

Tropolite Bets on R&D and Innovation to Shape Future of Food Solutions

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Puneet Davar, Founder & CEO, Tropolite

India's food industry is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by premiumisation, evolving consumer preferences, demand for convenience, and the rapid adoption of technology across the value chain. In this changing landscape, food ingredient companies are increasingly moving beyond traditional ingredient supply to become innovation and solutions partners for food manufacturers, bakers, cafés, QSRs and HoReCa businesses.

Tropolite has been at the forefront of this shift, evolving from a whipping cream brand into a diversified food solutions company with a portfolio spanning bakery ingredients, culinary and beverage solutions, frozen desserts, starter cultures, cream cheese, ready-to-use products, premium whip toppings and cake premixes. Backed by a long-standing foundation in food science and an R&D-led approach, the company focuses on addressing real-world challenges around functionality, consistency, efficiency, and product innovation.

In this interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum Asia, Puneet Davar, Founder & CEO, Tropolite, discusses the company's evolution and its ambition to build a globally recognised gourmet food solutions brand from India. He shares insights into emerging trends across the bakery, café and HoReCa sectors, Tropolite's customer-centric R&D strategy, the growing importance of plant-based and convenience-led solutions, and the balance between functionality, sustainability and affordability. He also outlines the company's international expansion priorities and explores how automation, digitalisation and AI are set to influence food manufacturing, product development and customer engagement in the years ahead.

Tropolite has evolved from a whipping cream brand into a comprehensive food solutions company. What have been the key milestones in this transformation, and how is the company redefining its role as an R&D-led gourmet solutions partner for the food industry?

Tropolite's journey has always been rooted in innovation. While many know us for our whipping cream portfolio, our foundation actually goes back much further. Our family pioneered India's first indigenous ice cream stabiliser and emulsifier system in the 1970s, laying the groundwork for decades of food science expertise. Since launching Tropolite in 2008, we have consistently expanded our portfolio beyond bakery ingredients that include culinary and beverage solutions, frozen desserts, starter cultures, cream cheese, and a range of ready-to-use products along with our existing premium range of whip toppings and cake premixes.

Every milestone has been driven by solving real industry challenges, whether it was introducing India's first egg-free cake premix, developing non-dairy cooking cream, pioneering commercial-scale starter cultures, or launching ready-to-serve cold coffee and frozen dessert solutions. Today, we offer one of India's most comprehensive food solutions portfolios.

Our role has therefore evolved significantly. We no longer see ourselves as an ingredient supplier. We see ourselves as an R&D-led gourmet solutions partner that collaborates with customers to improve operational efficiency, accelerate menu innovation, deliver authentic taste experiences, and help businesses scale sustainably. Innovation today is not about launching more products; it is about creating commercially viable solutions that enable our customers to stay ahead of changing consumer expectations.

India's bakery, café, and HoReCa sectors are witnessing rapid premiumisation and changing consumer preferences. What emerging trends do you see shaping demand, and how is Tropolite aligning its product innovation pipeline to address these evolving market needs?

Indian consumers today are more exposed to global cuisines than ever before, and that is fundamentally changing expectations across the bakery, café and HoReCa sectors. Premiumisation is no longer confined to metro cities. Consumers across Tier II and Tier III markets are actively seeking café-style experiences, authentic flavours, artisanal desserts, global bakery formats and high-quality beverages.

At the same time, operators are under increasing pressure to deliver consistency, speed, operational efficiency and menu differentiation while managing costs. We also see growing demand for plant-based alternatives, convenience-led formats and ingredients that simplify kitchen operations without compromising quality. One example of this innovation-led approach is Bakesheen, our plant-based egg wash replacer that delivers a premium golden finish while improving operational efficiency and minimizing wastage.

At Tropolite, our innovation pipeline is built around these evolving needs. We work closely with chefs, bakers, QSRs and food entrepreneurs to identify operational pain points and translate them into practical solutions. Whether it is our cream cheese - that is crafted for global standards, frozen desserts, ready-to-serve beverages, premium whipping solutions or future-ready innovations, our focus is on helping customers innovate faster while delivering exceptional consumer experiences. Every product we develop begins with one question: how can we make our customers' business more successful?

Innovation has been central to Tropolite's journey, from India's first egg free cake premix to plant-based and ready-to-use solutions. Could you share how your R&D strategy identifies industry challenges and translates them into commercially viable products?

For us, innovation does not begin inside the laboratory; it begins inside our customers' kitchens. Our R&D philosophy is built around understanding the real operational, commercial and consumer challenges faced by food businesses.

Our teams work closely with bakers, chefs, café owners, QSR operators and food manufacturers to identify gaps in efficiency, consistency, shelf life, taste, convenience or menu innovation. Those insights become the starting point for product development.

Once a need is identified, our R&D teams focus on developing solutions that balance functionality, commercial viability and consumer appeal. Every product undergoes extensive application testing under actual operating conditions to ensure it performs consistently across different formats and environments.

This customer-first approach has enabled us to introduce several category-defining innovations over the years, from India's first egg-free cake premix and non-dairy cooking cream to starter cultures, cream cheese, ready-to-serve cold coffee, premium whipping solutions and frozen desserts. Ultimately, successful innovation is not measured by how many products we launch, but by the value those products create for our customers and the consumers they serve.

As food manufacturers increasingly seek clean-label, sustainable, and operationally efficient ingredients, how is Tropolite balancing functionality, quality, sustainability, and affordability while developing next-generation food solutions?

Today's food businesses are looking for solutions that deliver on multiple parameters simultaneously. Consumers expect transparency and quality, while manufacturers need ingredients that improve efficiency, reduce wastage and remain commercially viable. Balancing all these expectations require continuous innovation rather than compromise.

At Tropolite, sustainability begins with designing smarter products. We focus on ingredients that improve yield, extend stability, optimise processes and minimise operational losses across the value chain. At the same time, our R&D teams are continuously developing future-ready ingredients and solutions that respond to evolving consumer preferences without compromising on taste, functionality, or performance.

Affordability is equally important, particularly in a price-sensitive market like India. Our strength lies in combining indigenous food science with advanced manufacturing capabilities to deliver globally benchmarked products that offer both value and functionality. We believe the future belongs to ingredient companies that can successfully integrate quality, innovation, sustainability and operational efficiency into a single solution.

You have spoken about building the first globally recognised food ingredients and gourmet solutions brand from India. What are your priorities for international expansion, and how do you plan to differentiate Tropolite in highly competitive global markets?

Our aspiration has always been to build a world-class food solutions company from India. We believe Indian food science and manufacturing capabilities are now fully capable of competing with established global players, and our objective is to demonstrate that on the international stage.

Our international strategy is focused on strengthening our presence across the 9+ countries where we currently operate, while continuing to build capabilities for future expansion. Rather than entering markets with a product-first mindset, we adopt a solutions-first approach, understanding local customer needs, food cultures, and operational requirements before developing market-specific offerings.

Our differentiation lies in combining decades of indigenous food science expertise with globally benchmarked quality, application-led innovation and customer collaboration. We are not trying to replicate what already exists. We are building solutions specifically designed to help customers innovate faster, operate more efficiently and create exceptional consumer experiences. That partnership-led approach is what we believe will help Tropolite establish itself as India's first globally recognised gourmet food solutions brand.

With automation, digitalisation, and AI beginning to influence food manufacturing and product development, how do you see these technologies transforming the food ingredients sector, and what role will they play in Tropolite's future innovation and customer engagement strategy?

Technology is rapidly reshaping every aspect of the food industry, from manufacturing and quality assurance to product development and customer engagement. Automation and digitalisation enable greater consistency, traceability, and production efficiency, while AI opens new possibilities in areas such as predictive quality control, demand forecasting,

formulation optimisation, and faster product development.

At Tropolite, we view technology as an enabler rather than a replacement for human expertise. Food innovation will always require culinary understanding, sensory evaluation and close collaboration with customers. However, digital tools and AI will significantly accelerate our ability to analyse market trends, identify emerging consumer preferences, optimise manufacturing processes and shorten innovation cycles.

Going forward, we will continue investing in advanced manufacturing technologies, R&D capabilities and digital systems that improve speed, consistency and responsiveness. More importantly, these technologies will help us engage with customers more effectively, co-create solutions faster and deliver innovation that is increasingly personalised, data-driven and aligned with evolving market needs. We believe the future belongs to companies that successfully combine scientific expertise with digital intelligence to create smarter, faster and more sustainable food solutions.