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JANUARY 2025

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THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

gourmet

volume 20, issue 1



HEART OF THE HOUSE

For **Rohit Manek**, the challenges in his life were no match for his passion to achieve his culinary dream



SPIRIT OF FRANCE

Chef **Christophe Prud'homme** is bridging cultures through French connection



A NOD TO INDIAN FLAVOR

Celebrity Chef **Kunal Kapur** on cracking the Indian taste code at Pincode



WHEN SPICE MEETS SWEET

Chef **Luat Pyll Araullo**'s dish is full of sugar, spice, and everything nice





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Allow me to start by wishing all our members, friends of the Guild and readers a Happy New Year for 2025, a year of great promise and purpose for all of us at the Emirates Culinary Guild.

The excitement is already building and entries are open for Salon Culinaire 2025. These will fill fast, if you have not done so already, download Foodverse, open your account and register for the classes you wish to compete in. Spaces are limited so don't get left behind. A new team event based on National Cuisines will be announced soon and invitations will be sent to join this new and radically different competitive class.

The culinary world is a stage where creativity, perseverance, and resilience shine, with each chef carrying a story of challenges and victories that inspire both beginners and seasoned professionals. The Jan 2025 issue is packed with stories that bring it all together. Our cover story introduces the incredible Chef Rohit Manek. He proves that no challenge can stand in the way of passion and dedication. His story is about turning challenges into strengths.

One of the highlights of this issue is Chef Christophe Prud'homme, a true ambassador of French cuisine. As the 'UAE Delegate General Master Chef' recognized by the Maitres Cuisiniers de France, Chef Christophe is bringing France to life by blending tradition with creativity.

We also have an exclusive interview with Celebrity Chef Kunal Kapur, who opens up about his latest venture, Pincode, in Dubai and shares how he is paying homage to his Indian heritage. His story explains how cultural roots can inspire and elevate culinary artistry in a global setting.

We also dive into the sweet world of pastry with an in-depth interview featuring Chef Luat Araullo, offering insights into her creation for the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery competition. Also, in the issue, Chef Kamal Nehme shares his inspiring journey to becoming the Executive Chef at the Royal M Hotel By Gewan in Abu Dhabi.

In addition to these personal stories, our op-ed section covers a range of topics that are shaping the food and beverage industry. From longevity foods inspired by Blue Zones, health and wellness trends in beverages, handling catch-22 situations in the kitchen, to innovations in food tech, we cover trends that are poised to make an impact in the coming year.

Wherever you look throughout hospitality across the UAE you can see the passionate, pioneering spirit on full display in both established and new concepts, it is certainly an exciting time for our beloved industry. So, I look forward to 2025 with great optimism and renewed vigor.

Keep it Cooking
 • **Alan Orreal**



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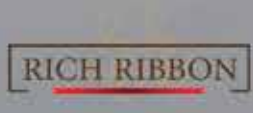
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Spirit of France

A French take on life, a childhood spent on a farm, and a savior of flavors, Chef **Christophe Prud'homme** brings France to life as only someone with its spirit in their veins can. Amaresh Bhaskaran chats with the Culinary Director of Millennium Plaza Downtown about his honor as the 'UAE delegate general Master Chef' by the Maîtres Cuisiniers de France and his culinary philosophy

When I first met Chef Christophe years ago, he was already a prominent figure in the culinary world. His large frame and cerebral art for French cuisine have gracefully added to his unique style and communication. I was struck by the same kindness that initially drew me to him. His compassion feels like a rare gem as he effortlessly shares his culinary wisdom.

Born in Normandy and raised on a farm, Chef Christophe fell in love with the simplicity of fresh produce as a child. Strolling through the sun-kissed farm, feeling an intimate connection with the earth, and harvesting wheat, beetroots and many more jewels of the ground, this humble heritage was steadily typing his passion for cooking in the background.

"I grew up in a family where we would sit around the dining table for dinner, enjoying food that came from the farm. This was a sharing of work, where your parents' love created a strong background for communication through the smells in the air. Gastronomy is rooted in the earth, nourished by high-quality soil and skilled farming techniques. I know the aroma of a good potato or the fresh bread wafting from the oven and the taste of fresh produce. With this understanding, I have crafted the menus. This is the beauty of our job," he says, still familiar with that feeling.

And what many might consider destiny often finds its beginnings in the most unexpected of places. "At the time, I was studying trade at an international school, not even in the catering business," he reminisces. A knife gifted by a friend who saw potential where he had yet to see it himself became the catalyst for his passion. Starting his apprenticeship at the age of 22, he was diving headfirst into uncharted waters. In due course, his passion saw him through as he found himself at a three-Michelin star restaurant, Lenotre, where his career blossomed. Over three decades, Chef Christophe has captivated



Gastronomy is rooted in the earth, nourished by high-quality soil and skilled farming techniques

the palates of patrons around the globe with his French sensibility.

Even after 35 years away from home, his heart beats with a rhythm for France and Normandy. He carries with him the taste of France, enjoys traveling, and works abroad, where he can immerse himself in diverse cultures and culinary experiences. A passionate proponent of French gastronomy, language, and culture, he recently received the prestigious title of 'UAE Delegate General Master Chef' from Maitres Cuisiniers de France.

Additionally this honor, awarded by the Ministry of France, with nods from the president and the Ministry of Agriculture,

celebrates his lifelong commitment to promoting sustainability, farming, flavors, and origins of food.

"The award was a surprise to me," he says, becoming verklempt. "You work hard, and recognition comes naturally over time. Starting from my roots as a farmer in France to working at different places that shaped my journey. I am proud to represent both my homeland and the country that welcomed me, UAE," he added with gratitude.

To be promoted to this prestigious position, one must have a guiding light, a person who can vouch for and elevate one's standing within the Ministry of Agriculture and authorities. "For me, it was my godmother, my marraine, Mrs Marie who has been a silent force in saying that I have been promoting French gastronomy and the pride of our culinary traditions over a long time."

Over the next 12 years, he worked for several iconic establishments before stepping into his first role as an executive chef at the five-star Le Meridien Piccadilly London. His journey then took him to Dublin, Egypt, and ultimately, in 2007,

he was drawn to Dubai, starting at Al Bustan Rotana. It was a new beginning, but he quickly rose from overseeing one hotel to becoming the cluster executive chef and culinary director. After 11 rewarding years, he moved to Millennium Plaza Downtown Hotel.

As the Culinary Director at the Millennium Plaza Downtown Hotel Dubai, he is currently overseeing the dynamic culinary operations and remains excited about the ongoing major developments that promise to breathe new life into their restaurants for the guests.

"Our facilities, both inside and outside, are expanding significantly," he shares,

his voice registering the excitement. "We're preparing to offer a wide variety of flavors. Currently, we have cuisine from Sri Lanka, India, France, Asia and more to satisfy all taste buds."

While more upcoming outlets are under wraps, he tantalizes with a picture of something extraordinary, stating, "The market will soon see our exciting plans." In his words, you can sense a place that sounds like a chef's paradise.

French Roots, UAE Creativity

Beyond his active role with the Emirates Culinary Guild and the Worldchefs, he is also an ambassador for French chefs. With a heart full of ambition, Chef

Christophe is on a mission to redefine the future of culinary artistry.

He gets ebullient as he talks about representing French gastronomy across the Middle East, which is ripe for innovation and collaboration. "I also represent the Maitres Cuisiniers de France association in the Middle East," he explains. You can almost feel the weight of his responsibility as he has taken charge of initiatives in several countries, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh.

"With the support of talented chefs from France and local culinary experts, we are showcasing the richness of our culinary heritage. The groundwork is laid; now, it's about uniting our strengths. By fostering partnerships among economic stakeholders, business leaders, working with other ambassadors, along with Chef Guillaume Gomez, Maitres Cuisiniers de France and Christian Tetedoie, we can proudly elevate the French culinary narrative in the Middle East."

Talking about the role as the ambassador of French cuisine, he likens himself to a preacher, spreading the gospel of gastronomy. "Just a few months ago, I introduced Normandy beef to this part of the world for the very first time. The inclusivity of this



Starting from my roots as a farmer in France to working at different places that shaped my journey. I am proud to represent both my homeland and the country that welcomed me, UAE

city extending even to culinary is amazing and inspiring."

He further articulates with a warm smile, "The culinary heritage of France is rich and diverse. It's not just about haute cuisine; it's rooted in the simple yet delightful food from our streets and farms. We celebrate flavors that come from families, regions, and generations. We are not just talking about Michelin-star restaurants. The culinary scene belongs to everyone, from a simple eatery to a humble bistro in a village. It's about celebrating diverse culinary traditions from around the world. Gastronomy is a passion, a way of life, and a source of joy."

Schools like ICCA have also played a crucial role in nurturing chefs in the art of French cuisine. "It is also about senior chefs and schools to syndicate where the school guides and chefs share their insights. Together, we must congregate for the benefit of the market, for the guests, and for the growth of these young talents," he explains thoughtfully.

Gastronomy Beyond Borders

In the ever-progressing universe of culinary arts, Chef Christophe stands as a bridge between traditions and innovation. For those looking to replicate his way of staying anchored in authenticity, he points out the importance of mastering the fundamentals. As he puts it, "When you buy a car, you must learn to steer before you hit the road. Similarly, mastering cooking requires a solid understanding of techniques. Once you have your basics down, experimenting with fusion and skimming the skew can yield many dishes."

But Chef Christophe's wisdom extends beyond individual skill. He urges the young chefs to see that progress in the culinary world isn't a solo endeavor, a lesson he learned early on in his career. Even as the Ambassador of French cuisine, he thinks that culinary diplomacy in the UAE can only advance through a collective effort involving ambassadors, consulates, and the



The culinary landscape is wide open. There's plenty of room for talented individuals to make their mark and ensure they don't get lost in their career progress

French authorities, all working hand in hand to create a partnership.

Despite the decades spent in the hospitality industry, he has no time to rest on his laurels. He also projects

this philosophy of life and learning, inspiring chefs who feel stuck in their careers, "Stay excited about your work and life. Think about what you can do differently tomorrow. With the culinary landscape wide open, you'll find chefs in various settings, some in the kitchen, others thriving on social media. The market is wide open to those who dare to be adventurous and have a passion to grow. There's plenty of room for talented individuals to make their mark and ensure they don't get lost in their career progress."

Chef Christophe, who has worn many hats still feels the same excitement as he did in his halcyon days. He understands that this journey is not just about him; it's about the long haul. It is about great cooking, sharing stories, and bon appétit! ■



A Nod to **Indian Flavor**

Chef **Kunal Kapur** is cracking the Indian taste code at Pincode. **Shreya Asopa** speaks to the celebrity chef about his restaurant journey, the recipe for success, and how he is pinning the taste map of India on the global stage

Chef Kunal Kapoor typifies the quintessence of honoring culinary arts through heritage and history. He is an author, a host of a TV show, and has an accolade-laden career; if you love Indian food, chances are you have seen him on television or tried his creations. In a bold stride last November, he unveiled Pincode in Abu Dhabi, a venture that follows the success of his outlet in Dubai.

The aesthetic essence of Pincode is built upon celebrating the traditional, modern, and regional Indian cuisines from India's Pincodes. From Dal Makhni to the Pincode Signature Biryani, Mushroom Galouti, Malabari Lamb alongside playful interpretations like Spiral Chaat, Saag Burrata to Rasmalai Tiramisu, Jalebi Rabri; Chef Kunal explains every dish is hammered with labor-intensive artistry rooted in Indian cooking.

Chef Kunal's multidimensional personality finds expression in his vision to bring Indian diversity to Pincode with a repertoire of foods. "Pincode is all about local Indian food," he passionately explains. "We'd like to bring out the side of regional India, those pin codes that represent specific lanes and bylanes known for their exceptional cuisine that has yet to grace the world stage. There is so much more to Indian food than what meets the eye."

The excitement is still high as the doors to the Abu Dhabi outlet swing open. As he puts it, "there's a whole lot of intrigue and fun when regional flavors make their way onto the menu." He continues, "Sometimes the unknown is an entertainment for your senses. Tasting an ingredient you've never seen or heard of before would make you intrigued as you discover the journey of the dish," he says on a culinary adventure at his restaurant.

Food, in Chef Kunal's eyes, is a vessel for stories. According to him, everybody has a unique relationship with food that is hooked to their culture, memories, and experiences. "Storytelling in dishes is



Storytelling in dishes is not deliberate for a chef because it is an extension of their personality

not deliberate for a chef because it is an extension of their personality."

"Say, I cannot serve Galouti kebab without talking about its history and connection with me. It took me a great deal to learn it," he gets rendered with cheer, recounting his training days. "Every time I cook Galouti, I'm flooded with memories that are inseparable

from the dish. It comes naturally to me to mention that it took me 5 years to perfect the recipe just because my mentor was hesitant to share the full recipe with me," he laughs, adding it took years of perseverance before his mentor approved of his efforts.

Behind the scenes, the weight of overseeing multiple restaurants and maintaining consistency is not lost on him. It's a task that happens with a lot of attention to detail and training the team, especially the head chef, the linchpin from which all culinary creativity flows.

"There are certain other measures to handle the operations, too. With modern technology, the approach to feedback is swift. We can track all the comments on the food, service, experience, or ambiance, and if something is off, it's all hands on deck. I have a series of video

calls with the head chef to address issues in real-time, and if required, I will come down or send somebody to retrain.”

So, what does it take to run restaurants successfully in such a dynamic landscape? “There’s no recipe,” he pauses without losing his train of thought. “It’s about knowing the rhythm of each place, about how much and how often you’re willing to adapt whether with decor, menu, offer, or events. As a chef, your instincts tell you when things are on the brink of changing. You may put in the best of your effort, but sometimes, it simply may not resonate with a particular

market at a certain time. Conversely, a concept born out of casual ideas can unexpectedly become a sensation.”

Running the same restaurant without changing anything for a long time puts creativity at stake. To stay bestirred and alive in the kitchen, chefs need to think outside the box and come up with new ideas. Chef Kunal, a guiding presence for many, finds his inspiration for creativity from the younger generation.

“The youngsters push me not to be outdated, given our trade evolves at a rapid pace. Once you spend a certain

amount of time in this field, you can easily become complacent and comfortable in your space. But every time I see a new restaurant or a younger chef doing something bright and exciting, it nudges me to learn more and be up to speed.”

He even cultivates a culture of collaboration and shared learning to comprehend his team members’ thought processes, which keeps everyone on the same page and encourages the exploration of new trends.

The Career Pivot

Comprehending the intricacies of culinary art and instinctively elevating dishes may come naturally to him, but it wasn’t the path he initially chose. To understand this we go back to the 2000s.

Chef Kunal’s journey has been documented in headlines, but truly understanding it requires a deeper look beyond the surface. Growing up in India’s capital city, his roots run deep in Punjabi heritage. As the son of bankers, one might assume there was no fork in the road when it came to choosing a career. “I’ve done my bachelors in commerce. But I was never good with numbers. I always was inclined towards creative arts,” he shares.

Yet, a teen Kunal did not actually intend to be a chef. Unbeknownst to him, a life in culinary arts was taking shape in the depths of his mind. Watching his father and grandfather cook showed him that



Don’t try to follow the crowd. Break free from the molds and let your individuality shine through. Cook what you believe in

it was perfectly acceptable for men to don aprons. "I took a leap of faith by picking culinary, just to see if it would work for me," he recalls. This seemingly small choice uncovered a piece of his heart that had been searching for fulfillment and guided him through the next two decades.

Having worked alongside some of the finest chefs and now steering his own culinary ship, Chef Kunal has gained a unique vantage point that few possess. Despite the relentless chaos, he has a Zen attitude, which is an art in itself.

This humility comes with an open mind to evolution and a perceptive gaze that understands the reasoning behind everything. And yet balancing tradition and innovation with pragmatism when he wants to. He has an aesthetic grit and sensitivity towards learning new things. For him, learning is an endless journey. "Everything that is happening around you is a chance to learn. Push your boundaries and do not be complacent about what you have achieved; rather, you start with a fresh, clean slate every day," he emphasizes, inviting others to adopt a fresh perspective. "Sometimes, approach life without judgment, to accept nuances rather than point fingers, which is one of the best lessons anyone can learn."

What has also helped him is rediscovering himself through food. He shares, "It's fascinating because there are sides of you that you didn't know existed."

"For example, when you first begin your journey in a culinary college, you start with the French style of cooking. This approach really engrains certain techniques and methods in you, shaping your foundation. I was very strong-willed about how things should be done," he adds. But, the moment he ventured out into the world, a realization washed over him: there exists no singular path. "As soon as you start traveling within, you realize that there is no chef's knife, no chopping board, and no one way of doing



It's okay to fail sometimes. Failures are your greatest teachers

things; there are multiple ways. That there is so much to unlearn and learn by acknowledging different cultures, their techniques that are merely shaped by context and environment," his voice rich with conviction.

Life in Full Flavor

Chef Kunal is a poster child for sustainability at the moment. His attachment to this cause shines through his actions. Whether preparing khichda

with mushrooms and millet for the First Ladies at the 2023 G20 summit, championing the sustainable benefits of millets during the UN's International Year of Millets, or serving food with a focus on sustainability at his restaurant.

"There are certain ingredients, particularly meats, that are endangered, which I will never serve. If a source involves cruelty, it's off the table," he says firmly.

While he may not change the world in one fell swoop, he believes each mindful decision contributes to a greater narrative of awareness. "One thing we need to understand is that when a customer goes out to eat in a restaurant, they aren't necessarily thinking about sustainability."

"They're there to have a good time. There's a certain magic in the experience; they taste something delightful, and

suddenly, they will think, 'I can do this too!' This is where the connection to sustainability comes into play. If we take the time to educate our customers about the sustainable practices and the carbon footprint behind a particular dish, we can create a ripple effect."

Even so, he points out that people must ultimately take on this responsibility consciously. "Until sustainability is part of our everyday decisions until it becomes a 360-degree approach, it will have little impact."

Sharing a memory that haunts and surprises him at the same time, he takes us back to when he was served



You don't really need to look far for food. You begin in your locality, your heritage

chocolate mousse infused with eggplant. "The eggplant was roasted until it blackened, and then the pulp was extracted to fold into the chocolate mousse. The very thought was uncanny; had I not been forewarned about this

peculiar composition, I might have been intrigued. However, the idea of brinjal chocolate mousse initially evokes discomfort," he laughs.

There is more to him than just culinary. When he is not managing his restaurants and mentoring his team, he is occupied with varied pastimes that keep him grounded. Besides driving, he also enjoys taking a long walk without his phone. "Reading," he rattles quickly as his go-to solace option. While he perhaps can't pinpoint just one favorite author from his well-stocked shelves, he reveals himself to be a history buff who loves to know the legends behind food cultures and origins.

Well, history also runs like a golden thread throughout our conversation. For him, nothing rivals the connection to history, the way it allows him to unearth hidden techniques. He has a visceral love for burnishing these offerings and sharing dishes that shine with authenticity.

"It also gives me the push to look for talents, often residing in remote villages untouched by mainstream recognition. And when you start, you don't really need to look far for food. You begin in your locality, your heritage. A lot of the food I create, after 24 years in this field, is what I used to eat as a kid in Delhi," he reflects.

A voice of experience in this field, for aspiring chefs dreaming of their culinary ventures, he advises, "Don't try to follow the crowd. Break free from the molds and let your individuality shine through. Cook what you believe in."

Being lucid, he also cautions about the inevitable ups and downs of the industry. "Yes, there will be tough moments. A restaurant can close, and dreams can shatter. But don't take it to heart," he urges. "It's okay to fail sometimes. Failures are your greatest teachers."

As for seasoned chefs like him, he asks not to let the heat of the kitchen steal their





smile. Cooking with heart is an act of love, one that flourishes only when we nurture our well-being first. "What matters is that you should be happy. People always say customers should be happy; I think even chefs should be happy. You need to be in a happy space to make anybody happy," he gives a philosophical touch.

On his future roadmap, he reveals the expansion plans across the Middle East and India. Amid all these professional pursuits, he finds himself completing his long-awaited books, a project that

has lingered in the background for over a year and a half. "I've not taken that step to complete and finish. I just haven't been able to find the right time, and I know a lot of people are waiting to read those," he admits.

Now in his midlife, Chef Kunal has an enviable zest for his profession and a plan to decode India's address with Pincode. A chef, a storyteller and a celebrity. And you know, with that perfect mix of humility and ambition, the stars are within reach. ■

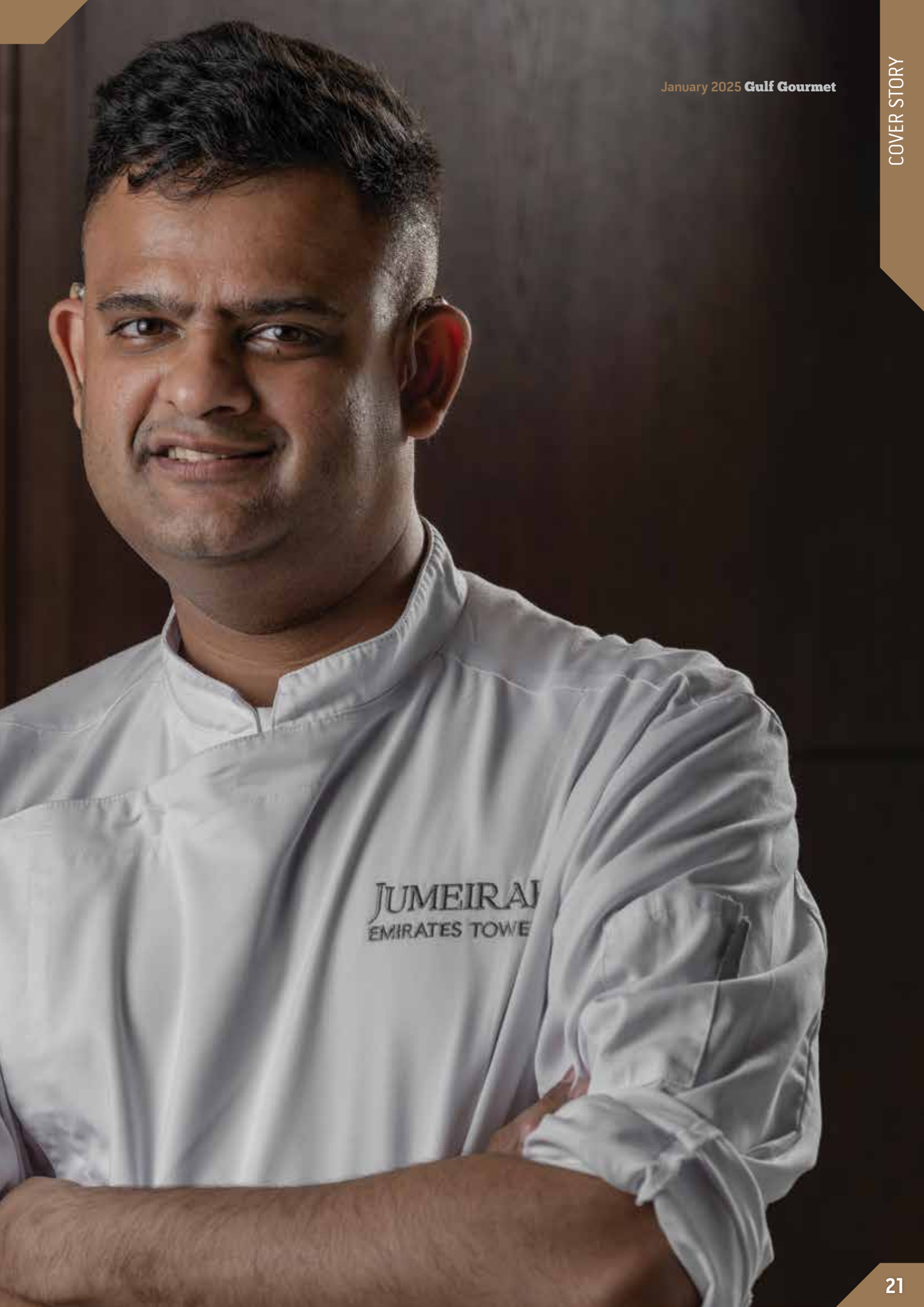


People always say customers should be happy; I think even chefs should be happy. You need to be in a happy space to make anybody happy

January 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**

HEART OF THE House

Chef **Rohit Manek** has overcome numerous challenges to create a commendable career in the culinary world. Despite his hearing impairment, he shows us that with love and determination, nothing can hold him back from reaching his dreams



Chef Rohit Manek, a talented Chef at Jumeirah Emirates Towers, has transformed his limitations into a remarkable career spanning over 12 years. His journey began at the Dubai Center for Special Needs, and then he earned a diploma in culinary arts. Celebrated for his exceptional work ethic and creativity, Chef Rohit has earned the prestigious "Heart of the House" award for three consecutive years, inspiring his team and aspiring chefs alike. *Gulf Gourmet* caught up with him to find out more about his childhood and his career story.

What initially sparked your interest in the culinary arts? We would love to know how watching cooking videos



With love and determination, nothing can hold you back from reaching your dreams

helped shape your early skills.

My initial interest in the culinary arts sparked during a part-time internship at Jumeirah Emirates Towers. Around the same time, I was watching lots of cooking videos on social media, which

really helped shape my early skills and deepen my passion for food.

What unique challenges do you face, and how do you overcome them? Are there special techniques you use to stay on top of everything?

The kitchen environment can be quite challenging, as it's a very busy and noisy place. This makes it difficult for me to hear instructions or communications across the room, especially as I rely on lip reading, which means I need to be facing the person speaking. Thankfully, my colleagues are incredibly understanding and have adapted their communication style to suit my needs. They use short, clear sentences and make sure I have a clear line of sight. I'm very grateful for their support!

Tell us about your experience at the Dubai Center for Special Needs. How did it influence your passion for cooking?

The Dubai Center for Special Needs (DCSN) played a pivotal role in my culinary journey by creating the opportunity for me to intern at Jumeirah Emirates Towers. It was there that a career counselor recognized my potential in this field, which further ignited my passion for cooking.

Transitioning from experimenting with pasta dishes at home to studying formally at the International Center for Culinary Arts (ICCA) must have been quite a shift. What was that journey like for you?

It was definitely a significant shift going from experimenting with pasta at home to the formal training environment of the International Center for Culinary Arts (ICCA). It was quite a change going from learning by doing to a structured curriculum focused on both the science and art of culinary skills. Challenging, yes, but also incredibly rewarding.

How did your time at ICCA prepare you for the high-pressure environment of a professional kitchen?

ICCA did a great job of preparing me for the pressures of a professional kitchen. Working within strict time frames as part





I believe in hard work and trusting the people around me



of a team definitely mirrored the real-world experience, and that sometimes felt quite intense. The support from the faculty and my fellow students was invaluable. There was also an added pressure, as everyone knew I was already working at Jumeirah Emirates Towers, unlike other students, so I felt I had a reputation to uphold.

Earning your diploma and entering the culinary industry must have been an incredible journey. Looking back, what are you most proud of?

Officially entering the culinary industry has been an incredible journey. I'm most proud of gaining formal recognition for my skills, as it significantly boosted my confidence and helped others recognize my potential, which isn't always apparent at first glance.



Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved sitting in a rocking chair. It takes courage and determination

What do you enjoy most about working as a chef?

I find immense satisfaction in creating dishes that people truly relish and enjoy. I also love the constant opportunity to discover and learn new recipes and techniques. Whenever I travel, I make it a point to sample the

local cuisine – I recently returned from France, and exploring the food there was a real highlight.

How do you keep your creativity flowing in the kitchen? Do you experiment with new recipes or techniques outside of work?

While it's a little tricky to experiment at home due to limited space and equipment and my parents having more traditional tastes, I'm fortunate to have plenty of opportunities to learn and experiment at Jumeirah Emirates Towers. The chefs there are incredibly generous with their knowledge and often call me over to explain the dishes they've created. I'm very grateful for their mentorship.

Can you describe a particularly memorable experience or achievement in your career as a chef?

One particularly memorable experience was when our Executive Chef Reiner Lupfer unexpectedly asked me to prepare a pasta dish. It was quite spontaneous, and I had only recently learned how to make different sauces. He seemed to enjoy it, and his compliment was a real confidence booster. It's a moment I cherish.

Communication is vital in a busy kitchen. What strategies do you use to ensure clear communication with your team?

Clear communication is so important in a busy kitchen. I'm incredibly fortunate to have such supportive colleagues who have adapted their communication styles to meet my needs. Face-to-face interaction at a slightly slower pace works best for me, and they've been fantastic at accommodating that.

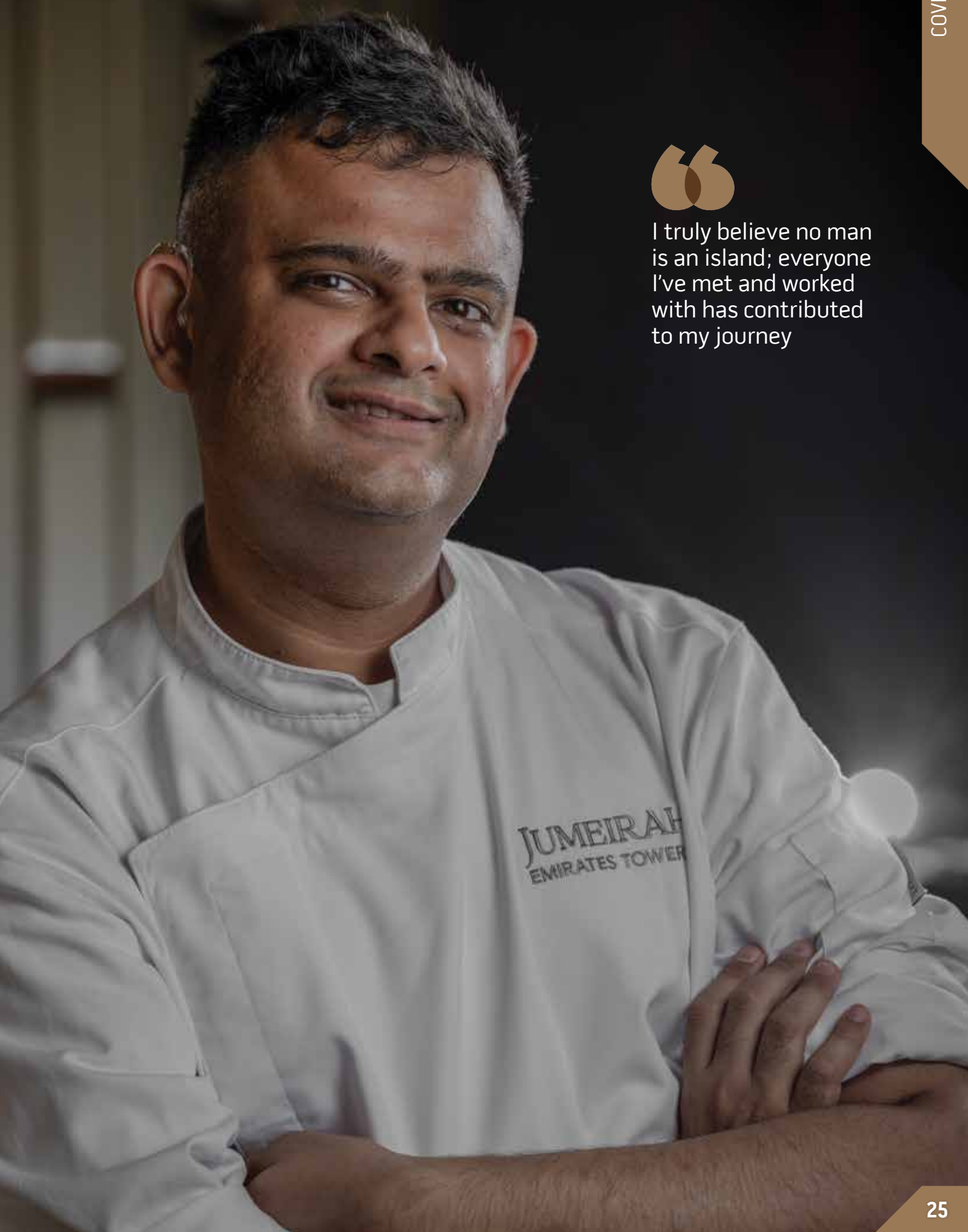
Have you faced any misconceptions or stereotypes about your hearing impairment over the past 12 years? How do you address those challenges?

Over the past 12 years, there have been occasions where people unfamiliar with my hearing impairment have been initially surprised, but they've generally been very accepting and accommodating





I truly believe no man is an island; everyone I've met and worked with has contributed to my journey



once they understand. The first few years were definitely more challenging as I was navigating a new environment, but now most of my colleagues know me and my communication preferences. The supportive and inclusive culture at Jumeirah Emirates Towers has made a huge difference.

How would you like to see the culinary industry and other workplaces evolve into inclusive spaces?

I think the culinary industry is actually quite well-suited to people with special needs, perhaps more so than some other industries. The service industry,

in general, tends to be more attuned to individual needs and adaptable. However, there's always room for improvement in creating truly inclusive spaces in all workplaces. Greater awareness and understanding of different needs, combined with a willingness to adapt, can make a huge difference.

How do you stay motivated personally and professionally, especially when facing challenging situations?

Both my family and my colleagues are incredible sources of strength and motivation for me, both personally and professionally. The challenges I

face aren't limited to the workplace, so having that support system is essential. Professionally, I'm very lucky to have such encouraging and supportive team. Thanks to Mr. Kirti Anchan and the executive committee of Jumeirah Emirates Towers.

Apart from Jamie Oliver, are there other chefs or food industry leaders who inspire you? What lessons have you learned from them?

Along with Jamie Oliver, I'm also inspired by chefs like Gordon Ramsay, Vikas Khanna, and Vineet Bhatia. They've all demonstrated incredible dedication, passion, and resilience in their careers, which are qualities I admire and strive for.

What advice would you give to individuals hesitant about pursuing their culinary dreams?

My advice to anyone hesitant about pursuing their culinary dreams is simple: follow your dreams, whatever they may be. Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved sitting in a rocking chair. It takes courage and determination, but the rewards are worth the effort.

What role has your family played in supporting your journey as a chef?

Like all parents, mine have been incredibly supportive. They've always treated me the same as my siblings, never making me feel like I needed special allowances or adjustments. I also have a large extended family—my grandfather had 13 siblings, so we're a clan of about



Clear communication and understanding among colleagues have been my greatest support in overcoming challenges



100 now!—and they've all been incredibly encouraging. They follow my progress on social media and are always cheering me on. Having that kind of love and support makes a world of difference.

Is there anyone you'd like to thank who has helped you on your journey?

That's a tough one, as so many people have helped me along the way. Everyone I've met and worked with at Jumeirah Emirates Towers has been incredibly supportive, as have my teachers at DCSN. I truly believe no man is an island. I'm particularly grateful to Mr. Andy Cuthbert, who gave



Whatever I do in the future, it will definitely be centered around food

me my first break, and Mr. Andy King, the Health and Safety Manager, who personally coached me in health and safety—that's really where my journey

began. And, of course, I'm deeply indebted to the current management team at Jumeirah Emirates Towers for their ongoing support.

Lastly, could you share more about your dreams and vision for the future?

I never imagined I'd be where I am today. I believe in hard work and trusting the people around me. Whatever I do in the future, it will definitely be centered around food, perhaps in the supply chain or specializing in a particular type of cuisine. I know I still have a lot to learn, but I'm excited to see what the future holds. ■

A Culinary Journey: From Passionate Beginnings and Beyond



(Part X) Chef **Helen Morris** writes about flipping the script to get the garnish you're worth

Ah, the good ol' days when the only thing "online" was the washing! Back then, job hunting wasn't about endless scrolling; it was about chefs whispering over the pass, introducing themselves, and scouring *The Caterer* like it was the Holy Grail of opportunities. That's where I stumbled across a job posting that led me to a culinary adventure deep in the Berkshire countryside. It was love at first bite—or at least at first sight of that stately home fit for a period drama. Eight minutes of the driveway (yes, I timed it), grandeur so thick you could spread it like clotted cream.

I pulled up in my trusty Ford Fiesta, admittedly more "economy lunchbox" than "luxury tasting menu" - Bentleys and Porsches. The crunch of gravel under my tires sounded like a symphony of crushed cornflakes. The valet boys gave me a side-eye, and I thought, Well, lads, I'm here to cook, not cruise. I parked my car far away, hoping no one would notice my humble hors d'oeuvre among the luxury platters.

Inside, the hotel was as grand as a mille-feuille, with layer upon layer of opulence. My nerves nearly curdled as I awaited the head chef, who descended the grand staircase with the poise of a catwalk model: tall, proud, and impeccably starched, and my eyes popped out of my head. He whisked me away on a tour straight into the kitchens. A symphony of sections—larder, butchery, fish, pastry, main and veg sections, and more. It

wasn't just cooking; it was orchestrating culinary magic for a Michelin-starred restaurant, lavish events, riverboat picnics, and even luxury cottage stays on the grounds. The kitchens were a world below guest civilization, a culinary underworld of heat, hustle, and hierarchy. It was like stepping into culinary heaven... if heaven came with a side of high-pressure hell. This was the biggest, most complex kitchen I'd ever worked in.

The pass was where you earned your stripes—or your burns. The working hot sauce was like a culinary episode of *Survivor* with the head chef glaring down at you as if daring you to misplate. Oh, the pressure? It was thicker than béchamel, both physically and mentally. The chef was a taskmaster, and the kitchen was a battlefield. I also spent many shifts in the larder, honing my precision and cursing every rogue thumbprint on a plate. To this day, if I spot one, my inner Gordon Ramsay emerges. Canapés? Thousands of them, each crafted by hand. There were no great suppliers of pastry cups back then—oh no, we made everything from scratch.

Breakfast shifts were a test of endurance and, occasionally, insanity. Prepping at 5 a.m., navigating the dumbwaiter, and plating dishes that had to look like the morning sun itself. Relief came in the form of a veteran breakfast chef—a one-man machine of *mise en place* mastery. Except, of course, for that Sunday. Our breakfast chef found himself in the, well,



Keep learning, keep moving, and always remember to enjoy every single moment of working in the kitchen



we call it lovingly in the UK, the 'weeds,' and he wasn't coming out any time soon. A chaotic and eternal line of orders had us scrambling like eggs on a hot griddle, battle-weary after a busy service, and deep-cleaning Saturday night (oh, how we loved that after a chaotic service) and trying to prep for Sunday lunch!

Then came the drama—a promotion promised but handed to someone else, leaving me simmering like a pot left too long on the stove. So, I handed in my resignation (the chef graciously accepted, even if a little startled), only to find myself in his office the next morning with a new contract, a shiny new title, and a pay rise that had me dancing with delight. Lesson learned:

sometimes, you have to flip the script to get the garnish you're worth.

This led to further promotion as executive sous chef, the vision in white's righthand man ... woman! I mastered not just the art of cooking but the alchemy of logistics, admin, and finance—different league finance. We had our own van and driver and sourced ingredients from London's infamous markets and France—my French was barely *mise en place* worthy, but with help from my bilingual brigade, and *voilà*, I managed.

After nearly three years of marathon hours and kitchen madness, I decided it was time to hang up my apron at the hotel. The chef was leaving

to pursue his dreams in the supply chain, and a new executive chef took over, but the shoes left behind were impossible to fill. I moved on, with my pockets lined from all the banked *lieu* days they owed me, stretching for months. I spent my newfound freedom exploring the countryside and... job hunting again. That's when I stumbled into the next chapter: the start of my educational path.

For now, I wish you a prosperous 2025. Keep learning, keep moving, and always remember to enjoy every single moment of working in the kitchen. It is, as I said in my first article, "simply the best."

Chef Helen

Shrimp 2.0

Switzerland-based startup catchfree is developing the shrimp of tomorrow using plant-based ingredients

By **Shreya Asopa**

Anyone who has ever enjoyed seafood is well-versed with the irresistible allure of shrimp. This delicious crustacean brings a taste of the sea to countless dishes around the globe.

Shrimp holds a place of prominence on the plate, yet its journey from ocean to kitchen isn't all rosy, as it raises some pretty serious environmental concerns. Changing this reality is Severin Eder and Eduard Müller with their food tech venture, Catchfree.

Based in Switzerland, their startup has made waves by rolling out algae and protein-based shrimp to the market. "Our inspiration was simple. In Switzerland, we largely depend on imported fish and seafood, which got us thinking about the environmental toll of traditional fishing practices," shares Severin Eder, one of the two co-founders.

With a solid foundation in food chemistry and food processing, Severin's journey took a pivotal turn at the Swiss Technical Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich during his PhD. That's where the lightbulb moment happened, and a vision to develop plant-based seafood alternatives hooked him.

Partnering with Eduard Müller, whose culinary expertise and a ton of business know-how complement his scientific background, they set out to push this idea of honest, sustainable plant-based seafood into the market. "Plants are the primary ingredient here, and it's not just about nutrition; it's about making a difference. From the get-go, we aimed to



We rather focus on structuring plant proteins into textures similar to seafood

connect with consumers and provide our vision in the market as quickly as possible. And plant-based was this vehicle since they don't come with all the regulatory red tape that other options do."

The significance of their product reaches beyond nutrition and innovation. Shrimp production is notorious for its substantial carbon footprint. And not just shrimps; due to the pressures of the seafood industry, vital ecosystems like mangroves are endangered, exacerbated by the use of chemical additives and pesticides. According to a report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), aquaculture has broken the record, surpassing capture fisheries for the first time.

From the outset, his team has teamed up with leading partners in the microalgae production sector, understanding that their strength lies in technology, not cultivation. They currently do not employ non-pigmented microalgae in their products, partly due to the limited availability at an industrial scale. Instead, their initial offerings rely on other plant-based proteins, such as rice and soy, to strike the perfect balance between taste and texture. "We rather focus on structuring plant proteins into

textures similar to seafood. Since 2022, we've dedicated our R&D efforts to optimize these processes and develop a technological platform for scalability. As we step into the new year, we're excited to produce our first ton of products and are ready to introduce them to the market," he explains.

In the meantime, they're diving into research and development, exploring all the ways microalgae can be used. "Microalgae is seen as a promising alternative protein in our R&D efforts for future products due to its numerous benefits."

Microalgae is swiftly becoming a top pick for a sustainable future. It has become a rising star. The integration of microalgae into various sectors presents a promising shift away from traditional seafood production, allowing for the extraction of valuable components in downstream processes. Among the forerunners is Edonia, a French startup developing protein ingredients from microalgae. Then there's Algae Cooking Club, another creative venture producing chef grade cooking oil from these tiny powerhouses and other food tech companies like Sophie's Bionutrients in Singapore that have made history with the first-ever microalgae-based milk. Severin also recognizes the countless possibilities of this raw material. "You can cultivate them just like beer in brewery tanks, yielding a whitish product that carries no off-flavor," he notes, contrasting it with other plant-based proteins that often require extensive processing to eliminate undesirable tastes.

While many other companies are focusing on extrusion technology as a perfectly

suitable technology to make fibrous structures for meat alternatives, they are using a proprietary process to replicate the intricate muscle structures of larger compartmentalized muscle strands that provide an authentic bite. Such complexities of the seafood categories perhaps also explain why the alternative and plant-based seafood sector has lagged behind its meat counterpart.

On the question of replicating the traditional product's profile, he recounts the taste of that first bite, when someone crunches into a shrimp and gets that satisfying snap. "We've spent the last three years perfecting the texture to mimic the firm. For the appearance and color, we have used paprika-based colorants, ensuring our coloring comes from natural, plant-based sources." He further notes, "To achieve a realistic look, we have created a heterogeneous mixture, making each shrimp visually distinct. In nature, not everything is a copy of one another; we aim for a degree of variety in patterns to make the shrimp look convincing."

The other way they have been able to refine the texture of their product and align it with market demands is through partnerships with restaurants and chefs. Their insights have allowed them to iterate their product based on real feedback and how their product holds up in real culinary settings. "We conducted market tests in restaurants," he explains. "This hands-on approach meant we could launch a product that was proven and optimized for our first group of consumers."

According to Severin, chefs have a unique perspective that many overlook. For this very reason, it's critical for them to have a product that meets a chef's standards and lifts their creativity. "Our collaborations with diverse restaurants have been enlightening. Take the Taj Palace, a specialty restaurant, where we had plant-based seafood dishes that honored classic Indian flavors with dishes like curries. And then there's Brauwerk, a casual restaurant where



they had dishes with our Catchfree fish burgers. These experiences helped us understand what chefs are looking for and showcased the versatility of our plant-based offerings."

Looking ahead to 2025, Severin foresees a swell of hype in the plant-based sector and trend building up. "Currently, the plant-based category is witnessing a transition, moving from niche offerings to mass market adoption. You might notice fewer products on supermarket shelves due to the consolidation of efforts. But the quality is great, and the variety on offer is growing gradually. Consumers are becoming increasingly informed, educated, and cottoning on to the benefits of these options."

This shift toward mass market adoption isn't just a fluke; it indicates that the groundwork for consumer education has already been laid, making way for a broader acceptance of these products. Supporting this perspective, a report from Data Bridge Market

Research projects that the plant-based seafood market is set to experience remarkable growth, with a CAGR of 28.5% anticipated from 2022 to 2029. Another finding from the 2023 Smart Protein Project survey reveals that 43% of European consumers express a willingness to consider purchasing plant-based seafood products.

As Severin discusses recent milestones, the company is also wrapping up its first investment round. For the future, they're eyeing the whole seafood spectrum with plans to lead the way sustainably.

And as for his favorite from their range, he's particularly excited about their newest addition: fish burger. "Each time we serve it to new customers or investors, seeing the smiles on their faces is priceless. It reassures me that we're on the right track." With that kind of verve, it goes without saying that this food tech startup isn't just catching the current; they are ready to create the tidal wave of change. ■

What's Hot and What's not

Industry expert **Jan Marc** discusses health and wellness trends in beverages



There is a rise of plant-based alternatives, vegan, organic, and different diet groups - in food and beverage

The world is in a fast-paced period where everything shifts momentarily. Five years ago, we experienced a major factor that changed the lives of the people. Since then, people have become aware of everything. People are seeking better health, better nutrition, better fitness, and, most importantly, better mindfulness. It sprung the demands for transparency and naturality.

In food and beverage, this demand has been adopted promptly by sectors of different brands. Multi-unit giants in the F&B business are becoming stricter in terms of ingredients regulation. Such restricted ingredients are artificial flavors and colors, added sugars, additives, and preservatives like potassium sorbate, sodium benzoate, and aspartame, which are used as artificial sweetener replacements. This kind of regulation is a campaign towards cleaner, better, and safer consumption for the human body.

There is a rise of plant-based alternatives, vegan, organic, and different diet groups - in food and beverage. From meat and cheeses to milk alternative options.

In plant-based drink alternatives, a study shows that consumer habits in choosing milk for their morning coffee had changed over the years, from traditional milk options like soy, oat, coconut, and almond to niche selections like sesame, cashew, macadamia, walnut, and quinoa. Some of these are available in your favorite neighborhood café or can easily be accessed online or in supermarkets.

While vegan, organic and other diet groups have much more meticulous requirements. In UAE and the rest of GCC, more and more consumers are changing their habits every day, leaning toward a healthy and fit lifestyle. As a result, it is integral for a restaurant business to consider options like vegan-friendly, natural and fresh ingredients, low calorie, etc, when formulating a menu to cater to these demands.

In beverages, unlike in food, the resources are limited. One should be creative, innovative, and resourceful to develop a menu that would attract consumers who are health conscious. Highlighting the nutrition labels of every item on the menu influences consumers' decisions upon ordering. Also, adding a calorie count is a plus.

In coffee particularly, there were disruptive ideas like bulletproof coffee. It is a coffee made for ketogenic diets and gym-goers who want to enjoy coffee while improving their gut health. Also, coffee is the most widely used nootropic, which boosts brain performance and memory-enhancing substances. On the other hand, smoothies and refreshing drinks should not contain sugar ingredients; instead, they should use natural sweeteners, fresh fruits, and adaptogenic components.

Kombucha, koji, and other probiotic beverages are also on the rise. It develops its own spotlight as it carries antioxidants and detoxifying properties. This sense of transparency towards the demands of consumers builds trust and loyalty. Thus, one should consider their menu choices accessible to everybody when developing and adopting these beverage trends. ■

Meat With Sulemana

Abubakari Sadik Sulemana describes his experience attending a specialized meat science course and witnessing firsthand the success of agriculture in the outback

Australia's farming and livestock industries are a remarkable fusion of tradition, innovation, and excellence. During my recent visit for a specialized course in Meat Science, I had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the unwavering dedication that underpins this sector. Generational farming stands as the cornerstone of Australia's agricultural success, with family-operated businesses handed down through generations. These farmers embody a deep-rooted passion and connection to the land, producing some of the world's highest-quality beef and lamb. This heritage, combined with modern practices, creates an inspiring narrative of resilience and excellence.

The Australian government plays a crucial role in upholding the integrity of the agricultural sector. Strict regulatory frameworks ensure that every farm, feedlot, abattoir, and slaughterhouse adheres to rigorous standards of safety, sustainability, and quality. This commitment ensures that meat products from Australia consistently meet—and often exceed—global benchmarks, reinforcing the country's reputation as a trusted supplier of premium food products.

However, Australia's agricultural brilliance extends beyond meat production. The country is also celebrated for its premium coffee culture and lush, fertile landscapes. These natural advantages, combined with a favorable climate, position Australia



Sustainability and innovation feed the world

as a global leader in agricultural productivity and innovation. The seamless integration of efficiency and sustainability in Australian farming practices highlights its status as a key player in feeding the world.

Australia's opportunities are as vast as its landscapes. Often referred to as the "Land Down Under," this diverse and dynamic nation embraces those who respect its values, offering pathways for personal and professional growth. The agricultural sector exemplifies this potential, blending tradition with cutting-edge technology to drive progress.

Understanding the origins of your food adds depth to its value. Australian beef and lamb are not just products—they represent a legacy of care, precision, and excellence. Each bite tells the story of generations dedicated to honoring the land, balancing heritage with forward-thinking innovation.

Australia's thriving coffee culture further showcases its craftsmanship and passion. For coffee growers, manufacturers, and suppliers, this industry offers immense opportunities. I strongly encourage stakeholders to explore emerging markets in the Middle East. Countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman have rapidly evolved into global business hubs. With thriving economies and a growing population of consumers seeking premium products, this region presents exceptional potential for agricultural and food industry partnerships.

Reflecting on this experience, I am grateful to God Almighty for granting me the opportunity to explore such a dynamic intersection of agriculture, business, and culture. My career in agribusiness has been a journey of continuous learning, professional growth, and a commitment to advancing global food and agricultural systems.

The world of agriculture holds boundless possibilities. Let us continue to harness these opportunities to drive innovation, sustainability, and meaningful impact worldwide. ■

Catch-22

Chef **Tarek Mouriness** reveals how to handle tough situations and create an environment that fosters collaboration in the workplace

I remember my culinary adventure in Cairo from 1979 to 1983; I feel grateful for all the experiences that helped shape my cooking skills and my ability to connect with people. Those lessons from our instructors are still fresh in my mind, proving just how powerful hands-on learning can be. We started as budding chefs, and before we knew it, I was handling managerial and executive chef roles. Along the way, I learned that leadership is letting our teams shine, not just about crossing things off a spreadsheet.

At the same time, I also learned that it is common for anyone to deal with miscommunication at the workplace. Tiny issues and resistance to adapting to constructive communication could make it hard to tackle problems effectively.

Starting this year, the lessons I learned replayed in my mind, putting the spotlight on the big picture. I often hear from people, "Please, understand the big picture when facing tough situations." While understanding the big picture allows for better decision-making, it's equally important to cultivate a strong culture. Success isn't just about the big picture; it's about creating an environment that aligns with it and supports sustainable progress at any workplace, profits and financial goals are key, but why not aim for a more ethical workplace culture, too?

After chatting with folks from culinary, service, sales, and commercial, I've spotted some areas where we could improve our communication and teamwork. Here are some key points worth chewing on:



Success isn't just about the big picture; it's about creating an environment that aligns with it and supports sustainable progress

Problem-Solving: We're great at spotting problems, but when it comes to brainstorming solutions, we can be caught off guard. You know those phrases like "not my job" or "that's your problem, not mine"? Those definitely can create a hostile atmosphere. Instead of making a discord with

such statements, we should chat to tackle operational challenges with open communication. It might help to shift the focus towards having a collaborative problem-solving environment. Teamwork makes the dream work, right?

Good Listeners: There seems to be a tendency for us to listen to reply, not necessarily to understand. Promoting active listening greatly enhances our discussions. In every relationship, active listening is important. To foster a strong team dynamic, we exchange ideas, solicit input, and engage in healthy disagreement. It's important to actively listen to each other. Even if we have disagreements, we are able to find resolutions because we understand each other's perspectives completely.

Personal Growth: There's only so much



you can do without all the right skills. How about we run targeted development opportunities for team members? It could also be fun to ask everyone what they'd like to work on personally and what they believe their peers could also work on.

Email Skills: Let's sharpen our writing game! Better emails would help in addressing issues more effectively and professionally.

Number Sense: For those who didn't major in accounting or math, a little training in reading numbers and

interpreting data could work wonders. Who knows, you might start to make more informed decisions.

I owe a lot of my growth to my first chefs: Wolfaghan Petzeler, Chang Ce, and Alphonse Pease. They taught me that one-on-one conversations can be beneficial instead of nitpicking one's mistakes. It's all about education and support which makes us grow stronger together, not tearing each other down.

A key takeaway from my journey is that we often forget to maintain healthy

relationships and a positive culture with our colleagues, regardless of which department we belong to. We should all aim to be patient, kind, and thoughtful in our actions. Let's strengthen our teams with ethical practices because, in the end, it's about sharing success in the kitchen and serving up something amazing together.

As long as the task is completed, we should review our culture to understand that having strong values can enhance our performance and financial outcomes. ■

Preparing for the Unseen

Chef **Carl Shi** elaborates on how the hospitality industry can better prepare for future pandemics

In the wake of COVID-19, the hospitality industry found itself at a critical moment. As a hospitality professional, I personally experienced the unique challenges and opportunities that emerged from this experience. The pandemic exposed vulnerabilities within our industry, but it also highlighted our resilience and capacity for innovation. By reflecting on our roles, responsibilities, and perspectives within the industry, we can better prepare for future pandemics. But how do we transform these lessons into actionable strategies?

Look Back

I witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of COVID-19, which brought operations to a standstill. I remember the uncertainty and anxiety that permeated our daily operations as we struggled to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. The pandemic underscored the fragility of an industry reliant on face-to-face interactions and physical presence. As a result, consumer behavior shifted, with guests demanding higher standards of cleanliness and safety. This necessitated a rapid adaptation of



Flexibility in operations, staffing, and service offerings is essential for navigating future crises



Chit-Chat with Chef Carl

services, including the implementation of contactless technologies and enhanced sanitation protocols.

I saw businesses around me turn to offer takeout, delivery, and virtual experiences, and those that did were better positioned to weather the storm. From my perspective, flexibility in operations, staffing, and service offerings is essential for navigating future crises. Embracing technology was a key factor in maintaining customer engagement during the pandemic. Online reservations, contactless payments, and digital menus have become vital tools, and investing in such technologies will be critical for future-proofing our operations.

Automation emerged as a valuable

asset, reducing the need for human involvement in routine tasks and minimizing health risks. Automated check-in and check-out processes, robotic cleaning services and deliveries, and AI-driven customer service chatbots streamlined operations and enhanced the guest experience. By reducing manual tasks, staff could focus on delivering personalized and value-added services, improving overall service quality.

Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, it is essential to develop comprehensive crisis management plans (I'd like to call it plan B) that include pandemic scenarios. From my point of view, these plans should outline steps for maintaining operations, protecting staff and guests, and communicating effectively during a crisis. I believe investing in staff training programs focused on crisis management, health and safety, and technology use will empower employees to respond effectively in challenging situations.

Strengthening supply chains is another critical consideration. The pandemic exposed weaknesses in global supply chains. Building relationships with local suppliers and diversifying supply sources can help mitigate risks. Enhancing our digital presence is no longer optional; it is a necessity. Investing in online platforms that facilitate customer engagement, from social media interactions to seamless online ordering and delivery services, is essential.

Sustainability is another key aspect



of building resilience. By reducing waste, conserving resources, and supporting local producers, we can strengthen community ties and enhance business sustainability. As hospitality professionals, we have the opportunity to lead by example, demonstrating adaptability, innovation, and a commitment to excellence.

We do not want to have another COVID-19 pandemic. However, this global crisis was a wake-up call that underscored the need for preparedness within the hospitality industry.

By reflecting on our positionality and implementing strategic measures, we can build a more resilient industry capable

of withstanding future pandemics. As we move forward, let us leverage our experiences and insights to create a stronger, more adaptable hospitality sector. I am committed to being part of this transformation, and I invite my colleagues to join me in shaping a future where our industry can thrive, no matter what challenges lie ahead. ■

Food In Frame

Professional food stylist **Henriette** discusses the art and importance of food styling

Who Am I?

My name is Henriette, and I have been a professional food stylist for the past 10 years. Many people ask me why I chose food styling as a career, and the answer lies in my love for creativity and food. I was searching for a profession that allowed me to use food as my medium while applying my cooking skills—something I learned from my grandmother and mother. What started as a hobby quickly turned into a full-fledged career, especially in the UAE and the Middle East, where the booming restaurant industry and demand for visually appealing food photos create an excellent market for these skills.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of working with globally recognized brands such as KFC, Dominos, Starbucks, McDonald's, Hardee's, Pizza Hut, Nestle, Jumeirah Group, Barakat, numerous coffee shops, hotels, recipe books, and dark kitchens. While I adapt to various styles based on client needs, my personal preference leans toward dark and rustic aesthetics, which hold a special place in my heart.

What is Food Styling?

Food styling is the art of making food look so appetizing and irresistible that it entices viewers to purchase our client's products. At the same time, we must stay true to the brand's guidelines and respect the chef's presentation. While chefs style food to impress the naked eye, food stylists work specifically for the camera—crafting visuals that capture the perfect angle and lighting.

In some cases, we use slightly undercooked ingredients to make food look fresh, or we rely on creative tricks such as shaving foam instead of whipped cream to maintain the look of perfection for extended periods.



Food styling is about enhancing the natural beauty of a dish

Our role is twofold

- ◆ Ensuring the food looks its absolute best on camera.
- ◆ Placing the food in an environment that aligns with the brand's identity.

This is why we always request brand guidelines or a mood board before a shoot. These tools guide us in selecting the right props and backgrounds to create cohesive, visually stunning imagery.

The Difference Between a Food Stylist and a Chef

While food stylists and chefs share the goal of creating beautiful food, the two roles differ significantly. Chefs focus on creating edible masterpieces for immediate enjoyment, whereas food stylists often use techniques, such as half-cooking or incorporating non-edible elements, to ensure food maintains its appearance throughout a shoot.

I strive to stay as true as possible to the chef's original presentation, but some adjustments are necessary for photography. For instance, I might add sauce at the very end or reduce garnishes to enhance the dish without overpowering it. It's a balance between respecting the chef's vision and meeting the technical demands of a photoshoot.

The Art and Importance of Food Styling

In today's era of social media and visual marketing, stunning food

photography can significantly elevate a dish's perceived value. This is especially important in a multicultural hub like the UAE, where diverse cuisines need to communicate their appeal through images.

Food styling is about enhancing the natural beauty of a dish. Simple touches—like adding a light glaze of oil to the meat or misting herbs and vegetables with water—can create a sense of freshness and make the dish look more enticing. We always use garnishes that are available in the restaurant, ensuring they are fresh and positioned to complement the dish, often sitting atop it like a crown.

It's crucial to highlight the dish's appeal rather than completely altering it. When a chef's presentation is already impeccable, my focus shifts to set styling—crafting the environment and background to reflect the brand's identity and aesthetic.

Why Food Styling Matters

Food styling plays a critical role in large-scale projects, advertisements, and campaigns. A professional stylist's touch ensures that the final product aligns with the brand's vision and connects with its audience.

Beautifully styled food not only looks good—it tells a story and evokes emotions. By combining art and culinary expertise, food styling creates an experience that goes beyond the plate, inspiring customers and elevating the perception of the dish.

In an increasingly visual world, food styling is no longer just an option—it's essential for chefs and brands who want to stand out and showcase their creations in the best possible light. ■



Beautifully styled food
not only looks good
— it tells a story and
evokes emotions



Elixir Of Life

Chef **Vivek Huria** writes about the impact and benefits of foods that can improve mental, emotional, and physical health



Though the elusive fountain of youth still dances just out of reach, there exist dietary selections that have the ability to improve the quality of life

Throughout history, people have worked on endless quests to find the secret of eternal youth and immortality and foods that could be labeled as the 'elixir of life.' Though the elusive fountain of youth still dances just out of reach, there exist dietary selections that have the ability to improve the quality of life.

One of the most fascinating areas of exploration is the concept of Blue Zones and learning about them was just the beginning. My brother, Prof. Vinod Huria, and I were motivated after realizing that following a specific diet had enabled them to maintain good health without dependence on medication.

In exploring the concept of blue zones and their impact on longevity, we were inspired by a project led by Dan Buettner and the study of Blue Zones. Buettner, a National Geographic Explorer, coined the term Blue Zones during an expedition in 2004 (Buettner & Skemp, 2016). His subsequent expeditions uncovered Okinawa in Japan, Sardinia in Italy, Ikaria in Greece, Nicoya in Costa Rica, and Loma Linda in California as blue zones with the highest rates of living centenarians. These regions share common factors such as a plant-based diet, regular physical activity, prioritizing happiness, and family bonds that help promote longevity and health.

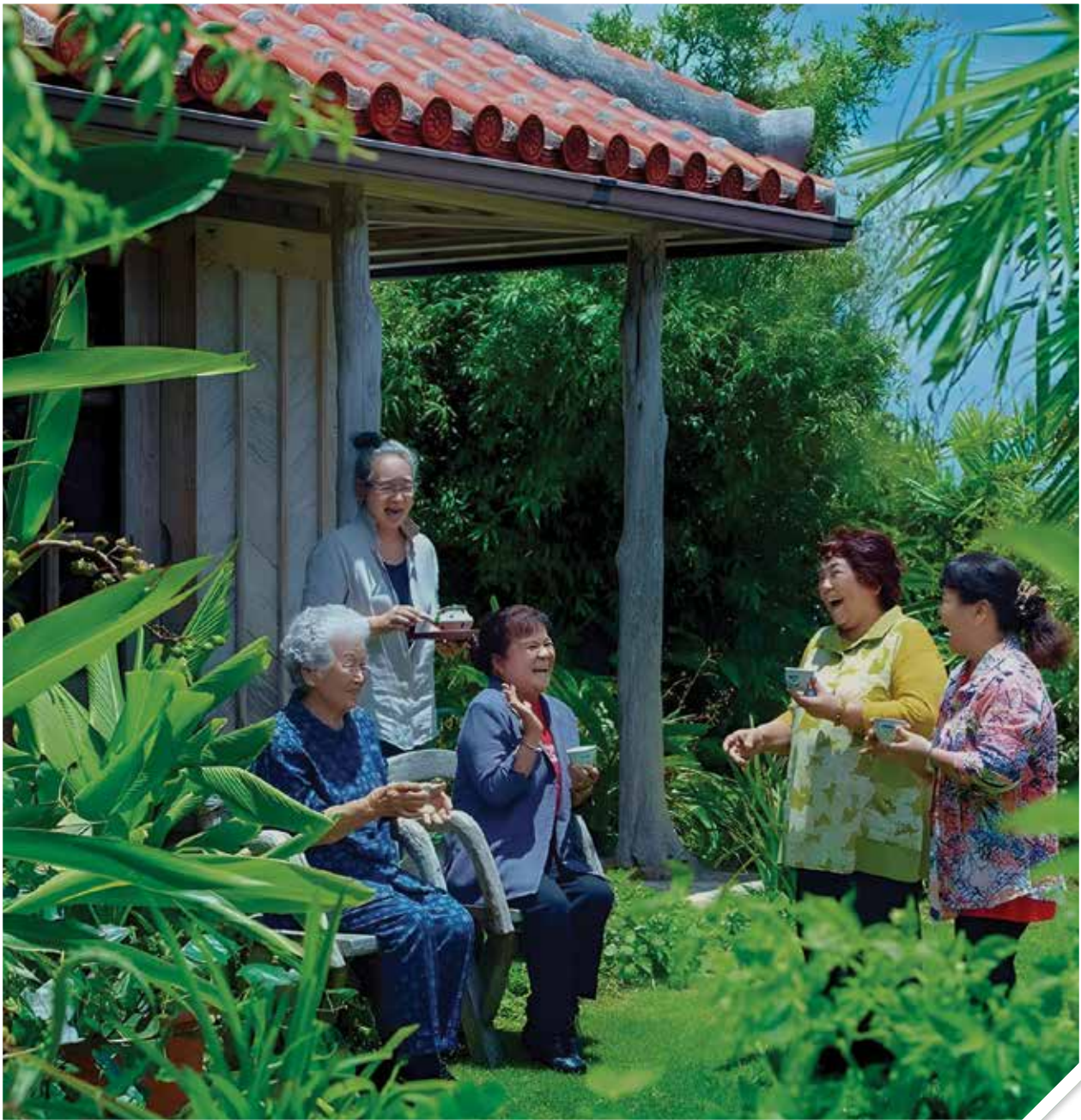
Life-enhancing foods can also be classified as functional foods. Functional foods, rich in bioactive compounds, offer potential health benefits beyond basic nutrition. They contain specific bioactive compounds that can positively impact our health. These foods can prevent diseases, boost immunity, and improve cognitive function. Whether naturally occurring or fortified, they play a crucial role in promoting overall well-being.

Most foods are functional in some way or the other when they have the potential ability to affect health positively. By incorporating a variety of nutrient-rich foods into your diet, you can harness their power and enhance your health. Examples of functional foods are fruits and vegetables (rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants), whole grains (provide fiber, B vitamins, and other essential nutrients), fatty fish (packed with omega-3 fatty acids), nuts and seeds (offer healthy fats, protein, and fiber), yogurt (contains probiotics, which support gut health), dark chocolate (high in antioxidants), and tea (contains antioxidants and may boost brain function).

The Elixir of Life, also known as 'Amrit' in Hindu scriptures and jīndān (golden elixir) by Chinese alchemists, has long been pursued as a means to achieve immortality. While it is never really practically achievable, scientific progress has shown that there could be

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a way to achieve similar results. A study published in 2024 by a team of scientists has highlighted that genetically modifying T-cells can enhance immunity, which has rejuvenated mice and offers potential in the fight against age-related diseases (Amor, Fernández-Maestre, Chowdhury, et al, 2024).

However, in our pursuit of expensive cures, we have overlooked the most fundamental and accessible cure: maintaining good health and improving longevity through food. Reflecting on the diverse and ever-evolving cultural history of human dietary habits reveals

that the social practices, rituals, and consumption of food play a vital role in health and mental well-being. Historically, diets were based on seasons, habitats, and lifestyle habits.

Food consumption varies across different regions based on weather conditions, similar to how we used to study geographical habitats. We've got to dig into our roots to appreciate that these traditional seasonal foods are actually doing wonders for our health (Huria, 2024).

Currently, there is a lack of research on the direct impact of healthy eating habits

on aging well. Most existing studies are observational, and trials on dietary interventions are limited in scope. As more epidemiological data becomes available, we can better understand how different dietary patterns may contribute to healthy aging (Yeung, Kwan, & Woo, 2021).

As we continue our exploration into the world of Blue Zones and the impact of dietary choices on health and longevity, I have understood that it is much more than just the food we consume. Stay tuned as we further investigate different foods in the next edition. The pursuit of longevity is ongoing, and this is just beginning. ■



COMMUNICATING THROUGH FOOD

Combining her interest for mass communication and her passion for culinary arts, Chef Luat Pyll Araullo is connecting people and cultures through the universal language of food

As a child growing up in the picturesque province of Aklan in the Philippines, Chef Luat basked in the simplicity of small-town life. When she hit her teenage years, the world beyond her hometown beckoned, calling her to explore new horizons and open her mind. "I came to Manila to find my calling," she recalls the time when she was seeking answers about her career.

She gets loquacious when talking about the turn of events that planted the seed of her dream. A natural "people person," she pictured herself choosing mass communication as her career, working in an office environment, and connecting with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

But to her, it was not just about talking to people but really getting to know them. And as they say, the way to a person's heart is through their stomach. "I wanted to connect with people, and what better way than to know someone by cooking for them? Food is a form of language, and so I choose to communicate through it," she says thoughtfully.

Fate had its plans, and the opportunity to move to the UAE presented itself in 2022. With her mother already having a career in the UAE's aviation industry, her journey overseas inspired her to take a leap of faith and apply for a role at Emirates Flight Catering.

Having just two years under her belt at EKFC, Chef Luat's journey is still in



I wanted to connect with people, and what better way than to know someone by cooking for them? Food is a form of language, and so I choose to communicate through it

its early chapters, but it has already proven to be richly rewarding. "When I first came here, I initially aimed for a commis 1 position. However, given my limited experience, I took on the commis 2 role instead, which turned out to be a great decision as I had a lot to learn from here," she says.

Her stint began in the lounges, where she prepared salads and entrées for the buffet and served Mediterranean and international cuisine to first-class passengers. "I was very fortunate to learn from this role, prepare a range of gourmet meals, and also serve à la carte dishes to meet the needs of the travelers," shares the 25-year-old.

Each day for Chef Luat feels like a new exploration as exhilarating as flying. She rises with the sun, chasing it to the gym before jumping into the rhythm of

her shift. Preparing a range of gourmet meals for first-class travelers coming from all walks of life, each with their own stories and dreams, there are rare moments that remind her of the Philippines. "When I take a break and see different passengers, it kind of takes me to a different time and place," her thoughts filled with wanderlust.

Often facing the high expectations of travelers who are well-versed in their culinary taste, she meets challenges head-on, welcoming them with open arms. "While I haven't yet worked in different hotel settings to draw comparisons, my time here has been rewarding," she says. "The first few months were certainly new and challenging to me, like there were days when I was alone in the cold kitchen buffet and doing the a la carte. But this developed my skills, made me a little faster, and with the incredible support of my senior chefs and team, I've learned so much."

Besides speed, precision, and other technical skills, in the past two years, she has acquired a newfound confidence and a sense of camaraderie.

Her inspiration comes from her mentors and working with a great team. "It's like being part of a sports team," she explains enthusiastically.

"You go in, do your thing, leaving the stresses behind. In the kitchen, work is work; we all are invested in doing our jobs well. Once we're outside the



“

When I take a break and see different passengers, it kind of takes me to a different time and place

kitchen, we all are friends again. I enjoy applying my communication skills to build rapport within my team," she says, adding that friendship is beyond the confines of uniforms.

Her face-off with competitions is rather young but impressive. Last year, she represented the UAE as part of a young chefs delegation in Singapore to support the young chef competitors from the UAE. It was a platform where she met chefs her age and seasoned professionals from all corners of the world.

Thinking back on this first taste of international competition, she says, "It



was all worthwhile. And the team won medals too. I learned from this experience that it is not just about building bridges; we should cross them as well."



I learned from this experience that it is not just about building bridges; we should cross them as well

With a creative itch to wear many hats, Chef Luat has been whipping up the adventure to master both hot and cold kitchens. Currently, her focus lies in perfecting international salads and buffets for the cold kitchen, while she also aspires to learn more about the hot kitchen and pastry.

Spurred by this inquisitive spirit, she also decided to enter the Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Competition. For the competition, Chef Luat has channeled her kaleidoscope of skills into a pastry dish that speaks volumes of her spice and sugar creativity. "It was a bit nerve-racking. The dish, clementine with toasted coriander seeds, shortbread, and whipped cream cheese, may sound a bit unusual at first," she admits with a sunny expression, "but it has great flavors."

Looking to the horizon, she sees herself inspiring more people and using her voice for a greater purpose. "I want to inspire more young chefs," a soft smile appears. "I thought being a chef before was not meant for me since I was interested in doing something related to communication. But moving to Dubai, connecting with diverse nationalities, and learning different cultures and cuisines opened up a world that was fulfilling for me. So, I want to talk about my journey, learn, and inspire others."

If talent needs any more proof, it can be found in the way she naturally combines food and storytelling in every dish she creates. ■



Clementine, Toasted Coriander Seeds And Whipped Cream

Clementine Sorbet

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| White Sugar Cubes | 120g |
| Clementines | 8pcs |
| Sugar | 15g |
| Glucose Powder | 40g |
| Super Neutrose | 4g |
| Clementine Juice | 1l |

Method

- ◆ Rub the clementines with the sugar cubes.
- ◆ Bring 200g juice to a boil with sugar, glucose, super neutrose, and sugar cubes.
- ◆ Mix with the remaining juice and let it mature for 12 hours.

Shortbread mix

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Shortbread, Crumbled | 200g |
| Maltodextrin | 40g |
| Lemon Oil | 5g |

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Demerara Sugar | 50g |
|----------------|-----|

Toasted Ground Coriander Seeds
Clementine Salt (Dried Zest Blend)

Method

- ◆ First, mix the maltodextrin with the lemon oil.
- ◆ Then, add the remaining ingredients and season with coriander powder and clementine salt.

Whipped Cream Cheese

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Cream cheese | 300g |
| Sugar | 100g |
| Cream | 200g |
| Whipped cream | 200g |
| Vanilla pod | 1 pc |

Method

- ◆ Mix the cream cheese with sugar, cream, and vanilla.
- ◆ Whip until smooth. Fold in the remaining whipped cream and store away.

Shortbread

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Cold Butter | 250g |
| Sugar | 200g |
| Milk Powder | 50g |
| Salt | 5g |
| Egg Yolks | 200g |
| Flour T55 | 500g |
| Baking Powder | 20g |

Method

- ◆ Mix everything, roll out a 4mm thick, and bake at 150°C until golden brown.

Garnish

- ◆ Caramelized dark chocolate branches, clementine segments, and red sorrel leaves.

Celebrating Alumni

The ICCA Dubai Culinary Scholarship Program

Ekta Alreja, from ICCA, engages in a conversation with Chef **Tony Doan**, discussing the transformative impact of the ICCA Dubai Scholarship on his life

Growing up by the serene shores of Vietnam, Tony Doan witnessed firsthand the beauty and resilience of his homeland's culture, inspiring a lifelong passion for food and creativity. Watching his family's resourcefulness instilled in him a deep respect for hard work and tradition—values that now shine in his creations.

As the only member of his family to work abroad as a professional chef, Doan credits his success to his perseverance and his family's support. From humble beginnings in Vietnam to leading the kitchen at Wox, Pan-Asian Restaurant at Grand Hyatt, his journey is proof of the power of dedication, passion, and continuous learning.

Chef Tony's culinary journey began in Vietnam, where he started as a dishwasher while supporting his family. Through sheer determination, he rose through the ranks, mastering the art of Vietnamese cuisine in small restaurants and later honing his skills at a French restaurant in Saigon.

In 2019, he made a bold move to Dubai, joining the Fine Dining Hoi An restaurant at Shangri-La Dubai. Here, he showcased his ability to merge traditional Vietnamese flavors with international techniques. Recognizing the importance of professional training, Tony was awarded a full scholarship to ICCA Dubai in 2021—a life-changing opportunity that refined his skills and boosted his confidence.

Today, Chef Tony is the Sous Chef at Wox Restaurant, Grand Hyatt Dubai, which is



The kitchen is not just a workplace, it's a space for creativity and self-expression

celebrated for its Vietnamese and Asian street food. Tony's dedication to his craft is reflected in his numerous accolades over the years. His winning streak began in Vietnam, where he won a Bronze

Medal at the Vietnam 8th Culinary Challenge in 2019. After relocating to Dubai, his talent gained international recognition, earning him a Silver Medal at the Expo Culinaire Virtual Salon Culinaire in 2021.

The following years brought even greater success. In 2022, he won two Gold Medals at the Expo Culinaire Virtual Salon Culinaire in Abu Dhabi, followed by another two Gold Medals in 2023 at the Expo Culinaire Salon Culinaire in Dubai. In 2024, he continued to excel, securing two Silver Medals at the Expo Culinaire Salon Culinaire in Sharjah and receiving the prestigious MARSHAL Certificate of Appreciation from the Emirates Culinary Association.

These achievements culminated in his induction as a Senior Member of the Emirates Culinary Guild in 2024, solidifying his reputation as a distinguished chef.

For Chef Tony, the kitchen is more than a workplace—"It is a space for storytelling and cultural expression. Being a chef demands creativity, leadership, and meticulous attention to detail," says Chef Doan. One of his proudest creations, Vietnamese Pho, encapsulates his culinary philosophy. By honoring its traditional roots while adding his signature flair, Tony connects diners to Vietnam's rich heritage.

Chef Tony's commitment extends beyond cooking techniques; he emphasizes the importance of customer satisfaction,



believing that the true fulfillment of a chef's work lies in creating memorable dining experiences.

Looking ahead, Chef Tony aspires to open his restaurant. "It will be a bridge, introducing the world to the authentic and innovative flavors of Vietnam," says Chef Doan. Reflecting on his journey, he acknowledges the pivotal role of

ICCA Dubai in shaping his career. "The ICCA scholarship gave me the tools to succeed, and now I want to use them to share Vietnam's culinary story with the world," he says.

With unwavering passion, creativity, and a dedication to his roots, Chef Tony Doan is set to redefine Vietnamese cuisine on the global stage.

Rising Star features inspirational stories of talented chefs who have dedicated their lives to perfecting their craft and continuously pushing the boundaries of culinary excellence. This initiative is executed in strategic partnership with the Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG), the World Association of Chefs Societies (WorldChefs), and City & Guilds, London.

A Celebration of Flavor: U.S. Poultry Enchants UAE Guests

The USA Poultry and Egg Export Council (USAPEEC) recently concluded a successful series of promotional events showcasing the culinary versatility of U.S. turkey and duck at ten prestigious hotels across four emirates in the United Arab Emirates (UAE): Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah, and Fujairah.

A Culinary Journey Across the Emirates

From December 5th to 16th, 2024, the promotions unfolded across eight days, captivating guests with a series of delectable brunch and themed night experiences. Participating hotels, including renowned establishments such as Zero Gravity, Jumeirah Creekside, and the Waldorf Astoria Dubai, provided the stage for a culinary journey showcasing the exceptional quality of American poultry.

Showcasing Culinary Excellence

Collaborating with the Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG), these events aimed to:

- **Elevate Holiday Feasts:** Guests were treated to a symphony of flavors, with U.S. turkey taking center stage in dishes such as U.S. Whole Roasted Turkey and creative interpretations like U.S. Duck in Char Siew Glazed and U.S. Duck Pastrami with Raspberry Sauce.
- **Unleash the Potential of U.S. Duck:** Chefs skillfully incorporated U.S. duck into their buffet offerings, showcasing its rich flavor profile and superior texture, captivating the palates of discerning diners.
- **Inspire Culinary Innovation:** The promotions provided a valuable platform for chefs to experience



firsthand the exceptional quality of U.S. poultry, inspiring culinary creativity and encouraging the incorporation of these premium ingredients into their menus.

A Resounding Success

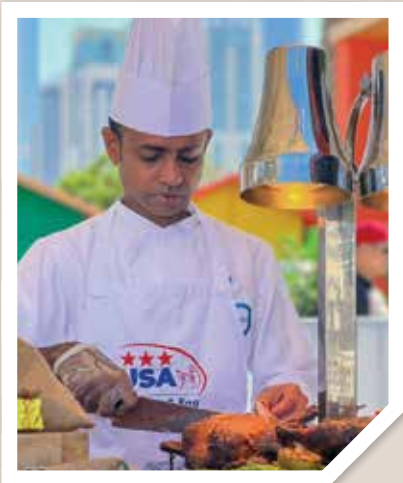
The promotions garnered significant attention, attracting thousands of guests across all participating hotels. With an estimated footprint of around 8,400 people, the events effectively showcased the appeal of U.S. poultry to a wide audience. Chefs consistently praised the tenderness, flavor, and juiciness of U.S. turkey, while U.S. duck received accolades for its exceptional quality and rich flavor.

Many chefs expressed their intention to incorporate U.S. turkey and duck into

their regular menus, recognizing the value proposition these high-quality products offer. Encouraging testimonials from chefs included, "The U.S. turkey was beyond excellent—absolutely out of this world!" and "The U.S. duck was absolutely phenomenal!"

Consumer feedback was equally positive, with U.S. turkey and duck dishes proving to be highly popular among guests.

The successful U.S. turkey and duck promotions in the UAE have effectively increased product visibility and demonstrated the exceptional quality and culinary versatility of these American-grown products, captivating the discerning palates of both chefs and guests alike. ■



January 2025 **Gulf Gourmet**



The Guild Meet

The December guild meeting was held at the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel on Tuesday, the 10th of December, 2024. We thank Chef Ramola Bijendra and General Manager Andy Cuthbert for hosting the event.











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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

newmembers



Jeyaram S, CEO of Taaza Quality Foodstuff Trading L.L.C, received the membership certificate from Chef Harald Oberender, VP of Corporate ECG, and Andy Cuthbert, Past President of the ECG.

Superior Service & Standards

- ◆ **40+ years of** industry expertise and established relationships across the supply chain
- ◆ **Stringent quality control:** Our produce undergoes rigorous quality checks at every stage of the supply chain, from cultivation to packaging, to guarantee freshness and safety.
- ◆ **Responsive customer service:** Our dedicated team is committed to promptly addressing inquiries or concerns and providing personalized assistance to ensure customer satisfaction.
- ◆ **Convenient delivery options:** With flexible delivery schedules and



reliable in-house logistics, we strive to ensure that our products reach customers in optimal, temperature-controlled conditions and on time.

- ◆ **Certifications and compliance:** Our adherence to industry standards and certifications underscores our commitment to maintaining the highest levels of quality, safety, and ethical practices.

At the heart of our mission is a dedication to superior service and uncompromising standards. From farm to table, we prioritize excellence in every aspect of our operations, ensuring that customers receive the freshest, highest-quality fruits and vegetables with responsive customer service, sustainable practices, and adherence to the strictest industry certifications. Our commitment to excellence is unwavering, delivering peace of mind and satisfaction with every purchase.

Our focus is on better diversity & quality, continuous improvement, and a commitment to sustainability. ■

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

As we enter the year of the snake, there is a saying, **"Out with the old, in with the new."** With this in mind, 2025 looks to be an exciting year for trends. **WAIT**, I hear you say, what is a trend? Well, let me explain. A trend is a sustainable, hip, and popular item that may cause a direction of change or could be developing. So take a store cupboard staple such as Miso and use it in a new, unusual way, e.g., instead of soup, use it in chocolate brownies. Or it may be tempting to try something new, like pickled dates to eat with cold cuts and cheese. We are saying goodbye to overly complicated recipes and menus as **'Less is More'**.

In 2025, we will see more choices for customizing foods, from grills to burgers and even ice. Our customers want to be able to say the beverage or food is theirs, well, their creation brought to life by Us. Big, punchy flavors are back with a vengeance. We are going back to basics to drive taste, texture, and armor. Watch this space in the coming months, and together, let's ride the wave of Middle East trends.

MUGI, TSUBU, SOBAMUGI, HADAKAMUGI, and NANBAN: No, it's not another K-pop band, but it's not far off. These are all types of **MISO**, yes, **MISO**. This fermented soya bean paste is getting a makeover now and is made



Chef Simon says...

from brown rice, seaweed, barley, or even buckwheat. Maybe it won't be long till we see a chickpea version. Still, in white, red, and yellow and loaded with amino acids that drive the profile, Miso is now appearing across the menu, not just on meat and vegetables or in soup. We now see it in drinks, chocolate, and ice cream....my favorite so far is Miso toffee, which has an amazing flavor second to none. Have you thought about adding it to your Mac and cheese, chocolate chip cookies, or even your apple pies? Mixologists and baristas are whipping up concoctions with white Miso as a flavor boost. Today, I am trying a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with Miso for a flavor boost, and boy, it's gone to the next level; I will never go back to this without Miso!

When is wheat, not wheat??? Well, the answer is simple: when it's buckwheat. It's part of the Rhubarb and knotweed family, and it's getting big across the

region. The groats are used naturally or roasted in salads, stews, and porridges across the globe, but now buckwheat flour in bread is getting big, as is buckwheat tea and chocolate. Used in soba noodles and pancakes, this not only tastes great, but it's also a good source of protein, fiber, and energy. It's gluten free. Some people also say it's good for Diabetes and heart health. **IF ITS NOT ON YOUR MENU, IT SHOULD BE AS IT'S THE NEXT BIG THING.....**

AUGUSTE ESCOFFIER & FERNAND POINT, both Masters of Modern and classical cuisine, would have marveled at the new trend of updating the classic sauces with a spin.

This month, I felt completely gluttoned. I tried some amazing new foods and revisited so many old and forgotten ones. The highlights were Date Olives (pickled green dates) and rediscovering the classic dish of Sauce Gribiche with charred lettuce. If you could pick two dishes from the last month, what would they be?

Finally, looking at trends, 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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**CHEF
OF THE
YEAR
2024**

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