

Kitchen at ISKCON Chowpatty (Join the Kitchen Religion)

Kitchen at ISKCON Chowpatty has evolved to be a highly efficient setup with the capacity to Cook & Serve out Prasadam for 7 to 8 thousand devotees on any given day. Here HG Damodar Prabhu shares some best Practices

Standardisation of Recipes

At ISKCON Chowpatty, consistent quality of prasadam has been ensured by standardization of recipes. However this has been achieved without curtailing the innovation and variety of recipes. Following are the Step by Step process Standardizing Recipes: - They begin by documenting the process and quantities of ingredients used in the making of every successful dish; which is the key to ensure consistent taste of a dish every time its prepared or served. - They have different varieties of the same dish but all of them have been standardized. - To create varieties and improvise the taste of a dish, they cook small quantities of the dish thereby documenting the same and then making small changes to fine-tune the recipe for the best taste. -The improvised recipe now can be scaled-up for 200 devotees and then for 2000 devotees but the same great taste remains. Results This way the recipes have evolved in quality and variety according to the tastes of devotees and ingredients available locally at various centers.

Menu Planning

They make sure no item in the menu is repeated during the span of 15 days. This is how they do it: The following considerations are made by the purchase team before choosing the dishes for the coming week: - Good seasonal vegetables at that time of the year. - Feedback of previous week's menu. - Any special ingredients required is checked in advance With this we avoid monotonous menus and maximize devotee satisfaction.

Volunteer Management

Learn about the tried and tested practices in recruiting, maintaining and caring for your kitchen staff from Damodar Prabhu. He not only shares his insights about effective management of the kitchen, but also about developing a devotional spirit in the kitchen staff. RECRUITMENT - They look for people with the right attitude and recruit them through devotee contacts. - They are trained first in kitchen cleaning, then vegetable cutting and finally cooking. - They did not recruit any trained cooks in the last ten years. Most of their existing staff had been trained according to standards in cooking by them. - They actually recruit only helpers. -Gradually, they become trained cooks and go on to become a valuable assets to the kitchen department. MAINTENANCE - Kitchen runs 365 days a year. Cooking has to be done even on fasting days. - Their big challenge is to keep the staff inspired and to develop a devotional mood. - They started with weekly meetings exclusively for the kitchen staff as a part of devotional training and inspiration. - But the distractions of kali being stronger than their training, hence they now hold the meetings daily. - Every evening from 8pm to 9pm, they do kirtan and katha together - since last three years. CARE - Staff here is paid 13 months salary for their work of 11 months assuming one month as

paid leave and one month's salary as bonus. - Medi-claim for all staff members is provided. - PPF (Public Provident Fund) for all the staff that worked here for five years or above is also provided. - Soon, they will also be offering medi-claim for their dependents as well. - Kitchen Staffs have a retreat once in every six month. - Incentives for major festivals and yatras in terms of money and dham yatras is also offered to staff.

Clean and Hygienic Kitchen

Damodar Prabhu shares his practice of how to ensure a cleanest possible kitchen and kitchen staff at all times and more importantly, how to make a 'cleanable' kitchen. - Inspired by the instructions of HH Radhanath Swami "Anytime you cook, cleaning must follow immediately. You can't leave the kitchen dirty at any time of the day. Maintain cleanliness while cooking and also cleanup after cooking". - Frequency of cleaning has been increased from 3 times a day to 6 times a day to maintain hygiene. - For that to happen, the kitchen has to be 'cleanable'. Which means cleaning it takes least possible energy. Required renovations for a 'cleanable' kitchen: 1. Good flooring 2. Walls tiled up to the ceiling 3. Ensuring no crevices 4. Using stainless steel for everything possible. - Train the staff in cleanliness and hygiene standards like: 1. Mandatory hand wash before cooking 2. Daily washing all aprons and caps used 3. All activities like vegetable cutting and chapatti rolling are done off the floor on stainless steel tables. All the above practices ensured the implementation of ISO 22000 standards in Chowpatty kitchen for the last 6 years. In Conclusion: - The devotional training helps solve and avoid many management problems and also keeps them inspired. Lot of effort needs to be invested for keeping the staff inspired and maintaining a devotional mood. - But, in the end, we have an inspired staff who are willing to put in all their energy for serving the devotees.

Dealing with Space Constraints

Effective utilization of limited kitchen space to accommodate ever-increasing prasadam quantities and kitchen equipment has always been a challenge at ISKCON Chowpatty. In-order to accommodate ever-increasing kitchen equipment in the same available space, RGM Kitchen inventory grows vertically and gets dynamic to use ever bit of space effectively using following methods: - Installing racks and arranging things according to their frequency of use. - The least used things are kept on the top-most rack and frequently used things on the lower racks for quick and easy access. - Giant cooking vessels used only for big festivals are hung close to the ceiling by using a chain pulley system when not needed. - By adding wheels to the vegetable racks and the chapatti machine, they can be rolled out of kitchen into prasadam hall freeing up more space in the kitchen for festival cooking. - Adding wheels to all heavy equipment will allow dynamic use of space according to need and time. Prerequisites & Safety Instructions All floors need to be level for wheels to work. Proper safety should ensured while storing heavy things at a height.