

**gulf**

THE MAGAZINE CHEFS LOVE TO READ

# **gourmet**

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## **READY, SET, NYUM!**

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Re-imagining the Meal  
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Nyum Meals by Chef  
**Tarryn-Leigh Green**

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# So yum... it's Nyum!

**Tarryn-Leigh Green** not only excels in culinary but is also a successful entrepreneur. With a fantastic flair for transforming challenges into chances, she has developed Nyum Meals to deliver delicious food without compromise

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**A**s a working parent, the most dreaded question of all is "What's for supper?", and if your kids are picky eaters, refusing to eat veggies, then the struggle to get them to eat a balanced and wholesome diet is real.

A chef and an entrepreneur, Tarryn-Leigh Green is the co-founder of Nyum Meals, a ready-to-eat, handmade meal food

service based in Dubai. When you meet her, the first things you notice is her vivacious personality and happy-go-lucky nature. They conceal the obstacles that have molded her throughout her career that led to her starting her venture.

Chef Tarryn-Leigh refers to Nyum meals as her lockdown baby, which was developed during the tumultuous time of the COVID-19 pandemic when

the demand for ready-to-cook meals skyrocketed. "At that time, I was employed by a firm that operated in airports, but owing to the shutdown, there wasn't much activity. That's when my stepfather gave me a nudge to follow my dreams," says the 38-year-old.

Being a working mom herself, she was driven by the bigger picture of offering handmade, wholesome food that wasn't made using the traditional mass manufactured methods. With years of food development experience and a clear vision, all that was left to do was find a facility that could replicate her methods. "We partnered with Intelligent Foods, utilising their facilities and knowledge, to support our team of chefs."

Little surprise then that the company's relationships with clients have spanned across borders in just a few years since its launch. The brand caters to a wide range of taste buds, including crowd-pleasing meals such as mac 'n' cheese and lasagnes to more ethnic flavours such as Thai red chicken panang curry. "The range will expand further, branching into new categories" she further states. Even though her initial target demographic focus was on adults, the need to bridge the gap in the children's meal segment is an important area of focus. Nyum Meals has also tapped into the kid's meal



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segment, developing meals consisting of at least 80 grams of vegetables within each meal. This means each kids meal has at least one of their five a day.

So how easy is it for the customers to get Nyum Meals on their plate? Every meal can go through three cooking methods: air fryer, oven, or microwave, with certain meal exceptions. "Once the meal of choice has been selected, it is about removing the sleeve and film, and heating in either an oven, air fryer or microwave. A delicious, hand-made meal ready in minutes," she explains. The meals have also been developed for hotels, restaurants and catering, where children's meals are often considered an inconvenience, Nyum provides a varied meal solution, ready for quick heating from frozen. This reduces the pressure on chefs and removes food waste, all whilst providing consistency of quality and guaranteed gross profit.

### EMBRACING INNER CHILD

With deep roots in the UK and South Africa, Tarryn was inspired by her parents who instilled in her the value of being strong and independent. "The love for food came from both my parents. My mother is a fantastic cook and my father has had his own restaurant since I was five years old and still does to this day. A passion for food was instilled in me at an early age," she says. "My mother is also a successful entrepreneur and watching her build her business has been a great example and inspired me to have my own business."

Unlike kids who could be fussy eaters, young Tarryn-Leigh was never averse to giving unfamiliar ingredients a shot. She would eagerly try out recipes albeit with her mother in the kitchen or with her father in the restaurant's kitchen. "The other day I was reminiscing about an incident when I was just seven years old and ended up in the hospital due to a broken arm. In an effort to make me feel better, my grandmother asked me if I wanted cuddly toys. Much to everyone's amusement, I requested garlic snails from my dad's restaurant."



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With a love of food, it was always clear that a career in F&B would be an obvious one. However, with a sound understanding of the restaurant industry through her father's lens, Chef Tarryn-Leigh looked for alternative avenues to drive her passion. This set her on the course to becoming a food product developer.

"Most product developers study food technology. I took a different path, believing in the importance of understanding both the foundations and skills of food, and chose to qualify as a chef from The Institute of Culinary Arts in South Africa."

After completing her studies in South Africa, she returned to the UK to pursue food product development, starting as the retail development chef at Fortnum & Mason, an upscale department store operating in Piccadilly, London, since the late 18th century.

The next break in her career was with Bakkavor London, as the Senior Development Chef for various leading retailers (Waitrose, M&S, Sainsbury's, Asda, Co-op) developing their private label products. "In terms of manufacture and size, it was a varied experience, from "core" and diet meals all the way to Heston Blumenthal premium ready

meals, dips, snacks, accompaniments and beyond. That served as a basis for the direction I've taken recently. From there I accepted an opportunity at Charlie Bigham's and that's where the stars aligned."

This premium, handmade ready meal manufacturer is the leader in the market and continues to grow from strength to strength. "I loved my time at Bigham's. Charlie has created a fantastic company, with a sound ethos that every person in the company works by. I spent 5 1/2 years at Bigham's and would have continued to do so, but a phone call for an opportunity in Dubai changed the course of that of mine and my family's lives and after twelve years in the UK, I found myself on an airplane to an unexpected course."

Always focused and with a plan, it was the first time that Chef Tarryn-Leigh quit her job without a prospect in hand. Nonetheless, she looked up jobs online with a search for product development-related roles, but "everything that came up was IT-related. I was mortified, as in the UK, product development is all food related" she says, adding that she remembers talking to her husband about how her passion has come to a halt.

As luck would have it, an opportunity in the gastronomic hub presented itself. She accepted a position at Autogrill ME, one of the leading travel-focused providers of food and beverage services.

Overseeing the franchises and labels, monitoring the outlet development, and bringing together the food concepts, those three years further cemented her craft before she took on a similar mantle in 2021. A stint with MAF Carrefour came next, with the position of Head of Innovation and Development.

### LOVE AFFAIR WITH QUALITY

A stickler for quality and perfection, Chef Tarryn-Leigh deems that the only way to get consistency is through adhered ingredient specifications, extensive





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training, detailed SOPs and regular quality checks. Ergo, only fully trained, dedicated chefs work on Nyum's meals.

Whilst the pandemic allowed for most people to reflect on their work life balance (or lack thereof), most of us find ourselves creeping back to old habits, forced by fast paced environment in which we live. High demands, low resource, and often time poor, the need for instant meal solutions is higher than ever. Nyum Meals have created an innovative approach to wholesome, hand-made meals providing convenience to working professionals and absolving mothers of any guilt for not preparing food themselves. "There are no machines, just human beings who are cutting shallots, or carrots to prepare meals. It is really important for us to take a little bit of that burden off from



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you, only using ingredients you would use at home."

Consumers are becoming, more aware of what they are eating, and transparency is essential. "At Nyum our core values are quality without compromise, and so all our meals are made using

clean ingredients and wherever possible, locally sourced." Hand-made, fresh products with no additives, preservatives, or modified atmosphere packing, result in limited shelf life. This was further exasperated in the Middle East, with most retailers not having the POS technology to reduce costs on end-of-life chilled products, a practice widely used in Western markets which encourages customers to buy rather than waste. "This restriction means that chilled foods are removed from shelves up to 48 hours before the end of life. This generates huge food waste, making fresh, not always best! This went against our ethos as Nyum aims to provide convenience and to reduce food waste. With this in mind, we had to re-evaluate our format also considering the feedback from our customers which resulted in a pivot to a blast frozen range. Making this change gave our customers more convenience and better flexibility. Better still, blast freezing the meals at their freshest, allows for the meals to maintain both their quality and nutritional value throughout their shelf-life. Something which was a concern with chilled format" adds Chef Tarryn-Leigh with a positive smile.

They recently joined the Emirates Culinary Guild, which is important for Nyum meals "The guild is a mark of quality. It was a proud moment for us, and we will live by the standard of the guild."

Talking about the happiness that she gets when someone prefers Nyum Meals, she shares that one reason is that they offer food that has consistency in its taste regardless of the time frame.

"A chef can get an instant gratification from a compliment off a guest who is pleased with their dish. In terms of prepared products, it is all about consistency in taste that can increase the takers for the product. When someone eats a Nyum meal it has to taste the same in weeks or months and this happens with the art of perfection and quality."



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Perhaps the most serious problem threatening the planet today is sustainability. As demand rises, the earth's resources are being rapidly depleted. Another problem that demands attention is waste minimization. Nyum Meals has taken a step towards addressing this issue with wherever possible using locally procured ingredients, utilising biodegradable packaging and of course, producing locally are all strategies to reduce the

carbon footprint of their consumers. "We are in the process of teaming up with HeroGo, a fantastic business that takes all the "ugly" and excess produce from local farmers and retailers and sells them onto customers. I love this initiative and with the large amount of vegetables that we use, in particular for the children's meals this is a great step to furthering our sustainability"

**FUTURE OUTLOOK**

"We are now working with hotels,

restaurant chains, and cafes. As our meals are frozen, the risk of food waste is eliminated, allowing for the opportunity of consistent quality and gross profit. We are not coming in between the chefs jobs, but simply giving them the ability to focus on what they love doing best. We partner with these organisations to help them provide fantastic quality meals to their customers. There is an opportunity and I hope people see that," says Chef Tarryn-Leigh.

A decade from today, she wants to see Nyum Meals reaching multiple countries and becoming international. With a focus on healthy, nourishing, and wholesome meals that the children truly enjoy remaining key.

Chef Tarryn-Leigh's stepfather, an entrepreneur and business partner who pushed her to create Nyum meals, has been her confidant, providing massive support in her endeavors. Meanwhile, her husband, who too is a chef, is the operations director for Jones, the Grocer.

"My husband is the pillar in our family and a huge support to me. Whilst my children provide me the strength and courage to pursue my dreams. I truly want to make them proud and show them that everything is possible if you work hard, dream big, and believe in what you're doing."

Why not? Look how big dreams helped Chef Tarryn-Leigh reach new heights!



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