

# CEIA

October 2023

## INTERNATIONAL CHEF'S DAY

Meet the stars of  
the food industry

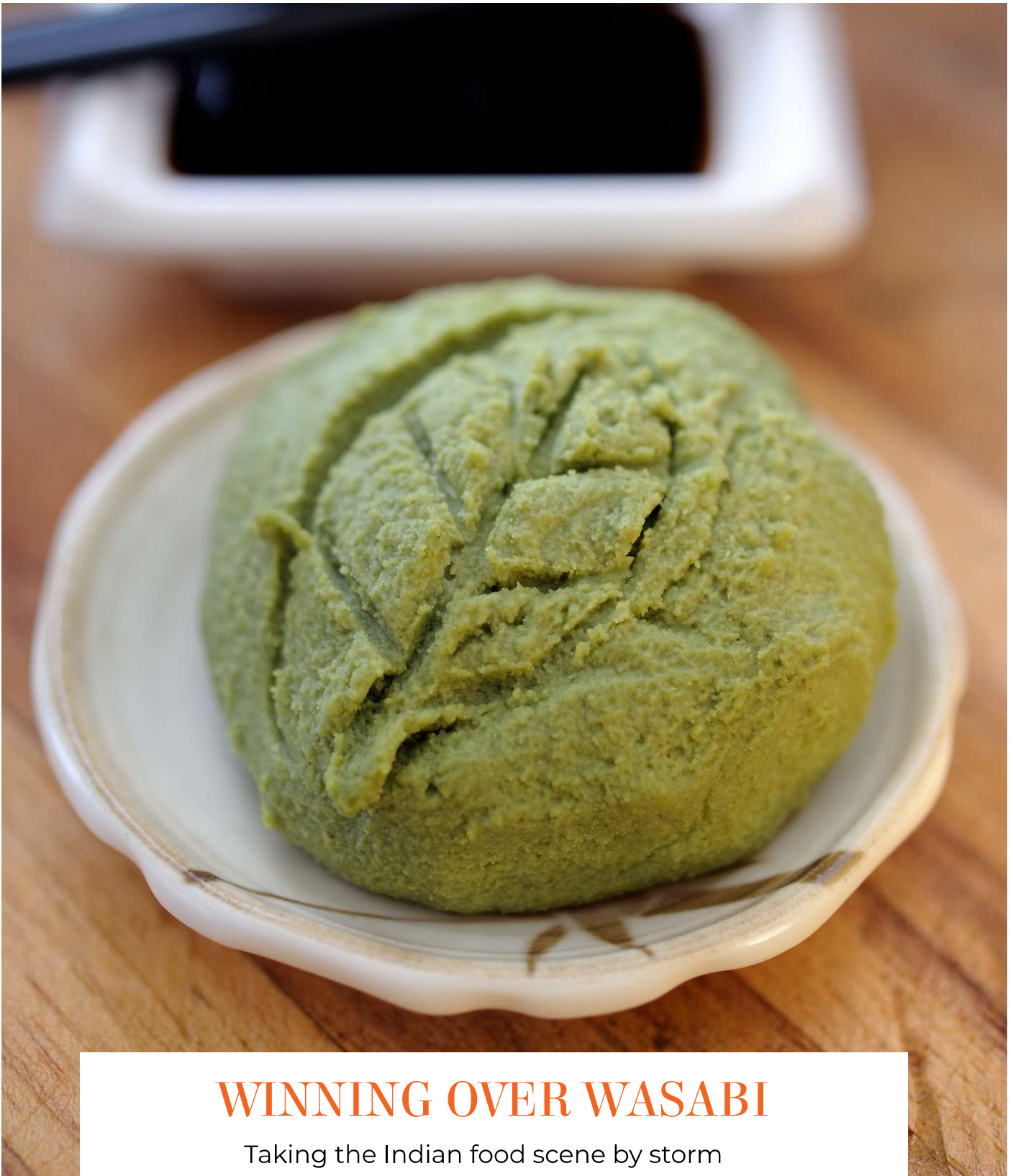
### **The Coffee Connect**

Wake up and smell the coffee  
this Coffee Month

### **Vegetarian Wonders of West Bengal**

The unique vegetarian varieties of  
this enticing cuisine





## WINNING OVER WASABI

Taking the Indian food scene by storm

*By Bindu Gopal Rao*

Often associated with Japanese cuisine, wasabi is making its way into various dishes across India, tantalising taste buds and creating a buzz among food enthusiasts. Traditionally known as a fiery condiment, wasabi has long been used to add a punch of flavour and a hint of heat to sushi and sashimi. However, the Indian culinary landscape is embracing this unique ingredient in innovative and unexpected ways. From fusion recipes to contemporary twists on traditional dishes, Indians are rapidly developing a newfound appreciation for the distinct taste and



### **Wasabi Twist**

Dishes like wasabi-flavoured green peas that add a distinct flavour to the traditional 'chakhna' and even Wasabi ice-cream that merges textures and contrasting tastes are becoming mainstream. **Sombir Chaudhry**, Chef Partner, **Raahi Neo Kitchen & Bar**, explains "wasabi offers a unique and strong flavour profile that adds depth and complexity to dishes. Indian cuisine is known for its bold and diverse flavours, and wasabi complements these well. As culinary boundaries continue to blur, chefs are experimenting with global flavours. The fusion of Japanese wasabi with Indian ingredients creates exciting and innovative taste experiences. Wasabi is perceived as a healthier alternative to some other condiments, thanks to its potential anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Health-conscious consumers are incorporating it into their diets."



### **Fusion Cues**

Wasabi has its own unique sharp, spicy, and pungent taste and due to its unique taste, chefs are not hesitating to use it in Indian dishes as well. The right quantity of wasabi in the form of powder, paste or foam is used to enhance the flavour of the dish. **Prasad Metrani**, Director of Culinary, **Conrad Bengaluru**, says, "it is used in the form of foam and cream in Indian appetisers like Malai Murgh Tikka with wasabi foam. Yogurt and wasabi flavoured chicken morsels charred in a clay oven and garnished with dollops of wasabi foam." The idea with wasabi especially when marrying ingredients is to think out of the box. "I have experimented with it through the Ram Ladoo, Wasabi Chutney, Shredded Radish: This is a fusion of Japanese condiments with our classic Indian dish, Ram Ladoo. The ram ladoo is made as per usual and the mint chutney is infused with wasabi. We top this up with shredded



Indian radish and serve. This brings a punch in the dish, nicely complementing all the flavours,” says Chaudhry.

### ***Twist of Taste***

Indian cuisine is known for being aromatic and flavourful from using a variety of spices in optimal proportions. Wasabi is a versatile ingredient that can add multi-dimensional flavours to a dish with very minimal innovation efforts in its usage - be it as a dip or in sauces. The strength of this ingredient is its ability to complement the subtle flavours of very fresh and high-quality ingredients. It has not only elevated plates of sushi, sashimi and bowls of soba but also impressed the fusion food club with its versatility. “This is a trait common to wasabi too which adds a burst of flavour to a dish. It lends a distinct pungent taste and volume that blends with the Indian style of cooking and palate. Hence it has gained wide acceptance in India. Moreover, wasabi is high in fibre making it a healthy ingredient for Indian cooking. Wasabi mayo dressed tandoori chicken roll, Aloo wasabi and Dhania Tikki, and Wasabi corn and avocado bhel are some popular dishes that have perfectly delivered this Indo-Japanese culinary fusion for the foodie Indian,” says **Gaurav Anand**, Culinary Director, **Hilton**, and **Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park**.

### ***Japan Jaunt***

Wasabi’s popularity in Indian cuisine is part of a broader trend of cross-cultural culinary experimentation. Chefs are constantly seeking new ways to surprise and delight diners with unexpected flavour combinations. Also, the growing curiosity of people wanting to try Japanese food and experimenting with Japanese ingredients also plays a big role. “Even with fusion trials, they are looking for unique perspectives and novelty. Wasabi has been accepted widely in the contemporary culinary world. There is a reason why it is aptly



called the ‘Heart of Sushi’, adding delicate depth to flavours of sashimi and sushi. Most guests are willing to try when they understand the story or see the inspiration behind the food. I believe that there is a great guest experience when kitchens are open and customers can see the chefs prepare the meal - chefs are artists and sushi for example is a great work of art that involves creating the perfect balance of flavours, textures, and placement,” explains Anand.

### ***Tips***

- Use the right quantity for the right dishes as per requirement. Wasabi is potent, so start with a small amount and add more gradually to achieve the desired level of heat.
- Store in cool and dark places, heat and light can degrade their taste.
- When using wasabi in sauces or marinades, ensure it is evenly mixed to avoid overwhelming one bite with too much pungency.
- Avoid heating wasabi directly, as high temperatures can diminish its flavour and aroma. Add it to the dish just before serving.