

# Culinary

## Entrepreneurs

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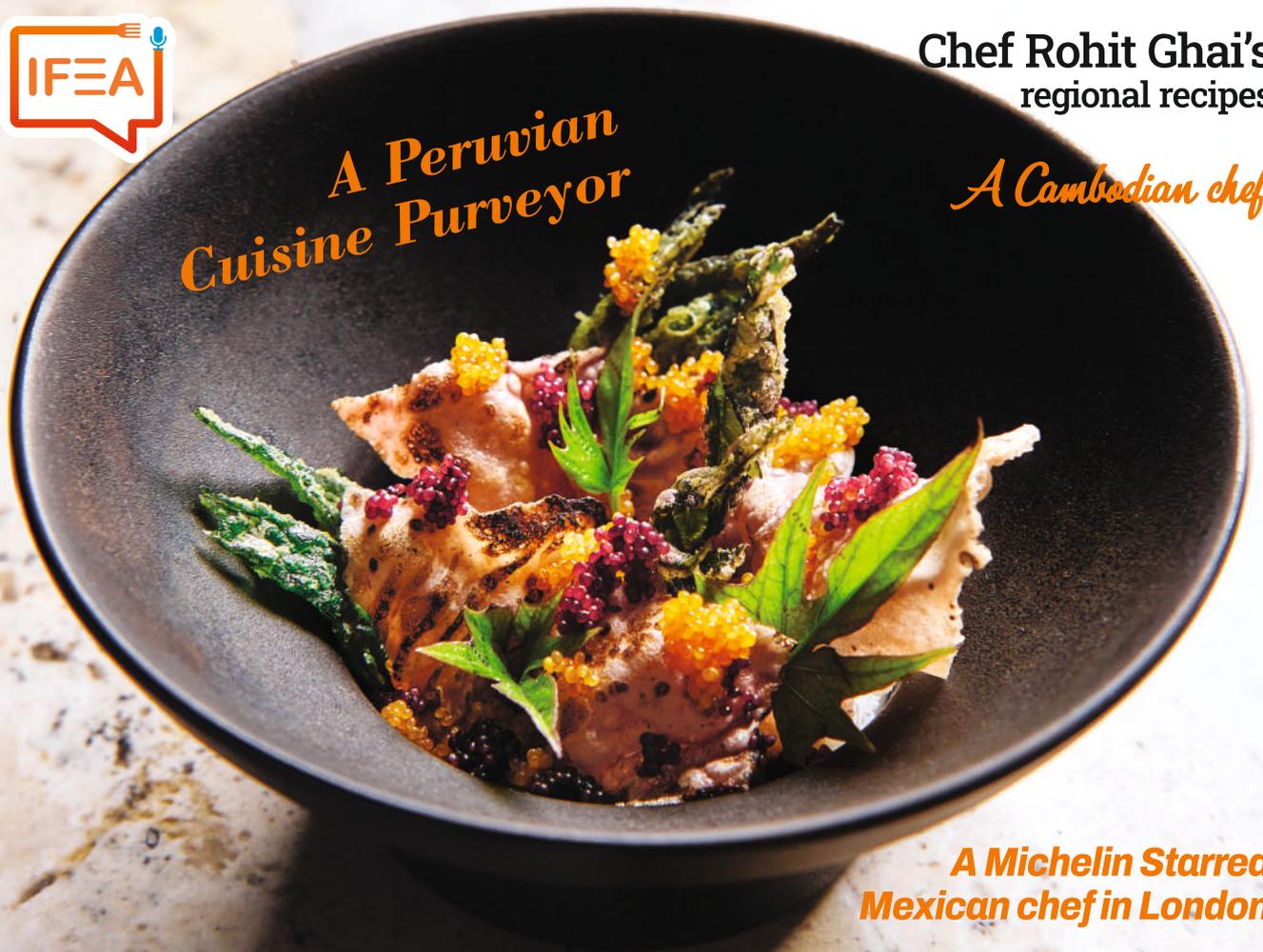
A magazine for the food, hospitality  
and tourism entrepreneurs by



*A Peruvian  
Cuisine Purveyor*

**Chef Rohit Ghai's  
regional recipes**

*A Cambodian chef*



**A Michelin Starred  
Mexican chef in London**

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Taiwanese fine  
dining**

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Peruvian chef, Virgilio Martínez Véliz is known for his contemporary interpretation and presentation of Peruvian cuisine at Central, a restaurant located in the Barranco District, Lima, Peru.

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# Editorial

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Gastronationalism or culinary nationalism promotes food and its history, production, control, preparation and consumption as a national identity.

In this edition of the magazine, we spoke to chefs who are promoting their country's cuisine. Chef Rohit Ghai is the first Indian chef to have won a Michelin star for Jamavar within ten months of the restaurant's opening. His latest book features recipes from 10 states of India. Rotanak Ros has won awards and accolades for ventures, Chef Nak Home Dining and her cooking classes that promote the cuisines of Cambodia. Chef Andre Chiang has created benchmarks in Taiwanese fine dining with his Michelin starred restaurants. Blending Mexican dishes and techniques with British ingredients, Chef Santiago Lastra has started Michelin Starred restaurants in London.

Chef Virgilio Martínez is renowned for showcasing and promoting Peru's biodiversity and landscapes on the global gastronomic stage.

As India celebrates Independence Day, our magazine honours those who preserve and promote national identity through cuisine.



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# A star of Indian cooking



Rohit Ghai

Michelin-starred Rohit Ghai has become one of in-demand chefs after a hugely successful decade on the London restaurant scene. He spoke to IFEA about his latest book, *Yatra*.



**C**hef Rohit Ghai says his love affair with food began in my mother's kitchen in Punjab. This led to studying hotel management at the Institute of Culinary Management in Gwalior, after which he worked in hotels of leading groups, Taj and Oberoi.

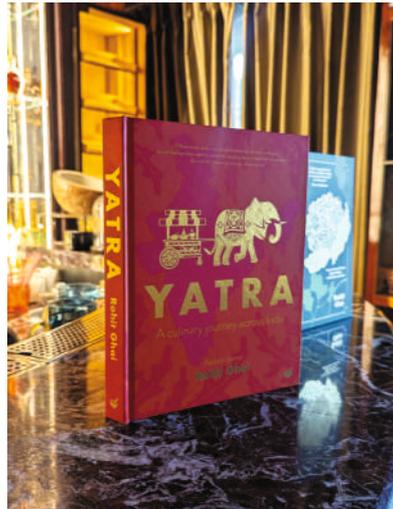
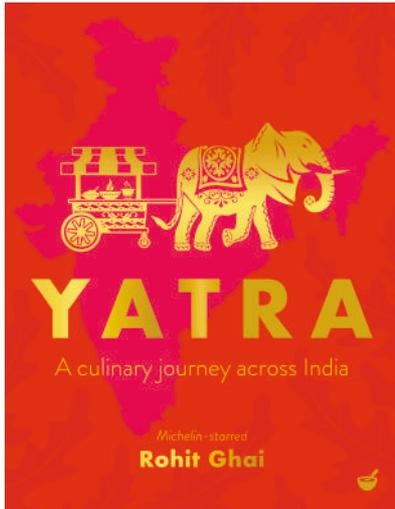
"After moving to the UK, I worked in and headed kitchens at some of London's leading Indian restaurants including Benares, Trishna, Gymkhana, Hoppers and Jamavar. I became the first Indian chef to have won a Michelin star, within less than a year at Jamavar", he says. Partnering up

with Abhishake Sangwan, the duo opened Kutir in November 2018 to offer a slightly different take on London's high-end Indian food offering. The restaurant got rave reviews. "I also launched a street-food diner KoolCha at Wembley's BOXPARK in early 2019", he says. In summer 2021, Rohit opened Manthan in Mayfair, a plant-forward Indian restaurant. His growing restaurant empire now also includes Rivayat in Morocco, IKSHA 360 in Doha and Aangan in Oman. He has also made many TV appearances.

His debut cookbook, Tarkari was launched in 2021. Recently, he

launched Yatra: A Culinary Journey Across India, a book covering his experience across 10 states of India.

"I was given the opportunity for my second cookbook and I wanted to take people on a journey of my cooking experience: the type of food which has shaped my career to date," he explains, "Yatra stands for the culinary journey of my experience while being easy for everyone to make at home, The recipes are all from regions that are most special to me; where I have eaten and then developed the recipes over the years". Known for its bold flavours, Andhra Pradesh



is a region that packs a punch with its spice-laden dishes, using ingredients from the fiery chillies to the tang of tamarind, “One of my favourite recipes is from this region: Pesarattu, thin savoury pancake, similar to Dosa, made with green lentil; this is a healthy option but really tasty, enjoy alone or with filling”. He also talks about the egg kurma recipe.

Punjab is synonymous with hearty, satisfying meals that are perfect for sharing. The cuisine of this region is famous for its tandoori dishes, creamy curries, and a liberal use of ghee and butter. One of the most iconic recipes in Yatra is Butter Chicken, a dish that has become beloved around the world. With its velvety smooth tomato-based sauce and tender chicken,

it’s a dish that epitomises Punjabi comfort food. This is from Punjab region where my roots are from, a classic but I always love when they try my version”, he says.

Bihar, located in eastern India, is often overlooked when it comes to Indian cuisine, but Yatra brings this region’s food into the spotlight with some unique recipes. “The cuisine of Bihar combines sweet and savoury dishes. These flavours blend perfectly to create unforgettable meals. I discovered Launglata - a very famous dessert I came across. I tasted it recently and wanted to make my own - easy and delicious! I love finding new recipes and putting my twist on them”, he says, “Champan Mutton Curry is a rich, slow-cooked dish. This curry, which

originates from the Champan region, is a hearty dish that takes hours to prepare, but the results are well worth the effort. Bihar’s cuisine is not only delicious but also a testament to the patience and care that goes into every dish.”. Goa’s coastal location makes seafood central to its cuisine. Yatra showcases this with mouth-watering seafood recipes.

He says that a true Goan favourite is Cafreal Fish, a dish that combines tender fish with a flavourful green marinade made from coriander, mint, and a variety of spices. Another recipe that captures Goan cooking is Chicken Xacuti.

“This book is a personal journey of recipes I love and have discovered throughout my life. My mum taught me a lot of my recipes,” he says, “In Yatra I have a recipe from South India, Dhayirsadam, which is curd rice. My little one loves this at the weekend so I cook this a lot at home. These recipes have a strong emotional connect with me. I feel happy when people tell me that the recipes are easy and enjoyable to make for all the family”.

Chef Ghai has just opened Vatavaran, a fine dining restaurant with a bar and members club. “I am considering opening something in India soon,” he says, adding, “I would like to do another book as I love sharing my recipes but early days for now”.

## Recipe

### PESARATTU

Pesarattu are thin, savoury pancakes, similar to dosa, but requiring no fermentation. They are very easy and quick to make, and are nutritious as well as tasty. These lentil crêpes are a classic Andhra breakfast staple. I have given them a nutritious stuffing of spiced potatoes and cheese. Don't just save them for mornings – they are terrific to enjoy for any meal!

Serves 4–6

#### YOU WILL NEED:

200g/7oz/1 cup green moong dal/mung beans, rinsed well and drained  
 2 tbsp uncooked rice (any type), rinsed well and drained  
 2 green chillies  
 1 tbsp chopped fresh root ginger



1 tsp cumin seeds  
 ¼ tsp salt  
 2 tbsp vegetable oil or ghee, plus extra as needed

**POTATO STUFFING**  
 250g/9oz potatoes, peeled and cubed  
 1 tbsp rapeseed/canola oil  
 ½ tsp mustard seeds  
 50g/1.oz onions, thinly sliced  
 8–10 curry leaves  
 1 tbsp chopped green chillies  
 pinch of asafoetida  
 1 tsp chopped fresh root ginger  
 ¼ tsp ground turmeric  
 ½ tsp salt, or to taste  
 2–3 tbsp water  
 2 tbsp finely chopped fresh coriander/cilantro leaves  
 50g/1.oz mozzarella cheese, grated

#### METHOD:

1. Start with the stuffing. Boil or steam the potatoes until just cooked, then drain and set aside.
2. Heat the oil in a pan over a medium-low heat. Add the mustard seeds. Once they start to crackle, add the onions, curry leaves and chillies. Fry until the onions turn lightly golden. Add the asafoetida and ginger, and fry until the raw aroma of ginger goes away. Crumble the potatoes or smash them with a fork and add them to the pan. Add turmeric, salt and water, and saut. for 2–3 minutes. Stir through the fresh coriander, then taste and add more salt if needed. Set aside.
3. Place the rinsed moong dal and rice in a large bowl, cover with fresh water and leave to soak for 4–6 hours.
4. Drain the dal and rice, rinse well, then drain again and transfer to a food processor. Add the green chillies, ginger, cumin seeds and salt along with just enough water to make a thick batter. Blitz to a coarse or smooth batter as you prefer. Pesarattu batter must be of

pouring consistency, yet needs to remain reasonably thick and spreadable. If needed, add extra water to bring it to the right consistency, but do not make the batter too runny, as the pesarattu will not become crispy.

5. Using a spatula, spread a little oil or ghee over a griddle or frying pan set over a medium-low heat. Using a ladle, pour a spoonful of the batter onto the hot pan and spread the batter into a round shape. Drizzle some extra oil or ghee on the sides and in the middle of the pesarattu and cook for 2 minutes, then flip and cook on the other side until crisp and browned. Place a few tablespoons of the potato stuffing mixture in the centre and spread it with a spatula, then sprinkle with a little grated mozzarella and fold the pesarattu over.

6. Serve hot with Coconut Chutney (page 18) or Tomato Chutney (page 19).

### LAUNG LATA

This famous Bihari sweet has many names – you might also see



it referred to as lavang lata or latika. These crispy pastry parcels are filled with a sweet mixture of mawa/khoya (a dried milk product) and nuts, and are sealed with a clove (lavang), which lends an exotic aroma. Served warm, they are rich and delicious. I always advise to buy mawa/khoya ready-made, at Indian grocery stores or online, as it is very time-consuming to make from scratch. Makes about 10–12

#### YOU WILL NEED:

200g/7oz/generous 1. cups plain/all-purpose flour  
2 tbsp fine semolina  
¼ tsp baking powder  
⅛ tsp salt  
2 tbsp ghee or cooking oil, plus

extra for deep-frying  
10–12 cloves  
crushed pistachios, to decorate

#### FILLING

1 tbsp ghee or cooking oil  
50g/1.oz mixed nuts (almonds, cashews and pistachios), finely chopped  
150g/5oz mawa/khoya (dried milk product – buy ready-made at Indian grocery stores or online)

2 tbsp granulated sugar  
2–3 drops kewra water (or rose water)

⅛ tsp freshly crushed green cardamom seeds

#### SUGAR SYRUP

400g/14oz/generous 1. Cups granulated sugar  
400ml/14fl oz/1½ cups water  
1–2 drops lemon juice  
a few saffron strands  
3–4 drops rose water

#### METHOD:

1. Put the flour, semolina, baking powder and salt on a large plate and add the ghee or oil to it. Mix well with your hands. Add just enough water to form a medium-stiff dough. The dough should neither be very soft nor

very stiff. Set aside.

2. For the filling, heat the ghee or oil in a heavy pan over a low heat. Add the nuts and saut. for a couple of minutes, then add the mawa/khoya and saut. until it turns lightly golden. Transfer the mixture to a plate, add the sugar to it and mix well. Leave to cool, then add the kewra water and crushed cardamom seeds to the mixture and mix well.

3. Divide the dough into 10–12 small balls of equal size and roll them into thin oval shapes, about 8 x 4cm/3 x 1 1/2in. Place some filling mixture in the centre of each oval and fold in the 2 long edges to enclose. Now fold over the 2 short sides (rather like sealing an envelope) and close the fold with a clove to hold it in place. Continue to form the pastries until all the dough and filling has been used up.

4. Make the sugar syrup. In a saucepan, combine the sugar and measured water, and heat over a high heat, stirring until the sugar has dissolved. Add the lemon juice, saffron and rose water, and

continue to stir for about 5 minutes until the syrup is thick and sticky. Reduce the heat to very low.

5. Meanwhile, heat enough ghee or oil for deep-frying in a deep, heavy pan over a high heat. When hot, reduce the heat and start frying the pastries, one by one, until light golden on each side.

6. Remove the cooked laung lata from the oil with a slotted spoon and place them in the sugar syrup. Turn until well coated, then remove to a plate. Do not leave the laung lata in the syrup or they will become soft. Decorate with crushed pistachios and serve either hot or at room temperature.



## About the author (2025)

Rohit Ghai's love affair with food began in his mother's kitchen, in his native Punjab, India. He went on to study Hotel management at the Institute of Culinary Management in Gwalior, which is affiliated with Pusa University in New Delhi. He then trained at two of the biggest hotel groups in India - the Taj Hotel and Resort Group and the Oberoi Hotel Group. After moving to the UK, Rohit worked in and headed kitchens at some of London's leading Indian restaurants including Benares, Trishna, Gymkhana, Hoppers and Jamavar. Rohit is the first Indian chef to have won a Michelin star. In 2018, he launched his first solo London restaurant, Kutir, followed by KoolCha, and then Manthan in Mayfair. Most recently, he opened Rivayat restaurant at the Oberoi hotel in Marrakesh and the brand new Himalayan-inspired Vatavaran in Knightsbridge



# The Mexican Chef In London

KOL in London is a Michelin-starred Mexican restaurant led by Chef Santiago Lastra. It's known for its innovative approach to Mexican cuisine, using predominantly British ingredients to create authentic dishes.



**W**e started Kol to build a community that goes beyond just a restaurant, to celebrate and share the meaning of quality in Mexican culture and Mexican food, to bring something new to the world and evolve together with a team.

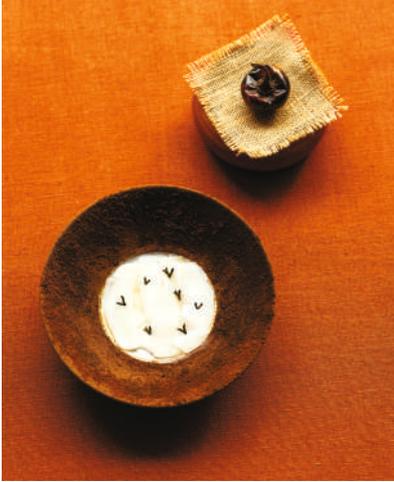
We use local ingredients from the UK to recreate Mexican flavours here at KOL. The UK is in a

different zone, and therefore, it has different weather and different ingredients. Working with the seasonality of the ingredients is very challenging. Winter is very long, Spring and Autumn are very short, and Summer is long and very dry and hot; the weather is very inconsistent. We work with micro seasonality and a lot of wild plants, which keep us on our toes, and after 7 years of working on this style of food, we are still learning how to marry the Mexican flavours with the ingredients available, It is definitely something not made before and it takes a lot of time and effort to get into this point

We do have a replacement for every single ingredient, different fruits, vegetables and herbs. For example, mango will be replaced with a different plant based on

micro seasonality, for example in summer it will be yellow bell pepper with elderflower and winter will be butternut squash with seeds and kombucha, so at the end of the day it is about finding new things and learning how to be creative with limited ingredients. And above all the food is very personal and artistic and is a representation of my life work together with what we've been learning on the way after being





open for 5 years, which makes KOL unique

One of my signature dishes is the langoustine taco, It's a marriage between Mexico and England, and a way to transport the guests to two of my favourite experiences ever: eating lobster tacos in Baja California on the beach, and freshly caught langoustine by the sea in Scotland. These places also inspired me to pick berries on the beach - from sea buckthorn bushes - and squeeze them on my tacos.

At KOL, we focus a lot on mezcal both in cocktails and cooking. We have a long list of Mezcal. When we were creating it, we had in mind the ability to showcase the diversity of mezcal in an easy way,

just like wine lists are usually presented. We tried to organise our Mezcal list based on the strains of plants they are made from, such as Americana, espadin and also the region. There is a lot of misinformation in the way Mexican culture is showcased outside of Mexico, therefore, it was very important for us to help people understand more about Mezcal and the different provinces and taste profiles. At KOL we use it for cocktails and we also offer a Mezcal paring and we also use Mezcal in the kitchen, as you can cook with it, and the taste profile is very complex; you can add it to sauces and even cure things with it. For example, at the moment, we are curing beef hearts with mezcal, and it gives them a smoky



aroma. Overall It ;s very healthy, you can just drink mezcal and be fine the next day, and it will make you very happy and open-minded- mezcal is good for you.

We only import a couple of ingredients, such as chillies, which are very important as they have a complex flavour which enhances dishes with umami. They add background and complexity; dried





chillies and fresh chillies are amazing, and you can even combine them and the sensation on the palette is amazing. Another ingredient is corn, which is a base ingredient in Mexican and Latin American cooking, and the corn is maximised with the beautiful taste of the land and authenticity of Mexican cooking. Apart from that, I would say that citrus fruit is an essential ingredient in Mexican cooking. Still, instead of citrus fruits, here in the UK at KOL, we use different fruits or preserved and fermented ingredients that

resemble those flavours. For example, a mixture of kombucha and Douglas fir pine gives us flavours of sour orange. Or fermented gooseberries and the sensation of lime, sea buckthorn berries, and the feeling of having small kumquats and a fresh and sour taste is also essential. Also, different types of ingredients that contain linalool (coconut flavour) present in gorse and woodruff, hemp seeds instead of pumpkin seeds, hazelnuts or peanuts (depending on how long we roast them), camelina seeds instead of

sesame and maybe an example of something a bit more technical will be combining pineapple weed, strawberry and cucumber to have watermelon flavour or cooking Mirabel plums to get flavours of zapote or something as simple as elderflower vinegar and roasted apple juice to replicate guava. We have a full list that keeps evolving.





“

Chef Nak (born Rotanak Ros) is a Cambodian celebrity chef. Chef Nak Home Dining and Chef Nak's cooking have been named among the best by leading publications. Anil Mulchandani spoke to her about her work in promoting Cambodian cuisine.

# The Cambodian Cuisine Custodian



### **What inspired you to preserve and promote Cambodian cuisine?**

My inspiration came from a place of love, responsibility, and identity. I began cooking at a very young age, not as a hobby but as a way to support my family. My father often travelled to different provinces for work, and my mother would wake up as early as 2.00 or 3.00 AM to sell vegetables at the market. That meant my older sister and I had to cook for our younger siblings. In those early mornings, I learned more than just how to prepare meals, I discovered how food could carry care, resilience, and

connection. I fell in love with cooking.

As I grew older, I realized something heartbreaking: Cambodian cuisine, with all its depth and uniqueness, was often forgotten or overshadowed, especially on the international stage. One moment that changed everything for me was in 2010, when I was working in the USA. After just a week, I began to crave the flavours of home, but I could not find a single Cambodian restaurant. That longing sparked something in me. I thought, "If I

feel this way, surely others do too. Why isn't our cuisine better known? Why isn't it being celebrated? Why are the cuisines of our neighbouring countries better known?"

Cambodian food is rich with ancient wisdom, delicate techniques, and unique flavours; it has so much to offer the world. I saw a responsibility and an opportunity. So, about 10 years ago, with the unwavering support of my family, I made the bold decision to leave a secure, well-paid job and devote myself entirely



to preserving, elevating, and sharing the beauty of Cambodian cuisine with the world.

And that journey continues, with heart, with purpose, and with hope.

**What are the key elements, nuances and features of Cambodian cuisine?**

Cambodian cuisine is incredibly diverse, regional, and deeply rooted in tradition. It's a vibrant tapestry of fresh, healthy flavours, enriched by the natural bounty of our land: our mountains, rivers, lakes, seas, and fertile fields. Every dish tells a story, shaped by the rhythm of the seasons and the wisdom of our ancestors.

What defines Cambodian food is the way we balance flavour. Most of our dishes carry a beautiful harmony of sweet, salty, sour, umami, and sometimes a touch of bitterness.

This balance is at the heart of how we cook and how we live.



Despite the wide variety across regions, one common thread is our use of lemongrass paste called *kroeung*, which gives many of our dishes their fragrant, earthy depth. It's like the soul of Cambodian cooking.

Beyond ingredients, our cuisine reflects our cultural legacy. In the countryside, food is about sharing ingredients, dishes, and stories. We are resourceful and creative, especially in times of hardship. During the war, or when new influences arrived from abroad, we learned to adapt. Instead of simply adopting foreign dishes, we reinvented them, infusing them with Cambodian flavours and spirit to match our palate and way of life.



Cambodian cuisine isn't just something we eat, it's who we are. A reflection of resilience, creativity, generosity, and the deep connection we have with our land and each other.

**What was lost during the Rouge?**

During the Khmer Rouge, many lives were lost, millions perished, and along with them, we lost our way of life, our culture, and our identity.

We were not allowed to cook at home. Instead, we were given only watery porridge, with just a few grains of rice in each bowl. In that period, we lost the recipes, cooking techniques, culinary traditions, and knowledge passed down for generations. People were no longer able to cook, and many of our elders never had the chance

to pass on their wisdom to the next generation. Food became a matter of survival, not celebration. The joy, creativity, and soul of our cuisine were silenced.

Yet even in that dark time, our culinary culture endured. Our survivors remembered, they saved seeds and after the war, they began to cook again. They held on to what little they could, even if just in their memory.



And today, we are not just reviving old recipes: we are reclaiming our identity, honouring our rich culinary heritage, and celebrating it with the world. I am truly proud to be part of this journey.

**Which are the historical and traditional Cambodian dishes?**

Defining which dishes are more traditional than others is difficult as Cambodian cuisines can be fairly diverse, regional, and innovative. We do know that many of our cuisines have existed for thousands of years - the ancient bas-reliefs of the Bayon Temple even bear evidence of their existence. Dishes like Fish Amok (Hmok) and Samlor Korke are beautiful examples. Both highlight our signature kroeueng paste, which has been a foundational flavor in Khmer cooking for



centuries. Interestingly, kroeung and our use of spices may have been influenced by Indian culinary traditions during the early Khmer Empire—who knows? Food, like culture, is always evolving, blending, and finding its own expression.

What's most special is that these dishes aren't just traditional, they are living legacies. They continue to be cooked, shared, and passed on through generations, carrying with them the flavors and spirit of Cambodia's rich culinary legacy.

### **Which are the ritual and festive dishes of Cambodia?**

Food has always played a sacred role in Cambodian life, woven into our rituals, festivals, and spiritual ceremonies, which accompany us from birth to death. It's how we honor our ancestors, celebrate life, and give thanks to nature.

One of the most symbolic ritual dishes is the sticky rice cake, filled with banana or pork and wrapped in banana leaves. It's especially important during Pchum Ben, when we offer it to the spirits of

those who have passed. It's also commonly prepared during weddings and other special ceremonies. This dish represents family gathering, gratitude, and remembrance. Even though wars and social changes have interrupted our traditions, these sacred foods and practices continue to be passed down from one generation to the next. They remind us that cooking is more than nourishment: it is devotion, love, and a deep connection to our roots and our people.

### What are your top dishes and why?

One of my favourite dishes is grilled fish with tamarind sauce, traditionally served with fresh Cambodian rice noodles and a vibrant assortment of vegetables and herbs. This dish truly captures the essence of Cambodian cuisine (fresh, well-balanced, nourishing, and delicious) and is beautifully wholesome. The recipe for this dish is featured in my first cookbook, NHUM.

In addition, there are two unique and somewhat forgotten dishes that I believe food lovers around the world would truly appreciate. The first is Num Banh Chok Namya Bangkorng—Cambodian fresh rice noodles served with a fragrant soup made using Mekong River grayfish. The second is Samlor Mukta, also known as The White Pearl Soup. Both are included in my second cookbook, SAOY - Royal Cambodian Home Cuisine. These dishes were once prepared in the royal family's kitchen before 1970, and they are a wonderful representation of Cambodia's rich culinary heritage.



### How do you research to find historical facts and rare recipes?

Traditionally in Cambodia, we haven't been very good at documenting our recipes. Like many of our art forms, culinary knowledge was passed down orally—and much of what was written was lost during the war. That's why I travel across Cambodia (and sometimes abroad), visiting elderly villagers, cooking with them, and listening to their stories. These are precious moments I've captured in hundreds of videos—to preserve not just recipes, but memories.

Researching has become one of the most exciting parts of my work. It's made me more open, appreciative, and respectful of other cultures. The more I learn about others, the more I understand my own roots.

For example, many think of prahok, shrimp paste, or fish sauce as belonging to specific countries. But these fermented flavours have ancient roots across Southeast Asia—and even in places like ancient Rome, with garum. Yet Cambodia's prahok wasn't copied—it was created out of necessity, from deep knowledge of our land and water.

Even our sour flavours are uniquely Khmer. As Zhou Daguan once observed, we didn't use vinegar like the Chinese—but instead drew sourness from tamarind, green mango, star gooseberry, and fermented fruits. Cambodian food has always been in harmony with nature.

### Which discoveries of lost, forgotten or rare recipes have been most exciting and rewarding to you?

I can't even describe how much joy and fulfilment I feel when visiting elderly villagers in remote parts of Cambodia. Many of them are so humble—they often say, "I don't know much," or "What I cook isn't anything special." But when I spend time with them, listen, and cook by their side, the most incredible things begin to emerge—dishes, techniques, and

stories I've never seen or expected. It's often mind-blowing. These quiet, humble moments have become some of the most rewarding parts of my journey.

One of my greatest joys has been rediscovering the royal home recipes of Princess Norodom Rasmi Sobhana—precious culinary treasures that were nearly lost during the war. I carefully reinterpreted them and brought them together in my second cookbook, SAOY: Royal Cambodian Home Cuisine, which was honoured as the Best of the Best Cookbook in the World by the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards last year.

One of the most meaningful discoveries has been Muktaa, the White Pearl Soup. It's a refined, royal dish that embodies grace, balance, and the soul of Khmer culinary tradition.

At first glance, it looks simple, with white tapioca pearls floating in a crystal-clear broth. But each element is carefully crafted. The pearls absorb the savoury richness of the broth, transforming

into the dish's namesake: muktaa, or pearls. The broth itself is made from a sacred trio of proteins (Mekong Giant Crayfish from the river, crab from the sea, and pork and chicken bones from the land), each representing a part of Cambodia's natural abundance. Beyond its royal roots, Muktaa speaks to something deeply Khmer: our love of soups as comfort, connection, and care. Whether in the palace or a village home, a hot bowl of soup is a symbol of tradition and love.

**What are your initiatives to preserve, document, promote and commercialise Cambodian cuisine?**

My work is rooted in one mission: to preserve and elevate Cambodian cuisine while sharing its richness with the world. I've approached this through many different paths—each one helping protect our heritage and bring it to new audiences in meaningful ways.

Preservation and documentation have been at the heart of my journey. I travel across Cambodia to learn directly from elders and

village cooks by filming, recording, and writing down rare and traditional recipes that would otherwise be lost. I've published two cookbooks: NHUM: Recipes from a Cambodian Kitchen and SAOY: Royal Cambodian Home Cuisine. These books are not just collections of recipes—they are living records of our culture, our stories, and our identity. To promote Cambodian cuisine, I offer curated home dining experiences, cooking classes, and culinary tours through the Chef Nak Culinary Art Center in Phnom Penh and now through our newly established centre in Siem Reap, one of Cambodia's most beloved cultural destinations. These experiences go beyond the plate; they invite guests to connect deeply with the history, flavours, and soul of Cambodian cuisine.

I also create engaging video content and storytelling on social media, helping inspire a new generation, especially young Cambodians, to reconnect with their roots and take pride in their food heritage.

On the commercial side, I work

with partners in Cambodia and internationally to bring Cambodian food products, books, and culinary services to a wider audience. I believe that for our cuisine to truly thrive, it must also become economically sustainable for farmers, food producers, chefs, and entrepreneurs. Supporting local sourcing and inclusive business practices is at the heart of everything I do.

Looking ahead, I have started consulting with top restaurants on incorporating authentic Cambodian recipes into their menus, and I am also working on our next very exciting cookbook, which I hope will open even more hearts and kitchens to the beauty of Cambodian cuisine.

For me, this work is not just about preserving the past; it's about creating a vibrant, flavourful future where Cambodian food is celebrated across the world.

### **What led to your opening the homestay at Phnom Penh?**

Both my husband and I have always had a deep love for everything Khmer—our culture, our antiques, our architecture, and

especially traditional wooden homes. So when my work in the culinary arts began to grow, we felt it was only natural to create a space that would reflect the full richness of Cambodian heritage, not just through food, but through how we live, build, and welcome others.

We restored and elevated our antique wooden home, adding comfort while preserving its traditional soul, and eventually expanded into nearby houses as well. This became the foundation of the Chef Nak Culinary Art Center in Phnom Penh. It's more than a place to eat; it's a space where people can stay with us, experience our way of life, and immerse themselves in Khmer culture.

When guests visit, they don't just come for a meal. They step into a peaceful community, surrounded by beautiful traditional homes, gardens, and warmth. It's a place where food, design, storytelling, and hospitality come together to celebrate Cambodia in a deeply personal and authentic way.

For us, this homestay isn't just about showcasing cuisine—it's about sharing our roots, our

values, and the beauty of Cambodian living.

### **What are the key aspects of the homestay?**

Our homestay is built on the value of cultural immersion. We've poured our hearts into creating a space that reflects the beauty and spirit of Khmer life, not just in how it looks, but in how it feels.

At the heart of the experience is the house itself, a traditional Khmer wooden home, carefully preserved and thoughtfully elevated with touches of luxury and modern comfort. It's a place where heritage meets elegance, where guests can experience Cambodia's past in a space that feels warm, refined, and welcoming.

What makes the experience truly special is that it goes far beyond accommodation. Guests can dine with us, cook with us, garden with us, or simply relax and enjoy the peaceful surroundings. We are part of a quiet, friendly community just a stone's throw from the bustling cities. Visitors can take morning walks, explore local markets, or soak in the rhythms of daily Cambodian life.

But above all, the key aspect of our

homestay is this: it's not a hotel, it's a home. And when people stay with us, we welcome them not as clients but as family or friends visiting from another part of the world.

This philosophy of immersive, soulful hospitality is also what inspired us to open our second culinary and homestay destination in Siem Reap, so that more people can experience the full richness of Cambodian cuisine and culture, one meaningful moment at a time.

### **What kind of food do you offer the guest?**

Our goal is to provide each guest with the most intimate and memorable culinary experience, so that they leave not only satisfied, but inspired and become ambassadors of Cambodian cuisine in their own way.

The cuisine we offer is thoughtfully tailored around fresh, seasonal, and locally sourced ingredients, many of which come from our own garden or the nearby community market. Each menu is curated with care to reflect what's in season, what's healthy and nourishing, and

most importantly, what tastes authentically Cambodian, both traditional and elevated.

We also take our guests' preferences into account to ensure the experience feels personal, thoughtful, and welcoming.

What makes the experience truly unique is that it's not just a meal—it's a cultural journey.

Guests learn about the origin of each dish, the meaning behind the ingredients, and the stories that bring it all to life. Whether it's a private home dining experience, a personal cooking class, or a home-style meal shared around the table, what we offer is food that speaks from the heart—an invitation to discover Cambodia through its flavors.

We also love sharing rare and royal recipes that have been carefully revived and featured in my cookbooks, NHUM and SAOY. These dishes represent the elegance, depth, and diversity of Cambodian cuisine—and help keep our culinary heritage alive for future generations to taste, remember, and celebrate.



### **What should be done by decision makers to preserve, revive and promote their cuisines and ingredients?**

First of all, decision makers need to believe that culinary art is incredibly important, it's about culture, identity, and national pride. Our recipes, ingredients, and culinary traditions are part of our intangible heritage, and they deserve the same attention, care, and investment as other priorities. We need to document traditional knowledge before it disappears. That means supporting research projects and engaging with cooks, chefs, and especially elders who still carry this knowledge and these stories in their memories before it's too late.

At the same time, it's essential to promote local cuisine and ingredients, support farmers, and

invest in food education that reconnects people, especially the younger generation. This work should also be integrated into tourism, education, and cultural diplomacy. For instance, government institutions can proudly serve Cambodian cuisine at international events, or schools can teach children about traditional ingredients and dishes.

We also need to create space for innovation while honoring tradition by supporting chefs, home cooks, farmers, historians, and cultural leaders to work together to ensure Cambodian cuisine stays alive, growing, evolving, and proudly representing us not just here at home, but around the world.

At Chef Nak, we are already working toward these goals through our cookbooks, culinary experiences, social media storytelling, and educational projects. But we know we cannot do it alone. We are always open to collaboration with individuals, organizations, and institutions that

share our vision of preserving, elevating, and promoting Cambodian cuisine for future generations.

### **Future plans?**

Looking ahead, my dream is to continue building a stronger, more recognized global identity for Cambodian cuisine, one that honors our past, enriches the present, and inspires the future.

We plan to expand our Chef Nak Culinary Art Center in Siem Reap, further developing it into a vibrant cultural and culinary destination. It will be a place where both locals and international visitors can learn, taste, and truly experience the depth of Cambodian food culture in an immersive and meaningful way.

We are also working on a new cookbook project, which will explore more overlooked recipes, regional flavors, and the personal stories behind them. It's still in the early stages, but I'm very excited about the potential it holds.

Another important focus is collaborating with top restaurants, hotels, event agencies, and chefs, both in Cambodia and abroad, to bring authentic Cambodian flavors to new tables. Through consultation, menu development, and pop-up events, we hope to see more Cambodian dishes represented on the global culinary map.

And finally, we want to continue empowering the next generation through education, storytelling, and meaningful partnerships. Whether it's young cooks, chefs, farmers, or students, we believe food can be a powerful tool for preserving identity and creating opportunity.

I will continue working to ensure that Cambodian cuisine is not only remembered but also celebrated, shared, and reimaged for Cambodia and for the world.



# The Peruvian

# Champion Chef

Chef Virgilio Martinez of Central in the Peruvian capital of Lima showcases the bio-diversity of the altitudes and habitats of Peru from the Pacific coast to the Amazonian jungles to the Andean peaks.

"In Central you find peru from dense glaciers and rugged peaks, through green forests and meandering rivers, barren desert and colorful valleys to the infinite blue of the ocean melting into the horizon"

Chef  
virgilio martinez



**V**irgilio Martínez is renowned for showcasing and promoting Peru's biodiversity and landscapes on the global gastronomic stage. Born in Lima on August 31st, 1977, he is the founder and owner of Central in Lima, MIL in Cusco, and Maz in Tokyo, as well as the co-creator of Mater.

## THE FOUNDING OF CENTRAL

After having traveled and worked in kitchens worldwide, Virgilio felt a profound need to return to Peru and reconnect with its land, people, and culture. This led to the founding of Central in 2008, marking the start of a transformative journey. His motto, "outside there is More," encapsulates his philosophy of

constant exploration and learning.

Central offers a unique sensory and visual journey, designed around various altitudes, featuring ingredients sourced from -15 meters below sea level to 4200 meters above sea level. Its concept and aesthetics have made it one of the top 5 restaurants in the world for seven years in a row, and number 1 in the world in

2023 according to The World's 50 Best Restaurant Awards.

## ESTABLISHING MIL

Established in 2018, MIL (Cusco, Peru) is located over 3,500 metres above sea level, adjacent to the Inca archaeological site of Moray. The project integrates gastronomy with research, showcasing food from the high-altitude ecosystem.



What makes MIL unique are its immersive experiences that offer a deeper understanding of the environments. Before sitting down to dine, guests embark on a timeless journey into the heart of the Andes, designed to explore and connect with the environment. From exploring a botanical route to vegetable dyeing with local plants, this experience is carefully tailored to learn about the daily life and traditions of local communities like Mullak'as-Misminay and K'acllaraccay.

"When We See The World Vertically, Taking Into Account That The Different Heights Of Our Territory Determine The Meeting Places Of Landscapes, Nature, People And Special Dynamics Between Them We Recognize In Other Territories That There Are Similarities In Resources And Systems, and We Visualize Them In Moments Of A Travel Experience."

Virgilio Martinez



## STARTING MAZ

Established in 2022, MAZ in Tokyo is a concept by Virgilio Martínez and Mater. MAZ bridges the aesthetics, culture, and ecosystems of South America and Japan; and has been recognized

with two Michelin stars in 2023.

Inspired by Virgilio's vision and Mater's motto "afuera hay más" (there is more outside), MAZ connects deeply with Peruvian landscapes while respecting local

Japanese produce.

The dining experience at MAZ celebrates Peru's biodiversity and integrates exceptional local ingredients from Tokyo, creating a



rich culinary dialogue between the two regions.

## MATER

Founded by Virgilio and Malena Martínez in 2013, Mater is an interdisciplinary organization deeply connected to the environment. It began as a scientific research centre focused on exploring Peru's biodiversity and ecosystems, enriching the concept of Central. Today, Mater also serves as the backbone for Kjolle, MIL, and MAZ, driving their unique food identities.

Mater's projects span art, culture, nature, and people, ensuring each initiative is thoroughly researched and conceptualised to generate a positive impact on society.





“

André Chiang is the founder of the two-MICHLEIN-starred restaurant RAW, one of the benchmark restaurants of Taiwan's fine dining scene. He has now converted the restaurant into a culinary academy. We spoke to him about his efforts to promote Taiwanese cuisine.

# The Taiwanese Food Champion

### What are your memories of Taiwanese food from your childhood and youth?

I remember the smell of long-simmered broths, the chaos of the night markets, the warmth of home kitchens. Taiwanese food isn't showy, it's very humble, comforting, and built on quiet techniques passed down through generations. Even today, those early memories guide the emotional core of how I build a dish, simple but accurate.

### What are the distinctive features of Taiwanese food? What are the key elements and dishes?

Taiwan's cuisine is shaped by migration, adaptation, and resilience. It blends Chinese, Japanese, Hakka, and indigenous influences. The use of fermentation, soy-based braising, and slow cooking techniques defines many of its dishes. Beef noodle soup, three-cup chicken, and braised pork rice aren't just popular, they reflect the collective memory of the Taiwanese people. But beyond the dishes, it's the subtlety and balance that make the cuisine unique.



### What inspired you to take up a culinary career?

My mother owned a Chinese restaurant in Japan, and I spent most of my childhood watching her in the kitchen. She wasn't just cooking, she was leading, creating, and solving problems in real time. I didn't realize it back then, but that experience left a strong impression. I wasn't drawn to cooking because I was the youngest kid in the family; it was something I understood from a very young age. It felt natural, instinctive, and later in life, it became a clear path for me.

### How did you prepare yourself for this career?

I took the long road. I trained in Japan to build my discipline, and

in France to understand the structure and language of haute cuisine. I didn't skip steps; I peeled vegetables, washed dishes, and worked my way through every section of the kitchen. 16 years later, I combined that foundation with my own perspective. Preparation for me wasn't just



about mastering technique, it was about learning how to think like a chef, an operator, and eventually, a leader.

**What are the highlights of your career?**

Opening Restaurant ANDRÉ in Singapore under my self-created “Octaphilosophy” is one of my top achievements. Making it into the World’s 50 Best, winning a Life time achievement award and having the best restaurant of its kind in Taiwan and Singapore. Retiring it at its peak. Opening RAW in Taipei, which became a symbol of what modern

Taiwanese cuisine could be. I then opened RAW as an academy to give back to the community.

These aren't just milestones – they are decisions that reflect my values.

**You have Taiwanese origins, a Japanese background and French education. Do these blend in your cooking?**

I never try to force them together as they are already part of me. French cuisine taught me structure, creativity, and discipline. Japanese culture gave me attention to detail and respect for ingredients. Taiwan is where my roots are, it taught me humility,



emotion, and to be humble. When I cook, I don't calculate those influences, they come through naturally because they're embedded in how I see food.

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**Which are your top dishes and why are they signatures?**

At Restaurant ANDRÉ, the Octaphilosophy tasting menu was a signature because it was never just about flavor, it was a system of thought. It expressed who I was at that time. Dishes like "Memory", why did it have this name? It was my "first created dish" in my career and so an important part of

my memory. The reinterpretation of French classics became signatures not because of technique, but because they connected with people emotionally, it is so French in taste, yet this creation never exists in French culinary history. Signature dishes are the ones that stay with people long after the meal.

**What do you think should be done to promote Taiwanese cuisine?**

First, RAW is the best example to





promote Taiwanese cuisine. We need to stop underselling ourselves. Taiwanese cuisine deserves to be part of the global fine dining conversation. That means better storytelling, more cultural investment, and giving Taiwanese chefs the platform to lead the narrative— not just repeat what others expect from Asian cuisine. We need more risk-takers who are willing to reinterpret tradition rather than replicate it.

**What are your future aspirations?**

I have stepped away from chasing

stars and rankings. My focus now is legacy, helping the next generation of chefs find their voice. That's why I turned RAW into a culinary academy. I want to mentor, share, and help others see that success is not about attention,



it's about intention. And I'll continue to create, quietly but purposefully, really create something for the next generation.





# EIGHT YEARS OF IFEA

In 2017, the food and hospitality sector in India was reeling from the double blow of the 2016 demonetization and the rollout of GST in 2017. Many small eatery owners were confused by the complexity of different GST rates and were unable to afford expert advice. Unlike large businesses, they had no access to elite chambers or associations where such matters were discussed.



It was during this time that Anil Mulchandani envisioned the creation of a food entrepreneurs' association that would be inclusive, free of charge, and non-hierarchical. An organization where everyone—from home chefs and small eatery owners to large restaurateurs and hoteliers—could find a sense of belonging and support. Joined by Rohit Khanna, Dilip Thakker, and Darshan Rawal as co-admins, the Innovative Food Entrepreneurs Associates (IFEA) was launched.

IFEA quickly became a dynamic platform uniting hoteliers, restaurant owners, bakers, ice-cream makers, artisanal producers, and other food entrepreneurs across the board.

### Key IFEA Initiatives

Addressing Policy Challenges:

IFEA facilitated stakeholder discussions on industry-impacting regulations.

- Pandemic Response
- Post- Pandemic Popsups and Food Festivals to support livelihoods.

GST Seminar – TGB Hotel

- Software & Technology for Food Industry – Treatotel Hotel
- Kitchen Hygiene & Sanitation Workshop – La Ceremonie
- Know Your Cheese – Soho
- Coffee Seminar – Novotel Ahmedabad
- Food Safety & Standards Seminar – Silver Cloud Hotel
- World Heritage Day Celebrations – WelcomHeritage Mani Mansion





and Diwan's Bungalow

- Republic Day Celebration – Vishalla
- Biodegradable Plastics Seminar – Madhav Rao Restaurant
- Entrepreneur Success Stories – Vanakam
- Expanding Brands Globally – Seminar with Indo-Canadian guests
- Earth Fest – Urban Chowk: A vegan and organic food exhibition
- Influencer Trails – Visits to rural tourism destinations

### IFEA Collaborative Events

- World Food Day with American Corner – Courtyard by Marriott, SBR
- Sustainable Grains Symposium & Millet Festival – Novotel Ahmedabad
- Food Festival of Women Chefs – 3 editions at The Sports Club

- Home Chef Festival – 2 editions at The Retail Park
- Agri-Connect: Women Farmers & Food Entrepreneurs Meet – FICCI Flo, Renaissance Ahmedabad
- Sustainable Hospitality & Food Services Conference – AMA
- Food & Agriculture Tourism Conference – FICCI Flo, Madhubhan
- Aakar Hospitality Expo – 2 editions
- Aakar Hospitality Awards – 2 editions
- Cooking Workshops and

- Competitions – with Aayna
- Events with Food Influencer Preeti Thakkar
- Workshops, Competitions, Expert Panels – with SNS
- Gandhinagar Heritage Festival – Grand Mercure, GIFT City
- Parampara Heritage Festival – With Gujarat Tourism at Narayani Heights
- Skill Development Programs – with hospitality and culinary institutes
- Seasonal Food Festivals – hosted at various hotels



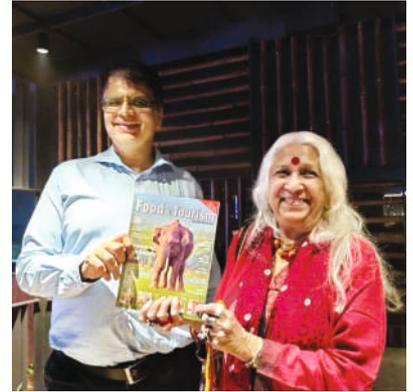
## Five Years Of The Magazine: Culinary Entrepreneurs

In the midst of the 2020 pandemic lockdown, IFEA launched a digital magazine to support the food and hospitality community with knowledge-sharing and industry insights. Editor Anil Mulchandani, with Ankita J Sharma as Editorial Coordinator and Arpan & Akshay (Upclues) as designers, brought the vision to life.

The magazine—Culinary Entrepreneurs—debuted digitally in June 2020. By 2022, the team secured an RNI registration and began publishing in print under the new masthead.

### Key Themes Covered:

- Festive Recipes – Christmas and Vegan Festive Foods
- Millets Special Edition
- World Health Day – Wellness



### Food & Hospitality Trends

- World Environment Day – Green Michelin Star Restaurants
- Culinary Tourism Across Continents
- Party Food Trends
- Chocolate Special
- Earth Day – Sustainable Foraging & Farm-to-Fork Dining
- Dairy & Agri-Enterprise
- Food Entrepreneurs & Chefs

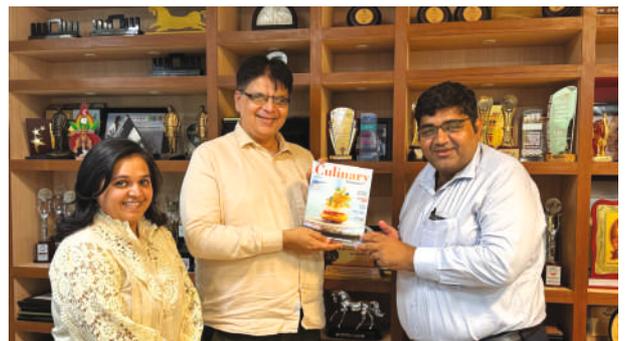
### With a Cause

- World Food Day Edition
- Beverage Trends Edition
- Hospitality Trends Edition
- Food Artistry Edition

## Looking Ahead

In just eight years, IFEA has transformed from a grassroots initiative into a vibrant, influential platform connecting culinary professionals, hospitality leaders, food artisans, and policy advocates. From advocacy and education to collaboration and celebration, IFEA continues to shape the future of food entrepreneurship in India.

Here's to the journey ahead—rooted in inclusion, driven by passion and philanthropy, and flavored with innovation.



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 Groceries  
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**IFEA Founders**



Anil Mulchandani



Rohit Khanna



Dilip Thakkar



Darshan Rawal

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