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OCTOBER 2023

THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

gulf **gourmet**

volume 18, issue 8

The SECOND ACT

Inside the mind of **Andy Cuthbert**, the new President of the Emirates Culinary Guild

ABOVE THE TREELINE

Cluster Executive Chef of The First Collection, **Quinten Lauder**, excels in both the kitchen and on snowy slopes



KOLL'S CULINARY SCROLL

Dennis Koll, the Executive Chef at Reef & Beef, shares his mantra for hit restaurant concepts in Dubai



SECRET TO SUCCESS

Justin Emmanuel Steinbach, CEO of IFFCO Out of Home, shares his thoughts about customer engagement



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Welcome back after the summer break to all our readers and members. What a month September was with our farewell to President Uwe, who takes on the role of Past President, and we wish him and Annette well in their active retirement.

The guild is back in action with our first meeting held on September 12 at the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel, and we thank our host, Chef Ramola, and Mr. Nandana Wirasinha, the hotel manager, for their support. What an great turnout we had!

During the meeting, we introduced a new initiative in line with future sessions. We are thrilled to announce a new season of guest speakers, starting with Chef Helen Morris, Executive Chef and Senior Lecturer at the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, who shared valuable insights with our chefs, on leadership and self-development for the future. Thank you Chef Helen. I am confident the young chefs in attendance found highly beneficial.

It is all about preparing for competitions at the moment for the team; we are gearing up to send two young chefs to China to compete in the young chefs' challenge in Ningbo, China. Two chefs, Chef Santhosh Selveraj from the St Regis Abu Dhabi and Chef Aakash Pundir from Zero Gravity Dubai, will compete against international teams in the competition, and we will have our Judge, Chef Majid Al Sabagh on hand to support them; good luck chefs. Our competition aspirations continue in China, and in February, our 30-strong team of pastry chefs and artists are getting ready to bring home the gold once again from the Culinary Olympics in Germany in February 2024. We want to thank Mr. Karim Al Azhari and the team of Sounbula Mills for their outstanding support by being the Gold sponsor of the ECGs culinary team for the 2024

Olympics. Without his support, we would not have been able to send such a big team to Germany in February.

Internationally competitions are important. At the end of September, Past President Uwe Micheel and President of the Syrian Chefs, Majid Al Sabagh will be traveling to Iraq to assist with a competition aimed at developing chefs in Iraq. Stay tuned for the November issue of Gulf Gourmet for updates on this competition. Zimbabwe is also on the horizon for the ECG to assist in the formation of their national member association of chefs, and we are looking at supporting their upcoming competition in October 2023; as Continental director of A&ME, I will be requesting support from the region of experts we have to assist them in their event.

As members of the Guild, we are also invited to judge in various countries. Recently, Senior Guild chefs Peter, Prasad, and Kushan were invited to judge in Maldives, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. Chef Uwe and I had the honor of being invited to Manila to be part of the Philippine Culinary Cup.

Chef Uwe served as a judge, while I had the privilege of participating in the Asian Presidents forum, which brought together the WorldChefs Asia Presidents under the leadership of Continental director Willment Leong. It was a fantastic week filled with friendship, food, and learning. As members of the guild, it is a great gift to have the global camaraderie and the opportunities that come our way. The Philippine Culinary Cup is an exciting event on the competition circuit that often resembles a nightclub and rock concert. As they say, it's more fun in the Philippines.

International Chefs Day will once again happen on the 2nd of October 2023, and we, together with our great partner ICCA



and Mr. Sunjeh Raja, will be working with Worldchefs and Nestle Professional to support this day with activities in the school with children. I would love to hear from volunteers to help us on that day, as working with the children is always a very humbling experience. Those interested, please reach out to me and Madame Josephine at the guild.

Lastly, I thank the newly formed executive committee and our sub-committees, who have started to develop and move forward with initiatives that will be part of the monthly activities for the guild and its members. With our volunteer group and corporate partners' support, our guild will continue to go from strength to strength. The newly formed committees include Bakery development led by chef Jurgen Ellenbeck and pastry development led by Dammika Herath; both these committees and their members will be important for the training of the chefs and also raising the standard of the competitions that we do in the guild. The media and communications committee is also a new addition to strengthen the voice of the guild, led by Senior VP Chef KAC Prasad, and this team will work on the reach of the guild. Chef Harald Oberender and his team will look after our corporate partners to ensure we have good communication and engagement with our corporate members. We will introduce more committees in the coming months as we finalise the future structure.

Remember to check out our social media links, updates and highlights of the month gone by, and special tributes to Chef Uwe.

We look forward to a great season ahead.

Andy Cuthbert
President and Editor





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Goodbye, not Farewell

The UAE Chefs community came together to see off Chef **Uwe** and **Annette** as they embark upon an adventure to a new chapter of their life- back home in Germany. Here are some pictures from the eventful day at the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel in Dubai



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SALES ENQUIRY



“
**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."**

Hybridized Foods: The act of cross-pollinating two foods to create exciting new concepts that both delight and exceed customer expectations. Currently, in Saudi Arabia, we have just seen Marinda's potato chips. WOW! It is an explosion of taste and texture that brings a salty potato chip and a sweet citrus drink together in an outstanding delivery to captivate our culinary senses. Not to be outdone; however, we are encountering this in many forms: chipotle ranch dressing, Tabasco chocolate sauce, ketchup ice cream, and Mountain Dew hot sauce, to name a few. What will be next? Maybe spiced melon Shawarmer? Or Shawa doughnuts. Who knows! Our industry is driving the trend in this region, so why not actively participate instead of just observing? I love marmalade and marmite together on toast. What is your mix-up food? Let me know!

Faux Foods: Looks can be deceiving. Faux foods have a realistic appearance; in fact, they smell and taste so good that it's hard to tell them apart from the actual things. As the population grows, the food stocks are becoming more challenging, so the new kids on the block are plant-based proteins (chicken, lamb, beef, fish, cheese, etc.). It's the biggest growth in our market, with people



wanting to be more health-conscious and more planet-friendly. And boy, the latest versions are so good, it's hard not to try them. Burgers, kebabs, whole muscle, filets, mince, koftas, and many more. It's all out there, and the future of the industry is embedded in this trend. Embrace the future.

Everybody is Wrapping Meat in Bread:

The new black this month is wrapping meats in flatbread. But it's not the filling; it's the bread, whether

it's Fatir, Bolani, Lavash, Roti Canai, Pide, Murtabak, Khachapuri, Injera, Cheong Fun, Tortilla, or Bammy. We are seeing global flatbreads of all forms, from barley, wheat, rice, semolina, rye, cassava, and millet teff. The list is too long to mention them all. Wrapping meat in flatbread is a foundational practice of earthly cuisine. To be honest, it's not just meat; this extends to vegetarian traditions too. It's the street food of every region, and it's portable, easy-to-serve, food on the go to fine dining. Yet now it's reinventing itself from duck-filled pancakes to Navajo tacos. Being multi-sensory is the next big thing. Bigger than now, you ask? Yes, yes.

AI Recipes are here and they are very real: AI, armed with a treasure trove of food data, flavor profiles, and ingredient compatibility, joins forces with restaurants. Chefs are bestowed with an extraordinary culinary boost, empowering them to craft inventive and delicious flavor combinations that will leave taste buds in awe. Get ready for a gastronomic transformation! This is not a sci-fi movie or a prediction, but it's here and happening now, so don't miss this epic journey and jump on board. It will never take away our jobs, but it is a great tool to enhance our craft skills and knowledge.

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

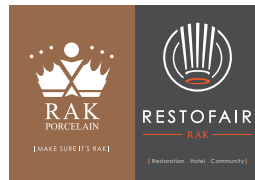
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Egg-sploring Masterbaker

Crack the egg factory code by joining young chefs from ECGYCC on their scrambling adventure to Masterbaker

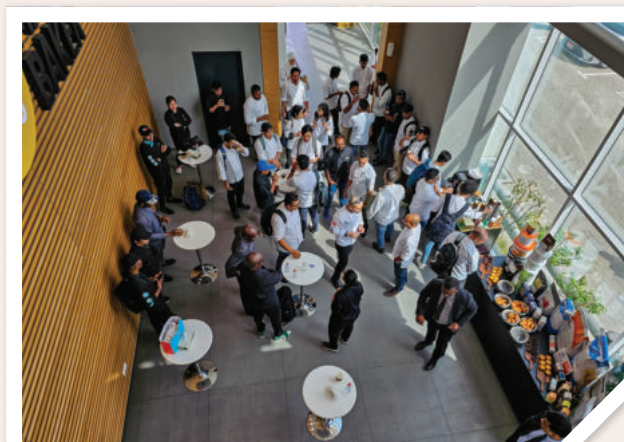


It's hard to believe that just on the outskirts of Dubai, not far from a concrete jungle, there exists a company that supplies a wide range of bakery and confectionary products to different parts of Asia and the Middle East. Here comes Masterbaker, well renowned for its reputation for its products.

Scrambled, poached, or fried. As a clarifying agent, emulsifier, or coating substitute. Eggs could be tackled in a multitude of ways.

The Emirates Culinary Guild Young Chefs Club had a unique opportunity to visit the Masterbaker's Egg Station facility on July 10, 2023. Jayakrishnan, Gautam and Chef Thimira introduced the young chefs to Masterbaker and its principal brands. One of the brands under Masterbaker, the Egg Station facility, is fully equipped to receive raw materials without any risk of cross-contamination. The production line is meticulously planned, leaving no room for errors or faults and requiring minimal human intervention. Additionally, they have a fleet of delivery vehicles to reach their clientele efficiently. During the visit, they had the chance to learn about eggs, which are widely used in cooking. They discovered the structure, the various stages that can lead to contamination, the pasteurization process for eggs, and techniques for maintaining and maximizing the shelf life of eggs.

The young chefs also enjoyed expanding their knowledge about the variety of

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products offered by SchapfenMühle. Chef Karl Gaug emphasized the significance of comprehending the different types of flour used to create breads, pastries, and more. Young chefs also had the opportunity to sample some of the finest breads offered by SchapfenMühle. What better way to truly understand the product than by experiencing its taste firsthand?

To wrap up our adventure, the young chefs made their way to the Richemont Masterbaker facility in JLT. Upon arrival,

they were warmly greeted by Chef Christiane Trilck, the Head of Faculty, and her team. Chef Christiane briefed them about the Richemont Masterbaker facility, emphasizing its comprehensive modern pastry and bakery education programs designed for aspiring chefs. After an adventure-packed day filled with exciting experiences, the visit concluded with a delicious lunch at Richemont Masterbaker.

The club still has more to come. Stay tuned on the social media pages

Instagram @ecgycc; Facebook @ Emirates Culinary Guild Young Chefs Club, and the events page :

<http://www.emiratesculinaryguild.net/events.php>

Culinary Regards,
Chef Fay Abreo, President ECGYCC,
together with Chef Islam Masoud,
Chairman ECGYCC; Chef Raghuprasad Pillai - Core Committee Mentor & the Core Team - Chefs Roberto Furtuno, Hillary Kajuku and Deshan Lakli

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ABOVE THE TREELINE

A snowboarding enthusiast and accomplished chef, **Quinten Lauder** is truly extraordinary. In an exclusive interview with **Gulf Gourmet**, the Cluster Executive Chef of The First Group shares an effective leadership style tailored for vast operations

Frequently, a sense of déjà vu engulfs us when we encounter culinary athletes who share a passion for fine cooking, equally matched by their sports interests, which fill them with the same adrenaline they seek in the kitchen. Time and again, the bewildering feeling of the present bending in reverse may wash over you when you meet Chef Quinten Lauder.

And so, here we find ourselves, making our way towards the accomplished 42-year-old Cluster Executive Chef of The First Collection, Quinten Lauder, who excels in the kitchen and thrives on the thrill of descending the majestic slopes.

Have you ever beheld the ethereal glow of a snowy mountain? The stunning orange-yellow tint just before dawn reflects off the glistening snow, creating a surreal spectacle. Combined with Chef Quinten Lauder's experiences in the snowy glades of Whistler and high-altitude traverses, these encounters have bolstered his confidence in taking risks when crafting a new identity for his dishes.

From the Versace Hotel to The First Group, his career has taken him to Australia, the UK, Canada, and Dubai. Even as he ventures into off-piste areas without knowing what fate has in store, he remains resolute in his determination to explore uncharted waters.

His childhood unveils a drone's-eye view of various Australian cities, revealing Melbourne as his home, where he completed his high school education and culinary college.

"Both my parents were skilled cooks. My father always aspired to be a chef but never had the opportunity, so he lived vicariously through me when I entered the industry," he shares the pivotal moment that spurred him to gain work experience.

At 17, he had the privilege of working alongside top chefs in Australia, an experience that left a lasting impression. After starting as an apprentice in an



Both my parents were skilled cooks. My father always aspired to be a chef but never had the opportunity, so he lived vicariously through me when I entered the industry

Italian restaurant and steadily climbing the ranks to become a commis, he made his way to the Vie restaurant at the Versace Hotel. Hungry for more challenges, he followed his instincts and seized the opportunity to work for a Michelin-starred chef. This chapter concluded with him honing his skills at Watt Modern Dining, a contemporary restaurant in Brisbane.

In pursuit of immersive training, he journeyed to London and secured a position at Smiths of Smithfield, a two-rosette European-style fine dining establishment housed in a massive four-level building, each floor boasting a unique dining concept.

Several memories from his time in London stand out, but one, in particular, shines brightly—the time he spent in the kitchen working under renowned chef John Torode. This experience had a profound impact on him.

"The place was a big eye-opener for me, especially in terms of production and execution for large numbers. That era was food-focused, with fresh seafood procured daily from the market and whole beasts butchered for the daily lunch service. The quality of the ingredients was unlike anything I had ever seen before."

He left with a bag full of new

experiences and the title of junior sous chef. The next time he unpacked his suitcase was to gather wisdom from banquets at the Sofitel Hotel on the Gold Coast. Among his noteworthy achievements were enhancing the catering experience and relaunching the upscale 110-seat restaurant.

A KICK TURN

For Chef Quinten Lauder, snowboarding was more than a passing fancy; it was the driving force behind his decision to venture to British Columbia, Canada.

"I went to Canada with two purposes in mind: snowboarding and cooking. I found employment at a ski resort nestled in a quaint town named Golden, where I had the opportunity to both indulge in snowboarding and work with locally sourced Canadian ingredients. As it was primarily just me and the kitchen stewards, I transitioned from a large hotel operation to a more focused, single-minded approach."

His next destination was the Fairmont Chateau Whistler. Here, once again, he reveled in panoramic views, gliding over snow while also overseeing banquets and restaurant logistics. The power of passion was destined to catch up to him. Shortly thereafter, he received a call offering him the position of executive sous chef at a boutique hotel in Vancouver. There, he managed both a la carte dining and external catering for high-end events, including Bentley, Aston Martin, and Tiffany's, among others.

In contrast to those who remain at one restaurant for years, Quinten chose to challenge himself by relocating to Dubai. The transition from Canada to Dubai was quite complex for him to grasp. "But I was working at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel! It was a vast operation with substantial numbers, budget maintenance, and KPIs to meet. I learned tremendously from that experience. Afterward, I joined the Conrad by Hilton hotel, overseeing its five venues from pre-opening to full operation."

He embarked on a new journey two years later by joining the Anantara Resort at Palm Jumeirah. His five-year tenure as executive sous chef, where he managed a brigade of 100 chefs, was abruptly interrupted when the pandemic shook the industry.

Securing a job in such a volatile market proved to be a formidable challenge. However, hope remained a constant companion. During his job search, he reconnected with his mentor, Mr. Mark Patten, from The First Group. Having first met him during the Conrad's opening, he discovered that there was an opening for a cluster executive chef.

"One of my initial tasks with The First

Group was to rebuild and oversee multiple food and beverage outlets. I relished the pre-opening phases, brainstorming diverse concepts to provide excellent value to our guests," he fondly recalls of his early days at his current workplace.

STEP UP JUMP

For most of the past year, he has been overseeing The First Collection Hotel at Jumeirah Village Circle, which includes Village Bistro, a terrace pool area, Santè Ria, a Latino concept spanning two floors, Risen Cafe, an artisanal bakery concept.

More recently, he embraced a significant opportunity by managing the pre-opening phase of the group's inaugural

beach club, Soluna. This involved everything from menu tastings to establishing the Risen Café branch, the poolside menu, a food truck, and the new Mediterranean restaurant, Énas.

When one contemplates the size of The First Group, it can be a daunting prospect. Handling numerous venues is no small feat. However, the chefs on his team rally together under his guidance to carry out their respective roles.

"Many individuals on my team had untapped potential and lacked opportunities to spread their wings. Here, they have the chance to innovate and create. They are true stars, and I consider myself fortunate to have them in my various operations," he says with a sense of pride in his eyes.

Commonly referred to as 'Chef Q' by his peers, he shares a strong camaraderie with his colleagues. Currently, he leads a team of 20 staff members at The First Collection JVC hotel and another 18 at Soluna Beach Club on the Palm. It may appear counterintuitive for a cluster chef to be on the floor collaborating with his team instead of being buried in administrative tasks at a desk. However, Chef Quinten prefers a hands-on approach, fostering a meeting of minds that helps them find common ground in creating high-quality dishes for the menu.



Many individuals on my team had untapped potential and lacked opportunities to spread their wings. Here, they have the chance to innovate and create



He acknowledges that the era of authoritarian leadership styles is behind us. Having worked with a variety of chefs, ranging from those who ruled with an iron fist to those who personally mentored him, he remains steadfast in his commitment to cultivating loyalty and leading by example.

"If you instruct me to do something, I will do it. But if you work alongside me, it will carry far more impact. I encourage my team to reflect on chefs who have left a lasting impression on their careers and incorporate the best elements from them for their own growth."

A TECH FLIP

The impact that local farming has on restaurants cannot be underestimated. He eloquently discusses the differences between his experiences in Canada and Dubai. In Canada, he worked with locally sourced ingredients, while in Dubai, he observed the industry shifting its focus from solely prioritizing shelf life to embracing sustainability.

"When I arrived here in 2012, kitchens placed a high value on shelf life, with apples sometimes spending months in a chiller. Today, Dubai is at the forefront of championing local produce, changing its approach so that locally grown ingredients not only taste better but also contribute to reducing the industry's carbon footprint."

Just as there is concern about technology replacing humans with machines now capable of rolling sushi, the traditional art of creating things from scratch is also at risk. With technological advancements permeating the processed packaging industry, young chefs may miss the opportunity to witness the transformation of ingredients from their raw form to the finished product.

"It's crucial to understand the origins of the products you use. Even if it's not something you think about every day, it's worth considering incorporating



If you instruct me to do something, I will do it. But if you work alongside me, it will carry far more impact

the practice of crafting things from scratch. Doing so enhances the quality of your cooking and fosters a deep appreciation for the process, rather than relying solely on pre-packaged, portion-sized items."

His view on automation is firmly rooted in the belief that chefs will continue to be responsible for serving, cleaning, cooking, and restocking refrigerators. "Automation will certainly impact the industry, but you'll also have farm-to-table restaurants, a traditional style of dining. However, it will take some time before automation extends to fine dining."

Despite Chef Quinten's deep passion for snowboarding and cooking, his wife's unwavering support truly completes his journey. Janey, who comes from

the hotel industry, understands the demands of his profession. An endearing moment in their marriage story emerged when they tied the knot in 2020. "Due to pandemic restrictions, she couldn't enter Australia even with a valid visa. So, we were separated just three days after getting married and eventually reunited after eight long months."

With Chef Quinten at the helm, overseeing multiple F&B venues, crafting plans, and managing numerous ongoing and completed projects, he firmly believes that The First Group is poised for an exciting future.

The chef, who always has a full plate, also envisions dramatic possibilities for his future plans. "I enjoy teaching and have had the opportunity to work as a guest lecturer at ICCA. The joy of engaging with young learners, discussing the industry, receiving positive responses to questions, and giving back to the industry excites me."

As for his eventual retirement, he contemplates the possibility of owning a beachside café serving breakfast. The range of choices is vast, but one thing remains certain: both the kitchen and the snow-covered slopes hold a cherished place in his heart.

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The Guild Meet

The guild meeting for April took place at the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel on September 12, 2023. The packed house saw presentations by several corporate members. We thank Chef **Ramola** and hotel manager Mr. **Nandana Wirasinha** for graciously hosting the meeting.

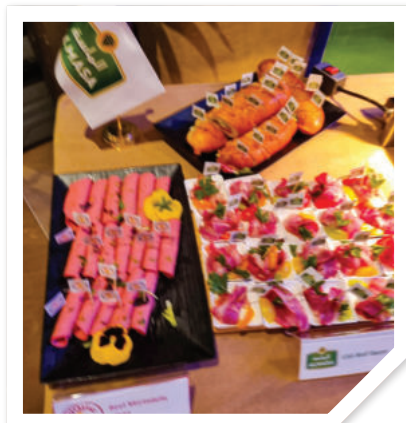




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Climate Change's Impact on the Culinary Industry

Chef **Carl Shi** addresses the role of climate change on our plate

Dear fellow culinary maestros and restaurant wizards!

Today, we gathered around the virtual table to discuss a hot topic in our kitchens and tantalize your taste buds: climate change. As climate change continues to make its presence felt, we must prepare ourselves for the impact it will have on our beloved culinary industry. Fear not, my friends, for I am here to share this culinary climate conundrum with a dash of information, a pinch of humor, and a lot of deliciousness.

Sizzle or Fizzle: Changing Ingredients

Picture this: you're flipping through your trusted cookbook, only to discover that some of your go-to ingredients have become as rare as a unicorn on a unicycle. Our culinary palette is undergoing instability and transformation due to shifting weather patterns and unpredictable growing conditions. As the climate changes, we must adapt our menus to incorporate more sustainable and locally sourced ingredients. Soon, you might find heirloom vegetables, ancient grains, and funky fungi that will become our new flavor heroes on our chopping board!

Kitchen Heat Waves: Rising Temperatures

When you thought your kitchen couldn't get hotter, climate change threw a culinary curveball! Rising temperatures globally pose challenges for chefs, particularly regarding delicate pastries and temperamental chocolates. The extreme heat may



Chit-Chat with Chef Carl

lead compressors to overheat and lose effectiveness in maintaining cold temperatures. This poses a critical problem for chefs who depend on precise temperature control for their culinary masterpieces. Adapting to these ever-evolving kitchen conditions becomes increasingly imperative.

Fishing for Solutions: Aquatic Adventures

Ah, the bountiful seas, where culinary dreams are realized with every cast of the net. But as ocean temperatures rise and acidification takes its toll, our oceans face a tough swim. Sustainable fishing practices, responsible sourcing, food miles watching, and embracing lesser-known seafood varieties can help us ride this wave of change. And let's not forget about the seaweed revolution, my friends—it's time to make room for this oceanic superfood on our plates!

Farm-to-Fork Feats: Sustainable Supply Chains

As climate change affects our

agricultural systems, we must support sustainable farming practices. Chefs can shape the future by establishing strong connections with local farmers and promoting responsible agriculture. Let's champion farm-to-fork initiatives, reduce food waste, and turn those ugly duckling fruits and veggies into stunning culinary swans. After all, sustainability is not just a buzzword—it's a recipe for a delicious and resilient future.

The Sweet Taste of Innovation: Climate-Conscious Cuisine

In the face of climate change, we chefs have a remarkable opportunity to become culinary innovators. Let's experiment with alternative proteins, embrace plant-based dishes that pack a flavorful punch, and push the boundaries of our creativity. Who knows? The next culinary masterpiece might be a climate-conscious creation that leaves our guests in awe. As a chef, I believe that the kitchen is our canvas, and with a touch of whimsy, we can paint a deliciously sustainable future.

Conclusion:

Dear chefs, climate change may be heating up, but our passion and adaptability are hotter still. By embracing sustainable ingredients, adjusting our cooking techniques, and supporting responsible farming and fishing practices, we can protect our culinary legacy for generations. So, let's raise our ladles, sharpen our knives, and march into the kitchen armed with knowledge. Together, we shall tackle this climate change challenge and create a culinary future that's both delectable and sustainable. Bon appétit!

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Big dreams, love, food, washing dishes, and connections are enlivened in an organic dialogue of thoughts—to unfold the tale of a man who would jolt the way you view the world. The early chapters are behind for **Andy Cuthbert** as he sets out on a new role as the President of the Emirates Culinary Guild

By **Shreya Asopa**

"Why does a samosa stand tall?" he quipped. "Because it is living up to its reputation as the 'Raj of Plate.' "As an Indian, I have heard my fair share of puns on this evening street snack, but none quite like Chef Andy Cuthbert unleashed in a jiffy during our tête-à-tête. It was a witty glimpse of the man behind the General Manager—who, along with picking up lessons from many cultures, had also taken a healthy dose of wit from people and wild experiences.

He sits inside a square room, brilliantly lit like rays of the sun striking naturally on citrine, illuminating the entire wall behind him full of accolades, certificates, and winning medals that symbolize the victory of passion. My gaze then circles back to Chef Andy, who has a relaxed demeanor, rejuvenated after a vacation from the Philippines.

Even though our chat took place on a digital canvas, it didn't fail to connect me to his illustrious career. For the past two decades, Chef Andy has donned multiple toques for the Jumeirah Group before becoming the General Manager at



In banqueting, there are times when we must adapt our approach and give direct orders because managing a large-scale banquet can resemble being in the army; the goal is to get the job done

Jumeirah Creekside Hotel and Madinat Jumeirah Conference & Events. "And it is also the spearheading of the beach and nightclub, Zero Gravity, that keeps me young and trendy," jests the 60-year-old with an infectious smile.

It is only natural that managing an operation of that magnitude, which also includes banquets where the setup, menu, and logistics change every time as per the theme, can put even an experienced GM on the spot. "But if you

have people who trust you too, and you can talk through the job, that's half the battle won," he adds.

"Being present on the floor with the team is crucial. In banqueting, there are times when we must adapt our approach and give direct orders because managing a large-scale banquet can resemble being in the army; the goal is to get the job done," he expounds on not just about sitting and reviewing spreadsheets, but having a constantly evolving leadership style.

In his productivity symphony, he orchestrates a blend of strict and liberal supervision depending on his teams, which, like him, have bolstered their resumes with amassed experiences and are tuning to keep the kitchen pot boiling.

Since transitioning from a chef to the role of General Manager, his close friends, Chef Uwe Micheel and the late Alen Thong, affectionately teased him, referring to him as a traitor. However, in his heart, he will forever consider himself a cook.

He has also dubbed himself a dinosaur—an old-fashioned GM who has walked into the shoes of his team. This is why he believes those in charge are capable



of navigating better and trying new approaches when stuck. A predicament when he had to cater to nearly thousands of guests when it rained just before the event commenced is etched vividly in his mind. Unexpected traffic snarls left some of the staff stranded. With tight staff numbers, the trust of his people shone through in the chaos as they took his orders for a seamless execution. "You cannot micromanage everything. Communication is the key to making the team understand what's expected. At times, things may go south, but creativity can help.

PRESIDENTIAL PATH

In 2015, Chef Andy assumed the role of Continental Director, Africa and Middle East, at the World Association of Chef Societies (Worldchefs). He has successfully led congresses in Greece (2016), Malaysia (2018), and Abu Dhabi (2022) and will continue his leadership in Singapore in 2024. His contributions to the Young Chefs Development Team,



Communication is the key to making the team understand what's expected. At times, things may go south, but creativity can help

which he held for six years and is now helmed by Chef Alan Orreal, have laid a solid foundation for a growth plan. This is reflected in the increasing number of people joining the club today.

His recent appointment as President of the Emirates Culinary Guild adds a streak to his milestones. Emotions ran high as he rendered the radical change. "The board had remained unchanged

for years. People come, and people go. Then we revamped the guild by making it a holistic platform connecting chefs, suppliers, and the f&b industry. We saw several talented chefs representing in culinary competitions, and after a little setback during COVID, we got a little more structure. We continued to develop and learn," he elaborates on the recent turn of events.

Since its induction into Worldchefs in 1994, the ECG has grown into the UAE's leading association of professional chefs. "Me and Chef Uwe Micheel were on the board together since 1996, and now he has stepped down," he says amid our conversation, taking a sip of water that punctuated his words.

The greatest lacuna, however, he adds, is not having Chef Uwe, one of the biggest doers in the guild. Yet he underlines that the new board will not only spread the workload but will also allow everyone to do their part and bring in new ideas.





We revamped the guild by making it a holistic platform connecting chefs, suppliers, and the f&b industry

October 2023 **Gulf Gourmet**

Who can be unperturbed by Chef Andy's poignant question: What happens when he steps down? "Uwe and me, here or not, we will still have the guild. The guild is the people," he replies sans hesitation.

The guild has contributed to his way of life. Even as he remains neck-deep in projects, he works seven days a week for the guild, preferring to be doing something on the weekend that leaves him in clover. "There's nothing more satisfying than watching young chefs beam with joy when they win a gold medal. And also a lot of satisfaction in explaining to a chef why they didn't get a gold medal."

His recent vacation to the Philippines reveals his disposition towards feedback. "I ordered chicken fried rice with basil, which was on the menu, only to be informed by the wait staff that it was unavailable because there was no basil. When I asked them if they had chicken and rice, to which they replied yes. So I requested them to make me chicken fried rice without basil. However, they refused, stating that it wasn't on the menu and couldn't be prepared. When I offered feedback to the waitress, she didn't know I came from the same industry, and what struck me was not just the slip-up but the missed opportunity for the restaurant to make potential revenue."

He continues to encapsulate the quiet wisdom of embracing critique, as one cannot be adept at everything. "Try to



There's nothing more satisfying than watching young chefs beam with joy when they win a gold medal

learn every aspect, but at the same time inspire and direct the team and empower them to do their best."

THE ABC OF WATERMELON

It was not until midway through our conversation that an unexpected glitch occurred—an abrupt pause in our call. Just as quickly as the connection vanished, it was restored. This momentary flicker conjured the prospect of talking about the relative tech age that is characterized by

groundbreaking concepts and shilly-shilly around the implementation of NFT, 3D-printed food, and AI.

Watching the era change from having a notepad to jot down his recipes to currently using phones, Chef Andy argues that the accessibility to innovations is now in our palms. "If you don't know the basics of cooking, then it is pointless. In the early years of my cooking career, I learned from chefs of different backgrounds, working with ingredients like cheese, salmon, and Angus beef from Scotland. Tech can't teach you that."

Like an alchemist leveraging the power of efficient cooking, he structured everything himself, getting rare ingredients from Europe, cooking them, and sous videing them later to create dishes that maintained their tenderness and flavor. However, the fine line between innovation and excess is often blurred in this age, as sous vide, he explains, is used to cook eggs for seven days, which is unnecessary.

The explosion of plant-based preferences has altered consumer habits, and chefs have transitioned their menus to keep a stack of dietary options with them. According to Chef Andy, the demand for vegan dishes can be met by playing around with ingredients. Another powerful reminder was shedding a spotlight on managing food waste for a sustainable future. Utilizing all the ingredients in the kitchen and educating customers could be the catalyst for change.



"How can you use left-over watermelon? Instead of throwing its peel away, you can make candied watermelon from its peel, make coulis, fresh juice, or a smoothie, and store it in a blast chiller. But the art of using ingredients to the fullest is fading into the background faster than 40 years ago when we made sure nothing was thrown away," he says with a palpable frustration in his voice that stems from the lack of awareness of overproduction in the kitchen.

Perhaps these areas would remain untapped without grassroots education on food costs, portion sizes, and recycling. Chef Andy recounted an incident that had stayed with him, highlighting shared responsibility through a cultural lens. When he first assumed the executive position, a disconcerting issue surfaced: color-coded bins didn't work to segregate glass, plastic, and aluminum cans in the hotel's banquet. The diverse group of chefs and guests with different language preferences made it difficult to communicate the segregation process. That's when he and a chef from the team came up with the idea of putting a wooden frame where they hung a glass piece and a plastic piece, respectively, to identify each disposing item. Guess what? Surprisingly, this simple innovation was successful.

Occasionally, he reiterates the need to bring in greener initiatives, even during guild activities. During the salon



Try to learn every aspect, but at the same time inspire and direct the team and empower them to do their best

culinaire competitions, the guild worked to reduce the number of static displays and tasting plates for the judges. Left-over meat from the butchery class was stored in stainless steel containers in the cold room and shared among staff and chefs for free.

A part of restaurant waste management responsibility also falls on the customers. Chef Andy offers a promising solution for patrons who clutter their

plates, often with more than they can consume. "Several hotels in the Nordic region have changed the plate size on their buffet, resulting in a 30 percent reduction of food waste. Drawing on these learnings, I devised strategies that have helped us reduce food waste by 90 grams per person during the Ramadan buffet. And the rest of the waste goes into composting."

His unique perspective on learning is what sets him apart, not just from textbooks but from life itself. "Google is good, but you can get knowledge by eating real food and meeting people. Everyone counts."

LIFE, MORE THAN INGREDIENTS

By his second sip of water, he had some profound things to say about his vintage days, humbly addressing himself as the "1963 model" in reference to his birth year.

Had it not been for his father deterring him from being a motor mechanic,



Chef Andy could have easily slipped under the radar of the culinary world. The Australian chef's earliest cooking memories are from when he started washing dishes at his cousin's restaurant at the age of 16.

He then trained as an apprentice in different restaurants for four years and studied at Boxhill TAFE in Melbourne. By then, the itch to amplify his cooking skills had caught up to him, so he took a step toward the UK, where he worked with great cooks from all over Europe. His big break came when he landed in Dubai in 1992. He initially served as a sous chef at the Hilton Dubai Trade Center and subsequently joined Jumeirah after it assumed the hotel's operations in 2000.

"My father used to work as a service station proprietor, and my mother was a kindergarten teacher. As a young boy in Australia, I never considered the odds of taking up multiple leadership positions



Google is good, but you can get knowledge by eating real food and meeting people. Everyone counts

and having a part in the Culinary Olympics. Whereas many budding chefs these days are fast-tracking their resumes by taking risks, jumping from one hotel to another just in four months," he says, painting a picture of the dynamic industry.

Purveying the importance of making a relevant space for young chefs in tandem with modern times, Chef Andy

shares how the Young Chefs Club of the guild acts as a door for many to learn about opportunities in the market.

While achieving what was unthinkable a decade ago, the Young Chefs Club has managed to strike a balance between practical learning through field visits with corporate partners while simultaneously giving them the autonomy to lead by example.

The other avenue for the young chefs to train through the initiative aligns with his belief in culinary competitions. As lucky as the guild can be to have chefs participating and winning medals for the country, it also focuses on letting more young chefs ensure the winning legacy and having Emirati representation on the global stage. "The greatest opportunity is to be involved with the guild and participate. Compete in competitions; be involved with the association. Don't try to run before you can walk, and 'just





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do it.' The industry is still the gateway to the world for young chefs."

COMPASS OF LIFE

His indomitable spirit thrives in his travel experiences. The hands-on exploration has made him the keeper of culinary basics. If a fellow chef is unfamiliar with the basics of their native dish, he is there to step in.

And he leans back with a smile, reminiscing a dialogue between him and a young Indian chef who came for a job trial. "Do you know how to make chicken makkhanwala?" Chef Andy asked the Indian chef, expecting a confident affirmation. The reply was a straight 'No'. Chef Andy continued, "Isn't that among the native dishes?" The Indian chef acknowledged this but explained his mother used to make it. With a playful glint in his eyes, Chef Andy said, "Then let me show you how it's done," emulating the cooking styles.

Above all, the frenzy of wandering and packed schedules is his empathetic wife, his compass for work-life equilibrium. "A couple of years ago, when I used to



take a break, I felt the whole world would collapse. Now, when I take that vacation, I have the confidence that everything will be fine, as I can rely on the team to do their jobs. I am lucky to have supportive people and my wife, Jo, around me."

"Josephine was the hostess with the mostess in the restaurant, and I was a sous chef; we clicked for life," he adds. Chef Andy had a candid exchange with his lecturer during his training days in Australia. His mentor mentioned that there would come a time when they would have to decide between advancing in their careers or prioritizing family. Twenty years later, when his teacher visited Dubai, he knew Andy had a career choice that meant limited time with the family. When his mentor



acknowledged this, Chef Andy replied, "That's because my wife is strong."

His wife's support stands out not just within his life aspects; her influence radiates in her work as the VP of administration for the Emirates Culinary Guild, a role that has given her a unique vantage point into the industry. Her interactions with thousands of chefs around the globe have made her a famous face during competitions. Meanwhile, his two sons grew up in tune with his profession but were not into following in his footsteps. His older son practices as an actor, while the younger one is a graphic designer.

As I ended the call, I couldn't help but notice the impact the conversation had on me. The final verdict underscores his belief that he would not have achieved what he has today if he hadn't met the right people from different walks of life. Luckily for me, this was not our final rendezvous.



Compete in competitions; be involved with the association. Don't try to run before you can walk, and 'just do it.' The industry is still the gateway to the world for young chefs





Chef's secret
ingredient!



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How important is **Customer Engagement?**

We ask **Justin Emmanuel Steinbach**, CEO of IFFCO Out of Home, for his thoughts.

Justin Steinbach is an experienced business leader with a solid foundation in Business Administration and Sociology. He earned his Degrees from Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Canada, graduating in 2001. With a career spanning more than twenty years, Justin specialises

in overseeing global foodservice businesses, having held key roles at multinational companies. He brings his experience to bear on IFFCO's Out of Home range, helping to evolve IFFCO products into innovative solutions that benefit both food service professionals and consumers.

What exactly is customer engagement in the context of the OOH food business?

Customer engagement in the OOH food business refers to the ongoing interactions and connections between any food establishment and its customers, from the humblest street-

food cart to the most esteemed 5-star restaurants around the world. Spectacularly important, it encompasses the strategies and efforts made by businesses to create meaningful relationships, encourage interaction, and build brand loyalty with customers, consumers and patrons. We are a broad-line solution provider for operators within the Out of Home industry, both commercial and non-commercial, and therefore, their consumers are also our consumers. We facilitate the provision of better solutions related to all food, beverage and non-food categories, so from F&B to complex ingredients, from farm to fork, we're a one-stop shop that targets customers at every touch-point to enable them to achieve their business ambitions – which makes good customer engagement so important for us all.

How does customer engagement impact the success of your OOH food business?

Tremendously, it's why we established our Customer Engagement Centre. We have found that it significantly impacts the success of IFFCO's OOH food businesses by increasing repeat customer visits and generating positive word-of-mouth promotion from consumers because engaged customers are more likely to become advocates, leading to increased revenue and sustained growth across the value chain.

What are some effective strategies for genuinely engaging your customers?

For me, it's all about leveraging effective tactics that are proven to work, including personalised marketing, social media engagement, loyalty programs, excellent customer service, special events, and the use of both traditional and emerging technology for convenience and efficacy.

You talk about brand loyalty, how does customer engagement contribute to that elusive concept?

Customer engagement in the food industry is based on so many elements, but most are connected to building



We are a broad-line solution provider for operators within the Out of Home industry, both commercial and non-commercial, and therefore, their consumers are also our consumers

emotional connections, which lead to feelings of trust and comfort, making customers more likely to return to a particular establishment and reducing the likelihood of them patronising competitors.

Tell us more about your Customer Engagement Centre in Dubai.

It's the largest state-of-the-art facility of its kind in the region (2,300 sqm) that enables out-of-home businesses across the region to really get together, collaborate, create, and directly address shifting market requirements. Because our out-of-home segment caters to all restaurants, hotels, hospitals, airports and cafes, the centre is the cornerstone of our industry's growth, fueling our progress and contributing to the UAE's sustainable economy. In the CEC, we have created a unique space where

chefs can team up with their peers, restaurants can design new and exciting menus and hotels can create their next signature dishes. Additionally, nearly all parts of the center are audio-visually enabled for live and virtual demonstrations. By working together, we are providing the means to bring better, tried and tested solutions to the categories offered by IFFCO OOH: frying and cooking, baking, indulgence, beverages, non-food, and, of course, THRYVE™, our innovative plant-based meat. Moreover, at IFFCO Out of Home, we currently are serving and supporting more than 7,550 customers between international and local QSRs across the MENAP region.

As an international group, are there any regional factors that can affect customer engagement strategies?

Certainly, and of course, they are in a constant state of flux, so we must always be on top of changes in cultural and regional preferences, especially as our products are found in so many markets around the world. Numerous factors, including dietary preferences, traditions, religious and ethnic tastes, will influence both menu offerings and our engagement strategies so that they resonate with specific customer demographics. Our CEC is a brainstorming melting pot of new ideas and inventions that strive to satisfy a broad range of consumer and client demands.

How much of your business relies on gathering and using customer feedback to improve engagement?



Quite a lot! These days, as the internet continues its expansion into nearly every aspect of our lives, accurate data analytics on feedback has become an extremely effective tool, not just for us but for the entire world. We all have social media accounts of one type or another where we tweet our thoughts, Instagram our favourite dishes, and post about things that are important to us. Then there are platforms like Trip Advisor and Yelp, giving everyone a chance to rate their experiences - so gathering and utilising customer feedback is pretty much the lifeblood of our business. Understanding our customers' opinions, experiences, and suggestions is an invaluable part of the jigsaw puzzle of how we shape our products, services, and overall engagement strategies.



As in many walks of life, the use of technology in the Out-of-Home food industry has totally transformed customer engagement

So, how do you use this information to improve customer engagement?

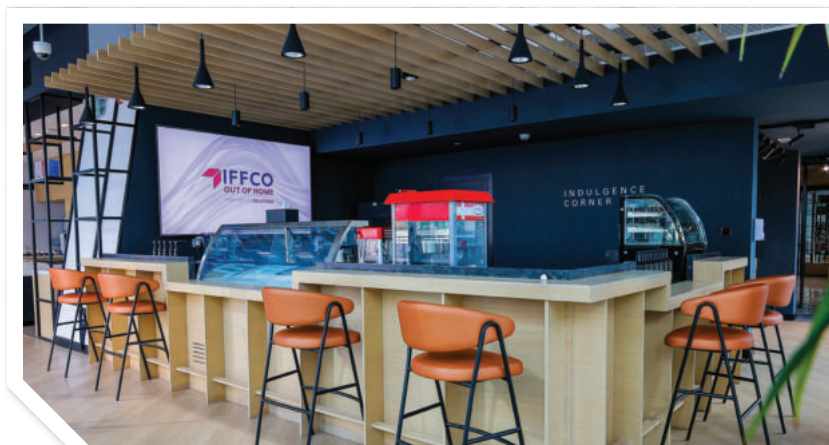
Customer feedback, whatever the source, serves as our compass for continuous improvement. It informs our decision-

making processes and guides us in refining our offerings to better meet customer needs and expectations. It literally is fundamental to our ongoing process of enhancing products and services, resulting in higher customer satisfaction rates and increased brand loyalty as customers recognize that their voices matter.

You mentioned the importance of social media; how does social media enhance customer engagement?

OOH food businesses can collect customer feedback in a number of passive ways, through surveys, online reviews, and other interactions. However, the use of social media platforms to directly engage customers, enables us to share visually appealing content, respond immediately to customer feedback, and run promotions at the drop of a direct message, helping to identify areas for improvement and encouraging the introduction of adaptable strategies while fostering a sense of community through these dynamic one-to-one and one-to-many online interactions. Mobile apps and loyalty programs offer more than just data collection though; we can actually make personalised offers based on customer preferences and generate incentives for repeat visits, which enhances engagement and customer loyalty.

What role does personalisation play in customer engagement for your businesses?



Personalisation empowers us to tailor our offerings and interactions based on individual likes and dislikes, creating a truly dynamic and reciprocal customer experience. We can even use relevant data to fully customize promotions, menus and recommendations, making customers feel heard and valued. This leads to engaged customers being much more likely to recommend OOH food businesses to followers, friends and family, positive word-of-mouth marketing that can significantly impact the reputation and success of any establishment.

We hear a lot about how innovations in technology are having a domino effect on businesses around the world; how does the use of technology in the OOH food industry impact customer engagement?

As in many walks of life, the use of technology in the Out-of-Home food industry has totally transformed customer engagement. At the business end, mobile apps, self-service/ordering kiosks and online ordering platforms have made the dining experience more convenient, while for consumers, personalized recommendations and loyalty programs are enhancing the customer experience. And, of course, technology enables effective feedback

in real-time, giving customers a distinct voice in shaping services and social media and review platforms amplify word-of-mouth marketing. So overall, innovative technology streamlines operations and fosters seamless interactions, leading to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty in the long run.

What role does storytelling and branding play in engaging customers within the OOH food sector?

Effective storytelling through narratives and branding are absolutely paramount in our sector because they enable us to establish an emotional connection with our customers and consumers, making every dining experience memorable. A compelling brand narrative can convey a unique identity, identify core values and reflect culture and heritage. Through storytelling, customers relate to an establishment's journey and vision. Good storytelling draws customers back, not just

for a meal but for a captivating experience, engaging customers on a deeper level.

How can OOH food businesses balance personalised service with customer privacy concerns in their engagement efforts?

Balancing personalized service and customer privacy involves transparent data practices, opt-in mechanisms instead of opt-out, and respecting customer preferences. Clear communication about data usage is essential.

What emerging trends and technologies are likely to shape the future of customer engagement in the OOH food industry?

For our customers, emerging trends and technologies such as AI-driven personalization, contactless ordering and payments, augmented reality menus, and sustainable practices will likely play a significant role in shaping the future of customer engagement, but for IFFCO OOH, it is critical that we stay ahead of the curve, protecting our status at the frontline of adopting new innovations in order to serve our customers better, and having that characteristic cascade down to consumer level. However, as it seems that there is something new almost every week, we also have to be discerning in our evaluation and implementation of any new technology, conducting thorough research at the CEC to ensure minimal interference from short-term distractions while maximising the future potential of technology that will make a difference across our industry.

Thank you, Justin.



THE SKILL WITHIN

A divine-looking dessert can taste a little off-base if not executed with humility and pragmatism, both of which **Pravin Ramakrishnan** possesses in abundance. The Cluster Executive Pastry Chef of InterContinental Hotels at Dubai Festival City discusses his pastry-making approach, the latest trends, favorite flavor combinations, and more

They say perfection is a mirage. But with every dish that has never been disqualified in the crucible of tasting rounds, Chef Pravin Ramakrishnan has been able to get near it. "I was fortunate not to have done a retest in the tasting rounds, and most of the dishes made it onto the menu. Thanks to my mother's blessing and God's grace, every dish I presented was received with a positive response," recalls Chef Pravin.

Amusingly enough, behind his creations lies his name, Pravin, which quietly translates to 'skilled' in Sanskrit. Not just that, perseverance might well be his middle name.

These virtues have dazzled its sterling reputation for the last year and a half as he handles the pastry operations of the InterContinental Hotel at Dubai Festival City and its three different brands. Admittedly, as a cluster executive pastry chef with his hands in too many pies, the burden of expectations for creating a sumptuous dessert plate following a warm main course does give away.

He elucidates that in the face of parallel assignments, creativity is inevitably put to the test. "Whether big or small operations, both fragments involve bringing the best. It is not just about the volume of operations. When curating a



When curating a dessert, it is about calmness, peace, and getting the best out of nothing

dessert, it is about calmness, peace, and getting the best out of nothing."

Extrapolating from his liking for international cuisine and voracious curiosity, he has been mentoring junior chefs on his team. Mindful of the complex task, the Indian chef has divided responsibilities among his team of pastry and bakery chefs, who cover every nook and cranny of the operation. "Structuring the team and at the same time giving them a level of freedom in their respective roles is imperative to make the plan more functional."

Most of his recipes include multiple stages, and when he presents them to the team, their first reaction is creased foreheads, yet it leads to the creation of a dish one has never imagined.

"Read the recipe first, then grasp it in

sections before starting. Execute the components, which I feel will be easy, after completing the mise en place. You can't complete the dish in one go; pastry calls for time and a specific technique," he says, offering a tip to chefs on how not to get perplexed by a lengthy recipe.

His outlook on balancing the complexity of separate components extends seamlessly into his plating, where he keeps an eye out for elements like flavor, color, design, and combining all to keep it classic and satisfy the client's demands. Keeping a tab on the latest trends is another facet he weighs by incorporating healthy, plant-based desserts or spicy desserts, some with edible floral concepts. "I am very particular about matching flavors with each component and playing with colors to make the plate eye-catching."

Trends, social media, his idol, Chef Antonio Bachour, and his mentors, Chef Eric Gouteyron and Roland Eitzinger, are among the few inspirations he looks to when curating his pastries. Along with that, he brainstorms with the team, evaluates visual appeal using drawings, and finally compiles the best concepts for the new dessert—a dessert that not only undergoes the entire process but also earns a spot on the menu.

FLOUR, SUGAR, BUTTER, AND EGGS
His simplest wisdom bears the thought



Structuring the team and at the same time giving them a level of freedom in their respective roles is imperative to make the plan more functional

Pravin Ramakrishnan
Cluster Executive Pastry Chef

that he was born to be a chef. But he did not come from a lineage of chefs and, by his admission, was expected to get into science or live the life of an army man, something that appealed to him as a teenager.

On the flip side, while growing up in Mumbai, India, he loved assisting his mother in the kitchen and dabbling with ingredients from a young age. So when the time came to make a career choice, he knew the kitchen would be his professional ground.

"It's been more than two decades," he says with a heavy voice, recalling studying hotel management in 1998.

Pastry, he elaborates, was never the first pick. It only happened when he was interning at the Leela Kempinski after graduating from the PES Institute of Hotel Management. "A senior chef told me if I can handle four ingredients—flour, sugar, butter, and eggs—then I can be a master in pastry." What transpired was extensive research in the pastry industry that led him to be what he is today.

The training ended with his stints across the finest brands, including Taj Air Caterers, Leela Kempinski, and The Hilton. Later, he joined a small hotel, Ramanashree Comforts, brushing up on his pastry techniques. Shortly after, he secured a job in Dubai at the Four Points Sheraton.

"Then I got a job at the Le Meridien at Dubai International Hotel. I learned much there before joining the Fairmont Raffles Swissotel Hotel group, which was a turning point."



After working at Fairmont Dubai for four years, he transferred to Raffles Dubai, where he joined the pre-opening team as a chef de partie and was eventually promoted to Pastry Sous Chef. Subsequently, he applied for an internal position as an assistant pastry chef at the Fairmont Palm amidst tough competition from some 200 applicants. The hotel, with over 380 guest rooms and suites and 3,000 square meters of conference and meeting space, sought the ideal candidate in Chef Pravin. During his time with the group, Chef Pravin participated in various competitions and won medals, including a major feat in the Guinness Book of World Records and a Nestle Book of Best Dessert Recipes. He also learned about food service and people management at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration US.

Nearly ten years later, he decided to depart the Fairmont Raffles



A senior chef told me if I can handle four ingredients—flour, sugar, butter, and eggs—then I can be a master in pastry

organization and join Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts. Throughout his two years as an Executive Pastry Chef, he restructured the pastry team by putting innovative ideas into practice. Among the highlights of his stint was his participation in the 2017 Charlie Chocolate Factory Project and his contribution to the initiation of chocolate training for the Movenpick group.

When Chef Pravin moved to the Swissotel Al Ghurair, he was tasked to handle the pre-opening operations. During his stint, he also launched the unique floating balloon dessert presentation and the zero food waste program and created a gigantic gingerbread house display in the hotel lobby. "The gingerbread was magnificently crafted from styrofoam, with the finest details that captured the aroma and texture of the real bread, which not only managed to cut the cost but also reduced the amount of food waste generated during the holiday season."

By the end of 2020, his life took another turn, routing him to Cove Rotana, Ras Al-Khaimah. "Compared to what I had previously worked on in Dubai, it was a completely different game for me. It was a resort property where I restructured the team and developed the menu as per theme nights and



We even source local ingredients into our menus, like the farm-to-table concept, reducing carbon footprints

Eastern European markets. I returned to Dubai a year later to work for the Intercontinental Hotel Festival City as Cluster Executive Pastry Chef.

MAN OF MAGIC

One of the particular flavor combinations he proclaims the darling of his heart is the rare pink guava flavor with raspberry. The flavor struck his palette during his early days in Dubai, stirring him to consider complementing flavors.

It is yet another indication that Chef Pravin possesses a sharp acumen for experimentation. Traveling gave him the steel to incorporate cultural influences. On his part, he borrowed some concepts from his Indian heritage that he harmoniously integrated into Western cuisine.

"I have done a few fusions, bringing bits and pieces of my culture. For instance,

identifying parallels between carrot cake and Indian carrot halwa to create a dish where flavors blend," he adds.

Beyond blending flavors, he advocates using green strategies in the workplace. Besides his current workplace doing its part to be plastic-free, he has actively adopted waste management strategies. "We even source local ingredients into our menus, like the farm-to-table concept, reducing carbon footprints."

So, what is it like to be a chef in 2023? You have to be a man of magic when it comes to pastry, he replies, pausing after surmounting the question. Apart from being quick on the table in a fast world, he recommends being aware of trends.

Relentless effort to elevate his techniques and tailor-made approach translated well into his desserts. Bottom line: The industry was not oblivious to his efforts, which is why he won multiple accolades and was shortlisted twice as Best Pastry Chef in the Caterer Awards.

Though a known face in the international pastry scene, he is an ordinary family guy at home, receiving support from his loving wife, Simitha, and two children: an eight-year-old daughter, Krithya, and a ten-year-old son, Viann.

Indeed a sweet story of skill, just like his name!

TAHITIAN GREEK
YOGHURT PINK
GUAVA PANNA
COTTA

TAHITIAN PINK GUAVA PANNA COTTA	
35% Arla Pro High Stability Cream	300g
Milk	100g
Greek Yoghurt	50ml
Sugar	150g
Gelatine	4g

Method

- ◆ Boil cream, milk, and sugar and set it

- aside from the flame.
- ◆ After adding the Greek yogurt and gelatine, the mixture should be left in the mold to set.

PINK GUAVA JELLY

Pink Guava Puree	450g
Sugar	150g
Gelatine	3.5g

Method

- ◆ Bring the pink guava puree to a boil. Add sugar, and gelatine and set it in the freezer.

RASPBERRY PECTIN

Raspberries IQF	150g
Sugar	100g
Pectin	2.5g

Method

- ◆ Bring the raspberry puree to a boil. Mix pectin and sugar and set it in the freezer.

RASPBERRY GEL

Raspberry	100g
Sugar	100g
Agar Agar	20g



Method

- ◆ Boil raspberry puree and sugar together. Add agar agar. Keep it to set and blend it until the jelly texture.

LEMON OLIVE OIL SPONGE

Flour	378g
Baking Soda	4.3g
Baking Powder	4g
Salt	2.5g
Eggs	6
Olive Oil	308g
Sugar	378g
Yoghurt	340g
Lemon Zest	4.1

Method

- ◆ Mix all the dry ingredients and fold them into the batter mix of eggs, sugar, yoghurt, and lemon zest.
- ◆ Bake it at 170°C for around 20–25 minutes.

SUGAR DOME

Sugar	100g
Glucose	50g
Water	50ml

Method

- ◆ Bring water, sugar, and glucose to a boil at 150°C and pour it on double-coated cling film with an SS cutter base, releasing pressure to have it blown into a dome.

MERINGUE SHARDS

Egg White	50 ml
Water	20 ml
Sugar	100g

Method

- ◆ Bring water and sugar to a soft boil at 115 °C. Add a pinch of pink color.
- ◆ Sheet the pink meringue on the tray and keep it in the dehydrator at 70 °C until dry.

CHOCOLATE CRUMBLE

Flour	100g
Cocoa Powder	500g
Lurpak Butter	100g
Sugar	50gm

Method

- ◆ Mix them all by hand. Bake at 170°C.

QUOTE MARSHAL

Chef **Sumeda Yapa** orchestrates culinary competitions with a stealth strategy, steering the event as a Marshal

The Emirates Salon Culinaire, a culinary competition of global participants, never fails to amaze its attendees, brings young chefs to the forefront, builds a platform to learn from experienced chefs, and fosters the craft of gastronomy.

Who do you think organizes every kitchen counter and event logistics? Look no further than the force of relentless Marshals. Among these dedicated individuals, one who stands out for his commitment to countless hours spent behind the scenes is Chef Sumeda Yapa.

The Sri Lankan native who started his career in the f&b industry in 1993 exhibits a specialty not just in Italian cuisine; he also spun plates between pastry and bakery. He has worked across several hotels in Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Sharjah.

For the last three years, he has been in Dubai, helping the role of production lead at Barakat Quality Plus. "I want to thank Chef Neil Ranasinghe for



Just as the sous chef handles the operations at the restaurant, I handle hot and cold kitchen production, maintaining budget and hygiene standards



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making me acquainted with the opportunity at Barakat."

When he initially arrived from Sri Lanka, he had already attained the rank of executive chef. Later, while working as a private chef for a palace in Sharjah, he earned the status of second-in-command. As the opportunity at Barakat presented itself, he willingly embraced it, believing that the value of new experiences outweighed any job title. As a production lead in Barakat, he trains the staff based on safety standards. "Just as the sous chef handles the operations at the restaurant, I handle hot and cold kitchen production, maintaining budget and hygiene standards."



I chose to be a marshal because I returned to Dubai after years and wanted to do everything from the beginning

As a junior guild member in 2004 and a senior member in 2021, Chef Sumedha is not unfamiliar with the disappointments and triumphs of competitions. But he doesn't stop at

being a member; he plays a crucial role in the competition, ensuring that everything runs seamlessly and every participant is given a fair chance to showcase their creativity.

"I chose to be a marshal because I returned to Dubai after years and wanted to do everything from the beginning. Additionally, I like to organize and help people and meet established chefs and old friends," he replies when asked the reason behind choosing the task that acts as one of the backbones for the event.

As a marshal, Chef Sumedha excels in various roles. By observing senior marshals, he has mastered calm



communication with participants and judges during competitions. He is responsible for maintaining the temperature of prepared food and handling it as needed for judges.

"I know the value of missed opportunities in competitions. From my past 27 years of experience in five-star hotels, including Crown Plaza and The Diplomat Radisson SAS Hotel Residence and Spa in Bahrain, and my current workplace at Barakat, I have been helping young chefs of different nationalities and passing on my knowledge. I time-manage and serve the judges and help everybody based on their quality and efforts."

In his advice to new marshals, he emphasizes being proactive, having keen attention when on the ground, collaborating, and, most importantly, having a passion to be present for those three days.

"A new marshal should give their all on those three days, as well as the days prior when we prepare and the days after clearance. Because it's an actual scenario and not simply a social event," he says, guiding them to assist seniors and friends and paying heed to the seniors' directions because a lot is dependent on them.

He always awaits the third day of the competition, where he gets to interact with different people. Even so, for five minutes, he explains, he is on board to guide them.

In recent years, Chef Sumeda has noted a change in competition patterns. The earlier age emphasized a stern approach, whereas it is more motivational now-a-days. Having done several competitions in the Maldives, created different kinds of pasta with the team called Sardinia Tower, Chef Sumeda has realized young chefs today are not only talented but also have a sense of how judges might perceive their dishes.

"Formerly, it was difficult, and today,



if I can figure out what beverage they like to drink the first time, then I can provide them with their drink of choice on subsequent occasions, without them having to mention it

judges are more motivated to inspire and award medals as chefs find new sources of inspiration to prepare for the competition. The medals encourage the chefs to do better."

Besides being a Marshal, he nurtures a goal - to grow as a judge in culinary competitions. His rapport with the judges is so impeccable that he knows their preferences to the finest detail—even their preferred drinks during competitions. He continues, "It's just a little thing, but if I can figure out what beverage they like to drink the first time, then I can provide them with their drink of choice on subsequent occasions, without them having to

mention it," and he believes this goes a long way in ensuring a positive environment during competitions.

When unplanned emergencies arise, competition does not fall behind. Chef Sumeda and his colleagues are accustomed to efficiently managing emergency scenarios like a sudden fire or a breakdown of appliances.

When asked what the strangest thing he has ever done as a Marshal at the competition, he replies that he samples every dish after the judges have devoured it. "I then follow the judges to find out to whom the gold medal is truly being awarded."

He nurtures his elder son's passion for cooking within his own family, witnessing the same fiery determination found in young chefs. "Young chefs are incredibly fast chaps," he shares with amusement in his words.

"However, they can also be demanding. They need to channel their behavior and knowledge positively. Creating a good presentation and winning by training under the guidance of senior chefs is good, but you would not learn anything else after that. Learn the basics, know the features of ingredients, and how they are made from scratch."

The Entrepreneurial Road From Dreams to Reality

Chef **Helen Morris** highlights the restaurant entrepreneurial route through the accounts of three flourishing Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management alumni

Starting a restaurant business has always been an alluring proposition for many, especially those passionate about food and hospitality. In the previous issue, I discussed the growth of entrepreneurs among hospitality students.

Alumni with experience in the restaurant industry tend to have a more grounded perspective. Their advice on the entrepreneurial path generally leans towards gaining hands-on experience before committing. This could mean working in various roles in a restaurant, further education in food and beverage operations, or even partnering with someone experienced in the sector. The real-world challenges of running a restaurant are often best understood when experienced firsthand.

This issue will highlight three university alumni from the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management (EAHM) who have already gone through the rigors of higher education and embarked on their restaurant entrepreneurial journey within Dubai, exploring their perceptions and insights based on their experiences and aspirations for the future. So, what do the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management alumni have to say about their entrepreneurial journey?

Aaqib Gaya,

Managing Director, Aqaya

Aaqib grew up with a father who had a background in food and beverage operations and is still, to this day, his biggest inspiration. His love of cooking



Knowledge is power, and the more you know, the more you realize you don't know

and the science behind the foods ignited his passion and vision to open his restaurant. Today, it is the reality.

As with all our alumni, Aaqib studied international hospitality management at EAHM. He believes that education is vital in his entrepreneurial journey, and while you may not be able to 'fly right away', you must know how to walk.



Aaqib Gaya

Education can provide a foundation that helps set you on the right path, and the academy provides a robust foundation in culinary and kitchen management. He says, "Knowledge is power, and the more you know, the more you realize you don't know".

In contrast, food and beverage service provided the fundamentals of restaurant operations management. However, he realized this was just the basics and, a year later, embarked on a specialized three-month course at EAHM in restaurant concept creation. This involved the creativity and development of a concept through execution, working on all aspects of opening a restaurant, including all associated resource requirements, generating customers, and being commercially viable. This provided a realistic, hands-on experience of opening and operating a restaurant. From this, his future path was born.

Nonetheless, the journey was not easy. Like every entrepreneur, he faced numerous challenges. The most daunting tasks included defining a clear vision for the brand, raising capital, hiring the right team, ensuring the food and beverage offerings resonated with customers, and maintaining standards consistently, which proved difficult. Despite the obstacles, he insists he wouldn't change anything. Every challenge and setback contributed to where he is today, and he firmly believes his restaurant journey was destined. Nothing compares to the exhilarating moment when all the struggles



culminate in something tangible. The satisfaction is unparalleled as the dream transitions from mere thoughts to reality. It is a testament to hard work, resilience, and belief in one's vision.

As for the future, Aaqib is thrilled to announce that Aqaya is set to broaden its horizons with a new branch at City Walk. We wish him well in his endeavors.

Madina Kharsieva,

Manager, Emir Turkish Restaurant

A journey starting from a letter in 2014 and being opened in 2020 to "Dear Future Me, I hope I have a restaurant or bakery by now, InshaAllah. Regards, Me".

Madina's heart found its calling in 2014, nestled in the classrooms of EAHM. She found a newfound passion for the hospitality industry, and the dream of owning a restaurant took root, but was it too ambitious of a dream? Nevertheless, some of EAHM's courses laid the foundation for her restaurant journey. Madina gained essential tools to navigate the entrepreneurial journey through classes in F&B management, restaurant service, culinary, human resources, housekeeping, and accounting. She believes the value of a formal education in hospitality



Madina Kharsieva

is invaluable. Beyond the theoretical knowledge, it facilitates personal growth, confidence-building, and networking with like-minded peers.

While EAHM inspired the dream, her father and uncle brought the vision to life with their unwavering confidence in her ability to succeed. The excitement of a soft opening in March 2020 soon turned to heartache when the restaurant was abruptly halted by a global pandemic, which

was also financially damaging. But resilience is built on adversity. As life finally got back to a sense of routine, the restaurant continued to thrive, but not without further challenges. Madina also found recruiting the right team was problematic; the location in Dubai Investment Park proved challenging for the brand and had completion setbacks. Asked if she would change anything, she says the importance and implementation of a thorough business plan, a project timeline, and strict budgets would be her priorities for future growth. Still, the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to practice and innovate is beyond rewarding.

As for future plans, Madina already has a vision for Emir Turkish Restaurant to open in another location and eventually become a global brand. On a personal level, she sees herself brewing dreams in her very own artisan coffee shop, and I look forward to sharing a chat with Madina over a coffee.

Emelie Rihani,

Co-Founder, Three by Eva

It is a family affair for the young entrepreneur. Emelie's passion came from her family. They have always shared a deep passion for food and cooking as

a family and believe that home-cooked dishes express love and are a unique way to unite family members around the table. This sentiment was passed down through their grandmother's expertise in the kitchen.

The idea of opening a restaurant and uniting people from diverse backgrounds with wholesome, traditional recipes was always on the agenda. It started in the cozy confines of a familial kitchen, where meals became an expression of love. The co-founder, Emelie, her sister Lilian, and their mom, Eva, always cherished the notion that recipes were more than mere instructions—they were heirlooms passed down with stories and emotions. As guests clamored for their recipes at social gatherings, the idea of a restaurant began to develop. And when Eva showcased their traditional dishes on TV, the calls for an authentic dining experience grew louder. Hence, "Three" emerged, not just as a restaurant but as a haven where people could feel the warmth of a home.

Emelie believes completing her bachelor's degree in international hospitality management from EAHM has significantly enriched her entrepreneurial journey. Several courses from her academic experience have been instrumental in shaping her daily business operations, such as food service, culinary arts, food photography, food and beverage management, culture, and leadership. These courses equipped Emelie with fundamental skills such as kitchen and restaurant operations and management, training, the importance of visual marketing and promotion, exceptional customer skills, navigating diversity amongst staff and customers in a globalized world, and ethical leadership qualities to enhance team and business performance.

She feels EAHM has been pivotal in furnishing her with the knowledge and skills required for entrepreneurial endeavors, significantly impacting how she manages the daily business.



Emelie Rihani

Furthermore, education provides opportunities for networking, exposure to industry trends, and access to mentors, and fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

As with the former alumni, the entrepreneurship journey was challenging, primarily because it is people-first, quality-focused, and operations-heavy. In the initial few months, training the restaurant staff from different cultures and backgrounds in the intricacies of Jordanian cuisine was a significant challenge. Therefore, an in-house program focusing on culinary arts and customer service was implemented.

Maintaining food and service control and consistency was an ongoing challenge. Finding a harmonious balance between personal and professional relationships was a hurdle. Staying focused on the restaurant's goal and working together to leverage their unique strengths helped them navigate through these challenges. Emelie says Eva is the 'business guru' and a people person. Lilian has an artistic vision to build the brand. Her attention to detail ensures repeat guest visits and delight. And Emelie is the crucial decision-maker behind the carefully crafted modern Middle Eastern menu.

Like Aaqib, Emelie says she would not change anything on this journey. It allows your business to grow organically and provides valuable lessons, and triumphs that are deeply rewarding.

Sharing this journey with family has created a bond and a deep connection beyond words. The passion, creativity, and hard work into every aspect of the restaurant, from designing the menu to creating a welcoming ambiance. It is not just about serving delicious food, but about creating a space where people feel part of our extended family—seeing the dream come to life and the joy it brings to customers' faces is truly priceless. The restaurant has become a place where memories are made, and it is a testament to the strength of this family and its restaurant journey.

There are big plans for Three by Eva. The future is most certainly bright, with an upcoming cooking school to share its rich Jordanian heritage and an exclusive supper club that promises a unique gastronomical experience. I have no doubt it will be a success.

While passion for food and service is undeniably crucial, alumni stress the importance of merging this passion with practicality. It means keeping a keen eye on profit margins, ensuring that pricing is competitive yet profitable, and regularly reviewing business strategies. Starting a restaurant is not just about the love of food; it also requires passion, strategy, resilience, and adaptability. While the challenges are manifold, the rewards, both in terms of financial success and personal fulfillment, can be immense.

EAHM's alumni believe Dubai and the UAE can empower young entrepreneurs by streamlining business procedures, presenting financial incentives, launching sector-specific incubators, advocating partnerships, championing innovation at events, and nurturing a culture of resilience and risk-taking. This holistic strategy can foster an environment conducive to entrepreneurial success and young entrepreneurs to shine.

I am certainly proud of these young shining stars!

INTERNATIONAL CHEFS DAY

A peek into the evolving role of chefs

While enticing dishes frequently receive attention in our fast-paced world, the people who truly transform meals into priceless memories are often out of the spotlight. The celebration of International Chefs Day, on September 20th, calls for renewed efforts to shine a well-deserved emphasis on the dedicated chefs who go beyond crafting unique culinary creations and pioneer a whole new realm of palates and flavors. This year, we've had the golden ticket of speaking with experienced chefs and delving into their stories, gaining insight into what it means to be a chef in 2023.

Andy Cuthbert

Continental Director of Africa Middle East at the World Association of Chefs Societies (Worldchefs), Chairman and President of the Emirates Culinary Guild, and General Manager at the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel and Madinat Jumeirah Conference & Events, Jumeirah Hospitality.

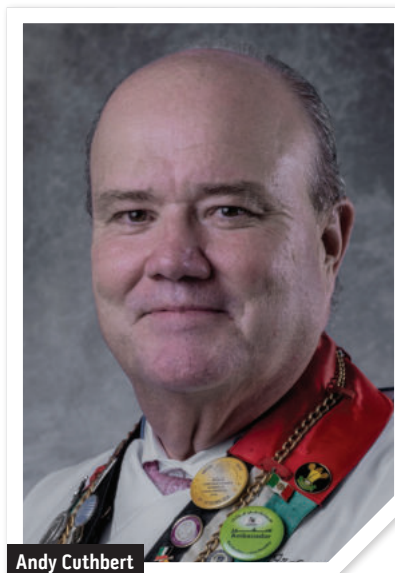
Every year, on International Chefs Day, we collaborate with Worldchefs and Nestle to involve children in cooking and teach them healthier eating habits. It is a wonderful initiative that I highly recommend young chefs to participate in.

Simon Martin

Executive Chef MENAT at Kerry Taste & Nutrition

What is it like to be a chef in 2023?

In the past 41 years or so that I've been in kitchens, I've seen an evolution from people eating to live to now when people live to eat. The international



Andy Cuthbert

food culture is now seen as fashionable, instagram-mable, and glamorous. As a chef in 2023, no matter what level you are at, you will be an essential part of the larger story we aim to deliver to our customers. Our ultimate goal is to nourish, delight, and engage our customers on all culinary levels. Being a chef also means being part of a great team, a global family of professionals in whites who take pride in whatever they achieve and daily delivery to the best of their abilities.

What is your favorite thing about your job?

The favorite part of my job is witnessing the end customers' satisfaction and delight when they experience some of the products that I have been involved in developing as part of a team. Triggering the emotional journeys that will evoke context and memory plays a powerful



Simon Martin



One important thing to remember, especially when starting, is never to hesitate to ask questions, as every day is a learning day for all of us, and humility is our friend

role in all the truly greatest meals in their lives whether a simple burger or a complex plant-based solution.

Share a piece of advice for a budding chef.

**Pravin Ramakrishnan**

One important thing to remember, especially when starting, is never to hesitate to ask questions, as every day is a learning day for all of us, and humility is our friend.

Pravin Ramakrishnan

Cluster Executive Pastry Chef at IHG Dubai Festival City

A piece of advice for young chefs?

The younger generation often rushes through the necessary steps to reach their spots in life. But it all comes down to being like wine: the more you give it room to breathe and age while believing in the process, the better it gets.

Carl Shi

Lecturer in Tourism and Hospitality Management at a Culinary College in Sydney, Australia

What is it like to be a chef in 2023?

There is an increase in health and wellness focus as people become more conscious of what they eat and seek better and healthier food. As a chef, it gives you an excellent opportunity to create more nutritious and healthy dishes and menus that cater to various dietary requirements. A healthy diet has become the trend, and embracing this can attract a broader customer base.

Another aspect is that the advancements in technology have revolutionized the way chefs operate in the kitchen. From smart appliances to new culinary methods, automation to AI-involved operations, such changes not only enhance the working efficiency and precision in the kitchen but also provide a platform for the chef to connect directly with customers and gather essential feedback from the guests.

Industry sustainability is another major opportunity for the chef in 2023. With growing environmental concerns, consumers are demanding eco-friendly practices in the food industry. Chefs have the chance to make a positive impact by sourcing locally, reducing food waste, and implementing sustainable practices in their kitchens.

What are the challenges for chefs in 2023?

Along with opportunities come challenges. One such challenge is the increasing competition within the culinary industry. With the rise of social media and food influencers, aspiring chefs can gain recognition and build a following without traditional culinary training. To stand out, chefs must constantly innovate, create unique dining experiences, and deliver

**Carl Shi****Helen Morris**

exceptional quality in their dishes. Furthermore, with globalization and multicultural societies, customers have diverse tastes and preferences. Chefs need to be knowledgeable about different cuisines, techniques, and ingredients to cater to a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

What is your favorite thing about your job?

I can learn new things and get more information from every fellow I meet, not just from the cooking itself but also from other people's personal experiences and meeting other beautiful souls. Also, I always enjoy seeing happy customers and having positive feedback (not always positive!). I keep improving from the comments. Lastly, learn continually and stay updated on culinary trends. I



A healthy diet has become the trend, and embracing this can attract a broader customer base

always believe that the "more you learn, the more you earn!"

Your advice to chefs:

First, never stop learning! The culinary industry is constantly changing and evolving, so keep expanding your knowledge and stay updated on the latest trends and techniques in the industry. Reading cookery books, joining industry associations, attending workshops, and talking to your suppliers are all excellent options.

Second, follow the "10000 hours theory" and build strong cooking foundational skills. Master knife skills, seasonings, and different cooking methods.

Finally, never say never! There are many "Nevers". Never switch off the communication channel with your team. Never try to be an "alone" hero in a teamwork environment. Never give up in the face of setbacks or long hours and so on!"

Helen Morris

*Executive Chef / Senior Lecturer
The Emirates Academy of Hospitality
Management*

What is it like to be a chef in 2023?

I think being a chef today is more complex than ever. We can no longer solely focus on the food we curate but must consider many other factors in our daily operations. Chefs need to embrace and adapt to technology, including AI, for example, inventory management and using AI or other technologies to help with menu planning, predicting food trends or managing food waste.

As a chef, we need to incorporate sustainability and ethical sourcing when planning menus and focus more on sourcing local, organic, and sustainable ingredients, reducing food waste, or using "nose-to-tail" or "root-to-stem," which further assists CSR goals for the business. As chefs, we want to do more, and this is no longer a trend. It should be a daily occurrence amongst the kitchen team.



Quinten Lauder

Special dietary requirements are at the forefront of menu planning, and care must go into understanding allergens and adapting to specific needs. Train the kitchen team on ingredients and 'hidden' ingredients. This is also associated with continuing education and upskilling, as well as investing more time in learning new techniques, experimenting with ingredients, or even taking courses to understand the business side of the restaurant industry.

As senior chefs, we must educate ourselves on our staff's mental health and well-being and what we can do to support our teams. The pressures of the kitchen, combined with the challenges of the pandemic, brought more attention to the mental health of chefs and kitchen staff. There could be a more significant push in 2023 for better work-life balance, resources, and support for chefs.

All chefs would agree meeting business goals and the financial aspects are even more challenging due to ingredient costs, labor costs, and other economic pressures. As I said, we can no longer focus purely on the menu item creation. We have to learn to be managers from early in our careers."

What is your favorite thing about your job?

Being a chef is a passion. We love the job we do. We love the camaraderie of not just the kitchen but the F&B industry as a whole. We are a supportive network. The buzz of service is second to none once the adrenaline starts. There are many favorite aspects of the job: creativity, no day is the same, and the accomplishment of a job well done (recognition).

Advice for budding chefs:

Embrace everything that comes your way. Develop yourself to be future-ready and be inquisitive—where does that ingredient come from, how much is it, and why use that and not this? And finally, make connections. The F&B industry is truly unique, and you should be proud that you are part of this, believe it or not, small network!

Quinten Lauder

Cluster Executive Chef, The First Group

What is it like to be a chef in 2023?

It's an exciting time to be a chef, as the industry is as advanced as ever, with lots of talent and passion growing in chefs and producers alike. The industry is super competitive, which brings out the best in everyone seeking success.

What is your favorite thing about the job?

Making people happy—the fundamentals of our industry are that creating enjoyment for customers, friends, and peers is the most satisfying part of what I do. Tasty food brings people together and becomes a fond memory to smile upon.

Share a piece of advice for budding chefs.

Every time you make something as a chef, try to improve it the next time. In terms of efficiency, flavor/taste, seasoning, presentation, and execution.

The next time you try a new dish, take a moment to discover the behind-the-scenes culinary experts who strive to bring culinary rhythm to every bite.



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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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Remarks:

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

Fees:

Young Member: Junior members will receive a certificate.

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

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

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

Corporate Member Dhs. 20,000 per year

A portrait of Dennis Koll, a man with a beard and short brown hair, wearing a black chef's jacket. He has his arms crossed and a tattoo on his left forearm. The background is dark and textured, with some blurred golden vessels in the foreground.

KOLL'S CULINARY SCROLL

Dennis Koll, the Executive Chef at Reef & Beef, brings over a decade of industry experience, showcasing his extensive knowledge and a distinct perspective for the industry. One cannot miss his insight on how to prepare for successful restaurant concepts in Dubai

If you are on a hunt to know the strategy behind dealing with tough tasks in the executive chef role, you'll likely find it from Chef Dennis Koll without expending too much effort. Beginning his career in traditional French cuisine, Chef Dennis learned from a Michelin-starred chef. He has acquired expertise in nouvelle cuisine throughout his career. In 2014, he moved to Dubai and worked at various properties within the Jumeirah Group. The next role came as an Executive Chef at the award-winning Play Restaurant and Lounge.

At the upscale restaurant Reef & Beef, he helms as the Executive Chef, exemplifying that the culinary industry is a collaborative endeavour. The German chef is working to elevate the essence of the establishment, fitting for a fast-paced and lively city.

Coming from a background immersed in the hospitality industry, he was raised by his mother, a skilled head chef, who always taught him relevant lessons during challenging moments. He carries with him these nuggets of wisdom, serving as the perfect melody to accompany aspiring chefs on their culinary journey.

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

I grew up in a hospitality-driven environment as my mother is a chef. It instilled in me being very hands-on in cooking from a very early age. After doing my usual mischief, like riding mountain bikes or snowboarding down steep slopes, I found myself assisting her with preparing the family dinner. Initially, it was mostly peeling potatoes and washing the dishes, but I got more exciting tasks over the years.

What inspired you to become a chef? Did you study or intern for it?

I always liked to be around the chefs in the kitchen. While other kids my age went on camping trips during my school holidays, I began enrolling in internships.



The first five to ten years of this beautiful profession are a tough and rocky road, but if it had been easy, everyone could have done it

I had a clear vision of becoming a professional chef. After graduating high school, I completed my three-year apprenticeship at a culinary university.

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

After I held my culinary diploma, which entitles you to be a "commis," the journey started. In my younger years, I focused on working only in Michelin-starred restaurants to learn from the best and eventually make it there. It was

a physically and emotionally challenging path with many ups and downs, but it was indeed a journey to remember.

Tell us about your journey to becoming an executive chef.

It has been a long road of failure and success to reach this level and gain the trust and confidence to be recognized and considered for such a big responsibility.

What are the challenges of being an executive chef?

I would say the main challenge for an executive chef is to build an undeniably understanding team that follows your culinary vision and delivers on high expectations every day without failure. It takes a lot of self-discipline and passion to reflect this motivation and drive on your team and to develop the individuals for them to excel and grow into bigger positions.

Tell us about your current property and what your current role entails.

We are a high-class steak house with a

strong focus on seafood. The concept started nearly two decades ago in Germany as an upscale steakhouse, and now we hold four international venues. In my current role, it is my task to elevate the existing DNA of our venues from Germany and bring them to a competitive and pathbreaking level in such a high-paced and vibrant city as Dubai and many more to come.

What is the importance of a good team behind a restaurant chain's success?

The team's importance is beyond measure. The culinary world is about team sport, and you, as an individual, are only as good as your team. A strong and well-communicated team is essential for preserving the status quo and ensuring

company standards are followed across multiple venues in different locations.

Over the years in the F&B industry, what are your thoughts on the unique concepts behind a restaurant's success in Dubai?

Having a unique selling point is a key contributor to the success of a restaurant. That said, being innovative and bold in taking paths that your competition or others have yet to explore is crucial. Even if it takes some time to rise to its glory, you should keep faith if you have a vision.

What is your advice for young chefs?

The first five to ten years of this beautiful profession are a tough and

rocky road, but if it had been easy, everyone could have done it.

Tell us about your family.

I was fortunate to have grown up in a family where food and the tradition of dining together held strong meaning. My mother, who was a head chef, spoiled me with delicious, high-quality meals on a daily basis when I was young. When I decided to become a professional chef and get my diploma, my mother laughed and said, "Don't make the same mistake I did many years ago. It is a demanding environment to be in. I must admit, even to this day, I ask for her advice in many situations, ranging from recipes to general advice on how to resolve certain situations, and she always has the right answer and an open ear for me.

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Sethu Menon, SVP Operations, Dubai World Trade Centre, receiving the Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Andy Cuthbert and Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG.

Large-scale and bespoke events specialists, Hospitality by DWTC has a 40-year track record of success that mirrors Dubai's rise to prominence as a world-leading global events hub. The preferred catering service for private, corporate, government and royal clients, our portfolio of premium hospitality services has grown in tandem with the city's diverse events calendar.

Custom catering solutions are the Hospitality by DWTC hallmark, from leadership summits at Dubai International Convention Centre and Dubai Exhibition Centre; global trade shows like Dubai Airshow; and international sporting tournaments, including the Formula 1 Etihad Airways Grand Prix; to VVIP private dinners; and more. The highly skilled team is equipped to cater for up to 20,000 people per day at multiple events in multiple onsite and offsite locations across the UAE.

Hospitality

BY DUBAI WORLD TRADE CENTRE

At the heart of our operation is a 3,650 square-metre state-of-the-art production kitchen featuring international grade smart solutions and cutting-edge technologies. Adhering to the highest local and global standards, the kitchen holds a Grade A rating from Dubai Municipality and full Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and ISO 22000 certification.

Culinary creativity is the backbone of our business and our 148-strong team of award-winning chefs represents a world map of nationalities, knowledge and gastronomic inspiration. We are passionate about food and service, from each individual ingredient to the way we present our dishes.

Over the years, our talented team of chefs and support personnel has enjoyed consistent recognition for our innovative quality-driven culinary repertoire and signature service. Since 2016 alone, Hospitality by DWTC has tallied 188 accolades including a record 17 medal win (including eight gold) at the 2023 Emirates Salon Culinaire 2023 competition as well as awards for Best Pastry Chef of the UAE, Best Four-Plated Dessert and Best Individual Establishment in the UAE.

Beyond world-class catering, Hospitality by DWTC works hand-in-hand with a high-profile community of clients and supports numerous internationally recognised events occasions, delivering turnkey event planning and management services that span menu conceptualisation, event décor, stage design, audiovisual and lighting effects and live entertainment.



Franck Pontais (second right), Country Manager Koppert Cress with ECG Past President Chef Uwe Micheel and ECG President Andy Cuthbert at the Expo Culinaire 2023.

Koppert Cress is on a never-ending quest to find natural, innovative ingredients that chefs can use to intensify the taste, scent or presentation of their dishes. A huge international network of biologists, plant experts and gastronomists support a steady stream of products, that meet the ever higher culinary demands of restaurants around the world.

Cress are freshly germinated seedlings from 100% natural, aromatic plants. These plants offer a freshness and intensity in taste and scent, which are only present in young plants. The flavours, gathered from all the corners of the earth, give an exotic touch to your dishes and intensify your guests' experience.

You will be amazed by the innovative possibilities offered by the 27 cresses and 32 specialties and you will be pleased by the response of your guests

Koppert Cress products are fun and ready to use. Just cut off the cress and since



KOPPERT CRESS
Architecture Aromatique

they are living plants, they stay fresh much longer. Make sure they are stored at the right temperature and do not dry out.

The Koppert Cress' approach is unique in horticulture. Owner Rob Baan focussed on the end users and presented his products to the finest chefs in Europe. Creative and innovative as most are, they immediately felt the connection and started to use the cress.

Today, the end user decides what products are on offer. Every year hundreds of professionals visit the company's Cressperience and learn about the collection's possibilities. Cooking on the world famous Molteni IV

is an exclusive incentive, which helps get the best in the field to come to Monster.

Food safety and consistent quality are top priority at Koppert Cress. At this very moment one of the most sophisticated greenhouses is being build. The semi-closed glasshouse creates the optimal environment for the cress to grow. Solar panels provide the electricity required by the 'state of the art' LED lights. These in turn, provide the exact amount of light for optimal growth. Excess heat is harvested and stored 200 m deep, so it can be used in winter. Cold water is used in summer to cool the greenhouse.

To ensure the cleanest starting materials, the company produces the seeds itself or under supervision. Seeds are soaked and washed before being sown on cellulose, the cleanest medium possible. Tap water is used to water the plants preventing any chance of bad influences. Biological crop control guarantees the absence of pesticides or other residue.



Pierre Nhemeh , CEO and owner of the Nina Pita company, Shan Oved, VP of Export and International Marketing, receiving the Guild Membership Certificate from ECG President Andy Cuthbert and Chef Harald Oberender VP of Corporate ECG.

The **Nina Pita** story starts with Nasri Nehmeh, who founded the bakery in 1936. From the start, our mission has been to produce the best artisanal pita in the world. According to a family recipe, our bread is made from entirely natural ingredients. Today, people all around the world enjoy our authentic taste and the highest quality products. We proudly continue the family tradition.

We provide customers all around the world with an artisanal pita that is slow baked in a stone oven, made from the highest quality natural ingredients. Our products range from small cocktail pitas to XL pitas, as well as round, oval, and



oblong shapes. All products are available in wheat or whole wheat pita bread. Nina Pita's unique and varied selection of pita bread is the ideal choice for food service and retail businesses.

We serve customers in over 40 countries around the world.

Among our customers you can find airlines, luxury hotels, catering companies, restaurants and more.

We also respond to the retail world.

Our products are considered premium products because of their quality and our production method and are marketed to this niche.



Edward Hamod - founder of Switch Foods (center), receiving the Guild Membership certificate from ECG President Chef Andy Cuthbert and Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG.

Switch Foods: A Culinary commitment to Plant-Based Meat

Focused solely on quality and taste for health conscious food aficionados, Switch is at the forefront of alternative food innovation with its environmentally conscious alt-meat products, representing a significant milestone for the UAE's commitment to sustainability.

A Paradigm Shift in Flavor and Quality

Switch is new product range that offers a variety of appetizing alternatives that embrace local flavours. These products are meticulously crafted to be alternative plant-based meats that satisfy the local palate and beloved culinary traditions.

A Palette of Possibilities

Products from Switch can be seamlessly integrated into a wide range of local culinary creations, from aromatic kafta to savory soujuk, luscious minced meat, mouthwatering burger patties, hearty

burgers, and succulent kebabs. The possibilities are endless, and Switch empowers individuals to adopt healthier eating habits by reimagining classic dishes in a plant-based form.

Health and Sustainability Harmony

In today's culinary landscape, consumers are increasingly aware of the various health and environmental impacts of their choices. Switch addresses these concerns by offering meticulously crafted, GMO-free, soy-free, allergen-free, gluten-free, vegan and halal-certified cuisine. Additionally, with the launch of Abu Dhabi's first state-of-the-art exclusive plant-based meat production, Switch Foods has taken a key step towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint, making it a smart choice to make a positive impact on the planet.

switch
for good

An Exceptional Partnership

Switch recognizes the significance of culinary innovation alongside advancement in food technology and understands the needs of professional chefs. With its uncompromising commitment to taste, quality, and sustainability, the brand stands as a reliable kitchen partner. Switch has also partnered with several renowned chefs to develop innovative recipes and share culinary insights to create an unforgettable plant-based dining experience.

Switch for Good

Switch is the future of the expanding plant-based food industry, offering a versatile, sustainable, and delicious choice that aligns with evolving culinary trends. It takes consumers on a journey of culinary innovation, delighting palates, supporting sustainability, and meeting the growing demand for plant-based excellence.

Hospitality at it's finest

From refined soirées and themed banquets, to dream come true weddings, our celebrated kitchen has been at the service of the country's finest events for more than a decade.

Our uncompromising attention to the superlative is available to you no matter where you choose to host.

Together with our team of epicurean experts, planners and décor professionals, we will ensure your event is memorable – for all our award winning reasons.



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- ENJOY THE TALENT AND CREATIVITY FROM HUNDREDS OF COMPETITORS AT THE 27TH EMIRATES INTERNATIONAL SALON CULINAIRE.
- EXPLORE DOZENS OF FREE CERTIFIED TRAINING AND EDUCATION SESSIONS.
- CREATE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

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