

How I Got Here: Ratnesh Bagdai

CASUAL DINING

By James McAllister

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The co-founder of Spanish group Brindisa, which recently launched its first restaurant outside of central London in Richmond, on his career, motivations, and thoughts on the service charge debate.



Why restaurants?

By complete chance really. Having graduated I was in need of a full-time job and was offered a position with the Sheraton Hotel Group. The world of Hospitality then just took and over the years I went from being a hospitality accountant to a restaurateur / financial operative.

Tell us something you wish you had been told at the start of your career?

I guess at the early stages of my career I was not aware that my job either in finance or operations would be 7 days a week. I work pretty much anytime, any day of the week.

What's your favourite restaurant or group of restaurants (besides your own)?

I am very fond of the JKS Restaurant Group. They offer a variety of concepts, so whether it is a social or business events I need to arrange they will always have a site that suits me. Gymkhana is my favourite.

What motivates you?

Apart from ensuring my business are run properly and commercial, I enjoy the mentoring that perhaps I can offer my management team. My motivation then comes from seeing staff progress through my business and continue to carry out the the ethos of 'great food, great service and great finance' all intertwined.

What keeps you up at night?

Funnily enough, If I get a service report at 9pm I may overthink its contents for a while. Overall, I try and make sure my family are fine and have had a good day.

Which colleague, mentor or employer has had the biggest influence on your approach to the restaurant business?

Without a doubt, Jeremy King. When I joined Caprice Holdings in the initial stages of career his kindness, his leadership and his guidance was class. Even today when I meet him or read what he

writes, he inspires me no end. I must also mention Mark Hix who I enjoyed over 9 years of business with a partners.

What time do you wake up?

6:30am, even on weekends.

Coffee or tea?

Masala tea.

How often do you check your email?

Every opportunity, apart from when on the golf course.

How do you let off steam?

Playing golf.

Do you prefer a night on the tiles or a night on the sofa?

A night on the tiles.

What's your signature dish to cook at home?

Urad dall, a Gujarati lentil dish.

Typical Sunday?

Golf and clubhouse all day.

What's the most spontaneous thing you've ever done?

Get Dougie, my CavaPoo.

Favourite holiday destination?

St Lucia.

What are you currently reading?

I'm not a huge reader but *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki is a book that has stuck with me ever since reading and I would highly recommend.

What boxset are you currently watching?

Wild Wild Country on Netflix.

What was your dream job growing up?

Being a Policeman.

Best business decision?

Starting up Brindisa Kitchen Ltd in 2004. Myself and Monika Linton took the Borough Market site, Tapas Brindisa London Bridge, and have never looked back.

Worst business decision?

Taking Brindisa Kitchens to Barcelona. Whilst it was fun and explorative for us and our management team, commercially we had to curtail that business. From that I learned to only operate business I know that I can visit weekly.

What piece of advice would you give to those looking to climb the rungs in the business?

Get ready for the long haul; have a minimum 10-year plan. Learn from others and multi task. When your superiors say jump, you say “how high” – I did just that!

If you could change one thing about the restaurant industry today, what would it be?

We must resolve the service charge debate. The well run tronc scheme is exactly that, period.

Bio

Born in *Uganda* in the late 60s, Bagdai studied at Sheffield University. After graduating, he joined Sheraton Hotel Group as an accountant, before going on to spend more than a decade working for Richard Caring's Caprice Holdings. He launched Spanish foods supplier and restaurant group Brindisa with Monika Linton in 2004. The group opened its first site in London Bridge, and has since opened a further four restaurants in central London. Last month, Brindisa **opened its first suburban location** in the south west London town of Richmond. Bagdai is also the director of restaurant accountancy firm RNB.

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