

THE FACE BEHIND
THE PALETTE

THE LIFE OF AN EXCHANGE
STUDENT AT AUS

THE KEYS TO
TRANQUILITY: HOW ONE
STUDENT FOUND PEACE IN
MUSIC

May 20, 2024



Dive Into Life

Lifestyle Magazine

25 DHS





MUSIC AND HARMONY	7
TRANSFORM YOUR HAIR ROUTINE	8
THE MIDDLE EAST BETWEEN A BRUSH AND ITS CANVAS: THE PERSPECTIVE OF AN ARAB ART'S CONNOISSEUR, COLLECTOR, AND TEACHER	9
JUDITH KENNY: A JACK OF ALL TRADES	11
DRAPED IN CULTURE: UNRAVELING THE DIVERSITY OF SOUTH INDIAN SAREES	13
HOW TO WHIP UP A MANGO CHIA PUDDING WITH JUST 5 SIMPLE INGREDIENTS	15
BEACH ESSENTIALS FOR YOUR SUN-SOAKED ADVENTURES	17
THE LIFE OF AN EXCHANGE STUDENT AT AUS	18
STUDY SMARTER, NOT HARDER: HOW TO PREPARE EFFICIENTLY FOR EXAMS	20
THE KEYS TO TRANQUILITY: HOW ONE STUDENT FOUND PEACE IN MUSIC	22
HOW TO DELVE INTO NEW ACADEMIC OPTIONS	24





TABLE OF CONTENTS



**INTERVIEW WITH DR. ANOUD
ABOUT HER CHATBOT AND AI
IN WRITING** 25

**TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF
VIDEO GAMES** 27

**MASTERING THE CLOCK: 3
WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR
TIME MANAGEMENT** 29

HIDDEN GEMS AROUND AUS 30

IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP 32

**FUSION FASHION OF THE
TWO C'S: CULTURE AND
CONTEMPORARINESS** 33

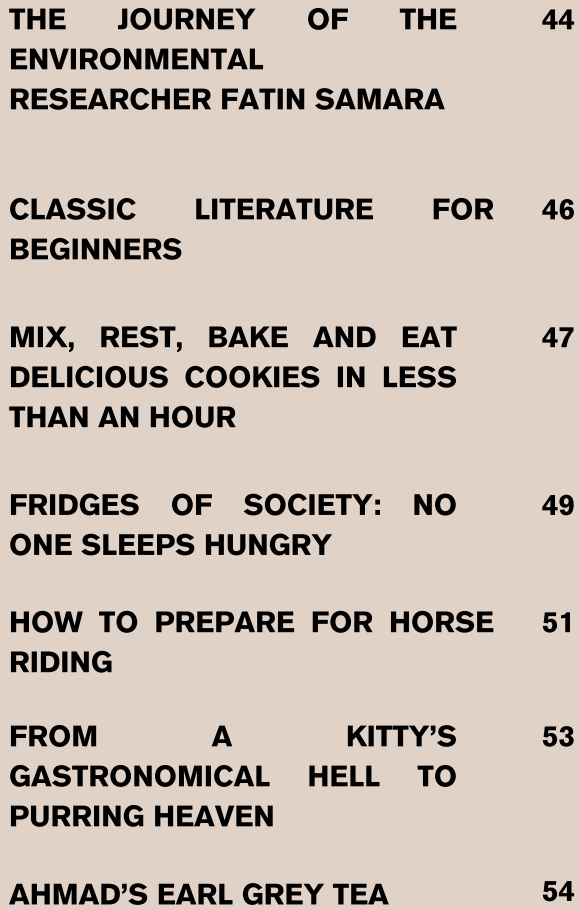
**SPICE UP YOUR SNEAKER
GAME: COMPLETE YOUR
SHOE COLLECTION WITH A
LIMITED-EDITION ADIDAS
SHOE** 35

**THE FACE BEHIND THE
PALETTE** 37

**A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO
CRUELTY FREE MAKEUP** 39

**PRE-LOVED BOOKS: A
RUMMAGE THROUGH
MARKED LINES AND OLD
LETTERS** 40

**FATIN SAMARA TALKS ABOUT
THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE
PRESENT AND THE
ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS OF
THE FUTURE.** 42

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Dive Into Life



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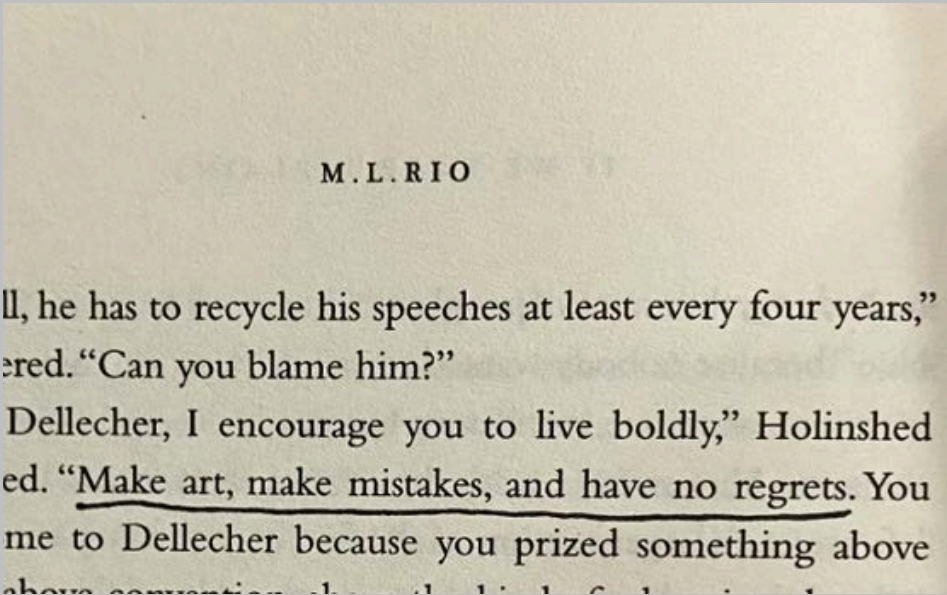
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FROM THE EDITOR

Have you ever struggled with balancing work and social life? Or perhaps balancing two different interests in your life? Whether you are a student or an employee, we all face the struggle of having different identities in our place of work versus in our personal circles. Although this issue is not uncommon, it is not widely spoken about. Balancing between these two ends does not have to be as difficult as you might think. If you are unsure where to start, we have many articles that detail different experiences of people who lead dual lifestyles, for example our article titled “Judith Kenny: A Jack of all trades.”

We examine an intriguing theme in this issue; living two distinct lifestyles side by side. Many of us, in our fast-paced society, are caught between opposing realities and aspirations. We frequently have to find a balance between the calm and the chaotic, the old and the new, or the sparse and the plenty. Our intention is to provide you with a glimpse into these diverse lifestyles, emphasizing the positives and difficulties that each has to offer.

Dive Into Life hopes to encourage you to consider your own lifestyle decisions with these and other stories. We hope you find your own way and completely embrace it, whether that be a life full of excitement and adventure or a more toned down, relaxed lifestyle.



Sara El Samra

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

BY MUHAMMAD HASHID JAFFAR

Harmony elevates your sound experience to new heights.

MUSIC



AND HARMONY

On a sunny afternoon, Dennis decided to take a break from his busy day. The city was bustling and full of noise. He slipped on his Harmony Wireless Earbuds, craving some time to unwind with his favorite tunes. With the Harmony Earbuds in his ears, Dennis strolled through the city, feeling the warmth of the sun on his face. The soft melodies from his playlist filled his ears, providing a pleasant soundtrack to his leisurely walk. As he wandered, Dennis couldn't help but notice the crisp sound quality of the Harmony Earbuds, especially their noise canceling feature, which prevented him from hearing the honking and yelling of the busy city. Every note was clear and vibrant, enhancing his listening experience. After a while, Dennis sat on a bench in a quiet park overlooking a pond. With his eyes closed and the music playing softly, he felt a sense of calm wash over him. For a brief moment, all his worries faded away as he lost himself in the music. Dennis reluctantly removed his Harmony Earbuds, feeling refreshed and ready to tackle the rest of the day. With a smile on his face, he headed home, grateful for the brief escape the earbuds had provided.

In a world where noise is almost inescapable, noise canceling earbuds become a must if you are trying to enjoy your audio experience. Say hello to the Harmony Wireless Earbuds, your perfect companion for seamless communication and immersive audio experiences. It is designed to deliver unparalleled sound quality. The Harmony Wireless Earbuds brings your music, podcasts, and calls to life with crystal-clear clarity. Whether you're unwinding after a long day or getting pumped up for your next workout, immerse yourself in the rich, dynamic sound that only Harmony can provide.

WIRELESS EARBUDS HAVE SEEN A SURGE IN POPULARITY IN RECENT YEARS, WITH THE GLOBAL MARKET EXPECTED TO REACH OVER 55 BILLION AED BY 2025, REFLECTING THE GROWING DEMAND FOR CONVENIENT AND PORTABLE AUDIO SOLUTIONS.

Its sleek design provides maximum comfort, even during long hours of usage. The earbuds themselves are small, allowing them to be carried anywhere, at any time. Additionally, the earbuds have a long-lasting battery life of over 15 hours of playtime, while the case provides an additional 50 hours, totaling up to a whopping 65 hours of playtime. Their user friendliness along with their seamless connectivity make it a must-have. The Harmony Wireless Earbuds seamless Bluetooth connectivity effortlessly pairs your headset with your favorite devices and takes control of your audio experience with the touch of a button. Adjust volume, skip tracks, and answer calls, all without missing a beat.



TRANSFORM YOUR HAIR ROUTINE WITH DYSON

BY SARA EL SAMRA

I have always dreaded doing my hair, especially in the mornings. It is a common experience to wake up late and have no time to do your hair or be too tired to spend almost an hour trying to get it right. I have tried so many different hair curlers and straighteners, hair care products and oils; the list goes on. Anything to make the process of doing my hair easier. I did not have much luck for a long time, so I just gave up on doing my hair every day. However, I eventually found a product that changed the hair game for me. When I discovered the Dyson Airwrap Multi-Styler, my life became so much easier. I suffered from heat damage to my hair, so finding a product that does not use extreme heat really helped me work towards healthier hair while still having it look good. Also, there are eight different attachments that you can easily change depending on the hairstyle you want to go for that day.



Dyson Airwrap Multi-Styler

These attachments include four different sized curlers, two brush straighteners depending on your hair type, a hair dryer, and a round volumizing brush. This makes the process so much more convenient and efficient, especially if I am in a rush. I can go from wet hair to dry styled hair in about fifteen minutes. The best part is that the product is engineered for different hair types, so my sister and I can both use it even though she has curly hair while mine is straight. It is also great for travel since it saves you the hassle of bringing multiple hair tools and having no space in your luggage. Instead, you can just bring the dryer and a couple of your favorite attachments. It is also very light weight, reducing the arm cramps usually gotten from holding your hair tool for too long. I have recommended the product to many friends, and they all loved it. One friend said, "I am never buying another hair tool again, I have everything I need with the Dyson Airwrap". Overall, the Dyson Airwrap Multi-Styler has completely transformed the way I do my hair and has made me enjoy the process and get excited to try out new hairstyles. I would recommend it to all you readers who struggle with doing your hair the same way I did.



Sheikh Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi sitting in his office at the American University of Sharjah

The Middle East Between a Brush and its Canvas: The Perspective of an Arab Art's Connoisseur, Collector, and Teacher

BY BISSANE EL SAYED



"I established Barjeel as an extension of storytelling, storytelling from the Arab world ... But rather than just words or politics, I'm looking at art," said Sheikh Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi.

Sheikh Al Qassemi is the founder of Barjeel Art Foundation and currently a professor at the American University of Sharjah teaching Politics of Modern Middle East Art. He is also a columnist and researcher.

The Beginning of the Story

His journey with art started around 30 years ago in France, where he took this interest and localized it to shed light on art from the MENA region.

"My interest in art started when I was a student in Paris in the 1990s. I was visiting museums and started to wonder if we have this kind of art back home, in the Arab world, in the Middle East. I started visiting galleries in the UAE, Dubai, Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation, and Sharjah Art Museum. That helped me form my interest in art."

By 2002, Sheikh Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi began purchasing art. The first two pieces he bought were a photograph by the late son of the ruler of Sharjah Sheikh Khaled bin Sultan, and a watercolor drawing by Abdul Qader Al Rais, who is a prominent Emirati artist.

Art and Value

From a scholar and an art enthusiast's point of view, Sheikh Al Qassemi necessitated that members of the Middle Eastern community must know and understand the value of their art.

That is why he decided to dedicate Barjeel Art Foundation to educate them more, and to provide a platform for Middle Easterners to learn about the rich art that emerges from their region, and for them to embrace and appreciate it.

Barjeel Art Foundation also always housed artists from the MENA region, making it a stage for them to publicize their culture and background.



He found that literary contributions revolving around art are “ultimately ... the best measurement of the importance of an artwork,” and raised its value while allowing opportunities for it to be appreciated by people of a similar background and those foreign to it.

“There are so many new books being published by Barjeel ourselves, by Sharjah Art Foundation, by independent writers, and by universities,” said Sheikh Al Qassemi, shedding light on the efforts dedicated to studying and teaching art. The contribution of his foundation and Sharjah overall is immensely fruitful, allowing the youth access to an abundance of resources.

When asked about the value of art pieces, Sheikh Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi answered “it's very difficult to put value on an artwork, there are ... different ways of evaluating art.”

On the level of individuals, art could be valued on a personal level based on memories, significance, and people accompanied by that work. He provided an example of the very first two works he bought. However, marketwise, the value depends on multiple factors, as Sheikh Al Qassemi explained, “when there's a limited amount of art, coupled with a high degree of scholarship and writing and literature, it makes the artwork very valuable.”

From his collection, there are some of the pieces considered most financially valuable. The first one is The Last Sound, a painting by a Sudanese artist called Ibrahim El Salahi. Another is a sculpture by Jawad Saleem, an Iraqi sculptor who died at the young age of 42.

Finally, a couple of works by the Lebanese Saloua Raouda Choucair, despite living for over 100 years, her works are valuable due to their rarity, and the fact that they are displayed in all the big museums, which is another measurement for evaluating art's worth.

Sheikh Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi said that Arab art is getting prominent, especially in terms of literature, because of foundations and entities concerned with art that are contributing to these advancements.

He said the target audience of Barjeel is Middle Easterners before it is other communities.

“You feel proud that somebody from my region who speaks my language and understands my culture [are] being appreciated,” he elaborated.

“SOCIAL MEDIA IS ALSO AN INDICATOR OF THE YOUTHS' CHANGE OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIDDLE EASTERN ART, IN WHICH MANY ACCOUNTS ARE OPERATED BY YOUNG PEOPLE” AS SHEIKH AL QASSEMI EXPLAINED.

He continued to say “I imagine myself, a 22-year-old in the year 2000, and had social media ... I would create an account and post about art from my region.”

Experience at AUS

When asked about his experience at AUS, he answered “AUS students are very keen to learn ... I have never taught in a place where the students were so keen on doing extra activities ... which I think reflects very well on them, showing that they're very social, that they're very dynamic, outgoing, adapted, adapting to new environments.”

He concluded with saying “ so far, it's super positive experience and [I am] very happy.”



JUDITH KENNY: A JACK OF ALL TRADES



Judith Kenny in her house.

BY ANNALISA JACQUELINE LEWIS

JUDITH KENNY, BORN AND RAISED IN DUBAI, IS A WOMAN OF MANY TALENTS. SHE STARTED OFF WITH AVIATION, HOTEL MANAGEMENT, TRAVEL MANAGEMENT, AND THEN BRANCHED OUT INTO BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT. SHE ALSO TREADS THE LINE OF A SMALL HOME-AND-POP SHOP, SELLING CAKES, AND PURSUES HER VARIOUS HOBBIES PASSIONATELY. KENNY IS CURRENTLY ON A BREAK BUT WILL START HER NEW JOB WORKING FOR A BANK IN APRIL.

Q: Can you walk us through your career track with your 9-5 working job?

A: My career and culinary interests have always been separate. I pursued aviation straight after university, aiming for opportunities with companies like DNATA or the newly established Emirates. Over time, I realized I craved change and shifted to air freight and shipping. Then, a friend suggested Deutsche Bank, which was newly established in Dubai. Banking had always intrigued me since I couldn't study it earlier. I spent 13 years there before taking a break. Banking remains my passion, offering excitement in market trends, client interactions, and diverse cultures.

Q: How did you find your passion for the culinary field?

A: My passions varied, it was not limited to the culinary field. I never thought that I was somebody who enjoyed being inside the kitchen, I never thought that I could be good at baking, drawing, arts, and crafts. But I think over the years, with constant practice, with trials and errors, I've come to master this craft. For the most part, my career path and my passions are poles apart from each other, but I am enjoying it.





Q: What made you think of turning your hobby into a small home business and actively pursuing it passionately?

A: My venture into cake decoration began around 2005 when I stumbled upon a cake magazine that taught fondant techniques and 3D cake designs. I pursued Wilton's courses and sought certification to enhance my skills and resume. Initially a hobby, it evolved into a home-based business influenced by magazine inspirations. Without many online resources, I relied on reading and adapting techniques. I approach cakes creatively, seeing beyond their form, often transforming them into unique concepts.

Q: What's been the hardest part about working for yourself and how do you manage this?

A: Balancing work and family as a full-time working mother is the toughest part. Cake orders often come during the week, requiring careful time management so I learned to set boundaries. I only accept midweek orders if given a week's notice. Working from home, I utilize weekends for preparation. Despite sacrifices, passion drives me to find time, even late at night. Prioritizing is key, but passion always finds a way. It is tough but manageable.

Q: How do you market your products? Do you rely on word of mouth, social media, or like other strategies?

A: It started off with word of mouth. If I knew it was your birthday, instead of buying you a gift I would bake you a cake. So once that's done you just have to give out a couple of samples. So you give out a couple of freebies before you start getting orders because if it's your birthday, it's not just you who's eating the cake. It began with word-of-mouth referrals, at the time Facebook became a platform for sharing cake photos, encouraging friends to share them too. As social media evolved, I adapted by creating an Instagram account. Adapting to changing trends is essential to staying relevant.

Q: Do you prefer your nine-to-five job or do you prefer baking and going into more of your creative side and turning that into a business?

A: I prefer having a stable nine-to-five job. It's essential to have a steady income and a backup plan for financial security. My passion for baking doesn't generate the same income as my job, but I enjoy it, nonetheless. I've tried pursuing it full-time but found it challenging without proper resources and support. Currently, I run it as a small-scale business, choosing orders selectively. But until now, at this point in time, I still enjoy my nine-to-five job. I have not gotten sick of it.

Q: How do you stay motivated and maintain your passions and your hobbies?

A: My motivation comes from structured days, research, and journaling. I compare my achievements to last year's to see my progress. I've learned to be kinder to myself if tasks aren't completed. Social media inspires me a lot.

Q: So do you have more hobbies that you would like to pursue?

A: It's been a dream to complete a crochet project during my gap year. I learned to crochet and made a tote bag, which my daughter promptly claimed. Lately, I've been drawn to carpentry and bespoke woodwork. My heart is leaning towards designing furniture and interior schemes. I'm a bit of a jack of all trades. My interest in carpentry stems from working with my dad, who crafted our furniture. When I sit back and think about it, my dad always furnished or created our desks, lamps, side tables, coffee tables, and a bed with storage under, which is what he and his brother did with their bare hands.



DRAPED IN CULTURE:

Unraveling the Diversity of South Indian Sarees

BY ANNALISA JACQUELINE LEWIS



A shop displays vibrant and different types of sarees in India.

Imagine you're in South India, a vibrant, loud, and bustling place, where vibrant traditions intersect with modernity. From the inner gullies to the main roads, you can find multiple saree shops lined right next to the street chai and chaat stalls, offering a variety of sarees catering to all budgets, from affordable to high-end options. These shops tend to come alive at night, all lit up and crowded with families. You can see small kids running around while the elders struggle to find the perfect saree for their occasions.

Some states in South India relate the saree to a woman's dignity, whereas to others it could be a part of their identity. The purpose of the saree originally was to highlight the grace and femininity, protect women from the harsh weather conditions, and to preserve their modesty. There are more than ten different varieties of sarees in the south of India with each state showcasing its own unique materials, designs and traditional ways of draping them. Although sarees are worn throughout India, the South Indian sarees are known for their intricate and exquisite craftsmanship, rich history and their endless allure. The intricate threads of these sarees not only weave together stories of tradition and artistry but also human connections.

Gully: The term “gully” is a common Indian English word, derived from the Hindi word “gali”, which means a narrow street or lane. It is a Hindi slang word.

The most famous example is the Kanjivaram silk saree, world-renowned for its rich silk and elaborate zari work. It originates from the city of Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu, where women have been draping themselves in the Kanjivaram silk saree for generations. The saree is expensive as it is handwoven by skilled artisans, and the mulberry silk material gives it a lustrous and luxurious feel. This type of saree is said to symbolize grace, wealth and timeliness. One of my aunt's personal favorites is the Kanjivaram saree as it's luxurious and feels soft on the body. According to her, this saree type is unique due to its hand stitched borders. The designs on this saree are mostly inspired by nature, mythology, and traditional symbols; they are always colorful and eye-catching.



Zari: It is an even thread traditionally made of fine gold or silver used in traditional Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani garments. This thread is woven into fabrics, primarily silk, to make intricate patterns and elaborate designs of embroidery.

Then there's the Sado saree worn by Mangalorean Catholic brides. Mangalorean Catholics weddings are a blend of western and Indian culture. Traditionally, at the wedding reception, the bride changes outfits, from the western white gown to the customary red saree known as Sado paired with white jasmine and orange marigold flowers adorned on their hair. This saree is made of finely woven silk embellished with the zari border. In some families this saree is passed down from mother to daughter as a generational heirloom.

My mother, a Mangalorean Catholic said, "After the wedding, the sado is preserved well and worn again only for feast days or any other grand functions."

Another popular saree from South India is Kerala's traditional white and gold *Kasavu* saree, easily identifiable due to its prominent golden borders. From a country that's known for its bright colors and vibrant hues, this saree stands out with its subtle charm. Although it has the façade of a simple saree, it has a rich cultural heritage and a unique aesthetic.

The Kerala saree is very minimalistic because it is mostly white in color with little to no patterns. In the past, patterns were considered a crime, relating in these subtle yet special handloom-sarees. *Kasavu* sarees were only worn by rich aristocrats and royalty. Commoners could only wear colored sarees at the time. Theories as to why the sarees are predominantly white could be linked to the prominent gold jewelry culture in Kerala. Most people felt the clothing didn't need to be heavily patterned as they'd adorn themselves with heavy gold jewelry.

An interesting thing I've noticed is that back home in Bangalore, the bai's are always draped in sarees. Most households in India tend to have bai's for cooking and cleaning. They generally wear old sarees as that is what they feel comfortable in. Foreigners relate sarees to festive events and glamour; however, it's also worn casually. The sarees they wear are softer and simpler, generally faded over time due to its overuse.

Traditional sarees offer comfort, affordability and versatility, making them suitable for household tasks. Additionally, the choice of traditional sarees may reflect societal norms and personal preferences, emphasizing a sense of dignity and respect for their roles within the household.

Bai: This term is used widely across India with different meanings. Bai is commonly used to address a female maid. However, it is also a respectful suffix for females, mainly royals, like Rani Lakshmi Bai and Jodhaa Bai. In the language Marathi, Bai is used to address schoolteachers and is a sign of respect.

There's an extensive variety of sarees throughout India, with each state having their own identity through a certain saree unique only to them. There's no one perfect way of draping a saree. Right now, there are about 100 different kinds of draping styles, depending on region, fabric, length and width of the garment, and if the wearer wants to look slim. The younger generation, trying to stay in touch with their culture, has also been experimenting in wearing and styling the saree in various ways.

Choosing the perfect saree is not simple. It's like a complex dance of tango having going through different stores and tailors. This piece of clothing has and always will be iconic in India. The saree is always evolving, showing just how important and beautiful it is.



This Mango Chia Pudding dessert is naturally vegan, gluten-free, and refined sugar-free.

HOW TO WHIP UP A MANGO CHIA PUDDING WITH JUST 5 SIMPLE INGREDIENTS

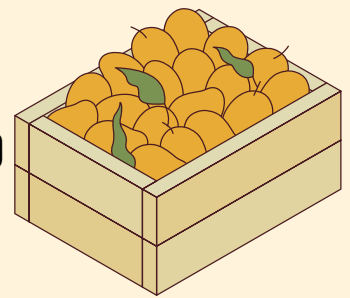
BY ANNALISA JACQUELINE LEWIS

Chia pudding is the perfect meal for breakfast or dessert. Everyone tends to like dessert; however, one setback is that it has high sugar content. This chia seed pudding is a guilt-free dessert.

Chia seeds have multiple health benefits that make this a healthy breakfast/dessert option that is perfect for everyone, especially for gym enthusiasts or people on a diet. The nutrients in chia seeds can promote heart health, support and strengthen bones and improve blood sugar management. Chia seeds are also known for being loaded with omega-3 fatty acids, fiber and antioxidants all good for a balanced diet. If you are on a weight-loss plan, try this recipe out, as it is high in fiber and protein, which can help you feel full and reduce your food cravings. This mango chia pudding is made with fresh mango purée making it rich and creamy.

Do not worry if you are not a good cook; this recipe requires just 5 simple ingredients and can be ready to eat in 15 minutes.

YOUR CHIA PUDDING CAN END UP BEING SLIGHTLY THICKER OR THINNER, DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE MANGOES USED AND THE BRAND OF COCONUT MILK. IF YOUR PUDDING ENDS UP BEING TOO THICK, YOU CAN ADD A BIT MORE COCONUT MILK AND MIX AGAIN. IF IT'S TOO THIN, ADD SOME MORE CHIA SEEDS.



INGREDIENTS (2 SERVINGS):

- ½ cup of chia seeds
- 2 cups of coconut milk (light or full-fat)
- 4 peeled and diced mangoes
- 2 tablespoons of agave
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract

TIP: USE RIPE ATAULFO MANGOES TO MAKE THE PUDDING NATURALLY SWEET AND FLAVORFUL. WHILE SELECTING THE MANGOES MAKE SURE THEY ARE SOFT TO THE TOUCH AND YELLOW. IF THE MANGOES ARE A BIT GREEN AND STILL HARD, THEY ARE NOT READY.



4 EASY STEPS:

- 01** Blend your coconut milk, mangoes, agave, and vanilla extract using a blender until it is smooth. You have to make sure the ingredients are mixed well so that the chia seeds do not clump.
- 02** Keep the chia seeds in a separate bowl. Then pour the blended mixture into the chia seed bowl and whisk together for at least 1-2 minutes until everything is combined.
- 03** Cover the mixture and place it in the fridge for at least an hour or overnight for the pudding to set.
- 04** Serve with fresh fruit slices of your choice. You can also use crushed nuts, and mint to garnish. People with a sweet tooth also add chocolate shavings on top.

Now every time you crave something sweet, you can whip up this naturally vegan, gluten-free and refined sugar-free dessert.





BY SARA EL SAMRA

BEACH ESSENTIALS FOR YOUR SUN-SOAKED ADVENTURES



Beach day essentials

With summer right around the corner, beach season is finally in session. It is time for golden tans and steaming hot sand paired with the freezing cold ocean water. While we all enjoy a good day trip to the beach, packing for it can get stressful. You never want to forget something at home, and be stuck without it for the rest of the day. To avoid this situation, here are five beach essentials you must have to ensure the best beach trip. Firstly, it is the sunscreen. Getting sunburnt is not a great way to end your day at the beach. So, sunscreen is the first thing that needs to be packed.

The second item is a cooler. It is important to stay hydrated while spending time in the sun. So, a cooler is great to make sure your drinks stay cold throughout the day. Thirdly, a speaker. What is the beach without a little music to keep you entertained while you are tanning. Fourthly, you cannot forget your sunglasses. Not only do they protect you from the sun, but they also spice up your beach look. Lastly, a ball. Whether that be a football, volleyball, or any other type, it is always fun to stay active and play some games at the beach with your friends.

THE LIFE OF AN EXCHANGE STUDENT AT AUS

BY SARA EL SAMRA

ALI DEEN ATAI, 21, IS AN EXCHANGE STUDENT FROM NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. HE IS A JUNIOR MAJORING IN PSYCHOLOGY AND IS CURRENTLY COMPLETING HIS SECOND SEMESTER AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH FROM HIS YEAR LONG EXCHANGE PROGRAM.

Q: What motivated you to do an exchange year?

A: One of the reasons was, growing up in the UK it's a very diverse place, especially in my home city, but I wanted to keep pushing myself to explore further. Since I moved out for university, I was thrown into deep waters, but I still wanted to keep pushing myself, and that's when I found out about the studying abroad program and decided to work towards doing that before I graduated.

Q: Why did you choose AUS for your exchange year?

A: AUS was an easy choice for me because I wanted to study in a Muslim country, and there weren't many options. There was only AUS and one in Morocco, but that was in the countryside up in the mountains which wasn't really my vibe. I also have family in Dubai, so my family trusts me more in the UAE rather than any other country or university. I've been coming to the UAE on holiday for a couple of years, so it already feels a little like home for me.

Q: What are some of the biggest cultural differences you've noticed between the UK and the UAE?

A: My home city is mainly populated with Asians rather than Arabs so there's many differences there in terms of the culture, food, clothes, and even the celebrations. Also architecturally, I find that the UAE is a lot more architecturally pleasing to the eye and has a lot of history in it, which is refreshing. Even Islamically, I noticed a lot of differences. I grew up in a mainly Muslim area in the UK, and I found that it is a lot stricter in the UK than it is in the UAE, which surprised me.



Ali Deen Atai exchange student at AUS



Q: What are some of the academic or educational differences you've noticed?

A: There are many differences between the educational system in the UK versus AUS. For example, we don't have quizzes in the UK, whereas here I feel like there's a quiz every other week. Another thing is that we don't get help from our professors on our assignments, mainly because the sizes of our classes are really big compared to AUS, so it's very hard for professors to help you in large classes like that.

Q: What challenges have you faced while living alone in a new environment?

A: One of the challenges that took me quite a while to adapt to is learning to travel around by myself. In the UK, everything is very close to you because it's a small country, and you can walk everywhere. For example, if I wanted to get groceries, it would be a three-minute walk from my dorm, but here you need to deliver everything and take a taxi anytime you want to go anywhere.

Q: How has living in a different country impacted your perspective on the world?

A: Moving away from my family to a different country by myself, it made me realize that there's a whole other world almost out there with all new opportunities, all new cultures, and all new history. It's made me want to branch out, keep it moving, never stay in one place. It's going to be difficult to go back to the UK after this, because I just want to keep traveling now. It's also made me realize that there are kind people everywhere, and you can make friends anywhere you go.

Q: What's a memorable experience that has occurred during your exchange program?

A: The best experience so far was from last semester. It was when I went to Dubai Fashion Week with one of my friends. It was a very crazy experience because I definitely didn't think before coming here that I would have the opportunity to go. To go on the final night and sit first row, getting to see all the celebrities and designers that I watched on TV, for example the cast of Dubai Bling, and speak to them and take pictures with them was a crazy experience for sure. That was when I realized there was more to life than the UK.

Q: How do you maintain a connection with your friends and family while being abroad?

A: With my family, I usually call them on WhatsApp at night, the UK is only about four hours behind so it's evening for them when I call. With my friends, we just use Snapchat and Instagram. I call my friends every once in a while but we mostly talk through texts and voice notes.

Q: How do you typically spend your weekends or free time?

A: I try and do as much as I can. For example, on campus, I try to partake in things that I can't do in the UK, like joining the track team, the Pakistani Cultural Club, and I even did tutoring last semester in my spare time, which really pushed me out of my comfort zone. On the weekends, I try to go out with my friends as much as I can and experience things I wasn't able to experience when I came on holiday, like Global Village. I've been to the UAE so many times but never when Global Village is open, so now that it is I go there a lot.

Q: What advice would you give to someone considering participating in an exchange program?

A: Without a doubt, make sure you've really thought about it first. For example, when I first looked into an exchange program, I was 18, and I'm 21 now, so in my mind this was going on for a long time and I thought about it extensively. You should feel like you know the country before you even come, because a lot of people don't enjoy it because they didn't know what they were getting themselves into. You need to be able to go into it very open minded or choose a place with a similar culture to your own. Another thing I would say is make sure you join everything, join a club or a sport because they are more interactive and that's how you make most of your friends.



Study Smarter, Not Harder:

How to Prepare Efficiently for Exams

BY MUHAMMAD HASHID JAFFAR



You have three midterms in the same week, two on the same day. The material for each exam is vast and there's too much to cover in the short time you have.

We've all been there. One unlucky schedule is all it takes to induce a panic attack. But you don't have to spend the next three nights sleepless, continuously studying, to do well for each exam. There are three very easy methods to prepare for your upcoming exams. These three methods still involve studying and effort from your side, but they will help you get started if you feel like you cannot. Here are the three ways in which you can study efficiently.

1) EMBRACE THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE

A famous and extremely effective time management method to maximize productivity is the Pomodoro Technique. It involves breaking work into two intervals, typically 25 minutes in length, separated by short breaks.



The art of effective studying is a step-by-step process.

Set a timer for 25 minutes and choose what to focus on. Try your best to avoid any distractions. Once the timer rings, take a 5-minute break to relax by doing whatever it is you would enjoy.



Repeat this four more times and enjoy a longer 15–30-minute break. Use this time to rejuvenate your mind and de-stress. This technique can be adapted to suit whatever intervals you think would be best. If you'd like to increase or shorten the focus period, go right ahead. The same works for the breaks. If you are spending the allotted time to focus and get things done, you'll be well on your way to doing well in your exams.

2) STUDY THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTS...AND THE EASIEST ONES

When there is so much to study, it is common to feel overwhelmed. Sometimes the hardest part is just trying to get started. Once you take that small step, you will realize that a nice portion of the work has already been done.

Stay hydrated and eat well. It is important to maintain a healthy diet while staying hydrated, as it can improve your study sessions. Try to avoid excessive caffeine, as that can lead to energy crashes or jitters.

Many times, people try to only focus on the parts that carry the highest weight in terms of marks.



However, starting with the easiest and shortest chapters will make you feel like you've made significant progress. Combine this with the Pomodoro Technique and you would've studied a nice portion of the syllabus in a short period.

3) STUDYING DOESN'T HAVE TO BE BORING

Personally, this one is my favourite method. The Pomodoro Technique advises us to use those 25 minutes of focus without any distractions. But a little bit of music never hurt anybody.

If you find what you are studying to be boring and you just cannot bring yourself to prepare for the exam, let music accompany you. Don't believe me? A study from the University of Maryland found that one of the best ways to stay focused is through music.

Celebrate your achievements! If you have finished a chapter or even a topic, feel good about it. Acknowledging your efforts leads to positive reinforcement and can tremendously help boost motivation.

The study also found that people who listen to music either in a casual or focused way had higher scores for mental well-being and reduced levels of anxiety. The study also found that people who listen to music either in a casual or focused way had higher scores for mental well-being and reduced levels of anxiety.

There are probably hundreds of ways for you to manage and prepare for your exams, but I have found that these three methods are the easiest and most effective among all the other methods.

Regardless of the method you choose, or whether you choose all three of them, you will see a noticeable ease in studying. Good luck on those exams!

THE KEYS TO TRANQUILLITY:

How One Student found Peace in Music

BY MUHAMMAD HASHID JAFFAR



Dennis Ningthoujam plays his keyboard in his dorm room.

Dennis Ningthoujam had long grappled with anxiety, a constant companion that left him feeling overwhelmed and filled with dread, as if anticipating something bad was about to happen.

He entered college with no prior experience of being in a foreign country. With the demands of his hectic academic load along with adjusting to a new environment, he felt himself drowning in anxiousness.

“I remember walking into my dorm for the first time. I was really excited because of how big and beautiful the campus was. The following day, I walked to my classes for the first time, and I was suddenly filled with an overwhelming feeling that made me want to run back to my dorm. I couldn’t help but feel immensely intimidated at the sight of so many unfamiliar buildings and people,” he recalled.

Dennis' anxiety seemed to get worse as time went by. He did not anticipate his anxiety to be this bad. It was becoming quite difficult for him to complete basic assignments or even socialize with his roommate.

One day, while Dennis was strolling through campus, still familiarizing himself with the place and people, he found himself in the Arts Building. As he walked by each classroom, peering through each window, he found a piano. He entered the room and suddenly realized he was not surrounded by unfamiliarity anymore.

He was so overwhelmed by anxiousness that he had almost forgotten about his passion for music. He sat down and started playing the piano.

“Throughout that whole duration of playing the piano that day, not a single negative thought came across my mind. It was as if I had finally escaped that drowning feeling, even if only it was temporary,” said Dennis.

HIS FEELINGS OF ANXIETY WERE NOW OVERCOME WITH MEMORIES OF JOY. WITH EACH KEY BEING PRESSED, HE FELT AS IF HE WERE NOT FAR AWAY FROM HOME ANYMORE.



After much contemplation, he started to look for a place where he could buy a keyboard. He knew it would be expensive and it would leave a dent in his monthly allowance, but he missed that feeling of joy so much that he decided to get it. Soon after, he got himself a keyboard so that he could play at his leisure when he was back in his dorm.

Suddenly, Dennis did not feel as much as he had before. That feeling of anxiety was no longer his companion. Instead, he carried on the joy of music.

Dennis said, “To me, it was really funny to find familiarity in an inanimate object like a piano. I had missed playing the instrument for so long. On top of that, my anxiety overshadowed every other emotion I had, including my passion for music. It felt like a huge relief to rekindle my passion, but at the same time I also felt silly because I never thought the answer to my problem would be such a simple solution.”

He has also decided to join the music club and maybe in the future, he might choose to take a minor as well. Dennis’ journey has not been without difficulties, but his tale serves as an example of how one can find peace and joy in many simple parts of life.

Finding support can be challenging if you or a loved one is dealing with anxiety or other mental health issues. Sometimes, pursuing what makes one happy can be good enough to overcome a lot of issues and increase feelings of enjoyment. Dennis’ experience of overcoming anxiety is a testimonial to how one should not forget their real passion and offers hope to those who may be going through a similar ordeal.





BY BISSANE EL SAYED

HOW TO DELVE INTO NEW ACADEMIC OPTIONS



The American University of Sharjah Campus

Do you find yourself lacking passion in your field of study? Enjoying the material but also feeling a certain kind of void that you fail to pinpoint.

These feelings are normal to experience despite it feeling like the toughest dilemma you have ever faced. Here are four steps to ease the confusion:

- Read your university's catalog and research all possible angles, majors and minors that you can pursue.
- When you find an area of study that catches your interest, take a class at the entry-level to experience it firsthand.
- If you still feel uncertain, book a meeting with your advisor and discuss your concerns per your study plan. They might know someone to refer you to or provide valuable advice; they are called 'advisors' after all.
- Speak with the head of the department you are interested in joining, or the minor program coordinator for final questions and inquiries.

University life is packed with ups and downs. Do not be afraid to ask, try and challenge your comfort zone every now and then. Your academic journey is your miniature trial of the outside world. So, while you are at it, practice how to dive into life.

ALAANOUD ABUSALIM TALKS ABOUT AI IN WRITING



Dr. Alaanoud Abusalim is a senior instructor of writing at AUS.

BY MUHAMMAD HASHID JAFFAR

DR. ALAANOUD ABUSALIM IS A SENIOR INSTRUCTOR AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH. HER TEACHING EXPERTISE COVERS RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION, ACADEMIC WRITING, AND RESEARCH WRITING. SHE RECEIVED HER MASTER'S DEGREE IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION AT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AND HER PH.D. DEGREE FROM LANCASTER UNIVERSITY. HER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR 24 YEARS AND COUNTING. SHE ALSO RECEIVED MULTIPLE AWARDS AND HONORS, RANGING FROM ACHIEVING THE CHRISTOPHER N. CANDLIN AWARD FOR THE BEST PAPER BY EARLY CAREER SCHOLARS IN 2023 TO BECOMING AUS'S TOP TEACHER IN 2013.

Q: What are the changes you have observed since AI has been integrated into our educational setting?

A: Obviously, plagiarism has increased with the prominence of AI. Along with that has come this fear of losing writers, especially the unique ones. Every student has their own voice and conveys their own thoughts through words that differ from other students. Even with all the grammatical mistakes and punctuation errors that some students make, you can find their own voice through their writing. I don't want students to lose that voice. There is also the case of too much unreliable information and hallucinations that AI can produce. When AI came to everyone's attention it was very alarming mainly because of how easy it was to access and use AI. It made writing quite disruptive, especially since students and professors weren't familiar with it.

Q: It's had a lot of negative impact. However, has it also had a positive side?

A: Of course, it has. We are still learning what AI can do when it comes to writing. So far it seems it can help with minor things like citation, punctuation, and grammar. This helps students learn other important things like developing their own voice and writing skills, rather than worrying about minor issues like this.

Q: Are there any specific Generative AI tools that help in teaching and learning writing?

A: There is ChatGPT of course. Along with that, there is also Grammarly, Microsoft's Copilot, and Perplexity AI. All the GAI can help students learn easy and simple writing tasks.





Q: In what ways have you adopted AI for your teaching?

A: I have an assistant chatbot called Dante where students can ask for prompts about deadlines and such. I have been training it since last summer to help with students' grammar, punctuation; and remind them of deadlines. It also helps them with accessing things on iLearn by telling them where they can find certain content. It only serves as an assistant for students and so far, I've heard that my students are happy with it.

Q: Can you tell me more about Dante

A: Dante is just the chatbot name that the company has given it. I haven't really changed that. It's a chatbot that becomes your personalized AI trained on your data. It's fun but at the same time sometimes it can be quite annoying training Dante. It can be a bit dumb at times.

Q: How did you come up with this idea?

A: I thought of it during the summer. I was at a conference, and we were talking about AI. So, the summer semester is quite short, and I always get so many emails from my students asking, "When is this paper due?" or "When is the deadline for the assignment?" I started thinking if there was a way to just automate this process of reminding students when things were due and that's where I thought about trying to train my own chatbot.

Q: How do you balance this integration of AI along with student writing?

A: It all boils down to the bigger conversation about AI. The conversation is not just about the features and what AI can do. I am always pushing my students and offering them different methods to use AI while reminding them of their roles as users. We, as users, have responsibilities to uphold while working with AI. I remind them to always question the information they receive from AI and not completely depend on it for their papers.

I also try to broaden the conversation about what AI really is. It's more of a tool or assistant to help students with minor issues. It's also important to realize how you see yourself in the relationship between AI and education. Having these conversations early on, especially from WRI 101 onwards, teaches students about digital literacy.

Q: What do you think will be the long-term implications of AI on writing once it reaches its full potential?

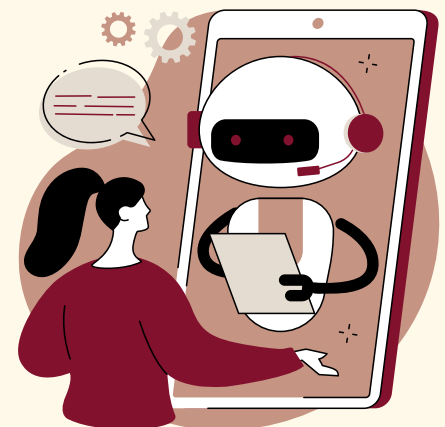
A: I'm mainly fearful of how students will lose their voices while writing. The work that AI produces is very generic and I'm fearful that it will replace their unique voices. The language will be too whitewashed, too general, too predictable; and too standardized. I don't want students to lose their voice that comes with their writing. Even with all the grammar mistakes and errors, sometimes they want to emphasize a certain thought or aspect they want to share and that only gets understood through their voice, not through the generic writing that AI produces. That's the most I'm fearful about. I also believe that AI will open the pathway for the dominance of homogenous anglophones in English. What the standard use of English is does not remain in every place, including the non-English speaking places. I strongly believe English is for everyone and that it can be a global language.

Q: What has been the overall response from other writing professors about the increasing prevalence of AI?

A: I'm not sure about how every other professor feels about AI. There are different points of view about AI and what is happening. Some people are dealing with it in different ways while others choose not to deal with it at all.

Q: Any last thoughts you'd like to share?

A: I think AI is a promising tool that is offering many ventures that we once did not have. I also think that a lot of the fears we are experiencing right now are proving to be unwarranted in a sense. I still don't believe AI will replace teaching and learning; rather, it'll just give us more opportunities as teachers and students to work on more important aspects of writing. But as AI keeps growing, we should be careful and always remember about the ethical usage of AI while upholding our responsibilities as its users.



TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF *Video Games*

BY Muhammad Hashid Jaffar

What do people think of video games? Usually, many people consider it to be a simple hobby. A few opinions are often negative as well. Some go to the extent of saying it instills violent behavior in people. What do people who play video games think about them? Would they agree with such opinions? Many do not realize how huge of an industry it is. The global video game industry is a billion-dollar business and has been for many years. In 2022, the revenue from the worldwide gaming market was estimated at almost 347 billion U.S. dollars. The industry is a beloved one and many people have loads to say about it.

For many people, video games are a form of escapism. But for many others, it can also become their life. The number of jobs and opportunities that have been created in the industry would be too long to list here. It starts from a beloved hobby to a beloved occupation.

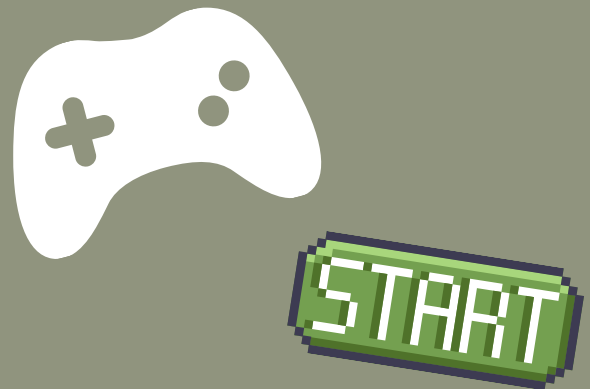
Hisham Jaffar's story is similar. He said, "I got a PlayStation as a gift when I was a kid and was immediately hooked. When Mom and Dad would go for business trips, they'd come back with a new game for me, and we'd sit together and try it out. I was so in love with it that I even decided to pursue game development, and that's exactly what I did. I'm now specializing in video game development and will hopefully soon get the chance to create awesome games for others to enjoy."

Did you know that at the end of every year, an award ceremony called "The Game Awards" is held to honor achievements in the video game industry? It was established in 2014 and is produced and hosted by game journalist Geoff Keighley.



Some popular
XBOX 360 games.

The power that video games have on changing people is immense. I would even go to the extent of saying it changed my life. I, like many others, was introduced to games by my elder brother. As a child, I've been hugely invested in it and my interest in it only keeps growing with it. One of my fondest memories as a child is trying to teach my mother how to play.



Sarvesh Taunk, a 20-year-old university student, would go to the extent of saying it saved him. “I remember vividly picking up a copy of a game called Dark Souls when I was in 8th grade just because the cover of the box looked cool. Now, I didn’t know anything about the game, and little would I know that it would be a huge factor in my future life. As time went on, I soon became familiar with depression and was struggling to cope with it. But Dark Souls helped me in ways I cannot even begin to explain.”

Stories like that of Sarvesh are not uncommon at all. When I heard him say this, I could relate to his feelings immediately. In fact, many people could relate to his story.

While it is commonly used as a form of escapism, it is also used to help people. A charity initiative known as “Gamers Outreach” empowers hospitalized families through play.

Each donation helps provide a child with an opportunity to be themselves while being hospitalized. Being in a hospital can be scary and isolating and kids lose access to friends, school, and moments that typically define childhood. Video games inspire joy during those times by helping kids express creativity, explore worlds, and simply have fun. It helps restore a sense of normalcy for them.

Did you know that a video game called “Grand Theft Auto 5” has made more money than any form of media in history, with over 90 million units sold and \$6 billion in revenue? Compare this with the highest-grossing film of all time, “Avatar”, which made \$2.9 billion, and the highest-grossing album of all time, “Thriller” by Michael Jackson, which sold over 70 million copies.

Chaitanya Satvik recalls the time when his sister was hospitalized when she was a kid. He said, “There were times a few moments when we couldn’t always stay with her, and she used to get really scared. I remember handing over my Gameboy to her to keep her company if we couldn’t be there. It helped her a lot in just feeling like a regular kid through just a simple thing like playing video games.”

Video games are a form of art. A digital playground for people to express themselves or for them to just have fun. A loving hobby that can even be turned into a paying job.

There’s no denying that it has had a significant impact on people worldwide. People have embraced the transformative power of video games and have celebrated the diverse experiences and communities that they inspire. After all, each person has a story to tell, and every game has the potential to change lives for the better.



MASTERING THE CLOCK: 3 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT

BY SARA EL SAMRA

At university, it is common to be so overwhelmed with work that we don't even know where to begin. Often, students find it hard to manage our time between studies and a social life, so we end up leaving all our work to the last minute in favor of relaxing or going out with friends. We have all been there, staying up all night working on assignments we procrastinated on the week before. However, most of us end up regretting that decision when we end up exhausted or get a bad grade. Yet, we still repeat the same mistakes because we don't know how to manage our time well.

Time management is not something we are taught in school; it's a skill we are expected to develop throughout life. This is why many people struggle with time management. Everyone has different methods of managing their time; however if you are unsure where to start, these are three ways to improve your time management.

ONE: PRIORITIZE TASKS

This may sound like a simple solution, but it is one of the most effective. When students get overwhelmed with the amount of work they have to complete, they become demotivated and procrastinate. Writing down your tasks in a list based on priority helps you have a clear goal and become less confused and overwhelmed.

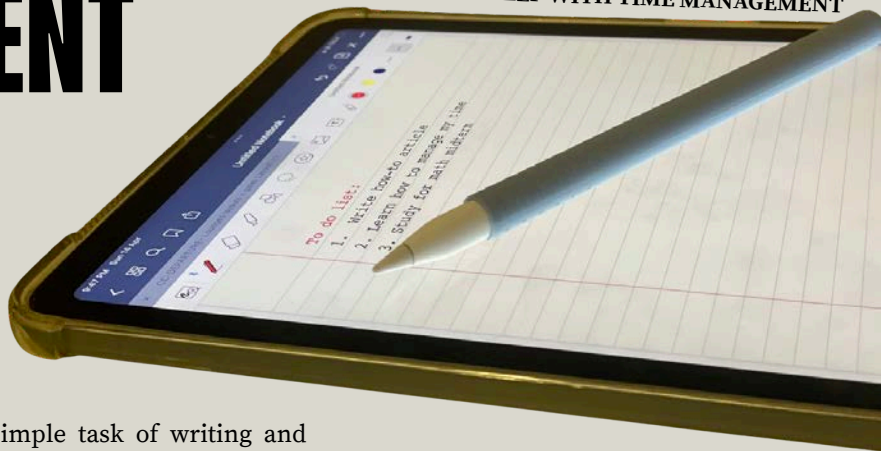
Also, the simple task of writing and ordering your task starts the train of productivity in your brain so you are motivated to finish your work.

This helps you make sure that you are focusing your energy on your most important tasks and not wasting your time on something that can be done later on.

TWO: NO MEANS NO!

This tip is unpopular with most students, but it makes a huge difference when it comes to managing your time. In order to fairly balance your academics and social life, you need to learn to say no to some plans with your friends. As much as we all hate doing this, especially for those who have a fear of missing out, it is just not possible to go out every single day while still having time to attend classes and study. Instead, try scheduling certain days where you can go out depending on your workload that week. This also gives you motivation to finish your work on time because you will have something to look forward to.

TO-DO LISTS HELP WITH TIME MANAGEMENT



3 fun places in Sharjah to study with friends:

1. House of Wisdom
2. Heerah Beach
3. Black Salt

If you need to study but still want to feel like you've gone out, try studying in nearby cafés or libraries with friends. This can work as a two-in-one, an outing with friends while also getting some work done. This can be a time saver and leaves you feeling accomplished.

THREE: LIMIT DISTRACTIONS

Often, distractions are what lead us to go off schedule and have bad time management. One easy way to limit distractions is by turning off your phone while studying, or even deleting your social media apps during exam season. Another way of limiting distractions is choosing a quiet place to study away from any friends, family or noises that may distract you. This will ensure you stay on schedule and complete everything on time.





Al Heerah Beach walkway



HIDDEN GEMS AROUND AUS

BY SARA EL SAMRA

When I first started my journey at the American University of Sharjah, I felt lost. Although I grew up in the United Arab Emirates, Sharjah was new and foreign to me. I spent most of my days in Sharjah; yet I did not know of any places to go study, eat, or have fun. While I had good times at the university, I wanted to go out and explore the new area around me, but I didn't know where to start. I would try and search for places to go in Sharjah, but they were either too far from university or very popular and busy places.

I know that I was not alone in this, especially for people who have come from different countries to study at AUS. Eventually, I made friends with people who lived in Sharjah, and we made it a tradition to go try a new place every Thursday. This helped me discover so many hidden gems that were close by, and my love for Sharjah grew.

Finding these hidden gems didn't just give me a place to go when I was bored, they were places to make new memories with friends, and discover the culture that Sharjah had to offer. Now, I have become the person who recommends places to new students.

Every AUS student has a favorite hidden gem that they visit often, so I decided to interview a few students to find out their favorite spots around campus.

A popular spot with students is Al Heerah Beach, which is located twenty minutes from campus. Many students go there to study, have dinner, or even play games on the beach with their friends. Students mostly enjoy this place in the winter, so you will probably spot a few AUS students walking by Al Heerah Beach in December.

AUS STUDENT, BANA HAYKAL, SAID “I LOVE TO GO THERE TO STUDY OR FINISH ASSIGNMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE WINTER. IT IS SUCH A RELAXING PLACE AND A NICE CHANGE OF SCENERY FROM THE AUS LIBRARY.”

Another hidden gem AUS students frequently visit is Doko, which is a restaurant/karaoke place located ten minutes away from campus. Students love the Japanese style food that is served, and the entertainment from the karaoke rooms. It's a fun way of releasing stress with your friends after a long week of assignments and exams.



Doko karaoke room

AUS student Aaliya Riaz said, “I love going there with a big group of friends, especially new friends because it’s such a fun way to bond and get to know each other. We always end up laughing half the time and having so much fun that we forget about university for a while. It’s also pretty affordable for what you get, which is good for us as university students.”

This next spot caters to people who are interested in Asian culture. Many AUS students like visiting Asak supermarket, which sells Asian snacks and merch for popular K-pop idols. Even for people who are not a fan, it is a cool spot to visit, and it is only seven minutes away.

I remember my friend making me go with her one day. Since I didn’t know much about Asian culture like she did, I did not think I would like the place. However, after visiting it and trying so many different snacks, I ended up having a really good time. Now, I visit it often with my friends whenever I’m craving Asian food.

LOCAL FOODS TO TRY:

- HAREES
- RAQAQ BREAD
- LUQAIMAT

Marwa Syam, AUS student, said “When I first discovered this place, I was so excited because I love Asian culture. I love taking my friends with me, teaching them about different Asian musicians and making them try my favorite snacks. They always end up loving it and asking me to take them there again.”

Another popular spot among students is Black Salt, which is located on Karak Street, five minutes away from campus. This restaurant is popular with students because it serves many different cuisines. So, if you find yourself not sure of what you want to eat or are with a group of friends who all want different things, this is the perfect place to go. No need for arguments or rock paper scissors matches to decide which friend picks the cuisine.

CULTURAL SPOTS TO VISIT IN SHARJAH:

SHARJAH MOSQUE

CULTURAL SQUARE

SHARJAH HERITAGE MUSEUM

AUS student Malaikah Ammar says “Black Salt has become the go-to restaurant in my friend group. It saves us so much time because we don’t have to argue about what cuisine we are feeling that day, we just go to Black Salt and figure it out once we are there. And the place is also really cozy on the inside, so we feel comfortable going there all the time.”

There are many more hidden gems that AUS students enjoy visiting, but these four are a good place to start. By visiting these places, you may even discover more hidden gems around them, and create new memories that can be shared with future AUS students.



Restaurant in Al Heerah Beach



BY MUHAMMAD HASHID JAFFAR

IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP



Alarm clock

In the hustle and bustle of modern life, amidst the constant demands of work, study, and social commitments, one crucial aspect often overlooked is the importance of sleep. Beyond mere rest, sleep is the cornerstone of physical health, mental well-being, and overall productivity.

Sleep is a reset button for the mind and body. It allows us to recharge, repair, and rejuvenate. It is during this time that our brains process emotions and replenish neurotransmitters that are essential for cognitive function.

But the benefits of sleep extend far beyond mental clarity. Adequate rest is essential for maintaining a healthy immune system, regulating hormones, and supporting cardiovascular health. It's a natural remedy that reduces the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and hypertension.

Moreover, the impact of sleep deprivation affects every aspect of our lives. From diminished focus and impaired decision-making to heightened stress levels and decreased productivity, the consequences can be far-reaching.

In a society that glorifies sleepless nights as a badge of honour, it's time to reclaim the importance of sleep. Prioritizing rest isn't a luxury, it's a necessity for thriving in an increasingly fast-paced world. The next time you drift off into dreamland, remember that a good night's sleep isn't just a luxury, it's an investment in your health, happiness, and overall well-being.

FUSION FASHION OF THE TWO C'S: CULTURE AND CONTEMPORARINESS



AlReem Alsalasi, owner of Dreemers Den and AUS student

BY BISSANE EL SAYED

ALREEM BELHOUL ALFALASI IS A MASS COMMUNICATION STUDENT AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH WITH A CONCENTRATION IN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION. SHE IS ALSO AN ENTREPRENEUR. ALFALASI IS STARTING AN ONLINE BUSINESS THAT FUSES CULTURAL FASHION AND CONTEMPORARY DESIGNS TO CREATE MASTERPIECES IN THE FORM OF ABAYAS.

Q: How would you describe your business vision and mission?

A: To create abayas that adhere to streetwear fashion trends so young women can express themselves fashionably while representing their culture.

Q: At what level of the business are you currently, and where do you aspire to reach?

A: I created some abaya styles and have given them to family and friends. I have more designs that I haven't given out yet but just began creating TikToks to market them and sell them online as well as the others. The Instagram is @dreemersden but I haven't posted them yet. Inshallah before Ramadan I'll wrap everything up. I aspire to begin as a local business then grow it globally as I feel there are some styles such as 'the hoodie abaya' that girls in more European countries that would like to stay modest would like.

Q: When did you make the decision to monetize your designs, and why?

A: I never thought of it as a business at first but instead a way for me to be able to wear designs that I couldn't find on the market. It all began when my sister, who goes to a fashion university, called me and told me that multiple girls asked her where she got her abaya from [...] I realized that this could turn into a business.

This then became a way for me to make pieces for friends who really liked them and when strangers started asking, I decided to work on it as a brand.

Q: From where do you extract the essence of your designs?

A: I get new ideas from streetwear pieces and outfits such as the lining of pants or jackets and add them onto my abaya designs.

For example, my most recent abaya is derived from the design of a dress I loved but is too revealing for me to wear so I decided to turn it into an abaya.



Q: Why did you choose abayas specifically?

A: Because abayas are [...] part of my cultural identity but streetwear and new trends are parts of the outfits I wear underneath. I wouldn't want abayas to cover the outfit I'm wearing, but instead, be an addition that complements it, the perfect balance.

Q: What themes do you apply in your abayas?

A: Mostly streetwear themed but not necessarily. Each abaya would have its own essence and would also be customizable. I will have some standard pieces, but I would allow the buyer to feel free to express their individuality. For example, one of my pieces I've incorporated art into and is completely unique to its buyer.

Q: What makes your designs successful?

A: I believe the originality of the pieces is what would make them successful. After all, it is a "dreamers' den" so there's no limit as to where one's imagination can take them through customization. The changing abaya is a relatively new concept so there's still a limit as to how original a piece really is. I'll provide the base of designs that I haven't seen in the market before and allow the buyer to add and subtract as they please. Not only is it a cloth of cultural representation, but a balance between that and complete self-expression. This way, I can wear it and feel like it is a representation of my identity, and I would like others to feel the same way too.

Q: What is the most memorable instance in your entrepreneurship journey?

A: It's not a good memory but I believe many bad things are good things in disguise and this was one of them. An ex-friend of mine stole my old business name and at first this completely unmotivated me. Now that I think about it, without her, I would have never been able to create a true dreamers' den so a big thank you to her for allowing me to develop one idea to an even better one.

Q: How was the reaction of your social circle?

A: My family thankfully supported me through it and my friends were excited for me to create new designs!

Q: What challenges did you face? And how did you overcome them?

A: I struggled the most with consistency but set deadlines in order to overcome that. I also didn't know where to begin when I had all these ideas but just started by finding a tailor and it all fell into place from there.

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Q: What advice would you give to someone considering participating in an exchange program?

A: Without a doubt, make sure you've really thought about it first. For example, when I first looked into an exchange program, I was 18, and I'm 21 now, so in my mind this was going on for a long time and I thought about it extensively. You should feel like you know the country before you even come, because a lot of people don't enjoy it because they didn't know what they were getting themselves into. You need to be able to go into it very open minded or choose a place with a similar culture to your own. Another thing I would say is make sure you join everything, join a club or a sport because they are more interactive and that's how you make most of your friends.

Q: How are you balancing between being an entrepreneur and a student?

A: This may not be the best thing for my professors to see but if you'd like me to be honest by greatest ideas come in my most boring classes. My biggest struggle is consistency as sometimes I would get a burst of inspiration then get carried away with uni work and neglect it but I'm hoping this time is different as I've put a deadline for myself for the first time.

Q: Do you think that after securing yourself in the abaya industry you will seek to introduce other clothing items to your store?

A: Yes! I've thought about some ideas but I wouldn't want it to be too broad of a line at the start so I would like to focus on the abayas first.

I was thinking shirt and pants sets that go into the same color scheme as the abaya. I'm in love with certain graphic designs that I feel would suit t-shirts more than abayas so maybe one day I could create entire sets.



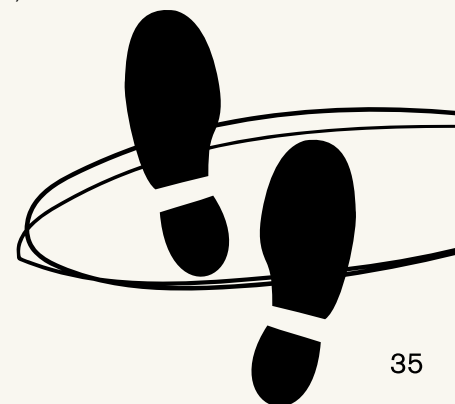


In the fast-paced and ever-changing world of fashion and culinary arts, collaborations between them lead to expensive but fruitful outcomes. The sneaker-head community and food enthusiasts got treated with the exclusive Adidas x Ravi Restaurant, a limited edition shoe collaboration. This fusion of style and flavor celebrates the unique vibrant culture of Pakistan through their re-interpretation of the original Adidas superstar shoe.

Imagine stepping into a world where every stride you take is a journey through the history of the restaurant, where every shoe tells a story of culinary craftsmanship and modernity. This is essentially the essence that has come out of this collaboration. It's supposed to incorporate the restaurant's rich history through the shoe's colors and design aesthetics.

Ravi Restaurant is one of the most popular Pakistani restaurants in the UAE which has been serving traditional cuisine since 1978.

It is essentially a family-owned business started by Chaudhry Abdul Hameed, and is rooted in the community of South Asian workers who helped build Dubai. Although it is a small hole-in-the-wall kind of restaurant, unlike the big fancy restaurants Dubai is known for, it still persevered through time and became a staple go-to restaurant for nationals, expats, tourists, and celebrities.



The tongue of the shoe has the logo of the restaurant and the name in arabic and english.

Spice Up Your Sneaker Game: Complete your shoe collection with a limited-edition Adidas shoe

BY ANNALISA JACQUELINE LEWIS

Dubbed the Superstar Ravi, Adidas outdid themselves by paying attention to every detail in the shoe. The shoe features a sock liner with a hand-drawn map that signifies the meaning of the name Ravi, which means river in Northeastern Pakistan.

The opening year of the restaurant is stitched on the heel tab of the shoe. It also has the English name stitched on one side of the heel tab and the Arabic name on the other side.

The tongue of the shoes features six dishes that the restaurant owners wrote in English on one side and Arabic on the other. If that wasn't already impressive, they even came up with a unique package design that features a special edition takeaway-style box. The colorway of the shoe: blend of white, off-white and shades of green pays homage to Ravi's iconic classic colors.

As a kid, university student Karim Mohammad was always at the restaurant on the weekends with his family. They enjoyed their traditional *Mutton Peshawari*, *Chicken Tikka* and *Chicken Biryani*, resonating a sense of nostalgia with the restaurant.

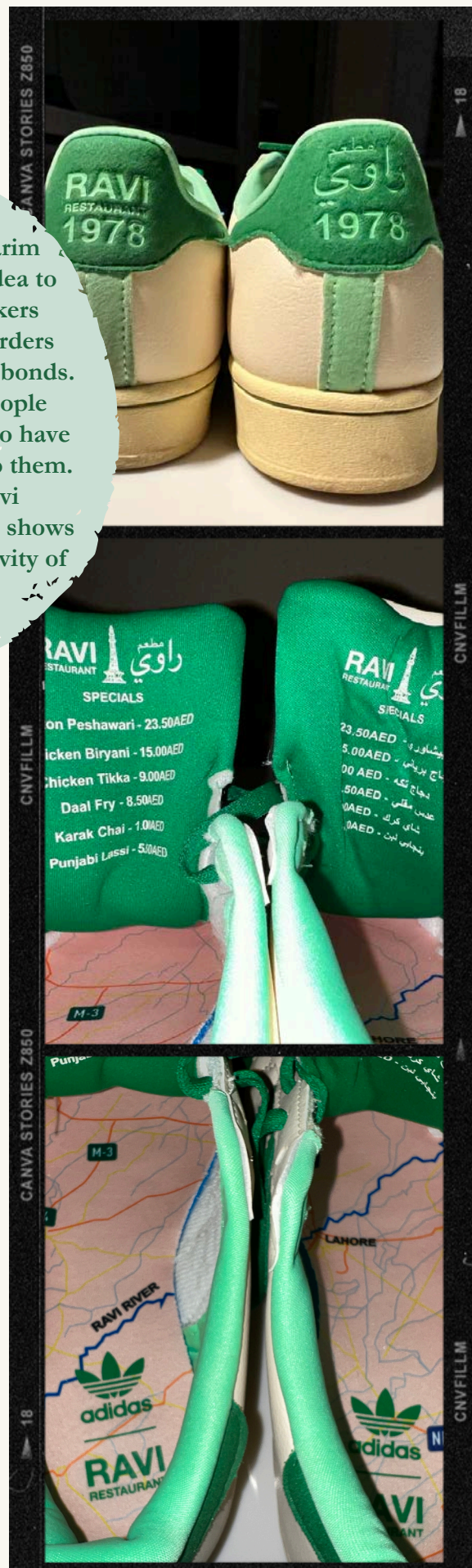
According to Karim, the shoe is also a great conversation starter. After getting hold of the special Superstar Ravi shoes, he kept it safely preserved at home. He did not even wear it once, afraid of damaging the shoe. He knew that the price of the shoe would get appraised in the future and wanted to be one of the few people with the special shoe. He recently wore the shoe out and was able to connect with other like-minded sneaker-heads. They got to talking about the shoe and about their cultures resulting in a lifelong friend.

The Adidas x Ravi collaboration transcends boundaries and unites people from all walks of life. So why not spice up your sneaker game with a pair of these limited-edition kicks? Sneakers and food coming together, what more do you need.

University student Karim Mohammad says the idea to merge food and sneakers transcends physical borders and also creates cultural bonds. It opens a place for people away from their homes to have something that relates to them. He says that the Ravi Restaurant collaboration shows the diversity and inclusivity of Dubai.

To celebrate food, hospitality and community, Adidas covered 11 restaurants in 11 cities and launched 11 unique restaurant designs, including the Ravi collaboration.

The unique designs of the shoe.



THE FACE BEHIND THE PALETTE

BY ANNALISA JACQUELINE LEWIS



Ekta Sawarkar in her University's studio where she shoots her makeup looks.

Ekta Sawarkar, a senior studying Fashion Branding and Promotion at Heriot-Watt University, Dubai, has been using makeup products since she was a child. As a child, her artistic flair manifested uniquely. She used to color in pictures of Disney princesses with her mother's expensive makeup products rather than using crayons and markers to infuse her drawings with vibrant hues.

Sawarkar has been exposed to different environments from an early age. She was born in Nagpur, Maharashtra, but then immediately moved to Muscat, Pune, Saudi Arabia and finally settled in Dubai. Each country gave her new experiences, but her time in the Arab world broadened her perspective on makeup.

Although she looks fancy on social media, she loves to be comfortable in her trusted sweatshirts. But when it comes to events, she tends to go all out and take the fancy, dramatic route. Unlike others, her process of finding the perfect outfit is to first find out more about the location of the event. Her idea for her outfits comes from researching the place and getting to know the overall vibes of the location.

"I LOVE SPENDING TIME DOING MY MAKEUP, PLANNING OUT MY JEWELRY, MY OUTFIT, AND WHAT KINDS OF PHOTOS I'D LIKE TO GET. PICTURES ARE NOT THAT MUCH OF A PRIORITY, AS MUCH AS THE WHOLE PROCESS OF GETTING READY."

Ekta describes herself to be a “delusional queen.” Her day-to-day routine consists of her mostly daydreaming. Once she generates a creative idea in her head, she has to make it come alive somehow. Her interests lie in makeup, movies, music, photography, creative direction, and anything where she can bring her creativity to the table. Her impeccable sense of makeup and fashion comes from the women in her family. She was raised by her nuclear and extended family. She aspires to be at least half as cool as them. None of her family members delved into the world of makeup and fashion professionally, but they did inspire her.

Her fashion journey began when her mother started dressing her up as a child. Most of her clothes were hand-stitched by her mother. According to Sawarkar, her talent for being creative and making things from scratch came from seeing her mom come up with such innovative ideas with her clothes. As she grew up, she started developing her own identity with fashion and stopped wearing the clothes made by her mother. Although she still thinks her mother is the one with the better taste in fashion. She's bound to receive compliments when she wears her mother's outfits.

Makeup for Ekta was never about impressing anyone, she did it for herself as an expression of art. Her interest in makeup started during her board exams, where she eagerly waited for influencer Cindy Kimberly to post new makeup looks so she could replicate them. She started experimenting at home by sitting in front of her mirror and getting her hair and makeup done. It started as an outlet for her to be free from the stress of writing the board exam.

She started experimenting with acrylic paint on her face which is not usually used by makeup artists. She remembers getting comments on her makeup looks asking why she'd put paint on her face. She later realized it probably wasn't the best idea to use actual paint on her face and ended up buying makeup products, and now it just might be her career path. As a kid, she didn't realize that she could pursue this as a career. She didn't know what kind of a job she wanted, as she was never good at anything.

She's already broken into the makeup career professionally working with big brands like M.A.C and Estee Lauder. Currently, she might get to do an event and work with another famous makeup brand, this is still in the talks. Working with M.A.C and Estee Lauder was where she peaked. She keeps thinking it can't get better, but it always does.

Ekta wasn't expecting a reply from M.A.C Cosmetics, as she got in contact with them through their customer care service. Funnily enough, she got a positive response back. She contacted them by saying she needed them for an assignment. Luckily for her, the marketing manager of M.A.C reached out to her. They sent her some makeup products and in a way that ended up being her first brand deal.

“I MEAN, I COULD BE GOOD AT ANYTHING IF I WANTED TO... BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THE PASSION FOR ANYTHING ELSE.”

Looking to the future, she would like to work closely with menswear brands, as she loves a challenge and feels they are given less attention in terms of creative direction. “There is a high level of creativity with womenswear too, however, with menswear there's so much room to make it more artful.” Her passion for luxury brands doesn't seem to be fading anytime soon. She wants to keep pursuing it and keep growing.

Ekta Sawarkar touching up her makeup.





BY ANNALISA JACQUELINE LEWIS

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO CRUELTY-FREE MAKEUP



Sustainable Makeup products from the Huda Beauty brand

As the world progresses people are moving towards using cruelty-free makeup. This refers to the beauty products and ingredients that have not been tested on animals. The days when beauty came at the cost of animal suffering are long gone. Ethical choices are becoming a part of the healthy lifestyle trend. If you are a beginner to using makeup and are not sure what brands are cruelty-free here is a simple guide for you to navigate through the beauty industry.

These brands help consumers to reflect on their ethical values as well. The beginner's list for cruelty-free makeup includes the following:

- Charlotte Tilbury
- Huda Beauty
- Colourpop
- Fenty Beauty

These brands are advocates for animal welfare and have been vetted by the non-profit organization, People, for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. By supporting cruelty-free brands, our society can look forward to a more sustainable and humane future.

Consumers tend to think that these sustainable makeup brands skimp on the quality and variety of their products, but that is just a myth. From a huge range of foundation colors, vibrant eyeshadows, and acne-safe makeup products, there's something for everyone. The demand for more cruelty-free products has spurred these companies to innovate further and come up with new exciting cosmetic items.

"PRE-LOVED BOOKS: A RUMMAGE THROUGH MARKED LINES AND OLD LETTERS"

BY SHAIKHA ALMAAZMI



The yellowing pages of old books

Handed down by a parent or a grandparent, bought randomly from a bookshop hidden in corners, or even stumbled upon in a local library, everyone finds a book they bond with one way or another.

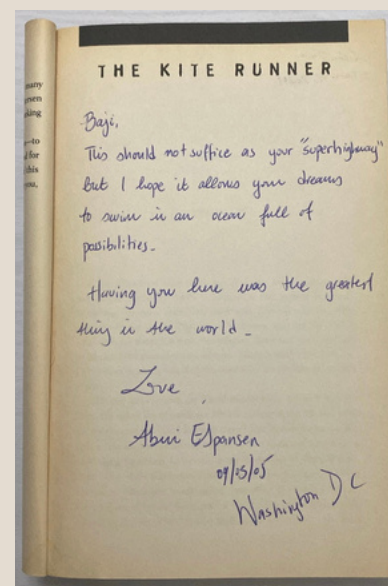
To gain insight into how many people buy used books, I conducted a survey that was distributed among university students. The survey aimed to understand what, how and why students buy pre-loved books.

According to a survey, 69.2% of the American University of Sharjah's students buy used books, and 88.5% would buy more if they had easier access to them. The survey shows that 50% of the students are interested in buying novels, 19.2% get non-fiction books, and 11.5% buy textbooks. It also reveals that 72.9% prefer to keep their books rather than donate, with 3.8% donating textbooks only.

Many students now prefer to buy used books rather than new ones. The reasons vary from having a new-like book but cheaper or feeling some connection with the previous owners by seeing the annotations or finding things like bookmarks and paper notes inside the books. Some started delving into the used book world recently, and others can only remember being at book fairs as kids.

"Maybe most of my memories were at the book fair, where we would just go and buy tons and tons of books, used and not used," said Malak Kamal Mostafa, a student at AUS, who shared her experience of when and why she started buying used books.

"My mom started reading when she was very young, and then I grew up liking what she did, so I would just copy her and read the same type of books she read. Now, my mom and I, have very different tastes in books, but when I was young like 10 years old, we would read the same Arabic fiction, very old ones."



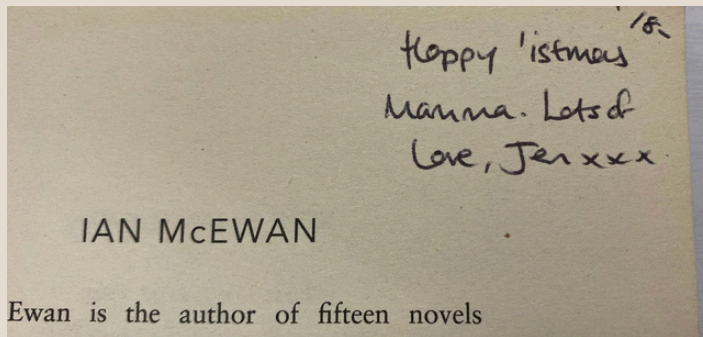
"ONE OF THE MOST HEART-FELT LETTERS I'VE FOUND IN MY USED BOOKS COLLECTION."

Many people would describe their experience of owning a used book as “personal,” and feeling a sense of warmth engulfing them by seeing how cared for the books in their hands are and connecting to the traces of the old reader.

In the written section of the survey, many participants wrote about their curiosity about reading the hand-written notes left on the margins of the book.

The survey showed that for 38.4% of people, the most common way to get used books is to acquire them from their loved ones.

Mostafa described her desire to have rare old books in her collections, not that she needs to start, but rather to continue because in her collection she inherited many books from her great-grandfather and mother.



“IT IS NOT LONG, BUT IT WAS IN A BOOK CALLED “CHILDREN ACT.” IN SOME WAY, IT SHOWS A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP.”

“Most of them are not with me here, I did not carry them with me when I moved to the UAE. They are very fragile. I had to tape them down, so they don’t fall” said Mostafa.

As readers, many of them consider giving away annotated books a cherished act. When annotating for each other, people share a part of themselves, their thoughts.

Buying used books not only allows people to experience a bond with both loved ones and strangers, but also to own exquisite and rare books. Book collectors would usually turn to used bookstores, especially vintage ones, to search for sought-after books.

Hunting for books adds a thrill to the experience of book collecting and makes one an expert in them.

However, the modern bookstores that only sell new books are now dominated by media, especially platforms like TikTok, making the growing industry favor quantity over quality.

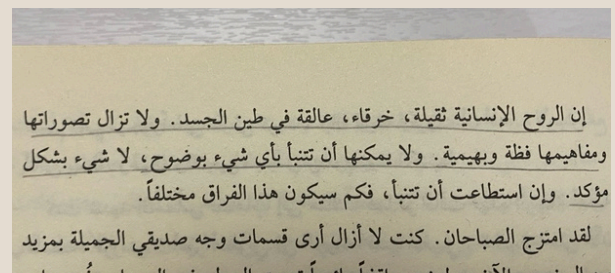
While BookTok has a positive impact by making many teenagers invest in reading books more and create an escape place for people with the same interests, the downsides outweigh it.

BookTok lacks diversity and depth in recommendations, the algorithm would only show books that are written by famous authors with plots that cater to the mainstream.

The method of recommendation on BookTok consists of mentioning the tropes and tags of the book instead of providing an interesting story and a critical assessment.

Unlike books that are suggested through BookTok, getting pre-loved books means that you mostly can find hidden gems and books that are rich in literature, but even then, a little caution about what one consumes would not be harmful.

Investing in used books also means helping the environment and being more sustainable. It reduces waste, resource conservation, and carbon footprints. Few students in the commentary sections of the survey expressed their guilt about buying a new book, reading it once, and leaving it on their shelves without any further use.



“I ENJOYED THIS PREVIOUS OWNER’S MARKED LINES ESPECIALLY, IT IS BECAUSE OF HOW PHILOSOPHICAL AND COZY THIS BOOK IS.”

FATIN SAMARA TALKS ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PRESENT AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS OF THE FUTURE.



Dr. Fatin Samara in her office.

BY SHAIKHA ALMAAZMI

FATIN SAMARA HAS BEEN AN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES PROFESSOR AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH SINCE 2009. SHE IS ALSO THE CO-CHAIR OF THE UAE CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH NETWORK. HER RESEARCH FOCUSES ON SOLVING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, TOXICITY ASSESSMENTS AND WASTE-TO-ENERGY.

Q: What inspired you to get into environmental and sustainable research?

A: When I was in middle school like grade nine, I had to do a science project and I remember that my project was highly inspired by the environment. In high school, I took a chemistry course with a teacher who was so inspirational to me. He taught me different sciences and it kind of increased my passion for sciences.

I ended up studying chemistry in college and I got a bachelor's in chemistry, but I always felt like I wanted to use chemistry differently. When I went to Graduate School, I found a professor who had just joined, and her specialty was Environmental Chemistry. I felt that this was what I cared about and that I wanted to use chemistry to solve environmental problems.

Q: How would you define sustainability, especially in the context of your expertise?

A: Sustainability has one meaning, which is the idea of meeting current needs without compromising the future, but I think that it can be viewed in a lot of different ways.

From the scientific perspective and the perspective of what I do, sustainability is seen as the fact that I'm looking at pollution and how pollutants are affecting organisms and the environment.

In terms of life, sustainability is how we can keep these organisms for the future based on the food chain. I see this in the sense of climate change and how our current actions could affect organisms and our climate in the future, but sustainability can also be seen differently. Thinking of education, partnerships, and cities and construction so that is sustainability.



Q: What research projects are you working on that involve climate change and sustainability?

A: I do have a lot of different lines of research, and I work on a lot on different projects. For one, I analyze pollutants in different organisms, and I think that some of this baseline data is so important because we have also looked at water quality and seen a lot of different environmental ecosystems here in the UAE. It's those areas that have not been explored because the UAE is new, and there is no background data on the salinity in our oceans, how that is changing, and what is the status of different species and organisms that are part of the food chain.

Another area I am exploring is the materials we have that are coming from food waste and sewage, and how we can convert these materials into something that doesn't go into the landfill and can be used as a source of energy or as fertilizers to reduce waste because eventually waste will be linked to climate and environmental sustainability.

Q: One of your recent research projects is about Oyster Beds in the UAE, could you tell me about that?

A: This was a big study that I did with a team of researchers from AUS, from the Emirates Nature, from the Environmental Protection Agency here in Sharjah as well as from ACP University.

The idea of this research was that we have some Oyster Beds that were explored by Emirates Nature in Sharjah, Umm Al Quwain, and Ajman. They have been mapped as some of the largest Oyster Beds but there is nothing known about them and with the fast development that is happening in the UAE, the concern was that if we do not understand what their status is they might later completely disappear without us understanding.

Q: What type of progress have you reached in your research?

A: After the mapping, we wanted to go in and assess the water quality. Looking into possible pollutants and heavy metals. We looked at the sediments in the bottom, we looked at the oyster population and the marine biologists were looking into the population of fish and other species that live in those areas. As part of the project, we also did interviews with fishermen, because what I think is a big component now is called "Citizen Science," which is looking into how the human population that has been here for a long time can support the research. We had interviews with fishermen, and they were able to tell us that they have seen changes in the fish population within this area that were also seen in the Oyster Beds areas and that they know where they are.

Q: What are the latest trends in sustainability that can be developed or remain helpful in the future?

A: When it comes to sustainability, materials and how they be differently looked into are becoming a very important trend. While writing for research, I read that biodegradable plastics are not necessarily biodegradable, they're only biodegradable in certain conditions. A big trend that could be very relevant about materials is how we can come up with materials that are biodegradable under all conditions and that will not have an impact on organisms in the environment.

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Q: And can you share with us how sustainability evolved over the years and the changes you have observed?

A: I can tell you quickly that when I first came to the UAE in 2009, BEEAH had already been established but I think that the idea of recycling was still very small. I think a lot of the population was not used to what recycling was and what was recyclable. But right now, we are exploring technologies. For example, Sharjah is opening waste energy funds, which was not seen back then. I believe with this transition, there is a lot of emphasis, in the UAE especially, on how we can be more sustainable, but I think that there is still a long way to go, not only for the UAE but for the whole world.

Q: If the burning of fossil fuel and the activity of humans do not become more reasonable, what do you think is the worst natural phenomenon that can happen?

A: There are so many different things as we are looking into the consequences of climate change. We see an increase in hurricanes, storms, flooding, and rain episodes but we also see an increase in droughts. It is a phenomenon that can increase a lot of different things.

Something that is highly talked about; is the increase in temperature, and we are already in a hot country. It is going to get hotter and as it gets hotter would we be able to tolerate the heat? Are we going to use more energy because we're going to have to pull down more? And at the same time, what about the air that we breathe? is it going to get more affected? I think that it is based on the area where you are located, but at the same time, I think that everything will become higher.

Q: What personal actions or lifestyle changes do you believe can contribute to a more sustainable world?

A: I believe that we can try and take smaller steps and I try to do this. It's a struggle because you cannot convince everybody to think this way. I try to walk a little bit more, and every time I go grocery shopping, I always take my bags.

Something that I keep talking about all the time, is the idea that you don't necessarily need to be an environmental scientist or somebody with sciences to understand the fact that you have such a big impact when it comes to sustainability. Think about your major, your field of study, and what you're currently doing, and see how you can incorporate that and fit it into the sustainable development goals.

THE JOURNEY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCHER

Fatin Samara

BY SHAIKHA ALMAAZMI



Dr, Fatin Samara working in the AUS labs

Fatin Samara, a professor at the American University of Sharjah and the Co-Chair of the UAE Climate Change Research Network, said that her passion for chemistry and helping the environment started in middle school, which then extended to shape her career.

Speaking of her early years' experience, the project she did at that time was highly inspired by the environment and recycling materials. Then in high school, she was taught by a teacher who inspired her and increased her passion for sciences. She was even part of many scientific competitions.

Samara said after acquiring a bachelor's degree in chemistry, "I always felt like I wanted to use chemistry differently."

Samara then met another person who inspired her to delve into the environmental chemistry line. When she went to graduate school, she found a newly joined professor whose specialty was environmental chemistry.

Samara said, meeting the professor, "I felt that this was what I cared about and that I wanted to use chemistry to solve environmental problems."

Since then, she has been using her knowledge of chemistry and its instrumentations to solve environment related problems because she believes that is something tangible and "we can see it; we can feel it. That your results do have a meaning for something greater than us."

"Oftentimes I wish that people understood that all the subjects that they're teaching, they do have some sustainability or that they could implement some sustainability."

Samara expresses the importance of knowing that even though sustainability has one meaning, it can be viewed and implemented in many ways. She defines sustainability as "meeting the current needs without compromising the future."

In her field of expertise, the perspective of sustainability can be seen in the study of pollutants and their effects on organisms and ecosystems in terms of life underwater and life on land, and how human action could have an impact on climate change and the future. Samara said that sustainability can also be seen in education, architecture, advertisement and how information is communicated to spread awareness.

Samara has been observing the changes in behavior toward sustainability and the environment in the UAE since 2009, which was when she first came and started teaching at AUS. By then, BEEAH was already established but recycling was not a common thing, and many in the population were not used to the idea of recycling and knowing what was recyclable. The UAE has come a long way since then; currently, they are exploring new technologies to help and improve the environment. One example that Samara gave is the recent opening of waste energy funds in Sharjah, which was not seen in the past.

“I BELIEVE WITH THIS TRANSITION, THERE IS A LOT OF EMPHASIS, IN THE UAE ESPECIALLY, ON HOW WE CAN BE MORE SUSTAINABLE, BUT I THINK THAT THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO, NOT ONLY FOR THE UAE BUT FOR THE WHOLE WORLD.”

One of the many research projects she has done with a team of different researchers in the UAE is the mapping and studying of Oyster Beds in Sharjah, Umm Al Quwain and Ajman. They were described as one of the largest Oyster Beds, but there is not a lot of information about them.

Samara, showing her concern, said that with the fast development of the UAE and the scarcity of documented data about it, if the researchers and biologists do not understand the Oyster Beds' status now, they might disappear completely later without anyone understanding them.

Awareness and education, Samara emphasizes, are some of the most crucial elements to achieving a sustainable lifestyle and improving the environment. Taking small steps such as walking more and using fewer plastic materials, are a good way to start.

“WE NEED TO LEARN THAT AS INDIVIDUALS WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY AND ONCE THAT RESPONSIBILITY BECOMES COLLECTIVE THEN IT'S GOING TO MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE.”

“Something that I keep talking about all the time, is the idea that you don't necessarily need to be an environmental scientist or somebody with sciences to understand the fact that you have such a big impact when it comes to sustainability. Think about your major, your field of study, and what you're currently doing, and see how you can incorporate that and fit it into the sustainable development goals.”





BY SHAIKHA ALMAAZMI

CLASSIC LITERATURE FOR BEGINNER READERS



Classic books for beginners to read

As beginners, many things seem intimidating and scary to approach, especially regarding things that challenge our intellect. Many young people now avoid reading classics, thinking they are too hard to read, but do not fret. Here is a list to help you ease your way into the classical literature world. All these books use simple yet captivating language that hooks and engages readers.

- Suppose you want to read a cozy book that explores familial relationships. A book that feels like sitting in the warmest corner of the house with your favorite blanket. In that case, you might want to try reading “Little Women” by Louisa May Alcott.
- Russian literature might sound frightening, but instead of starting with Fyodor Dostoevsky, why not read “The Death of Ivan Ilyich” by Leo Tolstoy? It is a novella about a man’s journey to death and the emptiness of a life lived for personal gains.
- If you are set to read 1984 by George Orwell, try reading his other book, “Animal Farm” first. It is less complicated but surely enjoyable. The story explores dictatorships and characters that are portrayed as animals.
- “No Longer Human” by Osamu Dazai might not be everyone’s first choice, as it discusses sensitive subjects such as suicide, sexual assault and depression. However, the book and the narration are quite captivating since the author uses many examples of his life in this novel.

Most of these books are under 200 pages, making these book choices more compelling for readers seeking literary enrichment within a manageable timeframe.



A tray of crinkle cookies.

MIX, REST, BAKE AND EAT DELICIOUS COOKIES IN LESS THAN AN HOUR

BY SHAIKHA ALMAAZMI

Stored in a jar or eaten freshly baked, cookies are always delicious. The best part is that you don't even need an occasion to have a cookie or two or even to finish a whole batch at once.

While cookies vary in recipes and origins and might sometimes seem scary to make, this simple crinkles cookie recipe might be your first step to becoming a professional cookie baker.

Many beginner bakers can start with this recipe to familiarize themselves with baked goods without having to spend long tiring hours of kneading and mixing and waiting in the kitchen.

Crinkles cookies were invented by Helen Fredell, during the 20th century in Minnesota, USA. The cookies then gained popularity in the 80s. The name comes from the cracks on the surface that appear because of the sugar-coating that draws out moisture.



THE SMELL OF FRESHLY MADE COOKIES ACCOMPANIED BY A HOT CUP OF BLACK COFFEE CAN MAKE A HOME FEEL SO COZY, ESPECIALLY ON WINTER DAYS.

INGREDIENTS:

- Three-quarters cup of powdered sugar (you can add more if you want it to be sweeter, but you will need to add a bit more oil).
- One-third cup of oil.
- Two eggs.
- Half a cup of powdered cocoa.
- One and a half cups of all-purpose flour.
- One teaspoon of baking powder.
- One teaspoon of vanilla.
- A pinch of salt.
- Your favorite chocolate stuffing.

STEPS:

01 Mix the powdered sugar and powdered cocoa well in a large mixing bowl: then add the oil and mix again. The texture won't be silky smooth immediately, so do not worry and keep mixing.

TO MAKE A PERFECT COOKIE FOR ONE'S PREFERENCE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO ADJUST THE RATIO OF FAT, SUGAR, AND FLOUR. FOR SOFT AND CHEWY COOKIES THAT SPREAD EVENLY MUST HAVE MORE FAT THAN SUGAR AND FLOUR. FOR THICK AND CHEWY COOKIES, THE RATIO OF FLOUR MUST BE GREATER THAN FAT AND SUGAR. ALSO, BAKING POWDER IS BEST USED TO MAKE LIGHT AND AIRY COOKIES, WHILE BAKING SODA IS BETTER FOR CHEWIER COOKIES.



- 02** When the mixture becomes homogeneous and is lump-free, add the eggs and vanilla and mix with a spatula.
- 03** Add the flour, baking powder and a pinch of salt then combine everything until it becomes a ball and stops sticking to the bowl.
- 04** Cover the bowl and leave it in the fridge for 30 minutes maximum.
- 05** Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius, prepare your baking tray and add parchment paper to it.
- 06** After the dough solidifies a bit, take it out and start shaping it into little spheres, and do not forget to add your favorite chocolate stuffing.
- 07** When done shaping, coat the spheres with powdered sugar and place them on your tray. You need to keep some distance between them, so the cookies won't melt into each other.
- 08** Put the cookies in the oven for 10-12 minutes and when you take it out, leave them for a few minutes to cool down.

In less than an hour you will have the most delicious and chocolatey crinkles ever. But you must prepare yourself because every time someone comes around, they will ask you to make them.

FRIDGES OF SOCIETY: NO ONE SLEEPS HUNGRY

BY BISSANE EL SAYED



A fridge and water cooler near Aisha Alqubaisi's house (PHOTO BY AISHA ALQUBAISI)

There are three nights in which millions of Muslims around the world round up and gather around media outlets for the sighting of a 'New Moon.' The first occasion of such a tradition each lunar year marks the beginning of the month of Ramadan. Once scholars and astronomers confirm that the new moon can be seen with the naked eye, households are decorated with lamps like ribbons of stars across the halls, crescents shine bright in each house lighting the room with the warm and gracious rays symbolizing the holiday it represents.

Family members are no longer each on their own at 3 a.m. each sleeping in their bed. Rather, they are all gathered around the suhoor table to prepare for the next day of fasting. Phones are ringing with congratulations and reserving their loved ones for iftar invitations before anyone beats them to it.

The new moon becomes the rebirth of paused relationships, family bonds, and ties of kinship are reconnected, and no one is to be left behind. It is a time for practitioners to reaffirm their commitment to serving society. However, a community is often forgotten, while overlooking their needs contradicts the values of giving and virtue, which are emphasized in these holy days.

According to the National, the most commonly used greeting used in the United Arab Emirates during the month is Ramadan Kareem, translated to 'generous Ramadan.' In that respect, Ramadan aims to foster a sense of solidarity and empathy among society and for less privileged communities.

As a result, Ayesha al Qubaisi's family has been maintaining a tradition of keeping fruits, water, dates, juice, and "non-perishable food items." Ayesha said that neighbors also contribute when they can to fill up these fridges. Ayesha is an Emirati citizen from Dubai, and a student at the American University of Sharjah pursuing a degree in Mass Communication.

DESPITE SOME SLIGHT DIFFERENCES IN THE MECHANICS OF FASTING, MOST RELIGIONS ENCOURAGE IT. ASIDE FROM THE PURPOSE AND EFFECTS OF SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS, ABSTAINING FROM CERTAIN LEISURE HABITS IS A FORM OF CLEANSING THE SOUL FROM DESIRES AND EARTHLY, MATERIALISTIC TEMPTATIONS MAKING IT A PIECE THAT CONNECTS SEVERAL ACTS, SHAPES, AND TYPES OF WORSHIP.

Ayesha's mother said their story first started with a water dispenser to battle the heat and dehydration resulting from the desert climate of the United Arab Emirates.

Construction workers would often pass by and refill their water bottles when at work. Since the water cooler was welcomed by society and labor workers, the family decided to elevate their charitable work into food and nutritious items, too.



The mother emphasized that this act of kindness is not foreign, but rather very common in the Emirati culture which encourages hospitality and charity.

Laborers are subject to harsh working conditions, especially when Ramadan coincides with the summer season; the blistering sun sears the skin of anyone who dares to peak outside. Moreover, laborers are exploited by some organizations that violate the ethical standards of the country. As a result, maintaining a healthy and nutritious diet could be a difficult task when the wage is divided between rent, financial responsibilities, and sending money back home for their families. Most of these workers are single or live far from their families, sometimes unable to muster the energy to grab or make a bite after a long day of hard work.

In Ramadan, even the most privileged and comfortable Muslim individuals feel hunger and thirst. Experiencing them firsthand allows fasting individuals to get a glimpse of how fortunate they are to have easy access to clean water and food, things that they might have taken for granted previously. This awareness inspires acts of compassion and generosity, as Muslims strive to alleviate the suffering of others through acts of charity and community service.

Ayesha's family did not stray far from this purpose of fasting, as they joined the initiative out of sympathy for the hungry, the thirsty, and the ones in need.

Ayesha's family did not stray far from this purpose of fasting, as they joined the initiative out of sympathy for the hungry, the thirsty, and the ones in need.

"We also believe that this is a reflection of our religion and what we believe in as Muslims," said Ayesha's mother.

"I'VE NOTICED A GREATER SENSE OF FULFILLMENT AND CONNECTION TO MY COMMUNITY SINCE PARTICIPATING IN THIS INITIATIVE," SAID AYESHA.

Ayesha elaborated in the cultural context that "This act of service symbolizes the Emirati values of hospitality, generosity, and compassion towards others."

Despite the fridge being filled all around the year, the family puts extra effort into making sure it is always stocked during Ramadan and in the summertime. Ayesha's sister explained this as the only obstacle but continued to express that the benefits outweighed any costs.

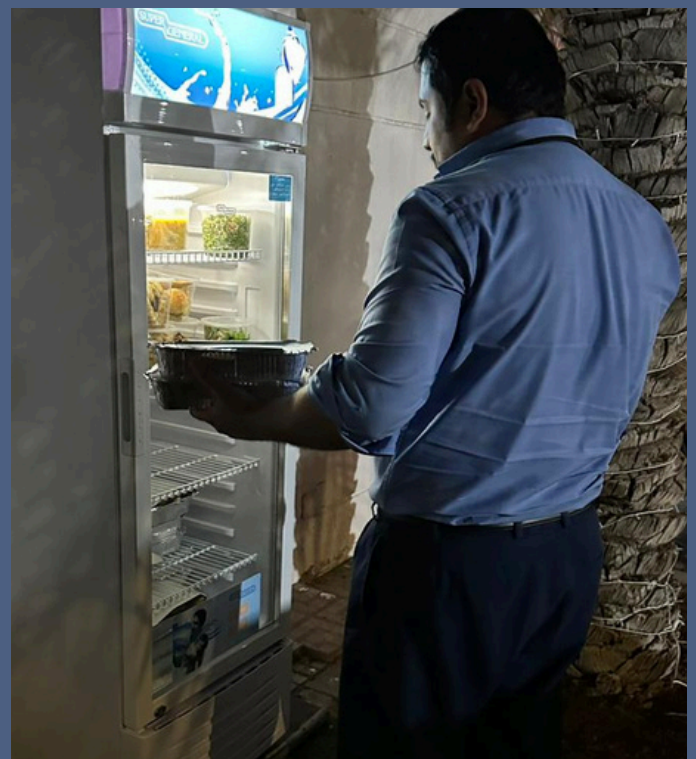
As for the financial price of maintaining an outdoor fridge, Ayesha said that the only cost worth mentioning comes with choosing a good-quality refrigerator, which she described as a necessity.

"IT DOESN'T REALLY COST US MUCH TO KEEP THE FRIDGE RUNNING BUT MAKING SURE TO PURCHASE A HIGH-QUALITY FRIDGE THAT WOULD BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE SUMMER HEAT IS A MUST."

According to Ayesha, this tradition is carried out by Emirati families and individuals interested in giving back to society. And her family collectively seeks to keep this act of service throughout generations, "whether there is a need for it or not."

At the end of the day, in the land of giving, respect, kindness, and tolerance, no one sleeps hungry.

A man taking food from the refrigerator near Aisha Alqubaisi's house



(PHOTO BY AISHA ALQUBAISI)

How to Prepare for Horse Riding

BY BISSANE EL SAYED



Riding on an animal's back is one of the earliest means of transportation. Among all animals, horses are the most efficient. Horses are friendly, a person's dearest friend, and smart. They are also fast and can handle a lot of weight.

It takes time and patience to get ready for horseback riding. Follow these steps to embark on your equestrian journey in a fulfilling way for you and your riding partner.

1) FIND A REPUTABLE COACH:

Before mounting a horse, you must seek coaching from a qualified instructor or trainer.

Like any other skill, attempting to master it on your own can pose a challenge of great difficulty. It is unsafe to try and learn horseback riding on your own considering it involves two ends of control.



A HORSE USED FOR HORSE RIDING CLASSES AT AN EQUESTRIAN CLUB IN THE UAE

The easiest and most accessible option is to look for equestrian centers qualified with the proper certification.

No emirate in the UAE falls short of having at least one equestrian center that will be able to teach you the basics of riding and handling horses to set you up for your journey.

2) GATHER YOUR GEAR:

Investing in proper riding gear is essential for safety and comfort.

The most crucial tool to get your hands on is a helmet. Find one made specifically for horse riding. The chin-tightness of the helmet must be adjustable.

Not well-fitted helmets may fail to provide sufficient protection.

Stirrups: A pair of ring-like metal rings or frames attached to the saddle, dangling down a little which horse riders rest their feet on for more stability and easier movement.

In second place comes riding boots. Footwear designed for horse riding provides stability by preventing your feet from slipping through the stirrups.

A slippery shoe can lead to the equestrian's feet slipping out while the horse is moving, and the rider might lose balance and fall.

Additionally, wearing comfortable clothes made of stretchable material allows for freedom of movement. For example, breeches or leggings, and shirts that do not restrict movement.

Crop: a whip-like tool, used to communicate with the horse instead of your feet.

Finally, a 'crop,' which might not be as necessary as other tools for safety purposes, but it is a great help for beginners. It especially aids people who struggle with keeping their balance while transitioning from trotting to sprinting.

3) PHYSICAL PREPARATIONS:

Incorporate exercises into your routine that improve strength, balance, flexibility and stamina.

Horse riding engages various muscle groups: arms, core, glutes, thighs and leg muscles all are actively used in a single session. Equestrians need both balance and high energy levels to keep up with their horses.

Additionally, horses must not carry anything heavier than 20% of their body weight.

Leg pain is not uncommon when equestrians are not wearing the right footwear.



A lot of ankle movement is involved, and the whole lower part of the human body is under a lot of pressure due to the grip power required.

Boots help with leg structure while riding and the material usually provides more grip effect easing the tension on leg muscles.

An average horse weighs around 420 kilograms.

For a comfortable riding experience, the rider's weight should ideally be no more than 20% of the horse's weight, meaning around 80 kilograms for the average horse.

4) UNDERSTAND HORSES:

Familiarize yourself with how horses communicate, their body language, and common signs of stress, discomfort, happiness, and excitement.

Learn how to approach and lead a horse safely, too.

Getting to know basic horse behavior is essential to be able to create a connection and develop a strong bond with the horse.

Once you get on top of a horse, the rider becomes one body with it and must act and think in a way that matches the behaviors and actions of the horse.



From a Kitty's Gastronomical Hell to purring heaven

If anyone would have visited Hussam a couple of months ago, the first welcoming, the last goodbye, and everything in between would have been engulfed with his kitten, Zofa's, farts. It was almost impossible for Zofa to last 15 minutes without letting go of its fatal nuclear emissions.

After visiting countless vets, he finally figured out what was committing these atrocities to Zofa's digestive system. It was the infamous purple bag brand of food. As soon as the culprit was exposed, Hussam immediately sought to replace it.

Upon consulting experts in the field, They advised him to rely on the brand Royal Canin for his kitten's nutrition. Hussam was in utter shock when he prepared his kitty's first meal of Royal Canin.

First and foremost, the wet food's smell was not a disturbing one at all. The second surprise was the sight of Zofa devouring the full plate. He never saw her eating like that before.

It's almost like she was starved for the past six months. She was biting down the bits and pieces of natural ingredients soaked and covered in the most blissful gravy as if it were a Michelin restaurant dish worth a thousand dollars. After around 15 minutes of inhaling the last bit of the mouthwatering food, Zofa was purring on Hussam's leg.

Royal Canin's bags of cat wet food

Most vet clinics Hussam visited during his journey displayed and sold Royal Canin due to the prominent levels of antioxidants and probiotics. Specialists also prefer it for their clients and patients because of its perfect recipe which balances protein, fiber, and other nutrients.

He could not move an inch without the kitten following him everywhere to thank him for the priceless elevation of her little journey on earth.

Zofa also became noticeably active and playful. It would hunt around the house, run like a cheetah, initiate games with its family, and sleep better. It also grew threefold, reaching the average cat's weight and height. Everyone could see that its mental health was doing better after this life-changing decision to change the food brand.

Twelve pouches of health and happiness for your fur baby costing less than AED 90 is undoubtedly a deal. In fact, with all the benefits a cat gains from this food, one might wonder how Royal Canin even makes a profit. It also is very easily accessible; you will not have to drive for 40 minutes to another city to secure your kitty's dinner.

Pets' health and well-being are incomparable to any sum of money. However, with Royal Canin, pet parents can rest assured that two things will not hurt in the process, their animal friends' tummies, and their pockets.

Royal Canin provides food for both cats and dogs. So, dog and cat owners alike, should grab a bag or a box and treat their pet to a fancy dinner every day.

BY BISSANE EL SAYED



“AHMAD’S

EARL GREY TEA”



A cup of warm Earl Grey tea

BY SHAIKHA ALMAAZMI

Sarah is such a morning person; she loves the calmness surrounding the world in those early hours and the cold fresh air. She could live in these peaceful moments, when it is just her, cold calming mornings and her warm cup of Earl Grey tea, for eternity if she ever had a chance. She savored every sip and took a deep breath with every wind gust. In those instances, she felt relaxed, a true escape before she had to think of work and chores.

Ahmad’s Earl Grey tea is a timeless, citrusy, and aromatic tea that would tickle your senses and awaken your palate. In Ahmad’s Earl Grey tea, every leaf is picked carefully to be made into black tea and gets infused with bergamot oil. Ahmad’s Earl Grey tea not only offers a delicious taste but also acts as a natural caffeine source.

It helps with weight loss and heart health and reduces anxiety and chances of strokes. Earl Grey tea will help you boost your cognitive abilities and exercise performance as a gentler alternative to get caffeine without making you feel jittery. That is why it is the best way to start your morning, as it can defog your brain from sleep and hydrate your body.

This tea contains antioxidants that help protect the cells from free radicals damage and oral infections while also fighting tooth decay. These antioxidants can strengthen the immune system against infections and illnesses. It even supports the growth of beneficial gut bacteria and reduces inflammation in the digestive tract, which helps maintain digestive health.

Plain or with additions, Ahmad’s Earl Grey tea remains delicious while it satisfies all different tastes. Lemon is traditionally added to Earl Grey tea; however, sugar and milk would also make a good match with it. This tea can be served and enjoyed hot or cold, making it a great beverage for any season.

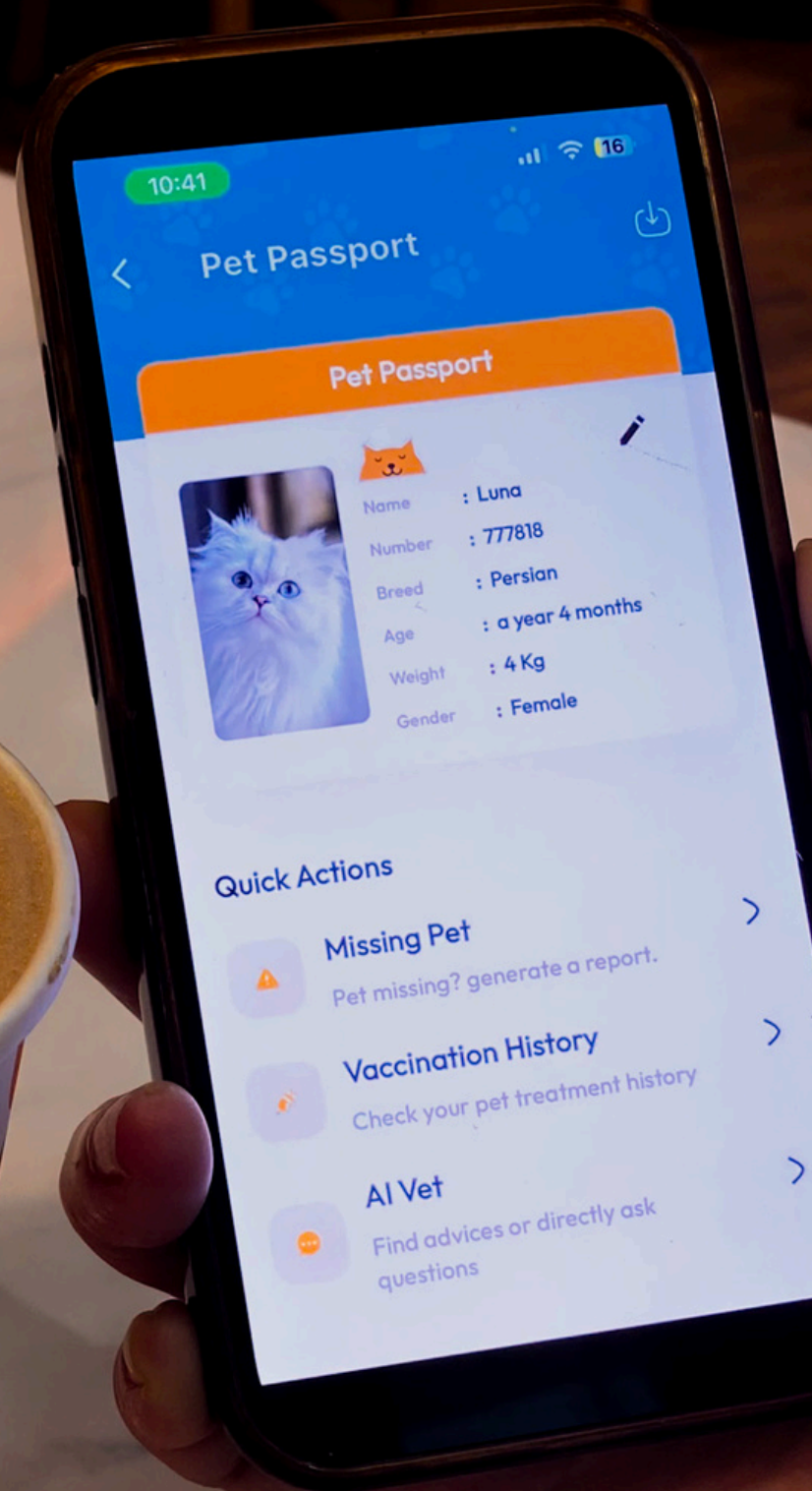
Besides that, it enhances metabolism which is why it is effective for weight loss. Earl Grey tea can prevent cholesterol build-up and reduce its levels in the blood, which eventually decreases the chances of getting cardiovascular diseases.

Earl Grey tea is not only restricted to being a morning drink but can also be enjoyed in the afternoon with the presence of family and a piece of cake or any other desired dessert. It can be used as a refresher for the post-lunch slump and to reenergize during the day with its natural caffeine effects.

Earl Grey tea would also be suitable as a hot soothing drink in the evening after a long day to calm down, and because of the modest caffeine content, this tea would not keep you awake at night.



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