

Culinary

Entrepreneurs

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CREDITS

EDITOR

Anil Mulchandani

CO. EDITOR

Ankita J. Sharma

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Dinesh Shukla
Respective organisations

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Editorial



Wishing all the Readers on India's Independence Day!

India's restaurant industry has seen an unprecedented boom in the last year. However, for most diners in India and abroad, Indian food in restaurants is limited to a few Mughlai and Punjabi dishes from the northern states and snacks from Southern India. Today, a growing number of food entrepreneurs, chefs and bloggers are embracing their culture and cuisine, bringing their home-grown dishes to the light through popups, food festivals, cookbooks and restaurant specials. From Kashmir's Pandit Food to Karnataka's Kodagu Food, the Mappila Food of the Malabar Coast to the Khasi Food of Meghalaya, the diverse cuisines of India are becoming an expression of community pride for the food entrepreneurs of India. For our Independence Day edition, we interviewed these custodians of ethnic Indian recipes.

While Independence Day is celebrated with rejoicing, there was a more poignant side to the events of 1947. At midnight, Britain's erstwhile Indian empire split. The borders, only announced two days later, slashed through rivers, villages, fields and homes, displacing nearly 14 million people and claiming millions of lives in Punjab, Sindh and Bengal. In the largest mass migration of human history, people moved across the newly demarcated borders to live in refugee camps with not even the most basic amenities. In this magazine, we have featured the stories of Hindu and Sikh Punjabis and Sindhis who moved to India after partition and set up food businesses. The migration of businesses like Moti Mahal Restaurant from Peshawar to Delhi and Havmor Ice-Cream from Karachi to Ahmedabad are now success stories that have made them brands to reckon with.

Keeping with the trends of the time, vegan home chefs speak about their plant-based food businesses.



Anil Mulchandani

✉ feaeditorial@gmail.com

📷 @writeranil

🐦 @foodieanil

Ankita J Sharma Co-Editor

📷🐦 @teekhidalmakhni



01

FLAG BEARERS OF INDIA'S ETHNIC FOODS



Anil Mulchandani

The growing interest in forgotten recipes and home-style cooking offers an opportunity for chefs and food entrepreneurs to present creative, colourful dishes of their heirloom cuisines to the world.

We spoke to an enterprising few who have taken bold steps to promote their ancestral dishes through popups, restaurant menus or blogs.

THE KASHMIRI CATERER IN CALIFORNIA



Bhavana Challu started Nyenya Batta in 2016. A catering service that specialises in authentic Kashmiri food, it offers doorstep food delivery services across the US and catering services in San Francisco Bay Area.

Bhavana Challu says that her childhood memories of Kashmir hold a special place in her heart. "The recollections are vivid and

carry a sense of nostalgia. I can still picture the sky, its hues shifting throughout the day from morning to evening. The kitchen was the centre of our family life, where delectable aromas filled the air. Whether it was the comforting embrace of Monday's meal, the delightful flavours of rajma, or the enticing fragrance of Rogan Josh, food always brought us together," she recalls. "And in the mornings, the smell of girdha and lavasa, accompanied by a dollop of butter, greeted us with a familiar and comforting embrace. These memories are a treasured part of my past, reminding me of the love and togetherness that defined our home in Kashmir".

Her passion for the cuisine that stems from her roots inspired her to start her Kashmiri food enterprise. "When I relocated, I faced the frustrating challenge

of finding the authentic dishes I grew up with. It was disheartening to visit restaurants and be served a version of Rogan Josh drowned in onion tomato gravy, far from the taste I knew and craved. This experience motivated me to raise awareness globally about the flavourful cuisine of Kashmiri Pandits, which surpasses many other regional cuisines in India", she states, "Through our catering service, I aspire to share the essence of Kashmiri Pandit cuisine as widely as possible. It is an opportunity to showcase the rich culinary heritage of Kashmir and allow others to savour the distinct taste that holds a special place in my heart. While my emotions run deep, it is with a sense of pride and a genuine desire to preserve and promote the flavours of my heritage that





I embark on this journey. We would watch my mother cook, mesmerized by the sights, scents, and flavors that unfolded before our eyes. Those experiences imprinted themselves upon us, leaving an indelible mark on our senses".

One of the biggest hurdles she encountered was dispelling the common misconceptions surrounding North Indian dishes. "People were astonished to learn that our traditional recipes didn't rely on onions, tomatoes,

or garlic. The idea of achieving such rich and consistent gravies without these ingredients seemed unfathomable to them. Hence, my primary aim is to promote Kashmiri Pandit cuisine on a global scale, educating others about its unique flavors and dispelling any doubts or misconceptions", she says, "Over time, this cuisine in the US was met with open arms - a testament to people's yearning for something new, something different. They craved a break from the monotony of their

usual fare, eagerly seeking culinary adventures. Our dishes became a breath of fresh air, tantalizing their taste buds with flavours they had never experienced before. The reception was overwhelming, as both Indians and non-Indians alike wholeheartedly embraced, acknowledged, and cherished the unique offerings we brought to their tables. It was a heartwarming affirmation that food has the power to bridge cultural divides and unite us in the joy of shared experiences".





The signature dishes are Monje Haakh Achaar, The Dumaloo, Lamb Roganjosh, Lamb Kaliya, Palak nadru (Spinach and Lotus Root), Monje haakh (Kohlrabi), tschook wangun (Tamarind Eggplant), Tschaman kaliya (Indian Cottage Cheese), Gogji Nadur (Turnip and Lotus root), Razma Gogji (Red Kidney beans and Turnip), Alle Hachi Wangan Hachi (Sundried Eggplants and Bottle gourd) and Phool Roganjosh (Cauliflower curry). "We have a pressing need to promote our Kashmiri culture and food on a global scale. Food, as they say, is the quickest gateway to understanding a culture. It is through our culinary heritage that we can educate people in the US and around the world about Kashmir, its people, and its exquisite cuisine. Let's

embark on this mission to share the essence of Kashmir with the world, leaving an indelible mark on hearts and palates everywhere," she says.

She says, her family has encouraged her to take up her entrepreneurial journey. "When it comes to my journey as an entrepreneur, I owe a great deal of gratitude to my mother and my elder sister. They have served as my mentors, guiding me through the intricacies of the culinary world. Their teachings, both tangible and intangible, have shaped my understanding and skill set. Moreover, I must acknowledge the unwavering support of my husband, who has become the backbone of our endeavours. He takes charge of the operational aspects of our events,

meticulously planning and organizing every detail. It is through his efforts that our visions come to life. I, in turn, bring these plans to fruition, implementing them with passion and dedication. Together, we form a harmonious team, united by our shared love for Kashmiri cuisine and our collective dream of showcasing its beauty to the world," she says.

She says she dreams of establishing the first-ever Kashmiri Pandit food restaurant in North America amid the vibrant culinary scene of the San Francisco Bay Area. "The nucleus of all our future plans seeds around keeping our culinary heritage alive and kicking, and sharing the eclectic flavours and dishes with others", she states.

THE FOOD ENTREPRENEUR FROM ASSAM

Chef Atul Lahkar is one of the well-known exponents of the cuisines of the North East, specialising in the tribal recipes of Assam. He says, "I started my culinary journey in the early-1990s at a small restaurant in Guwahati. After that I went to Chennai for studies and work before returning to Guwahati. During the early years of my career, I realized that most hotel management institutes were not interested in teaching and promoting ethnic cuisines. I was fascinated by food and culture and had been trying to preserve



the indigenous food and the culture of Assam. I decided to follow my passion for the cuisines of my native state of Assam and the neighbouring states like Meghalaya and Nagaland".

Lahkar spent time travelling in the north-eastern states of India

in search of recipes. "As I became known for my knowledge of regional food, I got opportunities for food shows of Star Plus, Channel 4 in London, etc, and to show my recipes to celebrities like Gordon Ramsay, the Late Anthony Bourdain, Vikas Khanna, Vineet Bhatia and Sanjeev Kapoor", he says.





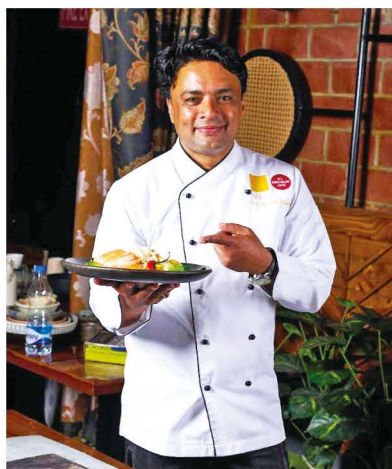
He says Assam has about 23 major tribes and communities with their own recipes using pork, duck, spices, herbs, locally-grown vegetables, forest produce, bamboo, etc. "They use rustic techniques of slow cooking, smoking, boiling, and so forth. The dishes are simple and delicious," he states. In 2004, he



started taking consultancy projects and by 2007 he launched his own restaurant. Today, he has three restaurants including Heritage Korikaa, which is famous in Guwahati.

"I want to take the cuisines of the North-Eastern States of India to the world," he says.

THE CHEF FROM JHARKHAND



Nishant Choubey has much global experience as a chef, consultant and restaurateur, from being Consulting chef for Michelin plated Indus Bangkok and Corporate Chef with Seinan Group (Tokyo) to being invited for several international events and co-founding a restaurant in



Bengaluru. He has also promoted the native food of Jharkhand, the state to which he belongs.

He says, "I grew up eating Madua Roti made from finger millets, jamun and mulberry, locally-caught freshwater fish, and a profusion of saag (greens) which were abundant in Jharkhand. We always have two meals together as a family, and our traditional food like Madua Roti, Chilka, Thasa, Sohari Roti, Konar Saag, Dumboo and Anarsa is an integral part of the time together. Fish is a celebration and we look forward to a fish meal. As this food is close to my heart one of my best professional memories is my research on Jharkhandi cuisine



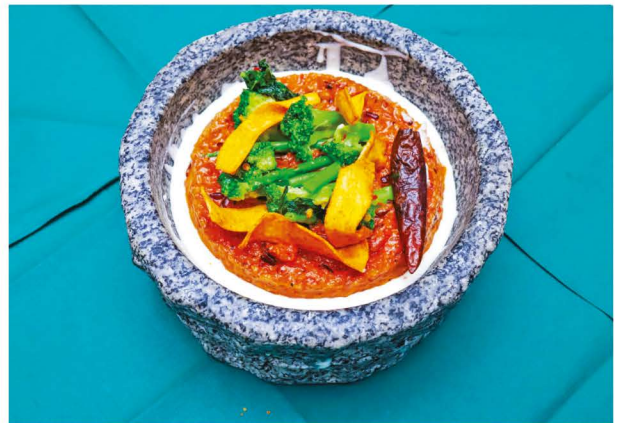
sponsored by Roundglass. I shot 120-plus recipes from the heartlands of Jharkhand with photographers Rohan and team, who did amazing work and made me feel proud of the research."

Choubey was preparing to be an engineer but when he did not get admission, his mind got diverted to other pursuits. "Seeing Sanjeev Kapoor's show with fabulous food motivated me to take up a culinary career", he reminisces, " since then,

winning the Iron Chef 2018 Challenge at Bangkok and getting the very prestigious Michelin Plate at the Indus Restaurant are among my most satisfying moments. I am also proud of the epic vegetarian feast I prepared for the Adanis. I also felt proud holding culinary sessions on Indian cuisines at Michigan and Indianapolis Universities".

Choubey calls himself a 'Sustainable Chef' who champions the use of produce

from India. "For me, local is exotic, regional is healthy, kitchen discards are delicacies, seasonal is preferable, a rupee saved is a rupee earned. I buy artisanal food products and spread awareness about sustainable sourcing. Waste Management is vital, and no plastics is the way to go," he says," Taking local produce and native recipes, I prepare dishes that are presented with a nouvelle approach to plating and appearance. I recently presented a mulberry chaat and the diners





went gaga over that. In the International Year of Millets 2023, Jharkhand has much to contribute from our native repertoire of recipes".

He is also taking forward regional cuisines like Sindhi Dal Pakwan, Goan Fish Cafreal, Hyderabad's Pathar ke Gosht, Nihari, Khichdis, etc. "My signature Modern Indian



creations include Makhanphal Chat, Besan Halwa Mousse, Coconut Milk Pancake and Cranberry Rasam, which are not only innovative but very healthy", he explains. His menus are low on salt and avoid refined starches.

He is looking forward to a consultancy project with a big Indian restaurant in New York, has a TV show coming up, and is set to launch an eco-friendly equipment range that he wants to scale up. He says, "If your attitude is right, you will go places, never say no, challenges are part of success and happiness is the key to a good life. My mantras"

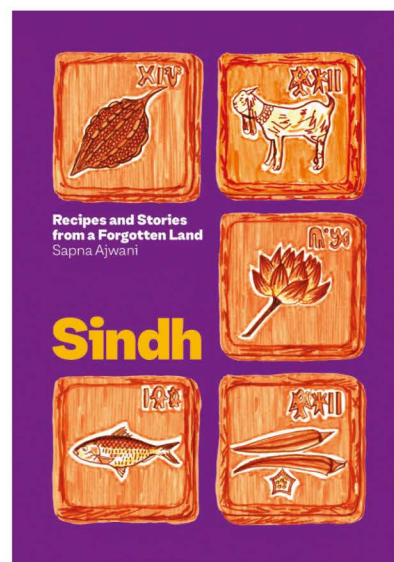
THE SINDHI SUPPER CLUB IN LONDON

Sapna Ajwani of Sindhi Gusto hosts supper clubs in London to introduce diners to Sindhi dishes that cannot be found on any restaurant menu, either in India or abroad, including traditional



specialties such as mirchan ji chaat (chili fritters in yogurt), methi mein macchi (fish steaks on the bone cooked in fresh fenugreek) and sai bhaji (spinach, sorrel, dill, and lentil stew).

"Sindh is bordered by Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab and Baluchistan, with a wide southern coastline





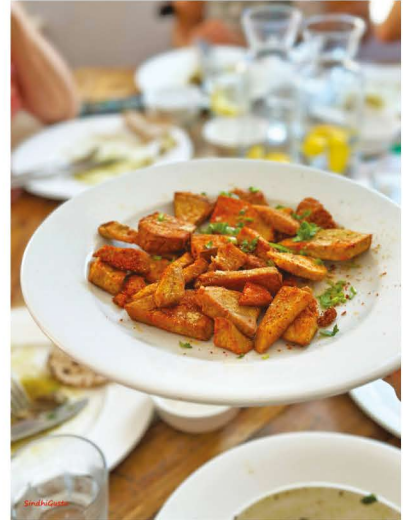
open to the sea. The Persians, Greeks, Turkish, Arabs, Moghuls and Rajputs have ruled Sindh provinces. There was much trade too because of the coast," Ajwani says, "These rich cultural influences are reflected in the flavours and ingredients of Sindhi cuisine, and therefore the cuisine has enough variety of please the palates of vegetarians, fish and seafood lovers, and meat eaters alike."

An accountant by qualification, Ajwani lived in Rajasthan Mumbai and Germany before moving to London where she worked as a banker. "I used to cook all the time because I missed my home food so much," Ajwani explains, "My friends whom I would invite always commented that the food is very



different from what they eat at Indian restaurants. In 2011 and 2012, supper clubs started becoming popular in London for those who wanted to discover new flavors. This gave me an idea to explore the possibility of promoting my community's food".

Ajwani started her supper club Sindhi Gusto in 2016. She says, "Eating Sindhi food is a travel in time itself, some of these ingredients date back to the time when civilisation itself began. The fish called Pallo (Hilsa or Ilish in other languages) and Bhee (lotus stem) from the Indus Basin, heritage grains such as 'Juar (sorghum) and millets, are all integral to Sindhi food. The Sindhi Gusto experience includes



not only the food but the narrative about Sindhi history and culture, an introduction to each dish, the stories." At a Sindhi Gusto popup, a meal may start with a Sindhi Papad followed by a salad, like smoked aubergine, and pickles. Small plates could include Hurbe ain thoom mein gangat (large king prawns cooked with fresh fenugreek and green garlic), Kuneh ja bhee (steamed lotus stem tossed in spices and chutneys) and Dal Pakaan. For the mains, Phote mein teevan (slow-cooked, bone-in lamb or goat, in a green cardamom and black pepper broth), Sindhi Kadhi and Bharyal Bhindiyoan (Stuffed okra), and sides like Suran ja tuk (twice cooked, crispy elephant yam). Flatbreads and rice dishes are the



accompaniments. And the meal will end with a dessert. "The idea of a supperclub to me is to introduce people to different flavours and ingredients they wouldn't normally get in a restaurant, because it may not be a very commercially viable dish. I source many vegetables that are not on restaurant menus like Ivy gourd or bitter gourd", she explains," The whole



evening is about eating, and chatting with your fellow guests, whom you may not know, but all are there for the same thing: to eat good food, learn about a different culture, make new friends, and have some interesting conversations". She also travelled to Pakistan and visited places in Sindh to increase her knowledge about the ingredients and cuisines. Her cookbook will be out soon.

AN INDIAN FOOD RESTAURANT IN MELBOURNE



A chef of Gujarati origin, Helly Raichura is taking the spotlight off predictable curries and spices and shining a light on regional Indian cuisine in Melbourne. Helly recalls,

"Alphonso and other mangos, ponkh, setur, jambu and falsa occupy my mind when I think of my memories of food in Ahmedabad. Sitting together for dinner was a tradition in our family and a time to cherish the delicious food my mother had prepared. Most nights this included a platter of staple, vegetarian Gujarati dishes. These products were so unique and delicious and I miss having them here in Australia".

She says she was always close to many inspiring family members that had strong ethics and cooking skills. "This got enhanced when I came here to Australia and got inspired by beautiful native produce," she says, "Indian food here was quite underrepresented and was mediocre, Indian food was misunderstood and also dumbed down hence I felt the need to cook what I grew up eating and then keep learning regional Indian dishes to be added to the repertoire". Thus, she was inspired to start Enter Via Laundry. Working in HR, she decided to share her love and



passion for Indian food with friends, family and neighbours, before she was encouraged to start home dinners, where people literally entered via the laundry door to get to the dining area. Thus, her new restaurant that opened in 2022 is called Enter via Laundry.

She took tutelage from well-known chefs to hone her skills. After gaining popularity in the Melbourne food scene, with the dinners being booked out

months in advance, she also featured in Masterchef Australia in 2020 as a guest judge. She has co-hosted a cooking series on SBS Food Channel, called India Unplated alongside Adam D'Sylva and Sandeep Pandit, and appears as a guest chef for shows like The Cook Up with Adam Liaw.

She says, "We cook food as close to authentic as possible, we incorporate native Australian ingredients as local and

seasonal produce is also part of our Indian food philosophy". However, she does face challenges of getting acceptability for non-stereotypical Indian food. "I think people don't understand the depth of the cuisines, the skill that goes behind it and hence consider it cheap. There are many Indian chefs in Australia that cook Italian, Asian, French etc food but I have yet to come across any Australian cooking Indian. It goes to say how complicated and skillful our cuisine is", she says, "The menu at Enter Via Laundry is constantly evolving and changing, but *Bebinka*, *Kodi*, *Shirin Pulao*, *Pasanda* are top favourites of our diners".



One of her first tries at Enter Via Laundry was *khandvi*, and she was attracted to the level of difficulty required to make *khandvi* and was excited to showcase a more technical side of Indian cuisine. This was one of her favourite *farsan* in Ahmedabad and made by her aunt on special occasions. "We cook *Khandavi* once a year in

April on our Birthday month", she says. She believes it is important for Indian chefs to participate on international levels and share their insight and knowledge, this can definitely help popularise Indian cuisine.

AN INDIAN VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN RESTAURANT IN MANCHESTER



When Hemali and Jaymin Shukla moved to the UK, they realized that there were hardly any restaurants in Manchester serving authentic Indian



vegetarian food. Says Jaymin, "We were born and brought up in Jamnagar, and came to England 18 years ago where I worked in banking and Hemali in healthcare. In 2013, we realized Manchester is such a big city and yet there was no Indian vegetarian restaurant. India is ranked top in the world with 38% of the total population being vegetarians that is 38% of 1.339 Billion people. So of course, it's not justified if an Indian food restaurant doesn't have many vegetarian dishes. Thus, we found a gap in the market and straightaway we started building up our customer base. We serve Indian food from North, West and South of India, including our native state of



Gujarat". Their second branch in Liverpool opened in 2016 and the menu is the same in each city inspired by Hemali's own recipes. "We were the first Indian vegetarian and Vegan restaurant to open in both cities. We use original Indian recipes to make it distinct, we do not adapt the recipe to suit the English pallet but keep it authentic as you would get it in on the streets of western India", Hemali explains,





"Our extensive menu boasts everything from traditional Indian street food to healthy options and wide variety of unique dishes that surprise non-vegetarian and non-vegan diners too".

Jaymin says people in UK are not aware of the wide variety of cuisines available within India. "Thus, we decided to launch Gujarati and Marwari dishes. These cuisines are by default vegetarian and have good vegan options, and they are healthier than the popular Punjabi dishes you get in restaurants", he opines, "The good thing about British people is they like to try new things and once they try the Gujarati and Marwari dishes, they liked them and recommended to their friends

and family. For those who were skeptical we offered small-tasting portions. We also do a Thali every Tuesday and Wednesday in which we give different dishes for them to try every time, customers would ask what the name of the dish was and order them as a full portion the next time". He says Ringan no Oro from Saurashtra is one of their top-selling dishes.

The best-sellers include Soya and Vegetable Sheekh Kebab, Paneer Lababdar and Vegetable Jaipuri. "When we launched Masala Dosa, it was new to most diners but now its one of our best-sellers", he says, "some of our signatures are the Kaju Karela, Kela nu Shaak made using ripe banana curry (its mild and customers love it), Punjabi



Kadhi Pakora which is also not served in most restaurants in the north west of UK, and Gujarati Vaghareli Khichdi which is also rarely available in restaurants". Once the recession is over, they hope to open more restaurants.

A CHAMPION OF KODAVA COOKING



Kaveri Ponna is an author and widely published independent writer on food, wine and heritage, based in Bengaluru. She graduated with a Master's Degree in Social Anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. In 2013, Kaveri completed work on *The Vanishing Kodavas*, an extensive cultural study of the Kodava people, published by Eminence Designs.

In 2012, Kaveri began writing *The Coorg Table*®, her blog on the cuisine of Coorg, based on continuing research and conversations and she is considered an authority on the subject. Through her blog, she reaches out to readers, chefs and home cooks across the world, encouraging them to explore the cuisine of this small but distinctive culture from Kodagu district (also known by its former name Coorg) in Karnataka. Before 1956, it was an administratively separate Coorg State.

She says, "The Kodavas are a

very small community with a distinctive culture reflected in the way they dress, their social customs and practices, way of worship, their language and what and how they eat. As a Kodavathi, I was always very interested in my heritage, and loved the many beautiful and forward-thinking practices that were part of my culture. I grew up seeing many of these practices and also, eating the outstanding traditional Kodava food that my grandmother cooked. All of this made a strong impression on me. Later, I wanted to understand more about my heritage. My Master's dissertation at SOAS, London, was on aspects of Kodava culture".

Her studies and her book led to her taking more interest in the cuisine. "Writing in depth about the cuisine of Kodagu came quite organically, as I spent a great deal of time in the rural areas and villages of Kodagu while researching my book. I was always offered food and the opportunity to share a meal with people living close to the land. I

was able to see first-hand how our everyday cuisine had evolved," she explains, "I am very curious about food and cooking, so I asked questions, and learnt a lot, especially about food that people in towns and cities had either forgotten about, or had stopped eating, and also traditional cooking techniques. I was very keen to document all that I experienced, as the way of life itself - both traditions and food - which I valued, was disappearing".

She says dishes that had disappeared in the repertoire of one area were alive in another. "It is probably important to add that a lot of what I put together—in terms of food knowledge, cooking methods, and techniques, recipes—came from men and women above a certain age, who were into their sixties, or much older. Some of them are no more. They were very happy to share their knowledge with me, and passed on precious culinary and cultural knowledge," she states, "I believe that once it is all put together, it will be valuable knowledge for the



future generations”.

The cuisines of small populations in India are little-known and rarely get to be part of the mainstream. “One of the main challenges is stereotyping and limited views, something faced by many cuisines. In the case of Kodava cuisine, it is the perception that it is only about meat, pork in particular, and that our food is ‘fiery’ hot. Getting people to eat dishes beyond pandi curry (pork curry) was a challenge. Meat was, and is, a very important part of our culinary practices. But it is not eaten in great quantities at every meal. In fact, until very recently, pork was a dish that

appeared on special occasions, not every day. There was always a balance with excellent vegetable dishes, a lot of leafy greens, jackfruit in season, both curries and stir-fries which were cooked paying close attention to the seasons and what was available in the vegetable gardens. Every Kodava home had a kitchen garden, from which fresh produce: tender beans, leafy greens, pumpkins and so on were plucked and cooked daily. The recent focus on pork and spicy food has come with tourism. It takes time to understand a cuisine,” she elaborates, “In my published articles and whenever I have curated a food festival, I have

taken pains to emphasize this aspect of our cuisine. One of the most popular curries I have introduced to people is Kodava kumme curry (mushroom curry) which appears in Madhur Jaffrey’s *Curry Easy* cookbook, and bainey barthad (pan fried tender aubergines) which was enjoyed wherever I introduced it. The other misconception is that Kodava food is extremely spicy. Unfortunately, this continues to be prompted quite widely, especially since the increase in tourist traffic to Kodagu, and the rise of pop-ups and food events. We do have a few spicy dishes that use bird’s eye chillies, such as dry-fried pork, for example, which was traditionally served

at weddings or celebrations, with alcohol. But most of our food is lightly spiced, non-oily and the flavours are well-balanced. I write about these dishes extensively and whenever there is an opportunity, share my knowledge with chefs, so that the awareness spreads. It's very important for me to represent the food in all its fullness, rather than a narrow picture of popular dishes".

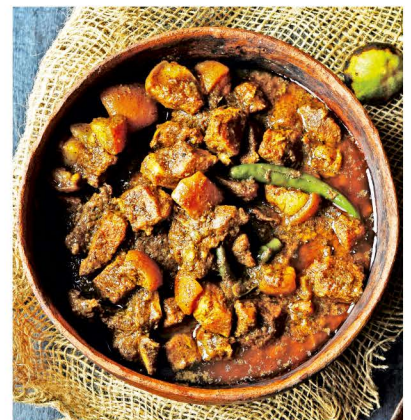
Kodava cuisine is distinguished by the use of the typical dark-roasted spice blend, kartha masala and souring agents such as local native limes, indigenous bitter oranges and of course, kachampuli, the tart, dark vinegar made from the ripe fruits of *Garcinia gummi gutta*. These two ingredients, used together or individually impart a distinctive flavour to many dishes that is not found elsewhere. Similarly, hyper-local and seasonal ingredients such as tender bamboo shoots and mushrooms are cooked differently. One of the other main distinguishing features is that there are little or no

restrictions on what foods are eaten by Kodavas. Kodagu was a densely forested land, with harsh climatic conditions.

Historically, life was difficult, the attitude towards food was practical, which is reflected in the cuisine and how people ate. Rice is the staple, which is eaten every day in numerous forms.

"The most basic is kanji kool (gruel) eaten with pickle or a fry. Akki ottis are versatile rice flatbreads made every day, as they can be adapted to all meals and taste good combined with kumbala curry (pumpkin curry) or elle pajji (toasted sesame seed chutney) at breakfast; with pandi curry (pork curry) or with a simple fry such as bainey barthad (pan fried aubergines) at dinner. Steamed rice puttus are another category of excellent rice dishes made from pounded and broken rice that can be combined with several different curries. Kadambuttus (steamed rice dumplings) are eaten with pandi curry; Noolputtu (steamed rice noodles) are eaten with koli curry (chicken curry) and paputtu

(steamed, coconut flavoured rice cakes) go with kori erachi curry (mutton curry). There are several other puttus and dosas eaten in various combinations," she says, "Everyday meals combine vegetable stir-fries and curries with a wide range of pickles, both such as dried fish, pork and fruit such as lime, wild hog plums and mangoes, or vegetables such as aubergines. Baimbale (tender bamboo shoots), madde puttu, rice cooked in the medicinal plant extract from the leaves of *Justicia wynaadensis* and wild mushrooms are monsoon foods that are highly valued. Bamboo shoots and mushrooms may be curried or fried, according to taste and eaten with akki ottis. A rich mutton pulao, erachi pulao, is definitely a celebratory



dish, served up at weddings with mangæ mor pajji (wild mangoes in seasoned curd). Pandi curry is another celebratory dish, which is cooked and served most festive occasions or community feasts".

While there is an interest in different cuisines, she says the emphasis is most frequently on a few, well-known dishes, and several important foraged and wild foods are falling into oblivion. Many cooking techniques are no longer popular, and slow cooking of foods has taken a back seat. Part of the reason is changed lifestyles, and a shift away from agriculture. "Also, the women from whom I learnt to cook used spices with great subtlety, manipulating the flavours of each dish so that it was quite distinctive in flavour. They devoted time to carefully roasting the spices, so as to release the flavours and not burn them. Now, there's an overwhelming use of a generic dark-roasted spice blend, which was more subtly used by

experienced cooks even a decade ago. Quite a lot of that subtlety is lost in the cooking. The use of red chilli powder has become far more liberal," she explains.

She is currently closing work on a cookbook on Kodava cuisine.

Writing about small communities and their food practices is definitely one way of highlighting them. Holding food festivals to dispel myths and presenting the food accurately is another way of drawing attention to both the culture and the food. Documentaries and Television films are also very useful. "Several years ago I was featured on Raja Rasoi Aur Anya Kahaniyan—I was amazed at the reach and longevity of the programme. So many people came up and still come up and say they learnt about Kodava cuisine from that episode. Social media is both useful and problematic. There is some excellent work, and at the same time an astonishing amount of inaccurate, hastily put out

information. Unfortunately this inaccurate information gets circulated and established as fact. If there was a better way to filter information, social media is a useful way to highlight unknown cuisines. Personally, I still prefer print media!", she enthuses.

A MODERN INDIAN FOOD RESTAURANT IN SINGAPORE

Firangi Superstar is a restaurant that takes inspiration from Colonial India with highly thematic décor recreating the days of the Officer's Club Bar and the Old Railway Private Dining Room. In this theatrical or cinematic setting, the food has modern takes on Indian dishes like Kashmiri Rogan Josh or Mysore Mutton. Says Michael Goodman, Chief Visionary Officer, "The idea came from my partner Rohit Roopchand and I. We are both really passionate about India and Indian food and so we always wanted to do something in that space. We knew we wanted to put our own spin on it, and the idea of coming at as



foreigners writing a love letter was born. Rohit's Indian, but was raised in Africa. I am not an Indian but have spent a lot of time there and was married there. Chef Raj Kumar is Singaporean Indian, so all of us are pretty much foreigners. We wanted a place that reflected that but still brought a real angle of appreciation".

They worked on a design story that is over the top and really immersive. "It was a direct

response to being cooped up during the pandemic and we wanted to be free to explore and see new worlds. This was our way to create an escape. In terms of food, the way Chef Raj approaches the food is also distinct. He looks at classic Indian dishes, breaks them down into their individual elements, and then puts them back together in an entirely new way. That moment when you see a dish and it looks like something you've not seen before, but then

you bite into it and the flavour really recalls a dish from the past is pretty special", he explains. He gives the example of a dish called THIS IS ALSO NOT ALOO GOBI, which has Smoked Heirloom Cauliflower, Potato Chips and Cashew-Raisin Vinaigrette. BAL-CIAO BELLA is a grilled octopus balchao, crispy ginger and pickled shallot, a classic take on the Goan dish. THE BENGAL BAKE-OFF is Bengal-inspired with salt-baked seabass, kasundi cream and banana leaf, BACK IN THE SADDLE is tandoori spiced lamb which comes with confit garlic and curry leaf). BLACK GARLIC BUTTER NAAN is a signature bread.

Chef Raj Kumar made a career switch from engineering to the culinary field at the age of 27. "I was an opening team member





of Marina Bay Sands and then worked for 6 years at Cut by Wolfgang Park (Michelin star). After that, I did the opening of Andaz Singapore and worked there for almost 5 years, ending my time there as Executive Sous Chef. In February 2022, I was given the opportunity to join Firangi Superstar as Head Chef," he relates, "Being Western-trained, I had to rely on family recipes and experiences with Indian food that I have been

exposed to throughout my life. I also looked back at my travels around India and the food I've had in the various restaurants, street-side stalls, and food that was cooked for me in the homes of people, for inspiration. I then pieced together different components of these dishes I've tasted and saw how they connect in a single dish. For example, the gunpowder that I sprinkle generously on our Kulchas is a family recipe. The

Balchao marinade and sauce that I use in the octopus dish was a rendition of a prawn balchao dish I tried in Goa. The green chilli chutney and tadka that I use in my pork and cauliflower main course dishes, was something that tingled my taste buds when I was traveling in Bengaluru".

He would like to popularize Indian food abroad. "I feel it's always a great way to share a



nation's culture through food. We have seen that a lot in various travel documentaries. Indian chefs can be at the forefront of this, showcasing their stories and cuisines based on their experiences and backgrounds. India is a sub-continent with many different regions, languages, food, and cultures," he explains, "What is largely known as Indian cuisine or culture around the world, has mostly been around mainstream items such as butter chicken, biryani, and Bollywood. I believe there are a ton of other things that India can showcase to the world. Consumers these days are looking out for new experiences and are willing to hear from the chefs themselves".

To build the theme, Goodman says, "We did a deep dive down a rabbit hole of ideas and storylines until we came up with the seeds for Firangi Superstar. Once we had that, I built a small brand story and shared it with our team to have them help grow it and really build it further. Then we brought our

consultants in and started working with them, Piya Thamchariyawat at EDG on Interiors and Holly Griffin at Design Hungry for Visual Identity for instance. Once that happened, it was just about making sure it grows in the right way and keeping it on track and on brand. So that's where I really come back in and stay on as art director".

THE HOME CHEF FROM HIMACHAL



Nitika Kuthiala is a home chef who specialises in Himachali cuisine and offers weekend delivery menus and home pop-ups. "My family is from Kangra and Shimla. When I



moved to Noida, I realised that the knowledge about Himachali cuisine was limited and inaccurate. Even in Himachal, most people don't know about the native cuisine", she says, "Belonging to the Sood community, I started with a nut- and ghee-enriched Panjiri based on my family recipes. This was successful and I began popups and deliveries that offer a large variety of dishes from the regions of Himachal". Her brand Pahadi Pattal is known for the regional variations of the legendary dham of Himachal. She has showcased the cuisines in media, on TV channels, and at food festivals in big hotels.

THE MAPILLA FOOD ENTREPRENEUR

Mappilas are among the oldest settled native Muslims in India, primarily as a result of the West Asian contacts with



Kerala. Mappilas were a prosperous trading community, settled mainly in the coastal urban centres of Kerala like Kozhikode and Kannur, with strong Arab links that have influenced their literature, art, food, language, and music

Abida Rasheed belongs to a Mappila or Moplah family, and started cooking with her grandmother from a very young age. "I have a good knowledge of the local ingredients, the variety of seafood and the

various techniques. Besides food, I am also knowledgeable about the history and culture of the Malabar region. Encouraged by my foodie husband Late Mohammed Rasheed, I launched my food business for the past 10 years and have successfully taken Moplah cuisine across the country. I am from Kozhikode and my husband was from Kannur, so my trademark recipes incorporate both city's specialties", she says. She says the cuisine of her community is a hidden treasure

that has not been brought to mainstream. "Our recipes are practised in homes and not commercialized", she says," The recipes are family heirlooms. We lived in joint families with the matriarchal system where the boy lives with his in-laws, not the other way around. Recipes were developed for the bridegroom and they were not exchanged between families. The world came to Malabar for spices of God's Own Country. The food of my native land is flavour-oriented not rich, we





enhance the original taste of the ingredients and spices". She says they are largely rice-based in their meals. Different biryanis like Thalasseri Biryani and Kozhikode Biryani, meats cooked with coconut are eaten with rice-flour flatbreads called pathiri, and there is a variety of dishes made with Kallummakkaya (mussels) and various fish caught on the Malabar coast which are also cooked with retain their flavour". Spices like pepper, cardamom and clove are used profusely and coconut oil. "The food is pretty meat and seafood heavy, non-vegetarian will be part of breakfast and the major meals," she says, "there is also a good variety of snacks like unnakkaya (deep-fried, boiled

ripe banana paste covering a mixture of cashew, raisins and sugar), pazham nirachathu (ripe banana filled with coconut grating, molasses or sugar), muttamala made of eggs, chattipathiri, a dessert made of maida, like baked, layered chappatis with rich filling, arikadukka, etc".

Her products encompass pickles, masalas, speciality snacks, and even Kerala's kitchen tools and utensils are available on major e-commerce platforms.

THE CUSTODIAN OF CHHATTISGARHI RECIPES

Garima Trivedi works as a legal services professional. After her marriage, she searched for Chhattisgarhi Cuisine on the internet around 2011 to try cooking the traditional fare. "To my disappointment, I found little to no authentic information available. The internet was brimming with recipes from other popular Indian states, but Chhattisgarh was vastly underrepresented," she recalls,



Fuelled by this, I started documenting family and community recipes for my personal use. In 2015, I took a step further and launched a blog, but later in 2016, I shifted to Instagram as it proved to be a more accessible and efficient platform to share the regional food of Chhattisgarh with a wider audience".

She grew up in Raipur and spent weekends and holidays in her ancestral villages. "Ever since my childhood, I had a keen interest in the tools and techniques used around the rural houses and farms of Chhattisgarh. The culinary knowledge that shaped me was greatly influenced by both my maternal and paternal grandparents, who provided me with a wealth of memories connected to food. Some of



these memories were my firsthand experiences, while others were conveyed through their stories and memoirs. I had the opportunity to experience both the urban and rural lifestyles of central Chhattisgarh, and it is from this region that I draw inspiration for the cuisine I present today," she states, "While the Bastar region has often garnered attention from mainstream media due to its tribal population and unique features, there is much more to explore in Chhattisgarh. The state offers a vast array of food and culture as we venture across its length and breadth".

While she was earlier largely looking for recipes for her household use and personal satisfaction, she began to realize that people started recognizing her as 'Nonee of Chhattisgarh'

on Instagram, where she shared insights about the food, language, and culture of this lesser-known region. "During this period, I had the privilege of being interviewed by popular regional YouTubers, which further fuelled my passion for showcasing Chhattisgarh's culinary heritage", she explains, "During the pandemic, a renewed interest in regional cuisine brought back the highlight to 'Noneecooks' and I had the honour of being featured in popular live talks like #HISTORYONAPLATE by director-writer Shubhra Chatterjee and #SPICECHRONICALSBYRMG by author-culinary consultant Rushina Munshaw Gildhiyal. Representing my state and its culinary traditions to such esteemed groups of food enthusiasts was a high point and there was no looking back".

In 2020, a detailed episode showcasing Chhattisgarhi traditional food was filmed with her at Sonpur village in Durg by Anubhav Sapra (Delhi Foods Walks), and it gained immense popularity. "As a result of this exposure, I was selected to represent Chhattisgarh in the Godrej Food Trends Report 2022 collector's edition, and I have been contributing regularly to it ever since", she says, "At this time, I was also contributing to various magazines, zines and culinary projects trying to get Chhattisgarhi regional recipes to the forefront of the Indian culinary scene, featuring in publications".

She says Chhattisgarhi cuisine centres around using fresh, seasonal produce and employing minimal spices. Rice takes precedence and holds a crucial role in this culinary tradition.



This regional cuisine has its own uniqueness when it comes to pairing of ingredients in a dish and the pairing of dishes in the thali itself. The usage of 'sour' ingredients in terms of yogurt, dry mangoes and roselle flower petals in everyday food is a non-negotiable part of the cuisine. "Due to harsh temperatures, we consume many vegetables in a curd-based curry which are called 'amtaha saag' or sour curry," she explains, "Chhattisgarh is blessed with many types of greens which can be both - cultivated and foraged. The region has an impressive forest cover and has a lot of seasonal forest produce making their way into our plates. Most traditional dishes consumed by tribals consists of native ingredients, rustic tubers like 'dang kanda' and 'laat kanda' instead of potato. They have a keen eye for foraged leafy greens that dot the forest, and



they can tell a handful of nutritious ones from the vast poisonous lot. Each of these leafy greens have different properties and health benefits".

A typical tribal platter from Chhattisgarh region includes 'madiya pej', 'aamat', 'chapda chutney' and meat and fish preparations like 'murgi pudga' or 'suksi pudga'. Rice and kodo millet are equally important and so is maize in some areas. Homemade country liquor is another part of the tribal culture and finds its importance in 'salphi', 'landa' and 'mahua' brews.

Her top dishes include Rice Phara, breads like Chilla, Angakar roti and Chowsele, sweets like Dehraori and Doodh Phara, and mains like Masalha Jimikanda in Chaunr Jeera Masala (Spicy elephant foot yam curry in rice and cumin seeds

spice blend). She enthuses, "Aamat is a soupy main dish, from the tribal districts, that is full of flavours and uses no oil!"

She envisions compiling all this valuable information into either a zine or a book.

THE PAHARI FOOD RESEARCHER



Rushina Munshaw Ghildiyal is a Culinary Researcher, Chronicler

and Consultant. Over the years she has documented Uttarakhand Cuisine from the lens of ingredients and practices, recipes to festive foods, food ways and more through historical research, recording oral testimonies and



more. She has authored hundreds of articles on various aspects of the culinary culture of Uttarakhand and showcased the cuisines of Uttarakhand through online and offline projects, lectures, workshops and, cooking classes. In 2016, realising that the most important way to keep a cuisine alive is to cook it and educate people on it, she pioneered pop ups that showcased the cuisine in various curated regional and seasonal meals including Kumaoni, Garhwali, summer, monsoon and winter thalis to highlight that traditional Uttarakhand cuisine is simple, flavourful, filling and nutritious and unpretentious, based on easily obtained local, seasonal ingredients.

She says, "I began as an arts student, joined animation school,

and have been an operations executive, copywriter, illustrator, product specialist and also a candle maker before I became a gastronomy writer and consultant. In 2002, I took a sabbatical to have my first baby. While on this sabbatical from work, we were also posted in a strange new city. With a small baby, and no social life, I would surf the net, looking for something to engage my mind and in what I suspect was a move to give me a creative outlet, a friend introduced me to blogging which was just beginning to get popular at the time. That led me to discover food writing, and begin writing for other food publications. By 2006 I was writing about 20 articles a month for a variety of food publications. Over the next 5 years I self-taught myself food styling, expanded my skill sets, and the services I offered".

After her second child, she began operating a small culinary consulting business from home. "In 2012 I launched APB Cook Studio with my husband. This was India's first hands-on cooking studio. Today I own and run A Perfect Bite® Consulting, a premier food consulting firm, and APB Cook Studio, which is now a food incubator lab, test kitchen, and food content studio. Throughout our existence we have worked on many innovative product and menu development projects and specialise in culinary chronicling and curating Culinary IP projects. We have to our credit a variety of pioneering initiatives including books, surveys, seminars, and projects. Amongst others, notable ones include The Indian Food Observance Days project, the #annual Godrej Food Trends Report (6 editions and counting), the Kellogg Flavour Conference with Chef Ranveer Brar,



the Godrej Culinary Chroniclers Conclave and The Spice Chronicles Project".

She began chronicling and championing the cuisine of Uttarakhand in 2005. "Over the years I continued to document the cuisine from the lens of ingredients and practices, recipes and festive foods and foodways through historical research, recording oral testimonies and more largely by authoring hundreds of articles on various aspects of the culinary culture of Uttarakhand, lectures, workshops and, cooking classes. She says overseas there are movements

such as the Slow food Movement, Organic food Movement, foraging, eating root to tip and waste management have gained ground. "And many of the traditional practices that these movements advocate returning to are living practices in Uttarakhand food culture even today. Uttarakhand is home to a multitude of culinary ingredients and practices that are unknown and relatively unrecognized outside the state. But it should, because cut off as it has been, it is a living culinary culture that connects to the very roots of Indian culinary origins. Worldwide there is a collective move toward returning to traditional ways of food production, food preparation and nutrition".

In 2016, realising that the most important way to keep a cuisine alive is to cook it and educate



people on it, I began popups that showcased the cuisine in various curated regional and seasonal meals including Kumaoni, Garhwali, summer, monsoon and winter thalis to highlight that traditional Uttarakhand cuisine is simple, flavourful, filling and nutritious and unpretentious, based on easily obtained local, seasonal ingredients", she explains. The challenge she faced was that the recipes are meant for the home kitchen. "When cooking for professional kitchens a lot more thought needs to go into not only scaling up but which recipes can be used, or how they might need to be tweaked so there is no compromise on accuracy", she says," Simply put, for the people of the state this is simply Pahari Khana. Food they grow with love and pride and eat with unbridled joy. Pahari food is a simple, straightforward food culture.



THE CHRONICLER OF ODISA FOOD



An economist, Alka Jena is the Assistant Director – Planning & Convergence Department, with the Government of Odisha. She says, " Though I belong to the coastal area of Odisha and live in Bhubaneswar, I started my career with work in a remote tribal area. My postings and work trips have taken me to



every district of Odisha, where I have found distinctive food", she explains. Her blog CulinaryXpress and other platforms document the diversity of Odia cuisine. "The information available in the mainstream did not do justice to the state's rich culinary culture. Everyone knows Odisha for its coastal food but there is much more diversity", she explains.

Odisha's unique rustic cooking techniques and flavours are part of batibasa, bampha, poda, sijha, chakta and bharta. Like some of the other eastern cuisines of India, Odia food uses souring



agents like ambula (sun-dried green baby mangoes), oou (elephant apple), kagazi lembu (a variety of lemon), khatta kamala (orange), ambada (hog plum), and khatt palanga (roselle) leaves. The Vaishnav religious culinary ritual foods of the Jagannath temple cuisine is sans onion and garlic, while meat and fish are offered at Shakti Peethas.

She has also hosted food festivals at prestigious hotels and restaurants, and been part of the re-launch of Kanika at Mayfair Hotel, the finest Odia restaurant.



CUSTODIANS OF KHASI FOOD



Daphimanroi and Dakiwanri Warjri are home chefs who showcase Khasi food through their popups. "Daphi has always been a part of the culinary industry and runs her own bakery in Mumbai. She has been baking since she was a kid. Cooking, however, is something we both picked up from grandmom, mom and our family cook who's been with us for more than 30 years," says Dakiwanri, "We started Symbai which organises these pop ups because we realized the lack of exposure of our food to the rest of the country, and we wanted to share it with everyone and highlight the diversity of North

Eastern Indian cuisine". The sisters say the smell of tungrymbai (fermented soybean chutney) being cooked over a chula during the winter still brings warm and pleasant memories. "A winter staple is a stew of mustard leaves and pork, and as children, we disliked the bitterness of mustard leaf and Grandmom would feed it to us with sugar. But how we love it now!", the sisters enthuse. Their memories of food in Meghalaya include Putharo (Black sesame pork) with a flat rice cake called Doh Sniang Nei long, and a seasonal red potato dish called Phan Saw with Tungtap, which is a fermented fish chutney. Khasi-style roast pork (Doh Stem) is also very popular, and a simple



Meat Stew (Syrwa Doh Masi) accompanied with a mint chutney is also very popularly. Smoked meats are also popular in Khasi cuisine. "We have seen from our pop ups that there is and always will be a large population willing to and excited about trying out lesser known cuisines. Custodians of heirloom recipes should showcase them at popups to popularize their native cuisine", they explain, adding, "We hope to be able to do pop ups more frequently and collaborate with more people and brands. That is truly the joy in this - meeting new people, both for our guests and for us as well. We would also love to be able to do one in every city in the country to popularize our culture and cuisine".





POST- PARTITION SUCCESS STORIES

Punjabi and Sindhi food entrepreneurs share the success stories of their restaurant brands and mithai shops started in Indian cities after the Partition rendered them homeless.

Cuisines evolve with the contributions of the different peoples who settle in a place. The forced migration from Punjab and Sindh has been a strong influence on India's food scene.

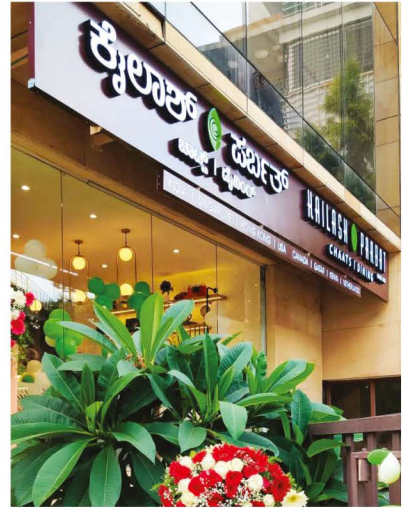
As we rejoice in the 75th year of India's independence, we must also remember the poignant partition which caused large-scale loss of life and an unprecedented forced migration between different parts of India as the borders were drawn between India and Pakistan.

The Hindu-Nanakpanthi Sindhis, the Sikh and Hindu Punjabis, and the migrants from the eastern parts of Bengal brought with them their own culinary influences that have left an



indelible mark on the food map of today's India.

The Sindhi dishes like Dal Pakwan are now ubiquitous in India, and you will find vendors on the streets of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan ladling out channa dal or moong with crispy pakwan. Many restaurants and caterers have also adopted these dishes, and modern versions are rampant. Few know that Fish Koliwada is not a dish of the Koli community but the result of Punjabi migration to Sion Koliwada in Mumbai.



The Punjabi business stories in the restaurant industry are iconic. Ramesh Chona came to Mumbai from Karachi and started selling ice-creams before he laid the foundation stone for Cream Centre at Chowpatty in 1958. He set the benchmark for the Channa Batura in Mumbai. Satishchandra Chona started the Havmor Ice-Cream business in Ahmedabad, and the Channa- Puri legacy he





started continues to please the city's palettes.

The most famous post-partition business migration in the food industry of an enterprise is that of Moti Mahal founded by Kundan Lal Gujral, Thakur Dass and Kundan Lal Jaggi. They are known for having invented Tandoori Chicken and then Butter Chicken or Murg Makhani, and enriching the Kali Dal with butter to make Dal Makhani at a restaurant owned by Mokha Singh in Peshawar in the 1930s.

Later, Moti Mahal at Gora Bazaar in Peshawar, gained immense popularity from the 1930s to 1947. After partition, Gujral arrived in Delhi with his mother, wife, and son, Nandlal Gujral. They landed up in refugee camp



in Old Delhi . He had to give up dreams of going back to Peshawar and found a place in Daryaganj where he established Moti Mahal.

The Gujral family took forward their legacy to make a chain of restaurants called Moti Mahal Delux.

Kundan Lal Jaggi's grandson Raghav Jaggi and Raghav's childhood friend, restaurateur Amit Bagga have taken forward their recipes through the brand Daryaganj.

In Mumbai, Kailash Parbat is an iconic place for Sindhi food and kulfi. Falooda. Four of the successors, Kamlesh Mulchandani, Amit Mulchandani, Jai Mulchandani and Manoj Mulchandani have taken their



brand, legacy and roots to different cities and abroad as well. Manoj takes pride in having taken their journey from a roadside `Halwai' to the most loved Indian eatery around the globe. They have multiple outlets in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Goa, and are present in several other cities and tourist destinations like Haridwar, Ooty, Solan, Kolkata, Prayagraj, Bhilai, etc. They are also setting up restaurants in Shirdi and Madikeri. The global presence is also impressive, with branches in Canada, USA, Singapore, Qatar, Hong Kong,



Kenya and European countries.

In this article, we look at the various influences of Punjabi and Sindhi migration on the cuisines of the cities of India.

MUMBAI'S FLAVOURS OF MIGRATION

Junisha Dama

A little over a year ago, a friend who had moved to Mumbai from Delhi asked me, "Where can I get good chole bhature?" As a proud Mumbaikar, my curt response was, "Stop seeking Delhi food in Mumbai." But as someone who has lived away from home and has often felt home-sick at the thought of vada pav, I took him to explore the Punjabi dhabas of Sion Koliwada.

After showing off the street full of Punjabi restaurants and kirana stores selling everything from Punjabi vadis, Amritsari papad, and aachar, to aata, I took



him to a crumbling little dhaba. For Rs 50, we ate a plate of single bhatura and chole at Chawla Fast Food & Snacks, a dhaba many Mumbaikars who are familiar with the neighbourhood have grown to love. While Delhiites may not find the chole here at par with the ones from their city – a debate best left unargued – Chawla is easily one of Mumbai's most sought-after chole spots.

But Sion Koliwada, to my Delhi friend, felt unfamiliar. Apart from the staple masalas, mighty Gurudwaras, many turban-wearing men, and a legacy tied to the partition of India and

Pakistan – there is nothing that Sion Koliwada has that is the same as Punjab or Delhi.

Post the partition when Sindhis and Punjabis migrated to India, they came with their food and customs. While Delhi got the tandoor oven and the Punjabi-style of gravies, Mumbai saw its own set of new phenomena: A creation of innovative dishes that grew on its streets often fusions inspired by the communities that already lived in the city and the migrants who came in.

It is no surprise that Sion Koliwada doesn't feel "Punjabi" enough to Delhiwallahs. But

these new dishes which mushroomed with the coming in of Mumbai's new residents have remained within the boundaries of the neighbourhoods they come from. Oftentimes, these dishes are rarely recreated outside the stalls they are currently available at. The influx of migrants, somehow, did not create a large shift in the eating habits of Mumbai. "Delhi got a lot of people from rural areas, like farmers who had no means of working their old jobs, so had to take to dairying (which was important for the development of tandoori) or making and selling food. They went to Delhi because it was easiest to reach across land either by foot or trucks or trains. The immigrants who came to Bombay were slightly different. There were more, I think, from Karachi, because of that city's connections to Bombay, more urbanised, artisans, traders, who could find work closer to their old work in the new city. To these immigrants, food was not their first choice of work, so it did not influence the food culture of Bombay that much.

Yes, there were poorer immigrants like Punjabis in Koliwada or Sindhis in Ulhasnagar (which was quite a distance from Bombay then), but their influence was more local and far less than the influence of partition immigrants in Delhi," Vikram Doctor.

Perhaps, the Fish Koliwada is one of the only dishes to have become popular. Despite being similar to the Amritsari fish in the way it's prepared and by the Punjabi community, its popularity doesn't cross Maharashtra's borders. "By the 1970s, India underwent a universalisation of food industries which was focused on the five-star hotels. By now we have figured out who we are post colonisation, so when it came to serving Indian food that identity grew in and from around Delhi as it was the capital and things were centred there," says Nakshatra Borgaonkar, an art researcher and documenter.

In Mumbai too, outside of the pockets that Sindhis and Punjabis live in, it is hard to find

refugee cooking or even their influences. Chaat culture is dominated by the migrants from UP or Bihar, and almost all food in Mumbai will have some influence of the Gujarati community. As Punjabi food is often synonymous with Indian restaurant food, it is widespread. Sindhi food, unfortunately, never took over. Sindhi migrants who moved to Mumbai too, were slightly different from the Punjabis who moved to Delhi. Those who did open food establishments were the families who had exactly those businesses pre-partition as well. "I also think that Sindhi culture, perhaps because it was more focussed on education and trading, was more private and less likely to present itself to the public. Sindhis make their food at home, and will proudly serve it if you ask and visit them, but they do not feel the need to put it out in restaurants, at least until recently. Perhaps it is also a result of Sindh being a drier place, part desert, so people are more frugal than in lush Punjab," says Doctor. "Whenever I have spoken to

anyone from the older generation in Ulhasnagar, they would always say they never wanted to expand or open a shop elsewhere," Alka Keswani. Another reason she points out is that Sindhi cooking is very homely, "We eat dishes like sai bhaji at home because it is healthy, but honestly, even I would not want to go to a restaurant and pay Rs. 300 for it."

Mumbai's post-partition dishes may not have the same status as say, the butter chicken. But a visit to the city or even a quick Google search is enough to classify them as iconic.

Sion Koliwada

When the migrants from Sindh and West Punjab arrived on the shores of Mumbai, they were accommodated in the barracks around Sion Koliwada. The Sindhi and Punjabi refugee camp were close to each other and the neighbourhood eventually came to be called Guru Tegh Bahadur (GTB) Nagar. If you walk around the

neighbourhood, much of which is now under demolition and redevelopment, it is somewhat a ghetto. Several eateries dot the street, and you can find everything from kirana stores to aata stores selling Punjabi and Sindhi items. Although the Punjabi to Sindhi ratio is arguably skewed, as the dominant population here is that of Sikhs.

Sion Koliwada has three unique inventions. One, the Fish Koliwada. Marinated in a chilly paste – which despite its fiery redness is not too hot – spiced with a hint of ajwain, and fried, the bright-red-coloured fish fry is GTB Nagar's pride. The creation, though often debated between Hazara Restaurant and Mini Punjab, is commonly credited to Hukumchand Singh Jhulka, who first sold the fish out of a small cart. The story goes that Jhulka eventually set up Hazara Restaurant, named after the village he hailed from, Hazara in Peshawar. Several efforts to contact Mini Punjab and Hazara Restaurant to confirm this were unanswered. With seafood available in



abundance at the Koliwada, the use of fish and eventually prawns, was inevitable. Speaking of what cooking techniques the Punjabi refugees brought into Mumbai, Vikram Doctor, food writer, says, "You did start getting tandoori items in Bombay, and the invention of Prawns and Fish Koliwada, which was that marinade and cooking style applied to seafood."

The legacy of the Fish Koliwada has gone beyond the borders of Sion Koliwada. You will often find the dish on menus of quarter bars across Mumbai, and at times even in other cities in Maharashtra as it is assumed to be a dish made by the Koli community owing to its name.

The second invention is the Petha Barfi at Guru Nanak Sweets. Now one of the few remaining sweet shops to still make traditional Punjabi sweets and namkeen, Guru Nanak Sweets too, like other businesses in the neighbourhood began out of a cart. Third-generation owners, Kuldeep Singh Wadhwa and Narinder Singh Wadhwa now run the store that was set up by their grandfather in the 50s. The Wadhwases were halwais pre-partition too, and brought their skills to Mumbai for better prospects after first trying their luck in then saturated market of Amritsar. But to stand out, frying imartis, mathris, gud parra, and making mithai was not enough. "My grandfather decided to make the petha barfi, it was his invention and you will not find it anywhere else in Mumbai. It has become a specialty of my sweet shop now," says Narinder Singh Wadhwa. The mithai is simple: Pieces of petha are added to a regular white mawa barfi and it is decorated with red tutti-fruity and silver varq.

The third: Kashmiri Soda at Indra Cold Drinks. You could call Indra

Cold Drinks the saviour of the neighbourhood. You need something refreshing to wash down all the meat and makkhan. So, the Kashmiri Soda comes as some much-needed relief. Second-generation owner, Mahesh Kumar Lamba claims that his father invented the masala for the Kashmiri Soda. While this may not be the same masala that you find across the country, it is a secret that is kept with the Lamba family. The masala sits in a ceramic barni on the counter of the cold drink shop and you can choose to have it added in plain soda, Thums Up, or Sprite. You will taste black salt, dry ginger, among a host of other spices that give you a unique flavour unlike any other masala soda you have tasted.

Chembur

Art deco bungalows, the RK studio, and Sindhi Camp – these are some things Chembur is famous for. It is common for Mumbaikars to flock there for dal pakaan at Vig Refreshments in the morning, the kulchas at



Sainath Dhaba by noon, or for kebabs and Sindhi-style mutton at Gopal's. But there are two prominent creations that you could say came about post-partition.

At Sindh Pani Puri, you can enjoy a plate of butter papri chaat. The butter papri chaat is a dish that you will now commonly find in most Sindhi neighbourhoods – Ulhasnagar, Chembur, and even Pune's Pimpri-Chinchwad – but was unknown to Sindhis too, pre-partition. Quite unlike the papri that you will see in the dahi papri chaat, the butter papri is what Sindhis call makhaniya. The makhaniya is a butter cookie, a jeera version of the makhaniya is common at tea time. But the chaat uses a plain butter cookie that is broken into

halves, topped with chutneys, aloo, boondi, pani puri water, and served cold. "I've been selling this chaat for about eight to nine years now, but I first saw it in Ulhasnagar," says Hitesh Wadhwa, third-generation owner of Sindh Pani Puri. Wadhwa's grandfather was in the business of making chaat pre-partition, and when they moved to Mumbai, he began selling four chaat items of a small cart in 1951. The shop space only came by around 1970 and later grew bigger as business prospered. "Have you tried it? It is so delicious!" exclaims Alka Keswani, who writes Sindh Rasoi, a Sindhi food blog, when I asked her about the dal moong sandwich in Chembur. Bhojraj Jarkani set up a cart selling moong dal sandwich, which his grandson Jitendra Jarkani now runs. A mixture of three dals – green, yellow, and chana – is served sandwiched between pav along with khatti-meethi chutneys and raw onion. But is this a post-partition invention or pre? "Bread or laadi pav was available in Sindh but usually eaten by lower-income groups. There was also a myth in those

days that pav is kneaded with feet, so people avoided it," says Keswani. It may be hard to trace whether the dal sandwich was a pre-partition dish, we can say that it won many hearts post-partition as it even has a song dedicated to it. The 1958 Sindhi film, Abana, which was shot in the refugee camps in Ulhasnagar has a popular song 'Dal Chola Dhabla' which translates to dal chole pav.

Kalbadevi

Meandering around Zaveri Bazaar is no easy task. But ask for the Sindhi Dal Sandwich, and you will be directed to the right spot. It also helps that the stall is marked on Google maps. After all, in internet terms, the sandwich is viral across the market, Mumbai, and even has heritage food walking groups that will lead you to it. But neither the dish nor its maker are Sindhi. When asked where he got this recipe from, Mahesh Pathak cheekily smiles and says, "It's all from the head." But you could say that the



sandwich truly defines Mumbai's cosmopolitan spirit (and its food).

While the Bombay sandwich is widely popular, Mahesh Pathak's father did not want to set up an ordinary sandwich stall. But as a resident of Ulhasnagar, he was inspired by his new neighbours, the Sindhi migrants. The Pathaks, originally from Mathura, learnt the Sindhi cuisine. That is how the Sindhi dal sandwich was created, somewhere in the mid-50s.

Sindhi moong dal is spread on Wibs sliced bread and a palak sanna pakora, aloo bhajiya, mirchi pakora, and a samosa are all dipped in a khatti-meethi chutney before getting sandwiched. The sandwich is

further topped with a ladle-full of moong dal, chutney, and chaat masala.

When asked why he offers Sindhi food Pathak responds, "Why not? The kadhi is good, the koki is good. I even have a bhajiya stall where I make all pakoras Sindhi style. No garlic or onions. Sindhis don't eat onion and garlic on some days, I can't keep track when. So, I make everything without them."

Pathak now has four stalls, all offering something more unique than the next, and a catering business too. He says that the Sindhi Dal Sandwich may be his father's invention that he carries forward alongside dal pakaan, but his own creation is an even more strange sandwich, one that he can only create if he is informed a day in advance. More on that later.

Colaba

Much is known about the restaurant whom you could call the flag bearer of Sindhi cuisine. In 1952, Kailash Parbat

Hindu Hotel Restaurants opened in Colaba. The Mulchandani family were in the hospitality business before partition. They started off in Larkana, Sindh – where they are from – before expanding to Karachi and later moving to Mumbai. Hargun Mulchandani, one of the partners expresses that it was more fun to conduct business in Karachi as it was a more progressive city back in the '40s.

After moving to Mumbai with their pani puri utensils in tow, the family first set-up business near Azad Maidan, selling Sindhi pani puri and other chaat items. "You could say that we brought in the North Indian style of chaat and snack culture to Mumbai. The Sindhi pani puri is cold, as we use aloo, boondi, and moong as the filling unlike the UP and Bihar style that uses warm vatana. The puri too is crispier as it is made with rawa and urad dal," says Mulchandani. He further highlights that the chole pattice or aloo tikki chaat was brought to Mumbai by them, as was the kulfi-falooda,

"Earlier in Mumbai they only ate the falooda in a glass with milk." Colaba would become the choice for Kailash Parbat's first brick and mortar in Mumbai as several rich Sindhis were settling in the neighbourhood. "In my youth, my favourite for falooda was always Kailash Parbat. I was very young - 13 - when I first started shopping at Colaba Causeway, walking from my home at Marine Drive all the way to Kailash Parbat at the far end, where I would land up with an armful of packages to savour their kulfi-falooda. I knew people who, if they wanted pani puri, would only go to Kailash Parbat because they said it was the safest place in town to eat it. They also had a full-fledged restaurant opposite their sweet shop," says Menka Shivdasani, a poet and researcher. When it first opened, the restaurant had an all-Sindhi menu. Serving everything from aani bhasar, bhuga chawar, bhee bhasar, and more. But with the Sindhis moving out of Colaba and the demand for the cuisine

dropping, the restaurant has limited its list of Sindhi dishes to a few popular items like koki, dal pakaan, Sindhi kadhi, sai bhaji, and pumped in a long list of vegetarian Punjabi dishes.

SINDHI POST PARTITION SUCCESS STORIES ARE SWEET

Nikita Dudani

Sindhi migrants to India brought many of their traditions of sweets and snacks to the cities where they settled. Some of these mithai shops and eateries have now grown to multiple outlets.

In Delhi, Bharat Khemani, chef and partner of Karachi Halwa says, "My grandfather migrated to India from Sindh, Pakistan way before the partition. He came 10 years before the partition around 1936 and 37. He landed in Delhi and started working as a contractor of building houses. Then, slowly he started making sweets and enjoyed it. He then learnt more



on this and started making Halwas. From the year 1938, he started selling sweets and brought a shop for same in 1943. The shop was located in the heart of Central Delhi – Gol Market. Slowly the word started spreading and the Karachi Halwa Shop became famous.

He says his grandfather had nine children and he ensured their education. "When I joined the business in 1979, it was challenging as the food industry was already changing. The old school business was a thing of past and new methodologies were taking over. One of the challenges was that there was no one to carry the legacy forward. I completed my hotel management in the year 2001 and officially took over the



charge to carry the legacy forward. My father expired in 2016, making me the only grandson to carry this forward," he states. "I personally feel as there was no other cousin to help, we lost time as business requires fresh perspectives of youngster to grow and expand. I am also a chef so my focus was to cater everything that a guest asks. For example: one day kids of a customer demanded Pasta but in Chinese base so I quickly went in and tossed Pasta in Chinese sauces like hot garlic sauce and other ingredients to innovate on the move. They really liked it. My ideas as a chef are to always give customers what they want as long as we have ingredients with us," he says, "Another challenge was to sustain on our own funds as we

didn't believe in taking loans, simply because you have the pressure to return it. That is also a reason we haven't branched out because we sustain on our own finances".

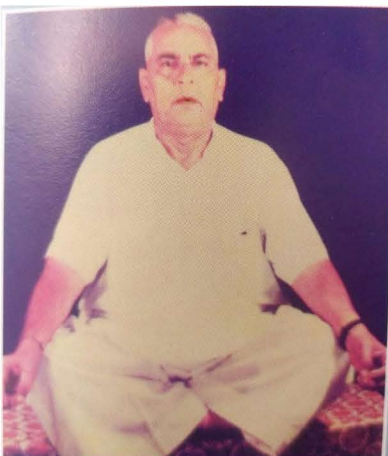
He says they are keeping pace with trends and changing times, from adopting food delivery platforms and online payments to making sugar-free or healthy options, and even adding Baklava and other sweets to their repertoire. "We do plan to bran out eventually in coming years", he says.

In Ahmedabad, Shikarpuri Halwai shop was established in the year 1952 by Pahelajrai Balwani. Partition brought him to Sardar Nagar area in Ahmedabad, Gujarat where he decided to make his mark.



Initially, it was a small shop serving Sindhi sweets to the people of Ahmedabad. As the quality and taste of their sweets grew so did their shop. They expanded their sweets shop and included many new items on the menu as well. With that they also started selling dishes such as Dal Pakwan to their customers. Gradually as things

changed and their sons took over, they took it to great heights. The one solo shop that stood in Sardarnagar area found its branches in Kuber Nagar and Satellite area of Ahmedabad. Prakash Balwani along with his sons and nephews take care of these three shops. The family chooses to stay in their family business and take it to new





heights. Ravi Balwani, the third generation of Shikarpuri Halwai shop takes care of all online dealings. He says, "Business needs to transform as the time changes. A bigger and better picture is coming towards us and we need to understand it and align our business with it. To be on top of your game, we have to continuously evolve, innovate to keep our consumers interest aligned."

Azad is a name that has become synonymous with its mithais and combo meals in Ahmedabad's markets. Kunal Rochwani says, "I am third generation in this business. My great grandfather used to work with a Mithaiwals in Pakistan. He was involved with making rewaries and other sweets. My grandfather saw his father and learnt the culinary skills from him. When partition happened, my grandfather moved to India with his big

family. In Ahmedabad, my grandfather started a small sweet shop that focused on selling Sindhi items such as Dal Pakwan, Barfi and Gulab Jamun. The name 'Azad' came because my grandfather used to help in passing messages before partition as he believed that they are going to be finally free. Freedom means Azad and so he decided to keep this name". At the time, there were only few shops in Relief Road which used

to be considered a hub. Those coming to Ahmedabad on business would have breakfast at Azad before proceeding to the markets of the walled city that was then the city's central business district. The locals would come to Relief Road to watch movies or for shopping, and have some food at Azad. Azad opens early, about 7:30 AM for breakfast. "If we were delayed, the customers used to get angry as it would disturb



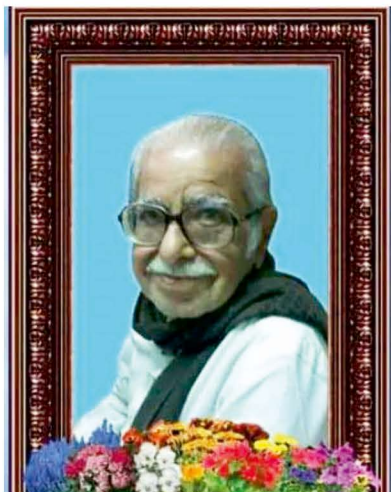


their schedule. Before we would open, customers would already be waiting for us. As the popularity increased, he had to buy bigger space for expansion". He says the challenges faced by his ancestors were different. "For them, it was the situation where they could keep a certain weight of ingredients and a fixed price only, even if they were expensive. They also faced shortage of raw materials so it was a challenge to keep things going and one had to be on their toes to cope up," he says, "for us our challenges are to keep pace with the new trends coming in. For example, today's generation would want to explore and prefer to have different cuisines and dishes option at one place. They would like to explore modern dishes together with the traditional roots. We are now using e-commerce platforms for the sale of our sweets. We also look

into how we can increase the shelf life of our product so people can use our products as corporate gifting and can send them across to their loved one. We also faced the challenge of Covid where we had to keep giving salaries even when business was in locked down. We had to ensure that our staff is getting meals etc, so challenges keep coming up and we have to find our unique solutions to them". Value-for-Money remains their USP. "All our menu items range up to 200 INR, which is a good deal as compared to other restaurants while ensuring fresh ingredients and the desired taste. This led to publicity and more people knowing our brand. For example, when we rolled out Puri Shak initially, people didn't connect to it as it was a dish made at home. However, slowly the people started to like the

authentic 'ghar-jaisa' taste it had and word start to spread and that's how our idea to keep our food at economical prices yet providing a tasteful and fresh food was born". He believes that an entrepreneur has to read about the market and product. "We make our own flour that takes care of the raw material. It guarantees consistent taste. In the industry that so dynamic, you have to constantly update your menu as it can be challenging to keep up with trends. For example, during the trend is of combos and meals so we adapt to that and include in our menu so if the customer is walking in, they have everything that they need. Right now, mayo and cheese are trending so we are looking into how we can incorporate this in our menu," he says. In future, he plans to enter the frozen food category.

THE LEGACY OF AZAD



Sindhikhazana.com

Dilip Rochwani talks about how they came from Mirpur Khas to Ajmer and then to Ahmedabad. "In Ahmedabad, we settled in an area called Vadaj, which had a Sindhi population, and started a sweets shop called Azad Sweets in Revdi Bazaar.

Revdi Bazaar was then a residential area with only 15-20 shops and a large maidan (open ground). I have cycled on the maidan as a 9-10-year-old boy. Today the maidan is no more and Revdi Bazaar has become a commercial area. With the railway station close by, Revdi Bazaar gradually became the

centre of the city. More shops opened and the bazaar became a hot spot for selling everything from clothes to shoes and a range of other goods that people needed. People from nearby villages visited the market and had nashta-paani (snacks) at our shop. We sold samosas, kachori and vada pau in good numbers.

My father used to bribe me, a 9-year old then, with a one-rupee coin or sweets to take me to the shop so that I could learn the ropes of the business. There was a lot of competition with other sweet shops. They offered one kachori free with one malpuro (a sweet fried bread of whole wheat flour or maida) and so on. We too had to offer the same.



We made a name in the market with our quality sweets and got orders from factories and companies for food. In those days, wedding functions were simple; there was no large-scale catering involved. People ordered food plates for guests. A wedding food plate would have a samoso, a gulab jamun or kala jamun, some wafers, and some dal moonth (a snack made of sev and fried dal), followed by Havmor icecream. We did well in this business.

Earlier we served samosas Sindhi style – a samosa is broken into pieces on a plate, different kinds of chutneys are added on top and the concoction is garnished with coriander leaves and masalas. Now, we serve the samosas with the chutneys on the side. People





thronged for the piping hot samosas, majun (a Sindhi sweet made of mawa and dry fruits), rabdi, gulab jamun, kala jamun, and rasgulla. We had no proper restaurant then and sold these over the counter. Now, we have space for people to sit and have snacks and sweets”.

TAKING FORWARD THE LEGACY OF MOTI MAHAL

Monish Gujral, Managing Director of Moti Mahal Delux Management Services (As Told to Nikita Dudani)

Moti Mahal, the restaurant, gained immense popularity from the 1930s to 1947, turning my ancestor into a wealthy man. While most migrants settled in



cities like Delhi and Ludhiana, he arrived in Delhi with his mother, wife, and son, Nandlal Gujral. They landed up in a refugee camp in Old Delhi. At that time, they never imagined they would be able to go back to Peshwar. But as the reality stepped in, he handed over his restaurant in Peshwar to his

friend to continue running it. With the little funds and gold, my ancestor found a place in Daryaganj, Old Delhi. He began with a small yet humble establishment. Yet, this time he was armed with experience and determination, he was confident in its success. Though his property, his restaurant was in





Peshwar, he applied for rehabilitant for same. With help of his friend, he got this place in Delhi along thus, marking the birth of first Moti Mahal in Independent India.

At that time, mostly the population was Muslim, Kayast, and Christian. Most of the Khayast population was vegetarian and the Muslim weren't acquainted to the North Indian food. But when they tasted the Tandoori chicken and other dishes, it became an instant hit, making it popularized across Delhi. The young generation back then was experimenting with food that



added to the popularity. This popularity also brought the first PM, Panditji to eat the Moti Mahal and he liked the food so much that it became like a hub for political meetings. Moti Mahal was even called to do catering at prominent dignitaries.

During the early 1970s, as Delhi experienced rapid growth, my father, in his early thirties, aimed to expand and branch out. He choose the name "Delux" as he was wanting to make it known to modern India. This led to the transformation of Moti Mahal into a renowned brand, with various outlets boasting



distinctive interiors inspired by places like Uttar Pradesh and Mussoorie.

By 1983, I joined the business after completing 12th grade and waiting to join college – to understand the nuances of this business. I learned culinary skills from my grandfather, while also gaining knowledge of restaurant management from my father. Unfortunately, the family suffered a loss when my grandfather passed away due to cancer, but the brand's legacy propelled them to carry on his vision. They worked Hand-in-hand, and Moti Mahal's



popularity soared. My mother helped my father in working our business strategies.

I decided to carry on the legacy and especially make the cuisines and dishes invented by my grandfather be shared with others. Hence, I started writing columns to promote the brand with Hindustan Times and later a book on Moti Mahal that became an international bestseller.

Driven by our vision, we ventured into franchising, opening the first Moti Mahal franchise in Faridabad. The dream of establishing outlets in India was cherished, requiring standardized operations in every aspect. Extensive research and development were carried out to ensure quality and consistency. From 2000 to 2005, Moti Mahal brand continued its expansion, seeking franchises that aligned with its legacy. The goal was not only to achieve outlets but to surpass this milestone within a century. We introduced more chains and emphasized strong backend support, drawing upon the wisdom imparted by my father and grandfather. Despite the initial challenges faced in standardizing recipes and

training chefs to ensure consistent taste, the use of locally sourced ingredients and specially blended spices enabled us to maintain the desired flavours. Passion and dedication were crucial in navigating the hardships and achieving success. After lots of R&D, we started making ingredients at our end that helped in standardising the process such as curry paste, spices blend etc.

We began more sister chains such as Chat trail, Gupta trail, China Trail, and so on. The key to their success lay in providing good food, maintaining high standards, and embracing innovation. Yet, Moti Mahal's signature dishes such as butter chicken, tandoori chicken, and dal makhani have withstood the test of time. They remain the most loved.

The mother brand, Moti Mahal, not only continues to thrive but also plans on introducing various regional and international cuisines, catering to the diverse tastes and demands of a growing clientele. Innovation remained at the core of our philosophy as they empowered other brands while

remaining loyal to their own, prioritizing quality and consistency.”

THE CHONA'S BUSINESS SUCCESS IN AHMEDABAD



Pradeep Chona (as told to Anil Mulchandani)

The Chona family entered the ice-cream business way back in 1944 when Satish Chandra Chona, who worked with BOAC Airlines, learnt ice cream making while he was in Karachi. He started the brand "HAVMOR", which meant that the customer got more value for money, and more taste to relish from his ice



creams. This became a catchy name and one of the best in food industry, something you always want to Have – More!

After the 1947 partition, he moved to Dehra Dun and tried to restart the ice cream business. But it was not easy owing to the cold climate in the Doon Valley and he failed. He then bought a friend's fast-food business in Indore but was cheated and he failed again and subsequently lost all his money and his wife's jewelry through which he had bought the fast-food business.

During the '50s, his friend in Ahmedabad advised him to try



his luck in this city, because Gujaratis are known for being nice and also have a sweet tooth. His friend told him that the city was flourishing as a textile industry centre and had a population that would spend on ice-creams. Pushing his cart near the railway station, he first faced resistance from the local vendors.

Fortunately, my father got good support from Motumal Tanumal Sharbatwala, a Sindhi who had also started out with carts after partition though now the family has air-conditioned shops. They helped him set up his cart. He introduced new flavors and



colorful ice creams like tiranga or tri-colour, which children loved. His maxim was 'Achchai, Sachchai, Safai', (quality, honesty and hygiene). After the success of his ice-cream brand, my father started a restaurant on Relief Road, in the busy heart of Ahmedabad. Though this was a Punjabi food place, it was a vegetarian restaurant as per the understanding with the eminent families who owned the property. By the 1960s, Havmor became as famous for its Chana Puri, samosas, cutlets and snacks as it was for its ice cream.

The major turning point was in 1991 when we established their fully automated mechanized plant at Naroda to step up production. My father was very content with his production centre and a couple of restaurants, but I wanted to grow. Thus, slowly, we built another new plant in an industrial area of Ahmedabad,





investing in land, machinery, technology, management systems, human resource development and promotional strategies in order to augment production. We also created a corporate environment with branding, advertising and systems in place. I was careful through the process to maintain the original recipes and consistency, but kept introducing new flavours, packaging and advertising campaigns"

Enter my son Ankit Chona, armed with a degree in management and information systems from the USA. He had worked in the USA and witnessed the growth of Panera Bread, which operates 1700 company-owned and franchise-operated bakery-cafes in 44 states of the USA and in Ontario, Canada. I gave him freedom and he decided to adopt the power

of franchising as a growth strategy to start expanding Havmor in Gujarat and then in neighbouring states. Thus, we set up a centralized kitchen for making the spice mixes and controlling the quality of ingredients used in all the restaurants and other eateries. For the ice-creams and packaged food, we bought land to build a plant that would triple the production capacity to meet the growth plan. Thus, all products are standardized. He also worked on SAP, GPS System in all vehicles, metal detectors, camera surveillance system'.

We also worked on recipe innovations. Smoked Paneer which is a paneer tikka masala where the paneer is given a smoky flavour, a take on the Burmese Khowseuy, unusual starters like Cheesy Cigar Rolls and a Waffle Sundae which has an entire ice-cream sundae in a large cone, some of our best-sellers at our restaurants in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Ajmer and Jaipur. For the contemporary diet-conscious client, my dietician daughter-in-law Gayatri has come up with a selection called Valens.

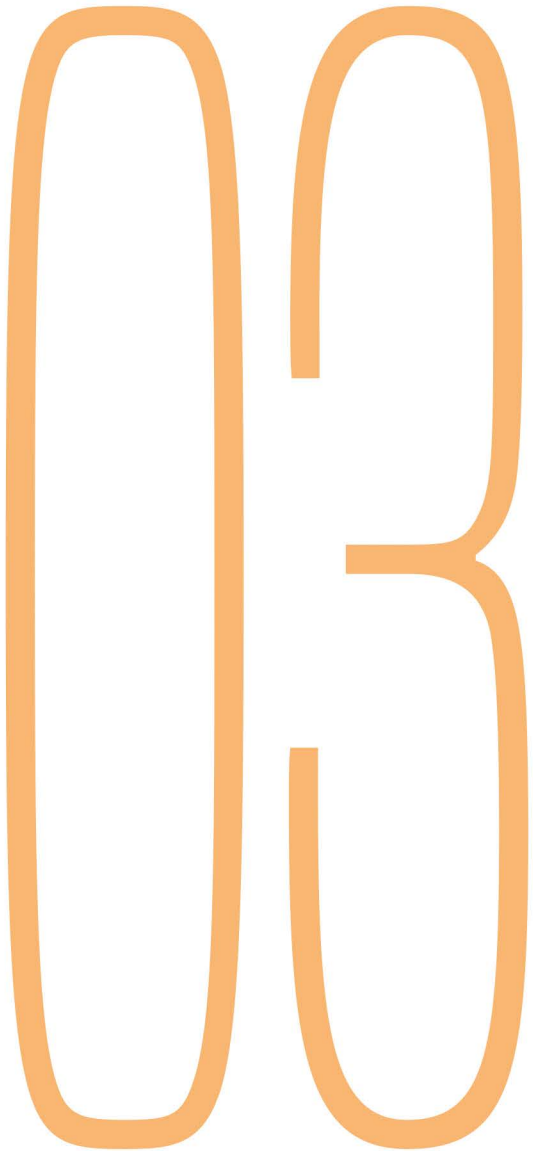


Among ice-creams, our new products like Cookie Crumble, extruded ice-creams, sorbet-like coolers and the mixed-in-front-of-you cold stone ice-cream have caught on very fast'.

After having sold the ice-cream manufacturing business to Lotte at a huge price, our family has built our new brands – 1944, Huber & Holly and Hocco Eatery. We have also diversified into healthy snacks and protein bars with the Phab brand.

We position ourselves as a lifestyle brand that offers delicious yet nutritious products. More than 80 years in the food business, we know customer's palate, so we make sure that the Phab buyer does not sacrifice taste in the quest for nutrition.

Our family currently operate with more than 100 stores across India.



THE SOUTH INDIAN FOOD KITCHEN

Anil Mulchandani

Unaavu Kitchen is an all-women-run South Indian food restaurant in Jodhpur by PR professional Chandni Arora and a South Indian food lover Seema Marothi. We spoke to them about their enterprise



What inspired you to start Unaavu?

The idea behind Unaavu was to bring quintessential South Indian flavors and culture to life in Jodhpur. The aim was to offer great taste, and introduce a new palette into the Jodhpur market, using high quality ingredients and thoughtful cooking practices.

What brought you together to start Unaavu?

A shared love for food and bespoke experiences especially

the love for authentic South Indian food that was missing from Jodhpur's culinary map. The idea also stemmed from the passion for regional cuisine and the desire to bring fresh food to the table (No pre-preps) with the most real flavours found in South Indian homes. We put in a lot of thought into the ingredients, their source, and the traditional cooking practices.

Why did you decide to serve South Indian food?

We wanted the people of Jodhpur to taste the South Indian flavours that we have grown up with and there was a big gap in the city when it came to authentic South Indian food. We saw this as an opportunity to start Unaavu.

How was your menu decided?

A lot of homework has gone into creating our menu in terms of identifying the recipes and sourcing the highest quality ingredients from Tamil Nadu and



Karnataka. We are re-creating traditional south Indian recipes using local and seasonal produce and discovering little secrets from south Indian kitchens that make our food special. While a lot of the items that you will find in the Menu may not be new, but the flavours are different. There are a few items that have been introduced in the city for the very first time. For instance, various preparations using Idiyappams, Kumbakonam Kadappa, Kurma, a variety of poriyals etc.

Did you face any challenges in getting acceptability for South Indian food in Marwar?

If yes, how did you overcome them?

We have received lot of love from Jodhpur. The initial months of operating a Cloud Kitchen gave us the confidence that Jodhpur loves the taste. Today one of our strongest marketing tool is word of mouth. A large part of our sales come from regular patrons.

Did you face any challenges putting such a team together or operating an all-women establishment since Marwar has reputation for being a rather patriarchal society?

Unaavu is an All Women's Kitchen, employing local women who have always been in the shadows - Women with a penchant for cooking but lacking the right platform. These are individuals who were either home cooks or domestic workers with no prior experience of running a professional



kitchen. The very idea was to change the narrative, upskill these women and give them the opportunity to run a business. The vision is to bring in more women into this fold and provide them with social and economic stability.

For us the challenge was to get the first few members of our team (women) to come on board, align them to our vision and develop their and their respective family's confidence in our model. Families in this particular region play a very important role when it comes to ensuring that women were allowed to join our workforce.

However, once the core team



was set, a sense of financial security was built they became our advocates who encouraged more women to join us. We believe that if you set a culture, take care of your employees, allow them to have balance and give them an environment where they can thrive they are here to stay.

To help with the groundwork we brought in home cooks from Tamil Nadu on board as consultants who trained local Jodhpur women on the basics and essentials of South Indian cooking.

How do you source the ingredients?

We put a lot of thought into the ingredients, their source, and the traditional cooking practices. Some of the key ingredients (Coconut, rice, tamarind, jaggery, chillies and other spices) come from farms in Tamil Nadu and our Filter Coffee comes from Chikmangalur to recreate the best flavours.

Everything from the masalas to batter to pickles and ice-creams are made inhouse. The menu includes only the most authentic recipes, such as Idiyappams, moongdal and coconut payasams, sundals, poriyals etc. In short, items new to Jodhpur apart from the popular South Indian dishes.

What are the distinctive experiences you offer the guest?

At Unaavu, we also curate unique experiences (community-style sit-down meals) for guests to present recipes from different regions of Tamil Nadu. The meal included items like Kumbakonam Kaddapa, Patnam Pakoda, Mor Kulambu etc, dishes that are unheard of in this part of the country. The focus is to allow its patrons to experience homey south Indian food which is not only great in taste but is also deeply nourishing for the gut. A lot of homework has gone into



creating the menu in terms of sourcing the highest quality ingredients from down south, re-creating traditional south Indian recipes using local and seasonal produce and discovering little secrets from south Indian kitchens that make food at Unaavu special.

Why did you start a small-batch restaurant?

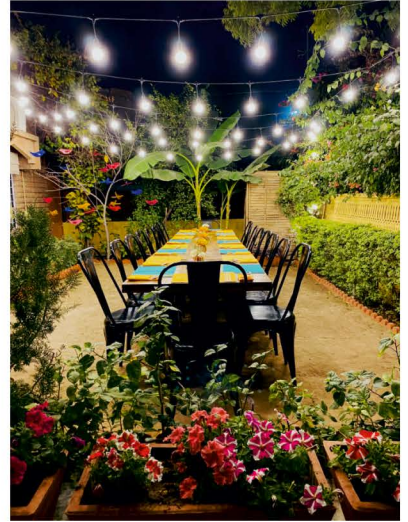
The overarching reason to start a small batch kitchen rather than a large-scale commercial setup was to not only bring good quality food to the table but also to avoid adding to the burgeoning carbon footprint. This scale of function helps it reduce wastage, while deep

thought has been put into the packaging as well, which is recyclable and biodegradable

We ensure minimum carbon footprint by using biodegradable and recyclable packaging and ensuring minimum wastage by planning and maintaining appropriate checks-and-balances in our cooking process. We were among the first in Jodhpur to use bio-degradable packaging at our restaurant!

The highlights of the journey so far?

The last year has been an incredible journey for us. The transition from a cloud kitchen to a boutique dine-in space within six months of operations was a major achievement. The opportunity to collaborate with and cater to some of the best hotels in Jodhpur was exciting. One of the key highlights being the opportunity to host and interact with the world renowned, Michelin Star Chef Vikas Khanna at Unaavu. This was possible due to our patrons.



Growing to a team of 10 women in the kitchen further rooted our belief that we were working in the right direction of creating a safe environment for women to work, collaborate and grow.

Your future plans?

To create more bespoke experiences while experimenting and collaborating to bring more regional cuisines to the forefront. A year into the business we are also open to the idea of taking this initiative to other cities, provided we are able to ensure sustainable executional excellence without compromising on the customer experience and our core values.

04

THE COMPAS- SIONATE CHOICE

Editorial team

Veganism is seen as an emerging trend in the food industry as people are becoming more concerned about the ethical, environmental and health benefits of a plant-based diet. Vegan food entrepreneurs talk about their plant-based food enterprises.

KANTA MITRA, KOLKATA



Like most of us, I was spending the winter of 2020 cooped up at home amidst the pandemic with my husband and daughter. At the onset of the pandemic, I lost my mother – a few months into the loss, I was still picking up the pieces. As a school teacher, I was beginning to get used to the new normal of online classes which left me quite a bit of time to spend by myself. I started baking for my daughter who turned vegan in 2017. Vegan

options were still sparse in our city then, and her stubbornness to ditch refined flour and sugar forced me to experiment with whole-wheat flour, gluten-free flours, and the use of jaggery and dates as sweeteners.

I watched a lot of baking videos and improvised on the baking I did earlier to churn out vegan alternatives to the cakes I used to bake at home many years back. I realised overcoming the challenges was also about changing the mindset that we cannot cook or bake without certain ingredients. Through the month of December 2020, I found it quite surreal to even think I can float a business. After one month of mulling over, I finally made some social media



posts, and customer orders started trickling in. The preparation to enter the business was exciting, buying raw materials, baking and packing!

I was doing everything by myself which also meant the process was overwhelming. I am forever grateful for their honest feedback which helped me get better at the craft of baking. I made up for the orders I messed up and knew that the way forward was to keep learning and reinventing myself.

I turned vegan a few months into my business. And, as I mentioned my daughter was already a vegan so we knew there was no way we would





profit from cruelty. This meant I would only bake and cook vegan food.

I started with vegan cakes, muffins, cupcakes, quiches and bread. Eventually, I branched out to make a range of dishes – tofu, mock meat gravies, pasta, fried rice, noodles, biriyani. I would highlight the mock meat biriyani, chocolate hazelnut cakes and Christmas cakes as my signature dishes. The use of whole grains, jaggery and dates instead of refined items sets my



items apart. Because I do this part-time, I do not really aggressively promote the business. I hope to expand the business after my retirement when I can devote more time. For now, I send fliers to the vegan community on WhatsApp and post the week's menu on Instagram.

The challenges are umpteen. The first challenge was the items did not turn out as expected. So I tried to pick myself up and learn while in the trade. The other major challenge is it is still a niche market which means customers are limited. With a limited clientele, it becomes difficult to sustain a business. The future of vegan entrepreneurs is promising if we manage to negotiate the limitations and turn them

around. I am actively looking forward to being a dedicated vegan baker after my retirement.

VAISHALI JAIN, MUMBAI



After I turned vegan, my cravings for sweets became unbearable. They say necessity is the mother of invention, and that couldn't be more true in my



case. In January 2020, I came up with the idea of making churma ladoos in different varieties and gond ladoos. It was a way to satisfy my sweet tooth while adhering to my vegan lifestyle. Little did I know that this experiment would give birth to Vishful, a venture dedicated to creating delicious vegan desserts that are both healthy and indulgent.

Being vegan and with the blessings of the animal kingdom, I embarked on a journey of creating vegan food without any formal degree. Inspired by my love for animals and a desire to live a compassionate lifestyle, I delved into the world of plant-



based cooking. Guided by the bountiful offerings of nature and a genuine passion for creating wholesome and cruelty-free meals, I discovered that formal education was not a prerequisite for culinary creativity. Instead, my connection with the animal kingdom and the understanding that every ingredient has a story allowed me to tap into a realm of intuitive cooking. Through experimentation and a deep respect for nature's gifts, I have been able to create nourishing and delicious vegan dishes that bring joy to both my plate and my soul.

I take pride in offering a wide range of delectable treats that



are free from preservatives and refined sugar. From an assortment of ladoos to a variety of cakes, cookies, chocolates, and jams, my creations are crafted with love and care. Each bite is a testament to my commitment to providing healthier alternatives without compromising on taste. Using natural sweeteners like maple syrup, dates, or coconut sugar, I ensure that every product is both guilt-free and satisfying. With a focus on using



wholesome ingredients and innovative flavour combinations, I strive to offer a delightful experience to those seeking delicious treats that align with their dietary preferences and wellness goals.

Ladoos, the sweet wonders, hold a secret so divine, as they melt in your mouth, you'll think its chocolate cake time.

With a sole mission of health and taste, I strive to use organic ingredients, no refined flour, sugar, or essence.

Amidst numerous challenges, I was told the greatest hurdle for a home chef is taste replication. Through practice and blessings, I conquered, achieving flavours in my homemade products.

I market the products through online platforms. As awareness of veganism grows, I see a promising future of growth.

My dream is to open a café with

a cosy ambience and delicious vegan food.

PREETI KAPASI, GURUGAM

Living in Ahmedabad, seven years ago there were not many dairy alternative options available, which led me to experiment in my own kitchen. We often had potlucks among my vegan friends and groups, and these items were appreciated. It led to a demand by vegans, health-conscious people and lactose-intolerant clients to commercially supply these products.



Thus, I had never planned to be a home chef, the opportunity just happened. I had a good range of vegan alternatives for milk, curd, cheeses, butter and ghee. I also developed vegan dishes from Indian and international cuisines, including those from different states of India. From starters to desserts, raw vegan and cooked vegan dishes, dairy, meat and egg alternatives, and so forth. A lot of traditional Gujarati food like





Dhoklas, Kadhi, Chaas, Mohanthal and Shrikhand are among my top items. Because I do a lot of gluten-free items too, my vegan, gluten-free and millet-based dishes have been my signature items. Mezze platters and Khowsuey are fast sellers, and these are by default vegan. I use no refined flour, refined salt, refined sugar or artificial colours in my food. I try to obtain organic and pesticide-free ingredients whenever and wherever possible.

My core strength and USP is the ability to customize dishes to



meet the demands of individual clients.

It's been a fun journey over the last six years, even the shift from Ahmedabad to NCR, uprooting everything was a perceived challenge but things smoothed out.

I think it was my belief that "I can do it" that made difficulties not seem so tough.

The business for my brand, Vedic Kitchen, has grown organically through word of mouth and referrals.

For vegan entrepreneurs, the floodgates have opened. The field is huge. I tell all vegan food entrepreneurs, "carve your niche by finding your focus area and work with perseverance to achieve your goals".

I have many ambitions from writing a book to opening a vegan culinary school.

PALAK JAIN, AHMEDABAD



I was always fond of cooking healthier versions of junk food. On 6 Aug 2018, I turned vegan and started looking for alternatives. Even when I searched the internet, very few recipes and options were available in the market and online. The international recipes used veggies and ingredients that were not easily available in Ahmedabad or were exotic and expensive. That is what led to





my experimenting with vegetables, fruits and ingredients that were locally available. A few of my friends used to ask me for recipes and it was difficult for me to explain them in detail at that time as I was working with my husband's company. So, I started sharing my recipes on social media. In January 2020, I went to Mumbai to attend a seminar on the Reversal of Diabetes and Hypertension by Dr Nandita Shah, founder of SHARAN. That



one-day seminar changed my life completely I was astonished that without sugar, oil and dairy, food can be this delicious. I came back to Ahmedabad and from the very next day, I started making changes in my kitchen. My whole family started to benefit from the changes I had made. In 2021 I took facilitator training from SHARAN and joined the team, since then I am taking online cooking classes which are hit and in demand. I started getting enquires for food from vegan potlucks and started supply food according to the client demands. I am specialise in WFPB food for those who follow a Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet, I like to convert conventional recipes into oil, sugar and dairy free



versions. I love baking cakes and making cake icing. Professionally, I am more focused on cakes and cakes premixes that are made with clean ingredients - whole wheat, gluten free flour, jaggery, vanilla pods, etc. Among my products, cake premixes are a fast-selling item in India. Locally, I get orders for vegan-friendly cakes, cupcakes, and tub cakes in Ahmedabad. Everything is made from scratch once order is





placed. Weight watchers and diabetics are among my clientele. My brand Healthy Fables has become popular because of referrals and social media.

As I never thought of entering in the food business in my wildest dream, it took in some time to adjust in the new profession which requires inventory control and keeping track of raw materials expiry dates, but now I am thoroughly enjoying it.

The future for vegan chefs is very promising, as I tell people same taste and texture can be achieved so why not make the compassionate choice? I am planning to start sharing recipes through social media so world

over people can easily maintain their good health guilt free.

VANDANA DEWAN, NCR



The Good Stuff by Vandys was established with one vision in mind - to break the myth that healthy food is bland and boring.

I graduated from the Academy of Pastry Arts, Gurgaon, as a Patisserie Chef, and had the opportunity to train and work at Oberoi Hotels, New Delhi, as a sous chef. Having the passion of cooking since my younger years and since I had my own weight loss journey I was always

looking for healthier versions, I was now more equipped to offer this to my customers. These experiences also brought me closer to my vision of offering healthy vegetarian and vegan fare with my gourmet twist.

I found that a lot of people had allergies to milk and milk products, but they did not know that lactose-intolerance caused symptoms like inflammation, rashes, etc. But once, they switched to a vegan diet many of these symptoms went away. Even the Satvik food movement which was started on many social media platforms was aiding this. Also, the animal industry is doing very unethical practices, which is why we see documentaries like Game Changer and Forks over knives .Plant-based food is more sustainable.

I think social media ,television and the availability of new vegan -friendly products have made people aware about veganism. Also, based on research, I am convinced that we can reverse certain lifestyle diseases by



becoming vegan. Moreover , it's exciting to cook vegan, creativity comes in when you cook with restrictions . I was even creating my own vegan Pan-Asian sauces .

In 2018, I established our first vegan outlet and pop-up at SS Plaza. There, we served delicious, low-calorie, healthy, vegan, and vegetarian salads, dressings, sandwiches, wraps, bowls, smoothies, yogurts, tea cakes, and other desserts as samplers and for takeaways. Vegan food has been my unique selling point, as it not only benefits health but also the environment. I started with food tastings at my outlet and one of my first wins was the subscription models with Gurgaon corporates for Salads , Buddha Bowls and Wraps .

To maintain freshness and a high-quality nutritional index, Vandys products are made from fresh ingredients sourced from nearby local organic farms. When the pandemic hit, we transitioned to a cloud kitchen model to facilitate online delivery and themed catering. Since early 2022 , however we adopted the model of gourmet pop-up counters across Delhi NCR, including prestigious locations such as Delhi Golf Club, DLF condominium clubs , The Delhi Gymkhana, Gurgaon premium Artisanal markets, Foodhall , Modern bazar etc .

Our recent pop-up, "Thai Wok by Vandys," featuring delectable and authentic Thai Cuisine, has received an overwhelming response, especially since we collaborated with a premium store in Delhi, NCR. . We also ventured into healthy iced teas and wellness Kombuchas, which have been well-received, especially after launching them at a few select Anytime Fitness centers in Delhi NCR.

This July I am delighted to present a specially curated Vietnamese cuisine menu for the



DLF Condominium Clubs, DLF Crest Club, and the Delhi golf club. Korean & Indonesian is next on my menu. Vegan, Asian dishes, specializing in Thai, Vietnamese, Burmese, Korean and Japanese, and also Mediterranean cuisines are among my favourites. The menu includes salads and stir-fries with aromatic sauces from these cuisines as they are light, aiding weight loss and promote overall health while providing essential micro- and-macronutrients. My best-sellers include glass noodle salads, soba Noodle Salad , Pad Thai , Vandys take on Khao sueys or Thai curries, and stir-fries.

The meals are convenient for on-the-go consumption. My top priority was to make healthy



food tasteful and full of flavor so that people would prefer it over unhealthy options like a bag of French fries. Additionally, I offer vegan desserts, such as the classic zucchini carrot cake with dates, and walnuts, gluten-free orange marmalade cake and banana bread. Active breakfasts like smoothie bowls, and gluten-free granolas, are also receiving positive feedback from customers.

Initially people would show reservations on hearing the word "Vegan", but my strategy of food tastings at outlets worked in my favour and it gained acceptability primarily due to its great taste and wide range of choices across different cuisines. I noticed that

as people traveled and became more aware of different cultures and cuisines, they were open to trying vegan options. My salads, vegan tea cakes, smoothies, and ice creams received overwhelming responses at my cafe. When I educated people about the health benefits and how it can boost immunity while also being an ethical choice, they became quite receptive to the idea of veganism, which was truly refreshing. Through my Chef cooking workshops I taught people to make their own plant based milks like oat milk, almond milk, cashew milk and vegan cheeses in their own homes without using any preservatives. I promoted my food business, starting with vegan cooking workshops, which were rare at that time, as people were not quite familiar with veganism.. As the business grew, we expanded our marketing efforts to include social media, participation in food fests like artisanal markets, farmers' markets, typing up with big food chains, and small party chef catering.

The future for vegan entrepreneurs in the vegan food business looks incredibly promising, especially in India, which is a vast market with endless opportunities. Convincing people, particularly Indians, to shift away from dairy, especially milk, might be challenging, but educating them about the benefits and the potential health concerns associated with dairy consumption can help. I have observed a positive trend in people transitioning to plant-based milk, especially in South India where coconut and coconut milk are commonly used. Overall, I believe the health-driven food industry has a very bright future ahead. I plan to open a chain of vegan cafes throughout India to spread the word and make the food so delicious that people choose it over regular options. I am already underway with my Vegan Cook book which will carry tips and easy recipes to include in the readers' daily diet, moving closer to my mission of creating awareness and that vegan food can be delicious and easy to put together too.

Contributors



NIKITA DUDANI

Nikita Dudani Nikita Dudani is a psychotherapist, a tarot card reader and a skilled Reiki master. She is a passionate hobby cook and food blogger. She contributes recipes for the IFEA website, feamag.com and has written for food publications. She has also organised Sindhi Food Trails for IFEA members. She has interviewed Sindhi sweet shop owners and Punjabi restaurateurs for this magazine.

Food blog:
@allplatedishes

Personal blog:
@nnikittadudanii

Spiritual blog:
@aakruti_tr



SINDHI KHAZANA

www.sindhikhazana.com

Sindhi Khazana aims to be a treasure trove of anything and everything Sindhi, with a focus on the culture of the Hindu Sindhis who migrated to different parts of the world after the partition of India. Sindhis have a rich culture which is as old as the Indus Valley civilisation.

Through blogs, videos and the website, Sindhi Khazana hopes to explore and share the history, literature, language, folk lore, music, cuisine and stories of Sindhis.

Insta:
@sindhi_khazana



JUNISHA DAMA

Junisha Dama is a Mumbai-based freelance writer. She has a Bachelor's Degree in mass media from Mumbai and graduated in lifestyle media from Centennial College in Toronto. She has worked with LBB India and Burrrp. She was the lifestyle editor for The Sparrow, an independent digital news portal.

She conducts food walks across Mumbai. She has a special interest in food history, culture, and Mumbai city's heritage. She has written about the influence of partition on Mumbai's street food scene for our magazine.

Insta:
@junishadama



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