

Incredible India

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE



Incredible

for chefs...by chefs

CHEF

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COOKING UNDER FIRE

The Art of Releasing
Pressure in the Kitchen



INTERVIEW

CHEF RICK STEPHEN

Certified Master Chef, and Vice
President and Culinary Competition
Committee Chairman at Worldchefs



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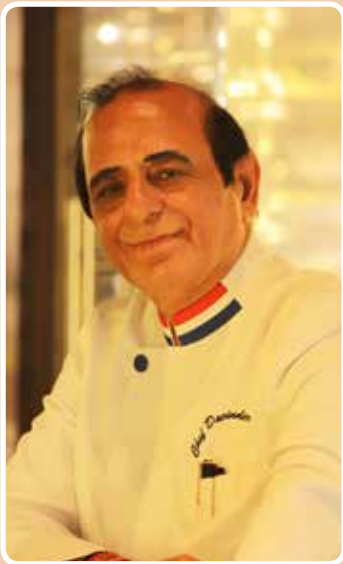
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DAVINDER KUMAR

President - ICF &
Vice President - Food
Production,
Le Meridien New Delhi

It gives me immense pleasure to present this special edition of Incredible Chef—an issue that celebrates the passion, perseverance, and extraordinary talent that continue to elevate India’s culinary identity on the global stage. Each page reflects the dedication of chefs, mentors, partners, and industry leaders who tirelessly contribute to shaping a vibrant and progressive gastronomic landscape.

Over the years, the Indian Culinary Forum has evolved into a dynamic and influential force within the hospitality fraternity. This 18th edition of Culinary Art India has witnessed record participation, reaffirming the growing enthusiasm and commitment of chefs across the country. Through our sustained efforts—competitions, workshops, masterclasses, and knowledgesharing platforms—we remain steadfast in our mission to nurture talent, strengthen professional capabilities, and uphold the highest standards of Indian cuisine. Our vision has always been clear: to empower chefs at every stage of their journey and to build a community rooted in skill, integrity, and innovation.

This year holds special significance as we host the 18th edition of Culinary Art India 2026, now officially endorsed by Worldchefs (WACS). This global recognition reinforces our dedication to international benchmarks of excellence, transparency, and professional ethics. CAI has grown into one of the most respected and eagerly awaited competitions in India, attracting exceptional chefs, hospitality professionals, and young aspirants from across the country. Running parallel to CAI, the Culinary Theater came alive as more than 25 senior chefs took the stage to demonstrate their craft in an engaging, interactive showcase.

It is also my profound honour to welcome our esteemed international Jury Members, who have travelled from their distinguished countries to join us. Their expertise, fairness, and global perspective enrich the competition and inspire every participant. Their guidance leaves a lasting imprint on the next generation of Indian chefs, who look to such leaders for direction and motivation.

This year, we also conducted the WACS Culinary Seminar, a specialised judging programme designed to enhance understanding of international culinary standards. Over 30 chefs participated, gaining valuable insights into the parameters required to evaluate a plate with precision, and many joined the CAI judging process as rookie judges—an important step in upgrading skills at every level.

I express my sincere gratitude to ITPO, our organising partner Hospitality First, our supporting partners, and our dedicated team of the organising committee who have worked relentlessly to make this year’s competition a resounding success.

This edition celebrates our achievements and our shared vision for a future where Indian chefs stand tall as innovators, explorers, and ambassadors of our rich culinary heritage. Together, we continue to build a legacy of excellence. ■

Chef Davinder Kumar

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VIVEK SAGGAR

Editorial Director
Incredible Chef
General Secretary, ICF
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In every professional kitchen, there comes a moment when the heat rises, the clock races, and the pressure feels almost overwhelming. Yet it is in these very moments that a chef discovers their true strength. This edition of Incredible Chef, themed “Cooking Under Fire: The Art of Releasing Pressure in the Kitchen,” is dedicated to that journey—how chefs confront intensity, transform it, and emerge stronger, steadier, and more self-aware.

At the Indian Culinary Forum, we believe that developing a chef goes far beyond sharpening knives and mastering recipes. It is about shaping individuals who can lead with clarity, stay composed under stress, and cultivate environments where creativity thrives even in the busiest service. Over the past year, ICF has continued to expand its role as a platform for growth—offering opportunities that strengthen technical expertise while also addressing the emotional and mental demands of the profession.

Our initiatives—from hands-on workshops and skill-building masterclasses to competitions and global standard seminars—are designed to prepare chefs for the realities of modern kitchens. The overwhelming participation in our events, including the 18th edition of Culinary Art India 2026, reflects a fraternity eager to learn, evolve, and embrace new challenges. The endorsement of CAI by Worldchefs (WACS) has further elevated the standards we uphold, ensuring that Indian chefs are aligned with international expectations of excellence and professionalism. Adding to this momentum, the WACS Culinary Seminar brought a new depth to our developmental efforts by training chefs in the finer points of judging and evaluation. It equipped participants not only with technical insight but with the ability to think critically, assess with fairness, and uphold the integrity of the craft.

This edition of Incredible Chef brings together stories, reflections, and expert insights on managing pressure, building resilience, and finding balance in the demanding world of culinary arts. It is a reminder that while fire tests us, it also refines us.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our partners, supporters, and the dedicated ICF team whose efforts continue to strengthen our fraternity.

Towards creating Happy Kitchens! ■

Chef Vivek Saggar

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SUMIT JHA

Managing Editor
Incredible Chef

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Rising Through the Heat!

In the world of professional kitchens, pressure has always been part of the craft—but in 2026, it has become the very lens through which the culinary fraternity is redefining itself. This special edition of Incredible Chef explores that transformation with depth, honesty, and a renewed sense of purpose. As one article notes, “In every professional kitchen, there comes a moment when the heat rises, the clock races, and the pressure feels almost overwhelming.” Yet it is precisely in these moments that chefs discover resilience, leadership, and clarity.

This year's theme - Cooking Under Fire - captures the evolving reality of Indian kitchens. Pressure is no longer just about speed or volume; it is about emotional intelligence, team culture, sustainability, and the ability to adapt. From Chef Prashant Kulkarni's insights on leadership under stress to Chef Pawan Kaushik's exploration of how Gen Z is reshaping kitchen expectations, the issue highlights a profession in transition. Gen Z's belief that “kitchens that don't burn people out” are essential for long-term careers, marks a generational shift the industry can no longer ignore.

This edition also celebrates a landmark moment in Indian gastronomy - the 18th Culinary Art India 2026, officially endorsed by Worldchefs (WACS). This recognition elevated CAI into a globally aligned competition, with over 600 chefs participating and international jury members raising the bar for excellence. As the magazine reports, “This edition signalled a shift in identity for Indian gastronomy... India didn't just compete—we led.”

Adding to the richness of this issue is an exclusive interview with Chef Rick Stephen, Certified Master Chef and Chair of the CAI 2026 jury. His reflections on discipline, global standards, and the evolving expectations of competitive cooking offer invaluable guidance to chefs navigating high-pressure environments.

Beyond competition, the issue dives into the changing role of the executive chef, the economics of “doing more with less,” the gaps in culinary education, and the rising urgency of sustainability. Each story reinforces a simple truth: the kitchens of tomorrow will be defined not by how much pressure chefs endure, but by how intelligently they release it.

This edition stands as a tribute to the courage, creativity, and evolving mindset of India's culinary community - one that continues to rise, even under fire. ■

Sumit Jha

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Managing Director - Chefs Kitchen Institute of Culinary Arts & Hotel Management
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for chefs... by chefs **CHEF**

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE INDIAN CULINARY FORUM

The Advisory Committee of the Indian Culinary Forum (ICF) brings together distinguished leaders from across the hospitality, food service, procurement, education and allied industries. The Advisory Committee plays a strategic role in strengthening the Forum's engagement with the broader hospitality ecosystem.

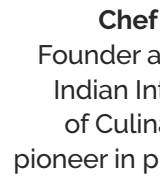
Its members include heads of industry associations, skill councils, culinary education institutions and supply-chain organisations. Their collective expertise helps guide the Forum's initiatives in areas such as culinary education, industry standards, procurement practices, skill development and global partnerships.



Dr. Nitin Shankar Nagrale – General Secretary of the Hospitality Purchasing Managers Forum (HPMF) and a leading authority on hospitality procurement and supply chain management.



Mr. Rajat Pandhi – Founder and President of the Association of Resource Companies for the Hospitality Industry of India (ARCHII), connecting hospitality businesses with specialised service providers.



Chef Virender S. Datta – Founder and Chairman of the Indian International Institute of Culinary Arts (IICA) and a pioneer in professional culinary education in India.



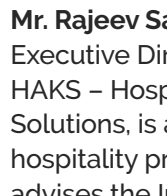
Mr. Rajan Bahadur – CEO of the Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) driving national skill development and training standards for the hospitality sector.



Mr. Amit Lohani – Founder Director of the Forum of Indian Food Importers (FIFI) and a key advocate for global food trade and premium ingredient sourcing in India.



Mr. Nitin Kumar – Chief Executive at Rans Technocrats (India) Pvt. Ltd., representing the Hotel & Restaurant Equipment Manufacturers Association of India (HOTREMAI), representing the country's commercial kitchen equipment industry.



Mr. Rajeev Sachdeva – Executive Director (ED) at HAKS – Hospitality & Kitchen Solutions, is an experienced hospitality professional who advises the Indian Culinary Forum on chef development, industry standards, and communitybuilding initiatives.



Ms. Bharti Singh Kalappa – Founder Member and National Vice-President of the Professional Housekeepers Association (PHA) promoting professional standards in housekeeping and hospitality services.



Mr. Jayant Kumar Chauhan – India Country Manager for the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH), advancing international hospitality education and certification standards.



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A LANDMARK EDITION IN INDIAN GASTRONOMY

The 18th Culinary Art India 2026 - a milestone that reshaped how India was seen on the world's gastronomic map.

The 18th edition of Culinary Art India unfolded not as another competition on the calendar, but as a defining moment in India's culinary evolution. It became a movement—a collective rise in craftsmanship, discipline, global alignment, and professional pride. For the Indian Culinary Forum (ICF), this year marked a milestone that reshaped how India was seen on the world's gastronomic map.

The 2026 edition drew over 600 chefs, apprentices, and culinary students, not just from across the country, but also from international destinations—making it one of the largest professional culinary competitions India had ever hosted.

“This edition signalled a shift in identity for Indian gastronomy. With global endorsement and unprecedented participation, CAI 2026 became the platform where India didn't just compete—we led, we inspired, and we redefined what our culinary future can be,” affirmed **Chef Vivek Saggar**, General Secretary of the Indian Culinary Forum and Brand Ambassador for the Confederation of Tourism & Hospitality (CTH), United Kingdom.

A Legacy That Built This Moment

For decades, the Indian Culinary Forum had been the backbone of professional culinary development in the country, evolving from a knowledgesharing platform into one of Asia's most respected culinary institutions. Through its annual showcase at



CHEF DAVINDER KUMAR

AAHAR, Pragati Maidan, the ICF built a structured, transparent, and globally aligned competitive ecosystem. Across 17 editions, it welcomed thousands of chef participants, drew representation from leading hotels nationwide, hosted international jury members from multiple continents, witnessed a surge in student engagement, and forged strong industry partnerships and sponsorships. The 18th edition carried this legacy forward—and elevated it with renewed ambition and scale.

Worldchefs Endorsement: A Transformational Leap

From the moment the 18th edition opened, the atmosphere shifted—sharper, prouder, more certain of its place in the world. Chefs walked into the arena not just with tools, but with the awareness that this year was different. India wasn't merely hosting a competition; it was stepping onto the global culinary stage with confidence that took decades in the making.

For years, Indian chefs had honed their craft with discipline that matched the world's best. In 2026, a long-awaited door finally opened: Worldchefs officially endorsed Culinary Art India. Suddenly, every station and every plated dish carried the weight of global scrutiny—and global respect. Judging



CHEF VIVEK SAGGAR

criteria aligned with international benchmarks used in Europe, Asia, and world championships. Medals earned here would shine just as brightly in any kitchen across the world.

“Culinary Art India has always been a platform to elevate professional standards in our kitchens. With WACS endorsement this year, CAI 2026 placed Indian chefs firmly on the global culinary sport map. CAI 2026 successfully undertook the responsibility to nurture disciplined, skilled and confident professionals who can represent India with credibility and excellence worldwide,” said **Chef Davinder Kumar**, President, Indian Culinary Forum and Vice President - Food Production, Le Meridien New Delhi.



CHEF BHARAT ALAGH

A New Chapter Began

“I take immense pride in presenting this historic edition,” said Chef Vivek Saggar. His pride was wellplaced. For the first time, Culinary Art India was officially endorsed by Worldchefs (WACS)—the world's most respected culinary authority. This endorsement was not ceremonial; it was a stamp of global credibility, signalling that India now competed at the highest international standards of hygiene, judging integrity, and professional excellence.

For professionals, this change was monumental. A gold medal at Culinary Art India was no longer just a national achievement—it became a global credential. For aspiring chefs, the competition was no longer a local stage; it became preparation for the world.



For the first time, Culinary Art India was officially endorsed by Worldchefs (WACS)—the world's most respected culinary authority. This endorsement was not ceremonial; it was a stamp of global credibility, signalling that India now competed at the highest international standards of hygiene, judging integrity, and professional excellence.

Discipline remained the backbone of the event, upheld through uniform standards, strict reporting times, zero tolerance for hygiene lapses, respect for jury decisions, and transparent medal thresholds—ensuring fairness and integrity at every step.

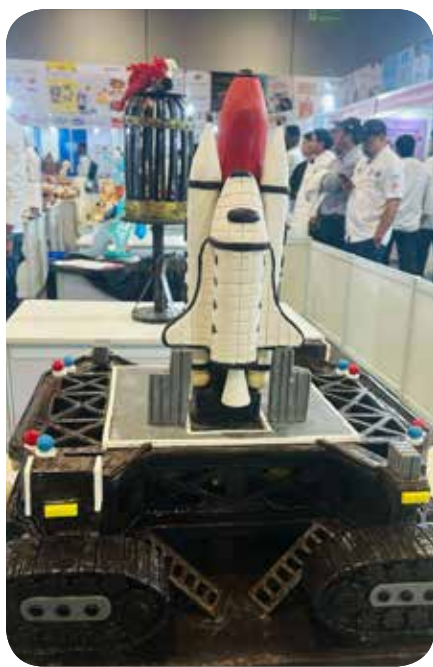
“CAI 2026 is not just a competition; it is a learning arena. These competitions were judged by a distinguished panel of World Association of Chefs’ Societies (WACS)-certified jury members from India and abroad, with Chef Rick Stephen, serving as Chairperson of this year’s jury. Participants were evaluated under a structured 100-point marking system aligned with global standards, assessing mise-en-place, professional technique, hygiene and food safety practices including HACCP compliance, innovation, creativity, presentation, texture, taste and overall execution, ensuring transparency, fairness and adherence to internationally recognised culinary competition protocols,” emphasised Chef Vivek Saggur.

For CAI to remain relevant and influential, it had to continue evolving—never static, always forwardmoving.

“Culinary Art India consistently encouraged chefs to move beyond routine kitchen operations and embrace structured competition. With global standards formally aligned through WACS endorsement, CAI 2026 strengthened India’s position in the international culinary arena,” said **Chef Bharat Alagh**, Vice President of the Indian Culinary Forum, articulated this momentum.

The Jury

The transformation became even more real when the international jury walked in—chefs who had judged competitions across continents, carrying decades of



global experience. Their presence elevated the atmosphere instantly. Young chefs straightened their jackets; senior chefs exchanged nods of pride.

This year’s jury was chaired by Chef Rick Stephen, a third-generation chef from Tasmania and the first Australian to be awarded the title of Certified Master Chef. Other international jury members included Chef Andreas Müller, Chef Jatuporn Juengmeesuk, Chef Alan Palmer, Chef Chern Chee Hoong, and Chef Lim Kim Wah. They were joined by Chef Altamash Patel, Chef Boopesh Pichaimani, Chef Kasi Viswanathan, and Chef Dev Kasalkar Jury members from India.

The competition was overseen by Chef Sireesh Saxena and Chef Arvind Rai as Organising Secretaries representing ICF.

“We are truly grateful that you have travelled from your distinguished country to be with us for this prestigious culinary celebration. Your presence as a Jury Member brings immense value, global perspective, and professional credibility to the competition,” said Chef Davinder Kumar.

It was more than a welcome—it

was an acknowledgment that India had earned its place at the global table.

Global Participation: India Became a Culinary Destination

India’s rising global stature was reflected in the unprecedented interest from international culinary communities. For the first time, nominations and participation came from Nepal, Thailand, the United States, and several partner countries. This was more than geographic expansion—it was validation. When chefs from other continents chose India as a competitive arena, it signalled a shift - India was no longer emerging; it was established, respected, and influential.

Guided by Atithi Devo Bhava, the competition embodied not only culinary excellence but also dignity, warmth, and cultural pride. It reinforced the belief that true hospitality lay in creating an environment where every guest felt respected and honoured.

India’s culinary tourism continued rising on the strength of regional flavours gaining global attention, modern Indian gastronomy, and Indian chefs leading celebrated kitchens worldwide. Culinary Art India accelerated this momentum by nurturing creativity, honouring authenticity, and strengthening India’s evolving culinary identity.

The 18th edition also saw a significant rise in participation from women chefs and students—an encouraging sign of growing inclusivity in professional kitchens.

For students, the competition became an early gateway into professional standards, building confidence, resilience, and global awareness. Strict hygiene protocols instilled lifelong habits, while

mentorship from senior chefs and jury members shaped their professional direction.

Culinary Art India also delivered economic and cultural value by deepening engagement across hotels, restaurants, vendors, equipment partners, and ingredient brands. It strengthened culinary institutes by connecting them to global standards and contributed to India’s tourism and gastronomic identity.

Looking Ahead: The Future Vision

Those who had witnessed the growth of India’s culinary fraternity knew how far the industry had come. Indian chefs were now more technically skilled, globally aware, and competitively driven than ever before. The Worldchefs endorsement was not the end of a journey - it became the beginning of a new global chapter.

The long-term vision for Culinary Art India included:

- Regional qualifiers across India
- Expanded international participation
- Junior chef exchange programs
- Integration with global culinary Olympiads
- Cross-country chef collaborations

A New Story for Indian Gastronomy

As the competition unfolded, it became clear that this edition would be remembered not for numbers or complexity alone, but for the shift in identity it represented. India was no longer aspiring to meet global standards—it was aligned with them. The world wasn’t just watching; it was participating, evaluating, and recognising India’s culinary excellence.

The 18th Culinary Art India 2026 stood as a powerful symbol of excellence and a testament to the

WHAT THE COMPETITION OFFERED

The 2026 edition presented a wider, more dynamic competitive landscape, featuring over 18 categories, including:

- Artistic pastry and bakery showpieces
- Threetier wedding cakes
- Fruit and vegetable carving
- Plated appetizers
- Petit fours
- International three-course menus
- Plated desserts
- Authentic Indian regional cuisine
- Contemporary sushi platters
- Millet-based dishes
- Chocolate artistry
- Apprentices’ categories
- Mocktails and sandwich making
- High-intensity live cooking competitions

The competition offered:

- A platform to measure skills against top chefs from leading hotels
- International exposure through Worldchefs alignment
- Livecooking formats that demanded precision, hygiene, and discipline
- Networking opportunities with global jury members and industry leaders
- Recognition that often translated into promotions, overseas placements, and industry visibility



legacy the Indian Culinary Forum had built over decades. It served as a vital bridge between education and industry, creating a space where emerging talent met professional mastery. As a global platform, it showcased Indian chefs to the world and celebrated the nation’s growing culinary influence.

“This edition was more than a milestone—it was a message. India was ready, India was confident, and India stepped forward with a culinary identity the world could no longer overlook,” said Chef Bharat Alagh capturing the sentiment with conviction.

More than an event, the 18th Culinary Art India became India’s declaration that its culinary future was global, ambitious, and unstoppable. ■



A Global Torchbearer of Excellence, Discipline, and Mentorship

Chef Rick Stephen stands as one of the most influential figures in contemporary culinary culture—a global torchbearer of excellence, discipline, and mentorship whose impact spans competitions, education, and professional leadership. He brings a legacy built over five decades, shaped by heritage, relentless pursuit of mastery, and an unwavering belief in the dignity of the chef's craft.

A third-generation Tasmanian chef, Rick's journey began in 1972 under the legendary Chef Claudio Magris, the Italian master brought to Australia for the 1956 Olympics. Under Magris, he absorbed the precision, finesse, and uncompromising discipline that would define his philosophy. His rise was meteoric: he became the first Australian to earn the Certified Master Chef title and went on to build one of the most decorated competitive careers in the world.

With 82 international gold medals, victories at the Culinary Olympics in Stuttgart, the Luxembourg World Cup, Food Asia Singapore, and major competitions across Sydney, Melbourne, Sapporo, and Detroit, Rick's competitive record is unmatched. His leadership extended to the global stage as Team Captain of the Australian National Team (1990–1995) and later as Team Manager and Coach (2002–2008), roles through which he elevated national culinary standards and inspired generations of chefs.

Rick's influence, however, extends far beyond competition arenas. As Director of Kitchens at SATS Ltd. in Singapore, he oversaw one of the world's largest inflight catering operations—400,000 meals a day across 14 kitchens, including those serving Singapore Airlines. His tenure as Continental Director for Worldchefs in Asia further expanded his footprint, mentoring chefs across 21 countries through masterclasses, training programs, and motivational sessions. His contribution to chef education is immortalised in China, where the Ningbo Culinary School houses the Rick Stephen Centre of Excellence.

A mentor at heart, Rick has coached national teams from Singapore, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, and China, guiding them to international acclaim. His work with WorldSkills competitors—several of whom placed in the global top three—reflects his ability to shape not just skills, but character. His books, *The Art of Judging*

and *Kitchen 241*, along with his contribution to the award-winning *Food Around the World*, further cement his role as a thought leader.

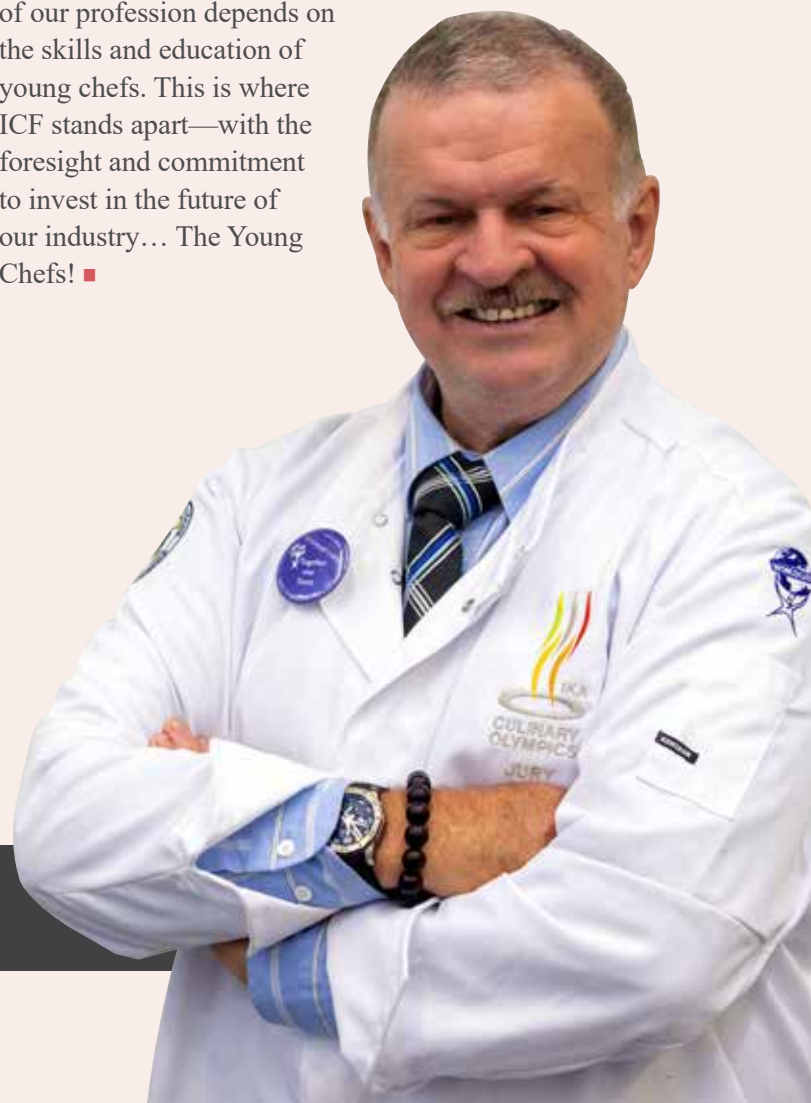
At the core of Rick Stephen's philosophy lies a simple, powerful creed: know the basics, cook with passion, respect boundaries—but push them. He champions the dignity of the "white coat," reminding every chef that excellence is both a responsibility and a privilege.

Culinary Art India

In a nutshell, Culinary Art India is a great opportunity for young chefs to hone and develop their skills. It's a free masterclass in R&D, as they train, work, and refine their entries for a panel of world-recognised judges. This event opens industry doors and showcases the emerging culinary talent of India.

Indian Culinary Forum

ICF is the oldest chefs' association in India, yet one that champions the newest ideas and strongest support for chefs. ICF has the vision to recognise that the future of our profession depends on the skills and education of young chefs. This is where ICF stands apart—with the foresight and commitment to invest in the future of our industry... The Young Chefs! ■



CHEF RICK STEPHEN

Culinary Competition Committee Chairman, WORLDCHEFS
Chief Jury - Culinary Art India 2026



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Chef Andreas Müller is an internationally respected culinary educator whose career has been defined by an unwavering commitment to structured training, professional standards, and the long-term development of chefs. With decades of experience across Europe and Asia, he has built a unique professional identity at the intersection of culinary practice, vocational education, and global certification systems. Rather than focusing solely on restaurant kitchens, Müller has dedicated his life to shaping how chefs are trained, assessed, and prepared for sustainable careers in a rapidly evolving industry.

He currently serves as Program Director (Western Cuisine Operations and Training) at the International Culinary Institute (ICI) of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) in Hong Kong. In this role, he oversees the full

spectrum of culinary studies for ICI's chef students, guiding curriculum development, instructional quality, and the integration of classical European technique with modern kitchen systems. His leadership ensures that young chefs graduate with strong technical foundations, disciplined work habits, and internationally aligned competencies.

A major part of

Müller's work is tied to the German Trade Test System. On behalf of IHK Koblenz and HwK Koblenz, he organises, conducts, invigilates, and certifies examinations for Certified Cook, Certified Pastry Cook, Certified Trainer Chef, and Certified Master Chef levels in Hong Kong. These rigorous assessments provide chefs with portable, competence-based credentials that are recognised across borders and grounded in real-world skill rather than reputation alone.

His influence extends into global skills development through his long-standing involvement with WorldSkills. Since 2007, he has supported and invigilated training for Trade-WorldSkills Hong Kong, and in 2017 he served as Chief Expert for WorldSkills International. His work in these arenas has helped shape competitive training systems that emphasise precision, discipline, and mastery of fundamentals.

Müller is also widely known as an international culinary competition judge. His judging spans student contests and professional-level competitions, where he is recognised for his emphasis on clarity of technique, organisation, consistency, and respect for ingredients. He is regarded as a judge who values fundamentals over spectacle, offering feedback that is precise, fair, and rooted in classical discipline.

At the heart of his philosophy is the belief that culinary success is sustainable only when learning is continuous. He advocates for lifelong education, encouraging chefs to view training not as a phase but as an ongoing professional responsibility. His mentorship extends to young chefs and instructors alike, helping them navigate both technical challenges and the realities of building long-term careers.

Over the years, Chef Andreas Müller has become a quiet yet influential force in the global culinary landscape. His impact is reflected not in personal branding, but in the systems he has strengthened, the educators he has trained, and the thousands of students who have passed through programs shaped by his vision. Through education, assessment, and mentorship, he has played a pivotal role in raising professional standards across borders and advancing the future of culinary training worldwide. ■

Chef Jatuporn Juengmeesuk, widely known as Pu Jatuporn, stands as one of Thailand's most respected culinary mentors, celebrated for his work in competitive training, chef development, and the preservation of Thai culinary identity on the global stage. As Advisory Chef for Fonterra Brands Thailand and Coach of the Bocuse d'Or Team Thailand, he has become a central figure in preparing chefs for the intensity, precision, and discipline demanded by world-class competitions.

His career blends professional kitchen experience with a deep commitment to teaching and mentorship. Over the years, he has been associated with leading culinary training institutions in Thailand, where he has instructed students, designed structured training modules, and guided young chefs toward professional readiness. His approach reflects a strong command of classical technique paired with an intuitive understanding of regional Thai flavours, traditions, and culinary philosophy.

One of the defining aspects of Chef Jatuporn's career is his leadership in coaching Thailand's national teams for major international competitions, including those within the Bocuse d'Or ecosystem. These contests require exceptional technical clarity, time management, and conceptual refinement, and he has played a crucial role in helping chefs meet these expectations under pressure. His coaching style is rooted in discipline and repetition, insisting on mastery of fundamentals before encouraging creative expression. At the same time, he ensures that competitors remain anchored in Thai culinary values—balancing acidity, heat, texture, and aroma in ways that honour the cuisine's heritage rather than adapting it superficially for competition.

Beyond the competitive arena, Chef Jatuporn is deeply invested in the broader development of young chefs. He promotes structured practice, professional conduct, and mental resilience, believing that long-term success in the culinary profession depends as much on character and discipline as on technical skill. His influence extends to shaping attitudes toward teamwork, preparation, cleanliness, and the mindset required to thrive in demanding kitchen environments.

Chef Pu Jatuporn's impact lies in his ability to translate Thailand's culinary philosophy into competitive formats without diluting its identity. Through education, coaching, and mentorship, he has helped cultivate a generation of chefs who view competition not merely as performance, but as a disciplined expression of skill, culture, and national pride. His work continues to strengthen Thailand's presence on the global culinary stage, making him one of the country's most influential voices in modern chef development. ■

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CHEF ANDREAS MÜLLER
Program Director, Western Cuisine Operations & Training
- International Culinary Institute (ICI), VTC Hong Kong



CHEF JATUPORN JUENGMEESUK
Advisory Chef - Fonterra Brands Thailand



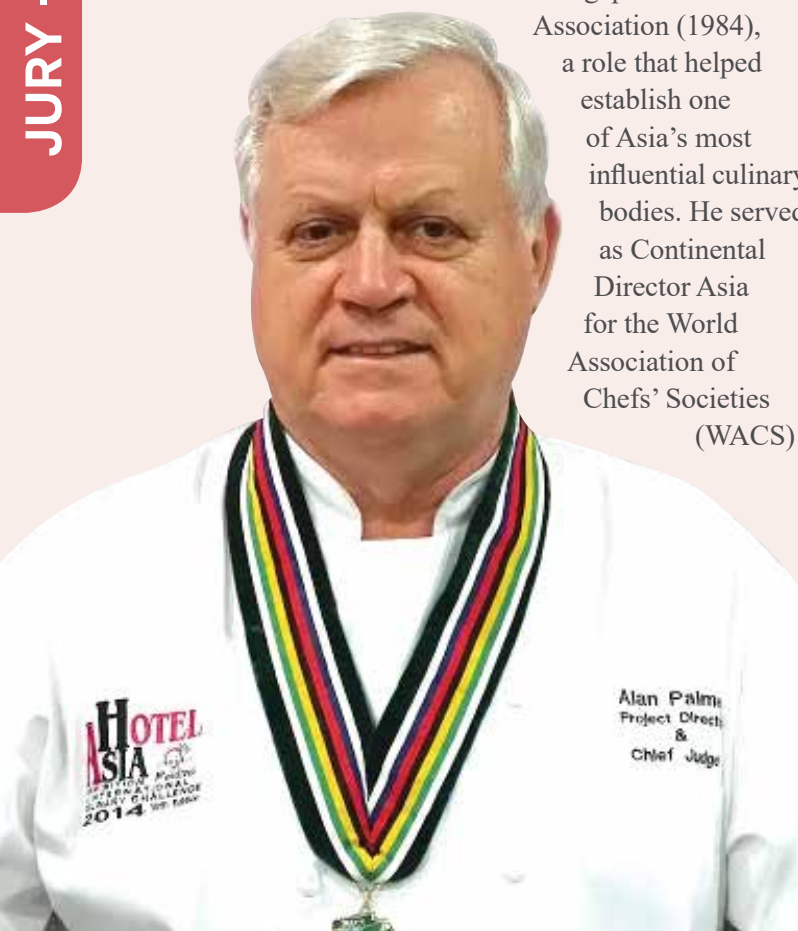
A Lifetime of Leadership, Legacy, and Culinary Excellence

Chef Alan Palmer, a renowned British culinary expert and Swiss citizen, is celebrated across the global gastronomy community for his visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to professional standards. With a career spanning more than half a century and multiple continents, he stands as one of the most respected figures in international culinary development. Trained in classical European kitchens, he went on to build an extraordinary career across Asia, Africa, and the Indian Ocean region, contributing not only to professional kitchens but also to the growth of culinary institutions and chef associations. His influence has shaped generations of chefs and elevated the standards of culinary competitions worldwide.

Palmer's early years were grounded in the discipline of traditional European culinary systems, where precision, structure, and respect for ingredients formed the foundation of his craft. As his career progressed, he moved naturally into leadership roles that extended far beyond the kitchen. He became deeply involved in association building, event organisation, and mentorship at a time when professional culinary networks in Southeast Asia were still emerging. His ability to bring structure, vision, and international alignment to these communities made him a pivotal figure in their development.

His global career is marked by several landmark achievements. Chef Palmer is a Founding Member of the Singapore Chefs Association (1984), a role that helped establish one of Asia's most influential culinary bodies. He served as Continental Director Asia for the World Association of Chefs' Societies (WACS)

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CHEF ALAN PALMER
Worldchefs Certified Global A International Judge &
Former Continental Director (Asia), WACS

from 1988 to 1996, and in 1990 he was honoured as an Honorary Life Member of WACS—one of the organisation's highest recognitions. He chaired the Organising Committee of the 24th WACS Congress in Singapore in 1990, a milestone event that strengthened Asia's presence in the global culinary arena. From 2008 to 2024, he served as a Worldchefs Certified Global A International Judge, bringing his expertise to competitions around the world.

Culinary competitions have been a defining thread throughout Palmer's professional life. As an international judge, he has evaluated chefs across a wide range of formats and skill levels, earning a reputation for fairness, consistency, and technical clarity. His judging philosophy goes beyond presentation and flavour, placing equal emphasis on organisation, workflow, hygiene, and professional discipline. Chefs who have competed under his scrutiny often speak of his balanced, insightful feedback and his ability to recognise both potential and precision.

Beyond judging, Palmer has played advisory and leadership roles in major culinary events, helping structure competitions, train judges, and ensure alignment with international standards. His contributions have strengthened the credibility and professionalism of culinary contests across several regions, leaving a lasting impact on how competitions are designed and evaluated.

Education has also been central to Palmer's legacy. He has shared his knowledge generously with young chefs and educators, emphasising the importance of fundamentals and cautioning against shortcuts or trends that compromise technical integrity. For him, longevity in the profession comes from mastering the basics, respecting tradition, and adapting thoughtfully rather than chasing novelty for its own sake.

Chef Alan Palmer's legacy is defined not by personal acclaim but by decades of service to the profession. His influence lives on in the institutions he helped build, the competitions he shaped, and the countless chefs who have benefited from his guidance. Through leadership, mentorship, and an unwavering commitment to standards, he has left an indelible mark on the global culinary landscape. ■



Mastering the Sweet Arts, Precision in Every Layer

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CHEF CHERN CHEE HOONG
International Pastry Chef &
Certified Pastry Judge (Malaysia)



Precision, Discipline, and the Making of Young Pastry Champions

Chef Lim Kim Wah is a Singapore-based pastry professional whose career has been deeply connected to the development of young baking and pastry talent in the region. His work spans professional pastry operations, team leadership, and competition mentoring, with a strong focus on youth development and structured training pathways.

With a solid foundation in professional pastry kitchens, Chef Lim has held senior operational roles that demand both technical mastery and managerial discipline. His experience overseeing pastry teams has given him a deep understanding of production workflow, consistency, and precision—qualities essential in high-volume, high-expectation environments. These operational foundations later shaped his transition into mentoring and team-management roles.

Chef Lim is widely recognised for his involvement with national and regional pastry teams. He has served as team manager and mentor for Singapore-based competitors participating in Asian youth pastry and bakery competitions. In these roles, he oversees preparation schedules, coordinates training resources, and ensures that competitors meet the professional and technical benchmarks expected at international events.

His mentoring philosophy emphasises structure, readiness, and repetition. Chef Lim places strong importance on planning and time management, helping young pastry chefs understand that success—whether in competition or in a professional kitchen—depends as much on preparation and discipline as it does on creativity. He encourages clarity of concept, clean execution, and composure under pressure.

Beyond the competitive arena, Chef Lim contributes to the broader pastry community through workshops, demonstrations, and industry engagement. He supports initiatives that expose young chefs to international standards while grounding them in disciplined craft. His work reflects a belief that early professional habits shape long-term careers.

Chef Lim Kim Wah's influence lies in his steady, methodical contribution to pastry education and competition readiness. Through leadership, mentorship, and guidance, he has helped young pastry chefs transition from training kitchens to professional and competitive environments with confidence, discipline, and professionalism. ■



CHEF LIM KIM WAH
Executive Sous Chef (Pastry), SATS Catering Pte Ltd



Redefining Modern Indian Cuisine with Precision and Passion

Chef Altamsh Patel is a distinguished culinary leader with 16 years of excellence, widely recognised for his innovation, precision, and creative flair. A recipient of major honours—including WICA's Young Chef of the Year, IFCA's Star Chef of India, and a place among India's Top 10 Hotel Chefs—he became one of the country's youngest five star Executive Chefs at 28.

He currently serves as Director of Culinary at Hilton Mumbai International Airport, where his cuisine is celebrated for bold flavours, refined technique, and visual artistry. His career spans iconic brands such as the Taj Group, The Park Hotels, Oakwood Premier Prestige Bangalore, and Hotel Sea Princess, along with key contributions to flight catering and multiple luxury hotel pre-openings.

A respected industry voice, he has led and participated in global food festivals, judged culinary competitions, and contributed to leading magazines and television shows. As an advisory panel member and guest lecturer, he actively mentors emerging chefs. In his role as Joint Secretary of the Western India Culinary Association, he continues to influence and uplift the culinary community. Would you like an even tighter version for a brochure or a slightly more narrative one for a magazine profile?

Culinary Art India

For aspiring and budding chefs, Culinary Art India is often regarded as the "Oscar" of culinary competitions in India. Much like the Academy Awards represent the pinnacle of achievement in the film industry, Culinary Art India symbolizes excellence, recognition, and national prestige within the culinary fraternity. Winning a medal or even participating on such a prestigious platform is a matter of immense pride for young chefs.

The presence of distinguished jurors from leading hotels, renowned restaurants, and international master chefs elevates the competition's credibility and ensures adherence to global evaluation standards. For many budding professionals, it becomes a defining milestone in their careers boosting confidence, strengthening professional profiles, and opening doors to new opportunities within the hospitality industry.

I am truly honoured to be part of the jury panel this year for this prestigious competition. Being entrusted with the responsibility to evaluate and mentor emerging talent on such a respected national platform is both a

privilege and a proud moment. It is inspiring to witness the creativity, skill, and passion of the next generation of chefs, and to contribute towards shaping the future of India's culinary landscape.

Indian Culinary Forum

As the Joint Secretary of the Western India Culinary Association, I have seen firsthand how the Indian Culinary Forum (ICF) has been a cornerstone in the growth and professional development of India's culinary fraternity. Being one of the oldest and most respected chefs' forums in the country, ICF consistently sets benchmarks in organizing structured, transparent, and globally aligned initiatives. Platforms such as Culinary Art India, held alongside AAHAR, provide unparalleled opportunities for chefs to showcase their talent at national and international levels. Their emphasis on international judging standards, mentorship, skill development, and industry exposure has significantly elevated the standards of culinary competitions in India. Personally, I have been privileged to participate in many of their events, each offering valuable insights into professionalism, planning, jury structuring, and execution - all of which serve as strong reference points for us in the western region.

As a regional association, we are grateful to ICF for consistently involving us in their activities and initiatives, allowing us to absorb learnings and implement similar best practices in our competitions. The collaboration strengthens our platform while aligning us with national and international culinary benchmarks. ICF's dedication to nurturing young chefs, encouraging innovation, and uniting the culinary community across India is truly commendable. Their leadership continues to inspire us, and we remain thankful for the guidance, opportunities, and trust they extend, helping shape the future of India's culinary landscape. ■



CHEF PATEL ALTAMASH
Joint Secretary – Western India Culinary Association (WICA)

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A Culinary Journey of Craft, Precision, and Passion

Chef Boopesh Pichaimani is a highly accomplished and dedicated culinary professional, bringing over 28 years of expertise as a Pastry Chef, Chocolatier, Ice Cream Specialist, and esteemed Educator. His distinguished career includes a decade (1999–2009) in the demanding cruise industry as a Pastry Chef with Carnival Cruise Lines, Miami, USA, where he served on inaugural cruise ships and contributed to the Culinary Development Team. His foundational training began with a Diploma in Hotel Management and Catering Technology from Asan Memorial Institute.

Chef Boopesh's craft has been shaped by world-class training under legendary Michelin-starred Chef Georges Blanc in Lyon, France. He further refined his skills under Chef Robert Oppeneder at Sweet Art Decor and Patisserie Schule in Munich, Germany, and underwent intensive training at Bäckerei Fiegl in Innsbruck, Austria. These global experiences strengthened his mastery of European pastry, chocolate work, and artisanal bakery techniques.

For the past eight years, he has served as Corporate Chef at Writers Cafe, where he leads menu innovation, product development, and culinary training. He is actively involved in shaping industry standards as a Board Member of SICA's Skill Development Committee. Chef Boopesh regularly conducts classes for the MOP Vaishnav College Diploma Course and engages with leading hotel management institutions including IHM, SRM, Asan Memorial, ICI Tirupati, Sai Institute, and masterclass platforms such as AAHAR Delhi for Nestlé and BakeryBiz Mumbai.

A recognised authority in his field, Chef Boopesh has served as a Jury Member for prestigious events such as the SICA Culinary Olympiad, All India Bakery & Pastry Professional Challenge at AAHAR Delhi, BakeryBiz Mumbai, Skill India (Chennai & Delhi), Indian Bakery Expo, and the Incredible Chefs Challenge by The World of Hospitality, Bangalore. His excellence has been acknowledged through numerous accolades, including "Bakery Chef of the Year," as well as Gold with Distinction and Silver medals in bakery display and plated dessert categories endorsed by the World Association of Chefs' Societies. He has also been honoured by the Tamil Nadu Bakery Federation for his contributions to student training and community development.

Chef Boopesh Pichaimani stands as a true master of his craft—an innovator, mentor, and industry pillar committed to culinary excellence and the development of future talent.

Culinary Art India

Culinary Art India has grown into one of the most respected culinary platforms in the country. The scale of the event is impressive, bringing together professional chefs, pastry artists, hospitality students, and leading industry brands under one roof.

It offers exceptional industry exposure by connecting participants directly with senior chefs, hotel chains, food brands, and hospitality decision-makers. The live competitions, knowledge-sharing sessions, masterclasses, and display categories—such as chocolate showpieces, wedding cakes, petit fours, plated appetisers, desserts, and fruit and vegetable carving—make it not just a contest but a powerful learning and networking platform.

The standards followed align with international benchmarks, enabling Indian culinary professionals to compete confidently at a global level.

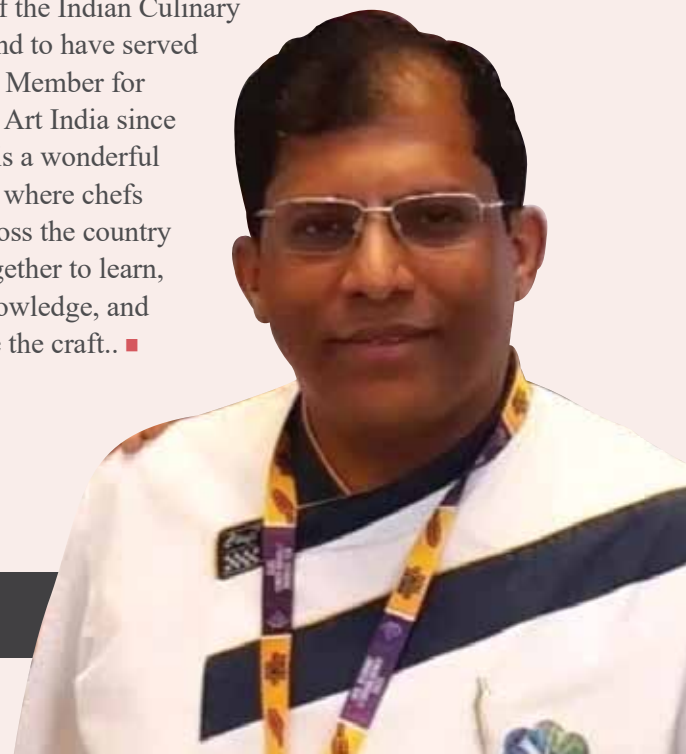
Indian Culinary Forum

The Indian Culinary Forum plays a significant role in strengthening the culinary profession in India. Its initiatives focus on skill development, mentorship, knowledge exchange, and industry collaboration.

Through events like Culinary Art India, along with workshops, seminars, and chef interactions, the Forum creates opportunities for both young and experienced chefs to showcase their talent and upgrade their skills.

Its consistent efforts in promoting professionalism, culinary excellence, and global standards have greatly contributed to elevating the Indian hospitality and bakery industry.

I am truly proud and happy to be part of the Indian Culinary Forum and to have served as a Jury Member for Culinary Art India since 2013. It is a wonderful platform where chefs from across the country come together to learn, share knowledge, and celebrate the craft.. ■



CHEF BOOPESH PICHAIMANI
Corporate Chef, Writers Cafe

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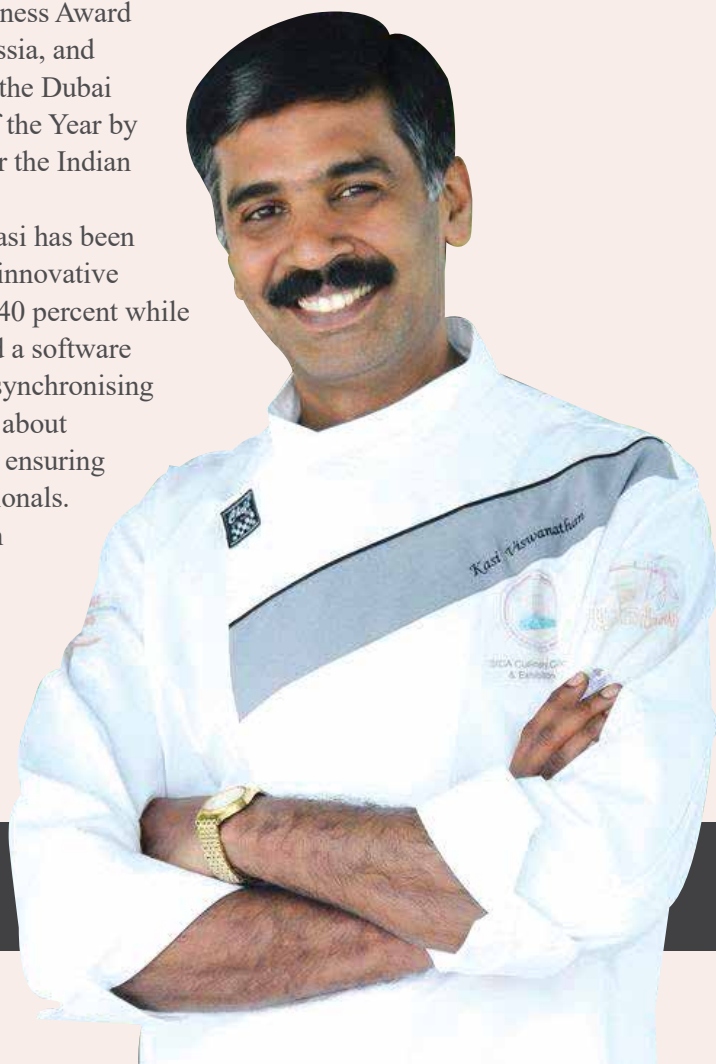
A Leader Shaping Culinary Excellence Across India and Beyond

Chef Kasiviswanathan is a distinguished hospitality professional with over three decades of experience across India and abroad. A specialist in Mediterranean cuisine, he has worked alongside Michelin-starred chefs during his tenure at the iconic Burj Al Arab and Emirates Tower Hotel in Dubai. His global career includes catering for high-profile dignitaries such as President Bill Clinton, the Sultan of Brunei, Queen Rania of Jordan, Oprah Winfrey, and several other international icons. He has represented Indian cuisine through food promotions in Sri Lanka, Iran, Bahrain, Singapore, Seoul, Cairo, and Dubai, strengthening India's culinary presence on the world stage.

A certified Train-the-Trainer professional, Chef Kasi is deeply committed to developing young culinary talent and has opened numerous restaurants while creating innovative food and beverage concepts throughout his career. His educational foundation includes diplomas in Catering and Hotel Management and Hospitality Management from Canan School of Catering & Hotel Management, Chennai, and West Michigan University.

Chef Kasi's professional journey spans roles such as Commis and Demi Chef at Jumeirah International's Burj Al Arab and Emirates Tower Hotel, Chef de Partie at Dubai Meridien, Sous Chef at Club Mahindra, Executive Chef at Atria Hotel and Radisson Blu Atria Hotel, and later Director of Food and Beverage at Radisson Blu Atria. He now leads operations at Bengaluru Cafe while also serving as a hospitality educator, Rotarian, and F&B consultant, including his role as Culinary Consultant for Britannia India. His contributions to the industry have earned him numerous honours, including the Silver Hat Award from SICA, the Culinary Greatness Award from IFCA, the High Food Quality Award at Ekaterinburg, Russia, and multiple medals at international culinary competitions such as the Dubai Salon Culinare. He has also been recognised as Smart Chef of the Year by IFCA and continues to serve as an Advisory Board Member for the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations.

Beyond his operational and culinary achievements, Chef Kasi has been part of the research and development team for Agnisumkh, an innovative industrial stove designed to reduce LPG consumption by over 40 percent while offering smoke-free, even-heat cooking. He has also developed a software program for standardising Indian recipes, auto-indenting, and synchronising purchasing systems to maintain par stock accuracy. Passionate about education, he remains dedicated to mentoring young chefs and ensuring India continues to produce skilled, passionate culinary professionals. He is currently working on a culinary book celebrating the rich heritage of Chettinad cuisine, further contributing to India's gastronomic legacy. ■



CHEF KASIVISWANATHAN
Vice President - South India Chefs' Association (SICA)
Director of Operations, Bengaluru Café

Building India's Next Generation of Culinary Professionals

Chef Dev Kasalkar stands among India's most respected culinary educators and chef-entrepreneurs—a nationally recognised mentor whose influence has shaped the careers of more than 4,000 young professionals. With rich experience across flight kitchens, hotels, and cruise lines, he brings a rare blend of industry depth, academic vision, and entrepreneurial leadership to the country's culinary landscape.

As Founder & Managing Director of Chefs Kitchen Institute, Chef Dev has built one of Maharashtra's most advanced hospitality education campuses. Spread across four acres, the 70,000 sq. ft. institute includes 20,000 sq. ft. of training kitchens and restaurants. From high-end buffet setups and eight modern kitchens to specialised studios for food photography, branding, and live demonstrations, every space reflects his commitment to bridging classroom learning with real-world application. With 800 students currently enrolled and the capacity to train over 1,000 annually, the institute has become a trusted centre of excellence in hospitality education.

Chef Dev's contributions extend far beyond the classroom. As Vice President of the Indian Young Chefs Association (IYCA), he leads national initiatives that empower emerging chefs. His accolades include the IFCA National Award for Best Culinary Educator (twice), WICA Chef Entrepreneur of the Year, Young Chef Mentor of India, and multiple honours from industry bodies and critics. A Certified Culinary Educator (IFCA) and Certified Commanding Officer (INS Hamla), he is celebrated for his discipline-driven approach to training.

Internationally, he has represented India as Team Coach of Young Chefs, served as an International Jury Member in Abu Dhabi, and led teams to victory at the World Heritage Cuisine Summit. His leadership is equally visible in industry events—managing the Kolhapuri Food Festival, delivering keynotes at INDUS Food Summit 2025, coordinating live demos at Indus Food Expo 2026, and participating in over 50 chef conferences.

A proud member of global and national associations including WACS, IFCA, IYCA, WICA, WMCS, CGI, ICF, ECG, and KHRCA, Chef Dev Kasalkar continues to elevate

culinary education, regional cuisine, and professional standards across India.

Culinary Art India

Culinary Art India is truly one of the most prestigious and large-scale culinary platforms in the country. Its professional standards, WACS endorsed international-level judging, and strong industry participation make it a powerful stage for chefs to showcase their creativity and technical excellence. The scale of the event, combined with the exposure it offers to young and professional chefs, makes it an invaluable learning and networking opportunity. CAI not only celebrates culinary craftsmanship but also motivates chefs to raise their standards to global benchmarks.

Indian Culinary Forum

The Indian Culinary Forum plays a vital role in strengthening the culinary fraternity of India. Through its educational programs, competitions, workshops, and networking initiatives, ICF continuously works toward skill development and professional growth of chefs across all levels. Their commitment to industry advancement and talent nurturing is truly commendable, and their efforts significantly contribute to elevating Indian culinary standards nationally and internationally. ■



CHEF DEV KASALKAR
Founder & Director - Dev Educational Society
Managing Director - Chefs Kitchen Institute of Culinary Arts & Hotel Management.
Vice President - Indian Young Chefs Association



Working in demanding kitchens requires adaptability. As a chef, it is essential to learn quickly and develop creative solutions to overcome challenges. The metaphor of breaking a chair and making a table highlights the resourcefulness needed to thrive under pressure, transforming obstacles into opportunities for improvement and success. Prashant Kulkarni, Director - Food & Beverage Operations, South Asia, Hilton, provides experiential tips on the art of releasing pressure in the kitchen.

COOKING UNDER FIRE

THE ART OF RELEASING PRESSURE IN THE KITCHEN

Traditionally hotel or restaurant kitchens have been often depicted as a cauldron of chaos. With chefs who are hot tempered, shouting and screaming, making young commis/chef de parties run around in circles, dancing to their tunes. This notion has been extended with TV shows like Hells Kitchen which created a “angry young man” persona for the chef, who is full of sarcasm and quick to deride and denigrate.

I have had the good fortune of working in kitchens in various geographies, whilst the hierarchy does not change, it is militaristic in certain way, or at least this is what the chefs are led to believe. Often it is necessary to maintain standards, focus on quality, consistency and craft. Things do go wrong as it often does in this dynamic environment, how the chef reacts to that is what sets him apart.

Lesson 1: Focus on the problem and not the person

Mistakes will happen! To figure out why it happened is more important than losing your mind on the young commis or sous chef who made the error. I call it my “duck story” it was one busy Sunday afternoon in a London hotel where I had to prepare for a dinner for 50 guests, with the dish being “Smoked duck breast with puy lentil salad and sherry dressing” The young apprentice who was working with me put in 25 duck breasts which were prepped and salted in the steamer rather than in the smoker! Which meant the duck breasts were unusable, over cooked and done. All I could do at the time was run all around Central London (literally) buying fresh produce from Harrods, Selfridges on my own dime to bring it back, prep it, reset it and get ready for service. All through the young apprentice was shaking and crying. His words were- “why are you not shouting at me?” My response “will that help”. The event went well and, in the evening, I learnt an important lesson in the kitchen. If it is critical, please do not delegate. Always double check if your team member has clearly understood the instructions.

Lesson 2: Skill and Knowledge

Get it done! This instruction has no meaning if you cannot showcase how. As a chef, failure of leadership often happens when the skill gap exists. If I am a pastry chef but do not know how to temper chocolate better than my sous chef, the respect will never come.

There will be harmony and respect in the kitchen if the leader is more skilled and more knowledgeable than the rest of the brigade. This is fundamental to the success of the brigade under pressure. Often chaos ensues when the head chef is unsure and tentative. It is his ultimate responsibility to ensure that there is no undue pressure on the team due to his own incompetence.

Lesson 3: Respect

Treat everyone the way you want to be treated. Easier said than done. Often there is banter and ribbing that happens in a kitchen. Maintaining an environment of respect and professionalism goes a long way in ensuring the brigade functions properly. Language and tonality are key. There is no place for abusive language to be used in the kitchens, just because it is the Back of House. Its Ok! No, it is Not OK!

The team behave and ape the aspects of the leader. Keeping the decorum is vital in my opinion to run a kitchen well. I believe it is important as leaders to create a safe environment for the team to operate in. Mental health issues and challenges are real and we as an industry should recognise and create the right work ethic for the teams to thrive in.



The question we need to ask today is about the leadership that exists in the whites. Are you contributing to the pressure or does your team look at you as the “safety valve”?

Lesson 4: Fail to plan is to plan to fail

Brigades often fail because the chef is disorganised, unsure, not interested, poor in his decision making and devoid of any passion. This kitchen is for sure not serving you delicious food. A key hallmark of a successful kitchen is when you walk in, you see controlled movement, purposeful chefs, who seem to know what they need to accomplish for the day. It is imperative in making sure the sanctity of the kitchen remains and mayhem is avoided. Most of the time the pressure cooker situation is self-created!

Lesson 5: Coaching and Training

This is one of the key aspects which maintains an even spirit in the kitchens. A brigade which is invested in learning, where the chef is a mentor and a coach, thrives. It is imperative that this is part of the culture and driven by the leadership in the kitchen. This leads to loyalty, followership and reduces attrition at all levels.

In conclusion, professional kitchens are unique environments,

where skill, artistry, science and innovation collide. Cooking is one of the most ancient professions in the world, and cuisine has evolved for millennia. The question we need to ask today is about the leadership that exists in the whites. Are you contributing to the pressure or does your team look at you as the “safety valve”? ■

About the Author

Prashant Kulkarni, a seasoned chef and F&B professional, has cultivated his skills across various kitchens and brigades in India, the UK, and Singapore. His experience encompasses restaurants, events, flight catering, and hotels, providing him with the unique opportunity to collaborate with some of the finest chefs in high-pressure environments.

Throughout his career, quality, cuisine, and innovation have remained at the center of every endeavor. Whether in the heat of busy service or during the meticulous planning of an event, these elements have consistently driven excellence in his culinary journey.





THE CHANGING ROLE OF AN EXECUTIVE CHEF

Chef Vikramjit Singh Ahluwalia, Director of Culinary, Radisson Gurugram Udyog Vihar, explores the evolution of the executive chef role, highlighting the key changes and the factors driving these shifts.

The role of the executive chef has undergone significant transformations over the years. Once primarily focused on cooking and overseeing kitchen operations, the modern executive chef now wears multiple hats, blending culinary expertise with managerial, administrative, and innovative responsibilities.

The kitchens are no longer confined to the art of cooking; they are emerging as crucibles of leadership, wellness and creativity. With artificial intelligence, automation and sustainable practices.

In the past, the executive chef was often seen as the master cook, responsible for creating menus and ensuring food quality. Today, the role encompasses a broader range of duties that extend beyond the kitchen. The modern executive chef must navigate the complexities of evolving culinary

trends, and embrace technological advancements.

The responsibilities of an executive chef extend far beyond the kitchen. They must balance culinary creativity with business acumen, ensuring the overall food and beverage financial health and operational efficiency.

Here are some key areas where their role has expanded:

- **Financial Oversight:** Managing budgets, controlling food costs, and maximising profitability without compromising quality. Driving FNB revenues.
- **Marketing and Public Relations:** Promoting the FNB outlet, engaging with customers, and building a brand through social media and other channels.
- **Technology Integration:** Streamlining inventory management, order processing,

and staff scheduling.

- **Customer Engagement:** Utilising social media and online platforms to engage with customers and promote the restaurant.
- **Culinary Technology:** Using advanced cooking equipment has transformed how chefs operate, allowing for greater precision and efficiency in cooking.
- **Sustainable Sourcing:** Prioritising locally sourced, organic, and ethically produced ingredients for environmentally friendly food options.
- **Waste Reduction:** Implementing strategies to minimise food waste and reduce the hotel's carbon footprint. Enabling the organisation with AI driven waste management software to educate team and minimise food waste.
- **Team Development:** Investing in the growth and development of kitchen staff through training and mentorship.



The responsibilities of an executive chef extend far beyond the kitchen. They must balance culinary creativity with business acumen, ensuring the overall food and beverage financial health and operational efficiency.

The evolution of the executive chef role reflects broader changes in the culinary and hospitality industries. From focusing solely on culinary excellence to embracing a multifaceted role that includes management, technology, sustainability, and innovation, the modern executive chef is a dynamic and influential figure in the hospitality world.

This evolution requires a blend of traditional culinary skills and modern business acumen, making the path to becoming an executive chef both challenging and rewarding. ■

About the Author

Chef Vikramjit Singh Ahluwalia is a seasoned culinary leader with over 25 years of experience across India's top hospitality brands, currently serving as Director of Culinary at Radisson Gurugram Udyog Vihar. His journey spans Hyatt, Oberoi, Lemon Tree, and Park Hyatt Goa, backed by multiple awards including Hotel Executive Chef of the Year 2025. A WACS-certified judge and wellness-focused chef, he is known for plant-based innovation, millet advocacy, and elevating regional Indian cuisine.

The New Face of the Executive Chef

The executive chef's role has evolved far beyond the heat of the kitchen. Today's chef is a strategist, culture-builder, and brand voice—balancing creativity with commercial responsibility. Menu mastery now sits alongside cost control, sustainability planning, and data-driven decision-making. Technology has become part of the craft, from digital inventory systems to precision equipment that ensures consistency at scale.

Leadership expectations have shifted too. The modern executive chef mentors diverse teams, nurtures young talent, and builds healthier, more collaborative kitchen cultures. The old command-and-control style is giving way to empathy, communication, and people-first management.

At the same time, chefs have stepped into the spotlight as storytellers and ambassadors—shaping brand identity, engaging with guests, and representing their restaurants across media and events.

In this transformed landscape, the executive chef stands at the intersection of artistry, operations, and influence—defining not just what's on the plate, but the future of the kitchen itself.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE CHEF

BUSINESS STRATEGY



Manage costs and operations

TECHNOLOGY



Integrate digital tools and data



LEADERSHIP



Mentor and develop staff

BRAND BUILDING



Represent and promote restaurant



In this incisive piece, **Chef Manveer Ramola, Executive Chef at Max Group – Antara Senior Living, Dehradun**, examines one of the most urgent challenges facing modern kitchens: the rising cost of running them. Drawing from his experience leading highperformance culinary systems in both luxury hospitality and senior living environments, he argues that today's culinary leadership is no longer defined by scale or extravagance, but by intelligence, discipline, and design. As inflation, energy costs, and supplychain volatility reshape the industry, Chef Manveer outlines how chefs must evolve - from creators of cuisine to architects of efficient, sustainable, and commercially resilient operations.

DOING MORE WITH LESS

REDEFINING CULINARY LEADERSHIP IN AN ERA OF RISING COSTS

The professional kitchen has always operated under pressure. Heat, speed, and precision are constants in our craft. Today, however, the intensity extends far beyond the cooking range. Rising food inflation, escalating energy costs, volatile supply chains, and tightening margins are redefining how professional kitchens function.

The pressure is no longer confined to the pass. It lives in procurement strategy, team productivity, electricity consumption, yield analytics, and menu performance.

In this environment, success is no longer measured by abundance. It is measured by intelligence.

This shift is reshaping culinary leadership across hospitality formats - from luxury hotels to structured dining environments such as senior living communities. Doing more with less is not about cutting corners. It is about engineering systems that are efficient, sustainable, and commercially sound without compromising guest experience. It is about shaping the chef of tomorrow.

The Reality of Rising Costs

Food pricing now moves with unprecedented volatility. Dairy, edible oils, imported ingredients, specialty grains, and even staples fluctuate unpredictably, while guests continue to expect consistency, quality, and value.

Chefs stand at the intersection of creativity and commerce. Protecting margins cannot come at the cost of integrity; it demands smarter design.

The question is no longer: How elaborate can the menu be?

The real question is: How intelligently can it perform - operationally and financially - while delivering satisfaction?

This is where culinary leadership evolves from artistic execution to strategic architecture.

Menu Engineering: Precision Over Proliferation

Disciplined menu engineering is one of the most powerful responses to inflation. The era of oversized menus built on excessive SKUs is fading. High-performing kitchens now operate with focused, analytically driven selections where every dish justifies its presence - in popularity, contribution margin, and production feasibility.

Strategic menu frameworks prioritise:

- Cross-utilisation of ingredients
- Seasonal and local sourcing
- Controlled SKU management
- Yield-driven recipe

standardisation

A single base preparation can support multiple dishes across meal periods. A slow-cooked sauce may anchor diverse proteins. Roasted vegetables can transition from entrée components to soups or grain bowls. A well-constructed puree can elevate plates across outlets.

Variety is no longer derived from excess. It is engineered through thoughtful adaptation.

Precision replaces proliferation.

Reimagining Banquet and Volume Dining

Banquet and buffet operations magnify both opportunity and risk. Traditional abundance-driven formats often result in overproduction and diluted margins.

A more evolved approach relies on consumption data, guest profiling, and calibrated variety. Curated selections outperform overloaded spreads. Smaller batch replenishment protects freshness while controlling waste.

In structured dining environments such as senior living communities, staggered service cycles and portion calibration based on consumption patterns

have significantly reduced wastage without affecting satisfaction scores.

Volume must be designed - not assumed.

Sustainability Through Maximum Utilisation

Sustainability in the kitchen begins with discipline. Maximum utilisation is both economic strategy and professional responsibility.

Vegetable trims become stocks or powders. Herb stems flavour oils. Citrus peels turn into reductions. Excess bread evolves into textured garnishes or desserts. Overripe fruit becomes compotes or beverages.

This is not frugality; it is refinement.

Forward-thinking kitchens are also embracing selective in-house cultivation of herbs and microgreens, along with house-made condiments and preserves. These practices strengthen flavour identity while reducing procurement volatility.

Individually modest. Collectively transformative.

The chef of tomorrow will be defined not by sourcing volume, but by utilisation intelligence.

Energy Discipline: The Invisible Margin

While food cost dominates discussion, energy remains a silent drain on profitability. Half-loaded ovens, inefficient refrigeration cycles, and fragmented



Doing more with less is not about cutting corners. It is about engineering systems that are efficient, sustainable, and commercially sound without compromising guest experience. It is about shaping the chef of tomorrow.

prep schedules accumulate into operational strain.

Energy-conscious kitchens focus on batch cooking, optimal equipment loading, preventive maintenance, and disciplined refrigeration management. In multi-meal service operations, aligning prep windows to reduce repetitive heating cycles alone can produce measurable savings.

Efficiency must be intentionally designed. It cannot be left to habit.

Forecasting Over Guesswork

Overproduction remains one of hospitality's most underestimated losses. Cooking "just in case" is expensive.

Data-backed forecasting - based on occupancy trends, consumption history, and event analytics - enables accurate production cycles. Staggered batch cooking and controlled buffet replenishment reduce spoilage without compromising guest perception.

The modern chef balances instinct with information. Discipline reduces pressure more effectively than reaction.

Developing the Future Brigade

No system succeeds without alignment. The next generation of chefs must understand more than technique. Yield management, portion control, storage science, energy awareness, and waste tracking must become foundational competencies.

When cost awareness is embedded early, accountability becomes culture rather than correction.

A brigade trained in systems, performs under pressure without panic.

Procurement with Purpose

Procurement today demands resilience, not rigidity. Seasonal sourcing enhances flavour while reducing volatility. Local partnerships shorten supply chains and strengthen reliability. Flexible menu architecture allows intelligent substitution during market fluctuations.

Rigidity increases exposure. Adaptability strengthens stability.

Flexibility is not compromised - it is strategic maturity.

Creativity Within Constraint

Innovation often emerges from limitation. When ingredients narrow,

technique sharpens. When resources tighten, systems improve. Constraint forces clarity.

Doing more with less challenges chefs to elevate flavour through skill rather than expense, to create impact through precision rather than excess, and to build identity through discipline rather than volume.

Restraint strengthens excellence.

The Evolving Role of the Chef

Today's chef is no longer defined solely by culinary artistry. We are strategists, sustainability advocates, operational architects, and mentors. We are responsible for shaping environments that inspire teams, innovate systems, and create meaningful impact. We design systems as carefully as we design plates.

We must balance:

- Excellence with efficiency
- Creativity with accountability
- Innovation with responsibility

The kitchens of tomorrow will not be judged by extravagance, but by intelligence.

Cooking under fire is no longer about surviving heat. It is about releasing pressure through smarter systems, sharper training, disciplined sustainability, and purposeful leadership.

Doing more with less is



not reduction.

It is refinement.

In an era of rising costs and heightened responsibility, true culinary leaders redesign the system - not just the plate.

And those who master this discipline will not merely adapt to change. They will lead it. ■

About the Author

Chef Manveer Ramola is a progressive culinary leader currently serving as Executive Chef with Max Group at Antara Senior Living, Dehradun. Over the past two and a half years, he has architected a wellness-driven culinary ecosystem that extends far beyond conventional kitchen operations. His work integrates senior-focused nutrition, sustainable systems, organic and seasonal sourcing, preventive health-oriented menu design, and precision-led waste optimisation. Rooted in both strategic discipline and Seva Bhav, his "food as medicine" philosophy translates into measurable lifestyle enhancement rather than conceptual intent.

Prior to Max, Antara Senior Living, he held leadership positions with esteemed luxury brands including Aman Resorts and Sujan Luxury Hotels, refining his expertise in experiential dining, pre-opening strategy, and operational excellence.

What sets Manveer apart is his conviction that learning is continuous and sustainability is institutional knowledge, not a passing initiative.

He fosters data-driven leadership and cultivates high-performance culinary teams grounded in accountability and purpose.



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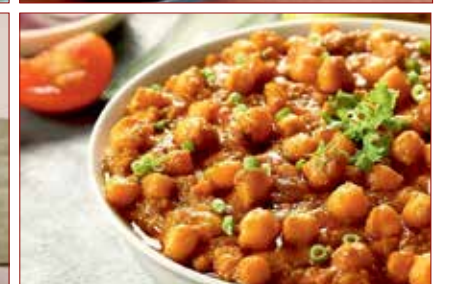
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In this thoughtprovoking article, educationist and university leader **Sanjib Kumar Rout**, Founder and President of C.V. Raman Global University, examines a critical gap in India's hospitality and culinary education system. Drawing on nearly three decades of experience in higher education and skill development, he argues that while India's culinary heritage is rich and timehonoured, its academic frameworks have not kept pace with the technological, digital, and entrepreneurial demands of today's food industry. His insights outline what culinary institutes must urgently rethink to prepare future chefs for a rapidly evolving, innovationdriven world.

WHAT CULINARY INSTITUTES ARE NOT TEACHING

India's culinary heritage traces its roots to the earliest farming communities of the Indus Valley Civilisation. Over centuries, it has evolved through Ayurvedic principles, regional food habits, and influences from Persian, Mughal, and European cultures. This long journey has shaped Indian cuisine into a diverse, deeply layered tapestry of flavours and traditions.

Despite this rich legacy, hospitality education in India remains largely traditional in its academic approach. With more than two decades of experience leading hospitality programmes across regulatory bodies, I believe that our curriculum frameworks continue to be shaped by conservative mindsets. While they offer a strong classical foundation, they are not adequately aligned with the technological, digital, and entrepreneurial realities of the 21st century.

We now live in an era defined by automation, digital transformation, fintech, artificial intelligence (AI), and environmental consciousness. These forces are reshaping industries worldwide—including culinary arts and hospitality. To prepare future chefs for this new landscape, culinary institutes must rethink what they teach and how they teach it.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Culinary Education

AI is no longer a futuristic concept; it is already transforming kitchens, restaurants, and food businesses. From standardised cooking techniques and precise temperature control to inventory optimisation and plating assistance, AIpowered systems are becoming increasingly common.

In culinary education, AI can significantly enhance learning in baking, confectionery, food manufacturing, and hospitality management. AI-driven analytics can help students understand customer preferences, ingredient cost fluctuations, seasonal trends, footfall patterns, and sales behaviour—enabling datadriven decisionmaking.

AI also strengthens quality assurance and food safety.

Advanced monitoring systems can track hygiene standards, shelf life, and storage conditions. By automating routine checks, AI allows chefs to focus more on creativity, innovation, and flavour development.

With AI, students can also design personalised nutrition plans for individuals with diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and lifestyle-related conditions. This creates graduates who are not only masters of taste but also leaders in wellness and innovation.

To integrate AI effectively, culinary institutes must collaborate with industry experts, introduce AI-integrated curricula, and conduct interdisciplinary workshops that build faculty capability and student competency.

Automation and Robotics in Smart Kitchens

Automation and robotics are rapidly transforming hospitality operations. Robots can now handle cleaning, repetitive tasks, food preparation, and even customer interaction in specific service environments.

Training students to operate automated technologies safely and efficiently is essential. Automation does not replace human creativity—it enhances efficiency and ensures consistency. Exposure to robotic kitchen equipment, intelligent cooking systems, and automated storage solutions will prepare students for future-ready hospitality environments.

Digital Technology and Ethical Online Engagement

Digital technologies have reshaped how food businesses operate. Social media branding, digital marketing, food delivery apps, and online ordering platforms are now central to restaurant success.



We now live in an era defined by automation, digital transformation, fintech, artificial intelligence (AI), and environmental consciousness. These forces are reshaping industries worldwide—including culinary arts and hospitality.

Culinary students must learn to use analytics dashboards, manage online businesses, build digital brands, and engage ethically with customers on social media.

Basic computer literacy should be mandatory before progressing to advanced digital tools. Knowledge of CRM systems, digital marketing, and data analytics will enable graduates to thrive in the modern hospitality ecosystem.

Fintech and Financial Literacy for Culinary Entrepreneurs

India's rapid shift toward digital payments—UPI, mobile wallets, QR codes, and contactless cards—demands financial literacy from future culinary professionals. Students must understand payment gateway integration, digital reconciliation, wallet management, and cyberfraud prevention.

Fintech knowledge will help them operate AI-powered ERP systems for billing, inventory, payroll, and taxation. Aspiring entrepreneurs must also learn digital



bookkeeping, crowdfunding, GST compliance, and business loan processes.

With initiatives like Atma Nirbhar Bharat encouraging entrepreneurship, culinary institutes should establish incubation centres in collaboration with Atal Incubation Centres (AICs) and Technology Business Incubators (TBIs). This will connect students with government schemes, seed funding, startup ecosystems, and mentorship networks.

Cybersecurity and Risk Management

In a digital-first world, cybersecurity is essential for all entrepreneurs. Students must learn the fundamentals of protecting consumer data, digital transactions, and business systems. Culinary institutes should partner with universities offering cybersecurity programmes to introduce creditbased elective courses.

Entrepreneurship also involves uncertainty and stress. Risk management and stress management should be integrated into hospitality education to help students handle operational challenges, competition, and financial unpredictability with resilience.

Environmental Science and Sustainable Hospitality

Environmental awareness is no longer optional—it is vital for human survival. Culinary education must include ecological science to address waste management, climate change, and sustainable food practices.

Students must understand the impact of climate change on agriculture, food processing, and livestock. Knowledge of carbon footprints, greenhouse gases, sustainable sourcing, composting,

and pollution control is essential. Training should include waste segregation, energyefficient kitchen design, and responsible material sourcing.

With rising lifestyle diseases, chefs must also learn nutrition science and healthy cooking techniques. Healthfocused, sustainable menus are increasingly in demand. Culinary professionals equipped with environmental and nutritional knowledge will be valued for their contribution to corporate social responsibility.

The Way Forward

Culinary education—both formal and informal—plays a crucial role in shaping society’s wellbeing. To build a healthy and prosperous nation, we must develop a large, skilled culinary workforce trained not only in classical techniques but also in technology, ethics, sustainability, and innovation.

The future chef must be technologically aware, financially literate, environmentally responsible, and entrepreneurially confident. Culinary institutions must move beyond conservative frameworks and embrace interdisciplinary, industryaligned



To build a healthy and prosperous nation, we must develop a large, skilled culinary workforce trained not only in classical techniques but also in technology, ethics, sustainability, and innovation.

education models.

By integrating AI, digital technology, automation, entrepreneurship, fintech, cybersecurity, and environmental science into the core curriculum, we can prepare graduates who preserve India’s rich culinary heritage while driving a more innovative, sustainable, and technologyenabled future.

As the world evolves rapidly, this is the right moment to transform culinary education—from traditional instruction to technologyenabled leadership. Only then can we develop a new generation of hospitality professionals who are not just masters of taste but champions of progress. ■

About the Author

Sanjib Kumar Rout is a visionary educationist and entrepreneur with nearly 30 years of experience in technical and higher education. An Electrical Engineering graduate with a Management Degree, he is the driving force behind the C.V. Raman Group’s growth into a nationally recognised education ecosystem.

Under his leadership, CGU has emerged as a hub for industry-integrated “Future of Skills” programs and has earned global recognition through achievements at WorldSkills competitions. He actively collaborates with leading industry bodies such as FICCI, NASSCOM, CII, and EPSI to strengthen academia–industry integration. Deeply committed to social impact, he champions the “SAFAL – Skill Can Change Life” initiative to empower underprivileged girls through skill-based education.

His mission centers on youth employability, skill development, and poverty alleviation, particularly in rural Odisha.




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GEN Z

IN THE KITCHEN

When we talk about ‘cooking under pressure’ in the modern Indian professional kitchen, we often conjure images of roaring flames, ringing tickets, blazing pans, and a cacophony of calls for “Table 12!” What we are starting to see now, however, is a generation stepping into these environments that is fundamentally reshaping what pressure - and success - looks like in our culinary spaces.

Generation Z - broadly defined as those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s - are entering kitchens across India with fresh energy, unfiltered ambition, and a markedly different set of expectations around work, life, and the very culture of the kitchen.

Gen Z - Challenging Tradition, Championing Change

1. Born Digital, Cooking Analog - But Not for Long

Gen Z grew up in a world saturated by technology. They have the ability to absorb information fast, pivot quickly, and are fluent in the language of digital learning. That doesn't mean they replace hands-on experience - far from it - but they approach skill acquisition differently from generations before them.

In the kitchen, this manifests as:

- **A hunger for structured learning:** From culinary technique videos to online mentorship forums, Gen Z isn't shy about leaning - leading to resources that accelerate skill mastery.
- **Feedback-driven improvement:** Digital natives are used for metrics, review cycles, and iterative progress - traits that, when brought into food preparation and service rhythm, can elevate consistency and precision.
- **Efficiency in time and task management:** Whether it's organising prep lists or optimising station workflows, there's a natural affinity for technologies that support smarter kitchens.

The result is pressure cooked not by exhaustion, but by intentional productivity.

2. Work-Life Balance? Yes, Please

In professional kitchens, especially in India, long hours and gruelling shifts have long been seen as rites of passage. They were badges of honor - a testament to resilience and commitment.

Gen Z doesn't see it that way. They value purpose over sacrifice, mental wellness alongside skill acquisition, and schedules that support life outside the kitchen.

This doesn't mean they are less dedicated. It means the traditional narrative - “if it doesn't hurt, it's not worth doing” - no longer holds true. Their perspective is simple: If this is how we sustain a lifelong career, let's build kitchens that don't burn

people out. And this perspective is reshaping staffing expectations from the ground up.

3. Redefining Respect and Collaboration

Respect in the kitchen used to be hierarchical - and often authoritarian.

Gen Z looks for respect earned through skill and character, open channels of communication, and a culture of mutual support and learning.

Where older kitchen cultures may have endorsed abrasive leadership as a form of conditioning, many younger professionals expect leaders who teach rather than demand; who collaborate instead of intimidate.

This doesn't negate discipline - it reframes it. The modern kitchen still needs structure, precision, and accountability. But in a Gen Z-infused brigade, discipline is paired with dignity.

4. Emotional Intelligence as a Kitchen Asset

For the first time in culinary history, emotional intelligence is not merely “nice-to-have” - it's a performance asset.

Gen Z openly values empathy, boundary setting, self-advocacy, and mindful communication. This translates into lower burnout rates, better teamwork, higher retention, and improved service quality.

Kitchens that once measured strength by how loudly a chef could shout, now find greater success when they value how effectively a chef can resolve conflict, train others, and sustain peak performance without chaos.

5. The New Pressure Points

Pressure is no longer only about speed or volume - it's also about career clarity, skill visibility, recognition and growth paths, and impactful work without



The traditional narrative - “if it doesn't hurt, it's not worth doing” - no longer holds true for Gen Z. Their perspective is simple: If this is how we sustain a lifelong career, let's build kitchens that don't burn people out.

compromising well-being.

For many Gen Z chefs, pressure is:

- Performing a perfect dish under time constraints
- Innovating menu items that resonate with current food sensibilities
- Advocating for fair schedules and sustainable workloads
- Balancing classical techniques with contemporary creativity

Pressure no longer simply breaks you down - it is expected to shape you constructively.

6. Where Tradition Meets Transformation

This is not a generational clash, but a cross-pollination of values.

Experienced chefs bring years of muscle memory, intuition built through hundreds of service nights, and a reservoir of culinary wisdom.

Young chefs bring fresh perspectives, tech-savvy approaches to learning, vibrant creativity, and a holistic understanding of wellness and sustainability.

Across India, we're seeing modified work schedules, mentorship programs, wellness check-ins, and training structures that balance rigor with respect.

This isn't idealism - it's evolution.

7. A New Recipe for Success

The future of professional kitchens in India will not be defined by how much pressure a cook can endure, but by how effectively the whole team can perform together.

Success in this new reality includes:

- **Balanced Kitchens** - where strength is measured in stamina and sustainability.
- **Collaborative Teams** - where voices are heard and skills are shared.
- **Curated Growth Paths** - where talent development is intentional and supported.
- **Well-Being as Standard** - because a chef with clarity of mind creates consistently.

8. Final Thoughts

Gen Z is not “soft” - they are strategic. They are not disengaged - they are aware. They are not asking for less - they are asking for better.

The kitchens that win tomorrow will blend precision with purpose - discipline with dignity.

Gen Z isn't just entering kitchens - they are helping reshape them into spaces that are powerful, productive, and human. And that's a recipe worth mastering. ■

About the Author

Chef Pawan Kaushik is an experienced culinary professional and industry thought leader with 23 years deep roots in the dessert gastronomy scene - Bakery & Chocolatier, currently working as a Corporate Chef with www.igp.com (Join Venture Group) heading 80 Kitchens across India, Dubai & Abu Dhabi. Known for blending traditional techniques with modern innovation, he has led kitchen brigades across high-profile establishments and champions sustainable kitchen culture. Passionate about mentorship and culinary education, he advocates for balanced professional environments that nurture talent and well-being.



BY MAHENDER SINGH

Director – HR, Radisson Blu Hotel Greater Noida
(a unit of Victora Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.)

One of the most pressing challenges facing India's hospitality sector today is the growing struggle to hire and retain skilled kitchen talent. Drawing on his extensive experience, Mahender Singh, Director – HR at Radisson Blu Hotel Greater Noida (a unit of Victora Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.), examines why kitchens across hotels and restaurants are finding it increasingly difficult to build stable, motivated teams despite the industry's rapid expansion. Through data-backed insights and on-ground observations, he highlights the widening talent gap, the post-pandemic workforce shift, and the evolving expectations of today's employees, urging the industry to rethink how it attracts, develops, and supports its culinary workforce.

MANPOWER CRUNCH

NO ONE CAN IGNORE

WHY KITCHENS IN INDIA ARE STRUGGLING TO HIRE AND RETAIN TALENT?

India's hospitality industry is expanding rapidly. According to the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), the Indian food services market is valued at over Rs.5.5 lakh crore and is expected to continue growing steadily in the coming years. The sector employs more than 8 million people directly and supports millions more indirectly.

However, despite this strong growth, hotels and restaurants across India are facing a serious manpower crunch - especially in kitchens. From luxury hotels in Delhi NCR and Mumbai to resort destinations like Goa and Jaipur, HR teams are struggling to hire and retain skilled kitchen staff.

Shortage of Skilled Kitchen Talent

Industry surveys suggest that nearly 60–70% of restaurant and hotel operators report difficulty in filling back-of-house roles such as commis, CDP (Chef de Partie), and kitchen stewards. In many properties, attrition rates in operational roles range between 35% to 50% annually, and in some standalone restaurants, it can go even higher.

While India produces thousands of hospitality graduates every year, not all of them enter kitchen operations. Many prefer front office, aviation catering, cruise lines, or corporate roles. This creates a mismatch between available talent and actual kitchen requirements.

Moreover, skilled chefs require practical training and experience. Replacing an experienced CDP is not easy, and training a new commis takes time and supervision - increasing pressure on existing team members.

Migration and Post-Pandemic Impact

Before COVID-19, a large portion of kitchen manpower came from migrant workers from states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. During the nationwide lockdown in 2020, millions of migrant workers returned to their hometowns.

According to government estimates, over 10 million migrant workers moved back to rural areas during the pandemic period. Many did not return to the hospitality sector. Instead, they shifted to local businesses, manufacturing units, warehouses, or gig economy jobs.

Delivery platforms like Swiggy and Zomato expanded rapidly during and after the pandemic, creating lakhs of gig jobs. These

roles often provide flexible timings and daily earnings, making them attractive compared to fixed long kitchen shifts.

This shift reduced the available labour pool for hotels and restaurants.

Long Working Hours and Tough Conditions

Kitchen jobs are physically demanding. A typical kitchen employee in India works 9–12 hours per day, and during wedding season or peak tourist months, shifts may extend further. Weekends and festivals like Diwali, Christmas, and New Year are peak business periods, meaning limited leave opportunities.

Standing for long hours in hot environments, managing high guest expectations, and handling strict timelines lead to physical exhaustion. When manpower is already short, employees are required to handle additional responsibilities.

Research across hospitality sectors indicates that long working hours and work-life imbalance are among the top three reasons for attrition in operational roles. Younger employees especially find it difficult to accept unpredictable shifts and extended duty hours.

Rising Salary Expectations and Cost of Living

India has seen rising inflation and increased living costs, especially in metro cities. Rent, transport, and food expenses have grown significantly over the last few years. Entry-level kitchen salaries, which may range between Rs.12,000 to Rs.18,000 per month in many cities, often feel insufficient compared to the workload.

While hotels have increased wages post-pandemic to attract staff, salary alone is not solving the issue. Employees now expect:

- Fixed weekly offs
- Work-Life balance
- No break shifts
- Overtime compensation
- Performance incentives

- Respectful treatment
- Job stability

Many kitchen employees compare their earnings with gig workers or retail staff who sometimes earn similar or slightly higher pay with less physical stress.

The Gen Z Mindset

Generation Z is now entering the workforce in large numbers. According to workforce studies, Gen Z employees are more likely to change jobs within the first year if they are dissatisfied. In hospitality, younger employees show higher attrition compared to older generations.

This generation values:

- Work-life balance
- Mental health
- Flexible schedules
- Positive workplace culture
- Fast career growth

Traditional kitchen culture in India is often hierarchical and strict. While discipline is important in kitchens, shouting or aggressive management styles discourage young employees. They prefer supportive leadership and structured growth plans.

As a result, frequent job switching has become common among young kitchen professionals.

Impact on Hotel Operations

The manpower crunch directly affects business performance:

- Slower food preparation during peak hours
- Increased guest complaints
- Higher overtime costs
- Reduced menu offerings
- Continuous recruitment expenses

HR departments are now spending more time and money on hiring and onboarding. Training costs increase when employees leave within a short period. In banquet-heavy properties and wedding destinations, shortage of kitchen manpower directly impacts service quality and guest satisfaction scores.

The Way Forward

To address this challenge, Indian

hospitality businesses must take practical steps:

- Better Workforce Planning: Ensure proper shift rotation and limit excessive overtime.
- Clear Career Growth: Show employees a structured path from commis to sous chef and beyond.
- Skill Development Programs: Invest in continuous training and certifications.
- Positive Work Culture: Promote respectful communication and recognition programs.
- Employee Well-being: Provide proper meal breaks, safe working conditions, and supportive supervision.

India's hospitality sector is growing, but kitchen manpower shortage is a serious concern. With an industry size of over Rs.5.5 lakh crore and millions of jobs at stake, ignoring this issue is not an option.

Migration changes, long working hours, rising salary expectations, and the changing mindset of Gen Z have reshaped the workforce. Simply increasing pay is not enough.

The future of Indian kitchens depends on creating workplaces that balance operational excellence with employee well-being. If hotels and restaurants adapt to these changing expectations, they can convert this manpower crisis into an opportunity to build stable, skilled, and motivated kitchen teams for the long term. ■

About the Author

Mahender Singh brings over two decades of rich experience across leading hospitality brands including Radisson Hotel Group, ITC Hotels, and Royal Orchid. He is known for his deep expertise in strategic HR management, talent acquisition, employee engagement, performance management, labour law compliance, and organisational development. A strong and trusted business partner to leadership teams, he consistently drives people-centric strategies that align with organisational goals, strengthen culture, and enable sustainable growth.



SUSTAINABILITY UNDER OPERATIONAL STRESS

How Indian Kitchens Are Redefining Efficiency?

In the fast-paced world of hospitality, sustainability is often dismissed as a luxury - something that only large, well-funded hotels can afford. For many Indian kitchens, where profit margins are razor-thin, it can seem impossible to balance eco-conscious practices with the constant pressure to control costs. Yet, having worked across diverse culinary settings including high-volume hotels, fine-dining establishments, and flight catering, I have witnessed first-hand that sustainability is not only achievable but essential. Far from being a drain on resources, it is a catalyst for efficiency, innovation, and even profitability.

Sustainability today is more than a moral imperative. It is a business strategy that enables kitchens to operate smarter, reduce waste, enhance brand value, and prepare for an increasingly eco-conscious customer base. Across India, kitchens are proving that thoughtful, practical interventions can make a real difference even when margins are tight.

The Dilemma: Tight Margins, High Expectations



Running a kitchen is a delicate balancing act. Rising costs for raw materials, labour, utilities, and fuel squeeze margins, while guests continue to expect exceptional quality, hygiene, and increasingly, environmentally responsible

practices. Add to this the evolving regulatory landscape, and the hesitation to invest in sustainability becomes understandable.

The perception persists that eco-friendly alternatives are expensive. Organic produce, energy-efficient equipment, and sophisticated waste management systems appear as cost-heavy investments. But when approached strategically, sustainability becomes a tool for reducing costs, minimising waste, and improving operational efficiency - essentially protecting, rather than eroding, margins.

Sustainability in Indian kitchens is often viewed as a costly ideal, especially when operations run on tight margins and every rupee counts. Yet, across hotels, finedining restaurants, and flight catering units, a quiet transformation is underway. Kitchens are proving that sustainable practices are not an added burden but a pathway to smarter operations, reduced waste, lower costs, and stronger brand value. Far from being a luxury, sustainability has become a practical, profitprotecting strategy—one that futureready culinary teams can no longer afford to ignore. Chef Altamash Patel, Joint Secretary – Western India Culinary Association highlights practical steps Indian kitchens are taking.

Minimising Food Waste: Turning Loss into Opportunity



Food waste remains one of the most pressing challenges, and opportunity, in Indian kitchens. Every unused ingredient or spoiled dish represents lost revenue.

Hotels and flight catering operations often report waste accounting for 5–10% of total food costs. By implementing portion control, accurate forecasting, and robust inventory management, kitchens can significantly reduce waste. Advanced digital tools now allow tracking of discarded items, identifying high-waste stations, and optimising prep methods.

For inflight catering, where pre-portioned meals are prepared in high volumes, precision is vital. Reducing overproduction not only cuts costs but also ensures compliance with airline standards. Residual food, when managed responsibly, can be composted or converted into biogas, transforming potential loss into a valuable resource.

Energy Efficiency: Small Adjustments, Big Gains



For chefs and kitchen teams, sustainability is no longer just an ethical choice - it is a necessity. Even kitchens operating under thin margins can thrive while doing right by the planet. The future of Indian culinary operations, whether in hotels, fine dining, or flight catering, lies not only in crafting exceptional food but in running responsible, innovative, and efficient kitchens that prioritise people, profit, and the planet.

Energy expenditure is a major operational cost. Kitchens run 24/7, with ovens, stoves, refrigeration, and ventilation consuming massive amounts of electricity and fuel. Yet, simple adjustments can yield significant savings.

Switching to LED lighting, investing in energy-efficient ovens and induction cooktops, and insulating freezers and hot boxes are small but impactful steps. Optimising cooking schedules and turning off equipment when not in use further reduces energy bills. Many kitchens report 10–15% reduction in utility costs within a year of such measures.

Flight catering, with its strict temperature-control requirements, benefits enormously from energy-efficient systems, reducing both operational costs and environmental footprint.

Local and Seasonal Sourcing: Sustainable and Smart

Global supply chains offer exotic ingredients but come with higher costs, logistical challenges, and a larger carbon footprint. Many Indian kitchens are turning to local farms and seasonal produce. Sourcing locally reduces transportation costs and ensures fresher ingredients,



while seasonal menus decrease reliance on imported or off-season products. Beyond cost, this approach strengthens community ties and appeals to a growing segment of guests who value ethical sourcing. Flight catering operations, which demand consistency and volume, also benefit from strong local supplier networks, ensuring timely delivery while reducing environmental impact.

Water Conservation: The Silent Game-Changer



Water is an often-overlooked resource in kitchens, yet its usage is enormous. Washing, cooking,

and cleaning consume thousands of liters daily. Low-flow faucets, aerators, and reuse strategies such as redirecting vegetable-wash water for cleaning floors - make a meaningful difference. Regular leak audits further prevent unnecessary wastage. These measures not only reduce water bills but also prepare kitchens for stricter regulatory scrutiny, particularly in regions facing water scarcity.

Circular Practices and Waste Recycling



Sustainability goes beyond food. Packaging, oils, and other by-products contribute significantly to a kitchen's environmental footprint.

Forward-thinking kitchens now adopt circular practices:

Composting wet waste or converting it into biogas. Recycling cooking oils into biofuel.

Segregating plastics, cardboard, and cans for proper recycling.

These steps reduce disposal costs while embedding sustainability into the daily culture of the kitchen.

Training: Building a Culture of Responsibility

Even the best systems falter



without an engaged team. Training staff on waste management, energy efficiency, and safe handling is critical.

Workshops and incentives - like rewarding stations with the lowest waste - encourages accountability. Cross-functional awareness ensures that every team member, from storekeepers to chefs to service staff, contributes to sustainability goals.

Flight catering operations, with their high-volume, high-precision environment, benefit immensely from continuous training in portioning, hygiene, and temperature management, which reduce waste and improve operational efficiency.

Guest Engagement: Sustainability as Brand Value



Modern diners, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, are deeply conscious of sustainability. Communicating eco-friendly initiatives such as farm-to-table sourcing, biodegradable packaging, or food donation programs not only enhances brand perception but can also justify premium pricing. Sustainability, when integrated into the guest experience, becomes a powerful differentiator.

Sustainability as a Profit Driver
The practices outlined above demonstrate that sustainability and profitability are not mutually exclusive. Waste reduction, energy efficiency, local sourcing, water conservation, recycling, staff engagement, and guest awareness all contribute to cost savings,

operational efficiency, and brand enhancement.

Sustainability is no longer a discretionary initiative; it is a strategic imperative that protects margins, strengthens reputation, and future-proofs operations. Indian kitchens, from hotels to flight catering, are proving that smart, practical steps allow operations to be greener, leaner, and more profitable even under tight margins.

Conclusion: A Future-Proof Kitchen

Sustainability in Indian kitchens is not a distant ideal - it is practical, achievable, and profitable. Embedding sustainable practices into daily operations reduces waste, conserves resources, improves efficiency, and enhances brand value.

For chefs and kitchen teams, sustainability is no longer just an ethical choice - it is a necessity. Even kitchens operating under thin margins can thrive while doing right by the planet. The future of Indian culinary operations, whether in hotels, fine dining, or flight catering, lies not only in crafting exceptional food but in running responsible, innovative, and efficient kitchens that prioritise people, profit, and the planet. ■

About the Author

Chef Altamsh Patel is an awardwinning chef with 16 years of distinguished experience across leading luxury hotels. Recognised with honours such as Young Chef of the Year and Star Chef of India, he is celebrated for his innovation, precision, and artistic presentation. A respected mentor and industry voice, he judges competitions, leads food festivals, writes for top publications, and guides aspiring chefs through academic and professional platforms.

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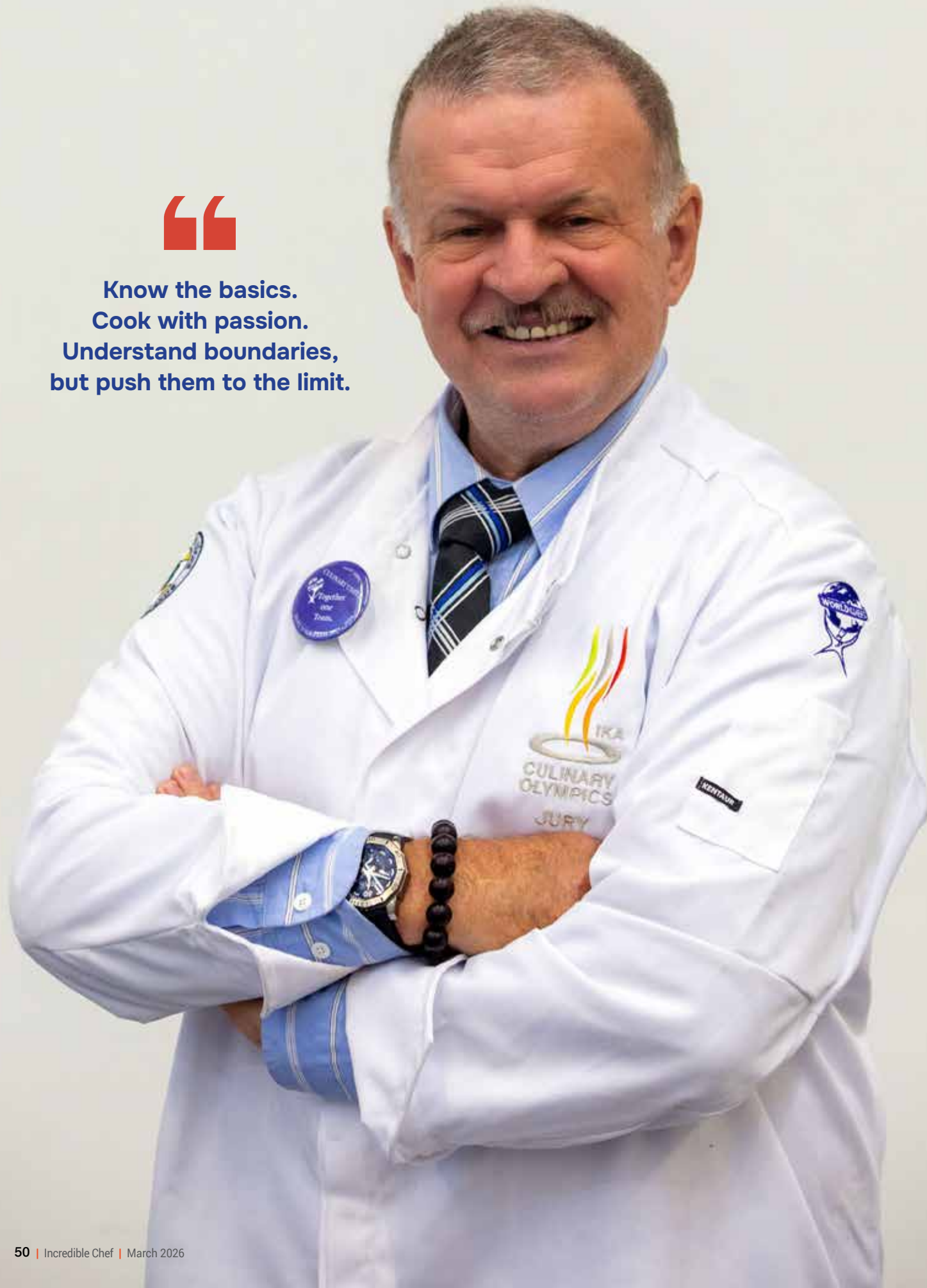
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**Know the basics.
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Chef Rick Stephen, Certified Master Chef, and Vice President and Culinary Competition Committee Chairman at Worldchefs, is one of the most influential figures in global gastronomy. A third-generation Tasmanian chef who began his journey in 1972 under the legendary Claudio Magris, Rick has since earned 82 gold medals across the world's most prestigious culinary arenas, coached national teams across Asia, and overseen one of the region's largest airlines catering operations - producing over 400,000 meals a day. Known for his uncompromising discipline, deep respect for ingredients, and lifelong commitment to mentoring young chefs, Rick has helped shape modern competition standards, global training frameworks, and the philosophy he calls Culinology - the intersection of science, equipment, and technique. In this conversation with Incredible Chef, he reflects on leadership, India's culinary potential, and the mindset today's chefs must embrace to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

“COOK FROM THE HEART”

CHEF RICK STEPHEN ON DISCIPLINE, INNOVATION, AND THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL CULINARY STANDARDS

You began your culinary journey in 1972 as an apprentice under Master Chef Claudio Magris. How did those early experiences shape your philosophy as a chef and leader?

Working under a chef like Claudio teaches you every discipline of the kitchen - speed, hygiene, quality, and consistency. These fundamentals shaped my entire approach to cooking and leadership.

From running a 3 Chefs Hat restaurant to leading one of the region's largest airline catering operations, what core principles have remained constant?

You cannot achieve anything without a great team behind you. Discipline matters, but you must be willing to do every task yourself before asking someone else to do it - including washing dishes and cleaning the kitchen.

You've managed teams of over 880 chefs and overseen production of more than 400,000 meals a day. What does it take to maintain consistency, quality, and morale at such scale?

Be open with your staff. Share challenges, work the floor with them, and be ready to roll up your sleeves. Greet every chef by name - it shows respect and builds trust.

You hold an honorary doctorate in Food from Youngsan University. How has academic exposure influenced your approach to culinology and innovation?

I call it Culinology - a term I didn't invent but have used for years. You must stay updated with modern trends and equipment to lead rather than follow. Academic knowledge is valuable, but real work experience and support matter far more than degrees people flaunt.

As Vice President of Worldchefs and Chairman of the Competition Committee, how do you see the organisation's role evolving?

Worldchefs aims to raise the bar at every competition while ensuring competitors understand what is



expected and are judged fairly. Organisers must provide proper jury systems, accurate timing, and worldclass kitchens.

Which areas - food safety, competition standards, or education - will define the next decade of culinary progress?

Sustainability is crucial. Chefs must know where products come from and respect the farmers and fishermen behind them. Food safety is equally important - guests must trust that your kitchen is hygienic and your food handled with care.

You often speak about "Culinology." How is this philosophy reflected in Worldchefs' training and certification programs?

Culinology blends research, food science, equipment, and guest expectations. While it's more my personal philosophy, elements like innovation are now integral to competitions.

What challenges does Worldchefs face in unifying global culinary standards across diverse cultures and economies?

Local politics can be a barrier. But chefs everywhere wear the same white jacket - we must share knowledge and support each other. The future lies with young chefs; those who don't support them will struggle with constant staff

turnover.

How do you view India's culinary evolution on the global stage?

I love Indian food - and yes, I can handle the heat! But India is missing from major global competitions like the World Cup and Culinary Olympics. Whether it's politics, confidence, or training, the cuisine must be presented in a way global judges understand while meeting event criteria.

As Chief of Jury for Culinary Art India, what qualities do you look for in young competitors?

Their mise en place, skills, technique, timing, flavour profiles, and plating. And never be late - guests don't wait, and neither do judges.

Stay authentic. Avoid excessive fusion and be mindful of spice levels, as juries are not made up entirely of subcontinent judges. Horses for courses.

What steps can Indian institutions take to align with Worldchefs' global standards?

Bring in external trainers to demonstrate required skill levels - especially modern plating and Western culinary techniques.

How can Worldchefs help India strengthen its presence in global competitions?

Training and more training. I always say: Fail to plan, then plan to fail.

What mindset shifts are essential for the next generation of chefs?

Be open and embrace feedback. Not all feedback is relevant, but good chefs know how to filter it and use what matters.

Across Asia, what skill gaps do you commonly observe during Worldchefs seminars?

Skills, practice, training, and mentorship. Competitors must prepare long before an event. It's not about quantity - it's about quality.

How can Indian chefs better

prepare for international competitions?

Through structured training and coaching. A "school of excellence" can be created anywhere, as long as it's open to all.

With rising expectations around sustainability and transparency, how can large-scale kitchens adapt?

Through recipe development, food R&D, chef training, and strong engagement with farmers and fishermen. Promote regional produce.

How can the industry balance discipline with wellbeing?

Time management is essential. Health and family must come first. Many chefs struggle because they don't delegate - often because they

haven't trained their understudies well.

What systemic changes are needed globally to ensure better worklife balance and career longevity?

Management must look beyond the bottom line. Staff are the most important part of any operation - from the dishwasher to the person delivering the food.

How can associations like ICF and Worldchefs support young professionals?

Promote your region, share knowledge, and develop young chefs to eventually take your place. Everyone has a useby date - if you hold on too tightly, young chefs will leave.

With AI, automation, and data-driven kitchens emerging, how will the chef's role evolve?

Chefs must understand food cost and labour cost. Profit matters, but so does great food that brings customers back. If AI or automation helps free chefs to be more creative, embrace it.

What global movements will shape the future of gastronomy?

Healthy cooking, innovation, and respect for food.

One piece of advice for every young chef in India?

Cook from the heart. Listen to everyone. When you become a chef, choose what works for you and your establishment. ■

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ICF FAMILY GET TOGETHER





FLASHBACK

WHEN ICF LIT UP INDIA'S CULINARY STAGE

FLASHBACK: THE 22ND ANNUAL CHEF AWARDS 2025

As we look back on the year gone by, one evening continues to shine brightly in the collective memory of the Indian Culinary Forum — the 22nd Annual Chef Awards 2025, hosted on 13th October 2025, at The Ashok, New Delhi, in the run-up to International Chefs Day. For the Forum, the evening stood as a powerful reminder of how India's culinary fraternity continues to evolve, inspire, and set new benchmarks of excellence. It was more than an awards ceremony; it was a reaffirmation of everything ICF stands for — excellence, mentorship, community, and the relentless pursuit of culinary mastery.

The ceremony brought together master chefs, hospitality leaders, academicians, and industry icons, transforming the venue into a vibrant showcase of India's gastronomic talent. Widely regarded as the Oscars of the Indian Culinary Industry, the Chef Awards once again highlighted the artistry, innovation, and discipline that define the nation's culinary professionals.

The event was graced by Mrs. Mugdha Sinha, IAS, Managing Director of ITDC, as the Chief Guest — a gesture that underscored the growing national recognition of the culinary arts and the role chefs play in shaping India's cultural narrative.

Honouring the Best Across the Industry

ICF honoured 17 exceptional culinary professionals across 15 prestigious categories, celebrating their contributions to the hospitality sector. The top honours reflected both legacy and emerging excellence:

- Lifetime Achievement Award — Chef Umesh Mattoo
- Jury Choice Award — Chef Julia Carmen
- Golden Hat Award — Chef Sandeep Kalra (Air India)
- Silver Hat Award — Chef Shailender Singh (Pride Hotel)
- Shri Anil Bhandari Memorial – Chef of the Year Award — Chef Ankit Gaurav (Country Inn &



As ICF looks back on the 22nd Annual Chef Awards 2025, the event stands as a testament to the Forum's mission — to honour excellence, foster community, and elevate Indian cuisine on the world stage. It was more than a ceremony; it was a celebration of the passion, discipline, and creativity that define India's culinary identity.

Suites) and Chef Karan Mehta (Le Meridien) Each award symbolised years of dedication and the relentless pursuit of mastery.

The 10 MasterChef Awards were the culmination of a rigorous fourday competition held at IBCA (Institute of Bakery and Culinary Art) and Banarsidas Chandiwala Institute of Hotel Management & Catering Technology. More than 150 chefs from across India competed in diverse categories, showcasing precision, creativity, and technical excellence.

The competition reaffirmed ICF's belief that structured culinary challenges are essential for

MASTERCHEF AWARD WINNERS — 2025

- International Cuisine — Jaskaran Singh, India Habitat Centre
- Oriental Cuisine — Timothy Lepcha, India Habitat Centre
- North Indian Cuisine — Naman Sanjay Mahorla, Pride Plaza Aerocity
- East/West/South Indian Cuisine — Abhishek Sengupta, Manipal University Jaipur
- Kebab — Nitin Kumar, India Habitat Centre
- Indian Sweets — Daman Prakash, The Ashok Hotel
- International Confectionery — Pawan, Marriott Aerocity
- Baker — Devender Yadav, Pullman & Novotel Aerocity
- Butcher — Tara Subba, India Habitat Centre
- Student Chef of the Year —
 - Female: Harpreet Kaur Malik, The Ashok Hotel
 - Male: Shresth Agrawal, Vedatya Institute

nurturing talent and preparing chefs for global platforms.

“The Annual Chef Awards stand as a proud symbol of excellence and dedication within India's culinary fraternity. Through these awards, we celebrate the relentless passion and innovation of chefs who continue to shape our nation's gastronomic identity,” said Chef Davinder Kumar, President of the Indian Culinary Forum, reflecting on the celebration.

General Secretary Chef Vivek Saggarr highlighted the deeper purpose behind the event stating, “beyond recognition, the Chef Awards represent growth, learning, and community. This year's event highlighted not only extraordinary skill but also the growing emphasis on sustainability and innovation. ICF remains committed to nurturing talent, encouraging knowledge-sharing, and supporting chefs who strive to redefine excellence in the kitchen.” ■

A LEGACY THAT CONTINUES TO INSPIRE

Established in 1987, the Indian Culinary Forum has grown into the country's premier association of professional chefs. Its affiliation with the World Association of Cooks Societies (WACS) connects Indian chefs to a global network of over nine million professionals across 110 countries.

Through competitions, seminars, mentorship, and continuous learning, ICF remains committed to:

- Advancing the culinary arts,
- Promoting India's gastronomic heritage,
- Inspiring young chefs to pursue hospitality careers, and
- Strengthening India's global culinary presence.



TRADITION TO TECHNOLOGY

13TH KNOWLEDGE SUMMIT

FLASHBACK



ICF convened leading voices from India's culinary, academic, wellness, and hospitality sectors at the 13th Knowledge Summit. Centred on the theme "Tradition to Technology: Strategies for Success in the Culinary World," the summit formed a key part of International Chefs Day celebrations and set the tone for the Annual Chef Awards.

The day opened with a welcome address by Chef Bharat Alagh, Vice President of ICF, who highlighted the importance of collaboration and continuous learning in shaping India's culinary identity.

In his keynote, Prof. (Dr.) Sanjay Srivastava, Vice Chancellor of Manav Rachna University, emphasised the need for academic institutions to evolve with global industry demands and prepare chefs who are both skilled artisans and innovators.

Three panel discussions mapped the future of the profession.

- **Health and Wellness:** Palates to Plates explored nutrition, sustainability, and mindful eating, with experts stressing the balance between flavour and wellness. Panelists included Dr. Sikha Sharma - Scientific Mentor, RANFORT Wellness; Chef Vaibhav Soni - Founder, Snowy Foods Culinary; Pallavi Upadhyaya Co-Founder & Managing Director - Millets for Health; Pranav Mishra - Business Development Head, Sankalp Group; and P. N. Jairam - Management Consultant.
- **Education and Learning:** Unlocking Opportunities examined the future of culinary education, with speakers calling for hybrid professionals fluent

in both creativity and digital tools. Panelists included Amit Saxena - Head L&D, Compass Group India; Dr. Ritika Singh - Dean, School of Culinary and Hotel Management, Manav Rachna; Rakesh Garg - Founder and CEO, Roop Mahal Rice; Sonia Mohindra - Founder Director, Under One Roof Hotel Consultants; and Jayant Chauhan - Country Head, Confederation of Hospitality and Tourism.

- **Advancing Technology:** From Theory to Reality focused on how emerging technologies are reshaping kitchens and consumer experiences. Panelists included Sohani Sachdeva - Director of Marketing, Hospitality and Kitchen Solutions (HAKS); Suneel Shah - National Sales Manager, Commercial Water Solutions (Indian Subcontinent);

Arnab Mukharji - VP - India & South Asia, Welbilt Inc.; Dr. Shankar Kumar - Dean, Hospitality Management, Galgotias University; and Alok Dubey - Founder THS Consulting.

"The Knowledge Summit has evolved into a platform that connects ideas, innovation, and inspiration. Technology should not replace creativity, but enhance it," noted ICF President Chef Davinder Kumar.

General Secretary Chef Vivek Saggarr added, "Education remains the cornerstone of professional excellence. The future chef will be creative, analytical, and adaptable."

The summit concluded with a vote of thanks by the convener of the summit - Dr. Chef Prem Ram, reinforcing ICF's mission to build a globally competitive, knowledge-driven culinary community. ■



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