



VILLA MAYA RECOGNIZED BY
LUXE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

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SPOTLIGHT:
JUNO:
SIX SEATS, ONE CHEF,
COMPLETE TRUST.



WHERE STORIES ARE SERVED: INSIDE VILLA MAYA'S QUIET, CULINARY MAGIC

An intimate conversation with Sashi Jacob, Executive Vice President of Villa Maya

Set within the historic walls of *Azumana Ammaveedu*, Villa Maya is not simply a restaurant — it is a living narrative. Often described as “a tabled kitchen,” the space invites guests into a world where heritage, memory, and imagination quietly intertwine. Rooted in Kerala’s rich cultural and culinary legacy, Villa Maya offers an experience that feels deeply personal, intentionally unhurried, and profoundly atmospheric.

For The Intimacy Issue, we spoke with Sashi Jacob, Executive Vice President of Villa Maya, about storytelling through cuisine, the power of subtle luxury, and how history, place, and flavour come together to create something timeless.

Villa Maya is described as “a tabled kitchen,” rooted in the idea that Maya is an illusion. What does this philosophy mean to you, and how does it shape the guest experience?

Villa Maya is often described as a tabled kitchen because our philosophy goes far beyond food, it's about storytelling and emotion. With over 300 years of history, *Azumana Ammaveedu*, now Villa Maya, carries a deep sense of nostalgia and cultural memory. Our vision has always been to thoughtfully blend the past with the present.

This philosophy reflects in every aspect of the guest experience. From the architecture and interiors to the recipes, service style, and even the smallest details, everything has a connection to history and a story behind it. Guests don't just dine here; they step into a living heritage space where tradition is preserved but presented in a contemporary, refined manner.

At Villa Maya, we aim to create an experience that feels timeless, where the warmth of the past meets the comfort and elegance of the present, leaving guests with a sense of connection, authenticity, and lasting memories.

Your menu shows inspiration from cultures that historically traded with Kerala, including India, Morocco, and Italy. How did this concept come to life, and why was it important to reflect Kerala's global culinary history?

The menu is deliberately designed to reflect Kerala's deep historical ties with global spice trade routes. For centuries, Kerala was a central hub connecting India with the Middle East, Europe, and beyond. Villa Mays draws from this legacy by blending local flavours with culinary influences from regions historically linked through spice commerce.

Rather than offering only traditional local dishes, we curate cuisine that intertwines Kerala's aromatic spices with influences from Italy, Morocco, and broader Indian traditions — representing the cross-cultural exchanges enabled by the spice routes.

Each dish is intended to tell a story of cultural exchange, showcasing how spices such as black pepper, cardamom, cloves, and cinnamon travelled and transformed global cuisines. The result is not just a meal, but a "culinary journey", an immersive experience where flavour, aroma, and presentation transport guests across time and place.

The setting, architecture, art, and cuisine seem to exist in quiet harmony. How do you ensure that each element complements rather than competes with the other?

Our menu is a thoughtful composition of traditional dishes, time-honoured cooking techniques, and refined presentations, brought together to create a cohesive gastronomic journey. Each element is designed to offer guests a deeply personal and immersive dining experience, where heritage, craftsmanship, and storytelling take centre stage.

What role does storytelling play in your cuisine, from the origin of ingredients to the way dishes are presented and served?

Storytelling is central to the Villa Mays experience; it weaves into every moment, not just the food on the plate.

From the first welcome, guests are immersed in a narrative of heritage and tradition. The traditional rasmalai sets the tone, grounding the experience in age-old Indian hospitality. The menu itself reads like a storybook, with each dish inspired by ancient recipes and regions connected through the spice trade.

Presentation is equally narrative-driven. The plating and visual elements carry strong ancient influences, evoking a sense of history and authenticity rather than modern theatrics. Even small rituals, such as the finger bowl, are thoughtfully designed and served in an elegant, traditional manner that recalls classical dining customs.

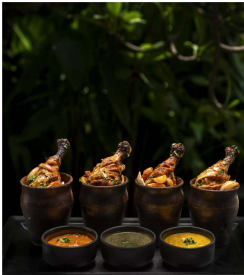
In Villa Mays, storytelling transforms service into an experience. It connects guests emotionally to the food, the culture, and the history behind every detail, making the meal not just something they taste, but something they remember.

Luxury today is increasingly defined by intimacy rather than opulence. How do you interpret modern luxury within the context of Villa Mays?

In Villa Mays, modern luxury is defined by warmth, intention, and emotional connection rather than excess.

Our menu is a carefully curated composition of traditional flavours, time-honoured techniques, and refined presentation. Each element is designed to feel personal and immersive, allowing heritage, craftsmanship, and storytelling to take precedence.





True luxury, for us, lies in creating moments that feel meaningful, unhurried, and quietly memorable.

Food is often deeply tied to memory. Are there particular dishes or culinary traditions at Villa Mays that are especially meaningful to your team?

Many of our signature dishes carry deep emotional significance for our team because they are rooted in memory, place, and storytelling.

Our tender coconut broth is a great example—it's something truly unique to Villa Mays. It reflects our creative approach to innovation while staying rooted in Kerala's culinary identity, drawing out the pure essence of coconut in a way that feels both familiar and new.

Another dish close to our hearts is the spice box, where kebabs are served in six distinctive flavors inside a traditional spice box. This presentation allows us to connect the spices that form the backbone of our everyday cooking with carefully selected kebabs, creating a dialogue between tradition and contemporary technique.

Roaching Bredhi chettu idichathu is especially evocative of the past. It's an ancient preparation of sun-dried meat that is pounded and served with raw mango and coconut. For us, it represents a time-honored cooking method reinterpreted with a modern sensibility, while still respecting its origins.

Dishes like these embody what Villa Mays stands for—honouring memory, culture, and tradition, while allowing creativity and evolution to shape how those stories are told on the plate.

Kerala is known for its rich culture, spices, and rhythm of life. How does the destination itself influence the soul of Villa Mays?

The destination shapes the soul of Villa Mays through its deep sense of balance, where nature, culture, and time move in harmony. The water bodies, the monsoon rains, the scent of spices in the air, and the slow, intentional rhythm of life all influence how Villa Mays breathes and welcomes its guests.

This influence is reflected in every detail: from the architecture that respects heritage and openness, to the cuisine rooted in local flavors and seasonal ingredients, and the unhurried pace that encourages guests to pause, reflect, and reconnect. Kerala's philosophy of living well, mindfully, sensorially, and in tune with nature, flows naturally into the Villa Mays experience, making it less a destination to visit and more a feeling to carry with you long after you leave.

Looking ahead, how do you see Villa Mays evolving while staying true to its heritage, philosophy, and sense of quiet magic?

Villa Mays' evolution will be a careful balance between honouring its heritage and embracing thoughtful innovation.

The essence of the villa—its connection to nature, its celebration of artistry and craftsmanship, and its quiet, contemplative magic—will remain at the core of every decision. Future developments may include subtle enhancements in comfort and sustainability, as well as new experiences that deepen guests' connection to local culture.

At the heart of it all is a commitment to authenticity: any evolution will feel organic, never forced, ensuring that the Villa Mays continues to offer a sense of wonder and timelessness, while quietly embracing the possibilities of tomorrow. The magic isn't in grand gestures, it's in the thoughtful, deliberate care that allows

each guest to feel transported, renewed, and connected.

In a world increasingly drawn to noise and spectacle, Villa Maya stands apart — a place where luxury whispers rather than shouts. Through storytelling, heritage, and intentional intimacy, it offers something rare: an experience that lingers long after the final course. As Sasha Jacob reminds us, true magic is found not in excess, but in meaning — quietly, beautifully preserved.



