

## Richa Food

At 7 o'clock on Thursday, Vinod Harwani is a few hours away from the end of his work week.

He owns three shops spread throughout the sikkas of Al Ras with his 15 staff spread over each location. The whole area is full of wholesalers, many of whom also specialize in food stuffs.

He and his staff will take orders from customers who call, email or walk in and within a few hours from making a sale they will be loading their products onto dhows often bound for a Gulf country, Iran or India.

The food is imported from all over the world to the company warehouse in Ras Al Khor, another district further inland along the Creek, before it is re-exported within the Gulf, Africa, India, Europe and North America.

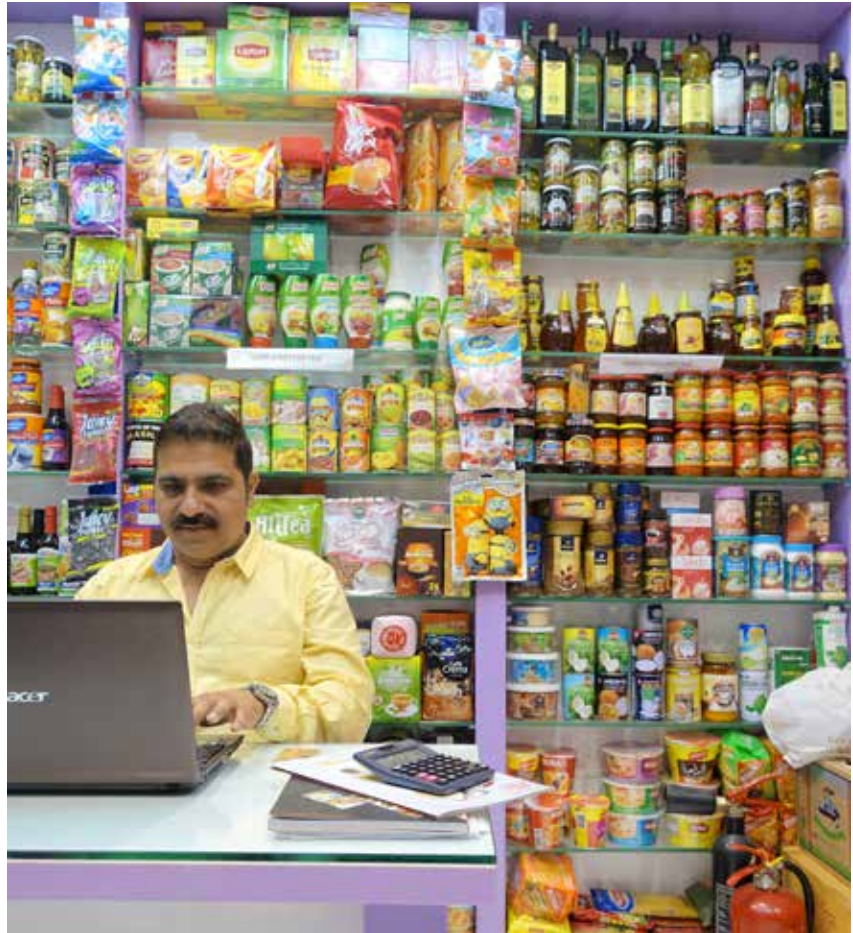
Sitting in his newest shop surrounded by shelves of sample products, he remembers how challenging it was to start the business 5 years ago. "For two years it was hard," he says. Formerly he sold electronics wholesale before deciding to make the switch to a new product line when he was 40 years old.

His 21-year-old daughter Richa, who started working alongside her father three years ago between her university classes, remembers the difficult start. "It was a bumpy road. He had to start over again and he's not young."

To help him build a base of customers and learn the business, Vinod's brother lent him his own food business' name: Bagstan. The shop is located next to a mosque which Vinod thinks of gratefully. "It has very good vibes," he says.

The Bagstan shop still retains its original name with Vinod's second shop, his first shop called Richa Food is located a few meters away across a small courtyard accessible only through sikkas which wind their way out of the larger roads.

Now the business is stable and growing and Vinod has launched 12 of his own brands to sell along with major global brands like Nescafe and Lays.



Images: Erin Hudson

Faith and business go hand-in-hand for him. There is a Hindu shrine next to Vinod's desk and a lemon with hung by the window to ward off bad vibes.

The shops are now the center of their family life, with all the staff's families coming to the shops to celebrate Diwali to bring wealth to the business for the year ahead and the children, like Richa, beginning to work alongside their parents.

### Numbers

Annual turnover 50 million AED  
15+/- staff  
900m2 of office space  
3 stores in Al Ras district in Deira  
Shipping to 5 continents  
2 warehouses in Ras Al Khor





