

Mr Chapati Man

Sandwich Designer of the Year category winner Chris Rai and wife Andrea launched wraps company Chapati Man in 2007, fired up by his mother's curry recipes and a shared love of outdoor festivals

These are exciting times for Chris and Andrea Rai, founders of Indian wrap suppliers Chapati Man. Their chicken saag wrap with fresh mint chutney and a cachumber salad won the Oasis Citrus Drink category at this year's Sandwich Designer of the Year Finals 2011.

Meanwhile, the company has recently struck a deal with The Sandwich Factory to have its wraps produced exclusively for them, and there's a new range of non-wrap products in the pipeline.

Last August they appeared in front of the Dragons on Dragons Den, always invaluable publicity, although investment wasn't forthcoming.

So, how did they manage to achieve their success at the Designer of the Year final? Well, for one thing, they've had plenty of practice. The Chicken Saag filling was one of the four non-mainstream flavours made available to customers when Chapati Man launched back in 2007 as festival caterers – to date still their most popular flavour.

Four years later, Chris' secret for making any curry filling taste authentic is still to keep ingredients and spices simple.

Their category-winning wrap, made in front of a panel of judges at the competition, held at the Lancaster Hotel, London on the day of the Sammies, was made using chicken breast, spinach, onions, garlic, ginger, fresh green chillis, turmeric, red hot chilli powder and cumin, fresh coriander and



fresh tomatoes. It also contained a fresh mint chutney, which was layered onto the wrap, providing a vibrant green colour and freshness – it also provided an interesting texture.

To complete the wrap a cachumber salad (a classic Indian salad recipe) was sprinkled on top of the saag filling, providing the necessary crunch and cooling flavour to complement the spice of the saag and the mixed flavours of the mint chutney.

Interestingly, although Chris is not a trained chef he was taught by his mother, Martha, to make wonderful curries from an early age. The idea for creating the company

came from Chris taking left-over curry in a wrap to work, the couples' love of music festivals and the authentic curry recipes Chris grew up with.

They began selling Spicy Indian Wraps at major events and festivals in the UK – their colourful trailer unit is now a mainstay at festivals, such as Glastonbury, Bestival, Camp Bestival and the Lovebox Weekender. In fact, Chapati Man was voted No.1 food caterer at Glastonbury Festival 2007 by Virtual Festivals.com – an outstanding achievement in their first year of trading.

Trading at festivals meant them both using all their annual leave to work on their

mobile catering trailer unit during the festival season; working 18 hour days for five days (sometime six days!) and then returning to their jobs the following week – proper hard graft!

Chapati Man was then created while Chris and Andrea were in full-time employment (Chris a civil servant – he left after nine years service in April 2009 to fully concentrate on building the company; Andrea, a textile designer, is now a full time mother to their seventeen month old son, Cassius).

The retail part of the business began in March 2009, with Chapati Man Ltd making its retail debut with a national supply deal with Morrisons. They launched with two flavours; Chicken Saag and Keema Aloo in over 300 stores! Their Chicken Tikka Masala flavour was added in August 2009.

Morrisons believed the Chapati Man brand had the necessary brand authenticity and recipes to plug a gap in the retail snacks market. Chapati Man traded in Morrisons for almost two years, with the brand building a loyal customer base even in a difficult trading climate, something Chris and Andrea are rightly proud of.

Chapati Man wraps are now being sold in WH Smiths cafes across the UK.

The wraps can be eaten hot or cold – and the packaging has been developed so there is no need for it to be removed when heating the wrap. The products are also halal.