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FEBRUARY 2025

THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

# **gulf** **gourmet**

volume 20, issue 2

## **Right Place, Right Time**

One train ride was all it took to  
change Chef **Khum Gaha**'s life



### **ARLA PRO COOK OFF**

Dynamic event, high energy, piping power, frosting finesse, discerning jury and a winner!



### **AIR TO YOUR PLATE**

Prepare for the future of food, where meals are created with the very air we breathe



### **DUCK OR EAGLE**

Chef **Tarek Mouriess** inspires you to find your culinary voice by focusing on your own progress





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The season of love has arrived, and it's all about the magic that happens when chefs pour their hearts into every dish. Love is abstract. It is unconditional, and when you love your work, you will deliver great work. Embrace the dedication and effort put into your dish, find joy in experimentation, and take risks. Have faith in your artistic process, but most of all, love the accomplishment that comes with it.

The first edition of the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Cook-Off was a smashing success, with chefs celebrating their love for food through pastry, chocolate, and decadent flavors. Don't miss out on the beautiful moments captured during the pastry competition.

Many chefs turn their passion into a profession. We talk to two chefs who share their firsthand accounts of overcoming challenges in the industry, driven by their love for their craft. They reflect on the ups and downs of their careers and offer advice for young chefs: take every opportunity, don't let fear stop you, embrace the challenges, learn from others, and never stop improving.

We are absolutely thrilled to feature Chef Khum and his serendipitous story. Much like how love and destiny intertwine to paint the story of a lifetime, Chef Khum's career was forever altered by a train ride. Sometimes, a leap of faith can lead us to destinations we never expected.



There's a lot by the chefs for the chefs. A special piece explores how, in this era, chefs can stay true to their authentic voice, don't miss it! Other articles highlight how being in the industry allows chefs to contribute in many ways, from education to creating foods that can enhance lives.

Also, be sure to read about menu adaptation strategies in response to rising inflation. Check out the expert tips on making your burgers photo-ready. And, don't miss an exciting article on the future of food, featuring a Finnish startup creating food with air. It's truly an exciting time to be a chef, with new possibilities on the horizon.

I hope you enjoy this issue.  
**Alan Orreal**



Love is abstract. It is unconditional, and when you love your work, you will deliver great work



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## newsbites

# Fiera Milano and Semark announce Host Arabia in Riyadh

In a landmark announcement, for the first time in the Middle East, Fiera Milano, Italy's premier trade fair and congress sector leader, has announced that it will host Host Arabia. This event is in partnership with Semark, a prominent Saudi leader in event organization specializing in the Food Service sector

The launch of Host Arabia aligns seamlessly with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative, where Saudi Arabia is undergoing a significant transformation with extensive investments in infrastructure and tourism expansion. With plans to construct over 300,000 new hotel rooms and attract 150 million visitors by 2030, Saudi Arabia is poised to become a key player in the global hospitality market.

Set to launch in Riyadh in 2026, the new trade fair Host Arabia will introduce to Saudi Arabia the successful format of HostMilano, which is renowned globally as the premier exhibition for the hospitality, out-of-home, and retail sectors.

"This project marks the beginning of a new growth phase for the Group, focused on global expansion and enhancing our portfolio in high-potential markets, as outlined in our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan," stated Francesco Conci, CEO and General Manager of Fiera Milano.

He further expressed his excitement, highlighting the burgeoning opportunities within the Saudi professional hospitality market. He noted that import values in sectors relevant to HostMilano reached 456 million euros in 2023, with projections of approximately 600 million euros by 2027. "Host Arabia aims to capitalize on this potential and reaffirms our ability to anticipate trends and promote Made



in Italy in an increasingly competitive international context, expanding the scope of our exhibitions to key markets."

HostMilano stands out with its unique exhibition concept. Offering a comprehensive overview, the exhibition features three primary macro-areas: Professional Catering and Bakery-Pasta-Pizza; Coffee-Tea, Ice Cream-Pastry, and Bar-Coffee Machines-Vending; and Furniture-Technology and Tableware. This biennial event gathers all major international players to unveil their latest innovations.

Jad Taktak, CEO of Semark, emphasized the importance of this collaboration with Fiera Milano on Host Arabia, further remarking, "For the past 15 years, our 'Saudi HORECA' exhibition has led the region in showcasing food, beverage, and hospitality services. This partnership with Fiera Milano is poised to elevate the hospitality exhibition standard in Saudi Arabia, setting the stage for the largest hospitality gathering in the Kingdom and uniting the most influential players from around the world to explore opportunities and showcase the latest industry trends." ■

To get your chef or company related news featured in this section, email [editor@gulfgourmet.org](mailto:editor@gulfgourmet.org)



## Exclusive Q&A with Chef Kamal Nehme

From childhood memories of preparing Levantine moune to collaborating with world-class chefs, the Executive Chef shapes memorable dining at Royal M Hotel by Gewan Abu Dhabi

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

As a child, I cherished the time spent with my mother and grandmother in preparing Levantine "moune" and holiday sweets. Meanwhile, my father was a true enthusiast of Lebanese mezze, the kind of person who knows how to savor a long meal.

### Why did you choose to become a chef? Did you study/intern for it?

I became a chef because of my passion for cooking and the joy it brings to others. Growing up in a family that celebrated food made me appreciate its role in bringing people together. I studied hospitality management and gained hands-on experience through internships, which helped me refine my skills and learn the intricacies of the kitchen.

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

The early years as a chef were a mix of excitement and challenges. I faced long hours, high pressure, and the steep learning curve that comes with working in a busy kitchen. Each experience taught me something valuable; those early days were tough but incredibly rewarding, shaping my passion for the culinary world.

### Tell us about your journey to become an Executive Chef.

I gained valuable experience working in five-star hotels like Hilton, Starwood, and Marriott, where I had the opportunity to collaborate with world-class chefs. Additionally, I served as an



Stay curious and never stop learning. Embrace every opportunity to expand your skills

executive chef at the Lebanese airport catering company.

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

Managing a diverse team, balancing multiple tasks, and maintaining high standards for food quality and presentation while respecting budgets and cost percentage.

### Tell us about your current property

### and what your current role entails.

At the Royal M Hotel Abu Dhabi, I serve as the Executive Chef, overseeing all culinary operations within the property. My role involves managing the kitchen team, creating innovative menus that reflect local and international cuisines, and ensuring that we maintain the highest standards of food quality and presentation. Collaborating with other departments, I help design unique dining experiences for our guests, aiming to make every meal memorable.

### What is your advice to young chefs?

My advice to young chefs is to stay curious and never stop learning. Embrace every opportunity to expand your skills, whether through formal education, internships, or hands-on experience in the kitchen. Be open to feedback and mentorship, as they can greatly enhance your growth. ■



## The Food Heroes plant their flag in the Gulf

Chef **Pierre Koffmann** recently launched his product range in the Middle East, with events in Saudi Arabia and Dubai, where he met chefs and also celebrated the 25th anniversary of his book, *Memories of Gascony*

The Food Heroes is a family-run specialty food business, supplying fresh and frozen products to the foodservice industry and chefs. Legendary chef Pierre Koffmann heads up the Food Heroes family. A number of Britain's top chefs have trained under Pierre, Gordon Ramsay, Marco Pierre White, Tom Kitchin, Jason Atherton to name just a few. His protégés have now amassed more than 30 Michelin stars between them.

Under his expert direction, the experienced team has developed a unique range of premium potato brands in partnership with AgriSto that offer chefs consistently superior taste to enhance any menu.

The Food Heroes started their journey in 2020 and are extremely proud that within five years their range of brands have become the Chefs number-one



choice for potato products in the UK. They are still the leader and have expanded significantly. The exclusive list of brands now includes: Koffmann's, Marco Pierre

White Retro, From The Farm and The Food Heroes Presents. Celebrity Chef and self-acclaimed 'Koffmann disciple' Marco Pierre White is also part of The





Food Heroes stable. With Marco Pierre White, the brand introduced a popular range of Retro products under the Food Heroes umbrella. This range will see the introduction of new product lines in 2025.

Pierre Koffmann recently visited the Middle East for the first time to celebrate the launch of his range of products in the region with visits to Kingdom Saudi Arabia and Dubai where he attended a series of events in association with Agristo and wholesale partners. Whilst in the Middle East he had the opportunity to meet with chefs, network, showcase his products and

many guests were lucky enough to receive a signed copy of his book *Memories of Gascony* that was recently re-released to celebrate the 25th anniversary of this book.

The Food Heroes and Agristo are delighted to be launching the full range of Koffmann's and Marco Pierre White RETRO products in the Middle East with partners that include JM foods in the UAE & Oman, Bidfood in Kingdom Saudi Arabia & Bahrain. There are also plans for the products to be available in Kuwait, Qatar and Jordan at a later date, watch this space. Pierre looks forward to

returning to the Middle East in the future to meet with more chefs and supporting the growth of his products in the Gulf.

2025 looks set to be another fantastic year for The Food Heroes and Agristo as they bring their renowned products to the Middle East. They don't stand still as they are constantly diversifying the brand portfolio, while maintaining a focus on the quality products and service that have established their reputation amongst some of the best chefs. As the year progresses they will have a range of new products launching. ■

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# Pastry Pros compete at Arla Pro Cookoff

Dynamic event, high energy, piping power, frosting finesse, discerning jury, Denmark trip and medals at stake. The debut season of Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition set the stage for creativity and daring pastry dreams to rise



The first season of the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery was an eye-opening experience, offering us an inspiring look at the culinary potential of pastry chefs across the UAE. Talented pastry chefs competed in the final Arla Pro cook-off held at the International Centre for Culinary Arts on Friday, January 4, 2025. The intense 1.5-hour cook-off saw the chefs create stunning and delicious desserts using a variety of culinary ingredients.

The atmosphere was electric as the competitors gave it their all, with competitors battling it out in front of seasoned judges from the culinary and pastry world. Each contestant presented their creations with unique flavors and artistic pieces to impress the jury.

The competition was judged by the panel of experts: Atim Suyatim, Jurgen Ellenbeck, Suresh Babu, Ollie, Herath Dammika, and Dilantha Asela. Their keen eyes for talent and precision shaped a fair and rigorous evaluation of each competitor's dish.

Chef Ruwan Kumara emerged victorious, winning the coveted gold medal. Chef Syarif Purawinata clinched the second runner-up position, while Chef Chanaka Peiris secured the third runner-up title.

The grand prize is more than just an award; it's the prestigious Arla Pro Pastry Mastery title and a trip to Denmark.





The winner will experience a culinary immersion trip, tasting the iconic ingredients that have made Danish cuisine world-renowned.

Chef Olli Kuokkanen, global culinary lead at the Arla Pro, praised the high level of competition. "The winning dish stood out for its handcrafting, harmony, and balance of flavors," he said.

Having been a competitor himself, he shared the winning recipe for success in the competition. "Practice makes it perfect. The competition kitchen, where you are under pressure from the judges and audience, is entirely different from your home or workplace kitchen. Even if

### Full list of winners

Name	Hotel/Establishment	Award
Ruwan Kumara	The Palace Downtown	GOLD WINNER
Syarif Bagenda Purawinata	Nammoss Restaurant Dubai	GOLD 2ND RUNNER UP
Chanaka Peiris	Pullman DCC	GOLD 3RD RUNNER UP
Dwiyanti Cintaningrum	DWTC	SILVER
Prasad Bandaranayaka	The Ritz Carlton DIFC	SILVER
Savio D'Souza	Eataly Dubai Mall	SILVER
Samitha Niroshan	Crowne Plaza Dubai Jumeirah	SILVER

you can cook in your kitchen under the time limit, you still need more practice to manage the demands of a competitive

kitchen. To become as comfortable as you are in your kitchen, you must practice a lot," he added. ■



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# DIVINE INTERVENTION

A difficult childhood, years of relentless effort in the industry in hopes of being rewarded with a once-in-a-lifetime break, an unexpected encounter on a local train. Just when Chef **Khum Gaha** felt all was spiraling down, a story unfolded for him straight out like a movie

Mumbai, known as the city of dreams, is alive with stories. The local train, a microcosm of the city, bears witness to the ebb and flow of its passengers every day, all struggling, winning, and losing in their race to arrive at their destination in life.

What were the odds that Chef Khum, who had no intention of seeking employment abroad, found himself face-to-face with a recruiter during a routine local ride? The real mystery wasn't just in the happenstance but the man himself.

Seated across from Khum on the crowded train, the peculiar stranger spent an hour observing him. His beard,



Once I graduated, my curiosity for cooking took me through 12 or 13 different restaurants across India over the next eight years

thick and wild, framed his face, and a piece of cloth worn like a makeshift eye patch shrouded one of his eyes, adding more secrecy to his demeanor.

As Chef Khum approached his destination, the stranger finally came over to speak. "What surprised me," he chuckled, "was how directly he offered me a job at his restaurant. He had never seen me or my work, and it struck me how he was willing to take a chance based on just a brief observation."

Yet, life hasn't always been so lucid for Chef Khum. About 185 miles from Kathmandu lies the Gulmi district. Aerial views show a series of tiny towns, each dotting the landscape like tiny flowers swaying amidst the mighty mountains. Among these picturesque settlements is the city of Shringa Deurali, housing Chef Khum Gaha's childhood.

Living with his electrical engineer father, a young Khum bubbling with mischief would dart around him when he would be tinkering at his workbench. "He would always tell me to focus on my studies, earn a degree, and never touch his equipment until I grew up. And I did just that by deciding to pursue a course in engineering."

Upon arriving in Mumbai in 2002, unbeknownst Chef Khum took his first step into the culinary world by joining the kitchen of a canteen in Panvel. A year into finding his liking, he decided to expand his palate by working in a food court preparing Chinese fast food.

"At the same time, to invest in my future, I decided to continue my diploma





What surprised me was how a man who had never seen me or my work was willing to offer me a job based on just a brief observation





in engineering while pursuing my culinary dreams," he says, consistently ranking at the top of his class of 86 engineering students.

His daily routine became waking up as an engineering student and ending up in the kitchen. "My nights were spent tackling homework, with only 2 or 3 hours of shut-eye before starting the cycle all over again. This routine continued for three years; luckily, all the restaurant owners I worked with in India were incredibly kind, always encouraging me, and even offered me the chance to return if I faced any challenges after graduation."

He was unquestionably a stellar student in both engineering and culinary arts. But he was aware that he had to come out of the duality of his interests loop if he wanted to step up to the plate as a talented chef. "Once I graduated, my curiosity for cooking took me through



All the restaurant owners I worked with in India were incredibly kind, always encouraging me, and even offered me the chance to return if I faced any challenges after graduation

12 or 13 different restaurants across India over the next eight years," he says, explaining how he grew along the way by hustling in Mumbai and the quieter corners of Tarapur and Chiplun.



Years later, on that train, a detour was about to begin, one that he never saw coming. After explaining to the bearded man that he worked at a Chinese-Indian restaurant, he was invited for a cup of coffee to discuss a job opportunity further. The bearded man, a humble purveyor of Indian sweets to a chef in the known kitchens of the Gulf, revealed he had successfully sent many individuals to Dubai for work, even some of Chef Khum's friends. To prove his trustworthiness, he encouraged him to call one of his friends and even contacted a restaurant owner in Al Karama, who elaborated on the promising opportunity.

"This was a great opportunity," Chef Khum says, reliving the exchange when he handed over his passport and 1,000 rupees for the visa process. "The man reassured me that if your visa doesn't come through, it's on us. We'll return your money and passport," he describes his memory in a calm cadence.

Weeks turned into months, and soon, six long months passed without a word on his visa application. In the tumultuous 2000s, he feared that his dreams were slipping away. Just as he began to lose hope, the unexpected happened: his visa arrived.

Seldom has the timing and desire synchronized like tango. For Chef Khum, events seemed to unfold as if he had an uncanny ability to be in the right place at the right time, and that's only scratching the surface.

Finally making it to Dubai, challenges awaited him at every corner. With limited knowledge and education, the only map he followed was to work for a few years to build his future and explore more opportunities later.

"It was a different ball game at that place than what I expected, but my past experiences in the restaurant industry back in India came to the rescue," he shares. A rather bitter stint in the



restaurant kitchen, paired with a hunger for new opportunities, meant starting afresh being the only means. Interestingly, he didn't return to the kitchen.

"I took on a housekeeping role at the Almaraz Rotana. Even though I had culinary experience, it was difficult for my talents to be fully recognized in the restaurant sector. After 14 years in the hotel industry, I found it tough to transition from the restaurant world. That moment made me realize I had to rebuild my career and start again at zero."

When he started pulling his weight in housekeeping, his manager saw he was a real go-getter. Swiftly cleaning and actively assisting the guests paid off when he finally decided to step into the culinary lane six months later.

As a pharaoh ascending the pyramids of culinary adventure, he began his odyssey in 2014 when he joined the Raffles Dubai Hotel. "I faced an intense recruitment process: six rounds of interviews, food tastings, and assessments that felt like an exhilarating adventure. Finally, I secured the role of Commis 3," he notes.

Within a year of cross-training and undertaking his assigned tasks head-on, he received not just one but two promotions. His tenacity inevitably led him to secure the Demi Chef de Partie position at Sheraton Sharjah Beach Resort. As he plotted out his next move, fate intervened when a mentor from Raffles Dubai reached out, inviting him to return.

In mid-2021, he joined Raffles, the Palm as a junior sous chef, a position he has held on to ever since. At the moment, he oversees the Raffles Club kitchen, which operates as an all-day dining venue. "The club is a VIP lounge. I take care of the members, support the chef de cuisine, and handle mainly the club kitchen operations," explains the 38-year-old chef.

As he takes us to his daily life and routine, it becomes clear that he puts



I faced an intense recruitment process: six rounds of interviews, food tastings, and assessments that felt like an exhilarating adventure

his all in the kitchen, starting early in the morning and leading a team of 8 staff members. Just a year after opening, they now serve around 200 guests daily during busy breakfast hours, and that

number can soar to 300, in addition to their regular all-day dining service for 500 to 700 people. "With 369 rooms and several villas, the five-star hotel is bridging the gap between traditions and today's luxury," he remarks.

He further adds, "We offer an extensive buffet for breakfast featuring pastries, bakery items, and live cooking for hot items. At the same time, lunch matches these with cold dishes, pastry additions in the buffet, and hot items in a la carte. For afternoon tea, we provide a light buffet option with some beverages, mezze, food to bite on, and snacks, and before dinner, we work on appetizers and drinks."

Even though he has a wealth of recipes in reserve, he collaborates with the team and senior chefs to keep the menu fresh by aligning it with guest

preferences every few months. "I change the menu based on the costing and the discussions I have with the chef de cuisine. It has been a great learning experience for me," he says.

Aside from his duties in training and recipe development, Chef Khum's passion shines through in another arena: marshaling at the Emirates Culinary Guild competitions.

If you ask him why he chose to be a marshal, he will take you back to the intense pressure he faced at the 2015 Salon Culinaire competition. He had a five-minute delay that threatened

his chance of competing. Panic set in as he feared disqualification because he hadn't plated his dish in time. "I thought, am I disqualified? I've finished everything, but my plate isn't ready yet," he recollects.

Just then, a marshal stepped in to support him. "You have three minutes left. You can plate your dish," the marshal advised, helping him just in the nick of time.

With that support, he managed to calm down, put the dish together, win a gold medal, and ultimately decide to become a marshal himself. "A little kindness can make a big difference," he says

with the same friendly smile he wears throughout the competition.

To him, being a marshal is more than just showing up. It is an opportunity to meet new talents and learn more about food, new equipment, and the hospitality industry. With his experience as a marshal overseeing the competition behind the scenes since 2017, he very well reads the nervousness that new participants often bring to their faces. "I advise them to relax and concentrate on their tasks. We are here to help; our kindness helps people bloom."

When work doesn't beckon him, his family becomes his priority. Though they now reside in Nepal, Chef Khum constantly dotes over his daughter, who is 12, and son, 6, describing his wife and children he loves and hopes the best for.

In hindsight, he holds his head high at the trajectory of his life. He has yet to learn the bearded man's name; all he remembers of him is his tall stature and their shared love of cooking. As for his goal, he says, "I want to start my restaurant, whether in Nepal, India, or anywhere else in the world. That's my target."

Like all meaningful stories, this one also carries a powerful lesson: no matter how disappointed you feel when things don't go your way, remember that the universe often has a better plan in store for you, one filled with unexpected opportunities. ■



Even though I had culinary experience, it was difficult for my talents to be fully recognized in the restaurant sector





After 14 years in the hotel industry, I found it tough to transition from the restaurant world. That moment made me realize I had to rebuild my career and start again at zero





# A Culinary Journey: From Passionate Beginnings and Beyond



## (Part XI) How Education Came Calling and Sealed Chef Helen Morris's Fate

After leaving my post in the picturesque Berkshire countryside and indulging in some well-deserved downtime (finally!), I found myself itching for my next adventure. Enter fate, stage left: a job in London. Not just any job, mind you, but a gig at a private culinary school with a fully operational restaurant that trained both chefs and front-of-house maestros. The job was in a fabulous part of London, so naturally, I jumped at the chance and headed to the interview.

The interview was a dream—I hit it off immediately with the executive chef and managing director. We clicked instantly—like eggs, oil, and vinegar transforming into the perfect emulsion for a silky mayonnaise. The team was small but full of flavor, like a well-seasoned reduction. A week later, I was in: jacket crisp, knives gleaming, and my enthusiasm turned up to high heat, ready to slice, dice, whip up some inspiration, and a trusty pen in hand.

Let's talk logistics: I live outside London, and this job was in London, so commuting became my cardio. Who knew there were that many steps on London Underground Tube Station escalators? But for the first time in my career, I worked straight shifts! No more split shifts stealing all my evenings. I'd start at 7:00 AM and finish by 4 or 5 PM or work afternoons from 2:00 PM to 10:00 PM and with weekends off. I nearly fell off my chef clogs with joy, well, Doc Martens (I've always been a huge fan).

With all this newfound free time, I did what any overachieving chef would do: I enrolled in computer classes (I could barely navigate a mouse back then), started my teacher training qualifications, and because I clearly didn't value sleep, I took on part-time work. First, I returned to the hotel I'd worked at previously (nostalgia, anyone?), then joined an events company, and eventually launched my own private dining business in London. It kept me busy—and funded my favorite extracurricular activity: traveling. Work hard; jet set harder!

This teaching role wasn't just a job; it was a feast for the soul. I got to combine training with a fully operational restaurant in a prime London location. The students were eager and hardworking and frequently represented us in culinary competitions. Watching them flourish in this high-pressure environment was like watching dough rise—sometimes slow but oh-so-satisfying. The connection with the industry was amazing but then came the less glamorous side: paperwork. Assessment forms, awarding body requirements, and audit trails, essentially, were part of my new *mise en place*, which involved folders and spreadsheets.

With my teaching qualifications in hand, I decided to sauté my skills into a government teaching institution in North West London. It was an eye-opener and the polar opposite of the swanky side of London with which I was familiar. Armed with my knives, books, and a battalion of



Teaching, much like cooking, is a passion. It's not just about knowledge; it's about the joy of plating it up and serving it to eager learners





Post-its, I stepped into the role of chef lecturer. The students ranged from fresh-faced 14-year-olds who didn't yet know their béchamel from their beurre noisette to seasoned adults balancing jobs and qualifications. I became a teaching ninja, flipping between different styles faster than pancakes on Shrove Tuesday to satisfy this diverse crowd.

Regulations and policies were like sous chefs who never stopped giving orders and the paperwork. Let's just say if paperwork were a dish, it would've been an all-you-can-eat buffet. Just endless. Thankfully, the restaurant we trained in overlooked Wembley Stadium, which made for a decent distraction. Plus, the industry support was incredible—we had guest chef evenings, student placements, and even a few culinary rockstars gracing our kitchen. Watching

students absorb this wisdom was as satisfying as seeing a perfectly poached egg emerging from simmering water.

After a couple of years, I was promoted to Curriculum Leader for Hospitality. It was a fantastic career move, but the paperwork seemed to multiply like yeast in a warm kitchen. Oh, and because I clearly hadn't learned my lesson, I went back to university for yet another teaching qualification. Well, I had no choice; it was a government stipulation. Balancing a full teaching load, curriculum management, budgets, meetings, and study? It felt like making a ten-course tasting menu on a two-burner stove—but hey, I did it.

Teaching, much like cooking, is a passion. It's not just about knowledge; it's about the joy of plating it up and

serving it to eager learners. Inspiring students isn't always easy—some days they're like meringue that won't stiffen, but when it happens, it's pure gold. Watching them develop into confident professionals makes every struggle, every head-banging wall moment, and yes, even every audit worth it.

Now, my dear culinary comrades, I know I promised this would be the final chapter of my career adventures, but I've got one more sizzling story to share. Next stop: DUBAI! Trust me, this tale is as rich as a double-chocolate ganache and deserves its own spotlight.

Until next time, keep cooking, keep learning, and remember—life, like a great recipe, is best when shared.

**Chef Helen**

# Air to Your Plate

Prepare for the future of food where meals are created with the very air we breathe as a Finnish startup rolls out Solein, one of the most sustainable proteins

By **Shreya Asopa**

In 2019, a cursory glance at reports on a Finnish startup and its air-derived food vision seemed downright outlandish. But as buzzwords like meat without animals or sustainable foods become the lingua franca of the food conversation, the shift in air-derived foods making their way to our plates has also begun to take shape.

The Finnish startup Solar Foods produces protein using microbial gas fermentation. Founded in 2017 by Dr. Pasi Vainikka, Dr. Juha-Pekka Pitkänen, at its core is bioprocess engineering, where a microbe is fed with gases (carbon dioxide, hydrogen, and oxygen) in a brewing vessel.

The end product is a nutritious, dry, yellowish powder derived from microbes that are free from food allergens, animal origins, and genetic modifications. In other words, growing food out of thin air.

A beyond-belief idea, the startup, as outlined on its website, brings a sustainable protein into the world that uses just 0.1% of the land and 1% of the water that a similar amount of beef would.

"Solein excels in its nutritional properties, mild flavor and broad functionality, which



Where there's a breath of fresh air, there's a possibility

make it an ingredient easy to use across multiple food & beverages and nutritional applications", says Juan Manuel Benitez-Garcia, Chief Commercial Officer at Solar Foods.

Dubbed the 'Intel inside' of the food industry by thought leaders, Juan explains it can be integrated with various flavors. "Be it sweet, savory, or in ice cream flavors like rich caramel, black currant, or decadent chocolate, it beautifully complements all. And Solein enhances all the natural characteristics of the dish without overpowering."

Though the invention stands as a remarkable feat in itself, the company's impact has been seismic, even earning it a spot as the Phase three winner in the international category of the NASA Deep Space Food Challenge. Since its launch, the Deep Space Food competition has attracted over 300 teams from 32 countries, proposing innovative food systems and production technologies to ensure safe, nutritious, and delicious meals for long-duration space missions.

Several other companies are baking a similar dough. A Dutch startup, Farmless, uses carbon dioxide instead of sugar to fuel its fermentation-based food production platform. Meanwhile, California-based Air Protein is developing a protein derived from edible microbes created from elements found in the air.



Solein stands out as a veritable powerhouse in this culinary cosmos, having 75% protein content and a very nutritional amino acid profile. "Our ingredient contain fiber, healthy fats, and micronutrients such as iron and vitamin B12. And it is versatile, meaning you can use it in health & performance products, and across a broad range of foods and culinary products substituting animal, dairy, and egg proteins," shares Benitez-Garcia.

Now for some intriguing and tasty tidbits: In 2022, Singapore took the lead by becoming the first market to give a thumbs-up to Solein. Since then, Solar Foods provided the novel ingredient for several limited-edition food products and test marketing in Singapore, be it in Solein-powered snack bars or chocolate gelato. Big names like the Ajinomoto Group, have even cooked up treats like Traditional Flowering Mooncakes and Ice Cream Sandwiches, both powered by Solein.

Fast forward to late November last year, Solein made its official debut in the U.S. market with the self-affirmed Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) status, making it the second country in the world where this novel protein has become commercially available.

To kick things in the market, an event was hosted at the acclaimed Olmsted restaurant in Brooklyn, led by renowned Chef Greg Baxtrom. He used Solein in a four-course menu featuring dishes like Beer Battered Delicata Solein Squash Rings, Solein Brussels Sprout Spätzle, Solein Carrot Crepe, and Old School Solein Chocolate Mousse.

Now, as they initiate commercial rollouts across the U.S., their strategy is to align with health-conscious consumers seeking innovative nutrition solutions. "We are providing an ingredient that can go across major culinary applications. We're starting in high-demand categories where consumers are seeking protein alternatives by focusing on key product



We can grow protein year-round, even in inhospitable ecological zones, in the harsh cold climates of Finland, once thought nearly impossible, in the arid climate of the UAE, or even in space

categories, like protein mixes, functional beverages, and nutritious snacks like protein bars. It gives us a chance to build awareness, test the waters, and align with consumer interest."

As the company amplifies its goals, it has also opened Factory 01, the first commercial-scale facility in Vantaa, Finland. "We are producing our initial volumes here and our plan is to increase annual production from 160 tons to over 3,000 tons by 2028 and continue expanding by 2030," states Benitez-Garcia.

Creating a robust pipeline of opportunities for strategic partnerships



and Factory 02 facility expansions is another aspect of their future plans. "We're targeting further regulatory approvals, with plans to explore other regions as well. Our vision is global. The guiding question for their plans is how



can we get our products into the hands of more consumers and maximize impact?"

### How Solein is Redefining Chefs Creations

Chefs have always been pioneers in food innovation. Paying heed to the potential, the company has collaborated with several chefs and passionate food enthusiasts to explore how Solein can elevate traditional recipes.

"Success to us isn't solely about having the best technology or product; it's about delivering the right experiences to consumers," explains Benitez-Garcia. "That's why we've invested in a development team and have talented in-house chefs who develop recipes

tailored to our ingredients, finding the right formulation and determining the correct amounts to achieve the desired texture and flavor."

About incorporating Solein into culinary dishes, he serves golden nuggets of advice. "First off, chefs should identify

where these proteins can effectively substitute traditional alternatives. Think about where they would like to have the unique properties these ingredients bring, such as emulsification capabilities, clean flavor source, and textural enhancements. Second, the protein is versatile, which acts as an ideal foundation for chefs who can blend the powder with water and other ingredients tailored for various culinary applications."

Among many chefs, Oliver Truesdale-Jutras and Mirko Febbrile have also tried their hands at creating a Solein-inspired tasting menu back in 2023 at Fico restaurant. According to Juan, the culinary scene is a thoughtful conduit. "It is a platform for us to observe how customers integrate our product. And as we scale up, we see Solein becoming mainstream in the markets."

And if just the innovation doesn't take you by air, then you would also be immensely moved by their thought on addressing one of the most pressing challenges in the food space, which revolves around boosting food



Success to us isn't solely about having the best technology or product; it's about delivering the right experiences to consumers



production. Their mantra is to reimagine food through the lenses of sustainability, nutrition, and innovation.

"We can grow protein year-round, even in inhospitable ecological zones, in the harsh cold climates of Finland, once thought nearly impossible, in the arid climate of the UAE, or even in space. Solein production is not dependent on traditional agriculture, weather, or climate. In that sense, we have a technology that could tackle the food security challenge. Our role in this equation involves contributing our new technology to work together with different stakeholders in food and nutrition to make a real impact."

Food derived from air is like a bouillabaisse of change. Yet, the essential question lingers: how can chefs fully embrace the truth behind the adage 'a chef is only as good as their ingredients', especially when those ingredients are made with the very air we breathe?

Just as life comes full circle, food has its way of reconnecting us to its origins and its boundless journey from farm to table. Perhaps with the right ingredients, the dish in front of you becomes a symbol of life. After all, where there's a breath of fresh air, there's a possibility. ■



# Elvis Tells All

**Elvis Taylor**, multi-unit manager for New Shanghai restaurants across the UAE, shares the secret to enhancing guest interactions

I want to share with you one of my first challenging experiences with a guest! In the dimly lit corridors of a luxury hotel, where echoes usually play with nature and a gentle breeze as the evening passes on, I was serving a guest whose hoarse voice could put the frights of Moses through you. It was not just any voice; it had a sharp, deep tone when she spoke; her voice echoed so piercing that birds, startled from their evening repose, would fly out of their nests in a frenzied clatter. Yes! As much as I detested serving her, I was the chosen one that night.

She had a formidable presence; every slight delay in service was noted with a pointed glance. Her expectations were high, and her encyclopedia of preferences was vast, but one rule stood out: never spill her drinks. It was a simple yet terrifying task for anyone serving her. I am still a greenhorn in the world of hospitality, and as fate and science would have it..When you fear something happening, it will happen.

During one of my service rounds, with the tray in my hands and her stern eyes watching, my worst fear came true. Maybe it was the nerves, or perhaps just bad luck, but I spilled the drinks right onto her table. But here's where the twist in my tale of horror comes into play - my saving grace was not a magic spell but my presence of mind.

Despite the spill, which could have easily been the end, I managed to navigate through this nightmare. When she raised her voice in dismay, I didn't just apologize; I listened intently and mirrored her concerns with genuine

empathy. Reflecting someone's emotions, especially in a high-stress moment, can disarm the tensest situations. It was a near miss or near hit... or should I say I escaped through the skins on my teeth.

Here's the Secret: mirroring as a technique can be a powerful tool to enhance guest interactions.

## Here's why mirroring works and how it can be applied even more effectively:

- ♦ **Active Listening and Immediate Reflection:** Mirroring starts with active listening. It's important not only to hear the words the guest is saying but also to understand the emotions behind them. When you reflect those emotions to the guest, it shows that you are fully engaged in their experience. For instance, responding with 'I can see why this upset you' or 'I understand this isn't how you wanted things to go tonight' acknowledges their feelings.
- ♦ **Body Language and Tone of Voice:** Mirroring isn't just about words; it's also about matching the guest's body language and tone, albeit subtly. If they are speaking softly, lower your voice as well. If they are standing, stand with them; if seated, sit too. This non-verbal alignment can create a sense of empathy and rapport.
- ♦ **Validating Their Experience:** Beyond just understanding and reflecting, validating the guest's experience can further deepen the connection. For example, saying, 'Anyone would be upset if their evening didn't go as planned,' helps validate their emotional response.
- ♦ **Offering Solutions or Alternatives:**



Once you've mirrored and validated their feelings, the next step is to transition to problem-solving. Be empathetic and proactive in ensuring their satisfaction. For example, after acknowledging the spill, you might offer a complimentary drink or a special dessert.

- ♦ **Follow-Up:** After the initial incident and resolution, following up with the guest can leave a lasting positive impression. This could be as simple as checking back later during their visit to ensure they are satisfied or sending a personalized note or message afterward thanking them for their understanding.

Using mirroring effectively involves a delicate balance of empathy, validation, and proactive problem-solving. By enhancing your mirroring techniques, you can transform even the most tricky situations into opportunities for building stronger relationships with your guests.

After all this, notify your management of what happened and have it recorded; you will never know who could then benefit from it, and you, in turn, could have learned some more. But most importantly, you start to develop trust with the guests, your management, and your team, my friend; this will help you do miles in your career! ■



# Meat With Sulemana

**Abubakari Sadik Sulemana** goes into detail about veal and beef, exploring breeds and the growing market potential in the Middle East and Africa

Veal and beef, both sourced from cattle, differ significantly in taste, texture, and market positioning. These differences stem from variations in genetics, breeding, farming techniques, processing methods, and consumer preferences.

## Prominent Cattle Breeds

- **Holstein (Europe, North America):** Primarily a dairy breed, Holstein calves are often utilized for veal production due to their lean, tender meat.
- **Limousin (France):** This dual-purpose breed is valued for both veal and beef and is known for its fine marbling and superior meat quality.
- **Angus (Scotland):** Renowned for its highly marbled beef, Angus is a premium choice in global beef markets.
- **Charolais (France):** A breed favored for rapid growth and lean muscle, Charolais cattle produce both high-yield beef and tender veal.
- **Boran (Africa):** Adapted to Africa's challenging climate, Boran cattle are becoming increasingly popular in the region's beef industry.

**Farming:** Veal calves are typically raised under regulated conditions, often in group housing or specialized barns. To preserve the distinctive tenderness and mild flavor of veal, these calves are usually slaughtered young. Whereas beef cattle are raised in open pastures, feedlots, or a combination of both, depending on market demands. Typically beef cattle are slaughtered between 18 and 36 months, allowing for the development of a robust flavor profile.

**Processing and Trade:** Veal remains a niche product, predominantly exported to premium markets in Europe and



North America. Meanwhile beef caters to a diverse range of consumers, from high-end steak cuts to economical secondary cuts and offals. Exporters prioritize certifications such as Halal and organic standards to access growing markets in the Middle East and Africa.

## Global Opportunities

Western Europe, particularly Italy, France, and the Netherlands, remains a stronghold for veal consumption. Beef dominates the global protein market, with major exporters such as Australia, Brazil, and the United States supplying premium and secondary cuts to various international markets. The Middle East is a key market for both veal and beef, with Halal certification being a prerequisite for entry.

Urban centers in the Middle East are witnessing a rising demand for veal, particularly in upscale restaurants and luxury hotels that incorporate it into gourmet cuisine. Whereas beef remains a staple in Middle Eastern diets, with high consumption during cultural and religious festivities such as Eid al-Adha and Ramadan. Premium beef varieties

like Wagyu and Angus are especially sought after in affluent regions like the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

## Growing Demand in Africa

Africa is emerging as a significant market for beef, while veal remains relatively untapped. Beef plays a central role in many African cuisines, with strong demand for both prime and secondary cuts. Indigenous breeds such as Boran and Nguni offer sustainable beef production solutions adapted to local environments. On the other hand, as urbanization accelerates and disposable incomes rise, veal has potential within niche markets, particularly among expatriates and fine-dining establishments.

## Market Trends and Challenges

As consumer demand for ethically raised veal is increasing, it is also influencing farming practices. High-cost barrier is also the center of the topic. Veal's premium pricing limits widespread adoption in developing economies.

Beef can navigate logistical hurdles by maintaining a robust cold chain infrastructure is essential for ensuring product quality and extending market reach. Another strategy that can prove beneficial is the Cut Variation Strategy where exporters can capitalize on the demand for both high-end steak cuts and economical options such as offals in Africa and the Middle East.

*Veal and beef each occupy distinct yet complementary segments within the global meat industry. Whether catering to fine-dining establishments with premium veal or supplying households with quality beef, these meats continue to shape culinary traditions across the globe.*

# Breaking BREAD

Chef **Bobby Kapoor** writes about the bread of the past, present, and future

The origin and history of bread are both vast and fascinating, spanning over 10,000 years and touching nearly every culture and country across the globe. Bread is one of humanity's oldest and most essential foods—a cornerstone of civilization itself.

I was inspired to contribute to education by penning cookery books for long-distance learning and sharing my discoveries on Wikipedia. The journey of bread captivated me so much that documenting its evolution became a passion. We often take for granted how transformative the invention of sliced bread was. In 1928, **Otto Rohwedder** revolutionized bread consumption with his slicing machine, and by 1930, the first commercial loaf of sliced bread hit the shelves, quickly gaining popularity. The phrase "the best thing since sliced bread" owes its origin to this groundbreaking innovation.

When I began exploring breadmaking, I delved into the distinction between leavened and unleavened dough. My passion for travel and modern cuisine led me to discover bread baked with steam, on stones, in pans, clay ovens, wood-fired ovens, and even charcoal. Every method reflected the heritage and ingenuity of the region. Grains harvested dictated cycles of baking, and much of this knowledge remains undocumented.

As milling shifted from stone-ground methods to mechanized processes, the shelf life of flour improved. Yet, walking into old kitchens revealed a world where granaries, grinding rooms, and ovens were integral. I've seen houses built around brick ovens, where bread was baked below and stored on



The story of bread is as rich and diverse as humanity itself

top to keep warm. As the oven cooled, bakers created an array of breads, from soft morning rolls to hearty offerings for lunch and tea. Bakers and artisans mastered the art of extracting every ounce of heat, beginning with high-heat soft bread and transitioning to low-heat harder varieties.

Seasonal grains dictated the diversity of bread, as storage was often a challenge. In India, for example, Roti and Naan are part of an extensive tradition, with over 770 documented bread varieties.

Similarly, encyclopedias of baking continue to expand as new breads are cataloged by origin and type. In my travels, I make it a point to seek out breads and fruits that tell the story of a country's evolution.

Each loaf, each flavor, carries the essence of history, culture, and ingenuity, weaving a mesmerizing tale of resilience and creativity.

## Early History of Bread

The earliest forms of bread were likely simple flatbreads made by mixing ground grains with water and cooking the mixture over hot stones or in fire ashes. Archaeological evidence suggests that humans began creating rudimentary bread as far back as 14,000 years ago. Remarkably, this predates the advent of agriculture, indicating that early humans

may have foraged wild grains, ground them, and crafted a basic dough.

## The Birth of Agriculture (circa 10,000 BCE)

The emergence of agriculture around 10,000 BCE in the Fertile Crescent (modern-day Middle East) marked a monumental shift. Societies began cultivating grains such as wheat and barley, which became the cornerstone of breadmaking. This transition from foraging to farming enabled surplus grain production, fostering the organized practice of baking and the evolution of bread as a staple food.

## Ancient Civilizations and the Advent of Leavened Bread

### Ancient Egypt (circa 3000 BCE)

Pioneers of Leavening and Baking: The Egyptians revolutionized bread-making by developing leavening, likely by chance when wild yeast in the air caused the dough to ferment and rise. This discovery resulted in leavened bread, which was lighter and more aerated than the earlier flatbreads.

**Technological Advancements:** Egyptians also invented the oven, significantly improving the bread-baking process. Bread was integral to Egyptian life, serving as a dietary staple and playing a vital role in religious rituals. Their advanced baking systems laid the groundwork for future innovations in breadmaking.

### Ancient Greece and Rome

**Greece:** Bread was a cornerstone of the ancient Greek diet. Greek bakers perfected leavened breadmaking and introduced more sophisticated techniques, such as adding honey and olive oil for flavor. Breadmaking guilds emerged, and public bakeries produced

bread in large quantities, making it widely accessible.

**Rome:** Romans adopted bread making methods from the Greeks and Egyptians, elevating the craft during the Roman Empire (circa 1st century BCE). Bread became an essential part of daily life, with Roman bakers mastering a variety of breads, from simple loaves to intricate pastries.

**Commercialization of Bread:** Romans established the first commercial bakeries, producing bread on a large scale for public consumption. Bread was also central to the Roman army's daily rations, symbolizing sustenance and strength. The iconic panis (bread) became a powerful emblem of nourishment.

### Medieval and Renaissance Bread (circa 5th to 15th Century)

**Bread as a Social Marker:** In medieval Europe, bread was a staple of the diet, but its type and quality often reflected one's social class. The wealthy indulged in fine white bread made from finely ground wheat flour, while peasants relied on darker, coarser loaves made from rye or barley, which were denser and less refined.

**Guilds and Regulation:** The baker's guild system flourished during this period, with bakers subject to strict regulations. Laws controlled the quality, weight, and pricing of bread to prevent fraud and ensure fairness.

**Regional Variations:** In colder northern regions where wheat was scarce, rye and oats became staples. These grains produced heavier, darker bread, which sustained communities through harsh winters.

### Renaissance (14th to 17th century)

**Evolving Techniques and Access:** The Renaissance era saw advancements in breadmaking techniques and an increase in wheat availability. This shift made lighter, richer bread more accessible, particularly in the growing urban centers of Europe.



**Innovation in Baking:** Sourdough and other natural leavening methods gained popularity, enhancing flavor and texture. The introduction of brick ovens allowed for better heat retention and more even baking, revolutionizing the art of breadmaking.

### The Rise of Modern Bread with the Industrial Revolution (18th and 19th centuries)

**Mechanized Milling:** The Industrial Revolution transformed bread production, with mechanized milling making flour production faster, more efficient, and consistent. This enabled the mass production of bread, especially white bread, which was prized for its soft texture and refined appearance.

**Variety of Grains:** The option of looking at grains for baking, and discussions around gluten, and using different mixes gave a direction of rye, wheat, barley, and seeds as blends.

**Baking Innovations:** The 19th Century saw the development of baker's yeast, which standardized leavening and produced lighter, fluffier bread. The advent of electric ovens brought precise temperature control, improving the consistency and quality of baked goods.

### Bread in the 21st Century

**A Global Staple:** The forms and styles of bread have diversified immensely. Traditional artisan breads like sourdough have seen a resurgence, valued for their rich flavor and lack of artificial additives.

**Cultural Varieties:** Every culture boasts its unique bread, from the iconic French baguette and Italian ciabatta to Indian naan, Ethiopian injera, and Middle Eastern pita, showcasing the global significance of their heritage and glorifying their roots.

**Health and Innovation:** Modern health trends have driven demand for alternatives like gluten-free, whole grain, and low-carb breads, catering to dietary needs and preferences. This evolution highlights bread's adaptability in meeting the needs of contemporary, health-conscious consumers.

If I were ever to become rich, I'd wish I had patented bread. Bread has the power to alleviate hunger across the globe. Let's collaborate and make it a reality.

To break bread together is more than a simple act; it's a profound blessing, a symbol of unity and connection.

The story of bread is as rich and diverse as humanity itself. What began as a simple mixture of water and ground grain has transformed over millennia into the vast array of types and styles we cherish today. From the flatbreads of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia to the refined loaves of medieval Europe and the industrial innovations of the modern era, bread has been a cornerstone of sustenance, culture, and daily life.

So, the next time you find yourself reaching for a breadbasket, take a moment to appreciate its journey. Consider how a tiny grain was cultivated, cherished, and ground, transformed by the mode of cooking into the bread before you.

**Give it all the love and attention it deserves—it's often the first thing we touch, taste, and share in any dining experience. Learn to respect it in every home. Amana, thank you, God, for providing bread from the earth. Bread, to me, is a blessing that each culture has celebrated throughout the years.** ■



# Duck or Eagle

By focusing on your progress instead of comparing yourself to others, you can find your culinary voice, writes Chef **Tarek Mouriness**

Life has been pretty demanding lately. It is that time of the year again when we roll up our sleeves and work on those New Year's resolutions. Everyone's hustling. What others have is often more appealing.

You might be sweating it out, trying to shed a little weight with morning walks, gym sessions, or protein shakes, counting down the kilograms, 80 kg to 78.5 in a month. Then, enter the gym-goer who dropped 4 kg in that month and suddenly makes you feel like a potato. Intrusive thoughts disrupt your self-discipline. This man is better than me...when can I be like that? You lose out on your focus, and the resolution turns into an ongoing game of snoozing the alarm instead.

But wait a minute. Haven't you made any progress? What about the one and a half kilograms you managed to lose? Maybe you've done better than you think, and with a few bursts of passion, you might achieve your fit and fine goal. Peering over the fence through rose-tinted glasses, it's easy to think the grass is greener on the other side. It's just human nature.

Internal comparisons can be powerful tools for growth as they help you get better than your past self. But if you find yourself in an external comparison spiral, competing with your peers, then it is time for you to reassess.

Honestly, writing about this topic of comparison was quite a challenge for me. It wasn't until I realized that I was on the flowery, greener side and found out many folks used my leadership style as a yardstick to measure other leaders



By focusing on your progress instead of comparing yourself to others, you can find your culinary voice

I felt the need to address this issue. Now, if my leadership approach inspires you, that's a win-win! Just like chefs can share plating ideas, we can learn from each other. It is like borrowing a cup of sugar, but if you start measuring your self-worth against others, it is a disaster.

Growing up, many of us experienced the daunting specter of comparison. From an early age, I was often compared

to my peers. My parents would tout how my neighbor's child had started walking and talking at a younger age or how other kids excelled in school. Meanwhile, I was a tough kid, trying to redefine my academic achievements after failing both grade 9 and grade 12 (psst... and look at me now, penning this literary masterpiece). Whether it was our parents comparing us to other children or the societal benchmarks we encountered, I began to internalize the belief that my worth was tied to how I measured up against others. These comparisons often shaped our self-perception and communication styles.

Then came my teen years and college, where I encountered the big bad wolf of comparison, not from textbooks but from people. It taught me that it's easy to forget that every individual has a certain set of abilities shaped by various life experiences, education systems, and cultural influences. In many societies, certain nationalities are stereotypically associated with specific skills. For instance, we often hear that French cuisine is better than many other cuisines or that Swiss craftsmanship is unmatched.

For me, the Japanese are the perfect example of discipline, training, education, respect, and seniority all wrapped in a positive attitude. Comparisons are not just personal; cultural narratives also influence them.

When we compare ourselves to others, we tend to focus solely on outcomes. Who speaks better, who earns more, or who gets promoted first... Yet, these comparisons miss the forest for the trees as it overlooks other factors like



education, upbringing that contribute to one's success. Each of us has been taught different things since childhood, and these lessons shape our competencies in profound ways.

**Young Chefs in this industry must learn that your journey and growth cannot be measured against others.**

Surely, there must be pressure to keep up with the others in this industry, but with a little understanding and faith in yourself, you can never lose your authentic voice.

**Unique Talents:** Like any recipe, every spice has its importance in making it all cohesive; we all have distinct skills and quirks. Don't fear someone else's strengths. Rather, learn from them.

**Learning Culture:** Why compete when we can collaborate? Encourage your chefs for growth and development.

Don't tell them why the person is better than you, but rather make them work together. Life is too short to be in constant competition.

**Diversity and Growth:** Embracing cultural diversity enriches the culinary experience and promotes personal and professional growth. Indian, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, and Peruvian- we want to learn all the cuisine, and it's great for our customers, too!

**Building Resilience:** Cultivating confidence, discipline, and resilience helps individuals resist the urge to compare themselves to others.

By exploring new skills and continuously seeking self-improvement, individuals can expand their horizons beyond just mastering cooking techniques. Think self-development, people management, and cultural understanding; you need them all for your development.

I am sure you must have heard it a billion times not to compare yourself and learn from others. And I understand when those pesky feelings of insecurity creep in that urge your inner philosopher with thoughts like "Why is that person better than me?" or "I wish I had their luck!" all this advice would wash away.

So, let's do a little mental gymnastics instead. Next time when you want to crumple the comparison paper, try out simple phrases like "I want to learn" and "Can you help me?" and see the number of doors that would open to valuable knowledge exchange and skill enhancement.

Don't be a duck, quacking endlessly about the issues while comparing yourself to others. Instead, be an eagle soaring majestically above the pessimism. You see when you glide through life like an eagle in a storm, you are just focused on yourself, and you won't even realize you are soaring to new heights. ■

# Rising Costs, Rising Creativity

What's driving food prices up? Chef **Carl Shi** shares insights on and how to stay ahead amidst rising inflation

## Why Food Costs Are Skyrocketing

The hospitality industry is facing a challenge that's impossible to ignore: food prices are climbing higher than ever before. For restaurants, hotels, and catering businesses, this is not just a minor inconvenience—it is a game-changer. However, why is this happening? The answer is not simple. It is a mix of economic forces, political tensions, environmental changes, and social shifts, all coming together to create what feels like the perfect storm.

Firstly, the rise in food prices **can be explained by the basic principles of supply and demand**. When there is less of something—like wheat, vegetables, or meat—but people still want it, prices go up. Several factors are driving this imbalance. On the supply side, disruptions in farming due to climate change, labor shortages, and rising production costs have reduced the availability of key ingredients. On the demand side, a growing global population and changing consumer preferences, such as the increased appetite for organic and specialty foods, have intensified competition for limited resources. Together, these forces are creating a squeeze that's driving prices higher.

This is exactly what is happening now. Supply chain disruptions, many of which started during the COVID-19 pandemic, have made it harder to get food from farms to tables. Ports have been clogged, shipping containers are in short supply, and transportation costs have soared. All of this has reduced the availability of food, pushing prices higher.



## Chit-Chat with Chef Carl

However, there is more to it than just supply and demand. Economists also talk about something called **cost-push inflation**. This happens when the cost of producing goods—like food—goes up, and those costs are passed on to consumers. Think about the rising prices of fertilizers, fuel, and packaging materials. Farmers and food producers cannot absorb all those extra costs, so they increase their prices. Moreover, because the global food market is so interconnected, a problem in one part of the world can quickly affect prices everywhere. For example, if a drought hits a major rice-producing country, the ripple effects can be felt **in grocery stores and restaurants around the globe**.

Of course, economics is just one piece of the puzzle. Climate change is another major factor, and it is hitting agriculture

hard. Unpredictable weather patterns, extreme heat, and natural disasters are making it harder for farmers to grow crops and raise livestock. Take droughts, for instance. They have been devastating wheat fields in Europe and corn farms in the U.S., leading to smaller harvests and higher prices. Floods, on the other hand, have wiped out crops in parts of Asia, further straining global food supplies. Scientists have been warning us for years that climate change would disrupt food production, and now we are seeing it happen in real time.

**This phenomenon can also be understood through the lens of the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC).** The EKC suggests that environmental degradation, such as the effects of climate change, tends to worsen in the early stages of economic development but can improve as countries become wealthier and adopt advanced technologies (Moser, 2010). In less developed regions, where agriculture heavily depends on natural resources and traditional methods, the impact of climate change is particularly severe. These areas often lack the infrastructure and resources to adapt to extreme weather events, leading to reduced crop yields and higher food prices. Conversely, more developed economies may have access to innovations like drought-resistant crops and precision farming, which can mitigate some of these challenges. However, the interconnectedness of global food markets means that climate-related disruptions in one region can still ripple across the world, affecting food prices everywhere.



Then, there is the political side of the equation. Geopolitical tensions are making a bad situation worse (IMF, 2022). The war in Ukraine is a prime example. Ukraine and Russia are two of the world's biggest exporters of wheat and sunflower oil, but the conflict has disrupted their ability to supply these essential goods. Ports have been blocked, fields have been destroyed, and trade routes have been cut off. **As a result, there is a global shortage of key ingredients, which** has driven up prices everywhere. Moreover, it is not just wars—trade restrictions and protectionist policies, such as tariffs, in other countries have also made it harder to move food across borders, adding to the problem.

Energy costs are another big driver of rising food prices. Think about how much energy it takes to grow, process, and transport food. Tractors and trucks need fuel, and factories need electricity. When energy prices go up, so does the cost of food. Over the past couple of years, oil and gas prices have been on a rollercoaster, driven by everything from supply chain issues to geopolitical instability (World Bank 2013). Moreover, every time energy costs spike, it is felt in the price of everything from a loaf of bread to a steak dinner.

Labor shortages are yet another piece of this complex puzzle. During the pandemic, many workers in the agricultural and food industries left their jobs, whether due to illness, quarantine, or a desire for better working conditions. Even as the world has started to recover, these industries are struggling to bring workers back. Without enough hands to plant, harvest, process, and transport food, productivity has taken a hit. Moreover, when less food is produced, prices naturally go up. For example, in countries like the U.K. and Australia,



The hospitality industry is facing a challenge that's impossible to ignore: food prices are climbing higher than ever before

a lack of seasonal farmworkers has left crops rotting in fields, further straining supply chains (USDA, 2024; Immigration Forum, 2022).

Finally, we cannot ignore the social factors at play. Consumer preferences are shifting, and that is having an impact on prices, too. More people are

demanding organic, locally sourced, and sustainably produced food (McKinsey, 2023). While these options are great for the environment and local economies, they are often more expensive to produce. At the same time, urbanization is driving up demand for processed and convenience foods, which also tend to cost more. These changing habits are reshaping the food market, adding yet another layer of complexity to the issue.

So, what does all of this mean for the hospitality industry? Rising food costs are not going away anytime soon. For chefs, restaurant owners, and food service managers, this is a wake-up call. They will need to get creative—rethinking menus, sourcing ingredients differently, and finding ways to cut costs without sacrificing quality. It is a tough challenge, but it is also an opportunity to innovate and adapt. ■

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# Photo-Ready Burgers

Food stylist **Henriette** spills the beans on how to make your burger picture-perfect

## How Do You Style a Burger to Make It Look Tall, Juicy, and Irresistible in Photos?

When I used to teach food styling, a burger was always the first dish on the agenda. Teaching how to style a burger immediately introduces 10–12 essential tips and tricks for food styling. A burger can be both challenging and rewarding to style. While many people have seen viral videos showing how producers fake the look of a burger or use artificial ingredients, I have always preferred using real ones—just making sure they are the best versions of themselves.

### The Bun

First, we need to select the best-looking bun, free of wrinkles, damage, or discoloration. This step might take time, as some buns may taste amazing but aren't very photogenic. Don't skip this crucial step! The top and bottom buns don't have to come from the same piece as long as they have the desired width, are proportional, and match in color.

### The Patty

The patty should be slightly larger than the bun and should have clean, well-defined edges. For smashed burgers, the edges often appear uneven and full of holes, which can look unappealing in photos. To avoid this, you can either:

- Use two patties and press them down with less force during cooking to retain a rustic but intact look.
- Shape or trim the edges of a frozen or fresh patty to achieve the perfect size and thickness.



The patties should be cooked just enough to hold their shape when moved onto the bun. Later, I enhance their appearance with a custom food coloring mixture to achieve the desired light or dark sear marks.

If the client requests grill marks, you can create them with a griddle, heated skewers, or an electric charcoal starter.

### The Vegetables

The vegetables must be fresh and vibrant:

- Lettuce and herbs should be green, not yellow.

- Tomatoes should be bright red, not orange.
- Onions should be deep purple, not faded or gradient.

For added freshness, mist the herbs and lettuce with a spray bottle of water just before shooting.

### The Sauce

The sauce is applied last, typically when the burger is already on set, so we can control exactly where it goes. The sauce should be thick enough to hold its shape but not so dense that it looks heavy or clumpy. Adjust the color with food coloring if necessary. Different brands of ketchup or BBQ sauce can vary in consistency and shade, so it's worth experimenting to find the perfect match.

### Building the Burger

To ensure the burger looks great in every shot, I work in layers and approve each step as I go. Fixing issues at the bottom is difficult once the top ingredients are in place, as they tend to shift.

To keep the burger stable and upright, I use tissues, makeup pads, or toothpicks at the back to support it and prevent it from leaning.

Let me walk you through how I styled the black bun burger for Catch22's "Gone Black" campaign. I started by slicing the bun, but instead of using just one, I chose the top and bottom pieces from two different buns. This way, the bottom bun was thick enough to hold the weight of the towering ingredients. To make sure everything stayed in place,



I added a discreet carton board at the base for extra support.

Next, I worked on the lettuce, carefully folding it and securing it with toothpicks to give it a neat, full look. I handpicked the best-looking patty and used a heat gun to keep it warm and juicy. Since the restaurant doesn't use griddle grills, I didn't need to add grill marks, which saved me some time. I melted the cheese in hot water and placed it on the patty exactly how I'd envisioned it—soft and perfectly draped.

To keep the patty from tipping backward, I supported it with makeup pads at the back, hidden just out of



A burger can be both challenging and rewarding to style

view. Then came the fun part—layering the pulled beef and coleslaw carefully to create texture and color. I added onion rings and fried cheese on top, making sure everything was perfectly aligned.

Finally, I placed the top bun gently over the stack, checking the balance from the

angle we shot from. For the finishing touches, I filled three squeeze bottles with sauces, ready to drizzle them precisely where needed. Before the shot, I brushed a bit of oil onto the patty to give it that irresistible shine.

This shoot was a collaboration between me, Raj Satyani as the photographer, and Akram Karawan, Art Director for Catch22 restaurant. It was amazing to see how all the little details came together to make the "Gone Black" burger look absolutely mouthwatering using black backgrounds, which further emphasized the black bun and matched the photography guidelines of Catch 22. ■



# Elixir Of Life (Part II)

Chef **Vivek Huria** writes about foods that can help us live our best lives



A balanced diet rich in whole foods can support healthy aging by reducing inflammation and oxidative stress

Welcome back, food enthusiasts! Here we are on part two of our journey exploring the world of foods for longevity. You know the saying, "You are what you eat," which becomes ever more important to understand when it comes to aging gracefully. Multiple studies suggest that a balanced diet rich in whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and micronutrients, can support healthy aging by reducing inflammation and oxidative stress.

Interestingly, if we peek into the lives of centenarians in Bluezone, we see that they embrace a diverse and nutrient-dense diet challenging 'superfoods' alone lead to optimal health (Buettner, 2020), (Roundtable on Population Health Improvement et al., 2015).

So grab your forks, and let us dig in!

**Nuts:** These are a source of healthy unsaturated fats, fiber, micronutrients, and antioxidants. Certain bioactive compounds found in nuts, including tocopherols, phytosterols, folic acid, selenium, and magnesium, are believed to possess antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and anticarcinogenic properties (Segura, Javierre, Lizarraga, & Ros, 2006).

**Mushrooms:** The ancient Greeks believed they provided strength to warriors in battle, while the Romans referred to them as the Food of the Gods (Valverde, Hernández-Pérez, & Paredes-López, 2015). They contain antioxidants like ergothioneine and glutathione, which protect cells, combat oxidative damage, and help regulate inflammation and immune function (Kozarski, Klaus, & Jakovljevic et al., 2015).

**Berries:** The polyphenol antioxidants

found in berries are linked to reduced inflammation, lower oxidative stress, and improved insulin resistance, which can help prevent diabetes (Meccariello & D'Angelo, 2021). These compounds may also protect against cancer, neurodegenerative diseases, cardiovascular issues, and metabolic syndrome. Diets of Bluezones have also focused on polyphenolic foods, which prove their effectiveness in reducing aging.

**Avocado:** Once not understood in public knowledge due to its appearance and referred to as alligator pear, Avocados today have become a buzzword on social media platforms for their health benefits. Even a small amount of avocado can be beneficial; studies indicate that swapping half a serving of butter, margarine, eggs, yogurt, processed meats, or cheese for avocado can reduce cardiovascular disease risk by up to 16 to 22% (Pacheco, Li, Rimm, Manson, et al., 2022).

**Seaweed:** It is a common ingredient in Japanese cuisine, and it is rich in antioxidants, dietary fibers, essential amino acids, vitamins, phytochemicals, polyunsaturated fatty acids, and minerals. Varieties of seaweed contain bioactive compounds like fucoidans, which research suggests may help counter cellular senescence, a key aging process (Cao, Lee, Lim, & Kim, 2020).

**Honey:** It has been a vital ingredient for healing inside out. It is not only used for wound healing burns but also acts as a cure for ulcers (Al-Waili, Salom, & Al-Ghamdi, 2011). Due to its therapeutic properties, it has been suggested that honey can be an antibacterial agent or wound healer. The therapeutic effects of honey exhibit immunomodulatory, estrogenic regulatory, antimutagenic, anticancer, and other honey, as



conventional therapy may serve as a novel antioxidant to mitigate diseases associated with oxidative stress (Ahmed, Sulaiman, Baig, et al., 2018).

However, further well-designed

experimental studies and clinical trials are necessary to fully explore and confirm garlic's potential as a cancer treatment.

As we continue our journey through the realm of longevity foods, we will

uncover even more treasures that can help us live our best lives.

Stay tuned to learn more about wholesome nutrition because every bite counts for a longer, healthier life! ■

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I took a detour to the sea in 2013, spent a year traveling over 17 countries and cooking for a crew of 24



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# A Dreamer's Hands in the Restaurant World

A hardscrabble beginning and obstacles at every turn. The biggest takeaway from Chef **Chamidu**'s life is that perseverance can lead dreamers to sweet success

When someone mentions dreams, Aerosmith's classic hit, René Descartes's argument about living in a simulated world, Martin Luther King Jr. and his symbolic speech, and many other pioneers who have pushed the world for the better through their aspirations will spring to mind. Another interesting addition to the list could be Chef Chamidu Nishara Ranasinghe, whose professional journey sets him apart from the crowd. Unlike many chefs who follow the conventional hotel route, his background solely lies in restaurants.

Six months ago, he became part of Amelia Restaurant and Lounge, known for its fusion of Nikkei cuisine and Mediterranean flavors, as Jr. Sous Chef. Ever since he has burst into action and upgraded his career.

As you might guess, he is cutting the mustard by working with a diverse team that connects him with different cultures, deepening his understanding of Peruvian-Japanese cuisine.

"I work with a team in the pastry section, along with two commis, preparing Peruvian and Japanese cuisine and desserts. We offer an à la carte service, around 350 to 400 covers. Preparation is often done a few hours in advance so we can keep up with the rush. Once service begins, we are non-stop busy for hours."

His desserts are refreshingly refined and innovative. "Combining Peruvian



Combining Peruvian and Japanese elements and all the rawness is quite challenging. The key was to find a balance

and Japanese elements, balancing the rawness is quite challenging. The key was to find a balance. Say, if we have tiramisu, it will have lucuma paste, blue chili caramel, finger biscuits soaked in sugar and coffee syrup, and elements that are a bit out of the ordinary."

A native of Sri Lanka, he grew up in an unassuming town, surrounded by the close-knit family of his caring mother, younger sister, and businessman father. At that moment, his dreams of becoming a chef were far from his thoughts; instead, acting stirred his heart.

Unfortunately, his life, which had been full of his parents' guidance, turned upside down when tragedy struck, and he lost his father at the age of 16. As the eldest son, young Chamidu had no choice but to shoulder the responsibility of supporting his family. However, his mother's disapproval of his acting career left him in a quandary.

Ready to face the music of life, he started working at a restaurant in Colombo.

"It was a central kitchen that serviced only one large outlet. My role was in the bakery section dealing with cleaning dry items and assisting with bakery production during the night shift."

With time on his hands, he decided to acquire a certification to grow. His request for time off to attend hotel school, however, was denied by his busy restaurant, leading him to change jobs. "I took the role of a waiter in a small restaurant while pursuing studies on weekends," he shares.

The completion of a two-year Pastry Bakery Course introduced him to various restaurants. When a chance to earn more and travel came along, he became a Second Cook on the M/V Stadt Solingen Shipping Line. "I took a detour

to the sea in 2013, spent a year traveling over 17 countries and cooking for a crew of 24." The smooth sailing of lessons ended a year later. However, with limited vacancies back on shore, he took a job as a security guard until a doorway to international experience opened.

He was poised for another roller coaster in Dubai. To come in from those difficult years to a new place was all too adventurous and stirring for him. Upon arrival, he faced a language barrier, a fraudulent job situation, and lost some



Don't give up on your dreams, or your dreams will give up on you

money. Nevertheless, he put in 10 to 12 hours at a shawarma shop, dishing out his relentless effort as a helper in the hot kitchen. After finishing his shift

each day, he would hit the pavement with his CVs in hand. One day, a friend suggested he drop off his CV at Mister Baker. Fortuitously, he received a call from their office.

Dressed casually, he showed up thinking it was a brief meeting since they'd earlier misplaced his CV. "Just then, Chef Indika approached and joked, "Have you been looking for a job in casuals," he laughs, recalling it.

Next thing he knew, Chef Indika handed him an apron and cap to bake a cake. While the creation received compliments, it wasn't quite up to Dubai standards. Luckily, his baking skills did the trick. To him, the place felt like a university, one of the best opportunities where his skills went full throttle.

He moved to Abu Dhabi a year later to work at a Palace. There, the head pastry chef, Prasanna Peries, became like a quasi-father to him, always offering advice and support when he needed it most. "I learned a lot about both my field and life from him. I was the first commis, but each day, he assigned me the task of making a cake. For example, if I made red velvet today, I couldn't serve it again for 15 days."

During this stint, the tide of learning began to turn. The challenge fine-tuned his pastry skills and know-how of minimal garnishes and healthier options. Shortly thereafter, he built his experience across different restaurants, including BOA Steakhouse and Sola Cafe & Restaurant, progressing through the ranks to Demi Chef de Partie.

Riding on hope, in 2023, he applied for a job at Krasota and immersed himself in the world of lights, haute cuisine, audiovisual technology, and storytelling. "The entire stint was on another level because we serve only 20 guests a day, and we have to deliver top-notch quality," he says, noting that during the two hours of dining experience, the team putting in the hard yards in the



back of the house for six to seven hours to serve the best. His work ethic caught the eye of one of the recruiters, leading to his current job.

A competitor at heart, he hasn't forgotten when he first held his medal. "Back then, I loved making showpieces, but I didn't have the opportunity to enter competitions. I remember watching Chef Jagoda making these amazing pieces and one day, I finally reached out to him for guidance. He gave me buckets of fondant to practice and asked me to win the medal. That was my first step into the competition world, and I ended up winning a bronze medal at the Expo in 2020 for the showpiece," he recalls. From then on, he has won over nine medals, including six silvers and three bronzes.

Ahead of the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition, he is pursuing the elusive challenge of creating a dish that appears simple on the surface but peels away into complex layers beneath. "It looks simple, but it's not. It has a big effect, and bringing this plate together requires skill. I've learned many flavors, small elements, and techniques from senior chefs who have always pushed me to learn something new."

Years later, Chef Chamidu's life has entered a joyful phase. Back home, his little sister is now married and settled into her own life. Meanwhile, he has also found happiness. His wife, a supportive partner, encourages his artistry by choosing recipes that push his cooking to new levels.

He is no longer the reserved lad from Sri Lanka. At present, he is a senior member of the Emirates Culinary Guild, where he connects with talented chefs and mentors. He is a member of the Sri Lankans Hospitality Professionals Association, actively participating in culinary workshops, and is grateful for the opportunities provided by the chef community. Pouring forth his plans, he confides that one day, he wants



One can emerge stronger from being broken every time life throws curveballs, enduring it all. It is fable and heroic

to participate in the IKA Culinary Olympics. "I have to be there, without a doubt," he affirms.

He says he is extremely thankful to a number of chefs who have helped him in Dubai. The names roll off his tongue,

and his eyes shine with gratitude, "Thank you to Andy Cuthbert, Chef Jagoda, Chef Dilantha, Chef Dammika, Chef Sanka, and Chef Indika. I also want to thank my mother, who taught me the artistic side of drawing; without her, I wouldn't be who I am today."

Here, we have a chef who confronted the darkness of personal loss, took the path he was meant to walk, and dreams of making his mark in the culinary world. He never factored in coming to Dubai and learning from esteemed chefs. One can emerge stronger from being broken every time life throws curveballs, enduring it all. It is fable and heroic. Here's to all the dreamers out there; let these words from the legendary John Wooden ring out, 'Don't give up on your dreams, or your dreams will give up on you.'





## Passion Yuzu Cheesecake, Chocolate Cherry Mousse With Yogurt Ice Cream

### Passion Yuzu Cheesecake

Arla Pro Cream Cheese 34%	165g
Icing Sugar	36g
Cream	60g
Passion Purée	45g
Yuzu Purée	5g
Gelatin	7g

### Method

- ◆ Dissolve a small amount of gelatin powder in warm water and set it aside to cool.
- ◆ Mix the Filling: Beat the cream cheese with sugar until smooth. Add passion fruit purée and yuzu juice, then mix well.
- ◆ Whip the heavy cream until soft peaks form, then fold it into the cream cheese mixture.
- ◆ Add Gelatin: Stir in the dissolved gelatin to the mixture.

- ◆ Pour the mixture into a mold and refrigerate for several hours until it sets.
- ◆ Once set, remove from the mold and serve chilled.

### Chocolate Cherry Mousse

#### ◆ Cherry Confit

Fresh Cherry	75g
Sugar	25g
Lemon Juice	8g
Water	20g

#### ◆ Chocolate Mousse

Arla Pro High Stability Cream 35%	150g
Dark Chocolate 70%	100g
Sugar	10g
Vanilla	5g
Gelatin	5g

### Method

- ◆ **Make Cherry Confit:** Simmer pitted cherries with sugar, lemon juice, and water until thickened. Cool.
- ◆ **Prepare Mousse:** Melt dark chocolate and let it cool. Whip heavy cream with sugar until soft peaks form. Fold the melted

chocolate into the whipped cream. Add whisked egg yolks and, if using, dissolved gelatin. Spoon the mousse into cups and refrigerate for 2-3 hours.

- ◆ **Serve:** Top with cherry confit and fresh cherries, then serve chilled.

### Yogurt Ice Cream

Greek Yogurt	100g
Arla Pro High Stability Cream 35%	50g
Sugar	38g
Arla Pro Butter	15g
Milk	12g
Vanilla Pod	0.5g
Salt	1g

### Method

- ◆ Melt butter with the vanilla bean seeds in a small pot, then let it cool.
- ◆ Mix yogurt and sugar in a bowl.
- ◆ Whip the cream in another bowl until soft peaks form. Fold the whipped cream and butter-vanilla mixture into the yogurt.
- ◆ Add milk.
- ◆ Freeze in an ice cream maker.



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## The Guild Meet

Mr. Sethu Menon, SVP of Operations for the Venue Management & Business Support Department at Dubai World Trade Centre, and his team warmly welcomed ECG members for the January 2025 Guild Monthly Chefs Meeting. Hosting the event, he proudly highlighted DWTC's achievements over the years with Andy Cuthbert, President of Worldchefs Societies



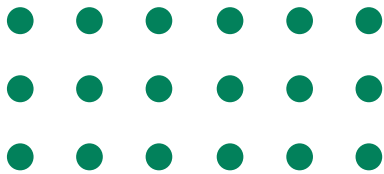




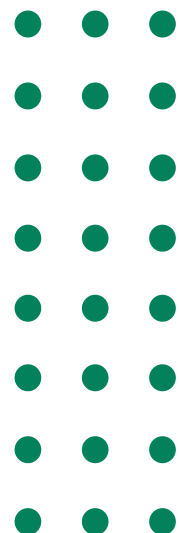


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# THE EMIRATES CULINARY GUILD APPLICATION FORM

Date of Application: .....

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

Type of Membership: (please tick)	
<b>SENIOR:</b> (Above the rank of chef de partie/ senior chef de partie on executive chef's recommendation).	<b>AED350 joining fee/ AED150 renewal fee</b> Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar
<b>MEMBER:</b> (Below the rank of chef de partie 29 years old and over).	<b>AED150 joining fee/AED75 renewal fee</b> Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar
<b>YOUNG MEMBER:</b> (under 28 years)	<b>Free</b> 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





*Dinner Bell  
Cheese*



*Gustodoro  
Tomatoes*

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  /EmiratesSnackFoods  
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# newmembers



Kerem Üner, Sales and Marketing Director of KAPP, received the membership certificate from Alan Orreal, President of the ECG, and Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG

As "KAPP", we proudly present our own production of professional kitchen equipment to HoReCa sector both in domestic and export markets. Constantly following the pulse of the industry in cooperation with the world's leading chefs, KAPP has achieved its well-deserved international reputation over the years. In its state-of-the-art production facilities of 25,000 m<sup>2</sup> in Izmir where it combines latest technologies with qualified manpower, KAPP manufactures world standard products to fulfill needs of its esteemed partners around the globe.

47 Years of Manufacturing Experience



KAPP, which has been manufacturing and distributing countertop professional cookware and equipment used in industrial kitchens since 1977. KAPP is today one of the leading companies in the sector with its exports its products to more than 70 countries around the world with its distinguished partners.

KAPP constantly enriches its product range. KAPP started serving the industry with only stainless-steel cookers. With the help of extensive R&D studies carried out in line with the renewed needs of the sector, KAPP proudly added the production of preparation, pastry, serving, open buffet, carrying, storage and dishwashing products to its portfolio. Thanks to its wide product range, KAPP is ready to serve all kitchens from artisan restaurants to 5-star hotels. KAPP is and always will be fully committed to developing its technologies to have an extensive product portfolio that will fully meet the needs of its valuable partners. ■



Anuraj Kr, Sales Manager of FSEP, received the membership certificate from Alan Orreal, President of the ECG

**FSEP** is a leading Dubai-based kitchen equipment provider. Our industry experts have bridged the gap for professional kitchens, providing them with world-class equipment that changes the way new-age culinary spaces function.

We mainly focus on quality brands to represent, as our existing brands range we are dealing with green and sustainable solution providers and we are in discussion with others brands in different product ranges having the similar core values.

Our Managing Director Mr. Sha Moin Nawaz previously employed with Rieber



GmbH for with impeccable experience of 8 years as a Sales Manager overseeing the Middle East and India regions, he have likely honed a strong set of skills in sales, customer satisfaction, and market-specific strategies.

With over 20 years of experience in the foodservice industry, he has developed expertise in culinary arts, kitchen management, and staff leadership.

Our product range includes everything from food prep equipment to advanced cooking machinery, designed to streamline operations and elevate kitchen efficiency. As a trusted partner, FSEP is committed to delivering exceptional products that meet the highest industry standards, ensuring our clients can achieve excellence in every meal.

Our team of experienced professionals is dedicated to offering expert guidance and support, ensuring the right equipment for your unique needs. Whether you're upgrading your kitchen or starting a new venture, FSEP is your reliable partner for all kitchen equipment solutions. ■



# 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 .....

As Gulfood is nearly upon us we should expect to see exciting global trends coming to our region and this month let's talk about a few trends that are about to hit our region and shake up the culinary world. The first is **SEA VEGETABLES** better known as **SEAWEED**. I am not talking about Nori, this is more like sea grapes from the Philippines; Kelp( car-y-Mor) from Wales, duckweed, and sea moss, in fact over 10,000 species. This year has already begun with Kelp ketchup, sea moss gummies, sea moss mango, and passion juice. Seaweed panna cottas and even sea salad fudge ice cream. Loaded with goodies such as iodine, fiber, omega-3 fatty acids, a multitude of nutrients, and antioxidants. Have you tried adding it to stews or rice dishes as it will drive the Umami flavors? It's a natural ingredient that's hitting



**Chef Simon says...**

taste buds and setting trends. Are we going to see Kelp and Chicken Hareesa? Or even sea moss Dubai chocolate after all if salted pretzel works, Why Not!!!!

Last year, we saw that gourmet sandwich appeared before us a few times but now it's been pimped, hyped, and elaborated to **SUPERCARGED SANDWICHES**. Chopped sandwiches have been trending on Tik Tok for a while and this is the evolution. Supercarged Egg Sando, Tender Juicy Hot Dogs with Fluff Marshmallow Spread...yummy, now I'm getting excited. What would you say to an **INSTANT RAMEN PO-BOY PRAWN SANDO** or **HOT NASHVILLE CHICKEN, VANILLA GELATO AND SPICED HONEY BAGUETTE**... the mere thought of these makes me think what's in the fridge. No rules with this trend as anything goes! It will also be very Instagrammable.... just make it bigger, better, and bite worthy...

Have you ever thought of what sweet looks like when it turns savory? Well, it's

the next big trend here. Nachos cheese and jalapeno **Om Ali**, creamy cheese, and cranberry chutney **s'mores**. Furdake and ginger ice cream, **turkey bacon cheesecake**, even jalapeno popper corn cupcakes, and potato chip cookies. I know it sounds a bit far-fetched, a bit Willy Wonker... We want these trends to spark conversation in our clients. What will be next? Will savoury turn to sweet? Salted caramel aubergines or even sugar-cured lamb ribs with sweet pistachio sauce!! However, this trend is geared toward disruptive innovation. It is helping gain a new footfall of customers with inquisitive minds and willingness to try something new, in other words, **FOODIE THRILL SEEKERS**.

This month, I have had the good fortune to try some amazing foods, including one of my all-time favorites HAGGIS. What's your all-time favorite? Could you pimp it up with a trend? But let's remember it's the Chefs, cooks, and baristas who are the real heroes of food trends and drive these through culinary thought leadership ...

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

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



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**CHEF  
OF THE  
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