



THE CHEFS ARENA

FOR MASTERS OF THE KITCHEN

THE WORLD HAS BEEN HIS OYSTER!

Chef Montu Saini

Executive Chef

Then President's Secretariat (2015-2020)

and Now ITDC-PHCU

Honorary Member, Les Club Des Chef Des Chefs



**The South India
Edition of the
Food Connoisseurs
India Convention
Discovers Some
Bright Gems of the
Food Industry**



**Unlocking the
Doors to Success
Through Grit and
Determination**

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Published By

Draft
Editorial Services

B-1, New Apsara Apartments,
259, Bund Garden Road,
Pune, India 411001

Printer and Edited by Draft
Editorial Services.

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EDITORIAL

A CULINARY ODYSSEY THROUGH 2023



As we bid adieu to another remarkable year, it's only fitting to take a moment and celebrate the culinary maestros who have continued to pamper our taste buds and elevate the art of gastronomy. In a year filled with new opportunities like the G20 Summit, our very dear chefs and food entrepreneurs have proven that their creativity knows no bounds, transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary.

2023 has been a year where the culinary professionals have embraced innovation with open arms. From experimenting with unique flavor combinations to pushing the boundaries of culinary traditions, these culinary virtuosos have left an indelible mark on the world of food. In a society that is constantly evolving, so too are the tastes and preferences of its denizens, and chefs have risen to the occasion, catering to the diverse palates that make up our global culinary landscape, yet preserving the best that they inherited from their past generations.

This year has seen a resurgence of appreciation for local and sustainable ingredients, with chefs championing the farm-to-table movement. As advocates for responsible dining, they've shown us that a delicious meal can also be a mindful one, promoting environmental sustainability and supporting local communities.

As we reflect on the culinary delights of the past year, let's raise a toast to the chefs who have continued to inspire, surprise, and nourish our souls. Let's cherish the success stories of the award winners from Food Connoisseurs India Convention, South Edition, and celebrate a range of mouthwatering delights from biryanis to barbeques to desserts to cocktails, combined with spectacular experiences that meet the international standards or even surpass them.

Let's know more about the World Food Forum, dive a lil deeper into the universe of chefs on world platforms who are gradually raising the culinary standards of the world and fostering international relationships and strengthening political bonds through culinary or food diplomacy, as they serve the heads of states of various countries from around the world.

Their dedication to their craft, coupled with an unwavering commitment to excellence, has made 2023 a truly unforgettable year for the world of gastronomy. May the coming year bring even more delectable creations and culinary adventures as we savor the flavors of the future, one exquisite bite at a time. 🍴

Sumit

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REIMAGINING INDIA'S CULINARY LEGACY AT WORLD FOOD INDIA 2023

A MELTING POT OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION



World Food India 2023, India's biggest gathering of food processing industry leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers, investors and other stakeholders, concluded successfully on November 5, 2023. The 3-day mega event commenced with the inauguration by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, in New Delhi.

The key highlights of the event included CEO Roundtables attended by over 70 CEOs from leading companies; 50 Knowledge sessions with 250+ eminent speakers; B2B, B2G, and G2G meetings; and a dedicated RBSM with 995 buyers from 80 countries. The exhibition at World Food India 2023 offered a premier exhibition space of 50,000 sq m, spread across seven halls in Pragati Maidan, with more than 1200 exhibitors from India and abroad. Themed pavilions showcased the finest wines and spirits from around the globe, smart proteins, millets, cutting-edge technology, and sustainable practices in food processing.

It was, however, the Food Street at WFI 2023 that stole

the show. Curated by Chef Ranveer Brar and co-curated by Chef Ashish Bhasin, Food Street was a delightful convergence of culture and cuisine, becoming a hot spot for food connoisseurs, celebrity chefs, professionals and students from the hospitality industry. Chef Rakhee Vaswani, the hostess and emcee extraordinaire, was instrumental in setting the tone for the lively vibe at Food Street. Legendary Chef Manjit Gill, Parvinder Bali, Gautam Chaudhry, Kunal Kapur, Harpal Singh Sokhi, Manisha Bhasin, Gunjan Goela, Anahita Dhondy, Pankaj Bhadouria, Sanjay Thakur, Vaibhav Bhargava, Nishant Choubey and Saraansh Goela were among many others present.

The chefs conducted masterclasses where they whipped up wholesome and delicious dishes using the humblest of ingredients, leaving the audience in awe of the sheer simplicity and innovativeness of each preparation. Some dishes prepared included Millet Avocado Khichdi, Millet Mathri paired with Millet Onion Chutney, gluten-free Portobello Burger with Sweet potato Millet Tikki, Millet Chilla, and more.

The Food Street boasted many



attractions, but one of the most popular was the Kitchen of the Kings. This luxurious pavilion, presented by Author Anshu Khanna, featured a menu inspired by the culinary traditions of six royal gharanas: Kangra, Sailana, Khajurao, Rampur, Dhenkanal, and Jhalamand. The pavilion's ambience, enhanced with royal paraphernalia, brought back memories of an era long forgotten. Visitors enjoyed a regal dining experience as they interacted with their hosts, who served a tasting menu recreated from recipes passed down through generations.

Shree Anna, or millets, India's ancient superfood, was undoubtedly the showstopper. The climate-resilient grains are making a comeback, and how! With the United Nations declaring 2023 as the International Year of the Millets, the so-called 'coarse grains' are going from local to global. FMCG giant ITC created India's first Millet Pop-up restaurant as part of their initiative to promote healthy eating by incorporating millets into mainstream diets. Numerous food stalls celebrated the versatility of millets. From dishes with a modern twist like Jowari chaat and Rajgeera beetroot kababs to new-age fusion foods like Barnyard millet lasagna and Foxtail risotto, there was something for every palate. A millet revolution, it seems, is brewing on the horizon, ready to take over kitchens worldwide!

NASVI, the National Association of Street Vendors of India, paid tribute to the 75 glorious years of an independent India by presenting 75 different street foods from the length and breadth of the country. Fafda-jalebi, Awadhi Kachori chaat, Nagori Halwa, Mahadev Jaleba, Dal pakwan, Indori poha-jalebi and old favourites- vada pav, khandvi, fruit chaat exemplified India's vibrant street food culture.

With its diverse offerings, World Food India 2023 catered to both food industry professionals and impassioned food enthusiasts. The flagship event of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, was an ode to the future of food, showcasing trends and innovations in the food industry. The success of World Food India 2023 will ensure that it is going to be India's most anticipated food event in the years to come. 🍷



Raising their mugs to a well-deserved victory sip after three exhilarating days at the World Food India mega event!



THE MILLET ODYSSEY!

THE JOURNEY GATHERS MORE MOSS!

Here's something that we, at **The Chefs Arena**, talk about all the time. 2023 was declared as the International Year of Millets, but for us The Millet Odyssey began in 2020, when we first thought of millets as a grain with a lot of potential, be it for health or nutrition, or consuming them as a step towards sustainability. This was even before millets were declared as 'Shree Anna' or 'Shree Dhaanya, we had reached out to the sector of the society that mattered the most - the school children, and youth and raised awareness on millets and their benefits through a gamified contest combined with workshops to build culinary careers.

It has also been interesting to track the advances taking place in the field of millets. 37.68% Jump In Millet Exports in 5 Yrs - Amazing! According to the article in Economic Times dated 12th December 2023, Startups Find Meat in Millets, Gear Up to Meet Global Demand.

A Jodhpur-based bakery has exported millet cakes and cookies to the UAE, Indonesia, and South Africa this year. It is experiencing strong demand for these gluten-free and vegan-friendly snacks, which are made from locally sourced millets. The bakery is one of around 200 startups that produce millet-based products.

India has seen a significant



RICH IN HERITAGE



FULL OF POTENTIAL

increase in the branding and export of millets, which were once known as "mota anaaj" (coarse grains). In the five years leading up to 2022-23, exports increased by 37.68 percent to \$67.14 million. Buckwheat, ragi, jowar, bajra, amaranth, and canary seeds have all found favor in various countries around the world. In the first six months of 2023-24, millet exports reached almost \$30 million. India was the world's top millet producer in 2021, with a 20% share of global production, followed by the United States and Nigeria.

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Exports Development Authority (APEDA) has also organized food sampling and tasting campaigns at supermarkets and malls across the world, which has helped millets

gain traction.

With 2023 being declared the International Year of Millets, a variety of food items made from these ancient grains have become popular. From salads to desserts, jowar khakhra to bajra cake and bhujia, ragi biscuits and gajak, consumers now have a wide range of options. According to officials, there are 500 Stock Keeping Units (SKUs) of millet-based food products in the country. "The export of millet-based food preparations has increased by 15% since last year," an official said, adding that a new HS code (tariff classification) for value-added millet products is being introduced, which will help to better capture export and import figures. Ready-to-eat breakfast cereal mixes, biscuits, cookies, and

snacks, as well as ready-to-cook mixes like dosa, idli, and khichdi, are the top export items. In its second-quarter results update for the quarter ended September 30, 2023, fast-moving consumer goods company ITC stated that it has implemented a focused strategy to develop a millet-based product portfolio for every occasion, age, and format, and has introduced products in both traditional and modern formats, such as multi-millet mix and ragi flour.

The Chefs Arena in the year 2024, which is not a year of millets, would continue The Millet Odyssey. For us, raising awareness on millets is yet a 'mission unaccomplished', as in a vast and diverse country like India, there will always be a lot more to travel on the millet route. 🍷

WINTER FOODS

A REFLECTION OF THE WARM INDIAN HEARTS

Winter in India brings a delightful array of foods that not only provide warmth but also cater to the seasonal availability of ingredients. These winter foods not only are an example of the possibilities with seasonal produce but also reflect the rich diversity of Indian cuisine, offering a warm and comforting experience during the colder months. **The Chefs Arena** takes you on a culinary journey through the warp and weft of vibrant India.

A comforting bowl of hot soup filled with the essential nutrients that would not just give you the much-needed warmth in the cold weather but would also provide you with the required energy from within. There are winter vegetables which are specifically available in certain regions and are good for human consumption, and there are specially curated dishes which have found their special spot in the households across the nation. Let's explore what's cooking where.

What's cooking in Rajasthan?

When the temperatures keep getting low outside, it's time for some winter comfort foods or winter treats that bring warmth. For people in Rajasthan, it is also the time to indulge their sweet tooth a wee bit more. Winter also stokes some extra hunger, and is an opportunity to build immunity with a range of seasonal foods that comprise the winter cuisine of Rajasthan.

The Rajasthanis create



delights out of local grains like pearl millet, corn, sorghum millet, ghee, gond, gram flour, lilva (green arhar dal), sesame and jaggery, which usually increases in winter. With the onset of winter, eateries in Rajasthan, and most homes start rolling out special seasonal delicacies that are amiss during other times of the year. In winters, it is easy to work on fire. Open fire cooking or cooking on chullas are very common during chilly days. Some other cooking methods are roasting, frying and dum. In rural areas of Rajasthan, cow dung is the very common fuel used for cooking the meal. The winter foods of Rajasthan instantly induce warmth when it is cold and dreary outside. Make place in your stomachs and hearts for Bajre ki Raab, Jawar ki Khichdi, Gond ke Laddu, Sobhagya Sauth, Moth Dal ke Pakode, Dal Bhati Churma, Moong Dal Halwa, Til Gud ke Gajak, Makke ki Mehra, Fenni, Garam Mohan Thaal, Mohan Maans, Mutton Soweta, and more! Many of them laden with desi ghee, of course!



What's cooking in Maharashtra?

Maharashtra, with its diverse culinary traditions, offers a variety of delectable winter foods. The winter foods of Maharashtra reflect the regional diversity and cultural richness of Maharashtra, offering a mix of flavors, textures, and nutritional benefits to make the winter season delightful and satisfying. Pithla Bhakri, or Bajra Bhakri with Thecha are warm and hearty dishes that are staples in many Maharashtrian homes. Maharashtra also make Undhiyu, a curry made with winter tubers, and fenugreek dumplings during Makar Sankranti, even when the dish is traditionally associated with Gujarat. Sesame and



jaggery from which chikki and laddoos are made, not just keep the body warm but also symbolise the sweetening of relationships. One can dig into bowls of 'ponkh' (tender green grains of jowar), and an array of dishes made with these. The fragrant spices in the Masale Bhat help combat the chill of the winters. Winters are also amazing to enjoy a range of deep-fried delicacies, like bhaji and Kothimbir Vadi. Usal and Misal made with sprouted moth beans (matki) are also very popular. Patodi Rassa, Santra Barfi (a Nagpur special made with the oranges in season), Randani or Lamb Roti, Sambar Vadi, Dink Laadoo, and Dry Fruit Laadoos are some of the highlights of the winter foods of Maharashtra.

What's cooking in Bihar and Jharkhand?



First on the list is the traditional Litti Chokha, though this dish is available commercially and eaten round the year now, (as it is being baked on chulha or even deep fried) it is best suited to the winter season when the people warm themselves around the bonfire and also cook food for dinner. Littis are fire baked atta dumplings stuffed with sattu (roasted/malted chana dal and jau - barley). Sattu is a great source of easily digestible food and absorbed protein. The sattu is flavoured with chopped coriander leaves and onions and a little mango pickle masala. Once cooked, litti is dunked in desi ghee which is a good fat for the winter season. The classic accompaniment to the litti is Chokha- a salsa like preparation - mish mash of fire



roasted brinjal/potato/tomato, flavoured with chopped onions, green chillies, coriander and cold pressed mustard oil (great to warm the body in winter). Non vegetarians pair the litti with Bihari meat. Bihari meat is another famous winter delicacy, where the mutton pieces are mixed with mustard oil, whole spices, chunks of garlic and ginger, chopped coriander, sliced onions, turmeric and salt. Then all the marinated mutton is put inside the mud pot and the opening is sealed with the lid and dough and this pot is cooked on the cow dung cakes, fire/charcoal embers or slow fire for over an hour. This slow cooked meat is eaten with litti/chapati/rice. Winters here also witness a lot of greens like bathua, cholai, sarson, methi, muli bhaji and fresh vegetables.

What's cooking in Gujarat?

With Gujarat getting its fair bit of the winter chill and temperatures dipping, many

winter foods from Gujarat are based on the produce available during the season, and of course immunity and sweet tooth taking center stage. Undiyo is one such dish that cherishes all the winter vegetables like tubers, greens, tender beans, fresh garlic, coconut, and turmeric that add body, fragrance, taste, flavour and texture to this traditional dish. Methi Thepla and Methi Muthiya, are now all season favourites, Saag, Lilva Kachori and Pulao, Khichu like savouries and Jalebi Fafda, Gundar Paak, Adadiya Pak, Til Laddoos and Chikki, and the very popular Gajar Ka Halwa, all go into this melting pot of winter delicacies of Gujarat.

What's cooking in the southern states of India?

Winters aren't all that brutal in the southern states of India, as compared to its northern counterparts, as October to December are monsoon months in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and even some parts of Karnataka, due

to the northeast monsoon winds. January heralds a plethora of festivals in these regions, and the foods made during this period also qualify as winter foods. Pongal in Tamil Nadu has specialties like Sharkara Pongal, and Ven Pongal made with the fresh harvest of rice. Special curries are cooked with the winter tubers, greens and beans that are abundantly available soon after monsoon. Ragi Mudde, steamed balls of finger millet, Avarekalu Saaru, a curry made with field beans and coconut, Ellu Urundai, sesame and jaggery laddoos, Gongura Pachadi made with gongura greens, Soppu Saaru, Kambu Koozh made with bajra, and so much more make up the winter food of the south Indian states.

Though 'buy local and eat local' is the mantra for sustainability, savour the winter foods from all over India at a regional restaurant in your neighbourhood or be sure to order them online once in a while without guilt. It's nice to indulge your taste buds once in a while. 🍷



REASONS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- Focused reach to Chefs and other F&B professionals
- Purposeful visibility within effective market segments
- A single point to disseminate information to a large decisive audience
- Reach covering professionals from across the country

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Centre / Double page spread	70,000/-
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Full Page: W 20.6 cm x H 28.6 cm (Bleed)
W 20 cm x H 28 cm (Non Bleed)

Double page spread: W 40.6 cm x H 28.6 cm (Bleed)
W 40 cm x H 28 cm (Non Bleed)

Half Page: W 17.25 cm x H 12.2 cm

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THE CHEFS ARENA

MASTERS OF THE KITCHEN

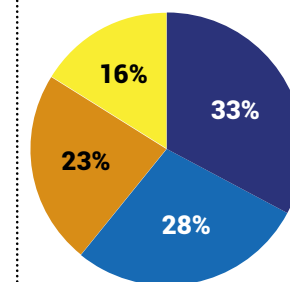
Welcome to The Chefs Arena!

DIGITAL

Reach of The Chefs Arena is in the form of its digital and print magazine. Digital form of the magazine is being sent out to over **30,000 industry professionals**, which includes:

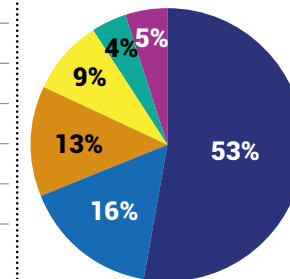
- Chefs at Hotels/Restaurants
- Culinary Institutes/Students
- Professional Food-service Consultants
- Hotel & Restaurant owners
- Product manufacturers and suppliers
- Senior Management (including CXOs)

Break up of 30,842 (as on January 2022) Readership by region



North	10178
West	8636
South	7094
East	4934

Readership Profile



Chefs	16346
Institutions & Students	4935
Food Professionals	4009
Hotel & Restaurant owners	2776
Product manufacturers and suppliers	1233
Senior Management (including CXOs)	1543

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THE WORLD HAS BEEN HIS OYSTER!

Living up to the term 'Culinary Diplomacy', building relationships with the world through cuisines, and culture, here's **Chef Montu Saini**, Executive Chef, Then President's Secretariat (2015-2020) and Now ITDC-PHCU Honorary Member, Les Club Des Chef Des Chefs, New Delhi, and a member of Club Des Chefs Des Chefs, in a candid chat with **The Chefs Arena**.



Officier du Merit de Agricole - By the President of France

IFCA Awardee

FHRAI Young Hotel Chef Awardee

ICF Master Chef Awardee

How did your culinary journey begin, and who was the greatest inspiration?

My culinary career began accidentally. I was a science student and academics came to the fore. I didn't have any idea about Hotel Management. But as destiny would have it, I am here!

Tell us something about your initial days as a culinary professional.

My initial days were tough. In fact, I'd say they were quite rough. Being in the kitchen is no child's play. It's a very demanding job and one has to always be on their toes. The working hours are brutal, sometimes even exceeding a 24 hours shift.

Who has been your greatest guide and mentor? What were your learnings from this person?

I would not be able to name just one. There are many, and from diverse areas in the culinary field. I am in awe of the industry stalwarts like Chef Vikas Khanna, Padma Shri Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, Chef Manjit Gill, Chef Sudhir Sibal, and Chef Satish Arora.

- B.Sc in Hospitality & Hotel Administration
- Post Graduate Diploma in Food Safety & Quality Management
- Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing Management
- Master in Tourism Management
- MBA (Financial Management)
- Pursuing PhD in Tourism Studies

The very first learning has been to set very high standards, and develop skills to match those standards. I have organised many charity dinners both in India and abroad, which have been inspired by these stalwarts' 'giving back to the society' mantra.

Share some interesting anecdotes that have been an inseparable part of your journey so far, and what do they mean to you?

There are some culinary experiences that are just unforgettable, and interesting for many reasons. The memories of these always bring fond memories. One of those comes from my first tour to Madrid, Spain, when we stayed at The Ritz Carlton. This was in the year 2009 when the President of India at the time, Smt. Pratibha Patil hosted a reception in the honour of the King and Queen of Spain, with my team and our Director, Commercial and Marketing. The Queen was intrigued by the jalebis that we had meticulously made, and she had a very novel question to ask. "How did you inject sugar syrup into these spirals?" It amused us as we never



Presenting greetings to the Honourable former President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee ji

thought the jalebis would elicit such a question. We did explain that the jalebis are porous in nature, and when you dip them in sugar syrup, they absorb it.

Another incident that comes to mind is an incident from the food festival in Vietnam where I had designed and laid out an Indian menu in Sheraton Hotel, Hanoi, and Ho Chi Minh City. So, this gentleman who was coordinating requested me to keep the spice levels slightly low. Keeping that in mind, I kept the spice level at the lowest possible. But I was taken aback as the moment he tasted my food, he just blasted, saying, "Oh my God!! This is too spicy. This is too salty." When I tasted it again, I found that it tasted very bland. It was so bland, and there is a level below which I cannot make Indian cuisine

bland, because I won't be doing justice to our robust and vibrant cuisine. I then asked this gentleman to tell me which was the fastest moving dish in his Vietnamese restaurant, to which he replied, "Coriander Chicken". I then asked him if I could taste this Coriander Chicken, as the fastest moving dishes indicate the taste of the majority of the diners. When I tasted this, I realised that this was absolutely watery, lacking in taste and body. The consistency was unbelievably thin with no seasoning of salt or pepper, but it was one of the most flavourful foods that I have had in my life. It was loaded and bursting with the flavour of coriander, true to its name.

Tell us about your typical work day?

As an Executive Chef, the first thing that I have to do as soon as I reach my office is to brief my Sous Chefs and Supervisors. Like I said it is a high energy environment, where things move super-fast. From the functions you are

"How did you inject sugar syrup into these spirals?"

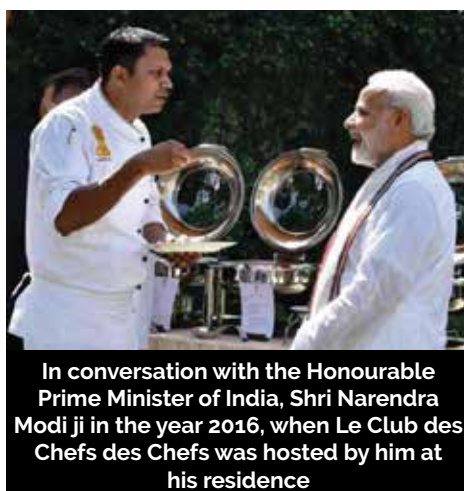
organising, the restaurants you are running, new menus, special dishes planned for the day, special dietary restrictions to be taken into account, information to be disseminated down the line; it's like checking every step of the assembly line and ensuring that these work like a well-oiled machine. Then comes the supply chain management. I take a round of my stores to check the stock that we have, managing what is being used, what is in stock and what is due to arrive in a couple of days. I also stay on top of the items that have been demanded, and the requisitions that have been received. Then comes the kitchens and their hygiene.

I have to prepare for the interviews that I need to conduct with the HR, and keep a tab on how many candidates are coming to me for their final interviews, going through their profiles, mentally preparing the questions to be asked. Then we have future plans to discuss; what events are in the anvil or have been planned, the menus to be designed for each of these, and coordinating with various agencies for these. Then I move over to the new kitchens being designed in the hotels, the work to be done on each of these, meetings and brainstorming ideas for these, going through the blueprint and drawings, and suggesting changes where needed. How can one forget emails? There are loads of them to be responded to on a daily basis. All these call for a whole lot of coordination.

It doesn't stop there. As we come to the closing for the day, there are the evening closing sale numbers to be taken care of, costs to be looked at, cost versus sale to be calculated, assessing net profit earned,



Presenting greetings to the Honourable former President of India, Ram Nath Kovind ji



In conversation with the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi ji in the year 2016, when Le Club des Chefs des Chefs was hosted by him at his residence

“One should explore the idea of modern Indian cuisine only when they have mastered their skills”

and keeping a track of if and how we are moving towards achieving our financial goals.

What standards are important to you when it comes to guest service?

Standards are the only standard (level of quality) that

work. They have to remain consistent. The signature Butter Chicken cannot taste different each day. Your guests keep coming back to you for this special taste, and wouldn't want that taste and experience to be altered. So, standardisation is the key to success in your kitchen. Chefism is all about standardisation - in every sense of the word. The kind of standards we create involves plating, presentation, how the food will be served, the right temperature, the right time to serve, the time taken to serve a particular a-la-carte dish; these should always be spot on. A la carte cannot be delayed, and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have to be maintained for this. All of these, form the backbone of your kitchen, and the backbone of your operations. Your success majorly depends on these SOPs and their implementation.

How have culinary professionals evolved over the years?

Culinary professionals have evolved a lot over the years. The field has been changing

at a super-fast pace. 'Modern Indian Cuisine' is the 'in thing', and the new concept that's the talk of the town. There are some positives and negatives here. Some young culinarians have emerged who have just jumped into modern Indian cuisine without perfecting their skills and without mastering the cuisine. The sad part is you can't question them as they will claim that it is their innovation. There is no benchmark as such. Blame it on complete innovation whether you like it or not. The only thing that counts is people liking these flavours. If they do, you will survive in the market, and that's the main reason the restaurant industry has a very low success rate of hardly 8 or 10 percent. If people don't like what you are dishing out, you'll have to shut your restaurant, else you'll be burning cash, or running it from your own pocket. So, one should explore the idea of modern Indian cuisine only when they have mastered their skills and know the authenticity of food, and when they are a master of flavours, know their flavour profiles, they can do well, and understand what goes

“Standardisation is the key to success in your kitchen”

well with which food. Basically, there are 5 types of tastes, sweet, sour, salty, astringent, and pungent. Food is generally a mixture of these five tastes. If this blend is perfect, your dish is perfect. When we talk about concepts like molecular gastronomy, I don't say that one should not be doing it, but to do it one has to grow to that level of mastery and perfection. I'd advise the youngsters to first understand the flavours, before they learn to mix them to create a new flavour profile. Then you will see how things start working out for you.

What can be done to bring more respect to the profession and make it more desirable for the youngsters to choose it as their career path?

Firstly, the profession involves long working hours. The youngsters need to understand that this is a

very tough profession. In the industry the minimum expected clock-in time is 12 hours. The HR stipulates that it's an eight-hour job, but by the time we end up closing the shift it is already past 12 hours. So be mentally prepared to put in those hours. Then some may see it as a thankless job with too much hard work. Nowadays there is equipment available in the market, but only the affluent ones can afford equipment like buffalo choppers, bone saw cutters. The rest would still have you work manually, as they prefer hiring cheap labour instead of investing in expensive equipment. They need to understand that the equipment adds to the speed and efficiency.

The industry has made the job tougher than it should be. We need to make it easy, and efficient. The thanklessness is evident in the very low pay packages. The ones passing from culinary schools are good, but still not industry ready. They need gadgets like smoking guns in culinary colleges; bakeries and patisseries still can't afford sprays. Till the time there are high standards of inputs,



The members of Le Club des Chefs des Chefs along with their spouses with the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi ji, in October 2016, at his residence

there won't be high standards of output. And this is after all the effort that has gone in, and college fees that have been paid, that one gets a low paying job. The industry needs to somehow balance effort, time and pay to attract talent.

What skills do employers wish to see in the future generations of chefs?

What will bring success to my restaurant? This is 'THE'

question that the employers want answered. They demand high standards of skills, but they also need to pay accordingly. Most of them are not able to pay an appropriate amount, and when you map these city-wise it's even more disheartening. For example, take a city like Mumbai. The accommodation by itself is very expensive. Most of what you earn gets spent in accommodation. Real estate

has defeated the restaurants as well. If the rents are sky high, the economics can be achieved only by earning that much per day, and here I'd like to add that it is not the manpower that is killing the restaurant, but it is the cost of real estate that is killing the restaurants. The manpower as it is, is very cheap in India. Even if you consider 20 Euros per hour in Europe, which is approximately INR 1800/hour, that too on the lower end. Now compare that with India, where the pay is a maximum of INR 25,000 per month.

How can the profession be made attractive to include more women?

There are only a handful of women chefs in the hotel industry. The first deterrent is the number of hours. A lady chef has to also take care of her house, and the culinary industry doesn't allow that much time or space for this. So, the family, and eventually the work life balance takes a back seat. The happiness index is very low. Then comes the super long and tough work hours. Many of us have to spend time commuting, as there are no residential properties close to 5-star hotels. One spends over 3 hours, to and fro, and goes home to just go to bed and wake up the next morning to start the same cycle again. Our kitchens are not just kitchens; these are food factories. The same kitchen caters to banquets, restaurants, room service, lounges, and all the special occasions. The amount of work is huge with a tremendous emphasis on quality. What the employees earn is very less as compared to the effort that they put in, and this pattern needs

What the employees earn is very less as compared to the effort that they put in, and this pattern needs to change

to change, if the industry needs more women, and to achieve gender balance.

What is your take on the rising number of celebrity chefs?

I'd say congratulations to all the

celebrity chefs. They are doing good business and they are giving a good name to the profession. Hats off to them. But there are a handful of celebrity chefs, and you can count them on your fingers. I feel that all the TV channels, social media platforms, and video channels, should also promote the upcoming chefs. There has to be a balance. You ideally should not use or celebrate just one chef, making them a multi-millionaire or billionaire, but the industry should give a chance to other chefs as well. Especially to the ones who have talent, can speak well, and they can present themselves and the food well. Presenting yourself is also an art, especially on camera. Training can definitely help overcome all the drawbacks. The rising number of celebrity chefs are very few. There should be more of them. When we look at our country and the size of its population or even the size of the world and its population, the ratio of celebrity chefs is perhaps 0.00000001 per cent. This is too less. It needs to be a lot more.

How do you feel about national level awards like the Padma Shri?

Padma Shri is the biggest recognition for the industry. Thanks to the pioneers who made it happen and a special thanks to the Ministry of Tourism, that included culinarians under the skill category of the awards. Congratulations to Mr. Imtiaz Qureshi of ITC Hotels, the very first chef to receive a Padma Shri, followed by Chef Sanjeev Kapoor. Hats off to both of them. I also give credit to our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's government for the excellent work here. Thanks to our Minister Mahesh Sharmaji, Member of Parliament from Greater Noida for having initiated this as proposed by our stalwarts, the Late Mr. Anil Bhandari, Chef Manjeet Singh Gill, Late Chef Saundararajan and others. 🙏



The members of Le Club des Chefs des Chefs being received by Dr Jill Biden, the First Lady of the United States of America, on October 30, 2023



With His Excellency the President of the French Republic, Mr Emmanuel Macron at the banquet hosted by the former President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, and 54 Heads of State/Government attending the founding conference of the International Solar Alliance, at the Embassy of France, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. Chef Guillaume Gomez, the then Chef to the President of France and now Culinary Ambassador of France from Foreign Ministry of France



With Prince Albert II, The Prince and President of Monaco. A photo autographed by him shared by his chef, Chef Christian Gracia, a dear friend, and President of Le Club des Chefs des Chefs



LIVRET PROGRAMME DES CHEFS DES CHEFS USA 2023



With Chef Cristeta Comerford at The White House, on October 30, 2023 during the Livret Programme in the USA

Tell us more about the Club des Chefs des Chef programme?

The Club des Chefs des Chefs (CCC) is an exclusive organisation made up of the personal chefs to heads of state and royalty from around the world. Founded in 1977 by Mr Gilles Bragard, a designer and couturier to chefs, the CCC is known as a place where these elite chefs can connect, exchange ideas, and showcase their culinary skills.

One of the primary purposes of this entity is to promote major culinary traditions and to protect the origins and genesis of each national cuisine. The Club also aims to develop

friendship and cooperation between its members, who have similar responsibilities in their respective countries.

What were the highlights of the Livret Programme in 2023?

The 2023 meeting took place at Salamander Middleburg Resort & Spa, Washington D.C. It began on 27th of October and went on till 3rd of November. Art & Soul Restaurant - Art Smith, Mr. Stanislas Vilgrain Cuisine Solutions, Monticello Barbourville Winery, Salamander Resort, The Willard InterContinental DC, Central Kitchen, RASA, Compass Coffee, Right Proper Brewery, José Andrés Group, DRVN Garnier-Thiebaut, were the hosts. The dress

code was specified for each day. Several tours were organised throughout the event, including a **visit to the White House** where we were received by Dr Jill Biden, the First Lady of the United States of America and after an excellent speech on Food Diplomacy and its importance, we had a chance to enjoy the luxury of enjoying the delicacies of the White House and its repertoire, The Capitol, Pentagon, and interspersed with breakfast, lunch and dinner at interesting venues. On 30th of October, Des Chefs des Chefs prepared a meal at the DC Central Kitchen in Washington for homeless people.

What role do you play here?



Candid moments with some members of Le Club des Chefs des Chefs at the White House



Fostering friendship and cooperation

I represent India, and I am an honorary member of the Club, which has 29 members from all over the world. I am also one of the Host Chefs. Only a few members have become Host Chefs. Host Chefs have a lot of responsibilities, like arranging for sponsorship, and showcasing the best of their country to the world. There are a few chefs who have done tremendously well for

the Club. The government has supported the Club. That's why India has a special place in the Club which makes me proud.

Tell us about the membership at CCC.

The Club des Chefs des Chefs has extremely strict membership criteria. To be accepted you need to be the current personal chef of a head of state. If the head of the state does not have a

personal chef, members can be the executive chef of the venue that hosts official state receptions. One member is admitted per country with the exception of China, which has two seats.

This programme was held in India in 2016. How did you make it happen?

In 2016, I had invited the members of the Club to India. In the 43 years of the Club's history, it has been only once that India has invited the member chefs. I was the Host Chef back then, and I requested them to plan their annual general meet in India. This is documented now, that the general assembly meet that happened in India in 2016 has been the best of all in the 43 years. This is because it is the prerequisite of the club that the head of state has to meet them. So, I had organised their meeting with the Honourable President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjeeji; I was his Executive Chef then, and I managed to get an approval from the Secretariat.



Le Club des Chefs des Chefs hosted by the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi ji, in October 2016, at his residence



Gazpacho by Chef Cristeta Comerford at The White House Lunch on October 30, 2023

Your favourite cuisine: Mother cuisine is the best cuisine for anyone. My Mother Cuisine is Indian Cuisine

Comfort food: Day to day light food from your mother's cuisine. you cannot have feast everyday

Your favourite movie: Being a chef you don't get much time to watch movies. Yes it's a fact, long shifts, laborious work, etc. If you don't like to socialise, if you don't like to meet friends often, if you don't like to celebrate festivals with family, you can dare to become a chef

Your favourite restaurant: Alain Ducasse, Paris, France

Your favourite book: The Secret - Law of Attraction

Your favourite cookbook: Larousse Gastronomique

Your favourite place of travel: USA

One spice that you cannot do without: Cinnamon



Celebrating camaraderie and positive vibes

Madam Promita Paul was generous enough, and accorded all the approvals and made it possible to host the Club in India. One of the officers Mr. Ashok Mehta, the Private Secretary to the President, said, "Montu if you are doing such a great thing for your profession and for the palace and showcasing your country to the world's best, then why not invite the Honourable Prime Minister also? Let's connect with the Prime Minister's Office." That's when I approached the concerned officer. He used to look after the appointments of Shri Narendra Modi ji. He was kind enough and accorded approvals. That's how we organized their trip to PMO. Even the Prime Minister hosted a high tea for us at his residence. We stayed at the Imperial for 4 days and then I took the club members to Agra for Taj Mahal, then to Jaipur where a lunch was organised on The Maharaja Express train. It was a stationary train in Jaipur station, because the train has an itinerary to follow, and it has a minimum package of 3 days. The Club didn't have that much time. I then took the Club to IHM Pusa, where the local cuisine was showcased. I put my country first and highlighted the best it had to offer.

How do such collaborations foster international relationships or culinary diplomacy?

International relationship or food diplomacy as we call it, believes that If politics divides, a common food table re-unites. It is the table of negotiations. It is the table of discussions. Whenever discussions



The White House lunch table for Le Club des Chef des Chefs on October 30, 2023



Food diplomacy at its best. With the Executive Chef of the Presidency of Greece, Vasilis Bekas, awarded the Best Chef of Europe for 2022, during 'A Greek Harmony of Flavours' festival, held in collaboration with the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy of the Hellenic MFA and the Embassy of Greece in India



happen over the table, that's when you get to stretch the time, you can extend your menu which in turn can demand more time. Great food also uplifts your mood, and hospitality is the key. Serving good food, food diplomacy, and international relationships I'd say, is where all the chefs are connected through a culinary line. At Club Des Chefs Des Chefs, we call it the blue line. For example, if any head of the state has to come to India, I call up the chef of that country's CCC, and ask if there's anything special their head of state needs? If any dietary preferences or restrictions need to be taken care of? This is besides the official route, but this connection or blue line is a faster way of communication. It is very important to maintain a good relationship, showcasing your hospitality to foster good relationships between two countries. This is a wonderful gesture.

What would you advise a younger version of yourself if he were in the present times?

When you pass from your college, you are young and desire to earn a lot of money. I didn't opt for money, I didn't start from the private sector; in fact I started from the government

One of the primary purposes of this entity is to promote major culinary traditions

sector, and I am happy about my decision. Michelin star restaurants are making good money. It gives me immense happiness when it comes to conjuring up a good meal being in the government sector. When it comes to building my profile, I'd say, whatever I have made till now is the best anyone can have. Money is just one part.

There is something equally good or even better, which is to gain perspective. As far as the profile or service to the nation are concerned, or the development and growth that the job brings in, I am proud. We get a fixed salary, and it is not in sync with our business. Salaries are decided by the government. My younger version would also agree with the same. I am happy. People often ask, "Why don't you include Michelin star chefs in this Club?", Mr Gilles Bragard had an answer. "They are commercial chefs. They are selling their food, one meal for one thousand euros or dollars, they charge hefty amounts, and have a waiting of over 5 years at time, already sold out for almost a year. We represent the nation and represent their kings, queens, monarchs, and other authoritative figures". 🍴

The South India Edition of the Food Connoisseurs India Convention

Discovers Some Bright Gems of the Food Industry

**The 4th Edition of the Food Connoisseurs India Convention 2023
- South India Edition concluded recently**



The South India Edition of the Food Connoisseurs India Convention (FCIC) concluded successfully on October 30th, 2023, at the Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center, Bengaluru. Renowned as one of the nation's premier business-to-business F&B shows, this event played host to prominent industry figures. Organised by Industry Live, the convention drew over 1000 brands from the HoReCa domain and welcomed more than 2000 attendees.

The event garnered strong support from The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) as the 'Supported By' Partner, with Zee Business serving as the Telecast Partner, Red FM as the Radio Partner, and Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center as the Hospitality Partner. SNN Foods & Celsius Logistics Solutions joined as Associate Partners, EazyDiner as the

Dining Partner, On2Cook as the Session Partner, Simba as the Roaring Partner, Paul John Visitor Centre as the Celebration Partner, and Brews & Blends as the Gift Partner. Indian Culinary Forum and All India Food Processors' Association lent their support as Supporting Associations, while World of Hospitality, Hospitality Lexis, The Chefs Arena, Better Kitchen, and Samyati magazines contributed as esteemed media partners, with TagTalk as the Digital OOH partner.

Culinary fans were welcomed to the convention with a magnificent inaugural keynote address delivered by Conference Chairperson Chef Hemant Oberoi, Founder of OB Hospitality and Hemant Oberoi Hospitality Goa; Founder of Michelin Selection Martabaan by Hemant Oberoi. Chef Oberoi's compelling Keynote, "From Tradition to Innovation - Navigating the culinary evolution in HORECA," offered a comprehensive perspective on the changes in culinary arts and the hospitality industry. Chef Hemant

Oberoi highlighted the evolving landscape of the HoReCa industry in India, shedding light on what's new and what's next in the F&B industry.

The convention featured a diverse agenda, including ten different sessions on topics such as New Age Restaurants, Food Tech accelerating Food Transformation, Expansion of Regional Cuisine beyond Traditional Boundaries, The Era of Pub-Hopping & Nightlife, and Entering the World of Hospitality. These sessions brought together over 40 industry leaders, including Mr. Rajat Agrawal, Chief Executive Officer of Barista Coffee Company Limited, Mr. Sachin Pabreja, Co-Founder & CEO of EazyDiner, Ms. Swarnalatha Ravi, Director of Namma Veedu Vasanta Bhavan, Mr. Dhiman Das, Executive Director of K.C. Das Private Limited, Ms. Rashmi Daga, Founder & CEO of FreshMenu, Ms. Shweta Ravi, Director of Nandhana Group of Restaurants, Mr. Manish Gupta, Director of Digital Marketing & Technology at Pizza Hut India, Yum! Brands, Mr. Raghavendra Rao, Co-Founder & CEO of The Rameshwaram Café.

A highlight of the event was an engaging Fireside Chat with Mr. Zorawar Kalra, Founder & Managing Director of Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd., moderated by Mr. Raunak Kundu, Founder of Bangalore Foodies Club & Secret Sauce behind a Successful Restaurant. Mr. Kalra shared insights into Culinary Entrepreneurship and navigating the path to a flourishing dining



establishment.

Chef Abhijit Saha, Founder & Managing Director of Ace Hospitality & Consulting, delivered a keynote address on Sustainable Dining and the Restaurant Revolution, emphasising the importance of crafting a greener tomorrow.

The event concluded with the Food Connoisseurs India Awards, celebrating excellence in the Indian Food & Beverage industry. A vastly experienced jury panel comprising Chef Chalapathi Rao, Cuisine Designer & Partner – Simply South, MasterChef India (Telugu) Judge, TEDx Speaker; Chef Saby, Chef, Mentor, President – Young Chefs Association of India (YCAI), Restaurateur & Entrepreneur; Chef Abhijit Saha, Founder & Managing Director, Ace Hospitality & Consulting; Chef Koushik S., Celebrity Chef, Consultant, Master Chef Tamil Judge & Founder, Eatitude; Dr. (Chef) K. Thiru, Principal,

Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration; Chef Davinder Kumar, Executive Chef & Vice President, Le Meridien Hotel, New Delhi & President, Indian Culinary Forum; MasterChef Pankaj Bhadouria, TV Host, Author, TEDx Speaker, Entrepreneur, Educator judged winners across 190 categories.

Few of the prestigious award winners were:

Outstanding Contribution to the Hospitality Industry – Female: Ms. Swarnalatha Ravi, Director, Namma Veedu Vasanta Bhavan, Outstanding Contribution to the Hospitality Industry – Male: Mr. Zorawar Kalra, Founder & Managing Director, Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd., Lifetime Achievement Award: Chef Hemant Oberoi, Founder, OB Hospitality and Hemant Oberoi Hospitality Goa Founder, Michelin Selection Martabaan by Hemant Oberoi, Restaurant Serving the best South Indian Cuisine: Vidyarthi



Bhavan, Restaurant Serving the best Biryani: Buhari Hotel Since 1951 Mount Road, Home Baker of the Year: Dr. Archana Diwan, Founder – Cupohlicious, Best Bar Consumables Brand of the Year: Ice Port, Restaurant Serving the best Hyderabad Biryani – South India : MEHFIL Group of Restaurants, Best Quick Service Restaurant Chain – Hyderabad : MEHFIL Group of Restaurants, Restaurant Serving the best Multi Cuisine: Zaitoon Restaurant & Grills, Best Restro-Bar of the Year – Bengaluru: Street 1522, Best Restro-Bar in Karnataka: 1522, Best Rooftop Microbrewery of the Year – Bengaluru: Red Rhino – Craft Brewery and Inspired Kitchen, Bangalore, Best Microbrewery of the Year – Hyderabad: Red Rhino – Craft Brewery and Inspired Kitchen, Hyderabad, Best Microbrewery in Whitefield: Fox In The Field, Best Microbrewery of the Year – South India: Ironhill India, Restaurant Serving the best Telangana Cuisine: Uppu, Restaurateur of the Year – Male : Mr. Amar Ohri, Executive Director, OHRI'S GROUP, Best Restaurant Chain of the Year – Hyderabad: Ohri's and many more.

The South India Edition of the Food Connoisseurs India Convention was a resounding success, recognizing and honoring the remarkable achievements within the industry. 🍷



Organised by Industry Live, the convention drew over 1000 brands from the HoReCa domain and welcomed more than 2000 attendees.



FOOD CONNOISSEURS INDIA CONVENTION AWARDS



ZAITOON

SERVING MULTI CUISINE CULINARY DELIGHTS FOR ALL



Noufal NK
Founders, Zaitoon Restaurant and Grill

"Zaitoon takes pride in being a multi cuisine haven that caters to the diverse tastes of every family member, creating a shared culinary experience for all generations," says Mr Noufal Narikkoli, one of the Founders of Zaitoon Restaurant and Grill, in conversation with The Chefs Arena.



Fardan TK
Founders, Zaitoon Restaurant and Grill

Tell us something about the beginnings of Zaitoon and the people involved.

As one of the co-founders of Zaitoon, I embarked on a culinary adventure filled with passion and expertise. Coming from a place with a rich legacy of hospitality, I have tried to infuse creativity



and authenticity into our journey, and along with my partners and co-founders, Fardan TK, Muhammed KP, and Pocker PK. We bring in a keen understanding and enthusiastic thoughts on serving the best, which has ensured Zaitoon's success. Our synergy brings a unique blend of culinary artistry and strategic vision to our business, inspiring us to continue pushing the boundaries.

What has been Zaitoon's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and what are its signature dishes?

Our unique selling proposition lies in seamlessly blending flavors from around the world, ensuring a menu that appeals to the varied palates within a family, and that transcends generations. From the grandparents who appreciate the nostalgia of traditional recipes to the grandchildren exploring new and exciting flavors. We take

Zaitoon provides a dining experience that transcends generations

pride in our standout dishes, such as Barbecues, our Zaitoon Special Tawa Platter, Kozi Rice, Tender Coconut Falooda etc., which epitomise our dedication to crafting distinctive and memorable culinary creations.

What is Zaitoon's Success Mantra?

Zaitoon's success story is attributed to our unwavering commitment to unparalleled quality, indulgent menu, and utmost customer satisfaction, and continuously adapting to the changing tastes and food cultures by prioritizing the choices of our patrons. Our success is founded on a multifaceted approach, reflected so well in the establishment of Zaitoon Signature. This dedicated space is meticulously formulated to encapsulate all the elements of the best tastes from around the world, uniquely presented in Zaitoon's style. Delivering an impeccable service that leaves a lasting impression is evident in our loyal customer base. We don't just offer a meal but curate an extraordinary journey through food that is immersive to the senses and elevates the soul.

What types of customers does Zaitoon attract?

Zaitoon caters to a diverse customer base appreciating the diversities of the menu, whose patrons come from all walks of life. The warm ambiance of Zaitoon appeals to families, couples, and kids alike, creating a welcoming space for culinary enthusiasts. A four-member family, for instance, would appreciate the convenience of finding an array of dishes under one roof

whereas even an expert foodie values us for our ability to offer authentic flavors from various corners of the world.

How does it feel to win the FCIC Award and where is Zaitoon headed to?

We are incredibly proud to have won the esteemed FCIC South India award for the Best Multi Cuisine category. This recognition validates our unwavering commitment to providing an unparalleled dining experience. It inspires us to continue innovating and exploring new avenues for

growth, expanding our reach, with focus on maintaining the highest standards, and introducing more patrons to the flavors that have garnered acclaim 🍷



CUPOHLICIOUS

DECADENTLY DELICIOUS SUGARY BITE FOR EVERY PEARLY WHITE



Meet the dental surgeon turned baker, the Guinness Book and Limca Book record holder, **Dr Archana Diwan**, as she takes **The Chefs Arena** through her indulgently sweet journey of spectacular cakes and bakes!

From a dental surgeon to someone with a mastery in sugary treats. How did this transition happen?

All of "pearly whites and sugary bites" – yes, that's very much me!! About a decade ago, this wasn't what I envisioned myself to be. It all started in those days, when I was more at home and less at the clinic when my son was little. What started as a sweet pastime grew into my home baking venture, today known as 'Cupohlicious'. Dentistry makes you dexterous to a certain extent, so transiting to creating artistic edible creations wasn't difficult. A few good workshops from experts in the field and I was good to go. Today, I take time out to practice both professions and maintain a

balance between the doctor's coat and the chef's coat.

What are the most indulgent delicacies on offer at Cupohlicious, and what sets them apart to thrive in the competition?

Cakes from Cupohlicious "speak with their taste"! Our gooey, moist and delicious chocolate cakes are most sought after. Come December, our Christmas plum cakes rich in rum are the most in demand. Customisation being our USP, we are open to baking any flavour and creating any design requested by the customers. The designs are such that they are easy to cut and eat, rather than too many elements that make the cakes difficult to cut and serve. The extra love poured into each



creation elevates them by default!

You are a Guinness Book and Limca Book record holder. Tell us more about these records.

The Guinness and Limca records, both were team efforts and I am glad and feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to be part of them. 32 Degree Studio organised the "Joy of Baking" event on 23rd December 2014 at Orion Mall Bangalore. Six of us home bakers created a life-size 6 feet tall Santa Claus cake standing

on one leg! It weighed about 230 kilograms and took about 3 days to create. This cake found a place in the Limca Book of Records as the "Largest Caricature Cake". The Guinness World Record

The extra love poured into each creation elevates them by default!



cake was created by four of us home bakers – 'The Bangalore Baking Buddies'. We took over 10 hours to prepare it. It weighed 1078 kilograms and was unveiled at the Park Hotel in Bangalore on 31st July 2016. This cake made its way into the Guinness Book of World Records as the 'World's Largest Dirt Cake'! This feat was also recognised by the Limca Book of Records, the World Records India and the Golden Book of Records. Both these events are memories to cherish for a lifetime. These events were my first experiences to limelight and publicity. Both events were covered by periodicals and newspapers.

Customer profile, and the plans for the future

My customer profile is a niche high-end clientele, corporates and organisations. With 'Studio Cupohlicious' opening shortly, I plan to enter into the teaching domain where I will start by teaching select individuals the art of baking.

How does it feel to be recognised by FCIC?

FCIC is a very prestigious platform to be recognised by and I am honoured to be the recipient of their recognition for the last 3 years. Their events are always very meticulous, star-studded and professional, facilitating great connections and takeaways. ❤️

BUHARI HOTEL

FROM CHICKEN 65 TO CHICKEN 90 AND BEYOND



Buhari Hotel, Chennai, has been pampering the taste buds of food connoisseurs for over 7 decades now. What has been alluring people from all generations to keep going back to savour the delicacies? **Mr Nawaz Buhari** shares the origins of this legendary food destination.

Buhari has a legacy spanning 7 decades, with the very popular Chicken 65 as its signature dish. Tell us more about it.

Mr. A.M. Buhari, a former Sheriff of Madras, moved to Colombo, Sri Lanka at an early age for his education. It wasn't long after completing his schooling that he discovered his calling and through his passion for creating food, he carved out a worthy legacy in the culinary industry. He was the first person in the city of Madras to combine the fine dining that the British had perfected with Indian food to shape a whole new dining experience. Mr. A.M. Buhari

not only focused on creating culinary marvels but also gave patrons a dining experience that kept them coming back for more.

Among other things, Buhari was the first hotel to have a JukeBox to turn the atmosphere inside to a lively, boisterous one. Hits from the era were played and replayed and the memories remain till today. One of the most popular numbers played on the JukeBox was 'Dum Maro Dum' from the Bollywood movie 'Hare Rama Hare Krishna' in 1960.

After the demise of Mr. A.M. Buhari, I have been carrying on



the legacy till date.

Chicken 65 was actually invented by A.M. Buhari on 1st January 1965 in Chennai. The Chicken 65 got its name in the year it was christened - 1965. It's one of our signature dishes.

It is incredible to have sustained the business for 70 plus years. What do the people at Buhari bring to the table? What has made it grow and sustain?

It's the dedicated, friendly and motivated staff, which has led to customer retention and satisfaction that has made the Buhari Hotel grow and sustain the brand. Having a brilliant dedicated team and the right people who respect values, has helped us build the right infrastructure, be present in the moment, and in analysing and reviving our strategies. This has also led to creation of new products and services for the customers with the intent of enhancing their satisfaction and overall experience.

Over the years we have created a vision to anchor our brand, clearly communicate the organisation's values, and model good leadership

Establishing quality assurance procedures is key in ensuring that each and every guest receives the same level of service, no matter what.

skills, which focuses on human sustainability, social sustainability, economic sustainability and environmental sustainability.

How does Buhari maintain its quality? What are the famous dishes?

Establishing quality assurance procedures is key in ensuring that each and every guest receives the same level of service, no matter what. This helps maintain a consistently high standard of service and food quality. Using the best high-quality ingredients and food products, consistent delivery of service and dine in have been fostering the high



standards, which is visible in our patrons' satisfaction survey results.

Some of the famous dishes at Buhari are Biryani, Samosa, Chicken 65, Chicken 90, Wheat Parotta, Ceylon Stuffed Parotta, Mutton Kurma, Jamali Chicken, Campbell Chicken, Bun Butter Jam, Idiyappam Biryani, Dum Tea, Peach Melba, Falooda.

How has the customer profile changed over time?

With the rise in online food deliveries and an increased focus on food quality, customers have become savvier and more selective in their spending. Customers' expectations are far higher, they want friendly and efficient service, and value for money. Social media has given the consumers a louder voice and new channels to communicate with brands and share their opinions. Rapid change in fashion, trends, style of living, and the Covid -19 pandemic have changed the customers' profile overtime.

How does it feel to receive the Award from FCIC?

Winning this award from FCIC, I feel overwhelmed, honoured and this adds another feather to our cap. It makes me realise that my work is valued, and motivates me to carry on the good work that will shape my business career for the better. ❤️

IRONHILL

REDEFINES CULINARY LUXURY



Ironhill has always been more than just a microbrewery; it's a culture that brings together a passionate team dedicated to crafting exceptional experiences. The Chefs Arena learns more about Ironhill from Mr Teja Chekuri, Global Entrepreneur and Managing Partner, Ironhill India

Tell us about the Ironhill culture and the legends behind the legend - the people involved.

Ironhill has always been more than just a microbrewery; it's a culture that brings together a passionate team dedicated to crafting exceptional experiences. This is not possible without a strong team that is bound together by professional respect.

The team has fondly given the founders the moniker of the 'Fantastic Four' which includes Harsha Vadlamudi, Vidhatha Annamaneni, Subbaraju Penmatsa and myself. And we proudly carry that forward with individual responsibilities that are entrusted to us based on our skill sets. However, we see the legends of Ironhill as the skilled brewers, creative chefs, and dedicated staff who work tirelessly to uphold the brand's commitment to quality and innovation. Each member contributes to the unique aura that defines Ironhill, making it a legendary destination for craft beer enthusiasts and fine dining.

What keeps the Ironhill brand ticking in the macro world of microbreweries?

At Ironhill, we focus on perfecting the trifecta – great brews, delicious food and exemplary service all housed in a warm and inviting space lavishly spread across several beautifully crafted enclaves with chic art décor and contemporary design.

We don't just offer beer; we craft an experience—a tapestry of flavors, aromas, and shared moments that etch themselves into your memory. Nestled in the heart of India's bustling microbrewery scene, Ironhill stands out from the crowd with its dedication to quality, innovation and a deep understanding of customer preferences. Our brewing combines the finest ingredients to age old techniques, ensuring each beer has a distinct flavour that lingers on your palate.

What are your signature F&B dishes? Who is your ideal customer?

Our signature F&B dishes are crafted with the same attention to detail as our beers. Some highlights include Mushroom Ontario, Koli Chips, Chicken Wings expertly paired with our diverse selection of craft beers. Our ideal customer is one who appreciates the artistry of brewing and culinary skills and seeks a unique and elevated dining experience.

What are your plans for the future of Ironhill in India?

With 6 bustling microbreweries across Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Bangalore, Rajahmundry, and Nellore, we plan to maximize our footprint in each of these cities as we explore franchisee possibilities in the Western and Northern parts of our country. Currently, we are evaluating several

proposals for franchisees in Delhi-NCR and Pune.

How is the menu planned, and what other factors do you consider during this stage?

An F&B outlet needs to be known as much for the food as the beverage, if not more. At our restaurant, we take menu planning very seriously. Our meticulous process involves thorough research, curation, and testing to ensure that we offer a diverse, delicious, and innovative menu. Experimentation of a combination of global culinary trends, prominent local flavours and customer feedback usually gets the right results. I personally work very closely with our food curation team and chefs to create dishes that perfectly complement our wide selection of beers. Each plate undergoes rigorous sampling and testing to ensure that it meets our high standards of quality and taste.

However, menu innovation is an ongoing process. The team continuously evaluates the menu and finds ways to refine and enhance it. This allows us to keep up with changing tastes and

preferences and offer our customers a fresh and exciting dining experience every time they visit.

How have different cuisines impacted your offerings, and how do you decide the hero dishes in your menu?

Our passion for diverse culinary traditions is reflected in our menu. We take great pride in selecting dishes from world cuisines that complement our craft beers, ensuring each plate has a perfect balance of taste, texture, and aroma.

When it comes to deciding the hero dishes, it's a delicate dance between honoring classic flavors and infusing our own creative twist. We explore global culinary trends

Ironhill, focuses on perfecting the trifecta – great brews, delicious food and exemplary service.



on an ongoing basis, seeking out what resonates with our patrons. The goal is not just to replicate dishes but to reimagine them in a way that seamlessly integrates with the overall concept of our restaurant and the local palate.

Customer feedback plays a pivotal role in perfecting the recipe for hero dishes which our chefs are deeply invested in.

What does winning the award mean to you?

Winning an award is a remarkable accomplishment that showcases the tireless efforts and unwavering dedication of the entire Ironhill team toward our collective passion for creating exceptional microbrews and culinary delights for our patrons. It serves as a significant validation of our steadfast commitment to excellence in both brewing and culinary arts. An award recognizes our past achievements and catalyzes future endeavors, inspiring us to consistently push boundaries, innovate, and exceed our customers' expectations.

Moreover, an award encourages us to explore new frontiers and pursue our mission of offering our customers the best possible experience by continuously improving our craft and setting new standards of excellence in the industry. 🍷



MEHFIL CREATING A NICHE FOR ITS SIGNATURE BIRYANI IN THE LAND OF BIRYANIS



How is South Indian biryani different from the rest? What sets it apart? "Well that's a secret!" say **Mr. Jaleel Farrokh Rooz** and **Mr. Mohammad Mubin Pasha** of Mehfil Group of Restaurants as they talk about their winning streak to **The Chefs Arena**.

Tell us about Mehfil's beginnings 14 Years ago. Who were the people behind it, and how did it expand to 9 branches?

Fourteen years ago, our journey began with a simple yet ambitious vision: to serve the most authentic and flavorful biryani in Hyderabad. Rooted in the rich heritage of the region, we set out to create a dining experience that would resonate with the diverse palates of our patrons.

The initial days were marked by a small but dedicated team of chefs and staff, driven by a passion for culinary excellence. Our biryani quickly gained popularity among the locals, and word-of-mouth became our greatest ally. The warmth of the people in our community played a crucial role in our early success. Their enthusiasm for our biryani fueled our

determination to continually enhance our offerings.

As demand soared, we embraced the opportunity to expand our footprint. From a single humble establishment, we strategically opened branches across South India, ensuring that our biryani reached enthusiasts far and wide. Today, with pride and gratitude, we operate nine branches, each a testament to the unwavering support of our loyal customers and the dedication of our team.

What is special about Mehfil's signature biryani, that too in a city which is all about biryanis? What are the other popular dishes at Mehfil?

In a city that boasts a rich tapestry of biryani offerings, our signature biryani stands out as a true masterpiece. The secret lies in our meticulous selection of the finest ingredients, coupled with a closely guarded blend of aromatic spices. The result is a biryani that pampers the taste buds with its perfect harmony of flavors, textures, and fragrances.

Our signature biryani is a celebration of tradition and innovation, showcasing the culinary expertise that sets us apart. It's a symphony of succulent meat, fragrant basmati rice, and our proprietary blend of spices, slow-cooked to perfection in traditional dum style.

While our biryani takes

center stage, our menu is a journey that goes beyond this iconic dish. From tantalising kebabs to decadent desserts, each item on our menu reflects the same commitment to quality and authenticity. Popular dishes include our delectable kebab platters, rich and creamy kormas, and a variety of biryani accompaniments that elevate the dining experience.

What are your future plans? Where is Mehfil heading to?

Looking ahead, our vision extends beyond the nine branches that currently grace South India. We are actively exploring opportunities for national and international expansion, driven by a commitment to share the culinary excellence that defines us. Our goal is to introduce our authentic South Indian biryani to new audiences, bringing a taste of tradition and innovation to diverse communities.

Our expansion strategy involves careful consideration of locations that align with our brand ethos and resonate with lovers of fine cuisine. We envision creating a network of establishments that not only serve exceptional food but also contribute to the cultural tapestry of the communities

they inhabit.

What kind of customers does Mehfil attract?

Our customer profile is as diverse as the flavors we offer. From families seeking a wholesome dining experience to young professionals looking for a quick and delicious meal, our biryani caters to a broad demographic. We've become a go-to destination for celebrations, business lunches, and casual dinners alike.

Our patrons appreciate the authenticity of our offerings, and our commitment to quality resonates with those who seek a genuine taste of Hyderabad culinary heritage. Whether locals or tourists, our customers share a common love for exceptional food and a

The secret lies in our meticulous selection of the finest ingredients, coupled with a closely guarded blend of aromatic spices.



Mr. Jaleel Farrokh Rooz



desire to savor the essence of Hyderabad on their plates.

What does winning the award mean to you?

Winning the award for the best biryani in South India is a humbling and exhilarating experience for our entire team. It validates the years of hard work, dedication, and passion that have gone into perfecting our craft. The recognition is not just a feather in our cap; it's a testament to the love and loyalty of our customers who have made this journey possible.

This award is a source of motivation to continually raise the bar of excellence. It inspires us to explore new avenues, innovate our offerings, and strive for perfection in every aspect of our operation. More than an accolade, it's a responsibility — a commitment to consistently deliver the exceptional dining experience that our customers have come to expect.

Beyond the immediate joy of winning, the award opens doors to new opportunities and markets. It solidifies our position in the culinary landscape, attracting a broader audience and reinforcing our brand as a symbol of quality and authenticity. As we celebrate this achievement, we do so with gratitude to our customers, pride in our team, and a renewed dedication to the art of crafting the finest biryani in South India. 🍽️

FROM NAUTANKI GALI TO SAHIB'S BBQ, TO CAKE NATION, AND BEYOND OHRI'S JOURNEY CONTINUES



The man at the helm of a dynamic and exquisite restaurant empire that has provided a vast array of specialty restaurants and added significant layers to Hyderabad's dine out landscape.

Mr Amar Ohri,
Managing Director,
Ohri's, in conversation
with **The Chefs Arena.**

Could you tell us about the Ohri's Group's legacy?

Ohri was started by my grandfather. The first one in Baseer Baug, which became an iconic ice cream parlour, and a vegetarian snacks parlour called 'Eatmor', is currently celebrating 47 years. We feel very honoured and blessed that we are a brand with such a rich legacy, which I now manage and carry on. The call to fame to Eat Mor is the Chole Bhatura that is still being made from our house. My wife Sonam makes it even today. It is still one of the favourite restaurants in Hyderabad and people have some brilliant and cherished memories of it. My

father started Hotel Basera in Secunderabad which became an iconic 3 star hotel in its heyday, and then I joined my parents in 1998, and created a lot of innovative concepts. Today Ohri's has 40 plus outlets spread across various brands. I have been continuously creating brands, innovating and growing in the city, and I feel blessed for all of that.

What has been your success mantra?

Keeping things consistent, innovating with newer brands, changing with the trends as the city matures and grows, updating, refreshing and creating brands like Cock and



Bull, and Resign and Sahib, Cake Nation and Qaffeine to appeal the younger audience, as we are keeping our legacy brand consistent, newer concepts to appease the newer growth, the population, and the new metropolitan city of Hyderabad that we are seeing, helps us grow.

What are the signature dishes that keep customers walking in for more?

Multiple brands have different signature dishes, like the iconic Eat Mor brand has Chole Bhatura and Tutti Frutti ice cream, which are favourite haunts for the city, Awful Awful, a sundae, is also very popular, Qaffeine is popular for its Cold

Coffee, and Cappuccino. In Indian cuisine we have Talwar Kebab, in Sahib's. All these signature dishes make the brands popular.

Are there expansion plans in the anvil?

Only Hyderabad is on the cards. We are looking to add at least 10-20 of small formats

From 40 outlets, we want to take it to 55 plus in Hyderabad itself.



and a couple of large formats next year. Among the fastest growing brands are Sahib, Tansen, Cake Nation and Qaffeine within the company. From 40, we want to take it to 55 plus in Hyderabad itself, at least for the next two years. Once we cover enough pockets within Hyderabad we will look to expand further south.

What is the customer profile at Ohri's, and how does it feel to receive the award?

When it comes to customer profile we have a wide diaspora of guests coming to us. There are families that prefer our old format, and we have the younger IT crowd that loves our bars. This younger population also loves to chit chat and have a great time at our cafes. Typically the audience is anywhere between young kids to old parents and grandparents. Ohri's has enough brands to cater to all preferences, and different target groups out there.

The award is such an honour and blessing. I am really thankful and grateful, and I also feel that there is a lot more work to be done personally. The next couple of years will be defining to take Ohri's to the pinnacle, but right now I feel super happy and super blessed. Thank you so much for the award. 🙏



FROM TEHRAN TO TABLE: SHEESHKEBAB UNVEILS PERSIAN CULINARY DELIGHTS



Know how the authentic ingredients sourced from their homeland, form the heart and soul of every scrumptious kebab served at SheeshKebab. The Chefs Arena gathers all the insider's secrets from Mr Anas Nouman of Sheeshkebab.

What was the thought behind serving Persian food, and the fusion of Awadhi and Irani cuisine?

With my family's food legacy since 1965 and my experience in Bangalore's food scene since 2004, I observed a gap in authentic kebabs during my Middle East travels. In 2018, I founded SheeshKebab to bring genuine Persian flavors, using spices. Our unique menu combines Indian, Persian, and fusion kebabs, catering to diverse palates. SheeshKebab proudly stands as Bangalore's only restaurant serving Persian kebabs.

Tell us more about the ambiance, the pressure points in introducing lesser known tastes and cuisines. How have the customers accepted it and how do you create 'wow' moments for your customers?

SheeshKebab carefully crafts its atmosphere, featuring open-air dining with mango trees and a waterfall, enhancing the experience. Quality is paramount, and we source our authentic ingredients from Tehran in Iran.

Customer approval thrives on a commitment to superior Persian and Indian flavors. The 'wow moments' are achieved by offering



value for money, ensuring fair pricing for high-quality food, aiming to leave customers satisfied and impressed with exceptional service. Our motto is 'Love the food, live the experience', and despite imitators, our passion remains strong. One can copy the look, style, and design, but the taste can never be replicated. Original is always original.

What kind of customers love SheeshKebab, and how has the demand for the restaurant grown? What are the signature dishes?

SheeshKebab caters to meat lovers with authentic Persian kebabs. The demand, fueled by customers from all over Bangalore, led to our second branch in Central Bangalore at St Marks Road. Signature dishes like Chelo Kebab, Kebab-e Koobideh, Kebab-e Loghme, Joojeh Irani Kebab and Kebab-e Taftoon, contribute to our unique culinary experience,

SheeshKebab proudly stands as Bangalore's only restaurant serving Persian kebabs.



leaving a lasting positive impression and encouraging customers to return and recommend SheeshKebab.

What are your future plans for SheeshKebab?

With gratitude to Allah, SheeshKebab has become a beloved brand in the city, aspiring to be an iconic and legendary restaurant in Bangalore. We are committed to maintaining quality and taste as we organically grow into more branches.

How does it feel receiving the FCIC award?

This award is a reward for our hard work and honesty, a testament to our guests accepting us as their own. It's a collective effort from the entire SheeshKebab team and their families that has led to our recognition. ❤️

TREAD ON STREET 1522 LINED WITH 900 PLUS CULINARY DELIGHTS



“Street 1522 offers a street-like walk-through experience where one can discover the popular and best F&B brands of Bangalore”, says Mr Amar Singh, the Co-Founder of Street 1522, as he talks to The Chefs Arena.

The name Street 1522 is very unique. How did it all begin and tell us about the people behind it?

Street 1522 commenced its journey in 2021, emerging as a collaborative venture between Eatstreet and 1522, envisioned by me and Chetan Hegde. This innovative collaboration aimed to transform ambitious concepts into a vibrant reality. Located in Bangalore, Street 1522 represents a versatile hospitality destination, seamlessly blending the cozy ambience of a cafe with the dynamic energy of a pub. Chetan and I, along with our dynamic team, have dedicated our expertise to crafting an environment where patrons can indulge in diverse culinary delights. The journey thus far reflects

a steadfast commitment to providing unique and enjoyable experiences, harmonising the best elements of both worlds.

What is the X Factor that helps stay at the top of the game amidst similar formats of pubs?

Street 1522 maintains a distinct position in the competitive landscape through its unique collaboration between Eatstreet and 1522. These two brands created Street 1522, an experience unparalleled anywhere in India. It offers a street-like walkthrough experience where one can discover the popular and best F&B brands of Bangalore. The “market on your plate” format has attracted both the young and old to tromp to this place for



an amazing experience. This collaboration acts as the X factor, enabling Street 1522 to offer a diverse range of culinary experiences that seamlessly blend the comfort of a cafe with the dynamic ambience of a pub. The commitment to versatility, inclusivity, and constant innovation sets Street 1522 apart from similar pub formats, ensuring it remains at the forefront of the industry. With over 900 items on the menu, this offering has become a go-to destination for those seeking a unique and memorable dining experience.

What kind of customers does Street 1522 attract?

Street 1522 caters to a diverse clientele, welcoming patrons of all ages and social backgrounds. The versatile menu and experiences are designed to appeal to a broad audience, creating a dynamic and vibrant social atmosphere. Street 1522’s commitment to inclusivity ensures that it caters to various social inclinations,

Street 1522 seamlessly blends the cozy ambience of a cafe with the dynamic energy of a pub

making it a destination for everyone seeking a unique and enjoyable dining experience.

What are the USPs, signature beverages, and dishes at Street 1522?

USPs of Street 1522’s strengths lie in its unique collaboration, providing a fusion of cafe and pub elements. Versatility, inclusivity, and continuous innovation are key differentiators.

At Street 1522, customer satisfaction is our priority, showcased in our unique LIT cocktails - Kand, Fadu, the flaming lamborghini and Hawas, crafted with



homemade gomme syrup. Complementing these are our culinary delights. One can indulge in Chicken Peking Dimsums, Spice-dusted Corn Ribs, and Homemade Onion Rings,

explore non-veg appetizers like Spicy Prawn Ajillo and Spicy Chicken Wings, then move on to mains featuring all pastas, Grilled Chicken Thighs, and Seared Fish, and conclude the culinary journey with a delightful dessert choice, like the exquisite Panna Cotta. These signature offerings define Street 1522’s commitment to a distinctive dining experience, blending exquisite beverages with a diverse range of culinary excellence.

How does it feel to receive the FCIC Award?

Being acknowledged for this award is truly a gratifying experience. This recognition validates our team’s dedication to creating a unique and memorable dining space, setting us apart from competitors. It’s not just about receiving an award; it’s a testament to the passion and creativity that goes into every detail at Street 1522. This achievement inspires us to keep pushing boundaries, ensuring that our commitment to excellence and innovation continues to define the Street 1522 experience for our valued patrons. 🍷

UNLOCKING THE DOORS TO SUCCESS THROUGH GRIT AND DETERMINATION

Starting from scratch, and reinventing, not just recipes but the learnings and the career path, **Chef M Rehman**, Doctorate In Culinary Arts, Founder of Chef Rehman Culinary Services & Afreen Foods LLP, talks to **The Chefs Arena**, about carving his niche in the culinary world!



You have been associated with a plethora of prestigious brands as a guest chef, as a visiting chef, and more. Tell us about it.

Yes, I have been associated with most of the prestigious brands of hotels, clubs and resorts, since the beginning of my career. I was not interested in joining a company, and my vision was to establish a name for myself by my own work and do something different and off the mainstream. So, freelancing or consultancy was the only way for me. Initially it was very tough during the late nineties, when there weren't a lot of companies in India. Most of them already had master chefs, and it was quite tough to convince them. But somehow, Taj Group was convinced with my work and asked me to do a food festival. That was my first break, and in the first year I got only 2 assignments with which it was very difficult to build a name or even sustain my business. The only option was to promote my name and my work, and for that I visited major cities in India like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Bengaluru, contacted hotels, introduced myself, explained my work, and how I was different from their team and why they should be hiring me. These

are the questions which I had to reply to very confidently, sometimes I received a positive response, sometimes very negative and discouraging feedback, and sometimes the client was not willing to meet me, and asked me to drop my visiting card at the reception. Those were difficult times filled with hardship, and no doubt that made me stronger day by day and pushed me to achieve my goal.

How did you enter the culinary world?

I had no idea about my destiny, I was a science student and from 8th standard it was decided that I will become an engineer. But only God knows where you will go. Due to one major incident in my life, all my plans underwent a change and got disturbed. My beloved mother died in 1992, I broke down emotionally, and was not able to think further. That very year I got selected in a good engineering institute of India via a state level engineering competition, but I didn't take admission. Later on I took admission for the graduation programme and then Masters in Business. As I was from a traditional family, cooking was more like a hobby which began at the age of 11. So, I continued the same family legacy. Later on I diversified into hospitality education, and a few years ago, I was awarded a Doctorate in Culinary Arts as well. A career in the culinary world was not planned nor was it my first choice, but after entering the culinary world, I never looked



generations, as now day by day youngsters have become money-centric more than focusing on learning, quality work, and gaining knowledge. Based on the current scenario of the hotel industry, freshers and youngsters are disheartened, have been switching over to different industries, as the culinary industry involves erratic shifts, long hours, lower pay scale, and the career growth is very slow. In over two decades of my experience in the culinary world I have

realised that competition is present in every field and it is a part of life. There is a severe scarcity of well trained workforce and people who are passionate about their job. The aspirants need to understand that opportunities in this field are in abundance, but the peak in earnings is likely to spike only after 4-5 years of work experience. The sky's the limit for this sunrise industry.

As a visiting faculty I keep teaching and conducting workshops on different Indian cuisines, as I want future chefs to get attracted to our own cuisines, and elevate these to put them on a world platform.

What do you feel are the winners, and what are the lacks in today's hospitality education system? How can these be filled in?

Well, today's hospitality education system is not yet updated according to time. Our IHMs are still running with the same old curriculum, so the outcome product is not updated. We need to restructure and modify

I contacted hotels, introduced myself, explained my work, and how I was different from their team and why they should be hiring me.

back. The culinary world is not just a career, it's more than even passion for me.

You are associated with some reputed hospitality education institutes, in advisory roles. What do such roles comprise? Tell us more about the associations.

Yes, I am associated with a few reputed hospitality education groups, in advisory and visiting faculty roles. Majorly I would like to name Lexicon Institute of Hotel Management, Pune. This is my contribution to the future

our facilities, add new and modern faculties and need teachers training in advanced institutes, most of these are only available abroad. In India few private institutes are up to the desired levels and provide quality education, but the fees at such institutes is very high. The Ministry of Human Resources, should take more interest to upgrade the standards of our IHMs.

What do you see in today's culinary students, that you didn't see back then, and what are the traits that have gone



missing?

Most of the students today want to master continental or western cuisine, with an aim to move abroad, or take up jobs on cruise liners after 5 years of their education. This choice has a monetary angle to it. Every culinary student should aim to gain maximum knowledge, learn modern techniques and gastronomy, think about perfection and have a motto to deliver world class quality.

Your style of cooking is earthy and native. How important is it to connect with your roots when you cook?

Yes, I am working on old techniques of cooking, which I feel is basically the soul of Indian cuisine. To lend authenticity to the cuisine, it's very important to follow our roots, understand the genesis, and the process of cooking, which would comprise every step from the beginning till the end.

How has your cooking evolved over the years? Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?

Apart from basic traditional cooking I have from time-to-time been upgrading the modern cooking patterns and new norms of the kitchen. If you want to popularise your cuisine it's very important to be ready to adapt to changes. In the last 5-10 years I have established the strength of my cooking in two versions, one is the typical authentic way, and the other one is modern cooking with modern gas like induction, and modern utensils.

I see a notable change in the next five years. As of now I have adopted modern cooking utensils and vessels but in future I will move further to change the ingredients, accompaniments, presentation, cuts, garnish and some cooking techniques.

Share with us your top 'aha' moments, and how have these shaped you as a professional?

There have been so many amazing moments in my professional life. The top 'aha' moment was when I bagged an assignment for an elite party and there I had to serve only Muslim vegetarian food

in an 8 course meal. The food was much appreciated by the guests and that really was a very challenging job. That was truly an 'aha' moment.

Indian cuisine has been recently ranked as the 5th healthiest cuisine in the world. How do you see it evolving in the next ten years? How do you envision Indian cuisine on the world cuisine map?

Yes, after Chinese, Indian cuisine is very popular across the world and the 5th healthiest cuisine in the world. But now onwards the competition is going to be very tough, and it won't be easy reaching the next level. We have to standardise our cuisine which is not yet done. At the same time, presentation, new techniques, and fusion are also very important, just as in other cuisines that are implementing and upgrading very fast. One special wing of research and development in institutes and colleges is very much required, and at the same time we need highly skilled Indian chefs who would be dedicated to different core areas of research. For that we need special budgets and sponsorship programs to attract our young stars. If we keep these in mind and start our work in a progressive way, certainly the results will exceed our expectations. We can rise to either the second, or even the first position.

What are the core principles that have stayed with you and have been a part of your success?

Trust on hard and smart work. Your knowledge should be updated. You should know what is going on in the culinary world and what are the new challenges. We should take pride in our cuisine. ❤️

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AMLA - THE ANCIENT SUPER BERRY

As winter brings in the crisp air and much needed relief from the heat, it also opens the doors to let allergies and germs in that challenge our immune system. In winters people in India relish the lush green Amla fruit or Indian Gooseberry. **Chef Bharat Alagh** Vice President, Operations & Culinary, Orange Tiger Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., examines the benefits of the ancient super berry 'Amla' to shield us from ailments beyond winter.

What makes Amla The Ancient Super Berry? According to the Hindu Mythology, once when Brahma was engrossed in the meditation of Lord Vishnu, tears started rolling down his eyes. When these tears fell on the ground, the amla tree germinated.

According to another mythological anecdote, there was a fight between the Gods and Demons, after the Ksheer Sagar Manthan (churning of the milky ocean), when the nectar and poison that emerged from the ocean were being distributed. Amla has been believed to have originated from the Amrit or elixir of immortality that fell on the earth.

Amla is the first tree to be created in the universe which belongs to the family of Euphorbiaceae. Amla is native to India and also grows in the tropical and subtropical

The name "Amla" originated from the word 'Amlaki', which in Sanskrit means 'Nectar of Life'. A tree that is native to Asia, amla or Indian Gooseberry truly has a superfood status.



regions of Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, South East Asia, China and Malaysia. The fruits of amla are widely used in the Ayurvedic preparations and are believed to increase defense against diseases. It has a beneficial role in curing degenerative diseases like cancer, diabetes, liver treatment, ulcer, anemia, heart trouble. It is highly nutritious and is one of the richest sources of Vitamin C, amino acids and minerals. The immunity boosting Chyavanprash can boast of amla as one of its key ingredients.

Embelica officialis, commonly known as Indian gooseberry or amla

is the most important medicinal plant in the Indian traditional system of medicine, the Ayurveda. Various parts of the plant are used to treat a range of diseases, but the most important and significant, is the fruit. The fruit, either alone, or in combination with other plants is used to treat many ailments such as common cold, fever, infections. The berries with their anti-inflammatory properties act as a liver and hair tonic.

Amla is considered as one of the most important rasayana herbs. Rasayana refers to the practices that give us 'long life', memory,

intellect, health, youthful age, charisma, good skin color, a strong voice, strength in body and senses, power of speech and splendor. 🍌

It is highly nutritious and is one of the richest sources of Vitamin C, amino acids and minerals.

These are some of the promising benefits of amla:

Promotes immune function. Amla juice is a great source of Vitamin C, which is a water soluble vitamin and acts as an antioxidant

- Enhances liver health
- Supports healthy digestion
- Promotes heart health
- Increases hair growth
- Improves the health of kidneys
- Aids decongestion
- Helps manage weight
- Helps manage chronic illnesses
- Prevents constipation
- Naturally purifies blood
- Improves skin quality
- Improves eyesight
- Eases pain
- High fiber content prevents constipation
- Cures sore throat
- Cures insomnia
- Prevents respiratory problems
- Cures infections
- Good for bone health
- Supports reproduction
- Prevents diseases like dementia and Alzheimer's
- Boosts memory
- Prevents formation of gall bladder stones
- Helps in weight loss
- Improves cardiovascular health
- Helps in healing mouth ulcers
- Reduces risk of cataracts
- Treats scalp problems

- Helps in reducing the pain of arthritis patients
- Prevents lice and greying of hair
- Prevents hair fall and dandruff.
- Provides ease in cramps
- Prevents and reduces pigmentation
- Reduces skin irritation
- Heals pimples
- Has anti-ageing properties
- Helps reduce cholesterol
- Helps to lower blood pressure
- Maintains metabolism

One can consume amla in several forms

- Dried amla as a snack and in the form of candies
- Amla powder
- Amla juice in the morning on an empty stomach
- Raw amla (one or two)
- Amla pickle
- Amla chutney
- Amla murabba
- Amla Katli (Dessert)

One fresh Amla contains

- 80% water
- 0.9% Protein
- 3.4% Fiber
- 6.9% Carbohydrates
- 0.7% Minerals
- 0.1% Fat
- Vitamin C (463 mg/100 gms)
- Calcium (34 mg/100gms)
- Phosphorus, Iron (1.2%)
- Carotene and Vitamin B Complex (1%)



Here's the 'Amlamantra'
An Amla a Day, Keeps Diseases at Bay.

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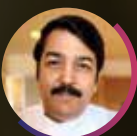
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