

HAMMER

Food & Beverage

Dec-Jan 2025 • Volume XXII Number 2 ₹ 100

Business Review

Business magazine for food service & food retail professionals



Business
Cleanliness and Hygiene: The Watchwords for Restaurateurs

Feature
Food & Beverage Trends for 2025

Agri
Sweet, Cool and Healthy

Beverage
Liqueurs: Adding Value to Cocktails

Theme Cuisine
The Aroma from Japan

Food
Currying Flavours

Flavours of East Indian Cuisine

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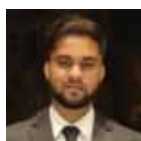


AWARDS



Akash Prasad
India & Subcontinent

aprasad@tsbrass.com
Ph: 7022569150



Yashaswi Anand
Western & Central India

yanand@tsbrass.com
Ph: 7709586000



Amit Verma
North & East India

averma@tsbrass.com
Ph: 9958300651



Dr. Punit Singh
Marketing Coordinator
India & Subcontinent

psingh@tsbrass.com
Ph: 9910953325

For more information





Taste of Indian food differs from region to region, with each region having its own recipes which have been passed down through generations. North Indian food and South Indian food is popular across most of the cities but there seems to be, comparatively, less awareness about East Indian food in the country. Cover story highlights the diversity of East Indian cuisine with varied regional styles and its increasing awareness.

Cleanliness and hygiene are critical for a restaurant's success as they build customer loyalty, attract new customers, protect public health, avoid legal consequences. Business story delves on the steps being taken by the restaurateurs to keep their kitchens clean and hygienic, thus provides opportunities to entrepreneurs to venture into the kitchen wellness industry.

The culinary world continues to evolve with innovative trends reflecting diners' specific requirements. There is a clear focus towards healthy food options, global cuisines influences, immersive culinary experiences, celebrating hyper local food, reviving regional cuisines and indigenous ingredients. Feature story explore the views of leading chefs on the major food trends expected to make waves in the coming year.

Agri section explore watermelon, a delicious fruit, endowed with impressive water and fiber content, which can easily taste more delicious in the scorching Indian summers. Food section talks about curries, which have undergone several innovations and modifications over the years, are not only germane to India's culinary character. Beverage section finds nothing can surpass the satisfaction of a post-prandial alcoholic drink that a glass of fine liqueur provides.

Theme cuisine section look at the popularity of pan Asian flavours that has been a prominent food trend in India during the last few years. Health & Nutrition section elaborate on the emerging need of probiotics as an important category of food supplement in India.

Regular sections, hygiene, supplies, restaurant and interview offers interesting reading. The current issue further updates on news, reports, movements and events of the industry.

Food & Beverage

Business Review

Publisher cum Editor
Rajneesh Sharma
rajneeshhammer@gmail.com

Resident Editor
Sharmila Chand (Delhi)
Ashok Malkani (Mumbai)

Layout & Design
Hari Kumar V

Production Assistant
Simran Gomer

Advertising Sales
Nikhil Kumar
Sumesh Sharma

Director Sales
Sanjay Anand
Mobile: +91 981136837

Director Operations
Rajat Taneja
Mobile: +91 9810315463

Editorial & Advertising Office:
Delhi:
Hammer Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
206, Samrat Bhawan, Ranjeet Nagar Commercial Complex,
New Delhi-110008
Phone: 91-11-45084903, 45093486

Website: www.fbrmag.com

E-mail: info@hammer.co.in

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Aahar 2025

The International Food & Hospitality Fair

March 04-08, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi



The forthcoming edition of AAHAR 2025 - the International Food & Hospitality Fair, to be held during March 04-08, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, is the most awaited B2B event in Asia. It is the largest fair in the food & beverage and the hospitality sectors in India. The 39th edition will feature new trends in F&B as well as hospitality services, food processing, culinary tech, retail and new innovations.

The specialised B2B event for the food & beverage and hospitality industry has grown by leaps & bounds during the recent years and is today regarded as a well-known destination for global vendors and sourcing professionals from the food & beverage and hospitality industry across the planet.

AAHAR is being organized by ITPO with support of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), Agricultural and Processed Food Products Development Authority (APEDA) and apex industry associations, Association of Resource Companies for

Hospitality Industry of India (ARCHII), Hotel and Restaurant Equipment Manufacturers Association of India (HOTREMAI), All India Food Processors Association (AIFPA), Forum of Indian Food Importers (FIFI).

The fair is poised to grow in size this year covering over 1,00,000 sqm.+ (Gross Area), with more than 1700 exhibitors. The show will have overseas participants from major countries this year. The 17th edition of 'Culinary Art India' will simultaneously held at the same venue during the show. This year more than 1 lakh visitors are expected at the show.

The fair features a wide range of Food Products, Machinery, F&B equipment, Hospitality and Décor Solutions, Confectionary item from participants from India and overseas. The fair has elicited participation for the foreign companies. A part from the meaningful display, the fair offers an insight to operational and food safety concerns and innovations to become energy-efficient,

finding budget friendly raw materials boosting productivity, while still aiming for greater profitability.

It is expected that the large number of trade visitors will visit Aahar 2024. These include top echelons of the Hotel and Hospitality industry including CEOs, General Managers, Executive Chefs, Executive Housekeepers, Purchase Managers, etc. Besides, senior representatives from catering industry and academic institutions, training hotel management professionals will also visit the fair.

Besides the potential to foster business revenues, Aahar also provides an effective platform for the players across global food & beverage and hospitality industry to disseminate/gather relevant information and gauge ongoing and future trends, which can greatly benefit the participants at the fair.

The forthcoming mega event can be the right place for importers, overseas trade delegations and Indian players in the food & beverage and hospitality space, and also for policy makers and media personnel to exchange knowledge and information. India's food retail industry is also going through impressive growth phase. Especially, in the backdrop of the impressive growth potential of the Indian food services and food retail industry and with the revival of the Indian hospitality industry, the relevance of a mega event like Aahar simply cannot be overlooked.

Going by the emerging and futuristic trends in the Indian food & beverage and hospitality industry, we can safely assume that the forthcoming edition of Aahar is expected to grace by impressive numbers of visitors.

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Future Ride

Culinary Scholarship Fund will support education of young culinary students

An amazing motorbike trip by chefs is underway right now across India to raise at least INR 10 lakh for an education scholarship. Chef Alan DMello wrote this piece just before he rode off.



The proverbial 'journey of a thousand kilometres starts with the first step' is true. This time we are doing 4000 kms for the benefit of the coming generations of Indian chefs. By the time you read this, we would be mid-journey having left Panjim on Republic Day at dawn.

The main purpose of Chefs Ride 2025 is to raise funds for the Culinary Scholarship Fund. Created by my organisation, X Events Hospitality, the fund will support the education of culinary students across India who are truly determined to be chefs but lack the finances and support systems to achieve it. I often say that the future of our community depends on how we support the future generations today. There is an excess of lip service and genuflection by India's chefs, but precious little community action. Meanwhile, the artistry and prestige of our culinary profession have eroded. A chef is now a commodity. We have to come out of the rut we are in. The fund is a rather small, we hope important corrective step, in the correct direction.

Small Action, Big Reward

Small collective action goes a very long way. Rather than plead for donations, we are offering something excellent in exchange. Our method to raise the INR 10 lakh via a



fundraising lucky draw where a coupon is a mere INR 250/- The reward for your support is a massive prize, a top-end adventure motorbike worth INR 3 lakh. One Royal Enfield Himalayan 450 has been kitted out as the 'Chefs Bike', ready to take that lucky someone on a year-long adventure to explore the culinary diversity of India. That special motorbike is part of our tour.

Tying in the motorbike as the prize and the culinary scholarship as the purpose, the name Chefs Ride makes a perfect fit. The motorbike is also funded by Chef Tours, a specialist touring company for professional culinarians, based in India. So that works out too.

Route Master

Our ride is essentially a roadshow to raise awareness and the monies for the Culinary Scholarship Fund. It will be approximately 4000 kms, from Panjim to Jammu, from 26 January to 15 February. The roadshow will host Hospitality Meet-Ups in 10 cities on the route; Panjim, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Nagpur, Bhopal, Jaipur, Chitkara Uni., Chandigarh,

Jammu and Delhi-NCR.

Now, while the roadshow is a physical effort to raise the scholarship funds, you can support it too, right now. The lucky draw coupon can only be booked online. Our website (www.chefsday.in) and Instagram (@chefsdayindia) have the 'Lucky Draw' links which I would like to visit to book your coupon.

At these Meet-Ups, everyone's in hospitality is invited. We make no distinction of designation or size of business. If we are in your city, come say hello. If we are not, say hello via our Instagram page.

Application Open

The Culinary Scholarship Fund is open to all students in India, no barriers or discrimination. Anyone, including you, can recommend someone or apply for yourself. Applications



are open via this link: xeh.one/csf_apply. All applications received will be evaluated thoroughly, with follow-up queries and interviews. More details are on our website and are updated regularly.

Everyone deserves a chance at a good career. Tomorrow's culinary leaders need your support today.

The author is the founder of X Events Hospitality and Chef Tours.

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The Bigg Small Cafe + Bar Open at Lower Parel

From the founders of Shiv Sagar, Butterfly High & Kyma, comes the announcement of the expansion of second outlet in Lower Parel –The Bigg Small Cafe + Bar, an all-day modern neighbourhood cafe and bar set to open at One International Centre, Lower Parel. Following the success of their first outlet in Saki Naka, the team is bringing their unique concept to a fresh audience, offering a cosy yet expansive space of 3000 sq.ft. where every celebration–Big or Small–is cherished.

The Lower Parel outlet has also gotten an upgrade from the playful interiors at Saki Naka to a modern, chic and contemporary vibe. You can expect a sophisticated atmosphere that perfectly complements the new and exciting flavours on the menu. The whimsical interiors of Bigg Small Cafe + Bar add to its charm, featuring rustic stone walls and community tables that foster connection are designed by Nishant Desai & Umesh Desai founders of UDA India

Combining global cuisine with Indian flavours, The Bigg Small Cafe + Bar at Lower Parel will carry forward this fusion approach. Guests can expect an eclectic menu featuring



DIY wok stations, pizzas, tandoori delights and dishes served in both small and big portions, making it perfect for solo diners or large groups. Some standout dishes to try include Stir Fry Bowls, Funghi Tartufo Pizza, Mexican Corn Ribs, Lucknowi Ghee Boti, Truffle Mushroom Baklava, to name a few. Community tables will encourage socialising, offering a space for people to come together over a shared love of great food. As a nod to

its roots, the menu will also feature bestsellers from Mahesh Lunch Home, also managed by the same founding team across three locations, blending tradition with modernity.

Narayan Poojari, Founder of Shiv Sagar Foods & Resorts Pvt. Ltd, shared his vision for Bigg Small Cafe + Bar as an evolution of the brand’s legacy, designed to bring their renowned hospitality to a new audience. “Bigg Small Cafe + Bar is a place where generations can come together, where the young and the old can feel at home while discovering something fresh,” he explained. “We’ve created a destination that honours our roots but speaks to today’s lifestyles, offering an experience that’s comfortable for both - a great meal and a lively celebration.”

Guests will also enjoy a variety of classic and signature cocktails. The Spritz Society features four curated signature Spritzes, Gin Garden menu featuring G&T cocktails inspired by lush gardens all around the world, and decadent cocktails like Campari Crush, Jungle Juice and Azure Splash ensuring the new spot becomes a go-to for both dining and socialising.

BIRA 91 Taproom Opens 9th Taproom in Mumbai

BIRA 91, India's leading craft beer brand, announced the opening of its 9th Taproom, coinciding with the brand’s 9th anniversary. Situated in the dynamic Kamala Mills area of Lower Parel, Mumbai, this new outpost builds upon BIRA 91’s growing nationwide network of experiential craft beer destinations, as the second BIRA 91 Taproom in Mumbai, following the successful launch at T1 Domestic Terminal which happened recently this year.

The Kamala Mills Taproom reaffirms the brand’s commitment to bringing bold, flavourful craft beer experiences to the vibrant and cosmopolitan audience of India’s financial capital. Spanning a sprawling 4,520 sq. ft. with a seating capacity of over 200, including a lush outdoor space for live performances and pet-friendly events, the Kamala Mills Taproom promises to be an unparalleled destination. The space’s design seamlessly blends industrial chic with natural greenery, creating a warm, inviting ambiance for

patrons to enjoy.

Guests will have the chance to explore 16 taps pouring an eclectic mix of Limited Release small-batch brews, seasonal creations, and flagship beers, alongside a menu curated by Celebrity Chef Vicky Ratnani. A proud Mumbaiker, Chef Vicky



has designed the offerings to reflect bold flavors inspired by local and global influences, ensuring each dish pairs perfectly with BIRA 91’s innovative beers.

Ankur Jain, Founder and CEO of BIRA 91, commented on this milestone: "Opening our 9th Taproom in our 9th year is a moment of immense pride for

BIRA 91. Each Taproom tells the story of our journey – one of passion, innovation, and bold creativity. Mumbai, with its unmatched energy and diversity, is the perfect city to mark this milestone. We’re excited to introduce our newest outpost in Kamala Mills and continue creating a space where craft beer lovers can connect and celebrate their shared passion."

The opening of the Kamala Mills Taproom reflects BIRA 91’s mission to transform the craft beer culture in India, blending global techniques with local flavors. Over the past nine years, each Taproom has been a testament to the brand’s creativity, serving as vibrant spaces for beer enthusiasts to connect, explore, and celebrate craft beer, the Kamala Mills Taproom continues this legacy by hosting live music performances, pub quizzes, immersive workshops, and pet-friendly events, fostering a sense of community while creating memorable experiences for all.

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BarSogo Brings an Elevated Experience to Varca

Bar Sogo, short for South Goa, not only has it added a fancy feather to the up and coming neighbourhood of Varca, it has exponentially boosted its social scene. A ‘susegad-chic’ destination for travellers visiting South Goa and respite for the neighbourhood community weary of driving a bridge too far for the busier north Goan nightlife, Bar Sogo checks all the boxes. Driven by experienced professionals and passionate owners, the cocktail bar and gourmet restaurant are surrounded by an infinite view of lush fields.

Inspired by South Goa, it is tucked-away just enough to intrigue, and serves an innovative global fare. Standing tall in a quiet residential neighborhood, Bar Sogo offers a fresh, inventive take on community experiences that give you a glimpse into today’s South Goa—catching up with modernity but at an unrushed pace.

In keeping with the influx of Goa’s discerning audience,



the kitchen scores. From sandos and steaks to Korean pork chops with homemade Kimchi, local ingredients merge with sharp techniques to bring a host of elegant flavours to your plate. SoGo’s bar programme, another treat for anyone stopping by, boasts of crafted, curated cocktails rooted locally, but constantly pushing the boundaries of a robust bar culture in the South. Forgoing the esoteric, the menu is as inventive as it is familiar and with equal time and craft poured into their non-alcoholic pours; for a burgeoning alcohol-free population.

Inspired by the vibe and funk of New Orleans’ Jazz-charm, this spacious, chic bar effortlessly transitions from AM to PM. Rich-toned interiors integrate with the lushness of the outdoors seamlessly, through glass façades offering unrestricted paddy views. High ceilings, waterfront verandah, a long community table to facilitate communal dining, and careful detailing, showcases elevated modern luxury.

YOÜMEE Opens a New Outlet at Vegas Mall, Dwarka

YOÜMEE, opens a new outlet for its Pan-Asian dining brand, at the Vegas Mall in Dwarka, New Delhi. This new edition promises to offer food lovers an unforgettable dining experience with an eclectic blend of traditional and contemporary Pan-Asian flavours.

YOÜMEE is a haven for those who crave unconventional and experiential dining. While the heart of the menu features delectable Sushi, Dim Sum, and Ramen, YOÜMEE offers a diverse array of

Pan-Asian dishes that transport diners to an entirely new world of flavours.

Mr. Ravinder Choudhary, Vice President of Vegas Mall, says,



"We are happy to welcome YOÜMEE to Vegas Mall and introduce it to our visitors. YOÜMEE aims to offer a dining experience like no other. It's about igniting the passion for food while making every guest feel at home. The outlet offers an ideal setting for both casual dining and special occasions. With its contemporary design, welcoming atmosphere, and wide range of dishes, it promises to be a go-to destination for those seeking a flavourful adventure in Pan-Asian cuisine."

Asur Microbrewery, Bar & Kitchen Launches in Delhi

Asur Microbrewery, Bar & Kitchen, the first microbrewery in West and North Delhi and the largest in the city—has opened its doors, ushering in a new era for the region’s craft beer scene. Featuring a state-of-the-art 5HL brewhouse, Asur is set to redefine how



the city experiences beer, food, and community.

With plans to launch 4–6 outlets across North India by 2026, the brand is poised to take its unique blend of craft beer, inventive cuisine, and vibrant atmosphere to a broader audience. On the product front, the brewery is already making waves with innovative offerings such as Kiwi Beer, winter-special Rum Beer and Scotch Ale, alongside staples like IPA, Belgian Wheat, and the bold, velvety Nitro Stout. Plans for live BBQ stations at the brewery further amplify Asur’s commitment to hearty, flavourful food that complements its brews.

Having invested over INR 15 crore, Asur is dedicated to maintaining premium quality. Ingredients sourced from Europe and the U.S. form the foundation of its signature beers, ensuring an uncompromising standard of excellence. The brewery’s transparent, open layout invites guests to witness the artistry behind every pint, offering an immersive connection to the craft.

Asur Microbrewery is driven by the vision of founder Rohan Khare, a seasoned entrepreneur with extensive experience in the beverage industry. Before launching Asur, Khare founded Bad Monkey and played a key role at Rock & Storm Distilleries Pvt Ltd, where he contributed to the success of several spirits.

"Our vision for Asur goes beyond serving exceptional beer," said Khare. "We’re building a space where people can connect, explore bold flavours, and truly appreciate the craftsmanship behind every brew. From our open brewhouse to our curated menu and plans for innovation, we want every visit to be an unforgettable experience."

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Netherlands Based YOYO! Fresh Tea Bar Arrives in India

YOYO! Fresh Tea Bar, the internationally renowned and innovative tea pioneer from the Netherlands, has launched its first outlet in India, choosing Bangalore as the perfect gateway to a nation rich in tea tradition. With over 12 years of experience revolutionizing tea culture in Europe, YOYO! Fresh Tea Bar, founded by the visionary Wing Li and brought to India by the dynamic Jose Mohan, is set to enchant Indian tea lovers with its vibrant flavours, customizable creations, and contemporary approach.

Founded in the Netherlands—a country where coffee often dominates the beverage landscape—YOYO! Fresh Tea Bar began with a mission to reimagine tea as a dynamic and creative experience. Its signature pink branding, innovative bubble tea offerings, and personalized beverages including the unique warm bubble teas—have since captured hearts across Europe. By introducing warm bubble teas, a comforting twist on the globally loved bubble tea trend, YOYO! brings a fresh and cozy option for tea lovers, especially during cooler seasons. The brand now aspires to establish a similar legacy in India, celebrating the country’s deep-rooted tea culture.

Bangalore, known for its openness to culinary innovation, was a natural choice for YOYO!’s India debut. With a robust franchise model, the brand plans to expand across metropolitan and emerging cities.

YOYO! aims to elevate India’s tea culture with unique flavours, locally sourced ingredients, and personalized beverages. Its expansive menu caters to all tastes, featuring refreshing fruity infusions, artisanal iced teas, and globally loved bubble tea creations. As the largest bubble tea store in the city, spanning 1800 sq ft, YOYO! offers tea enthusiasts an unmatched space to explore and customize drinks with premium toppings like popping bobas, tapioca pearls, and tropical jellies.

“India is the heartland of tea, and its rich heritage aligns perfectly with our journey of elevating this beloved beverage,” says Wing Li, Founder of YOYO! Fresh Tea Bar. “Our vision is to combine India’s love for tea with our innovative global concepts, crafting experiences that resonate with both tradition and modernity.”

The debut also marks the introduction of an exclusive range of ‘India Specials,’ created using locally sourced ingredients. These beverages will seamlessly blend traditional flavors with YOYO’s innovative techniques, offering something truly unique for Indian tea lovers.

“Our India Specials reflect our commitment to honoring the diverse tastes of India while introducing a fresh perspective on tea culture,” says Jose Mohan, Master Franchise Owner of YOYO! Fresh Tea Bar India. “By using locally sourced ingredients, we are not just crafting drinks, but creating a meaningful connection between global trends and local traditions.”

YOYO! Fresh Tea Bar is committed to sourcing ingredients locally, supporting regional farmers while reducing its ecological footprint. Franchise opportunities will prioritize partnerships with local entrepreneurs, fostering community-driven growth.





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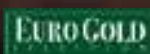
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Nando's is Coming to Mumbai

A South African brand known for its signature PERi-PERi flavours, is bringing its bold taste to the city. With plans for an ambitious expansion in Mumbai, Nando's is set to open 5 Casas (the name affectionately given to Nando's restaurants which means "home" in Portuguese) across the city, including at Terminal 2, Mumbai airport and at multiple major shopping malls. This, all off the back of a thriving business in Delhi and a hugely welcome reception to Nando's in the newly opened location in Hyderabad.

"It's a moment of great pride for us to launch Nando's into Mumbai, a city that thrives on bold flavours and



who has been asking for it for some time now," said Sameer Bhasin, CEO of Nando's India. "PERi-PERi – made with African Bird's Eye Chilli – is the heart and soul of Nando's unique flavour, and the perfect match for spice-lovers in Mumbai. This is only the start of an exciting journey in this vibrant city, with many more locations to come!"

All Nando's bastings, marinades and sauces are made with fresh, real ingredients and have no artificial flavours or colourants. The chicken is flame-grilled because it just tastes better, and the range of PERi-PERi flavours allow guests to customize their meal to the heat level of their choosing.

"We're confident that Mumbai will love Nando's signature flame-grilled PERi-PERi chicken, burgers, veggie dishes, and more", said Karan Kapur, Executive Director for K Hospitality Corp, Nando's joint-venture partner in India. "But in true Nando's style, there is a lot more to it than just the chicken. Our vibrant Afro-Portuguese heritage comes alive in every aspect of the guest experience. From Southern African inspired restaurant design, décor and art, to curated Afro-Luso music, and everything in between."

Chef's Theory, A New Launch by Ramnee Group

Ramee Group of Hotels announces the launch of Chef's Theory, a multi-cuisine dining restaurant at Ramee Techome, Khar. Chef's Theory is here to enchant taste buds and honour the rich heritage of multi-cuisine dining. As an all-day restaurant, it blends the essence of Indian flavours with global influences, reimagining traditional recipes to craft dishes that are both comforting and innovative.

With its warm ambience and meticulous attention to detail, Chef's Theory provides the perfect setting for any occasion. From seasoned connoisseurs to curious newcomers, every guest is treated to a memorable dining experience that celebrates flavour, tradition, and innovation.

Rajit V Shetty, Managing Director at Ramee Group of Hotels stated, "With the launch of Chef's Theory, we are proud to bring an authentic and immersive culinary experience to our guests. This venture reflects our commitment to celebrating India's rich heritage and flavours with global influences while upholding the exceptional service standards that Ramee Group of Hotels is known for. We look forward to welcoming you to a journey of taste and tradition."



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RATIONAL Presents Innovations at AAHAR 2025

RATIONAL will be exhibiting at this year's AAHAR in New Delhi from 4-8 March. The world market leader will be showcasing a host of innovations for professional kitchens over an area of more than 100 square metres.

As in previous years, the highlight of the RATIONAL stand will be the cooking shows in which RATIONAL chefs will prepare delicious dishes and demonstrate the performance and functions of the iCombi Pro and iVario Pro cooking systems. For example, the iCombi Pro can be used to prepare flavourful Biryani, overnight Dal Makhani and succulent kebab & tikkas. Thanks to its intelligence, the combi-steamer independently plans and controls cooking processes, ensuring consistently high food quality on all racks at all times. A tip from Vishal Raman, Managing Director RATIONAL India: "Anyone who comes to the

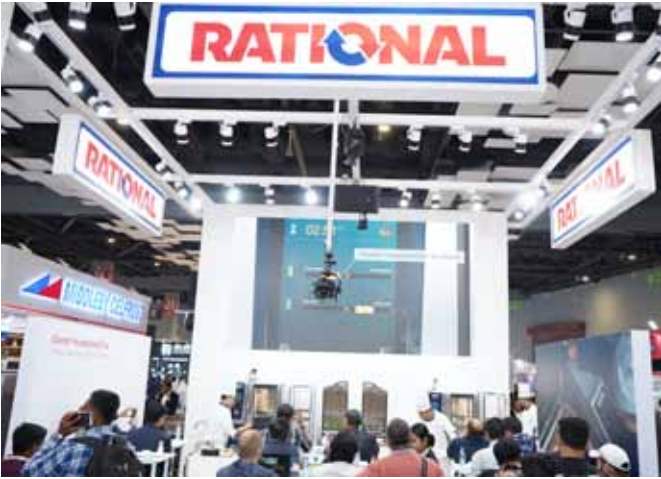
cooking show at 3 pm can taste the whole lamb roast, which is cooked for around seven hours and completely unsupervised."

The iVario Pro, which replaces tilting pans,

its high output and speed: For example, the RATIONAL chefs show how they can prepare 80kg of mutton curry in the iVario L in just one hour.

The fact that digitalisation is becoming increasingly important and helps to simplify processes in professional kitchens is demonstrated by the RATIONAL chefs with the ConnectedCooking digital kitchen management system. The free platform provides access to networked iCombi Pro and iVario Pro via PC, tablet or smartphone. This means you can always keep an eye on cooking system details such as utilisation, cleaning status, energy consumption and HACCP data.

"We are very much looking forward to convincing visitors live of the cooking systems, their functions and the delicious results at this year's AAHAR," says Mr Raman.



boilers, deep-fat fryers and pressure cookers in industry catering, will also be used live at the show. It is characterised not only by its consistently excellent quality, but also by

Nature's Basket Opens Bangalore's Largest Artisan Pantry Store

Nature's Basket, India's leading premium grocery retailer and part of the RPSG Group, unveiled its first flagship Artisan Pantry store in Bangalore. Inaugurated by Bollywood icon Karisma Kapoor, the new 10,500 sq. ft. gourmet destination stands as a testament to the brand's commitment to bringing curated culinary experiences to life. This marks the ninth store in Bangalore and the 35th nationwide. Nature's Basket continues to strengthen its presence as a pioneer in luxury grocery retail across the country.

The Bangalore flagship store sets a new benchmark in luxury retail, offering an immersive and unparalleled shopping experience that combines global sophistication with local artistry. Unique to this store are several first-in-class features designed to captivate every shopper's interest, including a Live Kombucha Bar with refreshing kombucha on tap, a Vegan Patisserie offering decadent plant-based desserts, a Live Cookie Corner with warm cookies baked fresh, Live Kunafa & Baklava showcasing authentic Middle Eastern treats, a Millet Café serving wholesome millet creations, and an Organic Snacking Counter with tasty, premium snacks. The indulgence continues with a luxurious Soft-serve corner

and the Gelato Atelier, offering international flavors that redefine dessert cravings.

Enhancing its gourmet offerings, the store boasts the widest range of cheese in the country, featuring rare and exotic cheeses from over 50 countries, delivered in an unimaginable time gap for a truly global



and flavorful experience. An exotic fruits and vegetables section brings global freshness to Bangalore, including items making their debut in India. The truffle bar celebration showcases luxurious culinary creations for true connoisseurs.

To elevate the experience, the store offers

an exclusive selection of premium cigars and a meticulously curated range of bar accessories, designed to satisfy the refined tastes of our distinguished guests. Additionally, an expansive collection of premium wines and liquors is available, carefully crafted for the discerning aficionado.

Shashwat Goenka, Chairman of Spencer's Retail and Nature's Basket, commented, "The opening of our first flagship Artisan Pantry store in Bangalore represents a significant strategic milestone for Nature's Basket. This flagship store responds directly to Bangalore's growing appetite for premium, curated culinary experiences. By blending the best of global gourmet offerings with local preferences, we are confident that this flagship will not only elevate Bangalore's retail landscape but also set new benchmarks in the premium grocery sector. Our commitment to expanding Nature's Basket's footprint with such innovative concepts is part of our larger vision to redefine luxury retail in India."

Nature's Basket's expansion into Bangalore with its first flagship store reflects its commitment to creating exceptional culinary experiences, pushing boundaries, and offering its patrons the very best in gourmet retail.

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Hyde Irish Whiskey Debuts in India: A Premium Taste of Ireland

India’s whiskey aficionados have a new reason to raise their glasses! Hyde Irish Whiskey, a multi-award-winning small-batch Irish whiskey brand, has officially launched in India by Beone Marketing Pvt. Ltd., the exclusive importer. Based in Delhi co-founded by Vikas Agarwal and Vikas Chauhan

Crafted to Perfection, One Cask at a Time

At Hyde Irish Whiskey, the motto says it all: “It’s all about wood.” Every drop reflects an uncompromising dedication to the art of wood management and cask curation. Each bottle bears the prestigious Conor Hyde Seal of Approval, ensuring an unparalleled whiskey experience that speaks of heritage, craftsmanship, and luxury.

A Symphony of Flavours: Hyde Whiskey Variants in India

Whiskey lovers can now savour three small-batch Hyde Irish Whiskey variants alongside the Eiregold Special Reserve Irish Whiskey, each crafted to delight the senses:



Hyde No. 6 President’s Reserve Special Reserve Sherry Cask Finish

An exceptional blend combining 8-year-old Single Grain matured in bourbon casks with 18-year-old Single Malt matured in Oloroso Sherry casks. This elegant whiskey undergoes an additional 6-month finish in toasted Oloroso Sherry casks, delivering a harmonious mix of deep fruitiness and smooth spice.

Hyde No. 3 1916 Áras Cask Single Grain Bourbon Cask Matured

Crafted exclusively from Single Grain matured for 8 years in flame-charred ex-Buffalo Trace Bourbon casks, this whiskey offers a creamy, toasty palate with hints of vanilla and caramel.

Hyde No. 7 President’s Cask Single Malt Sherry Cask Matured

Triple-distilled in a traditional pot still and aged for 8 years in first-fill toasted Oloroso Sherry casks, this rich and complex single malt boasts layers of dried



fruit, spice, and a velvety finish. Eiregold Special Reserve Irish Whiskey

A beautifully balanced blend of Single Grain and Single Malt, triple-distilled and aged for 4 years in alligator-flame-charred bourbon casks. Perfect for everyday indulgence.

Available in India

Hyde Irish Whiskey is currently available in Haryana and will soon grace shelves in Delhi, followed by other states across India throughout 2025.

Raise a Toast to the Spirit of Ireland

Whether you’re a seasoned whiskey connoisseur or an adventurous spirit-seeker, Hyde Irish Whiskey promises an experience like no other. With its meticulous craftsmanship and unique flavour profiles, every sip is a journey through the rich traditions of Irish whiskey-making.

Sudip Majumder a veteran in Alcoholic Beverages Industry is actively involved in promoting Hyde & Eiregold Irish whiskey for the Indian market.

CURRYiT Launches India’s Only Preservative & Chemical-Free Tomato Puree

CURRYiT has launched the country’s first preservative and chemical-free tomato puree. It is made with nothing but 100% fresh, farm-grown tomatoes—no preservatives, no additives, just pure, rich flavour that will bring every dish to life.



It is made with 100% fresh ingredients, and 99% of it is composed of tomatoes, olive oil, and salt—nothing else. CURRYiT’s puree is completely pure and unadulterated. Each teaspoon of this thick, smooth puree contains the goodness of one whole farm-fresh tomato, delivering a rich and delicious taste you can trust.

has no preservatives, no sugar, no vinegar, and no additives. It uses FDA-approved autoclave technology to vacuum pack and preserve the product, giving it a shelf life of 12 months without compromising on its natural freshness.

Uppal Brewers & Distillers to Debut with SOORAH! Whisky

Alco beverage industry veteran Ankur Sachdeva, Kanhav Uppal, Uppal Group and Manish Uppal, Chairman and Managing Director of the Uppal Group, have united to create Uppal Brewers & Distillers (UBD) with the objective of transforming the premium spirit segment. Their first offering, SOORAH! Finest Blended Indian Whisky. Initially available in Delhi, the company has robust plans to broaden its reach across India and into international markets in the coming years. Priced at INR 1700 in Delhi, SOORAH! offers an enticing combination of premium quality and accessibility.





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INSP20D	230VAC 50HZ	500	296x370x75mm	Inbuilt	275x350mm	Inbuilt	4.5Kg
INS2BRA	230VAC 50HZ	1000	800X400X100mm	Inbuilt	787X387mm	Inbuilt	9.700Kg
INS3BRA	230VAC 50HZ	1500	1200X500X82mm	Inbuilt	1205X505mm	Inbuilt	25.338Kg

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UNOX Chefs' Table Debuts in Delhi



UNOX, a leading Italian brand and manufacturer of commercial ovens, providing innovative solutions for every sector in the food industry, reaffirmed its commitment to culinary excellence in India with a spectacular Chefs' Table event held in Delhi. This exclusive gathering brought together eight renowned chefs: Chef Tarun Sibal, Chef Vanshika Bhatia, Chef Sambhavi Joshi, Chef Dhruv Oberoi, Chef Gaurav Wadhwa, Chef Osama Jalali, Chef Utkarsh Bhalla, and Chef Nikhil Rastogi, National Corporate Chef at UNOX India.

Hosted in a vibrant setting, the event highlighted UNOX's dedication to culinary innovation and excellence. It showcased the versatility and precision of UNOX combi ovens, allowing each chef to demonstrate their skills and creativity. Guests were treated to an

extraordinary culinary experience, featuring a carefully curated menu that highlighted the unique capabilities of UNOX's state-of-the-art ovens.

In the enchanting ambiance of the event, these distinguished culinary virtuosos showcased not only their gastronomic brilliance but also their mastery of various cooking techniques such as steaming, roasting, and baking, all made possible by the exceptional adaptability of UNOX's ovens.

Nicola Michelon, CEO of UNOX S.p.A., added, "At UNOX, we believe innovation drives culinary evolution. This Chefs' Table event allows us to connect with culinary leaders and reinforce our mission to elevate the food service industry."

Matt Roberts, Director of Sales, MEA &

India, highlighted the importance of the UNOX Chefs' Table event, stating, "The UNOX Chefs' Table events highlight our commitment to empowering chefs through innovative technology. These events serve as a platform where chefs can come together, push the limits of their craft, and inspire new ideas, showcasing how UNOX ovens enable culinary creativity and precision."

Vikram Goel, Managing Director of UNOX India, expressed his excitement about the event, saying, "The UNOX Chefs' Table is more than an event—it's an immersive experience where culinary talent meets advanced technology. We are thrilled to have some of the finest chefs showcase their passion and skill, using solutions from UNOX to redefine the boundaries of modern cooking. It's a proud moment for us to bring this vision to life."

The Chefs' Table event not only celebrated the brilliance of the participating chefs but also reinforced UNOX's commitment to excellence in the food service industry. By showcasing innovative cooking solutions, UNOX continues to empower chefs and businesses, ensuring they have the necessary tools to thrive in a competitive culinary landscape. This event stands as a testament to UNOX's dedication to enhancing the culinary arts and supporting the chefs who inspire us all.

Samosa Singh Opens 2 New Outlets in Hyderabad

Samosa Singh, one of India's leading quick-service restaurant (QSR) chains, ushered in the New Year with the opening of two new outlets in at the Nexus Mall and in Ashoka One Mall in Hyderabad, and a new state-of-the art manufacturing facility in Bengaluru. New manufacturing facility is set to revolutionize its operations, ensuring consistency, quality, and scalability as the brand gears up for further expansions.

Commenting on the expansion plans, Nidhi Singh, Co-founder of Samosa Singh, said, "Nothing could be a better way to kick off the New Year than with the opening of two new outlets and a manufacturing facility. This expansion is in line with our aim to provide a taste of India's rich culinary heritage through high-quality



street food. We are incredibly grateful for the support and growth we've experienced

in the past years, and we believe that it has laid a solid foundation for what's to come. As we step into 2025, we are filled with excitement and optimism for the boundless opportunities ahead for Samosa Singh."

Shikhar Veer Singh, Founder of Samosa Singh, said that the brand will take one step at a time in 2025 and will delight customers by introducing new flavours. "This year, we're more committed than ever to expanding our reach and delighting our customers with fresh, innovative flavors. A special thanks and heartfelt gratitude go out to our customers for their continued love and support—they are the driving force behind our success, and we couldn't have reached this point without them. Together, we are ready to make 2025 a year of bold growth and delicious moments."

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Chef Lalit Kumar

Skyview By Empyrean, the mountain harbour in Jammu’s Sanget valley has brought on board Chef Lalit Kumar as the new Executive Chef. With over 12 years of experience, he will helm the kitchen of Skyview’s multi-cuisine Banana Leaf restaurant. He also worked at Clarks Hotel Khajuraho (Madhya Pradesh), Radisson Hotel Rewa (Madhya Pradesh), and

Ramada Hotel (Navi Mumbai). Guided by a guest-centric approach, he passionately crafts dishes that not only tantalize the palate but also deliver a memorable visual and emotional experience.



Chef Richard Charlie

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center has appointed Richard Charlie as Chef de Cuisine. With over 15 years of experience in various leadership roles, including his recent position as Complex Head Chef at Le Meridien Hotel and Conference Centre, Dubai, he also worked at JW Marriott Hotel Dubai and Westin Mina Seyahi

Beach Resort & Marina, where he served as Chef de Cuisine and Senior Sous Chef. He will oversee the hotel’s dynamic food and beverage outlets.



Chef Rakesh Jadhav

DoubleTree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad ihas appointed Rakesh Jadhav as its new Executive Sous Chef. With more than 17 years of experience, he worked at Taj (Pune), Marriott (Pune & Goa), Accor (Mumbai), Starwood (Maldives), IHG Hotels (Pune), RHG Hotels (Pune), Royal Orchid Hotel (Pune), Kandima (Maldives), and Hilton (Pune). He holds a Diploma in

Hotel Management and Catering Technology (DHMCT) from VPHMCT, Kolhapur, which he completed in 2007. His formal training and dedication have established him as a versatile and skilled chef.



Chef Dinesh Rana

Novotel Goa Panjim has appointed Chef Dinesh Rana as the visionary leading the culinary team. With over 11 years of culinary expertise, he brings a wealth of experience from The Oberoi Grand Kolkata, Taj Exotica Goa, Taj Jai Mahal Palace Jaipur, Grand Hyatt Goa, Sheraton Brigade Bangalore, and Marriott Hotels in Jaipur and Mussoorie. His extensive

expertise spans continental, Italian, and multi-cuisine culinary arts, with a notable flair for designing innovative à la carte dishes, elaborate buffet spreads, and personalized banquet menus.



Chef Thanakit Sangjan

The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences has appointed Chef Thanakit Sangjan as the new Thai MasterChef at Spectra. Hailing from Bangkok, Thailand, Chef Thanakit has worked in the UAE and Thailand, where he perfected his craft. He held the role of Chef de Partie at The Thai Kitchen, Park Hyatt Dubai, where his work helped shape the

restaurant’s reputation for incredible Thai cuisine. He also worked at Anantara Eastern Mangroves in Abu Dhabi and Saeng Restaurant in Thailand.



Pankaj Shinde

DoubleTree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad has appointed Pankaj Shinde as the new Food and Beverage Manager. With over 13 years of rich experience in the hospitality industry, he worked at Marriott and Sayaji Hotels. He holds a Master’s degree in Hospitality and has honed his skills with esteemed brands. His journey is marked by a focus on elevating guest satisfaction,

optimizing operations, and fostering high-performing teams. His love for nature inspires his approach to sustainable and innovative practices in food and beverage operations.



Raj Kadamuturu

Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway has appointed Raj Kadamuturu as its new Director of Food and Beverage. With career spanning 19 years, he worked at Curio Collection by Hilton in Nairobi, The Westin in Pune, and Four Seasons Hotels. He will be pivotal in elevating the dining experience for guests, overseeing the daily operations of the

food and beverage division, and innovating dining concepts. His focus will also include menu development, service supervision, cost control, and maximizing revenue.



Shabad Ahuja

The Lodhi, New Delhi has appointed Shabad Ahuja as the Director of Food and Beverages. With over 15 years of experience, he joins from Annamaya Holdings Ltd., where he served as General Manager at MA-HE Coastal Indian in the UK. He also worked at JW Marriott Hotels in Bengaluru and New Delhi. His expertise includes pre-opening management,

beverage ordering, vendor negotiations, and service excellence. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Hospitality and Hotel Administration from the IHM Chandigarh.



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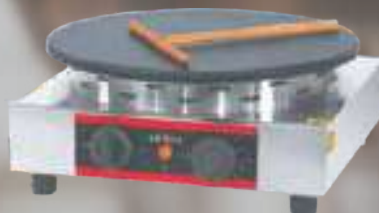
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The European Union's 'More Than Food' Redefines Culinary Excellence at SIAL India 2024



The European Union sets new standards in the Indian Food & Beverage space by bringing the best of European taste and culinary experiences to SIAL India 2024. As a part of one of Asia's premier food and beverage trade shows, the EU's More Than Food pavilion showcased the exceptional diversity, quality, and versatility of European products. As the pavilion shared stories of authenticity and anecdotes of safety and sustainability, the visitors had the opportunity to explore and relish the EU's fine produce ranging from cheeses and quality meats to olive oils, fresh fruits, chocolates, baked goods and more.

The EU's More Than Food pavilion was inaugurated by one of India's most famous and adored chefs, Chef Ajay Chopra, More Than Food Campaign Ambassador. This was followed by an exclusive tasting session where attendees had the opportunity to sample innovative dishes crafted by Chef Chopra, made with premium European ingredients. The chef also captivated the audience with live cooking demonstrations, blending European ingredients seamlessly with traditional Indian flavours.

Dishes such as Sea Salt and Gouda Cookies with Tomato Jam and Chorizo and Mixed Mushroom & Feta Spring Rolls with Paprika Grapes Chutney showcased his creative fusion of European and Indian cuisines, celebrating their harmonious blend. Later in the day, Chef Chopra also participated in a panel discussion titled

'Decoding the Global Indian Platter: Spotting Trends, Creating Opportunities', where he shared insights into the growing demand for European products in India and how they're shaping the future of culinary trends.

Pawel Stachowiak, Counsellor – Trade and Economic Affairs, Delegation of the EU to India said, "The European Union takes immense pride in its diverse range of authentic and high-quality food and beverage products, rooted in tradition. Today, the EU is India's largest trading partner, accounting for €124 billion worth of trade in goods in 2023, representing 12.2% of total Indian trade. Through the 'More Than Food' campaign, we aim to highlight the exceptional quality, authenticity, safety and sustainability of European food and beverage products, ensuring they resonate with Indian consumers while addressing market challenges, fostering collaborations, and creating awareness about premium EU offerings. SIAL India 2024 has been a wonderful platform to strengthen this culinary and trade relationship between the EU and India."

Chef Ajay Chopra, Campaign Ambassador



of the More Than Food campaign said, "Being a chef, I've always believed that great ingredients are the cornerstone of exceptional cuisine. And the EU's 'More Than Food' campaign highlights the unparalleled quality and authenticity of European products. I believe produce from the EU not only enhances the taste but also adds stories of heritage to every dish which makes it more delightful. At the EU's More Than Food pavilion, visitors could experience the finest European ingredients and witness their superior quality firsthand. These products, from premium cheeses to olive oils, are a perfect match for the Indian palate, opening doors to endless culinary innovation."

Continuing Day 2 on a high momentum, Pawel Stachowiak, Counsellor – Trade and Economic Affairs, Delegation of the EU to India shared his insights at a round table discussion 'Estonia-India Food & Beverage Cooperation'. The session provided a platform for policy-level exchanges that highlighted the export potential and sustainability aspects of products from the EU.

The EU's More Than Food Pavilion at SIAL India 2024 successfully inspired culinary innovation and collaboration. As the curtains fall on this year's 3-day event, the campaign continues its mission to make every meal More Than Food, fostering cross-cultural culinary excellence and strengthening the bonds between the EU and India.

About EU's More Than Food Campaign in India:

The European Union has initiated the 'More Than Food' campaign in India as part of its efforts to raise awareness about the diverse and rich agricultural products from the European Union. The campaign intends to showcase the versatility of European food and beverages in Indian cuisine by providing a glimpse into the abundant cultural and culinary landscape of the EU. The campaign also aims to increase recognition of the EU agricultural products in India by promoting the safety, quality, authenticity, sustainability, and diversity of EU agri-food and beverage products from the 27 EU Member States through a series of social media activities, B2B events, and promotions.

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FHRAI Raises Concerns Over Zomato and Swiggy's Private Label Food Delivery

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), the third largest hospitality association in the world, has expressed serious concerns over Zomato and Swiggy's recent move to enter the private label food delivery business. The association points out several issues, including unfair competition, misuse of restaurant data, and potential risks to food safety.

Zomato and Swiggy are now using their market dominance to directly compete with the very businesses they were meant to support. FHRAI is set to meet with the Ministry of Commerce to discuss these concerns and push for regulatory action to ensure fair practices in the food service industry.

The aim of raising this issue is to address the growing concerns about the misuse of restaurant data by food delivery platforms and the unfair competitive advantage these platforms now hold over restaurants. By leveraging data from restaurants, such as customer preferences and sales trends, Zomato and Swiggy can create personalized deals that directly impact the restaurant's business. This not only threatens the livelihoods of small and medium-sized restaurants but also raises questions about data privacy and consent.

Pradeep Shetty, Vice President of FHRAI, said, "We are meeting with the Commerce Ministry very soon and have requested an expedited appointment to discuss this serious issue. The actions of platforms like Zomato and Swiggy represent a direct violation of established e-commerce regulations. These companies were originally designed to function as neutral marketplace platforms, connecting

consumers with restaurants, not as direct competitors. By introducing and selling their own food products, they undermine the very essence of a marketplace model, creating an uneven playing field that disproportionately harms restaurants. What is particularly alarming is the use of years' worth of proprietary data collected from restaurants on customer preferences, order history, and sales trends to develop and promote their own branded products. Restaurants are excluded from access to this data, making it even more challenging for them to compete. This creates a dangerous environment for small and medium-sized enterprises and raises significant ethical and legal concerns around the misuse of sensitive data."

"Additionally, there are serious questions surrounding the food safety standards applied to these private label products. While restaurants are subject to stringent safety regulations, there is no transparency regarding whether the same standards are being enforced for products sold by these platforms. The lack of fairness and a level playing field exacerbates the challenges faced by our members, making it difficult for them to survive, let alone thrive, in this competitive landscape. This not only risks consumer trust but also threatens the reputation of the entire restaurant industry," he further added.

Zomato and Swiggy, which initially operated as platforms connecting restaurants with customers, have now ventured into the quick commerce space by creating their own private label food products. These platforms use restaurant

data to create personalized offers and discounts, which in turn puts restaurants at a disadvantage, as they are essentially competing with their own information. The lack of clear regulations around the production and sale of these private label products raises concerns about the safety and quality of food being delivered to consumers.

With this move, the platforms are now not only controlling the distribution of food but also the creation and sale of it, which could lead to monopolistic practices. FHRAI stresses that the food service industry needs to be regulated in a way that ensures a level playing field for all stakeholders whether they are restaurants, food delivery platforms, or consumers. It is essential that these platforms operate transparently, ensure proper consent for the use of restaurant data, and comply with the food safety standards expected from all food providers.

FHRAI aims to push for the establishment of clear and enforceable guidelines to protect restaurant data and ensure that private label food products sold by platforms like Zomato and Swiggy adhere to the same food safety and quality standards required for restaurant food. FHRAI seeks to ensure a fair, transparent, and competitive environment in the food service industry, where both restaurants and consumers are protected. The association urges regulators to take swift action to address the growing concerns related to data misuse, unfair competition, and food safety in the wake of these new developments in the food delivery market.

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Asian Presidents Forum 2025

A Culinary Journey to Remember



The Asian Presidents Forum (APF) 2025, organized by the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) and the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA) under the aegis of Worldchefs, successfully concluded at the Indusfood Show in Greater Noida and Yashobhoomi New Delhi.

Day 1: A Grand Welcome

The journey commenced on 6th January 2025, with the arrival of International delegates in New Delhi. A wonderful welcome dinner was organized for the delegates at the hotel, showcasing India's rich culinary heritage. The carefully planned reception exemplified India's legendary hospitality, welcoming guests with warmth and traditional Indian greetings.

Day 2: Exploring India's Cultural Treasure

On 7th January 2025, the delegates embarked on an unforgettable cultural tour to Agra to witness the Taj Mahal, a global symbol of love and an iconic representation of India's heritage. Their visit highlighted India's dedication to preserving its history and cultural values. Following the tour, a

royal lunch was organized, offering the guests a taste of India's culinary artistry. This experience allowed international delegates to engage with India's age-old traditions of hospitality.

Day 3: The Grand Inauguration at Indus Food 2025

The third day, 8th January 2025, marked the grand inauguration of Indus Food 2025 at the India Expo Mart, Greater Noida. This premier food and beverage trade show was inaugurated by Shri Chirag Paswan, Hon'ble Minister of Food Processing Industries. He said "It's an absolute honour to welcome all the esteemed chefs from across Asia and other parts of the World. India, with its rich



and diverse culinary heritage, offers a unique blend of flavours, spices, and techniques that reflect its cultural diversity. We are proud of the variety of regional cuisines that thrive in our country, each carrying its own history, traditions, and stories. To have such a diverse representation of chefs from various Asian countries is truly special, and I am excited to be a part of an event that celebrates the immense potential of food to bring people together. This gathering symbolizes our shared love for food and cultural exchange."

Alongside Baba Ramdev, Indian Yoga guru and Business Leader. Baba Ramdev said "India's culture, food, and thoughts are deeply interconnected, forming the essence of our heritage. The concept of 'Aachaar, Vichar, and Khadya Sanskar' highlights the importance of food, values, and thought in shaping society. Our food reflects our traditions, beliefs, and respect for nature. It is crucial that we promote India's culinary traditions globally, sharing the wisdom of our food culture. By embracing India's diverse cuisines, we not only introduce flavours but also promote health, spirituality, and well-being, positioning India as a leader in the global culinary arena."

The event, supported by the Ministry

of Commerce, set the stage for dynamic interactions and visionary initiatives.

The Day's Main Highlights:

Closed-Door Interaction:

Esteemed Chefs and Leaders from India and Abroad, including Shri Chirag Paswan, Hon'ble Minister of Food Processing Industries, Baba Ramdev, Indian Yoga Guru and Business Leader, Chef Manjit Gill, President IFCA President, Chef KK Yau Asia Vice Continental Director Worldchefs and Mohit Singla, Chairman TPCI, gathered for a focused and enriching closed-door interaction on advancing the culinary landscape. The discussion centred on fostering international collaboration, with a focus on creating global partnerships that elevate Indian hospitality standards. By sharing insights and strategies, the leaders explored ways to improve the welfare of India's hospitality sector, emphasizing sustainable practices, skill development, and the importance of preserving India's rich culinary heritage. The session aimed to strengthen India's position as a global culinary hub while promoting cross-border exchange and cooperation within the food and beverage industry.

Various IFCA initiatives

Chef Vijaya Baskaran, IFCA General Secretary, highlighted the association's diverse initiatives, showcasing how IFCA actively contributes to projects of national importance while deeply involving academia in its decision-making processes. He presented initiatives such as Startup and Entrepreneur Support, Public and Industry Relations, International Relations, Academics, and Events, alongside specialized focuses on Nutrition, SDG 12 & Food Wastage, Grievances, Communities, Indian Cuisine Projects, Branding & Communications, R&D and Innovations, Well-being, Food Safety, Digital Transformation, and the IFCA Magazine. Emphasizing IFCA's commitment to tangible outcomes, He underscored how the association fosters collaboration between academia and industry to address real-world challenges, positioning itself as a leader in advancing the Culinary arts and the broader Food Ecosystem.

Curtain Raiser for International Indian Centre for Culinary Leadership:

Chef Manjit Gill and Mr. Sandeep Das, Dy. Director General introduced the International Indian Centre for Culinary Leadership (IICCL), a groundbreaking initiative designed to



empower culinary professionals Worldwide. The center aims to bridge the gap between Indian and International chefs, fostering collaboration, innovation, and the exchange of culinary knowledge. With a focus on elevating the standards of Indian cuisine globally, the center will serve as a hub for training, skill enhancement, and leadership development, providing a platform for chefs to explore India's diverse culinary traditions. It will also promote the rich tapestry of Indian flavors and techniques, ensuring that Indian cuisine continues to make its mark on the global culinary scene. Through this initiative, Indian hospitality and culinary artistry will be celebrated internationally, driving recognition and respect for India's contribution to the World's Food Culture. Participants will be awarded an IICCL Certification, recognizing them as Culinary Leaders and Ambassadors of Indian Cuisine.

IFCA Communities Tech Platform: The launch of Tech platform "IFCA Communities" by Mr. Suresh Narasimha, Managing Partner of PESU Venture Labs underscored IFCA's commitment to leveraging Technology for Culinary advancement. Benefits of Tech platform - The development of a Tech Platform for the culinary ecosystem will create a vibrant community of Chefs, Culinary Leaders, Consultants, Food Professionals, Culinary Administrators, Owners, Students, Institutions, as well as Food Enthusiasts. This platform will help to promote IFCA's activities, provide visibility for key members, and offer exposure to the latest trends, innovations, and products. It will also curate new competitions and activities, supporting policy advocacy for certifications and government recommendations. By integrating advanced technologies, the

platform will offer networking opportunities, professional development tools, and a space for employment connections, ensuring the continuous growth and advancement of the culinary industry. The platform will be built with scalable, secure technologies and maintained regularly to ensure optimal performance and reliability.

Global Culinary Exchange: Top Chef Mavericks

Live cooking demonstrations by both international and Indian chefs highlighted diverse culinary techniques, fostering collaboration and innovation. To facilitate this, a wide variety of ingredients were arranged like a supermarket, with all items neatly organized on shelves. International chefs were given the freedom to choose ingredients of their choice, allowing them to explore and experiment with flavors and techniques. This hands-on experience encouraged creativity, as chefs from different culinary traditions came together to create unique dishes, exchanging knowledge and showcasing their culinary expertise.

CSR Initiative – Chefs Beyond Borders: In a heartwarming gesture, Asian and other International Chefs prepared and served meals to 200 underprivileged children. This initiative highlighted the social responsibility of the culinary community and educated children on the values symbolized by the white chef jacket.

Mongolian Scholarship:

In a heartwarming gesture, Chef Khandsuren Natsang, the esteemed President Chef from Mongolia, announced a special scholarship for a promising student. The scholarship will offer the selected student a unique opportunity to travel to Mongolia, immersing themselves in its rich and diverse



culinary culture. This initiative aims to inspire the next generation of culinary talent while fostering cross-cultural exchanges and deepening the understanding of Mongolia's traditional cooking techniques. Chef Natsang's generous offer not only highlights her commitment to nurturing young talent but also strengthens global culinary collaboration.

Day 4: Discussions and Collaborations

The fourth day featured the Asian President Forum Closed Door Meeting, which brought together prominent Culinary leaders, including Chef Manjit Gill, Chef KK Yau, Chef KK Kong, Chef Vijaya Baskaran, Chef Seetharam Prasaad, Chef Madhusudan Gupta, other Asian Presidents and Chefs. Worldchefs President and Continental Director addressed the gathering online. The meeting provided a platform for culinary associations from various countries to share initiatives, discuss best practices, and foster collaboration.

Special Visitor

Shri Indra Hang Subba, Member of Parliament from Sikkim, expressed interest in collaborating with IFCA to promote Sikkim's regional cuisines globally. The session emphasized strengthening international ties, encouraging shared learning, and promoting global culinary innovation for the advancement of the culinary profession worldwide.

Parallel Sessions

At the Expo Mart, expert panels featuring Indian chefs and regional associations engaged in dynamic discussions on pivotal topics such as culinary innovation, the authenticity dilemma, and the balance between local and global ingredients. These insightful discussions not only highlighted India's diverse culinary

heritage but also showcased the industry's forward-thinking approach. Additionally, the panel explored the role of robotics in the culinary world, providing valuable insights into how technology is shaping the future of cooking. The conversation extended to future trends in 2047, offering a vision of the culinary landscape as it evolves with innovation, sustainability, and technological advancements.

Unwinding with colleagues

The Asian Chefs delegation unwound with colleagues at a vibrant social life in Delhi NCR, enjoying a lively evening filled with music, dance, and delectable cuisine. This informal gathering provided a perfect opportunity for the chefs to relax, build camaraderie, and exchange cultural insights. The relaxed atmosphere fostered meaningful connections, allowing delegates to bond over shared experiences while celebrating the spirit of collaboration and friendship. It was an unforgettable evening that strengthened ties and added to the cultural richness of the event.

Day 5: Grand Finale and Global Perspectives

The final day at Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, featured two prominent summits:

India Food Manufacturing Summit

India International AgriTech Summit

These events were inaugurated by Mohit Singla, Chairman TPCI and Shri Devesh Chaturvedi (IAS), Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.

Visit to Ministry of Commerce

Few selected International Chefs and IFCA Delegates had been invited to visit Ministry of Commerce and interact with the Ministers. Shri Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Minister of Industry

and Supply engaged with stakeholders of the Food & Beverages industry along with MoS Mr Jitin Prasada on the sidelines of the IndusFood 2025 trade show. He emphasizes that "I am truly delighted to see Chefs from around the world here, representing the rich culinary traditions of their countries. In the realm of food, there's no language barrier—food connects us all through culture and shared love. As Indians, we take great pride in our food, which is integral to our identity, hospitality, and heritage.

Day 6: Cultural Finale: Delhi Landmarks and Exquisite Dining

The delegates embarked on an enriching tour of Delhi's iconic landmarks, including the National Museum, India Gate, Dilli Haat, Akshardham Temple, and Bangla Sahib Gurudwara. These visits offered a deep dive into India's rich cultural heritage, showcasing the city's historical and architectural splendor. The journey concluded with exquisite dining experiences at some of Delhi's renowned restaurants, offering a taste of India's culinary artistry. This perfect blend of culture and cuisine epitomized the warmth, hospitality, and grandeur that India is known for, leaving delegates with lasting memories.

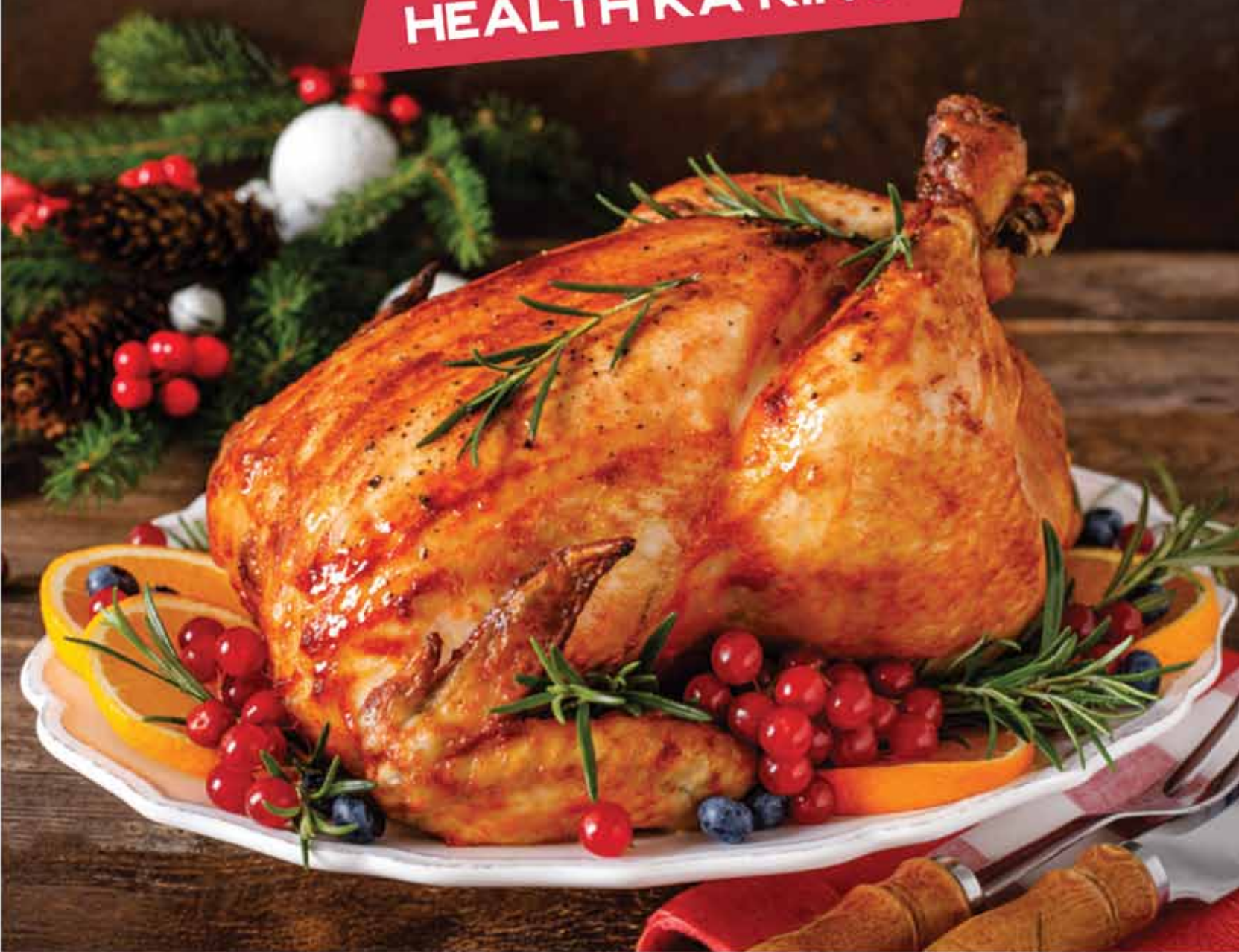
Impact and Legacy

APF and Indusfood 2025 successfully elevated India's position as a global culinary hub. The events fostered enduring collaborations among Asian chefs' associations, showcased India's rich culture, and reinforced its role in the global food trade. The initiatives undertaken by IFCA and TPCI left an indelible mark, setting new standards for culinary excellence and hospitality.

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Flavours of East Indian Cuisine



Indian food boasts of being one of the most tasty and subtle fares in the world. Different regions of the country boast of diverse cuisines. There is no homogeneity of flavour between North and South or East and West. The culinary diversity is indeed staggering! The vast country, with its variety of climates, has a repertoire of cuisines, each with its own unique and flavour profile. However, it is found that while South Indian and North Indian cuisines have gained prominence East Indian cuisine has not achieved similar distinction. **Ashok Malkani** highlights the diversity of this cuisine ranging from sweet and spicy dishes with regional styles that vary from Odia to Bengali to Assamese as well as the increasing awareness of East Indian cuisine among the populace.

Indian food, due to its rich flavours, spices and variety of dishes is popular across the globe. Taste of Indian food differs from region to region, with each region having its own recipes which have been passed down through generations.

North Indian food and South Indian food is popular across most of the cities but there seems to be, comparatively, less awareness about East Indian food in the country. However, it may be mentioned that East Indian food is popular around the world and is known for its rich flavours, spices and a variety of dishes like Machcher Jhol ((a fish curry), Momos (steamed dumplings filled with meat or vegetables), Jhal-Muri, et al.

But this cuisine has yet to make a perceptible and memorable mark on the Indian food scenario. So, one may wonder what are the East Indian states of India whose food is tasty but has yet to become well known and accepted across the country and what is the reason for this?

Pradip Kumar Pani, Executive Chef, Grand Mercure Mysore, declares, "East India primarily includes the states of West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, and Jharkhand. Sometimes, Sikkim is also considered part of this region due to its cultural and geographical proximity. Additionally, the Northeastern states, while distinct, are often grouped with East India in a broader cultural and geographical sense."

He continues, "East Indian cuisine, a treasure trove of flavours, boasts a diverse range of regional specialties. From the fiery curries of Bengal to the delicate fish preparations of Odisha and the hearty stews of Bihar, this cuisine offers a captivating culinary journey through India's eastern states. East



Indian cuisine's unique blend of spices, including mustard oil and panch phoron, creates a distinctive flavour profile. It emphasizes fresh, seasonal ingredients, making it both delicious and nutritious. Traditional cooking techniques, such as steaming in banana leaves and cooking with mustard paste, further elevate its appeal. While not as widely recognized as other Indian cuisines, East Indian cuisine's rich heritage and exquisite dishes deserve global acclaim."

Speaking about the popularity of East Indian cuisine as compared to the North Indian and South Indian cuisine he states, "East Indian cuisine, despite its rich diversity, faces challenges in gaining national popularity compared to North and South Indian cuisines due to factors like lack of standardization, limited cultural awareness, and geographical constraints. Additionally, chefs from East India often focus on other cuisines due to perceived demand, training opportunities, and infrastructure limitations. To promote East Indian cuisine, efforts are needed to showcase its unique flavors, encourage

culinary innovation, and increase its representation in popular culture."

Rajeev Ranjan, Assistant Food & Beverage Manager, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, disclosed, "Though North-Eastern states and other places like West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam, have a cuisine which is unquestionably delectable, characterized by subtle spices, fresh ingredients, and age-old recipes passed through generations, they often remain underrepresented due to limited promotion and accessibility. Unlike the globally marketed North and South Indian cuisines, East Indian dishes are typically confined to regional eateries. Yet, its unique flavours and cultural depth make it an untapped culinary treasure worthy of greater recognition."

It may be mentioned that the cuisine found in East India varies based on the State or tribe. This results in a never-ending list of diverse dishes which can give the diners not only a diverse range of tastes but also textures and sensations.

Staple Ingredients

Eastern India, comprising of the states Chhattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal, Sikkim and Jharkhand states (having popular cities like Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Darjeeling, Jamshedpur, Kolkata, Murshidabad Puri, Ranchi, Siliguri) has optimal growing climate. The region is not only noted for its quantity of rice but also for a wide range of vegetables and fruits. These items are thus the major ingredients used in East Indian cuisine. Mustard seeds and paste, green and red chillies and Paanch Phoran (a blend of five spices including white cumin seeds,



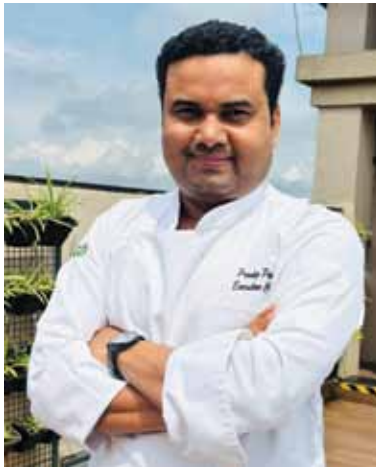
onion seeds, mustard seeds, fennel seeds, and fenugreek seeds) are also popular.

Rajeev states, "Rice, lentils, mustard seeds, bamboo shoots, coconut, and a variety of vegetables form the backbone of Eastern cuisine. Regional specialties like the use of mustard oil in Bengali cooking and fermented soybeans in North-Eastern dishes further enhance its distinctive flavours."

Pradip further elaborates, "Rice is the staple grain, consumed in various forms like steamed, fermented, puffed, or flattened. Special varieties like Gobindobhog and Joha rice are prized. Wheat is used for flatbreads, while millets are common in Northeast India. Freshwater fish, especially hilsa, rohu, and catla, are central to the cuisine of Bengal, Assam, and Odisha. Mustard seeds and mustard oil are key ingredients, imparting a pungent flavour. Chhena, a type of cottage cheese, is used in sweets like rasgulla and chhena poda. Bananas, in various forms, are used in many dishes, especially in Assam and Bengal. Tea, particularly black tea with milk or spices, is a popular beverage, especially in Assam. Handia, a fermented rice beer, is a traditional drink in Jharkhand and tribal communities."

Reasons To Relish

East Indian cuisine, being warm, flavourful and comforting is like a hug for your taste buds. One of the reasons you should be trying this food is because it not only tastes good but it is also good for you as it made with healthy ingredients which can



Pradip Kumar Pani

help you stay fit and strong. Spices like turmeric and ginger, which are used in this cuisine, have been known for centuries for their tremendous health benefits. Turmeric contains curcumin, which has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties while ginger is known for aiding digestion. It also has anti-nausea effects. East Indian cuisine also strikes a balance between protein, vegetables and grains. Traditional cooking methods also help in preserving nutrients in the food.

Pradip disclosed, "There are various reasons why one should taste this cuisine. It offers a diverse culinary experience. Seafood lovers will delight in the region's fresh fish and prawn dishes. Odisha's temple cuisine, influenced by Mughal, British, and Portuguese traditions, offers unique flavours. North-eastern states showcase ancient cooking techniques and fermented foods. The cuisine emphasizes fresh, seasonal ingredients and balanced nutrition. Indulge in iconic desserts like

Sandesh, Rasgulla, and Chhena Poda. Experience the cultural significance of Pakhala Divas and Durga Puja feasts!"

He further states, "Some of the popular methods of East Indian cooking, which help it in making it tasty and healthy, are:

Tempering (Tadka or Baghar): Frying spices like mustard seeds, cumin, or panch phoron in hot oil or ghee to release their flavors. Used in Dalma and Shukto.

Steaming: A healthy cooking technique, often involving banana or Colocasia leaves. Used in Paturi and Momos.

Clay Oven and Earthen Pot Cooking: Slow-cooking in earthenware, imparting earthy flavors. Used in Dalma and Handi Biryani."

Rajeev reveals, "The reason why you should try east Indian cuisine is because it offers a harmonious blend of flavours, from the sweetness of Bengali desserts to the subtle zest of vegetarian curries. Its emphasis on fresh, seasonal ingredients ensures not just taste but health benefits."

He adds, "East Indian cuisine emphasizes balanced flavours and natural ingredients over heavy spices. Its taste is as delectable as other Indian cuisines, but its lack of widespread representation has limited its popularity. With efforts to include these dishes in mainstream menus, this scenario is changing."

He cites some of the cooking methods and their benefits of this cuisine thus: "Tempering, steaming and clay oven cooking".

Diversity

Diversity in Indian cuisine, due to its many ethnic groups is also, is also applicable to East Indian cuisine. Cultural and lingual assortment together with rich histories and geographic heterogeneity of the encompassing states makes this cuisine an assortment and miscellany of tastes.

East India is believed to comprise of 3 schools of cuisine – Bengali and Assam, North Eastern States and Orissa. So what are the specialties of each of these 3 schools and which is the most popular?

Pradip states, "East Indian cuisine is a tapestry of diverse flavors and culinary traditions, with three distinct schools. Each of them differs from the others thus:

Bengali and Assamese Cuisine:





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Key Characteristics: Rice-based meals, liberal use of mustard oil and panch phoron, a balance of sweet, sour, and spicy flavours.

Signature Dishes: Hilsa fish in mustard sauce, Chingri Malai Curry, Kosha Mangsho, Sandesh, Mishti Doi, Masor Tenga, Bamboo Shoot Curry, Duck Curry, Pitha.

Popular Influence: Bengali sweets like Sandesh and Mishti Doi are internationally renowned, and Hilsa fish dishes are legendary.

Odia Cuisine:

Key Characteristics: Simple, subtle flavors, minimal use of oil and spices, focus on fresh, seasonal ingredients, and temple cuisine.

Signature Dishes: Dalma, Pakhala Bhata, Besara, Chhena Poda, Rasabali, Khaja.

Popular Influence: Odia sweets like Chhena Poda and temple offerings are gaining recognition.

North Eastern Cuisine:

Key Characteristics: Heavy reliance on fermentation, smoking, and boiling, minimal use of oil and spices, and the use of ingredients like bamboo shoots, axone, fermented fish, pork, and wild greens.

Signature Dishes: Smoked Pork with Axone, Eromba, Bai, Mui Borok, Thukpa, Zan.

Popular Influence: Smoked pork and bamboo shoot dishes are gaining popularity in metropolitan cities.

Each school of cuisine reflects the unique culture and history of its region, making East Indian food a treasure trove of culinary diversity."

Rajeev too has similar views. He distinguishes between the 3 schools thus:

Bengali and Assamese Cuisine: Known for their extensive use of rice, mustard, and lentils, these cuisines offer iconic dishes like fish curry (Shorshe Maach) and an array of sweets, including Rosogolla and Sandesh, which enjoy global acclaim.



Rajeev Ranjan

North-Eastern Cuisine: Celebrated for its simplicity and reliance on fresh, local ingredients, it features fermented foods, bamboo shoots, and dishes like smoked meats and steamed vegetables. These flavors are increasingly appreciated in urban India.

Odia Cuisine: Unique offerings include Pakhala Bhata (fermented rice), Dalma (a lentil and vegetable preparation), and Chhena Poda (a baked cheese dessert).

Among these, Bengali cuisine is the most widely recognized, especially due to its sweet offerings and a widespread diaspora promoting its flavors worldwide."

Increasing Awareness

Today, there is an increasing awareness and growing popularity of East Indian food. There are many reasons why one must try this food.

Rajeev states "I would advise people to try East Indian cuisine as it offers a harmonious blend of flavours, from the sweetness of Bengali desserts to the subtle zest of vegetarian curries. Its emphasis on fresh, seasonal ingredients ensures not just taste but health benefits."

Pradip declares, "One should try East Indian cuisine as it offers a diverse culinary experience. Seafood lovers will

delight in the region's fresh fish and prawn dishes. Odisha's temple cuisine, influenced by Mughal, British, and Portuguese traditions, offers unique flavors. North-eastern states showcase ancient cooking techniques and fermented foods. The cuisine emphasizes fresh, seasonal ingredients and balanced nutrition. Indulge in iconic desserts like Sandesh, Rasgulla, and Chhena Poda. Experience the cultural significance of Pakhala Divas and Durga Puja feasts."

But are there sufficient restaurants offering East Indian cuisine in Metropolitan cities and are East Indian dishes available in F&B outlets in star hotels?

Pradip disclosed, "The premier seven metropolitan areas—Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai, and Kolkata—account for 62.5% of the platform's restaurant listings. Delhi NCR emerges as the city with the highest concentration of restaurants, followed by Mumbai and Bangalore. Chennai and Kolkata also occupy significant positions on the list."

He continues, "East Indian cuisine is widely available in star hotels, especially in regions with a strong cultural influence. Metropolitan cities like Kolkata, being the heart of East India, offer a diverse range of Bengali delicacies. Star hotels in Kolkata frequently feature classic dishes such as m machher jhol, macher paturi, shorshe ilish, and iconic sweets like rosogolla and sandesh."

Rajeev states, "There are a growing number of East Indian restaurants in cities like Kolkata, Delhi, and Mumbai. However, they are still fewer compared to North and South Indian eateries."

He adds, "Many luxury hotels, including Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, are incorporating East Indian dishes into their menus to introduce guests to this rich culinary tradition."

Conclusion

Reflecting centuries of tradition intertwined with modern influence, India's food scene is full of diversity and differing tastes. Every dish tells a story of varying culture and evolving tastes. East Indian cuisine, with different style of cooking and a hot mix of variety of dishes is something that one needs to savour.





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Recipes

Machar Jhol (Bengali fish curry)

Ingredients:

Fish (rohu, bhetki, or any firm white fish)	500g
Onion, finely chopped	1
Tomatoes, chopped	2
Ginger paste	1 teaspoon
Garlic paste	1 teaspoon
Green chilies, slit	2
Turmeric powder	1/2 teaspoon
Red chili powder	1 teaspoon
Cumin powder	1/2 teaspoon
Garam masala powder	1 teaspoon
Mustard seeds	1/2 teaspoon
Nigella seeds (kalonji)	1 teaspoon
Mustard oil (or any cooking oil)	2 tablespoons
Salt to taste	
Fresh coriander leaves for garnish	

Instructions:

Heat mustard oil in a pan and fry the fish pieces until golden. Set aside.

In the same oil, add mustard seeds, nigella seeds, and green chilies. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions and cook until golden brown.

Add ginger and garlic paste, and cook for 2-3 minutes.

Add chopped tomatoes and cook until they soften and the oil separates.

Add turmeric powder, red chili powder, cumin powder, and salt. Cook for another 2 minutes.

Add water (about 2 cups) and bring it to a boil. Simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the fried fish pieces and let it cook for another 5-7 minutes.

Sprinkle garam masala powder and garnish with fresh coriander leaves.

Serve hot with steamed rice.

Odiya Dalma

Ingredients:

Yellow moong dal (lentils)	1 cup
Mixed vegetables (carrot, potato, pumpkin, raw banana)	1 cup
Cumin seeds	1 teaspoon
Mustard seeds	1 teaspoon
Ginger paste	1 teaspoon
Garlic paste	1 teaspoon
Turmeric powder	1/2 teaspoon
Garam masala powder	1 teaspoon
Green chilies, slit	2-3
Ghee or mustard oil	2 tablespoons
Salt to taste	
Fresh coriander for garnish	

Instructions:

Wash the moong dal and vegetables thoroughly.

In a pressure cooker, add dal, vegetables, and 4 cups of water. Cook for 3-4 whistles.

In a pan, heat ghee or oil. Add cumin seeds, mustard seeds, and green chilies. Let them splutter.

Add ginger and garlic paste, and cook for 2 minutes.

Add turmeric powder and garam masala, and sauté for another minute.

Add the cooked dal and vegetables to the pan, and bring it to a simmer. Adjust salt and consistency by adding water if needed.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves.

Serve with rice or roti.

Sandesh

Ingredients:

Full-fat milk	1 liter
Lemon juice (or vinegar)	2 tablespoons
Powdered sugar	1/2 cup
Cardamom powder	1/2 teaspoon

A few saffron strands (optional)

Chopped pistachios or almonds (for garnish)

Instructions:

Boil the milk in a pan, and add lemon juice or vinegar to curdle it. Stir gently until the milk separates into curds and whey.

Strain the curds using a muslin cloth or cheesecloth, and wash with cold water to remove the acidic taste.

Squeeze out excess water and knead the chhena until smooth.

Add powdered sugar, cardamom powder, and saffron strands (if using) to the chhena. Mix well.

Shape the mixture into small discs or other desired shapes using your hands or moulds.

Garnish with chopped pistachios or almonds.

Refrigerate for 1-2 hours before serving.

Pradip Kumar Pani, Executive Chef, Grand Mercure Mysore

Aloo Posto

Procedure

Soak 3 tablespoons white poppy seeds in ¼ cup water overnight. Strain out the water and grind the poppy seeds with 1 green chilli.

Rinse, peel and chop 2 large potatoes into 1 to 1.25 inch pieces.

Heat 2 tablespoons of mustard oil in a pan and stir and sauté ½ teaspoon nigella seeds (kalonji) in it.

Add chopped potatoes and sauté on low fire, stirring at intervals, till they are partially cooked and show a faint golden hue at the edges constantly. Sprinkle ¼ tsp of turmeric powder (if desired) and stir.

Add the prepared poppy seed paste and 2 whole green chilies (not slit). And mix well.

Rajeev Ranjan, Asst F&B Manager, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore

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Cleanliness and Hygiene

The Watchwords for Restaurateurs

The spotlight, in recent years, has been on health, while dining out. This does not involve merely eating healthy food but also the environment in which it is cooked. Cleanliness and hygiene have become important assets for restaurateurs. A distressing trend that has emerged in India has been the unhygienic conditions prevalent in kitchen. Diners have, over the last few years, since the Covid 19 pandemic, become vigilant about cleanliness and hygiene observed by the restaurants that they visit. Maintaining hygiene in the kitchen also involves the observation of certain rules and regulations that have to be followed by the staff, in the F&B outlets. **Ashok Malkani** delves on the steps being taken by the restaurateurs to keep their kitchens clean and hygienic, thus assuring the customers of food that is both, healthy and tasty. Keeping the F&B outlets' kitchens clean & hygienic also provides opportunities to entrepreneurs to venture into the kitchen wellness equipment providing industry.

Making a success of an F&B outlet comes with a diverse menu of daily challenges, from ordering quality ingredients to hiring helpful staff and – most importantly – to creating the right atmosphere by maintaining the place in a clean and hygienic manner so that the customer leaves fully satisfied.

It may be mentioned that cleanliness and hygiene are critical for a restaurant's success as they build customer loyalty, attract new customers, protect public health, avoid legal consequences, etc.

According to Internet Marketing Association, stats from the last couple of years show that 77% of the diners consider a restaurant's cleaning policies before visiting it. Cleanliness, in a restaurant, is not just about appearances but about safeguarding customers health, for which maintaining a hygienic kitchen is essential. This prevents foodborne illnesses and accidents.

Rana Shil, F&B Manager, Novotel Goa Panjim asserts, "Cleanliness is not just a standard, its our commitment to excellence. In our kitchen, we prioritise hygiene to ensure our colleagues and guest's safety, operational efficiency and trust in our brand. At Novotel, maintaining a clean kitchen is more than a task – its a promise of excellence in every dish we serve."

He adds, "Maintaining cleanliness and hygiene in our F&B Outlets is key to our success. We ensure the safety and well-being of our guests, which builds trust and encourages loyalty. A clean

environment creates a positive dining experience, leading to repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth. We also improve operational efficiency, as our staff works in an organized and safe space. By meeting regulatory standards, we avoid legal issues, further strengthening our reputation. Ultimately, maintaining high hygiene standards helps us stand out in the competitive restaurant and catering industry, ensuring our long-term success.”

He elaborates, “Poor cleaning practices can lead to health violations, fines, and potential lawsuits, which can hurt our brand and finances. Foodborne illnesses can damage our reputation and reduce guest loyalty, affecting revenue. Additionally, it can lead to costly equipment repairs and increased labour costs due to inefficiency, all of which negatively impact our bottom line.”

Yashwant Sopne, Executive Chef, Sayaji Wakad, Pune, says, “Maintenance of cleanliness in kitchen is essential for the following reasons:

Prevents Foodborne Illnesses: Cleanliness helps prevent the spread of bacteria, viruses, and other microorganisms that can



cause food poisoning.

Reduces Risk of Cross-Contamination: Keeping the kitchen clean reduces the risk of cross-contamination between raw and ready-to-eat foods.

Preserves Food Quality: Cleanliness helps maintain the quality of food by preventing contamination and spoilage.

Ensures Freshness: A clean kitchen

environment helps keep food fresh for a longer period.”

He adds, “Maintenance of cleanliness and hygiene in restaurants enable it to do better business. He cites the following reasons for this:

Builds Customer Trust and Loyalty

Positive reviews: Cleanliness and hygiene are key factors in customer reviews and



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ratings.

Repeat business: Customers are more likely to return to a restaurant that maintains high cleanliness standards.

Word-of-mouth: Satisfied customers share their experiences with others, promoting the restaurant.

Ensures Food Safety and Quality

Prevents foodborne illnesses: Cleanliness and hygiene practices reduce the risk of food contamination.

Maintains food quality: Clean equipment and storage areas prevent cross-contamination and spoilage.

Compliance with regulations: Restaurants that maintain cleanliness and hygiene standards are more likely to comply with food safety regulations.

Enhances Brand Reputation

Professional image: A clean and well-maintained restaurant projects a professional image.

Brand consistency: Cleanliness and hygiene standards are consistent with the brand's values and mission."

He averred that there were financial risks involved due to poor cleaning practices. Some of them were:

Negative reviews and ratings: Poor cleaning practices can lead to negative reviews and ratings, damaging the restaurant's reputation.

Loss of customer trust: Customers may lose trust in the restaurant, leading to a decline in sales and revenue.

Brand damage: Poor cleaning practices can damage the restaurant's brand, making it harder to attract new customers.

Personal Hygiene

Maintaining kitchen hygiene is as important as employees' personal hygiene to prevent food poisoning. People not observing personal hygiene can spread bacteria to food. If they touch their mouth, nose, hair or clothes and then food, the food could get affected by bacteria.

Rana states, "Personal & kitchen hygiene are fundamental in maintaining the highest standards of food safety and quality in F&B operation. Together personal and kitchen hygiene are the foundation of guest safety, operational success and brand integrity. For us, at Novotel Goa Panjim, they are Non-Negotiable Pillars of excellence.

Yashwant claims, "Personal hygiene practices, such as handwashing, prevent the spread of illnesses and infections. This is critical in food handling to prevent contamination and foodborne illnesses."

Some of the personal hygiene tips, it

may be noted, are:

- Washing and drying your hands thoroughly, frequently, before handling food.
- Not smoking or chewing gum.
- Never coughing or sneezing where food is being prepared or stored
- Wearing clean protective clothing, such as an apron
- Keep fingernails short and clean.
- Wearing disposable gloves while handling food.

Tools for Maintaining Hygiene

Entrepreneurs desirous of venturing into this area would be keen to know the tools used by the restaurateurs to maintain hygiene and cleanliness in the restaurants. Some of the tools used are: All-purpose cleaner, Glass cleaner, Disinfectant wipes, Microfiber cloths, Broom and dustpan, Mop and bucket, Vacuum cleaner, Trash bags, Furniture polish, Floor cleaner, Sanitizing solution, Paper towels, Gloves, etc.

Rana states, "Our restaurants rely on a combination of tools and practices to ensure high standards of hygiene and cleanliness in the kitchen to deliver the best services to our guests. A few of the tools my team uses are: Cleaning Supplies, Hygiene Tools, Hand Wash Station, Waste segregation and management, Monitoring and Maintenance, Protective Gear for handling different kinds of waste."

He continues, "As far as cleaning products and sanitizers are concerned, at our Kitchen & Outlets we ensure the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene by exclusively using branded cleaning products and sanitizers, which are widely recognized in the industry for their effectiveness





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and reliability. A few products that help us maintain a spotless and safe cooking area are: For all Purpose Surface Cleaning, Disinfecting food preparation Surface, For automated dishwashing & Manual utensil, Soft care Hand sanitizer and soft care line soap. There are many quality products that we use to enable us to uphold our reputation for excellence. In our kitchen, we rely on different cleaning agents to keep everything spotless and hygienic. We use detergents for everyday cleaning, degreasers to tackle grease, disinfectants to ensure surfaces are safe, and abrasive cleaners for tough stains. Acidic cleaners help us remove mineral buildup, glass cleaners keep surfaces sparkling, and enzymatic cleaners handle organic waste effectively."

He adds, "As far as essential tools and products used in commercial kitchens are concerned, we use brushes, scrubbers, mops, cleaning cloths, squeegees, vacuum cleaners, and segregated bins to maintain a clean environment. Our cleaning products include detergents, degreasers, disinfectants, abrasive cleaners, acidic cleaners, enzymatic cleaners, and glass cleaners for spotless results. To enhance efficiency, we rely on dishwashers, UV sterilizers, and grease trap cleaners to maintain high hygiene standards."

Yashwant declares, "To maintain kitchen hygiene and cleanliness restaurateurs use Mops and buckets (For cleaning floors and walls), Brooms and dustpans (For sweeping and collecting debris), Scrubbers and sponges (For cleaning surfaces, equipment, and utensils), Pressure washers (For deep cleaning equipment, walls, and floors)."

He adds, "It is also necessary to use sanitizing solutions such as bleach, quaternary ammonium compounds (quats) and acid sanitizers and UV sanitizers (For sanitizing equipment, utensils, and surfaces). Using ultraviolet light and disinfecting sprays (For killing bacteria, viruses, and fungi on surfaces) besides personal protective equipment is also advisable. In the kitchen PPE (personal protective equipment) like gloves, face masks and hairnets are also used.

Food Storage and Preparation

Food handling, storage and preparation in the hospitality sector, which includes



Yashwant Sopne

restaurants, cafes, and other eating out places, is a key requirement for these establishments. A key requirement for these businesses is to show that food handling and preparation processes are safe. They also have to keep documentation to show this to regulatory authorities. It is also necessary to convince the diners regarding the hygienic manner of preparation of food in the premises.

It may be noted that there are no such things as unsafe or unhealthy food, but food preparation in an unhygienic manner can make the person who consumes it sick. According to the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 any Food Business Operator (FBO) engaged in activities related to any stage of food-related business needs to apply for FSSAI registration/ license based on its eligibility criteria on the FoSCoS portal.

Thus it is imperative for F&B outlets to adhere to food safety norms.

Yashwant avers that it was important for F&B outlets to not only keep the foodstuff



Rana Shil

fresh but also to prepare it hygienically.

He states, "To keep the fruits, vegetables and other foodstuff fresh, it was necessary to adopt the following methods:

Refrigeration: Storing perishable items at low temperatures to slow down spoilage.

Cool Storage: Maintaining a consistent cool temperature to prolong shelf life.

Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP): Altering the gas composition in packaging to extend freshness.

Vacuum Packaging: Removing air from packaging to prevent spoilage."

He cites "food storage methods as:

Store Food at Safe Temperatures: Store food at safe temperatures: 40°F (4°C) or below for refrigerated foods and 0°F (-18°C) or below for frozen foods.

Use Airtight Containers: Use airtight containers to store food and prevent contamination.

Label and Date Food: Label and date food to ensure that older items are used before they spoil.

Store Raw Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Properly: Store raw meat, poultry, and seafood in covered containers at the bottom of the refrigerator to prevent juices from dripping onto other foods.

Check Food for Spoilage: Check food for spoilage before consuming it, and discard any food that has an off smell, slimy texture, or mold."

He outlines "safe food preparation thus:

Wash Hands Frequently: Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.

Separate Raw and Ready-to-Eat Foods: Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination.

Cook Food to Safe Temperatures: Cook food to the recommended internal temperature to kill bacteria and other pathogens.

Chill Food Promptly: Chill food promptly to prevent bacterial growth.

Avoid Cross-Contamination: Avoid cross-contamination by using separate cutting boards, utensils, and plates for raw and ready-to-eat foods."

He continues, "some additional tips are:

Clean and Sanitize Equipment: Clean and sanitize equipment regularly to prevent the spread of bacteria.

Use Safe Water: Use safe water



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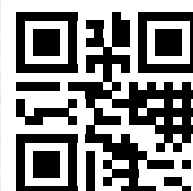
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for cooking and cleaning to prevent contamination.

Avoid Overcrowding: Avoid overcrowding refrigerators and freezers to ensure proper air circulation and prevent bacterial growth.

Be Mindful of Food Allergens: Be mindful of food allergens and take steps to prevent cross-contamination.

Rana affirms, “We, at Novotel hotel, ensure fruits, vegetable and other food stay fresh by implementing a few tried and tested methods like the ones I am citing below:

Proper Storage - it helps Humidity control, Freezing and refrigeration, Vacuum Sealing helps reducing oxidation bacterial growth, Rotational Storage, we follow the FIFO Methods, Controlled Atmosphere storage, Cleaning & prepping, Temperature Monitoring, Regular quality check.

By employing these methods we ensure that fruits, vegetables and others foods remain fresh.”

He adds, “To ensure safe food preparation, we wash our hands and sanitize surfaces regularly, use separate tools for raw and cooked food, and store cooked food at correct temperatures. We also cool cooked food quickly and use potable water for all cooking and washing. We store perishables below 5°C and frozen items at -18°C. We label everything with preparation and expiry dates, follow the FIFO method, and use airtight containers. We also store raw and cooked food separately and regularly check fridge and freezer temperatures.”

Technology

Keeping the kitchen clean and maintaining

cleanliness and hygiene in cooking in dining places can be an onerous job. In recent years, technology has revolutionised the ways of keeping the kitchens clean and maintaining hygiene while cooking.

One of the methods being used nowadays is steam cleaning. This technology uses high-temperature steam to clean surfaces. Automated cleaning technologies such as robotic vacuum cleaners and mops are also being used by some restaurants. Use of digital tools is also being made across the globe.

Rana avers “Technology plays a vital role in helping us maintain cleanliness and hygiene in our kitchen, ensuring the highest standards for a reputed establishment.”

He adds, “A few of the technology applications we use in our daily operations are:

Automated Cleaning System, Sanitation Monitoring Tools, Smart sensors and equipment, Cleaning Maintenance schedule, UV Sterilization technology, IoT Enabled Equipment, Waste Management Solutions



-use advanced waste compactors.

By leveraging these technologies we ensure our kitchen remains clean and safe & efficient reflecting our commitment to excellence and guests satisfactions.”

Yashwant declares, “Technology has helped immensely in maintaining kitchens in dining places clean and hygienic. Some of the automated cleaning systems are:

Dishwashers: High-temperature dishwashers sanitize and clean dishes, utensils, and equipment.

Floor cleaning robots: Autonomous robots navigate and clean floors, reducing labor and improving efficiency.

Hood cleaning systems: Automated systems clean kitchen exhaust hoods, reducing grease buildup and fire hazards.”

He adds, “The smart cleaning tools include:

UV-C light sanitizers: Portable devices use ultraviolet light to sanitize surfaces, equipment, and utensils.

Steam cleaners: Portable steam cleaners sanitize and clean surfaces, equipment, and utensils.

Smart mops: Microfiber mops with built-in cleaning solution dispensers and adjustable handles.”

He continues, “Software is also utilised for kitchen management like:

Cleaning schedules: Digital cleaning schedules and reminders ensure tasks are completed on time.

Inventory management: Software tracks cleaning supplies, reducing waste and ensuring timely reordering.

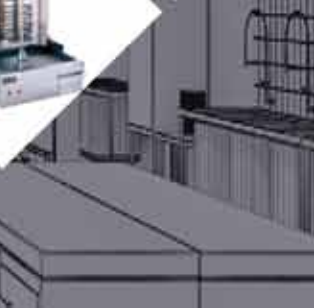
HACCP compliance: Software helps maintain Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) compliance.”

Conclusion

Kitchen Cleanliness and hygiene have become magical words for restaurateurs globally, particularly after the pandemic, which has made diners cautious about the quality of cuisine that they consume. Kitchen is the place with greatest food safety risks. Thus deep cleaning is necessary. This helps in reducing the risk of illnesses and cross-contamination, ensuring a welcoming atmosphere for the diners and boosting your business. Keeping the kitchen clean will not only help the F&B establishment in meeting the regulatory requirements but making it a trendy and loved place for diners to visit. ■



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Food & Beverage Trends for 2025

By Sharmila Chand

As we step into the New Year, the culinary world continues to evolve with innovative trends reflecting diners' specific requirements. There is a clear focus towards healthy food options, global cuisines influences, immersive culinary experiences, celebrating hyper local food, reviving regional cuisines and indigenous ingredients. Chefs are increasingly curating dining experiences that are as culturally enriching as they are gastronomically extraordinary and promoting the concept of 'Wellness On A Plate'.

Here are the top food trends expected to make waves in the coming year as we speak to the veterans in the industry:

Key Food Trends

Ritesh Sen, General Manager - Food & Beverage, The Fern Hotels & Resorts

As we step into the new year, the food and beverage industry is expected to evolve with a strong emphasis on sustainability, plant-based options and

wellness-focused offerings. Expect a growing demand for ingredients sourced from farming practices that restore soil health, reflecting a deeper commitment to sustainability. Plant-based innovation will continue to rise as plant-based foods



“Personally, I would like to prioritize health aspect. Travel, explore, and gain insights into global cuisines and food trends across different parts of the world”

Mahesh Padala, Director of Operation, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway

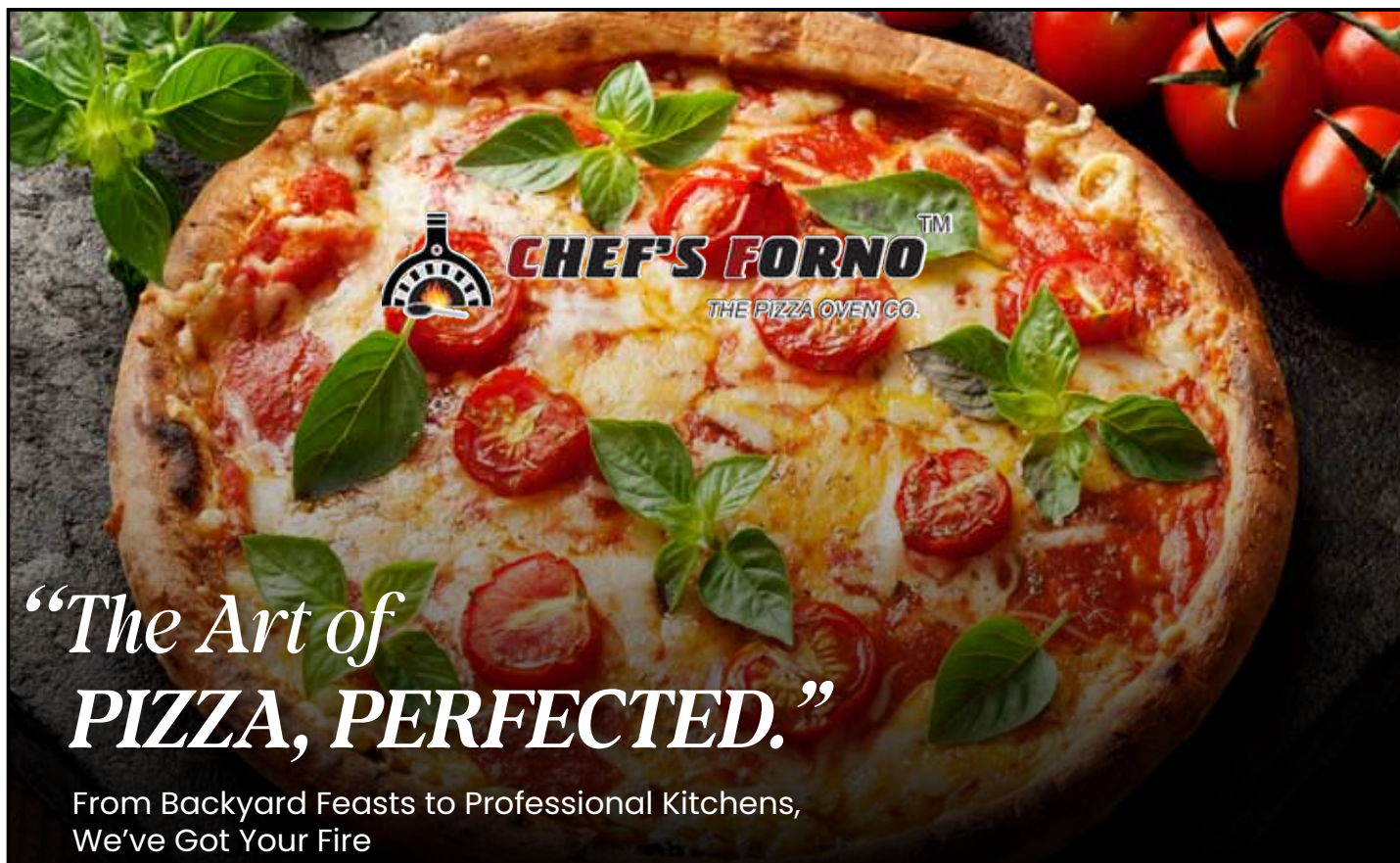
become more mainstream.

The blending of traditional regional cuisines with contemporary twists will create exciting dishes, driven by more accessible travel and cultural exchange. Finally, zero-waste cooking will see significant growth. Chefs embracing the use of every part of an ingredient, from root to leaf, will not only reduce food waste but also unlock new flavours, offering a fresh dining experience that supports sustainability.

Mahesh Padala, Director of Operations, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway

Edamame-Infused Cooking in Indian Cuisine: Edamame is poised to take Indian kitchens by storm, offering a unique blend of health and flavour. Its adaptability allows it to seamlessly integrate into traditional Indian recipes, from rich pastes to garnishes, adding a nutritious twist to classic dishes.

Smoked Cooking Techniques: The art of smoking will redefine how flavours



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"My goals for 2025 include driving innovation in sustainability, celebrating local cuisine, exploring new destinations for inspiration, embrace wellness-focused initiatives, and strengthen community connections through thoughtful collaborations"

Pallavi Mishra, Food & Beverage Manager, Grand Mercure Bangalore

are experienced. This technique, applied to everything from meats to vegetables and even desserts, will introduce a sophisticated smoky depth.

Peruvian Nikkei Japanese Cuisine: A vibrant fusion of Peruvian ingredients and Japanese techniques, Nikkei cuisine is already captivating urban diners. In 2025, it will gain wider recognition as restaurants in cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru bring this flavourful and refined trend to the forefront.

Farm-to-Glass Beverages: Sustainability and freshness will be key, with the farm-to-glass concept rising in popularity. Organic, locally sourced ingredients will form the backbone of innovative beverages, connecting consumers directly to the origins of what they drink.

The Rise of Creative Coffee Culture: Generation Z's quest for personalization and creativity will drive the coffee culture revolution. Expect to see a surge in flavoured and infused coffees with blends like vanilla, caramel, and spices becoming staples, offering a unique twist to traditional brews.

Sagar Kulkarni, Director of Food & Beverage, Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel

Hyperlocal and Sustainable Foods: Diners will prioritize local, seasonal, and

sustainable ingredients, pushing hotels to partner with local farmers and showcase hyperlocal flavours.

Personalized Nutrition: The focus will be on customised meals that cater to guests' health goals and dietary preferences.

Experiential Dining will be much sought with immersive, interactive menus, so that dining out gets more engaging.

Somrup Chanda, Director of Operations, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield

Go Local, Go Global - This trend celebrates the best of both worlds—highlighting local ingredients while embracing authentic and adventurous world cuisines. From products proudly showcasing locally sourced ingredients to capturing the essence of global authenticity, this movement will be winning over food lovers.

Consumers today prioritize honesty and transparency when it comes to what's on their plate.

Chefs and restaurants are reimagining their connection with farmers, fishermen, and food suppliers. What was once a transactional relationship is evolving into a collaborative partnership, rooted in mutual respect and shared goals.

Wellness on a Plate - Food trends are increasingly centered on health and well-being. The "food as medicine" approach promotes nutrient-dense meals.

Pallavi Mishra, Food & Beverage Manager, Grand Mercure Bangalore

The FSB industry in India and the APAC region is set to thrive with exciting trends in 2025. Sustainability will lead the way, with eco-friendly practices like locally sourced ingredients, plant-based menus, and zero-waste initiatives taking center stage. Wellness-focused offerings, such as health-conscious menus and mindfulness programs, will resonate strongly with modern travelers. The rise of domestic and hyper-local travel will further elevate authentic culinary experiences that celebrate regional flavors and traditions.

What will be IN & What will be OUT

Mahesh Padala, Director of Operations, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway



"This year, my focus is on incorporating hyper-local flavours, sustainable sourcing, and creative culinary events. We plan to offer more immersive dining experiences that combine food, ambience, and storytelling to create lasting memories for our guests. Strengthening local partnerships and offering innovative seasonal menus will be key to our vision for the year ahead."

Sagar Kulkarni, Director of Food & Beverage, Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel

IN

Resurgence of Regional Micro Cuisines: Regional cuisines will see a revival, with diners gravitating toward authentic, traditional flavours from different parts of India.

Pan-Asian Food with an Indian Twist: The fusion of Indian spices and flavours into Pan-Asian dishes like sushi, noodles, and stir-fries will dominate menus, catering to local tastes.

Healthier and Personalized Food Options: The demand for low-calorie, plant-based, and customized meals will continue prioritizing health-conscious menus.

Comfort Café Food Revival: Familiar, comforting dishes like homemade pasta and avocado croissant toast will make a comeback, with modern updates in flavour and plating to enhance their appeal.

OUT

Calorie-Dense Comfort Foods: With growing health consciousness, diners are moving away from overly rich, calorie-laden comfort foods and opting for lighter, healthier alternatives.

Generic Coffee Options: The era



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of plain, uninspired coffee offerings is waning, as consumers demand more unique and personalized coffee experiences.

One-Note Global Cuisine: Homogeneous global cuisine without unique cultural influences or adaptations is being replaced by diverse, regionally inspired, or creatively blended culinary concepts.

Ritesh Sen, General Manager - Food & Beverage, The Fern Hotels & Resorts

Locally sourced ingredients will remain a cornerstone of dining, as consumers demand authenticity and transparency. Supporting local farmers and reducing carbon footprints will be increasingly important, aligning with a growing desire for sustainability.

Technology and AI in the kitchen will continue to revolutionize operations. From streamlining cooking processes to aiding in recipe development, tech innovations will increase efficiency and creativity, transforming the culinary landscape.

Small plates and sharing menus will grow in popularity, offering communal dining experiences that encourage guests to sample a variety of dishes in a relaxed, social environment.

Healthy fast-casual dining will begin to overshadow traditional fast-food offerings, while rigid, formal dining experiences will make way for more relaxed and inclusive settings.

Sagar Kulkarni, Director of Food & Beverage, Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel

IN

Sustainable Sourcing: The food and beverage industry prioritises sustainability with locally sourced ingredients and eco-friendly practices, moving away from reliance on mass-produced, processed foods.

Cloud Kitchens and Virtual Brands: Cloud kitchens and virtual restaurant brands are revolutionising the foodservice sector, offering convenience and innovation while minimising overheads as the shift from conventional restaurant models gains traction.

OUT

Traditional Dining Experiences Without Unique Offerings: Traditional dining



"Our top priority is to enhance our sustainability initiatives. While we have made significant progress, we remain committed to reducing food waste, lowering energy consumption, and exploring new ways to minimize our environmental impact, ensuring that sustainability remains central to our operations."

Ritesh Sen, General Manager - Food & Beverage, The Fern Hotels & Resorts

experiences that lack originality are being replaced by more dynamic, creative culinary experiences that engage all senses and reflect evolving consumer preferences.

Single-use Plastics and Wasteful Packaging: The move away from single-use plastics and wasteful packaging is gaining momentum, with sustainable alternatives and eco-friendly packaging becoming the norm in the F&B sector.



"I am keen to revive "Forgotten Recipes of India", to reinstate India's rich culinary heritage to diners in a simple, engaging way"

Somrup Chanda, Director of Operations, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield

Somrup Chanda, Director of Operations, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield

IN

Shorter, Smaller, Stronger, Faster: Long, multi-course tasting menus are being replaced by shorter, high-quality ones in a more relaxed setting. Diners now prefer "less but better" for a more enjoyable dining experience.

Fine dining is becoming more welcoming and less formal, with chefs exploring new, fun restaurant ideas that cater to a broader audience. This change is bringing fresh creativity to the culinary world, and most focused concepts will thrive in the future.

Personal Focus Areas for the Coming Year

Ritesh Sen, General Manager - Food & Beverage, The Fern Hotels & Resorts

In the coming year, the focus will be to further enhance our commitment to sustainability at The Fern Hotels & Resorts. We plan to expand our sustainable practices, ensuring not only the reduction of food waste but also a comprehensive approach to eco-friendly operations. Fostering a culture of creativity and innovation within our culinary team will be a key focus. Lastly, strengthening our relationships with local farmers and artisans will remain a priority.

Sagar Kulkarni, Director of Food & Beverage, Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel

Embracing plant-based options, alternative proteins, and immersive dining and advocating food safety and hygiene, will be the key focus.

Somrup Chanda, Director of Operations, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield

Three key areas to focus:

Presentation and Communication: The way food is served is just as important as the food itself.

Seasonal Menu Changes: Embracing seasonal menu updates with thoughtful beverage pairings.

Value for Money: Offering great value for money ensures a lasting connection with consumers, who appreciate high-quality experiences that are both satisfying and reasonably priced.

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Sweet, Cool and Healthy

Watermelon is a delicious fruit, which can easily taste more delicious in the scorching Indian summers. The plant which does bear the fruit is also named the same. Hot climate is conducive to the growth of watermelon fruit. The plant and the fruit are cultivated around the globe. The weight of a watermelon fruit may vary from 1 to 20 kg. It is mostly round in shape, but in Japan you can find square watermelons also.

The fruit has a rich legacy to match its rich red interiors. However, besides deep red, the flesh of watermelon can also come in pink, yellow or white, though deep red and pink are the usual colours for juicy watermelon flesh, which are dotted with black seeds. Watermelon fruits mostly come with a dark green outer skin.

History

How watermelons rolled into India is wrapped in enigma. But there is evidence that watermelons were being cultivated in India during the seventh century, and by the 10th century, this fruit had spread its sweetness to China. The fruit was introduced in Spain by the Moors and there is evidence of watermelon being cultivated in Cordova in Spain, during the 10th century. The fruit attracted wide cultivation in Europe during the 17th century.

Seedless watermelons, which were initially developed in 1939 by Japanese scientists, have become quite popular in the present century.

Production and Cultivation

In India, the states of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra are among the major producers of watermelons. Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Assam and Haryana also grow watermelons. In India, watermelon generally comes into



season during the summer months.

Watermelon cultivation requires temperatures higher than 25 degree centigrade to grow well. A well-drained sandy loam soil with good drainage and a pH range between 6.5-7.5 are just right for watermelon cultivation.

Delectable Applications

Watermelons are consumed in raw or as salad. Chilled watermelon juice can come as a refreshing drink in scorching summers. Though watermelon shake and watermelon smoothies are not so common, but they are no less delicious.

Watermelons can be used to make cakes. Watermelon cake, if made rightly, can be a delicious evening snack, particularly in summer days. Watermelon ice-cream can also be a delicious treat in the hot and sultry days. And if you can put some papaya sauce in it then it can taste simply ethereal.

And watermelon can also be used to make delicious breads. Our bakeries should strive to make watermelon breads a tasty, innovative and healthy addition to more and more breakfast tables. I am quite sure such an endeavour of theirs would garner much popularity across urban middle and upper class India.

Watermelon juice can also be made into wine. In China and Vietnam, watermelon seeds are partaken during the New Year celebrations. Watermelon rind is used to make pickles.

Enriched with Health

Watermelon is spruced with several health benefits. The fruit is enriched with good quantity of vitamin A and C, calcium, fibre, magnesium and potassium. Intake of watermelon on a regular basis can facilitate a healthy life.

Its impressive potassium content is believed to facilitate flushing out the toxic depositions in kidney. Moreover, as watermelon has high water content (close to 92 percent), intake of watermelon can facilitate urination, which again

is a helpful measure to clean kidneys. So, regular intake of watermelon can help to keep your kidneys healthy. But if you have a kidney disease already, do exercise caution in consuming watermelon.

The lycopene in watermelon, which gives its red colour flesh, is good for your eyes. At the same time, it helps promote heart health. Watermelon can play its role in regulating blood pressure. The significant amount of potassium and magnesium present in watermelon can also be helpful in reducing blood pressure.

The fruit is endowed with anticancer properties. Watermelon has significant level of lycopene, which is associated with cancer prevention. Lycopene can reduce the risks of prostate, breast, lung, colon, and endometrial cancer. Besides, having a good source of antioxidants, watermelons can facilitate to combat the formation of free radicals, which are cause of cancer. Also antioxidants present in watermelons can reduce signs of premature ageing like wrinkles.

As watermelon is endowed with impressive water and fiber content, its regular intake helps to keep constipation away and promote a healthy digestive tract. Watermelon can be a healthy fruit for diabetic patients as its intake can keep the diabetes in check. Arginine, which is found in watermelons, can be very helpful in increasing the impact of insulin on blood sugar.



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Liqueurs:

Adding Value to Cocktails

A fine dinner, with its different courses, often comes to an end with the offer of a cup of coffee, tea, a glass of brandy, or a glass of liqueur. However, nothing can surpass the satisfaction of a post-prandial alcoholic drink that a glass of fine liqueur provides. But to make a wise selection of liqueur, after a satisfying meal, one needs to understand the basic technicalities involved in the production of this delightful drink, and also the suitable ways of enjoying it.

The importance of liqueurs also lies in the fact that they make valuable additions to any cocktail of choice, by providing aromas and finesse to a cocktail. They blend instantly with the neutral flavoured spirits like vodka, but some liqueurs also manage to complement alcoholic drinks that come with identifiable aromas of their own, such as whiskies or dark rums.

A Few Technicalities

The word liqueur originates from the Latin

word 'liquifacere' which simply means 'to dissolve'; a reference to the dissolving of ingredients in the spirit. A liqueur is almost always a sweet alcoholic drink, flavoured with fruits, herbs, flowers, spices, seeds, and sometimes even with creams. However, this list is hardly exhaustive as there are additional possibilities of flavourings. Some of the well known liqueurs like Benedictine, and Absinthe have been derived from some of the well-known herbal medicines.

Today liqueurs, in addition to being consumed at the end of a meal, form a great additive to cocktails. Fancy liqueurs may be served with ice, mixed with coffee or other mixers, or as a simple dessert enhancer. They may also be used for cooking.

Categories of Liqueurs

Strict categorisation of liqueurs is not as simple as it might seem! They are commonly categorised on the basis of

the presence of distinguishing flavours of chocolate, coffee, cream, crème, fruits, berries, flowers, herbals, nuts, whisky, and a few other flavours.

Over the ages, some brands of liqueurs have become more popular than others, but once you get hooked and charmed by the world of liqueurs it is easy to be totally engrossed in different styles, options and ingredients.

Some liqueurs may even infuse certain woods, and others may be distilled from aromatic or flavouring agents. Alcohol content in liqueurs is also not a regulated feature and it could range anywhere from 15 percent to 30 percent, although in some cases alcohol content in liqueurs could be as high as 55 percent.

Healthy Liqueurs

Yes, there is a good health angle too to these delicious delights. Some work as aperitifs and most of them are good digestives. Others can be classified as

desires of the moment, but they too, like the dairy cream based liqueurs, provide a good lining to the stomach.

Anise liqueurs have an additional property which is eye catching and interesting; the transparent liqueurs turn cloudy when any water is added to them. It is surely a good after dinner digestive, either on its own, or when mixed with something else.

Limoncello, the Italian liqueur made of lemons, is served as after dinner digestive in small chilled ceramic glasses. Made from lemon rinds limoncello has been a favourite drink even among some of the well known celebrities of the world. It can here be mentioned that in a song recorded in 2007, Avril Lavigne sang, "I will drink as much limoncello as I can. And I'll do it again and again..."

Cream V/s Crème

A cream liqueur includes dairy cream along with other ingredients. Baileys Irish Cream and Saint Brendan's use Irish whiskey while Heather Cream contains scotch whiskey. Maple Cream from Canada uses maple syrup and cream while Cruzan Rum uses rum, cream and other ingredients. Amarula has distillate of fermented marula fruit and Dooley's uses toffee and vodka, while Voyant Chai Cream uses black tea, spices and cream.

A crème liqueur on the other hand has no dairy cream. Crème in them refers to the consistency. Crème de menthe has mint; crème de cacao contains chocolate, and crème de cassis has black currants.

Liqueur Cocktails

It is not easy to compile a list of liqueur cocktails. But plenty of them can be found in the beverage menus of various restaurants and hotels. However, one particular mix of equal quantity of Baileys and Cointreau with a couple of ice cubes is simply delicious. One should try Cointreau with Amarula and another African cream liqueur. However, Carolans from Ireland produced better results with Irish Mist!

Cooking with Liqueurs

Liqueurs may be added to food items, ranging from starters to main dishes, and definitely to your desserts. One basic principle to remember while cooking with liqueur is - if it is not good enough to be drunk, it is definitely not good for cooking. When you add a splash of the original alcohol to the finished dish just before serving, it reinforces the flavour. Another important thing to remember is that as compared to other products, alcohol freezes at lower temperature. Therefore excessive use of liqueur in frozen desserts is not advisable.

Although experimenting is a great option, one can easily use Amaretto for almond, Frangelico for hazelnut, Kahlua for chocolate and Grand Marnier for orange. Also, Amaretto, Baileys, Cherry Brandy, Amarula are suitable for puddings and desserts.

Liqueurs that are often used in the preparations of main

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course dishes and desserts are Cointreau, Drambuie (with red meat), and Grand Marnier (with red meat and poultry). The easiest way to use liqueur in a dessert is to pour some amount of the liqueur over plain vanilla ice cream, thereby immediately making it a visual and culinary treat.

Stocking & Shelf Life

All cream based liqueurs need to be stored in your refrigerator and checked periodically. As with any other alcohol, liqueurs too lose their aromas over a period of time. Ideally, six to eight months is considered the maximum period for which the liqueurs can be kept, after they are opened. But some liqueurs like the Irish Mist could happily take as long as a year of shelf life.

Liqueurs are best stored in a cool dark place, away from direct sunlight or harsh bulb displays. When stored, some liqueurs that are heavy on sugar content get a film of dried sugar around the cap, but that is no indication that the liqueur has lost its potency. This can be easily remedied by wiping the inside of the cap and the bottle opening after use, before stocking it away.

The Right Choice of Glasses

A cocktail mixed with liqueur would ordinarily be served in a Martini or Tom Collins glass, or maybe even in a Margarita glass. Old style fancy crystal cut wine glasses are also suitable for serving liqueurs, especially as most wine drinkers nowadays prefer the Riedel style bigger glasses to get the wine aromas.

Many people prefer the coloured lead crystal saucer style glasses to sip their favourite liqueurs. Although they are a tad expensive, such glasses do make an impact on the guest. Blown glasses with stem, are beautiful to hold and admire.

Small short glasses are best for liqueurs like Drambuie, Benedictine, Amaretto and many other herbal as well as nut flavoured liqueurs. However, if there is a mix of two liqueurs, and ice is added to it, then of course a regular glass that tapers dramatically but is still short is good for the mixing of the ingredients.

Some Forgotten Brands

Sometimes brands and styles become outdated or just fall out of favour from



the lists of bartenders. One such golden oldie, which has very fond memory, is definitely Southern Comfort. At a Tapas Bar in Madrid there will be a moment you don't want a beer, or wine, not even whiskey on its own. Get a bottle of Southern Comfort, served cold without ice, which does not need any dilution of the liqueur. The glass in which it was to be served was interesting too – like a whiskey glass but only half as high. One should nurse two of these drinks with rounds of tapas.

Brands get forgotten because bartenders find them difficult to mix with other alcohol or make blazingly different cocktails. Moreover, people also want to be constantly challenged with different tastes, and they often look for new mixes. But every bar needs to stock Southern Comfort.

Liqueurs that Never Say Die

Times constantly change, and what is fashionable today may easily become outdated tomorrow. The bartenders also play a big role in popularising a particular brand or taste of liqueur. But certain liqueurs never go out of fashion. Surprisingly, it is due to their full flavour that they remain favoured as cocktail ingredient, on their own, or for cooking, or for pouring over desserts. One would happily use Grand Marnier, Cointreau, Amaretto, Tia Maria, or for that matter Chambord, whenever the need be.

While Baileys is still quite relevant, Amarula is gaining popularity as an important liqueur. Amarula uses the wine

made from the local South African fruit Marula, and therefore it suits people who want a lighter version without added whisky. Certain liqueurs like crème liqueurs, which do not have cream but are heavier and sweeter in taste, are very relevant as they lend colours to certain cocktail base.

Trial & Error in Mixology

Professional bartenders have the advantage that they can visualise and know in advance what proportion of mix will work for what end result. Individuals have to try options to mix and match, and if they do make mistakes, it is better to learn from the mistakes and proceed on. It is important to keep an eye on the proportions and the end alcohol content of any cocktail – be it with liqueurs or any other drink.

Mixology is not rocket science, and unless the error is extremely bizarre there would be somebody who will find it perfect. Flavours belong to families and need to be mixed well to get the best out of them – as they say a sum total of many things are always greater than the individual items.

Personal Findings

There will always be brands an individual has not come across, let alone tried. These are often local produce with focus on what is in abundance in that region. While a liqueur like limoncello might become internationally recognised and favoured, there would always be lesser known local offering, sometimes with short shelf life, such as walnut liqueur in Italy or pistachio liqueur in the USA.

One such locally made liqueur marked 'Produce of Finland', is made of cloudberry – a berry found only in the Arctic region. While most enjoyed liqueurs of cranberry, loganberry, and even of blueberries, this is a unique flavour. It is almost delicate on the nose, extremely fresh on the palate and not overly sweet either. This berry is also used to make jams, marmalades and other sweets locally. While many bartenders may not be using it, as the flavour is delicate and extremely individualistic, but on a trial basis one could use it with vodka and some other fresh juice to make some very summer friendly cocktails. ■



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Currying Flavours



Mention curries and, inevitably, you drool as you remember the spicy concoctions. Curries are not only about spices, but also about herbs. Curries though probably originated in the Indian sub-continent, but their popularity has spread across the world, over the course of centuries. Today Great Britain has more than 9000 restaurants serving curries. In that island, Indian curries are extremely popular.

However, today curries, which have undergone several innovations and modifications over the years, are not only germane to India's culinary character. If you traverse the globe, you will find curries in their many manifestations, ranging from fiery Thai curries tempered with coconut milk or cream to Japanese deep fried curry doughnuts or Caribbean goat curries. But there can be no doubt that curries have found favours from people of several regions across the globe.

Curry is a generic term primarily used in western culture to connote a wide range of dishes whose origins can be traced to the cuisines found in parts of the Indian sub-continent (in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to be precise), and in the cuisines of Sri Lanka, Thai and other South Asian and South-eastern Asian nations.

Many New World cuisines influenced by the cuisines of these above mentioned nations, such as the cuisines of Trinidad and Fiji, also have their curries. The common feature of curries is the infusion of complex combinations of spices and/or herbs. The curries also generally include the presence of fresh or dried hot chillies.

Curries may contain fish, meat, poultry, and seafood, both with combination of vegetables or without vegetables, and there may also be curries with only vegetables and no non-vegetarian food product in them. Curries can come in wet as well as dry forms. Wet curries have significant amount of sauce and/or gravy, whereas dry curries involve very little liquid in their cooking process, which is allowed to evaporate. Eventually, in dry curries ingredients are presented as coated with the spice mixture.



The Origins of Curry

The origin of the word curry is believed to be Indian. The etymology of curry can be traced to the Tamil word kari, which means sauce. Personnel from British East India Company who were trading with Tamil merchants along the Coromandel coast, first tasted kari in the mid 17th century. There they also became familiar with a spice blend used for making kari concoctions, which was called kari podi or curry powder.

The British probably got a taste of Indian curries only during the mid 17th century, but the history of curry dates back much further. Even during the Indus Valley Civilisation, the dishes of highly spiced meat were believed to be there. They can be precursors to modern day curries. Archeological evidence that dates back to 2700 BC indicates that the people from Mohenjodaro used mortar and pestle to grind spices which included mustard, fennel, cumin, and tamarind pods. They used these spices to flavour their food.

The influence of Indian curries flowed to Burma, Thailand and China by Buddhist monks, whereas the coastal traders spread the aroma of these curries to Indonesia and the Philippines. Both these developments could be traced to the 7th century AD.

Though curry may have had its origin in the Indian sub-continent it was carried by Buddhist monks and traders to other Asian countries during the course of centuries. Later curry moved to Europe, South Africa, and the Caribbean too, where it was modified to include the infusion of local ingredients. In Britain, the first curry recipe appeared in the mid eighteenth century. Then probably it was difficult to assume that one day curries would become an integral part of the modern culinary culture of Britain.

Thai and Indian

Among the curries, perhaps Thai and Indian curries are very popular. In Thai curries fresh herbs play a crucial role, whereas the mainstays of the Indian curries are dry spices. However, that doesn't mean that Thai curries do not have spices, or the Indian curries do not have herbs.

Many view there is another important difference between these two schools of curries. However, this second difference is valid only if you exclude many of the curries from South India from the comparison. By and large the Indian curries, except the curries from South India, do not usually use coconut milk, whereas Thai curries have coconut milk as their essential ingredient. According to an expert Chef who has proven expertise on Thai cuisine, letting the coconut milk cool down for a little while before the addition of the curry paste/spices, can make for a great Thai curry.

Many north Indian curries depend on dairy products such as ghee, dahi, etc. but the curries from South India have their share of coconut milk infusions. Especially in Kerala and Karnataka, the role of coconut in curries is very much rampant and if you objectively compare the Kerala curries with Thai curries, you would find that there are various similarities. In this context, the fancy hypothesis that the Thais did get their curries from South India cannot be ruled out altogether, for the reference of coconut in the Indian texts was much before than in the texts of any other country. However, at the same time it must be conceded the curries of India have been greatly influenced by Mughals and Portuguese.

Variety of Curries

As far as Indian curries are concerned, the country has a wide variety of curries spruced with meats, poultry, seafood, or vegetables; marinated in aromatic spices and simmered in a thick gravy-like sauce. Both vegetarian and non-vegetarian curries have wide varieties. From mutton korma to vindaloo to dal makhni to simple stew-like basic Indian curry, the role of curries is omnipresent in Indian culinary traditions.

In fact, curries are the edifice of Indian cooking. Cumin, chilli, turmeric, and coriander are some of the common spicy elements of Indian curries. The other popular spices in Indian curries are ginger, clove, cinnamon, cardamom, garlic, fenugreek, caraway seeds, and saffron among others. Myriad spices are used in various curries in various combinations. In India, spices are grinded and then cooked in ghee or oil.

Lime juice, tomatoes and tamarind are also often added to prepare Indian curries, which facilitate to endow them with great



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sour taste. As yogurt also has a role in most of the Indian curries, they are not generally unhealthy, as commonly perceived to be. And of course, Indian curries' wonderful taste and variety have contributed to their global popularity. Sometimes, cream and dry fruits are added to make the curries rich. Often herbs are used to garnish the Indian curries or to season them. Sometimes herbs also lend aroma to the curries, though their role in Indian curries is not major but subsidiary, unlike that of in Thai curries.

As discussed before, Indian curries reflect awesome varieties and could not be treated as a homogenous culinary entity. Like its languages and customs, the curries in India also differ from region to region. For example, the curries from Andhra Pradesh are drastically different from the curries from Punjab. Even within the state of Andhra Pradesh the curries are likely to differ in terms of taste and flavour across geographies. In the Telengana region of the state, the curries are flavoured with spices like clove, cinnamon, anise and bay leaf, whereas in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh curries are flavoured with coriander powder, cumin seeds/powder, black pepper powder, red hot chili peppers /powder, asafetida, ghee, fenugreek seeds, curry leaves and turmeric. The coastal Andhra Pradesh has an impressive array of curries comprising vegetables and a few curries made from meat.

Shredded coconut paste or coconut milk is the characteristic of the curries from Kerala. Mustard seeds, sliced red chillies fried in hot oil, onions and curry leaves are the other common elements of the curries of Kerala. The non-vegetarian curries of Kerala are heavily spiced. Cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, clove, garlic, green and red peppers, coriander, and turmeric are some of the important spices of Kerala cuisine.

Curries from Bengal and Orissa have great influence of mustard seeds and poppy seeds. Bengalis have a long love affair with fresh fish and sea food, and a great many curries are tailored in Bengal's culinary traditions to bring the best of taste from these food products. The hilsa curry with grind mustard seeds, and prawn curry with influence of coconut milk and mustard seeds are all time Bengali delicacies, which



if promoted well, can match the popularity of the best of the curries of the world.

The curries from Maharashtra, which include vegetarian curries, meat curry, chicken curry, and fish curries, range from mildly spicy to very spicy. In western Maharashtra, the spice content of curries is high, and does have infusions of groundnut powder. The curries from the Vidarbha or the eastern region of Maharashtra are also spicier than those of coastal Maharashtra. The curries from the Konkan region of Maharashtra, which is the coastal region of the state, have extensive use of coconut along with spices.

Taambda rassa (red curry) and pandhra rassa (white curry) of chicken and mutton from the city of Kolhapur of Maharashtra and the varhadi rassa (varhadi chicken curry) from the Vidarbha region are some of the delectable curries from the state of Maharashtra. The coastal region of Konkan is famous for its fish curry.

The highlight of the curries of Goa is vindaloo, which generally happens to be a spicy dish of lamb and chicken where potatoes are being frequently used. The name vindaloo has a Portuguese origin and signifies a combination of vinha d'alhos or wine (vinho) and garlic (alho).



Vindaloo in its authentic form should be a combination of wine, garlic and Indian spices, but many Indian varieties of vindaloo add vinegar instead of wine. Originally, meat used in vindaloo was the pork meat. The introduction of potatoes in this curry dish was an Indian influence, and came much later. Today vindaloo from Goa has attracted popularity in the Great Britain and the US. Besides vindaloo, Goan Fish Curry is another famous curry cuisine from Goa.

Gujarat too has a number of vegetarian curry dishes, where gravies are based on buttermilk or coconut milk. The main ingredient in these dishes does vary. It can be brinjal, potatoes, okra, tomatoes, and other vegetables too. Besides these there are kofta dishes. Then there is undhiyu, a culinary specialty from Gujarat, which happens to be a spicy, wet mixed-vegetable casserole cooked in an earthenware pot. This broth is often enjoyed during the winter months.

Besides a blend of dried spices or a paste of a combination of spices, desi ghee, butter and cream play important roles in the curries from Punjab, as do garlic, ginger, onions and tomatoes. In fact, these four vegetables play the role of base in the curries from Punjab. Maha Di Dal and Sarson Da Saag are the famous curries from Punjab. Rogan Josh is another famous non-vegetarian curry dish of India, which has originated from the state of Jammu & Kashmir. This is a lamb curry with the gravy exuding a reddish hue.

An amalgamation of Kashmiri chillis and an extract from the red flowers of the cockscomb plant (mawal) are responsible for the reddish colour of this delectable curry dish. Goshtaba, which comprises of large lamb meatballs cooked in yoghurt gravy, is another famous curry dish from this trouble-torn and beautiful state, which occasionally graces the western restaurants.

Today curries have transcended all borders and are popular in not only Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, but also in China, Japan, Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, the UK, the US, and the West Indies. Curry is one of the most loved dishes in the world. The inherent flexibility of curries probably reflects the pluralistic legacy of India. Most of the countries where curries are loved have developed their own recipes of curries. ■

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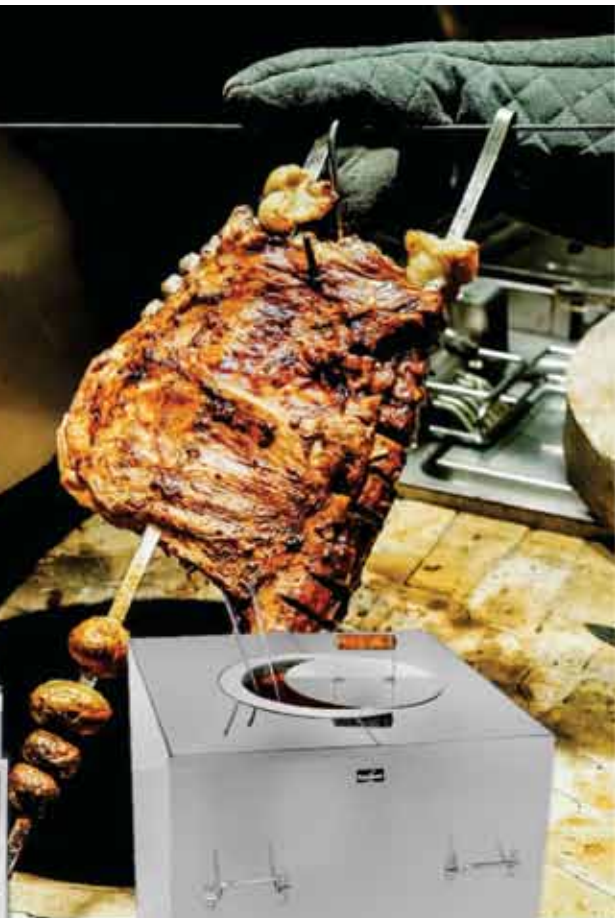
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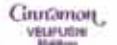
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Choosing A Right Knife

When choosing a good knife, it is important to keep in mind few things like:

Material

The material the knife is made from can affect its maintenance, sharpness, and durability. For a professional kitchen you require a Stainless-steel blade, if you get any other type, it won't give you the performance and safety required. Also, the types of steel changes depending on the usage and the country of origin.

Why Stainless steel?

Stainless Steel is durable, corrosion resistant, and easy to maintain.

For a professional chef knife the recommended steel is DIN 1.4116, that is found in the main brands, sometimes described as High Carbon, German Steel, Premium steel and High-quality steel. This is a more expensive knife because this stainless steel is costlier. (In its composition we find Molybdenum and Vanadium which results in more malleability, and it will hold the sharpness for longer).

Widely we find the AISI 420, this is mostly for the retail kind of knives which are usually found in home centers and supermarkets. You will find the marks on the blade saying Stainless Steel or Steel. It's a more economic type of steel, usually with lighter blades.

For Sushi the Nitro-B, is mostly used in Japanese kind of knives to increase the hardness of the blade and improve wear resistance for the kind of cuts that sushi requires. (In its composition besides Molybdenum and Vanadium we also find Nitrogen)

In Made in India knives we find the AISI 420 J2, it has more than double the amount of carbon, making it more susceptible to corrosion and the blade more likely to breaker. It's a cheaper kind of stainless steel.

Blade Shape

There are several blade shapes, and each one has a purpose:

Fruit & Vegetables Knives: To cut and peel, (ideal for slicing, peeling and making delicate cuts)

Peeling Knife: Narrow and pointed blade (used for cutting in cylindrical shape - peeling)

Tomato Knife: Pointed blade with micro-serrated edge (breaks the skin of the tomato without crushing)

Steak Knife: Serrated edge blade, Ideal for cutting roasted meats.

Cheese Knife: Perforated blade, Ideal for cutting and slicing soft and semi-hard cheeses. The blades design prevents cheese from sticking.

Chef's Knife: V shaped point that can be used for everything in the kitchen, (cut, slice and chop).

Cleaver: Thick and heavy blade, Ideal to breaking and separating bones.

Boning Knife: Rigid blade, Ideal for separating meat from bones and removing fat.

Fillet Knife: Flexible blade, indicated for cuts of fillet and removing the fish skin.

Bread Knife: Serrated long knife, cut without kneading.

Pastry Knife: Long serrated blade, Ideal for cutting and preparing cakes and pies.

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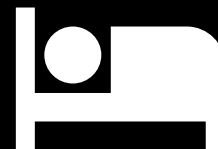
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Cold Cuts Knife: Narrow and long blade, Ideal for cutting thin slices of ham.

Utility Knife: Blade with sword tip, assists in opening and punching food.

Meat Knife: Rigid blade and curved tip, Ideal for cutting raw, roasted or cooked meat.

Carving Knife: Long blade, slightly curved at the tip, Ideal for carving roasted meats and poultry.

Santoku Knife: Precise and effortless cutting, Ideal for cutting, slicing and mincing. (Grooved model that prevent food from sticking)

Asian CLEAVER: Heavy blade, ideal for slicing or chopping vegetables.

Deba Knife: Strong blade, indicated for heavy cuts, being widely used in the cleaning and preparation of fish.

Nakiri Knife: Wide blade provides a quick and uniform cut in vegetables.

Yanagiba Knife: Classic oriental kitchen model, with elongated blade guarantees precision cuts. Indispensable in the preparation of Sushi and Sashimi.

Construction

Forged Knife:

Forged Knife is made from a single bar of steel that is heated and hammered into shape. Forged knives are usually heavier than stamped knives, which are made by cutting a blade out of a larger piece of steel. These knives are often considered higher quality than stamped models.

Besides the quality of the steel in this case the Forged Knife should have a perfect balance so it would feel very nimble in the hand.

Stamped Knives:

There are several types:

Mounted Knife: It's when the blade is made separately and in the end of the production it's fitted to the handle, in some cases you can see the rivets used to fix the handle.

(Japanese specialty knives are usually like this, also the supermarket kind of knives)

Injected Knife: For this process the injection molding is done on top of the stainless steel, you can find plastic and nylon type of handles been used. In a good quality knife, it will not come off.

Welded Knife: In the welded we have the hollow stainless-steel handle that is attached to the blade, most of the time the welding is not noticeable.

There is another type, which the handle may be wood or plastic, but inside there is a tang in which the blade is welded to. The way to identify is per the balance of the knife, the blade usually is much heavier.

Heat Treating

Quenching and Tempering

The steel is further strengthened and hardened through a process called heat treating. In this process the blade is heated up to 1.000° C and then cooled very rapidly by water or nitrogen to increase the HRC (Rockwell hardness C scale), the hardness of the steel. In the nitrogen cooling process, we call it sub-zero because the steel drops in second to below 0° C.

After this process the knives go thru a second process called tempering, where they are heated not more than 300° C, leaving the piece with the right hardness, the repetition and time of this process is a secrete of the manufacturer.

The normal stainless steel has around 22 HRC before this process and after it can go up to 58 HRC in regular knives, the Sushi knives can go up to 65 HRC.

These are time and energy consuming processes that elevate the cost of a good knife.

Handle

The handle should be ergonomic and comfortable to hold and provide a secure anti slip grip. Cutting is a major task in any professional kitchen, where cook or the helper will spend hours in a day cutting, slicing and chopping, so the ergonomics and safety is very important to avoid any accident and also prevent injuries from repetitive additional movement. Having a proper knife will increase productivity and the aesthetic of the cuts.

Popular materials for handles include Natural Wood, Treated Wood, Metal, Nylon, Polypropylene and Polycarbonate with fiberglass.

Having an antimicrobial handle is a must, it blocks the proliferation of bacteria in the kitchen avoiding contamination.

NSF certification, this goes without saying that the professional kitchen needs a knife that is certified by NSF (national sanitation foundation), it assures that the product has been tested by a trusted independent certification organization.

Sharpening

A safe knife is a sharp knife, this is a very important concept, sometimes we think that a dull knife won't cut us, but usually it's when accidents happen, when the knives is not sharpened you must put more strength in the hand, and it can slip and cut yourself. If the knife is properly sharpened the movement of cutting will follow a straight path and it will make a clean and secure cut.

How long should a sharpening last in a good knife?

The better the quality of steel and the heat treatment process the longer it will retain its sharpness. It will also depend on what you are cutting, let's say a tomato is softer then a pineapple.

Is the food frozen or not?

The frozen food also increases its hardness. Your cutting board also affects how long the sharpness will last; a wood board is softer than a tempered glass for example.

The acidity of the food will also degrade the sharpness and the steel in general, it's ideal to have a separated knife for these sorts of foods and clean immediately after each usage.

There are two stages for the resharping:

Misaligned Edge - After some uses the knife will get misaligned, this is normal and happens to all the knives. When you try to cut you will feel some resistance from the food, but it goes through. These are micro bends that happens to the blade and need to be realigned.

Blunt Edge - After some usage the knife fill need to be resharpned, this is a easy process that is not mastered by many. Once the cutting edge does not exist anymore, only the sharpening will bring back the cutting power. When you try to cut and end up smashing the food, that is when the resharpning is required.

Sharpening Tools - Proper sharpening steel, Table sharpener, Sharpening Stones.

Maintaining Knife

The knife needs to be cleaned with careful because it's a sharp object, with the soft part of the sponge and neutral detergent and should be dried and stored away to avoid any accidents.

With inputs from Tramontina India Private Limited



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A perfect mix of the British Old-World Charm & Quintessential Modernity

Tucked away in the leafy bylanes of Pali Village in Bandra, and housed in a 90-year-old quaint, weathered bungalow, Scarlett House makes a bold entrance to the city’s culinary scene. With its unmissable brick red exterior and a charming design philosophy that makes you feel like you’re in an extension of a living room, everything about Scarlett House is designed to make you feel right at home—from the vintage crockery and old-world charm that has been retained in the interiors, to sun-lit nooks and corners and a culinary philosophy that focuses on clean eats backed by wellness.

With four partners at the helm, Dhaval Udeshi, founder of Dhaval Udeshi Hospitality, celebrity entrepreneur Malaika Arora, her son Arhaan Khan along with Malaya Nagpal; the quartet have

combined creative forces for a refreshing concept that the city hasn’t experienced before, alongside creating a platform for indigenous small manufacturers to offer



wellness products and reach out to the right audience.

You have a wholesome menu that evolves through the day, a dedicated water bar serving an assortment of healthy elixirs, a cocktail bar that will feature a compact menu of tipples (and is by-invitation only), along with a selection of retail products where the restaurant has teamed up with small-batch, local vendors, in an effort to give them a platform to showcase their produce.

The 45-cover restaurant is split between two levels. The lower floor houses a coffee bar, a wine and cheese room, a retail section, and seating that features cosy sofas and armchairs where you can while away your afternoon. Take the wooden staircase to the upper level which resembles an intimate, attic-like

space with vintage wallpaper, a cocktail bar (operational once the restaurant receives its liquor license), a live sushi bar and a reading corner where you can settle in with a book.

"After launching over 20 hospitality projects I wanted to curate something that was more than just food— I wanted to craft a dining experience that feels like home, but with a touch of culinary adventure. Scarlett House is a culmination of global cuisine curated through locally produced ingredients. This is the first Scarlett House and we plan on expanding the brand with more outlets in Mumbai and other cities in India and across the globe, along with the Scarlett Retail kiosks at strategic locations," says Dhaval Udeshi. "The idea is to offer solution-based eats that serve a purpose, rather than be just another restaurant. Scarlett House is a work of many months focussing on giving a platform to local entrepreneurs to showcase their produce," he adds.

For Malaika Arora, Scarlett House is truly a labour of love. "I've always been a firm believer in the fact that food brings people closer. I myself host and eat with

the same ethos. Food isn't just about calories and macros, but also sustenance and most importantly—love. That's what we have tried to do at Scarlett House. This has been a long-standing dream and finally it's coming to fruition. The fact that I'm doing this venture with my son Arhaan, makes it all the more special," she shares.

The Interiors

Leave behind the cacophony of the neighborhood as you step inside a homely space that blends old-world charm with rustic simplicity. Whitewashed walls, distressed accents, wooden shutters and tiles mingle effortlessly with the sun-dappled interiors, which feature mismatched wooden tables, vintage chairs in bright pops of colour, and artwork framing the walls.

Potted plants add to the pleasant aesthetic, while a scarlet-hued door makes a statement near the coffee bar. The cosy theme hints at the bungalow's Portuguese heritage, combined with the clink of cups and murmur of gentle conversation which ebbs and flows with

the history of the bungalow. In fact, much of the house's original character has still been retained.

The Culinary Philosophy

Scarlett House is more than just a place to dine at, catch up with friends or sip on brews. The idea is to offer a wholesome experience that goes beyond a regular cafe. You're welcomed with the philosophy of healthy and nourishing eats combined with creating a space to simply ideate and unwind.

Evenings can be spent enjoying an intimate wine and cheese session, where the restaurant has carefully curated a list of local and international wine labels that you can pair with cheese sourced from regional cheesemakers from across India. This includes a selection of vegan cheeses.

Chef Beena Noronha has designed the menu which transforms as the day progresses and features global flavours with an Indian twist, using ingredients sourced from across the country. Enjoy a stack of Matcha Waffles with Pistachio Cream and Candied



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Mumbai (Branch Office)
No. C/401, 4th Floor, Hyde Park, Saki Vihar Road,
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Lemon or a Portuguese-style Egg Skillet for breakfast. If you're feeling peckish, order portions of the Salmon Mille Feuille sandwiched between layers of jeera khari, Asparagus Soufflé or Chicken Ghee Roast Wrap. Pair these with freshly-pressed juices and smoothies or visit the dedicated Water Bar on the upper level where you can make your own elixirs depending on specific concerns—from glowing skin to better sleep or digestion.

A separate page on the menu is dedicated to 'Malla's Favourites' that Arora often whips up at home. This includes Scarlett House's take on her popular baked fish or banh mi stuffed with offal. If you're craving Asian flavours, how about handmade maki rolls from the Sushi Bar using indigenous rice from Uttarakhand? Other signatures on the menu include Russian blinis, gluten-free wraps made with almond and chickpea flour, vegan rolls, sandwiches, salads and hearty mains. Desserts are indulgent with a healthy twist, such as Chocolate Sourdough with Blueberries and Brie Cheese (lets add one more dessert here).

The mixology aims to be elevated with a cocktail program that will change every 45 days or so. What's more, international mixologists will be encouraged to visit Scarlett House for bar takeovers as they



whip up eclectic cocktails in collaboration with the restaurant's in-house team.

The Retail Experience

After your meal, stop by the retail wall where you can purchase ingredients used across the menu, from nut butters that are freshly churned in-house, to flavoured salts, sauces, compound butters in savoury notes such as Madras Curry or Furikake & Bacon, as well as protein bars. Millet-based products have been carefully sourced from local,

women-led vendors in the city, while you also have ingredients like jamun vinegar. The idea to create a retail wellness space comes from the coherent idea of building a platform for small indigenous manufacturers and offering homegrown sips and eats to people.

With its warm, inviting ambiance and a philosophy that is rooted in nourishing the mind, body, and soul, Scarlett House is a chic addition to Mumbai's food scene that is all set to offer a superlative dining experience.

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The Aroma from Japan



The popularity of pan Asian flavours has been a prominent food trend in India during the last few years. The cuisines from south-east and north-east Asia is a blend of several tastes together – sweet, sour, salty, spicy, and bitter. They have a combination of flavours and textures, often within a single dish.

Pan Asian cuisine from the orient involves the presence of a range of vegetables, which range from greens such as morning glory to white water lily stems. The cuisines offer noodles made from a variety of ingredients and are prepared in dozens of different ways. Noodles are most commonly made from rice, wheat, egg, moong bean, or a combination of ingredients. There has been an emphasis on fats, oils and sauces in cooking.

The Legacy of Japan

The global traveller has a greater appreciation for diverse international cuisines. The cuisine from Far East, like Japanese food being perceived healthy and fresh, this East Asian cuisine has become more popular now than ever before. Japanese cuisine was always considered haute. The food is rice and noodle-based, and easy to share which is similar to most Asian cuisines.

Japanese cuisine represents gastronomical delights with a bountiful of

regional and seasonal fresh preparations. It's comfort food is flavourful and a touch exotic, offers healthy eating options and look beyond traditional dining choices.

It is a well-known fact that the Japanese believe in preparing dishes according to the season so that they can use fresh ingredients. For instance, they use lots of bamboo shoots in the spring and chestnuts in the fall. Exploring the culinary culture of Japan can be an experience of a lifetime. Japanese food is as much about the presentation as of preparation. Presenting the food is an art in Japan where every dish is carefully plated.

The focus of Japanese cuisine is on fresh seasonal ingredients. The Japanese Chefs don't like to overcook so as to bring out the authentic colours and flavours. Japanese cooking came to emphasise the frequent use of deep-frying (i.e. tempura, etc.) using vegetable oil or conversely, raw food (i.e. sushi and sashimi).

To add colour contrast to the food,



simple condiments are often infused to enhance the flavours e.g. light dipping sauces, citrus, miso, wasabi, pickles, and soy sauce, in the realm of Japanese cuisine. Though the individual servings are small, traditional Japanese meals called Kaiseki that include several courses, does make the meal wholesome and delicious.

The availability of authentic ingredients and the culinary craftsmanship of Japanese chefs in India have also played a significant role in fostering a growing interest in the cuisine. With its unique combination of flavours, a strong emphasis on fresh and high-quality ingredients, and a focus on presentation—there is a clear distinction that makes Japanese food stand apart and be appreciated. Sushi, sashimi, ramen, and other dishes are not only delicious but also visually appealing. The art of sushi-making and traditional dining rituals like teppanyaki, have also intrigued and captivated food enthusiasts.

Popular Tastes from Japan

Now let us have a look at some of the most popular items in Japanese cuisine.

Sashimi and Sushi

Sashimi comprises thin slices of raw fish or other seafood served with spicy Japanese horseradish (wasabi) and shoyu,

SAKURA

At The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa (a.k.a. THE MET)

Sakura, one of the pioneers of Japanese cuisine in India, offers authentic experience of the taste of Japan in India. Sakura was the beginning of this cuisine's journey amidst a country that relies heavily on its spices and local ingredients. The restaurant offers its captivate guests with eclectic and distinctive dining options. To the global gourmet, the award winning Sakura, India's first Japanese restaurant and an all-time favourite with expats and high fliers continues to delight guests with its authentic fare from the land of the rising sun.

Sakura, decorated in a contemporary Japanese manner, creates a visual effect of serenity and relaxation. The window blinds are deliberately designed to resemble with Japanese interior accents common to most houses in Japan. The stone floor and the colour found on the walls evoke soothing, natural elements that draw inspiration from the earth. The rich fabrics and highest-grade wood furniture gives the space a current and warm look, but also maintains the balance between tradition and modernity.

Food

Japanese culture, interior and food have always been an enigma wrapped in layers of mystery -- the more you uncover, the more there is waiting to be discovered. Here, at Sakura, guests can unravel their own part of the enigma to relish exquisite Japanese food, lovingly prepared by Executive Chef & his team, as it was always meant to be. Exotic flavours from the finest and rarest ingredients are enhanced with the most impressive repertoire of Japanese Sakes. Visually stunning Sushi Bar treats guests to the best

of Japanese gastronomic delights.

To provide guests with unusual food experiences, Sakura keeps creating unique food festivals in a year, which gives something new and innovative to them. Our cosmopolitan guests who are well travelled or are culinary enthusiasts already like Japanese and Pan Asian laid menu that's a



complete palate pleaser to them.

Sleek and stylish, fine-dining restaurant with its three elegant private dining rooms, offers the best of Japanese cuisine. The restaurant has hosted royalty and corporate titans, adds a perfect fusion of pan-Asian taste and tradition to its famed Japanese gastronomic artistry. The Japanese and pan-Asian menu not only brings to the diners aromatic flavours and enticing dishes but also provide a whole new dining affair.

For people on the move, there's Sakura's famous Bento Box meals with food arranged

artistically and meticulously in different slots. The restaurant offers to explore the exotic Japanese cuisine and unravel the remarkable Asian flavours from Korea to Indonesia to Mongolia to Thai and more.

The Menu

Sakura's menu is designed to appeal to the evolving palettes and preferences of guests, while providing them with dining experience from both Japanese and Pan Asian Cuisine. Food connoisseurs can delight into an array of Vegetarian and Non-vegetarian delicacies.

One can choose from brilliant Sakura menu:

Hourenso Goma Ai - Blanched spinach mixed with soy, miso and tahini paste),

Edamame - Lightly salted blanched green soybean pods

Yaki Gyoza - Japanese style pan grilled Momos with choice of pork or chicken

Yasai Misoshiru - Japanese soybean soup with vegetables

Tempura Moriawase - Prawns and vegetables dipped in light batter and deep fried

Chicken Teppanyaki - Grilled chicken in teppanyaki sauce

Also On offer is Sashimi and Sushis, Nabe, Ramen, Udon and more.

These dishes can be paired with exotic beverage range in champagne, sparkling wine, premium Scotch whisky, Sake, gin, tequila, cocktail, mocktail and more.

The artistic integrity of this world-class fine-dining restaurant ensures the guests of a spiritual and a purifying experience indulging all senses and providing them with a complete Sensuous Pleasure.

while sushi consists of the same, served on vinegar infused rice, but it also includes cooked seafood, vegetables and egg.

Domburimono

These dishes consist of a bowl (domburi) of rice, covered with one of a variety of toppings such as boiled beef (gyudon), chicken and egg (oyakodon), deep-fried shrimp or deep-fried pork cutlet and egg (katsudon). They are often eaten with miso soup and pickles.

Tempura

Seafood or vegetables dipped in batter and deep-fried, tempura is served with a dipping sauce and daikon. The word tempura comes from the Portuguese word tempero (gravy or sauce) and this dish dates from the mid 16th century, when Portuguese and Spanish culture was first introduced to Japan. Tempura can be served with a side bowl of rice and soup or on a bowl of rice or noodles (tempura

udon, tempura soba).

Sukiyaki

This is a savoury stew of vegetables and beef, cooked in a large nabe and dipped in a bowl of beaten raw egg. The vegetables usually used are green onion, shiitake mushrooms and chrysanthemum leaves (shungiku). Also added are tofu and gelatinous noodles (shirataki) and the ingredients are cooked in a sauce made of soy sauce, sugar and sweet cooking

sake (mirin).

Shabushabu

For this dish, there is the requirement to dip paper-thin slices of beef in a pot of boiling water and stock for a few seconds and then dip the cooked beef in sesame sauce (goma dare) before eating.

Later, vegetables such as enoki mushrooms and Chinese cabbage, tofu and shirataki are added. When cooked, these are dipped in a soy and citrus sauce (ponzu). After the beef and vegetables have been finished, udon can be added to the pot and eaten with the broth. Other flavourings used include crushed garlic, chives and daikon.

Okonomiyaki

Best described as a savoury Japanese pancake, for its preparation, chopped



vegetables and meat or seafood are mixed with batter and cooked on a griddle. Like a pancake, the okonomiyaki is flipped over and cooked on both sides. It is then topped with a special sauce and mayonnaise and sprinkled with nori and dried fish flakes (katsuobushi). Variations include adding a fried egg or soba.

Yakitori

Yakitori itself means broiled chicken.

Various cuts of chicken, including heart, liver and cartilage, are cooked on skewers over a charcoal grill. Also cooked this way at yakitori restaurants (yakitoriya) are an assortment of vegetables such as green peppers (piman), garlic cloves (ninniku) and onions (negi). They are flavoured using either a tangy sauce (tare) or salt (shio). Yakitoriya are usually laid-back places where the food is a snack to accompany drinking.

Yakiniku

The term translates literally as grilled meat, and it consists of bite-size pieces of beef (and to a lesser extent pork, chicken, seafood and vegetables) which are grilled at the diner's table. Though overseas it is usually called 'Japanese barbeque,' in Japan it is often translated as 'Korean barbeque.'

Offering Authentic Experience of Japan



Rajesh Khanna heads the Department of Food & Beverage at The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa since April 2008. He has 20+ years of experience in the Hospitality industry covering diverse areas in Food Beverage and Service. Having started his career with The Hyatt, New Delhi in 1984, he joined The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa in 2003 as Banquet Manager and was later promoted to Food & Beverage Manager in September 2006. He is equipped with a Bachelor's degree in Commerce from Delhi University and holds MBA from National Institute of Management Studies Mumbai. He oversees planning and manages the operations of the food and beverage of the hotel, including three major award-winning restaurants- Chutney, Bar + Tandoor (serves Pan Indian cuisine), Sakura (Japanese Cuisine), Zing (world cuisine and 24 hrs coffee shop) and Dessert shop, Zing GourMET Shop. He supervises the discussion, and implements business plans, event calendar and budget plan. He spearheaded the launch of two restaurants at Gurgaon- Chutney, Bar+ Tandoor and Sakura. He actively planned new restaurants (Zing, Chutney+Bar and Sakura) as part of renovation of the hotel. His forward-thinking approach

ensured the launch of THE MET club loyalty membership program of the hotel.

In an exclusive interview with FBR he provides insight on the trend and growth of Japanese cuisine in India.

How you see the growing trend of Japanese cuisine in India?

Japanese Cuisine is becoming very popular in India. People now being health conscious prefer food, which is less on oil, flavourful, less spicy and full of nutrition. After effect of the Japanese food is minimal. Japanese menu has multiple courses for guests to choose from. The meal is quick, colourful, with all courses and in minimum quantity. The range starts from easy pocket to enlarged pocket.

What is the USP of restaurant 'Sakura'?

Sleek and stylish, award winning,

fine-dining restaurant Sakura has three elegant convertible private dining rooms for independent dining, offering authentic Japanese cuisine. The menu consists of Sashimi and different types of Sushi, which is also the USP of the restaurant. The restaurant is located in the heart of city and attracts people from all parts of the city.

Sakura staff is well trained and uses Japanese phrases to welcome and greet the guests. They are well aware of the culture and eating habits of Japanese diners. Moreover, the menu is printed in English and Japanese language that adds to the experience of dining in India

as Japan. Apart from above, we keep curating different promotions to enhance diners dining experience.

How you see Sakura has evolved over the years?

Sakura being original and authentic has grown over years. At Sakura we constantly worked on dishes and upgrade the menu keeping in mind giving diner's best and original taste.

Sakura started when Indians were not much exposed to Japanese cuisine. Being a pioneer of authentic Japanese cuisine, the restaurant began its operations during the time when there was an economic

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HOTREMAI publishes a periodical journal known as 'HOTREMAI REPORTS' in its effort to be more informative to its members and the industry. It carries information on activities, happenings and developments in the hospitality and allied sector and also covers the information on new projects, exhibitions and events. This creates opportunities for members to actively participate by sharing their views and also advertise their products and services at nominal costs. The 'HOTREMAI REPORTS' is circulated free of cost in the hospitality industry.

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reform and government had opened the doors for foreign companies to invest in India. Many Japanese, Korean and people from other nationalities started travelling to India. This pushed demand for international standard of Japanese food and Sakura lead the way.

We cater to almost for all the country Heads of Japanese & Korean companies, Heads of various Diplomatic missions, etc. With boom in travel and airlines industry many Indians started travelling to various countries where they experienced the Japanese food and when they came back to India, they had already developed certain taste for the cuisine. They found authentic Japanese food in Sakura and this made them the regular patrons. Now Sakura has large number of Indian food lovers as well. And the demand for this cuisine will keep evolving.

What is the concept behind the menu your restaurant offers?

Sakura is known for its authentic Japanese cuisine, most of the ingredients are flown internationally. Sakura offers Royal Japanese courses, Quick higawari meals, fixed meals and Benton boxes. The menu starts from Appetizers, Chefs Salads to Grilled and Fried dishes with choice of different Dons, Soba, Ramen and Udon. Home-made Ice creams are part of the menu. Our Best Seller ice creams are Goma, Wasabi, Ogura and Matcha.

How often you renew your menu offerings?

We revise Sakura's menu every year looking at the popularity of the dishes. We check the costing to plan and execute right selling price of each dish. We remove the non-popular dishes from the menu and add new and innovative dishes in order to give the best to our guests. It is exciting to present dishes to our guest who are not much exposed to varieties of Japanese cuisine. Most of the diners are not fully aware of Japanese Pizza, Hot plates, Hot pots and other dishes of menu.

How you see the perception about Japanese cuisine has changed beyond Sushi & Sashimi?

Today Japanese food is not only



known for Sushi, Sashimi, Teppanyaki and Tempura. Japanese food has wide array of selection which includes Ginmutsu Saikyo Yaki (Tara Fish), Okonomiyaki, Soba, Donbori, Udon. There are different types of sushi as well like Uramaki, Temaki, Chirashi, Gunkan and Inari. As mentioned above, guests have evolved their palates and are now experimenting and savouring the other dishes of this cuisine.

What kind of flavours are popular among Indians?

Indians mostly like Teppanyaki, Soba, Sushi Sashimi, Tempura, Yakimeshi, Yaki soba are few dishes Indians order.

Dessert choices offered at the restaurant?

No meal in the restaurant is complete if it is not ended with sweet taste. Sakura is known for home-made Ice creams like Matcha (green tea), Ogura (red bean), Goma (sesame seed) and Wasabi. These are different and unique flavours which you will not find anywhere else. We also have Japanese custard. All the fixed meals, Boxes and Set Menus are served with sliced fresh fruits.

What drinks you offer with the food?

We offer both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages at Sakura. Ocha is served to the entire guest as part of meal. The beverage menu includes variety of Japanese Liquor starting from Japanese

Whiskey, Shochu, Sake and Japanese Cocktails created for the restaurant. Guests who prefer non-alcoholic beverage order unique mocktails and aerated drinks as well.

What are your personal preferences in Japanese Cuisine? Why?

As Japanese menu is divided into different courses as cold and hot which is again divided in Grilled, Fried, Broiled, Sashimi, Sushi and other courses. One must try Sushi, Sashimi, Grilled with Soba and Rice. Miso soup is always part of the courses. These are in my must-try list!

How you create balance between traditional Japanese cuisine and modern culinary trends?

There are few things to keep in mind while balancing the two. We minimize the modern culinary trends while preparing authentic Japanese cuisine. Japanese love their original flavours, and does not appreciate tweaking of their food much. Based on guest feedback we learn, improve & keep evolving. However, on guest demand and various feedbacks, Sakura has also introduced amazing Asian Cuisine offerings. The new pan-Asian menu not only brings to the diners aromatic flavours and enticing dishes but also provide a whole new dining affair. Food connoisseurs can delight into an array of Vegetarian and Non-vegetarian delicacies from Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Mongolia, amongst others. Sakura has incorporated dishes from these regions mixed with Japanese spice and herbs to create an extraordinary fusion of taste for its customers

What are the challenges you face to run a successful Japanese restaurant?

Importing raw material from outside India is the biggest challenge as there are very few suppliers in India for Japanese ingredients. Cost of raw material is another challenge we are dealing with, since with increase in cost we cannot increase the selling price on same percentage. Controlling wastage and cost is challenging as the raw material is very expensive.



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“Passion and discipline are the foundation of my work ethics”

Rakesh Jadhav, Executive Sous Chef, Double Tree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad



Rakesh Jadhav brings over 17 years of culinary expertise to his role as Executive Sous Chef at DoubleTree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad. A seasoned professional, he has honed his skills with prestigious hospitality brands such as Taj, Marriott, Hilton, Accor, Hyatt, and Starwood across India, Maldives, and beyond. Rakesh specializes in multi-cuisine operations, particularly modern European, Indian, and Asian cuisines, with a keen focus on kitchen management and innovative menu engineering. Known for his leadership and mentorship, he is deeply committed to delivering exceptional culinary experiences.

Outside the kitchen, Rakesh enjoys traveling, listening to music, and reading mythological books. A food photography enthusiast, he dreams of combining his creative passions with his culinary journey.

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

How do you define yourself?

I am a passionate, dedicated, and innovative chef who thrives in high-pressure environments. My focus is on creating exceptional culinary experiences while mentoring my team to achieve their best.

What is your philosophy of cooking?

Cooking is an art that tells a story through flavours. My approach emphasizes simplicity, authenticity, and respect for ingredients, turning them into memorable dishes that connect people to cultures and traditions.

What is your area of expertise?

I specialize in managing multi-cuisine operations with a strong focus on modern European, Indian, and Asian cuisines. My expertise also includes large-scale kitchen management and crafting innovative menus.

Had you not been a chef, then what?

If I weren't a chef, I'd likely be in food

photography, combining my passion for food with creative visual expression.

What is your source of inspiration?

I draw inspiration from Chef Marco Pierre White for his perfectionism, Chef Gaggan Anand for his groundbreaking approach to cuisine, and my mother, whose home-cooked meals sparked my love for food.

What has been the most rewarding moment in your career?

The highlight of my career was leading the culinary operations during the opening of a luxury resort and receiving exceptional guest and critic feedback for my work.

How has the journey been so far?

It's been a fulfilling journey marked by diverse experiences, challenges, and achievements. Working in different countries has expanded my culinary knowledge and enhanced my leadership abilities.

What skills are necessary to be a good chef?

A good chef needs creativity, leadership, adaptability, time management, attention to detail, and a collaborative spirit to succeed in the kitchen.

How do you de-stress yourself?

I unwind by spending time with my son, exploring nature, and experimenting with food photography, which allows me to merge creativity with my culinary passion.

Favourite Ingredient? Why?

Garlic is my favourite ingredient for its versatility and ability to elevate the flavour of any dish.

Favourite Cuisine?

I enjoy Indian cuisine for its complexity and depth and European cuisine for its refinement and technique.

Favourite Spice?

Cardamom is my preferred spice because its warm, floral notes add

sophistication to both sweet and savory dishes.

Favourite Equipment?

The chef’s knife is indispensable to me for its precision and versatility, making it a fundamental tool in the kitchen.

Favourite Restaurant/Food Joint?

‘Gaggan’ in Bangkok stands out for its inventive, story-driven approach to dining that transforms every dish into an experience.

Your Favourite Diner?

I enjoy serving diners who appreciate the effort behind a dish. One memorable instance was recreating a nostalgic dessert for a guest, earning heartfelt appreciation.

Favourite Culinary Destination?

Thailand inspires me with its vibrant street food culture and its masterful balance of bold flavors.

“With 17 years of global experience, having worked with leading hospitality brands, my journey has enriched my culinary expertise, leadership skills, and dedication to mentorship. I strive for culinary excellence and inspiring the next generation of chefs.”

Best compliment you have received?

A team member once called me a “true mentor and inspiration,” which was deeply rewarding as I saw them flourish into a successful chef.

What is your philosophy of work?

I believe in leading by example, fostering growth, and maintaining consistency.

Lessons learnt in the kitchen?

I’ve learned to respect every ingredient,

value humility, and never stop learning. Consistency and teamwork are critical to success.

Last meal on Earth?

I would choose homemade dal, rice, and pickles, as they bring me comfort and remind me of home.

10 years from now?

I envision myself as a culinary consultant, mentoring aspiring chefs and sharing my knowledge through workshops and collaborations.

Future plans?

I aim to transition into food photography while mentoring young chefs and advocating for sustainable cooking practices.

Best career advice for aspiring chefs?

Stay passionate, work hard, and be patient. Master the fundamentals before innovating, and embrace learning at every stage.



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Meaty' Issues of Hygiene



Meat is not just a food item in India. While a large section of the population just loves to devour them every time they get a chance, many others are very touchy about it. It is not that they just do not want to eat meat, some may even prefer not to have any contact with meat-based items. So handling and serving meat is a very sensitive issue, especially in the northern parts of the country.

But apart from the reservations of a section of the people about meat consumption, those who love to eat meat or meat-based products need to be served these items with care in order to maintain their hygiene level. And consumers in some parts of the world have become so conscious that for many of them an ideal hygiene regime for meat-based products starts much before they are slaughtered with the purpose of making them available for restaurants, hotels, or kitchens of someone's house.

So consumers have now started asking questions like how the animals were fed or were they given antibiotic injections. There has been a growing preference for antibiotic-free poultry. And in fact, some major fast food chains have started offering antibiotic-free chicken in their restaurants in countries like the US. Demands for serving antibiotic-free chicken is also growing in India due to increased consciousness about dangers of antibiotic resistance.

But as there is currently no law barring

meat from animals that were given antibiotic injections, few major players have come forward to serve such meat in the country, probably because the price of antibiotic-free meat seems to be a tad higher than their much commoner counterpart.

But even if we leave the issue of antibiotic-free chicken aside, there are several issues of hygiene surrounding the production, processing, distribution and cooking of meat. This is because meat can get much more easily contaminated than other dry items or vegetables.

Moreover, if not properly handled, spillage of blood or other biological matter from meat may contaminate other foods in the kitchen. Therefore, those handling meat at any stage of their production or distribution should be extra-careful in order to ensure that the end customer gets to eat safe food.

Safer Slaughter House

A lot of the meat that goes into the kitchens of hundreds and thousands of restaurants in the country may come from the unorganised meat sector, even today. That may increase the risk of unsafe meat consumption because traditionally, animals are slaughtered in the open in many parts of the country which increases the risk of attracting dirt, dust or other pathogens. It is generally seen that meat sellers who do not have proper licence, or not registered, often find the dirtiest of the

corners of the neighbourhood to set up their shops, often near a garbage dump. But that does not mean they would not supply their products to some restaurants or hotels. With far cheaper rates, they may ink pacts with some hotels or restaurants for supply of their products.

Food handlers should also remember that meat is a perishable commodity and therefore the risk of spoilage and contamination is higher for this product which is nutritionally quite rich. Other hazards associated with meat include chemical or physical contaminants coming into contact with meat.

The challenge of growing demand of animal protein-based diets is linked with the use of antimicrobials in the feed and compromised hygiene practices at slaughter houses and retail markets. The result is the lack of trust in consumers on the quality and safety of meat and meat products available to them.

Tackling Contamination

Contamination can occur at any stage of the production chain. For example, use of contaminated water for cleaning meat can help the contamination spread. In the distribution stage too, contamination can occur through various means. For example, if a truck is loaded with fresh produce without carrying out the necessary sanitisation process, especially if it was previously used for transporting animal products, the chances of the fresh produce getting contaminated cannot be denied.

In the preparation stage, the lack of personal hygiene on the part of a worker can also lead to contamination of food served on the dining table. For instance, if a sick employee shows up at work or handles food without washing hands after using toilet, the risk of the worker spreading germs to the food increases.

Therefore, it is only prudent that the checks and balances at every stage of the food production chain is strictly followed by the food handlers and managers.



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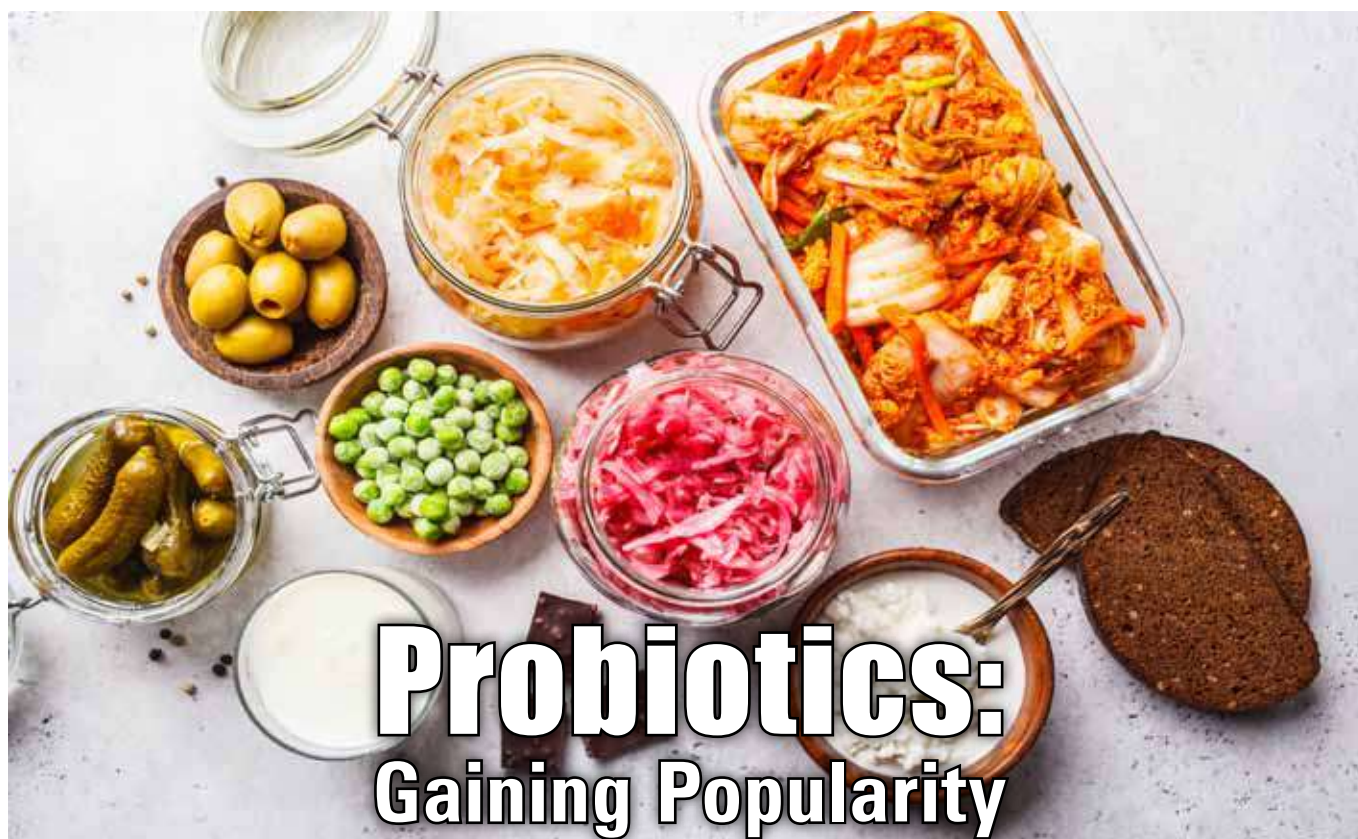
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People around the world are now paying closer attention to the nutritional profile of foods, including the composition of their ingredients. This has put additional pressure on regional, national and even international level food and beverage manufacturers, as they have to respond to the renewed market forces by reducing or cutting out fat, salt and sugar, as well as preservatives, additives and colorings. This is resulting in vigorous market research, and the launching of a slew of healthy foods.

People's rising consciousness about healthy foods is reflected in the growing popularity of probiotic foods, which are nowadays emerging as an important category of food supplement in India. Probiotic elements in dairy products have become part of our diet. They are present in milk, yogurt and ice cream products.

What are Probiotics?

Probiotics are live, non-pathogenic microorganisms that benefit the consumers' digestive system. People often think that bacteria and other microorganisms are harmful "germs," but there are 'friendly bacteria' that are normally present in our

intestines and help in digestion of food, in destroying disease-causing microorganisms, and in producing important vitamins. Many of the microorganisms in probiotic products are the same as or similar to microorganisms that naturally live in our bodies. In simple terms, probiotics are live micro-organisms which, when ingested in adequate amounts as a single strain or as a combination of strains, confer one or more specified health benefits to the consumers.

Types of Probiotics

Our digestive systems have around four hundred different types of probiotic bacteria, and the best known is *Lactobacillus acidophilus*. There are others including *Bifidobacterium* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*. Each group comprises different species, and each species has many strains. In today's health conscious society, probiotics are becoming fashionable as a means of promoting all kinds of digestive improvements. The commonly used organisms in probiotics are:

Lactobacillus: This may be the most common probiotic. It's the one you'll find in yogurt and other fermented foods. Different strains can help with diarrhea and may help

people who can't digest lactose, the sugar in milk.

Bifidobacterium: You can find it in some dairy products. It may help ease the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and some other conditions.

Saccharomyces boulardii: It is yeast and appears to help fight diarrhea and other digestive problems.

Other substances termed "prebiotics" are dietary fibers that favour the growth of beneficial bacteria over harmful ones. The term "synbiotics" refers to products that combine probiotics and prebiotics. Among adults, probiotics or prebiotics are the third most commonly used dietary supplement other than vitamins and minerals globally.

How they Work?

According to the currently adopted definition by FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization) and WHO (World Health Organization), probiotics are "Live microorganisms which when administered in adequate amounts confer a health benefit on the host." It is hard to believe, but antibiotics apparently kill the good bacteria as well as the bad, which explains why many experience digestive

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difficulties while taking antibiotics. To restore the balance, or the ratio of good bacteria to bad bacteria in the body, many people who are on antibiotics are prescribed probiotic products that come in a variety of forms.

Probiotics help you in a variety of ways:

- They break down and digest food.
- They support overall gut health.
- They ensure the immune system works well.
- They also play a role in how one think and feel.

Probiotics have potential health benefits for conditions such as gastrointestinal infections, genitourinary infections, allergies and certain bowel disorders, all of which afflict a considerable proportion of the global population. Probiotics have been shown to boost immune system against various invaders. Having a healthy bacteria population in our gut protects us from bad bacteria, such as overgrowths of yeast, fungi, and viruses.

Our gut is sometimes called - second brain - and its balance of bacteria directly affects mental health. Gut bacteria not only improve the production and regulation of hormones, such as insulin and leptin but also have been found to produce neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, dopamine, and GABA, which play a key role in our mood. In both animal and human studies, some strains of probiotics have been found to improve psychological conditions. Research also found that probiotics helped with anxiety, depression, Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and even memory issues and may help to reduce blood pressure.

Among other things, probiotics also help send food through the gut by affecting nerves that control gut movement. Researchers are still trying to figure out which of these are best for certain health problems. Some common conditions they help relieve are:

- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Infectious diarrhea (caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites)
- Diarrhea caused by antibiotics

There is also some research that shows they are useful for problems in other parts of your body. For example, some people say they have helped with:

- Skin conditions, like eczema
- Urinary and vaginal health
- Preventing allergies and colds

The Best Sources

In India, probiotics have mostly found their way into curd and ice-creams. Probiotic curds in India are marketed by Amul, Nestle and Mother Dairy. However, a variety of plant-based foods, particularly sour and fermented foods, contain beneficial, probiotic bacteria are also available. Some of the best probiotic foods include:

Sauerkraut: A form of fermented cabbage, sauerkraut is full of probiotics created during the fermentation process. Freshly fermented is best, as it maintains the most nutrient density.

Kimchi: This traditional Korean food is made using fermentation with cabbage and other veggies.

Tempeh: A fermented soybean product that's high in both protein and probiotics.

Miso: A staple in Japanese cuisine, miso paste is commonly used as a base for soups and as a flavoring in many dishes. While rich in probiotics, it's also high in sodium so it may be best used in moderation.

Natto: An unusual food with a unique texture and flavor, Natto is made from fermented soybeans and is rich in probiotics.

Kefir: A cultured, probiotic food typically made with cow's milk and contains both bacteria and yeast working together. To avoid the negative health effects of dairy, you can opt for coconut or water-based versions instead.

Yogurt: To stay plant-based, choose non-dairy varieties, which can also have probiotics. Steer clear of sweetened varieties because sugars can be bad for your digestive health.

Pickled vegetables: While cucumbers might be the most popular option, any kind of pickled veggie can provide probiotics as long as they're unpasteurized. However, you may want to keep consumption of these relatively low, as they're also high in sodium.

The Caution

In healthy people, probiotics usually have only minor side effects, if any. However, in people with underlying health problems, serious complications such as infections have occasionally been reported. According to the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP), consulting a physician before administering probiotics to infants or to people with compromised immune systems or other major underlying illnesses is of great importance. Also one should go through the 'Warning' and 'Other Information' on the product package and be aware of any expected symptoms or side effects.

Moreover, just because a product claims itself to be probiotic, doesn't mean it is probiotic. Some products labeled probiotic do not have clinically validated strains or levels in the product. The consumers of probiotic products should be aware of those products, and should refrain from using them.

The probiotic bacteria can confer health benefits only if they are consumed in right quantities. Probiotics are measured in CFU which stands for colony forming units and is a measure of live microbes in that probiotic. According to the association (ISSAP), CFU amount should be the same as that shown to be effective in clinical studies. More CFUs does not necessarily mean better. Moreover, ISSP advises that it should be borne in mind that different probiotics have been shown to be effective at different levels. It is not possible to provide one count for all types of probiotics. ISSP also states that it is always better, safer and wiser to pick up a probiotic product from a trusted manufacturer. The common sense also dictates that if the addition of probiotics is not done properly, the results could be disastrous. A trusted manufacturer with an impressive track record is more likely to ensure that its probiotic product has the same strain(s) and is as potent through the end of shelf life, as what was used in clinical studies

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the apex body for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research in India, along with the Department of Biotechnology of the Ministry of Science and Technology, have proposed guidelines for evaluation of probiotics in food in India, which articulates the base for the law to govern probiotics. India's small but growing probiotics market is dominated by strains from non-Indian companies and there are differences in Indian gut flora. So the mooted guidelines suggest probiotics should be tested on local populations before they receive safety approval.

Labeling of the probiotic products are indeed, of great importance. Besides telling what probiotic is being offered, the label can also throw light on how many live microorganisms are approximately there in each serving, and when does the product expire. The serving size, the possible health benefits, the proper storage conditions, and corporate contact information can also be elicited through a proper, comprehensive labeling. ■

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"I Believe that Passion is Essential for Creativity, Innovation and Excellence"

Gopinath Vyraperumal, Assistant Food & Beverage Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Goa Colva



Gopinath Vyraperumal, Assistant F&B Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Goa Colva, leads the F&B team focusing on the successful ramp-up of the F&B outlets, with the goal of positioning the hotel as South Goa's favourite dining destination. His proactive approach and dedication to guest satisfaction will be instrumental in driving the department towards achieving its objectives. Vyraperumal holds a diploma in catering and hotel management from SIHMCT, Trichy, and a B.Sc. in hospitality and hotel administration from Tamil Nadu Open University.

In an informal conversation with **Sharmila Chand** he talks about his work philosophy and more

What is the USP of your F&B outlets?

Our F&B outlets have several unique selling points that set us apart from others, like:

Locally sourced ingredients: We prioritise using fresh, locally sourced ingredients to create authentic and flavourful dishes that showcase the region's culinary heritage.

Innovative menu offerings: Our menus are carefully crafted to include a range of innovative and creative dishes that cater to diverse tastes and dietary preferences.

Exceptional service: Our team is dedicated to providing exceptional service, ensuring that every guest feels welcome and valued.

Unique ambiance: Each of our F&B outlets has a distinct and inviting ambiance that reflects the local culture and atmosphere.

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

I enjoy the creative freedom and opportunity to innovate that comes with being a Food & Beverage Head. I love developing new menu concepts, collaborating with chefs and mixologists, and finding ways to surprise and delight our guests. It's also rewarding to see our team members grow and develop their skills.

What are the key trends you are showcasing and focusing on in your F&B spaces?

We are currently focusing on several key trends, including:

Sustainability: We're prioritizing sustainable practices, such as reducing food waste, using eco-friendly packaging, and sourcing ingredients from local, environmentally

responsible suppliers.

Wellness-focused dining: We're emphasizing the importance of healthy, wholesome food and beverage options that cater to guests' wellness needs and preferences.

Experiential dining: We're creating immersive and engaging dining experiences that combine food, drink, and entertainment to create memorable moments for our guests.

What works the best to retain a good F&B team, according to you?

I believe that retaining a good F&B team requires a combination of factors, including:

Competitive compensation and benefits: We prioritize offering fair and competitive pay and benefits to attract and retain top talent.

Opportunities for growth and development: We provide ongoing training, mentorship, and opportunities for advancement to help our team members grow and develop their skills.

Positive work culture: We foster a positive, supportive work culture that values teamwork, creativity, and open communication.

Recognition and rewards: We recognize and reward our team members' achievements and contributions to motivate and inspire them.

How has your journey been in hospitality so far?

My journey in hospitality has been incredibly rewarding and challenging. I've had the opportunity to work with amazing teams, learn from experienced mentors, and develop my skills in various aspects of F&B management. I've also had the chance to travel, experience different cultures, and learn about the diverse needs and preferences of our guests. Overall, it's been an exciting and

fulfilling career path that I'm grateful to be on.

What are your dreams to be fulfilled?

My dreams include continuing to innovate and push the boundaries of F&B excellence, while making a positive impact on our guests, our team, and the environment. I hope to one day open my own restaurant or F&B concept, where I can showcase my passion for creative, sustainable cuisine and exceptional service. I also aspire to mentor and inspire the next generation of F&B leaders and entrepreneurs.

What is your working philosophy?

My working philosophy is centered around the following core values:

Integrity: I prioritize honesty, transparency, and fairness in all my interactions and decisions.

Collaboration: I believe that teamwork and collaboration are essential for achieving success and creating memorable experiences for our guests.

Guest-centricity: I prioritize our guests' needs, preferences, and experiences above all else, striving to create personalized, memorable moments for each and every one of them.

How do you define yourself?

I define myself as a passionate and innovative Food and Beverage professional who is dedicated to delivering exceptional culinary experiences. I'm a creative problem-solver, a team player, and a lifelong learner who is always looking for ways to improve and grow. My passion for food, beverage, and hospitality drives me to continuously innovate and push the boundaries of what's possible in the industry.



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