



MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

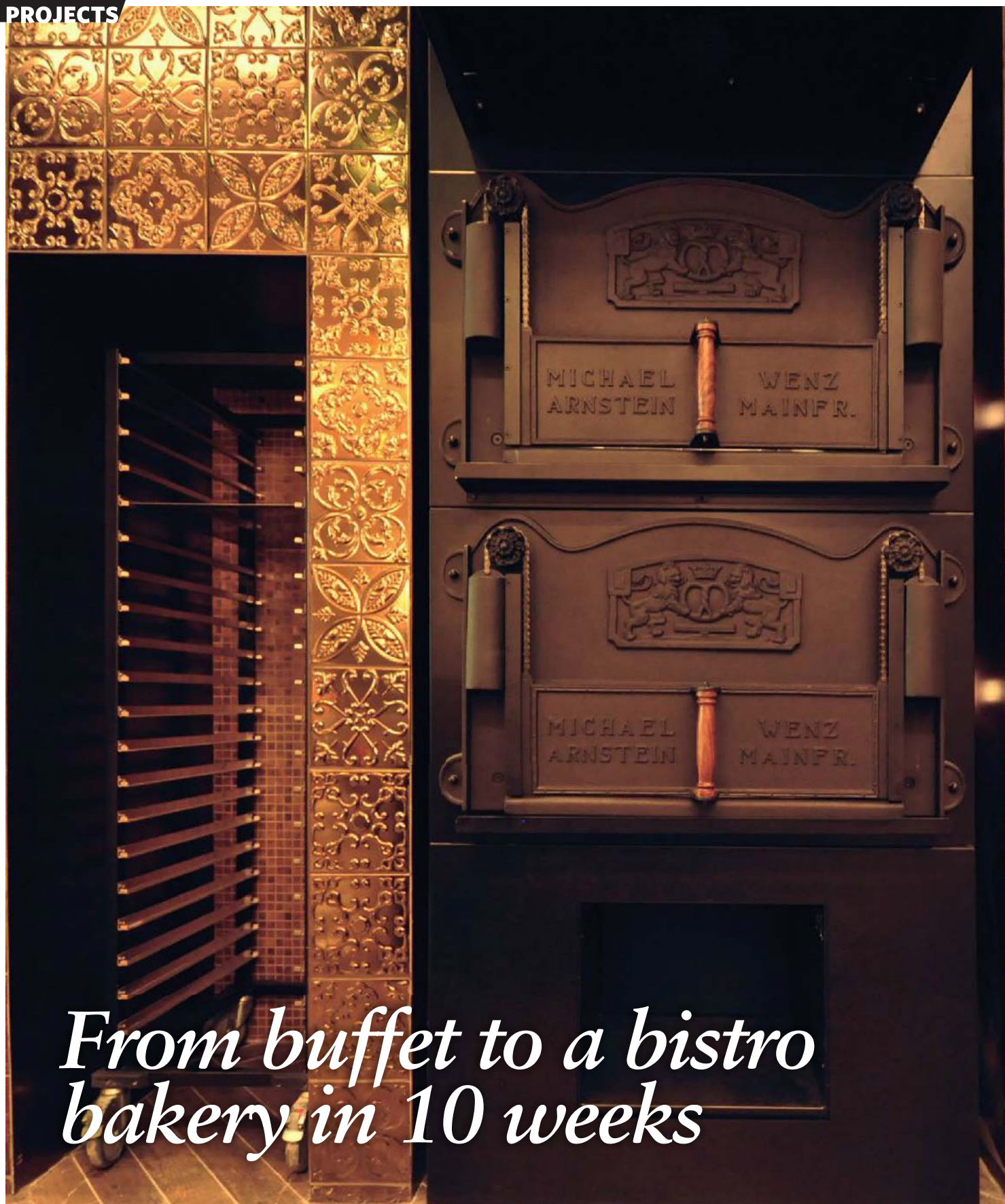
FOODSERVICE CONSULTANT



Shaking it up

FROM HUMBLE ORIGINS TO GLOBAL
AMBITIONS, SHAKE SHACK AIMS HIGH

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*From buffet to a bistro
bakery in 10 weeks*

First-time team Al Ansari and consultants Tricon battled the clock to deliver a show kitchen for the Westin Bahrain City Centre's newest restaurant. Elly Earls finds out how they did it

Despite a tight timeframe and new partnerships, experienced contractors Al Ansari and FCSI member firm Tricon were able to deliver an eye-catching new kitchen for the Westin Bahrain City Centre's newest F&B outlet – Furn Bistro & Bakery – on time and within budget. And both the operator and the restaurant's first customers are delighted with it.

The project came about when Bahrain's first and only Westin property, which opened its doors in 2014, decided to swap its international buffet restaurant Saveur for an exclusive bistro serving authentic Khaleeji fare with a modern, Western twist. It was a decision that meant a complete overhaul of the existing kitchen. "The concept completely and utterly changed – we used to have a buffet, now it's à la carte. We used to serve European-influenced food, now it's all Arabic flavours – it literally turned 180 degrees," explains the hotel's executive chef **Andreas Gøber**.

Chef Gøber believes a good kitchen design is essential to a restaurant's success. "If you don't have a good design, your staff will be running back and forth all the time and productivity won't be what

it should be, whereas if a kitchen is properly designed, a chef just has to turn round and get one ingredient. It's much faster."

High end and full of flair

Enter international foodservice consultancy firm Tricon and Oman-based building, infrastructure and engineering company Al Ansari. Selected via a competitive tender initiated by the hotel's owners Majid Al Futtaim Properties, both companies set to work on delivering a kitchen that met Westin's high expectations with flair, while keeping up to date with global F&B trends.

The final result was two spaces: a bronze-themed show kitchen for the bistro, which was based loosely on Tricon's Levantine restaurant Olea in Kempinski Mall of the Emirates and allows guests to observe the chefs; plus a bakery outside the main restaurant, featuring a Victorian-style showpiece baking oven by MIWE, complete with cast iron front.

In the main kitchen, which is visible to diners through a glass panel, the central focus is an Ambach cooking suite made up of a single piece top, top mounted pot rack, a deep fat fryer, a pasta cooker, two gas burners and a robata (charcoal) >



grill. Next to this is a hot pass area featuring induction plates built into a granite worktop, which can only be seen glowing through the granite when turned on.

The contractors even managed to integrate the previous restaurant's beloved Wood Stone oven into Furn's new kitchen. "It was a challenge as the existing oven had been cladded and fully built into the wall," recalls **Adrian Berry**, senior business development manager Middle East and Africa Al Ansari Group (KE & Laundry). "So we had to be very careful when dismantling it. In the end, relocating the oven and fixing a new exhaust hood went smoothly, but it did take time."

This wasn't the only challenge Al Ansari and Tricon faced during the project, which they were given 10 weeks to complete. "We had to airlift a number of items, such as the MIWE oven and the Ambach cooking suite, which would normally come by sea. Of course, this meant there was extra expense involved and the Ambach unit had to be taken apart and assembled on site due to the size of the single piece top," notes Berry, adding that the toughest challenge was the team's hours. "Most work had to be done at night and as the delivery deadline was so tight, close liaison between all the the companies involved was essential."

Everything came off without a hitch, however, thanks not only to close collaboration between all but also to Al Ansari's relationships with its suppliers, who were happy to ensure the deadline was met. "There was also a lot of very hard manual work. When goods arrived they were initially stored in the basement of the hotel and then had to be brought up

manually to the new kitchen as there was no lift big enough to hold them," Berry adds.

Proud of all the firsts

The team was particularly proud of the results, for which feedback from Majid Al Futtaim has been overwhelmingly positive, because it marked a number of firsts for Al Ansari. "It was a landmark job for us for several reasons – it was in a new country, it was our first venture with Majid Al Futtaim and it was our first job with Tricon – and, even with all of these firsts, it went to plan and was completed on time," Berry says.

"Usually, it's a real challenge when everything is a first."

On Gober's part, there haven't been any complaints either. "We're still in the soft opening phase, and it always takes a couple of weeks for the chefs to get to know a new kitchen, but the team is really happy with it," he grins. "I'm particularly happy they managed to integrate our old oven, which is a brilliant piece, into the new kitchen, and I also like the invisible induction plates; they're great. It's in line with the current trend of live cooking and the whole kitchen works on drawers rather than doors, which makes it a lot more space-efficient for us. It's a very well thought out kitchen."

Looking past the soft opening, the team at the Westin is certain the hotel's newest F&B concept, aptly named after the Arabic word for oven – fur'n – and featuring items such as lamb and chicken kofta, slow braised lamb shank and Gulf king prawns, will be a success. "The feedback we've had so far is the diners love the design and they love the food – we've got a very optimistic outlook," Gober concludes. ■



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