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— *magazine* —



WHERE FOOD
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JUNE 2026

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Chef Suntron Bangjan

Being a restaurant owner means you are responsible for everything:

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Owner of
Kinsu
Japanese
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Christoph Siebentritt

Internationally recognized Executive Head Chef and culinary consultant with more than two decades of experience in luxury hospitality, superyachts, and Michelin-level fine dining. Having worked aboard prestigious superyachts such as M/Y Maryah, M/Y Whisper, and M/Y Synthesis, as well as serving as Executive Chef for Crystal Cruises, he is known for combining refined international cuisine with operational excellence and uncompromising quality standards.

I grew up in a small village in Bavaria, deeply rooted in nature and surrounded by lakes and forests. Back then, my focus was entirely on becoming a professional football player. Fate, however, had other plans which, in hindsight, was a stroke of luck. Cooking was always in my blood. As a young boy, I helped my grandmother in the kitchen or joined her in the garden to plant fruits and vegetables. My most vivid taste memory from that time? Eating the first ripe tomatoes straight off the vine, you could literally taste the sun and the earth.

At 17, during my final year of business school, the decisive moment arrived. A close family confidant, who was an important mentor to me, asked about my plans while we were cooking together. He gave me the final push with arguments that immediately resonated: "You love to cook, you love to travel. As a chef, every door is open to you, you'll connect with people, learn about cultures and languages, and the world will be your oyster." That was exactly what I wanted. A few months later, I moved 300 kilometers away to Frankfurt am Main to begin my dual vocational training.

Having traveled and worked in various countries, I've learned how diverse enjoyment can be. Professionally, I stand for a light, aromatic cuisine paired with a play of textures. I used to get lost in "ChiChi", a leaf here, two dots there.





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I used to get lost in "ChiChi", a leaf here, two dots there. Today, my approach is: "Not standard – it's a signature." Excellent technique and making the product the star of the plate are my priorities. In my kitchen, rosemary, thyme, parsley, lemon, and garlic are non-negotiable essentials. For me, true mastery lies in bistro-style cuisine with all its facets. If you master this, fine dining plating is just an additional skill to learn. My signature dishes include Beetroot Tartare with Golden Raspberries and Lobster with Snap Peas and Carabineiro Praline.



Every station of my career has shaped me, but one moment on a royal yacht remains unforgettable. We had to take a tender boat across the ocean at night for two hours to load provisions at the pier. I lay on the boat's couch and watched the stars, just the sea, the waves, the wind, and the darkness. It was a moment of pure humility.

On the flip side was the harsh discipline of the 2 & 3-Michelin-star world, especially in London. There were days when I wanted to quit, but pushing through strengthens your self-confidence and self-discipline. As the saying goes: diamonds only form under pressure. These places were schools of life, not just for professional skills, but for personal growth.





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TV and social media mostly show the glamorous sides of the profession. However, newcomers quickly realize that the reality is defined by discipline, sweat, blood, and pressure. Then there is hygiene, which dictates 90% of our daily routine, yet nobody enjoys cleaning. But a clean workspace reflects the order in a chef's mind.

Despite the hardness, it is the most beautiful job in the world. It can only be executed excellently with absolute honesty and heart. Both the guest and the team sense half-heartedness immediately. If nothing changes at a political level, I foresee a "two-class" gastronomy system: Haute Cuisine for high earners and low-quality fast food for the rest of society. Dining out should not become an unreachable luxury. Culinarically, I believe we will move further toward vegetarianism and pescetarianism, but we must also prepare for an increase in allergies and intolerances caused by genetically modified products and additives.

My mentor once told me: "Christoph, only dream if you can afford it. Goals, on the other hand, are there to be achieved." I am currently in the final phase of completing my Bachelor of Professional of Business as well as my Bachelor of Cookery and Management. Simultaneously, major projects are underway with my company "chris7tritt - excellent consulting & cuisine." As a culinary consultant, I develop tailored F&B systems for yachts and restaurants worldwide and train staff in sales and craftsmanship. The core of my work is the "7S Culture - The Compass of Excellence", a framework that leads from strategy to success.



It might sound boring, but I cannot live without fresh mango, berries, golden kiwi, and melon. I love ripe fruit and crisp salads, for me, that is pure quality of life.





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Nothing brings me more joy than a perfect Spaghetti Aglio, Olio e Peperoncino or Penne Arrabiata. The garlic must be sliced precisely and roasted evenly to a golden brown in excellent olive oil (from my friend Fernando Pesato). When the pasta water emulsifies into a delicious sauce, it's indescribably good. Pasta and risotto are also my "test dishes" for any chef I hire.

In 2014, I needed a break. I grabbed my backpack and headed to Australia. I planned to travel for six months, but after just two, I missed the kitchen so much that I started working for Mark Best in Sydney. Later, I hitchhiked 5,000 km through the Outback and worked at the horse races in Darwin while sleeping in a broken 4WD. Ultimately, I spent nearly two years in Australia and Southeast Asia before I received a call from AIDA Cruises, asking if I would help commission their new ship, the AIDAprima.

To stay healthy, I need peace and fresh air. After a shift, I take 20 minutes to enjoy the silence and look at the sky. Sports, swimming, and specific breathing techniques help me control my focus. The social aspect must also play its part to stay truly balanced. I leave the alcohol to the younger crowd; I prefer a clear head. During service, I am focused, calm, and give clear instructions. Excellence in a team is only possible through unmistakable communication.

Cooking is one of the most important crafts in the world. It connects cultures like nothing else. My hope for the next 20 years is that we rediscover culinary arts as a way to heal, mentally through the social fabric of dining and physically through the intake of organic, wholesome products.



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CHEF'S LIFE



Mei Parker

Chef, Culinary Writer

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Thinking back to your childhood – what was it like where you grew up? Did you always imagine yourself becoming a chef, or did life take you somewhere unexpected?

I was born and raised in Malaysia, in a family where food wasn't just something you ate – it was the language we spoke. Celebrations, arguments, grief, joy – all of it found its way to the table. Food was the constant

My mother and her sisters were exceptional cooks. People would say their dishes were the best – and I grew up eating them without a second thought, the way children take for granted whatever is simply always there.

What eventually pulled me toward food wasn't a recipe or a restaurant. It was longing. When I moved to the United States, I missed the togetherness – the noise, the chaos, the wisdom that passed quietly from one generation to the next over a shared meal. I started cooking to find my way back to that feeling. And somewhere in that process, I realized I never really wanted to leave it.

So no, becoming a chef was never the plan. But looking back, perhaps it was always inevitable





When did cooking become more than just an interest – when did it feel like "this is what I want to do"? How did your family react? And back then, what kind of future were you dreaming about?

Ironically, cooking was never the plan. If you had asked the younger version of me what I wanted to do with my life, I would have said writing. I loved reading, I loved stories, and I imagined a life built around words. Instead, life took me through fitness instruction, then marriage, then migration to the United States, then years inside corporate America – each chapter useful in ways I couldn't fully appreciate at the time.

Cooking during those early years was survival, in the most honest sense of the word. It was how I managed homesickness, how I kept a piece of Malaysia alive in a country that felt nothing like home. I cooked for friends, hosted dinners, catered small events when money was tight. It was comfort before it was career.

The turning point came quietly. I noticed that nothing I did in an office gave me what I felt standing in a kitchen – that particular combination of confidence, purpose, and joy that comes from feeding someone well and watching them respond to it. Corporate work left me flat. The kitchen never did. That realization, simple as it sounds, changed everything. By the time I was certain, I was in my late thirties with a family to care for. A restaurant kitchen – the long hours, the hierarchy, the sacrifice of everything outside those walls – was never what I wanted. What I wanted was something more intimate. The freedom to create my own menus, to cook for people I knew well, to nourish a small number of people deeply rather than a large number superficially. When I discovered the personal chef model, it felt less like a career choice and more like an answer to a question I'd been carrying for years.





What I learned, once I was inside it, is that being a personal chef is far more complex than most people imagine. The cooking is the part you train for. Running the business — building trust, maintaining visibility, marketing yourself in an industry that rewards spectacle over substance — that's the part nobody prepares you for. It's one of the reasons I eventually pivoted toward writing. I know what it costs a chef to do the work and remain invisible. Helping them change that matters to me.

As for dreams — I never wanted Michelin stars or a restaurant empire or a television platform. What I wanted, from the very beginning, was simpler and in some ways harder to achieve: to bring people back to the table. To create meals that made a difference in someone's life — socially, personally, in their sense of wellbeing. Food, to me, has always been the thing that connects people across every divide that otherwise keeps them apart. The other dream — the one I held quietly for years — was to travel the world, to understand cuisines from the inside, to learn what makes each food culture distinct and what makes them all recognizably human. I'm pursuing that dream now, not through cooking, but through writing. It turned out the two loves of my younger self — food and words — were always meant to find each other.

What kind of food or ingredients do you feel most connected to when you cook? Is there something that just feels like you on a plate? And when did you decide to turn your chef experience into writing — and why?

I am, at my core, a curious cook. The ingredient or dish that excites me most is almost always the one I haven't fully understood yet. I am drawn to spice blends that carry an entire culture inside them — Berbere from Ethiopia, Ras al Hanout from North Africa, Garam Masala from the Indian subcontinent. Each one is essentially a story compressed into a handful of aromatics, and the moment I understand how a blend works — its logic, its history, what it's trying to do to a dish — I immediately want to see what happens when I bring it into conversation with something from a completely different tradition.





That cross-cultural experimentation is probably what feels most like me on a plate. Not fusion in the trendy sense, but genuine curiosity – taking a technique I learned from one cuisine and applying it to ingredients from another, then seeing what emerges. I rarely return to the same dish twice in the same way. The kitchen, for me, has always been a place of continuous discovery rather than repetition. That said, there is one exception. When I am homesick or need comfort, I always come back to noodles. A bowl of ramen, a simple stir fry, something slow and soupy – noodles were the food of my childhood in Malaysia, the thing that felt like a treat beyond the daily rice. That connection never left me.

No matter how far my cooking has traveled, noodles are always home. I trace this restless global curiosity directly to my father. He was the adventurous one – always pushing my mother to prepare something outside the usual Asian repertoire, always excited by an unfamiliar ingredient or an unexpected flavor combination. Those experiments around our family table planted something in me early. The appetite for discovery, the comfort with the unfamiliar, the belief that trying something new is almost always worth it. As a personal chef, I carried all of that into how I cooked for my clients – drawing on techniques and ingredients from across the world to create meals that were not only delicious but genuinely nourishing. Over twenty years, that accumulated knowledge became something I wanted to do more with. The pivot to writing grew from two things happening at the same time. The first was honest: the physical demands of the kitchen were taking their toll. Cheffing is labor intensive in ways that compound with age, and I reached a point where I needed to find a way to stay connected to the work I love without the work consuming my body. The second was something I had been sitting with for years – a growing desire to explore food culture the way I had always experienced it in the kitchen: through curiosity, history, people, and place.

I wanted to write about the world through food. Not recipes, not restaurant reviews, but the deeper stories – why a cuisine developed the way it did, what the land and the history and the people contributed to what ends up on the table, and what we understand about each other when we finally sit down to eat together.



That is where my writing is pointed. My goal is to contribute to culinary travel, food culture publications, specialty food media, and magazines that explore the intersection of food, people, and place – bringing the perspective of someone who has spent twenty years cooking global cuisine professionally, not just observing it from the outside. The chef's lens is a specific one. It notices things a food tourist doesn't – the technique behind a dish, the ingredient that signals a cultural exchange, the meal that could only have come from that particular geography and history. That perspective is what I bring to the page.

Helping food businesses and chefs tell their own stories is part of that broader work – because the same curiosity that drives me to understand a cuisine drives me to understand the people who have dedicated their lives to it. But the larger ambition is the writing itself: to use food as a window into cultures, communities, and human connection in ways that make readers want to pull up a chair at tables they've never sat at before.

Twenty years in the kitchen taught me how food brings people together. Writing is how I intend to keep saying that – just from a different seat at the table.

Looking back on your journey so far, is there a place you worked that really stayed with you – in a good way? What made it special? And on the flip side, was there a moment or place that really tested you?

When I look back, what stayed with me was never a place. It was always the people.

Cooking is the reason I get hired. But what actually happens over time – what makes this work meaningful in ways that are hard to explain to someone outside of it – is the relationship that builds between a personal chef and the people she feeds





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You enter someone's home, you learn how they eat, what comforts them, what they're celebrating, what they're quietly going through. You cook for their families, their guests, their ordinary Tuesday evenings and their most important occasions. Done with care, that kind of work becomes something that sits closer to friendship than employment.

Some of my clients have been with me since the very beginning of my career. That continuity tells its own story. It says something about trust, and about what happens when food is prepared with genuine attention to the people receiving it rather than just the dish being produced.

That intimacy is what I have always valued most about personal chef work – and it is something the role offers that almost no other culinary path can.

The challenges came from a completely different direction. The cooking I could do. What tested me was everything surrounding it – building visibility, putting myself forward, finding the clients who needed what I offered and helping them understand why it mattered. Marketing is not something that comes naturally to me, and in the early years that was a real struggle. You can be exceptional in the kitchen and still remain invisible to the people who need to find you. I lived that gap firsthand, and it took sustained effort and humility to close it.

I also made a deliberate choice during quieter periods to work outside my own business – taking on shifts with catering companies and volunteering with nonprofit organizations. The catering work in particular was a different world entirely. Cooking for a thousand people at a single event demands a different kind of discipline – precision under pressure, the ability to adapt quickly, an understanding of how large-scale service actually functions. It was demanding in ways my private chef work was not, and I am glad I did it. It rounded me out. It gave me a respect for the commercial kitchen that I could not have developed any other way, and it made me a more complete professional.

The most useful experiences are rarely the most comfortable ones. That has certainly been true for me.





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These days, food is everywhere — TV, Instagram, YouTube — and chefs are almost like celebrities. How do you feel about that? Do you think it helps the profession, or does it take something away from it?

Both things are true, and I think it's important to hold them together rather than land firmly on one side.

The visibility is genuinely valuable. When people are curious about food — when they want to understand where ingredients come from, how a dish is built, what a chef is actually trying to accomplish — it creates a more engaged and appreciative audience. Chefs who have learned to use social media well have built platforms that would have been unimaginable a generation ago, and some of them have used that reach to do meaningful things for the industry and the people in it. That deserves recognition.

But there is a side to it that troubles me, and I say this as someone who has spent over twenty years doing the unglamorous version of this work.

What social media rarely shows is the foundation. The years of starting at the bottom and earning your way up. The physical toll of standing on your feet for twelve hours. The thankless stretches where you give everything to your craft and the recognition doesn't come. The reality that this profession demands not just passion but genuine endurance — and that passion alone will not carry you through the difficult years.

What concerns me is the impression that gets created in its absence. When a chef's life looks effortless and glamorous on screen, it sends a message to the next generation that the path is shorter and easier than it actually is. It isn't. You begin humbly. You build slowly. You earn your craft through repetition and sacrifice in conditions that no camera tends to follow. Social media is a powerful tool — I believe that completely, and I use it myself as part of building my writing practice. But a tool is only as honest as the person using it. The chefs I respect most are the ones who bring their real selves to their platforms — the difficulty alongside the beauty, the struggle alongside the success. That kind of honesty serves the profession far better than a perfectly lit plate with nothing behind it





From your perspective, where is the culinary world heading? What changes – good or bad – do you see coming?

Food has always moved in cycles, and if you've been paying attention long enough, you can see the pattern. We moved from the classics to nouvelle cuisine, from novelty back to comfort, and now toward something that feels more intentional – a growing awareness of not just what tastes good, but what is genuinely good for us and for the world we're eating it from.

What strikes me about this particular moment is that the shift feels less like a trend and more like a reckoning. People are more informed than they have ever been – about nutrition, about sustainability, about the true cost of what ends up on their plates. Technology has played a real role in that. Access to information has changed how people think about food, and that in turn is changing what they expect from the chefs who feed them.

The constant through all of these cycles – and this has never changed – is that people want to eat well. What's shifting is the definition of "well." It now includes not just flavor and satisfaction, but quality, provenance, and sustainability. Ingredients sourced thoughtfully. Techniques that honor the ingredient rather than overwhelm it. Simplicity applied with skill rather than shortcuts taken for convenience.

I think chefs are genuinely responding to this. The best ones have always cooked this way – with respect for the ingredient and an understanding that restraint is often more sophisticated than complexity. What's different now is that the wider industry is catching up, and the conversation around sustainability and nourishment is moving from the margins to the center.





My hope is that this particular shift holds. Not as a marketing angle or a passing moment, but as a permanent reorientation of how the culinary world measures excellence – where the skill lies not just in transforming an ingredient, but in choosing the right one to begin with, and doing as little harm as possible in the process of making it extraordinary. That is the future I want to see. And I believe the chefs who embrace it will be the ones who matter most in the decades ahead

What about you personally – what are you hoping for next? Any dreams, plans, or goals you're quietly working toward?

My answer to this question is simpler than most people might expect – and I mean that without apology. I am not working toward a cookbook deal or a television platform or a personal brand with a million followers. Those are legitimate ambitions for other people, but they have never been mine. What I am working toward is harder to quantify and, I think, more lasting. I want to bring people back to the table. That has been my philosophy since the beginning of my chef career and it remains the driving force behind the writing I do now. Not the table as a metaphor – the actual table. Families sitting down together. People from different backgrounds sharing a meal and discovering, in the most direct and human way possible, that they are not as different as they imagined. Food has always been the most accessible bridge between cultures, between strangers, between people who think they have nothing in common until a shared dish proves otherwise.

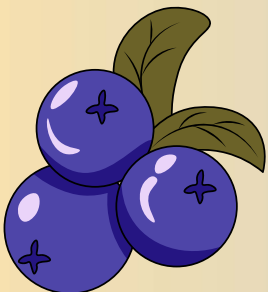
We live in a moment of extraordinary division. And while I am under no illusion that a meal solves everything, I believe deeply that the act of eating together – of preparing something for another person and sitting down to share it – is one of the most quietly powerful things we can do for each other. It breaks down walls that politics and argument cannot touch.





That belief comes from somewhere personal. Growing up in Malaysia, the dinner table was where everything happened – the joy, the chaos, the connection, the wisdom passed between generations without anyone realizing it was being passed. I have carried that memory my whole life, and a large part of why I cook, and why I write, is the longing to see more people experience what I experienced around that table. So what am I working toward? Writing that moves people toward curiosity – about other cultures, other cuisines, other ways of living and eating. Content that helps food businesses tell stories worth telling. And the quiet, persistent hope that somewhere, someone reads something I wrote and decides to learn more about a culture they didn't understand before – and then sits down to share a meal with someone from it. That, to me, is enough. That is everything, actually.

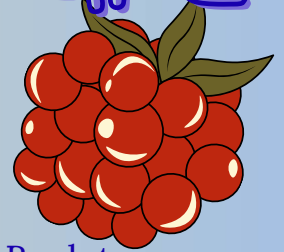
What's your all-time favorite food – the one thing you could never get tired of?
Noodles. Without hesitation. There is something about noodles that transcends culture and geography in a way that almost no other food does. A bowl of ramen built slowly over hours, its broth carrying the depth of everything that went into it. A simple stir fry, wok-tossed and fragrant, done in minutes but no less satisfying for it. An elaborate lasagna layered with patience and intention. A homemade pastitsio, warm and generous, the kind of dish that feels like someone's grandmother is feeding you even when it's your own hands that made it. What I love about noodles is precisely that – they belong to everyone. Every culture has its version, its own logic, its own relationship to the same simple idea of dough pulled or rolled or cut into something that carries flavor and brings comfort. That universality fascinates me as much as the food itself.





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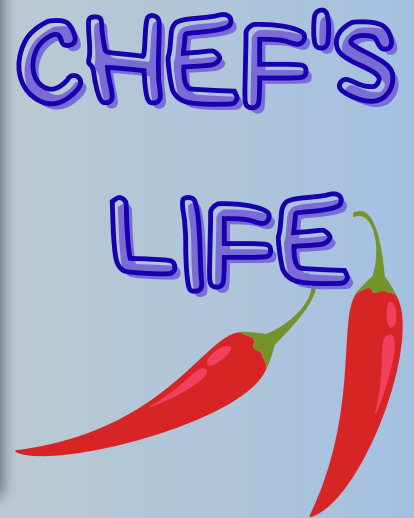


But if I'm being completely honest, noodles also take me home. Back to Malaysia, back to childhood, back to the feeling of something warm and familiar in a world that doesn't always feel that way. No matter how far my cooking has traveled or how adventurous my palate has become, a good bowl of noodles is always where I land when I need to come back to myself. Some foods nourish the body. Noodles, for me, nourish something deeper than that

Is there a dish you love cooking the most? Something that always brings you joy or comfort?



Honestly? The process itself is the answer. I know that might sound like a deflection, but I mean it genuinely. I have never been someone who returns to the same dish over and over, perfecting it through repetition until it becomes my signature. That kind of singular devotion belongs to a different kind of cook than I am. What brings me joy in the kitchen is the act of discovery — a new technique encountered and immediately applied to something familiar, a classic dish reimagined through an ingredient I came across from a completely different culinary tradition, the moment when an experiment that had no right to work turns out to be exactly right. The comfort, for me, has always lived in that process. The focus that comes when you are working something out in the kitchen. The particular kind of quiet that settles over you when your hands are busy and your mind is fully engaged with the problem in front of you. That state — absorbed, creative, present — is what cooking gives me more than any single dish ever could. If I had to be more specific, I would say I am most alive in the kitchen when I am cooking something I have never cooked before. When the ingredients are slightly unfamiliar, when I am drawing on knowledge from multiple traditions to figure out how to make something work, when there is genuine uncertainty about the outcome. That edge is where I find the most satisfaction. Perhaps that is also why writing about food feels like such a natural extension of cooking it. Both are acts of exploration. Both ask you to take what you know, push against its edges, and see what you find on the other side.



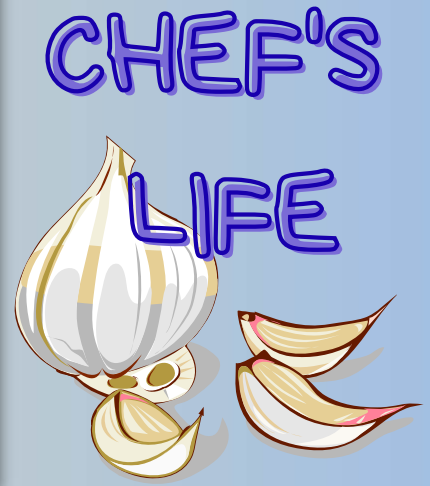
Have you ever had a moment where you doubted this path? Where you thought, maybe I should do something else?

No. And I can say that without hesitation.

That might surprise people, given that I came to cooking relatively late and by an unconventional route. But doubt about the path itself – that particular uncertainty – never came. If anything, the years I spent in corporate America before finding my way to the kitchen made the clarity sharper when it finally arrived. I knew what it felt like to spend my days doing something that didn't quite fit. I knew the particular flatness that comes from work that leaves you unchanged at the end of it. When I stepped into the kitchen professionally, I understood immediately what the difference felt like – and I never forgot it.

Cooking gave me something I had not found anywhere else. It made me feel needed, valued, and genuinely capable in ways that no office role ever had. But more than that, it gave me a language for something I had always felt but struggled to express – the desire to show people they matter. Every meal I prepared for a client was, at its heart, an act of gratitude. For their trust, for their presence in my life, for the privilege of being invited into their homes and feeding their families. Cooking has always been, for me, the most direct way I know how to say – I see you, and I am glad you are here. That is not a profession you walk away from when things get hard. That is something you protect. The challenges were real – the physical demands, the business pressures, the years of building something from nothing with no guarantee it would hold. But none of that produced doubt about the direction. It produced determination. There is a difference, and it matters.





Being a chef isn't easy — it can be exhausting, both physically and mentally. How do you take care of yourself during those tougher moments?

This is something I had to learn the hard way, and I think most chefs do. In the early years, self-care was the thing that always got pushed to the bottom of the list. There was always a client to prepare for, an event to execute, a business to keep running. Taking care of myself felt like a luxury I couldn't afford. It took time — and honestly, it took age — to understand that the opposite is true. If I am not well, nothing else works. The cooking suffers. The clients suffer. The business suffers. You cannot pour from an empty vessel, and the kitchen will empty you faster than almost anything else if you let it.

I have always been drawn to fitness — it has been a constant throughout my life even when everything else felt uncertain. But what changed as I got older was the intentionality behind it. I run five miles every day, and that time is non-negotiable for me. Not because I am chasing a number or a goal, but because that is my hour of stillness. The place where I process, reset, and come back to myself before the demands of the day take over. It is my moving meditation, and I protect it the way I protect nothing else in my schedule. Food, too, I approach very differently now than I did in my younger years. There is something almost ironic about a chef who spends her professional life focused on nourishing others while neglecting to nourish herself. I became more aware of that contradiction as I got older, and more deliberate about what I consume and how I treat my own body with the same care I extend to my clients. The mental side is its own conversation. Cheffing carries a particular kind of stress that doesn't clock out when the service ends — the weight of responsibility, the pressure of running a business, the emotional labor of caring deeply about the people you feed. What I have learned, slowly and not always gracefully, is to step away from the kitchen when the kitchen doesn't need me. To enjoy life outside of it without guilt. To release what I cannot control and focus my energy on what I actually can.

That last lesson took the longest. But it may be the most important one.





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And finally – if you imagine the future of cooking and chefs in the next 10–20 years, what does it look like to you?

I am genuinely hopeful. And I don't say that as a polite closing thought – I mean it as someone who has watched this industry evolve over two decades and still finds it as fascinating today as when I first stepped into a professional kitchen.

Technology will change the mechanics of this work significantly – it already is. Better systems, smarter tools, more efficient ways of managing the logistical weight that has always threatened to crush the creative spirit of the chef underneath it. I welcome that.

Any advancement that lightens the physical and administrative burden of running a kitchen or a food business creates more space for the thing that actually matters – the cooking itself, and the human connection it produces. But I hold one belief about this firmly: technology will never replace the foundation. The knowledge of how flavors behave together, the instinct developed through years of repetition and failure and refinement, the ability to take the simplest ingredient and coax something extraordinary from it through skill and understanding rather than spectacle – none of that can be automated. And as the mechanical aspects of the work become more accessible through technology, those deeply human qualities will become more distinctive, not less.

The chefs who carry genuine craft will stand out precisely because craft cannot be replicated. What I hope for most, though, goes beyond technique. I hope the next generation of chefs enters this profession understanding that the work is not just about feeding people – it is about connecting them. Food is one of the last remaining universal languages we have. It crosses borders that politics cannot, builds bridges that argument cannot, and creates understanding between people who might otherwise never find common ground. The chefs who grasp that – who see their role not just as craftspeople but as cultural translators and community builders – are the ones who will define what this profession becomes. They will need to work smart, persevere through the inevitable hard years, and resist the temptation to chase what is trending at the expense of what is true. If they do that, I think they will surprise us all. I am already looking forward to seeing it.





TIMELESS
RECIPES
from
Craig "Burnie"
Burns



<https://forgottenfeasts.com/>

Craig "Burnie" Burns Founder of FusiFood and Forgotten Feasts

Ancient Broth

Long before nutrition labels, clinical trials, or the language of collagen peptides, ancient cooks understood something very important: a pot of bones simmering over a low fire could restore the body. They may not have known the word "gelatin." They did not speak of amino acids, fibroblasts, or bioavailability. But they watched what happened. A sick elder regained strength after broth. A woman recovering from childbirth could tolerate warm stock when richer foods felt too heavy. A hunter with aching joints found comfort in a deeply simmered soup. A child with a fever was given a clear chicken broth, not because it was fashionable, but because generations had seen it work. For ancient peoples, food and medicine were rarely separate. In Chinese medicine, long-simmered broths were used to build vitality, support the kidneys, nourish the blood, and restore depleted energy. Across Europe, bone soups were standard recovery foods after illness, injury, and winter hardship. Indigenous communities around the world practiced similar traditions, simmering bones, marrow, cartilage, skins, and connective tissue until every ounce of nourishment had been extracted. This was not just thrift, although thrift mattered. Traditional food cultures practiced "waste nothing" cooking because survival depended on respect for the whole animal. Bones were not scraps. Feet, knuckles, necks, ribs, heads, and joints were culinary assets. The chef of the ancient world knew that the toughest parts of the animal often produced the richest, most restorative foods.

What they discovered through practice was one of the great foundations of restorative cooking: slow heat transforms structure into nourishment.

When bones and connective tissue are simmered for many hours, collagen breaks down into gelatin, giving broth its silky body, deep mouthfeel, and remarkable digestibility. That texture itself became a sign of quality. A broth that cooled into a gentle gel was understood to be strong, rich, and life-giving.





TIMELESS
RECIPES
from
Craig "Burnie"
Burns

Modern science now gives chefs a new vocabulary for what ancient cooks already knew by observation. Collagen provides structural support throughout the human body. It is central to skin, joints, bones, muscles, blood vessels, and connective tissue. As we age, collagen production naturally slows, which is why foods that provide collagen building blocks have returned to the center of wellness conversations.

Bone broth delivers glycine, proline, and hydroxyproline, amino acids associated with collagen formation and tissue repair. Gelatin also contributes to the soothing texture that has made broths a traditional food for fragile digestion. Chicken soup, beef consommé, fish stock, lamb broth, pho, ramen, avgolemono, and countless village soups all share the same ancient logic: extract nourishment slowly, serve it warm, and make it easy for the body to receive.

For today's chefs, bone broth is more than a wellness trend. It is a return to culinary intelligence. It represents flavor, sustainability, whole-animal respect, and functional nourishment in one pot. A kitchen that makes proper stock is not only building sauces and soups. It is preserving one of humanity's oldest healing technologies. The ancient cook did not need a laboratory to understand bone broth. They had time, fire, observation, and results. They knew because people got better. They knew because the body responded. And in many ways, that is still the most powerful culinary evidence of all.





RESTAURANTS
KINSU
Japanese
Restaurants
UAE



Chef Suntron Bangjan Ownee of Kinsu Japanese Restaurants, UAE



Where are you from? How was your childhood? What dreams did you have as a child?

I'm originally from Thailand. My childhood was simple, but it shaped my discipline and work ethic. I wasn't born into luxury, so I learned early that if I wanted something, I had to work for it. As a child, I didn't clearly dream of becoming a restaurant owner—but I always wanted to become someone respected, someone who could create something meaningful and lastin

How did you become a restaurateur?

I have worked in the culinary industry for more than 16 years, starting from a young age. At 18 years old, I began from the lowest position as a kitchen assistant and gradually worked my way up to becoming a Head Chef.

Throughout my journey, I gained experience in many environments—from small local restaurants to large operations, including five-star hotels and fine dining restaurants. Each place shaped my skills, discipline, and understanding of what true quality means. The most important turning point in my life came when I had the opportunity to work in a traditional Japanese restaurant that had been operating for more than 30 years. The Japanese master I worked with was not just a chef to me—I respected him like a father. He didn't only teach me cooking techniques, but also discipline, consistency, and the mindset of a true craftsman.

He was the one who inspired me to dream of having my own restaurant. At the beginning, my wife and I didn't start with a big investment or a perfect plan.

We started small—cooking and selling food through delivery. For about six months, we worked every day to slowly build our customer base and reputation. That period was very challenging, but it taught us everything about real business—understanding customers, maintaining quality, and never giving up.

Eventually, we were able to open our first restaurant.

And today, we have grown to three branches in the UAE, continuing to develop and refine our concept of a luxury Japanese dining experience.





RESTAURANTS
KINSU
Japanese
Restaurants
UAE



What is life like as a restaurant owner? How many hours do you work?

It's not easy. It's a lifestyle, not just a job. I work long hours—often 12 to 16 hours a day. Being a restaurant owner means you are responsible for everything: food, team, service, customers, finances, and reputation. But at the same time, it's very rewarding. You see your vision come to life every day.

Do you have time for vacation? What is your favorite place?

To be honest, not much. The restaurant is always in my mind. But when I do travel, I love Japan. Japan is not just a destination for me—it's a source of inspiration, culture, and energy.

What is the difference between you at the beginning and now?

At the beginning, I focused only on food. Now, I understand that a restaurant is much more than that. Today, I think about branding, customer experience, team development, and long-term vision. I also learned patience. Before, I wanted everything fast. Now, I understand that real success takes time.

Would you do anything differently? Did you ever feel like doing something else?

Of course, there are many things I would improve if I could go back. But mistakes are part of growth. There were difficult moments when I felt tired or questioned everything. But I never truly wanted to do something else.

Cooking and building KINSU is not just a career—it's who I am.

What are your plans for the future?

I want to grow KINSU into a strong international brand. Not just restaurants—but also culinary experiences, education, and possibly a Japanese culinary school. My goal is to bring a luxury Japanese experience to more people around the world.





RESTAURANTS
 KINSU
 Japanese
 Restaurants
 UAE

Do you still cook yourself?

Yes, I do. Cooking is my foundation. Even as an owner, I always stay connected to the kitchen. It keeps me grounded and ensures quality.

What is your favorite food?

I love simple, high-quality Japanese food. Especially sushi with premium ingredients like otoro and uni.

What is your favorite food to cook?

I enjoy preparing dishes that highlight the ingredient itself. For example, sashimi, nigiri, or grilled dishes like wagyu or gindara. It's about balance, technique, and respect.

How do you imagine the future of restaurants?

The future is about experience, not just food. People want more than a meal—they want a story, emotion, and connection. Technology will play a role, but authenticity will always win.

What does the name KINSU mean? What is your philosophy?

KINSU represents precision, craftsmanship, and value. Our philosophy is simple:
 Use high-quality ingredients
 Respect Japanese techniques
 Create balance in every dish
 Deliver a luxury experience in every detail
 At KINSU, we don't just serve food.
 We create a journey.





CHEFS and RECIPES




Chef Michael Powell

Jerk chicken Mary land

Served with coconut rice

Burnt lime 🍋 wedge

Mango and chilli salsa with coriander

Jerk chicken is marinated overnight and lightly fried in the pan on the stove top for 3 minutes on each side and then placed onto a baking tray with grease proof paper w a little salt and cook for 20 minutes on 170c also

served with burnt lime,

the coconut rice 500g of jasmine rice feeds 4 people, wash rice under cold water place into cooking pot with cold water twice amount of water to rice also 1/2 tin of coconut cream ,pinch of salt bring to the boil and simmer for a further 15 minutes with the pot lid on and then after 15 minutes turn off the heat with

The pot lidajar



Jerk red snapper

Burnt lime 🍋

Garnished with, coriander, red chilli 🌶️

And shallots

Recipe card

1/2 tsp all spice

1/2 tsp nutmeg

1/2 tsp cinnamon

1/2 tsp brown sugar

1/2 bunch of coriander

1/2 bunch of shallots

2tsp of soy sauce

2tsp of thyme

1/2 of ground white pepper

1 tsp buillion powder

2tsp of honey

Red snapper is marinated overnight and then lightly fried for 3 minutes each side

then placed on to a oven tray with grease proof paper with a little salt and placed into the oven on 180c for 18-20 minutes, Burnt lemon is also fried in a pan on the stovetop until golden and caramelised, The garnish is picked coriander Sliced shallots, sliced thin strips of red chillies





BEING
SOMMELIER



Thibaut FOURTON Sommelier Conseil

When I was a child, I wanted to work outdoors because I loved the scent of flowers and trees. Then, when I was a teenager, my father, a winemaker, introduced me to the world of aromas through wine. The stages of the different colors (dry and sweet white wines, red wines and champagnes). The aromas of the wines (on the nose) and finally the tasting of the wines (on the palate).

When I was young, I had a knack for recognizing and remembering smells, as well as flavors in the kitchen. I have wonderful memories of aromas and tastes from my childhood with my maternal grandmother. And I love discovering new flavors. To answer your question, it takes not only a degree but also a tremendous amount of work. Whether it is in terms of tasting, the history of wine-producing châteaux, estates, or appellations. It is also important to know the quality of each vintage: Is this a wine worth cellaring? Or is it best enjoyed now? For example, you need to know what the trends are, just as you need to know the finest, fullest-bodied, and most supple wines. The same goes for champagne. You also have to love fine dining and be able to analyze each customer's tastes in order to tailor my recommendations. It is a truly exciting profession that requires a lot of research.



Through my company, Thibaut Fourton Sommelier Conseil, I immediately focused on the most expensive wines. And before I was able to offer private tours of these types of estates (châteaux), it was not easy. I worked very hard. Then, through word of mouth, my reputation grew in my field. I also guarantee complete confidentiality to all my clients. In my line of work, my clients are well aware that it is a privilege to taste these types of wines. For my part, I respect sommeliers who enter competitions, but it has never been something I felt the need to do. I have the utmost respect for every winemaker and every oenologist who crafts these masterpieces. I believe it is an art to elevate a vintage through a range of terroirs and choices of barrel brands (...). Nor should we forget that in this price range, one must know how to stand out in order to always remain at the top level. When I offer tastings of these types of wines, I explain this carefully to my clients.





BEING SOMMELIER



My relationship with the wine world has had to evolve along with the markets and the changes in different wines based on target markets. Some wines reflect their terroirs depending on each vintage. Others, for example, are very extract-heavy because certain countries (regions) prefer this style of wine.

But to be honest, at this point, it is difficult to identify a truly objective trend. With U.S. tariffs, taxes (...), it's really up to each estate (château) to demonstrate its expertise. I will then see what the trends are, whether in terms of taste or price.

I first became interested in the world of wine when I was young.

I started out working in the vineyards to learn the trade, and then moved on to wineries to continue learning more. I also worked as a tour guide at a château.

Then I shifted my focus to sommelier work.

I have absolutely no regrets about having worked in the vineyards and in winemaking cellars, because few sommeliers can talk about the winemaking process having actually done it themselves. This is a real asset for me in my profession.

To answer your question: I have 30 years of experience in the wine industry.

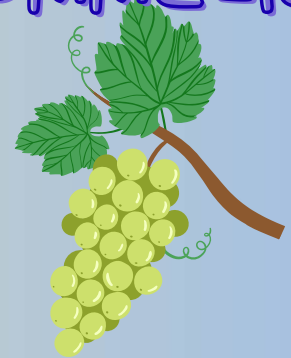
I have never felt the need to change careers until now. I love my job, which I still find just as interesting as ever. I have never produced my own wine. But I help winemakers with tastings to select barrels or blendings. As for my favorite wine: I really like certain châteaux in Pomerol, and I really like certain châteaux in Saint-Émilion as well as in Margaux. I also enjoy certain great white wines from Burgundy.

I like to let myself be swept away by the magic of the moment. If I am at a restaurant, I might very well ask the sommelier to surprise me. Or, when looking at the menu, I might choose a Californian wine, for example. That is also what makes my job so exciting—the wines have to really move me. Yes, a glass of wine or champagne can indeed bring back wonderful memories.





BEING SOMMELIER



I watched a few episodes of the series *Drops of God*, but I am not a big fan. I truly believe that unless you have worked in this field, it is pretty hard to fully grasp everything that is going on just by watching this series. I realized this about my own profession. And thanks to my experiences in the vineyards and in the winemaking cellars, I do not see things the same way when I taste a wine. It is like watching someone smell different scents in a TV series.

Just as in winemaking, there have been technical advances in the field of sommelier science. For example, the evolution of wine glasses. Certain glasses—which I call "technical glasses"—are very useful during professional tastings. Decanters have also evolved significantly. But the most important thing to remember is the person who will use this technique. Technological advancements are merely a tool.

I have already had to adjust my approach to climate change, for example, in my line of work. Tastes will also evolve, and I will have to adapt to that. There will certainly be other factors to take into account. That is why we will need passionate people like me to champion estates (châteaux), champagnes (...), and the men and women who produce great wines and great champagnes

My work is my passion, and I share that passion with all my clients.

It is very important to me to answer every specific question.

It takes a lot of work, but it is also a lot of fun.





HISTORY and STORIES behind

INCREDIBLE STORY OF ALEXIS SOYER

by Julija Toth

Alexis Soyer was born on 4 February 1810 in Rue Cornillion, Meaux-en-Brie, France, the youngest son of Emery Roch Alexis Soyer and Marie Madeleine Françoise Chamberlan, former grocers of Rue du Tan. By the time Alexis was born, the family had fallen into financial hardship, and his father worked various jobs, including labouring on a canal project. Two older brothers, Paul and René, died in infancy, leaving Alexis and his brothers Philippe and Louis. After his father died when Alexis was eight, his mother remarried and moved to Crécy, France. At nine years old, Alexis joined his brother Philippe in Paris, where Philippe had already established himself as a chef. By the age of seventeen, Alexis had become a highly regarded chef himself, supervising twelve junior chefs. Having trained under Georg Rignon, he later worked at Douix on Boulevard des Italiens in Paris. In 1831, Alexis left France for England to join Philippe, who was then chef to Adolphus Guelph, Duke of Cambridge.

Within five years, Alexis had built a strong reputation among the British aristocracy and became a noted chef de cuisine. In 1837, he accepted a position at the newly founded Reform Club, where he helped design the kitchens alongside Charles Barry. That same year, he married the artist Elizabeth Emma Jones. Emma, as she preferred to be known, was highly productive and had first exhibited at the Royal Academy at just ten years old. She also held unusual views on etiquette and social behaviour, believing that natural speech and behaviour were "vulgar and commonplace."

Emma died tragically in 1842 during a violent thunderstorm while pregnant, her death also being described as occurring in childbirth. Another great love in Alexis's life was the celebrated ballerina Fanny Cerito. Although her father disapproved of the relationship and she later married Arthur St Leon, the marriage failed, and she and Alexis maintained a secret relationship until his death.





HISTORY and STORIES behind



During the Irish Potato Famine in 1847, Alexis became deeply concerned by the suffering of the Irish people. With permission from the Reform Club and at the request of Russell's government, he travelled to Dublin and established one of the first properly designed soup kitchens. There, he served his specially created famine soup, feeding as many as 5,000 people a day. His efforts are credited with saving hundreds of lives. He also opened "Soyer's Philanthropic Gallery," an art gallery displaying paintings by his late wife Emma, using the proceeds to fund soup kitchens for the poor across London.

Having lost several family members, including his brother Philippe, to tuberculosis, Alexis became increasingly concerned about his own health. In 1850, he resigned from the Reform Club, officially objecting to the club allowing members of the public into the coffee room, although he had threatened resignation several times before. Lord Marcus Hill accepted his resignation and remained a lifelong friend.

Later in 1850, in partnership with Joseph Feeney, later known as Alexandra Symonds, Alexis leased Gore House, the site where the Royal Albert Hall now stands. In 1851, he opened "Soyer's Universal Symposium to all Nations," hoping to capitalise on the excitement surrounding the Great Exhibition. The establishment became one of the most extravagant restaurants London had ever seen, with elaborate themed rooms such as "La Grotte des Neiges Éternelles" and "La Chambre Ardente d'Apollo." A huge marquee called the "Baronial Banqueting Hall" stood in the grounds. Soyer planned to serve 5,000 guests daily with menus for all social classes, but despite its grandeur, the venture failed after only three months, leaving him with losses of £7,000.

Between 1851 and 1855, Alexis toured Britain promoting his cookbooks and his "Magic Stove," while continuing to organise lavish banquets and insisting that leftover food be distributed to the poor. In 1855, alarmed by reports in **The London Times** about terrible conditions in Crimean War hospitals at Scutari and Balaclava, he volunteered at his own expense to travel to Crimea and improve matters. Supported by the Duchess of Sutherland and authorised by Lord Panmure, he was given authority to reform conditions as he saw fit. Before leaving, he invented the "Soyer's Field Stove," which remained in use by the British Army for over a century. Working closely with Florence Nightingale, he improved food preparation and nutrition in military hospitals.





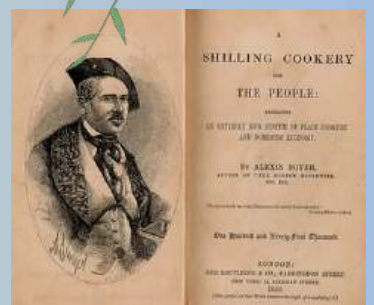
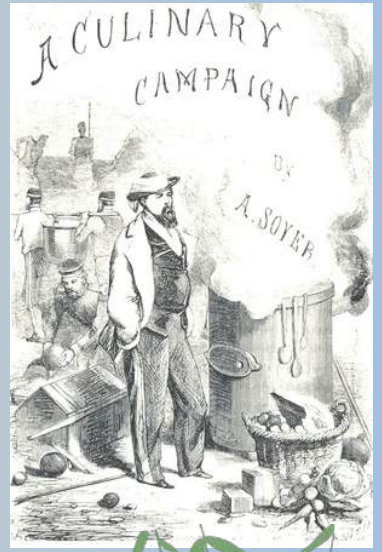
HISTORY and STORIES behind

Soyer also introduced a system where each regiment had a trained cook responsible for collecting rations and preparing meals using the Field Stove in all weather conditions. This system later influenced the creation of the Army Catering Corps. He also developed improved dietary plans for soldiers.

After returning from Crimea, Alexis's health declined significantly. He completed and published his final book, **Culinary Campaign**, before dying in 1858. He was buried beside his wife beneath the memorial "Faith" in Kensal Green Cemetery.

During his lifetime, Alexis Soyer was a prolific inventor and author, writing eight books, including **Instructions for Military Hospital Cooks**, published in 1860. His cookbooks appealed to all levels of society. However, after his death, a creditor named David Hart, a wine merchant connected to the Lemon Hart Rum family, seized all of Soyer's possessions. In 1859, Hart sold fifty of Emma Soyer's paintings at Christie's auction house. As a result, most of Alexis's personal papers and records were lost, leaving little behind of a man once regarded as the greatest chef in the world. Despite his humanitarian achievements, he received little recognition from Britain and became, in many ways, a forgotten figure in history.

Ironically, Alexis Benoist Soyer's genius was often more appreciated in America than in his adopted country. Although several biographies have been written about him, some authors – including Helen Morris, Andrew Langley, and Elizabeth Ray – relied heavily on earlier works without substantial original research. Much of their material came from **Memoirs of Alexis Soyer**, published by Volant and Warren shortly after his death in 1858, despite that book containing several factual inaccuracies that basic research could have corrected.





TECHNOLOGY
and
INNOVATION



**Kesha Stickland
Founder and CEO
MushroomMeet co**



<https://mushroommeatco.com/>
A Life Rewritten

Everything in life happens for a reason.



In my twenties, I was searching for direction. I was a psychology student in Los Angeles, modeling to make ends meet, when I became fascinated by the emerging world of technology. I taught myself how to build computers, learned programming and markup languages, and eventually changed my major to IT. One unexpected meeting at a Los Angeles nightclub changed everything. I met the founder of an internet startup running AOL's official online dating platform — and received a job offer on the spot.

I worked as a freelance programmer before joining an online banking SaaS startup in 2000, beginning a long career in tech. By my thirties, I had fully entered the corporate world. I worked across banking, payments, and entertainment, eventually joining MySpace before moving on to lead engineering for Disney's Digital Books platform. Later, I transitioned from engineering into product management at Disney Interactive. In my early forties, I became Vice President of Product for a late-stage technology startup and later worked as a principal consultant, helping Fortune 500 companies develop multi-million-dollar product strategies and lean product management practices.

Then life changed in an instant. On the way to a client's office, I was involved in a major car accident. The years that followed were filled with constant pain, prescription medications, inflammation, and the diagnosis of an autoimmune condition I had never even heard of before. I gained over thirty pounds and struggled physically and emotionally through one of the hardest periods of my life. But that painful chapter became the beginning of a transformation. I began exploring detox practices, herbal medicine, medicinal mushrooms, and a whole-food plant-based lifestyle. Gradually, my health started to change. The inflammation subsided. I lost over thirty pounds, weaned myself off medications, regained mobility, and felt healthy again.





TECHNOLOGY and INNOVATION



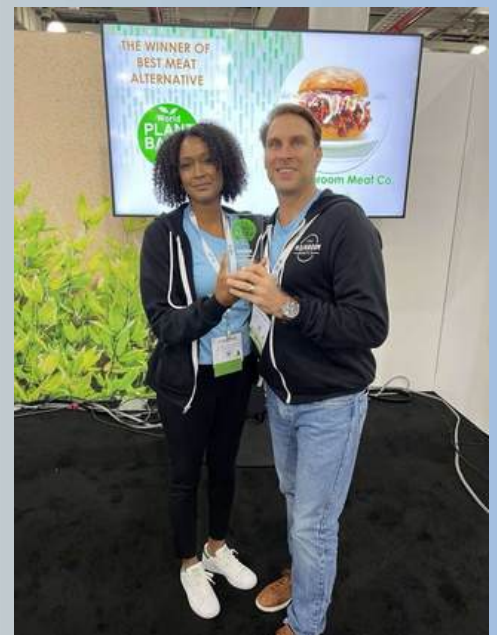
The transformation went deeper than physical healing. Together with my husband Dan, I immersed myself in plant-based nutrition, detoxification, health coaching, and mushroom cultivation. We stepped away from work to live on a mushroom farm, learning every part of the craft – lab work, spawn preparation, and cultivation techniques. I studied culinary arts to learn a new way of feeding myself and my family. In the process, I began experimenting with mushroom mycelium and fruiting bodies, creating what we called “MushroomMeat” – a new kind of center-of-the-plate food.

Encouraged by my husband, I submitted a pitch to the National Science Foundation’s Small Business Innovation Research grant program.

Three days later, we received a yes. And The Mushroom Meat Co. was born.

In our early fifties, we introduced our first prototype: PULLED MushroomMeat. The product went on to win Best Meat Alternative at the World Plant Based Awards, competing against brands backed by billions in funding. Today, I work alongside my husband and youngest son, building a mission-driven, family-run food startup focused on making mushrooms and whole superfoods more familiar, accessible, and central to everyday meals.

My food choices changed more than my body – they changed my life. Not simply through weight loss, but through resilience, healing, purpose, and the courage to begin again.





BEING
a
CHEF

An illustration of a chef's knife with a black handle and a silver blade, positioned diagonally. Below the knife are several slices of a red tomato.

Furqan Meerza
Senior Innovation Chef | Culinary
Innovation @KraftHeinz
Nijmegen, The Netherlands

<https://fugitivechefs.com/>



Thinking back to your childhood—what was it like where you grew up? Did you always imagine yourself becoming a chef?

I grew up in Bombay, India, in a family with Iranian heritage. My ancestors came from Persia generations ago and eventually became part of the royal administration (nawabs) in eastern regions of India, in what is today Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa. So growing up, food was never just food in our family. It was always connected to stories, migration, identity, gatherings, memory, and history. I remember listening to my father and grandparents talking about what they used to eat before India became independent, stories about regional cuisines, hunting traditions that existed at the time, large social gatherings, and the strange mix of influences between Indian culture and the British administration back then. Looking back now, I think those conversations shaped me more than I realized. At the same time, I honestly didn't grow up dreaming of becoming a chef. Like many Indian kids, I went through a phase where I was deeply patriotic and imagined maybe joining the armed forces one day. But food was always there quietly in the background. I was curious about cooking very early, especially baking and helping in the kitchen.





BEING
a
CHEF

When did cooking become more than just an interest for you—when did it feel like "this is what I want to do"? How did your family react at the time? And back then, what kind of future were you dreaming about?

One moment I still remember very clearly happened when I got jaundice as a child and had to stay home for a few months. Suddenly food became a much bigger part of my daily life because there were so many things I couldn't eat. I started helping my mother cook, doing very small things in the kitchen.

I remember the first vegetable she let me cut properly was okra. Of course, I was cutting it terribly with a dull knife because she wouldn't trust me with a sharp one. But later, when we sat down to eat, I could actually recognize the strange little pieces I had cut myself inside the dish. That moment stayed with me. It sounds simple, but it created a strange emotional connection. It felt like I had somehow entered the food rather than just eaten it. As I grew older, another major influence became Anthony Bourdain. At that time in India, his shows were not easily accessible on television, so I would watch clips online, read *Kitchen Confidential*, watch *Parts Unknown*, and become obsessed with this idea that food could be a way to understand culture, politics, people, identity, and the world itself. That changed everything for me. Suddenly being a chef no longer looked like only cooking. It looked like exploration. Research. Travel. Storytelling. Human connection.

And strangely enough, years later, I realized my work had started becoming surprisingly close to the kind of life I once watched through those screens. My family was supportive emotionally, but also understandably worried. The chef profession, especially at that time, was still associated with instability, long hours, physical exhaustion, and uncertain career paths. Many of those concerns were valid. At that stage, my dream was very connected to fine dining and research-driven restaurants like Noma and Mugaritz. Not because of prestige alone, but because they represented creativity, experimentation, culture, and a completely different way of thinking about food.





BEING

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CHEF



What kind of food or ingredients do you feel most connected to when you cook? Is there something that just "feels like you" on a plate?

I feel naturally connected to ingredients and flavors from back home in India, especially spices. Growing up around them gives you a very instinctive relationship with balance, aroma, heat, acidity, and layering that I think stays in your body almost subconsciously. At the same time, working in places like Noma and Mugaritz completely changed the way

I think about food. They taught me to look beyond flavor alone and think about food through landscape, emotion, memory, fermentation, seasonality, and narrative.

But honestly, if there's one thing that feels the most "me" when I cook, it's probably very simple comfort food made from whatever is left in the fridge. I cook like that a lot when I'm alone. One-pot dishes, improvised meals, things that are forgiving and adaptable.

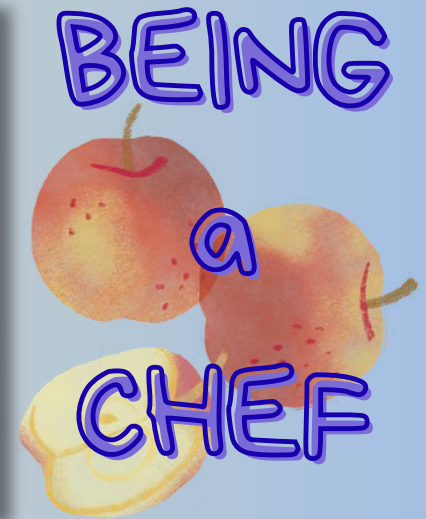
Fried rice is probably the perfect example. I love it because it accepts almost anything. Different cuisines, leftovers, random vegetables, scraps, sauces, spices. It's flexible, fast, comforting, and never too precious. Of course there are still rules. High heat, low cooking time, understanding texture, not making it soggy. But beyond that, it feels very free to me.

Maybe that's why I connect to it so much. It reflects the way I increasingly think about cooking itself: less about perfection or rigidity, and more about adaptability, intuition, and creating something meaningful from what already exists around you.

Looking back on your journey so far, is there a place you worked that really stayed with you — in a good way? What made it special? And on the flip side, was there a moment or place that really tested you?

Mugaritz stayed with me very deeply, probably more than any other place. What made it special was that it completely challenged my understanding of what a restaurant could even be. Mugaritz was never trying to simply create "the most delicious meal." In fact, that conversation was openly accepted there. Guests would say it. Staff would say it. Even internally, the philosophy was much more about questioning satisfaction itself.

I remember discussions around how restaurants often rely on familiar comforts to create satisfaction: bread, butter, sweetness, richness, certain structures of service. Mugaritz was interested in questioning those systems and emotional expectations instead of simply reinforcing them. There was one dish that stayed with me very strongly. It was a small piece of grilled lamb with saffron sauce, served alongside two bowls. One bowl contained one gram of real saffron, while the other contained dried Basque peppers that had been hand-cut every morning by interns and team members before service.



The guest would then be asked: what is actually more expensive? The world's most expensive spice, or the labor and time of all these people? That kind of thinking fascinated me. It stopped being only about food and became philosophy, sociology, storytelling, and value systems all at once. At the same time, places like Noma tested me enormously. Working there felt like playing in the highest league possible. The level of pressure, detail, creativity, and expectation was incredibly intense because everyone around you was equally talented and equally ambitious. There was very little margin for error. Physically and mentally, those environments can push you very far. But they also shape the way you think forever. They teach you discipline, curiosity, standards, observation, and how deeply people can dedicate themselves to craft.

These days, food is everywhere—TV, Instagram, YouTube—and chefs are almost like celebrities. How do you feel about that?

I have mixed feelings about it. On one hand, I think it has helped the profession enormously. The image of being a chef has changed completely over the last decades. It went from being considered almost a low-status blue-collar profession to something many families now genuinely encourage their children to pursue. That shift matters.

But at the same time, I think we have reduced chefs too much into personal brands and public figures. A lot of the conversation now revolves around visibility, followers, collaborations, and image rather than the deeper capabilities chefs actually develop through years inside kitchens.

What interests me much more is not the "celebrity chef" itself, but what culinary training allows people to understand about systems, culture, human behavior, adaptation, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving. Today we often see chefs attached to products or marketing campaigns, but I think their contribution can go much further than that. Chefs spend years learning how to operate under pressure, adapt constantly, understand sensory experience, manage teams, observe people, and work across culture and emotion. Those capabilities are valuable far beyond restaurants. I also think social media has created situations where people sometimes chase brands and prestige without fully questioning what they actually want from the industry. That can create unhealthy environments because the image becomes more important than the learning itself. For me, the future conversation should not only be about chefs becoming more famous. It should be about understanding how chefs can contribute meaningfully to much larger conversations around culture, sustainability, education, food systems, climate, community, and innovation.





BEING
a
CHEF

A stylized illustration of a red chili pepper with green leaves, positioned between the words "a" and "CHEF".

Now let's talk about Fugitive Chefs podcast. How did the idea come? What was the goal behind it?

Fugitive Chefs started during a very uncertain period in my own life. I had just left Noma in 2022, not really by choice, but because of immigration complications in Denmark after the renewal process around my visa became impossible during the period following the Ukraine war. Suddenly I found myself questioning what came next.

At that moment, I started speaking with people from previous stages of my career, including someone I had worked with at Mugaritz who had transitioned into R&D and education. She introduced me to the Basque Culinary Center, where I eventually joined as an R&D chef and gastronomic consultant. That experience completely changed my perspective. For the first time, I realized that the skills developed inside kitchens could translate into entirely different environments: research, innovation, education, strategy, consulting, product development, cultural research, and many other fields I had never even considered before. What surprised me most was that nobody had ever really explained these possibilities clearly to chefs. Most people only see restaurants as the destination because they simply don't know what other paths exist. That became the foundation of Fugitive Chefs.

At first, I honestly thought I would run out of guests very quickly. Instead, the opposite happened. The more conversations I had, the more I realized there are endless ways culinary people are contributing outside traditional kitchens. The podcast became less about "leaving restaurants" and more about understanding how transferable culinary capability actually is. A lot of chefs feel trapped between burnout and prestige. Many move from one toxic environment to another because they believe suffering itself will somehow eventually lead them toward success. But often they simply haven't had enough exposure to alternative paths or different definitions of what a culinary career can become. That's what the podcast tries to offer: visibility, perspective, and possibility. Today the podcast exists across YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and other platforms, but beyond the episodes themselves, there is also a growing community around helping chefs understand how they can navigate these transitions more intentionally.





BEING a CHEF

What about you personally—what are you hoping for next? Any dreams, plans, or goals you're quietly working toward?

Right now, I'm very interested in understanding how culinary talent operates inside modern food organizations beyond traditional restaurants. Working inside a large food company has exposed me to a completely different side of the industry and made me realize how much potential still exists around culinary capability that many organizations are only beginning to understand. One thing I've observed is that chefs inside companies are often still underutilized or narrowly positioned. Sometimes culinary roles become heavily centered around presentation, hospitality, or symbolic creativity, while the deeper capabilities chefs develop through years of training are not fully integrated into innovation, strategy, systems thinking, or organizational problem-solving.

I don't think this is because companies are failing or because non-chefs cannot manage chefs. It's more that there is still a translation gap between culinary culture and organizational structures. Both sides are often speaking different professional languages.

That's something I've become increasingly interested in exploring.

Alongside that, I'm also very focused on the future of culinary education and how schools prepare people for the realities of the modern food industry. I think many students still enter the profession with a very narrow understanding of what culinary careers can become. And finally, I'm very interested in how restaurants themselves can evolve into healthier and more sustainable organizations by developing broader revenue models and using their knowledge in different ways beyond service alone. A lot of my work right now, including Fugitive Chefs, sits somewhere between those three areas: education, organizations, and the future evolution of culinary work itself.

More than anything, I'm trying to better understand how chefs can contribute meaningfully to the wider food system without losing the human side of what makes this profession special in the first place.





What's your all-time favorite food—the one thing you could never get tired of?

Probably my mother's biryani. At home we make it Calcutta style, which is slightly different from many other versions because it includes potatoes alongside the chicken, spices, and rice. There's something very comforting and emotional about it for me because it carries so much memory from home. What I've always loved about biryani is that it's both technical and deeply personal at the same time. The layering, the spices, the sealing of the pot through the dum method, where everything slowly cooks together in its own trapped aroma and steam — it's a very beautiful process. And honestly, it's one of those dishes that instantly transports me somewhere emotionally no matter where I am in the world.

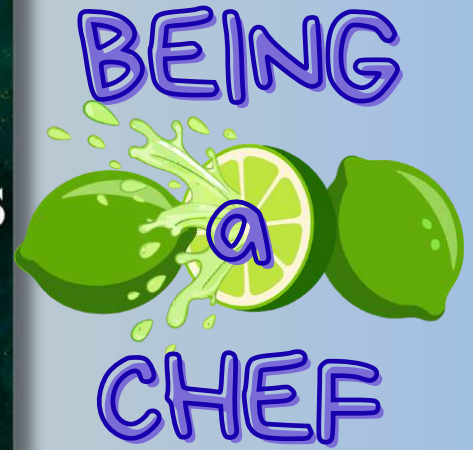
Is there a dish you love cooking the most? Something that always brings you joy or comfort?

Honestly, probably fried rice. I love it because it's forgiving, adaptable, fast, comforting, and never too precious. When I cook for myself, I usually end up making one-pot dishes with whatever is left in the fridge, and fried rice somehow always works for that. It can absorb different cuisines, leftovers, vegetables, sauces, spices, scraps — almost anything. Of course there are still basic rules: high heat, good texture, not making it soggy. But beyond that, it feels very free. I think that's why I connect to it so much. It reflects the way I increasingly think about cooking itself: less about perfection and rigidity, and more about adaptability, intuition, and creating something meaningful from what already exists around you.

Have you ever had a moment where you doubted this path? Where you thought maybe I should do something else?

Yes, definitely. One of the biggest moments of doubt came after leaving Noma because of immigration and paperwork issues in Denmark. At that point, I had dedicated so much of my identity to kitchens and fine dining that suddenly being forced out of that environment made me question everything. I remember wondering: is this really it? If even the most creative kitchens eventually become routine and repetitive, what am I actually chasing? But interestingly, stepping outside restaurants is what made me reconnect with food again in a much healthier and more meaningful way. Suddenly I was no longer cooking for guests or service alone. Food became a tool for research, culture, education, travel, and human connection again. I found myself in Egypt helping improve school meals, in Portugal working around gastronomy tourism, collaborating with UNESCO, researching fermentation and cultural preservation in Japan, studying perceptions of heat and spice across countries like Korea, Jamaica, India, and Mexico. That period changed my relationship with food completely. It reminded me that food is not only competition, prestige, rankings, or expensive menus. It can also be a language that connects people, preserves culture, solves problems, and creates understanding between completely different communities. That realization brought me back to this path, but with a very different perspective than before.





Being a chef isn't easy—it can be exhausting, both physically and mentally. How do you take care of yourself during those tougher moments?

One thing that has always helped me is reminding myself: it is just food. Of course food is important. Hospitality is important. Feeding people matters deeply. But at the same time, I think it's dangerous when the industry starts treating itself as something larger than life to the point where people lose perspective or destroy themselves emotionally and physically for it.

I try to stay grounded through simple things: taking care of my health, traveling, reading, listening to podcasts, meeting different people, staying curious, and remembering that most situations in life are temporary even when they feel overwhelming in the moment. Travel especially humbles me a lot. Every place and every culture reminds me how much bigger the world is than our own small professional bubbles. And lately, I've also been trying to remind myself more often that many of the things I experience today were once dreams I had years ago. It's easy to constantly chase the next goal and forget that where you are today was also once something you wished for very badly. Sometimes it's important to pause for a moment and acknowledge that too.

And finally—if you imagine the future of cooking and chefs in the next 10–20 years, what does it look like to you?

I think we will see chefs existing in far more diverse roles than we do today. Restaurants will always exist and great restaurants will always matter, but I don't think the majority of culinary talent will remain concentrated only inside traditional kitchen structures forever. As technology, automation, AI, and convenience systems continue developing, many repetitive forms of food production will probably become increasingly industrialized or automated. At the same time, I think chefs will move more into areas where human creativity, emotional understanding, adaptability, and cultural interpretation still matter deeply.

I hope we begin seeing more chefs involved in education, food policy, sustainability, innovation, organizational leadership, research, technology, and solving broader food-system challenges.

Chefs spend years learning how to adapt under pressure, work with limited resources, understand human behavior around food, and create meaningful experiences from constraints. Those skills can contribute far beyond restaurants if society learns how to use them properly. And maybe, in an increasingly automated future, restaurants and hospitality spaces will also become even more important as rare places of genuine human connection.

Perhaps we will go out less often, but when we do, those moments will matter more deeply because they will offer something machines cannot fully replace: care, emotion, storytelling, culture, and human presence.

That, to me, is the future of hospitality worth protecting.





BEING SOMMELIER



John Sears

**Executive Sommelier C.S. at Sears Wine &
Spirits Catalogue
Writer, Jazz Music Critique, Chef**



The Beginnings

I didn't really have a childhood dream although I thought I might be a professional musician but other more social interests got me side tracked. I was very interested in the romance and the social aspects of the home entertaining and restaurant atmospheres along with cooking and the accompaniment of wine and spirits and music. My family was very supportive of any interests I had and they let me explore whatever presented itself.

About becoming a Sommelier

Almost anyone can become a wine specialist but some are obviously more talented than others. Just like other forms of education, some things come very easy for people and other people have to study harder. It wasn't that difficult for me to become a wine specialist because I was in the hospitality business for so many years I was learning in real time first in kitchens and consequently on the Floor as a Sommelier. So when I was ready to take my Sommelier exam years later I pretty much knew most everything that was required. Even before that I had read many books regarding those subjects.

More people than you think are gifted with some degree of photographic memory especially people in high-level positions in every industry. Wine is like every other interest; if you have the desire, you really want to read books and research to find out about those subjects. I hate dating myself but I have over 40 years of total experience in the hospitality industry (over 50, if one includes summer jobs at the 100 year old (1870-1970) Family Store, Sears Leather & Luggage) hotels, restaurants and private clubs so being a professional was just a natural progression from starting as a dishwasher in a friend's father's pizza and steakhouse business.



Family Store
Elkhart, Indiana



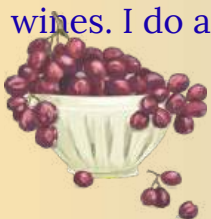


BEING SOMMELIER



About Chef and Sommelier life

I never really thought about choosing a different path because I was pretty happy with hospitality. I was always drawn towards food, wine and entertaining. After working for my friend's father, I started my own private catering business and, after that, I moved to Portland, Oregon for a job with ARA fine dining services at Atwater's where my Chef was Doug Bradley (who later was the Director of Culinary Operations for the 2008, 2010 and 2012 Olympics) atop of the U.S. Bancorp Building who also managed The Carnelian Room in San Francisco, The Changing Scene in New York and The 95th atop The Sears Tower in Chicago, all Wine Spectator Grand Award Wine List winners located in high profile high-rise buildings that featured cutting edge fine dining. Then I moved to Saint Louis to cook in the kitchens of French Master Chefs Marcel Keraval and Jean-Claude Gillossou of French classic fine dining restaurants Cafe de France and L'Auberge Bretonne, respectively. I then came upon an opportunity to be a Wine Steward at Fedora, a Gilbert-Robinson enterprise that also owned Houlihan's. This is where I met one of my mentors, Doug Frost, who was the Sommelier at The American in Kansas City and was also only one of two people in the World to hold both Master Sommelier and Master of Wine certifications. After working in the private sector as a Chauffeur and Yacht Chef for a couple of years I was lucky to land a position at Chez Louis in Seven Gables Inn which was on the National Historic Register and a Relais & Chateaux property. This was founded by Morton Meyer, the Father of Danny Meyer, the famed New York restaurateur. While still managing the beverage program there, mostly remotely, I was also the Sommelier at The Saint Louis Club, the premier dining only Private Club in Saint Louis. While there, I had the good fortune of working with French Master Chef Pierre Chambrin who was also a former White House Chef (Reagan/Bush). After 10 years there, I performed as Sommelier at a few other establishments. I never have produced my own wine; the old saying goes - if you want to start a winery you have to start with a large fortune to make a small fortune. I don't really have a favorite type of wine but I do appreciate all of the major wine regions in the World preferring European wines over American especially French, Spanish and Italian but there are numerous other wine regions large and small that produce outstanding wines. I do agree that the love of wines is not only experiencing the diverse tastes but also creating memories and emotions just like different foods.



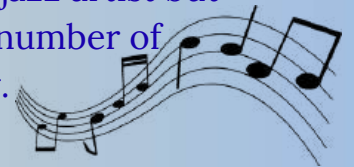


BEING SOMMELIER



About music

I am obviously old-school and I don't really like anything that uses artificial intelligence let alone creating music. It is fake and I don't like anything not authentically created by people. Like wine, I don't really have a favorite jazz artist but I appreciate all of the compositions and improvisations of a diverse number of creative artists, mostly traditional but some contemporary.



How many people in today world knows who Miles Davis was?

Almost everybody knows who Miles Davis is even people that hardly ever or never heard any jazz. He was such an iconic and influential artist spawning several major jazz personalities musicians.

I grew up in Elkhart Indiana, the band instrument capital of the World. Selmer, Vincent Bach, Conn, Gemeinhardt and other major manufacturers were all based in that city of only a 40,000 population. I was fortunate to meet several major artists when they came to tour the factories and many played as guest artists in our high school band and Orchestra. I also traveled to Chicago frequently and heard almost every major old school jazz artist (Dizzy, Joe Pass, Dexter Gordon, on and on) at The Jazz Showcase on Rush Avenue back in the day. Music, wine and food are all intertwined synergistically in most entertainment venues.

I think the future of Jazz and wine is bright. They have all been around for hundreds of years and will be appreciated for hundreds more.





CHEFS and BOOKS



Chef Marco Silva

Author, A Chef's Compass

www.achefscompass.com

Chef Marco Silva, a Brazilian-born chef based in Utah. I am classically trained at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris and have spent many years working in fine dining around the world, including Brazil, France, Dubai, Australia, and Papua New Guinea. My culinary style reflects a blend of classical French technique, Mediterranean influences, and the warmth and flavors of my Brazilian heritage. A Chef's Compass: A Brazilian Heart, A Parisian Hand, A Mountain Home is a reflection of my culinary journey, bringing together the flavors, memories, techniques, and traditions that have shaped me both personally and professionally. The cookbook combines elegant yet approachable recipes inspired by my travels, family heritage, and years in professional kitchens around the world. Food has always been more than cooking to me. It's storytelling, culture, hospitality, and creating memorable experiences through the table.





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