

Culinary

Entrepreneurs

Volume 6, Issue 3

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A Magazine for the food, hospitality
and tourism entrepreneurs by



A lodge in Namibia

A resort in South
Africa

A farm in the desert

An eco retreat
in Bali

Farm-to-table
at Asheville

Forest-side farm stays

A farm retreat in Kerala

Garden-to-table
retreats

A tea tourism retreat

**Farm -to-table
gastronomy**

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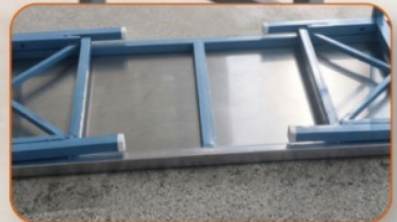
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with ease



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&Beyond gastronomy philosophy centers on sustainable, farm-to-table, and regionally-inspired dining at its lodges.

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Kashmiri vegetarian food used core produce like Lotus Stem (Nadru), Collard Greens (Haak), Baby Potatoes and Chaman (Paneer-like dense cottage cheese cubes).

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Editorial



Dear Readers,

Farm-to-table gastronomy celebrates fresh, seasonal, and locally sourced ingredients. Resorts and restaurants embracing this philosophy serve produce grown in their own gardens or sourced directly from farmers, fishers, foragers, artisans, and small-scale producers, creating authentic and sustainable dining experiences.

The editor visited 98 Stripes at Tadoba, where he enjoyed Varadhi food made by women cooks from the region at the resort.

Also featured are insights from chef William S. Dissen on responsible sourcing at his restaurant in Asheville. The issue ends with authentic Kashmiri vegetarian recipes by food curator Sabrina Suri.

We hope this edition inspires you to discover how farm-to-table gastronomy is redefining hospitality through sustainability, authentic flavours, and meaningful connections with local communities.



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An Eco-stay in

Bali



Cath and John Blundstone

Permaculture-based resorts use regenerative systems to eliminate waste, build healthy soil, and grow food in harmony with nature. Bali Eco Stay is a premier permaculture-based retreat located on the slopes of Mount Batukaru.

Permaculture is the heart of the resort: The restaurant menu consists largely of local cuisine, much of it using ingredients farmed on the premises from its own organic rice to free-range chickens, along with all manner of fruits, veggies, herbs and spices. Water is directly sourced from Mount Batukaru, and each bungalow has its own wastewater garden to help fertilize the plants. The buildings are constructed using locally sourced materials, and the rooms stock organic hand-made local amenities.



After experiencing the global financial crisis in 2008 I needed a change from working in restaurants so I took the family on a camping trip around Australia to find a new direction and half way through we camped next to a wonderful family doing a visa run from Bali who invited us to come and visit them at their eco lodge in Bali which we did 6 months later and then rest is history.

We are situated on the southern slopes of Mount Batukaru at 500 meters of altitude which means we are 5 to 10 degrees cooler than on the coast. We produce the majority of our own food in our extensive permaculture gardens, we have spring water coming from all taps and we are off grid with a micro hydro system.

Our systems are all out of The Permaculture Design manual by Bill Mollison and having worked in restaurants for 35 years I had a

good idea for the best restaurant layouts and I always liked the idea of an open kitchen so the guests can experience and witness there food being prepared which also make is so much more empowering for the kitchen staff. The staff loves working with our own on-site organically grown heritage red rice which is served with most main meals.

Nasi Campur is a favourite as it showcases the Balinese style of food and my Auntie Ellien's sticky date pudding as an absolute astronomical extravaganza !

We offer seven different treks with one to the top of Mount Batukaru (2,200 meters) not for the faint hearted, many workshops including basket making, flute making mat making coconut oil making cooking classes permaculture tours, ceremonies in the village (when available).





Currently we are building an Ayurvedic Wellness Centre including dispensary spa rooms, sauna hot tub and cold tub with later plans to build another yoga shala and 4 more bungalows specializing in detoxification.

Low-impact Tourism

Bali Eco Stay is often used as an example of low impact tourism in Bali because it combines

eco accommodation, local employment ,regenerative farming and farm to table dining If the Balinese government wanted to encourage more people like this the biggest impact would likely come from combining incentives ,zoning,education and tourism branding, Plus the government could offer ;

- * Reduced land tax for eco certified



developments

- * Lower permit fees for buildings using renewable energy,rainwater harvesting,bamboo ,recycling timber,or waste water recycling.
- * Low – interest "green tourism"loans for small Balinese owned businesses
- * Grants for organic farming partnerships between hotels and local farmers.



FARM-TO-TABLE GASTRONOMY RETREATS

We look at three retreats where meals are crafted from ingredients grown at the site.



Culinary Experiences at Kanha



Culinary experiences at Kanha

Sheema and Jhampan Mookerjee

As a couple, we were always sure we would not settle in a big city, especially Delhi. We had bought land in Kanha several years ago, but in 2015, we decided it was time to leave our city lives, and relocate. So we built the house of our dreams, moved lock stock and barrel, and within a year started the Homestay. Our inspiration has been to share this little piece of heaven with other wildlife lovers.

Salban is nestled in the village of Baheerakhar, 7 km from the Mukki gate. This side of Kanha is less 'developed' and thus more peaceful. The 11-acre compound has been planted with many fruit trees, and there is an organic vegetable and herb garden. The local brown rice and wild millet (kodo) is grown in the fields. The property stands in the middle of an old mixed forest dominated by sal, and dotted by old mahua, bahera, jamun and other trees. We share a boundary with the core zone of the park, and alarm calls are often heard. The birdlife on the land is prolific.

Here, we offer a slice of life in a remote forest village, bordering the core zone of Kanha National Park. The Guest experience is in perfect sync with nature. We promote sustainable tourism in every little way.

Food is at the core of the Salban experience – as it is with the Mookerjee family! We are passionate cooks, and have passed it on to our son who is a

chef in Kolkata. Each meal has our personal stamp, and is customised according to the guests' tastes. So, you will get a variety of cuisines, from homely desi to Italian, Thai, authentic Chinese and Continental (Jhampan's stuffed roast chicken is the star, while Sheema loves baking and does cakes for tea and muffins for packed safari breakfast.).

Our kitchen basket overflows with fresh garden produce, most of it organic. Apart from the gamut of vegetables, we grow our herbs, salad leaves, chillies and more. We also delight in serving typical local produce like treacle from mahua flowers, kodo or wild millet, sun-dried tomatoes, and the local brown rice.



We create spontaneous menus, depending on the seasonal produce, and the Guests' likes and dislikes. Our aim is to serve home-cooked food, but with a large variety, drawing from regional Indian cuisine as well as international cuisine.

We introduce local organic produce in every way possible - such as the local greens, Kodo millet, products from the Mahua flower, jamun jam made from forest fruit, mango and lemon preserves from our orchard, and much more.

Our signature dishes are 'bhapa doi with mahua treacle', kodo salad / fried rice, as well as fine dining, non-vegetarian items like mutton yakhni pulao, lamb confit, and Thai curry using fresh Thai herbs grown in our garden.

If the environment has to be saved, the world has to move towards sustainable tourism, Emphasising Small and Local. The movement

towards responsible and sustainable tourism has to grow. Supporting local livelihood, and serving farm to table food is the only way forward.

Our only wish is to preserve the forest and create growing awareness among our guest. Our aspiration is to remain sustainable and to serve as an example to others around us.

A Farm-to-Table Homestay at Kaziranga **Anna-Louise and Champak**

Medini began as a place to root ourselves both professionally and personally. Champak had returned to Assam from a career in the ocean, with the Indian Navy and then as a commercial deep sea diver. He started Native Northeast, a tourism business and particularly enjoyed bringing guests to Kaziranga National Park. Our choice of location for Medini was largely

based on this. Anna-Louise's career has been in textiles, and she had just completed her PhD in the eri silk textiles of the Ri Bhoi District in Meghalaya. The vision for Medini was to bring together tourism, textiles, and farming in a manner that mirrors the interconnected nature of the traditional practices of the Northeast region.

Medini is a working farm. We practice natural farming, and promote the use of pesticide free food. This begins with staples such as rice, local pulses, beans, turmeric and mustard oil, all grown and processed within our farm. Seasonal vegetables change the palette of our farm to fork dining experience as the year goes by.

Except for plastic, Medini as an integrated farm has been able to recycle each and every other waste. Our vegetable peels, grass, and weeds become either cow feed or vermi compost feed. Cow dungs are used for Gobar gas and gobar



gas slurries are used as bio fertilizer. Mustard cake that comes as a by-product and rice husks after milling become livestock feed for cow, duck and fish.

Our handloom weave studio employs local women from the nearby Mishing village. We cultivate eri silk and natural dyes, deeply integrating farming and horticultural practices with textile traditions. This also is a proto-type physical form of Anna Louis's PhD thesis. We celebrate the fact that her research is not confined to documents.

The location of Medini as a property is not in the hub of Kaziranga hotels. We are a standalone property that offers an immersive experience of Assamese rural culture, both within the property and in the immediate surroundings. We are at the foothills of the Karbi hills, and a short walk through a tea garden



takes you to the Karbi villages, while a 10 minute drive or cycle in the opposite direction takes you to the Dhansiri river bank area, where you can observe the agricultural and fishing-based lifestyle of the villages in the flood plain areas.

Medini offers guests the opportunity to experience rural Assamese life, yet within the comfort of a boutique property where rooms are designed with quality, comfort and cleanliness as priority. Almost everything in the rooms is hand-made, from the furniture to the curtains and artwork.

There are challenges all along the way, this is part of setting up and operating a business in a more remote part of the country. It was a great challenge to complete the construction with a high standard of finish, particularly during the pandemic!

The land was completely barren when we bought it. It was left unused after the top layer was excavated for landfilling around the neighbourhood. So we had to start everything from scratch and planted everything. And it has been a real learning experience in understanding how to bring back the soil health and the balance of nutrients to support growth of all plants, trees and vegetables. Our effort to revitalize the soil structure through natural means and find solution for pests, fungal infection, etc will always remain a big challenge given the fact that we are the only natural farm in the neighbourhood and we have started with an already damaged piece of land.

However, the response in regeneration and reproductive capacity of the soil and nature has been an eye opener. We are thrilled by the fact that our effort brings such great returns from nature.

During the first couple of years we struggled with maintaining regular staff and communicating the vision and expectations of Medini staff. We now have a core group of staff who have been with us for a few years, who are extremely dependable. This has come through transparent and respectful interactions from both sides.

The Harvest:

Each changing season brings respective seasonal produce and we will continue working towards enhancing it.

The winter months, the peak tourist season are the months of abundance in the farm for fruits and vegetables.

From October till March we harvest Joha rice, urad and arhar dal, beans, leafy green vegetables, strawberry and a variety of vegetables. Mustard is grown at a riverbank. From March till September, we harvest gourds, roselle, edible herbs that grow in wetland areas like ferns, taro, water spinach, stink vine etc, and leafy vegetables. Banana, papaya, guava, mango, jackfruit, gooseberry, etc are produced at the property.

Top farm-fresh dishes:

- Homegrown Rice
- Homegrown Dal with Ou tenga (Elephant apple)
- Labra Sabji (a local mix vegetable dish)
- Bangena Pitika (Charcoal grilled aubergine mash with fresh local herbs)
- Koldil Bhaji (Banana flower sabji)
- Kol posola (Banana stem sabji)
- Dhekia bhaji (Fiddle head fern)
- Mutton Curry.

- Chicken curry with black sesame seeds.
- Pork broth with local exotic herbs.
- Meats cooked with bamboo shoot.
- Meats cooked with Lai Patta (local variety of mustard).
- Outenga mass (fish curry with elephant apple)
- Chicken with curry leaves.

Our dining area is in what we call 'The mud house' and like a homestead in rural Northeast India, it is the heart of Medini. It is a traditional style building with woven bamboo walls and mud plaster. It is an open kitchen, so guests can observe the preparation of meals, or participate in an Assamese culinary workshop with the kitchen staff.

We offer a buffet of freshly cooked meals and guests sit together on big tables to encourage interaction and dialogs of all sorts. The experience becomes an representative of how a community feast is organ-



ised and experienced.

There is a growing trend of travellers looking for a more personal and meaningful experience. In our experience, these places tend to keep sustainability at the core of their business model which is possible with a property of a smaller scale like Medini. These properties also give guests an experience that brings an understanding of the local ecologies and cultures within the comfort of boutique hospitality. Each small unit is unique to their own environment rather than a





replicable hospitality model repeated in various locations. A traveller looking for a responsible way of consumerism becomes part of the supporting ecosystem that keeps us growing. We feel the government can do wonders if the think tanks get together and implement constructive measures.

Future

- Enhance the soil structure for better and resilient indigenous varieties of food crop.
- Increase production through natural means for self sufficiency.
- Increase our farm produce product range and volume.
- Implement nutrition as the core of the farm to table experience.
- Diversify the platter to bring more seasonal vegetables.
- Include dishes of different ethnic communities of North East India.

A FARM-TO-TABLE RETREAT IN BHOPAL

Faiz Rashid

Jehan Numa is not a hotel group in the conventional sense. It is a family that has been a custodian of Bhopal's royal heritage for over two centuries, and that sense of custodianship — towards the land, the culture and the guest experience — continues to guide everything we do.

This brand was not built through corporate strategy or by a management company. It was built by people who genuinely love what they are preserving. That passion cannot be manufactured. It exists in the walls of the Palace, in the trees of the Retreat and in the forests of Reni Pani. It is also what shapes everything we aspire to create in the future.



Setting up a farm-to-table restaurant at Jehan Numa Retreat was less a decision and more a natural consequence of where we are. We sit on twelve-and-a-half acres on the edge of Van Vihar National Park. From the very beginning, the philosophy of this property has been to exist within the land, not over it. Not a single tree was felled during construction. So when it came to the kitchen, the same thinking naturally applied — to use what the land gives us. We started growing our own vegetables because we wanted the guest's plate to reflect the same values as the property itself. When a guest sits Under The Jamun Tree and enjoys a dish made from produce that was growing twenty metres away that very morning, something changes in the experience. It stops being just dinner; it

becomes a conversation between the kitchen and the land.

That is what inspired it — not a trend or a marketing strategy, but a consistent belief that food should be honest about where it comes from.

Our garden works year-round, but what it produces changes entirely with the seasons, which is something genuinely exciting for both our chefs and guests.

During the winter months — from October through February — we see an abundance of leafy greens, spinach, methi, coriander, radish, gourds, broccoli and fresh mint. Spring brings tomatoes, aubergine and our citrus harvest, much of which feeds directly into the Citrus Garden Project bar. The summer garden is lighter, but this is when our herbs — lemongrass, basil, mint and vetiver — are at their most aromatic and vibrant.

What we source from trusted farms rather than grow ourselves are primarily proteins — meats, dairy and certain specialty ingredients that are not suited to our soil or climate. For our Nawabi dishes in particular, we work closely with suppliers who understand the quality and authenticity these heirloom recipes demand.



However, the philosophy always remains the same: the shorter the journey from soil to plate, the better and more honest the dish becomes.

Greenhouse Bistro is our all-day café — relaxed, warm and surrounded by greenery and the fragrance of jasmine. The cuisine is light, global and deeply garden-driven. Guests particularly enjoy our freshly baked sourdough pizzas, cold-pressed juices, seasonal egg preparations, mezze platters and herb-forward salads. There is always a seasonal special inspired by what the garden is producing at that moment.

During the summer months, the menu leans towards chilled dishes, cold soups and fresh fruit preparations, while winters transform the

greenhouse into an incredibly cosy dining space with a warmer, more comforting menu.

Under The Jamun Tree, however, is an entirely different experience. It is our signature dining destination — set beneath a century-old Jamun tree, lit by hurricane lanterns, with the forest forming a dramatic natural backdrop.

The cuisine here is rooted in the Nawabi culinary heritage of Bhopal. The Bhopali Murgh Rezala is perhaps the dish we are most known for — a distinctive green coriander-based rezala created for the royal court of Begum Shah Jahan Begum in the 19th century, and one that exists in this form nowhere else in the world. Other signature dishes that guests consistently return for include the Filfora, Junglee Maas, Gosht Makhane Ka Qorma and the live-grill Seekh Kebabs.



Our kitchen garden tour is an experience that guests truly connect with. Walking through the garden with our team, understanding what is growing, handpicking produce and later seeing it on your plate creates a directness that is difficult to replicate elsewhere.

Bush TV in the evenings — where wildlife documentaries are screened under the open sky with the forest itself as the backdrop — is especially loved by families. Morning yoga by the pool, when the mist still lingers over the forest, is one of the most peaceful and restorative ways to begin the day.

The group's food philosophy re-

mains consistent across all three properties, even though the context and experience at each are entirely different.

At Jehan Numa Palace, the cuisine is deeply anchored in the Nawabi heritage of Bhopal. Signature dishes such as the Rezala, Gosht Pasinda and Filfora are prepared using heirloom recipes preserved by the family that owns and operates these properties. At Reni Pani Jungle Lodge in Satpura, Gol Ghar is the signature dining space — a warm, uniquely designed restaurant centred around a fireplace. The cuisine is comforting, fresh and locally rooted, with an emphasis on regional ingredients

and produce sourced from nearby communities.

One of our most exciting upcoming developments is Jehan Numa Retreat, Mandu. Mandu is among the most extraordinary heritage destinations in India — perched along the Vindhya ranges at nearly 2,000 feet, a historic city where Afghan architectural influences meet the rich cultural legacy of the Malwa Sultanate. The vision is to create an experience that is deeply rooted in the spirit, history and landscape of Mandu, while remaining true to the philosophy that defines the Jehan Numa brand.



THE LUXURY FARM STAY

Diogo Lopes

Diretor de Marketing



São Lourenço is a luxury hotel, with a working winery, olive grove and farm in Portugal's Alentejo region.

São Lourenço do Barrocal was born from a desire to preserve a place that has been in the same family for over 200 years. The estate had long existed as a self-sufficient farming community with agriculture, livestock, olive groves, and vineyards at its core. The renovation project was led by José António Uva, and his main idea was to safeguard its identity and heritage. Rather than creating a hotel from scratch, his ambition was to revive the existing buildings, allowing guests to experience the rhythms and traditions of rural Alentejo. This extensive restoration work was undertaken in collaboration with Eduardo Souto Moura, the only Portuguese Architect to win a Pritzker Prize. The hotel opened in 2016, making a new chapter for the estate while maintaining its agricultural roots, with farming remaining at the heart of Barrocal's identity, alongside hospitality, wine production, and olive oil making.

There's a special sense of tranquility that only this landscape can provide, with dark skies, vast open landscapes, and a deep connection to nature. Barrocal's estate spans



approximately 780 hectares. It has vineyards, olive groves, pastures, and lakes. Guests can explore a remarkably preserved cultural landscape, with views stretching across the Alentejo plains to Monsaraz. The architecture, of course, is another defining feature, creating a seamless dialogue between heritage and contemporary comfort. The estate is also home to a winery, olive mill, spa, stables, two pools, and extensive walking and cycling trails.

We offer our guests the opportunity to engage directly with the agricultural life of the estate. Seasonal experiences include vineyard and olive oil mill visits, wine tastings, olive oil tastings, guided walks through the estate, horseback rid-



ing, and birding. Everyone's invited, of course, to explore the estate's orchards and vegetable gardens. Since food plays an important role in understanding the landscape, many programmes revolve around seasonal harvests and local traditions, connecting visitors with practices that have shaped the region for generations.

We're always guided by seasonality and natural rhythms. Some of the most cherished ingredients come directly from the estate's vegetable gardens, olive groves, vineyards, and orchards. Our team loves working with the Barrocal's olive oil, wine, honey, wild herbs, figs, pomegranates, citrus fruits, and many seasonal vegetables. Beyond the estate, our cooking team works



closely with local producers, sourcing exceptional ingredients such as bread, black pork, lamb, artisanal cheeses and freshwater fish from Lake Alqueva. What excites the culinary team most is this opportunity to showcase simple ingredients that allow the flavours of Alentejo to speak for themselves and highlight provenance, seasonality, and a strong sense of place.

The Alentejo is one of the richest areas of Portugal in terms of gastronomic tradition. Its vastness allows it to have an amazing ocean coast, with delicious fish and seafood, and its more agriculturally-prone interior is home to delicacies such as wine, cheese, and pork. Hence, it was very clear from the beginning that our gastronom-



ical identity had to be a reflection of this. The fact that we are also a fully functioning farm, with certified organic production of fruits, vegetables, cereals, meat, aromatics, wine, olive oil, and so on, also made it clear that a farm-to-table approach would be impossible not to consider. We are not self-sufficient, naturally, but we see that as a positive, because that allows us to work with outside partners from the region, who work in a similar. We want to create a more sustainable presence in our community.

Despite its tremendous value, the Alentejo still has a big margin of growth in terms of showing itself to the world, so if decision makers are able to keep their investment in terms of promoting tourism in a

considered and targeted way, that would be very fruitful.

This year will be a particularly meaningful one for Barrocal, as 2026 marks ten years since the beginning of its transformation into a hospitality destination. Beyond the celebration itself, this anniversary invites us to look back on everything that has shaped the past decade and to acknowledge the many guests who have been part of that story. Their connection to this place has continually reinforced what we have always believed: that Barrocal is truly one of a kind.

Looking ahead, we are preparing to take another important step in the evolution of our project with the gradual addition of new villas to our collection. These homes are privately owned and will be made available to guests during selected periods of the year under our management. The initiative has been in development for several years and represents a significant milestone for Barrocal, enabling us to further strengthen and expand the experience we offer our guests.

In a more general note, we hope and aim to keep showcasing the vast cultural, historic, and natural richness that makes the Alentejo such a special place.



The Farm-to-Table Chef

Schalk Vlok is the executive chef at Babel Restaurant, honoured as Africa's Best Farm-to-Table Restaurant by the World Culinary Awards. Situated at the historic Babylonstoren wine estate in South Africa's Cape Winelands, Babel follows the pick, clean, cook and serve philosophy.

Can you tell us about your journey as a chef?

My plan was to study law, but then I fell in love with cooking and with what you can achieve through food. In my matric year, I realised this is what I wanted to do. The story that you can share via food was what ultimately drew me to it.

I started my career as a commis chef at Fancourt in George and worked there between various outlets until I progressed to chef de partie. This was definitely a great foundation for my career. I worked with some truly inspiring people, who shaped me into who I am today.

I worked in some top restaurants in the Winelands and Cape Town area. To name a few: Le Quartier Francais, Maison, Leeu Collection, Janse and Co and a few others of the same calibre.

Which of your stations has shaped you the most?

My first job as a chef de partie was on the veg section at Fancourt and that was hugely influential in my career. It showed me that the only way to have great service is to be well prepared, focused and determined to achieve the best. Every section and every place I have worked in has taught me

something different. Some taught me discipline and others respect, some taught me how to keep going and some taught me when to step back. I've learnt something new every single day of my career and I think if I had to choose the most important thing I've learnt, it would be that you need to stay humble and aware that you are working on something bigger than yourself.

I think any chef has millions of ideas and plans on a daily basis, but you need to be realistic and focus on one task or idea that you can achieve in a day. Babylonstoren is always progressing and constantly coming up with new ideas and directions to move, improve and grow. At the moment I am enjoying being part of



such an innovative team and I see a very positive future.

What do you love most about food?

Food gives us the opportunity to tell a story. It symbolises far more than just a dish on a plate. It is not just about the chef, but also about the ingredient, producer, vegetable, cook, waiter, supplier – every link in the chain. Food in a restaurant is a symphony performed by many individuals, involving different elements. And that is what I love most about food – when that symphony works together perfectly. Food always brings people together.

What is the concept of Babel?

Babel has a farm-to-fork philosophy and focuses on incorporating as many of our farm's own ingredients and products as possible. We build our menu around what comes from the farm and garden – the produce dictates what we cook and reflects the current season. The entire concept of Babel is built around showcasing our amazing ingredients in a simple way, paying respect to the artisanal craft behind each product and the people who produce them. Simplicity and a philosophy of

eating seasonally, respectfully, with as little waste as possible, are key features of Babel's dining.

Farm-to-fork has become one of the food industry's most overused buzzwords and marketing terms. What does farm-to-fork mean to you?

To me farm-to-fork simply means being guided by the ingredients, people and seasons. Our menu is all about keeping it simple and paying tribute to an ingredient in its simplest form – always cooking what is in season and what is available, never pushing or manipulating an ingredient into something it is not, and allowing the ingredients and producers to do the talking through each plate offered to our guests.

What are the key ingredients that come from your garden or farm?

The bulk of what we have on the menu is from our garden or our farm. Some products, like prickly pears or persimmons, come in very large quantities while others are available in small amounts, but we let the quantity guide us as to where and how the product is used on the menu. If we do have to order anything from elsewhere, it will always be from a trusted fresh producer, farmer or artisan in close proximity to us, who will supply us



with an offering that is farmed in line with our way of doing it.

Is having a farm or edible garden in your kitchen's backyard a paradise for a chef?

The inspiration one gets from the garden is something, I think, that every chef dreams about. At Babylonstoren, it is not only the produce that is inspiring but also the people who look after our garden and farm. Every single person here shares the same passion for the ingredients and produce we use. This is what inspires me and everyone in the kitchen on a daily basis – the shared passion for what we offer.

Sustainability has become a focal point for discussions in the hospitality sector. How do you find the best, earth-friendly alternatives?

Finding and honouring sustainable practices are at the heart of our approach at Babylonstoren. Just as the garden is our inspiration, the rhythm of the seasons is a reminder that we share a responsibility towards the Earth.

In our farm restaurants at Babylonstoren, the menus are always seasonal and guided by what is available in the garden. We take great care not to waste – offcuts go to the stockpot for soups and sauces, dried citrus peel makes a delicious flavouring, carrot tops are blended into a paste for filling mushrooms or adding to soup.

Farm-to-table eating is proving that being mindful of how and what we eat as well as where it comes from isn't just sensible, but could help combat climate change. The recipes for all of the dishes on



our seasonal menus are inspired by what grows in the garden and can be picked fresh on the day of consumption. Changing our ways takes time, but we've learned through our own small journey that every step counts.

Does the Farm-to-Table Menu of the Day start with the vision of dishes to serve or the produce in the garden with which you create a dish?

The season comes first, then we focus on what is available and then we plan our dishes around that. The ingredients dictate our menu and we always try and plan around that. Our vision needs to align with the season.



What are the special features of Babylonstoren?

One thing stands out and explains the magic, in my eyes, is the shared passion for the farm and everything we do and produce as a team. There is not one single person at Babylonstoren who doesn't believe in what we do. Everywhere on the farm, every single person is trying to achieve the best they can in the field that they are working in. The shared knowledge and each team member's passion make Babylonstoren a magical place and, in turn, this translates into an incredible experience for our guests.

How do you work together with two teams: the restaurant team on one hand and the growers on the other?



I balance my work between a few things (such as Bakery evenings, Babel, functions, and a few others) but my main focus is Babel Restaurant. I work very closely with our garden team, the butchery team, the bakery team and any other person dealing with the ingredients we use in Babel. I have a strong team behind me and some great mentors and leaders in front of me, so I am in a privileged position to have the freedom to achieve great things together with others who have immense knowledge in their fields.

Do you also work together with other ingredient suppliers?

We do work with local fresh producers, local farmers and artisans and our main focus when we decide on these suppliers is whether they follow the same

ethical ways of farming and are just as focused as we are on producing the best possible offering. We support suppliers who share our values.

What would you say is your gastronomic philosophy?

Keeping things simple, thinking of more than just the food and telling a story that pays respect to every single aspect of that dish and everyone that has worked together to make it happen.

Do you have a favourite season and favourite ingredient?

Spring, I believe that there is something special about the produce this time of the year. There are so many changes, inspiring so many new ideas.

Onion is the simplest of ingredients with the most possibilities. It is also where everything starts in all the classical recipes. It resembles the start of something great to me – simplicity in its best form.



What do you consider to be your best and your worst characteristics?

Best: I have a very clear and clinical way of looking at what needs to happen and I always keep a level head under pressure.

Worst: I am quite obsessive and a big perfectionist, and that sometimes leads to disappointment and frustration. I struggle to accept failure.

Do you have a life motto?

Focus on what you want, stay disciplined and never forget who helped you climb those steps when you get there. Always be humble.



What is your message for aspiring farm-to-fork chefs?

Keep it simple and true to the earth, stay focused, remember why we're doing what we're doing, question everything and, above all, pay respect to the ingredients we use.



Farm-to-Table in Asheville



Asheville is one of the top destinations for farm-to-fork dining in USA.
We spoke to [William S. Dissen](#), Executive Chef and Owner of The Marketplace about
his restaurant.

Specializing in American cuisine, Chef William Disen presents menus that are ingredient-driven and focus on the best of the season based on what's fresh from local farms at The Marketplace.

What inspired you to open The Marketplace?

I grew up with grandparents who were farmers. Their love for nature and growing their own food inspired me to chase my dream of becoming a chef. Asheville is known for our amazing small farms and access to the best ingredients. So, it was a natural fit to take over The Market Place. We are celebrating our 47th year in 2026, and my 17th year as the chef and owner.

Did you face any challenges starting the restaurant? If yes, how did you overcome them?

We've had many challenges over the years - from the US Recession in the 2000's to the Pandemic, and recently Hurricane Helene devastated our region. Chefs are resilient. Our team leaned in and we have learned to be adaptable to the times, which is why we have been relevant as a restaurant for so long. We have never wanted to be the trendiest restaurant, but

rather focused on our foundation as a farm-to-fork restaurant and worked to create the trends ourselves.

When you started, Farm-to-table and Slow Food were not the buzzwords they are now. Did you find it challenging getting the word out about the concept and marketing farm-to-table gastronomy?

Farm-To-Table has moved beyond a buzzword, and is now found in everyday society. It's become over played as a description for a restaurant because most restaurants are not actually following the seasons and sourcing local. We walk the talk and for us, farm to table is a way of life. We forge relationships with our farmers, foragers, and fishers to create delicious and inspiring



menus for every season of the year.

What are your sustainable sourcing strategies?

We look to source our ingredients within our "foodshed". So, for us we want to create relationships with farms and artisans who value the land they grow on. Their respect for the earth comes through in the quality of their ingredients and ultimately it comes through with the flavors on the plate at our restaurant.

What are the sustainability practises at the restaurant?

We are a solar powered restaurant, and the building, furniture, and fixtures are sourced from recycled and reused materials, with LED lighting, energy efficient equipment, and water-cooled refrigeration. We are a zero waste kitchen and operate primarily from a wood burning grill at the center of our culinary operations.

Which are the most exciting farm-sourced ingredients in your pantry?

Every season brings amazing ingredients into our kitchen. In the Spring I love wild ramps, morel mushrooms, Solomon's seal shoots, strawberries and

fresh greens. In the Summer I love Cherokee Purple Tomatoes, Torpedo Onions, chanterelle mushrooms, peaches & plums, and fresh corn. In the Fall I love candy roaster squash, pink lady apples, sorghum syrup, pecans, and chicken of the wood mushrooms. In the Winter I love hearty greens like kale and collard greens, covington sweet potatoes, persimmons, and breaking into our larder of preserved ingredients.

Which are the top dishes of the restaurant, and why are they your specials?

Our menu changes constantly. Some of my recent favorite dishes include our hand- made pastas, our strawberry brasied pork shank, and our beef tartare.

Do you think decision makers should encourage more farm-

to-table restaurants, farm enterprises and sustainable food enterprises?

Yes I do. If you believe in a healthy environment and strong local economy, then farm-to-table restaurants help to pave the way for communities to thrive. When a community is engaged in local food, it becomes a stronger and more resilient place to live, the citizens become closer together, and people are happier because they are eating fresh and healthy food.

What are the special features of your other restaurants?

Our other restaurants (Billy D's Fried Chicken) focus on fast casual fried chicken using regenerative poultry. It's a delicious brand showcasing that farm to table can be made available in a cost-



effective and casual environment and still stay true to our sustainability and local food practices.

What are your future aspirations in the farm-to-table gastronomy space?

I would love to open more restaurants. I have a concept for an all day casual cafe, a sustainable seafood oyster bar, and a French bistro.



GASTRONOMIC LODGES

Two &Beyond Lodges tell us about their culinary philosophies.



CULINARY EXPERIENCES IN CHILE

The inspiration behind Vira Vira was to create something far deeper than a traditional luxury hotel, a place where guests could genuinely connect with the land, the culture, and the rhythm of southern Chile. The Lake District is one of the most spectacular and authentic regions in South America, with its volcanoes, rivers, forests and strong Mapuche heritage. The founders saw an opportunity to build a lodge that celebrated this environment in a meaningful and sustainable way, rather than simply placing luxury accommodation within it.

The farm-to-table concept emerged very naturally from that vision. Instead of importing products or creating an artificial hospitality experience, the idea was to produce as much as possible directly on the estate — vegetables, herbs, dairy products and cheeses — and allow the cuisine to reflect the seasons and the identity of the region.

Food became a central part of the guest experience and also a reflection of the lodge's sustainability philosophy. It is about freshness, traceability, authenticity and reducing environmental impact, while supporting local producers and preserving regional culinary traditions. Ultimately, Vira Vira was designed to feel like a living, breathing part of the destination rather than simply a luxury lodge placed within it.

Challenges

One of the biggest challenges was that, when the lodge first opened, Chile's Lake District was not yet widely recognised internationally as a luxury experiential travel destination in the same way as Patagonia or Atacama.

There was also the challenge of explaining a concept that combined high-end hospitality with a working farm, sustainability, adventure

travel and cultural immersion. At the time, the market was still very focused on more traditional luxury models.

Another challenge was operational. Building and maintaining a sophisticated hospitality product in a relatively remote environment requires strong logistics, reliable local partnerships and long-term commitment to staff training and sustainability systems.

These challenges were overcome through consistency, authenticity and word-of-mouth reputation. The lodge focused heavily on delivering exceptional guest experiences rather than simply marketing luxury.

Over time, travellers increasingly began seeking meaningful and sustainable experiences, and Vira Vira was well positioned ahead of that trend.

Partnerships with respected luxury travel brands such as &Beyond also helped elevate international visibility and reinforced the lodge's conservation and sustainability credentials. Recognition from global travel publications and repeat guests further strengthened the lodge's reputation.

Culinary Concepts

Our cuisine is deeply inspired by the richness of our farm and the surrounding region. This year, some of the most exciting ingredients have truly reflected the diversity and quality of our local terroir. Particularly outstanding have been our native potatoes, celebrated for their unique varieties, colours, and flavours, along with delicate baby carrots and a vibrant mix of baby leaves, including tatsoi, mizuna, lettuce,

vinagrillo, and red sorrel. These ingredients bring freshness, texture, and a distinctive character to our dishes. In addition, we have enjoyed an excellent season of blackberries, full of intensity and natural sweetness. During the autumn months, the region offers exceptional wild mushrooms and chestnuts (exclusively harvested from our own chestnut tree on the property), which add depth and a true sense of place to our culinary creations.

At Vira Vira, we pride ourselves on our product-driven cuisine. It is a style of cooking that adapts to the season. While our culinary philosophy remains the same year-round, the ingredients change, bringing out new flavours and different dishes. To celebrate Chilean food, we host two special dinners each week featuring a traditional Chilean menu, where we revisit classic dishes with our own unique style, prioritizing ingredients when they are at their absolute peak."

Garden-to-Kitchen

We believe that today's luxury in gastronomy is direct contact with nature and the local community. At Vira Vira, we have a beautiful garden located just steps away from our kitchen, which allows us

to harvest fresh ingredients once right before the lunch service and a second time before dinner. This ensures we can serve our guests freshly gathered treasures. We also raise our own lambs for consumption, and our garden provides a large percentage of the ingredients we use daily. To complement this, we partner with local suppliers and communities; we always strive to source locally, ensuring that our products are not only Chilean, but also come from the immediate surroundings of the hotel.

Artisanal Cheese

At Vira Vira, we proudly produce a refined selection of artisanal cheeses in our own on-site creamery, guided by our master cheesemaker.

Our collection includes:

- Hard cheeses: Parmesan,

Gruyère, and Manchego

- Semi-hard cheeses: Gouda and a buttery-style Cheddar
 - Soft cheeses: Camembert, Reblochon, and blue-style cheeses
- The process begins with the careful pasteurization of fresh milk, sourced from a nearby farm, Fundo El Coigüe. We then add selected cultures that define the unique flavour and texture of each cheese. Once the curd is ready, it is transferred into moulds to shape each variety. The cheeses are then placed in brine baths for the appropriate time, enhancing flavour and preservation. Finally, they are moved into our aging cellar, where each cheese matures according to its specific requirements, developing its full character and complexity. All of our cheeses are crafted exclusively for our guests and can be enjoyed throughout their stay. They are served:



- As part of our daily cuisine
- As a dessert option
- Elegantly presented on a cheese board, perfectly paired with fine Chilean wines

Seafood

The Pacific Ocean is our main provider of seafood. We also understand that seafood has its own seasons and timing, so the fish we use varies throughout the year.

However, we have wonderful products available. A clear example is wild salmon, along with hake, sea bass, and pomfret, as well as an endless variety of shellfish such as mussels, clams, razor clams, and various crustaceans. Most of this seafood comes from Valdivia, located approximately 200 kilometres from us, and from traditional fishing areas such as Mehuín and Queule.

Being so close to the Pacific Ocean comes with a responsibility for us to handle these ingredients with the utmost care. On our menu, guests always have the option to choose from the selection of fish that the season allows us to offer. We prepare our fish and shellfish in various ways, featuring traditional Chilean dishes like caldillo de congrio (conger eel chowder)—a true staple of our Chilean dining nights—as well as more technical



or modern preparations, which we pair with ingredients from our garden and native products.

Gastronomic experiences
In terms of gastronomy, we believe our guests always have the opportunity to discover unique experiences, no matter the time of year. During the spring and summer, our garden truly shines. This is when our cooking connects deeply with the land, becoming more pastoral and floral, and the weather allows us to host wonderful riverside barbecues. By the end of spring and early summer, our own lambs are ready to be enjoyed. Then, as autumn begins and winter arrives, we welcome the season with a spectacular chestnut tree on our property.

We also enjoy foraging for wild mushrooms, and our Chilean

themed nights offer the perfect experience for guests seeking that authentic connection with the local culture, creating beautiful memories to treasure forever.

Future aspirations

The aspiration for Vira Vira is to continue deepening the connection between luxury hospitality, sustainability, and cultural authenticity.

This means continuously improving environmental practices, strengthening relationships with local communities, and preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the region for future generations. There is also a strong ambition to continue evolving the culinary experience by expanding regenerative agricultural practices, enhancing the organic gardens and further integrating local ingredients and traditions into the

guest journey.

On the guest side, the future is about creating increasingly personalised and transformative experiences that allow travellers not only to enjoy the beauty of Chile's Lake District, but to leave with a deeper understanding of the region, its people and its ecosystems.

Ultimately, the vision is for Vira Vira to remain a benchmark for sustainable luxury hospitality in South America while continuing to prove that high-end tourism and responsible tourism can successfully coexist.

Tourism has enormous potential to become a positive force for environmental protection, cultural preservation, and local economic development, but only if sustainability is genuinely integrated into the model. Farm-to-table gastronomy and eco-conscious lodges create multiple benefits simultaneously. They reduce food miles and waste, support local farmers and artisans, preserve culinary traditions, encourage biodiversity, and create more authentic experiences for travellers.

From a policy perspective, governments should support

these initiatives through incentives for sustainable construction, renewable energy use, waste reduction systems, water treatment

infrastructure, and local sourcing practices. Certification systems also need to become clearer and more credible so travellers can easily identify truly sustainable operators.

Training and education are equally important. Supporting local communities, culinary schools and hospitality programs with sustainability-focused education can help build long-term capacity. From a promotion perspective, tourism boards and industry leaders should move beyond simply marketing destinations visually and instead highlight meaningful travel experiences, including local culture, conservation initiatives, gastronomy and community engagement. Today's travellers increasingly want experiences with purpose and authenticity, and destinations that embrace sustainability will ultimately be more competitive in the long term.

GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCES IN THE NAMIDIAN DESERT

Sossusvlei Desert Lodge serves

dishes highlighting fresh produce, premium meats, and local Namibian ingredients from the desert region.

Our food identity at the lodge is Elemental Alchemy and is all about "Timeless techniques. Desert ingredients. Modern refinement." We have tried to incorporate the elements into our cooking techniques but give them a modern twist. We use local culture, as well as Afrikaans and German heritage in the flavours we create and ingredients we use.

Elemental Alchemy is a food identity born from opposites: silence and intensity, ancient and modern, survival and indulgence. Drawing from the Namibian landscape and the lodge's sleek, modern design, each dish is a study in contrasts...minimalist yet complex, earthy yet refined.

Namibian produce

We are incredibly fortunate to work with a range of uniquely Southern African and Namibian ingredients that allow us to create dishes with a strong sense of place.

Some of the most exciting ingredients we use are locally sourced proteins such as Namibian beef, springbok, and oryx. One

of our signature dishes features grilled springbok loin served with a rooibos-infused demi-glace, combining the richness of game meat with one of Southern Africa's most iconic flavours.

We also work with small-scale artisanal producers, including charcuterie makers who produce beautiful cured meats that reflect the craftsmanship and character of the region. Seasonal Kalahari truffles are another exceptional ingredient we enjoy incorporating when available, bringing an earthy and luxurious dimension to our menus.

From the coast, we source seafood from Swakopmund, including local species such as snoek and kabeljou, allowing us to bring a

taste of Namibia's Atlantic coastline into the desert. These ingredients often pair beautifully with smoky and spice-led flavours such as kapana spice, inspired by Namibia's vibrant street food culture.

Traditional flavours and dishes are equally important to us. We enjoy reinterpreting familiar regional elements in a refined way... for example, serving traditional dombolo dumplings alongside sweetcorn and biltong, or incorporating indigenous grains, herbs, and botanicals into modern dishes.

What excites us most is the opportunity to honour Namibia's culinary heritage while presenting it through a contemporary lens, creating food that feels elegant,

grounded, and deeply connected to the landscape surrounding the lodge.

Signature dishes

Many of our most meaningful dishes are rooted in the traditional techniques of preservation, resourcefulness, and desert living, aligned with our food identity, Elemental Alchemy. In a landscape as extreme as this, food has historically been about making ingredients last, intensifying flavour, and respecting every part of the product.

Some of the standout dishes at the lodge is our Grilled Ostrich Steak with Mebos, Salt-Baked Beetroot, Grilled Spring Onion, and Fermented Beetroot Reduction.

The ostrich is carefully grilled to highlight its natural depth of flavour and lean texture, then paired with the sweetness and tang of traditional mebos, earthy salt-baked beetroot, gently charred spring onion, and a rich, layered fermented beetroot reduction.

This is a standout dish because it captures the essence of Elemental Alchemy through both technique and philosophy. It draws directly on traditional Namibian methods of preservation, drying, fermenting,



and salt baking which speak to a culture of resourcefulness and making food last in a harsh desert environment. At the same time, it elevates these techniques into a refined, contemporary expression, balancing sweetness, acidity, smoke, and earthiness in a way that feels both deeply rooted and modern.

We also take inspiration from deeply traditional dishes such as viskop sop (fish head soup), which reflects a no-waste philosophy and coastal heritage. This approach of utilising every part of an ingredient is central to our kitchen ethos and aligns strongly with our vision of sustainability.

Staples such as samp and beans are reinterpreted in refined forms, celebrating their grounding, nourishing qualities while elevating them through technique and presentation. These dishes speak to longevity, sustenance, and the ability of simple ingredients to carry deep cultural meaning. Across the menu, there is a clear thread of sustainability through tradition... drying, fermenting, smoking, curing, and slow cooking. These are not modern inventions for us, but rather a return to desert wisdom, where food has always been shaped by scarcity, ingenuity, and respect for nature.

The result is a cuisine that feels honest and grounded, where every dish tells a story of survival, adaptation, and beauty in simplicity while deeply connected to the desert landscape that surrounds the lodge.

Use of indigenous produce

We approach local produce through the lens of Elemental Alchemy, where traditional knowledge and modern technique come together to create a cuisine that is both rooted and refined. Many of the ingredients we use carry deep cultural significance, and we aim to honour their origins while expressing them in a contemporary, luxury context.

Traditional methods such as wind curing, sun drying, fermenting, smoking, and salt baking are central to our kitchen philosophy.

I think one of the dishes that is an excellent example of this style is our version of a beef tartare, which has been cold smoked. The dish reads: Cold Smoked Beef Tartare, Bone Marrow Emulsion, Rooibos infused Apricot, Curry Oil, Labneh and Paprika Pickled Onion.

The ingredients we preserved are not only used in their traditional forms but are also reinterpreted

in sauces, garnishes, and flavour bases that add depth and nostalgia to modern dishes. Similarly, staples such as samp and beans are treated with respect for their heritage, while being refined in texture and presentation to suit a contemporary dining experience.

We also actively explore innovative applications of indigenous and regional ingredients. For example, fermented chilli sauces are used to build complexity and heat in modern preparations, while onion ash is created through controlled charring to add a smoky, elemental seasoning that reflects fire as a core cooking technique. Ingredients from the coast, such as fish from Swakopmund, are sometimes paired with desert botanicals to create unexpected but harmonious contrasts between land and sea. Yes, we often integrate local ingredients into more recognisable, mainstream-style dishes to make them accessible while still retaining a strong sense of place. For example, traditional flavours may appear in familiar formats such as grilled meats, refined salads, or plated tasting components, but always with a distinctly Namibian narrative behind them. This allows guests to experience local culture in a way that feels both comforting and



elevated, bridging heritage and modern hospitality.

Experiential dining

Sossusvlei Desert Lodge offers an experience deeply connected to the land, and the food journey forms part of that immersion. Guests can enjoy dining under some of the darkest and clearest night skies in the world, often paired with storytelling, wine, and fire-based cooking experiences.

We also offer intimate dinners in our wine room, where guests enjoy a thoughtfully curated wine-paired tasting menu, our own “Taste of Namibia” experience. The menu takes guests on a culinary journey through locally inspired flavours,

regional ingredients, and stories of the desert, all paired with carefully selected wines to enhance the experience.

In addition, we are currently developing a wellness-focused dining offering, centred around fresh, nourishing, and wholesome cuisine that complements the restorative nature of the desert environment and the overall guest experience at the lodge.

The lodge also offers incredible access to the desert through guided nature drives, desert walks, stargazing experiences at the observatory, and scenic excursions to the iconic dunes of Sossusvlei. What makes the lodge unique is the balance between remote wilderness and refined luxury. Architecture, cuisine, hospitality, and nature all work together to create a deeply sensory and emotional experience.

The importance of farm-to-table gastronomy

Sustainability and local procurement are essential to the future of tourism, especially in fragile environments. Supporting local farmers, producers, artisans, and suppliers not only reduces environmental impact, but also strengthens local economies and creates more meaningful guest experiences.

From a promotional perspective, guests today are increasingly interested in authenticity and responsible tourism. Locally driven, immersive experiences should therefore be highlighted not as niche offerings, but as aspirational examples of modern luxury travel. Sustainability should become part of the story guests actively seek out and value.

Future aspirations

We will continue deepening the connection between cuisine, sustainability, and a sense of place. We aim to further expand our use of locally sourced ingredients, strengthen relationships with regional suppliers, and continue exploring innovative ways to express the landscape through food.

We also hope to create even more immersive culinary experiences for guests, from fire-led outdoor dining to storytelling through menus inspired by the desert’s elements, seasons, and night skies. Ultimately, the goal is for every guest to leave not only remembering what they ate but feeling that they have experienced Namibia through every plate, flavour, texture, and moment shared at the lodge.



Farm Retreats

Agri-tourism bridges agriculture, hospitality and tourism. Some of the major farm-first entrepreneurs tell us about their properties.

Tathagata Farm

Navin Tamang, Darjeeling

I have been working with the tea farmers of my area since 1995 as a Program Manager in an NGO to build a sustainable tea farming small tea growers. As I also own a tea farm, I opened an experimental farm where other farmers can also come and experience the organic farming practices. With my support, farmers in the area are now Organic and Fair Trade certified.

In 2004-2005, I decided to open up my farm to generate revenue from both tea and tourism. Construction at a remote village with low access to roads and electricity, and promotion and marketing in an area with limited communication facilities posed challenges. In 2011, I decided to quit my job and instead focus on tea plantation and agri-tourism. Once the property was listed on various online platforms, business began to grow. Guests enjoy activities ranging from tea picking to making handcrafted teas and tea tasting, interaction with local farmer communities, fishing, day hikes, cooking demonstrations, tours of different farms in the area, and interactions on sustainable



agriculture practices.

We serve only local hearty food of Nepal and the East Himaalaya, including Gundruk (a fermented raddish or mustard leaf soup), and locally sourced of farm harvested organic seasonal vegetables with free range livestock like chicken, pork, etc.

Farm tourism and homestays support local livelihood – they should be encouraged by the government with suitable schemes. At the same time, rules and regulations should be in place so that homestay and farmstay terms

are not misused to start hotels that lack personalized attention and local experiences.

At my property, accessibility is a challenge as the homestay is reached by a cobbled path sloping downhill – I am planning to build a road for better approach so we can facilitate senior citizens and those with physical challenges.

I am also building a Community Farmstay & Homestay Program that can be a platform for more homestays in my area.



Dewalokam

Jose Dewalokam

I have been a professor at the university, and my wife Sinta is still working as a higher secondary teacher. Parents on both sides are traditional land owners and farmers. Our small farm is more than 120 years old, which always practiced homestead farming.

We decided to stay with our parents and look after them in their old age. We started a small business in the year 2005 taking a few paying guests.

The big challenge we face is in promotion as we are 75 km from Kochi with no known destination nearby so tour operators and travel agents do not include us in itineraries. We are getting online business and testimonials-led



bookings.

At Dewalokam., the farmstay uses vegetables, fruits, spices, milk, eggs, and honey produced at our farm. Guests can see the picking of the produce for the kitchen making this a unique farm to fork farm stay in Kerala. Our food is a culinary tour of Kerala and nearby areas in South India, offering meals without repeating. The sadya lunch is one of our highlights.

The spice walk in the 15 acre farm, cooking demos, and seeing the produce being used in the kitchen are highlights of the stay. We also organise trips in the countryside with villages, pineapple fields and rubber plantations.

Responsible and sustainable practices should be promoted. Long term licenses could be issued to prevent harassment from the bureaucracy.



Mharo Khet

Rajnush Agarwal and Vedika Prasad

Mharo Khet began almost as a mistaken project. It started on a whim during the pandemic by selling produce from our fields and then evolved into hosting weekly brunches, and eventually into what it is today: a pastoral retreat. Along the way, we found ourselves drawn to creating a space where people could slow down and experience rural India in a way that felt both honest and intimate. It was never conceived as a "hospitality product," but rather as a way of life that we chose to open up and share.

The early challenges were less about operations and more about intent. We were trying to build something that didn't sit neatly within existing definitions of farm tourism in state that is governed primarily by heritage tourism. There were practical constraints too: water, climate, and the realities of building within an arid landscape. We moved slowly, listened to local wisdom, and allowed the land to guide decisions. That patience, in hindsight, became one of our biggest strengths.



What defines Mharo Khet is that it is a working farm first. The cottages are not placed on the land—they exist within it. The dining experience unfolds outdoors, under trees and shifting light, and is as much about storytelling as it is about food. There is also a certain quietness to the place—an intentional absence of noise that allows guests to tune into the subtler rhythms around them.

Most experiences emerge organically from the farm itself—walking through the fields, understanding what is growing and why, and spending time at Paeru over a long, unhurried meal. We also invite members of the local community to guide guests through artisanal skills and simple pleasures: whether it's weaving a charpoy, enjoying a champi under a tree, or trying their hand at miniature painting. Guests often find themselves engaging in things they may have forgotten to value. We don't try to fill every moment; we try to give it depth.

There is a deliberate restraint in how Mharo Khet has been built and experienced. We have chosen intimacy over scale, and immersion over activity. The storytelling through food, landscape, and conversation is central to what we do. It's less about offering a checklist of experiences, and more about creating a setting where something meaningful can unfold for each guest in their own way.

Our food is deeply rooted in the land we sit on. We grow over 110 varieties of crops and utilise most of them across our three dining venues. Samaa, is an all-day dining venue serving pan-Indian dishes celebrating the rich culinary heritage of India. Aab, the poolside alfresco dining is more fun play on food for lighter lunch meals with sandwiches, bowls and salads. Paeru, is our pre-plated, 9-courses, plant forward dining experience in the guava orchard, where 95% of the ingredients are sourced directly from our fields.

Innovation, for us, is subtle—it may come through reviving a forgotten ingredient, or reinterpreting a local preparation in a way that feels relevant today, without losing its essence. There are many innovative plays across the dining venues at Mharo Khet.

We don't think of dishes as signatures in the conventional sense. What guests tend to remember are flavours tied to a particular moment—their "specialness" comes from immediacy and provenance, shaped by the season, the soil, and the hands that prepare them.

That said, certain creations do linger in memories. A recent amuse-bouche at Paeru has been especially well received: a thayyir sadam (curd rice) wrapped in a nasturtium leaf, perched on a fresh long banana chip, and finished with moringa podi masala. At Samaa, the dahi goat cheese kebab with puffed quinoa and strawberry chilli chutney is another dish guests often return to.



FOREST SIDE FARM

**Hemanshu Joshi, Kotabagh,
Uttarakhand**

We are a farm stay located in 2.5 acres of food forest. A suite with 2 bedrooms and its own living room and an independent cottage with 1 bedroom makes it an exclusive space for maximum 6 guests at any time. We have a large land space, despite that we have built a limited hosting space because we wish to remain a farmer first property. We feel more than 6 people becomes a crowd and we wish to enjoy hosting our guests. You see green forested mountains from all the rooms. Being in the farm you are always surrounded by trees and greenery. All around us are the farm lands. We are 12 feet away from the forest. A full moon night here is mesmerising.

Simple personal artifacts adorn the rough-hewn walls to give the property a personal home touch. The rooms have affirmations inscribed on wood pieces using pyrography. The concept is to align the mood of the guests in line with the slow life philosophy of our farm through appropriate affirmations.

Guests get to interact with me specially during breakfast or dinner. There are lots of stories

of building the farm, switching from corporate life to become a farmer, wild animal interactions are shared.

Our top farm-to-table meals include regional specialties like Kumaoni lunch, Ras . (a mix of 5 whole dals, all grown in our own farm, cooked in slow heat for 5 hours in cast iron pot), Pahadi Kadhi. etc.

Mutton Handi is our signature: Mutton is sourced locally of a jungle grazed goat, slow cooked in an earthen pot for 4-5 hours. We make our own pizza dough and pizza sauce. The dough preparation takes almost 36 hours using a starter. We do not use any extra gluten or bread enhancers. The pizza sauce is made with blanched tomatoes. The pizza has smokey flavour and it is very fluffy. Pita bread is also wood oven baked and served with Hummus made



using white chick peas grown in our own farm. The Pita bread is thin and fluffs unlike the one done on tawa. What makes our sizzlers unique is our custom sauce, in which the primary ingredient is the honey that we produce in our own farm. We bake our own breads. Our hot beverages are always served along with a piece of home baked tea cake.

. All our food is cooked with either spices grown within farm or whole spices are purchased from market and freshly ground to be used for cooking. We never use any pre-mixes or any other food enhancers.

We always cook our food fresh for every serving to guests. We never use ready mixes or prepare gravy in advance to quickly mix and serve the food. That is why we are always loved for our authentic taste. Therefore, we want our guests to always pre order their food.



KASHMIRI FOOD BEYOND THE WAZWAAN

SABRINA SURI



Born in Kashmir with a history of growing up eating Kashmir cuisine, I took a short trip to Kashmir where I spent time with the local wazaas learnt the techniques and science behind the Kashmiri food. That's where I learnt how our cuisines emphasise slow-cooking, smoking, and fermentation to produce hearty, warming food, where ingredients like dried fruits, yaks' milk, sheep cheese, meats and staples like buckwheat and rice are used to make the meals.

As time passed by I realised that for most people Kashmiri food was only about Wazwaan. As all my childhood memories kept flashing on my mind. How my grandmother would emphasise on optimal osmolality, preservation

of the vegetables and meat by Fermentation. So I decided to promote lesser-known recipes of Kashmir, and dishes from Gurez, Banihal, and Pandit households feature on the menu of my food festivals.

I gathered lost recipes by exploring oral history, traditional culinary techniques, and a focus on specific, fast-disappearing dishes. Researching this cuisine requires focusing on the two distinct, yet interconnected, culinary traditions: Kashmiri Muslims incorporate heavy use of onion, garlic, and yogurt) and Kashmiri Hindus use yogurt and subtle spices, focusing on aromatics like fennel powder and dry ginger.

Promoting lesser-known culinary traditions involves a mix of storytelling, digital marketing, experiential events, and strategic partnerships. Key approaches include highlighting the history and community context behind dishes, adapting recipes for modern kitchens, and leveraging social media influencers to reach broader audience

My supper club called Malun T Variv Khen Chen(where malun means moms house variv means in-laws house and khen chen means eating gathering) is where stories are shared. Food is served in a traem (A large, traditional copper plate designed for communal dining). The conversations are very interesting.



Top dishes:

- Kashmiri Kandur (also called Girda or Czot) is traditional fermented flatbread, often baked in a tandoor with a crispy exterior and soft, chewy center. It is prepared by fermenting wheat flour/maida, yogurt, salt, sugar, and yeast (or overnight rest) to form a soft dough, flattened with fingers, coated in poppy seeds, and baked until golden
- Khatta Meat is a popular Dogra community mutton delicacy from Jammu (not strictly Kashmir) known for its distinctive sour taste, typically achieved using dry mango powder (amchur), tamarind, or pomegranate seeds (anardana). The dish is characterized by tender mutton cooked in mustard oil, often finished with a unique smoking technique using red-hot coal and ghee.
- Ambal is pumpkin cooked with fennel, jaggery, fenugreek seeds, tamarind paste, turmeric, etc. These dishes are traditionally cooked on the day before wedding on the occasion of Saant
- Masale Tchot is a traditional Kashmiri street food wrap, often enjoyed as a spicy and tangy breakfast or snack. It features warm lavasa bread (a soft, thin Kashmiri flatbread) filled with

boiled, mashed white peas and a pungent chutney made from radish, green chilies, yogurt, and spices.

- Chaman qaliya Tchaman is a classic vegetarian dish from Kashmiri cuisine particularly popular within the Kashmiri pandit community. It features cubes of fried paneer (called chaman in Kashmiri) simmered in an aromatic, milk-based yellow gravy
- Gogje ti Maaz (Turnips with Lamb)
- Haaq (spinach/similar greens)
- Rogan Josh
- Tabak Maas
- Meeta Pulav
- Tahar (or Tehri) is a traditional Kashmiri yellow rice dish, cooked with turmeric, mustard oil, and salt, usually prepared on Fridays or special occasions. It serves as a symbol of community, togetherness, and cultural heritage, usually served alongside curries or distributed as a sacred offering.
- Hokh Syun: Dried vegetables (and fish) are locally called hokh syun, and are carefully stored to endure the winter, when fresh produce is scarce.
- Shab deg or shab daig is slow-cooked turnip and mutton stew.



Kashmiri Vegetarian Recipes

- Sabrina Suri

NADRU MANJU

Also known as Nadir Monji, **Nadru Manju** is a famous Kashmiri street food snack made from crispy, deep-fried lotus stems (called Nadru in Kashmiri). The lotus stems are cut into vertical strips, coated in a spiced rice-flour batter, and fried until golden

Preparation Time: 30 Minutes

Cooking Time: 25 Minutes

Serves: 4

Course: Appetiser

INGREDIENTS

For Cooking Lotus Stem

- 4-5 lotus stem / nadru (washed)
- 2 black cardamom
- 4 green cardamom
- 1-inch cinnamon stick
- 2 bay leaves
- Salt as required

For the kebab

- 1 large potato (boiled and peeled)
- 1 tbsp ginger (chopped)
- 2-3 green chillies (chopped)



- 1 tsp Kashmiri red chilli powder
- ½ tsp pomegranate seed powder / anardana powder
- ½ tsp fennel powder
- ½ tsp roasted cumin powder
- A pinch of nutmeg and clove powder
- 2 tbsp brown onion paste
- ¼ cup besan (roasted)
- Ghee / oil for shallow frying
- Ghee / oil for shallow frying
- Fried sliced lotus stem / nadru for garnish
- Curd for garnish (beaten)
- Salt as required

Stage-1

Peel and cut the lotus stem into 2-inch roundels. Add nadrus into kadhai with all the whole spices, salt and just enough water to cover them.

- Cook for 2-3 whistles. It should break easily but still be firm.

- Drain the liquid immediately and discard the spices

Stage-2

In a mixing bowl, grate the cooked lotus stems. Add potatoes and mash it.

- Now add ginger, green chilli pomegranate seeds, Kashmiri red chilli powder, fennel powder, cumin powder, nutmeg powder, clove powder, brown onion paste, besan and mix well. Adjust salt.
- Make lemon-sized balls and flatten them.
- Heat ghee / oil in a frying pan on medium heat.
- Transfer the kebabs on the pan and cook on both sides till golden. Remove the kebabs on absorbent paper and drain off the excess oil.
- Arrange kebabs on a service plate and serve hot with onion chutney,

PANEER KANTI

Paneer Kanti is a popular semi-dry dish that features cubes of Indian cottage cheese (paneer) stir-fried with diced bell peppers, onions, and tomatoes, all tossed in a spiced, tangy gravy.

For the Marinated Paneer

- Paneer: 500g, cut into bite-sized cubes
- Kashmiri Red Chili Powder: 1 tbsp
- Black Pepper Powder: 1/2 tsp
- Salt: To taste
- Vinegar: 1 tbsp
- Dried Fenugreek Leaves (Kasuri Methi): 1 tbsp
- Cornflour: 1 tbsp
- All-Purpose Flour (Maida): 2 tbsp
- For the Gravy & Aromatics:
- Oil/Ghee: 3-4 tbsp (Mustard oil is traditionally used for a sharp flavor)
- Onions: 2, finely sliced or chopped
- Ginger-Garlic Paste: 1.5 tsp
- Tomatoes: 1, chopped
- Turmeric Powder: a pinch
- Coriander Powder: 1 tsp
- Cumin Powder: 1/2 tsp
- Whisked Yogurt (Curd): 1/2 cup (slightly sour)
- Bell Pepper (Capsicum): 1, diced

Method

- Marinate the Paneer: In a mixing bowl, combine the paneer cubes

with the Kashmiri red chili powder, black pepper, salt, vinegar, and Kasuri methi. Toss gently so every piece is coated.

- Coat and Fry: Sprinkle the cornflour and maida over the paneer to create a dry, light coating. This helps it crisp up. Shallow-fry the cubes in a pan with 2 tablespoons of oil until they are light golden on all sides. Remove and set aside.
- Sauté the Veggies: In the same pan, add a bit more oil and lightly toss the diced bell peppers for 1-2 minutes until slightly softened but still crunchy. Remove and set aside with the paneer.
- Make the Masala Base: Add sliced onions to the remaining hot oil and cook until they turn soft and lightly

browned. Add the ginger-garlic paste and sauté until the raw smell disappears

- Incorporate Curd: Turn the heat to low (or temporarily switch the stove off) to prevent the yogurt from curdling, then stir in the whisked yogurt. Mix it quickly and continuously into the spiced onion paste. Let it simmer for a couple of minutes until the fat surfaces.
- Toss Together: Finally, add the fried paneer cubes and sautéed bell peppers to the gravy. Mix everything gently so the paneer is well coated with the masala. Add a splash of water if it feels too dry, and simmer for 2-3 minutes.
- Serve: Garnish with a little fresh coriander and serve hot with rice or an Indian flatbread.



Tourism

A CULINARY **RETREAT IN TIGER COUNTRY**

- Anil Mulchandani



Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve is one of the few national parks that remain open during the monsoon, offering an opportunity to see lush forests, dramatic scenery, birdlife and reptiles. Tiger and leopard sightings are possible, though less predictable due to factors such as dense vegetation and abundant water sources. In addition, the Tadoba area has boutique resorts that offer a peaceful environment, green surroundings, luxurious interior spaces, and good food.

We selected 98 Stripes for our holiday after reading excellent reviews of it as a food lovers' destination, with a well-regarded restaurant and regional specialities. The resort is close to the Kolara Buffer Zone, where safaris operate even in the monsoon, including the Madnapore Gate, which is good for tiger sightings.

We left Nagpur at 10.30 AM and reached the resort entrance at 12.30 PM. Here, we were welcomed by Aman Verma and the rest of the resort's team, which has a fair balance of both men and women staffers.

THE RESORT

Once past the reception, we walked through the resort, which has villas

and luxe tented rooms set around the gardens. The pathways to the rooms lead past the lawn, plants and trees. Each villa is named for a tree or plant that grows in the area. Each villa has a separate living room with an attached powder room, a bedroom with an ensuite bath, a spacious wash area, and a backyard lawn. The resort has thoughtfully provided a range of toiletries and amenities.

CUISINE

Rather than relying on a standard multi-cuisine buffet like most lodges do, 98 Stripes celebrates India's remarkable culinary diversity through carefully curated regional experiences.

Executive Chef Suresh Rama, who hails from the Garhwal hills, presented us with the Himalayan Thali for our first lunch. A delicate



Badam Shorba opened the meal together with non-veg and lotus stem starters. From here, we moved on to an apple-and-vegetable Yakhni that was elegant and deeply comforting. Palak ka Chaman, Aalu Katli Kali Mirch, a soulful dal and fragrant Mitha Bhat. The star of the thali was the delectable Mutton Rogan Josh. The meat yielded effortlessly to the fork, while the rich, gelatinous gravy was delicious.

For high tea, the Coffee Shop's semi-open patio became our favourite retreat. Surrounded by monsoon greenery alive with butterflies and birds in their breeding plumage, afternoons drifted by over high tea as the pastry chef surprised guests with a changing selection of cakes, puddings and desserts. From the



patio, we watched Ashy Prinia, Tailor Bird, Scaly Breasted Munia, Jungle Mynah, Treepie, Oriole, White-breasted Waterhen and other birds. We could hear the breeding calls of cuckoos and other birds. We saw the nesting sites of Fantail and Paradise Flycatcher, and my wife spotted a Tailor Bird making its nest.

We were back here at night when the outdoor grills and wood-fired oven transformed dinner into another memorable occasion. Melt-in-the-mouth Shammi Kebabs, Paneer Tikka, Chaats and freshly baked Pizzas were the highlights of the dinner.

At breakfast time, the resort's bakery deserves special mention. Pastry chef Vasudev produces fresh croissants, artisan breads, muffins, pastries and desserts daily. In the morning, the young

women brought beautiful grazing trays with the morning bakery products, eggs, sausages, cold cuts, preserves, poha, etc.

Lunch on the second day was a thali from the Deccan. Inspired by Chef Rama's years in Hyderabad, this feast travelled south with equal confidence. Prawns in coconut curry, tangy Gongura Pappu, Hyderabad meat preparations, traditional South Indian breads and an excellent Beetroot Halwa were presented on thalis.

The third day belonged entirely to Vidarbha, the eastern region of Maharashtra. Breakfast the next morning brought Nagpur's beloved Tari Poha together with other morning staples.

Prepared by Chandra, Sushma, Lata and Sunita for lunch, the

Varadhi Thali is representative of the region to which Tadoba belongs. The local women arrived with warm smiles and immense pride to introduce us to authentic Varhadi cuisine. The kansa thali that followed featured rustic regional cooking: Patodi Rassa Bhaji with its gram flour dumplings bathed in a local curry, smoky Bharli Vaangi stuffed with aromatic spices, comforting Pithla, Varhadi Chicken, fresh Jowar Rotis, Kadhi, Bhat, Sabudana Vada and the inevitable ghee-rich Puran Poli that rounded off the meal on a sweet note. The flavours remained authentic, although the famous Varhadi heat—normally powered by generous quantities of red chillies and black pepper—had been gently moderated for guests.

What impressed me most about all the meals was the balance. Every dish possessed its own identity; no two flavours competed, yet each complemented the other.

Before every meal, an elaborate tray of chutneys, pickles and accompaniments appeared on the table—a small ritual that heightened anticipation before the first bite.

General Manager Aman Verma explained the philosophy simply: owner Manoj believes that

memorable hospitality begins with giving the team everything they need to create exceptional experiences. That investment is evident not only in the kitchen but also in the resort's own vegetable and herb gardens, whose produce frequently finds its way onto the plate.

THE SAFARIS

After lunch and some rest, we boarded the semi-open vehicles for the safari. As it was drizzling, the property provided us with raincoats. As we entered the forests through Siketra Gate, we were not very hopeful of major sightings because of the weather. But, an hour later, the driver spotted fresh leopard pugmarks. We got lucky: a leopard moved gracefully along a tree branch,



followed by her two cubs.

We stopped for a picnic tea provided by the resort, veg rolls, sandwiches and flasks of tea, before setting back for the gate. A unique aspect of Tadoba is that the forest department provides water in glass bottles decorated with wildlife graphics at the entrance, along with illustrated guides to common birds and butterflies of the park, to prevent travellers from carrying plastic bottles.

We got lucky once again on the way back - the guide pointed to tiger pugmarks, and my daughter Radhika spotted a tiger lolling in the grass. The guide told us it was a tigress named Chhoti Rani.

The next morning's safari also started on a quiet note as we drove in through Madnapore Gate. We saw the pugmarks of Xlo, one of the largest and most dominant male tigers of the area, but could not spot him. After a break to enjoy the breakfast box provided by 98 Stripes, we saw the tigress Jumabai with her four juveniles. A fitting end to our trip.

We departed from Tadoba with lingering memories of wildlife, regional cuisines executed with style, and the resort's amenities.



Years of IFEA



A Dynamic Network of Food, Hospitality and Tourism Professionals

The **Innovative Food Entrepreneurs Association (IFEA)** was founded on **12 July 2017**, when food entrepreneurs were facing the challenges of GST implementation. **Anil Mulchandani** envisioned a democratic platform to strengthen communication, collaboration and mutual support within the industry.

IFEA was co-founded with **Rohit Khanna, Dilip Thakker and Darshan Rawal**, who brought their respective experience and networks to build the association.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the founders established the **Culinary Education and Enterprise Development Association (CEED)**, an NGO focused on **skill development, entrepreneurship and capacity building**.

A Diverse Professional Network

IFEA brings together stakeholders from across the food, hospitality, tourism and culinary sectors, including:

- Hotels, resorts, homestays, heritage hotels and lodges
- Restaurants, cafés, bakeries and confectioneries
- Food-processing companies and cloud kitchens
- Home chefs and food entrepreneurs
- Culinary institutes and hospitality educators
- Tourism and homestay operators
- Food writers and media professionals
- Agriculture, equipment, packaging, wholesale, retail and other allied sectors

Why Join IFEA?

Connect: Share business updates, products, services, events and opportunities through the IFEA app and WhatsApp community.

Access Knowledge: Tap into the collective experience of entrepreneurs and professionals across the industry.

Find Solutions: Seek recommendations and advice on equipment, ingredients, packaging, technology, suppliers and other business needs.



Learn & Participate: Take part in seminars, conferences, workshops, knowledge sessions, culinary competitions, food festivals, culinary trails and industry events.

Collaborate & Grow: Build partnerships, exchange knowledge, discover opportunities and contribute to a stronger food and hospitality ecosystem.



IFEA is a platform to connect, learn, collaborate, innovate and grow together.





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