

# Art of filmmaking



## FILM REPORT

By MELISSA NAZARETH  
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**B**AHRAINI producer and director Mahmood Al-Shaikh is presenting a masterclass at Hawa Al Manama festival, which will be followed by a film screening.

Manama Light is an eight-day workshop, which runs until January 13, and will focus on various aspects of the craft, including script writing, production, direction and lighting, among others.

A total of 16 Bahraini enthusiasts are attending the sessions, which will culminate with a film screening at the festival. The participants have been divided into two teams and are working together to create two short films guided by learnings from the workshop.

The second edition of Hawa Al Manama, which runs until January 15, is being staged by Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) at Manama Suq and features a wide range of attractions, from cultural and heritage activities to historical exhibitions and experiences.

The masterclass is supported by Saynario – an online space that seeks to showcase the voices of Arab cinema lovers and pop culture enthusiasts.

“The Manama Light workshop is an intensive journey that takes participants from the initial concept to the final screen, focusing on practical aspects such as directing, production, and professional cinematic lighting,” Mahmood told *GulfWeekly*.

“We are deeply proud



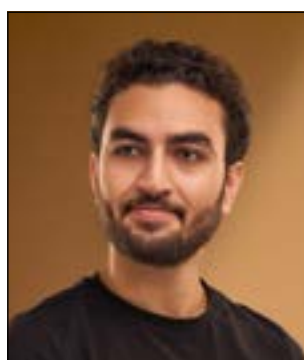
MASTERCLASS:  
Mahmood talking  
to the participants  
during the session



POWERHOUSE: Mahmood

of our collaboration with the BTEA to present this workshop, which is supported by Saynario. This strategic partnership enriches the filmmaking industry in Bahrain and contributes significantly to developing national talents,” the entrepreneur, who recently founded Picture House Production as hub for Bahraini creatives, added.

The 39-year-old, who works



WRITER: Adnan

at the Information Ministry, believes in sharing his knowledge, and is presently working on two feature films, one of which will commence shooting this year.

“This follows my previous work, which includes directing the feature film *May Ward* (Rose Water) last year and the TV series *Dafee Alshowar* (Warm Feeling) that was aired in 2023 on *OSN*,” noted the

Sanad resident, who has a Bachelor’s degree in multimedia from Bahrain University.

Sharing his view on regional films, he said: “Arab cinema has achieved remarkable milestones in recent years, producing significant films of high artistic value. A clear testament to this is the presence of four Arab films on the Oscars shortlist recently.”

The Arab films that were shortlisted for the Oscars are: *All That’s Left of You* (Jordan), *Palestine 36* (Palestine), *The Voice of Hind Rajab* (Tunisia) and *The President’s Cake* (Iraq).

“As for Bahraini talents, they possess immense passion and a capacity for innovation. Through these workshops, we aim to provide an environment that enables them to bring our local stories

to international platforms with a modern cinematic vision,” he added, praising local creatives.

One such artist is 23-year-old Adnan Ahmed, who is pursuing his final year at Bahrain University. The Al Dair resident has assisted on numerous projects in the past as an assistant director, including for *BTV* and the popular comedy film *Sambosa Chapati*. However, his passion lies in script writing.

“I have gained some great insights on writing good stories during this masterclass. I think young Bahrainis usually focus on the technical aspects but a good script is equally important,” he noted.

For more information on the sessions and festival, follow @hawa\_almanama on Instagram.



WHAT’S LEFT?  
Reinventing food  
SEE PAGES 2-3



POIGNANT VERSES  
New book releases  
SEE PAGE 3



LEISURE SCENE  
Food, fun, etc.  
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FLASHBACK: Mahmood, left, with his crew behind the scenes of a previous project



FULL HOUSE:  
Eager storytellers  
at the event



PULSE OF POP  
TV, books & more  
SEE PAGE 6



# Get creative in the kitchen

**T**HE festive season might be over but many of us still have leftovers from dinner parties and gatherings taking space in our freezers. This week, **Melissa Nazareth** talks to Bahrain-based food enthusiasts, exploring unique ways to transform excess food into interesting dishes that will make you want to devour them.

## MEAT MATTERS

Millennials might remember Monica's Thanksgiving sandwich on the sitcom *Friends*, which she made with leftover turkey. The catch was that she added a slice of gravy-soaked bread – the 'moist maker' – blowing new life into the food. Sandwiches are indeed a great way to repurpose protein. Another idea in the same vein is smartly captured in the cannelloni enchilada recipe that Bahraini homemaker and fitness enthusiast Jehan Alsairafi saw online. It brings the best of Mexican flavours and Italian culinary craft in one oven. The food lover simply replaced the chicken with the excess turkey from her pantry and voila! A neat supper to savour was ready in no time.

## TAKING STOCK

Irish homemaker and blogger Moya Mc Guigan aka *Food and Tools* uses her leftover turkey carcass to make stock, which she then adds to soups and stews.

"I freeze some of the stock for later use as well," said the mother-of-two, who has called Bahrain



SCRUMPTIOUS: Baklava cheesecake

home for over 40 years.

You can easily freeze stock in reusable ziplock bags or ice cube trays, which can be used on a different day. They make for simple yet potent flavouring agents in one-pot rice dishes.

Flavourful stocks can also be brewed with the excess vegetables from your celebratory dinners. In fact, roasted or sauteed vegetables deepen the flavour.

The stock can then be used to prepare stews. Add some

beans to the mix and you have a hearty vegetarian meal – perfect for the freezing weather right now.

You could even perk up winter vegetable leftovers like cooked carrots, parsnips, roast potatoes and greens, with a rustic winter vegetable curry. Moreover, switching to a lighter diet after all those meat-heavy parties might be just the care your body needs.

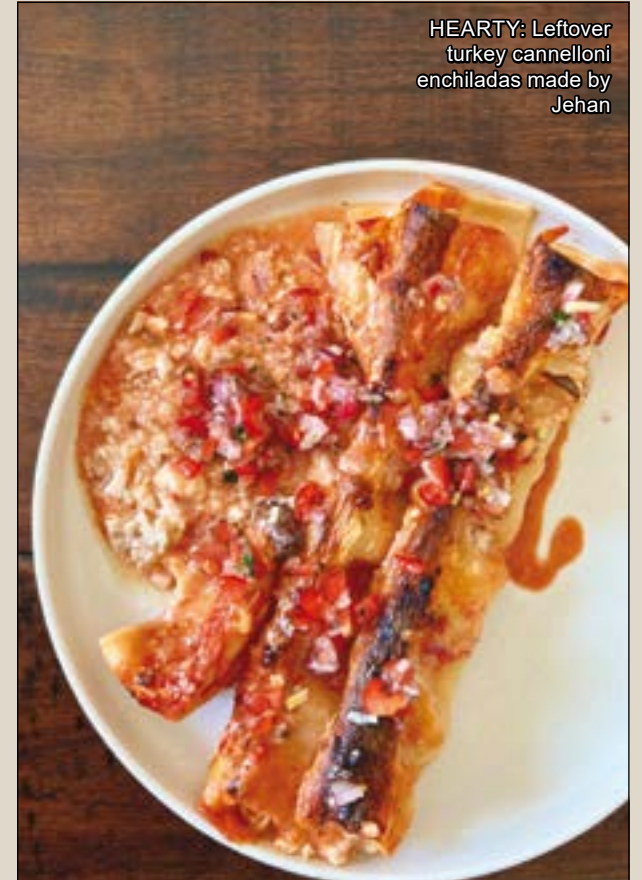
## PROOF OF THE PUDDING

Leftover desserts can be fun

to elevate too. Like Moya's Christmas pudding ice cream, which combines gooey festive pudding with the goodness of a chilled treat.

"Anytime I've served this dessert, it has gone down a treat! Buying a good quality ice cream saves time with preparation but you could also make your own – I have a fun recipe on my blog [foodandtools.com](http://foodandtools.com)," she revealed.

A popular trend among Indian food enthusiasts,



HEARTY: Leftover turkey cannelloni enchiladas made by Jehan

which nods to Moya's recipe, is to infuse ice creams with traditional sweets like gulab jamun, rasgulla or even jalebi.

The same idea could work well with traditional sweets across cultures – think baklava ice cream or even a cheesecake. Many serve fruit as dessert, which if it remains, can be repurposed into smoothies, jams, baked goodies like muffins and pies, or fruit leather – a fun snack.

## SAUCY!

Whether it is gravy, dal (lentil curry) or pasta sauce there is almost always some that remains uneaten because these sides are often cooked in large batches.

"I seldom repurpose any dish I prepare or cook. However, I have tried some like my favourite chicken adobo," Filipino media specialist

Nanju Francisco said.

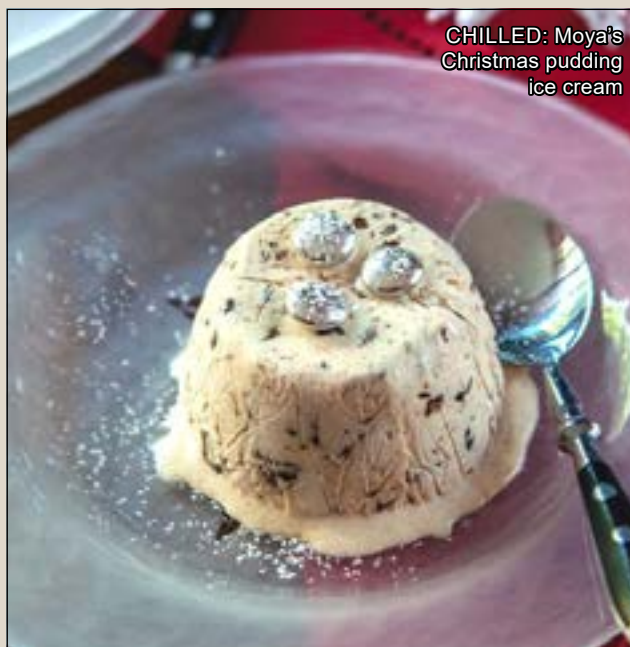
"Normally, we cook the chicken with soy sauce and vinegar so you can expect it to have sauce or soup. For the left over sauce, I use it to make 'adobo fried rice', with shreds of chicken and left over rice," she added, highlighting that chicken adobo is the national dish of the Philippines.

Indian expatriate and businesswoman Anita Menon makes a mean dal fry – a staple on her festive table – which she uses as stuffing for paranthas (stuffed Indian bread) the next day.

"I dry out the dal on a slow flame and then use it as stuffing. It already has the tempering and spices so it tastes really good," the Manama resident added.



FLAVOURFUL: Chicken adobo



CHILLED: Moya's Christmas pudding ice cream



AROMATIC: Stocks can also be brewed with leftover vegetables





## Winter vegetable curry

### Ingredients:

- 4 tbsp coconut or olive oil
- 1 tbsp black mustard seeds
- 10 fresh or 20 dried curry leaves
- 150g shallots, finely sliced
- 3 large garlic cloves, finely sliced
- 40g ginger, peeled and finely chopped
- 30g fresh coriander, stalks finely sliced, leaves roughly chopped
- ½–1 red chilli, finely sliced
- 2 tsp ground turmeric
- 2 x 400ml tins coconut milk
- 150ml vegetable stock or water
- 600g cooked seasonal vegetables
- 200g cooked greens
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Cooked rice or naan (bread), to serve

### Method:

- Using a large pan on a medium heat, warm the oil and add the mustard seeds. Cook until they begin to pop, then add the curry leaves and fry for 30 seconds.
- Add the shallots, garlic, ginger and coriander stalks, and season with salt and pepper. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring often, or until the shallots soften.
- Once softened, add some or all of the chilli and turmeric. Cook for a further minute before stirring in the coconut milk and vegetable stock (or water). Bring to a simmer and cook for five minutes to allow all the flavours to develop. Taste and add salt and freshly ground black pepper if needed.
- Add the vegetables and slowly bring back to a simmer. Cook for five minutes, then take off the heat and stir through the coriander leaves.
- Serve hot with rice or naan.



## Leftover Christmas pudding trifle

### Ingredients:

- 400g leftover Christmas pudding (about half a large pudding)
- 400g tin pear halves in juice
- 500g ready-made custard
- 150g mascarpone
- 300ml whipping or double cream
- 1 square of dark chocolate
- Handful of flaked almonds (optional)

### Method:

- Break the Christmas pudding into chunks and place in the bottom of a trifle bowl in an even layer. Sprinkle over 1 tablespoon of the pear juice.
- Drain the pears and cut each one down the middle, then layer them on top of the cake.
- Beat together the custard and mascarpone and spoon on top of the pears.
- Whisk the cream until soft peaks form, then spoon it onto the custard. Finely grate over the chocolate and sprinkle over the flaked almonds, if using.

# Tapestry of words

POETESS: Pallavi



**A** group of Bahrain-based writers have published their works in two recently released anthologies, writes **Melissa Nazareth**.

*Curry for The Spirited Soul* showcases the works of 36 women around the world, including locally residing artist and entrepreneur Anju Kapoor, homemaker and 'teacher at heart' Garima Kapoor, author and teacher Nivedita Roy, artist and wordsmith Pallavi Jain, and artist, singer and songwriter Rupa Bhargava.

The 191-page collection of personal anecdotes brings alive some of their best memories as well as the hurdles they have overcome, offering to inspire readers.

Another bilingual book entitled *Strings of Connection/ Kache Dhaage* (Hindi for 'fragile threads' symbolising weak connections) includes verses by Garima, Nivedita, Pallavi and Rupa, alongside 57 bards from different walks of life. The 186-page compilation explores 'the many shades of human connection' across 97 poems.

"In *Kache Dhaage*, my piece in Hindi deals with an expatriate



ARTISTIC: **Anju**

declaring his/ her love for both homeland and the home away from home. My English poem is dedicated to my late brother and our relationship," Nivedita told *GulfWeekly*.

"In *Curry for The Spirited Soul*, I have shared my childhood experience of going through an orthopaedic condition," added the 54-year-old from Adliya who has called Bahrain home for more than two decades.

She revealed her plans to write a children's book and another one focusing on work-life balance in the



WORDSMITH: **Nivedita**

New Year.

Visual artist Anju Kapoor from Manama, who has been residing in Bahrain for the last 30 years, tells a tale that encapsulates her journey overcoming a crippling fear of water.

"Today, I am a confident swimmer. I am proof that confronting one's fear can open an entirely new world of possibilities beneath and beyond — the surface," remarked the 54-year-old, who, along with the other contributors, is part of Literary Warriors Group (LWG).

LWG is an online platform promoting literature and poetry, and published both the anthologies last year.

Pallavi from Saar, who presented her verses at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, India, in collaboration with the LWG last year, noted that she was not sure if she had life experiences that could inspire readers.

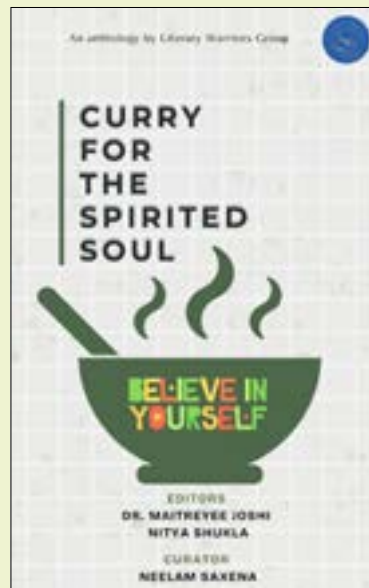
"I got talking to my husband who reminded me of the many meaningful events in my life," nature lover Pallavi said.

The 51-year-old confessed that working on her verses for *Kache Dhaage* helped her focus on the relationships that are integral to life and let go of the ones pulling her back.

The books are available on *Amazon*.



RELATIONSHIPS: **The bilingual anthology**

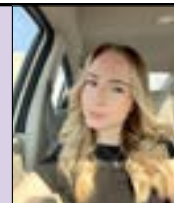


EMOTIONAL: **The book cover**



# Leisure Scene

What's on guide by  
Julia Cassano



## THE RITZ-CARLTON'S MAGIC MARKET



FRESH: Farmers' Market



OPULENT: Maharaja Thali

**H** EAD down to The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain, which is hosting its popular annual Farmers' Market, where the rich spirit of the kingdom's heritage comes alive.

The vibrant event celebrates local flavours, craftsmanship and community, featuring fresh

seasonal produce, live cooking stations, artisanal creations and family-friendly activities.

It takes place every Friday until February 13, from 8.30am to 2pm.

Gather family and friends for a spectacular weekend brunch fiesta at Cantina Kahlo. Bold flavours and festive energy set

the stage for an unforgettable Mexican dining experience.

Savour an array of dishes crafted with authentic ingredients, perfectly complemented by the lively rhythms of a resident mariachi band. The brunch is priced at BD35 per person including soft beverages, or BD45 with selected beverages,

and runs every Friday and Saturday from 1pm to 4pm.

Soak up the cosy charm of Le Coin Chalet at La Terrace, where the comforting aroma of freshly baked apple strudel meets the indulgent flavours of bubbling fondues. This enchanting experience is available until February 16, Monday to

Saturday, from 1pm to 11pm.

Capture the essence of the Italian coast at Primavera's Brunch, where classic favourites such as saffron arancini, fresh seafood and tableside tiramisu take centre stage.

The brunch is priced at BD35 per adult including soft beverages, or BD45 per adult

## WONDERFUL WINTER CHALET AT FOUR SEASONS

**E** MBRACE the winter spirit at Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay, with a series of diverse dining experiences.

Gather with family and friends at Bahrain Bay Kitchen for its exclusive Chalet-themed Brunch.

Savour fondue crafted from artisanal cheeses, relish fresh seafood with melted butter and dipping sauces and indulge in decadent chocolate fondue.

It is available every Friday in January, from 1pm to 4pm and costs BD35 including soft beverages and BD48 with a selected beverage package.

Set at Bay View Lounge, a refined French experience unfolds among olive trees, with amazing views of Bahrain Bay.

From bite-sized creations such as foie gras macarons to caviar-topped scallops, there is something to suit all tastes.

Available until January 18, 11am to 11.30pm, it costs BD12.

Discover the flavours of Portugal at CUT by Wolfgang Puck on January 17, with a special one-day lunch hosted by restaurant director Fabio Marques. Drawing inspiration from his culinary heritage, Fabio presents a family-style menu featuring traditional Portuguese dishes such as Ameijoas à Bulhão Pato – clams prepared with garlic and fresh herbs – and the beloved Pastéis de Bacalhau – crisp codfish fritters – paired with selected Portuguese beverages.

The lunch is available from 12.30pm to 3.30pm, priced at BD39net per person for food only, with



DELICIOUS: Fondue

an optional beverage package available for BD10.

Join the hotel for an outdoor spinning class with sweeping views, expert instruction and an energising atmosphere on January 17. It will be held from 10.30am to 11.30am at the Infinity Pool Area and costs BD6 per person for hotel guests and members and BD12 for outside guests.

Experience the calming flow of New Moon Yoga, where the session draws on the gentle energy of the lunar cycle to restore balance, clarity and inner calm. It will take place on January 18, from 6.30pm to 7.30pm and costs BD6 per person for hotel guests and members and BD12 for outside guests.

For more information, contact 17115500.

## ROAST WITH A TWIST

**I** NTERCONTINENTAL Bahrain invites guests to explore a wide range of culinary experiences, expertly crafted to please every palate and fit every occasion.

Join Legendz SteakHouse for a roast like no other.

Experience a relaxed, chef-curated lunch where the traditional British roast is reimaged.

Delight in a five-course tasting journey featuring seasonal starters, perfectly carved roasts, thoughtfully paired sides, and indulgent desserts – each plate designed to create a truly memorable dining event.

It costs BD19net with soft beverages and BD24net with two selected beverages, every Saturday, from noon to 3.30pm.

For an epic Brunch Affair, savour signature creations served a la carte. Dig into dishes such as surf-and-turf beef fillet with Béarnaise sauce, teriyaki glazed duck leg sweet potato, BBQ angus beef brisket and more.

It costs BD28net with soft beverages and BD38net with unlimited selected beverages. Children under six dine for free, while children aged six to 12 can

enjoy with a 50 per cent discount tomorrow, from noon to 4pm.

Savour double the enjoyment at Legendz SteakHouse with its Buy One Get One offer on any steak of equal or lesser value. It is available every Sunday and Monday from 6pm to 10pm.

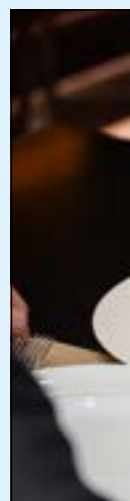
Relax with your loved ones at Noor Lounge today and tomorrow with a leisurely afternoon tea.

Guests can enjoy a delightful selection of treats, sandwiches, and beverages, and can upgrade the experience with unlimited bubbly for an additional BD4. It costs BD6.500net per guest from 2pm to 7pm.

For seafood lovers, the hotel offers a fantastic Seafood Night featuring interactive live stations, signature seafood dishes, and ocean-inspired beverages.

Children under six dine for free, while children aged six to twelve receive 50pc off. The experience costs BD25net with unlimited soft beverages, or BD33net with unlimited selected beverages, and is available tonight from 6.30pm to 10.30pm at the Regency Tent.

For more information, contact 17208308 or 36967701.





# Leisure Scene

Weekly Entertainment

with selected beverages. Children aged four to 12 dine for BD17,500. The event takes place every Friday, from 12.30pm to 4pm.

Meanwhile, visitors can embark on a royal culinary journey at Nirvana with its Friday Maharaja Thali.

Indulge in an exquisite selection of aromatic curries, succulent tandoori specialities and fragrant rice, all beautifully presented on a traditional thali.

The experience is priced at BD19 per person, including one soft beverage, or BD29 per person with selected beverages, available tomorrow from noon to 3pm.

Start the year off with a restorative spa experience designed to release tension and enhance the skin's natural luminosity. Combining expert techniques with premium products, it will leave your skin feeling smooth, firm and deeply revitalised. It is available on Fridays and Saturdays, 9am to 9pm. For reservations, call 17586808.

For bookings and enquiries, call 17586499 or email [rc.bahrz.restaurant.reservations@ritzcarlton.com](mailto:rc.bahrz.restaurant.reservations@ritzcarlton.com)

COLOURFUL:  
Fresh  
Ingredients



SUCCULENT:  
Juicy steak

## BARBECUE WITH A VIEW

**A**T Hilton Bahrain, every experience is designed to delight the senses.

From innovative dining options and signature culinary creations to relaxing wellness offerings, there is something for all to enjoy.

CLAW BBQ, located on the 44th floor, serves more than just a meal – it is a social destination where food, games, entertainment and unforgettable moments come together.

Set against the stunning backdrop of the kingdom's skyline, the restaurant is open Sunday to Thursday, 4pm to 3am and Friday to Saturday, noon to 3am.

Happy Hour is available from Sunday to Thursday, 4pm to 8pm and Saturday, noon to 8pm.

Guests can also enjoy two hours of unlimited beverages at BD12,500, available from 4pm to midnight, with the option to extend for an additional BD10.

Additionally, guests get 20 per cent off on the full menu all day.

Mondays are reserved for Ladies' Night, from 8pm to 11pm, where female guests can enjoy four free beverages and a sharing platter for BD15, as well as 30pc off on all full-priced food and beverages.

Don't miss Taco Tuesday, where diners can indulge in unlimited tacos and selected beverages for BD16, from 6pm to 1am.

Guests can also enjoy a selection of unlimited beverages for an additional BD3,500.

Meanwhile, Origin Kitchen and Culture is also offering a variety of dining events filled with great vibes and delicious flavours.

La Vida Esta Loca Brunch promises a day of great fun, tasty bites and meals and beverages that make for a memorable occasion every



DETAIL: Seafood Night

Friday of this month, from 12.30pm to 4pm. Prices start from BD29.

The restaurant hosts Pan Asian Night on Wednesdays, from 7pm to 10pm. It features sizzling live stations and karaoke fun, at BD26 with unlimited soft beverages.

Open mic starts from 8pm.

Tonight, Origin Kitchen and Culture offers a fantastic Seafood Night. Indulge in the freshest catch and live cooking stations.

It costs BD30net with soft beverages and BD32net with unlimited selected beverages, from 7pm to 10pm.

Early risers can enjoy a breakfast buffet at BD13net per person, available Sunday to Friday, 6.30am to 10.30am.

For more information, call 33692013.



**G**ET together with your family and friends to enjoy some of the English language films being shown at CINECO Seef this weekend.

**SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT (18+)**

A child witnesses his parents' murder by a man in a Santa suit. Years later, as an adult, he dons a Santa costume himself and embarks on a violent quest for retribution against those responsible for the traumatic event from his childhood.

**Actors:** Rohan Campbell, Ruby Modine, David Brown

**Timings:** 11.15am, 1.15pm, 3.15pm, 5.15pm, 7.15pm, 9.15pm, 11.15pm

**BENEATH THE LIGHT (15+)**

Jacob takes a job at an isolated lighthouse, hoping to reconnect with a childhood friend. As strange events unfold, he grapples with reality, anxiety and fractured memories while finding romance and an unexperienced bond with the owner.

**Actors:** Zach Tinker, John Pyper-Ferguson, Ana Chavez

**Timings:** 12.30pm, 5pm, 9.30pm

**ANACONDA (PG-15)**

Doug and Griff have been best friends since they were children and have always dreamed of remaking their all-time favourite movie – Anaconda. When a midlife crisis pushes them to finally go for it, they head deep into the Amazon to start filming.

**Actors:** Jack Black, Paul Rudd, Steve Zahn

**Timings:** noon, 2.15pm, 4.30pm, 6.45pm, 9pm, 11.15pm



**AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH (PG-15)**

Jake and Neytiri's family grapples with grief after Neteyam's death, encountering a new, aggressive Na'vi tribe, the Ash people, who are led by the irey Varang, as the conflict on Pandora escalates and a new moral focus emerges.

**Actors:** Zoe Saldana, Sam Worthington, Stephen Lang

**Timings:** 11.30am, 3.15pm, 7pm, 10.45pm

## SHERATON'S WILD ADVENTURE AWAITS

**E**NJOY a weekend full of flavour and relaxation at Sheraton Bahrain Hotel, where exceptional dining and leisure come together for an unforgettable time.

Get ready for a flavour-packed adventure at The WILD Brunch. Indulge in premium shareable cuisine and sip on punchy beverages while live entertainment electrifies the atmosphere.

It costs BD36net per person for soft beverages and BD46net per person for a selected beverage package, every Friday from 12.30pm to 5pm.

Ladies can enjoy the experience for a special rate of BD23.

Midweek diners can unwind with Brasero Atlántico's Business Lunch, offering a thoughtfully crafted menu in a relaxed setting. It is available Sunday to Thursday, from noon to



FEAST: A lovely spread of dishes at Brasero Atlántico's Business Lunch

4pm at BD20 per person.

As the day winds down, head to the rooftop for Atlántico's Hour,

where guests can enjoy a selection of bites and beverages in a laid-back atmosphere.

Priced a la carte, it is available Sunday to Thursday 4pm to 7pm.

Early risers can enjoy a taste of tradition at Golestan Persian Grill. A special breakfast menu invites guests to indulge in a delightful selection of authentic Persian creations. Dishes include freshly baked sangak bread, a cheese-and-herbs platter, fluffy omelettes and more.

Guests can enjoy tomorrow from 8am to 11am.

Pick up a new hobby this weekend at Sheraton Bahrain Hotel's Paddle Court, available every day from 7am to 10pm.

It costs BD18 for 60 minutes, BD28 for 90 minutes and BD38 for 120 minutes. Guests can rent a racket for BD2 per person, available for any duration.

For more information, contact 38885408.



# Pulse of Pop

AROUND THE WORLD IN MUSIC, TV, BOOKS AND MORE - BY RIMA ALHADDAD

ON DUTY: The series' poster



## A NEW UNEXPLORED WORLD

**INDIAN thriller series**  
**Taskaree: The Smuggler's**  
**Web premieres on January**  
**14 on Netflix.**

The show follows dedicated customs officer Arjun Meena (Emraan Hashmi), who is razor sharp, calm and calculating.

He cracks down on airport smuggling with his team, making sure to check luxury goods hidden in plain sight to organised international syndicates.

As previously reported in *GulfWeekly's* sister paper *GDN*, part of the series was shot in Bahrain, in collaboration with Bahrain-based producers Yousif Al Sahhaf, Mohamed Fareed and Vivian Pinto.

Short clips in the trailer showcase some of the kingdom's iconic locations, including Bahrain Bay and Nurana.

Created by Neeraj Pandey, the seven episodes are expected to feature his signature blend of sharp storytelling, grounded humour, and globe-trotting tension with high-stakes thrills.

"Airports are familiar to all of us, yet what unfolds behind the scenes is rarely seen," Neeraj said in an interview.

"The world of customs is not something that has been explored on screen, and that was part of the appeal in our endeavour to introduce our audiences to a new unexplored world which is quiet, disciplined, and high-pressure," he added.

"With *Taskaree*, we bring together an ensemble that could reflect the complexity with depth and conviction,"

Bollywood superstar Emraan found his first experience working with the

notable director 'exciting'.

"*Taskaree* was exciting for me on many levels. It's my first time working with Neeraj Pandey, and stepping into his world. Playing a customs officer is new territory for me, and Arjun Meena isn't loud or flashy, he's calm, observant and always thinking two steps ahead. I'm really looking forward to audiences seeing me in this new role," the actor remarked.

*Netflix* India series head Tanya Bami is thrilled to kick off 2026 with the show.

"Filmed across four countries and multiple international airports, the show unpacks an intricate smuggler's network in classic Neeraj Pandey style. It offers a fresh, immersive perspective that will be relatable for anyone who has ever taken a flight," she added.

## SAVING SCENTS

**T**HE English translation of Japanese young adult fantasy novel *Kokun: The Girl from the West* by Nahoko Uehashi hits the shelves on January 13.

It is the first in the ecological fantasy book series, *Kokun*, by Japanese author Nahoko Uehashi.

The story tackles the vast Umar Empire, which has been flourishing for centuries thanks to the miraculous Ohaleh rice – a sacred grain resistant to all parasites brought by the first Kokun (empress) from a distant land. However, the peace and prosperity sustained by the rice is threatened when a mysterious infestation spreads famine and has the empire crumbling.

Aisha, the 15-year-old granddaughter of the deposed king of the West Kantar domain, flees to the imperial capital after a violent coup. There she meets the reigning Kokun, Olie, an enigmatic girl praised for her supposed gift of scent, yet secretly powerless.

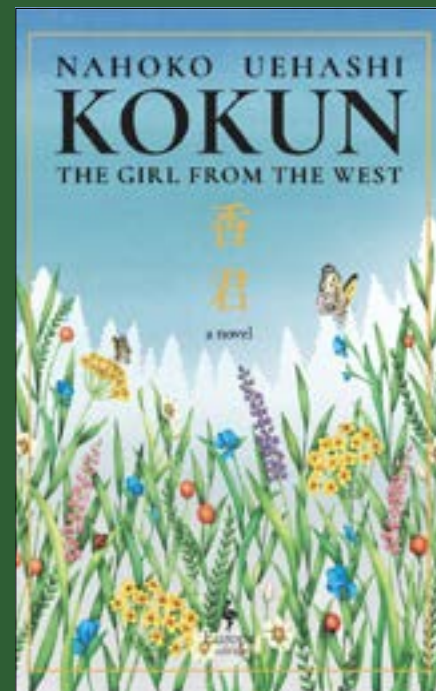
As Aisha uncovers her own latent ability to perceive the natural world through smell, she and Olie form an unlikely alliance. They must unlock ancient powers related to scent and nature to save the vast Umar Empire.

Canada-born-and-raised translator Cathy Hirano moved to Japan in 1978 as an English teacher and later, in 1987, became a freelance translator. In an interview, she reflected on how expression differences may cause the Japanese syntax to come across as 'flat and roundabout' to an English reader.

"The Japanese way of stating a point fairly subtly, from several different directions, is meant to establish a rapport with the other person and to give them the benefit of the doubt that they are intelligent enough to know what you mean," she explained.

"The English way of developing an argument is to go A, B, C, therefore, D.

"We have our introduction in which we state the points. Then, we back up each of the points, and have a conclusion to show why that logic makes sense and is convincing," she added.



ARTSY: The album cover

## COMPOSING PLAYFUL TUNES

**E**NGLISH post-punk band **Dry Cleaning** drop their new album **Secret Love** tomorrow.

The group's third ensemble showcases them diving into the rock avant-garde scene, as it blends a range of influences from 80's US punk to the playful no wave genre sounds, centring on the theme of trust.

The lead single off the album titled *Hit My Head All Day* released in September last year.

"The song is about manipulation of the body and mind," lead singer

Florence Shaw explained.

"The lyrics were initially inspired by the use of misinformation on social media. There are powerful people that seek to influence our behaviour for their own gain," she added.

"I find it hard to read people's intentions and decide who to trust, even in everyday life. It's easy to fall under the influence of a sinister stranger who seems like a friend."

The album's cover was designed by Scotland-based Canadian artist Erica Eyres and depicts the frontwoman

having her eye washed by someone largely out of frame.

Formed in 2017, the quartet consists of guitarist Tom Dowse, bassist Lewis Maynard, and drummer Nick Buxton alongside vocalist Florence.

Their debut full-length project titled *New Long Leg* (2021) was received with critical acclaim, earning a score of 86 out of 100 from review aggregator *Metacritic*.

Its follow up titled *Stumpwork* (2022) earned the quartet their first Grammy Award in 2024 for best recording package.



# Gearing up for F1



**B**AHRAIN is set to give fans their first glimpse of the next generation of Formula 1 cars, with pre-season testing scheduled at the Bahrain International Circuit next month.

The 2026 season arrives with high anticipation following an epic 2025, which saw a three-way title fight go down to the final round and McLaren's Lando Norris finally emerged as the champion, unseating defending champion Max Verstappen. One of the biggest talking points is the sweeping set of new regulations.

Cars will be smaller and lighter, with an altered approach to aerodynamics, including active wings that can change configuration depending on track conditions. Power units will see the largest change since 2014, with a roughly 50-50 split between internal



F1 REPORT

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combustion and electrical energy, removal of the complex Motor Generator Unit – Heat (MGU-H), and full use of sustainable fuels.

Drivers will have new tools for overtaking, including creative deployment of recovered energy and a manual boost mode similar to Drag Reduction System (DRS).

The grid will also feature four world champions for the first time in four years.

Carrying the number 1 on his McLaren, Norris joins Lewis Hamilton, Verstappen, and Fernando Alonso, combining for 14 titles among them.

2026 also brings a new Grand Prix in Madrid, joining the existing Barcelona-Catalunya race.

The Madrid venue, built around the IFEMA exhibition centre, will feature a mix of street circuit challenges

and high-speed sections, including a banked turn called La Monumental and notable elevation changes, offering teams and drivers a fresh puzzle.

The grid expands to 22 cars, with Cadillac entering as a full constructor with experienced drivers Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas.

Ford is partnering with Red Bull Powertrains, while Audi takes over Sauber to field its own power unit, adding further depth and competition.

Aston Martin is teaming up with Honda once again, with Adrian Newey stepping in as team principal, raising expectations for a push up the grid.

There is also a new generation of talent to follow. Arvid Lindblad is taking a race seat with Racing Bulls after a rapid rise through junior categories, while Isack Hadjar partners Max Verstappen at Red Bull, creating a fresh dynamic on the grid.

With new rules, fresh

rivalries and new tracks, the 2026 Formula 1 season is shaping up to be one of the most exciting yet and fans worldwide have plenty to follow even before the opening race in Melbourne lights up the calendar.

On January 15, Red Bull and Racing Bulls will present their liveries at a joint event in Detroit, marking the debut of Red Bull Ford Powertrains.

Mercedes will then release the first digital renders of the W17 on January 22, providing a glimpse of their car before the full launch show on February 2.

Cadillac will unveil their livery during the Super Bowl on February 8.

A five-day private session of pre-season testing will take place at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya in Spain from January 26 to 30, allowing teams to get hands-on experience with new machinery.

The action moves to Bahrain for the second pre-

## 2026 Pre-Season Key Dates

- January 15: Red Bull/Racing Bulls launch
- January 19: Haas livery reveal
- January 20: Audi and Honda power unit launches
- January 22: Mercedes unveil renders of the W17
- January 23: Alpine and Ferrari launches
- January 26-30: Private pre-season test in Barcelona
- February 2: Mercedes full season launch
- February 3: Williams livery reveal
- February 8: Cadillac livery reveal
- February 9: Aston Martin launch
- February 11-13: Preseason testing in Bahrain
- February 18-20: Final preseason test in Bahrain
- March 6-8: Australian Grand Prix

season test from February 11 to 13 and the final pre-season test from February 18 to 20, offering the last chance to fine-tune cars before the season opener.

The championship officially

begins with the Australian Grand Prix from March 6 to 8, followed by China and Japan, before heading to Bahrain from April 10 to 12 for the fourth round of the 2026 season.

## BRAIN-BUSTERS

**QUIZMASTER** and Radio Bahrain host Shannon Crockett, who has been entertaining people across the island with his brain-teasing quiz night sessions, has offered to put *GulfWeekly* readers' general knowledge to the test. Join in the fun every Thursday with Shannon's seven brain-busters.



- 1) Which animal, native to China, was officially removed from the endangered list in 2016?
- 2) Which city has the largest airport outside of England, within the UK?
- 3) Found in spiders, as well as some species of butterfly and moth, a spinneret is an organ that is responsible for the production of which substance?
- 4) In swimming, the freestyle stroke is also called what?
- 5) What is the name of the South African snack of salted and dried strips of meat, similar to beef jerky?
- 6) What is the name

of the dark volcanic glass that has been used as a scalpel for thousands of years?

7) The three worst maritime disasters in history all occurred in 1945. In which sea did all three ships go down?

1. Panda
2. Glasgow
3. Silk
4. Front Crawl
5. Biltong
6. Obsidian
7. Baltic

## ANSWERS



FLASHBACK: The pre-season testing in Bahrain last year

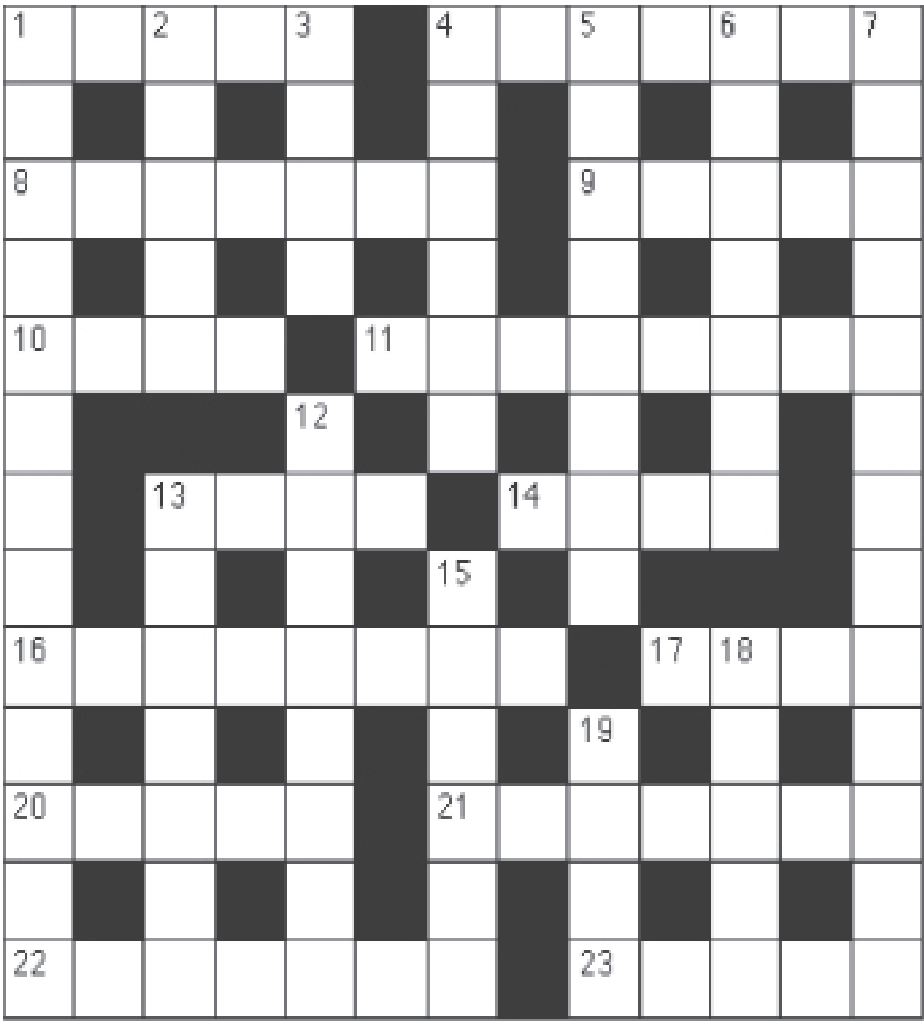


# Time Out



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## crossword break



Solutions in next week's issue.

### ACROSS

1. Hurl (5)
4. Blow-up (7)
8. Assemble (5,2)
9. Occurrence (5)
10. Simple (4)
11. Ominous (8)
13. Timber (4)
14. Happy (4)
16. Pottery (8)
17. Destruction (4)
20. Memorise (5)
21. Offence (7)
22. Withdraw (7)
23. Expel (5)

### DOWN

1. Vertical (13)
2. Tie up (5)
3. Conceal (4)
4. Weaken (6)
5. Pliant (8)
6. Avoided (7)
7. Hospitality (13)
12. Begin (8)
13. Voucher (7)
15. Exonerate (6)
18. Custom (5)
19. Competent (4)

### who, what, where, when

WHO ... was the first male presenter of classic British TV children's hit *Blue Peter*?  
WHAT ... does CTOI mean in Internet slang?  
WHERE ... is Parkhurst Prison?  
WHEN ... was the first human spaceflight?  
WHO ... had a cat called Socks and a dog called Buddy?  
WHAT ... British sitcom was *Three's Company* the American remake of?  
WHERE ... were the 1932 Summer Olympics held?  
WHEN ... was the first *Harry Potter* book published?

### just so

[[[[tax]]]]

↓  
HEAD

CORPSE  
MY

> i

## tough sudoku

So you think you're good enough at Sudoku to crack this baby? Remember, we were the first in the Gulf to bring you this bit of Japanese mayhem...so we don't kid around

### Last week's sudoku

6	2	4	8	3	1	5	9	7
3	1	9	6	7	5	2	8	4
5	8	7	9	2	4	3	6	1
8	6	3	5	9	7	1	4	2
2	9	5	4	1	6	7	3	8
4	7	1	2	8	3	6	5	9
7	4	6	1	5	9	8	2	3
1	5	2	3	4	8	9	7	6
9	3	8	7	6	2	4	1	5

3	7	2	9	1	5	4	6	8
4	5	9	6	3	8	7	1	2
1	6	8	2	7	4	9	3	5
7	1	5	4	8	3	2	9	6
8	2	3	7	6	9	5	4	1
9	4	6	5	2	1	3	8	7
2	9	4	1	5	6	8	7	3
6	8	7	3	9	2	1	5	4
5	3	1	8	4	7	6	2	9

### tough sudoku

7	9	4	6	5	3	1	8	2
6	3	5	1	2	8	9	7	4
2	8	1	7	9	4	3	5	6
9	5	2	4	1	6	7	3	8
8	1	3	9	7	2	6	4	5
4	6	7	3	8	5	2	1	9
5	2	9	8	3	7	4	6	1
1	7	6	5	4	9	8	2	3
3	4	8	2	6	1	5	9	7

### Sudoku

3		7			6			
	1	9			8		6	
	5	6		1				3
7				4	5	8	3	
	8						5	
	9	2	1	8		6		
1						5		7
	7		3	5	1	4	2	
	2		9			3		1

### Sudoku

		8	9		4		6	
4	2			1				9
6		3				4		
	7			4	1	3		5
1			7					4
8		4	5					
	4					7		8
				5			3	6
6		3		9	1			

### Last Week's Leisure Solutions

#### CROSSWORD BREAK:

**Across:** 3 Skinfint; 8 Mope; 9 Mercurial; 10 Uneven; 11 Ceded; 14 Erect; 15 Rear; 16 Yield; 18 Clap; 20 Wrest; 21 Lemon; 24 Glance; 25 Continual; 26 Curl; 27 Degrading.  
**Down:** 1 Impudence; 2 Ephemeral; 4 Keen; 5 Niche; 6 Larder; 7 Neat; 9 Meaty; 11 Clean; 12 Demeanour; 13 Brotherly; 17 Dwell; 19 Pester; 22 Owned; 23 Rove; 24 Gain.

**Who, What, Where, When:** Bruce Banner; Strawweight; Bulgaria; 1988; Sir Steve Redgrave; Goldsmith; Cyprus; 1685.

**Just So:** A shadowy figure; Above ones station; Incubator; Ruffled feathers.

### Tough Sudoku

			9		7		3	
		2		5				7
							5	6
	9	3						
6			8	2	5			1
							4	8
	6	4					5	
7				3		2		
	8		5		4			