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# Hospitality BIZ

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## F&B Businesses

# Combating Inflation

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# Indian Culinary Forum announces the 19th Edition of Culinary Awards

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Indian Culinary Forum brings the 19th edition of the much-awaited annual Chef Awards on 14th October, as part of the celebrations of International Chefs Day. The Annual Chef Awards function will be held at Hotel Pride Plaza, Aerocity, New Delhi on Friday, October 14, 2022, whereby the ICF will be honoring the achievements of 17 outstanding culinary artisans by conferring them with awards.

“The cherished Indian Chef Awards, first initiated nineteen years back in 2004 by ICF, have become Indian culinary industry’s most respected and most valued testament for talent and skill recognition in addition to becoming the biggest platform for knowledge sharing amongst industry stakeholders. This year’s event will further cement ICF Awards as the finest platform for knowledge sharing, talent recognition of Indian Chefs, and spreading goodwill and footprint of Indian cuisine around the world,” said Chef Davinder Kumar, President of Indian Culinary Forum.

Chef Davinder Kumar added “The Award event has three segments including Culinary Competitions, Knowledge Summit, and the Chef Awards. The ICF culinary competition will be held at Banarsidass Chandiwala Institute of Hotel



Management and Institute of Bakery & Culinary Arts, New Delhi where over 150 professional chefs will showcase their culinary skills in 11 different categories. WACS-certified noted chef Dayashankar Sharma is the chairperson of this year’s jury while well-known Chef Sireesh Saxena is the organizing secretary”.

The Knowledge Summit which completes ten years this time will provide a platform for discussion and deliberations on issues concerning the Industry. The special focus of Knowledge summit this year will be to deliberate on how to put Indian cuisine on the global culinary map and chalking out the ways forward for the Food and Beverage Industry. The Knowledge Summit which aims to create awareness about the profession among people at large shall witness participation from the who’s who of the hospitality sector, educators, food critics, and connoisseurs.

“ICF’s aim is not merely recognition of

talents but also empowering talents with latest culinary knowledge and skills which not only helps in career development but also helps the country by spreading the footprint of Indian cuisine around the world”. said Chef Vivek Saggar, General Secretary of Indian Culinary Forum.

Talking about the program Chef Vivek Saggar added “There are six special award categories which include Lifetime Achievement Award, Golden Hat, Silver Hat, Academic Silver Hat, Pastry Chef of the Year, Lady Chef of the Year, The Culinary Competitions (Trade Test) category includes Master Chef of the Year, Master Chef Kebabs, Master Chef Indian Patisserie, Master Chef Indian Sweets, Master Chef International Cuisine, Master Chef North Indian Cuisine, Master Chef Oriental Cuisine Award, Master Chef Baker Award, Master Chef South East & West, Student Chef of the Year Female, Student Chef of the Year Male”. ■

# AM Hotel Kollection signs management contract for 4 new hotels in Maharashtra, Sikkim, Rajasthan and Goa

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

AM Hotel Kollection, a comprehensive hotel management company, announced the signing of four new management contracts of assets in Maharashtra, Sikkim, Rajasthan and Goa.

The four new signings include Aurangabad’s Amarpreet Hotel, Jaipur’s The Grand Anukampa Hotels & Suites, a full-service city hotel attracting corporate, MICE and leisure market segments; Calangute Towers in North Goa, a property improvement & hotel management agreement, while Indra Mandala in Gangtok, Sikkim is a new launch. Indra Mandala in Gangtok is an experiential

boutique hotel that will house an upmarket modern Nepalese & Tibetan fusion restaurant & bar, which is set to open in Q4 2022.

With the signing of these new hotels, AM Hotel Kollection now has a robust tally of 15 hotels and 540+ keys under its management portfolio. The new hotels cater to a mix of commercial and leisure markets, bringing in a further degree of diversification to the AM Hotel Kollection portfolio. Apart from adding 265 keys, these new contracts also introduce additional restaurants and banqueting facilities under the AM Hotel



Kollection purview.

Randhir Narayan – Founder and CEO of AM Hotel Kollection, a hospitality veteran with close to 30 years of industry experience, having worked in India, Middle East & Europe commented, “The team and I are privileged to be associated with our new hotels. The assignment is challenging – which excites me personally. We are confident of adding value and enhancing its product offering and services and our vision is to create a truly memorable experience for the hotel guests and visitors.” ■



# UNCORK INDIA

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## ProWine Mumbai 2022 to be held from October 17-18

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

**P**roWine Mumbai, a 2-day world-class business event is steaming ahead as the largest event in India for the wine, spirits, craft beverages, and hospitality industry as well as for wine enthusiasts. This global platform now in India opens the doors for International and Indian wine, spirits, and craft brands to showcase brands and products not only through exhibit displays but also through live tastings thereby enabling both industry and consumer engagement and peer-to-peer contact.

The show is anticipated to bring together the country's community of brands, importers, distributors, wholesalers, and retailers, along with international brands looking to enter the Indian market and noteworthy large-scale buyers including hotels, restaurants, bar owners, and wine enthusiasts.

Messe Düsseldorf India in partnership with All Things Nice is co-organizing ProWine Mumbai on the 17th and 18th of October 2022, at the top-notch Jio World Convention Centre.

### EXHIBITORS & TASTINGS

ProWine Mumbai has grown exponentially since the last edition and this year boasts of large international support from The United States Department of Agriculture, Consulate General of The Republic of Argentina, Wines of Portugal with Confederação dos Agricultores de Portugal (CAP), Pro Chile, Department for Trade & Investment, South Africa, Department for Trade & Investment, South Australia and Business France showcasing an array of products. The event has witnessed an encouraging response from the industry with participation of over a thousand brands from across the world covering wines, spirits, craft beverages and allied segments. Participating countries include Italy, Armenia, Austria, Switzerland, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, Mexico, Finland, Germany and India.

### MASTERCLASSES

ProWine Mumbai will also host 15 sessions over 2 days of complimentary MasterClasses bringing together the best of knowledge and a range of wines, gins, whisky, sake, and spirit tastings. MasterClasses are brought to you by WSET Global, International Governments, Leading Wine Authorities, Master Distillers, and brand representatives.

### THE PROWINE MUMBAI NIGHT

The ProWine Mumbai Night promises to be a major networking event bringing together luminaries of the wine and spirits industry, leaders of hospitality, eminent media persons, and key exhibitors from across the world under one roof, making this the most prominent wine and spirit event of the year.

### INDIA WINE AWARDS & PANEL DISCUSSION

The India Wine Awards is the country's most prestigious competition that sets the benchmark in excellence by rewarding the best wines, both domestic and international, available in the Indian market. It is founded and chaired by Sonal Holland, India's first Master of Wine. The winners at India Wine Awards will be revealed at the glittering The ProWine Mumbai Night on the 17th of October.

Sonal Holland MW also joins us to create a special session emphasizing the influential role of Women in the AlcoBev Industry in India. A curated panel discussion on 'The Rising Role of Women in the Indian Alco-Bev Sector' hosting some of the most revered women in the industry will be felicitated during The ProWine Mumbai Night.

### INDUSTRY SUPPORT

The positive response and great appreciation of the industry stakeholders, sponsors and paired with the sector's growth forecast promises that ProWine Mumbai 2022 will once again be well received and well attended. ■





Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

**N**ational Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) recently concluded its AGM and The Indian Restaurant Conclave 2022 (TIRC) at HICC in Hyderabad. Pivoting on this large-scale event, the state of Telangana successfully secured an investment commitment of almost INR 500 crore in a single day. The event also witnessed the launch of a single window application for the food service sector, the TS-iPASS portal by the Telangana government.

Some of the key investments for the state came from Wow Momo (INR 50cr), Olive Bar and Kitchen, (INR 30cr), McDonald's (INR 100cr), Impresario Group (INR 30cr), PH4 Food and Beverages (INR 10cr), Almond House (INR 67cr), Chubby Cho (INR 20cr), Alive Hyderabad (INR 30cr), Chaayos (INR 40cr), Farzi Café (INR 20cr), Azure Hospitality (INR 20cr) and Barbeque Nation (INR 50cr) etc.

The Hyderabad Chapter of NRAI has played a significant role in increasing the ease of doing business (EoDB) in the state. The TS-iPASS portal which was launched at the event will ensure streamlining of licenses and faster processing through a single window and enhance the region's ease of doing business to a window of 15 days which was earlier 8 months.

The event also saw insightful panel discussions which are relevant to the industry at this point and time. A discussion on identifying the top 30 destinations in India for F&B business, witnessed several important points being raised by the panellists. The panellists included Rahul Agarwal, CEO, of Barbeque Nation, Gautam Gupta MD & CEO, Paradise Biryani, Sagar Daryani, Co-Founder & CEO, Wow Momo, Riyaz Amlani, CEO and MD of Impresario Handmade Restaurants, Raghav Joshi Co-founder, Rebel Foods.

## NRAI Hyderabad Chapter sees active participation and insightful discussions at the Restaurant Conclave

According to Agarwal, in the next few decades, the demand would be similar across metro and non-metro cities. "Over the next six years, GDP is going to double, per capita income is also going to go up by three times. Which means that once there's more money in the hands of people and the basic needs are taken care of, the discretionary spending will also come up and that is what we are seeing across the nation," he added.

Stating that Tier-II & III would make the future of the F&B industry bright, Daryani said, "Real India is the Tier-II & III cities. The real juice is lying in these cities as the people are becoming aspirational and want to try new things. The positive thing is that the rent to revenue ratio is much lower, and due to that one can make profits. The most important thing is to identify the gap to open up the market share. So, I suggest that one should build their brands in Metro cities, grow there, operate in a single digit EBITDA, however, since the double-digit EBITDA will come from Tier-II & III cities, so he should think of expansion in those cities as well."

According to Gupta, the strategy is different for different brands as in India there's been a lot of dependence on socio-cultural regions to be the master of their own market. "As a biryani brand, our approach is to penetrate its own socio-cultural region market and then move from there, which is really extremely important. Also, the most important thing is to have a Hero product/Hero brand."

Amlani said that the confidence in India has changed. "For the last two decades people consumed only westernised products and due to this we never really had a chance to consume our own product as a lifestyle. Now we may realise that the Indian palette is possibly the most sophisticated of all. What we need now is not disposable income but disposable time. In Tier- II, and III cities people have more disposable time and more disposable income due to the easier cost of living."

Shaz Mehmood, founder of NRAI – Hyderabad Chapter & Member, MC, NRAI – National spoke about the importance of technology in the F&B industry. He stressed the importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in F&B and requested all the F&B business owners to focus on AI tools which will eventually help them to know and understand their customer better from the customer data which the business owners already have, from the POS, Loyalty cards and other sources. "That would be the next gen-ideate to be innovative for our industry. By doing so, we could get the digital DNA of the customer which could help the businesses to understand the customer better." Mehmood also spoke about the impact of Metaverse in the F&B business. ■

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## KEEPING NOSE ABOVE WATER

**It's best to stay alert as reports of a hotel booking boom could lull into a false sense of complacency.**

At a recent informal gathering, one gleaned murmurs of discontent, if not protest, from a few quarters on the disinterest of the government in supporting the hotel industry lately. The unofficial response was that the government cannot hold hands beyond a point since the vagaries of the market actually hit everyone, including government coffers. It is therefore important for all to prepare their own support mechanisms.

Now, this is not new. Those who aren't able to slip in, do get grumpy. However, it will be in the fitness of things if the powers that be get much more explicit and transparent about the norms or criteria of obtaining government support. It is not a 'largesse' as some seemed to convey but prudence demands a much more open and neutral playing field. It is about not just tax cuts but discounts, delayed payments and support on power as well as other tariffs.

Since March this year, new approved and revised guidelines for marketing development assistance have kicked in. This should be advertised prominently to clear confusions if any. The hotel industry hasn't been especially marked for any large bonanzas but there is leeway for those who can manage it.

It is known to all that the continuously increasing operating cost has reduced the profit margin, especially for not only tour operators but hotel bottom lines as well. While this does call for some new strategies to be implemented it requires a more level playing field for the haves and have-not-enough of even the upper crust. It is assumed that differently starred have distinct clientele. That distinction is turning greyer by the day.

There are more numbers of smaller hotels that are upping their act through various means and strategies to offer alternatives to the big dads. But this needs definite capital investment to quite an extent. The basic thrust here is that clarity to the industry is essential in at least what the ministry will do to make life of hotel operations and business easier.

There is clearly much more scope for more clarity on that count.

**Anurag Yadav**  
Industry Expert

*Anurag Yadav is a travel author and columnist, writing on hospitality and design. An avid traveller, he has published five books and divides his time equally between Delhi and London.*

*The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.*

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# Ohri's: Revisiting Four Decades

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Ohri's Group is a 40 year old Hyderabad based F&B legacy which houses more than 25 unique restaurant brands. The story of Ohri's started with the grandparents of Amar Ohri, the current MD of Ohri's Group, who started a small food joint called Eatmore in the Basheerbagh area of Hyderabad. Eatmore's chole bhature and ice cream became so popular that several more outlets came up while the first outlet still keeps serving customers.

The growth of Ohri's from Eatmore to the 25 plus brands that Hyderabad loves was neither easy nor quick. 40 years ago the culture of eating out was not much appreciated and Hyderabad was also not mature enough as a location to generate big digit revenues. "When I came to this city in 1997 after completing my studies from Switzerland, Hyderabad was more like a town. Slowly but steadily Hyderabad is now transformed into a sprawling and bustling city. In the last two decades, many new things have been introduced to the city. Ohri's has witnessed the city's growth and its potential for the past four decades, all due to the love of our Hyderabad patrons, which helped us to continue our growth," said Ohri.

Over the years, Ohri's has not only carved a name for itself but also established its presence by creating several first time experiences for the diners of Hyderabad. "We had introduced the first thematic restaurant to the city, Gufaa, which is a train themed restaurant. The themes that we introduced at that time were not thought of by anyone else either in Hyderabad or across the country," shared Ohri.

The group pioneered the first pub in the city. "We as a group introduced Hyderabad's first pub Outswinger. We tried a lot of new themes and cuisines. By God's grace our patrons loved every innovation of ours and showered us with immense love. We had disrupted the entire F&B scenario by opening a food mall, where we showcased our 4-5 brands in a building, which at that

Amar Ohri, MD, Ohri's Group

point in time, no one could ever think of," Ohri added.

While Hyderabad has been keeping Ohri's busy, the time has come for the group to expand their footprint across the country or even abroad. Ohri stated, "Right now the focus of the company is to take three or four hero brands which are our signature brands from the 25+ plus brands that we are having and scale them further. Our vision is to now make the brand visibility national, maybe even international. We have already identified a few brands such as Caffeine-coffee shop, Sahib's Barbeque-signature Indian barbecue, Cake Nation – bakery and Cock & Bull – Irish Tavern/bar. Our plan is to expand with these brands."

The plan is to grow these hero brands first in Hyderabad and then expand elsewhere. Ohri thinks that their home-ground, Hyderabad, still has a lot to offer. "We are scaling our four hero brands in Hyderabad, as we feel that there is still a lot of untapped potential in this market. In Hyderabad, we are adding two more outlets of Qaffeine in the next month. By next year, we'll be adding another four of Ohri's restaurants. We also have plans to open Sahib's Barbeque near the airport. That place is still untapped and has a lot more to offer. With the extension of the airport, the future looks promising."

While speaking about prospective expansion locations outside Hyderabad, he informed, "Probably by next year, we will plan the pan-India expansion of our four hero brands starting with Bengaluru, Pune, Mumbai and Goa. Maybe in a year or two, we would plan to expand and introduce these brands in London and Dubai. We plan to add 8-10 outlets every year, and with this, we plan to cross almost 100+ outlets."

The company is also researching the cloud kitchen format. "My team is researching on the cloud kitchen format also, to identify cuisines best suited for the format, since in cloud kitchen format we have to check the financial dynamics. Though we are not cloud aggressive, but we might have some



presence in the segment by next year," informed Ohri.

While embarking on this expansion spree, the group is also mindful of the market challenges. Speaking of the same, Ohri stated that after successfully fighting the pandemic situation, the current challenge is tackling costs. "We feel that a few costs such as rentals need to be better handled and managed. Also finding quality manpower post Covid, especially for senior leadership roles is becoming a challenge," he concluded. ■

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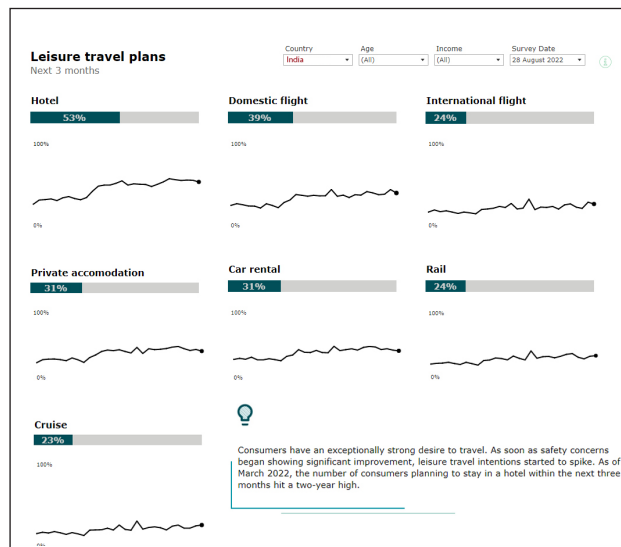
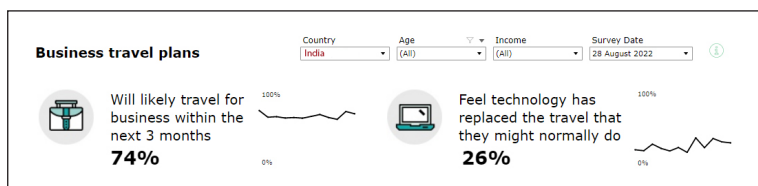
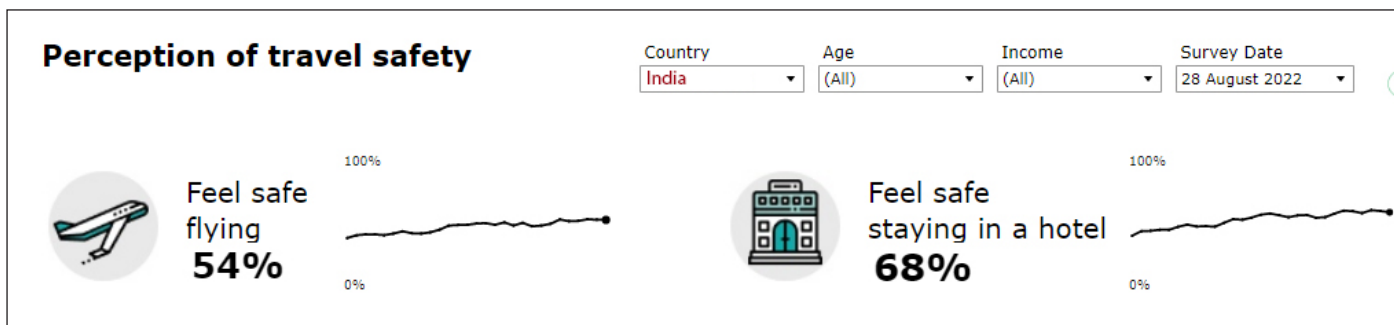
# 88% Indians are planning to spend on leisure travel : Deloitte's Global State of Consumer Tracker

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Indian consumers have expressed a strong desire to buy more discretionary products during the festive season while coming out of the pandemic, according to Deloitte's Global State of Consumer Tracker. Deloitte's latest analysis indicates that consumers are willing to increase spend on both travel and hotel stays. "The survey findings clearly indicate that consumers plan to increase their discretionary spend by 30 per cent (on items such

as recreation and entertainment, restaurants, and leisure travel) in August 2022, compared with April 2022," it said. "Despite concerns over inflation, the planned spending over the next four weeks will see a spike across age groups in all categories."

The current situation shows that consumers surveyed were willing to travel to domestic and international destinations. With easing Covid-related restrictions in some countries, about 88 per cent Indians are planning to spend on leisure travel in the next four weeks. ■



Inflation is the most important discussion of every industry right now, and with good reason. For the hospitality and F&B industry, which was just witnessing a rebound from the blows of the pandemic, the current environment of inflation has again rung the bells of gloom. In a time of inflation and recession, food and beverage or eating out is the first thing that consumers cut back on as part of their spending. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with F&B industry leaders to gauge the response preparedness of the industry to the looming inflation.



# F&B Businesses Combating Inflation

Rising inflation across the globe is causing serious concerns in India. With the price hike of essential commodities, the country's retail inflation moved higher to 7 per cent in August. According to reports, US restaurant operators reported a net decline in customer traffic for the third consecutive month. Buying essential items has become more difficult for consumers and since F&B is an optional commodity and often judged as a luxury, people will cut it back from their expense list as soon as the inflation elevates. While speaking about the looming inflation and recessions on the cards, Vikrant Batra, Co-founder, Dhansoo Café, Delhi & Gurgaon said, "Several opinions are swirling around regarding a potential economic recession. While no one truly has the answers, many restaurants find themselves bracing for the worst after what feels like an unbearable couple of years. On top of recession rumours, the restaurant industry currently faces challenging post-pandemic conundrums such as labour shortage and inflation." According to Debaditya Chaudhury, Managing Director, Chowman Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., the recession is yet to come to India. However, he said that the industry has been facing several challenges in recent times, "We faced a lot of difficulties economically in the last few years, and the advent of a recession might not be unprecedented. One

of the foremost difficulties that we witnessed in the last recession of 2020 that happened as an effect of Covid -19 was the direct impact on the supply chain. In the next few years, procurement and logistics will remain a major challenge with the looming recession. It would be difficult for the restaurant industry to maintain profit margins with rising prices."

## CHALLENGES EMERGING IN THE MARKET

According to Batra, a combination of macroeconomic factors—including COVID-19 shocks, trade policy shifts, workforce scarcity, energy transition, and even extreme weather events—have upended long-running trends that have benefited the global economy for several decades. He opined that the war between Russia and Ukraine has lit the fire of inflation by saying, "The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused the greatest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Second World War and further disrupted long-standing economic relationships.

The inflationary surge and frequent scarcity of critical supplies have made shortcomings of the traditional operating model increasingly visible and costly. These shortcomings include a lack of reliable long-term planning, the growing concentration of supply, limited insight into supplier economics, lack of collaboration





**Vikrant Batra**  
Co-founder, Dhansoo Café,  
Delhi & Gurgaon



**Debaditya Chaudhury**  
MD, Chowman Hospitality  
Pvt. Ltd.

across functional teams, and a failure to adopt and scale proven technologies that could reduce transactional loads. And the war in Ukraine has brought to the fore a host of noneconomic factors that must now be considered in sourcing decisions.” He further added, “Menu prices are not climbing at the same rate as inflation, while the food costs are pacing ahead. As a result, the margins for restaurants are slowing down.”

Chaudhury opined that the price hike in raw materials as well as the increasing fuel price naturally affected the profit margin, thereby causing a blow to their revenues as well.

Chaudhury also stated that the property rentals have gone high like nothing before. He said, “Mostly in Bangalore and Delhi the rentals are way higher than what I had expected. Adopting the emerging restaurant technologies, and implementing them in our restaurant operations have all helped in combating the spiralling cost.” However, Chaudhury is confident that due to the ongoing festive season in India, the F&B industry will be back in shape

soon. He said, “We have been fortunate to witness good business across all our outlets in Kolkata, Bangalore, Delhi and Noida.”

### COUNTERSTRATEGIES TO KEEP THE LIGHTS ON

While controlling inflation is beyond the scope of restaurateurs, some strategies can be adopted which can aid the industry to successfully counter the wave of recession. Stating some best practices, Batra informed, “Innovation will go a long way in finding a solution to this. Using seasonal ingredients or curating special events is a way to keep the costs at a minimum and at the same time attract more guests to come and dine. Seasonal ingredients offer an array of benefits: price break and more flavour.

Since people are going out less often, creating a special event to lure them in for a limited experience is a great idea. Special occasions could include specific themes, limited menus, one-time cocktails etc. That way, the dining experience becomes a special event. It will memorably engage your guests. “

Sharing his thoughts, Chaudhury pointed out a few strategies that can work well to counter a long-term recession and inflation. According to him, conducting a menu audit and cutting down on food costs is a very important aspect. If a restaurateur can do a proper menu audit analysing items which are less time-consuming and impose lesser food costs, it can be very beneficial. This can be followed by curating a concise menu. The second one is focusing on deliveries and cloud kitchens rather than dine-ins. The second strategy had proved its mettle during the lockdowns when dine-ins drastically declined, but the restaurateurs could cope because of cloud kitchen deliveries. Chaudhury also vouched for gig workers in the F & B industry. He said that employing part-timers not only saved them a huge cost but also accelerated smoother operations. He pointed out that proper staff training is the most important thing in this industry. “If one can efficiently train their staff, then it won't be necessary to employ much staff for the time being. Strategizing smart work can further enhance the operation module,” he added.

In times of ruthless inflation, the cost is usually passed on to the consumer. Though many restaurateurs opined that this would be the last option for them to be able to survive in the market, as increasing price costs a blow to any F&B business, it is a strategy that every restaurateur has at the back of their minds.

Choudhary said that they are not yet thinking of raising the price but in the future, they might consider increasing, if the situation spirals out of control. “Our agenda is to democratise fine dine-in and increasing the price points doesn't cater to that motto. However, if the hike goes up, we too will have to increase the price but only to an extent,” he said.” ■

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# ‘Our target is to exceed INR 300 cr in net revenues in FY23’

Started by **Priyank Sukhija, CEO & MD** in 1999, **First Fiddle Restaurants** was one of the first brands to introduce themes to the F&B industry. Sukhija started his journey with Lazeez Affaire, focusing on the concept of fine dining. Following its success, he launched brands such as Warehouse Cafe, Tamasha, Lord of The Drinks, Flying Saucer Cafe, and more. The brand is now planning an expansion around the country in cities such as Pune, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Chennai, and more. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with Sukhija to know more about his focus areas for the company.



**Q** You ventured into the F&B business at 19 years of age. How has the journey been since then?

At an early age, I realised that nothing makes me happier than eating and sharing a delicious meal. Food, music, and innovation were what always inspired me and hence I ventured into an area that could fulfil this passion. In a career spanning 23 years, I have managed to open more than 30 different outlets and have created some of the most talked-about brands in the industry – Misosexy, Bougie, Diablo, Plum by Bent Chair, Dragonfly Experience, Lord of the Drinks, Lazeez Affaire, The Flying Saucer Cafe, and several more.

**Q** Every brand of yours offers different vibes and different cuisines. How difficult is it to ideate, launch and sustain such brands?

It's a challenge that I love to take on, and often travel to broaden my horizons and experiences. I have found that moving out of one's comfort zone cures a creative block better and faster. I believe that my only competition is myself and hence, with every brand I try to one-up myself which drives me to think away from the norm. My primary way to navigate through launching and sustaining my brands is to invest and cultivate. To see my ideas and concepts bear fruit and be loved by everyone only pushes me to come up with better ideas and concepts so that my next venture is an even bigger success than the last.

**Q** How do you keep up to date with the different themes that are coming up in the F&B industry across the globe?

One has to reinvent the wheel all the time. What used to work 5-10 years ago doesn't anymore and what didn't work back then is all the rage today. Experiential dining is my forte and I try to offer new experiences every time I open a new outlet. Each restaurant has its own exclusively curated cuisine, signature drinks, decor, and music that not only compliments the theme but also enhances the entire experience. Moreover, the different events held at the outlets are also kept in line with the concept and theme of the outlet for an immersive experience.

**Q** What are your expansion plans?

I am forever in launch mode. My immediate future plans include Noche and Tickled Pink, which are ready to open their doors to Delhi. While Noche pays homage to Latin vibes with its heavy art influences, Tickled Pink is a feel-good comfort corner, a place where you would love to hang out with your loved ones and indulge in the fusion twists to favourite authentic dishes from every corner of India. We are also rapidly expanding into tier 2 cities through various franchise models for our most-loved brands.

**Q** Kindly elaborate on your funding, investment and expansion plans

We pride ourselves in using internal funding most often than not, using the profits from outlets for further expansion and growth. However, for specific outlets, we do have investors and partners. Our expansion plans revolve around a combination of both owned and franchise outlets. We prefer to

open company-owned outlets in our core markets of Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, whereas opting for the franchise route for non-core markets.

**Q** What innovative plans do you have for First Fiddle?

My plans for First Fiddle always focus on growth in terms of creativity, offerings, and ideation in all aspects, from the cuisine to the decor to the vibe. We put considerable effort into new designs as well as bringing global cuisines to the Indian plate. Apart from these, we are also implementing new CRM systems, which have been designed in-house to better the experience of all customers.

**Q** Kindly tell us about your revenue, growth targets and strategies for FY 2022-23. What new products are there in your pipeline?

As of now, our target is to exceed INR 300 cr in net revenues in FY23. Considering the year so far, I believe we are on track to achieve the same. As for new offerings, we've recently opened Noche, a progressive Mexican cuisine-themed restaurant, at One Golden Mile and are on the brink of launching Tickled Pink, which is an aesthetic female-focused restaurant with modern Indian cuisine. ■

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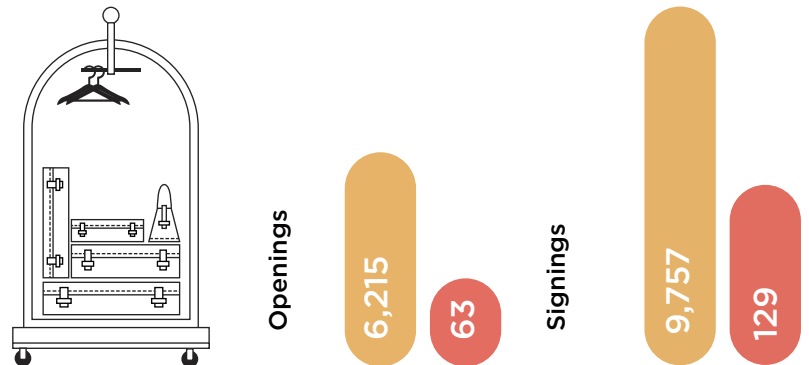
# Average rates and RevPAR continue to be higher than their pre-pandemic levels for hotels says HVS Anarock report

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

According to HVS Anarock's Hotels & Hospitality Overview (H2O) September 2022, nationwide hotel occupancy in August 2022 was lower than the previous month due to the impact of seasonality, but average rates were higher. The report says that average rates and RevPAR continue to be higher than their pre-pandemic levels for the month. It also added that Mumbai recorded the highest occupancy rate (73-75%) in Aug 2022, followed by New Delhi (69-71%) and Hyderabad (68-70%). Goa, Chandigarh, and Kochi continued to record strong growth in average rates compared to the pre-pandemic level. ■

## Branded Hotels<sup>3</sup> (YTD August 2022)

By Keys  By Properties 



<sup>3</sup> Data collated by HVS from 20 hotel operators and media reports as of 23<sup>rd</sup> Sep 2022 Year-to-Date (YTD)

## Hotels Sector

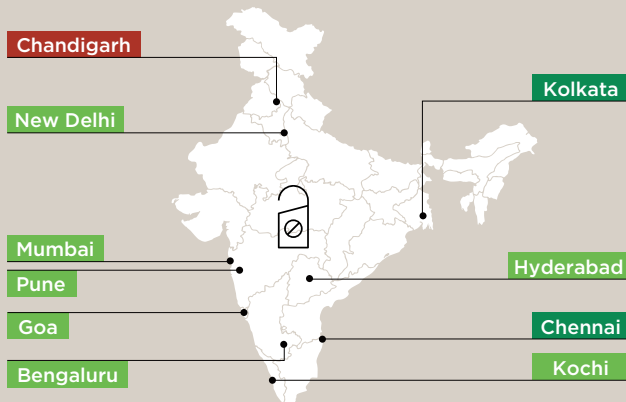
Key Stats (India Average)

	Aug 2022	Aug 2019	Aug 2021	Jul 2022
ADR	₹5,750 - ₹5,950	↑ 8-10%	↑ 42-44%	↑ 2-4%
Occupancy	59.5% - 61.5%	↔ Stable	↑ 13-15 pp	↓ 1-3 pp
RevPAR	₹3,421 - ₹3,659	↑ 6-8%	↑ 86-88%	↓ 1-2%

Change over (Pre-COVID) | Change over (Post COVID-19)

## Occupancy Change<sup>1</sup>

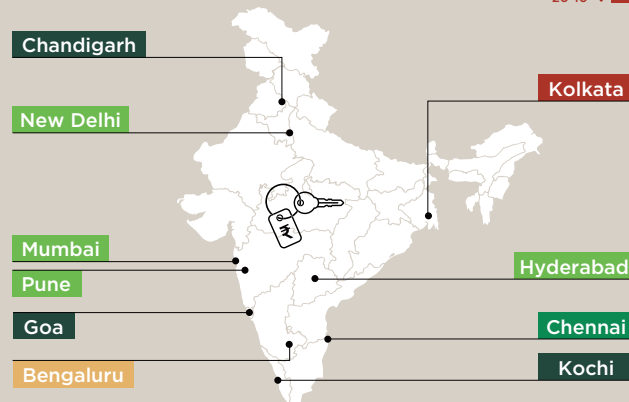
Key Indian Markets (Change over Aug 2019)



<sup>1</sup> Occupancy change in percentage points (pp)

## ADR Change<sup>2</sup>

Key Indian Markets (Change over Aug 2019)

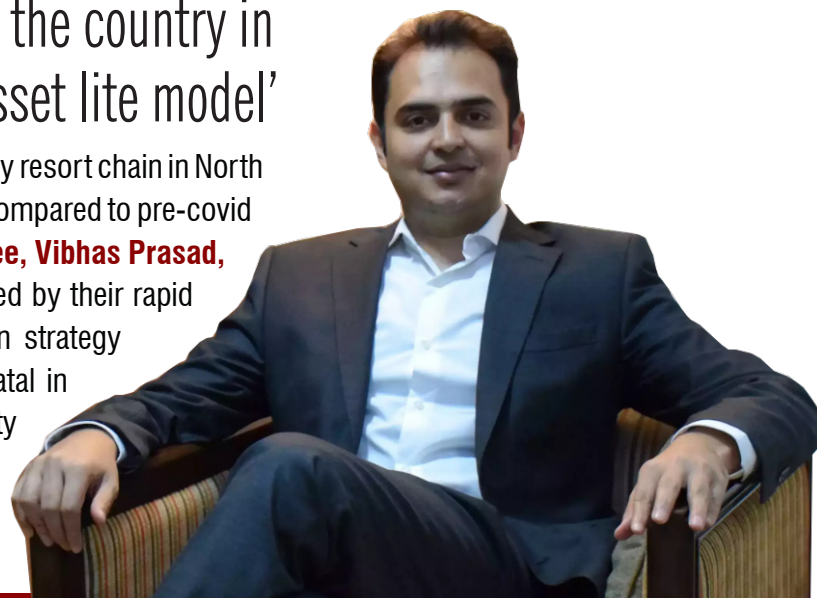


<sup>2</sup> ADR change in percentage (%)

Source: HVS Research

## ‘We are mulling growth across the country in leisure destinations with an asset lite model’

Leisure Hotels Group (LHG), an experiential luxury resort chain in North India, has been witnessing 25% Y-O-Y growth (compared to pre-covid levels). In a conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee, Vibhas Prasad, Director, Leisure Hotels Group** said that buoyed by their rapid growth the group is exercising their expansion strategy by launching a boutique property in Naukuchiatal in the current year and a high-end luxury property in Mussoorie within the second quarter of 2023. The brand also has plans to expand its presence to Corbett Park, Jaipur and Goa.



**Q** Kindly brief us about the profile of LHG and what is the number of properties that are owned by the group and how many properties are run by the brand?

At Leisure Hotels Group, we have been able to make our mark as a major player in North India’s hospitality sector. Our portfolio consists of smart hotels, boutique resorts, luxury villas & bespoke camps, incorporating beautiful properties across tourist & scenic destinations offering leisure, adventure, wellness, wilderness & spiritual experiences. Since the time of our first venture at Nainital – The Naini Retreat in September 1989, the group has had the opportunity to serve the largest number of tourists in Himachal, Uttarakhand & U.P at many sought-after locations such as Nainital, Corbett National Park, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Ramgarh, Bareilly, Kausali, Dharamshala etc. Of our 29 properties, 9 are managed and 20 are owned.

**Q** Kindly brief us about your business model.

Initially, the business model was to build for ourselves. However, over the last two decades, the group is evolving to build a business model which is “asset right”. This model entails the company building experiential properties on lease with Mahindra Holidays in Corbett & Naukuchiatal and on a Management basis with IHCL in Corbett & Haridwar.

In our quest to optimize the asset right mix of owned & managed, roughly 65 per cent of the Group’s portfolio is owned while the rest is managed.

Being a Hotel Owner & Operator, the group believes that an asset right philosophy is a right way of deploying capital for maximum

returns keeping the risk-reward spectrum in mind. Hence, the group continues to explore opportunities under Lease, Management & now even Manchise. The group constantly reviews the commercial viability of its asset portfolio and takes decisions from time to time that helps to monetize its asset mix strategy.

**Q** What are the new products that you are planning to launch? What is the USP of Leisure?

LHG is the largest hotel chain operating in Uttarakhand for the last three decades. As pioneers in the field of hospitality in Uttarakhand, we have been able to set standards & drive quality by offering good facilities & services to our guests.

We are about to launch a boutique property in Naukuchiatal in the year 2022 and high-end luxury property in Mussoorie in the second quarter of 2023.

Our brand promise is built around easy accessibility, curated experiences, value for money and above all, a well-appointed naturally distanced resort which is sanitized with stringent safety protocols.

**Q** What are your marketing strategies?

The group often does a ‘full-funnel’ marketing strategy that blends both brand awareness and performance marketing. The group uses omnichannel marketing to provide guests with a personalized and seamless experience.

**Q** Kindly let us know about the investment and expansion plans of the group.

We plan to add a Boutique Resort in

Naukuchiatal by December 2022 and one luxury boutique resort in Mussoorie by March 2023. Along with this, we are transitioning The Naini Retreat (Nainital) into IHCL SeleQtions. We are also planning for expansion in Corbett Park, Jaipur and Goa.

**Q** What are your goals for 2022-2023 and how do you plan to reach your target?

In terms of revenue, we expect to increase our revenue by 15% on average across the board.

We intend to reach our target through an optimal mix of online and offline marketing activities, which will include exhibiting at travel trade shows, road shows to develop new regional markets outside of Delhi NCR, advertising in leading newspapers and magazines, and online efforts that will include paid campaigns with offers & experiential packages to further strengthen our brand presence.

**Q** What is the reason behind Leisure Group’s strong presence in the Northern India region but not in the Eastern and Southern India region?

For the last couple of decades, our focus has remained on the hill states of Himachal & Uttarakhand as we feel that there is still a lot of untapped potential in these two states for experiential tourism.

Over the next couple of years, we should be able to monetise the potential with new properties in these destinations. We have already started looking out to grow across the country in leisure destinations with an asset lite model through management contracts. ■

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# Kairali Ayurvedic Healing Village

## Experiential journey in Nature's bliss

Asmita Mukherjee | Palakkad

Ayurveda is one of the world's oldest and successful healing systems developed more than 3,000 years ago in India. In these modern times, there are very few institutes that provide Ayurvedic healing in its traditional format. Kairali Ayurvedic Healing Village is one such institute which is one of the oldest and awarded NABH-certified hospitals designed as a resort, still providing traditional Ayurvedic healing in its authentic format.

We were invited to experience the magic of ancient Ayurvedic techniques in Kairali Healing Village at Palakkad, Kerala in September. September in Kerala is pleasant with less humidity, and perfect weather to truly enjoy the spice plantations, rolling hills, and meandering trails of the region.

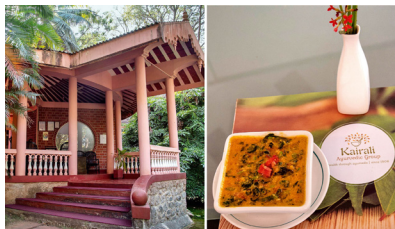
After an hour-long flight from Hyderabad, when we landed in Coimbatore to board the chauffeur-driven car sent by Kairali to receive us, the sun had already started to go down and the temperature was fabulous due to a bout of fresh rain. The dewy petrichor of the post-rain evening was my fellow companion on the beautiful route to Palakkad where we would be relaxing in the lap of nature at the Kairali Ayurvedic Healing Village. After a drive of 3 and a half hours, we entered the Kairali Ayurvedic Healing Village in Palakkad, welcomed by the croaking of frogs and the chirping of crickets. My mind had already embarked on the healing journey with nature's best music.

Kairali Ayurvedic Centre was formally founded in New Delhi in 1989. Due to the popularity gained by the centre, the pioneers of the healing village started the concept of stays and treatment in Palakkad. The Ayurvedic Healing Village was set up by K.V. Ramesh and Gita Ramesh in 1999, to carry forward the legacy of their forefathers who were ancient Ayurvedic vaidyas engaged in healing. The centre has a firm footing with over 33 treatment centres in India and 9 abroad.

The 60-acre healing village situated in the lap of the Western Ghats offers villas for guests according to 29-star signs. The



beautiful 30 villas are made of red bricks in eco-friendly Laurie Baker-style. The villa allotted to us carried the name 'Uthratathi'. Each and every material used in making the village is sustainable and locally sourced. The villas and suites of the Healing Village were recently renovated by utilising the time during the pandemic. We were told that an amphitheatre had also been recently added. On our way to the villa, we witnessed beautiful dense foliage of black pepper trees, coconut trees, peace lilies and other vegetation which covers the entire area. Artificial streams run between the pathways which are said to flow positive energy into the human body. The pleasant smell of flowers and trees was indeed an olfactory delight. Kairali's healing process starts right from the time one enters the villa. The minimalist architecture, red bricks, eco-friendly red oxide floors and the Valampuri Conch which is found in every room heal the body and soothe the mind.



As it was quite late by the time we reached, we decided to call it a day by having our dinner. The resort cum hospital has a canteen, where pure veg food is customised for each individual staying at the property as recommended by the doctors. Interestingly the resort boasts of its own vegetable farm where most of the organic vegetables used in the canteen are

produced. Noticeably in Kerala everywhere, lukewarm pink water called Pathimugam is provided with meals, which is a source of antioxidants and has a significant place in Ayurveda. The same Pathimugam accompanied every meal of ours at Kairali.

The next day's beautiful morning started sharp at 6.00 am with a yoga session. After an hour of yoga, we were starved and gorged on freshly made fruit juice, fruit salad, and uttapams. Next scheduled was our Doctor Consultation where we were given a detailed description of our Ayurvedic Doshas. Our next item on the itinerary was a 45-minute-long Ayurvedic treatment. This schedule was rigorously followed by the Healing Village over the next two days also.

The Ayurvedic treatment that we had on the first day was Abhayangam, the next day it was Shirodhara and on the last day, it was Khizhi. The massage with ayurvedic oils provided during these treatments was truly relaxing.

Our three-day stay at the Healing Village was no less than bliss. Morning yoga, treatments, fulfilling meals made with organic vegetables, and evening meditation within the lap of Mother Nature gave us an opportunity to forget the negativity and enter the magical world of peace and healing.

The wellness package priced at INR 32,931 for 1 person and INR 50,283 for 2 persons, requires a minimum of 3 nights and 4 days stay. ■

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# Developing Talented Chefs | A Voracious Priority

By Prof. Satish Jayaram, PhD – Ideator | Innovator | Incubator

Over the past year of resurgence, I have been researching extensively to analyse a perception versus reality gap. Why is there a contradiction between a declining interest in hospitality education and the overwhelming demand for talented chefs? Even as we try to reorder the variables behind this year's admission crunch, aside the humungous opportunities for hospitality talents, here are some rational factors, to leave you astounded while outlining some challenges that lie ahead. India's hotel industry was expected to reach a value of INR 1211 billion by end of 2023, expanding at a projected CAGR of 13% between 2018 and 2023 - until the advent of the 2020 pandemic. Pandemic year occupancies fell well below 33% and recovered to nearly 52% countrywide only selectively. India's 2.54 million accommodation sector across all room categories, barely managed to secure about INR 337 crores.

In sharp contrast, India consumed 133 billion meals annually, a weighted average of over 2 meals/day across all demographics including the wealthy, middle classes and BPL levels. Only 2% of these meals at 2.78 billion meals, were consumed within the organized sector, across all categories, where an estimated 3 million chefs, cooks, helpers were last involved in food production during 2019/20. Of these 133 billion meals annually, 27 billion meals were sold commercially, whereas 106 billion meals were cooked across our homes, the unorganized sector as well as low cost eateries and ancillary hawking systems. Of this 27 billion meal opportunity, 21.5 billion represented the ready to eat category whereas 5.5 billion meals were projected to be formally sold in food service establishments, where 4.5 billion meals were potentially delivered, against 1 billion meals targeted to be served.

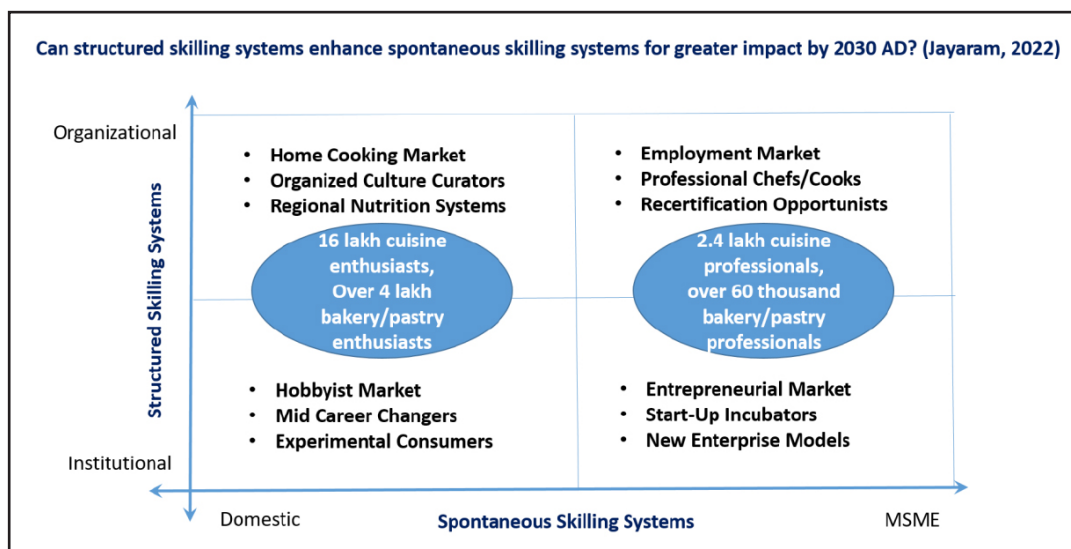


and organizations, the gap becomes clearer. In the professional space, India has the potential to serve 2.91 crore meals each day across a wide range of food service establishments and options, for which 3 lakh professional chefs must be trained each year, whereas I estimate only 5% are now formally trained. Interestingly, India will eat 11.65 crore meals per day in the domestic space, where even 20 lakh talented meal providers being trained per year, across homemakers/home-chefs leave options open! The love for cooking across some of the market segments indicated in my model will uncover demand.

Even if we were to target skilling 1% of our population steadily growing to 1.4 billion, for hygiene, nutrition, food safety, professional standards or simply skill our talented people to cook right, the demand for chefs is exponential. So here is an opportunity to skill our finest, motivated and fired-up chefs in the making, by choosing to propagate even traditional food, culture and recipes. If we can sustain the skilling of 1.37 crore potential chefs in a year, we could potentially be chefs to the world! A growing popularity of Indian cuisine and food-culture worldwide, represents an opportunity that promises many flavors! Can you imagine the projected demand to skill 240,000 chefs in culinary arts and 60,000 chefs in pastry for professional establishments? Or consider the explosion of cloud kitchens, ghost-kitchens, dark-kitchens even home-kitchens, where potentially 16 lakh culinary art professionals and 4 lakh pastry experts can be guided to a bright future for these chefs until 2030?

Some historical estimates indicated that formal food service revenue declined from INR 99,199 CR to INR 9071 CR in Q1 2021. This sector is expected to bounce back to INR 124100 CR, largely

driven by the innovative, entrepreneurial and emerging food sector. They are imagining new ways to consume food and beverage, even as we ideate! Incubating solutions that can re-certify our existing chefs to get up-to-speed by offering them options to re-invent their skills, can become a voracious priority to sustain cooking talent. Stakeholders addressed in my previous columns, need to consider the need to develop our talented chefs, not only for professional cooking but to create a healthier nation. After all, like all families that yearn to eat a great meal at a table



The model above juxtaposes the interface between potential structured skilling systems to develop chefs versus existing spontaneous skilling systems. If you consider the sheer demand for talented chefs across domestic, entrepreneurial and professional segments, the demand is mind-boggling. And in that light, if you consider the resources available at our disposal, to skill talents across institutions

together, a great nation eating healthily is a genuine aspiration. This should also re-assure all talents undergoing skilling in institutions or training in industry, that there are great prospects awaiting this brigade of talented chefs developed today! ■

*The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.*





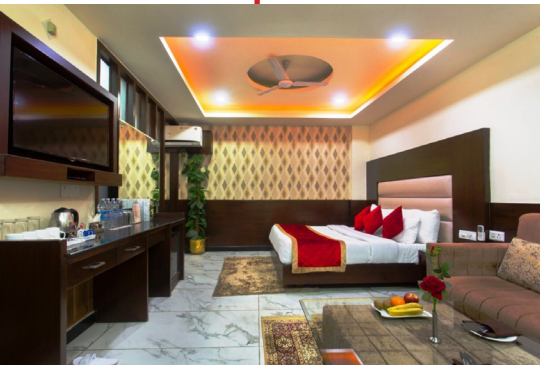
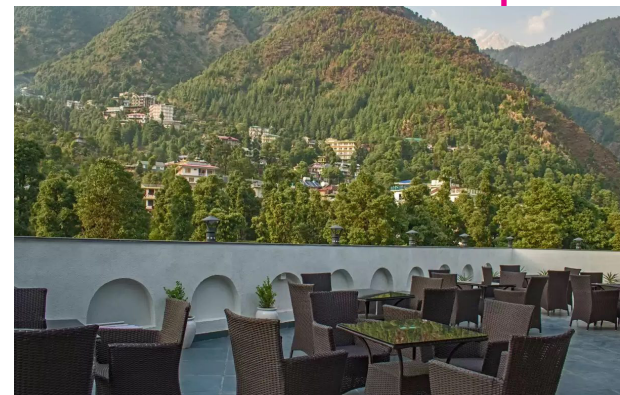
## Hyatt Centric Sector 17 Chandigarh

Hyatt Centric Sector 17 Chandigarh, marking the debut of the Hyatt Centric brand in Chandigarh. Paying homage to French architect Le Corbusier who designed the city along with Pierre Jeanneret, Jane Drew, and Maxwell Fry, the hotel celebrates both Corbusier's design philosophy and the vibrant and bold culture of Punjab. Ideally situated in the city's commercial and shopping district, the hotel offers 144 guest rooms with modern and contemporary decor. Both the outer façade and the interior design of the hotel reflect Le Corbusier's minimalistic style, interspersed with splashes of vibrant colour like the shades of yellow in the lobby and the red in the elevators. The highlights of the culinary offerings at Hyatt Centric Sector 17 Chandigarh include Corby's, the multi-cuisine three-meal restaurant. KOYO KOYO is the property's Pan Asian restaurant and bar, in addition to a thoughtfully designed Hyatt Centric Lounge that serves authentic tea and coffee.

## Quality Inn Heritage Hotel by Suba Group of Hotels, Mcleodganj

The property is nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas, close to the home of his holiness the Dalai Lama. It is well-situated and is close to the main square of McLeodGanj and Namgyal Monastery and a few minutes away from the famous Bhagsu Nag Temple and waterfall. One can easily walk from this property and explore the town and its popular places of interest.

The hotel is a unique blend of warm and cosy interiors with sophisticated facilities. There are 32 well-appointed spacious rooms, a multicuisine restaurant, and a speciality rooftop restaurant that serves Tibetan and Chinese delicacies.



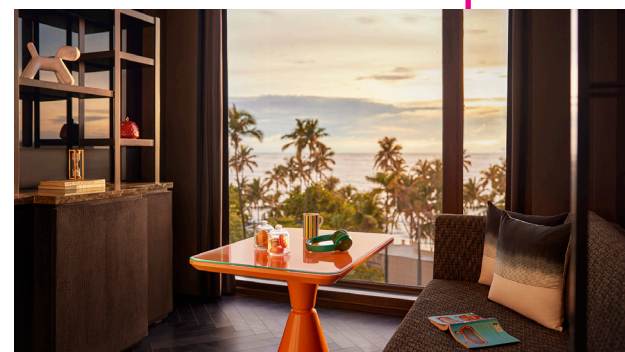
## The Fern Residency, Katra

The Fern Residency, Katra is conveniently located in the main city, with easy access for pilgrimages to Maa Vaishno Devi. The hotel offers 68 well-furnished rooms in 4 different category options, each room well-appointed with all modern facilities and amenities, including high-speed Wi-Fi internet access, LED televisions, complimentary bottled drinking water, tea/coffee makers and eco-friendly room lighting & bathroom amenities. The hotel also has a pure vegetarian multi-cuisine restaurant, banqueting space and Spa therapy for its guests.

## Hyatt Centric Juhu Mumbai

Hyatt Centric Juhu Mumbai houses 60 modern-style upscale guestrooms and suites, and guests can choose from a range of options including king and queen bed city view rooms, king bed sea view rooms, twin bedrooms, studio suites, suites, and a Presidential suite overlooking Juhu Beach.

Hyatt Centric Juhu Mumbai offers 2,152 square feet of event space at Saffron, a venue that is equipped with modern, business-friendly amenities for events and gatherings of all sizes and purposes. Guests can host corporate events, meetings, off-sites, movie launches, as well as intimate family gatherings or wedding functions.



## Genny from Watergen, water from air dispenser

Watergen's Genny by Hindware Appliances is based on innovative and patent-protected technology which extracts drinking water from the moisture in the air around. The daily production capacity is up to 30 litres per day, depending on the temperature and humidity levels in its proximity. No need to connect the device to water pipes; all that's needed is an electric power socket. GENNY can produce cold water, as well as hot drinking water. The product is priced at INR 2,50,000.



## Hafele presents Profin Range of Aluminium Profiles

Hafele presents Profin - a new comprehensive range of state-of-the-art Aluminium Profiles. The range consists of four different categories of profiles - Gola Profiles, Stack Modular Shelving, Rail Door Profiles and Strike Shelving System. These categories exploit an individual's sense of sophistication by proposing exciting design potentials and flawless integration.

The Profin Range of Aluminium Profiles and their accessories, across categories, are available in five contemporary finishes - Silver, Graphite, Gold, Rose Gold and Dark Bronze.

Profin Range of Aluminium Profiles by Hafele is manufactured using advanced technology with a meticulous precision that augments user-friendliness and ensures utmost ease of installation.

## ABD launches two new whiskies

Allied Blenders and Distillers (ABD) Ltd. has launched two new whiskies with a twist Srishti Premium Whisky and Sterling Reserve B7 Whisky Cola Mix.

Srishti Premium Whisky is a blend of rare Scotch Malts paired with select Indian grain spirits and its unique expression is rounded off with curcumin. Interestingly, the infusion has no change in the sensorial; that is in taste, aroma or colour.

Sterling Reserve B7 Whisky Cola Mix is the award-winning whisky blend, infused with cola to add a zing to every drinking occasion. The whisky cola mix retains the colour of whisky in the bottle, in a glass with water, soda or when consumed as a shot. Sterling Reserve B7 Whisky Cola has been recently launched in Assam and will extend nationally this season. Both the brands are available in three pack sizes i.e., 750 ml, 350 ml and 180 ml.





## MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

### Prashant Chadha, Hotel Manager, The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake and Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai – Marriott Executive Apartments



Chadha is known to be a seasoned hotelier with over two decades of experience in skilled operational and business process management. He has been instrumental in translating strategic vision into quantifiable commercial results across several hotels. Having worked

across leadership roles over his decades-long journey with ITC Luxury Collection Hotels, PAN India, he will now be spearheading operations for the cluster hotels along with bringing in newer perspectives to the positioning of Westin's 6 brand-centric pillars. In his role as Hotel Manager for The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake and Lakeside Chalet – Marriott Executive Apartments, he will be seen exhibiting a vast knowledge of management systems, guest services, and overall support systems alongside attaining business goals and bringing in cost efficiencies to ensure repeat and referral business.

### Hemant Tenneti, Cluster General Manager, The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake & Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai – Marriott Executive Apartments



Tenneti has held various leadership roles within Marriott International, most recently leading the Operations Discipline for South Asia as the Senior Area Director of Operations. Through his profound knowledge and dedication to championing the

ethos of luxury travel and hospitality, Hemant will be at the helm of day-to-day operations in his new role, ensuring personalized, high-quality service to all guests, and will continue to offer a home base for locals and travelers to explore Mumbai.

### Devidyuti Ghosh, Director of Operations, The Westin Goa



Ghosh will be in charge of leading the hotel's operations and ensuring that high standards of customer satisfaction are always met. She will also be leading operations for Food & Beverage, Culinary, Engineering, Front office, Housekeeping, Recreation, Spa & Health Club apart from this she will also be liaising with Revenue and Sales & Marketing

to identify areas of incremental revenue and implementing strategies across operations. She will also work closely with the General Manager and facilitate key movements in the hotel, events, complaints, best practices, F&B sales, operational requirements and statutory / brand audits.

## THE LEELA PALACE

### Virender Razdan, General Manager, The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru



With a career spanning over three decades, Razdan is a performance oriented senior hospitality professional who has worked at Hyatt Regency Delhi, Hilton New Delhi, Oberoi Hotels Mumbai, The Leela Mumbai, and ITC Hotels in Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Bengaluru. Over the years he has honed his skills in

managing a diverse team of people and build strong relationships that facilitate effective stakeholder management. He has successfully translated strategic goals into operational plans to achieve targeted growth in sales and drive profitability.

## ACCOR HOTELS

### Arjun Kaggallu, General Manager, Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences



Kaggallu comes with over 17+ years of rich hospitality experience across leading global hospitality brands across India, Europe and United States of America. His last assignment was at the Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa as a General Manager and looks forward to his new role and time in the City of Joy.

He holds an E-Cornell Certification along with a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management from Business School Chardonne, Mont Pelerin, Switzerland. He also has a Diploma in Hotel Management from Merit Swiss Asian School of Hotel management. He brings his expertise in strategic management and his key strengths lie in planning and management across verticals such as training, finance and operations.

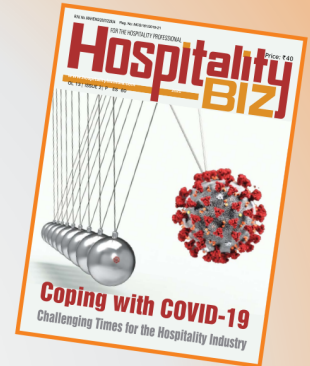
### Sidney D'Cunha, Culinary Director, Sofitel Mumbai BKC



D'Cunha's last assignment was with The Conrad Hotel in Pune, first as Executive Chef before becoming Culinary Director in January 2022. He recently bagged the third position in Power 25 Culinary, 2022 by Hoteliers Web. He first began his culinary journey in 2002, training at properties like the ITC Grand Maratha Sheraton and The Oberoi, Mumbai before joining the Taj Management

Training Program, working at Taj hotels in Delhi and Chennai during this time. Throughout his career, he has developed rich culinary experience and the ability to cater to both Indian and international palates. He also brings with him a deep knowledge of structuring culinary teams, launching new culinary concepts, and working with large-scale banqueting, all while keeping an eye on the bottom line.

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