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Food & Beverage

Business Review

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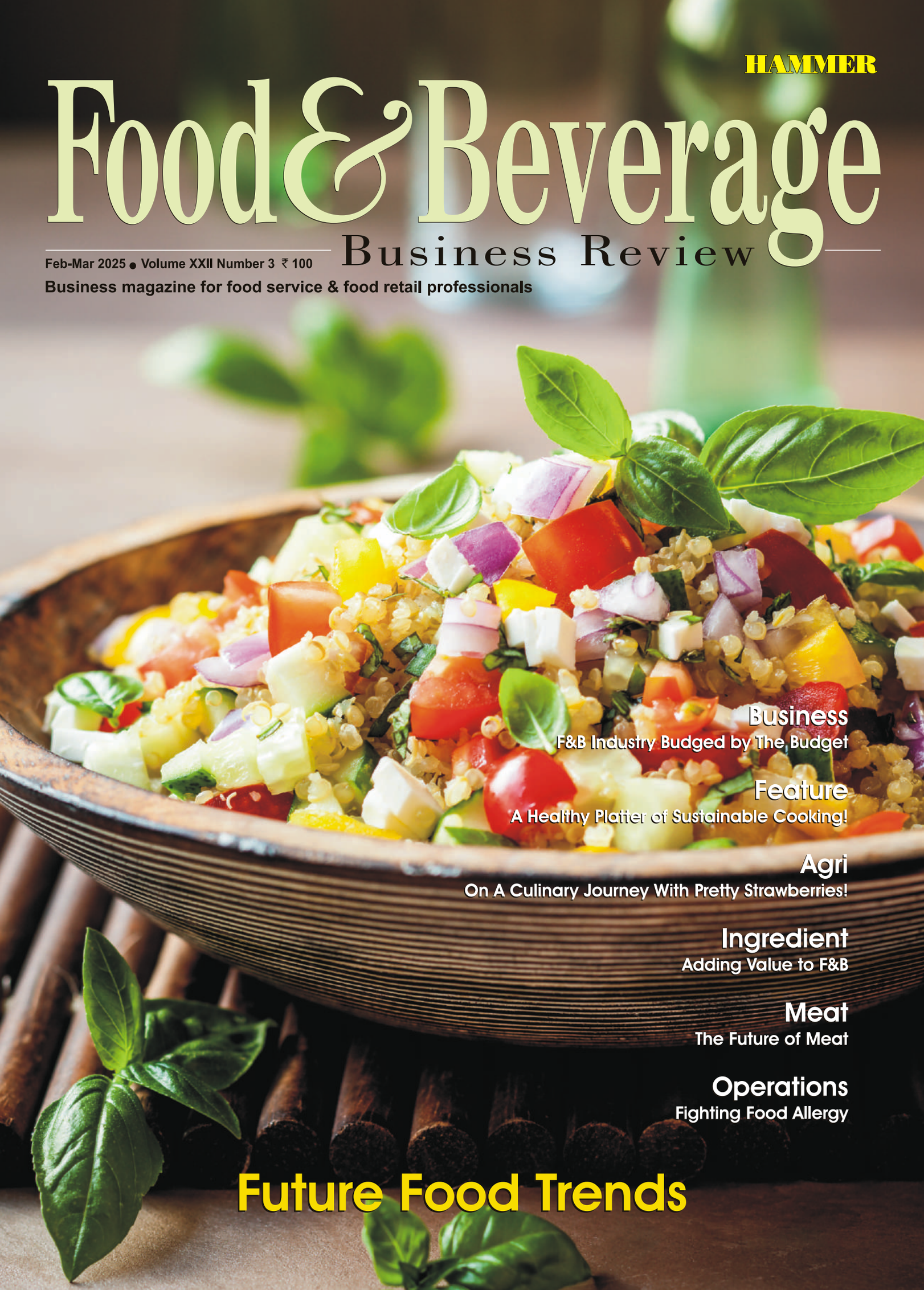
Business magazine for food service & food retail professionals



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Feature
A Healthy Platter of Sustainable Cooking!

Agri
On A Culinary Journey With Pretty Strawberries!

Ingredient
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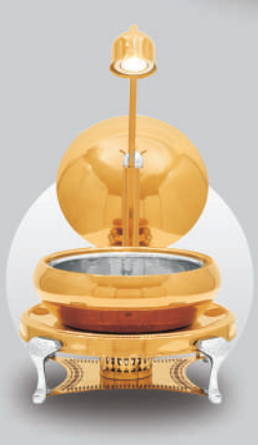

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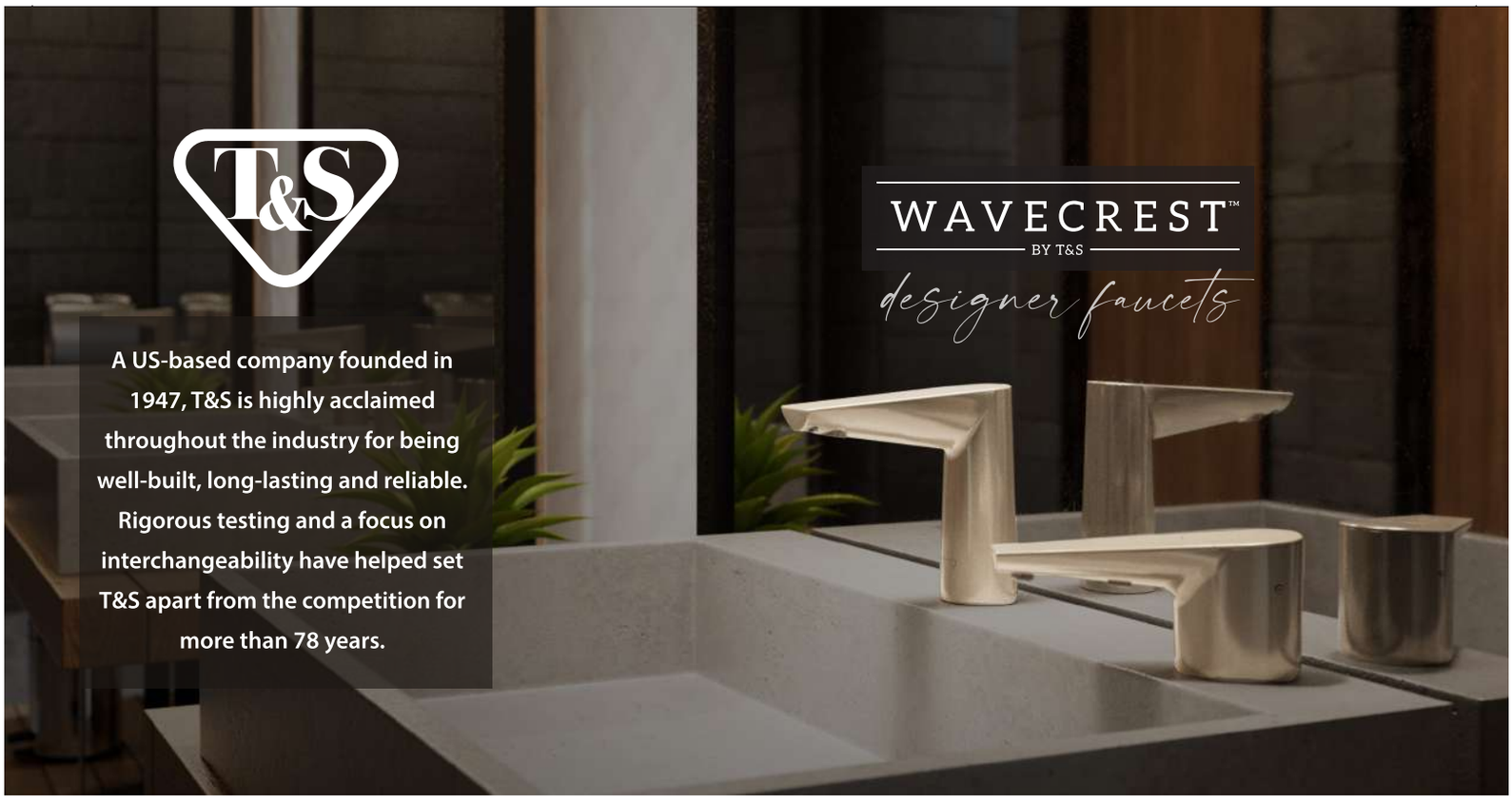

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The food habits also change with the way people think. Today people are becoming health conscious; so, the F&B outlets have to make changes to satiate their demands. There are going to be big shifts in menus and changes on various fronts to ensure that the diners are satisfied. Cover story delves on the changes that are going to take place in the cooking techniques and ingredients.

The Union Budget is an anxiously awaited event for every industry in the country. Its effect on the industry, in general, and the F&B industry. Business story tries to find how it has affected the F&B side of the hospitality industry.

Focus on 'Sustainability' is at the heart of chefs' and they wish to embrace local, seasonal ingredients and strive to minimise waste. Feature story elaborates that it is not about one ingredient but discovering and exploring new cuisines that are native to certain regions.

No food can survive without its ingredients. Even naturally obtained food like apple or banana or mango has their ingredients. Without food additives, food can survive, but may not be as tasty, or as attractive looking, or as nutritious or remain as fresh after a long period. Ingredient story finds food additives are also ingredients of food items in the market and are part of the final food products.

From training the staff about how to handle guests with food allergies to indicating common food allergens in the menu and preparing recipes in a manner that leaves no scope for cross-contamination are some of the steps that restaurants should take, has been discussed in the Operations section.

Besides these topics, the current issue has covered news & events, appointments and reports, along with the Aahar 2025, which is touted as the biggest food & beverage and hospitality fair in India.

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Aahar 2025

The International Food & Hospitality Fair

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

AAHAR - The International Food & Hospitality Fair is a flagship B2B event organised by India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), the premier trade promotion body of the Government of India. The 39th edition of the event was organised from March 4-8, 2025 at the iconic venue of Bharat Mandapam (New Delhi), with great success.

AAHAR is one of Asia's best known brands in Food & Hospitality shows. The show has grown by leaps & bounds in recent years and is today the well known destination for global vendors and sourcing professionals, 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 featured new trends in F&B as well as hospitality services, food processing, culinary tech, retail and new innovations.

AAHAR is 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 has grown in size this year covering over 1,00,000 sqm.+ (Gross Area), with more than 1700 exhibitors. The show also had overseas participants from major countries this year. The 17th edition of 'Culinary Art India' held simultaneously at the same venue during the show. This year more than 1 lakh visitors came to the show.

The fair featured a wide range of Food Products, Machinery, F&B equipment, Hospitality and Décor Solutions, Confectionary item from participants from India and overseas. A part from the meaningful display, the fair offered 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.

The show was visited by large number of trade visitors, including 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 also visited 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.

India's food retail industry is going through impressive growth phase. In the backdrop of the impressive growth potential of the Indian food services and food retail industry and revival of the Indian hospitality industry, the relevance of a mega event like Aahar simply cannot be overlooked.

The mega event also witnessed the range of imported food products, visit by overseas trade delegations and Indian players in the food & beverage and hospitality space, along with policy makers and media personnel to exchange knowledge and information.

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NCC-2025:

NFCI's Culinary Extravaganza Sets New Industry Benchmarks

The National Culinary Challenge 2025 (NCC-2025), hosted by the National Finishing & Culinary Institute (NFCI), was a spectacular showcase of culinary talent and innovation. Held at Pushpa Gujral Science City, Kapurthala, on January 31, 2025, this prestigious event brought together the most skilled and passionate student chefs from NFCI's 20 campuses.

A true celebration of India's diverse culinary traditions, the competition was designed to test expertise in regional and thematic cuisines across three intense rounds. The journey began with an overwhelming 1,023 participants competing in Round 1, where they were challenged with the creative theme 'Breakfast for Dinner'. After a rigorous evaluation, the shortlisted contenders advanced to Round 2, where they tackled the challenge of 'One-Pot Cooking' with rice as the star ingredient. Only the most skilled and innovative chefs progressed to the Grand Finale, where the top 72 finalists took the stage to present their culinary masterpieces under the theme 'Traditional Thali'.

The three-round competition demanded not only precision and skill but also a deep understanding of flavors, presentation, and authenticity. Contestants were tasked with preparing starters, main courses, beverages, and desserts, ensuring each dish was an innovative masterpiece.

The evaluation process was in the hands of three esteemed judges: Chef Ajay Sood, Chef Sireesh Saxena, and Chef Mahendra Khairiya. These culinary experts assessed the dishes

based on taste, creativity, presentation, and hygiene, making NCC-2025 a high-stakes competition where only the best could triumph.

The competition concluded with breath-taking culinary presentations, where the NFCI Hamirpur campus took home the Winner's title with their Bikaneri Thali, winning a grand cash prize of 51,000. First Runner-Up: NFCI Jalandhar & Maqsudan – Kumaoni Thali (31,000), Second Runner-Up: NFCI Karnal – Gujarati Kathiawadi Thali (21,000), Consolation Prize Winners (11,000 each): NFCI Varanasi – Kerala Sadhya Thali, and NFCI Solan – Odisha Pakhal Thali.

Additional accolades were awarded for excellence in specific categories: Best Starter – NFCI Chandigarh (Awadhi Thali), Best Main Course – NFCI Ludhiana (Sindhi Thali), Best Beverage – NFCI Mandi (Chhattisgarhi Thali), and Best Dessert – NFCI Amritsar (Navratri Thali).

NCC-2025 was more than just a contest– it was an opportunity for aspiring chefs to learn, network, and refine their skills. The participants had one-on-one interactions with industry leaders, gaining invaluable insights and feedback from top chefs. The event also featured exclusive masterclasses, providing practical learning experiences that connected academic knowledge with industry expectations.

The event's success was fueled by the support of key sponsors and media collaborations: Aprons Sponsor – Varun – Professional Hotelwares, Gift Hampers Sponsors – Amul,. Manpreet (Cremica), Consolation Prize Sponsors – Ms. Usha (Arnav Enterprise), Ms. Chaya & Mr. Rehmaan (Arc International), and Stationery Sponsor – Jain Bhai

The competition received extensive media coverage, with Radio City, Live Media, World of Hospitality, and Hammers playing a significant role in amplifying the event's reach, ensuring widespread recognition for NFCI's emerging culinary stars.

The success of NCC-2025 was made possible by the dedicated leadership team at NFCI: Ms. Brijinder Kaur Nagpal (Co-founder), Pemninder Singh Nagpal (Managing Director), Dr. Anjna Joshi (Director), Sanjeev Kumar (Director), Naveen Dua (Executive Director), Pawan Ailawadi (HOD Academics) and other NFCI Head Office team members. Their unwavering commitment to fostering culinary excellence has positioned NFCI as a leading institution in hospitality education.

As NFCI celebrates another successful edition of NCC, it remains dedicated to its mission of nurturing talent, promoting culinary innovation, and setting industry benchmarks. Each year, the competition raises the bar for aspiring chefs, inspiring them to push boundaries and achieve greater heights.

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Merlot & Co. Debuts in Jaipur

Merlot & Co. has opened its doors to Jaipur with the launch in the heart of Jaipur, in an aesthetic heritage building on the historic MI Road. It is designed by an ace architectural firm with a European touch, the restaurant celebrates the rich culinary heritage of world cuisine. Merlot & Co. is elevating Jaipur's dining scene by presenting a diverse tapestry of global gastronomy, refined flavours, and exceptional hospitality. Bringing authentic global flavours to Jaipur, the restaurant has assembled an exceptional team of chefs, each with distinct culinary expertise.

Chef Vikash Kumar, with over 14 years of industry experience and training under Michelin-starred Chef Aldo Zilli, will present his mastery of European and Pan-Indian cuisines, reinterpreting classic dishes with innovative techniques.

Chef Ram Singh Bisht, with over a decade of experience in Italian, Mediterranean, and Spanish delicacies, will feature his signature Italian creations, emphasizing fresh, high-quality ingredients and showcasing his strength in menu planning and kitchen management.

Chef Himanshu Sharma, a pastry and bakery specialist with 5+ years of experience, having previously worked at ITC Fortune under a Michelin-trained chef, will showcase his reinterpreted Italian and French fare, highlighting his expertise in refined French techniques.

Merlot & Co. promises an immersive dining experience with its signature global delights. From artisanal, hand-tossed pizzas to rich Truffle Mushroom Risotto and fresh-baked bread baskets, every dish is crafted to perfection. Guests can end their culinary journey with indulgent desserts like Chocolate Hazelnut Eclairs, Blueberry Cheesecake, and more, offering a multi-mood experience for every palate.

Prashant Ojha, Founder and Director at Merlot & Co. said, "We're delighted to serve a city that's so culturally rich and known for its vibrancy. At Merlot & Co., we continue to take this tradition forward in food and hospitality by bringing the finest dining experience to Jaipur. We believe that exceptional dining begins with the finest ingredients. Our ethos centers on sourcing the freshest local produce, seasonal ingredients, and premium spices."

Nora's Cantina Opens at Novotel Goa Panjim

The newly launched Novotel Goa Panjim debuts its specialty restaurant, Nora's Cantina, giving a fresh dining experience to the city's latest luxe destination. Designed as a sunny, welcoming space, Nora's Cantina promises to be the ideal spot for close gatherings and authentic flavours.

The premium Spanish restaurant promises guests a delightful elegance with various dining styles, starting from the Tapas Zone, the family-style meal at The Social Plate to the relaxed alfresco seating and bar stools perfect for lazy brunches and exquisite cocktails.

The finely crafted menu, inspired by the vibrant Spanish and Portuguese flavours, feature delightful small plates like Queso de Cabra and Vieiras Chamuscas, along with hearty mains such as grilled Chuletas de Cordero a la Parrilla and Lomo al Vacío

One can further elevate their dining experience with a specially designed selection of Iberian wines, spirits, and signature cocktails bursting with refreshing citrus and herbal notes. For a sweet finale, revel in theTurrón Tiramisu–a decadent blend of pistachio nougat, Baileys, and dark rum, or indulge in the goodness of a traditional Basque cheesecake.

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Soyi Opens in Noida

Soyi, helmed by Saksher Thakur, opens its doors in Sector 49, Noida. With an ambiance that seamlessly blends luxury minimalism with a touch of boho charm, Soyi is set to redefine casual fine dining with an exquisite culinary experience that appeals to both discerning food enthusiasts and casual diners alike.

Designed to accommodate 100 guests, Soyi presents an intimate yet upscale environment where every element, from the décor to the flavors, is carefully curated to create an inviting atmosphere. The restaurant's interiors showcase a harmonious blend of earthy tones, intricate textures, and warm lighting, offering a perfect setting for intimate dinners, friendly gatherings, and celebratory occasions.

At the heart of Soyi lies its thoughtfully crafted menu that offers a diverse selection of vegetarian and non-vegetarian delights, catering to a wide range of palates. Patrons can savor signature dishes like the smoky and spicy Chicken Tandoori or the indulgent Paneer Cheesy Kebab, alongside a variety of comforting soups, wholesome salads, and aromatic biryanis.

Reflecting on the restaurant's vision, Shaksher Pundhir & Yash Pundhir, the driving force behind Soyi, stated, "Soyi is more than just a dining space; it's a celebration of flavors, aesthetics, and heartfelt hospitality. Our aim is to create a space where guests feel welcomed and leave with unforgettable memories."

Looking ahead, Soyi has ambitious expansion plans, with a goal to launch four more outlets over the next two years, bringing its unique take on contemporary dining to a wider audience. With each new location, the brand promises to uphold its commitment to quality, innovation, and creating immersive culinary experiences.

A Taste of the Middle-East at Anar

Anar, a fun, relaxed and classy dining experience that brings middle eastern recipes has opened its doors in the lively neighborhood of Anjuna. Co-founded by Anant Kataria, Siddharth Manchanda, Roshni Kapoor and Divyansh Kapoor, Anar is a quaint restaurant serving bold and aromatic flavors of Iran and beyond.

At Anar, Head Chef Rishabh Law, who also leads the kitchen at sister brand Big Fat Sandwich, lets food take the center stage, bringing his expertise to a menu focused on recipes from the Middle East that share common ingredients and origin lore. The menu straddles a comfortable journey for the senses between novelty and nostalgic.

Co-Founder Roshni shares, "Anar is a food forward restaurant, where we are trying to balance serving this cuisine in Goa without making it gimmicky. The intention was to retain the grandeur and richness of the food and region but present it in a sit-down, fun family style, fine dining experience. The food is the star of your experience, presented on hand picked brass serve ware in a breezy paddy view seating. The namesake fruit, showing up subtly as visual cues- a garnish, on small vases on the tables, on handpainted Anar on the signature eponymous cocktail glass". The interiors at Anar are minimalist yet feel luxurious, with custom brass elements and cool cat-themed murals painted by Arun Sharma as Middle Eastern warriors. Anant, the co-founder of Anar, also an architect at AKA Designs, shares, "We wanted the space to feel elegant and fun at the same time.

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Sausage Saloon Teams Up with FranGlobal

South Africa-based quick-service restaurant (QSR) chain Sausage Saloon is set to enter the Indian market with a 25-store expansion in Delhi NCR. The deal has been finalised between FranGlobal, the international business arm of Franchise India, and Sausage Saloon, as part of the brand's global expansion strategy.

India represents a significant opportunity for our brand's expansion," said Steven Strange, Founding Partner and Director of Sausage Saloon. "The demand for high-quality, quick-service food is on the rise, and we believe our unique offerings will resonate well with Indian consumers."

Sausage Saloon operates over 120 outlets across South Africa, the UAE, and Mauritius. The 28-year-old brand specializes in quality, gourmet hotdogs, offering a variety of customizable options with globally recognized quality standards.

India's QSR market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 9% over the next decade, driven by increasing urbanization, rising disposable incomes, and a shift in consumer preferences toward convenient and affordable dining options. With its established presence in multiple international markets, Sausage Saloon aims to tap into India's fast-growing fast-food segment through its flexible store formats, including mall kiosks, food trucks, and standalone outlets.

The first Sausage Saloon outlets in Delhi NCR are set to launch in March 2025, with plans for further expansion already underway.

ITC Expanding Footprint

ITC has signed definitive agreements for the acquisition of Prasuma, a leading player in the frozen, chilled, and ready-to-cook foods space in India. Prasuma is one of India's fastest-growing, innovation-led, frozen food brands This family business has been scaled up by Lisa Suwal and Siddhant Wangdi, who have built a unique portfolio of products, leveraging a cutting-edge freezing technology to preserve freshness, ensuring unmatched taste and quality in every bite.

Prasuma disrupted the Frozen Food category with the launch of their iconic Momos and since then, Prasuma has continued introducing a range of first-to-market products dominating the Pan-Asian and the Deli Meats space. Prasuma now has a presence in 100+ cities across all online, and offline channels and cloud kitchens. Its direct-to-consumer channel "Meatigo by Prasuma" offers a curated selection of exclusive products, delivered within 30 minutes across major cities in India. What's unique to Prasuma is that it manufactures all of its products in-house, this not only ensures superior product quality but also reinforces Prasuma's commitment to delivering inventive flavors that resonate with Indian families from bigger cities to smaller towns.

"Frozen food is undeniably the category of the future. With Prasuma's strength in manufacturing and innovation combined with ITC's expertise in distribution and building new-age brands, we are excited about the potential of this partnership. Together, we believe this collaboration will create significant value for stakeholders and consumers alike in India and globally - revolutionizing the frozen food industry with quality, convenience, and most importantly tasty food." added Siddhant Wangdi, COO, Prasuma & Meatigo

Big Bowl Hits 200 Cloud Kitchens

Big Bowl has launched its 200th cloud kitchen M Cube Mall, Attapur, Hyderabad. A part of Lenexis Foodworks, this milestone strengthens Big Bowl's leadership in the Indian and Chinese bowl space while highlighting its rapid expansion in the cloud kitchen industry.

Big Bowl, known for its wide range of customizable Indian and Chinese bowls caters to modern consumers seeking flavourful, convenient meal options. With a presence in 35 cities, the brand plans to double the network by expanding to 500 kitchens over the next three years, focusing heavily on expanding in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities to cater to the increasing demand for convenient, flavorful meal options.

In FY25, Big Bowl surpassed the 100 crore ARR mark within four years of launch, a remarkable achievement that underscores its strong market presence. With its eyes set on continued success, the brand is projected to reach the 150 crore ARR milestone in the first half of FY26. This growth aligns with Lenexis Foodworks' ambitious sales targets, aiming for a 650 crore sales run rate by March 2025, with further expansion plans targeting 1000 crore in sales by FY26.

Reflecting on this significant milestone, Aayush Madhusudan Agrawal, Founder & Director of Lenexis Foodworks, shared, "Hitting the 200th cloud kitchen mark is a proud moment for us and a testament to our commitment to making high-quality, flavourful bowls accessible across India. Our journey from a single kitchen to becoming a category leader in bowl-based QSR has been incredible, and this is just the beginning. With an aggressive expansion plan in place, we are determined to bring Big Bowl to even more cities, catering to the growing demand for convenient, flavorful, and customizable meals."

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Farzi Experience Now in Goa

Zorawar Kalra, Founder and Managing Director of Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd. known for transforming the Indian dining scene with brands like Masala Library, Pa Pa Ya, Made in Punjab, and Louis Burger has brought his exciting new venture, Farzi Beach, to Goa.

It's all about mixing tradition with innovation, making every bite an experience. Launched in 2014, Farzi quickly became a favourite, tapping into a moment when India's youth was discovering and embracing global food trends. But there's more to explore, the menu goes beyond Indian flavours, featuring Italian and Pan-Asian influences, making it a go-to spot for those who love a mix of global tastes.

Farzi successfully completes 10 years and presents an exclusive 8-course tasting menu– The Farzi Journey, curated by Zorawar's signature "Farzified" twist to Goa's relaxed beach vibe. The menu offers a delectable mix of Modern Indian and Goan flavours, each dish infused with that distinct Farzi flair. It's a dining experience that offers something new, while still honouring traditional tastes. One can try the Farzified Tempura Prawns, crispy prawns tossed in a spicy tangy sauce with a refreshing lemon-chilli foam. Or the Daal Chawal Arancini, a classic Farzi dish with fried lentil and rice dumplings, served with pickled mayo, papad, and tomato salsa.

The Farzified Vada Pav gives the familiar Maharashtrian vada pav an inside-out twist, paired with homemade mint saunth chutney. If you're craving something spicy, the Guntur Chilli Chicken

is a must-try, bringing the bold flavors of Andhra-style chillies, curry leaves, and garlic. The Boti Kebab, made with marinated mutton chunks, is served with a mint paratha that complements its rich flavor. For something unique, try the vegan spin on the classic Lucknowi Kebab. To complement the food, there's a range of signature cocktails that are just as innovative.

The experience goes beyond just food and drinks–it's the ambiance that truly draws you in. As you step inside, the warm glow from elegant ceiling lamps sets the mood, making the space feel instantly welcoming. The soft beige and white tones create a clean, refined aesthetic, while the wooden chairs add a natural, earthy charm. A wavy-shaped curtain in a white and beige plaid pattern catches your eye, adding a cozy yet stylish touch. You settle into the low seating, feeling the relaxed and intimate vibe take over. And just behind the bar, the serene pool shimmers in the background, bringing a sense of calm that completes the whole experience.

"At Farzi Beach, we've created a unique dining experience that combines Goa's relaxed vibe with our signature twist on traditional Indian cuisine. It's about offering something new while staying connected to the roots, all set against the beautiful backdrop of Goa's beaches." – Zorawar Kalra, Founder and Managing Director, Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd.

Unveiling Farro

Farro, a collaboration between Chef Vardaan Marwah and entrepreneur Aman Talreja (Sip & Savour Co.), has recently opened its doors in the vibrant and upscale neighbourhood of Koregaon Park In Pune. Farro is an invitation for guests to embark on an extraordinary dining experience where every detail reflects their shared vision of artistry, flavour, and hospitality. Named after the ancient grain also known as Khapli /Emmer, the menu pays homage to the grain's journey through history and its introduction to India.

The restaurant's ethos is rooted in celebrating heritage while embracing bold, contemporary expressions. From the moment you step in, FARRO envelopes you in a calming ambiance. Beige-toned walls, curvilinear forms, and lime-plastered interiors create a tactile, earthy warmth, enhanced by accents of teak wood, terracotta, and lush foliage that bring in the outdoors. A stunning highlight wall adorned with handmade clay cups and whimsical hand-painted murals by Za Works bridges rustic charm with artistic sophistication, while a carefully curated soundtrack of lo-fi and jazz completes the sensory experience. At the heart of FARRO is its meticulously crafted menu that spans global influences, blending time-tested ingredients and techniques with modern flair.

Aman Talreja, Co-Founder Farro, shares, "With FARRO, our fifth creation under the umbrella of Sip & Savour Co., we've envisioned more than just a restaurant; FARRO is a space where tradition and modernity converge. It's a place of connection and celebration, where every detail, from the flavours on the plate to the textures in the interiors, is designed to make diners feel part of a story–one that's steeped in history yet forward-looking."

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Dave & Buster's Debuts in Bangalore

Dave & Buster's, America's premier entertainment and dining destination popular for its arcade games, social gaming, bowling, and immersive experiences, announces its highly anticipated entry into the Indian market with its flagship outlet at Mantri Avenue in Koramangala, Bangalore.

This expansive 27,000 sq ft space features a large 300-seater restaurant and a lively cocktail bar, providing guests with everything they need for fun and entertainment. The menu features a unique blend of American classics and locally inspired dishes, catering to a wide range of palates. The sports bar within the space offers a diverse cocktail menu, featuring signature creations.

"The Malpani Group is committed to bringing new experiences and entertainment to India. By bringing Dave & Buster's to India, we look forward to elevating the gaming and arcade experience," said Shreya Malpani, the Director of the Malpani Group. "With Bangalore's booming food and beverage scene, there is a strong demand for a place where friends and families can have fun and spend time together. Dave & Buster's perfectly fills this gap, offering a space for families, friends, colleagues, and people of all ages to enjoy. Dave & Buster's will also be progressively expanding across India, with plans to open 15 new locations shortly, beginning with the next store launching in Mumbai. The inaugural store in Bangalore will pave the way for an exciting journey that promises growth and success for both our companies."

The venue will offer a state-of-the-art midway filled with world-class games, many of which are being introduced to India for the first time, such as Godzilla VR, NBA hoops, Pacman roller, and so on. Guests can also experience competitive social gaming and India's first bowling experience, which features Nitro Lighting and Sparks combined.

Nasi and Mee Opens in Bangalore

Nasi and Mee, the pioneer of Southeast Asian cuisine in India, proudly unveils its newest and largest restaurant on Convent Road, Bangalore. This standalone property marks the brand's flagship outlet, celebrating a decade of culinary excellence since its inception in 2015. With this launch, Nasi and Mee now has five restaurants in Bangalore and eight across South India.

The Convent Road restaurant is a visual spectacle, designed as a hidden underwater grotto brimming with marine life. Guests will find themselves surrounded by vibrant marine life, corals, and bespoke light fixtures shaped like tiger sharks and jellyfish. The whole theme is centred around all those magical diving spots in Southeast Asia -- from Raja Ampat in Indonesia to Sipadan in Malaysia. Complementing the aquatic theme, lush foliage and an inviting al fresco seating area create a tropical escape in the heart of the city.

To commemorate the launch of this flagship space, Nasi and Mee is reintroducing its Asian breakfast with the Shiok Breakfast Club. This menu pays homage to Southeast Asia's rich morning traditions, featuring classics like N&M Kaya Toast with house-made kaya jam, the indulgent N&M Fren-Cha Toast with matcha foam, and the bold X.O. Benedict with poached eggs and X.O. Chilli.

"Nasi and Mee has always been about authenticity and evolution. This new flagship location at Convent Road, Bangalore not only elevates the dining experience but reflects the next phase of growth for us as a brand. We're excited to be a part of many a dining conversation and to serve a new community in a space that truly reflects our culinary journey," said Ravi Nahappan, Group CEO and Founder of Nasi and Mee.

With a capacity of 100 covers, this flagship restaurant is set to become a landmark dining destination in central Bangalore. Whether it's indulging in a hearty Besar Breakfast, or simply sipping on Milo, guests can now start their day the Southeast Asian way.

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KOCA Launched in Gurgaon

Cricket legend Yuvraj Singh is set to redefine the culinary landscape with the launch of KOCA, an experiential, high-energy fine dining destination at Golf Course Road, Gurugram. Short for 'Kitchen of Celebratory Arts', KOCA is designed as a place for people to come together, create memories, and indulge in exceptional flavours,

Spanning 14,000 sq. ft. across two floors with a seating capacity of 500 guests, KOCA offers a high-energy, captivating fine dining experience, the restaurant is set to open officially on April 12, 2025. KOCA blends Pan-Asian and global influences, offering a bold,

reimagined dining experience inspired by Six Sixes, featuring six distinct cuisines.

At the heart of KOCA is Yuvraj Singh's deep-rooted passion for food and hospitality. Personally involved in shaping its vision, he has curated a special "Yuvi's Favourites" menu, drawing inspiration from his childhood

memories. Handcrafted by Chef Megha Kohli and Chef Noah, the menu pays homage to comforting childhood flavours, featuring standout dishes like Kadhi Chawal Risotto, Rajma Avocado Galouti, Smokey Cottage Cheese Tikka, Yakitori, Dal Dhungaree, and Seafood Linguine. KOCA also offers a thoughtfully curated vegan menu, reflecting Yuvraj's commitment to mindful and sustainable eating.

The dessert menu features Hokkaido Cheesecake, Vietnamese Coffee, and many more innovative creations. Adding to the gastronomic experience, Chefs Prateek Jha and Adiba Jha from Izumi Dubai bring their expertise in nouvelle cuisine, focusing on fresh, locally sourced ingredients, sustainability, and zero waste.

KOCA promises to be a dynamic space, offering exclusive wine-tasting sessions, live cooking experiences, and curated chef's table events, elevating the dining experience into something truly immersive. The restaurant's bar program, crafted by renowned mixologist Luca Cinalli, is a seamless blend of innovation and artistry. Designed to complement KOCA's bold flavours, the cocktail menu features signature creations such as KOCA Mule, Sixer Picante, Sunset Boulevard, Banana Republic, and Espresso Powerplay, each adding a unique dimension to the overall sensory experience.

The restaurant embraces eco-conscious practices such as portion control, complete waste recycling, and a strict no-plastic policy, reinforcing Yuvraj's dedication to sustainable living and healthy eating.

Speaking about the launch, Yuvraj Singh shared, "KOCA is more than just a restaurant–it's a dream brought to life. My love for food has always been personal, and I wanted to create a space that reflects my journey and the flavours I cherish. From comforting childhood dishes to contemporary global creations, KOCA is all about celebrating food, flavours, and togetherness. I can't wait for people to experience it."

KOCA is the latest venture under Glamosphere Hospitality, founded by Shobhit Aggarwal and Kapil Goel, with ambitious plans for expansion across India and internationally. Bringing to life the vision of Yuvraj Singh and his partner Deepak Sahni, KOCA is set to redefine dining through exclusive collaborations.

Cornell India Unveils Seamless Innovations at Aahar 2025

Cornell India introduced two ground-breaking products, redefining efficiency and aesthetics in hospitality equipment, at AAHAR 2025.

The Seamless/Invisible Induction Warmer integrates discreetly beneath countertops, ensuring precise temperature control, energy efficiency, and a sleek, clutter-free presentation. Ideal for luxury buffets and live cooking stations, it enhances both functionality and design.

The Seamless Bottom Slung Frost Top offers an uninterrupted chilled surface to keep desserts, salads, and cold dishes fresh for extended periods. Its innovative seamless design blends seamlessly into counters, elevating food presentation while maintaining optimal temperatures with a remote compressor so that FoH area remains unhindered and top notch.

The innovations are aligned with Cornell's vision of "Why Not India?", proving that world-class kitchen solutions can be designed and manufactured in India.

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Chef Sandeep Panwar

Hilton Gurugram Baani City Centre has appointed Sandeep Panwar as its new Director Culinary. With over two decades of experience, he served as Executive Chef at DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square where he successfully led the culinary team for over two years before his promotion. His experience includes tenures at Marriott International, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) and Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL). This diverse background has equipped him with comprehensive expertise in operational excellence, team management, and gastronomic innovation.

Chef Amit Sharma

Hilton Bangalore Embassy Golflinks has appointed Amit Sharma as its new Executive Chef. With career spanning over 16 years at Hyatt and Shangri-La, his journey is marked by distinguished leadership roles, notably as Executive Chef at Hyatt Ahmedabad, where he spearheaded innovative menu concepts, optimized kitchen operations, and enhanced the guest dining experience. His experience also includes a tenure at Hilton Embassy Manyata Tech Park, where he played a pivotal role in launching Hilton Garden Inn and the Hilton Convention Center.

Chef Gaurav Mawari

Novotel Pune has appointed Chef Gaurav Mawari as its new Executive Chef. With career spanning over 15 years, he worked at Ista Hyderabad, Taj Vivanta Hyderabad, Aloft Hotel New Delhi, and Radisson Individuals Bangalore. Chef Gaurav served as Executive Sous Chef at Sheraton Grand Chennai and prior to that at Holiday Inn New Delhi International Airport and Radisson Individuals Bangalore as Head Chef and Executive Chef. He was instrumental in overseeing large-scale kitchen operations, refining culinary strategies, and mentoring teams.

Tushar Malkani

Baale Resort Goa has appointed Tushar Malkani as its new Executive Chef. His experience includes serving as Management Trainee at ITC Maratha, Mumbai, Executive Chef at The Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) and Kaitlyn Hospitality, Mumbai, as Culinary Director at The Good Food Guys, Hyderabad, Corporate Executive Chef at Khar Gymkhana, Mumbai, Territory Manager at Amalgamated Bean Coffee Trading Co Ltd and Sous Chef at Trident Hotels, Mumbai. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Culinary Arts from the Culinary Academy of India.

Pankaj Shinde

DoubleTree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad has appointed Pankaj Shinde as the new Food and Beverage Manager. With over 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he brings expertise and a passion for creating exceptional dining experiences to the hotel. He holds a Master's degree in Hospitality and has honed his skills with esteemed brands such as Marriott and Sayaji Hotels. His journey in the industry is marked by a focus on elevating guest satisfaction, optimizing operations, and fostering high-performing teams.

Ritesh Arora

ITC Windsor has appointed Ritesh Arora as the new Food & Beverage Manager. With over 13 years of experience, his journey in the hospitality industry began in 2011 as a Food & Beverage Associate at ITC Rajputana, Jaipur. He spent nine years at The Leela Palace, Bengaluru, honing his skills across various roles, with his last position being Assistant Food & Beverage Manager before joining ITC Windsor. An alumnus of Amity University Rajasthan, Ritesh holds a B.Sc in Hospitality & Hotel Administration.

Sujit Kumar Giri

Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield has appointed Sujit Kumar Giri as the new Food and Beverage Manager. With over 15 years of experience, starting as a Trainee caption at GRT Grand, Chennai, he later worked at Taj Lands' End, Mumbai and The Leela Mumbai. His journey with Marriott International began in 2018 at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, in various capacities, including Assistant Restaurant Manager at JW Café and Romano's, In-Room Dining Manager, Banquet Operations Manager, and Assistant Food & Beverage Manager.

Arup Panda

The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace has appointed Arup Panda as its Director of Food & Beverage. With 13 years of experience, he worked in both ultra luxury and premium hotels across India. His expertise spans across operations management, menu development, vendor relations, and cost control, making him a versatile leader in the food and beverage sector. He is driven by his passion, innovation, and results-driven approach. Throughout a successful career, he has earned the reputation of creating exceptional guest experiences,

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Be Luru Opened in Bengaluru

Be Luru, an elevated social destination, has opened its doors in the heart of the Garden City. This vibrant space blends Bangalore's rich heritage with its contemporary energy, offering an inviting haven to connect, unwind, and celebrate the city's unique essence.

The name "Be Luru" is a tribute to Bengaluru, reflecting its evolution from an old-school, lush green Bangalore to the vibrant, modern cityscape it is today. It symbolizes the city's journey and invites people to become part of its essence. The founders, orthopedic surgeons Dr. Haricharan Reddy and Dr. Sandaish Shiv Patil, envisioned Be Luru as a space that embodies the spirit of their hometown. "Bangalore is more than just a city; it's an emotion, a lifestyle, and a tapestry of rich heritage woven with contemporary dynamism," said the founders. "With Be Luru, we wanted to create a sanctuary that celebrates the city's evolution while staying rooted in its traditions. This isn't just a restaurant or a bar–it's a tribute to the people, the culture, and the stories that define Bangalore. Be Luru invites everyone to immerse themselves in the essence of this incredible city, sharing memories and creating new ones with every visit."

With seating for 168, Be Luru boasts expansive balcony-style seating that frames breathtaking views of the city's iconic greenery and skyline. The interiors, crafted with natural materials and adorned with curated artwork, evoke nostalgia for "Old Bangalore" while embracing modern aesthetics.

Be Luru's menu is a culinary journey that pays homage to Karnataka's rich heritage while embracing modern innovation. Signature dishes such as Donne Biryani, a nati-style biryani served in palm-leaf bowls, highlight the rustic flavors of Karnataka, enriched by locally sourced ingredients and traditional spices. Another standout is the Nati Koli Saaru, a hearty and flavorful country chicken curry that pairs beautifully with ragi mudde or steamed rice, showcasing the simplicity and depth of Karnataka's rural cuisine. For those seeking a fusion of tradition and innovation, dishes like Mutton Kofta, steeped in Mughal influences and spiced with a South Indian twist, offer a delightful burst of flavor. Each dish on the menu tells a story, weaving together Bangalore's culinary past with its vibrant present.

The bar at Be Luru offers an inventive selection of signature cocktails inspired by local ingredients and flavors. Guests can savor creations like Murraya Magic, featuring a floral cordial derived from the native Murraya plant, or the bold Pippali Punch, infused with long pepper for a spicy, aromatic kick. These thoughtfully crafted beverages elevate the experience, offering a refreshing take on classic cocktails while celebrating Bangalore's botanical heritage. With a perfect balance of traditional influences and contemporary flair, Be Luru's menu and cocktails promise an immersive dining experience that resonates with the city's spirit.

Be Luru comes alive with curated events, including vibrant weekend brunches, music-themed evenings, and Afro and Chill nights that embody Bangalore's cosmopolitan energy. Sundays are a special indulgence, with live music, signature drinks, and immersive culinary experiences redefining the city's social scene.

More than just a destination, Be Luru is a community-driven space where stories are shared, and memories are created. Combining heritage-inspired design, innovative cuisine, and engaging events, it offers an experience that lingers long after the last bite or sip.

With its heartfelt connection to Bangalore's roots and a fresh perspective on the city's evolving spirit, Be Luru is poised to become a cherished gathering place for locals and visitors alike, redefining what it means to experience the heart of Bangalore.

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Future Food Trends

As we enter New Year, everyone is focused on health and healthy food. Due to this, there are going to be big shifts in menus not only in the new year but also in the near future. There are going to be changes on various fronts to ensure that the diners are satisfied as far as their desire for having healthy food and maintaining their health and hygiene are concerned. Ashok Malkani delves on the changes that are going to take place in the cooking techniques and ingredients used for maintaining the flavour and rich colour that adds flamboyance and panache to the palette.

Variety is the spice of life. Change is an inevitable part of human life. American motivational writer, William Arthur Ward claims "The nature of life is to change." There is a constant change in the food too. Today, food is more than just a sustenance. It is something that brings satisfaction to your soul. And to maintain this interest in food, there is a need for constant change. Over ages food preparation has undergone a tremendous change. And this change is constant! Diners, over the years, have craved for food that is appetising, and something different than the usual standard food. Variety is the spice of life – and food!

The food habits also change with the way people think. Today people are becoming health conscious; so, the F&B outlets have to make changes to satiate their demands.

Dinesh Rana, Executive Chef, Novotel Goa Panjim, says, "In the present-day scenario, F&B outlets are adapting to the growing trend of health consciousness by incorporating wholesome ingredients, healthier cooking methods, and dietary alternatives into their menus.

Some of the Key changes include;

Whole Grains: Refined flour is being replaced with healthier options like quinoa, whole wheat, millet, and brown rice, offering better nutrition and fibre content.

Healthy Oils & Fats: The use of olive oil, avocado oil, and ghee is prioritised over refined oils for their heart-healthy benefits.

Lean Proteins: Menus now feature lean protein sources such as grilled chicken, fish,

tofu, and plant-based proteins, promoting muscle health without excess fat.

Low-Sugar and Sugar-Free Desserts: Desserts are crafted using natural sweeteners like honey, stevia, or jaggery. Lighter versions of popular dishes, such as baked snacks instead of fried, are also available.

Vegan and Plant-Based Options: To cater to vegan customers, menus include plant-based meats, oat milk, almond milk, and dairy-free cheese. The vegetarian menu is expanded with innovative and nutrient-rich dishes.

Allergen-Friendly Alternatives: Gluten-free bread, pasta, and pizza bases are offered, along with nut-free and dairy-free options for customers with food allergies.

Superfoods and Probiotics: Ingredients like chia seeds, flaxseeds, turmeric, matcha, and probiotics are added for their nutritional benefits. Gut-friendly options such as kombucha, kefir, and yogurt-based smoothies are also available.

Calorie Transparency: Menus display calorie counts to help customers make informed choices.

Healthy Beverages: The beverage selection includes infused detox waters, cold-pressed juices, herbal teas, and refreshing mocktails with minimal added sugar."

Vijay Pandey - Corporate Chef at Rebel Foods, Mumbai, informs, "As consumers become increasingly health-conscious, F&B outlets are stepping up by providing detailed nutritional information for every product on their menu. Dishes now come with clearly marked attributes such as high protein, high fiber, zero trans-fat, no MSG, natural ingredients, no preservatives, no artificial sweeteners, no refined sugar, and no palm oil. This initiative not only empowers diners with real-time insights into their food choices but also fosters a deeper sense of trust between brands and their customers. By prominently displaying this information on menus, F&B outlets are reinforcing their commitment to transparency, wellness, and responsible dining."

Kazim Mehdi, Director of Food & Beverage, Four Seasons Hotel, Bengaluru, claims, "As the demand for healthier dining options rises, our outlets have strategically evolved to cater to health-conscious consumers. Menus are being redefined with a focus on fresh, organic, and locally sourced ingredients, ensuring meals are both nutritious and flavourful. Additionally, plant-based and vegan options are expanding, incorporating nutrient-dense ingredients like legumes, tofu, jackfruit, and dairy-free alternatives such as almond and oat milk. Four Seasons Bangalore has a menu called "Balance by Four Seasons" which primarily focuses on heart and healthy meals which is appreciated by a lot of guests. Sustainability is another key factor embracing ethically sourced meats and seafood, reducing food waste and using Orange & Banana peel along with Gari to make homemade Bar syrups."

Pradip Kumar Pani, Executive Chef, Grand Mercure Mysore, avers, "At Grand Mercure, we value health-conscious and sustainable dining. In accordance with our brand philosophy, 60% of our menu is vegetarian, with specially designed options for special dietary requirements and allergens. We ensure organic, seasonal,

Dinesh Rana

Pradip Kumar Pani

Vijay Pandey

Gurpreet Singh Sodhi

and local ingredients to increase nutrition while sustaining the environment.

Our cooking style aims at fresh, minimally prepared meals without any industrial additives. We prioritise whole grains, fibre foods, and plant proteins and use cooking processes like steaming, grilling, and moderate sautéing with higher quality of various oils, and avoiding deep- frying. We tend to keep the salt and sugar content low while supplementing the flavours with natural spices and herbs. The range of beverages we serve demonstrate our dedication to health, with cold-pressed juices, detox water, and plant milk alternatives like almond, oat, and soy. These efforts ensure that the menu is not only healthy but also eco-friendly and consistent with modern dining trends.

Our dedication also reaches as far as sustainable packaging, replacing single-use plastics with eco-friendly substitutes. We are also dietary inclusive, with an expansive variety of vegan, gluten-free, and low-sugar products. Our employees are thoroughly trained in the origin of ingredients, health advantages, and sustainable procurement to provide knowledgeable service."

Varad Kotnala, Executive Sous Chef, The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore, states, "As the shift towards health-conscious dining continues to grow, F&B outlets are actively evolving their offerings to meet these changing preferences. We've already embraced this transformation by incorporating millets, healthy grains, and leaner meat cuts into our menus. Our commitment to quality ingredients is reflected in our use of cage-free eggs, free-range chicken, and organic vegetables. Looking ahead, we're expanding our plant-based menu options to cater to the increasing demand for healthier alternatives. We're also exploring trending superfoods like foxnuts, which are gaining popularity for their nutritional benefits. This adaptation isn't just about following trends–it's about providing our guests with wholesome, nutritious dining options without compromising on taste or quality."

Tenzin Phuntsok, Executive Chef, Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall, says, "In response to the growing trend of health consciousness among diners, our F&B outlets are meticulously curating menus with a focus on well-being. We offer nutritious dishes made from the finest, locally sourced ingredients, ensuring a fresh and flavourful experience. Additionally, we are committed to transparency by meticulously labelling allergens and providing comprehensive nutritional information. This approach not only respects our patrons' health choices but also offers an enriching, gastronomic journey that delights the senses."

Gurpreet Singh Sodhi, Director of Food and Beverage, Sheraton Grand Palace, Indore, informed, "The growing trend of mindful eating is undeniable, and at Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, we are actively adapting our menus to cater to health-conscious diners. Our in-house restaurant, S Café, is introducing a thoughtfully curated wellness menu featuring plant-based proteins, superfoods, and low-carb options. We are also emphasizing cold-pressed juices, fermented foods like kombucha, and immunity-boosting herbal infusions. Additionally, our bakery, Infuse, has launched a range of healthier indulgences, including gluten-free desserts, sugar-free sweets, and millet bread–allowing guests to enjoy their favourites without compromise."

Sukesh Krishnan, Executive Chef, Gateway Bekal, affirms, "Guests are increasingly valuing a balance and healthy approach to the food experience at hotels. Hotels are providing wellness options in their menus. Hotels incorporate the following changes in their menus:

Provide nutritional information of each dish for calorie conscious guests.

Dietary restricted food is offered in the menus.

Offering of super foods for breakfast buffets.

Focus on locally sourced ingredients."

Changes Adopted by Restaurants

The Indian food & beverage industry has always been a culinary melting pot. Several new trends, due to the diners becoming more conscious about their health, emerged last year and several more are likely to emerge in 2025 and future years. From variations in cooking forms and usage of colours and flavours, there would be ample changes to redefine the dining experience.

Gurpreet Singh disclosed, "To make food

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healthier, we are replacing traditional deep-frying with air-frying, slow roasting, and sous vide cooking–methods that enhance flavour while using minimal oil. At Araana, the specialty restaurant at our hotel, Sheraton Grand Palace, Indore, we are embracing firewood grilling and clay pot cooking, which help retain nutrients while infusing dishes with a rich, earthy taste. Meanwhile, at S. Café, we are incorporating cold-pressed oils and natural sweeteners like jaggery and date syrup as healthier alternatives to refined sugar."

He continues "Consumers are drawn to bold, natural flavours with health benefits. Expect more dishes featuring turmeric, matcha, blue spirulina and activated charcoal, known for their detoxifying properties. Vibrant beetroot-based sauces, moringa-infused dishes, and butterfly pea flower beverages will dominate. We are also incorporating umami-rich elements like miso and fermented black garlic to enhance flavour naturally."

Tenzin Phuntsok declared, "In the culinary realm, there exist four principal cooking techniques: grilling, roasting, steaming, and poaching, each with its own unique characteristics. Emphasising the use of locally sourced ingredients and incorporating herbs and spices as flavour enhancers, in place of salt and sugar, can significantly elevate the health quotient and flavour profile of the dishes. Umami, fresh and herbal flavour with earth tones and natural colours which can evoke feelings of warmth and comfort are likely to be preferred by diners in the coming years."

Varad Kotnala states, "Modern restaurants are increasingly adopting healthier cooking methods that preserve both nutrition and flavour. Techniques like sous vide cooking, steaming, and low-temperature braising are becoming more prevalent as they maintain the food's nutritional integrity while ensuring optimal taste. While traditional grilling over open flames or charcoal is popular, it's being approached with caution due to potential carcinogenic carbon deposits. Understanding food science is crucial in this evolution–for instance, knowing that chlorophyll-rich foods require minimal cooking time, while meat with connective tissues needs precise temperature and timing adjustments. This scientific approach to cooking methods helps create dishes that are both healthy and delicious."

He adds, "Colour and flavour preferences in dining are deeply connected to both human physiology and seasonal changes. The human eye is naturally drawn to yellow and green hues, followed by red, which influences visual appeal on the plate. Flavor preferences show distinct seasonal patterns–summer months see diners gravitating towards citrus notes like lime and tangerine, seeking refreshing, fruity profiles that complement warm weather. In contrast, winter dining preferences shift towards warming spices such as black pepper, cloves, cinnamon, and mace, which create a comforting sensory experience. Understanding these natural preferences helps in creating seasonally appropriate, visually appealing dishes that resonate with diners' instinctive tastes."

Dinesh Rana disclosed, "To meet the growing demand for healthier dining options, restaurants are modifying their cooking processes and methods to reduce excess fats, sugars, and salts while preserving flavours and nutrition. Key changes include:

Grilling Instead of Frying: Grilling is preferred over deep-frying as it reduces oil consumption and lowers calorie content. This method is commonly used for meats, vegetables, and even sandwiches.

Baking & Roasting: Baking and roasting help achieve a crispy texture with minimal oil, retaining the natural flavours of ingredients.

Steaming & Poaching: These techniques cook food gently without added fats, preserving nutrients and maintaining a light, fresh taste.

Air-Frying: Using hot air circulation, air-frying provides a crispy texture with up to 80% less oil compared to deep-frying, making it a healthier alternative.

Sous Vide Cooking: This slow-cooking method involves vacuum-sealing food and cooking it in a water bath at a controlled temperature. It locks in nutrients and flavours while requiring less salt and fat for taste.

Cold-Pressed & Raw Preparations: Cold-pressed juices and raw dishes help retain enzymes and vitamins that are often lost during cooking. Additionally, fermented foods like kanji, kimchi, sauerkraut, and

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kefir are encouraged for their probiotic benefits.

Healthier Cooking Oils & Fats: Restaurants are replacing refined vegetable oils and margarine with healthier options like olive oil, coconut oil, ghee, and avocado oil, while reducing excessive butter use.

Reducing Salt & Sugar: Excess salt and sugar are minimised by enhancing flavours with herbs, spices, citrus, and natural sweeteners such as honey and stevia.

These adjustments help restaurants deliver dishes that are both nutritious and delicious, aligning with the preferences of health-conscious diners."

He continues, "As diners become more health-conscious, their flavours and colour preferences are shifting toward fresh, natural, and wholesome options. Flavors from fresh herbs, spices, and natural ingredients like ginger, turmeric, and garlic are favoured for their bold taste and health benefits, while mint, basil, and lemongrass add a refreshing touch. Natural sweetness from honey, maple syrup, and fruits is preferred over refined sugar. Bright, vibrant colours such as green from leafy vegetables and matcha, reds and oranges from fruits and turmeric, and deep purples from berries and beets signify freshness and nutrition. With artificial colours becoming less popular, restaurants now focus on visually appealing dishes made with natural ingredients."

Sukesh Krishnan discloses, "The changes that restaurants would adopt in their cooking processes would be:

Flameless cooking - this can be done with variety of cooking methods like marinating, fermenting, pickling and dressing.

Dry method cooking - is used like baking, grilling, air frying etc to cut down on fat medium.

Moist method - is used to preserve nutrients in the food."

He adds, "As far as preferred flavours and colours are concerned, I would say that they are very crucial in food and beverage industry. Consumers are leaning towards natural flavours and colours. Key flavour trends are floral flavours, fermented food flavours, Flavours associated with anti-inflammatory ingredients like turmeric and ginger, exotic spices and herbs flavour. Global fusion flavours are also increasing in world of food and beverages."

Kazim Mehdi affirms, "restaurants are refining their cooking methods to create healthier meals. Deep-frying is being replaced with grilling, baking, steaming, and air-frying to reduce excess fats while preserving flavour and nutrients. Portion control is also prioritised, offering balanced servings and nutritious sides like roasted vegetables and whole grains. Techniques like sous-vide cooking and fermentation are gaining popularity for their ability to enhance nutrition and digestion."

He continues, "As far as flavours and colours are concerned, diners tend to prefer flavours that are refreshing, rich, savoury, spicy, or herbal, depending on the dining experience. Herbal and floral notes from ingredients like basil, rosemary, lavender, and hibiscus add freshness and sophistication. In terms of colours, bright and warm tones like red, orange, and yellow stimulate appetite, while elegant shades of gold, deep purple, and dark chocolate create a sense of luxury dishes, and can enhance both visual appeal and taste, making the dining experience. It's very subjective and varies from person to person."

Vijay Pandey disclosed, "In response to evolving consumer preferences for healthier dining options, F&B outlets are redefining their cooking processes. Traditional deep-frying is being replaced with air frying and oven baking to significantly reduce oil consumption. The use of organic ingredients and antibiotic-free meat is becoming a standard practice, ensuring cleaner, more wholesome meals. Additionally, innovative cooking techniques like ziplock-enclosed steaming are being adopted to preserve nutritional content while enhancing natural flavours. These shifts reflect a broader movement toward mindful eating, where taste meets wellness without compromise."

He adds, "Modern diners are embracing simpler, guilt-free yet flavourful food combinations that deliver both taste and nutrition. Indian thalis, a vibrant assortment of vegetables, dal, salads, chutneys, curd, and traditional desserts like kheer or payasam, are gaining renewed attention for their rich colours, diverse textures, and balanced flavours. From a light, comforting bowl of dal khichdi to the robust gravies of North India and coconut-infused delicacies of South India, regional Indian cuisine offers a 360-degree nutritional profile, packed with manganese, copper, selenium, iron, magnesium, and potassium. This shift reflects a growing preference for holistic wellness on the plate, where heritage meets modern health consciousness."

Pradip Kumar disclosed, "To promote healthy dining, Grand Mercure Mysore has refined its cooking methods to maintain the same levels of nutrition while minimizing the utilisation of unhealthy fats, excess salt, and artificial additives. We emphasise on grilling, charbroiling, and tandoor cooking over deep-frying, preserving the natural flavours of ingredients while decreasing the usage of oil. Cooking methods such as steaming and poaching are favoured for vegetables, fish, and eggs which helps retain the essential nutrients without the additional fats.

Sautéing is done with minimal cold-pressed olive oil, avocado oil, or ghee instead of refined oils to preserve the bold flavours and to keep in mind cardiac wellness. We also utilize sous-vide cooking, which is a slow, low-temperature technique that maintains the nourishment, enhances tenderness, and reduces the need for adding excessive seasoning. Additionally, we incorporate fermented and probiotic-rich foods such as kimchi, kombucha, yogurt, and sourdough bread to aid in digestion and the overall well-being. These refined techniques ensure our meals are both wholesome and flavourful."

He continues, "At Grand Mercure, we craft visually vibrant, nutritionally rich dishes without excessive salt, sugar, or additives. We enhance freshness with citrus flavours like lemon and lime, while aromatic herbs such as basil, mint, and lemongrass add depth. For warmth, we incorporate spices like turmeric, cinnamon, and cumin. Umami-rich ingredients such as miso, soy, and aged cheeses add complexity without heavy fats. Refined sugar is replaced with natural sweeteners like honey, jaggery, and dates, while nutty elements from tahini and flaxseeds enhance richness."

To be concluded in the next and concluding episode, the preferred regional dishes and global cuisine would be dealt with. Also, whether the food or ambience would be the criteria for the diners.

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Recipes

Millet & Moringa Energy Pancakes

(Gluten-Free, Superfood-Boosted, Protein-Packed)

Ingredients (Serves 2-3)

Millet flour (or ragi flour)	1 cup
Baking powder	½ tsp
Moringa powder	1 tbsp
Ripe banana, mashed	1
Chia seeds, soaked in 2 tbsp water for 10 minutes	1 tbsp
Almond milk (or oat milk)	½ cup
Honey or Date syrup	1 tsp
Cinnamon	½ tsp
Coconut oil for cooking	

Method

Get your dry ingredients ready: Combine the millet flour, baking powder, moringa powder, and cinnamon in a bowl and whisk them together.

Prepare the wet ingredients: In a separate bowl, mash the banana and then mix in the almond milk, honey, and soaked chia seeds.

Combine everything: Slowly pour the wet ingredients into the bowl of dry ingredients, stirring until the batter is smooth. Let the batter sit for 5 minutes.

Cook the pancakes: Heat some coconut oil in a pan over medium heat. Pour small amounts of batter onto the hot pan and cook until the pancakes are golden brown on both sides.

Serve and enjoy: Top the pancakes with fresh berries, nuts, and a drizzle of honey or nut butter.

This dish is a nutritional powerhouse, combining fiber-rich, gluten-free millets, immunity-boosting moringa, and omega-3-packed chia seeds. It promotes digestion, energy, and overall well-being, making it a healthy and sustainable choice. These protein-packed pancakes are a nutrient-rich alternative to traditional breakfasts, aligning with modern wellness trends while delivering great taste and nourishment.

Pradip Kumar Pani, Executive Chef, Grand Mercure Mysore

Millet & Spinach Khichdi

(A modern superfood take on a classic Indian comfort dish)

Ingredients:

Pearl millet	½ cup
Foxtail millet	½ cup
Moong dal (split green gram)	½ cup
Ghee	1 tbsp
Cumin seeds	½ tsp
Grated Ginger	
Green chili, chopped	1 tsp
Turmeric powder	½ tsp
Salt to taste	
finely chopped Spinach	1 cup
Vegetable broth	2 cups
Fresh coriander, chopped	

Method:

Wash millets and dal; soak for 30 minutes.

Heat ghee in a pan, add cumin, ginger, and green chili.

Add soaked grains, turmeric, salt, and vegetable broth.

Cook until soft, then add chopped spinach and mix well.

Garnish with fresh coriander and serve hot.

This dish is **nutrient-dense, gluten-free, and gut-friendly**, making it a **2025 superfood trend**

Gurpreet Singh Sodhi, F&B Director, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore

Millet & Saffron Risotto with Roasted Vegetables

(Hyper-Regional & Nutrient-Dense)

Ingredients:

Foxtail millet	1 cup
Vegetable broth	3 cups
Olive oil	1 tbsp
Onion, finely chopped	1/2
Garlic, minced	1 clove
White wine (optional)	1/4 cup
Saffron strands, soaked in 2 tbsp warm water	1/4 tsp
Roasted cherry tomatoes and zucchini	1/2 cup
Grated aged cheese or nutritional yeast (for vegan)	1/4 cup
Salt and pepper to taste	

Method

Heat olive oil in a pan, sauté onions and garlic until translucent.

Add millet and toast lightly, then deglaze with white wine (if using).

Gradually add vegetable broth, stirring continuously until absorbed.

Stir in saffron-infused water, cook until millet is tender and creamy.

Mix in roasted vegetables and cheese, season with salt and pepper.

Serve warm, garnished with fresh herbs.

Kazim Mehdi, F&B Director, Four Seasons Hotel, Bengaluru

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F&B Industry Budged by The Budget

The Union Budget is an anxiously awaited event for every industry in the country. Its effect on the industry, in general, and the F&B industry, in particular, affects individuals to a great extent. Every Indian, it may be said, ultimately, feels the after-effects – good or bad – of the budget. Ashok Malkani tries to find how it has affected the F&B side of the hospitality industry. It also talks about the key challenges the budget has addressed, such as rising costs, complex tax structures, and support for innovation.

Food & Beverage industry is an important contributor to the economic progress of the country. Restaurant business in India contributes significantly to employment generation and national revenue. Its employment potential is expected to rise to 10.3 million in 2028 from 8.5 million in 2024. This makes the industry one of the largest employers in India. It not only contributes to the employment potential of the country but also provides large amounts of revenue to the country in the form of direct and indirect taxes, thus helping in economic growth of the country at different levels.

The restaurant and its ancillary industries (like beverage industry, health food industry and food delivery apps) act as catalysts for tourism and directly add value to local agriculture. According to The National Restaurant Association of India, the country is likely to be the world's third-largest food services market by 2028, overtaking Japan.

The food & beverage industry, which is integral to the growth of the economy and contributes about 3% to the country's GDP, has ben grappling with many challenges (like hike in raw materials prices, logistics and utility costs) in recent times, was awaiting the Union Budget anxiously to cure some of its woes.

Expectations from the Budget

Industry stalwarts had made several suggestions for aiding F&B industry to help the country achieve the nation's target of being one of the most important country globally.

Vikesh Shah, Founder of 99 Pancakes had, before the presentation of the union budget, stated that he was hopeful that the QSR sector, which was brawling with inflating operational & input costs would have a reduction in GST along with tax elevation on sustainability packaging. He had claimed, "Such robust measures accredit brands like ours to continue striving towards innovation, amplifying customer experience & contributing to our country's economic momentum."

K Syama Raju, President of FHRAI had declared that granting industry status to all hotels and projects across India will unlock access to lower financing rates and encourage private investment. "By granting infrastructure status to smaller projects, streamlining the licensing process, and addressing GST issues, we can help unlock the full potential of this sector. These reforms will create a more competitive and sustainable environment for businesses, which will, in turn,

help India position itself as a global leader in tourism. This is an opportunity for the government to align policies with the growing demands of the tourism industry and ensure that India remains a top destination for both domestic and international visitors,"

Nidhi Singh, Co-Founder of Samosa Singh had said, "We look forward to the Union budget 2025 to have reforms that may vicariously fuel the growth of startups in F&B brands dedicated to prioritising quality and innovation. F&B sector provides stimuli for local sourcing. Reduced taxes on essential supplies, facilitated support for cold-chain infrastructure, can result in significantly impacting operational efficiency and product quality in a constructive manner in the F&B industry. We hope that implementation of this budget would make provisions for a far more resilient and thriving startup ecosystem and be the breath of prerequisite fresh air."

Some of the expectations of the restaurant industry were:

- Tax benefits for small F&B business
- Relaxation of regulatory hurdles
- Funding for sustainable practice
- Investment in food processing infrastructure
- Digitalization support
- Skill development programs

Source: National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI)

Industry Views on the Budget

So, how far were the expectations met? What are the views of the food and beverage industry on the Union Budget?

Arvind Dadu, Managing Director, Anand Sweets, says "With the vision of Viksit Bharat at its core, this budget has charted a bold and strategic roadmap for India's economic resilience.

One of the biggest highlights is the significant income tax cuts and higher exemptions, which put more money in the hands of individuals and businesses. The hope is that this extra disposable income will drive consumer spending, which, in turn, will encourage businesses like ours to expand, invest in new capacities, create jobs, and contribute to a stronger economy.

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The recognition of Makhana as a superfood and the proposal to establish a Makhana Board in Bihar is a great step towards improving production, processing, value addition, and marketing. Additionally, the announcement of a National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship, and Management in Bihar signals a deeper commitment to the food processing sector, an industry with immense potential to uplift farmers, boost exports, and create employment opportunities.

Finally, I was hoping this budget would simplify GST, especially to make compliance easier for businesses. The whole 'ease of doing business' initiative should focus on reducing the complexity of GST, particularly for restaurants, delivery partners, and the food industry. Right now, GST is way too complicated, with different rates based on specific product characteristics. If we had broader tax categories instead of these micro-level distinctions, it would be so much more manageable. That relief is still missing, and I really hope we see it soon."

Sanjay Nayar, President, ASSOCHAM, is of the view, "The finance minister has placed her confidence in the middle-class for leading the consumption-led growth. At the same time, there is a clear focus on unleashing the potential of the MSMEs, startups and exports."

He said pick up in consumption demand would, in turn, encourage investment in the medium term while several employment-oriented sectors such as tourism have been given an immediate impetus for take-off.

"Priorities to agriculture, rural demand, agro and food processing, warehousing and marine products would infuse a greater vibrancy in the country's rural landscape," he said.

Rajat Agrawal, CEO, Barista Coffee, has a mixed opinion. He notes, "Budget for the year 2025 entails more income in the hands of the middle class. Exemption of tax till Rs 12 Lacs for the salaried, will not only benefit the middle class will also benefit individuals at higher earnings. Higher income will support the agenda on spending and will support the middle class on their allocation of funds beyond their daily needs and could benefit the retail industry at large. Further lowering down of taxes for other salaried class will also support spending.

However, from a retail industry standpoint there were no direct benefits being passed on even in this year's budget."

Mayank Prasad

Amit Jatia

Abhay Parnerkar,CEO of Godrej Foods Ltd. says, "The Union Budget 2025 takes significant strides in strengthening the F&B and frozen food industries by focusing on self-reliance, value-added processing, and global competitiveness. The emphasis on edible oils and pulses will enhance supply chain stability, while reduced customs duties on marine products will drive seafood exports and bolster India's presence in global markets. Investments in post-harvest infrastructure and food processing will not only improve efficiency but also create better income opportunities for farmers by expanding market access. Strengthening the farm-to-fork ecosystem will ensure better quality, reduced wastage, and wider availability of frozen and ready-to-eat foods, ultimately benefiting both producers and consumers."

Aayush Madhusudan Agrawal, Founder & MD - Inspira Global, states, ""The Union Budget 2025-26 lays a strong foundation for transformative growth, particularly for the restaurant and hospitality industry and the real estate sector. The government's focus on increasing disposable income through tax relief and job creation is a significant boost for our sector. We anticipate increased

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consumer spending, leading to higher foot traffic in restaurants, more frequent dining out, and sustained demand for food delivery services.

The budget's emphasis on urban redevelopment, including the 1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund and enhanced infrastructure spending, creates exciting opportunities for mixed-use developments and real estate projects. Additionally, the allocation of 1.5 trillion fiscal support for MSMEs is expected to drive capacity expansion, creating a ripple effect that will further fuel demand for industrial real estate. The support for Tier-2 cities and the focus on urban innovation will not only stimulate real estate growth beyond the metros but also bolster homebuyer confidence and encourage further expansion. From gig worker welfare to the development of smart, sustainable cities, this budget's holistic approach will drive India's next wave of economic progress, creating new avenues for investment, innovation, and growth across our industries."

Simranjeet Singh, Director, CYK Hospitalities, declares, "The Union Budget 2025 marks the beginning of substantial financial reforms that are going to reshape the F&B consultancy and hospitality sectors. The expansion of credit guarantee coverage will provide better financial support for startups and small enterprises, reducing risks while paving the way for innovation. The strengthening of the role played by financial institutions will provide much-needed support toward funding early ventures to scale up quickly in the hospitality and food businesses."

Nidhi Singh, Co-Founder, Samosa Singh, commenting after the budget states, "A prospect for inclusivity and sustainable growth, the budget takes a progressive stance in promoting sustainability and growth in a number of industries, including the food and beverage sector. Making significant investments in education, digital literacy, and skill development will help create a workforce that is more resilient and equipped to meet the changing needs of companies, particularly those in the food and beverage industry. Supply chains will be strengthened by improved regulations, streamlined infrastructure, and more assistance for rural and agricultural development, which will help businesses that depend on locally produced, fresh

Rahul Seth

ingredients. A big step toward financial inclusion and gender equality has been taken with the provision of tax exemptions and incentives for new firms, especially female entrepreneurs. These actions will promote resilience and growth over the long run. If effectively carried out, the budget stands out as an established path for a more dynamic, sustainable, and inclusive economy, setting up sectors for long-term success."

The establishment of a dedicated startup credit ecosystem is a game changer, particularly for first-time women entrepreneurs and businesses from SC and backward communities, creating a larger scope of participation in the industry. In addition, simplifying access to credit could be a boon in itself, particularly with schemes such as the 2 crore loan initiative for women entrepreneurs that would encourage newer ventures and diversify and promote inclusivity in the F&B space.

It is in this context that the sector expects accelerated growth, decked in furtherance of enhancement of supply chains, going into the promotion of regional cuisines, and the development of the agriculture sector, all of which pave the way."

Chandan Polekarm, CEO at Adinath Agro, states, "As a packaged foods company, I view the Union Budget as a positive step forward. The reduction in taxes is expected to boost consumer spending, which will undoubtedly benefit our industry. Additionally, the government's focus on improving agricultural fields will help stabilize prices. The continued support for food subsidies and rural employment will sustain strong demand in both urban and rural areas. As a company, we remain committed to offering healthy and affordable food options, and the budget's emphasis on boosting consumption is highly encouraging".

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Vikram Agarwal, Managing Director, Cornitos, says, "Considering the growing awareness of healthier food options and the increase in the demand for nutritious food, the government's initiative towards improving the accessibility and affordability of these essential food items in itself is a remarkable move."

Mayank Prasad, Founder, Curated Catering by Design, declares, "The 2025 budget brings encouraging developments for the food and beverage industry, particularly for catering and hospitality businesses. The establishment of the National Institute of Food Technology will drive innovation and skill development in food processing, benefiting the entire ecosystem.

The push to enhance tourism by developing 50 key destinations is a welcome move that will directly boost demand for premium catering services. Additionally, government support for hospitality training programs will help bridge the skill gap, ensuring a well-trained workforce for the sector. These measures collectively create a strong foundation for growth, allowing the catering industry to innovate, scale, and contribute more significantly to India's evolving culinary landscape."

Rahul Seth, Co-founder, Burger Singh, says, "New income tax rates will boost consumption by easing the financial burden on the middle class, while term loans of up to 2 crore for first-time entrepreneurs will drive business creation and employment. As a QSR brand deeply connected with both sectors, we welcome these measures that enhance ease of doing business and financial inclusion, ensuring greater accessibility to quality dining options across India."

Amit Jatia, Chairperson, Westlife Foodworld,(owner and operator of McDonald's India W&S), states, "I would congratulate the Finance Minister for presenting a prudent budget that lays out a futuristic blueprint, aligning with India's consumption driven economy and the vision of Viksit Bharat. The measures announced in the Union Budget are well-positioned to fuel India's consumption engine through a smart fiscal framework. An increase in the tax ceiling to INR 12 lakh is a welcome move which will certainly strengthen household purchasing power, driving demand across sectors. I am particularly excited with the announcement of the proposed National Institute of Food Technology in Bihar. It is

Abhay Parnerkar

a significant step towards advancing food innovation and strengthening India's retail and food ecosystem, fostering innovation, skill development, and economic growth."

Haresh Karamchandani, MD & Group CEO, HyFun Foods, is of the opinion. "The Union Budget 2025-26 solidifies the commitment of the government toward food processing, agriculture, MSMEs, and exports–the very strong pillars of the economy."

Gagan Anand, Founder, Scuzo Ice 'O' Magic, India's Fastest-Growing Gelato and Live-Popsicle Brand, avers, "The newly announced union budget 2025 comes with a series of positive actions that will stimulate economic growth and have a positive impact for citizens and companies alike. Most noticeably, the individual income tax exempted level has been boosted to Rs. 12 lakh, effectively reducing taxes for most and putting additional purchasing power in citizens' pockets.

That will stimulate consumption, and in its wake, stimulate industries such as ours. Besides, the finance minister announced that credit guarantee cover for micro ventures will be boosted to Rs. 10 crores, with a view to providing an additional Rs. 1.5 lakh crore in credit in five years' time. That will provide a much-needed financial boost to small ventures, and enable them to expand and generate additional jobs for citizens."

Conclusion

The industry, overall, feels that the budget clearly focusses on fostering economic growth, promoting inclusive development, supporting industries. With a smart fiscal framework and smart strategy for inclusive growth it focuses on boosting consumer spending setting a stage for significant growth across various industries, including the F&B industry. ■

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A Healthy Platter of Sustainable Cooking!

By Sharmila Chand

A serious focus on 'Sustainability' is at the heart of chefs' culinary practices this year. They wish to embrace local, seasonal ingredients and strive to minimise waste. The year 2025 will also see them striving to create a 'Balance' - letting their diners indulge in gourmet food which is rich in flavours yet balanced in nutrition without compromising on taste. Rediscovering regional flavours through indigenous produce is something that excites them to explore further this year. It is not about one ingredient but discovering and exploring new cuisines that are native to certain regions, also tops their list of goals and see how their menu evolves.

Let's have a look at the resolutions FnB professionals are adopting to stay ahead in their culinary world.

Key Culinary Resolutions

Chef Amandeep Singh, Executive Sous Chef, The Westin Mumbai Garden City

Minimize Kitchen Waste - As we enter 2025, my focus in the kitchen is to refine techniques, embrace sustainability, and create dishes that are both flavourful and responsible. One of my key resolutions is to minimise kitchen waste through a zero-waste approach. I believe that every part of an ingredient has potential, whether it's turning vegetable peels into stocks, repurposing bread ends for breadcrumbs, or fermenting fruits to enhance flavours. This mindset not only reduces waste but also inspires creativity, allowing me to craft new flavours while being mindful of sustainability.

"My priority this year is to invest in my team—training them, recruiting the right talent, and providing opportunities for cross-exposure at other Marriott hotels. Learning from different kitchens will help them refine their skills and bring fresh ideas back to our resort"

Chef Hitesh Rai, The St Regis Goa Resort

Working on Healthy Alternatives - I love the depth and indulgence of classic dishes, but I'm consciously reworking them with healthier alternatives. Instead of using excessive butter or cream, I'm leaning towards nut-based pastes like cashews and almonds for richness. Yoghurt blends are replacing heavy sauces, and I'm incorporating natural sweeteners such as jaggery and dates in desserts.

Focus on local and seasonal produce - For me, working with hyperlocal ingredients is not just a trend–it's a way to connect with India's rich culinary heritage while supporting sustainable practices. I am particularly drawn to ancient grains like millet, which have incredible nutritional

benefits and can be used in everything from breakfast porridges to desserts. Ingredients like jackfruit and banana blossom are fantastic plant-based substitutes that add both texture and depth to dishes.

Keep Cooking Simple - Artificial additives and unnecessary complexity in dishes have no place in my kitchen. I prefer working with natural ingredients to achieve vibrant colours and bold flavours–beetroot for red, turmeric for yellow, and fresh herbs for aromatic depth. I also believe in simplicity; dishes should allow core ingredients to shine rather than being overshadowed by excessive garnishes or overcomplicated plating. Clean, honest flavours will always stand out.

Ingredients or Techniques - I'm particularly excited to incorporate more fermentation and pickling techniques to add layers of complexity to dishes while reducing food spoilage. The tangy notes of kokum and tamarind are something I plan to highlight more, especially in sauces and beverages.

Additionally, given our proximity to India's wine country, I want to explore the use of local Nashik wines in cooking–whether as marinades, reductions, or even in desserts.

Chef Hitesh Pant, Executive Chef, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center

We believe in constantly exploring new ideas that can be implemented in the culinary department of our hotel, taking a very seasonal approach to stay relevant in this space. Depending on the occasions and celebrations that come and go, local trends in foods that people are eager to try from different cuisines, the best seasonal produce, and the demand for food-based events, we have always tried to come up with new and interesting ideas to implement. 2025 is a year that we are projecting to have a lot of growth and development. The entire hotel industry had to change and go through a lot of turmoil in the past few years, owing to the pandemic. This is the year that we are hoping to implement a few more changes in our hotel's trends. We are looking to do product enhancement, and skill development to

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Chef Amandeep Singh, Executive Sous Chef, The Westin Mumbai Garden City

enhance customer experiences.

Chef Narayan Salunke, Executive Chef, Four Points by Sheraton Nashik

This year, my focus is on making sustainability a key part of my cooking. I want to minimise food waste by using ingredients more thoughtfully and sourcing locally grown produce to support the community. At the same time, I'm eager to explore the depth of regional Maharashtrian and Indian cuisines, giving traditional recipes a fresh perspective while keeping their authenticity intact. Another priority is creating dishes that are both indulgent and nourishing, ensuring our guests can enjoy meals that are rich in flavour yet balanced in nutrition.

"In 2025, the hospitality industry is set to prioritise technological innovation, sustainability, and personalised guest experiences"
Chef Hitesh Pant, Executive Chef, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center

Specific Focus Areas

Chef Hitesh Rai, The St Regis Goa Resort

My priority this year is to invest in my team–training them, recruiting the right talent, and providing opportunities for cross-exposure at other Marriott hotels. Learning from different kitchens will help them refine their skills and bring fresh ideas back to our resort. Another key focus is developing Susegado, our coastal seafood and grill restaurant. Operating as a shack comes with its own challenges, but I want to evolve the space to enhance both the concept and the quality of the food we serve.

Chef Narayan Salunke, Executive Chef, Four Points by Sheraton Nashik

At Arbor Kitchen, I want to enhance the dining experience by introducing curated seasonal menus that highlight fresh, local ingredients while also bringing in more live culinary experiences to engage our guests. I believe that training and mentoring my team is just as important as refining my own skills, so I plan to focus on fostering creativity while maintaining Marriott's high standards of consistency and quality. I'm also particularly interested in deep-diving into fermentation and pickling, which add layers of complexity to flavours and allow for more innovative techniques in our offerings.

Chef Hitesh Pant, Executive Chef, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center

In a fast-paced world where change seems to be the only constant, food can be a consistent source of comfort, safety, and warmth. Be it a serving of chicken soup, a plate for khichdi, or a bowl of ramen, warm and nourishing food can lift our spirits on the toughest days.

In 2025, Most of the guest food choices is going to influenced by mental

health, climate change and sustainability. Plant-based diets, mushrooms, functional ingredients and third culture cuisine are going to get popularise. Artificial intelligence, buckwheat and soups are emerging trends. Mindful eating and local sourcing are encouraged for well-being.

At Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center we are also planning to introduce digitisation and other food manufacturing processes to continue with sustainable style and climate conscious making menus for the guests. We will be introducing menus with promising health benefits, such as superfoods, adaptogens (Ginseng, Ashwagandha, Tulsi) and ingredients promoting gut health and to continue to be prominent for those pursuing holistic wellness goals.

Strictly No-No

Chef Narayan Salunke, Executive Chef, Four Points by Sheraton Nashik

For me, hygiene and cleanliness will always remain non-negotiable - there's no compromise when it comes to maintaining a spotless kitchen. I also firmly avoid artificial flavourings or shortcuts that take away from the authenticity of a dish. Freshness and real ingredients will always be at the core of my cooking. Beyond that, I believe the kitchen should be a positive and motivated space; negativity has no place in an environment where creativity and teamwork are key to crafting exceptional food.

Chef Hitesh Rai, The St Regis Goa Resort

Indiscipline and a bad attitude are absolute deal-breakers for me. Skills can always be improved, but a lack of discipline and a negative mindset can bring down even the best of teams. A respectful, motivated kitchen environment is key to delivering excellence.

Specific Ingredient or Cuisine

Chef Narayan Salunke, Executive Chef, Four Points by Sheraton Nashik

Millets are something I'm really excited about this year. With the growing awareness around conscious eating, grains like ragi, bajra, and jowar are not just healthy but also incredibly versatile. I look forward to experimenting with them in both savoury and sweet dishes. I'm also eager to incorporate more local wines into my cooking, especially from Nashik. Whether in marinades, sauces, or desserts, these wines have incredible potential to elevate flavours while celebrating the region's produce.

"This year our top priority is to enhance our sustainability initiatives. We remain committed to reducing food waste, lowering energy consumption, and exploring new ways to minimise our environmental impact, ensuring that sustainability remains central to our operations"
Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts

Chef Hitesh Rai, The St Regis Goa Resort

Rather than a single ingredient, I want to focus on using more locally sourced seafood, particularly varieties that can be incorporated into global cuisines. For instance, home-cured local anchovies could add incredible depth to Japanese dishes. Goa has an abundance of fresh produce, and I look forward to showcasing its versatility beyond just traditional Indian preparations.

"At Arbor Kitchen, I want to enhance the dining experience by introducing curated seasonal menus that highlight fresh, local ingredients while also bringing in more live culinary experiences to engage our guests"
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What will be IN and what will be OUT

Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, 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. On the other hand, overly processed foods will see a decline as consumers prioritise natural, clean ingredients. Rigid, formal dining experiences will make way for more relaxed and inclusive settings.

Lastly, sustainability will continue to drive change, with single-use plastics being phased out in favour of eco-friendly packaging and reusable alternatives.

Chef Hitesh Pant, Executive Chef, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center

In 2025, the hospitality industry is set to prioritise technological innovation, sustainability, and personalised guest experiences. Advanced smart technologies will be integral, enhancing guest services with voice-activated room controls and app-driven interactions, while also optimising operational efficiency to elevate guest satisfaction. Sustainability will take precedence as properties commit to eliminating single-use plastics, implementing energy-efficient practices, and sourcing local, organic products to support eco-friendly tourism. ■

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Hospitality Wizard on A Unique Culinary Voyage!

A visionary entrepreneur and hospitality innovator, Rajan Sethi leads Bright Hospitality Private Limited (BHPL) as its Managing Director. In his current role, he orchestrates the company's strategic growth and culinary innovation initiatives. As a Managing Director, Rajan spearheads critical organizational initiatives including market analysis, strategic expansion, and operational excellence. He is particularly passionate about BOSS (Bright Operating System and Solutions), BHPL's proprietary IT/ERP system, which he envisions as a game-changer for operational efficiency in the hospitality sector.

Born with entrepreneurial roots, Rajan's journey in reshaping India's dining landscape began in 2007 when he established BHPL with a vision to redefine experiential dining. An MBA degree holder in International Business from Macquarie University (Sydney), his global perspective and entrepreneurial spirit have been instrumental in creating BHPL's portfolio of award-winning brands, including Ikk Panjab, OMO, The G.T. Road, and AMPM Café & Bar. Under his leadership, BHPL has evolved into a powerhouse serving over 5,000 diners daily, each venue telling its unique culinary story.

Under Rajan's stewardship, BHPL's trajectory is set for transformative growth, balancing ambitious expansion with steadfast commitment to quality. The company's immediate focus for FY 2025 centers on optimizing internal processes and enhancing operational efficiency through BOSS, while simultaneously expanding its footprint across India's major metropolitan areas.

The roadmap ahead is meticulously crafted: domestically, BHPL aims to make its diverse portfolio of brands more accessible to discerning diners across India, while internationally, flagship concepts like Ikk Panjab and The G.T. Road are poised to introduce global audiences to the rich culinary heritage of South Asia. This expansion strategy is complemented by a forward-thinking approach to strategic joint ventures with like-minded partners, enabling shared responsibilities and co-investment opportunities while maintaining the company's commitment to excellence.

Looking ahead, Rajan's long-term vision includes transitioning BHPL into a public-listed entity, marking a significant milestone in the company's journey. This goal is underpinned by a future-forward sustainability mandate, exemplified by initiatives like sourcing 100% Indian ingredients for OMO Soul Food Community and fostering partnerships with local farmers. Under his guidance, BHPL continues to evolve as a pioneer in the hospitality sector, creating foodscape-defining concepts that not only resonate with current dining preferences but also anticipate future trends.

In an exclusive interview with Sharmila Chand, he talks about the latest trends and more...

How do you see AI transforming the way customers interact with restaurant menus?

AI is revolutionizing menu interactions by making them more personalized, dynamic, and interactive. With AI-powered systems, customers can receive menu recommendations based on their dietary preferences, allergies, and past orders. AI can also analyze local dining trends to offer hyper-relevant specials, ensuring a seamless customer experience. For example, digital menus could integrate AI to suggest wine pairings at bars or recommend healthier options at cafés.

Could you share examples of its implementation?

Globally, brands have embraced AI-driven chatbots for customer service. For instance, AI could power a conversational ordering interface, where guests can ask about ingredients, portion sizes, or preparation methods and receive instant responses. Another example is dynamic pricing systems, which adjust based on demand patterns, ensuring efficient resource allocation.

Augmented and virtual reality are gaining traction in F&B. How can they redefine the dining experience?

AR and VR are game-changers for experiential dining. Imagine guests using AR to see a virtual representation of dishes before ordering or diving into a VR simulation of Punjab's vibrant culture while dining. This tech bridges the gap between food and

storytelling, allowing diners to connect emotionally with the cuisine. Similarly, VR cooking workshops or behind-the-scenes tours at restaurants could redefine engagement for our guests.

In your opinion, how does cultural immersion contribute to a brand's identity in a competitive market?

Cultural immersion makes a brand stand out by delivering authentic, meaningful experiences that truly connect with customers. Brands like Ikk Panjab and GT Road ace this by blending heritage-inspired decor, soulful music, and authentic cuisine. It's more than just dining, it's a cultural journey. At BHPL, we mean what we say: "Food is a deeply personal and emotional business"! This deeper connection not only builds customer loyalty but also gives the brand a solid edge in a competitive market.

How do you balance authenticity with innovation when offering culturally immersive dining experiences?

Balancing authenticity with innovation is all about staying true to cultural roots while keeping things fresh and exciting. At BHPL, we respect tradition by preserving authentic flavors, ingredients, and cooking techniques, especially in brands like Ikk Panjab and GT Road. At the same time, we embrace innovation in ways that enhance the experience, whether it's modern plating, adding sustainable twists to classic recipes.

This balance ensures our offerings feel authentic yet relevant, appealing to both traditionalists and modern diners who crave something new. It's about creating an experience that honors the past while speaking to the present.

What role does the ambiance play in creating a cultural connection, and how do you ensure it aligns with the cuisine?

Ambiance is as important as the food itself, it's what sets the mood. At BHPL, every brand crafts an atmosphere that complements its menu. For instance, AMPM Cafe and Bar uses vibrant, youthful interiors to reflect its upbeat vibe, while OMO: Soul Food Community decor creates a cozy and minimalist charm, with earthy tones, warm lighting, and greenery that align with its fresh and wholesome menu. We achieve alignment by drawing from the cuisine's story, every element, from lighting to furniture, resonates with the culinary theme.

Functional foods are becoming popular. How do you decide which trends to adopt and which to avoid?

Adopting functional food trends is all about aligning them with the brand's identity and consumer preferences. At BHPL, we carefully evaluate trends to see if they enhance our offerings without feeling forced. For example, Espressos Anyday, known for fresh and wholesome options, seamlessly integrates functional foods like superfood bowls or immunity-boosting drinks. We avoid trends that feel gimmicky or short-lived, focusing instead on those backed by genuine demand and long-term value. Guest feedback, market research, and our commitment to authenticity guide these decisions, ensuring we stay ahead without compromising what makes each brand unique.

What unique challenges do F&B brands face when expanding into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities?

Expanding into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities requires navigating diverse challenges, such as pricing sensitivity, regional taste preferences, and limited exposure to global cuisines. At BHPL, we adapt by localizing our menu for example, introducing regional favorites alongside our signature dishes and offering flexible portion sizes. Staff training also focuses on personalized service, ensuring familiarity and warmth for guests new to our brands.

How do you adapt your menu and service strategies to cater to these markets?

To adapt to Tier-2 and Tier-3 markets, BHPL customizes its approach to meet local tastes and expectations. For the menu, we balance our signature dishes with regional flavors and familiar ingredients to appeal to diverse palates. For example, at OMO: Soul Food Community, we could introduce localized versions of popular dishes while retaining our signature quality and presentation.

On the service side, we emphasize warm, personalized hospitality, training staff to cater to the unique preferences of these markets. We also ensure affordability by offering flexible portion sizes and competitive pricing, making premium dining more accessible without compromising the experience. This dual approach helps us connect with new audiences while staying true to our brand's essence.

Are there any particular cities or regions that you see as hotspots for growth in the next five years?

Cities like Jaipur, Indore, and Chandigarh are emerging hotspots due to their growing urban population and increasing appetite for premium dining experiences. These regions are witnessing a surge in disposable income, making them ideal markets for Espressos Anyday's elevated comfort USP or AMPM's energetic atmosphere. When we explore expanding thoughtfully into such cities, we will aim to build lasting connections through our signature blend of innovation and authenticity.

On A Culinary Journey With Pretty Strawberries!

By Sharmila Chand

One of the favourite fruits of summers, strawberries elevate any meals effortlessly. Packed with nutrients and antioxidants, strawberries are culinary gems that are a delight to be consumed on their own or make several kinds of dishes in yoghurts, desserts and salads. They are rated among the top 20 high-antioxidant fruits and are a good source of manganese and potassium. Low in calories, yet sweet tasting, strawberries work well as a healthy addition in puddings for your share of flavor and wellness. Add these to the menu and enjoy delicious dishes for your summer feast.

Strawberries Are Not Berries

Strawberries are a member of the rose family and are neither a fruit or a berry– they are actually the enlarged receptacle of a flower.

The strawberry - Fragaria, is a member of the rose (rosaceae) family, and one of the most popular berry fruits in the world. There are more than 10 species of Fragaria that differ in flavour, size and texture, yet they all have the same characteristic shape and red seeded flesh.

Strawberry Nutrition Facts

Nutrients per serving
A 1-cup serving contains:
Calories: 45
Protein: 1.11 gram
Fat: 0.498 grams
Carbohydrates : 12.7gm
Fiber: 3.32 grams
Sugar: 7 grams

Strawberries are not only delicious fruits but also nutrient rich healthy choice to be relished fresh in the season.

Health Benefits of Strawberries

The vitamins, minerals and antioxidants in strawberries provide important health benefits. For example, strawberries are rich in vitamin C and polyphenols, antioxidant compounds that may help prevent some diseases.

In addition, the health benefits of strawberries include:

May help manage blood pressure

As a source of heart-friendly nutrients, including potassium, folate and vitamin C, strawberries are said to help manage blood pressure.

Helps in regulating blood sugar

It is believed that strawberries slow down the digestion of glucose and reduce insulin spikes, making them a healthy choice for those with type-2 diabetes.

Helps in weight management

Strawberries have a low glycemic index and thus help in moderating blood sugar release. It is said that a diet with plenty of low-GI foods could be beneficial for weight management and for reducing the incidence of obesity-related diseases.

May support gut health

Strawberries are a rich source of polyphenols and fibre, both of which have probiotic properties to aid in gut health.

Recipe

Strawberry Yoghurt Cheesecake with Double Crumb

By Chef Lalit, Executive Chef, Skyview by Empyrean, Sanget Valley, Patnitop

"A love story between rich cheesecake, juicy strawberries, and a golden crumb topping—every bite is a masterpiece!"

Ingredients:

Packets plain shortbread biscuits (roughly broken) - 250 gm
Whole almonds (toasted) - ½ cup (80 gm)
Coconut flakes (toasted) - ¼ cup (25 gm)
Ground cinnamon - 3 tsp
Unsalted butter, melted, plus 30g extra, chilled, chopped - 150 gm
Strawberries, hulled and halved, plus extra to serve, 500 gm
Caster sugar - 110 gm
Vanilla extract - 2 tsp
Titanium-strength gelatine leaves - 4
Cream cheese, at room temperature - 500 gm
Greek-style yoghurt, 420 gm
Baby basil leaves (optional), to serve
Macerated strawberries
Strawberries, hulled and halved - 25 gm
Caster sugar - 2 tsp
Red wine vinegar - 1 tsp

Method

Preheat oven to 200°C/180°C fan-forced. Line a baking tray with baking paper. Grease base and sides of a 20cm round springform cake pan and line the base with baking paper.

To make the base, place biscuits, almonds, coconut and cinnamon in a food processor, and process until finely chopped. Add melted butter and whiz until well combined. Measure 3 cups of the biscuit mixture and press firmly into base of prepared cake pan. Chill for 30 minutes or until firm.

Transfer remaining biscuit mixture to a bowl and, using your fingertips, rub in the extra chilled butter to form a crumb. Transfer to prepared tray and bake for 10-12 minutes, turning once during baking, until golden and crisp. Cool completely on tray. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and set aside overnight at room temperature until ready to assemble.

To make the filling, place strawberries, sugar, vanilla and 1/4 cup (60ml) water in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring until sugar dissolves, then simmer, stirring occasionally, for 8-10 minutes or until strawberries are softened and liquid has reduced to a thick syrup. Remove pan from heat. Using a handheld stick blender, blend until smooth.

Meanwhile, place gelatine in a bowl of cold water and stand for 5 minutes or until softened. While the smooth strawberry mixture is still hot, squeeze excess water from the gelatine and add to strawberry mixture, stirring until gelatine completely dissolves. Set aside.

In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whisk cream cheese and yoghurt together until smooth. Add strawberry mixture and whisk until well combined and smooth. Pour over chilled biscuit base in pan and level the surface. Cover and chill overnight until firm.

The next day, for the macerated strawberries, combine all ingredients in a small bowl and stir well. Set aside for at least 2 hours until strawberries soften and a rich syrup forms.

To serve, stand cheesecake at room temperature for a few minutes before releasing sides of pan. Transfer to a serving platter, top with macerated strawberries, extra fresh strawberries and basil (if using). Sprinkle with extra crumb and place remaining crumb in a bowl for people to help themselves. Serve.

Tips:

Crust: Use graham cracker or biscuit crumbs for the base; add nuts or extra crumbs for the second layer.

Yogurt: Opt for full-fat Greek yogurt for a creamy texture and tangy flavour.

Strawberry Puree: Blend strawberries, strain for smoothness, and mix into the filling or swirl for effect.

Sweetness: Adjust sweetness with sugar, honey, or maple syrup to taste.

Chill Time: Chill the cheesecake for at least 4-6 hours to set properly.

Double Crumb: Toast the top crumb layer for added crunch and flavour.

Toppings: Garnish with fresh strawberries or a strawberry compote for extra flavour.

Adding Value to F&B

Today, people are more health conscious and as a result of that several health products are finding favour with the processed food and drink manufacturers. The food ingredient/additive sector has potential for buoyant growth. The future for the industry – globally as well as in India – seems to be bright, but not without its share of challenges.

No food can survive without its ingredients. Yes, even naturally obtained food like apple or banana or mango has their ingredients. Without food additives, food can survive, but may not be as tasty, or as attractive looking, or as nutritious or remain as fresh after a long period. Food additives add attributes to food items.

Food ingredients which are not additives also can impart these above mentioned attributes to the food items. In fact, food additives are also ingredients of food items in the market, that is they are part of the final food products that are being sold in the market, but though every additive is an ingredient but not every ingredient is an additive.

Food additives can be both direct and indirect. Direct food additives are those additives which are intentionally included during preparation or processing of a food item to serve a specific functional purpose or some functional purposes.

Direct food additives can be defined as ingredients which are incorporated into food items in small dosages to influence their properties in some desired way, which in turn is expected to positively impact those food items' quality or marketability at the final stage, when they are presented before the market.

The indirect food additives are those which unintentionally migrate into the food products during its growing, manufacturing, processing or packaging stage. Here we are primarily dealing with direct food additives only.

Not Additional, but Integral

One must realise that food ingredients/ additives are a critical part of food & beverage industry and are used for maintaining quality, consistency, taste, aroma and texture of the food & beverages. Food ingredients/additives can also facilitate in processing of the food items or enhance their health quotient which helps to preserve or increase the nutritional quality of those food items.

The health element of food ingredients and additives is not recent, though now their role in healthy food has gained market momentum. For example, the addition of iodine in salt is not new, and it has led to prevention of goiter to a great extent. Similarly, the addition of Vitamin D in milk has greatly helped in countering the emergence of rickets, and niacin in bread has kept the disease of pellagra in check.

Food additives also help in preserving the food products by significantly delaying the deterioration of food products and their consequent spoilage. We can very easily gauge the role of food additives in F&B business. Without the use of food additives the bottom lines of many F&B industries would have gone fast downhill. Food additives like flavouring agents, colouring agents or artificial sweeteners also help to make the food look and smell more appealing and taste better. Overall, without food ingredients and additives we cannot imagine our present day F&B industry.

Additional History

Here it deserves a mention that the use of food additives is not new in the history of mankind. In fact, the use of food ingredients/ additives were there before the dawn of civilisation. Fire was probably the first additive, which helped to cook the early man's hunted meats, thereby making them more edible than before. Soon salt followed, when people realised that it can enhance the taste of food and also facilitate in its preservation.

The use of cloves in hams to prevent bacterial growth has been a feature of the ancient times. The use of food colours and seasonings can be dated to the ancient Egyptian civilisation. Spices and condiments were important items of trade since the ancient ages. Mustard was a popular condiment in Europe of the middle ages. In fact, the search for spices inspired many explorations during the medieval period. However, then the food ingredients/ additives industry was neither as big nor as organised; nor as sophisticated and mechanised, as it is now in the nascent stage of the twenty-first century.

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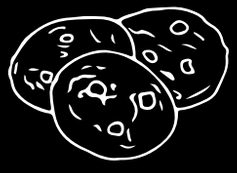

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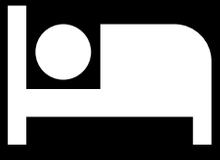

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The Right Usage

The ingredients/additives in food & beverages can take the form of preservatives, food colours, emulsifying and stabilsing agents, enzymes, artificial sweeteners, flavours, dietary fibre, omega fatty acids, antioxidants, nutraceuticals, probiotics and prebiotics, vitamins and minerals, among others. Most of the food ingredients are derived from natural sources, but some of them can be prepared synthetically as well. For example, food additives such as preservatives, artificial sweeteners, and a few flavours can be derived synthetically.

However, food additives, though can improve the marketability of processed food items, should not be indiscriminately used. There are some guiding principles for the use of food additives. They should be justified for their technological effectiveness and purpose. They should be safe for use. There should be maximum adequate levels, absolutely necessary levels of usage and ADI (Acceptable Daily Intake) properly evaluated while considering their safety and permitted usage levels in foods. They should not be added with the intention of misleading consumers about quality. They should also not significantly affect adversely the nutritional quality of food products.

Any new additive before approving must undergo rigorous toxicity studies, including acute and chronic studies involving biochemical evaluation, teratogenic studies, reproductive studies, besides the LD50 tests. However, exposure assessment is very important in determining the risk involving any additive under the modern practice of determining safety. The risk analysis, adopted nowadays, involves risk assessment, wherein the hazard is identified and characterised. Exposure is assessed and thus risk is characterised.

The Healthy Wave

Growing consumer interest towards healthy diet has fostered the development of several entirely new food ingredients/ additives over the last three to four decades. As conventional recipes for healthy eating have emphasised on fat and sugar reduction in the diet, there has been a trend of emergence of fat replacers and sweeteners.

Many hydrocolloids are used as fat replacers and they have gained currency from consumers' growing disinterest towards fat and sugar consumption. The rising demand for functional food has given a fillip to the functional food ingredients market too. Omega-3 fatty acids and phytosterols, probiotics and prebiotics are now in vogue in the functional food ingredients' market. The demand for functional food products has also led to more and more food items being fortified with beneficial vitamins and minerals.

One can say that the changing lifestyles and increased disposable incomes have led to the market need for functional food products in select pockets of urban India, which are often fortified with new-age healthy ingredients. They offer functional health benefits over the basic nutritional value of the given foodstuff.

Over the long-term, the health ingredients/additives market in India, which is characterised by probiotics/omega

fatty acids, is expected to witness rapid development, largely as a result of greater consumer exposure to imported health food products.

The Market Potential

Although the food ingredients/additives industry in India has great promise, at the same time, it is also bogged down with several impediments. Lack of commercial-scale cultivation of raw materials which leads to low yield in terms of quality and quantity, is a major constraint. This, in turn, fails to attract new investments in this sector. Lack of a centralised regulatory system at the farm-gate level and the presence of too many middle men is a major problem in raw material sourcing since it is too scattered and leads to traceability issues.

Paucity of a cold storage infrastructure and also the scarcity of an upgraded logistics and transportation system for perishable goods lead to substantial wastage of agricultural produce, adversely affecting the food ingredients industry. In fact, there is no denying the fact that poor cold chain infrastructure which results in huge wastage of agricultural produce has impeded the food processing and hence the food ingredients sector of India to harness its full potential.

Moreover, if the food processing industry of the country does way with the middlemen and endeavours to procure its raw materials from farmers directly as a rule, then they would get their ingredients at much lesser price. This would in turn give a fillip to the food ingredients sector. The modernisation of supply chain infrastructure with fewer middlemen in agriculture sector is the need of the hour.

The potential for Indian food ingredients/ additives market is huge. Particularly, in the backdrop of impressive growth of the processed foods market in India, the future of food ingredients' market seems bright. The fast expansion of food ingredients market is in tandem with the growth in the market of processed food & beverages.

With the growing demand for processed food and drinks, more and more innovative ingredients are emerging in the F&B industry. The processed food products generally need higher levels of additive-style ingredients than the unprocessed foods, in the way of preservatives, flavours, colours, etc., which makes ample room for innovation exercises.

Besides availability of affordable raw materials, cold chain infrastructure, regulatory approvals, etc. the concerns for food safety, the health and nutrition factor of the food ingredients/additives, especially in the context of the growing precedence of lifestyle diseases like diabetes and obesity, and most importantly, the research & development are among the factors guiding the market size of the food ingredients/additives for the near future. Globally, the demand for more complicated food ingredients by food processors is also fostering the demand for food additives.

Besides considering the above-mentioned factors, the adoption of more sophisticated food processing methods, and restructuring of food processing companies are also needed to evolve the food ingredients/additives market. ■

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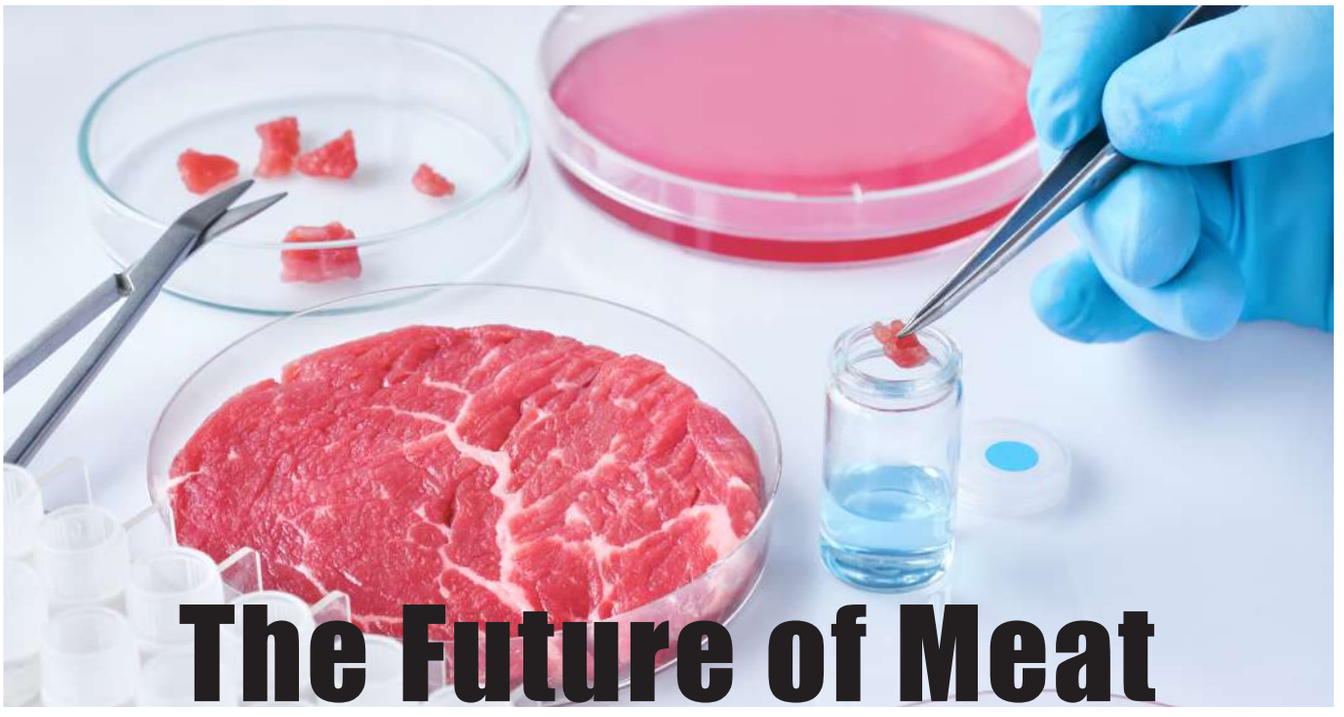


The Future of Meat

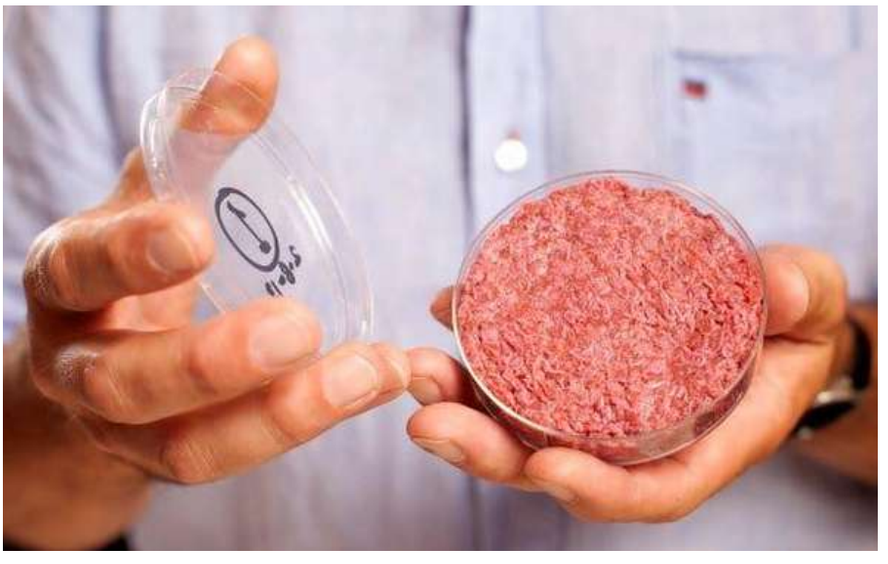
By Amit Vohra

In an era of rapid technological advancements and growing environmental concerns, the way we produce and consume food is undergoing a transformation. One of the most groundbreaking innovations in this space is lab-grown meat, also known as cultured or cell-based meat. Unlike traditional meat production, which relies on raising and slaughtering animals, lab-grown meat is cultivated from a small sample of animal cells in a controlled environment. These cells are placed in a nutrient-rich medium, where they multiply and develop into muscle tissue, replicating the texture and taste of conventional meat. This technology has the potential to revolutionize the global food system and address some of the most pressing challenges associated with traditional livestock farming.

The push for lab-grown meat is driven by multiple factors. The environmental footprint of the traditional meat industry is substantial, with the livestock sector contributing nearly 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Additionally, industrial meat production consumes vast amounts of land and water, contributing to deforestation, biodiversity loss, and soil degradation. As the world's population is expected to exceed 9 billion by 2050, the demand for protein will only increase, putting further pressure on already strained agricultural resources.

Ethical concerns also play a significant role in the rising interest in lab-grown meat. Factory farming has long been criticized for its treatment of animals, with organizations advocating for more humane alternatives. Lab-grown meat offers a potential solution by eliminating the need for animal slaughter while still providing a familiar dietary experience. The development of cultured meat aligns with the growing consumer preference for sustainable and ethical food choices, further accelerating research and investment in this emerging sector.

Beyond ethical and environmental advantages, lab-grown meat could contribute to global food security. With climate change disrupting traditional agricultural systems, ensuring a stable and reliable protein supply is becoming increasingly important. Because lab-grown



meat can be produced in urban settings and controlled environments, it reduces dependence on large-scale farming and minimizes the risks associated with supply chain disruptions due to extreme weather or geopolitical instability.

However, significant challenges must be overcome before lab-grown meat becomes a mainstream alternative. One of the biggest hurdles remains cost. Since the first lab-grown burger was introduced in 2013 at an astronomical price of $330,000, production costs have declined significantly. Yet, cultured meat is still far from achieving price parity with conventional meat, limiting its accessibility to the general public. Until large-scale production methods are optimized, lab-grown meat will remain a niche product.

Additionally, the transition to lab-grown meat raises economic and social concerns. Traditional livestock farming supports millions of livelihoods worldwide, and a large-scale shift to cultured meat could disrupt rural economies. In regions where animal farming is deeply embedded in culture and tradition, acceptance may be slow, requiring targeted education and policy interventions to ease the transition.

Another critical concern is the energy consumption of lab-grown meat production. While it offers environmental benefits by reducing land and water use, the large bioreactors required for cell cultivation can be energy-intensive. If these facilities rely on non-renewable energy sources, the sustainability advantages of lab-grown meat could be undermined. Ensuring that production processes use clean and renewable energy will be essential in maximizing its environmental benefits.

Lab-grown meat represents an exciting and potentially transformative shift in food production. While it offers solutions to some of the most pressing ethical and environmental issues tied to conventional meat, it is not a one-size-fits-all answer. The road to widespread adoption will require overcoming economic, social, and technological barriers. Whether cultured meat becomes a global staple or remains a premium niche product will depend on how these challenges are addressed. One thing is certain: the conversation around the future of meat is only just beginning, and lab-grown meat is at the forefront of this evolving landscape.

The author is chef and academician with over 22 years of experience in Hotel Management, Retail, and Education. A proud alumnus of the Institute of Hotel Management, Bhopal, and the Taj Management Training Program, he has worked with top brands like The Taj Group, ITC Welcomgroup, The Oberoi Group, and Aditya Birla Retail. He is currently the dean of the Culinary Arts department at Chitkara University, Punjab, and is pursuing a PhD in a qualitative study on acceptance of Lab grown meat.

"Cooking is My Art, and The World is My Canvas"

Chef Gaurav Mawari, Executive Chef, Novotel Pune

Chef Gaurav Mawari, the newly appointed Executive Chef at Novotel Pune, brings over 15 years of rich experience in the hospitality industry. His culinary journey is marked by significant contributions to the successful openings of several five-star properties, including Ista Hyderabad, Taj Vivanta Hyderabad, Aloft Hotel New Delhi, and Radisson Individuals Bangalore.

Before joining Novotel Pune, Chef Gaurav served as the Executive Sous Chef at Sheraton Grand Chennai. He has also held leadership roles at Holiday Inn New Delhi International Airport and Radisson Individuals Bangalore, where he was instrumental in overseeing large-scale kitchen operations, refining culinary strategies, and mentoring teams to uphold high hospitality standards.

At Novotel Pune, Chef Gaurav leads the hotel's culinary operations, focusing on menu innovations, maintaining high-quality food standards, and curating exceptional dining experiences for guests. He is also spearheading the launch of the upcoming restaurant, SOAK (Global Grill), aiming to blend global culinary trends with local flavours to offer unique gastronomic experiences.

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

How do you define yourself?

I see myself as a calm and composed individual with an insatiable curiosity to learn and understand both people and nature. My passion for continuous growth extends beyond the kitchen, allowing me to explore the deeper connections between food, culture, and well-being.

What is your philosophy of cooking?

I firmly believe in the adage, "We are what we eat." Indian cuisine is a treasure trove of wisdom, where every ingredient is carefully chosen for its nutritional and medicinal benefits. Cooking, to me, is a sacred art–one that nourishes the soul and body while preserving the heritage passed down by our ancestors.

What is your area of expertise?

My expertise lies in crafting artisanal cuisine with contemporary plating while maintaining the authenticity of traditional flavours. In a world driven by globalization, my focus is on reviving the essence of heritage cooking while presenting it in a refined and modern manner.

Had you not been doing this then what?

Had I not been a chef, I would have been a farmer, growing my own vegetables and grains. My purpose remains the same–to bring joy to people through food, whether by cooking it or cultivating it.

What is your source of inspiration?

My first inspiration is my mother, who encouraged me to explore the kitchen from a young age, never once discouraging my curiosity. She taught me that food is more than sustenance–it's a way to spread happiness. I also deeply admire Chef Heston Blumenthal, whose multi-sensory, scientific approach to cooking has always fascinated me. His ability to elevate ingredients to their full potential

is something I strive to emulate.

What has been the most rewarding moment in your career?

Winning the prestigious Times Food Award for two of my specialty restaurants in the same year was an unforgettable milestone. It was a moment of validation, proving that passion, hard work, and dedication always bear fruit.

How has the journey been so far?

Reflecting on my culinary journey, it has been a path filled with learning, challenges, and immense satisfaction. From my early days experimenting in the kitchen to leading teams in esteemed establishments, each experience has shaped my approach to cooking and leadership. The opportunity to innovate while honouring traditional flavours has been particularly rewarding. Moments like receiving accolades for my restaurants and witnessing diners' genuine enjoyment reaffirm my passion and commitment to the culinary arts.

What skills are necessary to be a good chef?

Resilience, acceptance, and perseverance are the three pillars of a successful chef. Beyond technical expertise, one must be a passionate food lover with a keen sense of taste. People often say great chefs have "magic in their hands," but the truth is, it all begins with a refined palate.

How do you de-stress yourself?

Music is my escape–I listen to soft melodies and play the guitar to de-stress. My most cherished moments, however, are spent playing with my little children, as their laughter is the best therapy.

Favourite Ingredient?

Lemon being one of the basic tastes is extensively used and accepted worldwide in every cuisine. Because of its acidic nature it not only triggers our taste buds but enhance the flavour of other ingredients as well and helps with tenderizing certain meat types. As you cannot imagine of a great fish without water and Lemons.

Fav Cuisine?

I love cooking Italian cuisine, but when it comes to indulgence, nothing compares to Indian food, especially South Indian delicacies.

Fav Spice?

Ceylon cinnamon–it has a uniquely delicate aroma that works beautifully in both sweet and savoury dishes. Beyond its flavor, its medicinal properties make it even more special.

Fav Equipment?

Split Charcoal Grill is my all-time favourite, as this gives you the freedom of cooking variety of food using it. Multitasking can be done with it when it comes to serving not just a single dish but the entire meal with multiple courses. Moreover, the marinated meats cooked over the charcoal can get anyone fall in love with this equipment.

Fav restaurant/food joint, anywhere in the world.

Indian Accent in Delhi. Every visit is a delightful surprise–each dish is an innovation, leaving me with not just a satisfied palate but also valuable culinary insights.

Your Fav Diner?

I love cooking for those who come with an open heart and a big appetite. Hungry diners don't discriminate between dishes–they savour every bite, appreciating the effort behind each flavour.

You favourite Culinary Destination?

New Delhi. Despite not having a distinct local cuisine, it has embraced culinary influences from across India and the world. From the best Mughlai food to vibrant street eats and global fine dining, it is a melting pot of flavors.

The best compliment you have received?

A mother of two children with strict dietary restrictions once thanked me with teary eyes. Watching her kids enjoy their meal, she said, "Seeing you cook with a smile reassured me that my children would love your food." Moments like these make all the hard work worthwhile.

What is Your philosophy of work?

Precision, planning, and foresight. Success in the kitchen comes from having the right approach at the right time, constantly learning, and being aware of both strengths and weaknesses.

Lessons learnt in the kitchen?

Always thrive for perfection. Don't get satisfied in between. Cooking is an art which cannot be done without your heart and soul in it.

Last meal on earth: What would you choose?

Ambur Mutton Biryani with Onion Pachdi–pure comfort food, rich in flavour and history.

10 years from now?

I may never fit into a corporate suit, but I will always wear my chef's coat with pride. I envision myself traveling the world, discovering new flavours, and sharing my culinary journey.

What are your future plans?

In the short term, I aim to elevate my current assignment to a new culinary benchmark. In the long run, I hope to create a legacy through food–one that leaves a lasting impact on both diners and aspiring chefs.

What is the best career advice you would like to give to youngsters aspiring to be chefs?

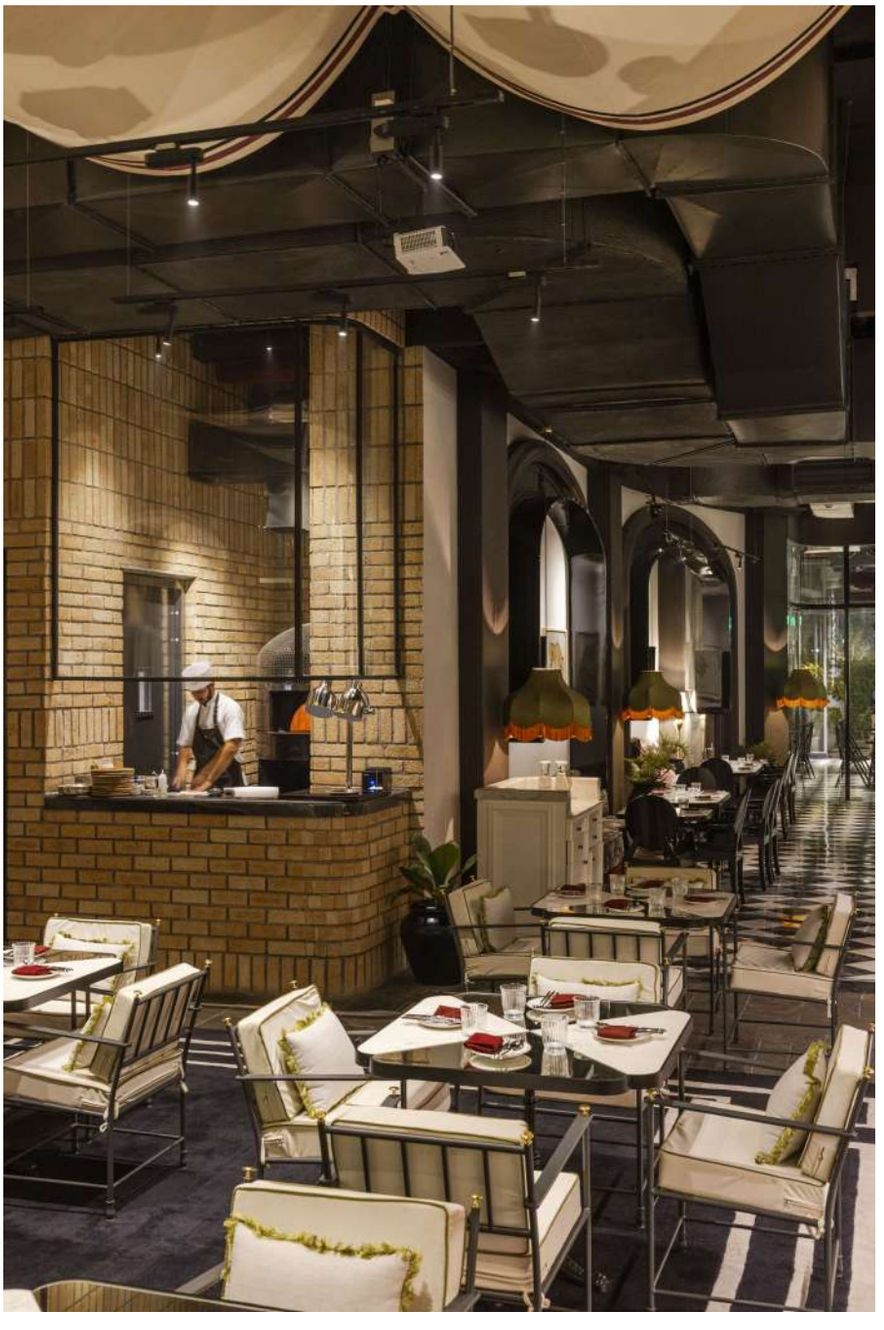
Develop a refined palate, find a great mentor, and never stop experimenting. Innovation and initiative are the keys to success in the culinary world.

Define yourself as a chef?

I start each day as a cook and grow into a chef with every learning experience. My role extends beyond cooking–I am a mentor, a leader, and a storyteller who brings emotions to the plate. Cooking is my art, and the world is my canvas.

Arts Room

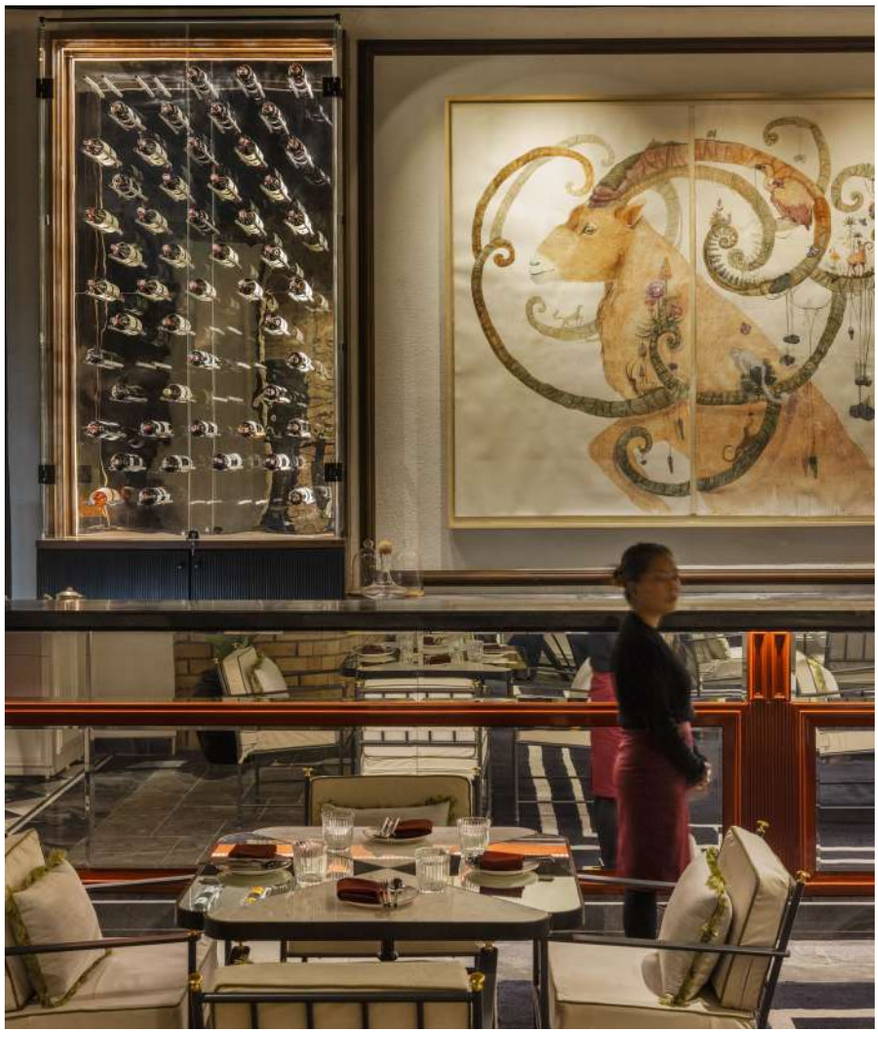
At the Eldeco Centre New Delhi



Arts Room, the much-anticipated global cuisine restaurant by Navneet and Randeep Bajaj's Ambrosia Hospitality, has opened its doors at Eldeco Centre, New Delhi. Combining a passion for exquisite cuisine with a dedication to creating sensory experiences, Arts Room is more than just a dining destination. It is a thoughtfully curated space where art, books, flavours and fragrances converge to offer a feast for all the senses.

Arts Room is a global cuisine restaurant that celebrates elevated dining through a seamless blend of taste and visual artistry. Designed with layers of discovery, each element of the space–from the café and dining room to the extensive bar and patio–unfolds to reveal a new experience. Drawing inspiration from a classical French living room and a Parisian courtyard, Arts Room merges multiple identities into a cohesive, lively and fun atmosphere, embodying the spirit of experiential dining.

With a strong emphasis on sourcing the finest ingredients from across India, Arts Room has forged partnerships with local experts to ensure the highest quality produce. This commitment to sustainability and excellence reflects the restaurant's ethos of reinterpreting global culinary traditions while celebrating India's rich resources. "At Arts Room, we strive to bring the timeless charm of hospitality back to the forefront. Our approach is vintage and classical in its essence, reflecting the elegance of a bygone era, while seamlessly



embracing modern trends in our food and beverage offerings. It's about creating an experience that is both nostalgic and contemporary, where every detail–from the locally sourced ingredients to the art-inspired cocktails–celebrates the artistry of dining," says Randeep Bajaj, Co-owner, Arts Room.

The Menu

The menu at Arts Room draws inspiration from classic global recipes, reimagined using the finest locally sourced produce and minimizing reliance on imported ingredients. Reflecting the restaurant's commitment to creativity, the menu is dynamic and evolves in harmony with each new art exhibit. By delving into the artist's vision and the themes of the exhibit, Arts Room crafts a menu that beautifully integrates art and cuisine, offering a truly immersive dining experience.

Arts Room's menu is a curated selection that has been thoughtfully crafted to cater to a wide range of palates, ensuring a delightful experience for all age groups. The menu also includes vegan-friendly and gluten-free options, marked clearly, with an abridged version available upon request for those with specific dietary needs. There is a breakfast menu as well.

Among the signature dishes recommended by the chef are the Chicken Teeka Masala, a creative twist on a beloved classic featuring Layla's roast chicken in a velvety tomato cream sauce, and the Crunchy Pork Belly, served with a Shillong roast dip and a touch of Mexican Tajin for added zest. For seafood lovers, the Lobster and Caviar, with Andaman lobster paired with cognac and Osetra caviar, promises an indulgent experience.

The menu also boasts refreshing options like the Yellowtail Ceviche, a vibrant dish with coconut and guava accents, and the Very Nice Salad, combining quinoa tartare, mizuna, and a tangy carrot kanji dressing. For pasta lovers, the Nero Pasta, inspired by Thai red curry and Maharashtrian thecha, offers a unique fusion of bold flavors. The Rainbow Trout, complemented by potato pave and orange fennel sauce, is a standout among the larger plates.

The dining area, adorned with Indian artworks curated by Pristine Contemporary, offers an immersive ambiance for guests. To enhance the dining experience further, guests are invited to explore an explanatory menu book that provides detailed insights into each dish. This guide delves into the origins, ingredients, and creative inspirations behind the menu, allowing diners to fully appreciate the artistry and

thought behind every plate.

A Cocktail Program

At Arts Room, the cocktail program is a masterful blend of imagination and technical precision, designed to captivate guests on two fronts.

First, the signature cocktails draw inspiration from legendary artists and their most iconic works. Curated by in-house bar veteran Kamal Kohli, these creations are an ode to art and mixology, where every sip tells a story. Guests can try the Two Fridas, inspired by Frida Kahlo's painting, featuring hemp seed-infused tequila with watermelon and chili saccharum. Another standout is the Goan Rains, a kokum-based tequila drink inspired by F.N. Souza's depiction of Goa's monsoon season. The La Guernica, a whisky-based cocktail with Manam dark chocolate and Mexican chili, pays homage to Picasso's powerful anti-war masterpiece. Each cocktail is a canvas of flavours designed to surprise and delight.

The second offering includes Contemporary Classics from around the world. Guests can enjoy a Freezer Martini, served with glamorous flair, or a reimagined French 75, where sparkling wine and gin meet with a visionary twist. Whether it's a Smoked Paloma or a perfectly balanced Paper Plane, these drinks promise sophistication and consistency in every sip. There are Zero Proof Cocktails on the menu too.

Art and Creativity

True to its name, Arts Room places art at the center of its identity. Guests are welcomed into a space adorned with works curated by the renowned artist collective Pristine. The visual delights extend to the menu itself, with art-inspired tasting plates that echo the essence of the featured artworks.

Adding a personal touch, the restaurant showcases whimsical cookie boxes featuring art by Navneet and Randeep's children, celebrating the innocence and imagination of childhood. For book lovers, Arts Room's collaboration with Bahrisons ensures a literary feast alongside the culinary experience, with handpicked titles available for browsing and purchase.

An Atmosphere of Thoughtful Details From the alluring fragrances of Hrishikesh scents to the warm gesture of complimentary hot chocolate for office-goers during the festive season, Arts Room creates an environment where every detail counts. Guests leave with decadent liquor truffles and a personalized keepsake photo, ensuring their visit is as memorable as it is delightful.

"We envisioned Arts Room as a place where the boundaries between dining and art blur, offering an experience that is both indulgent and enriching. From artisanal pizzas prepared in an Antonio Scirocco oven to partnerships with local producers, every element is designed to transport our guests into a world of culinary and cultural delight," adds Navneet Bajaj, co-owner, Arts Room.

Whether visiting for a leisurely breakfast, a lively dinner, or an artistic collaboration event, Arts Room offers a journey of sensory exploration.

Arts Room believes that creating an extraordinary experience begins with its people. To make the staff feel as special as the guests, the team is adorned with signature fragrances and elegant attire. Female team members wear Hrishikesh fragrances, while male team members complement the atmosphere with distinctive Jaguar fragrances, adding a touch of class. ■

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Fighting Food Allergy

From training the staff about how to handle guests with food allergies to indicating common food allergens in the menu and preparing recipes in a manner that leaves no scope for cross-contamination are some of the steps that restaurants can take to make dining out experience safer for people with sensitivity to certain ingredients or food products. As food allergies rise, dietitians and chefs are developing and evolving better and better systems, recipes and concepts to keep every guest safe.

Fatal Negligence

The customer who had peanut allergy clearly mentioned to the steward that he wanted a nut-free dish while ordering his food. But the restaurant failed to inform him that its curry contained peanuts. The customer unfortunately died from a severe anaphylactic shock after he ate his favourite curry dish. Restaurant, it appeared, wanted to cut corners and therefore swapped almond powder for cheaper groundnut mix. But that decision proved very costly and led to the death of an individual.

The tragic incident of this death due to gross negligence occurred in Britain but it could happen anywhere if restaurants are found not properly conveying about the ingredients used in their recipes, especially to people who are allergic to certain food ingredients.

In such allergy-prone people, certain compounds in food trigger a cascade of immune system reactions that can cause symptoms ranging from a harmless but disturbing skin rash to a potentially lethal anaphylactic shock.

There are large number of people who have food allergy. So you can safely bet that you'll serve someone who could have a bad reaction (or worse) to milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish and crustacean shellfish. And, since most food allergy reactions happen outside the home, foodservice operators bear a big responsibility, especially in onsite operations, where guests visiting the restaurant relying on a safe dining spot.

Allergy Sources

Not knowing what allergy you have and eating something containing the same ingredient to which you are allergic could be life-threatening. Besides peanuts, food products which are frequently responsible for allergies include walnuts, almonds and pecans; wheat; fish; eggs; milk; shellfish such as shrimp, crab and lobster; and some artificial colours and flavours.

According to the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research in Germany, the most common allergen in fish and crustaceans is parvalbumin, a calcium-binding protein. Other substances, however, are also suspected triggers of allergies, such as a group of proteins in cell metabolism called aldehyde dehydrogenases.

An estimated 8 percent of children and 5 percent of adults worldwide suffer from some or the other form of food allergy. While it is widely believed that the problem, especially peanut allergy, is more prevalent in western countries, the cases of gluten intolerance and vulnerability to some other food such as soy and eggs are

quite common in India too.

With population of well over a billion, food allergy could become an enormous problem to look out for in India. In fact, as more and more people are adopting western eating habits, steady rates of increase in the allergic disease across age groups, especially amongst youngsters, has been commonly noticed

Making Restaurants Safer

People with food allergy have to be very careful about what they eat and it is also their responsibility to enquire about the ingredients being used in a recipe when they go out for dining. This is because even accidentally eating only a little amount of the ingredient to which they are allergic could be dangerous.

For example, even small amounts of gluten can cause long-term harm in celiac disease patients. On the other hand, restaurants also have the responsibility to inform their customers about the ingredients being used and also ensure that no cross-contamination occurs during the preparation so that customers who want their food to be free of some specific allergens are not accidentally subjected to those allergens. And if handled in the right manner, the issue of food allergy need not necessarily be very complicated.

It's not hard to tackle food allergy, if handled carefully. First of all, the waiter should have full knowledge of the menu and the ingredients used. Secondly, the entire menu should have all the major potentially allergic items listed in the menu so that the guest knows exactly what she/he is ordering. Lastly, the restaurants should identify a separate space and equipment to cook the food for those with food allergy.

In restaurants the service and kitchen teams should be well trained to handle such allergens. A special menu should be prepared for allergy prone people according to their preference/s and for them the food is cooked in separate work area and with separate utensils. Buffet menu also must mention about the common allergens.

Creating a food allergy management plan in your restaurant or hotel is very important. While taking orders, inform and guide guests with regard to food allergy and offer assistance. Properties even have a separate team of kitchen and serving staff who look after the needs of the guests with food allergy, and monthly training of staff to handle such guests is being stringently followed.

Menus for special events, such as banqueting, corporate function, food & wine festival, etc., should be tailor-made as per the concerns of the guests, and they should also include icons to indicate gluten-friendly items Restaurants that offer gluten-free diet need to ensure that no cross-contamination with any gluten containing raw material occurs.

Allergy Causing

Shellfish - This allergen affected 8.2 million people in one year.

Fin fish - Seafood occupies two spots on this list, with fin fish further down at 2.6 million allergic reactions.

Wheat - Here is where all the gluten-free products come in. 2.4 million wheat reactions were reported.

Milk - 6.1 million reactions were reported.

Soy - It's not just soy sauce! As those with food allergies know, soy can be hiding in lots of products and recipes. 1.9 allergic reactions were reported.

Peanuts - Peanuts caused 6.1 million reactions. This allergen is an interesting one, because big strides were recently made, when the FDA approved a treatment in January 2020. This treatment is approved for patients age 4 through 17.

Tree nuts - Tree nuts, including almonds, cashews, pecans, hazelnuts, pine nuts and pistachios, caused a reported 3.9 allergic reactions.

Eggs - 2.6 million allergic reaction were reported from eggs.

Sesame: Emerging Allergen? - FARE has recognized sesame to be an emerging concern, and fatal anaphylaxis has been reported. ■

Cosmos CookWok Mini

EssEmm Corporation is renowned for its commitment to culinary innovation and proudly celebrates the legacy of its flagship brand, Cosmos. Established in 1997, the company has carved a niche in India's commercial kitchen and catering equipment sector.

The brand made its grand debut in 1997 with the Cosmos Multi Utility Grinder (CMG), quickly rising to prominence as a leader in the industry. Cosmos is renowned for its exceptional machines focused on food processing and cooking automation. Among its innovative products is the Cosmos Cook-Wok, a registered brand created by EssEmm Corporation, designed specifically for preparing traditional dishes such as curries, sweets, and biryanis.

CookWok is a brand created and trademarked by EssEmm Corporation The company has made significant strides in vegetable processing and induction cooking, continuously expanding its product range to include induction cook-woks, fryers, and electric steamers. Most Cosmos products adhere to international certifications such as CE, NSF, and ETL, ensuring compliance with global standards and delivering peace of mind to customers. In addition to its commitment to quality, Cosmos has successfully expanded its international presence, exporting high-quality equipment to key markets including the UK, USA, GCC, Australia, Singapore, and Canada.

Cosmos - CookWok Mini, launched in 2025, is a tabletop version of the traditional Cosmos CookWoks. Traditional CookWoks range from 80 litres to 1000 litres and are typically used by central kitchens, large restaurants, and food processing sectors.EssEmm identified a gap in the industry for smaller, efficient cooking solutions that maintain the same quality of the traditional process. As a result, EssEmm developed the Mini version, which has a processing capacity of 20 litres (from 1kg to 10 kg) of products. This unit is induction-heated and operates on a single-phase power supply, providing the flexibility to function without the need for a three-phase connection.

This unit is ideal for café's, small restaurants, R&D food processing labs, businesses operating in malls, and places where gas options are a challenge, such as Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs). CookWok Mini is designed to ensure that the traditional cooking process is maintained, while enhancing flavours during cooking. This guarantees consistent product quality, even in taste, and texture.

EssEmm Corporation
info@essemmindia.com

Multifunction Emulsifier

Antarctica Equipment, a leading name in temperature-controlled food display solutions, in collaboration with Valmar, has introduced the Valmix 20 to the Indian market. This state-of-the-art professional multifunction emulsifier is designed to enhance efficiency in gelato, ice cream, pastry, and gastronomy applications.

Valmix 20 will revolutionise the Ice Cream & Pastry Production. It is an advanced countertop emulsifier that blends, mixes, and finely disperses ingredients to create smooth, consistent, and high-quality textures. Whether working with gelato, ice cream, sorbet, toppings, sauces, or high-viscosity preparations, this innovative machine ensures superior stability, texture, and efficiency in every batch.

Equipped with a beater featuring vertical excursion, horizontal swing, and 360° rotation, the Valmix 20 offers unparalleled precision in the production process. With its variable mixing speeds, intuitive control panel, and a timer with automatic shut-off, it simplifies operations, allowing professionals to optimize workflow and reduce downtime.

Key Features of Valmix 20 includes

Advanced Emulsification: It finely disperses dry ingredients, flavoring pastes, fresh/frozen fruits, nuts, and stabilizers, ensuring smooth textures and consistent results.

Effortless Operation: A Simple control panel, servo-assisted vertical excursion system, and ergonomic handles make operation seamless and efficient.

Versatility: Its suitability for gelato, ice cream, pastry creams, fruit purées, and sauces makes it a one-stop solution for dessert professionals.

Efficiency & Speed: Reduces processing downtime while increasing batch consistency and minimizing ingredient waste.

Sustainability & Savings: Energy-efficient inverter-controlled motor lowers power consumption and extends the lifespan of components.

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"I Constantly Seek Ways to Enhance The Guest Experience"

Pankaj Shinde, FnB Manager, Double Tree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad

Pankaj Shinde is an experienced Food and Beverage Manager with over 13 years of expertise in the hospitality industry, currently serving at the Hilton Group. With a solid foundation working for globally recognized brands like Marriott Hotels and Sayaji Hotels, Pankaj has developed a deep understanding of F&B operations, customer service excellence, and team management.

His career has been marked by a consistent commitment to enhancing guest experiences through innovative dining concepts and impeccable service standards. Adept at managing multiple outlets, he excels in optimizing operations, curating menus, and leading large, diverse teams.

A hands-on leader, Pankaj places great emphasis on fostering a culture of teamwork and continuous learning within his department. His ability to mentor and inspire his team has resulted in high employee satisfaction and retention rates. Pankaj is known for his strategic thinking, excellent problem-solving skills, and unwavering dedication to maintaining high service and operational standards, ensuring that every guest leaves with a lasting impression.

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

What is the USP of your F&B outlets?

Exceptional Service: Each guest is treated with personalized service, ensuring their unique preferences are met.

Culinary Innovation: A focus on offering a blend of global cuisines with a local twist, creating a unique dining experience.

Ambiance and Design: Attention to detail in creating a visually appealing and comfortable dining environment.

Sustainability: Emphasizing eco-friendly practices, from sourcing local and sustainable ingredients to reducing food waste.

Consistency in Quality: Ensuring that the food, service, and overall experience are consistently excellent, leading to high guest satisfaction.

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

The most rewarding aspect of being a Food & Beverage Manager is the opportunity to shape memorable experiences for guests. I thrive on the creativity involved in menu development and the dynamic nature of the role, where no two days are the same. Additionally, leading a team and watching them grow professionally under my guidance is incredibly fulfilling. The fast-paced environment keeps me constantly engaged, and the challenge of meeting and exceeding guest expectations is what drives me.

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

Farm-to-Table: We are increasingly focusing on local, sustainable ingredients to offer fresh and healthy meals while supporting the local economy.

Plant-Based and Health-Conscious Menus: Catering to the growing demand for plant-based, vegan, and health-focused dishes.

Interactive Dining Experiences: Creating unique dining experiences where guests can interact with chefs, such as live cooking stations or chef's tables.

Technology Integration: Incorporating technology like digital menus and contactless payment systems for a seamless dining experience.

Zero-Waste Initiatives: Reducing food waste and incorporating sustainable practices into every aspect of F&B operations.

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

Employee retention in F&B starts with creating a positive work environment where team members feel valued and appreciated. Offering growth opportunities, continuous training, and acknowledging hard work through incentives are essential. Open communication and fostering a team-oriented culture help employees feel connected and motivated. Lastly, ensuring a good work-life balance and addressing concerns in a timely manner contributes to a loyal and satisfied team.

How has your journey been in hospitality so far?

My journey in hospitality has been incredibly enriching, full of learning and growth. I started my career with an enthusiasm for providing exceptional service, and over the years, I have had the privilege of working with some of the best brands in the industry. The experiences I've gained from leading teams, handling challenging situations, and constantly innovating to meet evolving guest expectations have shaped me into the leader I am today. It's been a rewarding path, and I look forward to continuing to make a meaningful impact.

What is your working philosophy?

My working philosophy is rooted in the belief that excellence is achieved through consistency, passion, and teamwork. I believe in leading by example, empowering my team to take ownership of their roles, and fostering an environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Guest satisfaction is always my top priority, and I approach every challenge with a positive mindset and a solution-oriented attitude.

Anything else you would like to say?

In the fast-evolving world of hospitality, adaptability and continuous learning are key. I am always open to new ideas and opportunities that allow me to push boundaries and create exceptional guest experiences. I am excited about the future of F&B and am eager to be at the forefront of this ever-changing industry.

How do you define yourself?

I define myself as a passionate and driven leader with a deep love for the hospitality industry. I am creative, resourceful, and constantly seeking ways to enhance the guest experience. My leadership style is inclusive and hands-on, and I take pride in motivating my team to achieve their best. Above all, I am someone who believes in the power of hard work, dedication, and a positive attitude.

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