

Career profile

Name: Cyrus Todiwala, OBE

Job title: Proprietor and Executive Chef

A passionate campaigner for the environment and sustainability



Cyrus Todiwala, OBE is an authority on Indian Parsee cuisine, a passionate campaigner for good food, the environment and sustainability. He is a regular on television programmes Market Kitchen and Saturday Kitchen, often features on national radio, and is the author of three cookbooks.

He is Proprietor and Executive Chef of the award-winning Café Spice Namasté restaurant, which he runs with his wife Pervin, and manager restaurants The Parsee and Café T.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

The motivation and challenges it gives me every day. It mixes the creativity of cooking and business skills. [His wife Pervin says he gets as excited as a child even now].

How did you begin your career in hospitality?

When I was young, I was very interested in agriculture and then I started to cook with my mother to try and impress her. I would take the part prepared chapatti then finish and sell them. Before I even started college I had a small business making cakes and wines.

I went to the Sophia Polytechnic in Mumbai, catering college. It didn't have such a good reputation as the Institute of Hospitality Management and when I started work my job was really low ranking, but it's by working my way up that I've achieved what I have today. My first job, as an assistant cook, was with the Taj Hotel Group. It was a real slog for the first seven years, no career progression or recognition and the pay was low. Yet I was given the opportunity to work in the most prestigious kitchen in the Taj, servicing the Chambers Club, so I made the most of the experience I got.

What is your best career moment?

My best career moment was the opportunity to cook for the Commonwealth heads of government in Goa.

What is your dream job?

This is my dream job! I wouldn't choose another one because in running my own restaurant and creating good food I have everything I want from a career - the whole world is at my feet!

Who your idol?

Professionally, I admire the cooking of Anton Mossiman, but I couldn't have achieved so much without my wife Pervin, who manages the restaurant.

What is your favourite food?

Parsee food – my favourite is Dhaan, which is my favourite dhal and rice dish.

What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?

On the TV programme Market Kitchen I ate tarantula.

What did you want to do at school?

Agriculture and nature have always been of interest. I'm a strong activist for sustainability and promote the use of locally produced and grown food; friendly farming techniques. Environment is at the heart of everything I do.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I have been a guest chef on television programme Saturday Kitchen, hosted by James Martin, and my wife says I can't sit still.

Do you have any unusual hobbies or talents?

I can write with both my hands. I'm left handed though so in the kitchen I sometimes get the wires twisted up!

What's the secret to success?

Hard work and perseverance; never give in to things and always try to get on with people – that's what the hospitality industry is all about.

Why apprenticeships?

Apprenticeship should never have gone out of fashion as they are the most essential route to developing a career path for any individual. Apprenticeships will give you the knowledge to understand whether or not the job is right for you.

Employers expect too much for people that come from an interview and the best person for the job may not be obvious from that one meeting, so choices can be incorrect. Employers need to develop their staff, provide training, trust and believe in them, give them the responsibility, the right working tools and environment, and make them feel wanted and pay them what they truly deserve. We have nearly 0% turnover here because of that.

Further information

For further information on career opportunities in hospitality visit www.hospitalityguild.co.uk