

# foodService

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Food Service Industry in East India



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## The Kitchen

Every food operator aims to have a well-designed, productive kitchen that enables maximum efficiency with minimum dependence on human labour, minimum wastage of resources (material and energy) and which ensures safety. Most of the food operators now rely on the expert guidance of a professional kitchen planner or consultant, who can advise on the work flow – one that ideally reduces effort, cross traffic and bottlenecks in the kitchen. The consultant will also be able to advise on the building codes and standards which the kitchen design must conform to, and which must be factored in at the drawing board itself.

Today, modern kitchens are based on sound engineering, and are equipped with efficient automated equipments. Elements of safety are factored in, along with hygiene, right lux levels, anti-skid flooring, storage space, ventilation, noise reduction, etc.

With the growing number of restaurants across the country, offering greater diversity in cuisines and dishes, India's culinary landscape is changing fast. Kitchen planners have to now take into account the dishes and their associated cooking equipment while planning a kitchen. Products like refrigeration, freezers, cold storage equipment, and water coolers are a must.

Needless to say, this is throwing up immense business possibilities for equipment suppliers, with many global brands eying the Indian market for a leg-in. In fact, from stand-alone restaurants on high streets to star hotels and food courts in malls, to cafeterias in corporate offices and canteens in industrial units, the commercial kitchen is now entering newer domains such as the food catering industry, pilgrim centres, halwais, and school canteens, which were hitherto occupied by the unorganised players. Our cover story gives insights by chefs and kitchen consultants on the making of a well-appointed commercial kitchen.



Amitabh Taneja

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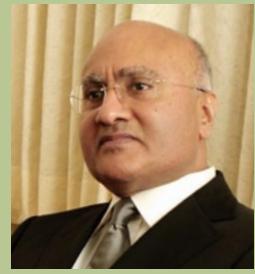
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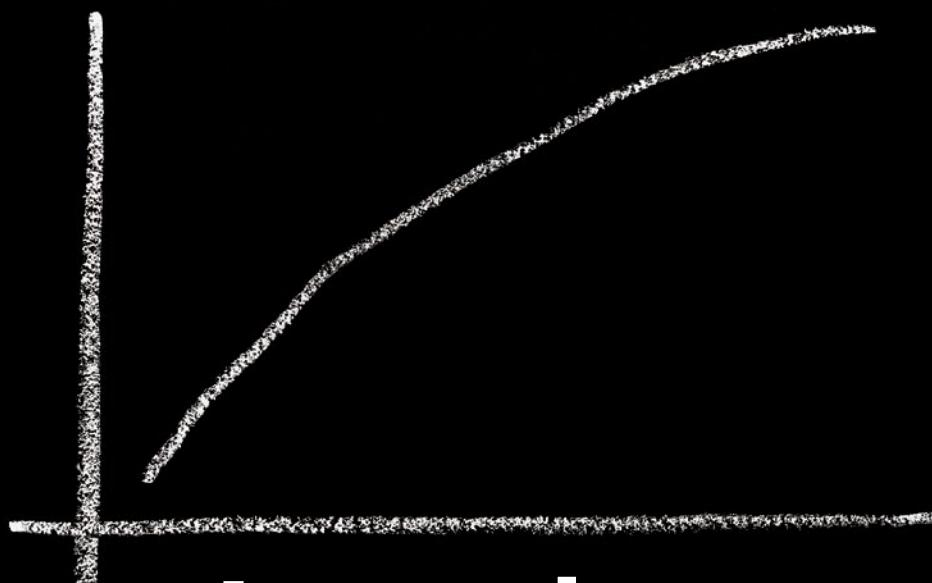


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# The Starbucks



## Learning curve

**Having sustained commitment to a core concept, delivering consistent quality and experience, while constantly improving efficiencies are key for food retailers in India who are aiming to grow their presence via creating retail chains. Let's explore what budding retail chains in India should definitely learn from the speciality coffee giant Starbucks, which is now on an expansion spree in the country**

By Gaurav Marchanda

**A**s news rolls in about yet another store being opened by Starbucks in a key location in South Delhi, the coffee chain's expansion sprint in India is well and truly on its way. Starbucks has quietly gone about its business and further plans to open around 50 stores in 2013. I wouldn't be surprised if it did a few more given that the chain has mastered the art of opening new stores in record time. The growth story of Starbucks is one for the business history books. Coming from an inconspicuous speciality coffee retailer based out of Seattle to one of the largest chains of well... anything.

While pursuing my Masters in Melbourne, Starbucks was always that exquisite experience I loved indulging in. I was intoxicated by the deep coffee aroma, the quick and happy service, the relaxed atmosphere, the flowing background music and of course the Starbucks cup of coffee. It was the perfect meeting point with fellow students, who seemed to revel equally in the setting. As a business student, I would inevitably research case studies on the brand and hear professors talk in length about accounts of it. All stories fuelled into my sense of affinity towards the retail chain.

When I think about the present scenario in India, my mind boggles at the potential that food retail has in the country. I simply can't hold my excitement when I imagine the new concepts that could bud out in the food loving nation. The increasing propensity of people to "eat out" and "meet out" is going to give entrepreneurs a great avenue to build concepts that invite people not just for the product they sell but for the experience they offer. This is not restricted to coffees, but extends to, as far as the long list of Indian foods go, vada pao, dosas, paans, tea, mithais, take your pick. The list is endless and so is the potential.

Creating retail chains is the future of business as they bring efficiencies, improve quality, deliver consistent value and well, just create more revenues. That's where Starbucks comes in as it provides a great learning curve for Indian food chains of the future to follow. Here is my take on seven key aspects that can be learnt from the Starbucks story.



All great chains start their business with a vision of a concept that goes beyond what is already established and believed to work best

### Recognise Your Concept's Potential

All great chains start their business with a vision of a concept that goes beyond what is already established and believed to work best. Starbucks is one of the main proponents that idealise this belief. In the initial years, Howard Schultz struggled to convince the former owners of the brand on the vast potential in the Starbucks's idea that he saw.

Several times over, he had to face resistance from investors who showed little faith in the expansion potential for the chain. However, recognising the power that the daily consumed item - coffee - has created a whole concept around it and pushing the idea to perfection through a continuous process of tweaking and tinkering were instrumental in changing the fate of the Starbucks brand.

### Love What You Sell

Starbucks was founded by people who loved fine coffees. They explored and learned different sources of coffee beans and experimented with alternative methods of roasting it to bring out deep coffee flavours and aromas. This made for a strong starting for the coffee chain as their core offering was now unique. This tradition of passion for the product was passed onto future managers of the company, who still scout the world for procuring the best coffee beans. This brings in unparalleled understanding of what they sell and how to sell it perfectly.

In-depth knowledge is indispensable and that comes from real passion for the product you sell. Often Indian food retailers start off selling something unique, authentic and truly special, but after reaching a certain scale lose focus on nurturing, improving and making it un-duplicable, and that's when quality drops, and so does the customer footfall. Your product is your lifeline. Making love and passion for your product the core of your company's concept is a must.

### Happy Employee Leads to Happy Customers

At an early stage, Starbucks' management realised the importance of investing in people. The company offered unheard of employee benefits and stock options even to its part time employees. The main idea for the company has been to treat employees as partners and not workers. Treating people like they own and equally share and contribute to the company's growth is a great way to deliver exceptional service.

In an industry that is perpetually struggling to retain well-trained employees, it is a significant advantage in becoming a preferred employer, which helps attract the best talent and delivers the best service. Good talent comes at a higher price, but exceptional service provides irreplaceable competitive advantage in the service industry.



# Kitchen Kinetics

**C**ommercial kitchens are large spaces occupied by multiple cooking stations, kitchen appliances, and an assembly line of equipment. Since equipment manufacturers are required to follow the parameters set for hygiene, most equipment is devoid of surfaces that are prone to virus and bacterial growth. It is also important that a running business lays down standard operating procedures (SOPs) that are enforced and ensures that the best practices are followed.

“Factors like ‘safety’ remain a concern in heavy-duty kitchens. Certain norms set by the excise department have to be followed. Health stipulations and safety measures revolve around factors like exit and entry levels, and movement of individuals,” says Krishna Shantakumar, General Manager, Aswati Group, which owns fine dine restaurants like Ebony and On the Edge in Bangalore. The other safety requirement is seen in terms of additional electric and natural gas outlets at each work station.

Practical aspects like anti-skid flooring, and easy-to-clean flooring are also factored in when designing a kitchen. Until a few years ago, kota or cuddapah stones were seen as practical, fire proof, hard, easy to clean, cheap, and somewhat sturdy, but they were not anti-skid. Today, there are anti-skid vitrified tiles, and homogenous composite seamless floors that can be laid in rolls and heat welded so there are no exposed grout joints. These floors maintain a high degree of cleanliness and hygiene, and are considered safe for the kitchen staff.

Vikas Pal, Executive Chef at Hilton New Delhi/Janakpuri, recommends PVC thermoplastic floors, which are less than an inch high and help ensure kitchen safety. They are easy-to-clean, durable and protect the kitchen from bacteria. Wall coverings should be of tiles or oil paints that go right up to the ceiling and can be washed easily with soap.

While the FSSAI guidelines are more in terms of food products and their storage, these guidelines are for the operators. It involves cleaning of equipment, storage of food and labelling of food products.

**Setting up a commercial kitchen is both a science and an art; it requires a great deal of planning keeping in mind the ergonomics and functionality of the space for optimum efficiency**

By Kavitha Srinivasa



"A kitchen that is symmetrical in design, well-lit and ventilated, clean enough for a customer to check it out, and fitted with standard size equipment made of stainless steel, will give the impression of being hygienic, well maintained, and professional," says Amit Roy, Partner at Thinktanc, a Bangalore-based F&B consultancy firm. "The emerging trend in the kitchen industry is where clients want to have a cuisine agnostic kitchen. They would like to plan a kitchen which can cater to all cuisines," he adds.

#### Aesthetics of Design

For the layout and design of the commercial kitchen, external factors like receiving area for goods, type of cuisine to be served, size of the restaurant and output required, location of services (plumbing/gas points/electrical) need to be ascertained at the outset. Once these factors are addressed, the layout and movement flow are visualised.

"We try to minimise crisscross movement and keep a smooth flow for which the key factors to be noted are the washing area, preparation area and

cooking area. They need to be in a circuit design thereby avoiding clutter as well as the clash of dirty plates with fresh food," informs Roy.

The typical flow of kitchen adheres to the receiving area (all raw materials received and stored) – to prep area (where vegetables are cleaned, cut and prepared for cooking) – cooking area (actual dishes prepared, plated) – pick up area (all dishes to be served are picked up from here) – guest dining – return of soiled dishes to wash area.

Working heights and the ability to reach places and vertical storage zones have to be carefully considered. Information on the employees, which includes average height and ability to peruse space, are important considerations. As regards ceilings, the higher the better as they enable better ventilation than kitchens with low ceilings.

Kitchen efficiency can be optimised by conceptualising the layout and design based on the cuisine it offers. "In designing hotel kitchens there always will be an all-day diner, with a broad spectrum of multi-cuisines. Many a time this is also where the room service work centre is located. The



**“In the main kitchen, white or neutral white is preferred and glare should be avoided. The prep kitchen requires a spotlight. The light should focus on the workplace as this is where the cutting and chopping take place”**

— Chef Vikas Pal,  
Executive Chef,  
Hilton New Delhi/  
Janakpuri



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# The Booming Foodservice Sector in East India – The Near Future

By Shahona Datta



**Even though East India's food market holds immense potential, the region has never been on top of the agenda of organised foodservice chains when they draw up their expansion plans. But the region is seeing growth despite being embroiled in political turmoil, fight for ethnic turfs, slow development, poor infrastructure, untrained human resource, and an inadequate supply chain management, all of which have made potential investors from other states of the country wary of setting up business here. Despite its problems, the resilient East is determined to be part of India's growth story. It's just a matter of time**

**C**urrently, India's food and beverage (F&B) business is worth Rs 45,000 crore, of which the QSR segment contributes 7 percent, and is poised to grow at a CAGR of 22 percent between 2012 and 2017. “East is the quintessential melting pot of cuisines from Bengali to Continental and Chinese in many variations. Formats include fine dining to informal cafes. A restaurant opens every other day. A new market has opened up for ‘luxury restaurants’ and is already booming as they are destinations that don’t just serve food and beverages but offer an experience in being entertained. In my opinion, the foodservice industry just cannot fail to do well in the East,” says Muckth Dogra, Food & Beverage Manager, ITC Sonar.

#### Eating out: A lifestyle

The whole concept of eating out, packing food for eating at home or ordering in after a busy day at work, is becoming a norm as lifestyles undergo changes, disposable incomes rise, and factors such as paucity of time and convenience set in. Pressed for time, families seek the comfort and convenience of eating, but are concerned about eating healthy as well. Observing this trend, many restaurants have introduced healthier and family meals such as thalis. Another incentive for eating out is the desire to indulge. Restaurants are luring customers with a wide range of cuisines that are popular across the world.

Like other regions in India where people are noted for their distinct fondness for food, Easterners too love their meals. Prominent cities such as Kolkata and Bhubneshwar, especially, have witnessed a rapid expansion of the foodservice sector in the last few years.

#### Changing dynamics

The “restaurant culture” has accelerated and become an integral part of our lifestyle. According to Praticee Kapoor, Associate Director, Retail, and Shruti Garyali, Senior Consultant, Retail, at Technopak: “There has been a move towards expanding taste horizons as a result of the overall lifestyle changes. In places such as Kolkata and smaller cities like Guwahati, Shillong, and Bhubaneswar, eating out is already a popular trend. With the blending together of so many cultures and cosmopolitan influences on our basic lifestyles, foodies all over are raring over new and distinctly different lifestyles. However, a similar trend to explore new cuisines and brands is emerging in other cities such as Patna, Ranchi, and Guwahati. This has been a result of evolution of aspirations of younger generation,



increased openness to foreign culture, an increase in disposable incomes, rise in presence of branded retail chains, and growth of entertainment as a concept with the emergence of malls and multi-screen multiplexes. All of this in turn has increased consumers' exposure levels and also influenced the way they eat by encouraging them to venture out and try new cuisines."

#### **Concepts and innovations**

Several innovative and out-of-the-box restaurant concepts have made their way into the Eastern horizon. Restaurant owners are going the extra mile to pull in more and more foodies not just by dishing out good food but also giving them a fine-dining experience. Eggspress, an egg themed restaurant, and Kaidi Kitchen (a prison themed place to eat) are examples of places that offer new experiences, clearly drawing light to the fact that food aficionados are willing to experiment with new concepts and cuisines.

"Innovative concepts always sell. I remember seeking professional help from food consultants and being discouraged by them saying nothing different can be done with eggs. An egg is just like a potato, it's a common food item, what more can you do with it. Well, I did a lot with eggs as they are healthy, tasty and as one of the most commonly consumed food items, they are everyone's favourite, and have wide acceptability amongst consumers of all ages," says Rajiv Jalan, Owner of Eggspress.

Ravi Ojha, Owner, Kaidi Kitchen, explains, "Our competition is with our own selves; we believe in quality edge where competition ends in itself. We strive to provide the best of food quality and service so that we get repetitive customers. We have explored very well and tried to give our customers which isn't available anywhere in fine-dining

restaurant easily. People here are adventurous with regards to their cuisine preference."

Says Bibi Sarkar, Owner of Taaja's and the recently opened Cafe 23, "Opening a restaurant on a theme is the new mantra to success. The idea behind opening a café was to give Kolkatans a taste of a European café which is not a coffee shop but an all day casual dining place, showcasing food from across the globe."

#### **Tier II and III influence**

Most of the domestic and international chains that have already entered or are planning to enter the Eastern region start with the big cities, but they also have an aim to eventually move to smaller markets. Their key concern is to be able to build enough scale in a few big cities so that they can streamline their logistics and supply chain processes before setting up stores in the smaller ones. In fact, with metros now reaching saturation point, it is the small towns and the suburbs of metros that are showing great promise. For instance, Jamshedpur and Raipur are booming markets.

#### **Emerging trends in the East**

There are certain difficulties that one faces while dealing with a customer base in East India. In Kolkata, the number of vegetarians is more than the non-vegetarians, while this is not so in other metros. Although the eating out culture is now rising in Kolkata, price factor still remains an important consideration here as compared to Mumbai. In Mumbai particularly, people like to visit specific restaurants that have a celebrity status, while in Kolkata the quality of food and service is the celebrity. Food alone sells here. There cannot be anything bigger than food in Kolkata. Kolkata and other neighbouring cities have seen the advent of several amazing food joints in the last decade or so, setting off a spate of trends in East.

Broadly speaking the food segment in the East can be classified into three brackets:

- Luxury restaurants – To be found in five-star luxury hotels and some exclusive stand-alones.
- Diners and other restaurants – Budget hotels and plenty of stand-alones.
- Club kind – Pocket friendly, limited fare and average ambience restaurants usually in clubs, commercial zones, etc.

#### **Growing importance of food courts**

Food has always played an extremely important role in all shopping and market areas of India. The need for being peckish while shopping is an Indian phenomenon. This theory has withstood the test of time and the malls have just taken this to another level. Further food has become as important as brands and the quality of the food has direct results on the success of a mall. This includes all F&B options that run through the mall.

"There are many factors leading to the success of a good food court; however, there are a few fundamentals that should not be tempered with. The offerings between brands and non-brands



**“Opening a restaurant on a theme is the new mantra to success. The idea behind opening a café was to give Kolkatans the taste of a European café”**

**—Bibi Sarkar  
Owner, Taaja's**

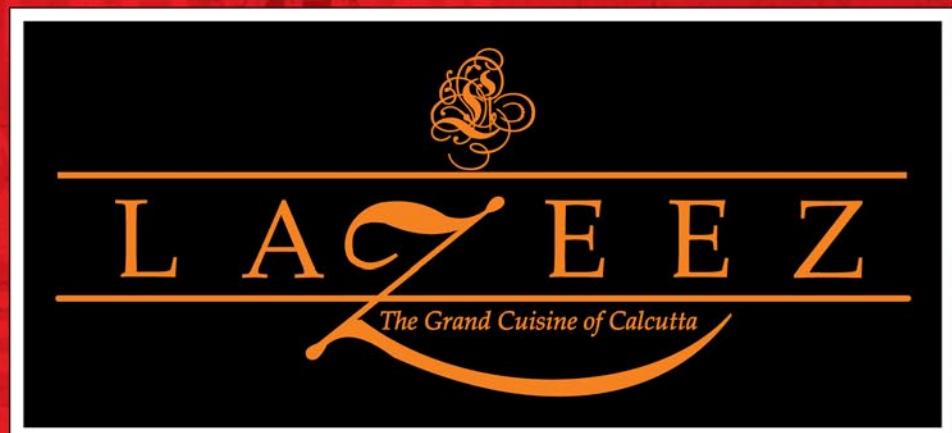


**“Several innovative and out-of-the-box restaurant concepts have made their way into the Eastern horizon”**

**—Rajiv Jalan  
Owner Eggspress**



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