

HOW I QUIT GOOGLE TO SELL SAMOSAS

ADVENTURES WITH
THE BOHRI KITCHEN

MUNAF KAPADIA

WITH ZAHABIA RAJKOTWALA



HarperCollins Publishers India

Praise for *How I Quit Google to Sell Samosas*

‘This book made me cry, laugh and feel hungry all at the same time.’

—Farah Khan, filmmaker

‘Love for your values, respect for your culture, entrepreneurial spirit to give it life. Read the book to find out more!’

**—Vikas Agnihotri, former managing director,
Google India, and operating partner, SoftBank
Investment Advisers**

‘I’m an admirer of Munaf’s audacity and ambition. As a fellow “solopreneur”, I can relate to his bumpy but always joyous journey. There is much to learn here!’

—Anupama Chopra, film critic and author

‘Munaf stands for everything I wish I had done when I was his age. His food journey inspires me, and I am sure it will inspire you as well.’

**—Ranveer Brar, chef, TV show host, and author of
*Come into My Kitchen***

‘As an entrepreneur in the food business I could relate to Munaf’s stories and experiences. I love how honest, real AND inspiring his narrative is—from giving up a coveted job, the many highs and lows of the business to the realities of a deadly pandemic. I’m sure any budding entrepreneur would find value and encouragement by reading Munaf’s story.’

**—Pooja Dhingra, owner, Le15 Patisserie, and author of
*The Big Book of Treats***

‘I have huge respect for the way Munaf created a delicious experience at home with his family serving Bohra food, then branded it as The Bohri Kitchen and marketed it brilliantly to make it the success it is today. He is a case study and inspiration for so many looking to enter this industry with their own ideas.’

—**AD Singh, founder and managing director, Olive Group of Restaurants**

‘Munaf’s madness, combined with his mother’s love for home-style Bohra food, are the perfect recipe for a journey worth taking.’

—**Sanjeev Kapoor, chef, author and TV personality**

‘Persistence always goes a long way! Munaf believed in what he wanted and didn’t shy away from following his passion. His stories are not only engaging, they are also inspiring. All of us have experienced the same struggles as Munaf at some point or other and his account of them will resonate with anyone from the hospitality industry.’

—**Riyaaz Amlani, CEO and MD, Impresario Entertainment & Hospitality Pvt. Ltd**

‘The book is an exhilarating and honest account of Munaf’s life. It’s not just a great weekend read, but a story that shows us the power of belief, the importance of persistence and that life is what we make of it. It will inspire you to stand up and do something—and do it NOW! I congratulate Munaf for being so forthcoming about his entire journey, including speaking about his failures so candidly. I am definitely inspired, and I hope many more people read this book and go on to help build the country through great ideas and entrepreneurship.’

—**Saurabh Kalra, COO, McDonald’s India (West and South)**

‘One hears of catchwords like grit, persistence, ambition and passion in many a success story. I have seen them come together in human form in Munaf. He had an insight, built an idea around it and pursued it to the point of going broke. But passion is the best motivator. This book is about inspiration, guts, and the dream to be the best. This is just the beginning of his story.’

—**Sunil Lulla, CEO, Broadcast Audience Research Council, India**

‘How do you successfully convert a great idea into reality ... read this book.’

—**Satish Mathur, former director general of police, Maharashtra**

‘This is a book about a unique journey, not a rags-to-riches story! It’s the story of a spiritual journey, a passage to find the truth within one’s heart.’

—**Prahlad Kakar, a man with many hats**

‘As Munaf has said, entrepreneurship by definition is a marathon. His story shows how we should always follow our dreams and, despite all the twists and turns, keep believing and finally, stay resilient.’

—**Bahram N. Vakil, founding partner, AZB & Partners**

‘As I progressed through the book it just reinforced the fact that Munaf as always, tells a great story. A story of stepping out of the relative safety net that a global corporate provides. A story of the journey of entrepreneurship and building a brand from the ground up. A story of grit and the determination to pursue a dream. Read it carefully enough and you’ll find some endearing lessons for life.’

—**Romil Ratra, executive director and CEO, Graviss Hospitality**

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For my parents, Nafisa and Turab Kapadia, without
whom there would be no TBK.

My wife, Zahabia Rajkotwala—without you there
would be no book.

For the Indian housewife, who remains the most
precious yet underacknowledged asset our country
has. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for
being the last custodian of our cuisine and tradition.

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Goddess of TBK Meets the Stars

Early in 2015, reporters always asked me, ‘What is your vision for The Bohri Kitchen?’

My MBA brain was tempted to say, ‘Open a restaurant someday!’ or ‘Get more Bohra families to pursue home dining!’

Instead, I responded with, ‘I want Shah Rukh Khan to come home, my family and I are big fans.’ Did I really want SRK to come home? Of course! But I intuitively felt that our Bollywood dreams would be more interesting to read about than my ‘business plan’ for TBK.

But how does one get Bollywood to your doorstep or how do you get to theirs?

TBK’s first encounter with Bollywood happened in March 2017, a month after I made the *Forbes India* cover. Coincidentally, the same gentleman who gave Shah Rukh Khan his Bollywood breakout performance gave us ours. It

started with a conversation with my friend's mother, who asked me to 'expect a call from Adi'.

The name didn't ring any bells, but I said, 'Sure, I'll speak to him.' Later that day, I did get a call from a man who identified himself as Adi and asked if we would do the catering for his wife's birthday. At this time, we hadn't started doing the thaal experience (what we have now dubbed the 'Travelling Thaal') in the form of private caterings or even thought about it seriously. I promptly said no, but I reiterated that we would be happy to host him, his wife and their guests at my home in Colaba.

Later that evening, my friend's mother called me again and was surprised to hear that I had turned down an opportunity to cater for THE Aditya Chopra and Rani Mukerji.

I was stunned. I had no idea that Aditya Chopra went by Adi. I rang him back, still unsure whether we could cater a thaal dining experience in someone else's home, let alone a high-profile client. But then again, if we had to push ourselves to do it, it may as well have been for Aditya Chopra. Adi and I spoke briefly about TBK, raan and samosas when, quite unexpectedly, he asked me to drop by his place so that we could meet in person to finalize the menu and I could recce the venue³⁰.

Till then, I had never seen the inside of a Bollywood celebrity's home and all it had taken was a ten-minute phone conversation to make it happen for the first time!

30 Which was to satisfy myself that the thaal would fit through his front door.

If this wasn't exciting enough, I decided to take Zahabia—who I was dating at the time—to Adi's house since we had plans to meet that evening. It was early days in our relationship (Zahabia and me, not Adi!) and I was wary of cancelling on her. I didn't bother informing Zahabia that we were going to Aditya Chopra's house, knowing fully well that she would think she wasn't dressed for it. She'd either refuse to come in or insist on going home and changing first. I simply told her that I had to drop by a client's house for a quick meeting. It was only after we were sitting inside the Chopras' living room, and Adi and Rani joined us, that Zahabia realized whose house it was.

Over the course of that meeting, while Zahabia sat there tongue-tied, all my preconceived notions about the film industry and the high-handed attitude and tantrums of its members diminished considerably. I wanted to go back home with stories of extravagance, flamboyance and high drama, but it turned out to be a routine client-vendor meeting with perhaps the most down-to-earth people I have had the pleasure of doing business with. I quickly took Adi, and later Rani, through the menu and did a look-see of the space that they would be using to host their guests. Barring a small debate on whether guests should be made to eat directly from the thaal or given individual plates, the meeting wrapped up in record time.

The catering for Rani's birthday went off without a hitch. I had decided that Mom would lead production for the event, even though at this point we had a full-fledged kitchen team that could handle it. I was a bundle of nerves

the night before, but my ever-cool mother talked me down in a way that only she could, stating with some authority that our celebrity guests were no different from the ones we hosted every weekend in our home. And our weekend events were a solid ten on ten.

With that we went on to successfully cater our first proper Travelling Thaal experience to celebrate Rani Mukerji's birthday. To ensure that the dining experience came as close to what we did at home, we served two thaals—one vegetarian, the other non-vegetarian. Guests served themselves from the thaal, but used individual plates.

One of my favourite memories from that meal was how it started out with everyone making fun of the vegetarians who had their own separate thaal. Yet, by the end of the meal, all the non-vegetarians were gorging on the vegetarian food as well! Another wonderful outcome of this association was becoming acquainted with Aditya Chopra's mother, Pam aunty. Till date, she remains a big fan of our smoked samosas and continues to evangelize TBK in the sincerest way possible. God bless aunty!

Catering Adi's party confirmed two things—(a) TBK's thaal experience retained customer satisfaction, food quality and the experiential aspects of home dining even outside our home and (b) it elevated our home dining experiences from a niche, rustic concept to a glamorous, highbrow affair.

After I uploaded a photo of Mom and Rani from the night of the dinner, I received a call from a journalist asking

for details of the event. They wanted to know everything, from the guest list to the menu and any gossip that I would be willing to share. I was tempted to talk about the family members and friends who had shown up, the inside jokes and meal preferences or even the warm conversations between Mom and Rani. I knew it was all PR gold. But this was not how I wanted to build the TBK brand, at the expense of my clients' private lives. TBK will grow and become famous not at the cost of our customers, but because of our customers.

I called Adi and asked him what I should do. He said, quite sweetly, 'Munaf, if it helps your business, please go ahead and share details of the menu but leave everything else to the readers' imagination.' The PR we generated was phenomenal! The engagement on social media surpassed anything we had received before.

In short, the Aditya Chopra magic that catapulted Shah Rukh to fame did the same for us too.

Excerpted from *How I Quit Google to Sell Samosas* by Munaf Kapadia. Click [here](#) to pre-order the book.