



VINEET  
BHATIA

Born in India in 1967, Vineet Bhatia was born into an educated middle class family in Bombay. His first passion in life was aeroplanes followed by his mother's first love, cooking.

"When I was a young child, I didn't have an alarm clock. I didn't need one. I was awakened at six-thirty each morning by the roaring engines of the DC-10 that took off from the airport near our house in Bombay, India.

I still remember those airplanes, not only because they were how I began each and every day, but also because my life's ambition at that point in time was to fly jets. I was always fascinated by them. I rode to school on a bicycle and I'd pass by a small flying club and stare endlessly at the Cessnas taking off and landing, marvelling at their speed and their aura of luxury.

A few years later, when I was seventeen, I took the national defence exam in hopes of joining the Air Force, but I failed the physical part of the test. My fascination for flying machines was so complete that if I couldn't be a pilot I resolved that I would do something else altogether".

Vineet now turned his attention to food. He successfully applied to study at catering college in Bombay and did so from 1985 until 1988. However on the advice of his parents, both professionals themselves, he also gained an economics degree in 1989

The Oberoi hotel group soon spotted his talent and determination and they recruited him as a trainee in 1988.

"The wonderful thing about growing up in Bombay was the eclectic influence all around you. It is a melting pot of culinary delights from all over the many different regions of India."

He remained there for three years covering all aspects of Indian cuisine.

"Way back in 1988, I was recruited as a trainee in Oberoi – Delhi and Jass Oberoi-Khajuraho. As a rule the cream of the class were absorbed in the French kitchens but I stuck to Indian kitchen much to the dismay of my seniors who almost threatened me to go French."

After Delhi it was Mumbai calling as Vineet got appointed as Chef De Cuisine at Oberoi (Mewar and Kandahar Restaurant). These traditionally rigid kitchens gave him no space to experiment with his creations. While on the other hand his French counterparts were being applauded for their daredevilry in cuisine. Frustrated, Vineet decided to move to London, unaware that curious Anglo-Indian spicy stews over large pints of beer was being gulped down by Britons as true-blue Indian cuisine.

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When he arrived in London in 1993, he was disappointed in the representation of Indian food there.

**And now in November 2009, Vineet features in the TOP 1000 Most Influential people in London!**

He started work at the Star of India (Old Brompton Road, South Kensington) by immediately creating a professional environment in the kitchen and then slowly moving his attention to the food and the menu. After the end of Year One a completely new menu was created that shifted the customer base from lager loving curry touts to Gourmet eaters. Restaurant critics alike noticed him with Fay Maschler heralding him as the Real Star of India and predicting him to rise to great culinary heights!

**“Bhatia has lifted the cooking into a new league; providing convincing proof that Indian food is capable of evolving” Fay Maschler Evening Standard**

After five long fruitful years, in June 1998 Vineet teamed up with Iqbal Wahhab, a very enterprising and revolutionary journalist to conceptualise Cinnamon Club and head the Kitchen. Planning Permission issues led to considerable delays and in January 1999 unable to financially sustain with a new house and a young son of 7 months, Vineet set up home at ‘Vineet Bhatia- Hammersmith’.

**“food from one of the best Indian chefs anywhere.....It is shaming to point out that if Bhatia cooked in French or Italian vernacular or came from New York, he would be hailed as super chef.....Go to Bhatia’s and eat. Do it now”. The Times AA Gill**

This was to be the most short-lived outpost, lasting only for three months. But what three months they were! Restaurant critic A.A Gill’s extraordinary review set the restaurant abuzz creating a waiting list of five weeks – something unheard of in those days.

Eventually in April 1999, Vineet partnered and opened Zaika, first in Chelsea, then in a new home in Kensington High Street.

In 2001, Zaika was awarded a Michelin star, making Bhatia the first Indian chef-restaurateur to receive this honour since the inception of the Guide. Vineet is known for revolutionising Indian food in Britain, and whilst retaining its core values, has changed everything from the way it is presented to the way it’s experienced. It hasn’t gone unnoticed and the accolades have followed his trajectory to the top.

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In 2004, Vineet Bhatia finally stepped out of the shadows of the Star of India and Zaika, to open his own restaurant '**Rasoi**' – meaning kitchen, thus fulfilling his cherished dream of having his own restaurant.

" Looking back – this has been the best decision in my life. It has not only given me a chance to be my own boss but also work in close association with my wife and life partner to realise our dream together. "

Taking over this 100 year old Chelsea townhouse turned restaurant necessitated Vineet using the family house as collateral, staking more than his culinary reputation.

The moderate size of Rasoi is indicative of the exclusivity of the restaurant. It enables waiting staff to create an intimate, at-home feel for diners and allows chefs to prepare their food without rushing. It also allows Vineet to have a more hands on approach on the operations.

**"Although Vineet never sacrifices substance to style, another of his gifts is a finely tuned sense of aesthetics. —This space works far better than Zaika ever did. And I like the mix of Michelin groupies, Chelsea-ites and loyal fans who will follow Vineet wherever he goes, because they know that despite imitation being the sincerest form of flattery, no one is turning out Indian food quite as dazzling as VB's."**

#### **Jeremy Wayne- Tatler**

Describing his food Vineet says that he produces 'evolved' Indian food and that his food never stops evolving. Balance and sophisticated use of spices mark his cooking. He scores with the way he has innovatively given traditional Indian cuisine a unique and contemporary twist, and modern presentation helps too.

**"Everything was so sensational, I just kept eating—This meal was, without doubt one of the great food experiences, even though I was so stuffed I could hardly walk."**

#### **Michael Winner, The Sunday Times**

Rasoi opened to much critical acclaim and in the few months since opening was named '**Best Newcomer of the year 2005**'; 'The Indian Restaurant of the Year 2005'; 'The **Chef of the Year 2004**'.

Writing in the Daily Telegraph, legendary restaurant critic, Egon Ronay, included Rasoi in his top 25 restaurants in the UK and Vineet Bhatia in his list of 'Magnificent 7 Chefs' in UK; Zagat accolades Rasoi with a food rating highest in Indian category and names it in the top ten restaurants in London.

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While anchoring himself in his personal venture, Vineet's modern progressive attitude to Indian food put him in great demand throughout the world, making him the 'Face' for Indian Cuisine. His reputation now synonymous with 'elite fine dining' is reflected in his impressive portfolio of exclusive consultancies in Mauritius, Geneva, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and India.

### **'Rasoi : new Indian kitchen ' Vineet's FIRST Cookery Book :**

Vineet has teamed up with a food specialist publisher, Absolute Press, to produce his first book, which went on sale in January 2010.

In this, Vineet shares more than 150 of the ground – breaking recipes that have earned him a reputation not just as a celebrated Indian chef but also as one of the most talented chefs in the world. His dishes are a beguiling mixture of modernity and classicism and include elements of molecular gastronomy. Yet **Rasoi: New Indian Kitchen** is an accessible and inspiring book and Bhatia's passion and knowledge shine through on every page.

### **'Twist of Taste with Vineet Bhatia' Fox History & Traveller, India**

Vineet's escapades with food brought this twice starred Michelin Chef, back to India, his journey beautifully televised in this show. Here he was able to add his signature touch to the local flavours of India whilst he journeyed across the sub continent, creating some interesting dishes along the way. The TV Programme aired from August 2011 right through the spring of 2012.

The **Second** season of Twist of Taste aired from November 2012, and took Vineet to yet many other unexplored cities of India giving his own 'twist' to the local culinary favourites.

Apart from the honours and inventions what Vineet Bhatia will always be respected for more so in his homeland is the Indian cuisine revolution that he stirred. A culinary battle of sorts that took him as he recalls “ **sixteen long years**” strengthened in his resolve constantly by his wife **Rashima** whom he calls “ **my biggest anchor.**”

“In hindsight, it's really quite surprising that I ended up a chef, not only because my childhood dreams involved being a pilot, but also because I never felt that I had a natural aptitude for cooking. My mother was an excellent cook with a fantastic imagination; I've never tasted food quite like hers. But despite her genes, and her early efforts to school me, I never felt that I had a knack for it. In fact, my first few attempts at cooking on my own were downright failures.

But now when I sit back and think there is nothing that I would have enjoyed doing better or am more passionate about! FOOD – It is an essential and an integral part of who I am. I would describe myself as a global Indian whose inspiration is deeply rooted in India with an ever-burning desire to put Indian Cuisine on the forefront.

Vineet Bhatia lives in London with his wife Rashima and their two sons Varaul and Ronit.