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HOME / A STARRY NIGHT AT SOFITEL

A starry night at Sofitel

By Louise Oakley



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May 23, 2012

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The first Stars, Food and Art event in the Middle East, organised by Sofitel and culinary author Lise Goeman Borgesius-Timmer, showcased gastronomic delights in a city always looking for new dining experience. Hotelier's Louise Oakley reports.



The renowned chefs from left to right: Gianna D'Amato; Bernard Bach; Christophe Aribert; Thomas Bohner; Claire Clark; Joe Barza; Sofitel's executive chef Thomas Pendarovski; and Cyrus Todiwala.

The culinary climate in Dubai is heating up, with restaurants and chefs across the city increasingly looking to add entertainment, chef's tables and cooking classes to their repertoire. Sofitel went the extra mile last month, showing off its culinary commitments, introducing the chain's Stars, Food and Art concept.

Held at Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach, the eight-course gala dinner concept was created by seven renowned chefs, with Michelin backgrounds and celebrity status, including Thomas Bühner of three-starred La Vie in Osnabrück, Germany and Giovanni D'Amato of the two-starred Il Rigoletto in Reggiolo, Italy.

The aim of the event, organised in consultation with culinary journalist and author Lise Goeman Borgesius-Timmer, is to celebrate fine dining and its relationship with art.

Back in 2007, Timmer's original intention was to raise the culinary level of her home country, The Netherlands. She approached several hotel chains with her brainchild, but it was with Sofitel that Stars, Food and Art was born; the two partners sharing "the same values of luxury and that joie de vivre," recalls Timmer.

Since then, the culinary events have been held at Sofitel hotels in Marseille, Lyon, Vienna and Munich, with upcoming events planned for

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London, Casablanca, Amsterdam and Vienna in 2012, as the concept is rolled out.

The intention is to showcase French gastronomy, and also incorporate cuisines from each location — Sofitel Dubai, for example, welcomed Lebanese chef Joe Barza of Joe Barza Culinary Consultancy in Beirut and Indian culinary guru Cyrus Todiwala of Spice Namaste in London, UK. Timmer also works with British sommelier Jason Turner to pair wines.

The 'art', explains Timmer, consists of various performances between courses. For Dubai's meal, she welcomed world renowned opera singer Edita Adlerova from the Czech Republic. Guests were also entertained with a live feed to behind-the-scenes interviews with chefs, explaining each dish as it was served.

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TV's Top Chef host to launch restaurant chain

By Charlie Lyon



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Joe Barza, co-host of LBC TV show **Top Chef Middle East**, has announced he is working on a concept for a Lebanese restaurant that he hopes to roll out across the Middle East, Europe and the US.



Joe Barza hopes to launch a new chain of Lebanese restaurants

The chef, an ambassador for Lebanese cuisine and a well-respected figure in the industry, has revealed the restaurants will have the tag 'by Joe Barza' and will serve a "new-wave" style of Lebanese dishes.

"That's why I have been travelling to Serbia, to Germany, to the States recently," Barza told *Caterer Middle East*.

"For an Arabic chef it's not easy to become international – my dream is to put my country on the international map."

Barza hinted that the dishes would include the following: Frike with lamb and smoked green wheat; tuna with shawarma spices, artichoke puree and tahini; hummus made with white beans; fish moghrabieh; haloumi wrapped fatouch.

Barza also said that he is disappointed with the standard of Lebanese food in the Middle East, which is notoriously traditional.

"In Dubai," he said, "there are some good [restaurants], but honestly, in my opinion, the good ones are very few."

When asked how he thought diners, who enjoy eating home-cooked style food in restaurants, would react to his modern dishes, he replied: "You don't have to shock the people, you just have to think about the small twists and how you present them."

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