

Chicken tikka masala a 'true British national dish'

London - Who invented chicken tikka masala (CTM)? Not many may have heard of this dish in India, but here in Britain millions of dishes are consumed or sold every year. In British Indian restaurants more than 25 percent of all orders are for chicken tikka masala.

A former foreign secretary described it as 'a true British national dish'. So hooked are the British on the dish that now several hotels in India import the dish from here to serve British tourists in India.

So just where does chicken tikka masala come from? The concept was apparently invented, not in India but in a British Indian restaurant as recently as the 1980s. It is commonly thought that its invention came about almost by accident.

Journalist and restaurateur Iqbal Wahhab claims it was created when a Bangladeshi chef produced a dish of traditional chicken tikka only to be asked 'where's my gravy?'. The response was, supposedly, a can of cream of tomato soup and a few spices and the masala element was born.

Several chefs have laid claim to the invention of CTM. It caught on at once, and swept so rapidly round the restaurant circuit that within a couple of years it was a standard item at all curry houses in Britain.

Industry figures show that 23 million portions of the dish a year are sold in Indian restaurants. As many as 10 tonnes of chicken tikka masala are produced by Noon Products every day for sale in supermarkets.

Chef Iftekar Haris of Newport, Gwent, has written a musical in praise of it. Organisers of Kingfisher National Curry Day claim that if all the portions sold in one year in Britain were stacked they would constitute a tikka tower 2,770 times taller than the Greenwich Millennium Dome.

.*_

Factory worker's exhibition opens in Birmingham

Many Indians settled in Britain continue to pursue their cultural activities such as festivals, arts and music. They avail of several opportunities for cultural activities with support from local authorities. Thus, during festivals such as Durga Puja, several associations are able to invite speakers and singers from India.

One such person of Indian origin who has retained his interests in the arts is factory worker Kiran Valmiki, 48. Based in Smethwick in the west Midlands, the machine operator for the last 23 years has opened an exhibition of his paintings in Birmingham.

Kiran spends his days making clothes hangers at BI Composites Ltd, in Cannock, but has always painted as a hobby and impressed Number Nine Gallery, in Brindleyplace, with his creations. He was born into a family of artists in the Punjab region of India and was taught by famous artist Sobha Singh.

But when he arrived in England in 1983, the father-of-two was forced to get a job in a factory to

make ends meet and gave up on his dreams of becoming a professional artist. He was persuaded to pick up the brush again by Birmingham art dealer Bhabinder Kumar, who wanted to put Kiran's designs up in an exhibition.

Kiran said: 'My first job in Birmingham was working in a shoe factory making shoes for six months and since then have been working in various jobs on the assembly line, which I found very grim and frustrating.

'I felt life had treated me unfairly as on one hand it had created in me the gift of painting, but on the other hand I was unable to pursue it.

'But I always had hope and would always paint religious scenes or portraits on walls and ceilings of Indian temples.

'And now seeing these pictures in the gallery has made me feel like my dreams have come true. At the moment I feel like I am walking on clouds.'

.*.

Indian artistes at Birmingham Symphony Hall

One of the best known symbols of Birmingham is the famous Birmingham Symphony Hall, where legends and amateurs alike have performed over the years, including many from India. They say that you don't really make a mark in music unless you perform in this hall.

The next performers of Indian origin to take to the prestigious stage are singer Kavita Krishnamurti and her husband, the violin icon, L. Subramaniam. The two are scheduled to perform on April 30.

Another singer to perform at the hall is Mehboob Chohan, a student of Bollywood legend Mohammad Rafi, on April 7. He will pay a tribute to Rafi by singing some of his greatest numbers.

(© IANS / India eNews)