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MAY-JUNE 2012 • ₹100 India Edition

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Power of Unique Concepts

Slowly but surely, India is getting wealthier and the result of this gradual enrichment has begun to reflect in the eating habits of people. Indians are getting more refined and sophisticated in their tastes and now don't mind spending a sizable sum on eating out if the experience is worth the price. Is it any wonder then that the fine-dining scene has begun to heat up in the metros, with many global and Indian brands opening shops to a warm reception from customers.

To crack the India code, the fine-dining players are customising the menus to better suit the Indian palate while still adhering to international standards of service and hygiene. As our cover story points out, though the Indian market for fine-dining is expected to rise to \$6 bn by 2015 from \$2.6 bn now, it still remains strictly a metro phenomenon. It will still be a few years before the fine-dining market fully evolves but the current players are going to benefit from the early mover advantage if they play their cards well.

The key to success in a competitive market place is to come up with unique concepts that appeal to the consumers in an innovative way. One example of this is the Gurgaon-based The Beer Café which is billed as India's first "pour your own beer" bar offering over 50 varieties of beer from countries around the world. Consumers can pour beer directly from the taps by using a beer card at any outlet of the chain in India. Its Founder and MD Rahul Singh in an interview with us says The Beer Café is poised to become the largest "on premise" beer chain in India, with ten locations planned for this year.

Talking about concepts, a couple of very young entrepreneurs in Kolkata managed to create another unique one by turning momos – the favourite street food of North-Eastern India – into a brand called Wow! Momo. The duo – Sagar Daryani and Binod Kumar Homagai – are running a thriving business of 14 momo outlets in the country by selling a plate of the dish for ₹ 40 to ₹ 70. Learning by hit and trial and not believing in any rule book, they have created a unique category of street food that did not exist before, proving once again that success depends on recognising unfulfilled needs and moving quickly to exploit them in the market place.

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WoW! Momo, India's first branded momos chain which began as an SIS format in the Spencer's, Kolkata, a few years ago, has now expanded to the entire city and is generating a turnover of over ₹6 crore every year. Shubhra Saini takes a look at how the chain started and its business model.

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Lucknow’s Aryan chain of restaurants was started in 2001 by Rahul Khanna in a bid to expand the catering business owned by his family. The Aryan brand has since expanded to ten outlets in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and is doing rather well. So what makes Aryan such a popular name in Lucknow, and a few other major cities? Amit Bagaria finds out.



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The Food and Grocery Forum India 2012 was held on March 27-28 this year at Goregaon in Mumbai. It saw hundreds of top players from the food and foodservice industry congregate at the venue to discuss the issues facing the industry and the way out.



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“Why go to the trouble of coming back?” There was no other question he had been asked so frequently in 2008, said Starbucks founder Howard Schultz at the 12th European Foodservice Summit in Zurich. Read our report to discover what more was discussed.





Rahul Singh,
Founder and MD,
The Beer Café

“India is thirsty for
F&B chains
associated with
beer”

From Belgian beers like Stella Artois, Hoegaarden, and Chimay to Australia’s Victoria Bitter, The Beer Café at the Ambience Mall in Gurgaon has all in store to offer a delightful brew experience to beer lovers. It is India’s first PYOB (Pour Your Own Beer) chain, offering 50 different varieties of beer from 16 countries. With 10 locations planned for this year, The Beer Café is poised to become the largest “on premise” beer chain in India. The Beer Café founder and MD Rahul Singh talks to Varun Jain about the unique concept.

Why is The Beer Café unique?

The Beer Café offers a unique beer drinking experience where consumers can pour ice cold beer directly from taps through RFID-activated beer cards. Also available is the Beer Café Radio, the first-of-its-kind radio station that entertains customers across each of our cafés. The life-time personal Beer Card is linked to a centralised cloud server and allows the customer to pour his own beer from any location without having to settle bills or look for change. The card can be topped up when the credit runs out.

What kind of market research did you do before coming up with The Beer Café?

The changing social habits of Indians have increased the “going out” aspect of meeting friends, and drinking is now considered a social need. Beer is a universal pastime and a healthier alternative to hard liquor. It’s also the most suited alcoholic beverage for the tropical climate of India. In 2011, India saw beer sales of \$4 billion with a 220 million case volume. This category is well positioned to be the growth leader vis-à-vis other ‘alcobev’ categories. Most state governments are also promoting low alcohol consumption by providing special beer licenses and reducing taxes.

I also noticed that there are no alcohol-based food service chains in India. Every now and then, a new fad comes in the form of discotheques, night clubs and lounge bars. But cafes remain consistent with their offerings and are evergreen, not just “flavor of the month.” Socializing is now an inescapable phenomenon and these cafes serve as a perfect neighborhood meeting place for urban consumers.

I saw a white space here and filled it with merging the two: beer and café. As nothing like this existed in India, I went around the Far East, Europe and the US, and picked ideas, met with potential partners and created India’s first PYOB (Pour Your Own Beer) chain.

What is your pricing strategy?

Pricing is a very important part of our business. We offer honest prices. We do not charge to rip you apart and hence we do not offer any discounts and there is no concept of "happy hours." All seven days of the week, we have the same price and the same motto of "come and enjoy your beer."

What is the reason behind serving tea and coffee at your beer cafe?

Many of our customers ask for tea! Making tea is very easy and we don't have to make much efforts to include it in the menu. We are not a place where you go to celebrate some occasion. A beer cafe is a neighbourhood place. Also, there is a huge amount of captive clientele which exists in a mall. For example, the employees in the mall where I am

present are all customers for me. On weekdays, I don't think anyone would come in the daytime and ask for beer. But I am open throughout the day, so captive customers are of a great help, and I have to capitalise on all the opportunities. I would be fooling myself if I say that all my sales before 6 pm are going to come from beer alone. They actually come from tea and coffee. We serve tea from Twinings; for coffee, we have a tie-up with Lavazza.

What kind of investment goes into opening an outlet of The Beer Café? What is the ROI?

Our investment is very simple. We spend close to ₹ 20 lakh on technology for each outlet, including the equipment cost, the beer-chilling cost, and the electronics. Another ₹ 40 lakh are spent on the rest of the things. So overall, we invest close to ₹ 60

THE BEER CAFE

(Ambience Mall, Gurgaon)

Average Footfalls:

On Weekdays:

50

On Weekends:

100

Average Bill Value:

₹ 700

Seating Capacity:

70



The Beer Cafe offers same prices every day with the motto of "come and enjoy your beer"



For The Beer Cafe, malls are a strong bet in terms of safety of customers, especially women



Rise of Fine Dining

By Priyanka Dasgupta

Fine-dining might be a niche format in India right now but it is fast catching up. The increasing wealth and aspiration levels of Indian consumers have tempted many global players to enter the country. While some have already tested the waters, a few more are scouting for local partners. If the industry watchers are to be believed, the concept is here to stay and thrive

The fast-food wave has already swamped the Indian foodservice landscape – the growth story of Domino's is the talk of the town. It now seems there may be another wave roiling the horizon: fine dining. India, bursting at the seams with a billion-plus population, has already attracted some of the world's most exclusive names in fine-dining, including Hakkasan and Yauatcha of London and Le Cirque and Megu of New York, with many more waiting in the wings, such as Trader Vic's of San Francisco, and scouting for local partners. These premium brands, globally known for their delectable cuisine and unmatched service standards, are fast developing avid followers in India too. Then there are the home-grown brands such as Bukhara of Delhi's ITC Maurya hotel whose tandoori North West Frontier cuisine regularly attracts gourmets, presidents and heads of state. Though the concept of fine dining is still at a nascent stage in India and is still essentially a metro-based phenomenon, the fast-rising per capita income and aspirations of the people have ensured that India's fine-dining restaurants are already having long waiting times for a table, just like their global counterparts. Industry watchers believe fine dining has a lot of potential in a growing country like India which is on its way to become the world's largest economy by 2050, beating even America and China.





Yauatcha, Mumbai



Two One Two Bar & Grill, Mumbai

What is Fine Dining?

The term “fine dining” is associated with exclusivity and opulence. From waiters in tuxedos to elaborate centre pieces adorning a minimalistic décor, fine-dining restaurants offer the best in cuisine, ambience, and service that can be had for money. Priced much higher than casual dining outlets, fine-dining restaurants are expected to set standards and meet them every time to satisfy the heightened expectations of their patrons.

These are full service restaurants with dedicated meal courses and visually appealing food portions. They have certain rules of dining which visitors are expected to follow. Their décor features high-quality materials to create a sophisticated atmosphere which is difficult to emulate in a casual dining format. Another peculiarity of fine-dining restaurants is that they are almost always small businesses and are generally either single-location operations or have only a handful of outlets.

According to Jay Singh, Co-Founder and Executive Director of JSM Corporation which runs brands like Hard Rock Café and Shiro in India, fine-dining restaurants are generally defined by their overall experience which includes quality interiors, appropriate table setting, good presentation of food and beverages, proper portioning, and top-quality service. Needless to say, most of these attributes are subjective to an individual’s taste, the same way that the food is.

Ajay Berry, the COO of KA Restaurants which has brought the London-based Michelin-starred Cantonese restaurant Hakkasan to India, points out that fine-dining restaurants are characterised by attention to every detail, flawless service, and dedication to the finest quality food. “These restaurants aim to be the best in terms of location, luxury, service and cuisine. Having a meal in a fine-dining restaurant is an experience in gourmet cuisine combined with excellent wines and spirits and unmatched ambience. It is about an experience and not just a meal,” he says.

Jeetesh Kaprani, Vice-President, Operations, with KA Hospitality, a sister concern of KA Restaurants which is responsible for bringing the Michelin-starred dim-sum tea house of London, Yauatcha, to Mumbai, says fine-dining restaurants have a different kind of aura attached to them. “One can expect stunning



“Having a meal in a fine-dining restaurant is an experience in gourmet cuisine combined with excellent wines and spirits as well as unmatched ambience. It is about an experience and not just a meal.”

– Ajay Berry,
COO, KA Hospitality

Di Bella Coffee, Australia's premium coffee chain which serves 2.2 million cups of coffee every week throughout Australia, has recently made its debut in India. Its entry coincides with a boom in Indian coffee market, with global players such as Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts announcing plans to open their outlets shortly. The decade-old Di Bella Coffee, with 1,200 outlets across 4 countries, has big plans for India. In an exclusive chat with Varun Jain, Sachin Sabharwal, MD, Di Bella Coffee (India) shares his perception of the Indian market and the company's strategy to lure the Indian consumers to the company's cafes.



Sachin Sabharwal, MD, Di Bella Coffee (India)



“This is India's time to take the centre stage”

Why did Di Bella Coffee decide to set shop in India when already there are many coffee chains operating in the country?

India is an emerging market and coffee retailing is really picking up here. The growth of the cafe industry in India over the last few years is quite encouraging, as evident from the figures published by the Coffee Board of India as well as retail reports such as by IBIS World on coffee retail.

In India, most cafe chains serve coffee that has been grown in India itself. There is hardly any player which is bringing in coffees from different coffee-growing regions of the world such as Yemen, Cuba, and Guatemala. This is the niche that we are targeting by making coffee from across the globe available to Indian coffee lovers.

How is the coffee culture in India different from other international markets?

I think in India, coffee drinking revolves around a social culture involving going out and meeting one's friends in a cafe, whereas in international markets, coffee drinking is more of a necessity. In the West, coffee chains do most of their business in



Di Bella Coffee brings coffee of different origins from across the globe

the morning hours, while in India the business is at its peak during the evening hours. So it is definitely a big difference and the cafe culture still has to evolve in India to the level of the West.

The cafe segment is growing much faster in India than the entire F&B industry. What according to you could be the main reason for this?

The main reason is that coffee hasn't grown much in India in the last decade. But now a big chunk of Indian youth are going overseas and many are studying abroad. As a result, they want in India the same cafe culture to which they have been exposed in the West. Indians have started adapting to the Western culture. For me, this is the reason why a lot of players have of late begun to enter the cafe business in India.

I remember reading a report a couple of years ago that if India and China started drinking coffee the way the Westerners do, the world will run out of coffee! In India, we have got youth who unlike their tea-drinking parents are accepting coffee

open heartedly. This can be the main reason why this segment is moving faster than the overall F&B industry. In the coming years, I can see a lot of new players entering this market apart from the ones who are already in the process of setting shops here. This is India's time to take the centrestage.

How do you look at competition in India where most of the market has been cornered by only two players: Cafe Coffee Day and Barista?

I believe the Indians today are welcoming the new entrants into the segment. Our brand philosophy is to bring in coffee of different origins from across the world. Coffee grown in different countries would never taste the same. Indians deserve this choice as they are becoming more educated and willing to try out different offerings.

Another of our strong points is the interactive platform we have throughout our outlets. This includes ordering from Samsung Galaxy tablets placed on every table, full Wi-Fi availability, and liking or disliking our menu through Facebook. For

Di Bella Coffee

Average bill value:
Rs 500 per couple

Average time spent:
30-40 minutes

Average footfalls:
250 bills per day

Coffee v/s non-coffee sales ratio:
70:30

Expansion plans in India:
50 outlets in 3 years

Formats:
**Full-fledged outlet
Kiosk**



Di Bella Coffee will give free training sessions to its loyal customers on different aspects of coffee



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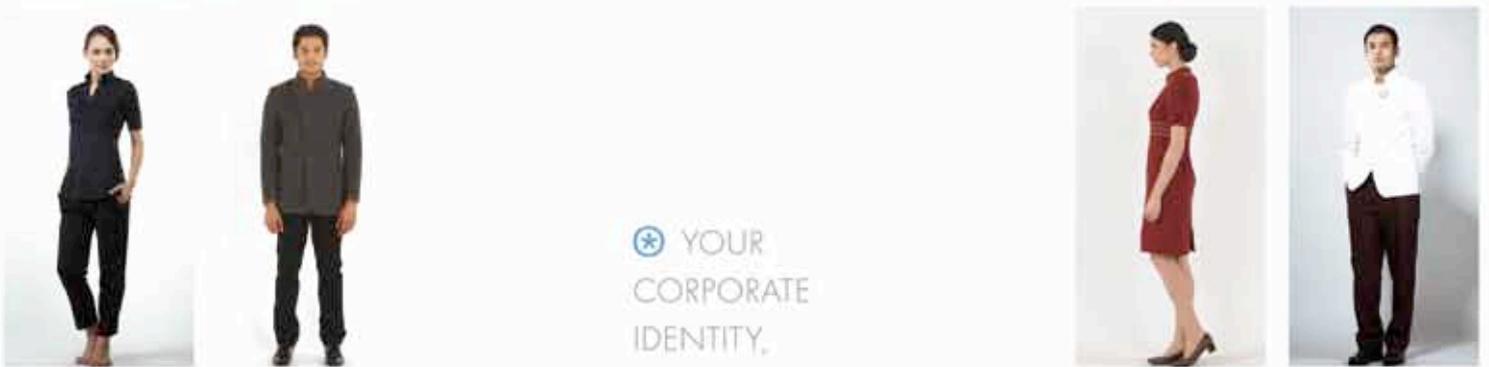
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