

# Caprese for COMFORT

The executive chef at Hilton Bangalore Residences is a believer of looking within to accentuate taste and flavour



Chef Anirban Dasgupta

**Tell us a bit about your time at Rambagh Palace, Jaipur, Taj Bengal and Taj Mahal Hotel, Delhi?**

Taj was an enriching journey to say the least. I picked up the nuances of cuisines starting with Rambagh Palace where I had the opportunity to serve the locals and top-end travellers. Moving on to Taj Bengal, after a hugely successful two years, I opened SOUK, the eastern Mediterranean fine dining restaurant. My best tenure was during my six years at my last assignment, Taj Mahal, New Delhi, that has the numero uno Wasabi, House of Ming, the Grill Room, Machan and definitely the multi award-winning modern Indian VARQ.

**Your icons in the food world? Those you look up to and why?**

Chef Hemant Oberoi for the sheer passion that he brings to his cooking even after 35 years in the industry, my batchmate Chef Gaggan Anand of the Gaggan restaurant in Bangkok, for making the whole world wake up and take notice of Indian food and Chef Manish Merhotra of the Indian Accent, I have not yet met anyone more creative than him.

**As executive chef, what are the cuisines that you are bringing to the table?**

We offer an array of cuisines, however our strength lies in Japanese, Italian, Spanish, Lebanese and Indian. We also boast of one of the strongest bakery pastry teams offering pastries and chocolate work at re:cess.

As we open the Salt Grill in a couple of months, we will bring forth the unique combination of chemistry meeting razor sharp grilling techniques.

**What's on your menu?**

- An innovative take on an Italian favourite *Insalata Caprese* plated in an iPad at Ministry of Food.
- A melange of Neer Dosa, a Coorg favourite, stuffed with Andhra spiced mutton *sukka* which turns into a *kathi* roll at re:cess
- The South Indian tapas at Klinx. A personal favourite is the Ghee Roast *Boti* with a cheese crust.

**In today's scenario, what are the menus that work and why?**

Comfort food, regional Asian cuisine and casual dining restaurants are on the rise. A tendency amongst guests is to experiment. Peruvian and Korean are two cuisines we are going to see much more of.

**What were the most memorable meals you have cooked?**

Cooking for the President and head of states during my stint at Taj Mahal, New

Delhi was a fulfilling experience

**What is your signature cuisine?**

My signature cuisine is the one I have specialised in during my initial years — Italian. I hold high respect for their culture and food as Italian still holds its position and continues to grow. The best part of the cuisine is that it is rooted in its culture of cooking by hand, traditional recipes passed through generations.

**In your travels, any incident that changed the way you cook and think?**

It surprises me that even though our country is so rich in flora and fauna, we rely on other countries to bring in imported food ingredients. In my recent travels across Karnataka, I met many farmers, starting from my good friend at First Agro, Nameet to goat milk farmers from Udipi to rice growers in the Tibetan monastery in Coorg, we are blessed to be surrounded by such wonderful farmers and cheese mongers. We need to look within. This is a culture I inculcate in my team at Hilton Bangalore Residences — we try and procure produce from a 100 mile radius only.

**The five must-haves in your kitchen?**

An oven, the woodfired pizza gives an earthy feel, an icecream Teppanyaki at Ministry of Food, my sous vide machine, an Alladin smoker from the 100% chef brand and my Wusthof knife.

**Any tips?**

After making eggs sunny-side up, deglaze the pan with sherry vinegar, then drizzle the sauce on the eggs to add another dimension to the dish.

**Any myths you'd like to bust?**

On myths, I would like to repeat that the idea of cooking with imported ingredients to give finer products is definitely a NO. For example: For the best tomato sauce, always use imported tomato from some Italian brands. We use the finest variety of San Marzano tomato from a Talkad Farm which is no lesser than the original taste.

— as told to SURUCHI KAPUR-GOMES

## INSALATA CAPRESE

San Marzano tomato 100 gm, buffalo mozzarella 100 gm, parmesan 25 gm, wild rucola 20 gm, Genovese basil 10 gm, sundried San Marzano tomato 20 ml, pine nuts 10 gm, garlic 5 gm, olive oil 20 ml, extra virgin olive oil 5 ml, balsamic vinegar 50 ml

### METHOD

1. Blanch and peel San Marzano tomatoes, slice them thick.
2. Marinate tomato and buffalo mozzarella in olive oil, balsamic and season.
3. Arrange vertically with alternate layers of tomato and buffalo mozzarella.
4. Wild rucola salad and parmesan flakes to be plated alongside.
5. Drizzle with reduced balsamic.
6. Make sundried tomato pesto in a pestle and mortar till smooth and arrange a quenelle on the side.
7. Make parmesan crisps and arrange on top of the quenelle touching the edge of the tomato mozzarella tian.

