

CULINARY, CARE, COMMUNITY

Chef **Raghuprasad Pillai** on integrating a caring-culinary approach at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi and what's next for his role as ECG Chairman

THE GASTRONOMIC LEADER

Idin Asmitha, Executive Chef at Media Rotana Hotel on his experience of skillfully preparing dishes for VVIPs and the Indonesian President



DEVOTED DHEERAJ

Pastry Chef **Dheeraj Singh** from Zero Gravity shares his reason for being loyal to his workplace



A PEOPLE'S PERSON

Exclusive interview with **Manzoor Hassan Balghari**, Executive Chef and CEO of Top Deal Party Services





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president's station

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Dear Members,

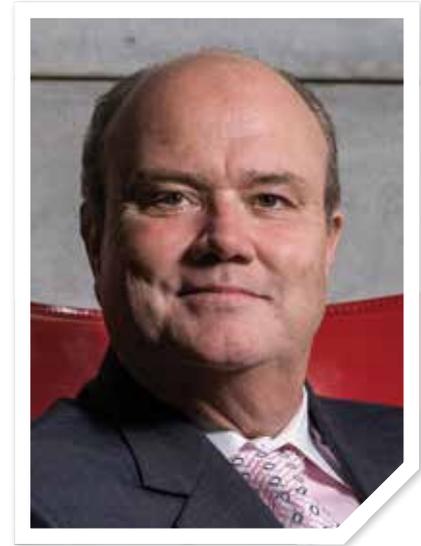
As we have already come to the end of 2023, it has been a year to remember for the Guild, filled with happiness and sadness that were all mixed together. Earlier in the year, we bid farewell to our dear friend Alan Pedge and remembered him dearly. The President of 24 years, Chef Uwe Micheel, a mentor and a great friend to many of us, finally slowed down and returned to Germany. But he has not stepped down from the guild and is still actively involved as our Past President. We saw our ExpoCulinaire and Emirates Salon Culinaire return to Sharjah for another successful edition. Practical competitions are among the best ways for young chefs to show their skills, share their knowledge, and learn, and we are grateful that we still have that platform available to us. 2024 will see a return to Sharjah, with some exciting editions on the competition floor.

Our corporate partners are vital to us, and we thank the members, old and new, for their continued support of the chefs of the UAE and their passion for our industry. Their contributions allow us to do what we do in the guild for our chefs. One of the biggest activities we will undertake in 2024, with their support, is sending our team to Germany in February for the Culinary Olympics. A team of 30 will travel to Germany to bring home the gold, and we will update everyone on their progress.

December is one of the busiest seasons for all of us in the industry in the UAE. We see some of the biggest national activities happening along with the country's 52nd year of union. We congratulate the UAE's rulers, citizens, and residents on this occasion. We are fortunate to call the UAE home, and we have been grateful to the rulers and government entities that

have supported the Guild over the past 32 years. We see enormous growth in our industry throughout the country and foresee the growing industry bringing plenty of opportunity for many in the culinary world, and we are glad to be part of this growth. The COP28 climate meeting is happening in December, and this will give us focus on what we, as chefs, need to do to ensure the sustainability of our industry and planet. Many new initiatives have been launched in the country, from food security to food waste and local sourcing projects, all of which we, as the Guild, need to be involved with. On December 11th, during the Dubai Municipality Food Conference, the Emirates Culinary Guild will be present with a special afternoon program focusing on the industry, food safety, and how the tourism sector is evolving with the culinary activities of the country. The session is from 3 p.m. to 5.50 p.m., and more details will follow. The connection to strategic partners such as the DM Food Control section gives us an excellent opportunity to shape the future of the industry in the UAE.

As we reach out throughout the country, from December 13th to December 22nd, we will be down in Abu Dhabi at the Al Wathba Date festival and auction, where practical cookery competitions will be held in partnership with the Cultural Programs and Heritage Festivals Committee (Abu Dhabi DCT-Abu Dhabi), and there will be some great displays of Emirati-inspired cuisine. Extending the reach to all Emirates is a continued focus for the Guild. We were also lucky to be hosted in November for the monthly meeting by the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre. We thank chefs Philip Delang and Mohammed Hamdan for their hospitality and terrific venue setup, and we thank the team in Abu Dhabi for their support and great turnout of chefs.



We continue to grow our membership base and encourage all our members to promote the guild and its activities continuously. We look forward to new members joining us and our competitions. We have a solid social media base now, and with our online magazine and these platforms, we hope you can all stay connected with us. One new online activity that we have launched this month is the ARLA Pro Pastry Chef of the Year for 2024, and information and rules have been sent out to all. It is an excellent opportunity for pastry chefs to showcase their skills, and every month, we will feature the best of the month in the Gulf Gourmet magazine leading up to a final cook-off in December 2024. Keep an eye out for the magazine and articles. This final issue of 2023 has some amazing interviews with talented chefs, including with the new Guild Chairman, Chef Raghuprasad Pillai. One thing you'll learn from these stories is tenacity and why these chefs believe in polishing the fundamentals.

In closing, I thank you all for supporting the industry, chefs, and the Guild. The committee is actively preparing for our competition in May 2024 and other activities, and I thank the committee for giving their time to the Guild and chefs. Without them, there is no culinary guild. From my family to your families, I wish you a safe end to 2023 and a precious 2024 filled with joy, happiness, and success in all you do.

With Regards,
Andy Cuthbert
President and Editor



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FERMENTING DAIRY FUTURE

The science and precision of lab-grown dairy

By **Shreya Asopa**

The tempting scent of freshly made waffle cones wafts in an ice cream parlor, where a variety of frozen delicacies are showcased inside the glass display. The menu unfolds with myriad options, with flavors like the classic vanilla, swirls of chocolate fudge, and unique tropical combinations, and you will spot vegan alternatives further down the menu list.

However, what will also grab your attention is ice cream that is free from dairy. It's not an ice cream derived from oats, soybeans, or nuts milk formula; instead, this ice cream is whipped up by brewing microbes in a laboratory. It turns out the aforementioned parlor may be fictitious, but the lab-grown dairy concept is now available on the market.

These days, you can create almost anything with fermentation due to strides in synthetic biology. When you paint a mental picture of fermentation, your mind conjures images of kombucha, bread, yogurt, or kimchi. Traditional fermentation has played a pivotal role in shaping global cuisines. In Japan, koji molds contribute to the fermentation of miso and soy sauce, while in India, a rich tradition of fermentation is evident in dishes like idli, dhokla, kanji, and various Indian sweets. Similarly, the world of wine depends on natural fermentation processes to create timeless beverages. Precision fermentation, on the other hand, is hitting a whole new ball in dairy production. In essence, precision fermentation is a complex procedure that encompasses the genetic modification of microorganisms such



as yeast or fungi to generate traditional dairy proteins. Ultimately, these proteins contribute to the creation of animal-free dairy products.

Earlier this year, a study conducted by the Hartman Group in collaboration with Cargill and Perfect Day brought attention to the fact that approximately 41% of individuals are ready to give precision fermentation a whirl. With rising lactose intolerance conditions, this could be a way out, as precision dairy products are free from lactose, additives, and antibiotics.

Not to mention the host of environmental advantages that come with it, multiple reports suggest it could exhibit significantly lower carbon emissions and reduce land and water usage compared to conventional dairy.

The market abounds with distinctive food tech brands, each taking a step to be available on store shelves. Some notable

names include Brave Robot, which offers ice cream; Very Dairy, with its multiple milk options; The Every Company, which brings precision fermentation to eggs; Yali Bio stands out for its precision-fermented dairy fat; and MeliBio, which introduces bee-free honey technology. Last year, Change Foods solidified a partnership with the KEZAD Group to have an animal-free dairy in Abu Dhabi. With start-ups delving increasingly into segments like whey, casein, butter, and cream, there has been a dynamic exploration within these niches.

Of course, for anything good, there are challenges to navigate. The situation hangs in the balance, with regulatory junctures and widespread consumer approval. But there can be no debate that the evolution of animal-free products expands the menu for consumers, prompting chefs to boldly venture into new culinary frontiers as they juggle diverse options.

December 2023 **Gulf Gourmet**

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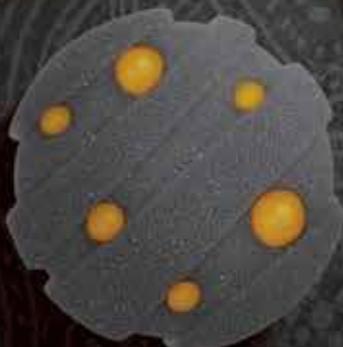


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newsbites

Chef Arivu Ravi's flavorful participation at the Seventh World Tapas Competition

In a celebration of global culinary diversity, the Seventh World Tapas Competition, organized by the Company for the Promotion of Tourism of Valladolid, S.L. (SMTVA) in collaboration with the Association of Hospitality of Valladolid, recently concluded with participants from around the world showcasing their talent. While the competition aimed to bring together active professionals from hospitality establishments globally, it saw a diverse array of culinary creations.

This international culinary event invited participants to submit a single, unpublished tapa, complete with detailed ingredient lists and preparation methods on the attached official form. Each submission was required to include a photograph of the tapa, along with a questionnaire containing personal data about the tapa's creator and details about the representing establishment.

One unique aspect of the competition was the stipulation that the cost of ingredients for each recipe should not exceed the value of 1.80 euros (1.90 USD). This rule aimed to ensure a level playing field for all participants and recognize the challenge of accessing market prices in Spain.

"The tapas committee asked me to create a tapas dish that represented my country or the culture of the country where I work. The tapas had to cost around 1.80 euros only. So, I came up with chickpea variations (featuring it in 4 ways that included deep fry falafel, hummus, roasted chickpea granola, and baked beetroot sumac hummus tuile). They had chosen 16 different candidates from 5 continents out of the pool of 146 candidates," said Chef Arivu Ravi, who participated and represented the UAE.



For him, tapas hold a deeply personal significance, woven into the fabric of his life. "This is how I began my career in Dubai. When I arrived in Dubai in search of a chef's position, I resided in Deira, near the Abra port. Every week, I would wait for my cousin and friends' off days so that we could indulge in street food delights like falafel or shawarma in that vibrant neighborhood. Days have passed so fast since then. Those memories are worth a lifetime."

Talking about the competition he explained it was tough. Despite receiving positive feedback, he fell short of securing a medal. The top honors went to Sweden, claiming the first place, closely followed by Spain in second place, and Bahrain clinching the third spot.



UAE aims to achieve a 50% reduction in food loss and waste by the year 2030

The 'Ne'ma Food Loss and Waste Reduction Roadmap' was revealed during the fourth National Dialogue on Food Security, organized by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MOCCA) with Ne'ma, the National Food Loss and Waste Initiative.

Her Excellency Mariam bint Mohammed Almhairi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, announced the strategic roadmap highlighting the significance of tackling food loss and waste. Citing the World Food Program, Her Excellency explained that one-third of all produced food for human consumption is lost or wasted globally.

The development of the plan involved more than 200 interviews with stakeholders across the food value chain and system levels, along with several workshops for ideation. As per the media reports, Jumeirah Group, Hilton Group, Rotana Group, and Expo City have signed agreements with Ne'ma during the event, demonstrating their dedication to making food loss and waste reduction a top priority.



IHG set to expand in Saudi Arabia with Two New Properties in Taif

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has inked agreements for two upcoming properties in Saudi Arabia – Holiday Inn & Suites Taif, and Staybridge Suites Taif in partnership with Al Jumaiah Group. According to the company press release the properties are anticipated to open in the fourth quarter of 2025, both properties will be located in Al Shafa, Taif, at an elevation of 2,500 meters.

This dual signing will augment IHG's portfolio in the country. The Holiday Inn & Suites Taif, nestled in the Al Shafa Mountains, will have a range of amenities, including an all-day dining

specialty restaurant, lobby lounge, pool, fitness center, cinema theater, and more.

On the other hand, Staybridge Suites Taif will feature standalone villas, studios, specialty dining restaurants, etc.

IHG presently manages 40 hotels across five brands in Saudi Arabia, including InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn, voco, and Staybridge Suites. IHG had recently also announced the signing of its first Vignette Collection hotel in Doha in partnership with Hospitality for Success H4S Hotels & Residences which is set to open by the end of Quarter 1, 2024.

Risen Café & Artisanal Bakery opens its sixth venue in Business Bay

Risen Café & Artisanal Bakery's sixth venue is now situated within The First Collection Waterfront in Business Bay. Known for its pastries, and delectable coffee options, the new venue too would offer a wide array of mouthwatering treats and specialty brews.

The recently unveiled location invites patrons into its appealing interiors, providing an opportunity to indulge

in offerings ranging from tempting Croffles, and signature pancakes to gourmet sandwiches and many other options catering to diverse tastes. The pastry boutique would offer treats such as the chocolate crème supreme, carrot cake, a range of tarts, and more. Simultaneously, the drink menu encompasses freshly blended juices, smoothies, mocktails, and a delightful variety of teas and unique infusions, ensuring a beverage for every palate.



Courtesy to the image: Risen Café & Artisanal Bakery

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



THE GASTRONOMIC LEADER

In his childhood, **Idin Asmitha** never envisioned becoming a chef. But his mother's words turned true, as he now serves as the Executive Chef, cooking for VVIPs

Ever wondered about the meticulous planning that goes behind perfect plating at an event graced by the presence of a president? Indonesian native Executive Chef Idin Asmitha holds the key to decoding the intricacies of such eminent occasions. He has produced refined meals throughout his 30 years in the industry, turning every high-profile event into a gourmet triumph.

From serving the Indonesian president to dishing up for the leader of South Africa, his professional journey is marked by collaborations with Michelin-starred chefs and contributions to feats such as preparing the longest stollen bread, recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records.

Without a hitch, he enumerates his busy schedules for the next month, from Christmas to the New Year, detailing the flurry of festive preparations amid the holiday season. However, as the conversation veers to his catering encounters with dignitaries and



After completing my hotel school, I prepared a meal for my mother. She tasted it and appreciated the food. The universe seemed to heed her words

diplomats, earnestness gets to his tone. He takes a pause and says, "I am fortunate. It has been one of the biggest achievements of my life."

Hailing from Bandung, a young Idin had zero clue if he wanted to be a chef. At 12, he began helping his mom prepare rice porridge and breakfast out of curiosity. The initial validation of his talent came from his mother. She would say, "You

possess good culinary talent. I am sure you will become a big chef one day and cook for renowned people."

Not long after his first food attraction, another catalyst for his culinary career emerged in the form of his neighbor, who worked on a cruise ship. Visiting home every six months, the neighbor regaled young Idin with tales from around the world. When he inquired about his job, the response, "I am a chef," rekindled a latent passion, and he joined the hotel school.

"After completing my hotel school, I prepared a meal for my mother. She tasted it and appreciated the food. The universe seemed to heed her words. Unfortunately, she passed away. I wish I could show her that her foresight turned true. Deep down, I believe she already knows," says the 49-year-old, fondly recalling his mother.

He got his first apprenticeship in 1993, when Indonesia was not widely recognized for its hospitality industry, and chefs inscribed their insights in notebooks. "This was an era devoid of YouTube or Google, so I worked using cookbooks and notebook with my handwritten recipes." He adds, "I also recall my senior's advice at that time, which I share today with the apprentices: to never settle for less in life and always try to learn something new. Only with that attitude was I able to work with Michelin-starred chefs like Henrik Yde-Andersen and Igor Macchia and handle people of different wavelenghts."

His first posting was at the Jakarta Hilton, where he held the commis position for nearly a year before moving to establishments including the Four Seasons and the Kempinski Hotel and growing up to the ranks of chef de partie.

Those days, managers of prestigious hotels approached to recruit him, which led to many coworkers casting dubious glances his way, wondering how he managed to get such avenues. "Because



I always believed in going beyond the 9-to-5 punch duty in the kitchen, working until 3 in the morning, and even often on holidays, just to learn. Only by changing yourself can you alter your life. When you have a positive attitude about people, they come searching for you rather than you going job hunting," he responds with an immunity to jealousy.

His different outlook on life caught the attention of an HR director, who reached out to him regarding an opportunity in Dubai. Even though the position entailed a step down in the hierarchy to commis, he was willing to embrace it to broaden his perspective. He battled hard in the kitchen, dealing with the situation while several chefs he was working with were giving up.

Two years later, he returned to Indonesia briefly, only to head back to a restaurant in the Grand Hyatt Dubai. The initial struggle of adjusting to a new place was lost by the joys of working within a diverse cultural milieu. His next stint took him to the kitchen of the Kempinski Hotel Mall of the Emirates. Continuing in his sous chef role, unfurling unique menus, and leading a kitchen brigade of 105, he achieved three promotions within four years of his tenure.

Advancing further, he took on two significant stints within 12 years, encompassing a tenure at the Park Hyatt Jeddah and a 10-year role as the Executive Chef at the Anantara Eastern Mangroves Hotel in Abu Dhabi. His experience as Executive Chef furnished momentum in his professional development chase, and he took on a role at the Media Rotana Hotel Dubai, where he currently oversees kitchen operations, stewarding across its five dining venues.

THE GOOD CHEF

It is pertinent to note that when he decides to be a part of a junior chef's career, he translates words into action plans, coaching, and giving them cross-training in both hot and cold kitchens.



When you have a positive attitude about people, they come searching for you rather than you going job hunting

That's why he consistently imparts a reminder to his junior chefs about never stopping learning so that in the scenario where one finds themselves

battling alone, the accrued skills will demonstrate competence.

On his path to becoming a 'good chef,' he has faced challenges. Drawing from his life lessons, he recommends young chefs be team players. "I always try to put young trainees through their paces and help them develop into good chefs because some come from backgrounds we are unaware of, and some are too shy to speak up, so we have to make sure we approach them differently."

Another challenge he confronts is developing his team while juggling promotions and maintaining budgets. He tackles this by driving business,

underlying the idea that a team's growth is interlinked with business objectives.

Describing his leadership style as flexible—occasionally firm, occasionally gentle—he handles a team of 85 chefs and stewards, bringing them all under one umbrella.

Catering for prominent individuals puts one in a political position with the onus of presenting regional cuisine. This responsibility carries with it a weighty burden of expectations. "Often, the guests are uncertain about their culinary preferences, and we must adhere to stringent security and dietary guidelines," noted Chef Asmitha. "Yet, we keep up with the trends, proposing diverse options from Italian, organic, vegan, and more. Even a VIP bonds over food."

The confidence in his culinary expertise has established him as a seasoned chef with experience in preparing dinners for delegates. As a result, when different dignitaries travel to the UAE, they unambiguously ask for his cooking skills.

Speaking to the Gulf Gourmet about the dishes that were prepared during the official gathering in Dubai commemorating the 78th Indonesian Independence, Chef Idin disclosed that the buffet spread included all-time Indonesian favorites like spicy panadas, organic chicken, soto ayam (chicken soup), chicken satay, rendang, and international delights like butter chicken rice. Chef Idin and his team also elucidated the recipe and history of each dish, which left the dignitaries surprised.

As for his go-to recipe when cooking at home, it is anything healthy. It stems from considering the dissonance between a healthy lifestyle and junk food consumption. "Your food is your body's petrol. Hence, I cook dishes for my kids that are free of preservatives. From chicken nuggets to fries to burgers, I prepare what they like, avoiding trans fat and replacing it with nutritional substitutes and fresh produce."

ECO-CONSCIOUS VISION

Unfailingly, in every sustainability seminar hosted in the city, you will find Chef Idin. He argues that since he is feeding the guests, it's his responsibility to provide healthy options for the guests and the environment.

"Every chef must take ownership of the food you prepare. This includes making the guests understand the ingredients and sustainable practices associated with the cooking process. Guests don't just show up to eat rice every day; you need to offer them alternatives so they can make better decisions, such as root vegetables, millets, or other foods."

The provocative question of robots stealing the likeness of a chef waded into our conversation, but he was quick to clarify that robots cannot rival a chef's passion for food. "When one cooks butter chicken in a state of anger, the dish takes on a distinct flavor, so emotions matter. What would happen when it came to troubleshooting? If a guest requests the sauce to be reduced or increased



This was an era devoid of YouTube or Google, so I worked using cookbooks and notebook with my handwritten recipes

after the dish has been served, a robot would not have the setting to make this situation comfortable for the guests and understand their body language." His response radiates in the light of AI taking jobs. "And this is why I advise my team always to greet guests with a smile to make your hospitality different."

Having his name among talented chefs on the Executive Chef Power List was like a dream come true for him. One must ponder why he doesn't take the bragging rights for the achievement. He instead maintains a humble stance without forgetting his roots. "It's not just about the cooking skills; a senior chef would be better than me, but it's about going the extra mile to make the community better through greener practices that put me on the list. Across the Rotana properties in the UAE and the Middle East, we support local produce and promote sustainability in the kitchen."

INCREDIBLE IDIN

Chef Idin's beautiful family comprises a supportive wife and two kids: an 18-year-old daughter and a 12-year-old son. They clicked immediately when he first met his wife in the hotel where they worked together. When he took a professional leap to Dubai, his wife trusted him and took his hand; months later, they were both in Dubai, starting a new chapter of their lives together. The rest, he says, is a long story.

His philosophy of living in the moment takes over his future plans. Occasionally, he muses about establishing his restaurant post-retirement. "The food industry is a never-ending story. If you are a skilled chef, a culinary business idea or a restaurant option is always there."

Since becoming a guild member in 2007, Chef Idin has participated actively in meetings and even hosted a few. Competitions, another aspect of the guild, was a leveler in his quest to build positive relationships within the community. Regardless of the conflicting opinions among chefs today,



The food industry is a never-ending story. If you are a skilled chef, a culinary business idea or a restaurant option is always there

with some considering competitions a waste of time, he strongly discourages such views, asking his team to find a middle ground—whether it's participating after completing their duties or during their off-hours.

"Chefs who compete could discover that they stand out when they apply for jobs because hiring managers would notice that they are involved

and active. At the Salon Culinaire, learning about hygiene, social skills, and personal growth is just as important as competition. It's a place where they can further their careers, network with other chefs, pick up tips from them, and use those ideas to create something new when they return to the hotel."

For the young cohort of chefs who quickly transition to new roles within a year, often without substantial experience, he has valuable advice. "When you are young, think about learning; don't think about earning. Money will follow. If you rush into your career and neglect the fundamentals, you will eventually fail because you won't know how to handle problems when they arise."

As we wrapped up the conversation, he dropped a fragment of what Leonardo da Vinci once said: "Life is all about connections and relationships. Everyone is connected to everything; you are not alone. So try to help one another in different ways."

EXPO *Culinaire*

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE THE EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINAIRE 2024

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

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

The aims of the ECG, broadly, are:

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

The Emirates International Salon Culinaire (ESC) is a series of practical and display-based culinary competitions; entry to which is open to professional chefs, pastry chefs, cooks and bakers and culinary students.

Some of the competitions are designed for entry by a single competitor; others are designed as team events. Each competition is called a class.

The ESC shall take place in during the Expo Culinaire exhibition for Chefs,

Bakers, Pastry chefs and cooks and which will once again be the home of the Emirates Salon Culinaire and is a fully endorsed competition from Worldchefs. To exhibit or sponsor at Expo Culinaire please visit <https://www.expoculinaire.com/>, All this - coupled with three days of real-time, hectic, and thrilling cookery competitions - fought against the constraints of time, makes the salon a stimulating event that will become a major attraction at the Expo Culinaire exhibition for Chefs, Bakers, Pastry chefs and cooks. This year the education arena is not to be missed as a special feature of the exhibition. Demonstrations and interactive sessions will be another highlight of the Expo Culinaire exhibition.

Social media plays a large part in the Guilds self-promotion and the Gulf Gourmet magazine drive awareness around the globe. www.emiratesculinaryguild.net/, www.facebook.com/Emirates-Culinary-Guild-763644223697376/timeline/, www.facebook.com/gulfgourmet?fref=ts, follow these links for more information on the Emirates Culinary Guild.

In 2024 the Emirates International

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

Membership of the ECG is open to all of those professionally and solely involved in the preparation of food.

Anyone interested in the Emirates Salon Culinaire to compete or sponsor, please contact us below.

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Pastry and Bakery

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

Showpiece Artistic Displays

- 07 Chocolate Carving Showpiece
Powered by Veliche Chocolate
Belgium
- 08 Fruit & Vegetable Carving
Showpiece Powered by Barakat
- 09 Open Show Piece

Gourmet Static Display

- 10 Five-Course Gourmet Dinner
Menu Powered by USMEF
- 11 Sustainable Three-Course
Vegetarian Lunch Menu
- 13 Four Plated USAPEEC Chicken
Dishes –Powered by USAPEEC
- 23 Savory tartelette Creations
Powered by HUG
- 24 Sweet tartelette Creations
Powered by HUG
- 28 Four Plates Vegan dishes -
Powered by Violife 100% Vegan
- 34 Sweet Creations Powered by
Potatoes USA

Practical Artistic Carving

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

Practical Cookery

- 19 Arabic Mezzeh - Practical
Cookery Powered by Rahma
- 20 Fish & Seafood - Practical
Cookery

- 21 Beef - Practical Cookery Powered
by USMEF
- 22 Emirati Cuisine – Practical
Cookery
- 25 Dressed Chicken & Dressed Fish
Practical Butchery
- 33 Savory Potato Creations
Practical Cookery Powered by
Potatoes USA
- 27 Chicken - Practical Cookery –
Powered by USAPEEC
- 30
- 35 Plant based Practical cookery
appetizer and main course
- 36 Soup and Sandwich Practical
cookery Powered by Chefs
Palette
- 37 Lamb Primal Cuts Practical
Butchery TBC
- 38: Syrian Cuisine Modern Main
courses Practical cookery
Powered by Boody's
- 39 Syrian Three Plates of Kibbeh
Plated display Powered by
Boody's
- 40 Sounbula Mills Artisan Bakery
Arena Practical Cookery

ADDENDUM – The Emirates Salon Culinaire 2024

VENUE & ENTRY FEES

1. The Emirates Salon Culinaire
will be held during the Expo
Culinaire 2024 from May 20th
till 22nd May 2024.
2. The venue is at the Sharjah
National Exhibition Centre
3. The entrance fee for all single
entries is Dhs.100 (AED. One
Hundred) per person per class,
unless otherwise stated in the
Rules and Regulations or the
Class Briefs.
4. The fee for entry to the trophy
classes is as follows:
 - i. **Best Cuisinier – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire-
Dubai 2024 AED:500/- per
person**
 - ii. **Best Pastry Chef – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire-
Dubai 2024 AED:400/- per
person**

- iii. **Best Artist – The Emirates
Salon Culinaire- Dubai 2024
AED:500/- per person**
- iv. **Best Arab National – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire-
Dubai 2024 AED:300/- per
person**
- v. **Young Chef of the Year – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire
Dubai 2024 AED: 300/- per
person**

CLOSING DATE:

5. Closing date for entries is April
28th 2024 However, many are
often fully subscribed and closed
well before the closing date.

TROPHY ENTRY:

Entrants to a trophy class must
enter and finish in all and only those
classes that pertain to the trophy for
which they are entering. No other
classes may be entered into by a
trophy entrant.

Trophies are awarded on the highest
aggregate judging points from all
classes pertaining to the trophy
being awarded.

The required classes are:

BEST CUISINIER:

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

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

BEST PASTRY CHEF:

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

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

BEST ARTIST:

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

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

BEST ARAB NATIONAL CUISINIER:

- i. *Class # 27. Chicken – Practical Cookery Arabic Style*
- ii. *Class # 19. Arabic Mezzeh - Practical Cookery*
- iii. *Class 22: Emirati Cuisine - Practical Cookery*

iv. In order to qualify for inclusion in the points tally for Best Arab National Trophy a competitor must win at least one Gold medal and be an Arab National.

BEST BAKERY TEAM

1. Class 40 Sounbula Artisan Bakery Arena Class "The SOUNBULA UAE Bakery team of 2024"

YOUNG CHEF OF THE YEAR

See Classes for Entry Document. Classes

JUDGING AND THE AWARDS SYSTEM

A team of WorldChefs (The World Association of Chefs Societies) approved international Judges will adjudicate at all classes of the competition: using Worldchefs-approved methods, criteria and documents www.worldchefs.org After each judging session, the

judges will hold a debriefing session at which each competitor attending may learn something of the thinking behind the judges' decision.

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

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

The scaling for awards in all classes is as follows:

Points	Award
100	Gold Medal with Distinction with Certificate.
99 – 90	Gold Medal with Certificate.
89 – 80	Silver Medal with Certificate.
79 – 70	Bronze Medal with Certificate
60 – 69	Certificate of Merit
Thereafter	Certificate of Participation

Corporate and Establishment Trophies

The corporate and establishment trophies available are:

Best Effort by an Individual Establishment – The Emirates Salon Culinaire

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

Best Effort by a Corporation – The Emirates Salon Culinaire

This trophy is awarded to the

corporation whose competitors gain the highest total combined points from the medals won from all of their entries.

Point Value of each Medal Won:

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

Winners where a sponsored trip is awarded are restricted to winning the trip once per life time. In a case where the overall winner has participated in a sponsored trip previously the trip shall be awarded to the 2nd place winner.

If no Gold Medals are awarded to competitors in the trophy classes then there shall be no trophy given at the competition.

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CULINARY, CARE & COMMUNITY

Chef **Raghuprasad Pillai** drives a juggernaut of care at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi; plating more than quality food made with fresh ingredients, cooked for optimal nutrition and overall health. His altruism does not stop there; he has sown seeds of change in the ECG YCC, mentoring the future generation of culinary talents

Towards the Malabar Coast, alongside the Arabian Sea, you will find yourself in Kerala, where tenacity reflects in their daily lives and dishes, from fragrant fish curries to the traditional vegetarian 22-course meal, the sadya. There, the stories of people frequently go unnoticed until, suddenly, they transform into an extraordinary tale of an unlikely hero.

And who wouldn't be curious to learn about individuals who can outstrip promises and raise the bar? An individual who fits this description perfectly is Chef Raghuprasad Pillai. The Engineer wannabee and the result of a Malayali lineage, he confidently changed the course of his fate, embracing his talent and ultimately achieving great success as a chef.

He has all the ingredients to be on top of his game. Despite his outward candor and soft-spoken nature, embellished with eloquent phrases, he is also a man of convictions, unabashedly expressing his viewpoints and becoming passionate when he addresses young chefs.

Even as he grew up in the kaleidoscope of Mumbai's diversity, he inherited



I did about 4 to 5 internships, studying simultaneously. The training was arduous, but I knew if you like something, you go for it

the indomitable courage embedded in the spirit of Kerala's resilient people. He started with a steely resolve to experiment with spices and flavors over unbending blueprints and architectural foundations. However, it was only through the meticulous exploration of 36 diverse subjects, encompassing facets such as bartending, practical culinary instruction, and the intricacies of F&B operations within the purview of his hotel management course, that he uncovered a profound passion for cooking.

Exhibiting exceptional qualities, he immediately secured an internship with Taj Hotels after receiving his hotel

management degree. "I did about 4 to 5 internships, studying simultaneously. The training was arduous, but I knew if you like something, you go for it," he says, recalling how some of his classmates dropped out of the internship month after month.

The technical robustness of his skills ultimately propelled him to Taj Ernakulam, Kerala. As a senior chef de partie, he actively participated in culinary festivals, expertly managing Indian cuisine while trying his hand at European and Mediterranean fare and crafting a thesis exploring the impact of foreign cuisine on the culinary landscape of India, namely, Kerala.

One day in 1999, a colleague, having foregone an interview, approached Chef Raghuprasad with the proposition to seize the opportunity himself—a move that would culminate in him bagging an opportunity in the United Arab Emirates. The interview panel was from the Jumeirah Group, tasked with pre-opening the Jumeirah Emirates Tower Hotel.

"It was in 2001, during the merger of Jumeirah Hospitality with the Emirates Towers, that I met Chef Andy.





It has been 23 years with the Emirates Culinary Guild, and together, the journey continues



It has been 23 years with the Emirates Culinary Guild, and together, the journey continues. Chef Andy has never ceased to amaze me, not only as a chef but with the sheer number of roles and responsibilities he has handled to date." Chef Raghu reminisces about his stint at the iconic hotel.

He also recounts meeting Chef Uwe in 2001 as a young competitor. What struck him was Chef Uwe's ability to make time for young cooks no matter what background they come from. "His mentorship and support over the years have significantly influenced the professional growth of aspiring chefs, a positive influence that I've also experienced in my own career," he says.

Chef Raghu commenced his Guild journey as a junior member, evolving into a passionate competitor and significantly contributing both as a Marshall, Event Secretary, and, for the last ten years, as Chairman for the Abu Dhabi Chapter of



For a professional chef, competition is R&D—a choice you make to develop yourself, sharpen the saw, and be able to put your skills and abilities with the best in the field

the Emirates Culinary Guild, where he worked with Chef Peter de Kauwe and the late Chef Alan Pedge to execute the culinary guild activities and competitions in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain.

Earlier this year marked a milestone as Chef Raghu became Chairman of the Emirates Culinary Guild. Replying to a

lingering question about his emotions upon learning of his new role, he said, "I was surprised and happy that I was considered and elected for this role after 25 years. However, the task of fulfilling a role that exceptional taskmasters like Chef Andy himself handled gives me sleepless nights."

Participating in every guild competition, Chef Raghu has been involved with the SIAL organizing committee since its inception in Abu Dhabi. What excited him the most was when he first learned about the guild's competition platform. Reflecting on his early experiences, he vividly recalls his first competition, where he executed four-plated main courses as a static presentation and won a gold medal for his efforts.

To put down his winning streaks would be oversimplifying his achievements. "Who I am today is because of my mentors. If it weren't for my senior chefs guiding me in 2001, it wouldn't have been possible, as it was a determining factor. The gold medal win is not just me, but rather a tribute to the profound mentors, and I am committed to passing it forward to aspiring young boys," states Chef Raghu, talking about competitions.

He is delighted when talking about the story of being part of the first team from the UAE representing the Jumeirah culinary team that ventured into international competitions, traveling to Singapore. He recollects the gastronomic creation—a dish of stuffed quail with shawarma-style meat infused with Emirati spices, cooked live within an hour that won him a silver medal. Despite the challenges of participating in a different country, he acknowledges that it broadened his culinary perspective. "For a professional chef, competition is R&D—a choice you make to develop yourself, sharpen the saw, and be able to put your skills and abilities with the best in the field. A chef from a five-star hotel or a chef in a restaurant all share the same dais in competitions – which is purely a skill





Competitions are a platform that is like a canvas on which you can choose what you can do, which means you can win against any champion if you execute your three Ps: Plan, Practice, and Perform on time

and performance-based leveling field. Competitions are a platform that is like a canvas on which you can choose what you can do, which means you can win against any champion if you execute your three Ps: Plan, Practice, and Perform on time," he says.

After garnering numerous medals in professional competitions, clinching championship trophies such as runner-up for Junior Chef of the Year in 2001 and 2002, and securing victory twice in the Middle East Chef of the Year (in 2003 and 2006), he understood the need for personal growth and underwent training to become a Worldchefs Certified Judge.

Garden-To-Table

By the time Chef Raghu moved to Crowne Plaza from the kitchen of Emirates Tower, he was a junior sous chef. A year after assuming the role of a pre-opening chef at the Zinc restaurant within Crowne Plaza, he ventured to Kuwait to spearhead the initiation of the Art+Tech concept in business hotels under the Le Meridien umbrella as Sous chef. "We introduced several concepts; among them was a traditional Khaleeji seafood restaurant, Al Marsa, famous for its traditional Arabic Seafood grills."



After that, he made a comeback to Jumeirah Emirates Towers in 2006 as a chef de cuisine for the Rib Room Steakhouse. In a subsequent time frame, Le Meridien Kuwait extended another offer to him, appointing him as the executive chef entrusted with the responsibility of its two boutique hotels.

Despite spending a couple of years in Kuwait, Kuwait's environment did not cater to his creative aspiration, and he opted to return to Abu Dhabi, where he seamlessly transitioned to a position at Beach Rotana, handling its 11 F&B concepts, banqueting, and extensive conference facilities.

Five years later, he moved to its distinguished Yas Cluster, encompassing Yas Island Rotana and Yas Island Centro. Taking on the mantle of executive chef, responsible for overseeing both

establishments, including eight diverse F&B outlets, he also embarked on cultivating a sustainable garden. This visionary initiative served as a sanctuary for stressed chefs and championed the cause of local produce, even earning acclaim at the esteemed Abu Dhabi Gourmet Awards.

"We started with 10 to 12 cultivatable crops, including water spinach, tapioca, Thai basil, rosemary, chili, tomato, pumpkins, and fenugreek. The focus was to cultivate specific herbs in modest amounts, fostering a self-sufficient approach for use in the kitchen. Although the overall output didn't establish complete sustainability, it significantly alleviated internal production consumption. It also helped chefs who found a therapeutic sense of joy in the gardening activities. With the support of the GM and the horticulture

team, we converted barren land, crop by crop, into a verdant green space."

This initiative extends beyond a mere project; it aims to enlighten young chefs about the substantial effort and time invested in cultivating fresh produce in an era dominated by prepackaged foods. "When chefs connect with farmers, they connect with the cultivation process. They develop a heightened awareness of the produce, responsibly use resources, and work on minimizing waste," Chef Raghu elaborates.

His love for farming remains steadfast, mirroring his post-retirement plan expressed in his previous *Gulf Gourmet* interview—to have a humble vegetable farm and a culinary school for the underprivileged. "I love agriculture, and I wish to couple that with the skills I can impart to young chefs. Upon retirement, I want to give back what I learned. And support the underprivileged who are on the wrong side of society and give them a chance in the food industry."



When chefs connect with farmers, they connect with the cultivation process. They develop a heightened awareness of the produce, responsibly use resources, and work on minimizing waste

Care On the Menu

Situated on Al Maryah Island in Abu Dhabi, Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi stands as a part of M42's network of global healthcare providers. A cursory glance at the surroundings immediately reveals a level of comfort distinctly

uncharacteristic of the traditional hospital milieu. Unlike a hotel's traditional cyclic menu, the a-la-carte dining approach extended to patients offers a broad spectrum of choices. Chef Raghu and his culinary team adeptly manage an extensive repertoire, accommodating over 50 different dietary requirements, each dish underpinned by cutting-edge culinary technology.

The sprawling expanse, spanning 409,234 square meters, with a state-of-the-art auditorium, spacious ballroom, gleaming foyers, meeting rooms, and quality caregiving facilities, epitomizes the multispecialty hospital.

Chef Raghu is sincere when discussing his current job, the longest he's held to date. He sees his work as a means to maintain his strong ties to the community.

"It has been eight years here. I was recruited by the former director to rework our culinary services, which required the standard of dining in a five-star hotel and concurrently embraced the cultural ethos of Abu Dhabi," explains Chef Raghu.

He adds, "However, it was difficult. Because patients come with conditions, and conditions have diets, diets have restrictions and specific needs. It was a chain, and we had to improve the experience and ensure it was perfectly balanced to help with their recovery process."

So, how has hospitality extended to hospitals, carving out a prominent space for chefs? It so happens with the hospital's mission—to provide the best patient care while maintaining the highest quality of service.

"The transition of a chef from the hospitality industry to this environment is a pivotal shift, given that a substantial number of chefs hail from the hotel industry. We try to hire the best chefs and educate them regarding the nuanced distinctions between hospital and hotel food





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services. An important factor is the patient's safety due to the plethora of health restrictions. Acknowledging these constraints, we place significant emphasis on training initiatives and making chefs well-prepared to serve the patients," says Khalil Abu Sair, Senior Director of General Services at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Khalil, serving as a bridge between management and food services, collaborates closely with chefs to cascade the vision into the dishes, aligning with patients' experiences during their treatment journey. "The crucial part of the treatment is to provide the highest standard of hospitality while taking into consideration the patient's safety. "So, what we do here is take the finest standards from the hospitality sector, customize them to our clinical needs, and provide the best food standards to our patients," adds Mr. Khalil.

"Nothing excites me more than how the kitchen co-opts ingredients and



I love agriculture, and I wish to couple that with the skills I can impart to young chefs

technology, as culinary has jumped in to take a bite out of the tech world," adds Chef Raghu. The kitchen of Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi has an ingeniously developed dietary interface designed to eliminate ingredients incompatible with specific medical conditions.

"It was the biggest learning curve for me: to fit a variety of cuisines, the ingredients, nutrition, and allergens into the a la carte menu. We don't restrict the patient to menu paper; instead, we let them choose what they can have, following their medical conditions. It was a jigsaw that we solved," says Chef Raghu.

It is worth diving into how he runs his team of 100 people. Even with multiple challenges, his culinary direction is shaped by seasoned professionals who comprehend the market and various cuisines.

"A 70-year-old in this region would like a particular type of cuisine. Instead of choosing grilled salmon or beef fillet, they would have different preferences. Tailor-made food sets us apart, where we have cuisine from Asia, the Middle East, and European regions."

Chef Raghu specifies that the individuals in Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi refer to one another as caregivers rather than staff members or employees because they prioritize the safety and well-being of their patients.

Overseeing the expansive operations engenders stress, but Chef Raghu outlines that it ultimately distills into three elements: passion, knowledge of basic techniques, and precision. "This is not a place where you can hire amateurs. It's a serious business. In hotels, errors can be rectified, but here, one error could be fatal."

Mentor Maven

In between the aesthetics of his cooking and competitions is his meticulous mentorship prowess. Aligned with industry trends, the notion of revamping the Young Chefs Club crystallized during his attendance at the 2016 World Chefs Congress. Although the club existed then, its limited membership necessitated a boost to enhance its efficiency.

"At that point, we had a couple of young chefs who didn't have direction, and the club needed structure. So, we restructured the Young Chefs Club in 2017, and now the ECGYCC is the most active club in the Middle East," he asserts.

Tackling the topic of the future for aspiring chefs, the club has grown with events, training sessions, field visits, and master classes. Nevertheless, Chef Raghu points out that the club is more



than competitions and field trips; it entails fostering a sense of belonging, networking, understanding the products, and gaining knowledge of the markets. In the face of the organic growth of the YCC core committee, he explains that there is a need for passionate chefs to serve as the foundation for the ECG cause going forward.

To inspire the next generation of talent, he has taken up the role of mentor for the ECG Young Chef Club. "I feel fortunate to take on the role of a mentor, but it comes with a huge amount of responsibility," he said, comparing it to the emotions he used to get when he first started dabbling with ingredients in the kitchen. "However, I see it as a long-term thing where you want to be able to accomplish something, making it impactful and inclusive, advancing with the direction of the guild members."

Inclusivity is increasingly imperative in both the kitchen and the broader culinary industry, ushering in celebrating cultural diversity in cuisines while recognizing the significance of each team member's contribution. The guild, in particular, has embraced a more inclusive and accessible approach, extending its reach to chefs from respected hotels, standalone properties, restaurants, and beyond. This is evident in the positive influx of Emirati chefs into the guild and the culinary profession.

"It's always been good to be a part of Emirati culture and cuisine. There is a great *mélange* of Emirati cuisine, with chefs giving it their own creative touch. Whether it's traditional or fusion, there have been advancements. For any cuisine, young chefs should be familiar with the classic techniques. You can only be good if you know the basics."

The mood brightened when he spoke about love—his wife, Ambily, and their 19-year marriage. She has been a pillar of support, just like his son, who is currently in the 12th grade, and his



Nothing excites me more than how the kitchen co-opts ingredients and technology, as culinary has jumped in to take a bite out of the tech world

daughter, a 7th-grade student. His children have undertaken cooking as an essential skill. Chef Raghu is prepared to impart his wisdom if and when they want to immerse themselves in the culinary realm.

"Next year will mark 30 years since I started my association with cooking." The lessons he has learned as a chef have transcended the kitchen and crossed its path into his life, changing

him big time. It has endowed him with multitasking skills, the ability to maintain composure under pressure, the capacity to deliver constructive feedback, and a pragmatic approach to addressing life's challenges.

To be sure, there is a slight downside; it typically arises from impatience and pure passion: "When things don't happen in order, I can get impatient, and I expect chefs to be passionate, be responsible in what they do, and treat the ingredients with respect."

Diverging from the typical nine-to-five desk job and office routine, Chef Raghu vehemently cautions individuals who aspire to enter the culinary profession sans passion. "It's not an easy profession. You have to be a manager and a good judge of people. While it may demand sacrifices in terms of family time and weekend festivities, the culinary industry has a way of enticing. Not everyone can withstand its challenges, yet if you feel interested, go for it. You won't know if you're up for it unless you give it a try."

chef's palette X



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The Aftermath of the Afters: Juggling Kitchen Waste Like a Pro

Chef **Carl Shi** reveals why a cleaner kitchen leads to a cleaner conscience

Hello, my culinary maestros! Let's put down our chef's knives for a moment and pick up a topic that's been simmering on the back burner for too long – kitchen waste management. Yes, you heard it right! The cling wrap that clings more to our conscience than our sandwiches, the foil that's more permanent than our temporary food love, and the cupboards full of glasses and plastics that could rival a small mountain. Unfortunately, cling wrap, foil, and plastic waste are not biodegradable.

Now, I know what you're thinking. "Waste management? Isn't that the job of my kitchen stewards?" Well, yes and no. While they do play a part, as chefs, it is our responsibility to lead by example in creating a greener kitchen environment.

Let's start with cling wrap. It sticks around for centuries, littering our landfills and oceans. Instead, let's court beeswax wraps. They're reusable, compostable, and won't give you the silent treatment when you forget their birthday. And foil? That shiny knight in aluminum armor isn't as chivalrous as it seems. It's non-biodegradable and energy-intensive to produce. Let's



“ Chit-Chat with Chef Carl

replace it with reusable silicone baking mats. They're easy to clean, durable, and won't run off with your best saucepan. But let's be real, most of the time, some good old reusable containers (Gastronome pans, containers to be precise! of course, with their lids!) will do the trick. Save the foil and plastic for when they're essential.

Now, let's talk about the main character in the room - plastic waste. It's the time to say NO to our fresh produce suppliers now. We can request them to use paper pouches, paper cartons, reusable boxes, or foldable crates instead of keeping the meat or the vegetables in plastic bags.

• Plastic bags from sous vide cooking. Sure, it creates a symphony of flavors that could make Beethoven weep, but at what cost? The plastic bags used are often single-use, ending up as landfill fodder or, worse, in our oceans. The solution? Reusable silicone bags. They can withstand the heat, are easy to clean, and won't leave you with a sinking feeling every time you sous vide.

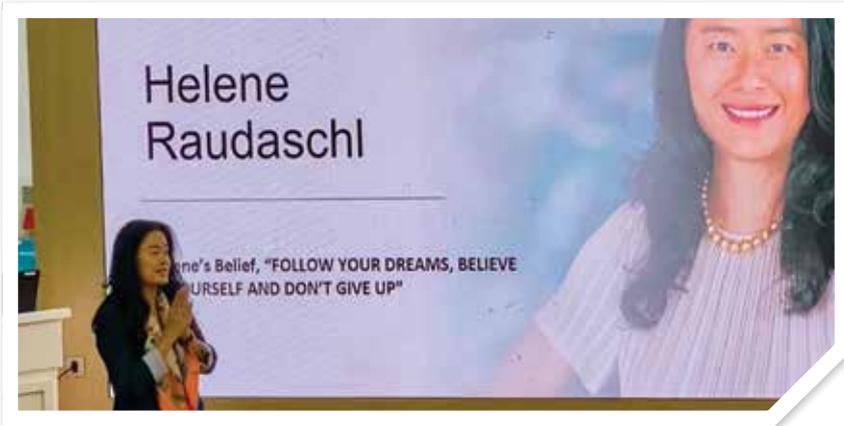
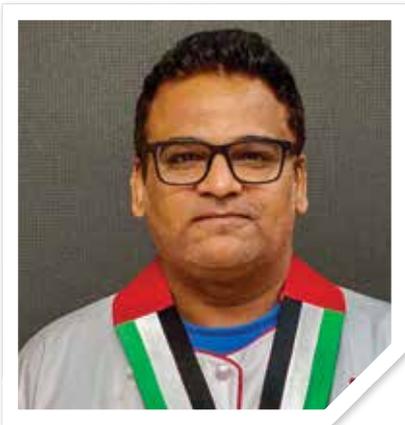
So, my fellow culinary virtuosos, let's take the heat out of our waste management practices and add some spice to our sustainability efforts. After all, a cleaner kitchen leads to a cleaner conscience – and that's a recipe we can all get behind!

Chef Carl
From Sydney

December 2023 **Gulf Gourmet**

The Guild Meet

November's guild meeting was hosted at the modern, trendy meeting space, The Hive, at ADNEC, Abu Dhabi. We thank Chef **Mohammed Hamdan**, culinary director of Capital Catering ADNEC, and Chef **Philip Delang**, executive chef of Capital Hospitality ADNEC, for hosting the meeting







DEVOTED DHEERAJ

Zero Gravity's pastry chef, **Dheeraj Singh**, reveals why he does not plan to leave his workplace

Between the pangs of competition, intense rounds, and high stakes, young chefs have to knuckle down and come on top with their refined cooking art. Among those who have come through the fire of competition crunch time is Chef Dheeraj Singh. Having competed in Salon Culinaire several times, Chef Dheeraj Singh is aware of the anxiety young contestants face. His tip for those entering the competitions is simple: deal pressure with calmness; otherwise, it will all go for a mess.

But he also goes beyond conventional advice, suggesting a unique approach to preparation. He recommends young chefs practice two to three months before the competition, carefully selecting the dish they want to plate and training in a different field to handle the jitters better. "To understand different kinds of settings, practice in a kitchen that is not your usual one. Even so, I tell my boys to take their things and train in a different kitchen because it is unfamiliar territory for them, and they won't immediately know where the freezer or chiller is. Once you overcome the panic of the new environment, I am sure you can work on your dessert with focus."

In a candid conversation with Chef Dheeraj, you would come across such sound perspectives on culinary competitions and pastry that come from his quiet confidence and a calm demeanor that resonates with the essence of his name, 'Dheeraj,' which translates to patience in Sanskrit.



Once you overcome the panic of the new environment, I am sure you can work on your dessert with focus

In an era where chefs' careers are surrounded by the trend of job hopping rather than working for someone from whom you can glean knowledge, Chef Dheeraj, the pastry chef at Zero Gravity Dubai, stands out as an exception. He has maintained a sustained path. This path has undoubtedly helped him succeed in his career, growing from the ranks of commis at one of the finest ultra-modern lifestyle venues.

"I have been here for eight years, preparing sweet creations. We have brunches that often, on the weekends, see a rush of more than 2000 people. Pastry is my specialty and my passion. I draw inspiration from everyone around me. I always keep in touch with Chef Dammika Herath, as he has been a strong source of motivation," says the 32-year-old.

Hailing from the postcard-perfect hill station of Dehradun, perched in the foothills of the Himalayas, he embarked on his culinary journey at 19. Primarily prompted by the intent to fund his studies at a culinary school, he immersed himself in a thriving pastry shop in Delhi.

Once he went to the pastry shop, his fascination for pastry engulfed him, and he decided that pastry kitchen was the right choice.

He landed a trainee role after his one-year Food and Beverage (F&B) course and spent the ensuing years assisting senior chefs across establishments like Taj Deccan, the Marriott Hotel in Hyderabad, and J.W. Marriott in Delhi.

"I arrived in Dubai in 2014 to work at the Marco Polo Hotel. During this period, I became acquainted with the Guild and its various initiatives and enjoyed meeting senior chefs such as Chef Uwe, Chef Andy, and Chef Dwarika Bhatt. Then Zero Gravity had a job opening, and I applied. Since then, I have never left this place."

The reason he remains committed to his current position becomes apparent when he opens up about his mentor. "I have never seen a positive man like Chef Dwarika Bhatt. He is akin to a father figure for me. He guides and motivates me every day. Having a great mentor allows you to learn and achieve anything. Besides cheffing, he has taught me valuable personal and professional growth lessons and how to lead a team with positivity and passion."

The learning curve at his workplace gave way to medals at competitions. He has been competing at Salon Culinaire since he was a commis. In his first attempt, he presented a four-plated dessert that earned him a bronze medal. Undeterred by setbacks, he embraced the learning



Diveraj Singh
Pastry Chef
GRAND



Having a great mentor allows you to learn and achieve anything

process, continuously honing his skills through subsequent competitions until he achieved a gold medal. His ambitions now extend to planning for international competitions and joining the UAE culinary team.

Chef Dheeraj has witnessed the pastry industry during the waves of change. Between now and then, one constant factor persists—the need for creativity. When he entered the industry, the challenges were more formidable. Nowadays, he explains, young chefs have the advantage of learning from various chefs, using social media, and even directly discussing their insights with seniors.



Pastry is my specialty and my passion. I draw inspiration from everyone around me

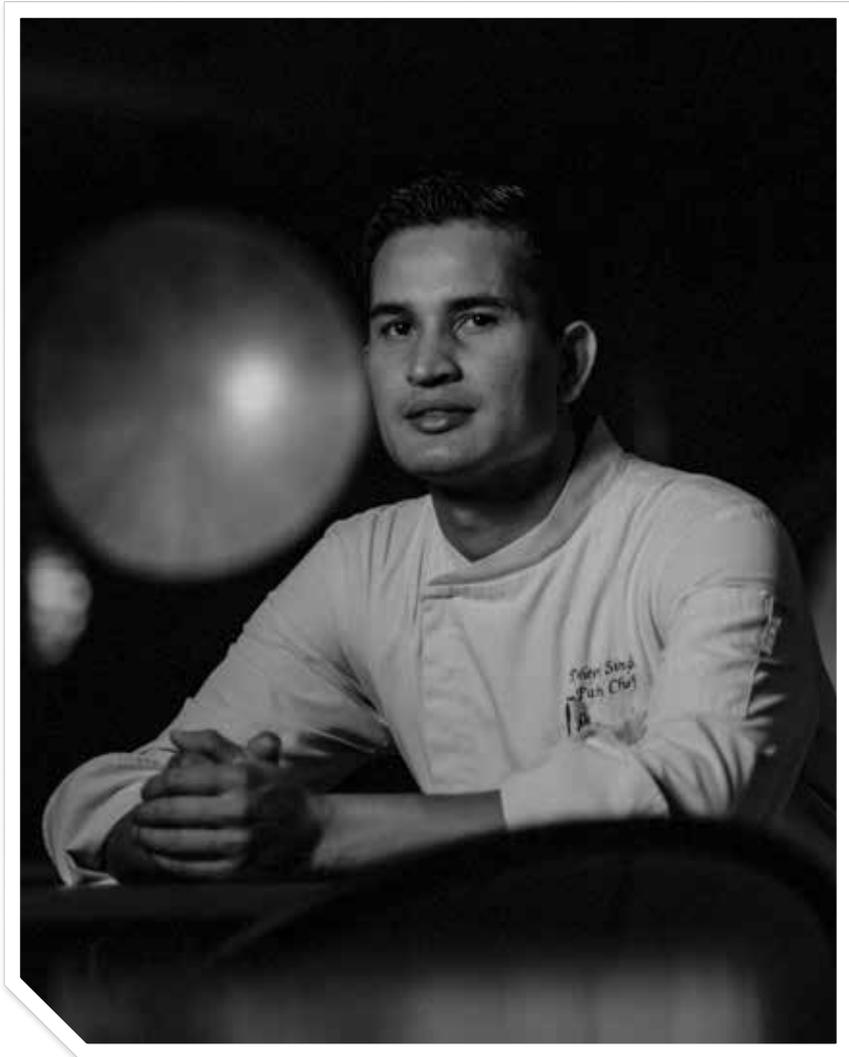
As for his artistic creativity, he makes sure his creations are packed with flavors that are pleasing in terms of both quantity and quality. Pastry is a mix of art and science to him that requires an understanding of harmonizing portions

and flavors. "When you put together a hot dessert, it's about discerning what complements it—whether it's the addition of ice cream or sorbet, with the choice of sorbet leaning towards citrus tropical flavors or earthy flavors. So, acquire knowledge of flavor profiles along with scientific aspects of proportions and measurements."

We asked Chef Dheeraj to craft an exclusive recipe for our aspiring pastry chef readers, and he graciously agreed. His featured dish embodies a delightful flavor palette, combining coconut with mango, infusing citrus notes through lemon, avocado, and mint sorbet, and incorporating a textural contrast with a crunchy element and an upside-down peach and basil. The inspiration for such different compositions in his dishes comes from reading books and understanding the vision of the recipes cooked by his seniors.

Creating a dish as stunning as this one, with its complex steps, prompts the question of practically achieving such a dish for a gathering of 1000 people. He states that it is easily possible because of planning and his six-person pastry team, "The art and science of the recipe take around seven days, during which we experiment with flavor profiles, determine what complements one another, choose colors and palettes, and create a final dish. Only the first plate takes time to produce, but once you prepare the final dessert and you take its photo, then for large volumes, we follow the recipe and go through the photo, which makes it easier."

Regarding the expansion of 3D printing and technology in making detailed cake designs, he has observed that while the industry itself may remain unchanged, there will be a noticeable trend toward using it to enhance creativity. Chef Dheeraj anticipates that the new generation of chefs will bring forth fresh ideas, diverging from the concepts he has worked with. "However, even with tools like 3D printing that beginner chefs may utilize, they still



need to master the original recipes and know the fundamentals. In case the print machine breaks, then what will you do? So, grasp the basics!"

His parents reside in India, while his wife and their 8-month-old baby girl are in Poland. The couple's journey began in 2019 when Chef Dheeraj spent a month working in a restaurant in Poland to learn more about European desserts. It was during this time that he met his wife, who, as a part-time chef, managed logistics in the hot kitchen. Their connection deepened, leading to a lifelong bond.

Itching to acquire new skills, he is also in discussions with Chef Dammika about viable opportunities to learn more about global desserts. Additionally, he is considering enrolling in a one-week sugar art training in France to delve into another artistic style of pastry. After a couple of decades, Chef Dheeraj sees himself educating and inspiring young chefs. "I want to guide aspiring chefs so that one day they can proudly say, 'This is the pastry chef I learned from.' I want to contribute to the culinary community and work in this country, as it now feels like my second home."



Coconut Mango Passion Fruit Raspberry Cream Cheese Cremeux Infused. Namelaka & Peach Basil Upside Down with Avocado Lemon Mint Sorbet.

COCONUT WHITE CHOCOLATE NAMELAKA GANACHE

Coconut Puree	250 gm
Glucose	12 gm
Gelatine	4 gm
White Chocolate	170 gm

**Arla Pro High Stability
Whipping Cream 35%** 150 gm

Method

- ◆ Melt chocolate in a double boiler and cool it to 32°C.
- ◆ Add coconut milk, and after mixing it well, keep the mixture aside and let it set up.
- ◆ Place the bowl on top of a double boiler until thoroughly warm.
- ◆ Beat the mixture until it's smooth and creamy. Add whipping cream and mix it well.
- ◆ The consistency should be like a spreadable frosting. And now it's ready.

AVOCADO LEMON MINT SORBET

Water	240 ml
Sugar	200 ml
Lemon Mint Juice	76 ml
Lemon Zest	4 gm

Avocado 1 no

Method

- ◆ Remove the flesh of the avocados and place them into a blender. Add lemon and mint juice, water, and sugar.
- ◆ Blend until completely combined.
- ◆ Place the mixture into a medium bowl. Add lemon zest to the mixture. Take a piece of plastic wrap and place it directly on the mixture. This will keep the mixture from turning brown. Place it in the fridge to chill for two hours.
- ◆ Pour in the chilled sorbet. Add liquid nitrogen, mixing in a machine bowl until thick.
- ◆ Add the last bit of lemon zest. Sorbet is ready for use.

MANGO PASSION FRUIT JELLY

Mango	1 pcs
Sugar	30 gm
Gelatine	5 gm
Water	100 ml
Passion Fruit	3 pcs

Method

- ◆ Peel mango, cut it into small cubes, and blend. Make puree.
- ◆ Cut the passion fruit, remove the seed, and add the juice to the mango puree.
- ◆ Place the canned mango passion fruit, sugar, and water in a medium saucepan. Stir in the softened gelatine and lime juice. Stir until the gelatine is dissolved.

COCONUT DACQUOISE

Coconut Powder	100 gm
All Purpose Flour	30 gm
Confectioners sugar	60 gm
White sugar	125 gm
Egg white	160 gm

Method

- ◆ Preheat the oven to 180°C.
- ◆ In a small bowl, combine coconut powder, all-purpose flour, and confectioners sugar. Sift the mixture through a sifter to break any clumps.
- ◆ In a clean and dry mixing bowl, add egg whites and beat on a lower speed until slightly bubbly.
- ◆ Increase the speed and beat until soft peaks form.
- ◆ With the mixture still running slowly, little by little, start adding white sugar until stiff peaks form.
- ◆ Little by little, slowly add the flour mixture to the meringue. Using a rubber spatula, mix everything well, lifting the batter from the bottom to the top.
- ◆ Fill in the remaining circles. Sprinkle dacquoise with confectioners sugar and set aside for 5 minutes.
- ◆ Bake in a preheated oven at 180°C for 15 to 20 minutes, until the dacquoise is slightly brown on top.
- ◆ Remove the dacquoise from the oven and let it cool.

RASPBERRY COMPOTE

Raspberry	20gm
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Sugar	12gm
Lemon Juice	2ml
Vanilla Pot	½ pcs

Method

- ◆ Place the raspberry, vanilla pot, sugar, and lemon juice in a medium-sized saucepan and set over medium heat.
- ◆ Stir the raspberries to coat them in sugar, and gently mash the raspberries just until they begin to release a bit of liquid.
- ◆ Bring the mixture to a simmer and cook the berries for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the compote is thick.

PEACH & BASIL UPSIDE DOWN

Lurpak Butter Unsalted	5gm
Brown Sugar	10gm
Salt	pinch
Fresh Basil	1gm
Vanilla Extract	1ml
Peach	half

Method

- ◆ In a saucepan over medium heat, add the butter, brown sugar, salt, basil, and vanilla. Bring to a boil, constantly stirring, and remove from heat once the sugar dissolves. Remove the basil.
- ◆ Line a round baking dish with sliced peaches.

CAKE

Lurpak Butter Unsalted	8gm
Brown Sugar	10gm
Egg	1no
Vanilla Extract	1ml
Plain Yogurt	5gm
Flour	10gm
Baking Powder	1gm
Salt	Pinch

Method

- ◆ Preheat the oven to 180°C.
- ◆ In a mixing bowl, whisk together the sugar, egg, vanilla, and yogurt until fluffy.
- ◆ Sift in flour, baking powder, and salt, and stir until a smooth batter is formed. Add melted butter to the last mix wall.
- ◆ Carefully pour the batter over the peaches. Smooth out the top.
- ◆ Bake for 20 to 25 minutes until the top bounces back to touch.
- ◆ Let it cool completely before removing it from the pan.

CHOCOLATE CRUMBLE

Cocoa Powder	2gm
Sugar	10gm
Almond Powder	10gm
Flour	8gm
Lurpak Butter Unsalted	10gm

Method

- ◆ Mix all ingredients together

- ◆ Put in the baking tray baked it for 10-15 minutes at 180°C

RASPBERRY CREAM CHEESE CREMEUX

Raspberry	270gm
Sugar	90gm
Egg	2no
Gelatine	8gm
Lurpak Butter Unsalted	30gm

Arla Pro Cream Cheese

Frost & Bake 30% 130 gm

Method

- ◆ Start by heating the raspberry in a pan, and then, in a separate bowl, whisk together the egg and sugar.
- ◆ Pour a little of the warm raspberry into the mixture to temper.
- ◆ Stir the entire egg mixture into the warm puree. Then continue to cook over low heat.
- ◆ Keep stirring until it is thick enough. Then remove from heat, add Arla Pro Frost, and bake for 30%.
- ◆ Squeeze the gelatine leaves, then stir them into the warm raspberry mixture until they are dissolved.
- ◆ Pass the mixture through a fine sieve into a clean bowl. Then vigorously whisk in the Arla Pro butter until emulsified.
- ◆ Pour the mixture into the mold and place it in the freezer for at least two hours.

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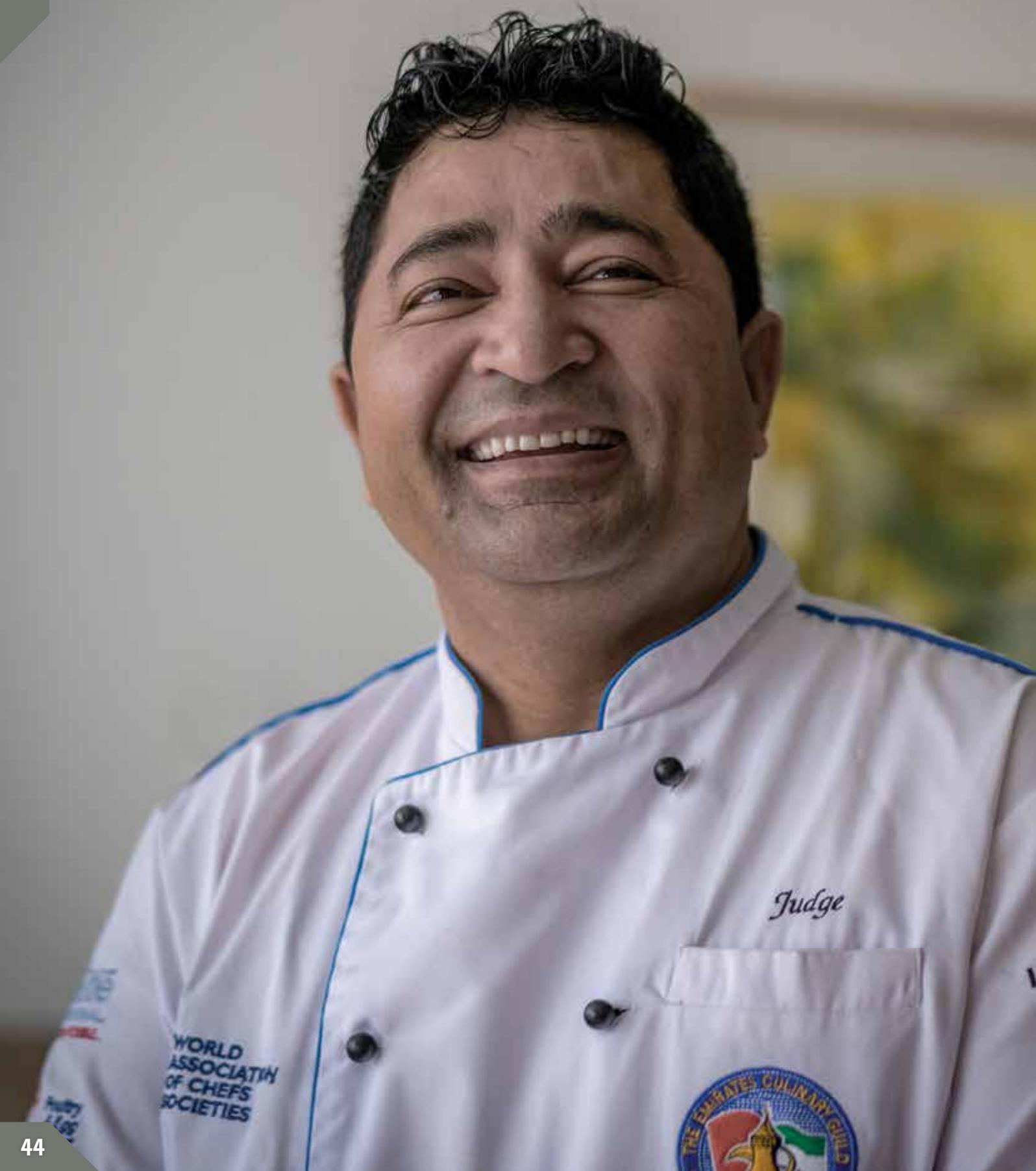


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A PEOPLE'S PERSON

Manzoor Hassan Balghari, Executive Chef and CEO of Top Deal Party Services, reels us with a behind-the-scenes insight into event planning and his unique business venture that provides staffing solutions to the F&B industry

A small village situated in Ghanchee along the bank of the Shyok River in the high mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan, Balghar is a summer destination for trekkers and tourists who want to bask in the cold wind of glaciers and the abundant bounty of nature. Nestled in the fifth province of Pakistan, which partially encompasses the second-highest peak in the world, this village was what Chef Manzoor Balghari called home. It thus came as no surprise that 'Manzoor Balghari' became his name, carrying the memories of his upbringing and humble roots, even as his career took him to places.

With limited progress and few educational centers in his village, he fondly remembers his classroom experiences sitting on the bare floor while learning from a blackboard. By 1987, Chef Manzoor Balghari and his family moved to Lahore. Against all odds, Chef Manzoor managed to go the extra mile to change his fate with his culinary skills. Today, as the Executive Chef and CEO of Top Deal Party Services, he is breaking new ground with rare ideas in the F&B industry.

"My late father Hassan Ali was a chef who had worked at multiple F&B establishments in Dubai, Australia, and the Pakistan Embassy," says Chef Manzoor and so it all inspired my career path."

The logical progression in his journey took him to enroll in a two-year diploma



I regarded my cooking diploma as a simple piece of paper, but a paper that could open doors for me

program in Hospitality and Tourism Management at TDCP Lahore in his home country. "I regarded my cooking diploma as a simple piece of paper, but a paper that could open doors for me. After you walk through that door, what you can do is entirely up to you," says the 40-year-old chef.

Upon wrapping up his course, he joined the Holiday Inn Hotel as a junior commis, which he describes as a time when individuals stand at a crossroads, contemplating whether their chosen career path aligns with their aspirations. "He received intensive training that gave him a hint of what it was like to work in a professional kitchen. With close supervision from experienced chefs, duties that included pre-cooking, such as peeling vegetables, setting out the cookware, making sauces, mise en place, etc, he received training in all the different restaurant sections.

He spent four years accumulating

skills working at multiple cafes and hotels before joining the revered Pearl Continental, a five-star hotel in Lahore. He joined the property as a commis 2 in Thaipan Kitchen, where he worked on fusion and Indo-Chinese-Asian cuisines. "I started my practical experience at Pearl Continental Hotel Lahore, one of the best establishments where I learned a lot. During this time, I truly discovered my talents, as I imbibed the unparalleled professionalism of a chef and garnered significant appreciation from my supervisors."

Then his father, who was residing in Dubai, suggested that he explore new opportunities in the flourishing food and beverage industry in the Emirates.

Chef Manzoor's debut job in Dubai was at Renaissance Dubai Hotel (now the Crowne Plaza). Starting as a commis 2 in the Chinese kitchen, he embarked with a renewed enthusiasm to achieve his goals and dedicated himself to diligent training.

"I assisted the chef de partie in a restaurant named Spice Island. The initial stages were tough as I grappled with homesickness, but the presence of friends and colleagues from my country in Dubai served as a motivating force to concentrate on my work. This led to my promotion to the role of commis 1. One and half years later, I assumed responsibilities of preparing food for the buffet, banquet parties, and outdoor catering," he recalls, emphasizing his

commitment to going above and beyond to assist his colleagues.

The multicultural environment polished him, endowing him with the experience of working with 46 different nationalities and receiving four promotions over the subsequent years. Advancing to the next position, Chef Manzoor became a Demi chef de partie, training the junior chefs and supporting them in every way.

He says about his time there, "I followed the used records, conducted taste panels, attended training for my development, made menus for outlets, and followed all brand standards. I ensured good behavior, hygiene, punctuality, and hospitality within the team."

"While managing the operations in the hotel, the executive chef observed how I dealt with the customers and my leadership abilities, recruiting me to head up the launch of a new restaurant. I formed a talented team there from scratch after connecting with the chefs and meticulously vetting and onboarding the staff,



When it comes to creating new recipes, how you put together your meals, and the presentation styles for each dish, you can let your imagination take the reins. Being a chef is an art form that many appreciate

ensuring a successful opening," he adds.

Chef Manzoor considers that being a chef is more than putting together a satisfying meal. It also involves adding a creative flair to the dish, allowing you to express yourself differently. "When it comes to creating new recipes, how you put

together your meals, and the presentation styles for each dish, you can let your imagination take the reins. Being a chef is an art form that many appreciate."

Seven years later, he assumed the sous chef role at the Hallmark Hotel (Star Metro Deira Hotel) before transitioning to open a grab-and-go concept, Panifico, an artisanal sandwich shop and espresso bar in DIFC. Chef Manzoor worked there for a year and went on to serve as the Executive Chef, overseeing menu development and culinary operations at a gourmet food truck and restaurant venture, Wokinaki, located in Shahama Abu Dhabi Deerfield Mall.

The restaurant's unexpected closure led to exploring opportunities outside of the culinary sphere. Throughout his life, Chef Manzoor held an inclination for running his own business, and when his career took him out of the blue, he serendipitously found himself joining an F&B services venture initiated by his uncle.

"The company specializes in providing comprehensive staffing management services for top hotels and restaurants on an hourly, monthly, or annual retained basis. It was established in 2015, and after my uncle left, he gave the business to my partner and me, and we run it today with over 60 permanent staff," he describes his venture, Top Deal Party Services, a driving force behind the seamless operations of cafes, events, and hotels.

The dynamic metamorphosis of the industry and the rise of an on-demand workforce have made employing casual staff more welcoming. He elaborates that many restaurants have cut back on their full-time staff; instead of having one waiter attend to one guest, there are now many guests per waiter. With the need for staff varying as per seasonal or periodic demands, casual staff has provided flexibility, allowing employers to scale their workforce up and down as required.

What sets his venture apart is the well-trained staff and the curation of a roster



of skilled professionals that blend in with the workplace theme. When a hotel expresses interest in outsourcing, the selection process begins with in-person interviews led by senior hotel leadership. Once the pool of candidates is identified, they may be assigned to front-of-house or back-of-house roles for the entire project duration.

"The art is in hiring the right skill for the job. Say, if a hotel requires staffing support, we have a month's grace period to source candidates matching their specified age, nationality, and skill requirements before deploying the team."

During the trying times of the pandemic, just like the world, Chef Manzoor faced unprecedented challenges. But he took it upon himself to support this team and navigate turbulent waters. Chef Manzoor contends that the success of every project is linked to cultivating a culture of professionalism within the team. If anything, he views his team as employees and a community united by shared passions.

Ever the person who once lived under the same umbrella as the young chef, he is always the first to dish out advice whenever his team faces the weight of predicaments. "Take care of your staff, as Sir J.W. Marriott Jr. once remarked, and they will take care of your customers. Thus, everything comes full circle and begins with the employer looking out for their employees."

No matter the flash and dash of the F&B industry, it is not immune to supply and demand issues. Chef Manzoor has a legion of part-timers ready to gain industry experience to counter these issues. Apart from the connections in the culinary community, he also maintains ties with culinary schools, enabling him to recruit part-time students seeking to step into the hospitality domain.

As a chef, one cannot stop learning. Chef Manzoor explains that schooling



Learning about a dish and making it once or twice is nothing compared to the person who has done it 400 times! It requires mastering numerous skills

can provide a good platform for young chefs to begin with their passion and make them more hireable. But it is only the start. "These skills can only be successfully achieved by repeatedly performing them. Learning about a dish and making it once or twice is nothing compared to the person who has done it 400 times! It requires mastering numerous skills."

When one achieves mastery of culinary skills, the preparation of unique and exhilarating dishes becomes effortless. Therefore, he strongly advocates that aspiring chefs expose themselves to diverse foods and cooking techniques.

This entails the opportunity to embark on culinary journeys around the globe to hone their craft. "Numerous culinary schools provide exchange and study abroad programs, facilitating a firsthand encounter with the world's most exquisite cuisines," he elaborates.

Chefs continue to play a timeless role in a world where new trends and career paths are constantly emerging. While the dedication and effort required may deter aspiring chefs, the significance of the culinary field cannot be overstated. Chef Manzoor reckons that one of the last things that a chef has to worry about is getting bored with the job, as there is always something interesting to learn: a new dish to try, an exciting new trend in the cooking world to experiment with, or a new technique or gadget to test.

"If the idea of a constantly changing and evolving profession captivates your interest, then a career as a chef is a great choice. Becoming a top chef can make you a star in your own right, opening doors to newspaper features, invitations to red-carpet events, publication deals for your cookbooks, and even hosting your television show. It can give you fame and fortune. However, it is also about choosing the profession because you love to cook. Few people can follow

their passion and reap such high rewards in life. The satisfaction of seeing your guests' eyes light up when they taste your food, the honor of being sought after for catering events and weddings, and the ability to craft unique, pleasing meals that bring satisfaction to your customers and your family. These are among the best reasons to become a chef," he shares the profound connection between chefs and their craft.

As a people person, Chef Manzoor enjoys forming bonds that build a strong community where different individuals from every aspect of the food industry can exchange ideas. If you peer into his rapport with others, it becomes clear why he opted for a social career rather than the traditional 9-to-5 job.

A recognizable face at guild events, his altruistic commitment to give back to society goes beyond simply being a loyal member and meeting attendance. A senior member of the ECG, a Worldchef-approved judge, a marshal, and a competitor, he has worn many hats for the



When one achieves mastery of culinary skills, the preparation of unique and exhilarating dishes becomes effortless

guild. Recently, he lent his refined palate to evaluate vegan dishes at the Salon Culinaire competition, a category that has seen limited judges around the world.

What drives his fervor for the events? Addressing the curiosity, he smiles: "I like talking to chefs. When I am wearing my chef's jacket, it helps the business and community. Many chefs know me because I am sociable in the hospitality industry. Connection is everything."

Chef Manzoor has catered to multiple tastes in competitions, but his top picks dwell in Chinese, Thai, Italian, Japanese, Mexican, and Indo-Pakistani cuisine. From Nihari and Ojari to Baltistani Murgh Masala Biryani, you ask him about his favorite Pakistani dishes, and he congenitally rattles out tidy sums, explaining there cannot possibly be one.

On the surface, it is apparent that a tight schedule has overwhelmed his life, and indeed, in reality, he has negligible time to spare for himself. Despite his packed calendar, he shares his gourmet wisdom with the world on his YouTube channel. His supporting wife and four kids (two daughters and two sons) live in Lahore and eagerly await to cherish quality time with him. Even in all of this, he still finds time to defy time zones and borders and to visit his family in Pakistan once every six months.

When Chef Manzoor had his salary in hand from his first stint in Dubai, he received the most shocking news of his life: he had lost his mentor and guide. His father had passed away in an accident. Even though disheartened by the loss, Chef Manzoor carries his father's torch, dedicating his career to the very industry his father had passionately introduced him to.

Looking ahead, he considers including chefs in his staffing management services. Providing professional chefs, however, includes stringent specifications, as distinct sets of culinary skills are necessary for specific roles. "An optimal chef fit is required for each section. Currently, we are only providing stewards and waitstaff. So I am considering hiring multi-talented chefs who can take up different activities in both hot and cold kitchens and help in the industry."

So the next time you see a beaming steward or a waitstaff at an event, remember individuals like Chef Manzoor making it happen, one connection at a time.



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RISING STAR

Ekta Alreja, from ICCA, engages in a conversation with Chef Jude Tharanga, discussing the transformative impact of the ICCA Dubai Scholarship on his life

Growing up observing his fisherman father's hard work, Jude Tharanga developed an appreciation for the satisfaction derived from a hard day's labour—a sentiment he now seeks to recreate in the kitchen of one of Dubai's premier restaurants. As the only person from his village working abroad as a successful chef, Tharanga attributes his success to his father's dedication to supporting his education.

His culinary expedition began in Qatar, working alongside his brother-in-law, and unfolded further at Bay Watch Eco Resort Village in Kalpitiya, Sri Lanka. The pivotal moment came in 2018 when he landed an opportunity at Four Points by Sheraton, Dubai. Realizing the significance of proper training, Tharanga turned to ICCA Dubai for a professional program, recognizing it as his launchpad to excellence.

"The way ICCA trains you for the industry, it gives you an added advantage. It helps you get leverage over your peers. In the school kitchen, you learn everything from techniques to handling pressure," emphasizes Tharanga.

His resilience was put to the test when he initially lost the ICCA scholarship in 2021. Undeterred, he persisted and emerged victorious in 2022, impressing judges with his unwavering commitment, positive attitude, and culinary precision.

Being part of the ICCA Dubai



embrace it and use it to further my career," he shares.

Tharanga's achievements extend beyond the scholarship win, earning him recognition as Employee of the Month at Atlantis, The Palm Dubai, in 2022, where he presently excels at Gordon Ramsay's Bread Kitchen & Bar. His accolades include a triumph at the Canned Legumes From Europe Online event in 2023.

His advice to aspiring chefs echoes his own journey: "Be always open to new ideas and never let doubts cloud your imagination. Embrace new things, suggestions, and ideas with open arms, and never stop working on yourself."

Chef Jude Tharanga's extraordinary story—from a small Sri Lankan village to Commis I in one of Dubai's finest hotels—is a testament to his dedication, resilience, and the transformative education provided by ICCA Dubai. As he continues his culinary journey, we wish him the best of luck in all his future endeavors.



Be always open to new ideas and never let doubts cloud your imagination

Culinary Scholarship Program proved transformative for Tharanga. "My confidence has grown in leaps and bounds, and with the knowledge and skills I have gained, all I need to do is

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.



My confidence has grown in leaps and bounds, and with the knowledge and skills I have gained, all I need to do is embrace it and use it to further my career





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Application Membership

Date of Application:

Family Name: (Mr./Ms./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 <input type="checkbox"/>	Senior Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>
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.

Signed:.....

Proposed By:	Sig:.....
Seconded By:	Sig:.....

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Remarks:

Payment received?		
Certificate Given.	Pin Given.	Medal & Collar Given
Approved	Approved	
President.....	Chairman.....	

Fees:

- Young Member: Junior members will receive a certificate.
- Senior Members: Above the rank of chef de partie (or senior chef de partie on executive chef's recommendation).
Dhs.350/=joining. Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar. Dhs. 150/=per year thereafter.
- Affiliate Member: Dhs.350.00 for the first year. Dhs.300 per year thereafter.
- Corporate Member Dhs. 20,000 per year

newmembers



Rahees Abdul Basheer, Key Account Executive – Food Service, Yassine Elallam, Key Account Manager – Food Service and Himanshu Kothari, Food Service Senior Manager, receiving the Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Andy Cuthbert

We offer a wide range of grades, origins, and packaging options to cater the specific needs of each of our partners. Thanks to our efficient and renowned food service team, we ensure that you will receive the best of our ingredients, products, and services. The trust we have earned throughout the years by some of the world's most notable chains speaks for our ability to always provide them with the best solution.

With many ground-breaking milestones, **Bayara** established itself as the leading manufacturer of nuts, dried fruits, spices and pulses across the Middle East and Africa. And now, we are geared to further strengthen our regional footprint and start expanding globally.

In line with the company's vision to offer healthier solutions, it remains a



core commitment to provide consumers with positive nutrition and value-added innovations that offer smart solutions to consumers with convenience and quality.

Innovation and offering newer and smarter solutions are a key driving engine for us, with sustainability remaining core for all activities in our operations. Every decision we take reinforces our commitment to three main pillars: planet, people, and community. We are optimizing our resources' efficiency, reducing

waste, and reducing our dependency on non-renewable energy sources. In 2020, we started the solarization of our production and office site. Today, 70% of our electricity consumption is now coming directly from the sun.

People across our value chain are the company's driving engine. Bayara as an organization stands out for its Workforce diversity, empowerment and inclusion of People of Determination, nurturing current talent and encouraging employees to be responsible citizens through taking on impactful roles in giving back to the community. Achieving the ultimate goal of providing employees with a home away from home.



Claire Whalley-Livesey, Managing Director- UK & EMEA, receiving the Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Andy Cuthbert

Meyer Corporation is a global leader in the cookware and kitchenware industry, renowned for its commitment to quality, innovation, and exceptional design. Headquartered in Vallejo, California, the company has established itself as a household name, providing top-notch culinary solutions to chefs and home cooks alike. With a rich history spanning several decades, Meyer Corporation has consistently evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of the culinary world.

At the heart of Meyer Corporation's success is its dedication to producing high-quality cookware, and one of its standout brands is **Hestan**. Launched as a part of Meyer Corporation's portfolio, the Hestan brand has quickly become synonymous with precision engineering and cutting-edge design in the culinary world.

Hestan, a name inspired by founder Stanley Cheng reflects the brand's family-oriented values and

HESTAN

commitment to excellence. The Hestan team comprises a group of passionate and skilled individuals who share a common goal: to elevate the cooking experience for professionals and enthusiasts alike. This commitment is evident in the meticulous craftsmanship and attention to detail that goes into every Hestan product.

The Hestan brand is renowned for its innovative features and technologies, setting new standards in the culinary industry. From advanced materials to ergonomic designs, Hestan cookware and kitchenware are crafted to enhance performance and durability. The brand's cookware collections are designed not only for their functionality but also for their aesthetic appeal, seamlessly blending modern design with timeless elegance.

One of Hestan's flagship innovations is

its NanoBond technology, a revolutionary breakthrough in the world of stainless steel cookware. NanoBond creates a surface four times harder than typical stainless steel, ensuring exceptional durability and resistance to scratching, staining, and corrosion. This cutting-edge technology exemplifies Hestan's commitment to pushing boundaries and redefining industry norms.

Beyond its dedication to product excellence, Hestan is also recognized for its commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. The brand actively engages in environmentally friendly practices, emphasizing the importance of reducing its carbon footprint and promoting ethical sourcing.

As a part of the Meyer Corporation family, Hestan continues to inspire culinary enthusiasts, professional chefs, and home cooks worldwide, fostering a legacy of innovation, quality, and passion in every kitchen it touches.



Antonio El Khoury, Director of Culinary Programs (MENA), receiving the Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Andy Cuthbert

The **USA Cheese Guild** represents American dairy farmers and the entire U.S. cheese community to build global awareness of the excellent cheeses from the USA. Through education and promotions, the Guild aims to inform chefs, importers, and consumers about the craftsmanship, quality, innovation, variety, and versatility of USA cheeses.

Managed by the U.S. Dairy Export Council, the USA Cheese Guild is headquartered in Arlington, Virginia and has offices across Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia.

Cheeses from the USA will astound you with unique variety, rich flavor, and incredible value. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @CheeseFromTheUSA, ME and LinkedIn @USACheeseGuild

With culinary traditions inherited from centuries of immigration, the United States today boasts a robust dairy community that has gained international



attention from professionals and foodies alike. With more cheese produced than France, Germany and Italy combined, the United States is the largest cheesemaking and cheese exporting country in the world. Like the UAE's vibrant food scene, the U.S. cheese industry is dynamic, diverse, and open to the world. USA Cheeses are diverse, flavorful, and accessible. They have won most international accolades cheeses can get – including the World's Best Cheese at the 2019-2020 World Cheese Awards.

Created in 2019, the USA Cheese Guild® is a customer-facing brand identity and entity that raises awareness of the quality, and innovation of Cheeses from the USA around the globe, through

running a variety of marketing programs in nine international markets.

A diverse range of cheeses are available in the Middle East, whether in food service or retail. Understanding the differences in tastes and texture of each can help find the best product to incorporate into local recipes. Some of the favorites are the soft-fresh (U.S. cream cheese, U.S. mascarpone), semi-soft (U.S. Colby Jack, U.S. Monterey jack, U.S. Pepper Jack, U.S. mozzarella), blue-veined (U.S. blue cheese), hard cheese (U.S. parmesan) and U.S. cheddar varieties



“
**Chef
Simon
says...**

Culinary Trends Express

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

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

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

BONJOUR, as we say hello to the rising trend of reinvented French classics. Comforting and delivering a sense of pure delight and indulgence with every mouthful. Simple flavors that sing and almost dance on your tongue with minimalistic handling...The use of great butter, cream, and olive oil paired with simple ingredients. Think savory mille feuille, a redefined potato fondant. The roulade and ballotine are back. Time to dig out those Paul Bocuse books or Fernand Point. We see menus across the region almost putting a spin on Nouvelle Cuisine, foie gras in burgers, and super laminated croissants filled with local delights and spices. **Ooh La La...** Gougeres are made with a variety of local cheese and even pickled dates alongside a grilled mackerel... Whether you prefer Vichy carrots or blanquette du veau, it is the foundation of many cuisines that are making waves, and **my favorite is confit duck with cherries...** Speaking of which...

CHERRIES are one of life's pleasures. Each fruit is glossy, bursting with aroma, and that amazing pop of sweet-tart almond-like profile we are seeing rise to be a regional favorite. Once beloved for its iconic look and juicy flavors,



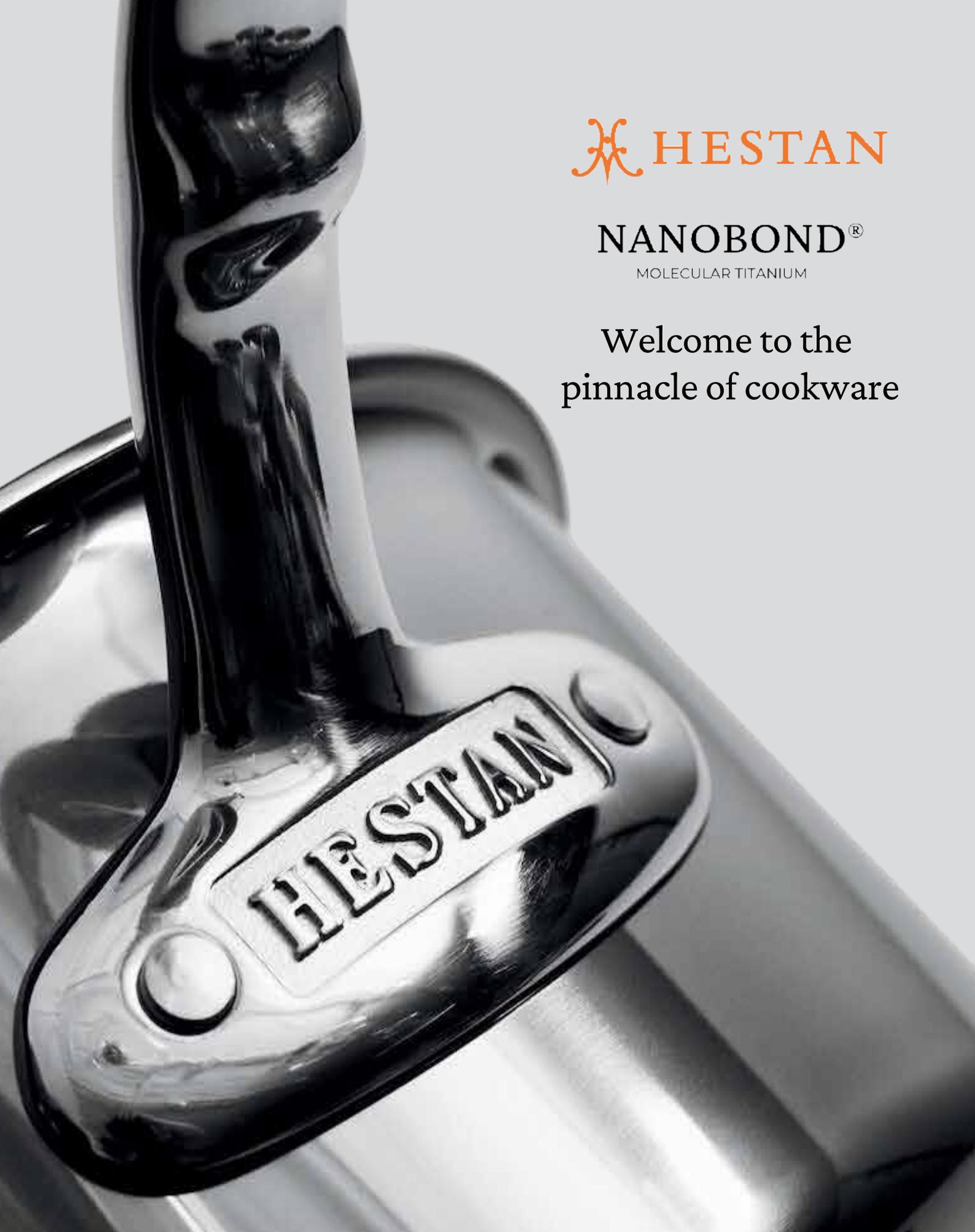
when it comes to drinks, cherry has sort of lost out to other fruits over the past couple of decades. But that has changed recently as beverages around the world have been taking on a bit of a pink-red hue and distinctive cherry tang. But not just in beverages; we see cherries in many colors and many evolutions of food, from sweet to savory, confectionary, and even in cosmetics. Some cultures adore this passionate fruit so much that they have up to 32 words to define the cherry. **AFTER ALL, IS LIFE NOT LIKE A BOWL OF CHERRIES?**

Pioneering chefs like Jose Andres and Dominique Crenn are setting new trends for us all to follow and not Jose's famous "Fabada Asturiana." I am, of course, talking about cultivated meat, also known as cultured meat....**WAIT, THIS WILL BLOW YOUR MIND.....** We are talking about genuine meat produced directly from cultivated animal cells without the need to raise, feed, or farm the animals. **OMG!!!!** By 2030, this is predicted to grow 48.1% to over 36.6 billion dollars. **SPOILER ALERT...** It's not

just meat but dairy, milk, cheese, and other derivatives as well. The protein industry is not only setting trends for us to follow in this region but also redefining the basis for the food chain. **I AM SURE CHEF ESCOFFIER WILL BE EMBRACING THE FUTURE LIKE WE SHOULD ??** After all, we are the pioneers and explorers in the white jackets that will shape our industry's future.

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

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



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