



10 MOST PROMISING CHEFS

:: Anoothi Vishal

W

Who are the rising stars among Indian chefs? Two weeks ago, we brought you the definitive ranking of India's best chefs – those at the very top of the pecking order. Now, it is time to identify the 10 up-and-coming chefs who are already cooking high-quality food but have the potential to be the foremost influencers. Some are already well-acknowledged, others are hidden gems. What unites them is not just creativity and talent but also originality.

A criterion that separates chefs from merely competent cooks is the thoughtfulness with which they create unique dishes. Those who merely copy others or jump at passing fads have no place on this list.

Measuring inventiveness isn't easy, though. It depends on a diner's own sophistication and taste buds. The hands that roll sushi with chaat flavours do not make the cut here, but Kavan Kuttappa who dreamed up an exquisitely detailed, lined-with-ridge gourd-chutney poriyal puff does. However, this list has far fewer women (in fact, there is just one) than we would have liked to celebrate. Early burnouts among women professionals is a bitter truth in restaurant kitchens.

Some day soon, that may change.

For now, dig in.

The writer looks at restaurants, food trends and culinary concepts

#1 HUSSAIN SHAHZAD, 31

SPECIALITY: Modern Indian, Goan

To have a great understanding of a culinary culture that is not one's own, as Shahzad has about Goan food, is no mean feat. Before O Pedro opened in Mumbai last year, Shahzad had spent time in Goa, perfecting flavours and baking techniques. His talent can be seen in impeccable dishes like the sourdough poee with a clever chorizo butter, a first-rate pastel de nata and the restaurisation of homey dishes like the grilled pumpkin foogath on toast.

STANDOUT DISH: Sourdough poee with chorizo-flavoured butter



#2 PRATEEK SADHU, 31

SPECIALITY: Global

Dining at Masque in Mumbai is an experience even if you are unable to zero in on one particular dish that you like the best, like I was. Sadhu does inventive food that cannot be slotted under any category – his influences are many, a testimony to his travels and training in some of the best kitchens globally. But his ingredients are decidedly local. He loves to go back to his home state Kashmir and use some of its best produce – be it apples or kalar cheese. If you have been finding kalar, which was earlier a jammu-dhaba staple, on many fashionable restaurant menus over the last two years, thank Sadhu for it.

STANDOUT DISH: Lamb with yoghurt, fennel and cardamom

