

Sojan: The Strength Behind 'Kumarakom' Restaurants!

Written by Valsala Menon



George Abraham, or Sojan, as he prefers to be called, welcomed us warmly to his plush restaurant Kumarakom, at Nungambakkam, Chennai. It's just one among many of his chain of restaurants. Mr. Sojan is the personification of simplicity. Clad in a full sleeved shirt and a typical Kerala mundu, he comes across as any other Malayali, out to enjoy a relaxed Sunday at his favorite restaurant, the sole difference being that he himself owns the entire Kumarakom chain. Simple and unassuming, yet blessed with an ability to put anyone completely at ease - that best describes Mr. Sojan, the brain behind the famed Kumarakom chain of restaurants.

Kumarakom was started virtually at Kottayam by this very enterprising couple Sojan and Mercy. They initially ventured into the hospitality industry by taking on outdoor catering project. This was a huge success; a friend of theirs invited Sojan and Mercy to start a Kerala restaurant inside Black Thunder, a water theme park at Mettupalayam on the Ooty main road. This too was a success solely due to its authentic Kerala cuisine and live music, both Malayalis and non Malayalis found it to be their favorite dining haunt.

Blessed with the Midas touch, Sojan and Mercy, on invitation and gentle compulsion from friends, decided to relocate to Chennai and start a similar restaurant here. It was indeed a giant stride for the couple from Kerala, but since then, they have grown by leaps and bounds in the hospitality industry. "We belong to the Kizhakkethalackal family of Kanjirappally. Basically, we are planters. We had our own distillery in Kerala but due to obvious reasons, political and otherwise, we have wound that up now. But I have my own vineyards at Kambam in Tamil Nadu. Ever since we relocated to Chennai and started our first Kumarakom restaurant in Nungambakkam, in the year 2000, we have managed to open a new outlet each year' - beams Sojan proudly.

Kumarakom restaurant has now grown to eight outlets spread out all over Chennai - at Velacherry, Anna Nagar, two at Nungambakkam (the second one here was inaugurated by none other than Rajanikanth himself) Adyar, Ramapuram and a brand new one, recently opened

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at Dubai.

Kumarakom prides itself on its unique and authentic Kerala ambience, which is maintained in all its outlets.” For a true testimonial of the experience of Kumarakom, you need just ask your taste buds”- affirms Sojan smilingly. “If you are on the look out for authentic Kerala dishes, you have come to the right place. Karimeen pollichathu, Kuttanadan duck roast, erachi ularthiathu, kappa and meen thala - the menu is tantalising to the taste buds. “-opines Sojan.

The huge clientele that this unique Kerala restaurant enjoys is well attended to by well trained personnel, who are a dedicated and committed team, solely consisting of Malayalis except for a couple of Chinese chefs.

“We are planning a three star high end restaurant in the city shortly. My wife Mercy is an expert in the culinary art and she personally handles recruiting of the staff and she also personally supervises the right mix of ingredients used in the dishes, at most of our outlets each day. Personal attention and care goes into making of all our dishes’ explains Sojan.

The couple is blessed with two equally enterprising sons- Itty and Thomas who assist them in running the entire Kumarakom chain smoothly, and a daughter Sharu Jose who is married to Mr. Jos Elanjikal . “I can personally vouch for the fact that ours is the only restaurant that serves Karimeen straight from the backwaters of Kerala which is brought in each day by train. We bring in sixty to seventy kg of fish daily. My wife handles all the purchase for the restaurants” clarifies Sojan.

This chain caters Kerala delicacies directly at the venue of your choice too- be it a corporate function, birthday anniversary or wedding reception. They offer you the best in Kerala cuisine. Anyone visiting a Kumarakom outlet are impressed by the courtesy, cordiality and wonderful service offered by the staff.

The entrepreneurial spirit does not end with just the chain of restaurants. When they relocated to Chennai, this enterprising couple Sojan and Mercy opened wide the doors of their home in Kumarakom, Kottayam district, to friends, family and other guests. That was the inception of Kumarakom Homes. They offer you a “home away from home” experience, a lovely retreat from the dust and din of cosmopolitan cities. The Kumarakom Homes is a perfect gateway for

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vacationers and a perfect hideout for the philosopher, poet, artist or thinker in you.

The Kumarakom Homes has sprawling lush green lawns which offer a perfect site for an exclusive over night party. The spacious drawing and living rooms are furnished with antique furniture which adds to the grandeur of the place. Plush and airy lounges with cane furniture and ethnic clay flooring add to the ethnicity of the place.

A Kumarakom experience needs to be savored personally, along with its mouthwatering dishes, accompanied by live music and karaoke, which transports you nostalgically to the backwaters of God's own country.

Sojan can be contacted through the website www.kumarakomrestaurant.com