chain Vapiano has announced a significant menu update for its Middle East locations. The new menu highlights that the entire pizza selection has switched to freshly crafted sourdough bases. Vapiano has a presence in over 30 countries, with over 140 restaurants globally. In the Emirates alone, the chain sells more than 150,000 pizzas each year. The new pizza dough recipe is the brainchild of Enrico Maria Costa, the Pizza Category Manager at Casinetto, the Italian gourmet foods supplier.

The restaurant's upgraded menu features an array of classic pizzas, including the classic Margherita, BBQ Chicken, and the Verdure option for vegetarians. Additionally, guests can enjoy new options like steak salad and brownie caramel, and coffee

connoisseurs can now enjoy selections like the Caffe Freddo Caramello and the Caffe Freddo Cioccolato. The restaurant chain is also introducing Pizza Pepperoni as a full-time menu item for the first time. In addition to the pizza selection, Vapiano has also elevated its pasta menu, with the latest addition being the Meatball Marinara. Established in Dubai in 2008, Vapiano has now expanded across the Middle East, including Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

"We are very excited to introduce our artisanal Sourdough Pizzas to the world. It represents a perfect marriage of modern innovation and Italian tradition. We cannot wait for our Middle East customers to embark on this gastronomic journey with us," said Ilenia Alba, UAE Vapiano's Operation Manager.



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Harvesh Gopalan



Behind every dish lies a tale of authenticity, infused with natural flavours and presented with flair

THE TASTE TREND-SETTER

When it comes to paving the way for new culinary trends, **Hareesh Gopalan** from the Dusit Thani Hotel is a shining example. However, his knack for conceptualization is just the tip of the iceberg. We uncover a wealth of hidden talents that set him apart...

It was the year 2001 when Dubai welcomed another new hotel. A place with a distinct Thai-inspired hospitality experience where your friends and family could unwind and enjoy a melting pot of diverse flavours—the Dusit Thani Dubai Hotel.

By then, Chef Hareesh Gopalan had embarked on his global culinary journey, working as a commis and taking obstacles in stride. Oblivious to the mechanisms of fate, his path led him to this town in a heaven-inspired hotel haven years later.

Developing menus and overseeing culinary operations for eight outlets and banquet facilities, a 500-guest capacity ballroom, and ten meeting rooms, Chef Hareesh Gopalan is currently focusing on creating culinary offerings as per market trends at the Dusit Thani Dubai Hotel. "With our exceptional staff of diverse countries, who are dedicated, highly-trained, passionate, genuinely love and live food, you won't find this level of quality in Dubai," he informs.

As the executive chef, all the hotel's outlets stay close to his heart. The familiarity with the market, customer preferences, and collaboration with his talented team have lent him a hand in finding his way through the challenges that often come with devising a new menu concept.

Excerpting more, he takes us back to



Challenges may arise unexpectedly, but the key is to remain focused, resilient, and overcome them

the period when he, together with the F&B Director, recrafted the concept and menu of View, an outdoor lounge with the city's best view of Burj Khalifa - now serving modern Arabic cuisine.

A torrent of process execution unfolds: We drafted a menu tailored to leverage the expertise of our Arabic chefs and align it with our shared ideas. Having the right person and talent is essential to progressing with the trials.

He continues, "We conducted multiple tasting rounds, working together to refine the dishes. Additionally, we sought feedback to evaluate the flavours. Overall, we conducted many tasting rounds to get exactly what we envisioned. The final tasting involved a panel that included the F&B director, GM, experienced executive leaders,

and participants from the Arabic demographic whose feedback confirmed the uniqueness of the concept."

Chef Hareesh, however, disputes the idea that the process is an exact science, arguing that you would still not know what the market perceives. Therefore, he tackles the market by not going too fast with too many options. Instead of offering a menu consisting of 50 or 60 dishes, he selects limited options that are unique, consistent, and have deep roots, considering the talents and techniques commencing with his resources. And if a concept strikes a chord, the expansion is obvious.

And it begs the question: Where does he get his concept inspiration from? "It comes in the same way a musician, painter, or artist gets when creating art. I create the dishes with a combination of modern techniques without losing the dishes' authenticity, understanding the ingredients' characteristics and what Mother Nature can offer. Working with top chefs, returning to my roots and school days when I used to draw, and travelling have a great influence," he replies.

The hotel's 24th Street, a culinary marvel boasting six live kitchens showcasing a symphony of diverse cuisines, brings another leitmotif of his expertise. "Behind every dish lies a tale of authenticity, infused with natural flavours and presented with flair.

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"It's a culinary journey fueled by skill, inspiration, and unwavering dedication. From humble ingredients emerges a masterpiece, a flavorful delight that captivates the palate and the eye. Each creation is the art of crafting something extraordinary from the ordinary. I fused creativity with precision, infusing a medley of street food traditions to craft a narrative. On 24th Street, an amalgamation of Japanese, Indian, Korean, Chinese, Arabic, and Mediterranean flavours converge in perfect harmony," he elaborates.

One thought leads to another, and he kicks into an explanatory mode while sharing his approach to blending flavours. "They should flow in a synchronized manner instead of being aggressive. The key is understanding which flavours complement one another. Unfortunately, nowadays, many people disregard this structure and instead mix incompatible flavours in the name of fusion cuisine."

A true leader at heart, he leads his team of 73 with a hands-on approach, setting the bar through his own

actions. His unwavering trust in his team has led to unparalleled success during numerous exceptional theme nights and festive occasions, such as the recent Christmas, New Year, and Chinese New Year brunches. "Behind those remarkable record-breaking achievements," he explains, "lies meticulous planning, seamless organization, and a spirit of teamwork that starts months in advance." The F&B and marketing teams also went above and beyond to drive sales, resulting in astonishing outcomes.



TOUGHEST TIME, THE BEST TIME

There were no eureka moments in young Hareesh's culinary journey. In fact, the beginnings were imbued with humble roots, meals crafted from homegrown produce, and a simple upbringing with his three siblings. Unravel the layers of his cooking today, and it embodies the elevated flavours of local produce that he cherished as a child.

Growing up in Kannur, a small city in southern India, alongside his mother, a head nurse, father, a military serviceman, and three elder brothers, Hareesh's impactful culinary exploration only began when he enrolled in hotel management studies. It was here that he showcased exceptional talent in food production and developed a deep fascination for the world of cuisine. Which was well-read by his culinary instructors, who guided him to focus on becoming a chef.



We must be the agents of change, setting trends that prioritize sustainability and local sourcing

It was at his elder brother's behest that he became fascinated by the hospitality industry.

"My brother sparked a conversation with my father about the promising opportunities in the hospitality industry. With a forward-thinking vision for my future and a sharp awareness of evolving job opportunities, it didn't take much to persuade him," says Chef Hareesh. After several discussions, he ultimately decided to join the pioneer batch at the Oriental School of Hotel Management, located in Lakkidi, Wayanad. Until their final days, both his father and mother took pride in the decision.

Eager for knowledge, he enthusiastically completed his training. While he and his siblings envisioned a future where he would be at the forefront of the office, destiny had other plans. They respected his decision, and now they are extremely pleased with his accomplishments and wish him continued success. They hope that he continues to ascend to greater heights, making his family and friends proud and grateful.

"I was left awe-struck by the power of the white jacket. It occurred to me while doing a brief internship during my training period. I felt as if I was standing and the world was running through me," he recounts, elucidating the electrifying sensation he felt while donning the chef's jacket.

Following his graduation, Chef Hareesh gleaned valuable lessons at The Country Club Managed by Amrutha Castle in Hyderabad. After completing various assignments, he made the pivotal decision to journey to the UAE, where he aimed to establish his culinary legacy.

When asked about his debut, Chef Hareesh revealed that it was a challenging journey, especially as a novice trying to break into the culinary scene in the UAE. Like many others at the time, he found himself living in a tiny apartment, sharing a room with



The key is understanding which flavours complement one another

12 other people and even sharing bed space. As his visa approached its expiry, he received a crucial invitation for an internship interview with Le Meridien Hotel Abu Dhabi.

Chef Hareesh recounts a dialogue with the trainee manager, "Upon entering the office, I noticed the absence of the trainee manager. My attention drifted to the wall adorned with three golden-framed American Hotel & Motel Association (AHMA) certificates. In contrast, I held in my hand eight AHMA certificates, along with the International Hospitality Management Diploma accredited by AHMA, as well as a Hotel Management diploma approved by the All India Council for Technical Education," he describes.

He adds, "As I smiled, the manager entered the office, curious about the

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meaning behind my emotional eyes and subtle smile. The moment I revealed the cause, it shocked him that I struggled to get a job even with honours."

The main concern in his job impasse was that Chef Hareesh was overqualified for the internship position. The thoughts lingered in the manager's mind after the interview, and he reached out to his contacts. It was then that a vacancy for a commis at the Forte Grand played its role. It turns out that things were still not easy for him.

As the cliché goes, nothing worth having comes easy. Chef Hareesh missed calls from the hotel offering him the position and only found out about it late at night.

"The following day, I anxiously sat beside the telephone. With my return to India only three days away, the call meant everything to me," he says about the landline ring and the relief that washed over him when he got the job.

At Forte Grand, Chef Hareesh began his journey as a commis chef at the prestigious fine-dining Italian restaurant Amalfi. However, he didn't confine



From humble ingredients emerges a masterpiece, a flavorful delight that captivates the palate and the eye

himself to just that role. During his days off and breaks, he dedicated himself to exploring and cross-training in various other outlets and cuisines within the establishment. This stint gave him a solid foundation to cross-train and gain invaluable knowledge about global cuisines.

In his early career, Chef Hareesh ventured into roles that further honed his culinary expertise. He joined Sheraton Kuwait, where he worked at the fine-dining Italian restaurant Riccardo, catering to esteemed presidential clientele. He transitioned to

The Regency Palace, Kuwait, where he skillfully managed large-scale banquets, outside catering events, and weddings—these pivotal years solidified his ability to orchestrate massive operations with meticulous precision, cementing his reputation as a consummate professional in the culinary world.

Shortly after he arrived in Dubai, he joined the Ritz Carlton as a Demi Chef de Partie. He started dabbling with his forte, banqueting and earned plaudits for it. But when his executive sous chef, Carl Stockenstrom, assessed his talents in fine dining, he was quick to ask if he would be keen on joining La Baie, a renowned French fine dining restaurant.

He agreed and found himself fully immersed, expanding his skills and expertise. As he progressed through the ranks, he advanced to the Chef De Partie and Senior Chef De Partie positions within the banquet operations. Subsequently, he assumed the role of Junior Sous Chef at the Italian restaurant Splendido while also overseeing in-room dining operations.

Reflecting on his journey, Chef Hareesh acknowledges the invaluable guidance he received from chefs such as Matthias Diether, Carl Stockenstrom, Andrea Magnano, and Maurizio Menconi. "I learned a lot from them," he says, emphasizing how they helped shape his culinary vision, refine his skills, and introduced him to modern gastronomy techniques. These top chefs bestowed upon him a multitude of lessons that have significantly contributed to his growth and success.

Following Chef Carl's move to the Address Dubai Marina, he invited Chef Hareesh to join him. As a result, he became a part of the team from its pre-opening in 2011, serving as a speciality sous chef. He launched multiple cluster properties throughout his time there and chipped in on shaping the restaurant structure.





In this era, we're witnessing the rise of sustainable initiatives in the UAE, particularly Dubai

Over the years, he fulfilled his responsibilities at Per Aquum Desert Palm Dubai, TDIC Food and Beverage Abu Dhabi, and Westin Dubai Habtoor City while growing through the ranks of Head Chef.

The conspicuous recurring theme in his career trajectory has primarily been about two years, leaving us to ponder the significance of the pattern. "Exploring new environments, cultures, and learning is crucial to me, he replies.

His concrete skills were again highlighted when he moved to the Sofitel Dubai Downtown. In this role, he handled all aspects of culinary service at the 350-room hotel and led a team of 53 chefs and stewarding staff. Additionally, he had a chance to work with Chef Cedric D'Ambrosio, who placed great trust in him. The experience proved to be a notable milestone in his career, leading to his promotion to Executive Chef before he joined Dusit Thani.

At Dusit Thani, Chef Hareesh is at the forefront of setting trends. "In this era, we're witnessing the rise of sustainable initiatives in the UAE, particularly Dubai. Even in the kitchen, we're implementing strategies to prioritize local products and maximize ingredient usage to minimize waste. We've embraced locally sourced herbs, mushrooms, and microgreens, not only for their flavorful contribution to dishes but also to support local farmers and ingredients," explains Chef Hareesh. "These initiatives are evolving by the day, and soon, we'll even have our own herb garden. We must be the agents of



change, setting trends that prioritize sustainability and local sourcing."

Chef Hareesh acknowledges the tremendous support from Dusit Thani's Management, particularly from the Directors of F&B, Marketing, Finance, Operations, and the General Manager. Their backing has been instrumental in embracing changes and initiatives that enhance culinary offerings and foster strong relationships with customers through unparalleled food quality and unwavering commitment.

Emotional support comes from his family: a loving wife and a son who is currently in 8th grade. Considering the demanding nature of his professional

life, Chef Hareesh can give limited time to his family and, therefore, thinks his son may not follow in his footsteps.

Chef Hareesh approaches adversities with a pragmatic mindset, drawing inspiration from the lessons life has taught him. He adeptly transforms challenges into opportunities, likening it to making perfectly balanced lemonade from life's lemons. "For me, it's about striving to excel at every endeavour from the outset. Setting, planning, organizing, delivering, and verifying are all crucial elements. There's no room for complacency in any of these processes," he explains. "I firmly believe that even in the toughest times, there's an opportunity for growth."

April 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**A black and white photograph of three chefs from the UAE National Culinary Team. They are all wearing white chef coats with 'UAE' and 'TEAM IKA 2024' visible on the left chest. Each chef is wearing multiple medals around their necks. Two chefs are standing on the left, and one is seated in a large, dark leather armchair on the right. The background is a simple, light-colored wall.

THREE- PEAT

The UAE National Culinary Team has delivered on its promises time and again, winning an outstanding total of 69 medals at the 2024 Culinary Olympics. Among the standout performers were three chefs, **Kameel**, **Sanka**, and **Thilina**, who evinced good things come in three, fending off fierce competition to bag Gold with Distinction

Kameel Rasyid Eril

Co-founder, BKRY

Even the most talented chef can encounter a sour note in the cutthroat arena of culinary competitions. However, there is one who resolves under duress, follows his hunch, and is always ready to roll the dice. Meet Chef Kameel; competition is practically his middle name.

In the most pivotal competition of his career, Chef Kameel's glorious moment was nearly set to be sabotaged by an unforeseen circumstance. Just before the eventful day, Chef Kameel confronted a situation when one of the raw materials required for his showpiece broke while being transported in cargo.

It was a moment of panic and chaos, but Chef Kameel refused to give up. "I am thankful Chef Uwe came to my rescue by finding hand mixers and icing sugar equipment from a nearby store. Ironically, that last-minute broken, raw material turned out to be what led to the distinction," he smiles.

Passing on his learning with the young chefs, he asks them to understand the big picture. "Competitions can be tough and stressful. Things can break, just like in my incident. You may experience last-minute chaos, and some may feel like giving up after preparing for five months. But stay focused and do your best with all your heart," says the 31-year-old.

His Olympic victory was scripted five months before, as he diligently spent five hours every day scouring for inspiration for his cake art and materializing it through his skills. "The first cake had angels, arches, and babies, reminding one of ancient Roman and Greek sculptures. The second one represented a garden theme, while the third creation was a pristine white cake with complex details, which earned the highest points," elaborates Chef Kameel, adding that the genesis of cake ideas stemmed from architecture, sculpture, and modern art.



You may experience last-minute chaos, and some may feel like giving up after preparing for five months. But stay focused and do your best with all your heart

Perhaps his real inspiration was rooted in Indonesia. A son of an architect father and baker mother living in Bandung, Chef Kameel was often surrounded by an unlikely combination:

the sounds of drafting pencils scratching on paper and the aroma of bread lingering in the living room.

As the influx of cake orders surged daily, necessitating a larger oven, an expanded workspace, and a plethora of decorative pencils, Chef Kameel pitched in to assist his mother in her expansive scope of operations. "That's when," he says, "I decided to enter the culinary field, as I find a connection with design and baking."

After completing a three-year vocational pastry and bakery education in Indonesia, Chef Kameel refined his expertise in artisanal bread, cakes, ice cream, and chocolate work at a 5-star hotel in Bandung before he moved to Abu Dhabi.

"In 2011, I joined Swiss Bakery in Abu Dhabi and worked there for a few years

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The Win

2 Gold, and 1 Gold with Distinction (highest level of judging points)

before joining a catering company to learn more about cake carving and wedding cake decorations," he shares.

Eventually, Chef Kameel got exhausted with carving and working with Styrofoam. He yearned to return to his roots of pastry production, and fate answered his call as he joined the Sheraton Creek Hotel in Dubai. "I joined the hotel for two reasons. One, I wanted to learn more about plated desserts, and two, I wanted to learn about chocolate decoration from Chef Kapila," he says.

Dubai presented challenges he never imagined. "But it is also a dream place for chefs," he says, recalling his first stint in the city.

Chef Kameel first felt the thrill of competition when he competed in two categories at the 2012 Salon Culinare. Only when he met Chef Jagoda Don Nalin Krishantha was he motivated to train harder and expand his range of competition categories. Eventually, he participated in the 2022 Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg and the Culinary Olympics in Germany, where he stepped into the spotlight, winning three Gold and one Silver medal.

For the past 11 years, Chef Kameel has been working in Dubai, which led him to take a leap of faith and start his own venture: "bkry" - an experimental bakespace located in Dubai's vibrant arts hub, Alserkal Avenue. With an open baking kitchen, the concept offers customers an insider's view into his one-of-a-kind recipes for bread, cakes, and pastries.

"The venue fits with our vision to showcase the art of baking. Like Alserkal Avenue, which has contemporary art galleries and artisanal spaces, we also consider baking an art form," he cleverly remarks.

He added that the place became even sweeter and more special after winning the gold medal. "Many around me were



I decided to enter the culinary field, as I find a connection with design and baking

sceptical and urged me to focus solely on the opening. I pushed it through with this medal, and everyone is proud."

Setting up his cafe has introduced him to the industry's business side. Chef Kameel has had to wear many hats, from overseeing production and costing to supply chain management and contractor negotiations to becoming well-versed in municipal regulations and food safety codes. "It is a learning curve that has taken me beyond the four walls of the kitchen, a process that will only strengthen me to tackle any challenging situation," he explains.

Even years later, the art connoisseur within him rested as an ever-present facet of his persona. At one point, he aimed to create a sculpture that would last a lifetime. But when he shared his idea with his father, he was met with a stern look and some wise advice: "Channel your love for design in pastry. Be a chef first and then an architect," he says, recalling his father's recommendation that helped quell his doubts.

Chef Kameel took his father's words to heart and decided to translate his design skills into his cooking. "Currently, I have enrolled in online design and pottery courses. I have fallen in love with sculpture. I see myself growing old with my bakery venture while doing my pottery," says the born artist.

An enthusiast of good challenges, Chef Kameel, brings his competitive attitude to his work and personal life. His bond with his twin brother, a co-founder of Archers Coffee in Sharjah, extends

beyond their mutual appreciation of food. The two share a penchant for friendly rivalry, as evidenced by his brother's triumphs in diverse barista competitions.

Fifteen years from now, Chef Kameel still sees himself in the industry, managing multiple bakery and coffee shops in both Indonesia and the UAE. His vision is crystal clear: to carve out a niche in the industry. Well, you can take Kameel out of competitions, but you can't take a good competition thrill out of Kameel.

Thilina Pradeep Fernando Pastry Chef, Al Jawaher Reception & Convention Center Sharjah

Rarely do those in the industry consider taking the risk of leveraging physics like Chef Thilina. Even more uncommonly, they secure a gold medal in their inaugural attempt at the global stage.

In Sri Lanka, they say chefs with sheer ferocity for pastry are as abundant as seashells on the shore. The saying became a delicious, sweet reality for Chef Thilina Fernando. As a young boy growing up in Colombo, Chef Thilina's experiments with different spices and ingredients were moulded by the circumstances of his upbringing. With his mother seeking a career as a tailor in Dubai while he remained in Sri Lanka, becoming a chef was only a natural choice after high school.

Shortly after he graduated, he excelled as a trainee confectioner, carrying out all the pastry work assigned by senior chefs at the multiple properties in Colombo. "As soon as I finished my training, I joined the Galadari Hotel as a commis, where I spent a year gaining sound knowledge of chocolate and garnishes," he shares.

Preparing plated desserts became his forte, a skill that emerged unmatched in bridging the way for an unforgettable opportunity at the UAE and Dubai Exhibition & Convention Center.

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Over four years, Chef Thilina fine-tuned his craft in the fast-paced environment of the property and its high-profile events. Above all, the experience acted as a springboard for his career, giving him the much-needed push for competition. "Every year, I used to compete at the Salon Culinaire, Gulfood, and I won medals every time," he says,

recognizing the support he got from the chefs and property to participate.

Following a victory streak, Chef Thilina was on a confidence roll until he decided to pause, introspect, and consider his mentor's feedback, all to turn Silver into Gold. Consumed by this itch, he spent a year in his hometown perfecting the art

of wedding cakes and flower decorations from the best pastry chefs in the city.

He returned to Dubai with new skills to join Zabeel Palace as a chef de partie. Transitioning to the demanding domain of catering VVIP functions and executing complex menu concepts presented Chef Thilina with undivided focus, leaving little time for his active participation in culinary competitions. "I had the opportunity to work with a team of talented cake artists. One of them was representing the Palace at the 2022 Luxembourg World Cup. I used to observe him while he practised his skills, feeling familiar with him as I have also tested my mettle in the world of culinary competitions," he expresses, remembering the moment when he decided to run for Culinary Olympics.

Despite the temporary hiatus from competitions, Chef Thilina remained passionate about using his creative cake skills and returning to the competition circuit. Chef Thilina's devotion to competition was reignited only last year when he started working as an assistant pastry chef at Al Jawaher Reception & Convention Centre.

It's been only a year for Chef Thilina at his current workplace, and he's already stepping into the shoes of his predecessor, Chef Aravind, whom he regards as a mentor and friend. With determination, he has embraced the responsibilities that come with the position. The upmarket wedding venue performs extensive operations,



Every year, I used to compete at the Salon Culinaire, Gulfood, and I won medals every time

Record Recap

2 Gold, and 1 Gold with Distinction (highest level of judging points)



preparing desserts and cakes for banquets, events, and weddings. "Everything is made homemade by a team of 12," he remarks.

At the IKA Culinary Olympics, the 31-year-old chef effortlessly outshone seasoned chefs. "I won a Gold with distinction (the highest level of judging points) for the modern art cake," he reflects on the win, which was also his debut in competitions beyond the borders of the UAE.

"How did you make that happen?" Gulf Gourmet asked Chef Thilina.

He reveals that it began a year ago with visualizing the drawings and figuring out the physics behind the height. For the past five months, Chef Thilina has been on his toes, juggling his daily pastry operations at the hotel where they host weddings and birthday events like there's no tomorrow, all the while putting in extra effort to perfect his creation for the upcoming competition.

As his excitement recedes, he digs into the details, "The first one that got me a gold medal was a white cake with finely detailed flowers, sculpted in Rome style, and a version of an upside-down cake hanging from its top part. Meanwhile, the second gold medal cake was focused on the idea of a white tree, with each branch carrying a cake incorporated with intricate details. It was also among the tallest cakes, with a height of 148 cm. The last one won a distinction. It was a cake representing modern art that balanced the contemporary and old."

Chef Thilina attributes his outside-the-box thinking of his recent win to his close friendship and shared creativity with former colleague Chef Pathum Liyanage. The two chefs share a competitive spirit; having witnessed each other's triumphs and supported each other through challenges, they constantly push each other to be part of the national team.

Chef Thilina's win is a proud moment

for his family, including his mother, brother, and wife, a nursery school teacher. Over the long term, Chef Thilina envisions having his own cake business in Sri Lanka and contributing to his hometown. "I would like to share whatever I have learned and teach aspiring chefs," he concludes.

Kuma Hennedige Pathma Madusanka Pastry Sous Chef, Atlantis the Palm

His showpiece may not have been the tallest in the competition, but it certainly took the cake, clinching a rare win at the Olympics. Chef Sanka graciously reveals the secret ingredients that led to his sweet victory.

In the world of cooking, some chefs are natural, while others undergo arduous training to make a name. Then there are the unassuming ones who bring the most inspiring tales.

With no hotel educational background, Chef Sanka was fascinated by his father's art of carpentry and the details that went into crafting a masterpiece. He began as an underdog, overcoming numerous hits and misses to reach the position he holds today.

"My father's woodcarving laid the foundation for my love of art. However, when I asked him about pursuing it as a career, he encouraged me to seek a more financially rewarding path," he



Even if you focus on two figures in your showpiece, that's enough. All you have to ensure is that it is nice and clean

recalls. Instead of carving out a path in wood and sawdust, he was whisked away by the winds of culinary destiny.

"It happened by chance. Whenever I visited Hikkaduwa Beach, I would make sculptures in the sand. One day, while making some sculptures, the manager of Lavanga Resort and Spa saw my work and approached me for a vegetable and fruit carving job," he says. After the carving trail, Chef Sanka became a kitchen artist.

Over the next three years, he worked at Hikka Tranz by Cinnamon, sharpened his knives, and cracked the code of his unique pastry flair, akin to mastering the bain-marie method for precise temperature control and delicate blending. "I thank Chef Julinda and Chef Lasitha. They are the ones who changed my life," he remarks, pointing out how he came to understand the ins and outs of professional kitchens.

It did not take him long to make his way to Dubai. In 2016, he joined the Al Murooj Rotana Hotel. Once he set foot in the thriving culinary landscape of the UAE, fresh prospects inevitably beckoned. His skills gained recognition while working at Mister Baker before he joined his current workplace, Atlantis The Palm.

The 33-year-old Sri Lankan native is a Pastry Sous Chef at Atlantis The Palm. From wedding cakes, petit fours, cake artistry, and creating showpieces during special events, his skills encompass a wide range of sugary delicacies. "I work in the central pastry production that caters desserts to all the hotel's 12 outlets, covering massive operations with a team of 56 chefs in pastry," he explains.

In an age when cake artists are losing relevance in the industry, Chef Sanka quickly points out the limited global platforms where pastry and artists are recognized. This realization prompted him to participate in the IKA Olympics.

For the competition, he followed the

Medal Haul

3 Gold, and 1 Gold with Distinction (highest level of judging points)



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adage of 'less is more,' creating a small yet impactful showpiece. Instead of opting for a towering structure, he made a neat, clean piece showcasing an eagle on one side and a queen on

the other, immediately catching the judges' attention. "Even if you focus on two figures in your showpiece, that's enough. All you have to ensure is that it is nice and clean," he says, revealing

the secret of the showpiece that took the distinction.

Discussing his preparation schedule, Chef Sanka describes being up to his ears in work until Christmas, leaving him with a relatively brief time to train for the Olympics. It wasn't until after New Year's that he finally buckled down and started getting ready, and that's when his past competition experiences came in handy.

Seismic achievements of the Olympic kind have been a thing for Chef Sanka since 2017. From winning the 2019 Best Kitchen Artist award at the East Coast Salon Culinaire to winning gold medals at the 2020 IKA Olympics and the 2022 Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg, he has solidified his reputation as a competitor.

As the memories of winning day engulf him, Chef Sanka humbly admits that it could not have been possible without the support of the Guild and his superiors at the hotel. "I thank my Pastry Executive Chef Patrice Cabannes and Pastry Chef Sergio Del Castillo Mora for their guidance and encouragement."

Chef Sanka is currently finding joy in multiple aspects of life. If competition wasn't enough, it became a harbinger of another joyous occasion as the family recently welcomed a new baby into the world. Indeed, when it rains, it pours.



My father's woodcarving laid the foundation for my love of art. However, when I asked him about pursuing it as a career, he encouraged me to seek a more financially rewarding path





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The Guild Meet

The March guild meeting was hosted by the Sofitel Downtown Hotel on March 4, 2024. We thank Chef Jay Williams and his team for hosting the meeting.



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Fish for a Thought

Whether they use plant-based, lab-grown, or fermentation methods for production, alternative seafood companies are upending the conventional perception of seafood, but are chefs prepared to bridge the gap and incorporate these products into their menus, ponders **Shreya Asopa**

If you ask Zac Austin, a committed vegan, about his favorite seafood, he'd tell you that he is hooked to mycelium fish filet crafted by the food scientists

at Pacifico Biolabs. The Berlin-based company, which develops whole muscle structures using biomass fermentation, is among the reasonably abundant alternative seafood firms in the sector where investments have skyrocketed. As reported by the Good Food Institute, investments in alternative seafood companies increased by 92% in 2021.

Alternative meat proteins have been stealing the show for a while now. Alt seafood, however, is finally getting its moment in the sun, with the clarion overarching truth of overfishing and bycatch. With over 3 billion people relying on seafood as a significant source of protein, the fishing industry has been on a constant quest to meet demand and optimize fishing methods without compromising the ocean's biodiversity. Amidst these efforts, alternative seafood options join the previously envisaged strategies of trade agreements and 3D Ocean Farming, with its fishless fish vision to combat IUU.

Riding on the alt seafood wave are three production methods: precision fermentation, cell cultivation, and plant-based. While the plant-based and cell-based sectors show notable figures in funding, fermentation companies have also made significant strides. According to the Good Food Institute report, they raised \$130 million in Q4 2022 and \$842 million throughout the year.

In the latest, Pacifico Biolabs caught the



We place a strong emphasis on the nutritional value of our food products rather than simply viewing them as alternatives

attention after emerging out of stealth mode with \$3.3 million in pre-seed funding. "We use mycelium to attain the flavor and textural attributes," says Zac Austin, the co-founder of Pacifico Biolabs. "We're not trying to create products that are completely indistinguishable from traditional seafood, but rather drawing inspiration from it and developing equal-tasting alternatives," he continues.

Besides its fermentation technology, which is already prevalent in offering a diverse range of meat options, the company is going the extra mile through reducing food waste by upcycling side streams from other food productions. "We are essentially looking for sources of sugars, where the leftovers have a lot of nutrients left after their primary use, which are otherwise hard to utilize. Mycelium can then effectively feed on those sugars and convert them into protein," notes Austin.

Despite the appeal of whole-cut meat alternatives and using unique sources

like jackfruit or algae for fermentation, a handful of companies are actively pursuing fermentation in the alternative seafood market. For those versed in market dynamics, the art of translating ideas into reliable revenue sources pivots on consumers.

In line with Zac's suggestion, addressing the pain points faced by consumers presents a promising avenue forward. "The primary obstacle lies in considering both the flavor and texture of the product. Early inventions in this field focused on the processed segment, like fish fingers, posing challenges in limiting consumer perceptions to diverse offerings. Meanwhile, the other pain point revolves around health. Many people choose seafood for its health benefits, so finding alternatives that can match these qualities is crucial for appealing to a wide range of consumers."

Shantanu Dhangar, co-founder of Seaspire, believes that nutrition is one of the sector's foremost competitive edges. Seaspire, the Indian alt startup, made its debut in 2021, introducing first-of-its-kind bioprinted whole-cut whitefish products for the APAC region. Leveraging 3D printing and extrusion technology, the company currently offers plant-based fish fingers, burgers, and mince made with pea and rice protein through its direct-to-consumer (D2C) channel in India.

"Our whole-cut fish filets contain significantly higher levels of protein and omega-3 compared to standard fish offerings. We place a strong emphasis on the nutritional value of our food



Photo Credit: freepik.com

products rather than simply viewing them as alternatives,” says Dhangar.

When they first launched their product in the Indian market that is saturated with over a third of the vegetarian population, the response fell short of expectations. The ubiquitous question followed their way: Why bother switching to an alternative when seafood is readily available at a nominal cost, especially in a country distinguished by a decentralized meat supply chain? “It has to do with customer acceptance. Compared to the Western market, where meat consumption is high, the necessity of such products in the Indian demographic’s daily diet is not as urgent,” observes Dhangar.

The global landscape presents a contrasting picture. A 2021 Euromonitor report highlights that 42% of global consumers are flexitarians, indicating a substantial market for products that measure up to the consumer’s expectations. Not to harp on the obvious, but the journey of fulfilling product expectations also hinges on chefs, who are pivotal stakeholders in the culinary world. Banking on the trend, Michelin-starred

- chef Laurent Manrique collaborated with Aqua Cultured Foods to perfect their whole-muscle-cut vegan seafood. Likewise, chefs at Copenhagen’s Alchemist joined forces with the microbial foods group at the Technical University of Denmark to recreate the taste and texture of alt-seafood products grown through fungi on seaweed. However, despite these initiatives, the number of collaborations remains a drop in the ocean.

“Chefs certainly play an important part in the narrative of how we scale these technologies. It is crucial that they collaborate with an open mind, developing these products, providing valuable feedback, and championing these technologies,” Austin explains, highlighting that we need all hands on deck to make this happen.

According to Shantanu, the increasing acceptance of plant-based meats has made it easier to push plant-based seafood products to chefs and consumers. “Our products are available in many restaurants in the Middle Eastern market. We have continuously worked with chefs, asking them to try and provide feedback. We aim to

- create a product that closely resembles conventional seafood, offering chefs assistance in culinary processes.”

Keeping consumer acceptance in check is just half the battle. Achieving scalability is equally vital for startups navigating the competitive landscape. Selling at a price parity with incumbent products can be the key to hitting it big. It is yet another pain point, Austin articulates, one entailing the exorbitant expenses and minimal yields synonymous with lab-grown or fermentation seafood. “To achieve lower costs through economies of scale, one must have the capacity to scale up. Therefore, our long-term plan involves establishing a network of decentralized production facilities capable of producing large volumes of protein at minimal cost and utilizing side streams as fuel,” he explains, adding that the vision is to operate on a truly global scale.

Discussing these innovations presents a clear picture. The startups have taken their initial step toward restoring the ocean, and the ball is now in our court. Are chefs ready to step up to the plate, and patrons prepared to dine the change?



Tackling Food Waste: A MULTIFACETED APPROACH

Chef **Carl Shi** presents a meticulous exploration of food waste, dissecting its complexities and urging collaborative efforts for sustainable solutions



**Chit-Chat
with
Chef Carl**

Dear Chefs,

I'm Chef Carl, and through this piece, I aim to present my latest research on the topics of food waste and its management. My approach will be to methodically lay out the foundational aspects of the food waste issue. I plan to dissect and scrutinize the topic from various viewpoints, including those of the hospitality sector, small and medium-sized businesses, and individual consumers, to unearth a deeper understanding of our urgent food waste

challenges. Additionally, I will share pertinent findings and practical advice that have been recognized in scholarly circles. The crusade against food waste is a shared responsibility—yours and mine. It demands a cooperative effort across diverse sectors. We must go beyond merely possessing knowledge; we should actively integrate what we learn into our daily operations, employing effective strategies to address the food waste dilemma.

• Food waste is a significant

Photo Credit: freepik.com



environmental challenge intertwined with sustainability. As defined in the 1987 Brundtland Report, the concept emphasizes meeting our current needs without compromising future generations. However, research also connects food waste to biodiversity loss, pollution, and excessive resource use (FAO, 2013). Contrary to common beliefs, food waste is less about population growth and more about heightened consumer expectations for convenience, overproduction, and the decreased relative cost of food items (Närvänen et al., 2019). In developed countries, it is often cheaper for businesses to discard excess food than to manage it, given high labour and other costs.

The FAO estimates that roughly one-third of food intended for human consumption is lost or wasted yearly—about 1.3 billion tons (FAO, 2011). Simultaneously, around 800 million

people experience hunger (FAO, 2021). This stark irony underscores the need for concerted efforts beyond the business sector to establish new distribution channels.

Food waste is split into two categories: food loss and food waste. Food loss occurs in the early supply chain stages and is prevalent in developing countries due to logistical challenges. For instance, nearly half of all fruits and vegetables are lost before reaching the market, often due to poor storage or transport (FAO, 2021a).

A study titled “Can ‘ugly veg’ supply chains reduce food loss?” (Hezarkhani et al., 2023) highlights discarded produce due to cosmetic imperfections. Surprisingly, up to 30% of carrots and other vegetables are wasted because they do not meet aesthetic standards (FAO, 2021b; Commons, 2017).

Food waste typically happens in later supply chain stages, at retail and consumption, and is an issue in wealthier regions. It is linked to consumer behaviour and policies affecting food handling in retail stores, restaurants, and homes.

Academic research indicates that households and supermarkets are significant contributors to food waste. Inadequate demand planning, lack of professional storage knowledge, and consumer demand for high-quality products all play a role (Teller et al., 2018). Consumer behaviour, both inside and outside the home, also contributes to waste through poor consumption planning and misunderstanding expiration dates (Hebrok & Boks; Zhang et al., 2023).

In the hospitality industry, food waste occurs from procurement to post-service. For example, low-cost but poor-quality ingredients may lead to spoilage during purchasing. Improper storage conditions can also result in food spoilage if temperatures aren't

adequately maintained. The extent of waste varies with the level of food preparation—restaurants cooking from scratch may produce more waste than those using pre-prepped ingredients.

Portion size can also lead to waste when consumers leave uneaten food, sometimes with no option for leftovers to be taken away. Additionally, buffet leftovers and unpopular dishes contribute to the issue. Internal communication within businesses and between businesses and customers is crucial to mitigate waste.

Addressing food waste demands a comprehensive strategy that spans the entire food supply chain. By understanding this issue's intricacies from production to plate, we can devise effective strategies to minimize waste and promote sustainability. Businesses and individuals alike share this responsibility. Together, we have the power to combat food waste.

Chef Carl

From Sydney

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Shaping the Future of Food Transparency in the GCC

Exploring Techniques and Technologies Adopted by Food Businesses

By **Soniya Ashar**
(Founder and CEO of NutriCal)

In recent years, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region has witnessed a profound transformation in the food industry, with a notable emphasis on transparency. Today's consumers are becoming increasingly discerning, seeking deep insights into the food they consume. They no longer settle for mere ingredient lists and nutrition facts; instead, they aspire to understand the origins, production methods, and overall environmental impact of the food they choose for themselves and their families.

According to a McKinsey report on consumer packaged goods, in the UAE alone, 51% of consumers read nutrition labels before purchasing packaged food products, and 48% prefer locally sourced food. Millennials, in particular, express a preference for brands that prioritize transparency and utilize sustainable packaging.

This global shift towards transparency is exemplified by initiatives like the SmartLabel® program, which has emerged in regions ranging from North America to Europe. Through simple QR code scans, consumers can access detailed information about food products, empowering them to make informed choices. This trend has also gained traction in the GCC region, where consumers have become more conscious of the need for transparency in food sourcing and production methods.

In the GCC, local initiatives have complemented these global trends. For instance, major retail groups like



AI Futtaim Carrefour embraced the IBM blockchain for Carrefour's fresh chicken and microgreens to enhance food traceability, offering consumers detailed insights into the journey of their food from farm to table. Additionally, homegrown F&B brands in the GCC are championing transparency by harnessing advanced food intelligence software powered by artificial intelligence and data analytics. These innovative technologies enable them to provide

consumers with accurate information about nutrition, calorie content, and allergens, thereby fostering greater trust and confidence in their products.

Moreover, notable players like McDonald's have also contributed to the transparency movement in the GCC. Initiatives like the "Your Right to Know" campaign have sparked discussions and raised awareness about the importance of transparency in the food industry.

The impact of science and technology on the food traceability industry has been massive, and this trend is only expected to continue as we deal with increasingly cautious and vigilant consumers. Food producers can monitor each stage of the production process, from farm to fork, using technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT), radio-frequency identification (RFID), and blockchain. The process of food traceability may be made more efficient while simultaneously improving food safety. New products are being created to provide consumers with more information on the source of their food.

As the GCC region continues to prioritize transparency in the food industry, fueled by both global and local initiatives, consumers can expect to see further advancements in traceability and information accessibility. With the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and a commitment to transparency, the GCC food industry is ready to meet consumers' evolving demands and ensure greater trust and confidence in the products they consume.

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PASTRY FROM PRINT

Executive Pastry Chef **Saman Sagara** of W Dubai The Palm is prepared to bake off at the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Competition, anchored by his immutable love for desserts

If recipe magazines could bring desserts to life from the pictures, Chef Saman would have been the happiest person in the world.

When a handful of bakery shops in his hometown, Matara, could not quench his thirst for trying every confection imaginable, six-year-old Saman's story progressed into a chapter alive with suspense and craving a sweet ending.

"I would spend hours poring over magazines, cutting out recipes, and collecting them with the hope of one day creating sweet treats," he chuckles.

The climactic turn in his story came when he was flipping through a magazine; he stumbled upon a picture of a guy who was the creator of the sweets he wanted to create: a chef.

"At that moment, I decided to be like him," he says with conviction.

After completing his culinary diploma course, Chef Saman was appointed as an intern chef at the Taj Samudra Colombo. "It was the happiest day as I fulfilled my dream of joining the Pastry Kitchen," he says with a voice weighing down nostalgic emotions. It was also where he met Chef Indika Pradeep, the first mentor of his life who helped him improve his skills in artistry and baking. In retrospect, Chef Saman describes his stint at Taj Samudra Colombo as one of the most memorable times of his life. He remembers the



I would spend hours poring over magazines, cutting out recipes, and collecting them with the hope of one day creating sweet treats

long hours spent in the kitchen and the aroma of baked pastries, all of which inched him towards his dream, from skimming through the magazine pages to plating the dessert.

Once he reached the position of commis, he decided to flip the page for a new chapter at the Galle Face Hotel, one of the oldest hotels east of Colombo. He worked there for two years until his drive for desserts took him to the UAE. For eight years there, he worked at Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers, learning both perfecting pastries and the importance of competition. "The team members at the hotel were like family. Chef Maher Trjman and Executive Chef Stephane Chambon were instrumental in motivating me to participate and win multiple medals at the Guild competitions. I even won Dubai's Best





Junior Chef title in 2006, " he says, forever carrying the lessons he learned.

The competitive attitude imprinted on him continues to be a catalyst in driving him today. Recently, his pursuit of competition directed him to participate in the IKA Olympics, where he won three silver medals. Chef Saman admits that he is incredibly grateful to his mentors, Chef Andy, Chef Uwe Michel, Chef Daniel Nuss, Chef Manoj, Chef Jagoda, Chef Dammika Herath, Chef Achala, Chef Kapila, and the Emirates Culinary Guild for providing him with the opportunity to participate.



I followed the guidelines of combining cold, warm, and frozen elements

"Although I'm not completely happy, as the scores were a near miss from the gold," he says, "I am not upset about it. I have set my sights on gold for the

next time." He explains while sharing his score for the plated desserts, wedding cake, and pastry categories.

In 2008, Chef Saman joined the Intercontinental Hotel as a Junior Pastry Sous Chef. He learned the production process behind massive operations under the guidance of Chef Sabine Heinrich and Executive Pastry Chef Antoine Chassonnery. His management of the kitchen and guidance of young chefs did not go unnoticed, as he was promoted to sous chef after two years.

Chef Saman's pastry-making journey spanned across different countries. He worked for the Address Dubai Mall, where he continued to refine his skills, and even travelled to Oman to open Fauchon Cafe, a French franchise restaurant. There, he worked for almost four years, making French desserts and learning the ropes of customized pastries before returning to Dubai in 2016.

Joining the Madinat Jumeirah was the next step. "Both Chef Paul Hayward and Chef Achala Weerasinghe were great mentors. Besides kitchen operations and organizational skills, they also taught me preparation techniques tailored for competition settings," he recalls.

As fate would have it, the pandemic hit the industry hard, and Chef Saman, who was working at Crown Plaza at that time, was not impervious to its aftermath. When he found himself at a crossroads, he decided to return to his hometown and work there for a while. But Chef Saman never lost sight of his passion for cooking. He continued experimenting with new ingredients, techniques, and flavours and kept himself updated with the latest trends in the culinary world.

In 2022, Chef Saman received an offer from the W Dubai - The Palm, and he knew that this was his chance to shine. He packed his bags and moved to Dubai, prepared to face any obstacles head-on. Chef Saman takes the mantle of looking after the pastry operations of events,





“

From menu planning to leading the team, I oversee the entire pastry operations to ensure that the pastry is presented perfectly on the plate

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all-day dining, room dining, and the hotel's pastry shop. "The only exception is the hotel's two Michelin-starred restaurant pastry operations. Otherwise, from menu planning to leading the team, I oversee the entire pastry operations to ensure that the pastry is presented perfectly on the plate.

He works with a team of 14 chefs. He leads by example, building a solid foundation for his team, thereby ensuring that they are always ready to confront any challenges that come their way. As a friendly manager, he remains flexible, taking time to engage

in team discussions, brainstorm new ideas, and work together to achieve success in any task.

"I usually don't get angry when any team member makes a mistake—except when someone does something clearly foolish. In that case, I will not stay quiet. Instead, I teach them on the spot and guide them toward the correct course of action. This way, I can prevent them from repeating the same mistake."

For young pastry chefs entering the market, he suggests prioritizing the taste of their creations over mere

superficial decorations. Chef Saman disapproves of desserts that focus on glittering decorations, powders, artificial substitutes, or even golden leaves to garnish rather than accentuating the natural taste and quality of their ingredients. "Customers will have a memorable experience when you make quality food. How does that happen? By focusing on food and not just on decoration," he creatively states.

His creation has the ideal balance of taste and decoration derived from his past experiences. The 47-year-old also gets inspiration from chefs, keeping an eye out for trends, and, of course, reading different magazines and books.

For the competition, Chef Saman used Arla Pro cream cheese and paired it with berry compote. "I followed the guidelines of combining cold, warm, and frozen elements. Unlike a typical biscuit crumble base, I have created a homemade crispy base and served it with cheese sorbet, crumble, and meringue to bring the dish together."

Chef Saaman's family is back home in Sri Lanka, and he visits them a couple of times a year. "I have three children. The kids are soon going to start school, and it is better for them to stay in Sri Lanka so that it aligns with the family's financial plan," he says, adding that his family has always been supportive, even when distance kept them apart.



Customers will have a memorable experience when you make quality food. How does that happen? By focusing on food and not just on decoration



Creamy Cheesecake, Berry Compote served with Cheese Sorbet

CRUMBLE BASE (BASIC)

Arla Pro Butter 82%	300g
Brown Sugar	140g
Flour T55	400g
Baking powder	3.5g
Corn Flour	65g
Feuillefine	85g
Salt	3g

Method

- ♦ Mix all the powder together and add the butter. Then mix it well together.
- ♦ Add Feuillefine and make a crumble.
- ♦ Bake at 150°C for 20 minutes.

CRUMBLE CRISPY BASE

Cheesecake Base (basic dough)	375g
Arla pro Butter 82%	95g
Fleur de Sel	4g
Brown Sugar	35g

Method

- ♦ Mix the cheesecake base with butter, flour, and sugar.

- ♦ Make it flat on baking paper.
- ♦ Bake at 170°C for 12 minutes.

CHEESE MOUSSE

Sugar	115g
Water	20g
Egg Yolk	65g
Arla Pro Creamcheese 34%	350g
Icing Sugar	20g
Gelatin	16g
Arla Pro High Stability Cream 25%	425g

Method

- ♦ Combine the icing sugar and cream cheese in a mixing bowl.
- ♦ Cook using the bain marie method until the sugar, yolk, and whites reach a temperature of 85°C.
- ♦ Whip the sabayon in the machine.
- ♦ Add gelatin, and then mix it with cream cheese and whipped cream.

CHEESE SORBET

Arla Pro High Stability Cream 25%	450g
Lemon Juice	10g
Water	265g
Sugar	200g

Glucose Powder	30g
Milk Powder	30g
Stabilizer	8g

Method

- ♦ Boil the water and pour it over the mixture of caster sugar, stabilizer, and atomized glucose. Stir once while hot and store it in the fridge.
- ♦ Once it has matured for approximately a full day, mix in the cream cheese and the lemon juice.
- ♦ Blend it twice. The next day, churn it in Pacojet.

WARM MIX BERRY COMPOTE

Frozen Mix Berry	250g
Sugar	50g
Pectin NH 95	3g

Method

- ♦ Bring the mixture of berries to a boil, then add sugar and pectin.
- ♦ Once it is slightly thick, take the pot off the heat.

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Picture Perfect Performance

A Peek at the UAE's creations at the IKA Culinary Olympics 2024

This year's culinary Olympics was the most memorable edition for the Emirates Culinary Guild with 27 chefs from all over the United Arab Emirates winning a staggering 69 medals. Take a look at some of the most impressive pictures from the competition.





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AN OVERVIEW OF THE THE EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINAIRE 2024

May 20th till May 22nd 2024
Expo Centre, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

The Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG) (www.emiratesculinaryguild.net) is the association of professional chefs of the UAE. It is a non-profit-making organisation, organised by volunteers dedicated solely to the advancement of culinary art in 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; 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.expo culinaire.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 2024 the Emirates International

Salon Culinaire and Expo Culinaire exhibition shall run alongside the Alen Thong Golden Coffee Pot Challenge for International teams of young chefs which shall take place with teams from around the world competing. 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.

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Briefs of the Classes for Entry

Resume Of 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

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
- 23 Savory tartelette Creations
Powered by HUG
- 24 Sweet tartelette Creations
Powered by HUG
- 28 Four Plates Vegan dishes
- Powered by Violife 100%
Vegan
- 34 Sweet Creations Powered 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 Mezzeh - 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 THRYVEPlant BasedOpen
to Culinary school students
and kitchen trainees/interns
only Classes 35 and 36 only
competitors must enter both
classesEntry 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
- 36 Soup and Sandwich Practical
cookery Powered by Chefs Palette
- 37 Lamb Primal Cuts Practical
Butchery TBC
- 38: Syrian Cuisine Modern Main
courses Practical cookery
Powered by Boody's
- 39 Syrian Three Plates of Kibbeh
Plated display Powered by
Boody's
- 40 Sounbula Mills Artisan Bakery
Arena Practical Cookery

ADDENDUM – The Emirates Salon Culinaire 2024

VENUE & ENTRY FEES

- 1. The Emirates Salon Culinaire
will be held during the Expo
Culinaire 2024 from May 20th
till 22nd May 2024.
- 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. The fee for entry to the trophy
classes is as follows:
 - i. **Best Cuisinier – The Emirates
Salon Culinaire- Dubai 2024
AED:500/- per person**
 - ii. **Best Pastry Chef – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire-
Dubai 2024 AED:400/- per
person**
 - iii. **Best Artist – The Emirates
Salon Culinaire- Dubai 2024
AED:500/- per person**
 - iv. **Best Arab National – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire-
Dubai 2024 AED:300/- per
person**
 - v. **Young Chef of the Year – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire
Dubai 2024 AED: 300/- per
person**

CLOSING DATE:

- 5. Closing date for entries is April
28th 2024 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

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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 Artisan Bakery Arena Class "The SOUNBULA UAE Bakery team of 2024"

YOUNG CHEF OF THE YEAR

See Classes for Entry Document. Classes

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:

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

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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
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Approved by President:	Signature:
------------------------	------------------

Approved by Chairman:	Signature:
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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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April 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

newmembers



Ashish Sabu, Area Sales Manager; Sadik Variyathod, General Manager; Subin Rajan, Sales Executive; Winson Misquith, Senior Sales Executive receiving the Guild Membership Certificate from the ECG team.

Restofair RAK is a joint venture between RAK Porcelain and ECF Group France which is a € 728 M company with 1700 employees, serving 250,000 customers in the HORECA Industry with nearly 140 years of experience, passion, know-how and innovation.



Thanks to the sustained organic growth and strategic acquisitions, the ECF group can exceed the expectations of the most demanding customer through its distribution network.

Many years of know how and expertise in Europe, had facilitated the opening of Restofair RAK in the Middle East 20 years ago offering quality services to the HORECA industry. Central warehouse in

Ras al Khaimah with our newly opened Dubai Cash & Carry outlet, offices in Ras al Khaimah, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and direct sales agents all over UAE to serve faster, timely manner & without compromising on product or service quality.

Our latest 2023/24 online interactive catalogue with over 510 pages, with 10,000 items ex-stock in UAE related to Chinaware, Glassware, Cutlery, Table

Accessories, Buffet, Disposables, Menu & Signage, Barware, Kitchen Utensils, Plug-in Machine, Pastry, Housekeeping & Stewarding, Uniforms, Hotel Apartments, In-Room items etc. To get a free copy of 2023/24 catalogue contact : info@rakrestofair.ae

So if you are in Dubai or visiting soon, we welcome you to our 20,000 sq feet factory outlet near to the Miracle Garden.

Restofair Dubai factory outlet which carries all the catalogue listed products, where our dedicated customer service team will offer you a personalized service experience.



Del Monte's Food Service Sales team receiving the Guild membership from Chef Harald Oberender

We are one of the world's leading vertically integrated producers, distributors, and marketers of fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables. Our products include prepared fruit and vegetables, juices, beverages, snacks, and desserts, and are sold in more than 90 countries around the world.

After many years of being present in the Middle East, **Del Monte** opened in 2007 its Regional Headquarter in Dubai, fortifying the proximity with its consumers and partners.

Leading the way to healthy eating, Del Monte® has been a symbol of product innovation, quality, freshness and reliability for over 130 years. Since 2007 in the Middle East, Del Monte® is a trusted source of healthful food, providing high-quality fresh fruits, vegetables and ultra-fresh juices in the region. Bringing the expertise of a multinational company to the MENA community, Del Monte® seeks to bring you the freshest foods available to meet your needs.

Because we grow our own fruits and vegetables instead of just selling



them, we understand the difference. Furthermore, we have the expertise to select the most premium fresh produce and tie up with the best partners to ensure reliable service. More than just providing resources, we offer tangible ways for more wholesome, nutritious meals that are flavorful and satisfying, thereby redefining what healthy eating looks and tastes like. Together with you, we seek to contribute to the health of a whole generation!

Del Monte sets the trends by creating fresh, healthy products conveniently packaged to meet customer's needs. Our state-of-the-art facilities include banana ripening and cold storage, fresh-cut fruits and vegetable operations - fresh or frozen, ultra-fresh juice lines and prepared food production. Del Monte has launched the HONEYGLOW™ pineapple, which is SCS sustainability grown

certified. HONEYGLOW™ pineapples are carefully handpicked at our farms to ensure the optimal taste and color.

Each day, we produce 70 tons of fresh-cut fruits and vegetables, 12,000 litres of fresh juices, 8000 sandwiches, 7000 of salads and 15,000 trays of canned juices.

All our products are produced following the most stringent food safety standards and all our operations are audited and certified by independent certification bodies.

Del Monte products are not only distributed to retail customers but also Business to Business in the hospitality and Quick Service Restaurant sectors. Mastering each step in the supply chain is critical to ensure strict control over the quality of our products and maintain consistency.

April 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

“
**Chef
Simon
says...**

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

Let's kick off this month with **CHAMOY**. It is salty, sour, sweet, and spicy, all combined in this bold Mexican sauce that's rocking up in our region but has its roots deeply planted in Asia. Its origins lie in Umeboshi's essential salty, tart, fruity flavor. When Japanese immigrants moved to Mexico in the 1950s, they adapted the preserved plums of Umeboshi to what we now know as chamoy, indeed similar sauces from stone fruit we all know like "Kiamoy" in the Philippines or "Xi Muoi" in Vietnam. Made from either apricots or mangos, it is driving food and beverage to a new level in the region. Added to drinks or over fruit, it's like a **firework going off in your mouth**; on ice cream, it's almost like you can taste the colors and a **sonic sensation of taste**. Appearing on Taco's pizzas and even in candy. We know this profile is elevating the food in our region, and our love of sweet and heat is a trend that's growing fast.

From time to time, we see staples of cuisine reinvent themselves, and at this moment, we are witnessing the rebirth of a great trend: **HOT SAUCES WITH A TWIST**. Nearly every tabletop in our geographical area has a bottle of hot sauce, a red, spicy, vinegary liquid that we use like a seasoning to embellish everything from shawarma to oysters. However, the trend is taking these to the next level with Scotch bonnet jam, zhug (from Yemen), habanero and lime, ghost pepper, mango, truffle hot sauce, mustard hot sauce, chicken hot sauce, and cheese hot sauce. The list is endless yet intriguing, as we see baristas and cooks using it in mocktails, as marinades and glazes, as well as seasonings on retail snacks, even in deserts. **HOT, HOT, HOT!!!!**..... it makes you want to come back for more, and the more you eat, the more you crave the heat. **It's a journey our customers are already on, and we can always help them on their way....**

Keeping with the rebirth of cuisine menus across the region from QSR's casual dining, we are seeing the growth in the trend of pizzas, artisanal doughs, and gourmet toppings, and the new kid on the block is **Canotto-style pizza** (high hydration, long fermentation dough), almost like a balloon—an oversized,



super-inflated, airy crust with simple, quality ingredients as toppings. It's a new take on Neapolitan pizza, whether with simple mozzarella and tomato or smoked salmon and cream cheese. These are big across the globe and are slowly arriving on our shores. We have seen Chicago-style stuffed crusts, BBQ bases, and Tokyo-style with everything from truffles to chocolate. But this trend in crusts is resetting the benchmark and driving these snacks to be the go-to trend of the month in our region. Topped with Mexican-inspired meats like birria, chorizo, and carne asada, they are the new black this month.

During our holy month for my Iftar, I have been playing with simple textures, dipping dates in Tahini, roasting sesame seeds or crushed lotus biscuits, and even popping candy. Also, dipped in fresh ground coffee brings a new experience, but my favorite from the last month and new go-to is dates dipped in Tahini, then crushed flamin hot Cheetos... **GO ON, TRY IT, IT MIGHT SURPRISE YOU**

Finally, 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.

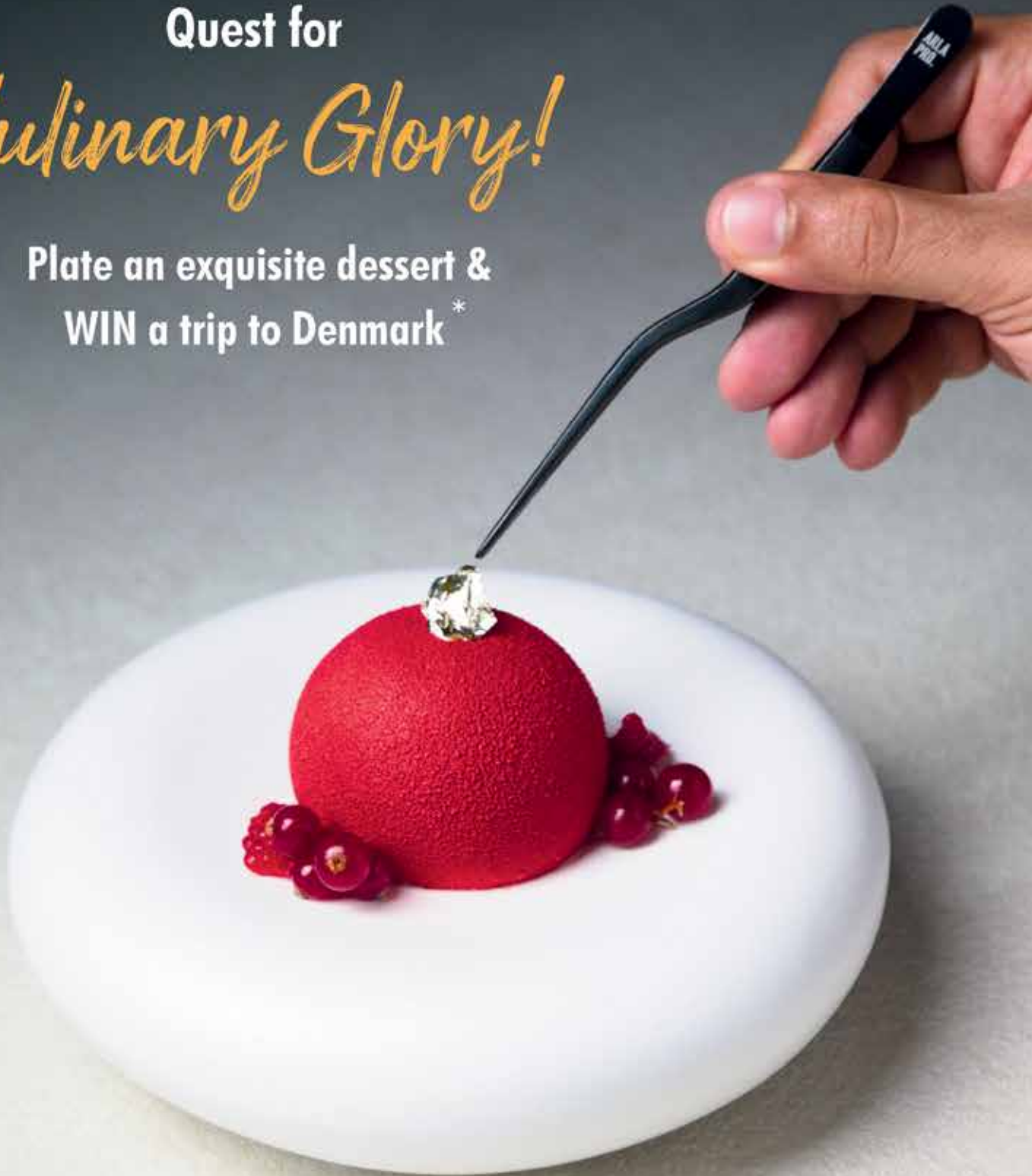
Kerry Foodservice provides custom-made solutions (coatings, sauces, beverages, etc.) and branded solutions such as Chef's Palette and DaVinci Gourmet to global and regional chains, QSRs, and casual diners across the region.

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