

Food & Nightlife THE CHAIN REACTION

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Food and Nightlife Magazine- Column



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According to the recently released 'White Paper' on the Indian restaurant industry by the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), it is anticipated that there will be a rapid growth in business in the next five years, which will provide employment to about two crore people. By 2030, we would have 350 million (35 crore) people in urban areas.

It will not be wrong to say that the biggest motivators of the Indian restaurant revolution are the giant chains like McDonald's, Pizza Hut and KFC which have changed the dynamics by introducing better hygiene standards, standardized food quality and friendly customer service. The initial success of these chains, most of which now have multi-city operations through the franchisee model, has already attracted the Indian players into this fledgling market. But today my agenda is to highlight the question, 'whether the introduction of chain system for fine-dining restaurants is a good idea or not?'. In support of my query, I would like to share a self-assessed survey, which I did at one of the most renowned restaurant chain of the culinary maestro Sanjeev Kapoor, the Yellow Chilli.

It is out-of-question to doubt the cooking prowess of this master chef who has been serving us with his tasty-zesty recipes through our TV screens and his bestselling

cookery books. Within a short span of time, the restaurant was converted into a full-fledged chain business and has opened 11 restaurants through franchise-model all over India today.

Lending his name to his franchises was an obvious choice to spread out his restaurant business but are these chains doing justice to his legacy and celebrity chef status? After dining at three outlets sited in Delhi & NCR, my answer will be a 50:50. Though, I am very much convinced and confident that before opening every outlet, Chef Kapoor must have personally trained all the head chefs and left no stone unturned to make sure that every food on the menu was nothing less than perfect. But is it really happening? Let me take you on virtual tour of the outlets. When I had been

greeted with a big smile at the entry and ushered to the table of my choice. I was happy and ready to select my options from the menu. I ordered the signature 'Sham Savera' along with the combo of Dal Makhni and Butter Naan. The dal was good-to-go but the 'savera' dish had no morning and was below the parameter of passable.

The answer to my question is a heart-wrenching reality, which clearly delineates the shortcomings of following the footsteps of chains such as McDonalds' and Pizza Huts, which are multinationals and have mastered this art with dedicated research centers and multi-level performance check on food, hygiene and quality to give their customers the best of both the worlds:

food and service. Anchoring on the name of Sanjeev Kapoor, they might gain heavy footfall but to garner respect they have to improve the quality of food and service.

And if one wants to see the example of consistency in food, service, quality and hygiene

then 'Haldiram's' stands as a clear winner amongst the hordes of wannabe gatecrashers in the race. They started as one of the largest manufacturers of Indian sweets and snacks and gradually expanded their base to chain restaurants. It will not be an exaggeration to honour it with the legion of most popular family destination in the town with tasty and hygienic food and easy-on-pocket prices. It has definitely set a benchmark for its Indian counterparts.

Sanjeev Kapoor
the yellow chilli

to the one located in Pitampura, the ambience was captivating and the food was matching up to the name, fame and taste of Chef Kapoor.

On the contrary, when I visited the outlet located in Noida, I actually wondered if I was at the right place or if it was just another namesake. But I was wrong; it was the official franchise of the restaurant. In Noida, it is spread over two levels, the second level was nothing less than a stinking chamber which was ill-managed and even the table linen were not fresh. I cannot tell you much about the food, as the first impression was so unfortunate that my appetite became automatically dormant. Not to forget, the staff was also unresponsive. At Ghaziabad, I was

