

Caterer's industry champions

Meet the 50 people who are shaping the region's culinary scene

The *Caterer Middle East* inaugural round-up of the top 50 F&B champions is a celebration of the most influential people in the region; the ones who, in the last year, have been stamping their mark on the Middle East's culinary landscape.

It's about people, rather than companies, who are driving standards, pushing innovation and implementing best practices, taking the Middle East to new culinary heights.

We've taken into consideration the impact of their work on F&B operations and standards, judged on: size, scale, innovation and longevity; how committed they are to industry issues and events; how highly regarded they are in the industry and among their peers; and how they are having a positive influence on the next generation.

With so many heroes to celebrate in this exciting sector, and their talents and contributions so diverse, we have split the round-up into five categories: brand champions; executive chefs; culinarians; industry gurus and development leaders.

Each group of people have been creating excitement, implementing new ideas and strategies, new concepts and ways of thinking, but in very different ways.

The brand champions are a collection of innovative thinkers who have worked hard to develop a homegrown brand, or made a highly regarded international brand succeed in the Middle East. They are dedicated, passionate individuals who, while bringing something new to the region, have excited diners and pushed standards.

Our recognised executive chefs are meticulous managers and inspiring leaders. Looking after large teams with diverse needs and managing complex operations, they are making sure the F&B offerings of corporations remain cutting edge and are of world-class quality.

The culinarians are our chefs who are pushing the boundaries of cuisine. They are inspiring, talented artists whose restaurants are award-winning and have sought-after seats. Their avant-garde menus are the talk of diners across the region, and their restaurant concepts are shaping the region's eating experience.

Our fourth category, the industry gurus, is full of revered individuals. Passionate about food as well as the region, they have been waving the flag for the Middle East's culinary scene for years, making sure it is celebrated and talked about across the world. They have shown commitment to the industry and have inspired the next generation, as well as their peers.

Last, but not least, our development leaders are astute business men and women. The huge scale of their operations are making waves in the region, but not only that, they are dedicated to quality and to raising the bar of their corporations' offerings.

The round-up has been put together by the team of hospitality experts at *Caterer Middle East* and is subjective. It includes personalities from the restaurant industry, from casual to fine dining, but not QSR.

We hope it will excite, inspire and start debate, and we welcome your thoughts and feedback. ●



Brand champions

WOUTER LAP, DIRECTOR, MORE CAFÉ

1 Wouter Lap grew up in the Netherlands, where he fuelled an innate passion for food with a series of roles at top outlets across the country.

Following stints at Michelin-starred restaurants and five-star hotels, Lap ended up in Dubai, having risen to the level of executive chef.

This gave him the know-how to set up his own company, supplying premium food products to the buzzing local food and beverage industry.

Lap and his wife Marijke launched Intelligent Foods in 2000 – manufacturing, importing and distributing to hotels, restaurants, catering services and shipping companies.

But Lap is arguably better known for his hit homegrown UAE brand, MORE Café.

Born in 2002, the popular casual dining concept relies on simple, healthy, homemade fare: a combination that's won over the hearts (and stomachs) of the UAE public.

Today, Lap's keeping busy expanding the MORE concept across the wider GCC, with openings on the cards in Oman and Egypt in 2012.

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