

HAMMER

Food & Beverage

Business Review

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Feature

Greet & Meet Fellow Foodies at Pop Ups!

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The pandemic has huge affect on foodservice industry since the restaurants and bars were ordered to close down by the governments. The open shut situation since the pandemic started has put the operators in a confused state. Should they continue to support the institution and its workforce or just surrender and close down? With restaurants not operating, has also caused a ripple effect on related industries such as food processing, imported foods etc.

According to a note released by HRAWI, over the last 15 odd months, various factors have resulted in massive financial losses due to the lockdown. Many restaurant owners said they could be forced to shut their businesses permanently in the absence of government support. Over 40 per cent of restaurants and hotels in the Maharashtra State have already closed permanently and a significant number of people employed in restaurants or hotels are moving away from this sector and are accepting lower wage jobs over uncertain wages due to constant closures. This is a dangerous trend for the future of the industry.

Restaurant owners are likely to delay bank loans, defer payments and sell properties if the third wave does hit. Most properties have cut salaries and laid off staff. Last year, the government extended guarantees on bank loans for small businesses including hotels and restaurants, as well as a moratorium on some bank loans through to the end of March. Some restaurant owners have already received notices from banks to repay these loans.

Restaurants are struggling to get back to their feet by gradually adapting to the new normal, as the lockdown is lifted in most Indian cities. It has once again reiterated the critical aspect of food safety and its increasing relevance in the food service industry. Today it is very important to learn and implement food safety and hygiene measures, and other SOP's, once the businesses restart.

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Cover Pic:
Namaste Desi, Delhi

Berco's joined hands with Japanese Food Brand "Bento by EN"

Berco's is now bringing Japanese food delivery by the name of "Bento by EN" in Delhi and Gurgaon. The newly launched Bento by EN has started operating their outlets in Munirka and Udyog Vihar with nutritious flavours and rapidly planning to expand throughout the world to deliver the essence of their Japanese cuisines. Bento by EN offers a diverse selection of traditional Japanese cuisines, which encompasses all of the country's traditional food items while adhering to all of the major Covid-19 criteria, which are governed by the food ministry and have sterile equipment and kitchens. Bento focuses on introducing westerners to the full range of meals, in addition to cooking and serving a wide choice of well-known Japanese foods.

Apart from ensuring that the taste is relative to the authenticity of Japan, it must also be delightful and mouth-watering for all sushi fans. A fresh and authentic meal prepared with the utmost care and hygiene with on-time delivery provides the ideal experience of enjoying wholesome Japanese cuisine at home.

Bento is a well-known crafted restaurant that serves sushi, fragrant ramen, and much more to tantalize the taste buds and is much forward in maintaining the important norms like fully sanitized kitchens and doing regular temperature checks in small intervals. Apart from this customer pleasure and the delicate nature of the health benefits being taken into account. The Japanese meals are available on delivery apps like Zomato, Swiggy and Dineout.



Kabir Advani, Managing Director of Berco's chain said, "It's fantastic cooperation for us to join hands with such a genuine restaurant range as Bento by EN, which provides all of the necessities in terms of taste or customer pleasure in the food market. This restaurant offers a unique and exclusive Japanese menu designed specifically for sushi enthusiasts; it is the finest place to go for the best sushi experience. It is created with the customer's taste senses in mind, as well as the delicate nature to maintain the item's originality. The food is prepared with the highest quality ingredients."

Bikano New Range of Snacks

Bikano, India's foremost packaged snacks brand has announced a new range of lip-smacking maida-based chai time snacks for snack lovers and patrons indicating continuity of intent towards aggressive product line expansion. With the maida-based snacks category largely remaining a part of the unorganized market so far, Bikano is entering the segment with intent to make it organized, offer branded product range and to ensure both hygiene & taste for patrons.



Particularly with an eye on the Hindi-speaking market, the launch of these products would not only add to the ever-expanding product portfolio of the snack company and boost its revenues, but also further cement Bikano's position as one of the most popular and leading snacks brands in the country.

"With these items, we not only wish to help patrons relive the tradition involving regular savouries that accompany their chai-drinking, but also expand the range of snack options that they often combine with their beverages. As such, these maida-based savories high on hygiene become a delectable complement to the tea or coffee that they often drink. Apart from satisfying their mid-meal cravings and filling the void in their snacking routines, because these are filling enough, these lip-smacking items can sometimes even serve as a substitute for regular meals when one is travelling, or is stationed in a remote place. Suitably filled in 200 gm convenience packs, they are easy to carry and consume anywhere anytime, said Manish Aggarwal, Director, Bikano.





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OBITUARY



Chef Palaniappan's Soundrajan, a great star and pillar of the Indian Culinary industry, left for heavenly abode on July 23, while attending a webinar. He was the general secretary and founder of the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA). Chef Soundrajan was instrumental in getting IFCA affiliated to World Association of Chefs Societies (WACS), and was a member of the Education Committee of the World Chefs. He was also the founder of South Indian Chefs association (SICA).

Born in Udumalpet, Tamil Nadu, he did his graduation from IHM Chennai and started his career at ITDC before joining Mahindra group. He later retired as the Corporate Executive Chef at Club Mahindra Holidays & Resorts. He started a culinary institute in Chennai, Soundar Culinary Academy, after his retirement from Mahindra.

He was awarded Honoris Causa, Degree of Doctor of Literature, by Vels University in 2011, presented by President, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, for his outstanding contribution to the industry. He was awarded the 'Best Chef Award' at the National Tourism Awards in 2008. He was a mentor to many leading chefs in India. His death has left a big void in the Indian Culinary industry and is a big personal loss for many who followed his footsteps.

We will miss you Chef, RIP.

FHRAI-IHM Trains F&B Staff

The FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM) in association with the regional Associations of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) organized a series of capacity building training programs for Food Production and Room Division and F&B Service staff of hotels and restaurants. The objective of the training programmes was to reinforce knowledge and update skills of the workforce employed in existing hospitality establishments in the country. The programme was rolled out in seven batches. Venkatesan Dhattareyan, Regional Director - West & Central Region, India Tourism, Mumbai inaugurated the first batch which trained 640 hospitality professionals.

"The training programmes have been developed to strengthen the skill sets of the entry-level or junior staff working in the Food Production and the Room Division & F&B Service departments at hotels. We were anticipating somewhere around 100 to 120 participants for the first batch but were pleasantly surprised to receive an overwhelming response. Over 640 hospitality professionals from across the country registered and participated in the training programmes. The trained participants were awarded certificates upon successful completion of all four sessions of about an hour across the selected modules," said Arun Kumar Singh, Director, FHRAI-IHM.

Regional hotel and restaurant Associations of the FHRAI - HRAWI, HRANI, HRAEI and SIHRA extended support and urged its members to nominate staff for the trainings. The training sessions were held under the direct supervision of Arun Kumar Singh. Dr Himanshu Talwar, Add. Director of FHRAI-IHM and Asst. Secretary General of FHRAI coordinated and facilitated the programmes.

Life Introduces New Range of Snacks

Life-Home Alone brand, created by food expert Bharti Sanghi, has come out with a new healthy range of snacks in the ready-to-eat segment as well as ready-to-cook. Using fresh and natural ingredients, authentic flavour profiles, the range from Life, now has snacks, sweets, sauces and seasoning.

Life has delicious and simple, ready to eat, theplas, interspersed with the fresh flavour of fenugreek and pickle. Other snacks include gur parras, a staple of many Punjabi homes, namak paras, rice puffs in new and contemporary flavours ranging from Jalapeno to Pudina, and diet chidwa mixes, which are perfect for snacking on the go.

Using alternates to glutenous flours, Life has come up with a lip smacking range of everyday snacks and chips, which are packed with nutrition and made from ragi, soya, ad healthier alternatives. Try from the range of Soya cups in many delicious flavours, Soya chips in flavours like x, y,z; as well as Ragi Chips in variants like Paprika and Wsaabi, and other Indian flavours. All snacks are high in fibre, protein and iron, and are a healthy, yet tasty alternative to calorie rich and nutrient deficit snacks.



Namaste Desi, Launched in Delhi-NCR

After the tremendous popularity enjoyed by Namaste Asia, the Namaste team has launched its second cloud kitchen, Namaste Desi. This cloud kitchen brings popular recipes from the Northern Frontier throwing special light to dishes from their ancestral hometowns of Karachi, Lahore & Sindh.

The handpicked menu at Namaste is an eclectic mix of the humble street food and plenty of homely dishes in which the focus remains firmly on flavour. The unique recipes that have been fostered and passed down through generations of food lovers are the highlight of the menu

With a strong belief in the farm to table ideology, Namaste Desi strives to make the freshest seasonal and sustainable produce from all over India accessible to their patrons while following a zero-waste strategy in the kitchen.

Anubhav Nayar, Co-Owner and Chef, Namaste Asia & Namaste Desi says, "We're delighted to launch our second Cloud Kitchen in Delhi NCR and bring a greater selection of food to our customers in the capital."

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FMCG Companies are Strengthening Rural Distribution Network to Combat the Low Consumer Sentiments

Like most sectors and indeed the larger economy, the FMCG companies too have not remained insulated from the effects of the pandemic, an outbreak which only seems to have resurfaced with greater ferocity and vehemence in recent days in the form of the so-called second wave. And while some product categories within the sector have undoubtedly suffered a bigger jolt than others, the fact that the sector as a whole has been subject to the whims of the virus. Already struggling with inflation and over-the-top offers before the onslaught of the pandemic, sales volumes for brands have suffered during this second wave, there have been different reasons to it. As such, that each one of them including the bigger brands has had to recalibrate their supply chain network and go-to-market strategies can't be overstated. And strengthening of the rural distribution network and firming up their rural supply chain management has been one of those adaptations.

Consumer confidence levels at a low receding tide

Till November last year when a consumer survey was conducted, about 40% of people reported reduction in household spending with about 39%, believing that their finances would not return to normal. Strikingly, this was in a month when the first phase of Covid seemed to be on the wane, lockdowns had eased and the economy seemed to be limping back to a semblance of normalcy. And although the rural India had all along fared much better than the urban areas during the onset of the first wave in terms of relative growth numbers, there was a definite and palpable squeeze on spending in the hinterland too. Not unlike their urban counterparts, rural India and semi-urban markets too had drifted away from discretionary and indulgence products towards preventive healthcare and hygiene as well as personal and household care products. According to Rural Covid Barometer report released in December last year, every third adult in rural India had been impacted by Covid-19 in terms of job loss implying that financially speaking, a substantial number of rural families and populace would have been at the receiving end of the pandemic.

Ramping up and recasting rural redistribution network



By Manish Aggarwal

So, among many measures that FMCG companies undertook, revisiting their rural and semi-urban operations has been one pivotal initiative to boost their last mile connectivity with end-consumers. As urban India began to report sluggish and uncertain demand in the wake of the pandemic, taking advantage of the relatively lesser and more lenient form of lockdowns and restrictions in rural India, companies went to great lengths to extend their footprints to the semi-urban and the rural areas with an eye on fully tapping into any potential demand from the remotest and the most inaccessible terrain. In addition to reworking and customization of product portfolios with smaller SKUs and value packs, thousands of new distributors, dealers, stockists, substockists and sales staff have been brought onboard by the FMCG companies exclusively targeting the rural market in the Covid period. Notably enough, many packaged food companies, or FMCG firms with significant food based products as part of their product portfolio, have been reported to be prominently involved in ramping up their rural distribution network. Deployment of ready-stock van units has been another route to rural market for FMCG companies aimed at direct distribution. Remember, direct distribution strategy had been adopted even before Covid came when the FMCG sector was grappling with liquidity shortage in the wholesale channel. Furthermore, smaller and local players too have fortified their already existing close connect with the neighbourhood markets during Covid times.

Employment of digitization of supply chain strategies in rural areas

Although in a rather disruptive way, the

Covid onslaught has been a great trigger for accelerated uptake of digitization by FMCG companies. And this digitization has not remained limited to metro cities and urban enclaves. The pandemic has propelled the FMCG companies towards also exploring digital initiatives in rural areas, across both B2B and B2C channels. Adoption of apps bringing onboard the humble kirana stores and small shops location-wise has been one way forward. With digital payment services and platforms erected by both the government and private players already gaining significant traction in rural India, the rural market has been brimming with opportunity. Of nearly 550 million mobile users in rural India, a sizable 260 million are on internet enabling rural distribution for FMCG companies. In terms of foundational infrastructure, nearly 4.9 lakh km of optical fibre cable has been laid to cover 1.6 lakh Gram Panchayats with nearly 1.51 lakh Panchayats having become service-ready.

Rural market has been ripe for the taking

While FMCG companies have been proactive from their own side, that the rural market has been nurtured by the authorities in certain ways can't be discounted. While reverse migration – albeit occurred in unfortunate circumstances – did take a toll on urban economy and consumption, rural consumption saw support and reinforcement helped on by favourable monsoons, massive government spending, the MGNREGA programmes and broader agricultural reforms.

Like they say, in every adversity lies an opportunity. If urban markets were faltering, it made eminent sense for FMCG companies to train their focus and energies on rural India. And rural India did not disappoint. A segment that contributes around 37 per cent of the total FMCG sales, a large part of which comes from food items, reported an impressive growth of 14.2% year-on-year in the third quarter 2020-21 against top metros' 0.8% y-o-y figure for the same period. Surely, bolstering of rural distribution network has paid dividends.

The author is Director at Bikano, Bikanervala Foods Pvt. Ltd., a prominent figure in the Indian FMCG industry.

Smoke House Deli Opens in Colaba

Smoke House Deli 2.0, has found a new home in the heart of Colaba's heritage district. Whimsical visual tales and an endearingly delicious menu combine to make your favourite neighbourhood deli a sensory treat. Smoke House Deli 2.0 is a product of over 12 years of love and dedication, and the team at Impresario knew that it was only fitting for newest outpost to be in Colaba. The cafe blends seamlessly with the heritage of the area, offering patrons a carefully curated menu of beautifully crafted European comfort food served up in a quirky and artistic space.

Riyaaz Amlani, CEO & MD, Impresario Handmade Restaurants, says, "Smoke House Deli has evolved with its patrons. It features wholesome comfort food made with organic ingredients, handmade from scratch. In fact, the Colaba outpost has been in the making for a few years and is the brainchild of our business head Jaydeep Mukherjee, who began his culinary career in the neighbourhood over two decades ago. From the minute JD joined Impresario, he has wanted to bring Smoke House Deli to the area. His vision has been bigger, better, and more nuanced than anything we've done before. This new outpost truly represents the best of this beloved brand."

For Mukherjee, his calling as a chef began in the neighbourhood, and the new SHD outpost is a nostalgic homecoming of sorts. "Colaba has an old-world charm that's unique to the area, and holds a special place in my heart. With the reimagined Smoke House Deli, the entire process is a return to my roots in a new and improved avatar. As the country's best-loved European cafe, our new Colaba outpost boasts of a menu that maintains our signature flavours and ethos towards clean, fresh, and wholesome food. Smoke House Deli is, and always has been, a conscious champion of sustainable and seasonal produce, and we're sure that our patrons will resonate with it," Says Jaydeep Mukherjee, Business Head, Smoke House Deli.

The menu is replete with wholesome offerings, signature flavours, and exciting new fare that takes things to the next level. A unique new inclusion is the Smoke



House Charcuterie - a selection of house-cured meats and sausages made using our in-house smoker. Sausage Chilli, Smoke House Charcuterie Meat Lover's Pizza, and the Pastrami Cheese Steak Calzone give you a glimpse into the extensive range of meaty additions to the indulgent menu.

The menu also honours vegan, gluten-free, and keto-friendly diets. From free-range organic eggs for breakfast and signature thin-crust pizzas, to freshly rolled, handmade pastas, single-estate cold-brew coffees, and fresh fruits salads, Smoke House Deli offers a wide range of healthy and indulgent options to satisfy all cravings. Also making an appearance is Goodness to Go station, where patrons can grab fresh and quick meals across healthy shakes, smoothies, salads, sandwiches, cold-pressed juices, and more.

The warm and abundant space also weaves intricate tales of its own. Borrowing from the culturally-rich neighbourhood, the walls are filled with hand-drawn art developed by illustrator Priya Dali. The quirky illustrations line the walls and capture your attention immediately. Juxtaposing nature and nostalgic technology, they add a whimsical touch that is now a signature visual language of the brand.

Says Sanya Desai, Experience Designer, Impresario Handmade Restaurants, "The interiors for Smoke House Deli, Colaba build on the SHD 2.0 design language developed

by Restore Design while adapting it to the context of this iconic corner location. The previously boarded up arched windows have been restored to bring in a lot more natural light. The artwork is influenced by all things Colaba - boats in the harbour metamorphosing into soft lotus leaves, potted tetrapods, our resident feline Salem's polaroids of the district, and of course, Salem's art gallery on the second floor. All the illustrations tie our new outpost to South Mumbai's rich history."

For over a decade now, Smoke House Deli has been serving up beautifully crafted food and experiences as the country's favourite European café. With 10 outlets across Mumbai, Delhi NCR and Bangalore, the delightfully peculiar world of Smoke House Deli has metamorphosed into an artfully imaginative, wholesome, and evolved version of its earlier avatar, while still retaining its 'handmade with love' ethos. Having built a legacy of trust and faith, it serves comfort food with a deep focus on ethically sourced local ingredients that are healthy, organic, and wholesome. The produce comes straight from local farms across the country, so that one can enjoy the best of both flavour and health, handmade from scratch. Daring to draw outside the margins with painstaking detail, the décor takes an irreverent approach that comes together to create a whimsical personality and an intimate environment.

Meditating on the Scrumptious Mediterranean Cuisine



Mediterranean cuisine, which does not belong to any particular culture but refers to culinary styles of people living in regions surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, is popular in India due to the huge variety it offers. Mediterranean food has developed not as national cuisine of any country but as a variety of regional cuisines based on diversified regional influences. Since olive oil is the most commonly used ingredient in Mediterranean cuisines, it is considered to be healthy. There is no traditional way of serving the Mediterranean food. This cuisine is a popular genre for dining out in India. **Ashok Malkani** examines various aspects of this cuisine and the reasons for its popularity in the country.

Mediterranean food is popular throughout the globe. It may be mentioned that diets across the entire Mediterranean region vary greatly but what most people think of as Mediterranean food comes mainly from Greece and Italy. In this region the diets that have developed over the centuries has been mainly due to what was readily available. Fish and lamb, which was plentiful in the region, formed the staple ingredients of the diet.

Kamlesh Salve, Executive Chef, The Mirador Mumbai, avers, "Mediterranean cuisine encompasses the Mediterranean basin, which covers several vastly different geographical areas including Spain, Italy, Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Europe, Asia, Africa and many others. The Mediterranean Sea boasts a different diet, religion and culture."

Ashish Kumar Tiwari, Executive Chef, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Rohini, states, "Mediterranean food has its roots in areas around the Mediterranean Sea, like Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Israel, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco.

Popularity in India

Mediterranean cuisine is believed to be extremely popular in India as it has a lot in common with the Indian cuisine. It is perfectly suitable for the Indian climate as well as palate. Light and healthy, the ingredients for this cuisine can be easily found in India. And what is more, it satisfies the principle that Indians love most: taste!

Kamlesh declares, "The Mediterranean cuisine is a very popular genre for dining out in India. The majority of the clientele for



this food is well travelled and understands the depth of the cuisine. This cuisine, which has a large repertoire of dishes to offer also, has a health element attached to it because most of the food is grilled and oil is used in minimal quantity. Another factor is the variety of vegetarian options available, which makes Mediterranean cuisine a welcome dining out option for Indians.

"Sourcing the ingredients for any specialty cuisine is not a challenge any more, due to the present meticulous transport facilities. We have multiple options and choices available for the best ingredients required to keep the Mediterranean cuisine as authentic as possible. All kinds of cheese, olive oils, pastas, vinegars, meats, and seafood are readily available. If there is a ban on import of certain products into India, menu-making does become a bit difficult.

"The repertoire of dishes and flavours is huge and widely accepted by both locals and expats alike. The key is the consistency of food and the quality of the ingredients used. This cuisine, I may add, is preferred by the age group between 25-45 years of age."

Sathiyaraj states, "The cuisine is mostly popular in tier one cities and their urban areas. This cuisine is popular amongst the 18 to 35 age groups and also with those who have travelled extensively and appreciate the different cuisines."

Indian and Mediterranean Food

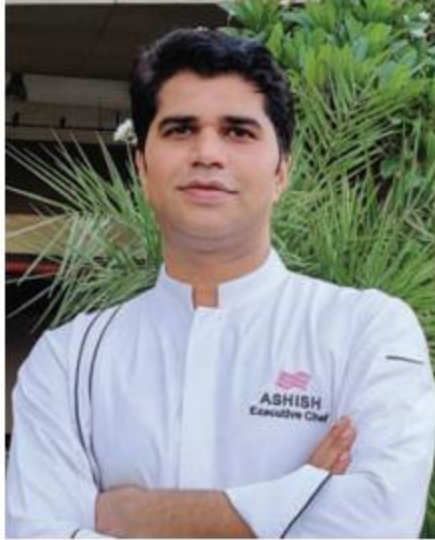
Although the two cuisines – Indian and Mediterranean – are from different parts of the world they have a lot in common. While the ingredients may differ a bit, the main theme of both cuisines is to use fresh ingredients along with flavourful spices and herbs.

Kamlesh is of the view that both have similarities, as far as cooking is concerned. He says "There are many similarities in the preparation and ingredients used when it comes to the preparation of these two delicious and healthy food traditions, but each cuisine has its own distinct taste, thanks to the native flavours of the regions surrounding the Mediterranean and India."

He adds, "Both Indian food and Mediterranean food revolve around the usage of ripe fruits and vegetables, rich and flavourful dips and sauces, and soft, oven-baked bread. The distinct and succulent flavours of their dishes reflect the tradition of their individual cuisines.

"One can incorporate the influence and inspiration from Indian food and





Ashish Kumar



Sathiyaraj Satyaseelan



Kamlesh Salve

Mediterranean food alike. Although the dishes are reflective of their origins, you'll notice many similarities in menu offerings.

For example....Naan from India, and pita from the Mediterranean region both types are made to be flat for dipping in curries, sauces, and dips, yet have their own distinct texture and flavours.

"Consider our Indian veg pakora, which consists of Indian-spiced chickpea flour, potatoes and other veggies, fried together and paired with a yogurt and mint chutney. Similarly, dolmades, a veg-based Greek favourite, is a Mediterranean dish. It consists of rice, dill and lemon, wrapped in grape leaves and finished off with a tangy Greek yogurt sauce.

"Most popular Lamb dishes, Lamb biryani, and Lamb kofta kebab, are inspired from both Indian and Mediterranean flavours. The Lamb biryani consists of tender chunks of lamb simmered in a traditional Indian broth of fresh spices, herbs, raisins, and cashews. Lamb kofta kebabs are made from freshly-ground lamb meatballs with potatoes, onions, and garlic, served in a tomato-onion sauce."

Sathiyaraj, however, differs, and asserts, "Mediterranean cuisine is not at all similar to Indian cuisine, as the spices used in preparation of Mediterranean food are completely different to those in Indian cuisine. Where Indian cuisine uses extensive hot spices, Mediterranean cuisine uses more herbs and subtle spices to lightly season the dish."

Ashish Kumar is also of a similar opinion. He says, "As a Chef I don't find a lot of similarities in both the Cuisine. I do agree that there are few concepts which have similarities such as Kebab and Biryani."

Commonly used Ingredients

Though the main theme of both cuisines – Indian and Mediterranean – is to use fresh ingredients paired with flavourful spices, each cuisine has its own distinct taste. So what are the main ingredients used?

Sathiyaraj disclosed, "The prime ingredients used in cooking are olives, olive oil, couscous, fresh garlic, feta cheese, eggplant, capers, chickpeas, arugula leaves, fresh herbs (like rosemary), sheep and goat dairy products."

Ashish adds, "The ingredients commonly used are olives and olive oil, herbs and spices like basil, cilantro, fennel, saffron, garlic, mint, thyme, sage, parsley, and more. Some nuts which are used are

pecans, hazelnuts, almonds, cashews, and walnuts. Besides this Feta Cheese is also a commonly used ingredient. Fish and Lamb are widely used."

Kamlesh is more elaborate. He states, "The Mediterranean diet is more than just a collection of foods and nutrients—it's an integral part and expression of the Mediterranean history and culture. It's also based on home cooking using local ingredients, which means that not all foods associated with the region are used in all areas. Even though each Mediterranean country has its unique foods and dishes, different foods provide similar nutrients, so the mechanistic effects of the nutrients and bioactive compounds are retained. Olive trees, vineyards, and wheat have been present in the Mediterranean region since the beginning, but because the region has been a geographical point of convergence for many different cultures, religions, and traditions, typical Mediterranean foods include those that are native to a particular area as well as those that were imported long ago.

The following are some of the superstar foods in this delicious, nutritious, and health-promoting diet:

Olive Oil: Italy, Spain, and Greece are the top three producers of olive oil in the world, and olive oil is the common denominator in the varying dietary patterns that make up the overall Mediterranean diet. Extra-virgin olive oil is rich in carotenoids, and polyphenols, giving it antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Olive oil is the principal source of dietary fat. Olive oil is also used for cooking and baking. Olive oil has a high smoke point because of its lower free fatty acid content

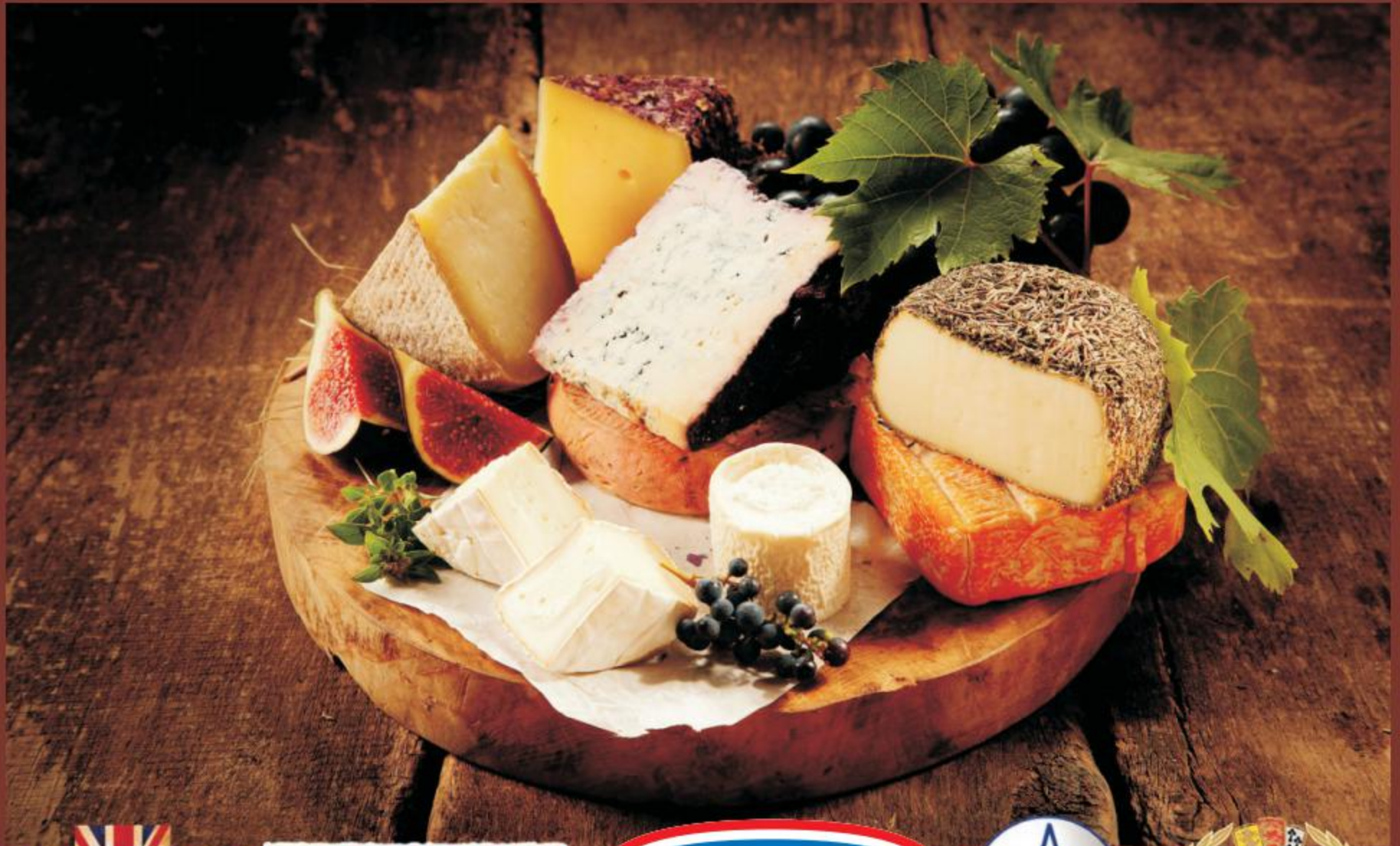
Olives: Table olives, especially Kalamata olives, also are rich sources of antioxidant polyphenols. Olives are universally eaten whole, and are widely used for cooking and flavouring. Put pitted olives in a food processor with olive oil, garlic, and your favorite seasonings for a simple tapenade that makes a delicious dip, sandwich spread, or topping for fish and poultry. Toss pasta (cooked al dente) with chopped olives, tomatoes, garlic, olive oil, and fresh herbs of your choice. Add chopped olives to your favorite tuna or chicken salad recipe.

Wheat: Wheat is the foundation grain of the Mediterranean. One traditional grain is Farro, an ancient wheat with renewed popularity in Italy and the United States. Bulgur is made from whole wheat berries that have been steamed, dried, and



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cracked, then used in pilafs, tabbouleh, and kibbe, a traditional Lebanese dish of minced meat with bulgur and spices. When choosing bulgur, use coarse for pilafs, medium for tabbouleh and other salads, and fine for making kibbeh. Breads often use unrefined wheat and barley flours. Durum, which has a creamy yellow color from the natural carotenoids, is the quintessential Mediterranean wheat, used for bread, couscous, and Italian pasta

Wine: Alcohol consumption was common in the traditional Mediterranean diet, but generally in moderation and in the form of wine and, as a rule, during meals—in the spirit of the ancient Greek word 'symposium. Wine, red wine in particular, contains antioxidant polyphenols and the flavonoid resveratrol, and may help increase HDL cholesterol while decreasing LDL cholesterol levels.

Wild Greens: Savory pies, tortes made with greens are a staple dish in Greece, southern France, Italy, and other areas of the Mediterranean. Dandelion greens, fennel, cardoon, rocket, purslane, and chicory are just a few, and there are more than 140 types of wild greens on the Greek island of Ikaria alone. Although exact nutritional composition varies between species and cultivars, wild, dark leafy greens are rich in carotenoids, vitamins C and E, and minerals such as magnesium, iron, and calcium. Greens are rich in flavonoids, but not all greens are equally rich in the various flavonoid classes, so eating a variety of greens is optimal.

Capers: Capers generally are used as a flavorful, antioxidant-rich seasoning or garnish, and are an important ingredient in tapenade. Quite often salad is sprinkled with oregano and olives, and capers and feta cheese are added. Capers are fermented in sea salt, so while they are low in calories. Rinsing capers under running water before using will remove some of the sodium. The caper's pungency lends an appealingly sharp flavour to many sauces and condiments. They often can be used in place of olives.

Chickpeas: A half-cup of cooked chickpeas (82 g) is an excellent source of fiber folate Dand manganese and a good source of protein and copper, iron and magnesium One of the earliest known cultivated legumes, chickpeas are the key ingredient in hummus. A soup of black and regular chickpeas, fava beans, lentils, and whole wheat is an important traditional dish in Puglia, Italy. Chickpeas have a

stronger inherent texture and aroma than many beans, which means they need fewer aromatics when cooking. For a Mediterranean-style snack, roast cooked chickpeas and salt them like peanuts.

Lemons: Acidic foods lower glycemic response by slowing stomach emptying. The acidity and high flavonoid content of lemon peels may have a beneficial impact on blood glucose, helping to control or prevent diabetes. Lemons and oranges originate from the Far East, and Arabs originally brought them to the Mediterranean. A common Mediterranean habit is to squeeze lemons on salads, fish, soups, and beans, and into drinking water, lowering the glycemic load of the entire meal. Lemon juice is a staple ingredient in hummus. Squeeze lemon juice over roasted broccoli or use it as all or part of the acid in a vinaigrette.

Garlic: Garlic is an essential ingredient in all Mediterranean cuisines. It varies from province to province. Tzatziki, yogurt mixed with garlic, cucumbers, olive oil, red wine vinegar, and salt, is a common sauce in many Eastern Mediterranean cuisines. Mixing garlic with eggs and olive oil produces aioli. The sulfur compounds in garlic are responsible for both its pungent odor and most of its health benefits, which include anticancer, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory effects. To maximize garlic's benefits, crush or chop the garlic and allow it to sit for 10 to 15 minutes before using it.

Herbs: Herbs are high in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds, especially polyphenols. They contribute significantly to the overall dietary intake of flavonols and flavones in the traditional Greek cuisine. Each region in the Mediterranean has a different flavor palette, but herbs and spices are universally important in the Mediterranean cuisine. Do as they do in the Mediterranean and add fresh herbs to salads to increase the antioxidant capacity.

Feta and Yogurt: Traditional feta and yogurt are fermented, making them rich in probiotics. They also provide additional protein to a diet that's largely plant-based. In addition to being found in the classic Greek salad, feta cheese often accompanies stews. Authentic Greek feta is made with goat's milk or sheep's milk. The Turks probably introduced yogurt, and it's more commonly used in the eastern Mediterranean (the old Ottoman Empire). Yogurt with honey is a common Greek breakfast.

Is Mediterranean Diet good?

It is believed that Mediterranean diet, with greens and other healthy ingredients, not only ensures weight loss but also improves cardiovascular health, besides keeping cancer and depression at bay.

Ashish avers, "It is a healthy diet. Extensive usage of fresh ingredients and more of vegetables, herbs and fish it makes a healthy Choice.

Sathiyaraj states, "The diet is good when anyone would want to reduce their weight. The leafy green vegetables from Mediterranean cuisine have a lot of health benefits and ensure a healthy diet."

Kamlesh is more forthright. He declares, "The word "diet" is most commonly associated with losing weight and counting calories. However, let's not forget the other meaning of "diet" – the food and drink we regularly consume. That's exactly what the Mediterranean Diet is for the people of Spain, Greece, Italy, Morocco and other countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It's the "diet" they use to nourish their bodies that also happens to be a "diet" full of health benefits.

"Because of the proximity to the sea, frequent consumption of fish and seafood is an important part of the Mediterranean Diet. Seafood is, as everyone is aware, healthier than red meat.

Extra-virgin olive oil is the primary source of fat in the Mediterranean Diet, followed by fish, nuts, seeds and avocados. These foods offer "good" (monosaturated) fats that actually help reduce blood cholesterol levels and lower the risk of heart disease and stroke."

Conclusion

According to new research, eating a Mediterranean diet rich in vegetables, fruit, fish, and olive oil may help preserve brain cells as we age. Dr Yian Gu, from Columbia University in New York, disclosed that a study undertaken of 674 people with an average age of 80 showed that those following a Mediterranean-like diet had larger brains.

Dr James Pickett, head of research at Alzheimer's Society, adds, "There is an increasing amount of evidence that eating a healthy diet, rich in fish, vegetables, legumes and nuts is good for your brain."

So let's raise a toast to your good health, while consuming Mediterranean cuisine, comprising of fish and other healthy ingredients! ■

Recipes of Mediterranean Cuisine

Grilled Halloumi with masculine green, Onion Marmalade

Ingredients

Halloumi Cheese	100 gms
Onion	100 gms
Apricot	50 gms
Sugar	20 gms
Butter	20 gms
Cucumber	1 piece
Microgreens	10 gms
Masculine green	10 gms
Olive oil	5 ml
Salt	to taste
Pepper	to taste

Method

1. Chop the onion, take butter in a pan. Sauté the onion add thyme and sugar. Cool it slow to till the onion and sugar turns to brown.
2. Also chop the Apricot sauté it in butter, add sugar and cook it on slow fire.
3. Cut the Cheese in quarter and grill it.
4. Take out the slices of Cucumber by slicing Machine or peeler.
5. Now season the mesuclin green and microgreens with little of olive oil, salt and pepper.
6. Plate the green below and the Cheese on the top

Calamari Fritos

Ingredients

Calamari	100gms
Flour	50gms
Seasoning	
Oregano	10 gms
Oil to fry	
Paprika	10gms
Garlic cloves	20 gms
Tartare sauce	
Mayonaise	75 ml
Capers	20gms
Gherkin	
Shallot	20 gms
Parsley	10gms
Sea salt	to taste
Black pepper	10 gms
Lemon juice	10 ml.

Method

1. Marinate the calamari with salt pepper, Oregano, lemon juice,

- Spanish paprika & garlic.
2. Dredge in to flour & deep fry. Serve with tartare sauce.

Executive Chef Ashish Kumar Tiwari.

Spanakopita a Greek savory pie with spinach and feta cheese filling

Ingredients

For the Spinach and Feta Filling	
Chopped spinach	250gms
Flat-leaf parsley, stems trimmed, finely chopped	2 bunches
Large onion, finely chopped	1
Garlic cloves, minced	2
Extra virgin olive oil	2 tbsp
Eggs	4
Feta cheese, crumbled	50 gms
Freshly-ground black pepper	
For the Crust	
Phyllo sheets	as required
Extra virgin olive oil to grease	2tbs

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 220degrees ,finely chop the spinach.
2. To make the filling: In a mixing bowl, add the spinach and the remaining filling ingredients. Stir until all is well-combined.
3. Unroll the phyllo (fillo) sheets and place them between two slightly damp kitchen cloths grease with oil.
4. Now, evenly spread the spinach and feta filling over the phyllo crust. Top with two more sheets, and brush with olive oil.
5. Fold the flaps or excess from the sides, you can crumble them a little. Brush the folded sides well with olive oil.
6. Bake in the preheated oven until the phyllo crust is crisp and golden brown. Remove from the oven. 7. Finish cutting into squares and serve.

Greek Chicken Souvlaki

Ingredients

For Souvlaki Marinade	
Garlic cloves, peeled	10
Dried oregano	2 tbsp
Dried rosemary	1 tsp
Sweet paprika	1 tsp
Kosher salt and black pepper	1 tsp each
Extra virgin olive oil	¼ cup

Dry white wine	¼ cup
Lemon	1
Bay leaves	2

For Chicken

250 gms boneless chicken breast, cut into 1 ½ inch pieces

Method

1. Prepare the marinade. In the bowl of a small food processor, add garlic, oregano, rosemary, paprika, salt, pepper, olive oil, white wine, and lemon juice
2. Place chicken in a large bowl and add bay leaves, and add the above marinade and refrigerate for overnight.
3. Soak 10 to 12 wooden skewers in water for 30 to 45 minutes or so
4. When ready, thread marinated chicken pieces through the prepared skewers.
5. Griddle it till done, serve with pita and Tzatziki sauce.
6. Optional hummus can be added too.

Executive Chef Kamlesh Salve

Eggplant roulades stuffed with wild rice for 4 servings

Ingredients

Eggplant	10 large
Olive Oil	250ml
Onion , chopped	2 cup
Wild rice (cooked in vegetable broth)	3 cup
Parsley, chopped	1 cup
Garlic, minced	½ cup
Fresh Thyme	4 bunches
Lemon juice	4 no's
Salt & Pepper	to taste

Method

1. Sauté onion, garlic and thyme in a small amount of olive oil. Add cooked wild rice, parsley, thyme and salt and pepper to taste.
2. Leaving the peel on, slice eggplant lengthwise to 1/4 inch thickness. Marinate for at least 30 minutes in olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Grill the eggplant to make soft enough to roll easily.

3. Using two eggplant slices, side by side with one overlapping the other, place a spoonful of the wild rice mixture and roll.

Executive Chef Sathiyaraj Satyaseelan



Bright Sunshine for Cloud Kitchens

The pandemic has created new norms in all walks of life. Restaurateurs, with SOPs like social distancing and allowing only 50 per cent accommodation for their dine-in clientele, after adopting drive-ins and takeaways, are now contemplating on cloud kitchens. A cloud kitchen is, basically speaking, a restaurant with no costs on rent, electricity, waiters or any other fixed charge. In the post-Covid world cloud kitchens have become a favourite venture for investors. **Ashok Malkani** examines why they are gaining so much popularity

Coronavirus, has created massive disruptions in the restaurant industry. Social distancing has resulted in lower footfalls. This has, in turn, encouraged home delivery. As restaurants remain shut for dining, hotels and restaurants are pivoting to takeaway to stay open, and retain staff. However, with the SOPs in the new norm, for restaurants which have been designed for dine-in, profits from takeaway is often not able to even provide a breakeven.

For those in the F&B industry starting a new restaurant has always been a glamorous ambition. However, with severe restrictions imposed due the pandemic they find cloud kitchens easier to launch and keep running.

According to CRISIL, the restaurant footfall, due to the pandemic is at an all time low. The analytics company states that sales are down by as much as 90% compared to the pre-pandemic period. CRISIL estimates that the recovery of Rs. 1.5 trillion (\$ 20 billion) will take at least a year after the lockdown is lifted.

As restaurants remain shut for dining, hotels and restaurants are pivoting to takeaway to stay open, and retain staff. However, for a restaurant that has been designed for dine-in, profits from takeaway

will never be enough to break even. Many of them now believe that cloud kitchens are easier to launch and keep running, thanks to low entry costs, low capital expenditure and lower rents. Cloud kitchens are becoming a more democratic market space where a new start up can potentially compete with the biggest players in the business. And brands like SLAY coffee, Keventers, Penang, Burger king only go to prove it.

Today, one finds an increasing number of cloud kitchens, which are also known as Ghost kitchens, Dark Kitchens, Shared Kitchens or Virtual Kitchens. As one scrolls through Swiggy or Zomato apps one finds new brands being listed almost every month. These brands rely on online orders, usually placed through online food aggregators.

Cloud Kitchen Market

With successive lockdowns since March 2020 several enterprising entrepreneurs have ventured into catering to serve the clientele at their homes. Cloud kitchens have become the new norm. Over the last couple of years thousands of restaurants have entered cloud space.

According to Valuates Reports, global Cloud Kitchen Market would reach \$ 71.4 billion by 2027, with a CAGR Of 12% from 2021 to 2027. The major factor that can be

attributed to the rapid rise in cloud kitchens is an increasing demand for online food delivery. The thinning profit margins and stiff competition in restaurant business has also forced several dine-in restaurants to down the shutters and start economically profitable cloud kitchens.


The report states that Asia-Pacific is expected to witness the highest growth rate during the forecast period. This is due to an increase in the number of young people in this area and an increase in demand for online food supplies.

Even online food aggregators, who are the major contributors to the growth of this segment of the F&B industry have tried their hand in this business. Swiggy has launched shared kitchen spaces called Swiggy Access with the help of existing restaurants.

In fact the cloud kitchen business is growing at such a pace that Swiggy and Zomato have decided to expand their business to tier II and tier III cities. This expansion could lead proliferation of restaurants in smaller cities. Deepinder Goyal, CEO of Zomato has gone on record stating that emerging cities were major growth avenue for the food aggregator. He has declared, "We expect them to constitute more than 50% of our total order volume

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by the end of the year. We are, therefore, developing Zomato Kitchen (cloud kitchen) hubs in smaller cities in India to drive growth for our restaurant partners.”

In small towns, the biggest issue is that of a limited number of restaurants. So platforms like Swiggy partner with local brands through Swiggy Access, which provides several kitchen spaces under one roof. The two step approach of Swiggy not only provides the restaurants with kitchen space but also, initially, extensive training of restaurant staff to fill the status gap between metropolitan and tier II and tier III cities. Mohit Gupta, Chief Executive of food delivery at Zomato expects these new cities to constitute more than half of the order by the end of the year.

Today, some of the large cloud kitchens are Rebel Foods, Box8, Eat.fit et al. One of the biggest cloud kitchen operator, Rebel Foods Pvt. Ltd, recently raised nearly \$ 50 million in a fresh funding round from US-based hedge and investment fund Coatue Management. This gives credence to the belief that investors are placing their bets on cloud kitchen business because they continue to be profitable even during the pandemic.

Low capital investment and high operational efficiency are becoming factors for enterprising entrepreneurs to jump onto the bandwagon. It may be mentioned that poor sales often hinder the expansion strategies of brick and mortar restaurants. However, cloud kitchens enable one to scale up without incurring high costs.

Pros & Cons of Investing in Cloud Kitchens

There are several reasons why investors are now looking for opportunities in cloud kitchens. Due to the pandemic people are reluctant to visit dine-in restaurants due to restrictions on movement, maintaining social distancing, masking et al. The fear imbedded in the customers’ minds prompts them to opt for home delivery.

The ease of getting food delivered at reasonable price and record time has led to an increase in the number of online orders. It is believed that on an average the urban working class orders online 3-4 times a week. And this could go up once the online aggregators increase their operations to tier II and tier III cities!

Low investment is another reason which encourages entrepreneurs to enter this field. Since there is no need for any front of house operations or in-premise seating, one needs minimal staff, resulting in low operational costs. There is also the scope to scale up operations at a quicker pace since the investment required to open a cloud kitchen is significantly lower than opening a dine-in restaurant.

However, there are a couple of problems that may be experienced since the trend is now shifting to penetrating into smaller cities. One has to realize the cultural differences between metropolitan cities and smaller ones. People in these cities are still hesitant to order food online. It is even considered taboo in some of the households in small cities.

It may also be mentioned that disposable income of people in smaller cities is comparatively lower than those of the metropolitan cities. At present, according to sources, in smaller towns, the average order value is about 20-30% lower when compared with metros.

But there is a silver lining. There is an increasing demand, in tier II and tier III cities though the disposable income is lower than of the people in metropolitan cities.

Shared Cloud Kitchens

There is also the opportunity of shared cloud kitchen. These shared cloud kitchens are helping companies achieve higher sale.

What are shared cloud kitchens?

They are kitchen spaces with large kitchen infrastructures which are fitted with all the utilities and equipment. There are well divided co-working spaces that can be inhabited by multiple hotel brands. They have common storage and refrigeration spaces. The co-kitchen working space, on an average is about 1200-1800 sq.ft. Often on shared cloud kitchen is large enough to accommodate 6-10 different restaurant brands at a time.

These cloud kitchen operational spaces provide back of the house services like dishwashing and cleaning. Some of them also provide technology to accept orders from online food aggregators. In shared kitchen spaces there is no initial investment like kitchen equipment, etc.

What is more, even the licenses and permits become easy to get since these

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spaces are fully compliant for food business.

Riyaz Amlani, CEO and MD of Impresario Handmade Restaurants and the former President National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), believes that conventional restaurants will never go out of fashion. However, he concedes, that cloud kitchens are becoming popular because a lot of people are aspiring for quality cooked meals. "They form a very important aspect of the food industry and are helping food entrepreneurs start their own ventures at a low investment and capital cost."

Food Aggregators enter the Scene

According to Swiggy who introduced BrandWorks, a cloud kitchen initiative "cloud kitchens eliminate large costs associated with real estate and serving staff from a conventional restaurant thereby enabling a restaurant to focus on cooking great quality food alone. This model enables easier expansion for restaurant partners across geographies both within the city and to newer cities at a fraction of the cost, reducing the risk and commitment normally required for them to begin operating in a new location."

According to News18, popular eateries such as Haldiram's, Keventers, Chaayos, Saravana Bhavan, etc. have established cloud kitchens in partnership with Zomato.

The latter has been quick to understand the need for cloud kitchens and accelerated the process of setting up kitchen infrastructure in areas where there was a supply deficit. The cloud kitchen initiative by Swiggy called 'Swiggy Access,' has created over 1,000 cloud kitchens for its restaurant partners. Through Swiggy's cloud kitchen model, restaurants can experiment with new markets and expand on a large scale without spending extra on the infrastructure.

Requisites for Cloud Kitchens

For investors interested in establishing a cloud kitchen it may be mentioned that the minimum investment required, to start a franchise unit of a kitchen cloud, would be about Rs. 25-30 lakhs. This would include lease rent, equipment, interiors, licenses and registration, franchise security deposit, franchise fee and operational expenses like the salary of the manpower and rent.

The investors do not have to look for property in a prime location, as they are not looking for high footfall, which is necessary for a dine-in establishment. The investor could settle for a property of about 250-300 sq.ft. It can be located at a relatively inaccessible area, but with high customer demand.

As far as licenses are concerned, the most critical licenses required for a cloud kitchen are:

- FSSAI Food Safety & Standards Authority License
- Health/Trade License
- Eating House License
- Shop & Establishment Act
- GST Registration
- Fire Department
- Signage License
- Certificate of Environmental Clearance
- Signage License

It is also essential that you spend on marketing your food delivery brand, at least in the initial days.

Future of Cloud Kitchens

Even before COVID-19 people's eating habits were changing, some preferred eating out in the open air while some others preferred chilling out in front of to TV while devouring delicious meals ordered at home.

According to research 81% people order their meals online. This is a clear indication that cloud kitchens have a huge potential in India. There are, according to estimates, over 300 cloud kitchens running over 2000 internet restaurants in about 35 cities

According to DataLabs by Inc42, the food ordering market in India is expanding at a CAGR of 16 percent to reach \$17 billion by 2023. The market size of a cloud kitchen is expected to reach \$1.05 billion by 2023.

Earlier, the contribution by cloud kitchens was estimated to be 20 percent of the food delivery market. However, this percentage is changing and will undergo drastic changes in the favour of cloud kitchens.

Cloud kitchen as a concept was gaining popularity even before the pandemic struck, but now they have become more lucrative. Cloud kitchen as a concept was gaining popularity even before the pandemic struck, but now they have become more lucrative, primarily due to two reasons. One, they allow restaurants to deliver to the clients at home and second, they operate in a fraction of the traditional restaurant space.

Prior to COVID-19 there was a distinct divide between restaurants which were focused on delivery and those focused on the dine-in experience. But it is believed that in the future each restaurant would come up with a delivery focused brand of its own

However, for the cloud kitchen to succeed it is not only essential to understand the economics of partnership with delivery apps and the cost of procurement of menu items but also be aware of the customers' likes and dislikes and anticipate the items that the customers are likely to order during different times. ■

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Greet & Meet Fellow Foodies at Pop Ups!

By Sharmila Chand

When food is the ice-breaker at exclusive community events, what do you expect?

Plenty of culinary camaraderie, laughter, bonding with like-minded people, narration of stories, and of course, clinking of glasses. Now that's truly, a game changer! Yes, Food Pop Ups have been a Game Changer in the culinary world. Whether it's about Cheese Tasting or Tea / Coffee Brewing or Chefs offering an offbeat, well curated multi - course meal, Pop Ups are experiences one cannot imagine in regular dining at restaurants. They not only give an opportunity to explore different cuisines and cultures in a personal and intimate setting, one also gets to learn and understand various aspects of ingredients and cooking styles.

Known for setting up exclusive pop ups, Bengaluru based Neha Malik, Co-founder at Conosh beautifully puts it, "Conosh aims to create a friendly environment where kitchen heroes can happily transcend from a kitchen space to a living space; from being not just a creator but to a creator, presenter and narrator." Through their dynamic platform, Conosh outfit has been bringing people together over food and culinary conversations. Their buzzing community dining experiences and outdoor events are known for binding likeminded foodies in the city.

Likewise, Mumbai based Nikita Harisinghani, CEO at Chrome Entertainment has been very active in organizing exclusive pop ups. She says, "Close to the launch of our upbeat Silly Restaurant, yes, named Silly Community Bar & Kitchen in Bandra, our pop ups like Picnic Project, The Dessert Garden, Grazia Weekender, Street Food Festival, have been a big hit."



"I believe the purpose of pop up is to create a memorable experience which tickles you to revisit the restaurant again and again"
Chef Harangad Singh, Chef & Founder at Parat

Philosophy about Pop Ups

Pradipt Sinha, Director of Food & Beverage, Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla

"The culture of pop ups began in the year 2000 in Britain and Australia and it is gradually springing up in the Indian Food & Beverage scenario. It is an excellent opportunity for the chefs to showcase their culinary talent and promote a theme-based concept for a specific time period.

It also gives the restaurant or a brand an opportunity to assess if the concept or the trend is working out for a particular target group or locality. The most exciting part of the pop-up culture is that home chefs are getting the correct platform to showcase the magic of their culinary skills and regional cuisines, thus giving our guests a taste of their culture and preserving it for future generations. This was not possible earlier due to heavy cost involvement.

With the advent of Social Media like never before, the unique & quirky pop-up concept witnesses huge 'Pop-ularity' on social media. Also, the modern guests are well travelled with discerning palates and are on a look out for something new every time."

Chef Harangad Singh, Chef & Founder at Parat

"Pop up is all about showcasing the best of culinary techniques, thought process and culture of the restaurant and giving the feel of the restaurant."

Sugandha Saxena, Chef Founder - Okhli and Laddooh

"As a Chef, the idea of a pop up is definitely exciting, but also extremely challenging. My overall philosophy on pop ups is defined by the cuisine being served and the success of any such venture is definitely the menu. I believe pop ups for any food business should be a branding effort and never their main bread and butter. In addition, they are a great way to showcase new dishes, innovations and bestsellers to an audience that usually doesn't frequent the original establishment."

Nikita Harisinghani, CEO at Chrome Entertainment

"The presence of pop-ups and the popularity surrounding them are continually growing and rightly so because pop-ups are a great platform for entrepreneurs to meet potential customers, engage with them and educate them about their product offering. These days, most small businesses do not have a brick-and-mortar presence, and pop-ups help bridge that gap by bringing brands and potential buyers under the same roof."

Neha Malik, Co-founder at Conosh

Pop-ups, or as we call them, 'Conosh Tables' are a place of unforgettable dine-in experiences with fabulous hosts, cherishable flavours, brand new memories and new friends. We believe in creating a space which connects stories, is dynamic, and embraces change. A place where one not only tries out some delicious new cuisine but also network, socialise and swap stories and create beautiful memories over food. Conosh aims to create a friendly environment where kitchen heroes can happily transcend from a kitchen space to a living space; from being not just a creator but to a creator, presenter and narrator.

How you like to Organize Pop ups

Pradipt Sinha, Director of Food & Beverage, Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla

At Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla, we curate theatrical pop up concepts during our food festivals. We design



"I feel Pop Ups is the new name for food revolution in Food & Beverage space"

Pradipt Sinha, Director of Food & Beverage, Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla

mesmerizing sections at our restaurant where the guests not only relish a thematic food menu but also get transported to a different time or era- a foreign locale or a specific time frame from the history.

For our signature Dilli 6 food festival at Edesia this year, we focused on two cuisines namely Mughlai and Anglo Indian and created multiple dining experience



"2021 seems to be the year the entire world is learning to function and commercialise in a pandemic.

We have moved to smaller gatherings, and moved away from big crowds. With smaller gatherings, the pressure on food quality and consistency is high, but there also a massive opportunity for true talent to shine through"

Sugandha Saxena, Chef Founder - Okhli and Laddooh

set ups such as Shayari Durbar, Viceroy's House and Dilli Junction- Dine inside the train. We also collaborated with a real vendor from Chandni Chowk who had set up a special station to serve iconic 'Daulat Ki Chat' for the patrons.

So the four pillars on how our theatrical pop-up concept work is-

Choose a theme or time period: For our Dilli 6 food festival we selected 'From Ghalib's Dilli to Lutyen's New Delhi'

Curate unique dining experiences: We recreated a Shayari Durbar inspired from Ghalib Ki Haveli, a British style Viceroy's House set up and a Train & Engine Set up

Collaborate with vendors from the real locations for an authentic touch: We invited real vendor from Purani Dilli to whip out the winter delicacy Daulat Ki Chaat

Social Media Alert: Since these pop ups are time specific, it is very important to create instant buzz on social media to attract footfall. We curated a 'Dhai Kilo Ki Tikki Dumbbell Challenge' which witnessed a great visibility on social media.

In short, the pop ups include but not restricted to the food trucks, secret suppers, chef exchange/takeover and home chef series as we conventionally know of.

Chef Harangad Singh, Chef & Founder at Parat

First shortlist the restaurant where you want to exchange the thought of your restaurant or place and you can give experience of your food.

Make a very crisp menu with varieties of dishes which inspires everyone.

Practice a story to be told with every dish because every dish has a story to tell.

Alignment of service sequence.

Nikita Harisinghani, CEO at Chrome Entertainment

When it comes to pop-ups, it's important to first find a niche, whether it's a fashion or a food pop-up, I like to stick to one niche.

Once you have a pop-up concept in place, the venue is key, as it needs to be accessible, the right size, and affordable, all at the same time.

Next is getting the right mix of brands on board for the pop-up, brands that will add value to the pop-up.

Lastly, spread the word through the correct marketing channels to invite the right audiences to the pop-up.

Neha Malik, Co-founder at Conosh

We always keep in mind "What are

people looking for” and “what are they expecting from us”. And this is how we initiate the planning.

Curation of the experience is extremely important at Conosh. This involves everything from smallest of the things to biggest ones. Planning the menus with the homechefs, tasting the food, designing the look & feel of it and finally the execution of the same with the homechef. Extreme attention to detail uplifts the entire experience.

Retaining the narrative of the person who is hosting the pop up. People do go by trends while deciding on which themed pop up to attend, but one of the important parameter being, the way the story is told to them. A narrative which is original at the same time very relatable. That's the soul of the pop up.

Making the pop-ups a memory that one would always like to remember is the motto that we swear by.

Sugandha Saxena, Chef Founder - Okhli and Laddooh

Organising a pop up is an intensive exercise, but here are the first 4 steps I like to get done in the organisation process:

Menu: What defines the success of any popup is how much thought has gone into creating the offering. I tend to prefer menus that have an optimal mix of spicy and mild within the savoury section, and atleast 3 dessert options.

Venue: From location accessibility to area available to interiors, the next most crucial element is venue. For my Kayastha Cuisine brand Okhli, I will always choose a venue with a fully equipped kitchen however, for my Indian Dessert Brand Laddooh, I would prioritise an open air setting.

Guest List: While the format of most pop ups is ticketed, its a great idea to have a guest list for your brand.

Decor: Specific to the brand in question and menu, decor would be number 4 on my priority list but equally crucial to all other elements involved in planning. My aesthetic is understated and heavily floral, so most of what my team spends time on is table setting.

Quick Tips on how best to Organize Pop ups

Chef Sahil Singh, Culinary Head at Vdeliver.online

Market it well



“With more people moving towards a healthier lifestyle, we will definitely be seeing more of Vegan, Keto, Gluten-Free Food pop-ups becoming a 2021 food trend.

Nikita Harisinghani, CEO at Chrome Entertainment

Understand the location of the restaurant

Understand the clientele of the restaurant and

Promote it to the fullest.

Chef Harangad Singh, Chef & Founder at Parat

Decide your location which must be easily accessible to your guests.

Decide your menu with limited varieties of dishes.



“Gatherings which are intimate, local in feel and ingredients, backed by a narrative which is more colloquial, will help concepts which are mainstream, upcoming and innovative to transition well into the pop up space and thrive”

Neha Malik, Co-founder at Conosh

Align the service sequence and follow the prep list before the event.

Pradipt Sinha, Director of Food & Beverage, Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla

Well rounded research on the proposed theme & cuisine, target market mapping, competition analysis, consumer preference& location.

Plan on practicality in terms of kitchen equipments, cooking space, set up, décor and eating areas

Focus on safety and hygiene standards during such extra ordinary times

Strategized collaborations and promotional strategy to create immense buzz

Nikita Harisinghani, CEO at Chrome Entertainment

New Concept Pop-Ups always garner great media attention. For example, we were the first to launch an all dessert pop-up in Mumbai and it was extremely successful.

Find brands that are unique and have something new to offer

Have live acts and entertainment to lift the energy of the pop-up

Get industry-specific influencers to spread the word about the pop-up

Neha Malik, Co-founder at Conosh

Knowing your customer is the key to organize any pop-up. While organising the pop-ups this can help you work on the details and make it an experience that's worth the time and money of the customer.

Make people feel at home. While organizing any kind of pop-up, the customer should always feel that they are the most significant part of it.

Personalization plays a crucial role in organizing pop-ups. Curate the whole experience in a way that the attendees feel that it's designed personally for them and that is the best way to make them engage with you and your brand making them come to you time & again

Post pop-up engagement should be kept in mind while organizing the experience. The attendee/ customer should take back something extra than what they were expecting so that they always have something to connect with even after the event which will eventually bring them back to you, making them a regular to a loyalist! ■



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Intricacies of Olive Oil

While most traditional bakery recipes include the usage of butter, fat, lard, or sometimes vegetable, the Chefs constantly try to tweak things to discover healthier and newer options. However, such efforts may not be required for olive oil. The fact is that olive oil of different grades and quality has been part of the Mediterranean diet for a long time, and it continues to find favours with the Bakery Chefs around the world.

However, baking with olive oil does not

work out to be an economic option, as it does not come cheaper than most other available alternatives. And if you use the lower end of pomace or artificially tweaked pure olive oil that has had aroma and other impurities removed by heat and chemical treatment, you lose all the advantages of cold pressed olive oil in the bargain.

I recently tasted potato chips freshly fried in extra virgin olive oil. The chips were dry, as they did not retain any oily residue, and a heavenly smell of the extra

virgin olive oil emanated almost delicately from the chips.

As for the cookies, with simple recipe that included only four ingredients in equal proportion – extra virgin olive oil, flour, sugar and water, are definitely heavenly in their texture and taste.

Style Selection

For baking mildly flavoured cakes one needs to use a cold pressed olive oil that is graded extra light in tasting. There are some Protected Denomination of Origins in the North of Italy where the olive oils have the lightest possible texture with just a hint of fruitiness to it. Ciabata bread of Italy gets its flavours not just from whole or cut olives in it, but also from the olive oil used in the process of mixing the flour before baking.

Few Italian companies have even managed to extend the shelf-life of some of the oils through a different filtration process called selective filtration. Essentially, filtration is needed to avoid fermentation of suspended particles in the oil from the fruit's pulp. Hence unfiltered oil, which is rarely available in the market,





has a short self-life.

They use special paper filter which catches the water, but lets the aroma inducing particles remain untouched. While the 'bitter' polyphenols are caught in the filter, the 'sweet' polyphenols get through the paper, increasing the shelf-life of the oil in the process. One can draw the parallel between the tannins of the wines and compounds of the polyphenols to drive home the point.

Few companies in Italy with an individualistic approach crush the relevant herb or condiment, e.g. celery, onions, garlic, ginger, peppers and many other items with the first cold press of the olive oil, thereby infusing the flavour of the additions to the extra virgin olive oil. These oils can add a new dimension to either cooking with flavoured olive oil, or just as a drizzle over freshly baked rolls and breads.

Comparing Fat

Essentially, all oils are 100 percent fat, and all oils contain 14 grams of fat and 120 calories per tablespoon. But olive oil delivers a bonus; it contains more monounsaturated fat (77 percent) than any other fat or oil, making it a better choice for the Bakery Chefs. Add to that the aromatic factor and you have a winner on hands as baking ingredient.

Olive oil gives cakes and cookies a light texture and it can be used with confidence in lieu of butter or other oils. It is better to use a lower intensity, late harvest extra-virgin olive oil during baking, as it provides a subtle flavour. However, the dominant taste of high intensity olive oils may interfere with the taste of the final product.

Ways to Use

You can also use olive oil for preparing a baking pan before adding the dough or other mixture. Simply brush the oil onto your favorite baking pan, cookie sheet, spring-form pan, or other type of baking dishes or pans.

There are several factors that one needs



to consider while deciding whether you can use olive oil in the recipes that suggest the use of vegetable oil. Thus baking with olive oil, instead of vegetable oil, is an option, but it really depends on what you are baking and what results you are expecting.

It is a fact that using olive oil for baking is a familiar feature in Mediterranean style of cooking. It is evident that baking with olive oil has actually been in practice for centuries. Olive oil dramatically cuts down the cholesterol and saturated fat content of desserts. It produces lighter-tasting baked goods and allows the flavour of the other ingredients to come forth. Because olive oil contains vitamin E, it helps to naturally maintain the freshness of baked goods, and creates moist cakes, biscuits and muffins.

Olive oil is also a "healthy oil" as it contains polyunsaturated fat. But there



are a few other vegetable oils that also contain polyunsaturated fat - for instance soybean oil, canola oil, and walnut oil are all good sources of this healthy kind of fat. So, if your purpose for baking with olive oil is because it is a healthy fat, you have a few other options. Using olive oil instead of other vegetable oils won't affect the calorie content.

If your reason for using olive oil in baking recipes is flavour, you may find the use of olive oil quite useful indeed. Gourmet olive oils are highly flavoured and taste like olives. Olive oil marries well with citrus flavours, but not so well with chocolate. If you are trying to make brownies, using a low flavour olive oil may be your best option. One of the reasons why a recipe suggests the use of vegetable oil is because of its 'neutral' flavour, and good olive oil is anything but neutrally flavoured.

Replacing vegetable oil with olive oil in recipes may be an option if you don't have regular vegetable oil at hand, but then you must ensure that you are not disappointed with the flavour. If you must make those brownies, taste your olive oil before using it.

Caution

Remember that any olive oil that is no longer fit for consumption raw will only carry its flaws to the baked good as well. Any oil which is not kept properly needs to be discarded. When exposed to heat of the environment, or stored for too long, it gets exposed to moisture, and the volatile oil (olive or other) will go bad and must never be used in baking.

Store olive oil in an opaque container in a cool, dark place. You can also refrigerate it if you wish. The oil may become cloudy when it is cold, but it will clarify as it warms up to room temperature.

In the end, it can be said that baking with olive oil, instead of vegetable oil, is possible, and might even render a wonderful product. You just have to know what you are going to create with your recipe. Bon appetit! ■

Pickled



Pleasures

You can find pickles for the diet conscious, oil-free kind; pickles full of vitamins with mineral rich ingredients. There are also pickles made using just the rind of certain citrus fruits tossed in chilli or ground aromatic spices.

Aristotle praised the curative powers of pickled cucumbers and Napoleon fed his army on them. Certain fruits like lemons and others (rich in vitamins) were preserved and fed to sailors to prevent scurvy and other ailments on long voyages. With the passage of millennia, pickled pleasures are still attracting varied palates.

Sweet, hot, spicy, tangy, whichever way you may describe your pickles, it is likely that they would have one common factor – they would be delicious. It is a side dish which adds flavour to the main dishes. There are a wide variety of pickles, encompassing almost every vegetable, fruit, meat, fish we know being used as a primary ingredient.

Pickle making in India is a national past-time and constitutes women of our past generations' integral part of culinary achievements. Even today in the hustle and bustle of cities, you can find many a lady of the house priding herself on serving 'homemade pickles.'

Some pickles age like wine and mature after a while and can be preserved for years. The use of certain spices like ginger, asafoetida, turmeric and saunf (cumin) in pickles facilitate digestion. Certain spices like clove, cinnamon and ginger are used for their warming properties. Cumin and cardamom are used in pickles as cooling spices.

The variety of ingredients in pickles is seemingly endless. You name the ingredient and chances are it is being used in a pickle. But there are hot favourites. In India, there are the universal lime, mango and chilli pickle, and the temptingly sweet mango chunda to name a few.

Indian Achar

Indian pickles are as diverse as the country itself, with each state and community having its special recipes descended from generation to generation. The most common variety of course is the 'mango pickle, followed by lime pickle, chili pickle, etc. as they grow more or less all over the country.

Almost all vegetables and raw fruits can be pickled. Pickling is the best way to ensure the preservation of vegetables and fruits that are over abundant in their harvest season and unavailable for the rest of the year. Usually, no chemical preservative or artificial food colour is being used in pickles and preservation is maintained by the use of common salt, spices and tempered vegetable oil, which makes the pickle a healthier food option than other preserves such as jams and jellies.

Some pickles like the whole lemon pickle

of Nepal have medicinal properties and are effective against indigestion as well as anorexia. The spices used in the pickle like mustard seed, chilly powder, black pepper, fenugreek, asafoetida and many more are mostly appetite enhancing and stimulate the secretion of digestive juices, thereby facilitating digestion. The raw vegetables and fruits have good nutritional value; most of which is preserved in the form of pickle. Sometimes meat, fish and poultry is also preserved in the form of pickle, using spices, salt and oil. However, not much of the non-vegetarian variety of pickles are produced commercially in India.

Business in India

The commercial production of pickle started in India almost seven to eight decades ago when the homely pickle crept out of the kitchen to small cottage industries where



the local women would gather to cut the seasonal fruit, grind and mix the spices and oil. But then the scope of pickles' commercial success was limited due to poor packaging facilities and paucity of standardised procedures. Also, there were no laws to maintain hygiene and nutritional standards.

It was only after the development of packaging materials and procedures, which could retain the flavours and quality of the pickles, that pickles could successfully be manufactured on a large scale. Ease of transportation and storage in the modern times was also an important factor. Special packaging materials gradually developed keeping all these factors in mind.

Manufacturing

Now, we have large-scale manufacture of pickles in the country. The required fruit

and vegetables are procured in bulk during the season. For example, the raw mango season lasts for a short four to six weeks when it has to be picked from the orchards, brought to the factories, sorted, washed, cut, brined and stored for consumption as pickles, all through the year. Modern factories now use automatic machines for washing, cutting of the raw fruit and vegetables, grinding of spices, mixing all the ingredients, packing into containers and making the product market ready.

High hygiene standards have to be maintained and label designs have to be approved by the authority to comply with the law. The oil-based pickle also has clearly defined norms regarding the quality of oil used and the amount of oil that should stand over the pickle. This is to ensure the right preservation of the pickle.

However, despite the advances of

mechanisation, still almost 80 percent of the pickle manufactured in India is in the cottage and small-scale sector involving traditional methods of manufacture, which does not require any sophisticated machinery. Here, the process is almost entirely manual, the knife being the most important tool. However in a modern large factory, the pickle making process may be mechanised since quality standards have to be maintained stringently.

In the Indian context, pickle making is an ancient skill that is now honed to perfection using modern technology. Manufacturers armed with closely guarded grandmothers' recipes use scientific systems and processes to produce standardised pickles sold all over the world, which are relished by all.

Storage

The packaging for pickle is also special since only food grade plastic materials having good barrier properties can be used for packaging pickles. Since pickles are used by varied segments of the society as well as many establishments and institutions dealing with food, there are a wide variety of packs that are used ranging from 20 kg plastic drums to small single time use portion packs of 15 gm. The intermediate 5 kg, 2kg and 1 kg packs are usually for institutional sales and the 400 gm bottle is primarily catered towards the busy lady of the house who has no more the time for going through the elaborate procedure of pickle making but at the same time wants to taste the wide variety of pickles now available in the market. ■

The Perennial Taste of



Kebabs

Whether it is a night party or an evening of introspection and irrespective of whether there is a glass of whisky or beer accompanying the treat, kebab is perfect partner at any such occasion. If you are a meat lover, a plateful of well prepared kebabs do have the potential to take you to a different world; a world where only aroma and taste reigns and the worries melt in the warmth of the mouth... like the glitter of diamonds, the taste and aroma of kebabs too can delight many generations. They are for all seasons, and their gastronomic appeal does have the potential to perennially flow across ages.

Any connoisseur of Mughlai food must have savoured the succulent kebabs, which come in wide varieties, shapes and tastes. But in general, all kebabs are simply

sumptuous. Though the word kebab may be of Persian in origin, but its taste has influenced the lovers of good food the world over. However, kebabs are not only an integral part of the Mughlai dishes from India. They have their presence in Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Central Asian, and even African cuisines.

Even people in many European countries enjoy this wonderful meat dish, whose taste has withstood the test of time. Kebabs in general constitute grilled or broiled meats of goat, chicken, lamb, and bovine creatures, etc. In the Muslim and Jewish world, the intake of pork is prohibited by religion, but pork kebabs are not that uncommon in Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece and the United Kingdom. Even in Goa, pork kebabs are being enjoyed.

Misty History

The history of kebab, like many other world class delicacies, is wrapped in the foils of mystery. According to the Arabic tradition, kebab is believed to be invented in medieval Iran, where soldiers used to grill meat on their swords, by holding them over field-fires. However, this claim is disputed by many who state that kebab was originated in the East Mediterranean region, during the ancient times, a region which includes the modern nation states of Greece, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Cyprus, Israel, the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In fact, the chronicles of Ibn Battuta, the famous globe trotter of the medieval age, has revealed that kebabs were partaken in the royal houses of India at least as far back as the Sultanate period, and was

also enjoyed by the commoners during that period, who had it with naan for their breakfast. Thus we can say that kebab has a long history, which is supplemented by its tasty future.

Though kebabs' history is disputable, their taste is not. India may have had its association with kebabs during the Sultanate period too, but its full-fledged love affair with kebabs took shape during the Mughal era. In India, shami kebab, sheekh kebab, kakori kebab, kalmi kebab and galouti kebab have played crucial roles in shaping the taste buds of generations of connoisseurs of Mughlai food. They are ideally served with roomali rotis, a thin bread of the shape of a handkerchief, onion salad, and mint or coriander chutney. Of course, without any accompaniments also these kebabs don't taste that bad.

Some Popular Kebabs of India

Among the various popular kebabs in India, shami kebab is a favourite. Nicely prepared shami kebabs can give you a blissful sensation, and can serve as perfect accompaniments to a glass of vodka or whisky. It constitutes of a small patty of minced mutton or beef, along with ground chickpeas and spices. The delicacy is very much popular in India. You can enhance the taste of shami kebabs, or for that matter any kebab which is popular in India, by garnishing it with lemon juice and/or sliced raw onions.

Many food historians believe that shami kebabs were introduced to India during the Mughal era, by the Muslim emigrants from the Middle-East. However, the opinions are divided over its origin. Some believe this delicacy originated in Syria, while some other groups of food historians believe that it is of Persian origin. But who cares about the origin as long as it tastes great, which it does!

The seekh kebab is also a very much popular dish in India. They are made of cubes of lamb, goat or chicken meat, or even beef, which are complemented by a variety of spices. The meat cubes are traditionally broiled or roasted in a tandoor oven. The cubes of meat are threaded on a skewer, and then roasted. The radiant heat from the tandoor slowly grills or roasts the meat and due to the lack of direct heat from the fire, the juices of the meat do not escape, thereby adding flavour and keeping the meat's moisture intact. Garnish and accompaniments in seekh kebab are not much different from the of shami kebab.



If one happens to visit Lucknow, shouldn't miss the taste of kakori kebab, for doing so can be a gastronomic crime of sorts for every non-vegetarian person. It is believed that this type of kebab preparation originated in the Kakori town of Uttar Pradesh, which gives its name. This kebab is made of the paste of finely grind minced goat meat, along with the support of many wonderful spices. The meat is



grilled on a skewer over burning charcoal. With accompaniments of roomali roti, onion and mint or coriander chutney, a plate of kakori kebab can take you very near to a state of hedonistic bliss.

Besides Lucknow, in some nooks and corners of Old Delhi also you can find eating joints which can prepare this delicacy with the right subtlety and precision. For kakori kebab, the meat has not only to be delicately minced and spiced, and grind to a paste, it must also be kept moist for long enough to get that special culinary sensation; a sensation which simply melts in your mouth. It is a job which

involves great finesse, and is not the cup of tea for an average cook or Chef. No wonder, many stories abound around the preparation of kakori kebab.

Then there is kalmi kebab and galouti kebab, without which traditional Indian Mughlai cuisine is incomplete. For preparing kalmi kebab, marinate the chicken drumsticks with yoghurt or curd, add some freshly grind spices, and then place the drumsticks on a tandoor. Ideal garnishing for these chicken drumsticks can be mint leaves, and ideal accompaniments can be onion and roomali roti. The dish, which originated in Iran, attained popularity in India during the Moghal era.

There was a Nawab of Lucknow, who was a connoisseur of good kebabs, but due to his sensitive teeth, he couldn't savour those. So for him, his expert cooks made a special kebab, which was soft enough for him to chew. In fact, this kebab doesn't need to be chewed; it is always willing to melt in your mouth. Thus galouti kebab was born. Since then, this succulent treat, made generally of minced goat meat or beef, has made a niche for itself in the kebab world of India. Galouti kebab is Awadhi cuisine at its best, and can rub shoulders with kakori kebab and the famous biryani of Lucknow. Though you can get galouti kebab in many five-star hotel chains across India, but the best place to try this delicacy in its most authentic flavour and taste is in the streets of Lucknow.

Though all of these kebabs may not be born in India, they refuse to leave India. They now have a special niche in India's rich and varied culinary culture, which is traditional and cosmopolitan at the same time. ■

“A Curious Chef who Believes In Discipline & Training”

Chef Ravish Mishra, Executive Chef, The Westin Goa



Chef Ravish Mishra is Executive Chef at The Westin Goa primarily responsible for looking after and leading kitchen operations while also mentoring a comprehensive team and managing all the food and beverage outlets on the property. He brings his extensive knowledge and hands-on experience in international as well as Indian cuisine, with 15 years of rich experience in the field of food and beverage. Chef Ravish has been perfecting and excelling in the culinary field since 2008. He completed his graduation from IHM Hyderabad, post which he joined the prestigious WMI (ITC's Management Training Program).

Over the years, Chef Ravish has developed his own standard of cuisine with deep commitment to hospitality. From customizing and catering to every palate, to understanding the nitty-gritties

of various techniques, Chef Ravish expresses his love for food by playing with ingredients from around the world.

In his previous roles, he was associated with pioneer brands of the industry like ITC Ltd., Intercontinental Hotels and Carnival Cruise Lines before joining Marriott. He then completed a three-year stint with the pre-opening team at The Westin Kolkata. In 2018, he made the switch to Marriott Bhopal where he conceptualized many new concepts of dining and cuisines.

In an exclusive interview with [Sharmila Chand](#), he talks about his work philosophy and more ...

What is your area of expertise?

My expertise lies in Modern progressive Indian and Classic Indian food. During my short tenure of 3 years in the US, I learnt a lot of Mexican and Caribbean cooking as well.

Had you not been doing this then what?

An IAS officer, I am from Bihar, everyone there either becomes a doctor, an engineer and then an IAS officer. Another career option would have been a fashion designer.

What is your source of inspiration?

There is a lot of love and affection that goes into cooking for the family meal and that is what makes it special. I totally admire it because I feel it is divine and hence inspires me the most. A family meal cooked by the mother is my source of inspiration.

What has been the most rewarding moment in your career?

The day I got accepted into ITC hotels as a management trainee. I cherish that day till date.

How has the journey been so far?

I started my career at ITC, post which I went to the US. On returning to India, I started working with The Marriott Hotels. With Marriott, I learnt the art of opening new hotels and so it's been wonderful so far. It's been an amazing 15 years in hospitality.

What skills are necessary to be a good Chef?

Well, the first thing is to be disciplined. If you are not, you will not be a good chef. The other major skill is that you are a good learner, keen to learn new things and work towards improving your skills.

How do you de-stress yourself?

I love spending quality time with my family - my son, daughter and my wife.

How do you rate yourself as a Chef?

This is a tough question because to be

very frank I don't know my negative points much. Having said this, it is always good and important to know your negatives. In response to your question, I would rate myself 9 out of 10.

Fav Cuisine?

Indian cuisine and in Indian, I would pick the Amritsari cuisine.

Fav Spice?

There are so many, but if I have to pick one, it would be jeera or cumin powder as it is very versatile and flavourful. If added to any dish, the taste changes and becomes brilliant.

Fav Equipment?

The Mortar Pestle, also known as the simple Indian Hamam Dasta, granite mortar pestle. This is because when you crush an ingredient using it, the natural oil and flavours comes out of the spices and results in brilliant flavour.

Fav Restaurant/food joint?

When I was in boarding school, there was a small chaat stall in the area. We used to sneak out from the hostel, with 5 rupees in our pocket, the shop was called 'Panditji Ka Chaat'. Till date, I have not had anything like that. Apart from that, The French Laundry in Washington is my favorite restaurant.

Your Fav Diner ?

I would love to feed the kids, youngsters because they have a lot of questions to ask. They don't have a set opinion about food, they are open to try a lot of dishes and then form their choices. And, to fulfill their desires, you have to really work very smartly. Hence, I think my favourite diners, would be kids.

Your Hot Selling item?

Avocado Toast is my all-time favourite, Lamb Galouti is also amazing.

The Best Compliment you have received?

M.S. Dhoni in the first season of the IPL matches, had come from Chennai

and I was then the Sous Chef at ITC The Windsor. It was 1 o'clock in the night, and we were cutting a cake to celebrate their win. After the celebrations, he called me personally, he shook my hand and said that the MURG BEMISAAL is amazing and I've never had this earlier. That was one of the best compliments so far.

Your philosophy of work?

Total discipline. Love your work, but discipline is what takes you to success.

Lessons learnt in the kitchen?

Punctuality and Precision

Last meal on Earth: What would you choose?

Khichdi. That's my soul food

10 years from now?

10 years from now, I want to go more into the opening of hotels and designing new concepts of restaurants, I find it more creative.

What are your future plans?

Open more hotel for Marriott, work more for guest satisfaction, and helping the hotel in achieving its food and beverage targets.

What are the problems and challenges faced by Chefs?

I think nowadays, the maximum focus is given on plating and how does the food look, but nobody wants to learn the basics right. This is witnessed with the new generation of Chefs who are coming on board. So, when we onboard a Chef, we train them so that they know the basics, and deliver what is required.

What is the best career advice you have received?

When I was coming back to India from the US, I called my mentor and told him that I am coming back and going to get married. His advice to me was, never make two big decisions in life together. Between changing jobs and getting married, focus on one as both need equal importance.

Water Conservation and Food Safety

Hand-washing is an essential part of operating a kitchen safely. But with many hand sink faucets delivering water at 15 L/min or more, the amount of water – and money – wasted can really add up. By simply adding a T&S CEF Sensor Faucet, you can significantly reduce the amount of water wasted while still maintaining a clean and healthy kitchen.

That's what T&S CEF Sensor Faucets were designed to do – a sanitary alternative that will save you money and reliably and effectively work hard at a surprisingly modest cost. Even minor investments have a huge impact on saving water, energy, and money! The larger the



facility and the more changes you make, the higher the savings will be, because when you reduce the amount of water you use, you also save on energy costs by needing to heat less water.

Hygiene has recently become even more critical, especially in public spaces. We don't realise, washing hands actually can defeat the very purpose of improving hygiene. We use soiled hands to touch the faucet, wash our hands and then touch the same faucet again to shut off then water, again recontaminating or resoiling our hands again.

Sensor faucets are the perfect solution for this problem. The use of sensor faucets has become more and more prevalent in recent times especially due to COVID and many facilities are retrofitting sensor faucets in most public spaces. Due to the heavy duty usage in public spaces, sensor faucets needed to be:

- Rugged
- Long Lasting
- Conserve Water

All put together can bring down the total cost. Being electronically operated, sensor faucets come with a need for high reliability and longer life.

People often invest in sensor faucets that are low cost but end up struggling to repair and spending more money to replace it.

T&S Sensor faucets come with a high degree of reliability:

- Saves up to 3.79 Liters / 1 gallon per hand-washing
- Various Flow Rates Available (1.89 LPM / 8.33 LPM)
- Below deck controls
- Alkaline Batteries that lasts atleast for 500,000 cycles & up to 1 Million cycles for the Solenoid Valves.
- Built-in AC / DC Option

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Chef's Choice

Knife is said to be 'life' of a chef. In fact, holding on to a good quality of knife is as important as for any user in the kitchen. In this very segment the most exclusive branded knife of India, which has been closely associated with star hotels and catering units is Remington Steel. Over the years the company has won an essential place in the commercial kitchens of India. The knives are made from tough, carbon stainless steel that ensures greater edge retention. These knives are heat treated and tempered in an inert atmosphere.



Remington knives are appreciated due to its sharp, long lasting edges, user-friendly shapes and sizes and wide range that it offers. The wide range includes French Cook's Knives, Paring Knives, Steak Knives, Vegetable Knives, Carving Knives, Slicing Knives, and many more. Remington Knives are fully forged to shape from high tough, Carbon Stainless Steel that ensures greater edge retention. Remington Knives are heat treated and tempered in an inert atmosphere. Edges of Remington Knives are ten times sharper and longer than the conventional knives. They are known for their full-length tang for perfect balance and for easier and less tiring cutting.

Quality of Remington Knives is at par or above as compared to imported knives. They are precisely handcrafted and finished with each blade honed to an exact perfection and lasting experience.

Remington Steel Arts
remingtonsteelarts@yahoo.com

Giffard Syrups

Originated in France, Giffard is one of the leading names in fruits and plants syrups. Émile Giffard was a dispensing chemist living in Angers. Blessed with an inquisitive mind and a gourmet taste, he invented Menthe-Pastille, followed by lemonade & orangeade. Five generations later, the family business still bears the GIFFARD name and is providing the best of the products worldwide. A favourite amongst Chefs, culinary experts, mixologists, professional bartenders and pastry chefs, Giffard is known to provide an astonishing variety of flavours to choose from. They offer a very large range of pure sugar, highly flavoured and colourful syrups which have been pasteurized to ensure perfect preservation. They use the sugar which comes from French sugar beets which are transformed into naturally white sugar. Made from 25% of concentrated fruits juices and selected



plants extracts or spices, these syrups have a three-year shelf life. The versatility of their innovative flavours is their speciality. They can be used to make simple drinks topped with water or flavoured hot beverages, cocktails etc. A trusted name in the industry, Euro Foods is proud to introduce them to the Indian culinary scene.

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“Creating and Executing New F&B Concepts Excites Me!”

Shoeb Mohammed, Director of Food & Beverages, Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty



With 10 years of enriching experience in the hospitality industry, Shoeb Mohammed is Director of Food & Beverages at Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty. He has been with Hyatt Hotels since 2014. Over the years, he has worked in different capacities at Park Hyatt Toronto and Grand Hyatt Kochi. In his current position, he endeavours to utilize his immense experience in strengthening the iconic property and convention centre’s F&B strategies, guest experiences while driving operational efficiency. Hailing from Hyderabad, he loves to travel, engage with communities and is a football enthusiast.

In an exclusive interview with **Sharmila Chand**, he highlights his work philosophy and more...

What do you enjoy most about being a Food & Beverage Director?

The most dynamic part of my work is that every guest is different; catering to their varied needs and making sure they have the best possible experience drives me ahead.

Creating and executing new F&B concepts interests me. The 90-foot-long event boat of ours is a classic example – providing a safe and spectacular dining experience onboard this megalith is truly a mix of creativity and strong teamwork. I enjoy moving about the outlets and banquet spaces, looking for new promotions and to find out how we can provide solutions to different and emerging segments.

Is your job challenging?

Our process of associate management is drawn from Diversity-Inclusion-Equity; even so, managing a large team with varied skills and capacities is time-consuming and challenging but provides scope for continuous assessment and betterment.

Our hotel is suited for most types of guest profiles, from business travel to weddings and intimate social events to international conferences and large gatherings. This proves to be a challenge for the team as I have to ensure that all the planning, research and execution, within the department and between different departments are seamless and effective.

Pressures you encounter at work?

The diverse types of events at the hotel

and convention center require different and specific planning processes. Effectively streamlining this is something we have to develop as a team and sustain.

Tips or insights to strengthen your team?

I have a strict policy against micro managing – when I started out in the hospitality industry, I was lucky to have mentors who inculcated this value and showed me the benefits of the same. Being a good listener has always helped; I believe in delegation, and then extending my support only when necessary.

What is the USP of your F&B outlets / brand?

The Grand Hyatt brand is about the bold and the iconic, and the outlets and properties are created based on those pillars as well. Malabar Café is an award-winning restaurant serving authentic Kerala recipes. The rooftop Colony Clubhouse & Grill is a gourmet’s delight – locally acquired produce to European grills. Colony bar offers classic beverages, spice-infused cocktails and Draught beer (a first in Kerala) as well as a topline single malt selection. Thai Soul is a vibrant poolside restaurant inspired by Bangkok streetfood, with 3 expat chefs.

What is your working philosophy?

Reinforcing Hyatt's global food and beverage philosophy – ‘Thoughtfully Sourced, Carefully Served’ – I believe that

food is a connecting factor for people across the globe. Grand Hyatt Kochi’s continuous focus on sustainable initiatives, zero waste practices, using recycled paper and materials and supporting the local community is a lingering emphasis on the current trends and measures.

Anything else you would like to say?

We have recognized the prospects for our dining components to go digital, and have taken measures to make sure they are all available to the guest at a click. From restaurant menus on Hyatt Restaurants – a web platform that brings together all of Hyatt’s restaurants under one roof – to contact-less dining experience and social media promotions, the seamless journey for a guest is paramount for us. Whether it is the World of Hyatt app, Hyatt Dining Club website or the brand websites itself, Hyatt has focused on keeping guests’ requirements at the top.

What is your take on how best to cope with challenges of the present pandemic times?

The shift from grand, larger than life events to small, intimate get-togethers and personalized weddings has given us opportunity to plan re-imagined experiences for our guests. We have adapted to the roadblocks of the pandemic by designing creative takeaways, brunch in a box and delivery options utilizing local talent.

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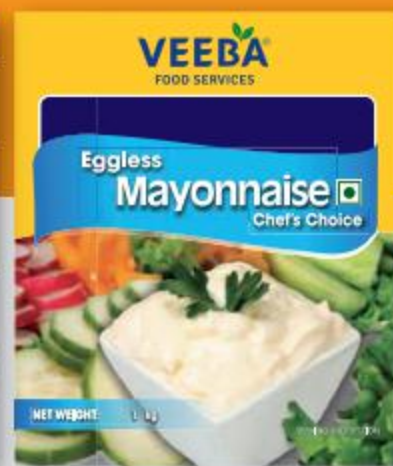
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