

Behind the opening of Asian-inspired restaurant Awara

By [Emily Stander](#)

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With the recent opening of Bukhara incarnation and Asian-inspired restaurant Awara, *Bizcommunity* spoke to owner Sabi Sabharwal.



Image supplied: Awara recently opened in Cape Town

“We look forward to welcoming [customers] to our beautiful establishment filled comfort, style, and amazingly wonderful food and staff,” Sabharwal said.

Despite the heavy impact Covid-19 had on the restaurant industry, the Bukhara Group is thriving. We find out more about how it got to this point, what inspired the opening of an Asian cuisine-focused restaurant in South Africa, and who the person behind it all is...

■ ***How did you end up in the restaurant industry?***

I moved to South Africa from New Delhi, India. Here, I felt there were areas in the restaurant industry in which I could make a difference.

■ ***What inspired the inception of Bukhara, and subsequently of Haiku and Awara?***

Being from India, I felt a great longing for authentic North Indian cuisine, hence the birth of the Bukhara group.

Having travelled extensively, I then brought the cuisines of Japan and China (mostly dim sum) to Cape Town, which soon became the talk of the town in a very similar way that Bukhara had.



New tapas bar Awara is here for revelry

22 Nov 2022



■ ***The restaurants are deeply rooted in Asian cuisine. Why?***

This is where I felt the most opportunity lay - in bringing something exceptional to South Africa, something that was not here yet, or at least not in the way that I wanted to present it, in terms of taste, variety, quality, ambience, service, etc.

■ ***What does Awara hope to give its customers when they enter the establishment?***

We want all our customers to not only have a lunch or a dinner, but we also want them to have a culinary experience - all the flavours and tastes, the presentation and quality, the love in each dish.

We want them to leave with a sense of complete ecstasy, not quite believing the amazing experience and service they have just experienced.

■ ***How did the business overcome the challenges of Covid-19?***

During the times that we could not operate in-dining, we ran dark kitchens and did all our own deliveries and some curbside collections. The local community was a tremendous support, and we are very grateful to them.

Once we were able to slowly open again, it was under the new name, Awara. At that time we moved Haiku upstairs, into the same Church Street premises as Awara, as it did not make sense to run two separate restaurants with occupancy allowance as it was back then. We ran the two restaurants together for about a year and a half, and again it was mainly our wonderful local support that helped us along.

A number of months ago we moved Haiku back to Burg Street.

Even though those were tremendously tough times for the industry, we are grateful to still be here, now in our 27th year.



Image supplied: Awara specialises in Asian cuisine

■ ***If you could send one message to the Awara customer base, what would it be?***

Awara is brought to you by Bukhara, the same trusted household name that you have known for 27 years.

There is a bit of confusion about the new name, Awara, but we would like to reassure our customers that the barbeque, curries and naans that they are used to being served under the name Bukhara are still exactly the same.

The only difference is that we have added even more deliciousness to our menu - tapas grills, and flavours from Japan, China and Korea, and of course India.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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