

Culinary

Entrepreneurs

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A magazine for the food, hospitality
and tourism entrepreneurs by



Chefs with
a cause

Social
Gastronomy
Enterprises

Agri & food
tech for a better
tomorrow



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Editorial



World Food Day commemorates the date of the founding of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization on 16th October 1945. This day aims to promote worldwide awareness of hunger and promote action for the future of food, people and the planet.

The World Food Day special edition of Culinary Entrepreneurs covers chefs, restaurateurs, food scientists and technologists who are realizing the power of food enterprises in fighting hunger, reducing social inequality, improving nutrition, providing employment and engaging people in good causes. The magazine looks at enterprises, startups, organisations and individuals working in areas like zero-waste food production, sustainable agriculture, agri-tech, food-tech, plant-based food products, social enterprise cafes, etc.

We have interviewed celebrity chefs who are part of the global social gastronomy movement for this issue.

With the festive season ahead, we encourage readers to take up social causes through the power of food.



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CHEFS WITH A CAUSE

Anil Mulchandani

Chefs play an important role in developing social gastronomy solutions. We spoke to two of the world's best-known social gastronomy champions.

Chef Ebru Baybara Demir



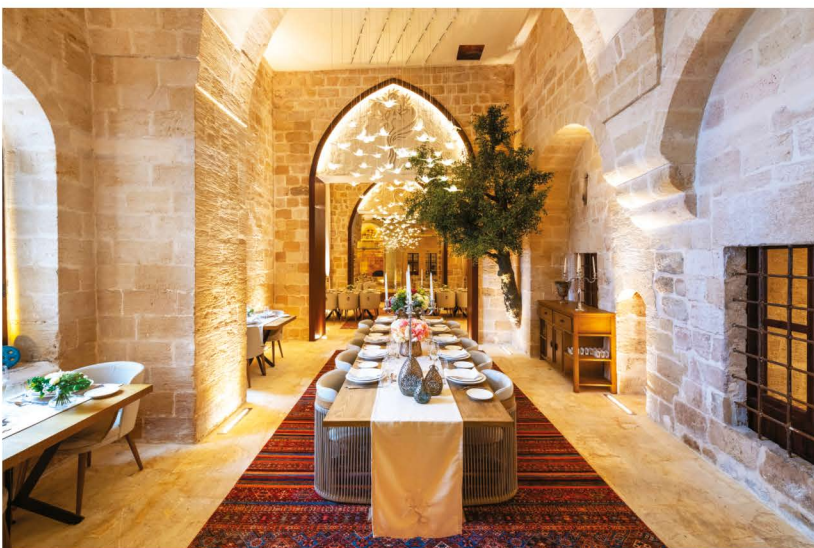
Ebru Demir is a Turkish social entrepreneur and chef who is involved in many projects targeting women, biodiversity and social work. The winner of the Basque Culinary World Prize (BCWP) 2023, which is called the Nobel of the gastronomy world, she became the first chef to bring this award to Türkiye. Demir was deemed worthy of this award for the solutions she has produced with a gastronomy perspective for social needs in the projects she has been implementing for more than 20 years.



“Growing up in a vibrant family where food was central to gatherings, I developed a deep appreciation for culinary arts. Accompanying my mother to markets, experimenting with new ingredients, and witnessing her creativity in the kitchen shaped my culinary skills. Reflecting on these moments, I realise I possess a rich flavour memory foundation built upon scents and distinct tastes. Then after studying Tourism Guidance at Marmara University, I

moved back to Mardin in 1999. My decision to pursue a career in the tourism sector was deeply rooted in my desire to contribute to my hometown. Growing up in Mesopotamia, a land teeming with diverse languages, religions, and cultures, has always inspired me. I envisioned using the rich cultural tapestry of my birthplace as a focal point in my tourism endeavours, aiming to showcase its unique heritage through my work”, she explains, “Furthermore, over 20

years, I delved into Anatolian cuisine through research and practical experience. My journey in culinary arts transcended mere cooking; it was about making a meaningful impact on people’s lives. Beyond the plate of food, I was intrigued by the entire process from soil to plate. My interest extended to understanding how food could serve as a catalyst for change, touching lives and fostering connections. This philosophy led me to embrace social gastronomy, where I could leverage





both my culinary skills and tourism projects to create positive change in communities.”

She founded Cercis Murat Konağı, the city's first touristic business, with 21 women who believed in her, on her journey driven by her passion to introduce tourism to Mardin. In addition to the many projects she has implemented, Ebru Baybara Demir continues to work under the umbrella of Türkiye's first social

cooperative Topraktan Tabaga Agricultural Development Cooperative, of which she is one of the founders, with the propagation of Sorgül Wheat, one of the oldest wheat in Mesopotamia, Şemim Soaps, El Ele Elden Ele Store, online sales platform, and Zamarot1890, Türkiye's first zero waste and 6th sense restaurant, to create a role model for the ideal cooperative model in the national and international arena. “Overcoming the economic and social challenges of establishing a women-led restaurant in Mardin was undoubtedly a daunting task, particularly as a woman striving to carve out a space in a society still grappling with gender disparities. Yet, I soon realized that effecting change in traditional, close-knit communities required a different approach. Rather than dictating terms, I learned the importance of inclusivity

and involving others in my vision for progress. The path I followed after realizing this; Regardless of whether they are men or women, the best job people know is to turn it into an economic value for them. This eliminated the worries they would experience while learning the skills for a profession about which they had no knowledge before”, she explains, “In a community where every endeavor has its proprietor, especially in a family of artisans, breaking away from tradition to pursue a different path is met with resistance. When I expressed my





desire to venture into tourism, it was the hotel and restaurant owners who opposed me, threatened by the prospect of a young woman challenging the established order. Despite the initial isolation, I remained steadfast, believing that success speaks louder than words. It took nearly two years to lay the groundwork for my venture, and when I opened Cercis Murat Mansion in June 2001, the battle against resistance was far from over. However, with each success and every person I involved in my journey, through the success we achieved, by empowering housewives to monetize their culinary talents, perceptions began to shift city. Over time, the vibrancy emanating from the restaurant became a source of inspiration and

prosperity for the city. demonstrated the profound impact food can have on societal dynamics”.

Inspired by Cercis Murat Mansion, the people of Mardin rallied behind the burgeoning tourism industry. Since its inception, Cercis Murat Mansion has not only served as a prominent employer for women and young individuals proficient in

cooking but also catalyzed Mardin's transformation into a tourism hub. “At Cercis Murat Konağı we offer a culinary experience deeply intertwined with the cultural and historical richness of Mardin. Our restaurant, housed in a restored historic mansion, serves as a testament to the warmth of Mardin's hospitality and the authenticity of its cuisine. With a team primarily





composed of women, we not only showcase traditional Mardin dishes but also empower local communities through employment and cultural preservation efforts," she says. Over the years, she has been deeply involved in projects to support Syrian migrants, especially women who are under temporary protection with the contributions of the EU, the UN, Ministries and local governments. She states, "One big project involved bringing back Sorgül, an ancient type of wheat. With support from the UN FAO, we

started the "Living Soil, Local Seed" project in 2017 to promote eco-friendly farming and empower Syrian and Turkish women. Working with two volunteer farmers, we planted Sorgül seeds on 100 hectares of land. This not only brought back old farming methods but also let Syrian and Turkish women share knowledge. We also teamed up to make Aleppo soaps under the Şemim brand, using 97% olive oil and natural methods. This showed how much we learned from each other. Listening to Syrian

women's experiences was crucial in our efforts. Their traditional knowledge didn't just teach us about farming but also emphasized the importance of saving local seeds and eco-friendly farming".

She says it has been incredibly rewarding to see the real impact of our projects—like empowering women and bringing back old farming practices. "These projects show how working together and learning from each other can make communities stronger, even in tough times," she elaborates.

The only Turkish chef featured in the documentary "The World's 12 Zero Waste Chefs"; by American online content platform HBO Max, Ebru Baybara Demir was also awarded the Aenne Burda Creative Leadership Award at the DLD Munich Conference in January 2023. "Zamarot1890, a part of the Soil to Plate Development Cooperative, stands as a pioneering establishment. "Our commitment to sustainability is evident in every aspect of our operation, from rainwater harvesting channels integrated into composting unusable food items in our kitchen," she says. Established within a white stone building dating back to 1890,





Zamarot1890 operates as a cooperative venture, promoting local agriculture and traditional craftsmanship” Our menu features a fusion of traditional Mardin flavors and innovative culinary techniques. We source olives from Derik, extracting oil through traditional hand-pressing methods for use in our kitchen. The byproduct of this process, known as “posa,” is repurposed for the production of Şemim Soaps, an initiative guests can witness firsthand in our Soap Production Workshop located within the restaurant premises” , she explains, “As stewards of Derik’s olives and advocates for the preservation of Anatolia’s oldest olive trees, we aim to raise awareness about the importance of this cultural heritage. In addition to highlighting the significance of olives, we proudly incorporate

Sorgül wheat into our menu, resurrecting the values intrinsic to this land. So together, Cercis Murat Konağı and Zamarot1890 represent more than just restaurants; they are symbols of community, empowerment, and the enduring spirit of Mardin’s culinary traditions. Our priority is to ensure Zamarot 1890’s successful market entry, solidifying its role as a sustainable culinary leader. The Revenue generated here will continue to fuel our cooperative’s mission, supporting employment opportunities and further investments”

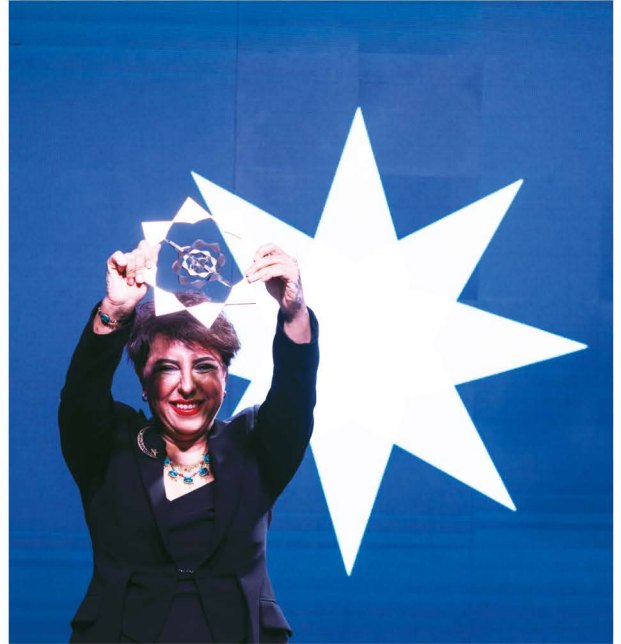
Gönül Mutfağı is a soup kitchen situated in Hatay - İskenderun, which remains dedicated to addressing ongoing needs, particularly in the aftermath of the earthquake. Beyond providing

nourishing meals, their efforts extend to facilitating school breakfast programs, ensuring access to clean water, and collaborating with local farmers to utilize surplus citrus fruits.

“We are actively engaged in a project funded by the €100,000 prize from BCWP. While details remain confidential at this stage, our commitment to this endeavor is unwavering as we work towards its realization, ” she says.

Social Gastronomy

The culinary industry and gastronomic tourism play a crucial role in social development, as exemplified by establishments like Cercis Murat Konağı and Zamarot 1890. By utilizing local ingredients and preserving traditional recipes, they contribute to the preservation of regional flavours and the continuation of culinary heritage. Sourcing products from small-scale producers supports farmers who employ traditional agricultural methods, thereby safeguarding cultural legacies for future generations and fostering local economic development. Restaurants play a pivotal role in



conserving traditional recipes, utilizing local ingredients, and indirectly stimulating local economic growth. They serve as bridges between different cultures, fostering social integration while also supporting local economies and development.

Moreover, gastronomy businesses that procure products from local producers facilitate the convergence of local agriculture with tourism, enhancing their marketing opportunities and enabling them to reach a broader customer base.

To promote social gastronomy, food tourism, and sustainable produce, authorities can take several steps. Firstly, they can organize support programs and training sessions for

local producers to enhance agricultural techniques and marketing strategies. By providing assistance in these areas, authorities can empower producers to improve the quality and competitiveness of their products. Secondly, collaborations and joint marketing activities can be established to promote the use of local products in tourism. By showcasing the unique flavours and culinary traditions of a region, authorities can attract tourists who are interested in experiencing authentic local cuisine.

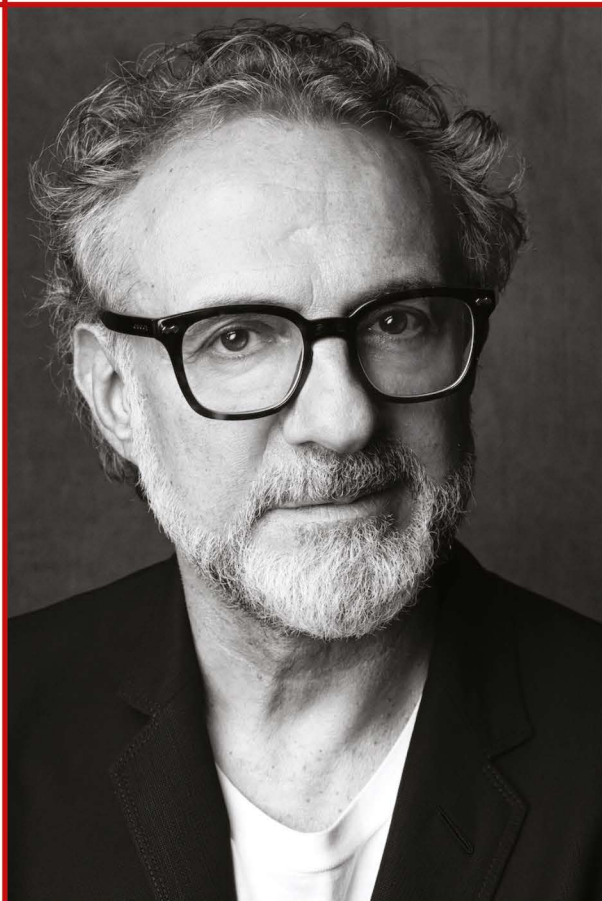
Furthermore, authorities can facilitate partnerships between gastronomy businesses and local producers to ensure a steady supply of sustainable produce. By

encouraging restaurants and food establishments to source ingredients locally, authorities can promote the consumption of seasonal and regionally grown foods, which are often more environmentally friendly and support local economies.

My passion for creating meaningful change stems from witnessing firsthand the transformative impact our initiatives have on individuals and communities. Embracing my role as part of the solution, I approach challenges with a gastronomic lens driven by my proactive nature. Together, we're shaping a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Ebru Demir

Chef Massimo Bottura



An Italian restaurateur and the chef patron of Osteria Francescana, a three-Michelin-star restaurant based in Modena, Massimo Bottura has consistently been listed as one of the world's best chefs and among the world's influential people. His restaurant has been ranked No.1 on The World's 50 Best Restaurants list twice and is currently part of the Best of the Best list.

Chef Bottura uses his global platform to advocate for the reduction of food waste, for healthy and sustainable food systems, and for the protection of the environment and biodiversity through sustainable cooking practices and ingredient sourcing.

Let's go back to 2015 at Milan World EXPO. The theme was "Feed the planet energy for life". Every country called their best chefs to cook and represent them, but no one was asking for their opinions or ideas about what feeding the planet really means. As an Italian chef, Milan Expo was an opportunity to do something more than just cook a good meal. So, what did we do? We decided to feed the planet in our own way, in a real way," he enthuses, "We saw an opportunity to raise

awareness about Food Waste and Food Insecurity. We saw an opportunity to create community through cooking, to feed those in need and to show that chefs are more than the sum of their recipes!! So, we created a soup kitchen inside an abandoned theatre in a neglected neighbourhood of Milan and we called it Refettorio Ambrosiano!! Refettorio comes from the Latin word reficere: to remake to restore, not just the body but also the soul". This project, aimed at welcoming people in need, with the help of more



than fifty chefs allowed the recovery of about fifteen tons of food surplus resulting from the EXPO. The project is still active and the model has been replicated in different parts of the world. In Brazil, the project was inaugurated during the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in collaboration with chef David Hertz: the Refettorio Gastronomica.

As a consequence of these projects, in 2016 Bottura and his wife founded Food for Soul, a nonprofit

association that aims at contrasting food waste and social isolation through the power of beauty, the quality of ideas and the value of hospitality." The main idea behind Food for Souls is that real beauty is seeing the value in something that might not seem to have any value at all. Seeing the beauty in surplus food destined to become waste, grasping the potential in banana peels, stale bread or overripe tomatoes is a way to really fight food waste and heal the planet. But also

seeing the light in the darkest place, in an abandoned theatre, in a suburban neighborhood. When you are able to see beauty even through obstacles, the invisible becomes visible. And through beauty, good food becomes food for good," he explains, "Food waste is one of the most important issues that we are facing today, with over production and the overconsumption of energy, Water and human capital, waste is one of the biggest contributing factors to climate change. This is an issue that everyone can help solve just with a few small gestures every day" .





In order to raise awareness on these issues, in 2017 Massimo Bottura published the book "Bread is Gold" with Phaidon Press – "Il Pane è Oro," published in Italian by Ippocampo. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Food for Soul Refettorios continued to work and support those most in need; not only that, but a fundraiser was also launched through which more than 35 tons of surplus food were recovered in a single month and more than 100,000 meals were delivered to people in vulnerable situations and frontline health workers. Food for Soul opened Refettorio Felix in London,



Refettorio Paris, Refettorio Antoniano in Bologna, and Refettorio Made in Cloister in Naples. Despite the situation due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, Food for Soul has continued working on new projects to support local communities and contrast food waste and social isolation.

Refettorios Mérida and Lima opened their doors in 2020, along with Refettorio Harlem in New York and Refettorio San Francisco in California, while in 2021 it was the turn of Refettorio OzHarvest Refectory in Sydney and Refettorio



Geneva in Switzerland, while other projects are currently in the work.

THE CHEF'S RESPONSIBILITY

Today in 2024, a cook must be more responsible, and think not only of their creative output but also their carbon footprint: if every cook takes his or her individual actions seriously, it could change the way future kitchens are run and make a big impact on the industry! Supporting local farmers, planning seasonally, and shifting menus so they have a positive impact the environment. I know that it is hard





for a restaurant to change all their operations overnight but making small conscious changes in our daily habits and in our communications can help build up a larger global sustainability movement around the world. I want everyone to know that they have the ability to contribute to positive change in the world. It starts with us, in our own kitchens. It's something that everyone can relate to, and something that everyone can start doing right away. We all talk about changing the

world, but we must remember that it starts in our own neighborhoods. The first step is asking yourself what you can do for your own community. For the people that you see every day. **WE ARE THE REVOLUTIONS.** Not "I", not "you", but "WE".

The key is to act together. Understanding that is not only about the present, just because now we are facing an emergency, but is how we decide from Today to rebuild the

future, restore what is valuable for us and give food the importance that it has. Isn't cooking the best way to take care of others?

Start by taking care of who's next to you: your community and then of your planet will come along pretty easily. It is a slow process and of course, it takes time, but if everyone starts acting toward the same goal, we will be able to make a cultural revolution.



FOOD TECH FOR

A Better Tomorrow

Advances in **food and agriculture technology** can enhance efficiency, reduce waste, create sustainable substitutes and promote eco-friendly practices to secure future food systems. We spoke to a few promoters of agri-tech and food-tech companies.

Ekolive

Founder:
Darina Styriakova, Biotech PhD.



Some of the most important scientific breakthroughs in history have come about by chance. Our company originally focused on the biotechnological treatment of minerals, but then discovered by chance that it was actually producing a very effective alternative to agrochemicals with its innovative eco-bioleaching technology. The uniqueness of the components, the surprising effects we discovered and the fantastic results on various crops inspired us and led to a radical refocusing of our activities and business model.

How does it work

Soil is formed naturally over centuries by the weathering of minerals. We can actually replicate this process in a few days with our patented and EU/ETV certified eco-bioleaching technology. Liquid minerals solubilized by microorganisms provide macro and micronutrients in a form easily accessible to plants with a billion beneficial microorganisms per liter, breathing life back into the soil and fixing nitrogen and CO₂. However, the most effective components, which ensure high profits for farmers, are the various bioactive phytohormones produced by the microorganisms with levels far exceeding the maximum limits of other products on the market, bacteriocins important for immunity to diseases, proteins and various organic acids (lactic, butyric, acetic,



salicylic, fatty acids, etc.) that stimulate growth, and alcohols that make plants resistant to drought. This very effective composition is not created - unlike most biostimulants on the market - by mixing chemical components, but by a natural process that takes place precisely in the microbial symbiosis

in plant roots, without energy consumption and volume limitations. We were inspired by nature.

Soils contain about 75% of the carbon pool on land, three times more than the amount stored in living plants and animals. Soils therefore play an important role in





maintaining a balanced global carbon cycle. However, due to the excessive use of agrochemicals, soils are becoming increasingly degraded, lifeless and destroyed. All natural processes in the soil and on the ground are seriously threatened when the microbiome in the soil is destroyed and soils thus become "dead". Crops become less and less resilient and lower yielding, which in turn leads farmers to increase the use of agrochemicals with corresponding costs - a vicious circle. The resulting contamination of groundwater by agrochemicals is



in turn also an issue of international concern because groundwater is used for drinking and their residues in food endanger our health.

Our technology and products help reactivate natural processes in the soil, restore degraded soil structure and microbiome, increase water storage efficiency, reduce the use of agrochemicals, and biologically sequester CO₂ and N in the soil. They stimulate plant growth, strength and health, increase plant resilience to climate change and other abiotic stresses, and increase yields to produce more and healthier food for society while reducing costs for producers.

Success stories

We are proud of the results of our agri-tech company. We have quadrupled the pepper crop in Nigeria, where even the former president himself reviewed the results. We doubled the corn crop in Bulgaria. We increased the strawberry crop by 30% in a large-scale trial at the University of Novi Sad in Serbia. We achieved a possible 50% reduction in fertilisers or reduction and complete replacement of nitrogen fertilisers and fungicides in wheat in the trial at Mendel University in the Czech Republic.





We have also had amazing results in wheat from the University of Agriculture in Samsun, Turkey, where not only the yield was assessed, but also the increase in chlorophyll, water use efficiency and all parameters of soil quality were improved. We have also had very

good results with several global food companies, for example with sugar beet and strawberries, where not only the yield but also the sugar content increases significantly. Really fantastic results in general can be achieved with root vegetables. Even the largest fruit producer in Slovakia confirmed significant effects on plant vitality. Immunity to the most common diseases was again demonstrated by a scientific institute in England but



was also observed in many farmers in various European countries.

We use our networks and collaborations and are particularly happy about the support we receive from, for example, EIT Food from the European Institute for Innovation and Technology, RESPOND from the BMW Foundation or StartLife from Wageningen University and Research.





Paleo

Co-Founder:
Hermes Sanctorem, Bioengineer

For ages, people have enjoyed the taste of meat. Yet, livestock farming has put immense pressure on our planet, our natural resources and animals. While plant-based foods are more sustainable, their taste and colour, and nutrition have not been up for the challenge so far. Here Paleo steps in with the development of heme proteins. Our groundbreaking alternative proteins are bio-identical to those found in animal meat. They are identical in taste, look and nutrition. The main difference is that we don't use animals. No antibiotics or hormones. Instead, we use yeast to produce these bio-identical proteins.

Confronted with the toll conventional meat production is having, Paleo is on a mission to rewrite the story of meat. First, we hunted for our meat. Then, we bred. Now, we brew.

After being founded in 2020 and successfully

establishing production at the lab scale, Paleo closed a 12 million EUR Series A Investment Round in 2023, funded by an international investor consortium. This allowed us to increase our staff by more than fifteen-fold to scale production and prepare for the commercial launch of our products. Our focus lies on many fronts covering R&D, Scaling, Regulatory, Food Science and Business Development.

However, when driven by impact, things never go fast enough. Our solutions will first need to obtain regulatory approval in various regions before reaching customers' plates. We will be on the market first where regulatory approval is most swift. Therefore, originally a European company, Paleo opened an office in Singapore at the end of 2023, serving as a base for future operations in the wider APAC region.

How it Works

Paleo produces animal myoglobin, an iron- and oxygen-binding protein found in the skeletal muscle tissue of animals. A notable difference between Paleo's heme protein and various other products on the market is that our protein (myoglobin) constitutes an alternative to the true animal protein version, yet being animal-free and therefore considered plant-based.

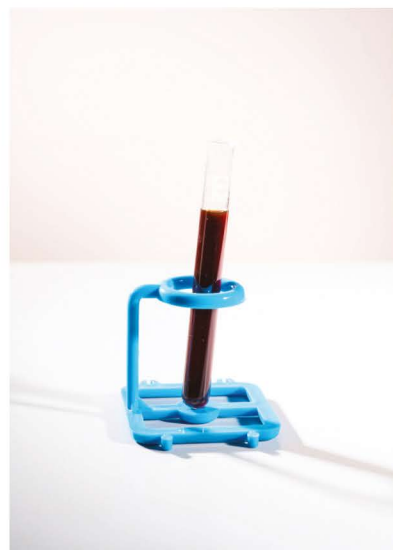
Paleo's myoglobins are 100% bio-identical to the actual animal proteins you may find in beef, chicken, pork, lamb or tuna. They provide the same level of bio-available iron as does the original meat or fish version and they come



with the same taste and color profile. This is captured in Paleo's slogan "Same Taste. Different Story", emphasizing that we do not need any animals, hormones or antibiotics, and way less natural resources compared to conventional meat production.

Another differentiating feature of our product is the way we produce

it. Our unique technology allows extracellular secretion of our product (myoglobin) ensuring that the end-product is free of GMO, setting our company apart in the market today. Today, Paleo is a B2B company servicing (pet) food manufacturers, formulators or food distributors. Our clients will range from plant-based



manufacturers—including food service—to formulators and even the pet food industry.

Through the process of precision fermentation, Paleo delivers a sustainable animal protein that provides an authentic meat flavour and colour, allowing the food industry to offer meat and fish alternatives that people love, albeit with a low carbon footprint. Likewise, in Paleo's day-to-day operations, we apply the principles of reducing, reusing, and recycling as much as possible. We avoid using disposable materials and prefer to work with durable laboratory wear whenever feasible.

Success stories

So far, we developed heme proteins that are 100% bio-identical to the actual animal proteins of beef, chicken, pork, lamb, tuna, and even mammoth. More species are in our pipeline – in order to cater the needs of specific market segments.

Mammoth meat undoubtedly captures the imagination the most. Producing heme proteins from an



extinct species served as the ultimate proof that there is no more need to hunt or breed. It also showcases that we are indeed continuing an age-old tradition of eating meat, as this species was once consumed by our hunter-gatherer ancestors.

Paleo is currently in the process of upscaling and preparing for its commercial launch. Being in a pre-commercial phase allows us

to further develop our products while understanding the use in food application of our products in partnership with other players in our industry across the globe. While we work towards obtaining regulatory approval, we are eager to already start working with interested customers such as plant-based manufacturers and pet food players. For that, we are actively seeking potential partnerships and business opportunities, including in





Betta Fish

Founder:
Deniz Ficicioglu

At BettaFish, we are making seaweed a mainstream ingredient in our food system by advancing the research and development of seaweed ingredients. Our first line of products consists of our authentic and delicious plant-based fish alternatives using European seaweed. By making seaweed an integral part of our diets, we can all help regenerate our oceans and by increasing global demand for this crop, offer coastal communities a more sustainable source of income. 70% of our planet is covered by oceans, yet 90% of our food comes from land mass. We rely on monocultures, we overuse chemicals, and we damage our soils. We have reached a point of diminishing returns and growing inefficiencies. Climate change requires resilient aqua- and agriculture, but more fertilizers and larger machinery are not the answer.

Seaweed is the fastest-growing biomass on the planet. Utilizing this crop in our food system can have a significant impact on our environment. It helps our oceans to regenerate, increases

biodiversity, and counteracts acidification. As a zero-input crop, it doesn't require fresh water, soil, or pesticides to grow anywhere in the world. Long-term, we aim to use local seaweed species to develop products for local geographical markets. Most of our seaweed farmers are former fishermen and women who have transitioned to a more sustainable source of income. Our objective is to boost the demand for seaweed, facilitating more fishermen to make the switch. By utilizing seaweed in our food system, we can drastically cut down on CO2 emissions and conserve valuable resources like fresh water and soil.

After launching our plant-based tuna, we realized quickly that we're a niche product in a niche market. Nobody knew or even tried any fish alternatives back then and people were quite reluctant to. Even seaweed was not very common to consume in Europe, so we had to not only promote our products but also educate people about its benefits.

How it Works

We collaborate with seaweed farms in Norway, Ireland and Sweden that cultivate and harvest various seaweed species in the open ocean. Our work begins immediately after harvest. Our experienced R&D and product development team innovates throughout the entire value chain, from raw materials to finished products. Although seaweed contributes a great deal to our award-winning BettaFish products, we love it for its refined flavor and strong umami component. We developed a proprietary mix of seaweed species and processing methods to create a unique flavor profile that really closely resembles real tuna. Furthermore, our products are enhanced with exclusive



nutrients that are only present in marine plants, such as iodine and omega fatty acids.

We are the pioneering company on the market using macroalgae as a key ingredient, bringing an authentic taste of the ocean to our products. Thanks to our heavy focus on R&D, we are also able to employ pre- and processing methods like

fermentation, enzymatic hydrolysis and mechanical techniques to offer a clean-label product that is superior in taste and nutritional value. This sets us apart from competitors who rely on standard ingredients such as TVP made from soy or wheat mixed with flavourings. We are the only company in the plant-based seafood market offering this level of differentiation.





Success stories

Luckily, our key ingredient seaweed has become quite popular in Europe as the new superfood and we started to leverage that in our communications. But generally, we know that consumers can only be convinced with two things: price and taste. That's why we try to reach price parity with the original animal product and get as many people as possible to try our products. Besides managing a young, approachable



brand, we've started to sponsor and sample at relevant events right from the beginning of our journey and by that let as many people as possible

taste the product. For us, that is always the ultimate brand experience.



Our target audience includes vegetarian and flexitarian consumers. For the HORECA sector, we are looking for partners who are catering to the end consumer's demand for more sustainable alternatives and therefore focusing on sustainability and impact. For this case, our team, consisting of food technologists and trained chefs,



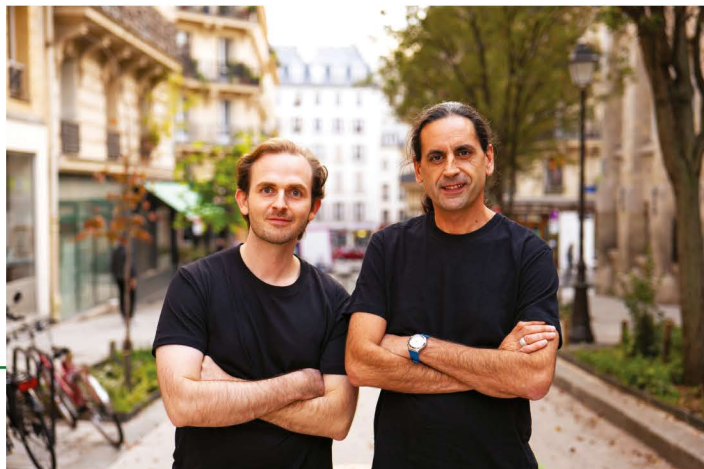
have developed and optimized our TU-NAH to the needs of the HORECA sector. Our TU-NAH not only comes in cans but also in an IQF frozen pouch or an 8 kg bag-in-box. Since TU-NAH is an all beloved pizza topping, we've optimized our product to be heat-stable until 400°C.

We are very grateful to name renowned restaurant chains like L'Osteria and Pizza Hut and business catering companies like Dussmann

our partners as well as a close collaboration with Japan Airlines. Also, we got to meet David Zilber, Noma's Ex-Head of Fermentation.

The umami is perfectly naturally balanced, nicely rounded with a nice play of texture, so my brain kept telling me: Keep eating'.





VERY

Founder:
Arnaud Delacour and
Dr Oscar Castellani.

The VERY Food Co. ("VERY") is a French start-up that offers non-animal products to replace milk and eggs with their functionality. VERY was inspired by strong ecological convictions and the urgent need to change the food production chain as highlighted by the 2019

IPCC special report on land use. Founded in 2022, France-based The VERY Food Co. is on a mission to decarbonize the agri-food sector by replacing milk and eggs used as ingredients with functional plant-based proteins.

How it Works

When starting the enterprise, I had no idea how to develop a product, let alone bring one to market. There were numerous instances where the company could have ceased operations due to significant challenges. The food industry, in particular, has a much longer iteration cycle compared to other sectors. Before presenting a product to customers, it must be fully developed and often must pass regulatory hurdles. Once presented,

feedback might necessitate starting over to incorporate unforeseen features. This prolonged iteration cycle complicates and extends the startup development process. Additionally, the long sales cycles of large enterprises add to the difficulties of launching a food company.

The development involved using science and technology to analyze the characteristics of legumes and oilseeds. This exploration allowed the optimization of their components to make them functional, leading to

the development of plant-based ingredients with unrivalled performance. These ingredients are designed to mimic the use and sensory properties of the animal-derived components they replace.

Success stories

We are particularly excited about VERY AQUAFABA, an innovative, clean-label, allergen-free egg white substitute. This product is tailored for patisserie and mixology,



offering multiple advantages over traditional egg whites, including an extended shelf life, room-temperature storage, and being



allergen-free. Deeply rooted in ecological responsibility, the company aims to revolutionize the food production



chain by significantly reducing the use of animal-based ingredients and replacing them with natural, plant-based protein alternatives.



Mimica

Founder:
Solveiga Pakstaite

Food waste has significant consequences at environmental and societal level, and the consumers are also responsible for poor planning before shopping, overcooking and overpurchasing. Consumers' tend to waste food close to or past its expiration date

because of concerns about food safety and food quality, mainly because they are unsure about the meaning of "sell by", "best if use by" and "use by" labels, resulting in large volumes of safe food being wasted.

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How it Works

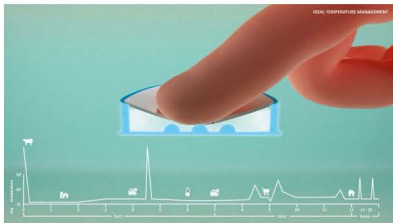
Mimica has developed a temperature-sensitive indicator for food freshness, called the Mimica Touch Cap or flat label – that tells consumers when food is no longer good for consumption. The innovative indicator has the goal of helping consumers store the food at the right temperature and reducing food waste by lowering consumers' reliance on the wasteful worst-case scenario expiry date. Much of the food disposed by consumers because of the 'best before' date could be perfectly edible,



Success stories

Mimica is creating the next generation of food expiry labeling to reduce food waste and improve food safety-

Mimica Touch which is a food expiry cap or label that experiences decay at the same rate as food. It provides accurate, real-time indication of the product's freshness with a tactile interface.



Winnow

Founder:
CEO Marc Zornes and Kevin Duffy

Winnow develops AI tools to help chefs run more profitable, sustainable kitchens by cutting food waste.

Food is too valuable to waste. We saw the potential of technology in tackling the global

issue of food waste, particularly in the hospitality industry. A significant portion of food waste in commercial kitchens is preventable, with up to 20% of all food purchased going to waste.

How it Works

Winnow Vision AI uses a motion sensor camera and a connected scale

to automatically capture images and weigh food waste as it is discarded.

This data is analyzed by our AI-powered system, which uses computer vision to identify the types

and amounts of waste and calculate the associated costs. The insights generated help kitchens make informed operational changes, such as:



- **Adjusting Production:** Reducing overproduction by aligning cooking quantities with actual demand.
- **Menu Optimization:** Refining menu offerings based on waste patterns and guest preferences.
- **Inventory Management:** Improving forecasting and purchasing decisions to minimize spoilage.
- **Behavioral Changes:** Encouraging sustainable practices through

training and data-driven insights.

Success stories

One notable success story is the Four Seasons Resort Costa Rica at Peninsula Papagayo. By integrating Winnow's AI technology in two of their kitchens and the staff canteen, they achieved a 50% reduction in food waste from August 2022 to December 2022. This amounted to

40,000 meals saved from the landfill and \$46,000 in cost savings, which were reinvested in high-quality, locally sourced ingredients to enhance guest experiences.

Another example is Hilton Hotels' Green Breakfast campaign, where 13 hotels across the UAE used Winnow's data to identify and address waste trends. By introducing batch cooking, live cooking stations, and adjusting the size of croissants, they achieved a 62% reduction in food waste.



Entrepreneurs

WITH A PURPOSE

Food enterprises offer many opportunities to offer social benefits and inclusive employment.



Shaun Christie-David

founder and chief executive of social enterprise Plate it Forward.

Shaun, whose parents are from Sri Lanka, grew up in Australia and was constantly reminded of his fortunate circumstances. His parents instilled in him the importance of treating everyone equally, particularly those who are marginalised by society. "My mum Shiranie, an early childhood educator, had a big part to play in it. Cooking was a way she showed my brothers and I how much she loved us, and it kept us very connected to our culture as Sri Lankan Australians. It wasn't until I was older that I began to



appreciate the values of compassion and education that she was instilling in us daily. After a successful but somewhat unfulfilling career in finance, I founded Plate It Forward to employ people who may not have been given a chance to share their skill, I'm very passionate about tapping into and utilising hidden potential," he recalls.

Plate It Forward's particular way of doing this is to offer comprehensive training, employment opportunities

and career development programs in the hospitality sector. The organisation includes six social enterprise restaurants, a catering and events business, a meal donation initiative and training and career development programmes. Its revenue is derived from trading business units. This is reinvested back towards its organisational purpose of driving social change.

"Our restaurants run a quality meal

donation program. With any set menu ordered in our restaurants, we donate a meal overseas and one meal here at home to people in need. When we feed you, you feed two. In partnership with long-standing and trusted Australian charities our community kitchen prepares and distributes over 3000 meals a week to the most at-risk members of their communities. These charities include Department of Communities & Justice, First Nations Response, Weave Family





and others supporting our First Nations communities, those experiencing homelessness, people on their recovery journey and families just doing it tough dealing with cost-of-living pressures," he explains, "For those who contribute via donation, every \$2 provides a nutritious meal to someone in need. To date Plate It Forward has provided over 550,000 meals".

, Colombo Social marked the

beginning, then he opened Kabul Social to support Afghan women and migrants, and Kyiv Social. He now has two Kabul Social restaurants. "The dhal is my coming-of-age dish. It's very popular among our customers and one that I've very proud of because of what it represents to me personally. As a kid, I was very embarrassed to bring this meal to school because it made me the target of jokes around my ethnicity and how different my

culture was but in the world of food this became my super power", he enthuses, "The lamb chapli kebab is a super authentic Afghan dish that is packed full of flavour with a five spice Char Masala blend including black cardamon and cinnamon. It is like a rissole but loaded with spices, fresh coriander and so much more. Then it is flash fried!"

He is proud of his training programme that goes beyond





hospitality skills to include leadership. “We have trained and employed close to 200 people who were considered “unemployable” and have a retention rate of 93%. We are very proud of this because it means that we have created a place to work that people find both helpful and enjoyable. This has resulted in over \$3 Million in wages to people who may have otherwise relied on social welfare. It’s a very challenging business to be in but I think watching you staff grow in confidence in both a professional and personal capacity is very rewarding. Day by day you watch

their English get better, from that comes a confidence in being able to communicate well and you start to see peoples real personalities begin to break through,” he says, “It cracks me up when staff members will feel comfortable enough to call me any other lingo they’ve picked up – it means we’ve made them feel safe enough and accepted in Australia to adopt their culture”.

They are launching a monthly series called Mum Cha, a 10-course set menu lunch experience. “Mum and I get in the kitchen with another chef and their mum. Dan Hong and his

mum Angie Hong are up first, and our dishes will showcase flavours from Sri Lanka and Vietnam. Think dhal sandwiches, empanadas spiced with the flavours of Sri Lanka, cheeseburger pan rolls, fresh rice paper rolls and green papaya salad”, he says, “In the coming months we’re excited to be opening a new venue in South Eveleigh Precinct called Bush to plate, offering an Indigenous-inspired menu utilising produce from local gardens as well as fresh produce foraged from Country by a team of First Nation horticulturalists and farmers”.





Viviane Kouame, Chocovi

“Being the granddaughter of a planter, I grew up wanting to create something unique with brown gold made in Ivory Coast. Over time and training with renowned chocolatiers, the love of cocoa grew”, she explains, “One of the biggest challenges was being able to train properly. Passion alone is not enough to rise to the rank of the best. Then come back and settle in Ivory Coast when we have spent time outside the country. The total change of scenery almost got the better of my dream”.

Viviane decided cocoa would be a part of her life, and in 2021 she set up her own company, Chocovi, to make and sell chocolate. She is now a face of Ivorian chocolate.

Ivory Coast is the world's top producer of cocoa beans, but the vast majority are exported then processed elsewhere with only a few companies like hers making chocolate locally. Her chocolates also carry the country's themes on the packaging.

They are already the first fairtrade certified factory. “This denotes seriousness and mastery of the entire value chain. Also, I have the chance to transform the cocoa bean from our plantations from start to finish”, she explains.

She says 100% sugar-free chocolate produced for





diabetics is their greatest success. “Chocolate is good for the heart and essential for a good mood. No one should be deprived of it,” she believes, “The authorities are doing a lot to promote made in Côte d’Ivoire. As artisans, our job is to offer the best of our creations to our consumers”.

Viviane says, “I aim to expand my production unit to meet public expectations. But also expand our range of products to all”.



HioK Keat, Flour Power

immense opportunities that could be unlocked with the right support and environment”, Keat explains, “I am proud to head Flour Power—a beacon of social responsibility and a testament to the meaningful impact that businesses can have when driven by a purpose beyond profit”.

Upon taking over Flour Power, he says he embarked on a comprehensive redesign focused on maximizing social impact while ensuring business sustainability.”

Recognizing that a significant number of PWDs required a supportive environment to thrive, we strategically pivoted towards cookie making, a task well-suited for our employees’ skills and abilities. This shift allowed us to create meaningful employment opportunities while maintaining high standards of product quality”, Keat states, “As the owner of Flour Power, I am dedicated to integrating social impact seamlessly into our commercial

Flour Power is a bakery with a social-driven mission that aims to create a more inclusive workplace for everyone. “Flour Power was born from a deep-seated belief in the untapped potential of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to excel in the workforce, particularly within the Food & Beverage (F&B) sector. My journey with Flour Power began with a pivotal experience at Project Dignity (Dignity Kitchen), where I witnessed firsthand both the challenges faced by PWDs in vocational training and the



operations. Over the years, I have gained profound insights into vocational training for PWDs in the F&B sector, and this journey has reinforced my belief in the transformative power of inclusive employment practices. Every day, I am inspired by the resilience and potential of our team members, and I am committed to driving positive change in their lives and in our community”.

He says the beginnings posed challenges in navigating the uncertainties and obstacles inherent in the F&B sector, compounded by the onset of COVID-19 in 2020. “ One of the initial challenges we encountered was refining our product offerings to resonate with our customers. Our first attempts at cookie recipes did not achieve immediate success. Recognizing the importance of quality and taste, we dedicated eight months to

meticulously fine-tuning our recipes. Simultaneously, we had to redesign our production processes to ensure they were accessible and efficient for our colleagues with disabilities. This period underscored our adaptability and unwavering commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring that every cookie we produced not only met high culinary standards but also supported our mission of inclusive employment”, Keat explains, “As our team include members with diverse backgrounds and disabilities, we faced another pivotal challenge—creating an inclusive environment where everyone could thrive. Many of our team members joined without prior



baking experience, necessitating a thoughtful redesign of our operations and training processes. We implemented tailored support systems and adapted our workflows to accommodate different abilities, ensuring that each team member had the tools and environment to succeed”.

He says overcoming these challenges required perseverance, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to our social cause. “One of the most fulfilling aspects of





my journey with Flour Power has been witnessing the remarkable growth and achievements of our team members, particularly those with disabilities who have joined us on this journey. Seeing individuals who initially had no baking experience blossom into skilled professionals has been deeply heartening and inspiring," he says, "One of the most memorable success stories is that of Alvin, who is deaf. When Alvin first joined us, he lacked any prior experience in baking. However, through his dedication and perseverance, he has not only mastered the art of baking but has also taken on the crucial role of Quality Assurance for our cookie production. His attention to detail and commitment to maintaining high standards have made him an invaluable member of our team, demonstrating that determination and passion can

overcome any challenge".

"Another touching journey is that of Gabriel, who has autism. Gabriel started with us facing similar challenges but has since become our fastest cookie maker. His efficiency and hard work have not only impressed our team but have also set a standard for excellence in our production line. Gabriel's progress is a testament to the power of providing a supportive environment and the right training opportunities, enabling individuals with disabilities to thrive and excel in their chosen roles"," Keat says.

He says their Sea Salt Black Sesame Cookies are iconic. "They blend the rich, nutty flavor of black sesame with a touch of sea salt, creating a unique and memorable taste experience. These cookies have quickly become synonymous with Flour Power, resonating with our customers who appreciate our commitment to innovation and distinct flavor profiles," he opines, "Another staple in our lineup is the Sea Salt Double Choco Cookies. Crafted with premium ingredients, these cookies strike a perfect balance between the indulgent sweetness of chocolate and the



savory notes of sea salt. They are a testament to our relentless pursuit of quality in every aspect of our baking process, Each cookie sold supports our inclusive employment practices, empowering individuals within our community and showcasing the potential of diverse talents in the culinary industry".

The Flour Power initiatives

Firstly, 'Bake @ FP' encompasses our bakery production where we not only sell delicious cookies to the public but also prioritize the employment of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). This initiative not only supports our local community but also promotes inclusivity and diversity within our workforce.

Secondly, under 'Learn @ FP', we



have created a safe and supportive environment for PWDs by offering cooking and baking classes. These classes are designed using the Universal Design for Learning framework, focusing on enhancing fine and gross motor skills, fostering mental resilience, and encouraging social interaction among participants. This initiative goes beyond baking; it's about empowering individuals and providing them with valuable life skills.

Lastly, through 'Event @ FP', we engage with corporate partners and organizations through CSR initiatives and workshops. Our programs like 'Bake with Empathy' and 'Kopi Mindfulness' not only educate participants on the impact of our bakery's social mission but also inspire them to integrate similar values of inclusivity and empathy into their corporate practices.

Social franchising not only creates business opportunities but also fosters economic independence and community integration. By leveraging our successful model, we aim to support PWDs in establishing and running their own Flour Power franchises, thereby expanding our impact and promoting inclusivity on a broader scale," he says, "Looking beyond our local borders, Flour Power is enthusiastic about sharing



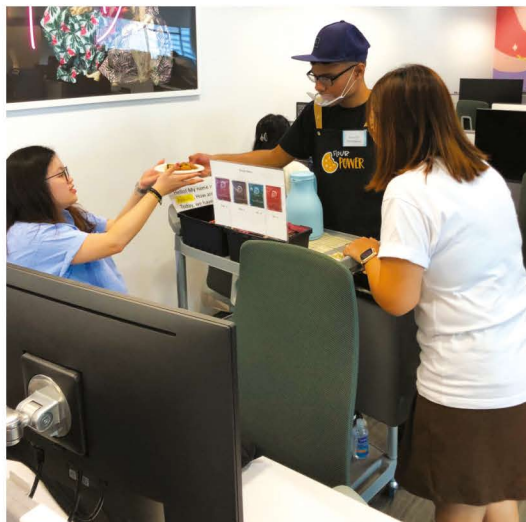
By scaling our micro job program, exploring social franchising opportunities, and expanding our global outreach, Flour Power aims to continue leading the way in creating positive change for PWDs and fostering inclusive communities worldwide. We are excited about the possibilities ahead and remain dedicated to advancing our mission with passion and purpose.





our knowledge and services internationally. We are actively seeking opportunities to collaborate with organizations and communities abroad that can benefit from our inclusive employment practices and vocational training programs. Our goal is to break down barriers for PWDs globally by exporting our proven methodologies and supporting the establishment of similar initiatives in diverse cultural contexts.

For aspiring social entrepreneurs, my foremost advice is to anchor your journey in a clear and refined social business model. While grants and funding opportunities can be enticing, it's essential to prioritize developing a sustainable business foundation that aligns with your



social mission. This means understanding your target community or cause deeply and designing a business model that not only addresses social needs but also ensures long-term viability and impact.

It's crucial to stay true to your mission amidst the inevitable financial pressures and operational challenges. Remembering the 'why' behind your venture will guide your decisions and sustain your motivation through tough times. Take the time to continuously refine and improve your business model, ensuring it remains effective in delivering social outcomes while being economically sustainable.

Patience is key in the realm of social entrepreneurship. Building

meaningful impact takes time and perseverance. Be prepared for a journey that may be filled with obstacles and setbacks but remain resilient in your commitment to creating positive change. Celebrate small victories along the way and learn from failures to iterate

and improve.

Networking and collaboration are invaluable in the social enterprise landscape. Engage with like-minded individuals, organizations, and mentors who can provide support, guidance, and partnership opportunities. Collaboration often amplifies impact and opens doors to new resources and expertise that can accelerate your venture's growth and reach.

Lastly, embrace innovation and adaptability. The social challenges we aim to address are dynamic and evolving. Stay agile in responding to changing needs and trends, and be open to exploring innovative solutions that can drive greater effectiveness and efficiency in achieving your social goals.

Hiok Keat, Flour Power

Pelve (Crepes with Coconut Filling)



Ready in: 30 minutes

Makes: 6 serving

Tips

Make sure you don't get colors to your crepes.

The sweetness of the filling can vary according to preferences.

It can be stored in the fridge for a week, but to be eaten at room temperature.

Any dried fruits of your choice can be added.

Sugar can be replaced with coconut/palm sugar or jaggery. Pairs best with a cup of lemon tea

Ingredients

1 cup refined flour

½ cup milk

Water for adjusting consistency

2 eggs

2 tsp sugar

½ tsp cardamom powder

½ tsp nutmeg powder

2 cups grated coconut

3 tbsp sugar/ jaggery

2 tbsp ghee

¼ cup dried fruits

Preparation

In a large mixing bowl whisk together eggs, sugar, flour, milk and a pinch of nutmeg. (has to be milk like in consistency) Rest for 10 mins.

In a pan heat ghee, add grated coconut and saute until it starts to turn gold.

Add cardamom and nutmeg powder saute well, get it off the flame, add sugar and dried fruits. Set aside and let it cool.

Grease a non-stick pan with ghee and pour 1 ladle of the crepe mix and swirl the pan around to spread it evenly.

It can also be cooked over woodfire on a cast iron pan for an outstanding smoky flavour.

Make sure the crepe is a paper thin sheet, let it cook over a medium-low flame.

As soon as it starts to release the edges, remove the cooked side facing up on a plate (do not turn over to cook).

Fill it with 2 spoons of the coconut mix and fold it in rolls.

Serve at room temperature.

About the author:

Chef Jasirah Dalvi graduated from Queen Margaret University, Edinburg. She has worked with a number of restaurants, and cooked various cuisines. She has been a part of the Bollywood industry as a personal Chef for a number of celebrities. Currently, she is running "Teeloeffel Galley – the teaspoon kitchen.", where she caters to various small and big events from home.



Chef Jasirah

FARMING

FOR THE FUTURE

1000 FARMS is a community farming movement to
revive the indigenous seed.





000 Farms Farmer Producer Company is an accidental social venture by **Shikha Kansagara and Shailesh Awate.**



Shailesh Awate, an avid trekker was concerned about the balding of mountains over a course of 10 years of exploring the Sahyadri ranges. Along with that, the beautiful aromatic rice and other grains that he was used to eating in the mountains at the homes of the tribal communities was slowly getting replaced by less aromatic hybrid varieties. Upon further prodding, he found that there was

a massive switch to hybrid seeds farming in these hamlets which were replacing the indigenous seed varieties at a very alarming rate.” More and more conversations, especially with village elders, made me realise the importance of the native indigenous seeds and so began the journey of 000 Farms (Out Of Zero Farms) Movement”, he explains, “What started as a conversation with tribal farming communities residing in the

Sahyadri Forests in Maharashtra to revive the indigenous rice they were growing since generations but had switched to growing of hybrid rice varieties in the past 10 years, led to the conservation of 2600 indigenous rice varieties at present day”.

Over the course of the next six years, the 000 Farms’ team of co-founders, traversed across the country, talking to farming



communities, collecting native seeds, growing them and distributing them free of cost to different tribal farming communities. These indigenous and native seeds are hardy in nature and easily adaptable to the changing climatic patterns. When grown with no chemical input, these seeds produce robust and nutritionally dense food. “ In fact, we observed that external inputs of chemicals and fertilizers have almost always resulted in a poor

quality harvest,” they explain, “After about 3 years of continuous farming with the native seeds, keeping them for home consumption and saving seeds for next season, the tribal farmers returned with excess produce. The conundrum – what to do with the excess produce that the farmer harvested? “ Thus, 000 Farms Farmer Producer Company was formed to bridge the gap between the farmers and the

market. “Today, 000 Farms FPC has seven tribal farmers on the Board of Directors and half of the directors are women. The farmers make the decision of what to sell, whom to sell to and what to charge. This way, a movement to bring back the almost-lost rich agricultural heritage of India went on to become a Farmer Producer Company and native and indigenous seeds came back to mainstream farming. Today, 000 Farms works in more than 63 village hamlets in Maharashtra and Gujarat with more than 2200 tribal farmer families and conserving more than 3500 varieties of native rice, wheat, millet, cotton, beans & pulses, corn, vegetables and other seeds,” Shikha explains, “It is only due to the efforts of the indigenous people and tribal farming





communities that thousands of varieties of native heirloom seeds are still being preserved. 000 Farms is hoping to conserve not only the native seeds but also indigenous farming practices that will eventually guide us towards better Soil Health and Human Gut Health. Restoration of life is all but an interconnected web where symbiosis is of utmost value”.

000 Farms has distributed 14,000 kgs of free native seeds to tribal farming communities. “We have encouraged the farmers to use region specific age-old agricultural practices naturally promoting biodiversity and agroecology models. We also work only with a community of farmers and never with individual farmers, thus strengthening harmony over competition. We hold regular Gram Sabhas in villages to discuss seed

requirement, soil health issues and other problems that the farmer may encounter. Over the past four years, farmers have been successful in creating seed banks in their regions, thus promoting seed democracy as well. Now, most farmers that we work with do not see a loss in their earnings owing to no cost in buying of seeds since native ones are regenerative, zero costs for chemicals and fertilisers and improvement of their farmlands. Usage of such native seeds with no external inputs can also help resolve the vicious cycle of farmer debt and suicide”, Shikha explains, “In addition to this, the farmers receive at least 10-15 times more price from 000 Farms for their native produce than the market price because we understand the major disparity between the efforts put in by the farmers and the

return they get on the sale of the harvest. That the balance is tilted in these modern times is a gross understatement. The disparity is downright cruel and unfair”.

RAISING AWARENESS

Every year 000 Farms hosts 2 major festivals – Wild Food Festival and Rice Festival, along with pop-up events.

The Wild Food Festival in the last week of August, was first started by 000 Farms to create awareness about the foods that go beyond the 8-10 vegetables and grains that we are used to seeing and eating.

How do we explain the abundance of food around us? How do we move from a mental state of scarcity to one of plenitude? What



other ways of life exist outside of our cities? Traditional Ecological Knowledge vs Science - both are powerful, so why do we prefer one over the other? How do we get back to our roots? How do we cultivate appreciation for the non-normal?

The Wild Food Festival tries to address such questions through

- A display of more than 150 wild vegetables, roots, tuber and fruits collected from the Sahyadri forests

in monsoons, cooking of more than 90 dishes

- A Tasting Menu and Meal of 90+ dishes cooked by the tribals
- Talks, conversations and interactions with Domain Experts and Tribals
- showcase of Tribal customs and culture, especially of art and music of thriving communities in the mountains and forests

- Seed Bank display of the various native and indigenous seeds that 000 Farms conserves with the tribal farming communities

The festival is a good time to learn about foods that have sustained these communities for thousands of years without much help from our so-called modern societies. Their food, medicines, tools - everything comes from the forests and they live a good life. How do they know about such nutrient



dense foods? How do they know what to use and when? Thousands of years of keen observations. Way before modern science made its mark. Thus, it is a good time to think outside the patterns.

The Rice Festival is held generally in the last week of January or first week of February after the harvest of rice. It is tagged, "A Celebration of the Ancient Native Folk Rice of India".

The Rice Festival is a celebration of India's rich rice heritage where, not only are there more than 1000 varieties of Rice on display, but also tasting and dinner of dishes cooked from about 40 native rice varieties.

The main aim of the Rice Festival is to educate and inform a consumer about the bountiful indigenous rice varieties of India. We know of 5, maybe 10, varieties of rice but we are unaware of a thousand more varieties which are still existent in our country.

India boasted of 1 Lakh 40 Thousand varieties of rice officially till 1960. But with the advent of

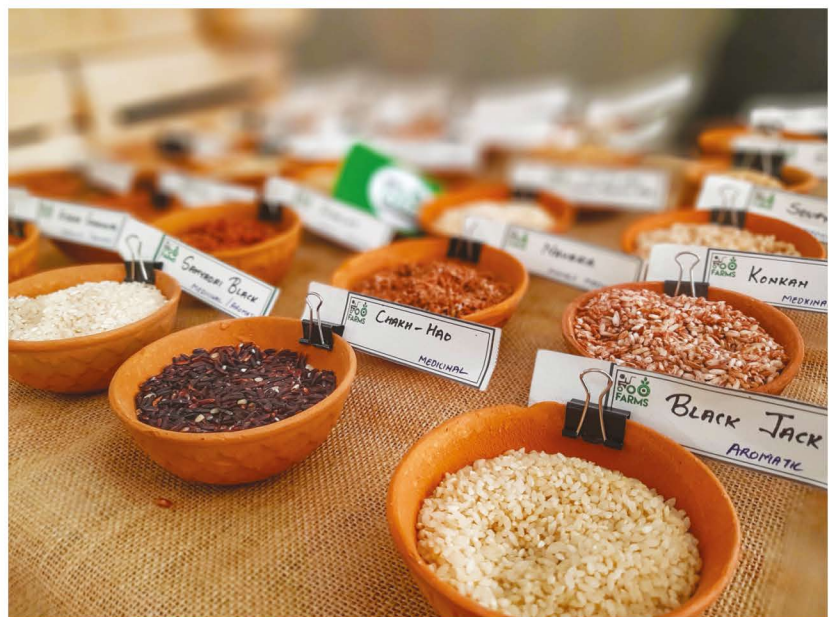
the Green Revolution and hybridization in agriculture, the diversity of rice has reduced to just a couple of thousands. The exact origin of rice will perhaps never be known. However, it is certain that domestication of rice ranks as one of the most important developments in ancient Indian history.

Rice has a special place across the Indian Subcontinent. Rice is included in pretty much every meal of the day. Culturally, rice is often directly associated with prosperity and fertility, hence there is the custom of throwing rice at newlyweds. Rice is almost always the first food offered to babies when they start eating solids or to

the husband by his new bride, to ensure they will have children. Rice is also used in Temples for worship and as medicine for many ailments. Such is the importance of Rice in India.

Once revered, we now tread with caution while consuming this ancient grain. Indigenous paddy that once was a huge part of our social construct is now reduced to Basmati, Brown Rice, Red Rice and more recently, Black Rice.

People need to be informed about their roots and how having lost indigenous knowledge has resulted in taking us further away from living a healthy life. Our bodies have known these grains for





thousands of years, we have just forgotten.

As with Wild Food Festival, the Rice festival also has

- a display of more than 1000 varieties of indigenous rice
- a Tasting Menu and Meal of 50+ dishes cooked by the tribals and chefs from 40 native rice varieties
- Talks, conversations and interactions with Domain Experts

and Tribals

- showcase of Tribal customs and culture, especially of art and music of thriving communities in the mountains and forests
- Seed Bank display of the various native and indigenous seeds that 000 Farms conserves with the tribal farming communities

Two main challenges that we still

face are

- Convincing Tribal farming communities to switch to native indigenous seeds from hybrid seeds. Even though the farmers see eventual benefits - financial benefits, improvement of Soil Health and Physical wellbeing - in switching to regenerative seeds and growing their produce without any external inputs of fertilisers and pesticides, it is initially difficult to convince them to stop using





hybrid seeds. Farmers have been shown only short term benefits of using the hybrid seeds and sometimes also shamed when they use indigenous seeds. It has taken a lot of effort and constant conversations and hand-holding for 000 Farms to help farming communities transition from farming of hybrid seeds to native indigenous produce

• There is no market for native and

indigenous produce that the 000 Farms' farmers grow. 000 Farms has created markets for different native produce through awareness programmes, festivals and pop-up events. For example, a native rice variety called Sahyadri Black which has a great amount of iron and is used by tribal communities post-partum and as Baby's First Food, was almost extinct in the Sahyadri mountains. Through our efforts, this rice variety was slowly revived. But to make it

commercially viable when farmers wanted to sell the rice, we had to bring Sahyadri Black Rice to the market and have people taste it. Not only did we give the tribal wisdom and nutritional profiling of this rice variety to consumers, but it was the tasting of this highly aromatic rice variety that eventually convinced the consumer to pick it up. Today, even though its high price point, Sahyadri Black Rice is one of 000 Farms' best selling rice variety because





consumers are truly well-aware of the benefits of eating this rice, are happy with the taste and know that their purchase helps farming communities directly. This has helped not only revive Sahyadri Black Rice from being almost extinct, but it has also come to a production level of 25 tonnes annually today. Challenging, but a definite success story of 000 Farms and its farmers.

Currently, 000 Farms offers the following cereals commercially in various variants:

- 35 varieties of native indigenous

rice (unpolished and semi-polished)

- 6 varieties of native wheat
- 14 varieties of native legumes and pulses.
- 9 varieties of native millets
- Red Corn.

All of our products have been successfully used by different restaurants, fermenters and breweries. Raw native and indigenous grains add an extra flavour and texture to different dishes and are well sought after by chefs.

Other native products:

- 2 types of native turmeric – Waigaon and Amba Halad
- 3 types of Raw, unfiltered Honey which is mindfully harvested by a dedicated Tribal Community from the Sahyadri forests, called Thakar. This community has been harvesting honey since generations and only remove honey depending on the season's availability and in accordance with the climatic patterns. Thus, if the bees don't have enough honey in a particular year, then the community does not harvest the honey.





SPECIALTIES

One of our major Value Addition products is Baby and Infant Food. Not only are they nutritionally rich due to the native produce but they are also made with the guidance of tribal wisdom and what the tribals use to feed their young ones.

MOVING FORWARD

At the moment, 000 Farms works with more than 2200 farmer families in 63 village hamlets in Maharashtra and Gujarat. We hope

to take this work forward to 600 and then 6000 villages and spread the native indigenous seeds far and wide.

The remarkable changes in soil health that we have experienced through our work has solidified our belief in 'Nutrition per Acre' versus 'Yield per Acre' through the farming of native indigenous seed without any external inputs. By extending our work in more villages, we are confident that 000



Farms will be a part of the solution to the larger climate





change crisis instead of the problem created by the use of hybrid seeds and their fertilisers and pesticides. OOO Farms intends to continue due efforts to let soil heal itself over time.

THE PHILOSOPHY

Experimentation with native and indigenous grains and produce opens up a new flavour profile for the culinary industry, and along with that it also provides farming communities a motivation to revert back to the age-old tradition of saving regenerative seeds that are nutritionally more dense and practicing true seed and harvest democracy.

It is also important to look into our own backyard and discover an

array of vegetables and produce growing in our forests and learn from tribal communities who know how to identify and forage them instead of pursuing exotic ingredients that add to the carbon footprint. Having said that, it is also very necessary to be mindful of what is being consumed and foraged. A lot of wild foods and native produce is limited and the tribal communities who are safeguarding them have the first right to decide how and when to use them. It is very important to trust their generational wisdom and only consume foods that are growing in abundance in and around the forests and that the tribal communities have voluntarily shared with us. Seasonal has a

new meaning here – not only what grows in season but also mindful harvesting and foraging in the season that sees the abundance. Lastly, wild foods and native produce are available everywhere. India is a very biodiverse region and we are able to find the so called edible ‘weeds’ even growing in and around pavements in urban areas. Old native trees are also found strewn throughout our cities and it is only a matter of being able to identify them. If we were to seek out people who are knowledgeable in this domain and learn from them, it will be easy to not only forage ingredients but also conserve them for future generations to relish.

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