

Right Ingredients for Culinary Success

By Sharmila Chand



Chef Alex M John, Executive Chef, Daiwik Hotels Rameshwaram, has over 25 years of rich and varied expertise in culinary domain in India. He did his hotel management from Bangalore University. His professional career began with Taj Malabar Resort & Spa, Cochin.

Over the years, his career has taken him to many hotels and resorts within India. As a result he has garnered extensive experience with both North Indian and South Indian cuisines.

Chef Alex has done many cooking shows across various TV channels in South India, and his recipes have been published in many national dailies and magazines.

The Ministry of Tourism took his help in training young incumbents in a programme called *Hunar Se Rozgar*. His most rewarding moment came when he prepared food for Shri Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, at the inauguration day of Abdul Kalam Memorial at Rameswaram.

Since 2015, Chef Alex has been working with Daiwik Hotels, an exclusive hotel chain for pilgrims. For Daiwik Hotels Rameshwaram, Chef has come up with a delectable multi-cuisine fare that is highly enjoyed by both domestic and foreign travellers to the hotel.

Chef Alex brings an honest dedication and discipline to his work. He loves to experiment with baking and constantly likes to innovate new menus through different utilisation of ingredients. The excerpts of the interview follow:

How do you define yourself?

I am a simple person and a good team leader.

What is your philosophy of cooking?

My philosophy of cooking is following the standardised recipes and using the right ingredients for the right dish.

Had you not been doing this then what would you have been doing?

I am not sure, but there is a chance for doing my own business related to the food

and beverage industry.

What or who is/are your source/s of inspiration?

My mother's great cooking is my source of inspiration.

What has been the most rewarding moment in your career?

My most rewarding moment in my career was when I got a chance to prepare food for the Indian Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, during his visit to Rameswaram for

the inauguration of Abdul Kalam's Memorial.

What challenges have you faced in your career and how did you successfully manage one such challenging situation?

Pleasing every guest has to be the biggest challenge in my job. On one occasion there was a long staying Italian guest who became fairly adamant and insisted on something Italian other than a pizza or pasta. So I quickly cooked and served her with minestrone soup and

vegetable lasagna with garlic bread.

She enjoyed the meal so much that it changed her perception of not only Daiwik Hotels but also of Rameswaram and its people.

What prepared you the most for your career?

To be able to closely watch and listen to directions of some of the wonderful Chefs with whom I have worked under and alongside in my career has helped me the most in my career.

What is your definition of success?

Guest satisfaction is my definition of success.

What is your strength/s, professionally?

I am a self-dependent person and that is I think, my strength.

And what is your weakness?

I think I am a short tempered and emotional person, which is my weakness.

How do you de-stress?

I unwind by listening to music.

How do you rate yourself as a Chef?

Excellent.

What is your favourite cuisine?

Indian cuisine is my favourite cuisine.

What is favourite spice?

All Indian spices are my favourite.

What is your favourite dish?

I always prefer traditional dishes.

What is your favourite equipment?

I like planetary machine very much because it reduces the work load in the production unit.

Who is your favourite diner?

I would like to serve food to all food lovers.

What is your hot selling item?

My hot selling item is *Dal Makhani*, from the Indian curry section.

What is your philosophy of work?

I believe in being disciplined and fair to all my colleagues.

Lessons learnt in the kitchen?

Be honest & disciplined.

What is the best career advice you have received?

To love and respect my work and profession is the best career advice I have received so far.

Where would we expect to see you 10 years from now?

Probably in a corporate role at Daiwik Hotels; managing the F&B of the hotels under the brand.

What is the position of Chefs these days, in India ?

There is more acceptability for Chefs as a profession among families in the country. Many Chefs are now super stars and highly respected in the Indian society.

What would you recommend to someone interested in working in your field?

Always update yourself and do more experiments with all types of cuisines.

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