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gourmet

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE FOR CHEFS
volume 8, issue 3**SHAWARMA
DRAMA**Our guest writer's take
on the quintessential
shawarma**SALON
INSIGHT**Exclusive moments and
medal winners caught on
camera at Gulfood**Bright Spark**Meet **Chef Mahesh Aruna**, the winner of the Best
Gastronomist award at the Salon Culinaire 2013**CHIEF
SPEAK**Otto Weibel, Chief
Judge at the Emirates
Salon Culinaire
reveals what goes on
behind the scenes**CHEF
OF THE
MONTH**Interview with
Executive Chef
Vinod Nair of the
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DELIGHT**Chef **Antonio's**
Italian recipes
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Dear Fellow Chefs, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the post Salon Culinaire issue of Gulf Gourmet for 2013. I am sure everyone is waiting with bated breath for the events photos. And to make sure that no one is disappointed, this year the guys at Gulf Gourmet promise to have all the images from the event spread across the March, April and May Issues.

I would once again like to thank all the competitors for their hard work and dedication towards our Salon Culinaire – you all are the real stars of the show. And while there can be no competition without competitors, the same goes for the organisers, judges and supporters and sponsors.

A big thank you to WACS President Gissur Gudmundsson, Chef Otto Weibel and his team of judges, and the Emirates Culinary Guild team for organising, planning and marshalling the event. There would also be no show without our sponsors, thank you to Nestle Professional and Sadia, our long time key supporters, John Holt foods, Barakat, US Dairy Council, Convotherm, Australian Meat, IFFCO, Master Baker, Ronai and of course RAK Porcelain.

We had another first this year with 16 individual competitive kitchens – thank you to Ginox, Manitowoc, Convotherm and Electrolux for the great support.

Our colleagues and visitors were well looked after at the show by Mr. Ronnie and the Masterbaker team at the Chef's Lounge. Not to forget the final evening, where our marshals and judges were hosted for dinner by Pro Chile.

As in the past, Jumeirah Emirates towers hosted the briefing and the welcome party for the judges and a big thank you for that.



I do apologise if I have forgotten any of our great supporters – there are many more, like the hotels hosts and meal sponsors. Thank you again to all – without you, we would not be able to stage such a great show.

Our next 3 important events are the UAE final for the Global Chef's Challenge, The Global Pastry Chef's Challenge and the Hans Bueschens Young Chef. Good luck to all the competitors, as the winner will represent the UAE in Namibia at the MEA final.

The website chefscomp2013.com for Taste of New Zealand, an existing competition with products for New Zealand, is now open for registration. Do not miss the chance; the winner will go to New Zealand.

The registration is also open for the Dilmah High Tea Competition. The

winner goes Sri Lanka, so please do register with Josephine at the ECG email theguild@eim.ae.

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 the Dubai Marina Beach Team for hosting the February meeting.

Culinary Regards,

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

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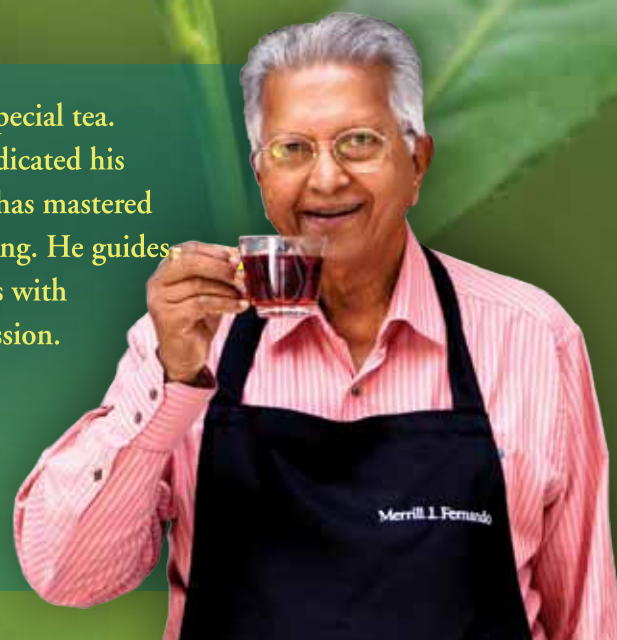
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March 2013 Gulf Gourmet

editor'snote

email editor@gulfgourmet.net



It is absolutely amazing to watch the meteoric rise of Gulfood. With each passing year the number of exhibitors increase, the number of visitors increase, the exhibition space increases; it's simply fascinating.

Equally fascinating is the rise in quality of participants at Salon Culinaire in Gulfood, the region's biggest Chefs competition and one of the most renowned on the world culinary map. The 1,300-odd Chefs that competed this year for the top honours were way better than the years gone by say the judges.

The big winner this year is Chef Mahesh from – no prizes for guessing – the Address Downtown Dubai. How does the Address Downtown do this year after year? I'm sure it all boils down to the support from the hotel's management. Kudos to the leadership for inspiring young chefs to dream big and for teaching them that the sky is the limit.

Our March issue also features images of winners at the Salon Culinaire. Those that could not be accommodated in this issue will be featured in the April and May editions. We have close to a 1,000 images from the Salon on our facebook page. Like our page, tag your friends and stay abreast of all the Chef news online.

Enjoy the read and keep cooking with passion.

Aquin George
Editor

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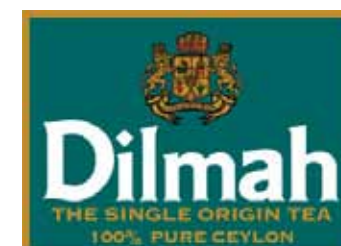
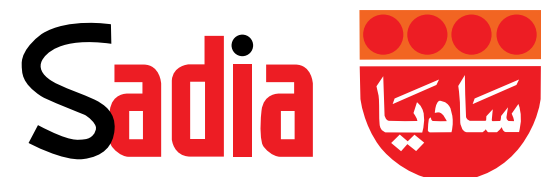
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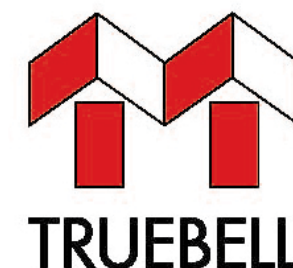


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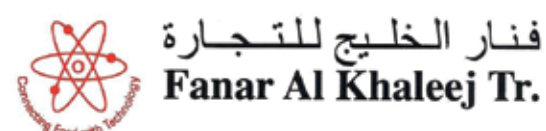


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newsbites



New Chef takes charge at Holiday Inn

Sandeep Kamal is the newly-appointed Executive Chef at Holiday Inn Dubai – Al Barsha. An Indian national, Chef Sandeep has worked in the Arabian Gulf hospitality sector for 10 years, starting his career in the region as part of the pre-opening team of Grand Hyatt Dubai.

Holding a diploma in hotel management from a prestigious college in New Delhi, India, Sandeep served an internship at the Leela Kempinski, before moving on to spend three years with Taj Hotels as Chef de Partie at various locations throughout India.

Most recently he worked with the Carlson Rezidor Group launching food and beverage operations at the Park Inn Muscat as Executive Chef. In his new role at Holiday Inn Dubai – Al Barsha, Sandeep is responsible for a team of 51 members, eight food and beverage outlets and six meeting rooms with a capacity of up to 400 people, as well as outside catering services.

"Sandeep is a very welcome addition to our team," said General Manager JS Anand. "Under his direction, we look forward to expanding our culinary menus and enhancing the reputation of the hotel as a dining destination with unique food and beverage concepts to suit a wide range of tastes."

New hotel manager appointments at Madinat Jumeirah



Azar Saliba has been appointed Hotel Manager of Jumeirah's Al Qasr and Dar Al Masyaf hotels. The Lebanese national has over 18 years of experience in the hospitality industry, and 7 years with the Jumeirah Group in the UAE. Prior to this appointment he worked as hotel manager for Mina A'Salam, where his passion for dealing with guests and colleagues was quickly recognised. Saliba takes time to forge relationships with clients and improve customer satisfaction, as well as developing the commitment of team members to the delivery of "Stay Different" experiences throughout the Arabian resort. He is one of the youngest hotel managers within the group today.



Gisele Clark has been appointed Hotel Manager of Mina A'Salam. Prior to joining the Jumeirah Group in 2010, she worked for well-known groups such as Firmdale Hotels and Thistle Hotels in London, The Swiss Grand Hotel in Australia, and Marriott. Clark brings with her an exceptional 22 years of experience spanning 8 countries. Over the past 3 years as General Manager – Operations Support, she provided key support to Jumeirah's properties in the Maldives, Azerbaijan, and Istanbul during their pre-opening phase, as well as to new openings worldwide. In her role as interim GM for Jumeirah Maldives during 2012, Clark inspired teams to deliver Jumeirah's hallmarks, and developed culturally connected experiences that gave back to the local community.

Horeca Trade and Roundmenu announce strategic partnership

Foodservice distributor Horeca Trade has announced a strategic partnership with RoundMenu.com to focus on driving footfall and increasing customer loyalty for their hospitality partners across the UAE.

With more than 1,500 customers across the UAE, ranging from hotels to restaurants to cafes and caterings, Horeca Trade is looking at ways to add further value to their partners in terms of helping to bolster business and trade, above and beyond simply delivering quality food and services.

RoundMenu was created not to drive one-off discount seeking diners, but to create a platform which offered discounts that are available on an annual basis, with no limit on how many times a diner can use the discount at each restaurant.

Hisham Al Jamil CEO of Horeca Trade commented on the partnership: "At Horeca Trade our number one priority is quality. We invest heavily into people, products, service, systems and marketing, to ensure that our customers get the very best value in what we offer."

Feast on Grills

Now "Eat More for Less" as you enjoy the ultimate grills by the beach at Casa Samak in Coral Beach Resort – Sharjah any day of the week. On offer are a wide selection of tantalizing kebabs and grills from the sub-continent and the Middle East. The lavish spread is available from 7 to 11pm daily for only AED 79 per person.

Jean Pierre Simon, Regional General Manager – Northern Emirates, Coral Hotels & Resorts, said, "Our chefs go daily to the local fish market in search of the finest fish. The key to making moist and flavourful meat is careful grilling and our chefs are experts in cooking these to perfection without giving a scorched or dry feeling."

The setting of the BBQ is equally enticing where you enjoy al fresco dining on the beach while taking in the scenic sea views. Jean Pierre said, "It is a wonderful experience. The atmosphere is truly gentle and beautiful where you can have a great time with your family and friends."

Dine in the Dark

A new dining concept will hit the city this month that will test the limits of the most refined palates and shed new light on heightening your senses, all while keeping you in the dark.

Dine in the Dark with **Chef Andy Campbell** is the latest new feature at Taste of Dubai at the Dubai Media City Amphitheatre from 14 to 16 March 2013. If you think you know your paprika from your pepper, this blindfolded dining experience is for you.

You will be served three large canapés, which will be hidden from view, allowing only your sense of smell, taste and texture to help you then choose 20 ingredients from a list of 100 and guess what you have sampled.

By correctly identifying the ingredients, you will be entered into a prize draw to win an exclusive fine dining experience in your own home courtesy of Chef Andy Campbell, worth AED 5,000.



Park Regis Kris Kin Hotel heads To Berlin

The Park Regis Kris Kin Hotel Dubai team is in Germany this month at the ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel and tourism show, in a bid to capture an increased share of both the German and other European markets.

The event traditionally attracts more than 10,000 exhibitors and 170,000 visitors and is a key venue for tour operators and agents to contract hotel rooms for the coming year, according to the hotel's Director of Sales & Marketing Patima Onnorn.

"While emerging markets such as China and Russia have shown tremendous growth in recent years, Germany remains a key source for us and we are keen to capitalize on interest shown by the 800 travel trade executives who attended the DERTOUR Academy in Dubai in December where agents and operators were briefed on new tourism attractions of the city," she said.

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

Gastronomic Superstar

The Address Downtown produces more winners this year at the Salon Culinaire. We interview the big winner

Until last month, very few industry folk knew of S. Mahesh Aruna Peters, a Senior Chef De Partie at The Address Downtown Hotel in Dubai. However, by the end of Day 4 at the Gulfood 2013 when the results of the Salon Culinaire had been announced, almost every chef knew the young culinarian.

He had just been named the Chef of the Year or 'Best Gastronomist' as the engraving on his trophy states.

We make a trip to the Address Hotel where his seniors have won similar awards in the past to meet the young prodigy. As he walks in for the interview, we realise that he neither has the aggression of Chef Daniel nor the build of Chef Asham, two of Address Hotel's previous big winners. Yet, he has got what they achieved – or at least partly – being featured on the cover of a magazine.

And even more in terms of an affable persona.

The 31-year-old Sri Lankan may have a long road to travel, yet he has shown the astute mind set of a winner. Ask the lad what sets him apart from his peers and he says, "The right attitude and my knowledge of the basics of cooking."

Conversing with Chef Mahesh makes you realise that he is following



My teacher was a Chinese Chef who spoke my native language Sinhalese. He taught me basics though some words were tough to remember

almost all the advice we hear Executive Chefs give time and again to young chefs. He works hard, reads cook books, gives extra importance to workplace hygiene, understands the basics of cooking, maintains a positive attitude at work, learns only from experienced chefs and refuses to while away his free time.

And the results are for all to see. In just 7 years, he's risen from Commis III to Senior Chef De Partie and has now won the biggest culinary competition in this part of the world. So how did Chef Mahesh get here?

The son of businessman and a homemaker, he is one of four siblings – three brothers and a sister – and is the only person in his family to work within the hospitality industry. His sister is a nurse, one brother is a businessman, and the other brother is a professional body builder and gym instructor.





Chef Shelton Mahesh Aruna Peters
with wife Surangi Madushani Silva
and daughter Sadhali Elisha Peters

He joined the industry after seeing a hotel school vacancy in the newspaper and decided to go in for it along with his friend. "I went in with the clear aim of becoming a chef because as a child I loved cooking. Mom would push me to cook as well."

Like most young chefs, he too had no clue about anything to do with professional cooking. "My teacher was a Chinese Chef who spoke my native language Sinhalese. He taught me basics though some words were tough to remember. Words like julienne and mirapoix would completely flummox me," he says.

Following his education, he along with his friend joined a small restaurant to cook. Here he worked for two years catering to small functions after which he joined the Galway Lodge in Sri Lanka.

As luck would have it, he got the opportunity to move to Dubai and work with the One and Only Royal Mirage. It is here that he truly learned the basics of cooking from

his Executive Chef Eric which helped build the foundations to a promising career. In two years he went from Commis III to Commis I and then moved to the Address Downtown for its opening almost 5 years ago.

In these five years he landed three promotions through his hard work and sheer determination and support from Chefs like Chef Dwayne, Chef Tushan and Chef Daniel. Seeing that he was surrounded by many award winning chefs, he decided to follow in their footsteps, learn from them and further his career.

So what are the best things about working for The Address? He says, "Even though the work culture here is quite tough, everybody helps each other here from the Executive Chef downwards. Communication here is excellent."

And how did competitions happen? "Chef Daniel pushed me to do my first competition. I learnt from him about competing successfully."

While Chef Mahesh has won many medals in the past, this time had to be different if he had to make a mark for himself. He says, "I practiced a lot more this year. Read a lot of books. My Exec Sous Chef Tushan and my Executive Chef Alain helped me a lot.

"I won two Gold medals and Silver Medal which made me the Chef of the Year. I was hoping to get three Golds but the judge didn't like the plate I chose with designs on it." So is there any Chef he looks up to and would like to emulate? His answer is Chef Tushan, his Executive Sous Chef. "I want to be like him someday," he says as a matter of fact.

Going forward Chef Mahesh nurtures the same dream as most other chefs which is to become Executive Chef someday. "I guess in addition to learning more about cooking I will have to be more computer savvy and improve my language skills. But I will surely get there," he says.



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The Executive Chef Speaks

"Guess who's won this year's Best Gastronomist award?" said the voice on the other end of the line. "Is it someone from The Address Downtown?" I ask. "That's right!" replies the voice with a tone that clearly said, no prizes for guessing.

It's almost no surprise now to hear that The Address has swept the awards at local and international cooking competitions. The only chance other hotels have to win the big medals is when the Chefs at The Address decide to take a breather.

This is why I couldn't help but ask Executive Chef Alain, "What are you feeding these guys?" Chef Alain has continued from where his predecessor had left off by showcasing that his team still has it in them to be adjudged the best at the toughest of competitions.

Chef Alain says, "We have a great team and it's all about team effort. This culture of winning has been passing down from generation to generation. The senior chefs have done competitions before, are good at it, and they teach the youngsters. They guide them and work sleepless nights to ensure what comes out is good enough. We try and translate that into our operation. And carry on that passion and consistency daily. This is a great team builder and these competitions works to our advantage. Our chefs don't leave us because no one likes to leave a winning team. In fact, other chefs want to join us."

When Hari Met Danny

Meet Hari Susanto, another aspiring Chef from the The Address Downtown Dubai. He bagged the 1st runner up prize at the Young Chef of the Year competition at Salon Culinaire last month.

We ran into the 21-year-old Indonesian during our interview with Chef Mahesh. The youngster with just three years of experience was beaten by his peer from the Atlantis Hotel by a small margin.

Ask him about the secret behind his success in his very first cooking competition and he reveals that the award was not a lucky break.

Last year, he helped some of his colleagues at the Salon Culinaire and realised that if they could do it, so could he. The Commis I worked rigorously for 4 months after work hours and did not take a single day off until the D-day at Salon Culinaire.

He ended winning three medals (Silver medal- beef practical cookery, silver medal- practical butchery chicken and fish, bronze medal- Emirati cuisine practical cookery) which helped him bag the big prize.

So who does he credit his win. "Chef Daniel is my teacher," is his prompt reply. "He would judge me and kept making me change my dish until I got the menu right." With a teacher like Chef Daniel, who was adjudged among the world's best last year, we can only wait and watch what this kid dishes out next.




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Pleasing all PALATES

Chef Vinod Nair, Executive Chef and Regional Fresh Foods Manager at EMKE Group, tells about his unusual rise to the top

Why did you choose cooking as a career?

Cooking and computers have always been my two main passions. I had to choose one for my career and the other as a hobby. Most people in my shoes would have chosen computers as a career and cooking as a hobby. I decided to do it the other way around and cooking became my career. Computers still remain my hobby; at last count I had assembled 106 computers worth hundreds of thousands of dirhams and I haven't charged a single penny for assembling them (smiles).

Tell us about your culinary journey thus far.

My culinary journey began with helping my mom in the kitchen. As the son of an Army man, I was lucky enough to travel across India and learn about various cuisines. Once I had decided on cooking as a career, I joined IHM in Mumbai, Asia's best college for catering and hospitality management. I interned those days with leading luxury hotel groups



I am inclined towards fusion, basically Indian cooking with Continental presentation. That said my specialty is food and ice carvings

such as the Taj and the Oberoi.

After graduating, I joined The Leela Mumbai because they offered the maximum learning experience as compared to other equally prestigious hotel groups such as the Taj. The pay was poor but the knowledge I gained there was worth it. Even as a management trainee I was able to work across all sections of the kitchen. After a few months I moved to The Leela Goa and some years later I worked at the Sheraton in Fiji Islands.

You have a strong hotel background both in terms of education and experience. How did Lulu Hypermarkets and Department Stores come into the picture?

Following the coup in Fiji, I moved to Dubai as a Bakery Chef for the Hypermarket in Qusias in 2000. I was quickly promoted to Executive Chef for the Hypermarket, then Corporate Executive Chef for 16 branches across Dubai and Northern Emirates and now I have the added responsibility as Regional Fresh Foods Manager. This involves ensuring that only the best meats, fish, cold cuts, vegetables and fruits are sold in our supermarkets and I overlook the quality of foods sold through our Bakeries, Roastery (dry fruits and nuts) Cold Kitchens and Hot Kitchens.

Why did you stay here this long?





I have stayed here for over 12 years because the role here is more varied than that of a typical Executive Chef in a 5-star hotel. Our customers do not fit just a specific profile. We cater to people from all walks of life. Our customers come from the East,

Indian sub-continent, Middle East and Europe and from various age and income groups. Cooking high quality dishes that are value for money and suit all palates is no easy task. I am proud to say that none of our supermarket competitors come even close to us as far as taste and variety is concerned.

Also, at Lulu we have a very conducive work environment promoted by the management. I have grown personally and professionally under the dynamic leadership and guidance of our Director, Mr. Salim M.A. I have also been lucky enough to work closely with our Managing Director, Mr. Yusuf Ali and have the opportunity to cook for VIP guests.

Lulu today undoubtedly has the finest range of cooked food

250kg

Today, the Lulu Qusais Hypermarket alone sells 250 kilograms of beef each day!

as far as supermarket chains are concerned. How did you manage this?

I still remember the apprehension when I suggested we should cook 5 kilograms of beef a day at the Lulu Qusais Hypermarket in early 2000. Today, the Lulu Qusais Hypermarket alone sells 250 kilograms of beef each day!

None of this would have been possible without a visionary management and a strong team that is always willing to learn and teach. Truth be told, I not only teach my team members but I also learn from them. In a 5-star hotel you need to be a master of one to be recognised. Here a jack of all trades wins. My chefs have learned to cook a variety of cuisines during their tenure at Lulu. When someone in my team finishes with his work, he will quickly go and help the person cooking another cuisine.

What kind of cooking style do you prefer?

I am inclined towards fusion, basically Indian cooking with Continental presentation. That said my specialty is food and ice carvings.

How was it using Nonions?

It was a new experience at first because we were apprehensive about how the food would taste. For example, we use fresh ginger-garlic paste as packaged paste spoils the taste. However, with our feedback, Nonions turned out to be a perfect alternative to fresh onions. We now use it in large quantities in Lulu. As you know, in Indian cooking, onions play an integral role and a lot of time is wasted on it.

Today, that time is saved. At first there was a bit of resistance to change. But after a blind tasting – which almost all got wrong – we are now using Nonions in our dishes and our curries continue to be fast-moving items.



YAM & PANEER KOFTA IN ONION CASHEW GRAVY

INGREDIENTS

For Kofta	
Yam	200gms
Paneer	150gms
Nonions Sautéed Onion Paste	50gms
Red Capsicum (small cubes)	25gms
Green Capsicum (small cubes)	25gms
Garlic	(Fine chopped)
Fresh/Frozen Green Peas	25gms
Asafoetida (Hing) powder	1tsp
Garam masala powder	1tsp
Turmeric powder	1/2tsp
Crushed black pepper	1tsp
Dry bread crumbs	2tbsp
Bengal gram flour	2tbsp
Coriander leaves (chopped)	1tbsp
Oil	for deep frying
Salt	as required

For Gravy	
Nonions Boiled Onion Paste	200gms
Cashewnut Powder	100gms
Tomato puree	50gms

Garam masala powder	1tsp
Red chilli powder	1tsp
Oil	for frying
Grind together	
Green chillies	2
Ginger	1 inch
Garlic	5 flakes

PREPARATION

- For Koftas**
- Remove outer skin and cut yam into thick chunks.
 - Heat water in a broad vessel. When it starts boiling, add yam pieces and cook till soft.
 - Strain water completely and spread the pieces over a cloth to dry up the moisture. Allow to cool.
 - Mash the yam and add Bengal gram flour, breadcrumbs, hing powder and salt. Knead it into smooth dough.
 - In a pan, heat oil, add garlic. Add **Nonions Sautéed Onion Paste**, capsicums and green peas. Add the powder spices and pepper.
 - Crumble the paneer coarsely and mix

- with the above sautéed vegetables. Add coriander leaves and take off fire and let it cool down.
- Take a ball of the yam paste, flatten it on your palm and stuff it with the paneer mixture.
 - Shape the kofta into a large oval shape and deep fry to golden brown. Keep Aside.

- For Gravy**
- Heat oil in a pan and add the ginger, garlic, green chilli paste and sauté.
 - Add cashew powder and stir well. Add the spices.
 - Add tomato puree and sauté. Add **Nonions Boiled Onion Paste** and continue cooking till the raw flavour disappears.
 - Add water to adjust the consistency, add salt & let it simmer.
 - Cut the Kofta lengthwise into halves. Pour some gravy onto the serving plate, place the koftas in the centre and garnish with fine juliennes of ginger, sprigs of coriander leaves and a swirl of cream.

New judges, first impressions...



Montasser M. Masoud

“The Salon Culinaire is really something amazing for the Middle East. For me it's great to meet chefs from around the world, to share knowledge and also see what the competitors are dishing up. I have travelled and worked around the world and I can tell you that the standards are very high here. It's a great experience for young chefs. On the flip side, I'm learning a thing or two from the young competitors too!

— **Montasser M. Masoud**
Executive Chef
Dar Al Tawhid Intercontinental
Makkah, Saudi Arabia

“I'm judging the ice carving section of this competition. To be honest, I'm very impressed with the level of these young artists but there's definitely a little room for improvement. A comment I'd like to make is that a lot of them are sculpting figures that resemble fish. While these ice sculptures are good, I'd recommend them to try their hand at creating other figures. I would like to be back here next year to extend my support to all the young contestants and share my



Alan Payen



Kenny Kong

knowledge to encourage chefs to chase their passion and not just money!

— **Alan Payen**
Director and Executive Chef
Le Bon Choix Mauritius

“This is the first international competition I'm participating in as a judge. I'm judging the ice carvings section. I come from a country where there's no chance of getting ice like this. We have seen some really impressive carvings over the last two days. I'd love to come back to Dubai next year for the Salon Culinaire as a judge.

— **Tom Mutavdzic**
T&T Hospitality Training
Windhoek Namibia

“As the President and Co-founder of the Saudi Chefs Association and having run the Salon Culinaire in Saudi for the last few years I can tell you that the level here is really high. Chefs are of a very high standard at the hotels in Dubai and this is reflected in the competition. I'm judging the Emarati food preparations at the moment.



Tom Mutavdzic



Nabil El Souaf



There's definitely room for improvement in terms of the live cooking but the art is just superb! I'd advise the young guys to speak to their chefs because ultimately their chef has to have the capacity to advise them on what they are doing right or wrong.

— **Nabil El Souaf**
Corporate Executive Chef
Saudia

“It's definitely a competition of international standards. The Salon Culinaire is a great place for us to share ideas and knowledge with other chefs. The focus here remains the same as other top international competitions around the world – it is on taste and food hygiene. Presentation comes after. I've noticed that a few of the chefs were nervous and made mistakes as a result of that. I think that we as judges need to support these young chefs by giving them constructive feedback. With regards to desserts, I would like to advise these young chefs to focus on the taste of the dishes rather than working heavily of the presentation – a successful dessert is one that can be made for the competition and should be easily replicated in a restaurant setting. Nothing too complicated.

— **Kenny Kong**
Executive Pastry Chef
Resorts World at Sentosa, Singapore



The Final Arbitrator

We speak with **Otto Weibel**, the Chief Judge at this year's Salon Culinaire to find out what happens behind the scenes before the judging begins

What happens at the judges briefing?

Basically, the judges briefing happens to ensure that the judges are all on the same page. As you know, WACS is the world body for chefs and it is my job to ensure that they are all at the same level.

We now also have the judges' seminar at the venue of the Salon Culinaire. It's essentially to bring new judges up to standard. What's important is that you, as a judge, are setting a standard. This includes behaving appropriately, being properly dressed and giving proper feedback to the contestants.

The latter is very important in that the feedback should be positive so as not to destroy the confidence of a young participant but at the same time constructive so that the contestants get an idea of how to improve next time around.

Also, another aspect of the judges briefing is to instruct judges on how to tackle a situation wherein two judges have wildly different opinions about a particular entry. In this case the judges have to discuss the results, justify their opinions and find a middle ground. Our goal is to standardise judging – if a competitor wins a gold medal here in Dubai, then the same creation should win a gold medal in, say, Singapore.



Any interesting experiences with judges in the past?

Sure! At the IKA Culinary Olympics last year we had a judge who was late every single day. After repeated warnings we struck him off as a judge because it's not fair on the competitors and the other jury members. Sure, small mistakes can be tolerated but there has to be discipline.

As the Chief Judge have you ever experienced any dissent from other senior judges as they have to take instructions from you?

As a Chief Judge I do have arbitrate

from time to time and overrule some decisions made by the judges. That said I have been in the business for a long time and all the judges know me well. So in general I don't have any problems with the judges.

What's the most important attribute a culinary judge must have?

Judges must be up to date – a lot of the pieces here at the Salon Culinaire are modern and it's absolutely important that judges have update themselves about world culinary food trends in terms of taste, styling and presentation.

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Do you want fries in that?

Olivia Atkinson recounts her first tryst with the shawarma and the generous portions consumed whilst figuring out the need for fries in it



The shawarma and I were first introduced eleven years ago. At the time I was a born and bred Kiwi kid with a tendency to gravitate towards the fast food classic of fish n' chips, steering clear of anything vaguely exotic sounding. After landing on Middle Eastern soil, my parents decided that a forced broadening of my taste buds was in order. With this notion in one hand and a map of old Dubai in the other, we set out on a culinary quest of sorts – one that sparked my interest in the beloved shawarma.

For those unfamiliar with the food, a shawarma might be nothing more than Iron Man's preferred post-battle snack. Robert Downey Jr.'s random mention of them in the blockbuster hit 'The Avengers' seemed to spark a bit of a curiosity craze, I'll give him that. But here in the UAE you'd be hard pressed to find a true shawarma enthusiast who credits the Marvel movie for their shawarma discovery.

Those who call Dubai home have probably had their fair share of the popular Levantine sandwich – both good ones and not so good ones. Even so, whether it's your local shawarma stand or some fancy restaurant, there's nothing better than the harmonious combination of a piece of Arabic bread stuffed with meat, pickles, tomato and that delicious garlicky sauce. The meat, usually chicken or lamb is cut with an abnormally large knife from a rotating vertical meat tower or just falls into a circular tray at the bottom of the spit. Fun fact. The Arabic word 'shawarma' originates from the Turkish word çevirme, which means 'turning'. This method allows the meat to cook from the outside and in its own juices, giving it a flavour that completely kicks regular grilled meat out of the competition.

Of course, as with anything, there are regional variations on the shawarma

itself but the question I want to pose is, what's with the French fries?

I like a fry just as much as the next person provided that it's crispy on the outside and soft and fluffy on the inside. Needless to say I was somewhat confused to find a trio of soggy fries nestled in my supposedly traditional shawarma on that fateful day eleven years ago. I read somewhere that the fries were a tactical move to soak up the juices from the meat and the sauce. If I'm not mistaken, fries plus liquid equals a limp, sodden potato strand and who wants to eat that? ... most people I've discovered.

Then there's the health nut perspective. These days' people are gradually giving more thought into what they are putting in their mouths; calories, macronutrients and whatnot. The shawarma is considered to be a fast and fairly nutritious meal, minus the addition of the French fries.

Granted, they do add a textural element to the shawarma. They also provide a bit of bulk. And if you'd rather keep the sauce in the sandwich itself rather than have it run down your arm then, hey, I suppose it's a bit of a clever concept. And I'm sure no one is going to throw their toys out of the cot for adding a French fry or two to their dinner intake.

I do draw the line however when the quantity of French fries outweighs the meat – which is the highlight of the shawarma itself. The sacrifice of the glorious protein for the starchy excess carbohydrate does not go unnoticed.

As you can imagine, during my research for this article, I consumed copious amount of shawarma. I found that most vendors were more than happy to accommodate for my request of 'shawarma, hold the fries.' So if you're Team Sans-Frites, you're in luck, just don't forget to ask for an extra napkin or two.



THREADS OF GLORY

Executive Sous Chef Antonio Iacovelli of the Amwaj Rotana JBR reveals his favourite ingredient



Saffron is a very versatile ingredient; it naturally blends with many other dishes due to its particular taste, aroma and colour

What is your specialty?

As an Italian, I am influenced by the Mediterranean way of cooking – keeping it simple with a natural look and above all ensuring extraordinary execution. My approach varies between modern and traditional techniques.

Could you tell us about your previous experience?

I started my career at the age of 18, working in a few places across Italy followed by a 3-year stint in London perfecting my craft. I then moved to Spain where I was lucky to work in a 2-star Michelin restaurant as an unpaid kitchen hand. This was a stressful job but a great training ground for me in fine dining. Here I felt the satisfaction of working in a kitchen.

My restlessness took me to Miami where I worked with the Bice Group followed by a stint in Bratislava Slovak Republic for 3 years. Here I managed 4 restaurants as Executive Chef. It was an amazing experience for me. I came to Dubai to work at Florian's Café before joining Rotana Hotels as an Italian Chef at Rosso and am presently an Executive Sous Chef.

While cooking, what is your favourite ingredient?

One of my favourite is Saffron; it's always been one of the top ingredients that come to mind.

Why do you like this ingredient so much?

Saffron is a very versatile ingredient; it naturally blends with many other dishes due to its particular taste, aroma and colour.

How does this ingredient enhance the dishes you create in terms of flavour, colour and taste?

Ever since I started my craft, I have always been using Saffron in my dishes for several reasons. Firstly, because we do have massive productions of saffron in Italy, secondly, I can use saffron in various ways i.e. Saffron oil and any saffron based stock as a natural colorant. Needless to mention, that it can be used with fish, meat, vegetable well as in preparing deserts.

How you were first introduced to this ingredient?

Looking back from the early years of my craft, Saffron is widely used and known in Italy but I came to know it's used during my tenure in Spain in a fine dining restaurant.

From where do you get the best quality product?

I get the best from our local supplier, who imports saffron from Italy and Spain.

How versatile is Saffron and in how many kinds of dishes and cuisines can it be used?

If you really would like me to answer this question, you should visit me for at least a week (smiles). Jokes apart, it can be used widely from anything from starter right up to the dessert.

If for some reason you can't get this ingredient, is there a substitute available?

No, unfortunately there is just no other substitute for Saffron. However, if I will just have to use saffron to add colour to a dish, I would substitute it with Turmeric.

How important or indispensable is Saffron in your culinary scheme of things?

As a 100% pure Italian (smiles), it's certainly fundamental for a lot of my authentic signature dishes.



SAFFRON PANNA COTTA, BEETROOT SPONGE AND CANDIED TOMATOES

INGREDIENTS

Cream	500gr
Saffron	2gr
Sugar	120gr
Gelatine	6gr
Flour	150gr
Egg yolk	60gr
Egg white	120gr
Icing sugar	40gr
Boiled beetroot	50gr
Beetroot powder	20gr
Plum tomato	100gr
Orange blossom water	

FOR THE PANNA COTTA

- ◆ Bring to simmer the cream and remove from the heat
- ◆ Add saffron, sugar and gelatine, stir well and leave to infuse for about 10 minute
- ◆ Pour the panna cotta into desire shape and refrigerate for 4 hours before use

FOR THE BEETROOT SPONGE

- ◆ In glass blender, place flour, egg yolk, egg white, icing sugar, freeze dry beetroot powder, boiled beetroot and blend till it get smooth
- ◆ Pass the sponge dough trough a five sieve and fill up in a syphone
- ◆ Close it and charge with 2 capsule, leave to rest for 2 hours in fridge
- ◆ Practice 2 small holes in a plastic glass and fill by half with the beetroot sponge
- ◆ Cook in the microwave for 45 second full power
- ◆ Chill it and set aside

FOR THE CANDIED TOMATO

- ◆ Blanche a plum tomato and remove the skin
- ◆ Cut it in 4 wedgies and remove the seeds
- ◆ Using a small pasta cutter procure as much confetti as possible
- ◆ Place some honey in a non stick pan and bring to simmer
- ◆ Add the tomatoes, sea salt and a touch of water

- ◆ Leave to cook till tomato is tender, leave it to chill and then remove it from the honey

SERVING

- ◆ Place as centre piece the panna cotta
- ◆ Break the sponge delicately spread it in the plate
- ◆ Add the candied tomato and mist with orange blossom water



SAFFRON CALAMARI, ZUCCHINI TARTAR, MOREL MUSHROOM AND FAVA BEANS

INGREDIENTS

Fresh squid	500gr
Saffron	2gr
Fish stock	200gr
Green zucchini	200gr
Yellow zucchini	200gr
Red radicchio	100gr
Plum tomato	100gr
Fresh fava beans	500gr
Sea salt	5gr
Evoo	100gr
Morel mushroom	20gr
Butter	20gr
Cinnamon	a pinch
Roasted garlic	5gr

FOR THE CALAMARI

- ◆ Clean the fresh squid and open the body with a sharp knife
- ◆ Cross the inside meat and place the

squid in a vacuum bag

- ◆ Boil some clear fish stock till reduction (by half)
- ◆ Add the saffron, cover with cling film and leave to infuse till it gets totally cold
- ◆ Place the saffron fish stock along with the squid and seal the bag
- ◆ Leave to macerate for 4 hours
- ◆ After macerating open the bag, dress the squid with a good olive oil and sea salt
- ◆ Sear the squid in a non stick pan till they curl, keep warm and set aside

FOR THE ZUCCHINI TARTAR

- ◆ Remove the green part and yellow part from the zucchini
- ◆ Cut the 2 part in fine brunoise and place in a mixing bowl
- ◆ Add a fine brunoise a red radicchio and plum tomato
- ◆ Dress the tartar with extra virgin olive oil, sea salt and touch of lemon juice, set aside

FOR THE FAVA BEANS AND MOREL MUSHROOM

- ◆ Boil in a pot with salted water
- ◆ Blanche for few seconds the fresh fava beans and place immediately in an ice bath
- ◆ Peel the fava bean and dress with extra virgin olive oil, sea salt and set aside in a warm place
- ◆ Meantime heat a film of olive oil, and pan fry the morel mushroom (that are been soaked in water before)
- ◆ After being sautéed for 1 minute, add knot of butter, roasted garlic, pinch of cinnamon and sea salt, and set it aside

SERVING

- ◆ Place a pasta cutter into the plate and fill it with the zucchini tartar
- ◆ Remove the ring and add the warm squid
- ◆ Place around and in an elegant way the morel mushroom and fava beans
- ◆ Add on top of each squid some saffron treat and finish with a good extra virgin olive oil



COD BLANQUETTE, MANILA CLAMS, SAFFRON FUMET AND CORIANDER

INGREDIENTS

Fish stock	500gr
Cream	100gr
Saffron	2gr
Butter	40gr
Sea salt	5gr
Manila clams	200gr
Evoo	100gr
Black eye cod	500gr
Baby carrot	100gr
Pearl onion	100gr
Violet artichokes	100gr
Baby leeks	100gr
Fresh coriander	10gr
Coriander oil	10gr

FOR THE SAFFRON FUMET

- ◆ Simmer 500ml of clear fish stock until reduction (by half)
- ◆ Add 100gr of cream, butter and saffron treat, continue to simmer till the stock

reaches 150ml, and keep it warm

FOR THE BABY VEGETABLE

- ◆ Heat a film of oil on a non stick pan and add the baby vegetable, carrot, onion, beans, artichoke, leeks and sautéed on low fire
- ◆ Add some vegetable stock and touch of butter and continue to cook till stock is completely evaporate and vegetable result glazed
- ◆ Sprinkle with coriander leaves and set aside

FOR THE COD AND CLAMS

- ◆ Place the clams in a sauce pan with a touch of water and olive oil, cover and bring to simmer
- ◆ As soon the clams open remove from the heat and immediately clean the meat from the shell
- ◆ Heat a film of oil in a non stick pan and sear the black eye cod skin side down first for about 3 to 4 minute
- ◆ Flip the cod and remove from the heat

and leave it to cook in the pan

- ◆ Add the clams' meat and gently toss it

SERVING

- ◆ Place the saffron fumet on the bottom of a deep plate
- ◆ Add the cod and clams
- ◆ Arrange nicely the baby vegetable around and finish with a twist of coriander oil



ECG monthly meet

Chef Talal Jaradat and his team from the Dubai Marine Beach Resort and Spa hosted last month's Emirates Culinary Guild meeting. The final meeting before the big event – Salon Culinaire – saw a huge turnout of close to 70 top chefs and close to 10 leading food suppliers such as Nestle and Nonions at the meet.

Corporate members of the Guild also took this opportunity to present their latest offerings – such as Chef Vivek's presentation of Nonions products and IFFCO talking about its Allegro pasta brand. Chef Uwe Micheel presided over the event and introduced two new corporate members.

The topics for the event included Salon Culinaire Chef Entries that closed at 1,300 registrations, addendum update to the Class of Briefs by Chef Prasad, New Judging points from WACS for live cooking competitions, ECG Marshals meet and Young Chef Committee handling ECG merchandising.

That apart, also discussed were the MLA Beef Training Workshop, the UAE team at the 1st Thailand Culinary World Cup, the Dilmah High Tea competition, the Green Box to be organised by the Irish Council, the Taste of New Zealand event, the Bur Juman Young Chef – ECG Treat in May and the Al Qasba Food Festival running from March 28 – April 17.

Here are some of the images from the event.





SalonMoments

In a first of three series, Amaresh Bhaskaran brings you moments captured at the Salon Culinaire 2013 and the smiles of winners who made their mark at the biggest culinary competition seen in this part of the world. If you do not see a moment representing your victory, fret not. We will have a lot more images from the Salon Culinaire in the April and May issues as well.

















EMIRATES SALON CULINAIRE 2013 - TROPHIES

AWARDS	HOTEL	NAME
Best Hygiene Award - Diversey (on stage Mr Simon House) F&B Director of Sealdair	The Ritz Carlton Riyadh KSA	Baburam Dhakal
Best Hygiene Award - Boecker (On stage Mr. Antoine Masse) Country Manager	Grovesnor House	Nazrul Molla
Winner - Best Effort by an Individual Establishment - Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	The Atlantis the Palm	
Winner - Best Effort by a Corporation - Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	Jumeirah Group	
Winner - Best Arabian Cuisinier - Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	Al Ain Rotana	Alaa Salameh
Winner - Best Pastry Chef - Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	Radisson Blu Deira Creek	W.A. Sachithra Danendra
Winner - Best Kitchen Artist - Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	Burj Al Arab Hotel	Rohita Kumara Kasthuriachchi
Best Gastronomist - 2nd Runner-up Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	Jumeirah Emirates Tower Hotel	Bikash Bonny Gomes
Best Gastronomist - 1st Runner-up Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	Zaabeel Hospitality	Georges Bsharah Nakhle
Winner - Best Gastronomist - Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	The Address Downtown Hotel	Maresh Aruna Peters
Young Chef of the Year - 2nd Runner-up Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	Radisson Blu Deira Creek	H.D. Mithun Chamika
Young Chef of the Year - 1st Runner-up Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	The Address Downtown Dxb	Hari Susanto
Winner - The Middle East Young Chef of the Year - Emirates Salon Culinaire Dubai 2013	The Atlantis the Palm	Bholanath Pandey

BEST CLASS AWARD

NAME OF THE WINNER	HOTEL	CLASS DESCRIPTION	MEDAL AWARD	AWARD	REMARKS
Ayaaz Seema Mohamed	The Address Downtown Hotel	Practical Cookery - Beef	Gold	\$ 1,000 cheque award	MLA
Bunleth Sign	Ferrari World AD	Bread Loaves & Showpiece	Gold	Trip to Germany	Not available to receive the award
Surojit Aloysius Haldar	The Address Downtown Hotel	Four Course Vegetarian Menu	Silver (highest score from silver)	3rd runner up for best in calss	Cheese board, recipe book & USB
Heshan Sameera	The Address Downtown Hotel	Four Course Vegetarian Menu	Gold	2nd runner up for best in class	Cheese board, recipe book & USB
Nalin Susantha	Al Murooj Rotana	Four Course Vegetarian Menu	Gold	1st runner up for best in class	Cheese board, recipe book & USB
Shyju Varghese	Dubai World Trade Center	Tapas Finger & Canapes	Gold with total score of 274	3rd runner up for best in class	Cheese board, recipe book & USB
Baby Chandana Kuzhiyil Mathai	Zaabeel Palace Hospitality Dxb	Tapas Finger & Canapes	Gold with total score of 283	2nd runner up for best in class	Cheese board, recipe book & USB
Priyantha Indrajith Gurubadallage	Zaabeel Palace Hospitality Dxb	Tapas Finger & Canapes	Gold with total score of 291	1st runner up for best in class	Cheese board, recipe book & USB

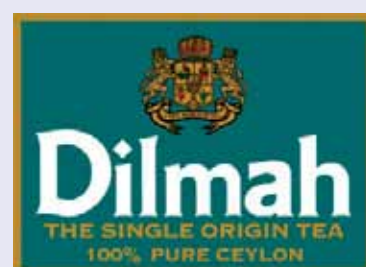


Vivette Anklesaria Brand Representative and Merill J. Fernando Founder and Chairman receiving the membership certificate from Chef Uwe Micheel, President, Emirates Culinary Guild

Dilmah – the finest Single Origin tea from Ceylon

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Dilmah is unique; a brand that is founded on a passionate commitment to quality and authenticity in tea. Founder of Dilmah, Merrill J. Fernando, declared his commitment to tea in the 1950s, when he devoted his life to tea. Four decades later he was joined by his two sons, Dilhan and Malik (after whom he named his Dilmah Tea) who share his



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Elias Rached, Regional Director Sales MENA, Rabi Al Aaraj Business Development Manager Application Chef Sales MENA, Stephan Kammel Regional Vice President International Sales and Ludger Mai Teamleiter Anwendungstechnik receiving the membership certificate from Chef Uwe Micheel, President, Emirates Culinary Guild

MKN is the German specialist for the design, production and worldwide sales of professional cooking technology. Its complete product range consists of the HansDampf combisteamer, the tailor made and unique KÜCHENMEISTER cooking range, the MKN classic appliances and the multifunctional FlexiChef. With all these appliances MKN is at home in the best kitchens in the world, whether in hotels and restaurants, in community catering, in catering chains, in star rated gastronomy, in catering or on luxury liners.

The MKN GreenTeam, consisting of national and international specialists, has been concentrating on the subject of environmental protection and sustainability for some time now. In order to implement the SaveEarth concept, MKN has introduced an integrated environmental and quality management system which was awarded the ISO 14001 certificate.

The MKN FlexiChef convinces chefs with its multifunctionality when it comes to running a kitchen in a fast, flexible and efficient manner. Cooking, frying, pressure cooking and deep frying – with this multi-talented



Master of Performance

appliance everything is possible, separately from one another of course, on a small surface. The pan can even be divided in up to four zones. This means, when frying, that a complete meal can be prepared, e.g. with different temperatures in only one pan. In addition, the heating system Turbo PowerBlock has a resource-saving effect as energy is only directed where it is absolutely required.

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The FlexiChef® has been awarded the Gulfood Award 2012 in the category equipment for its technical innovations. The award also honours the highly effective marketing concept behind the successful market launch of the new product. Criteria such as customer satisfaction, brand awareness and sustainability were decisive for the international jury of independent industry experts. In particular, the strong innovative capacity and considerable savings potential of the new multifunctional cooking appliance FlexiChef® convinced the jury.



gulf gourmet

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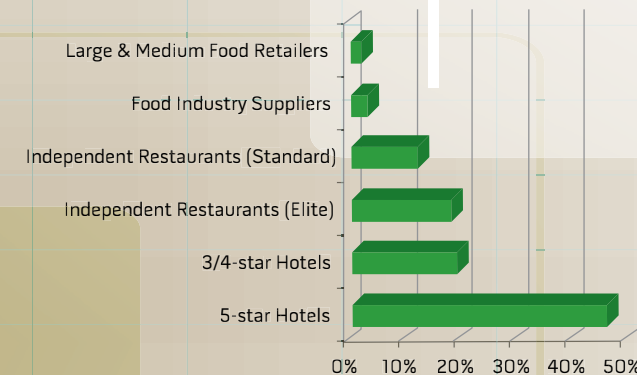
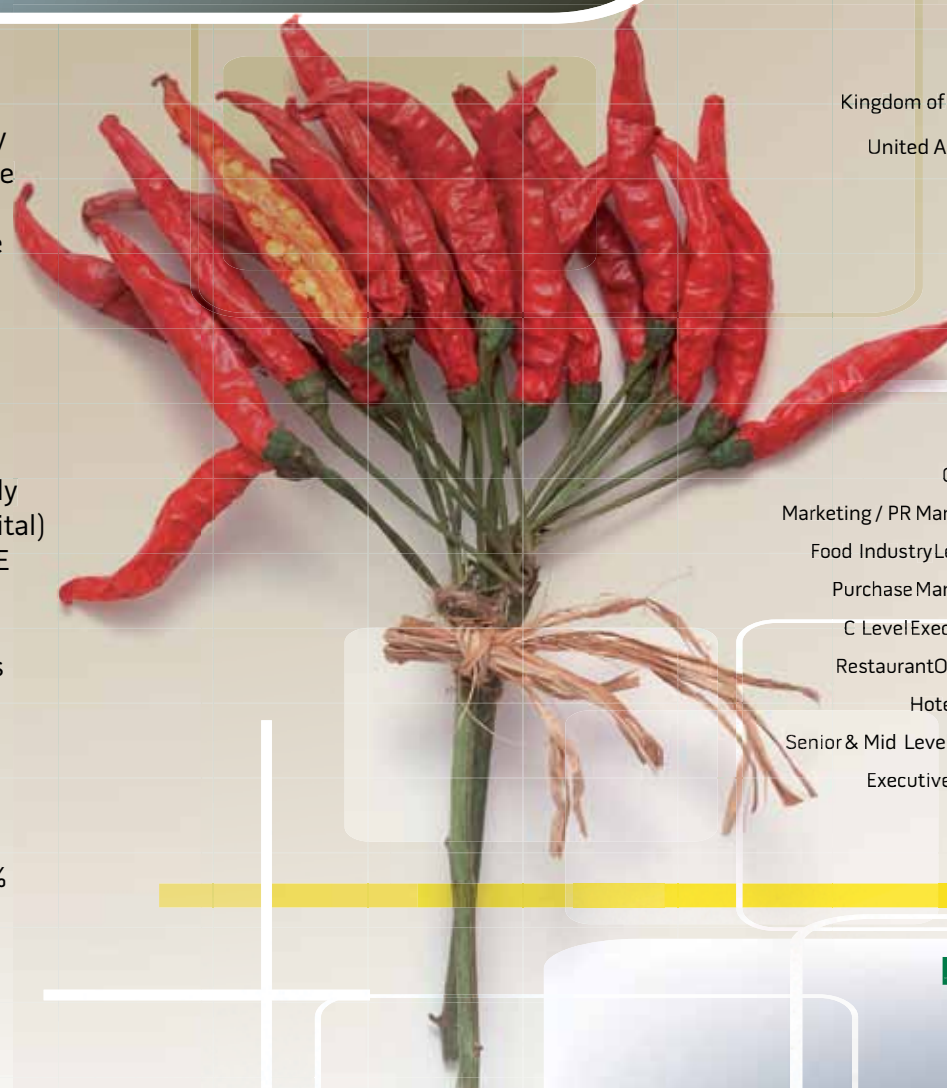
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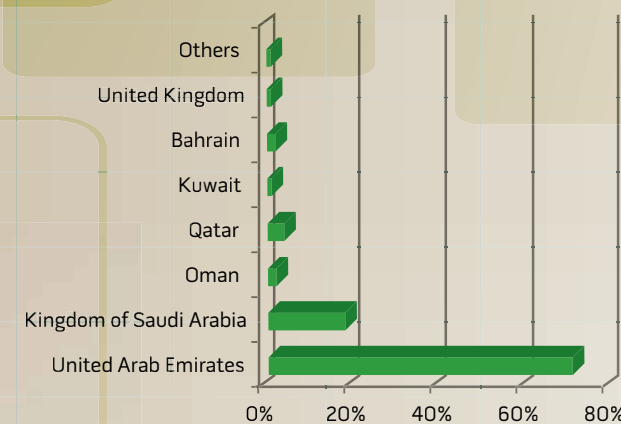
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- ◆ Senior & Mid-Level Chefs 36%
- ◆ Hotel GMs 10%
- ◆ Restaurant Owners 15%
- ◆ C-Level Executives 2%
- ◆ Purchase Managers 7%
- ◆ Food Industry Leaders 4%
- ◆ Marketing / PR Managers 1%
- ◆ Others 2%



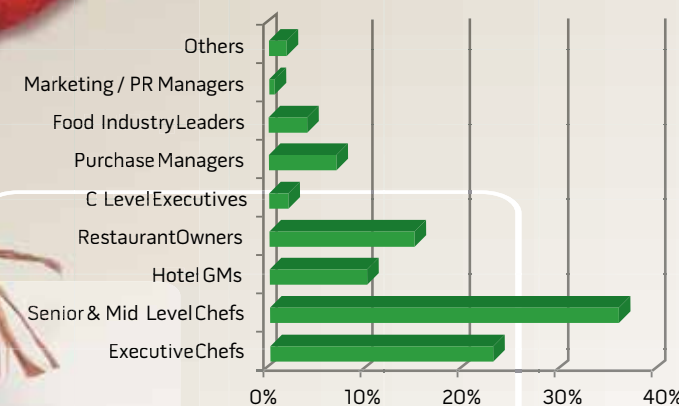
MARKET SEGMENTATION

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%



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%



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%

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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:

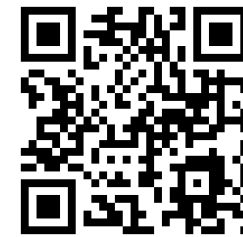
Above the rank of chef de partie (or senior chef de partie on executive chef's recommendation).
Dhs.350/=joining. Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar. Dhs.
150/=per year thereafter.

Affiliate Member:

Dhs.350.00 for the first year. Dhs.300 per year thereafter.

Corporate Member

Dhs. 20,000 per year

**big
daddy's**
kitchen

One of my favourite culinary personalities is Chef Rick Stein and his show Food Heroes. He did a few other variations of the series, however the core of his program was about him traveling, discovering and saluting small restaurants and food establishments that are more dedicated to delivering Real Food for generations to come and less concerned about the bottom line. These are unsung heroes on the frontlines, battling against the conformity of offering a side of fries with every dish. Real Food Heroes!

I Need a HERO

I was in a remote part of Turkey a few weeks ago on business and was once again eager to taste the food. I love Turkish food. To me, it's a cross between costal Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisine. Very colourful with emphasis on fresh ingredients, lots of meat with the right balance of seasoning, and bread... I just love their bread, basic and uncomplicated.

My colleague and I arrived at the hotel early evening. After checking in to our rooms, we rode the elevator down and noticed a poster with a picture of a large cut of beef "Try the Sea Salt T-Bone Steak at our Restaurant". Though I appreciated the fact that the choice cut of beef was not treated with unnecessary spices or marinades, I still felt wrong about coming all the way here and having steak. If I want a good steak, I'll just fire up my grill.

Still, we approached the concierge and asked about a good place to eat around here. Of course, like any well trained hotel staff, the first option is always the resident restaurants. It tickled me when he suggested the Sea Salt T-Bone Steak. As if the large poster in the elevator was not enlightening enough. He continued "there are not a lot of restaurants around here... and we really should try the ones in the hotel".

We went for a walk and despite the rain and the cold weather searched for an alternative to the Sea Salt T-Bone Steak. I have to admit; we were limited for choices as there really were not that many restaurants around. A few sandwich shops and a couple of other hotel restaurant types that looked like they had not seen customers in weeks.

As we headed back to the hotel we noticed a small restaurant

across the street with a few diners. I felt a little glimmer of hope as we walked in. First observation: clean tables-check, clean floor-check, tidy staff-check, local customers that looked very much like 'regulars'-check, homey aroma of food with a slight undertone of grilled meat-double check!

As soon as I opened the menu I started to smile like someone who has discovered a treasure without even really looking for one. You know the feeling when you just know something good is about to happen, but you don't know what it is yet... kind of intrigued and content at the same time? The menu looked lean and uniform, 2 soups, 3 salads, 3-4 pastries with meat or cheese, 6-7 variations of kebabs or grills that would be offered with rice or in a sandwich, and 4 desserts.

It was clean, easy on the kitchen and enough to



(continued from page 65)

have options for the guests and it looked like it had not been changed in years. Why mess with a good thing I guess. There were no Small, Medium or Large sizes, no extra Add-On for a fee, no Up-Size, no gimmicks or funny business; just good food, right portion for the right price.

Indeed, my expectations were met when the food arrived; the soup was hearty, yet delicately seasoned to perfection. Lentil & Burgol Soup! WOW... cold weather, rain, hot bowl of soup and fresh bread. Even my grumpy colleague was smiling by now. We agreed to come back to this gem of a restaurant throughout our stay and try different dishes on the menu; the soup however would not change, it was just perfect.

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Desserts almost all included walnuts and syrup as any good Turkish dessert would and all served with black tea on the house. The staff was very friendly, a couple of older gentlemen ran the floor and did not speak a word of English except for "OK" and "Good", not that they needed to; good food speaks for its self.

I felt a little bit like Chef Stein in that I had discovered a Food Hero. The sign on the door said that they had been around for about 30 years or so. Not generations, but still long enough. The staff was laid back and comfortable, the food was wholesome and if it was good enough for the locals, it was good enough for me and I was happy to be able to skip Seas Salt T-Bone Steak and get to enjoy the local food. Little restaurant across the street, and many more like you, I salute you and wish you success as a Food Hero.

You know I could not leave you without giving you the recipe for that incredible Turkish Lentil & Burgol soup:

INGREDIENTS

15 g	Olive Oil
100 g	Onions, diced
10 g	fresh Garlic, crushed
50 g	yellow Capsicum, diced
100 g	fresh Tomatoes, peeled & diced
15 g	Tomato Paste
1.5 ltr.	Chicken Stock
75 g	red Lentils
45 g	fine Burgol
45 g	white Rice
3 g	Paprika
2 g	Cayenne Pepper
5 g	dried Mint
to taste	Salt & Pepper

DIRECTIONS

- ♦ Sauté vegetables in olive oil, add tomato paste and stock, add grain and cook to thicken soup. Season with spices and herbs and serve with lemon wedges. Serves 6 or just 1!

Basic, but oh so very good. Anyways, I will leave it there and leave the rest for next time.

I am Big Daddy and this is my Bread & Butter!



rolled blueberry crepe

roll'in glory

Popcorn • Candy Floss • Nachos • Slush • Sno-Kones • Waffles • Waffle Cones • Crepes
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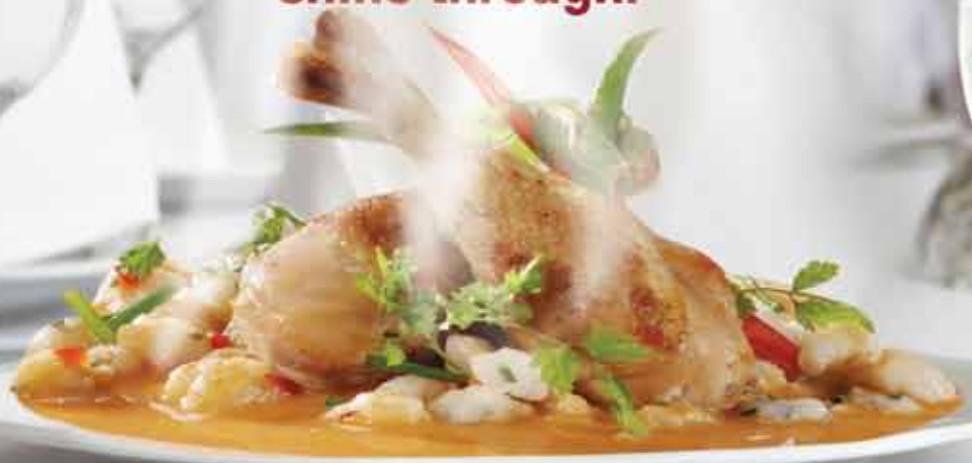
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