

# Restaurant *Success* Stories 2023

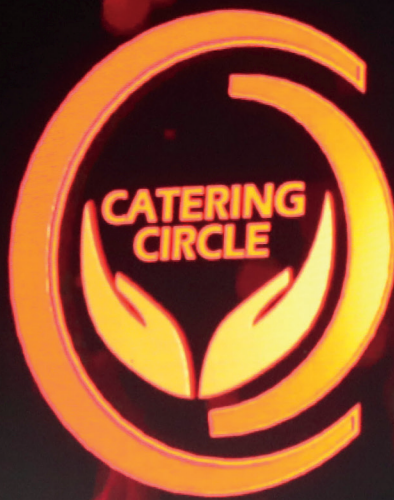


THE ESSENTIAL BOOK OF  
CATERING INSPIRATIONS

VOLUME 3







## FORWARD

In a world where the food service industry is constantly evolving, it is essential to remember the stories of those who have paved the way for success. This book brings together the journeys, the triumphs, and the memories of those who have made their mark in the culinary world.

Amidst the challenges of running a restaurant, it is easy to forget the hard work, dedication, and determination that goes into each success story. This book serves as a reminder of the achievements of our fellow entrepreneurs and the resilience they have shown, even in the face of adversity.

From the bustling cities to the quiet villages, the stories in this book span across the UK, capturing the diversity of the industry and the wide range of experiences that make it so rich and vibrant. The common thread that runs through each story is the unwavering spirit and determination of those who have made their businesses a success.

With the launch of the Restaurant Talent Show 2023 and the publication of this book, we aim to give visibility to the heroes and heroines of our industry, both those who are in the media spotlight and those who are working quietly behind the scenes. We believe that by sharing these stories, we can inspire and motivate the next generation of restaurateurs to continue to push the boundaries and achieve greatness.

This book is a testament to the power of perseverance and the importance of celebrating our successes, no matter how big or small. I invite you to delve into the pages and be inspired by the stories of those who have made their mark in the food service industry.

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# The Ballet of Business

Discovering the Key Ingredients of Restaurant Success.

## EDITORIAL

Ladies and Gentlemen, grab your forks and knives and prepare to indulge in the triumphs of the British Asian restaurant industry, where an unforgettable feast awaits. In this latest edition of "The Restaurant Success Stories," we journey into the kitchens of the most innovative and successful players, uncovering their secret recipes for success and the unique qualities that set them apart.

As we explore this volume, we will discover the secret ingredients of success in an industry where competition is as intense as the spices in a fiery vindaloo. These successful chefs and restaurateurs have not only created menus that burst with authenticity and creativity but have also become Life Members of the Catering Circle, a media platform that supports and elevates the catering industry. With their membership, they've shown their willingness to give back and help others achieve the same level of success, a true embodiment of the adage, "a rising tide lifts all boats."

Our findings reveal that success in the restaurant industry is a delicate balance between delicious cuisine and efficient operations. The successful restaurants featured in this volume have struck this balance perfectly, delivering both mouth-watering dishes and exceptional service, leaving a lasting impression on their customers.

In a time when the restaurant industry is facing challenges like never before, it's inspiring to see that success is still within reach. By taking a page from these success stories and investing in

They've shown their willingness to give back and help others achieve the same level of success, a true embodiment of the adage, "a rising tide lifts all boats."

the right strategies, restaurants can overcome adversity and emerge even stronger.

So, dear reader, let us feast on the tales of these culinary wizards, whose tireless efforts have resulted in dishes that will leave you spellbound. Their passion, hard work, and unwavering commitment to their craft have resulted in culinary masterpieces that satisfy both the palate and the soul. Let us revel in the flavours of success, and savour the taste of resilience.

Let the feast begin!

**Towhid Shakeel**  
*Publications Editor*



## ABOUT US

# Spice Up Your Life:

## Reviving the Curry Industry in Britain

Welcome to the sizzling world of Catering and Hospitality, where innovation and evolution are always on the menu. The Curry Industry, a colourful and flavourful element of British culture, is undergoing a metamorphosis that promises to redefine its place in the world. From the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic to the increasing significance of sustainability and environmentally responsible practices, the industry is being subjected to an array of pressures and influences.

At the forefront of these transformative times lies the Curry Industry, an essential element of British culture that is currently undergoing an unprecedented crisis. With a valuation of £4.1 billion, the industry is teetering on the brink of collapse, with no clear path forward in sight.

An acute shortage of chefs, escalating business costs, tax rises, and the proliferation of technology are all contributing to the gradual decline of traditional curry houses. For the Bangladeshi community, whose hardworking entrepreneurs have played a pivotal role in shaping the industry, this is a matter of great concern. The Curry Industry is in dire need of a resurgence, and the media platform Catering Circle is stepping up to address these challenges head-on, working closely with experts to find sustainable solutions.

Why is the Curry Industry so important, you may wonder? It's not just about the delicious food. British Bangladeshis have made an indelible contribution to British society through their creation of this vibrant industry. Curry has emerged as one of

“  
Join us on a  
flavourful journey  
as we explore the  
challenges facing the  
Curry Industry and  
discover sustainable  
solutions to keep it  
alive and thriving!  
.....”





Britain's most beloved cuisines, and the curry house has been a vital stepping stone for many Bangladeshi immigrants to build their futures and those of their children in Britain. Today, the Curry Industry is a proud symbol of their history and heritage, generating an astounding £4.1 billion for the economy, with over 12,000 outlets across the UK. With an average British adult spending £1,260 per year on curry and a weekly consumption of 18 tonnes of Chicken Tikka Masala, it is clear that the Curry Industry is an integral part of British culture.

In the short term, the industry needs an immediate boost to overcome its present challenges. This includes

- improved health and safety training
- effective marketing, branding, and PR campaigns
- nurturing homegrown talent with the potential to establish Michelin Star chefs.

Furthermore, the industry must adapt to the shifting landscape,

- embracing technology and
- demystifying it to cater to modern customer preferences and demand.

To secure the Curry Industry's future, long-term plans have been put in place, including

- making the industry "fit for purpose,"
- developing strong leadership, and
- strengthening relationships with the banking sector to facilitate business expansion.

Other plans include

- creating training manuals, supporting training,
- engaging with ministers and politicians,
- promoting the catering industry to attract the younger generation,
- engaging with suppliers,
- raising the industry's profile to establish its global leadership and
- sharing best practices with others in the catering industry.

In conclusion, the Curry Industry is an invaluable part of British culture and a significant contributor to the country's economy. With Catering Circle leading the charge in finding sustainable solutions, the Curry Industry can be given the boost it requires to overcome the challenges it faces and ensure its continued success for generations to come.





# 14 Indicators of a Great Restaurant: Beyond the Quality of Food

The Catering Circle has been a game-changer in the Curry Industry, providing solutions to the real problems faced by restaurants. With innovative ideas, challenging perceptions, and transforming menus, the Catering Circle has been a source of inspiration for the industry. With the upcoming Season 8 of the Catering Circle, supported by its large and active team throughout the UK, there is no doubt that the platform will continue to be a valuable resource for restaurants.

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However, beyond the quality of food, there are small things that make a restaurant great. Most restaurants rely on regular customers who expect the same level of service, quality, and taste every time they visit. To keep these customers coming back, the restaurant needs to have a great atmosphere, good service, and a clean bathroom. Additionally, restaurants need to be accommodating to their customers, offer healthy options, and have knowledgeable and authentic servers. In this article, I reflect on these 14 signs that make a restaurant great, beyond the quality of food.



“A restaurant’s atmosphere should be well-designed, comfortable, and tailored to the cuisine served, setting the tone for the meal.”



1. **Clean Bathrooms:** A clean bathroom is a reflection of the restaurant’s attention to detail and also gives an indication of kitchen cleanliness.
2. **Quick Service:** A server should come over quickly after seating, avoiding frustration for the customer.
3. **In-Season Ingredients:** The menu should feature in-season ingredients and use local groceries whenever possible.
4. **Good Acoustics:** Diners should be able to hear their table companions, with sound design and fewer tables in high-end restaurants for better acoustics.
5. **Knowledgeable and Authentic Servers:** The best restaurants have servers who are familiar with the menu and able to answer questions without consulting a notebook.
6. **Accommodating:** Restaurants should be accommodating to customers, as long as it’s reasonable, and provide a friendly response to special requests.
7. **Healthy Options:** Restaurants should offer a range of healthy options to accommodate the increasing demand for healthy food choices.
8. **All dishes served at once:** Good restaurants ensure all dishes are served at the same time for a coordinated dining experience.
9. **Prompt but not rushed clearing of plates:** Restaurants should clear plates quickly but not so quickly as to rush diners.
10. **Little details:** Small gestures, such as sending guests home with a muffin or introducing them to the chef, can greatly enhance the dining experience.

11. **Professional but friendly service:** A good restaurant will have professional and knowledgeable servers with a friendly and approachable demeanour, providing attention without constantly hovering.

12. **Regularly changing menu:** A restaurant’s menu should change regularly, showcasing new and interesting ingredients and dishes to keep the dining experience fresh and exciting.

13. **Unique atmosphere:** A restaurant’s atmosphere should be well-designed, comfortable, and tailored to the cuisine served, setting the tone for the meal.

14. **Focus on quality ingredients:** A good restaurant will have a strong focus on sourcing high-quality ingredients to create delicious dishes.

In conclusion, there are many factors that go into making a good restaurant. From the service to the atmosphere and the focus on quality ingredients, each aspect plays a role in creating a memorable dining experience. Keep these factors in mind when choosing your next restaurant, and you’re sure to have a great meal!



**Professor Dr Sanawar Choudhury**  
Entrepreneur





## IT'S NOT ONLY THE DISHES

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It is only in recent times that a restaurant has had to think about not just the food quality, management and physical branding - but also crucial digital aspects such as SEO (Search Engine Optimisation). Two restaurants could be serving exactly the same food, yet one could have greater visibility in the market and reach more people - just because it ranks higher in search results with relevant keywords that the target audience are already searching for.

This may seem intimidating for new restaurant owners: while the total pool of consumers has indeed grown, the barrier to entry for competition in the fierce market (as a result of new essential costs arising) have increased too. But the good news is that like never before, restaurants can digitally market to their desired target audience in a way that was not previously heard of even a few decades ago.



“Technology will evolve at an expeditious rate - the only way for restaurants to survive in the future is to keep up with the latest trends and technologies.”

Despite a growing global population, competition for restaurant brands to have a premium reputation remains intact. Of course, if a restaurant offers delicious food but invests little time into its marketing strategy, how will anyone know about it?

Consumers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (of both food and services so pun intended) are growing increasingly accustomed to viewing adverts for restaurants on screens - whether this be embedded in websites and apps or displayed on video streaming platforms. Yet if we cast the needle of time back by a few decades, we will see that the media through which consumers have been targeted, has changed immensely.

Firms can draw up their target audience by age, location and even interests - then entering those specific demographics into social media marketing platforms before releasing a paid advert. Not only does this age of social media marketing mean a target market can be more easily reached and celebrity endorsement has a greater effect, it also utilises the fact (with eating at restaurants being a largely social activity often published afterwards) the word spreads further through location tagging of the restaurant.

This is hugely advantageous as restaurant marketing can be funnelled towards those most interested in certain cuisines based on existing statistics - this can in turn aid revenue. However, one stark reality remains:

A few decades ago, restaurants would not have set funds aside for digital marketing strategies such as SEO optimisation. Thus in a few decades time, technology will evolve at an expeditious rate - the only way for restaurants to survive in the future is to keep up with the latest trends and technologies.

**Dr Zaki Rezwana  
Anwar FRSA**







# Attracting, Engaging, and Retaining Females in the Restaurant Sector

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Determining  
whether  
staff are fully  
competent in  
their business.  
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“Staff retention matters as it is the single most important factor determining whether staff are fully competent in their business. Employers spend significantly on recruiting and retaining staff, but in many cases staff are not staying long enough to recoup these costs and fully contribute to the business. People 1st's conservative estimate is that labour turnover is costing the hospitality and tourism sector £274m per annum.”

## People 1st Insight Report - 2017

“There are very few female role models, CEOs and Chairmen in the sector;

...A significant number of small- to medium size businesses do not think there is an issue regarding gender imbalance, nor see it as a priority;

...The sector attracts a high number of female graduates, but it is not doing enough to retain them;

...A lack of flexibility in working conditions and/or support for women balancing careers with family is systemic;”

**WiH (Women in Hospitality) 2020 Review, Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC)**



“The sector has little trouble attracting the women at entry level, yet despite this, many leave at middle management level.”



Attracting, engaging and in particular, retaining female employees is one of the biggest issues facing hospitality today. The stats are pretty self-explanatory and still, as we enter 2023, we see only very small movement based on previous reports.

**So why is it so hard to keep the female employees once they've been recruited?**

Having spoken to a few of my colleagues in the sector and done a google search on the topic, it's apparent that one of the crucial sticking points for most women is the lack of understanding and inflexible approach to family and work/life balance.

It's no surprise then that when many women in hospitality go on maternity leave, very few return.

“There is still a significant lack of women in the top commercial leadership roles, and very few as CEO or Chairman. The sector has little trouble attracting the women at entry level, yet despite this, many leave at middle management level.”

**Sarah Lim, Managing Director and Head of UK Consumer, Korn Ferry**

Women see hospitality as a valuable career choice and work hard to get to a good management role. However, once in their 30s, and the potential to grow a family becomes important, many feel their employer is not supportive enough in listening to their needs.

Whether you are a small, medium or large sized employer, it's important

to engage with your staff, particularly those in under-represented groups including gender and diversity, to understand their needs and why, if they're leaving or have left, what was the main reason they didn't stay.

Just as we serve our customers and are concerned with fulfilling their needs, we must also fulfil the needs of our staff for it is those employees that ultimately ensure your business is operating at its highest, most effective level.

**Here's a suggestion:**

- Create a focus group of past and present employees that represent diversity in your organisation
- Engage with their views and uphold what they are suggesting
- Encourage more women into the workplace, offering flexible working hours and job shares
- Offer childcare support, financially and practically
- Shout out loud to your peers to do the same

Unless we all get on board and create a workplace that welcomes all, we will never see the changes that are so vitally needed.

**Hulya Erdal**

Hospitality Professional,  
Transformational Coach, Educator







# ADAPTING TO NEW NORMS:

## Maintaining Restaurant and Kitchen Hygiene Post-Pandemic

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And what can you do to make your workplace a more attractive career choice?

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The Asian restaurant industry is a very important and valued contributor to the national economy. It provides variety, offering a range of meal experiences and therefore important to national and local communities.

The hospitality industry has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic, with many businesses struggling and some closing. The ones that have survived focussed most of their efforts on take away and delivery, resilience became the order of the day! Now is the time to bounce back, and take the lessons that can be learnt from the pandemic and remodel the business to allow for growth and expansion.

A mini boom is expected in the UK moving forward from the pandemic, as people want to celebrate and eat out again, and so it is important to be ready by having all the hygiene and appropriate systems in place to deal with the increase in business.



It is becoming evident that we will have to live with the virus and that viruses are not going to go away, this means that hygiene in the kitchen and restaurant becomes even more important. Kitchens will not just need to be cleaned but sanitised thoroughly.

All restaurant staff will be required to wash and sanitise their hands more regularly. Many customers will expect hand sanitisers at reception, and hand sanitisers on every restaurant table, perhaps branded with the name and logo of the restaurant.

Good hygiene conscious restaurants will add a hand sanitiser wipe in the take away packaging, with the sterilised disposable wooden cutlery. More and more customers will expect this, hygiene and health safety are a key selling point, a good marketing tool and can be associated with a strong brand.

Bowls of nuts and crisps on the bar for customers to help themselves will become obsolete. Individual wrap packaging will become the norm. Some restaurants will find it advantageous to publish their hygiene policy alongside the scores on the doors. The policy may contain the restaurant's health policy on vaccinated staff for example some Asian countries require all waiters and food servers to be double vaccinated.

Welcome Skills is a national training organisation specialising in Asian restaurants, they are accredited by Craft Guild of Chefs of Great Britain, and offer a range of training programmes in Food Safety in Catering, Health and Safety and Licensing. They are able to assist restaurants with Environmental Health Inspections and Premises License applications.

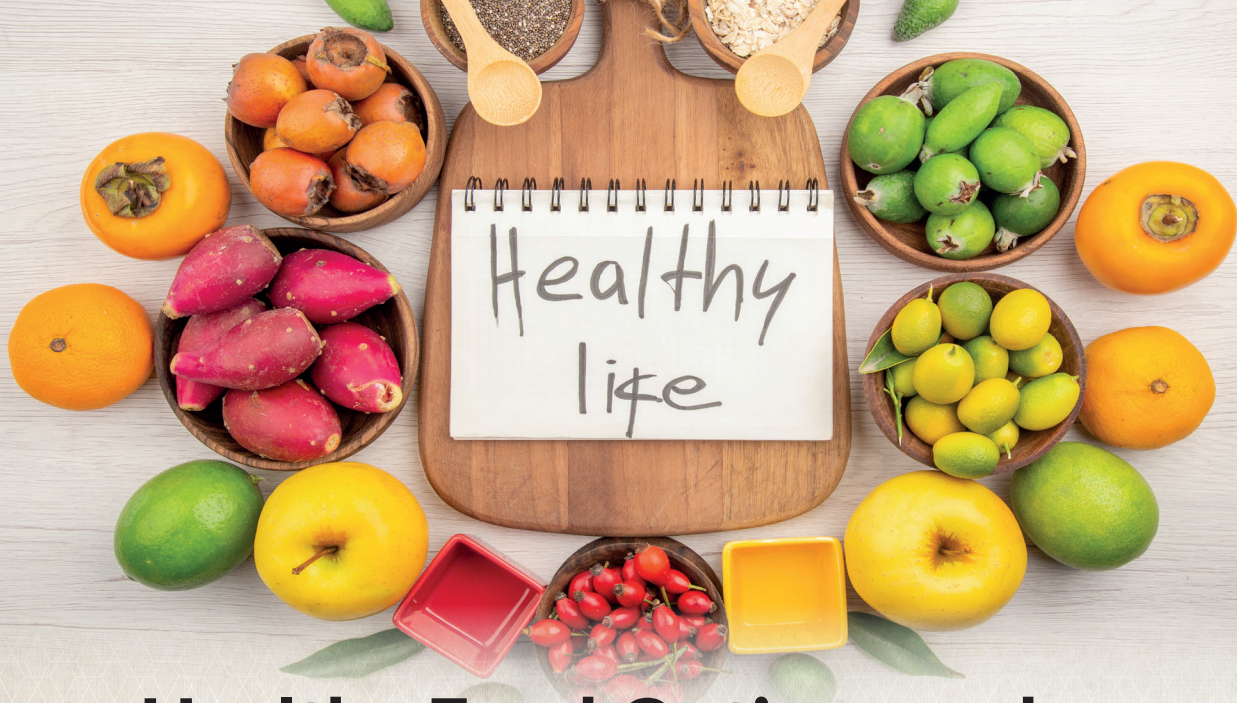
“More and more customers will expect this, hygiene and health safety are a key selling point, a good marketing tool and can be associated with a strong brand.”



**Professor David Foskett MBE**

Welcome Skills Consultant





# Healthy Food Options and Adopting New Concepts: Three Evergreen Trends

With the tremendous upheaval and constant change that happening in the UK hospitality industry and in particular, the Indian and Bangladeshi Restaurant industry, it's no wonder that there have been extremes in severe ups and down in recent years.

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How exactly do you adapt to this new world and keep customers interested through Marketing and PR?

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However, there are several key factors that will remain constant, and will in fact grow in importance, this year, as well as in the coming years beyond 2023. Insights into upcoming trends and forecasts show that a select number of key trends have emerged as being evergreen' - always in demand with customers, but allowing the Restaurant and Takeaway to add their own 'twist' to it and make it look 'new' on a regular basis, therefore enabling this small change to be used as a selling point or marketing tool to their existing client base and as a way to attract new customers.



“Additionally, using plastic-free and/or recyclable packaging where possible, can also create a selling point to the ever-increasing number of climate-conscious customers.”

Here are the Three Evergreen Trends that will always keep your finger on the pulse, making you look like you're ahead of the curve, but will also keep your establishment on top of trends without having to keep up to date with constant changes in customer tastes and interests:

### **1. A Focus on Sustainability and Using Climate-Conscious, Eco-Friendly Packaging:**

'Sustainability of ingredients' and eco-conscious packaging (whether it is recyclable or if its production causes low environmental damage) are key focuses for 2023 and future years. The provenance of ingredients, (with customers' interest in eating dishes that contain ingredients that have a shorter 'farm to table' journey) can help to attract the increasingly climate-conscious customer. This focus is more important in the takeaway sector, with customers keen to feel as though they are not contributing to environmental damage with their takeaway packaging.

Not only will the hospitality industry's focus on improving in this area help to attract new customers, but it will also help retain existing clientele, particularly if the restaurant emphasises a reduction in carbon emissions, and thereby help to eventually lower cost during the current energy crisis. There does appear to be a major interest by customers, in opting for locally, or nationally, sourced seasonal ingredients instead of the more expensive, and environmentally damaging, internationally sourced ingredients.

This will in turn, also help to ensure better quality and freshness of ingredients for the customer, therefore aiding healthy food claims by the restaurant, and enabling this to be used as a marketing ploy by the restaurant or takeaway.


Collaborating with, or supporting local suppliers (especially during the current cost of living crisis) can help to ensure that restaurants and takeaways differentiate themselves from their competitors, and appear more 'on the pulse' of the current 'environmental' and 'cost of living crisis' zeitgeist.

It will also demonstrate to the clientele, an active involvement within the local community by championing local or national businesses rather than obtaining supplies internationally. Additionally, using plastic-free and/or recyclable packaging where possible, can also create a selling point to the ever-increasing number of climate-conscious customers.

### **2. Plant-Based is Still Popular**

Consumers' interest in plant-based foods has only grown stronger since the Covid-19 pandemic. Customers are now keen to improve and maintain their health, and the number one way they are doing this is through what they eat. However, the cost of living crisis and the pandemic has moved the focus onto plant-based comfort foods rather than what they consider sparse 'health foods'. This is where Indian and





Plant-based options can be added to the menu in a variety of ways. This can involve the 'Indian Street Food' and 'Indian Fusion Food' options which are quick to make as well as cost-effective.

Bangladeshi Restaurants and Takeaways can take full advantage of this trend by combining the fantastic variety of flavours of South-East Asian cuisine, in a fusion concept or as traditional dishes, and also as street food style dishes.

There is a plethora of South-East Asian Vegan and Vegetarian recipes available that can be used by establishments, and many do not need adjustment for the hospitality industry unless required by the establishment for creative purposes. Plant-based options can be added to the menu in a variety of ways. This can involve the 'Indian Street Food' and 'Indian Fusion Food' options which are quick to make as well as cost-effective.

Furthermore, using healthier ingredient alternatives (e.g. using Olive Oil or Coconut Oil instead of Vegetable Oil or Seed Oils) and marketing to customers the fact that the dishes use healthier cooking techniques, that also prevent 'overcooking' the ingredients

and therefore maintain the nutrients of the ingredients, is an extra selling-point that can be fully utilised by the restaurant establishment. The Plant-based and vegan trend is definitely here to stay and it would be wise to take advantage of it due to its ability to attract new younger clientele as well as retain existing customers. An increasing proportion of customers from the younger age group will continue to demand such options on the menu.

### **3. Simplify the Menu And Clear And Simple Messaging To The Customer:**

Adopting a Minimalist Messaging approach to the customer base, in all of the restaurant or takeaway's menu and advertising, will help to reduce confusion about the establishment's menu offerings and services, as well as connect more strongly with the customer. A clear and simple message also helps to build the restaurant's brand as it has more of a memorable impact.





A simplified menu will always help customers to decide and order more quickly; and it also enables the establishment to keep reducing its stock of perishable.

Another benefit of adopting a minimalist approach overall in terms of reducing the list of menu offerings and reducing the complexity of dishes is its effect of reducing the impact of increased costs and supply chain disruption, and staff shortages – particularly important during the current cost of living crisis.

Research also shows that a complicated and extensive menu can cause customer confusion, and leads to a lower possibility of the customer completing an order, compared to a more focused, simplified menu, particularly a menu that offers dishes that contain seasonal ingredients – (customers view this as a more palatable menu of dishes containing ingredients that are of higher quality and greater freshness).

A simplified menu will always help customers to decide and order more quickly; and it also enables the establishment to keep reducing its stock of perishable, therefore reducing costs and enabling a regular change of the menu's latest offerings. This creates a more dynamic

brand image of the restaurant or takeaway in the customer's mind.

The ability to offer fresh new dishes on a simpler, clearer menu on a regular rotation in accordance with the 'season' – (especially using seasonal ingredients) is an excellent marketing tool. It will also create a 'limited-time offering' or a 'limited edition' factor to the dishes on the menu, which acts as a unique selling point to ensure customers have the 'Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)' effect and therefore making customers more likely to order.

**Shahena Ali**

Nutritional Therapist  
and Naturopath







# Essential Measures for Ensuring Food and Health Safety

“  
Tastier Food,  
Happier  
Customer,  
Staff and Safer  
premises Better  
Business  
.....”

## Safer Food Better Business

Having a 5-star rated food business is very important as, according to statistics, most customers look for stars and then make a decision based on the rating given by the Environmental Health Officers. According to FSA, 41-62 per cent of consumers often check if the rating is displayed before deciding whether or not to buy food from a business. That is why getting a 5-star rating for every catering business is essential.

## 5 Top tips to achieve this:

**1. Cleaning:** keep a cleaning schedule; keep the handwashing sink clean with hot and cold water, antibacterial liquid and tissues or hand-dryer. Fridge/Freezers and ovens should be cleaned, and the workspace, specifically all the hand and



“Provide first-class customer service to all the customers all the time. Always serve your customers with smiles, love, tenderness and care and treat each customer as your special guest.”

food contact surfaces, should be cleaned and disinfected daily.

**2. Storage:** raw meat/chicken/fish should always be stored on the bottom shelf and prepared separately to avoid cross-contamination. Do not store food on the floor and label cooked food, dairy products and ready-to-eat food with use-by-date.

**3. Chilling:** Maintain and accurately record fridge/freezer, cooking, reheating and hot-holding temperature every day.

**4. Staff training:** all staff should have sufficient knowledge about food safety with at least a level 2 food safety qualification, specifically about food allergens.

**5. Management:** Maintain the Safer Food Better Business folder, do Opening Checks and Closing Checks every day, and make sure you sign and date them.

*Tastier Food, Happier Customer, Staff and Safer premises Better Business.*

**2. Fresh gravy** tastes much better than leftover old, cooked gravy. Cook and use fresh gravy every day to make your curry taste much better and safer.

**3. Customer Service:** Provide first-class customer service to all the customers all the time. Always serve your customers with smiles, love, tenderness and care and treat each customer as your special guest.

**4. Staff members:** Treat your staff with honour, respect, and fairness and provide appropriate training courses and support to improve their skills, knowledge, experience and positive attitude towards their work, workspace and colleagues.

**5. Legal requirement:** Run your business as professionally as a mainstream British business by following appropriate and relevant legal requirements for health and safety, fire safety, business insurance, staff accommodation, payroll system, and diverse employment opportunities.

## 5 Top tips to achieve this:

**1. Fresh rice:** Sell freshly cooked rice every day. Do not sell today's cooked rice tomorrow as it loses taste and can cause food poisoning due to bacterial growth.

**Md Abdul Hoque Habib**  
Managing Director  
London Training Centre







# Marketing & PR in a Post Covid World

## New Ways to Stay Relevant

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How exactly do you adapt to this new world and keep customers interested through Marketing and PR?

During the pandemic, the hospitality industry has been forced to look for new ways to stay relevant; this is not necessarily bad news. With change come new opportunities.

What does this mean? It means that as a restaurant it is more important than ever to listen to your customers and be up to date with food trends that are important to your particular customers, and what they like and dislike about your restaurant. As long as you keep an eye on these two factors, you will be able to successfully adapt in a world where the customer holds all the clues.

So, how exactly do you adapt to this new world and keep customers interested through Marketing and PR?

You would be surprised at just how easy it is, and it doesn't take a big budget to do it!

Here are some cost-effective tips to ensure your marketing efforts are cutting through the competition post pandemic.



## 1. Your Market Positioning - It starts with the two C's, Customers and Competitors.

Your positioning tells your customers (your market), what your restaurant stands for; who will be your target group of people; and how you will be unique from other restaurant brands.

This will help you write your messaging when it comes to Branding, Social and PR so that you can cut through the noise of your competitors and stand out.

In the crowded marketplace with more options than ever before, positioning will differentiate your brand from the competition. If everyone already has a perception of the top restaurant in town, don't try to fight against that. Don't try to take on your competitor's position. Find a different angle that you can own.

Positioning is so important, it influences the actions, mindset, design, service, and focus of your brand. This can only be done by understanding who your customers are, what their age group is, do they spend a lot, or are they budget buyers? In other words, what do the customers in your area want?

Next, what is your competitive landscape, which competitor is fulfilling their needs and what is missing? It is about looking at all the restaurants in the area and seeing which ones are popular and why, and are there any Indian cuisine alternatives? It isn't about what you would like to offer them, if they don't want it they won't buy.

It's simple. If you look at the chart below, you can map out your competitors positioning as well as yours. If you are offering the same as all your competitors, unless you are the best in offering this category, it's time to start reviewing your positioning. But it starts with what the customers wants and what is already out there.

Are there four competitors all offering a traditional curry house experience in a market that has families? If so, then offer something more young focused, with café culture that the younger members can visit with their friends. Make sure the customers exist or this won't translate into profit.

How do you know what to offer? Easy! What are you known for? What do your customers tell you are your good points? What are your unique aspects? Tripadvisor, surveys and face to face communication, as well as newspaper and magazine reviews will tell you how your customers see you and what your strengths and weaknesses are.

Don't try to be everything for everyone, Indian restaurants are known to have hundreds of dishes on the menu, cut out those that don't sell, this will give you an idea of what works and what doesn't work, and the type of customers that love your restaurant.

There are several ways you can address your positioning.

- Positioning based on product characteristics. Do you pride yourself on offering only local produce, or a specialist cuisine that no one in the area offers? Do you have special dishes that others don't have?

“Don't try to be everything for everyone, Indian restaurants are known to have hundreds of dishes on the menu, cut out those that don't sell.”



- Positioning based on price - cheap and cheerful for the budget conscious.
- Positioning based on quality or luxury, fine-dining for the middle class.
- Positioning based on the competition. What is missing that your competitors do not offer but customers want to see? What can you offer, that no one else provides in the area?

By defining the right positioning you will be able to accomplish the following:

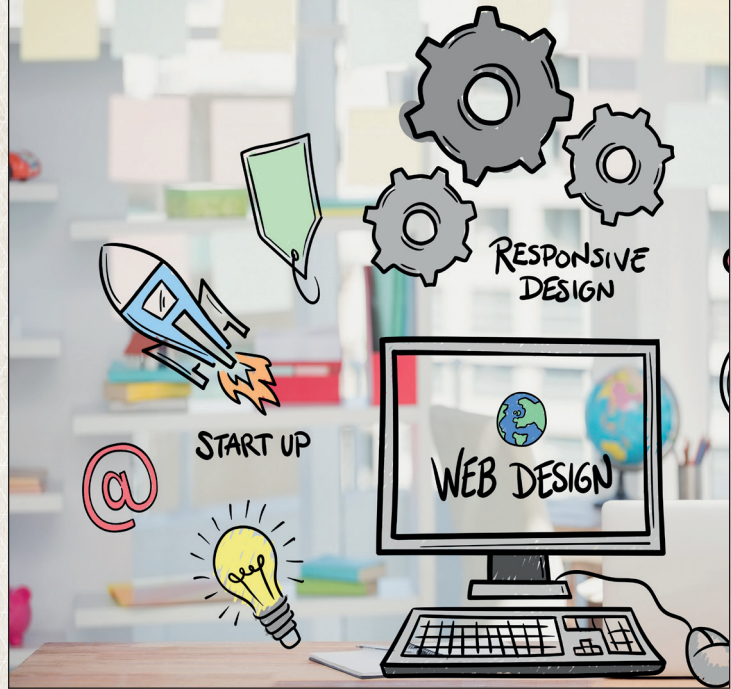
- Set your brand apart from the competition
- Be memorable
- Provide consistent messaging
- Increase advertising Return on Investment
- Create a framework for making better marketing decisions that translate into profit
- Unify the team's efforts

## 2. Next, Brand Strategy

With positioning understood, branding needs to be consistent. Everything should help the customer identify your restaurant. Be consistent with the following;

- Brand logo and colours
- Brand Font style (the lettering)
- Tone of voice (in other words, the way you speak to the customers in the restaurant as well as on social media)
- Your brand personality (what the restaurant is known for – is it fun, high class inviting or unique?)
- Brand messaging (what are the 2-3 sentences that you always use to describe your restaurant and the experience guests will get, e.g. KFC is Finger Lickin' Good).

Branding covers both design as well as the experience and needs to be the consistently the same across all aspects of your restaurant. This includes the interior, exterior, your menu, website, social media channels, uniform, the way the customers feel when they enter and leave the restaurant, even the way your staff speak to the customers and the style of images you take



for social media. A good example is Nando's, no matter which one you go to, you will have the same experience above and beyond the food.

Remember, your customer feedback will give you an idea of what your brand personality is, ie family friendly and warm hospitality, or classy and sophisticated etc.

## 3. PR builds Trust, Publicity and Profit

When it comes to restaurant PR, it is all giving the press something that is newsworthy. Here are some tips to do your own PR no matter what type of restaurant you have;

A picture speaks a thousand words. A story doesn't get covered without professional images. For some reason, the photography budget is always cut but restaurants run the risk of giving an unprofessional image to customers.

An investment of a few hundred pounds for images of your restaurant, signature dishes, Chef and Owner are not only for PR. Remember, your images can be used on your menus, websites and social media, and they are vital for your website. These can last a few years and will increase your chances of getting press coverage and gives you a more professional image.

Make sure you have actual news to share. Your story is what will get you into the publications,



making them want to feature you. Doing this well will help you gain that all-important 'know, like and trust' factor.

### **So what makes a good story?**

Journalists depend on the 'news angle' of your story. Is it new, topical, educational, different or quirky? They are also busy people, so when you email them, get to the point, sum up your reason for contacting them and what your story idea is or you will crate a bad impression and they won't want to cover you in the future.

### **News examples include;**

- Is it unusual or sensational? Eg hottest curry competition, largest onion bhaji in the country. Did a celebrity visit your restaurant that you can share with photos? etc.
- Does it affect the people that read the publication? A charity event or competition for the readers as part of a partnership with the press.
- Jump onto the latest news, is it flu season? Tell the press all the flu fighting benefits of a curry.
- Celebrate awareness days. Is it National Vegetarian Week? Give the media some vegetarian recipes from your establishment for example.
- Offer stories about people. This can be a story of how your business survived Covid, or a celebration of how you have raised money for a local cause. ! Are you sending out some of your wait staff or

“  
Traditional food review  
– the lifestyle editor will  
never say no to a timely  
review or recipe linked  
to holiday.  
”

cooks to help serve meals in a homeless shelter? That's news!

- Traditional food review – the lifestyle editor will never say no to a timely review or recipe linked to holiday.

Whatever you offer to the media, keep the below in mind;

- It must NOT be commercial or sound like an ad – that's what advertising is for!
- It must be timely, the story must be relevant to what readers care about in this exact moment.
- Your email/phone call must be short and to the point

Leverage away! Once you get featured in the press, it's important to capitalise on it and leverage your media coverage on social media and online.

### **4. Use Influencers and Reviewers to your Advantage**

When it comes to advertising and public relations, there's nothing quite like a 5-star review posted on social media by a local influencer or reviewer. So, where do you start? Search for a list of these essential influencers and local restaurant reviewers, who you can invite to your restaurant for a special "influencer night."

Influencers love to be wined, dined, and recognised. This event gives you a chance to ensure they receive impeccable service, an exclusive interior look, and great food. In exchange, your restaurant will end up trending on social media, drawing in the highly coveted attention of potential customers.





“Educational posts on the benefits of your dishes Events. You can announce special events in your restaurant, or even hold live online cooking classes”

Just make sure they tag your restaurant social channels and include a #hashtag of your choice.

If you don't know where to search, highlight in your social media that you are open to collaborations with influencers, they will contact you!

### **5. Social Media is about Community and Conversation**

This is where your iPhone photo and video editing skills have power. Social media channels are about getting your customers talking to you and each other, all with one topic in mind. How much they love your brand!

People love your food, but more importantly, they love you.

One of the big reasons your guests dine with you is because of the experience you provide and how you make them feel, not just because of how delicious your food is, so build that community!

Marketers know 80% of your profit comes from 20% of your customers. Loyal ones, so stay connected to your loyal customers, but only through the social media your customers use or you will burn out.

If your customers are above 30 they will be on Facebook, so share news on your page, below that they will be on Tik Tok, regardless, all food fans will always be on Instagram, but don't use all channels. Only those that are seen by your customers.

Try and engage with them as much as you can. Videos and images do best, think of what can

be shared to others. People love personality and helpful information, they want to know more about you, don't try and copy someone else, stick to your brand personality.

The key is to educate and entertain, never go silent! Always inform your loyal fans about what's going on and have a regular calendar of content to share, don't go silent!

Famous chefs around the world are taking the public into their homes through Facebook and Instagram live for the very first time to teach recipes and procedures that were once "secret".

Content can include a variety of topics related to your brand, such as;

- Updates on your business – do you have some changes to your operations, do you have online ordering?
- Exclusive discounts for your Facebook fans when they book online through your website.
- Sharing of PR coverage
- Educational posts on the benefits of your dishes
- Recipes and tutorials from your chef (short videos work best)
- Behind the scenes videos and images of where the magic happens.
- Fun personality led pieces on you and your staff, let them get to know each and every staff member, not just the owner.
- Events. You can announce special events in your restaurant, or even hold live online cooking classes
- Question and Answers session related to cooking your cuisine.

### **6. Your online activity needs updated content**

Your website should always have updated content. Why? Because fresh content, not copy and paste, will mean you go up the google rankings, this is called SEO (Search Engine Optimization). The more content you have, the better, that doesn't mean long pages of information, fresh short pieces of interesting information works best.

People may not be walking by your restaurant like they used to, they are googling it. Ask your web team for editing options so you can update quickly.

As customers start looking up places to dine, where



will you be in those search results? Take some time to optimise your online presence and ensure your social media channels are consistent so that when consumers do go looking for your restaurant, they can actually find you.

A great place to start is by making sure you're set up with Google My Business. It's free, easy to use, and allows you to manage your online presence across Google, including Search and Maps. This helps guests find you more easily through various marketing tactics that keep guests engaged.

Beyond your Google business profile, you should also be updating your website. When auditing all of the pages of your website, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the information up to date?
- Do customers know of the changes to their experience due to Covid restrictions?
- Does your menu view well on desktop PC and mobile devices?
- Are your images up to date?
- Fresh content can include your start up story, chef biogs, recipes etc)
- Are you capturing emails and building a mailing list you can share a newsletter with? (Mailchimp is free but always make sure your web team add GDPR compliance policies when collecting to stay above the law!)

You can also make sure to include information people may need to see now regarding your operations, including:

- The current status of your operations (eg open for dine-in, open for takeout only, delivery only etc).
- Your updated health and safety precautions post Covid.
- Any government-mandated procedures you are following
- How guests can support you ie direct ordering online
- How to stay connected with your restaurant (email sign up, social handles, Tripadvisor link)

Most importantly of all, always encourage Tripadvisor reviews and share your Tripadvisor



badges on your website and social channels.

### Profile

Shareena Ali, an internationally successful Chartered Marketer and PR Expert with over 18 years of experience across corporate communications, travel, food and beverage, health & beauty, wellness, fashion and entertainment industries.

Former Communications Specialist for the London Olympics 2012, Mayor of London, she was the International PR Director for Atlantis, The Palm Dubai, as well as P Director for holiday destinations Yas Island, and Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi, promoting the Abu Dhabi F1 Grand Prix, and the luxury hotel and restaurants including the W Hotel, Hilton, Jumeirah, Rixos, Radisson, Fairmont, and Sofitel.

Her work has featured in Forbes, Cosmopolitan, BBC, ITV, The Guardian, The Daily Mail, Cosmopolitan, Grazia, Vogue, The Travel Channel, Sunday Times, Gulf News, This Morning, Channel 4, Jerusalem Post, NY Post and others.

Shareena also advises small business owners and entrepreneurs as a PR Coach, so they can secure media coverage that translates into profit and media buzz.



**Shareena Ali**

Chartered Marketeer





# Effective Marketing Tips for Restaurants that Yield Results

## Restaurant marketing is tricky.

Fierce competition, tight margins, ever-changing trends; restaurant marketing isn't for the faint-hearted. And now you've got to deal with digital marketing too. But there is a silver-lining. Countless restaurant owners and marketers have already tried and tested every digital strategy and marketing platform out there and we've waded through the results to bring you 6 of the most effective restaurant marketing tips.

### 1) Be instagrammable

Instagram is a restaurateur's dream. It isn't just millennials who love snapping pictures of their food to post on Instagram. Over a third of all Instagram users in the UK are aged over 35 and with 22 million users across the country, you're certain to have a sizeable Instagram audience in your local area.

Before you start posting on your Instagram account, here are a few words of advice to nail your restaurant PR:

All of your dishes may look great but it's worth creating a signature dish or drink; something creative that is unique to your restaurant which you can really go to town with on Instagram.

Make sure all of your foodie photos are of a high quality. This means clear, clean, sharp images with no glare. Good lighting is

“  
It's worth  
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restaurant  
.....”



“Good restaurant marketing isn't just about creating positive chatter about how great your restaurant is, it's about dealing with negative reviews in a way that can turn an unhappy customer into a happy one.”

key, so find a spot in your restaurant where natural light floods in. (Pro tip: don't take pictures on the pass under heat lamps. The orange glow makes the pics look bad!)

To break up the parade of foodie pictures, include photos of the inside your restaurant so your audience can get a feel for your dining atmosphere. Also, include photos of your staff; front-of-house, chefs, KPs, the whole team. Showcasing the friendly faces that make your restaurant will make it more inviting.

Create a hashtag that is unique to your restaurant and use it consistently. Don't forget to add in geographical hashtags so you can draw in a local crowd.

Instagram is a 2-way street when it comes to restaurant marketing; it's just as important to get your customers posting. Here are a few ways you can make this happen:

- Create Instagrammable food; food that stands out in some way, whether it's through eye-catching colours, interesting textures or intriguing ingredients.
- Create an Instagram dessert menu as part of a limited time offer. If customers take a picture of their dessert and post it on Instagram with your restaurant hashtag, they get it for free.
- Find local foodie influencers on Instagram, individuals who have a large following on Instagram (and love good food) and as such have sway when it comes to recommendations they make. Invite them to your restaurant and ask them to post photos of their dining experience including your restaurant hashtag.
- Celebrate your restaurant's birthday with an

Instagram giveaway. Put out a post asking people to like your account for the chance to win a free dinner for themselves and a friend. Include a deadline for your giveaway and make sure people stand a good chance of winning by handing out your prize to multiple winners.

- Get even more interactive with Instagram giveaways and nurture new customers into becoming loyal customers by running contests that offer free meals or dishes if, for example, customers post photos with their favourite waiter or waitress at your restaurant (similar contests work just as well on Facebook).

Remember to repost photos from your followers to show that you're grateful for their contribution.

## 2) Respond to reviews

Customers looking for somewhere new to eat will often turn to Google searching for reviews. Yelp, Facebook, Google, TripAdvisor reviews and the like will be listed in their search results. If you're not on these platforms, you could still be racking up reviews. To stay in control of your reputation it is therefore important to claim your space on these platforms and put up as much useful information as you can: photos, opening hours, your location, a mobile-friendly menu, price ranges and other facilities you have (WiFi, parking, outdoor seating etc).

Next, set up Google alerts, so whenever your restaurant name appears somewhere new online, you'll know about it. Good restaurant marketing isn't just about creating positive chatter about how great your restaurant is, it's about dealing with negative reviews in a way that can turn an unhappy customer into a happy one. Reply to negative reviews quickly, politely and in a friendly manner;



apologise for a customer's bad experience and offer to redeem things with a free meal or discount.

### 3) Up your local ranking

Once again, Google reigns supreme when customers are looking for a restaurant near them. Local marketing for restaurants is made easy with Google Maps. If you can nab one of the top 3 spots in Google Map's results panel, you're certain to get more traffic to your website.

To be featured on Google Maps you need to set up a free Google My Business account and populate it with all the information a customer would find helpful: your opening hours, address, contact information and photos. Reviews will also show up here, so make sure you follow tip #2 too. It also helps to keep your website updated and all of your restaurant details consistent across platforms.

### 4) Set up a loyalty programme

Keep your customers coming back for more with a simple loyalty programme. The lure of getting something free still works but today any decent loyalty programme needs to be digital.

Digital loyalty cards come with the added benefit of giving you data on what keeps your loyal customers coming back. Offer an incentive for new customers to sign up when they're at the till, such as a 10% discount off the bill they are about to pay. Finally, make sure you promote your loyalty card perks on your social media accounts, in your email campaigns and on your table tents

### 5) Get on board with Facebook check-ins

Facebook is still the biggest social media platform out there with arguably the most powerful reach. Facebook check-ins are an easy way to promote

your restaurant by getting your customers to do much of the legwork.

A Facebook check-in is a type of post that highlights where someone is located and when. For businesses it acts as a personal endorsement. By encouraging your customers to check-in on Facebook when they visit your restaurant, you'll get instant exposure as Facebook check-in posts are on average seen by 150-200 Facebook friends of the customer who checks in.

No matter how finessed your restaurant PR is, there is nothing quite as powerful as being recommended by a friend or family member. In fact 92% of people trust family and friend recommendations, which is why Facebook's algorithm is now more heavily weighted to these recommendations over what businesses advertise.

### 6) Get Smart: Link Your Social With Chatbots and Email

We find you can get incredible results by getting joined up: don't just rely on social media, enhance your presence with a paid-for ad targeting your local geography and fans of your type of food.

Then, link that post with a chatbot. A chatbot is simply software that automatically carries out an on-line chat 'conversation' via text message to your potential customer. As part of that process, you can request the customer's email address, and incorporate them into your email marketing so you can start to build a long term relationship with them too.

Below are some ways we use Chatbots and Email to get results for restaurants:

### Viral Giveaway Campaign





One of the most effective campaigns is a viral giveaway. These get you a huge amount of attention from new potential customers using an attractive giveaway offer posted to Facebook.

You can then convert a significant amount of them into immediate paying customers using a clever Chatbot sequence. When the user comments on your giveaway offer, you can set it to open up Facebook Messenger and prompt them to pass on their email address (so you can add them to a mailing list) and you can offer them vouchers for their next purchase. This means they aren't just there for the free prize draw.

### **Birthday Bot Campaigns**

Birthdays are a great opportunity for restaurants to get group bookings.

You can target potential customers who have a birthday coming up, reach them with a great offer to encourage a group booking, and convert them into paying customers. Set it up using Facebook ads and a smart Chatbot sequence that utilised Facebook messenger, and keep the campaign running in the background with fresh content each month.

### **VIP Clubs**

Social media is great for reaching your fans – but you are always beholden to the dreaded algorithms – or worse, getting your account suspended.

We always advocate encouraging your customers to join a 'VIP club' for your restaurant – essentially an email list that allows you to communicate directly and provide loyal customers with great offers and regular announcements. Set up a great VIP programme that encourages people to join and builds an email marketing and messenger contacts database allowing you to reach them with great offers and new dishes directly.

We regularly get 40-60% open rates on emails and 80-90% open rates on messenger, so you can start turning social media 'interest' into bums on seats.

### **BONUS TIP!**

#### **7) Ask for help!**

If you're not sure sure how to get going with Facebook check-ins, social media marketing,

You can target potential customers who have a birthday coming up, reach them with a great offer to encourage a group booking, and convert them into paying customers.

chatbots or email you're in luck! At RFS Marketing we offer a tailored Facebook check-ins programme that has every angle covered:

- We'll encourage your customers to check-in on Facebook via attractive promo signs designed for you
- We'll run monthly contests to encourage repeat business and more check-ins
- We'll regularly change your check-in promo signs with fresh offers
- We'll re-share and engage with your customers' comments on your page
- We'll even train your staff on how it all works and keep them motivated.

It's a great starting point to getting great results on social media. To find out more about this all-inclusive programme, and our other restaurant marketing services. Visit [RFSmarketing.co.uk](http://RFSmarketing.co.uk)

There you have it, six restaurant marketing tips you can get started on right now. And a bonus one! It's a recipe for digital marketing success.

**Richard Forshaw Smith**

**MD, RFS Marketing**







# REBRAND

## The Interdependence of Branding and Public Relations

While “branding” a product is all about promoting a term, symbol or a product name, public relations (PR) experts view their job as also pitching something with marketing and advertising efforts.

In a nutshell, branding is who you are—and marketing is how you build awareness. Branding is your strategy, while marketing encompasses your tactical goals. In order to determine who your brand is.

Whereas public relations is about selling the company or brand through positively managing the communication channels between a company and its stakeholders. Overall, marketing activities are trying to achieve direct revenue, while PR is trying to drive a positive reputation through an effective PR strategy.

PR helps brands bring their stories to life in an authentic and genuine way. PR helps brands narrow their focus so their story becomes relevant to their target audiences. PR helps brands identify their target audiences - The audience is key. Who brands are engaging with is just as important as what they are saying. The following are illustrative examples of public relations.

- Investor Relations
- Government Relations
- Community Relations

“  
PR helps brands narrow their focus so their story becomes relevant to their target audiences.

.....



- Media Relations
- Media Production
- Customer Relations
- Marketing Communications

### Influencers

Four basic categories of public relations research activities are most common: media monitoring, public relations audits, communication audits and social audits. Public relations research can be formal or informal, primary or secondary, qualitative or quantitative, etc.

Good branding elevates a business and builds recognition and loyalty. Customers are attracted to brands that share similar values with them. When you showcase what you value through branding, customers will develop an emotional connection to you. For example, I love the brand Appointed.

### Branding comes first

After all, your ultimate goal is sales, and marketing is the strategy used to optimize for sales.

A PR strategy will help you organise your PR activities and make strategic decisions about the best ways to communicate. It can also help you to use the stories in your business to draw in your target audience as well as increase your profile and build brand awareness.

The function of public relations is to build favorable relationships with the organisation's key publics. Marketing is about promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising. Marketing and PR strategies target different audiences. ... Marketers work really hard to meet customers' needs.

### Public relations builds up credibility

Public relations boosts an organisation's credibility, because it'll operate through numerous trusted intermediaries. Plus, these intermediaries communicate to a certain audience which looks to them to filter out all nonsense.

The terms "marketing" and "public relations" aren't interchangeable. Defining what makes them different can help you create better-focused marketing and PR campaigns, with better objectives, goals and expected outcomes.

Here are three differences between marketing and public relations.

### 1. Function

The two industries have different functions. The function of public relations is to build favorable relationships with the organisation's key publics. Marketing is about promoting

A successful marketing campaign would be one that met sales goals and resulted in profit and high ROI.

and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.

### 2. Target audiences

Marketing and PR strategies target different audiences. Marketing's target is the customer. Marketers work really hard to meet customers' needs. In PR, audiences consist of a range of publics (customers, employees, suppliers, investors, media, etc.), who collectively support the organisation's objectives.

### 3. Strategy success metrics

Both marketing and PR professionals measure the success of their campaigns after their implementation. However, marketing and public relations strategies use different metrics to measure their success. A successful marketing campaign would be one that met sales goals and resulted in profit and high ROI. Public relations pros define success through the mutually beneficial relationships they've built with key audiences.

Both marketing and public relations industries serve to achieve a company's goals and fulfill its mission. Understanding the differences between the two helps companies craft their strategies, better aiming them at different target audiences with specific focus and results in mind. Savvy marketing and public relations professionals should integrate marketing and PR into their strategies to achieve organisational success.

Axia Public Relations provides the expertise and resources to build a winning PR campaign for your company. Learn how to get the most from your relationship with your PR firm.

**Sudha Saha**

Celebrity Chef





# ENSURING SAFETY IN FOOD AND HEALTH MATTERS







“The ability to understand what is food safety and health and safety are as important as driving revenue.”

I would say this is a serious issue in lesser known hotels and restaurants.

Leadership comes from the top and the culture is filtered down.

It is a no brainer how important these aspects are in the food business. Not many owners/chefs/managers take this seriously until something major happens. There should be weekly and monthly audits to keep a tab on due diligence.

It is not only the due diligence, it is about understanding the process and reasoning behind HACCP.

Education and training is a must at all levels. It is also the pedigree of chefs recruited. For instance, an owner would like to save a few grand and recruit less able staff to run the business. This over a period of time has a negative impact on the business. Today so many nationalities work in the food industry, many of whom have no experience at all. This can be dangerous for the business.

The ability to understand what is food safety and health and safety are as important as driving revenue. Unfortunately, owners or managers or chefs are NOT ignorant but take shortcuts to complete their daily tasks.

Many food businesses run at a fraction of staff actually required due to high wage costs. It is a difficult balance of recruitment, understanding, training, logic and common sense, an initiative by the top management or owners. Ignorance is not an excuse. It may affect the lives of staff members and customers equally.

**Arup Das Gupta**

Executive Chef







# THE ART AND SCIENCE OF QUALITY

## A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS IN THE CATERING BUSINESS

**Nurturing excellence in every detail, one bite at a time.**

“

Quality is not an act, it's a habit.” –  
Aristotle

.....

In today's competitive market, the catering business faces numerous challenges and opportunities to stand out. Quality, in all its aspects, is what sets a successful catering business apart from its competitors. Quality encompasses not only the food and service, but also the work environment, customer relationships, and management style.

The modern catering business is about creating memorable experiences for customers through a combination of exceptional food, service, and hospitality. A positive work environment is crucial for ensuring quality in the workplace. Clear communication channels and proper training for employees, along with effective management that provides clear goals and regular feedback, are essential for success.

In the catering business, it is important to cultivate a culture of quality that starts with the management and extends to every employee. The kitchen staff, waiters, and all other employees must be trained and equipped with the necessary skills to deliver the best possible experience to customers.



# “Quality is the foundation for success in the catering business.”

## • A Culture of Quality:

- The work environment must be positive and supportive, with clear communication channels and policies that help employees balance work and life.
- Employees must be trained and equipped with the necessary skills to deliver the best possible experience to customers.
- The management must provide clear goals, regular feedback, and the necessary training to ensure success.

## • Continuous Improvement:

- A continuous improvement process must be in place, which involves regularly gathering feedback from customers, employees, and management.
- The aim is to continuously raise the bar and deliver the best possible experience to customers.

## • Hospitality is Key:

- A restaurant is not just a place to eat, but a retail establishment that sells food and beverage products through service.
- Hospitality is about creating a warm and welcoming environment where guests feel valued and appreciated.
- To serve is to sell, and by providing excellent food, service, and hospitality, a catering business can turn casual customers into loyal, repeat guests.

## • Additionally, Technology:

- Technology is playing an increasingly important role in the catering business.

- The use of online ordering and delivery systems, customer relationship management (CRM) tools, and other digital solutions can help streamline operations and improve the customer experience.
- By leveraging technology, catering businesses can increase efficiency, reduce waste, and provide real-time data to help make informed decisions.

In conclusion, quality is the foundation for success in the catering business. It requires a commitment to excellence at every level, from the management to the employees and customers. A culture of quality, combined with a continuous improvement process, regular training and development programs, and the use of technology, can help ensure success in the catering business.

As the famous chef Julia Child once said, “People who love to eat are always the best people.” In the catering business, quality is what brings people together and creates a memorable experience for everyone.

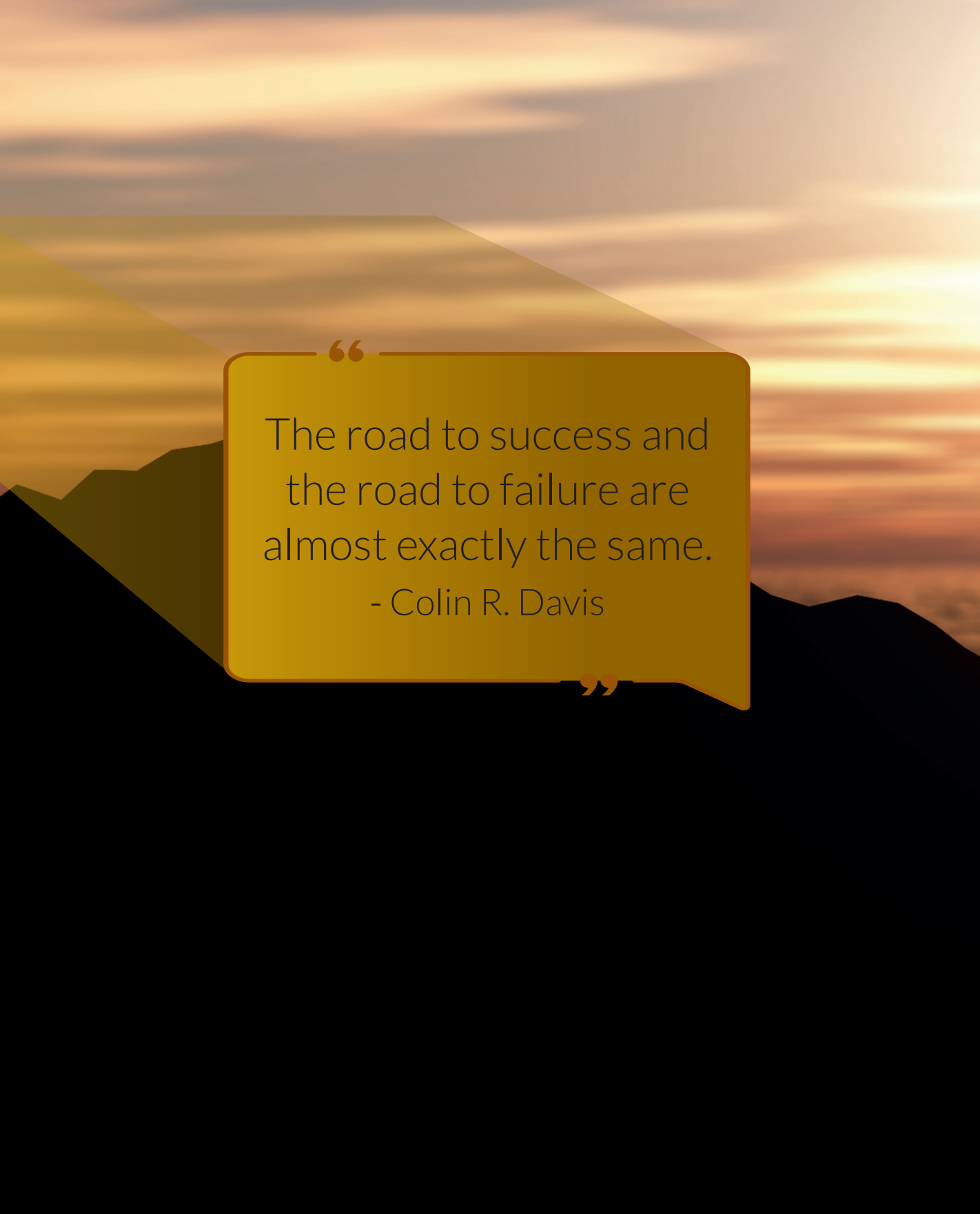
Quality is the foundation for success in the catering business, embrace it at every level.

**Altat Hussain**

Executive Member  
Catering Circle





The background of the image is a sunset or sunrise scene. The sky is filled with horizontal bands of orange, yellow, and light brown clouds. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted mountain ranges. A large, semi-transparent yellow speech bubble is centered in the middle of the image. Inside the bubble, there is a quote in a dark, sans-serif font. The quote is enclosed in large, stylized quotation marks that are part of the bubble's design.

“  
The road to success and  
the road to failure are  
almost exactly the same.  
- Colin R. Davis  
”





# SUCCESS STORIES





## Foyso! Choudhury MBE MSP



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The first Bangladeshi-origin  
Member of the Scottish Parliament  
(MSP) for the Lothian region

---

**Britannia Spice**  
Edinburgh EH6 6LB



Foyso! Choudhury MBE has been involved in the restaurant business since 1990, but the business has been in the family since the 80's. Growing up he used to help and naturally began to enjoy as well as show a keen interest in the field. He was always interested in Politics and the restaurant was the place for conversations, discussions and meetings. The restaurant became a meeting place not just to socialise, and talk about ideas but share visions and find new ways to do business and new technologies and techniques to discover. For him, it wasn't just a business but a way of life.

His favourite part of this business is meeting new people. Over the years it developed his confidence as he had to socialise and meet all kinds of people and he enjoyed it very much. It made him realise he enjoys helping people and being an active member of the community not just a business owner. The business helped improve his communication skills which allowed him to do charity events, help those in need as he had the skills and expertise to do so as well as arrange fundraising for many causes. The restaurant was never just a restaurant for him but a place where he grew as a person and gained many skills which have made him the person he is today.

In choosing menu and ingredients, he discusses this with his chefs and together they brainstorm and research new dishes and ingredients. Their signature dish, Foyso! confirms, is, "the Jalfrezi because it's traditional and tasty and one of my favourites. We want to keep the food authentic, fresh and true to its roots, so it's important for us to produce these to the best of our abilities rather than losing them by changing or evolving them into something else."

The staff in his restaurant are all trained and he tries to ensure they are happy to be part of the business and have a passion for the industry. They are aware of maintaining good standards and excellent customer service. Foyso! loves what he does and hopefully they see that and are inspired to enjoy the work and always treat their customers with the utmost respect, care and attention.

They use social media for the businesses and try to interact with the public with promotions and advertising. "When everything's online you have to move with the times. We have modern

equipment in the restaurants and ensure we are up to date with technology. Internet bookings and online services are a vital part of daily life now so we try to stay current and maintain a presence online," says Foyso!.

Social media, he says, is good for reaching out to large numbers of people quickly. Before this they used local news to advertise the businesses. They can interact with people online now, take orders and bookings quicker. "So the internet is probably most useful tool for us," he says, "rather than posting out paper menus or leaflets to homes." They have a database of clients so they communicate with them with deals, events, and offers as well as help celebrate their special days such birthdays and other important days they may have. This allows them to not only build relationships with their customers but also keep them involved with the business.

"The biggest challenge to not only my business but majority of restaurants and businesses is the competition offered online by sites such as Groupon and other food sites which provide cheap alternatives," says Foyso!. "I value quality over quantity and our food will always be the best we can offer and that won't be compromised. We also find that it's a challenge getting the best quality produce and spices for reasonable prices."

The hardest part of the job or being a manager, he says, is getting the right staff for the job. He finds this to be the toughest bit because he wants the person to be right for the job and keen as well as passionate and this can be difficult as not many young people especially ethnic minorities are choosing this as a career path.

The key ingredient to Restaurant's success, according to him, has to be good tasty authentic food, reasonable prices and great customer service and standards.

Foyso! is always concerned about the industry and its people. "I would love and hope that colleges and other agencies would do more to promote this field and make it more appealing as a career and a business. We don't want to lose this industry, so more needs to be done to make it appealing and interesting to future generations. It's not just about food but skills, which need to be preserved."





## Tofozzul Miah




**Bayleaf**  
London N20 9HH




Installing EPOS System enables Tofozzul's Bayleaf to boost sales and cut labour cost during peak business times. He is a firm believer of IT and Bayleaf has used advanced EPOS systems since 2001, where they have collected over 12,000 pieces of data from their customers to date. They use this database to remarket via three streams: SMS, Email and Direct Post. By implementing this strategy, they do not leak profits, especially with the current breath-taking fees being charged by third party online companies. "Also this has made us much more efficient when we are packed, and given our waiters the opportunity to take more tables." Tofozzul explains. They also have their own website, app and online ordering system, with each of them improving efficiency for both customers and themselves.

Tofozzul is an innovative and forward-thinking entrepreneur. He is the founder of the award-winning Bayleaf brand and Hiltop Motors Ltd, located in North London. From a very young age, he always wanted to be in control of his destiny and realised that the self-employment route will allow that. He did various labour-intensive jobs as a young man straight after school and on the weekends, which included working in the rug trade and on the Sunday markets. By the time he was a young adolescent he had enough capital to open up his own Indian Restaurant. He took this leap in South East London at the age of 17 and unfortunately the venture wasn't too successful. However, he did not give up. The principal lessons he took from this was that one really needs to entirely understand all work streams of a business when it is a micro size enterprise and in the case of a restaurant he needed to understand the roles of managements as well as front house and kitchen.

He worked in a Punjabi owned restaurant for the next 3 years, where he gained invaluable knowledge and experience. He learnt many tricks of the trade and saved some money too for future investments. An opportunity soon arose to become the partner of a Restaurant in North London. He took it, with some reservations as he was buying into this partnership knowing that the restaurant was not doing too well at the time. However, he managed to change things and after several months, this business was considerably profitable. This made him even hungrier to go and open his own establishment. He quickly realised that food delivery was an emerging market (in the 1990s), and with not many Indian takeaway/



He learnt many tricks of the trade and saved some money too for future investments. An opportunity soon arose to become the partner of a Restaurant in North London.



restaurant establishments doing deliveries, he took a bold but exciting decision of venturing into it. This is when he opened Bayleaf Takeaway on the Whetstone High Road. The business won many awards and accolades within the first few years alone and he has not looked back since.

5 years ago, he found a gap in the market for a fine dining Indian restaurant and opened up Bayleaf Restaurant in 2013, and it has been hugely successful since. By having a separate establishment that solely focuses on dining, they are able to direct their focus on not only the quality of food, but the presentation, too, and provide the best experience for their customers through impeccable service.

Amidst his journey in the catering industry, he began a hobby of buying and selling cars from home in 2006. Immediately he saw impressive returns, which led him to expand by purchasing a forecourt which held up to 20 vehicles. Upon continued success, he expanded even further by purchasing a car showroom in 2009. This is when he established Hiltop Motors, a quality German car dealership stocking up to 80 cars. It has been very successful since, with a current turnover of nearly £4m a year. He also likes to engage in local charity as well as voluntary work and he is a founder-trustee of Bangladeshi Welfare Society of Barnet, currently holding the President position. He also carries out voluntary work as the current Chief Treasurer of British Bangladeshi Caterers Association.





# Touris Ali



**Eastern Eye**  
Newton Abbot TQ12 2EU



Touris Ali started his career with restaurant job in 1982. Food is his passion and he loves to cook. He wanted to be his own boss and hence started restaurant business and materialised ideas he has gained from many years of experience in hospitality.

Established in 1990 in Newton Abbot's Queen Street, he has been successfully running his restaurant Easter Eye. From last 29 years under his ownership, they are busiest and first Indian restaurant in South Devon. In 1990 Eastern Eye started with 12 tables. In 2003 Touris refurbished and expanded the premises with 31 tables and celebrated an opening party for three nights inviting all of their loyal customers. Once again in 2013, they expanded the sitting capacity to 41 tables and refurbished the restaurant with an interior decoration. Now they can accommodate up to 160 persons in the restaurant.

Touris loves to face constant challenges in his business. Every day is different. Every shift has a new surprise, and he enjoys the challenge of handling them. He also likes how he improves more with each one. He always handles a new situation better than the last. Sponsoring local sports, supporting local charities, special compliments for customer's special occasion, buying best quality ingredients, Social Media – these are his brand building and marketing approaches.

They have designed their menu with selective dishes from South India, North India, West Bengal and coastal area. Their most popular signature dishes are Komla Chicken, Murgh Ghassi, Chicken Angara, Chicken Chengazi, Rajasthani Laal Maas, Sri Lankan Sefood Curry, Chennai Ghosth, Westbengal Murgh, etc.

Touris is well aware that employees can make or break his business, so he motivates them by telling them they are doing a great job and giving surprise bonus when an employee does a great job, and he also mentions that he feels very lucky to be working with them. He frequently communicates with his employee, let them know how the business is progressing and takes 10 minutes briefing every day before they start work.



Every day is different.  
Every shift has a new surprise, and he enjoys the challenge of handling them. He also likes how he improves more with each one. He always handles a new situation better than the last.



Touris uses innovative technology and modern equipment for his kitchen and front of the house. He advertises and promotes his menu items through live events, email, website, facebook, twitter, free Wi-Fi splash page, which attracts and reaches to the customers quickly and they get quick response.

Long time working experience staff, family involvement, keeping adequate funds in reserve, getting a memorable logo, ensuring a unique menu card, investing on customers, having responsive website and social media pages, these are the key ingredients for Eastern Eye's success in South Devon in last 29 years. The business has given him much social recognition. He is currently the vice chairman of Devon Bangladesh Association and a trustee of Bishwanath Education Trust.



## Jassim Hussain



**Shoreditch Fish & Chips**

117 Redchurch St  
London E2 7DL





Jassim's business acumen and focus on halal trading with barakah (blessings) in its earnings have earned him widespread recognition, including a win in the Catering Circle Talent Show in 2019 and a finalist award in the Restaurant Star Creative Dish Competition in 2023.



Born in the bustling city of London, Jassim Hussain, the son of Haji MD. Rafique Hussain, follows in the footsteps of his grandfather's legacy as a prominent business figure in the family. He is the grandson of Haji Aman Ullah, the founder of the well-known Karimullah Market and Aman Ullah convention centre in Sylhet. With a background in Optometry, Jassim's journey in the world of business began after a brief stint working for the NHS.

Taking on the challenge to manage his father's property portfolio, Jassim quickly rose to prominence in the property rental industry. However, he was not content to rest on his laurels, and soon set his sights on a new frontier - the food industry. With his brother's idea and guidance, Jassim launched Shoreditch Fish & Chips in 2018, a unique take on traditional British cuisine that quickly gained widespread recognition and accolades.

Undeterred by the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Jassim seized the opportunity to explore another market and founded Holy Smokes BBQ in 2021. With a focus on smoked brisket, ribs, and American-style burgers, Holy Smokes BBQ quickly became a staple of the food industry.

Jassim's business acumen and focus on halal trading with barakah (blessings) in its earnings have earned him widespread recognition, including a win in the Catering Circle Talent Show in 2019 and a finalist award in the Restaurant Star Creative Dish Competition in 2023. With a team of 18 dedicated employees and a passion for finding new ventures, Jassim's future in the world of business is bright and full of promise.

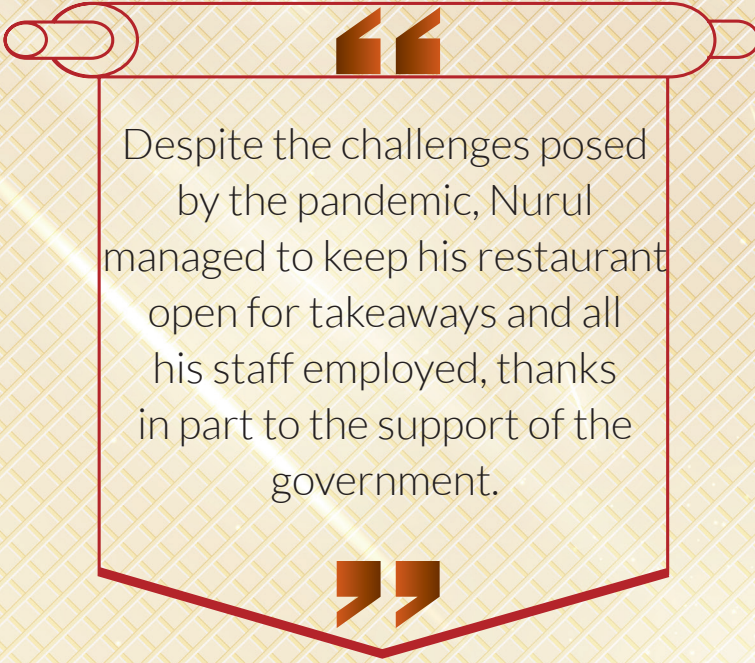


## Nurul Hussain Kadir



**Moghul**  
99-101 Main Road  
Sidcup, DA14 6ND





Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Nurul managed to keep his restaurant open for takeaways and all his staff employed, thanks in part to the support of the government.

Nurul Hussain, known to many as Kadir, embarked on his journey in the culinary realm in 1985. He took a job at the Moghul restaurant in Sidcup, a place that would become an integral part of his life's story. A year into his employment, he ventured to Bangladesh for a family holiday, only to return and be offered a partnership with his previous boss. With a bit of hesitation, but trust in his former employer, he accepted and opened his first business in North London in 1987.

However, the initial years were far from easy, as the country was facing a deep recession under the leadership of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Despite the challenges, Nurul persevered and sold the business, though at a loss. He decided to pursue a new career path and became a driving instructor, honing his skills and learning to survive in a challenging role.

In 2000, fate intervened in the form of a friend and successful businessman, Jamal Hussain, who offered him another opportunity to be in partnership with him. Nurul, who had worked in the restaurant before, eventually agreed to the challenge and took on the role of managing the struggling business.

Years of hard work and competition with established Indian restaurants in Sidcup paid off, as Nurul and Jamal expanded their restaurant by acquiring the property next door in 2007. Despite facing another recession in 2009, they persevered and merged the two buildings into one, finally opening their expanded Moghul in 2015 to great success.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Nurul managed to keep his restaurant open for takeaways and all his staff employed, thanks in part to the support of the government. The chancellor's Eat out to Help initiative was a big success for the Moghul, and Nurul is determined to continue offering good food and service that customers have come to expect from the restaurant.

Nurul believes in the power of self-belief and doing one's best. As he wisely states, "My belief has always been to believe in yourself, do the best of what you know, and keep going, and don't try to copy others. Do your best in what you do best. That is better than trying to copy someone else."



## Ataur Rahman Lyak



**Rajdoot Tandoori**  
220 London Road  
Guildford, GU4 7JS



Ataur Rahman Lyak is not your average restaurateur. He's a passionate chef, a business genius, and an all-around foodie fanatic. With over three decades of experience in the restaurant industry, Ataur has made his mark in the world of food with his passion, dedication, and unbeatable business acumen.

It all started in 1992 when Ataur opened his first restaurant, Rajdoot. From the very beginning, he knew he had something special to offer. "I was working in a restaurant in 1988, and that's when my passion for the food business started. I realized that the restaurant industry had high profit margins and low management hustle. I knew I could make a success of it," he said.

And make a success he did. Ataur's favourite part of the business is being in his restaurant, connecting with customers, sharing their thoughts and ideas, and implementing them in his business. Ataur has always believed in making his restaurant unique and different from others. His passion for food and his expertise in selecting unique recipes, ingredients, and spices for his menu has set his restaurant apart from the rest. His signature dishes, such as Tandoori Mushrooms Dupiaza, Murg Malai Sag, and Handi Lamb, are not only extremely popular with his customers, but also create an unparalleled flavour that is not available anywhere else.

Ataur's philosophy when it comes to selecting his menu and ingredients is simple: "Buy fresh, sell fresh." He believes that using fresh ingredients is the key to making delicious food that his customers love. And his philosophy is not limited to just his ingredients but extends to his entire business model. Ataur believes that simplicity and freshness are the key ingredients to his restaurant's success.

One of the biggest challenges of being a restaurant owner is motivating staff to maintain a constant service ethic. But Ataur has made it easy for his staff by equipping his restaurant with modern technologies and high-tech cooking apparatus. This not only makes their lives easier, but it also ensures that the service is efficient and of the highest quality.

Ataur is not one to shy away from using technology in his business. He uses an Epos system for order taking, manages his restaurant with remote access, and he uses tablet and online ordering systems. This not only makes his restaurant more efficient but also makes it more accessible to his customers.

When it comes to marketing and advertising, Ataur's main strategy is investing in his local community. He sponsors children and adult football clubs, provides charity meals for schools, organises fundraising events for churches, and

“  
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”

participates in other social activities. He also uses social networking sites such as Facebook, Google, and TripAdvisor to promote his business.

But owning and managing a restaurant is not without its challenges. Ataur admits that finding cheaper deals when buying good quality food and energy supplies can be a daunting task. However, he believes that with effort and dedication, it is possible to manage a restaurant efficiently.

When asked about the key ingredient to his restaurant's success, Ataur shared his success tips, "Buy fresh, sell fresh, and have fewer items on your menu. Your customers will love the taste of freshness in your food. Try to be humble and friendly with everyone. Word of mouth takes it a long way."

Looking towards the future, Ataur is waiting for the current economic situation to improve so that everyone can have more disposable income. He understands that the cost of living has increased significantly, and it will bring a negative impact on outgoing people's lives. Therefore, he will be waiting for the right time before thinking about his next project.

In conclusion, Ataur Rahman Lyak is a true inspiration for anyone who is passionate about the restaurant business. His unique selling point, passion for food, and dedication towards his customers have made him a successful restaurateur. Ataur's success story teaches us that providing fresh and unique flavours, investing in the local community, using modern technologies, and keeping your staff happy are some of the key ingredients for running a successful restaurant. As Ataur said, "Word of mouth takes it a long way," and his success is a testament to this statement.



## Rezaul Korim



**The Best of Turkish**  
41 Putney High Street  
London SW15 1SP



Rezaul always had a passion for cooking and a knack for hospitality. So, when he saw an opportunity to combine his two loves, he knew he had to open his restaurant. And that's how The Best of Turkish was born! He is the mastermind behind the success of The Best of Turkish located at 41 Putney High Street, London SW15 1SP.

Rezaul has been in the restaurant business for quite some time now, and with each passing day, he's learning new things and growing his business. But what he enjoys most about this industry is the ability to make people happy through his food and service. His unique selling point? Well, it's his secret recipe for the mouth-watering Turkish Kebabs that keeps customers coming back for more!


When it comes to creating his menu, Rezaul always goes for the freshest and highest quality ingredients, ensuring that his customers get a taste of authentic Turkish cuisine. His signature dishes include the famous Lamb Shish, Halowmi and Falafel Wrap.

But, what sets Rezaul apart from the rest is his ability to motivate his staff to keep delivering a high standard of service. For him, the success of his restaurant is not just about the food, but also about the people who work behind the scenes to make it all happen. He believes in treating his staff like family, creating a positive work environment where everyone feels valued and appreciated.


One of the ways Rezaul motivates his staff is by recognizing their hard work and offering incentives for excellent service. He knows that happy employees are the key to a successful business, and he does everything in his power to ensure that his team feels supported and motivated to give their best.

Rezaul also understands the importance of effective communication in the workplace. He makes it a point to listen to his staff's concerns and suggestions, taking their feedback into consideration when making decisions that affect the restaurant. This fosters a sense of teamwork and collaboration among the staff, leading to better performance and a more positive work environment.

In addition to providing incentives and creating a positive work environment, Rezaul also invests in his staff's training and development. He believes that by providing opportunities for growth and learning, his staff will be better equipped to handle the challenges of the job and provide excellent service to customers.



He makes it a point to listen to his staff's concerns and suggestions, taking their feedback into consideration when making decisions that affect the restaurant.



Overall, Rezaul's approach to managing his staff is centred around creating a supportive and positive work environment where everyone feels valued and appreciated. By recognising their hard work, providing incentives for excellent service, fostering effective communication, and investing in their training and development, he motivates his team to give their best every day.

Rezaul also embraces technology to streamline his operations, using modern equipment to enhance the cooking process and improve efficiency. And when it comes to marketing, Rezaul believes in the power of word-of-mouth and social media to get the word out.

Running a restaurant comes with its own set of challenges, and Rezaul has had his fair share. But, he believes that the key ingredient to his success is his unwavering commitment to quality, consistency, and customer satisfaction.

So, what's next for Rezaul and 'THE BEST OF TURKISH'? Well, he's always on the lookout for ways to innovate and expand his business while staying true to his roots. And with his dedication, passion, and drive, we're sure there's a lot more success in store for him!



## Abdul Karim



**Mahdi Lounge**  
32-34 Cinque Ports Street,  
TN31 7AN



When Mr Abdul Karim first came to England from Bangladesh with his parents in 1977 at the age of 12, he had no restaurant experience. But two years later, the part-time job he took changed the course of his life and the lives of many people. The Darbar restaurant in Bayswater, London is where Karim first encountered the life he would later devote to his servant. In fact, he loved the job so much that he wanted to work full-time in Darbar after earning his GCSE degree in 1980. There he began a journey that took him to many restaurants, including Wimbledon Tandoori, and since cooking was his passion, he continued to hone his skills as a restaurant manager, waiter, and kitchen worker.

Mr Karim kept dreaming of having his own restaurant, but knew that running a place entirely on his own at this stage would be too great a challenge and risk. So, with a sensible move, in 1986, he and his business partners opened Kent Tandoori (later renamed Baadshah) in Tenterden, Kent. The restaurant was a massive success and business was good. He spent most of his time in the kitchen, honing his skills as a chef, making traditional Indian and Bangladeshi dishes the likes of which were completely new in Kent.

As time went on, his family grew and his restaurant did very well. In 2002, he opened his own restaurant, Mahdi Spice (named after his third son), in Rye, East Sussex. The location was a bold and risky move as it was just a hundred feet away from a well-established curry house, The Gandhi, which had operated there for fifteen years already. And soon there was another curry house on the high street close by. But this did not deter Mr Karim. Rising to the challenge of establishing himself in a new neighbourhood, he strived tirelessly in search of perfection, covering every aspect of the business himself to make sure his personal touch was felt. Mahdi Spice soon established itself as the best curry house in Rye, winning many awards in its first year, including the prestigious Curry Award. Soon everyone swore by the quality of his take on South Asian cuisine, and also by his unmatched customer service. Mr Karim, a true believer in 100% customer satisfaction, accommodate every possible request from customers. His mission is to ensure everyone who comes through his restaurant doors leaves satisfied and wanting to return. And they do! That is what explains his success. His outstanding food and fantastic personal customer service.

As Mahdi Spice was established firmly as the best curry house for miles, the other two curry houses

shut down, not being able to compete with the competition from Mr Karim's establishment, which was now running better and stronger than ever, with his sons having joined the business. His eldest son, Jakaria, is a business graduate. His second son, Mahee, studied computer science. Mahdi, the youngest, is currently studying business management at the University of Canterbury. All three have the makings of fine entrepreneurial restaurateurs, with their own individual touch. Having gleaned so much from working closely with their father from a young age, each of them have picked up the finer tricks of the trade from hard graft, working both front of house and in the innards of the spice festival that is the sweltering kitchen. Mr Karim has poured his passion into his business and into the three sons who will take it on.

Despite his burgeoning success Mr Karim remains rooted in his culture and traditions. He has not forgotten where he hails from. Since 2010, when he founded the Dighal Bak Union Development Association, UK he has been helping people back home, and is currently the Vice President of the organisation. In 2016 he founded and is Director of the Greater London Nabiganj Welfare Association, which is dedicated to improving the lives of the Bangladeshi community in his hometown, areas suffering from severe seasonal flooding and devastating monsoons. Mr Karim ensures that his charitable work takes stock of these and other social issues facing his home country. Education and youth issues have a close link to him, and he has been closely involved in the Zukta Razya Nabiganj Education Trust since 2006. Aside from this he has been founding member of the Bangladesh Caterers Association, (Executive Member) and also the British Bangladesh Caterers Association (BBCA) since 2012. He is currently one of the Senior Vice Presidents of the BBKA.

With his three sons now gradually taking on serious responsibilities in the business Mr Karim secretly hopes he might begin to plan retirement. His warm and hearty grin whether he greets a familiar face of the Rye regular or a newcomer, a tourist or a lone dinner on his weekly Curry night out, Mr Karim is the personification of the generous South Asian host with a heart of gold and plateful of delicious food. Taking over the old established four-decade old restaurant and morphing into an up-scaled eatery called Mahdi Lounge, Mr Karim has shown that taking on the competition is clearly a sign of things to come



## Abdul Sattar



**Bengal Tiger**  
London EC4V 5EA



Abdul Sattar has a wealth of experience in the food service business. A love of food and innovation in recipes has been with him throughout his varied and accomplished life. He opened his restaurant Bengal Tiger at the age of 25 in the year 2000, inspired by the success and ethos of iconic Asian restaurants such as the Red Fort in Soho. Now at the helm of eight successful restaurants, he manages his time to spend in all to create inimitable dishes inspired by his South Asian roots and pushes the boundaries of what authentic Asian restaurant can be.

Bengal Tiger was his first ever business venture and he was fortunate in acquiring a venue in an enviable location close to St. Pauls cathedral in the heart of London. Set on two floors, the restaurant sets the standard for trendy chic with cutting edge interior design, complete with its very own Bengal Tiger (of the ornamental kind). With a reputation for food that was a cut above the rest, diners flocked to the 140-seat restaurant every day of the week. At weekends, however, without the custom of the city workers, Sattar found that the venue was a lot quieter. He decided to expand his business and eight years went into partnership to open his second restaurant in Canon Street in East London.

A third restaurant, Papadum, was launched in 2009 on Brick Lane the curry mecca of East London, followed up with involvement with Masala restaurant, one of the largest restaurants on Brick Lane.

Abdul Sattar is a gastronome who is passionate about food. Now, with interests in eight restaurants specialising in Thai, Japanese, Indian and Italian cuisines, he employs over 100 staff. Business success rests on his good team of trusted partners who look after individual restaurants. Sattar spends most of his time travelling from one restaurant to another to ensure they are running smoothly. Each of his ventures has its own character and style with no uniformity imposed. Sattar says his Thai restaurant in particular is very popular, situated in a historic area of London.

Sattar believes success has only come with hard work, commitment and effective communication. With a high benchmark for quality, fresh food and good service he strives to achieve authenticity, sourcing ingredients from around the world. A firm believer in staff development he ensures his

Eating out is another hobby but one that combines business with pleasure as an ulterior motive is keeping abreast of trends and developments in the culinary world.

team are well looked after and takes a personal interest in their training. When it comes to training, it must not just be about what happens behind the scenes, but also how staff interacts with customers. He treats each member of his team in the same fashion and expects each customer to be treated the same as well. There has to be a welcoming smile when the customer arrives. At the table they must receive attention quickly and the food must arrive with perfect timing with consistency in the preparation and delivery.

His catering commitments take up most of his time but Sattar is also an investor in property and some of his restaurants are freehold. When he is not busy overseeing his many business interests he enjoys travelling and takes his family of wife and three children on holiday three times a year.

Eating out is another hobby but one that combines business with pleasure as an ulterior motive is keeping abreast of trends and developments in the culinary world. Abdul Sattar is a keen supporter of charities and gives to many charitable organisations. Mindful of his roots in Bangladesh, he has built houses for poor people in deprived areas of the country. He is also heavily involved with community organisations and is senior vice president to Jagannathpur Unnayan Shangstha. An impressive business person, he never does anything by half, giving his time and talent to whatever project he is on.



## Aki Rahman



**The Don**  
Milton Keynes MK9 1LR



Aki Rahman accidentally fell in love with how dynamic the Indian restaurant market was whilst working for his uncles. Any effort that was put into aspects such as marketing and tweaks to service was rewarded by increase in custom straight away. He gained enough trust over time and they gave him carte blanche with regards to business policy.

With the advent of social media slowly starting to make a bigger impact on revenue Aki saw this as his chance to cash in on this cow that is the volatile Indian Restaurant game and started planning for his very own establishment.

He's loved every minute of it and has no regrets, even though he entered into it without the full blessings of his parents. They wanted more for their son who they privately educated. The education he received from his time at secondary school and college has set him up and influenced many aspects of how he view life and go about doing business.

Their marketing, ranges from closing the restaurant and renovating for 1 night on Halloween to scare the living bats out of their customers in the dark with night vision cameras to giving away a £1000.00 diamond ring during Valentines. They've attempted drone deliveries of their curry, which made national news being invited onto the This Morning Show with Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby broadcast on ITV. Modern innovations and technology have shaped their business from state of the art Epos systems and top end marketing companies to help spread and establish the brand.

Don Utd & Don Fc football teams have gone onto win many tournaments under the stewardship of Johirul Islam and Aki, respectively. They even organised their first tournament in 2019, raising £500 for Selfless.

Aki's business partners Hussain Chowdhury & Aziz Miah, together have created countless menus with their ideas coming from visiting the very best restaurants across the country, Amaya in Knightsbridge being their particular favourite. Thank you mum and dad for putting up with me and my wife and for always being there through thick and thin.

Eating out is another hobby but one that combines business with pleasure as an ulterior motive is keeping abreast of trends and developments in the culinary world.

Aki is always grateful to the Almighty for his success – "Allhumdulilah all 4 businesses have been successful and I give all thanks to Allah but I feel our creator cannot be happy that I have been profiting from the sale of alcohol and that is why I feel it's time to hang up my boots." "I've been part of the industry now for 6 years and initially my reason for diving head first into it was purely as a means to an end. The end being, Film making and Documentaries with the means being the income from the restaurants," he adds.

He has other big projects planned. One of them being a restaurant consultancy and marketing business called Isaacs Projects and another, which he hope to be a Just Eat killer.

His passion for film making has lead him to forming a film making production company called Aki Films . He also has a successful photography business called Aki Vision.

"Anyone going into the industry, persevere and put in hard work and effort into marketing and your venture will be fruitful In Sha Allah," assures Aki Rahman.



## Akthoraz Miah



■  
**Radhuni Restaurant**  
Bucks HP27 9AA

■  
**Radhuni Restaurant**  
Bedford, MK40 3PF



Akthoraz Miah has been in the business for 30 years, allowing him to build up a wealthy bank of expertise on how to run a business.

He was very passionate about food and cooking and wanted to move into this industry to make a contribution with his creativity and ideas that cultivated his current restaurant, Radhuni.

His favourite part of the business is creating new innovations over time and how it brings a young and thrilling feeling to his business. Also, it brings joy to socialise with his customers over food and to hear about their satisfaction with the service the business offers!

Akthoraz and his chef partake in lots of important research in how they can bring new dishes that is formulated out of special spices and fresh and locally sourced ingredients. He emphasises, "It is really important to ensure that our dishes are made with creativity and not something that is very common. This is what makes some of our highly rated signature dishes."

When asked how he motivates his staff to keep a constant service ethic, Akthoraz replies, "The business ensures that the staff are always updated in our regular staff training, to ensure that staff do not forget what standards should be set in providing customer service and keeping hygiene top notch."

They use Epos system and online ordering service to provide their customers easier ways to eat their food quicker and in convenient places. Akthoraz is very happy embracing these modern technologies, as he believes, "When customers look back on their experience with you, the customer service will be as crucial as the food. Few customers are willing to rave about a dining experience where the food was delayed or the service poor, no matter how good the dishes were. How customers experience the service at your restaurant will also have a key role to place in how they review you online and whether your restaurant is recommended to friends."

For marketing and advertising they utilise social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to help other people know about them. "Current customers are able to send links to their friends and families to our page, which allows them to

His favourite part of the business is creating new innovations over time and how it brings a young and thrilling feeling to his business.

know more about the business and thus be more inclined to try it out" says Akthoraz.

There are always challenges in food service business, as he mentions, "Some of the challenges involve being ready and quick to solve any problems that may arise any time. Another challenge would also be keeping hygiene standards, as well as making sure cashflow is positive."

The key ingredients to his Restaurant's success are – innovation, determination, good communication and social skills, and most importantly, passion about food.

"Thinking about you would like to be served and what atmosphere you'd like to feel when you walk into the restaurant – apply this to creating the perfect restaurant experience," he advises. And, "The first step if you are going to open a restaurant is to draw up a plan – a business plan. It starts and ends with a plan; because it is the plan that lays out the roadmap to take you from where you are to where to go."

"I am very happy with where I am in the business, as I feel successful in reaching my goal towards creating a successful business, making loyal customers happy with their food and earning recognition for my staff and their hard work over the years. There's always room for improvements in the future, no matter how perfect the business is – at the moment the business is running smoothly," he confidently proclaims.



## Ashraf Talukder



**Tamasha Group**  
Lindfield, Haywards Health  
RH16 2HH



Ashraf Talukder followed his hobby into the trade, and when he started he could see how lucrative the trade was and his passion for customer service and also the quality of food which the chefs provide. "I could see where I could improve, and well, the rest is history."

Passion for food, diligence in service and welcoming ambience, he says, are three key ingredients to creating a successful restaurant. He always put food first. Authentic flavours are at the heart of his restaurants and the recipes he creates are based on Asian traditions in hand with modern twists to create signature dishes. But he is well aware that "Your restaurant may have great-tasting food, but if the atmosphere is bland or distasteful, it will overshadow the quality of the meal. On the flip side, a great restaurant atmosphere will keep your customers around longer and ensure that they'll return again and again."

He looks at his competitors and sees what he and his team can do different. He creates a system that allows him to remain consistent in everything he does. He has kept all his restaurants with the same concept of dishes. All his chefs are trained in the same style. They have a very unique menu and customers can taste this when they come and dine with them.

"You must rely on your own passion to drive the passion of your staff." He gives emphasis to both a passion for food and an agreement of how food should be prepared. He wants them to agree with what he is telling them. If they do not agree they will not be able to prepare truly delicious food. It is about the recipe, but it is also about how it is prepared. With discipline you have consistency so that when customers who order something one day can come back and think, "Ah yes, this is the taste I remember." He is very innovative and hence, he says, he was one of the firsts if not the first to bring out Theme Nights or Tribute Nights within his establishments.

Ashraf treats each member of his team in the same fashion and expect each customer to be treated the same as well. At the table the customers must receive attention quickly and the food must arrive with perfect timing with

consistency in the preparation and delivery. They should feel welcome and well fed. He does team building sessions in his business, where he asks his colleagues for their views on how they did and also where they can improve, plus he has incentives in place to reward his employees who go above and beyond.

He uses online ordering plus an epos system where his colleagues can take orders and he is looking at investing in the top of the range software so their efficiency gets better and they can concentrate on the customer.

What kind of marketing and advertising initiatives have worked for you? What haven't?

Word of mouth has been his best marketing and it's free. Sending newsletters out to customer base has also been a key element. Newspapers have gone down and marketing with it due to the digital age.

Retaining staff is a challenge for him at the moment. As the business grew, so did the necessity of putting together a qualified staff. Says Ashraf, "You have to make sure you have the right people for the job." Everyone wants to be next to family and they are finding it hard and he also can see that the volume of new recruits to the trade is very low. He says restaurant business always has unanticipated issues. He emphasises the importance of planning anyway. "You can usually overcome a couple of nuances or a couple of wrinkles, but you can't overcome a lot of them," Ashraf says. "So having a plan where there are fewer unforeseen challenges is the way to go."

Customers are doing favour to you by choosing your restaurant. In turn you have to be ready to provide them with the quality food and service they have come to know. Your customers trust you and they put their faith in your skills to bring a new and unique plate that offers them a chance to experience something special.

Ashraf has been in the restaurant business near about 25 years if not more. Now he is thinking of semi-retirement: "So to do that I must pass down my experience to my protégé, so he or she can carry on with the reigns - If ever I can do that..."



## Atik Rahman



**Graam Bangla**  
London E1 6RL



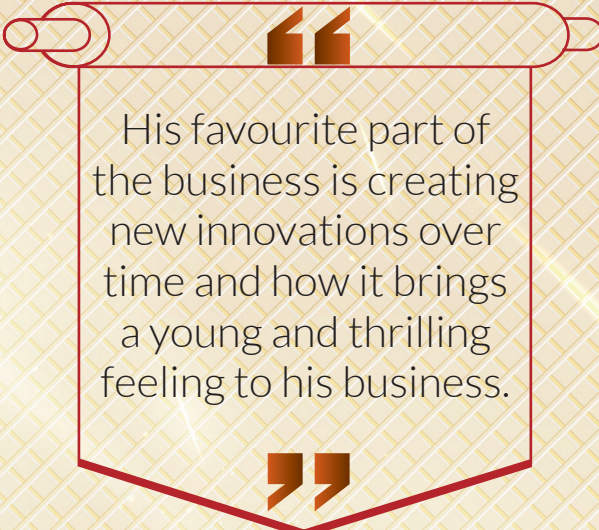
"What I share with restaurant owners is how everything they do and every decision they make affects the bottom line," says Chef Atikur Rahman. As a consultant chef, all he can do is offer guidance and recommendations that will help the restaurant meet or exceed its goals. He understands that structure and systems are vital to a restaurant's success.

Atik was born in August 1977 in Moulvi Bazaar, Bangladesh. He came to this country with his family at the age of 19 and now lives in Chelsea with his wife Lina and son Samuel. Atik developed his passion for curry at the young age of 12. There, when he saw his mother cooking, his first curiosity about the journey of spices and ingredients began. He would always give a hand in the kitchen and it was then he had a great passion and immense interest in everything related to food and ingredients.

Celebrity chef Atik Rahman started of this culinary journey working at the famous blue bird restaurant located in Chelsea (the heart of London). With his growing passion for food, Atik passed his NVQ level3 (professional cookery) at the Hammersmith and West London College. He also opened his own food education class serving individuals determined to learn the secrets of spices. To compliment his skills and talents, he provides chef consultancy, training and other curricular activities to develop the craft of cooking.

Chef Atik has been honoured as the private chef of the great Sheikh Bin Zayed who is the king of Arab Emirates. His first major achievement was when he won the 2007 Chef Award, and the following year he also won the British Chef of the year. "There's a big demand for Chefs to reach celebrity status today and I have had my share of attention... This meant a lot as it is a privilege to be nominated by your peers as someone who is making a different in a very competitive industry. However, for me, it is all about the cooking not about fame" says Atik.

His own show called Atik's Recipe, aired every Sunday on Channel 9. This was his main show alongside NTV's Atik's Kitchen and Roshoighor on Bangla TV. All of these programs allow viewers to learn Atik's unique culinary skills. He has an outstanding and high-profile career providing food and hospitality consulting services, an extensive network and deep knowledge of the consumer and B2B sectors.



His favourite part of the business is creating new innovations over time and how it brings a young and thrilling feeling to his business.

In addition to being a food and restaurant reviewer for several media outlets, he is also a regular contributor to a variety of publications including Restaurant Magazine, H-The Hotel Magazine, BBC Food, Pub Chef, Eastern Eye, The Asian Age and Tandoori Magazine. Chef Atik has also worked as a freelance restaurant inspector for Caterer & Hotelkeeper, covering a wide range of topics such as home delivery, how to train staff to increase sales, how to handle awkward customers, and many other informative features.

From restaurants to convenience food to consumer tastes, his understanding of the Indian and European food scene is extraordinary and is considered one of the leaders in this subject in the sector. Cooking is an art to him, and he considers each dish a masterpiece. That is why it is difficult to be faced with the need to work quickly when you want each dish to come out beautifully. This demand has allowed him learn a few very important skills he uses at his restaurant. Atik believes, "when restaurants are too focused on profits they make sacrifices to quality that will not provide customer satisfaction. Restaurants have to believe that it is not about saving money but about quality over price."



## Iftekar Rahman Shawon



**Mumbai Wokingham**  
Wokingham RG40 1XJ



Iftekhar Loves food tasting, he has passion for creating new dishes in his spare time. His parents' homemade cooking has inspired him to start cooking. He has been in the industry for the last ten years as an amateur working and supporting the family restaurants, however involved independently in the last two years with his own business, Mumbai Wokingham. His father and uncles were very supportive and provided invaluable advice as they have decades of experience in the catering industry which started from his grandfather in the late 60's in Britain.

They are always trying new and improved methods when it comes to food ingredient and good quality poultry and produce at their business. They promote healthy eating by offering vegan options on their menu, plenty of vegetarian and light snack options. Their menu is very different and dishes are incomparable and unique to their local competition. They are able to offer customers light snacks such as Mumbai sandwich, Tortilla wraps, healthy baps and burger alongside the usual traditional curries.

They used leaflet distribution as a marketing strategy since opening of the business. The quality of the print makes a huge difference in making impact, vibrant colours, smooth texture and good quality menu has helped them stand out against other companies using leaflets as their marketing tool. Online presence has really helped them from website views, instagram followers, facebook pages and weekly updates via sms marketing by promoting and keeping in touch

In the last two years being able to adopt with changes for Coronavirus and all the variant restrictions under the government guidelines has been very difficult but they have followed through. Mumbai Wokingham had all social distance measures and guidelines rules followed.

Moreover, the rising prices of good means their margins are small. The rising inflation means they are constantly challenging and menu prices are constantly under review. At this backdrop, "the hardest part of the job would be dealing with staffing issues. Labour shortages, shortage of skilled workers and commodity price rises means

The quality of the print makes a huge difference in making impact, vibrant colours, smooth texture and good quality menu has helped them stand out against other companies using leaflets as their marketing tool.

less choice and higher prices and struggling to healthy profit," says Iftekhar.

#### Iftekhar's SUCCESS TIPS:

**Teamwork:** Working as a team has certainly lifted the business. They treated their employees like a family and took care of them. Employee incentives and all personal support motivate employees, which has a positive impact on their day-to-day operations and thus a positive impact on their business.

**Customer service:** They like to hear from their customers and always make sure customer have a smile. Unhappy customers are always contacted further to continue with them.

**Product and Cost:** Having confidence in their products and knowing the real cost of their raw food against menu price, they follow a standard formula for pricing food by gross profit margin.

#### NEW BRANCH!

Mumbai Rickmansworth...is opening soon!

It's been a great journey, a journey which has been very pleasant and fruitful. From starting at home kitchen to a shop front is proud moment for Iftekhar: "This achievement shall create a great example for our new generation who are looking to start up their own journey to the curry industry."



## Julal Syed



**Taj Tandoori**  
Cambridge CB1 7AA



Julal Syed has been running the Taj Tandoori in Cambridge for 16 years. This is a family-run business. After completing his BSc in Computer Science at the University of Leeds, an opportunity came across his way to take over his father's business. That was in 2004. Julal says his business grew because he heeded the advice of his father and other older executives who told him, "Concentrate on progress rather than perfection."

Favourite part of his business, he says, is the education he receives from it. "Whether that is creating new dishes on the menu, strategizing the latest marketing techniques or working out clever ways to save and make more money." Being tenacious was one of the strategies Julal used to break into the business. He always advises others, "Don't give up. Be persistent." Also, having the best tasting products with the most expensive ingredients allows him to charge more. "You have to compete on the quality, because big businesses can't mass-produce that," he adds. "That's what sets us apart."


Their menu is a mix of both authentic and fusion street food. "We take our inspiration from the influences we have had in our lives." One speciality that is very popular among their regular diners is their Lamb Rogan Shepherd's Pie!

They have a family based culture at the restaurant. Everyone is aligned with the vision that they promote. "This makes the staff genuinely care which in turn provides a great service ethic throughout the team," says Julal. "Good people make all the difference."

"Epos, food processors, cutlery polishers, dishwashers, combi ovens, digital loyalty schemes are all utilised to make the restaurant as efficient as possible," says Julal.

Using a marketing company has helped propel our business to new heights. They showcase everything we do using original, fun and creative content.

Running a restaurant is not always easy. Working evenings and weekends as well as managing everything in the day are quite challenging. "One of my biggest hurdles," says Julal, "is systemising the restaurant to a standard that I am happy



Whether that is creating new dishes on the menu, strategizing the latest marketing techniques or working out clever ways to save and make more money." Being tenacious was one of the strategies Julal used to break into the business.

with – pulling together all the elements, from turning your concept into a working model to cultivating your employee base." The best advice Julal got when he started his restaurant is, "Do not take no for an answer. Overcome the obstacles set by others who try to talk you out of it."

"Increasing my knowledge continuously has been a huge part of the success of my restaurant," says Julal. He gives value to what experts say, "Don't get in the same swimming pool with the sharks." And urges aspiring restaurateurs to know their competition. "You have to know who you are up against. The best thing is to make sure you create a unique niche in the industry before you go forward. And always moving forward and keeping up to date with the latest trends and techniques are paramount." The basic truth of the restaurant industry, he says, is, "You are only as good as your last meal. And there is really no substitute for that."

Systemising the Operations, Marketing and Financials of the restaurant is Julal's goal. "Once this is done I will replicate the processes for new ventures as well as helping others with the knowledge I have gained."



## Kamal Rob, Ambrish Joijode and Mofazzul Hussain



**Khau Galli**  
Royton OL26AB



AJ — Came from a business family background and who are into business from last 80 years in India. He has clear ethos in life when it comes to business. He has always been passionate about food, being born and bred in Mumbai where street food has been the backbone of people coming from all walks of life.

KR — Came from a marketing background. He's been a very successful entrepreneur with a clear vision for success. A Bangladeshi and the youngest of the family, he grew up watching his brother work in the hospitality industry. He has always been fascinated by cooking. In the past, his family owned several restaurants and eateries, where he gained much knowledge over the years.

MH — Came from the wedding management industry. He has always been keen on opening a restaurant since realizing at the age of 16 that without food there would be no wedding. He has worked part-time in restaurants and loved every minute of it. When his friend Kamal approached him about investing in Khau Galli, he didn't hesitate knowing it was a great idea from the start.

They opened their restaurant Khau Galli in 2019 just before pandemic — 1st restaurant business for all partners. The favourite part of their business is to see a satisfied smile on their customers after they relish Khau Galli's food. They and their motivated staff live for that moment. The traditional recipes sourced from AJ's mother in Mumbai are as authentic as it can get with an adaptation of our local customer's palate. The idea is to make the customer feel closest to the street food available on the streets of Mumbai. Green Lamb Chops is an ideal example as their signature dish, thanks to AJ's mother in India who is the inventor of this dish.

"Work environment has to be a happy always," says Kamal Rob. "We provide fair salary with shared tips for all staff. We have star waiter/waitress for the front of house and star worker in the kitchen monthly with performance bonuses also a yearly star performer with a big performance bonus. We have a policy that all our evening staff have to sit together and eat at the end of each shift which gives them time to bond," he adds.

They rely on technologies to run my restaurant efficiently and effectively. Everything is well structured with the right technology in place to

The traditional recipes sourced from AJ's mother in Mumbai are as authentic as it can get with an adaptation of our local customer's palate. The idea is to make the customer feel closest to the street food available on the streets of Mumbai.

save time and money while having peace of mind.

Cloud-based phone helps them collect data, control their phone system from their mobile and makes their business look professional with waiting music and giving information while customers are waiting on the line, such as opening hours and special announcements. They have done a lot of research when it came to finding the right EPoS and Online Ordering solutions.

They have a device (Waiter paging system) in their main reception and smartwatches on their waiting staff which signals when a customer presses a button on their table notifying the customer needs their attention. This simple piece of tech saves me time, money and more importantly, service improves a lot.

The combination of a smart alarm system, cameras and password-controlled access to the restaurant makes their life so much simpler and easier as their staff can access the restaurant without them. Kamal and his team make use of any tech that automates and makes the business self-sustaining and self-running. They have their own server installed in their restaurant that controls most of the tech they used and this is part of the plan to expand their business and manage all their future sites too. Well-structured business plan with scalability is the key here.



## Poly Rahman and Family



**Palm Tree**  
London, E7 9HA



Poly Rahman has always been involved in catering business since a very young age. She gained experience by working at Indian, Indonesian and Greek restaurants. Her passion about food business has always been on top of her agendas. She opened her own first restaurant in London in 2010 with her life partner Nadir Mazumder. Which was a very successful in its own terms. It was a Turkish and Greek restaurant. And in 2016 she had her 2nd business, an Indian Takeaway, in north London. She also started production of Gawa ghee in the UK in 2018. Later on she had teamed up with Dean Chowdhury to open her catering business for weddings and special occasions.

Dean Mahdi Chowdhury who was trained to be a successful Restaurant owner by his father Mr Mohib Chowdhury, starting from a family business "Akash" an Indian Restaurant in west London. Dean was always eager to take new challenges. In 2011 he ventured out with "Palm Tree Banqueting Hall". Where full event management is taken care of, whether indoor or outdoor.

Dean Chowdhury had teamed up with Poly Rahman and Nadir Mazumder in their Ghee production business branded as "SALWAH." since 2018 its been very successful and still growing.

Nadir Mazumder, after his graduation went to India to train as a chef. Spending 6 years in Delhi and Mumbai at five star hotels facilities with Micheline star chefs he had gained the knowledge of north Indian cooking.

As a strong bonding as business partners and their individual skills together making the business very successful and still growing.

Dean, Poly and Nadir have started their own catering business "Panache" kitchen, providing food to "Palm Tree" and other venues. As a strong bonding as business partners and their individual skills together making the business very successful and still growing.

As a team they believe, to be successful in any business, there is a need for 3 key ingredients.

1. Passion
2. Skills
3. Execution

Most importantly, a good team and team work.



## Mohammed Shahidur Rahman



**The Rajdoot**  
London W1U 4HW



Shahidur Rahman has been in the restaurant business for over 24 years. He initially chose to start his restaurant business as a means of supporting his family, and he learned over the years how to make a business a success before opening his own restaurant with three brothers and a son. Then he translated those ideas into serving the local community with fresh, delicious food with impeccable service.

What he enjoys most is seeing how good food can bring people together, as he loves serving customers. According to him providing excellent customer experience in a restaurant is key to building restaurant community and repeat business. In an industry that is constantly changing, Shahid and his team are able to adapt to modern times while maintaining the traditional cooking methods and recipes that have made them so successful and Shahid believes this is the best part of the business.

They choose their menu and ingredients with care. It all starts with the seasonality. They only use the best produce available at the time from their local suppliers, and freshly ground spices that allow their dishes to speak for themselves. Their menu is inspired by dishes across the region of South Asia, and they place great value on authenticity, with dishes such as the popular Bahari Lamb, a dish of lamb that has been marinated for 24 hours in a complex masala, then cooked and served in a thick spicy sauce that will leave you wanting more.

Shahid always motivates his staff to keep a constant service ethic. Their staff are trained to be professional, attentive and always willing to go the extra mile for their customers. If a customer would like a dish's heat to be adjusted, they do their best to accommodate for that particular customer as no two patrons are the same, and their staff recognise that, and for this Shahid is so proud of them.

"It is no denying fact that," he emphasises, "one of the most important factors to consider when running a restaurant is the quality of the customer service you provide. Good customer service includes providing courteous and quick service to meet customers' needs during their dining experience, which can determine whether or not someone becomes a recurring customer." He believes:

- "Happy customers generate more positive feedback and reviews for your restaurant.
- Excellent customer service can increase revenue.
- Satisfied customers are more likely to become regular customers.

“We use tablets to seat customers according to their reservations, and systems that enable us to process bookings and online orders quickly and efficiently”, says Shahid.

- The longevity of a business usually relies on good customer service.”

“While we consider ourselves traditionalists in terms of the curry house experience, I quickly recognised the need for modernisation and keeping up with the times. We use tablets to seat customers according to their reservations, and systems that enable us to process bookings and online orders quickly and efficiently”, says Shahid.

They often utilise social media platforms such as TripAdvisor, Facebook, Google and Yelp as they believe they play a huge role in showcasing a restaurant's online presence and its popularity. “We have been constantly ranked as one of the best Indian restaurants online as a result of this focus and attention to detail, while offering special discounts from time to time to those who follow us on social media, and for special occasions.”

What are some of the challenges of being a restaurant owner and manager? What's the hardest part of your job? Shahid replies, “There are a number of staff shortages across the industry, as it takes a lot of skill to train as a chef at an Indian restaurant and I believe the government should consider allowing restaurants to bring in skilled workers from the region as Indian restaurants have been the backbone of the service industry for many years, and we have been one of the biggest contributors to the British economy.”

Shahid wants to serve the community, nationally and internationally, to those in need, as his parents taught him the importance of giving back at an early age, and that's what he's always pushed for in his business and will continue to do so in the future.



# Abdur rahman (Mona)



**The Grand sultan**  
Port Talbot SA13 2PA

**The Chillies Indian Rest.**  
Pontarddulais SA4 8TH

**Chilli Too**  
Swansea SA6 5LH

**Chilli Express**  
Swansea SA4 8SY



The business was started by his family. Growing up he used to help and naturally began to enjoy as well as show a keen interest in the field. He was always interested in Politics and the restaurant was the place for conversations, discussions and meetings. The restaurant became a meeting place not just to socialise, and talk about ideas but share visions and find new ways to do business and new technologies and techniques to discover. For Mona Miah, it wasn't just a business but a way of life. The business has been in the family since the 80's but he's been involved in it since 1990.

Mona Miha's favourite part of this business has to be meeting new people. Over the years it developed his confidence as he had to socialise and meet all kinds of people and he enjoyed it very much. It made him realise he enjoys helping people and being an active member of the community not just a business owner. The business helped improve his communication skills which allowed him to do charity events, help those in need as he had the skills and expertise to do so as well as arrange fundraising for many causes. The restaurant was never just a restaurant for me but a place where he grew as a person and gained many skills which have made me the person he is today.

He discusses this with his chefs and together they brainstorm and research new dishes and ingredients. Their signature dish would be the Jalfrezi because its traditional and tasty and one of Mona Miah's favourites. They want to keep the food authentic, fresh and true to its roots so it's important for them to produce these to the best of their abilities rather than losing them by changing or evolving them into something else.

The staff are all trained and he tries to ensure they are happy to be part of the business and have a passion for the industry. They are aware of maintaining good standards and excellent customer service. Mona loves what he does and his staff see that and are inspired to enjoy the work and always treat their customers with the utmost respect, care and attention.

They use social media for the businesses and try to interact with the public with promotions and advertising. "When everything's online you have

to move with the times," says Mona. They have modern equipment in the restaurants and ensure they are up to date with technology. Internet bookings and online services are a vital part of daily life now so they try to stay current and maintain a presence online.

He believes, Social media is good for reaching out to large numbers of people quickly. Before this they used local news to advertise the businesses. They can interact with people online now, take orders and bookings quicker. So the internet is probably most useful tool for them rather than posting out paper menus or leaflets to homes. They have a database of clients so they communicate with them with deals, events, and offers as well as help celebrate their special days such as birthdays and other important days they may have. This allows them to not only build relationships with their customers but also keep them involved in the business.

"The biggest challenge to not only my business but majority of restaurants and businesses is the competition offered online by sites such as Groupon and other food sites which provide cheap alternatives. I value quality over quantity and our food will always be the best we can offer and that won't be compromised. We also find that it's a challenge getting the best quality produce and spices for reasonable prices."

"The hardest part of the job or being a manager is getting the right staff for the job," Mona find this to be the toughest bit because he wants the person to be right for the job and keen as well as passionate and this can be difficult as not many young people especially ethnic minorities are choosing this as a career path.

To gain success in the business, "it has to be good tasty authentic food, reasonable prices and great customer service and standards," he says.

Mona Mia is a visionary businessman: "I would love and hope that colleges and other agencies would do more to promote this field and make it more appealing as a career and a business. We don't want to lose this industry so more needs to be done to make it appealing and interesting to future generations. It's not just about food but skills which need to be preserved."



## Sajjad Rahman



**Taste of India**  
Sheerness ME12 3JD



Sajjad Rahman was only 10 years old when his father opened the business and he still remembers that very day. He loved everything about the business and he knew he wanted to be a part of this someday, to follow in the footsteps of his father as a businessman. He joined the industry from a tender age of 13, working part time as a waiter in his father's takeaway. He had to beg his mum to persuade his father to allow him the opportunity.

Inspired by his upbringing in the bustling kitchen of this family-owned takeaway, Sajjad has a strong passion for the food and flavours of traditional home cooking. Since opening the restaurant doors they have been proudly dishing up traditional Indian sub-continental food in its most authentic form. Dedication to their cultural roots and cooking all of their food the traditional way is at the heart of everything they do.

Their menu is simple and doesn't have many special dishes but whatever they make, they do it to a high standard. You won't find any pastes, powders or colours in their kitchen. From their variety of all-time favourites plated straight from the tandoor to their wide selection of starters or side dishes to accompany your meal, their menu built from a long-established history of family cooking is guaranteed to have something to your taste.

Their business embraces modern technology. They have online ordering with their own bespoke App, front of house is all digital, and they are constantly looking to use technology to their advantage. They are currently running various online advertising on different platforms. Doing so has helped them stay ahead of their competitors. "We typically don't like to do any advertising that we cannot track our metrics," says Sajjad.

When asked how they motivate their staff to keep a constant service ethic, he said,

"We have a family like relationship with all of our staff, we laugh and joke whilst maintaining good practices in the workplace."

There is a list of challenges that he faced throughout his entire career in this business. But, "the biggest challenge is finding competent

Those who have to deal with changing markets and consumer behavior as well as other external factors such as the economic environment must come up with the best business ideas and solutions," he believes.

staff who can carry out their duties to a high standard. The hardest part is getting people to see things as you do. It takes a lot of skills and dedication to run a business in this industry. Problems will arise along the way, so you have to solve them to the best of your abilities," says Sajjad.

His success tips are simple. Consistency and continually evolving the business has been key to their success. According to him, restaurant ownership is more than just a career, it's a way of life. It will require you to get used to something that you're not used to doing. "The flexibility and adaptability of restaurateurs are what make them one of the most prevalent types of entrepreneurs. Those who have to deal with changing markets and consumer behavior as well as other external factors such as the economic environment must come up with the best business ideas and solutions," he believes.

"I want to be able to help fellow business owners get an advantage through digital advertising, most don't realise how powerful it is and that you can actually see real results, track metrics to see profitable return on your advertisement.

Perhaps, I should launch an agency service!"



## Shah Shahid Hussain



**Entouraj Indian  
Kitchen & Bar**  
Droitwich WR9 0PW



Shah Shahid Hussain has always been passionate about food, and perhaps that drives him to open a restaurant over 30 years ago. He says when restaurants are too focused on profits they make sacrifices to quality that will not provide customer satisfaction.

The menu, according to him, reflects more into seasonal availability and local produce, which, he believes, is the key element of restaurant trade. Regarding the ingredients, he says, "I always use the good quality product and don't believe in cutting corners."

He adds, "As mentioned before my menu is more seasonal, I change it every 4 months, keeping the popular one and replacing the less popular." He takes a special care about the healthy option without compromising the flavour. His menu is created by his award-winning head chef Sudha Saha. Recognised by both the Michelin and Hardens Guides, Sudha has created a menu that celebrates the most exquisite Indian flavours. Regarding signature dishes, Shah says, "This is always the USP of our business, which showcases the creativity, innovative ideas and technically accomplished cooking."

They use the EPOS system for the FOH and menu engineering for obtaining a very healthy GP. In kitchen, they use Rational Combi Oven, Blast Chiller, Thermomix, blow torch, dough mixing machine and robot coupe. This modern kitchen technology, says Shah, "greatly enhance the process of efficiency, making it easier, safer and more efficient to cook meals and keep our food fresh." The appliances allow his staff to serve the food more quickly and professionally. "If you are planning to join food service business or to enhance productivity in your business, you will need the right equipment and utensils and a plethora of knowledge how a catering business works actually."

When it comes to a professionally designed commercial kitchen, according to Shah, it should have kitchen equipment that perfectly fits in the available space. Nowadays, he says, the manufacturers are introducing an innovative range of kitchen equipment to cope with the space problems faced by restaurant owners. These modern appliances are specially designed while keeping in mind limited space availability and are

a perfect choice for restaurateurs. "The modern equipment offers time management, comfortable work space while reduces the chance of accidents, injuries and fatigue. Such equipment increases the overall efficiency and productivity of your restaurant workers and also keeps them healthy."

As to the marketing and advertising initiatives, "Use of social media, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, newsletter through our website, regular interval of using PR, inviting the food blogger helped us a lot," says Shah. "I think giving adverts on newspapers and local magazines does not give much impact," he adds.

To keep the business floating, Shah introduces innovative ideas and marketing gimmicks, and he has to push the boundaries extra hard. Then staffing is another big issue as it is hard to get good staff. He says, due to market inflation the operating cost is going high, which gives him tough times to keep the good GP level.

Also, man management skill is the hardest part of his business, says Shah. The management in his restaurant sets target to the staff, providing training and personality development programme, and gives incentives once the target is achieved. All this motivates his staff to excel. "But fundamentally our performance is about keeping the enthusiasm and drive of the team - and it's held up remarkably."

For success, according Shah, "Questions to ask yourself are; how will my restaurant connect with people? Why does my restaurant exist? What type of people am I looking to attract? What do they read or watch? How do they spend their spare time? What is the best way to reach them? Knowing why and for whom your restaurant exists is crucial to success." He says, "Keeping the standard consistent - in both food and services, never cutting corners, continuous marketing plan and well trained staff are key ingredients to your restaurant success."

Shah is thinking of expanding his business across the UK in the next five years. As for the next few years, he is clear about the major trends that will dominate the British Bangladeshi restaurant scene. "Value is going to remain key, and the quality and provenance of food will become more important. I'd like to expand my brand throughout the country with good food and excellent services."



## Shamsul Islam Shelim



**Viceroy of Windsor**  
Windsor SL4 3BP



Shamsul Islam Shelim began working in the restaurant industry in 1980, as a part time waiter in Beaconsfield while enrolled at College doing Business Studies. He moved to Henley in 1982 to support a new Family Restaurant and enrolled in High Wycombe College to study Engineering. By his third year, he realised that he was more interested in his work than his studies and he wanted a challenge. This led him to working more hours at the restaurant. Eventually, he opened Carterton Tandoori in 1985 where he would get his first taste in management. His early years saw huge success. Business was booming.

Then he moved to Windsor and opened the Viceroy of Windsor, in 1987. The first restaurant was very small. They would have regular queues out of the door and around the block. Needing extra space, they relocated down the road in 1994 and have been there ever since.

Since then, he has opened numerous other restaurants across the country but he spend most of his time there in Windsor, as he has also been the local Councillor for the local area for over 5 years.

His favourite part of his business is being an integral part of the community. Restaurants are the hearts of towns, where local people get together, to catch up with old friends, for business meetings, date nights, and most importantly great food. He takes great pride in being at the core of this community.

In all his years, he has never been afraid to experiment and try new things, but there must always be balance. "Keeping ingredients fresh and recipes simple is the key to good food. Overcomplicating dishes for the sake of wanting to be different can sometimes be more of a hindrance than a smart move," he says.

From the waiters to the chefs, his staff are his family, "For an effective and motivated workforce, you must respect them as individuals and in turn they will respect you."

They have increased their online presence in the last few years. They have redesigned their website using modern tools for an accessible and engaging website, and have also embraced social media. In particular they have targeted Google Reviews and TripAdvisor where they interact with their customers and generate feedback in areas they want to improve. It hasn't been a surprise that using these methods have directly translated to a large increase in online bookings and orders.

They also implement the EPOS system for takeaways increasing the overall efficiency of the restaurant by managing the amount of orders going into the kitchen.

The internet is increasingly important for attracting a new generation of customers, but Shamsul still prefers word-of-mouth for recommendations. "As part of the community, their customers treat my restaurant like their own and as a result they will speak highly of you and recommend your restaurant to other locals and tourists."

There are many challenges and difficulties in the restaurant industry. "The biggest sacrifices, I believe we make, is having our work take over our lives," says Shamsul. "Working long hours and weekends takes away from your social life and the time you do have free is when everyone else is working. This can be the same with family; you do not get to see your partner or children as often as you like and the free time you do have is spent doing the day-to-day necessities of life," he adds.

He has been in the industry for almost forty years now and his personal key to success comes down to hard work and dedication. He has been an honest businessman, worked hard to serve his community, both here at the restaurant, and as councillor for his borough, listening to the concerns of the people and how to improve his community. He has taken this further by being greatly involved in local charities and tackling the homeless issue.

In terms of the restaurant industry, he has always done his part to create a community for all of us working in the industry, trying to unify our goals and discover solutions to tackle the many problems our industry is facing. By involving himself in so many different avenues has given his life a purpose, and that is what carries him from day to day.

"Lastly," he remarks delightfully, "I should emphasise the utmost importance of family. Without the support of my family, my wife, my brothers and uncle, as well as my children, I would not have been as successful.

"I would like to retire before too long to spend more time with my family, and hopefully pass on the business to the children and grandchildren one day.

"Looking back, I am pleased at the rapid improvement our industry has seen over the decades, and hope that this evolution will continue with future generations."



## Shanoor Miah



**Café Zeera**  
Harpenden AL5 4ST



Throughout his life Shanoor has been passionate about food and creating innovative dishes. He's been doing this since childhood when he used to watch his mother cooking food and was fascinated by what she created. He gets excited about cooking every day and feels so lucky to have been able to parlay his passion into a successful business. Inspired by his mother's cooking, he started working in restaurants when he was a teenager, but always had a dream of opening his own business and offering something new and exciting to his customers. And as the years have gone by he has just got better and better. The key is to keep moving with the times, to keep innovating – which Shanoor has done.

"Customer experience plays a major role in your success," he believes firmly! Talking to the customers and listening to their feedback is his favourite part of this business: "Their compliments are wonderful to hear and it makes it all worthwhile. The numbers of times I've heard people say they've had their best meal or they've never had something so full of flavour before is amazing. I love what I do and this makes me very happy."

Their unique selling proposition, Shanoor says, is their ability to evolve, to find out what the customer likes, what works well and to change if necessary. He adds, "We have many regular customers and we're able to remember their favourite dishes. Everything is cooked from fresh so we can make our dishes to the customer's preference."

From years of growing up in a family of cooks and from travelling around the world he has gained experience of how to choose his menu and ingredients: "We talk to chefs from all over the country and from places in other countries, we share tips and advices and in our spare time we apply them to find out what works and what doesn't."

"The ingredients must always be fresh and high quality, which makes a huge difference," he says. They have recently changed their menu and introduced new dishes which people in the region won't have seen before. The chef specials are many favourite dishes that take traditional Indian cuisine to a new level of intensity. These dishes are very popular with their customers.

To Shanoor, the kitchen staff are extremely

important, from the KP to the tandoori chef. "They are the cogs to the engine and without them we don't work. I have no doubt that they love what they do and enjoy it but they also have families. Families and happiness come first always and we are very accommodating to ensure there is a work-life balance."

Personal relations strategy and marketing are of paramount importance to Shanoor and his partners. They know each restaurant has a story to tell but without a strong PR strategy, that story may never reach your customers. PR helps the brand authentically connect with your customers, increase your visibility and elevate your credibility, keeping your brand out of the advertising abyss. One of the investors in the business runs an award-winning PR and marketing company. They manage their press, adverts, events and social media. Shanoor and his team consider this as the key to bringing customers in.

They are innovative working with local partners, like the council, to try new initiatives, which is great for community engagement. They often get asked for vouchers by schools and people setting themselves challenges which they are always happy to offer as it supports the community and gets their name out there.

The hardest part in his business, Shanoor thinks, is when a customer doesn't have a good experience for whatever reason: "It doesn't happen very often but when it does you take it personally and you feel that you have let them down. It may be no fault of yourself or the staff, it might be that the person is not terribly friendly but you still take it personally."

Shanoor is very clear on simplicity. 'Work hard and listen' is his philosophy: "There are many people out there that have years of experience. Listen to them, take advice, share your own, and never be afraid to learn."

During the pandemic he sold his shares after a four-year partnership business at Maya Indian Kitchen & Bar. Currently, he has started a new restaurant called Cafe Zira on the basis of partnership. "We're a two-year-old business and there are new ways we can improve, grow and develop." Shanoor wants his new venture to be one of the best celebrated restaurants in the country and he won't stop until it is.



## Motin Miah



**Bangkok Lounge**  
Harpenden AL5 2SP



Motin's family had never owned a restaurant, but they were heavily involved in restaurant life. Members of his family all worked in various capacities within the trade. As a Bengali, food was always an important part of family life so this ritual became combined with his ambition to have his own business. He felt that the market was a little saturated with Indian restaurants, but it was on a return trip from Thailand that he decided Thai cuisine was what he wanted to get involved in.

The business model he had was applicable in any restaurant but there was a huge learning curve in understanding the cuisine, flavours, ingredients even the culture and the philosophy of the Thai people. He had to get this right in order to succeed. His professional job allowed him to bring in the experience of management and his due diligence filled in the gaps.

Motin is a bright, hardworking and a very ambitious individual who has gained experience in people and project management. He has a long track record of ensuring projects are delivered to the highest quality, within budget by effectively organising, managing and utilising all resources. He is able to lead teams on commercial and industrial levels. He is always actively involved in all aspects of the project life-cycle and can deliver high-value projects in matrixed organisations and across different disciplines. His work is based on setting realistic targets and working hard to archive these. The expertise and knowledge that he has gained allows him to drive profitability and improvement through strategic growth plans. "Every decision, good or bad, has been a learning experience and has brought me to where I am today" he adds. Motin is a BSc Hons graduate in Computer Science.

#### **BUSINESSES: Past and Present**

2003: Opened Blue Orchid Thai Restaurant, Aspley Guise, UK. Within a space of 5 years he had expanded this brand to 7 totalling 11 restaurants. In July 2007 he sold the brand so he could concentrate on property development.

2007: Opened Bangkok Lounge Thai Restaurant, Harpenden. This was expanded to include a further 2 outlets. Bangkok Lounge has been recognised as one of the top 3 Thai restaurants for vegan foods by Metro newspaper in 2016 and more recently 'Best National Thai Restaurant of the year 2019'.

2013: Import and export of commodities worldwide.

The expertise and knowledge that he has gained allows him to drive profitability and improvement through strategic growth plans. "Every decision, good or bad, has been a learning experience and has brought me to where I am today.

This was a short term venture and has since been sold on

2014: Executive producer involved in Asian films and Arts projects

2014: Founder member of British Bangladeshi Caterers Association (BBCA)

2014: British Bangladesh Caterers Association. Joint Treasurer

2016: Director of Windsor Hotel and Resort

2016: Life Member of Bangladeshi Cricketer Supporters Association UK

2018: British Bangladesh Caterers Association. Membership Secretary

2018: Director of World Glazing

2019: Managing Director of BioGrade Solution

Motin is affiliated with the following charities: CAP(Community Against Poverty - Ambassador), Amir Khan - Water AID, Macmillan, RFC (Ramadan Family Commitment - Ambassador). He is also hoping to launch a foundation in the memory of his late father Al Hajj MD Aziz Miah. His work within the community involves monthly immigration surgery attendance along with other BHC embassy staff.



## Mohammed Abdul Lais



**Eurasia Food Service**  
Reading RG7 4PW



Tadley Tandoori finds success and is making more money by following an interesting strategy: not going after money. Since the opening of his establishment, owner Mohammed Abu Lais's goal has been to offer diners high quality, traditionally cooked foods. "We dominate on customer service, too, but our target is total quality" he adds. "I personally interact with customers and have paid close attention to their feedback."

Mohammed Abul Lais is a successful businessman, outstanding community organiser and well-known philanthropist in Berkshire. He left for the UK when he was only 16 and entered professional life. For his sincere and hard labour on the one hand he attained success in his business and on the other being the elder son of the family he educated all his brothers and sisters. He was born in Sunamgonj, Bangladesh. His father late Alhaj Abul Bashor Md. Mashuk Miah was a restaurant trader in the UK. He was a philanthropist who came over to the UK in 1963. After sitting the SSC Exam in 1975, Mohammed Abu Lais left for the UK along with other family members. On arrival in the UK he started serving in restaurants and at the same time continued his studies.

He opened his first business, Curry Garden, in 1978 in Newbury, Berkshire, which was later established in Tadley, Hampshire in 1982, on a partnership basis. Then again in 1991 he opened Curry Garden in Reading. In 1985 he established 'Rajdoot Restaurant' in Cirencester Town in Gloucestershire on partnership. In 1991 he established a company named Eurasia Food Service. He established a first Thai and Bangladeshi restaurant named 'Café Blue Cobra' in the small-town Theale in greater Reading area in 1996.

Mohammed Lais is one of the founders of Basingstoke Islamic Society. Initially he was the founding secretary of this organisation and later on he served as president for 3 years. He is the founding member of Reading Central Jame Masjid, member of Basingstoke Chambers and Commerce, Thames valley Chambers of Commerce, and a founder of British Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce in the UK. He has made special contributions towards the establishment and development of Amria Mosque and Amria Madrassa based in his own village. In 2016 he built an academy building in Amria Madrassa,

For his sincere and hard labour on the one hand he attained success in his business and on the other being the elder son of the family he educated all his brothers and sisters.

which was opened by M A Mannan MP, the then Deputy Finance Minister of Bangladesh. During the devastating flood in 1988 and in 1991 he raised funds £1400 and £11,000 respectively and sent it to Bangladesh through British Red Cross Society for the flood affected people. Mohammed Abul Lais and his brother Absar Md. Waess have established a family trust after their father's name - Alhaj AB Mashuk Miah Foundation. Mohammad Abul Lais is the trustee of this Foundation and his siblings are members. Mohammed Lais is a founder trustee of Bangladesh Female Academy in Derai. He served as the president of Dakshin Sunamgonj Upozilla Association UK.

Mohammad Lais got married in 1984 to Nazma Khatun Qureshi, and they are blessed with two daughters and one son. First daughter Shumana Lais obtained Honours degree in Investment Banking and Finance, from Reading University, worked for KPMG as an auditor and also completed ACA. Shumana is married to Dr Omar Siddique and blessed with one son. The other daughter Sameera Lais is studying at Aston University. Son Shumel Lais, graduated in Business and Marketing from Bournemouth University, worked for Sachi and Sachi and currently running his own business in Marketing. His company Apsumer Ltd is listed on startups 100 in 2017 and 2018 respectively.



## Jamal Uddin Mokoddus



**The Garden of India**  
Harlow, CM18 6PA



Jamal Uddin's career in the restaurant industry started shortly after his arrival in the UK, two-and-a-half years to be exact. He opened his first restaurant 43 years ago in the Town of Harlow, Essex, which he now calls home. At that time there were not many Indian restaurants. So he wanted to be one of the first few around the country. He has always had the entrepreneurial mentality from a young age, that never goes away. He thought by being the first person to introduce curry to Harlow he would be able to dictate the market price and be able to capitalise on it.

Jamal Uddin's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is himself, his personality. He is the brand, he has built his businesses around his name being synonymous with premium quality. For all the restaurants he has at the moment that is the fundamental USP.

“He is the brand, he has built his businesses around his name being synonymous with premium quality. For all the restaurants he has at the moment that is the fundamental USP.”

- The Vojan Ongar is the flagship (220 covers).
- The Raj Epping is a traditional and cosy in spirit, yet contemporary in design and food.
- The Raj Lodge Old Harlow is the eldest in his group of companies at the moment yet contemporary and modern in design.
- The Garden of India Harlow is the one that attracts everyone for the quirky menu. Also has the most modern, sophisticated interior out of the group.
- Sanuk High Ongar is a Thai restaurant in a grade 2 listed building he opened in 2006.
- He has a hotel in Royston.
- He also has a restaurant in Hillingdon.
- His Cash & Carry M18 in Harlow is now as spacious as 12,500 square feet, which serves locally, in surrounding areas and the wider restaurant community around the country.

Jamal Uddin has a secondary school fully funded by him in his birth place in Bangladesh established in 2000. He is the founding director and current chairman of Adventure World Sylhet. He is also the founding director of Homeland Life Insurance Bangladesh.

The favourite part of his businesses is the opportunity to turn nothing into something. Charity has become a habit of Jamal Uddin. He supported many families who are in destitute condition. Being inspired by Jamal Uddin, many are doing big things in their fields. Also he is grateful to the Almighty that he is able to show his sons the way and install the entrepreneurial skills needed for them to succeed. Through them he can keep his desire alive for the family empire to grow. Jamal is truly blessed to be in the position. The property portfolio is growing, the businesses are growing and his sons are both involved in the family empire.

Jamal Uddin's next move will be growing the Cash & Carry further to be able to serve more clients. He also intends to start some new different types of cuisines. He has already done business with Italian as well as Thai food in the past. Now he is looking to do modern European



## Shamsul Alam Khan



**Haldi Restaurant**  
Portsmouth PO5 2SG



"Merely offering good food and good service is not a guarantee of success in traditional dining. Your marketing goal should focus on repeat business", says Shamsul. "Today more than ever, you need to create a memorable customer experience."

As marketing strategy, Trip Advisor and Google as well as menu innovation and leafleting have worked for him. Newspaper ads don't always work, as he says.

Like many other successful entrepreneurs, he gives great value to customer experience, and says, "You can have the greatest concept, recipes and talent but if your restaurant can't deliver a quality customer experience consistently, people won't come back."

He adds from his experience, "Better systems not only ensure a more predictable customer experience, but also make the restaurant less dependent on the owner's constant involvement in daily operations."

Shamsul Alam worked as a waiter in various restaurants. Gaining skills and knowledge in running a restaurant gave him motivation to start his own business. He has been in the business for 10 years now.

Meeting and generating new customers and general public, introducing new dishes in a modern twist to traditional curry house are his favourite part of this business. He has created dishes using vegetables from Bangladesh such as uribisi/sim bichee, shatkora, etc. His popular signature dish is Sylhet Gosht.

Their multi-award winning and 27 years experienced chef, has put together a delightful menu that gives their customers a wide choice of delicious meals.

Shamsul Alam's staff are always valued and they have input in providing good quality food. "Your employees are your most important asset because it takes happy employees to create happy customers. Your employee experience drives your customer experience and your customer experience drives customer loyalty, word of mouth and sales", he emphasises on.

Meeting and generating new customers and general public, introducing new dishes in a modern twist to traditional curry house are his favourite part of this business.

According to him, the key ingredients to restaurant success are:

- Creating a loyalty card to reward customers by offering a free dish on their 5th visit to the restaurant
- Promoting more offers and discounts
- Offering training and work experience to students wanting to learn the restaurant trade
- Serve non-greasy fresh quality food by using local organic produce for better taste

Samsul says, "healthy eating promotes a healthy successful business". To him, having professional skilled staff, giving his 100% to provide quality food and services and support from family are some other keys to success.

Shamsul intends to open traditional Bangladeshi/Indian homemade style cafe serving breakfast and lunch.

You can have the greatest concept, recipes and talent, but if your restaurant can't deliver a quality customer experience consistently, people won't come back.



## Ana Miah



**Juboraj Rhiwbina**  
Cardiff CF14 6HG



Ana Miah started in the industry as a teenager working in a local Birmingham restaurant. He made the decision to do the very best he could and after a few years his family opened their first restaurant in London in 1982. He moved to Cardiff and opened his first restaurant as an owner in 1989.

Of all the enjoyable aspects of running a restaurant, such as the financial reward, there is little more rewarding than building relationships with local customers that can develop into real friendships. Ana thinks they manage this in the Juboraj by focusing on this relationship. They work hard to make the couple-of-hours customers choose to spend with them a special experience and by providing consistently good food.

Ana likes trying foods in different restaurants looking for new ideas. When he finds something that he likes he takes the idea back and work with his chefs to add a Juboraj twist and create something new. They have a few unique dishes on their menu. Most notably the Chicken Kolapuri, their biggest seller and the Jamdani Hash, a duck dish they created in the early days, made famous by Ruth Jones in her enormously successful television show Gavin and Stacey. Although there are now many restaurants serving a Jamdani Hash, people come from all over the country to taste the original at the Juboraj!

The Juboraj Restaurant Group is one of the oldest, and almost certainly, one of the great Indian and Bangladeshi restaurants in Wales having won numerous awards. For well over 20 years there has been a Juboraj in Cardiff of which the Rhiwbina restaurant with its sumptuous Georgian interior is one of the originals. The Juboraj pride themselves on combining traditional authentic dishes with a fresh new contemporary approach bringing you the best flavours the Indian sub-continent has to offer. The Juboraj Guarantee ensures that only the highest quality New Zealand lamb and Welsh beef, and the finest 100% fresh chicken breast and freshest seafood available, is used in their dishes. With a warm welcome and friendly attentive staff you can be sure that time spent at Juboraj, whether it be a light lunch or a candlelit evening meal, will be time well spent.

Ana likes trying foods in different restaurants looking for new ideas. When he finds something that he likes he takes the idea back and work with his chefs to add a Juboraj twist and create something new.

Apart from TripAdvisor, which Ana finds too open to abuse, one of the most challenging parts of the business is keeping the staff happy and then, once they are fully trained, keeping them permanently. You can't run a restaurant by yourself. You need good quality reliable staff. He thinks it's down to the manager to be on top of their game and that example passes to the staff. They hold a monthly meeting to highlight problems or come up with ideas for improvements.

Juboraj team use a website with online booking and ordering and they keep in touch with their customers using social media. Of all their marketing initiatives he finds the big sport screenings they put on very successful. People enjoy them and pass on the experience by word of mouth. In the same way Ana has always been a big part of the local community, getting involved in festivals and sponsoring sports teams, and the like. Even if it's a simple gift voucher for a local raffle. The kind of recommendations community work generates are priceless.

Ana strongly feels the industry needs to work closely with government to make it easier to bring skilled staff from outside the UK and to enable training initiatives to work with and encourage future business owners by making the industry more attractive to them.



## Dr Siraj Ali



**Maharaja Restaurant**  
Benfleet SS7 1BG



Dr. Muhammad Siraj Ali came to the UK when he was 11 year's old, and worked in his teens whilst he was studying in school, at his older brother's restaurant, The Curry Centre, in North London. Back then, this was the only option in terms of a career move for many Bangladeshis.

However he wanted to move away and find an unsaturated market, and chose a small town in Essex to open his first restaurant. He becomes a pioneering force behind the introduction of Indian cuisine in the Essex region. He has opened 8 restaurants in Essex. In his successful 48-year career, he introduced Indian food to Thurrock, and has used his success and experiences to broaden cultural understanding and raise millions of pounds for charities in Bangladesh and the UK.

His passion to build bridges between cultures and communities has seen him become an ambassador for multi-cultural integration and charity work. Since 1995, Siraj has raised over £3 million for charity, with his charitable efforts having even seen his dishes flown to 150 UN troops in the Congo.

Dr Ali's successful restaurant was chosen by MPs to cater for the first ever Bangladesh Festival of Food and Culture at the House of Commons in 2001. In 2008, Dr Ali won the British Bangladeshi Who's Who 'Outstanding Contribution' Award. In 2009, he was a winner of the Channel 5 Awards for his long standing contribution to the British Bangladeshi Community. In 2011, Siraj received the British Bangladeshi Who's Who Award and in 2015, he was awarded by Currylife magazine for contribution to the catering and hospitality industry.

In 2018, Siraj was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Essex for his distinguished career, joining Rt Hon John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons, Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of Jatyo Sangshad, (Bangladesh Parliament), former UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson and former President of Chile, Her Excellency Michelle Bachelet, whose achievements are recognised by academics.

In Bangladesh, Dr Ali is a director of the Metro Hotel and Conference Centre, founder and proprietor of the Crescent Hospital, Mirabazaar,

Dr Ali's successful restaurant was chosen by MPs to cater for the first ever Bangladesh Festival of Food and Culture at the House of Commons in 2001. In 2008, Dr Ali won the British Bangladeshi Who's Who 'Outstanding Contribution' Award.

now City School, a trustee, co-founder and sponsor of Balagonj Sixth Form College and the Osmani Nagar Girls College, co-founder, trustee, secretary of the Haji Soyed Ali Memorial Trust, co-ponor of the Haji Soyed Ali Memorial Trust Anwarul Uloom Jamia Academy and Haji Soyed Ali Primary School, and Co-Founder of the Haji Soyed Ali Memorial Trust and Anwarul Uloom

Jamia Hostel for orphans. Siraj Ali is also the owner and chairman of the Al Siraj Plaza, a multipurpose building in Goalabazaar Sylhet which includes the 10,000 square feet Siraj-ul-Uloom for Quran and Hadith Research Centre and Library, the 3rd centre of its kind in Bangladesh.

In Essex, Siraj is the Founder Chairman of both the Thurrock Bangladesh Welfare Association and the Thurrock Islamic Educational Cultural Centre, former general secretary and founder member of the Essex Jamme Masjid in Southend on Sea, as well as the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Essex Bangladesh Welfare Association (Essex) and former Vice Chairman of Bangladesh Catering Association Essex region.



## Abdul Karim Nazim



**Maharani Camden**  
London NW1 7JN



It all started in 1963, when Abdul Karim Nazim's father and uncle opened Maharani Camden. At this point the Clapham branch was already opened but his father was not involved. His father was his role model as he was growing up so he wanted to get involved in the family business, too. As he was growing up, he started learning more and more about the Indian food industry and in 1984 he joined the family business and have been involved ever since. They are a family-owned and operated business.

Since being involved in the business, there are a lot of things that motivate him but also make him smile. For example, being based on Camden High Street, he gets to meet new people from different backgrounds everyday as Camden is a huge tourist attraction now. Also, being able to maintain a good relationship with his regular customers and local businesses would be his favourite part in having the business. Furthermore, being one of the oldest Indian restaurants in Camden, more and more people wish to come and visit them, making their loyalty to Camden High Street their unique selling point.

As he has worked in Indian restaurants from a young age, he understood the industry a lot more and realised that he would need to create some different flavours in order for him to stand out. As he is from Bangladeshi heritage, he knew about the ingredients used in an Indian restaurant which is why he was able to create his speciality dishes with ease. They cater for all palettes, whether you like your curry extremely mild, or extremely hot with a desi twist.

Motivation plays a big role in any business, and it is up to the owner/manager to ensure that the staff are motivated. To be completely honest, wherever you go, money will always be a big factor of motivation. However, he likes to keep things different here as he gives his staff a bit more responsibility than being a simple employee. Loyalty is important to him and any business owner will tell you, loyalty is key to running a successful business. His head-chef has been with him for over 20 years now as long as one of his waiters. Due to this loyalty, he makes sure they enjoy working at Maharani.

As this is the 21st century, it is crucial to be

Motivation plays a big role in any business, and it is up to the owner/manager to ensure that the staff are motivated. To be completely honest, wherever you go, money will always be a big factor of motivation.

using and keeping up to date with modern technology. They started off with using the basic Just Eat machines but as social media is a huge thing now, they are slowly getting on to social media platforms. They are already on Instagram. They also use modern technology for their online orders and marketing. Marketing on social media is vital as it is the only way to attract an audience. Back in the day, let's say in 2011, marketing was done by going door to door and posting leaflets, but this is not as effective as advertising on social media.

Being a business owner comes with many challenges; the hardest would be during the quieter seasons as it does mess up the cash flow. Quieter seasons would be the first few weeks of January as Christmas and New Years just pass, and also during summer. It is not easy to run a successful business but the key ingredient to doing so is being patient and love what you are doing. If you do not love the industry you are in, you will not love your business enough to make it successful. Also, as they are a family-owned and operated business, it was important for them to stick together



# Manik Miah



Maharani  
Ipswich, IP1 2NJ



The greatest challenge as a restaurant owner is delivering an excellent customer service and food to all customers every time they visit.

Manik Miah has over 40 years of experience in the restaurant and takeaway sector within the UK. He has had a few restaurants over the past 40 years. His experience, ability and wealth of information about food is credited as responsible for the many prestigious awards his previous restaurants have achieved. A wealth of management and operational experience is in the forefront of his contribution to the Maharani.

Manik Miah is from a family background who had an Indian Restaurant before the Second World War in the UK. His uncle opened the first restaurant before the Second World War in London (Earls Court). In that time, he had 5 restaurants. They still own the restaurant in Earls Court and is run by their family. This is how Manik was encouraged to become a restaurant trader because he wanted to introduce Indian/ Bangladeshi cuisine to the Western people and make the Asian food more popular, which is now the most loved food in the UK. He has his own restaurant in Ipswich. His brother had a restaurant here that's why he moved to Ipswich in 1989.

Enjoying and mixing with the customers, making friends through the restaurant, customers enjoying the food and service returning back for more quality food are the traits he is fond of. His unique selling point is the excellent quality of food, as well as being a good host and being friendly with customers.

Nowadays customers are looking for quality and different types of new food. Manik Miah and his award-winning chefs are well aware of this. To meet and exceed customers satisfaction they always use fresh products, locally sourced, where possible. They have more than 15 Speciality Dishes, two of these are the Haandi which is mainly cooked home-style in a casserole pot, and the Bangladeshi Macherbiran Bhuna, and in all these are used ingredients such as meat, chicken, prawns each cooked with fresh herbs, spices, mustard oil, etc. The restaurant caters for vegan and vegetarian diets and for other dietary needs.

All their food is cooked in the traditional way, using traditional methods of cooking, including the clay ovens. They use technology to promote the restaurant through their website, on social media and on Trip Advisor. They still find most new customers are recommended by their existing customers. They sometimes advertise in local papers, also in the cinema and theatres. They advertise their business online through a local business directory which promotes local independent businesses through their website and their social media channels, to help us reach a wider audience.

The greatest challenge as a restaurant owner is delivering an excellent customer service and food to all customers every time they visit. But Manik's staff are very loyal to him, all of them have been working for him for the last 18-20 years. Any good performance and best services are recognised and rewarded. They work hard for the business to succeed.

Manik's restaurant provides good quality food and good service at competitive prices and his wish is to be a good host to all his customers. It is also about being part of the local business community, being well respected, and being part of the wider Bangladeshi and Ipswich community. He also actively supports local, national and international charities, and he supports local education as a member of the Corporation at Suffolk New College. He is also on the Board for the Users Group at Ipswich Hospital.

Manik would like the Maharani to continue as a popular community focused restaurant, and personally he would like to increase his charity work.



## Mohammed Abdul Ahad and Brothers



Millennium Balti  
Leamington Spa, CV31 3AG



“They have passion and willingly provide the best possible food and service to their customers. They do everything with love. That’s their secret ingredient ‘love’.”

While all new restaurant ventures are risky, they may be one of the most unlikely restaurant success stories that we’ve ever interviewed. Ahad started working with Indian restaurants and takeaways at a very early age. He worked for different branches of Millennium Balti, which was opened in 2000 (Nuneaton, Hinckley, Leamington, Coventry). Then in December 2014 they bought one of the branches in a very busy area, Leamington. It was very difficult, a lot of major improvements were needed to the actual building as well as menu, etc. The business wasn’t good, there was so much competition, they struggled a lot in the early days. But they didn’t give up, his family supported him at every step of the way. All four brothers motivated each other, every member of the family contributed in their own ways.

The restaurant required improvements inside building as well as increasing customer base. He did his research by asking the public and checking out other competitors. He and his family did all the works of refurbishment and menu innovation. Their menu is extensive and there is something for everyone. But they kept the design, layout and descriptions simple and easy to read and understand. They built the business up slowly but strongly - taking extra care of all the ingredients, using fresh produce and maintaining the quality. The food price is standard and reasonable, but the quality of their

food is very good.

Their restaurant has a very friendly environment where all customers enjoy the food and the atmosphere. They now have a huge regular customer base. Most of the customers they know personally and know their likes and dislikes. For example, some of their customers when walk in, they know what they will order without asking! They are impressed with their memory and service. They look after everyone with love. Forming personalised relationship with the customers is all the more important given the restaurant’s decidedly intimate appeal.

They have passion and willingly provide the best possible food and service to their customers. They do everything with love. That’s their secret ingredient ‘love’. Well not secret anymore! Quality speaks for itself. You can taste the difference in their food compared to others. They look after everyone, whether new or regular customer, however small or big order. They also cater to individual tastes and preferences. For the health conscious they have a wide range of healthy vegetarian dishes and grilled food where oil is very minimum, and they use low-fat yogurt. The extensive menu, that they have, caters for all tastes, flavours and textures.

Though not on Just Eat, they have built up a fantastic customer base for their delivery and takeaway service, where a majority are now regulars. Even they are getting new customers through word of mouth. As its family run business, all members come to rescue if required. Everyone in the family helps each other and providing the best for their customers. They always take part in charity events.

They give free meal vouchers, donate money, sponsor cricket team, football team, medical team. They are always looking for ways to improve. Recently in August 2017 they attended a culinary workshop in Newcastle where they met various Michelin Starred chefs, executive chefs and managers and learnt a lot. Also they participated on a live Restaurant Talent Show on Channel 5. They have won many local and national awards for their excellent customer support, hard work, quality food and service. They have also been recently appointed the official Youth Ambassadors for the Asian Restaurant Owners’ Network.



## Ziaur Rahman Choudhury



**Montaz**  
Newmarket CB8 8DN



Ziaur Choudhrey, who is one of the cofounders of Montaz, a popular modern Indian restaurant in Newmarket, Suffolk, started his career at a restaurant called The Merryland Tandoori in 1992.

He soon established himself as a key member of the business and was offered a partnership in 1997. It was a time when the restaurant sector was in good stead and banks were forthcoming with finance, suppliers helpful in giving credit and staffing levels adequate.

With Ziaur's strengths being in menu innovation, interior design and above all customer service, these important aspects encouraged him to oversee many projects, starting from Montaz St.Ives , Montaz Bourne, Montaz Ely, Masala Lounge Rugby, Chai Kai Tea House St.Ives, Chai Kai Tea Company and Montaz Newmarket.

Ziaur says, "I have worked with many different budgets to open different sites, but key to all is good simple food using great produce, excellent and friendly customer service along with presentation of your food and your restaurant. A key factor of Montaz Newmarket's success is to use local suppliers providing quality local produce and on trend, sustainable fish and meat with the latter for example being used in our award winning signature dish "Slow Roasted Ox Cheek."

He adds: "What I enjoy the most is the evolving nature of our menu, taking traditional recipes and giving them a modern spin, which in turn also creates stories for marketing the restaurant as I believe the old way of newspaper ads and leaflet drops are long gone. I believe strongly that creating such material on where perhaps you may have travelled and been inspired to create recipes or even having something on my staff like staff days out, gives the marketing material an emotional depth and personalises everything to the extent that your brand becomes very liked by your clientele. It gives them a connection."

Like good, contemporary and knowledgeable restaurateurs, Ziaur takes his inspiration from

“What I enjoy the most is the evolving nature of our menu, taking traditional recipes and giving them a modern spin, which in turn also creates stories for marketing the restaurant as I believe the old way of newspaper ads and leaflet drops are long gone.”

both recipes of long ago to current ones from Michelin starred chefs because he says, "it gives me an understanding of how food has evolved, how recipes and cooking techniques have changed along with how customer tastes have developed and adapted. Add to that the fact that Britain has such wonderful ingredients and we can utilise them in our cooking to show to the rest of the world."

With the wealth of experience under his belt, Ziaur next intends to create a rollout brand within the catering industry so watch this space!

I have worked with many different budgets to open different sites, but key to all is good simple food using great produce, excellent and friendly customer service along with presentation of your food and your restaurant.



## Mohammed Siddiqur Rahman



Raj Garden  
Watford WD23 2DQ



The marketing and advertising initiatives have worked for him are leafleting, local press and social media but most importantly word of mouth has been a great driver of his business.

Mohammed Siddiquir Rahman had worked in Indian restaurants for many years and wanted to apply the ideas he had developed - that was his main motivation. Serving his customers and seeing them happy and very satisfied are his favourite part of his business. The unique selling points of his business are consistent and great customer service with excellent and unique cuisines.

Siddiquir and his team choose the menus from their own ideas developed over many years taking inspiration from traditional Sylhety cooking. They specialise in Traditional Bangladeshi dishes with a modern twist and key is fresh produce. Their signature dish is called Rajestani Chicken and HariAli Chicken.

Siddiquir's team have constant training and customer feedback and also they have a friendly and fun atmosphere in the restaurant. The marketing and advertising initiatives have worked for him are leafleting, local press and social media but most importantly word of mouth has been a great driver of his business.

To face challenges of being a restaurant owner and manager, he says, "You have to wear many hats, you are the manager, the chief taster, the supply checker, the bookkeeper and also the inspector of hygiene - all these things you have to be on top of everyday routine." The hardest parts of his job, according to Siddiquir Rahman, are maintaining staff and hygiene of all areas of the restaurant on

a daily basis. He considers the key ingredients to his Restaurant's success have been consistently delivering good service and food that customers love to recommend.

Siddiquir Rahman was born in 1971 in Luton, Bedfordshire. He completed his GCSEs in Denbigh High School in 1987. At the age of 16, Siddiquir started working part time at an Indian restaurant which initiated his interest in the restaurant trade. At the age of 19 he opened his first thriving business, an Indian takeaway which he later converted to a restaurant in Oxhey, Hertfordshire called Curry Cottage. After the success of Curry Cottage, in 1997 he went on to open another Indian restaurant, Raj Garden in Bushey, which became his most successful venture, receiving many awards for their service and support of the community. Since then, he has opened several other restaurants around the country but in 2002, he decided to diversify and invest in another industry.

In 2002, he began his career as a property investor buying houses to re-develop them and put them on the rental market. This has enabled him to develop his property portfolio and diversify within the property industry. He is the director of Luton Property Management Ltd and the senior negotiator for Simply Move, overseeing the management of properties. This business is fast becoming one of the busiest property management companies in its area. He is also the owner of M.S Rahman Properties (Real Estate) and S&Z a property development company.

In addition, he is a member of several business associations such as one of the Directors of the UKBCCI and an EC member of BCA. He is also a member of the National Landlord Association and a member of the ARLA which is an association for residential lettings. He believes giving back to society is a vital part of life. Therefore, he is the secretary of Jalal Pur Welfare Association which gives unprivileged children in Bangladesh a chance to transform their lives. He is also a part of the advisory board at Dhokin Surma Committee, a role passed on from his father. In the UK, he is a dedicated member of charities such as the Peace Hospice and local charities especially in the Watford area, for which he has gained certificates and awards from local MPs and Mayors.



## Shajanur Raja



**Sopna Indian Restaurant**  
Caernarfon LL5 2BB



From its signature dishes to its beautiful atmosphere and a large variety of Bangladeshi, Indian and some fusion food, it goes out of its way to make certain that it has something for everyone.

Shajanur Raja loves to work and mingle with people and he knows that the restaurant business is a people business, which makes forging good interpersonal relationships between restaurant staff and customers critical. Shajanur points out that he has always treated his employees well and considered them like family. "Great employees are happy and successful, which in turn creates pleased and loyal customers", he adds.

His award-winning restaurant Sopna Tandoori is well known for quality, variety and hospitality. Set in beautiful rural Caernarfon, 8 miles from popular Llanberis, Sopna Indian Restaurant delivers authentic home style Indian cuisine with a taste of distinction. From its signature dishes to its beautiful atmosphere and a large variety of Bangladeshi, Indian and some fusion food, it goes out of its way to make certain that it has something for everyone.

Their chefs use only the highest quality seasonal produce, locally sourced wherever possible, and pride themselves on creating delicious food that tastes good. From the spicy, aromatic notes of Sher-E-Bangla to the sumptuous textures of our Lamb Jaflong; from a rich Sopna Special Biryani to the fragrant King Prawn Dilraj they are proud to share an array of enduring classic dishes alongside some of the most visionary contemporary Indian cuisine to be found anywhere in the UK today.

"Warm hospitality is at the heart of everything we do," says Shajanur. "Because we are family owned and operated, we personalise your visits and attend to special needs. Our staff is our greatest asset, and we work hard with them to create extraordinary dining experiences." He is indeed a hard-working honest businessman.

Shajanur was born in Salamatila, Moulvibazar and he came to the UK in 1989. He used to live in Oldham (1989-1991). In 1991, he moved to North Wales and started working in a restaurant. After that he worked for several restaurants in North Wales. He started restaurant business at Pwhelli North Wales in 1996. Since then he did not have to look back. His hard work, honesty, sincerity and good community works took him to this position very fast. From one restaurant, now he is the owner of five outlets, a Takeaway and a Cash & Carry under the name of Sopna group. Also he has some property businesses near his all restaurants and in Bangladesh. One of his restaurants, Sopna Tandoori gained Wales Curry House of the Year Award in 2007 and 2010. In 2011, he opened the first Bangladeshi Cash & Carry at Bangor in North Wales. He has a good reputation with local Muslim community and also with local Welsh people.

Shajanur loves to do charity work and donated lots of money for the people in need in Moulvibazar, Bangladesh as well as in North Wales and different parts of the UK. Currently he is the Founder Chairman of three charity organisations - Bangladesh Womens Aid, Britain Bangla Social Development Foundation (BBSDF) and Nasiruddin Hafizia Madrasa at Hiyala Shahebbari in Hobigonj District. Every year he organises charity night at each of his restaurants and raises money for his charity works. He is also involved in many local and social activities both in the UK and in Bangladesh. He is the Director of the Exposure Developments Ltd, which is based in Bangladesh since early 2009. He is currently working with a project of building a private hospital in the name of Hason Raja and Jubeda Vanu Hospital, in his birthplace in Bangladesh. He is the member of Greater Sylhet Council UK and acts as the Vice-president of its Chester and North Wales Committee.



## Mujibur Rahman Junue



**Spice of India**  
Twickenham Tw2 7LB



A restaurant is a public space, where people come to eat food and interact. It is all about socialising, community spirit and making people happy and energetic. Mujibur Rahman Junue realised that this 'character and spirit' of the restaurant business really matched with his personality and ever since he wanted to run a restaurant. Although he wanted to open a restaurant to start off his career, the first opportunity that came on his way was in the form of an off-license, which he ran for 6 years successfully. He was able to fulfil his dream of opening his own restaurant within 3 years running the off license. It was a great learning experience managing both the businesses at the same time. However, he gave up the off-license to fully concentrate in the restaurant business which was his passion. He spent the last 23 years turning his restaurant

Mujib is very much interested in the usage of modern technology in his business. Right now he has his own online order system and Booking system that help him save money, and help his staff work efficiently.

into one of the best restaurants in the area. He has two more branches, where one is leased out currently.

Mujib's favourite part of the business is being of service to his customers. "I don't compromise on staff strength and quality of service which made us very consistent all these years. Being consistent made our customers, very confident that they can depend on us, any time, any day", he added. They aim at 100% customer satisfaction by providing unmatched customer service and exceptionally tasty food. His unique selling points are consistency, quality of the

food, service, and decor. He chooses his menu by assessing his competitor's offerings, their prices, and the dishes. He tries to be different and unique than what they do. His signature dishes are Lamb Shank, Shukran Chicken, Murg Khandani and Sho-Coo-Tee Chicken.

"Stress, anger and Negative attitude are contagious. I never allow this to pass onto my staff. I stay positive and pleasant all the time, which makes my staff very open to me" says Mujib. "I motivate my staff by demonstrating leadership qualities and showing how to put customer needs first, by having regular meetings with them", he adds.

Mujib is very much interested in the usage of modern technology in his business. Right now he has his own online order system and Booking system that help him save money, and help his staff work efficiently. He has his own self-checkout system being developed, for Takeaway collection orders. This free up his counter staff on busy evenings. Customers can come, order a takeaway and pay using the integrated card machine, all by themselves. Right now, he is waiting for a demo of his Restaurant's new dine-in management system which will use cloud-based technology and latest payment system such as Google Pay and Apple Pay. With this, he is aiming for faster service for his customers and an efficient work environment for his staff. Also, his technology providers are doing some research on Bluetooth beacons, which will provide him Live data about his business on his mobile, such as air quality, temperature, how busy the shop is etc. These data will be analysed to find business insights later. Facebook Boosting and Google Adwords have been really helpful. Even though they are paid promotion, return on investment justifies them.

Mujibur Rahman Junue is the Deputy Secretary to Bangladesh Catering Association (BCA) and General Secretary to West Bangladesh Welfare Association. He is the General Secretary of Boliar Bhag Madrasah Committee (UK), in Bangladesh which is responsible for a lot of charitable work. Also, he is the Deputy Secretary for Richmond and Hounslow Islamic Centre.

His next move would be to increase his property portfolio and open a fast food grill restaurant.



## Abdus Shahid



**Valley Connection**  
London N9 7EP

**Ballington Valley**  
Suffolk,



Abdus Shahid is a multi-award winning cook. He was born and raised in a rural village in Bangladesh. He recollects how his mother would grow all her own vegetables and use them; fresh from the ground to the plate. This is what he wishes to closely emulate in his own restaurant. His earliest memory of cooking is when he used to boil fresh potatoes with his mother on an open fire outside. His mother would finely chop shallots, coriander red dried birds-eye chillies, and smother the potatoes with this mixture. She would also add some salt and mustard oil which was the piece de resistance! His siblings and he would always be hanging around the kitchen. Hence, his inspiration for cooking has originated from his childhood. However, when arrived in the UK, Shahid was amazed by the beautiful creations of the chefs in all the restaurants in London.

His first kitchen post was in a restaurant in Stoke Newington in Hackney. He worked as a kitchen porter but very quickly the chef realised that Shahid had the skills to become a chef. He encouraged him to assist in the food preparation and eventually allowed him to cook when he was on leave. It didn't feel like hard work as Shahid was so impressed by his newly learned skill and creations; making rice and curry look like a piece of art!

This is what inspired him to open his own restaurant. He discovered that he had the skill, work ethic and professionalism to run his own restaurant. He has three restaurants now – Ballingdon Valley, Moza, and Valley Collection – all based in Suffolk with menus created by himself. Valley Connection is one of Bury St Edmund's largest and smartest Indian restaurants, with award winning chefs. Recently renovated this elegant and stylish restaurant can accommodate up to 110 diners in sumptuous and contemporary surroundings, setting the tone for an up market dining experience with menus that focus on Indian continental dishes to Bangladeshi cuisine. Atul Kochhar is Shahid's food hero. Atul, he says, has promoted Indian food to a level that has historically occupied by predominantly European chefs.

Shahid's restaurant serves a delightful selection of traditional and Bangladeshi meals. He always

This is what inspired him to open his own restaurant. He discovered that he had the skill, work ethic and professionalism to run his own restaurant.


endeavours to use fresh ingredients to create dishes that are exquisite in taste and visual. "My food is completely different. I make my own spices – this is my secret. I buy all fresh ingredients and make my own recipes and people like my food. When I received my awards, my customers say we are not surprised," says Shahid.

His favourite dishes from his current menu are Hariyali Chicken Masala (fresh spinach with succulent pieces of boneless chicken in mild spices), Jingra Kal Mirch (king prawns tossed with shallots, ginger, tomato, peppers and garnished with coriander and fresh green chillies – medium hot) and Dum Lamb Achari (a lamb curry bursting with pickle spices, fairly hot) – something for everybody!

When asked which three store-cupboard ingredients he could not cook without, he said 3 staples need to be onions, garam gasala and a good mixed curry powder. You can create a curry with just about any type of vegetable or meat using these ingredients.

Shahid has achieved several awards such as the Tiffin Cup 2018, Eat out Eat well West Suffolk Silver Winner, BCA Restaurant of the Year 2017, South Asian Curry Awards 2015 and many more.





“I never dreamed about  
success. I worked for it.”  
- Estée Lauder





TOP TIPS







## Keith Best

Panel Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

✦ In furthering Unity and Collaboration it is my belief that the major representatives of the industry should come together regularly and discuss the different issues (such as recruitment of chefs, pricing policy, procurement of ingredients, joint marketing etc) and agree to share certain information which is not especially commercially sensitive.

✦ There should be agreement on a common line to take and some joint resources should be committed to achieving that aim with clearly set objectives and timeline - there needs to be an agreed strategy. The time for talking and disagreeing is now over and the time for joint action is long overdue.



## Shahagir Bakth Faruk

Panel Judge  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- ✦ Identify and control hazards in order to make safe foods
- ✦ Be proactive and take preventative steps
- ✦ Get used to a management system HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point)



## Pasha Khandaker MBE

Panel Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

✦ Be optimistic and involve your customer to lobby the government

✦ Grow with the flow - Food Management, Technology, Food and Hygiene etc

✦ Modernise the cuisine by making it very appealing and presentable and at the same time keeping it healthy



## Dr Wali Tasar Uddin MBE

Panel Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

✦ Effective marketing and promotion strategy

✦ Team work with dedication and determination

✦ Train quality chefs who then will lead the kitchen team and generate better creative dishes and presentations





## Mahbub Reza Chowdhury

TV Producer and Film Maker

“

- Adapt to emerging technologies
- Aim for exceptional customer service and presentation.
- Make the innovative menu a priority.



## Dr Zaki Rezwana Anwar

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- Listening to customer feedback is crucial for the growth of the business
- Accept the realities of a changing socio-economic climate and act with an adaptable mindset
- Improve the service/interface with customers and clients - both virtual and face-to-face



## Oli Khan

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- We need to focus more on skills and the curry industry needs to take on more apprentices
- Proper hygiene is very important when it comes to food preparation
- Minimise your menu and only sell popular item from your menu



## Mujib Islam

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- Evolve with current market trends. Try and understand your customer
- Price your menu based on location and customer base
- Engage in social media and digital marketing





## Cllr Ayesha Chowdhury

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- ◊ Promote curry industry to the young generation/newcomers by using all possible techniques and use of media
- ◊ Lobby government (under effective leadership) to bring skilled staff/chefs
- ◊ Use of technology is a must and so is staff/management training to improve and learn new skills



## Altaf Hussain

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- ◊ Enthusiasm and passion boost your business
- ◊ Amending training process and staff management systems
- ◊ Keep up to date employment related documents for all employees



## Helal Malik

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- ◊ Understand customer behaviour and deliver beyond expectation
- ◊ Engage customers through social media. It's a tool to impress and inform
- ◊ Dining is a passion. Your menu reflects your creativity and skill. Implement new industry trends



## Forhad Hussain Tipu

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- ◊ Shorter version of menu and Innovation
- ◊ Own online ordering facility hub
- ◊ Giving importance of digital marketing





## Ruhul Shamsuddin

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- Identify your target audience. Look at your local market and tailor your style to appeal to them. All towns have a different community and culture, make sure your restaurant suits their needs
- Shape your concept. Do not be afraid to market yourself as a Bangladeshi cuisine restaurant. Be confident to promote and show off the Bangladeshi food and culture to educate your customers
- Create a restaurant theme suitable to your market



## Ana Miah

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- Train staff on regular intervals
- Reduce menu content and upgrade regularly
- Embrace social media and make it part of your marketing strategy



## Atikur Rahman

Special Judge,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards

“

- Good food hygiene is of paramount importance for the pleasure of your customers and the continued success of your business
- Have adequate public liability insurance and right paperwork
- Complete the SFBB (Safer Food, Better Business) folder thoroughly and ensure the opening and closing checks are undertaken on a daily basis



## Farhan Masud Khan

Head of Programmes  
Channel 5

“

- Be ready to evolve , especially the chef as customers demand and wants are changing constantly with new diet trends
- Management training has become a big part of our future for the industry, to learn and implement
- Communication with employees has to be improved. A training session should take place once a month with all the staffs for better understanding of running of the restaurant





## Minara Uddin-Meghna

Special Judge, Catering Circle

“

Rethink and smart design your menu creatively and wisely, streamline the dishes this will help in ways to reduce food wastage and save money. This improves better execution of dishes cooking times and flavours.

Leverage your loyal and customers, give them discounts which is an incentive for repeat visits and takeaway orders.

Look for cost efficient good technology in EPOS/POS and Kitchen Management System (KMS). Compare management system prices as these services will enable staff to work seamlessly better, in turn customers have good experiences.



## Mohammed Jubair

Chief Reporter,  
Channel S

“

Understand your locality and prioritise the customer's point of view

Respect your staff and pay reasonable salaries

Activate as an organisation or group to address the curry crisis together sharing ideas and experiences



## Abdul Kashim

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

Share your thoughts and ideas with your staff and understand their needs and aspiration

You and your staff have a common goal and that is the success of the restaurant, if you benefit so should they

A happy team has a direct effect on productivity, which in return means a successful restaurant



## Mohi Sami Uddin

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

Make sure you invest time in training your team on the technology you have implemented

Explore ways to segment data from your systems to help your business analysis

Social media tech will enable you to reach a far bigger crowd, so learn how to use it





## Fahad Islam

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Stick to your style that works for you and don't compromise your ethics
- Indian food is healthy as long as you remove the unhealthy elements
- Always buy quality products and fresh ingredients to get the best nutrients



## Ash Miah

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Investing in staff training and management with a particular focus on HACCAP will provide organisations with greater knowledge in food safety
- A diverse workforce helps strengthen equal opportunities in the establishment. Simplified menus help embrace a healthy eating lifestyle
- Using the EPOS systems is fundamental in greater transparencies and management



## Tofozzul Miah

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Invest in IT - this includes having your own website, mobile app and online ordering system. This will improve efficiency for customers and avoid having to face the breathtaking fees charged by third party online companies
- Collect customer data via EPOS systems. Using Twitter and Instagram provides a whole new audience for your business to target
- Avoid door to door leafleting. Instead, online marketing tools are much more effective



## Safwaan Choudhury

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Create engaging marketing campaigns and utilise social media platforms to keep customers up to date
- Use TripAdvisor and other reviews and give staff the feedback
- Have a clear and precise menu with accurate descriptions





## Murad Ahmed

Finalist,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Innovation required to improve the image of catering industry
- Employment rights for staff
- Pension rights for long term employees



## Shathil Islam

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Bring new concepts like lunch-time trade, street food, stone cooking (Hot Rock), different Build Your Own (BYO) food experiences
- Create an attractive atmosphere. Consider human senses - taste, sight, lighting, table layout, painting, colours, cooking process, sound, music, smell, aromatic scents
- Customise menu according to the survey responses from your diners



## Rehan Uddin

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Do not accommodate and feed staff. Instead rent out the accommodation and do not include breakfast, lunch and dinner for free. You will save 40k in one year
- Receive prepped product daily from your supplier. Chicken, lamb, onions, vegetables. Reduce prep time and pay by the hour
- Vegan customers now make up 7% of the population a new core market. Create new vegan menus



## Ziaur Choudhrey

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Work with your chef to keep food cost down, use local produce where possible and price accordingly if using expensive ingredients
- Use social media to reach younger audience lifestyle magazines for older generations. Twitter is my go to place
- Till systems, online booking and ordering, kitchen equipment all lead to efficiency and reduced staff costs





## Aki Rahman

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Plan and design your menu very carefully and keep your menu size in check. Categorise menu items according to profit and popularity levels. Maximise income from high margin products
- In your menu, showcase your culinary philosophy and brand attributes featuring traditional healthy dishes and ingredients
- Know your customers. Be attentive. Make your service exceptional



## Tania Rahman

Finalist,  
The Restaurant Talent Show  
Awards 2017

“

- Focus on talent and invest in your team by training passionate chefs to your standard of cuisine ultimately benefiting the business in the long term
- Make technology your friend by investing in state of the art Epos system
- Keep it simple by focusing on quality of produce and ingredients rather than quantity of items on your menu



## Adnan Hussain

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Stay one move ahead i.e. observe what other restaurants are doing, sales patterns in the market and how you can adapt
- Always have trust in yourself so never doubt what you can accomplish. Forget all the 'buts' just because previous generation did not use similar ideas
- Always be innovative with your menus. People like an imagination and being in an industry where everybody copies each other, be original and separate yourself from other places



## Aziz Miah

Winner,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“

- Reach out for support from the local council, i.e. environmental health department and premises licence department
- Regularly check and test employee's knowledge and provide training where necessary
- Do not stand still, enhance your own training and knowledge





## Sadia R Hussain JP BEM

Host,  
Catering Circle, Essex

“

- Offer incentives to employees, flexible hours and more diverse workforce
- Reduce menu sizes and create better working environment
- Transparency in terms of accounting and tax matters



## Sabbir Karim

Special Judge  
Catering Circle

“

- Be passionate and provide excellent customer service and always listen to your customer's feedback, it's the key to success.
- Your team is your strength, value them, be a good communicator, regular briefing, and training your team motivating to create a positive diverse working environment. This will benefit your business and grow loyal employees.
- Be prepared to make changes and evolve with the time & food trends.



## Foyso Choudhury MBE

Host,  
Catering Circle, Edinburgh

“

- Develop a professional and positive marketing strategy
- Form a national committee to lobby regional and national governments
- Introduce modern Information Technology in areas of service, sales, procurement and training



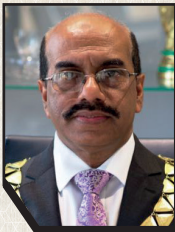
## Raza Miah

Senior Food Safety and  
Licensing Officer

“

- Better food safety standard, better business compliance
- Clean your hands regularly, prevent cross contamination risk
- Regularly monitor food safety, preventing food poisoning incidents





## Cllr Parvez Ahmed

Former Mayor,  
London Borough of Brent

“

- ◊ Grow together as one team
- ◊ Build, improve and develop relationship through coaching, constructive feedback and opportunities
- ◊ Create the environment of trust, acceptance, respect, understanding and courtesy to build and maintain strong relationships



## Faruk Miah MBE

Special Judge  
Catering Circle

“

- ◊ Create the right product (creative menu, great flavours, concise menu)
- ◊ Use modern marketing methods eg. Food bloggers, social media, promotions
- ◊ Provide great customer experience, no point having a great product, decor or menu if you don't serve with a smile or attend to customer needs.



## Oliver Ranson

Pricing Expert

“

- ◊ When it comes to pricing forget about costs - it is what your customers are willing to pay that counts
- ◊ Experiment with new promotions, price increases and special offers to test how your market responds to price changes
- ◊ Offer special prices only when the restaurant is not busy



## Ashraf Ahmed

Community Activist

“

- ◊ Train educate and inform young people of traditions and new catering methods and practice
- ◊ Make industry more attractive for them and their needs
- ◊ Encourage them to flourish and create next generation, of restaurants based on past and present





## AH Afzal Mahmood

Finalist,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“



Keep consistent in your quality of service with every customer



Food quality must be at its peak all time, not on just some dishes but ALL



Cleanliness and hygiene must be a top priority at all time



## Aminur Rahman

Director of IT,  
Purple-i Technologies

“



Avoid being listed in third party online ordering and online booking companies' website



Invest in reputable companies: Digital goods such as an EPOS and order online services are long time investments- go to companies with a long standing reputation within the sector who will give you good customer service and training



The Electronic Point-of-Sale (EPOS) is not an option in the 21st century - it's an absolute must for curry houses. It saves time and money, reduces paperwork and creates a customer database giving you better cash control



## Zakaria Chowdhury

Finalist,  
The Restaurant Talent  
Show Awards 2017

“



Better food safety standard, better business compliance



Must provide at least Level 2 Food Safety in Catering training to your staffs



Get a 'CATERING GUIDE', which has legal requirements, 'Guide to Compliance' and 'Advice on Good Practice'



## Abdul Halim

Director  
Nawab Lounge

“



Learn how to cook even if you are not planning on being the executive chef at your restaurant.

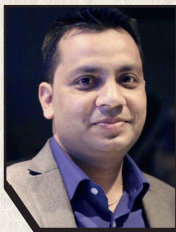


Acquire experience in all areas of the restaurant business if you want to be a successful restaurateur



Never stop learning about your industry so you are familiar with the latest and greatest trends





## Ahad Ahmed

Senior Producer,  
Channel 5

“

- Understand customers, products, and business
- Identify the actions needed to reduce waste, engage staff, and use local resources
- Redesign and refurbish your restaurant for greater efficiency



## Suhana Ahad

Director,  
Pearl Advertising

“

- Never start without the big three. Great chef, great location and a great concept
- Be ready to evolve, especially the chef as customers demand and wants are changing constantly with new diet trends
- Keep your brand alive on social media. It is a must and the best way to attract new customers and retain them through online promotions



## Shafi Ahmed

eCommerce Expert,  
dineNET.co.uk

“

- Take control of your own business. Use your own online ordering system on your website.
- Ensure your order online site is Responsive Ensure your online ordering system has a mobile App site or native mobile App
- Ensure your online ordering system site is integrated with your EPOS



## Poly Rahman

Life Member,  
Catering Circle

“

- Focus on offering high-quality food by using only the best quality ingredients.
- The chef you employ needs to have diversity in their skills and creativity. And train the service staff on a regular basis. In order to provide the best customer service.
- Keep your menu simple and specialize in a particular type of cuisine or dishes that is unique to your restaurant to differentiate yourself from competitors.













[www.cateringcircle.co.uk](http://www.cateringcircle.co.uk)