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Travels inspire a 'convertible'

By Regina Gurung | Express News Service | Published: 18th November 2016 10:08 PM |

Last Updated: 19th November 2016 03:30 AM | A+ A A- |



Travels

BENGALURU: Growing up in the city, Amit Gowda, saw many of his favourite restaurants shut down because they were operating from basements. City byelaws made this use of space illegal. But with that, according to Amit, the city lost half of its charm.

A food enthusiast and an ardent traveller, he decided to open a multi-cuisine restaurant much in line with Tycoon restaurant that once was his go-to place in the city. It took him two years and travels to 15 countries to finally open his ideal restaurant.

The Druid Garden was opened yesterday in Sahakarnagar.



The 32,000-sqft restaurant is on the third and building that houses a fitness gym and grocery stores. But pass the first two floors and you enter a world starkly different with its striped Aztec black and

white marble floor.

The entrance is dimly lit and, almost all of a sudden, the restaurant turns bright and open. There are different seating arrangements -- German communal tables and elevated corners to VIP sections and closer-to-the-DJ rooms.

"Our idea was to have an outdoor space and yet a controlled one," says Amit. "What if it rains? An open space will not be fun," he says. I look around to see the open space and see the glass roof above my head starting to slide. The retractable glass roof gives way to open skies and a cool breeze.

There are planted gardens all around, to remind you of this "garden city". In the nights, with fairy lights, the restaurants wears a warm yellow tone.

I seat myself in an elevated area, to the right of the entrance. Seated in a handcrafted Italian oak chair, I get an open view of an Italian kitchen. The kitchen boasts of a wood-fire grill and imported teak, oak, rosewood and hickory are used to smoke meat in the grill.

The kitchen occupies 20,000 sq ft area and is driven by 60 chefs. You can take a tour of it on request. The store rooms and the refrigerators are stuffed with imported products from all over the world, such as chocolates from Belgium, salmon from Venezuela and cheese from Italy. While the organic vegetables are brought in from Talakadu and Chikballapura, the lamb is from Banur. Majority of the basic ingredients such as garam masalas, breads and ice-cream are made in-house. All ingredients are sealed with a sticker that carries the name of the chef who prepared it, the date on which it was prepared and 'Best Before' date.

Adjacent to the kitchen is a brewery with 36 tanks imported from Czech Republic. The beer is made exclusively by a master brewer Ladislav, who is from Czech Republic.

The 140 dishes on the menu were carefully picked from 400 dishes. "It was tough to narrow them down," says Niharika Raval, general manager of the restaurant.

The dishes are from all 15 countries Amit travelled to: Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Portugal, Vietnam, Thailand, South America, Honduras, Peru, Columbia, Venezuela, Mexico, Japan, China and India. The menu was curated, over eight months, after tasting food from streets and from fine-dining restaurants.



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