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INDIA'S ONLY MASTER OF WINE
Sonal Holland and her pursuit of wine excellence

Featured inside: Karan Tanna | Priyank Sukhija | Sonal Holland | Samir Menon | Dinesh Arora



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People today are looking for a dining experience that responds to their needs and concerns for health, well-being, and environmental issues. There is an emerging and growing demand for food ingredients that are sugar-free, gluten-free, vegan, green and protein-rich. An increasing number of consumers are mindful today not only about their food choices and consumption but also about food production. In general, people are now asking more questions about their own eating behaviors and food choices.

The restaurant industry, therefore, needs to offer dining solutions that make both the traditionalists and enthusiasts happy so as to keep receiving the unstinted support of a broad demographic of diners.

Restaurants need to provide for a demanding demographic with specific tastes and preferences. This is possible only when restaurants ensure a menu that is inclusive and focuses on recipe development as per the needs and evolving demands. For instance, non-meat protein alternatives such as tempeh, tofu, seitan and nutritional yeast are on the rise today, as are gluten-free and sugar-free ingredients in baking and bread making. Chia, acai, matcha green tea, avocado, kimchi, kefir, kombucha and other fermented products have already caught on in a big way.

At the same time, the demand for 'green' foodstuffs is on the rise and restaurants need to have a broad menu that features more of green offerings as dining options. They should continue with their menu innovations to help guests making a 'greener' choice – like having the option of grilled cauliflower served with black sesame and truffle. Products such as humus, falafel and seasonal salads are also becoming very popular with the discerning diners.

Restaurants that offer cuisine derived from this new approach to cooking and eating and provide for a superior and healthy dining experience, will prevail and continue to win.



Amitabh Taneja

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India's First and Only Master of Wine

Master of Wine Sonal Holland is the first Indian to have been bestowed with this prestigious global title.





New Picks, Hires, and Promotions

Your one-stop shop for the latest news on executive movement in the HoReCa industry.



VIKAS KUMAR APPOINTED GENERAL MANAGER OF THE WESTIN PUSHKAR RESORT AND SPA

» Vikas Kumar has been appointed as the General Manager of The Westin Pushkar Resort and Spa – Westin Hotel's first resort property in India. Counting on his experience of over 18 years in the hospitality industry, which includes almost a decade spent with Marriott International Hotels, Vikas is responsible for all aspects of operations of the resort property, including guest and employee satisfaction, human resources, sales and revenue generation, etc.

As a talented professional, Vikas has gathered numerous awards and accolades to his name. One of the most prestigious awards won under his leadership has been the Brand Ambassador Award, Asia Pacific - Starwood Divisional Award in 2015, for Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park. He was also credited for developing and implementing marketing plans and sales strategies that increased F&B revenue (per occupied retreat per day) by an average of \$35 above target for 10 consecutive months at W Retreat & Spa Maldives.

Vikas was earlier General Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport, where he was instrumental in converting the hotel to a 'Smoke

Free Compliant Hotel', which was also certified by the 'Global Wellness Council'. At JW Marriott Chandigarh, his active role in the conceptual development of 35 Brewhouse resulted in it being established as the first ever microbrewery of its kind in an Indian five-star hotel.

He commenced his professional journey as the F&B Supervisor at Ananda in the Himalayas and worked his way up many prestigious hospitality chains as part of the pre-opening phases like Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park, Sheraton Bangalore Brigade Gateway and The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace. Before joining the ranks as General Manager, he was Director of F&B at W Retreat & Spa Maldives & Director of Operations at JW Marriott Chandigarh. Additionally, he has held various F&B designations at IHCL Hotels, Accor Hotels (Novotel Hyderabad), Intercontinental Hotel & Resort, Goa, and Sheraton Dammam Hotel & Towers, Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Vikas's academic qualifications include a Masters Program in Business Administration from IIBM and a Diploma in Hotel Management & Catering Technology from IHMCT, Kovalam.



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Serving world's tastiest chicken for over 60 years

KFC has over 60 years of experience serving signature chicken to billions of customers across 125 countries. **Samir Menon, Managing Director, KFC India**, speaks to *FoodService* about how the brand continues to serve the world's tastiest chicken and its plans to expand and penetrate further into the Indian market.

Please explain the positioning of KFC India, its USP and special features when compared to the other QSR chains in the Indian market?

The biggest USP for KFC is that nobody makes chicken like KFC does. Our consumers love the signature craveable taste of our chicken, and their love for the brand has helped us grow over the years. We are known for making the world's tastiest chicken and shall continue to focus on what we do best. Our hot & crispy chicken continues to be a favourite; other offerings like zinger, smoky grilled, popcorn, etc. are also quite popular among the consumers.

What is your value-for-money proposition for diners and which are your key customer demographics?

We follow a standard menu pricing across all our restaurants in India. Our menu offerings are structured to meet the needs of all segments of consumers and their differentiated demands. The brand has several offerings for its customers that includes both value and variety. We have launched special offers like

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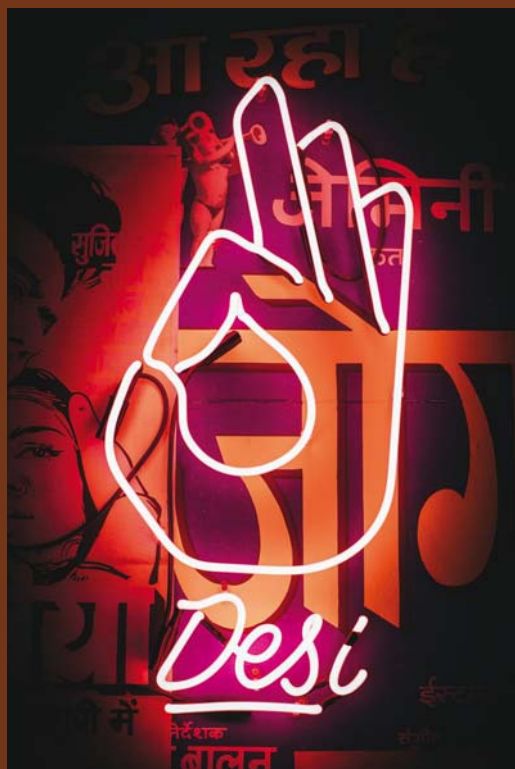


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Shaken & Stirred: Mocktails are the toast of town

Mocktails were once mainly considered as a sweet drink or thirst quencher but people today are experimental in trying out new flavors and recipes by bartenders across the world. Today, mocktails are as creative, delicious and flavorful as any alcoholic mixed drink and one of the biggest trends in the beverage industry in recent years.

by Sanjay Kumar



▲ Vintage artefacts collected on journeys throughout India decorate the guestroom walls and tables. ©Gilles Draps



▲ Mission Masala's menu surprises with unique and unexpected combinations, and original presentations. ©Gilles Draps

Explosive flavours

Ready for a trip to India? Golden Palm winner Mission Masala will take you there. Vibrant and intoxicating, the casual-dining concept was carefully devised by career changers Pavan Bajwa and Tim Van Den Heuvel to tickle all senses. Among foodies around Belgium, their food trucks have long reached cult status.

by Katrin Wissmann

The success story of Mission Masala actually began with a food truck: the 'Curry Cruiser' started roaming the food festivals of Belgium in 2015 – and became an immediate hit with the audiences. Just like friends (and friends of friends), whose taste buds had once made contact with the addictive flavours of Pavan's Indian family cooking, other foodies craved for more. A second food truck – Bombay BBQ – followed in 2016, adding new recipes to the growing menu of authentic Indian dishes with a modern twist – enough to start thinking of a bricksand- mortar restaurant.

In February 2018, Mission Masala opened in Antwerp, Belgium. Inside the cosy 60 sq m restaurant, situated in a local neighbourhood, everything says 'India': Bollywood posters and striking murals, painted in the most vivid and bright colours, meet the eye upon entering the welcoming space. Vintage artefacts like letter boxes, signs, wooden drink crates, old enamel tiffins & chai sets, collected on journeys throughout India, decorate the guestroom walls and tables. A 'tea stall'-labelled thermo pot holding eight litres of hot tea spiced with ginger, cardamom and cinnamon sits on the counter, which separates the guestroom from a small open kitchen where busy chefs prepare customer favourites



▲ He's a Belgian DJ by trade, she's a fashion designer from London: Mission Masala founders Tim Van Den Heuvel and Pavan Bajwa (in front of their famous food truck). © Gilles Draps



▲ Inspired by the colourful art works of India that decorate buildings, walls or street vendor stalls, Pavan and Tim asked a painter to recreate the Indian street style on their restaurant walls and food trucks. The Mission Masala logo featuring two tigers was designed by Olivier Smets. ©Gilles Draps

UNPLUGGED *Courtyard*



Exuding Goan vibes in a corporate hub

Dinesh Arora, Founder and Managing Director, Eastman Colour Restaurants, speaks to *FoodService India* about the brand's market positioning and its other dining hallmarks and why he thinks the café has the trappings to emerge as a successful dining destination in Gurgaon's corporate and industrial hub.

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

Unplugged Courtyard's new outlet in Gurgaon has an alfresco setting that brings out the Goan theme to the capital and gives its customers a unique experience in experiential dining. It has a walk-through lined with a cluster of balmy trees in a courtyard spread over 15,000 square feet, located in the heart of Gurgaon's Udyog Vihar. The décor at the café is comfortable and chic. With over 375 covers, it also boasts of a terrace area, a secret garden and a quirky bus as a prop. The café has a progressive approach to world cuisine – a place to indulge your palate with interesting mixes of heady drinks in a perfect setting buzzing alive with entertainment, live enthralling performances, and groovy music.

What is the market positioning your brand is looking to create?

We aim to position it as a youthful brand, which caters to music, food and drinks and serves the interests of the community. Located amidst the corporate hub of Udyog Vihar, it is a perfect and soothing place to de-stress after a tiring day.

Please offer a detailed lowdown of your establishment's:

Menu offerings: The menu allows you to choose from delicious treats and dishes like the tawa chicken and chur chur roti with eggs and coconut

gravy, sukha bhuna ghosh karare parantha slider, kasundi jhinga, house bbq pork ribs, tandoori potli kebab, and more. From lobsters to rajasthali lal mass, atta signature to tawa tarkari, Chinese, far West, Asian, Indian, Italian and Continental, the café serves it all on the menu.

Price: Dishes at Unplugged Courtyard are decently priced. A meal for two can be enjoyed for Rs. 2,500/- with alcohol at the café. Our signature cocktails are also reasonably priced, keeping in mind the ingredients, as well as the positioning we're targeting in the market.

Format: Unplugged Courtyard is the biggest courtyard in Gurgaon. Inspired by the concept of experiential dining with great food, drinks and music, it is the city's new fun location.

Concept: It is a first of its kind courtyard concept. Unplugged is a tastefully designed café and cocktail bar with a trendy and enticing look.

Average ticket size of bill: Rs. 1,500 for a meal for two without drinks.

Facilities and amenities on offer: Unplugged Courtyard hosts events, pop-up, music and live performances. It has themed sections and serves world cuisine with a progressive twist on the plate and trendy and classy cocktails.

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

The food at Unplugged is curated by Chef Akshay Bhardwaj. He has an exceptional take on modern



"We're Coolberg – a zero-alcohol beer brand – and proudly Indian"



Pankaj Aswani, Founder and CEO, Coolberg, speaks to FoodService India about how the brand has successfully introduced and created a market for a non-alcoholic drink that has the taste, texture and aroma of beer, and offers a trendy solution in the alternate beverage space.

We are working on building the category of non-alcoholic beer in India. And there is a vast playground for this category.

What is unique about your beer brand?

Brand Coolberg was launched in 2016 with the vision of catering to a new category of drink that is modern, trendy and aspirational. In a market where cola or fruit-flavoured fizzy drinks are prevalent, we provide an alternate beverage to what's available in the market.

Dressed up in strong 300 ml glass bottles, with a packaging design that appeals to the eye, Coolberg's 7 flavours are a treat for every taste. We take pride in getting our products right, with just the right amount of sweetness, brewed impeccably in a natural base of hops and malt, and a fizz that's just enough to pleasantly tantalize your taste buds. This Coolberg experience will soon be available in a 250 ml can as well, which will help cater to a different target audience and consumption opportunity.

Though our products are alcohol-free, as far as taste is concerned, our Malt variant could pass off as real beer in a blind test, while our Java Malt variant would tease the taste buds with a lingering aftertaste of coffee. With 5 additional crafted flavours, we cater to every taste – Cranberry, Ginger, Strawberry, Peach, and Mint.

Which consumer segments and markets are you targeting?

Coolberg is targeted at the teetotalers and the occasional non-alcoholics looking for a pleasant respite from the currently available beverages in the non-alcoholic space. Our products cater to every taste – from the bittery bursts of malt to the zesty zing of ginger – and so we're not targeting any specific gender. We have a pan-India presence and Coolberg is currently available in 70 cities across India.

What makes you so sure of your brand's success?

The very essence of beer is the taste, texture and aroma. In the absence of alcohol, getting the brew to taste like beer is a challenge. With our flagship flavor – malt – we have been able to crack it and qualify as beer for the beer connoisseurs. Our other flavours are similarly crafted and have set a benchmark for taste and texture. What sets Coolberg apart is the quality, sure. But the larger differentiator for us is the pursuit of perfection.

What is your strategy for increasing the retail outreach in the HoReCa segment?

Our products are the right fit for HoReCa and provide a delightful consumer experience and blend well with different cuisines. The malt variant, for instance, would complement a loaded cheese burst pizza. Or a mint would go just right with a lavish biryani on a leisurely afternoon at a restaurant. In a way, Coolberg and great food add a mutual value to enhance the gastronomical delight that our consumers crave.

What new trends and developments will influence the consumption of your product?

Currently, the non-alcoholic beverage segment is devoid of choices for a beverage that straddles a premium imagery and an authentic taste. This void is very much palpable in the everyday life of our target audience. Going ahead, this gap is going to be more obvious than apparent, and we're geared up to fill it.

Going ahead, what are your goals and targets?

We are working on building the category of non-alcoholic beer in India. Operating in this segment calls for an in-depth consumer understanding. And we believe that there is a vast playground for this category. Backed by our understanding of the consumer psyche and lifestyle, our product has a consumer-centric USP, that aims at adding value to their lifestyle quotient. Going ahead, we aim at adding more HoReCa partners and strengthening our distribution at a pan-India level. ●●



India's First and Only Master of Wine

Master of Wine Sonal Holland is India's most accomplished wine professional. The first Indian to have been bestowed with this prestigious global title, she has won numerous awards in her incredible journey to become the only Master of Wine in a nation of over one billion people! She speaks to *FoodService India* about how she chanced into the world of wine, her pursuit of excellence, and all that it took to establish her reputation in her chosen line of work.



Tell us how you came into this profession?

My journey into the world of wine was unexpected. I was pursuing a corporate career with a multinational Fortune 500 company. Though I enjoyed wine, the thought of following this passion as a profession grew slowly on me. I began to see the opportunities that existed in the then nascent Indian wine industry and made a strategic shift in my career to explore this further. My singular aim then became to be the first Master of Wine from India.

Tell us of your journey to becoming India's first certified wine master?

As a rank outsider to the industry, I started off on the arduous journey to become India's first Master of Wine. This is the most prestigious title in the world of wines, awarded by the Institute of Masters of Wine in the UK. But to attempt this feat, I had to first embark on a few years of early studies, including the 2-year flagship Diploma in Wines from the London-based Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET). Thereafter, I applied to the Institute of Masters of Wine in London and was the first Indian to be accepted on the program.

But these accomplishments were not easy to come by. As a woman and an Indian, with little access to the global wine industry, I was perceived to be at a disadvantage to my global peers. However, with the unstinted support of my family, I persevered on this journey for six long years, which required an immense investment of time and finances, keeping me away from home for long stretches of time. This sacrifice weighed tremendously on my mind, but it strengthened my resolve too. Finally, in 2016, it became a reality. I joined an elite club of only 378 Masters of Wine across 30 countries, of which only 131 are women.

What did it take to establish your reputation in this profession?

Dedication to your craft or profession and a great work ethic speaks for itself. My resolve, since I first stepped into the country's AlcoBev industry, has

been to educate, enthuse and entertain consumers about drinking wine responsibly – demystifying it for a larger audience that perceive wines as esoteric and intimidating.

Even before earning the title of the first Master of Wine, I have been working tirelessly towards creating excellence and developing India's wine industry by introducing ground-breaking initiatives. The Sonal Holland Wine Academy, in association with the London based WSET, has completed a decade-long innings in providing world-class wine education to luxury hotels and the trade. Our consumer-based initiative – a Mumbai-based Wine Club – is an enthusiasts-only club that encourages the appreciation of wine through invigorating activities and events. The India Wine Awards have been conceived as an independent, authoritative and transparent award that recognize meritorious wines and enable informed consumer choices.

What is the most challenging part of your job?

As India's first and only Master of Wine, I aim to be a role model for young aspirants looking to make a career in beverages. It also gives me great joy to see women taking rapid strides in this field, which has traditionally been male-dominated. I use every opportunity to share my understanding of wine with others, influencing a huge number of people towards enjoying the drink, responsibly and in moderation. Nothing is more exhilarating than to meet like-minded students and professionals and enthusiasts who share a deep passion and enjoyment of wine.

How can experience and versatility help restaurants in creating customer loyalty?

A deep knowledge of wine regions, grape varieties, wine styles, quality levels and knowledge of the best producers that offer the best value and excitement in a particular region is a starting point to draw up a wine list that resonates with the diners. Today, wine forms a greater part of the entire dining experience and it needs to be holistically drawn out, to tie in





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