

Lifestyle - Food

 Print

All you need to know about Community Tables

From restaurants serving hand-made pastas, to I-pad menus and now community tables – the city is full of new dining concepts. We find out more about this latest fad

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It all started with the Belgian chain restaurant Le Pain Quotidien. As you enter this delicious-smelling bakery, the first thing you notice (after the dessert studded counter, of course!) is a large pinewood table with an accommodating capacity of 14 people. The folks at LPQ proudly called it the communal table. This table promotes the purpose and message of founder Alain Coumont – that bread should be shared. “When I started Le Pain Quotidien, the concept in my head was very straightforward – the idea is simply to make a handmade bread with a good crust and a firm slice, shared around a table, to be savored among friends,” says Alain. Within a few months, The Table – a swish restaurant in the same lane, joined the bandwagon and gave the city another opportunity to dine as a community. We speak to Chef Alex Sanchez, from The Table, on this rising trend...

What is a communal table? Where does the concept originate from?

The concept of communal dining is nothing new to society. The communal table was most likely the first style of seating used in public eateries. Though it may be difficult to pinpoint the origin, the idea of a communal table has been seen everywhere from Southeast Asian street food to Irish pubs and German Taverns.

What is the idea behind having communal table at a restaurant? Does it work?

While the communal table provides a relatively small percentage of the restaurant’s total seating but it makes a statement. It sends a very clear message that our restaurant is a place of social gathering. Most importantly, it conveys a sense of comfort, as if dining in someone’s home. It provides ground for conversation, something commonly overlooked in many establishments. The communal table is well received by our guests.

How far does the concept work in a city like Mumbai?

No restaurant can rest on the acceptance of their concept alone. Running a successful restaurant is the sum of many small, well executed parts. In this light, it would be difficult for me to say whether or not it is our concept alone, or the entirety of our restaurant that is successful. What I can say is that, each time I leave the kitchen and make my rounds throughout the dining room, I can see the look of utter comfort and satisfaction on the faces of our guest at the community table.

Recipe from The Table’s kitchen

Beet Salad, Goat Cheese, Orange, Pine Nuts & Mint

Ingredients for Marinated Beetroot:

1 kg red beetroot
3 sprigs rosemary
5 sprigs thyme
½ cup olive oil
2 Tbsp vinegar
1 tbsp red onion (minced)
salt to taste

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Preheat oven to 170 degrees. Mix together the beetroot, rosemary, thyme, and ¼ cup of olive oil, ensuring the beetroot is well coated. Place ingredients into a baking dish and cover it with an aluminum foil. Bake it for one hour or until it is completely cooked. Allow the beetroot to cool, then peel and cut into bite sized

wedges. Mix wedges with remaining olive oil, sherry vinegar, and red onion and allow it marinate until for a while.

For the Goat Cheese Mousse:**Ingredients:**

1 cup soft
unripe goat cheese (without rind)
¼ cup cream

Method:

Whisk together goat cheese and cream until smooth and light. Set aside.

For Assembly:

1 recipe marinated beetroot, 1 recipe goat cheese mousse, 2 pcs oranges, (peeled, segmented), 1 orange (zested), 2 tbsp pine nuts (toasted), 1 tbsp mint (chopped)

Method:

Place a few dollops of the goat cheese mousse on the bottom of the plate. Artfully arrange the marinated beetroot and orange segments on top of the mousse. To garnish, sprinkle chopped mint, toasted pine nuts, and orange zest.

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