

So, You Want to be a

RESTAURATEUR?

Cosmo debuts a career series where each month, we'll invite successful women from a particular field and gather their secrets to building a career in that profession. Ready to be inspired? **By Priyam Chaturvedi**

"Research everything—market costs, rents, furnishings, etc. When you start out clueless, some people may try to cheat you and take advantage."

Ardahan Pinky Passey, Owner, Yeti & Cafe 88, New Delhi

"Get rid of that ego. Don't think that you won't do a certain thing, just because you're the owner. All you should remember is that you have to put your 100 percent into the business, and not shy away from any kind of work."

Gauri Devidayal, Owner, The Table, Mumbai

"When I decided to open a restaurant, I searched for an investor and went to him with a proper, detailed plan. Everything from how I wanted the service to be, to the height of the table, and the way it would smell. Being prepared is critical!"

Naina de Bois-Juzan, Owner, Le Bistro Du Parc, New Delhi

"Never compromise on the food! While you have to make your business model cost-efficient, cutting corners on the actual food you serve will take you down."

Ritu Dalmia, Head Chef and Owner, Cafe Diva, New Delhi

"Quality control is key—consistency is the biggest thing required in this business. If a dish is not up to mark, don't serve it. People might forget 10 good dishes served, but will remember one bad dish."

Mishali Sanghani, Owner, Pali Village Cafe & Pali Bhawan, Mumbai

"Being in the field of desserts, I have to ensure that my product looks as good as it tastes! So I experiment a lot with flavours, but also work hard on presentation."

Pooja Dhingra, Owner, Le 15 Pâtisserie, Mumbai

"Choose the right chef and make sure he is up to mark. Since this is a people's job and everything depends on food, you need to have the best team on board."

Priya Paul, Owner, Park Group of Hotels, India

"Keep your menu simple and easy to read. It's a small thing, but makes a huge difference."

Pooja Gogia, Owner, Harem, New Delhi



Photographer: AMAN MANKAR; Editorial: KARISHMA YADAV; Location: courtesy, GUPPY BY AI, LODHI COLONY MARKET, NEW DELHI

Last month, while going through entries from our career poll, we found tonnes of enquiries from girls who wanted to own a restaurant...but had no clue how to! So, for our first feature that will be part of a mega career series, we got India's biggest women restaurateurs together and picked their brain on how to open and run a successful eatery. Here's what they had to say...

Cosmo: What is the smartest thing you've done to make your restaurant a success?

Ritu Dalmia: "Cost efficiency—for the first six years, I was the head chef, interior designer, PR manager, cleaner and server. I realised that if our costs aren't under control, the business won't sustain."

Gauri Devidayal: "When we opened the restaurant, my husband and I ensured we were there 24/7. I used to take reservations, answer phone calls, take reviews from people...basically, I wasn't afraid to get my hands dirty on the job."

Ardahum Pinky Passey: "To not tamper with our menu. Initially, some people suggested that we change a few dishes to appeal to popular taste, to attract more customers. But we insisted on only serving authentic Tibetan food, which helped make Yeti a success."

Cosmo: Generally speaking, what makes a restaurant successful?

Mishali Sanghani: "The most important thing is consistency. A lot of places open on a fancy note, but lose their quality and credibility over time...and shut down in six months."

Pooja Gogia: "Being passionate about food, and your restaurant, plays a huge role in making your venture a success. Also, avoid diluting your business by opening franchises with people who don't share the same love for food as you do."

Priya Paul: "People come to your restaurant for food, period. It doesn't have to be a fancy five-star to be successful, you just need to ensure that your food is brilliant. Your team also plays a huge role, so see that you



Ritu's words of wisdom: "In this business, you need to be thick skinned."



Pooja explains how she started her business on Facebook by uploading daily pics of cupcakes



Gauri talked about how she personally checks every single review of The Table

have the best people on board."

Cosmo: What's your number-one tip for someone who wants to open a restaurant?

Pooja Dhingra: "Don't over think, just jump into it. If I would have sat and thought of all the things that could go wrong, I would've never done it. So as long as you're passionate about the business, just go for it—everything will fall in place eventually, and you will learn things along the way."

Ardahum Pinky Passey: "I'd say get ready to work hard. It's a 24-hour job, and while there is money, it's a lot of hard work...and not all of it is glamorous."

Naina de Bois-Jusan: "Even if you're passionate, do your homework. Have a proper plan and goal in place so you know exactly what to do."

Cosmo: What's the last major problem you faced in your restaurant?

Pooja Gogia: "Licensing is a major problem we face at Harem. Since a lot of places now shut at 12am in Delhi, people don't go out as much anymore. This has affected sales across the board."

Ritu Dalmia: "My biggest problem is bureaucracy—whether it is licencing, dealing with the department or the food import laws that keep on changing."

Naina de Bois-Jusan: "Recently, a dissatisfied customer took to social media and wrote against my chef, which got out of hand. Because of this, I had to let go of my head chef and it took me a long time to find the perfect person for the job." ■