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OCTOBER 2024

gulf

THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

gourmet

volume 19, issue 8

SON OF THE SOIL

Growing up around citrus farms and now championing sustainability as Head of R&D Culinary Development at Barakat, Chef **Tiaan Wessels** is tapping into his connection with nature

SALON DU CHOCOLAT

Complete list of sweetest victories and visuals from the world's largest cocoa and chocolate event



THE CARTALYST

Chef **Bobby Kapoor** breathes in tradition and innovation and exhales the aromatic turn of trends



THE GENTLEMAN CHEF

Chef **Sudusinghe Chandrasena** has found the essential ingredient to prepare chefs for success





*Bakbel
Lemon Cream*

*Mera
Mascarpone*

*Backaldrin
Sponge Mix*



CITRUS BLISS, CRAFTED TO PERFECTION



THIS EXQUISITE DESSERT COMBINES THE TANGY FRESHNESS OF BAKBEL LEMON CREAM, THE RICHNESS OF MERA MASCARPONE, AND THE LIGHT, FLUFFY TEXTURE OF BACKALDRIN SPONGE MIX.

A DELIGHTFUL BALANCE OF FLAVORS IN EVERY BITE.



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president's station

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Dear Members and Partners,

What a great way to kick off the season, with over 100 chefs and more than 15 partners attending the viewing meeting held at Rove Downtown. Thank you, Chef Spencer Black and the team, for such a great venue and warm welcome.

The competition season is upon us. As I write this, our team, sponsored by Sounbula, is in the Maldives competing in FHAM. We wish them the best of luck! Check out the upcoming edition of the magazine for the highlights.

In September, our young team achieved success in Egypt at the Africa Cup, bringing home a well-deserved and hard-earned bronze medal. Competing internationally is no easy feat. This was their first international competition, and we are proud of them. Check out this issue for a detailed report on their impressive performance.

We're also looking forward to the sustainable cook-off event in October during the Future Hotel Summit with UAERG and a smaller exhibition event showcasing our chefs. Recently, we wrapped up the Salon du Chocolat, where 150 competitors participated in the three-day exhibition. Be sure to flip through this issue for pictures and a great read, especially the fashion show of chocolate dresses.

Next, our young chefs head to Hungary in October and then to China in November, making it a great last quarter packed with activities for them.

This month, from October 19th to 22nd, we will be in Singapore for the Worldchefs Congress 2024, where I am bidding to become the new World President of Worldchefs. I want to



extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone, both locally and internationally, for their support thus far. A special thanks to my family, Jo and Cody, who are here supporting me, and to Kyle, who is in Australia. My team and I are ready to take on this role and move Worldchefs forward with your help, building an open, transparent, and inclusive environment over the next four years. The election will take place on October 22nd.

During this time, we also have our four global chef finalists competing against the best in the world and two competitors in the Gelato Cup. Be sure to check the next edition of the magazine for updates.

One big step we are taking together into technology with our friend and partner from ICCA, Sunjeh Raja, is Foodverse.

Download the Foodverse app or visit www.foodverse.io to start exploring the future of food and the food industry!

Education and training will play a huge part in this initiative, and the full inclusion of the industry will bring us all closer together. Exciting times lie ahead for the Emirates Culinary Guild and our partner of 15 years, ICCA. We've also launched our newly designed website, so please visit www.emiratesculinaryguild.net to check it out!

In each of our monthly meetings, the Women's Culinary Chapter gathers at 3 PM on the same day as the main Guild meeting. We encourage more of our female chefs to join Chef Tarryn for insightful discussions.

Looking forward to another great year. Exciting times ahead for all of us in the Emirates Culinary Guild.

With Regards,
Andy Cuthbert
President and Editor



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CREDITS

EMIRATES CULINARY GUILD

Andy Cuthbert
President
+971 4 340 3128, theguild@eim.ae

Uwe Micheel
Past President

EDITORIAL

Andy Cuthbert
Editor

Amaresh Bhaskaran
Associate Publisher
amaresh@amareshbhaskaran.com
+971504568161

Vahiju PC
Art Director

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CONTRIBUTORS

Shreya Asopa
Atim Suyatim

PUBLISHED BY

Emirates Chefs Guild, Dubai, UAE

SALES ENQUIRY

info@gulfgourmet.org

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Taste of H.K. Black Box Challenge 2024

The Kings of the Kitchen will battle it out to win the grand prize

HK Enterprises gears up to host an exciting black box competition for chefs. This dynamic event, supported by the Emirates Culinary Guild, will be held at Jumeirah Creekside on October 11th, promising a thrilling culinary showdown. The competition invites participation from hotel properties, freestanding restaurants, clubs, culinary schools, caterers, and airlines, with a minimum of seven teams required to compete.

Four players per team with an eye for detail, a knack for problem-solving, and an unyielding dedication to craft will work together to create a pleasant dining experience

During the Gala Dinner, each team will be required to present two portions of each course for judging and photography, while serving 20 portions at the event, resulting in 22 dishes per course. To ensure a complete Food & Beverage Experience at the event, every team will have two waiting staff members, one specializing in wine service, along with a service supervisor.

Each team will receive a black box

containing a list of identical ingredients and will have one hour to create an impressive four-course menu. The sponsor, HK Enterprises, will supply the ingredients. The menu will feature a cold starter utilizing sponsored chicken prepared in two different ways, a hot appetizer with sponsored duck presented in two distinct preparations, a main course utilizing a sponsored lamb rack, and a dessert to complete the meal.

In addition to branding opportunities, networking, and displaying creativity, the competition offers grand prizes that include educational sponsorship, an internship with a celebrity chef for a young chef, and a ticket to their home country.

A team of international judges, approved by WorldChefs (the World Association of Chefs Societies), will evaluate all competition classes using official WorldChefs methods, criteria, and documents. After each judging session, competitors can attend a debriefing to gain insight into the judges' decisions and reasoning.

The judging criteria for food focus on several key aspects. Judges evaluate the

arrangement of materials, cleanliness of the workspace, and appropriate clean attire, as well as the timing of food service in the correct order.

Professional preparation is assessed based on proper techniques, efficient time management, and punctual completion. Hygiene is crucial, with attention to cleanliness during food preparation. Presentation and innovation are judged on the harmony of ingredients, simplicity, originality, and appropriate table decoration. Taste and texture carry the most weight, emphasizing proper seasoning, flavor, and adherence to modern nutritional standards. Meanwhile, the judging point criteria for Table Service focus solely on the two service staff of the team. Professional preparation, including the setup of the table and centerpiece, is evaluated along with the staff's service and welcoming skills and food knowledge.

Teams will be awarded gold, silver, bronze medals, or certificates of merit based on their performance. Special awards include trophies for the Best Service Team and Best Kitchen Team, the Grand Prize for The Taste of HK Black Box Champion, and recognition for the Best Hotel Team.

The African Culinary Cup:

Young chefs from The Emirates Culinary bring home the bronze

In a remarkable feat, a group of talented young chefs from the Emirates Culinary Guild team has bagged a bronze medal in the Africa Culinary Cup competition at the HACE held in Egypt. After displaying their culinary skills and creativity on an international platform, the team has returned home, proudly wearing their success on their uniform.

A young team of chefs, including Nader Samih Kokash from Mina Salam Hotel, Anisa Sinjali, and Aakash Pundir of Zero Gravity, displayed their culinary proficiency while being mentored by seasoned professionals. Led by the President of the Syrian Culinary Guild, Chef Majed Alsabagh, and senior chef Rabeah Amer, the team impressed the panel with their training on Emirati cuisine and several techniques and recipes. Chef Dwarika Bhatt from Zero



Gravity also played a key role in training the team for the competition.

The Emirates Culinary Guild lauds the impressive performance of its young chefs. Given that it was their debut

competition, where they worked together as a team and traveled abroad for the first time, this achievement made the Guild immensely proud of their hard work. The Guild looks forward to watching them continue to grow in future competitions.

Isabella Cucina Italiana opens its doors in Dubai



Warm hospitality meets delicious Italian cuisine at Isabella Cucina Italiana, the newly launched restaurant in Dubai's Emirates Hills neighborhood.

The authentic Italian restaurant balances tradition and modernity, reflecting the team's passion for Italian cuisine and hospitality, explains Managing Director Rob de Villiers. He adds, "Our head chef has curated a menu that features modern and innovative dishes with authentic Italian ingredients to offer an unparalleled dining experience. Isabella Cucina Italiana has been designed with the guests in mind, with intricate details that are cozy,

elegant, and sophisticated, making it the go-to Italian venue in the area."

The restaurant's head chef, Ruggiero Gissi, who hails from Rimini in northern Italy, is bringing a menu featuring modern mixology methods. In addition to secondi, mains, and desserts, the menu features classic selections including crudi, antipasti, insalate, and da condividere. Tagliolini al tartufo nero pasta, Gnocchi di patate ai gamberi risotto, and woodfired pizza al tartufo and pizza bresaola are among the many dishes resulted from the kitchen team's dedication to using premium flour, making fresh homemade pasta, and proofing pizza dough for 48 hours.

Savor the Essence of India with Tej

Located in the Ramada by Wyndham Dubai Deira, Tej is the newest must-visit culinary hotspot offering both traditional and modern Indian dishes.

The contemporary Indian restaurant stands out with a menu curated by the seasoned chef Rajender Singh Bisht, who brings over 27 years of expertise spanning India, the USA and UAE.

Guests can enjoy a menu showcasing fusion of traditional and modern Indian dishes, offering a range from fiery curries and tandoori specialties to aromatic biryanis and wholesome thalis.

From fiery curries to aromatic biryanis, tandoori specialties and wholesome thalis, the restaurant showcases dishes infused with hand-ground spices and

exotic ingredients like shahi gilafi mutton seekh kebab, tandoori jheenga, kachhe gosht ki dum biryani and paneer kadhai along with classics such as dal makhani, mutton rogan josh, and papdi chaat plate.

Ahmed El Bassyouni, Executive Vice President of Ramada by Wyndham Dubai Deira, expressed his excitement in introducing Tej to Dubai's diverse culinary landscape. He stated, "Our passion lies in delivering an unforgettable experience to our diners through dishes inspired by India's rich culture and heritage. Indian cuisine has a symphony of flavours and rich tastes that allows us to really experiment with different spices and textures to deliver art in the form of food. We invite everyone to experience the essence of India at Tej, where culinary artistry meets tradition."



Zordar makes a powerful entry into the UAE culinary scene

Chandramari Group, a prominent F&B company, has unveiled its latest culinary concept, Zordaar. The Indian restaurant celebrates the rich tapestry of India's cuisines across districts.

The concept is backed by a significant investment of AED 5 million and the Chandramari Group plans to invest an additional AED 20 to 25 million to drive their F&B division growth throughout the region. The expansion strategy will kick off with the opening of four to five Zordaar outlets in the UAE before moving to other key markets including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain.

Mr. Muralikumar, Chairman of Chandramari Group and Founder of Zordar, highlighted that the restaurant is redefining Indian dining by blending tradition with innovation. He stated, "Each dish is a celebration of India's diverse



culinary heritage, crafted with a modern twist to surprise and delight our guests. We aim to create an unforgettable dining experience where every bite tells a story of flavor and creativity."

Mr. S.C. Suresh Babu, Founder of Zordaar, further added, "Zordaar is not just a restaurant; it's a destination for those who seek authenticity and

excellence. Our commitment to quality extends beyond the kitchen, from the carefully curated ambiance to the personalized service we provide. We believe in crafting an environment where guests feel at home while being transported on a culinary journey that honors India's rich traditions."

The menu offers 75 dishes from 16 different states and districts in India. Unlike other North Indian restaurants, Zordaar offers an expansive selection that includes Mumbai's street food and Goa's coastal cuisine. Each dish captures the essence of its origin while also incorporating innovative twists.

Zordaar is the most recent addition to the impressive portfolio of the Chandramari Group, which also includes Rockstar, and Jehangir restaurants in Al Ain, Malak Al Tawouk, Mankhool, and Barsha.

FHAM 2024:

ECG Sends Team of Chefs to Maldives for Global Culinary Challenge

The United Arab Emirates will be represented at this year's Food Hotel Maldives by a team of young and senior chefs under the Emirates Culinary Guild's banner.

The FHAM 2024 Global Culinary Competition, is set to take place from September 23rd to 25th at Dharubaaruge in Malé, Maldives, provides a platform for the culinary team to compete on the international culinary stage.

According to Guild President Andy Cuthbert, General Manager of Jumeirah Creekside Hotel and Madinat Jumeirah Conference & Incentives, this year's competition in the Maldives marks the third time they have sent a team. He adds, "We are proud of the young chefs, we were lucky to again have our great competition partner Sounbula Mills support the chefs through sponsorship. President Cuthbert also thanked Mr. Karim Al Azhari, from Sounbula Mills for their unbelievable sponsorship support to the Guild and the Chefs. Managing director Mr. Karim Al Azhari said "it



is with such pride that I am able to help these chefs show off their skills to the world and I am proud that as an Emirates based company we are able to help them to realize their dreams and perform at the highest level."

The team was composed of both young and senior chefs from Abu Dhabi, with Guild Assistant Vice President Chef Peter De Kauwe from the Club Abu Dhabi leading the group. Chef Sanjeewa

Chamil, Chairman of Abu Dhabi & District, also played a key role in the team. The senior chefs who led the group included Chef Dinesh Hashan, Chef Ishara Mayanga De Silva, Chef Tharishma Madushanka Mendis, and Chef Nishan Nayana Kantha.

The chefs will compete in a series of hot cooking and static display classes, and the Guild thanked the chefs and hotel management for their constant support.



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

THE GENTLEMAN CHEF

The word on the culinary street is that Chef **Sudusinghe Chandrasena** has found the essential ingredient to prepare chefs for success. It's not merely mastering cooking techniques; it is about nurturing a generous spirit that separates the best from the rest

There is only one thought that drifts through Chef Sudusinghe's mind when he guides young chefs: kindness.

A blinkered attitude of teaching without compassion can stifle the creativity of the new generation of skilled chefs. "Being aggressive may be common in the kitchen. Kindness, in my experience, produces better outcomes. There is something called love and care. We must understand the mindset of the younger generation. By showing them empathy, they will be more likely to work with us and appreciate the effort we put into their development," he says.

A culinary school principal and mentor at Shamila's Cookery Academy in Colombo, he is at the heart of the process that shapes the raw talents of aspiring chefs into polished professional diamonds. Having a rich mix of culinary adventures in kitchens around the world, he brings a global outlook and international culinary techniques to offer the highest standards of education and training. "We design and deliver comprehensive hands-on training programs covering everything from mastering the basics to exploring the latest trends in the culinary world."



Kindness, in my experience, produces better outcomes. There is something called love and care. We must understand the mindset of the younger generation.

His personal approach to culinary education is blended with the belief that cooking is a creative expression that can bring happiness to people. That's why, whilst developing the training program, he focuses on cultivating creativity and an inclusive learning environment where students can feel inspired to give a nod to innovation.

A critical linchpin of his coaching role while helping mentees at various stages of their careers involves collaborating



with seasoned chefs who can pass on their time-tested wisdom, everything from the fundamentals such as mastering fish filleting and meat cuts to building niche skills in the cutthroat competitive culinary industry. "When I coach, I focus on grooming them not only for the culinary world but also for how they can interact with others and have a deeper understanding of humanity," he stresses.

He is a familiar face in international culinary events and conferences, a jack of all trades who catches the soul of every toque he wears, whether holding the title of Honorary Member of Emirates Culinary Guild or Founder Member of Chefs Guild Lanka. "Furthermore, I hold the position of senior lecturer at Win-Stone Culinary Campus and have an affiliation with



When I coach, I focus on grooming them not only for the culinary world but also for how they can interact with others and have a deeper understanding of humanity

been a haven for chefs. "There is no denying that the chef associations in Sri Lanka and the government have been supporting budding chefs in cultivating their expertise to face challenges head-on. This support speaks through the success we see at every competition where participants from Sri Lanka are emerging on top," he notes.

While the world gets the privilege of working alongside talented Sri Lankan chefs, are the numbers of chefs in the country nose-diving? Chef Sudusinghe convincingly rebuts this perception, adding that global exposure provides chefs with better opportunities to develop their knowledge and lifestyle. In his eyes, it's a win-win situation, where they can then give back the newfound skills to the community and support the country that shaped them.

Even with his storied career, he's not stepping away from improving his life, health, and industry. "I wear many hats as a culinary trainer and mentor. So, I had to switch the hats depending on the day. I also dedicate my time to charity work and community projects as a member of the International Lions Club of Sri Lanka," he smiles.

And with that, he hits all the right flavors of kindness, professionalism, and humanity, ultimately becoming a true gentleman chef. ■

the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority, where I assist the authority in inspecting the hotel to ensure compliance with industry standards and supporting the overall growth and enhancement of the tourism sector," he shares.

If you think he has enough on his plate, add this to the mix: He is also the founder member and Secretary to the President of Bocuse d'Or Sri Lanka. Named after the legendary Chef Paul Bocuse, the cooking competition is a vital platform for aspiring chefs to participate and connect with top culinary professionals.

"Last year, the world culinary competition was serving up talent from all over. We had a good representation of Sri Lankan chefs. Once they win the Asia Pacific cook-off, they get a chance to compete in

the world culinary competition in Lyon. My job is to train the young chefs and set up mentors for them not just for the competition but also to sculpt them into great chefs for tomorrow."

With more than four decades of national and international culinary experience, Chef Sudusinghe has been around the block with a lifetime of insights. He is optimistic that in the years to come, young chefs will have a bigger role to play. As he puts it, "The industry has taken to a different height with AI and technology. There is a space for young chefs to shine in their career and have a buffet of opportunities through social media or in different avenues like food tech labs," he asserts.

With its sun-kissed beaches and signature cuisine, Sri Lanka has always

October 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**

Salon du Chocolat et de la Pâtisserie Dubai concludes on a sweet note

Check out the complete winner list from the third edition of the chocolicious event

The third edition of Salon du Chocolat et de la Pâtisserie Dubai, the region's most anticipated event dedicated to chocolate, pastry, gelato and coffee, officially closed its doors after a remarkable three-day run. Held at Madinat Arena, Madinat Jumeirah, from September 18-20, the event welcomed over 7,000 visitors.

This year's edition was a true celebration of the art of chocolate making and pastry, featuring over 360 brands from around the world. Spread over 3,000 square meters of exhibition space, more than 90 exhibitors showcased an array of exquisite products, from artisan chocolates to the latest pastry masterpieces, offering visitors a chance to sample, learn and be inspired by the top pastry chefs and innovators in the industry.

During the opening ceremony, a



recognition award was awarded to guest of honor Guillaume Gomez, personal representative of the president of the French Republic for food and gastronomy, for raising the profile of French gastronomy in the Middle East.

In addition, Victor Delpierre, barista, mixologist, world champion and gastronomy consultant presented "Treasure of Cocoa," a cocktail made specially for Salon du Chocolat et de la Pâtisserie Dubai.



Among the many highlights of the event was the Chocolate Fashion Show, which mesmerized attendees with 13 spectacular chocolate dresses created by renowned pastry chefs in collaboration with ESMOD Dubai students. These edible masterpieces highlighted the extraordinary creativity and skills of the participants.

Throughout the event, The Talks provided a platform for industry leaders to discuss the latest trends and innovations in the world of pastry, chocolate, coffee and sustainability.

Furthermore, the Coffee in Good Spirits Championship, organized in collaboration with the Specialty Coffee

Association-UAE, debuted, with some of the best baristas and mixologists highlighting their skills in front of a professional jury and large audience.

A total of 43 competitions and masterclasses formed part of the rich program. Competitions include the Best 3D Cake Design, Best Chocolate Showpiece and the KitKat Dessert Challenge. Visitors were also able to enjoy live culinary demonstrations at the Choco Demo and interactive workshops led by world-renowned chefs at the Pastry Show.

Salon du Chocolat et de la Pâtisserie Dubai returns for its fourth edition from September 30 – October 2, 2025. ■



October 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**





Take a look at the complete list of the winners:

| Sr | Class Description | Co Name | Name | Medal |
|---|---|------------------------------|--|--------|
| STATIC DISPLAY | | | | |
| 1 | BEST 3D CAKE DESIGN (DISPLAY) | Kitopi Catering Services | Kumuduni Priyadarshani Karunathna | Gold |
| 2 | BEST CHOCOLATE SHOWPIECE (DISPLAY) | Huqqabaz Garden | Kasun Sandaruwan Silva | Gold |
| 3 | BEST THREE PLATED DESSERT PRESENTATION (DISPLAY) | Palace Downtown Hotel Dubai | Asith Harendra Niroshana Kariyapperuma | Gold |
| 4 | BEST FOUR TYPE OF PETIT FOURS (DISPLAY) | Anantara Dubai Palm Jumeirah | Karnjeev Kumar | Gold |
| 5 | BEST PASTRY SHOWPIECE (DISPLAY) | Bateel International LLC | Vijitha Nihal Gunasena Udagedara | Gold |
| 6 | BEST THREE TIER WEDDING CAKE (DISPLAY) | German Ice Cream Factory | Minhathul Muzeeha Jayah | Gold |
| 7 | BEST MACARON (DISPLAY) | Bateel International LLC | Nishad Peaboda Egodage | Gold |
| PRACTICAL CLASS | | | | |
| 8 | BEST CAKE DECORATION (LIVE) | Kitopi Catering Services | Kumuduni Priyadarshani Karunathna | Bronze |
| 9 | BEST CHOCOLATE TART FOR STUDENTS AND JUNIOR CHEFS (LIVE) | | | |
| 10 | BEST CHOCOLATE ÉCLAIR FOR STUDENTS AND JUNIOR CHEFS (LIVE) | ICCA Abu Dhabi | Mohamad Ali Abbas | Gold |
| SPONSORED CLASS - Sponsor on Stage | | | | |
| 11 | ELLE & VIRE PROFESSIONNEL VIENNOISERIE (DISPLAY) - CHOCO DEMO | Charlie & Friends Restaurant | Anish Rai | Gold |
| 12 | ARLA PRO GATEAUX CLASS (DISPLAY) | Bateel International LLC | Dhanushka Hemal Attanayake | Gold |
| 13 | KITKAT WITH A TWIST COMPETITION (DISPLAY) | ERTH AD | Gopinath Moraboina | Gold |

African Soil to Desert Dunes

Growing up around citrus farms, championing sustainability at Barakat as the Head of R&D Culinary Development, and imagining a future of living in the lap of nature, Chef **Tiaan Wessels** is tapping into his connection with the elements of the earth



Barakat



Wasabi. Earthy, fiery, pungent. A fascinating, underrated ingredient cultivated under the prerequisites of running water and cold temperatures.

"Once you grate and peel the wasabi, its flavour explodes into something potent, with a hint of mild sweetness in the first 20 minutes that takes your breath away. After 20 minutes, the original flavour disappears, and all you are left with is pureed paste. It's incredible to realize one spends nearly two years cultivating it, only to have about 20 minutes to savour its full potential," explains Chef Tiaan Wessels.

Thinking about wasabi takes Chef Tiaan on a trip down memory lane, where a piece of his childhood was about finding joy in the art of cultivating fresh produce and enjoying the food harmoniously.

Growing up in South Africa, he was always in the thick of things—cattle farms, citrus orchards, sugarcane fields, and the crowded pack houses with heavy equipment loading the products, instinctively ingraining every step of the food chain into his perception of food.

His father, being in the construction business, moved the family to a new part of the country every two years. Each new location brought a fresh wave of experiences, but one thing remained unchanged: the family's love for food. The braai (barbecue) evenings were spent observing his father grilling over the open flame, and festivals were all about cooking a feast for the extended family gatherings.

"Unfortunately, life is full of unexpected twists. I lost my father at a young age, and then I faced some challenges that made me change my plans of joining the Navy to take care of my mother."

Not giving up in the toughest battle of their lives made Chef Tiaan emerge even stronger.



Once you grate and peel the wasabi, its flavour explodes into something potent, with a hint of mild sweetness in the first 20 minutes that takes your breath away

His fixation with food and nature became a doorway for his career in the culinary industry. "It took blood, sweat, tears, and a lot of overnight shifts to reach this point in my career. Today, I am the Head of R&D Culinary Development at Barakat, and there's no other way I would have it," he declares.

His role at Barakat involves enhancing communication between customers and the kitchen. He acts as a bridge between the front-of-house and back-of-house staff to deliver products precisely as needed by the customers. "I had split my day into two areas of the business, working in the kitchen and supporting the sales team in developing new products for them," he says.

Dishing out the research and development process, he shares that he keeps his finger on the pulse of both the local and international markets and identifies current patterns to gain better foresight on predicting trends for the seasons and staying ahead of the game.

"When engaging with clients, I bring up these trends to gauge their take on the current marketing landscape. This helps to put our products and vision in sync with the demand. Once we have alignment with both the culinary team and the marketing department, we initiate the product development process," he elaborates.

Innovation in R&D has its own crumbs to sweep up. When bombarded with numerous social media fads, it's hard to replicate those trends in actual production. "We've had some pretty creative requests like being asked to make soft-serve ice cream appear like clouds on top of a cone or to promote the concept of selling artisan biscuits. It's all very artsy, but figuring out where these ideas fit in and how they can be scaled up is crucial. We need to keep it real, consider practicality, and do the math," he explains.

A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work in their production model, which runs on large numbers. Every brand they work with has a different customer profile. "I can't just copy and paste the same old formula everywhere. I have to target the audience, taste profiles, customer profiles, previous trends, competition, and serve the perfect package that suits the local taste preferences."

Almost every day, we encounter a multitude of prolific, talented chefs in the culinary industry. As essential as it is for chefs to convey passion and commitment in their craft, it is equally important to use the craft for the planet and community. It is rare to find a chef who is both skilled and a planet thinker.

Chef Tiaan is always on the lookout for locally available produce to reduce their carbon footprint and deliver the 'Best of Fresh' to their customers while keeping the cost in mind to bring something new to the table. His passion for sustainability shines through when he's thinking outside the box. This is more materialised than merely rhetoric, especially given that the company, Barakat, has been honoured recently with 1st place in the 'Leaders in Sustainability' category.

"We source local produce, such as lettuce from a local farm or hydroponic farm in Dubai, to minimise reliance on global logistics and reduce the carbon footprint. A chef is a storyteller. When people sit down to eat, they want more



A chef is a storyteller. When people sit down to eat, they want more than just food on a plate; they want a whole experience

than just food on a plate; they want a whole experience. We've moved past just eating; it's about bringing customers into the whole culinary journey and the story behind it. That's what gets people excited nowadays, much more than it did a decade ago," he puts it beautifully.

Automation goes by many phrases: complementing advancements, possibly a job stealer, and a means to streamline processes. Chef Tiaan has eschewed exaggerated expressions for automation in favour of realistic ones, believing in using them right from the cultivation process to enhance the efficiency of handling products and services.

He suggests that automation and AI can optimise the food production stages, such as testing the right conditions of the soil before sowing seeds and supporting the supply chain to increase the shelf life of the produce.

Even with access to the very best automation, the industry can still struggle to achieve the same level of human interaction that customers seek when they order dishes. "Customers want a chef with whom they can converse as they place their order or request additional seasoning. Our industry is about taste and feel, whether it evokes a warm fuzzy feeling or transports you back to cherished memories."

A ZESTY START

After Chef Tiaan completed his apprenticeship with the Hyatt group in Johannesburg, he then hopped around a few international hotel brands in the roles of commis and chef de partie. He finally got past his plateau of similar roles when he joined a team for the pre-opening of a restaurant in Johannesburg.

A few years later, he received a life-changing phone call from one of his international mentors, Chef John Wood, with an offer to work at the Burj Al Arab in the UAE. Working alongside amazing chefs, he found himself in a fine-dining



I truly believe that one is never too old to learn. I can glean lessons from the 80-year-old grandmother in rural Italy as much as from a 17-year-old wunderkind whipping up an omelette

restaurant that was ranked among the top seven in the world.

His drive to go beyond the usual fare of cooking, crunching numbers, and menu planning led him to join Heidi Chef Solutions, a company providing chefs and bakers with a quality range of bakery ingredients, Frozen Bakery, and Equipment. After six years of handling the business side of things and boosting profits, he felt a tug to get more involved in the food scene.

Launching his consultancy for restaurants and cafes, revamping menus, R&D, and reimagining concepts were the next steps in his career memo. When the hospitality industry took a hit from COVID-19 and put several projects on hold, he was approached by Barakat to oversee its R&D department. It's been three years with Barakat, and he's already seeing a positive change with record-breaking business. "We're opening our facility in Saudi Arabia by the end of this year. With Mr. Kenneth D'Costa at the helm, the company is moving in the right direction."

Since switching from cooking to managing the R&D team, he has been grappling with a good dilemma of juggling his love for food. He has to constantly remind himself to balance the two because his natural inclination towards the culinary arts teeters him to the kitchen all day.

"My passion lies in the kitchen. I'm constantly in the kitchen working on new ideas when I should be at a meeting," he chuckles. People end up having to call me to join them because I get so engrossed in my cooking, giving my knowledge and expertise to the young team," he says, stressing that the chef in him never dies.

However, having a chef background has also given him a leg up at Barakat as he brings his top-notch fine dining skills to Barakat. He manages to maintain high quality in the products while consistently serving up the freshest fare day in and day out. This approach is translated into their freshly pressed juices and their drive to serve the salads in their purest taste. "Having a fresh salad that is consumed within 24 hours is not common in fast food brands. At Barakat, we serve the freshest possible dishes. Although we use some packaging technology like HPP in certain products for extended shelf life, our salads are completely fresh."

He mentions that his favourite part of the job is the creation process, which takes him through an emotional journey of working with a team of different cultures and views, pushing the boundaries, understanding shortcomings, finding solutions, and ultimately coming up with something fresh.

Earthbound Future

Keeping his creativity flowing is a cinch for him. Food is the main course of his thoughts. His inquisitive nature and the ability to say, "I want to learn," have ticked all the boxes for him to view the culinary map in a new way.

Even the most seemingly unattainable feats intrigue him, such as his expedition to the avocado plantations of South America, where he encountered baby avocados without seeds. "I truly believe that one is never too old to learn. I can glean lessons from the 80-year-old grandmother in rural Italy, perfecting her traditional pasta recipe,



I can't just copy and paste the same old formula everywhere. I have to target the audience, taste profiles, customer profiles, previous trends, competition, and serve the perfect package that suits the local taste preferences



as much as I could from a 17-year-old wunderkind whipping up an omelette. "

Over the years, a number of chefs, friends, and mentors have supported him in making his mark in the industry. Among the many he acknowledges, he gives a personal shoutout to one of his friends and mentors, Chef Nico Van der Walt. An artist and a pastry lecturer, Chef Nico has a longstanding connection with Chef Tiaan, a friendship that goes back to their days studying and working together. "We are brothers inside and outside of the kitchen! He is a successful pastry and chocolatier chef. I have learned so much from him throughout my career, and to this day, we bounce ideas off each other," Chef Tiaan states proudly.

According to his wife, with whom he has been happily married for the last 17 years, Chef Tiaan's signature habit would be cooking all day at work and then again at home. "My wife always teases me about how I'm always stuck in the kitchen, but honestly, cooking is not just work to me. This is where the difference comes in. When you're doing something you love, it doesn't feel like work at all," he shares.

He breaks into a smile as he conjures up a hilarious meme that perfectly mirrors his life. "Whenever I'm not in the kitchen, I'm glued to my phone, and my wife shoots me a quizzical look saying, 'What in the world are you so focused on?' The grand reveal is just me scrolling through my phone library filled with food presentations."

For his sons, Chef Tiaan is not just their caring dad who is always trying to devote some family time, but also like a personal coach who keeps them inspired and active with activities like hiking. Their six-year-old son is a little chef in the making. Whenever he wants to cook, he grabs his stool and gets to work. While some adults are hesitant about leaving their kids alone in the kitchen, he reassures that giving children the freedom to explore and trusting them to handle knives and cooking utensils can be



When you're doing something you love, it doesn't feel like work at all

beneficial for building their confidence. Meanwhile, their nine-year-old son takes after his father's adventurous spirit and enjoys exploring new things. The family enjoys seeking adventure, exploring new places as far away from the crowds as possible, and inevitably stumbling upon captivating sights in remote villages.

When you toss the convention-bound recruiters with the idea of job hopping, you'd seldom expect him to say it is a valid concern. But Chef Tiaan views job hopping in a positive light that glimmers with bringing fresh perspectives, new talent, and innovative ideas into the business. "Move around, even if it is with the same brand, same company, or same hotel. This would prevent you from getting rusty and make you

humble when you start becoming too self-centred. As long as you have the right attitude, changing jobs can introduce you to new people who can add something to your life."

His advice for the up-and-coming chefs is easy: listen. "Young people struggle more than us to listen. Only when you listen can you make wise decisions. Even if someone is talking nonsense, listen and then decide what to do with it. In the food industry, things change so fast you can't say I don't want to listen and do it all on my own."

At some point in his life, he dreams of owning a farm with the best listeners - the cattle, who will patiently moo through his deepest thoughts. He also plans to operate a charming cafe-style farmhouse or kitchen farm.

As a young boy, he held onto typical dreams that any young boy might have. Life, like wasabi, threw its surprising jolts at every turn of his journey, but he chose to learn from them. Just like a tiny amount of wasabi can make a big difference in flavour, he is on a path to sustainability, creating change through his small actions. Are you? ■

WORLDCHIEFS PRESIDIUM 2024-2028

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THE CULINARY UNITY

A Culinary Journey: From Passionate Beginnings and Beyond

(Part VII) Reflecting on the kitchen mishap that left her with three severed fingers and the valuable lessons she gleaned from seasoned chefs about sauce-making and kitchen etiquette, Chef Helen Morris reminisces about her time at a country house hotel



Life, my comrades,
is indeed for living—
whether in the heat of
the kitchen or on the
open road

As my culinary adventures led me to a quaint country house hotel tucked away in leafy Hampshire. Hopping from one kitchen to another, I noticed the kitchens expanded like dough in the oven, along with the brigade. We even had our own beloved "still room" ace, 'Betty,' a wizard with the speed of a blender and the precision of a pastry chef, churning out tea, coffee, toast, and biscuits for breakfast and lunch, easing the pressure for the service team. She was our unsung hero, and I am pretty sure she could brew a cup of tea that could solve any disagreement.

In our bustling kitchen, I vividly remember the commis chef in the veg section whipping up hollandaise every evening as if it were a lifeline. His dedication was such that I swear there was a hint of blood, sweat, and perhaps even tears in that sauce. In fact, I am certain there was. We would gather around our stations, turning endless veggies and potatoes, pondering the mysteries of life—and that is when I had my first major kitchen mishap. Absentmindedly, commonly known as talking and not concentrating, wielding a salmon knife to slice a sandwich, I managed to cut not just the bread but three of my fingers! Off to the hospital for stitches, I went, and those scars are now my eternal reminder of that fateful day.

Most of my time was spent in the sauce

section, coordinating the kitchen like a culinary conductor. Here, I had the honor of working alongside the head chef—a true kitchen maestro. He was not just a chef; he was a mentor who taught me the art of approachability with a dash of kitchen discipline and schooled me in cost control and budgeting—skills I carry to this day. Short-staffed? No problem! He would roll up his sleeves, roast beef bones for our endless stocks, and dive right into the fray. Except for the pastry section. No one dared venture into the pastry section... that team let no one through their doors! Trying to enter their section was like attempting to sneak past Fort Knox. Honestly, airport security had nothing on them. You would have an easier time getting a bottle of water through customs than catching a glimpse of their secret recipes!

Let's get back to the Chef. His approach to nurturing the team, both the rookies and the veterans, was nothing short of admirable. Not once did he raise his voice, yet he managed to guide us all with patience and expertise. He took the time to teach us new techniques, brainstormed menus, and always made sure we felt supported, no matter what was on the chopping block.

The hotel was a hive of activity, especially during events like weddings and birthday bashes. I learned the intricacies of event planning and execution, albeit on a smaller scale



compared to the skyscrapers of Dubai. The restaurant was packed with regulars and locals alike, and during peak hours, orders poured in faster than a cheetah chasing its prey. Yet, amidst the chaos, there was unparalleled collaboration between kitchen and restaurant staff. Our Spanish restaurant manager, a crowd favorite, would stride into the kitchen from his distant post, assess the situation, and give us a breather by holding off new orders while charming guests in the bar. Guests adored him, and our kitchen-to-service teamwork was as smooth as a velvety chicken liver parfait.

This hotel was not just a workplace; it was my second family. We lived within the hotel grounds, surrounded by stunning views and morning birdsong. Split shifts became the norm, and parties were endless. Our adventures extended beyond the hotel, exploring the culinary delights of the Shires and London, soaking in the countryside and nearby coastline charms—because, you know, I was maturing (or so I liked to think).

It was undoubtedly my favorite kitchen haunt, thanks to the camaraderie and shared purpose. The skills I learned here were not just practical but also in the

realms of kitchen management, providing me with another string to my bow. But alas, wanderlust beckoned — I dreamt of Australia, inspired by tales of fellow chefs who had ventured Down Under. And so, with a heavy heart but a backpack packed with skills and memories, I bid farewell to Hampshire, heading for Heathrow Airport, boots laced and ready for my next big adventure.

Life, my comrades, is indeed for living—whether in the heat of the kitchen or on the open road.

Chef Helen



A Voyage Into Chocolate's Future

Voyage Foods, renowned for its revolutionary clean label, creates chocolate without cocoa

By **Shreya Asopa**

California based food technology company, Voyage Foods is on a journey of creating more sustainable, scalable, delicious counterparts to everyday staples.

The company's plant-derived cocoa-free chocolate is considered among the most sustainable on the market. Voyage's breakthrough chocolate is exclusively marketed to B2B clients and their consumer focused plant-based, allergen free, peanut-free and hazelnut-free spreads are available at retailers nationwide.

In an exclusive Q&A, Adam Maxwell, Founder & CEO of Voyage Foods talks about the story behind making cocoa free chocolate and his belief that everyone deserves the right to enjoy their favorite foods without compromise on taste, risk of threat to future access or sacrifice to dietary needs. These preferences eventually culminated in the launch of Voyage Foods in 2021,



Life, my comrades, is indeed for living—whether in the heat of the kitchen or on the open road

where he now works alongside founding team member and VP of R&D, Kelsey Tenney, as well as a talented team of food scientists and CPG experts.

How Voyage Foods' sustainable chocolate alternative can be integrated into a variety of dishes without compromising on taste or quality.

Our cocoa-free chocolate is a one-for-one replacement. It has the same taste, textural, and functional properties as traditional chocolate and is interchangeable in recipe

development and various production processes, for baking, confectionery, frozen desserts, and more.

How Voyage Foods' technology and approach set it apart from other startups in the chocolate alternative space.

We used the traditional process of chocolate making as our starting point. Our production looks remarkably similar to that, with similar roasting and processing techniques that are tweaked based on the flavor of the inputs we're using. That's a layer of food science that is more or less analytical chemistry to develop the systems for how we treat those ingredients: aroma analysis, material design, sensory science and data analytics.

The story behind Voyage Foods. Adam Maxwell's journey in finding a sustainable and accessible way to create timeless classic food products like chocolate.

Cocoa, coffee, and other beloved foods are grown in climate-change endangered

regions, are contributing to deforestation, and are often products of unethical labor practices. Voyage set out to replicate our favorite foods in ways that are more affordable, less harmful, friendly to all dietary needs, and just as delicious.

Raw cacao beans do not inherently taste like what we think of as chocolate. Chocolate is the end result of ingredients, yes, and also a method that includes fermenting, roasting, and other processing steps. Our task was to find alternatives to raw cacao beans that can produce the same flavors, aromas, and experience.

Practical ways chefs can leverage such innovations and products to offer more sustainable dining options, respond to increasing consumer demand for eco-friendly choices, and stay ahead in the evolving culinary landscape.

We see multiple trends towards more sustainable and plant-based ingredients as well as allergen-friendly ingredients. Products like these help provide a safe and inclusive environment for people with food allergies and different dietary needs. Chefs should always stay open to accommodations, modifications, and swaps. Products that are a one-for-one replacement for their traditional counterparts, comparable in taste and application, are easiest for your staff to work with and incorporate into your menu.

The replication of functional and sensory aspects of cocoa in their products.

Creating cocoa-free products that share the same sensory elements as traditional chocolate is critical. Voyage has conducted in-depth consumer research to ensure the sensorial experience is in line with consumers' existing expectations of chocolate. We think the potential is greatest in applications like chocolate chips or ice cream, which also make up a larger share of total chocolate consumption. In those commodity markets, our sensory profiles are very close to traditional chocolate. ■



**Adam Maxwell, Founder
& CEO of Voyage Foods**



*Bob's Red Mill
Oats*

*Hershey's
Chocolate Chips*

*Rich Ribbon
T55 Flour*

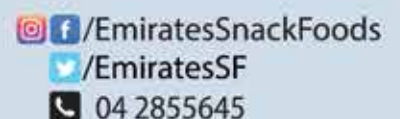


A CRUNCH OF INDULGENCE



BAKED WITH THE FINEST T55 RICH RIBBON FLOUR, HERSHEY'S CHOCOLATE CHIPS, AND WHOLESOME BOB'S RED MILL OATS, THESE COOKIES OFFER A PERFECT MIX OF HEARTY AND SWEET.

A TREAT THAT'S SIMPLY IRRESISTIBLE.



Meat With Sulemana

The farm-to-table journey of grass-fed beef production is increasingly gaining popularity, writes **Abubakari Sadik Sulemana**, a seasoned protein and livestock agriculture specialist

Grass-fed beef is known for its environmental benefits, ethical farming practices, and distinctive flavor and nutritional value. Each step, from breeding and pasture management to precise processing, ensures that the beef meets the highest standards for discerning consumers. The result is a product with a unique flavor profile and enhanced nutritional benefits, making it a valuable commodity in international markets.

Breeding and Calving

The process begins with the careful selection of breeding stock, typically heritage breeds well-suited to a grass-fed diet. These cattle are raised in natural settings, grazing on open pastures. After a gestation period of approximately nine months, calves are born and remain with their mothers, feeding on milk during their early weeks. This initial stage develops the calves' immune systems.

Pasture-Based Feeding and Management

Once weaned, the calves transition to an all-pasture diet. Farmers often employ rotational grazing methods, where cattle are moved between different pasture sections to allow the grass to regenerate and maintain its nutritional quality. A pasture rich in grasses, legumes, and herbs benefits the cattle's health and enhances the beef's nutritional profile.

Seasonal and climatic factors are also crucial in grass-fed systems. In colder months, cattle are often fed stored forages, such as hay, ensuring their diet remains grass-based throughout the year. No grains or supplements that would compromise the "grass-fed" status are used.



Animal Welfare and Health Practices

Grass-fed cattle are typically raised in systems that prioritize high animal welfare standards. The animals have access to open spaces, which allows them to engage in natural behaviors, reduce stress, and improve their overall well-being.

Farmers typically adopt preventative care measures, including regular veterinary visits, vaccinations, and natural parasite control methods. Unlike conventional grain-fed systems, the use of antibiotics or growth hormones is generally avoided to maintain the purity of the grass-fed designation.

Fattening and Growth Phase

As the cattle grow, they are allowed to reach their market weight through a slower, more natural fattening process. On a grass-only diet, it typically takes 18 to 30 months for grass-fed cattle to mature, in contrast to grain-fed cattle, which are often fattened more quickly. The result is leaner meat with distinct nutritional benefits, including higher levels of

Omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants.

Humane Slaughtering Process

Once cattle reach their target weight, they are transported to a slaughterhouse, with many producers opting for local abattoirs to minimize transport time and stress on the animals. The slaughter process adheres to strict humane standards, ensuring minimal stress, which is essential for maintaining the quality of the meat. Stress during slaughter can negatively affect the texture and taste of the beef, making this step critical in the production chain.

Meat Processing and Aging

After slaughter, the meat undergoes a rigorous processing phase under high safety and hygiene standards. Grass-fed beef is notably leaner than grain-fed beef, and its fat often has a yellowish tint due to the carotene content in the grass.

Many producers choose to age the beef through dry-aging or wet-aging techniques to enhance flavor, resulting in a more palatable and rich final product.

Packaging and Export Preparation

The beef is vacuum-sealed after processing to preserve its freshness and prevent contamination. Detailed labeling, such as organic or grass-fed labels, ensures consumers know the product's origin, weight, and certifications.

Before export, the beef must meet the stringent import regulations of the destination country, including sanitary and phytosanitary standards. Full traceability from farm to table is essential, and once cleared, the beef is transported in refrigerated containers to ensure its freshness during transit. ■

Tasting The Viral Content

Celebrity chefs, social media stars, and commercial chefs are working together to write a new definition of culinary, notes Chef **Tarek Mourie**

In the fast-paced and dynamic world of the culinary industry, the lines between commercial, celebrity, and social media chefs have become increasingly blurred. These talented cooks are stirring up the food scene like never before, changing how we see and enjoy food. Gone are the days when we relied on stacks of cookbooks or hurried to the library to learn about the art of presentation; now, we have all the insights and inspiration just a tap away.

I remember the days when female celebrity chefs like Martha Stewart and Julia Child hosted cooking shows that transformed how we view cooking. Their shows sparked interest in the origins of dishes and inspired countless people to pursue their dreams in the kitchen. Many celebrity chefs, as we know them today, made a commercial legacy for themselves before stepping into the world of cooking shows.

It's interesting how these famous chefs used their TV appearances to spread awareness of the culinary arts, express their talent, and obliquely introduce them to their brands. Whether it is nail-biting competitions or cultural exchange of cooking techniques, celebrity chefs have reshaped the professional cooking scene. Donning their white coats, they bring their charisma and talent, adding a dynamic twist to humble cooking.

The ability to connect with audiences has leaped from TV to now at our fingertips. Social media is increasingly becoming as mainstream as television. The hashtags "foodstagram" and "cheftok" are the new lingo on the block.



They make cooking more 'aesthetic,' as they say and play a part in food trends.

While the #tags might take time to catch on, social media is already helping commercial chefs spark creativity and find inspiration. Several chefs are leveraging social media to brainstorm ideas for presentations. We frequently get customers who request dishes they've seen on social media. Often, they don't even glance at our options. I've had my fair share of requests. The trend of making croissants into "croffles" or cloud bread highlights how much influence social media has on audiences. Such myriad trends and numbers have challenged commercial chefs to stay sharp and keep our creative juices flowing.

What We Can Learn from Each Other:

Competitions and Shows: Celebrity chefs have changed how people view cooking, showing them what it takes to create quality food. By hosting and judging cooking shows, they push aspiring chefs to focus on detail and creativity, raising

the bar for the whole industry. They prove that cooking is more than just skill; it's about creativity, precision, and knowing flavors inside and out.

Art of Interaction: I've had the chance to meet celebrity chefs who not only excel in presentation and team interaction but also have the ability to serve breakfast to 1,000 people with ease, all while maintaining their signature charm and professionalism. Celebrity chefs are dynamic, charismatic, and masters at connecting with their audience. This is a skill that commercial chefs should take to heart.

Social Media Chefs

and Media Influence: Recipes and food history channeled through social media have improved our understanding of creativity classical techniques. If commercial chefs want to check the practical side of food trends and spice things up, social media chefs have a lot to offer. Back in the day, we'd rely on cooking magazines, but now, with AI and digital tools, fresh ideas are served on a silver platter. For instance, they often showcase how to creatively use economical cuts of meat, turning humble ingredients into standout dishes. One major challenge for commercial chefs is finding the time to explore new trends, like gluten-free and plant-based diets. Ironically, these trends are often bubbling up from social media chefs. By keeping an eye on what's trending online, commercial chefs can stay ahead of the curve and incorporate these fresh ideas into their own kitchens.

Credibility: Recently, one of my friends told me about an experience at a food

exhibition where he ran into the downside of media hype. The Asian restaurant that received a lot of social media attention didn't live up to the glossy pictures that were posted online; all that was being served at the exhibition was noodles straight out of the packet. This situation brings home the point: when promoting products, it's crucial to ensure that what's presented aligns with the real deal. Whether it's noodles in a supermarket or a dish from an Asian cuisine, there's a responsibility to deliver on promises and avoid misleading consumers.

Commercial Chefs

- ◆ **Financial Aspect & Scale:** Commercial chefs often have a strong grasp of the financial side of cooking. Unlike celebrity chefs, their focus lays naturally on the mathematical approach to making the most out of economical cuts of meat, and they are flexible to work with big numbers that cooking shows typically do not demonstrate.
- ◆ **Culinary Balance:** Celebrity chefs often come from a background rooted in commercial kitchens. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that their fame may occasionally overshadow their culinary expertise. Present-day chefs successfully hold two forts: the public spotlight and the demands of quality in the kitchen. Commercial chefs possess a unique edge in their ability to maintain consistency and efficiency under pressure, skills that can be invaluable for celebrity chefs looking to elevate their craft.

Media has a significant impact on how products are perceived, from targeted ads to celebrity endorsements and reviews. Fewer stars or high ratings don't necessarily guarantee excellence. It all boils down to building a reputation, which is tied to maintaining the integrity of your offerings.

Think of these tools and AI as versatile kitchen gadgets that can assist with tasks like food photography and recipe creation, rather than as a means of



diminishing the importance of chefs in their profession. I remember a conversation with Chef Andy Cuthbert, where we discussed that if we don't understand the fundamentals, it's challenging to make the most of AI.

AI might help you calculate quantities or provide guidance with recipes (psst... which are already created and tested by real human chefs). Sure, it can save time searching for ideas and whips up a little SORCERY using IT, but when it comes to the magic of CREATING, that's still a job for us humans.

This concept is becoming increasingly relevant as a major global consumer goods company plans to provide an overall

solution using AI to allow users to input recipes using the company's products. This assists with standardization and cost analysis. While it's a fantastic advancement that ensures consistency, the key is to maintain the integrity of the original recipes and culinary traditions, even if AI systems provide instant or convenient alternatives.

As we look to the future of the culinary industry, it is clear that the interplay between commercial, social media and celebrity chefs will continue to shape the way we experience culinary arts. Food is a common thread that binds the diverse tapestry of the industry, and it is our privilege to witness its continued evolution. ■

TRAMONTINA

Tramontina: 113 Years Perfecting Premium Kitchenware



V for Vanilla

Sherif El Ghamrawy, CEO of Vanilla & Spice, outlines why vanilla beans are regarded as one of the secret ingredients used by culinary masters

Vanilla, that mysteriously seductive botanical spice, has been the secret culinary ingredient for professional and home chefs for over six centuries. The mere mention of it invokes exotic visions of fragrant, delicious sweets and desserts that stir our senses and take us back to our childhood when vanilla was the magical flavor in our ice creams, cookies, and cakes.

Yet, using whole vanilla beans in commercial production of ice cream, chocolate, and patisseries is not as widespread as commonly thought. Readily available vanilla byproducts such as extracts, pastes, and even artificial vanillin have been used as quick, cheaper alternatives to plump, nutritional whole vanilla beans.

It is a given that vanilla extracts and pastes, in their varying degrees of grades and quality, play a role in infusing recipes with their delightful essence; however, the vanilla bean remains the king of flavor due to its intense profile. Vanilla experts suggest that vanilla beans offer



much more aroma and taste, with some stating that whole beans can have over 400 flavor components, not just pure vanillin, which is recognized as the measuring stick of all vanilla.

Synthesized vanillin made using natural sources such as wood and rice or chemically in a lab shouldn't be in this mix. The vanilla bean itself is a gift

to the culinary world. Unlike its liquid byproducts, the bean, or pod, as it is also known, gives off a rich, fragrant, complex profile with deep chocolate, caramel, honey, and amber notes. Its rich and fragrant properties are prized by the world's most renowned chefs, and its use in many recipes, particularly in confectionery, remains the pinnacle of culinary delight.

While there are several types of vanilla varieties grown in places like Indonesia, Polynesia, Mexico, and Uganda, each with its flavor profiles, it remains that the king of all vanilla comes from the island of Madagascar, where 90 percent of its reptiles, mammals, and plants are found nowhere else on earth. It is understandable why Madagascar vanilla is unique and remains the most sought-after vanilla in the world. What is also interesting is that Madagascar supplies almost 80 percent of the world's vanilla, with a production capacity of approximately 2,000 metric tons per year, and most of it is grown in the northeast corner of the island, known as the Sava region.



In its delicate dance with mother nature, Madagascar vanilla production can be greatly affected by adverse weather conditions, which is a primary cause of rising prices during low harvest seasons. Even as the second most expensive spice after saffron, vanilla remains the go-to ingredient for the world's greatest chefs, who use vanilla to produce delicious recipes for puddings, crème brûlée, meringue, gelato, and even in poaching liquid for a delicious, fragrant infusion. In the world of culinary delight, the vanilla bean remains the flavor of choice, with its complex taste that adds sophistication to any recipe. The next time you are thinking of grabbing that bottle of extract in your kitchen, go for a vanilla bean and create culinary magic instead. ■

BREAKING BARRIERS

Chef Carl Shi writes about shattering stereotypes and achieving gender and pay equality in the modern hospitality industry

Having spent over two decades in the hospitality industry as a professional chef, I've seen the landscape of gender equality and pay equity shift and evolve. The hospitality sector, celebrated for its vibrant and diverse environment, has indeed made strides towards inclusivity. Yet, significant challenges remain.

The hospitality industry has always been a melting pot of cultures and backgrounds. However, gender equality remains a pressing issue. A study published in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (2021) highlights the importance of gender diversity in top management teams for organizational performance. Despite this, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles, holding only 23% of board positions globally (Equality in Tourism International, 2018).

In the kitchen, a space traditionally dominated by men, female chefs often face barriers to advancement. A 2021 study in the *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* points out that women in culinary roles encounter gender bias and limited opportunities for growth. Despite these hurdles, there's



Chit-Chat with Chef Carl

a growing recognition of the need for gender equity, as diverse teams bring varied perspectives and creativity to the culinary arts.

Equal Pay for Equal Work

The issue of equal pay extends beyond gender; it encompasses nationality and ethnicity as well. The *Office for National Statistics* (2023) reports that the gender pay gap persists across various sectors, including hospitality. Women, on average, earn less than their male counterparts, even when performing the same roles. This disparity is even more pronounced for women of color and those from different nationalities.

A study from the *International Journal of Management Sciences & Business Research* (2023) emphasizes the importance of equitable pay practices. It suggests that organizations adopting transparent pay structures and regular audits can help bridge the pay gap. Moreover, companies prioritizing pay equity tend to attract and retain a more diverse workforce, enhancing their competitiveness in the market.

Nationality and Pay Equality

Nationality significantly influences pay disparities within the hospitality industry. Workers from different countries often face unequal pay due to varying labor laws and economic conditions. The *European Sociological Review* (2021) highlighted that migrant workers in hospitality are frequently underpaid compared to their local counterparts despite possessing similar skills and experience. To tackle this issue, industry leaders must advocate for standardized pay scales that transcend national boundaries. By ensuring that all employees, regardless of nationality, receive fair compensation for their work, the hospitality industry can foster a more inclusive and equitable environment.

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The Role of Leadership in Promoting Equality

Leadership within hospitality organizations is crucial in driving change. The Boston Hospitality Review (2021) underscores the impact of gender-diverse leadership teams on organizational success. Leaders who champion diversity and inclusion set the tone for a workplace culture that values equality. As a chef, I've witnessed the positive effects of inclusive leadership

in the kitchen. When leaders prioritize equal opportunities and fair treatment, it creates a supportive environment where all team members can thrive. This enhances employee satisfaction and improves overall performance and guest satisfaction.

The hospitality industry has made significant progress towards achieving gender equality and pay equity, yet there is still work to be done. By

addressing the challenges of gender bias, pay disparities and nationality-based inequalities, the industry can create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all employees. As professionals in the hospitality sector, it is our responsibility to advocate for equal work and equal pay. By fostering a culture of inclusivity and fairness, we can ensure that the industry continues to thrive and innovate, benefiting both employees and guests alike. ■



THE SWEETEST WAY TO LEARN

She is on a quest for knowledge, piping her own sweet symphony of exploring new techniques and flavors at every opportunity. Chef **Dwiyanti Cintaningrum** from the Dubai World Trade Centre explains why the more one knows, the more they realize how little they know

It all kicks off with the patrons selecting the dessert ingredients; occasionally, some may even have a color palette in mind, particularly for special occasions such as weddings. Then, the idea is baked with a schedule to create customized options. What follows next is the arduous task of spending three to four sleepless nights prepping the desserts. As a decadent swirl of chocolate and a burst of fresh fruits intermingle with velvety cream, it completes the food preparation.

A flawless display of desserts on the table is presented by 37-year-old Chef Dwiyanti Cintaningrum and the team for the food tasting. On average, the pastry team collaborates to convey their talent by rolling out desserts for various customers three to four times per week.

Contrary to the prevailing paradigm of large presentations at such events, Chef Dwiyanti goes against the grain by finding beauty in creating small and intricate dishes. Big numbers in catering, from bite-size desserts to mini canapes, come into play during the grandeur of royal weddings. A guest has to name it; they've got it covered.

"In a particular food tasting, we prepared around a whopping 60 dessert options. And that's not all; an entire hall was booked for the food-tasting presentation, divided for hot and cold dishes," recalls Chef Dwiyanti.

As a specialty pastry chef at the Dubai



The more one knows, the more they realize how little they know

World Trade Center, she assists the executive pastry chef in adding a touch of artistry to their set and seasonal menus. "I am also in charge of preparing the food tasting for a select group of guests. It includes meeting the VIP clients to discuss custom-made desserts and pastries for special occasions. Along with this, I handle staffing requirements at the DWTC's pastry kitchen, overseeing the training of new pastry assistants and bakers as needed," she details.

Aside from having to deal with 2000 plated desserts and strict security checks by high-profile clients, she is also trying to read between the lines to interpret her clients' tastes, a unique challenge that is not all black and white.

Looks matter, she says, noting that the dishes should appear as appetizing as they taste. "Having been here for the past two years, my experience has helped me understand my clients. When customers come for a food tasting, I observe which dishes they are drawn to, which allows me to determine their preferred flavors and recommend the best dish for them," she shares.

Occasionally, customers will combine different components from a variety of choices before making their final decision. When faced with such demands, Chef Dwiyanti finds the solution to be flexibility. "We can mix and match concepts, and elements to provide a range of options that ultimately narrows down to just a select few," she smiles, sharing memories about a food-tasting process where a client selected only 15 to 20 plated dishes out of 60 options.

Far away from the jostling of baking ingredients, her family in Bandung never thought her passion for baking homemade cookies during the Holy Month of Ramadan would evolve into plating desserts for the elite guests. "I come from a close-knit family with three sisters. I am the second one of our sibling quartet. As I got older, clearly my heart tilted towards the world of dough and sugar, so I decided to attend culinary school." Once she graduated from the Indonesia University of Education, she landed an internship at one of the Sheraton properties in Indonesia. The realities of cooking in an actual kitchen, as opposed to what she witnessed on TV, dawned on her. Missing just one ingredient meant starting a dish over, pointing out the magnitude of paying attention to detail.

She got a running start as she landed her first role in Dubai, becoming part of the Fairmont The Palm's opening team. Her drive to have a well-rounded skill pushed her to wade further to explore the culinary



We can mix and match concepts, and elements to provide a range of options that ultimately narrows down to just a select few



scene of the UAE, gaining experience at various hotels, including the St. Regis Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, The Address Boulevard in Dubai, Sheraton Dubai Creek, and the Waldorf Astoria DIFC.

While some chefs may frown upon job hopping, Chef Dwiyanti avoids staying in one coop and prefers to maintain a diverse career path. Though opportunities arise, she never jumps in without careful consideration of each job offer. When it comes to deciding on the right workplace, she places an emphasis on the ethos of the company and the expertise of the executive chef that can aid in enhancing her culinary know-how. It's not the game about fitting into a predefined mold but creating a mold where the perfect dough can rise just right for her.

"I want to improve and build myself. For example, when I joined Sheraton, I knew they had an exceptional executive chef - Chef Kapila Amaratunga- leading the team. He taught me everything about chocolate and garnishing. After mastering those techniques, I continued to further my skills at St. Regis, where I learned about food pairings and hot and cold infusion techniques from Christophe Sapy. Next, at Waldorf Astoria, Chef John Buenaventura taught me about using seasonal fruits on the menu. Currently, I am fine-tuning my skills in bulk cooking with events like Formula 1, Airshow, tech shows such as Gitex, and royal weddings," she explains.

For Chef Dwiyanti, art and science in pastry go hand in hand. She believes that only when art is taken under the wing of science, which is following the precise recipe path, can she reach her desired destination of innovative and delectable creations.

A hint of melding art and science to reimagine new flavors and textures also lies in her creation of the Chocolate & Citrus Texture dish for the prestigious Arla Pro Pastry Mastery Competition. "We have 64% Manjari Dark chocolate for the depth of the flavor, complemented



I am fine-tuning my skills in bulk cooking with events like Formula 1, Airshow, tech shows such as Gitex, and royal weddings

by refreshing notes of orange and yuzu fondant. Along with different textures, and temperature contrast, the dish also has a science flair with delicate chocolate caviar and Mandarin Infused Kaffir lime Sorbet."

She is proficient in using molecular gastronomy to create pastries, but practical planning takes a front seat when it comes to large-scale events. "You cannot implement those intricate molecular gastronomy techniques at big functions. Size does matter in this case—500 guests or less are doable, but anything larger than that, then we have to see if the idea is operational," she says.

Chef Dwiyanti, on paper, may have seemed like a shoo-in for the IKA Culinary Olympics. However, reflecting on her seven months of training for the

IKA Olympics, she admits she couldn't believe her luck. "It all began after securing the Best Pastry Chef and Best in Four Plated Dessert at the 2023 Emirates Salon Culinare. I took home three gold medals, and a few days after the competition, I was offered to join the national team for IKA."

Little doubt that she rose to the occasion at the IKA, achieving a gold and two silver for her pastry artistry. None of this, she explains, would have been possible without the help and support of her fellow chefs at the hotel. Chef Jason and Chef Shyju from the hotel's cold kitchen taught her everything about the competition from scratch. "With their guidance, I picked up the art of creating plated desserts for competitions. And Chef Kameel sprinkled his expertise on preparing showpieces."

A mother of two merry munchkins, ages seven and two, along with a husband who happens to share her interests and profession as a chef working at Emirates Catering, she finds her life is a perfect blend of family and culinary passion. The days are full of joyful chaos, like a reality TV show depicting a mix of cooking competitions and family adventures. Her ultimate goal? To seize opportunities, improve every day, and years later open a quaint bake shop in her hometown to serve delicately plated desserts.

The Greek philosopher Socrates is credited with one of history's most well-known true wisdom quotes. By acknowledging his ignorance, he presented himself as a truth-seeker rather than a know-it-all. In the era with all the information at our fingertips, perhaps we have lost humility and curiosity. Chef Dwiyani, however, has persistently carried the Socratic philosophy in her culinary journey, recognizing that there's always more to learn and understand about pastry making with all of its endless combinations using both science and art. ■



Chocolate & Citrus Texture

(Cherry Wood Smoked Chocolate Mousse, Chocolate Caviar, 66% Dark chocolate Yuzu Fondant, Mandarin Infused Kaffir lime Sorbet)

Chocolate Sponge

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Sugar | 572g |
| Flour T45 | 382g |
| Baking Powder | 190g |
| Cocoa Powder | 4g |
| Veg. Oil | 120g |
| Eggs | 400g |
| Milk | 718g |
| Arla Pro 35% Whipping Cream | 718g |

Method

- ◆ Preheat the oven at 180°C.
- ◆ Combine all dry ingredients with eggs and oil and whisk for six minutes. Add milk and cream. Mix it all together for two minutes.
- ◆ Bake it for 15 minutes.

Dark Chocolate Coffee Mousse

| | |
|-------|------|
| Milk | 250g |
| Sugar | 25g |

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Egg yolk | 25g |
| 64% Manjari Dark Chocolate | 175g |
| Gelatin | 375g |

Arla Pro 35% Whipping Cream

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Vanilla Bean | 1pcs |
|--------------|------|

Method

- ◆ Boil milk and add sugar and egg yolk. Then add gelatin.
- ◆ Fold in 64% Manjari chocolate and add gelatin.
- ◆ Fold whipped cream and set it in a mold.

Hazelnut Feulentine Crunch

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Praline Paste | 170g |
| Feulentine | 250g |
| Milk Chocolate Sao Palme Milk 43% | 250g |

Method

- ◆ Feulletine crunch: Mix all together and spread to a chocolate sponge.

Chocolate Caviar

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Water | 500g |
| Cocoa Powder | 50g |
| Sugar | 112g |
| X58 Pectin | 8g |

Method

- ◆ Boil water and add cocoa powder.
- ◆ Add sugar and X58 pectin.

- ◆ Pipe in cold grapeseed oil.
- ◆ Wash in cold water, soak in sugar syrup.

Cinnamon Crumble

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Flour | 125g |
| Arla Pro Butter | 125g |
| Almond Powder | 125g |
| Cinnamon Powder | 5g |
| Demerara Sugar | 75g |

Method

- ◆ Mix Arla Pro Butter with demerara sugar.
- ◆ Add flour, almond powder, and lastly add cinnamon powder.
- ◆ Bake it at 160°C for 12 min.

Yuzu Fondant Insert

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Arla Pro 35% Whipping cream | 600g |
| Trimoline | 100g |
| Yuzu Inspiration Chocolate | 600g |

Method

- ◆ Boil Arla Pro 35% Whipping Cream and Trimoline. Pour it slowly onto 66% Caraipe Dark Chocolate
- ◆ Allow it to crystalize, pipe in insert molds and freeze.

October 2024 **Gulf Gourmet**



The Guild Meet

The August-September Guild meeting was held at the Rove Downtown Hotel on September 10, 2024. We thank Executive Chef **Spencer Black** and his team for hosting this meeting









THE CARTALYST

He can effortlessly carry the Spice Guru hashtag with him. Chef **Bobby Kapoor** is the quintessential entrepreneur, breathing in the flavor fads and exhaling the aromatic turn of trends, crafting solutions that perfectly season the palates



During the medieval periods of India, pepper was referred to as "black gold" due to its popularity and high value. The petite, round peppercorn had a magnetic appeal, drawing Vasco Da Gama to India and holding a historic meeting with King Zamorin. Although this interaction failed to establish a commercial treaty, it assisted in opening up the spice route. If Chef Bobby Kapoor had been present in the court of the Zamorin, it would have been a deliciously different story! Vasco da Gama would have realized that there is more to Indian culinary arts than just spices and trade, and King Zamorin would have been more accepting of multicultural influences.

Although just a conjecture, one certainty is that in a culinary exchange, Chef Bobby Kapoor, a spice sensei, would win the argument with his command over spices. Today, Chef Bobby can create the exact flavor of any spice beyond geographical boundaries. He elucidates, "I can make a peri-peri flavor through the exact mint that captures the essence of Africa or a version that is tailored specifically for the Middle East. However, it's vital to recognize that each region has its own unique flavor profile." He expounds on the Middle East's flavor preferences for sourness over chili, clarifying that the 13 souring flavors that are ubiquitous in Indian cuisine are not typically used in the Middle East.

"Lemon, on the other hand, is a widely used ingredient in Middle Eastern cuisine, but only three distinct lemon flavors are recognized: loomi (dried lime), pomegranate



Food is not complicated, It's what we complicate

molasses, citrus fruits, and lemon juice. So we have Shatta and different lemon agents, which make peri-peri in this market into something entirely different," he illuminates.

As you listen to him speak, you might hastily conclude that he is a know-it-all. However, up close, you realize the days he spent understanding several pieces of equipment, the science of food, and consultations with food scientists to delve into the art of creating seasonings.

Growing up in Punjab some 35 years ago, this young flavor and spice savant was told he could never become a chef due to the prevailing dogma surrounding the inauspiciousness of left-handedness. But he was determined to show the world his dexterity by penning the ingredients with food passion. Soon after, Chef Bobby Kapoor graduated from the Oberoi School of Management and worked with the likes of Oberois, Marriotts, and Kempinskis across the mainland before eventually venturing out to become an entrepreneur providing food solutions.

At the epicenter of his food philosophy is Cartalyst. "It is not a food cartel," chuckles Chef Bobby, "but the coined term "ala carte and list." The eccentric name may throw you for a loop, but not Chef Bobby's culinary vision for Cartalyst, where he consolidates all the P's: procurement, planning, process, product, people and presentation to script quality in the business.

"Recently, we gave food solutions to a fast-food chain in India, where we optimized their operations to ensure the burgers were served within the two-minute timeframe by creating award-winning sauces. Whether it's developing a muffin mix or optimizing a bakery's production process, we do the job right and with consistency," explains Chef Bobby.

Providing tailored solutions to fast food joints is no piece of cake. However, by breaking things down into bite-sized chunks, Chef Bobby has been able to optimize the end product. The secret, according to him, is to sell a product that can do many things and is consistent across offerings. Using the same playbook, he has created products for big retailers like Waitrose, Spinneys, and Lulu.

"A lot of this stems from flavor analysis," he asserts. "If you are from Kerala and enjoy 15 dishes specific to Kerala cuisine, my job would be to ensure that when you visit a retail store, you are presented with options that cater to

your preferences. To achieve this, I would break down the spices, such as red chili, green pepper, black pepper, and green chili, that are prominent in those dishes."

Turning Setbacks into Comeback

As with any business, there are highs, lows, and the occasional curveball. It's not uncommon to encounter situations where one's trust is betrayed. Chef Bobby once found himself in such a predicament when he discovered that a trusted associate had misappropriated significant funds in a manner that could not be condoned. As they say, one bad experience can make you twice as cautious, and he carried the wisdom of working on his independent ventures rather than relying on others.

Another lesson of crossing all the t's and dotting all the i's came when he went on to convert food counters into food halls



We are successful at Cartalyst because we concentrate on food trends

in the process line of a retail company. By effectively identifying opportunities and capitalizing on them, he helped the company generate profits, not to mention the other five outlets that pushed him to expand the business with a team of 128 employees.

But then, the pandemic changed everything. Kitchens were closed, finances were destabilized, and the

future seemed uncertain. Chef Bobby found himself at a crossroads but refused to give up. Instead, he decided to restart. He downsized his staff to 34 and halted any collaboration with retail. "Not because I no longer believed in it, but because I wanted to give food on my terms. Basically, you understand your customers and what they want to eat. We are successful at Cartalyst because we concentrate on food trends," he adds.

Deciphering customer satisfaction is like trudging through the enigmatic Bermuda Triangle of expectations. Chef Bobby has effortlessly sailed through it by staying on top of the trends. Riding the crest of every food wave has inspired him to attend numerous conferences to discover heritage ingredients such as spices and dates while also exploring the local cuisine and questioning a chef's limitations. "We should create history by changing the process and embracing new ideas rather than being a part of the past," he remarks. Although he wields a sharp tongue when defending his approach to customizing flavor profiles according to the local palate, which depends on history and heritage.

"Food lessons are documented in the second century BC when diet plans were simple. Kings were served Rajasic food, farmers followed Sattvic food routines, and warriors were given Tamasic food. It is also about how Unani, Siddha, and Ayurveda shaped what we eat today."

The influence of heritage flows into Chef Bobby's other venture, Classic Catering. The company is built on the premise that food should be fresh and wholesome, and the principles of Ayurveda—nature, nurture, and nourishment—guide the preparation of every dish.

"I grew up eating seasonal produce and my mother's freshly made food. During the winter, my mother would make Kanji, a fermented drink made from carrots and spices that acted as a probiotic. We had fresh spices and pesticide-free grains. Taking those, I



have established Classic Catering to offer food the way it is, devoid of any additives, chemicals, or enhancers."

Preserving obscure traditions against the rise of processed foods and nutraceuticals is an ongoing focus of his latest heartfelt hustle. "Documenting heritage is essential. There is a reason why we temper lentils with asafoetida and turmeric. It creates a flavor pyramid while also preventing gas and providing essential proteins and nutrients, such as folate. Similarly, the sourness in sambar helped prevent scurvy in the olden times," he emphasizes, adding that the answer lies in food and heritage that we've overlooked.

Classic Catering is more than a mere business; it has filled the void of what Chef Bobby needs to continue working here. Albeit for a few fleeting seconds, it gives him an avenue to engage in his entrepreneurial dreams and execute events with quality service. But what sets his catering company apart from the rest of the pack? To kick things off, he scours the market and delivers what the customer wants. "I went about looking at retail, corporate, gourmet, making sous-vide meats, and packed lunch meals, all where I could add value-added products from the kitchen. Before COVID, we were supplying food to schools, running a 3,400-square-foot kitchen, and preparing 7,000 meals on average for 53 Carrefour outlets," he replies.

And yet, despite the success, he remains humble. "We don't steal the spotlight from our competitors," he muses, "we simply understand the customer and what they want to eat."

The Sustainability Oyster

With salt and pepper hair framing his face, Chef Bobby stepped in at 52. What's irking him is not the pressure to keep up with the younger, but what lies on the end of his fork. Raised around the wheat fields where the buds were three feet tall, the yield was higher, watching rice paddy grow like jasmine buds, the



We should create history by changing the process and embracing new ideas rather than being a part of the past

world filled with GMOs was foreign to him in his childhood.

"There has been a constant push to optimize the food chain and increase production volumes, but it has repercussions. Chefs, too, must bear the responsibility of finding a solution to address the proliferation of GMOs and high-sugar, high-salt foods. As chefs, we often prioritize the art of cooking above understanding the ingredients," he contemplates, drawing attention to unhealthy dietary habits that come at the cost of the consumer's health.

When it comes to sustainability, Chef Bobby advocates for a unified voice in tackling food waste. This prevails in a climate where one-third of the produce grown is discarded with disdain, be it perfectly imperfect. All go to the landfill in vain.

As he eloquently puts it, "We are cultivating oysters in the UAE, yet what measures are being taken to extract

the calcium from their shells that are wasted? How are we tackling waste management in our kitchens? And how can we extend the shelf life of food? These are just a few questions in the air that demand our attention as thought leaders in the culinary world. It is up to us to devise innovative solutions."

Among the many social, philosophical, and cultural paradigms pertaining to gastronomy, 'living food,' which lies at the nexus of biology and nutrition, has piqued Chef Bobby's curiosity. Food is not complicated," he says, his voice soft and reassuring. "It's what we complicate. As I've grown older, I've come to understand so much more about food—how food prolongs life. It is just about balancing the yin and yang of the food, which is the flavor pyramid and nutrition."

Deliberating on food as medicine has led him to two other initiatives: a health company where he researches and develops nourishing foods for the masses and a food solutions company, Byng Kitchens, based in India.

Although he admits there is room for improvement in the current level of control over his extensive operations, he remains confident that his team possesses the skills required to go the distance with his unfettered growth ambitions.

"My team executes their duties, and I bring additional value to the team. It is difficult, as I am restricted to a particular location. But after all these years, I only have gratitude, waking up every day with enthusiasm to learn, and there is so much more to learn," he says.

After two decades in the industry, Chef Bobby has pushed himself beyond his profession to make a difference in society. "Money will come; I am not interested in my net worth or the shoes I am wearing. At the end of the day, I will eat two pieces of bread, so I would rather inspire one more person to follow their passion, and that is the moniker I want to live with," he concludes with conviction. ■

A CUT INFIELD

Meet **Jasmon Silveira** from Crowne Plaza Dubai Jumeirah



What do you call a left-wing football player who loves to bake?

A dough-side dribbler or a frosty flanker?

Back in the early 2000s in Goa, the Portuguese cultural flair and its inseparable piece, football, strongly influenced the life of a talented young left-wing state player. Unfortunately, he had to hang up his cleats prematurely after multiple nasty abrasions during the games. Absent these injuries, this young footballer, Jasmon Silveira, would have been the response to this tongue-in-cheek pun.

So what? We don't have a star striker; we have an accomplished chef scoring culinary goals in the kitchen of Crowne Plaza Jumeirah.

Calangute, in northern Goa, is famous as the queen of beaches. Sprinkled with numerous beach shacks and a popular tourist destination captured in several Bollywood films, this was the place where Jasmon was born with a strong sense of hospitality.

His career thus far has not been all oceanic paradise and sunshine. Life, he says, was hard when he was growing up. His dream to become a football player was dashed, leading him to reconsider his path. Although he never anticipated the breadth of his cooking game, he always knew that his goal of reaching his real destiny was near. That's when hospitality found him.

Culinary ran in his genes. "Both of my parents used to cook live seafood, preparing everything from fish and lobster to various types of seafood and curry at our beach shack. Basically, I

grew up surrounded by food," he says, clearly recalling the shack and the serene beach view.

Every spare moment was spent helping his parents as a tastemaker, judging the flavours, washing dishes, cleaning, and chopping ingredients at the family shack amid summer breaks or in the brief window between school and tutoring sessions.

"I was learning day by day. By the time I was 14, I was literally cooking," he smiles.

To pursue his new vision, he completed a diploma programme at IHM Goa. Throughout his industrial training, he explored different spectrums of the industry, whether it was a five-star hotel or a local hotel kitchen. One thing stayed the same: his love for gaining knowledge from different kitchen worlds, both hot and cold.

Having always wanted to work in the UAE, he finally got his break when he was recruited by the Ghaya Grand Hotel (now Vintage Grand Hotel). "I started as a commis 3 with an appetite to learn more, working in the cold and hot kitchen, mastering the fundamentals such as meat slicing, specific cuts, and preparing sauces like Béchamel, Hollandaise, Espagnole, and demi-glace—all the techniques that I hadn't encountered in India."

Over time, he advanced to the position of Chef de Partie, heading room dining and a la carte with a team of four chefs for over 700 rooms and hotel apartments. "By 2021, I was second in command of the kitchen operations at a seafood restaurant and fusion outlet consisting of five live stations, including a sushi, Indian, Asian, Italian, and Mongolian concept grill station."

Things changed a year later. He accepted the Demi Chef de Partie role at the Sheraton JBR, which he notes "as a turning point in his career where I not only oversaw 150 covers for the



Cooking is a passion. The love for food is only received when the guest is satisfied with the dish overall, and only then will you feel satisfied

all-day dining restaurants but met my mentor Chef Chamika Perera."

"Hotels are busy, leaving limited time and mindset to participate in competitions. Chef Chamika was the one who really pushed me to start competing. I ended up entering various competitions and even won a gold medal at the Junior Chefs Vegetarian Local Produce Competition, held by Marriott Business Council UAE in 2022," he says, adding at the end of the day, it is the mentor's faith and hard work that work wonders.

Chef Jasmon's lure to Crowne Plaza Jumeirah was an opportunity to follow in the footsteps of his mentor, Chef

Chamika. Currently serving as a Senior Chef de partie, he is responsible for leading the main kitchen of the all-day dining area and a gastropub. In addition to training a team of eight junior chefs, he's also taking on the executive side of the role.

"Under Chef Chamika's wing, I feel encouraged to handle everything from duty rosters and payrolls to understanding market lists, checking products, keeping track of ingredient and kitchen supply stock, ordering stocks when we're running low, and even creating menus that suit the latest trends and seasons," he says.

His family of four, including his parents and a sister, has come a long way from their humble beginnings at a simple beach shack to now levelling up to run their own guest house business with a restaurant near Calangute Beach. Now, at 26, he sees himself becoming a sous chef by the end of the year. "With enough culinary knowledge, I want to grow to an executive level one day," he says confidently.

He shares his early lessons in the industry: "Cooking is a passion. The love for food is only received when the guest is satisfied with the dish overall, and only then will you feel satisfied." ■



ECG Corporate Member directory

Aalst Chocolate - A Cargill Company

Daniele Masini, Business Development Manager
G&D- IMEA, Mob: +971 54 799 2130,
daniele_masini@cargill.com,
www.aalstchocolate.com

Abu Dhabi Farmers' Services Centre

Martin Aguirre, Commercial & Operations Director
P.O. Box 62532, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Direct Line: +971 2 813 8400.
Phone: +971 2 813 8888, Fax: +971 2 813 9999
Mobile: +971 56 685 4836

Agthia Consumer Business Division

Dinusha Gamage, Brand Manager - Food category
Consumer Business Division
Agthia Group PJSC, P.O. Box 37725, Abu Dhabi.
dinusha.gamage@agthia.com, www.agthia.com

Al Islami Foods

Rasheed Chirakkal,
Area Sales Manager- Food Service,
Mob: +971 50 5188 391, Off: +971 4 8853 333,
rasheed.chirakkal@alislamifoods.com,
www.alislamifoods.com

Al Kabeer

Chandan Chakravarty,
Research & Development Chef
Mob: +971 56 6616 864, Off: +971 6 5333 999
chandan@al-kabeer.com, www.al-kabeer.com

Al Maya Hospitality

Mohamad Hajj Ali, Sales Manager
Mob: +971 50 1550998, Off: +971 4 3473500
Email: mohamadh@almaya.ae, www.almaya.ae

Alto Shaam, Inc

Gabriel Estrella Talentti, Director of Sales,
Tel: +971 4 321 9712, Mob: +971 50 8531 707
gabriele@alto-shaam.com, www.alto-shaam.com

Americana Foods

Laurent Stevenart, Plant Based Food Director,
Mob: +971 52 1354 732,
lstevenart@americana-food.com,
www.americanafoods.com

Arab Marketing and Finance, Inc. (AMFI)

Simon Bakht
Tel: +961-1-740378 / 741223 / 751262
Email: SBakht@amfime.com

Arabian American Technology (ARAMTEC)

Edgard Chalhouh, General Manager,
Tel: +971 4 380 8444, Mobile: +971 50 597 9516,
edgard@aramtec.com, www.aramtec.com

Arla Foods

Marc Hayes, Application Manager - MENA,
Tel: +971 6 534 6767, Mob: +971 56 417 3310
marc.hayes@arlafoods.com,
www.ArlaPro.com, www.arlafoods.com

Bakemart FZ LLC

Syed Masood, Director of Sales
Mob : +971 55 609 7526, Tel: +971 4 56708
masood@bakemart.ae, www.bakemart.ae

Barakat Group of Company

Kenneth D'Costa, Managing Director
Neil Ranasinghe, Head Culinary Innovation
Tel: +971 4 8802121

Barilla Middle East FZE

Duygu Ozpaksoy, Food Services Sales Manager,
Tel: +971 4 882 0488, Mob: +971 56 933 0909
duygu.ozpaksoy@barilla.com,
www.barillagroup.com

Bayara - Gyma Food Industries

Yassine EL Allam, Key Account Manager,
Tel: +971 4 8857 478, Mob: +971 56 2448 259
yassinea@savola.com, www.bayara.com

Del Monte Foods (U.A.E) FZE

Hany Shamseldeen, Mob +971 50 146 7400,
hali@freshdelmonte.com,
https://me.freshdelmonte.com/

Diamond Meat Processing Co.L.L.C

Kamparath Suresh, Assistant General Manager
Business Development, Mob: +971 50 655 4768
wnedal@siniorafood.com, www.almasadubai.com

Dilmah Tea

Vivette, Mob +971 508181164,
vivettea@dilmahtea.com

dmg events

Hassan
Tel: +971 4 4380355, Mob: +971 56 8360993
aysehassan@dmgeventsme.com,
www.thehotelshow.com

Emirates Snack Foods

Marwan Hussein / Feda Saimua,
Horeca Division Head / General Manager
Tel: +971 4 285 5645, Mob: +971 56 526 7181
marwan.hussein@esf-uae.com, www.esf-uae.com

Essity Hygiene and Health AB

Lara Haddad, Customer Marketing
Manager - MEIA, Mob: +971 5 276 3887
tork.meia@essity.com, www.torkmeia.com

Faisal Al Nusif Trading Co. L.L.C

Thomas Das, Managing Director
Tel: 04 3391149, thomasdas@fantco.net,
Web: www.fantco.net

Farm Fresh

Ferooz Hasan, Business Development Manager
Al Quoz, P.O. Box 118351, Dubai, UAE
Office No : +971 4 3397279 Ext: 253
Fax: +971 4 3397262, Mob: +971 56 1750883

German Icecream Factory

Boris Mueller, Mob: +971 50 108 9030
boris@drmuellers1969.com
www.drmuellers1969.com

Greenhouse Foodstuff Trading

Edgard Abounader, UAE Sales Manager – HORECA,
Tel: +971 4 8170000, Mob: +971 56 442 4608,
Edgard.Abounader@greenhouseuae.com,
www.greenhouseuae.com

Ginox Swiss Kitchen

Tiziana Ricottone, Personal Assistant &
Communications Manager,
Mob: +971 50 5091 689,
tiziana.ricottone@ginoxgroup.com,
www.ginoxgroup.com

Golden Dunes General Trading LLC

Sulemana, Head Of Sales,
Mob: +971 50 125 01 376,
sulemana@golden-dunes.com,
www.golden-dunes.com

Hamid and Kumar Enterprises LLC

Sunil Ahluwalia, General Manager,
Tel: +971 4 3474712, +971 4 3474571
dry@hkfoodgroup.com, www.hkfoodgroup.com

HK Enterprises LLC

Andjelka Pavlovic, Trade Marketing Manager,
Tel: +971 4 2486 000, Mob: +971 50 8347 662
andjelka@hkfoodgroup.com,
www.hkfoodgroup.com

HMNY DMCC

Shigeru Tachiki, Managing Director,
Tel: +971 568 747 60,
shigeru.tachiki@gmail.com

Hospitality Monster

Naseer Kareem, Manager,
Mob: +971 56 871 00 87, +971 50 256 72 00,
hello@thehospitalitymonster.com,
thehospitalitymonster.com

Hospitality by Dubai World Trade Centre

Georg.Hessler, Director - Culinary Operations,
Tel: 04 3086571, Georg.Hessler@dwtc.com,
https://www.dwtchospitality.com/en/

HUG AG

Riyadh Hessian, 6102 Malters / ,
food-service@hug-luzern.ch,
www.hug-luzern.ch, fb/hugfoodservice
Distribution UAE and Oman: Aramtec, PO
Box 6936, Al Quoz Industrial Area No. 1, Near
Khaleej Times Office, Mob +971 507648434,
www.aramtec.com

IFFCO

Mary Rose Lopez,
Associate Customer Service Manager,
Mob:+971 506719882, 065029025 / 6264
mlopez@iffco.com, www.iffco.com

Indoguna Dubai LLC / Indoguna Productions FZCO

Ana Elena Saenz, Juancho Capistrano,
Regional Business Dev Manager,
Group Sales and Marketing,
Mob:+971 58 2469 330, +971 54 3934 123
ana@indoguna.ae, juancho@indoguna-dubai.ae
indogunadubai.com, indogunaproductions.com

JM FOODS LLC

Rajan J.S. / Maikel Cooke / Grace Renomeron
Management, Tel: +971 4 883 8238,
sales@jmfoodgulf.com,
www.jmfoodgulf.com

Johnson Diversey Gulf

Marc Robitzkat
 Mob: 050 459 4031, Off: 04 8819470
 marc.robitzkat@johnsondiversey.com

Kerry Taste & Nutrition MENTA

Simon Martin, Executive Chef
 Tel: +971 52 450 0845
 simon.martin@kerry.com, www.kerry.com

Kibsons International LLC

Kumail Feyzee, Sales Manager
 Tel: +971 4 320 2727, + 971 50 595 3501
 Kumail.feyzee@kibsons.com, www.kibsons.com

Koppert Cress

Franck Pontais, Country Manager
 Tel: 31174242819, 447960700538
 franck@koppertcress.com, www.koppertcress.com

LG FMCG TRADING LLC

Joel C. Peñafiel, Trade Marketing Manager
 Tel: +971 56 993 5175,
 joel.cortez@lalsgroup.com,
 www.lalsgroup.com/brand/81/fmcg

LIFCO INTERNATIONAL

Jihad Harfouche, Horeca Manager,
 Tel: +971 4 561 2164, Mob: +971 56 681 9788
 jihad.harfouche@lifco-international.com,
 www.lifco-international.com

Lowe Refrigeration LLC

Mark Wood, General Manager
 Tel: +971 4 8829440, Mob: +971 52 8693695
 mark.wood@lowerental.com, www.lowerental.com

MADA FMCG (Mada Genmeral Trading LLC)

Ashlea Daniel, Business Development Manager
 Mob: +971 50 568 6150
 ashlea@madafmfg.com, https://madafmfg.com

MEH GCC FZCO

SOHEIL MAJD, MD
 Tel: +971 4 8876626, +971 4 8876636
 s.majd@mehgcc.ae, www.mehgcc.ae

Masterbaker Marketing FZCO

Sanket Shah, Sales Manager
 Tel: +971 4 8239 800, Mob: +971 50 4516 459
 info@uaw.switzgroup.com,
 www.masterbakerme.com

Meat & Livestock Australia

Damon Holmes,
 Business Development Manager,
 Tel: +971 52169 4743, dholmes@mia.com.au,
 https://www.lambandbeef.com/

MEIKO Middle East FZE

Jay Dhanrajani, Sales Manager
 Tel: +971 4 3415 172, jay.kumar@meiko.ae,
 www.meiko.ae

Meyer Group Ltd

Anjana Vaswani Kavasseri,
 General Manager - Middle East,
 Tel: +971 50 5950 772, anjana@meyeruk.com,
 www.meyergroup.co.uk

Middle East Fuji International Trading LLC

Vipin Sidharthan, Sales Manager
 Mob: +971 52 926 1559,
 vipin@mef.ae, www.mef.ae

MKN Maschinenfabrik Kurt Neubauer GmbH & Co.KG

Elias Rached, Regional Director Sales
 Middle East & Africa, Tel: +971 4 358 4000,
 Mob: +971 50 558 7477
 rac@mkn-middle-east.com, www.mkn.com

Nestle Middle East FZE

Elie Lteif / Luma Karadsheh, Culinary Advisor /
 Commercial Development Manager,
 Mob: +971 55 4427 010, 55 3437 632 (Elie)
 elie.lteif@ae.nestle.com, luma.karadsheh@ae,
 www.nestleprofessionalmena.com

Nina Pita

Mario Nehmeh, Sales manager,
 Tel: +971 50 9347 930, +972 52 5491 117,
 mario@ninapita.com, www.ninapita.com

NRTC Group

Iyad Nouneh, Regional Head of Digital Marketing
 & E-Commerce Manager, Tel: +971 4 320 8889,
 marketingmanager@nrtcgrou.com
 www.nrtcgrou.com

Nyum Meals

Tarryn-Leigh Green, Co-founder,
 Mob: +971 52 477 7731,
 tarrynleigh.green@nyummeals.com,
 www.nyummeals.com

One Foods

Ayman Akram Arnous, Food Service Manager
 Mob: +971 50 1592594,
 ayman.arnous@brf-me.com

Peachtree Foods ME

Cindy Storm, GM of Ops,
 (TEL) +971 58 587 6877, +971 4 517 7275
 meadmin@popcakesa.co.za, www.popcakesa.co.za

Pear Bureau Northwest

Nina Halal, Director
 Mob: (Lebanon) +961 3664088,
 (UAE) +971 58284 0008, halal@cyberia.net.lb

Potatoes USA

Victoria Hassani, Managing Director,
 Mob: +971 50 1013 541
 potatoesusa@gmadubai.com,
 www.usapotatoes.com

RAK Porcelain

Sadik Variyathodi, General Manager,
 Mob: +971 50 4868 141, +971 4 3335 474
 sadik@rakrestofair.ae, www.restofair.ae

Restofair RAK LLC

Sadik Variyathodi, General Manager
 Mob: +971 50 4868 141, Tel: +971 4 3335 474
 sadik@rakrestofair.ae, www.restofair.ae

Robot Coupe

chandranth pathi, Area Manager-UAE
 Tel: +971 54 4894896,
 pathi@robot-coupe.com, www.robot-coupe.com

Royal Foodstuff LLC

Harry Bhalla, General Manager
 Tel: +971 55 554 6661, +971 4 420 3686
 mail@royalfoodstuff.com, www.royalfoodstuff.com

Safco International Genera Trading

Pankaj Chanta / Naresh Khushalani, Corporate
 Head - Pastry & Bakery / Marketing Manager,
 Mob: +971 55 899 0183, +971 870 2000,
 chef.pankaj@safcointl.com/naresh@safcointl,
 www.safcointl.com

Seara International Food Company

Moustafa Belal, Key Accounts Manager,
 Mob: +971 52 865 4187,
 Moustafa.ali@seara.com.br,
 https://www.searafoodsme.com/

SHARIF HASSAN ALI TRADING LLC. (SHALI)

Lanie S. Paguyo, Manager,
 Mob: +971 52 136 0210, +971 54 791 7293
 lanie@shalidubai.com, www.shalidubai.com

Skinny Genie

Lucy Mwangi, Sales Executive
 Mob: +971 56 411 8287, + 971 56 411 8287
 lucy@skinny-genie.com, www.skinny-genie.com

Sounbula Mills

Karim Al Azhari, Ceo & Owner Sounbula Mills
 karim@sounbulamills.com

Sweet Connection the Gluten-Free Kitchen

Ahmed Alhamadani (Founder & Managing
 Director), **Chef Janitha** (Head Chef),
 Mob: +971 50 4599 401, +971 50 3057 760
 info@chillydate.com, www.chillydatefoods.com

Switch Foods

Robert Hazzam, Sales Manager
 Tel: +971 2 6759 555, Mob: +971 52 8979 062,
 rhazzam@switchfoods.com, switchfoods.com

Taaza Quality Food Stuff Trading LLC

Jeyaram S, CEO
 Tel: 04 4216660 Mob: 0504514274
 jeyar@taaza.ae, www.taaza.ae

UNOX Middle East DMCC

Matthew Roberts, Managing Director
 Tel: +971 4 5542146, Mob: +971 52 304332,
 info.uae@unox.com, www.unox.com

Upfield Middle East Limited FZCO

Melanny Lopez,
 Marketing Lead MENA - Foodservice,
 Tel: +971 4 2674 430, +971 56 6812 914
 melanny.lopez@upfield.com
 https://www.upfieldprofessional.com/en-ae

USA Cheese Guild

Angelique Hollister, Senior Vice President,
 Global Cheese Marketing,
 Tel: 703 528 3049
 ahollister@usdec.org,
 https://www.uscheeseguild.org/

US Meat Export Federation

Bassam Bousaleh,
 Tel: +971 50 3589197, +971 50 358 9197
 Bassamb@ams-me.com

USA Poultry and Egg Export Council Inc (USAPEEC)

Jena Gress, Global Marketing Manager
 Tel: 14048823920, www.usapeec.org

US Poultry

Andrew El Halal, Marketing Manager
 Mob: (Lebanon) +961 3200332,
 (UAE) +971 52 135 1405
 andrew@amfi-me.com

VITO AG

Ms Lorena Schmidt, Export Sales Manager
 Mob: 497461962890
 info@vito.ag, www.VITO.ag

Waterfront Market LLC

Mohammad Al Madani, Center Manager,
 Tel: +971 4 707 1580, Mob: +971 52 607 9595
 Mohammad.Almadani@Waterfrontmarket.ae,
 waterfrontmarket.ae

Welbilt

Rakesh Tiwari,
 Mob: +971 56 406 1628,
 rakesh.tiwari@welbilt.com



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



Farah Aslam, Director, Hospitality Monster, receiving the Guild Membership Certificate from Chef Harald Oberender, VP Corporate and Andy Cuthbert, President of the Emirates Culinary Guild

Hospitality Monster is where creativity meets functionality in Hotel Operating Supplies & Equipment. As the industry's best kept secret, we cater to every department with a focus on Front of House products for guests and innovative solutions for Back of House

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“
**Chef
Simon
says...**

Culinary Trends Express

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

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

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

Sometimes trends can be seen as an innovation in a store cupboard staple, such as with this mega-trend on new variations of **TOMATO KETCHUP**. This comfort food is sour, salty, umami, and bitter with a hint of sweetness. It is one of the few foods to hit each of the five basic food tastes, which is the secret of why we all love it. Now this humble condiment is being hyped up. Starting with its first recorded recipe in 1812 from the horticulturalist 'James Mease' or viral TikTok influencers dunking their Twinkies in ketchup to ketchup-flavored macarons. Just visit your local supermarket to see this trend in action, from jalapeno, pickle, maple syrup, sriracha, apple, and coconut, to name a few... This trend is not just about flavored sauces, we are seeing ketchup ice cream, ketchup KitKat's, ketchup-seasoned chicken nuggets, even popcorn, Truffle ketchup jalebi to cherry ketchup jelly. So the next time you open the fridge to grab a bottle or sachet of this desirable red delight, how would you use it? **Would you dare try it on your favorite cereal? # live the trend # live the dream.**

Soft liquid center chocolate bars are making headlines everywhere from Japan to New York, these are all based on the global phenomenon known as the **FIX CHOCOLATE DUBAI**. Yes, that's right, although only available in Dubai. It has been driven by a viral trend via TikTok on Instagram, so much so that competitive versions are popping up everywhere with flavors like pistachio, knafeh, and baklava. But this is now in coffees, smoothies, doughnuts, cheesecakes, and in ice cream. Have you tried a Knafeh brownie? Would your customers like chickpea and squash baklava? What will be next? I like the idea of a Laddu chocolate bar or a Ube Halaya chocolate bar. The choices are endless, and the food we all know and love is presented in a way that's caught the eyes of the global communities.

If I were to say "Zong Zi" or 'Gua Boa' what would spring to mind? Maybe a sweeter version of Chinese? Yes **TAIWANESE** food is getting traction here in our region. From the famous XXL fried chicken to soup dumplings (Xiaolongbao), it's all starting to make an impact across the Gulf. Many of these



dishes we see on our menus have been elevated to fame by the famous chef 'David Chang' at Momofuku and the international Taiwanese chain 'Din Tai Fung' as their global empire grows. The food really embellishes the colonial past with nods to Chinese and Japanese cuisine combined with unique cooking techniques and profiles of predominantly fresh ingredients.

As summer finishes and hopefully the weather starts to cool down (fingers crossed), I have been looking ahead to the coming season and bringing spice to my meals with crunchy chili oil. I have even tried this on vanilla ice cream, and with the addition of roasted crushed peanuts, I think I've found a winner... Adding crushed black pepper to my 7up has changed my thoughts on innovation. Of late, what have you tried that is a game changer for you? Maybe start small, like a spoonful of honey in your Shawarmer !!!

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





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



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