



Pilawoos magic draws the crowds

Twelve midnight on a Saturday and the capital's kottu hub, the 24/7 open Pilawoos on 417 Galle Road, Colombo 3 is seamlessly moving into its third shift. It is the late night pit stop for night owl revelers and is the capital's number one chop-chop kottu hub.

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Photographs Menaka Aravinda and Vishwathan Tharmakulasingham



Nadeer, son of Founder Mohammed Niyaz

It is Pilawoos at 417, Galle Road, Colombo 3, busiest session after sundown, especially on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. The time when the first wave of the city's fun loving, nightclubbing, party-going set hits the Pilawoos shore. The pit stop to refuel, to fortify themselves with the restaurant's offerings before they head off to enjoy the thrill and spin of another heady night on the party and clubbing circuit. For them the night has just begun. And for Pilawoos, the night is still young.

But before nightclubbing, partying set, another wave has already made landfall. The jet set. The tourist throng who storm its portals every night. Some have come to taste the Kottu

experience for the first time, after having learnt of its existence before arriving in the country. Many are returning to its tables to relive its kottu cuisine. Some of them had even made advance bookings to reserve a table.

Then, of course, there is the expat clientele who are the regulars, patronizing Pilawoos on a double weekly basis as a part of their routine of dining out. For them it's a family outing and they come with their children at an earlier hour to enjoy the kottu feed. Not to forget the Sri Lankans living abroad who, when they return home on holiday, make a beeline to this gourmet hub of the kottu straight from the airport to plunge their fingers into the good old kottu even before going home.

So what draws them, to Pilawoos'? On offer are the delicious biriyani, string hopper biriyani, egg roti special, chicken and cheese roti, chocolate roti and even a Masala Submarine, a fast food Pilawoos' creation that come in a long hotdog style bun. Wash it up with refreshing Pilawoos faluda, milkshakes, ice milo, Sri Lankan green orange juice or lime and mint drinks, but there's much more!

But the magnet and the magic that draws tourists, expats, Sri Lankans living abroad, and Colombo's night owls to swoop on this small joint is the kottu!

Pilawoos offers the cheese kottu, the masala kottu, the palandi kottu, the dolphin kottu made of fresh parathas and the chicken and cheese kottu, the top of the kottu pops at the establishment.

It is not only the Sri Lanka's cricket team that retires to this eating room to enjoy the Pilawoos kottu but visiting teams from India and Pakistan are regulars who come for second innings during their fixtures in Sri Lanka; to be willingly bowled over once again by Pilawoos' Kottu's enticing taste. Indian film stars too visit Pilawoos to enjoy their favourite dishes whenever they come to Sri Lanka. Also, Sri Lankan personalities too are regulars at this 'happening' place.



Mouthwatering variety of kottu - the Pilawoos signature

So what's the secret of its magic spin? What makes its kottu special from all the other kottu places in town? What makes Galle Road's stretch before Pilawoos' be doubled parked each night? What makes the pavement be full of folks seated at Pilawoos be packed to jam? What makes the tables within burst through the door and find its place on the sidewalk and inside many a car lined in row with its occupants gobbling it up with relish?

What is its secret? What's its magic? It is time to find out. Nadeer, the son of the founder, Mohammed Niyaz describes the origin of Pilawoos, which, incidentally has no connection with a host of other Pilawoos in town:

"My father started this in 1979 as a normal hotel. But it wasn't that successful. Then with many nightclubs opening, he discerned a demand for a fast food venue that is open all night. And he chose the kottu as his flagship. Thereafter its' rise became phenomenal..."

But what's the secret that makes Pilawoos' food such a hit? "the kottu is made according to my father's recipe. We do not add any artificial flavourings or MSG to any of the dishes that

we make. All are made using natural ingredients and we serve generously.” This is the secret of Pilawoos success.



The energetic, friendly and bubbly team at Pilawoos

The chop chop music of the Kottu being made can be heard throughout the night and whatever the order, the service is quick. All customers are served with a smile by all who work here right up to the car door. In fact, they don't wait to be called. They run up to the vehicles to take the customers' orders and "it is the service that we provide that has made our Pilawoos such a success", says Nadeer.

The night's not over yet. After the first midnight wave had lashed the shore and had its fill and returned to enjoy the night, a new wave lashes the shore each hour. New orders for kottu flow. The late night revelers making another pit stop at Pilawoos to feed on its prized kottu before heading home to hit the sack.

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Pilawoos: the Popular Joint

