



PHOTOGRAPHS: BLANK STORIES

# STEPPING IT UP

THE INTERIOR DESIGN OF GOYAA TAKES THE STORY OF THE TRENDY MUMBAI RESTAURANT A NOTCH HIGHER

BY MARIA LOUIS

Amid the quiet, old-world charm of Byculla's bylanes, approaching the façade of the city's new avant-garde gourmet address almost feels like chancing upon a portal. Industrial hues, sharp angles and clean lines draw you in through a small and inconspicuous cast-iron door, into a cosy yet minimalistic entryway dotted with indoor plants, books and ceramic ware. On entering the actual dining area, you are introduced to the magnanimity of the space...very gradually...as you first notice the show kitchen with bar stool seating around it, followed by the 23-ft-high ceiling, grey walls, understated alcoves, natural kota stone flooring and, finally, the fact that you are about to experience the drama of eating in an amphitheatre of sorts.

Nestled within a century-old mill, chef Siddharth Somaiya and mixologist Mariki Sayles' Goyaa invokes awe through simplicity. The name translates simply from Urdu as 'the art of storytelling'; it is represented in the layout of the restaurant, which treats the kitchen as the stage and uses the elevated seating to echo Somaiya's beginnings. His first establishment was The Bao Haus Co., a delivery kitchen in the heart of Colaba market, around which the design brief organically grew.

Designers Siddhant Tikkoo and Nikita D'Silva of STaND drew inspiration from the brand's growth and what they experienced as guests. "We meandered through the tiny streets of Colaba market to find this hidden gem, and a rather pleasant young man invited us to wait inside his tiny cabin

while our food was prepared," D'Silva recalls. "We observed the well-organised and clean kitchen through the cabin glass. Our dedicated patronage for his food took us back to the kitchen more often. We arrived one day to find the cabin full, as guests huddled in groups on the steps outside, engaged in conversation and chomping on baos with the market bustling on in the background."

It is this memory that influenced the creation of a kitchen that celebrates the interaction between the chef and customer, and a warm wooden multi-level seating area that pays tribute to the steps outside the delivery kitchen. The entrance foyer sits below the topmost step, creating the sense of intrigue from outside by blocking a direct view from the street into the restaurant.

Goyaa is a canvas of neutrals; a contrast to the vibrantly chaotic city of Mumbai. While consciously steering clear of walls filled with meaningless knick-knacks, the designers' clutter-free approach allows the space to breathe and employs a concise palette of materials that each solve a key purpose. The metal used lends lightness to the overall aesthetic, glass offers transparency, concrete contrasts with solidity, the wood brings warmth and softness, while the ceramic tableware gives the restaurant its only pop of colour other than the plants. The main focus remains on the food and drinks.

Rightfully so! Apart from the delicious baos that draw loyal customers and Somaiya's fans, the menu presents creative comfort food with Asian nuances along with unique desserts. The pork belly bao is a winner, with its melt-in-the-mouth



Belgian pork, goat cheese, watermelon and coriander-ginger, as is the charred broccoli with whipped burrata, persimmon chutney and pine nuts. The cocktail menu by Sayles – a New York mixologist who headed Manhattan's Le Bernardin bar – features perfectly balanced brews that are made with local ingredients and in-house syrups and bitters. They can be pretty potent, so relish every note at a leisurely pace, just the way she vividly describes it to you. And the 18:00 Pineapple Express is a journey in itself.

It's impressive to see how the culinary and sensory experience comes to life here, considering that, just a short while ago, D'Silva and Tikkoo encountered it as a bare shell. The space was devoid of any plaster on the walls and had no flooring – just an open north light, and an old jeep parked in a corner. "We were instantly awed by the column-less space and were eager to use the height to our advantage. We wanted guests to experience this rare sight, and envisioned it as an urban oasis," D'Silva shares.

With no power or water connection to the site either, the designers had to begin right at the grassroots level and work their way up. And because no restaurant contractor could take

2&3. Plants and ceramic tableware provide the only pops of colour to the muted interior scheme.



4

4. Warm white lighting animates grey expanses.

5. The challenge posed by an open kitchen for the HVAC system was circumvented by positioning the hot range to the back; installing double air curtains and strong air exhausts; and increasing the AC capacities.

6. Goyaa's material palette features diverse elements such as metal, concrete, glass and wood - all contributing towards a neutral canvas.

7. Goyaa's entrance foyer gives little away of its exciting interiors.



5

## MATERIALS & SUPPLIERS

- Flooring:** Natural kota stone with kadappa accents
- Stone:** Slate finish tile for the bar and open kitchen counter-top
- Ceiling:** Existing + nitril rubber for heat absorption from roofing
- Lighting/light fixtures:** Light Alive (3,000K warm white lighting)
- Wall partitions:** Wooden sections with bison board cladding/wood sections with rubberwood cladding
- Stepped seating:** Customised MS framework with rubberwood cladding
- Arches:** Customised moulded POP, cement textured paint and a sycamore wood trim
- Wall textures:** StoneLite (concreto finish) and paint
- Dado:** Polished bison board
- Paint:** Asian Paints' Lustre
- Tables:** Customised by STaND (rubberwood top with metal legs/ bent metal tall tables/full metal circular tables)
- Chairs:** Customised by STaND (cane weave with metal framework)
- Benches:** Customised by STaND (metal sections + PU coat/ rubberwood top + metal legs)
- Reception stools:** Bent metal + bent wood
- Sanitary fittings:** Jaquar

on building a restaurant from this basic a level, they joined forces with several separate agencies who worked together simultaneously. "Our challenges ranged from figuring out the kilo wattage capacity we had to draw to the restaurant from the main supply – to working out an efficient HVAC system for a heavy-duty open kitchen."

Keeping the space minimal was an interesting journey, bearing in mind that simplicity in design is often harder to achieve. Restraint was key. "At each step of the way, we asked ourselves 'Is this fulfilling a purpose?' and if an element did not, we stripped down to the basics." Almost every element in the space has been customised – right from the chairs and tables down to the bill boxes.

One of the largest design challenges was maintaining the ef-



6



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## PROJECT DETAILS

- The project:** Goyaa
- The client:** Hauslandish Hospitality
- The designers:** STaND (Siddhant Tikkoo and Nikita D'Silva)
- HVAC consultants:** SM Engineers
- Lighting consultants:** Light Alive
- Metal works and carpentry:** Sangelkar Furnishers
- Civil contractor:** DLC Interiors
- Area:** 2,100sq-ft
- Location:** Byculla, Mumbai
- Duration of project:** October 2017 - February 2018
- Date of completion:** February 2018

iciency of the air conditioning system due to the open kitchen. To solve this, the design duo worked on maintaining the hot range at the back, with strong exhausts that immediately suck out the smokes and smells. They worked with HVAC consultants to figure out a double fresh air curtain that would create an air buffer between the heavy exhausts and the air conditioning. The capacity of the ACs had to be increased to maintain the cooling on account of the heat from the kitchen.

What was more an exciting adventure than a challenge, however, was the lighting. The exposure to the north lighting gives the restaurant two contrasting ambiances – a bright and airy naturally-lit café by day, and an intimate fine dining haunt by night. The design approach allows shade and shadow to play a stimulating role as well.

Warm white lighting brings a vibrant vibe to an otherwise grey canvas, whether with the use of simple bulbs behind the frosted panes of the open kitchen that offer a diffused glow, or the geometric lines of the feature lighting wires that lend strokes to the monotone south wall. "We looked closely at lighting as an art, to maintain the minimalistic approach. A successful close-working relationship with our lighting consultants, Light Alive, has been a key factor to bring it all together," D'Silva explains.

With its food, ambience and thoughtful creativity, Goyaa takes a grand stand – giving visitors a wholesome experience of wonder, curiosity, discovery and pleasure. It engrosses you in artistry and surprises you from the moment you approach it...till you finally walk away, decidedly eager to return. **AS**