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Dining Out on Friday: In love with his job

by Josanne Cassar

Roger started his career in the kitchen as a commis chef way back in June 1991 in one of the leading four star hotels in Malta at the time. "Over the years I gained experience working in industrial kitchens, restaurants, catering companies and hotels around Malta and overseas. I had the opportunity to show my culinary skills in all sections of the kitchen until I found my ideal role managing a large brigade of chefs - I am now the Executive Head Chef at the Grand Hotel Excelsior."



Choosing a career in catering came naturally for Roger. "My family has always been involved in the gastronomy industry in Malta; the kitchen was always part of my life as a family concern. I was attracted to this environment from a young age and over the years spent long hours in industrial kitchens to get the feel of what it would be like to be a chef. Believe it or not I still get excited when entering a large kitchen."

After working his way up the career ladder by gaining hands on experience within this industry, Roger also had the opportunity to enrol in several culinary and management courses – both locally and overseas.

His explains that his experience is mostly in the hotel industry, working on large volume events, which is very different to the restaurant business where you cater for a fixed amount of covers. He points out that the hotel environment is seasonal and it fluctuates accordingly.

"The advantage is that one is able to explore new systems, trends and tastes accordingly. A challenge I thoroughly enjoyed was creating a buffet set up with a difference at the Grand Hotel Excelsior. Each night is themed, ensuring variety and novelty for our patrons. Together with my team of chefs we have achieved a strong and stable popularity within the local market and have also changed the international traveller's perception regarding the food available on the Maltese islands. A report in the media recently stated that 'The Excelsior's offering is probably going to be up there among the best this winter'. My team and I work hard to ensure a superior offering. The hotel is famous for its magnificent structure and location but is mostly known for its outstanding culinary products."

Roger professes to love all kinds of food and is always open to explore new flavours and fusion cuisine.

At home, however, he admits to taking a break from the kitchen since it is his wife who does most of the cooking.

"I only cook when we have guests."

When I ask him what he does to relax, he laughs,

"Relax!? What is that? My mobile is always on – I am like a doctor on call. You can ask my team – whether on my off day or on holiday, I still know exactly what's going on! Strictly speaking, in my position I can't afford not to think about my kitchen."

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