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Culinary Terminals

Foodservice business at airports takes off



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Bringing flavour to airport retail

Plush, swanky, glistening with a thousand lights, and teeming with travellers from all over the world, it appears that the airport is fast becoming a destination for upscale shopping and dining. In fact, travellers are often scheduling their arrival and departure to accomodate a quick bite or a leisurely repast at any of the several eateries.

September-October 2013 • PAGES 80

Though a fairly nascent development in India, the concept of airports as hubs for shopping or eating has grown over the past few years, especially once airports began to be privatised. Airport terminals are now transcending from being mere transit points to a place where the traveller enjoys spending time. Nondescript food kiosks are giving way to sophisticated F&B spaces, and providing a culinary experience that encompasses popular regional, national and international cuisines. Their focus is also on convenience, and quick, efficient service.

So it's hardly surprising that both domestic and foreign food operators are keen to expand their presence into the travel space given its captive audience and high footfalls. Airports at India are also keen on adopting global best practices, and ensuring that F&B operators create the right infrastructure and ambience worthy of world-class airports.

Our cover story in this issue gives insights on the transformation in the food service business across major airports in the country. We would like to invite you to share your dining experiences at airport terminals...so please write in.

We also look forward to your presence at our forthcoming India Retail Forum (on 25th and 26th Sept at Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel). This year, the event will witness the 10th anniversary of the Images Retail Awards. Do join us at this grand congregation of India's retail business, of which the food segment holds the largest share, and food service is one of the fastest growing.

Amitabh Taneja

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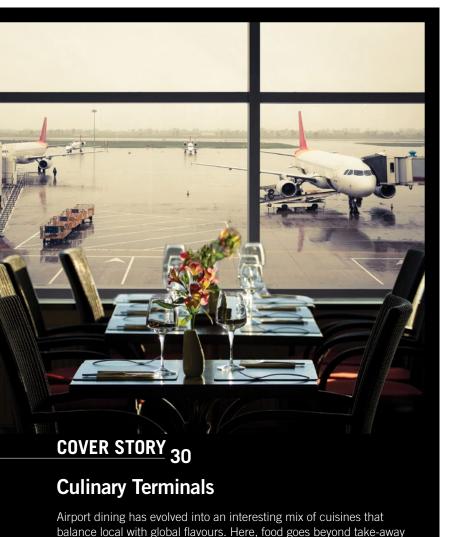


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options to include casual dining and even fine dining formats

ENTREPRENEUR



36 Naturally Premium Kunal Pabrai, Founder, Fresh and Naturelle, discusses the brand's high-end positioning, retail reach, and expansion plans through franchisees



O Burger's Bigger Pie
Hospitality industry veteran
Subroto Mukherjee intends
to make Burgs a brand
synonymous with burgers



8 Industry Updates News from across India's food service industry

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS



5 Challenges in Supply Chain Supply chain management issues that a food business has to deal with

22 Prices Under Pressure

Taking strategic measures in a time when guests are extremely price conscious



FOOD & BEVERAGE

24 Cuisine Watch: Goan

Chef Rajib Majumder at Grand Hyatt Goa talks about Goan cuisine's fusion of several cultures and unique flavours

26 Health in a Dessert

Akshay Batra, COO, Gelato Vinto, reveals the secret recipe of the brand's success, and shares the company's country-wide expansion agenda through franchise

IN CONVERSATION





12 Interface
US-based
Pollo Tropical
announces plans
to open 10 outlets
in north India by
2016



14 One-on-One
Bhavya Kohli,
Director, Business
Development and
Marketing, Fobsters
Hospitality, talks about
the business model of
Central Kitchen



One-on-One
Yogesh Parekh, Director,
Parekh Group, discusses
their tie up with Famous
Brands of South Africa,
and what differentiates the
Debonairs Pizza



8 SnapShot
After its success in Chennai,
Moving Cart is winning
consumers in Mumbai.
Founder Hardik Shah shares
the ideation and concept
behind its launch



TRENDS & CONCEPTS

44 Dining cum Retail

Dining cum retail formats are a new concept in India's foodscape as the market opens up to newer, fresher products and ingredients

50 Fast, Nourishing & Easy to Eat

Asian sandwiches might become the next burrito or taco

54 Fast Food Goes Green

New formulas created within the last 15 years have demonstrated the versatility of the category

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

58 Two-in-One

Virendra Mittal, importer and distributor in India of Josper ovens, talks about the oven cum grill's increasing popularity

60 Tortillas Turn the Tables

Hugues Chausson, Head-Marketing, Mission Foods Europe, discusses the Mexican tortilla's use as a versatile alternative to the bread-based sandwich

62 Safeguards

G Amar Subash, GM, Security Services, Tyco Fire & Security India, discusses the vulnerable areas in a restaurant and preventive measures for protection



PROFILE

64 Affordable, Ambitious

Fast casual brand 100 Montaditos has developed into one of Spain's biggest foodservice players

68 Indi Chic

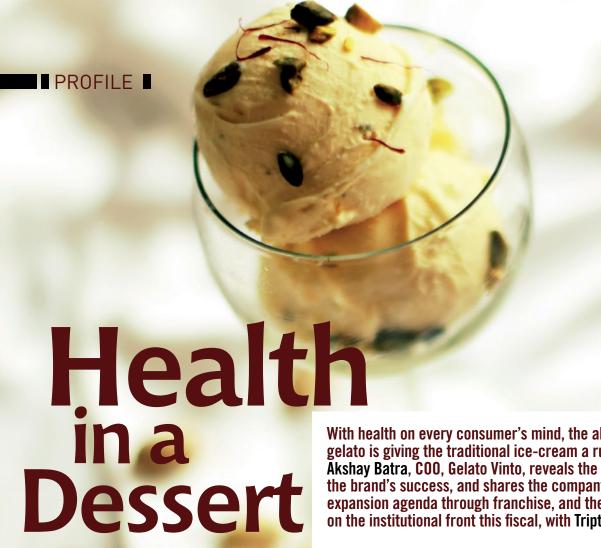
The interior décor of Jhaal Farezi has myriad shades; it is eclectic, versatile, and ranges from rustic brash to Bollywood melodrama

REPORT: NRAI



72 Helping India Grow

The growth of food service market in India has triggered growth across a wide range of ancillary industries thus providing a boost to the entire ecosystem







With health on every consumer's mind, the all-veg, fat-free gelato is giving the traditional ice-cream a run for its money. Akshay Batra, COO, Gelato Vinto, reveals the secret recipe of the brand's success, and shares the company's country-wide expansion agenda through franchise, and their aggressive plans on the institutional front this fiscal, with Tripti Bisht

frequent traveller to Italy and a gourmand, Vijay Arora, Managing Director, Gelato Vinto India, gave Delhi its first superior taste of frozen dessert in the form of gelato (derived from the Latin word gelatus, meaning frozen) with the opening of his first gelateria or gelato parlour at M Block Market, GK, New Delhi, in 2005. Italian technicians and machinery were especially flown down to India to prepare the perfect recipe of the natural Italian frozen dessert for the Indian palette. To begin with, 96 flavours were offered at the outlet.

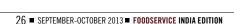
Started with a seed capital of Rs 3 to Rs 4 crore, the concept did very well in the first year but became stagnant for the next two years. In 2007, the company opened a trial outlet in Delhi's MGF Metropolitan mall for a week to check if the concept would succeed in malls. About 50,000 to 1 lakh customers per day were attended to during the week, establishing the fact that malls and not high streets were the future of the business. Subsequently, an outlet was opened on the ground floor of Select CityWalk.

For the first four years, the company grew by barely 30 percent or so. In 2010, it ventured into franchising, and almost doubled its presence by stepping out of Delhi-NCR to explore new states such as Punjab and UP. Since 2010, the store count has quadrupled.

Please tell us about your various store formats.

For a flagship store, the area should be at least 140 sqft. A shop-in-shop requires only a display cabinet so it can be as small as 24 to 25 sqft. Store size also depends on the mall. There are malls that are not ready to give us any space because they think the minimum area required for a kiosk is 100 sqft, but we have opened a kiosk in 36 sqft also. For an ideal kiosk, 50 sqft is the right size with a 10-ft frontage. Also, ground floor stores always do better than those in food court. Around 65 percent of our stores are on the ground floor.

The product mix varies with the location and the profile of its visitors. At DLF Promenade, the Bubblegum flavour, which is a kid's favourite, does phenomenally well, but it doesn't work at Select CityWalk. The sales team at each store knows best which products are moving fast, so as per their experience and demand forecast they place a 24-hour advance order for the gelato bins at our centralised kitchen. For outstation stores, we supply once in 15 or 20 days, so the orders are a huge 200 kg at least.







How do you come up with new flavours?

All our products are vegetarian. We do a lot of R&D, samplings and trials before launching a new product at our top stores by positioning them as the 'Flavour of the Week'. If the response is overwhelming, we convert them into a permanent flavour. Chocolate Fudge Cake and Fudge Scotch Caramel Cake have emerged as our top sellers. We created a dessert first, and then a gelato of the same taste followed. Flavours that are not popular are taken off the shelf. Customer feedback and suggestions also lead to creation of new flavours.

Most of the flavours are common across outlets; only four to six keep changing. The Tomato and Basil flavour was specifically launched for Italian restaurants and star hotels like Hyatt and Leela. We don't envisage it selling at the outlets! At the Claridges hotel, the chef wanted a gelato made out of a soup so we made a sorbet for them; of course, it just wouldn't work at the outlets. So, in this way we have created 600 flavours for the market, of which, 40-45 flavours are always on board.

We also offer customised flavours such as Kulfi Gelato and Saffron Pista Gelato; and special flavours keeping in mind regional preferences, for instance, we created Paan Gelato for Kanpur in UP; Rose flavour for MP; Mango Swirl and Mango Bite for Maharashtra; and dry fruit-based flavours such as hazel nut crunch and almond for Punjab.

Please tell us about your institutional sales.

Hotels and restaurants is not a very viable business for us due to their small orders. However, we do plan on reaching the HoReCa segment this fiscal. Within Delhi-NCR, we are supplying to 20-25 hotels such as the Taj Group, Claridges, Sheraton, Leela, Hyatt, and Radisson of which Hyatt is our biggest consumer. We also cater to around 150 restaurants

Over all, institutional sales, including catering, contribute 30 to 35 percent to our sales with the rest coming from retail. During the wedding season, which is usually October to February, we produce around 25,000 to 30,000 kg per month for caterers. December is the best month in terms of sales. We also do a lot of out-station catering in cities such as Indore through our warehouses, for instance, our warehouse in Ludhiana supplies to the whole of Punjab.

What is your pricing strategy?

A particular flavour's price will depend upon its ingredients and their cost. Mangoes come from Ratnagiri in Mumbai or from INA market. Our garnishing sauce is sourced from Italy. We also buy top quality fruits from Azadpur. The price range falls between Rs 49 (80ml) and Rs 176 (160ml).

Prices are pretty similar even for customised flavours. We sell by the kilogram, while industrial ice-cream is sold by the gallon. Our cost of production is very high as compared to industrial products as we do not use artificial colours or preservatives. Once we explain the reason behind our pricing (which customers see as somewhat high), they are satisfied.

How is your business growing in tier 2 and 3 cities?

Our brand in the smaller towns and cities has been doing exceptionally well because gelato is a new concept here. The first day sales in Amritsar was Rs 50,000. We are present in Kanpur, and have recently opened a store in Gwalior where we made Rs 24,000 on the first day. Rohtak, Gwalior, Dehradun, Raipur, and Bhopal are also giving us a great response.

In metros, people are always looking out for new concepts, new tastes and flavours, so sales can stagnate, but the rush comes back when we introduce new products. But since the population is bigger in metros, they contribute 60 to 70 percent to our sales. Ambience Mall in Gurgaon generates the highest sales (in mall stores), which can be attributed to its large size.

What consumption trends do you foresee for your products?

The biggest change that I have seen in recent years is that the Indian consumer is following a health drive. This is where my product comes into play more than industrial ice-creams because it

GELATO FACT FILE

Gelato: Italian word for ice-cream made with milk, cream, sugar and stabiliser. has natural ingredients, no synthetic flavour or essence. Prepared at 22-24 degree ambient temperature. Fresh, handmade product. Nutritious (contains protein, calcium, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamin A, and B group vitamins). 100% veg and 96% fat-free. Fat content of approx 4% is lower than ice-cream which has 10% or more. 35% over run (more product and less air content). Sold by weight not volume.

Company-owned stores

15

Franchise stores

33

Investment per company outlet

Rs 12-14 lakh

Investment on warehouse

Rs 40-60 lakh

Initial investment on machinery & equipments

Rs 3 crore

Till date expense on repair & maintenance

Rs 35 lakh

Current ROI 40-50%

Y-o-Y growth rate 30%



Culinary Terminals



Airport dining has evolved into an interesting mix of cuisines that balance desi with global flavours. Here, food goes beyond take-away options to include casual dining and even fine dining formats, finds Kavitha Srinivasa

offee used to be served in flimsy plastic cups along with a cold, staid sandwich, and a samosa or two. This just about summed up the food seen at domestic and international airports in India till about 2005-2006. Today, food retail at the airports has a winning flavour (with a gastronomic fare to satisfy the most time-crunched or finicky flier) thanks to private operators/infrastructure developers such as GMR Group and GVK Group who stepped in to give the airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Hyderabad a complete makeover. Joint venture consortiums followed, and airports were modernised, upgraded, and redeveloped, putting India on the high-end global aviation map.

For food service operators at the terminals, it was a flying start. Their focussed approach began with a sound infrastructure, backed by an eclectic mix of cuisines represented by the best brands to offer quality food and service. For fliers, these airports have become a preferred destination for food and beverage in the travel domain.





"Airport operations are longer gestation businesses, and the hospitality business is no exception. Whilst getting major brands and incurring premium investments are critical to creating the best-in-class passenger experience, they ensure generation of robust top line which is critical for healthy operations," says Romy Juneja, Chief Commercial Officer (Non-Aero), Delhi International Airport Pvt Ltd (DIAL), and adds, "On this basis, all the operators at our airport are already seeing the benefits of their investments yielding profitability. Over the next few years, the value creation from these operations would be even more significant."

Platters fly high

Airport retail has been expanding due to the efforts taken to develop revenue from non-aeronautical sources. Though it is fairly nascent in India, it has grown over the last 3 to 4 years after airports were privatised. Airports are captive places for food consumption and attract high footfalls. They provide a business opportunity to churn out revenue when flight delays compel passengers to wait endlessly at the terminals. This has created a demand for 'food travel retail'.

While the focus is on convenience and value for money, today's discerning and well-heeled passenger is willing to experiment with world cuisines offered at competitive rates. "Airports have understood the need to transcend from a simple food kiosk model to an experience provider model wherein overall ambience, quality of service, and value for money are becoming critical aspects. Best practices on such areas



adopted globally are also becoming prevalent across Indian airports with the advent of global operators, "observes Juneja on the economics of this food retail overdrive. Global favourites like Haagen-Dazs, Mad Over Donuts, Four Fingers Crispy Chicken, and McDonald's are some of the food retail brands that have checked in at the newly transformed airports.

The culinary-scape of airports is flexibly designed in the form of lounges, hangout zones, cozy corners and contemporary, quick and flexible service outlets. While formats range from QSRs to fine dining, QSRs by nature of their positioning, click at airports. The fact that they offer quick bites in easy-to-consume portions, have made them a popular choice among travelers crisscrossing security-sensitive airports.

"Food retail at GVK CSIA (Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport) in Mumbai is evolving to tap into and accommodate this latent need of the passenger of today," says a GVK CSIA spokesperson. "With extensive planning and customer research carried out by GVK CSIA, the assortment of food retail outlets promises to be exceptionally creative and engaging with national and international brands being introduced for the first time at any Indian airport. This will include a mix of both gourmet and fine dining options, which not only offers indulgence but also convenience," he adds.



⁶⁶We believe the F&B outlets at the airport can become brands in themselves as is proven in the case of Idly **Factory with** its unique five types of chutneys. We also have a specialty restaurant called Taste of India which serves Indian and local delicacies 99

Ramesh Krishnamurthy
 GHIAL



Dining cum Retail

Dining cum retail formats are a new concept in India's foodscape as the market opens up to newer. fresher products and ingredients. enabling restaurateurs to offer fine dine experiences along with greater diversity in food preparations. besides keeping wastage and inventory costs under control

By Shanti Padukone

he past 10 years or more have seen the trend of consuming gourmet food picking up like no other food trends in India. Earlier, the concept of fine dine was prevalent and confined to 5-star hotels only. But once restaurateurs and chefs started opening their own stand-alone restaurants, they reached out to the masses hungry for fine food with their international cuisines based on exotic ingredients.

With increased exposure to international cultures and cuisines came demand, and importers began to source and supply the most exotic ingredients from across the globe. As a result, in just 5 years, the Indian gourmet retail space has grown manifold. According to a report, its current size is Rs 6,500 crore, and growing at a CAGR of 20 percent, and expected to cross Rs 13,700

Apart from a number of rapidly expanding specialty stores, namely, Godrej Nature's Basket, Foodhall, Le Marche, etc, selling gourmet products, many restaurants are cashing on this demand by opening retail sections within their fine dine premises. So while at one end, the consumer has a full-fledged dining space, at the other, he can avail of a retail space selling some, if not all, of the items used to create the fine food being served at the restaurant or vice versa, that is, he can pick the ingredients for the dishes he fancies and the chef will prepare them.





being almost negligible, our deli has a lot to do with our brand positioning 99

Deepti Dadlani
 Brand, Marketing
 Communications
 Head; deGustibus



Actail is simply an add-on that encourages customers to become more experimental in their eating habits, both in the restaurant and outside

- **Ketan Kadam**Chairman and MD, Impresa Hospitality Management P. Ltd. (the management behind Two One Two Bar and Grill and Café Sundance)

The concept

One of the first fine-dine spaces in Mumbai to have introduced this concept was deGustibus Hospitality. Having already established their Indigo Cafe in 1999 and received an overwhelming response, the company decided to create an expandable format with casual dining and a deli-style retail space (it did not exist till then). Thus was born the popular Indigo Deli. Deepti Dadlani, Brand, Marketing & Communications Head at deGustibus Hospitality. says, "At Indigo Deli, our range of in-house retail products including condiments, dips and bakery products is almost artisanal. These are not only sold in-house but are also made in the kitchen of the deli and are stored in bottles that have been sterilised in-house. Moreover, since none of the condiments have preservatives or added sugar, it becomes almost difficult to put an expiry date or shelf life on the jars."

On their way to creating a far from artisanal repertoire for themselves, on the other hand, are dynamic duo Abhay Jaiswal, CEO and Arjun Gadkari, President, Nilgai Foods (popular for its Cafe Pico). While their Phoenix Market City outlet already has a range of in-house products on sale (bakery items and condiments along with sandwiches, juices, etc.), they now want to increase their number of touchpoints by distributing a wide range of jams, sauces, dips and the likes to well-known retailers outside the dining space. Moreover, while the current proportion of dining versus retail at the cafe is 90 percent in favour of dining, they hope to subsume the former and reverse the proportion to 75:25 in favour of retail.



The general idea of combining dining with retail is to ensure that the customer who comes into the dining space gets to take the experience home, observes Rohet Khanna from Dolce Vita - another such fine dining cum retail store. "Our concept allows customers to buy all the ingredients for a particular dish that they tried at our restaurant and replicate it at home. We have an open-door policy when it comes to our recipes, and sell them to interested customers and even explain the preparation procedures if necessary."

Ketan Kadam, Chairman and Managing Director, Impresa Hospitality Management Pvt. Ltd (the management behind Two One Two Bar and Grill and Café Sundance), informs that they are in the





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