

Ahead of What's Next ▶

Progressive GROCER

INDIA EDITION

April 2024 | Volume 18 | Number 4 | Rs 100
www.businessoffood.in

A black and white portrait of Sandeep Ghosh, a man with a mustache and glasses, wearing a brown blazer over a white shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

**From Salt Sprinklers to
Spice Leaders: Catch
Spices' Success Recipe**

Catch[®]

SANDEEP GHOSH
Business Head, DS Spiceco, Catch Salt & Spices

Progressive GROCER

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INDIA EDITION

INDUSTRY TITAN

Musings of Masala Man:
Lessons in Spice Retailing.

MUSHROOM MARKET

Rising Consumption Propels
the Market to \$258.6 Million
in 2023.

MANUFACTURING

The Journey of a Private
Label Product.



Wellness Forever

India's third-largest pharmacy
chain with a food retail twist



L to R: ASHRAF BIRAN, GULSHAN BAKHTIANI,
and MOHAN CHAVAN, Founders and Directors,
Wellness Forever

SPICES

Rising demand for
blended spices offers
a Rs. 50,000 crore
opportunity
for brands.



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PUBLISHER: **S P Taneja**

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SUPPORT

SR. GM ADMINISTRATION: **Rajeev Mehandru**

ADVERTISING

BENGALURU

VICE PRESIDENT: **Suvir Jaggi**

suvirjaggi@imagesgroup.in

MUMBAI

GENERAL MANAGER: **Rajesh Acharya**

rajeshacharya@imagesgroup.in

DELHI

ASST. GM – SALES: **Vandana V Thakur**

vandanathakur@imagesgroup.in

CONSUMER CONNECT & SUBSCRIPTION

SR. MANAGER: **Priti Kapil**

pritikapil@imagesgroup.in

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GRO CER

GROCERY GROUP PUBLISHER: **John Schrei**

GROCERY GROUP EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: **Mike Troy**

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In the world of retail, one chain is redefining the concept of Health & Wellness. Wellness Forever, a Mumbai-based retailer, has carved out a unique niche and identity of its own. Traditionally, pharmacies are associated with medicines and vitamins but Wellness Forever has expanded its offerings to include a wide range of food and beverage options. With 407 stores across Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh, it has become India's third-largest pharmacy and health & wellness chain (see pages 24-32).

Currently, non-pharma sales account for about 45% of Wellness Forever's business, a figure expected to rise to 65-75% within the next 3-5 years. This shift reflects a broader trend in the health and wellness industry, where pharmaceuticals are increasingly integrated with other health-related products and services.

Another significant trend in the food industry is the remarkable growth of the spices category in India. As the world's largest producer, consumer, and exporter of spices, India's branded spice segment is experiencing rapid annual growth of 15% and higher, trailing only behind pasta & noodles, and ready meals (read pages 36-45). Within this spicy saga, we bring you the stories of two luminaries: Catch Spices, a trailblazing brand, and Adesh Kumar Aggarwal, the industry's Masala Man (pages 50-66).

Catch Spices has traversed a remarkable journey, evolving from tabletop salt dispensers to establishing itself as a formidable force in the spices market. Meanwhile, Masala Man unravels the secrets of the retail spice sector by offering a treasure trove of wisdom and insights.

The narratives of Wellness Forever, Catch, and the Masala Man serve as shining examples of innovation, resilience, and excellence in the retail sector. Their journeys highlight the power of adaptation, creativity, and dedication to excellence.



Amitabh Taneja
Editor-in-Chief

All feedback welcome at editorpgindia@imagesgroup.in

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Printed & published by S P Taneja on behalf of Images Multimedia Pvt. Ltd. Printed at Modest Print Pack (P) Ltd., C-52, DDA Sheds, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase 1, New Delhi - 110020 and published by S P Taneja from S-61A Okhla Industrial Area Phase - 2, New Delhi.110020 Editor : Amitabh Taneja

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How Wellness Forever is shaping the future of health & wellness retail

Over the past 15 years of its retailing journey, Wellness Forever has played a significant role in reshaping the landscape of health and wellness retail across India. The company is now a leading pharmacy chain with 407 stores that are bridging the gap between traditional pharma and contemporary wellness solutions.

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Vijetha Supermarkets Celebrates a Memorable 25th Anniversary Gala

Vijetha Supermarkets celebrated its 25th anniversary with a deep sense of pride and gratitude. As the company's journey progresses, it remains ready to embark on the next chapter in its remarkable tale of success.

BY SANJAY KUMAR

“ I express my gratitude to all employees and vendors for their relentless support and partnership throughout Vijetha's journey.

– Jagan Mohan Rao, MD, Vijetha Supermarkets



AS

the sun set on April 7th, a grand celebration unfolded at the Pradhan Convention Hall in Nanakramguda, near Hyderabad's bustling Outer Ring Road. It was a momentous occasion, marking Vijetha Supermarkets' 25th anniversary, a milestone that resonated with pride and gratitude. Amidst the glittering lights and jubilant atmosphere, an evening of festivities commenced.

Among a gathering of distinguished guests and leading lights of the retail industry, chief guests **Arekapudi Gandhi, MLA, Serilingampally, Hyderabad, and Nara Brahmani, Executive Director, Heritage Foods Limited**, honored the event with their presence.

The festivities commenced with the age-old tradition of lighting the lamp, symbolizing the illumination of knowledge and prosperity. This was followed by a soulful prayer, which echoed with the hopes and aspirations of the community. Adding to



↑ Arekapudi Gandhi, MLA, Serilingampally, Hyderabad being welcomed and felicitated by Jagan Mohan Rao, Chairman & Managing Director, Vijetha Supermarkets.

HOW WELLNESS FOREVER IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HEALTH & WELLNESS RETAIL



From Concept to Shelf: The Journey of a Private Label Product

A lot of founders opt for private labels as opposed to investing in huge and expensive manufacturing setups at the initial stage of their business. Retailers frequently employ private-label brands to sell their exclusive products, expand their catalog, and undercut competition.

BY GAURAV SINGH

The Indian startup ecosystem has a superlative growth trajectory, creating space for many interesting business ideas. While a 'solution to a problem' is the very foundation of setting up a business, investing in huge and expensive manufacturing setups doesn't seem to be a wise idea at the initial stage. Thus a lot of founders opt for private labels where a

product produced by the manufacturer is marketed and sold by another company, under their brand name.

Retailers frequently employ private-label brands to sell exclusive products, expand their catalogs, and undercut competition prices. In most situations, retailers rely on third-party manufacturers to produce their products. There are four kinds of private-label products: generics, premium store brands, copycats, and value innovators. There is a manufacturer for each one of these. This trend of private labeling is being extensively seen in the beauty and personal care industry, and it increases the choices for consumers.



On the Spice Trail

How the Spice Market is Blending Tradition with Innovation

India's spice market is undergoing a remarkable transformation, bridging the timeless allure of classic blends and traditional masalas with contemporary creations. Fueled by the spirit of experimentation and inspired by global culinary trends, spice brands and manufacturers are at the vanguard of innovation, pushing the boundaries of creativity to create bold new blends and avant-garde seasonings.

This dynamic evolution reflects a concerted effort to cater to the discerning tastes of modern consumers who seek not only tradition but also novelty and sophistication in their culinary experiences.

BY SANJAY KUMAR

In the universe of Indian cuisine, spices hold a position of paramount importance, akin to the role of sauces and dressings in global gastronomy. Just as sauces and dressings enhance and define the

flavors of dishes worldwide, spices play an important role in shaping the taste, aroma, and character of Indian culinary creations.

India, known as the home of spices, is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices and spice products in the world. Indian cuisine is renowned for its delicious flavors, and these flavors come from a wide variety of spices. "The diversity of spices used in Indian cooking reflects the country's rich culinary heritage and cultural diversity.

Traditional spices like chilli, turmeric, cumin, coriander, cardamom, and cloves have been staples in Indian cuisine for centuries," says **Shikha Prakash**, Co-founder, *Valley Culture*, a one-stop online store specializing in ethically sourced local Himalayan Food.

From chilli and turmeric to coriander, whole spices, and blended curry masalas, these aromatic ingredients are the soul of Indian gastronomy, infusing dishes with flavor, color, and cultural richness.

Beyond these primary spices, Indian cuisine boasts an extensive repertoire of whole spices, including cumin, mustard seeds, fenugreek, and cloves, each contributing unique flavors and aromas to dishes. These whole spices are often tempered in hot oil to release their essential oils and unlock their full flavor potential, creating the aromatic base known as "tadka" or "tempering."

Blended curry masalas represent the essence of Indian spice blends, combining a harmonious medley of ground spices to create complex flavor profiles. These masalas vary widely in composition, with regional variations reflecting the diverse culinary traditions across the Indian subcontinent. "Each state within India offers its unique culinary heritage. Many snacking brands have adeptly capitalized on this diversity through a regional mix strategy. Similarly, spices and condiments brands have the opportunity to embrace this approach, catering to the discerning tastes of consumers by offering a range of ethnic and region-specific offerings," says **Sameer Shaikh**, *Regional Head - Buying & Merchandising*, *bigbasket.com*.

Discovering Regional Riches

India produces about 75 of the 109 varieties of spices that are listed by the International Organization for Standardization

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Surabhi Khosla

+91 9811434514

surabhikhosla@imagesgroup.in

Sanjay Kumar

+91 9818507730

sanjaykumar@imagesgroup.in

From Salt Shakers to Spice Leaders Catch Spices' Success Recipe

From pioneering the concept of tabletop salt dispensers to expanding and marking its formidable presence in the competitive spices market, the journey of Catch Spices exemplifies a steadfast dedication to consumer-centric principles and an unwavering pursuit of superior quality.

BY SANJAY KUMAR

A

bout three and a half decades ago, when the market for packaged food in India was beginning to evolve, the Delhi-NCR based DS Group – a conglomerate that operates multiple businesses, including FMCG, Hospitality, Agri, Luxury Retail, Tobacco, and many more – was on the lookout for the perfect entry point into the burgeoning spices market.

Sandeep Ghosh, Business Head, DS Spiceco (Catch Salt & Spices), narrates an anecdote that sparked the DS Group's entry into the world of spices. "Back then, in 1987, we encountered a common issue: table salt tended to become damp during the rainy season, making it inconvenient to use. Many of us resorted to adding rice particles to prevent clumping."

Faced with this common inconvenience, the DS Group rose to the occasion, introducing an innovative solution: the tabletop salt shaker or sprinkler under the brand name "Catch". Initially tailored for salt and pepper, with a few additional variants, the introduction of tabletop salt sprinkler represented a significant milestone for the company. However, the story did not end there. Although spices were not initially part of its product line, this innovative solution laid the foundation for DS Group's later expansion into the spices domain.

From Salt to Turmeric & Chili and Blends

Between 2003 and 2005, customers who were already fans of their widely popular tabletop sprinklers, started indicating a desire for high-quality spices. In response, DS Group introduced a line of quality spices around 2004-2005, albeit initially as a secondary offering due to the prevailing success of its salt sprinklers. Around 2015- 2016, the company identified the untapped potential within the spices market, leading to a strategic shift in focus and increased investment in the development of their spice business.





Musings of Masala Man

Insights and Lessons in the Retail Spice Sector

In the market of spices, one man embarked on a journey that would redefine his career and leave an indelible mark on the industry. Meet Adesh Kumar Aggarwal, affectionately known as the “Masala Man,” whose odyssey into the world of spices offers a rich storybook of insights and lessons in how the retail spice sector works.

From figuring out what spices people like in different regions to coming up with new and clever ways to sell them, Adesh’s voyage illuminates the complexities and opportunities inherent in the spice trade. Let’s dive in and learn more about the Masala Man’s experiences and what they teach us about the spice market in India.

BY SANJAY KUMAR

Booming Mushroom Market in India: Projected to Reach US\$ 466.8M by 2032

In recent years, the mushroom market in India has experienced a remarkable surge due to factors including increasing awareness of health and wellness, evolving dietary preferences, and a growing demand for protein-rich diets, particularly among fitness enthusiasts. This trend is notably prominent in India, where mushroom consumption has soared, with the market reaching a substantial size of US\$ 258.6 million in 2023, according to IMARC. Projections indicate that the market is set to expand to US\$ 466.8 million by 2032, representing a solid compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.78% from 2024 to 2032. Central to this growing market are gourmet mushroom varieties that are captivating both retailers and consumers alike.

BY AAKRITI VIRMANI

A

s Anna's mother cooks pasta, Anna watches eagerly through the transparent lid as the pasta simmers. Suddenly, her mother retrieves a pack of mushrooms from the refrigerator. Anna's excitement peaks – mushrooms are her favorite ingredient in pasta dishes, adding that extra flair to the dish she loves. She eagerly asks her mother to add plenty of diced mushrooms to the pasta, knowing it will elevate the dish to new heights, and mushrooms are rarely found at her home, making this addition even more special.

Mushrooms are often overlooked as compared to the plant and animal kingdoms. But in the recent years, there has been a sudden surge in its consumption. This newfound popularity arises from the rising trend of veganism and health-conscious lifestyles, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. No longer merely a side dish, mushrooms have taken center stage as a main course, catering to the needs of health-conscious consumers. This shift has captured the attention of both food entrepreneurs and the retail industry, recognizing the potential of mushrooms to meet the demands of a growing market segment.

Mushrooms are fleshy and nutrient-rich fruiting bodies of certain macro-fungi groups, which can be harvested by hand and cultivated either above or below ground. By maintaining optimal conditions such as humidity,

