

Better surroundings

Ruhul Shamsuddin, owner of the modern **Desi Way** takeaway, in Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, explains how more customer-friendly surroundings can be achieved.

The takeaway business, whether for a restaurant or a standalone takeaway, is the cornerstone of the Indian food sector.

Many restaurateurs make a hefty chunk of their profits from it, while takeaway outlets are solely reliant on it. The ease by which a customer can phone and collect a takeaway order or even personally call in, is unequalled when it comes to affordable and convenient dining in the comfort of his home.

Conversely, the experience of a customer waiting for his takeaway order to be ready can be soul destroying and is only marginally better than waiting for a kettle to boil!

My father, who was one of the earliest Indian restaurateurs in Essex, bought me up in the industry, but rather than opening a restaurant, I decided to launch a takeaway, and opened Desi Way in 2005. Only, I didn't want it to be just another takeaway, where a customer comes in, places the order and then sits down to watch a TV in the premises.

The key for me was imagination combined with customer comfort so that getting a



takeaway as Desi Way would become something memorable.

I put in luxury leather sofas for customers to sit on. I installed a big plasma screen on which Bollywood films play in silence, while the sound system blares anything from Bhangra music to the fusion sounds of Nitin Sawhney. There are Bollywood film posters, flame lighting, a delivery vehicle parked outside, which is a real rickshaw, and even our menu boasts specials with dishes such as Bollywood Bad Boy!

The talking point of Desi Way though, are the bank of five 10 inch LCD screens placed on the counter, which transmit live the cooking process from the kitchen to the customers right up to the point of packaging so that customers can see how the food is prepared.

I will even offer a complementary drink or kulfi if they have been waiting long

So the idea behind the concept is to never let the customer get bored. Use your imagination and marketing skills to make your business better than your competitor and ensure that the customer keeps coming back for more.