



The Founders: The Patel Brothers

After owning many franchise restaurants over the past decade, the Patel brothers decided it was time to indulge their true passion and create a place of their own. Besides, they were craving good Indian food, and it is hard to find. So H.P. and J.T Patel sought one of the most famous Indian chefs in the world, Hari Nayak.

Hemanshu "H.P." and Jatin "J.T." Patel were born in Gujarat, India and grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee. They co-own several restaurants in three markets, and they are six-time award winners for best franchise operations. As part of the growth of Salsarita's since its early days, the Patels have gained valuable insights from restaurant industry leaders as part of their "business tuition." The Patels consulted with designers, restaurant industry experts, chefs, and food marketers to execute their vision through every detail of the dining experience. With investors from the hospitality industry backing their passion, they have the expertise, the vision, expert consultants, and the capital to make a serious entry in new territory.

Their team has developed its recipe for success: Foods that satisfy the market's appetite for bold, ethnic flavors with fresher, less common, and more wholesome ingredients. Served in a place that meets industry demand for a finer version of fast-casual restaurant – a more authentic dining experience with more ambience. And, yes, it's Eco-friendly, too, right down to real plates made of 50 percent bamboo and plant-based napkins.

The Patels looked at Knoxville and other markets in three states to decide where they would begin and where they might expand. Knoxville makes a good testing ground for restaurants, and Tandur fills a niche in Knoxville's restaurant landscape. Plus, it was convenient for the brothers to use their hometown as a place to refine the concept and build a fan base. Knoxville makes business sense, but H.P. Patel explains that they want to encourage and support the future of Knoxville, as well. "Knoxville is emerging. Look at the strides compared to four years ago. It used to be that you would go to Chattanooga or Asheville and wonder why not Knoxville? We want to encourage and be part of what Knoxville is becoming as its own culinary scene."

Their newest restaurant, Tandur, seeks to create an innovative dining experience that diners will want to share with friends and colleagues. The setting feels like a comfortable art gallery where the cooking is part of a colorful display. The food has authentic trademarks of fine dining in India with freshly roasted and ground spices, recipes created by a famous Indian chef, and the flavor and texture of the Tandur oven. The menu also features "new and improved" versions that are lighter and more approachable with a more original flair than traditional Indian fare.

The Patel brothers are betting that timing, food trends, and a combination of talents are perfectly aligned to launch this new restaurant concept. Once the restaurant concept is refined, one may expect to see more Tandur restaurants in more markets. "Starbucks did not become famous because of its coffee. Coffee became famous because of Starbucks," says H.P. He adds, "That's what we ultimately want to do for Indian food through Tandur."

The time has come for Indian food to be the next big thing, and Tandur has the ingredients to make it happen.

