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WORLDCHEFS CONGRESS & ABU DHABI UAE 30 MAY-2 JUN

Dear Fellow Chefs, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to the August-September issue of our Gulf Gourmet.

I hope you all had a good summer and had some quality time with family and friends. After the very successful Congress and ExpoCulinaire in Abu Dhabi. We are getting very busy working on the next two big events and few smaller ones... busy times ahead.

Our next event is our Dates Online competition, which we just launched in 5 countries, do not miss it. The winner from each country will be going for the big final in Italy.

Our team for the World Cup is working on their respective showpieces and cakes, more team news in October.

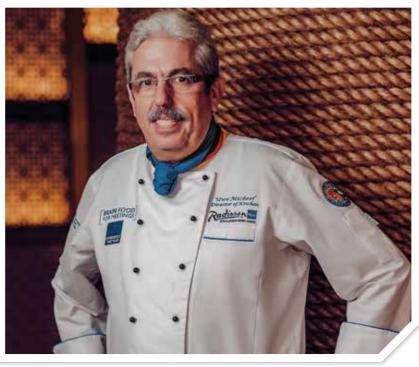
We are also planning a new event early 2023: 'Emirates Culinary Guild Chefs at the Races in Meydan'. Watch this space for more details for this live cooking event.

Our very own ExpoCulinaire and Salon Culinaire will be back in Sharjah for 2023.

15th – 17th May 2023 Expo Culinaire and Salon Culinaire – United Arab Emirates.

In addition to the exhibition, international salon culinaire and education area we will have 2 more big events. First is the Middle East Africa Global Chefs Final for Senior Chefs, Junior Chefs and Pastry Chefs. Second is a new category for the Best Vegan Chef. The winner of each category will represent our region at the Worldchefs Congress in Singapore 2024. Our Continental Director and very own Chairman Andy Cuthbert is finalizing the details.

I am also pleased to confirm that we will host Alen Thong Trophy for Young Chefs National Teams. Mr. Rajan from J.M. Foods our longtime supporter has confirmed his support for the same. Thank you to Rajan











and the J.M. Foods Team. Watch this space for more news and update.

If you have any questions for any of our events please do contact myself or Mrs. Josephine Cuthbert in the Guild Office at

emiratesculinaryguild@gmail.com

A big Thank You to everyone who helped us to make the Worldchefs Congress 2022 in Abu Dhabi a big success. The Team from Worldchefs, our Emirates Culinary Guild Team, Joanne Cook of Purple Kitchen Team, Sunjeh Raja and the ICCA Crew.

All our Sponsors. Our food and Beverage Partners from ADNEC and Erth Hotel. We had lots of Partners and Friends who supported us.

THANK YOU ALL

Please visit www.gulfgourmet.net

to browse through previous issue of this magazines. Visit www. emiratesculinaryguild.net to see latest happenings on the events calendar. And visit www.facebook.com/ wacsyoungchefs for young chefs to be in contact with over 4,000 chefs across the globe.

Please do not miss the company profile of our corporate members. We really do appreciate your support. Also do look at the Friends of the Guild pages to check all our supporters.

Thank you to the team of our partner at Waterfront, who hosted us at the Wyndham Hotel in Deira for our June meeting.

Culinary regards,

Uwe Micheel

President, Emirates Culinary Guild

ggcontents

Thank You
Check out the supporters
of the Emirates Salon
Culinaire, EXPO Culinaire
and Worldchefs Congress

> Friends of the Guild
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of Barakat Quality Plus

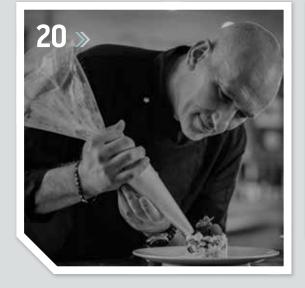
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Barilla



































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August-September 2022 Gulf Gourmet

THE MARATHON MAN

Life is not a sprint, it's a marathon. Nothing exemplifies this better than the career of Chef **Neil Ranasinghe**. The R&D head and culinary lead of Barakat Quality Plus has built a remarkable repertoire of experiences and skills in his three and a half decades in the food industry. And there is more to come...

eader, mentor, culinaire, innovator, father, husband, musician...there are many hats that Chef Neil Ranasinghe wears. With remarkable ease, too.

Maybe he derives the strength to juggle so many roles from his spiritual self; or maybe it's his inherent love for food at play; maybe it's the search for excellence that drives him. That's hard to know. But what is clear for everyone to see if that his journey from being a waiter to becoming the R&D head and culinary lead of Barakat Quality Plus is nothing short of spectacular.

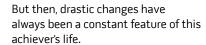
Today, the 56-year-old chef enjoys the enviable position of being the chief innovator of Barakat. It's a far cry from his initial days in the hospitality industry, when he waited tables to support his family of mother and sister. "I started in this industry at the age of 19. In this time, I have worked across



I started in this industry at the age of 19. In this time, I have worked across sections and departments, going from being a chef to a production manager to the R&D lead

sections and departments, going from being a chef to a production manager to the R&D lead," he says.

A 360-degree change it was, to go from being a chef to a production manager.



SLOW BUT STEADY

Born and raised in Colombo in Sri Lanka, Chef Neil was forced to grow up when his father away from the family just as he entered his teens. Instead of dealing with typical teenage drama, he was grappling with the challenges of becoming the man of the house even before turning into an adult. "My mother is an exceptionally strong woman and she tried to give us as normal a childhood as she could. With a full-time job, she needed us to manage the household chores." The siblings took turns cooking meals to lessen the burden on their mother. Although it was not evident at the time and long after, Chef Neil was sowing the seeds for his later career.

When he started as a trainee in 1983 at the Taj Samudra in Colombo, there was no defined move to the kitchen. "I did whatever I was asked to. At the time, a job was not about a career. It was about putting food on the table." Little had changed when Chef Neil made his way to Abu Dhabi to work for the Hilton. From being a waiter to an executive floor attendant, he worked across departments. However, it was during this time that he started wondering if the kitchen was a better option for him.

Turns out, it was!

Chef Neil began as a kitchen helper, eventually joining the pastry department to help with making icecream and fruit tarts. One thing led to another and before he knew it, he was involved in multiple aspects of culinary creations, from banqueting to the hot kitchen to fine dining. Chef Neil was also privy to the exclusive club of royalty catering when the Hilton hosted royal events and galas. From doing some live cooking shows on TV to being featured in media for his superfast oyster shucking skills, the Sri Lankan chef had many opportunities at the Hilton to gain recognition for his talent. "That was



also where I met the late chef Michael Wunsch, the mind and soul behind the establishment of Barakat quality plus. A very inspiring mentor, he had a way of making you feel like a part of the team and motivating you to give your best."

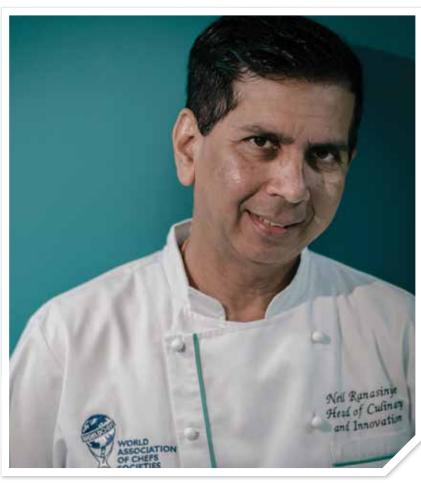
Nearly a decade later, when he left Hilton in 1994, Chef Neil was ready for a more prominent role in the kitchen. He moved to Dubai, joining the preopening team of Trader Vic's at the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza as chef de partie. A couple of years later, he went to Sri Lanka to get married and then decided to spend some time with family. More than a year passed before he returned to Dubai, joining the Al-Bustan Rotana Hotel's preopening team.

But after a couple of years, Chef Neil started missing his family. Along the way, he had also become a father to a daughter. So once again he headed back to Sri Lanka, this time to start a business with his brother.

Once a chef, always a chef. Within two years, he returned again to Dubai briefly before heading out to Bermuda to join the Fairmont Hamilton Princess Hotel.

With his specialised skills and his easy going attitude, Chef Neil proved over the next five years that any team would be lucky to have him. So much so that when his executive chef moved to handle another property within the group, he offered the Sri Lankan chef a chance to accompany him to the U.S. "I went with him to the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess Hotel in Arizona. In these two properties, I learnt a lot about international food hygiene standards as well as operations. These lessons were invaluable."

However, after a year and a half, the Ranasinghe family decided to move out of the U.S. to be closer to home in Sri Lanka for his daughter future, who had become a teenager. Although the initial decision was to move back to Sri Lanka, an offer from the Fairmont Dubai proved too good to refuse.





My mother is an exceptionally strong woman and she tried to give us as normal a childhood as she could. With a full-time job, she needed us to manage the household chores

A chance conversation with Chef Michael Wunsch truncated the assignment at Fairmont Dubai. "He had started at Barakat and he needed someone to help him the operations. I had fond memories of working with Chef Michael at the Abu Dhabi Hilton and so within a year, I left Fairmont to join him."

Chef Neil hasn't looked back since.

A PRODUCTION PRO

When he joined Barakat in 2011, the operation was just taking off. "I went from being a chef to a production manager. It required a complete change of mindset." Today, the company has more than 700 people. Of these, mainly majority is working in manufacturing process. "We do fresh-pressed juices, fruits and vegetables, salads, ice-creams, sorbets; we supply B2B and B2C. Our concept is extended kitchen and we have a lot of hotels, restaurants and grocers as our clients."

Chef Neil's job is to oversee innovation at Barakat. The company is now focusing on its B2C offerings, which it sells through retail and ecommerce channels. "We keep innovating for different seasons and events. We are not in the volumes business. We don't want to have the same 10 products and mass manufacture them throughout the year."

The reluctance to mass manufacture is also what make Barakat cautious about using automation blindly throughout its facilities. You would think that a

company that produces so many items would resort to a lot of automation. Chef Neil, however, makes it clear that Barakat is a 'people first' business. Our leader Mr. Kenneth

D' Costa managing director of Barakat group believe the same. "Some of our lines can be automated but in some others, we need talented people to do the job. For example, we produce icecreams. No one really makes ice-creams manually anymore. Same with juices. Automation can easily take care of these two lines. But fruits and vegetables and salads require customisation. You can't offer the same cut of lettuce to every client or make the same kind of fruit salad for every customer. It depends on their needs and their use case. Here, we need people to do these manually depending on the client needs."

About 60 percent of Barakat's operations are automated. Forty percent is still done by people manually. Manual work is especially valuable in cases where Barakat experiments with new concepts.



I went from being a chef to a production manager. It required a complete change of mindset

"At the moment, we are testing healthy detox juices. That's a small-scale operation and it is not feasible to automate it. We need the flexibility to try out different ideas." Robots are also not the place to look for innovation, which are crucial for the long-term success of any business. The hive mind of happy employees often leads to good ideas, Chef Neil asserts.

This focus on people extends to managing them too. Even during the Covid pandemic, Barakat did not lay off its staff. Any adjustments were made only to account for retirement-ready employees. "We are not in the hiring and firing business. Chef Michael was very clear about treating employees well. And we have taken his attitude forward."

Ask Chef Neil about any challenges he foresees for Barakat and the food industry and he dismisses them as inconsequential in the long run. "We are a very strong team. I know that we have the ability to take on whatever temporary or long-term challenges that come our way."

Some of this confidence comes from his unshakeable belief in God. A religious man, Chef Neil often credits a higher power for his success.

INNOVATION IS THE FUTURE

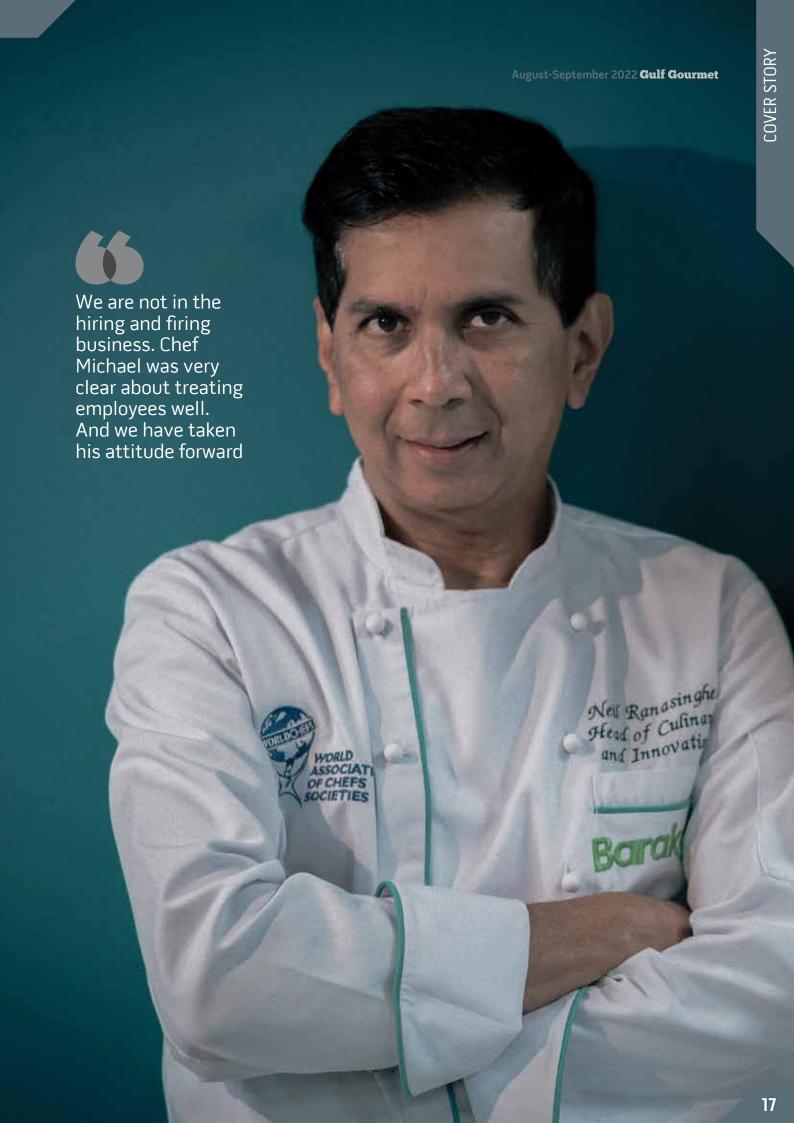
Unlike big hotel and restaurant chains, a food production company can afford to experiment more with its offerings as it looks to create new markets and client segments. With this in mind, Barakat gives its R&D team healthy budgets to look into options. "There are no restrictions for us here when it comes to researching food. Our leaders believe in us and we are empowered to do what is right," Chef Neil elaborates.

In its B2B business, Barakat "innovates almost daily" because clients communicate their needs directly. In B2C, customer testing, market research and surveys form the basis for product rollouts.

Barakat also works very closely with the Emirates Culinary Guild to engage with chefs across the hospitality industry and contribute to the industry's development. The company's engagement with the guild goes as far back as two decades. "Chefs have a bigger role in society and we want to work with them continuously. The guild is a part of us. We support ICCA. We allow hotel schools in the UAE to bring students to visit our facilities and see our manufacturing processes."

In his personal capacity too, Chef







Neil engages with the guild. He recently participated in the World Chefs' Congress as a senior judge for carving, poultry and butchery as well as for live cooking. "There were limited international judges this time because of the lingering effects of Covid pandemic but given the circumstances, I would say it went well." The event did not compromise on its usual standards and although it was a smaller affair than it usually is, everything was done well.

Chef Neil believes that it is important for everyone associated with the hospitality industry to engage with associations such as the ECG to "guide the next generation". "There's a very big gap between the cooking methods of our generation and the new generation. The knowledge of cooking is on the decline. Now people just resort to technology to find quick solutions. Back when I started, we had to buy books to learn about techniques and ingredients. Sometimes, we would have to wait for the next salary before we could buy a new book. Now, it's all about Google and YouTube."

Although he doesn't resent the younger generation the convenience factor, the experienced chef does wish they deepen their knowledge of the basics of cooking. "As a young chef, I used to make 100 kilo mayonnaise in a batch, manually. Now, it's all readymade. Although it is more hygienic, can you afford as a chef to not know how to make it from scratch? This dependence makes you unable to deal with emergency situations and it also reduces the uniqueness of your offerings."

Therein lies the real talent!

A PEOPLE PERSON

As is obvious, Neil Ranasinghe, the professional packs a powerful punch. Neil Ranasinghe, the person is no less exciting.

A devoted husband and an indulgent father, he assigns the same importance to his family life as he does to his





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professional life. And yes, he plays the judge of family cooking contests. "Although I like all cuisines, my go-to comfort food is Sri Lankan home-cooked food. And my wife is the specialist there," he smiles. Chef Neil doesn't do the cooking at home but he does bring some tips and tricks from the professional kitchen to the table. "I show my wife how to reduce cooking time, how to batch cook, etc. When you are a professional chef, it's hard to just stand by and watch."

Their daughter is now all grown up, she was angle of the house. She got married six months ago. "She had also interned at Barakat for half a year. My son-in-law (he was the luck son joined our family) has a business in Sri Lanka. We are exploring the idea of them starting a business in Dubai. I want to hand down my knowledge and network to my daughter and son-in-law, so they can take my legacy forward," says the proud father.

As for his own dreams, Chef Neil has a property in Sri Lanka that he wants to develop into a training centre for underprivileged youth looking to make a career in hospitality in the Middle East. "I have a place in Sri Lanka, it's a spiritual place where people go to pray. I want to turn one of the floors there into a training room. Sri Lanka is a poor country and there are many young guys who love to cook. I want to have a place where I can teach them free of charge everything about cooking and a career in the UAE, the rules, the culture and so on."

That's a good plan. After all, there is so much to learn from Chef Neil, not least of which is the art of DJing. You see, his most colourful hat is that of a professional DJ. "I used to play in Abu Dhabi hotels, especially at the Meridian Carousel disco. Hip-hop and R&B music mostly. Even now I have the whole setup at home and I DJ at home to unwind. You can send so many messages to people through music."

Message received!

THE ROMAN ROAMER

Culture begets cuisine. And respect begets relish. So believes Chef **Massimiliano Zampriglio**. The head chef of Sabella's restaurant is on a mission to preserve the authenticity of Italian cuisine and spread the love for his country's culture...

ou can take the Italian out of Italy but you can't take Italy out of the Italian. And that's a wonderful thing. While we drool over pizzas, pastas and lasagnes, few of us ever think about the culture that birthed the delicious cuisine.

Chef Massimiliano Zampriglio is determined to change that.

A proud Italian, he is on a mission to win appreciation for the rich culture of his country. He plans to do this by providing a haven for those looking to escape the fusion dishes that have diluted the essence of his country's food.

This haven is Sabella's restaurant at Ajman Hotel, where Chef Massimiliano is the head chef. "Italian food is a sign of respect for the culture, handed down generations in families," asserts the 52-year-old chef.

So how did such a devoted Italian end up in our midst? What is Chef Massimiliano's story and philosophy? Read on to find out...

Rome, the capital of Italy displays its extraordinarily rich past in its beautiful architecture, delicious gastronomy, and



I started working under a restauranteur. The place had great chefs and they pushed me to work hard and learn as much as I could

art that depicts 28 centuries of history. The 'cradle of Western civilization' features regularly on bucket lists, which is why it has a vibrant tourism industry.

Growing up in this environment meant Chef Massimiliano was exposed to the people business from the very beginning. "My maternal family had a butchery and kitchen business. A lot of my childhood years were spent there," he recalls. The boy was often allowed to help around for some extra pocket money. It was an open kitchen and serving food to many people was a daily affair.

When he finished school, Chef Massimiliano had no doubt that gastronomy was where his heart was. "I started working under a restauranteur. The place had great chefs and they pushed me to work hard and learn as much as I could." Being young and motivated, he did not mind spending the entire day working. The efforts paid off. "I never had to go to a culinary school to start my career. I learnt on the job."

Over the next years, Chef Massimiliano worked in several restaurants in Rome, mainly in pastry operations, slowly climbing the ranks to head chef. He also opened two restaurants with partners but eventually closed them down as being away from the city centre, they did not attract the clientele he had expected.

In 2008, he ventured overseas to join the Baker and Spice in London. "When Baker and Spice wanted to set up an outlet at the Burj Khalifa, they sent me to Dubai. Until 2010, I worked in Dubai." The format did not quite take off as expected. In 2010, Chef Massimiliano returned to London with a job at Chewies Bakery in Hampstead, where he managed the operations of six retail outlets.

A couple of years later, he went back

to Rome. "I took over as the director in charge of kitchen services at the Delizie & Sapori restaurant, just 10 minutes from the Colosseum."

2016 brought an unexpected call...and an opportunity. Some people he had worked with in Dubai were setting up a concept kitchen. Did he want to join them? "It was a unique organic food concept. All the food cooked in the kitchen was grown in two organic farms in Abu Dhabi. We did not buy any of the key ingredients from outside. It's still there but it has moved closer to the farm. They even raise bees and produce honey. You can taste the difference in the trees around the area in the honey."

After working there for three years, Chef Massimiliano joined Ajman Hotel. Although he started off well, the stint lasted just a few months as he was called back to Italy to deal with some personal issues. "By the time I finished resolving those, the Covid pandemic started and everything shut down. When operations resumed, they called me again and I returned to Sabella."

For Chef Massimiliano, his team at

Sabella is like family. "I love my team. If you are good to people, they work together better. A team has to enjoy the work and the atmosphere." He spends considerable time explaining the philosophy behind Italian food to his team because "you need to understand the culture and the approach before you can cook good Italian food".

When he cooks, he admits to turning into a child fascinated by food. "I think about my mother and my grandmother and how they cooked when I was growing up. The aroma of the tomato sauce, the ragout, the slow-cooked, delicious food. I respect my culture and I impart the same feeling to my colleagues."

Chef Massimiliano firmly believes that anyone who has worked in Italy for a while will become half-Italian automatically. The cultural influences are that strong.

He wants to preserve the authenticity of his country's cuisine. "Many new chefs do a lot of fusion cooking and that is eroding the authenticity of the cuisine. Using ingredients from Asia and other

parts of the world to make Italian food is not right. If your menu has 50 percent fusion dishes, don't call yourself an Italian restaurant!"

Going forward, he hopes to see a revival in original recipes.

This is why, he advises young chefs to go beyond YouTube videos while learning to cook. "Your ideas have to come from inside you, not from external sources. Invest a lot of time in the kitchen in your early years. Without sacrifices, you cannot succeed."

What he would never sacrifice, is his connection to people. Coming from a big family of five brothers and three sisters, being with people comes naturally to Chef Massimiliano. He has a large brood himself — five children from three marriages. A large family it is, but he has the energy for every single one of them. And for work. "I don't plan to stop working ever. If you don't have passion for your work, you will struggle to get out of bed every morning."

Doesn't he want to start his own restaurant again somewhere down the line? "No, When you start a restaurant, you become a businessman. You start thinking differently and beging to lose your passion for cooking. That's not my path."

Any path he takes, leads to culinary joy. His and that of his guests.





you need to understand the culture and the approach before you can cook good Italian food



Sbriciolata Roman style Mille Feuille

4 Portions

INGREDIENTS

Vanilla Cream	100 g
Whipping cream	200 g
Marsala Wine (optional for non-halal)	4 tbsp
Dark Chocolate (chopped)	50 g
Puff pastry	250 g
Sugar	30 g

Icing sugar

Mix berry (Blueberries, Strawberries,

Blackberries, red currant)

• Fresh mint

Method

FOR THE PUFF PASTRY

- Roll out the puff pastry and use the perforation roller, to avoid over puffing.
- Sprinkle a tray with baking paper with half of the sugar and add puff pastry and sprinkle remaining sugar over.
- Bake at 175 degree Celsius for about 20 to 25 minutes. Sugar need to be lightly caramelized.

CREAM:

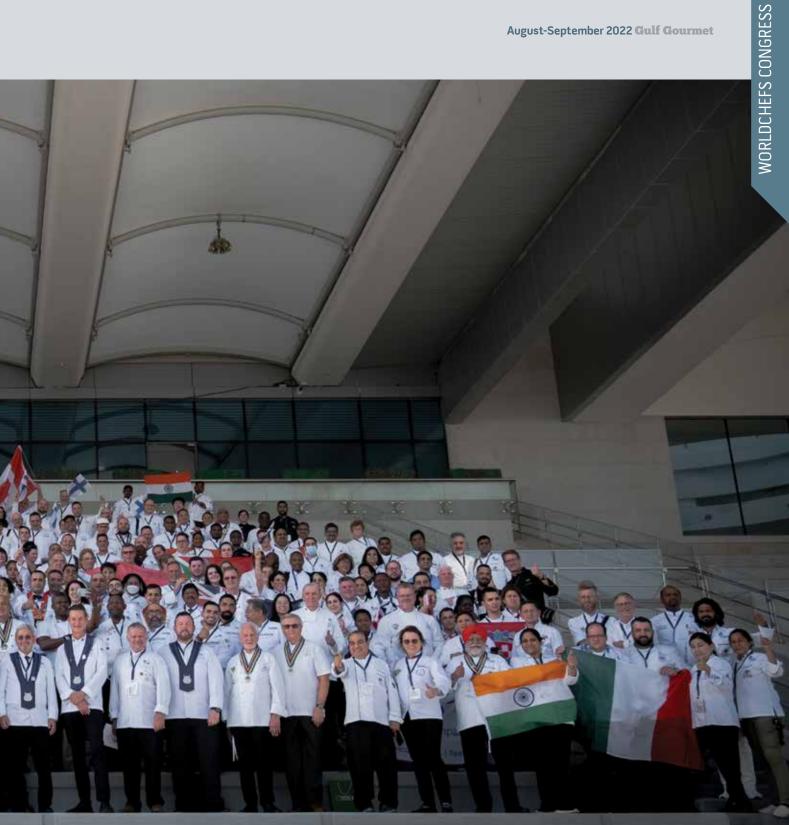
 Mix the vanilla cream with the whipped cream, add Marsala for better taste (if allowed), fill in piping bag.

ASSEMBLY:

- Crumble slightly the first layer puff pastry in the ring. Pipe some of the cream mixture on top, sprinkle chocolate and some berries over.
 Repeat, till top edge of the ring is filled.
- Garnish nicely with berries and some mint, dust little icing sugar at the end and serve.



CONGRESS



They came, they saw, they conquered the culinary imagination of all who were present. In this first part of our series, we bring you images of all the winners and their winning dishes at the Global Chefs Challenge, Global Pastry Chefs Challenge and the Global Young Chefs Challenge.

August-September 2022 Gulf Gourmet









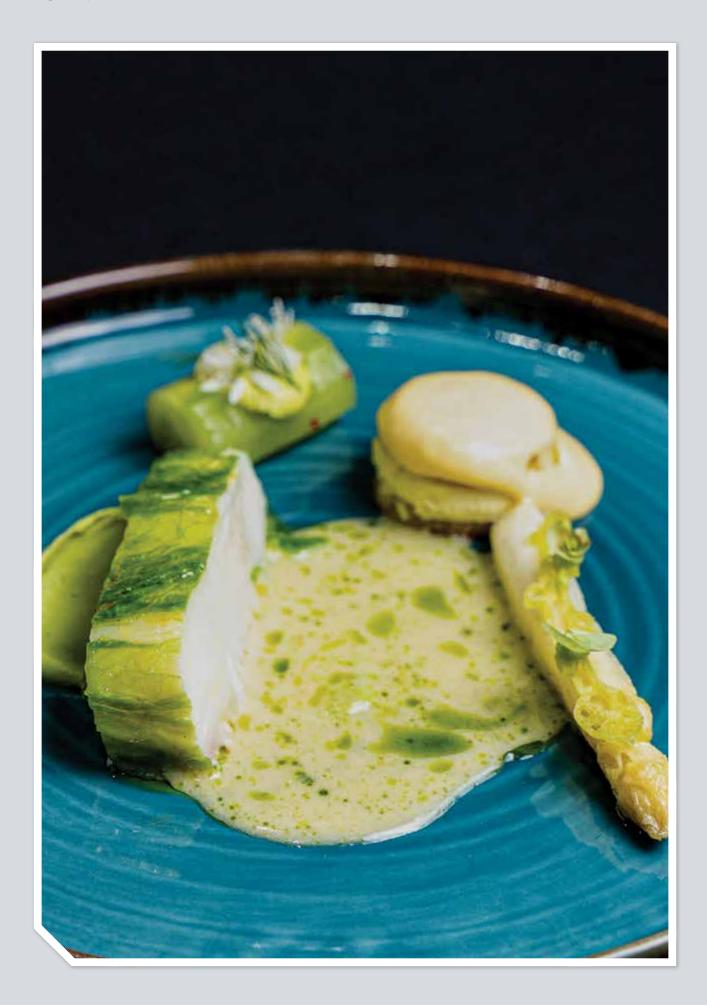
































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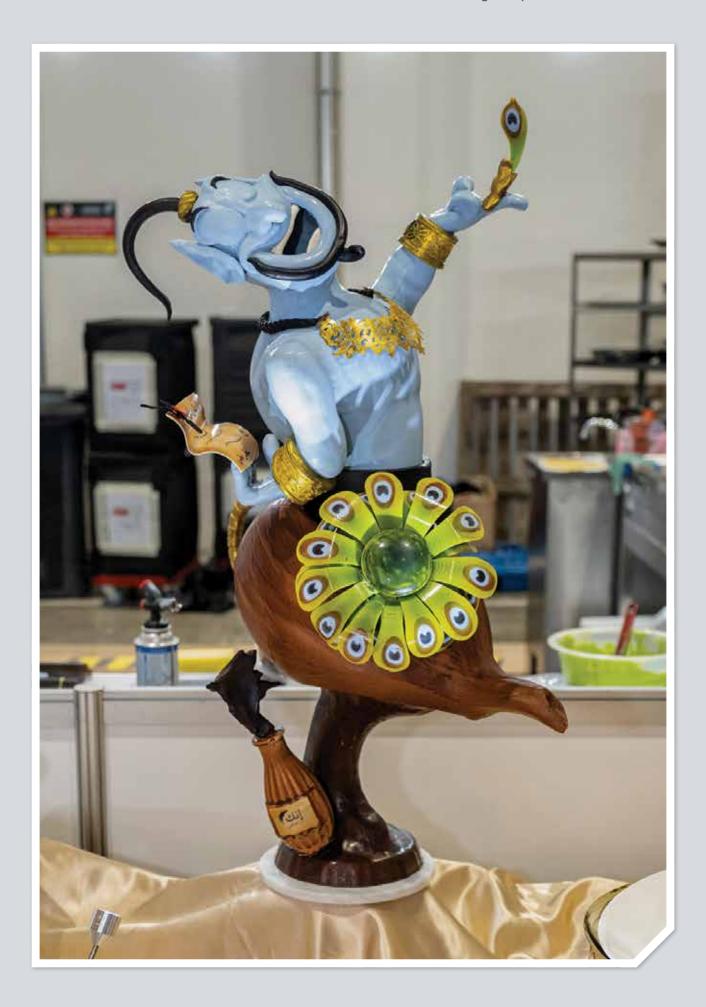
































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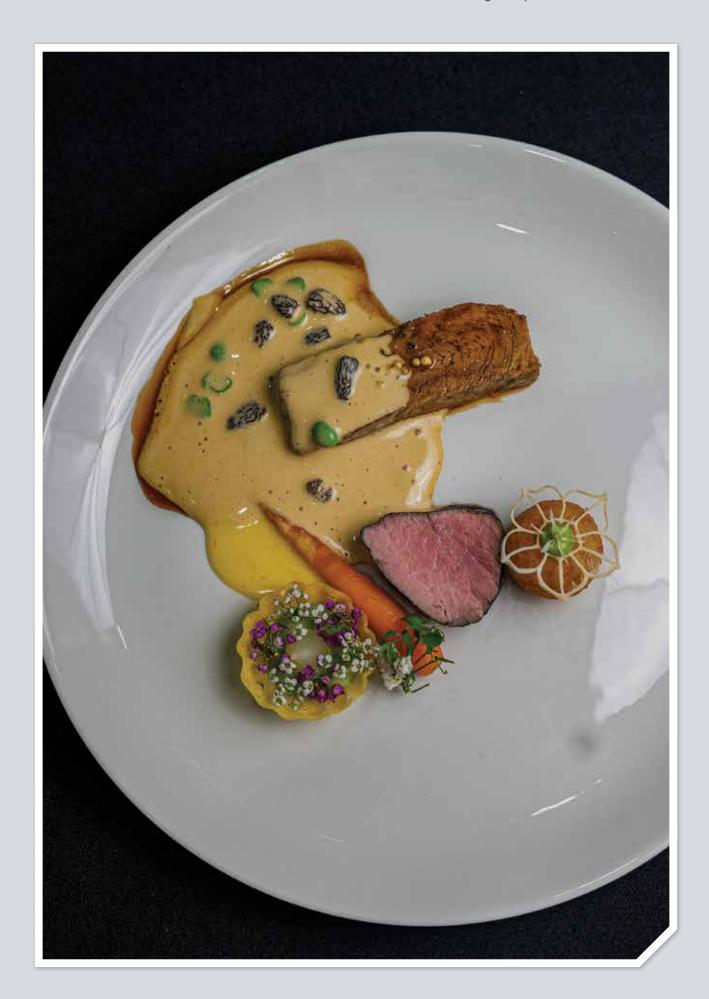




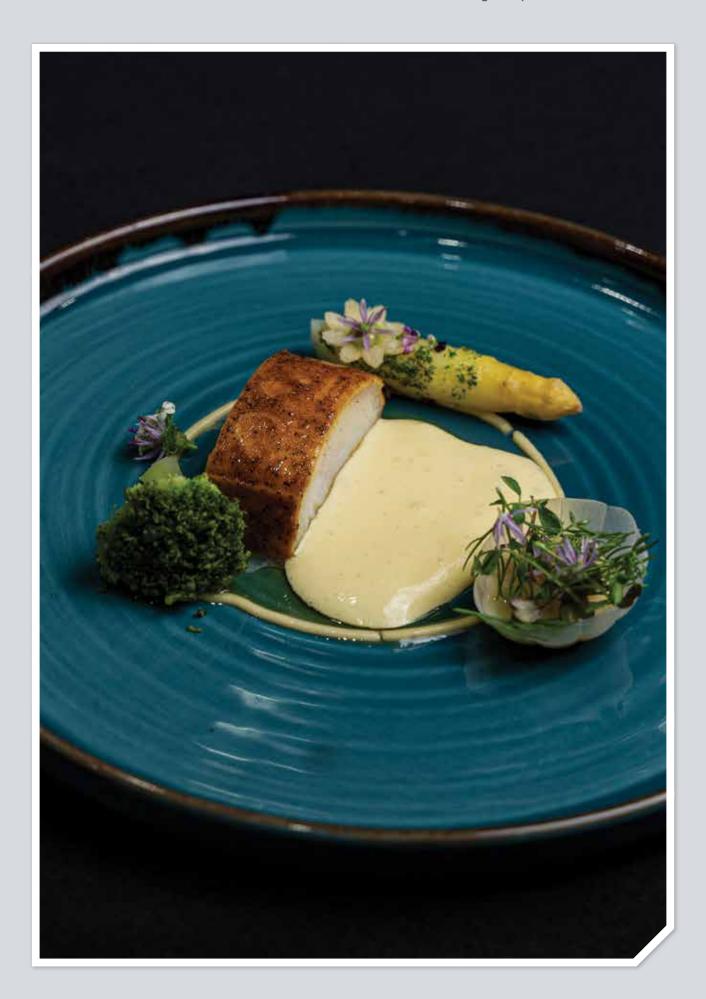












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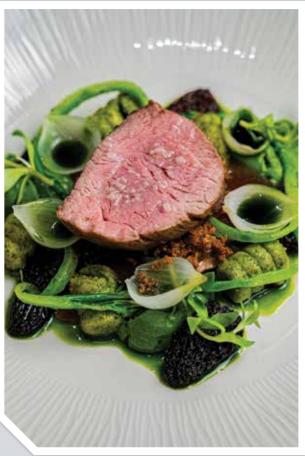




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- Readership estimates of nearly 11, 276 per month
- ► Positively influencing the UAE food industry since 2006
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Bahrain	2%
United Kingdom	1%
Others	1%



► 5-star Hotels	46%
► 3/4-star Hotels	19%
► Independent Restaurants (Elite)	18%
► Independent Restaurants (Standard)	12%
► Food Industry Suppliers	3%
Large & Medium Food Retailers	70%







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THE EMIRATES CULINARY GUILD



Application Membership

		Date of Application:	
Family Name: (Mr./M	1s./Mrs.)		
First Name/s:			
Nationality:	Civil Status:	Date of Birth: dd/mm/yy	
Name of Employer:		Address in Home Country:	
Work Address:			
		Tel:	
Web Address:		Email:	
Telephone Office:		Professional Title:	
Fax Office:		Type of Membership Required: (Please tick one)	
Tel. Home:		Corporate Senior Renewal	
Fax Home:		Senior Junior	
Email:			
Declaration to be Sid	gned by all Applicants		
·		I the ECG Constitution and By-laws. I agree to be	
		cted, I promise to support the Guild and its endeavors,	
to the best of my ab		,	
,		Signed:	
Proposed By:		Sig:	
Seconded By:		Sig:	
	FOD 05	TELOMAL MOTE ONLY	
	FOR OF	FFICIAL USE ONLY	
Remarks:			
Payment received?			
Certificate Given.	Pin Give		
Approved		Approved	
President		Chairman	
Fees:			
Young Member:	Junior members will receive a		
Senior Members:	Above the rank of chef de partie (or senior chef de partie on executive chef's		
	recommendation).		
		rtificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG	
	ceremonial collar. Dhs.		
Affiliate Member:	150/=per year thereafter.	The 200 per year thereafter	
		ons.ou per year merealler.	
Corporate Member	Dhs. 20,000 per year		



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