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FEBRUARY 2024

**gulf**

THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

# gourmet

Volume 19, Issue 2

CHECK OUT THE  
COMPLETE LISTING OF

RULES AND  
REGULATIONS FOR

**SALON  
2024**

## TWINS FOR A TRIUMPH

Certified twin chefs **Maitha** and **Abdulrahman Al Hashmi** are making the impossible possible, proving to the culinary scene that they mean serious business

### CHEF OF THE MONTH

How Chef **Kiran Sharma Ramsaran** leads his team with his come-what-may optimism and the secret to his prowess in the kitchen and beyond



### THE CHALLENGER

Life has dished out several challenges to Chef **Syarif**. Today he is putting down the gauntlet at the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Competition



### QUOTE MARSHAL

Although a certified judge, Chef **Thushara Fernando** prefers to do marshaling for the competitions. A passion he can't get enough of







*Barilla  
Rigatoni Pasta*

*Latteria Sorrentina  
Stracciatella Cheese*

*Cà Foresto  
Mushroom*

*Appennino  
Truffle Butter*

# STRACCIATELLA TRUFFLE RIGATONI



A LUXURIOUS BLEND OF AL DENTE RIGATONI ENVELOPED IN A VELVETY TRUFFLE CREAM, PAIRED WITH EARTHY MUSHROOMS AND FINISHED WITH A GENEROUS SWIRL OF CREAMY STRACCIATELLA CHEESE FOR A RICH, INDULGENT TREAT.



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# president's station

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

Dear Members and Partners,

With our team of 30 chefs heading to Germany for the IKA Culinary Olympic 2024, February promises to be an exciting month for the Guild. The chefs will compete in artistic classes and pastry arts, and we have high hopes that the team will once again make us proud and bring home the gold. A big thank you to Sounbula Mills and its managing director, Mr. Karim Al Azhari, for their generous support toward our team, making it possible for us to travel once again and represent the country in the world's best culinary competitions. Stay tuned for a comprehensive rundown of the competition in the upcoming March edition of the magazine. Good luck, Team Emirates.

In October 2024, there will be an election for the new presidium at the Worldchefs Congress. And I have put myself forward with a team from around the world to run as president, something I have been thinking about for a long time. I believe that with the strength of our ECG behind me and with my running partners, Rick Stephen from Australia, Alain Hostert from Luxembourg, Kristine Hartviksen from Norway, and, of course, my partner in everything, Guild Chef Uwe Micheel, we have a team that can lead the World Association into the next century. I thank my wife, Jo, as well as the ECG membership and committee for their support. More from Team Andy in future magazine editions.

The Jumeirah Creekside Hotel hosted the Guild's first 2024 meeting. We would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Nandana Wirasinha, Chef Ramola Bijendra, and their entire team for the wonderful hospitality and arrangements for the partners and chefs. It was a fantastic way to kick off the year. New members were welcomed, and it was great to see so many presentations highlighting the work that companies

are doing around food security and the best proactive measures for the future.

One of the backbones of the guild is its corporate partners. We are grateful to them, as without them, we would not have had the opportunity to do many of the activities that we are able to undertake now.

We extend our gratitude to Emirates in Flight Catering for graciously hosting a tour and interactive session for our young chefs in their facility in January. This visit provided young chefs with an eye-opening experience as they were given a firsthand glimpse into their vast facility.

A team of eight members of our senior committee also accompanied Helen Raudaschl and the Indoguna team on a factory and production tour in Jebel Ali. During this tour, we were able to firsthand witness the innovations that are at the heart of their great food products. Additionally, we also experienced the philosophy of Helene's company and colleagues. This was, of course, followed by an amazing tasting session with the team in the R&D kitchen, where we were able to sample some of the best innovations being developed by Indoguna for the market here in the UAE. Thank you, Helene.

Our partner ARLA Pro Pastry Chef of the Year competition is in full action, and we call upon all pastry chefs in the UAE to compete in this fantastic competition. It's free to enter, and the winner will get an all-expenses-paid trip in 2025.

At the upcoming Emirates Salon Culinaire in May 2024 at EXPOCULINAIRE, participants will have the chance to win five exclusive international trips! To obtain comprehensive information, kindly visit our website and navigate to the competition page for complete details



on the class briefs. Our competitions hold great significance, and we request from our supportive partners that they consider giving educational prizes to our winners. By doing so, we can further push the education of our aspiring young chefs and offer them opportunities that come once in a lifetime.

Another great competition making its way back in June will be the Hotel Show and the Chefs Table. If your hotel is interested in this interactive F&B experience, email me or Madame Jo so we can register your team.

We continue to see young chefs do well in our partner school, ICCA, which is offering the Annual One Million Dirham Continuing Education Award for UAE Young Industry Chefs. This prestigious scholarship is making lives happen by offering a group of passionate young men and women an opportunity to seal their career paths.

The selected candidates will receive weekly training at the school, where we are actively seeking experienced culinary professionals and industry leaders to mentor and train these dynamic young individuals. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact Chairman Raghu Pillai or Chef Harald Oberender directly to assist in liaising with the school.

Looking ahead, February and March are expected to be busy months for the industry as we carry the momentum from a strong finish in 2023 into 2024. We remain optimistic that this positive trend will continue throughout the year, benefiting everyone involved in the industry.

With Regards,  
**Andy Cuthbert**  
President and Editor





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# A Culinary Journey: From Passionate Beginnings and Beyond

Why Chef **Helen Morris** perceives life in a kitchen as simply the best

Looking back with fond memories evokes a beaming smile and a glint in my eye. There is no denying that the food and beverage world is nothing short of extraordinary! For sure, there were days I could have banged my head on a wall, thrown my kitchen cloth down, and left the kitchen, never to return. Long hours, the relentless pursuit of perfection, and the constant struggle to maintain an entire kitchen brigade all added to the 'stock pot' of the culinary world. So, why do it, you ask the question? It is simply the pure, unadulterated passion for this industry that kept me going—a passion that continues to burn even as I transition into academia. I have, without question, had the best time of my life—except for banging my head on a wall many times, of course! Let me take you back to the beginning of my culinary quest.

I was 14 years old when I had to consider my future. How would I know at this age? Nonetheless, I attended the school career fair. I briefly considered computer programming (I could have been a millionaire by now), but this conjured up a dimly lit office and tangled wires—it was the 80s, after all—and I decided that this was not for me. The next option that caught my eye was to join the Royal Air Force, and after some thought and reflection, I decided there was too much discipline in this career. Little did I know my future decision to join the culinary world would be ingrained with discipline and would capture my heart. So, how did I get to decide I wanted to be a chef?

It was one weekend when I was 15 years old. I sat in the living room, and a program came on the TV called *Take Six Chefs*. I was mesmerized as I watched



how the kitchen worked—the neatly pressed uniform and those towering, tall white hats. The authority oozed confidence and presence as they discussed dishes around a table. I was in awe, and at that very moment, there it was: I wanted to be a chef! My career path was set.

I was lucky to have two amazing grandmothers who knew how to cook, and one of them produced pastries that still can't be replicated today. Apologies to all the pastry chefs out there. Or maybe it's just plain old nostalgia reminding me of those memories of a carefree childhood gone by—great pies, crumbling pastry, and those inviting aromas in the kitchen when a seasonal

fruit, such as damson pie, was cooked. These experiences also fueled my passion for the culinary world.

Years later, I can confidently say that choosing the culinary path was the right decision. In the immortal words of Tina Turner, life in a kitchen is "simply the best."

Stay tuned for the next installment of my journey, where I'll reveal the reaction of one of my teachers when I chose this path. This journey isn't just about cooking; it's about embracing a lifestyle that shapes your very being.

Keep the passion burning.  
Until next time,  
**Chef Helen**

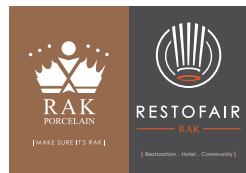
# friends of the guild



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# newsbites



## ECG introduces an exciting competition at the AI Wathba Date Festival

The AI Wathba Date Festival and Auction held at the Sheikh Zayed Heritage Festival in Al Wathba, Abu Dhabi, successfully captivated audiences with its celebration featuring diverse cultural events showcasing Emirati heritage. The festival aimed to not only entertain but also educate and inspire attendees to explore the customs and traditions that have been cherished for generations.

The 10-day event that took place between December 13 and 22, 2023, showcased various events. From date packaging competitions to date auctions, the event also featured a heritage market where visitors savored cultural delicacies and explored traditional crafts.

Additionally, a corporate exhibition provided a platform for businesses to display their products and services. The event also saw an Elite Dates Mazayna competition.

And for gastronomy enthusiasts, chefs showcased their skills in captivating cooking competitions held in collaboration with the Emirates Culinary Guild.

Talking about the competition, Raghuprasad Pillai, Chairman of the Emirates Culinary Guild, said, "This was the first time the Emirates Culinary Guild had participated and collaborated



for the 10-day event. We had 36 chefs participating in three different categories that were all live cooking competitions evaluated by world chefs certified judges from the ECG."

The competition included chefs from various nationalities, including experts from well-known hotels and restaurants in the UAE and Gulf countries, competing with their culinary prowess to create an appetizer, main course, and dessert, all incorporating dates, date derivatives, and extra virgin olive oil.

A creative use of dates and their derivatives was the theme of all the cooking competitions.

"There were three competitions. The Emirati category was where participants had to create two Emirati dishes and present them in both traditional and modern styles. The second leg of the

competition was the Arabic Levantine category, where participants again had to create a dish and present it in both modern and traditional ways. There was a dessert competition where participants had to create two desserts," stated Chef Raghu.

Apart from the competitions, the event also saw eight expert chefs conduct masterclasses, showcasing their expertise through live demonstrations, and offering delectable samples of dishes made with date products to the public.

"The event, organized in Sheikh Zayed Heritage Village in liaison with the Cultural Programs and Heritage Festivals Committee in Abu Dhabi, and the Emirates Heritage Club was a significant effort to bolster the cultivation, production, and manufacture of dates. It is a big, serious push by the government," added Chef Raghu.







## Young Chefs Ready to Take Off

Have you ever thought about how one of the world's best airlines' manages to deliver a delightful dining experience thousands of feet above the ground? Recently, the Emirates Flight Catering facility (EKFC) opened its doors to the young chefs from the Emirates Culinary Guild Young Chefs Club, offering them a behind-the-scenes look at how they manage to produce an average of 225,000 meals per day.

Located in the heart of the city of Dubai, the EKFC facility is the world's largest airline catering facility that offers a one-of-a-kind experience inside the world of in-flight catering.

What is the secret ingredient that makes the meal creation possible? It is a combination of state-of-the-art technology and a team of highly skilled chefs, bakers, and food technicians who work around the clock to prepare meals that meet the soaring high standards of the aviation industry.



Spanning an impressive 174,000 square meters, the EKFC assumes the responsibility of producing, packing, and delivering meals and snacks to airlines around the world and major outdoor catering events.

During the visit, the young chefs had

the privilege of a guided tour of the Emirates Flight Catering facility. They had an up-close firsthand experience of learning about the entire cycle, from the receiving of raw items and ingredients to the sanitization areas, followed by meal preparation and packaging as per airline stringent standards. Finally, off to conveyors for delivery to airlines—all of this in a linear process flow to avoid any chance of contamination. They also sampled some of the delicious food that is served onboard the flights.

Furthermore, the young chefs had a hands-on session led by talented chefs from EKFC, delving into the art of sushi making, and dumplings, and learning more about Arabic favorites like Sambousek, Fatayer, and Shish Barak.

In a rare educational opportunity, the young chefs had the chance to learn about the complex logistics and planning that go into catering for airlines and appreciate the hard work and dedication of the people who make it all possible.







## Sounbula Mills Sponsors the Emirates Culinary Guild Chefs to IKA Culinary Olympics 2024

The Emirates Culinary Guild in association with its Flour Mill partner Sounbula Mills, announce that from 3rd of February until the 7th of February 2024 a team of 30 chefs shall travel from the Emirates Culinary Guild the chefs Association of the United Arab Emirates to compete against the best in the world at the Culinary Olympics in Stuttgart Germany for the 4th time since 2012.

The owner and Managing director of Sounbula, Mr. Karim Al Azhari, said that this is an exciting time for the Sounbula brand and being associated with The Emirates Culinary Guild and its committee of professional bakers led by Master baker Jurgen Ellenback will be an important step. Al Azhari added, to be able to motivate these young men and women to perform on the world culinary stage and represent our homeland is a special feeling for myself and the company. He

added The Sounbula Flour mills are also in collaboration with bakers to develop custom made flour types to be used in all applications of the baking of bread.

The competition will be held across the full 5 days and the team will be competing in the artistic display categories and pasty art classes. Where they will demonstrate their skills and talents to the judges of the World Association of chefs societies.

Chef Uwe Micheel, Past President of the Emirates Culinary Guild, commented, "It is with great pride that once again I am able to lead the management of the team and highlight the great work our chefs do in the United Arab Emirates as well as represent our country. My past 24 years as President of the Guild have been filled with many proud moments and I am sure our team will once again bring home the Gold from Germany 2024.

## Sustainable Tourism Stamp

The Dubai Sustainable Tourism Stamp (DST) initiative announced by Dubai Tourism was awarded to 70 recipients. These award winners have received recognition for their contributions to making the tourism industry more environmentally friendly.

As per the DET's official website, the stamp is awarded to hotels that exhibit the highest level of adherence to the department's 19 sustainability criteria. The stamp categorized in a three-tiered system of gold, silver, and bronze is related to the winner's level of compliance achieved.

Dubai is the first city to introduce this initiative that mandate sustainability criteria for its hotel classification system

The initiative that was launched last year, aims to accelerate the tourism sector's efforts to support the UAE's NetZero 2050 strategy, and aligns with the goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, to consolidate Dubai's position as one of the top three global cities for business and leisure.

The complete list of the recipients can be found on the official website.

## 69% of UAE residents rate Dubai as the world's leading gastronomy hub

According to the Dubai Gastronomy Report 2023, published by the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), there has been a remarkable 61 percent year-on-year increase in the number of residents dining out, indicating their growing demand for diverse culinary experiences. This report underlines the rapid expansion of Dubai's thriving food and beverage industry.

The other key insights from the report featured Dubai ranking second worldwide in terms of restaurant density, 69% of UAE residents rating the city as the world's leading gastronomy hub, and an increase in satisfaction with Dubai's value for money when dining out of international visitors up to 66% in 2023.

The report additionally emphasizes the

importance of restaurants achieving Michelin green stars and the city's commitment to sustainability and UAE Net Zero 2050.

It also highlighted that the 11th annual Dubai Food Festival (DFF) will be held from April 19 to May 12, featuring a spectacular showcase of the city's culinary excellence.

## Kashkan by Ranveer Brar appoints Shamsher Singh as the Brand Chef

**C**hef Shamsher has been appointed as the Brand Chef at Kashkan by Ranveer Brar. As per media reports, Chef Shamsher will oversee current outlets in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, as well as any future ventures.

He brings over two decades of extensive

knowledge of both Indian and Western cuisines. His culinary journey includes notable stints at establishments in India, including the Taj Mahal Palace, Novotel, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson, and more. He has also showcased his culinary prowess in Moscow while working for International Domodedovo Airport and Paprika Restaurant, among many others.



## Saudi Culinary Arts Commission Reveals Provinces' Signature Dishes

**H**ighlighting its culinary heritage, the Saudi Culinary Arts Commission has recently revealed a list of dishes from each of the 13 regions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

As part of its National and Regional Dishes Narratives initiative, the commission aims to promote and highlight local gastronomic traditions as well as boost recognition of Saudi cuisine worldwide.

According to the announcement on the official page of the authority on X, these dishes are chosen according to set criteria, including cultural and heritage value, historical importance, and contribution to the local economy.

## Alaa Moustafa is Executive Chef at the Marriott Hotel, Al Jaddaf

**A**s a native of the United Arab Emirates, Chef Alaa sets the tone for a culinary adventure that started in 1999 with his deep understanding of regional flavors. Having completed a stage at a Michelin-starred restaurant and pastry training, Chef Alaa's expertise extends beyond traditional boundaries. Chef Alaa has worked for a number of establishments,

including Address Downtown, FIVE Palm Jumeirah, Intercontinental Abu Dhabi, and Raffles Dubai.

Throughout his career, he has launched 13 restaurants with great success, each of which has showcased his commitment to high-quality and innovative cooking.

The appointment of Alaa Moustafa as the Executive Chef of the Marriott Hotel will usher in a new era of culinary innovation for the renowned establishment.

"I am incredibly excited to help craft some truly unique experiences across the hotel while also focusing on coaching and developing the culinary team, very much in line with the Marriott spirit of putting its people first," stated Chef Alaa.

In January 2024, the hotel announced plans to tweak the all-day dining restaurant, The MarketPlace. It will also introduce a new Mediterranean rooftop restaurant and pool lounge called TerraMar.





# chef's palette X



For the first time in the history of Food Service, Tabasco is entering the industry in collaboration with Chef's Palette, the leading culinary solution provider in the region. This partnership reflects Chefs palette's deep-rooted belief in innovation, an integral part of our brand's DNA. We are excited to present a flavorful hot range of culinary solutions, crafted by chefs for chefs.

*Unleash your creativity !*



**SPICY  
MAYONNAISE**

**DYNAMITE  
SAUCE**

**SPICY BURGER  
SAUCE**



# SUSTAINA-BEL SUCCESS

**Heyam Abdelhadi**, Executive Chef at the Bel Groupe tells us how she presents the company's assortment through a range of recipes tailored to suit the tastes of the Middle East



Coming from a Palestinian background and an agricultural family, Chef Heyam Abdelhadi never forsook her deep respect for the farm-to-table concept. She believes in honoring natural produce and embracing sustainable practices as a genuine expression of appreciation for the environment.

As the Executive Chef at Bel Groupe, a major player in the food industry known for its dairy, fruit, plant-based products, and branded cheese, she feels proud to represent a company that places an emphasis on sustainability at every stage of its operations.

Gulf Gourmet brings you an exclusive interview with Chef Hayem to learn about her culinary approach, which focuses on infusing creativity into recipes without compromising on flavor or authenticity and aligns perfectly with the brand's vision.

#### Who is Chef Heyam? Tell us more about yourself.

A passionate chef and devoted mom of two, proudly embracing her Palestinian roots.

#### Could you tell us about your childhood and your family?

Many cherished childhood memories are intertwined with food and nature. From eagerly awaiting the annual first press of olive oil, relishing olive oil sandwiches amidst the bustling gathering of 31 cousins from my mom's side alone, to the memorable road trips to my grandfather's orange orchard in Tartus, Syria, nestled by the sea. Those adventures extended to Cairo and Amman, where I attended my grandmother's avant-garde dinner parties that showcased her culinary prowess ahead of her time. Growing up in a Palestinian family deeply rooted in a profound connection to the land, poetry, and heritage, I nurtured my enthusiasm for hospitality and the culinary arts.

#### Why did you choose to become a



### A passionate chef and devoted mom of two, proudly embracing her Palestinian roots

#### chef? Did you study or intern for it? What inspired you to become a chef?

My desire to reside in southern France drove me to seek a suitable program following my business school studies in Amman. I yearned for a purpose and stumbled upon a remarkable French cuisine program near Montpellier, which appeared ideal. Completing the course meant an additional six months for the diploma and a paid internship—perfect! While I had always cherished the kitchen and cooking, I hadn't intended to shape my career path; I was simply going with the flow.

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

The initial phase of any career typically involves challenges, often varying from city to city despite sharing similar themes. However, I prefer not to dwell on these obstacles, as I have managed to transform many of them into opportunities. A strong work ethic is essential in our field, and a hustler's mentality prevails—entitlement and blame have no place. The key is consistently delivering your best work, adhering to strong ethics, and avoiding complaints.

#### How do you describe your cooking journey, from France to the US and Canada, and becoming an Executive Chef?

In the realm of hospitality, I've traversed various roles across different countries, a journey for which I'm immensely thankful. Starting as an intern, progressing through roles like commis, and eventually becoming a business owner and now a corporate executive chef, my path might not be conventional, yet it has been undeniably thrilling. I eagerly anticipate its continued excitement and evolution.

#### What is the importance of a good team behind Bel's success?

This isn't just a scripted sentiment for an interview—the team at Bel is genuinely remarkable! It's more than a workplace; it's akin to a family-owned enterprise where everyone is genuinely invested in the team's success, individual growth, and the company's overall achievements. Sustainable success hinges on a content, enterprising, skilled team backed by supportive management—qualities that precisely define our environment at Bel.

#### Share the guiding principles that drive your culinary journey and how they align with the brand's values.

In the culinary realm, creativity thrives amid extensive research and development, staying attuned to trends, comprehending diverse markets, and embracing experimentation to craft optimal solutions. The brand's core values strongly resonate with this ethos of innovation and exploration.

#### What are your thoughts on the unique concepts behind a restaurant's success in Dubai?

Maintaining unwavering quality, fostering staff contentment, and embracing a comprehensive approach to hospitality.

#### What is your advice to young chefs?

There's no requirement to emulate someone else's journey for their success. Forge your unique path, one





The initial phase of any career typically involves challenges, often varying from city to city despite sharing similar themes. However, I prefer not to dwell on these obstacles



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that guides you toward becoming the person you aspire to be and reaching the destinations you aim for.

**Share key moments that shaped your cooking philosophy and how it aligns with the brand's vision.**

My upbringing in an agricultural family deeply rooted in the land has shaped my adherence to a straightforward farm-to-table ethos. This philosophy respects natural produce, reflecting a genuine appreciation for sustainable practices. The brand I represent prioritizes sustainability at every stage, starting from the farms where our cows are raised, extending to our eco-conscious cheese manufacturing methods, and culminating in environmentally friendly packaging. Continual enhancements in these realms have positioned us as pioneers in sustainable initiatives, earning recognition as industry leaders.

**Highlight what sets your cooking apart and how it has become synonymous with the brand.**

My culinary approach revolves around infusing creativity into recipes without sacrificing flavor. I intertwine modern elements while upholding the essence of authenticity, a philosophy that perfectly aligns with the vision of the brand.

**Discuss the dishes you've created and their stories, showing how they reflect your artistry and the brand's identity.**

The Kunaifat perfectly embodies this concept by harmonizing the flavors of Kunaifa and Luqaimat, two traditional desserts, into a delightful bite. Adding Kiri cheese enhances the dessert seamlessly, rather than feeling imposed. Similarly, the Atayef cake offers a modern twist on the traditional Atayef, gaining immense popularity. Respect for tradition is crucial; there's a delicate balance between anticipation of a new experience and aversion caused by drastic changes to cherished recipes.

**Explain how your presence has improved the brand's reputation,**



**The key is consistently delivering your best work, adhering to strong ethics, and avoiding complaints**

**attracted customers, and achieved milestones.**

My mission involves presenting Bel Group's range via a variety of recipes tailored to Middle Eastern palates. Catering primarily to chefs in the food

service industry, I leverage my expertise to engage with our audience on a technical level, providing valued culinary solutions that resonate strongly with our clients.

**Give us a glimpse of upcoming projects or ideas that further align with the brand's direction.**

As we venture into the out-of-home sector, we're crafting a fresh brand identity for our professional line. Simultaneously, we're innovating numerous tools tailored for chefs. Engaging in exciting collaborations with local and regional brands, we're also introducing novel concepts that will offer Kiri enthusiasts diverse ways to savor their favorite cheese.



# HOWEVER YOU BREAKFAST

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# TWINS FOR A TRIUMPH

At the age of 13, twins **Maitha** and **Abdulrahman Al Hashmi** became certified chefs. Their passion for cooking has allowed them to turn the impossible into the possible, defying all odds

**G**olden tones of nostalgia vault you back to recollections of your sibling bond when you meet Maitha Al Hashmi and Abdulrahman Al Hashmi. Their laughter-filled conversations and occasional disagreements cloud their sharp outlook toward life, which they express in countless ways.

Usually, cooking and kitchen dynamics are the furthest of your thoughts when you talk to a 15-year-old. But not for these two. What may amaze you is not that they are twins, but rather that they completed the Diploma in Commercial Cookery Program at ICCA at the age of 13, positing against the prejudices one has for teenagers.

The spotlight has shined bright and early in their career. In a phase when most are uncertain about what electives to take in their school course, they were already working with adults at the marquee restaurants of Dubai Ossiano and Gaia, surprising chefs by doing everything from scratch, from mise-en-place to plating, all independently.

"We believe anyone can work on themselves and become a good chef. You need determination and passion, but we were fortunate because our parents were very supportive. Also, we are grateful for the opportunities created by the UAE government," they remark.

Food, especially 'good food,' is central in their house. The two developed a liking



We believe that anyone can work on themselves and become a good chef. You need to have determination and passion, but we were very lucky because our parents were very supportive

for cooking as they actively participated in the kitchen, assisting their parents and grandmother with cutting and preparing various vegetables and components.

"Our parents would allow us to cook under their close supervision. After a while, they started to realize that we were very passionate about food and cooking," describes Maitha, while Abdulrahman further highlights the defining role their grandmother had in shaping their journey. "Our grandmother is an exceptional chef, crafting some of the most mouthwatering recipes. With my grandmother, we would love to go over to her house and have all the different types of food. She is an outstanding home chef, especially with

Middle Eastern cuisine, including local and GCC cuisine."

The foundational lessons in Emirati cuisine taught by their grandmother sowed the seeds of culinary change. It has transformed them from keen observers to explorers of the multifarious richness of Emirati cooking, reliving how their grandmother's food tasted, preserving tradition yet infusing their unique touch, and bridging the gap with the younger generation.

"When we started trying different foods from different restaurants in the UAE and beyond, we started thinking about bringing the traditional tastes we grew up with into these new dishes we were being introduced to. For example, risottos, which are rice-based dishes, are something that you can incorporate Emirati flavors into, and people will also be willing to try traditional international dishes with some incorporated Emirati flavors. As such, we also strongly believe that through sharing our fusion culinary experiences, we are also helping bridge some of the generation gaps," explains Abdulrahman.

Apart from their shared sibling synergy towards elevating Emirati cuisine to the forefront, their personal culinary preferences also align as twins. "We both like Japanese and Gulf cuisine, like Mandi and local food. We also like some Italian dishes," says Maitha, adding she enjoys spicy food, and Abdulrahman leans towards steaks. Their sweet tooth



unites them, except when nuts come into play, as her brother is allergic to several types, but likely not all.

Talking about dishes, they both agree that Emirati fusion dishes are particularly challenging to make. "You have a basis for what you wish to make, but you need to think very carefully about how to add other ingredients and not disturb the overall taste of a dish; in fact, you need to enhance the taste. So, it's always challenging to work on the recipe. And in preparation, you need to undertake many trials until you get the balance right, sometimes after more than 5–6 trials!" they say, explaining the finer points of getting the dish right.

To think that learning about culinary arts can be complete without considering the interplay of food supply chains, sustainable sourcing, nutritional cooking, local food emphasis, and food security would be a letdown, as it would directly fail to acknowledge the evolving demands of the industry.

"The formal education has helped us in all our collaborations," says Maitha. She adds, "Beyond food preparation and cookery skills, the education we received during the culinary program incorporated various important topics such as the application of sustainability principles, food waste management,



**Our parents would allow us to cook under their close supervision. After a while, they started to realize that we were very passionate about food and cooking**

costing, team motivation, and planning, and menu curation."

As more chefs assume responsibility for local produce and sustainability, the siblings are not behind in comprehending the need of the hour. "Emirati food ingredients are sustainable, rich, healthy, and very tasty. For example, we use dates and date molasses in several of our dishes. Dates are extremely healthy and were significant in the sustenance of the indigenous populations in the Arabian Peninsula," informs Maitha.

She shares that the two started researching local produce a few years ago. "We tried to grow certain

vegetables and herbs to understand local agriculture. This experience helped us develop a greater appreciation for food conservation, organic food supply, and how it is sourced directly from the garden to the kitchen."

Inspiration for their dishes comes from learning through the 'digital library metaphor' — YouTube channels and trying to recreate dishes at fine dining restaurants they visit. Yet, their greatest motivation stems from crafting meals for their parents or family members and curating special menus for various events and activations.

"Dubai and the UAE in general have many different restaurants and cafes, so it's always great to explore, especially when sponsored by our parents," smiles Abdulrahman. "I then look at some of the dishes and see how we can incorporate them to enhance the taste with Emirati spices and condiments," he adds.

Maitha is on the same page. If a dish catches her eye, she looks up the recipe in a book. She also makes a variety of sweets, especially for her friends and colleagues at the Quran Institute and school. "We have a large library of cookbooks at home, which my parents have collected over the past 20 years. Today, it is very easy to look up recipes and methods of preparation and cooking on the internet. We like to fuse Emirati cuisine with other cuisines, as we think the Emirati kitchen has some great tastes and flavors as well," she says when asked how she came up with her spin on Emirati dishes.

They further point out that the UAE not only leads the field in several areas, including innovation, science, and tourism but also has the finest and most vibrant culinary landscape. "The Emirati cuisine equally impresses curious tastebuds of those eager to better understand our culture, trading, local history, and traditions."

Even though they behave normally as





You need to undertake many trials until you get the balance right, sometimes after more than 5–6 trials!

they usually do with each other when they collaborate in the kitchen—that is, with fight and flair—they unintentionally add a touch of humor to the room. They rummaged through their stories to share one when they competed in the TV competition program “Chopped,” where they ended up in the final round going head-to-head. “It was funny and very stressful at the same time as we kept on fighting, making fun of each other, and blaming one another for not helping out with ideas as we were working. Even those filming us and taking photos during the program preparation couldn’t help but laugh with us,” they say, revisiting the lighthearted atmosphere.

The paradox is that they tend to agree faster when under pressure to do something for an activation or an event. While Maitha gets creative and brings out the best in the dish, Abdulrahman does some research, understanding each component to see if he can invent a new method to cook the dish. They make their dishes and compare which idea would work better when differences crop up.

“I like to make cookies and brownies, etc. Abdulrahman is the bossy one, and he always tries to take the lead on everything. But because we fight and



**We have a large library of cookbooks at home, which my parents have collected over the past 20 years**

work together at the same time, we get things done in the end,” shares Maitha. In contrast, Abdulrahman seeks to “do my research before making something and then explain it to Maitha. She mostly argues to make her point, but we challenge each other, and I guess that makes us get better faster!”

#### CANVAS OF COOKING

Cooking holds various interpretations for different individuals. For some, it serves as a pastime to unwind from their professional obligations. On the other hand, some dabble in it as a mere profession without a deeper meaning.

For Maitha, it transcends beyond a hobby or a day-to-day task. Being in the kitchen is a therapy that brings her the

utmost joy. “You can express your love through cooking. It’s just like making a painting on canvas; you can decorate the dish whichever way you think suits best, and then it turns out to be like an art piece you can enjoy twice, looking at it and then eating it!”

Like most people, she began her food footprint with eggs, breaking them, combining them with milk, and adding some spices and chives—a tradition passed down by their parents. “Once we cooked that, my father would put some cheese on top and place this special pan into the oven, and then five minutes later, we would have the eggs with melted cheese on top. Yum!” her eyes lit up as she recalled her first dish. Her initial strides then saw a multitude of dishes, leading to a culinary evolution of guts and gumption.

In an unexpected twist, the revelation that neither of them has ever bitten the fast-food bullet added a new layer of intrigue to their culinary experiences. Their upbringing, marked by quality food at home or during outings, embedded a refined appreciation for flavors. “When we went to the Culinary Academy, we also learned about the detrimental aspects of fast food. So, I now really appreciate that our parents never allowed us to eat fast food and took us towards nutritious and delectable options, either through home-cooked meals, food outlets, or restaurants,” she says.

#### CODING GOURMET

Amid the euphoria surrounding the transformative power of AI, how does a young chef remain seasoned in technology while simultaneously keeping up with his culinary vision? You see, young chef Abdulrahman does it. Whether it’s Lego, building robots, or experimenting with culinary delights, you will find him adding his unique perspective to all of his domains of curiosity. The verve of robotics has led him to compete in national-level competitions with the Emirates Science Club. Not only has he built a 3D printer from scratch, but he







We like to fuse Emirati cuisine with other cuisines, as we think the Emirati kitchen has some great tastes and flavors as well

*Abdullah*

also envisions the exciting prospect of combining tech and food.

For him, creating new dishes and mixing different flavors emulates an art experience. "When you mix different colors at different concentrations, you create new colors. Cooking is like that; you can create hundreds of new flavors for every palette if you have the patience to keep on trying and reworking your recipes."

Abdulrahman still remembers the first vegetable the two siblings dealt with. From slicing tender mushrooms with a plastic knife to expanding their culinary repertoire to breakfast dishes like eggs baked with melted cheese and small fried lamb pieces enjoyed on weekends with bread and cream cheese; since then there has been no turning back.

The most recent headlines featuring him were at the Al Wathba Dates Festival and Auction held in December 2023, where he was adjudged the First Place (gold medal) for Arabian/Levant Cuisine Main Course after competing against adults from five-star hotels and whisking up dishes in just 60 minutes.

Like Maitha, even he steers clear of junk food. According to him, when one



**You can express your love through cooking. It's just like making a painting on canvas**

cooks for oneself, they have a greater understanding of the ingredients and components used. He wraps it up with a response reflecting his awareness of the dense debate about the nutritional value of junk food, especially when making it delicious with additives: "Good and tasty food is not easy to make. When you use artificial ingredients and food enhancers and use salt and sugar in excess, especially with fatty or fried foods, they may taste good, like comfort food. But they may have more calories in general. That doesn't mean for it to be tasty that it has to have poor-quality ingredients that are bad for your health."

#### **PERSEVERANCE & FAITH**

Balancing school academics and culinary aspirations can be daunting, but they handle both without losing sight of their goals. Initially, struggles came with the theoretical aspects of

their diploma curriculum. But they were quick to easily connect the dots between subjects taught in school, such as mathematics, english, and science, and their importance in the field of food science and culinary arts.

They are on a dream-chasing path for the long haul. With just two years before graduating from school, they may have their noses in their textbooks, but their hearts always pull them back into the kitchen to experiment with new recipes.

Free from the fear of new has led them to revel in the joy of cooking. That's why they advise junior cooks who are just starting in the field to be explorers and pick up new skills every day. "Always remember that Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid always says, 'The impossible cannot be where there is perseverance and faith. There is nothing impossible in life,' and always be number one in what you do."

When the two are not cooking or teasing each other, they enjoy cycling, horse riding, paddle tennis, and swimming. In addition to being an excellent cartoonist, Maitha will also be memorizing the complete Quran within the next two months. Abdulrahman, in the meantime, is focused on computer programming and robotics.



Together, they are also writing a cookbook that will feature a variety of savory and sweet recipes, including a number of Emirati fusion dishes derived from menus they have collaborated on in their past activations. While the book is being created, they are receiving assistance from their parents, particularly from their father, Dr. Waddah S. Al Hashmi, who has authored several internationally published books. "I deal with photography and writing down recipes since Abdulrahman prefers to work with his hands and leaves the hard work of writing and editing photos to me," Maitha adds jokingly.

Art is where passion and profession collide. And one of the most passionate professions is cooking. The two young chefs are among the few who are fully cognizant of this. As the grandchildren of Dr. Shihab Ghanem, the first Arab poet to win the Tagore Peace Award for Literature in 2013, they convey a distinct viewpoint where art serves as a common ground in both poetry and culinary creations; just instead of words, they play with ingredients.

"Our grandfather is a skilled poet. Both poetry and cooking are art forms. As much as we focus on the taste, we also emphasize the presentation of the food when preparing a dish. We can picture how it will look at the end, which is just as crucial as the flavors it will deliver," they say while drawing parallels with food presentation and art, where colors and plating techniques combine to create a dish for both the taste and the eyes.

If you trace their journey, the obvious will show a heaping scoop of time and effort poured into developing a well-rounded skill set. However, their parents' patience was another rare ingredient that was added generously.

Their parents, both engineers, kept patience with the process, allowing their children to explore different fields of interest to spot their potential talent



**We see ourselves as two of the youngest culinary ambassadors in the UAE. Therefore, we strongly encourage the youth to pursue a formal education and vocational training in the culinary arts from a recognized institution**

and handing them everything they needed to pursue their passion.

The duo's mother, Hind Al Kindi, is pleased that her kids embrace challenges head-on. "Early encouragement is key to nurturing talent. We've seen the positive results of pushing them to do their best in any field," she says.

"You have to make them learn a variety of skills at first, and if they enjoy one activity, they will stick with it. Maitha used to be upset because she was the only student in her class who didn't eat fast food, but now she understands and is happy about it. So, support your children in their projects. As parents, we have to do our best and teach them planning. Be there for them. When you do that, your child will feel special and motivated to succeed," she states, offering words of guidance to the parents.

So, what's next for the two? According to them, no matter what path they choose in the future, cooking will always be part of their lives. Even if they don't pursue a career as a chef full-time, they are certain to keep their culinary skills alive by cooking for their family and friends, participating in events and restaurant activations, and introducing special dishes.

"We love doing that, and it keeps us always searching for new ideas and new things to do. It is also one of the things that bonds us as twins," this possibly best answers the question.

As they continue on their culinary journey, they also want to set up a chain of Michelin-starred restaurants in the region and a culinary academy that both inspires and teaches young people about good food and the development of culinary skills.

"We see ourselves as two of the youngest culinary ambassadors in the UAE. Therefore, we strongly encourage the youth to pursue a formal education and vocational training in the culinary arts from a recognized institution. After all, the UAE government is actively supporting Emirati youth to explore and enter new professions in hospitality, culinary arts, and tourism," they explain collectively.

They continue, "We also want to inspire other young nationals who have a passion for cooking and culinary arts and want to take this up either as a hobby or a profession.

"This is especially critical for the UAE, one of the Middle East's most admired tourist and business hubs, which houses and has attracted so many international and regional culinary brands as well as restaurants making their mark in such a competitive market," adds Maitha.

"We want to focus on sustainability and local sourcing of produce and products, even when it comes to all the dishes. We want to make and create a new school of practice focused on Emirati fusion," concludes Abdulrahman.

To iterate from Ruskin Bond's *Scenes from a Writer's Life*, all the glory comes from daring to begin. The two have taken the first step, and with a series of milestones ahead, their glory is just around the corner.



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# Modest Mauritian

Chef **Kiran Sharma Ramsaran**'s unassuming manner conceals his prowess in the kitchen and beyond, where his talents speak volumes

Anyone who has ever set foot in Mauritius knows that the island nation in the Indian Ocean has an influx of cultures, and their taste palette is a flooded labyrinth of microcosm cuisine. Widely recognized as the paradise of holidays, imbued with a blend of Indian, Creoles, and French, it is where hospitality is a way of life.

Chef Kiran Sharma Ramsaran perhaps grew up unfamiliar with those days of old of his country, but he developed a deep-seated familiarity with hotels while residing in the little coastal village of Grand Baie.

The Mauritian native to Dubai, Chef Kiran, is the Culinary and F&B Director at Novotel, Ibis, and Ibis One Center at the World Trade Center. His modest and meticulous nature puts him at the heart of handling the operations of the big Accor Cluster.

"We are preparing up to 2000 breakfasts in the cluster. Dinner and lunch are served à la carte. The Novotel could serve 300–400 lunches during exhibitions or events in all-day dining. We have several options at Ibis WTC, including a pan-Asian restaurant and a brand-new Mediterranean restaurant called Twine. All these make us one of the busiest clusters in Dubai," he says about his current stint.

The beauty of having Chef Kiran lead his team of 39 in the cluster is his come-what-may optimism, which empowers



When four to five events unfold simultaneously, success hinges on delegating effectively and executing teamwork

rather than micromanages them. He plans well ahead with his team, laying the groundwork and then letting them spread their wings. "When four to five events unfold simultaneously, success hinges on delegating effectively and executing teamwork. I am lucky to have a team that takes notes during the briefing, and when their tasks are strategically divided, they are ready to take charge of their tasks and execute them effectively."

Apart from carrying out a task with a proper plan and a prepared team, he says, the right equipment can also help, particularly in large-scale operations.

Automation, he extrapolates, has eased consuming tasks like peeling veggies and sanitizing with pre-packed substitutes, thus increasing productivity. "But cooking cannot happen without a person's touch," he reiterates.

Another aspect of automation is AI, which gives a sweet and sour snippet of data precision alongside concerns about job displacement. But Chef Kiran recognizes the positive side. "With AI, you can leverage analytics to enhance revenue and boost your income weekly. Data can let both front-of-the-house and back-of-the-house operations work better and improve customer retention."

Absorbing his words, one would notice his sincerity; no surprise, his sentences were bereft of any vaunting achievements. Much of his modest spirit has to do with living in the natural bounty of Mauritius, where he was surrounded by the seashore or hills drenched in green hues, realizing its vastness that is showered on us free from vanity. This unusual candor also comes across as he shares his career story.

Once Chef Kiran finished his three-year hotel management training, he worked for a four-star hotel, Le Victoria Hotel in Mauritius. He began as a trainee at 17, and by the time he had an opportunity in the Seychelles, he had advanced to the position of demi chef de partie.

The change from Mauritius to the Seychelles posed difficulties; given the nascent stage of the hotel industry in the Seychelles, Mauritius was already breathing tourism. But as a senior chef de partie, he deftly maneuvered around the scene, managing the main kitchen team.

From the Seychelles, the next opportunity was in Dubai, where he



joined as an assistant to the executive sous chef for the opening of Habtoor Grand Resort & Spa. He rose to the position of Executive Sous Chef during his tenure and even got to work in Lebanon, helping to launch the Le Ciel Restaurant at Habtoor Grand Lebanon (now Hilton Beirut Habtoor Grand). He clamored for change and returned to the Seychelles to join Constance Ephilia, a five-star resort. "It was the largest resort in the Seychelles and Indian Ocean. I worked there for a year before moving to the Maldives to work at Jumeirah Dhevanafushi Maldives Resort, which had 38 villas and three F&B outlets."

Life changed soon after, and he came to Dubai for the Accor Group in 2013. As a Complex Executive Chef at the Novotel and Ibis World Trade Center, he prepared menus for restaurants, planned daily operations, and revamped various food and beverage offerings. During his time there, he took part in setting up a task force for the Ibis Hotel in Tehran. He played a vital role as an Executive Chef in running the kitchen of Fairmont Mount Kenya Safari Club and opening a fine-dining restaurant called Colobus.



Being revenue-generation-oriented is crucial, involving skills in budget forecasting, detailed planning, and managing a substantial budget. That's why I have seen a big change in myself

A little introspection during his time in Kenya as in charge of services in front of the house sparked his interest beyond the kitchen. Fate was on his side as the following stint series saw him handling Novotel, Ibis, and Adagio Premium Dubai at Al Barsha.

"Then I returned to WTC, the property where I started in Accor. I found myself growing, transitioning from a role as a chef to currently being at the

front of the house," he says, his career coming full circle.

Shifting gears to a more executive role is beset with its conundrums. But he outlived the tempest and cruised a steep learning curve, gaining behind-the-scenes knowledge of the operations, maintaining connections with staff and guests, and developing a keen understanding of figures and strategies.

"Just yesterday, I was on an app checking how to align the goals to increase revenue. Being revenue-generation-oriented is crucial, and to polish skills in planning a budget. That's why I have seen a big change in myself," says the 44-year-old.

About ten years from now, he sees himself stepping into the role of hotel manager, with aspirations to reach the general manager position.

Even now, cooking is his go-to stress reliever when he feels tired or overwhelmed. The other place of happiness for him is with his family. He considers himself fortunate to be married to someone with a background in the hotel industry. His wife, who previously worked as a front desk employee at a hotel, brings a wealth of experience and support to their relationship—an amusing account of their meet-cute transitions from a warning letter to a love story.

"We were working together in the Seychelles. She was new to the field, having graduated from hotel school. One day, she made a grave mistake, and I was in charge. So, I issued a warning letter to her; little did I know it would develop our connection. Fast forward 20 years, and we're still happily married."

The couple's 19-year-old daughter carries on her father's culinary regard, occasionally cooking and practicing plating. "Well, she has a part of me," he adds with a soft smile.







Image generated by the AI: (A Busy but Organized Kitchen, Chef is Working Hard)

# Navigating the Brave New World of AI Cooking

Chef **Carl Shi** on walking the tightrope between incorporating AI and preserving the soul of cooking

In my last article, I explored the promise and perils of AI in the culinary world. With a simple prompt, powerful new tools like ChatGPT can now generate full recipes, pairings, and even blogs. But they lack human insight, intuition, and real cooking experience.

So, how should the industry embrace this technology while preserving the soul of cooking as an art form? Here are a few key areas that chefs and restaurateurs should focus on:

## 1. Nurture Creativity and Innovation

AI can inspire, but human chefs must drive creativity. Study the recipes ChatGPT produces, but also question and build upon them. Experiment with new ingredients and techniques the AI wouldn't think to combine. Attend events like culinary competitions or the chef's congress to stay aware of global food trends. Continue pushing boundaries: let AI enhance, not replace, human imagination.

## 2. Emphasize In-Person Dining Experiences

Even as AI generates content like food blogs, the core of hospitality is face-to-face dining. Invest in your physical spaces

and staff training. Managers regularly dine in their restaurants anonymously to experience their customer service firsthand. Hire service staff who can convey genuine warmth and enthusiasm for food. No amount of AI-powered reviews can replace personal connections.

## 3. Focus on Talent Development

Make mentoring the next generation of chefs and restaurateurs a priority. Create apprenticeship programs and partnerships with local culinary schools. Passion and skill must be cultivated through in-person training. Understanding that is what separates cooks from algorithms.



“  
**Chit-Chat  
with  
Chef Carl**

## 4. The Key is Striking the Right Balance

We embrace AI as a tool for efficiency and inspiration while staying rooted in human tradition, artistry, and relationships. If we focus on nurturing creativity, creating memorable dining experiences, and developing talent, chefs and restaurants can thrive along with technological advances. Our cuisine will only grow more innovative as the best of both worlds combine on the plate and in the kitchen.

In wrapping up this two-part gourmet saga, let's remember that while AI like ChatGPT can bring incredible tools to our culinary table, it shouldn't replace the human touch that adds flavor to our food experiences. After all, we will taste and test everything AI has created, though not all. So, chefs and hospitality mavens, let's embrace AI for its strengths but keep its role more as a sous chef than a head chef. Because at the end of the day, it's our human zest for cooking that makes all the difference.

Bon appétit!

**Chef Carl**

• From Sydney

February 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

## The Guild Meet

The first guild meeting of 2024 was held at Jumeirah Creekside on the 9th of January. The event kicked off the new year with a warm welcome to the new members, and thought-provoking presentations on food security





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# The Challenger

Chef **Syarif Bagenda** Purawinata ups the ante at the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Competition

Chasing a dream in pastry was off the table for Chef Syarif Bagenda Purawinata. When he first stepped in the kitchen while doing an internship, like many who assumed pastry was predominantly a feminine department, he too conformed to those conventional prejudices. But something about pastry made him full of beans.

"When I started with my internship program at the Grand Hyatt Jakarta, it became apparent that the kitchen had several segments, and I decided to focus on polishing the basics in one segment rather than all seven in six months. And pastry—at that moment, wasn't on my radar, as I perceived it as something not taken seriously. However, there was a magic in pastry that struck me," he says in the interview with *Gulf Gourmet*.

Picking the pastry path has surely helped Chef Syarif make strides in his career. In just 19 years, he has become the Head Pastry Chef at one of the finest restaurants in Dubai. His beginnings, however, were not all that fine-tuned.

Born into a small village in West Java, Chef Syarif made a life-changing decision at 14 to head to Bandung and live with his uncle. The move was driven to further his dreams, which were impossible with the limited opportunities in the countryside.

After completing his high school, he had plans to study international relations. But destiny presented itself in the form of a



Every dish remains ingrained in the customer's palatal memory, and when they come back, they will anticipate the exact taste; therefore, it is important to have consistency and quality

friend with whom a chance conversation sparked his interest in hospitality.

"Everyone in my family was into farming. So culinary was a completely new avenue for me," he says. Following his three-year diploma in food production from Bandung, he returned to his apprentice place, the Grand Hyatt, as a commis pastry chef.

"In 2007, one of my seniors working in Dubai asked if I would like to join him, and I agreed," says Chef Syarif on his first one-year stint at the Park Hyatt Hotel Dubai. Despite what he thought would be a brief adventure, the competitive culinary environment in the UAE ignited his passion for constant learning, prompting him to remain.

Two years later, he joined the pre-opening team of Armani Hotel Dubai as a Demi Chef de Partie. Located at

the iconic Burj Khalifa, the experience served as a major learning curve. "Then I got the fortunate chance to join the At.mosphere restaurant in the same building," he says.

Working with the team at one of the world's highest restaurants came with high expectations, but he rose to the occasion. "It was a truly great experience. I learned so much about teamwork, putting in all our efforts to overcome challenges, yet still having fun working together along the way," he remarks.

Steadily climbing the ranks, he then joined the ZUMA restaurant. During his three years there, he worked with the task force team for the restaurant's Istanbul location. He was promoted to Pastry Sous Chef, responsible for leading the pre-opening team in Abu Dhabi.

"It was different in terms of a pastry perspective because it was a combination of both Japanese and French techniques. Yet it was fun to create new flavors," he notes.

Three years later, he was back in Dubai, working across multiple properties, including The Dukes Hotel, before finally joining NAMMOS restaurant. "I have been at NAMMOS Dubai since its opening, and this marks my fifth year here handling the role of Head Pastry Chef," he states with a smile.

With a dynamic team of 10, he oversees the comprehensive responsibilities associated with both à la carte dishes and fulfilling large-scale orders from popular





Everyone in my family was into farming. So culinary was a completely new avenue for me



brands. Additionally, he accommodates special requests for patrons seeking vegan or eggless options.

"All this revolves around upholding quality. Every dish remains ingrained in the customer's palatal memory, and when they come back, they will anticipate the exact taste; therefore, it is important to have consistency and quality."

Unlike usual staff capacities, he has a relatively big team "because of our high volume of orders. We are catering to thousands of customers per day," he elucidates, explaining their operational readiness as akin to preparing for a daily

battle, with tasks systematically divided into teams of five.

Many of his dishes are the outcome of continuous experimentation through self-learning. While social media, books, and current trends help, it takes filtering to combine them all into something that resonates with customers' potential preferences. He notes, "Not all trends are good to work with. Some would just be Instagrammable but may lack practicality. So it's a mix and match while considering what would truly work."

Many aspiring cooks resort to 'social media school' to pass the time. Chef

Syarif considers this counterproductive. "You can learn from social media, but it will only be a shortcut. Young chefs should have strong roots when it comes to the basics."

What truly separates a good chef from a great one is passion and a good grasp of the fundamentals. In his view, while these two are essential, attitude weighs equally, acting as a linchpin that defines work ethics. He emphasizes, "If you have a positive attitude to learn and make things happen, it will ultimately determine how you deal with everything in your career."

Chef Syarif made his debut in competitions in 2009. It was also when he secured first place for the Petites Four Categories at the Emirates Salon Culinaire. Subsequently, he participated in international competitions, including achieving the distinction of a semi-finalist at the Valrhona C3 Competition held in Paris. Since then, his medal tally has grown exponentially.

Most recently, he won Two Plated Desserts, 100% Vegan, at the Al Wathba Date Festival and Auction in Abu Dhabi.

He says about his recipe for the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Competition, "I challenged myself to combine citrus with cream cheese and chocolate and present a different combination."

Technology has alleviated some of the pressures of running a kitchen, but Chef Syarif does not see it replacing the need for talented chefs going forward. "With the great power of technology comes the great responsibility of managing it, which may not be for everyone." Personally, he has embraced innovations like 3D printing to create customized molds when catering to special requests. However, he remarks, "This helps us chefs, but what truly sets us apart is also the taste. Food must be prepared by emotions, which do not happen when you eat from a machine."





You can learn from social media, but it will only be a shortcut. Young chefs should have strong roots when it comes to the basics

On the personal front, Chef Syarif dedicates his time to his family whenever possible. His wife, 12-year-old daughter, and 5-year-old son have been his pillars of support. "My family has always believed in me. I would not have come this far without them," says the 40-year-old chef. Some ideas are also brewing in his mind. "I want to run my own cake shop where I can share my passion for sweet creations in the future." Teaching the next generation is also on his wishlist.

Whatever his future holds, the aspect that remains ubiquitous in his journey is his courage to never say never for overcoming challenges.



## Citrus Crush

### ROSEMARY CHOCOLATE FONDANT

Dark Chocolate 55%	200g
Arla Pro® Unsalted Butter 82%	115g
Salt	Q.S
Castor Sugar	60g
Eggs	100g
Yolk	40g
Flour	20g
Dried Rosemary	2g

#### Method

- ♦ Melt the butter and chocolate with the bain-marie method.
- ♦ Mix eggs and yolk, and add sugar little by little until all is well mixed.
- ♦ Add in the chocolate mixtures and mix them, followed by dried rosemary, and at last add the flour.

- ♦ Put the mixture in the piping bag and pipe it into the previously prepared ring.
- ♦ Bake the mixture once you need it; bake at 180°C for about 7 minutes.

### CITRUS GINGER COULIS

Orange Juices	200ml
Grapefruit Juices	200ml
Vanilla Bean	1 pcs.
Ginger Juices	40ml
Xanthan Gum	3.8g
Neutral Glaze	140g

#### Method

- ♦ Blend all ingredients, except xanthan.
- ♦ Strain it and blend in the xanthan until the mixture gets thick.

### CITRUS COMPOTE

Fresh Orange	1 pcs
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Fresh Grapefruit	1 pcs
Citrus Ginger Coulis	Q.S

#### Method

- ♦ Peel the skin off for oranges and grapefruit.
- ♦ Cut the orange and grapefruit into segments.
- ♦ Strain the excess juices and mix the orange and grapefruit with the coulis.

### HAZELNUT STREUSEL

Demerara Sugar	40g
Hazelnut Powder	40g
Flour	40g
Arla Pro® Unsalted Butter 82%	40g
Salt	Q.S

#### Method

- ♦ Combine all ingredients in the mixing bowl and mix with the paddle attached.





- ◆ Once mixed, combine it to form dough, take it out, and keep it to rest in the fridge.
- ◆ Crush the dough and spread it evenly on the baking tray.
- ◆ Bake at 180°C for about 15 minutes.

#### CHOCO CIGARETTES RUSSES

<b>Arla Pro® Unsalted Butter 82%</b>	100g
Icing Sugar	100g
Eggs White	100g
Flour	80g
Cacao Powder	20g

##### Method

- ◆ Make the butter soft, and mix all the ingredients until it turns into a paste.
- ◆ Spread the paste mix on the tray using a stencil.
- ◆ Bake for about 3 minutes at 180°C.
- ◆ Take out the tuile and shape it while it is hot.

#### LIME CREAM CHEESE FOAM

<b>Arla Pro® High Stability Whipping Cream 35%</b>	100ml
Yoghurt	200g
Milk	300ml
Vanilla Bean	1 pcs
Sugar	150g

#### Arla Pro®

<b>Full Fat Cream Cheese 34%</b>	300ml
Lime Juices	30 ml

##### Method

- ◆ Combine all the ingredients, and blend them well.
- ◆ Strain it.
- ◆ Pour into the Espuma bottle and charge with an N2O gas cartridge; shake it well.

#### MANGO YUZU SORBET

Mango Puree	500g
Yuzu Puree	100g
Water	200ml
Sugar	100g
Trimoline	10g
Glucose Powder	8g
Super Neutrose	6g

##### Method

- ◆ Mix all the dry ingredients and keep them aside.
- ◆ Combine the puree in the container.
- ◆ Heat the water to a temperature of 40°C.
- ◆ Add in the dry ingredients, and mix it until it reaches 82°C.
- ◆ Pour the mixture into the container of puree, blend it well, and let the mixture rest.

- ◆ Churn the mixture in the ice cream machine.

#### MANGO JELLY

Mango Puree	220g
Water	80ml
Sugar	35g
Agar	3g

##### Method

- ◆ Mix sugar and agar and keep it aside.
- ◆ Boil the puree and water.
- ◆ Add in the dry ingredients and let it boil again.
- ◆ Take it out of the heat, pour it into a container, and let it set.

#### SUGAR SPHERE

Isomalt Sugar	200 g
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##### Method

- ◆ Melt the sugar at 165°C and pour in silpat, once a bit.
- ◆ Thick work on the sugar by pulling it to get the right texture to create a sugar sphere.



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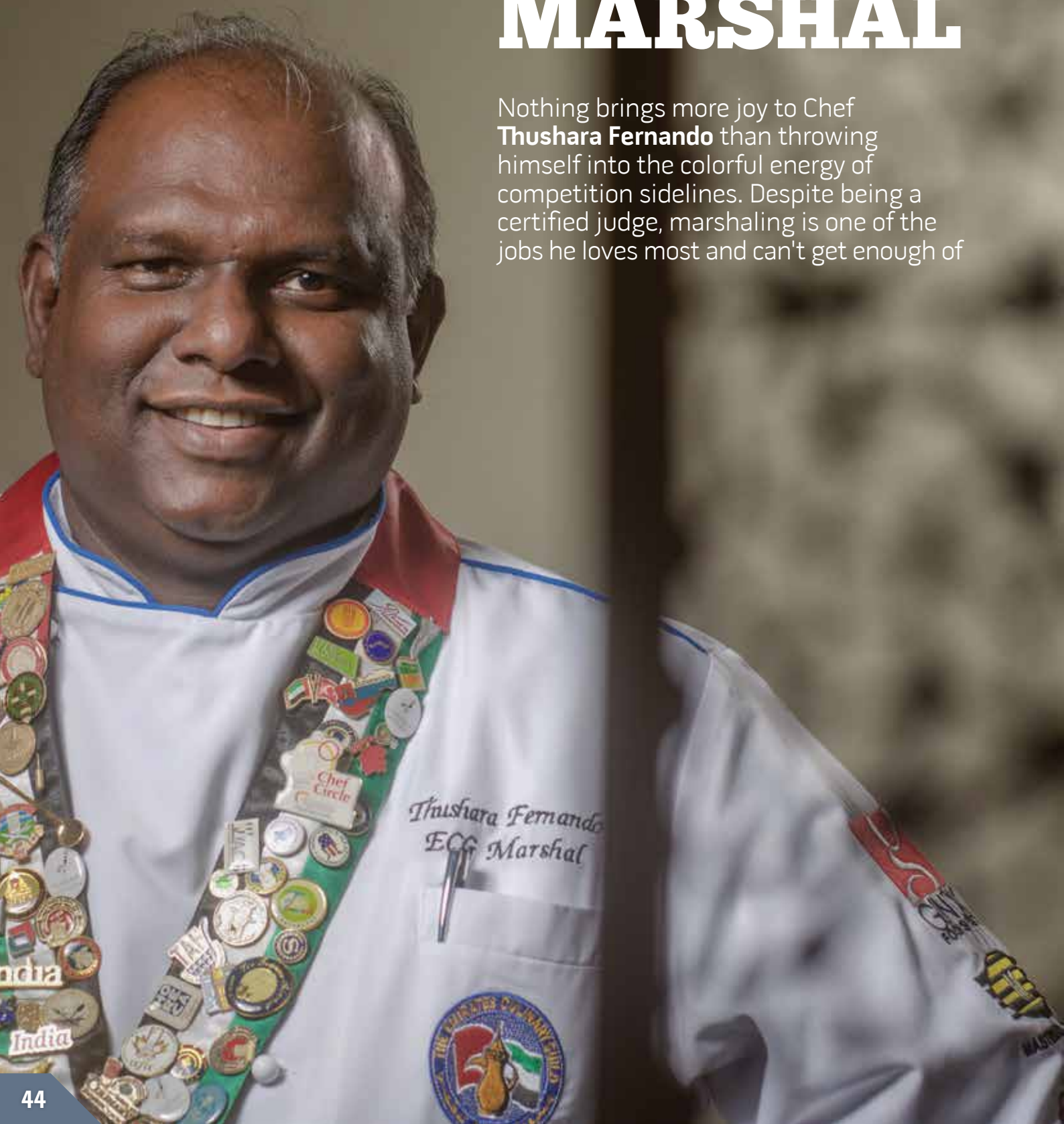




February 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

# QUOTE MARSHAL

Nothing brings more joy to Chef **Thushara Fernando** than throwing himself into the colorful energy of competition sidelines. Despite being a certified judge, marshaling is one of the jobs he loves most and can't get enough of





Even with extensive planning, competitions can be daunting places to succeed, and panic can easily take hold of competitors.

Among the frantic participants, who have no one else to rely on for motivation, stand the marshals.

Chef Chamil Jenison Thushara Fernando, a dynamo of encouragement, spares no effort in boosting the morale of young chefs as he carries out his marshal duties at the Guild competitions.

"Competitors vying for the second time may not feel the same level of anxiety as complete newcomers," he notes. "It's only natural to feel a bit overwhelmed by the crowd and world-renowned chef judges evaluating your performance as you work in an unfamiliar environment."

As a senior marshal, his effortless management in keeping a cleanliness check and mise en place hygiene standards is a true tour de force. Not to forget, he is also a walking stopwatch, reminding participants about time constraints.

He says young chefs often feel at ease with marshals, especially when rolling out multiple dishes with some roasting, steaming, and baking while trying to remain calm. However, Chef Thushara knows it's not a piece of cake to live up to the expectations of young chefs. But with his impressive track record of winning medals himself (he once won seven in a single contest!), he has developed a knack for understanding both sides of a competition.

"When we did competitions, marshals were there for us. So the young chefs look to us as examples. If we are there to guide them, then they will remember us fondly, thinking, 'He was a kind chef who supported me when my oven broke down.' Sometimes, I have to raise my voice when they get sloppy, and they may be upset at the moment, but eventually, all is forgotten when they win a silver or gold medal."

Chef Thushara is an overarching presence



## Many chefs seek our guidance to rectify errors and enhance their skills while preparing for the next competition

on the competition floor, darting from one station to another. From providing plates and blenders to those who need to remember their equipment, he is constantly lending a hand in sourcing the necessary tools. Even in an unforeseen mishap, when a chef cuts his finger, he is quick to assist with first aid.

Slip-ups often stack up when ensuring proper food safety for the judges, but Chef Thushara stays on the front foot. A typical culinary hiccup he has noticed is participants failing to cook chicken properly, leading to a raw texture on the inside and a crunchy layer on the outside. A tip he shares is to sear the chicken at the right temperature before using a preferred cooking method to retain a juicy interior.

At times, he also encounters potentially dangerous situations. Chef Thushara talks about an incident in which a participant, when using the flambe technique, turned it into an uncontrollable fire. "Within seconds, I was at his station, swiftly closing the fire by placing a stainless steel pan on top. Next came the smoke, causing panic among contestants, but that was quickly resolved too."

According to Chef Thushara, young chefs can benefit a lot from competition. Takeaway one: chefs can gain from the judge's feedback and improve for the next competition. "Many chefs seek our guidance to rectify errors and enhance their skills while preparing for the next competition."

Getting a stage to showcase skills is the second takeaway. As Chef Thushara said about one of his fellow staff members, "The competitions motivated him to compete in the culinary Olympics in Germany, representing our national team."

Besides being a behind-the-scenes mega-trailblazer, Chef Thushara is also a certified judge. While most marshals seek to become judges as their next step, he breaks the mold, expressing fervently, "Who will manage the competition issues if all become judges? This role is just as important."

That is also his advice to young marshals who lack interest when fulfilling their duties, urging them to pull their socks ahead of competitions. "To truly be an effective marshal, you must fully commit to the work. It is an important job. Do it with all your heart and care for others."

It was 2007 when Chef Thushara first became a Marshal. The inspiration to be one came from the late Chef Alan Pedge and Chef Andreas Kurfurst.

Perhaps in the age of countless technologies and systems we have for handling competition and culinary events, you might think marshaling has limited significance. But for Chef Thushara, it's absolutely essential, to the extent that even after suffering an accident that left him using crutches temporarily, he attended the competition to support fellow marshals.

Having coordinated Abu Dhabi SIAL continuously for 11 years, he still remains willing to commute between Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Looking back, he only remembers his love of marshaling. "It is fun; we worked for 4-5 days with my team and supported each other. The camaraderie is what makes it worthwhile."

### FOREVER YOUNG ZEAL

It's been 33 years since Chef Thushara came to the UAE. Starting his career in Colombo, the Sri Lankan native recurrently sought new avenues to

propel his dreams forward—a quest that led him to the UAE.

Currently serving as the Corporate Executive Chef at Fresh Bite Catering Services, one of the premier catering services, he leads their entire culinary operations.

Catering for big events is not his first brush in such domains. He has previously successfully supervised massive operations while working across multiple establishments, including the Ajman Kempinski Hotel, Jebel Ali Hotel and Golf Resort, Sharjah Golf and Shooting Club, the Royal Group, and the National Corporation for Tourism & Hotels (NCT&H) in Abu Dhabi.

"When several companies were closed during the pandemic, Fresh Bite, run by Managing Director Mohamed Suhaib and Business Associate Partner Rusan Fyroze, remained open," he recalls, adding that the owners, also Sri Lankan, upon a recommendation, approached him to take on the role, recognizing him as the go-to culinary whiz for establishing their catering company.

Regarding operating during the pandemic, he notes, "We signed up with the government to prepare meals for COVID patients. Kudos to the country for their exceptional handling of the circumstances. We produced 15,000 meals daily over that period, our highest record. Whether diabetic, soft diet meals for patients requiring mashed or pureed consistency, vitamin-rich meals, or cuisines from India, Pakistan, or the Philippines, we operated smoothly."

Since then, they have taken on several new catering projects, including providing meals for 55 schools, banquet events, and hotel services. Recently, they took on a university catering contract in Abu Dhabi, which proved challenging, but he is overcoming it through his skilled team of 85 kitchen staff and stewarding team.



**To truly be an effective marshal, you must fully commit to the work. It is an important job. Do it with all your heart and care for others**

Chef Tushara, a super early bird, is up at 4 a.m. to motivate his staff. He works a 12-hour shift at times, still maintaining high energy. Not just confined to the office and kitchen operations, he actively meets with clients for orders, visiting different locations to gather feedback.

"Sometimes, I inspect the schools to ensure food safety compliance. Strict guidelines must be followed around children's meals, such as limiting fat and oil and identifying allergens. We also have a dietician who checks calorie counts in recipes, and we base our meal preparation on it."

A fun and joyful leader until it is time to work, he cultivates an atmosphere where he remains sternly focused when productivity is at stake and dons a cheerful demeanor, buoying the spirits of the staff with impromptu singing sessions when pressure is off the grid.

If an employee makes an error, he corrects them—not once but thrice. Three strikes are the limit, after which a warning letter follows. "Otherwise,

it does not encourage self-correction or creativity," he explains. "I want to prepare them because one day, one of them could take my chair. In a previous role, I even promoted a sous chef to my position before leaving, recommending management not hire a replacement but give the sous chef a chance—and he succeeded greatly."

With strong leadership skills, his colleagues can capably manage operations even in his absence during emergencies. It has also been about empowering his team as a leader, as Chef Tushara adds: "If passengers are on a plane but not the pilot, it cannot take off."

Cooking is not easy. He explains that different international flavors are complex as they involve taste, texture, recipe, cutting, procuring good products within budget, and the constant determination to maintain quality. "You can get business at the end of the day, but if your quality is not maintained, then you will fail," he says. Talking about maintaining quality, he also shares that it's when reliable staff come to light who "do things correctly throughout the process."

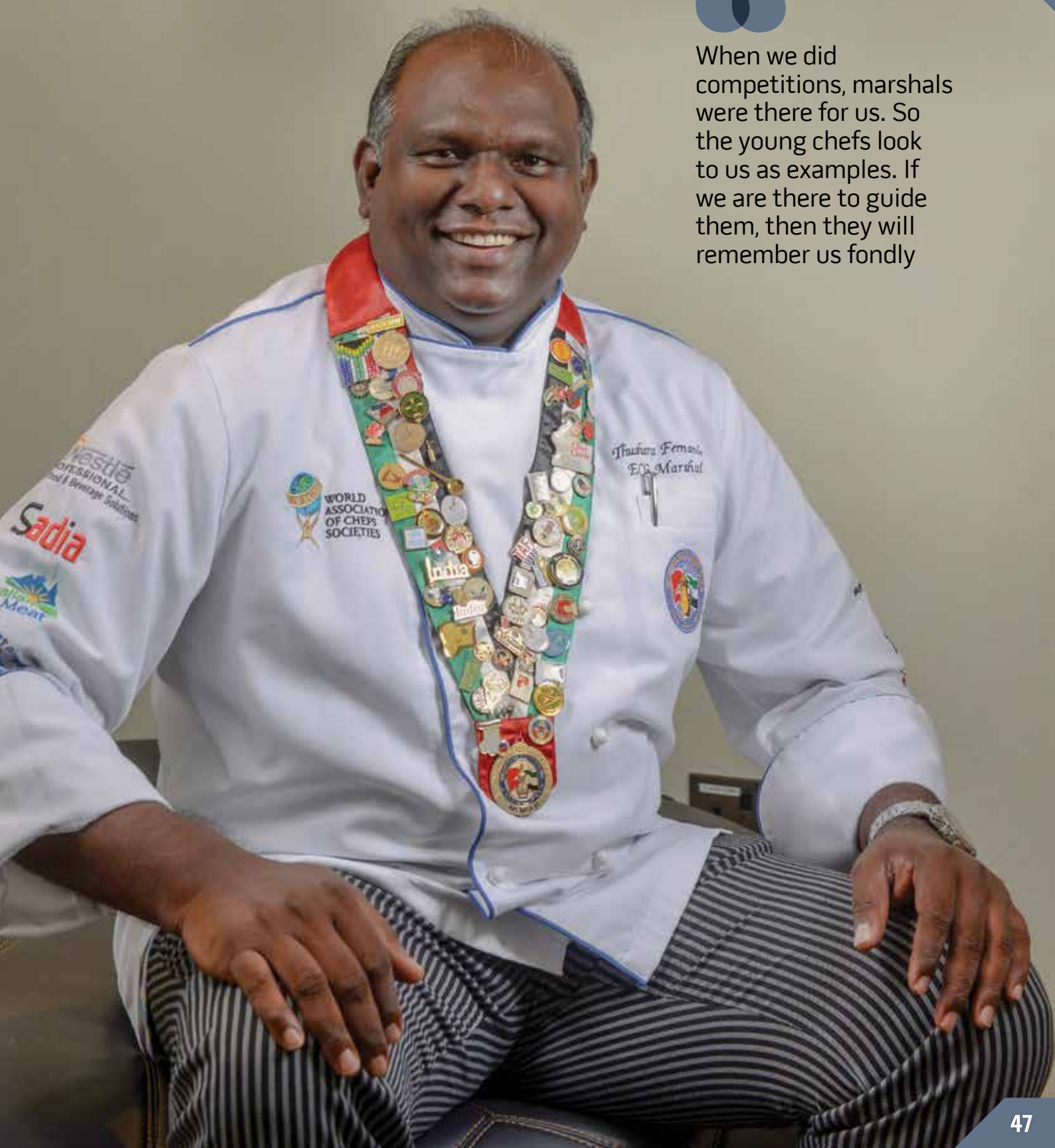
Chef Thushara shares two daughters with his wife, Sandhamali. The older daughter, Himashi, works in HR and business management, while the younger, Shimali, studies law at a UK-based university in Sri Lanka.

Recognized for his positive spirit and ever-present smile, Chef Tushara feels grateful that the culinary community knows him through his contributions to the guild.

Now 54 years old, Chef Thushara is content in his current role. This stint may be his last in the UAE. A man of word, he has committed to his current company to stay until retirement. "I'll keep my promise to help this company grow, and even the company doesn't want to lose me," he says. "It's not just about the money. It is important, but words also matter. And, of course, I love being here with this multinational crew."



When we did competitions, marshals were there for us. So the young chefs look to us as examples. If we are there to guide them, then they will remember us fondly





# EXPO *Culinaire*

FOOD & EQUIPMENT FOR CHEFS | PASTRY CHEFS | BAKERS | HORECA PROFESSIONALS  
**FEATURING THE 27TH EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINAIRE**  
 20-22 MAY 2024 | EXPO CENTRE SHARJAH, UAE

## 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](http://www.emiratesculinaryguild.net)) is the association of professional chefs of the UAE. It is a non-profit-making organisation, organised by volunteers dedicated solely to the advancement of culinary art in the UAE.

### The aims of the ECG, broadly, are:

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

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

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

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

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

Social media plays a large part in the Guilds self-promotion and the *Gulf Gourmet* magazine drive awareness around the globe. [www.emiratesculinaryguild.net/](http://www.emiratesculinaryguild.net/), [www.facebook.com/Emirates-Culinary-Guild-763644223697376/timeline/](https://www.facebook.com/Emirates-Culinary-Guild-763644223697376/timeline/), [www.facebook.com/gulfgourmet?fref=ts](https://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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 10062023

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### Briefs of the Classes for Entry Resume Of Classes for Entry Class No. - Class Description

#### Pastry and Bakery

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

#### Showpiece Artistic Displays

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

#### Gourmet Static Display

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

#### Practical Artistic Carving

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

#### Practical Cookery

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

- Cookery Powered by The Deep  
Seafood Company
- 21 Beef - Practical Cookery Powered  
by USMEF
- 22 Emirati Cuisine – Practical  
Cookery
- 25 Dressed Chicken & Dressed Fish  
Practical Butchery
- 33 Savory Potato Creations  
Practical Cookery Powered by  
Potatoes USA
- 27 Chicken - Practical Cookery –  
Powered by USAPEEC
- 30
- 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](http://www.worldchefs.org) After each judging session, the

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

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

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

**The scaling for awards in all classes is as follows:**

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

**Corporate and Establishment Trophies**

The corporate and establishment trophies available are:

**Best Effort by an Individual Establishment – The Emirates Salon Culinaire**

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

**Best Effort by a Corporation – The Emirates Salon Culinaire**

This trophy is awarded to the

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

**Point Value of each Medal Won:**

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

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

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



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# THE EMIRATES CULINARY GUILD

## APPLICATION FORM



**WCC**  
Women's Culinary Chapter

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

Type of Membership: (please tick)		
<b>Corporate Member</b>	AED20,000.00 per year Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar	
<b>Senior:</b> (Above the rank of chef de partie/ senior chef de partie on executive chef's recommendation).	AED350 joining fee/ AED150 renewal fee Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar	
<b>Young member:</b> (under 28 years)	Free Includes certificate; member-pin	

Declaration to be Signed by Applicant:

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

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

Signature: .....

Proposed By:	Signature: .....
Seconded By:	Signature: .....

### For Official Use Only

Remarks:

Payment Received?

Certificate Given	Pin Given	Medal & Collar Given
Approved by President:		Signature: .....
Approved by Chairman:		Signature: .....

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

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

# THE FOOD OXYMORON

## Vegan, meat and blended exaggerations

By **Shreya Asopa**

The year 2023 for the vegan trend gathered all sorts of fluctuations. Some reports indicated the sales numbers taking a tumble, few explained a year-on-year dip, and some even said looking at the stagnant market all hopes were lost.

A report from the Grocer's Top Products Survey for 2023 stated that the plant-based category volume was down by 4.2% in 2023. Yet many covered the opportunities plant-based products created through its budget-friendly options. The year also had notable celebrities substantially increase their investments in plant-focused and innovative food brands.

If we go by artificial intelligence, then by 2075 veganism will be a preferred choice globally. In that case, pretty soon the menus would turn around where meat-based proteins would be simply available as add-ons.

The growing demand for plant-centered options also coincides with sustainability which can no longer be viewed as a passing trend. This new age of vegan fine dining has taken hold of chefs experimenting with umami flavours, savoury depths of cuisine from East Asia, flavourful notes of Peruvian cuisine, and Korean salads.

Back in the UAE, there has been a recurring boom for vegan options, as seen by the establishment of multiple plant-based meat companies. In the latest Emirates reflects a 40% increase in customer orders for plant-focused meals with plans to include new vegan dishes later this year.

Vegetarian meat alternatives on menus are not unusual. Tofu, pea proteins,



and soybean-based dishes replaced a variety of vegan options, such as chicken nuggets and bacon options. They, in fact, were the transitional products that helped shift consumers' outlook toward going vegan by providing the texture and flavour of meat. Veganism and plant-based meats are two peas in a pod.

What is unusual, though, is that technology ran the new age of innovation in lab-grown meat. While lab-grown chicken might not be technically vegan, many have worked around creating a vegan range of meat textures without cell culture. At the forefront stands mycoproteins. Beyond mushrooms, *Fusarium venenatum*, the source of mycoprotein, is processed via fermentation to yield meat-like texture.

In this race are also the brands creating meat alternatives from jackfruit and cabbage leaves. An innovation of microalgae-based fish is also in the headlines. The technique of fermentation that produces these vegan frizzled meats had forayed also in coining terms such as animal-free dairy, dairy-free cheese or bee-free honey.

Not only that, if you are a meat lover yet

are reconsidering your dietary choices in the light of ethical concerns, then there is a fine mix of plant and meat-derived protein options underway in the market in the form of blended meat.

It may not be an outlandish idea. We see consumers ready for fusion products, trying the mix of sweet and chilli, Mexican and Japanese flavours. That being said, this may not equate them to being open to such combinations readily.

Food enthusiasts appreciate a balanced intake of both plant and animal fare as per their personalized customization, combining them depending on the recipes. It is hard to swallow that the idea of standardized blended products will do its trick when consumers have assorted food interests.

Over millennia, innovative vegan options gained an inclusion in global cuisine. However, once we reached the threshold, we were left with the absurdity of vegan meat. With these plant-based options finding their potential alongside a plethora of alt-meat delicacies, it is doubtful whether most of this vegan- meat oxymoron would survive to tell a tale.

# newmembers



Joel Cortez, Trade Marketing Manager receiving the Guild Membership Certificate from Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG and Chef Andy Cuthbert, President of the ECG

**LG FMCG TRADING LLC** is a one basket food service distributor in HORECA & Retail channel all over UAE & MENA region. We are present in Bahrain, Maldives, Seychelles & Mauritius.

Established in 1988, The Distribution Division (Food) of Lals Group it's a one-stop-shop for food items from around the globe. Our go-to source for high-quality food products from over the world! Our food division is a leading food service distributor, importer, and exporter, catering to the needs of clients across the UAE and the Middle East region.

With over 35 years of experience in the food and beverage industry, our family-owned and managed business is renowned for its exceptional quality



standards, diversity of brands, and progressive supply chain.

Over the years, we have earned a reputation for offering the utmost service standards to our clients. We pride ourselves on our unique capabilities honed to meet and exceed industry expectations.

We are one of the largest and most professionally managed B2C retail distributors in the UAE, Bahrain, Maldives, and Seychelles, with over 400

employees, 50+ brands, and a 45+ global presence. Our exclusive representation of leading international names in the food trade, wholesale and retail distribution, and supplies to re-export services to leading holiday resorts, embassies, and institutions, make us a one-stop destination for all your food-related needs.

We remain committed to delivering exceptional service, superior quality products, and unmatched value to our clients. We look forward to serving you!





**Peet Van der Westhuizen, Executive member receiving the Guild Membership Certificate from Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG and Chef Andy Cuthbert, President of the ECG**

### OUR CORE VALUES:

**Quality First:** We uphold the highest standards of quality, ensuring that every spice we produce meets and exceeds expectations.

**Innovation:** Our commitment to innovation drives us to explore new flavors, blends, and packaging solutions that inspire chefs and home cooks alike.

**Sustainability:** We believe in responsible sourcing and sustainable practices, contributing to a healthier planet for future generations.

**Customer-Centric:** Our customers are at the heart of what we do. We strive to understand their needs and provide tailored spice solutions that elevate their culinary creations.

### OUR MISSION

Empowering kitchens worldwide with premium, sustainable, and diverse spice offerings, crafted with precision and delivered with excellence.



### CEO THYS LOURENS MESSAGE

At Absolute Spice, our commitment to excellence is unwavering. We are delighted to share a key achievement - the successful entry into the Middle East market. This milestone reflects our dedication to expanding our reach and bringing the exceptional flavors of Absolute Spice to new horizons.

In the dynamic landscape of spice manufacturing, we embrace innovation, uphold the highest standards of quality, and prioritize customer satisfaction.

We are dedicated to ensuring that every spice we produce meets and exceeds expectations. Our journey is characterized by continuous growth, fueled by the collective efforts of our talented team and the unwavering support of our valued clients.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to upholding key values, including quality, integrity, and customer-centricity. We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and are confident that our collaborative efforts will lead to mutual success.

Thank you for being an integral part of our story.

### OUR PRODUCTS:

Explore a world of spices with Absolute Spice (PTY) LTD. From the earthy notes of cumin to the fiery kick of chili, our extensive range covers every corner of the spice spectrum. Whether you're a culinary professional or a home cook, we have the perfect blend for every dish.

### EXPORT MARKETS:

We proudly export our premium spice products to discerning markets in the Middle East and Africa. Our spices have found a place in the kitchens of renowned restaurants, hotels, and households, enriching dishes with authentic and irresistible flavors.



**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 .....

Protein-rich, great source of vitamin B, low in fat, rich in selenium, zinc, phosphorus, and iron. Beneficial for heart health and reduction of cardiovascular risk... more importantly, versatile and tastes amazing... What is it? I hear you ask about this new miracle food.....its of course, **'TURKEY'**. Once only for seasonal occasions, it is now moving into our region as a mainstream. Not just turkey dinners, but tenders, cordon bleu, nuggets, slow-cooked legs, minced, diced escalopes. We are seeing menus across the region serving turkey burgers, turkey tacos, and even turkey jerky....tastes as good as it sounds. Lately, smoked turkey meat is fast becoming the new protein as it is one of the sustainable meats with low carbon impact and can challenge home consumers, but in the hands of the catering industry, it's a **jewel in the crown of all things poultry**.

In keeping with the re-emergence of classic cuisines alongside French and Spanish in our region, we are seeing the rebirth of all things **GREEK**. Food of the gods, so to speak, the synergy with this region is making this trend the new black, as its importance is played on tomatoes, aubergines, green beans, okra, green pepper honey, onions, feta, and olives.

In fact, there are too many to mention. Tyrokafteri that uses local feta, peppers, and harissa, or Kleftiko (braised lamb) or the world-famous Greek Keftedakia (meatballs Greek style) in a sub or on a fine dining plate. It appears in fast-casual fine dining and retail across the Emirates. Greek food is now integral to our region, and to quote **HIPPOCRATES "LET FOOD BY THY MEDICINE AND MEDICINE BY THY FOOD"**. So, who am I to argue with a food culture which is over 2500 years old? ..... it is here to stay.

**BREAKFAST** is the mealtime when your brain and plate are a clean slate. This humble meal sets your mindset for the rest of the day. Always on trend but ever evolving are **'BREAKFAST BREADS'** - fried, baked, grilled, and roasted. This year, we see menus across the region being more diverse than bagels and English muffins. The trend is rising, and people desire new



flavors and textures that are not too dissimilar to what's popular now. After all, home comforts away from home we are talking about potato farls. Fried Sfinz from North Africa, Georgian Khachapuri, Taiwanese shaobing buns enrobed in sesame, and my favorite Mexican Conchas sweet bread topped with cracked sugar are some amazing ways to start the day... Some trends like those of this month are also about daily staples but elevated to delight our customers, driving the desire to try things not too different but enough to delight and embellish our delivery of the most important meal of the day...**BREAKFAST**.

These days, I start my day with a good cup of freshly brewed coffee and toasted bread with wholemeal peanut butter topped with sea salt and Korean hot sauce to dance on my tongue. But I am forever changing the bread in my quest for trends... What's your go-to breakfast bread? Why not try something new....after all, that's how all trends start...

**Finally, looking at trends, our corporate partners at the Emirates Culinary Guild are also helping define the landscape of trends with their visions and foresight to avail their 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 Foodservice provides custom-made solutions (coatings, sauces, beverages, etc.) and branded solutions such as Chef's Palette and DaVinci Gourmet to global and regional chains, QSRs, and casual diners across the region.*

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