

# Hashtag

INDIA

January 2023

8

INDIA'S TOP FOOD  
ENTREPRENEURS  
CHANGING  
THE WAY  
WE DINE

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# TEJA CHEKURI, BANGALORE

*Managing Partner, Ironhill India*

**USP:** Vision boarding with a clear focus and discipline. He has several restaurants in the US, including Godavari, Vaanga, 1947, and Madras Dosa Co., amongst others. Ironhill India is a chain of microbreweries that has gone from strength to strength, with outlets in Vijayawada, Rajahmundry, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Nellore, with the Bengaluru outlet being the largest microbrewery in the world.

For someone who has always been a thorough foodie who loved trying out new cuisines, Teja Chekuri, Managing Partner, Ironhill India however never saw himself delving into the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry as an entrepreneur. For someone who studied engineering, his first tryst with F&B came in the US where he saw the demand for Indian cuisine, while also experiencing the craft beer culture. "This was a eureka moment for me, and that led to the launch of my Indian restaurant chain, Godavari in the US along with a standalone microbrewery, Prost and a craft brewery chain, Ironhill in India. And when you align effort with your passion, you are set onto the path of success."

Though he has several restaurants in the US, Godavari, Vaanga, 1947, and Madras Dosa Co., amongst others, two forays have been career-defining. "The first one is the launch of Prost in India in 2012, and the other one is the launch of Ironhill's first outlet, Ironhill, Vizag in 2016. While the former established craft beer in India, the latter gave it a larger barrel to brew in." Since then, they have grown leaps and bounds, with a new and elevated Prost being relaunched in Hyderabad in 2021, and Ironhill reaching six units.



*Teja Chekuri, Managing Partner, Ironhill India*

He believes that in India, F&B always had great scope, but previously the focus was on eating in-house with dining out reserved mostly for weekends and occasions. "However, over the last decade or so, barring the pandemic era, there has been an increase in disposable incomes, awareness, and a general exuberance from the youth towards embracing the dine-out culture and we have seen that translate into business, with a plethora of options cropping up." This coupled with the advent of restaurant discovery platforms has given a boost to the industry with more people now choosing to adopt the dining-out lifestyle. A lot of credit is also given to the introduction of the Indian audience to global media and the travel industry which has introduced the Indian foodie to various cuisines and cultures encouraging them to experiment.

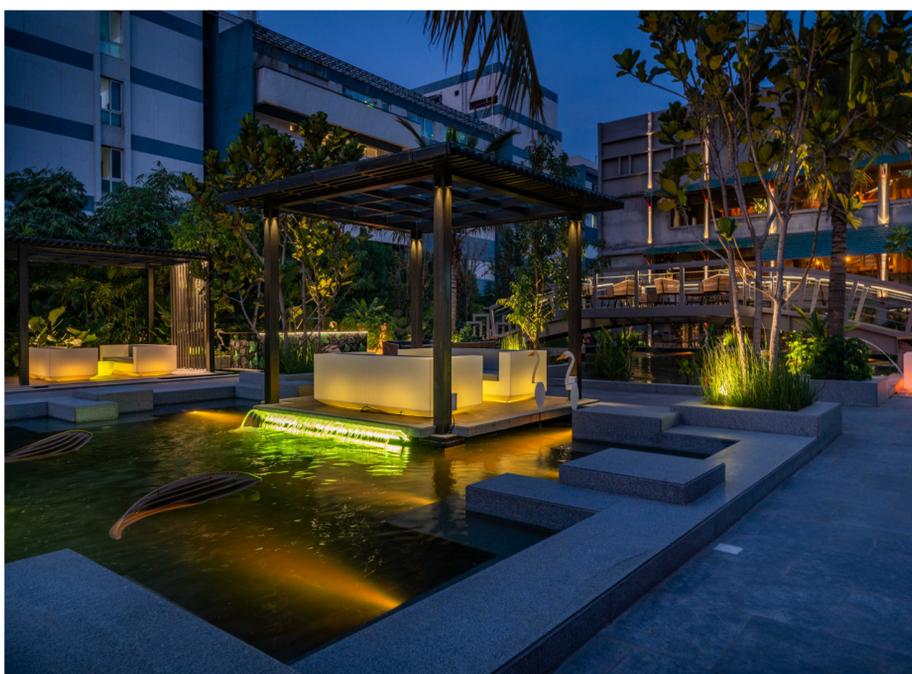


**This was a eureka moment for me, and that led to the launch of my Indian restaurant chain.**





Ironhill India is a chain of microbreweries that has gone from strength to strength, with outlets in Vijayawada, Rajahmundry, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Nellore, with the Bengaluru one being the largest microbrewery in the world. Ironhill was imagined to be a magnificent venue with a majestic ambience, delicious food, innovative craft beers, cocktails, and value-added events to keep the guests enthralled the moment they step in through our doors. And it has lived up to its reputation from the day of its launch. "Our uniqueness comes from the fact that we are not a one-trick pony. We have innovative craft beers and cocktails, amazing food, courteous service, and value-added events in a spellbinding ambience. While the leadership is responsible for setting a vision, I credit the team across the kitchen, service, and housekeeping staff for making this work every day. Their dedication to the vision is exemplary. Our vision is to unite the nation through craft (including craft beer), and we aim to take the brand pan- India in the coming years."



While the hospitality industry is an already established one and needs no introduction, it is important to innovate and keep things fresh is his mantra to stay relevant. "The core offering food and beverages is what people come in for and that must hit the mark every time. To keep things engaging and fresh we look at scheduling novel events, innovative beers on tap, and a season's special food menu regularly. I believe in the coming year, the F&B business will become very data-driven and consumer-centric with a high degree of personalization, which will open avenues for merchandising and new possibilities. We are at the cusp of a craft beer boom in India and the future looks extremely promising." Looking ahead, he plans to take the brand pan India over the next few years and aims to have at least 30 outlets by 2027. "The intention is to become a brand that is synonymous with the craft beer lifestyle, so stay tuned to us, as we undertake the journey to unite the nation through craft."

### Quick takes-

#### An ingredient you love working with?

Barley malt. The precursor to a beer of course!

#### Favourite cuisine?

I enjoy Indian cuisine, with a generous dose of cuisines from around the world. I also enjoy fusion food from time to time.

#### A must-have ingredient on your shelf?

Again, Barley malt and hops!

#### Your favourite kind of beer?

I enjoy a crisp, clean, low-hop lager.

#### The best pairing of food and beer/wine?

Any kind of spicy food with a lager goes well. At Ironhill, our Koli chips go extremely well with our lager, and it is one of my favourites currently.