

think!

MUMBAI LOCAL

TRENDS, PEOPLE, PLACES

A MASTER CHEF, IN YOUR HOME

GOURMET CATERING Well-heeled, well-travelled Mumbaiites are hiring experts to bring the cuisines that they have enjoyed abroad into their homes

Humaira Ansari
humaira.ansari@hindustantimes.com

Architect Ajay Nahar wanted to make his wife Puja's recent birthday celebration an event to remember, so rather than call on the regular caterers and set up a bar for their friends, he ordered an elaborate gourmet brunch at their 5,500-sq-ft Walkeshwar home. A well-travelled foodie, Nahar knew exactly what he was looking for — artistically plated gourmet fare such as handmade ravioli and socca, a French dish of chickpea flour pancakes with stir-fried greens and cottage cheese in mushroom wine sauce. But he wasn't sure if he would find it in Mumbai. "I wanted the cutlery and crockery to be perfect too," says the 30-year-old. "Forks with bent teeth and spoons with elevated handles and a curved face enrich a gourmet fine-dining experience."

The service, the table, the layout, they were all perfect. And we only paid Rs 700 per head. That's less than we would have paid at a restaurant.

AJAY NAHAR, architect. Nahar ordered a gourmet brunch from a caterer for his wife Puja's birthday

a four-year-old gourmet catering service with a central kitchen in Walkeshwar. The catering service sent a team to the house to retrace the kitchen; a week before the birthday, a tasting menu was presented to the couple.

On the day of the bash, Cibo did not disappoint. Early in the afternoon, Prashant Bhoir, a former chef with five-star Hotel Intercontinental and Moshe's restaurant, arrived with his team of six, took over the kitchen and began prepping for the meal.

Moments after the first guests arrived, the team began to serve up marinated mushrooms in balsamic vinaigrette; falafel in fresh hummus; char-grilled pita with mint, olive oil, pomegranate and chilli flakes; cottage cheese with wild mushroom sauce and roasted zucchini with baby potatoes, shallots and pepper.

Dessert was molten chocolate with ice-cream, served in clay pots.

A total of 13 dishes were plated up



HT PHOTOS: PUNEET CHANDOK

(Most of my clients are people who travel a lot and want to bring the food culture they have experienced around the world into their homes.)

SHILARNA VAZE, co-owner, Ninja Sushi

through the evening, served on high-end Noritake cutlery, alongside yellow and white carnations, all brought in by the catering service.

"The service, the table, the layout, they were all perfect," says Nahar. "And we only paid Rs 700 per head. That's less than we would have paid at a restaurant."

It's a formula that is becoming increasingly popular among upwardly mobile Mumbaiites who want to organise parties with a difference and who have acquired a taste for fine food and real presentation during their increasing travels abroad. Gourmet catering services, launched three to four years ago, are accordingly seeing a spurt in the number of customers.

"We have catered for 40 events this year already — double what we had when we began in 2008," says Somnath Bhattacharya, general manager (operations) for deGustibus Hospitality, which owns gourmet catering service Moveable Feast. "In fact, we started

Shilarna Vaze and Christophe Perrin prepare some gourmet fare for a private party in Bandra. (Below) Bacon-wrapped prawns and crispy Peking duck spring rolls with shiitake mushrooms and hoisin sauce

the catering service because our restaurants, Indigo, Indigo Deli, Indigo Café and Neel at Tote on the Turf, were getting so many orders to cater to home parties."

While Moveable Feast accepts orders for a minimum of 20 people and also caters for corporate events and special counters at weddings, Cibo, founded by former Moshe manager Vinod Singh, caters even for a party of two and has had 35 orders a month this year, up from 10 a month in 2007.

Meanwhile, more gourmet catering services are entering the marketplace, with at least two launched in the past year alone.

Last September, Varun Seth, who studied at New York's Natural Gourmet School, started 1 Tablespoon, a gourmet catering service with a central kitchen in Matunga. And last month,

ADDRESS BOOK

1 TABLESPOON GOURMET CATERING
Minimum order: 25 people
Cost per head: Rs 700 to Rs 900
Hot favourites: Couscous and cranberry salad with cinnamon and cumin vinaigrette; corn and feta burgers with chipotle mayonnaise
Call: 9920366639

NINJA SUSHI
Minimum order: 10 people
Cost per head: Rs 800 to Rs 1,500
Hot favourites: Prawn California rolls, mini-beef burgers, duck rolls, sushi
Call: 9820036525

CIBO
Minimum order: 2 people
Cost per head: Rs 750 onwards
Hot favourites: Tuna croquettes in orange glaze served with honey and chopped parsley; lamb pinchos with adobo marinade
Call: 32266611, 9833549632

MOVEABLE FEAST
Minimum order: 15 people
Cost per head: Rs 750 onwards
Hot favourites: Slow poached lobster with leek panacotta and celery broth; stuffed grilled portobello mushrooms served with radicchio and morel dressing
Call: 9820155578, 9920020104



Shilarna Vaze and her Swiss boyfriend, Christophe Perrin, expanded the popular Ninja Sushi home delivery services into a sushi and gourmet catering service.

"I've had eight clients already in a month, most house parties, with the odd corporate event too," says Vaze. "Most of my clients are people who travel a lot and want to bring the food culture they have experienced around the world into their homes."

Meanwhile, Neha Manekia and her husband Joshua, a former chef at Bahrain's Ritz-Carlton, are preparing to launch their Silver Spoon gourmet catering service, based out of a central kitchen in Mumbai Central, in January.

"The average middle-class and upper-middle-class Mumbaiite is becoming familiar with the concept of gourmet food, thanks to increased global travel and food shows such as [reality series] MasterChef Australia," says Kalyan Karmakar of food blog Finely Chopped. "Even non-foodies now understand the concepts of texture, plating and presentation, and want to experience them."

a day in the life of a plumber

'I always carry a spare set of clothes'



Humaira Ansari
humaira.ansari@hindustantimes.com

Subhash Kamble's office is a plank of wood fixed to the outside of a PCO booth in Mazagaoon. He has been a plumber for 10 years and has been operating from this footpath ever since he went solo in 2002.

"I don't have a shop but that's not a problem," he says. "Everyone here knows me and they know exactly where to find me when they need work done."

He also has a cellphone, he adds proudly, sweeping the instrument out of his shirt pocket.

Originally from Kolhapur district, Kamble, 36, left his lush, green village in 1995, two months after his wedding, boarding a state transport bus headed to Mumbai, determined to build a better life for his new family.

A Class 2 dropout with no specific skills, he took the first job that came his way, working at a stove assembly unit at Chira Bazaar for Rs 600 a month.

"Agriculture had never interested me. There's no money in it," he says. "I always wanted to come to Mumbai. I knew I would be happy with whatever job I got in Mumbai, and I am."

When the stove unit shut five years later, Kamble's cousin came to the rescue again, finding him work as a plumber at a small shop in Mazagaoon. With no experience, Kamble started at a monthly salary of Rs 1,200.

For the first six months, he would just tag along with an experienced plumber, observe and assist. "Most of my knowledge about plumbing has been acquired on the job," he says. "Initially, it was disgusting to open up toilet pipes and work in sewers. But work is work and I have got over those feelings."

By 2001, Kamble had saved up enough to call his wife and two children to the city and, with some help from his father, buy a one-room, 120-sq-ft tenement in Sion Koliwada for Rs 70,000.

In 2002, having learnt how to fix leaks, repair pipes and unclog sewage lines, he decided to go solo. Over the past decade, Kamble has built a steady stream of clients and does the odd construction job on a new building, earning a total of Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 a month.

His day starts at 8 am, with a short prayer session with his wife. Next comes breakfast: Two chapattis, poha and tea. At 9 am, Kamble takes his tiffin from his wife, mounts his bicycle and sets off for his plank, or his first assignment of the day.

The next three hours are usually spent fixing pipes and drains, checking on tanks and sewers or installing pipes and valves for a total of about five clients a day. "On days when the work has been very filthy, I have a bath in a public bathroom," says Kamble. "I always carry a spare set of clothes."

Kamble fits lunch into whatever spare time he gets in the afternoon. The most difficult part of his job, he says, is working on buildings' exterior pipelines. "Especially in the past five years, with so many high-rises coming up, my job has become riskier," he says. Sometimes Kamble uses a harness, but most of the time, he just has a rope tied to his waist. "I'm not scared, but my wife is," he says, smiling.

At 8 pm, Kamble heads home to spend some quality time with his wife and kids Dimple, 14, and Sunil, 12, both of whom study at a local civic school.

"I want them to finish college and get government jobs," he says. "But saving up for their fees is hard."

The family pinches pennies by living frugally. Dinner, for instance, is rice, some vegetable and a little 'salad' of chilli and sliced onion.

Their only indulgence is a colour TV. Kamble watches the news every day and enjoys Marathi serials and movies on his rare days off.

"I can't take weekly holidays because I only earn when I work," he says. "Even so, I like Mumbai better than Kolhapur. At the end of a hard day, at least I have earned some money and can return home a happy man."

(This weekly feature explores the lives of those unseen Mumbaiites essential to your day)

Remembering, mourning martyrs



01 NCP activists burn tyres on the Western Express Highway in Borivli on Thursday, hours after their party chief Sharad Pawar was slapped by an irate member of the public in New Delhi. Harvinder Singh, arrested for assault, said he was protesting against corruption.

PRASAD GORI/HT

02 Police constables stop to look at a statue of Tukaram Omble at Girgaum Chowpatty, on Friday. Omble was killed while capturing terrorist Ajmal Kasab during the 26/11 attacks in 2008.

HEMANT PADALKAR/HT

03 Keenan Santos's grandmother attends a candlelight march on November 19 in memory of her grandson and his friend Reuben Fernandes, who were killed in a street brawl in Amboli last month as they tried to protect their women friends from molesters.

PUNEET CHANDHOK/HT

04 Abhishek and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan pose for photographs outside their Juhu home, Janak, on Tuesday after returning home from hospital with their new daughter.

SATTISH BATE/HT

05 Children peep out of a helicopter on board INS Vikrant, a decommissioned light aircraft carrier. It was opened to visitors last week, Navy Week.

HEMANT PADALKAR/HT



05

