

20 Years of Chic Elegance: Paradise Road The Gallery Café



Paradise Road The Gallery Café is a landmark that reflects the identity of Sri Lanka

Paradise Road The Gallery Café, a landmark in the city of Colombo, celebrates two decades of refined elegance and ambience that reflect the persona of its bold founder, Shanth Fernando.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe

Photographs Mahesh Bandara and Menaka Aravinda

Geoffrey Bawa entrusted his beloved property, which was his office in my care and I promised that I would create something to his credit. I have succeeded in keeping my word,” says Shanth Fernando. While remaining true to the renowned architect’s style, the building was transformed into a chic gallery and restaurant that is unique and which set the standard for others to follow. The identity of Paradise Road that is inherently Shanth Fernando is visible throughout the space, and the ambience created is one of timelessness that has remained so for the past 20 years.



Shanth Fernando, Founder,
Paradise Road The Gallery
Cafe

Today, Paradise Road The Gallery Café, is an internationally recommended must visit place in Sri Lanka for the sophisticated traveller that appreciates the exquisite essence of this uniquely curated designer space. As Shanth Fernando explains, The Gallery Café is the most visited Geoffrey Bawa building in Sri Lanka. Interestingly, the clientele are repeat patrons who continue to enjoy the delicious menu that has been specially created with some of Shanth Fernando's favourite dishes and from the experiences he has garnered from his many travels overseas.

"We incorporate new things but we do not change the character of the space. If I redecorate or add a new dish to the menu, the change is minimal. I do not alter the ambience or feel of the place", explained Shanth Fernando. The menu features an eclectic blend of international and Sri Lankan cuisine that is sophisticated in terms of taste as well as presentation. The extensive dessert menu includes over 30 delicious preparations that are specially created by Shanth Fernando's wife, Angelika. "We do a lot of research to enhance what we are doing. It is all about living and doing things in a particular way. We have our own style and identity. The Gallery Café has never competed with any other restaurant," he further elaborated.

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The exterior and interior maintain the vernacular architecture. Together with the characteristic Paradise Road black and white stripes that adorn the various features of the restaurant and subtle yet exquisite furnishing, the perfect fusion of the old and contemporary has enabled the timeless ambience of the Paradise Road The Gallery Café. The open courtyards and dining areas provide a unique tropical vibe.



The open courtyard provides a unique tropical elegance

Paradise Road The Gallery Café is also special for another reason, as it was the first to have an art gallery and restaurant within the same space that essentially complemented each other. “In terms of the art gallery, I choose the art that will suit the space,” explained Shanth Fernando. Exhibitions are held and artists are selected with great thought and sensitivity, as this is not a commercial property but a heritage of the country. Through his endeavour in encouraging artists in Sri

Lanka, Shanth Fernando created a platform for them to receive the required experience and exposure through the Paradise Road The Gallery Café that would propel them to an international level. “We have given them the space to exhibit in a professional manner. We were the first to introduce previews and exhibition catalogues. We were able to establish the standard and level of professionalism that was required for artists to develop and create”, he elaborated.



Sophistication and creativity. Shanth Fernando has created a platform that encourages artists in Sri Lanka.

20 years on Shanth Fernando reminisces, “We have wonderful memories and we have made our mark. People know what we are doing. That is what is important. We will do what we do best in the future as well. My children Annika and Saskia who have their own successful businesses, too have my vision and appreciation for design and art.”

Paradise Road The Gallery Café continues to be an icon that is special and reflects the identity of the country. It is in a league of its own that no one can surpass. Shanth Fernando has indeed created a ‘paradise’ for posterity.

Opening hours; 10am to midnight daily
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It is the first space to have both a restaurant and art gallery.



The distinctive courtyard and pond reflecting Geoffrey Bawa's unique style.



The interior subtly features black and white stripes amidst objets d'art.



Paradise Road The Gallery Cafe fosters a timeless and chic ambiance



Black Pork Curry, a signature dish



Flavoursome Nasi Goreng with chicken and prawn



A sweet delight, the Chocolate Nemesis



The café is a perfect fusion of eclectic charm.