



CONTACT

+971 58 658 8705
graesslin.cyrus@gmail.com
@gsquadchronicles
linkedin.com/cyrusgraesslin

LANGUAGES

English **MOTHER TONGUE**
German **CONVERSATIONAL**
French **BASIC**

EXPERTISE

Cross Functional Leader
Team Culture Architect
SOP + Systems Guru
Hands On Operator
Marketing + Brand Steward
Franchise Builder + Scaler
Crisis Management Specialist

CORE PRINCIPLES

Faith, Not Religion
Speak Hard Truths
Own Every Outcome
Integrity Without Compromise
Ethics Above Ego

PERSONAL PURSUITS

Lego Enthusiast
Weekend Car Mechanic
PC Building Enthusiast
Movie Night Purist
Collectibles Aficionado
Audiophile Connoisseur
Curiosity Driven Learner

CYRUS GRAESSLIN

Chief Operator of Controlled Chaos & Hospitality Veteran

THE INTANGIBLES

A hospitality lifer with a Swiss education and a hands-on, people-first approach, I've spent the last 25 years leading teams, scaling brands, and fine-tuning operations across the Middle East. From launching award-winning concepts to overseeing 200+ million AED operations, I specialize in turning vision into reality through grit, strategy, and the kind of leadership that inspires loyalty from the ground up. I can be a desk jockey - but I truly thrive in the trenches, building a strong culture, identifying & nurturing talent, and creating dining experiences that resonate and leave lasting impressions long after the last bite.

ACADEMIC FOUNDATION

LES ROCHES HOTEL MANAGEMENT SCHOOL | SWITZERLAND

Diploma in Hotel Management + Associate of Science in F&B | 1997-2000

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF KENYA

American High School Diploma + Int. Baccalaureate | 1996- 1997

BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

International Baccalaureate | 1993- 1996

PROFESSIONAL TRAJECTORY

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Salmontini Hospitality Group | August 2024 - Present | Dubai, UAE

REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & FRANCHISES

Shakespeare and Co. | June 2011 - November 2023 | Dubai, UAE

DIRECTOR OF FOOD & BEVERAGE

Diyafa Holding Company | Dec 2010 - May 2011 | Manama, Bahrain

CORPORATE GENERAL MANAGER | HEAD OF F&B

Ali Al Sharif Establishments | Sep 2005 - Dec 2010 | Manama, Bahrain

RESTAURANT MANAGER

Al Ghalia Group [Monsoon] | Sep 2004 - Aug 2005 | Manama, Bahrain

ASSISTANT RESTAURANT MANAGER

Beach Rotana Hotel & Towers | Oct 2003 - Apr 2004 | Abu Dhabi, UAE

TEAM LEADER F&B

Hyatt Regency Auckland | Dec 2002 - Jul 2003 | Auckland, New Zealand

ASSISTANT F&B OUTLET MANAGER

Hyatt Regency Houston | Dec 2000 - Jan 2002 | Houston, TX | United States

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS | ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ACCOLADES

SALMONTINI HOSPITALITY GROUP

Director of Operations | August 2024 - Present | Dubai, UAE

This role epitomizes my expertise as a hands-on, all-encompassing leader, overseeing every operational facet of the business - including marketing, franchising, HR, IT, legal, and procurement - essentially running the entire show except finance.

- Oversaw all operations across three restaurant concepts under Salmontini Hospitality Group, with full responsibility for day-to-day performance, growth strategy, and brand positioning - managing a team of 80+ across Abu Dhabi and Dubai.
- Cut payroll expenditure by 35% through restructuring, performance-based offboarding, and efficient scheduling—without sacrificing service standards or team morale.
- Drove a 15% increase in sales and shaved 2% off food costs by re-engineering menus, refining pricing strategies, and renegotiating supplier contracts - turning analysis into action.
- Built a franchise-ready model from scratch, including SOPs, training frameworks, brand manuals, and legal structures. Partnered with World Franchise Associates to sign a multi-unit deal in Egypt and opened the first Salmontini Le Bistro franchise abroad.
- Owned and executed the entire marketing stack - from content strategy and social media to paid ads, design briefs, and review management - elevating visibility across three brands and tripling engagement on LinkedIn.
- Rolled out full front and back-of-house SOPs, transforming legacy systems into scalable, high-functioning operations, customized for each unit's needs.
- Led all HR and talent functions, including hiring, terminations, policy enforcement, and leadership development, building bench strength from within and improving retention despite market pressures.
- Revived a struggling brand presence in Abu Dhabi, launching local partnerships, neighborhood outreach, and personalized B2B initiatives to turn around footfall and build a loyal client base.
- Advised ownership on strategic direction, tackling everything from cash flow solutions and pricing strategy to brand identity and long-term sustainability - acting as the right hand to the CEO.
- Balanced creativity with control, ensuring marketing, menu, and guest experience innovations aligned with operational discipline and bottom-line results.

SHAKESPEARE AND CO.

Regional Director of Operations | June 2011 - November 2023 | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

This role was my pièce de résistance - a true jack-of-all-trades position where I presided over every facet of the operation, from design and marketing to HR, IT, and procurement. Fueled by both an unorthodox structure and a deep personal investment, my hands-on leadership helped transform the brand from boutique concept to award-winning market leader.

- Led the operational expansion from 8 to 38 company-owned stores across the UAE, evolving the brand from niche café to fast-casual powerhouse.
- Increased annual revenue from USD \$20 million in 2011 to \$55 million by 2015 through sustainable growth strategies and performance-led execution.
- Spearheaded regional franchise development, growing from a single unit to 15 stores across MENA - including Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon.
- Scaled the team from 400 to 1,300, implementing structured training programs that built bench strength and ensured consistency across all units.
- Delivered 15–20% YoY turnover growth, with 5% average annual same-store sales increases, anchored by rigorous quality and operational discipline.
- Cultivated a “promote-from-within” ethos, advancing team members from entry-level to senior leadership roles - fueling retention and deep brand alignment.
- Streamlined operations by redesigning workflows, cutting waste, and accelerating service speed - boosting profitability without sacrificing quality.
- Led full-scale rebranding efforts, elevating store design, menu presentation, and overall guest experience in line with evolving market demands.
- Launched innovative marketing campaigns and digital engagement strategies that amplified brand presence and loyalty.
- Engineered menu and cost strategies, balancing culinary innovation with disciplined profitability to maintain a strong competitive edge.

DIYAFA HOLDINGS

Director of F&B | December 2010 - May 2011 | Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain

Although my tenure in this organization was brief, it was nevertheless a productive one as I gained an invaluable glimpse into the “other side” of the F&B stratosphere, focusing on the research and acquisition of brands while dabbling in key operational functions with great efficacy.

- Brought on board to head the development of Global Banking Corporation's newly created F&B investment arm, with a focus on the acquisition of a stable of diverse but complementary brands, to be introduced to Bahrain's burgeoning, but under-developed culinary scene.
- First and only acquisition during my tenure was the franchise rights for famed Lebanese concept “Abd El Wahab”, opening a glitzy inaugural location at the World Trade Center comprising over 200 seats and a breathtaking 2 story structure that quickly achieved pinnacle status in both the fine-dining and Middle Eastern segment of the market. This unit achieved a turnover of USD \$2.1 million in its inaugural year.

ALI AL SHARIF ESTABLISHMENTS

Corporate General Manager/Head of F&B | September 2005 - November 2010 | Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain

Represented my initial foray into the independent restaurant segment, a successful transition from my previous aspirations as a hotelier. As a solitary General Manager sans a traditional supporting cast, I was responsible for every facet of the business including marketing, branding, all human resources functions, and project management.

- Grew the company from a single unit to 5 stores within a 4-year span, including a successful transition from a fast casual to a fine dining concept, that many considered unachievable.
- Single handedly grew the team from 30 to 220 employees, personally conducting recruiting trips across Asia, and building teams comprising a blend of industry veterans and fresh graduates that would go onto collectively achieve success operating 2 acclaimed concepts: Café Italia and Memories of China
- Highlights include 2010 Fact Awards Favorite Italian and overall Favorite Restaurant as voted by the public, 2nd place honors at the annual Chaine des Rotisseurs diner amical, competing against crème de la crème 5-star hotels and independent establishments of established repute.
- Marquee unit achieved an average annual turnover of USD \$3.1 million in turnover, with an average of 8-10% growth year on year, with the remaining smaller units earning between USD \$1.2 to 1.8 million in annual revenue, with slightly lower year on year growth of 3-5% as they were unlicensed units in highly competitive mall locations.

BEACH ROTANA HOTEL & TOWERS

Assistant Restaurant Manager | October 2003 - April 2004 | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Entrusted with full operational responsibility beyond my role, effectively performing as a Restaurant Manager in both Prego's Italian (an award-winning restaurant) and later the hotel's All-Day Dining venue.

- Successfully led Prego's through a critical transition, maintaining its reputation as one of Abu Dhabi's top Italian restaurants while improving team efficiency and guest satisfaction.
- Played a key role in the pre-opening and launch of the All-Day Dining restaurant, overseeing training, service standards, and workflow optimization to ensure a smooth opening.
- Improved staff performance and guest experience by implementing structured training programs focused on service excellence, upselling techniques, and operational efficiency.
- Optimized floor operations by refining table management and service flow, reducing wait times, and improving overall guest satisfaction.
- Developed a proactive approach to problem-solving, handling guest feedback, operational challenges, and last-minute demands with composure and efficiency.
- Gained hands-on exposure to financial and administrative responsibilities, including staff scheduling, cost control, and inventory management, contributing to the restaurant's overall efficiency.