

EXCLUSIVE

# Interview

Dubai is a city in the United Arab Emirates known for luxury shopping, ultramodern architecture and a lively nightlife scene. Dubai is a destination that mixes modern culture with history, adventure with world-class shopping and entertainment. Catch a show at the Dubai Opera, see downtown from atop the Burj Khalifa and spend an afternoon along Dubai Creek exploring the gold, textile and spice souks. Exploring on this journey recently, the journalist from BFW team visited the first historical hotel in the heart of Dubai, Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek. What makes this hotel different than other hotels in Dubai is the people working there, they are warm, friendly and flexible in addressing guest's objections. Also, the newly renovated swimming pool and the way it's designed and furnished adds a sensational atmosphere to the hotel. All of Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek's, 276 rooms are air-conditioned and have an array of amenities. Guests can expect 32-inch flat-screen TVs with cable channels, along with free Wi-Fi and wired Internet. Beds are dressed in Egyptian cotton sheets and pillow menus, and bathrooms offer hair dryers and free toiletries. Other standard amenities include coffee makers, free bottled water, and laptop-compatible safes.



Maria Tullberg, General Manager  
Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek

**What attracts you to working for luxury hotels? Recently you have won the Hotelier Middle East's "GM of the Year" award, could you please explain your career and achievements in this regard?**

**Maria:** I first started to work in the hotel industry at Scandic Infra City in Stockholm from 2006 to 2008 and as district director for Scandic's ten hotels in the Stockholm region from 2008 to 2010. Then I worked Radisson Blu Arlandia Hotel and Radisson Blu

**Amrita**, Editor of Beauty & World magazine had the opportunity to interview **Maria Tullberg**, **General Manager**, a Swedish national. Maria has over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry and responsible for overseeing the on-going refurbishment and financial performance of the property with its 16 food and drink outlets and team of over 500 employees. Also, simultaneously, we had a chance to interview **Chef Uwe Micheel**, his official title is Director of Kitchens, but he could just as easily be called the father of chefs. He is involved with nearly every food festival and food event in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek. Highly inspired by the Emirati Cuisine, Chef Uwe Micheel opened Aseelah, the most successful restaurant in Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek

Skycity Hotel in Sweden. Somehow, it's fascinated me. You meet the best people in luxury hotels. I wanted to be a part of the "best". Working in a luxury hotel means that you try to take care of those guests who enjoy being pampered and looked after.

**Being Swedish National, what are the most challenging issues you are facing on your current job? Especially in UAE. What inspire you to open the Emirati Cuisine Restaurant Aseelah, and how successful is this?**

**Maria:** Our industry is often challenged to find good and motivated young people to join us. You need to know that their

philosophy and values in life have changed so much in comparison with my generation, and adjustments in management styles have to be made to accommodate this change. When you work in a competitive city such as Dubai, you have to pay attention to what is changing around you. We live in such a fast-moving world; the greatest challenge is to keep up with new trends and to adapt to them. Our business is constantly evolving, for example, the booking industry has changed. Guests have many choices nowadays; we have to keep up with the changes. We have to be present in all sales channels.

Aseelah is one of our newly

opened restaurant serving Emirati cuisines, sealed with Emirati authenticity and heritage! Being situated in the heart of historic Dubai, in Dubai's first five-star hotel, history, heritage and traditional hospitality runs through the core of Aseelah's origins and surroundings, which makes to win the Best Interior Award from Caterer Middle East, Leaders in F&B Awards.

**Our next questions are for Chef UWE, What Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek offer its guest to experience the art of culinary from all over the World?**

**Chef UWE:** Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek take guests on a journey of food from The China Club (Chinese cuisine), Minato (Japanese cuisine), Shabestan (Persian cuisine), Fish Market (seafood) to Aseelah (Emirati cuisine) and more. Taking care of taste buds of the Indian Culinary, we have Indian Theme Night at the Boulvar restaurant.

**What are the unique selling points of the Radisson Brand? What can a guest at your hotel get that they will not find anywhere else?**

**Maria:** Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek offers a vivid visual celebration of leading-edge style where the delight is in the detail. The historical and the first five-star hotel overlooking Dubai Creek is close to the beach and the city's vibrant shopping areas which attracts travelers with luxury and comfort attitude.

**If I were to come to your city for the first time and met you in the Lobby asking for what to do, where would you send me?**

**Maria:** I recommend taking the breathtaking view of Deira Old Souk Abra Station which is an Abra dock in the Deira area of Dubai. Also to Dubai's famous Spice Souk, Gold Souk and the Perfume Souk.

**Which part of the hotel is your personal favorite and why?**

**Maria:** The Club Room, overlook-

ing the Deira Creek from every corner.

**What is the single best quality your employees can possess? What do your employees expect from you? When you dine in a restaurant, what else do you look at besides the menu?**

**Maria:** It's well understood that the relationships between a boss and his or her direct reports are important ones and figure strongly in the success of a team. The right attitude! They must genuinely like to please our guests. All the technical skills you can learn in time.

One of the key objectives that should feature in any business and organizational plan is motivation of one's employees. It goes without saying that a motivated workforce is a more creative and productive one. Innovation is necessary to produce quality work.

Actually, I look at many things, such as: the concept of the restaurant, the design and size, the atmosphere, the type of guests and their behavior as well as the behavior and selling skills of the employees. And of course, the food must be good, tasty and presented well. Essentially, I look at the whole package. Of course, it really depends on the guests' expectations. At times, you may want to be spoiled by the quality of food and service. On other occasions, the atmosphere and environment is very exciting and the food and service may not be the most important thing.

**What role does technology play in improving the guest experience?**

**Maria:** In our digital world, a modern hotel's long-term success is heavily dependent on the quality of service they're capable of offering guests. Ensuring an unforgettable guest experience has become more important than ever before in hospitality – the onset of social media and traveler forums have seen to that. Hotels around the world are constantly seeking new ways to enhance the quality of their guests' stay, and the industry as a whole



Chef Uwe Micheel

seems to be aligned in favor of the travelers. Needless to say, the hotels of today are fairly advanced as compared to the hotels of yesterday. And going forward, with the current widespread technology revolution, the hotels of tomorrow will be unique in their own ways, bringing a whole new breath of fresh air for travelers. The future lies with the technology-equipped hotels, which are going to lead the race, benefiting the industry with increased hotel bookings, thereby generating more revenue for hotels.

**And finally, what advice would you offer to those who aspire to become a GM in the hotel industry someday?**

**Maria:** The basic values, such as honesty, straightforwardness, willingness to accept criticism, the mentality to never make the same mistake twice, willingness to learn continuously, willingness to change because the world is changing, are very important. Here is his advice for those who are inspired to become a GM: It's a good thing if the individual aims to become a GM. I would advise him/her to be flexible, to stay open-minded and learn more than one language. You must be passionate about what you do. You must work hard and never give up. If the hotel where you are working now does not provide you with the right opportunities, don't just stick with that hotel; find one that will give you the chance to grow.

