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volume 16, issue 5

WINNING STREAK

Chef **Hillary Joseph** returns, and this time he has the Best Cuisinier Trophy from Salon Culinaire

SWEET SUCCESS

Rami Al Jebraiel of Al Jawaher Reception & Convention Centre talks about his journey



SALON GLIMPSES

Exclusive peek into last month's Salon Culinaire including winners, moments, and more



YOUNG CHEFS

Two more teams compete for Nestle Professional Golden Chefs Hat Award UAE – Season 9





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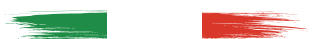


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Dear fellow Chefs, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the May issue of our Gulf Gourmet.

I hope all of you are enjoying a blessed month of Ramadan. For some of us, business is coming back and some of our colleagues are even struggling due to the present strength of their teams.

But we also need to understand that many of our colleagues are still struggling in UAE and many other parts of the world as many hotels and restaurants are still closed or operating on a very low level.

"TOGETHER WE WILL REBUILD OUR INDUSTRY"

I would like to give a big big Thank You to everyone who helped us stage the International Salon Culinaire 2021. I need to start with our two Host Hotels. Thank you Jan Hanak and the team of Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek and Andy Cuthbert and the team of Jumeirah Creekside Hotel. Without you, it would not have been possible to have such a great competition.

Thank you Chef Martin Kobalt, Vice President of Worldchefs and the President of our Jury, and all the Judges and Marshalls who had given their time for the Salon Culinaire 2021.

I would like to give a big Thank You to our Partners. Without our loyal Partners we would not be able to put up this great event. Our main Sponsors 2021 are US Beef Export Federation and USA Poultry and Egg Export Council and IFFCO. Our Class Sponsors Masterbaker, Arla Pro, Barakat Quality Plus, Il Granaio Delle Idee, Upfield, Barilla and Nestle Professional.

Our Kitchen Partners – Ginox and



Convotherm Welbilt. RAK Ceramic / Restofair for providing for the amazing plates. Ronai for supplying the Jackets for our Jury and Marshalls.

We are looking forward to a busy May. On 16th we will have 20 Young Chefs from UAE competing in the Hospitality Young Chef Semi Final at ICCA (International Centre of Culinary Arts) in Knowledge Park. The top 5 will then compete Live on 24th May at Hospitality Chefs AwardS Night at Dusit Thani Hotel.

May 18 is the big Day for our Scholarship Group 5 & 6. It's Graduation Day; read more about the Scholarship Program and the Graduation night in the June issue of our Gulf Gourmet.

Please visit gulfgourmet.net to browse through previous issue of this magazine. Visit emiratesculinaryguild.net to see latest happenings on the events calendar. And visit www.facebook.com/wacsyongchefs for young chefs to be in contact with over 4,000 chefs across the globe.

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

Thank you to Chef Diyan Manjula De Silave and Radisson Blu Dubai Deira Team for hosting the last meeting

Culinary Regards,

Uwe Micheel
President, Emirates Culinary Guild
Director of Kitchens,
Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek



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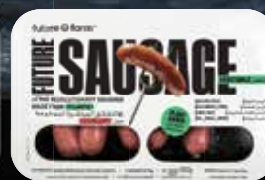
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editor'snote

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As mentioned in my note last month, the UAE's culinary sector is getting back on its feet faster than rest of the world. Chef Uwe too confirms this in his President's Station column. He alludes to the fact that chefs are now falling into two categories – the ones stretched thin at work by the surge in demand from guests dining out, and the ones who are underemployed or unemployed while waiting for the right opportunity.

If you look at our Newsbites section, you will see a lot of hotels are hiring chefs at the top end of the culinary hierarchy. This clearly indicates that a hiring boom is on the anvil. And that the only reason this is not happening at middle-levels (and this is my guess) is that hoteliers are waiting and watching to see if the reopening is temporary or permanent.

Either way this is great news for the foodservice sector, who had to bear the brunt of a worldwide lockdown over the past 12 months.

Last month's Salon Culinaire was a clear indication that the industry is dusting itself from a terrible fall and beginning to walk ahead. It is only a matter of time before the race restarts.

Talking of Salon Culinaire, we have interviewed four of the big winners, who shined bright among 300 entries.



We also have interviews with two senior culinary directors – Chef Rami Al Jebrael of Al Jawaher Reception & Convention Centre and Chef Sanjay Dwivedi of COYA.

Both are extremely successful in their endeavours because of their passion for the craft and their thirst for learning even after reaching high positions.

As is the remit of this magazine, we continue to focus on motivating and celebrating young chefs with our partner Nestle Professional through the Golden Chefs Hat Award UAE. The competition is now in its ninth season and the level of recipes these young chefs are bringing to the table are truly mind-boggling.

Hope you enjoy these articles and more.

If you are a chef or a foodservice professional who feels like they are yet to get back on their feet, please hang in there and connect with your peers for support. All trends are indicating to a major recovery by the year-end.

Wishing you all a Blessed Ramadan and Eid Mubarak.

Until next time, enjoy the read and keep cooking with passion.

Aquin George
Editor

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May 2021 Gulf Gourmet

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newsbites

Kevin heads culinary at Sofitel

Sofitel Dubai The Palm has a new F&B and culinary team. The hotel has appointed a new F&B Director and Head Chef along with the hire of a new Assistant Director of Events.

Irish born Kevin Fleming joins the hotel as the head chef across all the restaurant offerings at Sofitel Dubai The Palm. Previously at Atlantis the Palm, Dubai he has the knowledge of what Palm Jumeirah guests are looking for. He will oversee the running all restaurants including Porterhouse Steaks & Grills, Manava, Moana, The World Eatery, Maui, Zoya by Maui and Olivier's along with all

other details when it comes to aspects of the food and beverage offering, setting the culinary pace for the year ahead.

"I'm extremely excited to be joining such a prestigious hotel that is Sofitel Dubai The Palm. We have all seen ourselves through a hard previous year so now it is time to celebrate the amazing offerings that this hotel has, bringing life back to the F&B scene we have all missed" said Kevin Fleming. Kevin will ensure the continued success of the award-winning F&B outlets at Sofitel Dubai The Palm and has some exciting personal touches planned for 2021.



Geoffroy joins Four Seasons as Executive Sous Chef

Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach has appointed Geoffroy B. van Hasbroeck as their Executive Sous Chef. Chef Geoffroy has previously worked at Vistamar in Monaco, Il Cortile in Paris, Le Chalet de la Foret in Brussels and Jean-Georges Vongerichten in Dubai.

Born and raised in Belgium, Chef Geoffroy has spent the last 23 years criss-crossing the globe. In his new role, he reports to Executive Chef Gilles Arzur and will oversee the resort's restaurants, bars, room service, poolside dining and banqueting.

"Being a chef has never been a job for me, but purely a passion," says he. "My favourite part is working in a team, where everyone contributes their character, individuality, pride and history into every single dish."

Luisa joins Mondoux as Executive Chef

Columbian national Luisa Fernanda Caicedo is the new Executive Chef at Mondoux in Dubai Creek Harbour. She is tasked with improving the menu and enhancing the restaurant's dishes.

She says, "At Mondoux, we serve an international menu and are passionate about showcasing the natural flavours of ingredients. We source most of our products locally and prepare everything from scratch in our kitchen. I'm not a fan

of fleeting culinary trends and prefer a back to basics approach. Simple can be, and is, delicious!"

Chef Luisa hails from Medellin and has worked in New York City where she worked at Perry Street, run by Michelin-starred chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's son Cédric. She has also worked in Jakarta, Indonesia, heading up the kitchens of two upmarket restaurants, Vong Kitchen and Le Burger, both curated by Jean-Georges and Cédric Vongerichten.



The Restaurant Of Tomorrow Is Already Here: Digital And Green

Chefs and professionals to unveil latest trends in the sector at HostMilano (22-26 October 2021), as they do every other year

Sanitized air, delivery, green and digital. In the five corners of the world, the restaurant industry has changed its tune to adapt to new times and the future that will be.

This is what chefs and industry insiders will be saying at HostMilano (from 22 to 26 October 2021), the event that has established itself as the number one platform for all the most important Italian and international businesses that are ready to meet in the Rho Fiera pavilions not only to orient their business, but also to learn about the latest trends in the entire Ho.Re.Ca sector and attend hundreds of events with the most famous chefs and professionals from the worlds of coffee, ice-cream and confectionery.

This year, the direction of the restaurant industry, one of the most eager to look at the future, will be traced by watchwords such as sustainability and technology, to be leveraged in the kitchen in response to renewed consumer tastes.

The result? Restaurants, catering businesses and food service companies have rethought their processes all over the world, adapting their menus to a healthier offer.

As to innovation, professional kitchens are increasingly adopting new tools to optimize times and improve the quality of food: from multifunctional equipment to ovens that allow for a range of cooking processes to be followed at the same time, the most popular solutions today are those that help storing food safely at optimal temperatures and reducing



service times both in à la carte and take-away restaurants.

But restaurants know that, when they reopen, they will all have to share one responsibility: that of being 'safe' by

using air conditioning systems capable of sanitizing the dining room, cleaning cloths made of nanotechnological materials and, the cherry on top of the whole thing, graphically charming menus made of eco-friendly materials.

Juan appointed Chef de Cuisine at Casa de Tapas

Spanish Chef Juan Ramon Sobero Llaca has been appointed as Chef de Cuisine at Casa de Tapas in Dubai. Chef Juan was Chef de Cuisine at Vegamar Bodegas before moving across the globe to take charge of The Tapas Bar at J by Jose Andres in Mexico.

The Chef de Cuisine returned to Europe where he took the culinary reigns at Quisitapas, Westin Excelsior in Florence.

In 2017 he set his sights on the Middle East where he took command as Chef de Cuisine in both La Liga Lounge in Doha and Mercado Andaluz, St Regis in Amman, Jordan.

He says he is all set to revamp the menu

with sumptuous new dishes. Casa de Tapas is Dubai's legendary Spanish outpost housed within Dubai Creek Yacht Club. And Chef Juan has spent nearly a decade as Chef de Cuisine at renowned restaurants in three continents.

Chef Juan's approach to leading his culinary team aligns with the laid back, 'Mi casa es su casa' vibe that Casa De Tapas is known for. His upcoming dishes will include huevos rotos con jamón Iberico (eggs served Spanish-style with 36-month aged Iberian ham), pulpo a la gallega (Galician-style octopus with confit potatoes and smoked paprika), or arroz de Senyoret (Spanish rice with prawns, cuttlefish, seabass and saffron). Buen provecho.



Chef Izu gets 10-year UAE golden visa

Dubai-based Chef Izu Ani has been granted the UAE's 10-year golden visa for his dedication and contribution to the restaurant industry in the UAE, reports Emirates Woman.

The golden visa was launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai in 2019.

Chef Izu is the brains behind some of Dubai's most popular restaurants including GAIA in partnership with Evgeny Kuzin, Carine, The Lighthouse, Izu Brasserie & Bakery and more.

Joanna gets newly created role at Mandarin Oriental

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has appointed Joanna Flint as Chief Commercial Officer.

The newly created role oversees development and execution of the Group's commercial strategy as well as customer experience. She will take over the responsibilities of outgoing Chief Marketing Officer, Jill Kluge.

Prior to this, Joanna spent 12 years at Google, most recently as Managing Director - Global Partner Business in Asia Pacific. She was also Principal Consultant at Ogilvy Asia Pacific and worked for a decade in the travel industry leading transformation programmes for Singapore Airlines and British Airways.



James Riley, Group Chief Executive said, "Joanna's global leadership skills, digital expertise and understanding of customer behaviour will strengthen our ability to innovate and enhance our position as a leader in the luxury market."

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At Bluewaters talent runs deep

The first team this month for the Nestle Professional Golden Chef's Hat Award UAE – Season 9 are two dynamic young chefs from Caesars Bluewaters Dubai. Here are their stories and recipes

Chef Nurangi Madubashini

Chef Nurangi is a 22-year-old Sri Lankan from the Galle southern province and works as a culinary intern at the Caesars Palace Bluewaters. The self-confessed mummy's girl says, "I have been here for a nearly a year and a half and before this I worked with the Marriott Group in my home country."

Amidst mass layoffs across the global culinary industry, Chef Nurangi is one of the lucky few to have been retained through the crisis. When we ask her why she believed she was never let go, she

says, "Because I am young, I can learn fast and they like my artistic skills."

"Chef Julien, my Executive Pastry Chef, helps us a lot. He is my first teacher in Dubai and together with Chef Shawn, our Executive Sous Chef, I have been able to improve my culinary skills. This is a great place to learn something new every day."

"In such a short span, my colleagues and I are constantly motivated to compete in culinary competitions. I have already been part of four competitions since joining."

For the Golden Chef's Hat Award, she has tried to innovate using all three products from the Docello range. She created a crunchy base chocolate mousse with KitKat crunch at the bottom and caramel inside. Then there is the Coconut Panna Cotta with vanilla beans and Mango Creme Brûlée with chocolate sauce and sugar garnish.

"I have to give credit to Chef Rushi, Chef Julien and Chef Shawn for guiding me," she says. "In the future, I want to be able to compete with senior chefs and challenge them. It's not about winning





Chef Nurangi Madubashini

as much as it is a great way to learn and improve your cooking skills."

We ask her about an interesting career experience and she says, "When working at the Marriott in Sri Lanka, a guest and his family wanted a special cake. As it was a busy day, I made the cake and served it with a positive attitude. The family was so surprised and happy by my going out of the way to help them that they took my number and sponsored my flight to Dubai.

"Because of that and my uncle sponsoring my visa, today I am working in Dubai," she says with a smile. "When sponsoring my ticket they said, 'You don't need to pay back, it's a gift for your future because you are so young and you have a good attitude. One day you will reach a good position, keep smiling and be honest with everyone'."

Chef Islam Ezzat Mohamed Masoud

Chef Islam is a 30-year-old Egyptian working as Chef de Partie in the cold and hot kitchens of the Caesars Bluewaters preparing breakfast and cooking la carte dishes for our guests.



Chef Islam Ezzat Mohamed Masoud

"Sometimes I even assist in the health kitchen for brunch," he says.

The best part of the job for Chef Islam is when his guests are "happy with our food". He says the keeping guests happy is the challenge all chefs have to enjoy. "In a buffet you can make guests happy offering them an alternative, but in a la carte they are spending money for one plate. You have just one chance and if it is not done right, the guest won't return," he says.

Chef Islam began his culinary journey nine years ago. He completed his university degree in hotel management and also completed a culinary diploma accredited by City & Guilds UK.

He worked in Egypt close to the Red Sea where 3,000 guests had to be served daily. As a first job he says it was a great experience. Chef Islam says it is too early for him to consider himself a chef. "There is difference between a chef and cook! I hope that with time I will have the knowledge and skills it takes to be a good chef," he says.

After his first gig, he went on to work

at Hilton, Radisson Blu and Movenpick properties in Egypt. "I also worked in a standalone Mexican restaurant in between, just to understand the difference between hotels and restaurants." Though he was able to grow in his career at the restaurant, he believed the rise was too quick for him to be a chef who's worthy of his salt.

When he decided to leave Egypt for Dubai, his chef refused to let him quit saying that he could do that after he had secured a job. And secure he did. In 2018 he found a role managing the kitchens of a casual dining restaurant where overlooked the menu, costing and more. "It was easy for me."

However, the opportunity to work for Caesars Bluewaters was too good to pass and he has been working here since October 2018. The chef who has won medals at culinary competitions in the past, has created a unique dish for this competition.

"I did a fusion dish with duck breast as the hero ingredient. You will see hints of Egyptian, Italian, Indian and Spanish cuisines in my plate," he says.



Smoked duck breast and quail stuffed caramelized onion served with blue cheese polenta, sauté and grilled vegetables with coffee pan sauce and kumquat gel

FOR DUCK BREAST

Duck breast	150 g
Honey	15 g
Orange juice	5 g
Garlic paste	2 g
Smoked paprika	1 g
Salt and pepper	

FOR QUAIL

Deboned quail	65 g
Red onion	25 g
Brown sugar	5 g
Butter	10 g
Salt	

FOR POLENTA

Semolina	100 g
Blue cheese	20 g
Butter	20 g
Milk	150ml

Turmeric	1 g
White pepper	

FOR SAUCE

Butter	20 g
Flour	20 g
Chopped shallots	5 g
Maggi chicken stock	300ml
Nescafe powder dissolved in little water	60 ml
Salt and Pepper	

VEGETABLES

Boiled baby carrots	20 g
Boiled romanesco	10 g
Grilled oyster mushrooms	5 g
Confit tomato cherry	5 g
Grilled sliced onion	5 g

KUMQUAT GEL

Kumquat	50 g
Maggi chicken stock	100ml
Butter	10 g
Sugar	2 g

Method

- Take the blue chopping board. Clean the fish, fillet and portion it.

PREPARATION

- Caramelize the onion by sautéing it

with butter and adding sugar. Reduce fire until cooked and cool it. Then season the quail, add the onion and roll nicely. Simmer the roll for 10 minutes and let it rest.

- Boil the milk with butter, blue cheese, turmeric and season. Add the semolina slowly and mix well until it is cooked. Transfer sheet tray and let it cool. Thereafter cut into desired shape and pan sear before serving to take color.
- Blanch the kumquat, blend and strain. Melt the sugar, add the kumquat, chicken stock, season and finish with butter.
- Dry the duck breast, season and add to a cold pan skin down to be crispy. Drain the duck fat and continue cooking in the oven at 160°C for 10 minutes. Mix the honey, orange juice, garlic and paprika. Brush the mix on to the breast to glaze and shine.
- In the same pan add butter with duck fat. Sauté the shallots, add flour and make volute by adding chicken stock and the coffee. Strain and finish with butter. Season.
- Sauté the vegetables and start plating. Serve with sauce as a side and use the smoke gun to finish the plate and serve.



Crunchy Caramel Chocolate Mousse served with Coconut Panna Cotta and Passion Fruit Creme Brulee accompanied with Chocolate Cremeux

DOCELLO CHOCOLATE CARAMEL MOUSSE

Nestle Fresh Milk	100g
Docello chocolate mousse	50g
Caramel	50g

Method

- ◆ Whisk the cold milk and the powder. Add the caramel at room temperature. Continue to whisk it.

SEA SALT CARAMEL

Glucose	36g
Sugar	48g
Nestle all-purpose cream	100g
Gelatin	1piece
Butter	12g
Sea salt	0.8g

Method

- ◆ Warm the cream. Put the glucose and sugar together and caramelize it. When it turns into a dark caramel colour, add warm cream into stages and stir it slowly. Add the sea salt, gelatin and stir again. Allow it cool down and add the butter and hand blend it.

CHOCOLATE GLAZE

Sugar	120g
Water	140g
Nestle all-purpose cream	80g
Cocoa powder	50g
Gelatin	6g

Method

- ◆ Boil the sugar, water and cream together. Add the cocoa powder and cook. Then add the gelatin and hand blend it.

DOCELLO CRÈME BRULEE

Docello crème brulee	25g
Nestle fresh milk	100g
Nestle all-purpose cream	50g
Passion fruit puree	30g

Method

- ◆ Boil the milk and cream. Add the powder and hand whisk it. After that, pour into a container and chill it.

CHOCOLATE SAUCE

Water	25g
Sugar	50g
Nestle fresh milk	100g
Cocoa powder	20g
Corn flour	3g
Dark chocolate	15g

Method

- ◆ Boil the milk and sugar. Add the cocoa powder into it. Cook it with corn flour and water. Afterwards add the chocolate and hand blend.

DOCELLO COCONUT PANNA COTTA

Docello Panna Cotta powder	37g
----------------------------	-----

Nestle fresh milk	125g
Nestle all-purpose cream	125g
Vanilla	1pc
Maggi coconut powder	25g

Method

- ◆ Bring to a slow boil the mix of milk and cream. Remove it from the heat; add both powders and mix then bring back to slow boil.

CREMUX

Nestle all-purpose cream	60g
Nestle fresh milk	60g
Sugar	30g
Egg yolk	1pcs
Dark chocolate	132g

Method

- ◆ Boil cream and milk to 82°C. Add sugar and yolk. Whisk nicely and pour into the chocolate.

SABLE

Flour	32g
Butter	20g
Sugar	10g
Whole Egg	5g

Method

- ◆ Mix the butter and sugar but do not add cream. Add the whole egg, then add the flour on slow speed. Rest the dough in the chiller overnight.

GARNISH

Chocolate feather	1pcs
Chocolate sticks	1pcs
Sugar garnish	1pcs

May 2021 **Gulf Gourmet**

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SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS

Exclusive interview with **Rami Al Jebraiel**, Director of Culinary Affairs and Executive Chef at the Al Jawaher Reception & Convention Centre, Sharjah

Chef Rami arrived in the UAE, from Syria, 22 years ago. He vividly remembers the date. January 21, 1999 he says with pride. "I was 21 and had just graduated in tourism and hotel management," he says.

The young Chef Rami began his career in Fujairah working for a small property with two outlets. Even as a young man, the quiet Fujairah lifestyle suited Chef Rami's temperament.

The only reason he moved out is because he believed Dubai would catapult his career. "The competition, my industry peers, and career development, was all in Dubai those days," he says.

After working for a hotel that made way for the development of Dubai Media City, he was recruited for the pre-opening of Fairmont Dubai. He describes his exposure and experience working for the luxury brand as "Great". He saw his career grow from Demi Chef de Partie to Senior Chef de Partie in a matter of years.

"I learnt a lot and built relationships with many chefs and hospitality professionals.



I learnt a lot and built relationships with many chefs and hospitality professionals. They are still in touch even after moving around the world

They are still in touch even after moving around the world," he says.

Four years later, when his Executive Sous Chef moved to the Ritz Carlton, he offered Chef Rami the position of Sous Chef. The role was different too. "I had experience working in all-day-dinning, fine dining and concept restaurants. Ritz Carlton offered banquet experience," he says, explaining this was something that was too good to refuse.

The three years he spent there was great





in terms of experience and knowledge. He had risen to the position of Chef de Cuisine when he was offered the role of Executive Chef for Ramada Downtown.

Chef Rami admits that moving into this senior management position for an international brand was a "very brave step". Handling a department or working with a pre-opening team was not new to him, but this was the first time where he was ultimately responsible for the success (or failure). And success it was.

He says, "Though it was a dry hotel, we had a very successful opening and established the foundations for a very good business in that property."

Seeing his remarkable work, upper management asked him to revamp Ramada Ajman's food and beverage department. "It was very challenging changing things around," he says.

Chef Rami's determination, however, allowed him to instill a new line of business revenue and do things that made the property a significant attraction in the northern Emirates.

"The Ajman property was thrice the size of the Dubai property in terms of rooms and F&B facilities and we added a banquet for guests," he says.

Chef Rami was soon after besieged with working at a whole new Ramada Beach property. "Nearly three and half years went into group restructuring, change in name and restructuring the old property including rooms, food and beverage, restaurants, menus, the works," he says.

The turnaround did not go unnoticed and in 2013 he was hired by Al Jawaher Reception & Convention Centre in Sharjah to run their culinary operations. I was hired as Executive Chef, then promoted to Head of Culinary Affairs, and now to Director of Culinary Affairs and Executive Chef.

Since joining, Chef Rami and his team



You cannot put enough weightage on how important it is to learn from the right sources

have the turned the Centre into the most coveted destination for events, banqueting, and VIP weddings in Sharjah. It is without doubt one of the most established brands in the country for large VIP events and weddings.

"In these eight years, I have restructured the kitchen layout, brought in specialist equipment to match business requirements, and hired and trained a top-notch team in a competitive space for talent," he says.

While the culinary department including chefs, the kitchen and stewarding are under his purview, Chef Rami says an equally important part of his role is overlooking the development of products and strategy to keep it in line with market demand. "Doing this while maintaining the culinary standards and team morale is really important," he says.

Chef Rami is a strong believer in training his chefs and making them compete at national and international culinary competitions. "There isn't enough space to accommodate all the trophies and certificates our chefs have won over these years," he says pointing towards multiple walls lined with trophies and certificates.

He adds, "I must thank Chef Uwe Micheel and Mr. Andy Cuthbert for organizing this year's Salon Culinaire despite extraordinary circumstances. This Salon helps my team to learn new techniques, expand their knowledge, and break their fears of being in a competition. And if they winning the morale boost is an added bonus."

Chef Rami, who is a Worldchefs certified judge, is also an avid learner. "I'm not a pastry chef but I have started working on pastry techniques over the past year and a half because my pastry team is made up of award-winning chefs. I'm very proud of them."

"In my professional life, my goal for myself is always to support chefs that are eager to learn. My objective is to provide opportunities and training for the new generation that want to be successful chefs. I have conducted many online classes in the past here at Al Jawaher Reception & Convention Centre."

Chef Rami says whether it is his master classes, educational sessions or Ramadan videos, his underlying message is always the same. "If you want to learn something about gastronomy, learn it in a right way, regardless of the medium."

He says, during the last competition, he saw chefs spending their own money to travel from abroad and to learn. He says their plates may have been very basic or filled with technical errors. But the experience helped them learn and correct their mistakes.

"You cannot put enough weightage on how important it is to learn from the right sources," he says.

On the personal front, Chef Rami is the father of two kids Tiam and Majd. He says, "Over the years my wife, who is a teacher, has been my pillar of strength. She always inspires and supports me despite the long hours I spend at work. It is her ability to single-handedly take care of our family and support me that has allowed me to reach where I am today."

The pandemic has allowed Rami to reconnect with his family like never before. "We spent six months not stepping out of the house and used the time to cook together, learn music and relive lost moments as a family," he says.



Cold Lemon Cheesecake with Strawberry Parfait and Lemon Chantilly. Recipe on page 24.

COLD LEMON CHEESECAKE WITH STRAWBERRY PARFAIT AND LEMON CHANTILLY

STRAWBERRY PARFAIT

fresh strawberry	200 grams
icing sugar	100 grams
vanilla essence	1 teaspoon

Arla whipping cream 200 ml

Method

- Place strawberries in a food processor or blender, process/blend until smooth.
- Transfer the strawberry puree to a strainer and strain the excess liquid.
- In a bowl, mix the strained strawberry puree with icing sugar and vanilla essence.
- In another bowl, beat Arla whipping cream 75%. Add strawberry puree mixture and beat together until well combined.
- Pour the mixture into a freezer container and freeze for 4-5 hours.

COLD LEMON CHEESECAKE

egg yolk	50 grams
granulated sugar	25 grams
Arla Pro cream cheese	200 grams
Arla whipping cream	200 ml
lemon zest	1 teaspoon
vanilla stick	1 piece
gelatin sheet, soaked	3 pieces

Method

- Using a mixer machine, beat egg yolk and sugar until fluffy.
- Add cream cheese and continue mixing until the mixture is smooth. Set aside.
- In a separate bowl, beat whipping cream until soft peak forms. Add cream cheese mixture and fold using a spatula.
- Add lemon zest, vanilla stick, and soaked gelatin sheets. Mix until well combined.
- Transfer into a square cake ring or mold and keep in the freezer for 1-2 hours.
- Cut into desired sizes using a sharp knife.

SABLE BRETON (BASE)

Lurpak butter	150 grams
icing sugar	65 grams
egg yolk	50 grams
trimoline	5 grams
all-purpose flour	200 grams
almond powder	20 grams
baking powder	5 grams
salt	2 grams

Method

- Using a mixer machine, beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
- Add egg yolk and trimoline, and mix on medium speed for 5 minutes. Add all the remaining dry ingredients and mix on low speed just until the dough starts to clump together.
- Wrap the dough with plastic wrap and refrigerate to set for 2-3 hours.
- Sheet the dough and cut into 3cm x 8 cm or any desired sizes.
- Bake in preheated oven at 180°C for 12-14 minutes.

LEMON CHANTILLY

Arla whipping cream	200 grams
white chocolate	150 grams
gelatin sheet, soaked	1 piece
lemon zest	1 teaspoon
vanilla stick	1 piece

Method

- In a cooking pot, warm Arla whipping cream.
- Add the white chocolate and stir until the chocolate melts.
- Add soaked gelatin sheet, lemon zest, and vanilla stick. Stir well.
- Transfer the mixture into a container and refrigerate for at least 6 hours.
- Take out the mixture and beat using a mixer machine until smooth.

MICROWAVE CHOCOLATE SPONGE

eggs	4 pieces
granulated sugar	100 grams
all-purpose flour	130 grams
cocoa powder	10 grams

Method

- Using a mixer machine, beat eggs and

sugar until fluffy.

- In a bowl, combine flour and cocoa powder, then add into the egg mixture. Mix until just combined using a spatula.
- Fill the disposable cups with mixture, and bake in the microwave for 45 seconds.

MICROWAVE PISTACHIO SPONGE

eggs	4 pieces
granulated sugar	100 grams
all-purpose flour	130 grams
pistachio powder	5 grams
green color	2 drops

Method

- Using a mixer machine, beat eggs and sugar until fluffy.
- In a bowl, combine flour and pistachio powder.
- Add the flour mixture into the egg mixture and green color. Mix until just combined using a spatula.

CRUNCHY

milk chocolate	50 grams
feuillettine	10 grams

Method

- Melt white chocolate and combine with feuillettine.
- Make a flat sheet and refrigerate for just few minutes.

STRAWBERRY FOAM

strawberry puree	100 ml
sosa xantana powder	1 teaspoon
granulated sugar	2 teaspoon

Method

- Combine all the ingredients and blend using a hand blender until foam begins to form.

GARNISH

Blueberry
Strawberry
Raspberry
Dried rose petals
Fresh mango
Micro herbs
Strawberry jam
Silver leaves

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'I was focusing more on cooking than studies'

Sanjay Dwivedi, Culinary Director and Brand Ambassador, COYA speaks to Gulf Gourmet about how living in India and the United Kingdom helped shape his culinary journey

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

I was born in London and when I was 5, my parents decided to move from UK to India. I lived in India until I was 18 years old. I was lucky enough to have spent my youth both in India and UK, so I got the best of both worlds – East & West. India is where I had my early education and learned about my culture and family values. I was a very shy and quiet child. My dad was a pediatric surgeon while my mum was a dietician. They were both very hardworking people. They have instilled good work ethics and values and caring for others, in me and my sister from an early age. I loved my time in India.

When I came to UK, I was surrounded by a totally different culture and races. The weather was different, and people had their own way of getting things done. People lived at a very fast pace, but I loved it and relished that new chapter in my life. When I was 18, I started living alone. Being independent from my parents gave me a sense of freedom because I was figuring out life on my own. There was lots of choices and decisions to be made but I enjoyed it.

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

Around the age of 10, I remember going on a holiday to Visakhapatnam, a coastal town in India. My mother's cousin owned a 5-star hotel called The Sun n Sea Hotel. During one of my visits there,



Always use local and seasonal ingredients. Give every food you touch a lot of respect. There has been a chain of people who have made it possible for you to be using them

I went inside the hotel restaurant's kitchen, where I got to watch the staff work behind the scenes. I particularly remember the chef preparing a steamed whole fish, with some fresh herbs, lemon and butter all encased in a paper bag. I will never forget the aroma and the taste of the dish. I thought it was mind boggling and magical. I have never seen such a simple dish create an explosion of flavours. I was brought up on spices and our food at home was either cooked on a gas stove or on a BBQ grill. That moment planted a seed in my head and my interest in working with food grew.

From there on, I started experimenting with food. I remember spending a lot of time with my grandmother and watching

her cook. At the age of 15, after trying different methods, I made the best omelet in the family. I would whip the egg whites separately and then add the egg yolk or cook the tomatoes, onions, green peppers, and chilies together, add eggs, and bake then in the oven. To this day, every time I visit India, my family would have 'Omelets Sunday by Sanjay', where I make omelets for our extended family members. The last time I was there, I had to make 30 omelets!

When I was living and studying in the UK, I was focusing more on cooking than studies. My friends from school loved when I cooked for them and I thought that I should consider pursuing a profession in culinary.

My dad always insisted that I followed his steps and pushed me to become a doctor. Unfortunately, I didn't get the A-level requirements to go to medical school, so I decided to enroll in Hotel Management and Catering instead. I moved to Windsor and studied there for 3 years. As part of my course during my second year, I had to take an apprenticeship in a hotel. I worked different jobs across all departments such as a waiter, receptionist, bartender, and chef.

When I entered the kitchen and wore my chef's whites, I was very excited and nervous at the same time. The pace and the heat in the kitchen were new to me yet I loved being in that environment. My executive chef, David Williams took

me under his wings and mentored me there for over 4 months.

My parents were never keen for me to be a chef. They wanted me to take up a management position at a hotel and one day go back to India where opportunities in the hospitality industry were abundant. But my time spent under the wings of Chef David convinced me otherwise. I knew I wanted to be a chef.

On my third year, my lecturer and mentor in college, Mr. Malcom Gee, advised me to apply for the City and Guild's Level 3 culinary course. The class was difficult at first as I was surrounded by experienced Head Chefs and Sous Chefs. We were preparing complex dishes, designing menus, and taking the responsibility of running the kitchen during the production sessions. I had to learn how to prepare, cook and finish challenging recipes of fish, meat, poultry and vegetable dishes and make different kinds of sauces. I was a commis chef who had no experience of running a kitchen. All the other students are professionals and already accomplished in the field.

One of my assignments was to make a consommé, which at that time, I have never even heard of. I knew I had



As an example, when we opened COYA Mykonos, we made sure we included local ingredients such as feta cheese, Orzo Pasta, and Fava on the menu and added our Peruvian twist to it.

to research and with the help of my mentors and my favorite book at the time – Escoffier: A Guide to Modern Cooking, I gave it my all; there was no google in those days, so I had to work hard to find out information. As the saying goes, if you love what you do, you can achieve anything. And I did. I have never been so proud to pass an exam. My test results were better than the experienced chefs and that gave me enough confidence to try and work at the best restaurants.

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

The beginning of my career centered on working at French and Italian restaurants where I was the only Asian in the kitchen. The environment can be hostile, and I was subjected to racist remarks. The remarks made by colleagues were painful and I remember going home feeling lonely and disappointed.

I called Mr. Gee who advised me to do my best in the kitchen, show them my skills and work extra hard. That turned out to be one of the best advices I have ever gotten because as soon the chefs saw my potential, they started to view me as a talented chef not just an Asian individual. From there on, I developed my skills and worked in different top restaurants in London.

Tell us about your journey to become an Executive Chef?

I started as a Head Chef for COYA Mayfair in London in 2012. I was also their first employee and my mission was to open the best Peruvian restaurant in the city. With hard work and dedication of my amazing team, COYA received positive reviews and many of our customers became regulars.



We were voted the hottest restaurant in the world by Zagat, and I was so proud. Eventually, we expanded the brand to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, a second site in London, Monaco, Paris, and recently, Mykonos and Doha. Once Dubai opened, I took on the role as Executive Chef for COYA and by the time we opened Paris, I was in a new position as COYA Culinary Brand Ambassador. I was traveling all over the world and was grateful to be a part of the amazing brand we built. I even loved the fact that we were able to open 8 COYA locations in just 8 years.

Every time we opened COYA in a new location, we would do extensive market research. I would learn about what locals liked and the produce they grow locally, ensuring that these ingredients



are featured on the menu to create something exclusive for their city. As an example, when we opened COYA Mykonos, we made sure we included local ingredients such as feta cheese, Orzo Pasta, and Fava on the menu and added our Peruvian twist to it.

What are the challenges of being an Executive Chef?

It was a natural progression, and I was able to excel smoothly as I had an excellent team of head chefs with me across all COYA locations. My role changed from running the kitchens daily to creating and executing new ideas for dishes with COYA's talented chefs and ensuring consistency within the brand.

Tell us about your current role and what it entails.

As COYA's Culinary Brand Ambassador, I promote COYA's culture and DNA across our locations. Wherever I go, I make sure to pass on the message of COYA's love and passion for Peruvian cuisine and

South American culture and hospitality to the world.

Part of my job is also to empower COYA's staff and team members to be a leader because some of them will want to be a head chef and lead a team too one day. As someone who aspired to become a chef, I like to engage and inspire young talent by visiting colleges and job fairs, and judging competitions.

Innovation is the key to the success of any business, that's why I am always on the lookout for new ideas.

What is your advice to young chefs?

- ♦ First, when you are cooking, always cook with your heart.
- ♦ Do not over think everything but rather gather skills from your peers and colleagues.
- ♦ Always work extra hard and have a mind like a sponge when it comes to absorbing new knowledge and information.

- ♦ If it's possible, go out and visit high-end restaurants and taste their food. Study the ingredients and techniques the chefs are utilizing and use it to see what flavours appeal to you and build on it.
- ♦ Do not chase money but rather chase position because it will reward you so much more in the long run.
- ♦ Follow restaurants and chefs on social media to see their journeys and what they are up to. It's a great tool to have these days.
- ♦ Being organized both before and after your work is important. After my shifts, I would always make a mise en place list, a French culinary phrase for "putting in place", which I did meticulously. On my way to work the next day, I would plan on how I would attack that list.
- ♦ Always use local and seasonal ingredients. Give every food you touch a lot of respect. There has been a chain of people who have made it possible for you to be using them.



**Nestlé
Golden
Chef's Hat
Award**



Palette Delight

Pullman Hotels and Residences Dubai are this month's second team vying for the Nestle Professional Golden Chef's Hat Award UAE – Season 9. Meet the two amazing young chefs and their superb recipes

Chef Dira Sunarya

Chef Dira, an Indonesian chef from Bandung, is also relatively new to Pullman Dubai. "I joined Pullman last November after working at The Oberoi Dubai for a year," he says.

The 25-year-old Demi Chef de Partie took to the profession because of his father. "He is a professional cook and has a catering business. After retiring, my mom now runs the business," he says.

He has two younger siblings – a brother and a sister – both of whom have also pursued the culinary path for their careers.

After opting for culinary courses in high school and enjoying it, Chef Dira went on to complete a 3-year course in Major Food Production Management at the Bandung Institute of Tourism (STPB).

Chef Dira began his career working at the Padma Hotel Bandung in the F&B department as Commis I. "I was a trainee there during my college days and they hired me after I graduated," he says with a smile, and adds, "It was one of the best 5-star hotels in the city."

Two years later, he had three opportunities to choose from – one each in Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE. "I chose

the Oberoi Dubai and that's how I came to the Middle East. They have a good system for training."

A year later, he was headhunted by the Pullman HR team, who convinced him to join them. "I am thankful that so far I have got jobs without having to apply."

For the Golden Chef's Hat Competition, Chef Dira has created a fusion dish combining western and Asian influences and using saffron for flavour.

Talking of interesting experiences, Chef Dira says, "While at The Oberoi, I pacified an irate guest by with my Asian



Chef Dira Sunarya



Chef B.N. Amila Ian Monarailwa



dish. My chef saw this and gave me the responsibility of handling Asian cuisine.

"I was also given the opportunity to create a new Asian dish for the la carte menu, which went on to be a best-seller at the hotel. This was before the pandemic," he says.

"Most people think western cuisine when creating menus. I want to focus on bringing Asian cuisine with a modern twist that is currently trending back in my home country."

His long-term goals include managing the entire kitchen operations one day followed by becoming a chef-owner of a restaurant.

Chef B.N. Amila Ian Monarailwa

Chef Amila hails from the city of Negombo in Sri Lanka. "My dad is a carpenter and my mom is a homemaker. I have two sisters, both of whom are married," says the still single chef.

The 30-year-old Chef de Partie – Pastry

at Pullman Dubai was only recently appointed in his new role. Prior to this he worked at Caesars Palace Hotel for two and a half years in a similar role.

"My inspiration to join the culinary professional came from my uncle. He too is a pastry chef and I enjoyed seeing him create cakes and more," says Chef Amila.

He adds, "I just followed in his footsteps. I completed a Diploma in Pastry and Bakery at Airport Grand Hotel in Sri Lanka. It was like a three-year government course that combined theory and real-life work."

He moved to Abu Dhabi soon after to work at the Flamingo Hotel followed by Pullman Deira City Centre. "Yes, this is my second stint at this hotel. I worked here earlier as a Commis I before going to Caesars Palace. And now I am back again," says Chef Amila sporting a happy smile.

"It's now nine years since I began my career and I am enjoying every moment of it," he says.

The culinary field was not his original calling. "At first I was pursuing an IT course. That's when I realized this was not for me. I wanted a career doing something where I can wake up every day looking forward to work. In this profession, every day is different and I enjoy that," he says.

Chef Amila is not new to competitions; he has previously won a bronze for his dessert at the Salon Culinaire.

For the Golden Chef's Hat Award, he has created a vegetarian dish using all three products from the Docello range – chocolate mousse, crème brulee and panna cotta without egg. It is a dessert with lots of fruits and is ideal for the summer, he confirms.

"For inspiration I go to my Pastry Chef Dammika Herath. I speak with him and I also follow famous chefs on Instagram for ideas," says Chef Amila, who hopes to someday become a Head Pastry Chef himself.

Saffron Chicken Roll, Sesame Chicken Lollipop, Puree Pumpkin, Mango Salsa, Maggi Mashed Potato, Chicken Jus

SAFFRON CHICKEN ROLL

Whole Chicken	2 pcs
Saffron	3g
Carrot	10g
Onion	10g
Celery	5g
Salt/ Pepper	5g
Olive Oil	5ml
Maggi Chicken Stock	5 g
Egg Yolk	5 g

Method

- ◆ Debone and skin the Chicken. Mince the meat, add carrot, onion, celery, saffron and egg yolk into the minced meat. Season minced chicken mixture and chicken skin with salt, pepper, olive oil, and chicken stock powder. Apply cling film on the working table, put skin and minced chicken mix into the cling film and roll tight. Use the chicken bone and chicken stock powder for making chicken stock. Add onion, celery, and carrot for aromatic vegetables. Steam the chicken roll with chicken stock for 20 minutes. Remove the cling film from the chicken after it is steamed. Heat the non-stick pan, add olive oil and sear the chicken until it gets a nice color. Cut the chicken equally to serve.

SESAME CHICKEN LOLLIPOP

Chicken Leg	2 pcs
Sesame Oil	5 ml
Sesame Seed	3 g
Salt/ Pepper	tsp
Egg Yolk	10g
All Purpose Flour	50g
Bread Crumb	50g
Frying Oil	100ml

Method

- ◆ Cut the chicken into drumstick shape, marinate with sesame oil, salt/pepper. Dip the marinated chicken into all-purpose flour, egg yolk, bread crumb, and sprinkle sesame seed. Heat the frying oil until it reaches 175°C then fry until golden brown and set aside.



PUREE PUMPKIN

Pumpkin	100g
Olive oil	10l
Butter	5g
Salt	3g
Pepper	3g

Method

- ◆ Cut the pumpkin into 4 pieces, season the pumpkin with salt, pepper, and olive oil, and keep in the tray. Heat the oven for 180°C and cook the pumpkin for 8 minutes. Remove the skin and seed from the pumpkin, then blend until you get a nice smooth puree texture. Season the puree and add butter.

MANGO SALSA

Onion	10g
Tomato	15g
Mix Capsicum	10g
Mango	20g
Tomato Ketchup	25ml
Sugar	5g
Salt/ Pepper	5g
Lemon Juice	5ml

Method

- ◆ Cut onion, tomato, mix capsicum and mango into fine brunoise. Add tomato ketchup, and season with sugar, salt, pepper, and lemon juice.

MAGGI MASHED POTATO

Maggi Mashed Potato	100g
Milk	150ml
Salt	5g
Pepper	5ml
Cooking Cream	15ml
Butter	2g

Method

- ◆ Boil the water and add the mashed potato powder. Mix well and add milk to adjust consistency. Season with salt, pepper, and finish with cooking cream and butter.

CHICKEN JUS

Chicken Bone	100g
Water	500ml
Chef Demi Glaze	20 g
Carrot	10 g
Onion	10 g
Celery	5 g
Butter	20 g
Salt	5 g
Pepper	5 g

Method

- ◆ Boil the water then add demi glaze, chicken bone, onion, carrot and celery. Let it simmer for 90 minutes. Strain the bones and vegetables from the jus. Season with salt, pepper, and finish with butter.

Docello Vanilla Panna Cotta, Docello Milk Chocolate Mousse and Docello Strawberry Creme Brulee

VANILLA PANNA COTTA

Docello Panna Cotta	120 gm
Milk	400ml
Cream	200ml
Vanilla fresh	1 pot

Method

- ◆ Heat the milk, cream and vanilla pod. Remove from heat and whisk in the panna cotta powder. Return to the heat

for 2 minutes without boiling. Add to the mold and set.

STRAWBERRY CRÈME BRULEE

Docello Crème Brulee	50 gm
Milk	200 ml
Cream	100ml
Strawberry puree	100 ml

Mix berries

Method

- ◆ Boil the milk and cream with strawberry puree. Remove from heat. Add the powder and mix. Then bring to the boiled set in the mold in freezer.

DOCELLO CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

Docello chocolate mousse	100 gm
Milk	400ml

Fresh strawberry

Method

- ◆ Pour the chocolate mousse mix into the mixing bowl. Add the milk and mix well. Mold and set in the freezer.

CRUMBLE

Butter	50gm
Sugar	50gm
Tapioca powder	100gm

Method

- ◆ Melt the butter and mix all the ingredients.



BACK WITH A BANG

Chef Hillary Q. A. Joseph wins Best Cuisinier at Salon Culinaire

This is the second time Chef Hillary is gracing the cover of this magazine. His first cover story came soon after winning the Chef of the Year trophy at La Cuisine du SIAL Middle East in 2016.

The 40-year-old Sri Lankan won the Best Cuisinier trophy this year – at the biggest regional culinary competition for professional chefs – by winning three Gold medals across three individual competitions.

The cumulative points for his five-course menu, his beef practical cookery, and his fish practical cookery, became the most impressive overall performance at this year's Salon (which had over 300 chef entries).

"I had just a month to practice, so I would stay back after my work got over at around 9 or 10pm and practice for hours," he says.



I reach home at 2 or 3 am and I find my wife practicing recipes of her own. She has been encouraging me to do competitions all these years.

No practice is possible without your team backing you. At Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek, where Chef Hillary works as Senior Chef de Partie, he had the support of Chef Sampath and the entire banqueting team.

Ask him if he will continue with more competitions and he swiftly replies, saying, "I have won. Now, I must support my colleagues." Chef Hillary still remembers his first competition in 2012 while working for Dubai International Airport Hotel. "I did not get any certificate or medal," he says.

Rather than lose hope, the experience lit a hunger for being the best. A year later, he represented the same hotel again and returned with a gold and a silver medal for beef practical cookery and fish practical cookery, respectively.

Today his home displays over 20 gold medals and multiple trophies.

The soft-spoken chef's rise to culinary stardom is no overnight feat. Coming from humble beginnings, he began as a kitchen steward at the Holiday Inn Colombo. This was in 1999 after being introduced to the industry by his uncle. He still remembers the happiness when he was promoted to Kitchen Helper a year later. The promotion meant a few extra bucks to support his family.

Over the next nine years he rose to Demi Chef de Partie before moving to Colombo's Cinnamon Grand. Two years later, in 2011, he moved to Dubai. He has

since worked at the Media Rotana, Dubai International Hotel, and Ajman Saray before joining Radisson Blu in 2014.

In his current role, Chef Hillary is in-charge of the banquet kitchen at Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek. "With Ramadan, the kitchens and quite busy," he says with a smile.

His advice to young chef is – as you may have guessed – to compete to improve your culinary skills.

"Young chefs need to practice daily to learn. I learnt so many things from our Executive Chef Diyan over the years. From the first time I met Chef Uwe and Chef Diyan in 2014, they have been training me. Winning this trophy would not have been possible without a culture of sustained training over the years that was put in place by Chef Uwe and driven by Chef Diyan and Chef David," he says.

The real support he says though has been his wife, who works as in the pastry kitchens of the Fairmont Hotel. "I reach home at 2 or 3 am and I find my wife practicing recipes of her own. She graduated from Sri Lankan Hotel School, so she understands my situation. She has been encouraging me to do competitions all these years. She has won medals too at previous Salon Culinaires in the Live Cake competition," he says.

The chef says that his long-term dream is to a restaurant in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where the menu is an extension of his own passion for cooking.



Radisson
HOTEL, DUBAI DEIRA

Hillary Zuentus Anthony
Chef De Partie

'I HAVE MORE THAN 60 GOLD MEDALS'

Chef **Rohita Kumara Kasthuriarchchi** wins Best Artist at Salon Culinaire, again

Not many can win one of the world's most reputed competitions after deciding to compete just 13 days before D-day. But then not many have the skills and the talent that Chef Rohita possesses. He has won this title every year from 2013 to 2019 before deciding to make way for others. But decided to compete again this year at the request of his new employer.

For those not in the know, Chef Rohita has previously graced the cover of Gulf Gourmet magazine and is a trump card in the UAE national culinary team, winning multiple Gold medals at international competitions.

The 37-year-old Sri Lankan national came to Dubai as part of the pre-opening of Atlantis The Palm in 2009. Three years later he moved to Etihad Towers Abu Dhabi as Sous Chef but soon moved to Burj Al Arab at the same position. "I was at Burj Al Arab for seven years from 2012 to 2019," he says.

He joined the Mister Baker team this year and is tasked with conceptualizing new cakes in line with the vision laid out by the management. "I have been requested to do something special, never seen before line of cakes, to increase local customers," he says.

The artistic chef is renowned for his ice sculptures and chocolate sculptures. His art has adorned some of the big projects at Burj Al Arab.

Talking of medal tally and he says, "I have more than 60 gold medals, 11 silver medals and 7 bronze medals." Ask



If you feel you are talented, you first study, then experiment as much as you can.

him about his secret to success and he says, "There is no secret. If you feel you are talented, you first study the things related to your job. You then experiment as much as you can. Experimenting is very, very important and so is studying."

For this year's win, Chef Rohita created an open showpiece, a sugar showpiece and a chocolate showpiece. The chocolate and sugar showpieces won Gold with distinction, which translates to 100 out of 100 marks from the judging panel.

We tell him that we noticed the attention to detail in all his three showpieces and that we could not fathom how he managed to pull off a seemingly impossible task in just 13 days.

He says, "I managed because of my years of experience. I know how to create and achieve daily targets. It took 17 years of professional competing and 14 Gold medals with distinction to reach this stage," he says as a matter of fact.

Chef Rohita has been a part of the UAE National Culinary Team since 2014. "I have participated in the World Hospitality Championship in 2015,

Culinary Olympics in 2016, Culinary World Cup in 2018 and 2020, and other international competitions like the one in Milan," he says.

"At the World Cup and at the Olympics I have got 100% marks," he says. With 13 Gold medals just from these competitions, he has always been an integral part of UAE's huge medal tally.

Ask him about his artistic instincts as a child and he admits, "Yes, I had some talent in my hands. I did drawing and sculpturing in school, and chose Art as a subject. My university professor taught me how to pursue this professionally. I went on to work with him for 3 years in the hotel industry in Negombo, Sri Lanka. That training helped me get 3 gold medals in my first national competition.

"I moved to Maldives in 2004 and worked there for 3 years at 2 hotels before moving Seychelles for 2 years. In between I came to Dubai for a competition and liked the city. When I heard about the pre-opening of Atlantis The Palm, I applied and got through."

And the rest as they say is history.

On the personal front, Chef Rohitha says that his father and his family supported him and his brother wholeheartedly to turn their artistic talent into a profession. His brother too is an artist. He is now a Sous Chef at Etihad Towers Abu Dhabi.

We can't wait to see Chef Rohita's creations add a new life to Mister Baker's range of cakes and thereafter to the UAE's hotel industry.



THE ART OF PASTRY

Chef **Thilina Fernando** wins Best Pastry Chef at Salon Culinaire

As you may have guessed by now, Sri Lankan chefs are clearly dominating the big wins at this year's Salon Culinaire.

32-year-old Thilina Fernando was recently promoted to Junior Sous Chef – Pastry at W Dubai The Palm. His win comes as little surprise to those who have been following this competition over the years. He had support from his Executive Pastry Chef – an equally young Kapila Amaratunga – who has previously won this trophy multiple times while still in his 20s.

To win the competition, Chef Thilina competed in Four Plated Dessert, Petit Four, and Live Cake. "This was first time I created a vegan plated dessert, which was a nice experience for me," he says.

Chef Thilina is comparatively new to the competition space and spent two months doing rigorous training to be selected as the Best Pastry Chef. "I



My advice is work hard because pastry is not easy. There are so many fine nuances you need to learn. If you master these delicate techniques only then can you achieve your goals

practiced every single day and just went for it," he says.

He has competed in Live Cakes competition three times in the past and has won a silver and two golds.

His journey to becoming a professional chef started soon after his schooling. "My father wanted me to be a chef," he says.

He joined a hotel school in Sri Lanka but soon realized that the hot kitchen was not for him. He then tried his hand at bakery and pastry and studies the art for two years. "I started as a baker in Sri Lanka and soon after got opportunity to work at the Hilton JBR in Dubai," he says.

The move to Dubai was propelled by his uncle who urged him to visit the city and try his luck and gaining employment here. "It's been eight years since I began

my pastry career," he says looking confident with the journey so far.

After Hilton, he moved to Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel, where he first met Chef Kapila. And over the years he has built his techniques from one of the best in the industry. He even followed his mentor to his current place of employment during its pre-opening days.

We ask him about his advice to other young chefs and he says, "My advice is work hard because pastry is not easy. There are so many fine nuances you need to learn. If you master these delicate techniques only then can you achieve your goals."

He adds, "For me, I'm privileged to working with a great chef. It helps because he supports me and my colleagues. Whatever I learn – from A to Z – it's only from him. My secret to success is working with a legendary chef. I also love to teach to others. This is another trait I got from him.

"But at the end what matters is that you have to work hard to achieve your goals."

This win has been the equivalent of tasting blood for Chef Thilina. "Yes, I will compete again," he confirms.

On the personal front, Chef Thilina's parents are back home in Sri Lanka and his sister is married and living in Norway.

His long-term goal is become an executive pastry chef either in Dubai or someplace else. We wish him the very best.





RISING STAR

Chef **Santosh Tamang** is 2nd Runner Up Best Cuisinier at Salon Culinaire

Chef Santosh Tamang is a 27-year-old Nepali national and is the second runner-up in the Best Cuisinier competition.

He ranked just behind his colleague Chef Hillary Joseph and Chef Naveen Bhardwaj from Jumeirah Creekside Hotel in the total tally.

We are featuring him as part of this story because he is still a Commis I at the Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek and yet managed to come this close to winning a much-coveted title and trophy.

He created a five-course meal, a live beef cookery and live chicken cookery. While the five-course meal won a high silver, the chicken and beef live competitions saw him win a silver medal and a bronze medal respectively.

Chef Santosh has been competing quite often of late and says he has been a part of at least three or four competitions last year. "At last year's Salon Culinaire I won a gold medal. This year, I couldn't practice a lot as I didn't have enough time," he says with a wry smile.

The Chef first arrived in Dubai eight years ago this very month. "I worked with the Landmark Group for 3 years in a warehouse," he says. He adds, "Even though I was a Cook working in a restaurant in Nepal and I had learnt a lot there, I was not able to immediately find a culinary job here."

When we ask him to elaborate, he says, "After my schooling, I moved to Kathmandu and started off with a job washing dishes. The salary was not ideal," he says and laughs.

Then around three years prior to moving



I really miss my parents right now because it is their support that has allowed me to be in this position today

to Dubai, he found the opportunity to work with a German chef in Kathmandu, who trained him on the basics. "I learnt from him and worked there as a chef assistant for three years."

This is when the lure of Dubai and the stories of the city's bustling culinary scene caught his attention.

He collected whatever little savings he had to move to the city of dreams with hopes of making a culinary name for himself here. The ground reality, however, was something else.

He says, "When I tried finding a job as chef, nothing worked out." The investment was way too much to go back and Chef Santosh decided to make do with whatever he could. He spent years working as a warehouse assistant cum picker. He prayed that he could someday get the culinary job of his dream.

Three years later he found an opening within the Radisson Blu Hotel but in the laundry department.

"I grabbed the opportunity," he says because it allowed him to be close to a reputed hotel kitchen.

Another year went by before he could try his hand at working in the kitchen. "China Club had an opening and they were willing to accept me as a Chef."

It's now four years since he returned into the culinary fold and says he has been trained well enough to not just rise to the position of Commis I but also learn from some of the finest chefs to be able to confidently compete in national level culinary competitions and perform well enough.

Ask him where he would like to see himself some years down the road and his response is, "I want to be a big chef," alluding to a dream of someday becoming an Executive Chef and leading a team of smart culinary professionals.

He knows that realizing that dream will be no easy task and says, "I want to learn more and more."

On the personal front, Chef Santosh's entire family is back home in Nepal. "My wife, my parents, and my three brothers all live in Nepal."

The pandemic has meant that Chef Santosh has not been able to travel to Nepal or meet his wife for nearly two years.

While his attitude stays positive, he can't help but reminisce about his hometown. "When I worked as chef in Nepal I would cook for my parents. Now when I look back, I know that the food was not all that great. But my parents would always say nice things about my cooking and support my passion.

"I really miss my parents right now because it is their support that has allowed me to be in this position today."





24th SALON A HUGE SUCCESS

The whole new format drew 300 chefs to compete at the 4-day International Emirates Salon Culinaire

The Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG) successfully ran the 24th Emirates Salon Culinaire 2021 in the first week of April. The Salon this year was a completely new experience for competitors, organizers and judges as it was a Hybrid event. This included the Virtual Expo Culinaire, which was live streamed by strategic partner ICCA Live. Purple Kitchen events were once again the exhibition organizer.

The competition saw over 300 chef entries from the United Arab Emirates, Palestine and Pakistan to compete in 23 classes across all disciplines of the Culinary arts. This included Practical cookery, Static displays, Emirati cuisine, cake decorating and Showpiece categories.

To help with the proceedings, the ECG

invited an international panel of judges. The judges who flew in, have been with the guild for many years. Even though many long-time judges were unable to travel, a team led by Worldchefs Vice President Martin Kobald did a fantastic job.

The panel included heavyweights such as Alain Hostert (Worldchefs Europe Central Continental Director), Hossam Soliman (President of Egypt Chefs Association) and David Sosson (President from Qatar Culinary Professionals). Together with Uwe Micheel, ECG President & Culinary Advisor Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek and the ECG committee, the 4 days were a memorable experience for all in this new event era.

The international judging panel was

complemented by 16 UAE-based judges. This is the first Culinary competition in the Africa and Middle East region that is also endorsed by Worldchefs to be run since the pandemic began.

The competition was held at two venues in Dubai. Days 1 & 2 were held at The Radisson Blu Dubai Deira Creek hotel in the Zabeel ballroom for the static display and the cake decoration and sandwich classes. Days 3 & 4 were held at the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel in the secret garden for the practical cookery classes.

These venues were then enhanced digitally by a complete live streaming set up by Sunjeh Raja and team at the ICCA School in Dubai that beamed the event globally with hosts Shanaaz Raja of ICCA, Guild Vice President Alan Pedge

and Joanne Cook, Managing director of Purple kitchen events.

"The standard was extremely high once again this year, even in these challenging times," said Uwe Micheel, President of the Guild & Culinary Advisor Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek.

He added, "We are proud to have once again been able to put on the event. We are grateful to the supporters of the Guild, to the courage of the chefs, and the industry for their support and presence throughout the 4 days and the awards ceremony held at the ExpoCulinaire 2021. The competition was bigger than we could have hoped for and we are excited for 2022 already."

Andy Cuthbert, ECG Chairman and General Manager of Jumeirah Creekside Hotel, and Madinat Jumeirah Conference & Incentives and Jumeirah Hospitality, said, "This year's competition was another great effort by all involved and a special thanks to ICCA Live for bringing us into the digital world and hybrid events arena. Same goes for our supporters, who helped us put this event on, because without them it would never have been possible to be this successful."

A total of 4 Gold Medals with Distinction were given which is a fantastic result with two being awarded to chef Rohita Kumara on one day, 51 Gold Medals, 62 Silver Medals and 87 bronze medals



were awarded during the 4-day event. The Emirates Salon Culinaire is the largest Culinary Competition in the Guild's calendar.

In 2022 The Guild will host the bi-annual Congress of Worldchefs from May 30th till June 2nd 2022 in Abu Dhabi and are looking forward to hosting another great event and competitions. Visit www.worldchefscongress.org for more information.

"The UAE has led the way with the Virtual ExpoCulinaire 2021. By teaming up with the right partners it was possible to live stream all Salon Culinaire competitors as well as have priceless insights and contributions from around the world.

We made the most of a smaller physical competition by inviting a global audience to join us," said Joanne Cook, MD of Purple Kitchen Events. "To be able to maintain our commitment to chefs and to education was essential. Our certified education sessions have become a pillar of the overall event so to deliver them in 2021 thanks to ICCA Dubai, Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management and Richemont Masterbaker was excellent added value for our newfound global online audience. Next year we will welcome back our physical exhibitors as ExpoCulinaire 2022, which will run as part of the Worldchefs Congress. This will be after a 4-year gap in a worldwide gathering and we have big plans in the pipeline," said Cook.

The winners of the trophies this year came from many hotels and were:

Winner - Best Effort by an Individual Establishment Expoculinaire Salon Culinaire 2021	Radisson Blu Deira Creek	
Winner - Best Effort by a Corporation Expoculinaire Salon Culinaire 2021	Radisson Blu Deira Creek & Radisson Blu Yas Island AD	
Winner - Best Pastry Chef Expoculinaire Salon Culinaire 2021	W Hotel The Palm	Thilina Fernando
Winner - Best Arabian Cuisinier Expoculinaire Salon Culinaire 2021	Pullman Deira City Center	Emad Al Wazwani
Winner - Best Artist Expoculinaire Salon Culinaire 2021	Misterbaker LLC	Kasthuriarachchi Rohita Kumara Leelawansa
2nd Runner - up - Best Cuisinier Expoculinaire Salon Culinaire 2021	Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creekside	Santosh Tamang
1st Runner - up - Best Cuisinier Expoculinaire Salon Culinaire 2021	Jumeirah Creekside Hotel	Naveen Bhardwaj
Winner - Best Cuisinier Expoculinaire Salon Culinaire 2021	Radisson Blu Deira Creek	Hillary Quentus Anthony Joseph





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May 2021 **Gulf Gourmet**



US\$ 3 billion

what's your GCC market share?

The UAE alone has over 750 hotels.
Each hotel has an Executive Chef.
Each Executive Chef has an annual budget.
It ranges from AED 1 million - US\$ 3 million.

There are over 7,000 independent restaurants in the UAE.

Each restaurant has a Head Chef.
Each Head Chef has an annual budget.
It ranges from AED 100,000 - US\$ 1 million.

Now you do the maths.

The largest body that speaks for this group of Chefs is The Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG).

ECG organises Salon Culinare at Gulfood Dubai, La Cuisine by SIAL in Abu Dhabi and world-record breaking food events in the city.

Gulf Gourmet is the only magazine endorsed by the ECG.

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- ▶ Positively influencing the UAE food industry since 2006
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Civil Status:

Date of Birth: dd/mm/yy

Name of Employer:

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Work Address:

Tel:

Web Address:

Email:

Telephone Office:

Professional Title:

Fax Office:

Type of Membership Required: (Please tick one)

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Corporate ☐

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Senior ☐

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Email:

Declaration to be Signed by all Applicants

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

Signed:.....

Proposed By:

Sig:.....

Seconded By:

Sig:.....

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Remarks:

Payment received?

Certificate Given.

Pin Given.

Medal & Collar Given

Approved

Approved

President.....

Chairman.....

Fees:

Young Member: Junior members will receive a certificate.

Senior Members: Above the rank of chef de partie (or senior chef de partie on executive chef's recommendation).

Dhs.350/=joining. Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar. Dhs.

150/=per year thereafter.

Affiliate Member: Dhs.350.00 for the first year. Dhs.300 per year thereafter.

Corporate Member Dhs. 20,000 per year

EVEN CHEFS HAVE TO ZOOM

We live in a world where you chefs have no choice but to increasingly manage technology at work. You use high-end cooking equipment, use software for managing budgets, use camera filters when photographing your dishes, cross promote yourself on social media, and now, you have to join virtual meetings and go live.

Whether you are talking in a team meeting or presenting in front of an audience, you will have to speak in public from time to time. The way you speak affects the way people think about you. This is why public speaking causes so much anxiety among chefs. After all, you joined the profession to follow your passion for cooking.

Today's reality is that speaking skills are an essential part of your career. With the pandemic, technology helps us stay connected. Even the recently concluded International Emirates Salon Culinaire was a hybrid event with people logging in to see the Salon live.

That said, communicating through virtual services can sometimes lead to challenges such as difficulty in conveying the message, hard to read body language and expression, and disturbance during the conversation.

If you want to improve your communication skills, follow these 4 vital tips:

1. Connect With Your Listener

A great speaker is someone who increases people participation. You can pause in the middle of your speech or presentation to ask if listeners have any doubts. With this, you can gauge how far they followed you and how much they

MORE THAN A CHEF

ROHIT BASSI



have understood. Be aware of who you are talking to and understand the energy in the virtual room.

2. Cope With Nerves & Speak Confidently

When you have to speak in front of others, you may envision terrible things happening. You might forget every crucial point you have to make, or might stutter while speaking.

When it comes to speaking, confidence is very crucial. However, when you speak in front of the audience for the first time, it is quite usual to be nervous.



To speak efficiently, you must do more than just defeat your nervous jitter. You must have confidence in your subject and be yourself while speaking. Make notes if you have to so that you can remember all the points.

3. Pay Attention To Your (Upper) Body Language.

Your audience can understand your inner state, just by observing your body language. If you are nervous, or uncertain of what you are saying, they will know it.

Luckily, in a virtual world, you just have to focus on your upper body – mainly your face and your shoulders.

Sit-up straight, try and talk looking just under the camera as much as possible, smile (not too much) while speaking, and maintain a slow and steady breath. Yup that's it.

4. Background and Lighting

You spend hours ensuring that your dish is photographed using the right lighting and background. You do this so that the beauty of the dish stands out. This is to give the tasty meal an added advantage.

Similarly, you need to give your talent that added advantage as well.

Make sure the backdrop behind you is not boring. It must amplify who you are. And even more important is the lighting. The best lighting in the world is the sun and if you can get the softer rays to brighten up your face and your backdrop, it adds major value to what you are saying.

Rohit Bassi is a corporate trainer and TedX speaker, who specializes in getting employees to perform better at work. You can reach him at rohit@in-learning.com



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