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VOLUME NINE • ISSUE TWO

Trade Journal for the Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Industry

MARCH-APRIL 2019 • ₹100 India Edition



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HONORING THE BEST IN FOOD SERVICE

Images Food Service Awards 2019, presented by HUL's Knorr Seasonings and powered by Lulu Mall, were given away at the 12th edition of India Food Forum, held in Mumbai last month.

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THE RISE AND RISE OF FOOD DELIVERY APPS

How can F&B operators collaborate and partner with aggregators to expand the market

Featured inside: Chef Neelabh Sahay | Devesh Rawat | Vikram Rana | Rahul Gandhi | Chef Ravi Saxena



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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 foodservice industry.

Discussions also led to information on trends, emerging concepts and categories, understanding consumer behaviour, and on marketing and F&B promotion strategies – all of which, as everyone agreed, require joint efforts of both suppliers and retailers. Pages 28 to 40 of this issue of the magazine offers a conspectus of the action at the India Food Forum. For those who were not there, we bring you interesting bytes and loads of information exchanged at the Forum.

Turn to pages 36 to 40 to find out about the winners of IMAGES Food Service Awards presented by HUL's Knorr Seasonings and powered by Lulu Mall. The winners were awarded glittering trophies and citations for demonstrating excellence in F&B operations across multiple formats. The selection process for the Awards involved inviting entries from the nation's leading food service operators across multiple categories. The Awards' Jury comprised eminent personalities from the fields of business, media, and research and consulting. The Jury analyzed key performance metrics such as growth in top line sales and retail presence, sales per square foot, same store sale growth. The Jury also studied the impact of IT application, innovation, marketing, supplier relations and employee practices.

My congratulations to the winners and my heartfelt thanks to all the participants at the Forum for making the show a great success.



Amitabh Taneja

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Colombo's iconic Ministry of Crab comes to India and opens in Mumbai.



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Charcoal Concepts

Charcoal Concepts is a platform for specialist Indian food and beverage, founded by K Hospitality Corp, India's leading hospitality and food services corporation.



14 CHEF TALK

Breaking it down for the new-age generations

FoodService India speaks to Chef Neelabh Sahay, Executive Chef, Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences, about his proficiency and skills as chef and the new-age trends that are catching on in the foodservice industry.



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India Food Forum 2019 concludes on a thumping note

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Brewing Success

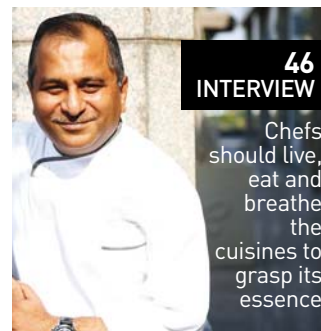
In an increasingly flourishing coffee-bar market, home-grown Eastern European coffee-shop brands are carving a niche for themselves. Two particularly successful examples are the Romanian fixed-price format 5 To Go and Serbian full-service specialty-coffee-shop chain Kafeterija.



42 COLUMN

The coming Home Delivery Boom

Food delivery apps are enabling demand through their swift expansion and this is further facilitated by the multitude of restaurants already dotting the landscape that are eager to cater to the supply side. The key question to keep in mind is how this market will pan out over the next few years, and what is in it for Foodservice operators and Foodservice companies to partner in this growth and drive it.



46 INTERVIEW

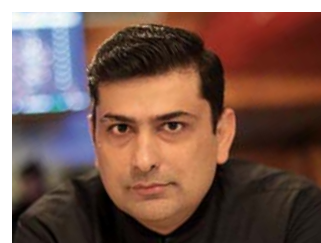
Chefs should live, eat and breathe the cuisines to grasp its essence

With over two decades of experience, nationally and internationally, and after honing his skills in multiple cuisines – from Italian to north Indian – he is an inspiration for several budding chefs in the business. Chef Ravi Saxena speaks to FoodService India about his culinary journey, about taking risks with a comfortable career at hotels and switching to restaurants, and sharing his professional wisdom for the benefit of aspiring chefs.

50 RESTAURATEUR

Focusing on the values of brand and breaking ground in niche markets

FoodService India speaks to Vikram Rana, MD, Vapour Bar Exchange, Gurgaon, about the challenges of opening a new restaurant in this competitive market and the marketing strategies necessary for the brand to stay relevant in this digital era.



52 F&B – MIDDLE EAST Perfect Blend

Known for spectacular architecture and shopping malls, Dubai attracted more than 15 million tourists last year. Home to one of the world's highest number of restaurants per capita, the city is also considered a foodie paradise with almost endless dining out options. It comes as no surprise that the city of glitz and glamour attracts celebrity chefs from all segments, though mostly to be assigned to the fine dining scene. One of the latest additions to Dubai's hospitality landscape is Morimoto, one of 17 restaurants owned by Chef Masaharu Morimoto who is the face of contemporary Japanese cuisine.



50 GM SPEAK

Think global, act local, is the mantra at Marriott

Devesh Rawat, GM of Marriott Hotel, Indore, speaks to FoodService India about the role F&B plays in generating revenue at Marriott hotel in Indore.





INTRODUCES

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Colombo's iconic Ministry of Crab comes to India and opens in Mumbai



An opulent, crustacean centered culinary restaurant in Mumbai charts new waters for Gourmet Investments Pvt Ltd (GIPL) – and is the city's biggest and most awaited launch of financial year 2018. A huge Crab logo, along with installations across the city, reveals the name behind **chef Dharshan Munidasa's** iconic restaurant – Ministry of Crab, from the Asia's 50 Best Restaurant list, located at, Zaveri House, Khar, Mumbai.

An evening hosted by GIPL spokespersons, Ramit Bharti Mittal (Director and CEO) & Deepinder Batth (Director and COO) along with chef Dharshan Munidasa and cricketers Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, witnessed numerous guests coming to experience iconic delicacies of Ministry of Crab. The evening saw a mélange of Bollywood stars and cricketing champions; Anil Kapoor, Khushi Kapoor, Shanaya Kapoor, Zaheer Khan, Yuvraj Singh, Ajit Agarkar and Shobhaa De were amongst the few who were present to celebrate the launch, with Ministry of Crab family.

Ministry of Crab, is known for being Sri Lanka's first restaurant dedicated to serving export quality lagoon crabs and is the brainchild of celebrated chef and restaurateur Dharshan Munidasa. Partnering with Sri Lankan Cricketing Legends Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, MOC was launched in Sri Lanka on 12th December, 2011.

A veteran of several landmark restaurant launches in India (PizzaExpress, Typhoon Shelter, The Bandra Project, The Runway Project, The Market Project, The Poona

Project), GIPL is supported by its parent company Bharti Group and is committed to creating a benchmark name in the F&B industry in India with best in class restaurants, both homegrown and international brands. With the launch of Ministry of Crab, GIPL brings to Mumbai another relaxed luxury dining restaurant with an ambience attractive to India's globe-trotting clientele. With 14 operational restaurants and over 7 new openings within the financial year, GIPL aims to open over 80 restaurants by 2020, in India and globally.

MOC boasts of opulent interiors spread across 6,000 sq. ft with private dining room for up to 24 guests. In the basement is a block-long floor exclusive bar, whereas the restaurant itself has three stories. Naturally, all furnishings across the three-tiered restaurant are bespoke and sit with an outdoor patio for those who enjoy the flush of green. The Bar at Ministry of Crab is a destination bar in its own right and is proud to hold the city's largest collection of wine list, with the world's best vintage collection. The bar serves an expert cocktail list – Cocktails to Whet Your Senses – which champions a more sustainable approach to cocktail craftsmanship. The bar is beautifully conceived and creates an instant connect to those seeking luxury in a relaxed atmosphere. Ministry of Crab uses ingredients that are not just the best but also the freshest. The menu includes many signature dishes apart from "old favorites" like crab curry, clay pot prawn curry, and chicken curry rice. The restaurant promises to offer its loyalists not only long-standing favorites from its Sri Lankan menu but also an elaborate luxurious bar offering. A brand new nibbles menu for The Bar at The Ministry of Crab has also been curated by Chef Munidasa for those who are looking for just that experience. Commenting about the brand's launch in India, chef Munidasa says, "We are looking forward to working in the Indian market with Indian crabs and young Indian chefs. We are happy to have partnered with Gourmet Investments, as they share our value system and are committed to bringing the DNA of The Ministry of Crab to give our guests an authentic experience."

Chef Amrita Raichand felicitated

Under the aegis of Asian Food Congress & Awards and Hospitality Super Star Awards, celebrity **chef Amrita Raichand** has been conferred the honour of 'Most Talented Food Industry Leaders' citation as well as 'Hospitality Super Star' citation recently. To acknowledge chef Amrita's significant contributions to the food industry, she was also requested to lead a standalone discussion on 'Challenges and awards of being a female leader' by the Asian Food Congress Committee. Amrita directed the session by elucidating on the various roles a woman has to play to keep her home and work life balanced on all fronts. Speaking on the all-encompassing role of females, she noted



how women tend to take more work than what can be managed in an effort to be true to their families as well as professional obligations. .

The Asia Food Congress & Awards is an international dais where those leaders of the food industry are celebrated who have build a sustainable, authentic and responsible food ecosystem while offering people great diversity in their choices. The conference also served as a platform to hold discussions on latest developments in the food industry vis-à-vis start-ups, role of technology, etc. Stars of the Industry Awards aims to recognise excellence in the field of Hospitality and Management Services and reward those who have differentiated themselves with their outstanding performance. Sharing her joy at receiving the award, chef Amrita Raichand said, "I am indeed honoured to have been considered amongst the 'Most talented food industry leader and Hospitality Superstar'. Winning this award would not have been possible without the inspiration from my seniors and my friends in the industry for whom I have the deepest respect, and from whom I have derived the strength to push my limits and perform better."

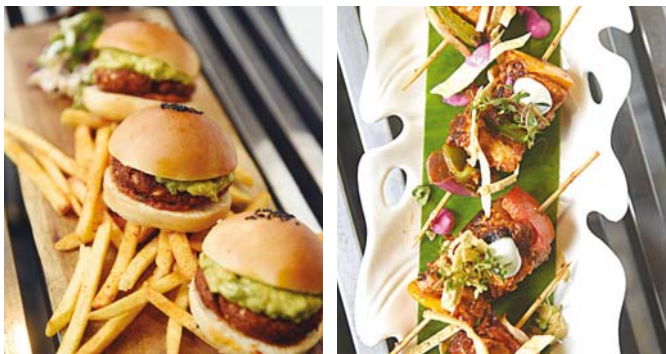
The Myx Bar & Kitchen relaunches in an all new avatar

It's fun, it's quirky, it's inspired by pubs the world over, and it now has brand new entrees to boot. The Myx Bar & Kitchen has revamped and relaunched itself in a new avatar. It is unquestionably the best hangout where beautiful people meet to celebrate life's simple journey. The menu is non-conformist and quirky, bringing together all the signature dishes that have made it a delight for food lovers; as well as lots more. Expect to find various cuisines, homely and familiar flavours, given an unconventional and playful twist, comforting pub grub and the newest cocktails with a twist. Enjoy eclectic delicacies from the fusion malai cottage cheese with parmesan and truffle oil to the Thai chicken satay with sweet & spicy peanut dip, tomato, basil and mozzarella risotto fritters, with balsamic mayo; mini dahi kebab burgers, Indian slaw and masala fries and Gondhoraj marinated fish with tangy tomato amongst others. The emphasis, as always is on the fresh, innovative and affordable-in a cool, yet, laid back atmosphere.

The Myx Bar & Kitchen, in its new incarnation, aims to deliver on the promise of anything but the usual. Adding more for those peckish moments, or a soul satisfying meal the new additions bring regional dishes with a twist. The menu is not only inclusive but also caters to the palate of the comfort seeker and the gourmand, alike. The Myx Bar & Kitchen has also added a new set of cocktails to their already innovative bar menu. It's no longer about regular cocktails but a whole new spin where innovation and freshness are firmly at the forefront. Raise your spirits with the unusual concoctions like Madras Café (white rum, curry leaves, passion fruit, espresso & pineapple), Myx coco cosmo (vodka, cocosyrup & basil), Around The World (a combination of tequila and Red Bull), and other breezy and delightful combos guaranteed to make you happy!

The tantalizing food menu has been curated by the eminent food consultant **Shaun Kenworthy**, with a host of new scrumptious dishes. Its impressive cocktail menu has been concocted by Uttam Singh (winner of Times Awards 2017). All in all, this is a menu that defies stereotypes, bringing boldly to the table comfort food from days gone by and lets you indulge in your Indian roots, with a totally fresh perspective. The Myx Bar & Kitchen is designed to be a bonafide dining-out option when one is looking for a great evening out with friends.

Apart from the new menu launch, an interactive cooking session was also held here where Shaun Kenworthy demonstrated the preparation of a few items from the newly launched menu. The participants billed the session as 'therapeutic', a way to de-stress and highly fancied it. "We are thrilled about these additions to our menu, as they really highlight the diverse flavor profiles of the various countries", said Kenworthy.



UpSouth launches its sixth branch in Pune

QSR chain UpSouth recently launched its sixth branch in Pune. After establishing its successful presence in Viman Nagar, Pune Airport, Aundh, Wakad, Phoenix Market City and now at Wanowarie, the brand is looking to launch more outlets in the city by the year end.

UpSouth offers great, authentic, delicious food with lightning speed of service in hygienic & live kitchen atmosphere. This is a self-service and sit-down restaurant. It is an ideal place to grab a quick bite for students and offers a relaxing atmosphere for families and office-goers looking for fast service and tasty food. The menu offers universal favorites like varieties of idli and dosa, meduwada, uthappam, filter coffee, paddu, south Indian combos, meals and many more dishes. It also hosts its patented signature dishes like uthly, Malabari parota sandwich, sabudana cheese vada, elaneer mousse, mango moksha and healthy super grain paratha. All this priced very competitively – the average spends per person ranges between Rs.80-90 only.

UpSouth is the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) brand of Billion Smiles Hospitality Pvt Ltd, one of India's leading hospitality chain. "We are here to create convenient,

affordable, hygienic and quality driven South Indian QSR chain in upscale environment. We are looking forward to create an impactful presence in pune market through internal investments and franchising options. South Indian cuisine is recognized as one of the most popular cuisine, and as a product is also suitable for all day dining. Hence a great opportunity for UpSouth to build a successful QSR format nationwide", says **Kumar Gaurav, Vice President, Billionsmiles Hospitality Pvt Ltd.**

UpSouth is committed to bring Indian and south Indian vegetarian cuisine in a modern quick service format – with the highest level of quality in both products and services, at the lowest reasonable prices and in the most hygienic environment. UpSouth makes their food from fresh ingredients, unlike large international chains with their highly processed food at industrial scale. Its **Corporate Executive Chef Manu R Nair**, says: "UpSouth redefines the experience of Indian and south Indian cuisine with a contemporary touch. We bring healthy, delicious, fresh and wholesome Indian and south Indian vegetarian food in a modern format."

HPMF organizes conclave with hospitality IT professionals



Hospitality Purchasing Managers' Forum (HPMF) along with Hospitality IT Professionals Forum (HiTPF) jointly hosted a conclave recently at The Park Hotel, Hyderabad. The event got together IT and Purchasing professionals of the Telangana region for better coordination and deliveries to the industry. The event saw several luminaries being felicitated – Padma Shri Daripally Ramayaa, Sai Praneeth (International Badminton Player), Amitha Desai (Executive Director- Hamburg-Ambassador), Sudha Jain (Miss Asia Pacific Runners up and Ms Hyderabad), Dantu Mitra (author with 60 years of experience in Cost Accountancy) and Veera Vanitha (Gallantry Awardee posthumous).

A panel discussion and presentation was also organized, which emphasized on the importance of collaborative efforts. **Jwala Srinivas CH (President - HPMF Telangana)** said, "Such events bring in synergy in the organization and at HPMF it is our intention to make the entire world one family."

Sanchez Taquería and Cantina now in Indiranagar, Bangalore

Lounge Hospitality has launched its second Mexican restaurant, Sanchez Taquería and Cantina in Indiranagar, Bengaluru. The menu, curated by **chef Vikas Seth** takes you on a trip to taquerías around Mexico to give you a taste of dishes that are rooted in authenticity yet offering a slice of modernity. This new dining landmark, located on 12th main Indiranagar, aims to deliver a dining experience with both emotions and delicious food.

The brand new taquería is cozy and upbeat defined by a bold, contemporary Mexican vibe and fits right into the cosmopolitan neighbourhood. Raw brick walls are adorned with motifs from Mexican folk lore like the Calavera, playful neon lighting, coloured strings strung across the wooden rafters that form a vibrant canopy above and the stained glass screens that welcome you when you enter, all create an ambience of a taco cart on the streets of Mexico. The vibrant bar has a facade of handmade, decorative tiles and there you can

linger over bespoke, fusion drinks crafted from fresh and natural ingredients. To complement the experience, a casual outdoor section within vertical gardens gives diners a quiet respite.

Speaking about the new launch, Director **Siddharth Mankani** said, "Sanchez in UB City is renowned for its authentic Mexican fare with a menu that travels to the heart of the country. With this launch we would like to give the city a taste of Mexican cuisine that is still largely unexplored. We have an array of modern dishes and authentic Mexican culinary techniques and ingredients that we will be using to create these." **Karan Virwani**, Director, said, "We are very excited to expand our reach to Indiranagar and this new Sanchez will help us to continue pushing boundaries and bring forth enhanced dining experiences to the city. The Taquería has a fun, contemporary vibe with its live counters and experiential dining concepts which will enable us to connect with a younger audience as well."

Besides tacos, there are the widely popular avocado toasts made from in-house



Bolillo bread with a bunch of Sanchez's tasty interpretations to it. The Oaxacan Style Tortilla Soup, aptly known as the queen of soups in Mexican cuisine and the Tlalpeño Broth made of pulled chicken, rice & chick peas and served with slices of lemon, cilantro leaves, chopped onion, avocado and chipotle on side, are highlights of the menu. Then there are the traditional Garnachas and Chilaquiles, and Tex-Mex Wet Burritos topped with a choice of sauces. The Margaritas are a must have with variations based on seasonal fruits along with the other Mexican concoctions like the Micheladas and a range of Tequilas.

The dessert section of the menu provides the ultimate indulgence. The decadent Dark Chocolate Guacamole

made with creamy mashed avocado is a great option for vegans and the Dulce de leche Ice Cream Taco decorated with chocolate pearls, caramel popcorn & cinnamon sugar stars is an epicurean fantasy. Vikas Seth, Chef and Culinary Director, has more than a decade of experience in Mexican cuisine and has been on multiple culinary journeys across Mexico. Speaking about the new restaurant, he said, "With Sanchez Taquería & Cantina, we turn to explore the brilliance of tacos, albeit with the special Sanchez twist. In keeping with our philosophy of offering food that is fresh and flavoursome, we have recreated the modern taquería experience complete with live taco rolling."

The Lodhi unveils 'The Sultan Suite'

The Lodhi, New Delhi, a member of The Leading Hotels of the World, has introduced the latest addition of grand suites "The Sultan Suites" – a 4,400 square feet suite with two floors connected by a private elevator inside. With magnificent gold leafed walls, the living room is filled with natural light from floor-to-ceiling windows and features a six-seater dining table, a grand Upright Piano, state-of-the-art 86-inch TV and Bang & Olufsen 1400 watt speakers with acoustic lens technology for entertainment in exceptional style. For hosting private soirées, the hotel's Master Chefs can even create exquisite culinary fare in the suite's fully-equipped kitchen.

The suite encompasses two expansive bedrooms and the master bedroom has a private library, 65-inch OLED TV and B&O multiroom wireless speaker. Guests can stay in great shape with the suite's fitness area, and indulge in a massage and luxuriate in the sauna in their own spa



room which serves as a personal oasis for rejuvenation. The Lodhi's signature plunge pool and balcony presenting panoramic views, along with a decorative fireplace, spacious walk-in closet and cigar humidor complete the experience.

The hotel has also enhanced some of their Garden Terrace Rooms, Garden Terrace Suites and Verandah Pool Suites, which are now named Signature Terrace Rooms, Signature Terrace Suites and Lodhi Signature Suites. These categories offer every conceivable modern amenity, including ultra-plush four-poster beds

for best quality sleep, comfortable sitting areas, custom writing desks, 65-inch 4K smart TVs and more. All rooms feature ultra high-speed Wi-Fi, complete full bottle private bars, plush PLOH bathrobes, TWG tea selections, Illy espresso coffee machines, universal plug points, USB charging ports, air purifiers, large 5 fixture 'spa-inspired' bathrooms with bespoke amenities and TOTO automatic toilets. Art inspired by Indian history, art-deco styled lavish furniture, warm wooden floorings with custom wool and silk carpets provide the ultimate opulence.

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Bangalore's Vedant Mehra wins Bacardi cocktail competition

After a nail-biting finale in Delhi, India, on the 5th of February 2019, Bacardi announced **Vedant Mehra** as the winner of the 10th BACARDÍ® Legacy Cocktail Competition. **Sanjit Singh Randhawa, MD India and Southeast Asia at Bacardi**, said, "We created Bacardi Legacy as a global platform to enable development and recognition of world class bartenders and it has become a core element to those we consider essential stakeholders of our business. We are very proud of the way the platform has evolved in India and this edition of the BACARDÍ® Legacy Cocktail Competition saw contenders pushing the boundaries of their creativity to make delectable cocktails combined with successful marketing and business strategies to effectively promote their drinks. We are very proud of what Vedant has accomplished in the India leg of the legacy competition by crafting a winning cocktail based on sustainable ingredients and our brand ethos."

Vedant, who makes delicious cocktails for Bootlegger in Bangalore, competed against 13 other finalists, to emerge as the winner of the Bacardi Legacy Cocktail Competition. The winning drink – Limitless, is a cocktail inspired from the idea of using sustainable ingredients and is made with Bacardi



Carta Oro, Martini Rosso, Angostura bitters and a banana peel syrup. Vedant is a business management graduate who chanced upon his passion when the bartenders showed up late at an event and he proactively got behind the bar with a few friends to serve the guests. That was his 'Eureka!' moment and he knew he'd found his calling. Vedant Mehra has been in the industry for a little over two years. As the Bar manager at Bootlegger, he has represented Bangalore in various national competitions. His winning drink, 'Limitless', was inspired by Bacardi's "Good Spirited Campaign", an initiative which is aimed at reducing the company's environmental impact. Banana is the most widely consumed fruit in the world and its peels are thrown away in large quantities. Utilising the peels to make a syrup is a great way to reduce waste and utilize an ingredient that would have otherwise been thrown away. He displayed commendable camaraderie, spirit and unity, as each of the finalists congratulated him and picked him up on their shoulders to celebrate his victory.

Speaking about the victory, Vedant Mehra said, "Bacardi Legacy is one the biggest competitions in the world and I feel on top of the world to have won the India chapter. At the same time there is a huge responsibility upon me now to make the country proud and place India on the global map for skill in cocktail making. I hope to win the Global competition and inspire the world to focus on sustainable processes."

The judging panel was looking for a simple cocktail, yet complex in terms of taste and innovative technique. It is essential for Bacardi Rum to be the core ingredient for each cocktail as well as the basis for its story. The drink must be easily replicable in any bar across the world and stand the test of time in order to be considered in the league of former Legacy cocktails such as Mojito, Cuba Libre & Daiquiri.

The BACARDÍ® Legacy Cocktail Competition began as a UK competition, which was first won in 2008 by Ago Perrone of London's Connaught Bar, and has since grown into one of the world's largest cocktail competitions, attracting thousands of entries. Each national winner will travel to Amsterdam in May 2019 to join forty-one others in the hope that their 'legacy' cocktail will be declared worthy to stand shoulder to shoulder with BACARDÍ classics such as the Authentic BACARDÍ Mojito, the Original BACARDÍ Daiquirí and the the Old Cuban.

Speaking on the occasion, Richard Neil Irwin, Bacardi Advocacy Manager for Asia, Middle East & Africa who also judged the competition said, "BACARDÍ® Legacy Cocktail Competition brings alive Bacardi's commitment to the cause of developing the bartending community by giving them the biggest platform to showcase their creative talent and create a legacy. Over the last 11 years, it has paved the way for some of the best cocktail traditions, which continue to inspire and enhance the drink experience for our consumers. Vedant's drink was a balanced, fresh & clean cocktail with a delightfully compelling story and style which translated in to a recipe of success." ••

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I, S.P. Taneja, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated : 01 March, 2019

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INDIAN CUISINE WITH A MEDITERRANEAN TWIST

FAMILY ENCOUNTERS WITH OLIVES FROM SPAIN

Jackfruit and olive biryani



HEALTHY SNACKS WITH OLIVES FROM SPAIN

Orange and chaat masala olives



Chef Saransh Goila is the brand ambassador for Olives from Spain for the second year. His recipes embrace the infinite possibilities to have a healthy and creative dish using the different varieties of Olives from Spain

Charcoal Concepts

Charcoal Concepts is a platform for specialized Indian food and beverage, founded by K Hospitality Corp, India's leading hospitality and food services corporation.



The company has a clear vision to conceptualize, incubate, develop and grow leading brands for Indian food and beverage, both in India and abroad.

Charcoal Concepts caters to global audiences and focuses on presenting the diversity of Indian fare, combined with progressive presentation, creative design and architecture and a captivating blend of flavours using classic culinary techniques. It aims to globalize Indian flavours, and lead the cuisine's evolution and growth in Indian and global markets.

Through its food, hospitality and impeccable customer service, this organisation is purely focused on taking Indian cuisine global. With investments in its infrastructure, the company aims to introduce patrons to its award-winning range of distinctive recipes, flavours and concepts, in India and abroad.

Charcoal Concepts manages few of the leading, award-winning Indian cuisine brands, serving millions of customers each year.

Copper Chimney, Contemporary Indian:

Established in 1972, Copper Chimney is one of Charcoal Concept's flagship concepts in the country. The brand is an ode to the secret recipes and cooking techniques envisioned by its founder **J.K. Kapur**, using influences from slow-cooked dishes across undivided North India, from Peshawar to Delhi. Copper Chimney makes all its dishes fresh every day, using spices of the finest quality, sourced from select farms to create flavours that are truly unforgettable. Over the years, Copper Chimney has become the leading contemporary Indian restaurant brand, and has recently forayed into international markets with outlets in the Middle East (with recent launches

in the UAE and Kuwait) as well, with an upcoming large launch planned in London, UK this year.

Karan Kapur, Director, K Hospitality Corp, says, "The uniqueness of Copper Chimney and the strength of brand has grown from strength to strength over the past 45 years. Through our focus on fresh cooking, high quality produce, and our secret recipes and techniques that have been carried over generations, we always strive to we deliver our promise of 'Indian Food, Made Unforgettable.'" It is one of the oldest and strongest Indian restaurant brands in the country which has maintained its equity by fulfilling a high quality, value for money, memorable food and beverage experience for families and corporates across the country. "By integrating the brand and investing further into its development, we are readying it for the next phase of growth to lead the development of Indian cuisine, grills and overall great Indian flavours," says Karan.

Bombay Brasserie (India) & Bombay Borough (International) Experimental Indian:

Serving progressive Indian cuisines, Bombay Brasserie, and its international avatar, Bombay Borough, is an all-day modern Indian bar and eatery. Rediscovering India through an explosion of flavours, Bombay Brasserie's menu features



ingredients from all over the country that shine through in each plate. Every dish infuses familiar flavours with the unexpected to create a memorable gastronomical experience. This formula has won the brand many awards and has now been scaled across 5 Indian cities. Charcoal Concepts is now taking Bombay Brasserie's global avatar to international markets, with launches upcoming in the UAE and Sri Lanka.

With over 45 years of experience in this cuisine, and drawing on K Hospitality's knowledge of scaling and managing F&B businesses, Charcoal Concepts is bringing new concepts such as:

Tamarind Tiger, a fast, casual format, bringing together Indian flavours with local ingredients through creative combinations, alongside a full-service chai bar.

Gully Kitchen, a modern-Indian fast food concept, serving fast, delicious Indian and Indian-inspired dishes, made from scratch, to a global audience.

Punkah House, a high-end experimental Indian bar and dining experience, merging vintage India with a contemporary evolution.

The Street Club, an Indian and Indian-influenced food market, with multiple stations serving food from across the country, retail of Indian food products, and an all-day café.

As part of its growth strategy, Charcoal Concepts, recently acquired all the Copper Chimney outlets from the Everstone Capital owned Pan India Food Solutions (erstwhile Blue Foods), and has rebranded and launched these under the Charcoal Concepts umbrella to great success.

"The franchise buyback of Copper Chimney is reflective of K Hospitality's aggressive growth and expansion strategy to bring authentic Indian cuisine to global audiences by building on Copper Chimney's leading position in the contemporary Indian cuisine space in the country. The results are visible and very encouraging as we now plan to extend the strategy to new outlets in India and abroad, as part of the new business segment, Charcoal Concepts," says Karan.

With a strong expertise and leadership in Indian cuisine over the last 40 plus years, Charcoal Concepts aims to consolidate its leadership position, and scale across numerous cities in India with its formats, as well as lead an aggressive roll out in international markets. The company has already extended its reach with projects underway in across numerous countries in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, and the UK, and has plans to deepen further into these international markets over the coming years. ●●

With over 45 years of experience in this cuisine, and drawing on K Hospitality's knowledge of scaling and managing F&B businesses, Charcoal Concepts is bringing new concepts into the market.



Breaking it down for the new-age generations

FoodService India speaks to Chef Neelabh Sahay, Executive Chef, Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences, about his proficiency and skills as chef and the new-age trends that are catching on in the foodservice industry.



Tell us about your professional career and the milestones that have shaped your career?

My culinary journey has been amazing, filled with challenges, success and learnings. I started my career with Oberoi Hotels & Resorts and worked with them for around 9 years. I worked at more than five hotels of the Oberoi group within the country, which helped me get exposure to the different cuisines, cultures and styles of cooking. I do not call myself as a specialist of any particular cuisine but at the same time I regard myself as a versatile cook at ease with different cuisines thanks to my varied exposure during the initial years of my career. One of my career milestones came in August 2013, when I was transferred to the largest property of the chain, Trident Nariman Point. If The Oberoi Grand taught me the softer aspects of being a chef, Trident Nariman Point taught me all that can go wrong in such large operations.

Later, I joined as Executive Sous Chef at the newly launched Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences. After working for almost a year, the turning point in my life came when I became the Executive Chef and was responsible for managing the culinary operations of the entire hotel. This has been an enriching experience as it gave me direct insight and taught me some valuable lessons.

What do you think are your strengths as a chef?

I keep myself grounded by keeping my basics strong. I feel everything is about how strong a chef is with his/her basics. If that is in order, then you can build on anything else. Hence, I believe

that being grounded and getting the basics right is my key strength as a chef.

How do you look at the role of a modern-day chef?

A modern-day chef has to perform nothing less than magic in his/her kitchen. With exposure to so many TV shows and the digital world, today's guest is someone who is demanding and relentless when it comes to what he or she wants. The hallmarks of a chef then comes down to his professionalism and his ability to delight the guest. The chef has to achieve a balance between the impossible and possible things.

What is the one thing that is going to change the way food will be promoted in future?

Digital media is and will keep on changing the way food is promoted all across the globe.

Does India have enough trained and qualified chefs to meet the new emerging demands?

Yes, of course. More and more hotel management colleges are opening in the country and that is giving a platform to the young and bright chefs to sharpen their skills.

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

We focus on global cuisines at Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences. It's always exhilarating when you mix ingredients of diametrically opposite cuisines. I think, most chefs these days are trying to combine flavour combinations in this way. However, I feel that it is our Indian cuisine that

has evolved over the years. It is no longer just "spicy food".

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

As I mentioned earlier, the Indian culture and its myriad cuisines are probably only tapped 20-30%. Hence, the potential is still huge. Personally, I think the regional cuisine of the North-East and some south Indian regions will gain momentum in the future.

Can you offer us examples of some innovative F&B ideas that you have implemented?

Last year, we launched Le Jardin- our Parisian Rooftop banquet space that has ushered a change in the culinary gastronomy of Indian banqueting. The banquet space has over 20 live fusion cuisine counters for guests. The counters display different 'stories' of food and beverage. Distinctive concepts include 'The Auroville Oven Corner', 'Greens and Grains Bar', 'The Curry Wagon', 'The Kadhi-Suey Story', 'An All Cocoa Affair', 'Paan and Digestive Affair' and similar. The dishes at each station are globally artistic, soul-satisfying and appealing to the senses.

For this year we are planning to add more live counter concept for our valuable guests that will reflect Indian regional cuisine experience such as "The Punjab Mail", "The Rajasthani Trail", "The Station Master Tiffin Box" and similar.

How do you think this year will pan out for the foodservice business?

The food service industry is booming and 2019 will be a great year for evolution in food. This is one business that is only set to grow because people have become cash rich, purchasing power has increased and everyone wants to try the next new thing in the market. Gone are the days when going out to eat idli-dosa as a family qualified as an outing. Now, it's all about trying new cuisines such as African, Peruvian, Brazilian, etc., to name a few.

What new developments and trends would you like to highlight in the foodservice sector?

There are a variety of opportunities for growing the food and beverage businesses. We are trying to develop teams that can focus on a few of the following emerging trends:

- Exotic flavors, snacking, and health & wellness are still at the forefront for consumer food preferences now in an even more elevated way
- Transparency of Food Safety
- To play with organic ingredients
- Go local

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

There are a few challenges in working as a top chef. We have witnessed two types of food consumers; one who is going towards the industrialized food with cheaper production and



another who is going towards the homegrown or organic foods. The former is a major concern as it is creating a bad impact on the consumer's health. I think we should work together to generate a good policy on farming and the environment to create a balance between the two.

How do you ensure upgradation of skills, training and technology?

The best way to upgrade skills is by learning both from your juniors as well as the experienced staff. Reading books is another old age, yet the best method of gathering knowledge. With regards to training, we generally do skill base and knowledge base workshops to be updated on the current food trends. Technology is another parallel part of our profession. We need to be online each and every moment as it has a direct impact on the profitability of the business since technology helps us to save time and manpower.

What have been your major learnings, which you would like to share with aspiring chefs?

My journey has made me learn a lot many things. Some of them that I would like to share with aspiring chefs is: Learning is the key to success and you never stop learning till your last breath.

Never try to change the classics and never try to destroy the authenticity of food. Always play with the natural and healthy ingredients. Always follow the hygiene and safety regulations as demarcated. ●●

I keep myself grounded by keeping my basics strong. I feel everything is about how strong a chef is with his/her basics. If that is in order, then you can build on anything else.



Brewing Success

In an increasingly flourishing coffee-bar market, home-grown Eastern European coffee-shop brands are carving a niche for themselves. Two particularly successful examples are the Romanian fixed-price format 5 To Go and Serbian full-service specialty-coffee-shop chain Kafeterija.

Flavia Fresia reports

The Eastern European branded coffee shop market looks buoyant. Romania, in particular, posted double-digit unit growth in 2018: + 25%, according to the latest Project Café Europe 2019 annual study published by the Allegra Group.

And while big international brands like Starbucks are entering new markets and driving their growth in others, local brands are also emerging and gaining strength.

The 100-unit-strong coffee shop chain 5 To Go was launched as a fixed-price concept in Romania's capital, Bucharest, in 2015 by Radu Savopol, a designer and restaurateur, and Lucian Bădilă, a 25-year-old barista and entrepreneur.

All hot coffee beverages (espresso, cappuccino, latte etc.) as well as other beverages (chocolate, tea, soft drinks) and snacks are priced at RON 5, little more than one Euro (approx. €1.05), and served in well-designed stores with an appealing and contemporary feel. "I wanted to come up with something new and fresh for the Romanian market," says Savopol. "Fixed pricing is not really an innovative concept for Europe or America, but in Romania it was not really developed. Research showed us that a good and well-prepared coffee could be sold at a fair price in good looking stores. We have gained the trust of our clients because we are offering them medium-premium products at a low price."





The concept, as described by Stavopol, is defined by five main elements:

- 1 Taste:** "Products are made from high-quality, fresh ingredients, carefully selected every morning."
- 2. Professional knowhow:** "In 5-To-Go locations you can find some of the most skilful baristas," boasts Stavopol.
- 3. Quick service.**
- 4. A diversified** range of coffee-based products as well as a large variety of snacks.
- 5. Ambition:** "We simply want to be the best." Coffee and coffee-based products are at the heart of the concept. "At the moment, we are using a special blend which was created just for us: a combination of 80% Arabica and 20% Robusta. Obtaining this blend required a lot of work, but it is the most balanced for our products. It is medium roasted and premium packed in order to maintain quality and freshness."

Premium range & individualised store design

The initial offer has evolved over time. "We used to receive many messages on social media from clients asking us to provide products that were not yet included in our menu," reveals Stavopol. "For example, sandwiches with premium ingredients, natural smoothies or even bigger coffee cups, with double the amount of coffee." This is how the partners came up with a new range, 5 To Go Plus, focused around hot and cold coffee-based products as well as healthy snacks, at prices not exceeding RON10 (approx. €2.15).

Savopol himself designs the stores. "The ambiance is built around the idea of a friendly and urban space, with some soft Scandinavian influences and relaxing green accents," he says. "We try to avoid strong accents in order to create a good mood - ideal



for the client who is still in school or university, but also a great place for office workers or grandparents going for a walk with their grandchildren. Each coffee shop has its own personality and I adjust the design to the area and neighbourhood where they are located. For example, the one on Paris Street in Bucharest has a Parisian and Bohemian accent. Also, in every coffeeshop I design, I add some handmade furniture".

The format and layout have also developed since the first store opened in January 2015. "At the very beginning of our activity, we were attracted by small spaces. The smallest 5 To Go is only 4 sqm in size. But as customers began to love our concept, they also started to ask for bigger coffeeshops, because they wished to spend time with their friends, to work or even to study there. Now, most 5 To Gos have a seating area or even a porch."

Ready for more growth

In just four years, 5 To Go has opened 100 stores in Romania, with plans to have 150 active stores by the end of 2019. Stavopol is also planning to take 5 To Go abroad: "As soon as possible we will open the first coffeeshop in England," he announces.

Development has been mainly through franchising. Out of 100 stores at the end of 2018, only three are directly managed. A thing that stands out is that most current 5-To-Go franchisees are very young. "They all come from different backgrounds and career paths," says Stavopol, "but I do believe that what unifies them is their desire to make things happen and their ambition to succeed. Besides, they have this kind of conviction that a business is about devotion and 100% involvement". To select them, 5 To Go has put up a special department. New franchise partners can expect a whole range of services, including pre- and postopening training of employees. Every new location is provided with a professional trainer, promoted from other 5 To

Go coffeeshops. "Most of them have worked as barista and attended special courses. With their help, every new employee learns how to prepare the products and how to relate with the client," explains Stavopol. The 5 To Go management is also responsible for setting up the store, buying the espresso machine ("the most expensive and important device," underlines the concept founder) and for devising a business plan and customized marketing strategy.



5 TO GO

Start: 2015

Country: Romania

Founders: Radu Savopol and Lucian Bădilă

Group turnover 2018: €5.5 m

Units: 100 (3 directly operated, 97 franchised) at end 2018; 150 planned by end 2019

Employees: 200 +

Average franchise investment: €15,000-20,000 incl. franchise fee (€5,000)

Bestseller: Caffe Latte

Average check: RON 9 (€1.93) chainwide
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KAFETERIJA

Start: 2014

Founders and co-owners: Zoran Stanojević and Marko Vukomanović

Units: 14 – 3 x Kafeterija To Go;
8 x Kafeterija Medium (< 150 sq m);
3 x Kafeterija Large (150-350 sq m)

Countries: 2 (Serbia and Montenegro)

Turnover 2018:
approx. € m

Employees: 160

Average check: €4.20

Bestseller: Cappuccino Black
Diamond
www.kafeterija.com

The brand has also launched the “Local Entrepreneur” project. “In this campaign we promote Romanian brands and we present the story of our producers and manufacturers and the stories of our franchise partners. I believe it is very important to make the world aware of these entrepreneurs because they contributed to Romanian business development and also positively affected Romanian trade, which is vital for the development of local tourism,” explains Stavopol. “Because 5 To Go is a 100% Romanian brand, this campaign was created in order to express gratefulness to those who have sustained us since the very beginning. Thanks to them, our coffee chain evolved in a short time. Also, through this campaign, 5 To Go intends to prove that Romanian businesses can be successful and compete with other international brands.”

What is the key to 5 To Go’s success? “I believe that the focus on people and their needs is essential,” concludes Stavopol. “We pay attention to both our customers and employees. The entire concept is built with enhanced attention to details and the quality of our products and service is our main concern.”

Kafeterija

Kafeterija is one of the fastest growing specialty coffee shop chains in Serbia, with 13 stores in the country and one in Montenegro. Its



debut in Hungary is scheduled for the second quarter of 2019. The full-service concept was created in 2014 by Zoran Stanojević and Marko Vukomanović, two young entrepreneurs who at the time had already kicked off the Lovefest music festival in Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia, while working in different industries: Zoran handling budgets for the World Bank, Marko as a graphic designer. “Marko and I, as huge coffee lovers ourselves, had the idea to bring the core culture of coffee closer to the people of Serbia,” recalls Stanojević. “We started talking about our visions – and realized that we had the same passion for business principles and ethics. Hence, we concluded that we could be the perfect ‘feet-on-the-ground and head-in-the-clouds’ match. We started small, but fully dedicated, preparing coffee of exquisite quality in a tiny little coffee store in the heart of old Belgrade”.

At the time, Kafeterija was something of an innovation for Serbia. As in most Eastern European countries, four centuries of Turkish rule had made an impact on local coffee drinking habits. “Just until recently,” confirms Stanojević, “people in Serbia didn’t have a culture of exploring more than the traditional Turkish coffee, but then, as the country opened to the world, people began to explore new things. I believe Marko and I recognized the right moment to start educating Serbian citizens about coffee culture through the Kafeterija brand. So now, everybody knows the difference between espresso, macchiato or cappuccino. Our customers can also tell whether they prefer coffee from Cuba, Brasil or Ethiopia”.

A four-storey coffee shop

The food menu is created to complement coffee and always includes freshly baked croissants, sandwiches, rolls, muesli and many desserts. A couple of stores in Belgrade, namely Fontana and Magazin 1907, have on-site kitchens and a larger, all-day food offering. Kafeterija Magazin 1907, by the way, is the biggest coffee store in the region: located in an elegant early-19th-century department store, it spreads over 1,100 sq m on four floors, has 300 seats, a kids play area, a barber shop, and yearly turnover above €1.5m. “Every store has its own story, depending on the neighbourhood where it is located, the people who are visiting it, the history of the building. We always look for an interesting location, so that Kafeterija can live a unique local energy,” underlines Stanojević.

The core of the design for each Kafeterija coffee store comes from Zoran Stanojević’s wife Jelena, who is an architect, now assisted by a team of designers working out the details. “We like to stick to ‘less is more’,” says Zoran, “taking a bit from every style we appreciate. So, in our coffee stores you can find a bit of vintage spirit, with elegant industrial details, and a modern vibrant energy”.

Over the years, Kafeterija has developed three formats: Kafeterija To Go, Kafeterija Medium (<150 sq m, no kitchen), and Kafeterija Large (150-350 sq m, with full kitchen, children playground, barber shop, retail shop). All stores are directly managed. "In order to maintain quality, we strive to remain a company-operated concept. In the future we will probably look for more options, which will allow for faster market penetration. We will develop through partnerships, not franchise, and we are looking for suitable operators in different markets," says Stanojevic.

New app & cashless store

Kafeterija has a diverse customer base, though the target audience is 18-45 years-old, dynamic, modern, mainly pays by card and visits at least three times a week. "Most of our clients are part of a young urban generation that are not afraid to try new things, share new energy, while still appreciating the very authentic spirit of their country," declares Stanojevic. To better cater to this digital and connected clientele Kafeterija has come up with a custom-made app which will be launched in April and that, among other features, will enable users to locate the closest Kafeterija, pre-order coffee-to-go and collect their coffee without having to wait for it. Also, in partnership with Visa, Kafeterija is about to open its first cashless store, a first in this part of Europe.

Considering that Serbia is one of the countries with the lowest income per capita in Europe and that the average price of a coffee or a cappuccino at Kafeterija is €1.90-2.50, what is the positioning of the chain? "We are aware of the standard of living in Serbia, so we strive to maintain prices as low as possible through our efficient operation, while keeping our quality standards. In this context, I can say we are a mid-priced coffee store chain," explains Stanojevic. So, what is the key to Kafeterija's success? "For our team, real people matter, people that are our guests, people who keep coming back, people of different interests, people like us. I believe our customers can feel that, and that's why they feel a bond with Kafeterija as a brand. On the other hand, everybody loves to feel acknowledged in their local coffee store, to have staff that knows what kind of coffee they prefer, and to get a smile from their favourite barista or waiter and, in the end, to have a cup of great quality coffee," concludes the co-founder. ●●



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Local ice cream will continue to be patronized

Rahil Gandhi, Director, Vadital Dairy International Limited, speaks of his companies new marketing campaigns, withstanding the foreign competition and the growth of ice cream industry in India.



Rahil Gandhi

The ice cream industry in India appears to be going through a phase of churn with foreign brands giving a serious look-in to home-grown brands. What explains this sudden foreign interest in the Indian Ice cream industry and why are local brands looking to exit a business they have been associated with so long?

I don't think there is any sudden interest of foreign brands in India. As you may be aware, Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) had acquired the Kwality brand ice cream way back in 1995. Also, Cadbury had brought the Dollop ice cream brand in 1990. There has always been an interest in ice cream or the dairy sector by foreign brands. Ice cream, overall, is always in demand and liked by many and there has never been a sudden foreign interest in the industry. Of course, there are always some local brands that are on the lookout for interesting buyout opportunities to come their way. By and large, local ice cream still continues to be patronized and liked by many people.

Why is it that many of the regional players, despite their years in the business, have not really been able to scale up as desired? Why is it that regional players have not been able to become national brands?

Regional players, despite being in the field for long, have not been able to scale up at the desired size because ice cream is a very tough business to be in. We need to have effective distribution, high-end logistic support and be able to match the taste and preferences of consumers. But regional players have been able to scale up in their own territories. They could not grow further in other territories due to the higher transportation and infrastructure costs. Setting up depots is very expensive and not very profitable if they are farther away from your production base. Selling ice cream products in other far way territories poses formidable logistics challenges.

Do you think foreign players will be able to scale the business heights that Indian players have failed to achieve?

As I said, most home-grown regional players have done well and have amazing success stories in their own respective regions though that success has not been replicated at the national level. I don't believe it is that easy for foreign players to scale business beyond a point as the market is extremely competitive. Already, there are many big brands, multinationals, and major co-operatives in the market. They too have a tough time in catering to the territories where they are regionally weak. And good local players will always offer strong competition. Also, Indians are normally patriotic by nature and are loyal and patronizing of home-grown brands.

Is brand building a tough nut to crack in India's ice cream market, which is massively fragmented, unorganized and crowded with small players?

Definitely. brand building in ice cream is a tough nut to crack. You only need to look, for instance, at a State like Maharashtra where there are one or two local players in every district. But they find it hard to scale up beyond a point individually. In some pockets of the State, it is very difficult to cut across the locally preferred and accepted brands. If you look at Aurangabad district alone, there are about 10 local brands in the region. Add to the fact that there are other brands available as well, which makes the existing cold chain market very competitive regionally.





As a leading player in the Indian ice cream market, what is Vadilal doing on the premiumisation and brand awareness fronts that can help enlarge its brand equity and footprint?

Vadilal is going to be very aggressive moving ahead as compared to the past years on innovation and brand building efforts. We have launched more than 30 SKUs in different forms like cups, candies, party packs as well as massive packing design changes for the summer season this year. We have gone in for a big overhaul of our product portfolio with the view to offer more choices, innovation in packaging and brand building. Our exercise in creating more awareness for our products and the strengthening of our availability programme has boosted both demand and supply. Going ahead, we have plans for more promotions – advertisements on boards, posters, POPs as well as advertising in newspapers and social media.

What is Vadilal doing to enhance the retail reach and increase the visibility and availability of its brands in terms of: –

- a) **Marketing campaigns** We plan to increase our outlets three-fold, keeping the rural and urban markets in mind and matching our quality and packaging to international standards. Currently, the company has approximately 15,000 outlets, which we plan to increase three-fold over the next five years. Of course, there is a plan to increase the capacity in terms of production and to adequately meet the demand by enhancing the infrastructure and facilities, thereby making Vadilal brand available in every kirana (retail) stores in the territories, and making it an easily accessible brand in every nook and corner. Our vision is to maintain the integrity of the brand with world-class quality and complete customer satisfaction. Vigorous marketing campaigns are underway through electronic and print media during the current financial year as well as for the years ahead.
- b) **Promotion via social media** Engage in active social media promotions and it is being done.
- c) **Ramping up the distribution system with freezers not only in supermarkets/ hypermarkets but also in small neighbourhood shops** For the first time in India, Vadilal launched different varieties of cones recently. In order to make these cones, machines had to be specially



AN OVERVIEW OF THE ICE CREAM INDUSTRY

Under dairy or food processing sector, Indian ice cream industry is one of the fastest growing segments. The current size of the industry is over Rs.4,000 crore and is growing at the rate of 15%-20% on year on year basis. This figure is expected to reach Rs. 6,198 crore in 2019 even though the per capita ice cream consumption in India is only 400 ml compared to 3,000 ml and 22,000 ml in China and USA respectively.

modified so that consumers could get different varieties of ice creams – anjeer, kaju draksh, cookies-n- cream, tutty-fruity – in cone varieties. Earlier, these flavours were available in party packs and cups only. Distributors with cold room facilities are being offered higher margins and additional benefits as compared to the smaller distributors who operate deep freezer machines. Deep freezers with nominal deposits and, in certain cases, on nil deposits are being offered to the retailers from where good returns of sales are expected. Select retailers are being offered special discounts to maintain the loyalty.

- d) **Opening more ice cream parlours;** We have ice cream parlours of two different brands – ‘Pure Happiness’ and ‘Nothing But Goodness’. More such parlours are being opened for greater penetration of our products.

What have been your initiatives on introducing new ice cream concepts by way of new flavours and low-fat products for the calorie-conscious?

Innovation and introduction of new flavours and variants are a continuous process at Vadilal. FOM (Flavour of the month) is one such process through which a new flavour is added periodically.

How do you see the future for the local players?

With the changing times, tastes and preferences of consumers for natural and traditional flavoured ice creams are set to develop further. Indian brands will continue to play a major competitive role in Indian market despite foreign players entering the market. For sure, competition will always be there from Indian brands and International/foreign brands will not find the Indian market as easy to crack as they might have expected. ••





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India Food Forum 2019 concludes on a thumping note

As the 12th edition of India Food Forum got up and running from 5th-6th Feb. at the Renaissance Hotel Mumbai, it once again shone the spotlight on a ground breaking agenda geared to reframe our understanding of the trends shaking up modern food retailing. Through an innovative format of Conferences, Exhibition and Awards, India Food Forum 2019 brought into play a powerful and cutting edge agenda that set an exciting tenor for two days of knowledge sharing and exchange of ideas among industry stalwarts.

The theme of the Forum this year – Charting the growth map for food grocery, food service and food startup in this fast, tech-savvy, digitally connected, demanding consumer-driven era – was aimed at building the roadmap for food retail business to accurately read the underlying opportunities and predict future consumption paths that the

Indian consumer will tread. Offering unique opportunities for networking and business ideas, and for exploring growth opportunities in the dynamic world of food retail, the Forum gathered with the mission to “accelerate food retailing excellence by generating ideas, insights, innovation and opportunities for profitable growth.”

With twelve years of stellar track record as India’s pre-eminent knowledge and business networking platform for food retail, India Food Forum 2019 once again brought together key decision makers from every part of the food retail ecosystem. Chaired by Krish Iyer, President & CEO, Walmart India, India Food Forum 2019 was power-packed with interactive and focused panel discussions, workshops, exhibition, Master-classes, product launch pads, awards and an array of other highlights.

The activities at the Forum this year had a thoughtfully curated and designed five structured zones – Food & Grocery



KRISH IYER
*Chairman, India Food Forum 2019
President & CEO, Walmart India*

Forum India, India Food Service Forum, India Food Retail Tech, Food Start-ups Innovation Convention, and the Golden Spoon Awards for excellence in Food and Grocery, Foodservice and for demonstrating innovation in the Food Start-up category. To keep the delegates connected with the next big innovations in food retailing, HoReCa and food technology, the Forum featured a



line-up of powerful conferences and eminent industry experts as speakers. This year, the stellar cast at the Forum spanned over 3,000 participants, including 100+supermarkets & grocers, 100+ restaurateurs & chefs, 300+ Food, FMCG & HoReCa professionals, 100+ global brands & retailers, 100+CIOs/CTOs/CXOs besides an impressive line-up of startups, investors and other principals from the Food Retail universe.

In his keynote address, **Krish Iyer, Chairman, India Food Forum, and President & CEO, Walmart India** said, "Retailers need to look out for the middle class India – this segment of the population is going to matter most in the coming years –



“As F&B players, we want to be part of the shopping centres of the future”

The restaurateur fraternity discussed and deliberated on many issues at the India Food Service Forum. Very fruitful discussions were held with Mall operators who were keen to understand what we want as operators of food service. We discussed these issues with the people who are developing space for food, leisure, and retail. The F&B sector is in an expansion mode. We want to multiply our stores to come – not just in the cities that we are present in but also in Tier II & III cities.

We have enough capital backing and bandwidth but the problem is that there is no quality space. Shopping centres being developed are for the future and as F&B players we want to be a part of it. Today, there is tremendous scope for developing new food centric spaces. We were happy to hear more on the new emerging spaces like Airports, Metros, Railways, Bus Stations, Hospitals, Petrol Pumps and Highways at India Food Forum where we got together and addressed this situation.

– **Rahul Singh**
President, National Restaurant Association of India

their spending capacity is constantly rising and will account for 40% of the overall wallet share which, in the long run will make for a significant contribution to the FMCG sector.” He also mentioned some important factors that could help bring about faster growth for the industry and food retailers. Among his observations were: The desire among Indians for healthier consumption is increasing under the influence of the growing reach of education – whether in urban, semi-urban and rural population. There is a strong move towards value and there are more opportunities waiting to be tapped on this front.

Commenting on the rise of the omni-channel approach, he said: “As consumers are becoming richer and digitally-savvy, servicing their needs require that the gap between physical and digital is bridged. More and more of today’s new age entrepreneurs want to launch their business through the online platform. He said that food retailers are going digital in distinct ways – they are using digital tools to elevate customer experience and are innovating around e-commerce, hyperlocal, payments, and across other consumer touch points as well. Therefore, customer engagement through digital tools is becoming quite significant and customers are looking for an on-demand delivery particularly when it comes to ready-to-eat food.”

“Digital touchpoints have increased the bandwidth of data, therefore, helping enable a better omnichannel experience but it also requires large scale investment. Enriching physical via digital is the key. It is not about replacing the physical details – it is about enriching the experience by collaborating with both platforms to give an enhanced experience to customers,” he observed.

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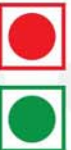


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Indian food service market: Lessons for 2019

The Indian food market is a veritable treasure chest of opportunity for food service companies. But the same market can also spell doom if they fail to understand its finer nuances. In a highly engaging and thought provoking session, top honchos of leading QSR and food companies discussed the key learnings from the Indian market in 2018, and how they are planning their future expansion. The session was moderated by Rahul Singh, Founder & CEO, Beer Café, and President, NRAI.

by Virat Bahri

It would be hard to find a parallel to the sheer diversity that's inherent in the Indian food services industry – from the street hawkers in rural India to the highway dhabas, standalone restaurants and QSR chains of major Indian and MNC brands.

Buoyed by disposable incomes, rapid urbanisation and global exposure, Indians are splurging on food like never before. They are looking for great taste, variety and value for money. And QSRs are only too happy to oblige with an ever growing bouquet of offerings.

The Indian QSR market was valued at Rs. 9,125 crore in 2016 and projected to grow to Rs. 24,665 crore by 2021 according to a report by National Restaurants Association of India (NRAI). On the other hand, the food services market in the country was pegged at Rs. 3 lakh crore in 2016 and estimated to grow to Rs. 5 lakh crore by 2021. The food services sector employed around 5.6-6 million people directly in 2016, a number that's expected to surge to 8.5-9 million people by 2021.

Penetration levels are still low, which implies huge headroom for growth. India's per capita expenditure on food is at around US\$ 110, compared to US (US\$ 1,870), China (US\$ 750) and Brazil (US\$ 745). Indians eat out around 4-5 times a month, while the frequency is 28 times in Singapore or Hong Kong.

In the exclusive inaugural session of India Food Forum 2019, some of the leading players of the industry came together to discuss some of the key learnings from their experiences in 2018. In this session moderated by **Rahul Singh, Founder & CEO, Beer Café, and President, NRAI**, the panelists also discussed their expansion plans for the Indian market in the coming years. Some of the major learnings are as follows:

A product creates an industry

Indian street food has enthralled global palates over the years, and the sheer variety, exquisite tastes and flavours and innovation in this industry is a delight for the senses. Besides homegrown



delicacies, the street food industry is known for giving its unique twists to the Italian pizza, Chinese noodles and even the Nepali momo.

The momo came into India as a street food initially and became an instant hit across India. Yet, entrepreneurs Sagar Daryani and Binod Homagai felt that the potential of the momo was much, much more. And thanks to their conviction, Wow! Momo was born. The very idea behind Wow! Momo was to create a brand and an industry out of the product.

At the core of the success of Wow! Momo has been the innovative varieties of momos they have brought on their menu, including chocolate momos and momo burger. **Sagar Daryani, Co-founder and CEO, Wow! Momo** said, "It's like taking it to the next level. We have done simple things with style, we have kept on innovating. The market is there; our population is our biggest strength. It's a consumer-oriented market. We have Indianised momos. That's the mantra." They have even brought in frozen momos, packaged momos and aspire to introduce a momo vending machine. Wow! Momo is indeed an inspiring and educative case study on how a brand can be created from a product category.

Profit first, market share later

The costs of real estate are a real dampener for the food services industry at present, a fact that was acknowledged by most panellists. **Navin Gurnaney, CEO, Tata Starbucks**, commented, "I would like to make a note to real estate developers to be kinder to food services people. Occupancy costs are not easy."

High operational costs in general prove to be a major deterrent for food services players and that is why QSRs have shifted their focus to profitable growth as opposed to a mindless pursuit of market

share. Gurnaney summarises it thus, "We are at 136 stores, we'll finish this year at 144 a lot more to come in the years to come. But what we will not do is to grow just for the sake of growing. It's extremely critical for us to grow profitably." The philosophy was echoed by **Subroto Gupta, SVP & Head, Innovation and Business Excellence, Jubilant FoodWorks Ltd.**

Frugally innovative

Given the high cost structures and the need to deliver outstanding value to customers, QSR chains are looking at all possible ways to stretch every buck. Domino's has been doing better on financials due to relatively softer commodity prices, change in beverage partner and favourable movement in the product mix. But the company has also taken some critical steps to boost



“ We have close to 2 million visitors so far in our store. We do not see the problem with manpower. Right now, we have 200 people in the store working with food. Around 50% are women and we are super proud of that. For the long term, we have a goal of achieving 10% of sales from the restaurant business in India. We have the footfalls to achieve the goal.

– Henrik Österström
Country food Manager,
IKEA India



“ The way we made roadside momos a brand - it was unorganised we made it organised. Now there is this big market for roadside Chinese which can become a brand – the Indian Chinese which we call Chindian. We all it live Chinese. It's all transparent – it's a live kitchen you can see it being made right in front of you. That's going to be the next game changer.

– Sagar Daryani
Founder, Wow! Momo





“ While India presents lots of opportunity, there are also challenges. The one that comes most to mind – I would like to make a note to real estate developers to be kinder to food services people. Occupancy costs are not easy. We are very proud of having broken even in a relatively shorter period of time. It took McDonald’s over ten years to break even. Even Domino’s had to wait for a decade... ”

– Navin Gurnaney
CEO, Tata Starbucks



“ As a food processing company, we do not want to become innovation junkies. We don’t want to launch products for the sake of launching products. We need to be differentiated, we need to be valued because of the differentiation in the product and the service that we offer. We won’t launch products, which do not conform to our core philosophy... ”

– Chintan Dholakia
GM, Unilever Food Solutions

margins as Subroto reveals, “One of the things that we have done really well is to use technology and data science to improve manpower efficiency. We have been able to maintain a reasonable control over our manpower costs using things like GPS tracking and automation. A combination of these two has helped us maintain our profitability levels.”

Wow! Momos is exploring options to better utilise its existing infrastructure and assets as it diversifies into Chinese (specifically Chindian) cuisine with Wow! China. Sagar elaborates, “We have a base kitchen which is producing momos all night. When we do Wow! China, the cooking and everything does not require a base kitchen. It can all happen at the store but the sauces and the premixes can all happen at the base kitchen by the same set of people who prepared the momos. So we are using the same skill sets and real estate. And we have now come up with a separate brand because we feel that if we can open 1,000 Wow Momos, we can definitely do 200 Wow Chinas.”

Leveraging human capital

Employees in the food service industry typically face a highly stressful working environment – long working hours, high attrition, disgruntled customers, etc. As the panelists agreed, it was important to keep employees motivated to consistently deliver on the high customer expectations in an extremely competitive market.

Moreover, attracting quality talent for the industry is a difficult task. Youth in the age group of 20-22 years will not be enthused by the prospect of a career as a chef. Keeping pace with the rapid changes in trends is tough without quality manpower on your side. Unilever started a unique

initiative, “We are for U” where the core objective is to free chefs to love what they do. **Chintan Dholakia, GM, Unilever Food Solutions**, explained, “By freeing chefs we mean that we remove the mundane tasks that they do every day. We remove activities like chopping onions and tomatoes and making a broth in the kitchen. We have products that free chefs so that they can actually love what they do in the kitchen.”

Companies like Domino’s set employees on a clear career path from the beginning. Subroto Gupta comments, “We make sure that the employee value proposition (EVP) is very clear when you join Dominos. So when you join as a delivery boy, you have a chart inside the store. It says here you are at day 1 and here is a chart where you can progress to actually be the Country Head for Operations.” Domino’s previous country head started as an Assistant Manager-Training in Mumbai. Moreover, the company keeps a track of employee overtime, Diwali working, etc to ensure that the hardworking staff is always aptly rewarded.

Tata Starbucks faces a peculiar problem – the employees are not generally from the class of customers that visits the store, so there is a natural feeling of intimidation. The company invests a lot of money in training resources so that its employees can be “confident and appropriately friendly”.

The power of listening

Expectations of diners are ever evolving, compelling QSRs to tune their value propositions accordingly. Wow! Momos has already changed the game with its momo outlets. Similarly, the company has introduced innovative menu ideas



for Wow! China. For instance, they serve Chinese bhel in a bhelpuri patta to give it the Indian feel. Customers can choose their noodles, rice, wheat noodles, sauce. The person makes the food in front of you. Sagar opines, "I believe that in today's world the food service business is all about dramatics and theatre. And we call it live Chinese. It's all transparent – it's a live kitchen you can see it being made right in front of you." The customer wants convenience, taste and transparency. Considering the growing health consciousness, Wow! China has kept its menu totally MSG free.

In accordance with its premium positioning, Starbucks considers store design as an extremely important aspect of its overall customer offering. Every store brings its own design nuances based on a lot of research and led by the extremely competent professionals. Gurnaney explains, "We have a design team that sits in Hong Kong, and a design team in Seattle. They are constantly doing research on our upcoming sites. It is a very important part of the essence of the brand and the feel that you get when you walk into the store. So part of it has to feel aspirational, yet localised in an appropriately respectful manner."

Food aggregators – collaborate and compete

With the rising penetration of food delivery apps, more and more customers are now ordering/ making reservations on their mobiles. Several standalone restaurants would only see an upside with food aggregators, but there is a risk for established brands like Domino's. Subroto asserts that Domino's will not give any leeway on its service experience, "You can order through Zomato or Swiggy from Dominos, but the entire service experience including the call centre and delivery is managed by our technology. And all the data and algorithms are ours. It has always been our strategic priority as a brand to own the consumer experience end to end."

Aggregators do pose a challenge to brands like Domino's as well as they expand to more cities with obviously greater variety. Subroto outlines the company's approach to tackle this challenge, "We will continue to invest in what makes us successful – great products, great experience, operations and service, faster delivery, all of those things that we will stand for. We will bring more and more consumer insights with more and more data science. But we are very clear on what it takes to succeed in the food market in India, and we want to double down and invest and continue to excel in those areas."

Food processing – the next frontier

Indians have a traditional perception that processed food is bad and only fresh food needs to be consumed. Companies like Hindustan Unilever are looking to address this issue, as Chintan states, "We at Unilever are committed to have good great processing facilities from farm to factory should be our motto rather than farm to plate. That is the need for the country."



“ We are very clear that as a company, partly to do with the fact that we are listed, but more importantly as a philosophy, we can grow 500 stores tomorrow morning. But we will not do that. We can create 20 more products, we will not do that. We will always prioritise profitability rather than focus on growth alone.

– Subroto Gupta
SVP Head Innovation
and Business Excellence,
Jubilant FoodWorks

While processing facilities are being set up at a rapid pace, the problem of perception needs to be addressed through advertising. Unilever is looking at tools like front of house branding (advertising in restaurant areas like lobby and dining space) to inform people that it is providing processed food with assured quality, consistency and nutrition value. This form of branding is going to take a massive leap in the coming years.

The pie is huge and there is enough room for a lot of players. India's per capita income is approaching US\$ 2000, which is recognised as a point of inflection for consumption in the consumer market. Having said that, India carries its own peculiarities in terms of customer perceptions, tastes and preferences. Failure to understand the dynamics of the Indian market has proved costly for many food service companies. At the same time, a chosen few have successfully cracked the market through years of diligent planning and razor sharp execution. As players plan their next phase of expansion, learnings from both sets of players will certainly come in handy. ●●



HONORING THE BEST IN FOOD SERVICE

Images Food Service Awards, presented by HUL's Knorr Seasonings and powered by Lulu Mall, were given away at the 12th edition of India Food Forum, held in Mumbai last month. The awards are given for excellence in different categories of Food Service, and recognised as India's most prestigious honour for F&B operators. India's most innovative, successful and revered brands and professionals across the food service sector were presented with the awards this year. Trophies were presented to brands, personalities and concepts for exceptional initiative, outstanding/focussed performance, setting efficiency benchmarks, innovation, and broader impact to India's foodservice industry.





IMAGES MOST ADMIRED FOOD SERVICE CHAIN OF THE YEAR: **QSR India Origin**

★ **HALDIRAM'S** ★



Received by: **Dr. A K Tyagi**, Executive Director, Haldiram's

Presented by: **Mukesh Kumar**, CEO, Infinti Malls

IMAGES MOST ADMIRED FOOD SERVICE CHAIN OF THE YEAR: **Cafes & Juice Bar**

★ **THE CHOCOLATE ROOM** ★

Received by: **Dhawal Shukla**, Assistant Director, The Chocolate Room

Presented by: **Mukesh Kumar**, CEO, Infinti Malls



IMAGES MOST ADMIRED FOOD SERVICE CHAIN OF THE YEAR: **Ice-cream & Dessert Parlours**

★ **NATURALS ICE-CREAM** ★



Received by: **Srinivas Kamath**, Director, Naturals Ice-cream

Presented by: **P Muthuraman**, Director (western region), FSSAI



IMAGES MOST ADMIRED FOOD SERVICE CHAIN OF THE YEAR: **Pubs & Bars**

★ **THE IRISH HOUSE** ★

Received by: **Meena Shah**, VP F&B Controls, **Shauvik Modak**, VP Supply Chain & Cost Control, **Rajat Verma**, VP Operations, **Vikas Sharma**, **Neha Dave**

Presented by: **Sachin Goel**, National Key Account Manager, Unilever Food Solutions, India



IMAGES MOST ADMIRED FOOD SERVICE CHAIN OF THE YEAR: **Dine-in**

★ **BERCO'S** ★



Received by: **Kabir Advani**, MD, Berco's

Presented by: **Shibu Phillips**, Business Head, Lulu Mall





IMAGES MOST ADMIRERD FOOD SERVICE CHAIN OF THE YEAR: **Kiosk/Express Format**

★ **WOW! MOMO** ★



Received by: **Sagar J Daryani**, CEO, Wow! Momo,
Nilesh Gautam, City Head,
Rajkumar Gupta, Operations Manager,
Bikash Sharma, Marketing Manager,
Md. Akram, Project Manager

Presented by: **Shibu Phillips**, Business Head, Lulu Mall

IMAGES MOST ADMIRERD **Food Service Outlet Launch of the Year**

★ **DILLI STREET T3, NEW DELHI** ★

Received by: **Meena Shah**, VP F&B Controls,
Shauvik Modak, VP Supply Chain and Cost Control,
Neha Dave, PR & B2B, **Rajat Verma**, VP Operations,
Vikas Sharma, Production Head



Presented by: **Keyur Bhatia**, TJUK Trade Network



IMAGES MOST ADMIRERD **Food Court of the Year**

★ **MY SQUARE, SELECT CITY WALK** ★



Received by: **Rohit Bakshi**, Manager,
Select City Walk

Presented by: **Dhiren Kanwar**, President and
MD, India and Middle East, Griffith Foods



1st Runner-up ★ **INORBIT WHITEFIELD** ★

Received by: **Leasing Team**, Inorbit
Presented by: **Dhiren Kanwar**, President and MD,
India and Middle East, Griffith Foods



2nd Runner-up ★ **PHOENIX UNITED, LUCKNOW** ★



Received by: **Sanjeev Sarin**, Center Director, Phoenix
Presented by: **Dhiren Kanwar**, President and MD, India
and Middle East, Griffith Foods



IMAGES MOST **Effective Innovation in Food Service**

★ **PERPULE** ★



Perpule

Received by: **Vijay Krishna**, AVP-Growth, Perpule
Presented by: **Sameer M Warma**, General Manager, Lulu Shopping Mall (Lucknow)

IMAGES MOST ADMIRER **Startup of the Year in Food Service**

★ **BELGIAN WAFFLE** ★

Received by: **Ankit Patel**, CEO, Belgian Waffle
Presented by: **Kunal Yadav**, Director- Sales and Marketing, McCain Foods India Pvt. Ltd.



Excellence in F&B Quality and Safety

★ **JUBILANT FOODWORKS** ★



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The coming Home Delivery Boom

Food delivery apps are enabling demand through their swift expansion and this is further facilitated by the multitude of restaurants already dotting the landscape that are eager to cater to the supply side. The key question to keep in mind is how this market will pan out over the next few years, and what is in it for Foodservice operators and Foodservice companies to partner in this growth and drive it.

by K.S. Narayanan



Since time immemorial, India has been a nation of traders with millions of mom & pop stores and independent restaurants dotting the entire length and breadth of the country. These millions of establishments were able to address the needs of the billion-plus population and get goods & services delivered to the doorstep in their own limited manner. In recent years, there has been a tremendous transformation in this area with the advent of the 'on-demand service economy' in the food service industry space pioneered by the food delivery apps, including the likes of Swiggy, Zomato, UBER Eats, Food Panda and other players.

The traditional classification of the food industry was segregated in a rather simplistic manner between 'in-home eating' which includes staple grocery items, fruits & vegetables cooked at home, and 'out-of-home eating', which referred to hotels, restaurants and catering. The on-demand service economy has now introduced a third dimension in significant measure, i.e. out of home cooked food, but delivered and experienced at home.

The popularity of food delivery apps has surged exponentially within the past 3-4 years in India. Within the past year alone, one of the key delivery apps has expanded its presence from 15 to 45 cities, the number of orders per day has grown seven fold and their number of riders has multiplied 25 times. This merely reflects the tip of the iceberg, with this space currently seeing stupendous growth.

These food delivery apps are enabling demand through their swift expansion and this is further facilitated by the multitude of restaurants already dotting the landscape that are eager to cater to the supply side. The key question to keep in mind



The Transformation

Restaurants have predominantly been the one service where the production and distribution of the service was done by the same operator, i.e. the restaurant operator / owner. Any takeaways or home deliveries were managed through internal resources and these were typically about 10%+ of total sales of the restaurant and was considered good. However, with the prevalence of food service apps, there is a growing segregation between production and distribution of the food service.

With the onset of these food delivery apps, the restaurants clearly saw a market that they were unable to address earlier. The demand for 'out-of-home food experienced at home' posed an opportunity for restaurants to capitalize on incremental sales, and they went out of their way to facilitate this through faster service, better delivery packaging, modification in menus, separate delivery counters and so on but offered a significant discount to the delivery service apps. If this trend of increasing delivery sales continues indefinitely, it puts the profit margins of restaurants at risk because the cost equations become imbalanced. However, there is no denying that the delivery boom has expanded the food service market as a whole. This has come at an opportune time with the rising Millennial population tending to order more food from outside.

The delivery boom has been a great impetus to the emergence of Cloud Kitchens / Dark Kitchens / Delivery Only kitchens and so on. This has enabled tremendous saving on precious real estate, service staff and expensive utilities amongst others. With the capability to serve multiple cuisines / formats from one centralized kitchen location, there is also the ability to co-locate multiple brands from the same location. However, in order to succeed in this environment, one needs to optimize menus for the delivery market, maximize use of convenience products and de-skill and re-skill the kitchen and assembly staff.

In recent years, there has been a tremendous transformation in this area with the advent of the 'on-demand service economy' in the food service industry space pioneered by the food delivery apps, including the likes of Swiggy, Zomato, UBER Eats, Food Panda and other players.



is how this market will pan out over the next few years, and what is in it for Foodservice operators and Foodservice companies to partner in this growth and drive it.

The Chinese Situation

Data from our neighbour China clearly indicates that China competes with India as one of the world's fastest growing markets for food delivery. Based on the estimates available, China was galloping away at about close to 40 billion USD in size and growing at a pace of about 25%. This means they are adding at the rate of 10 billion USD every year – three times our market size! In comparison, India is growing much faster at approximately 50%, but at a paltry 3 billion USD in size. This goes to show that India has just started to order food online!

Unlike any other QSR metrics, like average bill value, etc., the average size of the delivery value in China and India are similar at about 350-450 INR. This is a great positive with regard to delivery economics. This means that the challenges faced in the delivery economics in both countries are similar.





So how does one differentiate and build a cloud kitchen brand? Food innovation is the key. There is this general tendency for consumers to look for change, and it is in these areas where these brands can focus their attention and differentiate themselves in the marketplace:

- ▶ Serving a range of ethnic specialties hitherto eaten only during weddings and family functions, cooked by special maharajs, family cooks, halwais and so on, now made available on demand. This will give a great impetus to the unsung catering industry, which can pioneer this trend.
- ▶ Curating exotic recipes using specialized ingredients, both domestic and imported and creating the much needed differentiation.
- ▶ Using an optimized kitchen (using standardized equipment, etc.) and ensuring that one is able to dish out multiple cuisines / formats and optimize the delivery fleet to service the demand so created across all the day parts of breakfast, lunch, snacks & dinner.
- ▶ Reimagining various combos ranging from snacks, healthy salads, meals to beverages and ensuring they are aligned with the major food trends.
- ▶ For the average consumer who seeks his daily meal / ghar ka khana – food production in hygienic state-of-the-art automated kitchens (a la Akshayapatra) using economies of scale to drive food production costs and leveraging delivery as a means to reach the consumer.

- ▶ Foodservice oriented food companies supplying to such operators can step up the game by producing on a larger scale and providing solutions rather than selling products or ingredients.
- ▶ The on delivery economy would call for foodservice companies to develop products and solutions that can withstand delivery. For example, French fries that can last longer, packaging that can help a dosa not go soggy and so on.

The delivery boom is clearly throwing up huge opportunities at an unprecedented scale, requiring imagination and a combination of the first mover advantage backed by solid analytics that should enable a restaurant brand to make a mark.

Where does this leave the restaurants that see a decline in their dine-in service or will it really decline? Clearly, consumers are looking for experiences that cannot be created or matched at home, and restaurants will have to ensure that they provide such experiences without fail. Remember, humans are social beings, eager to step out of their homes and having a meal is clearly one of the best past times. So make it memorable, an experience worth remembering for them, their families and friends. Clearly a case of both sides of the bread being buttered! ●●



The writer is a Food Industry expert with over 30 years of experience in running businesses across the various F&B Sectors in India & Europe. He is a member of National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), and a regular guest lecturer at various Management Institutes.

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Chefs should live, eat and breathe **the cuisines to grasp its essence**

With over two decades of experience, nationally and internationally, and after honing his skills in multiple cuisines – from Italian to north Indian – he is an inspiration for several budding chefs in the business. Chef Ravi Saxena speaks to FoodService India about his culinary journey, about taking risks with a comfortable career at hotels and switching to restaurants, and sharing his professional wisdom for the benefit of aspiring chefs.



Please take us through your culinary journey so far, the major milestones accomplished along the way and how they have shaped and influenced your career?

I have developed my culinary skills over the past 25 plus years. After graduating from IHM Goa, I started my career as a Kitchen Trainee with The Leela in 1992. Soon after, I joined The Holiday Inn, Pune, as second in command to the Executive Chef to take responsibility for the kitchen. I then spent a year in 1999 at Baisan International Hotel, Bahrain, where I acquired the versatility and efficiency in cuisines such as Mexican, Mediterranean, Italian, Arabic and Continental. Later, I followed this up with a stint at The Imperial, Delhi, where I joined as a Junior Sous Chef and opened the Italian Restaurant 'San Gimignano'. I was later promoted to Executive Sous Chef in 2005. After this stint at Imperial, I was exposed to two 2-star Michelin restaurants in Siena and Verona in Italy where I honed my skills in Italian cuisine.

I joined The Claridges, Delhi, in 2007 as an Executive Chef. In 2013, I moved on and introduced the quintessential 'dhaba' experience in a lighter, more fun ambience with Dhaba by Claridges in Saket, Gurgaon and Nehru Place. After Azure Hospitality took over



Dhaba in 2016, Dhaba has expanded outside Delhi-NCR, to Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai and in Pune as well. The most recent 10th Dhaba outlet opened recently on 5th Jan 2019 at the new upcoming destination Aerocity in New Delhi. I am an integral part of this venture with my duties as Corporate Chef for the brand, the outlets and the base kitchen. I have brought about an interesting separation of the Dhaba menu into three parts: tawa, tandoor and patila.

What kind of a food person are you? What do you think are your key strengths as a chef?

I have always believed in simple, tasteful and no-frills food. Though coming from multiple cuisine backgrounds, both regional and international, I have always believed that the major focus should always be on the taste of food and on using the best of the ingredients. The key strengths of a chef is on having an in-depth knowledge of the cuisine that one specializes in. To master any cuisine, one has to live, eat, drink and breathe that cuisine thoroughly. One has to understand the culture, the palate, the ingredients and all that one can know of that cuisine.

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

The role of a modern day chef has seen a major paradigm shift from what it used to be in the past. Today, the restaurants run majorly on the skills of chefs and where "food is king", which makes or breaks the reputation of a restaurant. With the advancement of technology, the innovation levels have scored new highs. A top-drawer chef plays multiple role these days, be it in the innovation of dishes, being up to date on the latest trends, training people, selecting the best of ingredients, maintaining the hygiene standards of kitchens, and greeting and meeting the guests. Besides, chefs are equally involved in the project and planning of the kitchen facility, right from the selection of equipment, the layout of kitchen, cost control, MIS of the restaurant, controlling expenses...the list is endless...



As a top chef, one has to keep evolving and, most importantly, the game changer is consistency in the deliverables, which helps one keep ahead of the curve.

What is the one thing that is going to change the way food will be promoted in future?

Easy access, app-based ordering, and price points are three major ways in which I feel the industry is changing and will continue to promote the food in future.

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

Yes, as said earlier, the growing culinary expertise in India has resulted in better trained chefs. Be it any cuisine, Indian chefs have mastered it very well as we have seen in our country. The immense growth in the number of standalone restaurants, F&B destinations and hotels are proof of this trend. The one segment I personally feel that Indian chefs really need to grow and evolve is bakery and confectionery.

Which particular cuisines you focus on and how have you seen it evolve over the years?

I love to work on Italian and regional Indian cuisines.

How do you see the potential of Indian regional cuisines?

With an experience of running over 10 north Indian restaurants (rather Punjabi food) across the country, this cuisine has been very well accepted and appreciated not just in the north but even down south. Having said that, north Indian cuisine still has a very strong potential not just in the domestic market but in other overseas markets too.



Can you offer us examples of some innovative How do you envisage the evolving role of chefs in a changing food scenario and what new developments and trends would you like to highlight regarding your professional line of business?

The growth and spread of technology, ease of access to the best of the ingredients, travelling to learn the cuisine, internet access to keep oneself updated on the latest trends worldwide, chefs' seminars and interactions, food shows on TV channels, are a few developments and trends that are having an impact on this profession and contributing to the evolving role played by chefs.

As a top chef, one has to keep evolving and, most importantly, the game changer is consistency in the deliverables, which can help to stay ahead of the curve. To achieve this, one has to have a good team as it cannot be accomplished alone. As a firm believer of team work, I am of the opinion that the best ideas will not see a conversion until the time they are



My one sincere advise to aspiring chefs is: Keep your eyes and ears open to what is happening around, be humble and eager to learn....

executed under the leadership of a top chef who is assisted by an equally qualified and trained team. Staying relevant in the face of cut-throat competition, staying on top of the game through constant evolution and being consistent are major challenges that I see in times to come.

As a top chef, how do you keep ahead of the curve and up to date with the latest trends in the industry?

Social media exposure and internet are the major sources that I rely on to be in step with the latest trends in the industry. As my job requires a lot of travelling to major Indian cities, I get to visit a lot of new places, which helps me to have a pulse on the latest changes and happenings around. In my personal experience, it is the best way to learn and upgrade.

How would you describe your best accomplishments and achievements?

The proudest accomplishment so far for me in my

career was the switch from being a hotel chef to becoming a restaurant chain chef after putting in 22 plus years in the hotel industry.

It wasn't an easy decision or move as they are two faces of the same industry with their own pros and cons. Today, I feel very glad about the switch I made. Even after so many years in this profession, there are still new learnings for me everyday.

What advice and suggestions would you like to offer to those aspiring to come into this profession?

One has to cook with passion and put your heart and soul into the job. Know your ingredients, cooking methods and food well. Till the time I am not satisfied with my product, I don't expect my guests to like it as well. Also, in these competitive times, you need to give what the market demands. To make it big in any field, you need to have an equally big base and foundation. I believe that along with technical skills, theoretical knowledge is a must or else the journey will be too long. With increasing competition, things are not easy for chefs these days. My one sincere advise to aspiring chefs is: Keep your eyes and ears open to what is happening around, be humble and eager to learn in the early stage of your career, imbibe and absorb as much as you can, make notes and don't give up with a few initial failures. Life will present many exciting opportunities, so never stop learning...

After all these years as a chef, what are your feelings looking back and ahead?

Each day is a new day. The kitchen is my playground and the ingredients are my tools of the trade. I love using them and moulding them as much as I can. To all aspiring chefs, I would recommend that experiment as much as you can and try cooking a new dish each day. ●●

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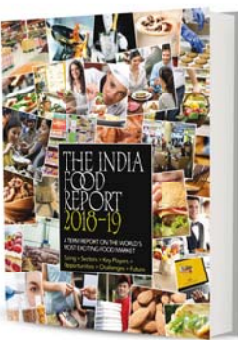
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FoodService India speaks to Vikram Rana, MD, Vapour Bar Exchange, Gurgaon, about the challenges of opening a new restaurant in this competitive market and the marketing strategies necessary for the brand to stay relevant in this digital era.



Focusing on the values of brand and breaking ground in niche markets

What is the customer and value proposition of your brand for the guests?

A value proposition is a promise of value to be delivered to our guests with a pure product that provides a tailored level of unique services and experiences. We, at Vapour Bar Exchange, Gurgaon, offer services at a very nominal prices as compared to the other bars (almost 60% to 80% less). This makes our guests and customers come for us.

What is the kind of positioning your brand is looking to create?

To be the best of the best is our goal. We have our concepts and brand character very clear as compared to the other brands. Our values are very clear to our customers in terms of our food, cocktail, entertainment, etc. As a brand, we keep evolving by bringing and introducing the latest trends in cuisines and beverages.



Please offer a detailed lowdown of your establishment in terms of the parameters below:

- ▶ Menu offering: Multi cuisine
- ▶ Price: Economical and pocket friendly
- ▶ Format: Bar Exchange format with food and liquor
- ▶ Concept: Giving people value of money and its dynamic pricing
- ▶ Size of restaurant and seating capacity: Seating is 550 seaters and 22000 sq. ft. (which includes all our 4 properties)
- ▶ Facilities and amenities on offer: Valet parking, Live music, dance floor, wheelchair accessible, rooftop, smoking area, private dining area available, nightlife, and kid friendly.

What innovations have you introduced in your food and beverage operations?

'Vapour' as a brand has always believed in offering something new to the market. We are offering very innovative cocktails. As a brand, we change our menu every three months or six months and keep introducing some "specials" in the menu from time to time.

What do you think of the market potential of your outlet in a crowded market?

F&B is quite a challenging business to be in. Every other day, there is a new bar and restaurant opening up in the city. But with our well trained and experienced team, we make the variations in the routine, like including different items in the menu, live music, stand-up comedy shows, celebrity nights, etc., for our clientele so that





VAPOUR BAR AT A GLANCE

- **Parent company:** Manipal Brewing and Hospitality Pvt. Ltd
- **Brand name:** Vapour Bar Exchange
- **Headquarters:** Gurugram
- **Launch date:** June 2015
- **Retail format:** 4 outlets of bar exchange concept
- **Total retail area under operation:** About 22,000 sq ft. (this area includes four properties – Vapour Bar Exchange: Golf Course Road | Sohna Road | Sector 29 Gurugram | Hauz Khas Village)
- **Average ticket size of bills:** INR 1200
- **Average footfalls per day:** 250
- **Dish/food/beverage specialty:** Vapour Atta Chicken and Dal Makhni with Chur Chur Naan
- **Seats/cover size:** 550
- **Total number of employees:** 150



‘Vapour’ as a brand has always believed in offering something new to the market. We are offering very innovative cocktails. As a brand, we change our menu every three months or six months and keep introducing some “specials” in the menu.

every time the guests get to experience something new with us and are willing to revisit us again. These variations have turned out to be result oriented for us and we get lots of the young crowd as our customers and they are bringing in more business for us.

How would you describe the challenges of opening a new restaurant in Delhi-NCR?

Opening a restaurant should be made simpler and a single window policy is much needed. This will obviate the need for us to keep coming up with new plans and strategies for survival.

What are the new trends that will gain currency for your restaurant format going ahead?

In my opinion, it has to be about a more vibrant night life and pub trends. Thankfully, every day we are seeing something new and interesting coming up. However, it is important that we keep innovating with our practices. Whatever policies and the things that we create for our clients, we should keep improvising and improving on them so that our guests continue to extend their patronage to us and we keep getting guests on a regular and repeat basis.

Please describe how and in what forms you are deploying technology to make your business more efficient and customer friendly?

The kind of technologies that have been introduced in the market are changing continuously as new demands and requirements emerge. F&B operators are everyday searching for something new for their clients, whether it is in terms of privilege and card membership, customer retention or customer feedback.

We run a chain of restaurants and each of these restaurants are equipped with their own office for managing the operations. Each outlet has its own functional unit and operations manager. We have a central store system, a CRM, and there is a core team which includes our chefs to take care of the food management.

We are working with various software as well to help us manage the inventory, for MIS and so many other things. So, every day we keep learning and improving besides also deriving inspiration from our competitors if they are doing something really good and cool.

What’s your business outlook for the future?

The market has evolved and there are lots of competitors around. People are travelling more nowadays and exploring new ideas and concepts. Being in this game, we have diverse team to advise us as we don’t want to miss out on products. We want to be very strong with our products. ●●



Perfect Blend

Known for spectacular architecture and shopping malls, Dubai attracted more than 15 million tourists last year. Home to one of the world's highest number of restaurants per capita, the city is also considered a foodie paradise with almost endless dining out options. It comes as no surprise that the city of glitz and glamour attracts celebrity chefs from all segments, though mostly to be assigned to the fine dining scene. One of the latest additions to Dubai's hospitality landscape is Morimoto, one of 17 restaurants owned by Chef Masaharu Morimoto who is the face of contemporary Japanese cuisine.

by Bettina Quabius

Masaharu Morimoto, known to millions as Iron Chef Morimoto, originally had other plans than entering the culinary world. He initially envisioned a career in baseball but a shoulder injury ended his plans to become a baseball catcher in Japan. Morimoto then began following his second dream and started working at a local restaurant in his hometown of Hiroshima, learning all about sushi and the art of Kaiseki or Japanese fine dining. In Hiroshima he opened his first restaurant, at age 24. Five years later, Morimoto moved to New York, working for a series of prestigious restaurants such as the Sony Club, a restaurant for the corporation's executive staff and visiting VIPs. In 1994, he was recruited to join

the original Nobu restaurant by Nobuyuki "Nobu" Matsuhisa and was soon promoted to Executive Chef.

Cooking battles

After having first competed in 1998 on the Japanese television show "Iron Chef" he later became one of the stars of Food Network's "Iron Chef America". "The majority of my guests still think of me first and foremost as Iron Chef Morimoto, and I love that! It's been over 20 years since I have been the Iron Chef and I am very thankful at the opportunities I've had", Morimoto says today. His engagement turned out to be the springboard for an incredible career in the international restaurant business. In 2001, Morimoto opened his first eponymous restaurant



in Philadelphia which was later followed by restaurants in some of the most vibrant cities such as Mumbai, Tokyo, New York, New Delhi, Napa, Honolulu, Mexico City and Maui. Morimoto Asia Orlando at Disney Springs opened in 2015, followed by Momosan Ramen and Sake NYC, Morimoto Bangkok and Morimoto Las Vegas at MGM Grand in 2016. Morimoto Asia Waikiki, Momosan Waikiki and Morimoto Doha opened in 2017 and Morimoto Dubai in 2018.

In terms of size, design menu and price level each restaurant is different from the other, but all teams use the same core philosophies which are the common thread to each restaurant. Morimoto says that he tries to deliver these core values whether it is a casual Momosan Ramen or one of his signature Morimoto restaurants: "When people dine at a Morimoto restaurant, we want it to be the best in category of whichever type of meal they are having."

Bridge between Japan and the West

While the market for restaurants serving authentic Japanese cuisine today has become crowded in many parts of the world, things were different at the time of Chef Morimoto's beginnings. Though sushi and sashimi were already popular amongst Americans, Japanese dishes incorporated lots of Western ingredients, partly due to local eating habits, partly based on which ingredients were available. Chef Morimoto is known for creating a bridge between the culinary traditions and ingredients from his native Japan and the West. Before he appeared on the scene, dishes such as toro tartare, tuna pizza, or crispy fried chicken with gingerjalapeno sauce would have never been prepared by classically trained chefs in Japan. "The style of my cooking

is rooted in classic Japanese styles and cuisines, but with my own signature twists I have added throughout my years of travel as a chef. I believe that Japanese cooking is both very beautiful to the eye and the palate at the same time", Morimoto explains both his philosophy and the popularity of his native cuisine. The idea behind his brand: "We try to create a restaurant that follows my culinary philosophy and core set of values, then hire the staff that can deliver on our mission. Great food and beverages, exceptional service all inside a fun and exciting dining environment. Our focus starts and ends with the guest experience and how much being in our restaurant pleases them."

Morimoto's seamless integration of Western and Japanese ingredients and his glamorously presented dishes have received critical and popular acclaim. Around 15 of his dishes or some version of them are on the menus at almost all of his restaurants. Beyond that, the menus vary by location, based on local influences and preferences. Culture is very important to the chef when considering a menu for any of his restaurants. "I have 17 restaurants all over the world, and each one of them has its own identity within the city where we operate", he says and points out: "I am very passionate about incorporating local flavor into my menus as much as possible, while still staying true to the dish that we are preparing."

Tuna Pizza & Angry Chicken

Morimoto says he doesn't follow food trends when creating menus but wants to stay true to himself and the type of food that he likes to cook and his guests have liked. At Morimoto Dubai, located on the 23rd and 24th floors of the Renaissance

Among the most popular entrées are braised black cod with a gingersoy reduction, ishi yaki buri bop, which is yellow tail on rice cooked at the guest's table in a hot stone bowl.

▼ Toro Tartare



MORIMOTO DUBAI

Opening date:
29 March 2018

Location: Renaissance
Downtown Hotel, Dubai

Design:
WA International, Dubai

Size: 1,430 sq m
(23rd floor) and 925 sq m
(24th floor)

Seats: 378

MORIMOTO DOHA

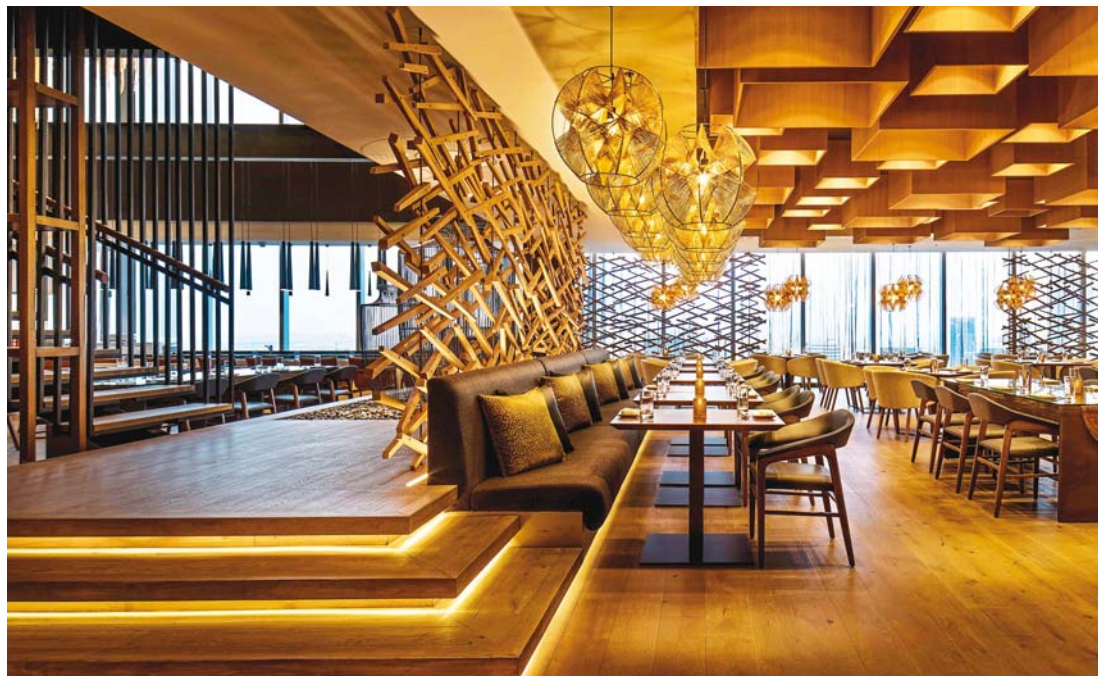
Opening date:
4 October 2017

Location:
Mondrian Hotel, Doha

Design:
Glamorous, Tokyo

Size: 800 sq m

Seats: 184



**MORIMOTO RESTAURANTS
FACTS & FIGURES**

Company Name: MM Management, LLC
Headquarters: New York, USA
No. of employees: 200+
Restaurants by opening date: Morimoto Philadelphia (2001, in partnership with Starr Restaurants) www.morimotorestaurant.com
Wasabi Mumbai (2004) www.tahhotels.com
Atelier Morimoto XEX Tokyo (2005) www.xexgroup.jp/en-morimoto
Morimoto New York (2006, in partnership with Starr Restaurants) www.morimotonyc.com
Morimoto Sushi Bar Boca Raton (2008) www.bocaresort.com
Wasabi New Delhi (2008) www.tajhotels.com
Morimoto Napa (2010) www.morimotonapa.com
Morimoto Mexico City (2011) www.morimotomexicocity.com
Morimoto Maui (2013) www.morimotomaui.com
Momosan Asia Disney Springs (2015) www.partinagroup.com/morimoto-asia
Morimoto Bangkok (2016) www.morimotobangkok.com
Momosan Ramen & Sake New York (2016) www.momosanramen.com
Morimoto Las Vegas (2016) www.mgmgrand.com
Morimoto Doha (2017) www.morimotodoha.com
Momosan Asia Waikiki (2018) www.momosanasiawaikiki.com
Momosan Ramen Waikiki (2018) www.momosanramenwaikiki.com
Morimoto Dubai (2018) www.morimotodubai.com



Downtown Hotel in the city's Downtown district, the menu features signature dishes such as above mentioned toro tartare, which comes as finely minced tuna served on a specially created wooden tray with fresh wasabi, puffed rice, sour cream, avocado, chives, and a paste made with dried seaweed, or tuna pizza, made from tortilla (not pizza) dough, thin slices of tuna on top, garnished with red onion, black olives, tomatoes and anchovy aioli sauce, both dishes at around €20. Other appetizers include Morimoto sashimi, a combination of seared toro, salmon, eel, tuna, hamachi with five sauces; oyster foie gras or sea urchin carbonara, udon noodles with veal bacon and crispy shallots on top.

Among the most popular entrées (€32- 60) are braised black cod with a gingersoy reduction, ishi yaki buri bop, which is yellowtail on rice cooked at the guest's table in a hot stone bowl, and – another dish that Morimoto is famous for – angry chicken, half chicken marinated in a spicy Indian-style garam masala with roasted peppers. Soups and Noodles (€-14), several wagyu steaks (€5-90) and a wide variety of sushi & sashimi (€3,50-8) as well as maki rolls (€4.50- 20) round up the offer. Chef's combinations of sushi start from €7 to €12, sashimi combinations are available for €6 to €140.

Besides cultural differences, other factors are also to be taken into account when putting together the menu. For example, different from the Dubai venue Morimoto's 2017 opened restaurant at the luxury boutique hotel Mondrian Doha features an open fire robata grill as well as the legendary Omakase menu (€140), a series of courses selected by the kitchen which has

become known as the best way to experience the essence of Morimoto's cuisine.

The necessity for high-quality ingredients comes without saying. In Dubai - logistically well situated and reachable - the restaurant team has good access to ingredients from all parts of the world. Morimoto says: "We try to produce the best possible dishes we can, regardless of where we are. If that means the local product is what is best, we try to source and use it. Sometimes local doesn't always mean better, so we take all circumstances into consideration for each specific restaurant we operate."

Private labels

The beverage menu lists a range of zodiac inspired cocktails infused with the likes of wagyu infused bourbon, horseradish and parmesan cheese (€14-20), wine by the glass (€13.50-18.50) and beer from his Signature Series, a line of culinary-minded beers brewed by Rogue Ales in Oregon including Morimoto Soba Ale, Black Obi Soba Ale and the Morimoto Imperial Pilsner. The main focus is on sake, offered in different grades (Junmai, Honjozo, Junmai Ginjo, Junmai Daiginjo and Nigori) mostly by bottle (720 ml) at prices between around €75 and 585. Chef Morimoto has also developed his own range of premium sakes that are produced in collaboration with the Fukumitsuya Brewery, a prominent sake brewery in Kanazawa, Japan. They include three aged sakes, costing as much as €300-1,500 for a bottle of 300 ml. The chef is happy to have that many great relationships in the retail world and is proud to work with so many talented producers for my Morimoto branded lines. "My newest product is Easy Cup Sake which is something that

▼ Tuna Pizza



I found lacking in the marketplace. It's a premium sake product that comes in a 210 ml glass bottle with plastic lid so you can take it on the go, great for picnics and backyard parties."

Morimoto is also working on a packaged instant ramen product that soon will be introduced in the US market. A series of high quality knives, Morimoto Edition knives by Miyabi, crafted by Zwilling J.A. Henckels, adds to the line of products as do two cookbooks with which he wants to inspire a understanding and discovery of Japanese food similar to Julia Childs with her classic on French cuisine.

Organic design with futuristic touch

The wow factor in Morimoto's food presentation certainly extends to the design of his restaurants. When Morimoto opened his first restaurant in Philadelphia in partnership with Stephen Starr from STARR Restaurants Group, the duo hired star designer Karim Rashid who created a modern space combining traditional Japanese design with organic and sensual elements. The award-winning flagship restaurant in New York, designed by renowned Japanese architect Tadao Ando, surprises the guest with a wall made of 17,400 glass bottles that seems to descend from the ceiling like a waterfall. Morimoto's interiors feel modern and chic while paying homage to Japan such as in Doha, where original artworks by Hiroshi Senju featuring waterfall murals transport guests to another dimension. Morimoto Dubai incorporates a 250-seat restaurant, a large bar area, three private dining rooms, sushi and teppanyaki counters and four outdoor terraces offering killer views of the Burj Khalifa. Geometric designs in light wood give a natural feel while furnishings have a slightly futuristic



“ I love being in my restaurants and talking to the guests. I learn so much about them just from spending a few minutes with them at a table, and that is really enjoyable for me. Without the guests, we would not have jobs. ”

Chef Masaharu Morimoto, Morimoto Restaurants

touch. First you eat with your eyes, Morimoto recalls the saying. "Visuals are very important in my restaurants and no detail is overlooked. Everything from the exterior signage to the individual plating is important and thought out carefully from start to finish." Hard work, perseverance and absolute attention to detail are the key to his success, the chef is sure. Though he tries to stay involved in each restaurant as much as he can, he relies on his team which he sees as a representation of himself. Future plans? Morimoto just announced that he will be opening a Momosan Seattle, so exciting things are yet to come. ●●



Think global, act local, is the mantra at **Marriott**

Devesh Rawat, GM of Marriott Hotel, Indore, speaks to FoodService India about the role F&B plays in generating revenue at Marriott hotel in Indore.

What role does F&B plays in the overall business proposition of the hotel?

F&B plays a very prominent role at our hotel—55% of the total hotel business revenue comes from the Food and Beverage section. Indore Marriott being a large F&B hotel is a F&B destination within a destination in itself. Guests can come here to spend their time and enjoy breakfast, high-tea, the night club, being on the pool side, the sumptuous buffets, spas, & gyms that keeps the visiting guests easily occupied for typical stays, which usually lasts for three days and two nights on an average. Hence, F&B is surely an important part of our business considering we also hold conventions, weddings

and corporate functions at the property. The property comprises of 5 banquet halls, 25,000 sq. ft. lawns, 4,500 sq. ft. rooftop and smaller lawns used for parties that are of 3,000 sq. ft area.

How do you apply the elements of service and hospitality in your F&B regimen at your outlets?

Our vision is simple – *“Think Global, Act Local”*. Indore is rich in terms of people’s love for authentic food. This makes it easier for us to focus more on traditional cuisines and we ensure that we don’t miss out on the local elements and blend global trends with it. Providing best services to our customers is in the heart of the Marriott service culture and we give our best to maintain this culture without any compromise. In the hotel premises each and every venue is very unique and vibrant in terms of its concept. For example, One Asia is a premium fine dining restaurant serving Pan Asian cuisine; Indore Baking Company serves some of the best coffees; Malts provides some of the finest brands of scotch and whisky. Indore Kitchen is the most popular amongst our guests. We keep introducing a lot of promotional activities that even a regular customer would always find something new to explore.

How do you evaluate the current trend in food service in hospitality? What special element is needed to make an outlet of a hotel to be successful?

In the digital era, everyone is connected with each other and there is so much exposure and it has made the evaluation of current trends much simpler. In Marriott, we have our own Global web platforms for feedback, like HYP3R, a real time, location based marketing platform. We have a great F&B team across continents and in India, where we keep sharing the recent trends, happenings and best practices for F&B. We keep interacting and involving ourselves with them to exchange ideas which help to get better understanding on the current trends.

Some of the other elements which are required for a successful hotel are maintaining the very fundamentals of the hotel industry. Make





sure that that customers are delivered with palatable food with high quality service and a great ambience that could turn their stay into an experience. Also, the USPs of the Hotel needs to be marketed, so that it reaches to the customer.

In today's scenario, is it easy to maintain a low operating cost for restaurants? What are the critical steps you take to keep it as low as possible?

Operating costs depends on different formats of restaurants. If it is a coffee shop – the operating cost will be much lower when compared to fine dining; which are usually smaller, authentic and the ingredients included are imported, and it leads to higher operating costs. To keep the operating costs in check, we try to minimize the wastage of food and prepare just the required amount of portions for that particular day. There are constant reviews of the menu to ensure that the dishes are not moving or getting replaced with new dishes and the ones which are moving, are in demand.

Do you think technology can augment the quality of personal touch in offering quality service to make guests feel at home and pampered?

Technology helps us to enhance the “personal touch” by providing better services to the guests. Through the internal data base software, we take the record of our guests for e.g. Their likes and dislikes and their feedbacks. We record it and then it is shared live to bring in the *Wow* factor for our guests. We have a proactive approach on every issue to ensure that our guests get the best of services. There is no doubt that technology and F&B can not go together and there are huge prospects that can be explored.

Which are the technology tools you are employing for ensuring higher F&B standards at your outlets?

Modern technology is helping us to maintain, communicate and market the F&B standards through digital marketing – brand videos, youtube videos and through other social media platforms.

With constant changes in the food trend, how do you go about keeping the food offerings of the hotel alluring for the customers and relevant with the times?

With global exposure food trends are changing constantly but we have realized that food authenticity is something that our customers will always prefer. So we ensure availability of few authentic or classic food items in the menu and if there is something new coming up, we do try it out through our promotions. It is a great way to understand the shifting preferences of customers, changing menus on the basis of the feedback given by the customers. We also constantly keep reviewing and changing our buffet and a-la-carte menus every quarter or monthly, depending on the need of the restaurant.

For any F&B enterprise, getting the right price for F&B consumables is a top concern. But should the right price must also be the lowest?

Not necessarily, and there is a reason to it. In this case our centralized purchase or procurement

F&B plays a very prominent role at our hotel – 55% of the total hotel business revenue comes from the Food and Beverage section. Indore Marriott being a large F&B hotel is a F&B destination.



For service, we ensure that our staff is well trained so the hiring starts with the right people with the right attitude and we make sure that they are well oriented, trained and have a better understanding of the hotel facilities and culture.

department helps out, and there are several branches of Marriott hotel in South Asia. All our suppliers are regularly audited for hygiene and quality checks. All these factors are considered for the vendors when starting business with the hotel. It is never the case that the lowest pricing is the first priority. The quality matters the most and then the pricing negotiation happens.

Even in the age of technology-driven tools, do you think personal touch is still important in hotels? Why?

Absolutely, personal touch will never lose its impact. Even though technology is important to make any process simpler, we still try to incorporate the personal touch aspect in it as it provides a better connect with the visiting guests. For example, Marriott has the mobile chat where the guest can interact with his/her experience specialist for that stay.

How do guests react when you present them with wow moments that they never expected?

Our guests appreciate the extra effort that has been put in to surprise them and this gives them a moment to cherish, when recalling their stay at our property.

How does your hotel harness the power of guest interactions, directly or indirectly? What specific facilities do you provide to ensure that service offered is supreme?

We have different mediums to connect with our guests, one of which is through feedback

forms. Most of these feedbacks are properly documented so that service recovery or gratitude mails can be sent. Issues are discussed on daily basis so that the required solution can be initiated or if any change in process is required. Other than that we are surely open for personal feedback and our Chef's and staff are always open for suggestions. Also, promotional activities are another interesting and interactive way to connect with our guests. We have software like GXP for the guest where feedbacks are recorded in real time.

When we look at the facilities, obviously we make sure we have high quality products whether it is the cutlery at our restaurant or the kitchen. For service, we ensure that our staff is well trained so the hiring starts with the right people with the right attitude and we make sure that they are well oriented, trained and have a better understanding of the hotel facilities and culture.

Do you think this attitude of serving guests to the limit comes from within or do you go about training the staff? In which areas of service, this aspect is particularly critical to win the guests over?

The attitude definitely comes from within and that is the one thing that we look for while hiring our staff. But even if we recruit people with the right attitude it is very important to cultivate certain skills and knowledge in them which they must attain to provide better services. It is also very important that regular training sessions are conducted. This aspect is relevant to every department of the hotel, whether it is back office or the front office. A well-defined structure with a supportive team is very important to maintain a system.

Even when a hotel might score low on occupancy, F&B takes in the extra load to manage revenue. What do you have to say about it?

F&B is made for both in-house and resident guests but it would be wrong to say it takes the extra load as a good occupancy hotel will always cover the restaurant and vice versa. ●●

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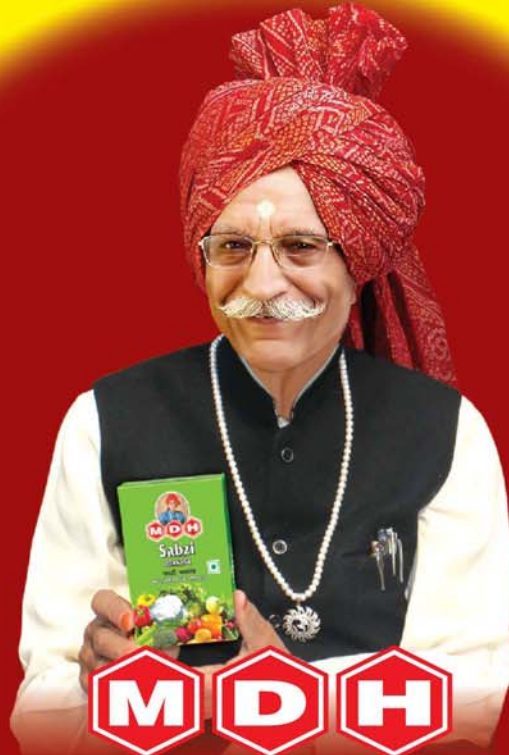
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