**Café Totaram tests waters in Hyderabad with a cloud kitchen**

Ranjana Singhal has an unflinching love for parathas. The New Delhi-bred and now Coimbatore-based restaurateur swam against the tide when she set up the fine dining restaurants That’s Y Food and On the Go, followed by Café Totaram, in a span of a decade, riding on a North Indian and continental menu in Coimbatore. Ranjana is now testing the waters in Hyderabad with Café Totaram cloud kitchen. Driving this café’s menu are parathas and pizza-on-paratha variants.

**Café Totaram**  
**Where:** Madhapur  
**USP:** Parathas, pizza on parathas, desserts  
**MO:** Functions as cloud kitchen, place orders through food delivery apps.

The time-tested aloo, gobi, mutter and achari paneer parathas are all there. You’ll also find jalapenos and cheese, chicken and cheese, and mutton kheema varieties. All these flavours are available in the pizza-on-paratha section as well. The cloud kitchen in Madhapur caters to customers through leading food delivery apps. Ranjana is gauging the market and hopes to open cloud kitchens in Hyderabad, along with a central kitchen, in a few months.
Café Totaram was conceptualised as a tribute to her grandfather, a freedom fighter. On her decision to not open a regular café (the Coimbatore one spreads over 1000sqft) where guests can come in and dine but solely function through food delivery apps, she says, “My established brands in Coimbatore are heavy on investment and personnel. A cloud kitchen is viable, to begin with, in a new city.”

To standardise the food across her Café Totaram outlets, Ranjana transports products from her central kitchen in Coimbatore, all the way to Hyderabad. The parathas, samosas, desserts are all cooked to varied levels, sealed, frozen and transported. “We did R&D for a year to perfect the process. The shipment takes 24 hours to reach Hyderabad and the first time we did it, I flew down to sample the food. I have a responsibility towards serving food that’s healthy,” she says.
Yet, I have my doubts. As we are increasingly aligning ourselves to eating food that’s made fresh and not served from a package, why does a café resort to transporting frozen food from nearly 1000km? Ranjana makes me sample the cheese and jalapeno paratha. Unless told, you wouldn’t know if it was made fresh from scratch or from the shipment of frozen food. It tastes good too, with the heat of the jalapenos cutting through the cheese. The chocolate mud pie felt fresh too, though I found it a bit too sweet. “Our food went through several tests. The parathas are all of the same size and thickness, cooked to 70%, vacuum sealed, frozen and transported. Done the right way, frozen food cannot be contaminated. Small batches of the frozen food are transferred to a kitchen refrigerator and used for final cooking when a customer places the order,” she explains. As the business expands, Ranjana plans to have a central kitchen here so that fresh salads can be added to the menu.

Ranjana entered the food industry 16 years ago. She reminisces about moving to Tiruppur from Delhi and looking for ways to beat the sense of confinement in a small city. Opening a restaurant business in the neighbouring city, Coimbatore, was enticing: “My sister is a trained chef and helped me. My brother in laws and I started That’s Y Food. Today, I’m the lone woman in the Coimbatore restaurants and hoteliers association.” Ranjana took up a three-month course for women entrepreneurs at the Indian School of Business (ISB), backed by Goldman Sachs. “I was just a commerce graduate wanting economic independence. This course was a life-changing experience. I was 40 when I learnt to write a business plan and ended up winning the best business plan award,” she sums up.