

# *The Art of* LUXURY

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# SULEMAN RAZA

## FROM A CHEF - TO A FOOD CZAR

### MEET THE BRITISH SUCCESS STORY

It is impossible to miss the tinge of ambition when one meets the tall, lean and handsome Suleman Raza – who started as a chef around the turn of the millennium in a Brixton eatery, and recently got listed among the most influential people of the UK food industry by Society magazine as a Society Icon award winner 2019. In many ways, he is a British success story of sweat and toil that is worth telling.

The chief executive of Spice Village group – the multiaward winning British chain - launched the first restaurant in 2004. The aroma of chicken tikka, seekh kebabs, mutton chops and variety of curries filled the air due to the irresistible combination of spices. Suleman's hard work has been rewarded. Customers have poured in, some of them from 30-40 miles away. The word of mouth spread like wildfire.

Soon, there was a queue outside the restaurant and people were jostling to get inside. The waiting time got longer. The happy customers started talking about the yummy spicy fish, the incredible curries, the delicious tikkas and mouth-watering kebabs. Spice Village spread to the East of London and West of London too. From Tooting it reached Ilford and then Southall. The customers flocked wherever the brand reached. People came as tasters and then became avid fans. The taste, service, ambience couple with great value for money multiplied the number of diners.

Today, Spice Village with a host of services in catering, restaurants and events serves more than two million customers all across London and the United Kingdom.



It is not the numbers only as the quality of customers also picked up. Spice village customers range from the British House of Commons and House of Lords to Lambeth Palace, the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, several embassies and London's best starred hotels and iconic venues. London's favourite mayor Sadiq Khan ranks Spice Village among his favourites. Every now and then some movie star walks in and some celebrity sneaks out. Social media and advisory websites are abuzz with the amazing feedback. Awards are piling up every year from almost every known entity that deals with food and lifestyle.



*Spice Village Group winning the award at Hurlingham Club in October 2019*

In Business 2017 Conference in London, Suleman received the coveted Award of Excellence by the global bestseller author and leadership icon Brian Tracy in presence of more than two thousand international delegates in London. On October 4, 2019, Suleman was receiving an award at the Hurlingham Club at the food industry's biggest celebrations of the year. Spice Village Group was picked up for several reasons for the accolades by the top judges who were impressed by the story, the journey and the finesse.

Apart from the roaring business success, Suleman's real achievement is moulding Spice Village restaurant chain into 'a business with a solid purpose'. He devised Spice Village's three-pronged CSR strategy focusing on sourcing, society and environment balance. The first pillar is focused on healthy people by offering portion control, balanced offerings and natural ingredients prepared with nutrient-preserving cooking techniques. The second pillar is focused on a healthy planet by implementing sustainable practices that will improve the long-term health of people and the planet. The final pillar is intended to support healthy communities by sourcing from local suppliers as part of our commitment to championing Great British quality. 100% meat, poultry and vegetables are sourced through ethically run British farms. Suleman's real contribution to the food industry is believing into a sustainable and eco-friendly model. Achieving zero waste target was a daunting challenge as it took years of consistent efforts.

Suleman Raza made headlines in national newspapers while championing Pakistani cuisine. 'Pakistani cuisine has a distinct taste and flavour when compared with Indian cuisine, but it was surprising that several Pakistanis market their restaurants and eateries as "Indian" while actually serving Pakistani cuisine and being of Pakistani origin. "I proudly go around and tell the world that I am a Pakistani, my restaurants serve Pakistani cuisine and I am proud of it. I have been doing a great business by marketing my business associated with Pakistani name and Pakistani food. "I call on all such restaurant owners to reconsider their approach, be true to yourself, your origin and be proud of Pakistan. This will give you more respect and credibility than anything else," he stressed in an interview with a top tv channel.

Though Suleman has left his tough days miles behind him but he contributes heavily to charities like Prince of Wales's The British Asian Trust to support vulnerable people in education, livelihoods, anti-trafficking and mental health. As a Chief Executive of Spice Village, Suleman ensures supporting various charities, Macmillan Cancer Support, Tayaba, the water charity, Penny Appeal, PAGE, Akhuwat and many others. More than 10,000 diners are fed annually without charge under his Friends4Free campaign. 'I want people to give respect to food and all what is associated with it. I don't like boasting about my philanthropic initiatives. It crushes my heart returning someone from the door for not able to pay for it. As a group, we do a lot and mostly keep it under the covers. Reaching out to fellow human beings in need is not a choice. That is the only option. For us, it is making difference through every single meal we serve'. He concluded.

[www.spicevillage.co.uk](http://www.spicevillage.co.uk)



*Suleman Raza delivering keynote address at Asian Curry Awards at Grosvenor Hotel in 2018*





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