



In 1935, Haji Hussain Ali started Café Goodluck after taking over the place from one Narayan Seth. The eatery was perhaps the first garden restaurant in Pune with 40-odd tables. Many FTII students such as Dev Anand, Rajesh Khanna and David Dhawan, who later went on to become actors and directors, would frequent the place.



IT professional Animesh Topno with his daughter at the kitchen garden on his terrace. The garden is a fine balance of flowers and seasonal veggies. (Below) Lush spinach at Kothrud resident Anupama Patil's 1,500 sq ft terrace garden —Sanket Deshpande DNA



# GREEN THUMBS UP

Aniruddha Rajandekar DNA

**T**he terrace at Animesh Topno's house used to serve as a place to dry clothes, until he came across a presentation on organic kitchen gardening. The area is now home to spinach, broccoli, methi (fenugreek leaves), tomato, basil, beetroot, cucumber, carrot, radish, onion and other veggies. Topno, a project manager in an IT firm, is the latest convert to the current trend of organic kitchen gardening, in the city. With reports of existence of pesticides in fruits, vegetables and food items becoming a regular feature in newspapers and magazines, many, like Topno, are turning to get their hands dirty and are setting up their own organic kitchen garden.

A kitchen garden is not a new concept for Pune-kars, with many of them growing up in big houses with a tree of chikoo, custard apple, guava, and harvesting seasonal veggies and herbs. However, what's new is the drive to go organic. Simply put, organic produce translates into no harm to the plant, soil or the environment. The followers of the organic sect do not use any chemical fertiliser or pesticide. Armed with neem oil pesticide, gobar khaad (cow dung manure), and vermicompost the environment-friendly brigade, which includes CEOs of companies and housewives alike, is growing stronger in the city.

## WHY THEY SWITCH

For most it's the pesticides that are found in vegetables in the market, for others it's the ever rising prices of vegetables and fruits, which leads them to become organic kitchen gardeners. Topno, however, wanted to use the space on his terrace. "I have a bungalow. While on the ground floor garden I have planted flowers, I wanted to use the terrace for gardening too," says the NIBM resident who started with common herbs like coriander which 'one usually runs out of'.

Owner of a big outdoor space (2,000 sq ft), Shrikant Pittie, wanted to utilise the slope area of his house on the river bank in Koregaon Park. "It's hard to get good quality produce at the market. Whatever is available is laced with pesticides and chemicals. Thus



the move to go organic," says Pittie, CEO and president of Solar Energie Technik Ltd.

For Anupama Patil, a Kothrud resident, it was her daughter who got the kitchen garden installed on their terrace. "My daughter is very environmentally conscious. She keeps updating herself with new ways to be eco-friendly. While researching once, she came to know about organic produce and its benefits," says Patil, who believes if one wants to eat organic, one might as well grow one's own. Today, her 1,500 sq ft garden features vegetables like spinach, okra, potato, coriander and more. Happy with the results, Patil now intends to turn her farmhouse in Peacock Bay into an organic farming area.

Anil Sohoni, a building contractor, has a long association with home-grown produce. The sexagenarian has been gardening and harvesting brinjals, coconut, mango, gourds, beans, chikoo and other fruits and veggies since 1980. "The body that the plant/tree receives from organic farming is tremendous. And that translates into the taste of the produce," says Sohoni, who also makes his own manure through a vermicompost unit.

## THE BENEFITS OF ORGANIC FARMING

Apart from the obvious reason that organic produce means no pesticides or chemicals, what draws some to organic gardening is that the produce is richer in nutrients. Vaibhav Dugar, co-founder of Ek Tilti, an organisation which helps farmers and city residents set up organic kitchen gardens in their houses or farms, says, "It

## Want to be an organic gardener?

Maintaining an organic garden is no rocket science. However, if you are starting from the scratch one should seek experts' help. Vaibhav Dugar, founder of Ek Tilti, can be reached at [vaibhav.dugar@ektilti.org](mailto:vaibhav.dugar@ektilti.org) or 9967589210. Another group functioning on similar lines is the Abhinav Farmers' Club. Dyaneshwar Bodke of the club can be reached at 9422005569.

has been proven that the nutrient and mineral content in organic produce is up to 400% higher. Another major reason to go organic is the fatality of pesticides. Of all the pesticide that is sprayed, only 1% reaches the target pest, the rest goes into the food chain. That's reason enough to go organic." He also adds that the pesticides harm not only the pest but also humans and the ecosystem (birds and bees) at large.

Many studies support the concept of organic produce being more nutritious, richer in vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids than non-organic foods. More nutrition would mean better health and immunity. But what stands out is the taste. "There is a remarkable difference in the taste of organic vegetables vis-a-vis non-organic ones," says Patil adding "Also you are sure of what is going inside your system." On a lighter note she says, "It has also attracted a lot of visitors. Many of my daughters' friends come home to see and water the garden."

Topno recounts the first time he harvested spinach from his kitchen garden, "I can't forget that fragrance. It was so fresh and different. And naturally so, the taste too was very rich," says Topno who finds the process of sowing-nurturing-harvesting an extremely rewarding and satisfying.

Rajanish Joshi, an IT professional, vouches for organic vegetables. "It is easy to grow, it promotes a healthier environment and the taste is way better than commercial veggies," says Joshi who has turned his 20X8 ft balcony into a small garden. He, however, has no complaints, "Space is a constraint, but I am extremely content with what I am doing."

# A legacy of a place

Since inception in 1935, Café Goodluck on Fergusson College Road, has emerged as an eatery famous for its *bun maska*, *bheja masala* and chocolate mousse among other dishes. Priyanka Naithani reports

**F**rom colonial bungalows to high-rise buildings, small shops to giant malls, narrow streets to four-lane roads, Pune has evolved into Pune over the years, but there are a few places which haven't really changed.

Like the city's famous Irani restaurant, popularly known as Café Goodluck. The eatery, which lords it over the busy intersection of Bhandarkar and Fergusson College roads, was perhaps the first garden restaurant in Pune with 40-odd tables.

It was in 1932, when one Narayan Seth bought a small place which was later taken over by Haji Hussain Ali Yakshi. In 1935, Haji Hussain Ali set up this food joint here, which has catered to the taste buds of several Pune-kars.

As you enter the café, you can't fail to notice the aroma of scrumptious food that pervades the surroundings. The *bun maska* with the most favoured dish of the loyal students and citizens, who come here after their morning exercise.

The place also offers varied options of egg — omelette and fried eggs, soft and fluffy scrambled eggs on toast and bun omelette. The five-star quality chocolate mousse here is savoured by all along with other desserts such as caramel pudding and kulfi. One also can't miss out on the spicy *bheja masala* or *bheja chutney* with rice.

When Haji Hussain Ali passed away in 1989, his brother Kasim took over the restaurant. Haji Hussain Ali's son Ghasem remembers visiting the restaurant as a child. "After my father's demise, I used to help my uncle. In 2001, I finally took over it. The challenge was to revise the redundant menu. It was the need of the hour to break

the monotony and so I came up with tawa and tandoori recipes," says Ghasem.

Till 2004, the young generation was reluctant to visit this place as they thought that it was meant for oldies only.

"The revised menu brought in the young crowd. As there are many colleges in the vicinity such as Modern, Fergusson, BMCC and Symbiosis, this became the most-preferred destination," adds Ghasem.

Manager Abbas Ali Khajehnoori, who has been with the café since 1965, says, "In those days, one samosa with one *chaai* and a cigarette would cost Re.1. Since the Film and Television Institute of India's inception in 1965, many actors like Dev Anand and Rajesh Khanna and director David Dhawan would visit us regularly."

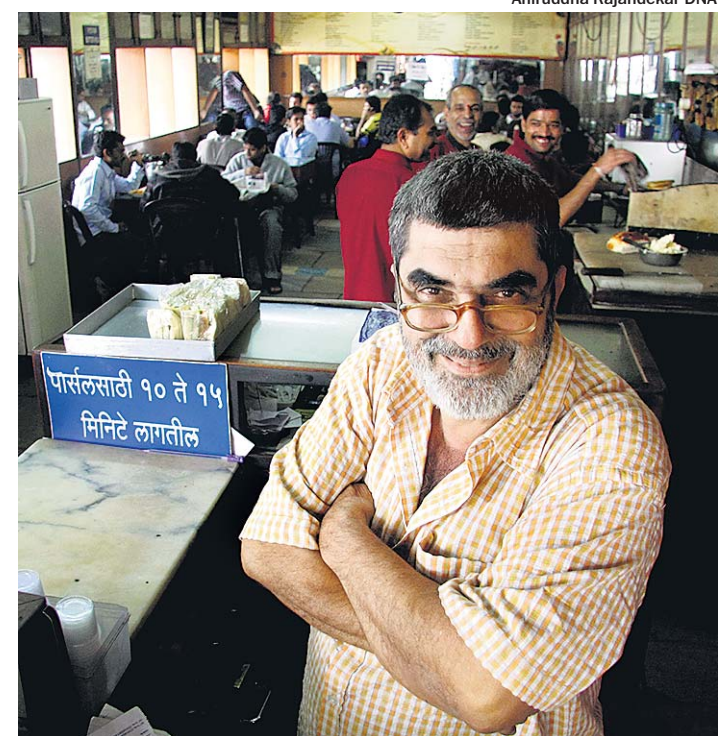
The eatery had to go through some dark days when the H1N1 virus spread in the city. "Those were the days when for the first time I felt a

crunch. The business suffered about 60% to 70% loss. I had to pay the staff from my pocket to retain them," says Ghasem.

With rising number of eateries and chains of fast food joints, Ghasem has full faith in his customers. "Competition is always good for the customers and the market. Sometimes I have to invest from my profit. Earlier, we used to revise the prices of the dishes once in three years but with sky-rocketing prices of raw materials, we revise the cost of dishes every year," says Ghasem.

The restaurant's USP has been its inexpensive and delicious yet fulfilling food. The café has come up with free home delivery service to areas like Aundh, Kothrud, Prabhat and Bhandarkar roads. The 'luck' sure is taking it places.

Aniruddha Rajandekar DNA



Manager Abbas Ali Khajehnoori has been with Café Goodluck since 1965

## Letters to the editor

### Analyse the need for metro in Pune

This is with reference to the editorial titled, 'Elevated or underground, give Pune a metro' (November 24). Your article states that the metro project is critical to Pune because of the poor state of its public transport system.

As someone, who commutes by PMPML buses, I agree with the sentiment that Pune's mass transit system is in a mess. As a student, I cannot afford autorickshaw fares. Every day, I have to walk for 20 minutes to reach Swargate to take a bus. Once there, the wait for buses is a long one. Most

buses don't have the desired frequency. Sometimes the drivers do not stop the buses even when they can see the passengers running behind the bus. However, I beg to differ that the metro project is critical to Pune. We already have a transport system that can be made efficient. Regrouping and restructuring timetables is needed. An intense study on the least connected areas of the city is needed. The real problem is the lack of proper and proactive governance. The logical step is to have debates on the "need" for the metro project; even if the cost is delay. —Meenal Tatpati, Pune

### Anna, watch your words

As per reports appearing in the electronic media and the press, Anna Hazare asked, "He was slapped? Was he slapped only once?", when informed about the incident. Hazare or for that matter any responsible person who is known for his work and speech all over India should be very careful in the use of words. Although he subsequently made another statement, the first impression created some bad feeling in the minds of the people. It is very difficult to build up a good reputation among the followers, but it does not take much time to destroy the



respect and reputation. I request Anna and his team to concentrate on the methods to fight corruption. —SS Nair, Mumbai

### Flawed logic

The Trinmool Congress and opposition parties had expressed their disapproval on the government's decision to permit multi-brand FDI retail up to 51% in 53 urban

areas. Their argument is that the FDI with its vast resources would have an advantage over the domestic players, who have entered the industry recently. But the Agriculture Produce Market Committee Act already protects the domestic retailers and therefore, this argument does not stand to reason. Restricting the flexibility of operations and product quality of FDI multi-brand retailers would introduce a benchmark in the retail business. This will also eliminate rapacious middlemen, who skim off a large share of profit, that would now go to farmers. Ultimately the consumers

will get high quality products at cheaper rates. —C Koshy John, Pune

### Shivaji, the true secular hero

The write-up by Francois Gautier, 'The hijacking of Shivaji Maharaj by vested interests' (November 23), is an eye-opener. It is good to see that a French man has an insight into the subject to state that we Hindus are our own enemies, a fact we tend to ignore. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was and will always be the true secular hero we Indians will look up to. —Suru Shivdasani, Pune

### Kishenji death a treacherous act

Kishenji, and Suchitra Mahato's run was ended when near 1,000 CRPF jawans and policemen, led by CoBRA commandos, launched a massive assault on them. Hardly two year ago these Maoists had supported Mamata Banerjee, who used them in Singoor, Lalgarh and East Midnapore to come to power. Then way Mamata's force along with central forces killed the same person. It is not only shocking but looks like a treacherous act on the part of the WB government. —Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee, Faridabad