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Local restaurant Spize graduates from a humble cafe to a three-outlet chain

# Spiffy outlet, upsized menu

NOOR ASHIKIN ABDUL RAHMAN

Change is the only constant in life. For Mr Hareesh Sabnani, 39, that is the greatest lesson learnt in the course of co-running popular franchise Spize with his elder brother and founder Anil Sabnani, 41.

The same philosophy has driven the swift expansion of the business from a humble Shaw Towers cafe in 1997 to the busy three-outlet restaurant chain it is today.

Last October, Spize took a step in a new direction with the opening of its third and fanciest outlet — a spiffy restaurant located at Temasek Club, a recreational and interaction space for military personnel at Rifle Range Road.

Its upsized menu has been boosted with creative additions such as roasted pumpkin and quinoa salad.

It has also partnered with artisan coffee roaster Dutch Colony Coffee Co, another factor that sets this outlet apart from its River Valley Road and Simpang Bedok branches.

This new venture has opened up new opportunities for Spize — it will be the caterer for its first Malay wedding next month.

“If you stop evolving and growing, that is when you start to decline. It is always important to look forward and challenge yourself to be better,” said managing director Hareesh, who runs the River Valley Road and Temasek Club outlets.

The rise of Spize has not been without hurdles. Manpower — it now has 200 employees — continues to be a big challenge. It depends heavily on foreign service staff.

Mr Hareesh admitted as much:



Spize owners Hareesh (left) and Anil Sabnani continue to innovate even after two decades in the business. TNP PHOTO: DALENE LOW

“Sometimes, customers can be prejudiced against foreign staff. Currently, our Temasek Club outlet has the highest number of Singaporean employees.

“Customers have high expectations of good service. Perhaps, we are victims of our own success... customers expect better and better each time from us. We have to always match the expectations.”

And the brothers are already looking ahead. They have plans to develop their own dessert range. They hope to find a new space for a central kitchen that will make the desserts to be sold at their outlets.

Their dedication to their diverse menu has kept patrons coming back for more, despite cheaper prices at competitors' stalls.

Mr Anil, also a managing director, took three years to perfect the “tiga rasa” sauce, while Mr Hareesh's creations include the

roasted pumpkin and quinoa salad.

“We take a lot of pride in developing our recipes, crafting our menu and achieving the same consistency all the time.

“We don't have service charge, except at the Temasek Club outlet,” said Mr Anil, who has honed his skills in the hospitality and food and beverage sectors since the age of 16 before setting up Spize Cafe.

Mr Hareesh's education in hospitality at the International Management Institute in Switzerland has proven invaluable.

Nostalgia also plays a big role in luring customers back for more.

“It is rewarding not only to see our regulars but also their children eating at Spize. They've marketed our brand to their children, and these children become our regulars as well,” said Mr Anil.

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PHOTO: GATES PCM CONSTRUCTION

## Multi-nation effort

Over 120 foreign workers gathered at the Blood Bank at HSA to donate blood yesterday as part of the GATES Gives Life Blood Donation Drive. The employees, from countries such as India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Myanmar and the Philippines, work on the building and maintenance of the local railway lines in Singapore.