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JANUARY 2024

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gulf gourmet

volume 19, issue 1

NO STOPPING

There is truly no stopping Chef **Muna Almansoori** in her commitment to giving voice to the diverse flavors of her Emirati heritage

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COMPLETE LISTING OF
RULES AND
REGULATIONS FOR
**SALON
2024**

HARBOURING DREAMS

Chef **Avinash Mohan** on balancing his work as an entrepreneur and chef, discovering his roots and starting a new restaurant business



MENU PLANNING MASTERY

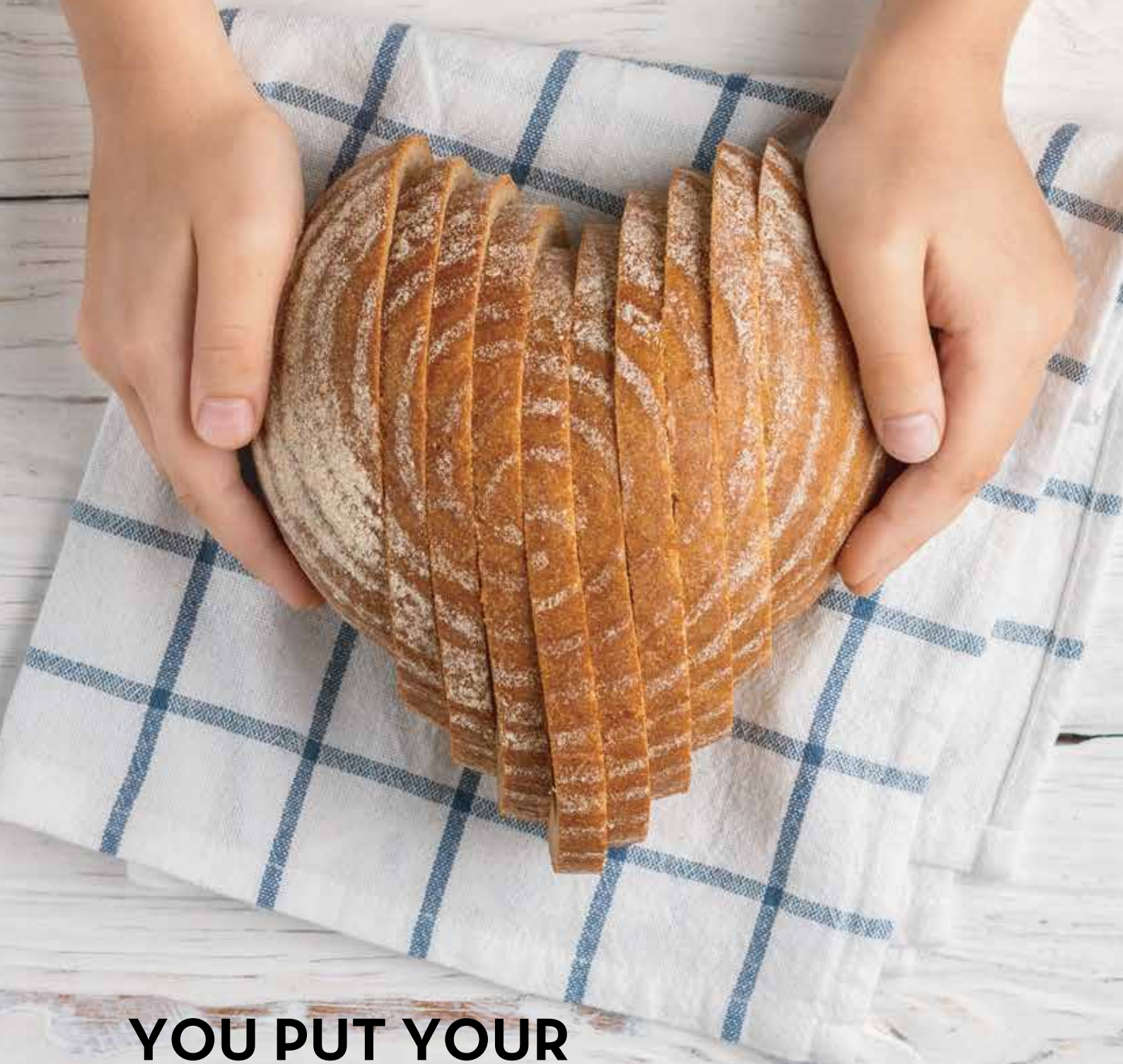
Manuel Jose Caicedo, Executive Chef at Habtoor Grand Resort, explains how global experiences shaped his culinary perspective



BORN FOR CAKES

Pastry Chef **Samitha Niroshan Perera** of Crowne Plaza Jumeirah gives a strong start to the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition





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Dear Members and Partners,

What a fantastic year 2023 was for all of us: business bouncing back, the guild undergoing a change that helped us move forward, and new partners joining us and supporting the chefs in the UAE. Thank you all for a great 2023. We anticipate an equally dynamic 2024. We thank the f&b team and chefs of the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel for a great festive dinner and for hosting the recent meeting, which took place on December 12. Thank you to all the partners who joined us.

As we enter 2024, I am hopeful that we continuously improve our structure to support our growth. We will see the Women's Culinary Chapter being launched, and its inaugural meeting will take place in February at the monthly ECG meeting. Chef Tarryn, our inclusion and diversity champion, will lead this part of the guild for us. This marks an important turning point in the guild's history as it allows us to better understand how to grow going forward and sustain the guild, mentor the young, and ensure we remain an all-inclusive organization that is committed to upholding the key pillars that we have stood by over the previous 32 years.

Our collaboration with United Arab Emirates government entities needs to be strengthened, as so does our recent alignment with the Dubai municipality, where we had excellent exposure at the recent Food Safety Conference. We also had the opportunity to work with the Cultural Programmes and Heritage Festivals Committee of Abu Dhabi during the Al Wathba dates, festival and auction, where we witnessed an amazing nine-day competition. We thank Mr. Obaid Khalfan Al Mazrouei, the committee's director of planning and projects, for his support. We also appreciate the ECG judges for taking the time to drive to Al Wathba to judge. We also thank the Abu Dhabi team, led

by our Chairman, Chef Raghu, for their assistance with marshaling and judging during the event.

The first half of 2024 will be a very busy time for us. We will send our team of 30 chefs from the United Arab Emirates to compete in the Culinary Olympics at IKA 2024 in Stuttgart, Germany. Chef Uwe and Karl Heinze Ney, as well as senior guild members, will provide strong support from Germany. The competition is scheduled to run from February 2 to 7, and our team is all set to bring home the gold once again. Chefs Jakoda and Dammika have been working hard with all competitors to get them ready, and our best wishes go out to the team for success in Germany. We know they will make us proud. We thank the team of Sounbula Mills and Mr. Karim Al Azhari for their fantastic support in helping us send the team to Germany.

May is also a busy time for our home-grown competitions. The Chefs Table and the Hotel Show mark the return of a three-day event, with nine teams competing in an all-inclusive food and beverage experience. If your team is interested, we would be happy to enter them; it's a great competition to be a part of.

ExpoCulinaire is scheduled to return to Sharjah at the expo center on May 20–22, 2024, where the Emirates International Salon Culinary will also run alongside the exhibition. This year, the Salon Culinaire has been endorsed by Worldchefs as an international-level competition. We will also see nine teams competing in the Alen Thong Golden Coffee Pot Challenge, sponsored by our friend, JM Foods. Also, we will run the first-ever bakery team challenge, with teams from across the globe coming to compete. This is the Sounbula Mills Bakery competition, and we thank Sounbula Mills, Mr. Karim Al Azhari, for their support and MIEW ovens for their equipment support in making



this first-time competition possible. To highlight the bakers is another focus of the guild, thus making sure that every aspect of the culinary industry is spotlighted and promoted alongside each other. Our exhibition partner, Purple Kitchen Events, and its Managing Director, Joanne Cook, are actively working on filling up the exhibition floor. For those interested in space, please reach out to Joanne directly.

We still have an event in Abu Dhabi planned for the second half of the year, and we will update everyone on that as the year goes on. The monthly meeting schedule will be moving out soon for the first half of the year, and we thank our host venues and partners for their support in 2024. A non-profit organization recently approached us to help recruit young people globally into the industry. This is an area we will focus on promoting, as we still see the need for skills and people to be encouraged into the industry. We, as leaders in the industry, must also be the ones to wave the flag high for the industry and encourage people to look at hospitality as a great career of growth.

Please visit emiratesculinaryguild.net to browse through previous issues of this magazine. If you are a young chef looking to connect with over 4,000 chefs worldwide, visit facebook.com/wacsyoungchefs. Also, check out the Friends of the Guild pages to see all our supporters.

In closing, once again, thank you for your support through 2023, and we are looking forward to a fantastic 2024.

With Regards,
Andy Cuthbert
President and Editor



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Rise of the AI Chefs

Chef **Carl Shi** on how OpenAI Will Disrupt and Enhance the Culinary World

OpenAI's ChatGPT and image generators like DALL-E have captured public attention recently with their ability to generate human-like text and images. What could these powerful AI tools mean for the future of cooking and the culinary industry?

On the positive side, OpenAI could help chefs exponentially. Imaginative new recipe ideas could be quickly spun by prompting an AI assistant. ChatGPT can generate full recipes with ingredient lists and instructions if you describe a dish you want to create. Its knowledge comes from scanning millions of recipes to combine elements in unexpected ways. The first AI-generated pop-up restaurant, Luminary, has done its hat



**Chit-Chat
with
Chef Carl**

tricks in North Sydney restaurant Rafi for one week starting July 29, 2023.

- AI tools could also automate menu

development, pairings, and food blogs or online reviews. They may one day act as 24/7 sous chefs in restaurant kitchens, following verbal instructions for repetitive tasks when staff is limited. Digital assistants could provide servers with detailed descriptions of dishes, ingredients and preparation methods. However, AI has limitations in replicating human creativity, intuition and real-world cooking experience. The recipes ChatGPT generates tend to be basic combinations of known ingredients. It doesn't have a sense of taste and can't judge how experimental recipes might turn out. Its food blogs and reviews could become repetitive without a natural person's perspective.

There are also concerns that AI could take jobs in industries with limited roles. Would an AI sous chef or food blogger put cooks and writers out of work? Technology is still far from that level, but it's a debate that is worth having.

While AI will continue advancing, we have a long way to go before computers can truly match a talented chef's skills, imagination and knowledge. So, while they may shake up parts of the industry, human chefs won't be made obsolete just yet. Technology can provide enhancements, but the future of culinary arts ultimately depends on continuing to nurture human creativity, passion and talent.

Reference: (<https://www.smh.com.au/goodfood/sydney-eating-out/would-you-like-ai-with-that-australia-s-first-restaurant-generated-by-artificial-intelligence-is-coming-20230712-p5dnqz.html>)

Chef Carl

- From Sydney



One of the AI-generated images that helped develop the concept for Luminary

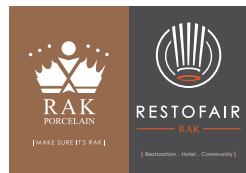
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newsbites

Maîtres Cuisiniers de France named Christophe Prudhomme a "UAE Delegate Master Chef"



The Management Committee of Maîtres Cuisiniers de France has named Christophe Prudhomme a "UAE delegate Master Chef." Chef Christophe Prudhomme, who is currently working as the Executive Chef at the Millennium Plaza Downtown Hotel in Dubai, brings a wealth of culinary knowledge and experience to his position.

If cooking had been a sport, the culinary artist would be nothing less than an Olympian. Over the past three decades, he has delighted guests across

continents with his French sense of the finer things in life.

Chef Christophe's reputation as a leading figure in the industry has been further solidified by this prestigious appointment. Notably, he has also had the honor of hosting esteemed visitors like the President of France, proudly representing his home country in the vibrant culinary scene of the United Arab Emirates. Maîtres Cuisiniers de France was founded in 1951 with the goal of preserving and advancing French culinary traditions.

SushiSamba to open in Abu Dhabi in 2024



The renowned eatery SushiSamba will be opening its doors at the Conrad Abu Dhabi Etihad Towers in April 2024. Led by culinary director Kyung Soo Moon, the restaurant will offer a menu inspired by the flavors of Japan, Brazil, and Peru.

This latest addition to the city's dining options is a result of a partnership between the Department of Culture and

Tourism in Abu Dhabi and Conrad Abu Dhabi Etihad Towers.

Guests can enjoy vibrant dishes like Chilean seabass anticuchos, asevichado rolls, and sushi platters and experience the exquisite blend of spices and contrasting flavors in each dish. Sushisamba has already made its mark in London, Las Vegas, and Dubai. The brand is now prepared for its April 2024 launch in Abu Dhabi.

Harees added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage for Humanity 2023

During the 18th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held at Cresta Mowana Resort in Kasane, Republic of Botswana, from December 4 to 9, UNESCO stated the inclusion of Harees in its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity for 2023.

For the unversed, Harees is a traditional dish from the United Arab Emirates that consists of wheat, ghee, and meat. The dish is frequently devoured at significant family events, like weddings and national and religious holidays, especially in the month of Ramadan.

Erth in Abu Dhabi awarded a Michelin star

Located in Abu Dhabi, Emirati restaurant Erth has been awarded a prestigious Michelin star. The restaurant is now listed alongside three others that were honored with stars in the inaugural Michelin Guide Abu Dhabi.

The Michelin Guide awarded nine eateries. The newly added restaurants are Erth, Jose by Pizarro, Ray's Grill, Mate, Yadoo's House, Terra, Kopitiam by Chandy's, Al Farah, and Les Dangereux.

In November 2022, Michelin star was awarded to Talea by Antonio Guida, Hakkasan, and 99 Sushi Bar, all of which retained their stars in the 2023 announcement. Al Mrzab and Oii have been recognized with a Bib Gourmand



distinction. These eateries join Almayass, Beirut Sur Mer, Otoro, and azal—the four that received Bib Gourmands in the

previous year's Guide. Meanwhile, the Young Chef Award went to Chef Rigers Cuka of Oii.

Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Chef of the Year Competition 2024

If you are a pastry chef working in the UAE, then the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Chef of the Year Competition 2024 is the perfect platform for you to showcase your pastry skills. Organized by Arla Pro and the Emirates Culinary Guild, the competition is open to pastry chefs who are currently working in the UAE.

Every month, the magazine will feature the recipes of each pastry chef, providing the shortlisted chefs with an equal opportunity to gain exposure and recognition. The chefs will use Arla Pro products to prepare the dishes. A panel of Worldchefs-accredited official judges and pastry judges will evaluate each of the pre-finalists' and finalists' culinary creations.

All finalists will receive medals and certificates. Additionally, the winning chef will receive a fully paid trip to visit Denmark's Arla Pro factory farms, including a culinary immersion into the top restaurants in Denmark. Would you like to be featured in the region's most widely read chef magazine? Then this is your chance.

Email your interest to Madame Josephine at emiratesculinaryguild@gmail.com

ICCA Abu Dhabi Steals the Show at ADIFE 2023

The third iteration of the World Gourmet Show, which took place at the Abu Dhabi National Food Exhibition (ADIFE), featured the ICCA Cooking Competition. Young and aspiring chefs had a special opportunity and unique platform to showcase their skills at the ICCA Cooking Competition.

In an exciting culinary event, young and talented cooks got the chance to shine on a prestigious platform. Divided into three teams, these talented students were given a challenge: they had five minutes to choose high-quality ingredients and one mystery ingredient, and only 60 minutes to create a delicious dish. This year's competition focused on promoting sustainability and reducing food waste in the culinary industry, requiring the chefs to use every ingredient they selected. The winners of the ICCA Cooking Competition were Maitha Ahmed Mohamed Abdulla Alshamsi and Joemar Idios, who demonstrated their culinary skills.

To get your chef or company related news featured in this section, email editor@gulfgourmet.org

HARBOURING DREAMS

Amaresh Bhaskaran speaks to Chef **Avinash Mohan** about how he is expanding the horizons of Kerala food and discovering the perks of following his inner calling

Making waves in the saturated hospitality market where an ocean of choices exists takes work. However, not just one but three distinctive F&B concepts are swimming against prevailing trends to carve a name for themselves. And the brain behind these concepts is Chef Avinash Mohan. Founded by Avinash Mohan, Cochin Harbor is quickly becoming a local favorite. Another concept, Hideout Events and Catering, a business dedicated to catering, is gaining traction for its customized catering as per the theme and requirements of the event. The latest concept, Rasam, has also entered the fray of perpetual new F&B venues in a vibrant city. These venture releases ushered us into the warm ambiance of his restaurant, where we found ourselves comfortably seated across the table and settling into a conversation that delved directly into his journey as a *chefpreneur*.

Referring to himself as a Chef at Heart, Chef Avinash says that though he is in business, he loves cooking and making others enjoy what he cooks. This expression loosely describes that even as you ascend to greater heights, some things remain unchanged, such as your love for your roots, which makes you the best version of yourself.

Born in Kottayam to the parents of government employees, unbeknownst to him, his childhood was entwined



Having spent 25 years in the industry, I've gained experience guiding young chefs in refining their culinary skills

with South Indian cuisine. He was three when his family moved to Jaipur. His teenage years unfolded in Cochin, and the diverse geographical backdrop of India characterized his upbringing during those formative years.

The beginning of his career was quite cliché. "A bright student with excellent grades pursued a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science. "I remember traveling 15 km for the computer practicals in my second year of college. We used to travel on Luna, a bike that took a tiring 40 minutes to reach there, only to discover a single computer for so many students," Avinash recalls.

At the same time, a couple of his friends were busy preparing for hotel management entrance exams. Eager to learn but having yet to ponder the idea of hospitality, he ultimately took the exams. It so happened that he was the only one among his friends to pass it outstandingly.

"I used to love watching my grandfather cook some lovely dishes. Even my mom cooked great meals. Though the interest in cooking was there, I never thought about taking it as a profession," he says, smiling at those memories.

Just contemplating his uncertain career in hotel management and seeking guidance on the scope of the course, his merit got him into IHM PUSA, Delhi. "One of my seniors there, who was practicing to be a chef, invited me to assist with the mise-en-place and sanitization. That is when I started in the kitchen." The world in the kitchen turned out to be completely different and adventurous than what he did in his





management studies. His passion grew to the extent that he later became the culinary head at the college.

"In the third year, I secured a spot at the Oberoi Center of Learning and Development through the campus placements. I was lucky, considering they selected only 20 students across the country. I am indebted to my mentors there, especially the Head of Culinary, Chef Baranidharan, from whom I learned what food is," he says, referring to how training there shaped him into whatever he is today.

The two-year intensive training while working at multiple hotels and ascending

from commis to manager in the kitchen got him placed in Oberoi Amarvilas. "The training required us to work in different roles every three to four months at different properties. Upon completing the course, I was 22 and a sous chef." A young boy at an emerging property of the Amarvilas in Agra, he found himself in a dynamic team, fanatic about bringing top-notch services, running to do things perfectly with time and energy.

A life-changing twist of fate happened when a guest from Ireland dining in the restaurant took notice of his culinary talents. Owning a restaurant in Dublin called Rasam, the gentleman inquired if he would be interested in heading

the culinary operations. Chef Avinash was not of the cut that presumed all overseas stints had the banal circle of adaptation and overcoming challenges; rather, he had the thirst to explore the unique side of diverse cuisine and life that many often overlooked.

"In 2007, I came to Dublin to oversee the restaurant. I owned up to my skills. Plating for the Western Palette, adapting to the Irish taste, taking up ayurveda classes to explain about the spices to the team," he explains on his four-year term.

The need to revisit hotel establishments from a standalone restaurant fired him up, and he applied for a job at a

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Four Seasons property in Mumbai. He underwent the interview rounds remotely from the Four Seasons Dublin property. However, by the time the trial evaluations were completed, he learned the position in Mumbai had been filled.

"Consequently, I was offered a sous chef role by Chef Terry White at the Dublin property," he says. "In those five years, I had the chance to work with Michelin-starred chefs, including Chef David Thompson, Chef Gordon Ramsay, and Chef Juan Amador. I learned to combine flavors for the finer dining aspect, get insights on different presentations, and learn the art of complimenting ingredients."

But it did not take long before the Great Recession hit the f&b industry, which snowballed his choice to branch out from his job and open Mantraa, an Indian restaurant, with a partner. The restaurant became a smashing hit and was nominated as the best ethnic restaurant of the year. The outpouring of success saw him open another restaurant, Indian Brasserie.

Circumstances turned differently when he had to bid farewell to Ireland and his businesses and return to India to be with his ailing mother. But quickly, he bounced back and paved his way by joining the pre-opening team at Leela Palace Chennai. He stitched together an entire



A USP is also the popularity we have garnered among those who want our catering services for events and birthday parties

team, rolled out comprehensive training programs, and set up the administrative and kitchen production spaces in his role as the Executive Sous Chef.

Three years of rapid management uptake went on to be a crucial element in his leadership style. "I was 36 or something, and it was a great opportunity to become sous chef in a hotel. From there, I became the Group Executive Chef for three luxurious Fairmont hotels in East Africa."

During his tenure in Africa, he picked up nuances of African cuisine while working with fresh produce. He also contributed to the concept creation of a restaurant in Nairobi that earned the Best Restaurant of the Year award. Things were progressing positively until volatile situations cropped up when tensions transpired in the region. "With

unrest in some local areas, I decided to head back home. At that point, one of my former general managers, Pascal Dupuis, approached me with a role at the Address Hotel located in Dubai Marina, and in 2014, I decided to come to Dubai."

Encountering new ways, defining some, and ironing out any kinks, Chef Avinash expanded his perspective on culinary offerings. Whether changing the a la carte setup of the brunch that won a couple of awards for the best brunch in the town, modifying regular poolside dining to a barbecue space, or bringing catering to eight cruise yachts, he extensively drove the development of the f&b offerings at the hotel property.

Taking account of his prowess to initiate and launch, the managerial team relocated him to Palace Downtown. "That place was like a machine. We had six award-winning restaurants ranging across a broad variety of cuisines. We won many awards and had the highest revenue in the entire company in terms of culinary experiences."

In many ways, working with the Emaar Hospitality Group helped him grow holistically in his career. Planning and executing the culinary operations at Expo 2020 as the Director of Operations, driving massive revenue, signing contracts, and monitoring expenditures with ease, Chef Avinash admits this property will hold special meaning to him.

COAST TO CREEK

Running a restaurant on his terms always lingered in his thoughts. He tends to get overwhelmed by a sense of gratitude, and a swell of emotions appears on his face when thinking about going for an independent run in hospitality. Having tasted the challenges of overseeing a business firsthand from his time at Mantraa, he knew exactly what he wanted to do, and he kicked off with the idea to launch Cochin Harbour.

Kerala Coastal Cuisine is a spotlight of the Al Karama venue he opened in 2021.



"We are bringing five-star hotel-quality Indian food to Al Karama. In keeping with the Kerala cuisine theme, we use premium products. Apart from the Kerala cuisine, it is also our touch to keep it homely. If you are cooking curry in a pressure cooker, it should be served directly from the cooker. Similarly, if everything is cooked in the same pot and served in that very pot, it mirrors the home-cooked experience," he conveys his thoughts, oscillating between nostalgia for the Indian cuisine and flavors he is excited to present.

Concerning the risks involved, he says, like any investor, initially, there was a certain trepidation regarding its potential success. Still, he was determined to confront uncharted waters and get to the bottom of the sea to see if he could survive. This yielded results, as within six months of the opening of Cochin Harbour, he broke even, becoming profitable and running steadily.

Since his erstwhile adventures at Mantraa and background in five-star hotels, recipe planning and setting up systematic SOPs on hygiene for his team have flowed in tandem. The revenue for the place derives from patrons dining in and through several events. "A USP is also the popularity we have garnered among those who want our catering services for events and birthday parties," he adds.

On that finance front, it must be said that any new place calls for a foolproof plan for menu pricing. How are the prices maintained? "The prices of the ingredients are not the only aspect that makes the food cost high. It is actually food wastage. But here, we have strict waste management in the kitchen."

Along with mitigating food wastage, Chef Avinash also focuses on sourcing fresh produce locally, thus implementing sustainable practices in his kitchen. "We directly source high-quality seafood and other produce from Deira Waterfront Market, which reduces our prices by almost 25 percent. Implementing these



You cannot get the right flavor if you don't use the right spices

little strategies has helped us maintain the price point," he answers, elaborating on the sustainable approach and, as a result, the benefit going to the customers.

With several signatures on the menu pages varying from entrées, mains, seafood specialties, and desserts, there is a selection of menu items Chef Avinash and his team are enthusiastic to plate. One of those is the seafood bucket. "I ran the previous restaurant that was in the space for a month before

shutting it down. And I noticed the seafood bucket was popular among the demographics. So, we picked it, but we had used a unique spice mix from Kerala, differing from the previous dish."

Diners will always find Fort Kochi Paal Konj, a prawn curry, and Seabass Kanthari Tawa, a dish that includes a bird's eye chili spice mix to get a fiery kick, and a range of authentic regional desserts to tone down the heat.

Of course, his firm grasp of Kerala cuisine takes you on a trip through the north and south Kerala traditions, highlighting dishes from each region—coconut milk-based curries, biryani, and spicy meat curry. And the list goes on.

A considerable difference in his cuisine comes from the spices that he sources, especially from India. "You cannot get

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the right flavor if you don't use the right spices. For example, when we make a curry dish, we use a spice called Sarvasugandhi (allspice), an aromatic leaf that imparts flavor to a curry. And you cannot find this spice anywhere but Kottayam."

When hiring a chef, he scrutinizes the pot for the ones that radiate passion. They may come from the background of a restaurant, a hotel, or a small place where they do one or two dishes a day. However, if he senses their passion for cooking is more than just thinking about it as a job, he knows he has found a potential candidate. "It is about the chefs who have passion more than knowledge. Having spent 25 years in the industry, I've gained experience guiding young chefs in refining their culinary skills. I want to pass on my learning to them as it will be good enough for them to kickstart. After that, it is on them if they are passionate enough to excel in their careers. The key is understanding that your last dish is as good as you are."

However, securing the right talent for regional cuisine poses a challenge—a hurdle he has encountered before. Many individuals ideally suited for the role tend to stay in one workplace due to the comfort of their established routines. As we pop this question, he drops the anchor and reveals that while one might label it as a quest for passion, the reality is that finding individuals genuinely passionate about food is quite challenging. "I choose people based on their passion for food, even if they lack specific culinary knowledge. We've had chefs from various regions. But my approach involves extensive cross-training, ensuring they follow the recipes and bring creativity, and this way is implemented consistently across all spaces I operate."

Chef Avinash has achieved what he aimed for. In what may seem like he is walking calmly and facing the music of life, his secret is to turn plans into action. "We see a lot of motivational snippets on our social media feeds as



I choose people based on their passion for food, even if they lack specific culinary knowledge

we scroll them endlessly. It is not just about hearing those inspirational words; it is about making a plan to achieve your dream. I believe in action and consistently working towards the goals," he says in his simple success sauce.

REDOLENT RHYTHMS OF RASAM

The late 2023 release of Rasam by Avinash Mohan is an ode to the classic South Indian soup, like broth, while incorporating the culinary knowledge he has acquired throughout his career. "With Rasam, we wanted to cover pan Indian food, serving dishes of a wide spectrum," says Avinash Mohan, with a hint of passion embedded in his words.

A local feel, unique decor, and a skilled team have been behind the scenes of the restaurant located at the Chelsea Garden Hotel, which he manifested for

one and a half months. "Since we are the hotel's restaurant, we have a captive crowd. We also serve breakfast to the hotel guests, offering Western and Indian food to cater to wide preferences. And there is a delivery market we have not tapped yet; the food potential seems to be only growing further," he says.

Nothing sparks curiosity in him like cooking in the kitchen. Always a hands-on chef, you would find Chef Avinash often cooking and having his culinary direction at both his kitchens, Rasam and Cochin Harbour, to streamline the process.

Currently, Chef Avinash lives with his wife, Smitha, and two sons. His wife has been his go-to person for home-style cooking. While the younger son, a foodie, is already giving him a little instinct that he may continue like him, his 16-year-old elder son is ready to go to college and is hell-bent on taking computer science. "He may follow my way and come back to food; you never know," laughs Chef Avinash.

Despite his best efforts to maintain a positive attitude towards leading his team, occasionally pressure gets to him. But he feels he is fulfilling his aim to be an entrepreneur and chef with positive zeal with each passing day. Confirming that he aims to have five to six restaurants in 2025, Chef Avinash expresses his determination to expand his restaurant brands to a more elevated space.

Walking into his own kitchen has been a different feeling for him. For him, it has been like an extension of his home. He quickly states, "Guests that come here are like guests that come to my house, so you automatically cook for them with the same love and affection as you do for the close ones," he says, resonating with a vision to connect with his customers on a personal level.

If his recent venue unveils are factored in, the f&b industry is expected to welcome another spicy and rich venue wrapped in a comforting sense of home.



*Bonne Maman
Apricot Jam*

*Alpro
Vanilla Yogurt*

*Familia
Honey Granola*

APRICOT SUNRISE



SAVOR THE SMOOTHNESS OF VANILLA YOGURT COMBINED WITH THE TANG OF APRICOT JAM AND HONEY GRANOLA, A PERFECT BALANCE TO WAKE UP TO.



Bonne Maman

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FEATURING THE 27TH EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINAIRE
 20-22 MAY 2024 | EXPO CENTRE SHARJAH, UAE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE THE EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINAIRE 2024

May 20th till May 22nd 2024
Expo Centre, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

The Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG) (www.emiratesculinaryguild.net) is the association of professional chefs of the UAE. It is a non-profit-making organisation, organised by volunteers dedicated solely to the advancement of culinary art in the UAE.

The aims of the ECG, broadly, are:

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

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

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

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

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

Social media plays a large part in the Guilds self-promotion and the *Gulf Gourmet* magazine drive awareness around the globe. www.emiratesculinaryguild.net/, www.facebook.com/Emirates-Culinary-Guild-763644223697376/timeline/, www.facebook.com/gulfgourmet?fref=ts, follow these links for more information on the Emirates Culinary Guild.

In 2024 the Emirates International

Salon Culinaire and Expo Culinaire exhibition shall run alongside the Alen Thong Golden Coffee Pot Challenge for International teams of young chefs which shall take place with teams from around the world competing. All this activity will make this the chefs event of the year.

Membership of the ECG is open to all of those professionally and solely involved in the preparation of food.

Anyone interested in the Emirates Salon Culinaire to compete or sponsor, please contact us below.

The Emirates Culinary Guild
 PO Box 454922 – Dubai – UAE
 Tel: + 971 56 8014089.
emiratesculinaryguild@gmail.com
 10062023

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Briefs of the Classes for Entry

Resume Of Classes for Entry

Class No. - Class Description

Pastry and Bakery

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

Showpiece Artistic Displays

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

Gourmet Static Display

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

Practical Artistic Carving

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

Practical Cookery

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

- Cookery Powered by The Deep
Seafood Company
- 21 Beef - Practical Cookery Powered
by USMEF
- 22 Emirati Cuisine – Practical
Cookery
- 25 Dressed Chicken & Dressed Fish
Practical Butchery
- 33 Savory Potato Creations
Practical Cookery Powered by
Potatoes USA
- 27 Chicken - Practical Cookery –
Powered by USAPEEC
- 30
- 35 Plant based Practical cookery
appetizer and main course
- 36 Soup and Sandwich Practical
cookery Powered by Chefs Palette
- 37 Lamb Primal Cuts Practical
Butchery TBC
- 38: Syrian Cuisine Modern Main
courses Practical cookery
Powered by Boody's
- 39 Syrian Three Plates of Kibbeh
Plated display Powered by
Boody's
- 40 Sounbula Mills Artisan Bakery
Arena Practical Cookery

ADDENDUM – The Emirates Salon Culinaire 2024

VENUE & ENTRY FEES

1. The Emirates Salon Culinaire
will be held during the Expo
Culinaire 2024 from May 20th
till 22nd May 2024.
2. The venue is at the Sharjah
National Exhibition Centre
3. The entrance fee for all single
entries is Dhs.100 (AED. One
Hundred) per person per class,
unless otherwise stated in the
Rules and Regulations or the
Class Briefs.
4. The fee for entry to the trophy
classes is as follows:
 - i. **Best Cuisinier – The Emirates
Salon Culinaire- Dubai 2024
AED:500/- per person**
 - ii. **Best Pastry Chef – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire-
Dubai 2024 AED:400/- per
person**

iii. **Best Artist – The Emirates
Salon Culinaire- Dubai 2024
AED:500/- per person**

iv. **Best Arab National – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire-
Dubai 2024 AED:300/- per
person**

v. **Young Chef of the Year – The
Emirates Salon Culinaire
Dubai 2024 AED: 300/- per
person**

CLOSING DATE:

5. Closing date for entries is April
28th 2024 However, many are
often fully subscribed and closed
well before the closing date.

TROPHY ENTRY:

Entrants to a trophy class must
enter and finish in all and only those
classes that pertain to the trophy for
which they are entering. No other
classes may be entered into by a
trophy entrant.

Trophies are awarded on the highest
aggregate judging points from all
classes pertaining to the trophy
being awarded.

The required classes are:

BEST CUISINIER:

- i. **Class #10. Five-Course
Dinner Menu**
- ii. **Class # 21. Beef Practical
Cookery**
- i. **Class # 27. Chicken Practical
Cookery**

In order to qualify for inclusion in the
points tally for Best Cuisinier Trophy
a competitor must win three medals,
at least one of which must be a gold
medal.

BEST PASTRY CHEF:

- i. **Class # 01. Practical Cake
Decoration**
- ii. **Class # 03. Four Plates of
Desserts**
- iii. **Class # 06. Friandises,
Petites Four**

January 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

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In order to qualify for inclusion in the points tally for Best Pastry Chef Trophy a competitor must win at least two medals one of which must be a gold medal.

BEST ARTIST:

- i. *Class # 07. Chocolate Showpiece*
- ii. *Class # 09. Open Showpiece*
- iii. *Class # 15. Individual Ice Carving*
- iv. *Class # 17. Practical Fruit & Vegetable Carving*

In order to qualify for inclusion in the points tally for Best Artist Trophy a competitor must win at least three medals one of which must be a gold medal.

BEST ARAB NATIONAL CUISINIER:

- i. *Class # 27. Chicken – Practical Cookery Arabic Style*
- ii. *Class # 19. Arabic Mezzeh - Practical Cookery*
- iii. *Class 22: Emirati Cuisine - Practical Cookery*

iv. In order to qualify for inclusion in the points tally for Best Arab National Trophy a competitor must win at least one Gold medal and be an Arab National.

BEST BAKERY TEAM

1. Class 40 Sounbula Artisan Bakery Arena Class "The SOUNBULA UAE Bakery team of 2024"

YOUNG CHEF OF THE YEAR

See Classes for Entry Document. Classes

JUDGING AND THE AWARDS SYSTEM

A team of WorldChefs (The World Association of Chefs Societies) approved international Judges will adjudicate at all classes of the competition: using Worldchefs-approved methods, criteria and documents www.worldchefs.org After each judging session, the

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

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

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

The scaling for awards in all classes is as follows:

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

Corporate and Establishment Trophies

The corporate and establishment trophies available are:

Best Effort by an Individual Establishment – The Emirates Salon Culinaire

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

Best Effort by a Corporation – The Emirates Salon Culinaire

This trophy is awarded to the

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

Point Value of each Medal Won:

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

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

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

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A WOMAN WITH A MISSION

An inspiring force, **Muna Almansoori** is a known face on several cooking TV programs and leads the culinary team at the Fairmont Bab Al Bahr. But her reputation stems from giving a voice to Emirati cuisine

The global culinary scene is gradually embracing Emirati Cuisine, and one of the impetuses behind this shift is Chef Muna Almansoori. Highly regarded for her contributions to Emirati cuisine and taking the forefront to promote the tapestry of Emirati flavors, the Emirati Chef is a woman with a mission.

On her mission, she hopes to not only change global perceptions of Emirati food but also to push for the status of culinary education to be on par with other university programs.

To better comprehend the obstacles she faced as a female Emirati chef, understand her efforts to break stereotypes, and discover her preferred Emirati dish, Gulf Gourmet embarked on a deep dive discussion excursion with Chef Muna.



As an Emirati with a global mindset in this field, I am here today, reflecting on the transformative journey that has shaped my career

Talk us through your culinary journey and the pivotal experiences that shaped your career.

My journey began as part of an initiative by the Ras Al Khaimah government in 2014, aiming to introduce women into the tourism sector. Following a

comprehensive study of hospitality and tourism sciences for nearly a year, I entered the workforce at Ras Al Khaimah Hotels, starting as a commis.

During that period, societal perceptions of working women were particularly challenging, especially as we were the pioneering batch entering the tourism sector. To add to this, we embarked on the journey as cooks, and there was a prevailing lack of distinction between those who cooked and chefs who underwent formal education, learning, and rigorous training.

It was a period marked by difficulties, considering that cooking is a comprehensive specialty akin to other university majors such as medicine and engineering. My efforts involved addressing societal misconceptions, explaining the true nature of our





I love society in my personality, meaning that I did not abandon the basic appearance of the Emirati girl with her humility and politeness



work, and promoting a new cultural understanding, which presented significant challenges at that time.

However, the landscape has evolved markedly since then. Today, despite the enduring biases across various brands, I find myself sought after by international companies eager to have me on board, purportedly considering me a rare talent. As an Emirati with a global mindset in this field, I am here today, reflecting on the transformative journey that has shaped my career.

Are there specific elements of Emirati cooking that served as inspiration for your journey to becoming a chef?

Learning from my mother is my greatest source. I discovered that our grandfathers and mothers in the past were inadvertently world-class cooks. For



As Emirati chefs, we must adhere to the authentic Akharan taste for a very long time to promote Emirati cuisine to the world, as it is still regarded as one of the world's emerging cuisines

example, they would prepare more than one recipe using the same amounts of flour and water. One of the recipes would be baking tortillas, which are like regag

bread for thareid, and another would make dough to cook with margooga.

Navigating a culinary career as an Emirati woman in a society with distinct traditional values can present unique challenges. How have you overcome these hurdles?

To this day, I remain steadfast in wearing back my scarf, i.e., my hijab and abaya, and mixing Emirati vocabulary with English to facilitate communication with the outside world. It is also about presenting the Emirati identity with its honorable customs and traditions and, at the same time, including the positives of global culture. I love society in my personality, meaning that I did not abandon the basic appearance of the Emirati girl with her humility and politeness. I also kept my morals and openness while mingling with the outside world, welcoming and integrating with all nationalities of the world.

Can you provide more insights into your current role as the Emirati chef at Fairmont Bab Al Bahr?

My role as the lead chef at Fairmont Bab Al Bahr has been instrumental in shaping my personality and enhancing my expertise. This has happened with significant support from Chef Ayoub Makdisi. His encouragement has allowed me to participate in various forums that contribute to my personal and professional growth. The diverse array of international cuisines in the hotel setting allows me to acquire valuable insights daily amidst the rapidly evolving landscape of world tourism.

From a personal perspective, the management recognizes the importance of showcasing Emirati cuisine within the hotel. This commitment is evident in the incorporation of Emirati dishes on menus, particularly in the Arabic restaurant. Moreover, other restaurants have also incorporated the Emirati touch. For example, sushi qashid, an Emirati fish dish that is boiled, filtered, and seasoned with traditional spices, is featured in a Japanese restaurant that follows the





It is necessary to keep pace with the current developments in modern technology and sustainability

Shosei style. This strategic approach adds to my culinary repertoire and reflects the hotel's dedication to embracing and promoting local culinary traditions.

How do you envision the future of Emirati cuisine, both locally and globally?

Five years ago, Emirati restaurants were very rare, but in the present time, Emirati cuisine has spread throughout the Emirates. It has become very easy to search for a restaurant with specialized Emirati dishes due to the large demand from tourists in the Emirates. Currently, it is considered one of the world's most important cuisines, and its beauty is that it combines the same Emirati taste with international creativity in presenting and plating.

Emirati cuisine incorporates unique ingredients like dates, saffron, ghee, etc. How challenging is it for chefs in the region to source and highlight the importance of local produce?

Some products became very popular, to the point that international commercial companies heard about them and began to adopt them. You will find many companies that have begun to produce new lines of ingredients, such as black lemon powder, ground cardamom, and saffron, to keep pace with the requirements of the time. As for Emirati ghee, I still prefer to buy it to this day. This is because the producing families are the only ones who have the mastery of making authentic Emirati ghee, and the international companies have not been able to do so up until now.



As Emirati chefs, we must adhere to the authentic Akharan taste for a very long time to promote Emirati cuisine to the world, as it is still regarded as one of the world's emerging cuisines.

What recent food trends have you observed, especially concerning technology and sustainability?

It is necessary to keep pace with the current developments in modern technology and sustainability. For example, we have undertaken a study on consumption by installing equipment to calculate the amount of food waste disposed of and to entirely stop using plastic materials, replacing them with environmentally friendly options. The chef and their management must keep up with the times and always be aware of what society and the environment demand. We also grow ingredients in

the hotel and use them for cooking. It is a beautiful idea; it even makes the chefs happy when they participate in the cultivation.

Would you like to elaborate on your participation with the Emirates Culinary Guild?

I am delighted to be the media face of the Chefs Association, and I am always honored to attend meetings that provide me with knowledge and experience in marketing, buying, and selling. Searching for quality also links me with the World Chefs Association and worldwide events in this sector. I cannot do without my membership with them because they are a very important part of me.

As someone with experience in both competing and judging culinary competitions, can you share some

insights on the significance of these competitions for chefs?

My participation in competitions—losing and winning medals many times in my early days—is what sets me apart from other Emirati chefs. Therefore, I urge all new chefs to participate in competitions because it is truly a profitable experience. In any case, whether you win or lose, you will gain great experience. Both in terms of the pressure or dealing

with intertwined feelings of fear and determination to provide the best results in front of the jury.

Participating in competitions is a complete training course and a qualitative transfer of experience that will benefit the chef in their development journey. As for the judging, I learned a lot from the Emirates Chefs Association judging committee,

especially from Chef Mussabeh Al Kaabi. In the beginning, he was a judge when I was a contestant. As time went on, I found myself sitting alongside him at the same table, now in the role of a judge, and he taught me a lot. Chef Raju also continues to teach me to this day. I will never stop learning because I want to transfer this culture and knowledge to the Emirati community so that they can benefit from it and adhere to international standards.

Can you share a memorable incident from your experience in the kitchen that has stayed with you over time?

Perhaps the incident with a German tourist left an imprint on my mind and heart. It made me feel like a wave full of energy. At the beginning of my career, I was in the position of third assistant chef. I was serving and supervising the food at the buffet. A German tourist paused and asked, why was I wearing the chef's uniform? How did I wear the UAE flag on my shoulder and if I was an Emirati?

I confirmed that I was, and he responded in amazement, "What brings you here? You are an Emirati girl, and the Emirati youth is pampered by their government. Our prevailing idea in Germany is that the Emirates is full of oil and does not need to employ its youth for such tasks. If they put you here, you will not work because you do not have seriousness in life."



Participating in competitions is a complete training course and a qualitative transfer of experience that will benefit the chef in their development journey





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Although his manner was very polite and respectful to me, his words were filled with misconceptions. It bothered me since I had only been at my workplace for two years. I took him to the lounge's balcony, offered him Emirati coffee, and told him my answer after offering him our hospitality.

I acknowledged what he said and explained that the government of the UAE facilitates and provides its citizens with all their basic needs, but oil is not

the real source of money and power. Instead, the rulers of the Emirates and the main among them is our father, Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him, see that the youth are the true wealth of the nation, investing in them to benefit our country.

One example out of many is that I studied hospitality and culinary sciences at McQueens University in Britain, with all the expenses covered by my government, and we were a group of

20 students. This was done because they wanted to have Emirati youth in the tourism sector and to provide the highest levels of Emirati hospitality while spotlighting the presence of Emirati faces. And today, I am here to welcome you and prepare the most delicious Emirati food for you.

The story was from 2015, and to this day, the German tourist continues to bring his family to the Emirates to enjoy the tourism. He says he completely changed his idea about the Emirates, its people, its youth, and especially the delicious Emirati cuisine. So, I often find myself stepping in as an ambassador to convey the Emirati identity to the world in all its smallest details.

Restaurant kitchens are a different ball game, where techniques vary, and chefs use diverse cooking methods. How do you manage these demanding aspects of the profession?

In the initial days, I used to enter the kitchen to apply what I had learned about the rules of cleanliness, cutting, movement, security, and safety in the hot kitchen so that I would be confident and familiar with the basics of international kitchens overall. To become an expert, I continued this for three years. As the years passed, I moved from one hotel to another, taking advantage of working in different kitchens.



I will never stop learning because I want to transfer this culture and knowledge to the Emirati community so that they can benefit from it and adhere to international standards



Chef Ayoub, the current chief executive chef at the Fairmont Bab Al Bahr Hotel, Abu Dhabi, supported me and taught me, for example, Japanese cuisine from a Japanese restaurant and then Italian. From the external side, I continue to develop networks with world-class chefs. My love for learning the correct and precise methods for each cuisine from the right people never stops.

What is your favorite Emirati dish?

To be honest, my favorite dish is chicken tharid. I always like to prepare it and eat it at the same time. It is an Emirati dish usually prepared specifically during the holy month of Ramadan. It is a liquid sauce and paste made with Emirati spices, tomatoes, and onions. We add chicken and hot water to it and then mix it while serving with a very thin bread called ragag.

What advice would you give to an aspiring chef?

Provide tourists with what you believe is similar to what you offer your guests at home. Continue, do not stop, and do not be afraid of losing. Sometimes, in our field, there is no loss because, in any case, you may emerge with experience that would otherwise be missed. Learn from all the nationalities in the world. Highlight your efforts because you are an ambassador for your country at your workplace. Present Emirati cuisine with warm hospitality. Convey the Emirati identity with its generosity, strength, and a smile, as it is. Do not look at material things and money as the only gain. There are many other things in the world of tourism. You can achieve anything you wish for.

We are curious about your future plans. What's next in your career?

It's all by God's grace. I am passionate about my work and have honed a refined proficiency for it. In terms of growth, continuity, and government support, opportunities are always in front of me, and I am grateful for them. From the get-go, I have wished for a culinary academy to be set up at our accredited



I will be with them as many initiatives are set to start, corporating to highlight the strengths of Emirati youth

public university. In my view, hospitality deserves greater attention and focus, similar to other university disciplines. I'm working on it, and with time, there will be a day when this is accomplished.

We would like to know more about your involvement in the Career Lab Emirati Hospitality Program scheduled this year.

This program is one of the government

initiatives through which the UAE government began to employ Emirati youth in the tourism sector. Following the success of my efforts and persistent advocacy for the presence of Emirati faces in all forums, the UAE government began to pay attention to employing and nationalizing the tourism sector. This is very honorable and one of my goals that I was striving for.

Initiatives come from many quarters, and being the first example and media figure, they turn to me for supporting and encouraging young people to enter the field. I started it and want my brothers and sisters to continue this path. I stand ready to collaborate with any governmental body aiming to encourage the representation of young Emiratis in the tourism sector. I will be with them as many initiatives are set to start, corporating to highlight the strengths of Emirati youth.



Trends, ft. Introspection and Foresight

Take a look at the food technology developments of 2023 to get a sense of what could happen in 2024

By **Shreya Asopa**

You could say that I'm running a little behind schedule on the recap. That being said, it's that time of year again when we set new year resolutions, and what better way to start one than with a little reflection on past trends to make room for new promising trends?

Who would have thought that Michelin Guide would decide to feature hotels after 123 years, with the first awards scheduled

for early this year, or that an Australian company would bring meatballs from the extinct woolly mammoth to life via the process of growing meat from cells? I came across a fair share of such aforementioned stories in 2023, so let's jump right into the fascinating world of food technology trends.

Up Against Waste: A surge of investment in startups tackling food waste with food gained momentum. Jams were widely embraced as an upcycled product category. However,

last year, we witnessed a shift as companies began exploring diverse upcycling categories, such as making milk from leftover nut oil, turning fruit waste pulp into popsicles, repurposing barley or yeast into protein powders, turning different types of nuts and kernels into dairy or upcycling ugly farm produce to create a range of dishes. If that weren't unique already, the Estonian startup ÄIO announced the utilization of agricultural and wood industry by-products, such as sawdust, and converting them into edible



oil. With a focus on the low-carbon footprint and discussion on food waste at COP28, the environment-friendly ways will continue.

Doing it the AI way: In 2023, AI wasn't just the talk of the town among writers and actors; it was also a sizzling topic in the food business. Restaurants tapped into the potential of AI to analyze demand for their offerings and customer preference patterns to accelerate their operations. AI made major ripples in the fast food segment, with prominent fast food chains leveraging it to accept orders using voice bots. With artificial intelligence leading the way, the idea of personalized nutrition might gain more traction in 2024 than in the past.

Tryst with Robots: After the pandemic, robots took the cake and kept rolling in 2023. AI-powered robots made waves in the market, where users just had to load chopped ingredients, choose a

cooking method, and select a dish to enjoy a prepared meal. We also had robots serving, cooking sushi, frying, and making pasta.

Notably, Mamma Ramona's, a pizzeria in California, made headlines when they combined a prep robot and an automation system to increase pizza production efficiency. Chipotle started testing "Autocado," a new robot that can slice, peel, and remove the avocado's core, to assist employees in preparing guacamole for the restaurant. Meanwhile, the University of Cambridge made a robotic chef trained to mimic recipes after watching cooking videos.

In case you missed it, a wholly automated burger restaurant called CaliExpress by Flippy is coming soon to Pasadena, California. The restaurant will take things to the next level by running a fully equipped restaurant via advanced AI and robotics, from self-ordering kiosks to the cooking process.

Robotic chefs have been a recurring theme that comes along with a side note of whether they can hold a candle to their human counterparts. Even though food automation is becoming increasingly popular, consumers' opinions are still divided.

Printing Food: The printing technique that builds on scaffolding, adding layers of food paste to create dishes, debuted a few years ago and has since started gaining ground. Several startups offered diverse culinary creations: plant-based meat replicating real meat's taste and appearance, 3D-printed fish, and edible dishes made from insects or algae. Many combined 3D printing with lab-grown meat for sustainable food production. Companies are constantly experimenting with advanced printers. It would be interesting if these printers became as common as ovens.

Peering into Plant Base: After an impressive introduction of plant-based products, 2023 signaled the next stage

of development and adaptation. A major focus was on creating plant-based fats. Commercial brands introduced vegan bacon, meat, butter, and cheese, achieving an authentic taste through precision fermentation techniques to create animal-free fats.

A spark of vocal acceptance swept in when Denmark and Korea took the lead in unveiling a national action plan promoting a roadmap for plant-based food production. Plant-based and fungi-based yogurt also made it to supermarket shelves. Speaking of fungus, companies were interested in mycelium (the root structure from which mushrooms grow) and began using it to produce plant-based meat substitutes. From plant-based chicken breast and vegan steaks made from mycelium to fish sticks, there was no shortage of mycoprotein-based options for consumers.

Cultivated Meat: The retrospective doesn't end without mentioning cultivated meat. The cultivated meat sector expanded as a whole, improving its categories and taking steps to reach restaurants. Reluctance from Italy and concerns about cost-effective solutions raised eyebrows regarding this innovation, whereas we also saw FDA approvals and Singapore's green light for lab-grown chicken. Advancements in cell-based shrimp meat and seafood were made; chefs even used lab meat in their recipes and served it at Michelin-starred restaurants. Recently, Czech startup Mewery created a cultivated meat prototype using microalgae.

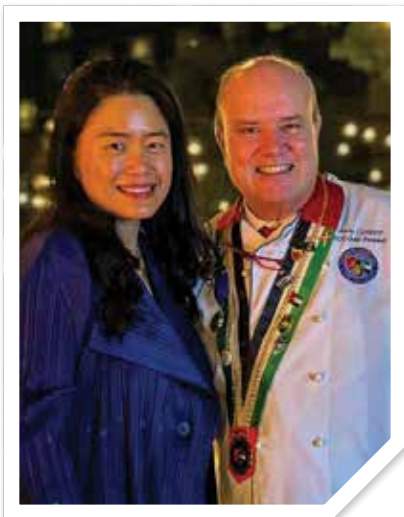
Tying all this together leaves me with a burning question: whether people were better off sticking to the original way of cooking, embracing tradition and creativity in recipes. The notion may come across as hurried, but it comes against the backdrop that customers shouldn't feel disoriented amid all these innovations. Perhaps in 2024, these innovations might establish an "extra" essential personal connection that customers could relate to.

January 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

The Guild Meet

The December guild meeting was held at the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel on December 12, 2023. The night concluded with the annual festive dinner, doubling as a celebration for the guild president, Andy Cuthbert's birthday





January 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**



January 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**



BORN FOR CAKES

Pastry Chef **R.H. Samitha Niroshan** dishes out tips on sugar art and his recipe for the Pastry Mastery competition

Kicking off the new year with an exclusive Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Chef of the Year Competition 2024, we are thrilled to present Chef Samitha Niroshan Perera as our first contestant feature. He may be the first one, but he is all set to give a tough competition, setting a compelling prelude to an exceptionally sweet challenge.

The Central Colombo native chef, Samitha, grew up around his father, who worked at the harbor, and mother, who used to design and sell wedding cakes for local functions. The early exposure sparked an inclination within him toward sweet creations.

"I was ten years old, and as the eldest of three, I helped my mother, making occasional mistakes in the baking process and learning along the way," he says of his mother's cake-baking sessions.

After his one-year food and beverage diploma course, he joined the Hilton Hotel in Colombo as a 3rd Commis. By then, his mother had relocated to Dubai, facilitating a young Samitha to join her. Leaving his comfort zone and coming to a new kitchen culture was mildly taxing, but he took this as only a fraction of his giant journey.

His first stint in Dubai was at the Le Meridien Airport Hotel. The four years of pure dedication in that tenure got him a double promotion. "We had a staff of 18 in the pastry team, for there were many restaurants. I learned so much about French pastry from Executive Pastry Chef



Young chefs should exhibit a good attitude and respect those from whom they learn; only then can operations run smoothly

Benoit. I continue to follow his learnings because his recipes are among the best from France. We are still in touch, and he is very proud that I have become a pastry chef."

Constant challenges allayed his reservations about dealing with any unfamiliar environment, but it did not manage to extinguish his itch for facing challenges head-on. This drive to confront new challenges got him to the Radisson Blu.

"During that time, I participated several times in the Salon Culinare competition. I even got the Best Cake of the Year 2018 title, and it was because of my mentor, Chef Dammika Herath, and his training on sugar art that I used in the competition for the cake's decoration."

Chef Samitha credits Chef Dammika for imparting the intricacies of sugar art, including the tricks for maintaining the temperature and transforming it for decoration. The deep-seated connection with Radisson holds personal

significance to him, forged in Chef Dammika's training on new baking techniques and Chef Uwe's guidance for his professional endeavors.

He distinctly remembers a poignant moment during his farewell party at the Radisson. Chef Uwe greeted me and said, "Your hands possess perfect talent; all you have to do is focus more on expanding your skills, and success will come soon to you," he said, remembering his inspirational words.

His subsequent stints included working at the Sheikh Al Manzoor Beach Palace and Millennium Hotels and Resorts Al Barsha before he joined the Five Palm Jumeirah. As a sous chef, he ran the pastry operations of Cinque Restaurant and learned about aspects of fine dining from the Italian Chef Giuseppe Pezzella.

The move to his current workplace, Crowne Plaza Jumeirah, came in 2022. As a pastry chef in his current role, he oversees the entire desert operations and takes care of the food preferences of top country VIPs, personally making pastries for them.

"Under my ambit are also three cake shops, one inside the hotel and the other two at the American Hospital Jumeirah Clinic. All the pastry here is made from scratch. We do pastry for the 180 rooms here and cater to special cakes. I have a team of four under me, and we also run breakfast operations for around 300 to 400 guests. I will have completed almost two years at this property next month," says Chef Samitha.



I cannot forget my mentors, as they were there for me, and I would do the same and give everything from my heart to anyone who wants to learn

Sanutha Niroshan
Pastry Chef

When the operations hit a stumbling block, Chef Samitha bands together his whole team to fix the situation. Plus points to his friendly management style: his team trusts his lead, and Chef Samitha has faith in his team and his training of new techniques that have molded them into experts. "I always train them on pastry, different desserts, and all about sugar art. In a way, I am inspiring them with sugar."

That's why, when hiring, he relies on both curiosity to learn and a good attitude. "Young chefs should exhibit a good attitude and respect those from whom they learn; only then can operations run smoothly."

Ever inquisitive, Chef Samitha never deterred from introducing new influences into his desserts, even



I always train them on pastry, different desserts, and all about sugar art. In a way, I am inspiring them with sugar

amidst a full plate of responsibilities. He blazes his curiosity trail while creating showpieces with his favorite ingredient, dark chocolate, and playing around with glazing and sugar art.

In the days when debate circles about showpieces becoming a dying art, Chef

Samitha is quick to argue and make the point. Simply put, he still sees the demand in the market, in events, and in the eyes of his customers. "Whenever a VIP event takes place and a showpiece is requested, I am there armed with my skills, and as you know, dark chocolate and sugar art never leave my side," he laughs.

So, how hard is sugar art? We questioned him after observing his face light up with excitement every time he mentioned it. "I mean, I practiced it for seven years, and now I can do it with my eyes closed," he replies quickly.

He adds, "I practiced a lot with isomalt sugar. What if you don't have isomalt sugar? Then, we can use 50 grams each of water, glucose, and sugar to make it from scratch. You need to melt it at the right temperature. If you want to add color, it has to have a high temperature and texture. Then you can do any art with it," he says, dipping into his past lessons of working with chefs of different nationalities and picking up the complexities of sugar from chefs Dammika Herath and Giuseppe Pezzella to master it.

When not being a chef, Chef Samitha enjoys drumming. A hobby that he cultivated in Sri Lanka, fronting an acoustic music band. Currently, Chef Samitha stays with his mother and brother in Dubai. While his mom doesn't have enough time to bake cakes due to her tight work schedule, he does cherish the idea of reliving the baking magic with her during vacations. "According to my mother, my cake-baking skills continue to be good. Considering how her mother rates his baking, he responds, "She says I was born for the cakes."

Talking about his future aspirations, a major one for him is flying to other countries and learning from new experiences. "I have been in Dubai since 2012, and I would like to explore maybe New Zealand and England," he elaborates, saying that although he has no plans to move, he hopes a plan will strike him one day.



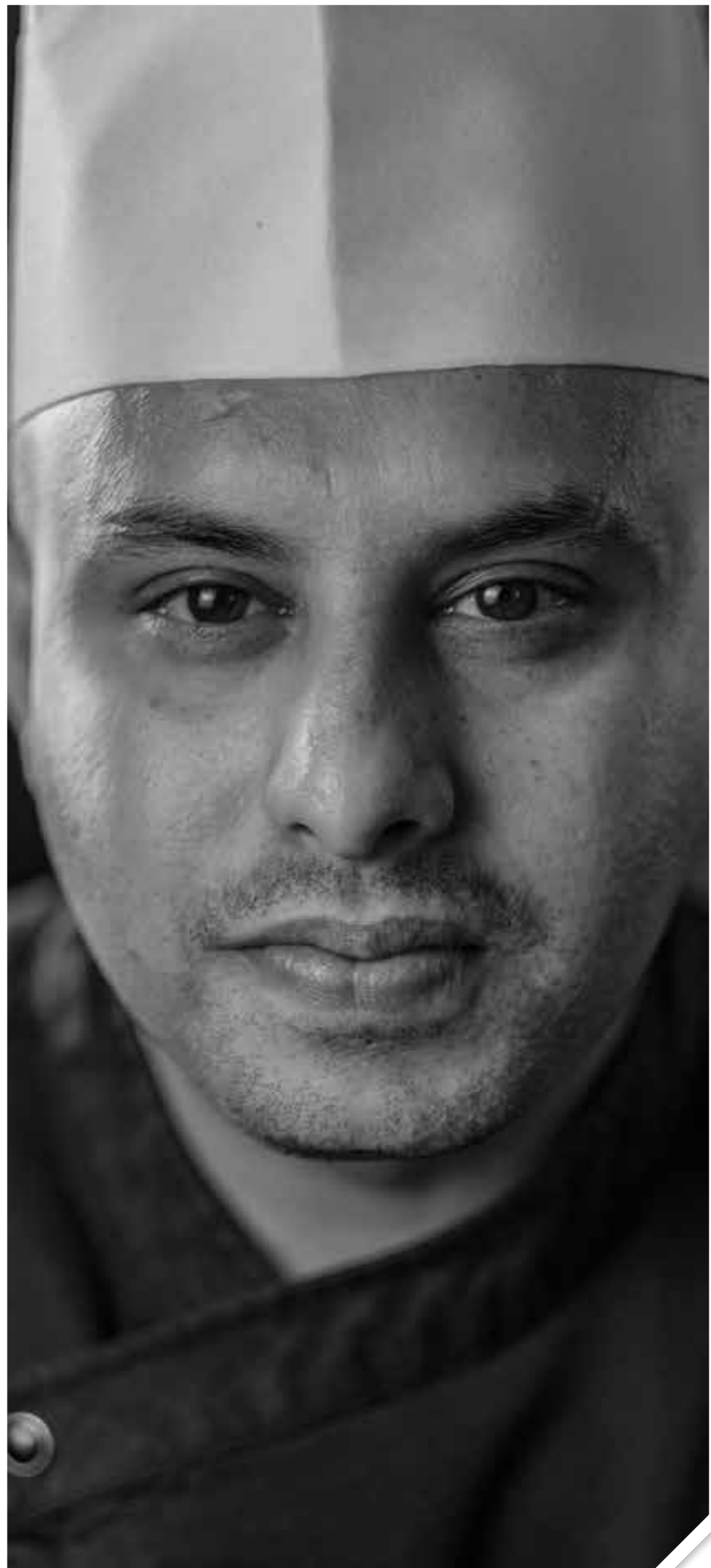
Taking cues from various senior chefs and diligently putting forth efforts to excel has elevated Chef Samitha to be among the finest in the field. How does he find inspiration now to create unique desserts at the height of his career? "A chef named Sanjay once advised me to observe and absorb knowledge from world chefs during my tenure at Le Meridien. He constantly pushed me to work on a small new dessert every day, and I felt inspired to keep practicing and coming up with ideas. I took those lessons to heart, and I am now pushing my team the same way, asking them to try new things," he answers.

Chef Samitha has put together a dish with detailed hot, cold, and frozen elements for the competition. A cold component derived from the Arla Pro cream cheese and mint delicacy, while the ice cream accentuates the frozen element, whereas the hot flavor is based on a comprehensive idea of a dark chocolate foggy mountain that cracks when poured with hot chocolate.

Chef Samitha has garnered several nitty-gritty pieces of pastry from chefs of different walks of life, and what he is today, he says, is the culmination of those learnings. "I cannot forget them, as they were there for me, and I would do the same and give everything from my heart to anyone who wants to learn," says the 32-year-old.



Whenever a VIP event takes place and a showpiece is requested, I am there armed with my skills, and as you know, dark chocolate and sugar art never leave my side





Crème de Menthe with Foggy Mountain

CRÈME DE MENTHE CHEESECAKE

Arla pro cream cheese 34%	150 gm
Mascarpone Cheese	150 gm
Icing Sugar	90 gm
Gelatine	9 gm
Arla Pro High Stability Cream 35%	100 ml
Fresh Mint Syrup	10 gm

Method

- ◆ Combine cream cheese, mascarpone, and icing sugar together in a machine bowl.
- ◆ Heat the cream with mint syrup and add the gelatin, then mix them together. Then keep it in the freezer to get it set.

DIGESTIVE RICH CHOCOLATE BASE

Arla pro Butter 82%	30 gm
Dark Chocolate	75 gm
Condense Milk	50 gm
Digestive Biscuits	60 gm
Cinnamon Powder	5 gm

Method

- ◆ Add butter and chocolate, and then place on double-boil. Add condensed milk to it.
- ◆ Finally, add digestive biscuits and cinnamon powder. Then, keep it in the chiller to set.

RASPBERRY CRUMBLE

Almond Powder	10 gm
Sugar	10 gm
Arla pro butter 82%	10 gm
Flour	10 gm
Fresh Raspberry	2 pcs

Method

- ◆ Arrange all the dry ingredients. Sugar, almond powder, and flour. Then melt the butter and mix it together with fresh raspberries. Bake it for 8 minutes at 180°C.

MINT SAUCE

Mint Fresh Leaves	5 gm
Sugar	30 gm
Water	15 ml
Pectin	2 gm
Sugar	5 gm

Method

- ◆ Add mint leaves, sugar, and water, and boil it to 70 degrees Celsius.
- ◆ Add pectin & sugar into the boiling mixture, then mix it and keep it inside the chiller.

FOGGY MOUNTAIN

Dark Chocolate	35 gm
Arla pro Butter 82%	35 gm
Egg	35 gm

Sugar	20 gm
Flour	10 gm

Method

- ◆ Add dark Chocolate, butter and place on double- boil. Add egg and sugar together and then hand mix it.
- ◆ Combine this mixture together, and then add flour and make it at 180°C for 12 minutes.

VANILLA ICE CREAM

Milk Arla Pro	150 gm
Arla Milk powder	6 gm
Sugar	20 gm
Arla Pro high Stability Cream 25%	40 gm
Dextrose	8 gm
Stabilizer	2 gm
Vanilla Beans	half (pcs)

Method

- ◆ Boil it all together, and keep it at room temperature.
- ◆ Later move it to the freezer to get it set.
- ◆ Once set, remove it from the freezer & use paco jet to make a nice ice cream scoop.



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Januar 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

MENU OF A MASTER

Exclusive interview with The Executive Chef of
Habtoor Grand Resort, **Manuel Jose Caicedo**

Chef Manuel Jose Caicedo is an experienced chef possessing advanced, refined skills across various cuisines such as Spanish, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and more. As the Executive Chef of the Habtoor Grand Resort, not only is he managing the entire culinary operations, but he is also curating new culinary events.

Recently, he introduced a chef's table experience event—a six-course menu focused on the flavors of Tuscany at Luciano's, a chic Italian restaurant in the hotel. His ability to capture the essence of the Tuscan culinary experience was evident in his menu design.

For Chef Manuel, menu development is a continuous task, just like the never-ending pursuit of perfection.

Gulf Gourmet catches up with Chef Manuel Jose Caicedo to find out about his curation of the Chef Table - A Taste of Tuscany event, his unique approach to menu planning, how he ensured that food made for guests consistently meets high standards, and much more.

Can you share some insights from your culinary journey, from your early days as a cook to your current role as Executive Chef in Dubai? How has your experience shaped your culinary perspective?

Life is like a mountain trip, filled with ups and downs, leading to where I am today. Reflecting on the years and returning to my roots has been an amazing journey, especially when fueled by passion and coupled with the right commitment and attitude. There are no barriers.

My culinary journey began in Colombia after completing high school. I continued my studies, learning in Colombia, and later expanded my experiences in Argentina, from Buenos Aires to La Patagonia. Leaving South America, I embarked on a new chapter in Barcelona, undertaking a culinary postgraduate program and working in renowned Michelin-starred restaurants and hotels,



Life is like a mountain trip, filled with ups and downs, leading to where I am today

such as The Ritz-Carlton Barcelona. I also participated in projects in Madrid and supported pre-openings for Marriott, including Tenerife.

Throughout this mountainous journey, I've spent nearly 12 years working in Dubai, surrounded by great places and incredible people of diverse nationalities.

Chef Manuel, can you elaborate on the inspiration behind choosing Tuscany as the focal point for the "Chef Table - A Taste of Tuscany" event?

Our hotel has an Italian restaurant, and it's not a generic Italian eatery. Our goal is to transport guests straight to Tuscany the moment they step inside

and peruse the menu. We aim to deliver an authentic Tuscan culinary experience, capturing the essence of the region. In Tuscany, you find always-fresh products, perfect vegetables, virgin olive oil, Bistecca alla Fiorentina, a great selection of cold cuts and cheeses, pine nuts, and a wonderful array of wines.

What distinguishes the "Chef Table - A Taste of Tuscany" culinary experience from other dining occasions? Are there any innovative elements or personal touches you've incorporated into traditional recipes for this occasion?

It's an entirely different experience compared to the market. Firstly, the setting is unique—an outdoor environment that brings part of the kitchen to your table. Each course is introduced directly by the chef and the team with clear explanations and special tips. The experience is personalised; we engage with the guests in advance to understand their preferences and align our offerings accordingly.

The direction is always towards freshness, utilizing ingredients sourced directly from Tuscany to ensure that flavors and tastes resonate with the region. Importantly, throughout the experience, there are unique surprises designed to create unforgettable memories.

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

To be unique, the most important factor is to believe in what you do. Success in the market requires authenticity and a steadfast belief in your concept. Never compromise on quality and service. Adhering to these key principles ensures consistency, resulting in satisfied repeat guests and attracting new customers for a unique experience.

Could you highlight some key influences and inspirations from different cuisines that you have incorporated into your cooking style? After many years in the industry, it's

challenging to pinpoint where to begin. Chefs who are truly passionate about food often yearn to travel and work in various parts of the world, immersing themselves in different cultures and cuisines. Moving around cities, if possible, strengthens us and provides invaluable knowledge. While it's impossible to list all the nationalities I've worked with worldwide, what I can say is that I have a profound love for Mediterranean cuisine. It's not just what I like to cook; it's what I love to eat and share with others through my culinary creations.

Your background includes diverse culinary styles, including Spanish, Continental, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern. How do you maintain these cuisines' authenticity and quality while incorporating your creative touch?

I always advise new cooks starting their careers that before running, you have to walk, and the starting point is to learn the basics from original recipes and fundamental techniques and practice as much as possible. Learn from the best chefs, and keep sharpening your knives. As we often say in our industry – the more you learn and practice the basics, the sharper your knife becomes.

Once you have mastered the fundamentals, it's your moment to experiment: be authentic, and you won't need to copy; you'll have your own stamp, and people will recognize your work as unique. It's important to remember that creativity flourishes when you are working and maintaining your passion.

How do you go about developing a menu that caters to a diverse range of tastes and preferences?

The culinary journey is always a lengthy one, demanding continuous inquiry and an understanding of how to cater to different needs, considering the availability of products and the nuances of seasonality to ensure the best quality. Teamwork is crucial; involving your team in brainstorming sessions, writing, drawing on paper,

reading the 'menu,' sleeping on it, and revisiting the process ensures that you find the right menu for the event, guests, or restaurant.

A notable aspect of our job is that perfection doesn't exist. We can always go back and keep working on it; there's never an end to the pursuit of "perfection."

Please share a bit about your creative process when it comes to menu planning and recipe design. How do you keep your culinary creations fresh and innovative?

There's never a specific process; it all depends on your working days, how you're feeling, and the moment. Some ideas come while cooking and taking notes; others are memories of previous places and new trends, as we need to stay updated on what's in the market. What always remains the same at the end is to write the ideas on a piece of paper, including some drawings. We then assess the plates and props available to us before heading back to the kitchen to prepare, cook, and taste.

Later on, we begin the process of writing the recipes, scaling each item, finding the right suppliers, and doing the costs. This may require a few changes during the process. After repeating this comprehensive process for a few days, we have a new menu ready to share with our guests.

How do you ensure that the food produced at the resort exceeds guest expectations and consistently meets high standards?

There is a substantial amount of work that happens behind the scenes, involving a large team. We need to be close to our suppliers to find the right products, go through menu engineering to understand guest preferences, and listen to their feedback. Staying updated on new trends, brainstorming with our marketing team, and creating strong, authentic concepts are all part of the process. It's essential to offer outlets with different cuisines and



Learn from the best chefs, and keep sharpening your knives. As we often say in our industry – the more you learn and practice the basics, the sharper your knife becomes

identities to cater to all our guests, especially those staying with us for extended periods.

Listening to our guests is crucial for revising menus and offerings regularly. In a large organization and within a resort, the key to successful execution is having a motivated team. Standardizing recipes, including pictures and pickup charts, ensures consistency. This consistency is crucial for success; if a



guest orders a particular dish today and returns in two days, they expect it to be the same as their initial experience.

What guidance or words of wisdom would you offer to aspiring young chefs who are just starting their culinary journeys?

Passion and more passion— that's always my first recommendation, not just for culinary careers but for any path you choose to spend the

rest of your life on. It's about feeling motivated and being in love with what you do. Every day, as you wake up, you're surrounded by people in the kitchen, spending long hours, weekends, and holidays creating and sharing the best meals and experiences for the guests who choose to visit.

Being a cook often means sacrificing holidays with friends and family, working when others are on vacation,

and taking days off when most people are working. It's a different way of living with long hours, but if you love what you do, you study, practice, ask countless questions, and embrace curiosity. You make mistakes, burn the food, try again and again, and always strive to learn from the best chefs possible. In the culinary journey, there's never enough time to achieve everything you want, but the love for the craft keeps you going.

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QUOTE MARSHAL

From his vantage point as a chef and marshal, Jagbir Singh provides behind-the-scenes insights into one of the top culinary competitions in the region

The overall efficiency of competitions at Emirates Salon Culinaire would not have been possible without the troops of Marshals. In a bid to know the unsung heroes who work to enhance the platform where talents from the world go head-to-head for culinary excellence, *Gulf Gourmet* met Chef Jagbir Singh.

A man with a calm demeanor and an emphasis on work ethics, Chef Jagbir may come across as a reserved individual who rarely displays the different facets of his personality. Yet his reserve trait takes a backseat when he oversees the kitchen and serves as a marshal on the ground.

Chef Jagbir's relationship with the Emirates Culinary Guild dates back to 2019. Recognizing his active engagement during meetings and aptitude for mentoring young chefs, the Guild appointed him a marshal. His past participation in competitions could also be the reason why he takes his marshaling responsibilities so seriously.

"I understand how difficult it is to be in a new place and leverage all your skills in a confined kitchen setting where you cannot call your senior when in need. Having someone you can trust



If your equipment is not working suddenly, then that is when I come in



is important. If your equipment is not working suddenly, then that is when I come in. My role also entails arranging stations for competitions, setting up the area for practicals and showpieces, and supporting the participants to help them perform better."

While speaking on the qualities expected of a marshal, he expounds that a good marshal is the one who supports and motivates young chefs, keeping them away from panic.

The viewpoint holds weight because a chef cooking in an unfamiliar setting might feel intimidated by the new setting. "Although you might be comfortable adjusting the temperature in your traditional kitchen oven, in competitions, you are working on other advanced tools that are not easy to operate, and it may be difficult to get perfect results from your first try. So, it takes time to understand the equipment, but as marshals, we are there to help them with its settings."

More of a keeper with a knack for kicking out any unhygienic elements in the dishes, he tasks himself with vigilant observation for cleanliness in every participant's work. This is simply because contestants present their dishes to the judges. "Furthermore, we constantly pay closer attention to ensure everything is hygienic for both participants and judges alike, lest we let the participants lose out on their hard work due to one of the marshals not being sincere in his work."

The enthusiasm and anticipation to win in a competitive race against time are palpable. Even in the frenzy, Chef Jagbir recognizes a good competitor who shines through in the crowd right from the onset of competition, emanating confidence in their body language, demonstrating well-preparedness, and maintaining food safety and hygiene. "The key is to read the rules and regulations. A chef may have good taste in his hands and good presentation



It is important that competitors thoroughly read the guidelines that are then reflected on their plates. And it is the small things that add to the points

skills, but there are also some aspects, like accurately portioning the weight of vegetables and proteins. It is important that competitors thoroughly read the guidelines that are then reflected on their plates. And it is the small things that add to the points."

An afterthought from his observation of the winners clinching medals in four to five categories is that good competitors result from senior chefs' diligent work in preparing them for competitions. As for the common parlance that some chefs win competitions only to depart on a quest for better opportunities, causing reluctance among many managers, he understands the correlation but also asserts that it is not always easy to change jobs. "Winning does open new doors because they get to network and learn about new technology and concepts in food. But how the winner utilizes the opportunity is up to them."

He throws open his wisdom coffer for young marshals joining the crew. One advice is to be on your toes, especially during technical issues. This comes against the backdrop of the fact that only the participants trust the marshals to resolve it. "Some participants may seek your help on different brand ingredients. If they use a specific type of ingredient in their everyday kitchen and during competition, they might encounter a different brand of that ingredient. In such instances, they ask

the marshal to detail the flavors of different brands. It is not just organizing things as a marshal; you need to have 360-degree knowledge of all the products," he states, offering tips to the rookie on how to succeed as a marshal.

Calling the competition a platform that can foreground the talents of chefs, which they work on for months, he says it cannot be foiled just because of a technical snag. "Marshals should be cognizant and have things in place when equipment breaks down. You do not want to put the competitor's hard work at stake and put them down. We are there to inform the judges about the technical issue and tackle the issue accordingly."

Once, while monitoring the competitions, he witnessed a standout incident when a participating chef lost their products upon arriving at the venue. However, this is when the chef turned things around to make something beyond imagination. "If a participant had planned on certain plating but misplaced their cutlery due to issues such as truck loading and unloading, then it boils down to how they came up with ideas at the last minute. I have seen chefs doing real innovation and bringing out-of-the-box plating. This skill comes with years of practice in the kitchen. They are the real winners even if they do not get the medal," says the 37-year-old.

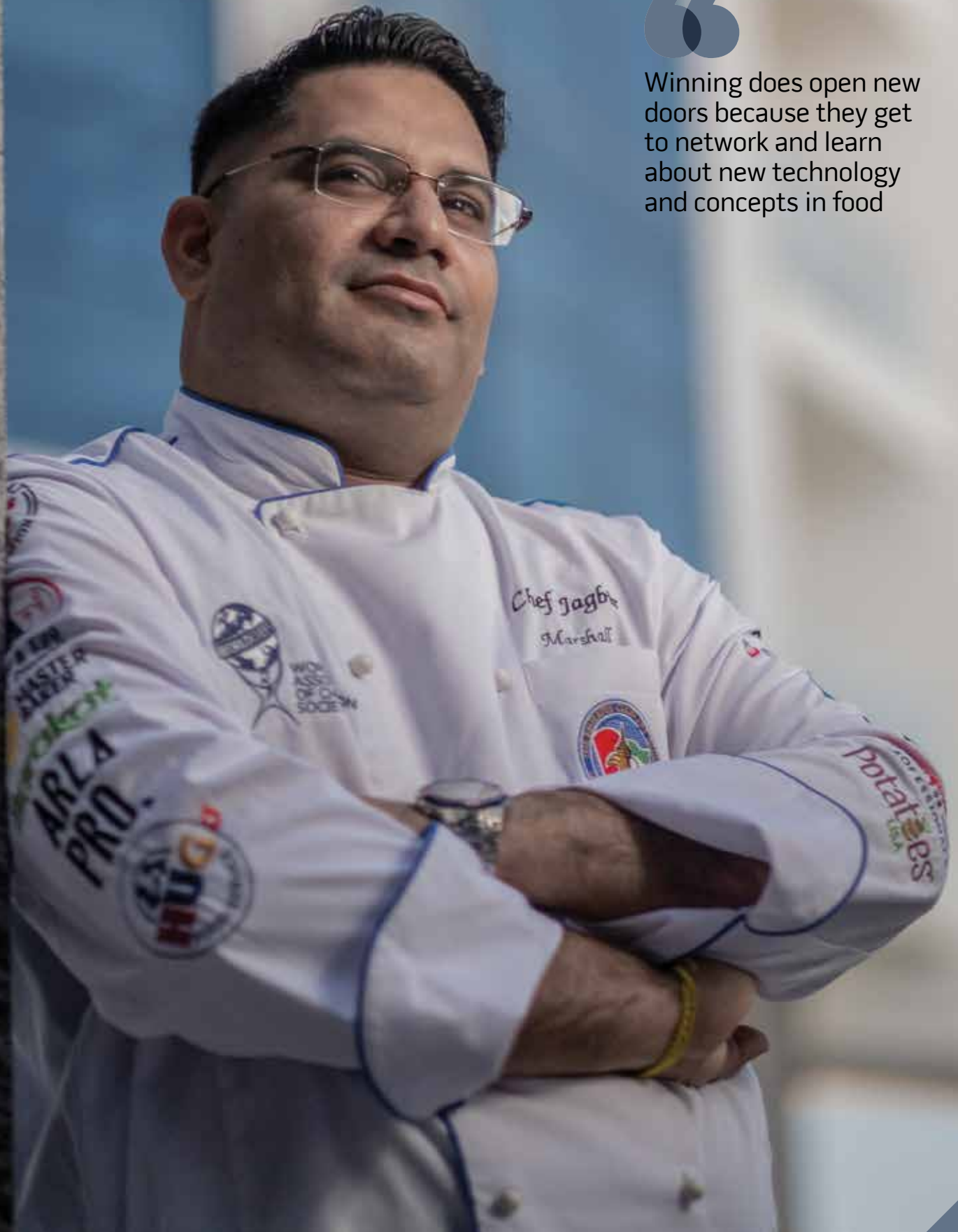
For the last five years, Chef Jagbir has actively done marshaling and hopes to continue to play his part in competitions as a judge. He notes that to be a judge; one should also know the ins and outs of marshaling and understand the competitor's perspective through active participation in the competitions. Having done both, he is feeling motivated to take the next step. In any case, what sets him apart is the passion he brings to culinary competitions.

VERSATILE & AGILE

It was not odd that Chef Jagbir Singh was endowed with the ability to



Winning does open new doors because they get to network and learn about new technology and concepts in food



experiment with the hot pans and clinking spoons in the kitchen. Based on his family history—father, uncle, and brother—all in hospitality, he knew he would sign up to be a chef.

Home in Delhi and childhood around cooking, his fascination with the cuisine largely began after he became an apprentice cook for the Hyatt Regency Delhi while simultaneously studying at the PUSA Institute of Hotel Management.

"I came from a family of chefs, worked with my uncle in a hotel, and listened to chefs' stories. Hospitality was in the blood and eventually became a genuine interest," says Chef Jagbir.

After a few more jobs in India, he had the chance to travel overseas to join the Park Inn by Radisson Hotel in Oman. In the span of five years, he contributed as a pre-opening team member, learning and carrying out plans for the launch before returning to



Marshals should be cognizant and have things in place when equipment breaks down. You do not want to put the competitor's hard work at stake and put them down

India to be with his expecting wife.

What followed in his career was another pre-opening project for the Ibis Hotel in Delhi. In 2014, he moved to the UAE to work for the Radisson Blu Resort Fujairah; subsequently, he made a three-year stint stop at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Oman, growing through

the ranks as head chef. The next role took him to Millennium Place Barsha Heights, where he drilled a talented team to enhance performance and foster business growth.

In the latter half of 2023, he took another leap upward by taking the opportunity to steer the pre-opening team of Park Regis by Prince Hotel.

As the Executive Chef, he manages a team of 29 individuals at a 160-room establishment comprising seven food and beverage venues, including an all-day dining restaurant, beach club bars, a Turkish specialty restaurant, and a Japanese cafe named Wabi-sabi.

At the new property on Deira Island, he continuously improves the menu by collecting expert input and transitioning from pre-opening to seamless operation.

"I take care of all the culinary outlets," he says on his current stint. "Since it is a new opening, we have to plan everything from scratch, from kitchen setup, the line-up of equipment, recruiting and training the team, and devising business plans to attract more guests. Given that we have lovely sea views and a variety of culinary offerings, it is something that people want to come to enjoy," he describes his three month-long pre-opening stage.

A chef, a marshal, a competitor—across the decades, Jagbir Singh has fulfilled all his roles. Yet he holds a title that goes beyond hospitality: that of a father. "The moment I got my daughter into my life, everything changed for me. When I am cooking food now, it comes with so much more love than before, as if I am cooking for her," he remarks, referring to how lucky he is to have her seven-year-old daughter in his life.

A meticulous chef who spoke measured words throughout the conversation revealed a softer side at the end. How is that for a surprising twist? Perhaps anything like the twists he grapples with in the competitions as a Marshal.



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Application Membership

Date of Application:

Family Name: (Mr./Ms./Mrs.)		
First Name/s:		
Nationality:	Civil Status:	Date of Birth: dd/mm/yy
Name of Employer:	Address in Home Country:	
Work Address:	Tel:	
Web Address:	Email:	
Telephone Office:	Professional Title:	
Fax Office:	Type of Membership Required: (Please tick one)	
Tel. Home:	Corporate <input type="checkbox"/>	Senior Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>
Fax Home:	Senior <input type="checkbox"/>	Junior <input type="checkbox"/>
Email:		

Declaration to be Signed by all Applicants

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

Signed:.....

Proposed By:

Sig:.....

Seconded By:

Sig:.....

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Fees:

Young Member: Junior members will receive a certificate.

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Dhs.350/=joining. Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar. Dhs. 150/=per year thereafter.

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newmembers



Karim Al Azhari CEO & Owner Sounbula Mills and Jurgen Ellenbeck, Managing Partner / Co-Founder, Home of Breads LLC receiving the Guild Membership Certificate Chef Harald Oberender VP of Corporate ECG and Past President of the ECG Chef Uwe Micheel



Hi everyone, I am very excited to bring to the Emirates Culinary Guild and its up-and-coming young chefs a bespoke opportunity to work with top-level Wheat Flour milled by the most advanced technology available in the milling industry.

I took over **Sounbula Mills** in Jebel Ali in August 2022 and improved it through additional investments in a wide range of equipment to achieve my goal of serving the individual needs of the most demanding Chefs and Bakers in the UAE.

It may come as a surprise to some people in the room that the past 50 years that I have spent in the UAE, working in the manufacturing industry at my family-owned concrete products factories, as well as building the



strongest Motorsport teams, could make such an impact on the cooking industry, given that I knew absolutely nothing about it just 14 months ago.

Well, here I am standing in front of the toughest crowd, feeling like an absolute rookie, but loving every moment with you now and for many more years ahead.

Karim Al Azhari, CEO & Owner, Sounbula Mills



“
Chef
Simon
says...

Culinary Trends Express

Simon Martin, Executive Chef at Kerry Taste & Nutrition (Food Service), has been sharing trends for our region since 2016

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

They're not complicated, but just a few simple ingredients will rock your culinary planet

Culinary Greetings. Wishing you all blessings and prosperity in 2024, Feliz Año Nuevo! Bonne Année! Xin Nian Kuai Le...

As we enter the year of the DRAGON in 2024, we will see heat and a new cross-pollination of chili profiles into mainstream trends across the region, which will breathe FIRE into the desire of our customers to spice up the norm. I am, of course, talking about trends across categories, from Habanero Ranch to Chipotle Cola... to Tabasco Dynamite. Hot pepper ice cream, jelly sweets, and even cheeses. Believe it or not, exposure to "CAPSAICIN" can drive hormonal and emotional changes in our customers that lead to social influences and chemosensation. **In the chef's talk, the more our customers eat chili, the more they crave...** It's a trend that's driven by the desire to add something to lift a beverage, a meal, or a sweet to the next level and why not with a hint of spice. With over 50,00 cultivated varieties, we are truly spoiled for a HOT TREND THIS COMING YEAR.

HOLA... We are seeing a trend in Spanish food hitting the region with flavors. From simple groundings of onion, garlic, paprika,



and saffron to local versions of tapas like those served in San Sebastian, replace cheeses like Manchego with local cheese and local cured meats. We see the rise of local twists on classic pan con tomate, and so many synergies like Patatas Bravis are so close but in name to Batata Harra. Will we see Paella or Caldereta (stew) leveraging a local twist using our region's substantial seafood and amazing produce? Goat meat paella fished with Za'tar aioli? **Does that tempt you?** My mouth is salivating at that thought. **Maybe even churros with a pistachio and date dip...** After all, we not only follow the trends, sometimes we set them...

I can't mention what's hot this year without mentioning pink: grains of paradise, Sichuan, Sancho, Tilly Cherry, green, etc... **YES!** You've guessed it: peppercorns are back, but with providence. This is being driven by the rebirth of the long pepper, amongst others. Peppercorns have been used in cuisines for more than 3000 years, and in the year 408 CE, 3000 pounds of peppercorns were included in the ransom to free the city of Rome from its siege..... Pungent, earthy, woody brash,

but somehow goes well with strawberries or meats, lifts cheeses, and takes toffees to the next level... Peppercorns are the new vogue in spices for our region. It's always the bridesmaid, never the bride, UNTIL NOW.... A star is born in the Penja white pepper and the long pepper (cubeb), both dazzlingly intense with bursts of fragrance. As I write this, I am sipping a black pepper cream soda ... **Peppercorns are on trend. It is the new black, it's hot, and it will set your menus on fire...**

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

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







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