Oh Maria!

COMPILED BY: BI STAFF; **PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY** ZA WORKS

Taking over the iconic spot which was earlier occupied by Birdy's for the past 30 years in Bandra, Mumbai, La Loca Maria is the newest entrant in the city's thriving cultural scene. The 24-seater restaurant offers enthralling Spanish culture through its scrumptious burgers and tapas. Brainchild of chef Manuel Olveira Seller, the restaurant draws major inspiration from his Spanish roots. With chef Manuel's real inspiration — his mother Maria — co-founder Mickee Tuljapurkar suggested that the restaurant should also symbolise the chef's passion for food and his cultural heritage. With a punchline la loca meaning the crazy, La Loca Maria was born.

To bring the chef's indigenous legacy to life, Za Works — artists' who specialise in wall styling and mural design — was roped in to

design the walls of the restaurant. They were given a brief of creating Maria, a woman who is headstrong and one who does what she wants in day-to-day life activities. Snazzy as it gets, the interiors of La Loca Maria truly radiates the pulsating energy of chef Manual's mother. The living embodiment of all things bold, unconventional and confident, she was the first woman in her town to start her own restaurant. She did not choose to abide by societal norms. It was quite rare for a woman to walk into a bar and get herself a drink back in the days. And Za Works has beautifully carved Maria's inimitable zest for life and self-confidence through the murals. One such mural is that of a woman leaving the ladylike conventions by the wayside, where you will find her sitting with her legs uncrossed, sipping on sangria in between bites of a wholesome burger.

Also, going on with the element of crazy, Za Works has worked on three unique concepts to paint the walls of La Loca Maria. Rough texture, painting with hands and vibrant but a chic colour scheme has been inculcated in their art. Besides, the founders have also left their personal touch on the place by inculcating a painting of their pet dog Max on the walls.

The kitchen of this charming eatery occupies nearly half the size of the restaurant, thereby allowing patrons to see the food on their plates being made before their eyes. The botanical walls of the restaurant complements perfectly to its vibrant and spirited food. Garnered with Spanish influences, chef Manuel takes great pride in serving dishes created completely from scratch, be it from pasta or ice cream. He ensures to inculcate traditional flavours with a twist of his own modern palette in all of his dishes, and plates them spectacularly well for his patrons at La Loca Maria. The menu for the main course offers an array of delicious dishes where one can taste the authenticity of the ingredients and feel the richness of flavours. Right from discovering gastronomical delights to going crazy, this Mumbai eatery is an Insta-worthy catch. BI