

# Curry life

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The chefs to remain on the Jobs Shortage List

UK FOOD INDUSTRY URGED TO  
REDUCE CALORIES BY 2024

## Basmati Rice Dispute Between Pakistan and India

The end of traditional restaurant service?

# AWARDS 2021



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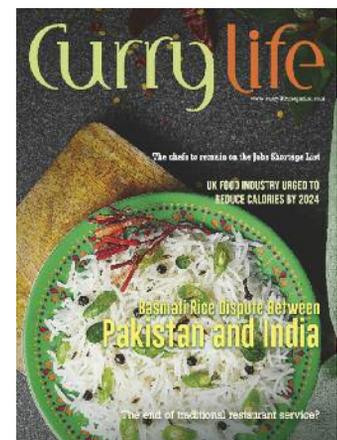
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## Common Sense Prevailed

Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), which offers independent advice to the government about immigration and the issues surrounding it, recently recommended to exclude chefs from the Shortage Occupation List. Good news that the government has rejected the idea. This is a very positive decision from the Government suspecting the detrimental impact that the MAC's recommendation would have had on the sector. This means that chefs will remain on the Shortage Occupation List for the time being. Curry Life found the MAC report worrying when it was released for several reasons. The first was the UK's decision to implement an Australian-style immigration system to replace the now removed EU Freedom of Movement. While this does mean the UK will be looking

away from Europe for skilled workers, there's no guarantee that chefs from places like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan or Sri Lanka will be considered. This is worrying, considering there was already a UK curry crisis well before threats like COVID-19. The ongoing curry crisis is a generational issue. The cause is (though no fault of their own) that the children and grand children of traditional Bangladeshi and Indian restaurant owners in the UK are turning away from the restaurant trade to pursue other endeavours that interest them. Of course, these youngsters are British citizens; therefore, they have every right to study and join any career they choose. But that doesn't stop it from being a worrying time for the UK Curry Houses; the shortfall will need to be made up from somewhere. Immigration was considered the answer but reports like this from MAC could put an end to this hope. We welcome this decision by the Home Secretary to reject the MAC recommendation. We believe, to protect our Curry Industry and ensure we have the talent we need to keep our recipes alive and celebrated. Wherever the talent may be from should be allowed to fill the skill shortage.



## Recognising Covid Curry Heroes

During this unprecedented time of pandemic, some of our Curry House Heroes were doing magnificent jobs feeding the NHS,

Care workers and vulnerable people across the country. Their business and livelihood has been severely impacted, but this did not stop them offering helping hands to the most needy in our society in time of crisis. Curry Life Magazine decided to recognise some of those Local Covid Curry Heroes for their excellent work. Despite the unprecedented problems posed by the present pandemic, these curry houses have gone out of their way to be almost a fourth emergency service to vulnerable people. Their businesses and livelihoods have been severely impacted, but this has not stopped them offering a helping hand to the most needy in our society at a time of crisis.

## COVID-19 vaccine sparks renewed hope

The potential arrival of a vaccine renews hope that the hospitality industry could now start forecasting its recovery. The Pandemic started to bring the whole of the hospitality industry worldwide to its knees as well as affected a lot of other service industries. Everyone was waiting for the medical solution for the start of a recovery in the hospitality industry. However, we are still facing a massive recession and no doubt perhaps it would take two to three years to get back to close to 2019 levels of activity. Some experts are saying employment in the hospitality industries that have been hit hardest by the coronavirus crisis will take more than five years to recover to pre-pandemic levels. With final departure from the EU, it will probably cause even more challenges. But still we are optimistic and there is a glimmer of hope. Even against all odds, when things look bleak, thinking in terms of 'hope horizons' can help for the future.

# The chefs to remain on the Jobs Shortage List

A recent report from a government think-tank recommended that chefs be removed from the shortage occupation list. To put it simply, this would have meant that the UK no longer looks to other countries to fill job vacancies in the UK.

The report was released recently by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), which offer independent advice to the government about immigration and the issues surrounding it. This includes what occupations they deem are most valuable at any given time. This advice then allows the government to decide what skills they need to search for and informs their immigration policy.

Fortunately, the government choose not to implement the advice from MAC. Instead choosing to keep chefs on the list. In a letter from Home Office to British Takeaway Campaign (BTC) which Curry Life is a founding member the government confirmed this by saying, "The Government's careful consideration of the MAC's findings and recommendations must be set against the backdrop of the global pandemic and its continuing impact – not only in relation to overseas migrants' ability to travel to the UK, but also the very uncertain future many resident workers in the UK are unfortunately facing."

The Home Office Spokesperson went on to say, "The Government encourages employers to look to recruit resident workers wherever possible. The Kickstart scheme offers financial support to employers who create jobs for young Universal Credit claimants. This support is not available for sponsoring migrant new entrants. Employers will need to meet the full wage costs of their sponsored new entrants, as well as paying the Immigration Skills Charge."

Mitu Chowdhury, Secretary General of BCA, Bangladeshi Caterers Association representing 12,000 restaurants said:



"The Curry Industry has been under enormous strain already due to coronavirus pandemic. Having to contend with an even bigger skills shortage is the last thing it needs. I am glad that the Home Office didn't accept MAC recommendation to remove chefs from the Shortage Occupation List.

"The policy makers should understand that Restaurants that specialise in international cuisine such as curry may struggle to find chefs within the UK labour market who have the necessary expertise and this is why we should be allowed to fill the vacancy from overseas if required."



# Rishi Sunak extended furlough scheme till March 2021



The hospitality sector has had no choice but to face a crippling second lockdown, which sees all restaurants, bars and cafés forced to close for four weeks in November. Restaurants will still be able to do takeaway, delivery and collection; however, all indoor and outdoor seating must close, leading to a devastating impact on an already ailing sector.

Under 'lockdown 2.0' restrictions you must stay at home and avoid meeting people you do not live, with those who seriously flout new lockdown restrictions facing steep fines.

Schools, universities, and nurseries will however remain open, unlike the first lockdown in March.

Due to all hospitality venues forced to close, chancellor Rishi Sunak has extended the furlough scheme across the UK until the end of March. This means the government will pay up to 80% of an employee's wages, up to £2,500 a month, with the policy set to be reviewed in January.

Boris Johnson has claimed the lockdown will "expire automatically" on 2 December, however there is fear

within the industry that the lockdown will extend beyond November through to January, with a growing threat that Christmas trading will be lost. This will mean restaurants will struggle to plan for the future, with a substantial number of redundancies on the horizon and the survival of hundreds of businesses at greater risk. The sector is now facing the government's fourth change of strategy affecting hospitality within the last six weeks. Many voices in the industry argue the main issue with the government's current strategy is the lack of "exit plan", with many urging the government for clarity on Christmas - typically the most significant time of year for the hospitality sector.

The government states it has maintained a balance between protecting the NHS and the economy, resulting in over £2 trillion in debt. The past few months have been anything but easy for the hospitality sector, with countless restaurants across the country already having to close as a result of the pandemic.

Before the announcement of a second nationwide lockdown starting the 5th November, those from different households in England were banned from meeting in pubs and restaurants in Tier 2 and Tier 3 areas. In Tier 3 areas such as Liverpool, due to the higher restrictions the government paid up to 67% of a worker's wage under the Job Support Scheme, however, the government only paid 22% for those in Tier 2 – which UK Hospitality chief executive Kate Nicholls described as a "real squeezed middle" with "next to no help, maximum restrictions and no alternative but job losses."

Gary Forrest, chief executive of the High Street Group, which owns a large chain of bars, restaurants and hotels across the north-east of England, told the BBC the sector "cannot afford to have a poor December this year". Forrest said: "It's tending towards being a total disaster", with the industry "bearing the brunt of the government's restrictions."

# Taxpayers could face a £26bn due to COVID Business Loans

# £26b

UK taxpayers risk losing over £26 billion due to many businesses' inability to pay back their COVID related business loans. It is also feared that fraud may also be a factor. Although the main concern is that the businesses that stayed afloat will still struggle after COVID. Meaning they will find it difficult to pay the loans back in full. While some companies may recover from the effects of COVID-19, even if they begin a repayment plan it could take years for them to pay off the full loan. The treasury will remain out of pocket until the day the loan is paid back in full. There is also risk of it never happening. Even before the pandemic, no business was ever promised or guaranteed success. The natural ebb and flow of the UK economy means that some businesses thrive while others fail. The risks that threatened a business prior to COVID-19, such as competition, consumer demand, poor location, human error and general bad luck – are still just as prevalent. The National Audit Office first raised these concerns, pointing out that the

Treasury is unlikely to recoup its loans. In total the government have lent £43bn to over 1 million businesses - and taxpayers may need to make up the shortfall. Some businesses are often bought out by their competitors, but government debt could reduce the likelihood of this happening too. The debt each business holds could deter potential buyers, leading to more businesses closing than being merged with others. Something that will also hinder the growth of more successful companies looking to expand. They will have less options when it comes to possible buyout opportunities. Fraudulent claims have also been a problem for the treasury. While efforts were made to protect against such crimes, many have still managed to slip through. Some fraudsters pretended they had a struggling business to qualify for the bounce back loan. They registered phony companies, received the funds then vanished. Others had legitimate businesses but used the money to supplement their personal wealth instead of funnelling

the funds into their company. Meaning their business was still at risk and likely to close eventually. In cases like this, the government has little or no chance at recouping its loans. In other cases, fraudulent businesses have needed to steal the identities of others to make their scam appear legitimate. This has resulted in people having large amounts of money borrowed in their name, when really, they didn't see a penny of it. According to the BBC these crimes have been committed on an "industrial scale" and could have long term ramifications on the UK housing market. This is because some bounce back loans may have been invested in property instead of being used to support a struggling business. Instead, borrowers are abandoning their business, reporting it failed to erase the debt, then investing the funds elsewhere. Such as property or some other venture. This has already led to increased house prices in the North of England.

# UK Food industry urged to reduce calories by 2024

The UK government has urged restaurants, takeaways and ready meal providers to reduce the number of calories in their food by 20% before 2024, in an effort to tackle obesity. Clinical obesity is rising in the UK and is also leading Britons to suffer from various associated health problems such as diabetes and heart disease. Public Health England have provided a list of targets for hospitality business owners to strive for. But health groups have argued these measures don't go far enough and that the targets should be mandatory. A report commissioned by Public Health England (PHE) has revealed that by reducing sugar from fizzy drinks, the government has helped protect children from obesity. There has also been progress when it comes to reducing calories in cereal, yoghurt and ice cream. However, PHE also revealed that progress across other food groups has been slower. Others

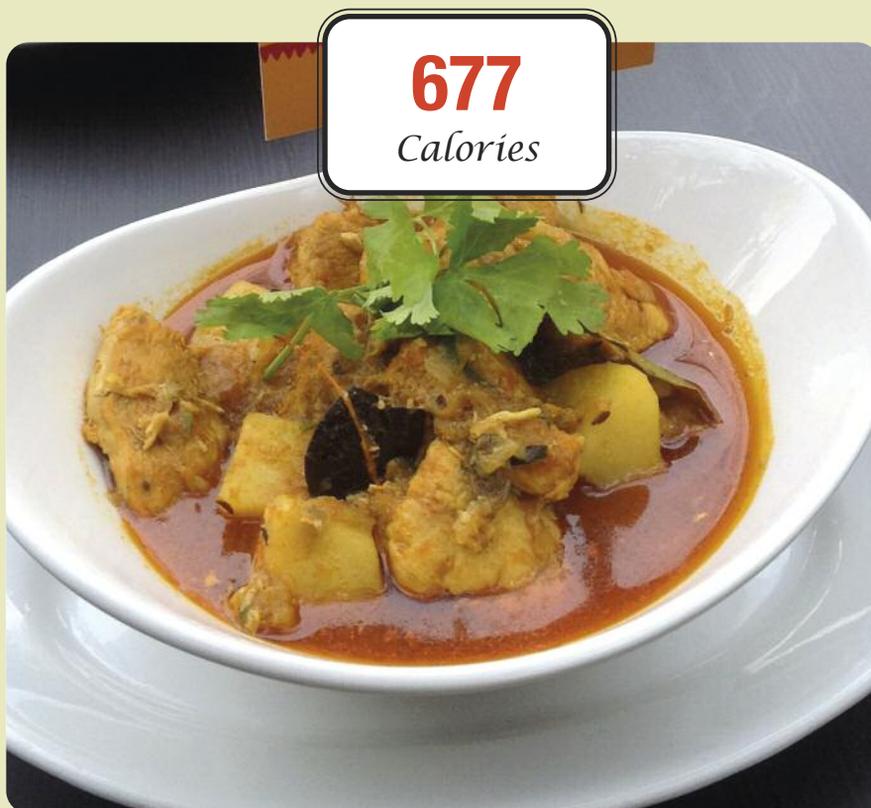
argue that by making the program voluntary, it risks it being largely ignored by some manufacturers within the food industry. Defending the government's measures, health minister Jo Churchill said, "On sugar reduction, particularly in products like breakfast cereals, yogurts and ice cream, we have achieved some much-needed progress. This will make it easier for everyone to make healthier choices, but it's clear more can be done." She went on to say, "Covid-19 has highlighted obesity and how important it is to tackle it. Our recent announcement of the obesity strategy includes world-leading measures, such as a TV watershed for advertising food and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar, and consulting on how we can introduce a ban online. If more action is needed to support individuals to lead a healthy life, we will go further to help them." Graham MacGregor, who is the

chairman of Action on Sugar, also felt like the government need to go further, saying, "Apart from the sugary drinks levy, it's abundantly clear that the Government's voluntary sugar reduction programme is simply not working, after reporting a dismal 0.1% reduction in sugar between 2018 and 2019."

He continued, "Food and drink companies that want to do the right thing are crying out for a level playing field, which can only be achieved by setting mandatory targets for calorie and sugar reduction. The soft drinks levy has shown that this approach is both best for business, and best for everyone's health, including people from more disadvantaged groups." Making the calorie reduction mandatory would help tackle obesity in the UK. It would also allow companies to indeed be on a 'level playing field', as all would need to abide by the same rules. Rather than cherry-pick the ones that suit them.

While beneficial, the move also raises questions about consumer choice when ordering food. Adults should have the right to eat whatever they choose, regardless of how healthy or unhealthy the ingredients may be. Although children may not understand the difference, so making such a rule mandatory on products intended for them makes sense.

The problem is, unless marketing campaigns specifically target children, how is anyone to say what unhealthy snacks are for any age group? All food can be consumed by all ages and enforcing laws based targeting by demographics does nothing to create consistency across the industry. Finally, the move could cause irreparable damage to restaurants and manufacturers who offer particular food types. Reducing their menus to eliminate unhealthy food options or changing recipes altogether could risk some businesses going out of business. Many actually rely on this food to exist. Some items are simply unhealthy and are designed to be an occasional treat. One where moderation is advised. The items they produce could be their main selling point. While reducing sugar and calories from these items may help tackle obesity, it could also leave many people without jobs in the long run.





# Cobra Beer 'Eat Out to Help Out' Scheme had overwhelmingly positive response



Cobra Beer Launched Their Own 'Eat Out To Help Out' Campaign Cobra have launched their own version of the 'Eat Out To Help Out' scheme in an effort to support bars, pubs and restaurants. Establishments that supply Cobra Beer will be able to offer discounts of up to 20%, 25% or even 30% to dining customers, as well as a free drink of Cobra. Since the launch of the scheme from September up until now the public response to the campaign was overwhelmingly positive and that is why it had to be extended until November 2020.

Cobra Beer is a brand within the Molson Coors Beverage Company and is one of the UK's favourite drinks to have alongside curry. Therefore, many Indian, Thai and Chinese restaurants will be involved in this campaign. The idea was conceived after the success of the government's own Eat Out To Help Out scheme, which ran throughout August.

As various other hospitality groups created their own campaigns, this inspired Cobra to do the same. The group also had a network of restaurants of whom they supply with beer, many of which would be happy to sign-up. After all, the scheme benefits everyone involved in some way.

Throughout the month of September and October Cobra Beer partnered with hundreds of restaurants across the country to provide support in the wake of COVID-19. The promotion ran every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. To qualify each customer would simply need to order a drink of Cobra, but in doing so they got a second drink for free. Of course, those under 18 would not be able to drink an alcoholic beverage. But they could still qualify for the scheme as part of a family group. The promotion offers up to a 30% discount on food, providing the customers were

dining in, and the maximum discount is £10 per head.

Lord Karan Bilimoria, who is the founder and chairman of Cobra Beer said, "We at Cobra Beer have admired and appreciated the amazing resilience and effort put in by the restaurant industry in facing the huge challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past months."

The scheme was a great success, kicking off with a well-attended industry launch event at Madhu's Restaurant in Heathrow, attended by representatives from Curry Life Magazine, BCA, BBKA and the British Kebab Awards. During the month of September, over 560 restaurants signed up to the scheme. The response encouraged Cobra to extend the scheme through October and November. Once the scheme wrapped up at the end of September it restarted in October and will run until the 15th November.

This time the scheme will run from Monday to Thursday in participating restaurants, starting at 12pm until 8pm.

In other news, Cobra Beer has launched its first virtual cookbook based on the Sony TV series 'The Chef'. The Cookbook is free to everyone and showcases recipes from all over the world from Thai to Chinese, Turkish, Indian and more. Participating chef's, who have all featured on the series, such as Rohit Ghai from Chelsea based restaurant Kutir, Karunesh Khanna from the Michelin starred Tamarind and Chad Rahman from Chaz Mumtaj share their favorite recipes and tips and tricks for executing these signature dishes.

There are also YouTube video tutorials included in the e-book, to make it an even more engaging experience and cook along.

Visit:

[www.eatoutwithcobrabeer.co.uk](http://www.eatoutwithcobrabeer.co.uk) for more details on participation.



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# Chef Oli Khan awarded MBE



The UKBCCI London Regional President Oli Khan has been honoured as part of the Queen's Birthday Honours list and awarded with an MBE. Oli, a successful celebrity chef, was given this honour for his enormous contribution to the hospitality industry, as well as his charitable works throughout the COVID-19 pandemic at home and abroad.

Oli was recognised for his crucial role in supporting the community during the lockdown earlier this year. His MBE was awarded to recognise him as a business leader who went above and beyond when it came to helping others in crisis. He supported frontline staff by providing 5,000 free meals to NHS staff, care homes and valuable people during the pandemic.

The Luton based businessman and his team hold the Guinness World Record for cooking the world's largest onion bhaji. The Guinness Book of Records logged the win on Tuesday 4th February 2020. The event took place at the East London Mosque, The London Muslim Centre in Whitechapel, East London.

He and the team from Surma Takeaway in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, created the gigantic Onion Bhaji, which weighed a heavy 175.6 kilograms. Breaking the previous world record held by Colin Burt from Bradford College winning by 73.4 kilograms.

Oli also achieved 'Best Caterer of the Year 2010' at the golden jubilee celebration of Bangladesh Caterers Association (BCA), an organisation that he used to be secretary general. He has also won the "Business Achievement Award" for being the 'Best Achiever in the Business and Community Relations' by Curry Life Business Awards 2014.

In his spare time Oli also finds time

for other charitable works. He is the founder chairman of Oli's Foundation which he established in 2002. Oli is well known in the Bangladeshi community and owns a restaurant, takeaway and property business. He has participated in the British Curry Festival in Bangladesh and India.

Commenting on about MBE, Oli Khan said: "I feel fantastic. It's one of the biggest achievements we can attain from her majesty, so it's such an honour."

Oli is still helping his community now that a second lockdown has arrived. He's also supplying free food to hungry children after being inspired by footballer Marcus Rashford's comments about the helping those in need.

He told us, "The government are doing a lot to help people during the pandemic, but it was wrong of them to not help children during the holidays. They could have done more here. These children could grow up to become part of the government one day, what lesson will they learn when they look back on this story?" After learning of the government's refusal to help, Oli felt compelled to step in and support children in his local area during the holidays. He did so by supplying them with over 2000 free meals. Something he plans on doing as long as children need food in the holidays.

## Cafe Spice Namaste announced closures



Café Spice Namaste owner Cyrus and Pervin Todiwala announced the closure of their flagship restaurant in Prescott Street,

East London. Early in the New Year 2021, the Todiwala's will be moving to different premises, not too far away from its present location to Shoreditch.

Café Spice Namaste has held a Michelin BIB Gourmand since the award was created in 1998.



# Welsh Brewed Indian Beer Launched



Roar Beer is the First Welsh Brewed Premium Indian branding the Roar Beer is born with the target to Uplift 1000 staff to work for the Curry Sector in the United Kingdom, starting from South Wales.

To official launch of training programme and the Roar Beer was supported by Mr Ana Miah the owner of the Juboraj Group in South Wales. At the launch chef Zillu Miah from Juboraj Group and chef Anand George from Purple Poppadom got together to run a training session for young chefs. Those two leading chefs from the curry industry shared their knowledge with fellow workers to motivate them to step up the ladder to move up their career in the kitchen. Roar Beer is a Proud sponsor for DEAN & ABBEY UK Ltd with a simple vision to give new life and career to young generation to be part of the Curry industry, so this dying legacy of Curry Houses could be saved.

Mr Asher Ronald Founder and Chairman of both Roar Beer and Dean and Abbey Ltd, Said: " Dean and Abbey is a small community based company based in South Wales trying to change



lives of about 1000 young people by developing their skills to attract them to Curry Industry.

The Roar Beer has been launched to support this particular good cause. So, my requests to everyone in the Curry Industry to support this initiative of skills developments of thousands of local young people and help connect them with our industry.

You can help this initiative by stocking and selling Roar Beer in your restaurants. Further information please email us on [roarbeeruk@gmail.com](mailto:roarbeeruk@gmail.com) and [deanandabbey@gmail.com](mailto:deanandabbey@gmail.com)

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## The most anticipated Curry Life Awards has been postponed until October 2021

Curry Life Media Group announced postponement of their 2020 Curry Life Awards ceremony in light of the current Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak despite all the preparations. The Curry Life Awards and the World Curry Expo will not be held this year. The two events were scheduled to take place on Sunday 15th November 2020. Both events now have been rescheduled for Sunday, 10 October 2021 at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in Central London.

Curry Life Awards authorities after consulting all stakeholders, including all sponsor partners decided to postpone this year's event and reschedule for the autumn, 2021. Syed Belal Ahmed, CEO of Curry Life Events, said: "It is with great regret that we have decided to postpone our highly-anticipated awards ceremony

world curry expo and culinary workshop. Right now our number one priority is the health and safety of our readers and potential participants to our events. We would like to encourage them to mark the new dates and start sending nominations via our awards website for next year's event.

"The people of Curry Industry have shown amazing resilience – despite the lockdown risking their own team's lives - to provide meals and food deliveries to feed NHS staff and elderly and vulnerable in society. We have not only extensively reported on their courageous stories in Curry Life, taken steps to giving recognition to a select group of those brave Local Covid Curry Heroes by without hosting any formal ceremony."

"However, with the second wave of Coronavirus looking even more deadly,

it would be unwise for us to host events like Curry Life Awards & World Curry Expo, which potentially could put people's lives in danger. We have already notified our main sponsors Just Eat, Cobra Beer, Unisoft Solutions and Travel Links Worldwide, who we'd like to thank for their understanding and continued support."

Syed Nahas Pasha, Editor in Chief of Curry Life Media Group, said: "The hospitality industry is going through a difficult time Worldwide. Here in the UK, despite hundreds of obstacles this year due to the coronavirus, the main publications of Curry Life Media Group have not stopped."

"We have made arrangements to deliver our regular publications Curry Life and Oriental Food Life with important information to our readers even at this difficult time.

"Not only that, considering our huge Bengali readership, we have published another new magazine in Bengali called "Curry Chef" during this lockdown. In addition to Curry Life and other publications, Curry Chef Magazine will also be our regular bi-monthly publication for Curry Industry."

## Michelin To Hold A 'Digital Only' Ceremony Next Year

The annual Michelin Star Revelation Ceremony for 2021 has been pushed back to the 25th January 2021. It was originally supposed to be held in October 2020, ready for the new year, but was cancelled due to COVID-19 fears. Pending a new date which is now confirmed.

While coronavirus is still likely to be a problem come January too, Michelin will hold a 'digital only' ceremony instead. This way the ceremony can still be held, but without risking further spread of the virus. We'll look forward to seeing what restaurants win a much-coveted Michelin Star come January 2021.





# THE LEADERS IN ASIAN DINING BEVERAGES



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# Eat Out to Help Out: First arrests made over alleged scheme fraud



Three arrests linked to the government's Eat Out to Help Out scheme have been made, marking the first enforcements tackling fraud resulting from the government's Coronavirus business support

In an effort to boost the hospitality sector after several months of lockdown, the successful government scheme offered a 50% discount of up to £10 per person throughout August. Heavily discounted meals were valid

predicted to be the first of many: National Audit Office (NAO) warned that taxpayers could stand to lose as much as £26bn from fraud, organised crime or default. Rachael Herbert, from the NCA, said: "The NCA and others will pursue those serious and organised criminals who seek to exploit the help provided to businesses during a national crisis." On the 2nd November, HMRC launched a disclosure facility where businesses that were not eligible for Eat Out to Help Out, or have been overpaid, can make a repayment. Deputy director of the fraud investigation service at HMRC Kath Doyle said: "The vast majority of businesses will have used Eat Out to Help Out responsibly, but we will not hesitate to act where we suspect abuse of the scheme."



measures. The men, aged 37, 43 and 48, have all been alleged of abusing Eat Out to Help Out, chancellor Rishi Sunak's scheme which encouraged the public to visit restaurants during August. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) officers arrested the men in London on suspicion of cheating the public revenue and fraud by false representation. They have all been questioned and released under investigation.

on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; about 84,700 restaurants signed up for the scheme, and diners claimed 100 million meals across the UK.

However, there are now several serious allegations being made of the scheme relating to fraud, as well as concerns that it contributed to the sharp rise in Coronavirus infections, which has led to a second national lockdown.

Unfortunately, these arrests are

"This is taxpayers' money and any claim that proves to be fraudulent limits our ability to support people and deprives public services of essential funding."

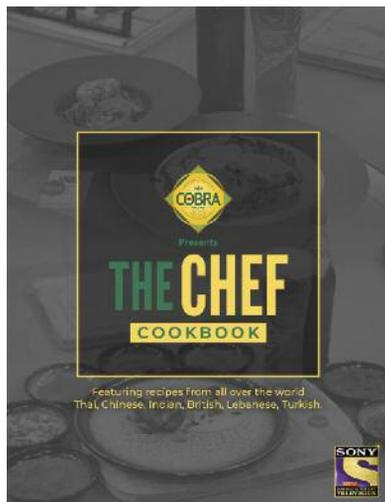
The three arrests come after the Daily Mail investigation in October, which claimed Papa John's pizza chain took part in the scheme when they were collection and delivery-only during the height of the pandemic. HMRC however has declined to confirm or deny whether the arrests relate to the franchise.

## Restaurant for Sale in Sylhet, Bangladesh

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# Cobra Beer Launches Virtual Cookbook

Following the success of the Sony TV series The Chef, Cobra Beer has launched its first ever virtual cookbook,



with recipes from twenty-five industry renowned chefs, featuring a range of cuisines, including Indian, Thai, Chinese, Lebanese, Turkish and British. The Chef Cookbook showcases the signature work of famous Chefs such as the

Michelin starred chef Atul Kochhar, who shares his recipe for Grilled Cauliflower Korma, packed with aromatic spices; Vivek Singh, a Master of Indian fine dining, who shares his recipe for Roast Rump and Grilled Aubergine; the Turkish delights of Maz Demir, with his taste bud-tongling Ocean Kebab, and the Michelin starred Dominic Chapman's rich and flavoursome Braised Ox Cheeks recipe.

The Chefs featured in the cookery book include Rohit Ghai (Kutir), Jude Sangsida (Foley's), Anirudh Arora (Hankies), Karunesh Khanna (Tamarind), Atul Kochhar (Sindhu), Rajinder Pandey (Mint Leaf), Dominic Chapman (The Beehive), Veysei Yavuz (Gokyuzu), Gavin Man (Royal China), Batuhan Kaya (Kibele), Poonam Ball (Madhu's), Vivek Singh (The Cinnamon Group), Minal Patel (Prashad), Sameer Taneja (Benares), Maz Demir (Skewd Kitchen), Parminder Singh (Roti Chai), Nikhil Mahale (Farzi Café), Jihad El Eid (Abd El Wahab), Peter Joseph (Kahani), Chad Rahman (Chez Mumtaj), Surjan 'Jolly' Singh (Chourangi), Manoj Vasaikar (Indian Zing), Shabir Hussain (Akbars), Surender Mohan (Jamavar), and Cyrus Todiwala (Café Spice).

The Cookbook is being launched with an online event today, hosted by Cobra Beer and attended by The Chefs from the cookbook, representatives from Sony TV, as well as attendees from the industry and press. Released during the second UK lockdown, when consumers are unable to dine out at their favourite restaurants.

The Chef Cookbook is perfect for those spending more time at home and want to try their hand at recreating dishes from some of the industry's most recognised chefs and restaurants.

The Chef Cookbook is free for all to download and use and includes links to YouTube tutorials so consumers can follow along at home. You can explore the cookbook here: <https://www.setindia.com/the-chef-ebook/>

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# Basmati Rice Dispute Between Pakistan and India



Wherever you go in the world where curry is served, rice tends to follow. The two foods go together perfectly and have done for centuries. But now a dispute between India and Pakistan has arisen, with Basmati rice at its centre.

India enjoys a fruitful trade deal with the nations that comprise the European Union. They have applied to the organisation's executive Parliament for Basmati rice to be recognised by the EU as a food that's grown exclusively in regions of the Indian subcontinent.

As valued trading partners, the EU allows India and Pakistani to trade Basmati rice with them without the need for tariffs and additional charges. Something that benefits both nations and the EU themselves.

It also means that, as far as the EU is concerned, only rice from either of these two countries can ever be considered authentic Basmati rice. It is providing both India and Pakistan preferential treatment and a degree of exclusivity. This makes rice from both nations highly sought after and more valuable than rice from elsewhere. However, India has now applied to the EU for full recognition of Basmati rice. They are arguing that two-thirds of the rice imported into Europe originates in India, not Pakistan. They believe that the deal between themselves and the EU should reflect this, meaning Pakistan risk being cut out of a lucrative trade agreement which they've enjoyed with the EU since 2006. While India's argument certainly carries some merit, and that it's understandable that the country would want the best possible deal with the EU, it's natural for Pakistan to object. While they may not export as much rice as India, they still supply a third of Europe's rice.

Pakistan will not want to pay additional tariffs on rice trade when they've not needed to for fourteen years. Therefore, the Pakistani government has "vehemently" opposes the application by India to the EU.

India's application to the EU now classifies rice by the following description, "The special characteristic of basmati is grown and produced in all districts of the state of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhnad, as well as in specific districts of western Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir."

Pakistan has countered that should the EU agree to these new terms, this would be a "hammer blow to Pakistani exporters" and risks damaging their business irreparably. Frictionless, tariff-free trading is one of the main benefits of EU trade. Something that, if lost, can cause significant financial harm to a country's trading prospects.



This is why so many are opposed to the UK leaving the EU without a deal. Fresh tariffs could be applied to most items, crippling the cost of trade for those outside the EU marketplace. Pakistan has launched a formal objection to the EU to prevent losing exclusivity and trading perks that come with Basmati rice. They will also raise the fact that the volume of rice that Pakistan supplies the EU has nearly tripled in the past few years. So, despite it still being less than India's supply, it's still of vital importance to both parties' economy. Commenting on the dispute, an EU spokesperson said, "The commission has published the application for registration of the name 'basmati' from India as a proposed protected geographical indication. This



publication gives the opportunity for stakeholders to lodge oppositions for a three-month period.

"This publication does not imply the registration of 'basmati' but is a step in the standard geographical indication registration procedure. The final decision on registration is only taken after the opposition phase has been completed. This allows the rights of all parties to be respected in the

registration process.

"If an opposition is received from any party, the commission will ensure it is examined in line with standing procedures, ensuring the rights of all parties are scrupulously respected."

The dispute is ongoing.

# Curry Houses at risk in latest Government crackdown on junk food



Government ministers have unveiled plans to ban TV ads on unhealthy food before the 9pm watershed, putting thousands of UK curry houses and takeaways at risk.

The government's latest crackdown on junk food in the form of a new advertising ban is alarming news for business owners, who fear the move will be disastrous for sales on top of significant losses suffered during the pandemic.



Andrew Crooks of the BTC

Ministers are aiming to outlaw adverts for high fat, sugar and salt products. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Andrew Crooks, of the British Takeaway Campaign, warned the ban would "punitively punish" thousands of smaller businesses, all of whom are already reeling from the disastrous effects of the pandemic.

The British Takeaway Campaign represents Bangladesh Caterers Association (BCA), Curry Life Magazine and other hospitality industry organisations.

Mr Crooks claimed it could be the death knell for thousands of small

businesses and urged the government to look at the work the takeaway industry has already made by responding to changing consumer appetites and providing a greater range of healthy takeaway options. He said: "65% of takeaway restaurants in the UK now offer low fat options while 59% offer low salt options. As that demand is reinforced by government policy, it is creating a virtuous circle, with takeaway owners embracing the commercial opportunity of offering healthier food."

There are around 8,500 curry houses in the UK, and most are privately run, stoking fear among business owners that they will be the worst hit by the ban.

The BTC is therefore urging for independent eateries, including curry houses, with fewer than five outlets to be exempt. In the letter, takeaway bosses including Mr Crooks said: "These local businesses do not have multi-million-pound TV marketing campaigns. For them, social media is their shop window, especially when we're in and out of lockdown.

"Removing their ability to advertise robs them of a crucial way to reach customers, when nobody knows what the future holds and takeaways continue to have a vital role in keeping the nation fed."

The takeaway industry has faced an unprecedented and increasingly challenging year, with owners and their employees playing a vital role in keeping the nation fed during months of lockdown and the rest of the year.

In the letter, takeaway bosses said: "Many more have done their bit, and more, to support thousands of frontline workers, often out of their own pocket. Takeaways, along with thousands of pubs, cafes and

restaurants, have adapted overnight to keep feeding their communities, be it through redesigning their shops to be COVID secure, establishing measures to keep staff safe or offering delivery services for the very first time."

The British Takeaway Campaign urged the government to consider the impact of proposed measures weighed against the "currently unproven" benefits. It argued the exemption of advertising restrictions on small eateries is a balanced way of supporting the government's healthier eating ambitions, without the burdens to small business owners who are struggling to survive within an ailing sector and precarious economic environment.





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# The end of traditional restaurant service?



**By Helen Salter**

For many restaurant-goers, good service is one of — if not the — main draw for going out to eat. Old-school, interactive experiences between waiter and customer are just one way a restaurant can bolster its reputation, with restaurateurs taking pride in maintaining a service which can lead to regional and national recognition. However, in the face of the pandemic, the restaurant industry has had no choice but to implement many operational changes, altering the general state of dining, which we know and love.

One of the most prominent changes restaurants have seen this year is the shift from face-to-face service to QR codes and app ordering systems. Restaurant technology of this sort has been around for many years — the most obvious partaker being pub

juggernaut Wetherspoons — though it's been this year which has understandably seen a huge uptake in mobile ordering and paying systems: Wi5, a web-based mobile order & pay solution for hospitality, reported a 500% increase in sign-ups, with a 2000% per cent increase in customer-generated revenue.

Nevertheless, with the influx of QR codes and app ordering systems — not to mention safety measures such as mandatory face masks and visors for staff — the very ground of what constitutes restaurant service starts to shake. So, how are restaurateurs and diners responding to this shift in dining - does the current emphasis on tech offer a multitude of benefits, or, does it erode relationships between staff and customer, indicating a potentially devastating impact on a sector already struggling to stay afloat?

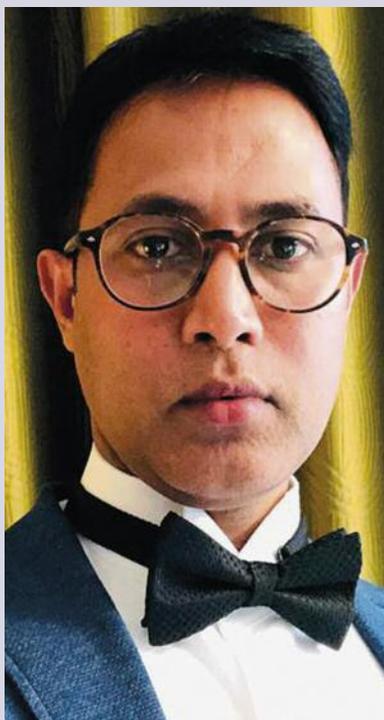
## A positive shift for restaurants

“It’s a positive shift as long as it allows restaurants who want to stay open to stay open and encourages customers who want to eat out to eat out, and do it safely,” says London-based food and drink writer Lucas Oakeley. Indeed, implementing mobile technology can offer a business a number of advantages, such as monitoring customer demand, track and trace functionality, increase in safety and hygiene and giving the customer greater control. In a research study of 1000 diners by digital ordering platform Ordamo, technology solutions such as contactless payment came third in customer’s list of priorities, with 67% of respondents feeling it was safer to order from their phone rather than restaurant staff.

But do these safety advantages outweigh the social cost of losing face-to-face interaction? Mr Mashukur Rahman, who runs Indian restaurant Jhaal in Colchester, still provides a service to his elderly customers: “We provide them with the takeaway menu, because some have said they don’t own a smartphone. I like talking to customers face-to-face - I’m a local guy and 95% of our customers are regular. So, we like having a chat with them. It is a bit different now – people are trying to eat and go home rather than interrupting, so it has changed.”

“We do however have QR codes for the younger generation – it’s so easy for them to scan and take an order,” says Mashukur. “But if you go to my different level of customer - who will come here with their wife, perhaps 50 years old, will want to talk to the owners face-to-face - and this is where the problem is. So, we’re accommodating to both.”

While the central point of newly implemented tech is to help staff avoid close contact with customers — as well as preventing crowds and physical queues from gathering — it’s apparent there is resistance to its role, not only from staff but from diners, too. “I think I’m always going to



*Mashukur Rahman*

prefer looking at physical menus and interacting with a real person rather than a phone screen because that’s part of the appeal of going to a restaurant for me,” says Lucas. “It’s being somewhere I can escape from the many, many screens in my life.” For lots of restaurant-goers, entering an establishment is a phone-free haven, a momentary slice of respite where phones are off the table and real-life conversations flourish. Those hoping for a tech-free evening are easily disgruntled, then, by the barriers presented with yet another app download, (provided they own a smartphone), potentially resulting in a dampened dining experience.

### “Unpractical and too complicated to be used effectively”

“Face-to-face service is crucial for judging guest experience and making all visitors feel welcome - there are so many small details that are only conveyed by direct interaction between waiter and guest,” says the manager of one Soho restaurant, where waiters continue to serve customers. “It allows waiters to set the pace of an evening, and guides

diners through any questions they might have. It’s a crucial feature of restaurant service: for the waiting staff to be present, and helpful, but not over-bearing,” the manager says. “On the whole, the influx of technology in restaurants is a positive change, however in some cases it can become unpractical and too complicated to be used effectively. It’s also increasingly important for all team members to be confident with new tech and systems, which can alienate some workers,” the manager says. “I think the uptake in technology involved in hospitality venues will certainly change what we consider ‘traditional’ restaurant service but can never replace it. The importance of waiters in restaurant settings won’t be overlooked.” It may be argued, crucially, that there is a time and place for a tech-driven dining experience: “If I’m looking for a quick lunch then I’m totally OK with the QR codes and apps - McDonald’s had already got that sort of ordering nailed pre-Covid and there are definitely benefits to it,” says Lucas. “Plus, if staff aren’t comfortable coming to tables and taking orders, then I’d rather they’re not forced to do that just for my sake!”

## Data protection and breaches

Though many tech solutions such as Wi5 require no app downloads or registration, allowing a more frictionless experience, they do present numerous data protection challenges. Before re-opening on July 4th, the government asked all restaurants to collect personal data to assist in track and trace, allowing businesses to store potentially sensitive data. This means commercial exploitation, state databases and data breaches are all at play, posing greater privacy risks for customers.

Ultimately, when it comes to health and safety, reducing physical contact in the casual dining arena remains key to staying in line with government guidelines. Diner reassurance at a time when anxiety levels are high is

paramount, not to mention the economic challenges many of us face in tandem. Most customer-facing technology — digital menus, contact-free orders and payment solutions — are specifically designed to shorten the time it takes for customers to receive and pay for the bill. Indeed, reducing time spent indoors is preferable in this climate and may, in turn, enhance customer confidence; Prask Sutton, chief executive and founder of Wi5, claims there's evidence showing businesses could save around 17 minutes per order.

what it is with your standard credit card provider. If you add these costs to the stress of operating at reduced capacity, and it's clear to see the strain restaurants are under.

## What is the future of restaurant service?

First-class service lies in the spirit of hospitality, and for many shapes not only a restaurant's reputation but also the reason why so many want to work in the industry. So, what does the future look like for the sector? "This is the

that, however when I go to a restaurant, I want to see the menu, but it's not going to be there anymore." Though technology offers a safer, cleaner alternative to sharing menus and social interaction, the foundations of the restaurant experience go under threat. Will this new-found appetite for mobile tech last longer than the pandemic, and is the digital shift a sustainable one? "I hate to be a pessimist but whether or not it's a viable long-term solution depends on what restaurants are still left after all 'this' is over," says Lucas. "I'd be lying



This smartphone-driven environment fails to consider, however, how unpredictable phones act when we need them most, owing to a shaky Internet connection, low storage and a low battery on the brink. "I've had a few issues; I don't have data on my phone, so I rely on Wi-Fi whenever I'm out and about. Frantically attempting to connect to the Internet while scanning a QR code as a line of disgruntled people forms behind you can be a bit of a pain sometimes," says Lucas. "But that discomfort is only momentary, and I wouldn't say it detracts from the overall experience."

Naturally, business owners ought to be eager to fully embrace technology should it bolster a beleaguered sector; any implementable measures which increase sales at a time when profit margin are slim and maintenance costs are rising are welcome. But how easy are they to implement, and is it cost-effective? Reports claim tech can cost up to £1000 to set up, with the cost of processing payments more than double

way we of doing business now. I believe it's the new trend, we've said goodbyes to menus," says Mashukur. "My future plan is every table will have an iPad, and from that you can order your food and pay as well. The only thing we'll provide is the food and that's how it's going to be.

"I'm happy as an owner, because some of the staff, not matter how good they are, they make mistakes. The kids are different – they're here to eat their food and go – they're not interested in hearing your life stories, so for them it's the way forward. It's a generational argument and it's going to go that way I think."

"In business, if you want to go forward you have to keep up with the trends, otherwise you'll be out of the market," says Mashukur.

"I like talking to my elderly customers, they know me by name, and I know them by name, most of them don't need the menu because I know the order, but the younger generation, they love using tech. I use a smartphone I don't deny

if I said the prospect of a world filled with restaurants that resemble McDonald's and Wetherspoons wasn't utterly depressing."

With countless independents unable to introduce all of these digital measures, as well as the hundreds of owners smacked with further restrictions and the reality of a second national lockdown, the already ailing sector faces a perilous winter ahead - with jobs hanging in the balance.

Whether the future of restaurants resembles a technology-driven one, free of the old-school service between staff and customer, is not entirely up to restaurant-goers and owners, says Lucas: "I worry that by making these restrictions necessary, we'll be phasing out a great deal of businesses and forcing them out of a dining landscape that they're integral to. The government needs to work harder to protect those people and their businesses. Because restaurants might well survive but I'm not sure if they'll be the sort of restaurants I'll actually want to go to."



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# Life during lockdown for Indian restaurants



For Indian restaurateurs up and down the country, the news that their business could finally re-open after first lockdown ended on July 4th July. It was welcomed with open hands. After months of boarded-up doors, empty kitchens and mounting economic struggle, those in the hospitality industry would finally be able to jump back into doing what they love best.

But what is this new reality really like for restaurants? After safely re-opening, did many find that they were faced with demanding customers, a shortage in tips and technological nightmares? Was the challenge in implementing the government's Covid-secure measures not worth the attempt at re-opening?

Now, we have the new national lockdown was declared and came into effect from Thursday, 5 November 2020.

For Abdul Milad, owner of Indian Moments, the past few months have been "completely upside down" for business: "It's a complete disaster for the curry industry. We just have to rely on takeaways and delivery business to

survive, despite investing a lot to make our place Covid safe. Obviously, it's not like before - business has completely calmed down. We are told to keep ourselves safe, but I don't know, we are thinking about it all the time - what's going to happen next, are we going to be ok - so yes, it's really stressful at the moment."

The whole of August included a government-funded initiative, Eat Out to Help Out, which saw slashed bills in half for all restaurants, bars and cafes involved in the scheme. Abdul claims the scheme was "good for us, we did really well, even though the weekends were very quiet", though he admits, however, that it hasn't always been plain sailing for trade: "When we started it was bad, then August was very good, but after the scheme expired it became very quiet. We are still running offers on our side, for September we were doing £10 pp discount every Sunday-Tuesday, and because of the curfew we are opening earlier, so at lunch we offer 50% off until 6pm, and then from 6pm onwards it's 30% off."

Discounts have certainly helped maintain bookings, but how much longer can restaurants slash prices to appease anxious customers? Abdul admits he isn't too sure: "It's helped business, and it's been busy. But the problem is that we don't know. We are hearing there's going to be another lockdown, so it's not like before. It's not like last year. We have a long way to go until we achieve what we were doing this time last year." Implementing the government's Covid-19 safety measures has undoubtedly made it harder for restaurants to run as smoothly as before, says Abdul: "maintaining the safety measures in the beginning was hard, but now we are used to it. We know how to keep ourselves safe and take all the precautions: wearing masks, gloves, hand sanitising, washing hands, sanitising everything top to bottom before we open. The problem is when we are serving food to customers at tables, we are not able to serve at a 1-metre distance from them, we are almost neck to neck. That's what scares us. Customers are sitting 1-metre away from each other,

but we are not. It's tough. But we are complying with the measures and every day we are looking into how we can improve and make it easier for us and the customers."

With economic uncertainty continuing to ripple through each stage of the pandemic, restaurants are also witnessing a shortage of customer tips. Shahid Rahman, the owner of The Rajdoot in London, has personally witnessed a shortfall: "So many have lost their jobs or are on furlough, they face uncertain futures, so of course they're going to be stingier with money," says Shahid. With so many changes necessary for restaurants to operate, Abdul Milad has witnessed a range in customer's compliance with the measures: "When the customer comes in, we ask them to sanitize and scan the NHS QR code. Some customers do, and some don't. Everyone sanitises that's for sure – some even go to the toilet directly and wash their hands properly before they sit down – but you can't get everybody to do the same, some don't care."

Abdul also mentions how the introduction of measures have arrived with a hike in prices:

*"Covid-19 has put the expense up high for us: QR codes, hand sanitising, gloves, masks - there's a lot of things to purchase and we're spending a good amount each month on them. It's definitely affected our profit margins and as a result we are suffering from not doing the same business as we used to do."*

The safety and confidence of staff are paramount to running a sustainable business, with Abdul admitting the past few months have seen a rise and fall in staff's confidence: "At the beginning of lockdown, we closed

completely for four weeks because my staff were very scared and so was I. After that, some of my staff felt more confident, so we opened for takeaway. Over the summer, the fear was still there but the rate was down, but now, because it's increasing again and it sounds scary in the news, my staffs are getting scared to come to work. They are more worried now than they were in the beginning; they don't know the future or whether they should continue to work. The way it's going now, the Coronavirus is going to create a huge amount of problems with staff and running the restaurant, because if you don't have staff, how are you going to run it? Furlough is stopping from next month, and if staff stay home, can you continue to pay their salary, or give them redundancy?"

This uncertainty has unfortunately already led to Abdul letting staff go: "I let two people go in May. I couldn't keep them; the amount of furlough pay was not enough so they moved on. My fear is the furlough will stop and if Coronavirus spreads the way it's spreading now - in the wrong direction - staff will want to stay home, to keep themselves and their

ahead for the curry industry."

Aside from the financial problems that the industry faces, emotions are running high for those attempting to keep businesses afloat: "People are confused and scared, everyone is, but I need to go to work. The fear is there, I'm scared every day when I go to work. It's an invisible enemy and we don't know who is carrying it – those who come to eat at the restaurant may have it. It's a difficult situation," says Abdul.

The latest attempt from the



Shahid Rahman

Government to curb the second spike was the blanket 10pm curfew for all bars and restaurants, which has left the hospitality industry with even



Abdul Milad owner of the Indian Moment said "people are confused and scared".

families safe, which is very respectable and I respect that, but then again how am I going to run my business? Where am I going to have to find new staff? It's a challenging time

more logistical struggles, says Shahid: "I personally think banning household mixing would have been a much better idea than the curfew." Abdul is similarly disheartened by the

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curfew: "I was obviously very sad, and I don't know how the 10pm closing will help fight Covid-19. Everyone is coming between 7-8pm and the kitchen is backed up. I definitely think it should stay for bars, pubs and clubs because young people go late at night and don't maintain social distancing, but I don't think the curfew for restaurants make any sense. I think the government are failing policy in this country. They are disorganised. They had enough time in the summer and they kept talking about the second wave in the autumn. The government are failing to do all of this and they are confused and confusing the public."

Abdul acknowledges that his mental health has been seriously affected by what's happened in the past six months: "I'm very concerned about my health, as well as my staff and my family's. I go to work every day - I need to because it's my bread and butter - but I'm worried and scared and it's scary for me and my staff."

With restaurants having no choice but to revert to delivery should a local or national lockdown occur, the upcoming weeks and months have never looked more tentative. "It's very hard to tell, but something I always tell my family, and I tell my staff, is that we have a very challenging time coming ahead," says Abdul. "I think coronavirus will remain after winter, and business-wise as a whole, not only curry industry but everyone will be affected, people will lose jobs, and it'll have a big impact on every single business in the country. People will only survive who have the manpower and a very high reputation and people who run family businesses, they will be able to survive. Those who rely on employees are going to be tough for them. It's going to be a challenge and we will definitely suffer. I just wish everyone all the best and wish everyone to be safe."

As we collectively face uncertain futures, with the prospect of a difficult winter to come, restaurants are undoubtedly nervous about what lies ahead, with Shahid claiming winter will be "the hardest month yet" with fragile business conditions. ■

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# THEY'RE STILL SIZZLIN' AT SIZZLE & SPICE

The new normal calls for new strategies.

We spoke to Sizzle & Spice in Glasgow, to see how their business has adapted over the last few months, and how they're facing towards the future. Read on for some tasty inspiration.

## How has your business adapted to the current environment?

We put staff needs first. If they were concerned about safety they didn't need to come in. Then we looked to helping the community.

## How were you able to help your community during this time?

We avoided putting our prices up despite the soaring price of supplies. Then gave a 10% discount to the local police station and to NHS staff through Super Hero Sunday on Just Eat. We also provided support in Pakistan, distributing food to poor communities.

### **Did you stay open during lockdown?**

Yes. Right from the start it was clear we were in the front line. So we stayed open to support people through the uncertainty.

### **Have you picked up any habits you want to keep using in the future?**

We maintained consistency throughout, as we always want people to know what they're getting from us.

### **What tips do you have for other restaurants?**

Keep looking after your community, especially through charities - food or anything - it all counts. Here in Glasgow, people come in asking for food having not eaten for a few days; no judgement, we provide it.

### **How do you make the most of your brand?**

Brand is everything! We worked with Just Eat from the beginning to maintain customer reach and smooth out the operational side of things.

### **How do you make the most of your relationship with Just Eat?**

Working with our Account Manager, we've realised Just Eat genuinely want us to succeed. With the support of data to identify customer trends, we've made improvements that we wouldn't have recognised without their input.

### **What key changes did you make to become a Local Legend?**

We've found it's all about delivering consistently good customer service and maintaining food quality. So those are what we focus on, every single day.

### **What's on your mind for the next 12 months?**

Innovation is crucial - but there's a fine balance needed to keep the menu simple and consistent while introducing new items to keep customers interested.

### **What tech are you using?**

We keep it simple, Just Eat is our only technology.

### **Final thoughts? The floor is yours!**

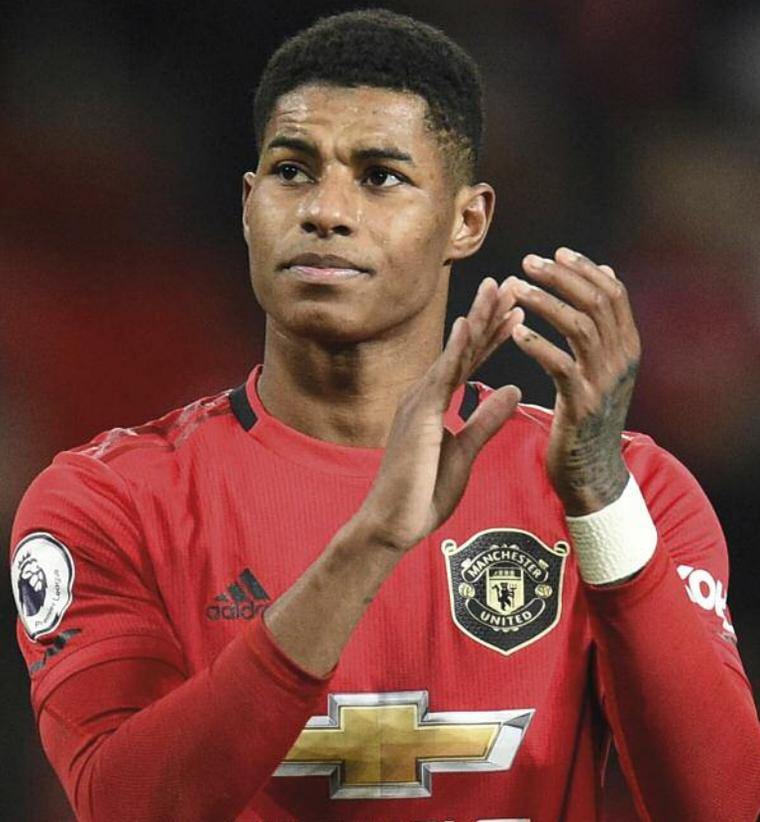
Keep looking after your community and support those abroad who aren't as fortunate as we in the UK. Be consistent in your business too - customers need to know what to expect before the food arrives.

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[partner.just-eat.co.uk/blog/covid-19](https://partner.just-eat.co.uk/blog/covid-19)



# Marcus Rashford Welcomes the government U-Turn on free school meals



The UK government has finally agreed to help support hungry children over the school holidays after growing public pressure, including a petition started by footballer Marcus Rashford. His petition itself has reached over one million signatures and had unprecedented response from restaurants across the country that has shown their determination for not letting children not go hungry. This move represents just the latest of several government U-turns during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the summer of 2020, Marcus Rashford encouraged the government to reconsider their stance on providing meals to children over the holidays, supplying them with the same amount of food they'd provide during term time.

Marcus Rashford has described being overwhelmed with pride as ministers announced a £170m winter grant scheme aimed at helping low-income families struggling as a result of Covid 19.

A winter grant scheme, to be run by councils, will provide support with

food and bills, and a holiday food and activities programme is to be expanded. Rashford said it would improve the lives of almost 1.7 million children.

Before this latest U-turn, the government's position was that it's the parents' role to feed children during the holidays and that Universal Credit should be enough to do this. However, not all parents will or can commit to doing this, meaning the priority should be making sure children are fed – not arguing about who's responsibility it is.

Mr Rashford argued that children who are entitled to free school meals do not have the same safety net during the holidays and are at risk of going

hungry. After learning of the government's initial refusal to provide this support, many restaurants stepped in to support their local communities, providing free meals to hungry children in need.

Restaurant owner Oliul Khan, of the



Oliul Khan with the shopping for school children

Magna Tandoori, posted to social media to advise families that he would be providing free lunches to all children at his local Berwick Community Trust foodbank. Oliul also



Ruhel Hoque

stressed that all children would be fed, regardless if they claim free school meals or not.

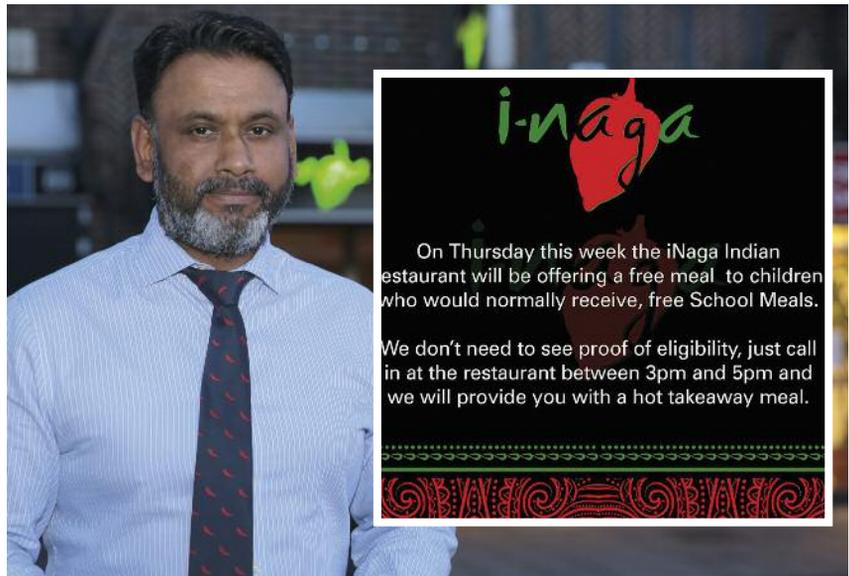
Oliul told Curry Life Magazine, “We also helped during the first lockdown, but after hearing Marcus Rashford, we felt this was the right thing to do. We can make food in bulk; this allows us to make a lot of it and feed a lot of people.” He went on to say, “This is the wrong time for the government to take the approach they did. They said no for a reason, but they miscalculated. Children are the future; that’s all that matters.”

Ruhel Hoque of the Indian Ocean in

sides, but there are simply no sides to take when it comes to children going hungry. They need to be fed. Rashford understands this, and he understands the difference between right and wrong.”

difficult time.

“Helping is the right thing to do. It makes me feel good to know I have contributed and done what I can. I want people to know; we’ll help, no questions asked. If you need food,



Abdul Hay

Ruhel went on to say, “The MPs get their meals subsidised. We don’t think their need is greater than vulnerable children. Is helping the future of our country really too much to ask? Is that going to push us to the brink? My team and I had to help.”

Abu Mojid, the Chandini Restaurant owner in High Wych, Sawbridgeworth

explained how fatherhood and COVID-19 has made him more sensitive to the suffering of young people. “I have my own little one, and since becoming a dad, I feel it more acutely. Kids are born into poverty; it’s not a choice or a failure on their part. They have no control over their circumstances.”

Abu has since provided food to hungry people in his area and plans to keep doing it as long as he needs to. He’s also using social media to spread the word to ensure nobody goes hungry during this

we’ll give it to you. We’re not going to verify who people are or anything like that.” Abu plans to offer free food to children every time schools break up for the holidays for the foreseeable future.

Business owner Abdul Hay was too busy feeding hungry children to speak to us, but we’d also like to bring his fantastic efforts to our reader’s attention. His restaurant, the iNaga in West Wickham, has been giving free meals to children who may be going without during the holidays. He’s been allowing people to turn up between 3 and 5 pm and claim a free hot meal by takeaway, in response to Marcus Rashford’s campaign.

Syed Belal Ahmed, Editor of Curry Life Media Group, said: “we would like to commend all the restaurants and takeaways that stepped in to feed the needy, not just as a result of the Marcus Rashford campaign but also throughout this entire pandemic by offering free meals to NHS staffs, elderly and vulnerable.

“We believe there should be no neutrality or argument when it comes to feeding hungry children. We also welcome the government’s decision to do more now.”



Abu Mojid

Cambridge also agreed with Marcus Rashford and stepped up to feed hungry children in his community. He told us, “We all have a duty of care. I rarely get involved in politics or take



# সিজল এ্যাণ্ড স্পাইসে তারা এখনও সিজল করছে

নতুন নিয়ম কানুন এর জন্য নতুন কৌশলের প্রয়োজন রয়েছে।

আমরা গ্লাসগোর সিজল এ্যাণ্ড স্পাইসের সাথে কথা বলেছি গত কয়েক মাস যাবত তারা ব্যবসাকে কিভাবে খাপ খাইয়েছে এবং কিভাবে ভবিষ্যতের মুখোমুখি হচ্ছে। কিছু অনুপ্রেরণামূলক মজার বিষয় পড়ুন।

বর্তমান পরিবেশে আপনার ব্যবসাকে কিভাবে খাপ খাইয়েছেন?

আমরা প্রথমেই স্টাফের চাহিদাকে প্রাধান্য দিয়েছি। তারা নিরাপত্তা নিয়ে উদ্ভিন্ন থাকলে তাদের কাজে আসতে হয়নি। তারপর আমরা কমিউনিটিকে সাহায্যের দিকে নজর দিয়েছি।

এই সময়কালে আপনারা কিভাবে কমিউনিটিকে সাহায্য করতে পেরেছেন?

জিনিসপত্রের চড়া দাম থাকা সত্ত্বেও আমরা আমাদের দাম বাড়ানো এড়িয়ে চলেছি। এরপরে আমরা স্থানীয় পুলিশ স্টেশন, এনএইচএস স্টাফদের জাস্ট ইট এর সুপার হিরো সানডেতে ১০% পারসেন্ট ডিসকাউন্ট দিয়েছি। আমরা পাকিস্তানে দরিদ্র কমিউনিটিতে খাবার বিতরণের মাধ্যমে সাহায্য করেছি।

আপনার কি লকডাউনের সময় খোলা ছিলেন?

হ্যাঁ শুরু থেকেই আমরা ফ্রন্ট লাইনে থাকার বিষয়টি পরিস্কার ছিল। তাই এই অনিশ্চয়তার সময়ে জনসাধারণদের সহায়তার জন্য আমরা ব্যবসা খোলা রেখেছি।

আপনার এমন কোন অভ্যাস হয়েছে কি যা আপনি ভবিষ্যতেও চালু রাখবেন?

আমরা সব সময়েই ধারাবাহিকতা বজায় রেখেছি কারণ আমরা চাই যে জনসাধারণ আমাদের কাছ থেকে কি পাচ্ছে তা জানুক।

অন্যান্য রেস্টুরেন্ট এর জন্য আপনাদের উপদেশ কি?

আপনার কমিউনিটির দেখাশোনা করুন বিশেষ করে দানের মাধ্যমে তা খাবার হোক বা অন্য কিছু হোক - সবকিছুই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। গ্লাসগোতে এমনও মানুষ এসে খাবার চেয়েছেন তারা কয়েকদিন কিছু খাননি; কোন বাছ বিচার না করে আমরা তাদের খাবার দিয়েছি।

আপনাদের ব্রান্ডকে কিভাবে তুলে ধরেছেন?

ব্রান্ডই আমাদের সব কিছু! শুরু থেকেই কাস্টমারদের কাছে পৌছা এবং সুষ্ঠুভাবে সবকিছু চলার ব্যাপারে আমরা জাস্ট ইট এর সাথে মিলে কাজ করেছি।

জাস্ট ইট এর সাথে সম্পর্কের সবচেয়ে বেশি ফায়দা নিয়েছেন কিভাবে?

আমাদের একাউন্ট ম্যানেজারের সাথে কাজ করে আমরা বুঝতে পেরেছি জাস্ট ইট প্রকৃতভাবে চায় আমরা সফল হই। ডাটার সাহায্যে আমরা কাস্টমারদের প্রবণতা চিহ্নিত করতে পেরেছি এবং আমরা সে অনুযায়ী উন্নয়ন করেছি যা আমরা তাদের সহযোগিতা ছাড়া করা সম্ভব হতোনা।

একজন লোকাল লিজেন্ড হতে আপনাকে কি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পরিবর্তন করতে হয়েছে?

আমরা দেখেছি ভাল গ্রাহক সেবা প্রদানের ধারাবাহিকতা বজায় রাখা এবং খাবারের মান ধরে রাখা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। এই বিষয়গুলো আমরা প্রত্যেকদিন নজরে রাখতাম।

আগামী ১২ মাসের জন্য আপনার পরিকল্পনা কি?

উদ্ভাবন অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ - তবে মেনু সহজ ও ধারাবাহিকতা বজায় রাখার মধ্যে একটি ভারসাম্য থাকার প্রয়োজন রয়েছে। সাথে নতুন আইটেম প্রবর্তন করে কাস্টমারদের আগ্রহী রাখাও জরুরী।

কি টেকনোলোজি আপনারা ব্যবহার করছেন?

আমরা তা সহজ রাখছি। জাস্ট ইট আমাদের একমাত্র টেকনোলোজি।

চূড়ান্ত কথা? মাঠ এখন আপনার!

আপনার কমিউনিটিকে সাহায্য করা অব্যাহত রাখুন এবং যারা বিদেশে রয়েছেন তাদেরকেও সাহায্য করুন কারণ তারা যুক্তরাজ্যে আমরা যেভাবে সৌভাগ্যবান তেমনটি নয়। আপনার ব্যবসায় ধারাবাহিকতা বজায় রাখুন - খাবার পৌছানোর পূর্বে কাস্টমারগণ কি পাচ্ছেন তা তাদের জানা উচিত।

জাস্ট ইটে যোগদান করুন ০২০৩ ৩৭০ ৯৯২২

কভিড ১৯ সম্পর্কে সর্বশেষ খবরা খবর জানতে আমাদের পার্টনার ব্লগ দেখুন।

[partner.just-eat.co.uk/blog/covid-19](https://partner.just-eat.co.uk/blog/covid-19)



# Enduring love for hospitality made Habibur



## CURRY KING

*Habibur Khan, a 23-year-old young curry entrepreneur. His father Matin Khan is also an established businessman who has been involved with restaurant trade since 1998. They have two family establishments in Edinburgh, Scotland are the Itihaas Restaurant in Dalkeith and the Radhuni Restaurant in Lonehead. Habibur Khan is at the helm of very popular restaurant Radhuni. This young "Curry King" from Edinburgh talks about his success story with **Syed Nahas Pasha**, Editor-in-Chief of Curry Life Magazine.*

"I work as an accountant in my day job, but I see the restaurant as my future. I like to make everyone happy; I like to manage; when providing service and food to customers, their smiles is what drives me."

Habibur Khan, otherwise known as 'Scotland's youngest curry king', has a lot on his plate. The 23-year old divides his time between his conventional 9-5 job with managing the award-winning Radhuni, a 150-seat restaurant located in Loanhead on the fringes of Edinburgh. "In the area it's what I'm known for: having a 9-5 job and working 5-12 in the restaurant; I'm almost working 24/7. But I enjoy it – I love it – and without it, I don't know what I would be doing." With Habibur firmly at the helm as Radhuni's managing partner, the Indian-Bangladeshi

restaurant, nearing its 10-year anniversary, has picked up notable accolades. Despite the praise Radhuni has garnered, though, Habibur remains determined not to be complacent in his role, and proves to be exceedingly determined, motivated and committed to working in the industry.

"I grew up with many of my family working in restaurants, so I grew an emotional attachment to them. Growing up, I was told not to come near the restaurant so it wouldn't affect my studies, but I'd always find an excuse to visit; I'd miss the last hour of school and come without anyone knowing. I saw it as helping myself to help the restaurant, because I just loved it."

At the age of 12, Habibur officially started working at the restaurant, though he wasn't too keen on his first role. "My dad put me in the back

# Habibur Khan





*Radhuni Restaurant, Edinburgh*

because I wasn't tall enough. After three or four weeks of washing dishes, I thought no, I'm going out in the front, the back is not for me." Once he was out in the front, customers would bear witness to Habibur, in his own words, 'running around like a headless chicken': "It was fun working whilst still being at school; my friends couldn't believe it. They would come in and eat with the family and find me working. It's an opportunity not everyone gets, so I was very lucky to have it."

Habibur's enduring love for hospitality undoubtedly stems from his father's long-standing involvement in the industry, who himself has been running takeaways and restaurants in Edinburgh for almost 30 years. "I do want my father to retire, he's been doing it for a long period of time, but there's still lots to learn from him. There's no end to learning; he's probably said things to me four, five years ago and I probably thought, 'what are you talking about', but as the time goes on, I realise why he said it. Basic things can end up meaning a lot."

And what's the best thing Habibur has learnt from his father's expertise in the trade? "There is one thing he taught me which I still talk about: a good waiter will not only serve one table, but on his way back, he will always bring something else back to

the bar to make his night easier. If I was to go to a table and serve, that's not my job finished. There are other tables around, so you make sure you pick something else up – why should I leave it for someone else?"

Surprisingly, Habibur claims his father wasn't too favourable of his son working in restaurants at a young age, and to this day remains sceptical: "he didn't like me working from a young age, and he still doesn't like it now. He says it's not a business you want to get into due to the manual labour. It's unsociable hours, but if you build a good team, these things go away. With any business you need to put in the hours, even if you're not getting paid. Once you've put in the investment it all pays off. But you need a lot of patience, to believe in yourself and believe in the business."

What does Habibur have to say, then, to the younger generation who may feel obliged, but not necessarily enticed, by the idea of taking over the reins of their family's restaurants?

"My message would be come in and see for yourself how you can drive it forward. You might come in and adjust things that's going to change the whole concept of running a business; you could make it easier for you or your family to run. Bring in something new that's going to help the business,

fresh ideas, a fresh motive, and see if there's a gap in the market. If you see it, then trade is always there."

As the city of Edinburgh has been witness to many changes over the years, Habibur states food trends have stayed relatively stagnant: "I don't think trends have changed much. Customers are sticking to what they know; authentic Indian curry houses are still very popular in the area. In terms of change, the only thing you can change is how the décor looks, or the quality of chicken, lamb or spices – if you're selling the top notch of everything, more customers will come to you."

It's perhaps no surprise, then, that Radhuni's most popular dishes are the more conventional among the British: "Bhuna, Madras, Dhansak, they are the bread and butter of our menu. You must have them, because customers still love them. They are used to it and have been for many generations. If you don't have them in the restaurant, 70% of your trade is gone."

Does this mean Chicken Korma remains the UK's no.1 curry? "Yes, it's the most famous talked about curry, it still is," Habibur says. "Our customers still love a Korma, Chicken Tikka Masala, Balti, these are still popular curries. Without them, I wouldn't be able to run my restaurant – customers would start asking me 'is this an Indian?'"

In today's current climate, Habibur acknowledges how essential keeping up with the trends is to survival: "everything has moved over to social media, that's where there's presence, plus it doesn't cost you anything. All it takes is a bit of research and knowing your customers. It's all about what I call 'organic growth' – using Facebook, twitter, Instagram – you as a business should be using it too if it's going to help your business."

The need to invest in your staff is significant too, Habibur iterates: "we've got about 15 staff, and they are very important. Everybody talks about the staff crisis and how they can't run restaurants; yes, there is a crisis coming from our countries – Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan – but that doesn't mean anything. What are people doing in the UK? They also have an interest in hospitality; we need to bring them in, give them the chance, teach and train them and they'll be just as good." Keeping ahead of the game is equally vital for Habibur: "For us and the new generation who are stepping into the game, you have to see what the gap in the market is and look at what others are doing that you're not doing. It's not about copying them, it's about how you can do it better. If everybody does the same thing, everyone remains the same, so how can you trade something new with a twist that your customers will love? If you invest in your kitchen, they invest back at you because you'll get money back in return. If you're making £500 profit a week, put £200 away for a rainy day, and another £200 for yourself. It's not all about



profit. Invest in your staff, invest in business.” In order to keep business healthy, then, do fellow restaurateurs freely exchange ideas? Habibur sees the benefit in doing so: “I do this all the time. Like I said, there’s never a stop to learning. I could be doing something wrong – which I think I’m doing right – then my friend will tell me how it should be. So, we are always learning from one another and giving each other ideas, and there’s nothing wrong with that. As long as you’re learning that’s the main thing, because that’s what makes you better. One person can’t know everything about a business; you have to take ideas from everyone, put it together and change it to how it works for you and your customers.”

“Before, there was no competition, not many choices, people went to their local and service was more personal. Now, if you go to a restaurant, you find that the service is not as personal. But you need to be more personal and chase business, then it’ll come to you. In

order to chase, you need to have something to promote it that’s different from others, so the customers believe in what you’re actually doing.”

So, there is nothing to fear from a bit of healthy competition? “I don’t have any fear about competition. My only fear would be if someone was to come along and do the exact same thing as me. But as I said I’m always learning. Let them do the same, hopefully I can then make my product better.”

To help bring in fresh ideas, Habibur admits to eating out two, three times a week, much to the annoyance of some: “My friends who are not in the game, they hate eating out with me, because I am always so observant with everything. They say: ‘you never take a break’, but for me I’m learning something new!”

The Coronavirus pandemic has undoubtedly put further strain on an already struggling sector, and with a recession and unemployment looming, there is mounting uncertainty on the survival of many restaurants. But how



was the last six months for Radhuni? “We are a restaurant and takeaway, and 70% of our sales were from the restaurant. Obviously, we had to close down. We had to adapt very quickly from running as a restaurant to takeaway only, which meant reducing opening hours and staff. Initially I was scared, because I didn’t want to let go of the great asset that we have, but then I thought, if everywhere is closed, where are the doctors and nurses going to eat once they finish their shift? They can’t afford to lose time standing at a supermarket. So, I decided to stay open to feed those who are saving us, and because we were getting almost hundreds of orders in from the local hospital, the police force, fire station, it turned out that I needed all my staff there. We all help each other, and we were lucky to be running the business as well.”

After an ostensibly successful attempt to survive lockdown from a business perspective, how does Habibur plan to move forward, bearing in mind the

country’s uncertain future? “I’m not cutting down any staff. Because of the extra measures we’ve put in place, our hygiene is good anyway, and I want to take the bar up and see what else I could be doing. In order to do better, I need more pair of hands to help me. So, I’m not cutting down on anyone at the moment.”

Though Habibur certainly hopes for expansion down the line, he reiterates how important timing is for the business: “Let’s see where the current climate is first.

There’s always opportunities coming up, but it needs to be the right opportunity, so fingers crossed.”

Our fingers are certainly crossed too. Taking into consideration everything that’s happened this year, does Habibur believe there’s still money to be made in the trade? “There is, but it doesn’t come to you. You need to put the hard work in first. You put it in, and you see the rewards – the harder work you put in the more reward you get, even it means waiting for six months... you’ll soon get the reward.” ■



# The pubs and restaurants will still be able to operate hot food takeaway service until 2022

The government has confirmed that pubs and restaurants will still be able to operate a takeaway service until 2022. This was something business owners and hospitality associations fought hard for during the first lockdown.

For some, it may have been the difference between remaining in business and bankruptcy.

The UK Hospitality boss Kate Nicholls welcomed the rule when it was made saying, "This move is welcome as it will give more hospitality businesses the chance to help and serve the community."

It had been suggested that this could be removed during the second national lockdown, something that caused a lot of worry for the

hospitality industry. But the government have since confirmed that the rule will remain in place to support businesses in the sector. They have also confirmed that the rule will remain in place until 2022. Of course, it is hoped COVID-19 will have been eradicated by then. But knowing the rule has been extended indefinitely will be a comfort to many restaurants and businesses. Sporadic spikes in coronavirus infection could continue to cause chaos for hospitality businesses while the virus still exists. It's also been confirmed that the rule also applies to the sale of alcohol. Providing alcohol is pre-ordered and picked up from outside the premises, pubs and restaurants will still be able

to serve it, according to new guidance from the government. Nik Antona, the Chairman of CAMRA welcomed the news saying, "I am delighted that the Government has listened to the concerns of thousands of CAMRA members, concerned pub-goers, and beer lovers who have e-mailed their MPs in the last 48 hours urging the Government to allow pubs and breweries to sell alcohol as takeaway during the second lockdown." Going on to say, "This is a vital lifeline for local pubs and breweries across England over the coming four weeks, giving them a lifeline of income and allowing people to support local businesses."



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# Bombay 8

## A gamble paid off

*Bombay 8. A beautiful restaurant in Warrington. Very good food and decor. Customers love it. Our reporter **Sam Smith** talks to owner **Mofozul Miah** and writes about their delicious food and the secret to their success.*



*Bombay 8 team*

**R**estaurant owner Mofozul Miah took a gamble when he opened an independent Indian restaurant on a Warrington's retail park full of name branded restaurant chains. The competition was fierce, but ultimately the gamble paid off.

Today Bombay 8 stands shoulder to shoulder with any of its competitors and is highly regarded by locals and shoppers that visit the area. Located near a large Ikea and various other shopping outlets, Bombay 8 offers customers freshly prepared Indian & Bangladeshi dishes of exceptional quality.

The restaurant takes advantage of passing shopper trade, but primarily provides curry for a loyal group of regular customers who come from all over the area to sample it's recipes. In fact, the restaurant is directly below a Travel Lodge hotel, meaning the occasional weary business customers visit the restaurant, drawn by the smell of the cooking.

"We see them all the time" Says Mofozul, "They come down from the hotel, experience our food and then

decide this will be where they stay every time they visit. Just so they can eat here again. They usually bring their colleagues too."

"It also saves them from venturing out into the town for food. They stay at the Travel Lodge, eat here, then often go over the road to the pub for a few drinks afterwards!"

Mofozul is proud of his restaurant's popularity and believes it's down to two things. First, it's the quality of his food, and secondly the quality of his service. The restaurant always employs more staff than they need, this way customers are always attended.

"I like to employ extra staff on each shift. It's more expensive I know, but it's better to have too many people than not enough. A poorly staffed restaurant usually suffers from a customer service point of view. I never wanted that to be the case here. It's an investment at the end of the day, an investment in people."

Bombay 8 wasn't the first restaurant that Mofozul owned, he previously ran one called the Golden



*Mofozul Miah, Owner of Bombay 8*

Viceroy, but said his heart wasn't in it. It wasn't until he opened Bombay 8 with his business partner that he truly felt accomplished.

"I can safely say my heart is in it now. This is just right. My best friend and my wife really helped me get to where I needed to be with this restaurant. So I'd like to thank them both. I've always been an entrepreneur; you see I was always more of a grafter than a natural academic. But Bombay 8 is where things really fell into place."

After learning the history of Bombay 8 we were looking forward to experiencing the food. The establishment has a reputation for quality and freshness and is one of those Indian restaurants that's simply on another level to what most people know. At Curry Life we believe it's our mission to identify these restaurants and feature them in

the magazine.

As we often do, we asked Mofozul what he would recommend. He advised us to order from the Chefs Specialities part of the menu, telling us that each dish was carefully crafted to stand out from the rest. So that's exactly what we did.

Each member of our party had different tastes when it came to curry, so we ordered a range of dishes in an effort to experience the full spectrum of the chef's talents. Every single meal exceeded our expectations considerably. We knew we were in for a treat, but they still managed to surprise us.

To start we were provided with papadums and a range of chutneys, but we were also provided with spicy papadums as well as regular ones. Mofozul explained that most people don't know about spicy papadums, but

once they do it's hard to go back to regular ones. We can confirm that he is correct.

We also ordered a Bombay special mixed started along with the vegetarian version too. This allowed us to try a range of different meats and other appetisers such as onion bhajis and vegetable samosas. Naturally, we also ordered a round of Cobra Beer too.

For our main meals the first one we ordered was the Chicken and Malai Kofta. We were expecting this to me similar to the kofta that was served as a starter, just a more significant portion. But instead we were pleasantly surprised by its presentation – and even more so by the taste.

who likes to order a korma or a pasanda, we'd recommend you try one of these dishes instead. The Malibu Chicken contains coconut like a korma, while the Moducash Murgh is made with mango and cashew nuts and is similar to a quality pasanda.

Before we arrived, we discussed our love of king prawns with Mofozul on the telephone, but we didn't actually order a dish containing any when we looked at a menu. We were enticed by other dishes instead. Mofozul had planned to cook us a King Prawn Palak, as it's one of the restaurants signature dishes. So when our main meals came, he brought us one of these as an extra.



At first glance, the meal looked more like an Italian dish, due to the red curry sauce, meatballs and cheese. But upon trying the sauce and recognising the tandoori herbs and spices, we realised that this dish was indeed distinctly Indian/Bangladeshi. If you're someone who cannot decide between chicken and lamb and wishes to try something unique – this will be for you.

The next dish we ordered was the Lamb Chilli Fry, pieces of lamb pan cooked with green chilli, mixed peppers, sweet chilli sauce, onions and coriander along with a salad garnish. This was simply superb and will be the dish we'll all order when we next visit Bombay 8. It was also just the right level of spice. The member of our party who ordered it described it as "the best curry he's ever had" – And he eats plenty of it! The next two dishes we ordered were the Malibu Chicken and the Moducash Murgh. Both were mild creamy chicken dishes. If you're the sort of person

We're glad he did, each king prawn was mouth wateringly marinated in tandoori spices and barbecued to perfection. It was a wonderful addition to our meal, and we'd order it again in a heartbeat. It was cooked to absolute perfection.

We visited Bombay 8 as the UK lockdown was easing, so we asked Mofozul about the impact of COVID-19 on his business. He told us that he closed for four weeks while they planned what to do, but then reopened as a takeaway only service. His suppliers all increased their prices, but Mofozul decided against doing this himself, believing it would be unfair on his customers.

He told us that as frustrating as this was, ultimately it was better to keep prices where they were and absorb the cost. As any increase in price risked putting customers off visiting. However, he did tell us the government's bounce back loans and support have



*Chef Monju Ahmed of Bombay 8*

helped.

Mofozul also told us about how he was able to keep employing all his staff, “I encouraged my team to share shifts between them. This was preferable to making any redundant or furloughing them. This way they could each work, just sadly less hours than normal.”

Although he did permit his staff to get a second job if they needed one. Promising to help them adjust their hours to accommodate both jobs. This allowed him to keep all his staff employed and not lose anyone.

We asked Mofozul about the Eat Out to Help Out scheme, specifically if he was using it and if it had been helpful. The answer we received surprised us very much.

“I didn’t take part in the Eat Out to Help Out scheme. I considered it very carefully but, in the end, I chose not to take it up.” Bombay 8 was the first restaurant we had visited that had decided against using the government scheme, so we asked Mofozul to tell us why he reached that decision.

“I felt it just wasn’t right for our regular customers. Let me explain, our regulars know they are always welcome. They will always have a table here. We know them and they know us. The Eat Out scheme meant that restaurants were incredibly busy. This is great for the industry, but the problem for us is that it meant we’d risk needing to turn away loyal repeat customers.”

He went on to say, “If we were too busy, we’d struggle to offer them what we usually do. This virus will be gone one day, and so will the government measures to help restaurants. When that happens, I wanted to make sure my regular customers knew we were still there for them.”

“My regulars love our curries, once they were free to go to restaurants again, we knew they’d want to visit us. The idea of us being too full to accommodate them simply wasn’t worth doing. Yes, we could have filled our tables and taken advantage of the scheme, but in the long term, we would have risked alienating those who really valued and stuck by us.”

“Getting a table anywhere during the scheme was difficult. We’ve actually managed to cater for a number of people who may not have visited us otherwise. Their regular favourite restaurants were fully booked, but when they came to us, we were able to fit them in. They were grateful and will now visit again.”

“You’ve got to realise what’s really important in times like these. To me, that’s family and that’s how we see our customers.”

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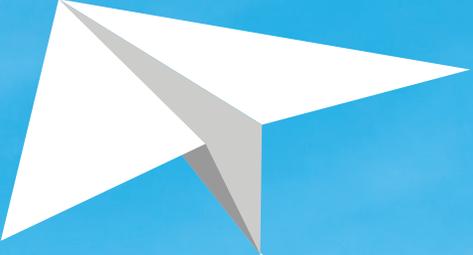


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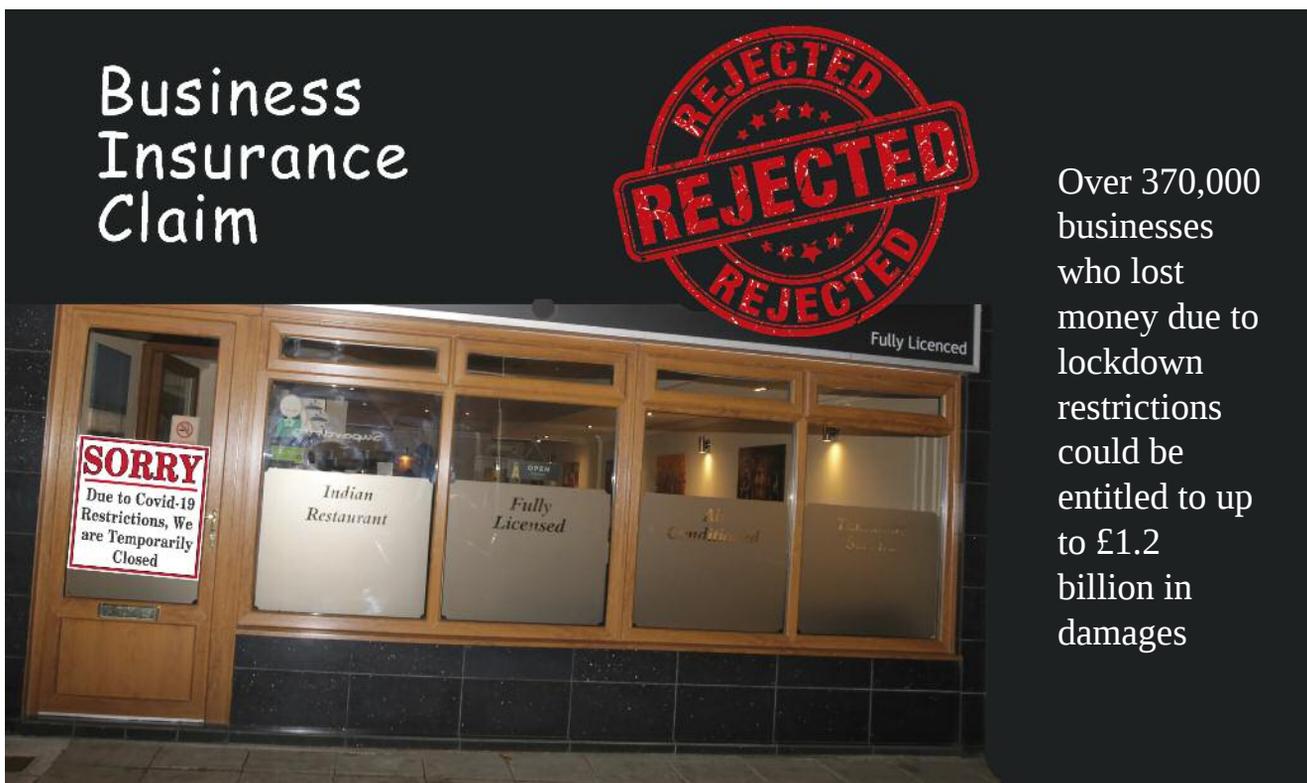
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# Policyholders Triumph in Business Interruption Insurance Case

The UK High Court has ruled that businesses that were forced to close earlier this year due to COVID-19 are indeed entitled to compensation. Many held business interruption insurance, which they attempted to claim during the early days of the pandemic, but were subsequently turned down.

In what's been described as a landmark insurance case, over 370,000 businesses who lost money due to lockdown restrictions could be entitled to up to £1.2 billion in damages. RSA Hiscox and Lloyd's of London are among the insurers accused of renegeing on their policy promises. Out of the £1.2 billion, Hiscox



Over 370,000 businesses who lost money due to lockdown restrictions could be entitled to up to £1.2 billion in damages

alone are expected to pay out £100 million in damages. Multiple complaints were lodged with the Financial Conduct Authority once it became apparent that insurers were rejecting business interruption claims. The rejections sparked a wave of confusion and panic among businesses, especially though in the hospitality industry, which had been forced to close. The rejections were perplexing to most, as the wording of many policies seemed to imply that businesses that had closed due to COVID were indeed covered. After receiving an overwhelming number of cases, the FCA then referred the issue to the High Court. Various insurance companies argued that while they did cover loss of earnings due to disease or illness, this did not apply to global pandemics. Something in their eyes that could be considered close to 'an act of God' and therefore was impossible to anticipate. Although

this stance was disputed by the FCA and the courts. The High Court found that in many of cases, the businesses were covered and that the rejections were unfounded and wrong. However, this was not the case with every complaint. Some companies legitimately did not offer cover for cases such as a global pandemic, and that was clear in their wording. Since the decision was made by the High Court to side with the policyholders, insurers are now expected to appeal the decision. But on what grounds is yet to be determined. Should the appeal fail, the High Court's ruling will be legally binding – and insurers will need to pay out. Christopher Woolard, who is the interim chief executive of the FCA, said, "We are pleased that the Court has substantially found in favour of the arguments we presented on the majority of the key

issues. Today's judgment is a significant step in resolving the uncertainty being faced by policyholders."

He went on to say, "Insurers should reflect on the clarity provided here and, irrespective of any possible appeals, consider the steps they can take now to progress claims of the type that the judgment says should be paid. They should also communicate directly and quickly with policyholders who have made claims affected by the judgment to explain next steps."

Huw Evans, who is the director general of the Association of British Insurers weighed into the debate saying, "This is a complex judgment spanning 162 pages and 19 policy wordings and it will take a little time for those involved in the court case to understand what it means and consider any appeals."

Then saying, "Individual insurers will be analysing the judgment, engaging with the regulator, taking account of the appeal process and keeping their customers informed in the period ahead."

Policyholders may now be able to claim the funds they were previously denied. But sadly, the ruling comes too little too late for many businesses that were forced to close. While these former owners will be able to reclaim some funds, it won't bring back the businesses they were forced to close.

It's also worth pointing out that many business interruption customers were never covered in the first

place. Therefore, the High Court's decision will have no benefit to them. However, the decision will help more businesses be able to stay afloat should a second COVID spike continue to remain a threat.

RLK Solicitors Limited which has been helping many SMEs including Curry Houses across the country to challenge insurance companies with their claims, welcomes the judgment of Lord Justice Flaux and Mr Justice Butcher's in the FCA test case, which was handed down on Tuesday, 15 September 2020.

Mr Satish Jakhu, Director and Head of Litigation at RLK says: "After 15 September judgment in the FCA test case, some insurers are required to pay business interruption claims in relation to COVID-19.

For some of our clients this is the welcome news, which will hopefully pave the way for the settlement they deserve. For others, we hope the insurers that were not party to the test case do the right thing and indemnify their policyholders."

"As a whole, our solicitors and barristers look forward to working through the next stages and developments to achieve the best results for our clients and their businesses," he added.

If your business has been affected by COVID-19 and you have business interruption insurance then please contact RLK Solicitors on 0121 450 7800 or [lucy@rlksolicitors.com](mailto:lucy@rlksolicitors.com)

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## VIRAJ IS HARD TO BEAT FOR CLASSIC INDIAN FARE

**B**odmin is not one of Cornwall's most tourist-heavy destinations, with many passing through by car en route to Padstow or Fowey, or by bike as part of the Camel Trail cycle route. But there is plenty to see, with historical attractions such as Bodmin Jail (which incidentally is under refurbishment with a planned reopening in October), the steam-operated Bodmin & Wenford Railway and Bodmin Keep, billed as Cornwall's Army Museum. There's also Bodmin Moor, a haven for hikers and one of the county's many designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Bodmin is also home to Viraj, which was named 'best curry house in Cornwall' at last year's Curry Life Awards. We decided to check it out on a recent trip to Cornwall (admittedly en route to Fowey). The restaurant, which opened in 1998, is easy to find,

located on the town's Higher Bore street and even has its own dedicated parking, which can be a big plus in Cornwall.

Viraj has a sleek and contemporary design, with brown and beige colours, and good lighting throughout, offering a welcoming ambience. This is complemented with an efficient, warm and friendly service from the staff, particularly founder Mohammed Choudury, who has many years of experience in the restaurant trade.

The restaurant focuses on authentic Indian food with a menu that is varied but not overwhelming - you can discover some favourite dishes, twists on the traditional and some unique creations. Dishes are clearly explained and well-divided into sections, with the expected 'Tandoori', 'Balti' and 'Biryani' choices alongside 'exotic' featuring more heavily-spiced curries such as Jalfrezi, and

'traditional', which includes Korma and Dhansak.

Most impressive of all though are the dishes from the 'Chef's Speciality' section - more on that later. We started with some traditional dishes, the onion bhaji, which was fried to perfection, with a light, crunchy exterior, delicately spiced. We also indulged in some equally delicious lamb samosas - the pastry was thin and the samosas were nicely packed with a succulent filling.

We chose two dishes from the speciality menu, a flavoursome and colourful Rezala chicken, tender, Tandoori chicken off the bone, perfectly spiced with a rich masala sauce and the 'Chum Chum' curry: deep fried strips of breadcrumb chicken tikka, with chopped onion, capsicum and green chilli, with an accompanying sweet and spicy sauce. Mohammed told us it was created in-



house in response to experimenting with popular textures and flavours, offering loyal customers the food they love but with something unexpected. It was certainly an interesting twist on a chicken curry and one that would suit many palates. With two kids in tow we also had a chance to try the Chicken Korma, which had a creamy, indulgent taste and was spiced just right. Our accompanying dishes were sag aloo, with large chunks of soft potato and just-wilted spinach and a buttery naan. We couldn't resist the desserts, which also leaned heavily on the traditional. We opted for 'Pineapple Delight', a quarter of pineapple skin filled with rich pineapple ice cream, 'Orange Surprise', a whole orange scooped and refilled with a tangy orange-flavoured sorbet and a pistachio-flavoured kulfi. All three were a hit. We were also tempted by the 'Lumpy Bumpy Cheesecake', but that will have to wait for the next time. The menu also has plenty of choice for

vegetarians and seafood lovers will not be disappointed either, with starter dishes such as tiger prawn puri and crab malabari or the most substantial tiger king prawn tikka and prawn malabari curries. There is an extensive choice of drinks, with liqueur, spirits, beer and alcohol-free options alongside soft drinks. For those partial to an after-dinner drink, Viraj won't disappoint, with a range of impressive liqueur coffees. There are eight to choose from, including Calypso Coffee, flavoured with Tia Maria, Royal Coffee, with Cognac and even Monk Coffee, with Benedictine. Unsurprisingly, given its 22 years in business, the restaurant has a loyal clientele, who are likely to come back time and again for the food as well as the friendly and professional service. While trade has obviously dipped due to the impact of the coronavirus - having a knock-on effect on both tourist and regular bookings, when we visited on a Sunday evening in August,

the place was buzzing, even with staggered bookings to observe social distancing. The kitchen was also kept very busy with a constant stream of takeaways. Social distancing was very well observed; as well as staggered dining times, unobtrusive screens have been set up between tables, alongside distance signage on the floors. For those who want to indulge in classic Indian fare or who like traditional dishes with a twist, Viraj is hard to beat.

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# Cheshire based My Curry Club Win's The Small Awards



Habiba Chowdhury, who is the founder and chef of 'My Curry Club', Cheshire's Indian cookery school, took the decision to go virtual two days before Prime Minister Boris Johnson told everyone to stay at home. She has successfully been delivering her luxury home-based classes across Cheshire, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield and further beyond with an international reach into Malaysia

too. Habiba, who lives in Cheshire, invested in a permanent base at Cranage Trade Park in June last year. The concept of the school is to introduce a world of new flavours to those who might only be familiar with the classic household names in the world of curry - such as balti, korma and madras. My Curry Club based in Goostrey, Cheshire has been crowned winner of The Sole to Sole at The Small Awards 2020.

The Small Awards, organised by Small Business Britain, is a nationwide search for the smallest and greatest firms in the UK, across all sectors. Launched in 2017, it celebrates smaller businesses that are often overlooked for recognition at other national awards.

My Curry Club won the Sole to Sole award, which recognises sole traders and celebrates the tenacity and drive it takes to go it alone.

She said: "It has been an amazing journey with My Curry Club, and to be crowned the Sole Trader of the Year from businesses across the UK is a big privilege.

Michelle Ovens MBE, Founder of Small Business Britain said: "Congratulations to My Curry Club for winning this Small Award! This is hugely deserved and recognises its amazing contribution to the local community and the UK's small business sector. The Small Awards is all about throwing a spotlight on their success, particularly in these challenging times!"



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# Police Warn Of Increasing Attacks On Asian Community

## IS UK RACISM ON THE RISE?

**SAM SMITH**

Far-right groups have been using COVID-19 as an excuse to commit hate crimes against members of the Asian community. More specifically, those of Far Eastern descent. According to the police, racist groups are using the virus as an excuse to commit crimes in an attempt to blame the virus on them. Racial abuse has risen in the UK over the past few years, starting with a lot of the rhetoric around Brexit which was focused on immigration. Prior to the Brexit referendum, far-right party UKIP were criticised for their ‘Breaking Point’ poster. A piece of promotional material urging people to vote to leave the EU due to the freedom of movement members laws. However, despite the poster being about EU immigration, the poster contained faces of Asian people instead. The EU is made up of countries which are predominantly white meaning people of Asian descent were an unusual target for this campaign. Prominent LBC host James O’Brien accused then UKIP leader Nigel Farage of deliberately stoking racial unrest in the UK with the poster. Farage was also accused of insulting the intelligence of his supporters by trying to manipulate them into thinking the EU debate was about race or suggesting they had limited knowledge of geography. UKIP were also subject to various other complaints when members were accused of various public gaffes and activities that were deemed as hateful. Nigel Farage described the party as “having a handful of idiots” which they had dealt with. He also complained that other political groups weren’t held to account as much as UKIP when they indulged in racist behaviour.

After vote leave won the EU referendum by a slim margin, the Guardian reported that hate crime against ethnic minorities surged. The attacks weren’t just limited to Europeans either, but members of the BAME communities. Leading some commentators to wonder if the ‘Breaking Point’ poster did influence behaviour. Let’s not forget that MP Jo Cox’s murderer was indeed influenced by far-right rhetoric and committed his crime around the same time the poster was released. The death of George Floyd in the United States triggered a global backlash against racism and discrimination, with the Black Lives Matter movement rising to prominence. However, at the same time, other voices chimed in to shout down the anti-racism movement. Nobody expected there to be such aggressive pushback against a cause simply calling for equality and an end to racism. Critics of BLM argue that the organisation is anti-police, anti-capitalist and those behind it are trying to cause anarchy. While some protestors have gone too far and should be prosecuted for violent acts and vandalism, the vast majority of people who subscribe to BLM genuinely want to see an end to bigotry. By saying Black Lives Matter, nobody is saying other lives matter less – the message is simply a reminder that black lives matter too. It shouldn’t even need saying, but it does. Either people are misunderstanding this, or they are pretending to misunderstand for racist reasons. The message behind the slogan ‘All Lives Matter’ is true, all lives do indeed matter. But the motivation behind it is more sinister. Some of the people shouting “all lives matter” have done little to show that they genuinely

believe this. They seem more interested in suggesting that all lives matter, but some matter more than others.

This is why the west has such a problem with racism. Some people deny the problem due to ignorance, while racists deny it because they don’t want to stop being racist. The rise in hate crimes against Asian people in the UK can also be traced back to the United States, particularly President Donald Trump.

Trump’s recent comments regarding ‘Antifa’ are rather telling. The word simply means ‘anti-fascist’ and is a shortened version of it. Countries like the US and UK have been proud anti-fascist countries for the longest time. Fascism was something we fought against during World War Two. So for the President to describe anti-fascists, or those identifying as antifa as terrorists is incredibly frightening for our anti-fascist society.

Is Trump trying to suggest that fascism is now the expected default? Or does he genuinely believe that Antifa is an organised militant group rather than an idea? Since when was being against fascism a negative thing? While Trump has never explicitly stated he identifies as a fascist, his behaviour towards anti-fascism is most baffling. There is no evidence to suggest that antifa is anything more than a word used to oppose fascism.

Could the problem be the word itself though? Antifa sounds vaguely middle eastern as far as words go, something which is merely a phonetic coincidence. But is Trump attempting to take advantage of how the word sounds, along with post 9/11 fear, by suggesting that Antifa is somehow a domestic version of ISIS or Al-Qaeda? Despite the idea having no connection at all to radical Islam.

Many people in the US have expressed concern that Trump referring to

COVID-19 as “The China Virus” may have influenced some far-right extremists. It could encourage them to blame not only the country for the virus, but anyone associated with it. Donald Trump often profits politically when he invents or exaggerates a foreign enemy or problem, then rallies his supporters against it. In 2016 it was Mexico. Trump’s rhetoric against Mexicans resulted in

questions from journalists when they have asked him if a rise in hate crimes against the Asian community worries him or not. This has led to an increase in racist abuse and attacks against American citizens of Asian descent. The President himself has engaged in this behaviour during White House press briefings, this can be seen during his interactions with Asian journalist

people, who just happen to be of eastern descent. Or it could just be racist people being racist people. Perhaps they don’t misunderstand that English Asians have no connection to China or indeed COVID-19. They could simply be using it as an excuse to inflict hate because that’s just what they do. What seems clear though is political rhetoric can influence such



*Black Lives Matters protest.*

**Photo: Steve Eason**

a rise in hate crimes against the Latino community across the United States. With a new election in 2020, Trump needed a new target. Who better than China? Especially when a deadly virus emerged from that country and has killed over 200,000 American people. China make a fitting replacement for Mexico, and by whipping up his base against anything or anyone Chinese, Trump can galvanise his supporters against a new perceived but largely imagined threat. Playing on their fear and essentially encouraging racism. The President has also deflected

Weijia Jiang, with whom Trump has butted heads on more than one occasion. He’s also seemingly fixated on her ethnicity despite her being an American citizen. The above could explain why such attacks have increased in the UK too. Trump’s words and actions could have been exported here, then heard by far-right groups. These groups could hear them as a rallying cry, then go out and seek retribution of members of the Asian community. All the while misunderstanding that not all Asian people are from China. The majority of them being English

people and, in many cases, embolden them. They feel like their hateful views are legitimised when powerful people express similar views, no matter how veiled. Brexit, posters attacking minorities, pushback against BLM and comments from Presidents may be the cause of the increased racism in the UK, or they may not be. But we all need to work together to not only stamp racism out, but to show people that it is never the answer through education and tolerance towards others.

# Curry house pledges to deliver 5,000 lunches to Northampton teaching staff

A curry house has donated hundreds of meals to two Northampton schools as part of its pledge to reward teachers working throughout the pandemic. Staff from Saffron, in Castilian Street, delivered 300 portions of onion bhajis, chicken tikka masala and pilau rice to staff at Vernon Terrace Primary School and Weston Favell Academy early November this year. Owner Naz Islam said: "The town means so much to us and we will always do our bit to help our community here in Northampton. "Teachers and school staff are doing an amazing job by putting the needs of our children first, giving them the routine and structure they need and allowing them to continue with their education

despite everything that's going on. "Donating these lunches is the least we can do to say thank you. We want to deliver up to 5,000 lunches to school staff over the next few weeks so if you think the teachers at your school deserve a treat then get in touch with us at the restaurant." Saffron also donated more than 1,000 meals to doctors and nurses at Northampton General Hospital during the first wave of the pandemic and fed more than 100 families during the October half-term holiday in response to England footballer Marcus



Rashford's campaign to persuade the Government to extend the free school meals scheme. Mr Islam added: "Marcus Rashford has shone a light on an apparently hidden epidemic plaguing this country. No child should be going hungry in the UK in 2020 yet many families are living in food poverty and barely able to feed themselves. "We will not stand by and let this happen here in Northampton."



*The Worthing's most awards winning Indian Restaurant, the Mahaan has been delivering free meals to their local NHS Hospitals since the lockdown started due to Corona Virus Pandemic. They have been also providing discounted meals on takeaways for NHS Staffs and vulnerable people in the area. The Mahaan Restaurant and it's team being much praised for it's heroic effort to support the local community during this global pandemic. One regular customer, Mr George said: "The tremendous support for our NHS and care workers by the Mahaan restaurant is simply commendable. Not only the first lockdown in March, they are still continuing with their generosity and support for the NHS and most vulnerable in the community."*

## JJ Reports 130% increase in Healthier Takeaway Options



JJ Foodservice has reported an increase in healthier takeaway options for its restaurant website business FOODit.

"Takeaways are no longer an occasional treat. They are part of the 'new normal' and people are making healthier choices", said JJ's Chief Technology Officer, Michael Dudley. Food deliveries and takeaways have been soaring since the first lockdown, according to Dudley. "We've seen an overall increase in takeaway orders of 51%." Healthier options – including grilled chicken, sushi, wraps and salads – are up 130% followed by American cuisine, up 40%; fish and chips up 100%; and Turkish up 37%. "It will become imperative for takeaways to have healthier options as the Government moves towards banning 'junk food' advertising in the coming months," said Dudley. "Our in-house nutritionist is available to support any takeaways that need advice," he added. FOODit recently launched printable QR codes for takeaways. The codes can be printed to use on shop posters and on flyers to encourage people to pre-order, helping to reduce queues and maintain social distancing.



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\*Source: CGA data for restaurants, 52 weeks ending 29/12/2018.



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