

STORY VICKI WILLIAMS

Mumbai magic, Delhi delights

There are many fine options for doing business over a meal in the big cities of the Subcontinent.



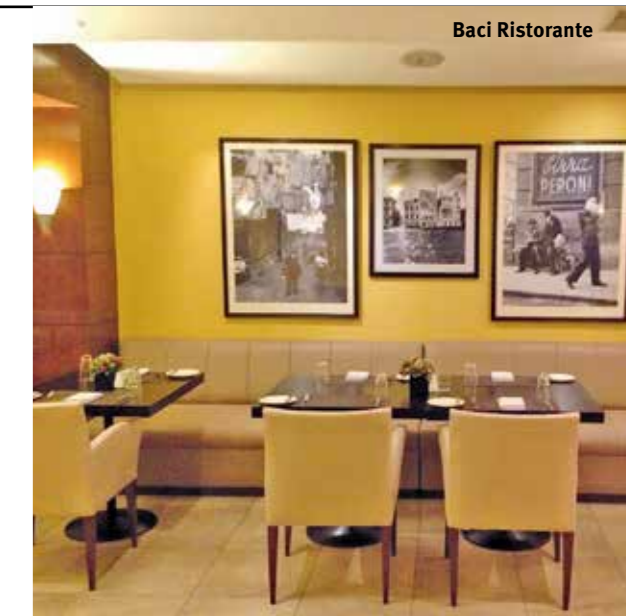
Wasabi by Morimoto



VARQ



Bukhara



Baci Ristorante

MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI are bustling metropolises, with a plethora of top-notch restaurants to consider when there's the need to do some business over a meal.

Here are six of the best options, based on quality, ambience and reputation.

MUMBAI

Housed in the iconic Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, known for setting trends in accommodation and dining, **Wasabi by Morimoto** was Mumbai's first modern Japanese restaurant and is now the city's best. It is also number 20 on the list of Asia's 50 best restaurants for this year – seven Indian restaurants are on the list.

The elegant space features stunning water views with modern dishes that are as breathtaking. Standout dishes from legendary chef Morimoto include yose-dofu, costing 450 rupees (INR), a rich, creamy tofu served with fresh wasabi, the truffle-scented scallops paired with a soy and onion dressing (INR2095) and the crowd-pleasing salmon or white fish carpaccio finished with hot oil and a vibrant yuzu sauce (INR2750).

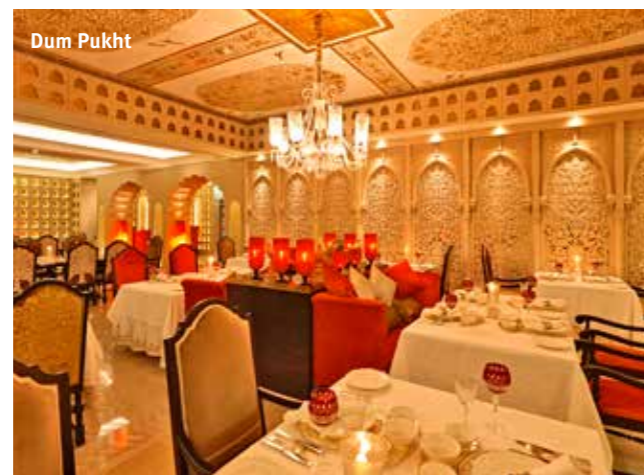
Teppanyaki dishes are also popular and ingredients are flown in from Japan. Two other restaurants in the hotel, Souk (middle eastern) and The Zodiac Grill (French) are also excellent choices for business dining.

WASABI BY MORIMOTO
Taj Mahal Palace Hotel
Apollo Bunder, Mumbai
P: +91 22 6665 3366
www.tajhotels.com

Restoring humble North Indian clay-pot cooking to its former royal fine-dining heights is **Dum Pukht**. The restaurant's selection of slow-cooked dishes have the city's gourmards declaring that there is a touch of culinary magic in the food, with the sealing of the pot and the slow cooking infusing dishes with a rich, deep and complex flavour profile.

A firm favourite is the melt-in-the-mouth raan-e-dum pukht (INR2850), a slow-cooked lamb leg with an intoxicating aroma of spices. The impressive interior is reminiscent of an Indian palace with ornate walls, gold leaf ceilings and rich furnishings.

DUM PUKHT
ITC Maratha, Mumbai
Sahar Andheri (E), Mumbai
P: +91 22 2830 3030
www.itchotels.in



Dum Pukht

Thai celebrity chef, cookbook author and restaurateur Ian Kittichai spread his growing restaurant empire to Mumbai three years ago with the opening of **Koh by Ian Kittichai**. The restaurant serves modern Thai cuisine in a setting of high, gold ceilings, dark furnishings and eclectic touches of Thai art.

The tender lamb shank massaman curry (INR1495) is a signature dish, slow-cooked for 12 hours with Thai spices and potatoes, as is the glazed Chilean sea bass (INR1925). For seafood fans there is also the decadent lobster green curry (INR795) with its notes of Thai basil and kaffir lime. Many of the ingredients are sourced from an organic farm in Thailand.

KOH BY IAN KITTICHAJ
InterContinental Marine Drive Hotel
135 Marine Drive, Mumbai
P: +91 22 3987 9999
www.ihg.com



Koh by Ian Kittichai

NEW DELHI

The undisputed king of modern, fine Indian cuisine when it opened, elevating street food (and other humble dishes) to unprecedented levels of modern elegance. For example, ganderi kebab (minced chicken with spices, INR850), at VARQ, instead of being a fried, ball-shaped snack, is a refined starter of chicken cooked around sugar cane, presented in a shot glass containing mango powder. Another is palak patta chaat (INR600), a deep-fried spinach fritter that here takes on an ethereal form.

Creativity in reinterpreted recipes – and plating – is evident in every dish, including varqui crab (INR900), flavourful, gently spiced crab resting between layers of filo pastry and topped with a tandoori prawn. The majestic restaurant has a sumptuous ambience.

VARQ
The Taj Mahal Hotel
Mansingh Road, New Delhi
P: +91 11 2302 6162
www.tajhotels.com

Bukhara, a rustic, cavernous New Delhi institution that has hardly changed its menu in more than 30 years, focuses on dishes cooked in a traditional tandoor oven. It might be a challenge for some with its family-style plating, de rigueur aprons and lack of cutlery, but it has attracted such illustrious diners as Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama.

The menu includes succulent meats and seafood marinated for 24 hours before being completed in the tandoor (prices from INR1550 to INR2350) and the fragrant dal bukhara (INR550) is made from black lentils slow-cooked overnight. It has a reputation for putting its chefs through intensive training to become spice and marinade masters.

BUKHARA
ITC Maurya Hotel
Diplomatic Enclave, Sardar Patel Marg, New Delhi
P: +91 11 2611 2233
www.itchotels.in

Italian restaurant **Baci** is known for its authentic cuisine, with many ingredients imported from Italy. One of the most popular antipasti dishes is the felix salad (INR420). Named for the owner's cat, it is a refreshing mix of peppery rocket leaves, fresh orange, goats cheese and pine nuts, with an agro dolce (sour, sweet) dressing.

The homemade gnocchi (INR450) is light and fluffy served with a vibrant tomato sauce or a meat ragu and the linguine with mixed mushrooms and a porcini sauce (INR450) is a crowd-pleasing dish deftly executed. Main courses include the butter-fried calamari with lemon mayonnaise (INR695).

The multilevel restaurant has an understated, refined ambience and the black-and-white photos of Italian scenes bring the space to life.

BACI RISTORANTE
Shop 23, Main Market,
Sunder Nagar,
Delhi
P: +91 11 4150 7445

Dining and etiquette tips

Lunch and dinner are both appropriate for a business meal, but it's best to leave it up to your guests or the host to take the lead.

If you are **hosting** a meal, check the dietary requirements of

guests as many Indians are vegetarian. If you are being hosted, either allow the host to order or follow their lead.

Some guests or hosts may insist that you order what you want. **Make a judgement**

call on whether this is appropriate. Most restaurants have extensive vegetarian options.

It is best not to drink **alcohol** unless the guests or host does so, and if eating with your

hands remember to use only your right.

Tip up to 10 per cent if no service charge is included with the bill.

If invited to a client's or potential business partner's home for dinner (a common

practice), accept but **arrive slightly late** – about 15 minutes.

Be prepared to be asked **personal questions**, which are usually introduced before business becomes the topic.

Be patient if you experience IST (Indian stretchable time). Punctuality is not keenly observed, with dinners starting late and meetings or meals often lengthy.