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JUNE - JULY 2023

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gourmet

volume 18, issue 6

The Salon Slalom 2023

Chef **Nuwan Senavirathna** races to big win

AT HEIGHTS, YET GROUNDED

Chef **Eka** on his ascent to one of the world's highest restaurant, At.mosphere



SELF MADE

Chef **Kriti** on leading all-female team and her take on banoffee



THE KITCHEN KNIGHT

Chef **Maurice Kazma** explains why money isn't everything when it comes to your job





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Dear fellow chefs, ladies, and gentlemen,

Welcome to the June/July issue of Gulf Gourmet. We had a hectic month of May with the Hotel Show and our Chefs Table Competition. A great team event that saw nine teams competing. Congratulations to all the teams on their super performances! Congratulations to Chef Diyan and the Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek team, who won the trophy. This was followed by Expo Culinaire and the International Salon Culinaire in Sharjah, which were both extremely successful over three days. Thank you to everyone who exhibited, competed, and supported the show with incredible dishes and showpieces at the Salon.

Congratulations to all the teams that competed in the Alen Thong Trophy, supported by Rajan and his team from JM Foods. Alen would have been happy to see all the young chefs competing at such a high level. Thank you for your support! Don't miss out on the result and pictures in this issue, as well as in the next issue of your Gulf Gourmet.

We also need to give a big hand to all the competitors in the four different global competitions. Kudos to all the winners, and all the best for the final in October 2024 in Singapore at the World Chefs Congress. You have won in Sharjah to represent our region in the Middle East and Africa and will be up against the best in Singapore. Enjoy one year of training, and then all the best in the finals.

Please take the time to review our sponsor page with all our sponsors; the show would not have been possible without these great supporters. A big thank you to all the marshals, other supporters, the ECG Young Chef team,



the admin, and everyone who worked for the event's success. Thank you to all our partners. A hearty thank you also goes out to all the judges, led by Rick Stephen, the Head of the Competition and Culinary Committee of Worldchefs. Thank you, Chef.

Our next big event is the Hospitality Young Chef of the Year. The final will be held on June 20th. All the best to all the finalists. Please visit www.emiratesculinaryguild.net to browse through previous issues of this magazine and to see the latest happenings on

the events calendar. And visit www.facebook.com/wacsyoungchefs for young chefs to be in contact with over 4000 chefs across the globe.

Do not miss to watch and subscribe in our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/c/TheEmiratesCulinaryGuild>

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

Thank you to Chef Ramola Bijendra and the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel Team, who hosted our May meeting.

Culinary Regards,
Uwe Micheel
President, Emirates Culinary Guild



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chairman'snote

email editor@gulfgourmet.org

Summer is upon us in the Gulf, and as many people prepare for their upcoming vacations, it gives us time to reflect on a so far successful year for the industry. The Emirates Salon Culinaire, which took place in the last week of May, shows us that there is a passion for learning amongst our young culinarians, and it also made it even more evident that there is a need for solid skills training.

The industry must take a united stance on approaching this need for training in the fundamentals and the basics, and collaboration needs to be considered by a cross-section of the industry. In conversation with the senior leadership of a global food service company, it was inspiring to learn that investing in people is a top priority for them and that improving skills is necessary across all sectors to drive better business outcomes.

In the UAE, COP28 will roll into town for three weeks at the end of the year, and the ever-increasing focus on sustainability is at a fever pitch currently. Are we scrambling to be ready? Are we, as an industry, putting suitable measures, training, and awareness in place and equipping our people to be ready? We will discuss these issues in the coming issues as they gain the limelight, and so much needs to be done.

Over the past month, we have seen the latest round of top awards go to the restaurant industry, and it is so

welcoming to see homegrown restaurant concepts leading the awards and local produce being highlighted among the awardees this time. This is an area that we can all focus on in our region to make better use of what is in our own backyard.

Not only does it support local businesses and farmers, but it also promotes sustainability and reduces the food industry's carbon footprint.

Then, among the major highlights in this issue is the list of the winners from the recent ExpoCulinaire, which was a great success. I want to express my gratitude to everyone who participated and for the event's excellent organization.

"Money is not everything; you need to enjoy your job and have a good work environment, and this truly brings satisfaction." Experience the real meaning of this quote by Chef Maurice Kazma in his story of making positive connections and nurturing his passion for food, which enabled him to succeed for more than three impressive decades in the industry.

Food and community go hand in hand. In the end, it all comes down to bringing people together. Please turn to page 14 to learn this through the lens of Chef Badya's recent experience at the Salon Culinaire and her visit to Syria after the devastating earthquake.

The issue contains interviews and personal accounts of seasoned chefs who,



although having undergone different journeys, had one thing in common: they overcame prejudices and cultural barriers to make a mark for themselves. Whether running an all-girls team or cooking in the kitchen of one of the highest restaurants in the world, readers can dive in to learn how the formidable chefs connect over their shared passions for good food, travel, and cultures.

On a lighter note, we have news from the most recent events, The Hotel Show and FHAM Global, and the most current market trends, as revealed by Chef Simon Martin. This month has been all about interacting with others, exchanging thoughts, and reflecting on who we are.

As the summer draws near, I wish the readers to connect with others and nurture their passion for cooking. Our next edition will be released in September. Have a great summer, and enjoy this delectable issue!

Andy Cuthbert
Chairman and Editor



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newsbites

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Chefs from ECG bags medals at FHAM 2023

Chefs from the Emirates Culinary Guild displayed their culinary prowess at the Food & Hospitality Asia Maldives Global Culinary Challenge 2023, winning a total of seven medals. The competition, which is the only Global Culinary Challenge in the South Asian region, is a mega event where more than 600 chefs from several resorts in the Maldives compete alongside national teams from all over the world.

An esteemed panel of skilled judges presided over the exhibition and culinary competition, which took place from May 8–10, 2023, at Central Park in Hulhumalé.

Around 21 categories were featured, including pastry, seafood, and creative fusion rice dishes. With contestants showing their distinctive styles, the competition was a spectacle of the various culinary talents and cultural

influences tying together to showcase the international food scene. The event also featured workshops from industry experts and chefs for budding chefs.

Among its many highlights, chefs from the Emirates Culinary Guild demonstrated their mastery of cuisine. The team was managed and mentored by Chef Sanjeewa from Yas Hotels Group and consisted of three senior chefs from Radisson Blu Yas Island. Their relentless efforts paid off with the following awards at the competition:

Nishan Nayanakanth

(Senior Chef de Parties)

Class L11: Seafood, Hot Live Cooking — Top Gold

Class L13: Beef, Hot Live Cooking—Silver

Dilip Rajapaksha

(Pastry Chef)

Class S1: Petits Fours or Pralines

(Pastry)—Gold

Class L7: Dress the Cake (Pastry)—Silver

Dilip Rajapaksha and Ishara Mayanga

Class L: Team Event—Hot Live Cooking (3-course meal)—Gold

Ishara Mayanga

(Chef de Cuisine)

Class L13: Beef—Hot Live Cooking—Top Gold

Class L11: Seafood—Hot Live Cooking—Gold

This year's edition of FHAM Global attracted hundreds of chefs, giving them a chance to exhibit their skills and compete with fellow professional chefs. As the only WorldChefs Continental event in the region, it is supported by The Chef Guild of Lanka and The Chefs Guild of Maldives.



JILL OF ALL TRADES

Chef **Badya Salam Khaireddin** weighs in on her recent experience at the Expo Culinaire and her role at CIC

If you have recently visited the Expo Culinaire, chances are you have attended Chef Badya Salam Khaireddin's exhibit, where she represented the Chef International Center and conducted a session full of unique ideas, flavors, and aromas for chefs seeking inspiration.

As she presented three different workshops in the education and training section at the Expo, her interactive nature was well received among budding chefs and ladies alike. They eagerly participated, shared their works on the table, exchanged feedback, and attended it with curious faces to observe what she did. When you watch her give tips to cooking enthusiasts, you won't believe she started in this industry in recent years, taking the culinary landscape effortlessly by storm, not like rumbling thunder but with a calm and captivating presence.

And in case you didn't have a chance to catch up at her exhibit, you can pick her brain at the Chef International Center (CIC). The CIC, which opened its doors in 2014, is more than just an education center; it provides holistic services, from workshops to consultations for those working in the hospitality industry, "and all the secrets to making your food work," adds Chef Badya.

"It is different from other conventional cooking schools. Apart from offering courses in both Arabic and English, we customize the classes as per the current trends," explains Chef Badya. Be it new



Apart from offering courses in both Arabic and English, we customize the classes as per the current trends

topics that reflect current trends, such as sustainability or tailoring programs to the demands of the clients, with years of experience from expert chefs, they can develop courses that provide a unique experience for the students.

Given the challenges posed by the ever-evolving market in the UAE, which requires one to devise strategies that make them stand out in the crowd, she says that their main goal is to work with people as per the needs of the end consumer. "And it gets simpler as we may customize courses and services more quickly as per modern trends without navigating several hierarchies and losing out on the most recent developments. Even for consultancy services, we can swiftly discuss with the customer to make decisions and implement the plan."

While Chef Majed, founder and CEO at CIC, oversees consulting and deals with chefs from the hospitality industries and catering companies, Chef Badya looks after everything education and training,

along with taking care of projects with the Ministry of Education and Health.

As an eloquent communicator, she has her way with kids and mothers, making them feel at ease during the workshops. No doubt, this is also what makes her an efficient presenter on TV and radio and the author of two books.

However, it was a different moment in her life when her gift of connecting with others played a significant role. When the catastrophic earthquakes hit Syria, her benevolent nature prompted her to be a part of the survivors' healing.

"If you want to get better, just keep going and work for the nation," says Chef Badya as she describes a part of the emotional experience that the earthquake survivors went through when their entire lives were changed on an unfortunate day.

Recalling her visit, she says that as the world came to a standstill during the earthquake, she and Chef Majed began to look for ways to help them. Once Chef Majed and his team reached an agreement with the Red Crescent and Worldchefs without Borders to travel to Syria, Chef Badya started to think on her feet to find ways in which she could assist in the mission.

Although there were limited options for women, given the difficult living conditions and safety procedures at the tent where she was staying, she was willing to put herself on the line for her passion.



If you want to get better, just keep going and work for the nation

Traveling there, watching the rubble, taking in the sights of camps, and meeting mothers who lost their children and children who lost their friends, she recollects several stories from the affected sites, only to find one thing in common: hope for things to get better.

She was surprised to see several individuals contact the team to assist in their relief efforts. "We didn't ask them, but whenever they spotted someone cooking or strolling down the street, they inquired as to how they might be of assistance."

"Then there were some ladies who were supporting us in our mission, but they too were coping with their grief," she recalls, adding that they wanted to help the family members and children who were still alive. They accepted the situation and were trying to look towards the future."

When she started studying the location with her team and visited houses and hospitals to learn about the experiences at the grassroots level, they realized many were working together hand in hand and putting other needs before their own.

"In many hospitals that we visited, we asked the children and mothers if they needed anything or any form of support, and all they replied was 'nothing, thank you'. These words were very sensitive. Despite being in pain, they were trying to be strong."

As soon as the team started whipping up hot meals, admiring the preparation and food quality, some people approached them, saying the food was

at the five-star level and not just for camps. "This is what we wanted to do. We wanted to give them a five-star food experience. The same would have happened to anybody in a normal situation," she elaborates.

While the team can't minimize their problems, their support played a small part in the big mission that touched

their lives through food. "Years will pass before things return to normal. We shouldn't forget times like this with a report, a photo, or a donation. Our part as chefs is to keep talking about the white jacket that symbolizes standing in unity, and as fellow humans, we should support one another."

Beyond the dazzle of running day-to-day



errands, life is also about contributing to society. As a mother, leaving her family, pausing her work, and assisting in Syria—this experience, she says, has given a new meaning to her life. "Somehow, we all got lucky to be part of this humble cause, and hopefully, it makes a difference for the people, and we can use this experience to serve the community better."

JOURNEY WITH THE GUILD

Confessing about her recent experience at the Expo Culinaire, Chef Badya reveals the workshops she made were full of love and unique ideas. As always, she strived to include unexpected ingredients when crafting a dish, such as baby marrow in cookies or brownies. Even though these recipes may sound strange, Chef Badya ensured they came out delicious every time!

She learned this craft of combining unusual ingredients in her recipes on her protracted voyage. Chef Badya first arrived in Dubai in 2000 to be with the love of her life, Chef Majed Al Sabagh. Initially, she supported her family by working in sales and training. This was followed by participation in Chef Majed's consulting, teaching, and workshops for



We wanted to give them a five-star food experience. The same would have happened to anybody in a normal situation

children and families. Additionally, she completed a culinary program at Ajman University, where Chef Majed teaches today. As an accomplished chef with Worldchefs Academy certification, Chef Badya is now implementing courses while handling admin duties at the CIC. Her work has even been acknowledged by the UAE's authorities, who even awarded her the 10-year UAE Golden Visa reserved for people who add tremendous value to the country.

Meanwhile, her mentor and husband, Chef Majed, has amassed numerous titles, such as Master Chef certified by Worldchefs, F&B consultant to Sharjah Ladies Club, Founder and President

of the Syrian Culinary Guild, and Vice President of the Emirates Culinary Guild for Sharjah, Ajman, and Umm Al Quwain.

Chef Badya joined the Guild, possibly a few years ago, but she has the network to have an impact if there is a Guild project that needs to raise awareness over and above professional chefs. Her participation in the Expo demonstrated that she possesses skills not only in the kitchen but also in networking and promoting culinary endeavors. "Expo Culinaire by the ECG is one of the great expos in the world where, along with the competitions, you also have a platform for education and workshops."

A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD

For Chef Badya, her life has been about challenging herself that lets her break free from her comfort zone. Invigorated by the drive to discover her best self and the unwavering spirit to learn led her to participate and compete in three different classes at the Salon Culinaire. "I am so happy and proud to win three different medals (Gold for Syrian Three Plates of Kibbeh; Silver for Savory Creations, and Bronze for Potatoes USA-Dessert/Baked Creations) in the three different classes."

Her future plans include trademarking her pastry items: "Having my own business and building my trademark where I will present my specialty, including cookies and desserts..." Eventually, she is determined to build a brand that encapsulates her passion for baking while providing quality products to her customers.

A mother of three: Fares, Fajer, and Rashed; a caregiver; and a staunch supporter of her husband, she is a Jill of all trades and a master of kindness. The real driving force behind her hitting the bullseye every day comes in two ways. "I love what I do, and so it makes me stronger to push myself forward," says Chef Badya as she gives a soft gaze at Chef Majed, who is sitting next to her on the



sofa of their home. "And strength to face everything also comes from my husband, Chef Majed, who has supported me through thick and thin."

The former phrase came from her journey of taking chances and believing in her work, and the latter came from not only receiving support from her loved ones but also accepting it correctly.

It kind of doubles as the motto she prefers to pass on to aspiring chefs. "Do your job because you like it, not just for monetary gain. Give back to the community while learning from your experiences and growing as a person."

Living a simple life and spending quality

time with her family, she thanks her neighbors and friends for being her cheerleaders. "My husband and children understand my work as I juggle the responsibilities of handling workshops, preparing meals for them, and being with my family," she explains, adding that their trust in her puts more responsibility on her to be a good chef.

As a stress buster, cooking helps. She cooks for her family and neighbors if she is not cooking for herself. "I love my job. When I am happy, I cook; when I am stressed, I cook."

For Chef Badya, cooking is more than a profession. It is something that brings her endless happiness and contentment.



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The Guild Meet

The April guild meeting was held at the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel on the 9th of May 2023. Thanks to our Chairman **Andy Cuthbert** and Chef **Ramola Bijendra** for hosting the event that saw the participation of several corporate partners as well as chefs in the run-up to the Salon 2023.



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THE SALON SLALOM 2023

The recent Salon Culinaire was an impressive showcase of the culinary skills that participants brought to the table. Learn what made the event memorable by diving into the experiences of the participants, marshals, winners, judges, and trainers!



The excitement of the participants from different spheres of life permeated the air. The Salon Culinaire, which was held at the Expo Culinaire show between May 29 and 31, 2023, brought together chefs from all over the map for three days of exploration, where young chefs connected with hospitality professionals, experts exchange ideas, all the while without tapering off their enthusiasm for the global competitions.

The event offered a unique experience that balanced the combination of cooking and more than cooking, presenting a delightful contrast that proved to be an enriching experience for attendees. The ExpoCulinaire in Sharjah featured three competitions over three days, including the Emirates International Salon Culinaire, the Alen Thong Golden Coffee Pot Young Chefs



We wanted to encourage the students from culinary schools and chefs to participate, giving them a platform to flourish their skills

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GLOBAL CHEFS
COMPETITIONS

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Challenge, and the Global Chef Challenge Africa & Middle East Regional Semifinals. The event also saw global chef participants from the UAE in the pastry, senior and vegan categories qualify in the semifinals and will now take their talents to Singapore for the finals!

Josephine Cuthbert, Vice President of Administrative Affairs at the ECG, beamed as she detailed the successful event. "We wanted to encourage the students from culinary schools and chefs to participate, giving them a platform to flourish their skills," she added.

This year's Salon featured a record-breaking 39 class entrees. Some classes were based on recent trends, including plant-based cooking. As disclosed by Josephine, officially, the Expo comprised over 600 entries, more than 250 entrees in live cooking, three cooking schools from Pakistan, chefs from several restaurants, five-star hotels, and even



It takes a lot of hard work, collaboration, coordination, and communication, and my goal is to make it successful

one Australian participant.

In an apparent reflection of the challenges that she had to make the event successful, she recalls overseeing the young chefs' event registration and last-minute questions from young chefs that required deft time management and effective communication on her part. She stated, "It takes a lot of hard work, collaboration, coordination, and

communication, and my goal is to make it successful."

FROM THE JUDGES

The judges contributed their knowledge and astute observation to evaluate the performances. Among them was Chef Mike Lee, the honorary president of the ECG and one of the competition's founding members. Having seen the competition as a platform evolve in strength since its first edition and now managed over the years by Chef Andy and Chef Uwe, he always graces his presence every year at the invitation of the guild to be a part of it.

Competitions often paint an emotional portrait of victorious celebrations and setback tears. As an engaging judge, Chef Mike Lee made it a point to keep encouraging the participants to do their best, and even if they fall short, he urges them to participate next time and do better. "When you compete, you



Chef Christian

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EASY CLEANING



don't sleep for days; you are worried about your preparation. However, as you compete more often, you can become more confident. Eventually, it's not about disappointments but about learning and getting better in the going."

With several young chefs dedicated to their craft, the Salon Culinaire showcased an eclectic mix of talent. Chef Dammika Herath, one of the pastry judges at the competition, noted that these young chefs demonstrated impressive skills and knowledge. "The young chefs we saw at the competition are so excited; they are organized and better equipped with tech than before; they have a school background, and they have been doing great jobs so far," he added.



When you compete, you don't sleep for days; you are worried about your preparation. However, as you compete more often, you can become more confident

For the last 20 years in the UAE, he has competed in several competitions, worked on improvements through many trials and errors, traveled, and made new

friends. As a proficient judge, he shared a tip for competing chefs. He stated, "Preparation is 50% of your success. Practice your skills 4 to 5 times before coming to the place, making it much easier during the competition."

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Planning, so the saying goes, produces order. But, in practice, only some things that are planned will work out as expected. A group of committed marshals worked nonstop behind the scenes to guarantee the activities went off without a hitch.

Chef Chamil Fernando has been a marshal for almost 15 years for the ECG, helping with timing, scale, and hygiene to ensure the quality standard. At the Salon, he was the go-to person for the



Chef Hyder Abdul Hamid



Chef Grant Manais



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SALON CULINAIRE AWARDS



competitors who arrived perplexed and anxious about navigating their way through the place. "The secret to being a good marshal is to help the judges and participants while ensuring discipline. Without discipline, you can never grow as a person. So I make sure to shout for it."

Another marshal at the event, Chef Grant Manais, made his debut in this area this year. It has brought him a fresh perspective, given that he is familiar with the other side of the competition, having been a regular competitor from 2014 until 2019 in Qatar.

"A lot goes behind the scenes; a lot of prep and hours go into what I anticipated," he comments as he



Preparation is 50% of your success. Practice your skills 4 to 5 times before coming to the place, making it much easier during the competition

talks about his duties that range from ensuring that all contestants have the necessary equipment, supply of power, water, cleaning materials, and hygiene

practices in mise-en-place to keeping a check that every contestant had the sponsored ingredients.

One of the most dreaded scenes any marshal could encounter is having any equipment fail; "it's like walking on water and waiting for a miracle to happen. But no excuses," he interrupts quickly, "even in such a situation, the team's preparation is paramount." Should equipment fail, the engineering team must be alerted immediately to fix it promptly. In case of technical difficulties outside of our control, competitors will be granted extra time. We take such scenarios seriously and make sure to respond appropriately."

EPIC ENDINGS & EXPERIENCES

As the competitions got underway, the expo center buzzed with people, tense faces, and chefs beating the odds, transforming the place into an energetic glimpse of talent. Regardless of the outcome, the competitors accepted the essence of competition and presented an incomparable dish. Several even understood the priceless chance to learn and grow. One of the competitors, Chef Hyder Abdul Hamid, currently working as a chef de partie at Emirates Flight Catering, has often participated in competitions. His disposition to take risks and learn from every step of the competition paid off, with him winning a gold medal in live pasta cooking. "For three months, I was preparing for the competition. I remember preparing the pasta dish around 20 to 30 times, perfecting the execution while taking guidance from my senior chefs and Chef Peter De Silva."

Being a seasoned competitor for the last 15 years and winning medals, he has found a way to make it happen. "The secret has been to keep trying and practicing," he said.

The culinary world works on deadlines, precision, and creativity. Participation in competitions not only gives aspiring cooks a chance to compete



Josephine



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CLASSES



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professionally against global talent but also prepares them for the rigors of this industry.

"This gives them a level playing field, in the sense that if a young chef initially believed they had awful skills, after participating, they may realize they are rather okay," said Chef Christian Biesbrouck, senior lecturer at Dubai College of Tourism, who oversaw a workshop run by his students at the Expo and also had six of his students competing. "They get much more perspective and an immense amount of confidence," he added.

As an experienced chef, he understands the importance of participating. He explains that he tells his students that it's crucial to



Chef Dammika

participate as that would mean they have invested time in training.

As the event concluded, months of planning and the moments of hard

work of seasoned judges, committed volunteers, and dedicated organizers unfolded in front of everyone's eyes.

A round of thunderous applause echoed for Chef Nuwan Senavirathna as he won the Best Cuisinier at the Salon Culinaire 2023. The participants' mutual interest in cuisine and the idea of transcending food beyond the plate with friendship turned the event from a worldwide competition into a unique experience.

The memories of this competitive event lingered in their hearts as the attendees left the place. If anything, there were smiling faces for the winner, gratitude for the participants who faced their fears, and a newfound sense of ourselves—our strengths and weaknesses.



Chef Mike Lee



Chef Chamil

FOOD IS IN THE AIR!

By **Shreya Asopa**

Eight years ago, if someone had told me that there was a way to convert CO₂ into food, it would have been just another hollywood script for me, similar to *The Martian*, or *Back to the Future*, at the McFly family's future home, where a dehydrated pizza gets converted to a full-sized pizza after putting it in a hydrator.

Guess what? It wasn't a screenplay, after all. A New York-based firm called the Air Company has made it into the third and final phase of NASA's Deep Space Food Challenge with its inventive approach of using astronauts' in-flight carbon dioxide exhalations to generate yeast-based nutrients for protein shakes designed to nourish crews on long-duration deep-space missions.

So how does this work?

According to NASA, it is turning air, water, electricity, and yeast into food. Fundamentally, the idea is to convert carbon dioxide into an alcohol feedstock via a process involving water electrolysis to produce hydrogen. This can then be further used for yeast, which can be used in food.

In a report published by the Reuters news agency, Air Company's co-founder and CTO, Stafford Sheehan, compared its flavor with that of Seitan, a plant-based substitute made from wheat gluten used as an alternative to tofu or soybean-based foods. He also highlighted its taste profile, mentioning that the product was sweet-tasting.

Considering the zero-gravity environment, providing nourishing food on space stations has been challenging. That's when NASA came up with its



Deep Space Food Challenge, where a number of problem solvers from across the world worked to develop cutting-edge approaches and technologies that can feed humans on their upcoming long-duration space missions.

NASA recently announced the eight winners of its final deep space food challenge. Teams from varied backgrounds, such as Air Company, SATED (Safe Appliance, Tidy, Efficient, and Delicious), Interstellar Lab, Kernel Deltech USA, and Nolux, among others, were selected for their unique approach to creating new, sustainable ways to provide nutritious meals during missions. These unique concepts from

the winners ranged from a cooking appliance that can be used in space to make a variety of meals utilizing ingredients with a long shelf-life to devising a process that simulates photosynthesis to generate plant-based ingredients.

In milieu of increasing the carbon footprint of food production and the environment, the need for sustainable food practices is greater than ever. We may not quite be able to cook like the McFly family just yet, but with these concepts that change the course of traditional space foods; going beyond the ideation stage for sustainable and unique eco-friendly foods will not take much time.

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The Kitchen Knight

Sitting by the shores of Al Mamzar Beach, feeling the cool breeze and warmth of beige sand, Chef **Maurice Kazma** feels he has come a long way from his Syrian roots. As the waves wash away the footprints, it leaves us with the space to fill his magical story—a story of a man with big ambitions who has achieved much despite adversity. He has become a culinary knight dedicated to realizing his dreams

Chef Maurice Kazma has always had a lifelong appreciation for food. From his earliest childhood memories, he was drawn to the tempting aromas emanating from his family's kitchen and the habit—nay, pleasure—of late-night snacking shared with his elder sister.

When he decided to become a chef, he had no idea that his career choice would be something he would have to fight to fulfill. His parents initially expected him to settle into other traditional pathways, such as pharmacy or engineering. But adamant about his decision, he moved out of his home and rented a place near his college during his first year of hotel management in Damascus.

"I was one of the 700 students from 7,000 applicants that the college took in, and the first one from my family to graduate in the field of hospitality," he adds as he remembers juggling both studies and a part-time job in a hotel.

Considering himself a diligent individual, Chef Maurice started working at the Meridien Hotel in Damascus and built up his skills before deciding to take his talents to the UAE, starting a four-decade-long tryst with Occidental Sharjah Grand.

IRON HAT & A FLAVOURFUL SWORD

In 1981, he joined the Occidental Sharjah Grand (then called the Meridien Hotel, Sharjah), where he picked up accents of



We also carry the responsibility towards our clients of respecting their children's needs for balanced diets

global cuisine. When the Grand Hotels acquired the Meridien Hotel, he had already advanced to senior sous chef. Amid the revamping and restructuring of the organization, he was approached by the managerial board to take charge of the culinary operations.

Running the hotel for a year alone, he spent ample time in the kitchen that goes back as far as his memories allow. His hard work and dedication paid off with him earning the title of executive chef.

"In 1986, unexpected circumstances resulted in a slump in the business. To reignite the interest of the consumers, we explored creative ideas and made different dining experiences, yet the footfall was meager."

However, when nothing else seemed to be working for the team, Chef Maurice brought his knack for optimism and unforeseen strategies. In no time, they were catering for up to 250 guests daily

and providing three or four outside catering services. The guest capacity increased due to their commitment to excellence, eventually leading to fully booked operations. "In those days, it was difficult to stand up again, but once we did, we didn't stop," he adds.

Another turn of events happened years down the road when the Barceló group acquired Sharjah Grand Hotel to launch a new chapter renaming it Occidental Sharjah Grand. "The team of 260 staff was reduced to 145, a modern makeover with management changes brought in fresh perspectives, and since the day they got on board, occupancy increased significantly."

With a passion for over-the-top food experiences, he changes the menu twice or thrice a year, taking into account what dishes hold up well and grasping the crowd pleasers. Alterations also take place every two weeks when it comes to the buffet menu. With each change, guests can look forward to a new twist to classic Arabian dishes and Chef Maurice's take on traditional recipes. The dish presented by him and his team can be best described as notes of cultures stemming from his philosophy that honor the ingredients.

All the while, he and his team are striving to offer a delightful experience to guests, many of whom have become like family.

"We also carry the responsibility towards

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our clients of respecting their children's needs for balanced diets. Be it preparing baby food or balanced playful diets for kids, all they have to do is send an email before their stay or inform us a day prior. Whatever they ask, we ensure that it is ready. It doesn't make the costs high, but it makes our guests happy," he explains.

Positive relationships are at the heart of the hospitality business. Chef Maurice's proactive nature and anticipating his guests' needs before they even ask have created loyal customers who return time and time again.

"We are now at 100 percent capacity. Having around 200 to 250 rooms, we are prepared to cater to 500 people at any given time. Time passes quickly when you're doing something you love!"

SALIENT SQUIRES

How does his team of 18 manage the culinary tasks for a number that could double down during Ramadan? As a knight of the kitchen, Chef Maurice and his team rely on meticulous planning, efficient execution, and a healthy dose of creativity. Cross-training also comes into play.

"Chefs work here without watching



clocks, just finishing their jobs with zeal. We compensate them for their additional hours, but at the same time, they feel responsible to finish their tasks on time." He admits this loyalty makes it easy to adapt to new changes, improves growth, and helps navigate challenging times. Effective cross-training has also helped relieve bottlenecks.

"I have a member of staff who has been with me for 22 years, and those who were stewards or housekeepers are

now cooks who oversee restaurants. The process of cross-training them took three years, during which their interests were evaluated as they progressed through the learning curve from commis to chef de partie."

Even when it comes to hiring, Chef Maurice emphasizes candidates who are in apple-pie order. An organized chef still has scope to train and enhance, but a disorganized one can impede a team's efficiency.

"I've conducted several virtual interviews, and even when candidates sounded good, the reality was quite different. So, it is essential for me that they do food trials. In one hour, I can evaluate how they prepare the mise en place, deliver the food, and clean the area, and even if they make modest mistakes, the fact that the process is streamlined suggests that they have the potential to be a good fit."

Whether big teams or small teams succeed, it comes down to leadership. As a seasoned leader with impressive tenures, he always has words of encouragement and can put his foot down to boost the team's morale.



"Once there was a trolley with a napkin kept on the handle in one of our restaurants, and I remember asking the staff around every other day to remove it so guests could readily access the meals, but there was no change. Then, on the fourth day, when there were still no developments, I had to get stern to make them comprehend the issues. Depending on the situation, I can lead sternly and softly; it cuts both ways."

Admitting that he's more like a father figure to his team, one can see his affable demeanor as he waves to everyone on his way, making him a great leader and a trusted friend.

One can see camaraderie even in his advice for young chefs who deal with obstacles. He advises, "Encourage transparency to boost communication. If your peer is older, you can take him as your brother; if he is younger, treat him like your son. As a hands-on chef, work with the team through success and failure."

A KNIGHT'S ERRANT

The UAE's culinary scene has become more diverse and complex than ever. Many moons ago, when traders descended to Sharjah and Dubai to sell fresh produce, auctions of seafood took place, and things were simpler. "Range of seafood was readily available at 4 AED or 5 AED. Unlike today, we bought kilos of seafood to freeze," says Chef Maurice reminiscing about the species of lobsters and cost-effective rates.

"There was a time when I bought 50 kilos of Cigale lobster and stored it in a freezer. Two months later, it had no file. So, I got in touch with a French chef who was a seafood expert; it turns out the lobster had the tendency to eat itself, and so he suggested I boil it for 2 minutes before freezing it for better results," he adds as he reflects on his experiences and the substantial changes the city has undergone over the years.

Will we witness his children tread in



Chefs work here without watching clocks, just finishing their jobs with zeal

their father's direction? Well, it appears that none of his sons will be following in their father's footsteps gastronomically.

Chef Maurice has been married to his wife for the last 34 years, and they have three sons. While they each pursue different professional endeavors—the eldest is an engineer, the middle one is a dentist, and the youngest is in IT school—they still maintain a strong bond and cherish their family time together.

It has been an impressive 42 years for Chef Maurice in the UAE. Back home, his family members have left the country

and started new lives in other parts of the world. Two of his siblings are in Canada, while one of his brothers is a general manager in Fujairah, having gone from being a pharmacist to a chef and then to manager.

As for his future, a concrete plan still needs to be put in place. But he muses that a business beyond the culinary shadow can lie ahead. "Something gold related—eschewing working within the food industry and wanting a more relaxed space."

Right now, he is content with his position and what life offers. Despite getting multiple offers from different places, he has decided to stick with his current employer. This professional balance comes from the wise words, "Money is not everything; you need to enjoy your job and have a good work environment, which truly brings satisfaction."

With that, he sure has found a place of lasting peace in his career.

SELF MADE

Who knew globetrotting and taking chances would inspire Chef **Kriti Shetty** to lead an all-female team?

Even though girls have excelled in every field, it is still tough to challenge social expectations. It is even more of an uphill battle for a woman who aspires to create a ceaseless story of her own without the shadow of coming from a privileged household. Yet, Kriti Shetty defied the perception that people from privileged backgrounds receive everything on a silver platter by breaking the mold and, at 28, rising to the position of executive chef at a renowned café.

With every plate she creates, Chef Kriti Shetty seeks to capture the essence of her family's resilience and spirit. The thirst for taking risks head-on and navigating uncharted culinary territories came from her brother and father, who aimed to be kicked to the curb only to emerge triumphant. As she puts it, "Once you get the taste of building things yourself, you would be reluctant to go back."

At 24, she got her first management position, and over the years, she worked with men who were double her age, dusting off the notion that the kitchen industry is male-dominated. Without a doubt, a lot more was going on than mere serendipity.

Her story is in her last name, she explains. Born in Mumbai, she was too young to understand the ways of food and hospitality, but she carried the blood legacy of hailing from a family of restaurateurs. People would automatically assume she owned hotel chains when they learned about her last name—Shetty, in India—and everyone immediately asked, "How many hotels does your family own?"



Once you get the taste of building things yourself, you would be reluctant to go back

Despite being descended from a long line of successful restaurateurs, having watched her father establish an empire and her mother multiply it tenfold after her father's untimely death, she never gave a thought to becoming one of them.

As we often discover, things can be right in front of us without us realizing it. It was the case for Chef Kriti, who embarked on a journey to find that she was primed for bigger feats. "Originally, I had my sights set on becoming a theater artist, and I got a degree in speech & drama from London Trinity College. After some time working in theater, I decided to try my hand at baking to see if it was my forte," she says, explaining her choice to enroll in one of India's top baking schools.

It was a time in India when being a chef was not considered a high-collar job. That's when she met her mentor, Chef Nandheetha Varadaraj, who was instrumental in changing her perception of being a chef. During her 6-month training, Chef Kriti's passion for cooking ran so deep that she could have even recited an entire recipe while sleeping!

After completing her course, she embarked on an exploration of her newly gained skill set through internships and

freelancing opportunities. Eventually, she stumbled upon a position as a Chef Instructor at Foodhall Cookery Studio, a lifestyle food superstore by Indian conglomerate Future Group, where she assisted leading chefs from India, the United States, and London.

In 2019, she found her niche as the head chef of Grub N Tuck Bistro. Leading shifts, designing menus, and doing hands-on plating for events for high-profile people and famous Bollywood celebrities for four years got her to crave more. To thrive further in the space, she made a pitstop to tweak her knowledge. She completed another diploma from the Academy of Pastry Arts (APCA) Malaysia before traveling to Bali to bask in the culture, cuisine, and creative craftsmanship.

"I ultimately traveled to the island of Gili Meno, where I spent a month working in a small café by the sea. When most of the chefs spent their initial years in the five stars, I gained invaluable insights from experiencing calm beaches and yellow sunsets, meeting people, and learning about true cuisine that I was able to bring back to the bustling city kitchens," she says as reflecting on her travels to Southeast Asia.

THE DREAM TEAM

When visiting Dubai for an event in Crowne Plaza Jumeirah, Chef Kriti received an unexpected opportunity. Her husband had asked her whether she may be able to land a job there given her qualifications, and much to her surprise, the reply was affirmative. "So, I knew that Dubai would always be somewhere I want to see myself."



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Seeking a new challenge, she relocated to Dubai following the Covid-19 pandemic and began working as the pre-opening head chef for EL & N London. She dove in and found herself helping the cafe stand on its leg.

A year later, she landed the opportunity as an Executive Chef at her current confidential workplace. With a vision as bold as her culinary creations, she leads a power-packed all-girls team who work to create fusion desserts, and entrees that wow their clientele.

"You need to be lucky to have a team where ideas flow smoothly, and each with their area they excel in. Once a chef achieves that flow, whether a male or female, it gets easy to manage the team; only with an all-girls team there is a different level of comfort. I am lucky I have the best of both worlds here—an effective team and an amazing Chef de Partie, Joselyn Ocampo."

Her kitchen is an interplay of trust and faith, where a talented group of people firmly believes in her direction and culinary vision. "The day I don't see the

faith in my team's eye, I know for a fact that I screwed up," she adds. She views each individual as a source of knowledge stemming from their unique expertise and encourages a willingness to learn regardless of age and experience. "It's important to understand that nobody knows everything. In a chef's life, there are thousands of thresholds," she explains. "We all have something to learn from one another."

Incidentally, her love for food would have been left in plain sight if someone would not mentor her. She carries the same beacon of light for the chefs who approach her for a job. "A chef might not get employment anywhere if you solely consider their lack of skills. Everyone has to start somewhere and have someone to mentor them. A person did the same thing for me. If someone came to me with minimal skills but the right attitude, I would train them to be a better version of a chef than what they were before."

THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF PASTRY

Even though she manages both hot and cold kitchens, she believes creating pastry to the tune of melodious music brings out the best in her. "Pastry is a detailed and precise art that not everyone is gifted with, and for those who are not gifted, they may struggle a lot."

With a perpetual smile adorning her face, Chef Kriti realized not only the works of Amaury Guichon inspire her in a way but also how he infuses genuine happiness into his creations. "The day I stop smiling like that means the field is not for me anymore."

Her interest in global food cultures continues. She still looks for ways to bring together global food cultures and her innovative approach. Her recipe for caramelized banana, for example, embraces both traditional techniques and new takes on ingredients and processes. "It's like a banoffee, but the chocolate and caramel components are more emphasized," she explains.





In a chef's life, there are thousands of thresholds, We all have something to learn from one another

Behind her culinary prowess, her husband, once an accomplished F&B director, has played a pivotal role. Although he has transitioned into working in sales at an FMCG company, he is familiar with the challenges and rewards of the culinary world.

And now, circling back to the pressing question, will she join her mother and be on the other side of the kitchen in the future? "It is very different when you are the owner and on the other side of the kitchen. As an owner, I would be preoccupied with the business, but when I am a chef, I can focus on my passion for food. And if that were to change, I would have to say that I didn't choose that line of profession."



Chocolate Banoffee with Caramel Mousse and Almond Praline

CARAMELIZED BANANA

Chopped Banana	200g
Caster Sugar	130g
Cinnamon	1g
Lurpak Unsalted Butter	22g
Salt	1/8 tsp

Method

- ◆ Caramelize the sugar until golden and add the chopped banana.
- ◆ Cook it on medium heat for 1 minute, then add the rest of the ingredients.
- ◆ Cook till it becomes a thick mixture, then take it off the heat and surface wrap.

CARAMEL MOUSSE

Caster Sugar	90g
Arla Pro High Stability Cream 35%	90g
Gelatin Leaves	4g
Callebaut Caramel	84g
Sea Salt (Crushed)	5g

Whipped Heavy Cream -

Arla Pro High Stability Cream 35%	280g
Icing Sugar	28g

Method

- ◆ Hydrate the gelatin leaves in cold water and set them aside to bloom.
- ◆ Make a dry caramel with sugar and deglaze with warm cooking cream.
- ◆ Add the bloomed gelatin and mix it with the melted Callebaut caramel chocolate.

- ◆ Whip the heavy cream with the icing sugar till medium peaks, and fold the cream with the chocolate mixture.

CRÈME CHANTILLY

Heavy Whipped Cream -

Arla Pro High Stability Cream 35%	100g
Icing Sugar	10g
Vanilla	2g

Method

- ◆ Start by whisking the heavy whipping cream.
- ◆ Once the heavy cream starts foaming, add the sugar and vanilla.
- ◆ Whip until medium to stiff peaks.



CHOCOLATE GANACHE

Chocolate	200g
Arla Pro Cooking Cream 27%	200g
Lurpak unsalted butter	10g

Method

- ♦ Warm the cooking cream and pour it over the chocolate callets.
- ♦ Let it sit for 10 minutes, then start mixing until it's a glossy mixture.
- ♦ Emulsify the butter, surface wrap, and chill until use.

CARAMELIZED ALMOND

Caster Sugar	100g
Oil	2g
Roasted Almonds	50g

Method

- ♦ Caramelize the sugar and oil.
- ♦ Once the sugar is golden, take it off the heat and mix in the almonds.
- ♦ Spread it over the Silpat and let it cool.

CRYSTALLIZED CHOCOLATE

Sugar	50g
Water	18g
Dark Chocolate	20g

Method

- ♦ Cook the water and sugar to a boiling point and melt the sugar completely.
- ♦ Add the dark chocolate and mix vigorously for 5 minutes.
- ♦ The mixture will begin to look like crystals; at this point, take it off the heat and transfer it to another bowl immediately.

CHOCOLATE NUT GLAZE

Dark Chocolate	150g
Vegetable Oil	7g
Nuts Of Your Choice (Pecan/ Walnut/ Almond/ Cashew)	50g

Method

- ♦ Melt the chocolate and mix the oil.
- ♦ Fold the nuts and cool them to room temperature.

Assembly

- ♦ Set the caramel mousse in a silicone mold with a caramelized banana in the center.
- ♦ Once the mousse is frozen, coat it with the chocolate nut glaze and set it aside.
- ♦ On the plate, with the help of a cake ring, spread the crystallized chocolate.
- ♦ Place the blowtorched caramel bananas
- ♦ Place the chocolate-coated mousse on top of the banana.
- ♦ Pipe a dollop of cream on top of the mousse and decorate.

Garnishes

- ♦ Blowtorched caramel banana
- ♦ Gold leaf
- ♦ Viola flowers
- ♦ Microgreens

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At Heights, Yet Grounded

Gulf Gourmet talks to Chef **Eka Mochamad** about his ascent to one of the highest restaurants in the world

Seared foie gras with buttery texture contrasted by the velvety richness of the Emirati dates, each possessing its unique character, embodies the essence of culinary fusion. The presentation could be familiar, but the flavors are unexpected—that is what you can anticipate from a dish curated by Chef Eka Mochamad.

Taking cues from local and international progressive concepts interplaying with diverse influences, he seeks to rekindle his passion for French cuisine. "I have a deep-seated affection for French cuisine," remarks Chef Eka.

Whether French or Emirati cuisine, traditional boundaries cannot limit where you can cook. A chef can cook from the midst of a creek or at the tallest tower. And when it comes to having a kitchen, Chef Eka's decades of experience have shown him that no space is off-limits.

Inside the glistening and regal presence of the Burj Khalifa, Chef Eka and his team concoct dishes at the At.mosphere restaurant that expand their creativity just as much as the panoramic view from their culinary haven. Nestled on the 122nd floor of the Burj Khalifa, the restaurant, dubbed one of the world's highest restaurants, recently unveiled a new theme reflecting contemporary design and food.

"Our focus at At.mosphere is not just on classic cooking; we also focus on fresh concepts and international cuisine. We have a French fine-dining restaurant and a lounge. It is a unique place. Not only



Our focus at At.mosphere is not just on classic cooking; we also focus on fresh concepts and international cuisine

are you dining at the highest restaurant in the world, but you get two different experiences on one floor."

As the head chef for a staff of 26, Chef Eka's day starts at around 6 a.m., preparing for breakfast. The kitchen was quite compact, but with the recent renovations, extra space has been gained, and his operations last for up to 20 hours, ending at 2 a.m.

With a diverse menu in the picture, he reveals that the new venue has emerged as a go-to destination for tourists and residents. As for Chef Eka, while he gazes out of the restaurant's panoramic windows, he is grateful for the opportunities. The towering height of the building now serves as a reminder of the heights he aspired to reach in his culinary endeavors. Soon, childhood memories flood him.

With its teeming markets, hugging green tea plantations, blazing waves of art, and old Dutch architecture, Bandung is where Chef Eka calls home. Looking back with nostalgia, he describes what he loves about the city: "It's popularly

known as the 'Paris of Java,' which gives you an idea of how much culture and flavor it offers." He pauses briefly before adding softly, "Good food and good taste. That is true in my hometown."

Despite living in a melting pot of culinary influences, he entered the kitchen when he was 15. That was to change when he joined the Bandung Institute of Tourism in 2008.

"When most people viewed food strictly as a necessity for sustenance, I saw it through the lens of science and flavor physics; the process behind its production is far more intricate. It was complex, and when this notion clicked, there was no looking back."

Back then, when several culinary schools in Indonesia had French cuisine as their base philosophy, Chef Eka discovered that Indonesian food and French food shared the same complexity and taste profiles. As he explored international cuisine, he never really thought there would be numerous chapters later in his career where his knack for learning cross-country cuisines would come into play.

His zeal for exploring cross-country cuisines led to jaw-dropping dishes during the course. He credits this success to two key elements: learning the complexity of different cuisines and utilizing excellent ingredients. Many of the prime ingredients he was exposed to were Irish, a country renowned for producing outstanding food, which is increasingly popular among consumers globally. The Irish John Stone beef is one such example—it is something he has been using since 2011, and with good



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reason, since it provides consistently high quality. His drive for high-grade products has even led him to become part of the Chefs Irish Beef Club, set up by Bord Bia, the Irish Food Board, with the aim of bringing the finest quality Irish beef to ingenious consumers in the UAE.

"The Chefs Irish Beef Club has given us the platform to get more insights on how the product is delivered to us. It is a story for us to tell our clients that this dish on your table is not random, but it involves a complex process from Irish cultures to our kitchens, thus giving value to our clients."

GASTRONOMIC PINNACLE

Months after graduating with a higher diploma, Chef Eka got a foot in the door of the Atlantis Hotel and worked there for three years. In 2011, he moved to Abu Dhabi to work at Shangri-La Qaryat Albari. Two years down the road, he got an opportunity to be head chef for the Jumeirah Group in Kuwait.

"We opened a restaurant called the Pepper Steakhouse, which was a mix



When most people viewed food strictly as a necessity for sustenance, I saw it through the lens of science and flavor physics

between a steakhouse and a fine dining restaurant, and I think it took us only a year or so to be awarded Best Steak House by Food and Travel Arabia."

He eventually returned to Dubai when he landed a job interview at Bateaux Dubai. Being on board a boat with huge windows and a fine-dining restaurant was something he couldn't pass up. "They were considering an Indonesian chef for their French theme. So, I had to go through an intensive food tasting period of three days in which I whipped

up 25 dishes," he adds. It was a daunting but rewarding experience, and ultimately he got the role of head chef.

A year later, he arrived at At.mosphere, which he calls a dynamic place. "Because the venue is always crazy for more!" Of course, working at such a high altitude comes with its own set of challenges. For Chef Eka, it's elevators! "Logistics are tricky because if someone needs to bring ingredients up, we have to take the service elevator. When you talk about a guest elevator, it takes exactly 58 seconds to go up there, but with service elevators, it can sometimes take up to an hour or even four (during New Year's). So, we must arrive two hours early since we never know how long we'll need to wait for an available lift."

In his kitchen, collaboration is not just a cliché. He has created a team-oriented workspace that encourages dialogue and strengthens creativity from the prep area to expediting stations. Inspiration for creativity comes not only from within the confines of his kitchen but also from fellow chefs.

"We have great chefs in Dubai, from Chef Himanshu to Chef Gregoire, and I am not ashamed to say that I seek inspiration from their food. It is about collaboration rather than protecting one's ideas. That's the beauty of the culinary industry; that's how we share our passions!"

He has also sought inspiration through research and understanding market demands. "I used to create caviar ice cream here. When I researched caviar ice cream, which didn't come up in the Google search, I knew I was on the right track. I'm not saying I'm taking that approach for all of the menus, but 80% of the dishes on the menu won't appear in Google searches."

A FAIR CHANCE

When it comes to hiring, Chef Eka ensures that aspiring chefs echo a sentiment that has driven his culinary journey: to pursue their chosen path not only for the money



it will bring them but also for the passion that lights up in their souls.

"There is no chef who was born as a great chef. Everyone is learning to be one and has a process to pass," he explains. Recognizing the importance of giving young talents a chance to prove themselves, he has taken up the mantle of helping others. "People gave me a chance to prove myself and acquire new skills. Sometimes when people come to me with hiring roadblocks in fine dining, I encourage them to look beyond fine dining and give everyone a fair chance," he shares.

This faith of his in hiring individuals with the right attitude is usually put to the test when they participate in competitions. "I encourage the team to participate because you go the extra mile. "You not only learn but do something beyond work for yourself," he says. Meanwhile, competitions are personal to him. They served as a platform that not only refined his talent but blessed him with awards, including a bronze medal at the Culinary Olympics in Germany, where he was a member that represented the UAE.

Touching on the topic of navigating through evolving automation and artificial



intelligence in the culinary landscape, Chef Eka contemplates that chefs should be leveraging technology in their kitchens. He acknowledges that technology cannot replace human chefs but can instead serve as a powerful tool for them to empower their craft better. "Chefs are still needed; they must simply know how to use the right tools for the job."

That doesn't imply he doesn't rely on traditional practices. Books are still his silent mentor. Every turn of the page enriched his ideas. He makes the point that, as humans, we have to keep relearning things to create something

that goes beyond the confines of even the highest structure.

"Today, the readily accessible internet holds immense promise. The current trend revolves around giving your customers value rather than just focusing on fine dining. Ultimately, chefs can use the tools correctly to cut the mustard."

To excel in culinary in the morning and at sundown, a chef must put in tons of effort and needs plenty of love and support from their family. In Chef Eka's case, his wife stands by him every step of the way.

"At home, she runs the kitchen. She possesses a profound understanding of the culinary realm, having once been a restaurateur herself." The couple are the parents of three children, ages 8, 7, and 3. Fulfilling his quest for destiny, he wants to leave his legacy behind. "The future is about leaving his legacy, either through working for corporations or opening his restaurant," reveals the 35-year-old chef.

There is no other way that Chef Eka would have it. His work as a chef at At.mosphere represents the fruition of years of toil and devotion to his vocation. Even though he cooks at the top of the world, his heart remains grounded in the kitchen.



June - July 2023 **Gulf Gourmet**

ECG successfully organized The Chefs Table at The Hotel Show

One of the major hospitality events of the Middle East, the Hotel Show took place between 23rd- 25th May 2023. The event featured the Chefs Table competition, a live cooking event, with talented teams competing for the title of 'Hotel Culinary Team Of The Year'.

The Emirates Culinary Guild organized a three-day competition where nine teams competed to produce a five-course meal. Each team consisted of around six members who went up against each other in an attempt to be crowned the winner.

The guests were provided with a sophisticated dining experience, complete with two mocktails crafted to perfection. The generous feast included an appetizer, a hot or cold soup, a main dish, and topped off by the perfect dessert. To finish off the delightful meal, the guests were served a cup of coffee.

Sharing about the three days' experience at the event, the President of the Emirates Culinary Guild, Chef Uwe Micheel, highlighted how the competition has brought different teams together to collaborate and compete for the medal. "I found the competition to be especially rewarding due to its focus on team collaboration. Teams of chefs, staff, pass, and stewards have the chance to showcase their skills while working together for a common goal—something that no other competition offers. This

The winners of the Chefs Table competition are as follows:

Best Team: Radisson Blu Dubai Deira Creek
Best Kitchen: Radisson Blu Dubai Deira Creek
Best Bar: Radisson Blu Dubai Deira Creek
Best Service: Pullman Dubai Creek City Centre
Gold Medal:
 Radisson Blu Dubai Deira Creek
 Pullman Dubai Creek City Centre
Silver Medal:
 Zero gravity
 Millennium Plaza Downtown Hotel, Dubai
 Le Meridien Dubai - Hotel & Conference Centre
 Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort
 Hilton Garden Inn Ras Al Khaimah
Bronze Medal: Folly

unique advantage sets it apart from all other competitions of its kind."

A number of high-profile guests, including GMs and executive chefs from the industry, graced the event. "Several sponsors came to the event to observe the teams use their ingredients, including juices and meat, to produce such incredible meals," commented Chef Andrea Karidis, a private chef and F&B consultant in Dubai, as she identified an important aspect of the competition. "A part of the competition is also about using the esteemed sponsors' products," she added.

Asked about the complexity involved in judging the dishes and overall experience, Karidis responded, "It's a

blind tasting. The judges are unaware of what is happening because they cannot see the contestants' faces or the person who is making the meal."

However, Chef Andrea, being a Marshall at the competition and assisting the ECG to ensure things were running smoothly, got a chance to peek in every once in a while in the back area where judges tasted the dishes and caught a glimpse of their reactions.

The format of the competition, she said, differed from usual competitions. "The competition gives a comprehensive picture of the restaurant experience, from the back of the house where mise en place and food preparation occur to the front of

the house where servers and managers aid in delivering amazing dishes to tables. All elements are simulated, with each team running a mock restaurant setting during the challenge."

In addition to medals, a grand trophy was awarded to the winner. According to media reports, more than 13,000 people attended the Hotel Show event, and 400 exhibitors from around the world participated in the trade show.





Rising Star

Celebrating Alumni - The ICCA Dubai Culinary Scholarship Program.
Roopa Menon, Content & Communications Manager, ICCA Dubai,
 speaks to Chef **Kingsley Mario Ugbeze** from Nigeria

Renowned author Joseph Campbell once said, "Passion will move men beyond themselves, beyond their shortcomings, beyond their failures." The journey of Kingsley Mario Ugbeze epitomizes this drive and serves as an example for young chefs looking to forge a career in the culinary arts.

Born in Nigeria, Kingsley had a difficult childhood. The loss of his father when he was just an infant and his elder sister's disability put immense pressure on his mother, who tried to make ends meet from her job as a palm oil seller on the street. But these struggles did not deter Kingsley from harboring ambitions and nursing his dreams. From an early age, he saw himself pursuing a career in the culinary field. With every chance he could get, he would spend time in the kitchen and prepare meals for his family.



It is a dream come true for me, one that would not have been easily accomplished without the ICCA Dubai Culinary Scholarship Program

Preparing simple, creative meals with love was therapeutic for him.

"Growing up, the lack of a father figure created a vacuum in my life. I always felt the need to shoulder more responsibilities, support my mother, and help her take care of my sisters. Cooking was a solace during these trying times,

and very soon, I realized this is the career path I want to follow."

From Snowy Mountains to Glorious Springs of Melbourne

Passion, drive, and ambition: Kingsley had all the necessary components required to become a chef, but he was unable to pursue a culinary degree due to a lack of financial support. And he had to enter the industry without any qualifications and work his way up from the bottom rung of the kitchen hierarchy.

"My affinity for cooking aside, I have also been passionate about learning, and I have always yearned for opportunities to improve my skills and do a culinary program, but since I was supporting my family, I didn't have any funds to make this dream come true."

Kingsley's culinary journey began at a

ski resort in the snowy mountains in Nassfeld, Austria, in 2016, where he started working as a dishwasher. He was also assisting the chef, performing menial tasks in the kitchen, and soon started learning basic skills like chopping techniques, good knife skills, etc.

He reminisces about his early days. "I remember feeling so driven and curious, and every day was spent learning, which finally led me to become one of the fastest learners amongst my colleagues." Kingsley's determination paid off, and he was promoted to the role of commis in the kitchen.

Later, he joined Gulf Gourmet LLC, where he worked as a commis chef in one of the cloud kitchens. His role was focused on receiving stocks, preparing mise en place, and cooking or preparing the delivery orders for dispatching, amongst others.

Recently, Kingsley migrated to Melbourne, Victoria, where he joined Yarra Botanic Australian Venue Co.

"It is a dream come true for me, one that would not have been easily accomplished without the ICCA Dubai Culinary Scholarship Program."

Better Opportunities with ICCA Dubai Culinary Scholarship Program

As he remained focused on furthering his culinary career, Kingsley never lost sight of his other plan: securing a comprehensive, internationally recognized culinary education. To carry out his plan, despite his hectic work schedule, he conducted full-fledged research on the best culinary schools in the region when he chanced upon ICCA. But he did not have enough money to pay the fees. Then he learned of the culinary scholarship program; however, when he applied in 2020, the country was enveloped in a COVID lockdown. After a wait of two years, he finally got a chance to fulfill his long-cherished dream of having a culinary education that was recognized the world over.



"The program has given me a deeper understanding of classical techniques, using modern equipment, and appreciating flavor pairings. It has helped boost my self-confidence and changed how I now see the hospitality industry."

Kingsley stresses that breakthroughs and better opportunities have come his way because of the remarkable impression that the program has left on his career as a chef.

Kingsley's story exemplifies how burning ambition can be the ultimate motivation. As he steadily climbs up the ladder, he continues to look for ways to evolve and grow while nurturing a desire to showcase African cuisine and the flavors of his native land to the world. For young aspiring chefs looking to enter the ever-competitive culinary

industry, Kingsley's journey, with its struggles and triumphs, is a true source of inspiration. His advice to young, aspiring chefs is simple.

"Always practice great work ethics; being diligent and meticulous always pays off. Patience is key for a chef. Be patient and go through every phase and process without giving up. I assure you, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel."

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

June - July 2023 Gulf Gourmet



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Name of Employer:	Address in Home Country:	
Work Address:	Tel:	
Web Address:	Email:	
Telephone Office:	Professional Title:	
Fax Office:	Type of Membership Required: (Please tick one)	
Tel. Home:	Corporate <input type="checkbox"/>	Senior Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>
Fax Home:	Senior <input type="checkbox"/>	Junior <input type="checkbox"/>
Email:		

Declaration to be Signed by all Applicants

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

Signed:.....

Proposed By:

Sig:.....

Seconded By:

Sig:.....

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Remarks:

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

Fees:

Young Member: Junior members will receive a certificate.

Senior Members: Above the rank of chef de partie (or senior chef de partie on executive chef's recommendation).
Dhs.350/=joining. Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar. Dhs. 150/=per year thereafter.

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newmembers



Ergin Gaytanli, Commercial Application & Customer Engagement Manager, receiving Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Uwe Micheel

Since its establishment, **IFFCO** has been a pioneer in the FMCG sphere in various fields of operations and production. Therefore, it is ideally placed to bring about a paradigm shift in consumer habits, which reflects their ever-changing desire for a healthy and nutritious way to broaden their dietary options. IFFCO's commitment to global food security goals has led them to continuously work towards reducing their dependence on non-sustainable products. This has been achieved through scientific research and analysis, as well as developing and introducing solutions that make a real difference.

To meet increasingly complex needs of food service operators, IFFCO Out of Home offers a wide range of innovative and tailor-made solutions that enable passionate and dedicated food industry professionals to delight their customers. They provide a full range of products



and solutions in core application segments such as Frying, Baking, Cooking, Indulgence and Beverage solutions as well as plant-based solutions which added more recently. IFFCO Out of Home also offers Halal-certified products that meet international standards for the GCC's food service industry bringing a new level of sophistication and quality to the region.

In 2021, IFFCO launched IFFCO Out of Home Customer Engagement Center, which is the largest in the GCC region. The customer engagement centre provides farm-to-fork solutions to out-of-home operators, acting also as a hub supporting thousands of restaurants and chefs regionally.

IFFCO Out of Home is committed to support food professionals through innovations and more importantly innovation by applications, providing a platform for collaboration with experienced chefs. Their purpose is to ultimately offer Simply Better Solutions to food service operators across GCC, helping food service professionals to elevate their offerings and provide better quality products to their target customers.

In conclusion, IFFCO's constant pursuit of innovation, research, and development of sustainable solutions has made them an ideal partner for food service professionals and consumers. They are dedicated to providing high-quality products and solutions that enable the food service industry to keep up with changing trends while delivering the best possible customer experience. [#simplybetersolutions](#)

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newmembers



Jeyaram S, CEO of Taaza Foodstuff L.L.C and Pradeep K, Sales & Marketing Manager, receiving Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Uwe Micheel

In the year 1984, Jeyaram S., known as JR, started his journey of distributing fresh fruits and vegetables from the very old Hamriya Market under the banner of "Barakat" as an employee.

In the year 2019, after 35 years, he took an ambitious break for four years and today in 2023, he is back in the Fresh Fruits & Vegetables market under the brand name of **"Taaza"**. Many of his ex-colleagues with legendary experience of three decades also have joined him.

Today at Taaza, we have a committed team of people from the industry to serve the Hospitality industry



ambitiously. Professional supplies with most competitive cost will be at the disposal of our most valued clients. In this promising and growing market, Taaza will fulfil all requirements of Hospitality clients in both fresh fruits and vegetables and processing.

A new road map has dawned to create partnership in business growth with fulfilling promises to be delivered.



Ms Lorena Schmidt, Export Sales Manager VITO AG, Germany, receiving Emirates Culinary Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Uwe Micheel

VITO - the oil filter for any deep fryer

Today, frying is a typical method of food preparation. It is not only found in your local tavern or fast-food joint, but bakeries, food productions, food trucks and even at the small food stand around the corner, not even having a full kitchen.

Being a manufacturer focusing entirely on the best possible filtration, VITO AG aims to offer the best solution to any business working with fryers.

The small footprint VITO 30 gives operators with small ventless fryers a chance to filter their oil. Whilst the VITO VM is the perfect match for countertop deep fryers and electric free-standing fryers. The VITO VL is the perfect fit for all free-standing fryers, pressure fryers and cooking centers.



The mobile VITO systems are the perfect match for bigger operations such as food producers.

All VITO oil filter systems have the ability of extremely fine microfiltration, focusing on dissolved particles doing the most damage to the oil. This microfiltration has proven to achieve an oil cost reduction of up to 50% and has a substantial positive impact on the quality and taste of the prepared food.

Not only oil savings and quality

enhancement are reasons for the growing customer base of VITO, but the portable systems are the only filtration systems that filter the oil directly in the fryer.

Also, digital solutions that make everyday kitchen life smarter, more transparent and more efficient are taking over. One of the most significant features in the VITO product line is the integrated software VITOconnect. With this innovative technology, restaurant operators can now connect their frying oil filter to the local Wi-Fi and lead their kitchen into a new era. After having registered the VITO, the intelligent monitoring begins. Kitchen operators can now have remote access to detailed information regarding the usage of VITO using their smartphone, tablet or computer - everywhere and anytime. The software allows seamless documentation and, therefore, maximum cost control.



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**Chef
Simon
says...**

Culinary Trends Express

Simon Martin, Executive Chef of Kerry Taste & Nutrition, has been sharing trends for our region since 2016

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

Compression Pastry: We've had cruffins. We've had cronuts. Next up... well, that's a big debate—are they Croons, Schwirls, Crombolinis, or pom poms? to call out a few names. However, you want to call them round compressed croissants, and they are truly the hottest thing in viennoiserie since Dominique Ansel. Unlike the classic French Kouign-Amann, these buttery, flaky circles of goodness are stuffed with craveable fillings and finished with sauces to drive your taste buds wild with excitement, then topped with decorations. Sweet and savory are popping up on menus and in shops, from pumpkin and chai lattes to salmon avocado with yuzu cream. **This concept brings out my inner child. It's amazing. Yum Yum!**

Ghost Chili: Bhut Jolokia, aka the famous Ghost Chili, is one of the hottest peppers in the world, topping over 1 million on the Scoville scale. It offers an intensely fruity, sweet chili flavor with heat that kicks in 30–45 seconds after eating (hence the name, as it creeps up on you like a ghost). It's definitely trending currently and can be found in candies, hot sauces, chips, and pickles. **It's hauntingly good, so give it a go and turn up the heat in your kitchen!**



New Kids on the Block- Yaupon & Guayusa: You've probably heard of yerba mate before, NO? Ok, but did you know that two other exciting species are now playing in the natural energy drink category? Say hello to Yaupon and Guayusa, the new "slow release" and "no crash" (headaches, tiredness, and irritability) alternatives to traditional caffeine...Get the fix without the crash. These are now seen coming to our region in Kombuchas, teas, and energy drinks and are making a big splash. **Could we be seeing energy chocolates or cookies? Who knows...!**

Move over, the Robo Chef is here: Yes, really, it's a 'robot chef' from the

University of Cambridge who has been trained to taste food at different stages of the chewing process and assess whether foods are sufficiently seasoned. The 'robot chef' tasted nine variations of a simple dish of scrambled eggs and tomatoes at three stages of the chewing process and produced 'taste maps' of the different dishes using a salinity sensor. In the future, the researchers are looking to improve the robot chef so it can taste different types of food and improve its sensing capabilities to taste sweet and oily food.... I guess the bigger question is, **"Will he have the craft skill and the character that define every cook/chef and make us unique among our white jacket brethren?"**



Chef's secret
ingredient!



At Taaza, we believe that fresh produce is the cornerstone of great cuisine. That's why we're committed to delivering the freshest, highest quality fruits and vegetables to our valued clients in the hospitality industry. From our handpicked selection to our personalized service, trust Taaza to provide the fresh, flavorful ingredients you need to elevate your culinary creations.

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LEADERS IN Bakery & Pastry Solutions

Partnered with the world's leading bakery and pastry ingredients manufacturers, Masterbaker Marketing FZCO specializes in supply of the best bakery and pastry ingredients to the region.

Masterbaker's cost effective solutions along with technical expertise provides convenience to the baker.

Together with dependability and the most recent innovative technology, Masterbaker is the one stop shop for all your baking needs.

OUR PARTNERS



OUR BRANDS

