

Headline: Innovative cafés in Chennai: Paws, Portions, Photos, and More!

Remember where you had your last cuppa, and chances are it's been in a yellow-lit beige dominated, Hygge-leaning room where the aesthetics are curated to attract millennials who will type away on their laptops like their life depends on it, with a cold cup of over-priced coffee beside them.

However, Chennai has of late been witnessing the mushrooming of a few out-of-template café's and with innovation taking the lead, these café's have a lot more to offer than simply the bare minimum. With themed interiors, unexpected features and activities, these café's truly re-define a holistic experience of a cuppa.

The Old Portion House

Engaging in every sense, this café succeeds in providing a truly immersive experience. This Harry Potter-themed café and its endless references become a treat for the fans as the filament of their distant fantasy becomes tangible reality.

Starting with the theme music from the Harry Potter TV series, it becomes an instant tool to transport the people walking into the café to the mystic grounds of Hogwarts. The gentle music becomes an invitation to break free from the strings of reality and fly freely (metaphorically, because the flying brooms seem a bit too much to expect) in a different reality.

After one takes in the vintage coffee bar, one will notice a pair of anxious eyes staring up.

A statue of Dobby holding a sock is one of the many physical references to the books, like Harry's trolley of suitcases and Hedwig's cage, which is half rammed into the wall.

There is a quidditch room with walls decorated with royal red designs that also hold all four house robes and a (again, maybe flying?) broom resting on the side.

There is a portion corner with portion-like concoctions resting in tumblers; the books on the shelves on the side come from the founder's personal collection, according to Venu Madhav, the manager. The café's specialty drinks and their highlight, butterbeer, take the theme beyond the décor and bring together a wholly immersive experience.

This café is bound to get any Potterhead grinning like an absolute idiot

Address: 3, 1st Ave, Shastri Nagar, Adyar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600020

Phone: 098844 35860

Gamistry

A bunch of young champs run all the way to the front in the process of yelling out their answers. The birthday party happening at this board game-based café seems fun, as even the glass doors of that cabin seem to fail to confine the happy squeals.

Glass walls separate the cabins in Gameistry, with each cabin equipped with purple boards to hold the amusing board games that the café offers.

One has to throw their head back a little bit to see that the top of the giant glass shelves holds boxed fun like Battleship, Catan, Code Names, and more. With over 1,500 board games to choose from, your assigned board buddy, who is also your waiter, will help you pick the game according to the people you have to play, the time you want to spend, and more.

The chosen game is then explained to you, and the board buddy ensures that everyone understands how it works. Catering to people of all ages, occupations, and walks of life, this café ensures that you unplug from the screen and unwind the board game way.

The place has attracted not just youngsters but people with corporate jobs who drop by with their team after long days of work and even students who come in during vacations, according to marketing head Prem Sharma.

The team at the café is made up of people who are trained to rotate their departments and also work in different departments at the same time. The waiters are trained to be board buddies, while staff from the accounts section can also be board buddies.

More board games are learned by the staff on a weekly basis, and new games are introduced according to customer requests.

Address: 2nd Floor SCM Jamaldeen Chambers, Red Cross Rd, Egmore, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600008

Phone: 096136 96137

Ciclo Café

Bright sunshine and yellow walls with cycle seats greet the customers walking into this cycle themed café. Ciclo has a working cycle displayed on the wall behind the front desk, and the more one looks, the more one can see the intentional cycle-themed décor.

The lamps hanging from the walls have wheels at the bottom; the salt and pepper are kept in a mini cart with wheels; and the tables do not have boring legs to hold them up but, you guessed it, wheels.

With a vintage collection of miniature cycles and any sections of the café holding cycle seats on the walls, the intentional placement of the wheels will put a smile on one's face. This café,

founded by a cyclist himself, has various high-end cycle parts and equipment displayed in the outlets.

The theme does go beyond the décor in this café as well, as they have a cycling community that represents the café in various races, according to the marketing head, Priya.

There are a few groups of Chennai-based cyclists who met here in the café and have been one community ever since. There are also various workshops that the café conducts in collaboration with cyclist communities.

The Ciclo Café also offers a 50 percent discount for cyclists who come to the café in their gear. The founder Ashish Thadani's primary intention is to promote the Ciclo way of life, which is healthy and movement-based. Ciclo becomes a peaceful place for dining, away from the impatient traffic on the Kotturpuram road.

Address: 32, 47, Gandhi Mandapam Rd, Chitra Nagar, Kotturpuram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600085

Phone: 044 4204 8666

The Bistograph

A whiff of gorgeous coffee greets the people walking into this photography-based café. Founded by cinematographer Hai Subash, the Bistograph is a café that has a lawn, a studio, and a golden-hour deck on top.

The luxurious warm lights add to the character of the interior, as everything, right from the art on the wall to the cup holders, is camera-inspired. This café has the option of printing photographs on their coffee.

The Bistograph coffee can be customised to print any of the pictures that the customer can share with them. The waiters at the café are trained to take pictures of the clients and give them the picture as a memory to keep.

There are about 57,000 pictures since the opening in 2023, according to Shahul, the mMarketing head of the café. The café also has Hawkeye Studio on top, which is owned by the founder of the café.

The studio is a working studio that is often rented out by third parties for photoshoots.

Address: No.13, 10th Cross St, Shastri Nagar, Adyar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600020

Phone: 073059 92096

Twisty Tails

The sweet symphony of racing paws greets you when you step inside the fence, which keeps around 24 happy doggos who are excited to come say hello.

The fur babies are fed cookies to jump, give high-fives, and play fetch by the two trainers, who ensure they behave. It's heaven for pet lovers, as 200 rupees gets you 20 minutes with the puppies and another 20 minutes with kittens.

The payment is redeemable in the café, which embraces the paw aesthetic. There are more than five breeds of dogs who are around four years old. They are trained for a month before intersessions and are groomed twice a day.

“Cookie, jump,” and one doggo jumps to catch the carrots. In contrastContrasting to the hyper and people-friendly energy in the puppy section, the kitty section is much quieter as they lounge around and pick who they want to cuddle with.

Rekha, the founder, has an inspiring story behind the start of her café, based around her undying love for pets and her faith in animal-assisted therapy. This one-of-a-kind café receives children and adults who are well loved (brace yourself for the licks too) by the furry angels.

Address: 2nd Floor, RVR Towers, OLD NO. 29 A&B, 10/5, Khader Nawaz Khan Rd, Nungambakkam, Tamil Nadu 600006

Phone: 090922 58887