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MANAGERS IN THE KITCHEN

Twelve senior HSBC staff attend a training session in NHI's kitchen to raise money for a students' fund

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Senior officials of HSBC attended a cookery class at National Hospitality Institute (NHI) on November 14 in an effort to raise money for the 40 for 40 fund. Twelve staff members from the bank tried their hand at cooking three dishes from a menu put together by chefs of NHI. The 'complicated tasks' for the bankers was

preparing stuffed chicken, a pancake and chicken risotto.

The event was called 'Put down the pen and pick up the knife', with Shabu Thambi, team leader of Gulf Chefs School at NHI, in charge of supervising the cooking session. "The officials worked in three teams and were not aware of the names of

their team members they would work with to complete the tasks earlier. The teams were informed at the beginning of the session that there would be a winner at the end of the training in the kitchen," said Rob MacLean, principal of NHI. The judge for the event was Jean-Luc Amann, executive chef of Al Bustan Palace InterContinental Hotel and president of the Oman Chefs Guild, while chef Aurelia Caccamo of NHI judged the teams on hygiene.

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"We are keen on this kind of a promotion for management training as for us it is a well known territory and management teams could have a rewarding experience. The officials are required to come out of their comfort zone and work together, share information and decide on the division of labour - who's going to do what tasks. This could present quite a challenge for people who are used to a controlled environment as in the kitchen there are many things that need to be balanced," Rob said.

Following completion of their tasks, there was a presentation in the kitchen wherein Jean declared the winner of the event and gave certificates to all the participants. For Hamad al Balushi, head of global banking at HSBC, a member of the winning team, cooking was fun and he enjoyed every bit of it. "But I realise now that it is not at all easy. However, this training did make it clear that each of us have our own strengths and skills and when these

are combined, we can achieve success by working together."

About his experience, Al Salt al Kharusi, unit head of middle market enterprise, said, "This training has helped us interact and communicate better with each other."

The participants included Ewan Stirling, CEO; Munish Sahrawat, COO; Paul Lones, head of credit and risk management; Rajendra Varma, head of internal control; Lalit Mehta, head of compliance; Ali al Abri, head of human resources; John Stubbs, head of personal financial services; Dominic Ferro, treasurer; Philip Crawford, head of private banking; and Tony Issa, manager marketing and corporate communications.

The 40 for 40 fund is being organised by the Oman branch of British Scholarships Overseas, the British Embassy and the British Council to raise money for the higher education of 40 Omanis at a cost of over RO400,000.