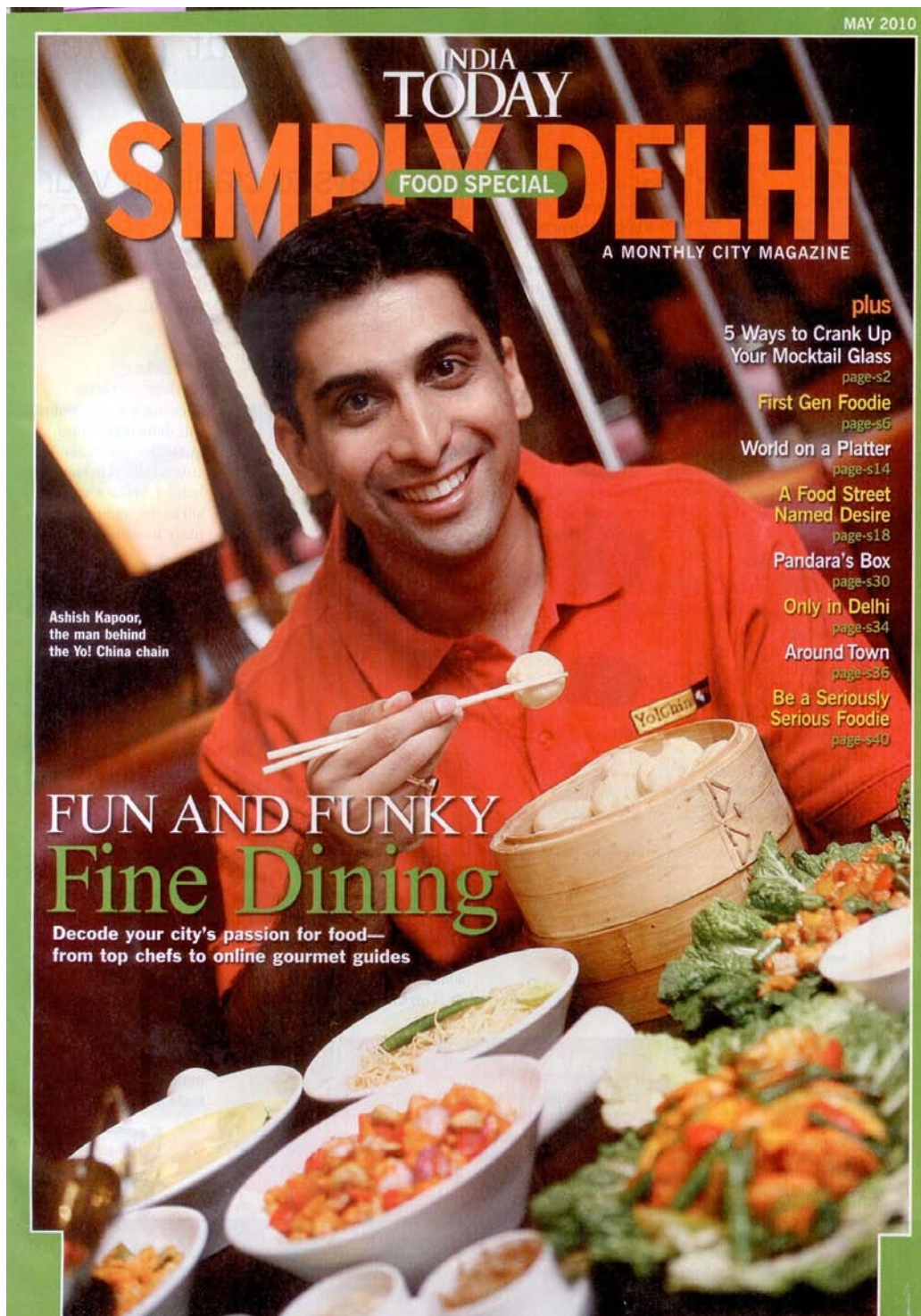


Publication	Page	Date
India Today - Simply Delhi	Cover page, 6 & 7	7 May 2010



# FIRST GEN FOODIES

THEY ARE A YOUNG TRIBE OF ENTREPRENEURS. AND THEY ARE BUSY SETTING UP A RESTAURANT OR TWO TO INDULGE THEIR LOVE FOR GOOD FOOD.



**T**hey are young and they love food. But that's not where the similarities end. Taking their love a notch higher, these first generation entrepreneurs have opened up restaurants they believed in. Their innovations, sometimes a first of its kind in the city, have resulted in India's largest chain of Chinese restaurants, a Punjabi fine dining place, a Lebanese hookah bar, an anglo-Indian-cum-Bengali eatery, and Delhi's first ice bar. SIMPLY DELHI chats up the owners on their gastronomic journey.

### Ashish Kapur, 33

Yo! China

Ashish Kapur's primary aim is to provide a "60-minute vacation" to his customers. "Hunger isn't really why people eat out," says the co-founder and managing director of Yo! China. It's an outcome of the aspirational lifestyle of the nouveau riche of India. Yo! China, which Kapur set up in 2003 along with five friends, is firmly settled in Delhi's culinary scene.

Over the course of its journey, Yo! China has gone through "every possible hiccup", according to Kapur. "We had to adapt to the Indian palate. Authentic Chinese food wouldn't work here." Today, Yo! China is

India's largest chain of Chinese restaurants, with outlets in 14 cities.

The brand was revamped about a year back. They added 35 new items. "We felt it was time to move on." Their fresh dishes include what he calls "the new-age experience" food, including several claypot items.

"I want to build romance in the dining space," Kapur says. Peppy music plays in the restaurant, mostly confined to retro, rock and pop. He narrates an incident when a young woman came up to the staff and asked for a specific song. She said she wanted to break up with her boyfriend while that song played in the background. The staff obliged, of course. Kapur laughs and admits he has no idea what happened thereafter to the couple.

Kapur, a theatre buff who also enjoys travelling and reading, wants Yo! China to become the "Infosys of food". "That's why we've jazzed it up," he says. Their focus is still on innovation—they've introduced something in Hyderabad that they're sure the locals will love: chilli chicken *biryani*.

Kapur says he thought he'd understood India back when the chain began, but had had his doubts over the years. But, with all his successful ventures, it seems he wasn't very wrong, after all. **by Nandini Narayanan**

I WANT YO! CHINA TO BE THE 'INFOSYS OF FOOD'. THAT'S WHY WE'VE JAZZED IT UP. WE WANT THE PLACE TO BE SWANKY AND INTERNATIONAL.

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