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MARCH 2025

THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

gulf **gourmet**

volume 20, issue 3



The **Masterpiece**

With his belief in the power of emotions, Chef **Pierre Gagnaire** brings a new dimension to how people experience food at his restaurants. What makes his vision one of a kind?

FOR THE GREATER GOOD

Philanthropic initiative by the Emirates Culinary Guild improves education in rural Egypt



PLATING PROFESSIONALISM

Executive Chef **Saul Andrade** discusses how he tackles the ups and downs of his role



DOUBLE TAKE

Chef **Dheeraj Singh** from Zero Gravity is in the race for the top spot





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president'sstation

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Warmest wishes and Ramadan Kareem to our members and partners. As March leads us into this sacred month, conversations around mindfulness, sustainability and how we reduce food waste take center stage again.

Kahlil Gibran once said that work is love made visible, which finds perfect expression in cooking. Welcome to the March issue, where we explore the art of food, the stories it tells, and the love poured into every meal.

This month, we celebrate the legendary Pierre Gagnaire, a culinary legend who opens up about ingredients that create harmony in a restaurant. His philosophy is that life should not only be long but also rich in experiences.

We also bring you insights from Chef Saul Andrade, Executive Chef at Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers, as he shares how he navigates the highs and challenging lows of his culinary adventure and his aspirations for an evolving culinary landscape.

Another fascinating story comes from Chef Dheeraj, who discusses his dish for the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition, blending modern and traditional flavors. This hints us about the extraordinary Season Two, determined to give their best.

The second season of the Arla Pro Pastry Chef of the Year competition is here. We call upon pastry chefs in the UAE to compete in this fantastic



We explore the art of food, the stories it tells, and the love poured into every meal

competition, it is free to enter and the winner can experience a culinary immersion trip to Denmark.

We shine a spotlight on an incredible philanthropic initiative by the Emirates Culinary Guild. For nearly ten years, the Guild, alongside volunteers and a coalition of expatriates, has been dedicated to providing quality education to children in rural Egypt.

Their efforts show that culinary excellence extends beyond the kitchen.

Open yourself to fresh inspiration as Chef Tarek talks about his 36 transformative years in the industry and helps aspiring chefs find answers to their questions. Don't miss to read about Chef Helen Morris and her transition from the hustle of the kitchen to the world of education.

In a refreshing twist, Chef Tarryn-Leigh Green bravely discusses the myths surrounding the balance of family life and a culinary career, shedding light on the realities of "having it all" in the fast-paced food industry. We also feature a story about a food tech company that's breaking the egg barrier with sustainable egg substitutes that are gluten-free and have 95% fewer emissions than conventional egg white powder.

Finally, don't miss out on the latest trends shaking up the industry, insights into global opportunities for lamb and mutton, and how to set the stage for culinary success through mise en scène and mise en place. With rising culinary costs and a focus on longevity foods, our expert chefs share insights on reshaping culinary operations to grow in the current landscape. This issue is sure to leave you hungry for knowledge and inspiration. Every story in this issue holds a lesson and as we all know whether you're in a happy moment or facing a tough one there's always something to learn.

Alan Orreal



March 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

ggcontents

03 » President's Station

Chef **Alan Orreal** gives an overview of the season, which is all about art, science, food trends, and the love ingrained into every meal

06 » Friends of the Guild

Brands that support the Emirates Culinary Guild

10 » For the Greater Good

How the Emirates Culinary Guild's philanthropic initiative, supported by volunteers and a coalition of expatriates, is improving education in rural Egypt

12 » IFFCO Seafood Gala

IFFCO Professional and Scotland's Amity Fish Company hosted a fine-dining experience at Fairmont the Palm's Seagrill Bistro

14 » Plating Professionalism

Saul Andrade, Executive Chef at Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers discusses how he tackles the ups and downs of his role

18 » Cover Story

More than a chef, **Pierre Gagnaire** is a living masterpiece. His belief in the power of emotions switches up the way people experience food at his restaurants. What makes his vision one of a kind?

24 » A Culinary Journey

Chef **Helen Morris** details her transition from the hustle of the kitchen to the world of education

26 » Breaking the Egg Barrier

A quick take on a food tech company that serves sustainable egg substitutes while also being gluten-free

30 » Tarek's Tao

Looking back on his decades in the industry, Chef **Tarek Mouries** answers the question: did he shape his career, or did his career shape him?

33 » The Truth About Having It All

Chef **Tarryn-Leigh Green** discusses the myths surrounding the balance of family life and a culinary career

34 » Setting the Stage

Chef **Bobby Kapoor** shares his guide to planning Mise en Scene and Mise en Place to create unforgettable dining experiences

36 » Chit-Chat with Chef Carl

Chef **Carl Shi** offers his perspective on rising costs and the evolving landscape of culinary operations

39 » Meat With Sulemana

Abubakari Sadik Sulemana discusses the global market opportunities of Lamb and Mutton

40 » Elixir Of Life

In this third and final installment of the longevity foods series, Chef **Vivek Huria** continues to take a holistic approach to various wholesome ingredients

42 » Pastry Mastery

Chef **Dheeraj Singh** from Zero Gravity is set to battle for the top spot at the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition

48 » Guild Meeting

Pictures from the monthly Emirates Culinary Guild meeting

52 » Members Directory

A listing of all the leading food, beverage, and equipment suppliers in the region

58 » Simon Says

Explore the latest culinary innovations with Chef **Simon Martin**



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The Majlis at DWTC

A Timeless Ramadan Experience with a Modern Touch

As the Holy Month of Ramadan begins, The Majlis at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) has long been the destination of choice for Dubai residents and visitors seeking exceptional Iftar and Suhoor experiences. As with every year, at the heart of The Majlis' offering, is a deep commitment to honouring Ramadan traditions while also addressing community needs and sustainability.

Sustainability at its Heart

Sustainability plays a key role in curating The Majlis menu. Food waste remains a crucial concern, and DWTC Hospitality remains committed to addressing this challenge. By sourcing locally and incorporating more plant-based dishes, the focus remains on minimising waste while delivering a high-quality dining experience.

As part of these efforts, DWTC Hospitality continues its collaboration with Tarahum Charity Foundation and UAE Food Bank to distribute thousands of meals to families in need across the city throughout the month, while also reducing food waste. Through careful forecasting based on previous years' demand, The Majlis team ensures that every meal is thoughtfully planned and executed.

Honouring Tradition with a Modern Twist

While deeply rooted in tradition, the culinary approach at The Majlis embraces innovation. DWTC's culinary team continuously seeks ways to introduce new elements to beloved classics. Classic Ramadan dishes are reimagined to offer lighter and more modern variations. Alongside traditional favourites such as lamb and rice, contemporary elements are introduced, such as fusion-inspired creations that maintain authentic flavours while offering a fresh perspective.

By blending traditional flavours with modern techniques, The Majlis at DWTC presents a menu that appeals to both traditionalists and those seeking new culinary experiences. Whether through innovative flavour combinations, portion preparation, or the incorporation of global influences, The Majlis' experience is elevated to reflect the evolving tastes of its guests, and the ever-evolving gastronomic scene of Dubai.

The Art of Menu Curation

The preparation process for The Majlis begins months in advance, with meticulous attention given to ingredient selection, seasonal availability, and guest preferences. Since the timing of Ramadan shifts each year, the menu is thoughtfully

curated around the freshest produce available. Collaborations with local farms help guarantee the highest quality ingredients, while tastings and feedback sessions refine the final offerings.

A Culinary Journey Beyond Borders

The culinary vision for The Majlis is shaped by a blend of global influences, seamlessly integrating authentic local ingredients with international techniques. The result is a Ramadan dining experience that is both deeply rooted in tradition and refreshingly innovative.

A testament to DWTC Hospitality's world-class catering expertise, The Majlis AT DWTC continues to uphold its reputation as one of the city's most beloved and long-standing Ramadan dining destinations. By prioritising sustainability, collaborating with charitable organisations, and refining its approach year after year, it remains a distinguished venue for celebrating the Holy Month.

The Majlis at Dubai World Trade Centre opens its doors on Thursday 6 March 2025 and runs through until Eid Al Fitr, welcoming Dubai residents and visitors to enjoy unforgettable Iftar and Suhoor dining experiences during this special season of tradition, reflection and connection.

For more details: www.majlis.ae

March 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

Philanthropic Initiative by Emirates Culinary Guild Improves Education in Rural Egypt



For nine consecutive years, the Emirates Culinary Guild, along with volunteers and a coalition of expatriates, has been working to bring quality education to children in rural Egypt

The Emirates Culinary Guild has been a generous supporter, nurturing the future of countless children in the Egyptian countryside through a small school project. This compassionate initiative has made an enormous difference in the lives of numerous young Egyptians, providing them with opportunities they might otherwise have never experienced.

The project, established by a coalition of expatriates living in various villages across rural Egypt, responds to the urgent need to assist families facing financial hardships that prevent them from sending their children to school.

Through the dedication of the Emirates Culinary Guild and contributions from local and international supporters, this fund has opened the doors of education



to less fortunate families, enabling their children to enroll in school and receive a quality education.

As a result of this remarkable effort, these children are not only gaining academic knowledge but are also being equipped with the skills and confidence needed to build a promising future. Without their help over the years, many would have missed out on the opportunity of a lifetime.

These happy, laughing children are the next generation. The School Fund initiative has been operating with great success for 17 years and, in that

time, has financed the expenses of approximately 2,000 children. The expenditure includes registration fees and the purchase of school uniforms and books/writing materials. Several of these children have furthered their studies and obtained a university degree; others have started working in various jobs, especially in the hospitality sector. Notably, the number of girls attending school has risen dramatically, now making up approximately 50% of the student assembly. This shift has expanded their horizons, offering them a variety of career paths that were previously unimaginable. Among them, five exceptional children, three girls have

taken the monumental step of pursuing higher education at university.

The project has flourished because dedicated volunteers from the villages understand the community's needs and identify the families most in need of support. Rather than providing cash assistance, these volunteers pay out the funds to cover registration fees to enroll the children into the school and purchase study books, notebooks, and uniforms, which are then distributed directly to the children.

The accomplishments of this humble yet impactful initiative are a source of pride. ■

March 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

IFFCO Professional & Amity Fish Host **Exclusive Seafood Gala in Dubai**

IFFCO Professional teamed up with Scotland's Amity Fish Company to present a fine-dining experience at Fairmont the Palm's Seagrill Bistro. The event showcased premium Scottish seafood, expert culinary craftsmanship, and sustainable gastronomy

IFFCO Professional, IFFCO Group's broad-line solution provider for operators across all sectors in the food service industry, recently joined forces with one of Scotland's largest and most respected seafood suppliers, the Amity Fish Company, to host an exclusive evening of culinary classic dishes for a selection of Dubai's top Chefs.

The fine-dining extravaganza at Fairmont the Palms Seagrill Bistro was a testament to IFFCO Professional's commitment to showcasing culinary

excellence beyond taste and flavor. The event celebrated the artistry and innovation of Chef Karol Grzeskiewicz, highlighting his expertise in ingredient selection, meticulous preparation, and collaboration with the finest Scottish seafood to elevate the dining occasion.

Speaking on the success of the event, Justin Steinbach, CEO - IFFCO Professional, said: "At IFFCO Professional, our ongoing mission is perfectly clear: to deliver excellence and maximise customer satisfaction. As such, we are

constantly evolving our relationships with partners and stakeholders to improve our service and offerings. During our gala dinner, the combination of delicious seafood, sustainably sourced by the award-winning Amity, beautifully crafted by Fairmont the Palms Culinary Director Darren Andow and his kitchen team, we also highlighted the benefits of cooking with IFFCO Group's Rahma extra virgin carbon neutral olive oil, a premium product that aligns with contemporary consumer preferences for natural and nutritious food options."



Justin added: "Hosting the Gala Dinner was our way of responding to the support we receive from the UAE's culinary masters who manage the region's finest luxury establishments gastronomic kitchens, and showing appreciation for their confidence in us. We are very much looking forward to further successful collaborations in creating fine food experiences."

The inspirational event was held in the Fairmont Palm's luxurious surroundings of the Seagrill Bistro, under the tantalising theme of "Savour the Sea", and featured the finest Scottish seafood from AMITY FISH, famous for its commitment to sustainability and exceptional quality, in a range of dishes carefully curated by Chef Darren and his expert brigade and paired with the rich flavors of Rahma Organic Extra Virgin Olive Oil on a menu that showcased how the finest ingredients and creative culinary artistry can connect with a discerning audience.



As a key division of IFFCO, the UAE-based multinational group known for its portfolio of leading FMCG brands and industry solutions, IFFCO Professional is at the forefront of

the region's food service industry. By setting new benchmarks in quality and innovation, it continues to shape consumer-driven experiences that drive business success. ■



An Executive Chef's Guide to Plating Professionalism

Saul Andrade, Executive Chef at Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers shares a snippet of his journey, discussing how he tackles the ups and downs of his role and his aspirations for an evolving culinary landscape

Chef Saul Andrade has carved out his own space in the competitive hospitality scene, fueled by his love for culinary and the desire to create unforgettable dining experiences. His journey shows not just his dedication to his craft but also his vision for a culinary world that welcomes everyone, focuses on sustainability, and champions the spirit of teamwork. In a conversation with *Gulf Gourmet*, he elaborates on how he balances artistry, leadership, and culinary passion through perseverance.

What initially sparked your interest in the culinary arts?

My mom was a chef and owner of a restaurant, so she taught me the first cooking steps, and from there, my culinary appetite started.

Describe your role in your current position.

A typical day as a hotel Executive Chef is a whirlwind of creativity, precision, and relentless pursuit of culinary excellence. It begins early, often before the sun rises, with a review of the day's operations, from staffing schedules to ingredient inventory. The heart of the day is spent in the kitchen, where I oversee the culinary team, ensuring that every dish adheres to our high standards of taste, presentation, and consistency. This involves everything from tasting sauces to inspecting plating techniques.

Beyond the kitchen, I collaborate with other departments, such as F&B, front office, and sales, to develop special menus for events and accommodate dietary restrictions. We see a better way to be more sustainable to reduce, reuse, and recycle our resources. This cross-functional approach is essential for delivering exceptional dining experiences.

While the physical demands of the job are significant, the mental challenge is equally demanding. I constantly strive to stay updated on culinary trends, experiment with new flavors and adapt to changing guest preferences. At the



Witnessing satisfied guests and a motivated team is a testament to the hard work and dedication that goes into every meal

end of the day, the reward is immense; you are sure that the daily mission is done and your team is stronger than yesterday. Witnessing satisfied guests and a motivated team is a testament to the hard work and dedication that goes into every meal.

What unique challenges do you face, and how do you overcome them? Are there particular techniques you use to stay on top of everything?

As an Executive Chef, I face a variety of challenges, including balancing creativity and consistency and maintaining a balance between innovative dishes and classic favorites.

Other challenges include leading a team with diverse skill sets and cultural backgrounds, adapting to a wide range of dietary needs, sourcing sustainable ingredients, managing labor costs, minimizing food waste, and keeping up with the latest culinary trends and techniques.

To overcome these challenges, I focus on strong leadership, which includes effective communication, clear expectations, and a positive work environment. Encouraging teamwork, knowledge sharing among the culinary team, attending industry events, reading culinary publications, experimenting with new techniques, and using data to analyze performance and make informed decisions also helps.

By effectively addressing these challenges, I can maintain a high level of culinary excellence and ensure guest satisfaction. Be patient and look to the best hotels that are developing to create innovation and be ahead of the competition.

What prepared you for the high-pressure environment of a professional kitchen?

My culinary journey, marked by consistent training and hands-on experience, has equipped me to thrive in high-pressure kitchen environments. Years of honing my skills under seasoned chefs have instilled in me the discipline, precision, and ability to perform under pressure. I've learned to prioritize tasks, delegate effectively, and remain calm in the face of chaos. Additionally, my passion for culinary arts fuels my drive to consistently deliver exceptional results, even in the most demanding circumstances.

Looking back, what are you most proud of?

I am most proud of my ability to consistently deliver exceptional dining

experiences. This has been achieved through years of dedication, hard work, and a relentless pursuit of culinary excellence. Whether it's creating innovative dishes, mentoring a talented team, or managing complex operations, I strive to maintain the highest standards of quality and service.

What do you enjoy most about working as a chef?

The most rewarding aspect of being a chef is the opportunity to create and share culinary experiences and the best of my knowledge. I love the thrill of crafting a dish from scratch, experimenting with flavors, and witnessing the satisfaction on a guest's face. Additionally, the family environment within the kitchen, the constant learning, and the chance to mentor the next generation of chefs make this profession truly fulfilling.

How do you keep your creativity flowing in the kitchen? Do you experiment with new recipes or techniques outside of work?

To keep my creativity flowing, I often experiment with new ingredients and techniques in and out of the kitchen. I enjoy exploring different cuisines, trying new flavors, and learning from other chefs. The young fresh chefs always have a new skill to share. Traveling to diverse culinary destinations is also a great source of inspiration, exposing me to new ingredients, cooking styles, and cultural influences.

Even at home, I love experimenting with recipes, substituting ingredients or adding unique twists to classic dishes. This personal experimentation fuels my creativity and helps me develop new ideas for the restaurant; at home, my family loves my cooking experiences.

Can you describe a particularly memorable experience or achievement in your career as a chef?

I'm incredibly proud to have been nominated for Chef of the Year in the Middle East and Africa in 2019 and to



The thrill of crafting a dish from scratch, experimenting with flavors, and seeing a guest's satisfaction is what makes this profession truly fulfilling

have won third place in the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs competition among eight renowned 5-star hotels in Bahrain. These achievements have solidified my passion for culinary excellence and motivated me to continue pushing boundaries.

Communication is vital in a busy kitchen. What strategies do you use to ensure clear communication with your team?

Effective communication in a busy kitchen relies on clear instructions, visual aids, regular team meetings, open communication, active listening, positive reinforcement, strong hierarchical design, and ongoing training.

Effective communication is essential in a high-pressure kitchen environment. To ensure clear and efficient communication, I implement several strategies. I provide clear and concise instructions, avoiding jargon and unnecessary details. I use visual aids like diagrams and written instructions to complement verbal communication.

I hold regular team meetings to discuss upcoming events, address concerns, and provide feedback. I encourage open communication and encourage my team to approach me with any questions or concerns. I actively listen to my team's feedback and suggestions,

I recognize and reward good performance for motivating the team, a well-defined hierarchy ensures clear lines of communication and accountability, and regular training sessions keep the team updated on new techniques, food safety standards, and menu changes.

By combining these strategies, one can create a positive and productive kitchen environment where everyone understands their role and works together efficiently.

How would you like to see the culinary industry and other workplaces evolve into inclusive spaces?

I envision a culinary industry and workplaces that are truly inclusive and equitable. This would involve encouraging diversity in leadership roles, creating opportunities for individuals from all backgrounds, and ensuring fair wages, benefits, and equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender, race, or sexual orientation. It would also be about prioritizing mental health and providing resources for employees to address stress and burnout, offering flexible work schedules and remote work options to accommodate diverse needs and lifestyles. Inclusive training programs that address unconscious bias and promote cultural sensitivity, fostering a culture of open communication where everyone feels heard and valued, will also be beneficial. By implementing these strategies, we can create workplaces that are more inclusive, innovative, productive, and fulfilling for all. I know that is a dream place to work.

How do you stay motivated personally and professionally, especially when facing challenging situations?

To maintain motivation, I prioritize a

balanced approach to work and personal life. I ensure adequate rest, engage in regular physical activity, and practice mindfulness techniques like football to release stress.

Professionally, I stay motivated by my passion for culinary arts and the constant pursuit of knowledge. I seek out opportunities to learn new techniques, experiment with flavors, and collaborate with talented chefs to develop them. Setting clear goals and celebrating achievements, both big and small, keeps me focused and inspired. When faced with challenges, I adopt a positive mindset, focusing on finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems. Setbacks are opportunities for growth and learning. By maintaining a positive outlook and a strong work ethic, I am able to overcome obstacles and achieve my goals.

Which chefs or food industry leaders inspire you? What lessons have you learned from them?

The work of chefs like José Avillez and Henrique Sá Pessoa truly inspires me. Their innovative approach to Portuguese cuisine, blending tradition with modernity, has elevated the country's culinary scene.

I admire their passion, creativity, and relentless pursuit of excellence, transforming heritage food into trendy food.

From my mentor, Nelson Mandela, I learned the importance of perseverance, resilience, and the power of forgiveness. His unwavering commitment to social justice and equality continues to inspire me to use my platform to make a positive impact on the world.

What advice would you give to individuals hesitant about pursuing their culinary dreams?

Don't let fear hold you back. Embrace the challenges and journey. Start small, learn from experienced chefs, and never stop learning. Remember, passion and perseverance are key ingredients to success in the culinary world. Never



Setbacks are opportunities for growth and learning. A positive outlook and strong work ethic help overcome any obstacle

forget that you can always start again and again from the beginning.

What role has your family played in supporting your journey as a chef?

My family is the pillar of my performance; they balance my life triangle, work, family, and friends, and have been my constant support, motivating me to pursue my culinary dreams. Their staunch belief in my abilities has pushed me to strive for excellence. Whether it's cheering me on during competitions or offering constructive criticism, their influence has been invaluable. With their support, I've been able to overcome challenges and achieve my goals. Without them, I can't do it.

Is there anyone you'd like to thank who has helped you on your journey?

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the many individuals who have supported me throughout my culinary journey. In particular, I would like to thank Chef Stephan Kuehlwetter and Chef Antonio Bastos for their invaluable guidance and mentorship. I am also deeply grateful to my loving wife, Miriam Betania Andrade, and my entire family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement. Their belief in me has been a constant source of motivation, and I am forever indebted to them.

Lastly, could you share more about your dreams and vision for the future?

My vision for the future is to continue growing and evolving as a leader. I aspire to reach the position of Hotel General Manager, where I can oversee all aspects of hotel operations, including culinary services.

To achieve this goal, I will focus on developing my leadership skills, expanding my knowledge of hotel management, and building strong relationships with colleagues and guests. I am committed to fostering a positive and inclusive work environment while maintaining the highest standards of quality and service. Ultimately, I hope to create a lasting impact on the hospitality industry by inspiring and mentoring the next generation of culinary professionals. ■

March 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

Le Chef-d'Œuvre

More than a chef, **Pierre Gagnaire** is a living masterpiece, defined by an unapologetic passion for culinary arts. In his interview with **Gulf Gourmet**, the French Master Chef tells **Shreya Asopa** about the core mantras that create harmony in a restaurant. He believes that emotions shape the entire dining experience. Grounded in this philosophy, he leads Pierre's TT in Dubai; after all, what are we without emotions?

It's mysterious how fate nudges us toward our calling, leaving just enough space for what might have unfolded if the stars had aligned differently. For

Chef Pierre Gagnaire, the kitchen was both an inheritance and unforeseen; never a childhood dream, yet something he was always meant to master.

"If I weren't a chef, I don't know what I could have been. I have done this job for a long time. When I was young, my dreams were influenced by my family's choices. But very quickly, I was surprised by all the pleasure I found in this work. My work became my mission. Turns out, becoming a chef was my destiny."



Find your own voice. Cook for your own soul, not for others

This steady incandescence of a mind fully consumed in mission has led the celebrated Michelin chef to establish multiple restaurants, including his fast-emerging endeavor in Dubai, Pierre's TT.

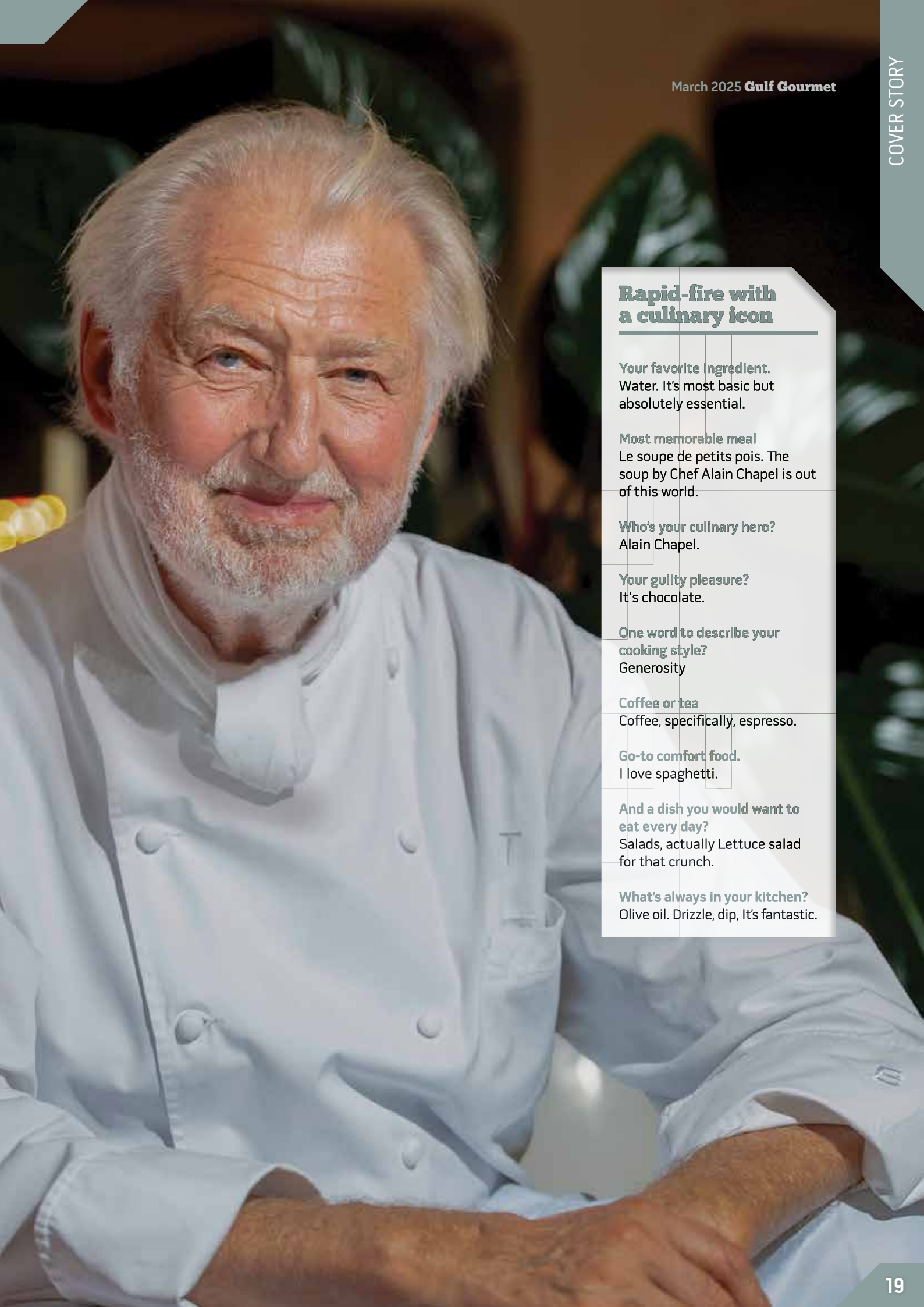
Exchanging courtesies online, he struck me as reserved but with soulful intellect. The pleasant morning air was agog, leaving me eager to learn more about his vision for running a restaurant and how one lives a legendary life. Admittedly, within minutes, his earnest aura began to radiate, thawing the icy reserve that had first struck me.

Born in Apinac, a charming village in France, Chef Gagnaire began his culinary training in Chef Paul Bocuse's restaurant in 1965. After going through a cascade of culinary adventures around the globe, he returned to his roots, joining his father's Michelin-starred restaurant. It was in the early 80's when he opened his own restaurant in the heart of Saint Etienne. A year later, his modern take on French cuisine, folding in art and molecular gastronomy, distinguished him with a Michelin star.

"In my family, food was nothing fancy. It was about enjoying le goûter, just chocolate wrapped in a slice of bread and butter, even though my father was a chef with a restaurant," says the 74-year-old candidly, dressed in a simple white t-shirt that speaks volumes about his unpretentious nature.

From stepping into the kitchen at 14 to watching the culinary landscape evolve, he had gained a vantage point. "Dubai, for instance, is another world today." As he closed his eyes for a moment, he





Rapid-fire with a culinary icon

Your favorite ingredient.
Water. It's most basic but absolutely essential.

Most memorable meal
Le soupe de petits pois. The soup by Chef Alain Chapel is out of this world.

Who's your culinary hero?
Alain Chapel.

Your guilty pleasure?
It's chocolate.

One word to describe your cooking style?
Generosity

Coffee or tea
Coffee, specifically, espresso.

Go-to comfort food.
I love spaghetti.

And a dish you would want to eat every day?
Salads, actually Lettuce salad for that crunch.

What's always in your kitchen?
Olive oil. Drizzle, dip, It's fantastic.

could almost hear a colorful mosaic of Dubai's rise. "Thirty years ago, it was a blank slate. Today, whatever you need is available here; it's a place where people from all over the world come to work, live, and explore."

The globalization of cuisine has changed eating habits, making them more diverse than ever. He further notes, "Food is like the world...more open now. Now, you enjoy dishes from various cultures, Mexican, Peruvian, or Emirati, rather than strictly sticking to geographical options. You have a burger; you have street food. It's a fusion."

Who understands globalization better than one of the pioneers of modern French cuisine? Chef Gagnaire's respect for the rich history of gastronomy,



For somebody like me, who travels a lot, staying authentic is not easy. We can do that because my team is very stable

melding modern techniques, and having a global perspective runs through his restaurants.

His Dubai restaurant, Pierre's TT, is already notable for its French culinary

influences and emotional connection to each dish. Among many dishes he fleetingly touches upon, a highlight is the Chocolate Soufflé. "This recipe is pretty old, around 50 years now, and it will be on my menu in restaurants all over the world," he states.

While food matters, he notes the atmosphere also brings customers back. In a world where everyone is glued to their smartphones and immersed in the digital realm, the definition of dining out has been updated. "Dining out is now about connection, love, and warmth. Now, many restaurants value atmosphere, service, and quality. You'll likely return if you sense all that upon entering the place. In Dubai, our restaurant may not be the most extravagant, but it is honest. You can



feel genuine happiness as our staff will make you feel welcome."

The spirit of his restaurant is made of multiple ingredients, including his life perspective, a multifaceted culinary approach, and food becoming a medium of connection and emotion. "Emotion is not only the food; it's the overall experience. It is about serving with honesty and tenderness. We have the service team alongside Chef de Cuisine Mathieu Balbino, who create a rhythm that flows through the restaurant. Their personalities give a tempo to Pierre's TT."

With each playing their part in his restaurant, the music of food created by the team in syzygy resonates within their walls. However, in making this melody, one needs constant motivation. In a husky voice, he adds, "Last week, I didn't leave the hotel; I stayed with my team. It's all about teamwork, encouraging them, and sharing knowledge."

Gliding through Trends without Losing Oneself

Alongside trends comes a precarious path of serving authentic dishes. To last in such a volatile environment, you really have to hang on to what you really are. Even after years in the industry, Chef Gagnaire has maneuvered through with an approach that acts as a litmus test for remaining grounded in one's purpose.

"For somebody like me, who travels a lot, being here and there, staying authentic is not easy," he admitted. "We can do that because my team is very stable. We enter a new world of comprehending products. People are more aware and health conscious now. Authenticity is not only in the creation of dishes but also in the raw ingredients," he explains, adding even the simplest elements of nature, like water, deserve respect in a world that's increasingly losing touch with its origins. "The earth is alive," he expressed, "and we must honor its gifts."

Intuitive artificial technology, the endless scrolling on superficial social



Feel alive in what you do. If you don't approach your work with an open heart, the inevitable crash is merely the beginning of disappointment

media, and algorithm-driven content have emerged in the industry, like a haunting paradox from The Eagles' "Hotel California," where we realize, "You

can check out any time you like, but you can never leave." But can they replace the human touch and connection in the kitchen? "I recall a conversation with a chef who experimented with AI," Chef Gagnaire glowingly shares an anecdote about an Egyptian chicken recipe with honey, figs, and dates he entered into AI.

"Can you imagine where that chicken found itself cooked?" he dramatically paused, and I anticipated a gourmet restaurant. And then he drops it: "In the tomb of Ramses II," he chortles, further explaining we still have a long way to go before robotics and technology replace chefs.

When discussing advice for young chefs who tend to pursue instant success and jump through the ranks, he points out

that it can be challenging to provide guidance to the younger generation.

However, with a gentle push, he goes on to share a thought from his bank of lessons: "When I was young, I too made mistakes."

As he articulates these thoughts, his eyes flicker with a youthful spark. "I believed that my work was enough for the world. But it wasn't," he says, adding that the most rewarding moment of his culinary journey and the most challenging moment panned out simultaneously.

"In 1996, the restaurant in Saint-Étienne closed due to financial issues. It was a



There's no cookbook for a legendary life. If I could bottle it, I'd call it the essence of living, best left unmeasured, the *je ne sais quoi*

gut-wrenching decision, but I realized that freedom is money. If it's art, it's also business." Paradoxically, it turned out to be the best decision he ever made; as he

puts it, "With it, I was finally able to turn the page and start a new chapter of my career. That year, nearly 30 years ago, still matters to me."

In a tone of reasonability, he says, "I'm glad younger artists understand the need to make money. Because freedom is not just in the stars; it also depends on what you have in your pocket. Over time, you can gauge your success, and only a few remain in the game for the long haul. Ultimately, time is the true judge."

He says with further brewing enthusiasm, "Feel alive in what you do. If you don't approach your work with an open heart, the inevitable crash is





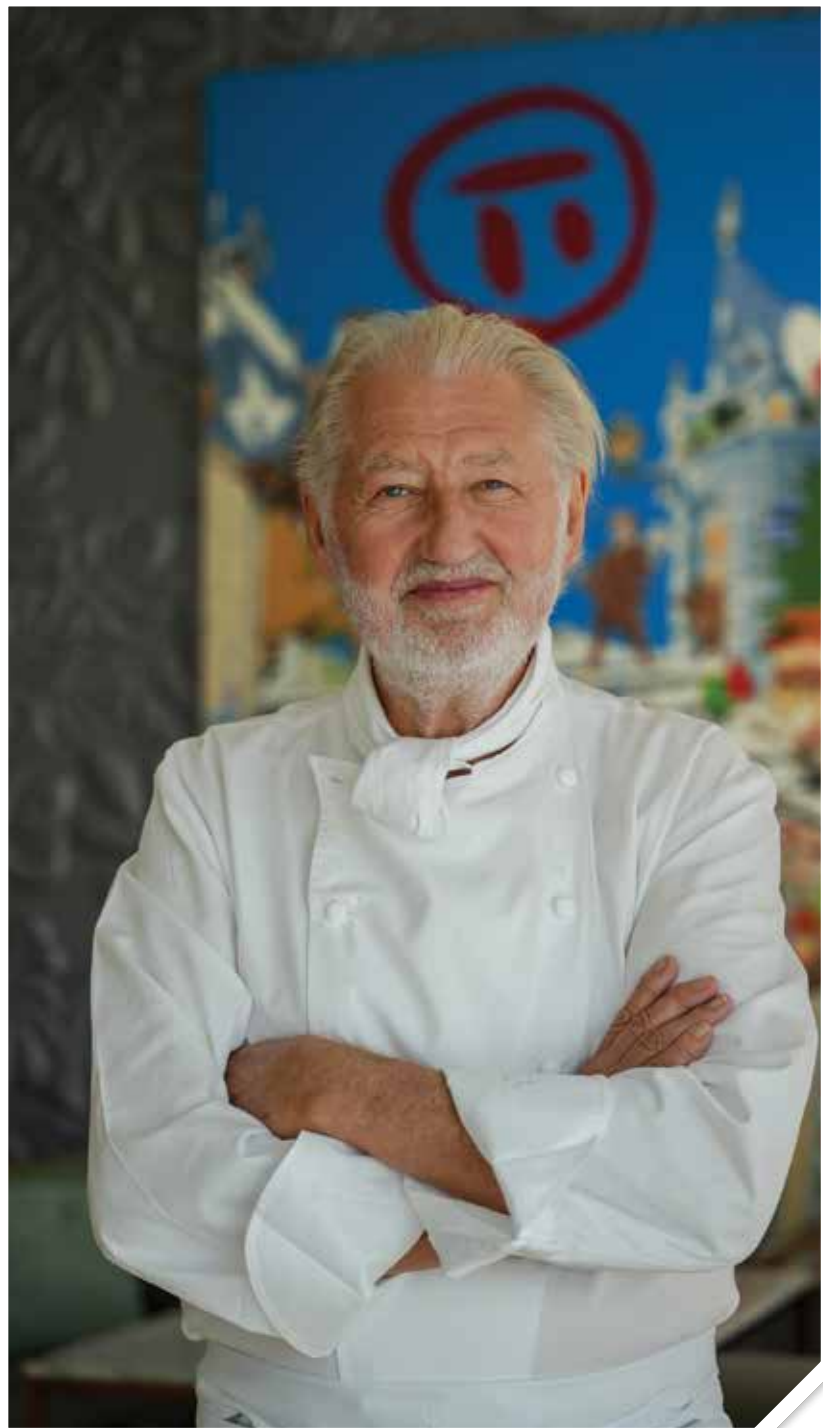
Emotion is not only in the food; it's the overall experience. It is about serving with honesty and tenderness

merely the beginning of disappointment. Just be yourself. You may stumble along the way, but those mistakes become meaningful lessons."

"And above all..take a note of that..," he urged. "...find your own voice. Cook for your own soul, not for others." He explains that having a mentor to guide you and a vision that captures your imagination is invaluable in the early stages. "But as you grow, you must cultivate your voice to express your art. Then comes talent; you either possess it or you don't. I am not perfect; I may not have all the talent in the world, but I do have my strengths." I nodded at his wise words about the beauty of imperfections, understanding with each passing year, his life gains new layers of richness. It's the depth of life that counts, not the duration.

In plain sight, one might perceive him as someone easing his pace in the kitchen, but in reality, his schedule remains as demanding as ever. "The day goes by with my teams and guests, curating our product offerings. It can be tough sometimes; friendships fade, and other passions outside these walls often fall by the wayside. I love skiing and the serenity of the mountains, but those hobbies feel like distant memories now. I do find a little time to cherish moments with my family and, most importantly, enjoy the tranquility that silence brings. Never underestimate the power of silence."

The future is not something he thinks about; he prefers to focus on the



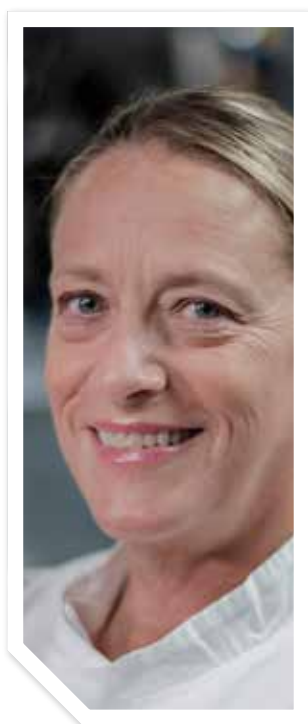
present, serving quality food and creating an impactful experience at his restaurants. Being true to himself has long guided him, an axiom that has empowered him to shatter the glass ceiling and pen a milestone script that inspired many to follow.

Today, he operates 16 restaurants and holds 14 Michelin stars. He has expanded his portfolio with several restaurants in Paris, Shanghai, London, Tokyo, Dubai,

and many others around the globe. It's rare for me to meet someone so celebrated who remains grounded.

By the end of the conversation, it really hit me that there's no cookbook for a legendary life. If I could bottle it, I'd call it the essence of living, best left unmeasured, the *je ne sais quoi*. Perhaps it's just about being yourself, something known only to those who dare to taste life in all its messy, beautiful flavors. ■

A Culinary Journey: From Passionate Beginnings and Beyond



(Dubai Calls! The Final Chapter)

From London's kitchens to the classrooms of Dubai, Chef Helen Morris took the task to shape the next generation of hospitality professionals. But the transition wasn't as simple as trading a chef's jacket for a lecturer's podium. What she learned along the way might surprise you

Well, there it was—my educational experience in the UK coming to an end, like a perfectly cooked steak ready to be plated. But instead of serving up the usual career path, I decided to add some international seasoning to my professional journey. Much like a chef staring at a pantry full of ingredients, I thought, why stick to the same old recipe when there's a whole world of flavors to explore?

So, I sharpened my CV like a well-worn chef's knife and started looking for opportunities overseas. What I didn't mention in my last article was that I had the chance to do a six-month stint in Dubai—a sabbatical; connections, with my job back home waiting for me. But, just like when a student submits a paper without proofreading, things didn't quite rise to the occasion due to factors beyond my control.

However, the idea of working abroad had been simmering away on the back burner. And then—one email, one CV later, and that faithful connection—I found myself being flown to Dubai for an all-expenses-paid interview at a prestigious hospitality school. Now, I've had some great interviews

in my time, but this one? Five-star experience. It wasn't just the flight, the accommodation, or the fact that I wine and dined in one of the most iconic buildings in Dubai (though I wasn't complaining). It was stepping onto that campus and realizing—this wasn't just a school. It was a luxury resort disguised as an academic institution.

The students were so polished and professional that I had to double-check I wasn't walking into a board meeting. It was like they had already been marinated in the industry—dressed to impress, greeting me with the kind of customer service some five-star establishments dream of. And let's not forget the weather—it was February, the sun was shining, and there I was, gazing at my potential new home with the Burj Al Arab standing tall in the background.

Well, that was that. I was ready to pack my bags faster than a student who'd just submitted their final dissertation. There was just one tiny issue—I had to check a map to figure out exactly where the UAE was! From the bustling grey skies of London to the shimmering skyscrapers of Dubai, I had officially hit the hospitality/educational jackpot.

What started as "I'll stay for three years"



Much like a chef staring at a pantry full of ingredients, I thought, why stick to the same old recipe when there's a whole world of flavors to explore?

turned into, "Okay, maybe five." Before I knew it, over fifteen years had flown by.

Now, what made this place so special? It wasn't just the students, the staff, or even the endless sunshine; it was the whole package. I got the best of both worlds: teaching in the classroom, rolling up my sleeves in the kitchen, and keeping my culinary skills sharper than my best set of knives. It was a dream—I was back where I belonged—stirring the pot, literally and figuratively, while shaping the next generation of hospitality professionals.

The cherry on the cake was that I worked with an outstanding F & B team, and we all had the same common goal – to provide the best F & B learning and experiences possible.

Of course, this wasn't just about plating up gourmet dishes. Teaching at a university meant I had to add a dash of academic rigor to my recipe. Gone were the days of simply instructing someone to "season to taste"—now, I had to reference it in Harvard style. There's a special kind of challenge in explaining why béchamel, a mother sauce in 2,000 words, is backed up by scholarly articles. Ok, so, not quite it was hospitality management theory. But hey, I love a challenge. Let's be honest—grading papers is just like judging a three-course meal. Some are Michelin-star worthy, some need a lot more seasoning, and some, well... get sent back to the kitchen for a rewrite.

But the real fun happened outside the classroom. We weren't just teaching; we were creating experiences! From guest chef dinners and student competitions to food festivals and pop-up events, the school was basically Hogwarts for hospitality. We even had a food truck experience! And let me tell you, our equipment would make most restaurant kitchens green with envy.

It wasn't all work and no play. Networking in Dubai is a fine art, and I quickly learned that knowing the right



people gets you onto VIP lists, exclusive events, and the kind of parties that students dream of but lecturers pretend not to know about. My work days were full of lectures and kitchen practicals, but my social calendar? That was a whole separate tasting menu of experiences. And the friendships I made? Stronger than a well-proved sourdough.

Now, always thinking ahead (like any good chef prepping for service), I knew I needed a postgraduate degree to unlock future opportunities. So, after 11 years of university, I returned to school while working. Returning to academia after over a decade felt like stepping into a kitchen without *mise en place*. Suddenly, I was a student struggling to keep up with academic jargon and referencing styles and realizing that Wikipedia was not a credible source.

But you know what? I was outside my comfort zone. Researching, studying, and meeting deadlines was like prepping for a high-pressure dinner service, except instead of serving guests, I was serving up research papers. I finally graduated with the classification I wanted and passport in hand, ready to reward myself with as much travel as possible in that same year. And then... BOOM! The Pandemic.

Just like an overbooked restaurant that suddenly comes to a grinding standstill mid-service, my travel plans came to a screeching halt. Thankfully, Dubai handled it better than many places, and life continued, and we eventually made

it to the new norm—eventually. However, things can change over time, and as any chef will tell you, when the flavor of a place changes and no longer matches your palate, it's time to move on. And I did just that. So, my next adventure began in Doha, Qatar.

After nearly 16 months here, I can say it feels less like I "left" Dubai and more like I just moved down the road. Doha is calm, compact, and easy to navigate, and I've built another fantastic hospitality network. Because that's what our industry is about: supporting each other, just like a well-run kitchen brigade.

Do I miss Dubai? Of course! Fifteen years is a long time and will always be my second home. I still visit and catch up with friends, and I know that one phone call will have someone helping me out instantly. That's the beauty of hospitality—it's a family, no matter where you go.

So, what's cooking for the future? Well, I'm prepping for early retirement, even if it is still some time away, and you know what that means—travel, travel, and more travel! But for now, Doha, you've been warm and welcoming, and life here is fantastic. My heart, though? It will always belong to Dubai.

So, whether you're in a classroom, a kitchen, or just figuring out your next move—keep shaking those pans, seasoning your experiences, and savoring every moment of this incredible journey. ■



Breaking the Egg Barrier

Meet the Netherlands-based food tech company that is reviving the food landscape with egg substitutes, serving up the desired texture for egg lovers while also being gluten-free

Shreya Asopa

Not too long ago, absentmindedly scrolling through tested baking recipes, a thought about the staple ingredients we take for granted took residence in my heart. Among flour, baking powder, and butter, it was eggs that drew a line beneath it all for me.

Ferretting about what life would be without it, the egg vortex swept me to a report from Research And Markets, which predicted the egg processing market would soar from USD 37.5 billion in 2024 to USD 47.2 billion by 2029. The numbers tell a story of a booming industry, though it lays a reality that is anything but



We are reviving old habits and introducing people to all-natural foods again

picture-perfect. Sure, eggs have a smaller environmental footprint, but let us not gloss over issues like harsh treatment, health scares, and culling. It's definitely not the sunny side of this industry.

Further rumination led me to explore half a dozen companies making news

with sustainable alternatives that rival eggs. Among them, one food tech company particularly piqued my interest due to its eggless, gluten-free solution.

Sitting over the other side of the screen was Jordania Valentim, Chief Commercial Officer of Revvyve. Jordania has been with the company since before it was named Revvyve. A food engineer and now a commercial leader (which explains her unique perspective on the industry), her role in the company is to understand where Revvyve can create the most value and bring those insights to market.

"Eggs have a very difficult supply chain. We are working on an alternative that replaces eggs and artificial texturizers,

as well as reducing the carbon footprint, with our ingredient having 95% fewer emissions than conventional egg white powder," said Valentim.

From the brainchild of Dr. Edgar Suárez García and Dr. Corjan van den Berg to the leadership of CEO Cedric Verstraeten, Revyve has become a thriving company in just six years, with its innovation centered on giving a second chance to yeast that would otherwise be discarded.

"We are reviving old habits and introducing people to all-natural foods again. We use the principles of circular economy to transform the food industry into a cleaner space. We use yeast from sidestreams, which time after time gets relegated to the waste bin, then process it and separate the proteins and fibers from it while maintaining a natural process. What we get are ingredients that act as egg replacers and texturizers."

Jordania was racking up brownie points because when confusion hit my face from some pedantic interpretation, she was quick to say, "Alright, let me break it down for you." She elaborated, "We have baker's yeast and brewer's yeast that we turn into two ingredients. Instead of relying on chemicals, we have a proprietary process, just like milling wheat, where whole wheat needs to be broken down to unleash its proteins and fibers and make bread, pizzas, and a whole host of other things; we do the same with yeast in a way that's all-natural and solvent-free."

With the rising demand for gluten-free options, their progressive solution of gluten-free baker's yeast found a way to bridge the gap of texture and stretchiness that usually goes MIA when you toss in non-natural gums. Designed with a process that cleans, mills, and dries the yeast at low temperatures, the proteins offer the same benefits as eggs, such as gelling, emulsifying, and foaming.

"It's like an egg. When heated, the proteins in eggs denature and



We use the principles of the circular economy to transform the food industry into a cleaner space

coagulate, turning from a clear liquid into an opaque, gel-like solid. Revyve works the same way. The shades are more of a beige color than the snow-white of eggs, which also enhances culinary appeal," she explained.

People have consumed yeast for centuries, and let's face it, egg replacers are not a far cry from being on our tables. Revyve leverages this long-standing familiarity with yeast, making it a viable substitute for egg powder.

"Whether in spreads to enhance cheese flavor, in the batter for crispy nuggets, in emulsions by mixing the powder with oil and water to enhance the texture of plant-based and blended meat proteins, or in baking for a chef who wants to reduce egg without compromising nutrition and taste, chefs can use Revyve. In the industry, egg white powder is commonly used. So it is kind of the same but with better shelf life than eggs," she reiterated.

With cookies, cruffins, fusion baking, bold flavors, and health-conscious and plant-based options being touted as trends to watch in the baking landscape, the paradigm shift for chefs is no longer just about shaking off the cobwebs of conventional approach; it is also centered on integrating sustainable ingredients into the dishes.

"Our job is to make the chef's life easier. If you want to change the world, be the difference, then we want to

provide you with something to make a difference," she expressed.

Prompting her about collaborations with chefs, she revealed they are engaging directly with food services, restaurants, and catering operations, viewing this as a swift way to impact the food system. Why? "Because launching a new label typically drags on for 6 to 12 months with all the design, product launch, and retail placement headaches. Instead, you can present the ingredient list when you serve it. And we have seen that many companies venturing into the plant-based space have opted for food services first because it's simply more expedient."

Jordania articulates at length the complexities of ingredient substitutes, noting that it's much more than a straightforward replacement of one ingredient for another, merely exchanging a gram of egg for a gram of something else. "Achieving the right balance requires understanding how to use these alternatives in the kitchen effectively. The quantities and proportions test us. The remaining challenge is to communicate how to integrate these ingredients in different culinary applications."

Price competitiveness remains another decisive facet, one she believes can be dealt with by positioning products across the market spectrum. "For example, when considering products like mayonnaise, which is typically used in smaller quantities for emulsification, our pricing is substantially lower than that of traditional egg components. In contrast, when we look at plant-based burgers, a crispy texture can require a larger amount of our ingredients. We have price parity so that you get the price right to taste right."

Weighing in on scalability, she analyzes their grip on market dynamics. They did not struggle to keep their boots on the ground in North America, including Canada and Mexico as they secured an exclusive distribution agreement with

Lallemand Bio-Ingredients to distribute Revvyve's yeast-based food ingredients across the region. Last year, the company also secured the first overseas distribution agreement with the UK's Daymer Ingredients. "The response from the Daymer Ingredients partnership has been fantastic. We have started many projects with them and their customers. But we need to learn more to understand the market, find local partners, and focus on expansion plans."

The impact of their first commercial facility in Dinteloord moves in tandem with these efforts. Current projections estimate that by the end of 2025, they will engineer a production capacity of 48 million eggs, which is double the capacity of December 2024. By 2027, the goal is a staggering fivefold increase.

Behind the glitter of sustainability and taste, nutrition cannot be brushed under the carpet. When nutrition comes up, Jordania makes it clear that she prefers to back up claims with data. "The Protein Digestibility-Corrected Amino Acid Score (PDCAAS) of our product is slightly better than eggs and matches that of whey. This makes for a highly digestible protein. Besides, we are making them more accessible to diverse groups, such as older people, athletes, or anyone following a keto diet in need of extra protein."

"And by the way, we don't have cholesterol," she quipped while also pointing out an important trade-off. "When you remove the egg and replace it with starch, you're sacrificing protein. We're here to help chefs maintain that protein level."

Entering the food market with new ideas is complex. "It was definitely a risk, but we always believed in our product." Her conviction cuts to the core as we see their team of senior leaders who left corporate careers to support the vision for sustainability and take the leap.

When I asked her to pick her favorite dish made with Revvyve ingredients, she



If you want to change the world, be the difference, then we want to provide you with something to make a difference

gave a puzzled look, clearly a telltale sign of contemplation. "I can never pick just one!" she exclaimed immediately. "Very recently, we prepared a holiday

feast at our workplace, and every dish used renewable ingredients. We had Japanese pancakes (okonomiyaki), Colombian cheese doughnuts, crispy tempura vegetables, Margarita with yeast foam, and brownies. Choosing just one dish? Impossible."

They say you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs. Much like life, where plans frequently get scrambled into unexpected shapes, maybe it's time we educate ourselves about these changes. After all, whether we're making traditional omelets or reconstructing them with modern substitutes, creating something involves taking risks of breaking a few eggs. ■



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What 36 Years in the Culinary World Have Taught Me

Looking back on his decades in the industry, Chef **Tarek Mouriess** answers the question: did he shape his career, or did his career shape him?

Dedicated to those we hold dear and who have guided my way.

February 28th means the world to me. It marks 36 years of growing, learning, and living in the UAE. To me, the UAE isn't just home; it's where I've built a life, found my passion, and created memories for a lifetime.

Just like any starry-eyed kid, I once had sky-high, unbridled dreams. But life had other plans. Growing up on a farm and losing my father while I was still a student threw me into a world I wasn't ready for. It was a tough time; thankfully, somewhere along the way, I found my true calling in cooking.

In the winter of 1983, two years after graduating, this Egyptian lad landed in Zurich, joining the Nova Park on Badenstrasse. I barely spoke the dialect, I hardly slept, and for a whole year, I didn't even visit home. Everything was new, overwhelming, and, at times, exhausting. Private restaurants weren't a thing where I came from, but suddenly, I was exploring local farms and bakeries, tasting flavors that felt like a whole new world.

That chapter led me to something I never saw coming. One of my mentors, Chef Alphonso Pertechy, hired me as a kitchen instructor at César Ritz Colleges Switzerland, where I mentored others, teaching them how to perfect recipes. It was a beautiful experience at one of the world's best culinary schools.

It was also there I experienced a



February 28th means the world to me. It marks 36 years of growing, learning, and living in the UAE

moment that will stay with me forever. It was there I met the love of my life, the mother of my children, now departed - Minita Mariam Chandy. She was my student then, but so much more. Now, she lives on in my heart, a memory both beautiful and bittersweet.

And then, the UAE beckoned me. Paul Alert, who recruited me for the Dubai Hilton, redefined everything. From 1991 to 1996, I had the honor of serving as the Executive Sous Chef in Dubai, a position I earned through my own merit and hard work. Those five years taught me a lot, and I was pleased to return to where my journey as a chef in the UAE began, the Al Ain Hilton.

Here, I refined my skills, built friendships, and created a career I truly love. Incredible journey. Now, as I think about these amazing years, I want to share something with the next generation of chefs. So many young dreamers ask me the same questions, and I think this is the perfect time to address these questions and pass on some of the lessons I've picked up along the way.

What are the most important skills to develop as a chef?

Mastering basic cooking techniques like knife skills, flavor balancing, baking, and pastry fundamentals. And to truly thrive, you must also develop:

- ♦ **Humility** – Always stay open to learning and never assume you know everything.
- ♦ **Adaptability** – The kitchen is fast-paced; be ready to adjust quickly.
- ♦ **Communication** – Clear and respectful communication fosters teamwork.
- ♦ **Patience and Perseverance** – I believe that there is great peace in consistency, and of course, success doesn't happen overnight

- ♦ **Creativity** – Dare to innovate and experiment with flavors and presentations.

Total effort leads to success. Give your all, face challenges with resolve, and perseverance will bring results.

Let me tell you a story. In the early days, during one of my interviews, the recruiting team put me to the test, and there was no sugarcoating. They handed me a disposable jacket and told me to make hollandaise sauce. Then, they gave me an 80-gram beef medallion and asked for medium-rare, and I remember I gauged with my thumb to check the doneness and a thermometer to back me up. Then came the veggie chopping test. I asked for a ruler. The second the team heard it, they stopped the process and gave me the job.

It's a different story that I chose not to accept the offer. The weight of my circumstances and personal priorities influenced my decision.

But what did I learn? Trust yourself. Adapt, be creative. And never underestimate the power of details. Sometimes, the smallest things, like asking for a ruler, can make the biggest impact.

How do you find a unique cooking style?

Your signature style will evolve as you gain experience, travel, and experiment. Develop your style through learning from different cuisines, staying curious, reading, observing mentors, practicing, and visiting authentic street food shops. And for the most essential skill, let me walk you through another tale. It was during a visit from senior guild members to mentor young chefs, and I remember Chef Andy teaching them about omelet. While chatting with young chefs, he asked, "How do you make an omelet?" One of them answered, "With hands." Andy laughed and gently corrected him, "With heart."

That's the secret right there. Cooking isn't just about technique. It's about passion, about putting your heart into every dish.



Cooking isn't just about technique. It's about passion, about putting your heart into every dish

How important is mentorship in a chef's journey?

The guidance of experienced chefs can shape you. Find mentors who inspire you, and listen to their advice. Growth comes from learning from mistakes. Once you gain experience, mentor others in return.

I'll never forget what my mentor, Chang Cey Wen, once told me. He saw real potential in me and said I could lead our team. At first, I was scared because I didn't speak great English during that time, and in a busy kitchen, that mattered. But he took me under his wing, teaching me skills I didn't even realize I was missing. That's when I understood that most of us don't get enough formal training. We learn by doing, by listening, by helping each other.

Even though you have earned stars or accolades, what truly matters isn't the title; it's the people. Many of my former team members have moved on to other restaurants, but they still reach out for advice. That means the world to me. The bonds we built in the kitchen last far beyond the job.

The challenges I faced aren't visible on my jacket, but the skills and heart I've shared do. When an old student or teammate messages me just to talk or ask for guidance, that, to me, is a success.

4. How do I handle the pressure of a fast-paced kitchen?

The kitchen can be a tough place, but with the right attitude, you can handle anything that comes your way.

I remember back in the mid 80's when I was working at a hotel in Egypt, a curfew was imposed due to civil unrest, and my baker couldn't make it in. I had no choice but to figure it out. I grabbed a German cookbook my baker had gifted me earlier and decided to make the bread myself. I shaped and baked loaf after loaf. Before long, the warm, rich smell of fresh bread started drifting through the neighborhood. People followed that scent right to our doors.

Always remember:

- A composed chef makes better decisions.
- Be organized – Good mise en place (preparation) reduces stress.
- Support your team – A strong kitchen runs on teamwork and mutual respect.

How important is networking in a chef's career?

Your skills matter, but your connections can open doors. Building relationships with fellow chefs, suppliers, and industry professionals can lead to opportunities.

Be part of the culinary world and go to events, competitions, and workshops. The UAE Emirates Culinary Guild is a great place to start.

You can also showcase your work through social media or collaborations. The most important thing is to be genuine and respectful, as the strongest connections are built on trust.



Trust yourself. Adapt, be creative. And never underestimate the power of details

Being part of the guild and witnessing its growth has been amazing. I've watched young chefs impress us with their culinary skills, all while promoting sustainability in the desert. Meeting

inspirational people like Chef Andy, who is humble and shows us to learn from every commis chef you worked alongside, is incredible. He just kept moving forward and pushed others to do the same.

The right people, the right moments, all this turned my passion into something even bigger than I imagined.

A chef's work is no joke. Cooking is good. Making a living is good. But what's sad these days is seeing people tear each other down instead of lifting each other. It's just not worth it.

I am thankful and blessed for my two boys, Daniel and Sherief, for their friendship and unconditional, genuine support. As I grow older, I find that I value those who witness your breaking and help with your rebuilding even more. The real connections that I have in my life today stem from that support.

I always think about how we want to be remembered. A close friend of mine lost someone dear, Chef Manura Yayasinghe, a colleague with whom he shared many memories. They were planning to meet in March, so hearing the news was devastating for him. My friend recalled the cherished moments spent together, the creativity, the laughter, the teamwork, especially Chef Manura's knack for smoking BBQ and his unforgettable recipe for mango habanero.

It's incredible how many people remember you after 36 years. What we work towards, how we make connections, and how people will remember us will matter. The impact we leave in others' lives. Chef Manura wasn't just a fantastic chef; he had a kindness that made everyone happy. His food was unforgettable, but so was how he made people feel, valued and inspired.

In the end, that is what makes all of this worth it: the service, the people, the late nights, the hustle. The struggle made the wins sweeter, and the smiles? They were the brightest part of it all. ■



Success vs. Sanity

The Truth About "Having It All"

The redefined vision of success for working parents in the industry should prioritize happiness and fulfillment over doing everything perfectly, writes **Tarryn-Leigh Green**

As a woman, wife, mother, chef, and entrepreneur, I often reflect on the idea of "having it all." Society paints a picture of success as thriving in a career, raising a family, maintaining a social life, staying fit, and still having time for self-care. But the truth? It's an illusion.

Like most women, I have an innate ability to mask the true state of my well-being. We smile, push forward, and juggle everything life throws at us. But at what cost? Are we driven by societal expectations, family obligations, or the silent pressures we place on ourselves? The reality is that we wear many hats throughout our lives, and at times, their sheer weight causes everything to topple—often to our own detriment.

So, do I believe you can "have it all"? That depends entirely on how you define it.

The Reality of Women in the Workforce

In the world of professional chefs, the idea of balancing a thriving career and a family feels almost impossible. Like many others, the food and beverage (F&B) industry lacks the support and flexibility for working parents. Part-time roles, childcare support, or even basic empathy for parents trying to manage both career and family responsibilities are virtually non-existent. You have to choose, either excel in your career or prioritize your family. The two rarely coexist seamlessly.



I chose the entrepreneurial path, hoping it would give me the flexibility to raise my children while continuing my passion for food. But owning a business brings its own challenges. Long hours, financial pressures, and the constant feeling that stepping away, even briefly, could mean everything falls apart. Ironically, instead of gaining more time, I've found myself working around the clock with little to no downtime.

The Cost of Compromise

How have we reached 2025 with so much progress in technology, transparency, and accessibility, yet the age-old struggle of choosing between career and family

still remains? And when we try to do both, why does it always feel like we're failing at one or both?

It's not just women; men feel it, too. Parents in every industry are making impossible choices, feeling the weight of sacrifice, and living with the guilt of missed moments. For a world that prides itself on modernity and innovation, we have never been more disconnected, isolated, and exhausted.

A More Inclusive Future

So, what's the solution? How do we move toward a society that genuinely values mental health, happiness, and work-life balance? Studies consistently show that shorter work hours and greater flexibility increase productivity and well-being. Yet, we remain trapped in outdated systems that prioritize hours over impact.

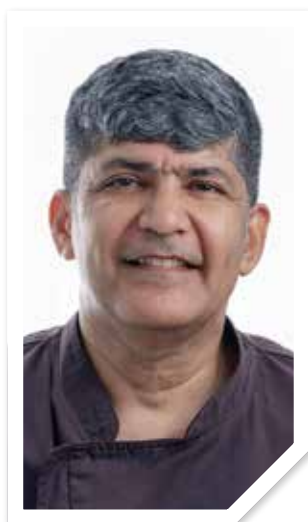
We must redefine success not as the ability to do everything perfectly but as the ability to make choices that align with what truly makes us happy. There is always a compromise; we must learn to accept the trade-offs. We can't get back lost time, but we can choose how we spend the time we have now.

No one has it all. But if you choose a path that fulfills you, you'll always find a way to make it work despite the challenges. And maybe, just maybe, that's what "having it all" really means.

Tarryn-Leigh Green

Setting the STAGE

Chef **Bobby Kapoor** shares his guide to planning *Mise en Scene* and *Mise en Place* to create unforgettable dining experiences



A great event is more than just food on a plate—it's an experience that lingers in the mind long after the last bite

In 1999, Paul Downing, an Area Food & Beverage Manager and chef who rose through the ranks, shared his expertise in building themes, dreams, and unforgettable events. As a young chef, I was sent to Malaysia for training, tasked with creating concepts from the ground up alongside 13 luminaries from the Marriott family, representing leading hotels across Asia, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore. Here, I learned how to transform banquets into immersive experiences that evoke awe and connection.

In the hospitality industry, particularly in the realm of large-scale events, the concepts of ***mise en scene*** and ***mise en place*** are paramount. Borrowed from French theater and culinary arts, these terms emphasize the arrangement and preparation of elements to ensure every event is a seamless masterpiece.

From breakfast spreads to gala dinners, the idea was simple yet powerful: infuse every aspect of the experience with the WOW factor.

Setting the Stage for Magic

Mise en scene refers to the visual and sensory elements that define the ambiance and atmosphere of an event. This concept, rooted in storytelling, is crucial for transforming a venue into a space that resonates with the event's theme and purpose.

Key Elements

Venue and Layout: The venue is the canvas for the event. Every detail, from table arrangements to the flow of

guest movement, must align with the event's theme.

- ♦ **Spatial Flow:** Ensure a natural and intuitive path for guests—from entrances to dining areas to entertainment zones. For example, circular tables encourage conversation, while long banquet tables create a sense of grandeur.
- ♦ **Zoning:** Create designated dining, dancing, and mingling areas to enhance functionality and ambiance.

Lighting and Ambiance: Lighting is a silent storyteller. Soft lighting evokes intimacy, while vibrant hues energize the room.

- ♦ **Highlighting Features:** Use spotlights to draw attention to centerpieces, food stations, or performance stages.
- ♦ **Thematic Lighting:** Colored lights, fairy lights, or even projections can reinforce the event's theme—whether it's a tropical paradise or a winter wonderland.

Décor and Props: Décor transforms spaces into thematic experiences. From floral arrangements to custom props, every element contributes to the story.

- ♦ **Centerpieces:** Elaborate floral designs, ice sculptures, or fruit carvings can become focal points.
- ♦ **Themed Accents:** Incorporate unique props like antique furniture for vintage themes or sand sculptures for a beach party.

Entertainment and Engagement: Consider interactive elements like

live performances, photo booths, or chef stations where guests can see the artistry behind their meals, these enhances the event's energy.

The Backbone of Execution

Mise en place, meaning 'everything in its place,' extends beyond food preparation to organizing every event detail.

Key Elements

Food and Beverage Preparation: The heart of any banquet is its cuisine. Proper mise en place ensures food is delicious and presented beautifully.

- **Buffet Displays:** Use artistic arrangements to make food visually appealing.
- **Temperature Control:** Maintain the integrity of hot and cold dishes with appropriate equipment.

Table Settings: Table setups should reflect the event's style and formality.

- **Formal Settings:** Multiple courses require meticulous cutlery, plates, and glassware placement.
- **Casual Arrangements:** Organize serving stations for smooth flow and convenience for buffets.

Creative Displays: Elevate the event with stunning displays that double as décor.

- **Ice Sculptures:** Use thematic designs to enhance the atmosphere while serving practical purposes, such as chilled seafood.
- **Interactive Food Stations:** Let guests customize their meals with live cooking or dessert stations.

The hallmark of a successful banquet lies in its ability to transport guests into a world of wonder. By blending mise en scene and mise en place, event planners can craft experiences that linger in the hearts and minds of attendees.

Thematic Brilliance

Themes set the stage for creativity. In 1999, we embraced the Y2K



buzz, transforming a banquet into a futuristic spectacle with international clocks, runway-style entrances, and interactive props. For a winter wonderland, we collaborated with ice carvers to create igloos paired with fur-clad staff serving hot chocolate—a logistical and creative triumph.

The Power of "Wow" Moments

Moments of surprise and delight define unforgettable events. These can include:

- **Spectacular Entrances:** Grand floral arches, fire performers, or confetti showers.
- **Innovative Food Displays:** Dishes presented with smoke effects, nitrogen techniques, or intricate carvings.
- **Unexpected Performances:** Surprise musical acts or interactive entertainment, like a dessert reveal under dramatic lighting.

Banqueting is more than an event; it's a craft that merges preparation,

artistry, and emotion. By mastering the principles of delivering on expectations, event planners and chefs can create moments that connect people, celebrate milestones, and leave lasting impressions. After all, a truly great banquet is one where every detail, from the lighting to the last bite of dessert, tells a story worth remembering.

I have had the pleasure of hosting Prime Ministers and presidents during the G7 summit. While all focus was on the meetings, breaks, and meals, it was the little things that worked best for taking care of their security detail and the people who made it happen. To feed 50 people, the team covered over 1000 people in aides, assistance, and security.

So hospitality has to be ingrained in the thought and the memory of delivering your best efforts consistently, on time, and in full. Passion and zeal need a team that works together and celebrates all aspects, which includes the service, the delivery, and the finish. ■

The Ripple Effect

Chef **Carl Shi** weighs in on the challenges of rising costs in culinary operations

Inflation is no longer just an economic term tossed around in financial reports; it's a reality that's hitting the culinary world where it hurts the most—its bottom line. For restaurants, catering businesses, and hospitality operations, the rising cost of food is more than a challenge; it's a seismic shift that's forcing the industry to rethink how it operates. From higher menu prices to strained supplier relationships, the ripple effects of inflation are reshaping the way culinary businesses function, and the changes are as complex as they are inevitable.

One of the most immediate and visible impacts of rising food costs is the increase in menu prices. For many restaurants, this is the first line of defence against shrinking profit margins. But raising prices is a delicate balancing act. Charge too much, and you risk alienating customers who are already feeling the pinch of inflation in their own lives. Charge too little, and you're left absorbing costs that could sink your business. The result is a careful recalibration of pricing strategies, with many establishments opting for smaller, incremental increases rather than dramatic hikes. Some are even introducing tiered pricing, offering premium options for those willing to pay more while keeping budget-friendly choices for cost-conscious diners. It's a strategy designed to retain a broad customer base, but it's not without its challenges.

Even with higher menu prices, profit margins are under immense pressure. The hospitality industry has always operated on razor-thin margins, and inflation is making it harder than ever to stay in the black. Rising costs



In times of challenge, innovation becomes the secret ingredient to survival

for ingredients, labour, and utilities are eating into profits, leaving little room for error. For many businesses, this means making tough decisions about where to cut costs. Some are reducing portion sizes, a move that can be subtle enough to go unnoticed by customers but significant enough to make a difference on the balance sheet. Others are turning to lower-cost ingredients, though this comes with its own set of risks, particularly when it comes to maintaining quality and customer satisfaction.

Compromised quality is a difficult path for any culinary business to tread, yet

for some, it's becoming an unavoidable reality. The challenge lies in preserving the essence of a dish while finding more cost-effective ways to prepare it. For instance, the owner of my favourite corner café recently shared that, despite his best efforts, he had to switch from using real butter to a more affordable alternative for their croissants. He explained that raising the price by even one dollar would likely deter customers, leaving him with little choice but to make the adjustment. These changes require a careful balance, as customers are often quick to notice when their favorite items don't taste quite the same. The key is to adapt thoughtfully, finding ways to innovate while staying true to the expectations and trust of loyal patrons.

Outsourcing has also emerged as a cost-saving strategy for many culinary businesses grappling with rising expenses. To reduce labour costs, some restaurants and hotels are turning to pre-cut or pre-prepared ingredients, which save time in the kitchen and reduce the need for additional staff. For example, instead of hiring extra hands to peel and chop vegetables, businesses can purchase ready-to-use options from suppliers. In some extreme cases, some fast-paced establishments are outsourcing most of their menu items, opting for ready-made products that can be quickly heated or assembled on-site. While this approach can significantly cut costs, it also comes with trade-offs, particularly in terms of freshness and the ability to customize dishes. Striking the right balance between efficiency and quality is critical, as customers still expect the authenticity and care that define a memorable dining experience.

Streamlined menus are another way restaurants are adapting to rising costs. By focusing on a smaller selection of dishes, businesses can reduce waste, simplify operations, and negotiate better deals with suppliers. A streamlined menu also allows chefs to perfect a narrower range of offerings, ensuring that every dish meets the highest standards of quality. This approach has the added benefit of making the dining experience more efficient, as customers spend less time deciding what to order. However, it's not without its downsides. A smaller menu can feel limiting to diners, particularly those who are used to having a wide array of choices. Striking the right balance between variety and focus is a challenge that requires careful planning and a willingness to adapt based on customer feedback.

The business landscape has shifted, and the traditional notion of "relationships" in commerce is no longer as binding as it once was. Today, customer loyalty is often driven by price rather than long-standing connections, a reality that aligns with established theory of consumer behavior. This shift is also evident in supplier relationships, which are increasingly strained under the weight of inflation. As food costs rise, suppliers are passing these increases on to restaurants, putting pressure on partnerships that may have been nurtured over years. In response, some businesses are renegotiating contracts, exploring new suppliers, or bypassing traditional supply chains altogether in favour of direct sourcing from local farmers and producers. While these strategies can help control costs, they demand significant time, effort, and a willingness to take risks. Building new supplier relationships is not an immediate solution but rather a long-term investment with uncertain outcomes. Nevertheless, for many businesses, it has become a necessary step to adapt and survive in today's challenging economic environment.

Despite these challenges, the culinary



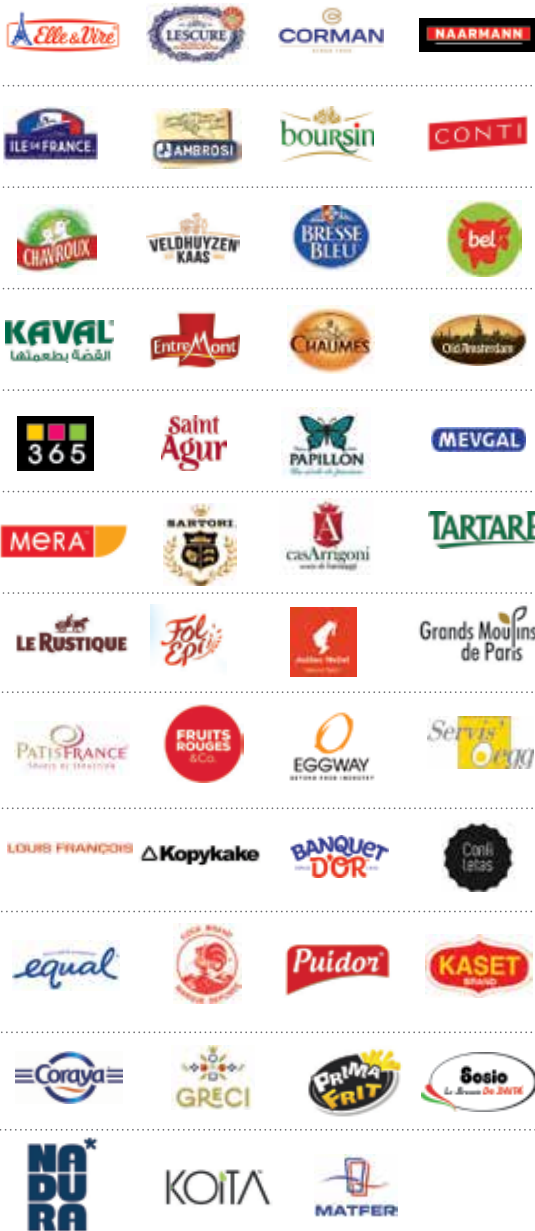
The art of cooking isn't just about flavors—it's about adapting to change without losing identity

world is proving to be remarkably resilient. Inflation may be forcing businesses to make difficult choices, but it's also sparking a wave of creativity and innovation. Chefs are experimenting with new ingredients, finding ways to elevate humble staples like beans and grains into gourmet dishes. Restaurateurs are rethinking their business models, exploring options

like meal kits, subscription services, and pop-up events to diversify revenue streams. Even the way food is presented is evolving, with many establishments embracing a more casual, approachable style that aligns with the current economic climate.

The ripple effects of rising costs are undeniable, but they're also a reminder of the industry's ability to adapt and evolve. For every challenge inflation presents, there's an opportunity to innovate, to rethink, and to grow. It's a time of transformation, one that's reshaping not just how food is prepared and served, but how it's valued and appreciated. In the face of adversity, the culinary world is proving that creativity is its most valuable ingredient. And while the road ahead may be uncertain, one thing is clear: the industry's resilience and ingenuity will continue to shine, even in the toughest of times. ■

CULINARY INNOVATIONS BY YOUR SIDE



About Us

As a leading foodservice company in the region for over four decades, Greenhouse Foodstuff Trading has evolved from importing exclusive and premium Dairy items, Cheese, Bakery & Pastry ingredients, finished products, Grocery, Plant Based food and Chef's equipment to embracing all aspects of the F&B industry and providing exceptional value to stakeholders and trading partners.

The company's growth has been driven by excellence, expertise, and quality products in tandem with a dominant market share for both Foodservice and Retail channels supporting the global chain and meeting the customers need for tailored foodservice solutions so they can curate successful food operations and experiences.

Greenhouse Foodstuff Trading offers hotels, fine dining outlets, casual dining restaurants, caterers, airlines, independent operators, leisure sector and institutional customers the finest products, operational knowledge, tailored support and an unwavering commitment to help partners succeed with value added services. It cultivates a diverse,

As industry innovators, Greenhouse Foodstuff Trading's main strength lies in streamlined logistics complemented by state-of-the-art storage facilities and infrastructure to support warehousing and distribution capabilities. The advanced temperature-controlled vehicles and storage facility, full-service stock management and modern distribution ability using AI and digital transformation is designed to meet the growing demands of the local and regional Food & Beverage industry.

Meat With Sulemana

Sulemana A. Sadik shares his insights on the global market opportunities of Lamb and Mutton

Lamb and mutton have played a significant role in global culinary traditions for centuries, each offering distinct flavors and textures that cater to diverse consumer preferences. This article explores the unique aspects of lamb and mutton, focusing on breed genetics, farming approaches, and export potential, particularly in the Middle East, where consumption surges during Ramadan and extends beyond the festive period.

Genetics and Farming Practices

Lamb refers to young sheep, typically under 12 months old, with tender meat and a mild flavor. Mutton, derived from sheep older than two years, possesses a richer taste and firmer texture. These variations result not only from age but also from breed selection and rearing techniques, both of which significantly influence meat quality.

Key Sheep Breeds

Merino (Australia, New Zealand):

Primarily known for its fine wool, the Merino breed also produces high-quality lamb and mutton.

Dorper (South Africa): A resilient breed suited for arid environments, renowned for its tender lamb meat.

Awassi (Middle East): Recognized for its fat tail and adaptability to harsh climates, this breed is valued for mutton production.

Suffolk (United Kingdom): Noted for its rapid growth and lean meat, making it a preferred choice for lamb production.

Texel (Netherlands): This breed is prized for its lean, flavorful meat and adaptability to intensive farming systems.

Farming Approaches

Lamb Farming: Focuses on rapid growth, with animals raised on nutrient-rich pastures or supplementary feed to ensure optimal muscle-to-fat ratios. Lambs are typically slaughtered before maturity, preserving their tenderness and mild taste.

Mutton Farming: Involves older sheep raised primarily on extensive grazing systems or marginal lands. These animals



develop more robust muscle fibers and a higher fat content, contributing to their distinct, intense flavor profile.

Processing

Lamb: Typically processed with minimal aging to retain its delicate texture.

Mutton: Often subjected to marination or aging processes to enhance its tenderness and depth of flavor.

Export Market Trends

Lamb: Considered a premium product with strong demand in high-income regions, including Europe, the United States, and parts of Asia.

Mutton: More affordable and widely consumed in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia due to its rich flavor and cultural significance.

Global Market Opportunities

Lamb is widely regarded as a premium meat, frequently featured in gourmet cuisine. The increasing global preference for sustainably raised, grass-fed lamb presents lucrative opportunities for exporters from Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Additionally, Halal-certified lamb is in high demand in the Middle East, providing a strategic advantage for exporters catering to regional dietary requirements.

Mutton enjoys robust demand in developing economies, where affordability and cultural traditions drive consumption. Nations such as India, Pakistan, Kenya, and Sudan rely

heavily on mutton for staple dishes, while the Middle East remains a major importer, particularly during religious festivities like Ramadan. With Ramadan expected to occur from February to March 2025, exporters should anticipate increased demand.

During Ramadan, lamb and mutton consumption rises significantly as households and communities prepare elaborate meals for iftar and suhoor. Lamb, ideal for roasting and grilling, making it a centerpiece for celebratory meals. Mutton, valued for its bold flavor, is a staple in slow-cooked dishes such as curries and stews.

Exporters can capitalize on these trends by ensuring a consistent supply of fresh, Halal-certified meat to meet market expectations.

Post-Ramadan Market Stability and Growth

Although demand stabilizes after Ramadan, the Middle Eastern market exhibits strong growth potential due to regular consumption and extended celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr. Lamb has an increasing influence of Western cuisine in urban areas and has heightened its appeal in fine dining and casual restaurants. The affordability and compatibility of mutton with traditional cooking methods ensure continued popularity, especially in rural regions and large households.

Understanding the nuances of these markets is essential for exporters aiming to maximize profitability, particularly in regions like the Middle East, where religious and cultural factors significantly influence consumption patterns.

Producers can effectively position lamb and mutton as indispensable protein sources by focusing on selective breeding, efficient farming practices, and market-specific preferences, ensuring their relevance from Ramadan feasts to daily meals worldwide. ■

Elixir Of Life (Part III)

In this third and final installment of the longevity foods series, Chef **Vivek Huria** continues to take a holistic approach to various wholesome ingredients, all working harmoniously to support optimal health and well-being



What we eat, how we move, and the people we spend time with all shape our health and happiness. The way we fuel our bodies each day plays a big role in how long and well we live. In this final section, we'll look closer at the link between diet, longevity, and overall well-being because small choices at the dinner table can have a big impact on our future.

So, let's keep the momentum going. Here's a list of powerhouse foods that support longevity and overall health:

Garlic: Some researchers have examined its effectiveness on cancer cell lines, and certain components of garlic appear to target multiple pathways involved in cancer cell survival with minimal toxicity, suggesting a possible role in selectively killing cancer cells (Zhang et al., 2020). Allicin is an organosulfur compound obtained by chopping fresh garlic; the enzyme alliinase converts alliin to allicin, which is responsible for the aroma of fresh garlic and the active compound that gives garlic its medicinal properties by blocking free radicals and helping ease inflammation (Carper, 1994).

Ginger: The impact of ginger on Arthritis-related diseases was the most conducted studies, particularly osteoarthritis (OA). Regarding OA, six studies investigated the efficiency of the constituents of ginger that serve as anti-inflammatory agents (Anh et al., 2020).

Cloves: They are commonly used aromatic spices in Indian cuisine, have long been valued for their traditional medicinal uses,

and have the highest Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity value. High ORAC value foods are believed to slow the aging process. The main compounds found in cloves include carvacrol, eugenol, thymol, and cinnamaldehyde, with eugenol being the primary active ingredient. Research indicates that cloves may support liver health and stabilize blood sugar levels (Batiha et al., 2020).

Dark leafy greens like kale, collards, spinach, turnip greens are a fantastic source of carotenoid antioxidants. Consumption of just one serving of **dark leafy greens** daily, which is a source of phyloquinone, lutein, nitrate, folate, -tocopherol, and kaempferol, has been shown to help slow age-related cognitive decline (Morris et al., 2018).

Eating more **pulses** has been linked to increased overall nutrient intake and extended longevity (Zargarzadeh et al., 2023). As highlighted by the people living in Ikaria, located in Greece (also a Blue Zone), including beans and legumes in their daily diet is linked to increased life expectancy.

Lycopene, a potent antioxidant found in **tomatoes**, plays a crucial role in longevity. The vibrant tomato is a South American native, with wild relatives still flourishing in the Andes, and owes its global popularity to explorers like Columbus and Cortés, who introduced them to Europe. From there, Spanish explorers disseminated them across the globe (Cashman, 2011).

Mediterranean and **Okinawa**-type diets are well known to promote good health



Let food be thy
medicine and
medicine be
thy food
— Hippocrates

and longevity. A study conducted by researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital, affiliated with Harvard University, noted that over 25,000 US women for up to 25 years who had followed the Mediterranean diet had up to a 23 percent lower risk of all-cause mortality (Ahmad, Moorthy & Lee, 2024). The consumption of extra virgin olive oil, a staple in the Mediterranean diet, has been associated with a range of beneficial polyphenols, such as hydroxytyrosol and oleocanthal, which exhibit powerful antioxidant effects (de Pablos et al., 2019).

The Okinawan diet consists mainly of whole plant foods rather than fish. The traditional Okinawan diet consists of soybean-based foods, root vegetables (mostly sweet potatoes), green and yellow vegetables, and other plants, many of which have medicinal qualities (Willcox, Scapagnini, & Willcox, 2014).

A study has also found that many aspects of the Okinawan diet are similar to those of other nutritious dietary patterns, like the modern DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet or the classic Mediterranean diet (Willcox et al., 2009). In addition to diet playing a role in lifespan, external factors such as genetics, environment, and lifestyle may also explain the



longevity in Okinawans. Perhaps it is their bond with friends and family and their tradition of Moai that supports them throughout their lives, even in their old age (Kotifani, 2018). Common characteristics among Blue Zone communities, like the concept of Ikigai in Okinawa and Plan de Vida in Costa Rica, suggest that having a clear purpose can also greatly impact health outcomes.

In addition to eating well, staying active and having a positive mindset are also vital for good health. The Blue Zone communities exemplify how

incorporating natural movements into daily routines can be beneficial. Exercise, combined with proper nutrition, enhances the quality of life and lifespan.

You need to understand your food, your body, and your mind. Choosing life-enhancing foods from local produce is a recipe for a good life. These foods also help build social solidarity, happiness, and empathy in our communities. It is not that we cannot adapt our diets. With a little effort and a willingness to change, we can make healthier choices and live life to the fullest. ■

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March 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

**ARLA
PRO.**

**CHEF
OF THE
YEAR
2025**

Double Take

You wouldn't immediately guess his prolific competition experience, but Chef **Dheeraj** is a seasoned challenger with an intense passion for pushing boundaries. In a chat with **Amaresh Bhaskaran**, he breaks down his dish for the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition, where he serves modern and traditional flavors that will make you do a double-take

The stakes are higher in season two of the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition, and Chef Dheeraj Singh is gearing up for a big win. Here's a bit about the steps he took to grow.

Two years ago, during his interview with Gulf Gourmet, Chef Dheeraj shared sound perspectives on culinary competitions and the art of pastry. He proffered advice to aspiring chefs to put in steady practice for a few months before the competition and train in an unfamiliar kitchen to handle the jitters well. Walking the talk gave him a great edge, as the past year has been filled with a string of accolades.

His impressive run last year saw him earn 15 medals, including five gold and several silver and bronze, notably at events like the Emirates Salon Culinaire and Chef's Table. "I have participated in several culinary competitions, winning medals in various categories. At the Salon du Chocolat de Pâtisserie, I bagged a silver for Best Pastry Showpiece. I also received a gold medal with the Zero Gravity Team at the HK Black Box Gourmet Challenge and was honored as the commended winner for Culinary/Kitchen Champion of the Year at the Hospitality Excellence Awards 2024."

Sprinting ahead with innovation has always been one of his core principles in competition which pulses through his take on his dish for the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition.



To hatch bold ideas, one must remain attuned to prevailing trends

"Nowadays, kunafa is trendy, so I've made a molten chocolate cake filled with kunafa and cream cheese. The base of the dish features kunafa layered with semolina and dates, complemented by separate elements like pistachios. The dish has traditional elements and presentation in a modern way," explains Chef Dheeraj.

The elements, he explains, all communicate with each other, and become a piece of a larger narrative. "I chose to incorporate something like semifreddo, an Italian delicacy, and modify it into an Arabic interpretation. It is a combination of various techniques and also has a mix of styles in the presentation."

Even the preparation speaks volumes about verismo, keeping it handcrafted and minimizing reliance on molds. "For instance, the tube was made by hand. The Kunafa base is baked, put in the tray, and cut with a knife; most of the process is executed manually. I used one mold, but that's only for shaping the fondant. But the rest was handcraft."

Pointing out his favorite ingredients from the Arla Pro range, he answers without a second thought, "Cream Cheese! I've experimented with it a couple of times, and it may seem basic at first glance, but I take it a step further to elevate it, say, when you use it into the fondant and then combine it with chocolate, the result is phenomenal."

To hatch bold ideas, one must remain attuned to prevailing trends, and Chef Dheeraj does precisely that, knowing full well that people are always on the lookout for something new. Lately, he has come across a rising craving for healthier options, a change he has put into action by substituting honey instead of sugar in the dish.

When confronted with the knotty question of creating a scrupulous



Innovation and creativity are very important. If you create something new and innovative, you must keep the momentum alive



competition plan, he says, "It's a lot of practice. Taste your food when you practice. I think about what a customer would like and the most important part is to take into different perspectives."

He values customer perspective, competition guidelines, and judges' tastes, but above all, his sights are set on giving his best. "I won't just create something to please the judges; my aim is to use quality ingredients and get the basics right before refining everything else."

Born in the hill station of Dehradun, a scenic city in India, he began his culinary journey at 19. Initially, he was driven by the need to keep the

wolf from the door while pursuing his culinary studies, so he started working in a busy pastry shop in Delhi but quickly fell in love with the art of pastry.

As soon as he completed his Food and Beverage (F&B) program, he learned the ropes from seasoned chefs at establishments like Taj Deccan, the Marriott Hotel in Hyderabad, and J.W. Marriott in Delhi. He then moved to Dubai to work at the Marco Polo Hotel.

When an opportunity arose at Zero Gravity, he gladly seized the chance. Since then, he has made this place his home, climbing through the ranks from Demi Chef de Partie to Pastry Chef over

the course of nine years. He credits his journey to a brain trust of mentors and supportive team.

His work has really taken off, both figuratively and literally. Besides crafting menus for brunch and events, he also plays a role in the Dine in the Sky concept, where guests enjoy a delectable three-course meal in the sky.

"This event has a crane that hoists an entire table, complete with guests, high into the air. When diners are in the sky, we have two chefs and three waitpersons catering to the people above. The whole setup is organized with plenty of elbow room for everything we need. The team ensures everything is prepared before we lift the diners to enjoy their meal. Plus, we've got a smaller board box on standby for any extra items that might come into play."

Up in the air, the margin for error is razor-thin. It is a challenge where even a tiny mistake can bring everyone back to the ground. "We organize everything on the basis of the booking and the confirmation," explains Chef Dheeraj. "We have seating for 22 people, and up there, we take plenty of food for everyone. There is no room for error. Even with desserts like ice cream, we handle it using liquid nitrogen to freeze it quickly, which works very well, even in summer."

His parents reside in India, and his life has been full of happy moments with his wife



I won't just create something to please the judges; my aim is to use quality ingredients and get the basics right before refining everything else

and their two-year-old daughter, Aurora, named after the beauty of the sky.

Sketching out his future plans, he mentions the upcoming Salon Culinaire and the pastry chef competition. However, he is not one to strictly adhere to conventional categories. He enjoys taking on challenges that are unique and unconventional. For example, at the Salon Culinaire, he plans to create pastry dishes using potatoes.

"Innovation and creativity are very important. If you create something new and innovative, you must keep the momentum alive. Keep on innovating and learning from many chefs. And those medals, you would only earn them by learning from your mistakes."



Molten Kunafa Cheese Cake, Pistachio Semifreddo, Dates Saffron Cream Cheesecake Crèmeux

Molten Chocolate Cheesecake

Chocolate	170g
Butter (Arla Pro)	55g
Salt	3g
Vanilla Extract	3ml
Eggs	3no
Egg Yolk	3no
Honey	171g
Flour	71g

Method

- ◆ Preheat the oven.
- ◆ Melt the chocolate and butter.
- ◆ Let the mixture cool to room temperature.
- ◆ Beat the eggs and egg yolks together until thick and light in color, 2-3 minutes.
- ◆ Add the powdered sugar and mix until combined. Add the melted chocolate mixture and the flour.
- ◆ Divide the mixture into half in the silicone mold and put it in the freezer. After setting the mixture, add the Arla Pro Cream Cheese with the honey vanilla pod. Then, half the mixture is added after freezing the cheesecake.
- ◆ Bake for 12-13 minutes.

Pistachio Semifreddo

Cream (Arla Pro)	150g
Vanilla Extract	3ml
Eggs	2no
Eggs Yolk	1no
Sugar	15g
Salt	A pinch
Pistachio Paste	10g

Method

- ◆ Add the Arla Pro Cream and vanilla extract to the bowl, whip the cream into a separate bowl, and place it in the refrigerator.
- ◆ Add Pistachio and fold with cream.
- ◆ Combine the eggs, egg yolks, sugar, and salt in the bowl.
- ◆ Use a stand mixer and a whisk to combine the ingredients. Set the mixer bowl over the simmering water.
- ◆ Cook the mixture over the simmering water, whisking constantly.
- ◆ Fold all mixture.
- ◆ Once the mixture is ready, set in the mold and keep in the freezer for 4 to 5 hours.

Dates Saffron Cream Cheesecake Crèmeux

Saffron	4g
Honey	10g
Egg	2no
Gelatine	3g
Butter (Arla Pro)	10g

Cream Cheese (Arla Pro)	130g
Water	100ml

Method

- ◆ Begin by heating a mixture of saffron and water in a pan. In a separate bowl, whisk together the egg and sugar.
- ◆ Stir the entire egg mixture. Then, continue to cook over low heat.
- ◆ Keep stirring until it is thick enough. Then remove from heat and add cream cheese.
- ◆ Squeeze the gelatine leaves, then stir them into the mixture until they are dissolved.
- ◆ Pass the mixture through a fine sieve into a clean bowl. Then, vigorously whisk in the cream cheese butter until emulsified.
- ◆ Pour the mixture into the mold and place it in the freezer for at least two hours.

Kunafa Cheesecake

Cream (Arla Pro)	150g
Cream Cheese (Arla Pro)	315g
Honey	50g
Sugar	35g
Sour Cream	30g
Lemon Juice	5ml
Vanilla Extract	5ml
Kunafa Paste	65g

Method

- ◆ Whip the cold Arla Pro Cream until stiff peaks form, about 4 to 5 minutes at medium-high speed.



- ◆ Beat the cream cheese, sugar, and honey quickly until smooth and creamy.
- ◆ Add sour cream, lemon juice, and vanilla extract and beat for 2 to 3 minutes.
- ◆ Using a mixer at low speed, fold the Kunafa paste, whipped cream into the cheesecake filling until combined

Tulie

Butter (Arla Pro)	35g
Honey	35g
Egg White	35g
All Purpose Flour	35g

Method

- ◆ Melt butter and honey together in a microwave
- ◆ Add all ingredients together and mix with whisk until smooth
- ◆ Spread on mould and bake for about 8 minutes at 160°C
- ◆ Carefully remove from mould before cooling. The tulie will be soft until it cools.

Fig & Dates Compote

Arla Pro Butter	20g
Brown Sugar	5g
Figs	100g

Dates	70g
Salt	2g

Method

- ◆ Melt butter in a small skillet on medium heat.
- ◆ Once the butter is melted, add figs, dates, and brown sugar.
- ◆ Stir continuously to coat the fig and dates in the brown sugar and butter. The brown sugar should melt almost immediately. Add salt at the same time.
- ◆ Keep stirring for about three minutes or until the caramel sauce thickens. Remove from the heat as soon as possible.

Saffron Caviar

Chilled Vegetable Oil	225g
Saffron Water	10g
Water	100g
Agar	1g
Salt	A pinch

Method

- ◆ Place vegetable oil in the freezer a few hours before starting caviar.
- ◆ Add agar and mix well until all the agar is dissolved. And make the mixture hot.

- ◆ You will need two containers, one larger than the other, to create an ice bath.
- ◆ Slowly drop the mixture into the vegetable oil using a pipette, aiming for about 4 to 5 drops per caviar sphere. You will know the process is complete when the spheres are floating in the oil; if they haven't set properly, they may combine into one another.
- ◆ After the caviar has been set for 2 to 3 minutes, you can remove it from the oil.
- ◆ Strain caviar and put it in an airtight container covered with vegetable oil. Rinse off the oil when ready to use

Orange Foam

Orange Puree	30g
Water	50g
Lecithin	1g

Method

- ◆ Put all ingredients together in a bowl. To create foam using an immersion blender, add that mixture to a large bowl and whisk it with the blender at an angle. This will bring extra air to the liquid. Blend for about a minute and let it rest one more minute to stabilize.



*Bob's Red Mill
Oats*

*Hershey's
Chocolate Chips*

*Rich Ribbon
T55 Flour*



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March 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

The Guild Meet

The Guild meeting was held on February 11th at the luxurious One & Only Royale Mirage Hotel in Dubai, a venue known for its stunning views and exceptional service. Attendees enjoyed a carefully curated agenda filled with engaging presentations and networking opportunities. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Carmine Pecoraro, the Culinary Director, for his generous hospitality in hosting this event.





March 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**







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

Declaration to be Signed by Applicant:

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

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

Signature:

Proposed By: Signature:

Seconded By: Signature:

For Official Use Only

Remarks:

Payment Received?

Certificate Given

Pin Given

Medal & Collar Given

Approved by President:

Signature:

Approved by Chairman:

Signature:

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

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

newmembers



On behalf of the Tork MEIA Team, Ms. Linda Moussa received the ECG Membership Certificate from Alan Orreal, President of the ECG, and Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG.

Tork - Essity Hygiene and Health AB

Tork is the global leading brand in professional hygiene. We are passionate about helping you improve your business, raising the bottom line to making your work life better. This is the ambition that drives our people, our cutting-edge innovations in circularity, well-being and health.

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Think ahead.

The Tork brand offers professional hygiene products and services to customers worldwide ranging from restaurants and healthcare facilities to offices, schools and industries. Our products include dispensers, paper towels, toilet tissue, soap, napkins, wipers, but also software solutions for

data-driven cleaning. Through expertise in hygiene, functional design and sustainability, Tork has become a market leader that supports customers to think ahead so they're always ready for business. Tork is a global brand of Essity, and a committed partner to customers in over 110 countries. To keep up with the latest Tork news and innovations, please visit <https://www.torkmeia.com/>

March 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

Omar Kroud, Business Development Manager – MEA, Shairra Mae Bartirza, Trade Marketing – MEA, and Nikita Kononenko, General Manager & Head of Sales – MEA & Russia/CIS of IRCA Group, received their membership certificate from Alan Orreal, President of the ECG and Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG.

IRCA Group Extraordinary Made Simple

Founded in 1919 in Italy, IRCA Group has been a pioneer in creating indulgent ingredient solutions for food manufacturers and artisans across over 100 countries. With a heritage rooted in quality, innovation, and simplicity, we empower our partners to craft exceptional creations effortlessly.

Our comprehensive portfolio includes premium products across chocolate, creams, pistachios, nuts, pastry and bakery mixes, and gelato solutions. These are brought to life through our renowned brands: IRCA, a leader in chocolate, pastry and bakery ingredients; JOYGELATO, offering joy in artisan gelato solutions; DOBLA, specializing in exquisite chocolate decorations; CESARIN, experts in semi-candied and processed fruit; RAVIFRUIT,

renowned for premium fruit purees; and DOMORI, the ultimate expression of fine chocolate excellence.

With 21 production facilities, 2 R&D centers, and 7 academies globally, IRCA Group ensures innovation remains at the heart of everything we do. We continuously explore new flavor profiles, cutting-edge ingredients, and advanced production methods to meet the ever-evolving demands of the food industry.



**Extraordinary
made simple.**

Our sustainability philosophy, Making Things Better Every Day: Together for Positive Impact, places people and the planet at the center of our initiatives. From developing healthier products to supporting our communities and delivering sustainable solutions, we are committed to driving a positive impact through education and collaboration.

With over 2,100 employees worldwide and a robust presence in the EMEA region—serving 1,000+ clients and 300+ distributors—our mission is to simplify the extraordinary.

IRCA Group combines heritage, expertise, and a commitment to making things better every day, empowering our partners to craft extraordinary creations effortlessly.



Vangielene – Sales Manager (left), Era Jain – Marketing Manager (middle), and Leo Marie – Senior Sales Executive (right) of HK Enterprises, received their membership certificate from Alan Orreal, President of the ECG.

HK Enterprises

The protein that keeps UAE on the move, is driven by us. We are humbled to be the pioneers of frozen food since 1984.

The success and decade long sustenance are the result of our team effort bringing the best of global brands



HK ENTERPRISES

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fulfilled by HK. Consistently evolving, we are committed to deliver quality, convenience and freedom of choice to you on time every time, everyday.

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

SPICY, CRUNCHY, UMAMI.....WOW!

Imagine all these together, and you have a **CRUNCHY CHILI OIL**. Typically, a blend of chilis drives the spice element; then, the crunch comes from various aspects, such as fried garlic, sesame seeds, shallots, or even roasted chickpeas. From mild versions to mind-numbing Sichuan pepper versions, this is the new on-trend condiment of 2025. I saw 15 versions in my local supermarket. Now, it's creeping into café menus and Shawarmer shops. It drives deep umami flavors that are complemented by the heat and amazing crunch. Some versions have a hint of coconut sugar to elevate this King of Condiments. Looking around our region, it's egg-citing on fried eggs, lifting



**Chef
Simon
says...**

salads, and nourishing our noodle dishes. Jokes apart, this is sitting next to hot sauce on every table and only looking to grow as people explore this new trend.

NUT BUTTERS are nothing new, but **"NAUGHTY NUT BUTTERS"** are the new black (made with seeds or nuts and no butter), so the naming can be confusing. Anything like Granola butter, Cinnamon roll butter, and sweet and salty sunflower seed butter seems to go. Marmite peanut butter, even strawberry cashew butter. Will we see this trend embrace local tastes like **"Kunafa sesame butter"** or maybe **"Halwa rose butter"**? Could this be the next Dubai Chocolate craze? Not just for Tartines, but these are now being used in beverages, desserts, and even as savory sauce dips. Easy to make the back of the house and customize. This will be bigger as we move through the year.

Winter in the region is fading, and the days seem brighter, warmer, and

possibly less humid. Some trends are dusting themselves down and pushing their way to the top of the trends List; flavored soft serve is one of these. Vanilla is the staple, but it is, let's be frank...BORING. Looking around, I see Chili mango, tiramisu, charcoal cola, peach, and salted licorice. Outside the region, I see this move into savory, like Jalapeno cheese soft serve with nachos and horseradish soft serve with smoked salmon. Do you think this will evolve into a savory situation here?? I would love to hear your thoughts on this !!

I am always looking at the new trends and seeing if the old ones are returning. February has been a short month, but it fits a lot in, from some fantastic beverages, Instagrammable foods, smoking Biryani, and Afghani breakfasts. The month's highlight must have been Zha-Jiang-Mian, sweet and savory soya bean paste with chicken and raw vegetables over hand-pulled noodles...YUMMY... Shandong cookery is at its best; it is simple but complex at the same time.

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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