

# INDI CHIC

The interior décor of Jhaal Farezi has myriad shades; it is eclectic, versatile and ranges from rustic brass to Bollywood melodrama



Colonial architecture cloaked in white, high ceilings, giant columns, latticed windows, conical verandahs with iron balustrades, and an exquisite porch, a music room, and a terrace garden with a sit-out, Jhaal Farezi, which opened recently in the heart of Kolkata, has become the city's latest landmark. An 80-year-old sprawling bungalow was converted into a cafe cum dining space. It successfully blends the traditional look with urbane, youthful taste.

Swarup Dutta – Visualiser & Interior Designer of the restaurant, shares, "The project gave a lot of scope to innovate and transform every aspect of it into an experiential zone. Both the Cafe rooms have a different theme: one has a formal style and the other a casual one, yet they are cohesive. We have created a lot of interesting wall arts like the salacious Bhojpur songs graphically shown by street art of old Calcutta which is Kalighat's 'Pattachitra'. Another art form is the fine appliqué work sourced from Barmer in Rajasthan and framed for the walls, and Bollywood dialogues that add hues to the whole decor."





Format:  
**Cafe cum dining**

Project by:  
**Ambuja Neotia Group**

Architect:  
**Channa Daswate**

Graphics & Interiors:  
**Swarup Dutta.**

Location:  
**42, Circus Avenue, Kolkata**

Area:  
**Approx 10,000 sqft**

Opened:  
**July 2013**

Daily footfalls:  
**80-90**



The props have been placed as "frozen relics from the past" as described by Dutta. Inspired by the industrial past, there are iconic elements such as barber chairs and revived enamel plates. A chandelier made from old glass jars of Horlicks, jam and pickle enhances the vintage look and feel.

"The whole idea is to celebrate Indi-chic. We are catering to the urban 'glocal' clientele. The space provides a glimpse of a vibrant Indian pop culture, which is becoming the new visual language. Graphic art has been predominantly used to establish this connection. It is an easygoing, celebratory language of the urban Indian," says Dutta.



To break the monotony of white, a dramatic installation welcomes as one takes the main staircase for the dining rooms on level two, where an artwork of neon letters on multi-coloured wooden plates echo Ghalib's poetry. The fine dining area has been divided into five thematic rooms. The first level has formal colonial design chairs juxtaposed with modern minimal design furniture, with walls illustrated with a comic strip narrating the story of a Bengali man called Mazoomdar, created by graphic artist Orjit Sen. The green colour from the pictures spills onto the tables, building a "land of fantasy and traditional folk lore".

The adjoining room is lit up by a majestic installation of 1,700 wine bottles sourced by the team of Jhaal Farezi. "We broke around 100 and had to drink and empty around eight to create the feel of eclectic India", shares Dutta. Embroidered kantha upholstery decorates the chairs. In the Drama Queen room, the third section, where one may host a small private party, a fun filled decor in

colourful appliqué work, expressing dramatic dialogues from Hindi movies greets guests. Another room has photographs of torn posters and monochrome graffiti, reflecting the city walls and establishing a connect with the sentiments of the "City of Joy." The false ceiling created with iron bars is lit up with small yellow lights that harmonise the warm wood with cold metal in the room.

Says Sri Lankan architect Channa Daswathie, "For me, the entire experience of recreating an old battered bungalow into a palatable contemporary counterpart keeping its soul intact was a challenge. The driving force was to preserve the old world charm, yet turn it around and make it relevant and sustainable. The overall look and feel continues to be colonial. Hopefully, Jhaal Farezi "will be as much a spatial as a culinary experience!" \*\*

\*\* Jhaal Farezi is a tribute to the City of Joy at multiple levels: spatial, architectural, cityscape and culinary \*\*

- Karshvasrithan Neelva,  
Chairman,  
Anbija Neelva Group