

CELEBRITY CHEF AT NHI

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Sweet study

Students from the Gulf Chef School at NHI were recently treated to a pastry master class as part of a publicity tour



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Students at the National Hospitality Institute (NHI) were recently treated to a lesson from renowned pastry chef Frederic Bourse, as part of his tour to advertise Valrhona chocolate and Boiron Purees & Fruit in the region.

World-famous in the world of cookery, the Frenchman has over ten years' experience in Michelin-starred restaurants in Europe, as well as claiming a number of significant awards in his field. He now owns and operates his own pastry shop – L'Atelier del Gusto – in Bergamo, Italy, which he opened in 2007.

"We felt this would be a great opportunity for our students to benefit from such an experienced chef and the interaction with Chef Frederic made the experience that much more memorable," said Shabu Thambi, team leader of Gulf Chef School at the NHI in a press release. "At NHI, we encourage as much exposure to the reality of the positions our trainees are working towards filling, which we believe creates a sense of admiration and drive to excel in their skill development and builds on their work ethic."

"The purpose of the demonstration today was to make people understand the quality of the products and how to use them as best as possible. It was also to impart new ideas and recipes which can be used all year round," said Frederic. "The students here are very interested in learning. They asked many questions. I got them involved in the demonstration; I made them work a little bit to understand the proper techniques."

Bruce Woolner, himself an experienced chef and today product development manager for Chef

Middle East, was also full of praise for the efforts. A former executive chef at the InterContinental Hotel Muscat, he said of his NHI-prepared dinner, "I've been into restaurants where I've paid and had worse food."

Of Frederic's visit, Bruce said, "It's a PR exercise, but at the same time it's giving something back to our clients. It's also so that the students get to see quality products. Obviously, as a school, they'll have budget restraints so they won't normally be able to use ingredients of this high quality."

A significant part of the reason for Frederic's tour is to raise awareness of the products of Chef Middle East, which represents both Valrhona chocolate and Boiron Purees & Fruit. Currently, the products are used in establishments such as the Al Bustan Palace Hotel and the InterContinental Hotel Muscat, but they are driven into the sultanate from Chef Middle East's Dubai headquarters.

The opening of an appropriate warehouse in Muscat is reportedly imminent – only the finalisation of the chilling facilities is pending.

"Oman is increasingly getting a sweet-tooth. The popularity of chocolate generally has increased, but especially dark chocolate. Weddings and birthdays used to be celebrated mostly with traditional food but chocolate fountains have become a more regular fixture," said Bruce.

"It is a growing market. It's a slowly growing market – many things in Oman don't change – but the tourism side of it will. Some projects may be delayed, but they'll get there," he continued, adding that Chef Middle East planned to expand its reach as far as Salalah soon.