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India Edition

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*Sanjeev Kapoor*



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Appearances can be deceptive. Which is why it's always wiser to look beyond the glitz of the surface if you want see the hard reality. Take the case of the internet-first restaurants. In recent times, the internet has become the launchpad for dozens of restaurant startups and food tech companies. In no time, these new ventures have become a rage all over. Bright young people have given up lucrative careers to set up online restaurants and even seasoned, hard-nosed veterans have rolled up their sleeves to enter the food services market, believed to be worth USD 50 billion and growing at 16 to 20 per cent YOY.

Such has been the excitement that new ventures have popped up with metronomic regularity. According to market reports, food technology start-ups attracted \$130.3 million of investments between January and September 2015. Everyone – right from venture capitalists to angel investors – have taken a fancy to these new ventures, considered to be smoking hot and sizzling with business potential. Names like SpoonJoy, Yumist, Hello Curry, TinyOwl, Swiggy, Dazo, BiteClub, NutriTown, Brekkie, FreshMenu, FRSH, HolaChef, and Eatlo, to name just a few, became the toast of the town, especially among the younger generations and working professionals.

However, it seems that the reality of running a complex business like food services is catching up fast. Several of the celebrated names mentioned earlier are today grappling with capital crunch and management-related issues. This has forced many of them to reduce their cash burn rate and re-assess their business models.

It would be a pity if these new entities were to wither on the vine even before blooming. Not only have they been able to bring diversity and vibrancy into the Indian food service market otherwise dominated by multinational QSR chains and local restaurants, they have also been instrumental in bringing about a range of innovations related to the production, distribution and supply chain of food. If these start-ups are able to hold their ground and fight off the funding problems that many are facing now, I am sure they will be able to emerge stronger and healthier. It's a consummation devoutly to be wished.



Amitabh Taneja

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**In the course of your long career, you must have seen many changes in this vocation. Which has been the most fascinating one? How would you describe your culinary journey so far?**

The concept of ‘chef entrepreneur’ has taken roots. More and more chefs are expressing their individuality by embracing this concept. From being a behind-the-scenes profession to today’s idea of a chef entrepreneur, it sums up the changes the vocation has gone through. As far as my culinary journey is concerned, it has been a satisfying and enriching one. Everyday is a new day, this vocation has taught me so many things...and I’m still learning and enjoying.

**Tell us about your approach to cooking. Are you a traditionalist or a modernist? Do you like keeping things simple and real or in creating new trends? What is your cooking style and what have been the changes you have made to it over the years?**

My approach to cooking doesn’t have an answer to the question ‘are you a traditionalist or modernist.’ My cooking encompasses everything. I like keeping things very simple and real and that probably becomes a new



# Chef Entrepreneur

## Sanjeev Kapoor

trend. I travel a lot, keep my eyes open, talk food wherever I go, learn and keep on experimenting with food on a daily basis. I've tried to simplify food to the greatest extent and that's the change that has happened.



**What is your view of the new-fangled kitchen equipment and tools that are being taken so seriously by chefs these days? Do these gadgets help inspire greater creativity among chefs and make food more flavourful?**

Gadgets don't make the food flavourful. The ingredients and their right use, the knowledge of what ingredients to use and what goes with what, makes food flavourful. Gadgets are only an aid and as it's true for every other gadget in life. Everyone has to differentiate between the use and misuse. So, if you become gadget-dependent and use less of your talent as a chef then you may go wrong. Be open to gadgets, use them, but use them only when required. Don't use them for the sake of using them!

**Which are your favourite cuisines and what has been your method of giving these cuisines your personalised touch?**

I enjoy all cuisines. I've travelled all over the world and believe me I've not tasted bad food anywhere. At the end of the day, I try making that food. But if I have to pick up one particular cuisine, let me be very patriotic and say it's Indian cuisine! In everything that I cook, there has to be a personalised touch and this is true for every other chef.

**What do you feel about the future of the food industry – do you think that going forward food will increasingly be marketed along the lines of goodness and wellness. How do you envisage the evolving role of chefs in a changing food scenario?**

The future of food industry is as bright as ever. The past has been good, so is the present, and the future will be equally good if not better. Food is never going to go out of fashion. In our country, food, cricket, and entertainment are the three religions. Similarly, in every other country, whatever the religion maybe – cricket maybe replaced by football – but food will always remain there!



Going forward, yes, food will be increasingly marketed along the lines of goodness and wellness. People will keep talking about goodness and wellness, but these do not come through talking. They need to practise it in everything that they do in life, including food. In a society, wherever changes take place, change is a constant. And wherever changes take place, there is always a change agent. So, in the food scenario, the change agent has to be the chef. They've always been and will always be.

**Will it augur well for the food service industry if the focus of chefs moves more to the role of marketing food than making good food?**

Never! First things first – if you cannot make good food, you cannot market! What is there to market!?



**In a society, wherever changes take place, change is a constant. And wherever changes take place, there is always a change agent. So, in the food scenario, the change agent has to be the chef. They've always been and will always be**



# Fishy Tales

One of the oldest companies in the raw frozen seafood market in India, Gadre Marine is now focusing on the RTC & RTE segments which also include surimi (Japanese term for fish paste) products. The company recently brought on board Michelin star chef Vikas Khanna to give a fresh impetus to its surimi line of products like crab sticks, crab claws and lobster bites. Nivedita Jayaram Pawar spoke to Arjun Gadre, MD, on popularising surimi and the challenges posed by cold chain in India



## FAST FACTS

**Year of inception:** 1978

**Founder:** Deepak Gadre

**Product category:** Raw cleaned fish, Ready to Eat, Ready to Cook, surimi based products

**Percentage of wastage:** About 5 per cent of our product are wasted due to loss of cold chain.

**No of SKUs:** 12

**Rate of growth:** 20-25 per cent year on year

**Turnover:** Rs 650 cr

**Gadré Marine started in 1978, as a processing and packaging unit of frozen marine products. What was the major turning point in the journey?**

We started India's first surimi processing plant with Korean technology in 1994. With innovation and the idea of value addition to surimi, Gadre Marine started a surimi value-added plant in 2004. This was the turning point.

You have signed on Michelin star chef Vikas Khanna as your brand ambassador. What role will the chef play in the company? We have now launched our surimi based product – crab sticks – in the Indian market. We are hoping that chef Vikas Khanna who has used these products internationally will help us popularise and take surimi based products to Indian households and restaurants. It's an extremely versatile product that can be used as a base ingredient to make a variety of dishes including soups, starters, mains and salads. We are in the process of creating around 15 short videos where chef Khanna will demonstrate the versatility of the product to the consumers. These will be pushed through the digital space. We want more and more people to use crab sticks to make Indian and international dishes with ease. It will even help restaurant chefs to be creative with using crab sticks to come up with a variety of dishes for their patrons.

**What are surimi crab sticks?**

Surimi is a Japanese term for pure fish meat. It was introduced in 1975 in Japan. The underlying process involves cleaning fresh fish to get rid of unwanted parts like head, bones, gut, skin, tail, fins, scales, etc and cleaning it 2-3 times, which rids it of all the blood and enzymes. What remains is pure white neutral tasting fish meat to which natural flavours extracted from crab shells are added and then textured and turned into desired shapes. It's a clean and healthy product, which is readily available and not as expensive as natural crabs.

Surimi products like crab sticks are the third most popular seafood product sold in supermarkets across the world (shrimps and salmon are the first two). Every single California roll made in the world has a piece of crab stick in it. We are hoping that we will be able to create the same kind of demand for surimi-based products in India. Our marketing campaign, which is titled 'What the Fish', will also include a TVC.

**According to a research report by Frost & Sullivan the Indian frozen food market is estimated at Rs 1,500 crore and is expected to reach Rs 3,750 crore in the next five years. What are the factors responsible for this growth?**

Sea food consumption is constantly increasing in the past few years and we believe it will play an important role contributing to the overall turnover. India is a huge market for all types of consumer products. In the next 10 year we expect India to be one of the most significant markets for seafood.

**You are present across the spectrum from raw frozen seafood to RTC and RTE. Which direction do you see the trend moving to?**

The frozen seafood market in India has been dominated mainly by raw frozen food. Freezing technology was used more for preservation than for adding value in terms of convenience and reducing kitchen time. But of late the trend has now shifted to RTC and RTE segments. This is especially true in urban India where couples work and have very little time to cook. So they are constantly looking for something that requires very little cooking time and is also healthy. The best thing about frozen food is that there are no chemical preservatives used. We use temperature as a preservative (-18 degree Celsius). It's not like a pickle or a fruit squash, which is usually laced with a lot of citric acid to stop the microbial activity. Frozen food is now accepted across India. People believe in the quality of RTC and frozen foods. Good quality and availability throughout the year is also a factor that influences consumers. Fish, which used to be eaten mainly in the coastal regions of our country, is now finding takers all across India. There is a growing demand for good quality frozen seafood.



**Are you looking to expand the product range?**

Currently over 60 per cent of our sales and revenue come from the RTC & RTE segments. In the raw fish category, we only deal with Tilapia fish fillets and Sear fish steak. We have stayed away from the more popular products like shrimps and prawns. We do want to come into that segment in the near future. The problem is that shrimps have today become a commodity and not a speciality. We want to be in the speciality category than be one amongst the many players in the commodity segment. So we are looking to launch a complete range that will include shrimps, mackerel, pompret and others by the end of the year.

**What is the toughest thing in the frozen food business?**

Fresh vs. Frozen... Consumers think that frozen food is not fresh. The freezing technology employed at the time of freezing is extremely important. Restaurants that claim that they use only fresh fish bought everyday in the morning are not only fooling themselves but also their customers. Most of the fish which is bought in the morning is used for dinner when the restaurant sees more customers. In the meanwhile it is put in the deep freezer which is only designed to maintain temperature of -18. So when you put a warm product it takes longer to freeze, and thereby degenerates to some extent. A badly frozen product gets soggy and fibrous. So people start blaming frozen food. But the nuance of how the product was frozen is never considered. We use a technology called quick frozen, which keeps the sanctity of the product intact and it is 98 per cent as good as fresh when defrosted.

We need good quality frozen shelves. Unfortunately, all the modern chain stores still operate fundamentally like mom and pop stores in India. They lack the back-end. Everywhere else in the world, chain stores accept delivery at a single delivery centre from where they are distributed to the various stores. The store tracks the movement of products and updates the manufacturer on shortfalls in inventory and future demand. But in India, our sales person on the field has to visit each and every store physically to check the volume of inventory and replenish stocks as and when needed. So distribution is a huge challenge.

**Surimi is a Japanese term for pure fish meat. It was first introduced in 1975 in Japan. The underlying process involves cleaning fresh fish to get rid of unwanted parts like head, bones, gut, skin, tail, fins, scales, etc and cleaning it 2-3 times, which rids it of all the blood and enzymes**



# 1001 Sauces & Dressings



What began as a small vinegar distillery in Berlin 300 years ago has developed into an international foodservice company. Kühne supplies hundreds of products from mayonnaise to pickled vegetables for retail, wholesale, industry and system catering in 80 countries worldwide. “Today, growth is mainly generated by geographical expansion,” says Carsten Gelahr, Director B2B. “To successfully enter new markets one has to be ready to invest and adapt to the demands of foreign cultures.” With key account Burger King, Kühne recently expanded its operating range to the Far East. To comply with the requirements of the Middle East, the company also provides Halal products

In the company's domestic market it will be hard to find a customer who has never heard of the brand Kühne. As a producer of vinegar, gherkins, dressings, red cabbage, sauces and pickled vegetables, the Hamburg-based company reaches a market penetration in the food retail sector of over 50%. In five product groups, among them gherkins and vinegar, Kühne is the market leader. The B2C business is still the main source of revenue for the company. “But, while the retail segment is pretty much saturated, the B2B business is steadily growing,” Gelahr states. About 30% of the company's total revenue of more than €300 m is attributable to wholesale, system catering and industry clients. In the foodservice sector, Kühne caters to the whole range, from quickservice restaurants to transport caterers and fullservice providers, as well as on-board catering. Important industry clients are food producers like Homann or Heinz, whom Kühne supplies mainly with vinegar.

The German company, once a purveyor to the Prussian court, now boasts renowned chains like Burger King and Subway among its customers in system catering. About 30 years ago, Kühne began dealing with clients in international system catering. Since then the sector and, along with it, the company's youngest business unit, have developed rapidly. “Our first big customer was Burger King,” says B2B Director Carsten Gelahr, who has been working for Kühne for 15 years now and was involved in expanding the new business unit. Business with BK soon grew to include not only the domestic market but also Austria and Switzerland, followed by further European countries, as well as Middle Eastern countries and, recently, China and Singapore. Meanwhile, BK restaurants in 38 countries are supplied by Kühne. A second important key account, besides Burger King, is Subway, whom they began selling to in 2003. Kühne now supplies their sandwich restaurants Europe-wide – almost 5,000 of them. Among



## KÜHNE

- Headquarters: Hamburg, Germany • Established: 1722
- Production sites: Berlin, Straelen, Schweinfurt, Hamm and Hagenow (Germany), Dijon (France), Walbrzych (Poland), Izmir (Turkey)
- Total group revenue: above €300 m • Share of Consumer/B2B/Wholesale: 70:20:10
- Domestic/International: 60:40 • Employees: 1,500 • Total number of countries where products are sold: 80

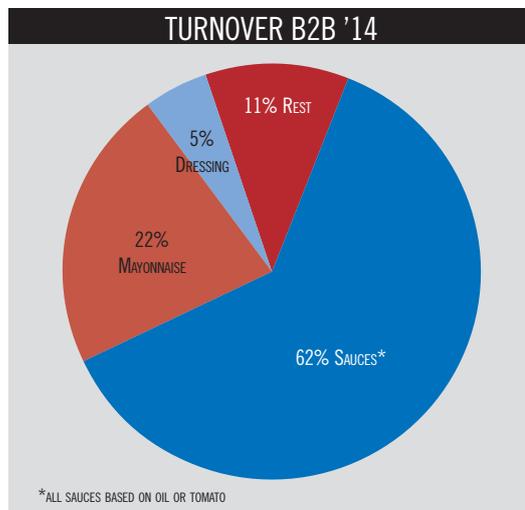


their other clients are the pizza-delivery brand Joey's, the restaurants of furniture retailer Ikea, as well as the restaurants of German QSR-brand Kochlöffel.

"Within the out-of-home-market we clearly focus on two product groups: mayonnaise and all kinds of seasoning sauces based on oil or tomato," explains Gelahr. "Apart from the sauces, we have recently seen rising sales of gherkins and pickled vegetables, especially chilli peppers and jalapeños." Whilst the extremely broad product portfolio is a factor of success in retail and wholesale, tailor-made taste is the key to the field of system catering.

The B2B unit in Hamburg, which has grown to 16 employees, has, for quite a while now, included its own research and development team. As Gelahr explains, "this is due to the fact that, for system catering, almost every product is developed on the basis of client-specific requirements." Without wishing to overstate the case, the sauce is, after all, a crucial element in the specific taste of a product. One might even claim that it is really the sauce that determines the flavour. "Because of this, the company recreates whole products to test the interplay of all ingredients." As far as trends in the food industry are concerned, the gastronomy sector is two to three years ahead of the food retail sector. New combinations, like for example the Chipotle BBQ, Dark Beer BBQ and Lime Pepper Mayo, are created for the restaurant trade." But not only are questions of taste to be taken into account, other factors like stability and texture also have a part to play: does the sauce make the bread roll soggy? Is it easy to spread?

Besides the product's flavour and suitability for daily use, developers also take into account things like clean labelling, sustainability, provenance of the primary products, reduction of salt, sugar and fat.



"These are all issues that customers and system caterers – and thus we as a provider – are concerned with," says Gelahr. And for a company working at international level, the process doesn't stop once a sauce is developed. "Regional differences in tastes are considerable. There are of course a number of international standards but generally, for one sauce, we use different recipes for different countries," reveals Gelahr. "As a rule of thumb: the further north, the sweeter the sauce. Germans have come to like spiciness, whereas we have to be a bit more careful with the level of spiciness in the case of France or Spain."

Further issues that result from the company's international expansion are the requirements of different religions, as far as food production is concerned. In order to deliver to Arab countries, the production process has to comply with the standards of Halal. "Adapting one of our production sites accordingly was a lot more complex than one would think," says Gelahr. It took two years before the Kühne factory in Hagenow received a Halal certificate. "After all, the requirements relate not only to the production process, but also to all primary products and thus to all our providers." However, expansion to the Middle East, where Kühne products are also distributed in a number of countries, is impossible without a Halal certificate. "Additionally, there is a growing demand for Halal products in France and Great Britain, and the Muslim population in these countries is not to be underestimated."

Geographic expansion driven by partners in the system-catering sector is one of the most significant growth engines for the company. The B2B business unit is already generating 50% of its revenue outside Germany, with the strongest markets being Spain, the UK and Russia. Gelahr identifies further growth opportunities in the area of start-ups in gastronomy and premium concepts. "We're thinking of burger restaurants and breweries. Coffee shops are also looking to expand their food offer and thus turn into potential customers," predicts Gelahr. "In order to do well in all segments, you definitely have to demonstrate operational excellence. We guarantee this excellence by providing a one-stop service. Not only are we in charge of the production process, but we also take care of the entire logistics chain and thus can guarantee for our products until their delivery to the customer." ●●

**Besides the product's flavour and suitability for daily use, developers also take into account things like clean labelling, sustainability, provenance of the primary products, reduction of salt, sugar and fat**



Carsten Gelahr, Director B2B:

*"Especially for our bigger customers, it's crucial that a supplier shows that he is prepared to grow in equal measure and to make the corresponding investments. Close cooperation is a characteristic element of business relations in our sector. At the end of the day, we're all in the same boat – if our business partner in the gastronomy sector booms, we profit, too. If he doesn't do so well, this also affects us."*

Article source: FS Europe & Middle East 4/15

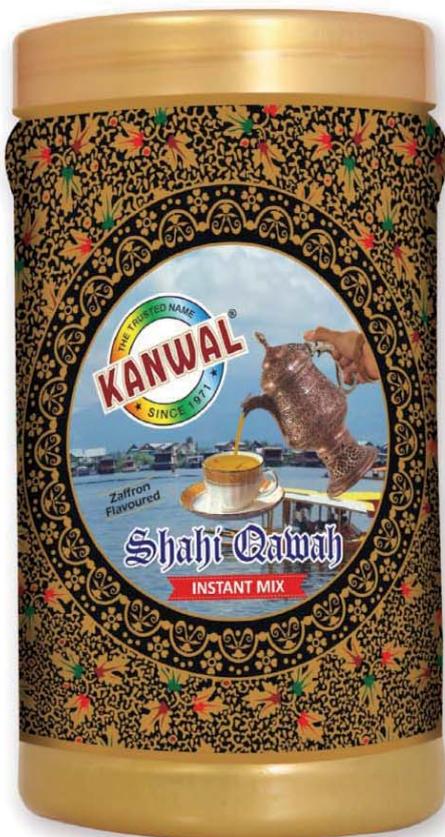
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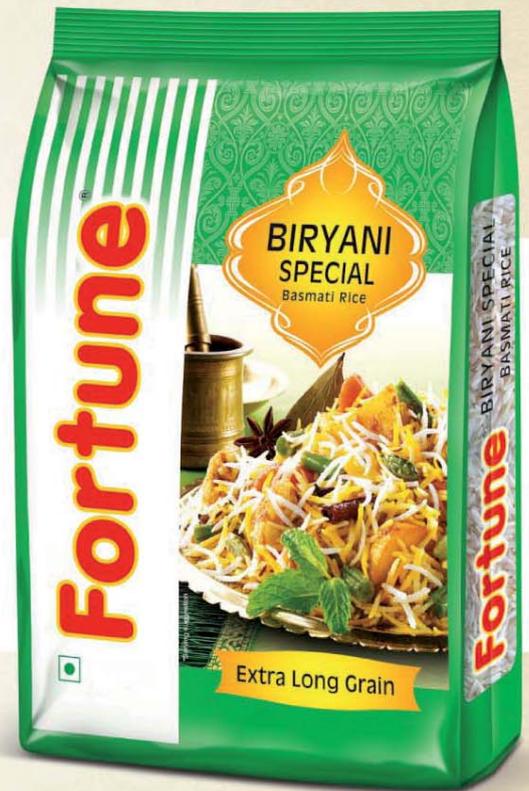


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