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DECEMBER 2024

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THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

gourmet

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SHINING BRIGHT

Chef **Nour Amro** on confidence, passion, and leading with purpose

THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER

Exclusive interview with **Christian Gradnitzer**, VP of Business Development at RIKAS Hospitality Group



DESSERT CALLING

Chef **Savio D'souza** on transforming avant-garde pastry pandemonium into pure delight



TOPPING IT OFF

Chef **Shammi De Costa**, the co-founder of Localino is serving up Roman-inspired food at his 'little place'





*Banquet d'Or
Puff Pastry*

*Bakbel Vanilla Compound and
Backaldrin La Ola*

*Backaldrin
Whipping Cream*

*Andros Chef
Puree*

A SYMPHONY OF ELEGANCE AND FLAVOR



DELIGHT IN THE CRISP LAYERS OF VANDEMOORTELE PUFF PASTRY, PAIRED WITH THE CREAMY RICHNESS OF BACKALDRIN WHIPPING CREAM BLENDED WITH VIBRANT ANDROS PUREE. FINISHED WITH A TOUCH OF BAKBEL VANILLA COMPOUND AND BACKALDRIN LA OLA, THIS DESSERT IS A MASTERPIECE OF REFINED INDULGENCE.



president's station

email editor@gulfgourmet.org

Dear Members and Partners,

As I write to you this month, I am busy planning festive activities. Like many of you, I am juggling seasonal events in evening sessions in the UAE. With the weather as glorious as it is throughout the Emirates and the continued growth we have seen across the sector, I feel confident that the year will end with pronounced peak business for all of us throughout the hospitality industry.

We are into December, and this marks the end of 2024, so it's time to reflect on the year that was, celebrate all that has been achieved, and look forward to all that the new year will bring. Starting with the stellar success of the Emirates Culinary Guild at the 2024 Culinary Olympics in Germany. Among the impressive haul of medals, the 30-30-strong-member team of chefs from the Emirates secured three Gold Medals with Distinction, an outstanding accomplishment that is seldom seen.

We witnessed our Expo Culinaire and the Emirates Salon Culinaire return to Sharjah once again. This year, we had a record 1000 entries across all classes. Competition for Culinarians remains a vital barometer of skills and a valuable opportunity to learn from peers while competing. This platform provides professional adjudication and feedback to build confidence and skills, especially for Young Chefs who are looking to expand their practical knowledge.

In 2025, we will introduce new classes, including one focused on a team event that highlights national cuisines. Additionally, the expansion of live bakery classes is expected to further enhance the growth of the show and salon competition. In June, we saw a highly competitive Chefs Table competition

endorsed by Worldchefs that was hotly contested and a great event.

After the Summer, we came back strong, competing and fielding teams for the Africa Cup in Egypt, sending competitors to the Maldives and back home in Dubai. The Salon De Chocolate was hosted at the Madinat Jumeirah, and we can hardly wait to see that again next year.

October was by far our busiest month, starting with the Chaine Des Rotisseurs Young Chefs Global final held in Budapest, Hungary. The 2025 National final will be announced soon, and I encourage all the senior chefs to prepare their culinary protégés for this most challenging of Black Box competitions.

The 40th Worldchefs Congress held in Singapore was undoubtedly our crowning achievement this year. Our own Andy Cuthbert was elected as the President of Worldchefs, supported by his experienced team of Vice Presidents and the General Secretary, who will lead our global association for the next four years. Further, we had representation in all the classes, including the Global Chef and the Gelato Challenge at FHA, as well as a strong presence of Young Chefs at the Billy Gallagher Young Chefs Forum.

All in all, it is an outstanding Congress that places the Emirates Culinary Guild in the spotlight on the world stage. Never satisfied to sit back, we returned home and hosted the first HK Black Box team competition and dinner, and what a resounding success it was; much thanks to HK, supporting sponsors and partners for their enthusiasm and to the teams who executed high standards and stellar dishes for all the guests and judges.

From October to December, we hosted various events and competitions to



promote poultry and eggs, sponsored by the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council. A highlight in November was the inaugural UAE Cluck and Flame BBQ competition.

Our corporate partners play a crucial role in the success of the Guild and in our ability to support the chefs of the UAE. We sincerely thank you for your ongoing support and contributions to our members, whose passion for our craft nurtures the youth of tomorrow.

We have had an exceptional year in 2023, focusing on our members and partners during our monthly meetings and in Gulf Gourmet magazine. We have successfully expanded our membership to include more senior and young chefs, and we are pleased to welcome six new corporate partners who joined us this year.

To wrap up, thank you to all who contribute to our beloved industry, the chefs of the UAE, and the Guild. To my committee and my brigade, you inspire and encourage me with your enthusiasm and passion for our profession, driving standards and supporting the youth.

As we celebrate the end of 2024, may this season surround you with loved ones, bringing joy and laughter, and ushering in a new year of prosperity for your business and life.

With Regards,
Alan Orreal



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A MASTERPIECE OF TEXTURE AND TASTE.



newsbites

Tempered Through Culinary Flames

Chef **Vivek Huria**'s debut book offers an honest look at the connection between humans and food. It also underpins a lesson that has been long forgotten in our goal-oriented culture: it is perfectly human to accept imperfections

To err is human finds its best explanation in Chef Vivek Huria's debut book, *Jalfrezi, From the Vantage of the Culinary World*. Set against the backdrop of breaking free from conventional norms, the book documents his bold self-discovery as he carves out an independent space where he can express his passion for culinary arts.

In this quiet retrospective, he recounts his journey from an ordinary chef to a restaurateur through creative culinary exploration. All of this happens, he says, because of his tryst with healing, learning, and growing. "I have always welcomed the chance to learn from my mistakes rather than shying away from them. Always strive to see the silver lining," he asserts with wisdom that comes from lived experience.

Flipping through the pages feels like a retro photo album of tasty details and nostalgia. It evokes the warmth of enjoying carrot halwa while learning



about Chef Vivek's upbringing in India during the spirited 1990s.

According to him, writing a book represents a whole journey of himself. Longing to maintain a diary for a while, he saw this book as a way to revisit and relive his life experiences. "This was an exercise for me. But this was not just about cherishing my memories; there is a lot of research involved in this book. The book explores the culinary world through flavors, sounds, colors, textures, and aromas while also covering restaurant setup, food as medicine, and spiritual self-discovery. It is a collection of everything I have experienced that I want to share with the world."

Losing his parents has made Chef Vivek keenly aware that time is fickle. This understanding has caused him to create a restaurant that celebrates family, love, and global culinary traditions. Certain passages in the chapters even have the heartfelt tone of a eulogy for his parents, particularly for his mother. As an homage to her memory, he has dedicated the recipes to her at his restaurant, *Jalfrezi*. "The recipes here are cherished creations from my mother,

inviting readers to recall how their own mothers cooked. One of my dreams is to open a restaurant called *Maa*, where mothers from all around can donate their treasured recipes for me to prepare, connecting us all with warmth, love, and culinary heritage."

Unspooling his eventful life, he also gives us a glimpse of his love story and parenthood, laden with selfless acts, kinship, and an enormous amount of understanding about his demanding profession. Despite the sacrifices inherent to his vocation, the feeling of contentment he gets from serving quality food overpowers it all. "You have to put in hard work, manifestation, and have that undying passion for culinary arts to achieve your dreams," he explains.

After all, it takes a pantry full of continuous learning and no what-ifs to have an extraordinary career in the kitchen, and *Jalfrezi, From The Vantage Of The Culinary World*, might just have the perfect recipe to do that!

Grab your personally signed copy from Chef Vivek. For inquiries, contact Chef Vivek at +971 50 335 7132.

HostMilano highlights Business Prospects for GCC Nations in Hospitality and Retail Sectors

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations are increasingly capturing global attention, especially following the inaugural bilateral summit between the European Union and GCC that took place on October 16 in Brussels. The discussions highlighted the significance of the region in international trade, with machinery leading European exports at €38.8 billion, according to the European Commission.

In this context, HostMilano convened earlier in November in Dubai. The event gathered industry leaders, institutions, media, and stakeholders to explore business opportunities in these sectors represented by this Fiera Milano-managed exhibition. The next edition is set to take place from October 17 to 21, 2025.

Exports across all sectors represented at HostMilano reached a total of €166.5 billion globally last year. Projections indicate a promising growth trajectory, with an increase of €36.4 billion expected by 2027, pushing total exports beyond €202 billion. Key growth areas will be Asia and the European Union, contributing €24 billion and €10.3 billion, respectively. Among the sectors, food service equipment will also see significant growth, reaching €85.4 billion by 2027, an increase of over €16 billion (CAGR +5.4%).

Italy, recognized as a leader in multiple sectors, recorded exports to the GCC worth €395.3 million in 2023, with projections indicating a rise to €445 million by 2027. Notably, bakery and pastry machinery is projected to see a growth from €30.9



million to €32.6 million (+5.5%), while the furniture and tableware segment is estimated to increase from €51.4 million to €59.8 million (+16.3%).

While the EU-GCC trade relations sectors highlighted at HostMilano generated €1.31 billion in 2023, with expectations of climbing to €1.6 billion by 2027. The primary markets are the United Arab Emirates, valued at €612.2 million (projected €791 million in 2027, CAGR +6.6%), and Saudi Arabia at €455.9 million (projected €598.9 million in 2027, CAGR +7.1%).

These industries will play a crucial role in Host 2025, with food service equipment being a central focus. The emphasis on bakery equipment is enhanced by a partnership with the SIPAN Consortium, which aims to spotlight leading Italian machinery manufacturers and elevate the iconic Milano Pane Pizza Pasta (MIPPP brand).

The upcoming Host 2025 exhibition will see organic growth in the Bar, Coffee Machines, and Vending sectors in conjunction with the Coffee-Tea area at the iconic SIC - Salone Internazionale del Caffè. This collaboration will culminate in the highly anticipated return of the World Barista Championship, organized by the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), to Milan in the next edition.

The exhibition's comprehensive concept fosters cross-selling across supply chains, offering a unique and complete experience in the international exhibition landscape. Over 1,200 companies have registered for Host 2025, with approximately 40% of participants coming from 43 different countries, in addition to Italy.

The 44th edition of HostMilano will take place at Fiera Milano.

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



UAE Cluck and Flame 2024: Showcasing U.S. Poultry Excellence

The UAE Cluck and Flame 2024: “U.S. Poultry Barbecue Competition” was a resounding success, held at the prestigious Zero Gravity beach club. Organized in partnership with the Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG) and led by renowned culinary experts Andy Cuthbert, President of the World Association of Chefs Societies, and barbecue Pitmaster Frédéric Casagrande, the event showcased the exceptional quality and versatility of U.S. poultry.

Fifteen talented chefs competed by preparing innovative dishes using U.S. chicken and duck. Prizes were awarded to the top performers, recognizing their culinary skills and creativity in utilizing these premium ingredients.

Following the competition, over 160 guests enjoyed a delectable buffet featuring a wide array of dishes made from U.S. chicken, turkey, and duck. The event highlighted the superior taste, tenderness, and nutritional value of U.S. poultry, inspiring culinary professionals and food enthusiasts alike.

By bringing together top chefs, importers, and influencers, the UAE Cluck and Flame 2024 aimed to strengthen the presence of U.S. poultry products in the region and foster long-lasting partnerships. The event successfully showcased the commitment of the U.S. poultry industry to delivering high-quality and delicious products to consumers worldwide.



USAPEEC: Expanding Global Markets

Founded in 1984, USA Poultry and Egg Export Council (USAPEEC) is an industry-sponsored trade association dedicated to increasing exports of U.S. poultry and egg products to foreign markets through marketing, trade policy, and technical programs. The Council is comprised of a network of international offices and consultants implementing programs in key global markets. The organization aims to increase US poultry and egg exports by expanding markets globally and advocating for the industry on trade issues by acting as a bridge between the industry and the government, facilitating communication between exporters and importers, and representing the interests of the US poultry industry. With a commitment to global nutrition, USAPEEC continues to power the world with high-quality protein.





The World Is Your Oyster

Farms and restaurants, he had the mise en place to herald his career in the industry. The VP of Business Development and International Operations at RIKAS Hospitality Group, **Christian Gradnitzer**, ties the secret to setting up F&B brands with the importance of building connections together all into one like a dream

John D. Rockefeller once precisely put it: The secret to success is to do the common things uncommonly well. To onlookers, opening a restaurant, choosing menu items, hiring staff, and managing the business are all cinch to do. Yet turning the nothing-out-of-ordinary strategy to write restaurant success is a checkered process only known to a handful.

Christian has been there and done that. He's the go-to person for upscale, mid-scale, or fine dining establishments aiming to become award-winning or for F&B professionals interested in developing one-of-a-kind restaurants from scratch.

As someone who has lived in this region for most of the last 25 years, on and off, Christian is acutely aware of the difficulties of high attrition and antiquated ideas when executing concepts that appeal to F&B partners and customers alike.

With a keen perception of these diverse challenges, Rikas Hospitality has expanded its portfolio to 17 different hospitality brands, offering Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Chinese, French, Japanese, Greek, North African and Middle Eastern Arabic cuisine as well as Mediterranean and patisserie options.

"Rikas Hospitality was founded in 2015 by a passionate creator and leader, Rizwan Kassim, leading the way with La Cantine du Faubourg at Jumeirah Emirates Towers Hotel back in 2015, and from there, he had a vow to expand with the talent of creating and operating a total of 16 various concepts his brand and offerings in the industry," says Christian.

The hospitality company that has homegrown award-winning concepts across the UAE has managed to crack the industry lexicon of what gets measured and gets done. "It's all because of our talented in-house team, with Rizwan at the helm, reviewing the concept along with our strategic partners. I heavily invest in conducting thorough research,



The world is your oyster; you just take it. All the opportunities are in your hands

evaluating opportunities via concrete discussions, and then developing new concepts or expanding existing ones. Together with the entire team, quick decisions are made to advance ideas efficiently," he adds.

So, how does one create profitable hospitality brands?

While we expect a textbook technique from him, he points out that the one-trick pony may not always suffice against the fluctuating market landscape that has varying legislation, demographics, labeling laws, and food conducts to follow through. "It is one thing to put thoughts on a piece of paper, and the other to be as real as possible with flexibility and forecast," he expresses.

Setting up a restaurant that speaks to the community and the location of the venue is something many people struggle with. By quickly responding to trends and having a clear vision of the products, one can increase the chances of success.

"Too many chefs spoil the broth, which is personified in large organizations where people miss opportunities due to lack of timely execution. At Rikas, we think out-of-the-box in providing end-to-end solutions, from recruiting, setting up the atmosphere, and all the nitty gritty details, which starts from the arrival to the venue and all its details of AV, lights, and simple coziness; it comes down to the last touches which will ultimately drive the success," he says.

As much as he upholds his company's ethos, Christian also accepts the non-negotiable brand value of the clients, or, as he prefers to call them, 'partners'. "Our partnerships go beyond the price of contracts; we understand their existing operation guidelines, which are not written in thick books; it's in the brand DNA."

His words reflect his total ingenuity, and everything seems to suggest that his history in hospitality buzzes perpetually around him. There's more than meets the eye when you ask him about making a big splash in hospitality.

"I have been in hospitality my whole life. I was brought up as a chef," he shares.

The majestic Alps and Habsburg-style buildings, a typical young lad would scamper about, enjoying a strudel against this biting picture of Austria. Instead, a little Christian was caught in the thick of a lovable struggle between helping at his father's cattle farm - where he gained an appreciation for nature - or assisting his hardworking mother at their small restaurant. "I did my apprenticeship at 14 at a restaurant, learning culinary skills under an old Austrian chef and later working at a Michelin-star restaurants. I thank my parents for directing me into culinary and mentors who laid the foundation."

Finishing his apprenticeship, the naive country boy took up the cudgels to make his global takeoff dream come true. He did it all, from setting foot in Switzerland, taking his first flight to

San Francisco to learn English, exploring American culinary culture, and finally to London, the untouchable city.

"Joining the Dorchester group was a turning point in my career. In that period, I developed a great deal of passion for competitions. In one of those years, I remember competing in three different countries while in the national team - spending a month in London and two months later in Australia, which all eventually added the fuel in me to put Emirates on the map years later."

Today, sunshine gleams at the alcove of his accolades. Perhaps the medal isn't what really drives him; it's the



Organic growth is built through leadership, curiosity to learn, knowledge, understanding, and confidence

excitement of giving his all, even if it goes against what others might expect of him. "Back in 2002, I was lucky to get competitive exposure through the Guild

and snag all the awards at the Salon Culinaire," he recalls the excitement and encourages young chefs to plunge into competitions.

From land, he went to conquer the sea, joining the QE2 and streaming along the world while realizing that conquest on cruise ships not solely relied on culinary skills but also on organization.

Just as on any random day on the cruise, he saw an advertisement about the pre launch of Burj Al Arab. Amused as he was already at the elusive extravagant hotel, he never imagined receiving a job offer email to him two weeks later.

"It was in 1999 that a headhunter contacted me about a job in Dubai, and I was clueless about the place. As soon as this first picture of Burj Al Arab Dubai popped up while surfing the net, I instantly said, 'That's the one!' And you know, I didn't need to think twice," he shares, beaming with contentment.

He entered the multicultural UAE culinary scene with a role as a chef de partie. The going was much tougher, but in no time, he was promoted to the head chef of Al Mahara.

"I evolved quite strongly over the five years until one of the great mentors, Jumeirah's CEO Gerald Lawless asked me to join Jumeirah Essex House," he reflects, adding even now, the memory of Chef Gerald's leadership gives him goosebumps.

A three-year sojourn in New York ended when Emirates Tower beckoned him back in 2008. "That place was a powerhouse of food and beverage, with a total of nine different food and beverage venues. It was a rare opportunity to lead the venues there as an executive chef."

His next challenge was to take over the culinary brigade of over 400 chefs to run Madinat Jumeirah Resort and the impressive banqueting operations alongside Chef Andy Cuthbert.





"In 2012 I turned towards the Group Level as Jumeirah Culinary Director and had the pleasure of being part of the creation of the Jumeirah Restaurant Group."

After cementing success with his team, with a heavy heart that was seeking more new adventures in 2015, he switched to Istanbul where he moved to with his family and join the D.ream group under Dogus Group

In 2017, he returned to the Emirates, where his family's initial long-standing roots were, to join Hilton Group. "The move to head Hilton's f&B operations and development for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa was driven by curiosity to learn how businesses in large scale works and contribute to the future F&B growth of the group," he says.

From his new position as a senior Director of F&B, he learned a ton about business while in charge of over 100 existing operating hotels and 180 plus under developments. Then, after climbing the corporate ladder for five years, he joined Rikas Hospitality Group

Christian might be perceived as a



This is not a job where it's just about the paycheck; it is a passion-driven profession—ultimately a life full of excitement and pleasure

pragmatic, measured-word-falling person; his eyes, however, perk right up with passion when he thinks about his organic growth. "My only advice to young chefs is to do what you love and trust the process. Quick growth can also go very quickly backwards. Organic growth is built through leadership, curiosity to learn, knowledge, understanding, and confidence."

On the home front, his kids bring joy post a long day. While his 17-year-old son Mario is sprinting down the sports route, his 15-year-old daughter Erica is passionate about food. Married now for 19 years, his

wife Matilda understands the demanding nature of his career and stands by him – he could not do it for a second without their support and guidance.

"I don't think anything will be given to you because you are a nice guy with a lovely smile. I have spent a chunk of time learning. But I am thankful to have a family who understands this is not a job where it's just about the paycheck; it is a passion-driven profession ultimately a life full of excitement and pleasure "

His parents and brother are still in Austria, running the farm. As nature's son, he makes it a point to reconnect with Earth once a year, bringing his mind to balance in this high-tech age.

"I was from a generation making sandcastles, but now I am catching up on making social media accounts and figuring out the Snapchat that my daughter put me on yesterday," he laughs.

"The world is your oyster; you just take it. All the opportunities are in your hands," says Christian. Now, that's a Shakespeare metaphor striking you refreshingly.

A hat tip to Mr. Gradnitzer. ■



Shining Bright

At just 23 years old, **Nour Amro** is stirring up the culinary world, carving her path with determination and creativity. A dynamic and fair leader, winner of the Young Chef Award at Taste of HK, she exemplifies grace under pressure and a passion that fuels her craft. Gulf Gourmet chats with the Chef de Partie at Waldorf Astoria DIFC, whose confidence and vision are as vibrant as the dishes she creates

Chef Nour Amro radiates confidence, passion, and an unstoppable drive to grow. At just 23 years old, she has quickly become a standout leader at Waldorf Astoria DIFC, earning her role as Chef de Partie and accolades like the Young Chef Award at Taste of HK. Beyond her achievements in the kitchen, Nour is the face of the Hilton Recruitment Campaign and a proud member of the Hilton Shefs Programme, showcasing her dedication to inspiring the next generation of culinary talent. Her story is one of embracing opportunities, staying open to growth, and uplifting others as she forges her path.

Nour's mindset is a testament to her belief in the power of perseverance and positivity. For her, challenges are not obstacles—they are invitations to rise higher. "Every experience teaches you something, even if it's unexpected. I've always believed that staying curious and open helps you uncover new strengths," she shares. Her journey has been defined by moments where she turned the ordinary into extraordinary through her tenacity and vision.



If you don't acknowledge your areas for improvement, you limit your potential for success



Her story begins with cultural hurdles and personal determination. Growing up in a traditional Jordanian family in the UAE, Nour was not immediately encouraged to pursue her dream of becoming a chef. "The kitchen has always been my favorite place. I spent long hours testing and mixing different ingredients, coming up with new recipes. It has always been my passion," she reflects. But convincing her family to support her culinary ambitions wasn't easy. "As a Jordanian born and raised in the UAE, my parents weren't sure I could make a living or succeed in the culinary field," Nour recalls. Despite their doubts, Nour's passion never wavered, and she pursued her dream by enrolling in Dubai College of Tourism (DCT).

DCT played a pivotal role in her transformation, helping her evolve from someone who simply enjoyed cooking to a technically proficient professional chef. "DCT was everything for me. It



A team thrives when everyone feels valued and trusted

propelled me from just a person who enjoyed cooking to a professional chef in the kitchen," she says. Her time there equipped her with the skills and knowledge she needed to not only excel but also challenge the limitations others placed on her.

Working in the UAE has further shaped her journey, exposing her to diverse cuisines, cultures, and guest expectations. "It's been an incredible experience," she shares. "Learning to adapt to so many influences has taught me the importance of versatility and

creativity in crafting dishes that resonate with people from all walks of life.

A pivotal moment in Nour's journey came when she made the bold decision to delay a promotion at Conrad Dubai, prioritizing her development as a leader over a faster career trajectory. "If you don't acknowledge your areas for improvement, you limit your potential for success," she reflects. "When I was offered the role of Demi Chef early on, I chose to wait. I wanted to focus on refining my leadership skills and ensuring I was truly ready for the responsibility. That decision remains one of my proudest moments because it taught me the value of self-awareness and intentional growth." Nour embraced coaching to identify and strengthen areas where she needed support, approaching the process with openness and determination. "I've learned to see timing as an ally," she says. "Sometimes, taking a little longer allows you to go so much further. Growth isn't about rushing."

In just two years at Waldorf Astoria DIFC, Nour has risen to the rank of Chef de Partie, leading a team of seven and earning accolades like the Young Chef Award at the Taste of HK competition. Reflecting on that achievement, she recalls it being about more than just the food. The journey began a week earlier with the daily rituals of planning, team huddles, and brainstorming sessions. "Chef Mohammed Usman, Chef Coetsee Croucamp, and Chef Ammar Kilani were incredibly supportive," she shares. "We spent hours fine-tuning dishes, practicing, and troubleshooting to ensure we were fully prepared for competition day." Despite challenges along the way, the team's determination and collaborative spirit never wavered.

This same ethos defines Nour's leadership. She is deeply committed to mentoring her junior team members, equipping them to thrive under pressure while fostering a culture of collaboration and pride. For Nour, mentoring goes beyond imparting skills—it's about helping others grow





The kitchen has always been my favorite place. I spent long hours testing and mixing different ingredients, coming up with new recipes

Nour Amro

and succeed. "Seeing them shine is one of the most rewarding parts of my role," she reflects. Her inspiration to guide others comes from her own mentors, particularly Chef Coetsee and Chef Ammar, whose belief in her has been a driving force. "Their support motivates me to push forward and inspire others in turn," she explains.

A hallmark of Nour's leadership is her belief in collaboration. She is deeply invested in fostering a supportive and empowering environment within her kitchen. "A team thrives when everyone feels valued and trusted," she says. Leading by example, Nour prioritizes open communication, shared goals, and mutual respect, ensuring her team is as passionate about their craft as she is.

"I keep instructions concise, using visual cues when needed to ensure clarity and



Every experience teaches you something, even if it's unexpected. I've always believed that staying curious and open helps you uncover new strengths

efficiency," Nour explains. "I've focused on fostering a culture where my team feels confident and supported enough to ask questions anytime. Encouraging openness keeps us aligned and allows us to work seamlessly, even in the most dynamic environments."

Nour credits her confidence and empowerment to the unwavering support of her team, whose camaraderie creates a positive, energizing atmosphere. "I've had the privilege of learning from mentors like Chef Ganesh Venkiteswaran and Chef Christian Biesbrouck. Their guidance has been invaluable, and I know I can always turn to them for insight and encouragement," she shares.

The pride Nour takes in her work shines in moments of recognition, like when her colleagues celebrated her culinary contributions by naming her signature creation, the "Amro Salad," a menu staple. "That moment wasn't just about the dish—it was about the trust and joy of working with a team that believes in you," she says.

For Nour, every accomplishment is part of a greater vision. She dreams of one day opening her own fine-dining restaurant, a space where her creativity can flourish and her guests can experience something truly unforgettable. "It's not just about the food; it's about creating a feeling, a memory, something that stays with people," she explains. Her vision is also deeply rooted in giving back to the industry she cherishes. Nour is passionate about mentoring young chefs, helping them discover their potential and build confidence. "I remember how much it meant to me when my mentors believed in me. It gave me the courage to push boundaries and trust my instincts," she says. This personal connection drives her to invest in the next generation, sharing her knowledge and nurturing their growth.

Her story is one of passion, self-belief, and an unstoppable desire to explore new possibilities. As she looks ahead, Nour sees the future as a blank canvas ready to be painted with creativity, purpose, and connection. With her boundless energy, leadership, and confident mindset, she is set to carve a legacy that celebrates excellence and empowers others to dream as boldly as she does. ■



Topping it Off

Where there is pizza, there is felicità. Chef **Shammi De Costa**, the co-founder of Localino talks to Amaresh Bhaskaran about serving up Roman-inspired food at his 'little place'

There's nothing like a wholesome pizza or a cheesy Cacio e Pepe that takes you back to the walkways of Italy, something that Chef Shammi De Costa plans to recreate and give any homegrown Italian chef a run for his money.

Along with the other partners who have been around the block in the hotel and restaurant industry, Chef Shammi is bringing Roman-inspired pizza, pasta, and sandwiches to Abu Dhabi. He shares with Gulf Gourmet about the Italian menu that satisfies both flavor enthusiasts and those looking for a quick bite between their jam-packed schedules.

FROM ROME TO ABU DHABI VIA PIZZA

Four years ago, we featured Chef Shammi in our magazine when he told us that he always has a clear vision of what he wants to achieve. "The road is not easy, but with the 'never give up' attitude, you can achieve your goals." Fast-forward to today at the newest iteration of his restaurant concept in Abu Dhabi, his vision of bringing Roman pizza strikes you like a moon hits your eye.

Beneath Localino's walls, however, is a culmination of Chef Shammi's two decades of career perfecting regional and international cuisine. As the only child in the family, he had wonderful memories with his cousins and friends while growing up in Colombo.

At a very young age, he relocated to Italy with his parents and adapted to a new way of quintessential Italian life. Whether in their serious pastime of sipping a cup of coffee or admiring the



architecture, not to mention Italian became his second language. "I studied culinary in Italy and then in Singapore, working at various restaurants and hotel groups along the way," he says.

He still recalls his days as a commis chef like yesterday: peeling artichokes until his fingers would bleed or the head

chef's fiery temper and plate-throwing antics when mistakes were made. The Italian culinary world was intense, but those experiences shaped him into the accomplished chef he is today.

Post his culinary studies he moved to Malaysia to take on an overseas Junior Sous Chef role at Shanghai-La

Rasa Sayang Resort. A stickler for a methodical path, he strongly advises gaining a thorough understanding of each role before progressing to the next step. This approach allowed him to apply his theoretical knowledge in practical settings effectively.

Atlantis the Palm was next on the cards. "I joined their pre-opening team as a sous chef. After successfully setting up and launching The Palm, I worked with the pre-opening team of Shangri-La Maldives as Chef de Cuisine. This move helped me step up in my career to a higher management role."

Following years of globetrotting, he became the Executive Sous Chef at Traders Hotel Qaryat Al Beri in Abu Dhabi. It was a good time as the hotel was flourishing as a popular dining destination before he relocated to Oman for Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah resort. "It was a challenging role in Oman, managing multiple outlets and maintaining high occupancy rates throughout the year. But I gathered experience setting up new concepts before moving back to Traders Abu Dhabi."

A key lesson he acquired as an Executive chef was the implication of being hands-on and keeping a finger on the pulse of the culinary world. "To deliver the best culinary experiences, chefs have to stay abreast of the trends," he emphasizes.

In 2021, he achieved first place at the Masters of Pizza competition. He also had the privilege of competing at the Parma Pizza World Championship, where his authentic Roman pizza was celebrated by experts and enthusiasts alike.

"It was a proud moment for me as I joined the ranks of celebrated pizzerias and chefs. My pizzas received high praise. Its crispy texture and distinct taste set me apart. The winning pizza was a creation featuring rocket leaves, parmesan, and pecorino cheese. It was mind-blowing for the judges," he says, reliving the excitement.



The road is not easy, but with a 'never give up' attitude, you can achieve your goals

The win gave him the much-needed motivation to bring Localino fresh out of the oven, a goal he had always yearned to achieve while working at the company.

"Located in Al Raha Beach in Abu Dhabi, Localino happened after 16 years," he smiles. "With my business partners, we invested together and set up this small restaurant," he says.

Serving Roman cuisine fits right up his alley due to his background and being a seasoned pro in the Abu Dhabi food scene. "We have outdoor seating for 36 people with a canal view so that you can see the jet ski moving and enjoy the beautiful backdrop of the setting sun. So far, our small place is going well, and we are happy that Italian customers are appreciating our authentic taste."

Seeing those views and enjoying the fresh Italian delicacies eclipses the one-and-a-half years it took to open the restaurant. Choosing the name, licensing permits, ambiance, and designs, the self-doubt checklist gnashed its evil teeth. He says, "My thought of simply moving the equipment and running the



restaurant was shattered once I learned about the operational procedures," he confesses with a surprised smile. "Even with all my chef experience, I was clueless about all the rules and regulations specific to this region while planning the restaurant. There were a million things to deal with, from construction work to civil approvals."

Localino holds special meaning for Shammi. Every day, he supervises a team of four, providing training, working with them in the kitchen, along with keeping the budget in check. "Though it has been a long journey, it's a fun one. The most important thing is that all the staff is cooperative and easy to work with."

A large part of the Localino menu consists of long pizzas made from bread that undergoes a 72-hour fermentation process. Having a balance of creative dishes and authentic taste was a priority when designing the menu. "An example of one of our authentic dishes is our carbonara, which is made without cream. We do it the traditional way using only egg yolk, both parmesan and pecorino cheese, as well as high-quality beef pancetta bacon to capture the real taste of Italian cuisine."

He is putting in a lot of effort to keep it real by sourcing local produce whenever possible. "I'm super picky about where I source my ingredients from – only the best will do! We import the tomato sauce and olive oil needed for the authentic taste, but for the most part, we stick to vegetables grown right from the local farm."

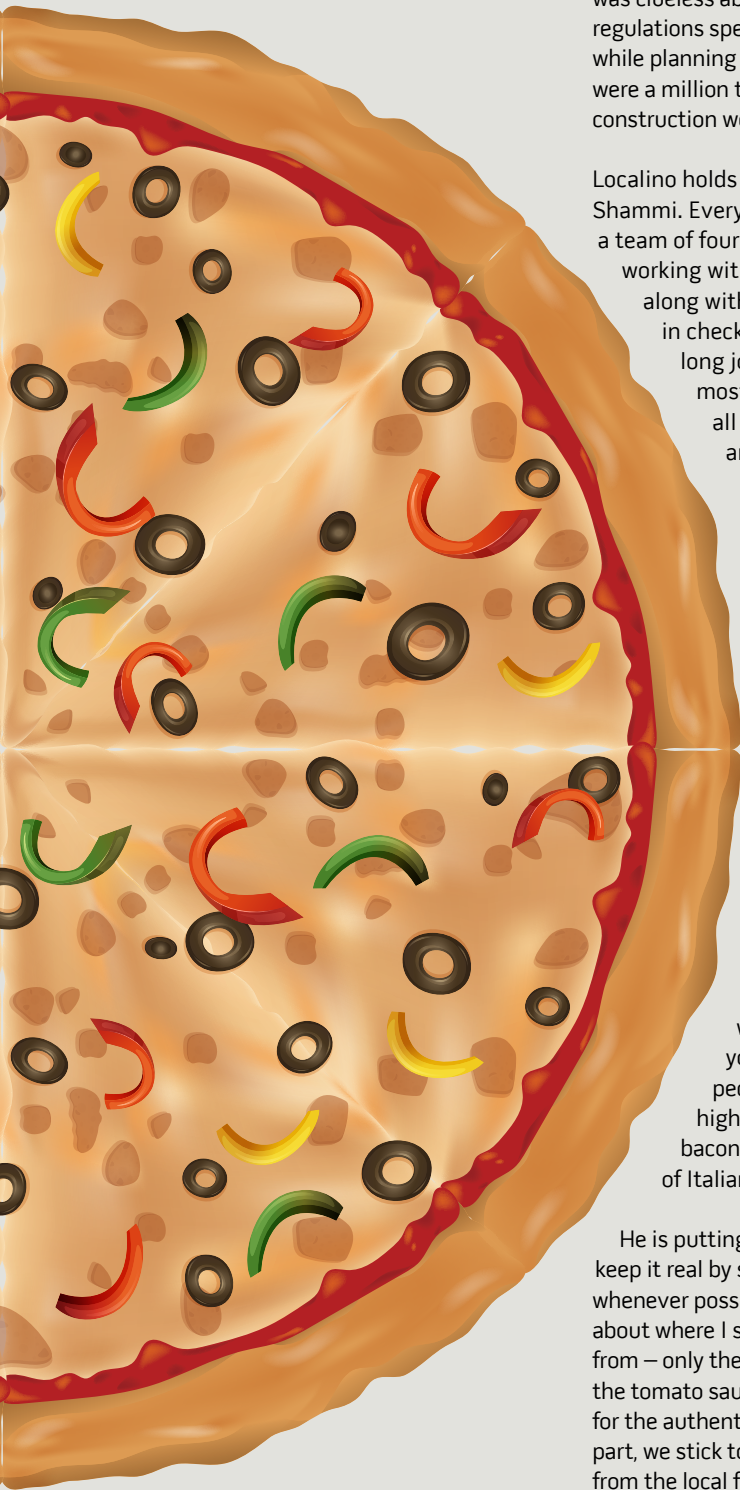


I'm super picky about sourcing ingredients – only the best will do!

But it's best not to rush into presumptions that it only carries a pizza label. The menu also features pasta, sandwiches, and fresh salads. "We take pride in using high-quality cold cuts imported from Italy through our trusted partners, alongside halal-certified beef and veal. Our focus is on delivering flavors that stay as true as possible to the authentic Italian experience, ensuring every bite is a celebration of quality and taste."

His wife, too, is a hotelier. The two met in the Maldives and have a daughter together. They are a family that loves food and traveling at best.

In the meantime, he is experimenting with different ideas to see what works for his business. "We have a few tricks up our sleeve on how to expand, and we'll play it by ear based on the market response. Focusing on great food is our aim." Now, that's amore! ■



A Culinary Journey: From Passionate Beginnings and Beyond

(Part IX) Chef **Helen Morris** talks about her time in Sussex and reflects on farm-to-fork lessons that deepened her appreciation for the culinary world



And my "accommodation"? A vacant house they were selling. Half-emptied, as lively as a dead fish, and zero neighbors

There I was, fresh off my travels, thinking I'd finally landed somewhere that didn't require a full suitcase of survival instincts, and the job hunt had officially begun. Soon, I found myself in yet another charming countryside hotel, this time in the wilds of Essex (don't ask). The property? Gorgeous, like something out of a Jane Austen novel. The kitchen? Well, let's just say the menu had about as much life in it as a week-old baguette. And I'm not exaggerating when I tell you—they had a dessert trolley. I mean, I'd expected some retro charm, but this was "museum artifact" level.

The Chef had heart, no doubt, but the kitchen brigade was small as an amuse-bouche – well, not quite, but you get my gist. The pastry "team" was a grand total of two chefs, which explained the relic on wheels. And get this—these pastry chefs ruled the kitchen with an iron whisk, no questions asked. The real shocker? They didn't even show up for dinner service, the most chaotic shift of the day! Their brilliant system was to whip up all the desserts in advance, load up the trolley, shove it in the fridge, and clock out. Voilà, the dessert shift was magically "covered."

One night, I was elbows-deep in the sauce section when a chef popped by and asked, "Can you head over to pastry and whip up a birthday cake? Just scribble 'Happy Birthday' on it." I stared, fish slice frozen mid-stir. "Wait, what? Where are your pastry chefs?" He shrugged. "Gone home." Can't you do it?

Well, apparently not; no piping skills! That was the moment I realized this kitchen wasn't my *crème brûlée*.

Then, one month in, the hotel staff had their annual staff party. Skeleton crew on duty, and, naturally, yours truly was part of the remaining "chosen ones." Five guests, two servers? Easy. I was ready to coast. But, like some cosmic joke, in swoops twenty guests from who knows where. All ordering mains, starters, and some even contemplating dessert—all at once. At least I had the dessert trolley! I was spinning faster than soup in a blender.

And my "accommodation"? A vacant house they were selling. Half-emptied, as lively as a dead fish, and zero neighbors. Honestly, the room felt like it would rather have a 'For Sale' sign than me. Quite the introduction to their "hospitality," wasn't it? I lasted a little over a month, collected my paycheck, and with a heavy ladle of relief, informed the Chef, "Thanks, but I'm out." His sigh could've steamed a pot. I wasn't the first to leave, and I certainly wasn't going to be the last. Pity—because that place had so much potential.

Next, I found myself in the Sussex countryside, finally committing to a true restaurant gig with a bit of wedding action on the side, just to keep things spicy. A family-owned, three-rosette haven with dreamy grounds and a brigade of 8-10. The head chef was a legend—spoke many languages, had trained with the Roux Brothers,



and could spin a kitchen tale that would make even the most jaded chefs crack a smile. His menus, ingredient pairings, and leadership style were a chef's dreams. Black and white, no sugar-coating; if you needed to hear something, he'd say it with garnish. I ran the sauce section and relished the creative freedom. One day during prep, the butcher called and said, "Look out the kitchen window. See those cows? That's next month's beef." That's farm-to-fork like I'd never seen. The energy of service, the rapport with suppliers, the rush of a packed kitchen—it's what I miss most now that I'm in education. These days, my "suppliers" bring me

paper and sticky notes. Such a thrill! Details for another day.

This restaurant was popular; weekend evenings and even weekday lunches were bustling. I loved the place, the blissful absence of the dreaded breakfast shift (hallelujah!), and the harmony of life outside the kitchen on those split shifts. The only downside was the location; it took a small expedition to get anywhere else. My London foodie adventures were practically extinct by then, though once in a blue moon, I treated myself to a Michelin experience just to remember what it felt like to be on the other side.

Eventually, as is the way in hospitality, my time there came to a close. The industry is all about growth, learning, and moving forward. My next chapter? A grand country house hotel in Berkshire with its share of colorful history and scandal. Little did I know this would be my final run in a professional kitchen before I tumbled into the world of education, where my career took on a whole new flavor.

Until next time, keep those pans sizzling and stock pots simmering with opportunities.

Chef Helen

Meat of the Matter

Exploring Kamalnayan Tibrewal's path to creating cultivated meat using 3D printing with the industry's successes and setbacks in the wings

By **Shreya Asopa**

Going back to the memoryscape from January, I recall my obsession with keeping up with all the latest news in the cultivated meat industry. But no matter where my mind wandered, it only reminded me that there is no escaping climate change, and we need to welcome sustainable solutions now more than ever.

For the first time, snow arrived late on Mount Fuji. Typically gracing its upper slopes by early October, this year, the mountain remained bare until November, shattering a 130-year record. Likewise, another anomaly happened in Saudi Arabia's Al-Jawf region when it recorded its first snowfall. A list of such unprecedented events and growing population repeatedly points out the gravity of talking about the way we produce food not just as a question of innovation but as a matter of survival.

Within the spiral of these thoughts, a striking sense of meaty déjà vu enveloped me during a candid conversation with Kamalnayan Tibrewal. The same thoughts I'd grappled with over the past months—the urgency and hope for the future—were now mirrored in his words. Kamalnayan, the founder and CEO of Mumbai-based BioKraft Foods, is working with his team to pioneer the development of cultivated chicken through in vitro cell culture and 3D bioprinting.

For Kamal, who has a background in biotechnology, it was just another day



3D printing has revolutionized structures in various fields, and now it's also about culinary applications. Imagine a vending machine that tailors outputs based on preferences for taste and nutrition

focused on exploring the frontiers of cellular agriculture. Kamal relayed his vision, his eyes reflecting a distant future. "By 2050, the global population is projected to hit around 10 billion. So, we must develop sufficient food products for everyone," he asserts.

Realizing the urgency, he was thrust into an avenue of blending innovation and technology for a realistic solution. Little wonder then that he came up with BioKraft Foods to produce sustainable, accessible, and cruelty-free meat for all. For him, eating chicken isn't the problem; it's about doing so responsibly.

"At BioKraft Foods, we replicate the texture and appearance of meat by providing essential nutrients to grow the cells and to ensure it looks, cooks, and

tastes like traditional chicken. But what sets us apart is our use of 3D bioprinting paired with customized bioinks," he says.

He continues, "3D printing has revolutionized structures in various fields, and now it's also about culinary applications. We aim to elevate 3D printing by personalizing nutritional profiles. By leveraging 3D bioprinting, we can precisely create the desired structure of chicken breast with this layer-by-layer technology. We want to take 3D food printing to that level that can act as a case study for everyone. Imagine a vending machine that tailors outputs based on their preferences for taste and nutrition."

Globally, bioprinting in the cultivated meat industry has filled the gaps. Companies like Good Meat and BlueNalu have already made headlines for their printed meats. There's been a lot of progress on the tech front, too. Take South Korea's TissenBioFarm, for instance; it uses its proprietary technology to produce whole-cut marbled steaks. According to reports, their advanced biofabrication system enables fiber-form production of muscle and fat up to 35,000 times faster than traditional methods, yielding 300 kg of fiber per hour.

The possibilities are endless, yet there's a chink in the armor when it comes to the acceptance of cultivated meat. Consumers often brush aside their stand on the sustainable promise when drawn by taste and texture.

The challenge, he says, is rather systematic. "It is about sustainable sourcing and eliminating health risks associated with antibiotic use in livestock and foodborne diseases. At BioKraft Foods, our cultivated meat product basically eliminates all of that, offering a sustainable product. Even the nutritional profile completely matches that of the conventional meat."

Now that the company has finalized its internal market validation, it is gearing up for external validation in cities like Mumbai, Goa, and Pune. Recounting their internal validation process takes him back to the long road he first took back in April after finalizing their prototype and MVP. The goal, he explained, was to thoroughly vet their product against various perceptions before introducing it to the market.

"This is the first time in India for a cultivated meat company to conduct such a comprehensive internal validation on this scale, distinguishing us from competitors still simmering on their technology," he shares.

Satisfaction with taste was high among the people. Kamal noted that while there's room for improvement in other parameters, he views feedback as essential for external validation and enhancement.

As I listened, I could see the weight of this feedback on Kamal's shoulders. "One key takeaway was involving our B2B partners and buyers in the experiment, which gave us a substantial authentic validation rather than merely hosting a large event," he says.

Targeting B2B clients is a well-thought-out strategy for him. "Chicken breast, in particular, is a highly sought-after product in hotels and restaurants. With its high demand and current supply challenges, our goal is to position ourselves as a bulk supplier of chicken breast with a competitively priced, shelf-stable product that can improve productivity and reduce waste for these businesses."



Commenting about taking a step further in external validation and addressing consumer skepticism about the taste and texture of cultivated meat, he says one of the key things is focusing on the dish rather than just the product itself. "When discussing cultivated meat, consumers tend to be more judgmental when presented directly, but when served in a well-prepared dish in the hotels or restaurants, they are more open to exploring new flavors. And chefs would not have to create a very high or different category in the menu; it could be presented alongside traditional non-vegetarian options, and clearly disclosing ingredients would drive acceptance."

Kamal has miles to go in bringing his product to market, but so far, he is not knackered. Like many others in the industry, he is juggling three hurdles in the pot: technical issues, market dynamics, and regulatory requirements.

Finding a sweet spot on the menu that doesn't break the bank calls for a recipe for scalability. The potential for 3D-printed food production can tackle the meat demand, but there's still a lot of cooking left to do, as the technology is often perceived to be mainly dished out for premium meat cuts. Scalability and funding, too, have been a mixed bag, as shown by companies like UPSIDE Foods, which have hit a snag in their plans for a large-scale facility in Chicago. Meanwhile, Dutch startup Mosa Meat,

having thrown together a tasty \$43 million, has rolled up its sleeves to open a 30,000 sq ft kitchen in Maastricht to scale things up.

"Right now, the priority is regulatory compliance and proving their product's safety for consumption. We aim to file for regulatory approval by the end of January 2025," says Kamal.

Remaining optimistic and focused on India, he shares his plans. "There is a vast market in India to cater to that remains promising if plans proceed smoothly," his enthusiasm swelled as he also described other plans in the pipeline, one being their collaboration with ICAR-DCFR for cultivating snow and rainbow trout.

In our 30-minute discussion, it was clear that Kamal was prepared to face the precariousness around cultivated meat in India, a sector already facing controversial market validation: Florida's ban, Singapore's promise, the UK government's £1.6 million commitment to establishing a safety assessment process for novel foods and limited markets.

I took a moment to reflect on the discussions. Would cultivated meat gain popularity in India? I wasn't sure. Fortunately, this isn't my last encounter with the thought leaders and innovators in the cultivated meat industry; the journey is ongoing. ■

Grilling

A Walk In History To Understand Barbecue

Uncovering the rich and spicy history of barbecue with Chef **Bobby Kapoor**, Chef-Partner at Cartalyst Food Solutions and Classic Catering

The Origins of Barbecue

History tells a story that in early Mexico, an unusual accident involved placing a freshly killed animal's carcass in a cactus and burying it in the ground for rigor mortis, as was the trend to tenderize the meat. A fire was lit above, and the result, when unearthed, was cooked meat that resembled a sleeping serpent. This practice, thought to be the origin of the term "barb coat al," sparked a culinary phenomenon and the concept of slow-cooking large cuts of meat, aka BBQ.

Another theory ties barbecue to the Taino word barbacoa, referring to a wooden structure used by the indigenous people of the Caribbean to roast meat.

Ancient Beginnings

With the discovery of fire, early humans quickly recognized that cooking meat over flames enhanced flavor and improved safety. Hunter-gatherers learned to master cooking techniques for preservation, discovering that smoke, curing, and the natural reactions of meat on a spit could give juiciness, flavour and extend the shelf life of their food.

A key component in grilling, the Maillard reaction, occurs when amino acids and sugars react at temperatures over 280°F (140°C), creating the golden-brown color and distinct flavor we associate with grilled foods. Barbecuing, on the other hand, is ideal for tougher cuts of meat, such as shoulders, brisket, and



ribs, which require slow, indirect heat to become tender and flavourful.

The two are very different, and in my eyes, the same equipment can contribute to both of them and the confusion around them.

Global Influences

The Caribbean: When Spanish explorers encountered the Taino people, they adopted the barbacoa technique, adapting it with their own spices and methods, laying the foundation for modern barbecue.

American South: Barbecue became a cherished tradition in the Southern United States, with enslaved Africans bringing their culinary knowledge and flavors, blending them with Native American and European practices.

Regional styles like Texas brisket and Carolina's vinegar-based sauces emerged from this cultural fusion.

Grilling Traditions Around the World

- 1. Brazilian Churrasco:** Skewered meats are slow-cooked over open flames, often served with farofa (toasted cassava flour) and spicy sauces. The Churrasco grill is the equipment of choice for my concepts.
- 2. Korean Barbecue:** Meat like bulgogi or galbi is grilled at the table, with a variety of banchan (side dishes) enhancing the communal experience. The tabletop grill makes it interesting, but I guess the seating adds to my thrill.
- 3. Argentinian Asado:** High-quality cuts such as short ribs are simply seasoned with coarse salt and grilled to highlight their natural flavor. Lava Stone for the table to sear the meat on makes this interesting on the table.
- 4. Japanese Yakitori:** Skewered chicken is meticulously grilled over charcoal, with each piece often brushed with tare sauce for a savory glaze.
- 5. Turkish Kebabs:** Influenced by various cultures, Turkey developed kebabs with onion, pepper paste, and tomatoes, serving them with salads and mint tea.
- 6. Indian Tandoor:** Dating back to 17th-century India, the tandoor (beehive oven) cooks meats and breads with intense heat, giving them a distinct smokiness and spiciness.



Modern Barbecue Trends

The art of barbecue has evolved with modern innovations, from sous-vide to plant-based grilling options. Pellet smokers, electric grills, and a variety of wood chips allow anyone to experiment with flavors and techniques.

Tips and Tricks for the Ultimate Barbecue

At Cartalyst, we encourage exploring the flavors of the world. Here are some essential tips:

1. **Umami Marinades:** Build your flavor base with ingredients like pesto, yogurt, tomato paste, fermented pepper chilies, or cream cheese.
2. **Spice Blends:** Develop your rubs and marinades to create a unique taste profile.
3. **Know Your Equipment:** Understanding your grill's features will help you control the cooking process. Just grill or understand the timing for the Barbeque.
4. **Create Flavour Dips:** Add a finishing

dip to cooked meats for an extra burst of flavor.

5. **Smoke It Up:** Use wood chips such as hickory, applewood, or mesquite for a rich, smoky flavor.
6. **Infuse Oils:** Add herbs to your oils to impart subtle flavors.
7. **Charcoal Hack:** Light your charcoal by soaking paper in oil instead of using lighter fluid for a cleaner start.
8. **Take Your Time:** Slow cooking allows flavors to deepen and tenderizes tougher cuts.

Essential Barbecue Techniques

- ◆ **Choosing the Right Cut:** Select cuts suitable for barbecue or grilling and the cooking method.
- ◆ **Marinate Wisely:** Let meats marinate for several hours or overnight to infuse them with flavor.
- ◆ **Temperature Control:** Invest in a meat thermometer for perfect cooking.
- ◆ **Experiment with Wood Chips:** Different woods add unique flavor profiles.

- ◆ **Grill Your Vegetables:** Grilled vegetables add a delicious, smoky complement to meat dishes.
- ◆ **Grill Fruits and Cheeses:** Pineapple and figs stuffed with cheese, raclette, and halloumi add a touch of sweetness or richness.

From onion halves to garlic cloves and a variety of vegetables, barbecuing goes beyond meat. Imagine the rich flavors you can achieve by grilling vegetables like eggplant, beetroot, and sweet potato until perfectly marked, smoky, or tender. Enhance them with a dollop of labneh or a smoked vegetable paste for added depth and complexity.

Whether you're creating a quick starter or crafting a full, 13-course meal, each dish can fire up your imagination and be a canvas for creativity!!

Fun fact: Barbecue is the correct spelling. The word Barbeque is often used mistakenly for the abbreviation BBQ.

The Art Of Hiding In The Bathroom

In the spirit of wisdom handed down by his grandfather, **Elvis Taylor** writes about the beauty of sharing life's secrets



Never forget to enjoy every bit of the chaotic, beautiful journey because this time called 'life' is meant to be shared

Greetings, I come in peace!

Currently, I am serving as a multi-unit manager for New Shanghai restaurants across the UAE in the ever-evolving culinary landscape and the dynamism of leading diverse teams. My days blend with interesting interactions with guests and quiet contemplation of strategizing over spreadsheets. I see it as a perfect recipe for both challenges and humor.

My journey in hospitality began with Taj Hotels and led to valuable lessons in management schools. Each step has taught me to embrace unpredictability, and that is what makes life incredibly interesting and often quite amusing.

Reflecting on a piece of wisdom from my grandpa: "A secret once told is no longer a secret." I have realized the importance of sharing experiences that inspire you to give it your absolute best every day.

My mornings start ambitiously, powered by morning stretches and a hefty mug of strong coffee. I squeeze in a moment for a quick reading, and this fuels my day before cracking up to get ready for work. My home life involves serenading my kids, Liam and Lara, with nursery rhymes. Though my singing skills might have them laughing more than singing along, believe me, I used to be the lead singer of a band.

Opposites attract, and my wife from Romania is no exception to the rule. She is methodical and meticulous, while I am more decisive and have learned to be happily married. My #1 rule is to let her win all the arguments. If one must

win an argument, let it be your spouse. Somehow, it seems like a daily episode of a sitcom, with me playing the role of Dad with his pint-sized co-stars, sometimes perfecting the art of hiding in the bathroom for a sliver of peace.

Whilst juggling work and education, I find myself sometimes doing acrobatics in this circus called LIFE! Now, time is not just of the essence, so studying in my car is quite normal. That is just my mobile university. It is a good thing my brain gets good mileage! Through family chaos, I whim my way, humming out mission impossible. You would often find my study notes a mix of candy stains and toddler scribbles. Despite the whirlwind of responsibilities, it is evident my life is a vibrant tapestry woven with laughter, learning, and a dash of madness. Life should be anything but dull. I am certain there are more like me who are striving hard with optimism each year to grow, to make more money, etc. But never forget to enjoy every bit of the chaotic, beautiful journey because this time called "life" is meant to be shared.

Until the next secret. ■

Meat With Sulemana

Abubakari Sadik Sulemana writes about the fundamental processes that contribute to market-ready beef that satisfies consumer expectations and industry standards



The journey from pasture to plate in the beef industry encompasses multiple stages that ensure cattle meet high-quality standards before entering the wholesale market. Two critical stages in this journey are cattle backgrounding and feedlot finishing; each plays a part in preparing animals for slaughter while enhancing overall meat quality.

A Foundation for Quality

Backgrounding represents the initial, foundational phase after weaning, designed to prepare young cattle for the more intensive feedlot environment. During this period, cattle are typically maintained on high-fiber diets, which may include pasture grazing, hay, or silage. This high-fiber regimen promotes a moderate yet consistent weight gain in terms of muscle development, strong skeletal structure, and immune system strengthening. The backgrounding phase is also intended to minimize stress, which is critical for ensuring cattle remain healthy and resilient as they transition to the more intensive conditions of a feedlot.

The backgrounding period generally lasts several months to a year, varying according to factors such as breed type, target weight, and market demand. The ultimate objective of backgrounding is to produce cattle with strong, well-conditioned physiques that can thrive in the feedlot.

Intensive Finishing for Optimal Market Weight

Upon reaching an appropriate size and resilience during backgrounding, cattle are moved to feedlots for the finishing phase. Here, they are introduced to a high-energy, grain-based diet to improve marbling rapidly. Meanwhile, the fine distribution of intramuscular fat contributes to tenderness and flavor. This phase is highly structured, with feedlot managers and animal nutritionists

closely monitoring each animal's progress. Feedlot operators often work with veterinarians and nutritionists to adjust feed and care as needed.

In feedlots, cattle are subject to precise tracking systems that manage feed intake, supplements, and medical care to ensure each animal reaches its target weight and composition. Feedlot management aims to achieve optimal growth in a condensed timeframe while preventing health complications that can arise from higher-intensity feeding regimens. As cattle approach the final finishing weights—typically between 1,200 and 1,400 pounds—careful attention is given to muscle and fat composition to meet the stringent quality standards expected in the wholesale market.

Wholesale Preparation

Once cattle attain their target weight and muscle composition, they are evaluated against wholesale market standards. They are checked with parameters like weight, fat distribution, and overall physical condition, which play vital roles. Wholesale buyers prioritize uniformity, requiring that cattle be raised under controlled, consistent protocols to achieve standardized meat quality. Collaboration between backgrounding, feedlot operators, and wholesale buyers ensures that cattle meet the criteria for premium cuts, fulfilling expectations for flavor, texture, and overall quality.

Wholesale agreements include inspections and certifications, which verify that cattle have been raised and managed according to specific standards to gain market confidence and fulfill consumer expectations.

These certifications ensure that the product meets quality demands and aligns with ethical practices, reflecting the industry's commitment to responsible production. These

verifications, in turn, develop consumer trust in the beef supply chain, affirming that the cattle were raised, managed, and finished with care and attention to detail.

The Importance of Precision in Cattle Management

Effective cattle backgrounding and feedlot management are essential for achieving weight and quality benchmarks and promoting ethical and sustainable practices across the beef supply chain. Producers can deliver high-quality cattle to the wholesale market by adopting structured, data-driven approaches while maintaining animal welfare and minimizing environmental impacts.

Advances in technology and data management have enhanced the precision of cattle management, enabling producers to tailor programs to specific market requirements and optimize animal health and growth more efficiently than ever before.

In summary, the backgrounding and feedlot stages are crucial in the beef production pipeline, ensuring cattle reach optimal quality and weight to meet wholesale market standards.

Producers can deliver high-quality cattle through well-structured growth programs, advanced nutritional strategies, and ongoing collaboration. This detailed look at cattle backgrounding and feedlot management highlights that careful planning and execution in producing beef align with both industry standards and consumer expectations. ■

2024 Unpacked

For Chef **Tarek Mouriness**, this year was written with lessons. He takes us through his calendar chronicles, sharing insights that he gained along the way

As we usher into the new year, I bring you some snippets of the lessons learned each month.

January – Courage

At the start of the year, we all needed courage, patience, and a whole lot of understanding for ourselves and those around us. This month has taught me to recognize my capabilities and the hidden talents of my teammates. It was about helping them express themselves, particularly those reluctant to have courage.

February – Legacy

Sharing your culinary skills is like passing down a treasured dish to the next generation. There's nothing quite like the joy of connecting with young chefs and collaborating with colleagues. What a blessing! I realized when you pour your heart into teaching, those eager interns and mentees start to see just how flavorful a legacy can be.

March - Curiosity

You know what they say: asking questions is a sign that you desire to learn. When you ask questions, it shows you're hungry to accomplish things, and trust me, it will never make you appear less capable. In fact, it just makes you more relatable and real. Gaining respect from others will come naturally. Nobody likes a know-it-all who pretends to have all the answers. No matter your position or degree of success, you should ask questions.

April - Encouragement

Oh boy, April! It felt like Mother Nature decided to turn Dubai into a giant water



park with those floods. But every storm clears up and gives way to sunshine. I understood that during tough times, growth will begin. It might be tough with the rain, but if you have an umbrella, it can help you overcome all the challenges in life and find the silver linings hiding behind those clouds.

I came up with three important insights that I'm excited to share:

Accountability: As a leader, it is important to share with your team that you take full responsibility for every decision you make. When you say, "You've got this," it signifies that taking ownership of our choices represents accountability, not a weakness.

Encouragement: Being transparent and showing genuine concern for your colleagues can help build a strong, positive, and healthy working environment. It shows that you stand by your words. Let's make things better, one encouraging word at a time!

Fear of the Unknown: A great leader may not always have all the answers. But here's the secret: it's perfectly okay. Respect and trust will be bestowed upon you by your teammates if you are humble enough to ask for their assistance.

May - Turtle

I found myself in a moment of reflection, pondering the question: "How am I going to get through all of this?"

It's super simple: concentrate on your performance and steer clear of comparing yourself to others. While you may feel your progress is painstakingly slow, it may appear fast to someone else. Each of us brings our special skills and talents to the table. Therefore, I always try to improve, aspiring to be a better version of myself than I was yesterday.

June – Ignorance

I came across an old photograph and found myself in the center, surrounded by Chef Joseph Robinson and Irfan Hussain. Today, Chef Joseph owns a hotel in England, and Irfan is a 5-star hotel executive in Bangladesh. They both trained under me as commis chefs, and I couldn't be more proud of their achievements. The meeting only made me remember a moment from Al Ain in 1993, who said, "Loving and respecting each other is very important. With respect, you can achieve anything. Respect must be sincere, and you must value human beings."

In life, we encounter various leaders whose behaviors can influence their competency. This month, I taught many young chefs that effective leaders should be mindful of their small actions and actively listen to their teams to understand their challenges.

It's crucial to engage with team members as humans and communicate openly to avoid ignorance. Instead of focusing on mistakes, leaders should address concerns and provide constructive conversations to help team members understand the consequences of their actions.

July - Growth

If you follow the plan and engage in all the learning, you'll be amazed at how much you can grow, just like a plant reaching for the sun! For the students, stay open to new learning opportunities and excited about learning to help you face tough times. Learn new skills, whatever they may be, to get ready for the future.

August: Classic and Modern

This month was about solidifying the foundational skills. Intelligence is solving problems, while wisdom is knowing not every situation is a problem. It's important to develop both intelligence and wisdom; don't focus on just one. Chefs must learn about yield, costing, waste management, and how to create accurate recipes to ensure financial success. Internship students should actively engage with their seniors in fundamental cooking techniques, such as roasting and making sauces. Understanding how foundation and technology work together, like AI, is crucial. These kinds of applications can teach our young, aspiring chefs more effective yielding, costing, and cooking techniques.

Overcoming my weaknesses is key to my personal goals. Setbacks have shaped who I am today. Once you've faced and accepted defeat, don't repeat the same mistakes. That's my advice.

September: Rebuilding

Kintsugi is an old Japanese art form that involves reassembling broken objects; in life, we experience many such pieces, including broken spirits, souls, moments, and moments of giving up. The things I have listed can only be fixed by you; no one else can. Whatever you are going through in life, whether it is a financial crisis, a family crisis, an election, a difficult job, etc., the only way out is for you and me to pull together, thread by thread, and put our best foot forward.

As this month ends – Always stay disciplined and positive. Rebuild your faith and embrace who you are.

October: The Metro Ride

During my morning metro ride, I noticed two young students rushing towards the sole exit, as indicated by a sign. Their actions highlighted the importance of a disciplined mindset and the consistency it fosters for success. Observing the directional arrows on the floor made me realize that even in a

calm setting, following simple guidelines reflects a larger truth: discipline is a cornerstone of achievement.

My dear friends and coworkers, self-control is a virtue that every one of us must work to cultivate. We must follow the basics and ensure consistency. Without discipline, no one can achieve their goals, and that is true for the troops, the Michelin Star Brigade, or any other occupation.

It is clear from the results that the athletes differ from one another due to self-discipline during training. Discipline and following the right "arrow" are the keys to success, development, and advancement.

November: Believe

Thanks to everyone who has been a mentor to me throughout the years. Along the way, you all paved the way for me to make my own educational decisions. The best advice they gave me was that there are many options available to you, and you may decide what you believe is best for you.

December: Gratitude

This month is full of blessings and grace. As the year draws to a close, I would like to share with you my overall learnings: "The eyes are useless when the mind is blind" - our mind can be like a cloud when our ideas are unclear. As a motivation, I should not be defeated by myself. Be disciplined, admit that I need other people's help, learn to practice good listening, walk the talk, practice skills, empower others by sharing my skills with them, and remember and be grateful to people in your life. Your eyes will see clearly, and your mind will never be blind; that is my credo.

Thank you to the Emirates Culinary Guild and Gulf Gourmet team for a wonderful year. To my inner circle, including my children, friends, parents, instructors, and my wife - who is my partner in life and beyond, I owe my achievements to you. Your words of wisdom and support have been a source of great motivation for me. ■

Culinary Evolution Adapt or Transform?

Chef **Carl Shi** discusses three critical problems: the slow adoption of automation, inefficient inventory management, and the underutilization of data analytics

The culinary industry is currently grappling with challenges posed by technology. There is no doubt that while many celebrate incremental advancements, the reality is that the industry is struggling with major issues.

For many decades, there has been a deep-rooted attachment to traditional cooking methods. The resistance from some chefs towards data and automation in cooking is understandable.

The culinary arts field has long been associated with creativity, intuition, and personal expression. Many chefs view cooking as an art form where the human touch and personal flair create dishes that resonate with diners on an emotional level. There is a fear that automation and data-driven decisions might strip away the soul and artistry of cooking, making it just another mechanical process solely for efficiency and profit.

However, it's important to recognize that data and automation don't have to replace the artistry of cooking; instead, they can complement it. By handling repetitive tasks and providing insights into customer preferences and operational efficiencies, data and automation can free up chefs to focus more on the creative aspects of their



Chit-Chat with Chef Carl

work. This technology can serve as a tool that enhances a chef's ability to innovate and experiment rather than constrain it. Ultimately, the key is finding a balance where data and automation support the culinary vision without overshadowing the personal touch that makes dining a unique and memorable experience. As a chef, I foresee a future where the culinary industry will incorporate a significant proportion of automated machinery. I have always respected traditional cooking, but I have learned that this respect can sometimes impede progress.

Managing inventory is a crucial aspect of running a successful kitchen, yet many establishments still rely on outdated methods. This results in issues such as overstocking, understocking, and food waste, which negatively impact both profits and the environment. Having managed kitchen operations, I understand the stress of manually tracking inventory. The future of technology in culinary inventory management is all about automation, integration, and intelligence.

Interestingly, the technology used in Australian supermarkets to detect customer purchases and prevent theft could potentially be adapted for kitchen inventory management.

The three technologies most likely to become prevalent in the future of culinary inventory management are:

IoT and Smart Devices: The Internet of Things (IoT) will play a significant role in inventory management. Smart refrigerators, freezers, and storage units equipped with sensors can automatically track inventory levels, monitor expiration dates, and even reorder supplies when stock runs low. This reduces manual labor and minimizes human error.

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning: These two can analyze sales

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data, trends, and external factors (like weather or local events) to predict future demand more accurately.

This helps optimize inventory levels, cuts down waste, and guarantees that popular items are always in stock.

Blockchain Technology: Blockchain can improve the aspects of traceability in the supply chain. By keeping it transparent with an immutable record of transactions and keeping track of the origin and journey of ingredients, blockchain can help maintain quality and compliance with safety standards.

In the context of the culinary industry and technology, being skeptical might mean having doubts about the effectiveness or necessity of integrating new technologies, such as automation or data analytics, into traditional cooking practices.

This skepticism can stem from concerns about losing the human touch in cooking, the cost and complexity of new systems, or uncertainty about

the benefits these technologies might bring. Skepticism is common when it comes to adopting new technologies. Many chefs and restaurateurs may question whether automation can truly replicate the nuances of human cooking or whether data analytics can accurately capture the subtleties of customer preferences. However, overcoming this skepticism is crucial for embracing innovation and ensuring the industry evolves to meet modern demands.

By being open to new ideas and technologies, the culinary industry can enhance efficiency, sustainability, and customer satisfaction while preserving the essence of traditional cooking.

Decisions are often based on intuition rather than data. However, data analytics can offer valuable insights into customer preferences and sales trends, which are frequently overlooked. Initially, I was skeptical about using data in the culinary field, believing it couldn't capture the nuances of the dining experience. However, I have

come to realize that data can help us better understand our customers and improve our operations. I am hopeful that high-tech companies will focus on developing small, affordable AI systems that are powerful enough to link customer feedback, online reviews, and other useful information to analyze sales trends and customer preferences. By investing in tools that analyze data, we can enhance the dining experience and drive growth. This requires us to be open to new ideas and recognize the value of data.

The culinary industry is at an important juncture. More than ever, it is required to confront issues around automation, inventory management, and data analytics directly. By doing so, we can improve efficiency, sustainability, and customer satisfaction. This is a call to action for everyone in the culinary world. We need to challenge traditional mindsets and embrace technology as a partner in our craft. By balancing tradition with innovation, the industry will survive and thrive in the future. ■



DESSERT CALLING

Gulf Gourmet talks to Chef **Savio D'souza** to understand his take on transforming avant-garde pastry pandemonium into pure delight

They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. When you come from a family that breaks bread over bakery treats, stepping into the culinary world was a no-brainer for Chef Savio D'Souza.

As the driving force behind developing menus for pastry offerings across all Eataly outlets in the UAE and the GCC in Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, the 33-year-old chef is giving the Middle East a sweet taste of Italy.

"As a pastry chef, I lead a talented team of nine chefs at the Dubai Mall and oversee four chefs in Abu Dhabi and Dubai Hills. In the GCC, we have chefs, but I'm the go-to person for hiring and interviewing candidates for positions abroad. Whenever we introduce a new menu, we set up a meeting to share the food specifications and recipes so they are on the same page. Then, I take a hands-on approach and head over to the restaurants for the workshop."

In an age when the avant-garde approach to plating reigns supreme, he embraces the tricky task of pairing it down to timeless finesse. He has found the perfect balance by mixing traditional Italian desserts with some of the modern techniques. "We're not changing the classics; they'll always be classic. Our focus is on the ingredients, keeping minimal garnishes. It's all about preserving the natural flavors and keeping things fresh," says Chef Savio.

He beams, "That means no artificial additives like colors or glazes here in



We're not changing the classics; they'll always be classic. Our focus is on the ingredients, keeping minimal garnishes

this kitchen. We celebrate simplicity and authenticity."

His love for chocolate and sugar, seen as two guilty pleasures by the world, is bubbling into an all-consuming obsession. Decades in the industry haven't quenched his thirst for learning. The dream? Attend the Pastry Academy of Malaysia to do an intense study on sugar, pastry, and modern creations and take some serious chocolate action.

Even when he considers his far-off future, he simply cannot get enough of chocolate and pastry. He brings to mind an image of his life rich in chocolate, biscuits, rustic breads, pastry selections, and tea, ultimately establishing a high-end French café.

While the plans for the cafe still seem like a distant star, one event shining brightly on the horizon is the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition. His standout dish features sous vide Mirabelle plums paired with an Arla

Pro Cheesecake and poached berries, topped off with peach semifreddo. An example of his modern and old-school ethos. "Mirabelle Plums are slow-cooked for three to four hours to turn them into a luscious compote. I also have cheesecake and Mirabelle plum jelly. A crunchy coconut base and biscuit crumb is at the bottom. The peach semifreddo adds a touch of lightness to balance the richness. And to finish it all off, we have berry coulis. The presentation is minimalistic yet evokes the warm, festive spirit of winter and Christmas, making this dessert a celebration for the senses," he dishes.

Endless hours and much effort have gone into preparing for a multitude of competitions. As he looks back on those exhilarating days, he recalls the laughter and camaraderie shared on those travel adventures with friends.

"I participated in the Nestle Golden Chef's competition, which took me to Singapore in 2018. The main cook-off took place in 2019. Next, I competed in the Young Chefs competition and won. Also, I have been involved in the Salon Culinaire competitions from 2014 to 2019, accumulating several years of competitive experience and an impressive collection of medals along the way."

A Floury Start

Doused in the aroma of freshly baked bread, Chef Savio reminisces when he was first besotted with pastry. Tucked away on the southwestern coast of India, Goa is a magnet for tourists. Raised in this hospitality-centric state, Chef



My love for chocolate and sugar, seen as two guilty pleasures by the world, has turned into an all-consuming obsession



Savio had a bakery dynasty kneading his inspiration candle bright.

His family ran a local bakery that was the talk of the town, supplying varieties of rustic and pound bread to hotels and other institutions. "Walking in the home, we smelled the aroma of freshly baked bread, proving bread, and flour everywhere we turned. As children, we would watch loaves of bread, some 5000 pieces of bread daily baked before our eyes, learning about the whole process from proofing to baking," he details.

A full-fledged family business in the mid-90s, where his mother played an active role alongside his uncles and cousins who were professional chefs, rubbed off on him, making the baking world feel like second nature. With ambitions of donning a chef's hat taking seed in his heart, he enrolled in a three-year degree program at a culinary school.

Charging out into the culinary land, he took his first bite through industrial training at the Taj Dubai. The connection to the hotel came from his mother, a hotelier who spent 14 years in their accounts team.

His first job following education was at the Taj Fort Aguada Resort as a third commis. The kitchen was his training ground for a year, simmering life-altering lessons before he zoomed away to Mövenpick at JBR Dubai.

"At the Movenpick properties, I gained hands-on experience while working



With a combination of talent, tenacity, and generous sugar, I've managed to unlock the door to one's soul and sweet tooth

at Movenpick JLT, where I joined the pre-opening team. In those years with Movenpick, my passion grew, and I advanced to the position of Chef de Partie."

The conclusion of the tenure heralded him into taking bold risks and exploring global cuisine. "I had plans to chase the American dream, but life threw a curveball with the pandemic. I had to return to Goa in 2019, and I rather took the leap to start my own pastry business there, selling modern cakes, desserts, and artisanal bread, just like my parents did. I catered to hotels and eateries and fulfilled cake orders and mini dessert requests like macarons and sweet treats for every celebration. It was a frenzy for a year until I got a job at the St. Regis in the Maldives."

Then, a new beginning unfurled in his life inked with his marriage. It nudged him to seek a role that aligned with his new responsibilities. With the support of his wife, who works in the automobile industry, Chef Savio is prepared to set out on a new path.

The decision to join Eataly ended up being a wise move. These days, he is full of growth opportunities. His artistic inspiration flows from culinary trends and looking up to renowned chefs like Chef Jordi Rocca. "I get inspiration from the senior pastry chefs, like Chef Praveen and Chef Amar. Their wisdom and skill have made me into the strong chef I am today," he adds.

With a combination of talent, tenacity, and generous sugar, Chef Savio has managed to unlock the door to one's soul and sweet tooth. As his career has been transformed with discipline and motivation, he shares the following words of clarity for aspiring chefs : Young chefs must build a solid foundation in the basics. He advises. "Draw inspiration from those around you, but never waver in your journey. Master the art of temperatures and textures. Make sure you respect the job, and you respect the pastry industry."

Looking at his numerous accolades, it's hard to go against these principles that have propelled Chef Savio to success. Perhaps his recipe for a sweet career progression might just be the missing ingredient that transforms your own culinary career.

Sous Vide Mirabelle Plum Cheesecake Peach Semifreddo

Mirabelle Cheesecake

Arla Pro Full Fat Cream Cheese 34%	350g
Icing Sugar	60g
Vanilla Extract	2 tsp
Arla Pro High Stability	

Whipping Cream 35% 160ml
Method

- ◆ Cream the cheese with icing sugar and vanilla extract until smooth.
- ◆ Whip the cream and fold in slowly.

Cheesecake Base Insert

Flour	100g
Almond Powder	120g

Arla Pro Unsalted Butter 82%	100g
Sugar Brown	60g
Ginger Powder	6gm
Desiccated Coconut	80gm
Lemon Zest	1 no
White Chocolate 29%	30g

Method

- ◆ Make the crumble with the flour, butter, almond powder, brown sugar



and bake it at 175°C

- ◆ After baking it, cool it down and crush using a robot coupe.
- ◆ Fold in the rest of the ingredients and add melted chocolate and mix .
- ◆ Set aside in the mould.

Mirabelle Candied Insert

Mirabelle Puree	120g
Arla Pro Unsalted Butter 82%	10g
Sugar	25g
Nh-Pectin	6g
Lemon Juice	10ml

Method

- ◆ Heat the puree on medium heat. Add in the sugar, Nh-pectin and cook till it becomes thick. Add in butter and lemon juice.
- ◆ Give a mix, pour in butter and set it in the freezer.

Sous Vide Mirabelle Plums

Fresh Mirabelle Plums	300g
Honey	50g
Vanilla Bean Scraped	1no
Light Sugared Syrup	200ml
Lemon Zest	1

Method

- ◆ Cut the plums into 2 halves and put in a vacuum bag.
- ◆ Pour the remaining ingredients and seal.
- ◆ Put in a sous vide machine at 75°C temperature for 7 hours .
- ◆ Once done, let it cool down. Use as required

Peach Semifreddo

Peach Puree	300g
Sugar	50g
Yolk	35g
Egg White	115g
Sugar	90g
Vanilla Pod	1no
Lemon Juice	5ml

Arla Pro High Stability

Whipping Cream 35% 120g

Method

- ◆ Heat the puree along with half sugar and vanilla pod.
- ◆ Make a pâte à bombe with remaining sugar and yolk. Keep it aside, and make the Italian meringue with sugar and whites.
- ◆ Lastly, whip the cream, carefully fold in the lemon juice, and place in a shallow tray. And then freeze it.

Vanilla Peach Anglaise Dome

Milk	100g
Arla Pro High Stability	
Whipping Cream 35%	100g
Yolk	20g
Sugar	20g
Cinnamon Whole	1no
Peach Extract	5ml

Method

- ◆ Cook milk and cream. Add sugar and yolk with vanilla pod.
- ◆ Once it thickens, add peach extract and then let it sit in dome moulds and freeze it.

Peach Elastic Sheet

Peach Puree	150g
Sugar	30g
Sosa Elastic	12g

Method

- ◆ Heat the puree.
- ◆ Combine the elastic powder and sugar and add it to the puree till it boils.
- ◆ Then pour it in a tray to chill.

Mirabelle Paper Crisp

Mirabelle Puree	200g
Xantana Powder	10g
Sugar	30g

Method

- ◆ In a bowl take the puree, sugar and xantana powder and blend it with a blender until it achieves a smooth consistency.
- ◆ Pour it on the silpat and bake at 150°C degrees till cooked, remove and pull the crisp to desired shapes.

Redberry Coulis

Raspberry Puree	100g
Strawberry Puree	120g
Lemon Juice	10ml

Method

- ◆ Heat both the puree. Then add sugar and lemon juice
- ◆ Cook on low flames until it archives a thick consistency



WRAPPING UP 2024

Amaresh Bhaskaran and **Shreya Asopa** have an insightful conversation about the whole shebang of events and activities that unfolded throughout the year, giving us a roundup of the Gulf Gourmet's evolution into becoming a more diverse and inclusive platform

Shreya: Well, here we are! Another year has come to a close. I have to say, revisiting our eventful magazine coverage feels like reliving every story we covered this year. Each story is seasoned with unique perspectives and shows no chef is averse to making tough choices. What standout stories linger in your mind from this year?

Amaresh: There were plenty of unforgettable moments. January's issue started with a hook that really got our attention on Emirati heritage.

Shreya: Absolutely. The story of Chef Muna Almansoori having played a key

role in transforming global perceptions of Emirati cuisine and pushing the status of Emirati culinary education set such a positive tone for the year.

Amaresh: But it wasn't just this one feature that radiated innovation, heritage and motivation. On a sanguine note, the story of young twin chefs Maitha and Abdulrahman Al Hashimi showed the seemingly impossible can become possible with dedication. And, of course, the subsequent cover story on Chef Kuldeep Singh, reconnecting with one's roots to build a solid culinary foundation, beautifully stood out in bringing together a diverse range of

powerful stories that pointed out the power of passion in the culinary world.

Shreya: I couldn't agree more. The stories shared, each harping on the theme of overcoming obstacles, much like resilience required in a good recipe. And speaking of diversity, let's shine a light on the development of the Women's Chapter of the Emirates Culinary Guild and the perks of being a wildflower like Chef Andrea Karidis.

Amaresh: The Guild's Women Chapter is another eventful milestone. It celebrates the empowerment, connection, and recognition of the

incredible talents of women in the culinary industry. This chapter is about cultivating an environment where women can come together, share their stories, and collectively build, grow, and thrive in their culinary endeavors. And Chef Andrea's story again drives home the importance of having a culinary platform for women. As she articulated, this is not a feminist movement, but it is an inclusivity and diversity initiative aimed at celebrating the unique strengths of women in the hospitality industry.

Shreya: And it's been amazing to freeze-frame these moments on our revamped website. The new look of the Guild's website is visually stunning, user-friendly, and intuitive to navigate.

Amaresh: Yes..just with a single scroll, you can get an update on the Guild activities, young chefs club events, competition guidelines, and insights from industry experts on the latest culinary trends. Let's not forget about all the updates on ExpoCulinaire, available on this fantastic platform. I'm already excited for the next edition.

Shreya: Speaking of the Expo, it really turned up the heat. This year, the ExpoCulinaire was thrilling, productive, and, above all, an incredible success. We had Chef Nuwan Kumara, who, in his victorious run, secured three golds, one silver, and the prestigious title of Best Cuisinier of the Year. Meanwhile, Chef Thushara De Silva and Chef Amanda Fernando clinched the Best Baker title, bringing home the Sounbula UAE Bakery Team of 2024 trophy.

Amaresh: These are some impressive victories. The Expo is a rare opportunity to break free from our routines and learn from people, especially in today's digital age. I enjoyed chatting with chefs, partners, marshals, bakers, and artists, but my chat with Chef Otto Weibel was particularly memorable. Currently running multiple restaurants as a partner-owner in Singapore, he is known

as the Godfather of Singapore's Culinary Fraternity. Bringing his extensive competition experience and 25 years as the head judge at the Expo Culinaire, he was excited to see so many well-trained chefs at the event.

Interestingly, he shared his thoughts on running a restaurant during today's competitive and challenging times. According to him, the secret lies in choosing the right location, serving excellent food, and creating a welcoming ambiance. He also mentioned that a restaurant manager can make a major difference. Customers keep returning because they feel appreciated, be it sitting at the same table or enjoying the same wine, they crave that personal touch, which in turn enhances the dining experience.

Shreya: That's a great piece of insight. Were there any interesting observations about the competition from other judges?

Amaresh: I remember meeting Chef Ilkin Hanifa, President of the Azerbaijan Chefs Guild and the ambassador of the Emirates Culinary Guild in Azerbaijan since 2001. He deemed this year's competition exceptional. This year, he was judging plant-based cuisine and the US potato category, which left him impressed by the vegan meat options.

Shreya: I think it really makes you sit up and take notice of how innovation in sustainability isn't just reserved for industry experts but is something everyone can rally behind. It reminds me of our coverage of Chef Tiaan and how small actions for the environment can lead to substantial change.

Amaresh: It's clear that sustainability changes how we think about the food we eat. And we can't overlook the panoply of op-eds that raise awareness about the pressing issues in hospitality. We've worked hard to better understand what flavors and ingredients you seek from the magazine that reflects

on 'from us, for us'. Therefore we've spiced things up by adding several new columns that give insights on topics like sustainability, food tech, AI, beverages, meat alternatives, leadership, and the latest trends that provide us with learning opportunities.

Shreya: And we also covered the UAE National Culinary Team's grand win at the Culinary Olympics. The team has consistently delivered, winning an impressive total of 69 medals at the 2024 Culinary Olympics! Among the standout performers were three chefs, Kameel, Kuma Madhusanka, and Thilina, who certainly proved that good things come in threes. It was a gourmet experience one after another. I mean, could you even pick a favorite issue?

Amaresh: Not at all. I loved how we concluded this year with a bounty of inspiration. A sea of nearly daily reminders to keep going in life.

Shreya: It's moving, isn't it? I believe readers will find his journey as inspiring as we did. It's the kind of narrative that lingers long after the last page is turned.

Amaresh: Finally, we leave this year on a higher note. We welcome Chef Alan Orreal, who will lead the Guild until our general election in May 2025. In an eventful career, Chef Alan has accomplished a great deal, earning accolades and medals, and now the position of President of the Emirates Culinary Guild.

And for the amazing news that will carry our momentum into next year. We have been shortlisted for the 30th Gourmand World Cookbook Awards.

Shreya: It's exciting to receive such recognition. It motivates us to keep telling the stories that touch people's lives.

Amaresh: Cheers to a year full of culinary adventures. Let's continue to share incredible stories. Onwards and Upwards!



The team of 27 chefs sent by the Guild at IKA Culinary Olympics made a remarkable impact, securing a stunning total of 69 medals and 1 diploma. With three golds with distinction, 39 silvers, and 27 silvers, they displayed an outstanding performance as the top-performing team in this year's competition.



The Guild members enjoyed a memorable Iftar experience at Shees Rest Area in Kalba, invited by Sharjah Tourism. This was a rare opportunity for them to experience the traditional breaking of the fast ceremony with the family members of the village of Shees during the special time of year.



The 27th International Emirates Salon Culinaire wrapped up with great success, attracting over 5,200 attendees. More than 900 chefs from the UAE and 11 countries competed in 39 classes that took place between May 20th to 22nd at Expo Centre Sharjah.



At The Hotel Show Dubai, the Chefs Table competition showcased top culinary talent. Nine teams from the region's leading hotels and restaurants went head-to-head in a three-day tournament. With the closest scores ever recorded, the event, organized by The Emirates Culinary Guild and dmg events, highlighted high standards in culinary skills, presentation, and taste, all while maintaining pristine kitchen conditions.



Young Chefs from the Emirates Culinary Guild served up a delicious debut, bagging a bronze medal at the Africa Culinary Cup held in Egypt.





▲ The third edition of Salon du Chocolat et de la Pâtisserie Dubai concluded successfully at Madinat Arena, attracting over 7,000 visitors. Highlights included the impressive Chocolate Fashion Show featuring 13 dazzling chocolate dresses created by pastry chefs and ESMOD Dubai students, alongside 43 skilled competitors celebrating culinary creativity.



▲ Chefs from the Guild achieved impressive success at the 2024 FHAM Global Culinary Challenge in Malé. They won 7 Gold, 3 Silver, and 4 Bronze medals, along with four best-in-class trophies and the title of best national team.



◀ Gulf Gourmet magazine has been nominated and shortlisted in the Best Food Magazine category at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards. With 222 countries and 1,270 nominations this year in Gourmand Awards, it's a great honor. The excitement builds as the ceremony approaches next June.

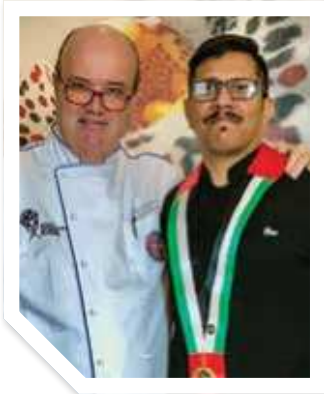


December 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**



The Guild Meet

The monthly guild meeting was held at the Waldorf Astoria the Palm on the 12th of November 2024. We thank Chef Stuart Sage and General Manager David Wilson for hosting the event.





December 2024 Gulf Gourmet







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THE EMIRATES CULINARY GUILD APPLICATION FORM

Date of Application:

Family Name:	First Name/s:	Ms/ Mrs/ Mr/ Other:
Nationality:	Civil Status:	Date of Birth: dd/mm/yyyy
Employee/ Business Owner:	Name of Business:	Designation:
Work Address:	Email Address:	Contact Number:

Type of Membership: (please tick)	
SENIOR: (Above the rank of chef de partie/ senior chef de partie on executive chef's recommendation).	AED350 joining fee/ AED150 renewal fee Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar
MEMBER: (Below the rank of chef de partie 29 years old and over).	AED150 joining fee/AED75 renewal fee Includes certificate; member-pin, member medal and ECG ceremonial collar
YOUNG MEMBER: (under 28 years)	Free Includes certificate; member-pin

Declaration to be Signed by Applicant:

I wish to join The Emirates Culinary Guild in collaboration with The Women's Culinary Chapter.

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' endeavours to the best of my abilities.

Signature:

Proposed By:	Signature:
Seconded By:	Signature:

For Official Use Only				
Remarks:				
Payment Received?				
Certificate Given		Pin Given		Medal & Collar Given
Approved by President:			Signature:	
Approved by Chairman:			Signature:	

Note: The membership is only applicable to those who are working in the UAE as professional chef or with a background related as Chef in the hotel and restaurant industry.

The WCC is in collaboration with the Emirates Culinary Guild, which is a member of the World Association of Chef's Societies

TRAMONTINA

Tramontina: 113 Years Perfecting Premium Kitchenware



December 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

newmembers



Stefano Callaioli, Executive Chef, Emirates Snack Foods, received the membership certificate from Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG

Established in 1996, **Emirates Snack Foods (ESF)** has emerged as a leading name in the marketing and distribution of FMCG products in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. With a strong foothold in retail, e-commerce and food service, ES has continuously expanded its product range and reputation for excellence, making it the sole representative of a multitude of top International brands.

At Emirates Snack Foods, we take pride in nurturing strong partnerships that drive mutual growth. Our enduring relationships with brands and partners



have fueled our success and earned us respect in the industry.

ESF operates a fleet of over 120 trucks and vans, providing comprehensive coverage across all the Emirates. Our state-of-the-art warehouses boast refrigerated and frozen sections that enable round-the-clock monitoring, ensuring all items remain fresh and pristine.

With a passionate team of professionals, Emirates Snack Foods continues to bring a wide variety of FMCG products to countless households and businesses across the UAE and Oman. We remain dedicated to embracing innovation, expanding our offerings, growing categories and continuing our pursuit of culinary delight.

We exist to service our brands, customers and partners by ensuring products are available and they add value to our customers' business, the brand's value and ultimately to the consumers' lives.



Dalizia Horn, Business Development Chef; Lucy Mwangi, Sales Executive and Elise Jublot, Business Development Executive, received the membership certificate from Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG

Skinny genie is an honest, forward thinking, health conscious lifestyle brand. We stand first and foremost for great tasting food that also happens to be healthy and 100% gluten free.

We believe life is a balance. Everybody needs the right mix of food & nutrition, mind & relaxation, and exercise & fitness. We love what we do and strive for holistic health and well-being.

And we believe every now and again everyone needs a 'cheat' day. This is why all our food is made by hand, designed to be healthy and indulgent - for you to enjoy, nourish, nurture & grow.

Vision

We want all people to eat with both pleasure and balance. We are out to

skinny genie
GLUTEN FREE

prove that healthy food, including gluten free, is accessible to all and that it tastes great. We want to lead the way, by educating and supporting our local communities, on the virtues of a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

Our ambition is for skinny genie to grow and reach as many people as possible.

Mission

"... is to rediscover the art and science of artisan foods, reinvented for modern day palates to make maintaining a healthy lifestyle easy, enjoyable and tasty..."

Offer

Our retail branch consists of cafes where our healthy food and drinks are available to customers, along with a selection of well thought retail products. Our catering branch offers a choice of healthy products designed for your events.

Our wholesale branch offers a wide selection of 100% gluten free products to catering companies, airlines, hotels, both chilled or frozen. We produce 100% of the product we sell, ensuring the quality and traceability of all ingredients used.



Andreas Schmidt, VITO AG, and Mark Kristofer Marquez, VITO Middle East, received the membership certificate from Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG

We have officially received our Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG) membership certificate during the prestigious Gulfood Manufacturing event held in Dubai. The handover ceremony, held on November 5th at our trade show booth, was a memorable moment that celebrated our enduring partnership with the ECG.

During the ceremony, Harald Oberender, Multi award-winning Chef from the ECG officially presented the certificate to our CEO, Andreas Schmidt, and Mark Kristofer Marquez, Sales Manager for **VITO Middle East**.

"We are incredibly honored to continue being part of the Emirates Culinary Guild," said Andreas Schmidt, our CEO. "This membership is a testament to our



ongoing dedication to supporting the culinary industry with innovative and sustainable solutions. Receiving the certificate at Gulfood Manufacturing underscores the strength of our partnership with the ECG."

As a trusted partner of the Emirates Culinary Guild for many years, we renewed our membership in May 2024.

However, due to scheduling challenges, the formal presentation had to be postponed. Gulfood Manufacturing provided the perfect opportunity for us to finally celebrate this milestone in person with our valued partners and colleagues.

The Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG), recognized by Worldchefs as the National Member Society of the UAE, is dedicated to advancing culinary excellence. With an international focus, the Guild supports a wide range of competitions, seminars, and events that unite culinary professionals from around the globe. By continuing our affiliation with the ECG, we align our efforts with their mission, while delivering high-quality frying oil filtration systems that enhance sustainability, efficiency, and safety in kitchens worldwide.



Gabriel Estrella Talenti, Director of Sales for Alto-Shaam Middle East & Africa, received the membership certificate from Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG, and Chef Alan Orreal, President of the ECG.

Alto-Shaam is a recognized leader and innovator in the global foodservice equipment industry, dedicated to meeting and exceeding customers' expectations at every touchpoint.

With headquarters and manufacturing in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, USA, Alto-Shaam proudly provides foodservice equipment solutions to more than 90 countries globally.

Founded on innovation in 1955, Alto-Shaam continues to pioneer hot holding, cooking, and merchandising equipment solutions that fulfill industry challenges and growing demands.

Product Innovations

Keeping food that has been cooked to perfection hot until the moment it is served demands the gentle precision of Alto-Shaam's first innovation, patented Halo Heat® technology. With a wide variety of sizes and styles of heated holding and merchandising solutions available, any size operation can maximize quality and minimize food waste.



Taking Halo Heat one step further, our Cook & Hold Ovens introduced low temperature cooking and holding to the industry. Designed to produce higher yields with top-notch food quality, our Halo Heat technology evenly surrounds food without the use of extremely hot elements, added humidity or fans. This gentle, radiant heat leaves food full of moisture and flavor, resulting in higher yields.

A centerpiece in most kitchens, versatile combination ovens provide efficient and consistent food production, doing the work of a convection oven, kettle, steamer, fryer, smoker, and more.

Introducing another cooking category to the industry, revolutionary Vector® Multi-Cook Ovens offer up to four ovens in one—each chamber with independent temperature, fan speed and cook time control. Cook up to four different food

items simultaneously with no flavor transfer for an unmatched volume and variety of food. The secret to more food, more often with the highest quality lies in exclusive Structured Air Technology®. Taking the Multi-Cook platform one step further, Converge® Multi-Cook Ovens pair Structured Air Technology with controlled humidity for unrivaled cooking power and flexibility. Steam, air fry, bake, grill and more at the same time—all in a compact, ventless footprint. The addition of water also allows for automatic, self-cleaning to significantly reduce labor.

Support

Whether you need to perfect a recipe or shift your business model, our team is here to assist in identifying solutions for issues related to space, labor, high costs, food consistency, and any other areas of concern. We also offer a full system of post-sale support for all of your installation, training and technical needs.

Contact Alto-Shaam today to learn more about our equipment solutions and how we can make a difference for your restaurant or foodservice operation.

Culinary Trends Express

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

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

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

Fusion and Mixy-blobs are now the thing as we approach the new year. As chefs and baristas throw caution to the wind, we see Japanese, French, and classic Italian cuisine merge into new concepts. Think deep-fried Lasagne burgers, ramen-style pizzas, and even Katsu paneer...Wow, I hear you say. It's all about pushing the limits with big, bold flavors, desi pizzas, roasted corn on ice cream, etc. There are no longer any rules. It's an exciting time in the trends world as our customers become more and more open to new ideas and mix-ups to excite their palates and quench their thirst. **HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT CHIPOTLE COFFEE IS LIKE?? OR BOA BUN CHEESEBURGER...**anything goes. Let your imagination run wild. I am going to try my favorite thing together: crunchy chili oil on apple crumble... It is amazing and sweet, and it has heat and crunch all at the same time!

K-POP is here to stay, driven by chefs like David Chang at Momofuku and the movement from restaurants to street food across the region. Locally, it's growing even in the retail space and online ordering. It's now number one, after all; who can't say no to Korean fried chicken with kimchi? This movement is driven not only by music and fashion but also by the way in which our customers are influenced by streaming services



“
**Chef
Simon
says...**

such as Netflix or Amazon Prime. It touches all those tastes and textures that make food crave-able, and it is also very Instagramable. Just visit either a food court or a large retail space. It's driving not only food but also beverages and sweets... Of course, we overlook the allure of Korean corn dogs covered in crisp batter with bread crumbs and then sprinkled with sugar...**YUMMY**

Chili crisp, chile crisp, or chili crunch (Xi ng là cuì) is a type of hot seasoning



originating from Chinese and Korean cuisine, made with fried chili pepper and other aromatics infused in oil, sometimes with different ingredients. It brings texture to meat and vegetable dishes, salty with a crunchy texture, and includes crispy chili, fried garlic, and fried onion. It's trending globally as well as here in the GCC. There are variations with shallots, Mexican chili, and even Sichuan peppers. It's a way to reinvent our dishes and take them to the next level. I have even put some in a small jar to add to my inflight meals to add another dimension. (Previously, I would crush chips on top of the food). Try it in an egg paratha or on pasta.

This month, I have been excited about the products that were in Gulfood and how trends are being driven across the region. It is a great time to be in the food industry. All recipes, lab grown meat, plant protein, even protein out of water and electricity. But it's the chefs, cooks, and baristas who are the real heroes of food trends and drive these through culinary thought leadership

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

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



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