

Feature: Stars, food and art at the Sofitel
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Overview:

The feature is an interview the Michelin-starred chefs attending the Stars, Food and Art event in April at Sofitel JBR in Dubai.

Other requirements:

- Hi-res image of chef

Questions:

- 1. Have you been to the Middle East before? If not, what are your expectations? If so, what are you looking forward to most?**

I am from the Middle East, specifically from Lebanon. I am looking forward to promote my national culinary heritage the way I think it should be showcased, I am also looking forward as always to the exchange of culinary styles and cultures with the other participating chefs.

- 2. What attracted you to attend and showcase your skills at this event?**

My friendship with Lise Goeman Borgesius is the main reason I have decided to participate in the event.

- 3. Can you share an idea of the dishes you will be preparing for the evening?**

I have suggested the below items for the menu but still haven't got the final confirmation of the three chosen ones:

1. Entrée Froide Akkawi Cheese wrapped in Fattoush Salad
2. Plat Principal Poisson Fish Moghrabieh in Saffron
3. Plat Principal Viande Frikeh with Lamb and Dry Apricot Sauce
4. Dessert Apple Osmallieh with Vanilla Ice Cream

- 4. How do you think the typical Dubai customer will respond to your menu?**

When developing a recipe, I always take into consideration the tastes and preferences of the target audience, and I adapt spices and choice of meats and vegetables accordingly. I am sure that the taste buds of the Dubai customers will transport them to Beirut and back.

5. What do you think are the challenges of creating world-class food in the Middle East?

There are absolutely none, since all raw materials are readily available in the market, and the Middle Eastern repertoire is so varied it can accommodate all cooking styles and skills.

6. What do you think you will take away from Stars, Food and Art?

The festival will definitely enrich my culinary culture through the exposure to new styles and trends. I am also looking forward to establishing rapport with fellow chefs, organizers, and the audience.

7. How did you feel when you received your first Michelin accolade and what advice would you give you ambitious chefs looking to achieve the same?

Unfortunately, the Michelin guide to this day, has not yet rated restaurants in the Middle East. As for my advice to chefs, I encourage them to stay focused and serious, keep their discipline level high, keep striving to learn more and more about the different techniques and new innovations of cooking, and last but not least never forget the basics of cuisine.

8. What trends are you predicting in 2012 for the industry?

I have been realizing that for some time now, the culinary world has been veering back to traditional and authentic local cuisine. Chefs are going back to basics and are using modern cooking and preparation techniques on traditional ingredients and products to give these products their proper value.