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AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2023

**gulf**

THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

# **gourmet**

volume 18, issue 7

## **NEW BEGINNINGS**

After four decades of pushing culinary boundaries and supporting the UAE's association of professional chefs, **Uwe Micheel** relinquishes his position as president. Yet, the epilogue of his story is just the beginning

### **MR. POSEIDON**

Resident Executive Chef **Christos Lymperis** on attaining fulfillment at the waterfront market, tech trends, and Greek philosophy



### **THE INNOVATOR**

In an exclusive Q&A, **Jad El Ghorayeb**, the regional executive chef of Paul, gives us a taste of tenacity



### **POWER PLAYERS**

Latest appointments on the board empower the ECG



## Application Membership

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First Name/s:		
Nationality:	Civil Status:	Date of Birth: dd/mm/yy
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Work Address:	Tel:	
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Telephone Office:	Professional Title:	
Fax Office:	Type of Membership Required: (Please tick one)	
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Fax Home:	Senior <input type="checkbox"/>	Junior <input type="checkbox"/>
Email:		

Declaration to be Signed by all Applicants

I wish to join the Emirates Culinary Guild. 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 endeavors, to the best of my abilities.

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Proposed By:

Sig:.....

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Approved	Approved	
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Affiliate Member: Dhs.350.00 for the first year. Dhs.300 per year thereafter.

Corporate Member Dhs. 20,000 per year

# president's station

email [editor@gulfgourmet.org](mailto:editor@gulfgourmet.org)

Dear all!

The year 2023 holds great significance in the history of the Guild. It marks the retirement of our long-standing president, Chef Uwe who has stepped down from the guild after an impressive 26 years. Chef Uwe was at the helm, leading the Emirates Culinary Guild from strength to strength under his guidance and leadership. It is a significant change for all of us in the guild, and even more difficult to fathom not having our 'Chef Uwe' in the country with us. Chef Uwe was instrumental in establishing the guild as one of the top players in the WorldChefs Association and also among the respected culinary institutions around the world. We have seen our guild grow and our chefs have traveled the globe, bringing home gold medals, and our prestigious Salon Culinaire has grown into one of the most sought-after competitions in the region.

At this moment, we must also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Annette, Chef Uwe's better half, who has supported him and been an integral part of the guild as much as he has. We will deeply miss her presence at our meetings and gatherings. As Chef Uwe and Annette embark on a well-deserved retirement, we extend our warmest wishes for a peaceful future. The chefs of the UAE will always welcome them back to their second home in Dubai. Chef Uwe will remain on our board as the Past President of the Guild, and he will serve as a steadfast supporter in one way or another.

With this transition, the new board, composed of both long-serving board members and fresh faces, gains the momentum to forge ahead. This dynamic blend will strengthen our foundation. Additionally, the formation of multiple committees within the Guild will allow us to share the workload and benefit all chefs in the UAE by providing a platform to continue to drive the guild forward in the future. These committees consist of seasoned professionals



from diverse backgrounds and culinary establishments, and we look forward to introducing them in upcoming magazine features.

Several committees have been established to lead different disciplines within the Guild. They will reach out to our members and corporate partners for support and involvement in the Guild's activities. Our key focus is still on nurturing our young chefs with a dedicated committee for diversity, and inclusion playing a pivotal role in shaping the Guild's future. Expert chefs who have excelled in competitions and brought home gold medals will lead committees focused on baking, pastry, and other areas to forge stronger skills and guide future competitors on how to succeed within the competition circuit. The re-establishment of our senior

teams and young chef culinary teams will be another key focus for the board.

Competitions serve as vital learning platforms for our chefs. The International Emirates Salon Culinaire, a part of ExpoCulinaire, will return to the Expo Center in Sharjah from May 20–22, 2024. We are excited to introduce new categories in the salon that will further develop the skills of our chefs. In this era of convenience and technology, it is crucial to impart essential knowledge, and for this, the guild's commitment is stronger than ever. The salon will evolve and become relevant for all chefs, cooks, pastry chefs, and bakers through knowledge of the basics coupled with innovation and new techniques.

In February 2024, we will be sending a team of pastry and artist masters to compete in the Culinary Olympics in Germany. A team of 24 chefs will represent the UAE, and we have full confidence in their abilities and anticipate their success in winning gold once again.

In conclusion, I am humbled to have been elected president of the Emirates Culinary Guild by our esteemed members, following 26 years as chairman. I cherish this position and vow to continue the great work we have collectively accomplished during the Guild's 32-year existence. In the next issue, I will provide further updates on our plans for the next 18 months and share some exciting highlights. Once again, thank you to Chef Uwe for his outstanding contributions and all you have done, and I wish you all a wonderful year ahead in 2023.

**Andy Cuthbert**  
*President and Editor*



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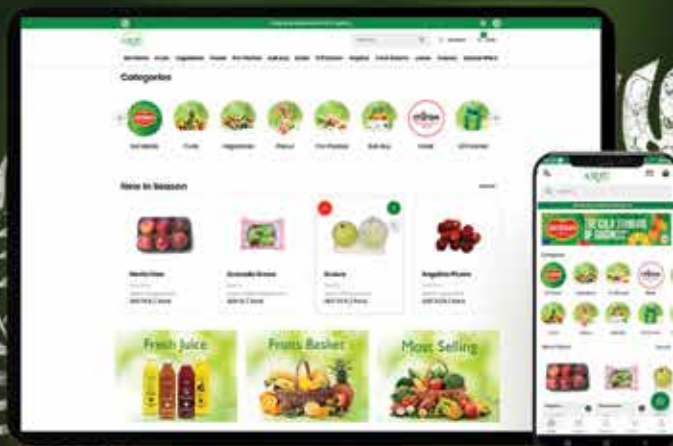
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# past president's message

Dear fellow chefs, friends, and partners,

I hope that everyone enjoyed their summer and spent plenty of quality time with loved ones.

We had a busy May and June with the Chefs Table Competition at the Hotel Show, one of my favorite events of the year since it emphasizes teamwork.

Following Expo Culinaire and then the International Salon Culinaire, the ECG had its hands full. Again, I would like to thank everyone who supported these two events. All of our partners, competitors, guest judges, local judges, marshals, and the whole ECG Team—this was only possible because we are all together—a great team indeed.

Then arrived a momentous day for me: on June 11, after serving as the ECG President for 24 years, I stepped down with one eye in tears and the other beaming with optimism for the bright future of the Emirates Culinary Guild under the leadership of our new President and the new board. Once again, the theme of teamwork arises as we acknowledge the exceptional team we have in the UAE, consisting of our talented chefs and valuable partners. I extend my heartfelt wishes for the team's triumph and assure them of my presence, ready to offer assistance wherever I can.

Our next big project is the Culinary Olympics in Stuttgart. On January 28, 2024, our team of 22 competitors, managers, and supporters will leave for Sindelfingen, close to Stuttgart, where we will have our base. The team is working full steam on organization, and the competitors are putting a lot of effort into showpieces and training. I would start with the team before joining the international judges in Stuttgart. In addition to Chefs Harald Oberender and Thushara, who will travel with the UAE Team, Karl Heinz Ney, Annette Micheel, and Otmar Schneider will join them in Germany and drive the team's buses and trucks. I look forward to a successful Culinary Olympics.

And then comes the heartfelt



message. Thank you to everyone who supported me over the past 30 years in Dubai. Beginning with my first general manager, Ahmed Ramadan, who convinced me to join him and his outstanding team at InterContinental Dubai in 1992. He gave me all the freedom and support that I needed to grow and excel. Thank you, Ahmed.

Turning to the Guild, I must mention the late Alen Thong, who was the first one to contact me in February 1993 to talk about the Guild, which was established less than a year before. I remember apologizing to him for my lack of time, as I had a complete kitchen renovation project and the opening of two restaurants in the next ten months ahead of me. However, a year later, I attended the Guild Meetings routinely. That's when Alen Thong approached me once more and told me it was time to take some responsibility for the ECG. My 30-year adventure with the Emirates Culinary Guild began at that point. And I don't regret even a minute of my time spent with the Guild because we always had a great team.

Though many talented chefs and supporters have left the country, we were always fortunate to have new partners and chefs who backed the Guild. I am sure Alen will be happy when he looks down from heaven and sees how the ECG develops and grows.

When giving thank-you speeches, it is customary to express gratitude to the family. However, in my case, the support I received from my wife, Annette, during the ECG events was exceptional. There

is a saying that behind every man's success, there is a woman, and Annette truly exemplifies this. Her support for ECG has been unwavering, whether it is supporting our partners during Salon, taking care of the wives of visiting judges, looking after us during board meetings, or even driving us during the Culinary World Cup and Culinary Olympics. Despite not being a professional chef, Annette has always been an integral part of the chefs family. Thank you, Annette.

One more individual, or better yet, a couple, to whom I must express my gratitude are the Cuthberts—Andy and Josephine. Without you both, the ECG wouldn't be what it is today. Thank you, Andy and Josephine.

Thank you to the ICCA team. One of my biggest dreams in the UAE became true through the ICCA Scholarship Program under the leadership of Sunjeh. Thank you, Sunjeh, Shanaaz, and the ICCA Team.

If I went on, there would not be enough room in the magazine for all of the people I want to thank! There is one more individual I must mention, and that is Amaresh. I first met Amaresh when he came to Dubai as a young photographer. We quickly became friends and discussed the ECG newsletter. Following a few meetings, Gulf Gourmet was born. Thank you, Amaresh, for running our Gulf Gourmet.

## A Big Thank You!

I want to express my gratitude to all of the chefs, partners, and friends of the Emirates Culinary Guild for their support over the past 31 years. Without you, the Guild would not be what it is today.

**To conclude, please continue to support the Emirates Culinary Guild.**

**Uwe Micheel,**

*Past President of the Emirates Culinary Guild, Assistant Vice President Worldchefs, Culinary Adviser at the Radisson Blu Hotel DDC, Conseiller Culinaire Commandeur Chaine Des Rotisseurs, Bailliage National Emirats Arabes Unis*

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# friends of the guild

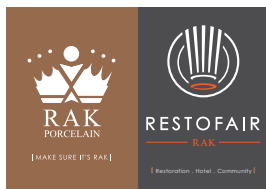


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# Spud Scholars

Young Chefs from ECGYCC leave no stone unturned to explore the potato palette and discover spud-land at a workshop by Potatoes USA GCC

Being baked, in the soup, in the salad, mashed, hasselback, or fried—there were foreheads with faint lines of concentration and eyes lit up with inquisitiveness among the culinary enthusiasts—to understand how versatile potato has proven to be a valuable ingredient with its endless possibilities.

Its adaptability has contributed significantly to the creativity of chefs, as demonstrated during a captivating hands-on workshop focused on this humble tuber. This event marked the first visit of the Emirates Culinary Guild Young Chefs Club (ECG YCC) to Abu Dhabi since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The workshop, organized by Potatoes USA, attracted a remarkable turnout than anticipated by the Young Chefs

Guild, demonstrating the eagerness of young chefs to learn and explore the potential of potatoes.

Potatoes USA has consistently organized innovation sessions, providing a valuable opportunity for young chefs to learn from senior chefs in the industry. The recent workshop allowed the chefs to engage in hands-on experience with renowned Chef James Knight Pacheco. Such moments are rare and should be seized by those who are focused and determined.

Choosing the suitable ingredient for your production may appear simple, but in reality, it is more complex than one might assume. For chefs, it is crucial to continuously partake in sessions like these to gain insight into the entire process, from farm to market. By developing skills and fostering a connection with farmers, one can

enhance their abilities and contribute valuable feedback. A potato is not merely a potato; it is an ingredient that can be transformed into a complete meal, including starters, main dishes, and desserts, in various varieties, by professional chefs.

"With more exciting events to come, we encourage young chefs to stay actively connected, especially through social media. Learning is not attained by chance; it must be fought for with passion and attended to with diligence. So, we hope to see you soon at our monthly events," says Faye Abreo, president of the EGYCC. "We appreciate the support of the senior chefs on the ECG Board. As the number of young chefs attending these sessions increases steadily, we encourage more chefs to join this growing community and be a part of this enriching experience."





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# THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE

For Chef **Christos Lympiris**, the waterfront market is the ideal place to convey his passion for culinary with the people



When Chef Christos Lymperis accepted the invitation to train people on standard hygiene measures at the Waterfront Market, little did he know that it would just be the first thread of destiny intertwining intricately to tie him to this place. "I recall training the staff at the Waterfront Market to the highest hygiene standards as well as teaching customers who were not aware of cleaning techniques and measures but knew how to cook," reminisces the 40-year-old chef. The unique place, as he says, gave him the sense that it was where he could share his passion for food and help others advance in their culinary skills.

His instincts paid off, leading him to become the Resident Executive Chef at the Waterfront Market, a 120,000-square meter fresh food marketplace thriving with bright blue accents, sounds of commerce, and an earthy palette that beckons one into the heart of the city and one that celebrates its cultural mosaic. As one of the biggest fish markets in the Gulf, the facility passes 400 tonnes of fish daily.

In the middle of one of the aisles that stretches as far as the eye can see, you will find Chef Christos, an affable figure who meets everyone on his way, inspecting the ingredients before resuming the live cooking displays, where he would then share new cooking recipes with the market visitors.

It is an exceptional spectacle. For executive chefs who are often behind the scenes in the kitchen, Chef Chris weaves between the crowd and prepares recipes to perfection, and that too with panache.

Looking closely, he still has a certain youthful energy that doesn't appear to have diminished with age. His thoughts flow with articulated phrases, and his expressions become fervent whenever a food memory surfaces. The infectious laughter comes out often and is full of sagesse, making you wonder what his childhood was like.



**My family believed it was crucial to always have fresh ingredients for our table, so I grew up on the farms of fruit, vegetables, and animals owned by our family**

"Chef Chris," as he is known colloquially, was born and raised in Greece's rural Olympia village, close to a mountain and a river and approximately 20 minutes away from the longest beach in Greece. Like many other chefs, his appreciation for great food and fresh ingredients started young. "My family believed it was crucial to always have fresh ingredients for our table, so I grew up on the farms of fruit, vegetables, and animals owned by our family," he says as he talks about respecting the ingredients that go into making dishes unlike any other—crucial for the best possible taste!

His childhood was graced with everlasting memories, from gathering olives, making olive oil, and learning to cook eels and grill meats from his grandpa. He also picked up valuable lessons in the kitchen from both his

mother and father, such as using the oven effectively for slow-cooking food, making sauces, and baking bread in a wood-burning oven. With generations of his family working in the hospitality industry, becoming a chef was written in his destiny.

As he grew older, he realized that cooking piqued his interest. "Cooking completed me as a person. It's the joy of creation and the satisfaction of seeing the reactions of the people who taste your food."

This became true when, just as a seventeen-year-old university student, he was already working in a professional kitchen. He took three bachelor's degrees: Mechanical Engineering (the conventional one), Interior Designing for Kitchen Spaces to learn about the ergonomics of workstations, and finally, the one his heart longed for, "a cooking degree at the age of 23," he adds.

While pursuing his diploma in cooking, he started working in small taverns and steadily made his way to restaurants and later to a la carte establishments. Early in his career, he faced tough times. From that period, however, he kept only the positive things: patience and persistence.

At the age of 28, he advanced to the role of executive chef at a catering company, where he handled catering for small-scale events and parties. The drive to discover new cultures led him to catch the travel bug, and he traveled to Europe.

The brief but poignant stint in parts of Europe left him with a positive experience. Eventually, he touched down in the UAE in 2012; ever since, he has dubbed Dubai his home.

"I got a job at a Greek theme restaurant in Dubai, where they used slow cooking techniques over charcoal," he says. With each passing shift, surrounded by the cracking sounds of charcoal and the aromas of delicacies, he immersed himself in refining Greek culinary heritage.

Never one to stop striving, he seized another opportunity to add another pin to his career map, this time with an executive chef's position at a restaurant in Jumeirah, "The place had around 400 capacity, all a la carte, and it gave me a gift of creative freedom that helped me unlock my potential." The position challenged him to dive into the rich tapestry of four distinct cuisines: Portuguese, Greek, Italian, and Spanish.

Three years later, his penchant for growth drove him to join the team of a Mediterranean restaurant at the Palm with a capacity of 900, but his culinary journey did not stop there. Seeking new avenues, he ultimately found his way to his current workplace.

"They didn't care how I appeared on the outside; they focused on the taste I gave the people. I believed in them, and they supported me a million times more," he says about what led him to Waterfront Market in 2020.

### WISDOM & LEADERSHIP

Working at the Waterfront Market is personal to him. "I must give the Waterfront Market a heartfelt thank you. I've lost around 110 kg in three years thanks to the motivation to work here and long inspection tours. They had faith in my potential, not in who I appeared to be on the outside," he elaborates. Besides expressing gratitude, he has a way of returning the kindness his workplace has bestowed upon him over the years: through his work.



**They didn't care how I appeared on the outside; they focused on the taste I gave the people. I believed in them, and they supported me a million times more**

His work ethic reflects in both his approach and dishes. A showman himself, he likes to entertain people while answering their intriguing questions. Every Friday, he hosts live culinary demonstrations for the patrons, creating dishes from around the globe using ingredients from Waterfront Market. A footfall of 100 often walks up to the door to learn about new recipes and get inspiration for what they can cook back home.

"I also have the hashtag #askchefchris on social media, where people can ask me whatever questions they may have about cooking techniques, methods, or how to pick ingredients at the Waterfront Market," he adds.

What's more, he harnessed his culinary talent where it counts- writing a recipe book containing more than 60 vegetarian and non-vegetarian recipes, inspiring readers to understand how cooking can significantly affect our world. The recipe book is like his child in that he has divided it into four sections to represent the ingredients in the Waterfront Market. The book is free and set to be released to the public soon. "The book is a big thank you to our guests, friends, and visitors who come daily to the Waterfront Market to support us."

In addition to cooking, he also inspects the market for hygiene and the quality of the products. "We have four different

sections here: fish and seafood; meat and poultry; fruits and vegetables; and dry goods and spices. We strive to provide quality products here with a variety of meats from 14 to 15 different countries and spices from different parts of the world."

To guarantee the quality, he also checks in at six F&B outlets that are independent but have their restaurants there. Chef Chris is happy with his tasks because, in a way, they assure him that anyone who comes to the Waterfront Market with their family will have quality.

In the whirlwind of multiple tasks, such as interfacing with customers and writing reports from scratch, he seamlessly navigates liaising with suppliers and dealing with the HORECA (Hotel, Restaurant, and Catering) industry market. When catering to HORECA establishments, he tracks emerging trends and tailors his services to meet each restaurant's requirements.

Given that they are one of the largest suppliers to several F&B outlets, including Emirates Airlines, we asked him what differentiates HORECA's needs from those of serving individual customers. "The only difference is volume. They need large quantities at a specific time while maintaining quality across each delivery," he responds. The process is also streamlined with the help of auctions. "We have overnight auctions where local fish from Dubai and imported fish are auctioned. It gets more seamless for them to come to auctions and buy for the right price."

### THE GREEK CONNECTION: FOOD, TECH & PHILOSOPHY

While fusion cuisine has its merits, he holds deep reverence for traditional recipes. "Tradition beats modernity," he says of his food philosophy. "For me, changing the traditional recipes is one of the biggest mistakes. Keep the recipe and taste the same, but incorporate new techniques and change the presentation. I've won awards for several dishes, but



the finest award I would give is to the traditional food that my mother cooked."

Amidst the rise of social media, lost passions for traditional cooking, and the allure of aesthetically captivating food, Chef Chris emphasizes that the heart of cooking goes beyond picture-perfect plating. He laments the growing trend solely for likes and shares with no taste in food, "as it overshadows the true essence of cooking that lies in smiling faces and satisfied palates of the guests," he explains.

As technology rapidly advances, artificial intelligence raises concerns about a future when most jobs will no longer require humans. Chef Chris, though, thinks that humans will always be a part of the machines. The ever-changing world would require individuals who would understand and run the many pieces of technology created every day. And if AI does one day take on the work of chefs completely, Chef Chris laughs, with the idea of returning to his hometown and fishing.

Technology replacing humans may take a while, but culinary embracing automation is already underway. The Waterfront Market, for example, showcases the use of automation by employing it for a hygienic floor and cleaning the seafood. "We have probably scoured the world for the last year and a half for all the best tech to make the place more hygienic and lessen the odor. A lot of stuff goes behind the scenes that people don't know, but it makes their experience more comfortable at the Waterfront Market."

Although striving for perfection can frequently result in stress, Chef Chris describes himself as "focused" at his job and makes an effort to set an example for aspiring chefs. "Never give up on your dreams. If you are pursuing your passion, then no matter how much your career has developed, keep your eyes and ears open, as in this job, you never stop learning. You have lost the game if you



believe you have learned everything."

The culinary industry can sometimes be unforgiving, yet one can perceive setbacks as lessons for the craft's development. "Learn from the old lady who might be cooking in a small village in the middle of a mountain, or from someone younger than you, or someone more experienced than you. Everyone has something different to teach you."

He also asserts the importance of listening to mentors and not forgetting how it all started, no matter how high your position is. "If you can travel all over the world, then embark on the journey to new flavors, ingredients, and recipes. Repeat the same recipe again and again until you reach the desired level of taste," he continues. Last but not least, he mentions getting feedback from your customers and your colleagues. "Taking into consideration the feedback from the customers, it's really important to challenge yourself to improve and touch perfection."

When he takes a break from his responsibilities at the Waterfront Market, he cherishes his time with his canine companion, Mikey, taking walks

with him in nature and socializing with friends. "The time I spend with my family is precious to me. And my dog Mikey always keeps me alert, but at the same time, he chills me out every time I get home from work."

They usually say that behind every man is a woman. In Chef Chris's case, he remarks that next to a man, there is a woman. "Without my wife's support, I wouldn't have been here. All these years, she has been with me through all the ups and downs, giving her sincere opinion because we should not forget that we are doing one of the most challenging jobs."

His parents are back in Greece. His mother, who was among the first to notice his skills, has been a lifelong mentor. Even today, when he returns home on vacation, his mother's feta-cheese Greek salad harkens him back to his childhood.

The small boy from Greece, who ran through the meadows of his valley and along the banks of glistening rivers, fishing lines forever in hand, now holds the beacon of culinary excellence. It is like fathoming of the mystical.

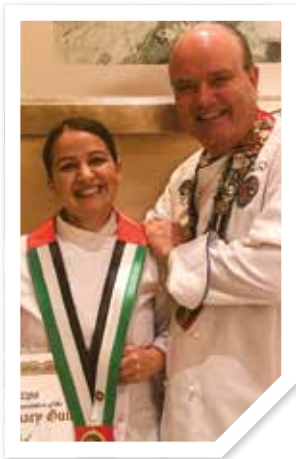
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## The Guild Meet

The recent guild meeting took place at the Media Rotana Dubai on June 13, 2023. We extend our gratitude to Executive Chef **Idin Asmitha** and General Manager **Sherif Madkour** for graciously hosting this gathering









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“  
**Chit-Chat  
with  
Chef Carl**

# Cuisine for a Greener Future: Smart Food Practices

Hey there, amazing chefs!

Prepare for a tasty and entertaining discussion on sustainable operations and waste management in the culinary industry. I like to call it 'Culinary and Extras'—catchy, right?

But first, let me introduce myself. I'm Chef Carl Shi, a proud dad of two. I worked as a chef at the Intercontinental Hotel in Dubai, now called the Radisson Blu Dubai Deira Creek. I was also part of the Emirates National Culinary Team from 2003–2004. These days, I'm teaching at the Culinary College in Sydney, Australia. I've earned two master's degrees in International Tourism and Hospitality Management and an MBA. And I'm currently pursuing my Ph.D. at Western Sydney University, focusing on food waste, waste management, and sustainable development in the hospitality industry.

Now, why did I decide to embark on this doctoral journey, you ask? Well, during my years in the kitchen, I witnessed some truly terrible practices when it came to disposing of food, garbage, plastics, and more. It was high time for a change! Through my research, I aim to reach influential people who can make a difference (yes, Mr. Elon Musk, I'm talking to you!) or provide valuable insights

to lawmakers and politicians, helping them shape policies, laws, and regulations.

Ultimately, my goal is to find better solutions for reducing, reusing, and recycling waste, preserving resources, and keeping our culinary industry thriving. In each upcoming article, I'll tackle one topic at a time, all from a chef's perspective (because, hey, I'll always be a chef at heart, even as an educator and researcher). We'll explore exciting subjects like how climate change affects our industry, tips for running a sustainable kitchen or catering service, ensuring food safety and security, future trends and challenges in our field, smart resource utilization, waste management, and even how the culinary industry embraces new technology, such as AI or the latest ChatGPT.

I firmly believe that if all chefs unite and work towards a common goal, we can keep our customers, bosses, and ourselves happy. So let's keep working smart and hard!

Catch you in the next article, fellow food enthusiasts!

Yours in culinary passion,

**Chef Carl Shi**  
from Sydney

# Real Halal

Hand Slaughtered  
No Stunning  
No added Hormones







# ONE MORE TIME

In a kitchen of the Intercontinental Hotel Group in Berlin in the '80s stood a man with a distinguished chef's cap, a white wrinkle-free uniform, subtly tousled hair, shining spectacles, and a modest smile. Back to the present, many call that man the 'father of chefs'. As the moniker reels out, you still catch a glimpse of a simple farm boy weaving dreams of crafting cuisine. **Amaresh Bhaskaran converses with Chef Uwe Micheel to learn about his new beginnings**

This is neither an ode, an expression of parting words, nor a somber farewell piece about Chef Uwe Micheel. This is an attempt to fathom why Chef Uwe's presence exudes a magnetic, larger-than-life aura that remains with those fortunate enough to encounter him in the culinary world of the UAE. And to delve deeper into the reasons why becoming Chef Uwe Micheel has never been simple.

To get to the bottom of this, I met him at his home, where the cool airconditioned air was broken with the anticipation of unspoken secrets. The aroma of a steaming cup of coffee wafts in his living room as this imposing persona makes her way to settle down on a chair across from me.

The feeling of his last month in office as president is slowly veering into his body as he remembers his desk that once carried the touch of his valuable files and to-do tasks, serving as a leitmotif of his shining decades. Those vacant spaces cry out loud with bittersweet memories



How fast the time is, and there are so many things to finish and ensure nothing is forgotten in between before bidding adieu

of several meetings. Waxing with nostalgia, it yanks him back to when he assumed the role of President of the Emirates Culinary Guild.

"How fast the time is, and there are so many things to finish and ensure nothing is forgotten in between before bidding adieu," he remarks as he talks of goodbye dinners. "When I was in the guild, I ran the operations with different strategies than the most recent generation. So, I have picked up some of the most

significant items as well as a plan of action to pass on to the successor."

Residing until the age of fifteen in a quaint village of approximately 150 residents called Bargfeld, Uwe lived with his sizable family, where no one had ever dabbled in the realm of hospitality before.

At the outset, he didn't have a meticulously handcrafted blueprint to manifest his passion for food, but there were always oblique hints of his affinity for cooking since childhood.

Mirroring the aspirations and actions of his elder brother, little Uwe followed his brother's suit. While his oldest brother tinkered with cars and his father devoted himself to his farm, he found himself immersed in the hum of tractors and gathering mature crops. However, unlike the peculiar scent of engine oil that surrounded him in those moments, he found himself captivated by the aroma of cooking oil that came from the kitchen.

He knew he had an inexplicable gift that he attributes to his mother's DNA. "My mother created a number of her recipes, and when I attempted to recreate them later, I could never exactly get them just as she did."

At the age of 13, he knew the road would



**My mother created a number of her recipes, and when I attempted to recreate them later, I could never exactly get them just as she did**

be marred, and the going would be tougher. Be it his innate desire to explore beyond the confines of his village or even defying societal norms by joining cooking classes typically attended by girls during his junior high school years. His bid to cook over the boys' woodwork class was met with shocked faces. "You should have seen my teacher's face! I even mowed the grass in the teacher's garden to convince her. She eventually agreed to let me enroll, and I enjoyed it."

The small wonders of what lay ahead struck him, and he concluded that becoming a ship's cook could be a way to let him travel all over the world. For someone who has been a globetrotter for his profession, he has never worked aboard a ship. And laughter fills the room.

## BAPTISM BY FIRE

Hitting the doorstep of a Hotel Celler Hof in Celle near Hanover, he set off with a three-year apprenticeship. "Since it was a small hotel, we didn't have a pastry kitchen, so we used to get bread from the bakery next door," he says as he vividly recalls juggling both school and work. Obsessed endlessly with learning more, he asked his Masterchef to guide him to a hotel where he could grasp the nuances of baking, only to find him on a trot, working for a year at the hotel Schwarzer Bock in Wiesbaden. "The senior chef there was one of the toughest but one of the best guys I worked with." By then, he knew what tale his plate of food would tell.

Before he charged out into the cuisine land with his skills, he was called for two years of mandatory service in the German army. In 1981, post-service Chef Uwe pivoted back to the f&b sector. He joined the Intercontinental Hotels Group in one of his dream cities, Berlin. However, yearning for a change of scenery and expanding professional horizons in new nations had a firm grip on him. There was only one catch: "I had to learn English," he adds quickly. And what better way to learn English than in London?

Unbeknownst to Chef Uwe, the restaurant, tucked away near bustling Hyde Park, a coveted destination for locals in London, unexpectedly became a significant spot for him too. With fewer spraying errors and more balancing as a demi chef, his stint at the Michelin-starred French restaurant Le Souffle in the Intercontinental Hotel gave him one of the key mentors of his life- Peter Kromberg. "But you must know, the majority of the staff spoke French. So I learned more French than English in England!" he says with a hearty laugh.

Meanwhile, as he found himself adapting to an unfamiliar language in a novel setting with unique perspectives on life, he encountered someone who stood apart from the crowd—the love of his life, Annette. She was a restaurant cashier







We want more hands to go global, and with more people on board, hopefully, it will show that we can do more projects than in the past

while he worked in the kitchen. The chance encounter turned into long talks that deepened their bond.

At the same time, inflection points in his career came as he bagged an offer in Bermuda. However, when the chef at Chef Peter Kromberg implored him to stay, he began to second-guess his decision. "He told me to stay. I said Yes, Chef and there was no turning back on my word," highlighting the significance of the phrase 'Yes, Chef', which epitomized responsibility during those times.

Having been promoted to Chef de Partie Saucier and working in a packed restaurant for an additional year, he set his sights on fresh opportunities. What awaited him was a three-year stint in Bahrain at the Intercontinental Regency. He takes a sip of the coffee, pauses in the conversation, crosses his legs, and shares part of his long to-do list, including working in the Middle East.

"Within two months of joining the hotel in Bahrain, the executive chef approached me to handle the main kitchen to improve the guest satisfaction rating of the all day dining restaurant from 50% to 75%." In less than four months, he not only put in more than 16 hours a day, but



**I am a sports fan. When a pre-opening position at Intercontinental Seoul became available, I grabbed it since it was one of my wishes to work in a city that would host the FIFA World Cup or the Olympics**

he also led all the way through to get a rating of 80%, prompting his chef to promote him to Sous chef.

As he mined the truth within himself, he confronted that even when immersed in professional pursuits, part of his heart was back in London, wanting to unite with Annette. "While Annette received a job offer in Bahrain, she was unable to accept it because of visa complications at the time. I also considered leaving the region if I was unable to bring her here. And I was

just 26 when I gave her three choices: either we forget about the relationship, we both quit and relocate, or I take my vacation early, and we get married. And she told me to take that vacation!"

This was 38 years ago! When she came to Bahrain, the pair even had the possibility of working together in the same hotel. She was at the front desk, and anytime the guests had feedback in terms of our food, she would inform me, and I fixed it. We had a lot of happy guests."

Another gentle sip of freshly brewed coffee echoes the emotions. Chef Uwe recounts them with an excitable grin as if they were fresh just yesterday. With the cups gingerly returning to the table, cooking stories kept tumbling out.

"I am a sports fan. When a pre-opening position at Intercontinental Seoul became available, I grabbed it since it was one of my wishes to work in a city that would host the FIFA World Cup or the Olympics," he says. Since the hotel was only a few miles from the stadium where the 1988 Olympics were being held, the 500 rooms that made up the official Olympic hotel were quickly reserved. "I enjoyed running the Hotel's banquet department. Korea was growing even more after the Olympics, and the development was crazy. When I visited Korea in 2012, I had this strange feeling like coming back home, but only the home has become a strange International city."

It helped that his mentor Alan Duval whom Uwe had crossed paths first in Bahrain, brought him to Korea and then accompanied him on to his next destination.

Three years later, he was called to the opening of the Yokohama Grand InterContinental in Japan as an Executive Sous Chef. "There was a lot of hard work, but at the same time, it was rewarding. But I had come to the point where I couldn't do anything more in Japan. And I had to move on."





Discussing the wonders of futuristic Japan and cosmopolitan Korea, he casually pulls no punches to state he affectionately refers to his elder son, Paul, as "made in Korea" and simultaneously nicknames his younger one, Max, as 'made in Japan.'

Throughout the last three decades, Chef Uwe has been an eyewitness to the countless ebbs and flows within Dubai's culinary industry. But years ago, he was sitting on the fence when a call came for him to join Intercontinental Dubai. "I was reluctant to be in Dubai." After taking a rain check on the offer, he ultimately accepted the role of executive chef.

### UWE 2.0

When Chef Uwe joined the hotel in 1993, it was already about 18 years old. "They were planning to open a French fine dining and Japanese restaurant. As I had adequate expertise in both cuisines, I was a match."

Even though Chef Uwe emphasized throughout our conversation that money was important, he revealed that he would learn about his pay only after receiving the contract. "After the Dubai offer, I returned home for a break. A few days later, Annette inquired about my salary, to which I replied that I didn't know. I hadn't thought to ask about it," he voices out, describing the stint that allowed him to capture his personality at the hotel.

His time at the Radisson Blu Dubai Deira Creek has been nothing short of stellar. In the mid-2000s, when the hotel rebranded from Intercontinental to Radisson SAS Hotel, Dubai, Chef Uwe decided to retain his culinary team at his hotel. Looking back to the very beginning, he reminisces about constructing his office, the very same one he occupies to this day. It was during this year that he also became a member of the Emirates Culinary Guild.

Around the time he served as Intercontinental's executive chef, Chef Alan Thong invited him home for a



## Others assume that being on the board of the Salon Culinaire is all about attending dinners or socializing over cakes and coffee

social gathering with senior members of the guild. Upon his initial encounter with the chefs, he had mixed feelings. "It wasn't one of the biggest welcomes. Many of them had been long-standing members for 10–12 years while I was comparatively younger. Unpleasant glances appeared to be cast in my direction, with only a select few individuals extending kindness and assistance from day one."

Although he was not immensely moved by the people, all that was negated by his faith in their cause for advancing culinary arts in the UAE. During the first year of his membership, he had to dial down his active engagement with the guild due to his focus on setting up the restaurants. Nonetheless, a year later, he committed to be there for the guild. When the guild tasked him with brainstorming and pursuing chefs for memberships, he didn't flinch and willingly embraced responsibilities that others shied away from.

"Gradually, I became the General Secretary of the ECG in 1994, Chairman in 1996, and President in 1999." Along with the senior members of the guild, he continued with his management role at the Salon Culinaire. In doing so, he broke the glass ceiling for regional chef competitions long before they became mainstream in the UAE.

As a past president, he will still have a decision-making role on the board. He firmly believes this would help in a smooth transition, one in which the only change that is visible to those on the outside is that the guild appears to be more active than previously. "We want more hands to go global, and with more people on board, hopefully, it will show that we can do more projects than in the past."

As the old members are retained, the new members are assigned various positions, creating a diverse blend of age groups within the expanded board and increasing its size from 14 to 25. The objective behind this expansion is clear: to gain a global presence by leveraging the expertise of experienced members, embracing fresh perspectives from newcomers, and harnessing the innovative ideas of young chefs, thus propelling the guild forward.

With another round of coffee, the intermittent pauses came again. I seized the moment to ask him about the selection of two important positions after the president. He kicks into

an explanatory mode with the first appointment: Chef Alan Orreal, Vice President of the Guild with a proven track record. And you can't help but notice the confidence he shows when he talks about him. "A seasoned chef, Alan is part of the Global Development of Young Chefs Committee of the World Chefs when Chef Andy Cuthbert stepped down. He understands young chefs and has the ability to navigate through adversity with total ingenuity."

The other eminent appointment was Chef Raghu Pillai as the Guild's Chairman. He is notable for his ability to build bridges by finding common ground among diverse perspectives. Having joined the guild when he was still a junior chef, he has seen the guild grow and is aware of its dynamics.

"He has been the link between the board, the senior chefs, and the young chefs. Whenever the young chefs need guidance in connecting with the partners for their monthly field trips to factories or farms, Raghu is there for them. He looks after one of the main pillars of the guild—the young chefs," adds Chef Uwe with confidence that he is ready for the next step.

In addition to key appointments, the guild has also introduced the Vice



**I suggest three things: hire the right people, then build the team, and motivate them. Everything in life is about teamwork, and it starts within the family**

President and Assistant Vice President for each chapter. With several chefs often busy with their schedules, the structure would distribute leadership, eventually fostering streamlined communication.

"Others assume that being on the board of the Salon Culinaire is all about attending dinners or socializing over cakes and coffee." However, he continues, "Running the chef community and accurately representing Dubai's culinary transformations takes a lot of dedication."

#### **HAVING THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN HIS CORNER**

As an unsullied chef, he may not have

any burnt éclairs to his name. And he can proudly say that he has never made the mistake of choosing the wrong partner in life either. "The only unequivocally right decision he has made was marrying his wife, Annette," he confesses. Her easygoing personality became a stabilizing force in all his plans, allowing him to find moments of respite in the face of constant pressure.

"If we had a meal with ten cranky people, I guarantee Annette would somehow inject her amiable demeanor throughout, resulting in laughter all around the end." He adds with amusement, "It's truly incredible how she possesses such skills!" Her caring nature also extends to the wives of other chefs, who, like her, were once new to the gastronomical hub, juggling the lifestyle and the expanse of chef culture.

Little wonder then that Chef Uwe became a role model for his boys to follow their passions. Both his boys are gaining footholds in different industries. His son Paul, a chartered accountant, is working with a chemical company, while his other son, Max, has taken a degree in hotel management but has taken a slight detour. Currently, he works for a company that rents office spaces to startups.

While he's at it, he adds how he views his son's choice to switch careers. Having witnessed plenty of young talents wither away unnoticed, he knows what it takes to be in the industry. "We have lost several people from the industry who are now doing jobs that call for fewer hours and don't have to work on the weekends. As my son Max explains, in his previous F&B-related role, he had no control over his schedule, even on holidays." And adds, "Although Max has inherited his mom's amicable nature, which would make him well-suited for a career in hospitality. Ultimately, everyone must do what they love."

Each silver strand of his gray hair symbolizes the countless brave decisions he made to pursue what he





loved. "I have a thousand people to thank for my last 48 years. I've always been lucky to have the right people around me to encourage my endeavors."

There is no denying the fact that to be indispensable in the competitive f&b market; one has to hire a solid team and understand what the customers want. For chefs who approach him to know the right way to climb the culinary ladder, Chef Uwe states, "I suggest three things: hire the right people, then build the team, and motivate them. Everything in life is about teamwork, and it starts within the family. If you and your wife don't match the wavelength, it might not work. So, you always work with the right people with optimistic energy, for that matter."

### MAN OF LETTERS

There is hardly a culinary portal that has not covered him in pages. He has authored two books, the first titled 'Chef At Home' and the other unputdownable 'Flavours of Dubai.'

In many ways, the arc of Chef Uwe's life exemplifies not squandering any chance to do away with preconceived notions. His cookbooks did the same, shattering clichés about Emirati cuisine by throwing light on recipes that spoke about authentic and fusion flavors.

"We printed around 3600 copies of my first book, and at that time, since I didn't have publishers, I started selling them myself by writing emails to guild partners and suppliers. I wanted it to be the perfect Christmas gift. After that tiring ordeal, I wasn't keen to go for another book. But eventually, I decided to do it one more time." All this effort was worthwhile when he won three Gourmand World Cookbook awards for this book.

The second book he wrote, *Flavours of Dubai*, was awarded second prize in the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards. Having won four Gourmand World Cookbook Awards to date, Chef Uwe was presented with his fifth Gourmand award for this cookbook in



**You always work with the right people with optimistic energy, for that matter**

the Best Chef Author category. "I did not achieve anything alone. Even I needed an entire team for the success of the cookbooks," he adds, asserting that his life experiences have convinced him that teamwork is essential.

### INSPIRATION & ICCA

For Chef Uwe, working for the fellowship program has been a leading edge in his sparkling career. Driven by the desire to empower young chefs who have made significant sacrifices to pursue their culinary dreams while supporting their families, he devised 'The One Million Dirham Continuing Education Award, an initiative undertaken by the International Centre for Culinary Arts (ICCA Dubai).

"I met Sunjeh Raja from ICCA about 15 years ago, and we briefly discussed starting a culinary program for chefs who cannot afford the education costs, with a curriculum resembling an apprenticeship program that includes both training and theoretical knowledge." Years later, as he puts it, on a fine day, he got a call from Sunjeh asking him if he was ready. "For What?" he replied promptly. "We had a dream, and we are ready to start now at ICCA," he elaborates as he recalls his meetings and conversation with Mr. Raja over the scholarship program.

"More than 200 students have passed the one-year scholarship program where they receive esteemed certificates that make them industry-ready and recognition as professional chefs."

Chef Uwe has an indelible appreciation for the ICCA team and the other key sponsors whose vision has an impact on future culinary generations. He also notes the rigorous selection process, which turns out to be rewarding as all the alumni from the program are currently working in different parts of the world due to their will to grow.

From 5-star hotels to standalone restaurants, several talents have joined the program. As a direct witness, three students from his hotel have become certified chefs, climbing the career ladder in countries like Australia and Canada.

Like skilled pearl divers exploring the depths of vast oceans in search of valuable yet obscured jewels, he urges those in the industry to keep an eye out for skilled chefs. Just as these precious stones are handed over to expert gem polishers who transform them into dazzling gems, he believes that prioritizing their teams and nurturing them will lead to positive growth. "As Sunjeh always emphasizes, we are not changing the life of one chef, but the life of an entire family. It would be great to get more support from the industry, which would increase the number of students. Unfortunately, not everyone views it that way; they only see competition, time, and money. While it's about learning, training, and gaining more knowledge,"

#### **RECORD-BREAKING FT: CHEF UWE'S 'ONE-MORE TIME' ATTITUDE**

You nudge him about sharing the story of preparing the largest cup of Karak Tea in the Global Village that led them to obtain the Guinness World Records title, and he fills in with euphoria and takes you back to his first attempt. "On the occasion of the UAE's 25th national day, the hotel's GM approached me to make the world's highest cake. However, this had constraints regarding scaffolding and external wind conditions. Instead, we made the longest cake, which stretched 2.53 kilometers and weighed 74,000 kilograms." With 28 teams from different hotels working on a standard recipe for the cake, it became the main highlight of the UAE's National Day celebrations in 1998.

The other limelight triumph in his repertoire includes reclaiming the biggest biryani bowl record. Under Chef Uwe's lead, chefs prepared multiple batches of biryani and carefully



**we are not changing the life of one chef, but the life of the entire family**

combined them in the pot, stirring to perfection using a forklift.

The humble cooking pot has a fascinating history of its own that spans over 20 years, during which it has accumulated four different world records. A collaborative effort from several partners resulted in the creation of the pot that is now housed at IFFCO.

He quickly pivots to another set of groundbreaking records: the biggest number of main dishes and the biggest number of desserts. "We surpassed our own 2009 record of creating 2000 unique desserts. We covered desserts from over 48 countries and had three pastry chefs from the Richmond School who were our official auditors. They audited all 2,586 desserts to ensure no dessert was similar. We even avoided any recipe aliases."

Piece by piece, he comes to Karak tea and the challenge of preparing 5000

liters in a huge custom-made teapot. Each of the 120 teams of 2 to 3 chefs prepared multiple batches of tea and put them in the pot, stirring them by forklift. Hot, tasty tea was given completely for free in the global village.

As it turns out, Chef Uwe's innate ability to mentor and rally the teams during the world records worked as an anchor in rough seas. With a dash of perpetual hunger, he humbly admits that after every record, he believed he had reached his limit. However, fueled by the drive to push his boundaries, he found himself drawn to the realm of record-breaking time and time again.

It's not easy to understand why Chef Uwe's mentoring would yield outcomes that made heads turn. Whether he is working alongside experienced or aspiring chefs, Chef Uwe effortlessly navigates all social circles. That explains why young chefs seek his mentorship and bestow him with the title 'father of chefs.'

As the yarn of his life unspools over three decades, all of his adventures make his journey as president truly memorable. The dwindling coffee in my cup signaled the end of our chat, and it only left me behind with a quote by Pericles: "What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others."





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August-September 2023 **Gulf Gourmet**A portrait of Chef Jad El Ghorayeb, a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark chef's jacket, sitting at a table with his hands clasped. The background is dark and moody.

# The Innovator

Meet Chef **Jad El Ghorayeb**, the man behind constant menu innovation at PAUL, Middle East & Africa. As a regional executive chef, the advice he proffers deserves a curious ear



**G**rowing up in Lebanon, he was exposed to the harsh realities of life around war at the tender age of 6! Despite this, his 40-minute walk to his grandmother's house to enjoy her food instead paved the pathway for hospitality within him. With more than two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, Chef Jad El Ghorayeb has dedicated his career, which spanned a variety of positions from Casper & Gambini to PAUL.

At PAUL, the accomplished chef in his current role leads kitchen staff from over nine countries across over 120 shops, dealing with their diverse nationalities, menus, and different products. In addition to emphasizing the importance of a strong team for the success of a restaurant chain, Chef Jad El Ghorayeb offers sound advice to aspiring chefs on why they should connect to their culinary heritage and become adept at their native cuisine.

#### **Could you tell us about your childhood and your parents or siblings?**

My family has been incredibly supportive throughout my life, particularly my mother. Since my father was always at work and my two brothers were 8 and 10 years older than me, I spent most of my time with my mother. Growing up in Lebanon during the war was challenging, and I have rich memories of spending my childhood on the streets, starting at the age of six. It was during those times that I truly learned the realities of life. These experiences have shaped me into the person I am today.

#### **Why did you choose to become a chef? Did you study or intern for it? What inspired you to become a chef?**

During my childhood, around the age of 8, I used to walk approximately 40 minutes from our house to my grandmother's house just to enjoy her delicious food and cooking.

One day, I expressed my interest in learning how she cooks, and she taught me how to make moussaka and



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molokhiyya. When I turned 14, I attended a three-month summer kitchen session. Then, at 17, I enrolled in Hôtellerie school in Lebanon's kitchen department, where I studied hospitality until I was 20. However, during that time, I also gained practical experience by working in various places as a beginner in the kitchen. I have a funny story from my first job experience: my initial month involved cutting parsley for tabouleh and peeling onions.

#### **How were the early years as a chef? Was it a struggle?**

As I mentioned previously, my love for food and the kitchen blossomed at the age of 14. Honestly, the challenge I faced was not the work exactly, as I am deeply passionate about it and still am. However, the struggle revolved around the limitations it imposed on my social life. I was unable to spend time with friends, even during holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and weekends, due to my constant commitment to work.

#### **Tell us about your journey to becoming an Executive Chef.**

Officially, I began my professional career in 2000 as a kitchen member in downtown Lebanon. During my time there, I had the opportunity to learn and grow under the guidance of Culinary Chef Athanasios Kargatzidis. Although the journey was challenging, Chef Kargatzidis proved to be the best teacher I could have asked for. In 2006, I was promoted to Head Chef and relocated to Cairo, Egypt. This promotion marked a significant milestone in my career. In 2011, I further advanced to the Executive Chef role, solidifying my culinary leadership expertise. Four years later, in 2014, I attained the position of Group Executive Chef, where I oversaw five distinct concepts, including Casper and Gambini, Lebanese Bistro Fusion, Catering, Gelato, Ice Cream, and CPU. Throughout this journey, I had the privilege of working closely with our Managing director, Mark Khalife. His exceptional management skills and ability to lead large teams greatly inspired me, and he taught me a lot about how to manage myself and a team properly. He remains a mentor, friend, and advisor. My next move took me from Egypt to Dubai in 2016, which presented its own set of challenges. After joining Azadea, I assumed the role of Regional Executive Chef for PAUL, overseeing the culinary operations in the Middle East and Africa. The transition from Egypt to Dubai was not without its difficulties, but it served as another opportunity for personal and professional growth.

**What are the challenges of being an Executive Chef?**

At a personal level, as a chef, staying constantly updated and fostering creativity is essential.

In my current role with PAUL, maintaining consistency is paramount, particularly when managing nine countries with diverse nationalities, menus, and different product issues. This calls for strong management skills and follow-up, as it goes beyond simply preparing a dish. It involves serving identical plates with consistent taste and presentation across over 120 shops in these nine countries. This presents a significant challenge.

**Tell us about what your current role entails.**

Nice question. My role is to innovate PAUL's menu in terms of taste, recipe, new plates, presentation, menu infrastructure, and scientific menu engineering. I need to identify what each country loves to eat and tailor the menu to their taste, which is why we have nine different menus in different countries. This requires a lot of study, hard work, and preparation.

**What is the importance of a good team behind a restaurant chain's success?**

A competent leader possesses the ability to effectively guide, establish clear

direction, and encourage independent management. Micromanaging people can lead to department failure.

**Over the years in the F&B industry, what are your thoughts on the unique concepts behind a restaurant's success in Dubai?**

Restaurants in Dubai's F&B industry have achieved success by embracing unique concepts that cater to the city's diverse population. These concepts include experiential dining, fusion cuisine, captivating ambiance, social media marketing, extravagant brunch experiences, and adaptability to change. Dubai's restaurants have flourished in a competitive market by combining these elements with quality food or products and effective marketing strategies, appealing to both residents and tourists seeking extraordinary dining experiences.

**What is your advice for young chefs?**

That's a good question! In my experience, it is crucial to stay connected to your culinary heritage and master the cuisine of your own country to succeed as a chef. Once you have a strong foundation, you can explore other countries' cuisines. Additionally, making mistakes as a young chef is essential for learning and growth.

**Tell us about your family.**

They are the backbone of my success—one for all and all for one!



Once you have a strong foundation, you can explore other countries' cuisines. Additionally, making mistakes as a young chef is essential for learning and growth







**Chef  
Simon  
says...**

# Culinary Trends Express

**Simon Martin**, Executive Chef of Kerry Taste & Nutrition, 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."**

What can be funky, salty, have traces of deep savory notes, a hint of sweetness, and an intoxicating blend of heat and acidity through fermentation? Allow me to introduce you to **Gochujang**. As the trend for **Gochujang** continues to grow steadily in the region, it's time to seize the spice that has crossed frontiers, making its way to cuisines all over the world. From **Gochujang**-infused caramel cookies, mocktails, and chocolate to its addition in stir-fries, soups, stews, and grills, this Korean spice knows no culinary bounds. It's here to throw a flavor disco party in your mouth. And why not try making Yangnyeomjang, a simple yet delicious sauce made from **Gochujang**? It may seem complex to you, but trust me, with just a few simple ingredients, it will rock your culinary planet.

Another versatile ingredient that can be used in a wide range of culinary creations is **Sweet Pickles**! While it may seem unlikely, this new kid on the block is all true. **Sweet Pickles**, otherwise known as "Bread & Butter Pickles," are currently in vogue. Whether it's in cotton candy, cookies, ice cream, dips, chips, or even as dried, deep-fried, and as flavor drinks, the unique sour-sweet taste is driving disruptive innovation. So, think beyond burgers and consider indulging in pickle chocolate chip ice cream or



savoring petit fours of caramel-dipped pickle slices. Our culinary world is going through a whirlwind of flavors this year. "Let's relish the moment."

Have you ever heard of the Aztecs or the Mayans? These ancient civilizations had a profound influence on Mexican cuisine. But you may not know that their influence extends to the food of the GCC region as well, with a harmonious blend of smoke, fire, and spice. Let's talk about something that embodies earthy, smoky, spicy, and fruity, with undertones of rich bitter chocolate flavors: **MOLE** (pronounced MOH-lay). In our region, **MOLE** is taking many different guises. Although this sauce has numerous local variations, we will focus on the savory version with a bitter chocolate base.

Given that this region is chocolate-made, and we all know sweet and savory just seems to be a hit here, this combination is a perfect match, much like our fine knife that seems custom-made for it. Who would have thought that chocolate chili chicken could taste so divine?

Now, let's feast our minds on a delectable notion: Cultivated meats are poised to revolutionize our palates. Granted, their current taste and texture may not be up to par just yet. But fear not, fellow food enthusiasts, because there may be a glimmer of hope in the form of craft meats.

Picture this: a world where we can pick a protein of choice, sit back, and watch it materialize before our eyes, like some futuristic gastronomic spectacle. This is not a scene from a sci-fi flick; instead, it is a tantalizing reality that awaits us just around the corner. With the global population on the rise and a pressing need for sustainable food sources, the creation of meat beyond the confines of traditional farms and kitchens is becoming an undeniable truth.

Brace yourselves for a future where 3D-printed meats and lab-grown proteins take center stage, tailored to our specific nutritional needs. The cherry on top: global respondents are already whispering about cell-based technologies being the holy grail of the food industry. So, let's take a moment to savor the absurdly exciting prospects ahead, my friends.

**What are your thoughts?**

# È delizioso! Semplicità and Bold

He had a slight look of confusion on his face that traversed into intrigue with widened eyes, peering unfazed at his mentor, who was teaching him to crack an egg. It was not until he was 17 that he learned this essential cooking skill. Years in the making, he creates desserts that marvel the sweet tooth beholder..

**W**hat evokes images of Italy? The pronounced taste of Parmigiano Reggiano, creamy risotto, tender lasagne, French tomato sauce, ossobuco, hearty ragù of Bologna, or cheering tiramisu. Italian cuisine is a celebration of simplicity, fresh ingredients, and time-honored traditions. Among the many remarkable symphonies of Italian taste is 'Piedmont,' a dessert by Pastry Chef Dhaval Dedhia; that's an orchestra in your mouth. According to Chef Dhaval, this dessert is more than just a sweet treat – it is a dessert that makes you want to dance a little and creates music around you.

"We have incorporated protected geographical indication (IGP) hazelnuts from Piedmont, which enhances the quality and authenticity of the dish. Our hazelnut base is gluten-free, combined with Gianduja chocolate," explains Chef Dhaval. To achieve the perfect creamy texture, he bakes it at a low temperature of 82–83 degrees for three hours, allowing it to rest overnight with Madagascar vanilla in the chiller. The result is a visually appealing dish with layers of textures from Sicilian mandarin and sorbet tucked inside various profiles that are nutty, milky, citrusy,...

The accord between the classics and contemporary aesthetics is evident in every ingredient on his plate. He has mastered the art of plating by accumulating all the knowledge he has acquired from working with different



**My goal is to produce a range of palates for different age groups and taste profiles so that every customer in the store will find at least one thing they love about us**

brands, people of different nationalities, and skilled chefs over the years.

How can I create unique Italian recipes daily for stores across the Middle East? This question seems to galvanize Chef Dhaval, who, every day, as a Pastry Chef at Eataly in Dubai Mall, curates a vast library of Italian flavors for all its brand stores in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait. He tries to catch the soul of Italian cuisine while overseeing the operations of an Italian venue that features a high-end restaurant along with a central marketplace where you can eat, shop, and learn.

Behind the display of a wide array of products in Eataly is Chef Dhaval's research into market trends, devising f&b concepts, tinkering with modern-classic flavors, and execution of recipes.

"We have a whole spread of options in ala carte, gluten-free, healthier selections, and gourmet products. In essence, my goal is to produce a range of palates for different age groups and taste profiles so that every customer in the store will find at least one thing they love about us. If I cater to that and everyone has one favorite on the menu and products, my job is done."

At Eataly, kids and adults can engage in exciting courses and learn Italian cuisine in grandma's style. In a world where modern equipment has made cooking easier, Chef Dhaval emphasizes preserving traditional cooking methods.

"This generation has the luxury of equipment, but they don't understand the effort it takes to cook from scratch. Sometimes, we need to embrace the challenges and remember our roots. We only remember our grandma's meals because we learned them the hard way, though," he says.

Creativity and Passion, he says, are at the core of creating pastry. As a chef, he asserts that if you are not passionate and creative, then it's like your heart stops, but your body is alive. "One of the best things about working here is to have a team that lets me run my creative thoughts. They are always surprised by whatever I bring to the table. I can decide what I want to do, and my creativity is not limited."

Having infinite creative options left





enough impact for him to transcend beyond authentic Italian-structured recipes. Since social media has triggered a paradigm shift in the culinary world and food preferences are rapidly evolving, Chef Dhaval tries to stay ahead by giving an Italian flair to popular dishes without Italian roots. If the customers like it, he says, and the team has good feedback, then nothing is wrong in giving an Italian touch to the dishes.

### EGGSHELLS STRUGGLES TO ECLAIRS

Indian native Chef Dhaval, 35, was raised in a family in Bombay that had no relation to the f&b industry. Unlike his family, who were garment business owners, he chose a different path, inspired by his mother. As a child, he observed his mother always eating last after serving everyone else. "She cooked and served hot food for the family, yet she had cold food on her plate. So I started making hot food for her, which sparked an interest in exploring different dishes and became a hobby."

After completing high school, he decided to pursue a career that combined practical knowledge with his love for cooking, much to the surprise of his family. There is a fascinating paradox in his pursuit of practical knowledge. What he thought would have limited technical and more practical knowledge, he found himself continuously learning both to expand his skills to this day.

Switching career gears, however, proved to be a little more complicated. Considering his Jain upbringing (Jains are strict vegetarians and also do not eat certain root vegetables), his mom grappled with the dilemma of him embracing non-vegetarian cooking. "Until my 12th grade, I never even touched an egg, so I didn't know how to crack it," says Chef Dhaval, adding that transitioning from a vegetarian background posed challenges for him, but his father's support made all the difference.

Once he completed his Bachelor in Culinary Arts from the Institute of



Until my 12th grade, I never even touched an egg, so I didn't know how to crack it

Hotel Management in Aurangabad (then affiliated with the University of Huddersfield in the U.K.), he joined JW Marriott in Mumbai to train as a pastry chef. He learned quickly that a pastry chef could maneuver in a hot kitchen, but the opposite was not true, and this was the idea that led him to become clear on his trajectory. "You can be a technician, an engineer, or a food scientist. The world of pastry was endless," he says, absolutely enamored with pastry as a combination of everything. He did multiple stints, including at the Leela Palace Kempinski in Bangalore and the Leela Kovalam, before earning a promotion as a junior sous chef with a work opportunity at the Leela Mumbai.

In 2013, he got a breakthrough in his

career when he got an opportunity in Dubai as an Assistant Pastry Chef at the Movenpick Ibn Battuta Gate Hotel (now the Oaks Ibn Battuta Gate Hotel). "The dessert menu was something my executive chef there used to surprise us with daily. We didn't know what it was, and he didn't know how we would come up with the dish. It was a challenge, yet we could play with food, break rules, and enjoy the process", he says. Three years later, he aced an interview for The Oberoi Beach Resort, Ajman. "Being an Indian, Oberoi was top-notch for me. So it was a big thing", he says of the emotions after he cracked the tedious interview process that finally led him to earn the title of pastry chef (Pre-Opening and Operational). An intriguing four-and-a-half-year stint concluded when he got an offer to join Eataly.

Although joining a restaurant was not his first pick, he recognized the chance to explore a concept where 98 percent of the ingredients were made from the ground up. "This place has big leverage on food quality as ingredients are prepared from scratch. And it also gives me big wings to fly."

It wasn't an effortless and smashing trail for him. Between his stints in India and Dubai, he used to work for 15 hours every day to absorb skills from his mentors, so if he handles the executive position tomorrow, he has to be technically and practically sound.

One can glean plenty of wisdom from his life experiences, though 'seizing any shot to learn' comes out on top of his sage inventory. He firmly believes that one cannot bypass knowledge or skills by jumping positions. Trusting the process has been an underlying emotion, and hard work was universal in his stints.

### DHAVAL AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Chef Dhaval sure has a copious amount of sugar to deal with in his personal life too, with his sweet 8-year-old daughter. She has become the "food police" in their household, eagerly observing her father's baking endeavors and ensuring her mother follows his techniques. His wife, who currently works as an assistant teacher, has been his tower of strength.

Have you ever wondered about the magic of tempering chocolate? What is it about this chocolate that brings us such immense joy and happiness when



we indulge in it? Chef Dhaval aims to demystify this journey of chocolate, from sourcing cacao to the intricate process of roasting, through his own brand, complete with a chocolate factory and museum. He believes many of the chocolates available in supermarkets are far from the real thing. "In the name of chocolate, you are eating palm oil, sugar, and hydrogenated fats, and

several brands are charging you for all the marketing shebang. By bridging the gap between bottom line and top line, I hope to offer people around the world the opportunity to enjoy truly exceptional chocolate."

A creative soul with a love for food traditions, Chef Dhaval Dedhia, is one true ambassador of Italian flavors.

## PIEDMONT

**Gianduja Cheesecake | Warm Caprese Sponge | Textures of Mandarin**

### GIANDUJA CHEESECAKE

<b>Arla Pro Cream Cheese soft 25%</b>	500 g
Madagascar vanilla pods	1 no
Caster Sugar	150 g
<b>Arla Pro High Stability cream 35%</b>	140 g
Potato Starch	20 g
Fish Gelatin 200 Bloom	4 g
Water (to hydrate gelatin)	24 g
Gianduja from IGP Hazelnuts	400 g
Whole Egg	40 g

#### Method

- ◆ Scrape the vanilla pod to extract the

vanilla pearls and mix it well with caster sugar. Make sure you spread it evenly.

- ◆ Hydrate the fish gelatin with chilled water.
- ◆ Warm the milk with the scraped vanilla pod to infuse the milk, and mix the potato starch well with the milk. Ensure there are no lumps. Let it cool down.
- ◆ In a planetary mixer, use the paddle attachment to soften the Arla cream cheese, making it smooth.
- ◆ Add the vanilla sugar slowly and mix it at a slow speed to dissolve the sugar.
- ◆ Add the milk slowly to the mixture, which already has the potato starch mixture.
- ◆ Melt the gelatin in the microwave and

mix it well into the above mix.

- ◆ Melt the Gianduja chocolate and mix it with the above mix. Scrape the sides well.
- ◆ Add the egg last and mix well.
- ◆ Pack the Gianduja cheesecake mix in vacuum-packed bags and vacuum pack them.
- ◆ Cook the mixture sous vide at 83 degrees for 2 hours.
- ◆ Remove it from the sous vide and let it cool down and rest in the chiller overnight.
- ◆ Use the mix as required.

### CAPRESE SPONGE (GLUTEN FREE)

Lurpak Unsalted Butter	125 grams
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Madagascar vanilla pods	1 no
Caster Sugar	150 grams
Gianduja from IGP Hazelnuts	100 grams
IGP Hazelnuts from Piedmont	150 grams
Whole Eggs	4 no's

#### Method

- ◆ Scrape the vanilla pod to extract the vanilla pearls and mix it well with caster sugar. Ensure that you spread it evenly.
- ◆ In a planetary mixer, use the paddle attachment to soften the Lurpak unsalted butter and let it cream. Slowly add the vanilla sugar to it. Cream until fluffy and the sugar has dissolved.
- ◆ Roast the IGP Hazelnuts in the oven till golden brown and let them cool down to room temperature.
- ◆ Melt the Gianduja chocolate and add it to the creamed butter and sugar mix.
- ◆ Crush the roasted hazelnuts; use a rolling pin to make sure some are powdered and some are crushed, leaving chunks of hazelnuts behind.
- ◆ Add to the above mix and mix on slow speed.
- ◆ Add the eggs last, one by one, on slow speed, and mix them well.
- ◆ Arrange two 18 cm rings lined with

silver foil, spread the mixture evenly, and bake in a combination oven at 160 degrees for approximately 40 minutes.

- ◆ Let it cool down after baking, and then it can be stored in a chiller and used accordingly.

#### SICILIAN MANDARIN SORBET

Sicilian Mandarin puree	500gm
Dextrose	50gm
Liquid glucose powder	50gm
Sorbet Stabilizer	50 gm
Amalfi Lemon juice	5 gm
Sicilian Mandarin zest	20g

#### Method

- ◆ Mix all the powders well together.
- ◆ Add the powders to the liquid and blend well to emulsify.
- ◆ Add the zest at the end and mix well.
- ◆ Let it rest in the chiller for 12 hours to stabilize, and then blend again using a hand blender.
- ◆ Transfer the mix to a Paco Jet beaker and freeze.
- ◆ Churn the sorbet when required and use it accordingly.

#### SICILIAN MANDARIN GEL

Sicilian Mandarin Puree	200gm
Simple Syrup	30 gm
Gelcream Cold	20 gm

#### Method

- ◆ In a liter jug, combine all ingredients together and blend using a hand blender.
- ◆ After blending, strain and store in a chiller overnight.
- ◆ The next day, blend again and strain well, and it is ready to be used.
- ◆ Store in a squeeze bottle and use as per requirement.

#### Assembly

- ◆ Warm the Caprese sponge in the oven and crumble it on the plate.
- ◆ Dust some cocoa powder on top of the sponge.
- ◆ Pipe the cheesecake onto the plate.
- ◆ Pipe the Mandarin gel onto the plate using a squeeze bottle.
- ◆ Place some IGP hazelnut halves and Sicilian mandarin wedges
- ◆ Make a quenelle of Sicilian Mandarin Sorbet and place it on the plate.
- ◆ Decorate the plate using some cress and edible flower petals.

*Simply... a matter  
of good taste!*



*Al Kabeer has been the most trusted name in Veg, Chicken, Seafood, Mutton and Beef products for over 4 decades. We are proud to market the largest range of frozen foods in the Middle East. Our range caters to all types of palates with one thing in common – good taste!*

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**ANDY CUTHBERT****UWE MICHEEL****ALAN ORREAL**

# Power Players

As the carousel of diverse foodscapes propels forward, the Emirates Culinary Guild welcomes the new president and leaders taking the helm across the chapters

The vibrant conversations echo inspiring vision, warm introductions, and hearts brimming with anticipation as the Annual General Meeting of the Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG) unfolds, leading the members in ever-intriguing renditions for a momentous transition that lies ahead.

Amidst the grand overture of the old guard passing the torch, each member of the ECG, carrying their unique talents, assumed new key positions, from president to vice president.

In an event not witnessed in the Emirates Culinary Guild since 1999, the Guild has elected a new president after its longest-serving president, Uwe Micheel, stepped down. Andy Cuthbert, the guild's chairman, has been chosen as the new president. Both Chef Uwe and Chef Andy served together since 1999, steering the Guild to global success and regional recognition through the many initiatives it introduced for chefs and budding chefs in the UAE. Chef Uwe will continue to help and serve on the board by assuming the role of Past President of the Guild.

President Cuthbert is proud to have such a diverse, experienced, dynamic group of chefs on the board, serving



These committees are composed of prominent chefs and experts in their respective culinary disciplines, all working together to support the new vision and bring about great change

the UAE's membership and community of chefs. "It is an exciting time for the guild and one where we will see great growth and continued success into the future," said Cuthbert. He added, "There has been the formation of multiple committees within the Guild. These committees are composed of prominent chefs and experts in their respective culinary disciplines, all working together to support the new vision and bring about great change."

Seasoned Chef Raghu Pillai from Abu Dhabi has been elected as the Guild Chairman, taking over from Chef Andy Cuthbert.

The guild board is a blend of long-standing members and new additions. Among them is Alan Orreal, the Vice President of the Guild. With his extensive experience as the SVP of Culinary at Emirates Airlines and his role as Chairman of Young Chef Development at Worldchefs, he brings a wealth of culinary expertise and competition knowledge. Another notable member is Bhatt Dwarka from beach club Zero Gravity, who has taken the helm as the chairman of the Dubai chapter. Chef Grant Marais from Gates Hospitality is stepping in as elected Vice President of Dubai, adding his valuable insights to the board.

Chef Peter de Kauwe, a founding member of the Guild from the Club Abu Dhabi, assumes the role of Assistant Vice President of the Guild. Having previously served as Vice President of Abu Dhabi, his dedication and experience will continue to support Chef Kushan Perera, who has been elected Vice President of Abu Dhabi. Additionally, Chef Sanjeewa Chamil takes on the position of Chairman in Abu Dhabi, while Chef K.A.C. Prasad, the former Vice President of the East Coast, embraces a new role as the Senior Vice President, overseeing the Media and Communication arm of the Guild.

Long-time UAE Chef Kuldeep Singh

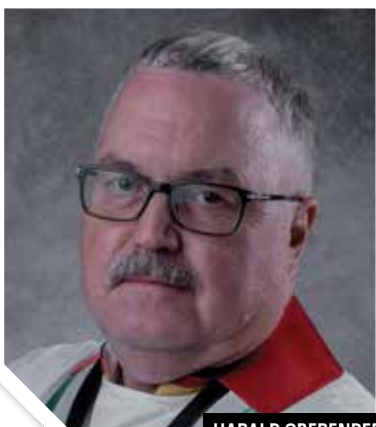
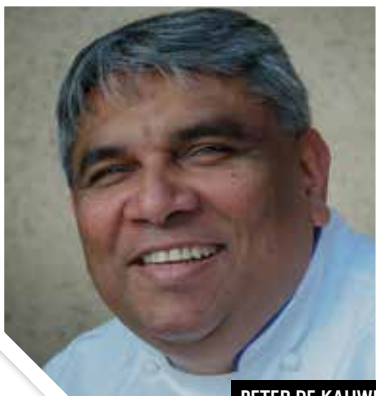


**RAGHU PILLAI****GRANT MARAIS****KULDEEP SINGH****VIVEK HURIA****MAJED AL SABAGH****SANJEEVA CHAMIL****BHATT DWARIKA**

has been elected Vice President of the East Coast, bringing his expertise and passion to this esteemed role. Chef Majed Al Sabagh and Chef Vivek Huria will continue their valuable contributions as Vice Presidents for Sharjah, Ajman, UAQ, and RAK, respectively.

The latest appointments of culinary professionals are set to bring a new wave of excellence, stirring the pot of the culinary landscape.

NAME	POSITION
ANDY CUTHBERT	President of the Guild
UWE MICHEEL	Guild Past President
ALAN ORREAL	Vice President of the Guild
RAGHU PILLAI	Chairman of the Guild
GRANT MARAIS	Vice President Dubai
KULDEEP SINGH	Vice President East Coast
VIVEK HURIA	Vice President Ras Al Khaimah
MAJED AL SABAGH	Vice President Shj, Ajman, UAQ
SANJEEVA CHAMIL	Chairman AD & District
BHATT DWARIKA	Chairman Dubai
KUSHAN PERERA	Vice President AD
APPOINTEE'S COMMITTEE	
JAMES GRIFFITH	Vice President – Marketing
HARALD OBERENDER	Vice President Corporate Relations
ROMEL HERNANDEZ	VP Membership Secretary
ATIM SUYATIM	Vice President- PR
COETSEE CROUCAMP	Chief Marshal
ROBIN GOMES	Asst. Chief Marshal
JOSEPHINE CUTHBERT	Vice President of Administration & Affairs (Internal & External)
PETER DE KAUWE	Asst Vice President
AMRO AL YASSIN	Asst Vice President Dubai
K.A.C PRASAD	Sr Vice President Media & Communication
HELEN MORRIS	Secretary General

August-September 2023 **Gulf Gourmet****HARALD OBERENDER****JAMES GRIFFITH****KUSHAN PERERA****COETSEE CROUCAMP****ATIM SUYATIM****ROMEL HERNANDEZ****PETER DE KAUWE****JOSEPHINE CUTHBERT****ROBIN GOMES****HELEN MORRIS****K.A.C. PRASAD****AMRO AL YASSIN**

# A Mis-steak

Cultivated Meat is the next step in food production. When these innovative products hit the shelves, will you embrace them?

By **Shreya Asopa**

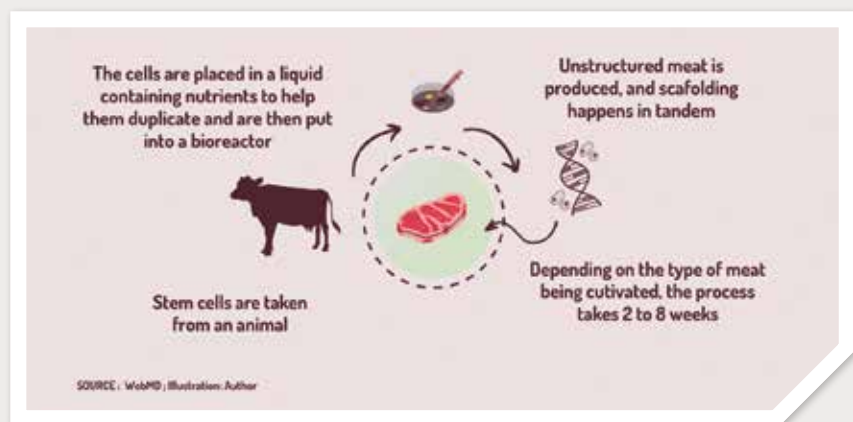
We can agree to disagree that lab-grown meat has caught fire in foodtech, but it is likely that it won't reach commercial scale until the next decade. While many of us have yet to devour it, Singapore has been ahead of the game since 2020, with lab-grown meats receiving a huge thumbs up. Falling into line, the FDA of the United States gave its nod to two separate businesses, Upside Food, and Good Meat.

The mechanics of lab meat from cell cultures is already present in the pharmaceutical industry. It came into the public eye when food critics sampled a lab-grown hamburger at a news conference in London back in 2013.

Cut to the present, where the idea has well-traversed to reach Australian startup Vow, which has unveiled the bell jar presenting a meatball made from mammoth DNA. Consider eating meat made from the cells of various corals, extinct animals that unleash a cornucopia of meaty innovations.

In a nutshell, it is described as taking stem cells, putting them in a petri dish, and you have meat, a technology attracting investments from established meat brands and venture capitalists. But there is an animal involved. While many businesses tout that they are moving away from fetal-bovine serum towards animal-free serum, critics express concerns about allergic reactions and the lack of transparency regarding ingredients in this highly processed product.

This refined product is expected



to replace conventional meat in supermarket aisles. But it can miss the mark due to its cost. According to the Journal of Agriculture and Food Research, with assumed tech advances, the cost of cultured meat would be \$63/kg, big bucks for a customer who eats a whopper ranging between \$4 to \$6. Even if we pull numbers out of the hat to make lab-grown meat into people's carts, it could have potential drawbacks for the brands in the long run.

Excitingly renowned chefs are already folding this exciting innovation into their menus. Good Meat will be served at chef José Andrés' restaurant, China Chilcano, in Washington. As reported by Business Wire, the dish, anticuchos de pollo, will have cultivated chicken from Good Meat that will be marinated with anticucho sauce, native potatoes, and ají Amarillo chimichurri. Upside Chicken has also made its debut at chef Dominique Crenn's restaurant, Bar Crenn.

Attempts to read the tea leaves of climate change have led to claims that cultivated meat could cull carbon emissions. Multiple studies have

highlighted that about 15 percent of greenhouse emissions are linked to livestock farming. However, whether cultivated meat is a better alternative for addressing climate issues remains unclear. Researchers from UC Davis pointed out that if lab-grown meat were cultivated in purified growth media, the global warming potential would be around 4 to 25 times greater than the average for retail beef. With sky-high orders, the hurdles would up the ante. The overall emissions would be put under the microscope based on the source of energy used to run the bioreactors.

Countries like Israel, the U.K., and Australia have planted the advocate flag; conversely, Italy has banned cultivated meat to protect its agri-food heritage. Do not miss the forests for the trees. The future is more about inoculating precision fermentation and cell cultures into our food.

But when you, as a chef, have a soft spot for farm-to-table ingredients and farmers with a centennial of breeding history, the question remains: are you ready to embrace cell-cultured meat?



# BE A SMART ENTREPRENEUR

Senior Lecturer at the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, **Helen Morris** addresses why it's time to be an entrepreneur in the F&B industry

**D**ubai has a vibrant restaurant scene with many entrepreneurs in the food and beverage sector. The restaurant scene is known for its diversity, with an overabundance of dining options offering a wide range of cuisine to suit anyone's palette. Many factors make Dubai an appealing place for budding restaurant entrepreneurs. Dubai is a major global tourist destination with a large expat population that demands a variety of international cuisines and a relationship that supports homegrown food and beverage offerings. It continually evolves and encourages innovation through unique restaurant concepts in a promising business environment that promotes the entrepreneurial journey in a landscape of opportunity, strategic government support, and progressive regulations. Moreover, the UAE has sanctioned many laws to boost entrepreneurship, including the landmark foreign direct investment law allowing 100% foreign ownership in specific sectors.

The UAE government and private sector have established numerous incubators, accelerators, and venture capital funds to accelerate the entrepreneurial journey. Hubs like Dubai Internet City, Abu Dhabi's Hub71, and Sharjah's Sheraa offer mentorship, funding, office space, and a community of like-minded individuals to promising companies.

Despite its thriving entrepreneurial scene, the UAE faces challenges that



**There is no doubt a growing emphasis on fostering entrepreneurship among hospitality students**

must be addressed. The key issues are access to funding for early-stage startups, the high cost of living, and the need for further regulatory reforms. The government, however, continues to address these through various initiatives and policy adjustments. As the UAE sets a goal of becoming a destination for cutting-edge startups, its entrepreneurial journey is anticipated to ascend to new heights.

The essence of entrepreneurship is the action of creating and scaling up a business venture, often involving considerable risks. Entrepreneurs are visionaries who identify opportunities, develop solutions, and continually refine their approach to achieve success. They challenge the status quo, driven by an inherent need to innovate. The entrepreneurial journey is not merely about establishing a profitable business; it is a pathway towards creating impact, generating employment, fostering economic growth, and driving societal change. Furthermore, education and

skill-building programs have also become cornerstones of supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Universities, technical institutes, and professional development platforms offer courses in entrepreneurship and innovation, fostering a culture of startup mentality among the young population.

One such university, The Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management (EAHM) in Dubai, ranked as one of the world's best hospitality schools, specializes in providing internationally recognized business management degrees with a hospitality leadership focus. Some of the academy's alums have embarked on the food and beverage entrepreneurial path and consequently opened successful restaurants in Dubai. Their entrepreneurial venture began with a vision reflecting entrepreneurial passion and ideals. So, what motivates some of the academy's graduates to venture into Dubai's competitive food and beverage environment, facing uncertainty, challenges, and limited expertise in opening a new business venture?

With the academy's focus on business management, students master skills in different subjects that are not just limited to finance, accounting, human capital, strategic management, marketing, revenue management, and business ethics, all of which are crucial in developing a new business venture. In addition, the university offers innovation and entrepreneurial courses that inspire the entrepreneurial mind and provide

a foundation for those who want to pursue a new business venture in the food and beverage sector. Integrating entrepreneurship in hospitality education encourages students to think outside the box, innovate, and develop creative solutions to industry challenges. This mindset prepares them to be proactive problem solvers, enabling them to create new business ventures or enhance existing ones. The entrepreneurial training equips students with essential business skills like financial management, marketing, and strategic planning. This comprehensive understanding of the business side of hospitality enables them to make informed decisions and seize growth opportunities.

Many of the academy's graduates who have opened their own food and beverage businesses have credited their determination to the opportunities in EAHM's food and beverage curriculum. Whether it be the core practical classes, events held on campus that see students participate in guest chef dinners, EAHM's food festival, supplier promotions, or an elective course that focuses on student groups creating their restaurant concept through a live operation. The journey is as realistic as possible within the constraints of the learning environment, from concept creation to marketing, finance, menu design and planning, resource management, and conflict resolution. Also, the opportunity to collaborate with various industry leaders and entrepreneurs outside of the food and beverage sector on these courses provides students with real-world insights and networking opportunities. Mentorship programs can further connect students with successful entrepreneurs who guide and inspire them. As the food and beverage sector becomes increasingly competitive and dynamic, there is no doubt a growing emphasis on fostering entrepreneurship among hospitality students.

Likewise, teaching students about emerging technologies relevant to the



hospitality sector, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and virtual reality, prepares them to leverage these tools to drive innovation. By bridging the gap between hospitality education and entrepreneurship, educational institutions can equip students with the skills, knowledge, and mindset needed to thrive in the evolving industry. Embracing innovation, creativity, and an entrepreneurial spirit will benefit individual students and contribute to the growth and transformation of the hospitality sector as a whole. As the industry evolves, nurturing the next generation of hospitality entrepreneurs becomes increasingly critical for sustained success.

While many of EAHM's alumni have journeyed on the food and beverage entrepreneurial path, they highlight

similarities in the positive aspects and challenges of opening a new business venture. While owning your own restaurant comes with stressful elements of financial risk, time commitment, regulatory requirements, and a significant amount of stress with internal and external personnel, the fulfillment of being your boss outweighs these issues. In contrast, the satisfaction that comes with owning your own business, the community engagement and recognition, the financial opportunity of a successful restaurant, and the creative freedom of starting a new restaurant venture. In the next issue, we will interview graduates that have started their own entrepreneurial food and beverage direction and get an insight into not only what keeps them awake at night but, more importantly, their fulfillment on this exciting journey.

# Rising Star

## Celebrating Alumni - The ICCA Dubai Culinary Scholarship Program

**Saaron Emimah John**, Content & Communications Manager, ICCA

Dubai speaks to Chef **Shayan** from Sri Lanka

From a humble steward to a highly skilled chef, Shayan's culinary tale is an inspiration. A native of Sri Lanka, Shayan's passion for cooking was fueled by his grandfather's culinary tales. His childhood dream was to follow in his grandfather's footsteps and become a professional chef. Unfortunately, family circumstances prevented him from pursuing a formal

education in hotel management in his home country. Undeterred, he headed to Dubai in 2017 to chase his dream.

His early days in Dubai were demanding. Working long hours as a steward, he also committed to a side course to enhance his culinary knowledge. His determination began to pay off when a friend offered him a position at the Four

Points by Sheraton as a commis chef. Though initially apprehensive, Shayan seized the opportunity, moving a step closer to his dream.

His culinary voyage continued at an Italian restaurant in Dubai Marina, where he mastered the art of Italian cooking. While Shayan's career trajectory was good, he yearned for professional culinary education. When he learned about the International Center for Culinary Arts (ICCA) scholarship, he diligently researched and applied.

The moment he received news of his acceptance for the ICCA scholarship, it was as if time stood still. He was elated beyond words. His heart pounded with excitement and disbelief as he reread the acceptance letter. It was a moment of pure joy and a profound realization of the journey that awaited him. With a steadfast commitment to supporting his family and a burning desire to learn, Shayan relentlessly sought opportunities as he pursued his program at ICCA, leading to a position at the prestigious Caesar's Palace Hotel. Looking back, he proudly reflects, "In a very short period, I reached this position, and now I am working in a Michelin-star restaurant as a commis 1."

At Hell's Kitchen by Gordon Ramsay, Shayan further enriched his culinary prowess, gaining insights into the various aspects of kitchen work along with the professional training at ICCA. He perfected the art of crafting Wellington, one of Ramsay's iconic dishes, earning a bronze medal at a U.S.







The ICCA scholarship was not just a ticket to higher education; it was a testament to my passion for the culinary arts and my potential to make a mark in the industry

cheese competition. His talent didn't stop there; Shayan struck gold in the Global Chefs Semi-Finals in Africa and the Middle East in 2023, securing a place in the 2025 finals in Singapore.

#### **MAKING THE MOST OF THE ICCA SCHOLARSHIP**

Shayan recalls, "I felt a surge of emotions. It was a mix of relief and a bit of nervous anticipation. Relief because I knew I could follow my culinary dreams without worrying about financial constraints, and nervous anticipation because I knew I had a great responsibility to make the most of this opportunity." He saw the scholarship as a vote of confidence in his potential and an affirmation of his culinary dreams. It was the perfect validation of the countless hours he had spent refining his skills in the kitchen. In his words, "The ICCA scholarship was not just a ticket to higher education; it was a testament to my passion for the culinary arts and my potential to make a mark in the industry."

Upon receiving the International Center for Culinary Arts (ICCA) scholarship, Shayan entered a transformative phase in his career. The ICCA, renowned for its world-class culinary education, offered Shayan a platform to turn his raw talent into refined culinary artistry. The scholarship, a beacon of hope, became a game-changer for him.



At ICCA, the curriculum was designed to expand his culinary horizons, providing exposure to a plethora of international cuisines and kitchen management skills. Shayan recounts, "The ICCA scholarship was a lifeline for me. It wasn't just about learning new dishes; it was about understanding the heart and soul of the culinary arts." Chef Julia Child once said, "Find something you're passionate about and keep tremendously interested in it," Shayan took her advice to heart. As he mastered the intricacies of various cuisines, he realized that his passion was not merely about cooking but about creating experiences.

The scholarship also emphasized the importance of communication skills in the culinary world. Shayan, who had initially grappled with English, saw significant improvement in his abilities. He shares, "At ICCA, I learned that cooking isn't just about ingredients and recipes. It's about telling a story, and to tell that story well, you need good communication skills." Shayan's culinary education extended beyond cooking techniques. He learned the importance of menu planning, exposure to various cuisines, and cultural menu development. The

scholarship's comprehensive approach to education bolstered Shayan's confidence, enabling him to apply for positions at larger establishments.

Reflecting on his journey, Shayan fondly states, "This professional journey made my parents proud and created a huge impact on my life." His advice to young, aspiring chefs is simple: "Work for your dreams; keep learning. The journey to culinary excellence never ends." Shayan's story is a testament to his conviction that hard work, determination, and an insatiable hunger for knowledge are the ingredients for success in the culinary world. Through his journey, he assures us that the taste of success, much like a well-crafted dish, is worth the effort.

*Every month, Rising Star features inspirational stories of talented chefs who have dedicated their lives to perfecting their craft and continuously pushing the boundaries of culinary excellence. This initiative is executed in strategic partnership with the Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG), the World Association of Chefs Societies (WorldChefs), and City & Guilds, London.*



## ECG team's magic in Sri Lanka

The talented chefs of ECG achieved remarkable success at The Culinary Art Food Expo (CAFE) 2023, which took place in Sri Lanka in June

Described as Sri Lanka's one of the premier and renowned Food and Hospitality showcases, the Culinary Art Food Expo (CAFE) 'Cafe 2023' concluded successfully in June with the ECG team proudly bringing home nine medals.

With thousands of chefs putting their culinary skills to the test, the expo covers every facet of food, from farm, factory to table. Hosted at the BMICH by the Chefs Guild of Lanka and the World Association of Chefs Societies (WACS), the three-day event kicked off on the 9th of June, 2023 featuring tantalizing plates, creative bakes, live demonstrations, and interactive stalls.

The culinary contingent from the Emirates Culinary Guild team won nine medals that ranged in categories from Hot cooking to plated desserts.

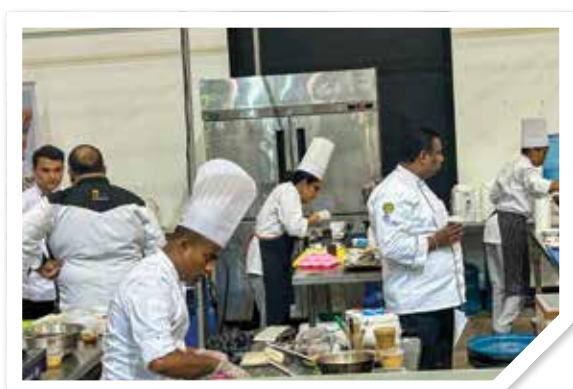
Esteemed judges from the United States, Europe, the Far East, the Pacific



Rim, and the Middle East, all approved by WACS, evaluated the competition. The presence of Worldchefs President, Chef Thomas Gugler further enhanced

the event's prestige. The 20th edition of CAFE returns after three years due to the global pandemic, attracting exhibitors and chefs from all over the country.





## THE MEDAL TABLE

### **Nishan Nayanakanth (Senior CDP)**

**Class B3:** Hot Cooking Open (Local Beef / Pork) & Lamb — Gold medal

**Class B4:** Hot Cooking Seafood — Silver Medal

**Class A2:** 5 Course Set Dinner Menu — Silver Medal

### **Dilip Rajapaksha (Pastry Chef)**

**Class A5:** Ritzbury Plated Desserts — Bronze Medal

### **Panagoda Arachchige Heshan Cristopher Perera (Sous Chef)**

**Class A2:** 5 Course Set Dinner Menu — Silver Medal

**Class A3:** Hot Cooking Seafood — Silver Medal

### **Ishara Mayanga (Chef De Cuisine)**

**Class B4:** Hot Cooking Seafood — Bronze Medal

### **Krushnath Ramesh Jadhav (CDC)**

**Class A2:** B3: Hot Cooking Open (Local Beef / Pork) & Lamb — Bronze Medal

**Class B4:** Hot Cooking SeaFood — Gold Medal







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# newmembers



Sunil Dandekar, Group Creative Manager; Chandan Chakravarty, R&D Manager/ NPD Chef; Rishi Shrivastav, Group Marketing Manager with Chef Harald Oberender, receiving the Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Andy Cuthbert (center)

**Al Kabeer** - Founded over 40 years ago, the Group has evolved into a multi-dimensional, multi-product business with offices, processing units and cold storage in over 10 countries.

It takes pride in distributing a range of more than 300 product Variants to over 20,000 retail outlets in GCC and international Markets.

It all begins with sourcing and is the first step in the direction of uncompromising quality. The freshest of meat, poultry, fish, vegetables, herbs and spices are used to ensure excellent taste and quality.

To monitor Halal processing at various international plants, a competent team is routinely sent for spot inspections, to ensure only meat and poultry slaughtered as per Islamic rites (Shariah) is imported.

The Group has dedicated factories around the globe from where the



highest quality raw materials are sourced, analyzed at our state-of-the-art laboratory, and subsequently cleared for manufacturing.

The utmost care is taken to ensure that the processing at these factories is done under stringent conditions. Our plants are built to international standards, equipped with the latest machinery, and are approved by the EEC, The United States Armed Forces, and the Australian Quarantine Board.

In the food industry, hygiene is critical, and at Al-Kabeer, this has become a code of conduct. To ensure that the most rigorous standards are maintained, processing is carried out in an ideal 15°C, and storage and transport is at -18°C. A

complete and viable back up source of power and water is always available.

Moreover, modern spirals, plate and blast freezers, along with massive cold storage facilities guarantee that the food is handled under ideal conditions throughout the production process. At Al-Kabeer it all adds up to a relentless pursuit of excellence.

In addition, the in-house laboratory team monitors the production continuously by sampling products at each stage of the production process, as well as ensuring that the equipment is properly sterilized after each production run.

The Al Kabeer Range caters to all types of palates with one thing in common - Good Taste! The range includes meat and poultry products, seafood products, vegetarian products, and ready-to-eat meals. We are proud to market the largest range of frozen and processed food in the Middle East.





Kashif Akhtar, Sales Director; Rasheed Chirakkal, Sales Manager - Food Service and Wiehann Nortje, R&D Manager, Al Islami Foods, receiving the Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG Past President Chef Uwe Micheel

**Al Islami Foods** enjoys the second largest market share in the frozen meat sector in the UAE, and a winner of 'Best Halal Consumer Brand' at the 2020 iHalal International Awards awarded by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), a body made up of 57 Islamic countries.

Al Islami product portfolio has expanded over the years from its real halal whole chickens and chicken portions, that are hand slaughtered, non-stunned and without adding of any hormones, to processed foods, frozen fruit and vegetables, French fries, and seafood as well as some child-oriented items under the Aladdin brand. Al Islami boosts highest safety standards backed by processes, machinery and international certifications from the BRC, FSSC 22000 and HACCP schemes. Similarly, its storage and distribution at -30 degrees



Celsius, backed by a high-tech fleet, is fitted with a GPS tracking device to ensure route optimisations.

To consolidate its position further in the frozen food market, Al Islami Foods has released a flurry of new innovations. Since the final quarter of 2020, it has launched over 40 new products in total. To name few, it has Zing Strips, Zing Fillet, Chicken Tikka and Tender Chicken Breast, as well as Skinny Fries, Jumbo Shrimps, Chicken Fries, Chicken Bites and Paratha range, etc. In 2022, we have strengthened

our existing kebab range with seekh kebabs, chapli kebabs and shami kebabs to boost the biggest portfolio.

Al Islami will surely continue to enjoy a competitive edge in the market in both UAE and international markets. The company's ethics also play an important role, particularly its real halal positioning and quality-conscious attitude, together with the range of great products where quality is not compromised in any way to deliver the best to its worldwide consumers.



**Laurent Stevenart, Plant Based Meat Director (Nabati) at Americana Foods, receiving the Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG Past President Chef Uwe Micheel**

Established in 1964, **Americana Foods** is one of the largest FMCG companies & foodservice players in the MENA region.

The region has a rich culinary heritage that is heavily reliant on meat-based dishes. However, there is a growing trend among consumers towards plant-based diets, driven by ethical, environmental, and health concerns. Nabati is the plant based meat brand developed by Americana Foods to address this shift in consumer behavior. Here are some reasons why Nabati is the future of protein in the region:

#### **Health and sustainability**

One of the most pressing concerns facing the MENA region is the rise in chronic diseases linked to dietary habits, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Nabati's products are cholesterol-free, which is a significant selling point in a region where heart disease is a leading cause of death. Cholesterol is a major contributor to heart disease, so Nabati's cholesterol-free products are an excellent alternative for consumers seeking to



improve their heart health. Nabati's plant-based meat is also more sustainable than meat-based products, which require significantly more resources to produce.

#### **Technology**

Nabati's use of technology to improve the taste, texture, and health of their products is a significant advantage in the region. Taste and health factors are crucial factors in food choice. By harnessing the latest technology, Nabati can create products that can rival traditional meat-based dishes in terms of taste and texture. This is especially important in a region where meat-based dishes are deeply ingrained in the culture.

#### **Affordability**

Nabati's commitment to providing affordable plant-based meat products

across retail and foodservice is critical in making them accessible to a wider audience. This is essential in overcoming the barrier to trial that many consumers have faced when considering plant-based options till date.

#### **Locally Produced**

Nabati's products are produced in Saudi Arabia. Local production enables the brand to have added flexibility regarding output and R&D. Furthermore, it ensures fresher stock to restaurant operators as the products aren't shipped from overseas. Finally, Americana Foods is a leader in food production and has a clear understanding of local taste and texture preferences.

In conclusion, Nabati's focus on health, sustainability, technology, affordability, and locally produced products makes them the future of protein in the MENA region. With the region's rapidly changing dietary habits, Nabati is well-positioned to meet the needs of an increasingly health-conscious population while still maintaining the rich culinary heritage of the region.



**Jérôme Hofer, Owner / President, Ginox Swiss Kitchen, receiving the Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG Past President Chef Uwe Micheel**

**Ginox Swiss Kitchen** has stood the test of time as an iconic symbol of innovation, sustainability, and excellent craftsmanship in the world of professional kitchen equipment. With roots embedded deep in Swiss precision and heritage, this world-renowned brand is synonymous with unparalleled quality, performance, and aesthetic beauty.

Established nearly 150 years ago, Ginox Swiss Kitchen has relentlessly pursued its mission of creating robust, efficient, and technically advanced kitchen solutions. The brand's guiding philosophy hinges on understanding the evolving needs of the culinary world and creating innovative products that seamlessly fuse functionality and form.

Every product that bears the Ginox Swiss Kitchen emblem epitomizes Swiss precision, superior performance, and durability. Their product range encompasses everything, from cooking ranges, refrigeration systems, and



dishwashing units to custom stainless-steel furniture. These products are designed to ensure the highest level of efficiency, hygiene, and safety, reflecting the brand's commitment to upholding the highest international standards.

The brand's success is deeply committed in its dedication to sustainability. Ginox Swiss Kitchen continually strives to reduce its ecological footprint by incorporating energy-efficient technologies and recyclable materials into its product designs. This commitment to the environment has made Ginox a preferred choice for eco-conscious chefs and businesses worldwide, earning the brand numerous awards and recognitions.

But perhaps, what truly sets Ginox Swiss Kitchen apart is its exceptional customer service. From detailed product consultation, bespoke design solutions, to efficient after-sales service and follow-up, the brand ensures a seamless customer journey from start to finish. This unwavering dedication to customer satisfaction mirrors Ginox's commitment to building enduring relationships with its clients and partners.

In the culinary world, where precision, durability, and innovative solutions are paramount, Ginox Swiss Kitchen has emerged as a go-to partner, fueling the dreams of professional chefs and culinary enthusiasts alike. The brand's rich heritage, coupled with its forward-thinking approach, has positioned Ginox Swiss Kitchen as an unrivaled leader in the supply of professional kitchen equipment on the global stage.





**Helene Raudaschl, Chairman & Founder and Karlo Pacheco, Managing Director, Indoguna Dubai LLC, receiving the Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Andy Cuthbert**

**Indoguna Dubai LLC**, a prominent member of FOODSERVICE APME (Asia Pacific and Middle East), has emerged as the leading food distributor in the Middle East. Since its establishment in 2005, Indoguna Dubai has built a strong reputation of importing and distributing some of the best international selection of meats, seafood, poultry, fine foods, dairy, beverage and ethnic foods.

Its clients spans from family restaurants, premium dining, QSR, hotels, airlines, caterers, retailers to private clients.

**Indoguna Productions FZCO**, is a state-of-the-art halal manufacturing facility established in 2012. The facility boasts the highest standards in Halal food



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production and quality management, food safety, innovative food designs to satisfy the diversified needs of its clients in the GCC region.

This facility serves as a hub for providing its clients with consistent Halal food products in bulk or retail format, convenience foods, kitchens solutions, menu & recipes solutions, private

branding possibilities, and many other food solutions that cover most of the F&B landscape.

Drawing from the founder's three-decades experience in food manufacturing and distribution throughout the Asia Pacific and Middle East regions, Indoguna Productions FZCO was born to tap into the market gap in the Middle East region.

Indoguna Dubai proudly boasts an extensive collection of both in-house and partner brands, tailored to meet the discerning tastes of customers across the United Arab Emirates and the GCC region, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.



**Ayca Koc, MENA Food Business manager and Elie Lteif, Culinary Advisor, receiving the Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG Past President Chef Uwe Micheel**

Nestlé's heritage in the Middle East and North Africa goes back over 100 years and today, Nestlé operates 25 Food & Beverage factories across the 19 countries of the MENA region, committed to Nestlé's purpose of unlocking the power of food to enhance quality of life for everyone, today and for generations to come. The Nestlé portfolio in the region currently exceeds 60 innovative product brands in a wide range of categories: Dairy, Infant Nutrition, Coffee and Creamers, Confectionery, Bottled Water, Breakfast Cereals, Culinary products, Health Science, and Pet Care, among others.

Nestlé Professional is committed to providing the finest ingredients, operational knowledge, and uncompromised support to food service



operations. We're in the business of helping your business succeed, our goal is to help our customers grow their businesses with our creative, branded beverage and culinary solutions. Nestlé Professional has a global network of 10,000 passionate and committed professionals ever ready to serve our most demanding customers' needs. Our expertise comprises of combining global thinking with local understanding with our dedicated, state-of-the art culinary and beverage centers around the world. We believe in the power of food to enhance the quality of life. It is this

belief that fuels our commitment to use our global scale, resources, and expertise to contribute to a healthier future for people and the planet. Our work is guided by our three global ambitions: to support children, develop communities and preserve the planet for the future. This is at the core of everything we do including all our new innovations and renovations we bring to the market day in and day out.



**Iyad Nouneh, Regional Head of Digital Marketing & E-Commerce Manager receiving the Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG Past President Chef Uwe Micheel**

**NRTC** group was established in the UAE over 40 years ago with a mission to supply the freshest fruits & vegetables in the growing demand of the UAE and other regions.

The group's top priorities are to innovate in modern lifestyles and craft new ways for the consumers to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables. In the past four decades we have dedicated all our efforts to delivering not just quality produce but also trust. This is reflected in the many awards and praises we have earned over the years. In order to respond to our customer's growing needs and demands, we strive to be a lean and encompassing organization which can fulfill the vital needs of the industry.



NRTC group is proud to deliver high quality of fresh fruits and vegetables all over UAE. We import more than 400 tons of fresh fruits and vegetables daily, from Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Morocco and Jordan. The products are transported by land and sea to the Dubai Central Market. In the case of certain kinds of produce with a short shelf life, we import by air.

The department has 11 state-of-the-

art chiller sites with a total of 35 cold storage rooms, where the products are repacked for immediate distribution within the UAE. Customer Satisfaction being our prime focus, we consistently innovate and adopt modernized approaches to keep up with the ever growing consumer needs.

NRTC has an excellent supply chain and perfectly working systems and processes that ensures the produce are delivered in fresh condition and good packaging to our customers at a competitive price.





PASSIONATELY CRAFTING PROFESSIONAL  
KITCHENS FOR OVER 150 YEARS.

Our story is one of Swiss precision blending harmoniously  
with Emirati tradition, a symphony of flavors where modern  
stainless steel meets timeless passion.

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[www.ginoxgroup.com](http://www.ginoxgroup.com)







- **Delicious**
- **0% Cholesterol**
- **Affordable and Locally produced**
- **Great Source of Proteins**



Introducing Nabati, the delicious plant-based meat range with 7 options that boast chicken and beef taste profiles, all while being incredibly healthy! Nabati is produced by Americana Foods, the leading food company in the MENA region. Americana Foods manufacture and distribute a diversified food product portfolio including red meat, chicken products, canned beans, dairy, frozen vegetables, pastries, cold sandwiches, biscuits and cakes, chips and snacks.