

# ELEVATED DESSERTS

Michelin-starred Pastry Chef René Frank discusses his latest collaboration with FIVE Hotels & Resorts

## **F**rom CODA to FIVE Hotels & Resorts. Tell us, what brings you to the Middle East?

Here in Dubai, desserts are defined as the sweet finish to your meal. The core of my philosophy is to create desserts that balance sweetness, using only natural ingredients, cutting out refined sugar and industrial processed ingredients, so you can easily have several desserts in a row and still hit the dance floor. There is big potential for the dessert cuisine in the Middle East.

I have seen a great synergy between FIVE Hotels & Resorts and my philosophy as a chef and my restaurant, CODA. This hotel brand dares to be different, the same way we've also dared to be different at my restaurant by questioning and redefining what a dessert can be.

In Dubai, we worked with four of the award-winning restaurants at FIVE Hotels & Resorts, including rooftop lounge The Penthouse, gourmet Chinese Maiden Shanghai, street food hotspot Soul St, and homely café The Delisserie. The creations for each of these venues are tailored to the concept of the venue, leaving room to be experiential and creative. For example,





the fluffy duck; a duck-shaped mango and passionfruit mousse on a mango and passionfruit bubble bath. I got the inspiration for this dish when I was visiting Hong Kong. I came across a rubber duck art piece in the harbour by Florentijn Hofman. The deflated duck art piece and famous 'Fluffy Duck' cocktail played a big role in creating this dessert, which since has become a signature dish of mine. Also, the flavours of my childhood. My grandmother's kitchen and our garden. A dessert is a very emotional dish because sweet things always remind you of your childhood.

At Soul St, we have created the Nitro Black Forest dessert which pays tribute to one of my favourite childhood desserts, the Black Forest cake from my hometown in South Germany. Simple yet elevated inspired by mountains, trees and snow, it comes with chocolate mousse, cherry compote and vanilla foam.

we grind our cocoa beans at "The Delisserie" to make hot chocolate and cakes. We also developed a concept for refined sugar-free desserts for the Chinese-inspired desserts at Maiden Shanghai and street food-inspired desserts at "Soul St".

### How are you planning on shaking up the dessert scene?

As a chef, I always feel responsible for the food that I am serving my guests. Food should be something that makes you feel good, that's why I always have an eye on the balance of a dish, regarding sweetness and flavour.

At FIVE Hotels & Resorts, we have taken the time to work on desserts that complement your dining experience, so you leave satisfied but are still able to enjoy your night out after. For example, at gourmet Chinese Maiden Shanghai, we have created the Almond Rice Bowl. This creation takes on inspiration from the traditional Chinese dining culture, where rice was usually served at the end of the dinner. Symbolically, we're using a cleaver knife to break through the richness of the dessert. It's a low carb vegan rice bowl starring almond, blueberry, soy milk and puffed rice presented in a chocolate rice bowl. It's a good example of how a dessert can be super light and attractive on camera at the same time.

### Where does your inspiration stem from?

My inspiration comes especially from travelling. I enjoy seeing what someone likes and what someone dares to eat. At The Penthouse, we have created

### Are you enjoying working with any unique ingredients at the moment?

We have developed a dessert selection individual to each venue, to reflect the restaurant's theme and also provide room to be playful, modern and experimental. In every menu, you should find something for each taste and desire. The combinations of various flavours, however, dare to be different!

At Maiden Shanghai, we have created the coconut nectar custard. Using all-natural ingredients, starring often forgotten produce like bone marrow. A homage to raw products and statement to reduce ingredient wastage. Made with unrefined Indonesian coconut sugar. Whereas at The Penthouse, we have the Japanese Adzuki Cheesecake, it's a combination of Japanese flavours with the finesse of French cheese. Anko, which is an Adzukibean paste is one of the most traditional flavours in Japanese sweets.

At Soul St, we wanted to represent the restaurant's international street food concept and have created the Pineapple Masala - this dessert is all about surprises. Infused with Indian spices and inhouse made curry powder. Starring the different textures of the pineapple with curry marinated pineapple pieces, pineapple granita and almond crumble. Lastly, at the Delisserie, you have to try the Cheddar Cheese fondant, a floating cheesecake made with Cheddar, served with red pepper ice cream.