

Ministry of Tourism



# Young Chefs Are Torchbearers of India's Culinary Heritage: Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

**Symbiosis School of Culinary Arts, Pune wins Grand Finale of PHDCCI National Young Chef Competition 2025–26**

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Symbiosis School of Culinary Arts and Nutritional Sciences, Pune emerged as the Winner of the maiden PHDCCI National Young Chef Competition (NYCC) 2025–26, at the Grand Finale held at the Institute of Hotel Management (IHM), Pusa, New Delhi. Maharashtra State IHMCT, Pune and IHM Pusa, New Delhi were declared the 1st Runner-Up and 2nd Runner-Up, respectively. The Best Bhaja Dish award was conferred upon Chef's Kitchen Institute of Culinary Arts and Hotel Management, Kolhapur.

Gracing the occasion as Chief Guest, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, said, “Indian cuisine is among our most powerful cultural assets and a vital pillar of tourism-led growth. Our food traditions reflect the diversity, wisdom and lived heritage of our regions, and our young chefs are the torchbearers of this legacy.” He noted that rapid urbanisation and changing consumption patterns offer Indian chefs a unique opportunity to lead innovation in value-added, nutritionally balanced and ready-to-eat food solutions rooted in traditional knowledge systems. “Platforms like NYCC nurture chefs who are deeply rooted in tradition yet globally confident, capable of representing India’s culinary excellence on the world stage,” he added.



The Grand Finale brought together 10 leading hospitality institutions representing all four zones of the country—Asian Christian Culinary & Agricultural Science Institute, Hosur; Chef's Kitchen Institute of Culinary Arts and Hotel Management, Kolhapur; Culinary Academy of India, Hyderabad; IHM Bhubaneswar; IHM Kolkata; IHM Kufri; IHM Pusa, New Delhi; IHM Hyderabad; Maharashtra State IHMCT, Pune; and Symbiosis School of Culinary Arts and Nutritional Sciences, Pune—highlighting the pan-India character of the competition.



The finalists were evaluated by an eminent jury comprising Chef Nand Lal Sharma, Deputy General Manager, Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation; Chef Deanjeet Majumdar, Consultant Chef & Co-Founder, Passion 4 Hospitality; Chef Nitin Shende, Professor – Food Production, GIHMCT Nagpur; Chef Srinivas V, Executive Chef, Travel Food Services; and Chef M. Prabu, Joint Registrar, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute, under the chairmanship of Chef Anil Grover, Certified WorldChefs Judge.



Organised by PHDCCI in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA) and the Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC), NYCC marked the culmination of a six-month nationwide culinary journey celebrating India's rich gastronomic heritage while creating a focused national platform for Indian cuisine.

Welcoming the delegates, Mr. Anil Parashar, Chair – Tourism & Hospitality Committee, PHDCCI, said, “NYCC was envisioned not merely as a competition, but as a national movement to restore pride in Indian cuisine among young professionals. The overwhelming response from institutions across India validates the relevance and timing of this initiative.”

The NYCC Steering Committee comprised Chef Manjit Gill, President, IFCA; Chef Anil Grover, Certified WorldChefs Judge; Chef Sudhir Sibal, Founder Member, IFCA; Mr. Rajan Bahadur, CEO, THSC; Prof. Kamal Kant Pant, Principal, IHM Pusa; and Mr. Amarjit Singh Ahuja, Director–Procurement, Le Meridien New Delhi.

Delivering the theme address, Chef Manjit Gill, President, IFCA and Chair of the NYCC Steering Committee, said, “Indian cuisine is not merely a collection of recipes; it is a philosophy shaped by history, science and cultural memory. NYCC encourages young chefs to respect the roots of Indian cooking and reinterpret them with honesty, skill and responsibility.”

Mr. Rajan Sehgal, Co-Chair – Tourism & Hospitality Committee, PHDCCI, noted, “NYCC exemplifies the power of collaboration between industry, academia and government. With mentorship, national exposure and fair evaluation, young talent becomes confident, employable and future-ready.”

The Grand Finale followed an intense live cook-off format, challenging participants to prepare a traditional Bhojan—including a bhaja preparation, main dish, vegetable and pulses preparations, curd preparation, rice or bread, and a sweet—within two and a half hours, with evaluation based on technique, authenticity, innovation, sustainability and presentation.

Presenting the NYCC journey and vision ahead, Ms. Shalini S. Sharma, Assistant Secretary General, PHDCCI, said that from the curtain-raiser to four zonal rounds across North, East, West and South India, NYCC engaged over

100 hospitality institutions nationwide, with plans to scale it into a sustained national platform offering structured mentorship and industry integration.

Proposing the vote of thanks, Ms. Meena Bhatia, Co-Chair – Tourism & Hospitality Committee, PHDCCI, reaffirmed PHDCCI's commitment to institutionalising NYCC as a flagship national initiative and expanding its impact in the years ahead.

NYCC was supported by leading industry partners including TATA Consumer Products, Lee Kum Kee, Nestlé Professional, Cremica Food Industries, Venus Industries, Hospitality & Kitchen Solutions (HAKS), Hilton, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, Wagh Bakri Tea Group, Welbilt India, McCain Foods, Chefs Unlimited, Le Meridien New Delhi, and the Purchasing Professional Forum India (PPFI), underscoring strong industry confidence in the initiative.

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