HAMMER

Food & Beverage

Business Review

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Business magazine for food service & food retail professionals



Business
Food Processing In f&b Industry

Feature
Comfort Food Trend: The Way Forward!

Spotlight
Flavour Pairing is the New Alchemy

Technology
The Art and Science of Steaming in Commercial Kitchens

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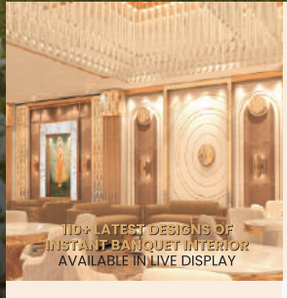
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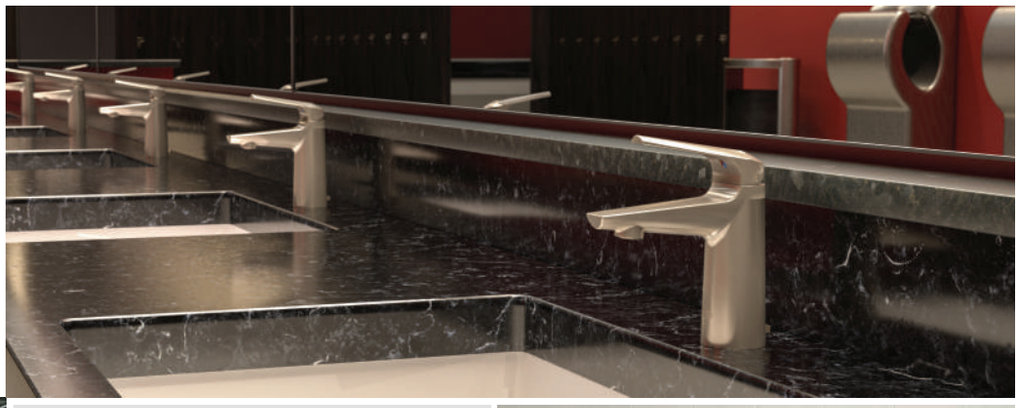


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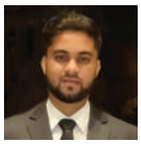
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For more information



Rum has long held a place on bar shelves around the world, and it's gaining fresh popularity as a year-round favorite. Once a staple for select palates, this spirited drink is now enjoying a broader appeal. In our cover story, we explore the growing fascination with rum, the reasons behind its resurgence, and how it's winning over a new generation of drinkers.

Comfort food is making a soulful comeback. This feature explores how chefs are reimagining nostalgic, homestyle dishes, infused with memory, warmth, and creativity to deliver deeply satisfying experiences in today's evolving, wellness-conscious dining landscape.

Flavour pairing has evolved from inherited instinct to innovation. Our spotlight story explores how chefs today blend science, memory, and technique to craft layered, harmonious taste experiences, turning the plate into a canvas of engineered precision and creativity.

Steaming is reclaiming the spotlight as a smart, health-forward cooking method. This story explores its global roots, nutritional advantages, and rising relevance in commercial kitchens that strive to serve vibrant, flavourful, and clean food with precision.

With plenty of food for thought, this issue brings you a curated collection of insights, industry movements, exciting new launches, and key developments, capturing the dynamic and ever-evolving pulse of the food and hospitality landscape.



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INDIA INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY EXPO
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Explore the Pulse of the Hospitality World – Only at IHE

3rd – 6th August 2025 | India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida





The 8th edition of the India International Hospitality Expo (IHE 2025) is set to open its doors from 3rd to 6th August 2025 at the prestigious India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida. As India's largest hospitality-focused trade show, IHE has emerged as the go-to platform for professionals, innovators, and business leaders from across the globe to connect, explore, and shape the future of the hospitality industry.

With over 1,000 leading brands, 25,000+ B2B visitors, and representation from more than 16 countries, IHE 2025 promises an immersive experience for attendees looking to engage with the latest trends, technologies, and solutions in Food & Beverage, HoReCa, Hospitality Tech, Housekeeping, Furniture, Facility Management, and more.

Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Chairman, India Exposition Mart Limited, while speaking about IHE 2025, said, "It is a strategic platform that positions India as a global hub for hospitality excellence. With its international scale and inclusive vision, the show reflects our commitment to driving innovation, partnerships, and growth within the dynamic HoReCa and hospitality sectors."

Hari Dadoo, President, India International Hospitality Expo (IHE) claims, "Each year, IHE sets new benchmarks by bringing together global brands, thought leaders, and changemakers of the hospitality world. IHE 2025 is poised to deliver unmatched value to visitors through transformative experiences, curated networking, and industry-first showcases."

Visitors can look forward to a dynamic mix of product showcases, live demonstrations, and knowledge-sharing sessions. Highlights of the expo include exciting culinary competitions such as Pastry Queen India, Master Bakers Challenge, and the Culinary League as well as impactful conferences and networking opportunities with key industry leaders. The coveted IHE Excellence Awards will also return to recognise innovation and achievement across hospitality verticals.



Dr. Rakesh Kumar

Building on the resounding success of IHE 2024, which generated business inquiries worth ₹12,000 crore and featured four co-located hospitality events, the 2025 edition is poised to elevate both scale and substance. This year's focus aligns with India's growing global stature in hospitality, merging traditional warmth with modern excellence.

For visiting professionals, IHE 2025 offers unmatched convenience, including free shuttle services, ample parking, on-site dining options, and comfortable accommodations in the vicinity, ensuring a seamless and enriching experience throughout the event.

Whether you are a hotelier, restaurateur, chef, procurement expert, architect, educator, or hospitality enthusiast, IHE 2025 is your gateway to connect with top brands, discover innovations, and explore new partnerships in a vibrant business setting.

Visitor registrations are now open. Mark your calendars and be part of this transformative journey that celebrates India's spirit of hospitality and global ambition.

For more information and registration, please visit: www.ihexpo.com

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CORNELL Dual TemPlate Inaugurated by FSCAI

Cornell India has introduced a groundbreaking advancement in commercial kitchen technology with the launch of its latest innovation – the CORNELL Dual TemPlate. The unveiling ceremony took place at a recently held India HoReCa Expo in Coimbatore, in the presence of the distinguished office bearers and members of



the Food Service Consultants Association of India (FSCAI), whose presence added immense value to this milestone moment for the Indian foodservice equipment industry.

What makes the Dual TemPlate truly special is that it is entirely designed, developed, and manufactured in India – a first for equipment of this kind. Until now, such dual-temperature units were solely imported. Cornell has proudly broken that barrier by creating an indigenous solution that not only matches but exceeds international standards. This innovation reflects our firm belief in the "Why Not India?" philosophy and our commitment to pushing the boundaries of Indian engineering and manufacturing.

The top surface is crafted from a proprietary composite material, engineered to handle extreme temperatures ranging from *-10°C to +140°C*, making it ideal for both chilled and hot service, with switchovers possible in under 20 minutes. Unlike conventional materials, this special composite offers better thermal efficiency, faster response times, and longer durability, all while maintaining a stylish, chef-friendly finish.

Designed with chefs in mind, the Dual TemPlate features a frameless, flush-fit design, easy digital controller, and multiple surface textures, combining aesthetics with function. It is ideal for live kitchens, buffets, and display counters, where quick transitions and precise temperature control are critical.

Cornell India is proud to have received the support of FSCAI in unveiling this flagship product. Their endorsement symbolizes the beginning of a new era for Indian-made, world-class hospitality equipment.

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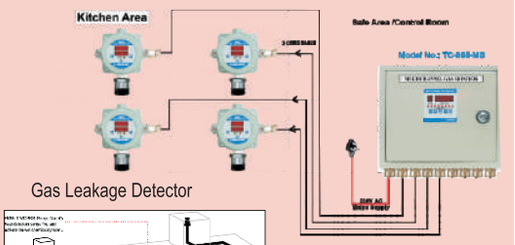
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Delhi Government Lifts Police License Mandate for F&B Sector



In a landmark decision taken in the June, set to reshape the hospitality landscape in the capital, the Delhi Government has officially removed the requirement for the Delhi Police License for restaurants, hotels, motels, guest houses, and discotheques.

This move is being hailed as a major step forward in improving the ease of doing business in Delhi, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises that have long grappled with complex licensing processes and administrative red tape.

Under the new directive, establishments in the hospitality sector will no longer be required to seek this additional clearance from the Delhi Police, a reform that is expected to significantly reduce operational bottlenecks. Industry insiders believe the change will not only encourage entrepreneurship but also attract fresh investments into the capital's F&B sector, generating more employment and revenue for the state.

We wholeheartedly thank the Central and Delhi Government for this forward-looking step. Removing the requirement for the Delhi Police Eating House License is a significant relief for restaurateurs who have long faced unnecessary delays and complexities." said Sagar Daryani, President of the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI).

The decision has been widely applauded as a progressive reform, marking a new chapter for the city's vibrant dining and hospitality ecosystem.

Samosa Singh Gets a Fresh Look!



Samosa Singh, a leading quick-service restaurant (QSR) chains and a beloved destination for authentic and delicious samosas has unveil its brand new identity, featuring a new logo, menu revamp, and commitment to serving healthier, tastier, and crispier snacks. As Samosa Singh continues to grow and evolve, its dedication to innovation, quality, and customer satisfaction has consistently remained strong. The new logo represents this change, with a more polished and contemporary design that illustrates its commitment to providing the perfect crunch and taste in each bite.

The new menu is an absolute blend of tradition and innovation–crafted to appeal to Gen Z's adventurous palate while still being nostalgically loved by millennials. It is a much-needed evolution to stay ahead in today's fast-changing food ecosystem, where being relevant means being rooted yet refreshingly different. The brand is redefining indulgence by incorporating better-for-you ingredients and mindful cooking methods, without compromising on the flavours their customers love.

To appeal to the younger generation, the brand has introduced special packaging that's vibrant, Instagrammable, quirky and made from high-quality materials.

"We are excited to unveil not just a new look and menu, but a renewed commitment to what Samosa Singh truly stands for – food that is healthier, tastier, and crispier, without losing its soul." said Nidhi Singh, Co-founder, Samosa Singh.

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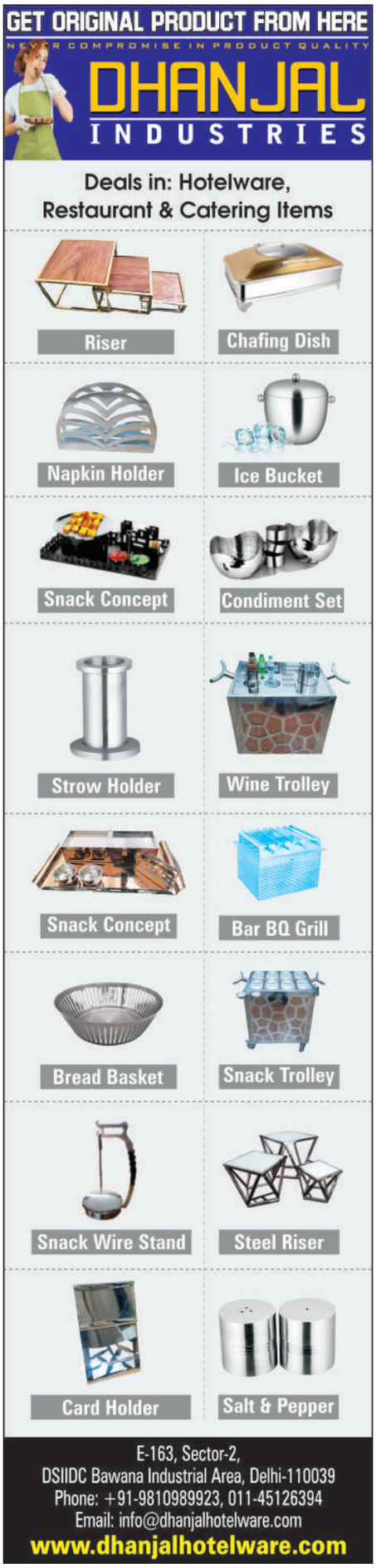
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Comenda Appoints Pallavi Verma as Country Head – India



Comenda Ali Group Srl, a leading manufacturer of innovative warewashing solutions for professional kitchens, has announced the appointment of Pallavi Verma as its new Country Head - India.

With an impressive career spanning 22 years, including 12 years in the hospitality industry, Pallavi brings a wealth of experience and insight to the role. She previously served in a sales and marketing role at Rational India, where she played a pivotal role in strengthening the brand's presence and building strategic partnerships nationwide.

"We're thrilled to welcome Pallavi to the Comenda family," said Carlo Famà, Sales Director UK – Middle East – Asia, Comenda. "Her extensive experience and impressive network in the hospitality industry make her the ideal leader to drive our India strategy forward. We're excited about the future and confident that under her leadership, we'll achieve great milestones together."

Speaking about her new role, Pallavi Verma said: "Joining Comenda at this exciting stage of its India journey is an incredible opportunity. The brand stands for innovation, reliability, and customer-centric solutions, all values I resonate with deeply. I look forward to working with our partners and clients to deliver exceptional results and take Comenda India to new heights."

In her new role, Pallavi will spearhead business development, market expansion, and customer engagement initiatives across India. Her appointment reaffirms the company's commitment to the Indian market as a key territory for innovation and growth.

Yummy Bee Brings Dubai's Viral Mini Burgers to India



Hyderabad-based Yummy Bee, a pioneering café chain for guilt-free indulgence, has unveiled its latest sensation, the Dubai Viral Mini Burgers. Inspired by the snack that's taken the Middle East by storm, these bite-sized flavor bombs have now landed in India with a wellness-first twist that only Yummy Bee could deliver."

True to the brand's VLOGS philosophy, Vegan, Low-calorie, Organic, Gluten-free, and Sugar-free, the new mini burgers are 100% maida-free, gluten-free, and preservative-free. Whether you're a fitness enthusiast, a mindful eater, or someone who just loves trying viral food without the guilt, Yummy Bee's take on this global trend brings together indulgence and discipline in every bite.

Originally made popular in Dubai for their compact size and bold flavor, mini burgers have become a viral favorite across social media. Yummy Bee reimagines the concept, keeping the format fun and craveable while eliminating the usual suspects like white flour and additives. The result? A snack that's light, clean, and surprisingly satisfying.

"When something goes viral, it usually comes with a side of guilt. We wanted to change that. These burgers are proof that you don't need maida, preservatives, or shortcuts to make food people crave," said Sandeep Jangala, CEO and Founder of Yummy Bee. "We've taken a trend and made it something our community can enjoy every day, without compromising on what they care about."

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SANJEEV KAPOOR

A Landmark Culinary Collaboration: CAST to Launch First Overseas Campus at Mahindra University



In a bold and transformative move poised to redefine global culinary education, CAST – the renowned Italian Institute of Culinary Arts and Hospitality – has joined hands with Mahindra University's School of Hospitality Management to establish its first international campus in India. The Memorandum of Understanding, recently signed by both institutions, paves the way for CAST's official entry into the Indian academic landscape with a full-scale campus launch planned for 2026.

This collaboration is not just a milestone in Indo-Italian educational ties but also a powerful statement about the direction of culinary pedagogy in a globalized world. For the first time in its prestigious history, CAST will deliver its acclaimed professional certificate programs in Mastering Italian Culinary Arts and Pastry Arts outside Italy–right here in India.

CAST brings with it a storied legacy of culinary excellence, widely recognized across Europe for its rigorous training, expert mentorship, and consistent output of top-tier chefs. Headquartered in Brescia, Italy, the institute is synonymous with authenticity and professionalism in the Italian culinary arts. Programs at CAST are taught by award-winning Italian chefs whose experience and craftsmanship have shaped the institute's global reputation.

Mahindra University, a rising force in India's higher education space, complements CAST's heritage with a contemporary, interdisciplinary approach to learning. Backed by the Mahindra Group's global footprint and known for its focus on innovation and academic rigor, the university's School of Hospitality Management offers cutting-edge infrastructure tailored to real-world training. The new CAST campus will mirror the original Brescia facilities, complete with high-spec training kitchens and advanced learning spaces designed to simulate professional culinary environments.



Cristian Cantaluppi, CEO - CAST & Dr. Yajulu Medury, Vice Chancellor, Mahindra University

What sets this initiative apart is the boldness of its vision. Establishing a world-class Italian culinary campus in India reflects both institutions' willingness to challenge conventions, embrace cross-cultural synergies, and invest in talent beyond borders. It is a venture rooted in trust, innovation, and mutual respect–a strategic step that positions India as a key node in the future of international culinary education.

The educational model at the CAST-Mahindra campus will be immersive, professional, and uncompromising in quality. Students will be trained under the direct guidance of master chefs from Italy, offering a rare opportunity to access authentic Italian techniques and philosophy without having to travel overseas. The program structure will also open doors to internships and placements in Europe, creating global pathways for aspiring culinary professionals from India and abroad.

Beyond skill-building, this partnership speaks to a deeper alignment of values. Both CAST and Mahindra University share a dedication to consistency, discipline, and excellence in education. This synergy is expected to attract not only young students but also experienced professionals seeking to refine their craft at a global level.

In an era where culinary traditions are being redefined through innovation and international collaboration, the establishment of CAST's first overseas campus in India is a decisive leap forward. It signifies more than just an academic alliance–it's a visionary step toward shaping the next generation of global chefs, grounded in heritage, fueled by passion, and trained to meet the standards of tomorrow's gastronomy.

As the countdown to the 2026 launch begins, the culinary world watches with anticipation. This partnership between CAST and Mahindra University may well set the gold standard for what the future of culinary education should look like: global, grounded, and gastronomically ambitious.

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ibis India Partners with Celebrity Chef Sanjyot Keer

ibis India has announced an exciting collaboration with renowned celebrity chef and culinary creator Chef Sanjyot Keer to elevate the guest dining experience at its signature restaurant, Spice It. This strategic partnership is part of a wider brand initiative to reinvigorate ibis India's food and beverage offering and connect with the evolving tastes of today's travellers.

Founder of Your Food Lab and former Food Producer on MasterChef India, Chef Sanjyot Keer is known for his unique storytelling approach and creative interpretations of Indian cuisine. With over two million followers on Instagram, and past collaborations with personalities such as Ed Sheeran, Ajay Devgn and Sourav Ganguly, Chef Sanjyot's flair and modern culinary sensibility align seamlessly with ibis India's fresh, inclusive spirit.

As part of the campaign, a specially curated menu will be rolled out at Spice It restaurants across all ibis hotels in India, showcasing Chef Sanjyot's signature touch. Guests can expect standout creations such as Cloud Eggs Toasted Dreams, a playful twist on breakfast; the nostalgic-yet-refined Railway Chicken Curry; and the indulgent Gulab Jamun Ice Cream, designed to surprise and delight.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with Chef Sanjyot Keer in this bold step forward for our dining experiences," said Tejus Jose, Director of Operations, ibis & ibis Styles India. "His creative approach and cultural relevance perfectly reflect the ibis brand ethos. This partnership redefines what guests can expect from



food and beverage at an economy hotel – approachable yet innovative cuisine served with heart."

Chef Sanjyot Keer added: "Partnering with ibis India is a wonderful opportunity to bring my culinary vision to life on a national scale. The menu we've created blends familiar Indian flavours with a global perspective, resulting in a collection of dishes that are comforting, imaginative, and made to spark conversation. I look forward to guests across the country enjoying this new dining experience."

This collaboration underscores ibis India's commitment to crafting memorable, multi-sensory guest experiences that go beyond the expectations.

American Pecans Join Hands with Café Delhi Heights for Superfood Festival Launch

Café Delhi Heights, a pioneer in India's café and casual dining culture, recently hosted a grand launch event to unveil the American pecan Superfood Festival, a month-long celebration of mindful indulgence, presented in collaboration with American pecans. The specially curated pecan-inspired menu is now available across all 40 Café Delhi Heights outlets in 13 cities, offering a refreshing take on health-conscious yet indulgent dining.

The launch event saw prominent figures from the food and wellness space come together, with noted nutritionist Kavita Devgan highlighting the health benefits of American pecans–rich in antioxidants, healthy fats, and fiber. She praised Café Delhi Heights for creatively integrating pecans into its menu. Guests enjoyed a curated tasting of dishes like Pecan Shorba, Beet & Pecan Salad, Pasta Pecan Delight, and signature pecan-infused drinks.



Roasted Chicken with Pecan Nut Glazed

Sumit Saran, In-Country Market Representative of the The American Pecan Council, said, "With their natural goodness and versatility, pecans are becoming an essential part of modern diets around the world. We see similar potential in India, where demand is growing as more health-conscious consumers discover this incredible but its health benefits, great taste, and ease of use in everyday meals. We're excited to partner with Café Delhi



Heights across its 40 outlets in India. Known for their high-quality offerings, they are the perfect partner to introduce indulgent yet nutritious pecan-based dishes this festive season."

American pecans make for a delicious snack or a nutritious ingredient in both sweet and savoury recipes. They are easily available through leading e-commerce platforms and major dry fruit retailers. "All consumers need to do is search for 'American pecans'," added Saran

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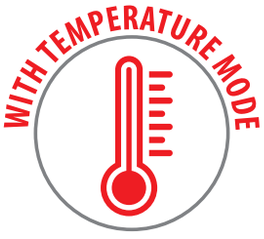
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RATIONAL Unveils Innovations for the Professional Kitchen in South India

RATIONAL India continues to lead innovation in South India's catering sector by introducing the powerful duo iCombi Pro and iVario Pro to industry specialists seeking exceptional kitchen performance. The intelligent cooking systems can be experienced firsthand at RATIONAL's South India Experience Centres in Bengaluru, Chennai, Kerala and Hyderabad.

Vishal Raman, Managing Director at RATIONAL India, explains: "The iCombi Pro combines steam and convection with intelligence. It automatically adjusts settings for perfect results, while the customizable MyDisplay simplifies operations for staff across skill levels. Plus, with interim cleaning taking less than 15 minutes, it ensures peak hygiene and uptime."



In combination with the multifunctional iVario Pro cooking system, caterers can cover almost 90 % of all cooking applications, empowering kitchens to deliver superior quality with reduced complexity. "The iVario Pro is a game-changer, replacing multiple traditional kitchen appliances. It impresses with its powerful heating system, using 40% less energy than conventional kitchen technology, and offers versatile modes from sautéing to pressure cooking", highlights Ashish Shukla, Business Development Director, iVario.

FIHM Noida Celebrates 5th Foundation Day with Grandeur and Gratitude

FIHM Noida, a premier institution in hospitality education, marked a major milestone by celebrating its 5th Foundation Day Anniversary with the theme "Symphony of Success." Held on, July 14th, at Radisson Blu Hotel, Dwarka, the event reflected the institution's remarkable journey, growing stature, and unwavering commitment to excellence in hospitality education.



The evening began with a traditional lamp-lighting ceremony and a graceful Saraswati Vandana performance that set a reverent and uplifting tone. A thought-provoking panel discussion featuring hospitality industry stalwarts added rich insights and future-forward perspectives to the evening. Distinguished guests were felicitated in a gesture of deep appreciation, and the musical performances by acclaimed vocalists from Delhi NCR added a soulful touch to the celebration.

The event brought together Advisory Board Members, fellow board members, alumni, students, parents, and industry stakeholders–reflecting the strong community that has been instrumental in the institution's growth.



The celebration was graced by leading personalities from Delhi NCR's hospitality landscape: Chef Ajay Sood, Chef Jai Kumar Bhasin, Chef Ashish Bhasin, Chef Gautam Choudhry, Chef Pankaj Jha, Sangeeta Ratra, Sanjay Anand, Parul Sachdeva, Samita Halder, Samiksha Aggarwal, Lata Kapoor, Vishal Gupta, Tushar Saraf, and Manish Sethi.

The occasion was not just a celebration of the past five years, but a reaffirmation of FIHM Noida's vision–nurturing talent, driving innovation, and shaping the future of hospitality. With renewed passion and purpose, the institution looks ahead to many more milestones on its journey of academic and professional excellence.

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Playboy Clubs Unveil Growth Plan for Indian Market

Playboy Clubs India is proud to announce its ambitious expansion plans with a ₹250 crore investment aimed at transforming India's premium nightlife landscape. With a strong commitment to delivering immersive, tech-driven, and luxurious entertainment experiences, the brand will soon make its presence felt in key cities including Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Goa.

Building on the brand's globally recognized legacy, Playboy Clubs in India have emerged as cultural epicenters where bespoke experiences, high-energy nightlife, and elite social environments converge. The expansion will see the introduction of new formats including VIP-exclusive lounges, themed Bunny Bars, and AI-integrated party spaces all tailored to meet the rising demand of a younger, more discerning urban audience.



"India's nightlife has matured significantly over the past few years. Guests are no longer content with just drinks and music–they seek curated, memorable moments," shares Rohit Malhotra, Owner of Playboy Clubs India. "This expansion is not about adding more clubs–it's about elevating the standard and making every venue a destination in itself."

As part of its expansion strategy, Playboy Clubs will deepen its focus on technology-led hospitality. This includes AI-powered bartenders that craft mood-based cocktails, VIP concierge systems, and AR-enhanced environments that turn each night into a sensory adventure.

The brand is also committed to sustainable luxury, integrating eco-friendly practices such as zero-waste cocktail programs, locally sourced ingredients, and exploring carbon-neutral design options across its new venues.

With India's nightlife rapidly moving toward exclusive, themed, and wellness-integrated spaces, Playboy Clubs aim to be more than nightclubs–they're lifestyle destinations. Each new venue will reflect a distinct narrative, from relaxed outdoor beer gardens to luxe rooftop lounges, ensuring that every guest finds an experience that resonates.

"The future of nightlife in India is about quality, personalization, and global sophistication," adds Malhotra. "We're not just expanding real estate–we're creating a nationwide network of iconic destinations that set the benchmark for high-end entertainment."

Playboy Clubs India is part of the globally iconic Playboy brand, reimagined for the modern Indian consumer. The brand is operated in India under license by Jay Jay and Deejay Group, with expansion plans aimed at making Playboy a leader in high-end social entertainment nationwide.

Punter Soju: A Sip of Korea in Every Drop

Punter Soju is the Korean drink that's winning hearts across India. Smooth, flavourful, and affordable, it brings the spirit of Korea to your glass. After the success of its Original, Peach, and Green Grape flavours, Punter Soju is now back with an exciting Mango twist, fruity, vibrant, and perfect for the Indian palate.

Behind this growing sensation is Rad Elan Distributors, the team that first introduced Punter Soju to India. Headed by Amit Goel, Rad Elan has a mission: to bring authentic Eastern culture to the Indian lifestyle and beverage scene. From K-pop fans to casual drinkers, everyone is joining the wave.





Amit Goel

In recent months, Punter Soju has made its presence felt at high-energy events like the K-Pop Korea Fest in Mumbai, with activations in cities like Delhi, Maharashtra, Kolkata, Haryana, Chandigarh, Rajasthan, Chennai, Orissa, UP, and Bangalore. Punter has also hosted unique experiences at cafés and retail outlets, making the drink not just a product–but a cultural experience.

What makes Punter Soju truly special is its affordability (priced between ₹400–₹700) and wide variant range–from the crisp Original to now, the sweet tropical Mango. Available in all major cities, it's accessible to both seasoned soju lovers and newcomers alike.

"Punter Soju is more than a drink–it's a cultural bridge. With the Mango flavour, we're blending Korea's favourite spirit with India's love for mangoes," says Amit Goel, Managing Director of Rad Elan Distributors.

So, whether you're at a party, a K-pop event, a buzzing bar, your favourite restaurant, or just unwinding at home, Punter Soju brings Korea to you, one flavour at a time.

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IICA's Exclusive Masterclass with Chef Ajay Chopra



The International Institute of Culinary Arts (IICA), New Delhi, in association with the European Union's 'More Than Food' campaign, successfully hosted a dynamic and flavour-packed culinary masterclass today, led by renowned celebrity chef and campaign ambassador for the EU's More than food campaign in India, Chef Ajay Chopra.

The workshop provided IICA students with a remarkable opportunity to delve into the rich culinary traditions and exceptional ingredients of the European Union, through immersive hands-on experiences and engaging live demonstrations.

Chef Chopra presented two delightful fusion dishes, Creamy Honey Roasted Ham on Baguette Crostini and Mixed Berry Salad with Balsamic Dressing and Danablu Cheese, sparking excitement and inspiring students to experiment in their own kitchens.

The event was a rich, multi-sensory experience that celebrated the safety, sustainability, authenticity, and the quality of European ingredients. Through fusion cuisine and storytelling, students explored what makes these ingredients truly special, including those marked with PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) labels, which guarantee that the ingredients come from specific regions in Europe and are made using traditional methods. The session sparked engaging conversations about origin, traceability, and the unique stories behind every product.



Chef Ajay Chopra, Campaign ambassador for EU's More than food campaign in India says, "Watching young chefs' experiment with European ingredients and weave them into Indian flavours was truly inspiring. These ingredients, with their distinct quality, heritage, and rigorous standards, elevate traditional recipes by adding layers of complexity and authenticity. This fusion beautifully bridges cultures and unlocks exciting new possibilities for culinary innovation that honour and celebrate traditions."

Arjun S. Datta, Managing Director & COO of IICA, shared, "Workshops like these help our student's bridge classroom knowledge with global culinary trends. Partnering with the European Union and welcoming Chef Ajay Chopra to our campus has been a true celebration of excellence in food, culture, and education."

This collaboration reinforces IICA's commitment to fostering globally conscious culinary professionals and advancing the standards of international food education in India.

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Michelin Stars Dubai 2025: A Glorious Year for Indian Chefs & Cuisine

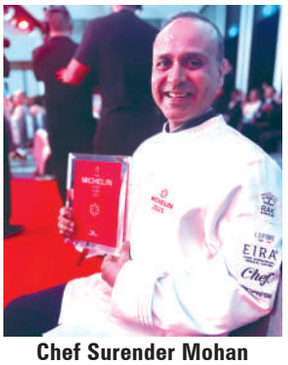


Michelin celebrated Dubai's culinary excellence like never before at Dubai's fourth MICHELIN Guide Ceremony. The event revealed 119 establishments, covering over 35 cuisine types, which made it into this year's selection, showcasing the city's booming gastronomic scene.

Notably, Indian chefs and Indian cuisine drew significant attention and recognition, underlining their growing influence on the global culinary stage. Indian chefs have been concocting dishes that have been appreciated and acknowledged the world over.


Chef Himanshu Saini

Trèsind Studio was promoted to Three MICHELIN Stars in its fourth appearance in the MICHELIN Guide Dubai, making history as the first Indian restaurant in the world to earn the Guide's highest accolade. This immersive Indian concept highlights Chef Himanshu Saini's limitless levels of imagination and creativity. The tasting menu showcases traditional Indian dishes from various regions, re-imagined and superbly crafted into vibrant, eye-catching, and flavorsome creations.


Chef Surender Mohan

At just 38, Chef Himanshu Saini has achieved a rare global culinary milestone, earning three Michelin Stars to his name. A feat that only a select few chefs worldwide can claim, this remarkable accomplishment places him firmly among the finest in the world and marks a proud moment for Indian cuisine on the international stage.

Jamavar Dubai, the acclaimed Indian restaurant conceptualized by restaurateur Samyukta Nair and Culinary Director Chef Surender Mohan, has been awarded One Michelin Star within its very first year of opening. Inspired by treasured Nair family recipes and lineage in Indian hospitality, the kitchen, under the expert direction and guidance of Culinary Director Chef Surender Mohan, celebrates the diversity of Indian cuisine, drawing inspiration from the regal kitchens of the North to the spice-laden coasts of the South.

"To be recognised by the MICHELIN Guide with a star within our first year of opening is a moment of immense pride, not just for our team, but for Indian cuisine as a whole," said Samyukta Nair. "It's a dream come true to see the flavors of India take centre stage on a platform as prestigious as Michelin, and it fuels our continued commitment to represent our heritage with authenticity and artistry."

Chef Surender Mohan added, "We are proud to take Indian cuisine to new heights and celebrate its richness and complexity through Jamavar. This recognition affirms our belief that Indian food belongs at the pinnacle of global gastronomy."

The Eastern India Culinary Association Set to Celebrate Culinary Talent

The Eastern India Culinary Association (EICA) is set to host the first edition of EICA Culinary Kaizen Chef's Talent – Season 1, a national-level culinary showcase, on 2nd and 3rd August 2025 at the 22nd International Kolkata Foodtech Expo, Biswa Bangla Mela Prangan, Kolkata.

This debut edition is a unique platform aimed at highlighting the diverse talent and evolving traditions of Indian cuisine through creativity, innovation, and cultural pride.

The event will bring together culinary professionals, aspiring student chefs, home bakers, and Indian sweet makers in four engaging competition categories, Home Bakers Talent, Professional Chefs Talent, Student Chefs Talent, and Indian Sweet Makers Talent, offering a vibrant platform to showcase skills across diverse segments of India's culinary community.

Adding prestige to the event, EICA will host legendary culinary icons including PadmaShri 2025 awardee Chef K. Damodharan, Chef Satish Arora, and Chef Manjit Singh Gill, President of the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA). A special felicitation ceremony will honour Chef Damodharan for his outstanding contributions to Indian gastronomy.

The two-day celebration promises vibrant highlights such as live mithai-making demos, interactive pop-ups by celebrity chefs, food photography corners, and audience engagement through social media and Instagram Live. The event will culminate with an exclusive felicitation banquet on 3rd August for participants, jury members, and dignitaries.

With its compelling blend of tradition and innovation, Culinary Kaizen Chef's Talent – Season 1 marks a new milestone in India's culinary journey. EICA extends a warm invitation to industry professionals, stakeholders, and food enthusiasts to be part of this landmark celebration.

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Pattabiraman A



The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore has announced the appointment of Pattabiraman A as the Director of Food & Beverage. With over two decades of experience in hotel administration and F&B operations, he has established himself as an innovative and creative leader.

Most recently, he served as the Director of Food and Beverage at Park Hyatt Chennai, where he demonstrated excellence in operational leadership and strategic management.

Throughout his career, Pattabiraman A. has championed the philosophy that exceptional dining is an art form, one that demands both passion and precision. As he takes the helm at The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore, his vision is to craft immersive culinary journeys that celebrate local heritage while embracing global innovation.

In his role, Pattabiraman will oversee all food and beverage operations, focusing on culinary innovation, service excellence, and strategic growth. He will collaborate closely with the hotel's leadership team to ensure that dining experiences reflect the luxury standards and cultural richness for which The Ritz-Carlton is renowned globally.

Chef Shiiv Parvesh



Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and Hyderabad International Convention Centre announced the appointment of Chef Shiiv Parvesh as their Director of Culinary. With over 20 years of expertise, Shiiv is set to bring his visionary approach to gastronomy to the heart of this renowned establishment.

A luminary in the culinary realm, Chef Shiiv journey began with a profound inspiration from the flavors of his mother's kitchen, leading him to pursue a postgraduate degree in kitchen management from the prestigious Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development (OCLD). His illustrious career has seen him honing his craft at renowned hospitality brands such as Oberoi, Hyatt, and the Marriott Group of Hotels, where he not only mastered culinary arts but also left an indelible mark on the global stage.

Renowned for his continual innovation and passion for learning, Chef Shiiv Parvesh's culinary finesse has earned him numerous accolades, including the prestigious Best Regional Cuisine Award 2018 by the International Federation of Chefs Association (IFCA).

Chef Somasundaram



Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa, Mahabalipuram has announced the appointment of Chef Somasundaram as the new Executive Chef, bringing over a decade of experience with Marriott International and a reputation for excellence in pre-opening and operational leadership.

Chef Somasundaram is a conscientious culinary professional who blends creativity with precision, leading with passion, technical skill, and organizational strength. His goal is to craft exceptional dining experiences that reflect the spirit of the resort while pushing culinary boundaries.

His impressive journey includes leadership roles at Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel, Shikar at Maxwell Reserve Singapore, and Courtyard by Marriott Madurai, among others. A graduate of the Madras Institute of Hotel Management, Chef Somasundaram is certified in food safety, culinary innovation, and restaurant operations, and has been recognized for his 10-year tenure with Marriott International.

The management expressed their enthusiasm in welcoming the new Executive Chef to the team, highlighting that his extensive experience and passion for culinary excellence align seamlessly with the property's vision.

Shashi Pal

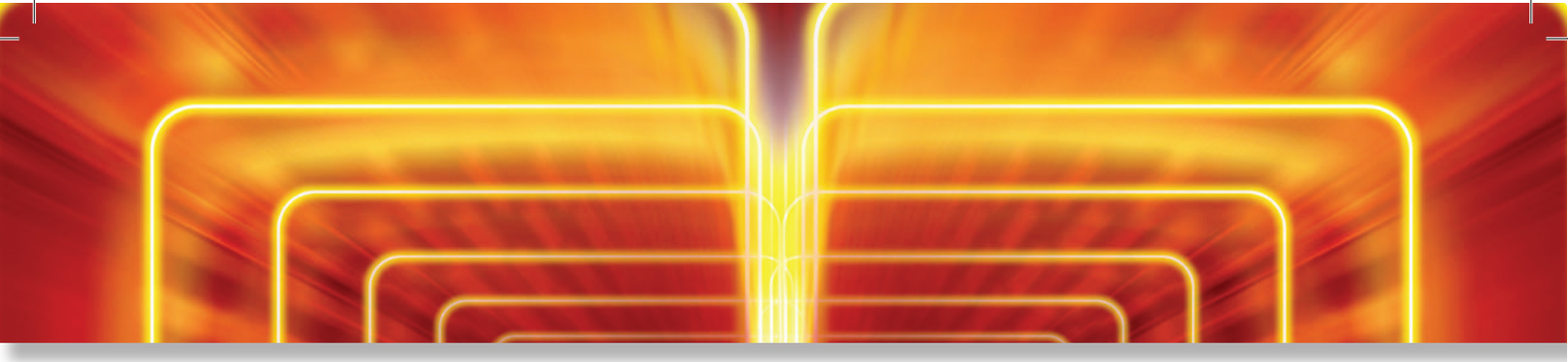


Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway has announced the appointment of Shashi Pal as the Food & Beverage Manager. With over 15 years of experience in luxury dining, high-energy nightlife, and large-scale event operations, Shashi's arrival marks an exciting new chapter in the hotel's culinary journey.

In his new role, Shashi will oversee operations across the hotel's acclaimed dining destinations.His vision is centered around elevating guest experiences, refining service standards, and launching innovative food and beverage initiatives that reflect global trends while staying rooted in local flavors.

Beyond operations, Shashi is a certified beverage trainer by Moët Hennessy and has curated high-profile events for diplomats, celebrities, and industry leaders. His accolades include the Emerging Leader of the Year 2023 and the prestigious CARE FOR GUEST Award from The Westin Hyderabad.

Shashi holds an MSc in Airline Tourism and Hospitality Management from Punjab Technical University and a Bachelor of Arts from Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.



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Surjeet Singh Rawat



Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity has announced the appointment of Surjeet Singh Rawat as its new Food & Beverage Manager. With an impressive career spanning over a decade in hospitality, Surjeet brings a wealth of experience in operational excellence, revenue growth strategies, and a steadfast commitment to enhancing guest experiences.

Surjeet's distinguished career includes key positions with renowned hospitality brands such as Hilton in Goa, Westin, and Taj Hotels. He was honored for the Best ADD Restaurant award in Hilton India Estate for his innovative culinary initiatives.

In his new role, Surjeet will oversee six distinctive F&B outlets across the twin properties, offering a blend of international and local culinary experiences. He will also ensure seamless service delivery for the 670-room inventory and manage operations for one of Delhi NCR's largest banqueting spaces. His strategic focus will centre on elevating guest engagement, optimizing revenue streams, and mentoring his team to uphold the highest standards of service excellence.

Chef Bhushan Sawant



The Ritz-Carlton, Pune has announced the elevation of Bhushan Sawant to Executive Chef, a strategic leadership role that reflects his exceptional contributions, consistent performance, and culinary mastery over the past five years at the hotel.

With over 22 years of global culinary experience, Bhushan has cultivated a rich expertise in luxury hospitality, having worked with prestigious international and domestic hospitality groups. His specialization spans all-day dining, fine dining, Garde Manger, and large-scale banquets, with a strong focus on innovation, operational excellence, and sustainability.

Bhushan will now lead a team of 87 chefs, continuing to innovate menus, drive sustainability initiatives, and deliver refined, personalized dining experiences that reflect the ethos of The Ritz-Carlton. His passion for regional Indian cuisine, guest-centric philosophy, and a deep understanding of global culinary trends will further enhance the hotel's F&B narrative.

A firm believer in mentorship and team development, Bhushan's leadership style combines operational rigour with creative exploration. His ability to blend authenticity with modern techniques has positioned him as a driving force behind the hotel's culinary journey.

Chef Gagan Sahu



The Ritz-Carlton, Pune is delighted to announce the appointment of Gagan Sahu as Executive Sous Chef, bringing over 14 years of culinary experience across India's most prestigious luxury hotels and restaurants. Known for his modern approach to Indian cuisine, deep ingredient knowledge, and commitment to sustainability, he is set to further elevate the hotel's celebrated dining experiences.

Gagan rejoins The Ritz-Carlton, Pune after a previous tenure as Chef de Cuisine during the hotel's pre-opening phase, where he led day-to-day operations for specialty restaurants and the All Day Dining venue.

In his most recent roles, Gagan held leadership positions at Hyatt Regency Pune & Residences and The St. Regis Goa, where he was instrumental in launching Susegado, a beachside restaurant concept celebrating coastal Indian cuisine with a modern twist.

In his new role, Gagan will support the hotel's expanding culinary vision across Ukiyo, Aasmana, The Tea Lounge, All Day Dining, and Banquets, working closely with culinary leadership to craft unforgettable gastronomic journeys.

Chef Pradeep Rawat



The Westin Sohna Resort and Spa has announced the appointment of Chef Pradeep Rawat as its new Executive Chef. With an impressive career spanning over 18 years across some of India's finest hospitality destinations, Chef Rawat brings a wealth of experience and an innovative culinary vision to the resort's dynamic dining landscape.

Chef Rawat joins from Hyatt Regency Dharamshala and has led kitchens at Courtyard by Marriott Mahabaleshwar and JW Marriott Mussoorie. Known for his creativity and commitment to sustainability, he brings fresh ideas and a strong guest-centric approach to the resort. His expertise spans curating diverse menus, managing large-scale banquets, and crafting unique dining experiences, reflecting his dedication to culinary excellence.

A graduate of GIHM Almora with a diploma in Hotel Management, Chef Rawat's academic foundation has been instrumental in shaping his approach to culinary excellence. In his new role, he will lead all culinary operations at the resort, infusing creativity and purpose-driven innovation across its dining venues.

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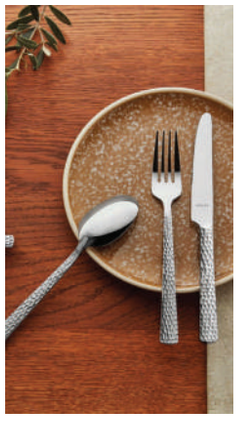
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Yum, its Rum

Rum is becoming a favoured drink in India. The Rum market is experiencing a significant growth driven by several factors like the rise of premium and flavored varieties, the ever evolving cocktail culture and expansion of the spirit into new markets. The increasing popularity of the beverage among the young population and increased disposable incomes of the populace has increased the Rum market, which is experiencing substantial growth, fueled by a large and increasingly sophisticated consumer base, The Indian rum market size which was valued at $ 2,448.41 million in 2024, according to Straits Research, is projected to grow from $ 2,578.17 million in 2025 to reach $ 3,897.08 million by 2033,exhibiting a CAGR of 5.3% during the forecast period (2025-2033). Ashok Malkani views the various factors for the popularity of this beverage, which was, for long, regarded as a pirates' drink.

Rum, which was considered a pirates' drink during the Golden Age of piracy, seems to have learnt the art of stealing from them and has, today, stolen the hearts of people of all ages. The result is that today the Indian Rum market is experiencing a significant growth and evolution and is projected to grow to $1.1 billion by 2030. According to GourmetPro, rum accounts for approximately 12% of the total spirits market in India. The steady growth is attributed to increasing disposable incomes, changing consumer preferences, and the rise of cocktail culture.

According to the Horizon Grand View Research, the Indian Rum market generated a revenue of $ 2,532.4 million in 2024 and, growing at CAGR of 4.3% from 2025 to 2030, expected to reach $ 3,237.3 million by 2030.

Today, Rum has a special "World Rum day" celebrated globally every year. This year it is on July 13. Similar to whiskey, Rum is one of the most well-liked options among drinkers. Made from sugarcane juice or molasses, Rum is a transparent or deep amber-colored, clear spirit.

Suresh Kumar, Food and Beverage Manager, ibis Styles Mysuru, says, "Once the drink of pirates, poets, and patriots–Rum is no longer just a winter companion or a colonial relic. In India today, Rum is rewriting its own story. From heritage halls to rooftop lounges, it's making a full-flavored comeback, embraced by the classic loyalist and the modern mixologist alike.



"Once tucked away in old-school clubs and mountain getaways, Rum is now the talk of trendy bars and beachside parties. Across India–from the Goan sands to the Himalayan slopes–rum is the quiet storm brewing behind the bar. Especially among adults, aged 25–45, Rum is enjoying a renaissance. This is not the same drink your uncle sipped by the fireplace–it is bolder, younger, infused with flavor, and flaunting its island roots with tropical flair."

Shravan Reddy, Food and Beverage Director, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park, declared, "Rum holds a significant place in India's beverage portfolio. Dark Rum, in particular, is popular in the northern regions and the Western Ghats due to the cooler climate, where consumers often prefer warming spirits. It is especially favored by individuals aged 35 and above. On the other hand, white Rum enjoys widespread popularity across the country and is consumed by a more diverse and younger audience. Its versatility in cocktails and coolers makes it a favorite among all age groups."



Gurpreet Singh Sodhi, Director of Food & Beverage, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, avers "Rum holds a nostalgic yet evolving charm in India. Traditionally, the consumption is dominant in winter and favored by older generations. However, it is now gaining ground among millennials (25–40) due to evolving palates and the rise of premium and spiced rums."

Shashi Pal, Food & Beverage Manager, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway avers,"Rum is quite popular in India, ranking as one of the top spirits consumed after whisky and beer. It's especially favored in certain regions like Goa, Kerala, and the Northeastern states. It's generally popular among the 25-40 age group, which includes young professionals and urban drinkers who appreciate Rum's versatility and taste."

Origins of Rum

The history of Rum is as spirited as the pirates of yon days of old. It is deeply rooted in the Caribbean. Tracing the antecedents of Rum is like unveiling an intriguing tale of adventure, rebellion and resilience.

The origins of Rum has been a topic of debate among the historians and Rum enthusiasts. Some scholars believe that Rum, which is closely associated with sugar because it is produced from sugarcane or its bioproducts like molasses, started in Asia, as sugarcane can be traced to Southeast Asia and modern-day Papua New Guinea.

Some historians argue that Rum making process has its roots in Europe, particularly in countries such as Spain, France, and England. This is mainly attributed to distillation techniques being known in Spain even during the Middle Ages. It is believed that Spanish, French, and English brought the knowledge of distillation to the Caribbean and South America, where it was applied to fermented molasses, sugarcane juice and sugarcane syrup to produce Rum.

Many historians are of the opinion that Rum originated in the Caribbean islands

during the 17th century. According to this theory Rum was first produced on islands like Barbados, Jamaica and Puerto Rico.

There is also a possibility that the Brazilian sugar boom of the 16th and 17th centuries might have led local distillers in Brazil to experiment with fermentation and distillation techniques and creating Rum in Latin America.

Overall, the origins of Rum are believed to remain a debatable issue.

Readers may wonder, what sugarcane plantations have to do with Rum. For their enlightenment it may be mentioned that Rum is a brandy obtained from the distillation of sugar cane juice, or from molasses which is the waste from the processing of the cane itself.

Shashi Pal says, "Rum originated in the Caribbean in the 17th century. It was initially produced distilling molasses, a by-product of sugarcane processing. It became a staple drink among sailors, pirates, and plantation workers, spreading globally via colonial trade routes.

Gurpreet Singh Sodhi, speaking about the origins of this spirit, avers, "Rum originated in the Caribbean in the 17th century when sugarcane plantation by-products (molasses) were fermented and distilled. Its association with sailors and trade routes spread it globally, including India."

Shravan Reddy, is of a similar view, he says, "Rum originated in the Caribbean in the 17th century, where enslaved people on sugar plantations discovered that molasses, a byproduct of sugar refining, could be fermented and distilled into alcohol."

Suresh Kumar states, "Born in the sugarcane fields of the Caribbean, Rum's journey began with molasses, the sticky by product of sugar refining. Fermented and distilled by enslaved workers, it soon became a symbol of trade, rebellion, and freedom—fueling pirate ships, revolutions, and royal navies. Today, it wears its scars like medals and dances into modern bars with swagger."

It may be mentioned that the origins of the word "Rum" are not very clear. According to one hypothesis it is derived from "rumbullion" (a beverage made from boiling sugar cane stalks) or "rumbustion" (which is slang for "uproar"). There are several other conjectures. The name "Rum" came into common use by 1654.



Shravan Reddy

Factors for popularity

Whatever be its origins, Rum is, today, a popular drink. Due to various factors like versatility, diversity, range of flavours, historical significance, et al. Today, Rum is an extremely popular alcoholic beverage in India, favored for its affordability and wide appeal, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. One may add that while traditionally popular for its lower price point and availability, the Indian Rum market is experiencing a shift with the rise of premium and locally crafted varieties, aligning with the broader trend of premiumization.

There's a growing trend towards premium and locally crafted Rums, indicating a shift in consumer preferences towards higher quality options.

Shravan Reddy feels there are different reasons for the popularity of Rum. He says, "For dark Rum, key contributing factors include a warmer climate, a naturally sweet palate, and its ability to pair well with rich and spicy food preparations. On the other hand, white Rum owes its popularity to its versatility—it blends seamlessly into cocktails, cooler beverages, and long drinks, making it approachable and refreshing."



Suresh Kumar

Gurpreet Singh Sodhi believes, "Affordability, deep-rooted cultural presence, winter appeal, and new-age innovation in packaging, flavors, and premium variants have all contributed to Rum's resurgence in both urban bars and traditional settings."

Suresh Kumar says, "There are various factors for Rum's popularity. They may be mentioned thus:

Heritage & Nostalgia: Iconic brands like Old Monk have created an emotional connect across generations.

Affordability: Rum offers quality at reasonable prices, making it accessible to a wide range of consumers.

Versatility: From neat pours to innovative cocktails, Rum fits all moods.

Flavours & Trends: The introduction of spiced and flavoured Rums has captured the curiosity of new-age drinkers."

Shashi Pal affirms" Factors contributing to rum's popularity in India are:

Affordability: Many Indian rum brands are competitively priced compared to whisky and vodka.

Taste Profile: Sweetness and smoothness appeal to Indian palates.

Versatility: Can be consumed neat, with mixers, or in cocktails.

Cultural Influence: Historical colonial ties (especially in coastal regions) have embedded rum in local drinking culture.

Promotion of Flavored Rums: New flavored variants attract younger consumers.

Mix ability: Works well in popular Indian mixers like cola and soda

Speaking about factors like spiced Rum and flavoured Rum, one may mention that spiced Rum was nonexistent until the 1980s while flavored Rum wasn't available commercially until rather recently thus their causes for popularity and increase in demand for this beverage would be rather new.

Wide varieties

Rum is a spirit with a spirit. It attracts

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consumers with variations ranging from clear and light to dark and richly flavored. Key types include white, gold, dark, spiced, and aged Rums, each offering unique characteristics and application

White Rum is a clear light-bodied spirit, primarily used in cocktails. The Gold Rum, also known as Pale Rum is amber or golden coloured. The colour is acquired due to aging in oak barrels. It has a slightly more pronounced flavor than white Rum. The Dark Rum gains its colour either due to aging in charred oak barrels or addition of caramel. It is excellent for sipping and is also used in cocktails like "Dark 'n' Stormy" or "Hurricane". Aged Rum, another variety of the spirit, is aged in oak barrels for years. This aging process imparts complex flavors and aromas, Often considered as a premium Rum, it is consumed neat (on the rocks) or in sophisticated cocktails. Spiced Rum is infused with spices like vanilla, cinnamon, cloves, or nutmeg. It is popular for usage in spicy cocktails.

There are several other varieties like Overproof Rum (with higher alcoholic content), Rum Agricole, Navy Rum, flavoured Rum, et al.

Gurpreet Singh Sodhi succinctly sums up the different types of Rum and their popularity thus:

Dark Rum – Most widely consumed, especially in North India.

W*hite Rum* – Popular among younger consumers and cocktail bars.

Spiced Rum – Emerging trend; gaining popularity for mixology.

Gold Rum – Seen as a mid-premium option.





Shashi Pal

Suresh Kumar comments, "Rum is one spirit with many moods. The Dark Rum, aged longer, has a caramel-like flavour. It is very popular, especially in north India and colder regions.

White Rum is light and clear and is ideal for cocktails. It is widely used in bars and lounges.

Spiced Rum, infused with spices like cinnamon, vanilla, and cloves, is gaining traction fast due to its mix ability.

Gold/Amber Rum, which is mellow and smooth, sits between white and dark. It is preferred by casual sippers.

Flavoured Rum, iInfused with fruits or herbs, is trending among younger drinkers and mixologists."

Shravan Reddy states, "Rum is broadly classified into four main varieties: white, gold, dark, and spiced. In India, white rum and dark rum are the most popular among consumers."

Shashi Pal states, The variety of Rum can be listed thus:

White (Light) Rum: Clear, lighter flavor, often used in cocktails (e.g., Bacardi). Moderately popular Dark Rum: Richer, heavier, aged rum with strong molasses notes. Popular for sipping or with cola.

Spiced Rum: Infused with spices like vanilla, cinnamon. Growing popularity, especially among younger drinkers.

Flavored Rum: Added fruit or other flavor essences (more on this below). Rising fast in India.

Premium/Aged Rum: Often consumed neat or on the rocks by connoisseurs; niche but growing segment.

Flavoured Rum

It is believed that there is a run for flavoured Rum. India is believed to be having a love affair with flavoured Rum. It is experiencing a surge in popularity and demand in India, particularly among younger, urban consumers who are seeking new and exciting taste experiences. The flavoured and spiced Rum market is experiencing a boom. This segment is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.4% from 2025 to 2030.

Shravan Reddy avers, "There is a big boom on flavoured Rum in India's market as it makes Rum reach out to different palates. The world of flavored rum offers a wide spectrum of tastes, with fruit-based flavors being particularly popular in India and globally. These flavours cater to a growing preference for refreshing and enhanced drinking experiences. Flavors include:

Fruit Flavors: pineapple, mango, banana, orange, and citrus fruits.

Spice Infusions: cinnamon, vanilla, and nutmeg.

Unique Flavors: coffee, chocolate, honey, caramel, and even unique combinations like black cherry. "

Shashi Pal disclosed, "There is a boom in India of Rum infused with natural or artificial flavors such as fruits, spices, herbs, or sweets. Popular flavours are Mango, coconut, lime, vanilla, cinnamon, pineapple, apple, and even. Brands like Old Monk and others have started launching flavored versions. They attract younger drinkers and cocktail enthusiasts with new taste."

Suresh Kumar is more vociferous. He exclaims "Move over vodka. Flavoured Rums are the new mood-makers. These Rums are infused with natural aromas–like:

- Coconut – Sweet and breezy
- Mango – Lush and ripe
- Coffee – Bold and intense
- Spiced Chilli – A fiery twist"

He adds, "Flavoured Rum is youthful, experimental, and exciting–perfect for India's evolving palate."

Gurpreet Singh Sodhi revealed, "Flavoured rum is infused with natural or artificial flavorings like fruits, spices, or herbs. Popular flavours in India include:

- Spiced Vanilla
- Pineapple



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- Coconut
- Coffee
- Cinnamon & Clove

These variants attract young consumers and cocktail enthusiasts looking for vibrant and experimental drinking experiences."

Favoured Mixers

It may be added that latest data by leading drinks importer-distributor, Paragon Brands, has revealed that Gen Z are driving a popularity surge of Rum, with almost four in ten (38%) young adults drinking the spirit at least once a week. The spirit is also appreciated for its versatility, as over a third of the nation (34%) drink Rum due to the fact it collaborates well with a huge variety of mixers.

A survey of 2,000 respondents, carried out by the company in Britain, discovered that when drinking the spirit, 35% of Brits pair rum with cola, but more niche pairings can come in the form of Rum and lime and soda (4%), ginger ale (4%) and even Rum and milk (2%).

When it comes to a night out, almost half of Brits (48%) will choose rum and a mixer as their go-to drink, with this tipple being especially popular with millennials, as nearly seven in ten (67%) are opting for this beverage at a party.

The general concept of the layman, which is further enhanced in their minds by the song "Rum and Coca Cola", that Cola is the only mixer for Rum seems belied.

Suresh Kumar iterates, "Rum has many partners. This is mainly because it listens, complements, and enhances its taste. Our guests love it."

The mixers are:

- Cola is popular because it is balanced and people are familiar with it.
- Ginger Ale or Beer – Offers a spicy zing that complements rum's warmth.
- Coconut Water or Pineapple Juice is popular because it is tropical and has refreshing vibe.
- Lime Soda – Popular in summer, cuts through the heaviness."

Gurpreet Singh Sodhi says, "Cola with dark rum remains iconic due to its easy availability and comforting taste. White rum pairs well with soda, coconut water, or juices, offering a tropical appeal ideal for summer and beach-style cocktails."

Shravan Reddy states, "White rum is typically preferred with lemonade due to its light, crisp flavor that complements citrus mixers. Dark rum, on the other hand, is traditionally paired with cola, as its deeper, caramel notes blend well with the sweetness of cola."

Shashi Pal lists the favoured mixers as coke and soda.

Speaking about Rum's affability or responsiveness to several mixers, one may state that the beverage also pairs well with several palatable Indian dishes. Some of the snacks that are amiable with the drink are: paneer tikka, masala peanuts, chicken wings, kebabs, pakoras, samosas, aloo chaat, and bhel puri. Each snack offers a balance of bold flavours and textures that enhance the warmth of Rum.

As far as meals are concerned, Indian dishes with rich, aromatic spices pair well with rum. Dishes like Mughlai lamb curry, Goan pork vindaloo. Remember Rum with a touch of sweetness can help in balancing the spiciness.

Truth or Myth

It is believed that there is no Hangover when you drink rum. Is that true ?

Shravan Reddy states, "The belief that rum does not cause hangovers is a misconception. While lighter-colored Rums contain fewer congeners, which are compounds that can contribute to hangover severity, all alcoholic beverages, including Rum, can cause hangovers due to their ethanol content and other factors like dehydration and sleep disruption."

Suresh Kumar declares, "Some believe Rum causes less hangover, especially dark or aged Rum. This is subjective and depends on:

- Quality and purity of Rum
- Moderation in drinking
- Mixing with non-sugary, hydrating liquids. Clear and aged rums with fewer congeners (chemical by products) may result in milder after-Effect).

Gurpreet Singh Sodhi fervently states, "This is a myth. While some claim dark rum is gentler, hangovers depend on factors like congeners (byproducts of fermentation), quantity consumed, and individual metabolism. Moderate consumption and hydration are key.

Shashi Pal too believes that it is a myth. He explains, "Hangovers are caused by alcohol itself and impurities called congeners, which vary by drink type. Some believe rum causes fewer hangovers because it's often distilled more purely, but factors like amount consumed, hydration, and individual metabolism matter more. Darker rums with more congeners may cause worse hangovers than lighter ones."

Conclusion

Rum, which is gaining popularity, has a wide range of flavours that appeal to the consumers. The spiced and flavoured variety of this alco-bev also makes it ideal for making intricate and exciting range of cocktails.

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Recipes for Rum Cocktails



Dark & Stormy

Ingredients:

Dark Rum	60 ml
Ginger Beer	100 ml
Lime wedge for garnish	

Method:

Pour rum over ice in a tall glass, top with ginger beer, stir gently, garnish with lime.

Below are Signature Cocktails crafted for IBIS STYLES Mysore:

Black-Headed Ibis

Ingredients –

Dark Rum	60 ml
Orange Juice	60 ml
Spice Masala	15 ml
Glass: Martini Glass	
Garnish: Sun-Dried Orange Slice	

Method:

1. In a shaker, add 60 ml dark rum, 30 ml orange juice, and 15 ml spice masala
2. Add ice and shake vigorously for 10–15 seconds.
3. Double strain into a chilled martini glass rimmed with spices
4. Garnish with a sun-dried orange slice.

Spoon Bill

Ingredients

White Rum	60 ml
Nannari Syrup	20 ml
Fresh Lime Juice	15 ml
Soda Water – to top	
Glass: Collins glass	
Garnish: Slit Green Chilli and Lime Wheel	

Method:

Fill a tall glass with fresh ice.

Add 60 ml white rum, 20 ml nannari syrup, and 15 ml fresh lime juice.

Stir gently to mix.

Top up with chilled soda water.

Garnish with a slit green chilli and a fresh lime wheel.

(Suresh Kumar, Food and Beverage Manager, ibis Styles Mysuru)

Mojito

Ingredients

White Rum	60 ML
Fresh Lime Juice	5 ML
Soda	25 ML
Sugar Syrup (1:1)	15 ML
Mint	Small handful
Crushed ice	
Highball glass	

Method:

1. In a highball glass, gently muddle the mint leaves with the lime juice and sugar syrup to release
the mint oils.
2. Fill the glass with crushed ice.
3. Pour in the white rum and top up with soda water.
4. Stir gently to combine.

Daiquiri (shaken)

Ingredients

White Rum	50 ml
Fresh lime juice	25 ml
Caster sugar	2 tsp
Cubed & crushed ice	
Coupette glass	

Method

1. Add all ingredients into a cocktail shaker with ice.
2. Shake well until chilled.
3. Strain into a chilled coupe or martini glass.

Rum Punch

150 ml Spiced rum
75 ml white rum
37.5 ml grenadine
150 ml orange juice

(Shravan Reddy, F& Beverage Director, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park)

Pina Colada



Ingredients

White rum	60ml
Pineapple juice	90ml
Coconut cream	30ml
Ice cubes	

Method

Blend all ingredients until smooth and creamy. Garnish with a pineapple wedge.

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

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Food Processing In f&b Industry

The Indian food processing industry plays a significant role in the country's F&B industry by providing the restaurants with a consistent supply of ingredients and aids it in reducing the preparation time as well as ensuring consistency in the palate. The food processing industry's support helps the restaurants to focus on service and thus enhance the customer experience while, at the same time lowering costs and expanding menu options. Ashok Malkani while presenting an all-embracing view of the industry provides details of how it offers an enterprising entrepreneur opportunity to venture into this prospering industry.

India's Food and Beverage (F&B) sector, driven by urbanisation, rising disposable incomes and changing consumer preferences, due to increased international travel, is on a remarkable growth trajectory and, according to UJA, projected to grow at compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.7% from 2024 to 2030, According to GourPro India's food and beverage market is on fire, growing faster than ever. Valued at $332 billion in 2023 to more than double, reaching over S$691 billion by 2030.

There has been an enormous growth in the F&B outlets in the country. It may be pointed out that this growth has been made possible due to the assistance of the food processing industry. One may ask how the food processing industry is responsible for the growth of F&B industry? There are several factors for this. Some of them are:

Steady Supply: A steady flow of ingredients, regardless of seasonal variations or weather conditions. Restaurants can rely on pre-processed vegetables, fruits, grains, and other items, minimizing disruptions to their operations.

Reduced Preparation Time and Labor Costs: Due to Pre-cut vegetables, pre-cooked sauces, and ready-to-bake items, the meal preparation time and labour costs are reduced.

Food safety: As food processing facilities adhere to strict hygiene and quality control standards risk of foodborne disease is reduced.

Extended shelf life helps reduce wastage: As compared to fresh ingredients processed foods have longer shelf life reducing wastage. Thus one can purchase ingredients in bulk resulting in cost savings.

All these advantages would increase F&B industry's support to the food processing segment which, in turn, is likely to attract intrepid entrepreneurs (including restaurateurs) to invest in the food processing industry.

Progress of Processing industry

India, with its rich agricultural resource base, strategic geographical location and an extensive network of food processing and research facilities has grown rapidly as a processed food supplying country. The Food supplying industry, in the country is expected to grow rapidly.

India's food processing sector is one of the largest in the world and, according to Indian Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF), expected to reach $ 535 billion by 2025-26.

The rise in the preference for processed food is driven by two worldwide consumer megatrends:

- The increasing demand for convenience
- A growing emphasis on health and wellness.

The rise in processed food consumption in India is mainly due to significant increase in the purchase and consumption of packaged processed foods (PPF). This can be attributed to the changing lifestyles, aggressive marketing, and the perceived convenience of processed foods.

Govt. Incentives

For a person desirous of entering the food processing industry it may be stated that the industry, which is experiencing robust growth due to increasing consumer demand, favourable government policies, and expanding export markets, presents significant opportunities. It may be mentioned that the government provides extensive support to the food processing industry through various schemes and initiatives which aim to boost investment, encourage innovation, enhance infrastructure, and promote exports.

Some of the key support schemes are:

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY). This creates modern infrastructure and efficient supply chains for the food processing industry, from farm to retail. PMKSY encompasses various sub-schemes addressing different aspects of the food processing value chain, including infrastructure development, food safety and quality assurance, and skill development.

Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLISFPI): This scheme incentivizes the production of specific food products like Ready-to-Cook/Ready-to-Eat (RTC/RTE) foods, processed fruits and vegetables, marine products, and mozzarella cheese. It also supports branding and marketing of Indian food products in international markets.

Scheme for Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME): It provides financial, technical, and business support to micro food processing enterprises, including credit-linked capital subsidies, seed capital for Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and support for common infrastructure.

Financial Assistance: including capital subsidies and grants, for setting up and upgrading food processing units, especially for micro-enterprises and FPOs is provided by the government.

Infrastructure Development schemes like PMKS: are provided by the government. They help in the development of Mega Food Parks and Cold Chain projects, enhancing



the infrastructure for the food processing sector.

Capacity Building: This scheme supports capacity building and training programs for entrepreneurs and workers in the food processing industry.

One may add that the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is investing in strengthening food testing infrastructure by upgrading existing labs and establishing new ones.

The government also actively supports the export of processed food products through various initiatives, including providing financial assistance for branding and marketing abroad.

With this support from the government, the processed food sector is projected to reach $ 785.4 billion by 2033, growing at a CAGR of 8.38%. The factors ascribed for this are believed to be rising urbanization, a preference for convenience foods, and technological advancements.

India's food processing sector's market size is estimated to more than double to Rs. 60,40,300 crore ($ 700 billion) in 2030 from Rs. 26,49,103 crore ($ 307 billion) in 2023, driven by growing demand for processed products, according to industry body PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI).

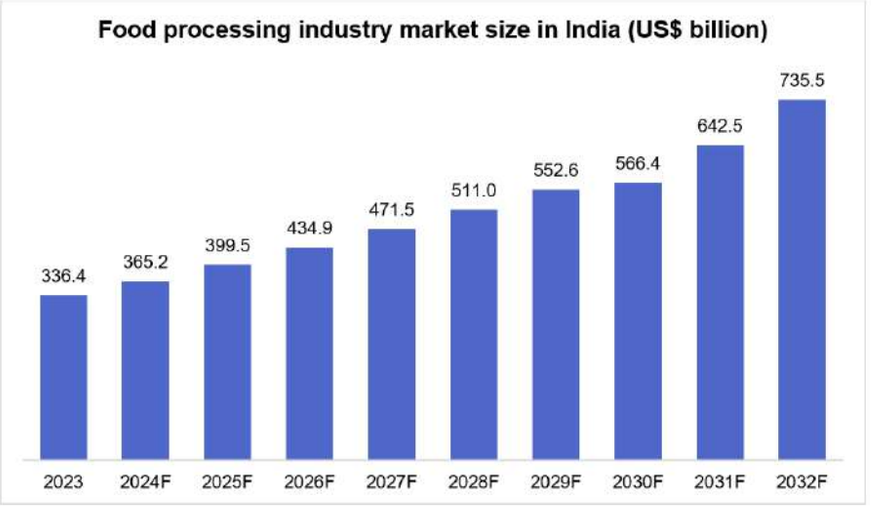
According to International Market Analysis Research and Consulting Group (IMARC), the Indian food processing industry has witnessed rapid growth in the recent past. It reached a value of $336.4 billion in 2023 and is expected to reach $ 735.5 billion, at a CAGR of 8.8% during 2023-2032,

Recent Investments

In the recent past, there have been several developments/investments to boost the food processing sector in India. Some of these are:

• Ministry of Food Processing Industries has, as on 30th June 2024, approved 41 Mega Food Parks, 399 Cold Chain projects, 76 Agro-processing Clusters, 588 Food Processing Units, 61 Creation of Backward & Forward Linkages Projects & 52 Operation Green projects under corresponding component schemes of PMKSY.

• Under the PFME, as on 30th June 2024, a total of 92,549 micro food processing enterprises have been approved for assistance.



• The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) was allocated Rs. 4,364 crore ($ 505.70 million) in the Union Budget 2025-26.

• Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY) budget was allocated Rs. 729 crore ($ 84.50 million). The food processing industry's Production-Linked Incentive Scheme was allocated Rs. 1,444 crore ($ 167.30 billion) to promote innovation in the sector.

• In the Interim Budget 2024-25, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries was allocated a total Budget of Rs. 3,290 crores (~US$ 396 million), an increase of ~13% over revised estimates for fiscal year 2024.

• An outlay of Rs. 879.5 crore ($ 105.8 million) was allocated towards the centrally sponsored schemes including the Prime Minister Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PMFME)

• The food processing industries have attracted US$ 12.96 billion between April 2000- September 2024, constituting around 1.83% of the total FDI equity inflow in all sectors, placing it in top 15 sectors.

• Government allows 100% FDI in the food processing sector under the automatic route, facilitating a straightforward and efficient investment process.

• The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) was allocated Rs. 4,364 crore (US$ 505.70 million) in the Union Budget 2025-26.

• The Ministry of Food Processing Industries hosted 'World Food India' event, in November 2023, in New Delhi. The event provided a distinctive platform to all the stakeholders in the food value chain including food processors, equipment manufacturers, producers, cold chain players, technology providers, logistics players, researchers, start-ups and innovators, food retailers etc. to engage and demonstrate their capabilities.

New developments that have taken place in different segments of the industry are:

• In a major boost to the dairy industry, India's iconic dairy brand, Amul has announced setting up the world's largest curd (*dahi*) manufacturing facility in Kolkata

• As on 30th June 2024, Ministry of Food Processing Industries has approved 41 Mega Food Parks, 399 Cold Chain projects, 76 Agro-processing Clusters, 588 Food Processing Units, 61 Creation of Backward & Forward Linkages Projects & 52 Operation Green projects under corresponding component schemes of PMKSY.

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The United Nation's General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets. The Union Budget 2023-24 included a special focus on millet, highlighting the aspirations to make India

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There are different techniques employed in the industry.

No	Techniques	Details
1	Preservation	In this process processes like canning, freezing and fermentation are used to aid in stopping the development of bacteria and other germs thus increasing the shelf life.
2	Preparation	In this the food is prepared for consumption by cooking, baking or grilling, etc. This assists in enhancing the flavour, texture, and presentation of food products.
3	Packaging	This helps in making the food look appealing enticing to the consumer and presenting.
4	Enrichment	For this nutrients like vitamins and minerals are added to food products to improve their nutritional value.
5	Fortification	In this process nutrients like folic acid in flour and iron in breakfast cereals is added to satisfy dietary demands.
6	Extraction	In this an ingredient is separated from the food product. Like oil extraction from seeds or protein extraction from milk
7	Concentration	This technique removes water or other ingredients from the food product. Examples are conc. Fruit juice or tomato puree.
8	Processing aids	Chemicals or other materials are used to quicken the food processing and enhancing the preservation time. Products like acids and enzymes, etc. enhance the fermentation of the food.

a Global Hub for Millets (Shree Anna).

During G 20 Summit, organised in March 202India organised a two-day Global Millets Conference where participants from over102 countries took part. Important issues related to millets were discussed. The Indian Institute of Millets Research in Hyderabad was declared as a Centre of Excellence for sharing best practices, research, and technology at national and international level.

Various Segments

For a new entrepreneur the food processing industry offers various opportunities. The country's vast agricultural resources, coupled with a growing middle class and changing consumption patterns, create a fertile ground for entrepreneurs. Food processing adds value to raw agricultural produce, reduces wastage, and extends shelf life, making it a critical sector for the Indian economy. From traditional snacks to modern packaged foods, the opportunities are vast and diverse.

There are several segment of food processing industry which offers immense scope for a new entrepreneur to venture into. Some of them, for the information of the novices, are:

Fruit and Vegetable Processing: India, one of the largest fruit and vegetable producers in the world, offers a great opportunity for entrepreneurs. With a variety of fruits and vegetables the entrepreneur could create enticing products like juices, purees, jams, pickles, sauces, and canned goods, Entrepreneurs can also explore niche areas like organic food processing, specialty mushroom cultivation, and urban farming consultancy. The key products like Jams, sauces, ketchups, dry fruits and vegetable pickles have immense domestic as well international market.

Dairy Processing: Being one of the largest producers of milk in the world, The Indian dairy processing industry offers numerous opportunities for entrepreneurs. Increasing disposable incomes and health consciousness makes this a promising sector for investors. An entrepreneur can concentrate on products like cheese, yogurt with unique flavors, probiotic drinks, and specialized ice creams. Investment required for this, on a small scale. is estimated to be 10-15 lakhs.

Flour Milling: This provides several opportunities for entrepreneurs due to the rising demand for various types flour. One can also start a multigrain flour mill business.

Packaged food: With increasing demand for ready-to-eat food products there has been an increase in demand for packaged food. Key areas include traditional Indian snacks (namkeen), healthy snacks, and global flavors.

Organic Food Processing: With rising awareness for healthy and sustainable food there is a rapid growth in organic food processing sector, providing an aspiring entrepreneur an opportunity to enter into processing industry connected with production of organic grains, fruits, vegetables, etc. There is a growing potential for this not only in the domestic market but also in international markets. Investment required for this, depending on the scale of your business. , is between ₹5-15 lakhs.

Bakery food processing: There is a growing demand a wide variety of bakery items like gluten-free, low-sugar, and high-fiber options, catering to diverse consumer needs. The market for these products presents significant opportunities for entrepreneurs

These are just a few of the processed foods. Some other popular food processing segments are Meat and Poultry Processing, Spice Processing, Frozen Foods, etc.

One also has an opportunity to enter the Ready-to-eat and frozen food segments.

Techniques

It may be mentioned for the people unaware of the food processing industry that it has 5 segments, namely: cereals and pulses, fruits and vegetables, meat and poultry and dairy products.

An entrepreneur interested in venturing into the field would, initially have to decide on which product is the one that interests him/her most and identify the target market and demand for the processing segment that interests him/her.

As in any other industry, in food processing industry too, you need to decide on the business structure – whether it will be a one person company (OPC),partnership firm, Limited Liability

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Partnering (LLP) or a Private Limited Company.

You need a comprehensive business plan, which would include legal registrations, securing funding, choosing a suitable location, and acquiring necessary equipment, funds, and licenses.

Considerations

To make a success in any business it is necessary to concentrate on various aspects like:

Location: An ideal location for your unit would be close to where you can get the materials. In case of food processing, it would minimise spoilage as well as transportation costs. Proximity to sources of high-quality raw materials is one of the most crucial factors in site selection. It should also be accessible and close to high quality raw materials, electricity sources, and essential emergency services, besides workforce.

Equipment needed: This would depend on which segment of the industry you would like to venture into. Some of the equipment, needed for the different segments are:

Food steaming/blanching machine, Coconut skin peeling machine, Wet soybean grinding machine, Coconut jelly disintegrating machine, Drum drying machine, Grinders, Slicers, 3ft open chiller, Bowl choppers, Forming machines, Injectors, Mixer Blender, Air Cooler, Bottling equipment, Crushers, Cutting, slicing, and dicing equipment, Fryer Machine, Mixers, Can sterilizing machine, Solar drying machine. These are only a few of the machines out of the several.

Funds: Every business needs proper capital. Besides your own funds, you could go in for crowdfunding or get business loans from banks, financial institutions or government schemes or approach venture capitalists or angel investors.

Selecting Supplier: Choosing an apt supplier for long term is a necessity. It should be a supplier who would supply on a long term basis according to the budget, else it may affect the profit margins.

Employee Availability: One has to see that trained employees are available near your organisation's locale. You would need production workers, supervisors, quality control personnel, and potentially specialists in areas like food safety, research and development, and logistics.

Sorting out legal compliances: It is necessary to go through legal compliances. You have to register the company following rules with the right authorities before you start doing business. You have to also to get it registered for different taxes like PAN, Sales Tax, Excise & Customs Registration, and Service Tax. It's also important to register for Intellectual Property Rights to protect things like patents and copyrights.

Following rules: Laws like the Food Safety and Standards Act of 2006 and the Standard and Weight Measure Act is really important for starting a food processing business. To legally operate in India, you also need to get licenses like a trade license, food license, and industrial license.

Marketing: This is essential for starting a business in any industry. And food processing industry is no different! Advertising helps the company reach a wider audience, build brand recognition, and drive sales in a competitive market. Digital marketing has become important today. Consistent brand messaging: across online and offline platforms reinforces brand identity and makes the brand memorable. Advertising helps drive sales and revenue.

Essential Licences

To start any business you need to get various licences. For the food pressing industry too you need various licences for starting the venture Some of these licences are:

FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) license or registration. The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 mandates that all food businesses in India, including processing units, must be registered with or licensed by FSSAI. These are of 3 types. Basic Registration is for small businesses with an annual turnover below ₹12 lakh. State Licence is for businesses with an annual turnover between ₹12 lakh and ₹20 crore. Central License is for businesses with an annual turnover exceeding ₹20 crore. FSSAI registration ensures that food businesses adhere to food safety and hygiene standards.

Trade Licence: This depends on the specific location and nature of business. It is issued by local municipality.

NOC from fire dept.: You require a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the fire department.

Pollution Clearance: Depending on the scale of operations and the nature of the processing, a pollution control board may require clearance.

Shops and Establishment Registration: This is mandatory for businesses to legally operate within a specific jurisdiction, ensuring compliance with labor laws and regulations. Being a State-level act, the procedures and requirements ay vary according to the location of your establishment.

BIS certification: The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) implements product standards in the country. This certification signifies that your food products comply with the relevant Indian

ISO 22000: Food Safety Management, which outlines the requirements for a comprehensive food safety management system. It pertains to every organisation in the food chain. It promotes their ability to control food safety risks and ensures that food is safe for people to eat.

HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point): Knowing this prevents food hazards. HACCP identifies the physical, chemical, and biological risks/ hazards in the production process that could make the end product unsafe and also suggests ways to lower/eliminate these risks to a safe level.

GHP (Good Hygiene Practices) These protocols will help an entrepreneur in maintaining cleanliness, safety, and hygiene in all areas of food production

Conclusion

The food processing industry offers an enterprising entrepreneur numerous opportunities not only with high demand products like fruits and vegetable but also dairy products, snacks, et al. An inventive and imaginative entrepreneur can attain name and fame not only in the country but there is also potential in the export market. However, the enterprising impresario has to follow certain protocols, as in all other businesses, to be successful and make the business gain name and fame. ■

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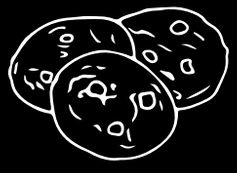


Essential modular deck ovens for

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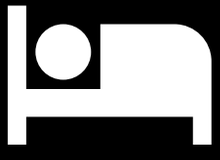
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Comfort Food Trend
The Way Forward!

By Sharmila Chand



The Indian food and beverage industry has always been a culinary melting pot, blending heritage traditions with the growing dynamism of evolving guest preferences. Hence there have been several new trends emerging every year.

From the rise of Comfort Food to Regional Cuisines and increased emphasis on wellness and sustainability, the industry has embraced each trend that promise to redefine the dining experience.

Comfort food is being celebrated like never before. Chefs are loving to play around with familiar home style food which they often recall from their grandma's kitchen.

Post pandemic, wellness has been a top priority with diners, hence chefs are balancing indulgence with nutrition, offering wholesome homestyle food options that embrace both health and taste.

Hotels across the country are curating menus that honor local flavors ensuring each dish tells a story and promote overall well-being. Here we have fnb professionals sharing their viewpoint on the trend.



"Comfort food is not about following a fad, it's about nourishment, both for the body and the spirit. These are the dishes that evoke memories, offer a sense of familiarity, and provide emotional warmth"

Matteo Fracalossi, Executive Chef, Andaz Delhi, By Hyatt

Comfort Food - Mindful Eating

Chef Amit Dash, Multi Property Executive Chef Westin Gurgaon and Sohna Resort & Spa

"Comfort food is indeed one of the most relevant food trends today - and for good reason. In a fast-paced world, guests are increasingly seeking dishes that offer a sense of familiarity, warmth, and emotional connection. Diners today want emotional satisfaction, but they also value mindful eating and wellness. This has opened up creative possibilities to reinterpret traditional favorites with a modern, health-conscious twist - whether it's incorporating global flavors, using cleaner ingredients, or experimenting with form and presentation. So yes, comfort food is more than just a trend - it's a reflection of the human need for connection through food. And when done thoughtfully, it's timeless."

Rana Shil, Food & Beverage Manager, Novotel Goa Panjim

"Comfort food is not just a trend; it

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Restaurants, hotel kitchenware/equipment, bakery equipment/tools, catering, and kitchen utensils are all essential components of the hospitality and food service industry







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"Comfort food resonates because it's deeply personal; it brings back memories, evokes nostalgia, and creates a feeling of home, no matter where you are. At the same time, the definition of comfort food is evolving. It's no longer just about indulgence—it's about balance"

Chef Amit Dash, Multi Property Executive Chef Westin Gurgaon and Sohna Resort & Spa

is something people naturally crave, especially when life feels hectic. There is something powerful about dishes that remind us of home, family, and simpler times. Comfort food connects us emotionally, it is familiar, reassuring, and nourishing in a way that goes beyond just taste.

At Novotel Goa Panjim, we focus on bringing the genuine tastes of Goan home cooking to the table, especially inspired by the Saraswat Brahmin culinary traditions. These dishes are comfort food in the truest sense, the kind cooked in family kitchens, passed down through generations. Signature dishes like King Fish Rawa Fry, Fish Ambotik, and Crab Xec Xec highlight simple, fresh ingredients and bold flavors that resonate deeply with locals and visitors alike. Each dish carries the warmth and familiarity of a home-cooked meal, making every dining experience a comforting journey into Goan heritage."

Matteo Fracalossi, Executive Chef, Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt

"Comfort food has never been just a passing trend, it has always held a place in every culture around the world. When you explore the countryside or regions rich in cultural heritage, you'll always find authentic, local cuisine that speaks directly to the soul."

Abhishek Mathur, Co-Founder, Covah - The Cavern

"Comfort food has seen a strong resurgence post-pandemic, as diners increasingly seek warmth, familiarity, and emotional resonance in their dining experiences. In today's fast-paced world, food is no longer just about taste - it's about evoking memories, nurturing connection, and grounding oneself in the familiar.

At Covah - The Cavern, we believe comfort food doesn't have to be predictable. It can be inventive yet rooted, drawing from cultural memory while being elevated with thoughtful techniques, ingredients, and storytelling."

Vikrant Batra, Director and Co-Founder, Batra Bros Food & Beverage Pvt Ltd.

"The trend has only intensified post-pandemic, where diners seek experiences that feel grounding and emotionally satisfying. It's not just about indulgence anymore–it's about connection, storytelling, and memories on a plate."

Integration of Comfort Food in the Mainstream Menu

Chef Amit Dash, Multi Property Executive Chef Westin Gurgaon and Sohna Resort & Spa

"At The Westin Gurgaon and The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa, we have thoughtfully integrated comfort food into our menu, celebrating the diverse flavors of India and beyond. A few standout examples include:





"Comfort food connects us emotionally, it is familiar, reassuring, and nourishing in a way that goes beyond just taste"

Rana Shil, Food & Beverage Manager, Novotel Goa Panjim

Guacamole Papdi Chaat: A playful fusion of Indian street food and global flavors. Quinoa Khichdi with Masala Khakhra: A wholesome twist on the traditional Indian khichdi - it's a nourishing, feel-good dish with layers of texture.

Matteo Fracalossi, Executive Chef, Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt

"In a hotel environment, it's important to offer comfort food that caters to guests from around the world. These familiar dishes bring a sense of warmth and reassurance, which is why they are always a part of our restaurant menus. From regional Indian cuisine, we include staples like butter chicken, dal, dosa, paratha, and a variety of curries. In the realm of Italian cuisine, classics such as spaghetti pomodoro, pizza, risotto, and fish stew are always on the menu. As far as Asian cuisine is concerned, we make sure guests find comfort options like wok-fried rice, kung pao chicken, nasi goreng, noodle soup, dim sum, and Thai curries. All of these dishes are thoughtfully integrated into our menus to ensure every guest finds something comforting and familiar during their visit."

Abhishek Mathur, Co-Founder, Covah - The Cavern

"At Covah, our approach to comfort



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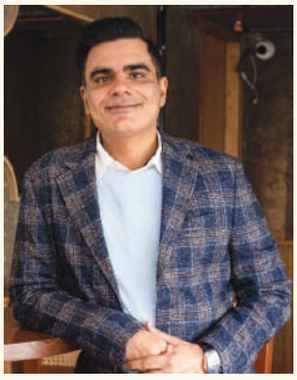






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"Comfort food offers a sense of warmth and reassurance—be it a childhood favourite, a home-cooked classic, or a dish from one's cultural roots"

Vikrant Batra, Director and Co-Founder, Batra Bros Food & Beverage Pvt Ltd.

food lies in reimagining familiar flavours through the lens of Mediterranean and Asian fusion, inspired by the historic Silk Road and the warmth of shared meals.

A few standout dishes that embody this ethos are Baked Brie Bites; Prawn Butter Garlic and Fried Rice Donburi with Chilli Oil - a deeply satisfying bowl of wok-tossed rice, crowned with a fried egg and our house-made chilli oil. This dish hits all the comfort notes - warm, umami-rich, and soul-satisfying.

Vikrant Batra, Director and Co-Founder, Batra Bros Food & Beverage Pvt Ltd.

"At our restaurants, comfort food plays a vital role in shaping the core of our menu. While we stay rooted in innovation, we always respect the familiarity and emotional value of classic favourites.



For example, Juicy Lucy Burger - a signature Café Delhi Heights creation, is indulgent, satisfying, and one of our all-time bestsellers. Likewise Rajma-Chawal Bowl is simple, homestyle preparation- a nostalgic nod to every Indian's Sunday lunch."

Guidelines on how Best to Incorporate Comfort Food in the Menu

Chef Amit Dash, Multi Property Executive Chef Westin Gurgaon and Sohna Resort & Spa

Blend Nostalgia with Modern Wellness - Comfort food doesn't have to be heavy to be satisfying. We reimagine traditional dishes with cleaner ingredients and contemporary techniques.

Draw Inspiration from Travel and Local Cultures - Let comfort food on the menu be rooted in stories of cultures, childhood flavors, and global influences.

Balance Familiarity with Surprise - The magic of comfort food lies in familiarity, but it must also excite. It's about delivering the warmth of the known with a hint of the unexpected.

Make It a Collaborative Process - Comfort food should not just comfort the guest - it should also reflect the joy and camaraderie of the team that brings it to life.

Highlights of Comfort Food Trend

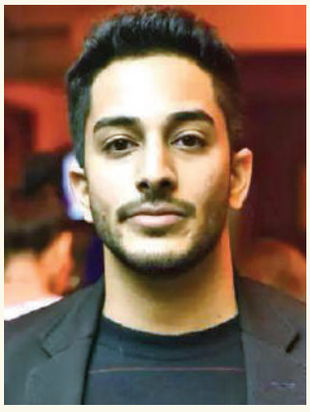
Comfort food typically entails dishes that evoke a sense of nostalgia, familiarity, and emotional fulfillment. They are associated with regular home-style flavors, traditional heritage recipes, and fresh seasonal ingredients that provide a strong sense of warmth, attachment and contentment.

Typical characteristics of comfort food include:

Familiar Ingredients: Comfort foods often use ingredients that are commonly found in home kitchens, like potatoes and green seasonal vegetables.

Hearty Flavors: Mostly comfort dishes have rich texture of ghee and spices, rendering a sense of wholesome food.

Nostalgic: Comfort food tend to have a strong emotional connection, reminding people of family meals and cherished memories associated with it and a sense of comfort as well as a sense of belonging and being cared for.



"Whether it's a dish that reminds someone of home or one that offers a sense of culinary nostalgia with a contemporary spin, comfort food is redefining luxury - less about opulence, more about emotion"

Abhishek Mathur, Co-Founder, Covah - The Cavern

Matteo Fracalossi, Executive Chef, Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt

To thoughtfully incorporate comfort food into a menu, there are a few key principles I follow.

First, it's essential to have the right chef with the skills and emotional understanding to cook these dishes with authenticity and heart.

Sourcing the right ingredients is equally important. Comfort food relies on simplicity, and using high-quality, traditional ingredients brings out the true flavour of each dish.

I also believe every comfort dish should tell a story, whether it's a family recipe, inspired by childhood memories, or rooted in a specific region.

Lastly, I prefer to keep the selection limited but genuine, fewer dishes done well always resonate more than a crowded menu lacking focus. ■

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Pic Courtesy: The Westin Chennai Velachery

Flavour Pairing is the New Alchemy

The science of precision meets the instinct of craft in the modern culinary code.

By Harsha Masand

At its core, cooking has always been about transformation. In contemporary kitchens, that transformation is driven by a calculated interplay between chemistry and creativity. Flavour pairing, once governed by inherited instinct, is now guided by both tradition and technique, emerging as a critical framework in modern gastronomy. Chefs today don't just taste–they test. They engineer flavour. Whether it's a molecular scan of ingredients, sensory memory, or textural play, each element is dissected and then recomposed to build a harmonized experience on the plate.

Flavour pairing begins with the understanding that instinct and science must co-exist. "Instinct is born out of experience, culture, and emotion; science ensures precision and repeatability. Together, they create a canvas where flavours don't just coexist–they elevate each other," says Chef



"Trials, errors, trials, errors, trials, and success,"
Chef Ashfaq Shaikh of Pisco Hospitality

Pawan Kumar of Radisson Blu, Pune. Aromatic volatility, Maillard reactions, fat-soluble vs. water-soluble compounds, and pH balance–these are no longer peripheral considerations. They now sit at the core of pairing strategy. Chefs are increasingly referencing databases of volatile compound affinities and experimenting with fermentation timelines and precise emulsification ratios to extract flavour depth.

The Dynamics of Sensory Interaction

"Aroma sets the stage, texture keeps you engaged, and temperature can either reveal or mute a flavour" elaborates Chef Paul Noronah from ITC Hotels, Mumbai. The sequence and method of service–whether layering temperature contrasts or adjusting volatile compound release–are engineered for impact.



"Instinct is born out of experience, culture, and emotion; science ensures precision and repeatability. Together, they create a canvas where flavours don't just coexist—they elevate each other,"

Chef Pawan Kumar of Radisson Blu, Pune

Understanding how thermodynamics influence flavour perception or how fat carries aroma molecules is key in building pairings that are multi-sensorial and immersive.

Pairing is no longer about what 'tastes good' together. It's about how taste, aroma, mouth feel, and thermal perception interact. When seemingly odd pairings succeed, they often do so by tapping into balancing principles: sweetness tempering umami, bitterness contrasted by acid, texture offsetting richness. There are no 'wrong' pairings–only miscalculations in equilibrium. As flavour mapping becomes more deliberate, boundaries are tested. Ingredients with contrasting molecular profiles are examined for how they complement or conflict within controlled conditions. Umami-rich ferments, enzymatic browning agents, or aromatic disruptors like sulfuric compounds are increasingly used to create tension and resolution in a dish. Every dish becomes a sensory hypothesis, where chefs aim to build contrast without chaos, and innovation without intimidation.

Chef Noronah notes, "The umami-sweet contrast was daring but worked." In his work, matcha's bitterness was tempered by the tang of aam papad and the salinity of sea salt. These aren't spontaneous inventions–they are calibrated contrasts using bitter alkaloids, fruit leathers rich in tartaric acid, and sodium to spike flavour perception. Creating emotional contrast–comfort versus surprise, nostalgia versus modernism–is often achieved through deliberate pairing of molecules that trigger memory or evoke intrigue. These aren't culinary stunts but layered sensory narratives, designed to create a pause and a reaction. While Chef Pawan Kumar recalls one particular instance during the creation of a festive menu where he paired roasted beetroot with aged balsamic and dark chocolate soil. It sounded unusual on paper, but when the earthy sweetness of beet met the tang of balsamic and the bitter depth of dark



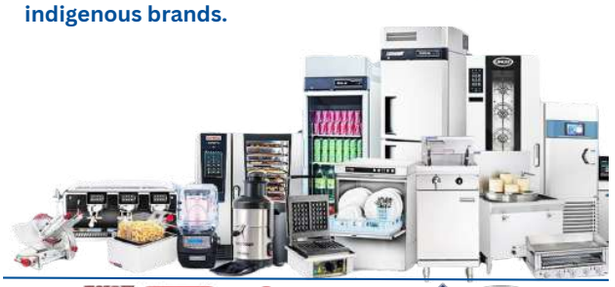
Matcha Paired with Aam Papad

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Aroma sets the stage, texture keeps you engaged, and temperature can either reveal or mute a flavour.

Chef Paul Noronha
ITC Hotels, Mumbai

chocolate, the result was surprisingly sophisticated proof that bold pairings often unlock new possibilities.

India's Culinary History: Refined by Science

Indian culinary heritage offers an expansive database of effective pairings, from rose and cardamom to mango and mustard. The modern chef views these not just as combinations, but as ratios, heat tolerances, and volatility curves. "Indian culinary history has always been a silent master class in flavour pairing," notes Noronah. The underlying science of our traditional kitchens often understood when pairing at the molecular and cultural level, present chefs with a blueprint for authenticity fused with innovation. Today, traditional flavour anchors are processed through new-age techniques: freeze-drying, infusion, emulsification, or flash freezing. These methods allow chefs to preserve nostalgia while pushing format boundaries, applying familiar flavours in unfamiliar forms. When a classic is broken down and reassembled through dehydration or sous-vide infusion, it brings forth something recognizable yet entirely novel. This duality is central to modern Indian gastronomy's evolution.

Cross-cultural pairing is no longer just fusion, it is formulation. Each cuisine's unique flavour lexicon becomes part of a broader sensory palette. The focus is not novelty but resonance. The process often starts with mapping molecular structures, identifying terpenes, esters, acids or phenols that may connect two seemingly disparate ingredients. Indian bases, complex, spice-laden, layered are particularly suitable for this exploration. The modularity of tadka, pickling, or slow cooking allows incorporation of new elements without dismantling the structural integrity of the dish. Pairing a miso, za'atar, or yuzu can be as thoughtful as how can they speak the language of curry leaves or mustard oil. While, sometimes, a humble rasam can be the base for a Japanese-style broth could be no longer seen as culinary rebellion but as thoughtful convergence. In flavour science, the intersection of cuisines is not chaos—it is coded coherence.



Kasundi Glazed Salmon

"Trials, errors, trials, errors, trials, and success," summarizes Chef Ashfaq Shaikh of Pisco Hospitality. R&D in kitchens follows an increasingly structured approach, first based on ideation, then sensorial testing, and finally integration. Most professional kitchens today maintain flavour logs and test matrices. Dishes are prototyped with incremental variations:



Mint Coconut and Lemon Cheesecake



"The choices for health food products are growing, but what separates us is using rarefied products"

Rouble Chhabra
F&B Consultant, Elbuor Pvt. Limited.

changing fat ratios, infusion durations, or acidic balance. Initial pairings are rarely final. As Chef Shaikh notes, "Sometimes we end up changing 50 percent of the elements we began with." Chefs now conduct controlled tests on viscosity, measure flavour volatility using digital sensors, and collaborate with mixologists or fermentation specialists to enhance aroma layering and aftertaste control. Some kitchens are even using AI tools to predict flavour affinity based on molecular compatibility. It's a form of culinary engineering, where success lies in iteration.

Engineering the Perfect Pairing

Reference tools like flavour compound charts, cross-modal databases (mapping colour-emotion-taste), and sensory maps are used to narrow down viable pairings. Increasingly, chefs also use molecular kits and pH sensors to refine balance. This is food design, not guesswork. Rouble Chhabra, F&B Consultant, Elbuor Pvt. Limited provides a health-forward perspective: "The Indian palette has tastes and preferences that are almost set in stone. The choices for health food products are growing, but what separates us is using rarefied products. For instance, monk fruit sweetener in our chocolates. This is India's first." Rare ingredients bring both technical complexity and new pairing opportunities. Monk fruit, with



Miso Avocado Toast

its high-intensity natural sweetness and zero glycemic indexes, introduces novel pairing possibilities with bitter bases like coffee or sour ferments like kefir. These are not just ingredient swaps, they are reinventions of what sweetness can feel like in a mindful gastronomic experience.

The future of flavour pairing will be shaped by ingredient accessibility, climate-conscious sourcing, and hyper-personalization. Fermentation, aged sugars, heirloom herbs, and rare seed oils are gaining traction not for novelty, but for the complexity they bring. Sensory fatigue among diners is giving way to a craving for narrative-rich, slow-cooked, or scientifically curated plates. Personalized menus based on genetic taste markers or micro biome compatibility may become a reality. Looking ahead, Chef Pawan Kumar offers a guiding thought for young chefs: "Respect your ingredients, but don't fear them." Mastery in the kitchen stems from understanding raw materials deeply and allowing room for experimentation. He challenges traditional binaries with his call to abandon rigid conventions like "sweet must be sweet, and savoury must be savoury." In the evolving landscape of cuisine, the modern chef must embrace versatility and redefine boundaries with intention.

Wrapping up the Alchemy on the Plate

Flavour pairing, then, is less about matching and more about meaning. It's a strategic language that informs how food is perceived, remembered, and replicated. As palates evolve and tools become more precise, chefs step into the role of modern alchemists, balancing intuition with instrumentation, and emotion with engineering. The plate, in this era, becomes not just a space for nourishment, but a canvas where chemistry, memory, and creativity coalesce into something transformative.

This alchemy is not a metaphor, it is methodical transformation. It is the precise moment when fermentation turns bitterness into depth, when acid lifts fat, and when memory makes a bitter herb nostalgic. In a modern context, flavour pairing becomes the chef's way of storytelling, where each component has a purpose, each sensation is intentional, and the journey from first bite to final note is a carefully orchestrated sequence. In that moment of cohesion, when a dish transcends technique and becomes emotion, alchemy reveals its truest form. It's where the diner pauses, reconsiders, and remembers. That's when the magic happens, and that is where flavour pairing achieves its highest expression. ■

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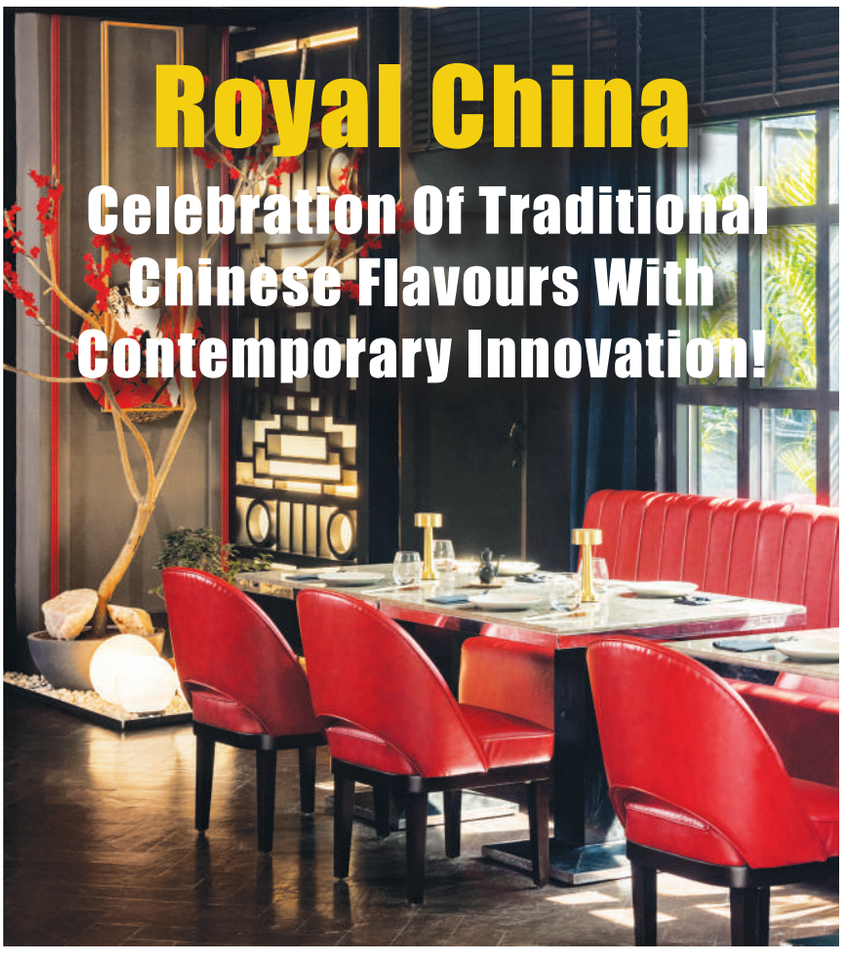
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Royal China

Celebration Of Traditional Chinese Flavours With Contemporary Innovation!

By Sharmila Chand

Royal China, a fine dining destination at The Chanakya, New Delhi, has unveiled its latest culinary offering–a thoughtfully crafted new menu that masterfully bridges the gap between traditional Chinese gastronomy and contemporary innovation.

Since its inception in 2010, Royal China has retained its position as an iconic destination for patrons who appreciate authentic Chinese cuisine, while also trying out dishes perked up in contemporary preparation.

Eclectic Decor

Royal China welcomes guests into a 100-seater space adorned with open skylights and a warm, inviting ambiance. By day, the restaurant exudes a casual, relaxed atmosphere, transforming into an intimate fine dining experience by night.

The restaurant has been dramatically painted with the dark hues of greys and browns and wrapped royally with the pop of red colour and the gold accents. The walls are symbolically and creatively adorned with the printed wallpapers in the private dining area and columns reflecting Chinese eclecticism, at the same time creating a cozy and warm ambience.

The New Menu - Flavoursome Narrative & Seasonal Creativity

With over 200 dishes in a newly introduced menu, Royal China continues to refine its signature style–lightning-fast wok-based techniques meet thoughtful, high-quality ingredients in a setting that's elegant and warm. Every element of the new menu has been curated to offer guests a rich, multi-sensory experience that honours Chinese culinary heritage while embracing modern tastes.



The new menu promises an immersive culinary experience. Guests can begin their journey with the indulgent Truffle Mushroom Soup, a comforting and velvety creation that captures earthy richness with every spoonful. Next the appetisers unfold with bold, diverse choices–Sauteed Chicken with Green Chilli, Salt and Pepper Calamari, Crispy Calamari with Burnt Garlic, and the delicately steamed Scallops deliver dynamic flavours for seafood and meat lovers. Vegetarians aren't left behind, they have ample options for a delicious feast. From the vibrant Butter Chilli Baby Corn and Potato offering a spicy, crispy prelude to the meal.

The main course dives deeper into an ocean of flavour and regional Chinese influences.

Seafood enthusiasts can explore dishes like Braised Fish in Garlic and Spring Onion, Braised Fish in Szechuan Sauce, Squid in Chilli and Black Bean Sauce, and the luxuriously tangy Chilli Plum Prawns.

For poultry connoisseurs, the menu introduces the Roasted Chicken in Burnt Garlic with Soya Chilli and Roasted Chicken with Oyster and Mushroom Sauce, each bringing a perfect balance of aromatic spice and umami.

Vegetarian mains take centre stage with robust offerings such as 'Five Treasure Vegetable', 'French Beans and Burnt Garlic', and 'French Beans and Shitake Mushroom,' all of which reflect Royal China's dedication to flavour-forward plant-based dishes.

These mains are elegantly paired with new noodle and rice dishes, including Ho Fun Noodles Chicken, Burnt Chilli Garlic Noodles Chicken, and their vegetarian counterpart, Burnt Chilli Garlic Noodles Vegetable–each showcasing wok-tossed mastery and layered spice profiles.

A side of fragrant Jasmine Rice completes the main course journey, allowing guests to soak up every nuance of their chosen dishes.

Dimsums Galore

A highlight of this season is the extensively expanded Dim Sum Menu, reinforcing Royal China's legendary reputation in this category. Guests can now enjoy the irresistible Spicy Crispy Chicken Cheung Fun, flavour-packed Basil Chicken Dumpling, and two new vegetarian favourites–the Edamame and Asparagus Dumpling and the beautifully

presented Poached Vegetable Dumpling with Chilli Soya. Steamed to perfection, each dumpling is a small parcel of craftsmanship and finesse.

In addition to the à la carte offerings, there is an Unlimited Dimsum Brunch, an indulgent feast which includes an array of signature dumplings and dim sum favourites–from Prawn Har Gow and Chicken and Chive Dumplings to Char Siu Bao, Truffle Water Chestnut Dumplings, Sticky Rice in Banana Leaf, and more. It's a must-try experience for dim sum lovers looking to enjoy variety without limit in a vibrant, welcoming setting.

The dessert menu is equally impressive. Amongst the top favourites are Tiramisu, Chocolate Mud Cake, Crème Brûlée, Lai Wong Bao - Custard Buns, Sticky Toffee Pudding. However, Chocolate Dome steals the show with its presentation and finesse. 'Royal Gin Ace' - dessert cocktail laden with richness of heavy cream, Gin, Egg White and twist of grated Nutmeg is not to be missed.

The Owner's Pride

Talking about the food philosophy at Royal China, Aashita Relan Marwah, the Founder says "Our philosophy in Delhi, and across its locations, centers around serving authentic Cantonese cuisine while adapting to evolving tastes and trends. We prioritize sourcing fresh, authentic ingredients and offer a mix of traditional and contemporary dishes, complemented by impeccable service and a refined dining experience. Our goal is to transport diners to a culinary destination, blending classic flavors with modern techniques and a sensory-rich atmosphere."



"The new menu reflects our commitment to innovation while staying rooted in tradition. We've thoughtfully incorporated customer feedback and preferences to craft dishes that are both comforting and exciting—enhancing the overall dining experience with bold flavors, seasonal ingredients, and refined presentation"

Aashita Relan Marwah, Founder, Royal China

She further adds, "What distinguishes Royal China from others, is authenticity, consistency, and attention to detail–whether it's in the ingredients we source, the flavors we create, or the hospitality we offer. Our curated menu and timeless ambience offer an elevated dining experience that's both refined and approachable. We stay true to our identity while constantly evolving. From ingredient sourcing to plating, we emphasize consistency and quality. Our loyal customer base and commitment to taste ensure we remain a preferred choice despite the competition."

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The Art and Science of Steaming in Commercial Kitchens

In the diaspora of cookery, steaming is one cooking technique that is strikingly exceptional to achieve culinary mastery

By Gita Hari

If you seek full-bodied, natural zest, minus-fat preparations which are light on the stomach with low calories, then look no further than steaming foods.

Dining establishments veer towards serving wholesome food to keep up with escalating demands from guests who perceive greasy, deep-fried foods as detrimental to health. Steaming not only locks in nutrients but also keeps the food vibrant, moist, tender and juicy. Steaming connotes as using vapour and is a versatile way of cooking. Food is suspended above boiling water and covered, where the vapour cooks it evenly while holding on the flavours and moisture. The steaming technique originated in China and Tibet and its healthy attributes have contributed to its popularity and brought it to the forefront in commercial kitchens globally. It also circumvents the likely development of detrimental and harmful compounds that can arise during high-heat cooking methods like frying.



A Gastronomic Dabbler

The chefs are constantly under duress to achieve a delicate balance between racing with time and dishing out good-looking, delicious dishes. They must roll out flawlessly prepared fare at breakneck speed. Standardization and productivity are the challenges posed in the tireless and relentless professional kitchens. And all this without compromising on the quality and flavour. Apart from scratch cooking, steamers come in handy for warming pre-cooked food without losing moistness and flavour.

The commercial steamer is a culinary dynamo which has transformed kitchen operations to plate up a symphony of flavoursome nosh. Its effectiveness is turbocharged compared to the slow, time-consuming frying or grilling which also necessitates continuous monitoring. Abdul Qader Shaikh, Independent Consultant Chef who has helmed the kitchens of The Leela Hotel, elaborates, "The magic comes from the steam's intensity, with a gentle shroud of hot vapour surrounding the food. The outcome is evenly cooked food like pillowy steam buns, fleecy dimsum, succulent seafood, moist and tender meat. Steamer is the option for a healthier, quicker, and dependable method to churn out an extensive array from the menu."



"Steamer is a time-saving device as non-veg items like fish, on a commercial scale, can get cooked within 8 minutes"

Chef Abdul Qader Shaikh
Independent Consultant Chef



Steaming non-veg food

Can steamed non-veg preparations taste amazing?

"Yes," says Chef Stefan Gadit, Michelin-trained Culinary Director, and erstwhile Executive Chef of Guari Khan's restaurant Torii. He further says, "The meat remains tender and juicy as there is no drying out. As frying is not involved, the pure taste of clean, bold flavours is retained. Top examples are Steamed fish with soy, ginger, scallions; Chicken gyoza or dim sum; Thai-style fish in banana leaf; Pork buns – fluffy and rich." The trick lies in marinating deeply, steaming with herbs and broths and time it right as overcooking can ruin it. Be it oysters, crabs or lobsters, steaming comes to the rescue with its flavour and succulence retaining features.

Different Techniques of Steaming

Traditional steamer baskets, microwave steaming, en papillote techniques, steam ovens or the smokiness of grill steaming, each process brings in its own distinctive nuance.

Be it steamed buns, wontons, dumplings, dim sum, Goan steamed prawns, mutton or stew, the clinch lies

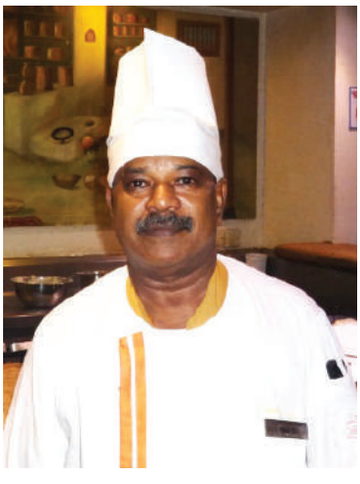




in the sealed setting. There are many ways to steam food in restaurants. Steamer baskets come in handy as the simplest and quickest method. Chefs keep seasoned food, like dimsums, (veg or non-veg) in a steamer basket. Placed in a wok or pot over about 10cm of boiling water and closed with a lid, it takes maximum 20 minutes for food to get cooked.

Microwave steaming is another method. Industrial microwave ovens have designated steam settings. "Utilisation of less water, preservation of vitamins and minerals, quick cooking time are some of the pros of microwave steaming. Best materials for the steamer are ceramic, glass or silicone. But make sure the steamer is not plastic as it can be toxic," warns Chef Stefan Gadit. Home chefs can make their own steaming arrangement by placing the food in a microwave-safe container, drizzle a little water or gravy liquid, and top it with a lid that has an opening.

Yet another interesting method is En Papillote or paper bag/packet heating and it can be a healthy one, especially when done correctly. It requires little to no oil, locks in moisture and preserves nutrients. It keeps food tender without added fats and is gentle cooking like steaming. "It is commonly used for Fish en papillote (French method with parchment) and Chicken or veggies with herbs and wine," notes Stefan Gadit, as he cautions, "Use parchment paper or food-safe baking paper, not plastic-lined bags or recycled paper. Avoid high flames or direct contact with fire. Done right, it's clean, light, and full of flavor." Banana leaves or turmeric leaves are also used to give a distinct aroma to the dish.



"Steaming is a healthy choice for weight watchers, even while eating out"

Master Chef Bala
Orchid Hotel, Mumbai

Steam ovens are available with a dedicated steam facility, with defined settings for different elements. They are an integration of steam and conventional dry heat, ensuring uniform cooking and retaining moistness. Steam ovens are energy savers, quick in cooking and apt for vegetables, rice, chicken and whole fish. Combi Steam oven, also called combi-steamers, hot-air steamers, or combination steam-convection oven is trending currently because of its multifunctional features. It combines cooking mechanisms like steam, roast, bake, smoke, braise, air fry and rethermalise, making it a preferred mode of steaming.

If you thought grilling is cooking the food in contact with heat - hot coals or direct flame - you haven't heard of grill steaming. This is a reliable and unique technique which integrates steaming with the smoky flavour of grilling. "Some grills can be adapted for steaming via indirect temperature or are armed with a steaming feature where a heat proof vessel is filled with flavourful liquid. This is a quirky mode to steep your dishes with an additional coat of zest,

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"Marinate deeply, steam with herbs or broth and time it right to get a perfect dish"

Chef Stefan Gadit
Independent Culinary Director

to lend your creations a rich smokiness and relish-worthy spin" informs Chef Bijender Rawat, Corporate Executive Chef, Divine Resort & Spa, Rishikesh.

Sustainability is a Highlight

In times when sustainability shines as responsible luxury, hotels prioritise the use of eco-conscious cooking like steamers. It is not just vegetables, but poultry, fish and several kinds of shellfish lend themselves perfectly to this process of cooking. This method seals in and elevates the vibrant hues of the greens. Where non-veg is concerned, steaming softens the fibre for easier digestion,



preserves flavour and texture, and reduces the fat content.

According to MasterChef Bala who helms the Indian peninsular cuisines at South of Vindhyas Restaurant of The Orchid Hotel Mumbai, "South Indian dishes are mostly steamed, retaining their nutritive values and fresh flavours. Idli, idiyappam (string hoppers), kozhukattai (modak), kadumbuttu (steamed rice balls) and ground rice layered with grated coconut steamed in cylinders called puttu are some of the dishes loved and savoured by all. You will find idli, in its varied forms like Kanchipuram, rava, vegetable, oats, or millets, is the breakfast staple of 5-star buffets." Other snacks like dhokla, muthia, handvo, patra, vadis are examples of popular Gujarati preparations that retain flavours and render taste.

The Flip Side of Steaming

Just like every other culinary method, steaming too has its limitations. Limited texture development, flavour can be mild,



moisture control issues, equipment cost and space, and lower customer perception where some cuisines are concerned, are some of the disadvantages of adapting this technique. As no browning or crisping is involved, steamed foods can lack depth, crunch, or visual appeal compared to grilled or roasted items. If not marinated or seasoned well, proteins can taste bland since steaming doesn't add flavour like caramelization does. Too much steam can make certain foods soggy or cause condensation on plated dishes.

Commercial steaming has its constraints, as Chef Stefan Gadit points out,

"Some diners associate steaming with "diet food" or "less indulgent" meals, which may not fit premium dining



"Practice safety norms like standing to the side when opening a steamer, wearing heat-resistant gloves and use long ladles for reshuffling food inside the equipment"

Bijender Rawat
Executive-Chef Divine Resort & Spa, Rishikesh

experiences unless well-executed."

Cost-effective and Time-saving

Foodservice providers in present times seek to satiate guest preferences, as they keep in focus their quality expectations, as they also simultaneously look for ways to curb operational costs. Commercial steamers cut down operational costs in hotels and catering units. Bijender Rawat explains, "Besides retaining nutrients, moistness of meat and vibrant colours of vegetables, steamers reduce prep time, help decrease waste, enhance efficiency, save labour and lessen cooking hours. They save energy in comparison to traditional culinary techniques. Contemporary steamers are equipped with fewer gadgets and are sturdier leading to less maintenance and repair expenses."

Conclusion

Steaming, with its health-forward appeal and operational efficiency, is more than a cooking method–it's a smart culinary strategy. As diners lean toward lighter, nutrient-rich meals, steam-based cooking is fast becoming the hero of modern professional kitchens. Its versatility, sustainability, and ability to preserve flavour and texture make it indispensable in today's evolving food landscape. ■

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"Dynamism is something I really value and Pepper embodies that"

Chef Aditya Kulkarni, Executive Chef, Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai

By Sharmila Chand



With an extensive background in luxury hospitality and a refined approach to culinary innovation, Chef Aditya brings with him over 15 years of experience and a commitment to delivering exceptional dining experiences at Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai.

As Executive Chef, Aditya will lead the hotel's culinary operations, overseeing its acclaimed restaurants, in-room dining, and banquet experiences. He will play a key role in enhancing menus, mentoring the culinary team, and curating experiences that reflect both Mumbai's local culinary heritage and the contemporary spirit of Four Seasons Mumbai.

A gold medalist from the Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development, Chef Aditya has held leadership roles across their prestigious properties.

"Chef Aditya brings with him a deep understanding of both classical techniques and modern tastes. His passion for quality, innovation, and guest experience makes him a perfect fit for Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai. We're excited to welcome him to the team and look forward to this new chapter in our culinary journey." says General Manager, Nitesh Gandhi.

In an exclusive interview, he talks about his favourites, cooking philosophy and more....

How would you define yourself as a chef?

As a chef, I think my identity keeps evolving. When I first started studying, I never imagined I'd become a chef.

It was actually by accident that I discovered my passion for cooking and decided to take the plunge. Once I chose this path, every few years a new cuisine would captivate me. I'd plan to specialise in it, but then I'd learn something new that interested me even more than the last. So, if I had to describe myself as a chef in one word, it would be dynamic. If someone had asked me 15 years ago whether I'd be where I am now, or cooking the food I'm cooking today, I wouldn't have believed it. My philosophy, skill set, and way of thinking have all evolved, often every couple of years shaped by the situations I've been in and the places I've worked.

What is your philosophy of cooking?

My philosophy of cooking is that it shouldn't be too complicated. It should be simple, but it should appeal to multiple senses. What truly makes food memorable is when it triggers an emotion or a memory. So when I cook, I think about how the food will connect with someone, not just through sight, smell, or taste, but through memory. People often say we eat with our eyes or that we smell the food before we taste it, and that's true. If someone eats something that reminds them of their mother or grandmother's cooking, or evokes the feeling of a place they've travelled to, it creates a much stronger emotional response. Whenever I cook, I try to tell those stories through my food. That, to me, is the most meaningful and engaging part of being a chef.

If you weren't a chef, what other career path do you think you would have pursued?

To be honest, I considered and even tried a lot of different options while I was studying and thinking about what I should do. But over time, I realised that none of them truly captivated my interest for the long run. This is something I've thought about many times, even wondering, what if one day I decide not to be a chef? And honestly, I can't see myself enjoying anything else as much. How most people dread Mondays? I've never felt that. Most people complain about long workdays, but at 10 at night, I often still feel like there are a few more things I want to finish, and I don't even realise how time passes. So, both in terms of aptitude and interest, I really think I hit the jackpot when it comes to finding the right profession.

How has the journey been so far? What has been the most rewarding moment in your career?

I think most chefs would agree that some of the most rewarding moments come when guests give positive feedback, when your hotel performs well, or when your restaurant wins awards. And while those things are definitely gratifying, for me, what's equally rewarding is seeing the people who have worked with me grow and succeed. When I see former team members now running their own kitchens, managing their own restaurants, or leading their own hotels, it gives me immense satisfaction. And just as many people have inspired me along the way, it feels fulfilling to know that I've played even a small part in someone else's journey. Another deeply rewarding moment is when guests return. In today's world, where restaurants and hotels

open faster than you can keep track of, having repeat guests is a huge stamp of approval.

What skills are necessary to be a good chef?

I've always shared with my team what I call the "pyramid of skills." At the foundation of this pyramid is skill. There is no substitute for it. It's the bedrock of being a chef. No matter where you've studied or which institute you've come from, skill is developed through practice. The first step to growing as a chef is to master your craft.

The second layer of the pyramid is knowledge. Once you've built your skill and grown a little further, you need the knowledge to inspire others and help them develop their skills. Then comes adaptability. How adaptable are you to changing scenarios? The food scene evolves every year. If you're not learning and moving forward, you're essentially moving backward. Having skill and knowledge is crucial, but to truly succeed, you must adapt to the ever-changing world of food.

The true success of a career lies in the third step: continuously building on your knowledge and staying adaptable to the changing environment. That, I believe, is the ultimate key to succeeding as a chef.

What is your favourite spice and why?

My favourite spice is pepper because I think it's one of those spices that doesn't have its own strong flavor like cinnamon or cardamom. Most spices have a strong character, but pepper elevates any dish you put it in. It doesn't change the character of the dish; it just enhances what already exists in it. So I think pepper is special. As I've mentioned before, dynamism is something I really value and pepper embodies that. It fits into any cuisine and any dish, and it adds punch.

What is your favourite equipment and why?

My favourite piece of equipment is actually a very clichéd one, it would be a knife. I think without that, everything falls apart. It's the foundation. If you're not cutting the food right, it will never cook right. I'm passionate about how knives are kept, how they are maintained, and about using the right knife for the right purpose. Most of my teams know this. In fact, at my last job, when I left, the inside joke was that everyone was relieved they could finally use different knives for anything now that I wasn't there. I'm very particular about it because I truly believe knives are fundamental. If you cut your food wrong, it won't cook properly. It may sound clichéd, but I genuinely believe that if the first step is wrong, nothing that follows can fix it. Using the right knife, treating it with respect, putting in the tender love and care to keep it well-honed, well-sharpened, and clean, these things matter. And when you do that, your knives pay you back as a chef.

What are the lessons you have learned in the kitchen?

I believe a kitchen is a fantastic place to learn a lot of life skills. It's a great environment to learn about teamwork and trust. For example, right now, I'm sitting here giving you an interview, while there are 80 people of my team cooking food, 100 plates going out to different parts of the hotel at this very moment. Being able to trust the team to deliver with the same level of intensity, love, and care that you would is incredibly important. There's also a strong sense of camaraderie in a kitchen.



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Criteria	Junior Pastry Indian Cup (JPIC)	Master Bakers Challenge	Culinary League
Date	3 - 4 August 2025	5 August 2025	6 August 2025
Eligibility	Pastry Chefs <26 years (born on/after 20 Jan 2000)	Professional Chefs, 24+ years	Home Cooks, 18+ years
Team Format	2 Contestants + 1 Mentor	Individual	Team of 2 Home Cooks
Participation Fee	Applicable, Refer Website	Applicable, Refer Website	Applicable, Refer Website
Max Participants	8 Teams	8 Individuals	8 Teams
Prize	Represent India at SIGEP Italy 2026 (all-expenses paid)	Master Baker Title + International Trip + Training	₹25K / ₹15K / ₹10K + Gifts + Media Coverage
Theme	"Music & Melody" Across 8 Pastry Categories	6 Artisanal Bakery Products (e.g., Breads, Quiche)	Battle of Besan (3 Recipes using Besan)
Duration	2 Days	1 Day (6 hrs Competition)	1 Day (7 hrs total)
Venue	Competition Arena, Hall 16 C, IHE Expo	Competition Arena, Hall 16 C, IHE Expo	Competition Arena, Hall 16 C, IHE Expo
Judging Criteria	700 Points Across Multiple Metrics	Taste, Creativity, Hygiene, Time, Cleanliness	180 Points (Taste, Innovation, Besan use, etc.)
Pre-Briefing	2 Aug, 2:30 PM	2 Aug, 3 - 4 PM	2 Aug, 3 - 4 PM
Setup Time	2 Aug, 3 - 6 PM	5 Aug, 9 - 10 AM	6 Aug, 8 - 8:30 AM
Competition Time	8 AM - 5 PM (Day 1), 8 AM - 4 PM (Day 2)	10 AM - 4 PM	8:30 AM - 1:30 PM
Award Ceremony	4 Aug, 5 PM Onwards	5 Aug, 5 PM Onwards	6 Aug, 3 PM Onwards

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"Honesty and working with sincere intentions guides my working philosophy"

Kanish Kaul, Food and Beverage Manager, JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru

By Sharmila Chand



With over a decade of rich and diverse experience across leading hospitality brands, Kanish Kaul brings with him a dynamic approach to elevating food and beverage operations, guest experiences and service innovation.

He began his journey with the Marriott family few years ago and has worked across various food and beverage verticals, steadily growing through roles that challenged and honed his skills. His passion for curating meaningful dining experiences is evident in the way he leads his team, with empathy, clarity, and a relentless pursuit of quality.

At JW Marriott Bengaluru, Kanish oversees a dynamic portfolio of restaurants, lounges and Banqueting areas. His strategic vision has been instrumental in repositioning the hotel's F&B offerings to not only match the evolving consumer trends but also exceed guest expectations. He has been actively looking into operations with a focus on innovation, revenue growth, and exceptional guest engagement.

Beyond his operational expertise, Kanish is a strong advocate for team development and growth. He believes that empowered associates are the true custodians of memorable guest experiences.

In an exclusive interview he talks about his dreams and more ...

What is the USP of your F&B outlets?

The variety and depth of our culinary experiences, along with our steadfastly individualized service and strong ties to the local culture, are the unique selling points (USP) of our food and beverage establishments at the JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru.

From the traditional Italian cuisine at ALBA to the contemporary Asian specialties like sake, sushi, and Ginza-style cocktails at UNO Izakaya, each of our diverse locations offers a different gastronomic experience. Chef Asif Qureshi, a fourth-generation chef from India's renowned Qureshi family, enthusiastically leads our Spice Terrace's amazing North Indian Frontier food. The Merak Brewhouse is renowned for its inventive cocktails and light fare, while Bengaluru Baking Company offers fresh breakfast, artisanal coffees, and delicious sweets in a more relaxed atmosphere.

But more than just the food, our USP lies in our committed team, thoughtful service, and enthralling ambience, which genuinely help our valued customers make lifelong memories. From locating locally sourced, fresh ingredients to designing themed pop-ups that celebrate Karnataka's culinary heritage, we painstakingly combine global sensibilities with local origins.

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

We are moving toward mindful dining, with sustainable methods, locally sourced food, and wellness menus at the forefront. We cater to today's guests that are more conscientious by being more open about our sourcing and preparation. Additionally, we are developing more immersive dining arrangements, such as chef's tables, carefully curated tasting menus, and regional partnerships with culinary artists, in addition to improving tech-driven visitor personalization. The goal is to amuse and amaze.

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

It is the people, in my opinion. This position is a lovely fusion of leadership, service, and creativity. I like developing potential and seeing team members advance into positions they previously believed were unattainable. Creating memorable experiences for guests is also incredibly satisfying. It is really fulfilling to be a part of someone's unique moment, no matter how small.

What, according to you, works best in retaining a strong F&B team?

It is a matter of culture. People stick around when they feel appreciated, heard, and seen. As a team, we are committed to providing our associates with the right amount of training and resources required depending on their area of work, but more importance is given to dialogue.

The most important things are to acknowledge accomplishments, be fair, welcome criticism, and offer a clear route for development. Individuals work for people, not just a brand.

How has your journey in hospitality been so far?

It has been thrilling as well as humbling. Like many others, I began with curiosity and passion. I have had many learning opportunities, difficult days, and wonderful mentors along the road, nevertheless, this has taught me patience, resiliency, and the beauty of human connection from working in hospitality.

What dreams or goals are yet to be fulfilled?

I would like to oversee the food and beverage department at a Marriott hotel worldwide, maybe in a place renowned for its fine dining. I also wish to be a mentor to upcoming generation of F&B executives.

What is your working philosophy?

Honesty, truthfulness, maintaining my composure, and working with sincere intentions guides my working philosophy.

How do you define yourself?

An enthusiastic hospitality worker and student who is constantly willing to learn and enjoys making a difference in positive results.

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