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## Maldives Wins Numerous Awards in the FHA's 2021 Virtual Culinary Challenge

By Iyath Adam Shareef

The FHAM Virtual Culinary Challenge 2021 concluded last month, with the Maldives claiming significant victories. This virtual culinary challenge was held in conjunction with the FHAM Virtual Trade Fair 2021, which took place from August 15th to August 19th, 2021. The fair was the first of its kind to be held in the Maldives in its entirety.

The culinary competition featured over 50 chefs from 15 resorts. The challenge was open to culinary experts from these resorts and featured products in seven categories: Class 1: Dress the Cake, Class 2: Fruit and Vegeta-



Class 5 - Sea Food Hot Cooking - Sanjay Pandey - Dhigali Maldives - Gold

ble Carving, Class 3: Artistic Pastry Showpiece, Class 4: Desserts, Class 5: Seafood Hot Cooking, Class 6: Lamb/Beef/Poultry Hot Cooking, and Class 7: Traditional and Modern Maldivian Meal. The awards were based on a point system and were judged by a panel of prominent chefs in the industry. Chefs who earned the most points received trophies, while others received medals.

37 medals in gold, silver, and bronze were awarded across seven categories. Maldivian resorts and vendors took home the majority of the awards. Dhigali Maldives took home 12 awards across four categories, while Lti Maafushivaru took home

ten. Notably, Dhigali Maldives was the only resort to earn a medal in the Class 7: Maldivian Meal category, with Chef Raghuveer Singh Rathure taking home the class's silver medal. Chef Mohamed Nabeel of



Class 7 Maldivian dish Raghuveer Singh Rathure Dhigali Maldives - Silver

Kiwi Bakers won bronze medals in both Class 5: Seafood Hot Cooking and Class 6: Lamb/Beef/Poultry Hot Cooking.

The FHAM Virtual Trade Fair took place on a dedicated online platform, with each vendor permitted to upload ten products to their 'virtual stall.' Additionally, vendors will be able to retain their stall for three months following the fair in order to connect with interested vendors. The trade show was organized in collaboration between the Maldives' Dhivehi Expo Serviced Pvt Ltd and Sri Lanka's CDC Events and Pvt Ltd.

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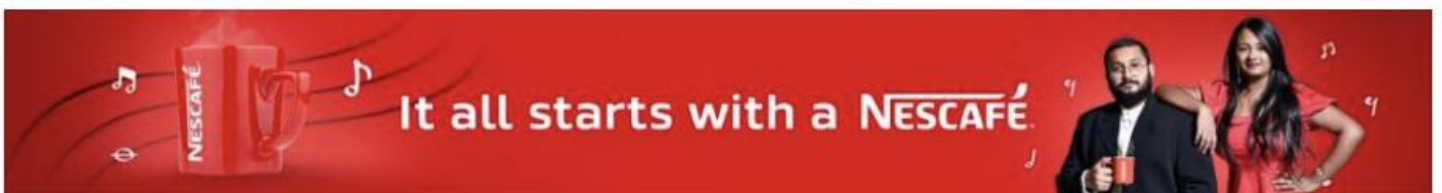


Class 6 - Lamb/Beef/Poultry Hot Cooking V. I. Abeysekara Lti Maafushivaru

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marketing@biztimesmv.com  
Phone: 9777434





# Rizfa Riza's Poushie Books

By Iyath Adam Shareef



Poushie Books is the brainchild of Rizfa Riza, a Maldives-based company that specializes in Dhivehi educational products. The brand has released a number of children's educational books as well as a Dhivehi board game.

Poushie Books, according to Rizfa, was born partly out of necessity and partly out of a life-long dream. "I've always wanted a career as a children's book author. More so when I had my own children and struggled to engage them in Dhivehi

(in part) due to a severe shortage of child-friendly Dhivehi educational materials. I finally had all the time and no excuses during the 2020 lockdown."

Rizfa's psychology background is the primary inspiration for her book concepts. Her primary objective is to promote healthy discussions with children and parents about a variety of pertinent topics. For example, a Poushie Book called "Rini ge Rulhi Boki" teaches children how to recognize

and manage their anger. "I enjoy imagining the book from the child's/perspective. Would a child find this enjoyable to read? Is this something a parent would consider beneficial for their child? The majority of my ideas originate in this mindset. I always begin with the storyline and then work on the illustrations, adjusting as necessary," Rizfa explained.

Another innovative product from Poushie Books is the Dhivehi board game 'Viluvaadha,' which takes players on a journey through the Maldives, from Haa Alifu to Seenu atolls – from one end to the other of the country. This, too, was a result of the pandemic and lockdowns, which inspired



Rizfa to create a fun Dhivehi game.

Poushie Books are distributed by major bookshops, who, according to Rizfa, are quite supportive of emerging artists. Additionally, Poushie Books stocks online businesses run by women from various islands in order to support them. Rizfa has benefited tremendously from the support of fellow creators. "One of the best parts about working in this industry is the support you receive from other local creative people. We are so fortunate to be surround-

ed by a community of like-minded writers and creators who are so supportive and kind to one another."

Rizfa will also be releasing some new Poushie Books products in the near future. "Some exciting projects are in the works, including something for older children, an activity book for early learners, and another Dhivehi game."

Visit Poushie Books on Instagram at @poushiebooks to peruse their current collection and stay informed about upcoming releases!



# Peoples Profile

## Mohamed Manik – Extraordinary Jig Maker

By Iyath Adam Shareef



The Maldives has long been renowned for its traditional craft techniques and environmentally friendly methods of production. For example, the Maldivian fishing industry has long relied on locally crafted fishing hooks and lures.

Mohamed Manik, a renowned fishing jig maker from Gaafu Dhaalu Faresmaathodaa, is one of those craftsmen.

Manik is well-known throughout the southern atolls for his superior craftsmanship. He received the National

Recognition Award for his contributions to the field in 1990. According to an article on the President's Office website, Mohamed Manik's products have been singled out for their exceptional quality, which is comparable to that of commercially manufactured products in Japan.

Although Manik began making fishing jigs as a means of living, he now works seasonally. His house in Maathodaa district has a dedicated area for jig making, which he runs with the assistance of his wife and two employees.

According to Manik, when he first started, he built all of his jigs entirely by hand, without the aid of any heavy

machinery. "When I first began this work, there was no electricity. The jigs were shaped by pounding and grinding the metal. After purchasing a generator, I created the tools necessary to create the fishhooks, which significantly simplified the process. In comparison to the ten jigs I made previously, I am now capable of producing 100 or 1000 jigs daily."

Manik offers a variety of fishhook sizes, with prices ranging from MVR 11 to MVR 15. This, he claims, enables him to earn an estimated MVR 80,000 per month. He estimates that approximately 60% of fishermen from southern atolls purchase fishing jigs from him, with additional purchases from residents of Alifu, Faa-fu, Dhaalu, Thaa, and Laamu atolls.

Manik's primary obstacle is a lack of materials in the Mal-

dives. For example, he cited difficulties locating the appropriate type of metal wire and similarly sized chicken feathers for the fishing jigs.

Apart from making fishing lures, Mohamed Manik is skilled in carpentry, welding, and "liyela jehun" – the Maldivian tradition of lacquer work.

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## 50 Years of Traditional Mat Weaving by Aneesa Mohammed

By Iyath Adam Shareef

Aneesa Mohamed is a renowned mat weaver and educator. Aneesa has been involved in the mat weaving craft since 1970. She is a native of Gaafu Dhaalu Gahdhoo, the Maldives' most famous island for mat weaving.

Mat weaving, or "thundu kunaa viyun," is a traditional Maldivian craft that is most prevalent in the southern atolls. The mats are woven on a special horizontal wooden loom using local reeds. Aneesa is also an expert in this traditional method of weaving, having begun at the age of 13 and following in the footsteps of her mother and older sister. Since then, she has continued to weave and teach.

Aneesa traveled to Mumbai, Calcutta, and Adaya Resort to demonstrate the art of carpet weaving. Additionally, she



has taught various carpet weaving courses, including a two-month course at the Maldives College of Higher Education's Thirunadhoo campus in 2003, as well as various courses in Fuvahmulah City and G.Dh. Gahdhoo. According to Aneesa, carpet weaving is a skill that anyone can learn in a relatively short period of time – all you need is enthusiasm, passion, and the will to persevere. However, she noted

a dearth of young people interested in the craft.

Additionally, Aneesa has won numerous awards for her mats. In 1995, Aneesa won second and third place for her mat weaving at the then Ministry of Trade and Industries' 29th Crafts Fair. More recently, in 2019, Aneesa received the President's National Award for Recognition for her contributions to the promotion of arts and crafts in the

country.

For Aneesa, the most difficult aspect of working in this field is not being able to sell her products at a profit. According to her, prices are determined by the mat's size. She has recently concentrated on weaving smaller mats, with larger ones made to order. "The actual price for a 1-ft long mat is MVR 500, but we usually sell it for MVR 350 or 400 if we are lucky or sometimes,

people do not purchase the mats we make to order because the price is too high." Aneesa also noted the difficulty in getting the equipment and materials needed for weaving here in the Maldives.

Aneesa's vision for the future is for this traditional Maldivian craft to be preserved. She hopes that both the government and local residents will take steps to sustain and preserve this art form.

**Interview is done by XeeTimes**

