



Incredible

for chefs....by chefs

CHEF

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Celebrating
Indian Culinary
Excellence



Culinary Education

The Way Forward



INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEW

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Sr. Executive Sous Chef, Le Meridien Delhi



IN FOCUS

Indian Team Creates History At Worldskills Event In Russia, Wins 4 Medals





Culinary talent has evolved in India

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime"

I go a one step further, "Teach a man how to fish and how to cook a fish, he's ready to feed others for lifetime!!"

Go a one step further, "Teach a man how to fish and how to cook a fish, he's ready to feed others for lifetime!!"

Arts under Symbiosis International University, and other similar schools offering culinary specific courses, this scenario has changed for good now!

It is indeed true that the road to a human's heart is through their stomach. Irrespective of how the other industries are faring or what the economic situation of the country is, people will not stop eating. In fact, the very reason why most people go to earn their living is to bring food to the table for themselves and their family. In such a situation, it is obvious that people are willing to spend a huge sum of money to have quality food being garnished well and served to them on a platter. Indeed, the taste of the food, the aroma, the ambience and the overall display of food - all have a role to play in this. This obsession of mankind with food has led to a wide array of career opportunities to be made available. All of these careers fall under the umbrella of culinary arts. It is fair on our part to say that this is as much an art as it is a science.

Since last 5-6 years, with the new culinary schools evolving in India,

who offer holistic culinary education, the culinary talent being churned out is much better skilled and trained. Although there were few schools who offered culinary specific courses and a pool of talent in previous years, these students were lapped up by big fish hotel organisations immediately upon graduation. Most restaurant and food outlets could not get a professionally trained pool of people to work for them.

One other important thing that has happened is that there also has been a sea change amongst parents in the perception about careers in culinary field. The winds of change are opening new doors. Indian students, with increasing support from their parents, are slowly exploring unconventional career options that go beyond Physics, Chemistry and Biology! There's much more willingness to venture into disciplines ranging from Design and Animation to Culinary Courses and Fashion Journalism. Social media and television in particular have played a big role in fast acceptance of this alternate career amongst the decision

makers- the parents. The aspiring students always viewed culinary as a good alternative but under parental and societal pressure, the decision makers prevailed and culinary careers never took off in past for many such students!

The way India is eating also has changed drastically and hence the restaurant and fine dine industry is evolving and its scope of service has extended way beyond hotels to resorts and even spas. New experimental food outlets are being sought by customers to suit personal diet requirements. Customers have become all the more conscious about the hygiene and sanitation level and want to know the way their food is cooked. They look for talented chefs who can discuss about food rather than a person who just greets and enquires about "Did you like the food or not"!

The trained chefs who were trained by the big hotel organisations like Oberoi and Taj Hotels have diversified in the fine dine and stand-alone restaurant space. These talented chefs are now looking for ready-made talent rather than training unskilled persons to work with them. At entry levels, the chefs look for aspirational youngsters who are trained in fundamental food preparation skills and have good understanding of international and regional Indian cuisine. While it's a fact that a degree or certification is not always a necessity to enter the world of culinary arts, it's a beneficial faster track to achieving your professional goals and standing up to the pressures of the food industry.

This has led for the fine dine restaurants (both standalone and in hotels) to seek people who have good interpersonal communication skills and at the same time talent and passion to talk about food. Anirban Dasgupta, Executive Chef at Hyatt Regency Pune says he looks for culinary staff, especially youngsters, who can interact and educate the customers



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and at the same time are able to converse on topics in general. These are the additional attributes beyond the culinary specific knowledge and skills!

Going ahead, culinary education will have to be more regional oriented with global standards. Students opting for a career in culinary arts have unique perks in India. India has some of the best and most diverse cuisines. Each individual can bring their own unique twist in terms of innovation and excellence in the vast world of cooking. Culinary specific schools have to teach these aspects and students in India have the chance to study vital basics in cooking skills, get exposed to different cuisines and build experience in kitchens and restaurants by applying for a professional course at a reputed culinary institute.

Moreover, culinary education is no more about skills only in food

preparation. Promoting food nutrition, designing personal diets, responsible hygiene and sanitation, regulations in food preparation, responsible usage of artificial food additives, use of fresh and seasonal ingredients, reducing usage of non- food consumables are some of the areas where the young culinarians will have to be trained to meet the requirements of the food service industry. Students will have to keep an eye on to learn sustainability, e-marketing and social media to their advantage. Strong industry partnerships, networking and tie-ups are key for growth. The development of Indian institutions providing culinary education and subsequent placement opportunities is but a natural response to the robust future awaiting in the food industry across the world.

Good quality education comes with a price! For that matter, culinary education globally has been an expensive proposition. One biggest pitfall in culinary education in India, however, in absence of any defined regulatory authority will be mushrooming of culinary schools under guise of offering the "Best Culinary Education" at meagre fees and gullible public at large falling for this. This will be a repetition of hotel and hospitality management education in India! Quality will get compromised and despite scope of becoming a culinary superpower, we will languish at being a mediocre culinary landscape. ■

(The author is Director, Symbiosis Institute of Culinary Arts)

