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EMIRATI'S JOURNEY FROM FINANCIAL ADVISER TO 'CHAIWALA'

LOVE OF TEA AND INDIAN STREET CULTURE SEES AN EMIRATI AND AN INDIAN EXPAT BOND OVER A PERFECT CUPPA

DUBAI
BY ANJANA KUMAR
Senior Reporter

The UAE and India share a long history of close cultural and commercial ties. And two friends living in Dubai decided to give up their thriving corporate careers to create a delectable fusion of the two cultures — very much in keeping with the long tradition of friendship and bonhomie between the two nations.

Meet Emirati Ahmad Kazim and Indian expat Justin Joseph, founders of a home-grown tea concept called Project Chaiwala. The company launched in 2017 takes tea to a whole new level. For the record, the word "chaiwala" is a Hindi term, a literal translation of which means "the tea person" and Project Chaiwala has a lot to do with the nostalgic charm of street tea cafes in India. What Kazim has done is take traditional recipes of Indian tea, snacks and spread them out in a modern setting.

"The intersection between Emirati and Indian cultures is very deep. 'Chai Karak' or 'Karak' tea is a staple, for example, in my household. You can be from any emirate in the UAE, but a common denominator is 'Karak chai'. It is simply embedded in our culture," said Kazim whose mother is a Bahraini and father is an Emirati.

Fundamental part

"Drinking tea is a fundamental part of the ancestral culture of the Middle East. Every day, we find new and interesting proposals in the market as far as tea is concerned," said Joseph, who is of Indian origin, but was raised in Dubai and is the co-founder of Project Chaiwala.

Kazim and Joseph's shared passion for tea is truly remarkable and it is perhaps this strong bonding over a perfect cuppa that saw the duo, employees at Deloitte & Touche, give up their full-time corporate jobs and follow their passion.

Kazim has done his Bachelors in Islamic Finance and is a certified public accountant (CPA), while Joseph is an industrial engineer with a master's degree in finance. From financial advisory to becoming a 'chaiwala', Kazim's journey with tea has been an fascinating one right through.

His passion for tea has seen him set a new goal. "In the next two years, we hope to build a

EXPLORING INDIA'S FAMOUS TEA ESTATES

Have you visited these tea estates in India?

You don't have to be a tea lover or a tea cafe owner to visit these tea estates in India. As you will see, the estates offer more.

Glenburn Tea Estate, Darjeeling

The Glenburn Tea Estate in Darjeeling, West Bengal, is one not to miss. It is situated in the foothills of the Himalayas and no matter which season you plan your trip in, the view is just breathtaking.



Nilgiri Tea Plantations, Tamil Nadu

More than 100 years old, Nilgiri Hills are known for housing the best tea estates in India. The tea here is dark strong and quite aromatic. While most tea plantations in India grow tea seasonally, the plantations at Nilgiri Hills do it throughout the year.



Jorhat Tea Bungalows, Assam
If there's one thing that Assam is known for other than its scenic beauty, it is the tea plantations there. It is often referred to as the tea capital of the world.

Kanan Devan Hills Plantation, Munnar
Munnar is a hill station popular for its tea estates. The Kanan Devan Hills Plantation is a must-visit site since it is the first-ever tea museum in the country. It is situated in Idukki and is a picture-perfect location up the hills.



Emirati Ahmad Kazim, right, and Indian expat Justin Joseph, founded Project Chaiwala in 2017 and they currently run six outlets in the UAE.



Kelagur Tea Estate, Karnataka
The Kelagur Tea Estate is popular for its organic method of making tea. It is spread across 1,500 acres of land and was built 70 years ago. It's a popular tourist attraction for tea lovers. You can see how the tea leaves are processed and the techniques they use to make tea.

Darang Tea Estate, Himachal Pradesh
The Darang Tea Estate in Himachal Pradesh is another popular tea estate in India that is more than 150 years old. The view is spectacular and the tea plantations only add to it.

Gatoonga Tea Estate, Assam
Another popular tea estate in Assam is the Gatoonga Tea Estate. It produces the largest quantity of tea in the country.

Cooch Behar Tea Estate, West Bengal
The Cooch Behar Tea Estate in West Bengal is another beautiful tea estate that tourists love to visit. It is located along the foothills of Darjeeling Hills and has been in business since 1950.

Kolukkumalai Tea Estate, Tamil Nadu
Kolukkumalai Tea Estate is another tea plantation in Tamil Nadu that is quite famous. It is located at close to 7,900 feet above sea level. The plantations here use the traditional process to make tea.

Happy Valley Tea Estate, Darjeeling
It is one of the oldest tea estates in India.



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local fresh 'chai' presence in the Gulf Cooperation Council market.

Kazim said he had heard about the street culture in India, but wanted to experience it first-hand. For this, he travelled to India's main cities such as

Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi, Agra and of course the famous tea estates of Darjeeling.

Typical street cafe

As this reporter visits one of its branches at Al Serkal Avenue, the look and feel of a typical street



Read full story on the Emirati's journey from financial adviser to chaiwala

tea cafe in India is unmistakable — be it the popular "Ghosee" or "Paale G" biscuits or ruskis on offer — to be dipped into a hot cup of tea — or the clay cups to serve the 'chai', or the Bollywood music playing at the store. Framed photos of famous Bollywood

stars and movie posters adorn the walls of the cafe. Kazim said there has been no looking back since the tea cafes were launched in 2017. "The Cinema at Al Serkal Avenue was looking for an owner. We launched the cafe first there. Today, we have six outlets — our most recent one being at the Time Out market in Souq Al Bahar," said Kazim.

Today, Project Chaiwala receives all its tea from Naxalbart Single Tea Estate in Darjeeling, while spices and fresh milk (and milk alternatives) are sourced locally to brew 'chai' every day.

Short takes

Driver injured as gas tanker, truck collide

Abu Dhabi court grants Dh200,000 in damages

Up to Dh50,000 fine for public obscenity in the UAE, Public Prosecution warns

Repeat violations and acts with minors, also include jail term

New Deal
Dubai (DSC)

<https://gulfnews.com/uae-success-stories/project-chaiwala-emirati-indian-duo-brings-love-of-tea-and-street-culture-to-uae-1.79281063>