

# Govindas Restaurant at ISKCON Juhu (Pilgrimage for the taste buds)

## Brief History

His Divine Grace Abhay Charanaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami, fondly remembered as Srila Prabhupada, introduced the novel concept of Govindas restaurant – first in USA and expanded all over the world. What primarily distinguishes Govindas from the other outlets is the vision behind its establishment. Srila Prabhupada's vision for Govindas was to provide "first-class" vegetarian and milk based preparations to guests visiting the temple as introduction to the Vedic lifestyle. Govindas restaurants all over the world operate independently but retain the same vision. His Holiness Sridhar Swami was the key founder to the Govindas Juhu project. Previously the restaurant had seating arrangements for 60 guests, near the main temple lobby. In the year 2000 they decided to shift to the new building 'Heaven on earth'. Architect H.G Premnath Prabhu drew up a convincing plan for a bigger restaurant. This was completed in 2005. This attracted larger crowds to the restaurant, at times the wait goes on for 1-2 hours. Plans are under discussion to increase the present seating capacity, with further expansion being an option considered. Govindas restaurant is very famous for "Chappan" (Hindi for 56) bhoga all over Mumbai. The 56 items are a carefully selected mix of Indian cuisine, with a few continental items prepared to indigenous tastes. The 56-item buffet is divided into 4 counters. It begins with salads and starters. Followed by a main course of a variety of subjis and continental items. The next counter has varieties of rice and dal, concluding with a counter for desserts. Fresh juices are served on the table. The centre spaces have round tables with larger tables kept on the side. Govinda Juhu has two shifts for 'A-la-carte', during breakfast and early evening hours; and two shifts for buffet, Lunch and Dinner hours. There is a priority focus on quality. The main chef has been with Govindas for the past 30 years. They have 3 members in the Research wing. They go to the market and different hotels and review the latest offerings and trends. Certain staff are also deputed to other hotels for training. For the past 30 years, they are using same methodology for cooking. The preparations have retained consistency in colour, texture and taste. The captains interact with customers and keep good relations. This is a protocol here, ingrained in the restaurant experience of creating a family atmosphere. The restaurant also caters to marriages taking in the "Heaven on Earth" temple complex and different venues around temple. In a typical marriage season, daily they cater to 2-3 marriages on average. On peak days, they cater to even 8 marriage parties.

## Work Flow Overview

They have 180 permanent staff and with contractual staff varying with the demand cycles. The overall administration is divided into 4 departments. 1. Administration 2. Service 3. Kitchen 4. Storage & Procurement. Each area has 2 assistant managers deputed through the operating hours. A typical day starts at 5 AM and goes on till midnight. Administration department prepared for and informs the kitchen dept. about the following months' festivities in the restaurant and accordingly grocery is procured. The Kitchen is divided into 4 sections - Pantry, Soft cooking, Preparatory and Washing Area. Pantry- The same kitchen is used by different teams but they will not use or mix up equipment's.

Respective teams will clean the kitchen after its use, as they have different timings in the daily scheduling. Soft cooking- Desserts and other small items are made in this section Preparatory section - Chapati and parathas are made in this section. Washing area - It starts working by 5 am and goes till 2 am. There are 2 people appointed for washing the vessels. Leftovers and uncooked wastage at the end of the day is sent to the Talasari farm. Fire safety is strictly adhered to and for that purpose they have latest equipment in fire cylinders, fire sprinklers and they are following all government given standards for safety. Storage and Procurement A centralized purchase department for ISKCON Juhu is maintains Stores, and the Stores supplies to the kitchen. Procurement list is given one month in advance to the Stores. Vegetable procurement is given 3 days prior, and twice a week vegetables are purchased. During unexpected excess demand, they place an emergency request to the purchase department to procure grocery. They procure all grocery from the APMC Vashi market. All requirements, completed orders are documented for the records.

### Organization Hierachy at Govinda's

Administration dept. - takes care of hall booking, menu fixing, payment and accounting. Service dept. - they have 11 captains, 3 main captains, all work in shift. Kitchen dept. - it also works in 3 shifts starting from morning 5 am. There are 3 main chef to maintain quality. Procurement dept.- 3 senior people work there. procurement is done in weekly or monthly basis. All depts. Have 1 chief and 2 assistant managers. 8 manager report to Chief and Chief reports to the 'brahmachari in-charge' Daily they offer bhoga to Sri Sri Gaura Nitai. Chefs and captains along with managers perform kirtan and chant together many times. They train their new employees gradually to take up chanting. In this way they try to maintain a saatvik atmosphere, if not Krsna Conscious. There are 3 sous-chefs who prepare the masalas, and particularly to ensure consistency they preferably do not interchange their role. The main Chef has experience of more than 30 years at Govindas.

### Key Lessons learned

- 1 It's not just about serving food. In order for the guests to cherish prasadam there is a large amount of preparation and background work into it.
2. Keeping objectives and detailed planning to achieve them is key to delivering consistent performance.
3. All services involving direct contact with guests should have a USP. Since we are not in the selling business per se, once can call it the Unique attraction point which the guests can recall, which attracts more guests.

### Achievements

Govindas has had a rating of 4.2-4.8, as against the average rating of 3.5 for restaurants in Mumbai.