

# MONSOON AWAKENING

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Our story starts with a man; his passport says André Evju. Initially, André did the smart and safe thing, strolling down the downtrodden road of a business degree at Oslo's premiere business school. Eventually, the asphalt twists and turns of the city, the pine trees, the conversations, as well as the confinement of his immediate environment became somewhat of a demotivating thing to wake up to every morning. It was a broken record kind of lifestyle that this hot blooded human wasn't keen on. So when the opportunity arose to say adieu to Norway for six months and hop over the pond as an exchange student back in 2009, no doubt – he went for it.

Whilst living in the industrial and quite cosmopolitan city of Monterrey in northern Mexico, André met Simon – the Australian surfer – and the two of them backpacked down to the luscious paradise that is Costa Rica. This would turn out to be a pivotal and life altering moment in André's life. The island, "Had him at hello", and a spark was ignited, inspiring more journeys all over the planet with a backpack as his most loyal travel mate, letting his own restless energy and urge for the unknown lead him forward.

Drenched in monsoon rain in dark alleyways of sizzling South-Asian cities and on quiet corners of streets with no names in South America, André discovered combinations of flavours unlike anything he had experienced before. He was smitten with the fabulous easiness and creativeness of these chefs in creating outstandingly simple, cheap and delicious meals.

## A life-changing meal

Whilst calling New York home during his MBA studies in 2013, André borrowed enough money to trek down to Costa Rica, alongside his brother Mads and his friend, Nam. Whilst in El Tunco, to the sound of the dark night waves high-fiving the shoreline, the group of Norwegian men came across a small bungalow with smoke oozing from its doors and windows. Magical food scents crept around in the shadows of the night enveloping the hut. André, Mads and Nam had no idea at the time, but this delicious meal would become the inspiration for their entire business to be, the wok restaurant by the name of Tunco.

Years went by. Mads and Nam were now up to their necks in their masters degree in engineering in Stavanger. Motivated by the lousy selection of takeaway that seemed limited to pizzas, burgers and kebabs, their conversations would often veer towards the idea of opening a place of their own. Reminiscing about the outstanding wok they had enjoyed that one night in El Tunco and hoping to incorporate the interesting vietnamese flavours Nam grew up eating. They knew they wanted to build a place to experience outstandingly tasty, exotic and healthy fast food.

Celebrating finishing five years of studies, Mads and Nam were ready to put their words into actions. Ideas



were solidified into business plans and André, whom had settled for a job in a brokers firm in Oslo, was invited to join. He didn't take much convincing. The three men, with no culinary background but plenty of experience eating food abroad, were diving head first into the food industry – with a place they all agreed on calling Tunco.

You don't have to set foot far outside Norway for poverty to be heartbreakingly common. There are those living in societies without social or economic safety nets and traveling the world, it is difficult to turn a blind eye. Following his travels, André found inspiration in Blake Mycowski, the founder of Toms shoes. Mycowski developed the concept One for One – a business strategy in which for every pair of shoes sold, a less fortunate person receives a pair for free.

#### **A meal for a meal**

In this way, consumers can effect positive change and contribute directly to humanitarian work. André pitched the idea of including a “meal for a meal” twist to Tunco. They would sell woks and take a portion of the profit to feed less fortunate children a hearty meal. With Nam having family in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam was a no brainer and they initiated a collaboration with SOS Children's Villages, discovering that a meal there costs a mere 5 Norwegian kroner.

It's the 11th of April, 2016. The sun is peeking through the clouds, letting the people of Oslo know that Spring has arrived. It lights up the bright blue Tunco sign hanging in front of their space in Bjerregaards gate, St. Hanshaugen. The glass windows reflect the passers-by, urging them to catch a glimpse of themselves. The seed that was planted years ago, over the steaming hot woks in El Tunco, has now materialised into something concrete.

After months of testing flavour combinations, the team finally settled on four different styles of woks; a tropical, fruity one, a Thai styled red curry one, one with Vietnamese oyster sauce and one slightly more challenging: blue cheese and cream. Nam and Mads, the engineers in the group, even created excel-sheets of all the flavour combinations in the process of finding the perfect mix. Unsurprising, the Tunco-team are also focused on sustaining our planet, so we all can keep traveling and experiencing the beauty of it, and are therefore not serving beef or scampi, which are

both red-listed when it comes to negative environmental impact.

Little money has been spent on advertising the establishment – they haven't gone all out on social media but after only a few weeks they are pushing out 130 woks on a good day. Word is spreading and customers are stating that, “I've been recommended to try Tunco by three different people during the last week!”

Keeping any sort of restaurant afloat and flourishing is a hard task, and thus far André, Mads and Nam are yet to see if woks will indeed be a hit with the people of Oslo before they follow through with their «Meal for a Meal» promise. But don't be alarmed, they keep thorough track – writing down every single wok sold, getting ready to wire money that will end up as food on the table for Vietnamese children.

And remember Simon the Australian surfer who took André on his very first trip to Costa Rica? Inspired by André and the team's business plan, he landed in Norway recently and is joining the others in their quest to make exotic, healthy fast food that has an added humanitarian bonus. Giving you every excuse to leave your lunch at home and eat out every day of the week.

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