



## Pizza Hut's New Offerings

BY SID KHULLAR – DECEMBER 20, 2010

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I was invited to a little gathering of people at Pizza Hut's Chef's Table initiative. The Chef's Table seems to be a program where Pizza Hut invites a few people to preview and comment on it's new menu offerings. Receiving the invitation, I was a little leery remembering a similar experience a while back at a similarly named event.

As it turned out, the two experiences couldn't have been more different. Not only was the event organised well,

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the offerings, for most part appeared to add tremendous value to Pizza Hut as a dining destination, escalating it from a QSR (Quick Service Restaurant) to what could be called Affordable Casual Dining.

The menu served to us included Marinated Plum Tomatoes with Bocconcini and Fresh Basil, Thyme Grilled Chicken & Olive Tapenade Bruschettas with Parmesan Flakes, Mozzarella and Sundried Tomato stuffed Mushroom Arancinis and three types of pizzas – Gardiner, Verde and Pollo Heaven. The Gardiner featured Pesto Cream Sauce, the Verde included Balsamic Glaze and Gouda Cheese and the Pollo Heaven was topped with chicken sausages and smoked chicken among other commonly available toppings, under the banner of Tuscani Singles. Having said that Pizza Hut plans to add some more choices to their available variety of toppings including vegetables like babycorn and zucchini.



Did I mention they had a live kitchen where the making of most dishes were demonstrated live by Chef Arjyo Banerjee? It made the whole event quite interactive, engaging and fun!

I didn't like the Sangria – appeared to have a little too much juice added to it for my liking and was the sort of thing IMHO a teenager may like. The fact that they're even serving it however is a good thing and will further the already deepening inroads western foods are making into the Indian market with respect to exposing the customer to different ingredients, flavors and textures. Take the plum tomatoes with bocconcini and fresh basil for example. It uses ingredients that at a basic level the average diner will compare to tomatoes, paneer and tulsii. In the longer term however, this classic blend of flavors and colors will prevail and begin to be appreciated as a combination quite different from anything we have in Indian cuisine, whatever that is. The Arancinis I'm sure will turn out to be a big hit; arborio based risotto balls stuffed with gooey mozzarella cheese and tangy, mildly chewy sundried tomatoes, rolled in a light batter, coated with orange crumbs and deep fried. Can't go wrong there! They were delicious.

The food was accompanied by a variety of wines and Sangria. Dessert was a large (l-a-r-g-e) freshly baked chocolate chip cookie topped with a scoop of vanilla ice cream and a cheesecake platter. The cheesecake was too dense for me to relate to it's lighter and fluffier cousins, but I loved the cookie.

Pizza Hut is also introducing wine to it's menus, from sometime next year, with the range extending from INR 99 to INR 189 per 125ml glass. Nice.

My only concern is the translation loss from prototyping to production. Will premium ingredients like sundried

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
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tomatoes, orange crumbs and arborio rice among others make it to outlets? Hard to say now, but one can only hope the great time we had will be extended to Pizza Hut customers in its entirety.

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#### About Sid Khullar

Sid is the primary contributor to and editor of Chef at Large. A self confessed food addict who likes cooking, writing and photography... and travel, if it gets him closer to a good book and interesting food. He's spent 17 years in varying functions of technology including research & development, training, sales, marketing and mentoring technology startups. He now applies himself to learning more about food and building food and beverage brands online for Chef at Large clients.

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