

# Movers & Shakers

*Award-winner at the Asian Curry Awards and shortlisted at the British Curry Awards, chef-patron Sabir Karim talks to Tandoori*

**You have just been named 'Best Chef' and 'Best Newcomer' at the Asian Curry Awards for Salaam Namaste and Namaste Kitchen, respectively, and been shortlisted at the British Curry Awards. What does it feel like being garnered with such accolades?**

It's a tremendous feeling, both on a personal level and professionally. It gives you recognition for all the hard work you have put into your restaurants. The awards are also very motivational and carry responsibility because it means that you have to continue maintaining standards along with customers, the media and your colleagues having a higher expectation of you. I'll strive further to be innovative and come up with new recipes and ideas to always improve my restaurants.

**What made you want to become a restaurateur?**

I've always been a passionate food lover. But having been a cabin crew member for British Airways, I have also travelled the world and eaten in some of the finest restaurants around the globe. In addition, I have worked in such prestigious London Indian restaurants as the Red Fort and Chutney Mary so all this has inspired me and given me the impetus to launch my own restaurants, Salaam Namaste in 2005, which was quite successful from the outset and then encouraged me to open Namaaste Kitchen in 2010. Whereas the latter is very traditional, the latter is more contemporary with an emphasis on grilled items.

**How do you manage to run two restaurants?**

I have a very strong team. I also make a point of ensuring that my managers and my kitchen personnel are trained regularly and keep abreast of all operational requirements. I also have mystery shoppers in my company to make sure that we are always on top of things and maintain consistency. Though I have the utmost faith in my staff, I tend to be very



hands-on myself and get involved in all aspects.

**What's the upside of your profession and what's the downside?**

the upside is that the work can be very gratifying. I walk into the restaurant and it gives you such a tremendous feeling to see the smiling faces of the customers, which in turn motivates the staff to do better. The downside is having to put in the long hours. Day or night, you are very much on call, even during the Bank Holidays. But ultimately, what I do is still very rewarding for me.

**What makes a good restaurateur?**

Someone who is dedicated, hard working, committed, passionate, innovative and knows what good customer service is all about. You must also have a motivated

workforce under you because they are the ones who are your sales people. They should always engage with your customers.

**What do you like to eat and drink yourself?**

I don't drink, but food-wise I love having home-cooked food, although I am rather fond of good restaurants too, one of my favourite being London's Galvin at Windows.

**Your ideal dinner guests?**

My late mother-in-law. Also, my late father, who I wish was still alive so he could see the success I have achieved.

**How would you like to be remembered?**

As a genuine and nice human being, who was always happy to help others as well as being a good husband and a good father.

# Tandoori

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# The 2012 Asian Curry Awards

It's been awards season for the Indian restaurant sector so Tandoori catches up with the Asian Curry Awards

**W**inners of the second Annual Asian Curry Awards, one of the biggest event in the Asian catering calendar, were announced during a sell-out ceremony at the Grosvenor House Hotel, in central London.

Honouring excellence and achievement across the industry, the 2012 awards were more comprehensive than ever before, recognising champions not just from the Bangladeshi and Indian catering community but also the Chinese, Thai, Malaysian, Japanese, Nepalese and Pan-Asian catering sectors.

Yawar Khan, Chairman of the Federation of Bangladeshi Caterers (FoBC), which organises this annual event, said: "This year's Awards were bigger than ever and a resounding success, setting a benchmark for the future. Our congratulations go to the winners across all categories. Their accolades were well deserved with well over one thousand guests in attendance, including leading members of the Federation of Small Businesses, the British Hospitality Association, the Malaysian Restaurant Association, and the Chinese Take Away Association."

Awards announced during the evening included the Asian and Oriental Best Chef Competition and Young Asian and Oriental Best Chef competition, the judging panel for which was chaired by Pat Chapman author of The Good Curry Guide.

Notable guests at the 2012 Asian Curry Awards included: Rt Hon Dr Vince Cable MP, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills; Chuka Umunna MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills; Rt Hon Don Foster MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government; Rt Hon Tom Brake MP, Deputy Leader of the House of Commons; Diane Abbott MP, Shadow Minister for Public Health; His Excellency the High Commissioner for Malaysia, Datuk Zakaria Sulong; His Excellency the Ambassador of Nepal, Dr Suresh Chandra Chalisei; Dr Chris Nonis, High Commissioner, Sri Lankan High Commission; Brigadier Abu Musa Sharf Uddin, Defence Attaché, Bangladesh High Commission, and Rashid Choudhury, Press Secretary, the Bangladesh High Commission, amongst many others.



1 - Namaste Kitchen, winner of Best South Asian Restaurant Newcomer, and Salaam Namaste, winner of Asian & Oriental Chef of the Year. Collected by Sabir Karim  
2 - Dancers at the awards show  
3 - Oishii, winner of Best Japanese Restaurant. Collected by Atique Choudhury, his wife Moy Choudhury and son Rishi Choudhury  
4 - Everest Inn, winner of Best Nepalese Restaurant  
5 - Yawar Khan, chairman of the Federation of Bangladeshi Caterers