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Sommelier and Director, All Things Nice

Though things have changed rapidly in the last 10 years, there is still a very long way to go to measure up to global standards. More cuisines in India should be introduced. We need higher quality restaurants, more bars, and more options.



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Within the organised foodservice industry, the best growth has been with the QSR segment. Other areas have had very slow growth, largely bogged down by infrastructure issues and red tapism. Varied licensing requirements and norms state-wise have limited growth to some areas. While growth has shown comforting numbers, these are not structured and spread across the sector.

**Are you satisfied with the way the organised foodservice industry has grown in India until now? How do you see its progress over the last 10 years?**

**How according to you will the modern foodservice industry look like in India in 2020 and beyond? How do you think it will evolve in the next 10 years?**

The next 10 years should see vast improvements in the cold chains and supply arm of the industry. Its growth will be responsible for the growth in the sector overall. The arrival of larger B2B chains from overseas should set the ball rolling. Smaller markets will be the bigger gainers in this scenario. I do foresee a large number of small players becoming a part of the organised foodservice industry. Newer home-grown players will make their mark in this decade and pose a challenge to the older overseas JV players operating from the last decade.

**What do you think are the biggest problems and challenges the modern foodservice industry is facing in India? What bottlenecks have to be overcome to allow the industry to grow to its maximum potential?**

Licensing and permissions are a huge bottleneck. In Mumbai, real estate prices are sky high.

FDI in wholesale has been slow in happening. The focus now is on tier 2 cities which have a larger growth potential. The biggest challenge is real-estate and infrastructure. The cost of real estate is impacting bottom lines and forcing business models to be restructured. The cost of power, gas and other essentials is responsible for the production costs going up and the customer bearing the brunt.

**In which areas do you think the modern foodservice industry is lagging behind the West? What do you think have been the main disappointments of the industry in India?**

I think a higher degree of quality at every level is required. Education is a big challenge which needs to be addressed. We should educate our F&B professionals and give them the tools so that they can do their jobs better.

The cold chain and processed food supply industry is largely lagging behind the West. While we have a large consumer base which is willing to try new products, we have not been able to support expansion of our front-end brands. This is because of the lack of personnel in the HR base of the industry with adequate trained manpower being supplied across the board. Training efforts are largely localised and organisation-based. Despite our population numbers, manpower with basic skills required for the industry is in short supply.

**What do you think should be done by the industry and the government to boost the growth of the modern foodservice sector in India?**

Make the licensing more transparent and less cumbersome. The costs of the licenses should be reduced.

Real-estate prices need rationalising, especially for the backend of the industry to operate. Training needs and HR development have to be looked at seriously. Multiple training establishments need to be set up in tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Government should incentivise brands which use local resources or supplier bases from within the state of operation. This will not only reduce transportation costs but will help each state to develop all facets of the industry.