



WHAT IS  
THE  
FUTURE  
OF  
INDIAN  
FOOD?

# RECAPTURING: FOOD FORWARD INDIA CHAPTER I MUMBAI

SOHO HOUSE MUMBAI  
17TH OCTOBER 2019

"The birth of a knowledge movement."

- Anoothi Vishal, writer.

17th October 2019, marked the beginning of **Food Forward India (FFI)**; a community driven initiative to re-examine, re-evaluate and reintroduce Indian cuisine to the world. The first chapter of FFI took place at Soho House, Mumbai and brought together the food curious community of the city with a *leitmotif* of a seemingly unanswerable question: “What is the future of Indian food?”

FFI is the brainchild of **Garima Arora**, the internationally acclaimed chef for her **restaurant GAA** and the first and only Indian woman to hold a Michelin-star.



*Choice of Mumbai for the first event was not accidental. Not only it is the capital city unique for many transgressing cultures, but also my hometown. The main idea for the first Chapter was to keep all the conversations very inclusive and therefore we wanted it to take character of a collaborative gathering rather than a symposium format,*

*says Arora.*

The meeting kicked off with a welcome introduction by Garima Arora followed by a brief presentation by **Elizabeth Yorke** (Edible Issues, curator, chef and researcher and also part of FFI team), who introduced “Mentimeter” – a live audience engagement tool that became a crucial element to gathering data throughout the meeting. Next **Rashmi Uday Singh** joined Garima Arora in a discussion, during which the guests got a tasting of Gaa’s signature dishes starting with the iconic corn and ending with the equally iconic betel leaf. This session was followed by a very detailed and scientific talk by **Prof. Ganesh Bagler** on data-driven food innovation and contrasting food pairing. Next, **Pooja Dhingra**, India’s favorite pastry chef, spoke about harnessing the power of social media to build one’s brand.

The event’s finale turned into a lively brainstorming session with leading remarks coming from a panel that consisted of **Vanika Choudhary, Kurush Dalal, Anoothi Vishal, Prateek Sadhu** and **Thomas Zacharias**. **Sonal Ved** moderated the entire length of the conversation and the key questions covered the topics of misappropriation of Indian food, sustainability, accessibility and education.

The crowd consisted of some of the brightest minds from the country's industry including food experts, scientists, anthropologists and historians, food writers and critics, chefs, restaurateurs and last but not least, academics from hospitality colleges. Among the present were industry proponents such as **Rahul Akerkar, Vicky Ratnani, Saransh Goila, Rakhee Vaswani, Gresham Fernandes, Karyna Bajaj** and directors and educators from **Mumbai's leading hospitality schools IHM, ITM-IHM, SSCA, KA Hospitality** and **DY Patil. Deepankar Khosla** from Haoma and **Himanshu Saini** from Tresind came all the way from Bangkok and Dubai respectively. Some of the audience earned their spots through their thought-provoking online applications that were released by FFI prior to the event.

The organizers continue digesting the outcomes of the inaugural Chapter of FFI, putting together a course for its future development in the long shot. They hope for it to remain honest and based on good will, sharing and discovering Indian food altogether. This came across in some of the participants' feedback, including **Anoothi Vishal**, who wrote about Chapter I the following:

*"A beginning has been made where all of us who feel passionately about Indian food came together to debate ideas thanks to Garima.*

*The birth of a knowledge movement."*

The future of the initiative they see developing on two levels. **"There is a need for the narrative on Indian food to continue in parallel, both within and outside of India,"** says **Matylda Grzelak**, FFI's project manager. As she explains further from a foreigner perspective: *"As much as FFI sees great need to keep on facilitating dialogue and connections within the country, there is also a lot to be done by taking that abroad and changing a wider public's perception on Indian food."*

Photos from the event can be accessed here:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/wt9q2w9zRc hmcmDt7>

Please credit: **Santosh Sawant**

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