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## wine/restaurant food & drink

the digest



### Meals ready

Change the way you experience home delivered food with Masalabox's meal packages. Choose from packages of 10 or 30 meals, valid for 30 days and 45 days respectively. You can pick any meal irrespective of its pricing (free delivery even if the meal value is below ₹500). Package of 10 meals at ₹3,500 and 30 meals at ₹9,500. Details: masalabox.com



### Food fête

Delicious food and fun times await at the three-day festival, Fandango. Organised by the students of the Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology at Kovalam, Thiruvananthapuram, the festival will have around 10 food stalls and two entertainment stalls. Chinese, Arabic and Kerala specialties, besides pastries and mocktails will be served up. From today. Tickets at ₹300. Details: 9400528585

### Yes to yoghurt

Have you been keeping away from ice creams, fearing the calories? Then, Yoghurtbay's franchise at Edappally Toll Junction is where you should head. Make sure you try their two new flavours — red velvet cheesecake and salted caramel. From ₹40 onwards. Details: 9539940487



## SPY

Here's another go-to site if you prefer ordering food from the comfort of home. Graburfood.com features popular restaurants across town and facilitates easy delivery. From ₹250 onwards. Details: 9020 121000



INDULGE  
THE NEW INDIA EXPRESS  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2015 | KOCHI

taste

## Destination

Stunning views and a menu with Mediterranean and Malabar accents meet at this boutique restaurant

# 51

Pics: Ratheesh Sundaram



TEAL building silently hugs Bazaar Road as men call for spices to be loaded on to waiting lorries. Its narrow entrance halts briefly at a blackboard with the day's specials. A bicycle painted on a wall sees you amble by before a stop at the courtyard. Green grass, blue sky, lazy waters of a pool and bustling waves of a harbour make for a pretty welcome. A right turn later, a corridor lined with spices and black-and-white photos of the neighbourhood takes you to your table by the waters. Three-month-old 51, boutique hotel Spice Harbour's restaurant, is where you've arrived.

### Notes from the past

A renovated spice godown that dates back to pre-Independence days, with flavours from Mediterranean and Malabar kitchens, music that sings of the New Wave era and art that is as local as it is global — 51's middle name is heritage. Managed by the RAXA Collective team led by

Crist and Amie Inman, and owned by the Muthoot Group, the property is an effort towards entrepreneurial conservation. While the old stands its ground in the structure, the new finds its places in paintings and bird cage lanterns that hang from a high ceiling. There's also a lounge with books and a television and a mezzanine floor that offers a personal view of the harbour. To say the 76-seat restaurant easily affords the best water view in town is apt.

### Along the seas

An acknowledgement of Kochi's long trading history is common across the restaurant's breakfast, lunch and dinner menus. "We didn't want one more colonial-inspired or typically authentic Kerala cuisine. And people may mistake us for a pasta house if we call ourselves a Mediterranean restaurant. Amie came up with the words 'Malabar soul food' to best name our Mediterranean-inspired cuisine that is rooted locally," Crist explains.



While the menu is not expensive, it is rich and colourful, as we first saw in the Xandari salad. With its origins at a property managed by the Collective in Costa Rica, the starter is perfect for evangelists of healthy eating. Mixed lettuce, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, carrots, radish, avocado, roasted cashew, pomegranate seeds, feta cheese and a yogurt-tahini dressing — the salad has everything going for it. The avgolemono (egg-lemon) soup, a staple in Greece during winters, is a pleasant surprise

as it is served cold. We got our quota of seafood in a beautifully done fillet of Mahi Mahi that comes with mashed green peas filled with a watermelon reduction — a piece of art in itself. The signature spice mix rubbed on the pan-seared chicken is one to be enjoyed; it starts with a mildly spicy flavour and ends on a tangy note, complemented by saffron couscous. And the kitchen's take on the classic Greek phyllo, wrapped around papaya conserve and served hot with ice cream, leaves no doubt about 51's knack at letting a 'number' do the talking.

Open from 7 am - 10.30 pm. Menu starts from ₹300. Details: 6503044 — Rosanna Abrachan



### launchpad

## Out of the box

Food delivery start-up, Masala Republic, is all set on reinventing the biryani experience



Pics: Ratheesh Sundaram

HAVE your biryani takeaways been a messy affair? Then, eating it out of a box may just be what the chef ordered. And what Masala Republic propagates. At the Kakkannad-based food delivery business begun by foodies and friends, George Kora and Robin George, 'B' stands for biryani and branding. "Biryani hasn't been given its due, like how Italy took pizza to another level, and America fried chicken. We wanted to make it convenient to have biryani and it helps that it is a meal in itself," Kora explains.

### Ricetalk

Easing into its fourth week of operations, the venture is powered by a bhandari (biryani master) whose family has been cooking the delicacy for three generations now. Kora and George found the firm man at the end of a four-month journey in search of the perfect biryani that took them

across Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

With a growing clientele at Infopark, their dum biryani boxes — available in egg, chicken, vegetable and beef variants — are ideal for a workplace meal. The sturdy and biodegradable boxes come packed with a container each of *raita*, chicken fry (cauliflower, in case of vegetarians) and a sweet dish apart from a large serving of the biryani. We liked that it has a distinct flavour, is not soaked in oil and comes with a generous share of nuts, raisins and fried onions. There's also ample masala to go with the rice and the sides give you a chance to have all parts of the meal in one place. The coming month will see the menu expand to include mutton and fish variants, apart from wraps. "We are not doing Indian fast food, but we provide fast Indian food," adds Kora, who also owns Chai Nation at Infopark. Plans are on for a drive-by outlet where customers can take home biryani without leaving the comfort of their vehicles.

From ₹99 onwards. Place your orders between 11 am-3 pm and 7 pm-11 pm. Details: 7034304040

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