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VOLUME SEVEN • ISSUE TWO

Trade Journal for the Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Industry

MARCH-APRIL 2017 • ₹100

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## Culinary wizardry at India Food Forum



Innovations with ingredients and brands and lessons in menu engineering



Images Awards for Excellence in Food Retailing



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**Office Come To MFG:** Sukharani Inclave Nr. Ghoda Chowk, Opp.D.S.P. School,  
Nr. Bansal Iron Factory, Gurgaon (HR) , Mr. Mukesh Mobile: +91-9213534192 / 2213534192

**Delhi Office:**

3790, Sarai Phoos, Tis Hazari,  
Delhi-54 Nr. Churuch, Delhi-110054  
Mobile: +91-8800356547

**Pune:**

Gate No.58/1, Tamhane Vasti, At Post Kunjirwadi,  
Pune Solapur Road Nr. Theur Phata,  
Tal. Haveli, Dist. Pune-412201

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www.indiaretailing.com

VOLUME SEVEN • ISSUE TWO

March-April 2017 • PAGES 72

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**

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**

#### Production

Sr. General Manager: **Manish Kadam**  
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#### Support

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

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#### CONSUMER CONNECT

**Anil Nagar**, Vice President

E: anilnagar@imagesgroup.in | M: +91 9811333099

Membership Team: **Priti Kapil**

**Sarika Gautam**    **Priyanka Sagar**

**IMAGES MULTIMEDIA PVT. LTD. (CIN:- U22122DL2003PTC120097)**

**Registered Office:** S-21, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase II, New Delhi 110020, India  
T: +91-11-40525000 | F: +91-11-40525001 | E: info@imagesgroup.in | W: www.imagesgroup.in

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**Kolkata:** 30-B, Anil Roy Road, Ground Floor, Kolkata - 700 029  
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T: +91-80-41255172, 41750595/96 | F: +91-80-41255182

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What can you expect at a gathering that attracts the most eclectic bunch of cognoscenti from the Food Retail industry? As is customary at the annual India Food Forum (organised by IMAGES Group and publisher of FoodService India), the Conclave this year rippled with energy and its usual share of heat and light that the conferences, workshops, exhibitions, live shows and networking sessions radiated.

Industry mavens who spoke on different themes and topics at the numerous panel discussions threw up interesting insights on the Food Retail industry. Discussions also led to information on trends, emerging product categories, understanding consumer behaviour, and on marketing and promotion strategies – all of which, as everyone agreed, are integrally knit into the performance and growth metrics of food service operators.

This issue of the magazine offers a focused round-up and conspectus of the slate of discussion and debate on various topics related to food retail at India Food Forum. For those who were not there, we bring you the interesting bytes and meaty morsels of information exchanged at the Forum. Turn to pages 64 to 65 to find out the outstanding achievers who won the Coca-Cola Golden Spoon Awards for excellence in different categories of food retail.

My congratulations to all the winners and my heartfelt thanks to the participants at the Forum for making the show a great success. I also express my gratitude to everyone in the industry for making India Food Forum a stellar platform for articulating the vision of the food retail industry in the country and for forging deeper ties and understanding with all stakeholders.



Amitabh Taneja

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Printed & published by S P Taneja on behalf of Images Multimedia Pvt. Ltd. Printed at: Modest Print Pack (P) Ltd., C-52, DDA Sheds, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase 1, New Delhi – 110020 and published by S P Taneja from S-21 Okhla Industrial Area Phase 2, New Delhi – 110020  
Editor: Amitabh Taneja

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Europe & Middle East    Germany | Austria | Switzerland    Poland    Russia

FoodService Europe & Middle East is the parent publication of FoodService published by Deutscher Fachverlag GmbH, Mainzer Landstrasse 251, 60326 Frankfurt am Main, Germany.  
Phone: + 49 69 759501; fax: + 49 69 75951510 | Editor-in-Chief: Gretel Weiss (gretel.weiss@dfv.de)  
Division Manager: Christiane Pretz (christiane.pretz@dfv.de)



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T: 011 25104060, M: +91 8510008487

E: [info.delhi@grihasthiudyog.co.in](mailto:info.delhi@grihasthiudyog.co.in)

# Sculpting the future of tandoors

In a conversation with Food Service India, Munnilal Founder & Chairman of Munnilal Tandoors, shares his expertise on the art of making tandoors and their importance in popularising tandoori cuisine.



Munnilal



whether I was upset about leaving the school. I was not even interested in the craft and my aim was to support my father. However, my father found ways to build my interest. I was involved as a helper to begin with, while he along with his brothers used to make small pots with clay and address occasional tandoor orders that they received. Soon after, I was lured to start making tandoors for home purpose and later big ones with a promise that money earned through those tandoors would be mine. This, somehow, gave me an ambition to make good tandoors. This is how I started my journey in the tandoor business.

As I was growing up, I gathered much experience to build a tandoor on my own. At the same time, the hotel industry was also beginning to rise. Food service demands led to a rise in demand for tandoors as well. So, our family started getting more tandoor orders from the initial hotels that were flourishing in Delhi. People liked our products and were assured of the quality. While my grandfather also made tandoors, they lacked the finishing touch. My father and his elder brother made tandoors giving them a finish that hotels loved instantly. They also started making them as per the requirements of the hotels—changing and tweaking the designs, which ensured that kitchen professionals started recognizing us as quality tandoor makers.

**M**unnilal Tandoors Pvt. Ltd. is one of the leading names in tandoor business. Munnilal, the owner of the company, spent more than 50 years nurturing the art of making tandoors.

Born to a humble family, Munnilal lived in the bylanes of Old Delhi. His family was involved in the making of clay pots for two generations; the pots made by his grandfather were very popular in different parts of Delhi in the 1940s and 1950s.

Munnilal had to sacrifice his education to support his father in their clay craft work, he left his studies when he was in the seventh standard. Hence, his entry into a working life began at a tender age of 14 back in 1960s. However, with many challenges and opportunities on his way, he has emerged as a winner to establish himself as one of the foremost names in the making of tandoors, not only in India but also worldwide.

Today, tandoor is seen as one of the most important elements of any Indian commercial kitchen. In more ways than one, a lot of credit goes to Munnilal who has crafted countless tandoors over the past 50 years. Let's delve into his journey over the years and his dreams for the future.

**Did you develop fondness for the clay craft at an early age?**

It was a difficult scenario for my family. I had no choice and therefore, it didn't cross my mind

**How did you establish your name as the finest tandoor craftsman?**

It was in the 1980s that an Australian gentleman came to our shop and asked me to make three tandoors for him that he would take to his country. He figured out that transportation itself would cost him a fortune let alone the trouble of installing them in his restaurants. I always had a dream of visiting a foreign land and know the world and the cuisines. I never thought an opportunity was right there. He offered me a proposition that I go with him to make tandoors for him in Australia for which he would pay me as well. Although it was a great proposition (and a dream come true) for me, my father didn't agree to the idea. I was married then with two daughters. However, my father-in-law supported my ambition and convinced my father of my decision. Soon, I was in Melbourne—where I received appreciation and money for my creations, giving me the first push in my career.



**Did your visit to Australia create a new path for your career?**

Way back then in Melbourne, there were about one or two Indian restaurants. In fact, I was told that each state of the country had merely a couple of Indian restaurants i.e., in the 1980s. I was amazed to see that so many Australians were enjoying Indian food at one of the Indian restaurants during dinner time. In fact, the waiting queue was so long for indoors that people would park their long cars outside and would rather enjoy meals there with their beers. I realised the importance of Indian cuisine in Australia. I stayed in the city for two-and-a-half months. During that time, I searched a lot for the right kind of soil, purchased it and made tandoors for the person who took me there. I would have made roughly 15 tandoors (with more orders pouring in as soon as other restaurateurs realised the opportunity they had) in that period and earned handsomely in comparison with what I used to in Delhi. Later on, I travelled to Australia six-seven times, exploring the country and making tandoors.

**How did you establish yourself in Delhi, or rather in the Indian hospitality circuit?**

After I returned from my first trip to Melbourne, I purchased a scooter for myself to ease my transit challenges. I began promoting my products extensively. A couple of years later, in the early 1980s, Delhi was getting ready for the Taj Mansingh hotel. I landed with tandoor orders for the hotel for the sheer recognition I had earned until then. This was the first step in the direction of establishing my name in the five-star hotel circuit. This led to one order after another and the tandoor business flourished.

**How many countries have you visited so far for the purpose of setting up tandoors? What have been your cherished assignments?**

I must have visited more than 18 countries. Various assignments took me to London, different parts of Australia and Sri Lanka, Dubai, Malaysia, Thailand, Seychelles, Canada, Singapore, Germany, the US, Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong, China, Maldives, Malaysia and many others countries. Each journey gave me an opportunity to learn new things, about the country's culture and the happiness of experiencing the acceptance and love for the Indian cuisine. I enjoyed traveling and loved the way different people approached and respected the tandoor craft. I now feel that tandoor cuisine has come of age. The experiences made me realise how things are getting automated—even smallest of hand-based work in the hospitality domain.

**How is your tandoor different from that of others', and what proposition do you offer?**

In 2009, when I established Munnihal Tandoors Pvt. Ltd. after detaching myself from other ventures, I had a clear dream of establishing this brand as the best in tandoors. The difference of our tandoor is in its quality and the effective output they offer. Each of the tandoors are hand-



crafted. Our products are according to the defined standards as under NSF approved listing (the US) and are also as per the Certified Gas Product Listing [conforming to CSA standards] (Canada). The fact that we are exporting our tandoors to over 30 countries is a testament of our quality products, which distinguishes us from others. I personally don't believe in competition; my sole intention is to create better products for the industry with each passing year.

**What are your expectations?**

I have achieved a lot over the years. Now, my two sons—Raju Prajapati and Rahul Prajapati—are taking the responsibility with élan. They are the new blood and taking the tandoor craft to a new direction. I am always there with them for guidance, but now they are the captains of this ship, and I just want to enjoy the sail. Until now, I have been doing everything by hand and now, they plan to make changes in the production that would take the quality even higher. I just wish is to see the company go from strength to strength. ●●

**I enjoyed traveling and loved the way different people approached and respected the tandoor craft. I now feel that tandoor cuisine has come of age.**

<b>FORM IV</b> (See Rule 8)	
1. Place of Publication	New Delhi
2. Periodicity of Publication	Bi-Monthly
3. Printer's Name	S.P.Taneja
Whether citizen of India?	Yes
If foreigner, state the country of origin	Does not apply
Address	S-21, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi - 110020
4. Publisher's Name	S.P.Taneja
Whether citizen of India?	Yes
If foreigner, state the country of origin	Does not apply
Address	S-21, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi - 110020
5. Editor's Name	Amitabh Taneja
Whether citizen of India?	Yes
If foreigner, state the country of origin	Does not apply
Address	S-21, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi - 110020
6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one percent of total capital	Owner: Images Multimedia Pvt. Ltd. S-21, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase - II, New Delhi -110020 Shareholders: 1. Mr. Amitabh Taneja S-21, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase - II, New Delhi-110020 2. Mr. Hemant Sood N-67, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor, Greater Kailash Part-I, New Delhi - 110048 3. Images Employee Stock Trust S-21, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi - 110020
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# Market and consumer trends influencing food retail

The market size of India's food services industry is expected to reach a whopping USD 75 billion by 2021 as it expands at a compounded annual growth rate of 15 per cent, according to a study by Technopak, a management consulting firm. "In terms of size, foodservices industry is 25 times the size of Bollywood. It's a fragmented industry, but an omni-present industry," said Saloni Nangia, President, Technopak Advisors, in her presentation at India Food Forum.

by Premjit Mohapatra



“It is very important for us to understand how the millennials conduct themselves with technology and mobile phones and we need to figure out how we can be a part of that”

Saloni Nangia  
President, Technopak Advisors

The food services industry in India has witnessed unprecedented growth over the past few years and the pace of expansion is likely to quicken further in the next five years.

Nangia's presentation touched upon some key aspects of India's food services industry, offering a bird's eye view of how its different segments are developing and the trends that will shape their growth.

## Food Services industry classification

**Organised formats:** Organized stores as usually licensed stores across the country (i.e. chain and licensed standalone players across QSRs, full service, casual, and fine dining restaurants, hotels, bars, lounges, cafes, etc.)

**Unorganised formats:** Unorganized formats are the dhabas, street stalls, roadside vendors, food carts, etc and they account for the largest share – 67% of the industry currently.

## Market Overview

Chain formats across the QSR, FDR and CDR, which is currently worth around USD 3 billion, are growing fast, making it one of the segments to watch out for growth. Food services or food retail is the largest consumption basket in India. About 67% of all consumption is accounted for by food, making it the largest category at 460 billion dollars in India. The food business in India is largely concentrated in unorganized formats and the organized formats have a market share of only 3%. They are expected to grow to 5% in the next five years, but have many challenges confronting them.

For perspective, the size of modern formats in grocery retail is roughly the same as the e-commerce market in India, which is around 15 billion dollars. But the fact that the e-commerce

market has been able to reach the same numbers as modern food and grocery in just five years speaks about the speed at which e-commerce is growing in this country and the challenges confronting modern retail.

## Trends having immediate market impact

**Demonetisation:** Discretionary spending has been going down in the wake of demonetisation.

- Impact on the industry - Food services industry has been impacted, but F&G retail has been impacted positively, with sales going up for basic products.
- Impact on consumers - Consumers have tightened their purses and the spending on discretionary products has come down.
- Forecast - Consumer spending will be lower and focussed mostly on essentials like healthcare and security. It will take six months (two quarters) for market sentiments to improve and things are expected to be normal by Diwali, 2017.

## Consumers: It's the Millennial's era.

We have 50 million millennials in metros and 400 million in India. They are in the age group of 15-36 and the largest such demographic in the world. They are the consumers of the future. It is very important for brands to delve into their mindset and understand how they are going to evolve and grow in the next decade. They are the trendsetters and will set the trends for smaller towns and drive consumption.

## Characteristics of Millennials

**Completely synced:** Their lives revolve around their mobile phone, be it shopping, searching for restaurants, making payments, etc.  
**Individualistic:** They don't conform. They like one thing today and another thing tomorrow.

**Confident:** Always looking to try new things.



### Comfortable with the shared or gig economy:

The gig economy or the shared economy – be it Uber, RentMojo or Flyrobe – is completely supported by the millennials and these services are developing in keeping with the millennials' tastes and preferences.

"It is very important for us to understand how the millennials conduct themselves with technology and mobile phones and we need to figure out how we can be a part of that," observed Nangia.

And it is not just the millennials. The rest of the consumer base too is becoming tech savvy. All forms of consumptions are moving to the mobile phone, which is slowly covering all aspects of one's life. With the number of mobile phone users projected to reach 750 million by 2020, it is essential for any business or brands to connect with the consumers through the mobile platform. Mobiles and app-based solutions are increasingly being adopted by businesses for consumer connects and feedback, operations and process management and for increasing productivity,



among others. Tablets and smart phones are going to be the gadgets of the future.

### A Food Tech World

- A whole range of food tech concepts has come in, be it for food exploration, discovery, reservations, delivery, feedback, internet restaurants among others.
- There is increased competition and performance benchmarks for the restaurant industry.
- Internet only, curated and differentiated restaurants are gaining market share because they are cutting out the challenges, like high rentals and manpower attrition, and connecting directly with the consumers.
- Innovation with technology in the kitchen- both last mile cooking and in the commissaries.

"The spread of food technology is a very positive development as far as restaurants are concerned because you can reach a number of people for delivery, and it has also made the market very competitive and transparent," noted Nangia.

### Food on the Move

Dining in and food delivery are gaining market share and they account for 15-20% of the market now. Projected to gain more market share rapidly.

- Tiffin and home style meals offer a scalable business opportunity.
- Food trucks, vans and carts too are gaining market share.
- Travel destinations (airports, metros, bus stations, railways), official and commercial complexes, campuses, among others are the upcoming locations for food retail.

"While there are a number of new formats and new cuisines coming in, Indian food continues to rule the roost. Be it regional or modern Indian cuisines, the core of it remains Indian. There are a lot of options that can be developed with Indian food. The same goes for food companies as well. There are a lot of opportunities for product development, which is based around Indian pickles, spices, ready to eat, and condiments, etc. An international QSR based around Indian food is a good investment opportunity," said Nangia.

### Fusion in Retail

Lines are blurring within formats, largely to maximize revenue and day parts. So we have Fast Casual, QSR Plus, Premium QSR, Bar +Cafe, Work+Cafe+Pub, Casual +Cafe, and others.

"A lot of interesting developments are happening in the restaurant industry where the lines are blurring and lot many formats are overlapping. The same fusion is happening in retail. There were very clearly brick and mortar formats and there were purely online businesses. But today each format is looking at the other to complement it. Almost all the brick and mortar formats have added online platforms while the e-tailers are looking at opening stores," said Nangia.

### Online + Offline Integration

Fusion is also taking place across retail formats as well with online adding offline, and vice versa. Today, we are seeing a rise in assisted commerce formats, which till sometime ago were pure online businesses, to connect with consumers and increase revenue.

### Clustered Approach and Private Labels

Modern F&G formats, although around for years, continue to face margin pressures and profitability still eludes them. A more clustered approach, by defining clusters based on consumption and looking at what efficiencies can come in from a certain region and then expanding, could be the way forward. Private labels will play a key role in business margins and profitability. There exists big opportunities to create private labels in some food categories, both online and offline, with increased Government focus and infrastructure support for food processing and investments in food parks. This will facilitate development and sourcing of private labels, according to Technopak. ••



**While there are a number of new formats and new cuisines coming in, Indian food continues to rule the roost. Be it regional or modern Indian cuisines, the core of it remains Indian. There are a lot of options that can be developed with Indian food.**



M. Mahadevan

## 'Hot Breads' Mahadevan sees the World as his Oyster



Sixty-two-year-old M. Mahadevan is a 'change' agent in the culinary landscape of the country. His stand-alone restaurants are theme specific, artistic, hygienic and the food, unparalleled! Deliberately, he has eschewed the familiar cookie-cutter mentality of fast food chains and chosen to open multiple brands of speciality restaurants.

Starting with Rs. 60,000 in 1982, he has today 252 partners across 18 countries and has a finger in the pie of 476 eateries across the globe. At the India Food Forum last month, 'Hot Breads Mahadevan', as he is popularly known in the industry, was felicitated with the South India Retail Award for his stellar role in contributing to the foodservice business landscape of South India.

FoodService India spoke to Mahadevan to get his story of entrepreneurial grit and remarkable business odyssey.



**Tell us about your entrepreneurial journey in the foodservice business and how it has progressed over the years till now.**

Actually, I started my career not with the food services industry but as an Assistant Professor in the University Of Madras in 1979. As a normal day job I taught Marketing to management and accounts students. But my fierce ambition to be a part of the hotel industry drove me to satisfy this urge. I took up a part-time night job with a hotel in the city where I started working for four hours at night to learn more about the industry. At the hotel I juggled many roles – I was a trainee, a bell boy, a receptionist: everything. So, while I was a professor during day time, I also moonlighted as an apprentice with a hotel in the evening.

I left my teaching job and moved to the F&B sector full time in 1982. Along with a partner who I had met when I was working with the hotel, we started our first take out – a Chinese take-away at a restaurant in Chennai. I opened my kitchen with Rs. 60,000, and it opened at 5 p.m. and closed at 11.30 p.m. That was the time Chinese food was a craze among the people.

One day, one of my customers who was building a commercial tower asked me if I would be interested in taking up a place there. That was how my first restaurant Cascade opened. We served Chinese, Thai, Malay and Japanese cuisine. An interesting thing about the restaurant was the way i chose to do up its interiors. Through the good books of my neighbour, who was painter MF Hussain's son, I reached out to Parmeshwar Godrej and sought her services. That was in 1986.



In those days, the interiors of restaurants specialising in Chinese and Oriental food were mostly done up in red and green. I told Parmeshwar Godrej that I wanted my interiors in all white and blue and wanted it to have a very different look and feel. Eventually, it became a major selling point of my restaurant and people just loved the look.

From then on, I have not turned back and the business has multiplied ever since. Another turning point came some three years later when I launched my Hot Breads venture. The idea was born during one of my trips that I used to make to Singapore for sourcing the ingredients like Chinese sauces. The dinky looking bakeries I saw during those trips fascinated me and caught my fancy and I decided to build one back home.

In 1989, I started Hot Breads with Rs. 11 lakh. People thought I had gone crazy and many questioned my move. But I had ideas of my own. I was not looking to sell just bread and basic bakery

stuff. I had my eyes on selling more exotic fare: curry buns, pastries, pizzas, burgers, etc. Bread was only to be an inducement for piquing people's interest and make them wonder as to what novelty the bland staple could hold in my shop.

I ensured that people did not return disappointed. I created some exciting concepts. We took a bun, filled it with curry and made it a curry bun. We filled chicken tikka inside a croissant. I got the idea to make these things Indian after I saw what the Japanese did to their bakery items. People used to crowd in our unit at Alsa Mall in Chennai. Our curry buns are a big hit even in faraway Paris.

From day one, we started making profits as the concept was unique and the product tasty. It was a perfect cocktail. We broke even in the first year itself and never looked back. In the third month itself, people from Kochi and Bangalore came to me to start Hot Breads units there. Soon, I came to be known as 'Hot Breads Mahadevan'!

In 1994, I opened my first international outlet in Dubai, which became my staging post for further forays internationally. Only last month, I opened my most recent international outlet, a south Indian restaurant in Melbourne-Australia. As of today, we have a total number of 268 outlets in India and 145 units across the world under

**Today, I work with 252 partners across 18 countries and there are 476 eateries that I am connected with across the globe. In India I have three companies and internationally each partnership is a separate entity.**



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## AT A GLANCE

**Company names:** Three private companies in India & International – Oriental Cuisines, CC Fine Foods, B&M Hot Breads. Also, the companies have various business partnerships with other players.

**Number of outlets in operation:** India - 268 units; International - 145 units

**Standalone outlets and partnerships:** All units are in partnership or in LLC

**Format:** Bakery & Cafe; QSR; Fine Dine; Casual Dining

**Number of cities where the outlets are present in:** Four in India and 26 International

**Geographic spread/distribution of restaurants:** India - South and East; International - 16 countries

**Number of restaurants in fine dining:** 7

**Number of restaurants in casual dining:** 11

**Number of food courts:** 16

**Number of bakeries:** India - 112; International - 41

**Annual turnover:** Indian operation - Rs. 195 crore; International - Partnership based

**Number of people employed:** Over 4,000



three banners - Oriental cuisines, CC Fine Foods, B&M Hot Breads. Today, I work with 252 partners across 18 countries and there are 476 eateries that I am connected with across the globe. In India I have three companies and internationally each partnership is a separate entity.

### How have you been able to sew up so many partnerships abroad?

I am out on the road for 200 days in a year. The purpose of these trips is to find suitable partners and boost and manage my own business abroad. I love meeting people and many of my partnerships have stemmed from it. It gives me a rush of excitement and a purposeful surge creating new business and ventures. It is a passion for me partnering with new entities and partnering with other established restaurant chains — such as Saravana Bhavan and Anjappar — in opening more branches outside India. I realise that the more I expand my business, the more jobs and livelihoods I can create for people.

### Tell us of the restaurant brands under Oriental Cuisines and CC Fine Foods.

CC Fine Foods has many restaurants and outlets under its umbrella, which include Copper Chimney, Bombay Brasserie, Cream Centre, Marina. Brands like Benjarong, Zara, Ente Keralam, Wang's Kitchen, Teppan, French Loaf, and Planet Yumm come under Oriental Cuisines.

### Tell us about some innovative F&B ideas at your outlets that have won acclaim and attention?

In our Hot Breads bakeries, the baking is done on site (bake and sell in the unit); at our seafood

restaurants, you can buy the seafood by weight and then we cook it in the kitchens in the premises.

### What is your strategy for addressing quality control concerns and supply chain issues that most restaurateurs face?

I believe in holding on to the trusted suppliers and they have been with us for years together. It has helped cement a strong bonding and a sense of loyalty, along with the ethic of not compromising on quality at any cost.

### How do you manage to run and operate so many brands in different formats at the same time?

Having partners in various locations has helped me to manage and run the units successfully.

### How would you describe the unique selling points of your restaurant brands?

Each of the restaurant brands offer food that is authentic, fresh and affordable and provided in a friendly atmosphere.

### In your experience, which is the most lucrative and profitable format?

South Indian Vegetarian with low food cost has been the most profitable format to run.

### What has been your mantra of success?

Do things you know or join with people who know the things. That has been my philosophy. Studying market needs and pricing policies are important before entering any market.

### What is your most notable achievement so far?

Providing employment for over 4,000 young Indians and being present in 16 countries.

### Why is it that no Indian operator has been able to scale the way of giants like McDonald's?

Too many SKUs and varied cuisines have complicated the Indian restaurants' growth in a McDonald's format.

### What are your plans and targets for the future?

My future plans are to build more Cafés and Bakeries to help the poor and downtrodden people. They get to learn the skills and earn a living, which is a very satisfactory thing for me.

### Do you work on your ventures also keeping in mind altruistic considerations?

My ventures have a commercial side but there is also a charity side to them. To give something to the society you need money. And to have that money you need to make money.

My baking operations form the core of my charity work. It can take years to develop a good chef, but only three months to train a baker, which is what all my bakeries do. My bakery projects teach the poor how to bake so that they can earn a living. It is like teaching them how to fish, rather than giving them fish. We have also trained a lot of women in baking skills so that they can be gainfully employed. ●●



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# Food Service Opportunities and Trends

by Premjit Mohapatra

**At a panel discussion at India Food Forum, food service stalwarts came together to discuss some of the burning issues faced by the industry today: the changing diners' preferences; changes in India's food service industry vis-a-vis what's happening in the rest of the world; changes in regulatory and legal environment; impact of digitalisation on food service industry; and new formats of food outlets.**

India today is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It is expected to register a GDP growth of 7.5% this fiscal and is on its way to becoming a \$3.8 trillion dollar economy by 2021. The country's economic dynamics are playing out in force and the imprints are visible all over: the ever-evolving consumer demands, rapid urbanization, favourable demographics, increased disposable income, more women in workspace and changing lifestyles and food habits. All of these economic factors have ushered in a scenario where the food service industry is changing every quarter and there are ripples of disruptive changes coursing through the market. But what is heartening is the positive upside to these changes with the market outlook presenting significant opportunities for industry players.

## Food Service: Key Highlights

- CAGR growth forecast of 19% for the food service sector in the organized segment for the next five years.
- The food service sector is estimated to be valued at Rs. 500,000 crore in 2021. The organised segment is set to grow from the current 30% share to 41%.
- The per capita spend of Rs. 6,500 per year on food service is significantly lower compared to China where per capita spend is seven times higher.
- All the data points to a big technological revolution in the offing. With 2% of the

foodservice market on apps, the industry already begets one million daily phone orders, 30 million online orders, 200 million active Internet users. The share of smartphone users is expected to be 39% of cell phone subscribers by 2019.

The numbers are fairly impressive and speak for themselves. And what they clearly point to is a sector with plenty of opportunities waiting to be tapped. "The food service sector has witnessed an unprecedented growth and considering the significant contribution it makes to the economy, it is expected to contribute 2.1% of the total GDP of India in 2021. The sector will bring in a lot of investments, opportunities and challenges," said **S.K. Maratha**, *President, Food Service India*.

## Changing Landscape and Emerging Trends

The food service sector is blessed with a young, dynamic and diverse food-loving consumer base, which is driving up consumption with higher disposal incomes. There is an increasing preference to eat outside, brought about by hectic lifestyles and the paucity of time. A growing participation of women in the workforce and double income families with eating out or ready-to-eat means are creating new opportunities for the industry.

Brand aware consumers are forever eager to explore newer and richer culinary experiences. Food evolution is happening

**L to R:**  
S K Maratha  
Shashikant Shetty  
Altamsh Patel  
Sushil Sawant  
Chef Juliano  
Kajal Bhatia  
Gaurav Singh





“ The sector has witnessed unprecedented growth and is expected to contribute 2.1% of the total GDP of India in 2021 ”

**S.K. Maratha**  
President, Food Service India



“ Companies should evolve strategies to avail the benefits offered by advancements in technology ”

**Shashikant Shetty**  
Ex-Honorary General Secretary, AAHAR Association



“ Indian food is very versatile and finding acceptability is a challenge and we have to take the views of the bloggers in our stride ”

**Chef Juliano**  
Owner, Link room, Corporate Chef - La Ruche



“ If we can fix the back-end through technological interventions, then we can reduce wastages, inputs and overhead costs ”

**Sushil Sawant**  
Director, Commercials, Vista Processed Foods



“ Ambiguity in food regulations and licensing procedures are a concern and there is a lack of regulatory standards for organic foods and a need to streamline it ”

**Kajal Bhatia**  
Founder Nutritionist, Owner, Kajal Bhatia Health

thanks to innovations in the traditional menus. Fusion foods, with the extensive use of foreign ingredients in traditional Indian dishes, are attracting experimental consumers.

Indian food will continue to dominate and grow strong and be complemented by the rise of Indian ethnic and regional cuisines. Foreign players are adapting themselves to suit the local palate while Indian restaurants are introducing Thai, Mexican and Italian cuisines.

Health and hygiene conscious consumers with wellness on the mind are moving towards healthy eating options. Food service operators are meeting customer preferences by adding healthy food options to their menu, ranging from lactose-free, vegan, low carbohydrates, gluten-free and diabetic meals, etc. Some restaurants have also started serving health food or organic food as their core offerings.

Internet penetration and access to smartphones contribute to a new breed of consumers with an increasing demand for gourmet and specialized foods. Based on reviews shared by food bloggers, food preferences of customers are being influenced.

Technological disruptions in the market are taking place with web-based ordering, and it is set to revolutionize home delivery with the faster availability of food on order. Home delivery of food is a new trend and is addressing the convenience aspect. There are established and evolving retail formats with fine dining models, molecular gastronomy and food festivals for consumer experience. Home delivery and online ordering are together moving the needle on consumer convenience.

Food trucks, drive-through and takeaway joints are being set up for consumers on the go. Food

aggregators and food courts are consolidating all format types under one roof. Not only do they provide easy access to food when indulging in shopping and entertainment activities, but they also offer a choice of multiple cuisines.

This changing landscape, in tandem with the upcoming trends and the growth trajectory that India is experiencing, is fast-tracking the growth of the food service sector. This pace of growth is expected to continue in the foreseeable future, driven primarily by the consumers and food service operators. The rapid growth brings in its wake a plethora of opportunities, both at the front end and back end of the industry, amidst challenges that need to be addressed to sustain the desired growth story.

### Key Growth Challenges

**Availability of skilled manpower:** The industry today requires skilled manpower to meet the fast-evolving challenges. Ineffective communication skills and lack of basic service skills are expected to impact the demand if the issues are not addressed. Finding and retaining quality manpower is an issue and the industry is beset with attrition rates.

**Technological disruptions:** With rising digital influence on consumer decision making, companies should adopt technology in their business strategy to enhance consumer experience and improve operational efficiency. “We don’t have the manpower with requisite skill sets to handle every customer, and companies should evolve strategies to avail the benefits offered by advancements in technology,” said



**With consumer preferences expected to drive innovation, technology can be used for generating a customer feedback system, GPS-aided delivery, digital menus, mobile payment solutions and mobile applications for taking orders.**



**Shashikant Shetty**, *Ex-Honorary General Secretary, AAHAR Association*. "Indian food is very versatile and finding acceptability is a challenge and we have to take the views of the bloggers in our stride," added **Chef Juliano**, *Owner, Link room, Corporate Chef - La Ruche*. "We have to give credit to the Indian reader's intelligence, regardless of the credibility of the blogger. It's a dynamic industry and any feedback helps us all evolve and improve not only services, but the dishes also," said **Kajal Bhatia**, *Founder Nutritionist, Owner, Kajal Bhatia Health*.

**Rising inflation/changes in raw material prices:** "Challenges in the supply chain due to inefficiencies and inadequate capacities continue. If we can fix the back-end through technological interventions, then we can reduce wastages, inputs and overhead costs. We can then price our products better on the menu and offer affordable and good food to our consumers," said **Sushil Sawant**, *Director, Commercials, Vista Processed Foods*.

**Regulatory and legal framework:** FSSAI is the apex food regulatory authority of India and it harmonises India's food regulations with International standards. Food service operators are expected to conform to the hygienic and sanitary requirements as laid out by FSSAI. "The emphasis is on compliance and standards and not enforcement. It's a welcome move by the government and should ensure the quality and safety of food and help to build consumer trust," said Shetty.

**The Way Forward**

While the food service industry evolves and progresses, technology can be a great enabler to take the growth story forward. Since the sector is largely unorganised, the adoption of technology has been sporadic. With consumer preferences expected to drive innovation, technology can be used for generating a customer feedback system, GPS-aided delivery, digital menus, mobile payment solutions and mobile applications for taking orders. Already, digital kiosks and menus are visible, leveraging the



**“ Experience seeking customers will keep experimenting with cuisines as well as with quality, variety, choices and convenience ”**

**Altamsh Patel**  
*Sous Chef, TajSATS Air Catering Limited*

**“ There is a growing trend of people ordering in due to the issues of traffic and connectivity in metros ”**

**Gaurav Singh**  
*GM, Marriott International*

cost-effective medium of social media platforms to reach, interact, communicate and promote offers. They have proved to be wonderful and effective tools in influencing consumer choices. With increased investments that the food service sector is attracting, Indian players are making use of newer technologies to increase production, meet international quality standards and thereby increase profitability.

"Experience seeking customers will keep experimenting with cuisines as well as with quality, variety, choices and convenience. A few years back, people didn't know about Sushi, Sashimi or Zucchini, but today they know about the many varieties of cheese available in the market," said **Altamsh Patel**, *Sous Chef, TajSATS Air Catering Ltd*. "There is a growing trend of people ordering in due to the issues of traffic and connectivity in metros. Hoteliers in the luxury and mid market segment are working to ensure that safe, good quality food is delivered in a nice proper manner to specific destinations. But this trend is yet to include a large part of the restaurant business. That is something that will take shape as we go along, whether the industry likes it or not", said **Gaurav Singh**, *GM, Marriott International*.

Rounding off the lively discussion, nutritionist Kajal Bhatia observed: "We are in an experiential phase and while we follow and adapt Western standards, it will be a while before we know what works for us in terms of sustainability. Ambiguity in food regulations and licensing procedures are a concern and while there is a lack of regulatory standards for organic foods and a need to streamline it, my belief is that health food is here to stay." ••



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## CKI is Smart, Modern and Evolving in Nature

Vineet Arora, Vice President of Customized Kitchen India Private Limited (CKI), joined the company recently. He talks to FoodService India about his operational approach and how he intends to give an edge to the company, which is taking bold approaches to redefine product quality and brand assurance benchmarks in the commercial kitchen equipment segment.



“ We are different from most companies in our service strategies to serve our customers with the best of end-to-end solutions. ”

**Vineet Arora**  
Vice President of  
Customized Kitchen  
India Pvt. Ltd. (CKI)

### How do you plan to contribute to CKI?

I joined CKI in January 2017 and it has been one of the most crucial turns in my professional career. With a total working experience of more than 12 years in the hospitality industry, I wanted to switch gears and bring my expertise, both in the front- and back-of-house operations, to the forefront and contribute to the industry in a holistic manner. Tarun Raj, CEO of the company, had a lot of faith in me that I am capable of contributing a lot to the growth of the company and can augur its customer relationship motto, setting new benchmarks in service.

### What are your core competencies?

I have always focused on different dimensions of kitchen operations—be it about innovative menu planning; cost reduction; waste management; vendor management & negotiation; sound kitchen, bar & dining room operations or integrated inventory control. On the other hand, I have nurtured myself becoming a motivational team leader, promote and upsell products, budget and manage profit & loss, and address the concerns related to safety & sanitation compliance.

### You have had experience of many F&B ventures. How do you plan translate the experience into the equipment manufacturing side for commercial kitchens?

I have experience in opening new ventures, which has given me not only confidence of understanding the mindset of customer demands, but also about the changing needs of commercial kitchen equipment in the current scenario. I previously worked with Tourist Café in Connaught Place in the heart of the Capital before joining this company. I even have experience of working with Barbeque Nation, Pind Balluchi, The BBQ Company, The Ancient Barbeque, Tourist and Gamerzzz. Therefore, I understand the myriad needs of different kitchens. This aspect is the strength, I carry, which would allow me to keep determining the minute aspects of equipment needs to serve our customers.

### Which characteristics differentiate CKI from other commercial kitchen equipment companies?

In the past two decades, the kitchen equipment segment has been one area that has evolved drastically. Now we see different sorts of gadgets everywhere, which are efficient and require less space. This also points out to the fact that the scope of improving equipment is immense. CKI has achieved remarkable standards within a short span of time, establishing itself as one of the foremost brands in delivering quality kitchen equipment. The company doesn't necessarily behave like a manufacturer; although it is, you would seldom find its approach typical to generations-old companies in this segment. We are smart, modern and evolving in nature. We feel being responsible to the quality that chefs want to achieve and rely on heavily. Therefore, CKI treats itself as a service-based organization that promises products of international standards with equally believable service excellence and benefits. We are different from most companies in our service strategies to serve our customers with the best of end-to-end solutions.

### What contributions do you think CKI will make to the growing hospitality industry in 2017?

There can be no better contribution to the industry other than giving it the freedom of convenience and assurance through quality products and services. This is exactly what CKI has been confident about and now brings to the table for the industry to benefit from. Until now, we were offering 18-month warranty on our products. Now, we are taking an unprecedented step to offer a five-year commitment on the products coming out of CKI. I am sure that this step is going to heat up the competitive zone of kitchen equipment in India, and is likely to make international companies to firmly believe our confidence to commit to stringent quality standards. We are confident of our products because we believe in what we do and deliver. Hope this paves a new direction for the industry and other players. ••



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Brijesh Kakkar | Email - [brijesh@dwhaber.com](mailto:brijesh@dwhaber.com) | Tel - +91 9818602438

# Raising the trust in the quality and safety of food

by Premjit Mohapatra

**L to R:**  
 Raj Kumar Singh  
 Kaushik Sengupta  
 Sanu Jacob  
 Dr Prabodh Halde  
 Dr Vinod Dhanuka  
 Dr N Bhaskar  
 Dr R. P. Singh  
 Omprakash Arora  
 Atul K Joshi  
 Dr Nilesh Amritkar  
 Vinay Hastak  
 Venkatesha Prasanna  
 Shalini Chakravorty



**The Food Safety Conclave at India Food Forum 2017, represented by top officials from the Central Government and Industry delved into various critical aspects of food safety – the rapidly evolving scenario in the food industry, food quality and standards, recent regulations, best practices, and challenges and opportunities related to food safety. The discussion was moderated by Shalini Chakravorty, Vice President - Ethics & Compliance - Asia, Walmart.**

An increasingly aware consumer today wants to take informed decisions about what h/she consumes, which has pitch-forked the issue of food safety centre stage. Consumers' food value equation is gradually changing from price, taste and convenience to health, wellness, safety, social impact and experience. Wellness and safety are definitely influencing the consumer behaviour and they are increasingly looking for information such as food safety standards, and complete and accurate labelling and traceability of the food products they buy. In India, an ever expanding consumer base, concerned about food quality and safety are the important drivers for the increased attention to food safety.

Some facts below from the WHO Food Safety fact sheet also reiterate the importance of food safety:

- Unsafe food containing harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemical substances, causes more than 200 diseases – ranging from diarrhoea to cancer.
- An estimated 600 million – almost 1 in 10 people in the world – fall ill after eating contaminated food and 420,000 die every year, resulting in the loss of 33 million healthy life years (DALYs).
- Food-borne diseases impede socio-economic development by straining healthcare systems, and harming national economies, tourism and trade.

Today, consumers expect protection from hazards occurring along the entire food chain. Providing adequate protection to the consumer by merely sampling and analysing the final product is not possible, hence the emphasis is on introduction of preventive measures at all stages of the food production and distribution chain. This calls for a determined, innovative, inclusive and participative approach from all stakeholders that are involved in food chain, from farm to fork. Not only is the responsibility of providing safe food to consumers of critical importance, the responsibility itself needs to be shared equally at every stage of the value chain, starting from the first steps of food production.

Not surprisingly, the food industry – including growers, processors, retailers, distributors, foodservice operators – has become conscious about





their products and offerings. Also, since most consumers receive their food from retail and food service establishments, a significant share of the responsibility for providing safe food to the consumer rests with them. Close collaboration among the regulatory authorities, retail operators and food service establishments can make a great impact on food safety aspects.

Conclave Chairperson **Dr. R. P. Singh**, *Secretary General, Quality Council of India*, started the session by saying that food affects the quality of life, which impacts employment, exports and contribution to GDP. "It is the joint responsibility of government and industry to protect consumers and provide best quality food". He also emphasised on the need for harmonising Indian regulations with globally accepted norms of consumer safety and making available the same quality of food products to domestic consumers as that which is exported.

**Dr. N Bhaskar**, *Advisor, Quality Assurance, FSSAI*, reiterated the role of Government and the support of regulators in ensuring that safe food is provided to consumers amidst growing calls upon the Government to accept greater responsibility for food safety and consumer protection. "Regulators have made a beginning with a multipronged strategy. What consumers want from the regulators and stakeholders is the 3Rs – Responsive, Responsible and Regulator. We, as regulators, have similar expectations from the stakeholders – to be

responsive and be responsible retailers because these 3Rs are shared responsibilities," he said. Elaborating on the initiatives by FSSAI, he added: "We are also educating young minds on the hygiene and safety aspects of food through inclusion of awareness material in textbooks. FSSAI, as a regulator, has taken the responsibility of upgrading the notified laboratories and state food laboratories in terms of manpower training and equipment they require, and showing greater sensitivity to and acting on newer threats to food safety. As appellate authority, we are building testing laboratories in private space."

**Dr. Prabodh Halde**, *President, AFST Mumbai & Head, Technical Regulatory*, concurred with Dr. Singh and Dr. Bhaskar. Amplifying on the 3R approach, he said, "I would like to add 2 T (Trust and Transparency) and one C (Compliance) to the 3 R. Compliance today is not a requirement but a hygiene and if you are not compliant you will be out of the business. Compliance has to be in letter and spirit. With the advent of social media platforms, aware citizens today have a public voice and one single mistake can prove disastrous for FBOs. Being compliant is a competitive sustainable advantage and is integral to the growth of the business. The FSSAI is adding new regulations and the industry needs to keep pace with the changing trends and respond adequately with transparent implementation by leveraging technology."

**Since most consumers receive their food from retail and food service, a significant share of the responsibility for providing safe food to the consumer rests with them.**



“ There is a need for harmonising Indian regulations with globally accepted norms of consumer safety and making available the same quality of food products to domestic consumers as that which is exported ”

**Dr. R. P. Singh**  
*Secretary General,  
Quality Council of India*



“ We are also educating young minds on the hygiene and safety aspects of food through inclusion of awareness material in textbooks ”

**Dr. N Bhaskar**  
*Advisor, Quality  
Assurance, FSSAI*



“ The FSSAI is adding new regulations and the industry needs to keep pace with the changing trends and respond adequately with transparent implementation by leveraging technology ”

**Dr. Prabodh Halde**  
*President, AFST  
Mumbai & Head,  
Technical Regulatory*



“ We ensure quality in our food products by having quality management systems in place. Any system requires hardware and software ”

**Omprakash Arora**  
*Head of Quality,  
Nestlé South Asia*



“ We have implemented supply chain management standards at our DC and supply chains and we have third party independent audits ”

**Venkatesha Prasanna**  
*Head, Quality, FCL  
(Future Group)*

**Creating a behaviour-based food safety management system or food safety culture can optimize the efficacy of food safety programmes and processes.**

**Omprakash Arora**, *Head of Quality, Nestlé South Asia*, observed: "Consumers chose a product from a supermarket or shelf based on the implicit trust they place on the producer and that trust is based on the inherent quality of the product. We ensure quality in our food products by having quality management systems in place. Any system requires hardware and software. Hardware involves the conceptualization of the product, designing and manufacturing processes, and verifying the product and processes through internal and external audits. Software of quality management system is the all pervasive quality culture that is ingrained in our employees."

**Hardware of Quality Management Systems for ensuring food safety**  
This entails having in place and complying with the following standards:

**Sourcing safety:** Food safety covers the entire supply chain, starting with farmers and suppliers. Rigorous procurement and auditing processes ensure safe, high quality raw materials are sourced and only from FSSAI licensed suppliers. Defining specifications for the materials and performing checks ensure compliance with the most stringent regulations. Defining processes ensure traceability and recall.

Pointing to the sourcing strategy employed by his company, **Venkatesha Prasanna**, *Head, Quality, FCL (Future Group)*, said, "At the sourcing level we train vendors in product quality requirements and accept only those products that meet the minimum criteria. At the manufacturing level we have all the quality control mechanism and audits in place."

## BEST PRACTICES IN FOOD SAFETY

For the Indian food industry to excel, providing good quality, innovation and safety is imperative in transforming it to a 'Global Brand'. The food chain thus needs to focus on Food Safety Risk Mitigation and build competence in organizations for effective implementation. Some of the best practices on Food Safety that were shared at the conclave are:

### Sourcing Safety

- Source safe, quality raw material and additives only from FSSAI licensed supplier
- Check raw material quality, expiry before using in production
- Define processes to ensure traceability

### Production Safety

- Ensure production site has all valid license including FSSAI
- Ensure hygiene and sanitation and pest-free environment, Ensure regular checks are conducted
- Maintain proper records of production and control limits
- Production facility are designed to meet food safety regulations

- Ensure backward integration with suppliers on standards are being met

### Storage Safety

- Manage Food contamination - Store food and non-food products separately
- Separate raw, work in progress, finished, rejected food in storage
- Properly label all designated storage area for food, packaging, waste etc.
- Ensure stocks in storage are rotated as per First Expiry First Out (FEFO)
- Ensure storage temperature and humidity is maintained

### Packaging and Labelling Safety

- Ensure packaging material is food safe
- Ensure FSSAI and legal metrology compliance for labelling on each food pack
- All mandatory information on the label must be pre-printed on the label.
- Declare all ingredients of the product formulation
- Declare weight using calibrated scale
- Ensure text is legible



“ We have different distribution centres for different products and constantly train and educate our employees for effective implementation along with regular audit appraisals ”

**Dr. Vinod Dhanuka**  
*Head R&D and QA - Reliance Retail*



“ Last mile logistical challenges remain but we are incorporating more innovations in technology to keep delivering fresh produce to our consumers ”

**Raj Kumar Singh**  
*Head - F&V Quality and Innovation, Bigbasket*

Our products have stringent product quality norms including such parameters that are not mandated by FSSAI, like the microbiological parameter. We have implemented supply chain management standards at our DC and supply chains and we have third party independent audits."

**Storage safety:** Ensure proper segregation of raw materials and prepared foods and store food and non-food products in storage. Ensure dedicated zones to prevent cross contamination in stores. To maintain the nutrition value of the food products, ensure temperature regulation.

Touching on the sourcing and storage aspects, **Dr. Vinod Dhanuka**, *Head R&D and QA - Reliance Retail*, said, "Reliance supply chain has many categories of products and for each product we have separate designs for ensuring safety and quality with regards to it perishable nature, shelf life and temperature requirements. We have different distribution centres for different products and constantly train and educate our employees for effective implementation along with regular audit appraisals."

**Raj Kumar Singh**, *Head - F&V Quality and Innovation, Bigbasket*, spoke about how his company sources only those produce that meet stringent regulations. "Freshness and safety are the index for fresh commodities like fruits and vegetables. At our Distribution Centre, we have three separate temperature zones – chilled (0-5°C), ambient (25°C) and hardy (30°C +) – for different commodities. Last mile logistical challenges remain but we are incorporating more innovations in technology to keep delivering fresh produce to our consumers."



**Production safety:** Production sites should be designed to meet the highest quality and safety standards. This includes preventing foreign bodies from entering products, enabling the management of allergens, and controlling pests and calibrating the equipments and manufacturing environment to produce safe products. Training of employees in safe food handling practices is important. There should be backward integration with suppliers to ensure standards are being met.

Emphasising on the training of employees, **Kaushik Sengupta**, *Product Manager-Food SAR, Bureau Veritas*, noted: "We need to engage with the employees who are part of the quality system process. Also, try to monitor the effectiveness of the training through CAPA programmes. Monitoring and assessment should be continuous. In the past one year, a lot of new standards have come up in GFSI, BRC, revisions in FSSAI version 4 and IFS revisions, and these need to be addressed in the assessment as well."

**Verification:** Carry out verification tests to confirm if the product is safe to consume and to guarantee the safety of the product.

Commenting on the aspect of verification, **Dr. Nilesh Amritkar**, *MD, Envirocare Food Lab*, said, "Of the 121 laboratories recognized by FSSAI,

only 20% have the capacity to conduct various tests mandated in the food safety regulations. There has to be stringent criteria that decide the recognition of laboratories. FSSAI is a regulatory body but the regulations have to be mastered by the industry, the laboratories and the consumers themselves. FBOs need to partner with the laboratories in the growth of a nation."

**Packaging and labelling safety:** Packaging has a vital role to play in ensuring that products reach consumers in a safe condition. Packaging should be food safe and should have all mandatory information – from ingredients, product formulation as well as any allergen risks – pre-printed on the label.

#### **Software of Quality Management Systems for ensuring food safety**

The most important aspect of food safety is largely behavioural in nature. Achieving food safety success often requires more than a thorough understanding of the food science and the processes involved because unsafe behaviour makes unsafe food. Creating a behaviour-based food safety management system or food safety culture can optimize the efficacy of food safety programmes and processes.

**Packaging should be food safe and should have all mandatory information – from ingredients, product formulation as well as any allergen risks – pre-printed on the label.**



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“ To bring about a quality culture we need to engage with the employees who are part of the quality system process ”

**Kaushik Sengupta**  
Product Manager-  
Food SAR,  
Bureau Veritas



“ Of the 121 laboratories recognized by FSSAI, only 20% have the capacity to conduct various tests mandated in the food safety regulations ”

**Dr. Nilesh Amritkar**  
MD, Envirocare  
Food Lab



“ Quality is a culture, food safety is a culture and a culture will only succeed when it percolates down to the execution level and the last employee has imbibed that and is involved ”

**Atul K. Joshi**  
Chief General Manager,  
Quality and Legal  
Compliances, Patanjali



“ Quality systems, training, processes and procedures are the minimum basic pillars without which we can't deliver safe quality products to our consumers ”

**Vinay Hastak**  
GM - Quality Assurance,  
Hardcastle Restaurants  
(McDonald's West &  
South India)



“ We have implemented supply chain management standards at our DC and supply chains and we have third party independent audits ”

**Shalini Chakravorty**  
Vice President - Ethics  
& Compliance - Asia,  
Walmart

**Adopting a preventive approach at all stages of the food chain requires the application of good agricultural practices, good manufacturing practices, good hygienic practices and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point system at the production stages.**

According to **Atul K. Joshi**, Chief General Manager, Quality and Legal Compliances, Patanjali, “All manufactures follow GFSI standards but what is different in our case at Patanjali, it is the work culture. It's driven by the vision of Baba Ramdev and Acharya Balkrishna, which they personally communicate to the last employee through engagement programmes. This encourages the employee engagement culture in the organization. Quality is a culture, food safety is a culture and a culture will only succeed when it percolates down to the execution level and the last employee has imbibed that and is involved.”

Focus on execution compliances: “If there is a gap between the standard requirement and what is executed at the shop floor, then there will be gap in the quality and food safety. When there is no gap it means consistent quality every day. The three pillars of execution compliance are, 'Plant, People and Process'. All our plants are GMP hygiene approved; we undertake hazard analysis and risk-based preventive controls, rigorously train our employees and are responsive to customer feedback. Building capacity and capability through education and training is an area of focus and we are already looking ahead by training them under US FDA regulations to keep pace with the evolving food safety aspects,” informed Joshi.

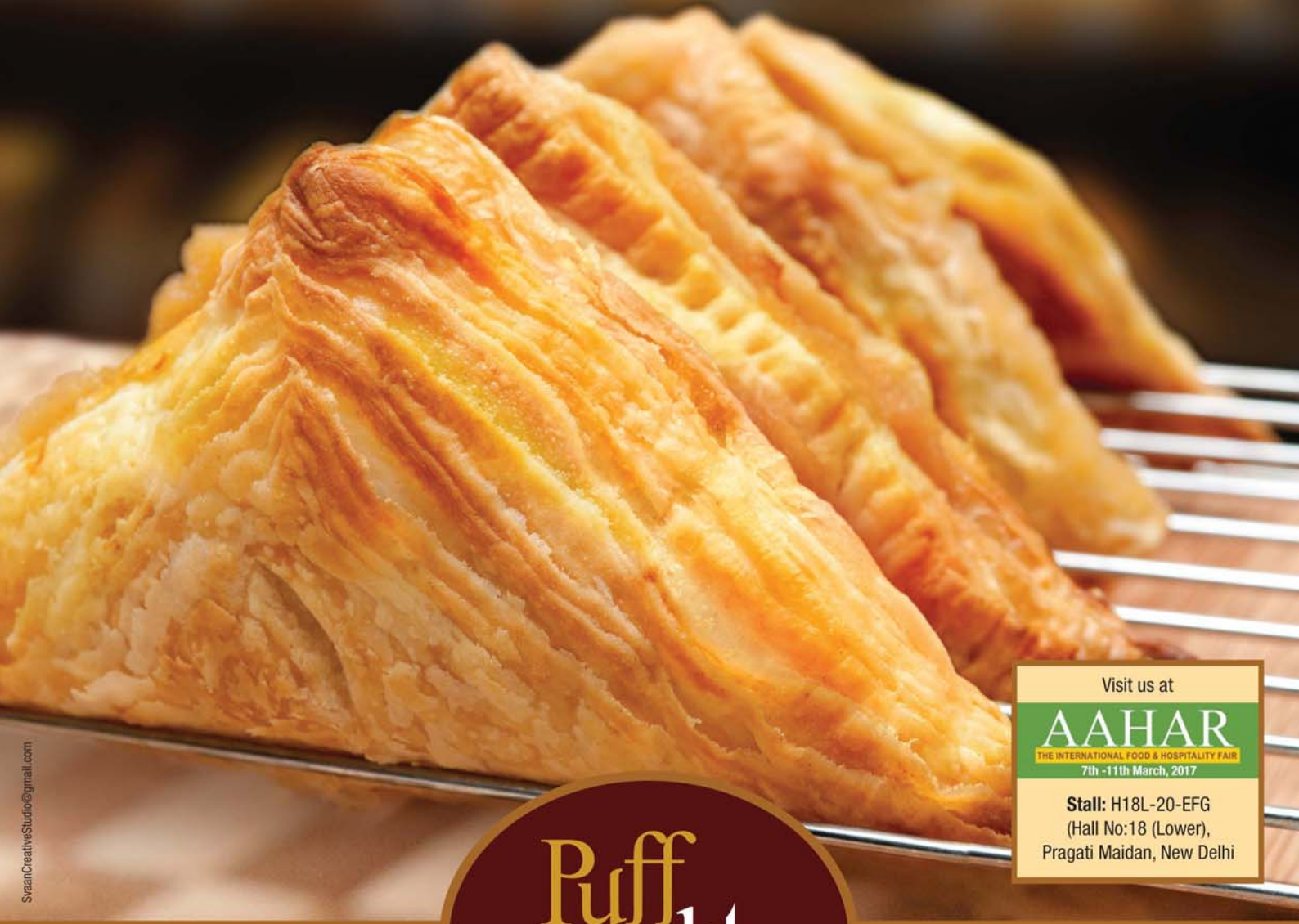
According to **Vinay Hastak**, GM - Quality Assurance, Hardcastle Restaurants (McDonald's West & South India), “Quality systems, training, processes and procedures are the minimum basic pillars without which we can't deliver safe quality

products to our consumers. At McDonald's, we primarily depend on preventive measures across the value chain by establishing priorities based on risk analysis and efficacy in risk management and use modern technology to build a failsafe mechanism to make up human failures.”

Buttressing the point made by Hastak, Shalini Chakravorty observed: “We should also appreciate the need to build the manufacturing units, quality control mechanisms and processes with foresight and thinking ahead of the time, factoring in the changes in law in future. That will give the much needed competitive edge.” She said that it is also very important to set the tone from the top in order to build a culture of quality and food safety. “That will set the right direction for the organization and build the much needed quality culture.”

The panellists concluded that an effective strategy for ensuring food safety is to adopt a preventive approach at all stages of the food chain. This can be done through the application of good practices, i.e., good agricultural practices (GAP), good manufacturing practices (GMP), good hygienic practices (GHP) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point system (HACCP) at the production stages. Taking these steps can prevent and mitigate the food risks. Rounding off the session, Chakravorty said: “Food safety objectives cannot be fully realised without the cooperation and active participation of all stakeholders: farmers, processors, retailers and regulatory authorities across the value chain.” ••

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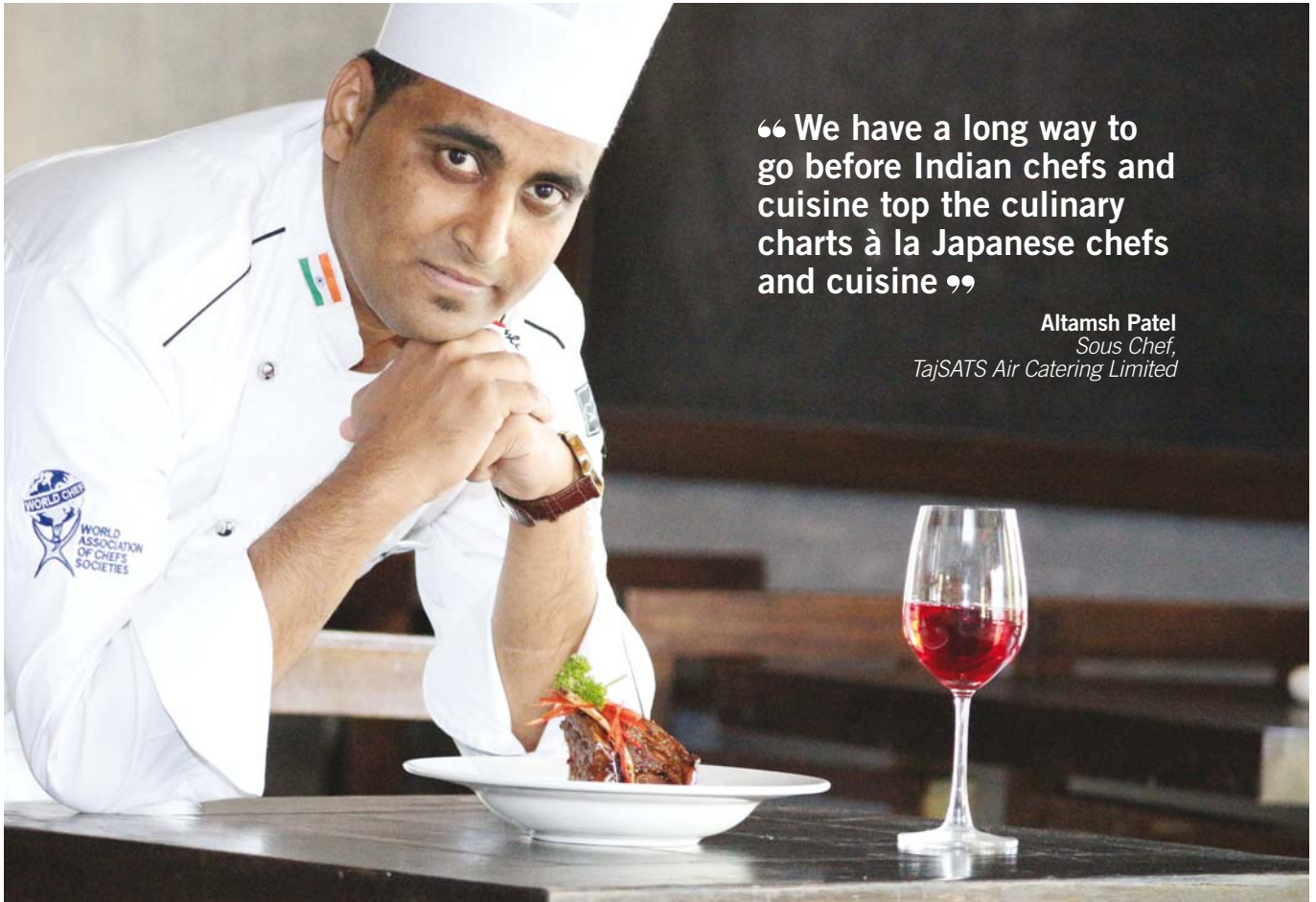
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“ We have a long way to go before Indian chefs and cuisine top the culinary charts à la Japanese chefs and cuisine ”

Altamsh Patel  
Sous Chef,  
TajSATS Air Catering Limited



**Altamsh Patel, Sous Chef, TajSATS Air Catering Limited, speaks to FoodService India about the growing influence of the Japanese and the other global culinary styles on up-and-coming Indian chefs and the way to synthesise global and regional cuisines in a way that presents exciting opportunities for chefs and consumers alike.**

## Indian chefs are designing culinary models that sustain creativity and culinary excellence

**How would you describe your culinary journey so far and what have been the turns and tides that have shaped and influenced your career?**

After completing my Hotel Management at Rizvi College of Hotel management in Mumbai, I had a dream start to my career with Taj SATS Air Catering, where I currently work as Sous Chef responsible for Japanese and Continental cuisine. During the six years that I have spent with Taj SATS, I have had the opportunity to work under the guidance of legendary chef Satish Arora and a host of expatriate chefs who visit us from time to time. This wonderful exposure has shaped my career and culinary outlook immensely.

**Which cuisines do you focus on and how have they evolved over the years?**

Japanese & Indian are the two cuisines that I hold close to my heart and they have largely shaped my culinary philosophy. Why else would you find Wasabi by Morimoto's in Taj hotels at Delhi and Mumbai?

Japanese cuisine has taught the importance of discipline for recipes, ingredients, tools and equipment and the various cooking techniques to the world. We too have started seeing the impact of this on Indian chefs in a big way. Indian chefs have started designing culinary models that sustain and eventually enhance consistency, creativity and culinary excellence.

There has also been a recent spurt in interest in Peruvian and Nordic cuisines but so far this interest has been largely in the West. But given the fact that Indians in large numbers are now travelling all over the globe

and embracing global cuisines, we expect this trend to touch Indian shores sooner than later. However, no cuisine can take away the popularity of the new found Indian cuisine, which embraces classical regional Indian and modern Indian fusion food.

**Talking of regional cuisines, how do you see their potential and which ones do you think have a great future?**

The regional cuisines of India are vast and the true magnitude of these culinary delights is yet to be truly presented on the global culinary scenario. A very interesting aspect of regional cuisines is that it is further enhanced by our rich family culture wherein recipes get passed on from generation to generation through home kitchens. So the scalability and richness of this culinary heritage is staggering.

With the advent of internet and an uptick in travel, regional cuisines are finding greater reach. Chefs realise this and have started channeling this trend into culinary models in the domestic and international market alike.

Leave apart the forerunners in regional cuisine like Gujarati, South Indian, Marwari, Punjabi, Maharashtrian and Dilli ka Khana, even the cuisine of hills from various parts of India has started making a mark with unique and vintage recipes.

**What is the one thing you believe will change the way food will be promoted in the future?**

Futuristic food trends are shaping largely in tandem with the changing face of our daily lives. Technology has come in big time with an unending array of tools and equipment supporting myriad interesting ways of cooking and pre-setting food on the platter. Healthy food has become the mainstay of any cuisine and chefs' efforts are to conjure an eclectic meal experience using global ingredients.

Home cooking too has come out of shadows and has embraced modern techniques and the spectral range of tools and ingredients, which is now easily available to all. In essence, the future lies in holding on to our timeless culinary traditions and techniques and embracing global diversity to keep churning out newer culinary experiences.

**Does India have enough good quality, trained and qualified chefs to meet the new emerging demands in food service industry?**

There is ample amount of talent which, if given proper direction, would give us excellent chefs in the coming times. However, I must confess that we still do not share enough with others which, if done, would result in the growth of all chefs, teams and cuisine at large. To me the success of a chef lies in the skills and success of each and every team member.

With the advent of internet, there has been a significant growth in the awareness levels with regard to different cuisines. However, we have a long way to go before Indian chefs and cuisine top the culinary charts à la Japanese chefs and



**Japanese & Indian are the two cuisines that I hold close to my heart and they have largely shaped my culinary philosophy. Why else would you find Wasabi by Morimoto's in Taj hotels at Delhi and Mumbai?**

cuisine. It is only in recent years that we have had Indian chefs getting recognised with Michelin stars. But now, Indian chefs are beginning to establish their prowess in all regions of the World and things can only get better.

**Can you offer us examples of some innovative F&B ideas that you have implemented recently or have plans to implement?**

While training, growth and development of the full team is of essence at all times, at the product level we keep organising various workshops that better our Oriental, Korean and Indian offerings.

The most interesting workshop at TAJ SATS Air Catering – last year – was the plating and food presentation workshop. It helped us bring in novelty and uniqueness to our plated food and it continues to give us great results.

This year too, we will continue organising various culinary workshops, which would add to our culinary skill levels and food quality. Also, this is a year of market competitiveness for us in which we need to evolve menus with higher culinary yields and guest satisfaction with lower costs.



**What are your observations about the evolution and development of fine dining, smart/casual dining and QSRs in India?**

Overall, there has been a strong quantitative and qualitative growth in all the segments. Out there, some are sustaining, some players have fizzled out, and at the same time new ones have come in



By and large, we are witnessing a boom in all the segments of food service industry and the success is driven by quality and cost, both of which are in the hands of the chef.

**What are the challenges you foresee for chefs in times to come?**

The primary challenge that chefs face is of burn-out as they pitch their passion and talent against the realities of business. Only a few make it and it takes a lot of support from the team and business operator to translate this zeal into culinary and business excellence. I have seen the best of chefs burn out as they could not plan their culinary vision in accordance with the organisation's requirements.

Chefs are now playing with the flavours, textures, tastes and presentations like never before. They are also good salesmen, they know the market trends and they are very competitive, which is healthy. It gives them food for thought to innovate.

The challenges that I foresee for chefs are adaptability to changing trends and guest needs, cost containment with consistently high quality of food, high level of food safety awareness and execution, constant innovations to keep ahead and training team mates in the face of scarcity of trained manpower.

**In a scenario of deficit of trained manpower, how do you ensure upgradation of skills, training and technology?**

Upgradation of skills, training and technology is a constant and consistent requirement in a chefs' career. But what is paramount is to arrive at the training needs of an individual and team at large, keeping in mind the culinary vision.

While there are regular training and audit programmes to validate and strengthen the culinary basics at one end, there are also specialised programs focusing on various aspects of food and cuisine from time to time. For instance, some of the recently conducted advanced training programs at TajSATS were on Singapore style of Chinese food, Korean cuisine, ancient recipes of India, culinary delights of Maharashtra, advanced plating and presentation techniques, to name



**The future lies in holding on to our timeless culinary traditions and techniques and embracing global diversity to keep churning out newer culinary experiences.**

with some of them coming in with international joint ventures too. As the economics of running culinary operations keeps zooming up, the survivors would be the ones with constant control and innovations on quality and taste, portions, visibility and consistency.

We are seeing the usage of a wide variety of global ingredients in fine dining. It is resulting in very adventurous menus – challenging five star hotel kitchens – and that is the reason we see top cuisine all around. Plating of food has also seen a boom and chefs have become designers and food stylist rolled into one.

Street food, kebabs, short eats, biryanis, bakery and pastry products have emerged as a strong offering in the QSR segment, whose visibility is growing with the success of malls and food courts. Those looking for classier food and service with quality time continue to go for fine dining. Since India is all about outing with families, casual dining too has a great potential where the families join, wine and dine and have a good time.

QSRs will grow at a very fast pace as it is a symbol of change in our society where the youth wants to grab something quickly and they do not require much service due to time constraints. So QSRs are a pocket-friendly option for them.



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**Growth – year over year – in the food service business has been very high. Restaurant hubs are mushrooming everywhere. But only the fittest will survive.**

a few. Food safety is a very important aspect of our work and we have regular training and audit programmes to keep food safety skill levels high.

**What do you do to keep ahead of the curve?**

As a chef, most of my time goes in training on and off job because this is what ensures the actual realisation of what is required from me and my team.

I am lucky to work under the guidance of legendary Star Chef Satish Arora at Taj and learn from him. I make it a point to visit different specialised cuisine restaurants to see their kitchen planning, ingredients, cooking techniques and plate presentations. The training stint at Wasabi by Morimoto and Zodiac grill at Taj Mahal Palace gave me great satisfaction and learning.

**What has been your major learning in this profession – one that you would like to pass down to aspiring chefs of the future?**

My major learning has been to establish strong fundamentals and consistently build upon them. Striving for excellence on all parameters of food, namely, taste, texture, visuals, flavour and aroma is something that pushes the boundaries of my skills as a chef.

I believe working without passion for an aspiring chef would mean like a lemon with no zing. You should see food and flavours in everything around you and truly love to cook and serve others in a way only you can.

**What new developments and trends would you like to highlight regarding your professional line of business?**

While culinary skills are the mainstay of your armoury, chefs today are expected to be tech savvy in the face of constant development in food trends and the industry at large. He should have good knowledge of all IT gadgets and social media to remain updated. Earlier, people used to buy expensive cookbooks to know more about cuisine and culinary trends but now most of it is available at your fingertips. Knowledge of financial management, and food safety and legal guidelines too have emerged as areas of core competence for chefs.

**Finally, how would you articulate the role of a modern-day chef?**

The role and definition of a chef has changed tremendously over the years. Traditionally, the chef's role was confined to the kitchen and cooking. But chefs today are well versed with all aspects of project management, planning, execution and day to day operations. They design the complete project, execute and run it as a business operator and it is no surprise that most of the consultants that you see around these days are chefs.

Today, chefs are expected to be immaculate in classical cuisine, and be creative and uniquely innovative. It is a 360 degree approach that is required from them – from cost containment to product development to team management. A modern chef is futuristic, a trendsetter and with a great knowledge of global ingredients, nutrition and food styling. ●●

**HOW THE FOOD SERVICE SCENE IN INDIA WILL PAN OUT**

With people travelling more and better exposed to different cuisines and cultures across the world, guests are very demanding these days. **Value for money has emerged as the single most distinguishing criteria for guests in selecting their dining destination.** With a stronger emphasis coming through FSSAI guidelines, consumers will benefit in terms of food safety and food traceability like never before.

Growth – year over year – in the food service business has been very high. Restaurant hubs are mushrooming everywhere. But only the fittest will survive. Guests will only come back if you offer wholesome experience with the best food, service and ambience. One needs to stand out and think out of the box.

Today, we see a maze of food concepts – a wide variety of packed cut vegetables, choice of exotic fruits and vegetables, frozen foods, retort foods, quick service restaurants serving an array of delicacies, regional cuisine food kiosks, malls with live food counters, home delivery foods, diverse fine dining, and international brands at all levels. Airline menus have become adventurous and varied, yet the food courts, lounges and food counters at airport terminals have grown phenomenally. What we are witnessing is a boom in food service industry.



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# The men, their models, and dining landmarks

by Premjit Mohapatra

## L to R:

Harmeet Bajaj  
A D Singh  
Rahul Akerkar  
Anjan Chatterjee  
Ashish Saxena

It is a rare occasion when the icons of fine dining in the country get together to talk of the culinary concepts they have introduced, and how many of them have become the defining benchmarks and touchstones for the food service industry. The panel discussion “Panache: The hallmarks of great cuisine and the icons who built them” on Day Three of India Food Forum saw a high voltage, straight-from-the gut interaction among the doyens of the foodservice industry as they shared with the audience the experiences and decisions that helped to shape their successful progression in this brutally competitive industry.



In an engaging conversation with the host **Harmeet Bajaj**, *Food connoisseur & Partner, Impresario*, acknowledged masters of the restaurant industry held forth on a range of issues and the ideas they ignited, which took on a life of their own and grew into enduring stories.

One such example of a foodservice entrepreneur who pulled himself by his bootstraps and pushed his way to success is **Rahul Akerkar**, *Chef & Restaurateur and Founder, Indigo*. With no culinary school background and experience to fall on, he took up a job even as a student to make ends meet. From overcoming a speech impediment to being promoted as a chef from a dishwasher, Akerkar is now a celebrated and much emulated restaurateur and an avid diver who has gone on to define the fine dining culture in Mumbai with his labour of love ‘Indigo’.

“When I came back to Mumbai in 1989, there wasn’t much happening on the standalone restaurant scene. I then tied up with AD Singh to set up *Just Desserts*, a standalone dessert outlet. From there I moved on to my first restaurant *Under the Over*, which was followed by *Indigo*,” said Akerkar.

**AD Singh**, *Owner, Olive Bar & Kitchen*, and the man who gave Akerkar his first major career break is known to have a Midas touch for creating landmark restaurants. Not only is he the creative spirit and the brain behind the swanky, high profile restaurant chain Olive Bar & Kitchen, Singh has also pioneered the distinct standalone restaurant culture in the country. A hugely successful restaurateur who doesn’t pretend to be a chef, he has given us brands like Monkey Bar, The Fatty Bao and SodaBottleOpenerWala. He is known to keep churning out restaurants and concepts that always push the envelope further.

“Most of my life journeys have happened because of the things I love. I had a perennial sweet tooth and that led me to my first Just Desserts, a standalone desserts concept. I am a guy of ideas, my journey has been about creating concepts that could work for a wider audience and that’s seen me do a variety of things across the country over 28 years,” said Singh.

**Anjan Chatterjee**, *Founder and Managing Director, Speciality Restaurants* (Mainland China), has established a company that runs well-known fine-dining restaurant chains ‘Mainland China’ and ‘Oh! Calcutta’. His company today runs 123 renowned restaurants that continue to churn authentic cuisines for the foodies. The company also boasts of eight award-winning cuisines to its credit. Before Chatterjee’s passion for gourmet cuisine found its expression in the restaurants he created, his first job was with Taj Hotels, which he quit to start his own advertising agency.

“I am a cook at heart and not a chef. I used to cook food for friends like CY Gopinath and Bachi Karkaria who are equally passionate about food. It was they who pitched the idea to me to market Bengali food, which wasn’t

on the food map of India. I started a hotel called 'only fish' and that's how the journey started," said Chatterjee.

**Ashish Saxena, ED & CEO, TexMex Cuisine (Chili's American Grill & Bar)**, is the development partner of Texas based Bricker International, which owns the American based casual dining restaurant chain Chili's Grill & Bar, a three year old firm. With a rich experience of 12 years across agricultural business, healthcare, FMCG, engineering, IT and pharmaceuticals, he has established a track record of consulting for leading companies across the globe.

"My journey in the food industry happened by accident. I joined a private equity fund, which owned this business and I was parachuted into this company. It's been an interesting three and half years and my journey has been about corporatizing the restaurant business and its management structure, which can take the brand to 50 restaurants in the country," he said.

**On how to create a new product and scale up**

The question drew interesting and perspicacious response from the panellists based on their

individual perspective and insights. "Conventional wisdom says that as you try to build long term value, you cannot have too many brands because then you tend to get diffused. But we felt that there is a great opportunity for some of our brands nationally. The brands that Olive Bar & Kitchen are known for are fairly casual and have been very well accepted. So we set about creating more such new brands – strong in concept and very strong in quality, which are even more fun, more approachable, and more affordable across different cuisines. I believe that there are huge opportunities in our sector across all kinds of ideas and price points. And for us, to penetrate a market with a set of brands works very well rather than have a single brand," said AD Singh.

Expressing a different perspective, Anjan Chatterjee said: "Managing a multiband portfolio is difficult. It requires managing everything – from the crockery and cutlery to the service and design, etc. We started with Mainland China, our flagship brand, and scaled it up. It was a strategic decision from the investors' perspective. With the advent of new formats, the restaurant space has changed and we are rebranding select outlets and doing



**“If you are in a chain game it's your concept that matters more but for standalone restaurants it is the cooking and food that counts more”**

**Rahul Akerkar**  
Chef & Restaurateur  
and Founder, Indigo



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**Contact us**

**Mr. Hasmukh Gajjar** (M.D.) Mobile No.: 9825023410  
**Mr. Farookh Kazi** (G.M.- Marketing) Mobile No.: 9375523410



**“ I am a guy of ideas, my journey has been about creating concepts that could work for a wider audience and that’s seen me do a variety of things across the country over 28 years ”**

**AD Singh**  
Owner, Olive Bar & Kitchen

brand refreshments and progressive cuisine within the Oriental area to keep our consumers happy.”

According to Saxena, “The space for American Mexican cuisine was vacant in India and brands like Hard Rock Cafe and TGIF had a pub like positioning in India. So there was a virgin market to tap into. The focus was to ensure that every outlet made money within three months of operations and also to make money at the company level. We started gradually and once we were profitable at the company level, we scaled up faster. We are a systems and processes company and, after strengthening our back-end, scaling up was easy.”

**On funding formats and challenges**

When you build a business and want to scale it up, it requires money. “We diluted 12% of equity and then used the resources generated to expand the chain of our restaurants across the country. We chose to go public with an IPO instead of private equity infusion, banking on the fact that the listing will help tap more liquidity in the long run and also gain people’s trust,” said Anjan Chatterjee.

According to AD Singh, “Opening a restaurant can be tough if you don’t have surplus money. There aren’t any government programmes to support young entrepreneurs who want to take the plunge. But today the scenario is changing with angel investing. And also there are people who are willing to fund you in exchange for the share of the perceived glamour and profitability of the business. Private equity funding is relatively new and available only to companies of a certain size.”

**On the role and impact of HR initiatives**

Good people are the backbone of any company and more so for a customer facing restaurant industry. “I understood that if there was no opportunity for our employees to grow, we would lose them. So we kick-started a process where the company could enter into partnerships with prized employees. About 13 of our top 15 managers have a stake in the company through ESOPs.”

According to Ashish Saxena, “Retaining quality manpower is a critical challenge. Being systems and processes driven company, we made the training available online and simplified it so that a person can hit the floor running in fifteen days. Also, we are very careful in according due importance to having the right managerial talent in place because they are the ones who impart the training.”

**On the acceptability and authenticity of cuisines**

“If you want stand out, you have to offer a different and authentic experience because the domain is filled with stereotypes and you will get swept away very soon by the competition. Finding a niche and perfecting what you have to offer definitely helps any restaurant’s competitive advantage,” said AD Singh.

Rahul Akerkar said that it’s very important for restaurants to have a cuisine and food identity. “If you are in a chain game it’s your concept that matters more but for standalone restaurants it is



**“ I am a cook at heart and not a chef. I used to cook food for friends who are equally passionate about food and they who pitched the idea to me to market Bengali food ”**

**Anjan Chatterjee**  
Founder and MD,  
Speciality Restaurants  
(Mainland China)



**“ My journey has been about corporatizing our restaurant business and its management structure, which can take the brand to 50 restaurants in the country ”**

**Ashish Saxena**  
ED & CEO, TexMex Cuisine (Chilli’s American Grill & Bar)



**“ We are in the business of storytelling. It is a combination of various things that goes with the integrity of the food and that is what creates a brand ”**

**Harmeet Bajaj**  
Food connoisseur & Partner, Impresario

the cooking and food that counts more. If you play safe it might get you good numbers in the short run but you will have no identity. More important than authenticity, it’s important that food has integrity.”

Harmeet Bajaj opined that authenticity can also be redefined. “We are in the business of storytelling. Every restaurant is telling you a story, the story of their food, their environment, the interiors, and the attitude. It is a combination of various things that goes with the integrity of the food and that is what creates a brand.”

**On trends in the restaurant industry**

The panellists agreed that the food market in India has changed a lot in the past couple of years and that there has been an explosion of interest in the sector. International diners are very curious about the evolution of Indian food. At the right price points, there is still a huge growth opportunity, what with the emergence of a young buying audience with money but not that much exposure. As this audience matures and gains exposure, they are going to start demanding an honest dining experience, regardless of the cuisine or market segment or type of food.

Rahul Akerkar observed: “Indian brands are now ready to go overseas. One Indian brand that is making an impact globally today is the Indian Accent. The diner overseas is very mature and looking for an authentic experience. It is only genuine products and not some watered down construct that will appeal to their palate. The Indian restaurants that are doing well overseas are those that are staying true to the cuisine.” ●●



News Release

# MANITOWOC FOODSERVICE CHANGING NAME TO WELBILT

*Rebranding as Welbilt:  
Bringing Innovation to the Table*



NEW PORT RICHEY, FL. -- Manitowoc Foodservice, Inc. (NYSE: MFS), a leading global supplier of commercial foodservice equipment, announced today that it is rebranding the company, its logo and its brand identity to Welbilt, Inc. The ticker symbol will change to "NYSE:WBT" on March 6, 2017. The new name and brand represent a long-standing commitment to put customers' needs first. The change is part of the company's strategic repositioning after it spun off from its former parent company, The Manitowoc Company, in March 2016.

"We are excited to announce the changing of our name to Welbilt, Inc., which further strengthens our corporate identity as a stand-alone company," said Hubertus M. Muehlhaeuser, President and CEO of Manitowoc Foodservice, "Welbilt reflects our promise and commitment to bringing innovation to the table. Rooted in the Hirsch brothers' innovative stove in 1929, Welbilt developed to become the first company in the industry pursuing a complete systems approach. The name Welbilt uniquely connects our past with our vision of the future. Our primary objective is to continue offering a complete solution for the entire kitchen with high-quality products supported by excellent service that help our customers' kitchens reach their full potential. As we continue to innovate and grow, we will always remain grounded in our long history."

Josef Matosevic, Chief Operating Officer commented: "Welbilt is synonymous with great quality and reliability in everything we do. We have significantly improved our operations to live up to that promise. Welbilt is also pragmatically innovative and all our products and solutions are designed with the entire kitchen in mind. Finally we are intelligently connected and create seamless solutions in the kitchen to get the highest operator benefits and help our customers achieve the return on their investment faster."

Andreas G. Weishaar, SVP, Strategy, Marketing and Human Resources said, "The corporate rebranding builds on the accomplishments of our dedicated team over the past year. Today, we are more customer-centric and more agile. To meet our future growth objectives, we will focus on further developing our 12 strong global brands under our new corporate name. In short, we are ready to live up to our new name, Welbilt."

Welbilt has one of the broadest portfolios of both hot and cold foodservice equipment in the industry, from ovens, fryers,

steamers, grills, ranges and induction cooktops to beverage dispensing, blending, refrigeration and ice-making equipment. The company has a global manufacturing footprint and award-winning brands that serve the world's largest quick service, fast casual and fine dining restaurants. In 2016, the company released 23 product innovations. Among others, the company received two National Restaurant Association Kitchen Innovation Awards and a variety of customer appreciation awards. The company has also been an ENERGY STAR® Partner of the Year since 2009 and has received seven years of award winning excellence.

Upon the effectiveness of the name change on March 6, 2017, Welbilt, Inc. (NYSE:WBT) shares will trade using the CUSIP number 949090 10 4.

#### **About Manitowoc Foodservice, Inc./Welbilt, Inc.**

Manitowoc Foodservice, Inc./Welbilt, Inc. provides the world's top chefs and premier chain operators or growing independents with industry-leading equipment and solutions. Our innovative products and solutions are powered by our deep knowledge, operator insights, and culinary expertise. We offer fully-integrated kitchen systems and our products are backed by KitchenCare® – our aftermarket, repair, and parts service. Headquartered in the Tampa Bay area, Florida, and operating 18 manufacturing facilities throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia, the company sells through a global network of over 3,000 distributors and dealers in over 100 countries. The company has approximately 5,500 employees and generated sales of \$1.57 billion in 2015. Its portfolio of award-winning brands includes Cleveland™, Convothem®, Delfield®, fitkitchenSM, Frymaster®, Garland®, Kolpak®, Lincoln™, Manitowoc® Ice, Merco®, Merrychef® and Multiplex®. For more information, visit [www.welbilt.com](http://www.welbilt.com).

#### **Media Contact**

Meridith Bridge / Rebecca Fabian at  
Instinctif Partners  
[Welbilt@instinctif.com](mailto:Welbilt@instinctif.com)





American diner Bulgarian style. With 21 restaurants, 'Happy Bar & Grill' is the strongest local catering chain and brand in the Balkans. 'Happy' says it all, standing for joie de vivre and humour, but especially for love of good food. Founded in postsocialist Bulgaria in 1994 by jewellery retailer Orlin Popov, then in his mid-twenties, the American diner-style concept has enjoyed a nationwide triumph, beating the major international chains. Alongside Bulgarian cuisine with a contemporary interpretation, since 2009 Happy has been running an awareness campaign for sushi and is a pioneer in delivery services, for which it covers the market. [www.happy.bg](http://www.happy.bg)

Because  
I'm  
Happy!

**B**ulgaria, covering 110,000 sq km, is about a third the size of Germany. With its 7.3 m inhabitants, it is a country of attractive contrasts – old next to new, poor next to rich – they do it in such a unique and varied way. A charming mixture of East and West. The political and cultural centre of Bulgaria is Sofia. At first glance this city of 1.2 m exudes Eastern Block romanticism – crumbling prefabricated concrete buildings, socialist memorials and poverty are reminiscent of Cuba or Berlin after the end of the Wall. At the next moment you see modern buildings, expensive fashion boutiques, splendid museums, or street art. Like many Eastern European countries, Bulgaria must struggle with high unemployment, a lack of sales markets and a considerable black economy.

#### In happy mode

In this context the name 'Happy' seems a simply perfect choice! "Our mission is to bring joy and a smile to the hectic lifestyle of our customers, offering them delicious and healthy meals, prepared and served with care, quick and quality service in a casual and pleasant atmosphere," is how founder Orlin Popov summarises his concept – for him the ultimate formula for success in the restaurant business. The message goes down well with the guests and is easily comprehensible. As soon as you go into a Happy restaurant, the first thing that strikes you are the young, attractive, mainly female waiting staff in their short miniskirts. The unique and casual interior creates a cosy atmosphere and good mood with many amusing pictures of today and of recent times. Shining red is the dominant colour, the corporate colour of the company. Flat-screens hang everywhere, transmitting Happy's own TV channel, and music reverberates from the loudspeakers. From the welcome when you arrive, to the order process, to the final goodbye, the guest finds beaming, service-oriented staff. All seem to be in 'happy mode' – which rubs off on the guests. No surprise, then, that 'Happy' has been chosen as the most popular restaurant brand in Bulgaria for the 7th time in a row.

#### A success story

Orlin Popov founded the first Happy restaurant on Christmas Eve 1994 on the Black Sea Coast in Varna. At that time it was still called the Happy Seaman's Bar. The second followed shortly afterwards, in July 1995, and was destined to form the cornerstone for one of the largest and most strongly growing system-catering chains in Bulgaria, now





## HAPPY IN SHORT

**1994:** Company founded

**2000:** 11 restaurants

**2009:** Sushi introduced to the menu

**2010:** Start of delivery service, International Hotel & Restaurant Association's Award

**2014:** 20th anniversary

**2015:** 22 Happy Bar & Grill restaurants

**2016:** Franchise launch planned

**Employees:** 2,500

**Brands:** Besides the Happy brand, the company has developed several other brands: Capitan Cook, SASA, Candy and Happy Sushi

**Locations:** Central locations in cities, on motorways and main roads

**Sales:** Estimated at €35-40 m (converted)

**Cost structure:** 33% food cost, 20% staff

**F&B mix:** 74% food (including 12% sushi), 26% beverages

**Food concept:** High quality, healthy and low calories for affordable price. Use of superfood, such as quinoa (7t a month), spirulina, maca and chia

**Busy times:** 12.30 midday - 3.00 pm and 7.30 pm - 10.00 pm

**Salaries:** Sales-dependent

**Average salary of a cook:** About €700-800 a month (converted)

**Minimum wage a month in Bulgaria:** €160

**Own communications channels:** TV, radio and news magazine

**Happy standards for surroundings, food, staff satisfaction, training, hygiene and safety**

with some 2,500 employees. Almost all of them are full-time staff. Today there are already 22 Happy Bar & Grill restaurants in Bulgaria – 121 on high-street sites, 5 in neighbourhood locations, 3 on the motorway, and another 2 in shopping centres. There is no home-grown competition. The local concepts, Victorian Pizza and Spaghetti Kitchen, have only 4-5 outlets in Bulgaria. Burger King, McDonald's and Starbucks are pushing appreciably into the market.

### Cool Bulgarian cuisine

Happy cuisine, in its inspiration, is local and Mediterranean, featuring many traditional dishes with a new and contemporary interpretation. What is initially surprising for Western Europeans is the wide-ranging menu, which is completely illustrated. Every dish is shown with a photograph, and all food really looks exactly as it does on the

menu. A word to the wise: try the salads, which cost between €6 and 7. Try, for example spinach with the new superfood additive quinoa (at present they use about 7t a month!), Caesar salad with calamari or shopska, the best-seller among the salads, with tomatoes, cucumbers, cheese and onions. Fried food in all varieties and every possible kind of meat and sausages are likewise very popular among the Bulgarians.

At the company's own food-supply factory in Varna, in-house called the 'prep kitchen', the chain's nucleus and flagship, raw meat is prepared, chopped and portioned centrally, and distributed nationwide by the company's own fleet. In addition to the main menu there is a seasonal menu, depending on the time of year. Featuring strawberries and spinach in spring, pumpkin and spinach in autumn. "The Bulgarians are mad about spinach," says regional manager Kaloyan Blagoev.





Rudi Kull



Bane Knezevic

## Two experts on Bulgaria on the country's cuisine as well as the Balkan state's restaurant business



Rudi Kull is one of Munich's leading hospitality entrepreneurs. As his wife is Bulgarian, he's been visiting the country regularly since 2001:

"Fantastic agricultural commodities are the foundation of Bulgaria's cuisine. The country's climatic conditions are especially beneficial to the cultivation of fruit and vegetables. Until the early 90s, Bulgaria was considered the garden of the Eastern bloc (key export area).

The taste of domestically produced tomatoes and cucumbers, watermelons and peaches is simply outstanding. This is also reflected in the food culture. Every meal in Bulgaria begins with a choice of salads accompanied by a drink of Raki. Afterwards, the main dish is ordered.

People love to go out. Of course, dining in a restaurant is also a status symbol. Your average consumer is a great to-go-customer, especially when it comes to breakfast and coffee. By the way: in Bulgaria, the two Mediterranean food classics, pizza and pasta, have only become truly relevant during the past ten years.

By the means of systemization and branding, the restaurant chain Happy has brought the country's domestic cuisine into the present. The company can take the credit for modernizing it without losing sight of its roots. Happy offers national dishes at top level and at affordable prices.

In comparison, Germany, for example, has not a single restaurant chain, which mirrors the national food culture like Happy does. It is a benchmark company on several dimensions at once. Not only the food offer, but also the restaurant system with its very efficient processes and state-of-the-art front cooking equipment is exemplary.

The chain's smart marketing strategy – from classic to digital media as well as at the point of sale is also worthy of mention.

One of the latest developments, namely the inclusion of sushi on the menu in order to broaden the brand's profile equally deserves the industry's attention. From my point of view, it's the next big opportunity." [www.kull-kg.de](http://www.kull-kg.de)

Bane Knezevic was Managing Director of McDonald's Bulgaria from 1995 to 1998. During that period, he grew the world brand from one to 15 stores there. Today, Knezevic is McDonald's development-licensee for Slovenia.

"I first noticed the Happy brand in the city of Varna in 1996. During those very tough years of economic transition, the concept was a true exception on several levels: besides top design and fast service the food quality was also very good. In the second half of the 90s, the restaurants had already arrived at a fast-casual format with table service and local food served on plates. I didn't see them as competitors since their concept was very different from that of McDonald's. From the very beginning, Happy seemed to me like a small but very well organized and systemized restaurant chain that was bound for future success. And so it happened.

In general, Bulgaria has a very rich and colourful food and wine culture. You can immediately feel the cross-cultural influences of Greek, Turkish, Middle Eastern and European cuisine. The warm climate has a very positive effect on the produce: vegetables and fruit are especially rich in flavour. That's what gives Bulgarian cuisine its distinctive taste.

But to really get a feel for what Bulgaria's farmers have to offer, you need to visit the country's green markets. One of the best is in Sofia: Jenskia Pazar. It's a very crowded and lively market where people trade, bargain and negotiate.

Inexpensive agricultural products and short food distribution routes allow for very affordable food and wine prices in the restaurants – compared to other Central European markets.

From my point of view, the restaurant business has significantly improved and numerous new restaurants have opened during the past five years. Among them are very interesting cross-cultural concepts that mix Italian, French, Asian and Spanish cuisine with existing Bulgarian, Georgian, Russian and Armenian culinary traditions."

[www.mcdonalds.si](http://www.mcdonalds.si)



The demand for vegetables is largely covered by supplies from the home country, or they are imported from Spain. The drinks selection is wide, offering many local spirits, beer [e.g. Kamenitza 0.5l for c2.99] and cocktails, as well as fruit juices and the usual speciality coffees.

#### Pacemaker for sushi

In 2009 the fast-casual chain did the culinary splits, extending its range of food to include a sushi menu. "The Bulgarians are very receptive to Japanese cuisine. Who, if not ourselves, with our strong brand umbrella, could have prepared the ground for sushi in Bulgaria," says marketing manager Svetlomira Yankova. To learn the high art of preparation, they engaged a Japanese sushi master from London, who spent some weeks at the flagship restaurant in the Paradise Mall, training a team of chefs, who in turn passed on their knowledge to the Happy restaurants. Today sushi is on offer in all Happy restaurants, and it now accounts for some 12% of overall sales.

The Happy flagship store in the Paradise Mall in the south of Sofia provides the benchmark for all the other restaurants. Here, too, all new dishes are tried out for the chain as a whole, cooks are trained, and standards set. On 1,600 sq m, with seating for 770 (of which 400 is outside), 127 full-time staff work in two shifts seven days a week to provide smooth service and ensure the guests stay in 'happy mode.' With around 1,350 guests a day, it is one of the highest-earning Happy restaurants in the country. Large glass cases at the entrance, with lush displays of meat, fish and vegetables, demonstrate freshness and product skills. At the Paradise Happy they are particularly proud of

their BBQ range, which is prepared on a high-tech Spanish stove. "That's where we are state-of-the-art," says regional manager Kaloyan Bageov.

#### Technically far ahead!

Guests make contact with the service staff by pressing a button on the table. The signal is transmitted to the bracelet worn by the waiter or waitress, who then appears promptly at the table to take the order. "Nobody should wait more than 5 minutes till they can give an order", says Blageov. The starters are served within ten minutes, the main courses within seventeen. Drinks take 2-5 minutes, sushi 7 minutes. The aim at Happy is to get the main courses in less than 15 minutes. "For us, technology has the primary purpose of making service faster, so as to serve more customers." Guests generally spend between 20 minutes and an hour in the restaurant. But in another area, too, Happy is way ahead when it comes to technology. It has its own radio and TV station, on which the company plays a programme tailored to the viewers, while generating additional advertising income. The intranet is mainly used for e-learning, to teach the service standards and to improve them. A Happy app enables guests to order simply from home. Delivery is a major consideration for the fast-casual concept. They identified this niche in 2010 and were one of the first in the country to take it up, with their own logistics, and with resounding success. 50% of incoming delivery orders are generated via the app and via the website, 50% by telephone. Now delivery business accounts for more than 20% of sales, and the trend is upwards. ●●

#### GASTRONOMY CHAINS\*

McDonald's Restaurants	37
McDonald's McCafés	9
McDonald's McCafés	9
KFC	29
Happy Bar & Grill	22
Burger King	11
Starbucks	5

\*in Bulgaria



Article source:  
FS Europe & Middle East 2/16



# “Ayurvedic restaurants and menus will trend soon”

Chef Bhairav Singh is a product not of some hoity-toity institute of hotel management. His early learnings in the culinary art came from the school of hard knocks. At the age of 14, he left his hometown, Nathdwara, in Mewar region of Rajasthan, in search of a job. He landed up in Nagpur where he took up the job of a Utility team member in a restaurant there. His hard-scrabble odyssey came to fortuitous bend two years later when as a Kitchen helper at another restaurant he found his mentor in Ustad Narayan Singh Dewra under whose tutelage he discovered his metier. With a devotional fervour that would make the sternest master proud, Singh not only built up a formidable knowledge of traditional Indian recipes but also a comprehensive understanding of herbs and spices that were an essential part of the traditional Indian cuisine.

More than twenty years after his serendipitous journey began as a cook, Singh has trod a path littered with success and many capstones. “The proudest moment for me came when I was promoted from Sous Chef to Master Indian Chef at the InterContinental Marine Drive-Mumbai. Never in my dreams had I imagined that a farmer’s son could come such a long way in this industry,” he said to FoodService India during the course of an interview in which the accomplished cuisine talks of his influences and motivations and his unremitting efforts to popularise Indian cuisine high on Ayurvedic ingredients.



Chef Bhairav Singh





**As a chef, what is the one attribute that you hold as most important for the practitioners of the art of cooking?**

Simplicity with creativity and maintaining the authenticity of ingredients. That's an attribute difficult to master but the key to success in this profession.

**What do you consider as your favourite cuisine and what do you find the most fascinating thing about it?**

Indian cuisine is my favourite. It has evolved over the ages and gone through various stages and states of transformation. But one of the most interesting facet of Indian cuisine is its strong connection and association with many speciality herbs and spices that are healthy and contain naturally rich and healing properties. It is something that holds immense fascination for me as a chef, and I believe it is my responsibility to explore and work on this aspect of Indian cuisine.

**So what are you doing about this strong connection of Indian cuisine with medicinal herbs and spices?**

Over the years, through my work as a chef and by way of other activities as well, I have been spreading the awareness about traditional food and making sure to dig and find out many lost recipes so that I can share their health benefits with the people at large.

In my culinary approach, I am forever trying to merge Indian food with Ayurveda as a way to create a healthy magic.

**How did you come to develop this interest in herbs and spices?**

I grew up in Rajasthan assisting my grandfather who was the village's most trusted medicine man (Vaid ji). This way I started my Ayurveda trail in childhood. When I used to travel the places in search of work, I used to observe small time vendors selling various types of Indian herbs and spices as per the region. I used to always get attracted to it and often tried to gather the information of their properties and how they can be used in making different Indian dishes.

It is a habit that has stayed with me. I still travel places like Patakot in order to explore different herbs and spices, which we have never heard of.

**Give us a few examples of the use of herbs and spices with healing properties in Indian food and dishes?**

There are many such examples. A few such are:

- Using haldi in our daily preparation, which helps cure cough and for glowing skin.
- Turmeric and lemon grass tea (with fresh lemon grass leaves, fresh turmeric) provides you instant energy and by adding little ginger and 2 black pepper can cure cough and cold; also detoxifies the body, which gives us healthy skin.
- Haldi latte (dry turmeric powder and cow milk) with desi cow milk strengthens immune power.

Saffron, known as the golden spice of India for its expensive and exotic richness, is used on auspicious occasions and has the ability to improve digestion and appetite.

- Kesariya drink (with fennel, candy sugar) is basically used in the summer season. Saffron and fennel seeds is the best combination ever to balance the body temperature and gives us tremendous health benefits.

Cinnamon is a spice with amazing health benefits and used in traditional medicine to control blood glucose levels and keeps diabetes under control. Cinnamon is known as dalchini.

- Cinnamon amla candy (Amla, cinnamon, honey) is good for overall health.

Cloves are known for their uniquely warm, sweet and aromatic taste and for their medicinal properties for centuries. Clove has lots of healing properties and is used for treating an upset stomach.

- loung anar ki chaat (freshly ground clove powder, fresh pomegranate, honey and Himalayan salt) can be consumed as a salad with any of your meals; it helps to cure vomiting, upset stomach, etc.

**I have been spreading the awareness about traditional food and making sure to dig and find out many lost recipes so that I can share their health benefits with the people at large.**



**I believe what the ancient sciences tell us that there is no better cure than food for a malady. As a chef, I dish out unbelievable combinations inspired by Ayurveda.**

**Tell us about how you have been able to use and integrate your love for Ayurveda and Naturopathy into your role as a chef?**

I believe what the ancient sciences tell us that there is no better cure than food for a malady. As a chef, I dish out unbelievable combinations inspired by Ayurveda.

A lot of people and especially celebrities often ask me about how to maintain the weight, treat cold and cough or most commonly how to get glowing skins. Many of these people happen to suffer from kidney stone, heart diseases, etc.

I have of my own set of special herbs preparations. For example, I make my own chawanprash – dimaag ki khuraak – which helps improve brain power. My Makai kesar ka shorba helps push out impurities from the body and purifies the blood. And it's also beneficial for those suffering from kidney stones. My other recipes include Babool ka gond aur bajre ki khichdi. While bajra helps strengthen muscles, babool ka gond keeps sperm healthy. This khichdi also aids women during menstrual cramps.

**Apart from herbal concoctions, which other innovative F&B ideas have you implemented of late?**

I love old school recipes. They offer many interesting ideas that I have used in my dishes for showcasing at a number of food festivals and platforms such as Vedic Food, Kamasutra Food festival, Clay Kraft Food Festival, The Lost Recipes, Winter Fare Food Festival, to name a few. On these occasions, I use ancient ayurvedic herbs and spices in my food preparations and serve these in their traditional ways.

**Who are the chefs you admire the most and for what reasons?**

I admire chef Narayan Singh Devra (My Ustad ji) for his deep knowledge of traditional Indian cooking and his application of authentic cooking techniques too. Chef Hector Pliego is one of the chefs I really admire for his mastery of food presentation skill.



**Which are your most inspirational Indian dishes?**

My most inspirational Indian dishes are Dora kebab, Laal Mass, and Kesariya.

**Do you see a commercial potential for marketing dishes and cuisines with marked "ayurvedic" or "natural healing" properties? Why is it so hard to find restaurants or chains dedicated to this kind of food?**

Ha ha, I am waiting for an opportunity to start such a food restaurant chain of my own. I am sure one day this trend will catch on and 'Ayurvedic' will find mention on restaurant menus. As the awareness of eating healthy spreads and gains momentum, increasing numbers of people will start going for food with healing and medicinal value.

**How do you see the potential of Indian regional cuisines and which ones do you think have a great future?**

Indian regional cuisines have an identity of their own. Every different region has its own special food, grown in particular type of soil, water, weather, and with a taste and flavour that is distinctive of the respective regions.

Cuisines from the north and south of India are very well known and famous, and we can get them in restaurants all over the country and even outside India. But I would like to promote food from the east and west India. I feel Indian food from the eastern and western regions will be the next big trend in Indian cuisine and they will have a great future. Cuisines from these parts will offer a new taste and will be explored by increasing numbers of food lovers.

**Which will be the culinary trends to watch out for?**

I think we will have more fusion food. There will be a greater merging of Italian with Indian and European with Indian flavours. The trend has already started. Going ahead, it won't be surprise if the practice of fusion extends to the merging of Ayurveda with Italian or Middle East or other cuisines. ♦♦





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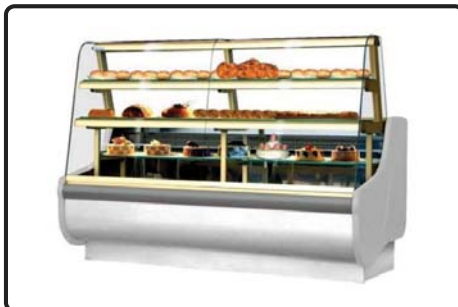
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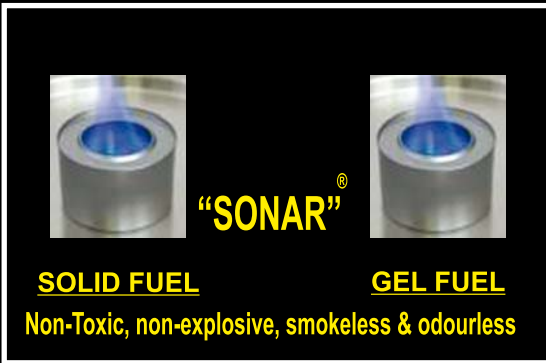
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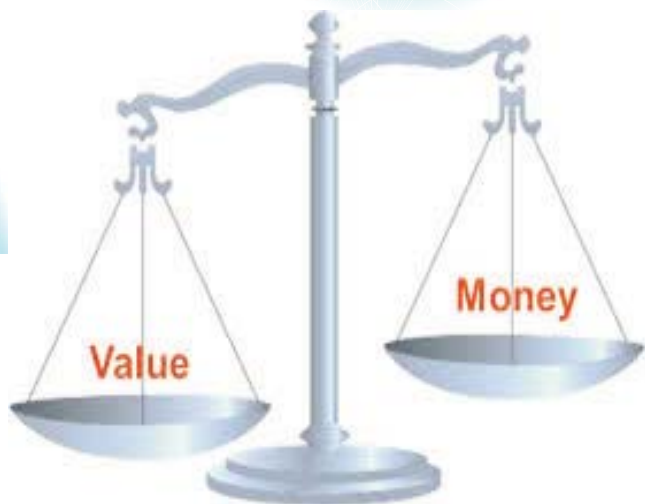
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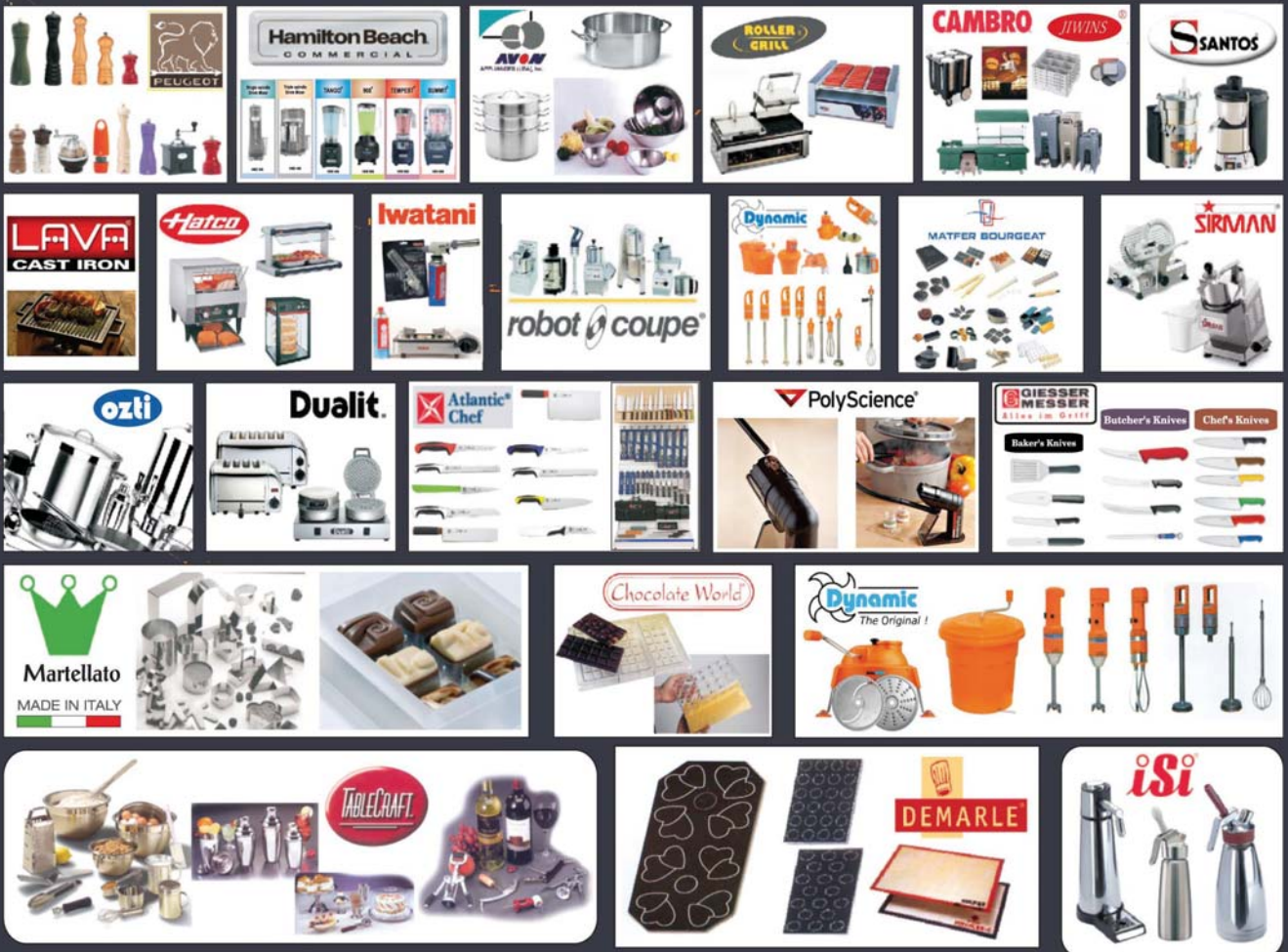
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# Mixing furniture and food into a bumper retailing proposition



Henrik Österström

**Henrik Österström, Country Food Head, IKEA India, spoke at the India Food Forum, on Food being a key component of the Swedish furniture maker's retailing strategy and the reason why it also operates restaurants serving great food in nearly every location that it is present in. "Food is a big part of the IKEA brand and the idea. Shoppers aren't happy when they have an empty stomach. So the food business is very important because it's a driver to our stores. It's about the whole experiences," said Österström. An edited version of his address at the Forum.**

by Ritusmita Biswas



IKEA aims to create a better everyday life for the people. It is with this vision that we created our home furnishing business idea, which is to offer a wide range of well designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them. But then you ask yourself why I want to talk about food, and why are we talking about food at all? The reason for our association with food goes back quite some time. As far back as in 1959, when we opened the first store in a small village in south Sweden, our founder Ingvar Kamprad had said: "It is difficult to do business with hungry customers." His observation is valid even today when we have huge showrooms in various markets across the world. Back at that time, our founder realized that people used to leave the store after shopping for some time. They did not come back because they went out to have something to eat. So the idea was born that we need to have our own restaurant to keep the people in the store and to give them something nice to eat.

Now, let me talk a little bit about IKEA food. It represents 5-6% of IKEA business totally. We have 389 restaurants all over the world and we sell our food to approximately 650 million customers every year. So, in that sense, we are quite big. But we do this with one purpose – it is to attract people to the store and it is part of our retailing concept, of course.

In India, our store and restaurant will be launched in Hyderabad where we will become operational this year itself and then open the next store in Mumbai. We have an expansion plan for about 25 stores all over India by 2030.

Coming back to why is it mandatory for IKEA to have a restaurant, I have answered it partly, which is that it is part of our core concept. Our restaurants help attract visitors to our stores. Another reason is that the restaurants strengthen the Swedish profile of IKEA stores. A part of our range is to strengthen the Swedishness of IKEA and we do it with our food. This also helps us to be part of a family and divide the profit evenly. Then of course, we ought to have something for our visitors who come to our store. Many of us love to have local food, so in every store we serve both the local and the global cuisine. We also aim to support low price of food and our food comes at the lowest price possible.

Then there are other reasons like building trust for the brand among customers, co-workers and suppliers. We would like all our visitors to have a great food experience, because that helps to build trust in the brand, overall. Our plan for India will be the similar to what we have all over the world, and that is to have two different kinds of places for experiencing our food. The format that we stick to is to have a big restaurant and a café as well. Having this kind of a format fulfills two purposes – you can go for a quick bite at the café when you are leaving the store and also get some local food and Swedish specialty at the restaurant. All of the products at our restaurants are organic and certified too.

Talking of our food range, it will have a Swedish feel but also an Indian appeal. It will be a well-blended fusion mix. For example, we will sell biryani and dal in Hyderabad, but we will also have Swedish specialty. High quality with affordable price is what IKEA food is all about and that will be the case in India as well.

As far as our food suppliers are concerned, we not only look for the quality and organic food, but we also keep the environment and social responsibility in mind. We look out for these attributes in our suppliers as well. Animal welfare, carbon footprint and the labeling of packaged food are important concerns that we will be looking at. ••



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# A trusted name in ice-cream making equipment

**Hasmukh Gajjar, Managing Director, VCS India Pvt. Ltd – a leading manufacturer and exporter of world-class equipment for making soft ice-cream, ripple soft ice-cream, thick milk shake, gelato (Italian ice-cream), frozen yogurt, slush and sorbet – speaks to FoodService India about his company has emerged a leader in the segment by bringing out quality products incorporating the latest concepts in ice cream manufacturing.**



**“ Our top sellers are softy ice-cream machines, those for making thick milk shakes, small ice-cream manufacturing, and natural/premium/gelato making equipment. ”**

**Hasmukh Gajjar**  
MD, VCS India Pvt. Ltd.



#### **Tell us about your company and its journey over the years.**

In the year 2001, VCS India started production of ice-cream making equipment at our factory in Ahmedabad. Over the years, we have gained recognition for our line of machines in the local and global market. Today, we have a state-of-the-art factory with international standards and by dint of our right business attitude, right quality and right pricing, the company grown multifold. Apart from winning the local market, Yes VCS INDIA is a name to reckon with in the International market also. The company exports its products to countries like Kuwait, Middle Eastern & African countries, Sri Lanka and we have distributors in Australia, Israel, Germany and Russia.

#### **Which are your major products?**

Our VCS India brand is known for its world class equipment for making soft ice-cream, ripple soft ice-cream, thick milk shake, gelato (Italian Ice cream), frozen yogurt, slush and sorbet. We also make ice-cream mix making machines, small continuous ice-cream freezer, and are known for the latest concept in ice cream manufacturing.

#### **Which are your top-selling products?**

Our top sellers are softy ice-cream machines, those for making thick milk shakes, small ice-cream manufacturing, and natural/premium/gelato making equipment. We make user friendly equipment that offer a complete solution from the selection of machine to the training, raw material supplies, etc.

#### **Which are the major markets for your products? Who are your top buyers?**

Our markets and buyers are ice-cream companies, leading hotels and restaurants, ice-cream parlours and those who want to establish a business with minimum investment and fast returns. Some of the major buyers of our products are the ITC Group of hotels (Bangalore, Noida, etc.), Havmor Ice Cream (Ahmedabad), Dairy Don (Surat & Mumbai), Haldiram Group (Delhi), Giani Ice Cream (Delhi), Amravathi Group of Hotels (Chennai), Saravana Group (Chennai), Sangeetha Bhavan (Chennai), Murugan Idly (Chennai and Singapore), Cheers (Ahmedabad), Yoyo Group (Bangalore), and many more.

#### **What would be the size of the ice-cream machinery market in India and how do you view its growth?**

The approximate size of the ice-cream machinery market is approximately Rs.50 crore. Growth of the market is approximately 10% to 15% per annum.

#### **What all you offer by way of after-sales support, warranty, repair service, etc?**

We provide the entire concept to our client: selection of machines, training for how to operate the machine, recipes and formulae for making ice cream and thick shake, procurement of raw material, prompt after-sales support, and other services as well.

#### **What are your future plans for expansion?**

We are planning to launch certain concepts/equipment in the near future, which no one has introduced as yet. ●●



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# No swinging for the fences

by Charu Lamba

**L to R:**  
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Mohit Kampani  
Jamshed Daboo  
Krish Iyer  
Arvind Varchaswi  
Ameeta Virk  
Henrick Österström  
Devendra Chawla



**Foodtech and delivery start-up Swiggy is consolidating its market position and aiming to turn profitable in all the seven cities it operates currently.**



**“ We have been able to survive as we conducted business in a more sustainable manner. We didn't give discounts and this is one reason why we have been capitalised well. ”**

**Nandan Reddy**  
Co-founder, Swiggy

**D**espite starting with a bang, Indian food tech startups – TinyOwl, Runnr, Zomato, Foodpanda, Dazo, Spoonjoy - have been feeling the heat since 2015. Many of them have either shut down or scaled down operations.

Though, initially touted to be worth US \$50 billion, food tech startups cumulatively saw investments of a whopping US \$74 million in the first half of 2015 alone. However, bleakness set in toward the latter half of 2015 with funding dipping to US \$19 million. Funding in the later rounds, and with newer startups, dropped further to US \$1-US \$3 million.

Companies were delivering food to customers at higher costs in the hope that they will form a habit of ordering food, and volumes will eventually make enough business sense for them in the long run. However, this premise has not been proved right.

Another problem area is that today, nobody is talking about unique product offerings coupled with consistent quality/taste and variety, which would bring stickiness.

Discounts and cash back schemes have proved to be suicidal. Companies bear various costs on data, servers, call centers, employee salaries and online marketing costs. Startups, which own the entire chain from kitchen to delivery, have to spend on petrol, bikes, uniforms, and packaging to keep the food warm. Thus, keeping extra funds for discounts and cash backs is next to impossible.

Despite the disruption in the entire industry, food tech and delivery start-up Swiggy recently managed to attract an investment of US \$5 million from

InnoVen Capital India backed by Singapore's state-run investment arm Temasek Holdings Pte Ltd.

Swiggy's Co-founder **Nandan Reddy** spoke to FoodService India at India Food Forum 2017 about what has kept his company growing despite the market headwinds.

He said, “We have been able to survive as we conducted business in a more sustainable manner. We didn't give discounts and this is one reason why we have been capitalised well. The best part is that all our investors have come back and invested some more in us, and that shows great validation of how well we have been able to execute the idea that is Swiggy.”

With the recent churn in food-tech, Swiggy, instead of testing the waters in new cities, is looking to consolidate its position in the cities it currently operates in - Mumbai, NCR, Bengaluru, Pune, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad.

“Currently, we are profitable in two of our key markets. So, we have already proven our capabilities and soon we will be profitable in other markets as well,” said Reddy.

He further added, “We want to consolidate our position in all the seven markets we are present in and we are aiming at profitability. At present, we don't have any plans to explore any new cities. We would like to concentrate on these cities and gain market leadership here.”

Swiggy competes with the likes of Zomato, Foodpanda India and Runnr. The company also faces stiff competition from Zomato, which has also entered the food delivery business. ●●



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# Home-grown food brands rule the roost

Successful entrepreneurs in the Food business share ideas on how to innovate, grow, build a lasting appeal for products and brands and become a market leader and trend-setter.

by Premjit Mohapatra

“Our merchant base failed to meet the demand consistently. It was difficult to manage all the orders as we were growing and we weren't able to control the customer experience to the extent we wanted. So we decided to start our own fulfilment centres and warehouses and became an inventory-led player”

**Albinder Dhindsa**  
Co Founder, Grofers

**H**ome-grown food brands, long used to playing second fiddle to the multi-nationals, are at last emerging out of the shadows. Quite a few are basking in market glory today that was unheard of before.

Their success run lately is also reflection of the consumer sentiment turning in favour of all things that are genuinely Indian.

Here are three success stories of home-grown brands that are blazing a trail at home, whose able stewards shared the milestones of their remarkable journey at a session at India Food Forum.

## GROFERS

In a short span of time, the company has grown to become one of the largest online grocery players in the country. According to **Albinder Dhindsa**, Co Founder, Grofers, “The initial part of the scale-up, till July last year, was purely driven by the marketplace. We had a tie up with grocery stores, ranging from the local kirana shops to the established players like Reliance and HyperCITY. We would list all the inventories from the stores to our App, and have them delivered to the customers as and when the orders were placed by them through the mobile app.”

**A quick ramp up:** In just nine months from the launch of the app, Grofers was doing 10,000 orders a day. ‘One of the advantages of not being a brick and mortar player is that you can go for the reach, and we reached a large number of orders in a short span of time,’ said Dhindsa

**Challenges and the shift to inventory-led play:** “Fulfilment of products, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, was a big challenge with the surprising surge in the volume of orders. Our merchant base failed to meet the demand consistently. It was difficult to manage all the orders as we were growing and we weren't able to control the customer experience to the extent we wanted. So we decided to start our own

fulfilment centres and warehouses and became an inventory-led player,” said Dhindsa, explaining the motivation behind shifting to inventory on-demand grocery model from the marketplace model it was following earlier.

Today, Grofers has 800,000 square feet of warehouse space that operates out of ten cities and the company stocks anywhere between .2 million to 20 million products at any given point in time. To ensure they deliver on quality, heavy investments were made in procurement and processing of raw fruits and vegetables.

“While our fill rates went up to 99.8% from 80%, the biggest impact it has had is on the customer satisfaction. Along with the quality delivered, the fill rate has increased 40% since we moved from a market-based player to becoming a heavily inventory-led player,” informed Dhindsa.

**Key Learning:** Controlling the customer experience in an online service is very important. “When you are in a competitive market and your customer experience is not as good as the other guy, you are going to lose,” said Dhindsa.

## YUMIST

Yumist is a food delivery player that operates in the daily meal space and is based out of NCR-Delhi. While there were developments in the F&B space, there wasn't much happening in the category of daily meals. Yumist is trying to fill the gap by building a technology powered F&B brand that provides consistent quality and a wholesome experience to the customer.

**Alok Jain**, Founder & CEO, Yumist said, “The daily meal space is a 50 billion dollar market, though largely unorganized and surprisingly there wasn't a single Indian brand in the fray. The category lacked quality, it lacked convenience and was price-conscious, so we decided to solve this problem and that is how Yumist came into being.”

Starting out in July 2014, the company has gone in for multiple iterations at every stage of the



business. This was all done to build a brand and a business model that is capable of quickly catering to a large segment of customers at significantly lower costs through the smart use of technology.

"We wanted to create a business, which has 30% margins, provides quality food for Rs. 80 and comes with no delivery charges. It was a challenging prospect. But we were ready to use technological ingenuity and innovate at every level to create a sustainable business model that creates profits for the stakeholders and delivers a great experience to the customers," said Jain.

#### Lessons:

- Food tech is not merely an app. In today's world, if a food brand has to sustain itself and become a bigger brand, it has to be technology-enabled.
- In the F&B space, consumer demands and needs and the business realities have changed.
- "The consumer today wants better quality and quality doesn't alone come from the food but the entire experience. So you better tech-enable your supply chain, payment systems, your delivery and dining experience, etc, else you will be left behind," stressed Jain.
- Employ the right mix of innovation with strong business sense in order to attain long term sustainability and scalability.
- Understand the Indian problems on the consumer front and business reality front and innovate without cutting corners.
- Brands of the future are going to be those that realise Indian problems require Indian solutions and act to solve them without compromising on quality of the product.

"At Yumist, we have one food factory and our supply chain caters to the entire city. We cannot have multiple kitchens but one kitchen that's going to cater to the entire city, so we decided to challenge the supply chain. We innovated constantly to limit our CAPEX and OPEX at our delivery outlets without importing solutions or business models from outside and applying them wholesale. Technology is there to help us reduce the costs, to help us increase our average order values, to provide a great customer experience but at the end of the day, it's the food that you are serving that is going to speak the most because that is your product. Ensure product quality and consistency," exhorted Jain.

#### CHAI POINT

The ubiquitous chai, which is the most consumed beverage in the world, has been around for ages in India. And Chai Point has succeeded in tapping this understated product and it has built a brand around it by providing high quality, freshly-brewed and authentic taste of tea across India. "Indians love their tea and their tea breaks but there was no organized player that was serving hygienically prepared tea, which was consistent in quality and taste to customers. There was a gap and we



**“ We wanted to create a business, which has 30% margins, provides quality food for Rs. 80 and comes with no delivery charges. It was a challenging prospect. But we were ready to use technological ingenuity and innovate at every level to create a sustainable business model that creates profits for the stakeholders and delivers a great experience to the customers ”**

**Alok Jain**  
*Founder & CEO, Yumist*

wanted to bridge that gap by modernizing and offering a refined experience of drinking tea to our customers," said **Yangchen Lachun**, *VP, Marketing, Chai Point*.

"Excellence in basic things will inspire excellence in everything," spelled out the clarity of the brand's purpose and how it intended to make a difference without compromising on quality. The company took inspiration and learnt from the best in the business like Starbucks – for what it had done with coffee in America; Elon Musk, for how technology can be used to better lives, and Indigo, for how it worked relentlessly to deliver its promise of reliability to its customers.

**Lessons:** Consistency in providing quality, taste and service to the customer is what brings the customers back.

For ensuring quality, the company has a strict control over the central ingredient, which is tea. About 7,500 kg of tea is bought every month, which is certified a tea advisor. Other key ingredients like lemon and ginger are freshly squeezed and powdered in the stores to make lemon tea and ginger tea. Each brewer is trained for 120 hours rigorously before they hit the stores, in order to maintain consistency. "By creating an authentic product with natural ingredients, we believe we can create a great chai experience for our customers," said Lachun.

Chai Point took an omni-channel approach to reach across mediums, online, offline or mobile and make the tea accessible to the customers. It uses BoxC-IoT enabled tea dispensers to deliver tea on a daily basis in corporate offices and path-breaking use and throw heat-retaining disposable flask for chai for home deliveries, which are contributing majorly to the brand's popularity. "Our tagline reads, 'India Runs On Chai' and we want to be accessible to anyone who wants to drink chai. Our omni-channel approach helps the company deliver on accessibility and convenience, which is further backed by technology and innovation. So whether you are at airports, malls or simply walking outside on a street, you can order and get our chai," said Lachun.

**Key Learning:** The moment of truth is ultimately the final product and how the customers feel about the cup of chai. With three lakh cups of chai sold every day, Chai Point has certainly got the customer endorsement. ●●



**“ Our tagline reads, 'India Runs On Chai' and we want to be accessible to anyone who wants to drink chai. Our omni-channel approach helps the company deliver on accessibility and convenience, which is further backed by technology and innovation. So whether you are at airports, malls or simply walking outside on a street, you can order and get our chai ”**

**Yangchen Lachun**  
*VP, Marketing, Chai Point*

# INDIA'S BRIGHTEST SHINE AT FOOD RETAIL'S MOST EXCITING HONOURS' NIGHT



Sofitel Hotel, Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai played host to the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Coca-Cola Golden Spoon Awards powered by India Gate Basmati Rice on the evening of February 1, 2017. With awards being presented across multiple categories, the ceremony honoured outstanding achievers in food and grocery retail and foodservice retail formats in India. The annual Awards are conferred on India's most progressive and innovative food and grocery retailers as well as food service formats and food retail professionals for outstanding achievements in business performance, category leadership and retail innovation.

Awardees were selected by an eminent jury that comprised Krish Iyer (President & CEO, Walmart India), Debashish Mukherjee (Partner, Co-Head, Consumer & Retail Industries, India & SEA, AT Kearney), Saugata Gupta (Managing Director & CEO, Marico Limited), Siraj Chaudhary (Chairman, Cargill Foods India at Cargill India Pvt. Ltd), Anuj Puri (Chairman & Country Head, JLL India), Amit Lohani (MD, MAX Foods & Convenor, Forum of Indian Food Importers) and Amitabh Taneja (CMD, IMAGES Group).



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- IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Chain of The Year: **Cafes & Juice Bars: CHAAYOS**
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- IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Chain of The Year: **Casual Dining Restaurants: SANKALP**
- IMAGES Most Admired Food Service: **Innovation of The Year: PIZZA HUT'S TRIPLE TREAT BOX**

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- IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Chain of The Year: **Supply Chain Management: PIZZA HUT**
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MD, Sri Krishna Sweets



# The balancing act

When it comes to the Kitchenware industry, it is the traditional brick and mortar that plays a vital role in striking the perfect balance between manufacturers and users for smooth operations. Distributors & dealers play a unique role, both as business partners and customers.

by Sunil Agarwal



**To bridge the gap between manufacturers and customers, distributors and dealers have always relied on the present globalized marketplace.**

The ecommerce industry has fundamentally changed customers' expectations. Several brands have been re-thinking their reach into the direct-to-consumer (DTC) world for insights on evolving customer expectations, making a shift from the dealer and distribution network. However, when it comes to the Kitchenware industry, it is the traditional brick and mortar which plays a vital role in striking the perfect balance between manufacturers and users operating smoothly. It is the distributors & dealers who play a unique role, both as business partners and customers at the same time.

To bridge the gap between manufacturers and customers, distributors and dealers have always relied on the present globalized marketplace, this relationship becomes even more important when a network of distributors have far greater ability to offer face-to-face service. The principle function of the distributor is to make the products available in more markets. Making it convenient for potential customers to purchase the products becomes an important marketing function.

Increased market coverage ensures that customers can purchase your products whenever they need them.

Good location and account coverage is crucial for success regardless of the economic conditions.

Distributors in a particular geographical area can guide and offer services to the customers on a level that would be difficult or even impossible for a main-office sales force. Moreover, these distributors & dealers do not only offer benefits to manufacturers, they can also be a boon for users because distributors represent multiple products and companies. There is also a good networking potential because they have access to new accounts for the brands' sales force. Good communication between the distributor and customer ensures an unbroken supply chain.

Also, for brands, the distributors & dealers are their best customers who build long lasting relationships with them, and take the time to educate themselves about the product. They can expedite response time, enhance a company's reach and even create value-added packages. While brands extend support to dealers and distributors in terms of marketing tools and strategies, the latter too, in turn, take care of the brands.

One of the most resounding arguments for a solid distributor network is the speed with which brands can respond to the demands of the consumer. With today's ever growing customer demands, it is crucial to be able to respond to customers quickly and in real time. Because they are more localized and nimble, distributors can typically offer a faster response. To truly be customer-driven, brands need to adjust their businesses to meet the needs of the customer, which in today's marketplace means local service, local inventory and technical sales people.

Distributors also have the benefit of reducing inventory and service burdens for both the manufacturer and the user. This is especially crucial now, when many users have been forced to cut back on in-house inventories and service staff. Distributors, now more than ever before, are service providers – they do not just provide products but also provide aftermarket services, cost reduction and process optimization strategies, as well as inventory management. Distributors create value by providing total solutions for their customers.

By understanding the ever-growing and evolving expectations of the customers, we can comprehend that the dealers and distributors are the backbone to every kitchenware brand.

Similarly brands like Vinod Cookware believe in a strong channel-friendly approach, wherein the brand grows with its partners. Brands also believe in having a strong communication model to reach out to potential customers more effectively. At the same time, dealers and distributors play a key role in sustaining and expanding the brand's presence in the country by introducing exciting creative marketing promotion for the channel partners and end users. ●●



The author is Director of Vinod Cookware.

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Chef Harpal Singh Sokhi

## More restaurants with street food concepts will open across the country

FoodService India speaks to chef Harpal Singh Sokhi, Director, Turban Tadka Hospitality, about the changing trends in the food service industry today and the shape of the things to come in the future.

### Tell us about the cuisines that you love most and what do you find fascinating about them?

Indian cuisine and all the regional cuisines excite me the most. There is so much in our own food that it is difficult to learn the entire spectrum of Indian cuisine in one lifetime. Over the last few years, I have been learning more of regional cuisines and also more about Ayurvedic food.

I have seen regional cuisines rise to the top of menus at most restaurants. Unique street foods from across the nation are being featured in the menus. It gives me immense pleasure to see such new trends evolving. The basic food of a state is being converted to a full scale QSR. One such restaurant I came across in Bangalore was serving various forms of litti, which was once cooked in homes only and then went on to become the street food of Bihar. Now it is part of a concept restaurant and is also considered as a great healthy food.

Since a lot of local migration is happening due to job placements, cross-cultural cuisines will emerge in various states. Hence, we see lots of new format restaurants in Bangalore, Pune, Gurgaon, Panchkula and various other urban centers where IT has a strong foothold. Today, people love to go to restaurants for food that they are used to eating at home. They also like to have the food from where they belong from. They order such food in restaurants so that they can experience a different level of taste and at the same time get to see the emphasis on presentation and plating, all of which sparks off the brilliance in the dish. People are also not afraid of experimenting now and then.

I love to focus on a style of my own, which is to pick up on various cuisines within India and the world in general. I then incorporate them into my style of cooking, which is easy to make so that people can replicate it at home.

**How do you see the potential of Indian regional cuisines and which ones do you think have a great future?**

I think that overall a lot of regional dishes are emerging more than the regional cuisines. At a national level, Punjabi has emerged as one generic cuisine. However, at State levels you can find Gujarati Thalīs in Gujarat and parts of India. In Maharashtra cuisine, while the missal pav has become popular in many parts of the world, within India it is yet to become popular as a national dish. Then there are Bengali restaurants popular in many different parts of India. Parsi restaurant concepts are emerging and a leading restaurant chain has been running this concept successfully. Down south you will definitely find Andhra food very popular in Bangalore, Chennai and other places as they all love spicy food.

However one thing very noticeable is the emergence of street foods of various states. They are becoming very popular – like the rolls of Kolkata, pav bhaji, batata vada from Maharashtra, litti chokha from Bihar, puri bhaji and so on.

I think more full service restaurants with street food concepts acquired from various states would open across the country. Personally, I would love to see more dishes from various states become popular so that people learn about and relish more of the regional flavours.

**Can you offer us examples of some innovative F&B ideas and concepts that you have implemented at your restaurants?**

My restaurants are known for their great quality food experiences. The Twist of Tadka and BBjaan,



a super specialty fine dining restaurant serving Royal Cuisines of India, are well established in their segments. We are now looking at creating two QSR concepts to serve Canadian Poutine and Desi Chinese dishes. These two concepts would be named Dhadoo and Chika Chika. We are also creating 4-5 five concepts to cater to the various markets.

Looking at today's market, children and women are major drivers of food. I have recently developed some great dishes for the Genuine Broaster Chicken restaurant chain in India of which I am the brand ambassador. As the face of the restaurant



chain, and looking at the emerging food trends where the youth is indulging international format cuisines with Indian taste, I have done something that is very Indian and yet has an International approach in order to cater to the tastes of the youth today.

I have deconstructed the regular Indian dishes and created modern-day appealing dishes for the youth. I have created some great burgers like the Red Mutton Rogan Josh Burger, Palak Paneer Burger and Jonglee Noodle Burger for which I picked the idea from the streets of Jalandhar. I understand that people like to round off their meals with a paan, so I created a Gulukand Muffin, which one can relish as a dessert or a tea-time accompaniment.

**What is your take on the way that food will be promoted in the future?**

As competition increases and profit margins become thinner, people will look to using the mediums that are highly effective and work within a catchment area they operate. Personalization and reaching out to the customer through high effective mediums will be used and I strongly believe that digital will be the medium of choice and will be used more sharply and with greater impact. Managing data and effectively using them will help restaurants to pull the clientele. With everything available on a hand phone, restaurants can be part of a technology-based medium to share their profile and food with their TG on a continuous basis.

Having said that, don't forget that at the end of the day the experience at the outlet matters, which calls for a human touch, and its importance cannot be overstated.

**How would you articulate the role of a modern-day professional chef?**

A chef has a great responsibility and various roles to play, especially when he becomes a public figure. People expect all kinds of solutions from him when it comes to food. With his soul being still in the kitchen, his heart has moved out to see how

**I love to focus on a style of my own, which is to pick up on various cuisines within India and the world in general. I then incorporate them into my style of cooking, which is easy to make so that people can replicate it at home.**



**I have to keep myself updated at every level – with the latest trends, food habits, food products, kitchen ware and appliances – as my work and business revolves around these verticals.**

people relish the food and the experience it has created. He is no longer restricted to the kitchen and he is responsible for creating an experience for dinner. He is the hero of a restaurant/ hotel. His name adds to the restaurant's profile. Today, chefs play a multi-functional role in generating sales, driving customer traffic, and marketing of a restaurant/ hotel. He has gone beyond managing the day-to-day activity of a restaurant kitchen.

Celebrity chefs have a bigger role to play toward the society. They are responsible for the health of society too. People look forward to all sorts of food solutions for their families. Any chef who has the quality to adapt to the ever changing fast world of today and is approachable, ready to listen to the demands of people, has a foodie attitude and is humble enough, is fit to play the role of a modern day professional chef.

**What do you think are your key strengths and weaknesses as a chef?**

Each one of us has his own strengths and qualities. I love to experiment, learn and give whatever I have learnt as a chef. Over the years in my role as a chef, I have loved working on new projects, new formats, and creating new concepts. I have great staff management ability and anybody who works once with me would love to work with me again.

My weakness is that after successfully launching a concept, I like to move ahead and work on the next one. I think that as you mature you start to minimize your weaknesses.

**What would you like to highlight regarding your professional line of work?**

My work revolves around the kitchen: be it food products, appliances, digital food recipes and, of course, restaurants. I have to keep myself updated at every level – with the latest trends, food habits, food products, kitchen ware and appliances – as my work and business revolves around these verticals. I have also to keep myself updated with social trends on food.

For a chef, the demand and need is different at various levels and so he should be good at adapting and responding to these different needs. For instance, a housewife needs a simple and quick solution in the kitchen and also wants to update her kitchen with appliances that help her achieve her quick goals of cooking. So quick recipes, great appliances, a trendy kitchen linen and a handy recipe on mobile, all these should be available to her at the click of a button. I keep myself updating on all these trends. In a restaurant, of course, one has to be creative and the approach to food is a little different with food taste being paramount. Also, a very important thing for a chef is to take out the time to travel, visit places, food stores, and update himself with the technology and media.

**Does India have enough good quality, trained and qualified chefs to meet the new emerging demands in foodservice industry?**

India definitely is facing the challenge of shortage of qualified chefs. Also, with the ever emerging demands and the changing trends in food, it is becoming difficult to keep updating at the Institute levels as well. It is important to also train the teachers at the Institutes so that students get the benefit of learning about the latest trends and practices and start employing them at an early stage of their career. Of course, as they say, all learning begins only when you start swimming in the water and the plunge happens when you start your professional journey. So, if you have fire in the belly, then nothing can stop you.

**What have been your major learnings in this profession, which you would like to pass down to aspiring chefs of the future?**

Stay focused, have patience, work hard and be smart.

**What can one expect from the food scene in the country going ahead?**

With more than 35% of the country's population living in major metros, and life becoming more and more difficult, people are looking for more quick food solutions. As both spouses are working these days, they have less time to spend in the kitchen. At the same time, dining on weekends will continue to increase. People are looking for food solutions at home too. So going ahead, I believe we will see the dynamics of food habits changing. While all this will happen, I am sure that Indian men and women will still love to spend some time in the kitchen and cook themselves. ●●



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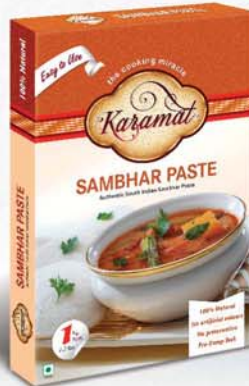


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