

Ministry of Tourism



PHDCCI kick starts grand contest to preserve Indian culinary heritage

First round of National Young Chef Competition held in Chandigarh for North Zone 11 hospitality institutes participate in live cook-off; two teams advance to Grand Finale

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The vocabulary of culinary institutions in the country needs to change to reflect the rich culture and history of Indian cuisine. This was stated by Chef Manjit Gill at the launch of India's first national-level competition for young chefs which was held in Chandigarh today for the six states of northern region.

Conceptualised by the 120-year old PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), the National Young Chef Competition (NYCC) aims at 'Celebrating Indian Culinary Heritage and Blending Tradition with Innovation'. Spread over six months, with the second zonal round to be held in Kolkata on September 18 for eastern region, third in Mumbai for western region and fourth in Kovalam, Kerala on December 18 for the southern region, the NYCC is being organised in partnership with the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA); Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC).



At the North Zone round which was held here at the Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Hotel Management, there was an exciting showcase of skill and innovation by the 11 participating teams which represented premier hospitality institutes of the north. Two teams, from IHM Pusa New Delhi and IHM Kufri were declared winners of the first zonal round and will now compete with other zonal winners in the grand finale in New Delhi in January 2026. The team from Indian Culinary Institute, Noida was declared runner-up.



In its maiden edition, NYCC is open for final-year hospitality students from all types of institutions, whether government, private, stand-alone or university departments, specialising in hospitality and hotel management. The aim is to provide a much-needed focus on Indian cuisine, its richness, vastness, unique techniques and flavours. NYCC will serve as a platform for young chefs to showcase their talent and connect them with industry for internships and job opportunities.



The multi-level competition involves each institute sending one entry in the form of recipes and photographs for the qualifier round. Once selected by the screening committee for entry into the competition, each team is required to prepare a three-course Indian meal comprising starter, main course and dessert. The actual cooking is done for two and half hours under the watchful eyes of judges, mentors, marshals and cheering onlookers.

The focus is on reinterpretation of traditional flavours using modern techniques. The participating institutes in the North Zone round included Ashok Institute of Hospitality & Tourism Management (AIHTM), Chandigarh Institute of Hotel Management (CIHM), Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Hotel Management (AIHM), Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) Noida, Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) Gurdaspur, IHM Hamirpur, IHM Kufri, IHM Lucknow, IHM Pusa, International Institute of Culinary Arts (IICA) New Delhi and The Lalit Suri Hospitality School, Haryana.

The Chair of the jury was Chef Anil Grover, Certified WorldChefs Judge and included Chef Nand Lal Sharma, Deputy General Manager, Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation; Chef Sanjiv Verma, Chef & Partner, Pashtun Restaurant; and Chef Deepak Sarkar, Executive Chef, Hyatt Regency Chandigarh.

Chef Gill, President, IFCA, shared his thoughts, saying, “This competition is not just about identifying the best young chefs, it’s about preserving India’s culinary identity and passing it forward. In a world rapidly moving toward homogenized food culture, NYCC celebrates regional diversity and calls us back to our roots with a modern flair.”

Ms. Shalini S Sharma, Assistant Secretary General, PHDCCI, added, “We see NYCC not just as a competition, but a movement. It brings together education, industry and youth, fostering aspirational pathways for students and pride in Indian gastronomy. We are deeply thankful to our partners and stakeholders for their invaluable support.”

Chef Sudhir Sibal, Founder Member, IFCA and Steering Committee Member of NYCC was also present at first zonal round to encourage and support the participants.

Commenting on the competition, Chef Grover, said, “What stood out today was the students’ ability to reimagine traditional Indian cuisine with modern finesse and clarity. This level of confidence and creativity is exactly what the future of hospitality demands.”

In parallel, a Career Sensitization Workshop was conducted for Class 11 and 12 students from THSC-empaneled schools. Led by Mr. Abhishek Anand, Vice President – Assessment and Certification, THSC, the workshop introduced students to diverse career opportunities in hospitality and tourism, addressing the growing enrolment gap in hospitality education across the country.

NYCC is supported by a strong consortium of industry partners including TATA Consumer Products, Nestle Professional, Cremica Food Industries Ltd, Venus Industries Ltd, Hospitality & Kitchen Solutions (HAKS), Wagh Bakri Tea Group, Welbilt India (Merrychef & Convotherm), McCain

Foods, Mann Fleet Partners, Chefs Unlimited, Purchasing Professional Forum – India (PPFI) and Hospitality Purchasing Managers Forum (HPMF).

For more information, visit:

<https://phdccitourismhospitality.in/upcoming-events/phdcci-national-chef-competition/>

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