

# THE BIG RAJAH: upholding mysore's CULINARY PRIDE



CEO, Dato' Dr John William Xavier and Chefs



Tasty food, the fun of watching your 'thosai' freshly made and great service - major elements that made up this writer's recollection of The Big Rajah at one of its catering gigs years ago. Speaking to its founders now, one sees why this company has stood the test of time since 1999. Co-founded by the late Mr JJ Xavier and his son, current CEO, Dato' Dr John William Xavier, descendants of the Mysore royals in India, it was an aspiration to introduce the fine food served at the Mysore Rajah Palaces to Malaysians. In their words, we are **"a little catering house that has grown to a full-service food catering company serving over 50,000 plates in a single day"**.

Despite high numbers to serve, we are surprised to find out that almost all dishes are prepared fresh in-house. The Big Rajah does not buy pre-made mixes or pre-peeled ingredients but invests in production crew and equipment for economies of scale in order to meet its standards. One of the ways to ensure good and fresh ingredients lies in the company having built strong relationships with their food suppliers and by getting them to share The Big Rajah's vision. This way, they would be compelled to also give their best.

Unless the nature of the dish requires it, for instance, yoghurt to ferment or sauces to fully develop in flavour, nothing is prepared more than 24 hours ahead of time. *"When you are talking about serving more than 1,000 guests at a single event, the food production timing is critical in determining the start and end of each segment of the food chain"*, said Mr Fred Netto, General Manager. As such, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is vital, alongside well-functioning equipment and staff who understand how to maximise equipment's capacity without compromising the quality of produce.

No client is going to be amused at tardiness and expects a caterer to be on top of any anticipated circumstances such as unexpected traffic, weather or staff no-show. Therefore, planning ahead is key and site surveys must always be done to find out on loading bays and exit routes, planning number of buffet lines needed to minimise bottleneck and calculating number of manpower required. One aspect that The Big Rajah highlights is its service crew. Although sometimes a client may desire to cut costs by reducing service staff, the company does not recommend doing so as the ratio of staff to guests are meticulously calculated to ensure adequate people are serving, overseeing stations and clearing.

Walk into an event catered by The Big Rajah and it is likely you would find a set-up with matching elements. Believing that good food will be further heightened with the right ambiance, the event décor team gets into action. From the right kind of covering (marquees, tents, canopies and high tops), furniture, furnishings, the exact table cloth colour, backdrops, flowers, music... you name it, nothing is too small a detail for the team.

Indeed, the late JJ Xavier had vision and was bold enough to track a new path and his efforts has not gone unnoticed. Named by the Malaysian Indian Food Caterers as the **"Founding Father of Food Catering"**, his legacy is kept alive by the third generation and going strong! 🙌

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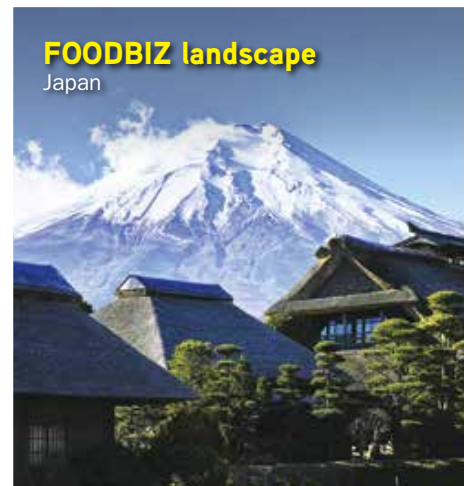
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