

Relishing seafood with a bit of fun

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(Left): M Shafraz Anees, MD - MFM, Sri Lanka, (Right): Davy Wee, CEO - MFM, Malaysia

A health conscious menu of fresh sea food combined with a cheeky attitude has made Manhattan Fish Market a hit in Sri Lanka.

Words Mamduh Waheed

It was a surprise to Davy Wee, CEO - The Manhattan Fish Market International (MFM) when the franchise's Sri Lankan's Facebook page received over 25,000 Likes within a month of opening. "I did not initially believe it when it was mentioned to me. It took almost six years for our Singaporean page to have 25,000 Likes." And the popularity of the restaurant did not end with the Facebook page. The interest generated in the restaurant, which completed two months in Sri Lanka only in August, has kept some waiting for more than two weeks for a table.

Visibly chuffed also was M Shafraz Anees, MD - MFM Sri Lanka, due to the immense interest in the restaurant. "I think it is a combination of factors, which includes our service as well as the food and ambience of the place," he said of the popularity of the restaurant with local patrons.

Anees, who is the Sri Lankan franchisee for MFM, does not come with a background in food and beverage, although he certainly is passionate about it. "I was looking for something and what struck me with MFM was the total experience that the brand offered. Not only the food, but also how visitors are greeted at the restaurant, how the interior is decorated and the visual displays of the chefs," he further explained.

The total experience that MFM offers does not end with the interior and the greetings. And certainly it is the excellent dishes offered that has kept repeaters visiting the outlet again and again.

Inspired by the renowned Fulton Fish Market in Manhattan, New York, the aspiration of MFM when it started was to offer freshly sourced western style seafood at affordable prices.

Now running its third generation menu, MFM offers a variety of seafood. And although over 70 percent of the dishes were fried in the first menu MFM offered, now it is the grilled, baked, poached or flamed dishes that have become the signature offerings from the franchise.

Trainers have also been visiting Sri Lanka to ensure that the staff - all Sri Lankan - are performing up to the standards that have made MFM such a favourite in the countries they are present. Currently MFM has outlets in Malaysia (where the brand was launched), Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They have also signed franchise agreements with partners in Myanmar and UAE and is expecting to finalise more agreements in Philippines and Vietnam too - all happening this year.

"Training is a very important aspect of our management. We ensure that the staff are up to our standards before we launch in a new country," explained Davy Wee.

MFM Sri Lanka has done so well so fast that its mother company, Bright Group of Companies is already contemplating a second outlet. "I did not foresee this. But I believe we have been able to offer something unique to our customers. And we would like to consolidate our presence with another outlet opening soon," said Anees of the future plans for MFM in Sri Lanka.

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