

gulf

## gourmet

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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE FOR CHEFS  
volume 9, issue 4**EAST COAST RULES**

Complete listing of rules and regulations for the upcoming East Coast Culinary competition this June

**PASTRY POWER**

Step-by-step process to making the perfect dessert from UAE's most renowned pastry chef Achala Weerasinghe

**MAN OF STEEL**

Alen Thong is founder of the Emirates Culinary Guild, reviver of Salon Culinaire at Gulfood and the driving force at La Cuisine by SIAL. The story of the man who made it all happen

**MAXIMUM IMPACT**

Exclusive interview with Mads Houlberg, Managing Director, Unilever Food Solutions – Middle East, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

**EMIRATI CUISINE**

Chef Amro Fahed Al Yassin prepares the perfect Jereesh Al – Dijaj as part of our ongoing quest to promote Emirati dishes

**YES TO VEGGIES**

Chef Anil Kumar and his push for all things green showcased in our UFS Sustainable Kitchens section





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# president'sstation

email [theguild@eim.ae](mailto:theguild@eim.ae)

Dear fellow chefs, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the April issue of our Gulf Gourmet. I have just returned from Beirut where I was part of the judging team at the HORECA event. I would like to congratulate the organising team and the Lebanese chefs for the fantastic Salon Culinaire.

Back home I hope you are getting ready for the East Coast Competition on June 9. Chef Prasad and the team are working in full swing. If you have not registered yet, do so ASAP, as places for all classes are limited. You can contact Chef Prasad at [kacprasad@iberotel.ae](mailto:kacprasad@iberotel.ae).

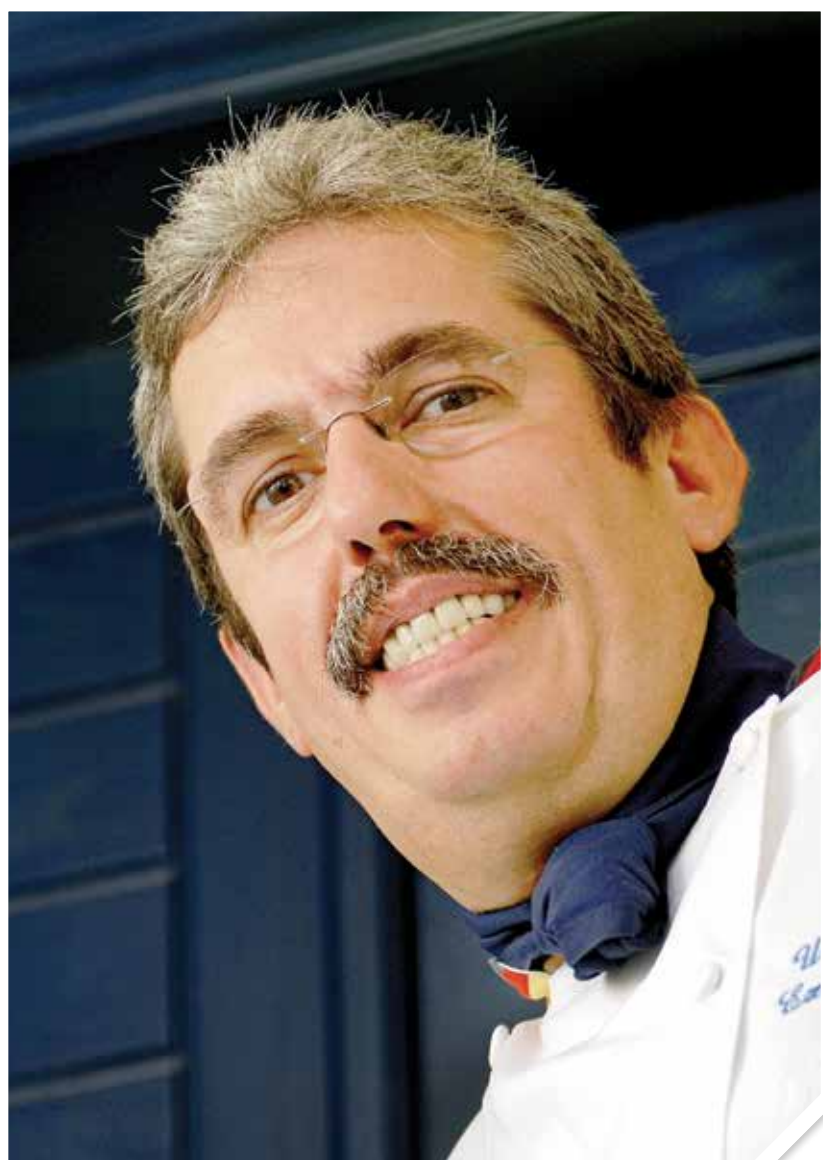
If any of our corporate partners want to be involved and support this great show, please contact Chef Prasad or me at [uwe.micheel@radissonblu.com](mailto:uwe.micheel@radissonblu.com).

Our monthly meeting for June will be on the June 16, the week after the East Coast Salon. On the same day we plan a mini plated showcase with our partner the US Beef Export Federation. Details will be finalised on Mr. Bassam's next visit and communicated soon; the location being the Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek.

I am very pleased to inform you that our team for Stavanger now comprises of 27 members. I am sure that we will be one of the biggest delegation at the Congress. Chef Achala Weeransinghe and Rahil Rathod are training hard for The Global Pastry Chef and the Hans Bueschens finals respectively.

I urge all members to go onto the Guild website to see what is happening on the calendar at [emiratesculinaryGuild.net](http://emiratesculinaryGuild.net) and also to visit the WACS Young Chefs Facebook page on [facebook.com/#!/wacsyoungchefs](https://www.facebook.com/wacsyoungchefs) and encourage your young chefs to join that page so they can be in contact with over 4000 chefs across the globe.

Please do not miss the company profile of our corporate members, the long-time



supporters who have renewed their membership, as well the new ones. We really do appreciate your support. Also, do look at the Friends of the Guild pages to check all our supporters.

And finally, a big thank you to Chef Talal and his team at Dubai Marine Beach

Hotel for hosting the March meeting.

Culinary Regards,

**Uwe Micheel**

*President of Emirates Culinary Guild  
Director of Kitchens  
Radisson Blu Hotel Deira Creek*

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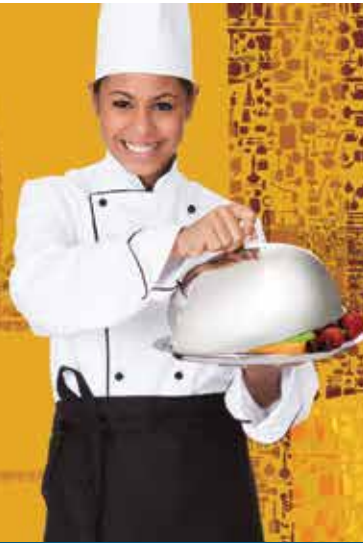


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# editor'snote

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There's something about Alen Thong that makes you admire him. I'm not quite sure what it is.

May be it is the fact that he has proved how a successful Executive Chef can also be a successful entrepreneur. Or perhaps it is the fact that he is the brain and a driving force behind the Emirates Culinary Guild, one of the world's biggest culinary success stories any nation has known.

It could be something as simple as him being one of those rare chefs who have an excellent command over the English language and knows what a Wren and Martin is. Or it just could be that after all these years he's still motivated to help thousands of young chefs to better themselves through Salon Culinaire and La Cuisine by SIAL; for which he ropes in some of the biggest financial supporters.

He's a man who's managed to live a full life on his own terms, taken risks and always come out on top. There sure have been downfalls here and there, but the spark and aggression remains intact within the 72-year-old man. This month's cover story is about him and is a must read to know about the man who makes things happen behind the scenes.

This issue also has some other great stories such as the feature on Mads Houlberg, the managing director of Unilever Food Solutions for Middle East Pakistan and Sri Lanka, who has turned the company around in a manner that many did not expect.



Then there's the affable Chef Anil Kumar, who without his realising started a quest to make the planet green both in the literal and metaphorical sense. Yes the twain are interrelated and the article tells you why.

Chef Achala Weerasinghe and Chef Amro Al Yassin have both prepared and shared something special for pastry chefs and Emirati cuisine chefs respectively.

And of course, the full list of rules and regulations for the bigger and better East Coast Culinary competition are available in this issue.

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

**Aquin George**  
Editor

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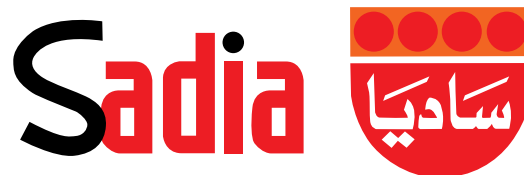
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# friends of the guild



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# GREEN BOX COMPETITION

## TASTE OF IRELAND

On behalf of the organisers of Taste of Ireland Green Box 2013 competition we would like to acknowledge the help and support of the Emirates Culinary Guild and to congratulate all 12 finalists and this year's winner

## Madinat Jumeirah Hotels

Winners of the Taste of Ireland Green Box Competition will visit Ireland for four days, all expenses paid, to experience first-hand what makes food from Ireland taste so special.

### Category winners

<b>Table Setting and decoration</b>	Movenpick Hotel Ibn Battuta Gate
<b>Best starter</b>	Atlantis The Palm Dubai
<b>Best soup</b>	Madinat Jumeirah Hotels
<b>Best Main Course</b>	Madinat Jumeirah Hotels
<b>Best dessert</b>	Burj Al Arab
<b>2nd Runner-up</b>	Burj Al Arab
<b>1st Runner-up</b>	Atlantis The Palm Dubai

### Finalists

Al Maha Luxury Collection Desert Resort & Spa  
Atlantis The Palm, Dubai  
Bonnington Jumeirah Lakes Tower  
Burj Al Arab  
Fairmont Dubai  
Jumeirah Beach Hotel  
Jumeirah Emirates Towers  
Jumeirah Zabeel Saray  
Madinat Jumeirah Hotels  
Movenpick Hotel Ibn Battuta Gate Dubai  
The Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management  
Shangri-la Hotel Dubai

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# newsbites



## Foie-gras demonstration

Chef K.A.C. Prasad, Executive Chef at Miramar Al Aqah Beach Hotel and the Vice President of the Emirates Culinary Guild, with chefs from across the East Coast region of UAE at his hotel last month. The image was clicked during a foie-gras demonstration held by Emirates Snack for the chefs working in the region.

## Michelin-starred Italian Chef Don Alfonso brings dining concept to Dubai

Italy's iconic two-Michelin starred Italian restaurant, Don Alfonso 1890, has officially opened in the five-star Shangri-La Hotel on Sheikh Zayed Road. The restaurant fuses authentic Mediterranean cuisine with high quality and locally-sourced ingredients, reports Haute Living.



The opening follows successful launches in Marrakech, Rome and Macau – all venues that present Chef Russo's renowned traditional dishes that add a contemporary twist to traditional Italian fare.

The latest venue for the 40-year-old brand, the Dubai location is situated within the centrally located Shangri-La Hotel on Sheikh Zayed Road. It offers a wonderful selection of a la carte and degustation menus. It also offers an impressive open-format kitchen, with Chef Christian de Nadai, who trained under Chef Don Alfonso himself, at the helm.



## Lee Goble heads to Madinat Jumeirah

Chef Lee Goble is the new executive chef at Madinat Jumeirah. He will oversee the kitchens for 40 outlets covering the three hotels - Al Qasr, Dar Al Masyaf and Mina A'Salam.

Goble takes up the position left vacant by Chef Sebastian Nohse who joined JW Marriott Marquis Dubai a few months ago. Goble began his career at the Ritz London and has worked as executive chef at various properties in the Caribbean.

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### Ivan joins Park Regis Kris Kin

Ivan Jovalekic has joined the Park Regis Kris Kin Hotel Dubai as senior business development manager, moving from Abu Dhabi where he spent two years in a similar position at the Insights Management Consultancy representing international hotels and tourist boards in the region.

A Croatian national, Ivan attended university in Belgrade, Serbia graduating with a degree in finance and accounting. He moved to Dubai and entered the hospitality industry with a post at Jumeirah Hotels looking after global and corporate sales, staying for four years and gaining a grounding in revenue management and reservations.

In 2006, he joined the JAL Fujairah Resort & Spa in its pre-opening phase, spending three years growing his expertise to attain the post of leisure sales manager, before moving back to Dubai and the Dusit Princess City Centre Hotel in a similar position.

## Fish and vegetable production in water-scarce GCC



**A**gricultural advancements taking place in Egypt's desert could pave the way for a whole new approach to cultivating fresh vegetables and fish in the GCC that's four times more efficient than regular farms, and requires no fertile land.

The Bustan Aquaponics farm is a 1,000 square metre operation located on the outskirts of Cairo, and is the first and only commercial aquaponics farm in Egypt, producing pesticide-free tilapia fish, four varieties of lettuce, baby spinach, purple

kale, swiss chard, celery, pak choi, wild rocket, gargeer, thyme and sage.

The system combines conventional aquaculture with hydroponics, where water and gasses from the fish are recycled and utilised by the plants as nutrients. The water is then re-circulated back to the aquaculture system. Launched 18 months ago, it has delivered an internal rate of return of between 20-30 per cent, and has the potential to break even within the next six to 18 months.

## Bank robber shot by police identified as popular chef

**W**hat drove a sous chef at one of Seattle's most critically acclaimed restaurants to don a disguise and rob a bank at gunpoint, before being fatally shot by a police detective, has perplexed his close friends, reports the Seattle Times.

Cody Spafford, 26, who was shot after a 2½-hour manhunt Thursday in Seattle's Denny-Blaine neighborhood, was just

weeks away from starting a new job at a Manhattan restaurant, said co-worker Jeremy Price. He had friends who loved him and was well-respected at the restaurant where he worked, The Walrus and the Carpenter in Ballard.

"He was a well-trusted employee and friend," said friend and co-worker Chad Dale. "We do not know the circumstances that led to this apparent act of desperation, but we know it was not him."

To be featured in this section, email your Chef-related news or information relevant to those working in a professional kitchen to [editor@gulfgourmet.net](mailto:editor@gulfgourmet.net)





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# MAXIMUM IMPACT

**Mads Houlberg** has put his money where your mouth is. After turning around Unilever Food Solutions' Middle East, Pakistan and Sri Lanka operations, the managing director for these regions now wants to bring about a revolution in UAE kitchens. With safety and sustainability his keywords, the effusive Australian tells **Gulf Gourmet** about his ambitious plans for UFS...

**UFS recently won an award at Gulfood for sustainability. Can you elaborate on it?**

Unilever has made some pretty bold statements around sustainability in the past three-four years. For example, we want to ensure that 100 percent of the vegetables used in Knorr products are sustainably sourced.

These are not just UFS initiatives, they are Unilever initiatives. UFS is a business-to-business company. One of the focus of our business is to ensure food safety in the kitchen. It's just a matter of time that you will need food solutions in the kitchens here like you do in Europe and the United States.

For instance, you can't make demi-glaze sauce from scratch in Europe because beef bones are not allowed in the kitchen. Ditto with eggs. You can't use fresh eggs in daily operations in the kitchen. Our job is to ensure the chefs here are educated on what is surely coming up. The UAE is also taking steps towards food safety.

Sustainability is not just about food. I am pushing our own sales organisation to become paperless. We all have our own responsibility as individuals to do something for the planet.

**You recently launched Hellman's dressings here. Was there anything special about the timing of the launch?**

At the moment, we are trying to fix UFS as a business. There was an immediate gap in our portfolio to show off the best products Unilever has to offer. One of those brands was Hellman's dressings from the US. We decided to get our 'Rolls Royce' in, so to speak.

We couldn't make it locally so we import



The big challenge right now is to get professionalism into the sales force. Also, fixing capacity in terms of production.

it from our factory in North America. And consumers love it. It's a very different product. As market leaders, it's our job to draw the categories. I find it unfortunate that people settle often for second best because they are chasing price. But take the example of mayonnaise. It's just 2-3 percent of the build of a sandwich. But chefs and restaurant owners are vulnerable to thinking it is very expensive. They don't know what good mayonnaise can do for you.

**Not much is known about UFS operations here. Can you tell us more?**

UFS has been in this part of the world, depending on the country, for 10-15 years. It started when someone saw an opportunity in bulk products. And that's exactly the problem with the business we have inherited.

They saw an opportunity in bulk products but not a lot of thought went into where it would go from there.

We are now sitting on the site of one of Unilever's largest tea factories in the world. We have just finished expansion next door and we are going to invest some more in there very soon.

For us, tea – Lipton to be exact – is doing

phenomenally well. Our tea business grew more than 25 percent last year. Although Unilever was surprised, we weren't. We hadn't taken a conscious, serious approach earlier and this was the first time we got serious about it.

Our dressings business grew 21 percent last year. Some of the Hellman's products we have had here for a while are now being locally made. Egypt has become a big manufacturing region for us. Our fruit and savoury range manufacturing is done there at a very big factory. Unilever has just announced that it would set up one more savoury factory somewhere in the region. It will come into play at some stage but I think that's still two-three years away.

We have a very good sustainable sourcing plan for Egypt. We continue to invest in our operations in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Egypt because we want to expand capacity.

**Is the UAE market a drop in the ocean for the region you handle?**

Not at all. I would say the UAE is as much as 30 odd percent of our business. The level of investment we are doing here is high. Expo 2020 will have an impact on us. Even though it is a while away, it will keep the market buoyant. That said, there are other regions also that are our growth drivers. Egypt, for example, especially on the tea side. We also have a great business in Pakistan. All regions are contributing to our business, be it in terms of volumes or margins.

We're aggressively entering new countries. We have just entered Jordan. We are also assessing Iraq. But we have to consider its history over the past five-ten years before moving forward.

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**What is your bigger focus – independent restaurants or big hotels?**

Our business tends to be built around tourism. We realise that we have a very western portfolio and we need to move away from that. Tourism is big and restaurants are huge for us because we have a very good local portfolio as well.

How we grow in the restaurants business is key to our strategy – there are about a 1,000 hotels in Dubai, 7,000 restaurants and 5,500 local tea shops.

We have to cover this entire gap even with our limited resources. We will go after restaurants. One challenge is the vacuum in the market in terms of skills. The UAE is rich in senior chefs at five-star hotels. But you go down the ranks a little and the lacuna shows. We have a role to play in increasing the skills in the kitchen.

**Are you taking any initiatives towards this?**

We are doing roadshows to up-skill chefs. We also have a team to train sales reps. These reps can help chefs skill up and offer solutions to overcome challenges in the kitchen with our products.

**Can you tell us about your association with the Emirates Culinary Guild?**

The guild plays a fantastic role in supporting the culinary industry here. We use every opportunity with them to show off not only our products but also what we are doing for the industry. We like to get their feedback on our activities and on where the opportunities lie. The idea is to be collaborative in what we do.

**How many brands and products does UFS have in its portfolio?**

We have a three-brand strategy. There's Hellman's dressings. In some markets, we can't use Hellman's brand, so we use Best Foods. Then we have Knorr. That's our biggest brand globally for savouries within Unilever retail and food services. Then we have Lipton. Currently, we have about 250 products across our business.

27%

We have high expectations of growing 25-30 percent annually. Our growth was about 27 percent last year across the region.

**Which are your most promising products?**

We have an edge in dressings and are focusing on that. We are drawing up a dressings strategy that will include sauces.

We are also reinventing Knorr, having a look at our local and international portfolios. Last year, we brought hollandaise sauce into the market and it was received well. It is an expensive product but people will pay for it because it is so good.

Unilever has made an acquisition in tea in the past eight months. Something new will definitely happen in the tea space shortly. We are testing some fresh brew solutions in the marketplace. Like iced tea that's brewed on leaf. This is exciting as it hasn't been done anywhere else before. It's proprietary technology.

However, we will not digress from our strategy. I won't get excited and bring out a cake mix because that's not in line with our strategy. We will stick to our categories.

**We'd like to know something about Mads Houlberg...**

I have been with Unilever for 18 years, always in food services. I started out as a sales rep. I am actually a qualified chef.

I spent 10 years as a qualified chef and four years studying to be a chef. So that put me in a good position at Unilever. I started with Unilever in Australia and essentially worked my way up - marketing and all the facets of sales you could imagine.

In 2003, I went into a regional role, starting with Singapore. I helped build the marketing organisation there, then moved to China to set up the business there. I also spent two years in Thailand working on customer development and sales. I was one of the three people who were given the opportunity to head Unilever's global strategy for sales. I handled Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

In 2010, I moved to Singapore, closer to where Unilever had invested heavily in setting up a head office for the Asia region. My stint with the UAE started in 2012.

I am a very passionate food services person. Unfortunately, I have never been in retail, not because there has been no opportunity, but because I am not done with food services. It's such a dynamic industry! In this region, the market is evolving so fast.

**What operational differences did you notice when you came here?**

The market here is very fragmented, with not too many big guys in the market. In the UK, or North America, or Australia, the market is very consolidated, down to one-two players. This market is still evolving.

The second thing I noticed here is the high calibre of people in the marketplace. The skill gap here is a lot less than in Asia - Indonesia, China. You can get really skilled people here, particularly from a manufacturing point of view. Sales and marketing skills are also readily available.

**How big is the UFS business for Unilever globally?**

We are a 2.8-billion-euro business. Although we are a sizeable business



within Unilever, we are completely standalone, unlike in the case of our rivals.

**Do you have any numbers on your growth?**

Since 2005, we have been averaging about 25-27 percent annually. We had a tough time in 2008-09, when the economic crisis hit North America and Europe. The good thing is that Asia was buoyant at that time. This is one of the reasons why UFS had not looked at the Middle East at that stage. Once things stabilised in Europe, it was time to start looking at other regions.

We have high expectations of growing 25-30 percent annually. Our growth was about 27 percent last year across the region. Growth in Egypt was the lowest at 13 percent.

**What are the challenges you face?**

The big challenge right now is to get professionalism into the sales force. Also, fixing capacity in terms of production. We were growing in single digits earlier and suddenly, we are growing in the 20s. That puts pressure on the factory floor. We are spending a lot on expanding capacity, mainly in Egypt. We are assessing whether Sri Lanka needs more investment. I have been going to different countries to see what is needed there.

We are also looking at profitability. It's a challenge and it will continue to be one. Raw material prices are rising and there is currency fluctuation.

**What is your advice to young chefs?**

Explore, explore, explore. You have access to so many products here, more than in other parts of the world.

Of course, you must respect the culinary heritage of the UAE but consumers need excitement. You don't want to go to the same old restaurant, have the same old buffet and the same old cream caramel or tiramisu. That's boring! If our dishes don't continue to evolve, we are not doing our jobs.



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# SAY YES TO VEGETARIANISM

**Chef Anil Kumar**, the culinary director of restaurant consultancy Food Wise, is a master of new concepts. From Memsaab in Jumeirah Lakes Towers to Mamatani Cafe in Jumeirah Beach Road, he has offered something new to foodies every time. Even celebrities and state heads swear by the India-born chef's culinary talents. Today, he's using his passion for food to give the world a sustainable future. Here's how...

**W**ant to live on a better, greener planet? You don't have to change the world, just change your diet.

Chef Anil Kumar's solution to a sustainable world is as simple as it gets. Through his TV shows, his talks to schoolchildren and his innovative

concepts and menus, he's busy spreading the message of vegetarianism. Not because he wants to deprive meat lovers of their staple but because a kilo of meat costs Mother Earth more than three times the resources that a kilo of any vegetarian produce.

Is that hard to digest? Take the proof from

chef Anil. "It takes about 13,000-15,000 litres of water to produce one kilo of beef but just 1,000-1,500 litres to produce a kilo of any vegetarian food!" he says.

According to the banker-turned-celebrity chef, there are multiple reasons why people must look at increasing their intake of greens and reducing the meat they



Anil Kumar with the chef of Fuego restaurant in Souk Al Bahar





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I am trying to show restaurant owners that they can create a vegetarian menu to give food lovers a chance to go for an environment-friendly option

put on their plates. "You reduce global warming, you save a lot of water, you lower pollution of water bodies, topsoil and rainforests and you prevent harm to wildlife habitat and endangered species."

Livestock produces more methane and nitrous dioxide, gases that contribute to global warming. Also as more and more farmlands turn into animal farms, there's less room to produce vegetables to feed the burgeoning global population.

The cause is close to chef Anil's heart. As the culinary director of Food Wise, a consultancy that creates thematic restaurants, he has the opportunity to change the way the world eats. What's more, chef Anil has also served celebrities such as Paris Hilton, Eddie Murphy, Amitabh Bachchan and Sonia Gandhi, among others. There was even a time when he was the corporate chef for India's former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

"I am trying to show restaurant owners that they can create a vegetarian menu to give food lovers a chance to go for an environment-friendly option."

Who'd have thought Mexican food can go all vegetarian? But chef Anil has achieved this mean feat – through his concept restaurant Fuego in Souk Al Bahar, he has created a veg menu for foodies who love their nachos and tacos and enchiladas. "There are 40 odd dishes in that menu. We have chefs from Mexico in Fuego. I want people to see it is possible. Mexicans like meat but every cuisine has

vegetarian dishes that are really good. You will be surprised to know even Arabic food has vegetarian options – like Mezze."

Chef Anil is a strong supporter of the ME Vegetarian - or the Middle East Vegetarian Group – campaign, which supports green foodism. His TV show, TREAT on Media One channel, also spreads the message. On the show, chef Anil helps housewives plan and cook special meals for their loved ones. "I tell them about sustainable sourcing of

foods. People don't know that using local ingredients, putting more veg food than meats on the plate are small steps to a sustainable lifestyle."

Meat lovers need not lose heart. Chef Anil believes that even those who prefer non-vegetarian food can make small adjustments that can help them contribute to a better world. "You can be a vegetarian one day every week or eat one fully vegetarian meal daily. After a while you will start enjoying veggie meals too."







## TYPES OF VEGETARIANS

> **VEGANS:** Vegans do not consume any animal products or by-products. They do not eat meat, seafood, eggs, dairy or consume honey, gelatine and other such products.

> **LACTO VEGETARIANS:** Lacto vegetarians do not eat meats, seafood or eggs but they do eat cheese, yoghurt and milk products.

> **OVO VEGETARIANS:** Ovo vegetarians do not eat meat, seafood or dairy products but they do eat eggs.

> **LACTO-OVO VEGETARIANS:** Lacto-ovo vegetarians, the most common kinds of vegetarians, do not eat meat or seafood but they eat dairy and egg products.

> **FLEXITARIANS:** Flexitarians have a mostly plant-based diet with occasional meat-based meals. This isn't a vegetarian diet but the percentage of plant-based foods in this diet is a lot higher than meats.

**What kind of vegetarian would you like to be?**

A more effective strategy, perhaps, is to educate the younger lot about the benefits of being vegetarian. Whenever chef Anil is called to schools to speak to children, he ensures that he shows them how a veg meal can be 'fun' too. "I ask them about the coloured veggies they like and show them tasty veggie foods. Children can be moulded easily. You can't tell them about global warming. You have to tell them about tastes and flavours. Show them what can be achieved."

Cuisines are evolving fast, says chef Anil. Food is no longer a seasonal phenomenon, with international sourcing, hypermarkets and exotic foods changing the culinary landscape, not necessarily for the better. "Earlier, you ate seasonal foods which grew locally. They were better for your health and also did not need as many resources as off-cycle, exotic and imported foods need."

The founder member of the Asian Chefs in UAE forum urges everyone to

participate in World Vegetarian Day, which falls on November 26. Just like Earth Hour saves a lot of energy, one day of purely vegetarian food can also make a huge impact on the environment.

"I want to ensure our future generations get to see the things that we have seen. The way things are going, they will be able to see all that we enjoyed only in museums," he warns. A plateful of greens to a greener world. That's food for thought.

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# DISCOVERING AN ANCIENT GASTRONOMIC TREASURE

**Chef Amro Fahed Al Yassin** has been cooking Emirati dishes for almost a decade. Moving away from the tried and tested he brings us an ancient delicacy called Jereesh Al Dijaj

## Why chef of all professions?

For me it was a miss at becoming a construction design engineer that landed me in the kitchen. The journey was hard as it involved travelling across countries and understanding cultures and cuisines. It was destiny.

I was to follow in my engineer father's footsteps but a mistake in the admission form changed my life. I was given a choice of professions in the admissions form. By mistake, I checked 'lawyer' instead of 'engineer'. They offered me a seat in law and that did not pan out as expected and I am here.

## Can you tell us about your career thus far?

I am currently a World Association of Chefs Societies-certified international judge, founder of the Arabic Chefs in UAE association and a chef trying to bridge the divide between French and Arabic cuisine.

Reaching here has been a great experience. My first tryst with a professional kitchen was at the age of 14. I would work in restaurants to make some extra pocket money in Damascus.

By 19 I had joined a hotel training centre. My first real job was the pre-opening of the Regency Park hotel, now a big brand in Syria. I then joined an authentic Chinese restaurant before moving to a seafood speciality restaurant in Saudi Arabia. I then worked with Holiday Inn

followed by the Marriott in Riyadh. I came to Dubai in 2004 and soon moved to Sheraton Jumeirah Beach, then InterContinental Hotel, Sofitel City Centre Hotel, and then Time Hotels.

## During this journey what has been your biggest challenge?

The toughest was when I handled cooking for 2,500 guests daily for a week at the Sheraton. It was South African cuisine week. We brought three chefs from South Africa and 50 kitchen staff from outside. It was a food festival. Our hotel had turned into a factory. That was the biggest event I had ever handled.

## How did you learn to cook Emirati dishes?

I started cooking traditional Emirati dishes in 2005 while at the Sheraton Jumeirah. It was a favourite of the owner of the hotel. During Ramadan he would come daily and we had to prepare something new each day. We could not repeat a dish and that forced me to dig deep into the culture and unearth some beautiful dishes that were famous in Emirati cuisine.

## Could you tell us about the Emirati recipe you are sharing with us today?

I have prepared for your readers an ancient Emirati recipe called Jereesh Al Dijaj. It used to be a very popular dish among those that dwelled in the desert. This was considered a good dish to cook especially on a rainy day; basically help tide over cold weather by providing energy to the body.

The dish uses chicken and wheat which were available for cooking. You can also use lamb or vegetables. Traditionally is it cooked using whole chicken with bones, but in the hotels we use boneless chicken.

Every time I cook this dish, it has been very well received and I am forced to make twice the quantity as compared to the other Emirati dishes I make. A variant of this dish is also popular in neighbouring Gulf countries.

## How was it using Nonions in your dish?

For preparing a dish as large as this, Nonions has turned out to be a great product because it saves both time and money and allows the chef to focus on the most important part of his job – cooking. Another great advantage of using Nonions is that it has natural goodness that gives better taste and aroma.

## Finally, what is your advice to young chefs who want to gain the kind of diverse experience that you have?

Do whatever you think is right but first you have to listen to what the seniors say. If they say something is wrong, ask them why it is wrong.

More importantly, don't forget to dream. You alone can make your dream come true. And once you've achieved a dream, don't rest on your laurels. Move on to the next dream.





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## JEREESH AL - DIJAJ

### Ya Reesh Al Di – jaj

#### INGREDIENTS

Chicken thigh bone-in & skinless	500 g
Jereesh ( broken wheat)	500 g
Corn oil	50 ml
<b>Miraya - ginger garlic paste</b>	30 g
<b>Nonions - fried onion paste</b>	100 g
<b>Nonions - fried onion</b>	40 g
Fresh tomato sliced	2 pcs
Tomato paste	100 g
Salt	10 g
Cumin powder	20 g
Turmeric powder	10 g
Coriander powder	20 g
White pepper powder	10 g

Dry lemon	3 pcs
Bay leaves	3 pcs
Cardamom powder	5 pcs
Cloves	5 pcs
Plain Yogurt	100 g
Fried chilli red & green	3 pcs for garnish
Fresh coriander leaves	2-3 sprigs for garnish

#### METHOD

- ♦ In heated cooking pan, add corn oil then Miraya - Ginger Garlic Paste, sauté it nicely till the aroma arise then add the chicken keep mixing them on medium heat for 15 minutes
- ♦ Then add all the spices and mix on low heat for another 15 minutes, follow the mixture with sliced tomato and sauté for

5 minutes after that add tomato paste, Nonions - Fried Onion Paste and mix well for 5 minutes, add the water and bring them to boil for other 10 minutes.

- ♦ This will be the exact time for adding Jereesh to it, but before that remove 3 pieces of chicken a side, then add the Jereesh wait till it boils, reduce the heat to the minimum and cover for 15 minutes, during that time, roast three pieces of chicken in the oven for 10 minutes. Remove the Jereesh from heat, add the yogurt and mix well.
- ♦ Put Jereesh in the plate and place the roasted chicken on it and top them with Nonions - Fried Onion and garnish with chili and fresh coriander leaves. Serve hot





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# THE GAME CHANGER

Many years ago, **Alen Thong** jumped from the frying pan of the kitchen into the fire of business. But that's not what makes the managing partner of John Holt Foods a part of history. What does is his role in setting up Dubai's calling card for the culinary world. The UK-born founder of the Emirates Culinary Guild tells **Aquin George** about his life and times...





Alen with his son Josh

Once upon a time in the West, a little British boy all of six donned an invisible apron and tossed up some sliced potatoes into the fryer, whipping himself up not just a meal but also a meal ticket to a better life.

The year was 1948. Alen Thong, comfortable in his Liverpool home that teemed with family members, had never dreamed he would change the culinary landscape of a land far away and very different from his own. Destiny, however, is an unpredictable goddess. Picking him up from a rough neighbourhood when he was 15, she plonked him straight at the high-brow Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. And there began a remarkable career that could lend Hollywood a plot or two.

Today, 72-year-old Alen is the managing partner of John Holt Foods. Illustrious the designation may be, but that's his secondary identity. For, he is the man who founded the Emirates Culinary Guild, perhaps the best visiting card of chefs in the Middle East.

Send Alen off on a trip down the memory lane and you can see nostalgia light up his face. "I lived in a big family with my grandparents, uncles and aunts, and my mother. I lost my father when I was two, so I didn't know him. My mother was a good cook and I was always interested



People appreciated what I did. Running a business is a thankless job. People think you are making a lot of money, but they don't realise how mentally challenging it actually is...

in cooking too," he recalls. His father being Chinese, he did develop a taste for Chinese food early on.

Somewhere along the way, Alen realised cooking was his calling. "At the time, no one knew what a chef was. I got a job at Adelphi hotel and suddenly, saw a different world. The hotel had rich guests who made you want to be like them. I worked hard, even did double shifts and worked on holidays, but life there was good. We were paid peanuts, but back then you didn't need a lot of money to have fun."

Bonding with as many as 50 guys his age over dinners and drinks, Alen learnt the ropes rather fast. "Service started at 7pm and ended at 9.30pm. You really had to hustle." A quick learner, Alen was

soon made a senior commis.

He credits the job with keeping him "off the streets and out of trouble". He says, "Every young man or woman should work in a five-star hotel. It's a great learning ground and the high life motivates you to get one."

Wanderlust bit Alen soon. He "roamed around a bit" and found country house hotels. "Many were monasteries and priories that were turned into hotels. They were beautiful." Menus at these hotels were limited and changed daily. That's where they scored over bigger-format hotels. "There were five starters and five main course options and one dessert. The menu changed daily and the food was delicious!"

At the time, being an executive chef did not excite Alen at all. As someone who wasn't good at "lateral relationships", he found people management a chore. Instead, it was the guest's taste buds and compliments that gave him a high.

Life changed course again in 1976, when he was invited to Oman to help open a nightclub, a concept unheard of there at the time. "Today, it seems funny but at the time, the nightclub was under the regulator of sports clubs and we used the rugby club licence to run the nightclub; and every six months we were fined," he says with a laugh.



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In some ways, that nightclub was a game-changer for Oman. Big hotels had to follow suit to retain their customers. "Intercontinental was the first to open a nightclub after us."

A fatality at a New Year party at Al Sabeer Club spelled trouble and the nightclub was shut for a while before being reopened. After spending a couple of years in Oman, Alen returned to the UK, but made his way back to the Middle East again with a job in Bahrain.

A year and a half in Bahrain later, he was invited by an ex-colleague in 1982 to join a food supplier in Dubai. His marriage to the company, known as Cobellon Ltd at the time and John Holt Foods Ltd now, has lasted 35 years and is still going strong, except a few hiccups. "It was a very different job from being a chef. Perishable food had to be picked up from airport and delivered to hotels and chefs. Most of the times, I would have a nine-to-five job. Only weekends were hectic."

Alen admits he had to adjust his attitude once he was out of the kitchen and into the food supply business. "As a chef, I was the one that wore the pants. I decided what I wanted. But as a supplier, I had to accept a 'no' and even criticism. You had to be humble." The positives were that his knowledge of food expanded and he developed a deep understanding of the needs of chefs of different nationalities. Strong bonds were also formed with chefs big and small, ties that would later come in handy.

At the time, Dubai did not have a formal platform for chefs to interact. Alen, with his experience as a chef, would socialise with some chefs on weekends. "Things were evolving back then. The first Gulf Food was being organised."

Much was changing at Cobellon too. In the mid-80s, the company was taken over by UK-based John Holt group. After a long eventful journey with the revamped company, Alen became one of the people to buy out John Holt Foods.



As a chef, I was the one that wore the pants. I decided what I wanted. But as a supplier, I had to accept a 'no' and even criticism. You had to be humble

Even as he played the game of corporate chess, he stayed active on Dubai's culinary circuit. A Salon Culinaire cooking competition was being organised by a hotel chain. Chefs from the hotel walked away with top prizes and some murmurs of dissatisfaction began in the culinary corridors of Dubai. Some high-handed officials at the organising team made the situation worse by disqualifying certain participants for frivolous reasons. The last straw was when Alen was accused of trying to make money for his company by participating in the event.

Having many loyalists among chefs, he found tremendous support within the industry. Alen, with a couple of influential chefs, then founded the Emirates Culinary Guild in 1991 to give all chefs a fair shot at showcasing their talent at the Salon Culinaire. The first Salon Culinaire under the guild followed just a year or two later.

Getting sponsors was rather hard at the time. "But MLA and Nestle were on board from the very beginning."

Now, the Salon Culinaire is synonymous with the ECG. Young chefs prepare for months to bag prizes in different categories. According to Alen, the guild's president chef Uwe Micheel deserves a special pat on his back for aggressively marketing the ECG and Dubai abroad. "If we lose him, we will lose a lot of our

revenue and international momentum."

Fame and accolades apart, Alen loves the opportunities that the guild gives youngsters. He confesses to feeling a sense of personal achievement every time a young chef in Dubai manages to impress an international judge.

Alen, however, does want more out of young chefs. "Some of them are good, some are awful. But the biggest problem is that most are not comfortable with the English language. It then becomes very hard to get through to them." Lack of communication makes it difficult to explain things to them and such young chefs tend to make a lot of mistakes on technicalities, Alen rues.

His other grouse is that young chefs "prepare too much". "They think that more is good. There is no need to make so many kinds of sauces and prepare so many things. Stick to what is needed!"

Also, he'd like to see more aggression in young chefs. "A certain amount of aggression is required to drive you forward. Many young chefs lack initiative. They follow orders well but they don't take up things on their own."

Changing the industry means Alen's life has changed a lot too. The honorary life member of the World Association of Chefs' Societies hasn't stepped into the kitchen for decades now. Does he miss those days? "I don't miss the hard labour. At that time, I could work all day and stay out partying all night. I had boundless energy. I am older now and I have to pay heed to health and family too."

What he does miss is the glamour of being a chef – the compliments and the adulation. "People appreciated what I did. Running a business is a thankless job. People think you are making a lot of money, but they don't realise how mentally challenging it actually is."

Then again, when has Alen Thong shied away from challenges?

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# THE ILLUSTRIOUS INDIAN

From the kitchen to the corporate boardroom, **Raman Khanna's** career has been as illustrious as his personality. After years of serving up culinary masterpieces, he hung up his pots and pans for a shot at setting up hotels and restaurants from scratch. Today, as chief operating officer of Qatar-based Global Hospitality & Restaurant Development Company, the India-born Khanna is eyeing new horizons to set up concept restaurants. In a casual chat, he tells **Gulf Gourmet** where he comes from and where he is going next..



**Can you please tell us something about yourself?**

I was born and brought up in Delhi in India. My father was also posted in Srinagar, which was my home for nine years. He worked with the Reserve Bank of India.

I left India in 1986 after doing a three-year internship at the Oberoi in Delhi, joining the Culinary Institute of America - or the CIA as it is known - in the United States to get a degree in culinary arts. After graduating from there in 1988, I started working in the kitchen of Hilton International at the World Trade Centre in New York.

In 1990, I was given the opportunity to work for one of the top chefs in the Hilton group - Albert Schnell. I went to work with him in Toronto as a sous chef. He is my mentor and I learnt a lot from him. I spent two years there, then moved to Washington DC with Hilton International.

Later, Abu Dhabi Hilton was going through a major revamp. It was adding a new building, a garden and a ballroom. I was asked if I would like to go to Abu Dhabi. I consulted a friend of mine who was in Abu Dhabi and taking his advice, I came here as an executive sous chef in 1994.

I was supposed to head to Durban in 1997 to open a Hilton hotel there as an executive chef. But there were two royal weddings and my transfer was cancelled. I stayed back and opened many concepts for the Hilton thereafter.

I also did state events for the president, the first lady and for the royals. My team also participated in the Dubai Salon Culinaire and won it back-to-back in the late nineties and early 2000. I broke the glass ceiling by becoming the first Indian executive chef in the Middle East. It was difficult for people to digest that a team headed by an Indian won the trophy two years in a row when there were so many chefs from all over the world there.

It was a matter of great pride for me.

**Talent is more about a good attitude and training**

Many Asian chefs from India and Sri Lanka came to me and told me that my win gave them hope and that was the greatest compliment for me.

After being with Abu Dhabi Hilton for 10 years, I reached a point where I wanted to leave. So when I was asked to help open the Emirates Palace, I took it up.

**How did your family react when you told them you wanted to be a chef?**

The reaction was mixed. My father, being a banker, wanted me to get into banking. But cooking was my passion. I studied geography at the Delhi University. I could have gone into climatology or some such. But when we were in Delhi and my mother was in Srinagar, someone had to cook. My brother didn't even know how to boil an egg. So I did the cooking. First it was a need. Then our friends started coming over because my house became a party place. I would end up cooking. I started with omelettes, then moved on to chicken curry and lamb curry and so on. Everybody was impressed and said that my food tasted good.

A friend of mine had an uncle who was a corporate chef at the Taj. I was invited to an event and I liked seeing him in his uniform with golden buttons. It was glamorous. I was impressed and thought how wonderful it would be to be a chef, go around the world and learn about different cultures.

Later I made enquiries and decided to join the CIA, which is one of the world's best schools for chefs. I realised then that the CIA needed six months' industry experience for admission. That's how I started my apprenticeship with the Oberoi but then decided to finish the entire three-year training. After that, I

went to the US and my maternal uncle loaned me money for fees. He supported me. My other family members were shocked. They asked me if I wanted to be a khansama, which means cook in Hindi. At the time, cooking was considered a menial job. But I was determined.

**Dubai is known to be a melting pot of cultures. Then why is it that few Indians have been able to make a mark here as opposed to, say, Sri Lankans?**

The perception is that Sri Lankan chefs are very good at pastry and cold kitchen while Indians are usually good at butchery and the hot kitchen. So the Sri Lankan chefs get more exposure because they get the final word. I am not quite sure if the ratio is skewed though. For a long time, India had a good standard of living so most people were happy being there. But Sri Lanka was going through conflict and chefs from there were glad to move here. That might have also played a role.

**How was your experience at the Emirates Palace?**

It was the toughest opening I have ever done. I didn't see my family for five months. That's when I realised I was burning out. It's different when your guests are the heads of state and the royals. It's a big responsibility and you pay with your health. My teenaged daughter once told me that I don't care about the family. That's when I decided I had to put an end to this.

Thanks to my good relationship with the office-bearers of the royal family, I was given a chance to join ALDAR Hotel and Hospitality. That company paid for me to go to Cornell University. I went back to college to get a certification in hotel real estate. Then, they sent me to Brussels to negotiate a hotel contract.

So I went from cooking and running the kitchen to negotiating hotel contracts, getting involved in design of hotels and restaurants.

Six years I got a real high travelling the

world, negotiating contracts with the likes of Ritz Carlton and Oberoi and even the Hilton. It was a great feeling.

I did it until ALDAR Hotel decided it wouldn't do any more development. Everyone knows the story of the economic downturn. Even then, I was the last one to leave the AIDAR Hotel. I was the first one to come in and the last one to leave.

In the time, I negotiated 30 hotel agreements, signed 24 and actually delivered 7 hotels. I coordinated 22 restaurants in the seven hotels. Some of those concepts were my own. When I drive by Emirates Palace today, I feel thrilled that I am part of its history.

Then Abu Dhabi National Hotels came and asked me to join them as corporate director for restaurants division, which I did. I helped them open the Ritz Carlton. Later, people came from Doha in Qatar to offer me partnerships to open restaurants, which is what I am doing.

#### **How long have you been in your current role?**

I have been here for one and a half years. It's not easy to establish a company with the aspirations they have. The legal and regulatory procedures are different in Qatar. It's a market that is learning. Dubai also had a learning curve and Qatar is going through that.

#### **I looked at IFS and they also have restaurant brands. How different is what you are doing for them?**

Their restaurants are quick-service restaurants. They brought me in to develop high-end restaurants. I am developing a 1,000 square metre French patisserie, bakery and Italian restaurant and a 2,000 square metre multi-concept restaurant. Also, a Turkish restaurant. I am also looking at creating a local restaurant with a modern presentation.

#### **With your new profile, do you miss being in the kitchen?**

Not really. Been there, done that. I have to move on now and respect my age.



If you are an executive sous chef, you have to work at the level of an executive chef.

If you work within limits, you won't be noticed. You have to show people you are ready for bigger roles

When I was younger, I could get away with not sleeping for 48 straight hours, doing an event for 7,000 people in a day, running 9-10 restaurants. I paid the price with my health and my family also paid a price. But there is no gain without pain.

I succeeded because I went that extra mile.

Yes, you have to be at the right place at the right time but you also have to do that extra bit to succeed. If you are an executive sous chef, you have to work at the level of an executive chef. If you work within limits, you won't be noticed. You have to show people you are ready for bigger roles.

#### **What is your opinion of young chefs these days?**

Some are hungry to learn but all of them are in such a hurry. I put in five years in the profession before I made a cent. I am not sure any of them today are willing to do that. They are not trying to perfect the basics. If you put them in a situation that is not familiar, they are lost because they don't have depth of knowledge. Executive chefs too don't have enough experience and they don't want to spend time training young chefs.

#### **How difficult is it for you to get talent to Doha?**

Very difficult. But I do believe that getting people with the right attitude and training them can do the trick. In my previous roles, we even got into the kitchen some housekeeping boys who were willing to learn. I would train them and some of them are now sous chefs. Sometimes it's better to have people who don't know anything but have the right attitude because you can mould them. They don't come with preconceived notions. There are no short cuts to good food. Talent is more about a good attitude and training.

#### **When will we see your first concept come to life?**

In a few weeks. I have most of the people on board. I am just finishing up things and French Olive restaurant will open very soon. It's a French patisserie and an Italian restaurant Doha.

#### **What are your future plans for this company?**

They would like me to keep on rolling out restaurants. We want to enter Saudi Arabia, mainly Kuwait and Bahrain. The UAE is also on the cards but that market is saturated now.

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# THE CANDYMAN

From a cosy corner of Sri Lanka to the glitzy galleries of Dubai, **Achala Weerasinghe**, the executive pastry chef at The Address Downtown Hotel in Dubai is in the enviable position of being one of the culinary ambassadors of the United Arab Emirates. He gives a quick lowdown on his journey....

## We've all heard so much about your pastry skills. How did you enter the industry?

I did not start out liking the kitchen. In my early days in the hospitality industry, I preferred wearing a waiter's smart uniform and going out into the restaurant. But that changed after two-three weeks on the job. I realised that waiting on people was not for me. I felt that cooking was up my alley. I absolutely loved the sweet smell of baking. So I joined the desserts kitchen as a trainee and went forward with it.

## Can you tell us about your early days in the kitchen?

I am from Sri Lanka, from a village that's about eight-nine hours away from Colombo. I had to move to Colombo to join a hospitality school. Unfortunately, they had seats only in the housekeeping course. After the six-month course, I joined the Holiday Inn hotel as a trainee. At that time, jobs were hard to find but because I had trained there, I got a job. They put me in the main kitchen. I did that for a week but I didn't like it because it was really hot there. So I asked the executive chef if there were any vacancies in the pastry kitchen. He took a week or so and then moved me to the pastry kitchen. That's how I started as a pastry chef in 1999.

## How did you come to Dubai?

In Sri Lanka, we had a chef who had come from Dubai. I learnt a lot under him and I would write down all the recipes he taught me. He was impressed and he told me apply for a job in Dubai. I did and a chef from Emirates Towers

called me and said there was a vacancy as a Commis III. He asked me if I was interested and I said yes. I actually took a demotion to take that job. But once I joined there, I was promoted back to my original designation.

After two and a half years there, I joined Dusit hotel as a chef de partie. I worked there for two years then moved to Renaissance hotel, where I worked for two-three years and was promoted to pastry chef.

## To what do you owe your success?

Self-learning mostly. I taught myself everything by buying books and reading the recipes. I even spend a lot on books;

as much as 400 dirhams on a book. I take the ideas and then innovate with my own ingredients and add creative touches.

## What are the most important things a chef should have to become a pastry chef?

You have to be passionate about it and you also need management skills. Presentation and technique are also important. You need to work hard and focus on putting the best desserts on the plate. Don't chase money. Money will come if you are a good chef.

## Tell us about your experience at cooking competitions?



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I participated in Salon Culinaire and won the pastry chef title in 2009, 2010 and 2011. At the Dubai World Culinary Championship, I learnt a lot. We made mistakes but also learnt.

**You are a part of the first UAE culinary team. What are your expectations from the upcoming Singapore competition?**

I want to take gold in both team and individual events.

**And what are your future plans?**

I would like to settle in Australia. Maybe open my own pastry shop and also a school to share my knowledge and experience with youngsters who want to become chefs.

**What did you make for us today?**

I created something for our young upcoming pastry chefs to learn from. My piece is a modern take on pastry with a lot of flavour. I saw the recently concluded Salon Culinaire and of the dishes were not well made or presented. I hope youngsters can learn something from this.

**Tell us about the Anchor products you used.**

I used the Anchor butter and cream. I loved both. The cream has higher volume while the butter is smooth, has good texture and nice colour. Both give good flavour to the final product.



I taught myself everything by buying books and reading the recipes. I even spend a lot on books; as much as 400 dirhams on a book. I take the ideas and then innovate with my own ingredients and add creative touches

## CHOCOLATE CRACK



### INGREDIENTS

Sugar	250g
Glucose	250g
Dark Chocolate	115g

### METHOD

- ◆ Heat the glucose and sugar 156o C
- ◆ Then mix the chocolate
- ◆ Put the silmat
- ◆ Then make the powder blender
- ◆ Sift into the silmat and bake it 200 oC around 5 minutes.
- ◆ Remove from the oven and cut it to rectangle shape.
- ◆ Then take the PVC pipe and roll it.
- ◆ Keep it in an air tight container.

## CHOCOLATE CAVIAR



### INGREDIENTS

Sugar	50g
Cocoa Powder	20g
Water	200g
Agar agar	2.5g
Sunflower Oil	1litre

### METHOD

- ◆ Mix all the ingredients and bring to boil stirring.
- ◆ Put the sunflower oil in a container and let cool it down until 10 oC.
- ◆ With a syringe, let fall drops of mixture into the oil and leave in for 2 minutes

## PRALINE SOIL





#### INGREDIENTS

Praline Paste	50g
Maltosec	100g

#### METHOD

- ♦ All mixed together until get the crumble.

### CARROT JELLY



#### INGREDIENTS

Carrot Juice	400g
Water	50g
Vegetable gelatin powder	25g
Simple syrup	75g

#### METHOD

- ♦ All boil together and put into the ring and leave it 30 minutes.

### CARAMEL CHOCOLATE MOUSSE



#### INGREDIENTS

Egg yolk	375g
Sugar	375g
Water	100g
Achor Cream	50ml
Dark Chocolate	750g
Milk Chocolate	300g
Galantine Leaves	05pc
Achor Whipped Cream	1500g

#### METHOD

- ♦ Melt the chocolate, whipped the 1500g of cream up to 70%.
- ♦ Make a caramel in a pot with the water; deglaze it with the rest of the cream.
- ♦ At the same time add the whipped cream in the chocolate then mix and keep in the chiller.

### ESFERIFICACION DE FRAMBUESA



#### INGREDIENTS

Raspberry Puree	250 g
Gluconolactato Sosa	5 g
Alginato	(1L Water, 5 g Alginato)

#### METHOD

- ♦ Mix the raspberry and gluconolactto together.

- ♦ Put into the mould and freeze it.
- ♦ Mix Alginato and water together.
- ♦ Put the frozen raspberry ball into the alginate mixture and leave it for 5 to 8 minutes
- ♦ Then remove from the alginate and place in the plate.

### PISTACHIO MICRO SPONGE



#### INGREDIENTS

Egg White	1- 1/4cup
Almond Powder	1/2 cup
Pistachio powder	6tbsp
Sugar	85g
All-purpose flour	28g

#### METHOD

- ♦ Process all ingredients in a blender and strain into an iSi whipper.
- ♦ Charge with 2 N2O chargers and refrigerate for a 2-3 hours.
- ♦ Make 3 small cuts in the base of plastic cups, shake whipper vigorously and fill each cup 1/3 full.
- ♦ Cook for 40 seconds in a microwave, flip cups upside down and set aside until cool.



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# MADINAT MAYHEM

This month, the boys from Madinat Jumeirah take the Nestle Professional Golden Chefs Hat Competition to a whole new level with their exemplary performance



Ruchi Shueng-Li Thammitage



Fodil Baghal

Two of UAE's finest young chefs have come together to create an unbreakable bond and to raise the performance levels of the on-going Nestle Professional Golden Chefs Hat Competition. Here's why they are among the leading contenders to win the competition

## Ruchi Shueng-Li Thammitage

This 27-year-old former chairman and

founding member of the Emirates Culinary Guild Young Chefs Club is no novice to competitions. Having just won the Taste of Ireland competition and looking forward to taking part in the Taste of New Zealand contest, he has more medals than he cares for.

"After having won 30-odd medals, I now do not even mention it in my CV," says the young lad who comes from an illustrious family of chefs in Sri Lanka. Having spent

over 75% of 8-year career in Dubai, he's now among the more recognised names in the young chefs circuit.

The youngster with a good command of the English language and a happy attitude candidly reveals that he was far from impressed by some of the previous contestants. He explains, "The availability of great products should force us to make new things with it. For example, some of the other contestants



seem to have used mashed potato powder to make just that. I tried to be different and used it to make croquettes.

Working with these products has been a challenge he says as being creative was fundamental to the entire process. "I have never before used any of the Nestle products that I have used in the competition. This is because at work we make everything from scratch," says Chef Ruchi, who is currently the Junior Sous Chef at the Mia A Salam's main kitchen and manages a team of 17 chefs.

"Forty minutes was more than ample time for me because it became really easy to create the basics. The mashed potato only needed hot water and the

sauces we created received an instant shine; something which otherwise is a struggle. The taste was nice too," he says.

### Fodil Baghal

This 24-year-old French junior sous chef works in the Central Pastry kitchen at Madinat Jumeirah and will be in Singapore this month to part take in the young chefs challenge alongside global heavy weights. He too is not new to the world of competitions having won medals at various international chef contests from South Africa to South Korea in his relatively short career.

He began his career as a Diplomat in Aux Delices Chocolaterie in Draguignan, France and then moved to La Tarte Tropeziene in Saint

Tropez as Chef de Partie where production took place for the 24 outlets. He remained in Saint Tropez and joined the Brasserie des Arts as Senior Chef de Partie and thereafter the YTL Groupe Muse Luxury Hotel also in Saint Tropez as Sous Chef.

He came to the UAE in 2011 to join Hilton Resort & Spa in Ras Al Khaimah and thereafter joined the Madinat Jumeriah Resort & Spa, where he's been working for nearly 18 months. He says with a smile, "Using the Docello products from Nestle Professional was really a great experience. For example, I could make a cube with my Crème Brulee. This would not have been possible otherwise. Also, this was the easiest chocolate mousse I've made in my life!"

## TRIBUTE TO LAMB WITH AERATED CARROT PUREE & MARROW CROQUETTE

### INGREDIENTS

#### PEPPER CRUSTED LAMB CUTLET

Lamb cutlet	80g
Black pepper	10g
Red pepper	10g
Malden salt	5g
Mustard	10g
Salt & pepper	To taste

Olive oil	10ml
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#### LAMB & APRICOT ROULADE

Lamb shank	100g
Thyme	5g
Rosemary	5g
Dry apricot	70g
Egg	1No

Salt & pepper	To taste
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Olive oil	10ml
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#### HERB CRUSTED LAMB LOIN

Lamb loin	80g
Bread crumb	40g
Parsley	15g

Basil	10g
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Parmesan	10g
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Olive oil	5ml
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Mustard	5g
---------	----

Salt and pepper	To taste
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#### AERATED CARROT PUREE

Carrots	100g
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Skimmed milk	100ml
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Onion	10g
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Garlic	10g
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Butter	5g
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MAGGI® Chicken Stock	10ml
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Salt & pepper	To taste
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**MARROW CROQUETTE**

<b>MAGGI® Mashed Potato</b>	50g
Bone marrow	30g
Bread crumbs	5g
Egg	1No
Flour	10g
Salt & pepper	To taste

**SOUS VIDE VEGETABLES**

Romanesco	10g
Radish	10g
Peruvian asparagus	10g
Baby carrot	10g
Baby fennel	10g



Thyme	5g
Rosemary	5g

<b>MAGGI® Chicken Stock</b>	20g
Butter	5g
Salt & Pepper	To taste

**SAUTÉED MUSHROOMS & ONION**

Shimeji mushroom	10g
Erinji mushroom	10g
Smell red onion	10g
Garlic	5g

<b>MAGGI® Chicken Stock</b>	20ml
Butter	5ml
Salt & pepper	To taste

**SWEET POTATO & POTATO PAVE**

Sweet potato	30g
Potato	30g
Salt & pepper	To taste

<b>Chef® Demi Glace</b>	30g
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**THYME JUS**

<b>Chef® Demi Glace</b>	30g
Thyme	5g
Garlic	2g
Olive oil	3ml
Crush Pepper	1g

**PREPARATION AND COOKING**

- ♦ Clean the cutlet and season with salt & pepper.
- ♦ Sear the meat with olive oil.
- ♦ Roast the peppers and crush it.
- ♦ Apply mustard on the seared meat and crumb it with crushed pepper.
- ♦ Cook it in the oven for 10 mins on 170°C.
- ♦ Clean the shank and cut into a thin layer.
- ♦ Keep the off cuts separate.
- ♦ Hammer the meat and season with thyme, rosemary, salt & pepper.
- ♦ Blend the apricots, lamb off cuts, egg, salt & pepper and put the mixture into a piping bag.
- ♦ Pipe the mixture on to the thin layer of lamb and roll it in to a cylinder shape.
- ♦ Wrap it with film wrap and keep it over night.
- ♦ Poach the roulade for 3mins.
- ♦ Remove the wrap and season with salt & pepper.
- ♦ Sear the roulade and cook it in the oven for 10 mins on 170°C.
- ♦ Cut it in to 2cm thick slices.
- ♦ Clean the loin and cut in to 3x 3 cm strips.
- ♦ Roll it into cylinder shape with film wrap.
- ♦ Keep it over night.
- ♦ Remove the wrap and season with salt & pepper.
- ♦ Sear and cook it in the oven for 3 mins on 170°C.
- ♦ Blend the crumb, parsley, basil, parmesan, olive oil together until become green powder.
- ♦ Take the loin out from the oven and apply mustard and crumb with the above mixture.
- ♦ Put it back in the oven for 2 mins.
- ♦ Sauté butter, onion, garlic, carrot.
- ♦ Add the chicken stock and skimmed milk.
- ♦ Cook until the carrot becomes soft.
- ♦ Blend and pass it through a fine sieve.
- ♦ Correct the seasoning.
- ♦ Add hot water to the potato powder until mixture is hard.
- ♦ Add bone marrow to the potato and season with salt and pepper.
- ♦ Form the mixture into small balls.
- ♦ Dust it with flour, dip it in egg and crumb it.
- ♦ Fry the croquettes until golden color on 180°C.
- ♦ Clean all the vegetables.
- ♦ Dissolve the stock in water.
- ♦ Put all the ingredients in a vacuum pack bag and seal it.
- ♦ Sous vide it until the vegetables become soft.
- ♦ Separate all the vegetables and season with salt & pepper.
- ♦ Clean the mushrooms and onions.
- ♦ Sauté it with butter and garlic.
- ♦ Remove the mushrooms.
- ♦ Add stock and cook the onions until soft.
- ♦ Put back the mushrooms and season with salt & pepper.
- ♦ Slice the potato & sweet potato and blanch it in water.
- ♦ Arrange a layer sweet potato in a terrine mold.
- ♦ Lay the potato on top of it.
- ♦ Put another layer of sweet potato.
- ♦ Repeat the process.
- ♦ Bake it in the oven for 30mins.
- ♦ Cut the pave into shape.
- ♦ Glaze it with demi glaze.
- ♦ Dissolve the demi powder in hot water.
- ♦ Sauté the thyme and garlic in olive oil.
- ♦ Add the demi glaze.
- ♦ Season with crush pepper.
- ♦ Strain the mixture and reduce to the right consistency.



## VANILLA CRÈME BRÛLÉE WITH COCONUT CHOCOLATE MOUSSE AND PANNACOTTA

### INGREDIENTS

#### CRÈME BRÛLÉE

<b>Docello® Crème Brûlée</b>	250 gr
Milk	1000 gr
Cream	500 gr
Vanilla stick	1 stick

#### PANACOTTA CHOCOLATE

<b>Docello® Panna Cotta</b>	150 gr
Milk	500 gr
Cream	500 gr
Chocolate milk 36%	220 gr

#### CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

<b>Docello® Chocolate Mousse</b>	250 gr
<b>MAGGI® Coconut Powder</b>	500 gr
Chocolate crunchy ball	100 gr

#### 24 CARAT CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

<b>Docello® Chocolate Mousse</b>	125 gr
Milk	325 gr
Glucose	15 gr
Cream	465 gr

#### COCONUT PANNA COTTA

<b>Docello® Panna Cotta</b>	150 gr
<b>MAGGI® Coconut Powder</b>	200 gr
Water	300 gr
Cream	500 gr

#### MERINGUE COCONUT

Egg white	200 gr
Egg white powder	20 gr
Sugar	400 gr

#### MAGGI® Coconut Powder

#### BLAST CAKE CHOCOLATE

Egg	190 gr
Sugar	120 gr
<b>Docello® Chocolate Mousse</b>	60 gr
Flour	95 gr
Red color	2 gr
Butter	95 gr

### PREPARATION AND COOKING

- ♦ Bring to boil the mix milk, cream and vanilla stick
- ♦ Remove it from the heat add the powder and stir well for 3 min
- ♦ Portion in the mold and chill for 1 hour.
- ♦ Boil milk and cream remove from heat add the chocolate
- ♦ And the powder,
- ♦ Then bring back to boil

- ♦ Fill the molds and cool in refrigerator for 1 hour.
- ♦ Put the appropriate amount of cold milk
- ♦ Mix powder with milk using a whip until a homogenous mixture has been obtained,
- ♦ Whip with a mixer for 2 min a low speed and 5 min at high speed
- ♦ Add the crunchy ball portion and cool for 2 hours.
- ♦ Boil milk and glucose remove from heat and cool at 25 degree
- ♦ Add the chocolate mousse powder and store it in chiller for 24 hours
- ♦ Before wiping add the cold cream in.
- ♦ Boil milk and cream remove from heat add the panna cotta powder, then bring back to boil
- ♦ Fill the molds and cool in refrigerator for 1 hour.
- ♦ Whip the egg white with the egg white powder
- ♦ Add the sugar pipe a drops
- ♦ Dust with coconut powder
- ♦ Mix everything in a robot coupe
- ♦ put the mix in a espuma gun pipe it in a paper cup than cook it in micro for 30 second



## The Guild Meet

**T**he Emirates Culinary Guild's last meeting was hosted by Chef Talal and his team at Dubai Marine Beach Hotel. The event saw a large turnout including corporate members from the industry. Here are moments captured at the event.





# 'Global market for In-Flight Catering to reach \$16.5 billion by 2018'

**Daniyal Qureshi**, Director of Airport Show, talks about the debut Travel Catering Expo (TCE), co-located with the top-league B2B platform for the aviation industry decision-makers taking place from May 11 to 13, and its relevance to the world's fastest growing aviation market.

## What is Travel Catering Expo (TCE)?

TCE is the Middle East's dedicated exhibition for the products, services and technologies required for the airport catering industry. It is a B2B platform for everyone involved in the travel industry supply chain right from the procurement managers to chefs and other hospitality professionals. It will gather leading global suppliers, caterers and experts to provide a dedicated platform to discuss the challenges and opportunities in the airport catering business, thus ensuring the sector mirrors the growth and success of the region's thriving aviation industry.

The event will focus on the catering requirements at regional airports undergoing over \$100 billion in expansion and modernization. The event will feature a full range of products and services relevant to the travel catering industry - from catering, packaging, transportation and refrigeration equipment to crockery, cutlery, food, snack foods and beverages. TCE will attract decision-makers from Airport Caterers, General Catering Companies, Airports, Airlines, Cruise Operators, Rail Operators, Leisure and Hospitality Industry, Food Services players and Charter and Business Jet Operators.

With the event's collocation with



There are over 630 flight kitchens in the world and more than one billion passengers are served by the travel catering players worldwide annually. Catering is going to be a game-changing aspect of the travel industry

Airport Show and Global Airport leaders' Forum, TCE will benefit from the over 7,000 expected attendees of the event representing more than 80 countries, generating substantial business and new growth leads for the events exhibitors.

## How did the idea of a dedicated event for the travel catering industry in the region emerge?

We are introducing Travel Catering Expo (TCE) as a collocated event of Airport Show this year based on the feedback given by the aviation industry decision-makers. The regional aviation markets are growing fast and one of

the areas of focus for both the airports and airlines are catering facilities and services to meet the needs of a growing number of passengers.

The GCC airports are working their ways to handle a staggering 400 million passengers by 2020. International Air Transport Association (IATA) says the total passenger numbers are expected to rise to 3.91 billion globally by 2017—an increase of 930 million passengers over the 2012 figure. Of the new passengers, approximately 292 million will be carried on international routes. The Middle East will witness the strongest international passenger growth with 6.3 per cent CAGR during the forecasted period (2013-2017).

Last year, Dubai airport alone handled over 66 million passengers. Dubai is also home to the world's largest flight catering facility operated by Emirates Airlines. Look at the amazing performance of other airports in the region. There are more people at airports and airlines these days than the past.

Every airport and airline in the region is working towards enabling passengers travel across the world via the Gulf region. As many as 132 airlines operate from the UAE airports transporting thousands of passengers on their



flights. This massive rise in passengers will obviously require expansion of the catering facilities compatible with the rising number of travelers.

There is the advantage of looking at this vital segment of the travel industry at this dedicated trade show that attracts key decision makers. It makes sense to everyone involved with the travel industry. There are over 630 flight kitchens in the world and more than one billion passengers are served by the travel catering players worldwide annually. Catering is going to be a game-changing aspect of the travel industry.

#### What is unique about TCE?

The event will focus on the catering requirements at airports, of airlines and other travel-related sectors in the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa region. The event will feature a full range of products and services relevant to the travel catering industry – from catering, packaging, transportation and refrigeration equipment to crockery, cutlery, food, snack foods and beverages. The event welcomes the support of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, Dubai Airports, Emirates Flight Catering, Food Point and over 50 companies, who will be participating at the exhibition.

TCE will also give the participants an opportunity to meet over 1,000 highly-qualified trade visitors representing buyers from regional airport developments, civil aviation authorities, airlines, airport ground handlers,

transport departments, government agencies, contractors, consultants, hotel, travel and tourism industry stakeholders including 'Hosted Buyers' from Bahrain Airport Services, Oman Air, Gulf Air, Tunis Air, Saudi Airlines Catering Company, South African Airways, Royal Jordanian, New Mauritius Hotels and LSG Sky Chefs amongst others.

#### How will the TCE benefit the industry as well as the region?

Global companies can tap into the growth potential offered by the massive expansion of airports and airlines in the region, while the local players will be able to consolidate their standing in the business. A number of companies will be showcasing and launching new products and services to seek the attention of over 1,000 trade buyers from over 20 countries.

Exhibitors can explore new business opportunities and strengthen relationships with existing clients and increase their bottom line by meeting trade buyers face-to-face and learning about their sourcing requirements. They can gain in-depth market insights that will help them enormously in business development and market entry strategies.

#### What is the size of global travel catering business?

Travel catering is a relatively well defined sector and it has shown modest growth in the last few years. According to a report by Global Industry Analysts (GIA), the global market for In-Flight Catering Services is projected to

reach \$16.5 billion by 2018, driven by addition of new, efficient airplanes with enhanced passenger capacity, rising demand for quality food, and innovative offerings in menus. Growth dynamics of the global airline catering market are largely dependent on the developments in the aviation sector. With the rise in the number of aircraft in the global airline industry, the demand for in-flight catering services has also increased in the past few years. Amount spent by airline caterers per passenger is expected to witness an incremental decline in the coming years. The market is expected to grow at a moderate pace in the next few years with growth emerging primarily from the increasing passenger traffic worldwide, addition of new aircrafts, and continuing innovations in on-board menus.

Rising passenger traffic across Asia, Middle East, and Africa is expected to offer huge opportunities for in-flight catering services market participants. A latest report says the demand from passengers for healthier food, the growth of low-cost airlines – which has led to fewer passengers receiving a free in-flight meal, increasing commercialization of airports with airport operators looking to earn more money from sources such as catering and retail, the increasing importance of strongly-branded catering offers capable of driving higher sales and the impact of airport changes such as enhanced security operations and on-line check-in on the time available for passengers to eat.







# TECHNOLOGY FOR KITCHENS

The growing influence of technology in commercial kitchens is not something one thinks of. However, the reality of its underlying impact is undeniable.

**Ruqya Khan** meets a few industry experts to understand how high-end kitchen equipment is increasingly making chefs more productive

**T**he kitchen is the heart of the home – it is where flavours come together, ideas become reality and meals are made with love. Kitchens in a hotel are no different. Yes they may be dishing out plates at a commercial pace but the drive to excel and please the palette is and always will be. Chefs today need to abreast themselves not just with the cuisines and food handling techniques but also the evolving kitchen equipment that they have at hand.

Technology in the kitchen is so different now when compared to several years back. As travel and tourism grows, the hospitality industry has come into the limelight and hotels are now busier than ever. The modern kitchen calls for better know how and management skills, here's a look at how well equipped we are to cope with the change.

Sunjeh Raja, Managing Director, International Centre for Culinary Arts says, "The food service industry has

become very discerning. The kitchens futuristic approach is not a luxury but the way to go forward, to help take things to the next level.

Additionally, Dubai will host the World Expo 2020 that will have a huge positive impact on the tourism and hospitality industry and by proxy the food servicing sector, with more than 25 million visitors expected to visit the Expo during the six-month duration. The focus should be to sustain the growth and development as a result of the expo event. And to do so, we have to embrace technology, innovation and collaboration in our practice by all means."

There are many different kinds of cooking equipment used by chefs. Apart from the basic implements and tools such as a set of knives, etc. the other main equipment would be Combi Ovens, Food Processors, Freezers and Chillers. With the advent of more and more modern technology, the commercial kitchens of today are definitely evolving leaps and bounds. The focus today is all about speed, convenience of use, high standards of hygiene, quality and consistency.

A cooking profession that revolves around a kitchen environment requires a mix of skills, talent, and knowledge and then experience. They all complement each other.



Technology plays a very important role in the kitchens of today

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Massimo Da Lozzo, General Manager of Emirates Kitchen Equipment, one of the oldest kitchen equipment contractors in the UAE agreed that education and understanding is important for a proper functioning kitchen, "I see the chef at the apex of the operations. His food is directly impacted by the space he works in. Very often space is the biggest challenge in the kitchen, hotels and restaurants have limited area allotted for the kitchen and with respect to that they need equipment that is multi-functional and not bulky. The chefs must keep an open mind and set aside ego so that he can embark on new ideas and options of deliverance."

"The kitchen industry has evolved beautifully with the city. Twenty years ago there was not a proper perception about the quality and value of specific items. The market here is interesting and open to new technologies. The coming of events and exhibitions like WACS and Gulfood to Dubai makes the industry workers more aware in the choices they make for their kitchen. Food authorities are also more educated too."

Mick Jary, Projects Manager at Manitowoc Foodservice MEA elaborated on the same, "The evolution of the Commercial Kitchen has been a continuous movement for at least the last 20 years as the Operator and the Owners demand further efficiencies from



Sunjeh Raja

the equipment to make their businesses and food offerings more successful. This has resulted in Manitowoc developing Easy Touch control panels across some of their Brands and investing in systems that make the equipment more efficient in Energy, the production of menu items and ultimately the use of multi-national Kitchen brigades where there is often no common language so photographic driven icons solve this issue. This all helps to create a more financially efficient business in a more price conscious market."

"With development in the market and kitchen equipment it is vital for a change of mentality to use these products when the Chef has been consistently using the more traditional equipment. Product training, menu development and continual building of working relationships are essential to give the operators the confidence to move forward and develop their business further."

"Furthermore, it is seen that the market has grown significantly in the Quick Service / Casual Dining



Massimo Da Lozzo

markets as eating trends have moved further towards a "grazing" culture. This ultimately demands equipment works on a smaller footprint as space is an issue in these kitchens but, the Operators demand is that the smaller footprint doesn't affect the efficiency or production rates of their Kitchens."

Sunjeh adds, "Technology plays a very important role in the kitchens of today. Adequate exposure and familiarity with advance cooking technology and innovation in equipment is very important for anybody working in the modern kitchens of today regardless of having acquired master skills and talent. In fact, technology and innovation play an important role in honing the skills and nurturing the inherent talent to a level where if applied in combination (cross-disciplinary approach), the overall results are on par with excellence and high standards – which is what the industry requires in meeting its end consumer expectations."

Speaking on thermal professional cooking equipment, Elias Rached, Export Department Regional Director



Very often space is the biggest challenge in the kitchen, hotels and restaurants have limited area allotted for the kitchen and with respect to that they need equipment that is multi-functional and not bulky

**Mick Jary**

Sales at MKN Middle East & Africa says, "The most important trends in design for professional ovens / combi-steamers is an easy handling and operation system. The challenges in commercial kitchens are getting more and more complex, so it is of highest importance to make complex challenges easy to handle with innovative and most modern operation systems. Products need to optimise energy consumption and be easy to operate for everyone in the kitchen, doesn't matter how skilled they are.

"Also the staff needs to be aware about how to take care for optimized kitchen processes and to have this processes under control. You cannot change one part of a working process without changing the entire process. Therefore it is important to have partners which have competence for the entire cooking processes. Chefs must learn and understand the product before they begin to use it. Kitchen equipment of any kind will be of best value if we know its functions inside out. Education equals efficiency."

**Chef Antonio Lacoveli**

Showcasing the other side of the industry, Chef Antonio Lacoveli, from Merletto Italian Restaurant at Marriott Hotel Al Jaddaf, Dubai says, "Living in Dubai, it is really hard to find outdated things, because everything is new and evolving every day. What is exciting is that for amateur chefs or culinary students, and even people with a passion for cooking, they can now easily find all professional kitchen equipment, in smaller and practical sizes, to use in the comfort of their homes. Kitchen equipment is no longer hefty and tedious. With a bit of training we are able to adapt ourselves to the techniques expected from the machine and the management."

"As chefs we are catering to a new genre of guests, they want to turn the normal 'dining' out into an 'experience', or an 'eatertainment' as I like to call it. People do not want to go out to just eat, but want to experience a restaurant with all their senses, from the smell as they enter, to the beauty and textures of the dishes, and of course last but not least, the taste. We need to be innovative in what we create from product to platter

**Elias Rached**

and what we use is half as important as how we use it.

I'm a simple chef. I like to create something extraordinary out of ordinary ingredients. I take old classic recipes and reinvent them to a modern version. I need to think and work quick. My tools have to be good for that perfect presentation. Other than the basic everyday kitchen equipment, I like to use the 'Sous Vide' water bath professional cooking equipment and method. It cooks at regulated temperatures for longer than normal cooking times, as it cooks meats and vegetables evenly, doesn't overcook and more importantly locks in the juices. Since I am Italian and work for an Italian restaurant, I love using my special pasta machines, which I use to make all our pastas in-house.

"But all said and done, I will confess that my all-time favourite piece of kitchen equipment would have to be a good old fashioned silver spoon to taste, taste, and taste! Taste everything before sending it out to the customer – this is a mantra I live by because food should be love at first bite!"



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# newmembers



Stefano Brocca (Managing Director – Pasta Regina LLC) receiving the membership certificate from Chef Uwe Micheel, President, Emirates Culinary Guild

**Pasta Regina LLC** was established in Dubai, Al Quoz Industrial Area in 2004. Today, the company is the largest manufacturer of fresh frozen homemade pasta in the Middle East, boasting a wide selection of authentically Italian products and currently supplying to all the best 5 star hotels, restaurants, airlines, catering companies and leading supermarkets in the region.

Pasta Regina LLC has one aim : to perpetuate the tradition of "L'arte della Pasta Fresca" - the art of fresh pasta. True to our mission, some of the best Italian chefs cooperate with us to enable us to serve our clients true Italian recipes stemmed in tradition. The finest ingredients are imported directly from Italy and are processed with state of the art machinery right here in our factory in Dubai. We only create our pastas using bronze die, a practice found deep in the roots of the Italian history of pasta that uniquely adds a special roughness to the pasta and so ensuring that your condiments



remain attached to the pasta surface until the last drop.

The quality of our products is very important to us and characterizes every step of our process, starting with our raw materials. Our Durum Wheat Semolina and our 00 Flour are imported directly from Italy, whilst our fresh pasteurized eggs and certified purified water are delivered to our factory daily to guarantee freshness.

Our Homemade Pasta is quick-frozen individually, allowing it to hold many advantageous properties: it is the only method of conservation that does not require preservatives or conservatives, leaving the true benefits only pasta of real quality can provide. The taste, aroma and colour remain intact and do not alter

for the entire shelf life of the product, so that all our pastas maintain their fresh and artigianale look. Moreover, an added value a busy chef can appreciate in this method is that cooking time is faster than usual, ranging from 1 to 5 minutes.

Our rich assortment of plain and filled pastas have the ability to satisfy even the strictest connoisseurs of traditional Italian pasta, as well as any specific requirement asked of us from the wide range of professionals in the industry that we call clients. Our innovative machinery and knowledgeable pasta technicians allow us to customize pastas, creating even modern and original shapes as well as fillings, tastes and colors that can adapt to any recipe our customer's chefs require. All of the meat used for our fillings are Halal Certified.

In addition, Regina Group received the HACCP certificate in 2008 and in 2013, we are pleased to be selected as one out of 100 Dubai SME 100 and First among the food manufacturers.



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## RESUME OF CLASSES FOR ENTRY

# EAST COAST CULINARY COMPETITION

### Class No. Class Description

1. Three-Course Gourmet Dinner Menu
2. Tapas, Finger Food & Canapés
3. Three – Course Gourmet Arabic Dinner Menu
4. Friandise/Petite Four/Pralines & Nougatines
5. Three Plated of Desserts International
6. Three Plated of Desserts Arabic
7. Bread Loaves & Showpiece
8. Three Tier Wedding Cake
9. Live Practical Cake Decoration
10. Open Showpiece
11. Chocolate Showpiece
12. Vegetable Carving Live
13. Practical Cookery Beef (only US Beef)
14. Cocktail Championship

### Class 01: Three - Course Gourmet Dinner Menu

*Present a plated three-course meal for one person.*

1. Suitable for dinner service
2. The meal consist of:
  - > An appetizer or soup
  - > A main course
  - > A dessert
3. To be prepared in advance and displayed cold on appropriate plates.
4. Total food weight of the three plates should be 420/480 gms.
5. Food coated with aspic or clear gelatin for preservation
6. Typewritten descriptions and recipes required.
7. Maximum area w60cm x d75cm.
8. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 02: Presentation of Ta pas, Finger Food and Canapés

1. Produce six varieties.
2. 6 pieces of each variety - total 36 pcs
3. Three hot varieties
4. Three cold varieties
5. Hot food presented cold
6. Food coated with aspic or clear gelatin for preservation
7. Presentation on suitable plate/s or platter/s or receptacles.
8. Six pieces should correspond to one portion.

9. Name and ingredient list (typed) of each variety required.
10. Maximum area 60cm x 75 cm
11. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 3: Three Course Arabic Dinner Menu

*Present a plated three-course meal for one person.*

1. Suitable for dinner service
2. The meal consists of:
  - a. An appetizer or soup
  - b. A main course
  - c. A dessert
3. To be prepared in advance and displayed cold on appropriate plates.
4. Food coated with aspic or clear gelatin for preservation.
5. Total food weight of the three plates should be 420/480 gms.
6. Typewritten descriptions and recipes required.
7. Maximum area w60cm x d75cm.
8. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 04: Friandises P etites-Four Pralines Nougatines

1. Present the exhibit to include a small showpiece; the showpiece is for effect only and will not be judged as part of the class.
2. Exhibit six varieties.
3. Six pieces of each variety (36 pieces total) plus one extra piece of each variety on a separate small platter for judges' tasting.
4. Freestyle presentation.
5. Written description mentioning the theme is required.
6. Typewritten recipes are required.
7. Maximum area w70 cm x d75 cm.
8. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 05: Three Plates of Dessert

1. Prepare three different desserts, each for one person.
2. Each dessert presented singly on an appropriated plate.
3. Total food weight of one plates should be 80/100 gms.
4. Presentation to include one hot

- dessert (presented cold).
5. Typewritten description and recipes are required.
6. Tasting will be part of the judging process if deemed necessary to determine quality and authenticity.
7. Maximum area w70 cm x d75 cm.
8. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 06: Three Plates of Dessert (Arabic)

1. Prepare three different Arabic desserts, each for one person.
2. Each dessert presented singly on an appropriated plate.
3. Total food weight of one plate should be 100 /120 gm's.
4. Presentation to include one hot dessert (presented cold).
5. Typewritten description and recipes are required.
6. Tasting will be part of the judging process if deemed necessary to determine quality and authenticity.
7. Maximum area w90 cm x d75 cm.
8. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 07: Bread Loaf & Bakery Showpiece

*The entire exhibit must comprise baked goods and must include the following:*

1. Bread is to be displayed with a baked bread showpiece.
2. Four types of bread loaves (competitor's choice) minimum of two pieces of each loaf to be displayed.
3. Four types of bread roll (competitor's choice) minimum four pieces of each roll to be displayed.
4. Four types of baked sweet breakfast items (competitor's choice) minimum four pieces of each item to be displayed.
5. Four types of baked savoury/salt breakfast items (competitor's choice) minimum four pieces of each item to be displayed.
6. Doughs prepared and breads baked at place of work and brought to the competition for judging.



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7. Tasting will be part of the judging criteria & Type written recipes are required.
8. Maximum area w70 x d75cm
9. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 08: Three-Tier Wedding Cake

1. All decorations must be edible and made entirely made by hand.
2. Pillars or stands may be inedible but, unless decorated by hand, must be plain and unadorned.
3. Fine, food-quality wiring is allowed for the construction of flowers and the like, but must be properly wrapped and covered with flower tape or paste.
4. Royal icing, pastillage, pulled sugar, etc., may be used in the construction, but the finished display must not be dependent on these items.
5. The cake will be tasted by the judges.
6. The bottom layer of the cake must be edible.
7. Inedible blanks may be used for the two top layers.
8. Typewritten description and recipes are required.
9. Maximum area w60 cm x d75 cm.
10. Maximum height 75cm (including socle or platforms)
11. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 09: Cake Decoration - Practical

1. Decorate a pre-baked single cake base of the competitor's choice.
2. Two hours duration.
3. Free-style shapes
4. All decorating ingredients must be edible and mixed on the spot.
5. No pre-modeled garnish permitted.
6. Chocolate and royal icing can be pre-prepared to the basic level.
7. Competitors must provide all ingredients, cake base, utensils, and small equipment required.
8. The cake base must a minimum size of 30cm X 30cm or 30cm Diameter.
9. A standard work table with a 13 amp power socket is provided for each competitor to work upon.
10. Water and refrigeration will not be available.

11. The cake will be tasted as part of judging.
12. The Judges will cut the cake.

### Class 10: Open Showpiece

1. Freestyle presentation.
2. Only showpieces made of edible food material will be accepted for adjudication.
3. Maximum area w60 cm x d75 cm.
4. Maximum height 75 cm. (including base or socle).
5. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 11: Chocolate Carving Showpiece

1. Free-style presentation.
2. No frames or supports.
3. Natural colouring is allowed.
4. Minimal glazing is allowed.
5. No molded work.
6. Maximum area: w60 cm x d75 cm.
7. Maximum height 75cm (including base or socle).
8. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 12: Practical Fru it & Vegetable Carving

1. Freestyle.
2. 120 minutes duration. {02 hrs}
3. Hand carved work from competitor's own fruit\vegetables.
4. Competitors to use own hand-tools and equipment.
5. No power tools permitted.
6. Pre-cleaned, peeled material is allowed, but pre-sliced/carved will result in disqualification.
7. Each competitor will be supplied with a standard buffet table on which to work.
8. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 13: Beef Or Chicken Practical Cookery

1. Time allowed for 40 minutes.
2. Prepare and present two {02} identical main courses using Beef as the main protein item.
3. Only US beef with can be use accept tenderloin. Need to write in the recipe card supplier & the badge number.
4. Present the main courses on

- individual plates with appropriate garnish and accompaniments.
5. Typewritten recipes are required.
6. One participant per entry is allowed.

### Class 14: Cocktail of the day

1. 02 identical cocktails & mocktails to be present with in 20 min.
2. Competitor should bring his/her own alcohol, juices, liqueur, etc.. & the Judges live his/her preparation.
3. Hygiene practices will highly inspect by the hygiene auditors.
4. One participant per entry is allowed.

## NOTES ON THE PRACTICAL COOKERY CLASSES

These notes pertain to all practical cookery classes. They should be read in combination with the brief of the class entered.

Due to the fact that only 45 min. is given to complete the competition; competitors are allowed to bring with them an extensive mise-en-place; however, there are restrictions on how much pre-preparation the judges will tolerate. In all cases, the preparation, production and cooking skills of each competitor must be demonstrated during her/his time in the kitchen.

1. All food items must be brought to the Salon in hygienic, chilled containers: Thermo boxes or equivalent. Failure to bring food items chilled will result in disqualification.
2. All dishes are to be served in a style equal to today's modern presentation trends.
3. Portion sizes must correspond to a three-course restaurant meal.
4. Dishes must be presented on individual plates with appropriate garnish not exceeding 250g total food weight excluding sauces.
5. Unless otherwise stated, competitors must supply their own plates/bowls/platters with which to present the food.
6. Competitors must bring with them all necessary mise-en-place prepared according to WACS





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guidelines in the hot kitchen discipline ([www.wacs2000.org](http://www.wacs2000.org)).

7. Competitors are to provide their own pots, pans, tools and utensils.
8. All brought appliances and utensils will be checked for suitability.
9. The following types of pre-preparation can be made for the practical classes:
  - > Vegetables/fungi/fruits; washed & peeled – but not cut up or shaped. Potatoes washed and peeled – but not cut up or shaped.
  - > Onions peeled but not cut up
  - Basic dough can be pre-prepared.
  - Basic stocks can be pre-prepared.
  - > Basic ingredients may be pre-weighed or measured out ready for use. Fish may be scaled and filleted and the bones cut up.
  - > Meat may be de-boned and the bones cut up.
10. No pre-cooking, poaching etc. is allowed.
11. No ready-made products are allowed.
12. No pork products are allowed.
13. No alcohol is allowed.
14. If a farce is to be used for stuffing, filling, etc., at least one of the four portions of the farce must be prepared in front of the judges to show the competitor's skill.
15. Within 10 minutes after the end of the competition, competitors must have the kitchen thoroughly cleaned and tidied and ready for the next competitor to use.
16. Two copies of the recipes typewritten are always required.
17. Submit one copy of the recipe/s to the clerk when registering.
18. Submit one copy of the recipe to the duty marshal at the cooking station.

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

Organized by Miramar Al Aqah Beach Resort - With Advice & Guidance of Emirates Culinary Guild

### NB:

1. Please read the following regulations carefully. The

instructions contained herein are mandatory. Non-compliance with any of the points mentioned could lead to loss of marks or complete disqualification.

2. The Briefs of the Classes for Entry document also forms part of these Rules and Regulations and must be read in conjunction with this document.
3. Other regulations relevant to a particular competition would appear on the last page of this document.

### PARTICIPATION:

4. Participation at competition is open to anyone professionally employed in the preparation of food within UAE and Internationally.
5. Unless the organizers specifically mention a class as being a team event, all classes are for entry by a single competitor.
6. Competitors are restricted to one entry per class.
7. Competitors are restricted to entering a maximum of three classes.
8. Competitors entering to win must participate fully in every class entered in order to qualify.
9. Competitors must attend and participate on the time allotted to them.
12. Completed photocopies of the entry form are acceptable.
13. Submit the completed form to the organizer **15th of May** before the event.

### CERTIFICATES AND LETTERS OF PARTICIPATION

14. Ensure that your name (clearly written in block capitals) appears on your entry form exactly as you would wish it to appear on any certificate, letter of participation or posting of results.

### HYGIENE

15. Competitors must bring their items in a high standard of

hygiene.

16. As the event will be held in the Al Farha Ballroom of the organizer, official Hygiene Officer will judge all the live cooking participants with points and award a special award for highest points achieved chef as best hygiene practice chef award in the presentation ceremony. Organizer has the right to inspect and give **black points** for any objection.

### THE SECRETARIAT:

17. Iberotel Miramar Al Aqah Beach Resort & Emirates Culinary Guild is the soul responsible for the organization and administration of the competition. For the final calculation of the event will be admin by minimum of secretarial personals from 03 different hotels to make the calculation more transparent.
18. The competition is governed by construed according to the rules of the organizer.
19. Competitors acceptance of participation in the competition will mean as confirmation of their undertaking to submit unconditionally to the jurisdiction of the organizer.

### EXHIBITS:

20. Each exhibits must be completely original work, it must not have been displayed previously.
21. All exhibits must be of edible substance except for framing and stands.
22. It is forbidden to use any living entity, depict religious, nude, seminude or political themes in an exhibit.
23. All exhibits must be suitable to presentation as a decorative item in a restaurant.
24. An exhibit must not carry any logo or mark of identification however; they should identify their own work, if needed.
25. Competitors are responsible for their exhibits and should ensure



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that they are available in their proper place for judging on the day and time specified.

26. No preparation or finishing of exhibits is allowed in any area except designated preparation area.
27. Finished exhibits must be placed in the position indicated by the organizer. It has submitted for judging.
28. Competitors must leave the judging area as soon as their exhibit is in place or when instructed to leave.
29. Failure by competitor to register at the specific time could result in disqualification.
30. Exhibit which is removed by competitors without permission by the organizer will not qualify for any awards.

#### COMPETITION MARSHALS:

31. A Marshall at arm will recognize by the badge displaying the logo of the organizer.
32. Marshalls are charged with the ensuring that the rules and regulations of the competition are observed by all concerned.
33. Competitors, helpers and visitors are all obliged to cooperate with the marshals.

#### AWARD:

34. Gold, silver and bronze medals and certificates are awarded solely at the discretion of the judges.
35. The decision of the judges is final and each competitor is required to abide.
36. The medals will be present at the end of the competition. Certificates will be present after the event. This will communicate with concern ex. Chef of the property by the organizer.
37. Special awards will be given to all category winners. Special award to be given for highest points achieve the live cooking fish/seafood category.

#### DISCLAIMER:

38. The organizers are entitled to cancel or postpone the East Coast Culinary

Competition or alter the duration, timing or schedule of any event.

39. The organizer reserved the right to cancel any classes or limit the number of entries or extend.
40. The organizer will not under any circumstances be held liable or responsible for the loss, Damaged of any exhibit, equipment, goods or personal affects.

To continually raise the standards of UAE's East Coast Culinary excellence and to promote camaraderie and educational opportunities among culinary experts and Professionals.

To act as a staging area for development of culinary concepts by:

- A) *Encouraging new and innovative styles in culinary.*
- B) *Bringing the traditional styles up to date.*
- C) *Nurturing the creativity of individuals by encouraging their participation.*
- D) *Providing a showcase for individual skills, techniques and styles.*
- E) *Providing example and inspiration for young or beginning professionals.*
- F) *Providing recognition from fellow professionals.*

Allowing the public to observe the current "sate of the art". This insight and learning experience of the public is of great importance because new trends, styles, techniques and philosophies progress with public acceptance, by promoting a greater understanding of sound culinary philosophies. Competitors provide an excellent forum for the public's education.

#### Judging Guidelines and Awarding System

A team of WACS Approved Judges will adjudicate at all the classes of competition using WACS-approved method led by chef Thomas Gugler continental director WACS middle east africa, criteria and documents.

After each judging session, the judges will hold a debriefing sessions at which each decision.

Competitors will not be competing

against each other rather they will be striving to reach the best possible standard. Judges will then apportion marks that accord with their perception of the standard reached. The competitor will then receive an award commensurate with his/her points tally for the classes.

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

#### The scaling for awarding all classes is as follows:

100 - Gold medal with distinction with Certificate.

99 – 90 - Gold medal with Certificate

89 – 80 - Silver medal with Certificate

79 – 70 - Bronze medal with Certificate

70 – 50 - Certificate of merit

#### Awards

1. Best Gastronomy award will be given to the highest points earned in Two Classes; **Three-Course Gourmet Dinner Menu and Beef Live Cooking.**
2. Best Arabic Chef award will be given to the highest points earned in Two Classes; **Three-Course Gourmet Arabic Main Course Dinner menu and Three plated of Desserts Arabic.**
3. Best Pastry Chef award will be given to the highest points earned in Two Classes; **Three plated of desserts internationally and Live Practical Cake Decoration.**
4. Best Kitchen Artist award will be given to the highest points earned in Three Classes; **Open Showpiece, Chocolate Showpiece and Vegetable Live Cooking.**
5. Best Bartender Award will be given to the highest points earned in Cocktail Championship Entry.
6. Best Hygiene Award will be given to the highest points earned in Beef Live Cooking Entry.
7. East Coast Culinary Champion Trophy will be given to the Establishment who got the highest Medal Points.



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Day / Date	Class No	Class Description	Reg	Start	Judging Start	Clear Time	No of Entries Max. Can Participate	Sponsored Supplier
<b>Day</b>		<b>STATIC DISPLAYS</b>	<b>Time</b>					
<b>Monday 09th June</b>								
	01	Three -Course Gourmet Dinner Menu	0700	0900	1200	1700	30	
	02	Tapas, Finger Food and Canapes	0700	0900	1200	1700	20	
	03	Three -Course Gourmet Arabic Main Course Dinner Menu	0700	0900	1200	1700	30	
	04	Friandises/Petit Four/ Pralines & Nougatines	0700	0900	1200	1700	20	Sponsored By Iffco
							<b>100</b>	
		<b>PASTRY CLASS STATIC / PRACTICAL /</b>						
	05	Three Plated Of Desserts International	0700	0900	1200	1700	30	Sponsored By Nestle
	06	Three Plated Of Desserts Arabic	0700	0900	1200	1700	30	
	07	Bread Loaves & Showpiece	0700	0900	1200	1700	15	Sponsored By Master Baker
	08	Three Tier Wedding Cake	0700	0900	1200	1700	15	
	09	Live Practical Cake Decoration	0700	0800	0900	1700	40	
							<b>130</b>	
		<b>ARTISTIC CLASS / PRACTICAL</b>						
	10	Open / Pastry Show Piece	0800	0900	1100	0900	1700	
	11	Chocolate Showpiece	0800	0900	1100	0900	1700	
	12	Vegetable Carving Live	0800	0800	0900	1700	1700	Sponsored By Barakat
							<b>100</b>	
		<b>PRACTICAL LIVE COOKING CLASS</b>						
	13	Beef Practical Cookery	0700	0800	0900	1115	30	Sponsored By Us Beef Any cut accept tenderloin / need the supplier & Badge num. to be mentioned in the recipe card.
		<b>BAR &amp; COCKTAIL</b>						
	14	Cocktail Championship	0700	0800	0830	1700	40	
<b>Total Expected Participation</b>							<b>400</b>	Hyg. Class Sponsored By Sealedair
		<b>GRAND AWARDS CEREMONY</b>				<b>1730 hrs</b>		



# US\$ 3 billion

## what's your GCC market share?

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

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

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

### Now you do the maths.

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

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

Gulf Gourmet is the only magazine endorsed by the ECG.

It also influences non-ECG Chefs across the GCC and is distributed at World Association of Chefs Societies events around the globe.

Take advantage of our platform.

Positively impact your market share!

Contact us now

**[advertise@gulfgourmet.net](mailto:advertise@gulfgourmet.net) / 050-5045033**

REACH

ENGAGE

INFLUENCE

## ABOUT GULF GOURMET

- ▶ Most widely read magazine by Chefs & Decision Makers in the GCC
- ▶ Officially supported by the Emirates Culinary Guild
- ▶ Highest circulation in its category at 6,150 copies per month
- ▶ Readership estimates of nearly 11,276 per month
- ▶ Positively influencing the UAE food industry since 2006
- ▶ Recognised by the World Association of Chefs Societies
- ▶ Circulated at top regional and international culinary events

## WHO READS IT?

▶ Executive Chefs	23%
▶ Senior & Mid-Level Chefs	36%
▶ Hotel GMs	10%
▶ Restaurant Owners	15%
▶ C-Level Executives	2%
▶ Purchase Managers	7%
▶ Food Industry Leaders	4%
▶ Marketing / PR Managers	1%
▶ Others	2%

## REACH BY COUNTRY

▶ United Arab Emirates	71%
▶ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	18%
▶ Oman	2%
▶ Qatar	4%
▶ Kuwait	1%
▶ Bahrain	2%
▶ United Kingdom	1%
▶ Others	1%

## MARKET SEGMENTATION

▶ 5-star Hotels	46%
▶ 3/4-star Hotels	19%
▶ Independent Restaurants (Elite)	18%
▶ Independent Restaurants (Standard)	12%
▶ Food Industry Suppliers	3%
▶ Large & Medium Food Retailers	2%



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# THE EMIRATES CULINARY GUILD



## APPLICATION FOR 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 ☐ Senior Renewal ☐

Fax Home:

Senior ☐ Young Chef ☐  
(under 25 yrs below)

Email:

Declaration to be Signed by all Applicants

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

Signed:.....

Proposed By:

Sig:.....

Seconded By:

Sig:.....

### FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Remarks:

Payment received?

Certificate Given.

Pin Given.

Medal & Collar Given

Approved

Approved

President.....

Chairman.....

Fees:

Young Member: Junior members will receive a certificate.

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

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

150/=per year thereafter.

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

Corporate Member Dhs. 20,000 per year



## Arigatou Gozaimasu

- > **Name:** Naveen Madhawa
- > **Age:** 23
- > **Position:** Commis I
- > **Works at:** Sakura (Japanese restaurant) at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai
- > **In Dubai since:** 3 Years
- > **Home is:** Sri Lanka
- > **Love:** Cooking Teppanyaki
- > **Inspiration:** Chef Rovel, my head chef
- > **Dream:** To be a renowned chef in Dubai.

*Every month we choose one Social Media Superstar from our many fans who like the Gulf Gourmet page on Facebook. You could be next!*



April 2014 Gulf Gourmet



## THE WORLD'S BIGGEST WIMP

For some people life wears a white hat. They just swan through things without ever getting even their hair ruffled. And for the rest of us it is one big, uphill climb to get anywhere at all. Like in the little things.

Attracting a waiter's attention. Some people just raise a finger and the world gambols to do their bidding. Others can stand on the table and holler and they won't get the bat of an eyelid. I went through this ordeal myself just recently.

Here we are sitting in this fancy place and I say, 'excuse meay', and raise my hand in a sort of nonchalant way. The waiter sails past. 'Helo-lo', I say, 'A moment, please'. No reaction. I wave. Both hands. Nothing. What are you doing, asks this lady on my right whom I have been trying to impress with my worldliness.

He's trying to catch the waiter's attention, says my wife, it always takes him a while.

This little wimp of a man escorting this lady I want to impress, a total nonstarter type, says, yes, they are a bit of a bother, aren't they?

By this time I am waving my arms like one of those air controllers on aircraft carriers bringing a Harrier in to land. No joy.

Here, let me try, says the drip and sort of flicks a finger.

In an instant a waiter appears.

Aha, I say, at last you noticed me, a bit tardy this evening, what?

You called, says the waiter to this other fellow.

Not him, I did, I say testily, now get some more pancakes to go with the crispy duck, will you?

Sorry Sir, only three pancakes per serving.

Don't be so silly, get more. I have never heard such nonsense in my life.

Sorry, says the steward curling his lip, rules are rules.

At which point this little chappie we brought along says, I think it would be a good idea if we got a stackful of pancakes, could you do that?

Of course, Sir, says the waiter going into a spaniel routine of gratitude just for being asked. He scampers off and returns with the pancakes.

Is it any wonder I have a complex? People tell me of the bargains they get. I whistle with amazement. Go on, I say you couldn't have got it so cheap. We did, says the buyer, no problem at all, in your position you will get an even better deal, you are a newspaper person, they will go out of their way to help.

True, I say, yes, true, I am a newspaper person, let me try. So I call up a friend and say listen I need a new music system, you have anything going in your company? Sure, he says, be glad to help, just mosey along and pick up what you like.

This seems to be working. So I fetch up and buy a XP 7000 with wireless or whatever and I say okay how hefty is the rebate.

Special discount for you, Sir, says the salesman, and he knocks off hundred dirhams.

What I save is this? A lousy hundred bucks?

Maximum, says the salesman, grinning widely.

Happened to me at Delhi Customs. I had heard that media wallahs are given kid glove treatment. You sail through, all sunshine and flowers. Don't muck about with the Press, not worth it.

I am a journalist, I say, as casually as one might say, don't you like my Picasso or my Ming vases?

So?

So nothing, just letting you know.

Why?

Why what?

Why are you letting me know you are a newspaperman?

No reason, just letting you know.

Are you threatening me?

Perish the thought.

You Press types think you can frighten us, you think I am scared?

Of course not, please forgive me, I am a silly little wimp.

---

*Bikram Vohra has been the Editor of 11 newspapers including Gulf News, Khaleej Times, Bahrain Tribune, Emirates Evening Post and helped in setting up Gulf Today*

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