

Matthew Kenney's vegan restaurant offers customers an upscale evening experience at Al-Murabba



- **Josie Clemens talks about her journey in creating Folia's vegan menu with American celebrity chef Matthew Kenney**

RIYADH: Al-Murabba, one of 14 zones at the Riyadh Season festival, continues to welcome visitors, offering a luxurious experience with its international restaurants.

It is here that American celebrity Chef Matthew Kenney has set up his restaurant Folia, known for its exquisite vegan menu and now open for the first time in Saudi Arabia.

Josie Clemens, Kenney's right-hand chef, told Arab News about her journey in creating this vegan menu with Kenney in Riyadh.

Most people know Clemens from Gordon Ramsay's "Hell's Kitchen," Season 20, which just aired this year.

"My life has transformed since then," Clemens said.

She described how she ended up working for Kenney when she went to London to do some pop-up menus and course tastings.

"I met some incredible people along the way who introduced me to Kenney's cuisine and then to the chef himself.

"Now I'm here with the honor and pleasure of opening his restaurant Folia," she added.

Clemens expressed how working with Kenney was a dream come true for her.

"He is a lovely, charming, gentle soul who just wants to bring the best plant-based cuisine to others and show the world how this innovative cuisine can heal."

Clemens explained how eliminating animal products from people's diets and lifestyles can create a harmonious relationship between humans and the planet.

"What makes our dishes special is the intelligence that goes into them, the flavor that is extracted and amplified just from using vegetables and anything that comes from the earth, no extras. So, this is true art," she said.

Clemens said that Folia is not only for vegan lovers but also for non-vegans.

"This restaurant is for anyone who is inquisitive about food or who wishes to establish a better relationship with food," she said.

The restaurant offers six delightful courses through which visitors can explore vegan cuisine. The menu includes amuse-bouches, a vegan take on famous Italian dish cacio e pepe, oyster mushrooms, vegan chevre, and chocolate marquise.

"What people can expect from our restaurant during Riyadh Season is an explosion of flavors," Clemens said.

“I really see great things for the city, and I hope to be part of it in a major way.

“I am planning to open a few franchises of vegan cuisine to make it accessible for everybody. I think fine dining has a huge place in my heart, but I also want to provide chef-inspired cuisine that is affordable,” she added.

Developed in partnership with KBW Ventures, founded by Prince Khalid bin Alwaleed, Folia first launched at the Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills.

Today, Folia’s kitchen includes talented Saudi locals and international cooks who are supporting Clemens with her creative dishes in the zone.

“It’s fun having both locals and people from all over the world here. And even though sometimes we don’t speak the same language, we’re still able to communicate because of the passion that keeps us connected,” Clemens said.

Folia is now open to the public throughout the season at Al-Murabba zone. Those seeking a unique and sophisticated vegan experience can book through The Chefz application.
