

# Let's break bread

Zaatar w Zeit offers a range of Lebanese staples that promises to take you back to your mother's kitchen

**MOHAMAD KADRY**

LEBANESE CUISINE is arguably the most popular Arabic food in the Middle East, and for good reason.

Their eclectic mix of Mediterranean inspired ingredients and fresh breads have tantalised the region for decades. While modern Arabia proudly boasts a diverse offering of national dishes, Lebanese food continues to dominate the menu.

And with this pride came a new kind of restaurant — Zaatar w Zeit (ZWZ). Its literal translation means 'Oregano And Oil', but it has become famous for a traditional style of cooking called 'saj'.

There used to be a time when getting your 'manousheh' fresh out of the oven meant waking up early and catching the first batch out from your local 'fern', or oven bakery. But what ZWZ manages to do is offer the fluffy pizza-like delicacies 24/7, with infinite toppings to choose



Zaatar w Zeit is a popular restaurant in the city

from. Reminiscent of your own mother's kitchen, the smell of fresh dough dominates the air within a half kilometre radius.

Even more delicious are the choices of cheeses, or 'jebneh'. Disappointment is not a word ZWZ seems to know.

For chicken lovers, order the 'Djiej al Aajine' — a wrap consisting of lettuce, tomatoes, pickles and garlic sauce.

Not gonna be a garlic night? Ask for some light mayo — it's the perfect substitute and your social life won't suffer.

For the signature dish, go for the Zaatar — a flat bread toasted and seasoned with traditional Lebanese dried thyme. To add taste to any order, make sure to ask for a plate of fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, olives, and mint leaves — a staple hodgepodge in any Lebanese home.

Wraps range from Dh8 to Dh24, and promise to fill any appetite. Also catering to the vegetarian and health conscious, ZWZ makes bread look good.

Visit ZWZ's new location in Jumeirah Beach Residence. ■ [kadry@khaleejtimes.com](mailto:kadry@khaleejtimes.com)



For Gihan Weerasinghe coffee is a passion

# Bean there, done that

Gihan Weerasinghe from the UAE who became the global champion of the Costa Coffee world spills the beans on coffee

**MOHAMAD KADRY**

IN THE world of competitive java, there are no rules — just good coffee. So it's no surprise that the Costa Coffee franchise began an organised competition — a 'coffee Olympics' if you will — in search of the world's greatest barista.

What has evolved into a beloved sport for these proud servers, the Barista of Year Championship combines original coffee creations with a touch of nutmeg and personality to reveal who really knows their beans.

While it may not be the most glamorous competition, the barista championships can change lives for the few who have exhibited exemplary skill and passion for their work.

Based in the United Kingdom, Costa Coffee opened its doors in 1971 and it remains one of Starbucks' biggest rivals. They even managed to build their biggest branch in Dubai, able to seat nearly 320 coffee aficionados.

As for the competition, baristas are selected based on merit from each of their respective countries. After

competing nationally, they go on to a regional meeting in which one connoisseur is selected to represent the Middle East in the global arena.

In 2007, Gihan Weerasinghe, a Sri Lankan national, represented the UAE during the regional competition. His coffee creations were so revered that he went on to become the global champion of the Costa Coffee world.

"For me, coffee is like wine," he says, now the proud supervisor of a local Costa branch.

But even with Weerasinghe's talent, he was reluctant to advance to administration, afraid to hang up his apron for a tie.

"I once met a barista who was 45 years old, so I asked him why he was still making coffee. He told me that skill is always with you, and once you reach that point of perfection, no one can stop you."

While his passion is admirable, it is also widespread. There is an interesting subculture that evolved in the past decade with the rise of coffee shops, a phenomenon that took much of the world by storm. While

quaint cafes were nothing new in Europe, they were all but non-existent in the United States, where people traditionally congregated in bars or pub. But as the coffee shop gained popularity, suddenly it became a chic hang-out. And with this new booming industry, came the barista.

Even the role of Gunther on the hit sitcom, *Friends*, was created at the height of the coffee boom, and suddenly the bartender became the barista.

But becoming the global king of espresso was no easy task for Weerasinghe, who had to utilise all his knowledge and expertise in creating a drink that would win over an international panel of judges.

Espresso Honey would become his signature creation and change his life forever.

"I made it from honey, almond and hot water, double shot of espresso, and foam with milk on top. The drink shows five clear distinct layers," he says.

"Every cup of coffee you make — if you make it from your heart — you learn something new." ■ [kadry@khaleejtimes.com](mailto:kadry@khaleejtimes.com)

## FUN

## WITH FRUITS

In order to win an exciting Tang hamper all you need to do answer the questions below:

1. The Mango is often referred to as apple of the:
  - Orient
  - Tropics
  - Far East
2. Approximately how many varieties of apples are grown around the world?
  - 2,500
  - 7,500
  - 1 million
3. Which of the following is true?
  - a. Grated lemon peel is called zest
  - b. The ladies of King Louis XIV's court used lemons to redden their cheeks
  - c. Sailors used lemons to cure a disease known as scurvy

(There could be more than one correct answer to the above question)
4. Strawberries are the only known fruit to have their seeds on the outside, with an average of 200 seeds per fruit.
  - True
  - False
5. You can grow your own pineapple plant by twisting the crown off a store bought pineapple, letting it dry for 2-3 days, then planting it
  - True
  - False
6. Tang is made with 100 per cent natural fruit flavours and is absolutely preservative free.
  - True
  - False

Send in your answers with your name, age, profession and contact details to [tangtrivia@gmail.com](mailto:tangtrivia@gmail.com). The last date for entry is August 30, 2008