

Spice market: the UK's subcontinental restaurant sector

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MW Eat

Founded: 1990

Number of sites: 7 (four Masala Zones and three fine dining restaurants)

MW Eat is the OG contemporary Indian group in the UK having launched the first restaurant in London - quite possibly the world - to make the argument that Indian food could be elevated and served in a manner that was both upmarket and creative. The success of Chutney Mary - which is currently celebrating its 35th birthday - paved the way for founders Ranjit Mathrani, Namita Panjabi and Camellia Panjabi to launch two further Indian fine dining restaurants - the Michelin-starred Veerswamay and Amaya - and the more casual Masala Zone chain. The latter was close to hitting double figures a decade or so ago but its presence in the capital has been scaled back in recent years to a total of four restaurants (three in central London and further site in Earls Court). The newest of these - launched in 2023 - is the group's most ambitious restaurant to date. Masala Zone Piccadilly Circus is located in the former Criterion Restaurant and demonstrates that the trio aren't running out of ideas with its spectacular interior design that's packed full of colour and interest. MW Eat's impact on the wider Indian restaurant scene cannot be overstated. The trio have inspired countless other forward-thinking Indian restaurants, from The Cinnamon Club and Gymkhana right through to Dishoom and Mowgli.