



September 2022

## Spice of Life 印度色香味

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### Recommended Citation

Springer, Kate (2022) "Spice of Life 印度色香味," *AMBROSIA 客道 : The Magazine of The International Culinary Institute*: , 28-37.

Available at: <https://repository.vtc.edu.hk/ive-hosts-ambrosia/vol11/iss1/15>

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*This page: The colourful interiors of Hong Kong Indian restaurant Chaat*

*Opposite page: One of several small bites that make up a tasting experience at Gaa*

本頁：香港印度餐廳 Chaat 色彩豐富的室內裝潢

對頁：Gaa 餐廳其中一款讓人一吃難忘的小食



From unexpected presentations to fine-dining riffs, Indian chefs around the world are bringing a fresh perspective to their cuisine and challenging stereotypes along the way. 世界各地的印度廚師紛紛為祖國美食注入新意，由讓人驚艷的賣相到精緻的餐飲體驗都花盡心思，期望能打破世人對印度菜的刻板印象。 **By Kate Springer**



印度色香味  
Spice of life

THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF GAA. OPPOSITE PAGE: COURTESY OF ROSEWOOD HONG KONG



## Springer: Spice of Life ?????

In 2001, two London restaurants, Zaika and Tamarind, became the world's first Indian eateries to earn Michelin stars. Never before had the cuisine met such international recognition, and while culinary awards are far from the only indicator of success, they have the power to alter discourse and cast off stereotypes.

Over the next decade, the momentum continued to build with more experimentation, refinement and pride. Take Gaggan Anand, who opened his namesake restaurant, Gaggan, in Bangkok in 2010, as one example. His playful, molecular approach upended global notions of what Indian cuisine could be. As a result, the restaurant went on to earn two Michelin stars and the coveted No. 1 Spot on Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list for four years in a row before closing in 2019.

Indian chefs in cities all over the globe have gone on to share their own inventive approach to Indian food. Restaurants like Chaat and New Punjab Club in Hong Kong, Gaa in Bangkok and Aurum in California show time and again that there's more to the story than naan, curry, kebabs and biryani.

Some chefs focus on elevating the classics with premium or locally sourced ingredients in a sophisticated atmosphere. Others are resurrecting forgotten recipes, turning a

spotlight on lesser-known regions and sharing the stories behind their dishes. But all hope to do justice to the spirit, flavours and processes of their country's vast culinary repertoire.

"Indian cuisine is moving in all directions now – it is moving vertically, horizontally and diagonally. People are getting inspired left, right and centre," says chef Manav Tuli of Michelin-starred Chaat at the Rosewood Hong Kong. "Also, guests are very accepting of that change and experimentation, which gives us confidence to try new things."

Steeped in history, India is one of the world's oldest and most diverse civilisations, with more than 1.38 billion people across 28 states and eight unions. When it comes to food, each region has its own complex, distinct character while influences from the UK, Portugal, the Middle East and Asia all come into play.

While it's impossible to huddle the entirety of "Indian cuisine" under one little umbrella, there are a few common threads. Many Indian home cooks make their own spice blends, use tandoor ovens or grills, embrace seasonal local produce, and have long practiced root-to-stalk and nose-to-tail methods to limit waste.

"My grandmother could make four dishes out of one aubergine," says Palash Mitra, who



*Clockwise from left:  
Chef Manav Tuli of  
Chaat; his pistachio-  
crusted lamb chops;  
some of the many  
spices used at  
the restaurant*

*左圖起順時針：Chaat  
主廚Manav Tuli；  
其開心果碎羊扒；  
餐廳用到的多種香料*





2001年，倫敦的Zaika和Tamarind成為首兩間躋身米芝蓮星級餐廳的印度食肆。雖然獎項斷斷不是成功的唯一指標，但這是印度餐廳首次取得如此重要的國際榮譽，足以改變大家對印度菜的刻板印象。

在接下來的十年，印度餐廳勇於求變、精益求精，以傲然之姿繼續在國際上大放異彩。以廚師Gaggan Anand於2010年在曼谷開設的同名餐廳Gaggan為例，它好玩有趣的分子料理不僅顛覆了世人對印度菜的看法，更讓Gaggan榮登米芝蓮二星餐廳，並於2019年結業前連續四年雄踞「亞洲50最佳餐廳」的榜首位置。

全球各地的印度廚師爭相分享他們別具創意的印度美食，香港的Chaat和New Punjab Club、曼谷的Gaa和加州的Aurum等，一而再地證明，印度菜多姿多采，不是只有烤餅、咖喱、烤肉串燒和印度香飯。

在這些廚師之中，有人著意在高雅的用餐環境裡為客人送上以優質或本土生產的食材炮製的美食，將經典印度菜昇華；有人希望復興已被遺忘的菜式；有人著眼於較少人認識的地區美食，並分享菜式背後的故事，但殊途同歸，目的都是弘揚豐富多采的祖國美食，希望印度菜的精神、味道和烹調方法能客觀地獲得應有的評價。

廚師Manav Tuli任職於香港瑰麗酒店的米芝蓮星級餐廳Chaat，他指出：「印度菜正朝向多元發展，大家從四方八面汲取靈感。與此同時，客人亦欣然接受這些改變和嘗試，讓我們更勇於挑戰新的事物。」

印度由28個邦和八個中央直轄區組成，人口逾十三億八千萬，是歷史最悠久、文化最多元的文明。在飲食方面，它受到英國、葡萄牙、中東和亞洲等地區的影響，各個邦區均發展出自己巧妙又獨特的菜式。

雖然印度菜無法被簡單地歸納起來，但各地印度菜之間總可以找到一些共通點。許多印度家庭都喜歡自己調配香料，使用印度窯爐或烤爐及採用時令的本土食材，珍惜食材、物盡其用的傳統更是源遠流長。

在Black Sheep Restaurants餐飲集團旗下的米芝蓮星級餐廳New Punjab Club擔任南亞菜總監的Palash Mitra表示：「我祖母可以用一條茄子做出四道菜。大蕉也一樣，花、果和莖均可入饌，葉則可以充當煮食工具或食器。」

他指，現時全球各地的當代印度餐廳，正自然而然地將印度菜物盡其用的傳統概念，與世界頂尖餐廳使用的烹飪訣竅和技巧糅合。

以現年41歲的Mitra為例，這位旁遮普-孟加拉廚師曾入讀廚藝學校、任職於齋浦爾和德里的The Oberoi酒店，以及在倫敦印度餐廳Cinnamon Club跟隨大廚Vivek Singh習藝。他憶述：「要煮出一道好菜跟廚藝變得現代化或精緻化無關，我從中學會的是尊







We use really good produce and seasonal ingredients. We play with the textures, flavours, presentation – keeping our dishes simple but striking at the same time

我們採用真正優質的農產和時令食材，在質地、味道和賣相方面下工夫，務求讓菜式做到簡單卻能讓人驚艷



– Palash Mitra

helms Michelin-starred New Punjab Club as the director for South Asian cuisines for Black Sheep Restaurants. “It’s the same with a plantain – you can eat the blossom, fruit and stem, then use the leaf for cooking or crockery.”

What’s happening at contemporary Indian restaurants around the world, he says, is a natural progression of these values combined with the nuance and skill that comes from cooking in the world’s top kitchens.

In Mitra’s case, he attended culinary school, worked at The Oberoi in Jaipur and Delhi, then learned all about “good cooking” alongside Vivek Singh at the Cinnamon Club in London. “It had nothing to do with modernity or refinement. I learned about respect for good seasonal produce, respect for methods and processes, and the basic idea that being a chef is a respectable vocation,” recalls the 41-year-old Punjabi-Bengali chef.

With this foundation, Mitra opened New Punjab Club with Black Sheep Restaurants co-founders Syed Asim Hussain and Christopher Mark in 2017 to “bring back that swagger into Punjabi food”, he says. At the restaurant, Mitra does not aim to modernise Punjabi cuisine but rather celebrate its history with nuanced spices, smoky tandoor ovens, premium ingredients and a soulful atmosphere.

“Indian food has always been about using good-quality ingredients to cook delicious food using local cooking techniques, so is there a need to [modernise] it?” asks Mitra, who expresses concern that some chefs adapt Indian food for the Western eye. “Evolution is a much better word [than modern]. It means a slow and irreversible process, hopefully, for the better.”

The chef says it’s about looking at the finer details to elevate a dish without changing its DNA. Maybe that’s the tandoor’s char on his Masalewali Chanp lamb chops or the flaky, juicy texture of a locally caught cobia fish. “We put in a lot of effort, using really good produce and seasonal ingredients. We play with the textures, flavours, presentation – keeping our dishes simple but striking at the same time,” he says.

Across Victoria Harbour at Chaat, chef Manav Tuli focuses on “elevated street food”. For inspiration, he draws on childhood memories as a Punjabi boy brought up in Central India, and years of experience travelling and working across India with Oberoi hotels. “I learned Rajasthani food, I learned Kerala food, I learned Gujarati, Bombay, Delhi,” he says of his career. “Every region has so much to offer, and unless you live in that region, you would not be able to appreciate the depth.”

After a stint in Mauritius, Tuli moved to London to join the “food fanatics” at Chutney Mary, known for its attention to regional specialities, where he honed his skills and taste profiles. His next move brought him to Chaat, which opened in 2020 mid-pandemic. From colourful small plates to slow-cooked delicacies, Tuli uses premium ingredients – like a tandoori Brandt Ranch Tomahawk, black truffle and chilli cheese naan or lobster tikka – while striving to maintain the essence of each dish.

“I want to get away from the taboo of not serving things like beef and pork in an Indian restaurant. I have travelled well in India and know there are regions like Kerala and Goa where they eat a lot of great beef dishes,” he says, recalling memories of eating beef curries with Kerala paratha (flatbread) while in culinary school.

He also hopes to resurrect forgotten classic dishes, such as pickled wild boar, which his grandmother used to make. “I also want to tell the story about every dish because there is a reason why things are done the way they are. For example, a chickpea curry always has black



*This page and opposite: Chef Palash Mitra of New Punjab Club presents an “evolved” take on Punjabi cuisine*

本頁及對頁：New Punjab Club主廚 Palash Mitra炮製的新版旁遮普菜式





重優質的時令農產，尊重烹調方法和處理過程，以及明白到『廚師是值得尊敬的職業』這個基本信念。」

在這樣的基礎上，Mitra於2017年與Black Sheep Restaurants的兩名創辦人Syed Asim Hussain和Christopher Mark攜手開設New Punjab Club，藉此「弘揚旁遮普美食」。Mitra並沒有在餐廳供應現代化的旁遮普菜式，反而是透過細微而精妙的香料變化、煙燻窯爐、頂級食材和充滿情調的環境，來彰顯旁遮普菜的歷史。

對於有廚師為了迎合西方人的口味而「改良」印度菜，Mitra對此表示憂慮：「印度菜素來強調以本土烹調技巧和優質食材烹調出美味佳餚，這樣何需現代化？（比起現代化）演進一詞應該更為合適，它的意思是循序漸進且不可逆轉的改進為目標，希望改進後變得更好。」

Mitra解釋，演進是在不改變食物本質的前提下，從細微之處著手改良印度菜。不論是經由窯爐燒烤後留在Masalewali Chanp羊扒上的炭焦，還是本地「槽仔魚」鮮嫩多汁的肉質，這些都可以是提升食物的細節。他又說：「我們花了很多心思，採用真正優質的農產和時令食材，在質地、味道和賣相方面下功夫，務求讓菜式做到簡單卻能讓人驚艷。」

在跟New Punjab Club相隔了一個維多利亞港的Chaat餐廳裡，主廚Manav Tuli卻專心一志「改良街頭美食」。這位旁遮普裔的廚師成長於印度中部，於The Oberoi酒店任職的數年間曾在印度各地遊歷和工作，這些生活體驗和童年時的回憶都是他的靈感來源。談及其工作，他說：「我懂得烹調拉賈斯坦菜、喀拉拉菜、吉拉吉特菜、孟買菜和德里菜，每個地區的菜式都博大精深，沒有在當地生活過，就不可能了解其深度。」

Tuli是在毛里裘斯工作了一段短時間後才移居倫敦，加入「美食狂熱分子」雲集、以注重地區特色聞名的Chutney Mary餐廳，並在這裡磨練其烹調技巧和鑽研味道分析。2020年，Tuli加入在疫情肆虐期間開業的Chaat。他喜歡採用頂級食材，不論是色彩繽紛的小菜還是慢煮佳餚均一視同仁，餐廳供應的菜式如燒Brandt Ranch斧頭扒、黑松露辣芝士印度烤餅和龍蝦串燒等就是最好的例子。與此同時，他亦力求保留每道菜式的本質。

「我希望打破印度餐廳不供應牛肉和豬肉等禁忌，我曾周遊印度諸邦，知道有些地區如喀拉拉邦和果阿邦等有許多牛肉菜式。」他一邊說著，一邊回味他在廚藝學校吃到的牛肉咖喱配喀拉拉烤餅。

他還希望復興那些被遺忘的經典菜式，譬如是他祖母昔日經常做的醃野豬肉。「我還想講解每道菜式



## Springer: Spice of Life ?????

cardamom because it helps with digestion. How did lamb curry become a part of Indian railway food in the 1940s? Why does kari meen (a fish that's native to Kerala) taste so different?"

Whether he's adding truffle to biryani or recreating a forgotten game dish, Tuli runs his ideas through a "sieve of two words: fine and balanced". "Food in India is not all about chilli, lots of oil and all that – it's also about being balanced," he says. "If done correctly, [Indian cuisine] could be the best."

Over in Bangkok, Garima Arora echoes this sentiment. The 35-year-old chef opened her elegant, fine-dining eatery, Restaurant Gaa, in 2017, and just a year later, it became the first restaurant helmed by a female Indian chef to earn a Michelin star. More acclaim followed in 2019 when Gaa ranked No. 16 on Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list, and she earned the title of Asia's Best Female Chef.

When it comes to the menu, Arora changes up the 10- or 14-course tasting experience every quarter to showcase the "varied, endless and limitless" world of Indian flavours, especially street food. "Street food resonates quite a bit with me from growing up in Mumbai," says Arora. "Our first bite on the menu is a take on chaat [Indian snacks]. For me, it's quintessential Indian flavours but in one place, one bowl, one bite."

Her approach calls for delicate use of spices, a wide range of exacting techniques, and a touch of Thai and Nordic influence, thanks to two years working at Noma in Copenhagen from 2013 to 2015. For example, she harnesses pickling, fermentation and open-fire primal cooking to produce anything from tandoori durian to crab "curry" with macadamia milk, khoba roti with pickles, and burnt coconut sugar ice cream with pork floss.

*This page and opposite: Chef Garima Arora of Gaa, and highlights from some of her previous tasting experiences*

本頁及對頁：Gaa主廚 Garima Arora及其嚮味餐單曾經供應的兩款精選美食

"Curry, to me, is a feeling. We've broken down that feeling of eating curry [and put it] into our dish," Arora says. "It's not traditional, in any sense of the term, but when you eat it, it gives you the same satisfaction or comfort of having eaten curry."

Modern Indian has also taken the US by storm, with Indian Accent and Junoon in New York, Taj Campton Place in San Francisco, and Aurum in Los Altos scooping up accolades. At Aurum, which means "gold" in Latin, chef Manish Tyagi strives to set the "gold standard" for modern Indian cuisine in the US, where too long, he says, it has been associated with chicken tikka, rogan josh or dal makhani.

Tyagi, who grew up in the foothills of the Himalayas, worked with prestigious hotel groups,

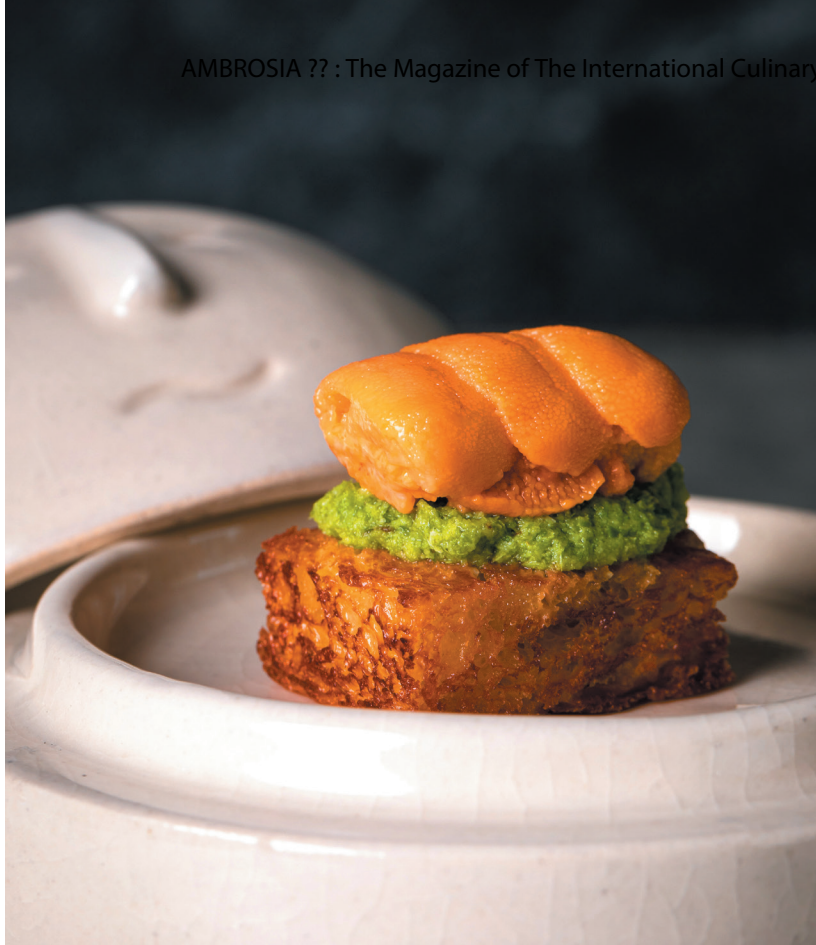
such as Taj and Oberoi, before moving to the US to open the second branch of acclaimed Rasika restaurant in Washington DC. In 2016, he opened August 1 Five, named after India's independence day, with a mission to "free Indian food from the stereotyping", he says.

The restaurant shut down due to Covid-19, but Tyagi bounced back with modern Indian bistro Aurum in December 2020, which earned a Bib Gourmand from Michelin within a few months. "We like to dig deeper and [resurrect] dishes of the past and give them a modern twist for today's diner," he says, pointing to his Loktak fish curry as an example.

Named after a lake in Manipur, a state in Northeast India, the dish features a regional spice blend called maru marang. Meanwhile,







☞ Street food resonates quite a bit with me from growing up in Mumbai. For me, it's quintessential Indian flavours but in one place, one bowl, one bite

街頭美食能讓我想起在孟買長大的日子。我認為這道小食拼盤體驗了典型的印度風味 ☞

- Garima Arora



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背後的故事，因為當中必有其道理。舉例說，鷹嘴豆咖喱裡放小豆蔻是為了幫助消化……為什麼咖喱羊肉會在1940年代成為印度的鐵路美食？為什麼喀拉拉邦的本土魚kari meen味道會如此不同？」

不管是在印度香飯裡加入松露，還是復興一道被遺忘的野味菜式，Tuli都以「精緻」和「平衡」作為構思菜式的宗旨。他說：「印度菜不只有重辣重油的菜式，它亦講求平衡，正確烹調的印度菜不輸給任何美食。」

身在泰國的Garima Arora也深有同感。Arora現年35歲，她於2017年開設高級食府Restaurant Gaa。該餐廳僅僅開業一年後便成為首間由印度女性掌廚的米芝蓮星級食肆，接續的2019年更登上「亞洲50最佳餐廳」的第16名，Arora自己亦獲封為「亞洲最佳女廚師」。

Arora喜歡在菜單方面下工夫，為了展示印度菜（尤其是街頭美食）「豐富多采和變幻無窮」的味道，她每季都會變換其10或14道菜的嚐味餐單。她說：「街頭美食能讓我想起在孟買長大的日子。餐單的第一道菜式取材自chaat（一系列印度小食的總稱），我認為這道菜體驗了典型的印度風味。」

她的烹調風格融匯了精妙的香料運用、各種萃取技巧，以及一些來自泰國菜和北歐菜（她在2013至2015年期間曾於哥本哈根的Noma工作了兩年）的靈感。她善用醃漬、發酵和原始的明火烹調等技巧炮製菜式，例如烤榴槤、澳洲堅果奶煮咖喱蟹，以至印度煎餅配醃青瓜和豬肉鬆椰糖焦糖雪糕等。

Arora解釋：「對我來說，咖喱是種感覺。我們將吃咖喱的感覺打碎，然後加入菜式裡。這不管怎麼說都不是傳統上的咖喱，但吃起來的滿足感和窩心的感覺，跟傳統咖喱無異。」

現代印度菜近年亦風靡美國，紐約的Indian Accent和Junoon、三藩市的Taj Campton Place，以及洛思阿圖斯的Aurum等印度餐廳屢獲殊榮。Aurum是拉丁語，意思是「黃金」，其主廚Manish Tyagi希望在美國為現代印度菜奠定「黃金標準」，打破當地印度菜一直以來跟烤雞串燒、洋葱咖喱或黑扁豆咖喱密不可分的刻板印象。

在喜瑪拉雅山腳長大的Tyagi曾任職於Taj和Oberoi等多個知名酒店集團，其後才移居美國並在首都華盛頓開設著名餐廳Rasika的第二間分店。2016年，他旗下以印度獨立日命名的August 1 Five餐廳開業，矢志「打破印度菜的刻板印象」。

雖然該餐廳在新冠疫情肆虐下無奈結業，但Tyagi迅速於2020年12月捲土重來，開設現代印度菜館Aurum，並在開業短短數月後即獲得米芝蓮必比登美食推薦。他以餐廳的Loktak咖喱魚為例說明：「我們拆解菜式的根源然後再重組，將一些被淡忘的菜式現代化，迎合現代人的口味。」





It's the responsibility of our chef fraternity to bring something new, something interesting, without deviating too much from the principles

印度餐廳的廚師們有責任引入新鮮有趣但又不會太過偏離原則的菜式



– Manish Tyagi

his “Arancini” appetizer elevates a humble rice and lentil porridge, kichdi, which he grew up eating. “It’s a very common dish but you will not find it in restaurants because people think, ‘Oh, this is so simple and unworthy – it cannot be on a restaurant menu,’” he explains.

Noting India’s long history of Ayurveda, an alternative medicine system, Tyagi considers health, balance and nutrients when preparing his dishes. “Everybody is going back to basics, getting back to eating vegan, vegetarian, doing yoga – things that are important to live a healthy life,” he says.

That, however, doesn’t mean Tyagi eschews all indulgences. His wildly popular Mr. Potato appetiser – a play on potato-and-chutney chaat – stars a spiral of twice-fried potatoes on a base of yellow peas topped with dehydrated cilantro and a drizzle of sweet yoghurt.

Whether light and healthy or rich and refined, he believes Indian food is “having a moment”, which he attributes to bolder chefs, supportive restaurant owners and more open-minded diners. In the past, he says, many non-Indian diners expected Indian cuisine to be oily, heavy, complex, casual and cheap. But that’s changing.

“My customers are exploring India much more than they used to, and they better understand the food now – nobody can fool them anymore,” says Tyagi. “It’s the responsibility of our chef fraternity to bring something new, something interesting, without deviating too much from the principles.”

Tuli of Chaat observes similar trends in Hong Kong. Diners appreciate when chefs surprise them without being gimmicky, he says. “We do a baked jackfruit samosa and, the moment it arrives, everyone is blown away by its

presentation,” he says. “They’re expecting a triangular, deep-fried thing that you just break and eat. But the moment they see the cone, they are like, ‘Can I have one more?’”

Whether they describe their menus as “modern” or “refined”, “evolved” or “elevated”, the chefs at these restaurants have one thing in common: they celebrate the heart and soul of Indian dishes, taking thoughtful steps to enhance their country’s cuisine with skilful techniques, premium ingredients, knowledgeable service and a contemporary atmosphere to match.

“All the upcoming modern restaurants are drilling into the details of each dish. They make sure the dish has a soul,” says Mitra of New Punjab Club. “It’s not about just the external appearance – it has to come in from inside. That is what elevation is all about.” 🍴



這道以印度東北部曼尼普爾邦的一個湖泊命名的菜式，採用該地區名為maru marang的混合香料調味。此外，名為Arancini的開胃菜則是khichdi扁豆粥的升級版，這種樸實無華的食物是他從小吃到大的。他指出：「這是非常普通的食物，餐廳都不會供應，因為大家覺得『這菜式太簡單了，不值得放進餐牌上。』」

Tyagi對歷史悠久的印度傳統醫學阿育吠陀也有所認識，因此特別注重菜式是否健康、平衡和有營養。他指：「現時大家都喜歡返璞歸真，重拾素食和瑜伽等健康生活所注重的良好習慣。」

然而，這不代表Tyagi要迴避所有「邪惡」的美食，他大受歡迎的開胃菜Mr. Potato就是好例子，這款改良自酸辣醬薯仔的小食，由底層的黃豆、中間一卷炸

過兩次的螺旋形薯片及頂層的乾芫茜和少許甜乳酪組成，一點也不清淡。

他認為，印度菜不管是清淡健康還是濃味精緻，都終於「熬出頭來」了，這得歸功於大膽創新的廚師、鼎力支持的餐廳老闆和樂於接受新事物的食客。他說，以前許多非印裔食客都認為印度菜就該是油膩、味道複雜濃重的廉價平民食物，但情況正在改變。

Tyagi指出：「客人對印度的興趣比以前大增，他們對當地食物的認識更深入，已經不會輕易被人糊弄過去。印度餐廳的廚師們有責任引入新鮮有趣但又不會太過偏離原則的菜式。」

Chaat的掌廚人Tuli留意到香港也有類似的情況，他指出，這裡的客人欣賞能給他們驚喜但不弄弄花

巧的廚師。他續稱：「我們有一款焗大樹菠蘿印度咖哩角，這道菜上桌時，大家都會被其賣相所震撼。他們原本期待普普通通的三角形炸物，但結果卻看到做成圓錐體，當下的反應是……『我可以再要一份嗎？』」

不管是用「現代化」、「精緻化」、「演進」還是「提升」來形容他們的菜式，這些大廚們都有一個共通點：那就是全心全意地頌揚印度菜，透過烹調技巧、優質食材、細心服務和時尚的用餐環境，悉心地改良祖國的美食佳餚。

New Punjab Club大廚Mitra表示：「所有正在籌備中的現代印度餐廳都集中精力鑽研每道菜式的細節，確保每道菜都有自己的靈魂。如何提升一道菜式，不僅賣相要好，關鍵更是由內而外的美。」



*This page: Chef Manish Tyagi of Aurum and his double cheese chilli toast with blue cheese and mozzarella*

*Opposite page: Samosas made with jackfruit, a plant-based pork alternative, at Chaat*

本頁：Aurum主廚Manish Tyagi及其雙重芝士辣椒多士配藍芝士和水牛芝士  
對頁：Chaat以大樹菠蘿代替豬肉炮製的素食版印度咖哩角

