

# the SINDHIAN

सिनधियन

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FOOD TO FUEL,  
SUSTAINABLY

Vik Khatwani

RESTAURANT

*Whiz Kid*

Shaan Gidwani

SETTING THE  
MOOD WITH

*Food*

Lakhan  
Jethani

REGENERATING  
THE INDIAN

*Palate*

Sannat Ahuja

**SCALING NEW  
HEIGHTS IN THE  
CATERING  
BUSINESS**

*Sanjay Vazirani*

*Designed*

FOR DINING

Nikhil Rochlani

*Extraordinary*

TURN OF EVENTS

Ronak Rochlani

**BINDU GOPAL RAO**  
SPEAKS TO **ASHESH L**  
**SAJNANI**, FOUNDER &  
DIRECTOR, OPA  
HOSPITALITY PVT. LTD.  
TO FIND OUT WHAT  
MAKES HIS BRAND TICK

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Good  
Food  
Good  
Mood

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**W**ith the food and beverage industry on an overdrive in India, there have been several players who have come and gone. However, OPA Hospitality that completes a decade this year has stood the test of time with a diversified set of offerings that has kept the taste buds of Mumbaikars satiated.

Serial restaurateur Ashesh L Sajnani, the force behind OPA







Hospitality, started his journey with the brand in 2012 after he earned a Hospitality Diploma from 'Hosta School of Hotel and Tourism' in Leysin, Switzerland. He followed this with hospitality experience in various eateries in Switzerland, a brief internship at the Taj Dubai, and 16 months at Gallops, Mumbai. He then started his first café, restaurant, and lounge, *Le Cafe* in Chembur in 2004.

Sajnani admits that Hospitality has always been in his DNA. "My family business is in the real estate and hospitality space, and at a very young age I took to food and always wanted to be in the F&B industry. I took over my father's hotels after my internship."

After launching his first restaurant, he started Juhu's hugely popular and multi award winning Mediterranean







Le Cafe

restaurant OPA. “OPA means to celebrate in Greek. We received a Times food award for the best newcomer but unfortunately, we had to shut and move out of the location. The name meant a lot to me, so I changed it to my company’s name and had it trademarked and registered.”

He also began managing the Hotel - Jewel of Chembur and went on to launch an Indian restaurant Moksha (now rebranded as Via Bombay) and Asterix (Lounge Bar) within the hotel in 2007. He has also worked on a Speakeasy bar called PDT in Lower Parel in 2014. After this, he launched Bombay Food Truck in 2015, which serves authentic fusion of Mumbai flavours with a gourmet street food twist. Currently, there are three such food trucks that can be seen in Mumbai.

“MY FATHER MOTIVATES ME THE MOST, AND IS THE ONE THAT HAS INSTILLED IN ME THE ATTITUDE - THAT BEING HUMBLE CAN GET YOU AROUND AND OPEN CLOSED DOORS”



Ashesh Sajnani



The food at Le Cafe

“The food truck business is my alter ego, and when we started this vertical and ventured into the space, it was uncharted territory and had not been done before. For us, it was a passion project and we wanted to be one of the first ones to do it. There weren’t and still aren’t any guidelines for the food truck business, unlike in the west. Hopefully, the governing authorities come up with some soon.”

As the food industry was most affected in the pandemic, he admits that the take-away business helped. “This boomed during the lockdown, and most players who did not focus as much started to take note and started delivery kitchens.” Of the restaurants he has launched, Le Café, Via Bombay and Bombay Food Truck are open.

Quiz him on the food trends he foresees, and pat comes his

reply, “plant-based food is on the upswing, and guests are becoming more open to experimenting with the choice of cocktails. I feel that the Asian cuisine has taken a big upswing and is here to stay.”

With his huge body of work in the hospitality and restaurant business, Ashesh credits his father for having been a big source of inspiration. “My father motivates me the most, and is the one that has instilled in me the attitude - that being humble can get you around and open closed doors.”

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Outside of work, what do you like to do? “I am an outdoorsy person, and like my time out in the open, and road tripping around the country. I prefer driving to destinations as there is so much more to explore and experience along the way. I love cars and have a small collection of a few classic cars which I have acquired over the years. I also like to read about world geopolitics and explore new restaurants around the city, and if I have enough time, I take off on a road trip to Himachal Pradesh and prefer driving a 4x4 on interstate road trips.”

Looking ahead, he hopes to open more hotels and restaurants and wishes to take the Bombay Food Truck to an international stage.



Ashesh at his Food Truck

And this is certainly some food for thought.

