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Empowering Readers: Our Most Precious Asset

“We conceptualized Villa Maya as a unique space where nostalgia meets modernity”

It was when the dynamic Shafee Ahmed, Cluster GM, Gokulam Grand Hotel & Spa, Bangalore spoke highly of the restaurant Villa Maya and the innovative Sashi Jacob, VP (who is also the Chef), that I decided to visit this wonderful gastronomically friendly restaurant. And I wasn't disappointed as I not only savoured the delicacies to the fullest but also enjoyed the company of Sashi Jacob.

Nestled in the heart of Trivandrum, Kerala, Villa Maya is an award-winning restaurant. The lush gardens, water features, and heritage architecture provide a refreshing environment, encouraging creativity, collaboration, and relaxation. Guests can savour award-winning dishes while enjoying the enchanting ambiance of its indoor halls or lush outdoor settings.

Created by the reputed top business house Muthoot Pappachan Group which has its roots in numerous sectors including Retail Trading, Financial Services, Automotive, Realty, IT Services, Healthcare, Precious Metals, Global Services, Alternate Energy and Hospitality Villa Maya is today among the top restaurants in the city.

Headed by **Sashi Jacob, VP, MPG Group**, a visionary leader, whose creative expertise and operational excellence has significantly shaped the hospitality division's success. Beginning his career in 1991 as a chef, Sashi has worked in hotels, cruises, airline catering etc. Under his leadership, MPG's flagship property, Villa Maya, has achieved numerous prestigious awards over the years, becoming a benchmark for excellence in the industry. In a tête-à-tête with our Editor he highlights how Villa Maya is unique. **Excerpts**



What was the idea behind creating Villa Maya?

Villa Maya is a living testament to history, culture, and timeless elegance. Set in a meticulously restored Dutch manor – 250+ years old, which once belonged to the Maharaja of Travancore, Villa Maya beautifully bridges the past and the present. Recognizing its rich heritage, we conceptualized Villa Maya as a unique space where nostalgia meets modernity.

Every element of Villa Maya has been thoughtfully designed to evoke a sense of the glorious past, whether through the curated menu, the warm traditional welcome, guided palace tours, or the overall immersive experience. This seamless blend of heritage and contemporary hospitality ensures that Villa Maya is more than just a restaurant—it's a journey into history, offering moments that are best experienced rather than explained.

Villa Maya is not just about dining; it's about reliving history, creating memories, and savouring the essence of timeless elegance.

With Trivandrum having so many restaurants and star hotels, how do you distinguish yourself?

Villa Maya offers a dining experience that blends history, creativity, and sustainability, combining heritage charm with innovative gastronomy. We are renowned for our globally inspired menu with flavors from ethnic Kerala, Indian, Mediterranean, and Italian cuisines.

Each dish reflects a commitment to eco-conscious practices, using locally-sourced ingredients and sustainable presentation methods, ensuring every meal is both exquisite and impactful.

Our chefs craft culinary masterpieces that reimagine tradition with a modern twist, while our clients, are our true marketing ambassadors, share the unforgettable moments we create. At Villa Maya, every visit is a journey through culture, history, and exceptional hospitality.



With Villa Maya doing extremely well, what was the need for Bakers Arch?

As a group we are deeply passionate about our ventures, we have always prioritized creating unique and memorable experiences for our patrons. After achieving our goal of making Villa Maya a standalone brand synonymous with excellence, we ventured into opening a second outlet in Trivandrum.

When conceptualizing a second outlet, it was imperative for us to ensure it would not replicate what Villa Maya offers. Instead, it needed to carve out its own identity and match the reputation we had earned through Villa Maya's success. Baker's Arch is a manifestation of this vision—distinct in its offerings, designed to cater to a different audience, while still reflecting the passion, quality, and innovation that define us as a group.

Each element of Baker's Arch was carefully thought out to ensure it would stand on its own as a unique product, offering something entirely different from Villa Maya in terms of cuisine, concept, and experience. Through this, we aim to diversify not only our offerings but also the culinary landscape of Trivandrum.



Loved the creativity at your restaurants. Where do you find these inspirations?

Inspiration for me comes from blending history, culture, and innovation. I've always believed in thinking out of box, and with Villa Maya, we wanted every element to tell a story. From the architecture to the food, we worked hard to create a dining experience that feels unique and meaningful. This philosophy extends to the dishes we serve—I've even incorporated ancient spice boxes as part of the plating, bringing history to the forefront in a way that feels fresh and engaging. Every detail reflects a journey, one that connects tradition with creativity, making every meal not just food but an experience to remember.

Sustainable food movement is the buzz word. What is the scene at your restaurants?

Villa Maya proudly stands at the forefront of the sustainable food movement, integrating eco-conscious practices into every aspect of its operations. From sourcing locally-grown ingredients to minimize carbon footprints, to using eco-friendly materials for plating and presentation, sustainability is at the heart of what we do.

Our commitment extends to effective waste management, energy-saving measures, and crafting culinary experiences that celebrate locally-sourced products. At Villa Maya, every dish is not just a meal but a statement of responsibility — blending exceptional flavors with a deep respect for our environment.

Theres a lot of talk that food could also be a form of therapy. Your views.

I couldn't agree more. Being deeply rooted in the culinary world, I find immense calm and clarity when immersed in creating. Working on new menus and exploring unique concepts allows me to channel my creativity, offering a sense of relaxation and focus like nothing else. For me, the joy lies in thinking out of box—crafting ideas that push boundaries and bring something entirely.

How can Villa Maya be a MICE destination?

It already is. It doubles as an ideal destination for MICE. Known for its historic charm and contemporary elegance, Villa Maya offers a perfect blend of functionality and aesthetics, making it a standout choice for hosting exceptional events. It features a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces that can accommodate different event sizes and themes. With modern audio-visual technology, high-speed internet, and professional lighting setups, Villa Maya ensures your business meetings and conferences are conducted seamlessly. I believe Villa Maya is not just a venue—it's an experience.

On a personal front how did you enter the cooking world?

I've always been a creative person, quick to bring ideas to life, even with limited time or resources. My artistic nature and passion span across many fields—whether it's exploring nature, sports, handcrafted art, landscaping, architecture, photography, or my love for animals.

Growing up in a fairly large family, food was always at the heart of our home. The meal experiences were unmatched. Guests would often drop by unannounced, yet my mother always managed to whip up something special, effortlessly turning simple ingredients into something extraordinary. Watching her create magic in the kitchen instilled in me a deep admiration for the art of cooking.

These early experiences shaped my passion, blending creativity with culinary exploration. It was in those moments—filled with food, family, and warmth—that I discovered how much joy and fulfilment cooking could bring.

What are the group's future plans?

Our future plans are rooted in growth, innovation, and staying true to the values that have shaped our journey so far. While Villa Maya has become synonymous with heritage, authenticity, and a unique dining experience, our focus is on expanding thoughtfully without compromising on quality or identity.

We aim to explore new markets and cities, carefully introducing concepts that are distinct and reflective of their own identity—much like what we achieved with Baker's Arch.

Creativity and storytelling will remain at the heart of everything we do, whether it's through menu curation, design, or guest experience.

Sustainability and community involvement will also play a significant role in our growth. From embracing eco-friendly practices to promoting local produce and artisans, we want our ventures to make a positive impact.

Ultimately, our goal is to create spaces where food, art, history, and culture come together to offer unforgettable experiences, while continuing to inspire and delight our patrons.

Delicacies that I relished at the restaurants -

At Villa Maya:

Mocktail: Villa Maya Blend – signature drink prepared with muddled organic mint, green chili, baby ginger, lime, a dash of honey, and aerated water.

Starters: Kaddu ki Galouti Kebab and Kandari Chembu.

Soup: Tender Coconut Broth - signature soup prepared from fresh tender coconut water & flavoured with mild spices and herbs.

Mains: Appam paired with Veg Mappas.

Dessert: Tres Leches (that I had at Baker's Arch).

