

YEAR-ENDER | After A Year Defined By Change — In The Way We Worked Out While Staying Home; Consumed Art And Entertainment; In The Food We Learned To Love, And In The Hacks We Discovered To Travel Safe — We Look Forward To 2022, Which Promises To Celebrate All This And More

TO A YEAR OF NEW CHOICES

FOOD

The main course was the great outdoors | If there's one thing the pandemic did, it turned everyone into a chef. According to Dineout, the number of home chefs could have risen by four times in 2021 alone.

Restaurants, on the other hand, adopted digital menus and set up alfresco dining spaces for the safety of their patrons. Start-ups emerged with curated picnic experiences for families to get quick, safe, breaks. Health-focused restaurants witnessed a 200% increase in orders, while locally available greens like the hibiscus saw new-found love.

What's in store | The transition to healthy, home cooked diets which began last year is set to evolve into a growing market of its own. Predictions say selenium-rich foods, plant-based meats and moringa are likely to hit big. In cities, urban foraging has become a discovery.

"The number of enquiries we get for our kitchen garden and organic farming workshops has doubled, and so have homemakers and young professionals interested in growing their own food," says Rohit Jain, secretary, Organic Farming Association of India.



OUT AND ABOUT: Small day trips spent in nature and the company of friends and family became popular after the pandemic

NFT ART

Into the metaverse | In May, Chennai musician Kaber Vasuki sold an early demo recording of his song 'Vasanam' as a non-fungible token (NFT) for 50 ether (equivalent to ₹1.5 crore as of then), to popular NFT investor Metakovan. In November, at the world's first NFT-focused music, art, and technology festival titled 'Dreamverse' that was held at Manhattan's Terminal 5, 41 visual and musical artists from Chennai, presented 'Pann', a programmable NFT that went on to be minted on Async Art.

In brief, 2021 saw artists and innovators flock the NFT market, not just for its monetary possibilities, but for its scope as a fairer ecosystem.

What's in store | Deloitte Global predicts that NFTs for sports media will generate more than US\$2 billion in transactions in 2022. Industry experts say tech majors like Microsoft and Nvidia could back this growth. MG Motor India has already announced the debut of its MG NFT.



FITNESS

Virtual is the way | If every plank you did earned you a score over another gym rat, would you be better motivated to work out? Popular brands like StepSetGo think so, as they gear up to explore gamified fitness experiences in 2022.

What's in store | So, if you have a fitness goal this new year, wear it with pride, literally. Because the sale of wearable tracking devices, which grew by almost 170% in the first quarter of 2021 (according to International Data Corporation's Worldwide Quarterly Wearable Device Tracker), is only set to get bigger. According to Deloitte, 320 million consumer health and wearable wellness devices will be shipped worldwide in 2022.

Also upping the game is virtual training as fitness centres rise up to a hybrid market in the coming year. "Most of our clients are exploring equipment-less, body weight routines like calisthenics and animal flow movement, which can be done at home," says M Sudeesh, head coach at The Quad, Chennai.



TRAVEL

No workations please, just vacations | In 2020, workations were in, but they were on the decline in 2021, and maybe on their way out in 2022, say experts. The Travel Predictions 2022 Research by Booking.com says 73% of their travellers want to reclaim vacations, making them strictly for leisure.

Caravans and RVs have become popular after the pandemic. After trying for decades, Steve Borgia, managing director of Indeco Leisure Hotels, launched his motor homes in April. "People choose caravans as they are safe and keep the family together," he says.



What's in store | 2022, say experts, will be marked by more frequent, instant getaways. Make My Trip says bookings at off-beat destinations like Bir, Hampi and Araku Valley will go up. Flexible travel solutions like the air fare lock option will also be sought after.

THEATRE

Back to the stage, with precautions | As a year of cancelled shows and financial crisis delivered a blow on small-time artists, some of them rose to the challenge by upgrading themselves digitally. In the beginning, most theatre artists, musicians and dancers explored the virtual medium, experimenting with pre-recorded shows. In June, Chennai's Sumanasa Foundation organized an Online Performing Arts Festival for folk traditions falling outside the digital economy.

What's in store | Live artists are looking at the coming year with the hope to engage with audiences directly. "It may be a slow process but is a necessary one," says Karthik Kumar of Evam.

Expect the tours to restart and Covid-19 protocol — including vaccination certificates and masks — to become mandatory prerequisites. "We cannot wait to get back on stage," says Karthik. "Studio spaces and intimate settings are emerging as great spaces to host shows for smaller audiences."



CINEMA

Women take the lead online | Yes, OTTs ruled in 2021, but look closer, and you will realise that the women ruled the OTTs. 'Lady Superstar' Nayanthara was seen in Miland Rau's thriller film 'Netrikann' (on Disney+Hotstar); Jyothika in the family drama 'Udanpirappe' (on Amazon Prime Video), and Trisha in 'Paramapadham Vilayattu' (on Disney+Hotstar), which was also her 60th film. Kangana Ranaut created waves in the south, playing late chief minister J Jayalalitha in 'Thalaivii', which came on Netflix. 'Master', 'Jai Bhim' and 'Sarpatta Parambarai' were among the most talked about films.



What's in store | The scope of OTT releases will grow, say industry experts. News is that Dhanush starrer 'Maaran', may see an OTT release, even as other mega productions, Ajith's 'Valimai' (set for a Pongal release) and Vijay's 'Beast' (to be released next summer) get set to open in theatres.