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Trade Journal for the Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Industry



## Diva of Italian Cuisine

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Bangalore: No.1, Victor Mansion, Kodihalli, Old Airport Road, Bangalore - 560 008. Phone: 080 41151120; Pune: No. 23, 3rd Floor, Kedar Empire, Paud Phata, Nr. Dasabuja Ganapati Mandir, Kothrud, Pune - 411 038. Tel: 020 4120 4069; Delhi: NH-2, C-Block, First Floor, Community Center, Naraina Vihar, New Delhi - 110 028. Tel: 011 2577 5161; Kolkata: Kolkata: 2A, 2nd Floor, C-46, Everest House, J. L. Nehru Road Kolkata - 700 071. Tel: 033 2289 1100





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Editor in Chief: **Amitabh Taneja**  
Editorial Director: **R S Roy**  
Publisher: **S P Taneja**  
Chief Operating Officer: **Bhaves H Pitroda**

#### Editorial

Editor in charge: **Sanjay Kumar**  
Correspondent: **Nibedita Roy**  
Content Writer: **Ashutosh Kumar**

Conference Content: **Nakul Jain, Mohua Roy**

Contributing Editors: **Zainab S Kazi, Namita Bhagat**

#### Creatives

Art Director: **Pawan Kumar Verma**  
Dy. Art Director: **Deepak Verma**  
Sr. Layout Designer: **Naresh Kumar**  
Sr. Photographer: **Vipin Kardam**

#### Production

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Sr. General Manager - Administration: **Rajeev Mehandru**

#### Subscription

Asst. Manager-Subscriptions: **Kiran Rawat**

#### ADVERTISING

##### Business Head

**Rakesh Gambhir**, Convenor, India Food Forum  
E: rakeshgambhir@imagesgroup.in | M: +91 9910001375

##### Lokesh Arora, Vice President

E: lokesharora@imagesgroup.in | M: +91 9999033612

DELHI	<b>Ekta Roy</b> , Sr. Manager
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#### CONSUMER CONNECT

##### Anil Nagar, Vice President

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Bengaluru: 523, 7th Cross, 10th Main (Jeevanbhima Nagar Main Road), H.A.L. 3rd Stage, Bengaluru - 560075  
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As the festive fever looks set to catch on, the food & beverage industry is particularly upbeat about the business prospects ahead. People eat out more often with their friends and families during the holidays and on festive occasions than on the regular days. Foodservice operators, restaurateurs and other F&B players are naturally optimistic, anticipating higher sales and better revenue in the months ahead. In general, the volume of all products increase during the festive season with the overall F&G business ratcheting up by 25-40 per cent led by chocolates, dry fruits, juices, sweets, biscuits, namkeens, etc.

In this season of spending, gifting and indulgence, old favourite mithai gift packs still call the shots. Estimates put almost 65 per cent of the gifting market to be dominated by mithai gift packs and its sales tick up close to 40 per cent during the festivities. Signature sweet products bring in good numbers while sales of healthier sugar-free range of sweets, nuts and dry fruits also peak during this period. In categories like chocolates, the leaders come out with new, interesting options and variants to enhance sales. For those who want to try something different, there are other food gifts aplenty: cheddar cheese cakes, Dutch cocoa brownies, fudge brownie bites, choco chip cookies, to name just a few. Sunrise categories like olive oils, highend gourmet confectionery, wines, exotic chocolates, and international cuisine ingredients are the favourite of those who wish to gift something really special and surprise the end receiver. Sales of fast foods like pizza and burgers and those of beverages and juices also perk up appreciably.

We hope that some of this spending fervour will touch and lift the spirits of the QSR industry in particular and the foodservice business in general, which have been facing some headwinds of late due to rising costs and stickiness in pricing. The coming months hold a great opportunity for lifting all business boats and we hope that it will buoy up the sentiments of all segments of the foodservice industry. Cheers!



Amitabh Taneja

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Phone: + 49 69 759501; fax: + 49 69 75951510 | Editor-in-Chief: Gretel Weiss (gretel.weiss@dfv.de)  
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**Delhi Office :**

3790, Sarai Phoos, Tis Hazari,  
Delhi-54 Nr. Chruh, Delhi - 110054  
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**Pune :**

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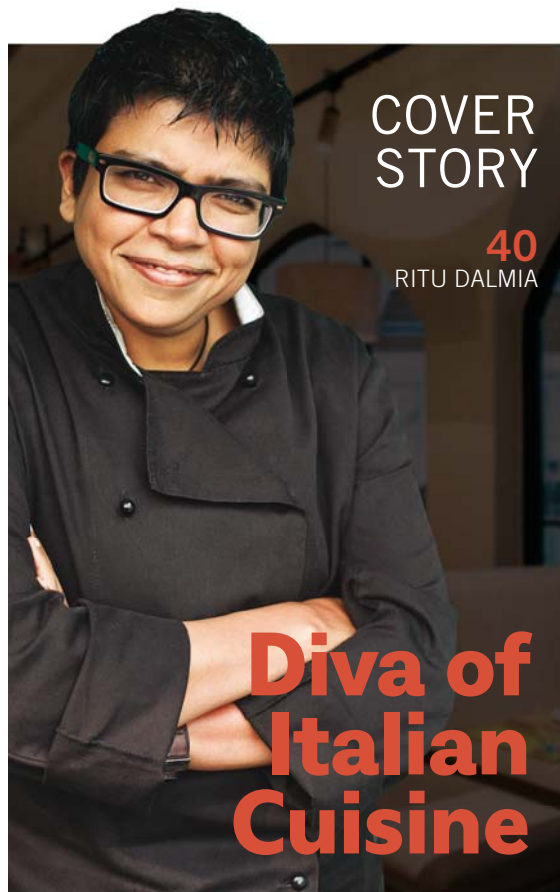
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## MARRIOTT INDIA HOTELS CELEBRATE, M-DAY, Q3 OF 2016

Leading five-star hotel chain, Marriott India has recently celebrated its second M-Day, Q3, 2016 held at Jaipur Marriott Hotel. The second M-Day was organised with an initiative to drive revenue by engaging guests in activities that build closer partnerships and result in long term business opportunities. The initiative focused at establishing a catalogue summarizing best culinary practice events for Marriott India. Besides, the event was organised to showcase the innovative Food and Beverage concepts through the 'Meetings Imagined' and promote culinary excellence.

Moreover, all the activities like chef and guest engagement, special customer engagement events, souvenirs and thank you memorabilia and much more were promoted through social media platforms of the hotel.



## FAIC ORGANISED ITS 2ND EXHIBITION AND CONVENTION IN MUMBAI



Leading association of caterers from pan-India, Federation of All India Caterers (FAIC) had organised its second convention and exhibition at Bombay Exhibition Centre, Mumbai. The three days event saw over 20,000 visitors comprising of Caterers, Banquet Owners, Hoteliers, F & B Professionals and Fast Food Vendors. Over 5000 caterers participated in the event.

Expressing his views about the event, Narendra Somani, President, Federation of All India Caterers said, "After the grand success of FAIC's first convention in Ahmedabad, we were pleased to unveil the second edition of exhibition & convention in Mumbai. FAIC Exhibition & Convention provided the perfect platform for manufacturers & traders from across the country to converge under one roof. Besides, the convention supported meaningful discussions between caterers & chefs. Also, the event connected many experts from the industry and educated members on the food safety guidelines of government."

The event was graced by veterans of the industry like

Celebrity Chef, Ajay Chopra, Chef Dhaval Ajmera (ITC Hotels), Celebrity Amrita Raichand, Harish Shah (Popular Caterers, Mumbai), Paresch Desai (Flavours, Ahmedabad), Sameer Lakhani (Lakhani Hospitality, Mumbai) and so on.

## GROVER ZAMPA VINEYARDS & PULLMAN HOTELS CELEBRATE THE SUCCESS OF VIJAY AMRITRAJ RESERVE COLLECTION

Leading wine maker, Grover Zampa Vineyards in association with Pullman New Delhi, Aerocity, celebrated the success of its Vijay Amritraj Reserve Collection at Pling Bar, Pullman New Delhi Aerocity.

The Vijay Amritraj Reserve Collection, was ranked among the finest reserve wines in India, and was launched worldwide in 2014.

Commenting on this unique association, Vijay Amritraj, former tennis player and sports commentator said, "It is my pleasure to be associated with Grover Zampa Vineyards. As a brand they have the knowhow and heritage when it comes to wine making. The wines made with absolute perfection bring together the element of passion and sophistication."

Tristan Beau De Lomenie, General Manager Delegate, Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity said, "It was a pleasure to host this prestigious event at our newly opened Pling Bar to celebrate the success and victory of The Vijay Amritraj Collection by Grover Zampa Vineyards."

The collection has received rave reviews across national and international markets and won 9 International awards in 2 years across 3 continents North America, Europe and Asia. Besides, the Vijay Amritraj collection of wines are available in India and key international markets such USA, UK, Australia, France, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Singapore.





## CHILE LOOKING TO STEP UP EXPORT OF ITS OLIVE OIL IN INDIA

Chile, which has been bestowed with a varied geographical feature, is also a food powerhouse. With the Pacific ocean in the west, Andes mountains in the east, Atacama Desert in the north and Antarctica in the south, the country is a pest free phytosanitary island harbouring some of the best varieties of food crops. ProChile, the Chilean Export Promotion Agency, has been actively involved in promoting Chilean products in India. Among the food items, Chilean apples, cherries, kiwis and frozen fruits have already hit the markets and are gaining in popularity day by day. Chilean wines have also created a space for them in the Indian market.

Recently, an event was held at the Embassy of Chile in New Delhi to mark the presence of Chilean olive oil in India. Chile has rich variety of extra virgin olive oil and it exports around USD 60 million worth of it every year. The concept of the evening was to familiarize the Indian importers and the Indian consumers about olive oil from Chile as it hopes to enter the Indian market very soon. Izaro, a well know Chilean brand supported the event and also had its samples made available, which were presented to key people of the industry.

The evening was also marked by olive oil tasting along with a presentation about the olive oil industry in Chile and the company Izaro. The key attraction was the food prepared using this olive oil. Chilean and Indian dishes, perfectly made, highlighted how well the olive oil can blend into Indian cuisine.



"India is an important market for us. It has a rising trend among the consumers of high quality food products, which is our target market. Chile's high quality Extra Virgin olive oil would surely gain an acceptance among these consumers who are looking for niche products," said Carolina Vásquez, the Trade Commissioner of Chile and Head of ProChile India.

## L'OPÉRA LAUNCHES NEW MENU

Authentic French Bakery, L'Opéra has recently come up with a galore of new and redesigned cakes and pastries to woo the Indian palates. The new menu was launched to celebrate the brand's five years of successful operations in Delhi NCR. Besides, the menu has been designed and created by award-winning pastry Chef Amit Sinha.

Expressing his views about his new dessert spread, Co-Founder and Managing Director Laurent Samandari said: "Our aptly named Royal Chocolate has always had a regal taste, look and feel; but Amit's redesign takes it to another level!" he admits. Some new entries to L'Opéra's array of pastries include the Safframel Tart, a special blend of poached apple and caramel mousse – the silky smooth Berrilla Delight, made with Vanilla and Wild Berries – and a brand new tropical Glutenfree Pabana Mon Amour, made with banana, mango and passion fruit. For coffee lovers like me, the new Coffee Tart is like a solace to my senses, with its sablé biscuit and the irresistible nuttiness of the almond glaze."

Apart from the new pastries and savoury delights, the brand has launched an array of confectionery gifting options with attractive packaging keeping in mind the festive season.



## TUV INDIA PROJECT TO HELP SMES MEET FOOD SAFETY REQUIREMENTS



TUV India Pvt Ltd, in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, has been prosecuting an important project to assist SMEs meet the food safety requirements.

The execution of the programme was under the PPP framework and was being co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The main objective of the project was to improve food safety hygiene and product quality in the Indian food processing sector. The project will help to improve awareness, knowledge and training opportunities regarding food safety standards and provide tools for the implementation of food safety management systems among Indian food processing SMEs, industrial associations and regulatory bodies. To mark the conclusion of the project, TUV has organised a Best Practices Forum, which would take place on 27th September. For more project details, visit the website <https://www.tuv-nord.com/in/news-events-projects/1743.htm> or <https://www.tuv-nord.com/in/press-273-2057.htm>



# WORLD FORUM



The World Forum of Food & Wine is a trade promotion association, which has been instituted with the objective of promoting and driving long-term consumer demand for food and wine in India and abroad



# OF FOOD & WINE



Instituted with the objective of promoting trade in Food & Wine Industry. World forum of food & Wine (WFFW) is a Trade Promotion that looks set to drive long term consumer demand in the domestic and global market. Food & Wine Industry appears to have reached a decisive juncture where it needs to adopt effective avenues of harnessing the commercial potential in wine and food World Forum of food & Wine aims to lay out a strategic platform for the promotion of Wine and Food in India and abroad.

WFFW will promote trade in Food & Wine industry by bringing together A to Z concerned companies and prestigious business associations. In addition to providing a shared arena for associate companies from India and abroad to showcase a wide range of products. WFFW will make a concerted effort to diversify and expand the scope of entrepreneurial endeavors in Food & Wine Industry. The

overriding concern of this enterprise will be to effectively harness the true business potential in Food & Wine Industry by paving way for the next advanced phase in the development sector.

WFFW will be organizing and taking part in numerous events from B2B Meetings, to Conferences and Trade Shows. WFFW is keen to handling delegations from India and abroad and send its own representatives abroad to participate in international conferences. WFFW has set its sight on identifying Key domestic and international areas where Food & Wine industry can flourish immensely. In addition to joining as a B2B contact to various trade associations around the world. WFFW will also appear on common platform alongside other companies and associations in order to work towards the development of Food & Wine industry.



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Suite No. 9, 1st Floor, Le Meridian, Windsor Place, Janpath, New Delhi-110 001, India

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# “Bakery makes for 15-18% of our F&B revenue”

Deepak Yadav, Pastry Chef, Courtyard by Marriott Gurgaon, speaks to FoodService India on how by constantly innovating with healthy desserts, jar cakes, cake pops and many more products his hotel is able to pull greater revenue and clientele and keep abreast with the industry trends.



Deepak Yadav

## How is your hotel promoting healthier fats & oils in bakery products?

Healthier fats and oils such as extra virgin olive oil are incorporated in various products such as focaccia bread, granola healthy bar etc. We speak to our regular clientele and promote the benefits of healthier oils and fats. These products are displayed in our buffet mentioning the health quotient as well as placed in our patisserie shop.

## What are the cost-related challenges to promoting healthier fats and oils in your products?

Healthy oil such as extra virgin olive oil is expensive, therefore the usage has to be for selective products. Since the cost is high for the raw material, the pricing of the end product automatically increases, hence hampering sales at times.

## Do you prepare your bakery and confectionery products in your own hotel by your own chefs or do you outsource them to outsiders?

All products ranging from breads, savouries, cakes, etc, are prepared in house by our team of chefs.

## In terms of F&B consumption of these products at your outlets, roughly what would be their share?

For bakery and patisserie, it is 40 per cent followed by chocolates contributing 20 per cent.

## In your opinion, what is the revenue generating potential of these products for hotel-based F&B outlets?

The potential is extremely high as the products that an outlet offers are of great quality and texture. Great deal of emphasis is given on the presentation and creativity, which in turn increases the revenue generation.

## Which new experiments and innovations have you tried out for these products?

Recently we have added newer additions to our dessert spread such as salted lemon madeleine and stone fruit clafoutis. Following the current trends in the industry, our team of chefs are constantly innovating with healthy desserts, jar cakes, cake pops and many more.

## Do you also promote handcrafted artisanal offerings for these products?

Breads, cakes, savouries and other products are made in-house with a lot of care and expertise for which traditional methods are followed for execution. These products are in constant demand by our regular guests.

## Which are the new flavours for these products that are becoming popular?

Berries are always a hot selling product. However we have received positive feedback for white rum flavour and products that use yellow butter as the base ingredient.

## Breakfast has been reinvented as a snack (Snackification of breakfast). So are you catering to this emerging trend?

Yes, we are catering to the emerging trend as many a times guests who have an early flight or early meetings tend to miss out on breakfast. In order to enhance their experience and offer them a high protein breakfast, the team prepares a goodie box which has savouries such as brioche, scallion cupcakes, chicken tarts, etc, with nuts and other products. This keeps the guests energized through the day.

## What is your strategy for promoting these products in your outlets?

These products are displayed in our coffee shop. Moreover the team talks to our guests notifying them about the USPs of various offerings.

## How much do they contribute to your total F&B revenue and what has been the value growth of these products at your outlets?

Bakery products contribute around 15-18 per cent of the total revenue. There is a great demand for pastry and baked products, especially for small celebrations, corporate events etc. Guests are opting for these products for their events, therefore adding to the revenue and value growth of these products.

## Who are your top suppliers for these products?

No comments. ●●





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# Kolkata and the Changing Platter

Much has changed since Calcutta paved way for Kolkata. Consumerism has hit the city in every possible way as is evident from the growing number of shopping malls, one-stop shops and swanky restaurants, and the spread of global cuisine to the heart of the city.

by Ritusmita Biswas





### From Nahbat to DJ

Once upon a time, entering the venue of a Bengali wedding would mean diving into a 'pandal' overflowing with the fragrance of fresh Jasmine and the tuberose paired heavenly with the aroma of fried foods like Fish Fry or 'Luchi' from the menu. The 'nahbat' with its beautiful rendition of flute and 'shehnai' created the magical ambiance while Punjabi and dhoti clad Babus and Benarasi or Jamdani clad ladies chatted heartily, while the host or the 'Karta' made hurricane trips from the Mandap, to the Food station, taking care of everything.

The scene today in Kolkata has changed radically. Weddings are mostly arranged by 'event organizers' and the Pandals has been conveniently replaced by Banquet Halls. The transformation has not stopped there. The 'Nahbat' has been replaced by much peppier and quirkier DJs as the gentlemen in suits and ladies in anything from sarees and Lehengas to gowns dance their heart out with the host as well. The age old Biye Bari is gradually inching towards a much globalised Wedding Party in posh Banquet Halls. The Journey is not limited to the venue itself. The food which has always been the centre to the lives of every Kolkatans (not necessary Bengali), has undergone massive change when it comes to Bengali weddings. The delectable fish fries or the deliciously inflated 'Luchis' are fast replaced by Chicken Fries or Pasta Salads. The meal itself is now divided by starters and main course, replacing the good old 'Jol Khabar'.

### Biye Bari Pandals vs. Banquet Halls

The typical Kolkatan 'babus' are gradually vanishing away. The Kolkatan babus today would rather sway to the groovy numbers, and taste the world served on their plate. As a result of this changing taste, the older markets have undergone a sea change. The transformation is quite transparent and is continuing; even the wedding market has metamorphosed over the years. Gone are the days, when relatives used to throng the wedding house, days before the original occasion. Weddings are now better planned and obviously better executed with the number of well-equipped banquet halls in Kolkata.

After a couple gets engaged, the excitement paves way for further plans for wedding. Of course, there are thousands of events and small functions which need to be planned in between. Most women today do their research about wedding themes online. Yes these days, even weddings in Kolkata revolve around a theme, tying all the rituals and events in a single string. A common trend these days is to hire a wedding planner who will not only plan details about the D-day, but will take all the headaches associated with the function. Says Yuvraj Singh Johar of Shloka Events a premier wedding management company which has arranged various events including that of Sahid Kapoor and Mira Rajput: "The wedding theme today needs to be innovative and in most



cases classy. The same applies to food menu and a lot of innovations are being done in this arena. As one of the premier event managers in the country we strive to provide innovative menu to all our clientele."

In fact today the couple just needs to be present for the ceremony. One of the first thing that a wedding planner does is to check the most suitable venue as per the budget of the couple. And here enters the Banquet Halls which are tailor-made for all kinds of functions associated with wedding. There are myriad banquet options in Kolkata – right from the options in star hotels to stand alone halls – the city has banquets of every shape and size for the clientele. In south Kolkata popular stand alone venues for example include the Sudesh Bhawan , to Panache in Homeland mall among others while popular outdoor venues include the Horticulture society, Nalban to name a few. "Based on the budget and theme of the wedding a venue selection is usually done," says Mr. Johar.

### The Culinary Change Across The Domains

While for sure the event structure in weddings have changed – what has changed the most is food. For sure it cannot be denied that the point of interest however in any function is definitely the Food. People may forget and forgive everything, when the food is good. Today, in Kolkata a standard wedding menu is

**As a result of the changing taste, the older markets have undergone a sea change. The transformation is quite transparent and is continuing; even the wedding market has metamorphosed over the years.**

not just about the regular traditional fare but a lot of other innovative items as well. Take for example just the sweet menu which is not more the iconic 'Rasgullas', 'Kora Paker Sandesh' or the legendary 'Mishti Doi'. These are fast replaced by the adventurous versions of their traditional forefathers, quite like the present generation. People are going gaga over baked rasgullas with chocolate syrup, or hot Jalebis with cream and threads of saffron or Mango or Chocolate flavoured 'doi' in Bengali weddings. Mr Sanjay Chakraborty, from Behala Chowrasta chirps happily "I plan to add Mango Mousse in my Reception Menu, instead of the traditional Mishti Doi or the tried and tasted ice creams" He is not apprehensive about how his idea will be received. He adds on "I have had Mango Mousse in one of my colleague's reception party, and it was quite a hit." Being an avid foodie he believes that Bengalis, even though loves to repeat their foods, yet are quite open to try out new and well experimented food. Agrees Pradip Nag of Bhim Nag " Why only weddings – people are keen to try various diverse kind of sweets and so our fusion sweets are doing quite good." Sudip Mullick, 4th generation, of the Balaram Mullick Shop known for its innovation mentioned how the shop had always created innovative products to amaze the taste bud of its patrons. It is believed that the founder of the shop Ganesh Chandra Mallik could make a sweet out of anything – one day someone challenged him to make a sweet out of jackfruit and thus was born the famous "kathal sandesh" or jackfruit sweet which is a delight for the fruit lover. Even today innovation continues to be the buzzword for the shop and over 150 kinds of sweets are prepared on a daily basis in the shop. In addition to traditional favourites like the "sarbhaja" or "narom-pak jolbhora", Balaram serves up innovative the "baked rashogolla" and "amrita paturi sandesh". The challenge for Balaram or any other sweet shop is to continuously innovate and yet stick to the demand for classics.

**The change in the choice of food for every Bengali is not just restricted to the wedding menu only. There has been a sea of changes in the sweet meat industry of Kolkata as well. Believing that only the younger generations of Bengalis are open to experimental food will be a wrong notion.**

### Innovation on the Sweet Trail: Glimpse of the Sweet History

The change in the choice of food for every Bengali is not just restricted to the wedding menu only. There has been a sea of changes in the sweet meat industry of Kolkata as well. Believing that only the younger generations of Bengalis are open to experimental food will be a wrong notion. The replacement of rice based sweet dishes with the 'Chhana' or cottage cheese based sweets was also an experiment during the cultural rebirth of Bengal in the 19th Century. Earlier, rice was considered as the heart and soul of Bengali sweets. It was savoured with desi ghee, jaggery and milk. But during the last half of 19th century the sweetmeat industry emerged, experimented and created delicacies from Chhana or cottage cheese, which had a Portuguese influence. The experiments were very well received, obviously.

Kolkata today boasts of more than 16000 sweet shops. While many have incorporated unique flavours to the good old 'Chhana', many more have left them untouched, for those who love their sweets in the traditional avatar. Mishti, the word that melts in mouth after any hearty meal in Bengal has metamorphosed multiple times since the birth. The traditional Rasogolla, by Nobin Chandra Das from his first outlet at







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Sutanuti (present Bagbazar) in the year 1866 soon became the signature sweet of this city. Wherever you go, the name Kolkata will be immediately echoed by Rasgullas. Since then this iconic sweet delight from Calcutta has gone through many transformations to deliver to the Food lovers of Kolkata. The Baked or mango flavoured rasogolla, fondly delivered by Balaram Mullick and Radharaman Mullick who has worked very hard since 1885 to find new flavours for the old ones and all of them have been a hit.

Similarly, Hindustan Sweets has decided to take their innovation to another level. Along with offering mental satisfaction associated with pleasing the taste buds, they have taken sweets to a new level with Smriti Sandesh or the Spandan Sandesh. Yes Hindustan Sweets offers herbal sweets with anti-oxidant properties which can provide soothing relief to individuals suffering from chronic disorders.

Ganguram, another age old sweet shop, which is still going strong, was the first one to come up with farsans along with traditional sweets in

a huge hit since its birth. They have revamped the industry with fusion sweets, malai roll with white chocolate, black forest sandesh are equally in demand along with the traditional. Till very recent, Nakur has opposed the franchisee policy because of fears that this may hamper the quality and goodwill of a century but now they have opened an outlet at Spencer's, the retail initiative of R P Goenka group to give answer to Goenka's loyalty. Nakur proudly disclosed that their sales are 100% each day.

Bengali sweets have inherited many influences through its journey and so became a strong trade link inside the country as well as abroad. From the culinary point of view, some major historical trends influenced Bengali sweet culture and so the other communities created parallel business chains which go hand in hand with the traditional Bengali sweets. Bengal fell under the sway of British for nearly two centuries, The Jews brought bakeries to this city while the Marwaris contributed their sweet making skills to enrich the legacy. Prabhu Shankar Agarwal, Chairman of Haldiram Bhujawala Ltd. are fusing Bengali elements into their confectionery for more than fifty years in Kolkata who thinks that sweets are passion and creativity and new experiments are something they always go for, this is the secret behind his grand success in Kolkata's niche market.

It was Nahoum's Confectionery, who created European delicacies to the Bengali taste buds for the first time with the pastries and patties.

#### **Old and New in one Plate: Evolution of Confectionary Industry**

According to renowned food aficionado Nondon Bagchi, Kolkatans have forsaken their traditional mishtis to welcome new trends-the present generation has different tastes but Kolkata is a place that has always accepted new things without



**Bengali sweets have inherited many influences through its journey and so became a strong trade link inside the country as well as abroad.**

Kolkata. Once Ganguram decided to add essence to the curd he was famous for and the result was a preparation of 2500 cups of scented curd. A regular customer and a renowned artist Satyen Roy pointed out that since people love Ganguram's curd for the taste, adding essence might create an impression that the curd was adulterated, what could be done to the odd 2500 cups of essence curd? Thus Indrani was born. Felu Modak, the century old sweet shop situated in Rishra that embraced change even while relying on its core strength so that it does not miss out on either segment of customers. Along with traditional sorer nadu and kheer malpoa they have come up with the futuristic tastes like, mango pulp rabri and blackcurrant sandesh.

The innovations surrounding the sweetmeats were taken to a new level by Dwarik Ghosh from Howrah. Nakur Chandra Nandy who set his footmark in this field in the year 1844 and made Chandrapuli, a sweet made of coconut and kheer,





letting go of the old, all things co-exist peacefully in a platter.

However sweets are passé, if teenagers are to be believed. Looking for different options such as cupcakes and doughnuts, the younger generations love the concept of small bakeries which dish out home-made but fresh macaroons and customized cakes. The dessert palate of a typical Bengali household no longer contains an assortment of sweets carefully hand-picked from the different sweets shops. As a result numerous confectionary shops are opening their doors in the city. "The business potential is endless in this sector currently. The audience is experimentative, exposed to different flavours and want newer items on the menu each day. Also we are observing a steady rise in the demand of home delivered food." says Mr. Rahul Agrawal, from Design My Cake.

The growth in the industry of Confectionery in Kolkata has been immense in the past few years. Gone are the days when, cakes were reserved for the occasion of birthdays and Christmas. Today, small cafes who serve macaroons, croissant, cup cakes or brownies are the hot favourites, not only among the youngsters but also of the elderly as well. "With multinational chains entering the various food service segments, global cuisines and flavours have become an instant popularity among the young. Customers are looking for something extra and more innovative. Regular food patterns are already outdated. We are very excited to be a part of this phase in the industry. We are responding to this craze by innovating new and creative flavours and designs to satisfy the curious taste buds. Our range of new products include spice infused chocolates, fruity tiramisu, spiced cheesecakes, exotic green tea infused desserts, alcohol infused treats etc!" adds Mr. Rahul Agrawal.

#### Your Piece Of Cake

With very little time in hand, every person is in hurry and they prefer to juggle many things at once, hence online service and home delivered foods are becoming hot favourite and convenience. With customization becoming an 'in' thing, every customer wants his/her signature feel to the product. Every customer wants to feel special and Design My Cake has taken a new measure to add some more to this already innovative industry with the concept of 'Self Designed Cakes'. "Here we encourage the client to give us their designs or pictures that they want their cakes to look like. This is a radical shift from the catalogue based orders. The clients feel more involved and each cake is exclusive and unique. We also extensively operate through social media which is quick and easy for customers. There is no requirement of the involvement of a person to speak to the sales people or undergo any hassle of ordering. He can order the design he wants at the comfort of his home." says the man behind this unique concept.



Apart from this, there are many names in Kolkata which have been catering to Kolkata connoisseurs a wider and high quality access of bakery products. Mio Amore (once known by the name Monginis) has undergone a radical change in the recent days not just the name but also in terms of taste and products and they offer these at a very affordable price.

Sugarr & Spice, a well known brand was started by Supriyaa Roy much against the will of her family in the year 1990 still holds a prime position among the city confectionaries. Her willingness to experiment and bring innovation to the food culture of Kolkata made her small initiative into a household name.

The emerging confectionery industry is having umpteen names which have already created their benchmarks in Kolkata in last few years. Au Bon Pain, for example has their signature blueberry muffin and raspberry cheese croissant. Mrs. Magpie, the new kid on the cake-café block is the brain child of Sohini Basu Behrens and is already a hit. The outlet deserves full marks not only for its quirky looks but for its exotic food. Mini cup cakes are signature item over here which comes in six different flavours.

Kookie Jar is another trusted name in the field of confectionery. Situated in many parts of Kolkata, this cake shop is serving for decades with their mouthwatering pineapple pastry and out of the world black forest cakes and for sure it is a brand that really has changed the face of Kolkata's sweet eating for the past 25 years.

**The dessert palate of a typical Bengali household no longer contains an assortment of sweets carefully hand-picked from the different sweets shops. As a result numerous confectionary shops are opening their doors in the city.**



**The younger generations of Bengalis need innovation for their taste buds, there are also other factors which have led to this sudden surge of innovation in every section of the food industry.**

### The Café Culture and Street Food of Kolkata – Changing Trends

Not long, but just 10 years ago, if you strolled carelessly around the city you would spot number of tea stalls or shops with a big crowd, chatting and discussing about the various aspects of the country while enjoying their tea with a toast or cutlet. One such place is the 'Radu Babu' located in the alley next to the Lake Mall. Satyaki Mukherjee, a 70 year old resident of the Lake Market area and a regular says "I have a group of friends and we meet every evening over cups of tea and enjoy long chats. Sometimes we binge on the age old cutlets and stew from 'Radhu Babu'. Every staff of this old shop knows us by our names. I wonder if this tradition will die with us."

It is not true that the younger generations don't have the time to indulge in chats. Walk into any of the Cafés and you would hardly get a seat. So what is it that has changed the scenario of Kolkata so much?

### Luxury and Innovation

Apart from the fact, that the younger generations of Bengalis need innovation for their taste buds, there are also other factors which have led to this sudden surge of innovation in every section of the food industry. The present generation cannot be satisfied by just food, since they need a comfortable sitting area, with wifi to work on their laptop or smart phones. Thus the gradual shift.

"When we started, Calcutta barely had any stand alone cafes. And budget eateries meant

Chinese and street food, but getting pastas sandwiches to the masses was easy as we set the trend. Thankfully we don't have hookah, as I feel I need to focus on food primarily." says Mr. Rahul Arora a Chef and owner of Bon Apetit. "We are more like a canteen, and we are one of the very few people who have over 175 dishes in a standalone Cafe. All dishes are added to the menu after conducting food festivals and the top sellers get added to the menu. Every year we have three special menus and the dishes that sell the most become permanent additions. We also have a huge egg eating clientele and we have experimented a lot with eggs." continues Mr. Arora.

The assorted dishes from various countries and a strong brewed coffee or a good flavoured tea are fast replacing the cutlets and strong tea from the street side ancient stalls. Even though the legendary shops like the Radhu Babu's in Lake Market, or the small tea shop popularly known as Dilip's Tea, in Southern Avenue that boasts of having served 'Netaji' with their famous cup of tea have not lost their charm and enigma. Many friends still visit this stall to catch up with their friends while sipping the tea. The immortal Coffee House in the Boi Para is still a witness to many 'addas' of both the generation but one cannot deny that The F.R.I.E.N.D.S Café, The Biker's Café, The Royal Bengal Tiger Café, Mrs Magpie, Flury's or Café Pranah are also gaining popularity every single day.

The chai bars are refined and acts as a nice spot for gathering or simply hanging out. Gone are the days, when people used to sit at the benches of the tea shops. The snacking culture in India especially in Kolkata is something really exciting. Previously the snacks got cooked in vast pots of oil which has large amounts of fat. Some of the prominent street foods that people used to enjoy with a hot cup of tea are Jhalmuri, Cuttlet -fries, kathi rolls and telebhaja. But if we are to believe Mr. Rahul Arora of Café Pranah "Health eating is of the most upcoming trends in Cafe circuits.



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People are avoiding Mayonnaise, people want Multigrain breads. We also have a lot of demand of sugar free dishes. Adding super foods like Chia etc are also a huge thing.”

“Café Pranah is a health Cafe that focuses in making conscious eating delicious, not very expensive, targeting young gym goers and conscious youngsters and older people.” says Mr Rahul Arora. And if the crowds are proof enough than these Cha Bars are doing great in infusing health to the daily life of the people of Kolkata.

### Food the Bookworms

Another rising trend in the Café sector is the emergence of ‘Book Café Culture’. In the year 2000, Cha Bar set its sail in Kolkata. No one thought that a Café with a book shop would last very long, but it prospered and today Cha bar has spread its wings with 30 outlets not limited to Kolkata but also in the major cities of India.

There are many people who hardly get any time to indulge in their hobbies or book reading. These book cafés are a solution to these people. They can read books from the library or buy books from the book store in the café while sipping on a cuppa of rich latte or nibbling on cheese garlic bread. The very idea may sound alluring to many and that is why many Book Cafés have sprouted in the city in the recent times. Cha Bar, Café Turtle, Back...to the Desi Café or Abar Baithak are some of the popular book cafés that has brought a revolution in Kolkata Coffee and Tea Culture. These Cafés often hosts book readings and many interesting activities that makes these cafés livelier.

“The smell of the books, old or new clubbed with your favourite munchies and coffee is like absolute Nirvana” says Ahana Bose a young student from Kolkata. While Amrit Sanyal is of the opinion “It is easy to strike a conversation with strangers or socialize in these Book cafes since they attract likeminded people.”

Even though the people of Kolkata are open to experimental food, they are embracing new and experimental themes and concepts as well. These health cafes, book cafes and cake cafes are proof enough.

### The Rising Foodgraph in Kolkata

“Food service is the third biggest service industry in India today. Who would have thought of this 15 or 20 years ago? A recent report suggested that the FNB service market would be worth a whopping INR 3.8lac crore by 2017. The growth FNB industry has seen an unprecedented growth lately and will continue doing so in the future as well. In east India, the growth has been relatively slow but is definitely catching up. We have seen more growth in the past 3 years than in the last 8 years prior to that. East India is exploring new permutations and combinations in the food industry, which is a major upside to the growth of the industry here.” says Mr. Rahul Agrawal from Design My Cake.

The explosive growth in the food industry indicates an increase in the wealthy Kolkatan middle class who are looking to embrace Western

**The explosive growth in the food industry indicates an increase in the wealthy Kolkatan middle class who are looking to embrace Western culture. A break from monotony is all what the people of Kolkata are looking for.**





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**Revolution in the food sector of Kolkata is not just about the change in the taste, but it is also about a change in the trend.**

culture. A break from monotony is all what the people of Kolkata are looking for. This revolution in the food sector of Kolkata is not just about the change in the taste, but it is also about a change in the trend. The 'Biye baris' are fast changing in to lavish banquet halls hosting fun and vibrant parties, more because the present day Bengali couples want to try something new, break the monotony of the age old customs and incorporate the western culture in their age old traditions.

The rise of the Café culture is also because that the Kolkata people these days need a neutral space which has its appeal of its own and which is neither a home nor a workplace. These Cafes have become their 'that space' where they can enjoy the company of their friends or families in the luxury of AC and free WiFi as well as take hundreds of selfies with fun and interesting background. These new trending cafés are fast becoming the 'living' space of not only the younger generations but the older generations are fast catching up on this trend of an 'Urban Living Space'. In many cases the food or a simple cup of coffee is priced at a much higher range but in exchange they give you time and space to be yourself.

**Working Couples**

Today most of the young couples in Kolkata are working. Right from the morning, they are busy with their work and handling work pressure. On returning home, no one intends to spend their time in cooking. They manage to get some ready to eat meal or order online. And when there is some special occasion or want to try their hand in something fancy they go out for dinner. When the frequency of eating out is more, obviously people will venture out for new cuisines. This has paved the way for many experimental food joints or health cafes.

This trend has also brought in the concept of restaurants that serve authentic Bengali dishes. The numbers of these restaurants are increasing everyday with an array of age old recipes that are on the verge of getting lost. These restaurants are getting an increased number of footfalls due to the increased number of working couples in Kolkata. Kolkata is known to balance the new and the old in the same platter hence restaurants like Bhojohari Manna, Bhoj Company, Koshe Kosha, Sholo Ana Bangali and the likes are doing great business. Even a few years back there were not as many restaurants serving Bengali cuisine as one can find today. The new Kolkata is happily embracing the 'Mocha Chingri' along with the Caffé mocha with the same warmth.

**Quality and Service – The Key Determiners**

There is also a stiff competition among the restaurants or the cafes as each one is trying to offer the best but because of the mushrooming of it, the revenue that is coming is getting divided. They have to come up with newer techniques and have to think something out of the box to stay in the competition.

The beautiful interior is not just enough to appease the consumers. To stay in the trade, it is important to provide quality food and tea. The loyalty towards customers needs to be maintained too. "The Bengali palette is very sensitive to familiar tastes. They like to go back to the restaurant and order things over n over again. They are also very loyal in terms of favorite restaurant. And consistency is their biggest puller. So if an outlet maintains regular quality checks, there is no looking back." says the owner of Bon Appetit and Café Pranah, Mr. Rahul Arora.

He also speaks about how he increases the business efficiency "I keep my highest cost fraction on the food. We have totally minimalistic breakage by using unbreakable crockery. The food costs us at all outlets is among 25 to 33 % we keep it approximately at 40 %. And our biggest secret is turnover. We have to be quick. And our average food service time to a table is 12 mins."

**The Challenges**

Even though the food sector is growing fast in Kolkata, there are many problems which the owners are facing that might stunt their growth. Mr. Rahul Arora of Café Pranah says "The





government should make the listing policies a little more transparent. The whole concept of middle men and agents should be removed. All licensing payment transactions must be done online or via a set format under standardized guidelines. A more organized body that aids start ups is of prime importance.”

Mr Rahul Agrawal of Design My Cake adds “I think there are two main things we could look at to make the food market more progressive – government policies on licensing and taxes. There is a plethora of licenses one needs to petition for before he can open a f&b outlet. There should be a single window to manage the entire procedure, given the sheer number of people wanting to open a new f&b outlet. And second is taxation. The VAT, excise and service charge implication is huge to the tune of about 17%- 25%. This inflates the final rate to the customer and it dissuades him from frequenting the f&b outlet.”

Among other challenges, the unavailability of labours and good formally trained chef is also a major problem. “Staff is the biggest challenge in Kolkata. It’s very difficult to retrain them. Thus we catch them young. A staff I hire is usually 19 to 20 yrs of age. It’s easier to train fresher and retrain them than to untrain and retrain.” says Mr. Rahul Arora of Café Pranah.



Inspite of all the challenges, new entrepreneurs are venturing in the food market of Kolkata bringing in something new to offer to the food lovers and connoisseurs of the city. Most of them are well received and are flying high in Kolkata. Be it the food served in weddings or in the health cafés, be it, the Luchi or the Lasagna, or a rasgulla or a ‘Nolen Gurer Ice cream’, the Kolkatans are always ready with their forks to dig in all the delectable pleasures from all across the world. ●●

**There is a plethora of licenses one needs to petition for before he can open a f&b outlet. There should be a single window to manage the entire procedure, given the sheer number of people wanting to open a new f&b outlet.**

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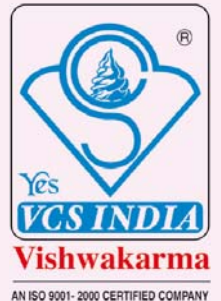
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E-mail: info@vcsindia.com, Web: www.vcsindia.com

Mr. Farookh Kazi (GM- Marketing) Mobile No.: 9375523410, E-mail: info@vcsgajjar.com Web: www.vcsgajjar.com







# Simplifying and synchronising the F&B business

In an interaction with Food Service India magazine, Nilesh Shah, Director of RanceLab shares his views on how technology is shaping up the F&B business.



Nilesh Shah

## Tell us briefly about your company and its business?

Established in 1998, RanceLab is a Kolkata based software developing company. Our software solutions are majorly for retail, restaurant and hospitality business. Besides, we are the pioneers of ERP software in India, which eases the daily operational needs of the restaurant and other businesses.

## Tell us about your positioning and special offerings?

Most of the retail, restaurant and hospitality ventures require more than one system to manage their day-to-day operations such as billing, accounting, customer details, suppliers, and much more. The ERP software -- FusionResto focusses on minimising the execution gap of managing different softwares for all these operations. This ERP software is an all-in-one ready to use module that includes point-of-sale, inventory management, accounts, loyalty program, payroll, supply-chain and analysis tools.

## Which are the customer segments for your offerings and which are your major markets?

We are currently serving 25,000 users in 30 countries including India, South East Asia, Middle East and Africa. It caters to all verticals of F&B business such as fine-dine restaurants, quick service restaurants, take-away and home delivery, food courts, and sweet shops, etc.

## What is your business model and what is your strategy for pricing the products?

Our business model revolves around addressing business challenges and needs, solving them with the best of technology available and helping other businesses to flourish with the help of our software solutions. Besides, we have offices and partner networks to offer timely support and zero downtime. Considering the prices of existing ERP softwares in the market, we are moderately priced.

## Which are the technologies impacting F&B?

Customers are becoming more and more demanding in terms of their needs and options. Besides, to address their needs and offer round-the-clock support. Keeping in mind the customer requirements, the solution providers have to be on their toes everytime to address the last mile challenges.

Recently, we have come up with FusionMobi, a suite of mobile apps that offer management reports on-the-go, stock checking, supplier performances, store performances, mobile POS, kitchen display system, home delivery, call-centre, mobile wallets and loyalty, etc. Moreover, the suite seamlessly synchronises all relevant data with FusionResto, helping restaurant owners to take timely decisions and stay abreast with the restaurant operations.

## How are you using technology in the F&B business?

With a surge in demand, the technology platforms are getting multiplied. From Windows, Android to iOS our solutions are available on all platforms ensuring that the user can leverage the maximum out of the available resources and infrastructure, thus ensuring a low total cost of ownership. The solution offers five to one ROI within one year of implementation and increase revenue up to 10per cent comparing to similar businesses.

## What is the one technology innovation that your business thrives on?

Going mobile is the one of the best innovation in recent days. It connects users, business owners, their customers and suppliers all in one platform. It helps businesses to offer more value-addition services, and create a better market visibility.

## Tell us about your growth & development plans?

Our growth plans include developing new technology, reaching out to more markets and make more cost-effective solutions to offer an end-to-end solution to F&B businesses worldwide. ●●





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Anuvrat Pabrai, CEO (R)  
and Partners Kunal Pabrai (C) & Nishant Pabrai (L)

## Sweet path to success

In a candid conversation with Food Service India magazine, CEO Anuvrat Pabrai and partners Kunal Pabrai & Nishant Pabrai of Pabrai's Fresh & Naturelle Ice Creams express their views on how the east India market is responding to the positive strides, and how young foodpreneurs are cashing in on the opportunities by innovation and right strategies.

**Which are the positive upsides to the foodservice market of East India? In your assessment, how has it evolved over the years in terms of growth and business opportunities?**

**Anuvrat Pabrai:** The east India market has been a late starter in terms of the food service industry, despite the huge demand. I feel that the market has stupendous potential waiting to be addressed. Infact, there is ample scope for food entrepreneurs to cash in on the opportunity.

Therefore, it is not surprising that multiple start-ups have blossomed in the city trying to carve out a niche for themselves. Some of them like Wow Momos & Pabrai's Fresh & Naturelle Ice creams have expanded their reach across the nation; while others like Chai Break & Paris Café continue to draw an increasing army of fans by constantly innovating their products.

**What is the sphere and scope of your foodservice operations and activities in East India? Which specific sector/segment of the foodservice market you cater to?**

**Kunal Pabrai:** At present there are 11 Pabrai's retail units in both standalone parlours and kiosk formats with eight in Kolkata, two in Siliguri and one in Bhubaneswar.

In each of the cities, in addition to addressing the retail demand for premium ice creams, we also address the demand curve of top hotels, restaurants and caterers.

**Which food retail formats do you occupy? How organised is this format of business and how much of this business format is in the organised market? Which are the factors that will encourage more players to embrace the organised market?**

**Nishant Pabrai:** Currently, we have three retail formats: mini counter format, which is a shop in shop format of approx. 24-36 sq ft. Kiosk

format, which we operate in malls and food courts of approx. 64-100 sq ft and parlour format which are standalone stores of 250-400 sq ft. Besides, each format has its own positives and negatives and comes with its own set of challenges and opportunities.

All our mini counters and kiosks are part of food courts, hyper marts or malls. Parlour formats are located on high streets and operate in standalone format. All formats are in organised sector and have to operate within the ambit of licensing and govt regulations.

I feel that a more proactive approach by the government in educating new start-ups, providing training in various aspects like cleanliness, hygiene, personal grooming, and financial and accounting practices for successfully managing a start-up; all these can help in greater transformation of the sector.

**Give us a brief description of your evolution and growth over the years?**

**Kunal Pabrai:** We started off with a single parlour in Kolkata in 2008. Our first franchised unit was started in 2010. Since then we have grown to 25 outlets in 10 cities in India. We are available in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mysore, Coimbatore, Siliguri, Bhubaneswar and Kolkata.

Besides, we have another seven outlets in the pipeline and we hope to close this in financial year with 32 plus units across India. Our CAGR has been 50% plus over a period of eight years, but we hope to settle to a more realistic 30-35% CAGR in the next 3-4 years.

**What is the business potential and opportunity for your format type?**

**Nishant Pabrai:** At Pabrai's we offer gourmet, premium, and natural ice creams, I feel we have immense potential and demand for our product



and keeping this in mind we are expanding our reach across the country through the franchise route. It enables us to partner with like-minded individuals to be part of this growth opportunity.

What sets us apart is our single minded pursuit of providing the best quality product. We feel new entrants to food business should focus on benchmarking themselves with the best in terms of quality of food and service.

**Have you tried out any interesting/innovative concept for your format?**

**Anuvrat Pabrai:** One of our most talked about innovations is creating cuisine specific ice cream flavours. This is mainly targeted towards the hotels and restaurants. So far we have created cuisine specific ice creams for Indian, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Bengali, Thai and Vietnamese cuisines. Some of the flavours made by us have never been tried before and our customers have given us a very good response.

I feel our growth and marketing is driven by our customers' 'word of mouth'. Our customers are loyal, and act as our brand ambassadors by praising our brand and our products to their friends, relatives and others. This cycle keeps on moving has been the reason for our growth and our strong connection with our customers.

**Which are the latest consumption trends and developments influencing your business format and how are you positioned to make the best use of the opportunity?**

**Kunal Pabrai:** Customised gift packing is the new trend - wherein attractive and customised gift packing is created for giving with marriage cards. Also our products are perfect gifting options for family & friends --both within the city and to other cities. Home delivery is a major part of our business, as normally no ice cream company delivers ice creams in a short span of time. We have been working hard to cater to the needs of our by delivering their favourite flavour at their doorstep.

We are actively working on strengthening our home delivery platform and long distance packaging systems.

**What is the input cost of your business? Which parts of your business operations incur the highest cost/expense and what are you doing to enhance business efficiency?**

**Nishant Pabrai:** For setting up a unit parlour operation, approximately Rs.12-15 Lakh is required. Apart from the above, repetitive monthly expenses are predominantly rental, salaries, electricity and inventory.

To enhance business operations, one of the key innovations is the personal training given by us to each new franchisee at the time of starting new counter. This is usually followed up by a revision training a month or so later. This helps ensure that franchisees have completely understood and are following the basic tenets of the franchise system.



Apart from this regular refresher trainings are given at least 2-3 times a year to ensure franchisees keep adhering to our standards and SOP's.

**Tell us about the challenges of your business?**

**Anuvrat Pabrai:** The biggest challenge we are facing is having franchisees follow our systems and standard operating processes. A lot of time and energy is spent on reinforcing the basics and pushing franchisees to keep relentless focus on the KPIs. In 90 percent cases we have seen that lack of understanding and implementation of Franchisor's Standard operating process often lead to failure. Although there are various reasons for failure, but following the advice of the franchisor is a key to a successful chain.

One major challenge is the up-grading of new systems, designs and initiatives across the franchise chain. This can be a challenging area and needs operational clarity between franchisor and franchisee on how new developments will be handled, implemented and most importantly financed. We firmly believe that a great system, a great product and great service will always ensure brand loyalty and future growth.

**What has been the impact of the entry and rise of global multinational foodservice chains in East India?**

**Kunal Pabrai:** It is a matter of great pride when our customers rate us amongst the best in the world in terms of our product and taste.

For us at Pabrai's, the rise and presence of global food chains has only sought to help and inspire us to be greater and better. International gourmet food chains also help educate customers about the unique tastes and flavours of different regions. This helps us indirectly as international chains bring in newer tastes, newer flavours, newer experiences. It helps when a home grown ice cream chain is seen to already have those flavours in their repertoire. ••

**The rise and presence of global food chains has only sought to help and inspire us to be greater and better.**



# The Desi Global

Evolving taste buds of consumers and the global donning desi avatar is a smart move by the QSRs and this is leading to the fattish growth of the Food and Beverage industry in India.

by Komal Anand



**T**he Food and Beverage industry is an industry which has seen an unprecedented growth in the past few years and continues to grow rapidly. A recent media report mentioned that the Quick Service Restaurants sector in India is likely to grow in double digits to reach \$4.13 billion (nearly INR 27,475.9 crore) by 2020. With increase in disposable income and changing lifestyle patterns, majority of the Indian population today prefers eating out on weekends.

About two decades ago, the Indian consumer had a rendezvous with a whole new set of ideas related to fast food and quick service dining. Led by globalisation, a younger and aware population, increased purchasing power, west inspired café culture, and a willingness to experiment and indulge, the concept of Indian QSRs was all set to be redefined.

Few top notch global brands forayed into India at a stage when the country was opening up to international food brands. These brands having earned the first movers advantage introduced the concept of branded fast food in India in 1996, and raised the hygiene and quality requirements to international standards.

The relatively higher price point of these brands from what was available at local vendors' came in very handy. They had a range of offerings which the "great Indian Middle Class" could afford. The brand value combined with taste a price point that didn't hurt the consumer sentiment resulted into the mammoth increase in the number of international food chains setting foot in India.

Due to cultural influences, consumers' interest went beyond food, and extended to the experience provided by the QSR industry still in its raw stages. Consumers got increasingly receptive to new products and services, which prompted the QSR industry to customise the menu offerings as per the local taste. Hygiene and less pinching price made humungous contribution to this growth. Add to this the diversity of Indian peninsula and you would have an appreciation of the experimental nature of the Indian consumer.

While Indians on the one hand took instant liking to global epicurean sensations, global food brands simultaneously endeavored to evolve new 'fusion' items as the market became more

accommodative. It is the same formula at work that people use as tourists in other nations. People learn the tit-bits of the language to be able to strike some similar chord with citizens of the other nation. As hosts we too like it when people from across the territory speak our language and adapt to our culture.

A very interesting trend is the QSR industry curating cuisines inspired from global palate and indigenizing it. A classic example is the Aloo Tikki burger. Aloo Tikki is a favorite Indian delicacy. It's been lifted from street food and localized in a western dish. Big names like KFC, McDonalds, Subway and Dominoes offer the western food in local flavors to appeal to the Indian consumer.

The market that was majorly dominated by established global brands which take the larger share of the pie and leave a very tiny amount for the new players, many factors including consumption of new cuisines and increasing brand awareness has led to exponential opportunities for other global players to enter the erstwhile inhibited Indian market.

As the Indian cuisine is vast and fragmented, standardization of the product is a major challenge. The key is to have a localized menu with a standardized product.

Globalizing the Indian taste and localizing the global cuisine is a smart move that caters to the need of Indian consumers. The consumer who likes to savor local flavors but from the house of international brands.

At McCain as well, customisation and localization has been our forte. Our strategy has been to localize the global food and give Indian taste buds a flavor of the global deliciousness.

With evolving taste buds of the consumers, the global donning the desi avatar is a smart move by the QSR's and it will not be wrong to say that such a change is responsible for the fattish growth of Food and Beverage industry. Not just QSRs but even fine dining restaurants are fast catching on to the trend.

The trend is all set to grow giving brilliant opportunities for established players and also by opening up to newer ones gradually contributing to the cosmopolitan culture of the Indian food industry which is a must watch scenario as India itself is a land of varied cuisines. There is ample place for all players who've stood the test of time and have understood the pulse of Indian audience. ●●



The Author is Head of Retail Sales & Marketing and Supply Chain at McCain Foods India.





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Inderjeet Singh Banga

# Pirates of good food !

Restaurateur, Inderjeet Singh Banga, Founder, Pirates of Grill speaks to Food Service India magazine about his success mantra and what it takes to retain loyal customers.

by Nibedita Roy

## What is your restaurant's format and how many restaurants are you operating currently under this brand?

Pirates of Grill started out as an exciting new concept in fine barbecue dining. We came up with the concept of live grills on the table, coupled with the story of pirates cooking their own grills. Our first restaurant was in Rajouri Garden, which was a hit among the customers of West

Delhi. Our innovative offerings at pocket-friendly prices, made the hungry masses drool for more, making successful venture. We then expanded to NCR with our second outlet in Gurgaon, at MGF Megacity Mall. We introduced live kitchens and also the first ever Brazilian Churrasco Grill in India. With delicious food grills from all over the world, we opened our outlet in the most popular hub of Chandigarh, and the response has been really good.

As we grew, our epic stories about food and ambience, serving live music along with delectable barbecue grew further. Our most recent addition to our restaurant chain is the new outlet at 'The Mall of India, Noida'. The new POG is designed keeping in mind the interactive buffet experience.

## What is your market positioning, your USP and customer value proposition?

It is a place where you can come to have lively meal with your family & friends. Thus, we try to cater to various palate preferences with our vast offerings, right from salads to soups to starters to main-course to desserts, we have everything. We also make sure that we have some dedicated sections in our menu to offer to our health conscious customers. Our starters are grilled and can be a healthy & wholesome meal.

Our market positioning is surely amongst one of the most acknowledged family buffet place in town that serves widest menu at the most affordable prices. We are living in the time of 'Jo Dikhta hai Voh bikta hai'. So, we follow almost everything to make sure we are reaching our audience, right from advertisements to social media campaigning, we focus on right strategies to retain our customers and reach out to the new ones.

But above all, we also believe that word of mouth is the most strongest strategy one can ever have. We make sure to serve right food at right price. We are very particular in maintaining our service standards and food quality, and we ensure that our customers always go back with good experiences. Our customers have been very helpful in promoting us and help us reach, where we are today!

## Today, diners are looking for out-of-the box concepts and something that breaks the daily monotony of home dining. Tell us about all that makes your outlets- in terms of F&B innovations, cuisines, restaurant layout and design, etc.

For sure, our customer is much evolved and travelled and are all set to embrace the innovations in the form of concept restaurants. We make sure that each of our brand is unique and different. We don't replicate the things of one brand and use it for the other one. Rather, we create different things for each brand. When we opened The Pirates of Grill, we were clear to offer good quality food at good prices, the theme was a grilled affair which went really well with foodies. Our upcoming concept 'Pranksters' will be a new revolution all together, it would be something that Delhi-NCR has not seen yet, a concept full of fun and frolic.



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Thanks to the much-evolved customers, people now like to experiment with new things and this encourages restaurateurs to come up with something new & exciting



**Which are those cutting edge concepts and innovations and bold experiments that you feel are truly unique to your establishment?**

The food and beverage industry is always in the state of evolution, from introducing new concepts, menus or new ideas everything is dynamically changing. Besides, the industry is witnessing a paradigm shift from traditional concepts to new international concepts. Thanks to the much-evolved customers, people now like to experiment with new things and this encourages restaurateurs to come up with something new & exciting.

One of the key elements today is to understand that the market is continuously evolving and is very dynamic. So the solution to stay in the game in the long term, is based on understanding the pulse of the market, get your basic product right and then in the second stage to consistently deliver the guest experience over and over again and finally to continuously adapt as per the changing times.

For a restaurant business long term future consistency with innovation is the keys the way to succeed. Soon we are coming up with - 'Prankster', a new experience based concept, Wherein, a customers can enjoy good food, drinks, music & ambience.

So keeping that in mind, we are building in a team of people who want to have fun and are genuinely concerned about the guests & their needs. Also, as a restaurateur, it is highly important that I have a focused vision for my venture and its operations, along with the ability to come up with unique and meaningful solutions with my team's support. I feel this would be our biggest differentiator. Despite the rapid growth of food & beverage industry, the customers still like to come back to genuine places where they can enjoy delectable food at a comfortable and good ambience. Hence, consistency, hard work and customer engagement are the things we keep in mind, to cope up with the competition.

**What is your opinion about the growth outlook and market potential for restaurant cum bars. What do you feel are the prerequisites for success in this segment?**

Currently, the food service industry is the most dynamic one. It has a room for all kind of offerings from all parts of world. food, drinks, ambience and events are four major elements which contributes to the success. We plan to grow bigger and better in all the four dynamics - right location, pricing, unique concept, offering are few things which we have in mind for all our upcoming places.

**How are you leveraging technology to streamline and expand your infrastructure bandwidth?**

In today's time technology plays a very important role. It's the way to reach out our target audience. We try to incorporate as much as we can, right from being on the social media platforms to in the e-planning stage of our exclusive apps to stay connected with our guests, We are trying to cope up with tech smart generation in every possible way.

**Are you in favour of local procurement or sourcing from far-off shores?**

Anything that brings the best to my outlet-- We are comfortable with. I am open to have less margins, but my main motive is that my customers, my vendors and my team should be happy.

**How much of your earnings is spent back as investment to the business. Which are the priority areas of such investment?**

Restaurant industry is everyday investment. After building place also, we need running funds always for marketing as well as supporting the business for initial months. Restaurant industry brings new challenges everyday. We invest Rs 3-4 crore for every. It takes about 2-3 years for us to take out our investments. However, we invest back 80-85% of income to generate more outlets. ●●



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# Playing with pots and pans

In a candid conversation with FoodService India, Chef Inder Dev of Fortune Select expresses his views on the various culinary cultures and his most preferred style of innovative cooking.

by Nibedita Roy



**Tell us how you came to step into the world of foodservice and whether it was by accident or design.**

My family was into the hospitality business. I was 11 when I got fascinated seeing chefs mixing ingredients and playing with pots and pans. So the passion started at an early age, and soon my dream came true.

**Who were your career mentors?**

Khana Khazana fame chef Sanjeev Kapoor, chef Manjit Singh Gill, chef Satish Arora and chef Sanjay Sharma were my key mentors.

**How do you define your cuisine?**

Initially I was taken up with cooking tasty food at home, and then preparing healthy food during my stint in the family business of hospital catering. But later I realised that cuisine was a vast subject which calls for excellent and special skills, an innovative brain, lots of dedication, hard work and the ability to understand the art of matching and mixing ingredients scientifically. My cuisine is definitely Indian, which itself has huge varieties. After graduating in Hotel Management in 1990, I took to some intense travelling in many countries. Now, with 26 years of experience under my belt, I can call the world cuisine as my cuisine.

**Which culinary styles have influenced your career?**

Though every culinary style has its own importance and the scientific reasons behind it, what impressed me was the 'Dum' style of cooking. It was very enthralling to see how perfectly the food gets cooked in a sealed pot and the way it looks and taste after it has been cooked. Also, I liked the pot roasting style of cooking in which food gets infused with herbs and other flavours, which makes it appealing and delicious.

**What twists or accents do you love to incorporate into your dishes?**

People call me a fusion master chef. I have created dishes, which are simply out-of-the box. Some of them are 'lotus root ki jalebi', 'missi roti pizza', 'Thai curried dal vada', 'dahi kebab ki chaat', 'olive chicken tikka', 'apple ishtew', 'biryani ke parathe', 'rasogola ki chaat', and gulab jamun baked with



white chocolate fondue, etc. I have also worked with a food scientist to gain a better understanding of mixing ingredients and their health benefits.

**Can you mention the ethnic specialties or the types of food you enjoy preparing and presenting?**

I have a passion for exploring hidden regional and ancient dishes and I am equally good at giving a twist to turn the dishes into healthy food. I like to use ancient ingredients and try to revive the old cuisine. I have used bajra, (pearl millet) raagi (finger millet), makai (corn), fresh jowar (white millet), etc, in my recipes. I love cooking fresh haldi (turmeric) ki subzi, cooking in turmeric leaf, banana leaf, grape leaf and colacasia leaf.

**You have travelled a lot and seen things in other cuisines in other countries. In this context, which are the things that interest you most?**

I have done extensive travelling across the country and overseas as part of my passion and profession. Every country has its own uniqueness depending upon the location and weather of the place. I take pride that I can eat any food even if it is not suitable to my palate. For instance, I equally enjoy Japanese cuisine when in Japan, I relish the local food when in the Middle East. The same is true when I am in Europe and it thrills me to tuck into roasted food. To conclude, every local food or cuisine is the best for its own region.

**What do you consider the most distinguishing features of your work as a chef?**

I love mentoring young chefs and discuss about healthy food and good health. Apart from that, I train all my employee to consider the customer as God and the food we cook as the 'bhog for God'. This approach to cooking provides clean, safe and excellent food.

**How would you describe the role of a modern chef today?**

A chef is an entrepreneur for the organisation, his skills need perfection and his passion needs vision. Besides, he must be innovative, creative and an artist to present his food with perfection.

**Do you see yourself more as a chef or a hospitality entrepreneur? Which is closer to your heart – managing food or managing business?**

If you are one of this, you are incomplete...first one needs to be an excellent chef to work as a good entrepreneur.

**What made you return to India?**

I worked abroad to experience various cuisines and food technology. But the kind of diversity in food and food habits that is available in India is nowhere in the world. There is an age old history to Indian food. I think, if I can master even a little bit of it, then it would be a great achievement for me. Secondly, I wish to put my expertise to globalise Indian food so that I feel honoured to be a chef in India for India.

**How many restaurants are you involved with currently?**

My dream project is 'The World Art Dining' and the restaurants that are conceptualized by me: World Art Café, The Brewhouse, The Cookhouse, India on My Plate and a few more, which are afoot.

**Tell us a bit about your restaurants and their food positioning?**

Every restaurant that I am involved in has a defined target clientele and offerings. All my ventures have different offerings. Each brand has its own positioning and the menu is as per the brand. India on My Plate has hidden or lost cuisines of Indian

**I have done intense travelling as a part of my passion and profession. Every country and its cuisine has its own uniqueness depending upon the location and weather of the place.**







regions, The Cookhouse gives you the feel of world cuisine and The Brewhouse offers you the best of fusion food with a twist of my own style.

**In the case of your restaurants, what is your strategy for engaging customers?**

In most of my restaurants there are open kitchens. I love the live kitchen concept as it helps the chef to connect with the customer easily and understand the customer's preference. It is a good way of connecting with the customers and I am going



I have two different views here: one from my days abroad and second in my own country. Abroad, when a customer expresses his dissatisfaction, the server will say, 'sorry Mr..., I will just make it in your style, give me 10 minutes.' The customer will cheer up for his re-prepared dish. However, in India, the satisfaction comes only after announcing it to more people, by judging the size of the damage to the image of the outlet. I am sorry for expressing my experience so bluntly. I believe, making a customer feel at ease with a strong bonding will make him speak out his dissatisfaction and for taking the necessary service recovery actions.

**One of the biggest challenges in the F&B sector today is to try and make every customer happy. How do you look at it and how do you react to adverse publicity?**

I don't really agree to it. In today's time, the customer is well travelled and he knows what quality of food is being served. I can proudly say that I have learned many things from customers. It's all about providing delicious and hygienic food.

**Today, restaurants have become multidimensional spaces for events and marketing events has become very important for restaurants to attract clientele. Is it because products across restaurants are getting more and more common?**

In the last couple of years, dining is being associated with socialising and commercialising. The concept of serious dining is passé now. Even family dining is also losing its charm. Merchandising, added with fun, has turned out to be an unwinding tool for the customers.

**Do you believe in organising events like book reading or yoga session, sufi nights, DJ nights and so on so forth in restaurants or do you restrict yourself to only activities on the social media?**

Nowadays, life has become more mechanised and noisy. Book reading or yoga sessions are not on same page with sufi and DJ nights but they have to be organised according to the different preferences of customers. With the emerging trend of social media, we too are focussing a lot on it.

**How do you decide and act on changing any particular food product on the menu?**

In one aspect, menu and changing a dish depends upon the place or society in which you are located. I also believe that if the food quality is good, there will always be people to enjoy it. The process for menu planning is nothing less than a research. It starts with a theme and then through mix and match experiments of the offerings and its requirement for customers.

**Which are your favourite dishes?**

Being a chef I can not single out any one favorite dish. I enjoy every food from every corner of

**Online media is certainly promoting culinary skills. And to acquire those skills, professional culinary schools are in demand.**

with the concept where the chefs are in front of customers. Moreover, the menu is from across the country so there is a dish for every guest. This really encourages the customer to enjoy the food and revive their passion for cooking.

**Do chefs really make good restaurateurs or is it just a myth? What are the chances of a good chef botching up as a restaurant entrepreneur. On the other hand, what could be the positives for a trained chef to turn out into a good restaurateur? Your own life experience can offer many good insights to this question.**

Over the past decade, many chefs became entrepreneurs and there are many success stories. I believe that ever since chefs have started becoming entrepreneurs, the cuisines have gone to the next level. While at Montreal in Canada, I remember that along with the traditional Indian food, snack food like samosa, papdi chaat, etc, were also a big hit. Similarly, Mexican taco, quesadilla, pizza and pasta from Italy are also liked in India. So kudos to the chefs fraternity for globalising cuisines and offering delicacies from around the world in one single platter.

**Do you think that many customers who post reviews on sites like Zomato do so without having an understanding of the nuances of cuisine? What can restaurateurs do to counter unscrupulous reviews?**



the world. From south Indian appam, Punjabi butter chicken, Rajasthani dal bati, Bihar's litti, Bengal's chicken roll, Japan's sushi, Chinese roast duck, Indonesian satay, Thai curries, Mexican tortillas, Italian pizza...i find all the dishes delicious and tempting.

**What do you cook for yourself and your family?**

I love eating egg-white preparations with raw garlic and chilli chutney. And I love cooking kachchi dum biryani for family.

**What or who are your current influences?**

I love food creativity. I am getting a huge response for my online posts on food creativity. Also, I explore regional hidden and royal preparations.

**Do you think that the rise of professional culinary schools and cooking shows on TV is changing the way future chefs see their profession?**

Yes, the influence is very much visible and even the results are noticeable. Online media is certainly promoting culinary skills, and to acquire those skills professional culinary schools are in demand.

**What new challenges do you have?**

The challenge is to increase my knowledge bank



and expose it to all food lovers but I am just saying this for fun. In fact, there is never a challenge. For me life is all about cooking, so happy healthy eating with chef Inder Dev. ♦♦



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# Diva of Italian Cuisine

In an exclusive tête-à-tête with Charu Lamba for FoodService India, Ritu Dalmia opens up on the major learnings she has had in her journey from chef to restropreneur.



Ritu Dalmia

**S**uper chef, leading restaurateur and TV show host, Ritu Dalmia has managed to master it all and yet she still strives to satisfy her insatiable appetite for endless gastronomic innovations.

The chef, who has received laurels for cooking scrumptious Italian meals, has never undergone any professional training. Her passion and love for food was obvious even at the tender age of nine and since then there has been no looking back.

She fell in love with Italian cuisine during her frequent visits to Italy, while supporting her family's marble business. While her heart drew her to Italy, her mind understood that the endgame was all about being a successful restaurateur.

To give her dreams shape, she opened her first restaurant – Mezzaluna – in Delhi, which was, in her words, 'a wonderful disaster'. She had to shut it down within three years of setting up shop. She then picked up the pieces and went to London where she opened a second restaurant, but her heart never left India.

In 2000, she came back and opened Diva, which became an instant hit. The rest, as they say, is history. Since then, there has been no looking back. Dalmia set about setting up one successful restaurant after another, under the banner Riga Foods, in India's capital. She is the creative flame behind some of the most successful eateries in Delhi – Diva, Latitude28, Cafe Diva, Diva Piccola and Diva Spiced – which are a rage among Indians and Expats alike.

Over the years, she has added many more feathers in her cap – a thriving catering business, a cookery show host and a cookbook author, she does it all with equal ease.

## **How did you come to Italian cuisine and what was the catalyst for it?**

My interest in Italian food began with a school trip to Italy when I was 10 years old. I then joined my father's marble business and from the age of 16, traveled extensively in Italy – that is when I fell in love with Italian food. I don't necessarily look at my journey in milestones – just some great memories. I have enjoyed traveling and discovering things along the way. I love being in the restaurants and over the last few years, catering around the world has been a brand new adventure with lots to do.





**We have six restaurants in Delhi. As different as they are, our market positioning has been using quality ingredients, ensuring consistency and personalised service. At Diva we like to treat our guests as they are visiting our home. The same filters down in all our training.**



**How many restaurants are you operating currently and what is their market positioning?**

We have six restaurants in Delhi. As different as they are, our market positioning has been using quality ingredients, ensuring consistency and personalised service. At Diva we like to treat our guests as they are visiting our home. The same filters down in all our training.

**Elaborate on the business model of your parent company Riga Foods.**

Our business model is very, very simple – to keep our guests happy. If you keep guests happy with consistently good food and service – that is the first ingredient to a feasible business model. Apart from that, in India, restaurants have the burden of a very high real estate cost. So one has to think that through.

**What is your strategy for engaging customers?**

We don't have a strategy – that sounds almost calculating. Our philosophy has and has always been very simple – use quality ingredients, pair them with quality and personalised service and engage with the customer. The other thing that is very, very important is to listen to customers. They give you the best feedback.

**Which particular cuisines do you focus on and how have you seen them evolve over the years?**

My first love is Italian food. My travels have taken me to far flung places and to places not discovered before. These experiences have found a place in what we do at the restaurants and in the events I curate for catering.

Also, it's joyful to feed guests who know good food – it makes what we do more rewarding. At the cafes, for instance, I very often incorporate a recipe of a dish I have fallen in love with during one of my travels.

A recent example at Diva Italian is something I'm incorporating from a little village in Italy called Vallesaccarda at a restaurant called Antichi Oasis Sapori. I tried a Burratta Praline there and we incorporated it at Diva Italian and did our own version with Ricotta, Burratta and goat cheese.

As far as evolution goes, a lot more is available today in terms of produce and ingredients. This is a huge step forward. When I opened Diva in 2001, there used to be a scramble for cheese and olive oils.

**You are a chef-cum-restropreneur? Do you see your role evolving further in the future?**

When it comes to food I wear many hats. It's not always a chef's cap. There are so many different aspects to running a restaurant. Some things are more enjoyable than others but all are intrinsically important.





**Being a successful chef necessitates in-depth knowledge on ingredients, flavours and tastes. Tell us how you have acquired these insights over the course of your career.**

A lot of this knowledge comes from experience – in my case it is almost 25 years of dedication. But it all stems from your passion and I have been pursuing that dream for as long as I remember.

**What are some innovative F&B ideas that you have implemented in the past year?**

Very often the customers educate us as well, through their preferences of food. At Café Diva – at Greater Kailash1 and Sangam Courtyard, RK Puram – we offer a super healthy pizza base made with millet flour.

**Food, presentation, or ambience? Which is more important? Or are all three equally important? How have you woven these elements and others in your restaurant business?**

All the restaurants have their individual USP's and thereby their own personality. So it would only make sense to mirror that personality in every element – the décor and the plating mirror, the ingredients and the offerings.

Divia Spiced, with its modern Asian menu, has quirky wallpaper and a colourful aesthetic that encapsulates the essence of the restaurant persona. Café Divas are more fun and casual, with clean lines and café seating. Diva Italian, being a fine dining restaurant, has formal table settings, ambient lighting, with a spotlight on the wine cellar.

**Are the lines increasingly blurring between fine dining and newer formats such as Smart Casual and Casual?**

This is a matter of perspective, however, we have a very clear distinction between the two.

**What suggestions/advice would you give to young entrepreneurs who have foodservice on their minds?**

Get into this business only if you are passionate about it, not because it's fashionable and the trendy thing to do. This profession requires very long hours and a lot of hard work. ●●

**What are the challenges of working as a top chef and how do you keep ahead of the curve?**

The clientele is evolving and so are their palates. The customer is now well traveled, has great knowledge about the food she/he eats and would like to experience. The chefs also have to keep up and recreate experiences, be ahead of the trend and constantly innovate to meet these expectations.

When I opened the doors of Diva Italian, people would complain about how the truffles smelled – it's a highly acquired taste and the smell is a unique characteristic. Today, truffle-based dishes are ordered well in advance.

**What makes your restaurants different from other cuisine-specific eateries in Delhi?**

I think it's all about passion. My passion for food is what translates on the menu and then on the plate. I also change the menu at all the restaurants every three months, ensuring that my patrons are never bored and there is a new offering waiting for them in my restaurants every time they visit.

**While curating a menu what are the considerations that you keep in mind?**

I like to constantly innovate when it comes to the menus at my restaurant. Any of the restaurant offerings will always comprise of the classic dishes for the traditional clientele but will also have a few offerings that appeal to those who have an adventurous palate.

**The customer is now well traveled, has great knowledge about the food she/he eats and would like to experience. The chefs also have to keep up and recreate experiences, be ahead of the trend and constantly innovate to meet these expectations.**





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# “We are a combo brand catering to leisure and business travellers”

The Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity is positioned uniquely for business and leisure travellers. FoodService India caught up with Tristan Beau De Lomenie, General Manager Delegate of the hotels, to talk about the various new and imaginative concepts that the hotels have introduced in terms of amenities and F&B offerings to promote itself as a preferred MICE destination in the Capital.



Tristan Beau De Lomenie

## What is the market positioning of Pullman & Novotel and what is your USP in a locality teeming with world-class hotels?

Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity does not position itself as a transit hotel. We rather cater to leisure and business travellers. The hotels are well positioned to attain a large segment of the increasingly important Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) market as it is home to Aerocity's largest convention space, spread over a vast expanse of more than 40,000 sq. ft. Not to forget, it is a food & beverage destination as well for guests who are looking to try an extensive array of cuisines.

Pullman New Delhi Aerocity is a perfect mix of luxury and convenience suited for the hyper connected and seasoned traveller. The biggest USP of our both the hotels are that it is presented as a combo brand i.e., Pullman and Novotel. The guests staying with us in either of our hotels, whether it is Pullman or Novotel, are free to visit the restaurants and other's public areas without any limitations.

## As a new business hotel in Delhi, what are the new concepts that you have introduced for enhancing the experience of guests. What are you doing to stay ahead of the competition?

The personalised approach for services and accommodation, ease of reaching hotels, speed of booking and confirmations are some of the most popular reasons that can increase the demand for a hospitality establishment and we are right on top of all these markers. Nowadays, business traveller's needs are considered a very important part of the day-to-day training within the hotel and we follow this approach scrupulously. Every effort is made to ensure the smooth execution of business meeting at the hotel.







Among other things, at Pullman New Delhi Aerocity, we have introduced 'Welcomers' who take care of the guests from their arrival through to their departure and are a one point of contact throughout the stay. Also, they collect and input information on guests, to improve their future visits to the hotel. Our event team is also a one point of contact for the guests who are looking to do their important events or business meetings.

**What is the hotel's approach to its F&B offerings and how is it designed to meet the tastes of business travellers, many of whom are from other countries?**

Global cuisines are increasingly on the rise in India. In particular, Asian and Italian cuisines are becoming a necessity in most hotels' F&B offers. Also, in the past couple of years, the number of foreign tourists visiting India has also increased, apart from the growing trend of Indians visiting abroad. Both these reasons have allowed for the inclusion of a number of global cuisines in



the menu of many hotels across the country. In addition to that, the scope for Indian cuisine is also getting enhanced as foreign tourists enjoy tasting various options in Indian cuisines; lots of Indian dishes are becoming extremely popular and are being demanded by international travellers.

We are aiming to position ourselves as an F&B destination and have a clear vision for creating a top notch culinary experience. Both our hotels extend an assortment of dining options including Pluck, a modern day eatery with an in-house farm and offers European and contemporary Indian menu with freshly picked ingredients. Café Pluck, a stylish go-grab delicatessen offers a widespread range of tea, coffee and other beverages along with fresh bakeries. The hotel's signature Asian bistro Honk is a melting pot of flavours with an indoor and alfresco seating offering Asian inspired street food cuisine. Pling is a vibrant lux-lounge that showcases a fine selection of wines with the signature 'Vinoteca by Pullman' concept. At the Food Exchange dining outlet at Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, we emphasise on providing a progressive modern approach to traditional Indian cuisine.

**Which are the special amenities your hotel offers to meet the standards and expectations of your target customers?**

People are travelling more and more, which is exposing them to newer cuisines. They are able to imbibe the international new trends in hospitality, service, cuisine, etc. There is an eagerness to explore new things and guests are ready to experiment and try out new cuisines. In addition, consumers are also benefiting a lot from state of the art technologies. To be in step with consumer expectations, hotels are now adapting and investing a lot – whether in banquet and events or rooms.

At Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, guests can experience a wide range of amenities. The services available in all the rooms include 42 inch LED TVs with satellite channels, Bose Sound Link II, Espresso Coffee Machines and a lot more. Also, with regard to MICE, the services feature state-of-the-art A/V technology with lights installed on trusses that drop down from the ceiling, maximum utilisation of floor space, plug & play from laptop and tablet devices onto high resolution ceiling projectors.

**The hotel pitches itself as a MICE destination. Tell us more about the MICE features on offer.**

Pullman & Novotel is a perfect MICE destination. We have a convention space that is spread over a vast expanse of more than 40,000 sq. ft. with a pillar-less Peacock Ballroom measuring 12,719 sq. ft. Further, we have state-of-the-art meeting and convention spaces with 13 fully-equipped meeting rooms, three boardrooms with flexible room layouts and one of the largest pillar-less ballroom spaces in the Delhi NCR measuring over 1,181 sq. m. The versatile meeting rooms can be adapted to suit various size and format requirements with flexible seating layouts. ••



**Global cuisines are increasingly on the rise in India. In particular, Asian and Italian cuisines are becoming a necessity in most hotels' F&B offers.**



# Cooking up a storm

The scope of catering services in India is humungous given the fact that the country celebrates numerous festivals and occasions in the form of important events. The industry is now extending its reach beyond marriages to include social gatherings, formal events, conferences, parties, sporting events, etc.

by Nivedita Jayaram Pawar



Sanjay Vazirani

Over the last decade, the catering industry in India has rapidly evolved and has become central to any large social and outdoor gathering. Functions that were earlier handled by families are now being increasingly outsourced to catering units, which often result in better arrangements and an opportunity for the family to enjoy the event. Considering the significance of social celebrations and events, the catering business is a rewarding option with a huge potential of growth.

Valued at Rs. 20,000 crore, the catering industry is one of the fastest growing sectors that has seen a surge in demand across the country. Mostly dominated by unorganized players, many of who run their business from the comfort of their homes and small establishments, the catering industry in India has maintained a 20-25 per cent growth rate year-on-year. This includes small-scale vendors along with local and national level players.

The growth in the industry can be attributed to the fact that catering services start-up costs are considerably lower and real estate doesn't have to be in a prime location. One can work out of location that is further away but yet service the entire city. A lot of caterers are empanelled with banqueting venues, which offer them commissions. Banks and joint venture partners are also recognising the potential of this business and are willing to offer an extended hand for establishing the business and also for its expansion.

According to the Federation of All India Caterers (FAIC), an industry body that has more than 3,000 members across 14 states, the catering industry in India is primarily spread across metros, tier 1 and tier 2 cities. "It has definitely come a long way from the days when we had started. There is a heightened awareness of food and various cuisines. Clients demand variety in food. And they are more particular about the authenticity of ingredients, styles of cooking



and presentation. They want the food customized with the rest of the theme of the event. Guests are more experimental these days and enjoy trying out new cuisines and are looking for more variety, range and innovation in food and presentation,” says Narendra Somani, President, FAIC.

The festivities from October to November and weddings from November to March in India are among the best times for the catering industry. Though, the industry doesn't rest for the remaining part of the year as well.

help reduce the labour cost, increase productivity and at the same time help to reduce the wastage of food products.

#### Key trends in the industry today

In a world of tough competition where business and brand names are at stake, many catering companies are flexing their creative muscles for innovative ways of catering business and social events. “Competition within the catering industry is stiff. Every guest is different and unique. We



#### New emerging segment

Although weddings account for nearly 65-70 per cent of the catering segment, corporate and sporting events are fast catching up. “The scope of catering in corporate segment is now much larger. Previously, there used to be only events like product launches, conferences and updates. Now companies are organising events such as Employee Motivation day, Family day, destination conferences, etc, which require catering. The concept of destination wedding too is catching up. We have booked a palace in Italy for an upcoming wedding in December and will be flying down people for the same,” says G.S. Bindra of Bindra Hospitality, a 25-year-old Pune-based catering and event management firm.

Advancement in cooking and transportation technology is fuelling the growth of the catering sector. Gas powered kitchens, which were long been favoured by caterers, is giving way to Induction as it is more environment friendly and energy efficient. This, together with the rise in gas prices, improved technology and awareness of the advantages of induction, explains why more catering units are making the shift.

High tech vegetable cutting and processing machines, blast freezers, Individual quick freezing, Retort technology, combi ovens, reefer vans, etc,

need to have trained and professional associates to customize every event and to pick competitive prices for services and balance the guest's budget. We need to be innovative, creative and upscale to be one of the preferred meeting venues,” says Varsha Sachdeva, Director of Catering Sales, Westin Garden City Mumbai.

The sit-down, plated dinner is not endangered, but alternatives are becoming more popular, from entire meals served on small plates, to Mongolian barbeque to dessert-only or hors d'oeuvre-only events. Guests today want to be entertained by the catering. That can be as simple as a chef who chats up the guests while serving or as complex as a menu item that foams, sizzles or bursts in some amazing way.

Here are a few catering trends that are now ruling the industry:

#### Customization

Clients today are way more demanding than before, believes Sanjay Vazirani who counts Ambanis, Ruia Brothers, Goenkas, Binani and the Poddars among his regular clients. “Everybody wants their event to have the best food, services, presentation, theme-based service ware, etc. Customization is the solution. The strength of a caterer lies in being able to adapt to these varied

**Advancement in cooking and transportation technology is fuelling the growth of the catering sector. Gas powered kitchens, which were long been favoured by caterers, is giving way to Induction as it is more environment friendly and energy efficient.**



**Catering to events is no longer just about serving good food; it's now about creating experiences and unforgettable memories.**

needs. We cater to every request – right from 24-hour coffee, small eats to religious rituals such as the Chauviar which necessitates eating before sunset. We personalize to such an extent that if a vegetarian guest requests Thai food, we fly in Thai Buddhist monks who specialize in vegetarian food to cater for the event. When we catered for Gautam Adani's son's wedding in Ahmedabad, we sent our people to Tharat, a place in Gujarat where the Adani's come from to understand their customs, food and tradition. We were then able to replicate it to a great extent at the wedding. For Kokilaben's birthday celebrations in Jodhpur, we flew in chefs from Dubai for Lebanese food, Thai chefs from Thailand, chefs from Amritsar for Amritsari chole and kulche, pani puriwalla from Ambala and so on," reveals Vazirani. His company Foodlink operates from a state-of-the-art 30,000 sq. ft. central kitchen and warehouse in Mumbai suburbs. "Comfort foods are still in demand, but clients expect a gourmet twist. Our SuperFoodRx theme breaks during corporate events help our guests recharge their body and mind. The nutritious snacks and nourishing smoothies give them the focused energy they need to work at your best," says Sachdeva.

**Regional Cooking**

In a bid to re-discover their heritage, people are shifting to regional food during social events. The regionalization for a Maharastrian wedding goes down to the very region the bride or the groom come from – Kolhapur, Pune, and so on.

Within the Gujarati community the food is customized to the region the host belongs to - Ahmedabad, Saurashtra, Rajkot, etc. So along with classic cities like Coorg and Mysore, the India outside the metropolis is ruling the roost in catering.



**Artful Plating**

We've all heard the saying, "you eat with your eyes first." Caterers are taking this adage a step further with innovative food plating. Catering to events is no longer just about serving good food; it's now about creating experiences and unforgettable memories. And hence, presentation plays a very important role. There is literally no limit to the creativity and inspiration here. At Foodlink, there is a separate team that handles display and presentation to help add value to the overall theme of the event. The team co-ordinates with the event management team to understand the client's vision and the event coordinators' execution of the same, and incorporate elements from these into the display and presentation of the catering set-up. From the display tables, printed menus and napkins to the liveried service staff and table set-up, each individual area is carefully thought through to add value to the overall effect of the event. Props and decor, when the budget allows, are often used to make a nice buffet look extraordinary.

**Mini Foods**

Caterers are constantly finding ways to elevate their services. Bite sized delicacies is one such effort. From bite sized burgers to desserts and even gourmet creations; you name it, caterers can make it fit in the palm of your hand. They're interesting and quite a conversation starter plus it allows guests to be free to mingle without a large plate and cutlery bogging them down.

**Adventurous Tastes**

Clients are becoming a lot more adventurous, particularly when it comes to food, says Nikhil Tipnis, a Mumbai based caterer and event planner. Caterers are indulging their taste buds with international cuisines. "It's not just pizza and pasta any more. Clients want Turkish, Egyptian, Korean and Vietnamese at their events. Moreover they demand these cuisines in vegetarian form which is often a challenge." Molecular gastronomy is no longer something only high-end caterers do. It was an experiment for caterers a few years ago, but guests who watch Masterchef want to see a few pearls and foams, at least. Internationally acclaimed chefs well versed in cuisines beyond the borders and in global trends are often flown down to translate and introduce the best of culinary art from across the world for such events. "Be it authentic kulcha chole or the finer aspects of dim sum making, we fly down chefs who are masters of it all. Recently, we flew down UK-based chef Stephen Gomes who specializes in molecular gastronomy for a wedding. It also helps that importing herbs, spices, cheese, wines, etc, is now very quick and easy," explains G.S. Bindra of Bindra Hospitality, a Pune based event planner and caterer.

**Interactive Food Stations**

People are now avoiding staid buffet counters and going more towards live and interactive counters, explains Anurag Katriar, CEO & Executive Director,



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Narendra Somani



**Caterers are constantly finding ways to elevate their services. Bite sized delicacies is one such effort. From bite sized burgers to desserts and even gourmet creations; you name it, and caterers can make it fit in the palm of your hand.**

deGustibus Hospitality, the company that handled many high profile events like IPL, and other international cricket matches played in Mumbai, Filmfare Awards, and many more.

Many catering firms are now preferring to have the chefs use a variety of mobile tools and cooking stations to prepare food right out in the open at the event. This provides guests with a form of entertainment and a level of intimacy with the dish and the people preparing it. From custom stir-fry stations to crepe stations, 2016 is seeing more and more chefs step out from the kitchen and into the spotlight to delight guests.

Strolling chef stations, where the chef visits guests at the table with especially designed food trollies to prepare a meal to specifications, is also gaining traction. Mix and Match Beverage Bars This is where guests can create their own exotic drinks with unexpected offerings like ice-cubes infused with lemongrass, and even loose-leaf tea bars where guests can mix and match their favourite leaves for the perfect blend.

#### Challenges for the catering business

Running a catering business is fraught with difficulties especially in a country like India where the infrastructure is poor.

#### Outdoor Woes

Preparing food in open air (if no indoor kitchen setup is available) is one of the biggest challenges

that modern day caterers face. Sudden, unpredicted rain shower, heavy wind, etc., only add to the problem. "The biggest challenge in the catering industry today is to create the necessary on-site infrastructure every day. This is cumbersome from the operational perspective, especially during the peak business months. It also entails significant infusion of capital every year, other than adding to the execution cost of every event," says Katriar of deGustibus Hospitality.

#### Lack of Trained Manpower and Attrition

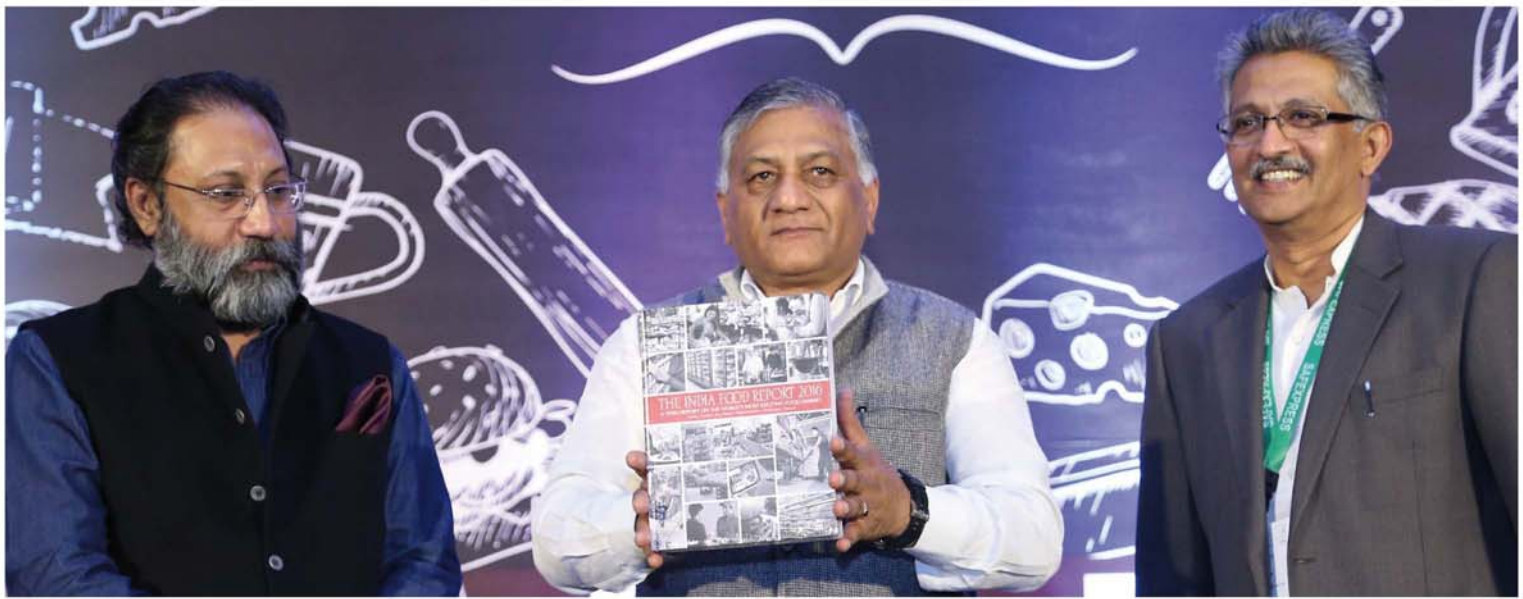
Finding capable staff, who are fully trained and ready to take up the challenges of catering, is difficult. Eventually when you do get them, some of them take-off after a few months to search for greener pastures. Undertrained employees are likely to ruin an event and lead to a loss of business. "What we need is a focused curriculum on catering and banqueting in hotel management colleges. The curriculum right now is heavily focused on hotels and restaurants. We need short-term courses, which can churn out trained staff for outdoor catering and banqueting industry," feels Somani of FAIC. "Being a largely unorganized segment, there are no anti-poaching laws in place like in the IT segment. This leads to large scale poaching which further hurts the industry," he adds.

#### Food Inflation

The cost of food is one of the most important operating costs for a catering unit. Escalating food costs can squeeze a catering company's operating margins. The price of critical commodities like rice, pulses, onions, oil and potatoes often increase significantly due to poor farm yields, unpredictable weather patterns, and market reactions to government farm subsidies. Inconsistent availability adds to the problem.

"We can be prepared for a steady inflation but a 300-400 per cent hike in vegetable rates is like a tsunami. Tomatoes at Rs 90 a kg a few months ago took all the profits away. The government should standardize the prices of essential commodities so we can conduct our business with ease. A restaurant can adjust menu pricing and pass the cost on to customers. But we can't do that since





# INDIA FOOD REPORT 2016

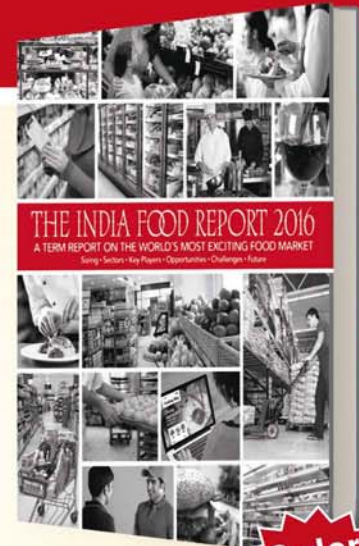
THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE GUIDE TO FOOD RETAIL MARKET IN INDIA

India Food Report 2016 was released on January 19th by General (retd.) V.K. Singh, Union Minister State for Statistics and Programme Implementation (independent charge), Minister of State for External Affairs & Minister of State for Overseas Indian Affairs.

“Indian Retail Food Market has the potential to not only double but triple in the next 4-5 years by 2020, aided by the government’s initiative to bring in systemic change, despite resistance, said the Minister at the launch of the Report.

The Report has been compiled with inputs from some of the world’s most respected consulting and/or market study organisations, retail business heads, brand analysts and consumer research companies, among others.

Organisations/industry experts who have contributed to the making of the Report include Nielsen, A T Kearney, Accenture, PWC, Technopak, IMRB, GS1, Institute for Competitiveness, IFC, Troika, PRICE, Wazir, Maple Capital Advisors, D’Essence Hospitality Advisory, IBEF, NRAI, IMT, IIM, Rama Bijapurkar, Dr. Rajesh Shukla, and Harish Bijoor to name a few.



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**Rather than having the dishes prepared in advance, many catering firms are now preferring to have the chefs use a variety of mobile tools and cooking stations to prepare fresh food.**

we book orders for events months in advance. There is already a wholesale price index and a retail price index, which is available on the internet. But these numbers do not accurately reflect the prices that we actually pay," says Bindra.

Many full service caterers now have clauses in their contracts allowing them to adjust prices based on market conditions, but in practice it is often challenging to go back to a client under contract and ask for a higher price.

**Food Safety Regulation**

The rules for food safety in India as mandated by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), has found more naysayers in the catering industry. "There are as many as 35 guidelines mandated by the FSSAI that are not possible to follow in an outdoor venue. As a result, only 30 per cent of our membership base has taken the FSSAI certification," says Somani. Yogesh Chandarana, Vice President, FAIC, adds that in the business of outdoor catering, most catering organisations offer their services at multiple venues, in which the caterers have little or no control. For example,

with the public at large. But a general lack of understanding of FSSAI rules is further hampering its implementation. No one knows the exact number of licences needed for FSSAI compliance. There is no specific website with that information. This leads people to believe that procuring them is a pain and unnecessary," says Bindra.

**Taxation Trauma**

The high rise in taxes has made the catering businesses very expensive. The cost of obtaining requisite materials and staff is growing higher by



FSSAI guidelines mandate that the caterer should describe the source of water used for cooking and also get it tested from an accredited laboratory.

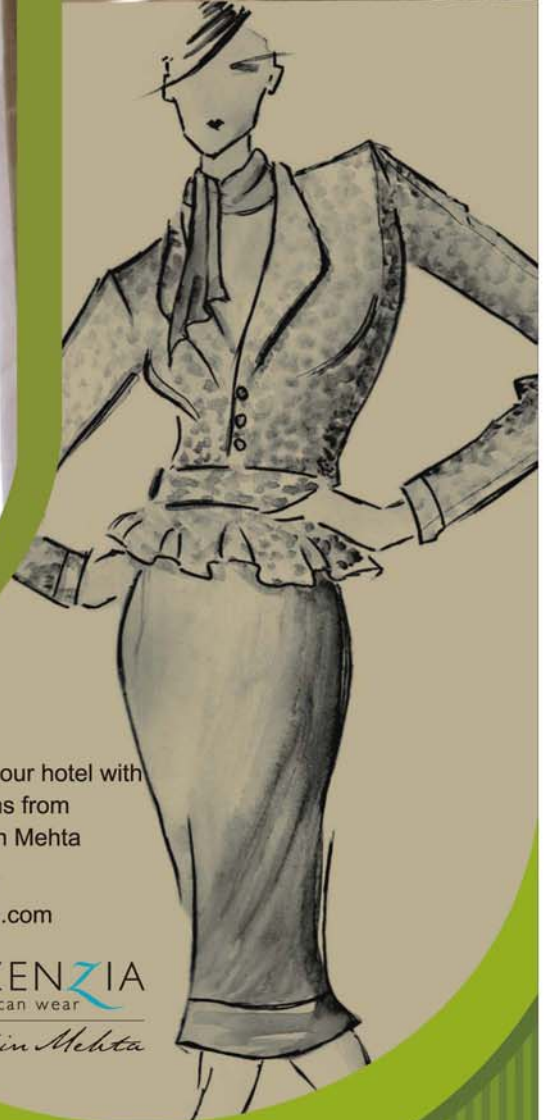
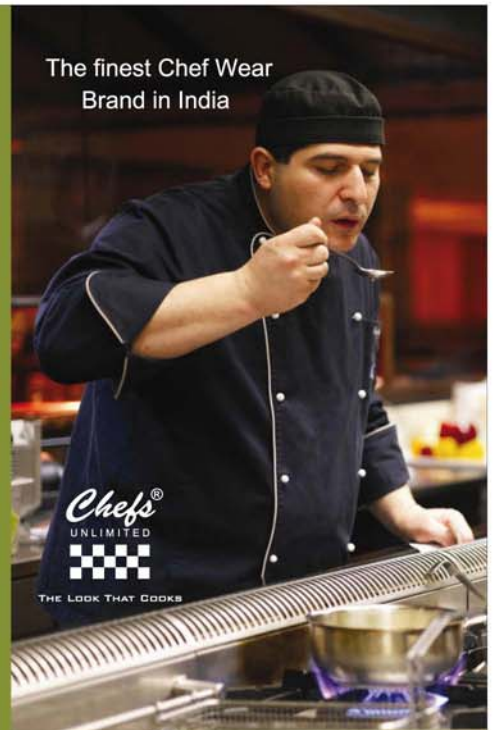
"The FSSAI rules are just not conducive for the catering industry. We often work on sites that have no proper infrastructure. We have to create a kitchen in six hours. Adhering to a lot of regulation in such a situation is not possible," believes Nikhil Tipnis. The other pain point is when electricity is used in the manufacture of the food items. In this case, the caterer is expected to "state the exact HP used or sanctioned electricity load" (both conditions are difficult to satisfy if the catering contractor has no say in which venue the event is being held). The Federation plans to make representations made to the Centre to formulate guidelines that will help in the growth of the catering industry.

Though FSSAI rules might create some temporary roadblocks, many in the industry feel that it is an excellent idea which will eventually help the industry. "It is imperative to have some food/hygiene safety guidelines when you are dealing

the day, and adhering to government regulations is difficult. The catering industry currently suffers from double taxation – Service Tax and VAT. This is the industry's biggest concern since it's largely dominated by a significant number of players from the unorganised segment. They are far more flexible on commercial aspects with clients as they don't necessarily follow the highest degree of statutory compliances. So what's the solution? "Nothing much can be done on an immediate basis but this is surely going to change soon. Firstly, I believe that all players will look at sharing the infrastructure costs. I feel that the laws will soon force the unorganised players to get more organised, and taxation will get more uniform (like GST), thus taking away their commercial flexibility/advantage. Lastly, I also feel that the consumers will realize the difference in the output quality of organized and unorganized players soon," explains Katriar, who believes the proposed uniformity of tax rates is a brilliant idea. It will widen the tax net, which eventually can bring down the tax rates. ••



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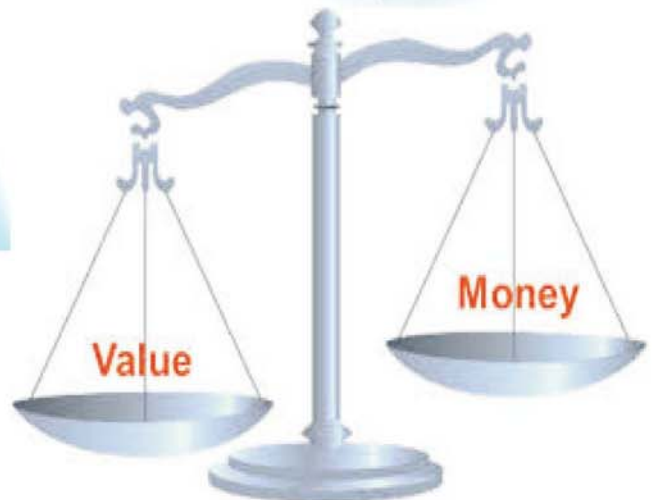
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Nityanand Shetty

# Dining Unselfconsciously

by A.S. Iyer

**A cocktail of professions and self-discovery later, Mumbai based restaurateur Nityanand Shetty talks about his latest foodservice venture, which has been designed to encourage diners to come out of their shell and enjoy the food in a natural and relaxing atmosphere.**

**S**tereotyping is often a thing one doesn't take too seriously and the ones who don't conform to it are often mocked for not being a stereotype. Quite ironical! One such person is Nityanand Shetty. Thanks to his last name, he was often asked where in Mumbai he owned a restaurant during his college years. Alas, at the risk of letting his friends down, he would say his family members weren't hoteliers. However, being asked the same question over the years repeatedly ignited inside him the desire to be a restaurateur, which brought about the launch of Pebbles, the first fine dining restaurant in Juhu to introduce tablets for placing the orders. Shetty's another endeavour in the hospitality industry is Thyme Bistro – a corporate style dining den in Kanjurmarg, which opened last month.

## Building Blocks

Although trained as an engineer in industrial electronics, Shetty's passion for restaurants led him to invest in a chain and let the administration be taken care of by someone else. He says, "I am a man of numbers, and that comes with the

vast experience I have had as a businessman, albeit in the software industry. Moreover, if I was investing in something, I wanted it to have a mark of me – a part of me that would reflect who I am." Soon after, Pebbles was born – one of the first restaurants in the city to have tablets for ordering food – a rather prominent imprint bearing the mark of the software tycoon.

Shetty explains how the idea of his latest venture Thyme was born out of the varied experiences he has had over the years. Starting with his son who used to visit a book store called Oxford in South Mumbai, which lets the customers walk in and enjoy a book with a cup of coffee or a bite from the canteen. "It was one of the early ideas that I wanted to work on and so at Thyme, you will find a library space stacked with hundreds of books. Being a businessman, I often interact with my sales managers and many-a-times they express their frustration of going back to the same old Café Coffee Day or Starbucks to kill time between meetings with the same old coffees and cold coffees. All because the time gap is long enough to catch up on some work with free WiFi but not long enough to come back to office – a modern



day problem in Mumbai that several professionals face,” says Shetty who founded Essen Vision, a software company in the late 90s.

### Going back to the roots

Thyme was born when Shetty’s experiences urged him to be his true-self. On one of the vacations with his son, Shetty recalled how he realised his feeling as a father that made him overcome fear. He says, “I am a very adventurous person. But when I had to jump off from one of the tallest bungee jumping points in the world in Macau because my son wanted to do it, I was petrified. In those moments, one doesn’t think of the non-refundable money that you have paid to avail the thrill. It was in that moment that I asked myself who I really was – was I the man whose fear got the better of him or the person who would do things anyway because he loved his son truly. That plunge was the defining moment.”

### Learning the lessons

“In my early days with Pebbles, I had some great learning experience. One of the first lessons was to have a disciplined kitchen. The best way to do that was to have reviews every fortnight with my staff. I would actually look at the costs incurred by each department since Pebbles was a multi-cuisine restaurant. For instance, if I have an estimated cost of 13 per cent, I am okay if it goes up or down by a percent or two, but not if it goes to 18 per cent. So I made everyone responsible and answerable for their actions,” he says.

Shetty also established system of how things worked at Pebbles– the kitchen would be allowed supplies by the vendor only two times a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. Similar processes are continued in Thyme too. “It is easier to establish practises earlier and to develop systems as an ongoing process from inception till the time they become foolproof and are deeply ingrained in the system,” says the man who is a firm believer of the philosophy ‘Create, Manage, Replicate’.



### Giving back

At the entrance of the Thyme restaurant one can see, well, themselves! The words Thyme written as ‘Thy’ on the board and the letters ‘me’ on the mirror shows a glimpse of what you are in for once you step into the corporate DEN, aka a place to drink, eat and network. Shetty explained it as a place where one can actually be whatever they are – a musician, a singer, an avid reader, healthy eater or junk-food lover – it doesn’t matter. “That said, the customers who walk in can practically have the time to themselves. The waiters have been specifically instructed to not be hovering around the tables unless they are called for. The idea is to provide a platform for people where they can meet the like-minded, even if it’s by asking for a mobile charger,” explained Shetty.

Shetty adds further, “The restaurant in many way is my idea of ‘being myself’. I host events where RD Burman lovers like myself can come together to enjoy what we like. Or a cyclist who despite a knee surgery has cycled to Ladhak.” It is Shetty’s idea to provide people with a platform to get in touch with themselves when the world otherwise seems too demanding and perfect to live up to. And when that can happen with some food and drinks...who are we to complain! ●●

**Shetty also established system of how things worked at Pebbles– the kitchen would be allowed supplies by the vendor only two times a day, once in the morning and once in the evening.**





Aditya Parikh



## “We have no organised player to distribute perishables”

**Aditya Parikh, Director of Aspher Food Private Ltd, talks to FoodService India magazine about how the Indian food service industry is witnessing a shift in consumer preferences from junk food to healthy snacking and how Paninaro, his healthy food QSR chain, has captured the taste-buds of Mumbaikars.**

**Tell us about your brand's progress in the first year of your operation in India. How many outlets have you been able to add in this period and how many more do you plan to add in the near future?**

Paninaro was originally conceptualised as a chain of food trucks which would be at one location for lunch and another for dinner. We launched our first food truck at Peninsula Corporate Park, Lower Parel in October 2010. Within six months, we realised there were too many barriers and downsides and started our first brick and mortar store, also at Peninsula Corporate Park. Since then we've grown to 11 outlets and are looking to grow to 20 to 25 within the city before expanding to Pune.

**Some the leading foreign QSR brands have been witnessing slowing same-store sales growth over the past few quarters. What opportunities do you see?**

While the QSR segment and the larger food industry are definitely facing headwinds and going through a tough period with rapidly rising costs and stickiness in pricing, I'm pretty optimistic about the future. With an increasing number of households opting to eat out or order, the opportunity for QSRs is tremendous. As with every industry, there is some degree of cyclicity to the foodservice industry but these challenges have to be taken in stride.

**Is it right to say that the food service business is not affected by the turns and tides of the economy as people will need to eat even in times of an economic slowdown?**

As I said, every industry has some degree of cyclicity, some more than others and the food

industry is no different. Sure, people always need to eat but they are going to cut down on eating out if they find it more economical to eat at home and money is the decision making factor.

**How do you assess the market potential for the healthy food category in India. How do you see it performing in the context of the growing fad for pizza and other fast foods. For QSRs, which new trends and influences will shape the growth of this category going ahead?**

I obviously have a biased view on the healthy QSR segment as we have heavily invested in it! We've been growing at a compounded annual growth rate of 27% over the last four years so it's safe to say I am quite bullish on it versus other categories.

The younger generation is already extremely conscious about their diet and exercise and it's only a matter of time for the healthy QSR segment to rival current mainstream categories.





**Tell us about your menu offerings.**

Our menu offers a mix vegetarian and non-vegetarian options, both of which are quite sought after.

**International QSR chains operating in India usually have third party vendors from where they source the ingredients. How do you ensure that the vendors meet the quality parameters and benchmarks?**

This is probably one of the most difficult aspects of the food industry in India - suppliers' cold chain management. With perhaps one or two exceptions, we have virtually no organised players who distribute perishable products. Procuring ingredients from third party vendors just shifts the burden away from the company. But without the necessary infrastructure, the quality of ingredients is still the same!

We have partially skirted the issue by procuring our perishables directly from the farms. But as we grow, we will also need to make significant investments in infrastructure to ensure better cold chain management.



**How much of online sales are you doing currently and how do you see this segment growing for you?**

We currently get about 5% of our sales through our website and online portals but are looking to grow this to about 15-20%. Since our business model is quite different, we expect subscriptions to be the primary growth driver.

**In terms of your investment and expansion plans, what are your short-term and long-term goals for the Indian market?**

Our philosophy is to grow in concentric circles so that economies of scale can be fully exploited. After reaching our target of 20-25 outlets in Mumbai, we're looking to expand to Pune and Bangalore thereafter. Beyond that, your guess is as good as mine! ●●

**The younger generation is already extremely conscious about their diet and exercise and it's only a matter of time for the healthy QSR segment to rival current mainstream categories.**



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# Next Stop: Foodservice Destination

Railway stations in Europe are today much more than just travel hubs. In recent years they have been turned into shopping and foodservice destinations in their own right, attracting not just thousands of travellers daily, but also office workers and people living in the neighbourhood. Thus more and more international and national foodservice brands are eager to get a foothold at these high-frequency locations, which serve as a showcase for their brands. Whilst speed and good value are most important for commuters, holiday and business travellers are increasingly putting emphasis on the quality, freshness and artisan production of the F&B offer. Part 2 of our pan-European survey.



The Top 10 railway stations in Germany saw their earnings from catering rise by 8% in 2015. Thus, despite line closures and strikes, the year turned out significantly better than 2014, not least thanks to the reopening of the suburban-lines distribution level at Munich Central Station and the new food area in Berlin Central Station. At Stuttgart Central Station, on the other hand, large-scale rebuilding work spoiled business, with foodservice turnover 11% down on the previous year.

At the Top 10 stations 104 operators, with 302 catering and food outlets, earned just under €330 m in turnover. Their products and services are offered to some 16 m travellers daily. Particularly strong growth came from the snack and coffee-shop segments, each of which was up by 9%. Fast food, the biggest segment by value, saw a rise of 4%. Further major growth trends: breads and pastries, and alternatives to classical burgers, plus quick and healthy provisions.

"Well-known and popular brands with their reputation for quality are extremely important for the foodservice business at railway stations. Our challenge: to optimise the market portfolio continually," says Horst Mutsch, head of letting at Deutsche Bahn subsidiary DB Station& Services of Berlin, which runs the 5,400 railway stations in Germany and lets a total of more than 1 m sq m of commercial premises. Deutsche Bahn's tenants earn some €2 bn a year from services, retail trade and catering. Typically, food-service represents 35-40% of the floor space at large stations.

One of the strongest-growing brands in 2015 was KFC ([www.kfc.de](http://www.kfc.de)). With four new openings, the company succeeded in doubling its presence at German stations last year. The new outlet in Nuremberg Central Station actually produced the best launch, on an annual comparison, of all openings



on the Deutsche Bahn network. "Earnings from the store, opened exactly in time for the traditional Christmas fair, are even now exceeding our expectations", says Marco Schäpers, chief development officer of KFC Germany, happily. "This outlet is already one of our Top 10 among the highest-revenue KFC restaurants in Germany." On existing premises, too, turnover rose in double-digit figures. At least four further units are planned at stations in 2016. The classic burger brands McDonald's and Burger King, by contrast, saw less growth.

That bakery products are a major item at German railway stations is demonstrated, among other ways, by the turnover figures for the bakers represented there. The self-service brand BackWerk ([www.back-werk.de](http://www.back-werk.de)), for example, through trading-up measures at its approximately 40 station outlets, saw a considerable rise. Also on the way up: Subway, with 25 outlets and growth of 6% in turnover on existing premises.

That there is also an increasing demand for healthy products can be seen from the success of the dean&david brand ([www.deananddavid.de](http://www.deananddavid.de)), with three new outlets in second place on the league table of openings. "In general, products with a health message sell very well at railway stations", confirms founder and managing director David Baumgartner. Leases for the central stations in Berlin and Hamburg have already been signed for 2016.

Fast-casual brands are also increasingly flying the flag at railway stations. The first Vapiano restaurant already opened at Berlin Central Station in 2013. In 2015 the rapidly expanding pizza brand L'Osteria entered the ring at Munich Central Station. Here the franchise partner is the station specialist Rubenbauer. "The opening of our new L'Osteria restaurant has been, we may say without exaggeration, a complete success," says CFO Nicole Rubenbauer. "Along with travellers and visitors to the station, the concept is particularly attractive to customers from the surrounding area." Rubenbauer is also in evidence at Munich Central Station with a 1,300 sq m food court, which offers a broad eat-in and take-away range on six catering islands, from pizza, to kebabs, to fish via the Gosch brand. The adjacent 70-seat restaurant serves Bavarian and international dishes with front cooking. Rubenbauer also manages foodservice units at Karlsruhe, Nuremberg and Garmisch-Partenkirchen stations ([www.rubenbauer.com](http://www.rubenbauer.com)).

The next few weeks will also see the launch of the first station outlet, at Berlin Central Station, to be run by the fullservice burger brand Hans im Glück ([www.hansimglueck-burgergrill.de](http://www.hansimglueck-burgergrill.de)).

Railway-station catering would be practically unthinkable without the potential supplied by commuters. "If you want to satisfy them, you must stick to the rules," says Sabine Stöhr, managing director of 1A Retail of Munich, a service provider specialising in letting and concepts. "In other words: high speed is a 'must', workflow optimisation a favoured choice. The only

outlets to survive here are take-away providers offering maximum perfection, linked with the right price-performance ratio. At a railway station it is important to assemble a clever mix of segments and ranges, supplied by the best providers: local and international, well-known brands and newcomers."

Launched in 1991, the Passage ('Wandelhalle') in Hamburg Central Station is one of the earliest shopping centres with a rail link in Germany. Some 500,000 people, both visitors and travellers, cross the impressive historical building daily – no other large German railway station can record such a density. In June the Passage celebrated its 25th anniversary, with 25 days of events and campaigns of all kinds.

52 shops, on a sales area of some 7,600 sq m, are united under one roof in the Passage to the north side of the building, close together as in a mall, but distributed across two floors. With 23 units, the catering part is a clear focal point, located mainly in the central Food Court ('Gourmet Station', 9 providers) and on the upper floor with a view of the railway tracks. Management of the centre is by Wandelhalle Martens Verwaltung und

**Fast-casual brands are also increasingly flying the flag at railway stations. The first Vapiano restaurant already opened at Berlin Central Station in 2013. In 2015 the rapidly expanding pizza brand L'Osteria entered the ring at Munich Central Station.**

D: TOP 10 RAILWAY STATIONS - STATION TRAVELLERS AND VISITORS -			
R	Station	per day	per day
1	Hamburg CS	500,000	183 m
2	Frankfurt am Main CS	450,000	164 m
2	Munich CS	450,000	164 m
4	Berlin CS	300,000	110 m
5	Cologne CS	280,000	102 m
6	Dusseldorf CS	250,000	91 m
6	Hanover CS	250,000	91 m
8	Stuttgart CS	240,000	88 m
9	Nuremberg CS	140,000	51 m
10	Berlin East	100,000	36 m

Source: DB Station&Service; CS = Central Station





**There will be seven new foodservice units in addition, mainly quickservice concepts, covering passengers' needs and wishes at this location. Burgers, coffee and bakery snacks, but also formulas with the prefix fresh and healthy or Asian food.**

## DB: TOP 20 FS-TENANTS

R	Provider	Units
1	SSP	131
2	DB ServiceStore	123
3	McDonald's	89
4	Le CroBag	71
5	Heberer	61
6	Brezelbäckerei Ditsch	58
7	Yorma's	45
8	BackWerk	40
9	Kamps	39
10	Burger King	27
11	Subway	25
12	Cuccis	20
12	Dunkin Donuts	20
14	Starbucks	19
15	Coffee Fellows	17
16	Asiahung	15
17	Asiagourmet	11
18	Mr. Clou	10
18	Rubenbauer	10
18	Stockheim	10

As of: 31 December 2015

Source: DB, Station&Service

Projektentwicklung GmbH. The list of their tenants reads like a Who's Who of the quick-service sector: McDonald's is there, so are KFC and Subway, but local heroes, such as Schweinske and Mr.Clou, are very much part of the mixture, too. Along with all these come concepts featuring specialist offers (Sashimi Sushi, Rosita's Chilli, asiahung ...).

A major rebuilding project is scheduled at Frankfurt am Main Central Station over the coming months. By redesigning both the north side and Level B, and by developing a broad additional area, some 10,000 sq m of new retail space will be created. This transport hub has around 250,000 visitors a day (around 1,800 trains daily) and thus, with Hamburg and Munich, is one of Germany's busiest stations. The expansion of the retail area from its current 20,000 to 30,000 sq m, with a future 70 new units (retail outlets and restaurants), is intended to give the station more variety and make it more attractive. There are currently 40 retail units here in the catering sector, with an annual turnover of just under €40 m, including the 'Frankfurter Markthalle' Food Court with nine units, run by the German subsidiary of the international travel specialist Lagardère Services ([www.lagardere-tr.de](http://www.lagardere-tr.de)).

"There will be seven new foodservice units in addition, mainly quickservice concepts, covering passengers' needs and wishes at this location. Burgers, coffee and bakery snacks, but also formulas with the prefix fresh and healthy or Asian food. The vision is that of presenting an urban attraction for shopping and good food," says Horst Mutsch.



Vienna Central Station



224 m travellers use the 6,500 trains of Austrian Railways (ÖBB), which cover around 142 m km a year. 190 m passengers use the local services and 34 m the long-distance trains. As part of its station strategy, ÖBB has been modernising its busiest stations since 2001 and around 270 of the 1,110 stations and stops (including buses) should have been upgraded by 2025. Safety, cleanliness, barrier freedom and an appealing range of facilities and services are the aims. Rundown stations, such as those in Linz and Innsbruck, have been turned into customer-friendly transport centres with a friendly atmosphere, attractive shopping, foodservice and service facilities.

"We ensure the foodservice providers and the culinary spectrum matches the function of the station," explained an ÖBB spokesperson. "At smaller stations where numerous commuters get on the trains in the mornings, a baker's is most appropriate while we integrate 'BahnhofCity' shopping centres into our big stations with national and international travellers. These shopping centres take the form of 'third-party locations' that, in addition to catering for travellers' needs also act as normal shopping centres for the region." The aim is to make train travel as attractive as possible and encourage people to use public transport.



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## FOODSERVICE AT TRAIN STATIONS

"And this includes enabling them to do their food shopping as quickly and efficiently as possible."

According to ÖBB, foodservice is the most important segment at railway stations alongside food and travel requisites and, depending on the number of passengers and visitors using the station, it can occupy up to 20 % of the retail space available – and the trend is rising. The aim, with internationally renowned brands, such as McDonald's, Burger King, Starbucks, Subway, Dunkin' Donuts, etc., is to give guests a feeling of familiarity and safety.



Vienna Central Station



Vienna Central Station

The first 'BahnhofCity' was opened at Vienna's 'Westbahnhof' station in November 2011. Covering three levels and a total of 17,000 sq m, the shopping centre boasts 90 shops, foodservice outlets and service points. There are 'BahnhofCity' shopping centres in all major Austrian stations today, including Innsbruck and Linz.

The biggest 'BahnhofCity' is at Vienna's new central railway station (Hauptbahnhof Wien), which opened in 2014 as a shopping and service centre with around 90 shops, foodservice outlets and service points on around 20,000 sq m. "In addition to the 'BahnhofCity', there is a completely new development around the station. Around 20,000 people work there and we wanted to provide an attractive range of facilities for lunchtime. Hence, the foodservice portfolio is particularly varied and ranges from Indian and Thai cuisine, via a 'Nordsee' fish outlet and bakeries, to burgers and fullservice restaurants," said an ÖBB spokesperson.

The new central railway station is one of the most important infrastructure projects in Vienna in recent years. Germany's ECE company was awarded responsibility for project development, sales and centre management. The foodservice providers include L'Osteria, McDonald's, Burger King, Starbucks and Vienna's leading butchers', Radatz, and Oberlaa (patisserie). Burger King, Nordsee, Le Crobag and Subway are also represented and were recently joined by the US brand Cinnabon and an Admiral Sportsbar. Vienna Central Station is used by around 145,000 people and 1,000 trains a day.



Vienna Central Station

Founded in Germany, the L'Osteria pizza brand currently has nine outlets in Austria, four of them in Vienna. The restaurant at 'BahnhofCity' has seating for 120 guests on 350 sq m. General licensee Maria Klara Heinritzi says the annual turnover amounts to around €2.5 m. It was here in Vienna, too, that McDonald's launched its new multiple-point ordering system, whereby the food is freshly prepared for guests after they order it at the counter, at a touch-screen, self-service kiosk or by smartphone app. [www.oebb.at](http://www.oebb.at)



The busiest railway stations in Sweden are in the country's largest cities; Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö. Stockholm Centralstation is by far the largest with 73 m visitors and travellers per year and approximately 1,000 train movements per day. Trains account for a relatively large share of the national travelling and the number of train travellers is increasing, especially in regional and local trips (length of journey less than one hour). The Swedish rail network is also used for a lot of freight traffic, unlike in many countries in Europe. Stockholm Centralstation, for example, has a mix of commuter trains, regional trains, inter-city trains and freight trains.

Jernhusen is a state owned real estate company that develops, owns and manages stations, station areas, maintenance depots and freight terminals throughout the Swedish railway system. They own and manage a total of 40 stations in Sweden, the top 3 stations above included.

SE: TOP 3 TRAIN STATIONS – NO. OF VISITORS & TRAVELLERS PER YEAR –		
R	Station	Footfall
1	Stockholm Centralstation	73 m
2	Göteborg Centralstation	27 m
3	Malmö Centralstation	17 m

Source: Jernhusen

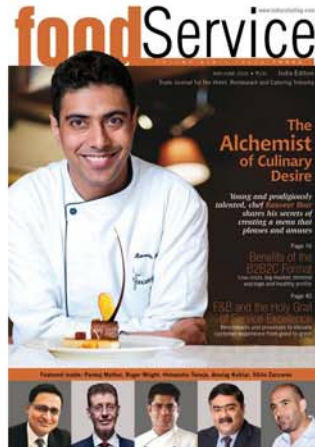


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**Travelling is increasing, mainly shorter trips and commuter trips, and so is the need for food and convenience products, and also for service outlets such as pharmacies, bread shops and grocery stores.**

"Travellers show an increased demand for various services in train stations," says Kristina Holmqvist of Jernhusen. "Travelling is increasing, mainly shorter trips and commuter trips, and so is the need for food and convenience products, and also for service outlets such as pharmacies, bread shops and grocery stores. Many commuters are in a constant rush and wish to save time by shopping on the way to or from work," continues Holmqvist.

Time spent at the station is an important parameter to analyse when planning the service range and locations for food and beverage units. Jernhusen categorizes the train travellers into three groups (see box).

Different travellers have different needs, but most passengers and visitors value fast service and well known food products and brands. Train travellers find themselves preoccupied with questions such as, when does the train depart, from where does the train depart, is the train on time, etc. This emphasises the need for quick and easy accessible foodservice. Another key word to the train traveller is value for money.

"Other food trends that we see are similar to the rest of the foodservice industry; increased demand for healthy, organic and locally produced food," says Kristina Holmqvist.

Stockholm Centralstation was built in 1871. Back then there were 500 passengers and 10 train departures per day. Today, it is the largest travel hub in the Nordic countries with 1,000 train movements per day and approximately

200,000 visitors and travellers per day, even 400,000 if you include the adjacent subway station hub, T-Centralen. The owner Jernhusen recently invested SEK1 bn in reconstruction and development of the station area. The new Stockholm Centralstation opened in 2013 and the commercial service area covers about 10,000 sq m. Jernhusen's vision with the new Centralstation is to further consolidate its image of being Scandinavia's leading and largest train station, offering the best range of services to travellers.

There are 25 food units in Stockholm Centralstation. Most of them are café and fast-food concepts ranging in price from mid-price to premium level. There are also a few fullservice restaurants, both in the casual dining segment and a bit fancier. "One of our foodservice strategies is to bring in new trends. We offer a mix of concepts such as Lebanese cuisine, noodles, dumplings, sushi, Swedish home cooking, bread and pastries, sandwiches, salads etc. All these concepts offer high quality, but with a service speed equal to the traditional fast food concepts," reveals Holmqvist. There is a food court area as well as individual units spread out in the station, with locations that are supposed to match the typical traveller flow to be found there, for example:

Lower Hall – focus on speed, simplicity and to save the traveller a detour. Here one finds easy accessible and well-known concepts such as Burger King, Panini Internazionale, Upper Crust, Beirut Café, Espresso House and Gateau.

North Hall (towards Arlanda Express) – the station's food court, a variety of concepts with a common seating area, offering a choice of concepts; traditional Swedish food, dumplings, sandwiches, burgers, coffee etc.

Scattered units, some of them facing the inside of the station and some of them with city street access. In general, more of 'sit down units' and full-service restaurants such as the sportsbar concept O'Learys and new concepts such as Luzette and Boston Grill.

The dominating lessee is SSP with their own brands such as Upper Crust and Café Ritazza as well as franchised brands such as Burger King, Starbucks, O'Learys and Boston Grill. Café and coffee-shop concepts are also important and other than Starbucks, Jernhusen cooperates with some of Sweden's strongest brands in the category. Espresso House currently has three units in Stockholm Centralstation and another 185 coffee shops around Sweden, thus forming the biggest coffee-shop chain in the country. Another coffee shop is Barista Fairtrade Coffee, which has 16 units in Sweden, and Wayne's Coffee.

The challenges for all operators are to manage the big customer flows and their high demands for speed. In addition, the concepts must work right throughout the day, i.e breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner. Since many of the units are quite small, several concepts must have access to production kitchens in another location.



Stockholm Central Station



Luzette





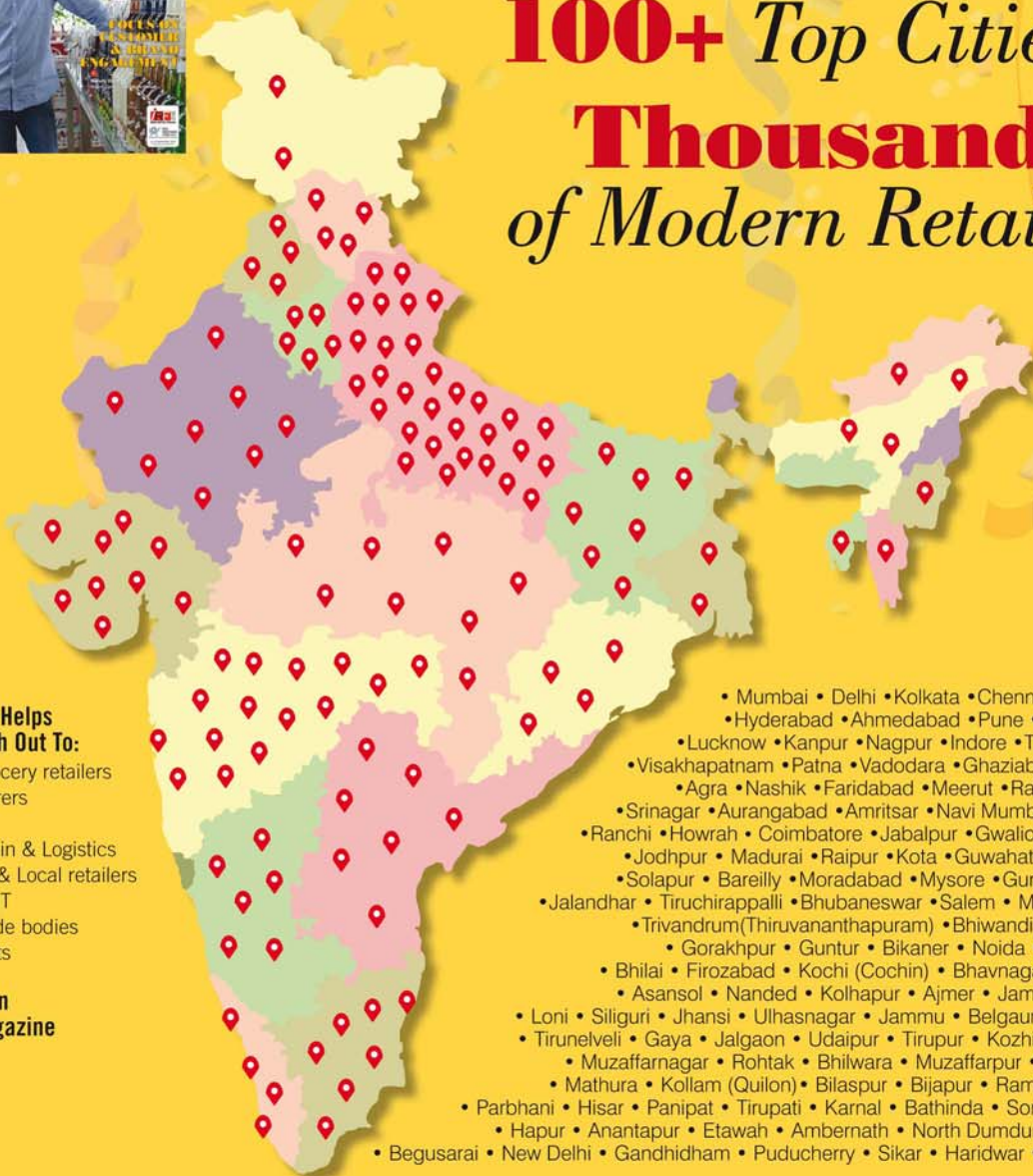
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**Another new fullservice option with upmarket food and beverages for travellers with more time to spare or non-travellers is Boston Grill.**

SE: TYPES OF TRAVELLERS		
Traveller Type	Travel Time	Spent in Station
Local T.	< 30 min	1-10 min
Regional T.	< 60 min	10-20 min
Long distance/ Business T.	> 60 min	> 20 min

The owner Jernhusen has a vision of transforming the central station into a food destination. One of the challenges has been to attract other guests than train passengers, for example people working nearby. "We also wish to attract people that will appreciate the open and continental atmosphere in the evenings and weekends," says Kristina Holmqvist. Since the refurbishment in 2013, a couple of fullservice and higher-end concepts have been established that help making the station a place to go also for non-travellers. One of them is Luzette that opened in 2014, a modern brasserie developed with inspiration from classic restaurants in other train stations such as Le Train Bleu in Gare du Lyon in Paris. Luzette is part of one of Stockholm's major restaurant groups, Svenska Brassierier, who also operates several trendy and well-established restaurants in Stockholm City like Sturehof, Riche, Teatergrillen and Taverna Brillo. Opening hours are from early morning till midnight and the range is wide; breakfast, lunch, dinner, ready meals to take away and freshly baked bread and sweets. There is a bar section with express seats and selected meals for travellers in a rush.

Another new fullservice option with upmarket food and beverages for travellers with more time to spare or non-travellers is Boston Grill. This is a new concept developed by O'Learys Trademark, who recently launched their House of Brands consisting of five concepts, including Boston Grill. The other four brands are O'Learys Bar & Restaurant (sportsbar with 120 units worldwide), Holy Monkey (Asian street food), Bambino (Italian eatery) and OBW (burgers & wings). The Boston Grill in Centralstation is the se-cond one and a third unit has just opened near the Central Station in Copenhagen. The Boston Grill menu includes steaks, seafood, premium burgers, soups, salads and typical Boston dishes such as Clam Chowder and Tomahawk Steak.



Russian railway stations are managed by a subsidiary of Russian Railways JSC (RZD). It comprises 348 railway stations in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, regional administrative centres, and towns with a population over 200,000. The foodservice segment is best developed at Moscow's nine terminals, which handle a total of 1 m passengers every day.

Rosinter Restaurants, Russia's major foodservice operator in the casual dining segment, is one of the key tenants at Moscow railway stations. The company's restaurants occupy a floor area of

4,000 sq m – the largest in the segment. Today Rosinter operates 15 locations at the Kursky, Kazansky, Belorussky, Paveletsky, Leningradsky, and Yaroslavsky railway terminals (13 of them company-run, 2 franchised). At the moment, the company is not present at railway stations outside of Moscow. "In Russia, the foodservice culture at railway terminals is still in its infancy. The Moscow crowd is only just beginning to get accustomed to the fact that they can have a tasty, quick, inexpensive and safe meal at railway stations. Traditionally, all innovations spread into the Russian regions from the centre, therefore, we might see certain potential there in a few years," explains Margarita Kosteeva, Vice President Transportation Hubs Business at Rosinter Restaurants.

The spectrum of Rosinter formats at railway stations varies from kiosks and coffee shops to free-flow and fullservice restaurants, comprising such concepts as Mama Russia, T.G.I. Friday's, Costa Coffee, Il Patio, Planeta Sushi. Some restaurants are located inside the railway terminals, others have a separate street entrance; in case of the former, 90% of the guests are arriving and departing passengers. Most of the restaurants work around the clock, with service breaks determined by the station administration. All concepts were adapted for railway terminals, taking the format specifics and the guests' needs





into account. "For instance, the menu is slightly different from the city locations, it doesn't have complex dishes that require lengthy preparation, because guests at railway stations are even more pressed for time than air passengers," says Margarita Kosteeva, adding that the average check at railway locations is 20-25% lower than in city locations because there are fewer items per check.

KFC is another major player at Moscow railway stations. Since 2010, City Restaurants has been operating the brand at these locations as franchisee. KFC restaurants operate at the Kursky, Paveletsky, Kazansky, Savelovsky, and Yaroslavy railway terminals in Moscow and at the railway station in Tver.

Apart from short and long-distance trains, the traffic at certain stations is created by the passengers of international trains and aeroexpress trains that take them to Moscow's airports. "It is highly important for us to attract city traffic in notes Marala Charyeva, Executive Director at City Restaurants. Consequently, the peak demand at the restaurants is observed in the morning and in the evening hours, at the beginning and the end of the working day. The restaurants at the Kursky, Yaroslavy, and Paveletsky terminals work around the clock, with a four-hour service break. On average, the restaurants serve from 1,000 to 4,000 guests per day.

The floor area of KFC restaurants at railway stations varies from 110 to 300 sq m, the number of seats is 50 to 150, with 7 to 10 cash registers per outlet. The bestsellers at railway locations are convenient on-the-go foods: the Twister and i-Twister wrap sandwiches, the Sanders burger, and hot wings. The share of take-away sales is 40% or even higher. The average check is RUB220-250 (€2.75-3.1), which is slightly lower than the overall average for the restaurant chain (RUB300/€3.75). Right now City Restaurants is in the process of renovating the locations at the Kursky railway terminal: the company is expanding its KFC outlet, with plans to open a Pizza Hut unit and a coffee shop under its own brand, I Love Coffee. Two of such coffee shops are already operating at the Paveletsky terminal.

When it comes to railway locations, large coffee chains prefer the express format or the coffee point format. That is how brands like Shokoladnitsa, Coffee House, and Dunkin' Donuts are present at Moscow's railway stations. Operating a coffee point only requires a power outlet; it can, therefore, be located in almost any part of the building. Coffee House units operate at the Paveletsky, Kazansky, and Belorussky terminals in this format. A Shokoladnitsa coffee point is located at the Kursky terminal. As a rule, coffee points have a minimum set of equipment: a commercial coffee machine, a grill for heating sandwiches and wraps, and refrigeration equipment.

Coffee House coffee points have an average of 220-250 transactions per day. The menu includes on-the-go items: coffee, loose leaf tea, fresh pastry and desserts, and hot sandwiches. The bestsellers are double cappuccino and regular coffee; chicken



tortilla is the most popular food item. Besides, the chain promotes its 'Box to go' offer that includes a choice of drink and a conveniently packed snack, at a very low price of RUB99/€1.25. The average check at a coffee point is RUB151/€1.9.

Two years ago, Nash Xleb Bakery Group, a Moscow-based operator of two bakery cafés, franchised Le Pain Quotidien and home-grown Nash Hleb ('Our Bread'), started working at railway terminals in the Russian capital.

Today the company has four outlets at Leningradsky terminal, hub for trains going to Saint Petersburg among other destinations: a Nash Xleb bakery café at the suburban train departure area, a Market & Bakery next to a Nash Xleb mini market on the first floor, a Nash Xleb outlet at a food court on the second floor, and a recently opened Le Pain Quotidien flagship café in the centre of the waiting room on the first floor of the building. With a floor area of 250 sq m, this is the largest outlet in the chain. Inside, it has different areas for the guests: from a quickservice bakery bar to a relaxed 'library' with warm lighting and cosy sofas.

The menus of the café and the bakery bar have been adjusted for the railway station. "We have removed all complex foods that take a long time to prepare. They have been replaced by combo offers and a new burger section (with meat and vegetarian options). In the bakery area, we installed a huge oven to bake hot rolls, small pizzas, hot baguette sandwiches, and hearty pies," explains Natalia Dzhariani, brand director at Le Pain Quotidien.

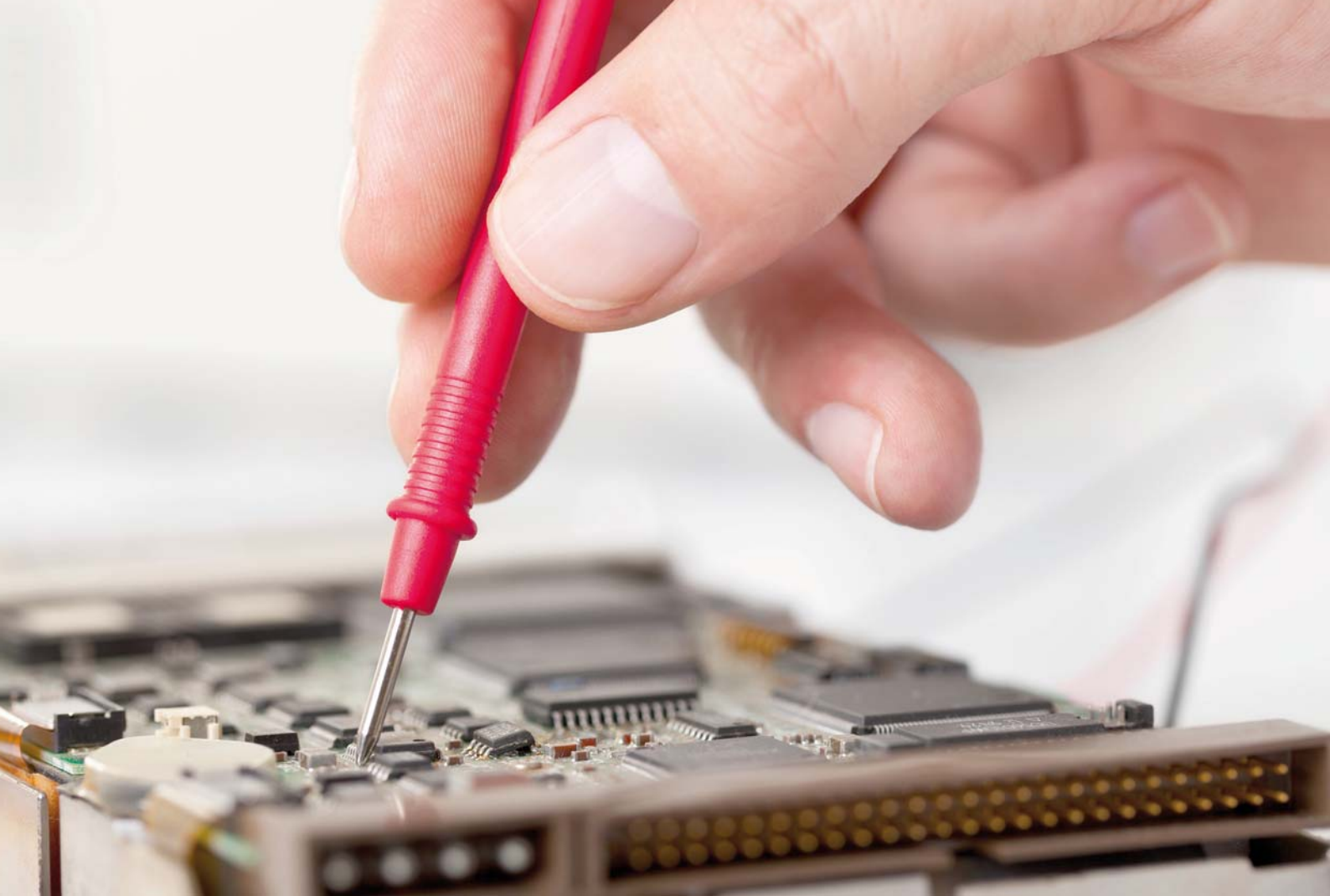
Through all formats, the bestsellers are coffee and water to go. The share of drinks at railway locations exceeds the average figure for the Nash Xleb outlets by up to 30%. The sales of other products are determined by the customer specifics at every location. Thus, the sales of bread are higher at the suburban departure area: many commuters shop on their way home. Customer traffic is especially intense at 6-7 am, from the morning trains, and from the evening trains on Fridays. The chain serves over 2,500 station visitors per day. According to Natalia Dzhariani, the cashiers process an average of 1.5-2 checks per minute during peak hours. ••

**When it comes to railway locations, large coffee chains prefer the express format or the coffee point format. That is how brands like Shokoladnitsa, Coffee House, and Dunkin' Donuts are present at Moscow's railway stations.**

Contributing Authors  
Germany/Austria: BS  
Sweden: Sofia Selberg  
Russia: Natalia Kosareva

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# Picking the right maintenance contract

Materials Managers prefer a comprehensive annual maintenance contract in which the vendor is responsible for the labour cost and for replacing all the components that malfunction.

by P. Boominathan

**T**he Engineering department is one of the backbones of hotel operations. The safety of guests and the property rests with the Engineering department. The department ensures the smooth functioning of all the equipment, a necessary prerequisite to guest satisfaction because even a minor fault or glitch in the functioning of any equipment might cause operational distress. There are numerous equipment to look after and check for regularly. Lift and the elevators systems, boilers, laundry equipment, power generators, UPS and invertors, telephones, computers & servers, fire fighting and alarm mechanism, HVAC system, refrigeration system, kitchen equipment, LPG & fuel, sewerage treatment plant, RO plant, electrical systems,

varieties of pumps and motors, audio, visual & PA system, etc., all of which need regular service and maintainance so that the overall system functions in a seamless manner.

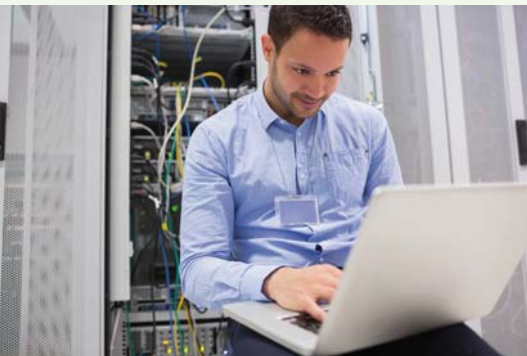
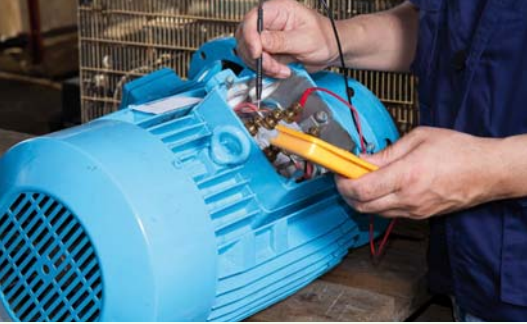
Each one of these systems and equipment might have been purchased and assembled in the premises by various agencies. It is the duty of the Engineering department to look after the performance of each one of the equipment so that maximum efficiency is extracted and they function at the optimum level.

Some of the reasons for hotels and restaurants to enter into annual maintenance contracts are:

- These original equipment manufacturers possess the best technical know-how to deal with any necessity.







- Periodic checking, verification and evaluation by these technicians keeps the equipment at the best performance level.
- Upgradation or new technology developments are being incorporated by the manufacturers constantly, and such upgradations benefit hotels and restaurants.
- Any deterioration in the working condition can be brought to the prior notice of establishments. Hence, replacement / transition would be smooth and without affecting the daily routine work.
- Manufacturers of equipment might have to use special tools to carry out the maintenance work of these equipments, which would be very costly for the hotel operator to procure and maintain.
- The hotel operator need not employ such specialised technician and incur additional man power cost.
- Most equipment sellers provide 24 \* 7 services and are just a phone call away.
- Preventive maintenance of the equipment is carried out at periodic intervals to reduce breakdown or shutdown.

The role of the Materials Management team is enormous as all such service comes at a high cost and needs to be vetted thoroughly before arriving at any decision. Materials Managers prefer going in for Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (CAMC) in which the vendor is responsible for the labour cost and for replacing all the components that malfunction. Another option is to go for a Non Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (Labour) (NCAMC) where their technician visits the hotel's premises periodically to inspect the equipment and produce reports about the status / health of the equipment. In this type of contract, hotels bear the cost of any replacement. The cost of a comprehensive maintenance contract is higher than the labour maintenance contract as the vendor is responsible for replacing the damaged spares.

For critical equipment like chillers, cold rooms, power generators, etc., it is preferable to go for CAMC, so that the time between breakdown and restoration is minimised. In the case of NCAMC, it is recommended to maintain a minimum stock of critical spares at stores of the establishment so that as soon the technician reach the hotel premises, the spares can be used as a replacement. This will ensure that the breakdown gets fixed promptly and there is no inconvenience to guests and disruption in the operations.

The charges for rendering the maintenance service are generally expressed as a percentage of cost of the equipment and increases with the passage of time as the wear and tear reduces the efficiency of the equipment. It is advisable to enter into such an agreement at the time of purchasing the equipment itself. This way, Materials Managers can have a better hold over the sales representatives of the manufacturing organisation. It also enables purchasers to get the warranty period increased, so that the seller is forced to maintain the equipment on their responsibility for a longer period of time. The materials department should scrutinise the pros and cons of the agreement and negotiate the price to the most economical level. Though AMCs are entered with the OEMs, managers should endeavour to rope in third-party service providers and alternative vendors and create a competitive atmosphere to reduce the quoted rates.

The contract should be for a specific term with no automatic renewal clause and should contain detailed specifications of the work to be accomplished and the frequency of visits. Once the contract is signed, the Engineering department should ensure that the work has been performed and billed accordingly. ••



*P. Boominathan is Commercial Manager with Fortune Select Grand, Chennai. He holds a Master's degree in Commerce from the University of Calcutta and an MSC in Hotel Management.*

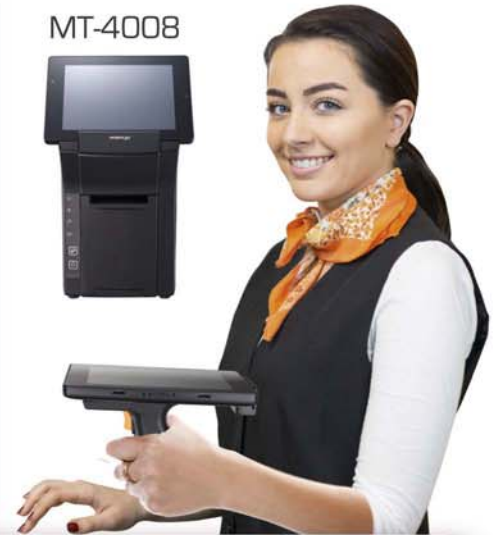
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