



# PIONEERING POPUPS

The hotel industry is seeking to reboot its repertoire of food and beverage offerings by showcasing chefs and other restaurants through curated popups.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

Popup events have become a popular trend in the food and beverage (F&B) industry as they introduce diverse and authentic flavours to hotels and unique culinary experiences to guests.

## POPUP ADVANTAGE

Popups benefit hotels in several ways, including client and brand building. While in-house chefs get valuable exposure to working alongside experienced and renowned chefs, it also allows them to grasp the art of authentic cooking.

Manav Sudhan, Executive Sous Chef, Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty, says, "These short dining experiences within hotel premises usually focus on one cuisine or chef. It could last from a weekend to a whole fortnight, depending on the hotel and the brand. Here's how it can benefit hotels: Create diverse dining options, attract new customers, try new concepts and more marketing opportunities."

Prasanna Venkatesh, Director of Food & Beverage, Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, adds, "The main aim behind curating a line of pop-up promotions is to bring together the synergies of two brands and showcase the best to our audience. Due to location differences, or busy schedules, many tend to miss out on authen-



➔ Manav Sudhan, Executive Sous Chef, Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty

tic flavours or new cuisines. Having pop-ups done bridges that gap and offers a new culinary experience. For hotels, the impact is threefold."

## CHOOSE RIGHT

The concept of popups involves bringing in renowned or talented chefs from diverse culinary backgrounds, both locally and internationally, to showcase their expertise and signature dishes for a limited period. So how do hotels choose the chefs and restaurants they want to showcase?

Radhika Changoiwala, Assistant Marketing and Communications Manager, The Westin Mumbai Garden City, explains, "The selection of our restaurant heavily relies on the cuisine curated by the chef. Hav-



➔ Prasanna Venkatesh, Director of Food & Beverage, Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity



➔ Radhika Changoiwala, Assistant Marketing and Communications Manager, The Westin Mumbai Garden City

also serve as a platform for hotels to experiment with novel concepts, remain agile, and continually refresh their offerings to stay at the forefront of the ever-evolving hospitality landscape.

Gaurav Chandna, Director of Operations, Hyatt Regency Delhi, says, "These popups help us maintain our position as trailblazers in the food and beverage industry, as it is essential to continuously introduce innovative concepts. Last year, we initiated a pilot program that featured popup events in collaboration with esteemed restaurants like Masque and The Bombay Canteen, as well as renowned establishments from outside Delhi and India. Internationally acclaimed chef Gaggan Anand also joined the lineup with his unique popup concept. The response was incredibly positive, prompting us to establish a regular schedule for these events every few months. The highlight was a month-long pop-up event priced at INR 50,000 per person, and we are delighted to share that all tickets were rapidly sold."

### BOOSTING THE BOTTOMLINE

Beyond just adding to the revenue, F&B popups enhance the overall guest experience by maintaining a dynamic calendar in an ever-evolving culinary scene.

ing successfully organized five popups, our focus remains on our guests' preferences when choosing the featured restaurant. Our goal is to provide a diverse array of culinary experiences for the best dining adventure possible. The selection of restaurants is meticulously done, taking into consideration how the food culture aligns with the theme of the popup."

Hitesh Pant, Executive Sous Chef, The Oberoi, Bengaluru, adds, "The filter happens on uniqueness of the experience. For example, we hosted a popup with the popular eatery Jamun in Assagao Goa and the food they did was contemporary Indian with Goan antecedents. The other is authenticity and origin, for example, our recently concluded Malaysian popup hosted by the Malay experts from Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur. We ensure the restaurant/ chef/ bar does not have a presence in our city and has not done a similar experience in Bangalore for the past 12 to 18 months."

### CULINARY EDGE

Collaborating with celebrated chefs or brands not only enhances the hotel's reputation but also generates substantial buzz and media coverage, ultimately increasing visibility and potential revenue. These popups



➔ Kashmiri popup with Chef Jasleen Marwah

“This ensures the hotel remains relevant in a competitive market, showcasing innovation, and building strong relationships with local and international culinary communities. A commitment to ongoing innovation and awareness of culinary trends is vital for sustained success, allowing hotels to consistently captivate and delight guests with diverse and exceptional offer-

ings,” says Kushkant Tripathi, Director of Food & Beverage, InterContinental Marine Drive.

**LEARNING LESSONS**

The hotel team receives a training window which enhances their knowledge and skill. The energy and synergy between the host team and the visiting team which always has osmosis of learning and exchange of culture.



➔ Hitesh Pant, Executive Sous Chef, The Oberoi, Bengaluru



➔ Gaurav Chandna, Director of Operations, Hyatt Regency Delhi



➔ Kushkant Tripathi, Director of Food & Beverage, InterContinental Marine Drive



➔ Arjun Kaggallu, General Manager, Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences

Arjun Kaggallu, General Manager, Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences, says, “It gives us a brand to explore different types of dining experience that we want to curate for our target audience and reach out to new audiences as a brand. Our unique pop-ups at different types of the season draw a distinct attention from our patrons and provide them the opportunity to try something different. Overall, at Novotel Kolkata we ensure that our pop ups are always resonating with the local audience, creating a memorable and culturally rich pop-up dining experience.”

**ORGANISATION MATTERS**

Organizing popups involves meticulous planning to accommodate external chefs with their unique culinary styles. There is a need to source specific ingredients, train staff for new cuisines, and carefully select optimal days, restaurants, and promotion strategies. Ensuring smooth logistics for temporary kitchens and ingredient sourcing is a constant focus.

“This pivotal step of deciding the theme sets the tone for the entire event, with careful consideration given to aligning the chosen theme with



➔ Gagan Residency





☛ Chef Sweety Singh at Pind Da Svaad

the brand identity and preferences of the target audience. The goal is to create a unique and immersive experience that resonates with attendees and leaves a lasting impression reflective of the establishment's distinct character. Fol-

lowing the conceptualization stage, meticulous attention is given to menu development. This entails designing a menu that not only showcases the chef's specialties but also harmonises seamlessly with the chosen theme," says Sandeep



☛ Sandeep Singh, General Manager, Hyatt Pune

Singh, General Manager, Hyatt Pune. They adapt to the seasonal availability of ingredients while maintaining a diverse and appealing menu.

**MARKET MOVES**

The key to a successful popup is understanding your guests' preferences, including their tastes and market demands. Social media marketing, offline marketing, PR activities, and collaborations with influencers are usually mixed up as far as promotion strategies are concerned.



☛ Sanjeev Ranjan, Director F&B, J W Marriott Chandigarh

"The promotional strategies involve leveraging the right channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and online portals for promotion. Utilizing online boosting techniques and social media campaigns are crucial components to create the necessary buzz and excitement in the market," says Sanjeev Ranjan, Director F&B, J W Marriott Chandigarh. When done well, pop-ups are often well-received by clients, as they offer a unique and memorable dining experience. In essence, pop-ups are dynamic events that not only elevate the culinary offerings but also enhance the overall growth and reputation of hotels. Now that is a win-win situation that augurs well for the hotel and guests. ■



☛ Chef Sherry at Hlmachali food fest