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The Indian Art of Fine Dining

The latest trends in serving crafted cuisine experiences in India

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Globally, Indian dishes have been made popular by Punjabi cuisine, especially the all-popular Tikka Masala! When in India, you'll realize that there are actually more than 36 distinctly different cuisines. This isn't that surprising, considering the fact that India is made up of many states with distinctly different cultures. These foods are served in a whopping 1.5 million eateries, which are manned by about 8 million workers. The overall Indian food services industry is worth about \$62.8 billion and is growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12 percent. Of this, QSR and casual dining have a 74 percent share, cafes have a 12 percent share, and fine dining encompasses a 14 percent share, according to NRAI's India Food Services Report.

The past five years have seen consumer perception of fine dining evolve from being a mere "special occasion activity" to being an extension of good living. The frequency Indians dine out is moving up rapidly from a modest average of 2 times in a year, in comparison to 40 times in Singapore (source: NRAI's India Food Services Report). This is largely driven by the increase in working population, disposable income, urbanization and the popularity of nuclear families.

Also, interestingly, there is a significant increase in viewership of food TV shows, like "MasterChef," which portray the culinary experience as a serious art. Added to this is the democratization of online food ordering by many well-funded mobile applications like Swiggy, Food Panda and Zomato. This growth trend has made it worthwhile for restaurateurs to invest in design to deliver unique dining experiences like never before.

I see three key design trends that are driving the curation of unique dining experiences in Indian restaurants. The first is a mixture of art and cuisine where designers use strong cultural cues from the cuisine's origin to integrate the menu, plating, serving, as well as the "eating culture," in a well done customer setting. The second is the use of a multi-sensory design that allows guests to participate with all of their senses in the culinary experience. The sight of colourful ingredients and sautéing sounds, combined with the strong aroma, helps create a compelling taste of what they are about to eat. The third is the creation of hyper-local socials, or spaces in dining environments where events and performances can be included. Remember seeing live bands and food festivals appearing on special days in your favorite restaurants?

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TOWNHALL, Gurgaon

Design By : Group DCA, New Delhi

Photographer: Anil / Finthome

The Townhall concept originated in the famous historic premium retail destination called Khan Market, to which the design pays homage. The interior design exudes the feeling of a large, indoor public space. The design palette comprises high end materials and forms that create an exquisite setting for fine dining. This has been reinterpreted in the chic IT hub of Gurgaon, persisting with the old-world charm of Townhall.

These inspiring examples assertively provide a strong flavor of the new expectations in fine dining today. India's dining design revolution has begun, and I am sure this will propel the Indian fine dining industry to greater heights than ever before.