

after a jet lag I only end up eating simple salads. However lunch in New York is always a big piece of grilled fish and for dinner I always have a big bowl of *dal*. I am also big on smoothies.

What is the best dish you have eaten to date and where?

It has to be at Krishna Temple in Udupi. I am not a Brahmin and I told them that. But I am a rational and religious person and way back in 1994, they allowed me to cook in the temple. Since I studied in Manipal, it was hurting somewhere that I may never be able to come back and this was a wonderful experience for me.

When you started Junoon in New York did you think it would become so successful?

I was skeptical as people kept saying it is very simple and I turned around and told them that the science of Indian food lies in its simplicity. I told them stick with me and I believe that this cuisine is what will work. Luckily it did and got me my first Michelin star as well.

You had another first when you launched your book *Utsav* at Cannes. Tell us more about it.

Yes, it certainly was a big thing. People were blown away by the grandeur of the book. Any page you would open and you could see that it is larger than life. Now it will become everyone's and it's 12 years of hard work and that is the India you want to take to the world. It was trending everywhere on the day it was launched. The French government invited me the next day asking if I could translate it into French. This book has been released with just 12 copies only to show the grandeur of India and I feel if we do not promote India, who will? We will launch a smaller version soon. This will be a priceless gift and you can't lift the book in one hand just like you do not



hold your daughter in one hand.

What is your kitchen philosophy?

You got to keep breathing in the kitchen. A lot of people are cooking with clenched hands. When you are cooking you are controlling it and when you put on the plate you give out a breath. Cooking is so interesting and your hands are shaped differently. I believe cooking is a yogic art and I know that's a big word.

Do you make any changes to adapt your food to suit a different palate?

Earlier I would do that to survive but I no longer do that because today people believe in what you are doing. Like you will not go to France and tell a Michelin star chef to take it back and make it to his or her palate. Today people's sensibilities have changed and in Europe there is no salt and paper on the table anymore. The chef

understands the right food and there is more trust which is fantastic. The moment you have faith, it all falls into place as the chef has figured it out.

What are your future plans?

Right now, I am working on food trends in 2018 and 2019. I write non-stop and any time, I keep writing on ideas and recipes. I feel there is so much more to do and I have not started as yet. I feel strongly that we must have something in India on food tourism on a large scale. I do not want to open more restaurants. If you see the cover of *Utsav* it is shot in Agra and the water has a reflection of the Taj Mahal but I don't talk about it as India has so much more. The whole thing is the boat that has so many people in it as a family. People should enjoy the authentic cooking and I promise you that will augur well for the country.