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TO

CHRISTIAN IOANNOU
GROUP CEO,
MCTC

FOR BEING FEATURED AS

**MOST INFLUENTIAL
LEADER IN
MARITIME INDUSTRY
TO WATCH IN 2025**



Sarath Shyam
SARATH SHYAM
Managing Editor



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Christian Ioannou

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RAISING GLOBAL STANDARDS IN MARITIME CATERING, CULINARY TRAINING AND CREW WELLNESS

Christian Ioannou began his journey in the maritime industry from a kitchen and has since redefined how it approaches catering and crew wellbeing. “I am actually a trained chef,” he recalls. After completing his studies in Germany, he returned to Cyprus to work as a chef. Those early years in the culinary world shaped his understanding of food, discipline, and teamwork, which would later become the foundation for his leadership.

He eventually joined Intership Navigation as a training supervisor and crewing superintendent, a role that required him to bring his food expertise on board. He sailed with vessels, observed how galleys operated, and worked closely with cooks to improve

standards. “I spent a lot of time in galleys with the cooks talking to everyone from cadets to captains when I realised that deck and engine departments have somebody in the office to talk to, but the cooks did not,” says Ioannou.

Back in the office, he began sending emails to cooks onboard, offering help with recipes, providing guidelines, and supporting them in their work. “Immediately they felt motivated just by having someone in the office to talk to,” he says. “That was when the idea of MCTC was born.”

In 2012, Ioannou founded MCTC Marine Ltd. What began as an effort to support and train cooks has grown into a global maritime catering management and training company that today provides catering services to more than 1,300 vessels worldwide. Over time, the



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company expanded its services to cover supply chain operations, ensuring that vessels receive the ingredients they need to run efficiently.

Scaling globally brought new challenges. MCTC had to adapt to different cultural expectations, regulatory frameworks, and client requirements while keeping its services consistent. “One challenge was ensuring consistency of training across different regions. We overcame this by developing a standardized curriculum that can be adapted locally without losing quality,” says Ioannou.

Building Skilled and Confident Maritime Cooks

At MCTC, training goes far beyond teaching cooking techniques. The company integrates nutrition science, mental health awareness, food safety, and cultural sensitivity into its programs. “At MCTC, our approach is unique because we don’t just focus on cooking techniques,” says Ioannou. Training is delivered through a blended model that includes classroom sessions, hands-on practice, digital modules, and continuous onboard guidance.

The team actively seeks feedback from vessels, monitors industry regulations, and collaborates with experts in nutrition and maritime health to keep their services updated. “We not only give feedback but also ask for feedback, it’s through feedback that we all improve,” he explains. This commitment to listening has become a key part of MCTC’s culture.

Impact is measured through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The company tracks catering costs and operational efficiency, gathers direct feedback from shipowners and crew, and monitors the career progression of its trainees. Many who started as entry-level

galley staff have grown into highly skilled Chief Cooks. Improved morale, healthier crews, and more efficient galley operations show how well the programs work.

One of the company’s proudest achievements is the Maritime Culinary Development Program (MCDP). It takes individuals with no kitchen experience and trains them to become competent galley staff. “We’ve seen complete transformations, from people unsure of their path to confident, skilled professionals serving at sea,” says Ioannou. Clients often share how onboard morale improves as catering standards rise, with many reporting higher satisfaction among crew members.

Placing Nutrition and Wellness at the Core

“Nutrition, good nutrition and wellness in general are at the heart of everything we do,” says Ioannou. He believes a well-fed crew is healthier, more focused, and more motivated, while poor nutrition can lead to fatigue, illness, and low morale.

MCTC addresses this by training crews to prepare balanced meals, manage stock efficiently, and design culturally inclusive menus. The company also educates seafarers on healthy eating habits to support their physical and mental well-being. This is done through its my-balance service as well as initiatives like the Family Health and Nutrition Conference.

“My-balance service was designed to take care of the body, mind and soul offering support, guidance and nutrition consultation to staff both at sea and at land,” explains Ioannou. Educational webinars, newsletters, stress management techniques, and fitness initiatives all support this focus on crew well-being.



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Driving Digital Innovation and Sustainability

MCTC’s commitment to innovation has shaped how it delivers services. Through its online platform, ESTIA, the company manages requisitions in alignment with vessel operations and port schedules. It gives clients real-time inventory tracking and monthly stock control reports. “Our menus are designed to offer high nutritional quality and satisfy crew preferences,” says Ioannou.

ESTIA also includes a built-in learning management system that makes training simple and interactive for crews onboard and ashore. The company is now working on ESTIA II, a next-generation platform with more features and deeper integrations to make the user experience even more seamless.

MCTC has also developed carbon emissions and nutritional values reporting tools as part of its client portal. “These reporting features are part of our commitment to sustainability and digital innovation,” pinpoints Ioannou. The Carbon Emissions Report monitors CO2 emissions linked to each provisioned item using a weighted global average that factors in country-specific variables such as irrigation and transportation.

Clients can also access detailed nutritional information, helping cooks build balanced menus and encourage healthier eating habits onboard. The Nutritional Values Report provides insights into daily nutrient intake and allows tracking of calorie and nutritional breakdown across daily, monthly, and annual periods.

Leading with Purpose and Resilience

“The pandemic taught us resilience and the importance of digital readiness,” says Ioannou. “I learned that transparency with clients and staff is crucial during uncertain times.” One of the



most important lessons for him was the value of listening and understanding what seafarers, clients, and employees truly need. The company had to stay flexible and adapt quickly.

“The pandemic hit the seafarers hard; there are cases where they stayed onboard for 8-9 months or 10 months without any contact from the outside world,” he recalls. “Not being able to disembark the vessel and go onshore leave for just a few hours or not being able to see your family because of the pandemic hits you hard you need to patient and resilient to adapt.”

These challenges also shaped Ioannou’s leadership style. “I would say my leadership style is collaborative and purpose-driven,” he says. He believes in empowering his team, giving them ownership of their roles, and reminding them of the bigger mission: supporting seafarers’ wellbeing through food. Creating a culture of respect, trust, and continuous development has been central to building a motivated global team at MCTC.

Shaping the Future of Maritime Catering

Looking ahead, MCTC’s strategic goals focus on expanding its global footprint, investing in more advanced digital learning solutions, and strengthening its position as a global leader in maritime catering and training. “We plan to strengthen our bonds our partners, launch new initiatives like industry events and culinary collaborations, and continue raising awareness about the importance of good nutrition at sea,” says Ioannou.

For him, the mission remains clear: “Because when we care for the crew we support the entire maritime industry.” ■