

capital life trend

# is gurgaon displacing delhi as the new hub for fine dining?

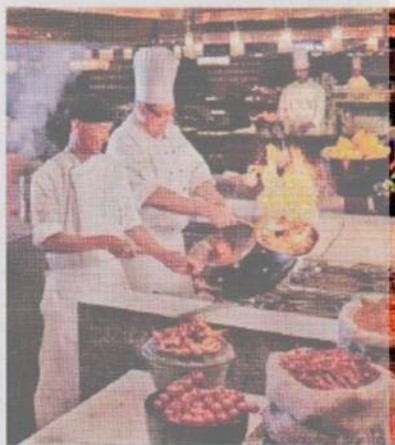


A wealth of new fine dining options in Gurgaon, suggests that the places to eat out and be seen may no longer be in the Capital. Go Now examines the rise of Gurgaon.

**I**t's happening. Slowly but surely Gurgaon is becoming the new hub for fine dining in the Capital. From Spectra the new restaurant at the Leela Kempinski which boasts seven live kitchens to Asia 7 a new Japanese multi-cuisine restaurant at the Ambience Mall, to The Creative Kitchen – featuring international cuisine with all day dining, the options in Gurgaon are getting more and more varied. This is not surprising that today international companies when they look at the Indian market are making a beeline for this destination. "Fresco is a case in point. The chain which has over 60 restaurants in cities such as Barcelona, Madrid, Lisbon, and Rome has now entered India via a joint venture with Litebite Foods. It has now set up shop in Ambience Mall.

**What makes Gurgaon so special?** But what has made Gurgaon special? Why are fine dining restaurants relocating here? Is Gurgaon really giving competition to Delhi? The answer to the third question would be yes. Part of the reason for this is the growth of quality five-star hotels to cater to an affluent crowd of MNCs and

industrialists who are well travelled and want the best. H.S.Kalra, co-owner of DineESty, Gurgaon, which offers authentic Chinese and Japanese haute cuisines said a market survey they had done four years ago, showed Gurgaon was the right place for their kind of cuisine. "We found a population that was health conscious and widely travelled, but more importantly we found a number of foreign nationals chose to be based in Gurgaon. Hence we thought it perfect for our kind of cuisine. In fact, we at DineESty were the first to opt for a combination of Chinese and Japanese fine dining restaurant at Gurgaon." Agrees Bhavna Kilam, the owner of Odyssey, the largest restaurant in India who adds, "When we came here, my husband simply fell in love with the place. We also happened to get the right location for the kind of restaurant we had in mind, and here it is."



### Old-timers record their recipe for success

The growth in Gurgaon has been meteoric. Only a few years ago, there was only a 32nd Milestone restaurant complex, Moets, Dana Choga, Sip and Bite and one or two more restaurants one could actually count the restaurants on one's fingers. But now with the growing interest in eating out, old timers have too expanded their operations. Sandeep Bindra, owner Moets, (who initially started off with just one restaurant years back, now has Coco-Palm, Earth and a pub too in his kitty). "The key to success is good food at affordable prices. People kept coming back to our restaurant because the food was good." Bindra adds that as the brand got established he was able to diversify into other eating out places. This was not

only thanks to wealth of space on offer (compared to Delhi) but the fact people working long hours, wanted something in their backyard. Agrees Bhupinder Chadha, co-owner Pind Balluchi, "Being in the restaurant business is tough but if you do have a unique selling point and give customers what they want, there is no stopping your restaurant from being patronized."

### Foreign fascination with Gurgaon

It's not just Indians who feel so. Dutch woman, Lalita de Goederen - van Lamsweerde, owner of Bagel Café a newly opened all day Breakfast place in Gurgaon explains why the place holds a great attraction to her. "All my life I wanted to leave Holland for a few years and live in another country. And when Alexander and I got married in 2007 we decided to move to India. Why? Because we think



India is a super interesting country and we wanted to do something different than 'everybody else' who go and live in US, UK, France or Spain." She adds, "We found our kind of clientele in Gurgaon - both foreigners and those who had lived abroad and were comfortable with foods like bagels. I have some ideas to grow the business through other outlets in Gurgaon."

### Business crowd flocking to Gurgaon hotels

But it's not just the cosmopolitan crowd. Hoteliers see business as a unique selling point here. Abhijeet Shrivastava, regional hotel manager, the lemon tree hotel says, "Our vision was to be located in or close to key business districts, and thus Gurgaon filled our needs. The Lemon Tree Hotel

Spectra  
**The Leela Kempinski**  
 Tel: 0124-4771234  
 Asia 7  
 3rd Floor, Ambience Mall  
 Tel: 9810740000  
 The Creative Kitchen  
 Radisson Suites, B Block,  
 Sushant Lok, Phase I  
 Tel: 0124-4719000  
 Frasco  
 3rd Floor, Ambience Mall  
 Tel: 9810740000  
 Spice It  
 Ibis, Golf course Road  
 Sector 53. Tel: 0124-4755000  
 Bagel Cafe  
 Shopping Mall, Phase I,  
 DLF City Tel: 9958890393

Company set up its first two prototype hotels in Gurgaon to fulfill the hospitality needs of the value conscious business and conference traveller. Agrees Ajay Dhar, owner of Oak Tree and Attitude, who adds, "We at Oak Tree are regularly patronized by CEOs of multinational companies. We also get a lot of corporate families from Gurgaon. Corporates also make their way here from Noida and Delhi."

Clearly, the quality of service and the choices on offer ensure that people now are willing to make the trip to Gurgaon, resulting in the NCR region slowly displacing Delhi as the hub for fine dining. What this trend continues or not, I can't say. But what I can be sure of is that Gurgaon will have many hours of happy eating!

by RUPALI DEAN