

Glowbal Vision

The grandeur of a West Side mansion rests in the harmony of classical architecture, with the contribution of fine artisans throughout Vancouver to create freshly updated, timeless room settings.

美味人生

——訪GLOWBAL GROUP餐廳的CEO EMAD YACOUB

從後廚幫工做起，到如今身為溫哥華GLOWBAL GROUP餐廳的CEO。EMAD YACOUB的傳奇人生，在他自己眼中卻像是剛剛拉開帷幕，還有更多好戲等待上演呢！

Chinese Text by Rui Chen English Text by Kate Missine Photography by Jimmy Jeong

談起自己成功的原因，Emad Yacoub將之歸結為對餐飲業與生俱來的熱情和凡事精益求精的態度。

Emad出生在埃及，像許多年輕人一樣，他曾經想做一番驚天動地的大事業，餐飲業絕不是心中的目標。19歲時，Emad來到加拿大成為了一名會計專業的留學生。「我那時一句英文也不會講。」站在自己新開業的擁有500個座位的餐廳裏，Emad回憶起當年在多倫多希爾頓酒店打工時的情境，不禁感慨萬千。

「我來到希爾頓酒店，在後廚謀了個差事，擠橙汁。每天都要擠出一桶又一桶。」儘管是個如此單調乏味的工作，Emad卻依然用積極的態度來面對，不斷嘗試每天用越來越少的時間完成工作。「這是個不錯挑戰。」Emad微笑著說：「不過就是個擠個橙汁，但我就是想做得更好。後來大家說我是全世界最快的擠橙汁工。」

Emad這份精益求精的工作態度，最終幫助他在餐飲業大展拳腳。先是成為了東海岸最頂級的大廚之一，後來又自己做了餐廳老闆。然而，這成功的經歷最初並未讓Emad感到滿足。「我和我的家人都受過很好的教育，我曾經覺得當個廚師不夠體面。」Emad坦誠地說：「但我意識到我擅長做這個。而我的父親總是告訴我，重要的不是做甚麼，而是要做到最好。」

He's bold, he's stylish, and he's not afraid to get his hands dirty. At the age of 50, the legendary CEO of Vancouver's Glowbal Group, Emad Yacoub, has accomplished more than most people could hope for in a lifetime — and he's not planning on stopping.

Egypt-born Yacoub may be a man of many ambitions, but conquering the restaurant business was not one of them when he arrived in Canada as a 19-year-old accounting student. "I couldn't speak a word of English," he recalls, looking chic in a silk paisley shirt and sculptural glasses as he walks around his newly opened 500-seat restaurant. It's a very different picture from his first days at Toronto's Harbour Castle Hilton.

"I walked in and ended up getting a job in the kitchen, squeezing orange juice. Every day, buckets and buckets of orange juice." To keep things interesting, he began timing himself, trying to beat his own time each day. "It was a beautiful challenge for me," he smiles. "It wasn't just about orange juice, it was about wanting to do better. They called me the fastest orange juice squeezer on the planet."

Yacoub's love of a challenge and relentless drive

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「這個盤子向人們呈現了一位年輕的妻子該如何經營自己的婚姻，其中有堅韌的身姿和溫柔的態度，傳統文化中對婚姻忠誠，以及要照料她的家人。」

——Angela Clarke

做為一名廚師，Emad總是虛心地接受來自各方的建議，不知疲倦地磨練著自己的技藝。他曾每晚下班後還堅持練習蔬菜雕刻；在高速公路旁停下車去挑選採摘放在自助餐桌上的野花。到1997年，許多東海岸的大廚前往溫哥華開拓新的餐飲事業，Emad成為了這些開拓者中的一位。他加盟Joe Fortes擔任廚師長，並在那裏結識了他未來的妻子Shannon。也就是在這五年之後，這對餐飲業的賢伉儷為溫哥華增添了一份別樣的味，Glowbal Grill開門營業了。

「任何事情都有兩面性。」Emad感慨地談起自己的創業經歷。當年的他幹勁滿滿，闖勁十足。他拆掉了耶魯鎮店面外那有當地特色的棕色磚牆，把餐廳換成了紐約式的前衛風格，窗戶上裝飾了設計感十足的剪影貼畫，這在當時的溫哥華可謂是前所未有的理念。Emad自願自地打造了這樣一家走藝術設計路線的新潮餐廳，從裝潢到菜式都獨樹一幟，靜靜等待著溫哥華的食客們前來嚐鮮。可惜這家餐館當時並未大獲成功。「有時我的思路會過度超前，造成事與願違。」Emad告訴我們：「當時人們對這樣的餐館還不怎麼接受。」

好在我們無須以一時的成敗論英雄，如今的Glowbal早已擁有了眾多的忠實顧客。十家分店，每一家都獨具特色。從Granville悠閒的垂釣小屋，到Alberni街上的海岸時尚風，再到優雅的藍黑色調，全部都由Emad親手打造。「我人生中最簡單的一件事，莫過於打造一家完美的酒店，然後一直開個五十家。」Emad開心地為我們講述著這份創造的樂趣。「所有事都要想到，從服務員的制服，到背景音樂，整體的風格。不過，這個過程真是令人興奮。每天都會有新點子，每天都會有新的視角，這才叫有活力。」

對Emad來說，有活力就意味著他可以在競爭激烈的城市餐飲業中領先一步。所以，當Telus的

was what propelled him from that well-earned title to the top of the culinary world, first as one of East Coast's top chefs and later, a restaurateur — an unexpected career path both for himself and his highly-educated family. "I thought I'd be ashamed to tell people I'm a cook," he admits. "But I realized that I was good at it. My father always told me, it doesn't matter what you do — just be the best at it."

Yacoub took the advice to heart, tirelessly honing his craft, whether it meant practicing carving vegetables every night after work or stopping on the side of the highway to pick wildflowers for the brunch buffet table. In 1997, he became, in his words, "one of the last Mohicans" to follow "an exodus" of East Coast chefs to newly cosmopolitan Vancouver, where he joined Joe Fortes as an executive chef. There he also met his wife Shannon. Five years later, the couple broke onto the city's blossoming dining scene with Glowbal Grill.

"It was the opposite of everything people were doing," says Yacoub. In an audacious move, he tore down a Yaletown building's trademark brown brick to usher in an edgy New York-style space, complete with an eyebrow-raising silhouette of a woman on the window. It was Vancouver's first taste of the restaurateur's artistic and oftentimes offbeat vision, which would go on to lead trends in design as much as cuisine — and would occasionally need to be kept in check. "Sometimes I'll get too advanced on a trend and it backfires," says Yacoub; "People are not ready."

Today, the Glowbal family is home to ten restaurants, each with an entirely different approach and feel — from laid-back Fish Shack on the Granville



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CEO，也是Emad的老顧客Darren Entwistle向他提出，把Glowbal從耶魯鎮移到溫哥華新落成的Telus Garden大廈時，Emad很爽快地答應了。他未來的餐廳將更加高端精緻，這正是他一直所期待的。

「我想把當年我開Glowbal時所做的工作再做一邊。不過，過去我沒有資金、空間和客源。而這一次，這些全有了。」提起這次「重裝上陣」，Emad掩飾不住自己的興奮。在全新的Glowbal裏，一切都被打造的高雅精緻，深棕色的地板和餐椅，米色的天花板，以及各類金屬與石材的點綴，充份體現出Emad對藝術設計的一貫熱衷。最特別的是陳列在大理石柱子上玻璃盒內的牛排，Emad說這個想法的靈感來自於Tiffany珠寶店。在他這位大廚的眼中，品質完美的牛排正如寶石一般閃耀奪目。「牛排烹製的火候要剛好，出鍋後再放置五分鐘，這時牛排的光澤真是棒極了。」

Emad說他烹飪的靈感常來自於一些童年的記憶，例如：埃及開羅街頭一位做炸羅非魚的老奶奶，她會把炸好的魚放在紙袋裏，撒上糖霜；唐人街擺在長條木板上的蓋飯；可口的意大利肉丸。這些想起來都是家的溫暖和親切。「我的母親是一個不平凡的人，她對所有的人都充滿了愛。」Emad深情地回憶著童年時被親情和友情所環繞的日子。

「我們家的大門總是開著，現在這是我們公司的理念。我希望所有來到我的餐廳裏用餐的顧客都像是來到我家裏做客一樣。我們送上的不僅僅是美味的菜餚，還有一段段美好的記憶。」

最後，當我們問起Emad在未來又有何大膽的計劃時，他停頓了一下，笑著回答說：「我想總有一天，我會放緩我的腳步。」不過眼下，這位雄心勃勃的大廚可沒準備讓自己鬆口氣。美食對於他來說，早已是生命中不可或缺的一部份。「美食像是源自於我的內心，做起來總是得心應手。」

strip, to Alberni Street's swanky Coast and elegant Black & Blue. “The easiest thing in my life would be to create a perfect restaurant and then open fifty of them,” says Yacoub of his decision not to franchise. With individual restaurants, “you have to worry about everything: the uniforms, the music, the style — but it's very exciting. Every day is a new idea, every day is a new vision. It's alive.”

For Yacoub, keeping it alive means always being one step ahead of the ever-changing city. So when Telus CEO and long-time customer Darren Entwistle approached to discuss a much-coveted space in downtown's brand-new Telus Garden, it was an easy decision to move Glowbal out of its Yaletown setting where, Yacoub notes, it was “no longer the new kid on the block.” The new development had exclusivity, cache, and a new level of sophistication: exactly what Yacoub was looking for.

“I wanted to do everything I had wanted to do the first time I opened Glowbal, but didn't have the money, the space, or the clientele,” he says. “This time, I had it all.”

Inside the new Glowbal, in an oddly mesmerizing juxtaposition, cold plates of beautifully aged steaks sit proudly encased in glass, each of the four boxes atop a marble pillar. The concept, Yacoub explains, was inspired by a jewellery display, a “Tiffany box” for meat. A fitting analogy, since according to him, the perfect steak is a rare gem. “It needs to be cooked properly, then rest for five minutes, then just flashed — and that's it.”

As forward thinking as he's come to be known, he



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looks back to the days of his childhood in Egypt for inspiration: an early memory of an old woman on a Cairo street frying tilapia served in a paper bag and dusted with sugar; and to his recent memories: seeing rice bowls lined up on a wooden plank in Vancouver's Chinatown; the perfect Italian meatball.

Perhaps a greater influence on Yacoub than food itself is his mother's hospitality.

“My mother was larger-than-life, full of love for everyone. Our front door was always open,”

he said. “And that's our company philosophy — anyone walking in is welcomed like it's my own house. It's not about the food. We're creating memories.”

Looking ahead, the plan for Yacoub is to pause and focus on his existing restaurants — but it's all open to change. “Someday, I'll slow down,” he chuckles. And for now, he's busy enjoying his true calling. “For me, food comes from the heart. I don't have to think about it. It's just there.”