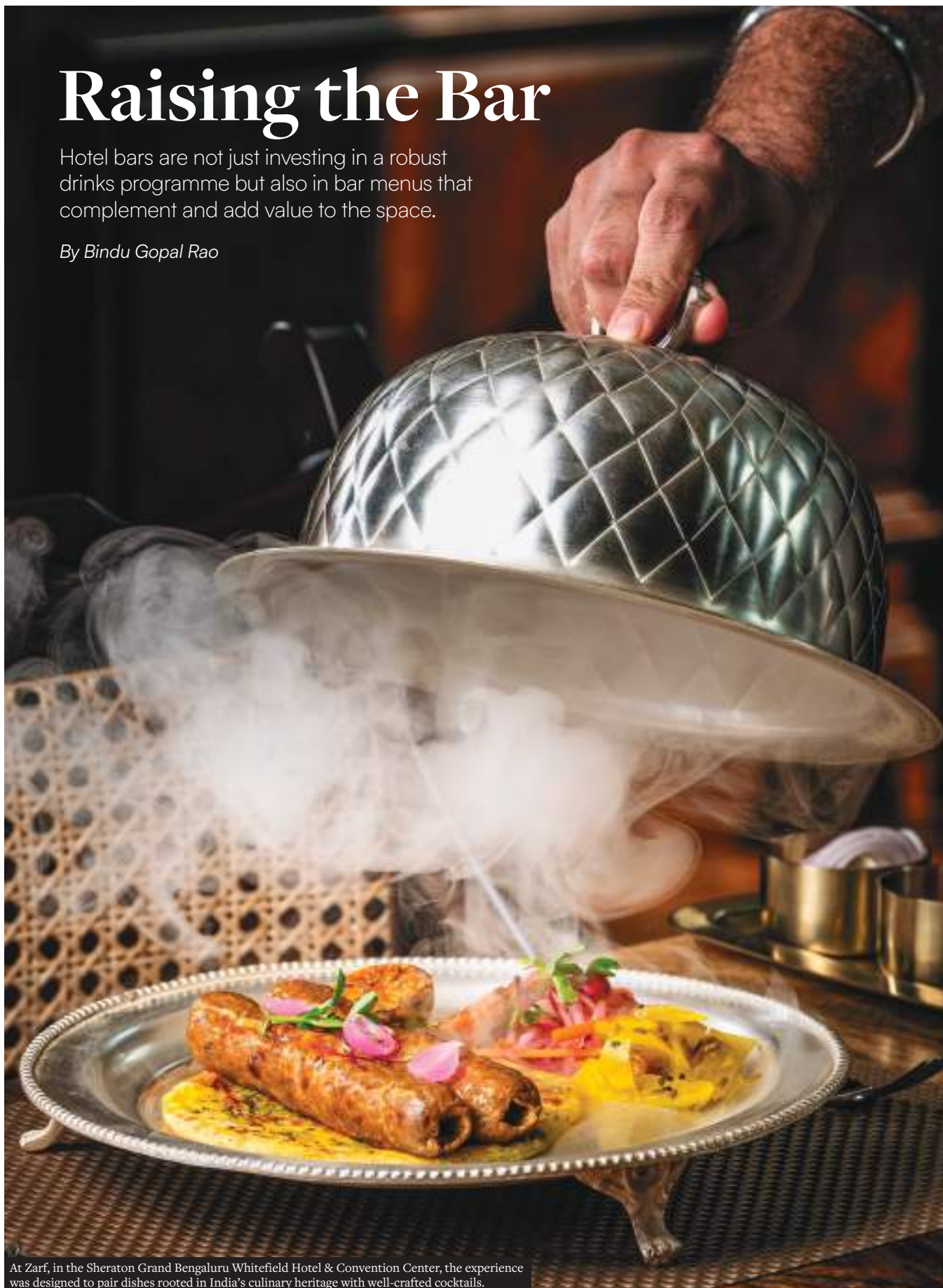


# Raising the Bar

Hotel bars are not just investing in a robust drinks programme but also in bar menus that complement and add value to the space.

*By Bindu Gopal Rao*



At Zarf, in the Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center, the experience was designed to pair dishes rooted in India's culinary heritage with well-crafted cocktails.



The food menu at Four Seasons Bengaluru today transcends typical snacks. Each dish is a fusion bite curated for balance, presentation, and innovation—think locally sourced ingredients transformed into gourmet twists on classics



Kazim Mehdi, Director of Food & Beverage, Copitas and The Wine Studio at CUR8



Gorav Arora, General Manager, Jaipur Marriott Hotel

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Food is an important part of the F&B experience, and hotel bars are stepping up to offer elevated dining experiences.

#### Holistic Deals

While beverages remain the core of any hotel bar, the focus on food menus has grown significantly. Today, guests look for thoughtfully crafted small bites, signature bar plates, and even complete meal-in-a-bowl options that complement their drinks and enhance the overall experience. The food menu at hotel bars today transcends typical snacks. Each dish is a fusion bite curated for balance, presentation, and innovation—think locally sourced ingredients transformed into gourmet twists on classics.

“The effort involves intense collaboration between our chefs and mixologists, extensive tasting sessions, and continuous refinement to ensure the bar food is as luxurious and celebratory as our award-winning cocktails,” says Kazim Mehdi, Director of Food & Beverage, Copitas and The Wine Studio at CUR8, Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru. While bespoke cocktails remain at the heart of the bar experience at Copitas, they have significantly elevated our food offerings to deliver a holistic sensory journey. “We have curated a sophisticated selection, drawing refined inspiration from our acclaimed Far & East menu, and recently introduced dynamic elements like live Teppanyaki to make Copitas a full culinary destination, especially during the festive season,” adds Mehdi.

#### Local Love

Bar food today is shifting towards storytelling: dishes that express a place, a memory, or a craft rather than mere indulgence. Guests today seek connection through flavour, and the response has been to create menus that feel lighter, cleaner, and rooted in authenticity. Gorav Arora, General Manager, Jaipur



Courtesy: Ramco Group.

Bar food trends are moving towards shareable, artisanal, and globally inspired menus





Rajesh Wadhwa, Grand Chef, LOYA, Taj Westend, Bengaluru



Nilesh Kumar, Food & Beverage Manager at Grand Mercure Bangalore



Saurabh Gahoi, Senior Vice President – India, Ramee Group of Hotels



Jatinder Pal Singh, F&B Director, Zarf, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre.

Marriott Hotel, explains, “At our bar, we have taken this evolution a step further by introducing hyper-local flavours with a global twist. For example, we serve Jungli Maas on herb focaccia and Fish Tikka Brioche—both bringing together regional favourites and European-style presentation. Our starters are paired with light, flavour-enhancing sauces to keep them moist and vibrant. Signature dishes like Smoked Paneer Tikka with dungar gravy or Makhmali Bharwan Aloo with silky roast gravy bring depth and richness to the bar snacks category.”

Lounge 18 features an innovative and elaborate menu curated

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– Saurabh Gahoi



Most bars also refresh their menus seasonally, and limited-time festive offerings ensure guests always have something new and exciting to discover

Courtesy Grand Mercure Bangalore



Every dish on our bar menu is created with pairing in mind

Courtesy LOYA, Taj West End Bangalore

specially for guests. One of the highlights is the signature L18 Burger, which has become an all-time favourite among visitors. Overall, their approach is to elevate bar dining with creativity, local character, and a strong focus on flavour.

### India Calling

At Zarf, in the Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre, the experience was designed to pair dishes rooted in India's culinary heritage with well-crafted cocktails: it's about how food and drink converse on the palate. “Every element, from the balance of acidity in a gin infusion to the smokiness of a kebab, is approached with shared intent by our mixologists and chefs. The menu celebrates the craft of pairing; cocktails built around ingredients rooted in our culture, like Himalayan salt, citrus blossom, and spiced bitters, find resonance in plates such as Calcutta Fish & Chips, Hara Patta Chaat, and Peshawari Namak Mandi Lamb Chops. Each pairing unfolds as a layered experience, a meeting point between spirit, spice, and smoke,” says Jatinder Pal Singh, F&B Director, Zarf, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre.

The menu draws from India's culinary memory and reinterprets it through contemporary sensibilities. The Lahori Tandoori Chargha carries the bold spice notes of undivided Punjab, finished with pickled radish for sharp contrast. The Multani Paneer Tikka, smoked over mango wood and dusted with dried mango powder, introduces a soft sweetness that lifts tropical and rum-based cocktails. Even the Vodka Avocado Pani Poori, an elevated street classic, was created to represent a crisp and refreshing bite paired perfectly with the sips.

*“Each pairing unfolds as a layered experience, a meeting point between spirit, spice, and smoke.”*

- Jatinder Pal Singh



The menu at Zarf, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center draws from India's culinary memory and reinterprets it through contemporary sensibilities

#### What Is New?

Bar food is seeing a strong movement toward small, elegant, shareable plates, which perfectly facilitate conversation and celebration. Guests desire global fusion flavours, refined vegetable-forward options, and dishes that are meticulously designed for seamless pairings with signature cocktails and fine spirits.

Saurabh Gahoi, Senior Vice President – India, Ramee Group of Hotels, says, “Bar food trends are moving towards shareable, artisanal, and globally inspired menus. Guests want both comfort and creativity — small bites that are flavourful yet refined. We’re also seeing increasing demand for vegetarian and health-conscious options, which we’ve incorporated across our menus. At Ramee, we view our bars as social experiences — spaces that bring together great music, ambiance, food, and cocktails into one cohesive narrative.”

For example, at Megumi, they serve authentic Japanese small plates and sushi with craft cocktails infused with Asian botanicals, while Ilili offers Middle Eastern mezze and grills that perfectly pair with their curated wine and cocktail list. There is also a strong shift toward balance: less oil, lighter textures, and vibrant, produce-forward dishes that keep the palate fresh. And while fusion remains popular, it’s now rooted in authenticity, where the spirit of the original cuisine is respected even when techniques are modern. There has been a noticeable evolution in how people approach bar dining. Guests today seek nuance; they want flavour without heaviness and creativity without pretence.

#### Pair It Right

One thing that sets bar food apart is that the pairing is meticulous, and hotels craft each dish not just to coexist with the beverage but to actively elevate the drinking experience. In fact, sommeliers and chefs collaborate to ensure thoughtful flavour balance, contrasting profiles, and complementary textures, turning every pairing at bars into a truly memorable moment. Rajesh Wadhwa, Grand Chef, LOYA, Taj Westend, Bengaluru,

opines, “Every dish on our bar menu is created with pairing in mind. Our chefs and mixologists work in close collaboration, balancing spice profiles, acidity, and texture to ensure perfect harmony between food and cocktail. For instance, Dal ki Chaat and Kachori Chaat pair beautifully with our gin-based drinks, which are infused with Indian botanicals like coriander and citrus. Dishes like Gal Gal Pat Murgh carry subtle smoky notes that complement our whisky-forward cocktails, while the Jwala Macchi, flambéed live with liquor, creates a dramatic sensory experience. Each pairing tells a story, where flavour, craft, and experience intertwine seamlessly.”

This year’s beverage menu at LOYA, Taj West End Bengaluru, titled Vriksh, draws inspiration from the tree, a timeless symbol of growth, renewal, and connection to the earth. Every drink on the menu pays homage to native produce, spices, herbs, and regional fruits, thoughtfully designed to complement and enhance the flavours of our cuisine, creating a seamless harmony between the bar and the kitchen.

#### Seasonal Spice

Most bars also refresh their menus seasonally, and limited-time festive offerings ensure guests always have something new and exciting to discover. Nilesh Kumar, Food & Beverage Manager at Grand Mercure Bangalore, says, “Seasonality shapes everything we do at By the Blue. Each season brings its own mood: citrus and fresh herbs in the summer and warm spices and robust flavours in the cooler months. Whether it’s through a winter special infused with cinnamon and star anise or a refreshing summer cocktail laced with local botanicals, our intent is to celebrate the changing seasons while staying true to our culinary identity.”

Food and drinks that are in tandem create an atmosphere where every sip and bite carries intention. Hotels want guests to leave with a story, a memory, and a renewed sense of appreciation for Indian flavours told through a modern lens. So, say cheers and raise a bite too. 