

Ministry of Tourism



Chennai hosts final zonal round as PHDCCI concludes nationwide National Young Chef Competition journey

All eyes now on NYCC Grand Finale at IHM Pusa, New Delhi on 19 January 2026

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PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) organized the South Zone round of National Young Chef Competition (NYCC) at the Faculty of Hotel Management & Culinary Arts, Dr. M.G.R. Educational & Research Institute, Chennai, bringing together high- potential culinary students from leading hotel management institutes across Southern India.



Organised in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA); and Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC), the South Zone round continued NYCC's national mission of '*Celebrating Indian Culinary Heritage: Blending Tradition with Innovation*' by encouraging young chefs to reinterpret classical Indian flavours using contemporary techniques, while remaining rooted in regional traditions.



Spread over six months, NYCC has travelled across the country through four zonal rounds before culminating in a Grand Finale in New Delhi. Following the successful North, East and West Zone rounds held in Chandigarh, Kolkata and Mumbai respectively, the final zonal spotlight shifted to Chennai, where seven institutes competed in an intense live cook-off, showcasing creativity, innovation and strong technical skill.



Following a closely contested competition, three teams from Culinary Academy of India, Hyderabad; Asian Christian Culinary & Agricultural Science Institute, Hosur and IHM, Hyderabad emerged as winners and will represent the South Zone at the Grand Finale. Team from IHM Shri Shakti, Hyderabad was declared the runner-up.

In its maiden edition, NYCC is open exclusively to final-year hospitality students across government, private, stand-alone institutions and university departments specializing in hospitality and hotel management. The initiative aims to create a focused national platform for Indian cuisine, highlighting its depth, diversity and regional techniques, while connecting aspiring chefs with the industry for internships, mentorship and long-term career opportunities.

The participating institutes in the South Zone round included Asian Christian Culinary & Agricultural Science Institute, Hosur; Chennais Amirta International Institute of Hotel Management; Culinary Academy of India, Hyderabad; Hindusthan College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore; IHM Shri Shakti, Hyderabad; Indian Culinary Institute, Tirupati; and

Institute of Hotel Management, Hyderabad. Each participating team prepared a three-course Indian meal comprising starter, main course and dessert within two and a half hours.

The jury for the South Zone round was chaired by Chef Anil Grover, Certified WorldChefs Judge and included Chef Ajeeth Janardhanan, Culinary Director, The Residency Towers; Chef Prem Kumar Mahendran, Executive Chef, Welcomhotel Chennai; Chef Natesan Kannan, Chief Coordinator, SICA Junior Forum; and Chef Nageshwaran K, Executive Sous Chef, GRT Hotels & Resorts.

Renowned Indian Celebrity Chef, K. Damodharan (Chef Damu), while interacting with the participants, remarked, “Indian cuisine is deeply rooted in culture, memory and emotion and it is essential for young chefs to first understand its soul before reinterpreting it. What impressed me today was the sincerity with which students approached traditional flavours while presenting them with confidence and creativity. Initiatives like NYCC play a crucial role in nurturing chefs who respect tradition, yet have the courage to innovate and take Indian cuisine to global platforms.”

Commenting on the competition, Chef Grover, said, “The South Zone round stood out for its strong technical fundamentals and confident expression of Indian flavours. Platforms like NYCC are critical in shaping chefs who understand not just how to cook, but why we cook the way we do.”

Ms. Sulagna Ghosh, Secretary, PHDCCI, added, “The South Zone round of NYCC reflects the immense talent and discipline that hospitality education in Southern India offers. NYCC is steadily evolving into a national movement that connects education, industry and youth, while reinforcing pride in India’s culinary heritage.”

The Grand Finale of NYCC will be held on 19 January 2026 at the Institute of Hotel Management Pusa, New Delhi and will be graced by Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon’ble Minister of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, as the Chief Guest.

NYCC continues to be supported by a strong consortium of industry partners including TATA Consumer Products, Lee Kum Kee, Nestle Professional, Cremica Food Industries, Venus Industries, Hospitality & Kitchen Solutions (HAKS), Wagh Bakri Tea Group, Welbilt India (Merrychef & Convotharm), McCain Foods, Chefs Unlimited, Dr. M.G.R. Educational & Research Institute, South India Chef's Association (SICA) and Purchasing Professional Forum – India (PPFI).

For further details on NYCC, please visit the PHDCCI events page: <https://phdcccitourismhospitality.in/upcoming-events/phdcci-national-chef-competition/>

Sunil Kumar Tiwari

[tourism4pib\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:tourism4pib[at]gmail[dot]com)

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