

## **Flavours of Malabar: The Love Story of Kareem Bhai And His Untold Kitchen Tricks in the Malayalam Movie *Usthad Hotel***

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Food plays a vital role in the life of human beings. The word 'food' is derived from the old English word 'Foda' of Germanic origin. It is an essential part for the sustenance of life and has gained a prominent place in the film industry. For instance, movies like *The Lunchbox*, *Stanley Ka Dabba*, *Chef*, etc., had chosen the central theme as food.

The movie *Usthad Hotel* had made a huge impact in the lives of foodies. The movie begins with the narration of Faizi's birth by an unknown narrator. His father who had always longed for a son got much happier after Faizi's birth. After the demise of Faizi's mother Fareeda, his father flies with him and his elder sisters to Dubai. Here he indulges in the kitchen activities with his sisters which were often denied by his father. The grown up Faizi will fly to Switzerland as per his wish to study for Hotel Management Course. He returns as a Chef from there and this agitates his father. Faizi's father will snatch his passport from him to prevent him from going to UK. Heartbroken Faizi leaves to meet his grandfather Kareem Bhai to *Usthad hotel* which is located near the shores of Arabian sea in Kozikode. The main plot of the cinema begins from *Usthad Hotel*. The "*Usthad Hotel*" is run by *Usthad Kareem Bhai* and is famous for the Malabari food cuisine specially *Dum Biryani*. The movie portrays the difference in attitudes of the owners of two hotels. One the local restaurant named *Usthad Hotel* and the five-star hotel *Beach Bay* which is built near the *Usthad Hotel*. *Kareem Bhai's* hotel is- run for poor feeding and those who struggle to get a day's food whereas the five-star hotel is run to gain maximum business profit. *Kareem Bhai* helps in fulfilling his workers dreams through his earnings from this hotel. He meets their daily ends as well as supports their family to come up in their lives.

*Faizi*, *Kareem Bhai's* grandson joins him and becomes the part of the *Ustad Hotel*. He helps his grandfather in running errands over there. *Faizi* learns to make Kerala *Porotta* from *Ustad hotel*. He uses the technique of making *Porotta* with Spanish omelette for a fusion fest held at *Beach Bay Hotel* later. When he makes his first *porotta* his grandfather says "Son anyone can fill anyone's stomach but those who eat should be satisfied mentally too. That ability makes a great cook". With the recommendation of *Kareem Bhai*, *Faizi* gets a job at the five-star hotel *Beach Bay*. Here he impresses the foreign Chef with his creative kitchen tricks and techniques.

*Sulaimani* is the metaphor for love in the movie *Usthad Hotel*. It reminisces *Kareem Bhai's* wedding day where he met his first love (his wife) for the first time. Both of them elopes on his

beloved's Nikkah and begins their fruitful days. He memorizes the day he went to cook Biriyani for his beloved's wedding and talks about Kismath to Faizi:

“Everything that happened in my life before seem to have converged to that point.”

They begin and end their conversation with a small cup of Sulaimani. Kareem interconnects love and sulaimani and says that:

“a little bit of love should be added with every sulaimani.”

Food and love are the are themes of the movie Usthad Hotel. In Malabar, Mohabath is the term used for love. Faizi and his grandfather connects food with love and remarks that “love should be added with food to feel tastier.” After a cardiac arrest, Kareem sends his grandson Faizi with a letter to Tamilnadu to meet his friend Narayan Krishnan. The letter requests Narayan Krishnan to teach Faizi the reason behind our need for cooking. Narayan Krishnan takes Faizi along with him the next day and distributes food to the poor and also shows him how to create a rapport and feed them each day. This scene will become an eye opener for Faizi and realizes the reason for the preparation of food. After a while, Narayana Krishnan begins to narrate his story and points out to an old man and says:

“You see that old man! He changed my life.”

The above quotation really made a huge impact on his life. When Narayana Krishnan was working as an executive chef in Taj, he came across a man on the roadside who was unable to endure appetite and was eating his own human waste. Then he questions himself the purpose of his life and realizes that working in a star hotel feeding all his guests whereas in his native place he finds people without means to have food for at least once a day. This made him quit his job and started feeding poor. Faizi then decides to be in his native land after serving food to special children. His eyes will get wet when a differently abled child appreciates his preparation. He goes back to his grandfather's hotel and will make a stern decision to renovate Usthad Hotel. The movie ends with Faizi's interview and the camera gets focused on Usthad Hotel's special Dum Biriyani prepared with untold secrets of Kareem Bhai served with love.

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## References

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