

# MASQUE

**Varun Totlani**

*Head Chef, Masque*

Varun Totlani was born and brought up in Mumbai, where, as a child, he'd spend hours watching cooking shows and videos in the hopes of convincing his mother to whip up new recipes every day. Instead, his own interest in cooking grew, and—much to his mother's relief—he began doing so himself. From then on, there was no turning back; the draw towards the kitchen was clear, and by the time he graduated high school, there was no alternative path to consider. After staging at a 5-star hotel in the city, he moved to Hyderabad to study at the Culinary Academy of India, and later graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in New York. On his return to Mumbai, Varun met with the Masque founders and joined the opening team in 2016 as a commis chef, steadily rising through the ranks and regularly running the pass until his appointment as Sous Chef in 2021, and Head Chef in 2022.

Under his helm, Masque ranked #16 on the list of Asia's 50 Best Restaurants in 2023, also naming it the Best Restaurant in India for the second consecutive time. The same year, he was named Travel + Leisure's Innovative Chef of the Year and ranked at # 7 on Culinary Culture's list of India's Top 30 Chefs.

An ace at the grill with a penchant for all things barbecue, Varun's cooking meets at the intersection of technique and intuition. As a cook, he is focused on showcasing the diversity of India's produce and culinary prowess and carrying them forward into the country's ever-evolving contemporary foodscape.