Beryl Menezes wrote:
Hi,

This is with regard to an article we are doing on regional cuisine restaurants for the upcoming issue of our magazine, Express Hospitality. Please find below a list of questions for the same. Would appreciate if you could revert back with the answers as soon as possible, as my deadline is Wednesday. Would also require a high-res passport-size photograph of yourself, as well as of your restaurant. Please send the same as a separate jpg attachment. Thanks so much.

1. What is the popularity of regional cuisine restaurants in the city, as compared to multi-cuisine or world cuisine? What is the most popular regional cuisine according to you?

Regional cuisine restaurants are getting popular by the day with softheads (BPO) belching QSR and non-Indian food disability to adapt Indian lifestyles. Home food is the most popular as we adapt our menus as per the regions like Indore's menu, Delhi's menu, Western India and Southern India menu all are adapted to local tastes even within the regional cuisines.

1.
2. Do niche restaurants really work?

Yes our waiting lists outside Rajdhanis across the country prove it, but the cuisine has to be close to home not alien.

1. When launching your restaurant, what kind of research did you carry out?

We launched decades back and setting up a Thali place in the heart of Gujarat required a lot of tweaking from the existing un-organized players, which concept is today standing the test of times the world over. The fundamentals of affordable unlimited variety of food with Indian unceasing service that were the outcome of our research years back, are good today too.

1. Is your restaurant décor influenced by the region you represent?

Our decor across all Rajdhanis is Indian, not regional but it adapts to all the States we are present in today, including Dubai.

1. How much investment goes into opening a specialised regional cuisine restaurant, as compared to a multi-cuisine restaurant?

Around Rs. 50 to Rs. 75 for a specialised regional cuisine restaurant compared to Rs. 1 crore plus for a multi-cuisine restaurant.

1. Who is your target audience? Do you mainly have customers from the region your are specialising in? Had this trend changed since your inception?

Target audience at the time of the launch of a specialised regional cuisine restaurant is local but over the time, cross branding and promotions broaden the net to domestic and international travelers, who refer to word of mouth, media promotions and travel guides like Lonely Planet, where Rajdhani gets listed. Since our inception with two Rajdhanis, one in Baroda and one in Crawford Market, Mumbai this trend has been accelerating. To cite Dubai, before the restaurant opened it's doors to public nothing less than fifteen guests left their visiting cards to be informed about the launch, having savoured Rajdhani food at one of the outlets in India.

1. What steps have you taken to bring about this change and popularise your cuisine?

We have adopted a daily changing menu as opposed to a yearly or two, changing menu of multi-cuisine restaurants, which has been the practice for the past three decades, without making a noise about it, like them. This has popularised our cuisine and not stagnated it, as boring - not changing with times, as shown in the film Ratatouille, for the French cuisine.

1. Are food festivals a way of spreading awareness of regional cuisines? Do you bring in the experts to give demos on the regional cuisine you are specialising in for food festival? Do you have a permanent in-house chef from the region you are specialising in? How else would you suggest making regional cuisines popular and educating people about them?

Yes food festivals help spread awareness for any cuisine. Not experts but our Chefs and Props do the demo. Yes our 25 odd Chefs are from Rajasthan churning out Gujarati and Rajasthani dominant food. By opening an outlet in each city, is the best way to educate people.

1. Why did you decide to open a restaurant specialising in only one kind of cuisine?How have regional restaurants and their popularity in the city evolved over the years? What are the factors responsible for bringing about this trend in the popularity of regional cuisine restaurants?

Rajdhani specializes in Indian food and doesn't allow any foreign food to creep in. This is the reason why the menus have a database of 22,300 recipes from different parts of India, with a Western India base. With this data as our R&D division updates the monthly

menus, consistently delivering the same dish across all Rajdhanis on a given day, we feel to have scratched only the tip of the foodscape of India. There is a whole warehouse waiting to open up, since every 10 kilometers India owns a legacy of a new dish, is the maxim we preach with our production circles. The Indian close to homeness is the the popularity stigma attached to our regional cuisine restaurants.

1.
2. Please shed some light on the brand format of your restaurant, in terms of your branding and marketing strategies?

Rajdhani Ek Khandani Parampara, is our brand format that brings about our branding and marketing strategy. It revolves around a family's legacy of capital tradition flowing down three generations of hospitality operators today.

1. Are there any fine dining restaurants specialising in regional cuisines?

Rajdhani being closest to heart, there are specialty restaurants in every five star hotels serving regional cuisines with fine dining.

--
Best regards,
Beryl.
Sub-Editor
Express Hospitality/TravelWorld
Business Publications Division
Indian Express Group

Facing challenges head-on is the real test of inner-strength

--
with warm regards from,
Kamlesh Barot
Director - Encore Hotels Pvt. Ltd.
39-B, Chowpatty Sea Face Road, Mumbai 400007, Maharashtra, India.
www.encorehotels.net
Telefax: 91-22-23696990
email:kamleshbarot@vsnl.com("SAVE PAPER - THINK BEFORE YOU PRINT!")