

Introducing

CHEF MAYANK ISTWAL

Corporate Executive Chef

Musaafer Restaurant Houston, TX



Musaafer



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About

CHEF MAYANK ISTWAL

Musaafer Corporate Executive Chef

Chef Mayank is available for speaking engagements, talking head TV appearances, filmed (TV) or live event culinary competition judging, South Asian Leadership events, wedding menu planning and celebrity chef collaborations.

He is a graduate of The Institute of Hotel Management of Guwahati, India. Chef Mayank combines his expertise, passion and encyclopedic knowledge of spices, ingredients and textures serving a neoteric Indian dining experience in a stunning, expertly curated setting within Musaafer (meaning "The Traveller",) built within Houston's luxurious Galleria at Westheimer and Sage.



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Accolades

RECENT PRESS, FIRSTS, AND ACCOLADES

In February 2024, Musaafer was named among the “Top 15 Most Romantic Restaurants in the World” alongside such luminaries as NYC’s “Eleven Madison Park” by Blacklane, an international, award-winning VIP travel company, with a team of over 300 people with hubs in Singapore, Spain, the U.A.E., the U.K., and the U.S.

Additionally in February of 2023, they were honored with a nomination for the Houston Culture Map “Tastemaker Awards”

January 2024 saw the unveiling of an avant-garde dinner collaboration with Bayou City Hemp and 8th Wonder Brewery, featuring eight courses of THC-infused dishes alongside infused mocktails and cocktails.

In 2023, Musaafer and Chef Mayank made the coveted “Top 100 Restaurants in Houston - Culinary Stars” list curated by the highly respected food critic Alison Cook.

In 2021, “Time Magazine” listed Musaafer as “One of The Top 100 Places to Visit in the World”

And recently, Chef Mayank and Musaafer have been featured in “Conde Nast Traveller”, “Houston Life” “FOX26 TV”, “The Houston Chronicle”, “CW39 TV”, “Houston Business Journal”, “Paper City Magazine”, “FSR Magazine” and many more.

Chef Mayank was also the presenter of “Indian Heritage Through Cuisine, Culture and Spices” for The Foundation for India Studies (FIS) on the celebration of INDO -AMERICAN HERITAGE DAY

A brief note about FIS (FIS runs a project in University of Houston, TX with a vision to promote knowledge about India’s contribution to the world in the field of language literature, arts, sciences, engineering, politics, economics and spirituality.)

He was recently in the news for his innovative creation called “The V-Pill”, taking inspiration from Ayurvedic herbs and spices, more details of which are forthcoming.

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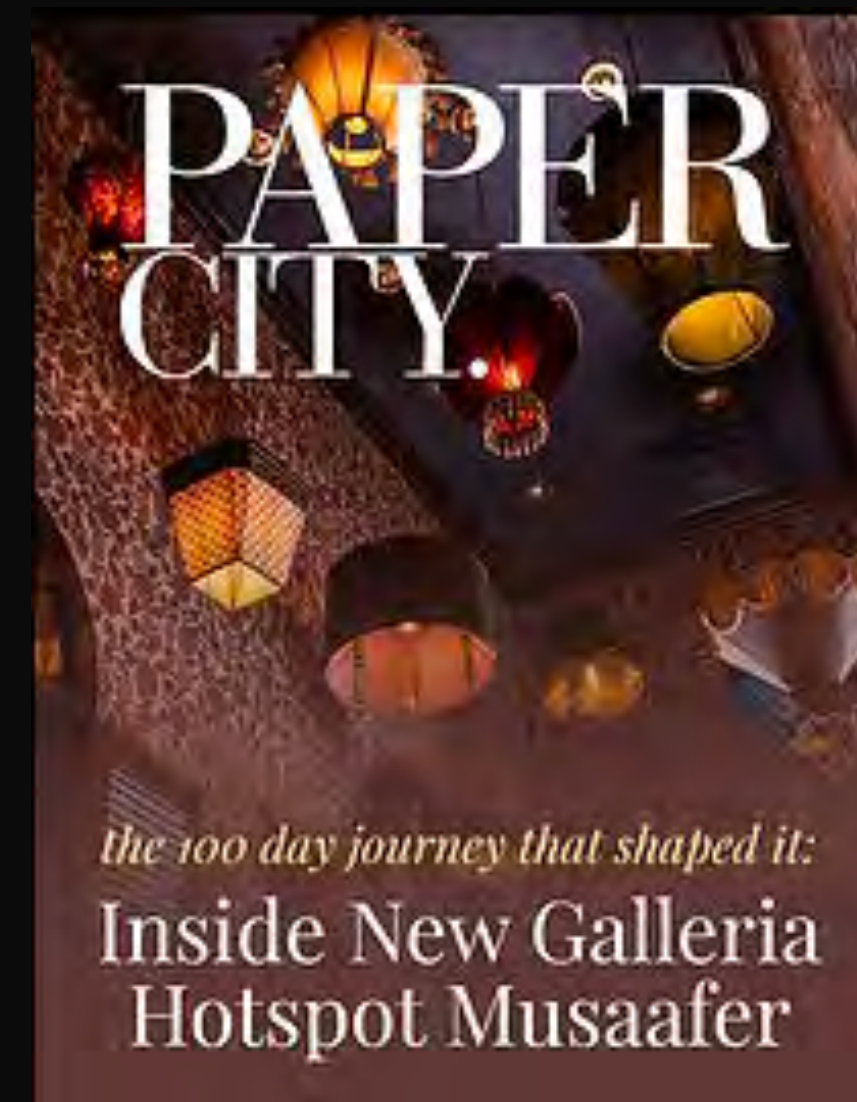
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Praise for Musaafer

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The Origin Story



As a student, Mayank won the National Council For Hotel Management And Catering Technology, New Delhi prestigious “Best Chef” award. His career began as a kitchen management trainee at the luxury boutique Devigarh Hotel in Udaipur, where he then became the Kitchen Executive. Mayank was chosen by famed Australian restaurateur and culinary entrepreneur, Chef Luke Mangan to run his fine dining restaurant “Salt Grill” aboard P&O cruise lines.

Following a few years aboard luxury, state-of-the-art cruise liners, Chef Mayank worked as a Junior Sous Chef at The LaLit, a luxury hotel in Udaipur where his talents earned him opportunities ~ such as being the exclusive chef to the cast of the BAFTA and Golden Globe award-winning movie ‘The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel’, starring Dame Judi Dench, Maggie Smith, Bill Nighy and Dev Patel. Whilst they were filming on the property, Mayank formed special bonds with some of the stars, and even took them on tours of the kitchen gardens, and concocted special request dishes for them during production.

He also worked as the Sous Chef at The Taj Fort Aguada, a beach resort and spa in Goa, which is world-renowned for having some of the best beaches, most diverse wildlife and top resorts in all of South Asia. During his tenure in Goa he was the winner of the prestigious Goan Chef Challenge. His extensive experience in menu creation and kitchen management led him to become the Executive Sous Chef at the LaLit Ashok in Bangalore, where he was responsible for the operations of all the property’s restaurants plus its event spaces.

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The Origin Story



During his formative tenure in India, he invented ‘healthy spice blends’ combining his broad knowledge of Ayurveda and spices, which more deeply examines the nature of each spice, and how to prepare seasonal blends. He has created a palette of spice combinations which are guided by the cooling, warming, digestive, mouth freshening or baking nature of the spices. Chef Mayank believes his invention of these healthy spice blends will contribute the gift of better digestion, more enjoyable gastro-experiences and a greater overall appreciation of spices to all mankind. Being a food historian, Chef Mayank is an impressive advocate of each ingredient and spice, from which he seeks age-old inspiration from the historic Indian traditional storytelling like Katha, Pravachana and kathakalashepam.

Following his successful career in India, Chef Mayank joined The Spice Route Company in the USA, to guide and shape all culinary aspects of their newest and most adventurous concept yet, and the group’s first project in Houston, Texas – Musaafer. In order to create a carefully curated and truly authentic menu for the new restaurant, Chef Mayank embarked on a 100-day journey around the 29 states of India. He discovered hundreds of new recipes that he combined with contemporary elements to take Musaafer’s diners on a luxurious and delicious culinary expedition, within its meticulously decorated spaces. His quest for research is never ending, and so he also undertook a 2-month exploratory culinary visit to Mexico City to further discover the traditions in his new neighbouring country.

Being an avid traveller and food historian, Mayank has sojourned to many countries including Australia, New Zealand, French Polynesia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, Central Africa, West Africa and Mexico.

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Experience The Journey MUSAAFER

A quest for authentic recipes and their ingredients from the vast & multi-cultural subcontinent of India led to the inception of an idea by the owners Mithu and Shammi Malik to plan a culinary journey for Chef Mayank to travel across the country to over 100 regions, leading to the eclectic, Himalaya and Indian cuisine featured at Musaafer today.



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By THE SPICE ROUTE

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