



HOME > INDIA > FOOD & DRINK

# A new restaurant in Bengaluru brings flavours of Kerala to the table

*From toddy shop 'touchings' to temple payasams, Kappa Chakka Kandhari, Koramangala, is serving nostalgia on a platter*

Share on facebook



[Anurag Mallick](#) and [Priya Ganapathy](#) |  
PUBLISHED: DEC 13, 2019 | 16:34:58 IST



Chatti meen and kozhi curry at Kappa Chakka Kandhari, Koramangala. Photo: Vinayak Grover

The [Kappa Chakka Kandhari](#) story began on a rainy day when three friends—Chef Regi Mathew, engineer John Paul, and event

manager Augustine Kurian—got nostalgic over typical childhood snacks like pazhampori and sukhiyan. “Each of us thought of our favourite items and how it would be wonderful to bring it back,” Chef Mathew reveals. And so, after three years of research and several pop-ups between Bengaluru and Dubai, they opened Kappa Chakka Kandhari in Chennai to rave reviews. This year, it was ranked **#23** at the [Condé Nast Traveller & Himalayan Top Restaurant Awards](#). Around 500 days later and 350km away, the trio is set to launch a sprawling new restaurant in Koramangala, Bengaluru.

### **Kappa Chakka Kandhari, Bengaluru**

The name itself is a talking point. Built on the three pillars or standard ingredients typical to Kerala—Kappa (tapioca), Chakka (jackfruit) and Kandhari (bird’s eye chilli)—the restaurant is an ode to home-style local fare. Be it chai kadas (tea stalls) or toddy shops, this is where the food of your childhood and youth comes together. To recreate a memory map of food, they set off on a culinary journey from Kasargod to Trivandrum (Thiruvananthapuram). “I’m from Kottayam



Share on facebook



while my partners are from Thrissur and Kannur. We went back to our roots, to our mothers. We collected their recipes, nuances and cooking methods and asked them to put us onto ten of their close childhood friends who were good cooks. From 30 homemakers it became 265 homemakers and after visiting over 70 toddy shops (beyond a point, you don't remember), we collected 800-odd recipes. Only 90 dishes have made it to the final menu, a good representation from the Malabari, Syrian Christian and Namboodiri kitchens.”

Share on facebook



Mutton chaps at Kappa Chakka Kandhari. Photo: Vinayak Grover



Share on facebook



At Kappa Chakka Kandhari, Koramangala, the ground floor space is inviting, with a verandah overlooking a tree-lined avenue. Light pours in through enormous windows and a starry ceiling of studio lights. Teak tabletops rest on vintage sewing machine-style bases. Colour tones are muted and earthy, and the white walls bear sepia images, evocative of simple childhood pleasures—mud football and catching fish with a torth (thin towel). The serving dishes are mostly black clayware, except for the ‘touchings’ in toddy shop-style white plates with coconut shell spoons and palm handles.

Share on facebook



We began with orange and lemon Goli Soda that brought in a wave of nostalgia, punching the marble down for the familiar pop ‘n fizz. There are no aerated drinks, only ethnic fare like nannari (sarsaparilla) sherbet, Absolute Kandhari—a school break classic of lime juice with a spicy kandhari kick and Kol Ice (ice lollies on sticks). Blasphemous as it may sound for a Kerala restaurant, they do not serve parota, biryani and meals. Chef laughs, “We wanted to keep the food light, inspired by the ‘touchings’, known locally as thuttu-nakki—‘touch and lick’ accompaniments served at kallu shaaps. Every toddy shop has its speciality like kappa-meen, duck mapas or clams. Portions are deliberately small, and we encourage people to try more sides and eat more protein than carbs.”





Idierachi at Kappa Chakka Kandhari. Photo: Vinayak Grover

So out came Kakka Erachi or masala-fried clams sourced from Kerala's backwaters, Ideirachi or sundried tenderloin and delicious Mutton Coconut Fry with coconut shavings. Kappa Vadas, boiled and spiced tapioca mash fried to a golden brown patty, came with an in-house beetroot puree, inspired from beetroot pickled in vinegar from Syrian Christian homes in Fort Cochin. Koorrka Ullarthiyathu or Chinese potatoes, found only in Central Travancore with a slightly more fibrous texture, were roasted in pepper and mild spices. Prawn Kizhi, a delicious pocket of prawns steamed with coconut masala in banana leaf, was reminiscent of the kizhi (poultice pouches) used in Ayurveda.

Improvising on his mother's dish, it adds an element of drama and curiosity. Ayikoora Nellikka Masala Fry has its origins in Agasthyamalai, where tribals would marinate fish with bird's eye chili, green peppercorns, wild herbs and sundried gooseberry, baking it on heated river stones, whose minerals gave the salt content. Unusual dishes never found in restaurants, here you experience Kerala's rich culinary diversity under one roof.





Ramassery idly at Kappa Chakka Kandhari. Photo: Vinayak Grover

Share on facebook



In the open kitchen, we witnessed the unique Ramassery Idly being made. Apparently, the Mudaliars, originally weavers who settled in Palghat (Palakkad) travelled to sell their wares and created these idlis that wouldn't spoil for 3-4 days. The unique steaming technique uses muslin cloth, netted clay rings, earthen pots and Plachi leaves. It is paired with chicken curry or a delicious, granular podi in coconut oil, with the crunch of Palakaddan matta rice. The sweet n' spicy Pineapple Nendram Masala—ripe nendrapazham (bananas) with spices, mustard, curry leaves and coconut oil is a standout dessert disguised as a palate cleanser.





Pidi and Rampuram kozhi curry at Kappa Chakka Kandhari. Photo: Vinayak Grover

Every dish has a story—Ramapuram's pidi (tiny rice dumplings cooked in coconut milk) with mellow country-style koli (chicken) curry is offered to devotees at the Ramapuram Church on feast day. The mains are delicious, each with

Share on facebook



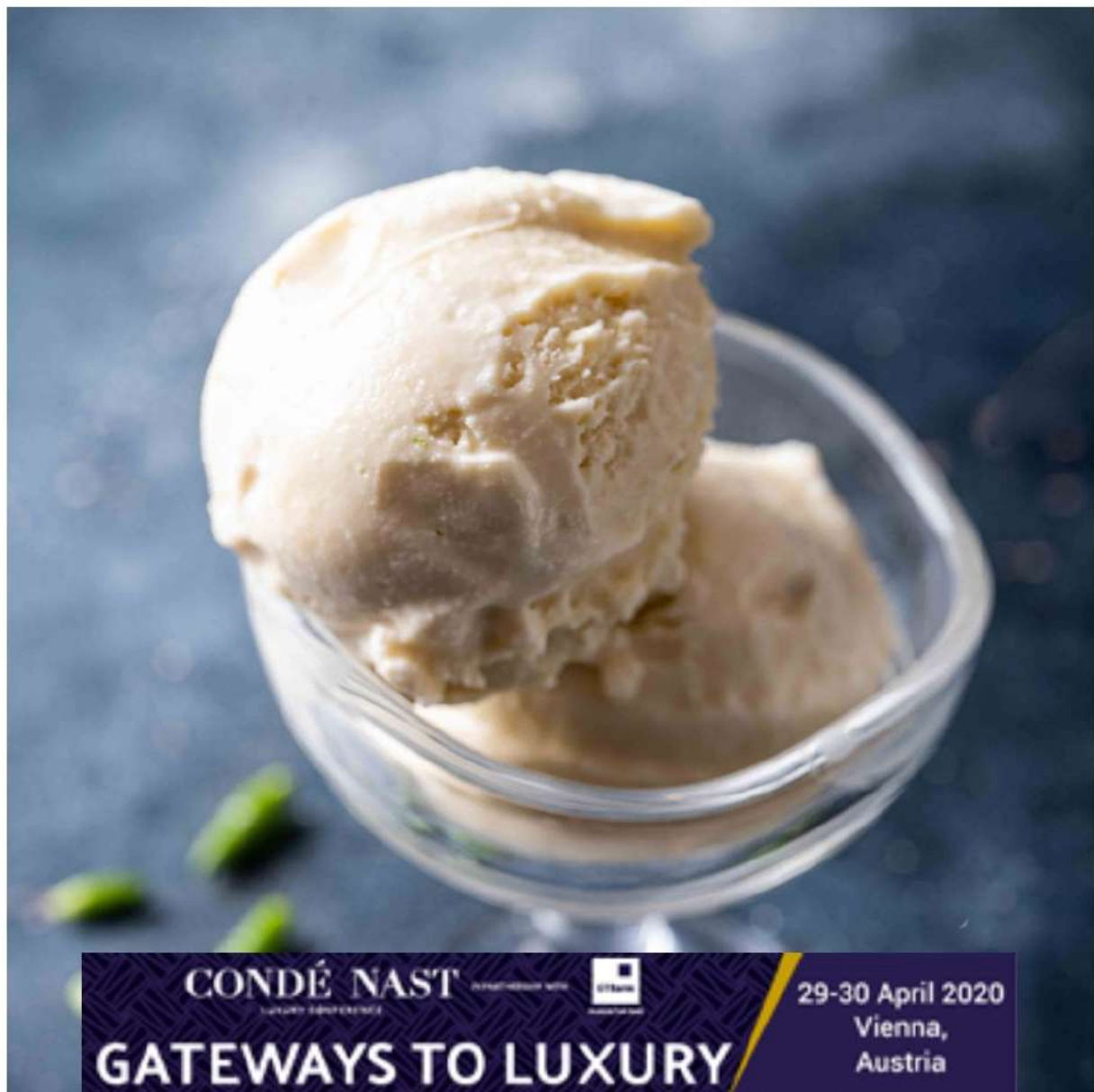
specific pairings—Vattayappam, pillowy fermented steamed rice cakes with delicately spiced Chatti Meen (Pearlspot) Curry, pathiri or typical Malabar rice roti with tantalising Mutton Chaps. The pure white ‘nice pathiri’ is from Tellicherry (Thalassery). Besides the unusual Puttu biryani, a steamed version from Cochin, there’s Maniputtu biryani or idiappam (string hoppers) available in mutton or green gram, served with papad. “Think of it as eating spaghetti,” says Chef Regi, forsaking a classical approach for a bolder attempt to make the food contemporary to a younger audience.





Njandu roast in the making. Photo: Vinayak Grover

To ensure the taste is authentic, Regi and team picked much of their staff from their travels – toddy shop cook Aachan, Sheelammachi and Sheelapriya, two ammachis from Kottayam and Fort Kochi, and a Namboodiri temple priest, who begins his cooking with a prayer. They use the open vessel, slow-cooking method in traditional cookware at a separate kitchen with Malayalam songs playing in the background! “We make a set quantity of food every day... if it gets over, it’s over.”



CONDÉ NAST



GATEWAYS TO LUXURY

29-30 April 2020  
Vienna,  
Austria



Share on facebook



Chef Regi has collected a range of payasams from across the region, but the other desserts were as exquisite—Unnakkai, kapok-pod shaped quenelles of deep-fried bananas stuffed with coconut and jaggery and the spicy Kandhari Ice Cream. Washing it down with cinnamon and spice-infused Sulaimani Tea, a meal at Kappa Chakka Kandhari left the flavours of Kerala lingering on our lips.

***Kappa Chakka Kandhari; 438, 18th Main Road, 6th Block, Koramangala, Bengaluru. Meal for two: Rs1,500+ taxes***

*In This Story:*      **BENGALURU, FOOD, KERALA, RESTAURANT**