

Indian Regional cooking

Indian cuisine consists of a wide variety of regional and traditional cuisines native to the Indian subcontinent. Given the range of diversity in soil type, climate, culture, ethnic groups, and occupations, these cuisines vary substantially from each other and use locally available spices, herbs, vegetables, and fruits. Indian food is also heavily influenced by religion, in particular Hindu, cultural choices and traditions. The cuisine is also influenced by centuries of Islamic rule, particularly the Mughal rule. Samosas and pilafs can be regarded as examples. Historical events such as foreign invasions, trade relations, and colonialism have played a role in introducing certain foods to this country. The Columbian discovery of the New World brought a number of new vegetables and fruit to India. A number of these such as the potato, tomatoes, chillies, peanuts, and Guava have become staples in many regions of India.

Indian cuisine can be said to have evolved along lines parallel to Indian History. India has ancient cultural heritage, which is dependent on religion, geography, and socio-economic conditions. Traditionally Indian cooking has been handed down through the generations by demonstrations and word of mouth.

Strong impact was made on Indian cuisine during the reign of Mughals in the sixteenth century, who were fond of good living, cooking, and eating. Muslim cooking was based on meat. Their influence was strongest in North and central India. Since then, well known Mughlai dishes were evolved, which have soon developed into an important culinary art and is part of Indian cuisine. Extreme South, the Mughal influence was slight, where cooking is mainly vegetarian. The regional dishes from different parts of Indian and influenced by religion, availability of ingredients and old traditions and customs, many of them being influenced by the different invasions. Thus it is a combination of cookery of many nationalities.

The heart and soul of India's culinary art is to be able to combine the two with the nitty-gritty of Indian cooking – dum, bhunnao, talna, baghar, dhunaanar, and bhunnana. Each one of this methods or a combination of two or three or even all may be necessary to prepare a delicacy. It is important, therefore, to be able to understand the basic principles of each.

Dum – literally steam, has been described as the 'maturing of a prepared dish'. Dum is the forerunner of the modern day slow cooking. In the good old days, when handi cooking was the vogue, the utensil was sealed with atta (whole-wheat flour) dough, to ensure that the moisture stayed within, and put on smouldering coal. At the same time, some of the coal was placed on the lid. This ensures even heat – from top and below. Today, the oven is used to perform the function of providing even heat. In this process, the main ingredient is cooked partially

with all the accompaniments (in some cases, some of the accompaniments are added only at the time of sealing) and then the utensil is covered with a lid, sealed with atta dough and then placed in the oven. The food continues to cook in its own steam, so as to speak. The advantage of giving dum is that since vapour cannot escape, the delicacy retains all the flavour and aroma. Dum is usually given when, say, the meat has become sufficiently tender and the curry is nearly ready. The fact that dum also brings the ghee or oil to the top helps to improve the appearance of the dish.

Bhunao is a combination of light stewing, sautéing, and stir-frying. It is the process of cooking over medium to high heat, adding small quantities of liquid – water or yoghurt – to prevent the ingredients from sticking, which also makes it necessary to stir constantly. Almost every recipe needs bhunao at some stage, very often at more than one stage. At the outset it may be the spices and/or ingredients like onions, ginger, tomatoes, etc., which require bhunao. The process would not only extract the flavour of each of the spices and/or ingredients, but also ensure that they do not get burnt or remain raw. In fact, the masala must be fully cooked. Subsequently, the main ingredient may also require bhunao. This ensures that the initial cooking is done in the ingredients' own juices. The process is complete only when the fat leaves the masala or the sides. Bhunao is not a complete process in itself but a part of the process that helps to prepare a dish. It usually requires the addition of substantial quantities of liquid to complete the cooking process.

Talna or Frying: In Indian cuisine, frying is done in a kadhai and a deep fat fryer. Not that there is anything wrong in using a deep fat fryer. It is just that a kadhai has some advantages:

The quantity of ghee or oil required is less, which makes it possible for the oil to be changed regularly. Needless to say, any food fried in clean fat will look good in every way – colour, appearance, flavour etc. Moreover, it would be free from the odour of oil that has been repeatedly heated and used.

The shape of the kadhai not only allows larger quantities of food to be fried but also results in even frying.

Baghar, Tarhka, chhonkna or Tempering: Hot oil has an extraordinary ability to extract and retain the essence, aroma, and flavour of spices and herbs. This is performed either at the beginning of cooking of a dish (the whole garam masala is tempered before the rice is fried, when making a pulao) or after (cumin and asafoetida are tempered and then added to the lentil, when making dal).

The salient features of baghar are:

The ghee or the oil is brought to smoking point and then heat is reduced. No water is even added. The ingredients are usually added succession, rarely together. The crackling of the spice or spices or a change in colour indicates

that the process is complete, unless fresh herbs and vegetables are also being used. The prepared tempering is poured sizzling hot over the cooked dish, except when a dish requires pre-tempering.

Dhuanaar or Smoking: Dhuan is smoke and to smoke dry meat delicacies is a simple, but effective, process. It is usually done at the end of cooking. It requires charcoal, ghee, and a dry spice, usually cloves. The procedure is: Put glowing charcoals in a katori (small metal bowl) and place the katori in the center of a handi or casserole, and arrange the cooked meat around it. Drop the dry spice over the charcoal, and pour a little clarified butter on top. Quickly cover the handi or casserole with a lid to enable the smoke to permeate the meat.

Bhunnana or Roasting: In Indian cooking, roasting is usually done in a tandoor, fired by charcoal, which acts as a catalyst to impart a flavour that is unique in the world of cuisine. What happens is that the juices of the meat drip on the charcoal which sizzles and sends up billows of smoke, giving the tandoor a smoking chamber effect. It is this smoke that gives tandoori cooking-kebab, breads, vegetables, and paneer (Indian cottage cheese) a special aroma.

Kebab, paneer and vegetables, but not breads can also be roasted on a sigri, which is an open iron grill. However, the flavour would be much milder. The only imperative is roasting Indian style is that all foods, except breads, have to be marinated.

Northern Indian Cuisine:

Perhaps the most prevalent culinary style found outside of India, Northern Indian cuisine reflects a strong Mughal influence. It is characterized by a high use of dairy: milk, paneer (an Indian mild cheese), ghee (clarified butter), and yogurt are all used regularly in Northern dishes. Samosas, fried pastries stuffed with potatoes and occasionally meat, are a distinctive Northern snack. Clay ovens known as tandoors are popular in the North, giving dishes like Tandoori Chicken and Naan bread their distinctive charcoal flavor. A significant number of Northern dishes make regular appearances on Indian menus. Dal or PaneerMakhani are popular vegetarian dishes, consisting of dal or paneer cooked in a creamy sauce of tomatoes, onions, mango powder, and garam masala. SaagPaneer and PalakPaneer are two similar dishes made with spinach, cream, and paneer, differing slightly in consistency and spices. Korma, another menu staple from Northern India, is a creamy curry of coconut milk or yogurt, cumin,

coriander, and small amounts of cashews or almonds. It can be served with different meats, usually chicken or lamb, but sometimes beef, as well as with paneer for a vegetarian dish.

Western Indian Cuisine:

Western Indian cuisine is distinguished by the geographic and historical particulars of its three main regions: Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Goa. Maharashtra's coastal location is responsible for its fish and coconut milk-dominant cuisine. Gujarati cuisine is mostly vegetarian and has an underlying sweetness to many of its dishes due to Chinese influence. Since the dry climate of this region produces smaller vegetables, this region is well known for its chutneys, which are popular Indian condiments that use cooked, fresh, or pickled vegetables and fruits with sweet, sour, or spicy flavors. Goa acted as a major trade port and colony for Portugal, resulting in a distinctive and unique blend of Indian and Portuguese culinary elements. Goan cuisine uses pork and beef with greater frequency than other regional cuisines in India. Vinegar is also a characteristic ingredient of Goan cuisine, another result of Portuguese influence. The prevalence of coconut milk, coconut paste, and fish in Goan cuisine results from its coastal location. Vindaloo is a traditional Goan dish that is an Indian restaurant mainstay, its name deriving from Vinho de Alho, a Portuguese marinade consisting primarily of garlic, wine, vinegar, and chilies.

Eastern Indian Cuisine:

Eastern Indian cuisine is primarily known for its desserts. These desserts are not only favored by other regions in India, but are frequently found at Indian restaurants, their light sweetness making an excellent finale to a meal. Rasgulla is a popular sweet treat consisting of semolina and cheese curd (chenna) balls that are boiled in a light sugar syrup. Eastern dishes favor mustard seeds, poppy seeds, and mustard oil, giving dishes a light pungency. Rice and fish also feature prominently in Eastern cuisine. Overall, Eastern dishes are more lightly spiced than those from other regions.

Southern Indian Cuisine:

Southern Indian cuisine is not typically found on many Indian restaurant menus and differs greatly from other regions. Its "curries" contrast differently in their textures and can typically be categorized according to the drier consistency, or those favoring a more soupy or stew-like presentation. Poriyals, dry curries consisting of a variety of vegetables and spices, accompany rice dishes. Sambars, rasams, and kootus, three common stew-like dishes, each differ in their primary ingredients and degrees of liquidity. Sambars are essentially tamarind flavored pea and vegetable stews that are more watery than curries from other regions, but are thicker than rasams. Rasams are more similar to soups in their consistency, and are composed primarily of tomato, tamarind, and a myriad of

spices. Kootus are more similar to curries found in other regions, but, rather than being creamy like the dairy-based curries of the North, kootus get their consistency from boiled lentils.

Aside from curry-style dishes, Southern Indian cuisine is known for its tasty fried or griddle-cooked snacks. Dosas consist of a large crepe-like rice pancake that is usually filled with vegetables, chutneys, or masala curries. Utthapams are similar to dosas, but are thicker with the “filling” sprinkled on top like a pizza. Idlis and vadas are fried delicacies similar to savory doughnuts that are served as accompaniments to sambars and rasams. Apart from restaurants that specifically serve Southern Indian cuisine, the only South Indian food that is frequently found in Indian restaurants are pappadams, a fried crispy rice cracker usually spiced with black peppercorns.

MAHARASHTRA

- The cuisine of Maharashtra has its own distinctive flavors and tastes. It can be divided into two major sections-the coastal and the interior. A major portion of Maharashtra, which lies on the coast of the Arabian Sea, is called the Konkan and boasts of its own Konkani cuisine, which is a homogeneous combination of Malvani, Gaud Saraswat Brahmin, and Goan cuisines. Besides the coastal cuisine, the interior of Maharashtra-the Vidarbha area, has its own distinctive cuisine known as the Varadi cuisine. Though most people are not very familiar with Maharashtrian cuisine and it has yet to find its way into five-star kitchens, there does exist a large and interesting culinary repertoire. Maharashtrian cuisine includes subtly flavoured vegetarian delicacies and hot, aromatic meat and fish curries. Their crunchy, crisp sweets are made mostly from rice and jaggery. The Konkan food has a lot of coconut in it and 'Masalas' that have mainly red chillies and coriander. The food from Kolhapur concentrates on mutton, which is made very spicy. The food of the Vidarbha region has fiery hot, oily tempering of chillies and garlic. To spice things further, Mumbai has it's own pot-pourri of dishes like VadaPav, Misal and PavBhaji - the Indian answers to fast food, which are immensely popular through out the country.

- **Konkan**

Konkan cuisine has two styles of cooking, "Konkanast Brahmin Cuisine", which uses few spices and is more coconut based, and the spicy non-Brahmin version. A little further inland, the Konkan cuisine has peanuts, sesame and coriander as the main spicing agents.

The food has a lot of coconut in it and Masalas that have mainly red chillies and coriander. Konkan food uses 'Kokum' (a deep purple berry that has a pleasing sweet and sour taste) and raw mango as souring agents along with tamarind and lime.

The Konkan food also has a version of 'Garam Masala' called bottle Masala, which has about 20-25 ingredients powdered together. Konkan food also plays on textures. Many dishes use coarsely ground Masala that one can feel with one's tongue to give the food a different feeling. Most of the Chutneys and Masalas are being hand

ground, as it is believed that machines cannot give the same quality as using the grinding stone. Konkan cuisine also uses a lot of charcoal grilled onions. These onions are either used chopped or ground along with Masalas after being grilled. This gives the food a very interesting smoky flavor. Of course, coconut is also liberally used in various forms such as raw grated, fried grated, coconut paste and coconut milk.

- **Maharashtra**

Maharashtrian meals are scientifically planned and cooked - the golden rule being that the cooking medium must not be seen. The vegetables are more or less steamed and lightly seasoned so as to retain their nutritional value. There is almost no deep frying and roasting. Coconut is used in cooking and as an embellishment.

Jaggery and tamarind are used in most vegetables or lentils so that the food has a sweet and sour flavour while the 'Kala Masala' (special blend of spices) is added to make the food piquant. As opposed to the coastal cuisine, where fresh coconut is added to the dishes, in the Vidarbha region powdered coconut is used for cooking.

- Varadi Cuisine Distinguishing features of the Varadi cuisine are the dishes made of 'Besan' (gram flour) like 'ZunkaBhakar' and 'Pathawadi' and the Vada-Bhat. Non-vegetarian food is also very popular in this region. As seafood is not easily available over here, chicken and mutton are commonly cooked.

- The people of Maharashtra are known for aesthetic presentation of food. In formal meals, the guests sit on floor rugs or red wooden seats and eat from silver or metal 'Thalis' or plates and bowl, placed on a raised 'Chowrang', which is a short decorative table. To avoid mixing of flavors, each guest is given a bowl of saffron scented water to dip fingers in before starting to eat the next delicacy. The Art Of Setting Food On The Platter In Maharashtra, even an everyday meal consists of several accompaniments that are set out in a particular manner in the 'Taat' (platter). The "TaatVadhany" (method of setting food on the platter) is an art. It starts with a bit of salt at the top centre of the Taat. On its left is set a small piece of lemon. Then follows the 'Chatni' (spicy accompaniment made of ground coconut and green chillies), 'Koshimbir' (salad), and 'Bharit' (lightly cooked or raw vegetable in Yoghurt) in that order. The vegetable with gravy never precedes the dry vegetable because the gravy will run into it. Once everyone is seated the women of the house will serve the rice, pour a little 'Toop' (clarified butter) and 'Varan' (lentil) on it and then the meal begins after a short thanksgiving.

A Marathi meal is not complete without 'Chapatis' or 'Bhakri' (Jawar or Bajra Roti). Chapatis usually go with 'Bhaji' or fried vegetable, which is usually a combination of one non-leafy vegetable and a leafy vegetable. A "BharleliVyaganychiBhaji" (Brinjal) for example, is generally served with a "Pale Bhaji" (a leafy vegetable like Methi or Spinach). As in south India, in Maharashtra too every meal is winded up with curd rice or buttermilk. A wide array of condiments like pickles and 'Papads' are also served along with every meal. Maharashtrian meal is incomplete without Papads, which are eaten roasted or fried. A typical feature is the Masala Papad in which finely chopped onions, green chillies and Chat Masala are sprinkled over roasted or fried Papads. The Mouth-

Watering Deserts Maharashtra also has its share of awesome desserts like 'Kheer', 'Shrikhand' and 'Basundi', and with the advent of the festive season one can find a plethora of goodies in every Maharashtrian home.

Delicacies For Special Occasions During a festival the presentation of food becomes even more elaborate. The platter or Taat is adorned with various patterns of Rangoli and white flowers around it. Food is served amidst devotional chants and the fragrance of incense sticks, in order to create an auspicious ambience. The most popular dessert of Maharashtra is the "PuranPoli", which is a 'Roti' stuffed with a sweet mixture of jaggery and gram flour and is made at the time of the Maharashtrian New Year.

During Ganesh Utsav, every Maharashtrian welcomes Lord Ganesh into his home and offers "Modak" - a favorite sweetmeat of Lord Ganesh that is made only during this festival. Shrikhand, a sort of thick yogurt sweet dish, is a great favorite at weddings and the Dussehra festival. Traditionally, a wedding feast has to have five sweet delicacies, of which a "MotichurLaddu" (sweetmeat balls made of gram flour) is a must.

Some of the choicest Maharashtrian festival dishes are "KhamangKakdi", "Masala Vangi" (Stuffed Brinjal Fry), Cauliflower "VatnaRassa" (Cauliflower Curry), "Varan" (Dal), Mixed Bhajis (mixed vegetables deep-fried), etc

- Snacking is a favorite pastime of the people of Mumbai. Chaat is probably the most widely eaten food in the city, followed by "Bhelpuri", "PaniPuri", "PavBhaji", "BatataPuri", etc. For those looking for non-vegetarian snacks, there are the Muslim Kebabs, "Baida Roti" (an egg Roti stuffed with minced meat), Tandoori Chicken, Seekh Kebabs, and Fish Koliwada.

- Snacks of Mumbai

- Talk of Mumbai and what immediately comes to mind is Bhel-Puri, the Ragda Patties, BatataVadas, Sandwich, Kulfi, Coconut and other snacks. Mumbai's fast food is not restricted to Bhel and PaniPuri anymore; roadside shacks now sell eclectic stuff, comprising of Dosas, Pizzas, Hamburgers, Pulao, Biryani and many more. In Mumbai, the 'Paan' culture has been raised to an art form. An example of this is the Cold and Sweet Paan in which the sweet filling is chilled.

There are several working families in Mumbai, belonging to different strata of society, who depend on the food supplied by hawkers. Food is available cheaply at the hawkers' joints and if hawkers stopped selling food items a majority of the working population would be deprived of their lunch.

Mumbai knows what people like! The most popular items include the Mumbai's VadaPav, the unique taste of which is unbeatable, Sandwich, a light snack made of bread, Zpudina Chutney and fresh vegetables, PaniPuri, a light snack made up of puffed Puris, sprouts and other spices, "DahiBatataPuri", good substitute for breakfast or mini meals during summer days, PavBhaji, medley of variety of vegetables cooked in different style, Misal as the name suggests, a spicy mixture of pulses, potatoes and other spices, BhelPuri a very famous Chowpatty chat

popular all over India, "SevBatataPuri" a light snack made of flat Puris garnished with mashed potatoes, chutneys and other condiments. If one is in Mumbai do not miss the Ragada patties at Mumbai Chowpatty.

GUJARAT

- Gujarati cuisine is unlike any other Indian cuisine. The state of Gujarat is renowned for sophisticated, light, vegetarian meals and there are slight variations in eating habits and modes of preparation in its three component regions. Almost strictly vegetarian, it is traditionally served on silver platters to the accompaniment of rice and a variety of wheat breads.

- **THE IRRESISTIBLY TANGY CUISINE**

Even though the state of Gujarat has absorbed many foreign influences over the years, the basic tastes in food have remained the same. There are few people who do not relish Gujarati savouries - crisp spicy fried 'farsans', which can be bought at wayside stalls.

Kathiawari and Kachchh food both use red chilli powder to make the cuisine spicy. The cuisine in south Gujarat too, is spicy but here green chilies add 'life' to the food. The people of Surat use sugar than the others in their cooking and as a result, the cuisine has a sweet, tangy flavour.

The famous Gujarati 'thali' served at weddings consists of 'farsans', sweetmeats and a variety of sweet and sour chutneys and pickles. This harmony is derived from mixing of the sweet with the salty is what makes the cooking of this state different from the rest.

- **South Gujarat**

- In comparison to the dry region of Saurashtra, Southern Gujarat is blessed with plenty of rainfall. Green vegetables and plenty of fruit therefore dominate Surati food. There are no elaborate preparations made, no expensive ingredients used and yet the food in its utter simplicity, tastes exotically different. Popular items include a delicious vegetable concoction called Undhyoo and Paunk, a tangy delicacy. Surat is also famous for its bakery items like the 'nankhatais', 'gharis' and the 'saglubaglumithai', which are easily available in the city's bakeries and confectionery shops.

Geographically, Gujarat can be divided into four regions and because of the climatic differences; there are slight variations in eating habits and modes of preparation.

NORTH GUJARAT

This region is popular for its traditional Gujarati thali consisting of rice, dal, curry, vegetables, sprouted beans, farsan, pickles, chutney and raita. Food is usually non spicy and oil is used sparingly. Farsans are of various varieties such as Pathara, KhamanDhokla, and Khandvi.

- **KATHIAWAD**

It is surprising to know that Saurashtra with its vast stretches of dry earth has sugarcane, wheat, millet, peanuts, and sesame, native to this region. Hence, pulses dominate Kathiawari food and sweetmeats made of 'gur' (jaggery). This region has a delicious variety of pickles.

Kathiawarifavourites include 'debras' made with wheat flour mixed with spinach, green chillies, a dollop of yogurt and a pinch of salt and sugar, these are eaten with 'chhundo' (a hot and sweet shredded mango pickle). Yet another specialty of this region is 'Methia Masala', a dry powder made from fenugreek seeds, chilly powder and salt. This is liberally sprinkled over raw vegetables and salads and gives the food an especially piquant flavour. 'Phafda', an omumflavoured assorted flour puri is another Kathiawarifavourite.

- **Kachchh**

- Kachchhi cuisine is relatively simple. It consists of Khichdi, the main dish eaten with Kadhi - a savoury curry made of yoghurt. Some common dishes include KhamanDhokla, a salty steamed cake, Doodhpak, a sweet, thickened milk confectionery and Shrikhand, dessert made of yoghurt, flavoured with saffron, cardamom.

PUNJAB

Punjab the land of Five Rivers. Punjab – the land of Milk and Honey. Punjab – the granary of the subcontinent. Punjab – the land of Indomitable People, reflecting the Spirit of Man. Punjab – the land of Virile Men, the symbol of India's Manhood. Punjab – Home of the tandoor and a superlative, robust cuisine. A cuisine richly influenced by all the invaders – from Alexander the Greek to Nadir Shah the Persian to Sher Shah the Afgan to Babar the Mongol. Punjab's other great contribution is the dhaaba – the roadside eatery that is an important feature on our network of national and state highways. Once frequented exclusively by thousands of truckers, today it is fashionable to 'slum' at a dhaaba – urban or roadside. Puran Singh's Dhaaba in Ambala has acquired a nationwide reputation for the excellence of its food. Moti Mahal in Delhi made Tandoori Chicken a truly international favorite.

What makes Punjabi food so special? In a word, the tandoor. The tandoor is much more than a versatile kitchen equipment – it is a social institution. In the villages of Punjab, the communal tandoor, dug in the ground, is a meeting place for the rural womenfolk - jus- like the village well – who bring kneaded atta and, occasionally marinated meats to have them cooked and to have a chat. This is not a rural phenomenon alone. Until just a few years ago, every urban neighborhood had its communal tandoor as well. Many have one even today. Punjabi cuisine boasts of equally good non-tandoori food. The remarkable aspect of this 'other' cuisine is its simplicity.

The Punjabis delight is the simplest food. The earthy Sarson-da-Saag (with knobs of white butter, Makki-ki-Roti and Lassi or churned yoghurt) is Punjab's eternal dish. To go with their fine cuisine, the Punjabis have per se, a wonderfully simple 'code' of eating. A meal of vegetables and lentils, for example, is eaten with a choprhya (spread with desi ghee – clarified butter or plain butter) phulka or tandoori paratha. On the other hand, a meat delicacy is usually eaten with a plain phulka or tandoori. Roti – sans ghee or butter – accompanied by nothing more than a raita and onions split open by smashing them with a fist. Traditionally, meat dishes are prepared by men folk, mostly on holidays, with great deal of flair. The woman are, by and large, vegetarian though they are not averse to cooking meat. Other holiday favourites include stuffed paratha with yoghurt, lentils (dal or red kidney beans) with Pulao and, occasionally, Poori with potatoes.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

JAMMU

- Jammu area is famous for the quality 'Basmati rice', 'Rajmah' (red kidney beans) and black lentils, a specialty famous throughout north India as 'Mah-ki-dal'. But when it comes to non-vegetarian food Kashmir is the best option for having a traditionally made mutton or chicken curries. 'Rogan Josh', 'Rishta', 'Gushtaba', 'Kabargarh' and 'TabakMaz' are some Kashmiri delights, which must be tried. Ladakhis quite a lot influenced by the Tibetan and Chinese cuisines and who can forget the yummy 'Mommos' or the butter tea 'Chang'.

KASHMIR

Kashmiri cuisine has some special variations from normal Indian food although it is basically of the north Indian type. Houseboat food although is basically of the north Indian type, still it tends to remain in its early English influence! Kashmiri Delicacies: Some Kashmiri dishes you may come across include:

Gushtaba - Gushtaba are pounded and spiced meat balls cooked in a yoghurt sauce. The meat is usually mutton or goat. Rista are rice balls and very similar to Gushtaba but with less meat and less spice in the sauce.

Roghan Josh - also fairly common elsewhere in north India, this is, in its most basic form, juiciest curried mutton, but a good Roghan Josh will be cooked in Yoghurt with a careful blend of exotic spices and added ingredients. Yaknee is also quite similar to Roghan Josh.

TabakMazis fried meat, not spiced at all. MarchwanganKurma is a hot mutton curry, usually served with rice and Nan MethiKurma is vegetables with chopped intestines - it tastes much better than it sounds. Karma Sag is made from the popular Dal Lake vegetable known as Lak - it's a bit like giant Spinach. NadruYekni is a very tasty dish made from lotus roots, cooked with curd or Yoghurt.

Kashmiri Nan Kashmiri Nan is the usual flat Indian bread but with Sultanas and nuts baked into it. Kashmiri Nan is really delicious but Kashmiri bread is very good to start with. The Kashmiris also make a fruit and Nut

Pillau - a bit like fried fruit salad! Popular vegetables in Kashmir include Bartha - minced Aubergines - and Bhiindi - ladyfingers.

Drinks Kashmiri tea is a fragrant, delicate blend flavoured with cardamom and ginger - a delightfully thirst quenching drink. Possibly it is the best tea in India.

A really good cup of this Kahwa tea will be brewed in a Samovar and have grated almonds in it. It's usually drunk without milk. The Kashmiris also make a good blend of Camomile and Cardamom tea, which is very good for settling stomach-upsets.

Soft drinks, freighted up from the plains, tend to be expensive but there's a delicious local brand of apple juice known as "Apco". It's a great change from the sickly Indian soft drinks and costs about the same as regular soft drinks in Kashmir.

Alcohol Being good Muslims, the Kashmiris do not drink alcohol - at least publicly. Liquor is available, but at a high price and often of very low quality. One would be well advised to bring in your quota of duty free liquor. Beer, however, is readily available.

- **LADAKHI FOOD**

- **Cholak**

The staple food in Ladakh is 'Tsampa', which is made by lightly roasting barley in a large metal pan, partly mixed with sand to prevent the barley catching alight. The barley is then sieved to remove the sand and the roasted grain is ground in a watermill. The resulting meal is sprinkled with 'Gurgur' (salt water) or mixed with a small amount of liquid to form cakes. Salted butter tea or 'Chang' (a locally made Beer) is often drunk with the Tsampa. These dishes are called "Cholak".

Apart from Tsampa there are few other delicacies too that one should get a taste of while visiting Ladakh:

Pava - peas and barley flour boiled in water for a long time until the peas are hard.

Chalak - a mixture of tea, butter, sugar and Tsampa.

Khambish - bread made from wheat flour.

Thukpa - water and wheat flour made into noodles and dropped into boiling water and then served with a flavoured meat sauce.

Gugur Chai- salt tea, made from green tea, salt, soda from the Nubra valley, butter and milk.

Curd- made from yak milk.

Moe Moe- steamed Tsampa dough, usually with meat in the middle like dumplings.

Gyatug - a dish of long, vermicelli like strips of Tsampa over which minced meat and a flavoured sauce is poured.

Skir - a hotpot of meat, potatoes, grain and sometimes vegetables.

Kambir - small round breads, sometimes tasting sweet.

Holkur - Ladakhi biscuit made of sugar, nuts and grain meal. Normally baked by the host himself to be served to the patrons.

Chinese Tibetan Cuisine

There is much Tibetan influence and you will find many Chinese-Tibetan dishes like Chow Mein or 'Kothay' - meat or vegetables wrapped in thin dough and fried or steamed.

The Food Variety

One may be surprised to see potatoes served in Ladakh. Moravian Christian missionaries brought them in from Germany in the last century. There are still about 200 Christians residing in Ladakh today. Food can get a little boring in Ladakh, the variety of vegetables and fruit grown locally is very limited - Barley, Potatoes, Peas and Onions are virtually the only locally grown produce on sale although fruit trees can also be grown in some areas. Mustard and a variety of herbs are also grown in Ladakh. Although food production is limited in Ladakh what does grow there can be quite outlandish. The long daylight hours and the extra strength of the sun's ultra violet rays at this altitude creates wonderful garden produce cabbages with heads that have exceeded 14 kg, Radishes or Potatoes weighing up to 2kg, Turnips which reach 5kg!

Tea & Butter Tea

The tea habit initially came to Ladakh, as to all of Tibet, from imperial china, but due to the closing of the Tibetan border tea now comes from India. One may find Chinese / Tibetan tea smuggled over the border from Tibet on sale in the bazaar in Leh. It's more rare than expensive and the quality is not too high. The tea is often transported in pressed blocks, which can frequently be seen as offerings in monasteries.

Traditional Ladakhi tea is made with butter and tastes more like a soup than our idea of tea. The tea is initially made very strong, brewed for a long time, then diluted to a drinkable strength. The tea is then put into a butter churn, a wooden vessel about 15 cm in diameter and 80 cm long, and bound with brass at the top, bottom and in the middle. A spoonful of salted butter is added and churned into the liquid. This broth is then reheated and drunk continually until it is all gone.

Every Ladakhi, no matter how poor, has his own tea vessel. In rich families the tea is served in three part silver cups, the lower cup stands on a small pedestal and the cup itself is covered with a lid. The tea is generally drunk warm, not hot and during the colder part of the year the lower cup serves as a handwarmer. If one is invited for tea anywhere in Ladakh one will find that one's cup is refilled as soon as one takes a sip. Tea drinking continues until all the tea made is finished.

Tea is usually drunk during prayer ceremonies at Gompas and one may be offered some, in that case one will be expected to have one's own cup, an item every Ladakhi carries everywhere he or she goes. Cups are on sale at

all the street stalls in Leh and at the general stores. In monasteries and for an average family's breakfast, the tea is accompanied by Tsampa, which is either sprinkled into the warm brew, or kneaded into lumps and dipped into the tea.

Chang - The Local Beer

Beware of the effects of the native beer - Chang. High altitude and too much alcohol do not mix well!

Nevertheless one should try some of this local alcoholic beverage. One should also try Chang in a village at some stage, as it usually tastes much better. Chang is a beer, home brewed from barley and millet partially seasoned by the addition of pepper and sugar. It is not filtered before serving so dregs and grains are found 'swimming' in the liquid. In short, Chang is a most unusual pleasure for the palate. In Ladakh one finds, as in the other Himalayan states with a population, which belongs to the Tibetan group, no manufacture of spirit liquors.

Note: Much food and produce comes up from Kashmir, but only in the summer when the passes are open, of course. Prices are naturally inflated and in the last few weeks before the summer season commences with the opening of the road, when tourists are already starting to flood in by air, the supplies of food can be somewhat limited. It's worth bringing in a few menu brighteners like bars of chocolate or cans of Apple juice. The usual Indian glucose biscuits are available everywhere and in Leh it is also possible to buy dehydrated Soyabean meal or biscuits, which provide a very useful and energy giving carbohydrate supplement to one's diet, especially at high altitudes.

There is no piped water system in Leh; even boiling water isn't such a positive method of purifying it at such a high altitude since the boiling point is much lower. Remember to keep the fluid intake up as one can easily become dehydrated.

WAZWAN DELICACIES

Wazwan' is the term used for the traditional Kashmiri Muslim feast which is entirely non-vegetarian – even the vegetables are cooked in meat-stock. In fact, enormous quantities of meat are boiled for a length of time and this stock, rich in juices, is used to make up the gravy for the great variety of dishes. Wazwan is an elaborate meal served and eaten in so ceremonial a manner that it is like a ritual conducted according to its own strict rules. The multi-course meal is cooked by professional cooks (the Kashmiri term for a cook is 'waza'). The guest take their seats on the carpeted floor in long rows, facing each other across long, narrow white sheets spread on the floor. Two people, one carrying an intricately engraved copper basin with an attached soap dish, known as 'tush', and the other a shapely jug called a 'naar' come before each guest so that he can wash his hands before eating. The meal is then served in large, tinned copper platters, covered with dome-like lids. All the metal vessels are beautiful, yet completely functional. Where all the guests have a platter – four people eat

from each platter – placed before them, the lids are lifted simultaneously to reveal a mound of rice, visible through a tracery of four portions of a number of dishes arranged all over it – seekh kebab, dum kokur, methi maaz and tabakh maaz. As the guests begin to eat, the wazas arrive on the scene, balancing enormous vessels on their hips. With long handled ladles, they serve the other wazwan delicacies one by one according to a strict order. Rista is followed by roganjosh, danival korma, tsaman, martsawangan korma, aabgosh, alubukhara maaz, bumtsoomth khanji or any other seasonal vegetable, and goshtaba, in that order. Pulao, zarda, a number of chutneys, onions dipped in hot vinegar sauce, thin slivers of radish and plain yoghurt in earthenware bowls are served as side dishes. When the meal is over, hands are washed again. Phirin in summer and halwa in winter are served as dessert to bring this extraordinary culinary experience to an end. Apart from being a feast served at weddings, festivals like Id, thanks-giving after a safe return from Haj pilgrimage or other celebrations, wazwan is an essential part of dinner-diplomacy in Kashmir! Mellowed after the shared meal with its surfeit of sensuous joys, even adversaries find themselves filled with the ‘milk of human kindness’ and the animosities disappear. No wonder Kashmiris long for wazwan and its ambience – peace, goodwill and general well-being. The dishes given here can easily be prepared at home, if the recipes are followed faithfully. The only equipment which would perhaps, be unfamiliar are a stone slab known as ‘goshiphor’ and a wooden mallet and pestle which are required for certain preparations. The authentic flavours and results cannot be achieved with a mixer-grinder or a food processor.

HYDERABADI CUISINE:

Hyderabadi cuisine is rich and aromatic, the taste more distinct, with a liberal use of exotic spices and ghee and the fresh fruit normally used is replaced by dried fruits. Lamb is the most widely used meat in the non-vegetarian dishes.

One of India's finest foods, the 'Biryani' (flavoured rice with meat or vegetables) is closely associated with Hyderabadi cuisine. It is so popular that it takes a special mention in the world of cuisines.

The Mughlai Delicacies

Hyderabadi Cuisine owes its origins to the Mughlai style of cooking of the AsafJahi period. By carefully mellowing and nurturing the typical Mughlaiflavours with a blend of spices, the cuisine of Hyderabad was born.

Non-Vegetarian Food

For those who want a taste of the royal menu, there is a variety of 'Biryanis' (a rice and meat preparation, seasoned with spices and flavourings); 'Kababs' (meat pieces or minced meat cooked in many different styles such as 'BotiJhammi', 'Kalmi', 'Shikampur', 'Sheek', 'Lagan-ke-Kababs', 'Dum-ke-kababs'); 'Kormas' (either meat or vegetables cooked in a rich creamy gravy) and 'Lukhmi' (pastry).

During the month of Ramzan, one gets to taste 'Haleem' (a pounded wheat and meat preparation). For those who prefer more homely food, there is Khichri (a rice a lentil preparation); 'KeemaMethi' (minced meat with fenugreek); 'Nahari' (stew of tongue and lamb trotters); 'RumaliRotis' (bread as thin as a handkerchief) and 'Chakna' (a spicy dish of meat). During the festival day of Id-ul-Fitr, it is traditional to serve 'Sheer Korma', the delicious 'Kheer', made with 'Sevian', dried fruits and dates.

Vegetarian Food

For vegetarians there is 'BagaraBaingan' (a rich spicy preparation of brinjals); Mirch-ka-salan (chillies in a creamy gravy); 'Tomato Qoot' (aromatic puree of tomato with flavourings); and 'ShahiDahiVadas' (lentil dumplings in Youghurt sauce).

Desserts

For dessert, one can have a pick from 'Double-ka-Meetha' (a bread and cashewnut pudding); 'Qubani-ka-Meetha' (stewed apricot dessert); 'Ande-ka-Piyosi' (made with eggs, almonds and purified butter); 'Badam-ki-Jhab' (marzipan) and 'Dil-e-Firdaus' (a rich, milk-based sweet).

Many small hotels and restaurants around the Charminar area offer authentic Hyderabadi dishes.

Mangoes, 'Anabshahi' grapes, custard apples are among the delicious fruits varieties and finally the elaborately prepared 'Paan' can be enjoyed after a hearty feast.

CHOWKI DINNER:

Andhra Pradesh Tourism offers on order a typically Hyderabadi multi-course dinner served on a low table (Chowki) around which 8 people can sit. Authentic Hyderabadi cuisine is served course by course, as the Nawabs were served with a Deccan ambience accompanied by traditional entertainment like Ghazals.

GOA

- Goa is a gourmet's paradise, with the overall quality of food being excellent. Seafood in particular is a gastronomic treat. The winter months have a bounty of Crayfish, Tiger Prawns, Squid, Mussels, Mollusks, and Crabs as well as Fish. On the beaches itself and in the villages adjoining them, many local families run tiny hotels and restaurants. In addition to seafood cooked in the local as well as Western styles, there are Chicken, Beef and Pork dishes. Some local dishes worth a mention are Chicken Xacuti, Cafreal, Pork Vindaloo, Sarapatel, Fish & Prawn Caldiline, Reichado and Balchoo. Large proportions of dishes and deserts contain coconut in them. Some sweet Goan temptations include Bebinca, a layered sweet, Doce, Ale Bete, Bathique, Cocado and Bulinos.

Goan Food And Drink

Goa has few of the dietary restrictions or taboos that apply in their regions of India, both Hindu and Muslim.

Here the idea of vegetarianism is probably more equated with poverty than purity, and drinking alcohol is not the shameful activity as it is elsewhere. The Goan Palate relishes meat, especially pork, and all kinds of fresh seafood.

KERALA

The unusual cuisine of Kerala brings to the fore the culinary expertise of the people of Kerala. Producing some of the tastiest foods on earth, the people of Kerala are gourmets with a difference. The cuisine is very hot and spicy and offers several gastronomic opportunities. The food is generally fresh, aromatic and flavoured.

Keralites are mostly fish-and-rice eating people. The land and the food are rich with coconut; though one can't imagine Kerala food without chillies, curry leaf, mustard seed, tamarind and asafoetida. Just a pinchful of tamarind can substitute tomatoes, but there is no real substitute for curry leaf. Since time immemorial, coconut has been an integral part of the cuisine of Kerala. These people put to good use whatever the land offers and the result is a marvellous cuisine that is simple yet palate tickling. They relish equally a dish as simple as 'kanji' (rice gruel) or as extravagant as the 'sadya' (feast). Sadya is the elaborate dish, which is a totally extravagant affair. Avial, an all time favourite, is a happy blend of vegetables, coconut paste and green chillies. Avial's seasoning is a spoonful of fresh coconut oil and a sprinkling of raw curry leaves, stirred in immediately after the dish is taken off the stove

- 'Kottucurry' is made out of cubed potatoes, onions and green chillies cooked in coconut milk with plenty of red chilli. 'Olan', a bland dish of pumpkin and red grams is prepared by cooking it in thin gravy of coconut milk. The rich and irresistible desserts form an essential part of the meals. These are served midway through the meals. Payasam is a thick fluid dish of brown molasses, coconut milk and spices, garnished with cashewnuts and raisins. There could be a succession of payasams, such as the lentil payasam and the jackfruit payasam, Bengal gram payasam and so on, though 'Adapradhaman', a rich payasam with thin rice wafers, is arguably the ultimate delicacy. 'Palppayasam', made with sugar, ghee and spices, brewed in creamy white milk is regarded as the last word in sweet dishes. This is served with a golden yellow sweet pancake known as 'boli'.

The Tangy Rasam: The hot Rasam, served after a delectable array of sweets, is a tangy deviation from the symphony of tastes and is poured on another serving of rice. The famous British 'Mulligatawny Soup' is said to have derived its flavour from Rasam. Rasam is a mixture of chilly and pepper corns powders boiled in diluted tamarind juice. The pulissery is seasoned buttermilk with turmeric powder and green chillies. 'Moru' or plain sour buttermilk comes salted and with chopped green chillies and ginger.

APPAM: Appam is the soft pancake made from toddy fermented rice batter, with a soft spongy middle, which is laced with crispy edges. It is generally consumed with either vegetable or chicken or mutton stew, thoroughly

mellowed with thick coconut milk and garnished with curry leaves.

PUTTU: A type of steam cake, 'Puttu' is made from rice flour and steamed in long hollow bamboo or metal cylinders. Depending on the taste preference, Puttu can be had with steamed bananas and sugar or with a spicy curry made from gram or chickpeas.

Tapioca And Fish Curry: A sumptuous, mouthwatering delicacy, it's a not- to- be-missed combination of 'Kappa' and 'Meen curry'. With natural flavours erupting out of it liberally, the fish curry is made with garlic paste, onions and red chillies and seasoned with mustard seeds and curry leaves.

UTTAR PRADESH

- The cuisine of Uttar Pradesh is synonymous with variety as every city offers a different but equally sumptuous cuisine for the gourmet. Most families in Uttar Pradesh eat vegetarian food, although meat delicacies of the Awadh style of cooking are world famous. Average cuisines in Uttar Pradesh revolve around the simple, vegetable curries of all kinds. But there is a predominance of fried foods like the tasty 'kachori' and 'puri', which are musts especially during festivities.

The irresistible **Mughlai food** is reminiscent of the Nawabi and the Mughal glory. **Dum Pukht** means 'to breathe' and 'to cook'. The cuisine owes its excellence to the fact that the food, sealed in a dish and slow-cooked in its own juices, retains its entire natural aromas and flavours. Lucknow is known world wide for its **biryanis** and different meat preparations. **Nihari** and **naan**, a mutton dish served for breakfast is one of the dishes that must be tasted to believe.

Banaras is famous for its bazaars full of 'jalebis', sweetmeats and a myriad variety of 'kachoris'. The 'pethas' from Agra are popular all over the country. And Lucknow offers the most exquisite mix of Nawabi food. A lot of emphasis is placed on savories and sweet meats in this state. From 'mathris' to jalebis, the latter often consumed with milk, a whole variety of foods are offered whenever you venture out on a visit.

RAJASTHAN

- Each region in India has its own traditional dishes and specialities. In the royal kitchens of Rajasthan, as well as most other states, food is a very serious business and raised to the level of an art-form. Rajasthani cooking was influenced by the war-like lifestyle of its inhabitants and the availability of ingredients in this region.

- Eating Habits

The personal preferences of the people about food are very much varied. The Rajput warrior was not averse to hunting, killing game to put in his pot at night. The Vaishnavas, followers of Krishna, were vegetarian, and strictly so, as were the Bishnois, a community known for their passion to conserve both animal and plant life. Even among Rajputs, there were enough royal kitchens where nothing other than vegetarian meals were cooked. The Marwaris of course, were vegetarian too, but their cuisine, though not too different from the Rajputs, was richer in its method of preparation. And then there were the Jains too, who were not only vegetarians, but also the ones who would not eat after sundown, and whose food had to be devoid of garlic and onions which were, otherwise, important ingredients in the Rajasthani pot.

Geographical Influence

Food that could last for several days and could be eaten without heating was preferred, more out of necessity than choice. Scarcity of water and fresh green vegetables has all had their effect on the cooking. In the desert belt of Jaisalmer, Barmer and Bikaner, cooks make minimum use of water and prefer, instead, to use more milk, buttermilk and clarified butter. Dried lentils, beans from indigenous plants like Sangri, Ker etc are liberally used.

Main Dishes

Gram flour is a major ingredient here and is used to make some of the delicacies like Khata, Gatte Ki Sabzi and Pakodi. Powdered lentils are used for Mangodi and Papad. Bajra and corn are used all over the state for preparations of Rabdi, Khichdi and Rotis.

A soup of legumes, flavoured with red chilli peppers, yoghurt or milk and sometimes a vegetable such as Okra, Jackfruit, Eggplant, Mustard or Fenugreek leaf. The wealthy can afford to eat meat regularly, but many abstain for religious reasons. Though the Rajasthani kitchen was able to create much from little, it had also to cater to different communities with their own ritual observances.

Various chutneys are made from locally available spices like turmeric, coriander, mint and garlic. Perhaps the best-known Rajasthani food is the combination of dalbati and churma but for the adventurous traveller, willing to experiment, there is a lot of variety available.

Delectable Desserts

Besides spicy flavours, each region is distinguished by its popular sweets. Most people from Rajasthan have a natural liking for sweets or 'Mithai' as it is locally called. People residing in Rajasthan prefer 'Jalebis' and 'Fafda' with a large glass of hot milk in the morning.

Each region has its own specialty. Laddoos from Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, Malpuas from Pushkar, Jalebies from most big cities, Rasogullas from Bikaner, DilJani from Udaipur, MishriMawa and Ghevar from Jaipur,

MawaKatchori from Jodhpur, SohanHalwa from Ajmer, Mawa from Alwar, the list is unending.

WEST BENGAL

Among the common culinary threads of the Eastern states the most common one is the extensive use of mustard oil and pungent mustard pastes. Rice is the staple diet, although chapattis are also popular. Fish eating and its preparation is an elevated art, and the merits of a 'Hilsa', or 'Rohu' or 'Bhetki', are passionately debated. Spices used are subtle, and the "PanchPhoron" a mix of fine spices gives a typical flavour to Eastern cuisine.

Fish comes in many forms such as the smoked Hilsa, the fried Bhetki, MacherJhol, which is a thin gravy or "MacherJhal", which is spicy and hot; ChingriMacher (shrimps and prawns) and Malai curry.

Sweets are distinctive, and are made from cottage cheese. Desert specials include 'Sandesh', 'Roshogolla', 'Roshomalai', 'Mihidana', 'Chhenapodapitha', which are light and exquisite sweets not to be missed.

PARSEE

There is saying among the Parsees that the community can be divided into two groups: one that loves good food and the other that loves eating. Parsees cuisine has spawned a super abundance of lavish delights, but if any dish can lay claim to being the 'national' dish of the Parsees, it is Dhansak. In fact, Parsees are often called Dhansakias because of their preference for this one-course meal of brown – caramelized-rice, served with a potpourri of three or five dals, vegetables (like red pumpkin and brinjals) and chunks of lamb cooked together in a rich, spicy gravy. The usual accompaniment is deep fried (until chocolate brown) Kebab that look like kofta (meat balls) – and a pinta ager. It is usually prepared on holidays, not because of any religious taboos, but simply it would be impossible to digest – and get back to work – on the other days of the week. As the Parsees say: "you need to sleep it off."

ANDHRA PRADESH

The cuisine of Andhra Pradesh is reputedly the spiciest and hottest of all Indian cuisine. The cuisine includes both the original Andhra cooking and the Hyderabadi cuisine with its Mughlai influence. It is the former, which is red hot. The food is very delicious and spices are used liberally in their food. Andhra Pradesh calls for some mouthwatering traditional delicacies.

There are specific items served for snacks, lunch, dinner, etc. Eating patterns differ as there is a mixture of Hindu and Muslim styles of eating. The cuisine is largely vegetarian, with only the coastal areas showing a

marked preference for seafood. Rice, the staple Andhra food, is served with sambar, other lentil preparations along with vegetables.

The traditional Andhra meal:

Traditional Andhra meal starts with people sitting on mats or small raised wooden seats. A banana leaf is placed before each person and a little water is sprinkled, this shows that the food can now be served. Rice is served with a little helping of ghee.

Unlike other parts a dry curry goes as a perfect combination with the rice. The meal includes nearly five types of dishes, but a typical Andhra meal has to have the famous hot pickles, chutneys, powders etc. Curd ends the spiciness of the meals on a cool note.

Pulihara, or tamarind rice, is the main food here in Andhra Pradesh, and green chillies add spice to the cuisine. The vegetables and greens are prepared with various different masalas giving the same vegetable different flavours. Traditional Andhra cuisine also has many non-vegetarian dishes, which are also spicy and unique in taste.

The pickles and chutneys are very popular and last for more than a year. Chutney is made practically of every vegetable including tomatoes, brinjals and an aromatic green called 'Gongoora' which is an Andhra speciality. The mango pickle 'Avakkaya' is a perennial favourite of Andhraites all over the world. The famous south Indian Tiffin's like Idli, Dosa are found in many restaurants, but the favourite remains to be 'Pesarattu', which has filling of 'Upma'.

Andhra cuisine is largely vegetarian, with only the coastal areas showing a marked preference for seafood. Fish and Prawn are curried in sesame and coconut oils, and flavoured with freshly ground pepper and eaten with rice.

Snacks

Snack time could mean onion 'Pakodas', 'Vadas', 'Murku' (roundels of rice flour that are deep fried), and 'Appadams'. For desserts, try 'Payasam', a pudding made with rice and milk. 'Putharekulu', 'Kakinada Kaja', 'Bobbatlu', 'Booralu', and 'BandharLadoo' are the famous sweets.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Food is one aspect that can very well define the variedness that India possesses. Food habits of the Arunachalese differ because of the Tribal influence. The Nishis generally take in boiled food; even meat is either boiled or dried. Apatanis, Chuki and Nishi tribals are also quite fond of pickles. The Monpas are quite fond of Momos and butter tea also makes an essential part of their cuisine. The most popular drinks among the tribes is Apang, made from fermented rice or millet.

- Monpas love food and drinks and are considered good eaters. Alcoholic drinks are popular both amongst men and women. Butter tea is an integral part of their cuisine. They are non-vegetarians and their food choice includes Beef, Pork, Yak Meat, Fish, Mutton and Chicken. Some of the local cuisines are: -
- MOMO Monpas are very fond of this delicacy. It is prepared by stuffing a mixture of minced meat and onions in dough. These are then steamed for about half an hour in a three-tiered perforated utensil placed one above the other, containing water and bone for soup. Momos are taken along with soup and home made chilly sauce. Vegetable Momo called 'Patan-Momo' is prepared by stuffing a mixture of green vegetable called 'Maan' or 'Kyiblab', fats of meat, powered chilly, fermented cheese in dough.
- ZAN It is the staple food of the Monpas. It is prepared by adding millet or any other flour to the boiling water. It is then strived with a flat wooden implement. It is taken with vegetable or meat items to which is added fermented cheese or Soyabean as condiment. Chilli is invariably added to all items.
- KHURA It is a Monpa pancake made of 'Kyab'. Little Chang and required quantity of water is added to the flour and is stirred till it turns into a thick paste and is kept near the hearth over night so that the cake becomes soft. On the next day, with little oil in the pan the paste is spread to form a circular shape. A teatime delicacy.
- GYAPA-KHAZI Gyapa-Khazi is Monpa version of 'Pulao'. It is prepared by mixing rice, fermented cheese, small dried fish, chilli, ginger, etc.
- THUKPA This is also the most popular and common dish of the people of Tawang. It consists of noodles with soup-minced meat. This kind of Thukpa is called "Dre.thuk". Thukpa made of maize, meat and beans is called "AshumThukpa". "GyapaKhatzi" made of rice, fermented cheese, small dry fish, chilly, ginger, etc. is also very popular. Bak-tza is another kind of Thukpa made in the same style as that of noodles with the difference that instead of noodles, flat rectangular shape of dough is used. Vegetables are also added to it for additional flavour.
- Other famous Monpa delicacies are Khatzi, Puta, Kyola, Kharang, and Bak-tzaMargu.

ASSAM

When it comes to food Assamis as good as Bengal. The state of rice-fish-dal etc. is not rich with spices, but the Special Assam Plate of Khar, Kharoli, Khorisha is something that is too tempting to resist. The state's homemade cakes (sweet) have some extra charms.

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CUISINES OF DELHI

- For a gourmet there are multifarious choices, when it comes to food in Delhi. The most popular cuisine is Mughlai, owing its origin to the Mughals. They introduced a new style of cooking, using clay ovens or tandoors, as they are known. The best traditional Indian food presence can be seen from roadside stalls called dhabas to speciality restaurants in deluxe hotels. Some of the popular dishes include braised meat or korma, pot roasts or dumpukht, kebabs, pilafs and biryanis. For those interested in continental cuisine, there is an ample variety available in the restaurants of the capital such as Orient Express at Taj Palace Hotel and famous fast food joints like Nirula's and McDonalds. Fine Chinese and Thai food is also found at several restaurants in the city including Baan Thai at the Oberoi and Spice Route at Hotel Imperial. Fine South Indian food ranging from dosas and idlis to chilli hot Andhra curries and coconut based delicacies from Chettinad and Kerala can be sampled at Sagar and Dasaprakash

CUISINES OF HARYANA

- Most Haryanvis are farmers and except for south Haryana, the rest of the state is rich in vegetables. The adventurous, outgoing inhabitants, eat well and drink well. Haryanvis are predominantly vegetarian. The eating habits of the essentially rural haryanvis are simple and non-fussy. The people of Haryana traditionally eat and enjoy whatever comes their way. Their food is rich and designed to delight and satisfy, rather than dazzle.

The Staple Diet

Traditional favourites, besides fresh vegetables, are 'Bajra Ki Khichri' (salty, wholesome millet porridge) eaten with generous helpings of Ghee or 'Karhi' (chickpea flour beaten in spiced yoghurt). The refreshing Bathua-Ka-Raita (green leafy Bathua in delicately spiced yoghurt) and the lip-smacking 'Aloo-ki-Tikiyas' (mashed, browned potatoes patties, stuffed with spicy lentils, smothered in sour tamarind chutney) are other favourites. Milk, buttermilk and ghee form a compulsory part of the diet of a typical Haryanvi's meal.

Mixed Dals (an unusual combination of mixed, spiced pulses, simmered over a slow fire) is eaten with hot Ghee. The traditional breads eaten are 'chapatis' (millet, corn and whole wheat breads) and 'pooris' (puffed, fried whole wheat breads)

The Simply Sumptuous Desserts

The desserts prepared by the people are simple and delicious delicacies, churned out of easily available ingredients. Specialties include the scrumptious Gajar-ka-Halwa (grated carrots simmered in sweetened milk, with almonds scattered about), the extravagant 'Kheer' (rice, simmered in thick sweetened milk with raisins) and the rich 'Raabri' (wheat flour custard, simmered in sweet buttermilk).

HIMACHAL PRADESH

- Where the hills echo the wind and the winds caress the corn. Where women spend a whole day gathering sticks to light the fire of hearth. The food is simple and made delicious with large additions of 'Ghee'. Non-vegetarian food, with a generous dose of spices like cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and red chillies, is very much the norm.

While the everyday meal is the usual dal-chawal-subzi-roti, the common north Indian meal of rice, lentil broth, dish of vegetables and bread, special dishes are cooked during festive occasions. Rice is the staple food and with it is served the tangy pungent Maahni or UradDaal with raw dried mangoes, and the Madra or Lentils cooked in yoghurt. 'Madra' of Chamba is unique as it includes about twenty spices and is made of Rajmah and cooked in yoghurt and Desi Ghee in slow fire.

Himachalies love the sizzling Luchi-Poti or Lamb Intestines, which is a favorite dish in the winter season. The Makki or fresh corn flour of Himachal Pradesh is especially delicious, as it is ground slowly in 'Paani Ki Gharaats' or water propelled-mill and eaten with milk for breakfast. Makki or Lentils and spices with Chhachh or buttermilk are eaten by hardy mountain folk.

Sidu is a kind of bread made from wheat flour. It is kneaded with yeast and the dough is allowed to rise for 4-5 hours. With stuffing of fat it is first browned over a slow fire and then steamed. Sidu is normally eaten with 'ghee' or clarified butter, dal or lentil broth as well as with mutton.

Festive Food

In many parts of the state, ankalos made of rice flour are a festive dish. In the dry Lahaul-Spiti valley, the leaves of buckwheat are mixed with wheat flour and made into cakes called 'aktori'. Patande is a sort of pancake dish, which is a specialty in the Sirmaur area.

The dham, a traditional festive meal, is cooked only by 'botis', a particular caste of Brahmins who are hereditary chefs. Preparations for this elaborate mid-day meal begin the night before. It is served in courses on epattalsi or leaf plates. In the Chamba region, the typical menu for a dham would start with rice, moong dal and a madrah of rajmah cooked in yoghurt. This is followed by boor kikari and a dark lentil or mash dal. Topped by khatta or sweet and sour sauce, made of tamarind and gur or jaggery, the dham ends with the mittha or dessert - sweet rice, liberally mixed with raisins and dry fruit.

The cuisine of Himachal is as distinctive and assorted, hence all the regional specialties ranging from South-Indian to Thai and Italian to Chinese are offered. Thalís are very well known in Himachal Pradesh. Dosas and utthapams play a major role in the South Indian menu. Spicy momos also tantalize the taste buds of most. Pastas decorated with numerous kinds of sauces and spices are very common all through Himachal Pradesh.

Tibetan& Japanese Eating Delicacies

There is tremendous influence of Tibetan and Japanese cuisine. 'Amdo' cuisine descending from the northeastern region of Tibet is a scrumptious composition served on a platter. Fish and chicken are the chief essentials of non-vegetarian cuisine.

- **Eating Patterns**

Food is usually served in bowls and placed on long tables surrounded by several chairs, where the whole family can sit together for a meal. A meat or fish dish is a must in every meal, but vegetables are also essential. The vegetables are usually cooked without any spices or masalas unlike the northern cuisine. There is no special style as such in eating food in Goa. All the dishes are eaten together as usual in plate.

The Portuguese Delicacies

Not unnaturally, after 450 years of colonization, Goan cooking has absorbed a strong Portuguese influence. Palm vinegar, copious amounts of Coconut, Garlic, Tangy Tamarind and fierce local chillies all play their part. Goa is the home of the famous Vindaloo, originally an extra-hot and sour pork curry, but now made with a variety of meat and fish. Other Pork specialties include Chourico red Sausages, Sarpotel, a hot curry made from pickled pig's liver and heart; Leitao, suckling pig; and Balchao, pork in a rich brown sauce. Delicious alternatives include vinegar chicken, spicy chicken or Mutton Xacutti, made with a sauce of lemon juice, Peanuts, Coconut, chillies and spices.

- **Sea Food:** The choice of seafood, often cooked in fragrant masalas, is excellent - Clams, Mussels, Crab, Lobster, Giant Prawns - while Fish, depending on the type, is either cooked in wet curries, grilled or baked in Tandoor clay ovens. Try Ape de Camarao, a spicy prawn pie with a rice and Semolina crust. Sannam, like the south Indian iddli, is a steamed cake of fermented rice flour, but here fermented with palm Toddy (also spelt as Todi). Sweet tooths will adore Bebinca, a rich, delicious solid Egg Custard with coconut.

Fruits: When it comes to fruits Goa have the Pineapple, the Melon, the Banana, the Pawpaw, the Custard Apple etc., but surpassing them all is the MANGO. One can find a huge variety of them but the sweetest, the most luscious and the most ravishing in taste, are the "Alphonso", the "Fernandina" and the "Malcorada", and without exaggeration, the best in the world.

Pastries: Pastries are almost a part of every common meals as well as occasion and feast in Goa is Christmas and the Ganesh Festival are occasions when they are prepared in all their varieties. Being the land where coconut is abundant it is not surprising that in quite a good number of these sweets coconut milk is used. However, the queen of the delicacies is the "Bebinca". It is made of eggs, pure ghee, flour, coconut milk and sugar. Other Goan pastries would include "Doce", "Cokad", "Dodol", "Bolinhas" and "Jia de Aronhas".

Rice Dishes: Rice is an important item of Goan diet. One will find it at every table and almost at every meal. Rice is eaten with delicious fish or meat curry, or in the form of "Pulao", and many other ways. A leavened and steamed bread called "Sana", another a round pastry called "Oddo", the steamed South Indian "Dossa" and "Iddli", a great number of sweet dishes made with rice and jaggery etc. are some of the regional preparations of Goa.

Cocktails: As for drinks, locally produced Wine, Spirits and Beer are cheaper than anywhere in the country, thanks to lower rates of tax. The most famous and widespread Beer is of course Kingfisher, which tastes less of Glycerine preservative than it does elsewhere in India.

Goan Port, a sweeter, interior version of its Portuguese namesake, is ubiquitous, served chilled in large wine glasses with a slice of lemon. Local whiskies, brandies, rums, gins and vodkas come in a variety of brand names come at affordable prices a shot, but at half the price, local specialty Feni, made from distilled cashew or from the juice of coconut palms, offers strong competition.

Feni - Goa's "National" Drink

Gently swaying coconut palms and bright red or yellow cashew apples can be found occupying Goa's half landmass under crops and their sap or juice is the source of Goa's popular "national" drink, Feni.

Making Of Feni

Palm Feni is pure but a strong drink ranking with the strongest spirits. It comes from Toddy, which is produced by tapping the sap from the base of the young palm shoots. Growers have to choose between producing Feni or coconuts because once tapped, the young shoots cannot go on to produce nuts, but the decision can be reversed with the next growth of shoots according to market demand.

Unfermented, the Toddy make a nourishing and refreshing drink and when strained and boiled down to crystallising point, it produces palm jaggery, the coarse brown slabs of sugar used in Goan sweet dishes. Within hours of tapping, the Toddy ferments to about 4% of alcohol. Often, it is drunk soon afterwards, but when distilled, the first gives the more potent Urrack, a favorite drink sold in the local bars.

Types Of Feni: The famous palm Feni is the result of the second distillation. It's name in Goa's local language 'Konkani' means 'froth', a name attributed to its reaction during processing.

A second type of Feni that is even more popular is 'Caju' Feni derived from the cashew apple. The Cashew is the legacy from Portuguese who introduced it to Goa from Brazil. Cashew Feni is usually drunk after the first distillation, but one can also find it double-distilled, flavoured with Ginger, Cumin or Sasparilla to produce a smooth liqueur.

KARNATAKA

- The cuisine of Karnataka as any other Indian cuisine, is influenced by both Hindu and Muslim traditions brought by the different rulers of this region. The culinary fare offered by Karnataka is quite varied with each region of the state having its own unique flavours.

Many factors and influences have contributed to enrich this culinary heritage. Though there are many similarities between the food of Karnataka and its southern neighbours, the typical Mysore cuisine is well known for its own distinctive textural forms and flavour with the dishes complementing and balancing each other.

The famous 'BisiBela Bath', 'Uppittu' and 'Holighe' are the delicious and popular food items from this region. 'Mysore masala dosa' is another favourite from Karnataka and so is the coconut chutney.

The Karnataka meal is traditionally served on a 'patravali' (banana leaf) or 'muttuga' leaves stitched together, especially during festive occasions or when entertaining visitors. The meal is divided into two parts.

It begins with servings of pickle, sliced lemon, 'raita' (yogurt), dry vegetables and a bowl of spiced dal. Rice is served with plain yellow dal or 'varan' (lentil), papads, fat puris made from whole-wheat flour and 'shreekhand' (sweetened yogurt with saffron). An aromatic vegetable and nut 'pulao' forms the latter part of the meal. Often the hostess ceremonially serves fragrant homemade ghee as a signal for the guests to begin eating. It is also customary for the guests to sing a few stanzas from scriptures to bless the food and the host before beginning. For everyday meals, Huli (a cousin of the sambhar of Tamils) begins the meal and then comes 'saaru'. The 'saaru' is followed by 'chitranna' and then the sweet dish is served.

Similar Yet Distinct

As one goes north within the state, the food begins to resemble that of Maharashtra. The cuisine of coastal Karnataka has similarities with the food of Kerala. There is, in fact, a large amount of correspondence in the food of the four southern states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. But there are subtle distinctions and recognizable differences in flavour.

The Staple Diet

Karnataka's culinary culture revolves round three staple items- rice, 'ragi' and 'jowar'. However, the people in the northern districts have a preference for wheat and jowarrotis (unleavened bread made of millet) eaten with spiced vegetable preparation. In rural Karnataka, 'ragi' is widely used with each meal. This staple grain is steam cooked and rolled into balls the size of cricket balls and served with hot chutney or 'huli'. The Kodavas or Coorgis, who are culturally quite different from the rest of the state, have an equally distinct cuisine.

They are perhaps the only Hindus who serve non-vegetarian food and alcoholic drinks for their marriage ceremonies and traditional festivities. Most of the Coorg curries-noted for their flavor and taste-are coconut based, lightly spiced and moderately sour. The coastal cuisine of Karnataka is as delightful as that of Coorg.

Non-Veg Fare

The non-vegetarian meal in Karnataka consists of meat and fish. Fish and seafood are available in plenty and since the majority are fisher-folk, the cuisine is simple, yet flavorsome. Cooking meat is a simple art in Karnataka, quite unlike that in north India or Hyderabad. Mangalore coast specializes in varieties of seafood, which are prepared in much the same way as in the rest of the coastal areas.

Desserts

A typical Karnataka meal has many delicacies like Kosambari, a salad made of the broken halves of the soaked green moong dal (lentil) minus its skin, spiced with salt, green chili and mustard seed and mixed with tiny scrapings of coconut, cucumber and carrot and dressed with a little lime juice. Then there are the playas which are vegetables steamed or boiled to retain the original color and flavor. Sometimes, huli is replaced with a milder kootu. Tamarind is taboo for kootu, which is spiced with lots of pepper, cumin seeds and ground coconut. Also, no Kannada meal is complete without saaru-a clear pepper broth. Other delectable sweets that come out of the Kannada kitchen are the shavigepayasa made of vermicelli and sugar, hesarubele made with green gram dal, and baadamihallu, which is, crushed almonds mixed with milk, sugar and saffron. Other popular Karnataka specialties are 'bisibelehulianna', which is created out of rice, dal, tamarind, chili powder, and cinnamon. 'Kesaribhath' (a halwa made of semolina, sugar, and saffron), chiroti and Mysore pak are among the favorite sweets in Karnataka.

But the piece de resistance is the obbattu or holigea-flat, thin, wafer-like chappati filled with a mixture of jaggery, coconut and sugar and fried gently on a skillet.

Other Festive Food: PothaParban is a day given to feasting on homemade sweets, pancakes and puffed rice. Instead of the daily fare of rice and fish curry, the rice harvest is made festive with the addition of jaggery syrup, coconut candy and condiments, to create a variety of recipes for this day.

ORISSA

- The rich and verdant land brings forth vegetables that are lush and fruits that brim over with beneficial properties and, therefore, form a large part of Orissan diet. Rice drawn from the emerald paddy fields in sun-drenched valleys finds its way to the table - sweet smelling and delicious. Due to the religious leanings of the State meat consumption is relatively low, though most hotels and restaurants have it on their menus
- **Tempting Delicacies:** What is rich and plentiful is the diverse selection of seafood, with crabs, prawns and lobsters steeped in the ever-present ingredients of - Orissan cuisine - curd (yoghurt) and coconut milk. The curd here is rich and creamy and gives the succulent flesh an additional flavour. It is not only the seafood which is traditionally cooked in curd and coconut milk but also yams, brinjals and pumpkins are liberally used in curd

with mustard seeds giving the whole preparation that extra zing.

Mouthwatering Desserts: Small cakes, or 'pithas', which are both sweet and savoury, are extremely popular in Orissa. Chhenapodapitha, the caramelised custard-like dessert is popular not only with the locals but also with the tourists.

The Traditional Mahaprasad

Another traditional must is the tasting of the 'Mahaprasad' or the sacred food offered as 'Bhog' to Lord Jagannatha or Jagannath. Available at the Anand Bazar of the Jagannatha Temple, one can procure it quite easily. The temple kitchen is believed to be the largest kitchen in the world. Created on a cooking facility, which is highly efficient despite its age, 400 'Supkars' (cooks) work around 200 hearths daily to feed over 10,000 people.

SIKKIM

- Sikkimese are essentially rice-eaters. Alcoholic drinks are popular both amongst men and women. Various traditional fermented foods and beverages are very common. . Beef eating is common amongst the Bhutias. Some of the common traditional cuisine with their food recipes has been presented below.

Momo is very popular Tibetan delicacy in Sikkim. A kind of a meat dumpling, this delicious snack is a favourite among the people. It is usually eaten steamed or fried. Today they even make vegetable Momos. The Momos are consumed piping hot with soup and home madechilly sauce.

GyaThuk or Thukpa: GyaThukOrThukpa is a noodle-based soup with vegetables or meat.

NingroWithChurpi: Ningro is an alpine fiddlehead fern and its tendrils when sauteed with 'Churpi' (form of cheese) makes an irresistible dish. Normally, not served in the restaurants but is prepared as a household dish.

GundrukGundruk are leaves of the mustard oil plant that are dehydrated. The dried leaves are then cooked along with onions and tomatoes.

PhagshapaPhagshapa is strip of pork fat stewed with radishes and dried chillies.

Sael Roti This Nepali cuisine is prepared by grinding a mixture of rice and water into a thick paste. Milk and sugar is added to the paste, which is deep-fried. It is normally eaten with potato curry or non-vegetarian dish and widely prepared during festivals.

Chang Chang is a local beer made by fermenting millet using Yeast. It is sipped from a Bamboo receptacle using Bamboo pipe. The receptacle, which has millet in it, is topped with warm water a couple of times until the millet loses its flavour. Chang can sometimes be strong and very intoxicating.

TAMIL NADU

- Tamil nadu provides visitors with a wide variety of delicious food both for the vegetarians as well as the non-vegetarians, though most food in Tamil Nadu consists of grains, lentils, rice and vegetables. Spices are added to give a distinctive taste. Rice is the staple diet of the state. Idly, Dosa, Vada, Upma, Sambar, Rasam and Coconut chutney are the other common delicacies. Chettinad cuisine is a specialty in Tamil Nadu and is a delight for those who like hot and spicy non-vegetarian food. This type of food has several variations of fish, mutton, and chicken dishes of which the Chettinad Pepper Chicken is a specialty. The Tamil style of Mughlai food can be savoured in the Biryani and 'Paya' (a kind of spiced trotter broth eaten with either Parantha or 'Appam' (a type of Dosa)). Tamil Nadu, especially Chennai, is famous for its filter coffee, as most Tamils do not prefer instant coffee.

- **CHETTINAD CUISINE**

- Known for its spicy, hot fare, Chettinad cuisine hails from the deep southern region of Tamil Nadu. Chettinad cuisine is far cry from the bland cuisine of traditional Tamilian Brahmins-it is one of the spiciest, oiliest and most aromatic in India.

Although the Chettiars are well known for their delicious vegetarian preparations, their repertoire of food items is famous and includes all manner of fish and fowl and meats, as well as delicate noodle-like dishes and carefully preserved sun-dried legumes and berries that the Chettiar ladies make into curries. Oil and spices are liberally used in cooking and most dishes have generous amounts of Peppercorn, Cinnamon, Bay leaves, Cardamom, Nutmeg, green and red chilies.

Main attraction of Chettinad cuisine is its variety, nutritional balance and the sudden surprises it springs on you. Their garlic pickles are out of this world. A lot of the food is very aromatic and heavily spiced, especially with pepper.

Popular Dishes

Some of the popular dishes in Chettinad menu are 'Varuval' - a dry dish fried with onions and spices (chicken, fish or vegetables sautéed), Pepper chicken, Poriyal - a curry, and 'Kuzambu', which has the ingredients stewed in a gravy of coconut milk and spices. Special mention must be made of their 'Kola Kolumbus' (Kofta gravies) and the sweet and savoury 'Paniyarams' (Dumplings)

- **SOUTH INDIAN DELICACIES**

- Breakfast or Tiffins include Idly or Idli (steamed rice cakes), Dosa (a pancake made from a batter of rice), Vada (deep fried doughnuts made from a batter of lentils), Pongal (a mish mash of rice and lentils boiled together and seasoned with ghee, cashew nuts, pepper and cummin seeds), and Upma (cooked semolina seasoned in oil with mustard, pepper, cummin seed and dry lentils). There are several variations of the dishes

mentioned above which are eaten with Coconut Chutney, Sambar (seasoned lentil broth) and 'MulagaPodi' (a powdered mix of several dried lentils eaten with oil).

The Making Of Filter Coffee

Tamil Nadu, Chennai, is famous for its filter coffee as most Tamils have a subtle contempt for instant coffee. The making of filter coffee is almost a ritual, for the coffee beans have to be first roasted and then ground. The powder is put into a filter set and boiling hot water is added to prepare the decoction and allowed to set for about 15 minutes. The decoction is then added to milk with sugar to taste. The final drink is poured individually from one container to another in rapid succession to make the ideal frothy cup of filter coffee.

Regular Tamilian Meals

Tamilians are essentially rice-eating people and they have preparations made of rice for all the meals of the day. Lentils too are consumed extensively, as accompaniment to the rice preparations. Being on the seacoast, coconut is also used a lot in Tamil kitchens, as are fish and other seafood. While tamarind is used for adding that distinctive tang, peppercorns and chili, both green and red, are used to make the food hot. To neutralize the effect of the chili, and soothe the stomach, curd is used in a variety of dishes. Other spices like mustard, cumin, garlic etc. are used for tempering and seasoning.

Though several communities in the state are strictly vegetarian, there is a whole range of non-vegetarian dishes - exotic, succulent, and full of fire. Fish and other seafood like crab are also cooked in the traditional Tamil kitchen with spices and traditional seasoning.

A Traditional Tamil Nadu Meal

In Tamil Nadu, food has a ritual purpose that reminds the individual exactly where he or she belongs on the culinary map of community consciousness. This is best seen during those occasions when members of any family or community get together to celebrate an occasion.

A Plateful

- The 'Sappad' or food that is served on a banana leaf (even the size of the leaf varies from one community to another) is displayed like an identity card. One look and a guest will know the community, the status, the exact wealth of the family, and from which part of Tamil Nadu they originate.

The top half of the leaf is reserved for accessories, the lower half for the rice, and in some communities, the rice will be served only after the guest has been seated. The lower right portion of the leaf may have a scoop of warm sweet, milky rice 'Payasam', which should be lapped up quickly.

- While the top left includes a pinch of salt, a dash of pickle and a thimbleful of salad, or a smidgen of chutney. In the middle of the leaf there may be an odd number of fried items like small circles of Chips made either from Banana, Yam or Potato, thin Papads, or frilly wafers, or Vada.

The top right hand corner is reserved for the heavy artillery, the curries, hot, sweet, or sour, and the dry items. If it is a vegetarian meal, the vegetables are carefully chosen, between the country ones-Gourds, Drumsticks, Brinjals - and the English ones, which could be Carrot, Cabbage, and Cauliflower.

If it is a non-vegetarian meal, in some cases, a separate leaf is provided for the fried meats, chicken, fish, crab, and so on. But again, the variations are presented carefully, one dry one next to a gravied one.

Major Culinary Delights

There may be a side attraction such as a 'PuranPoli' or sweetened Dal stuffed into a pancake, Sweet rice or any one of the famed rice preparations such as 'Pulisadam', or 'Bisibela' bath particularly if the family comes from Thanjavur, known as the rice bowl of Tamil Nadu.

After having worked through the preliminaries, the long haul starts with the rice, which is generously doused with ghee. Sambhar, the highly spiced Dal-based dish containing whatever appropriate vegetable there is in season follows, and the Rasam succeeds this.

After a final round of rice and curds, or buttermilk or both, the traditional meal concludes with a small banana, a few betel leaves and nuts.

EATING HABITS

Indians consider a healthy breakfast important. They generally prefer to drink tea or coffee with breakfast, though food preferences vary regionally. North Indian people prefer *roti*, *parathas*, and a vegetable dish accompanied by *achar* (a pickle) and some curd. Various types of packaged pickles are available in the market. One of the oldest pickle-making companies in India is Harnarains, which had started in the 1860s in Old Delhi. People of Gujarat prefer *dhokla* and milk, while south Indians prefer idli and dosa, generally accompanied by sambhar or sagu and various *chutneys*.

Traditional lunch in India usually consists of a main dish of rice in the south and the east, and whole wheat rotis in the north. It typically includes two or three kinds of vegetables, and sometimes items such as *kulcha*, *naan*, or *parathas*. *Paan* (stuffed, spiced and folded betel leaves) which aids digestion is often eaten after lunch and dinner in many parts of India. Apart from that, many households, specially those in north and central India, prefer having sweets after the dinner (similar like the western concept of dessert after meals).

Indian families often gather for "evening snack time", similar to tea time to talk and have tea and snacks. Dinner is considered the main meal of the day.

DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

In India people often follow dietary restrictions based on their religion or faith:

- Hindu communities consider beef taboo since it is believed that Hindu scriptures condemn cow slaughter. Cow slaughter has been banned in many states of India.^[168]
- Vaishnavism followers generally are strict lacto-vegetarians due to an emphasis on Ahimsa. They also do not consume garlic and onions because they are advised against it in the Bhagavad Gita.^[169]
- Jains follow a strict form of lacto-vegetarianism, known as Jain vegetarianism, which in addition to being completely lacto-vegetarian, also excludes all root vegetables such as carrots and potatoes because when the root is pulled up, organisms that live around the root also die.^[170]
- Muslims do not eat pork or pork products.
- Unlike some East Asian countries, dogs and cats are not considered suitable for consumption.

ETIQUETTES

Traditionally, meals in India were eaten while seated either on the floor or on very low stools or mattress. Food is most often eaten with the hands rather than cutlery. Often *roti* is used to scoop curry without allowing it to touch the hand. In the wheat-producing north, a piece of *roti* is gripped with the thumb and middle finger and ripped off while holding the *roti* down with the index finger. A somewhat different method is used in the south for the dosai, the adai, and the uththappam, where the middle finger is pressed down to hold the crepe down and the forefinger and thumb used to grip and separate a small part. Traditional serving styles vary regionally throughout India.

Contact with other cultures has affected Indian dining etiquette. For example, the Anglo-Indian middle class commonly uses spoons and forks, as is traditional in Western culture.^[171]

In South India, cleaned banana leaves, which can be disposed of after meals, are used for serving food. When hot food is served on banana leaves, the leaves add distinctive aromas and taste to the food.^[172] Leaf plates are less common today, except on special occasions.

INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN BASIC GRAVIES

The success of an Indian banquet lies in the extensive variety of gravies served. Only a hack would allow the dishes – vegetarian and non-vegetarian – to taste the same. It reflects a lack of interest and imagination. Even a simple fare can be made tasty and interesting with a slight variation of spices and herbs in the gravies. The hallmark of a good chef is his ability to create different aromas, aromas, hues, and flavours.

A curry is prepared by stewing the food with a masala and a mixture of spices. The word “Curry” is taken from the Tamil word ‘Kari’. Served with either sauce or cooked until dry. Masalas are designed to suit the particular ingredients and techniques indicated in the recipes. As the recipe shows various forms of specific spices which are mixed in special ways to produce the result. It is always found that the dry masalas made to order personally gives better results than that brought readymade. Readymade masalas cannot match the fragrance and freshness of the products made to order.

It is worthwhile grinding spices together from the whole seed when making a masala. Sometimes this may involve grinding them with ginger, garlic or other ingredients. This may be time consuming but the resultant product always will be better than readymade powders. If one wants to achieve speed and convenience he can always use the powders readymade and grind other spices.

Spices in the form of dry and wet masalas along with other products like ghee, curds gives body to the dish, taste, flavor, thickening agent and plays important role to give good appearance

White Gravy

Cardamom - 5nos

Black cardamom- 1nos

Cloves-5nos

Bay leaf - 1no

Mace- 2nos

Boiled onion paste -250gm

Ginger paste -30gm

Garlic Paste -30gm

Salt -20gm

Fried onion paste -50gm

Cashew nuts -30gm

Charoli-15gm

Melon seeds -15gm

Sesame seeds -10gm

Poppy seeds -10gm

Dry coconut -30gm

200gm ghee, 225gm curds and 150ml cream may be added

Used for Kofta, khorma, pasanda delicacies

Red Gravy (tomato flavored)

Ghee (for cooking)-200gm

Cardamom (green) -5nos

Black Cardamom -1no

Cloves -5nos

Cinnamon-1no

Bay leaf -1no

Mace -2no

Boiled onion paste -125gm

Garlic paste -10gm

Red chili powder-10gm

Coriander powder -5gm

Turmeric -3gm

Salt -20gm

Tomatoes -1kg

Fried onion paste -20gm

Cashew nut paste -30gm

Used for lamb, chicken preparations

A la Carte Gravy

Ghee -200gm

Onions (chopped)-400gm

Tomatoes (chopped) -800gm

Red chilies -10gm

Coriander powder -5gm

Turmeric -3gm

Curds (optional) -250gm

Ginger Garlic paste -50gm

Whole spices -10gm

Used for curries and to blend with white gravy to prepare a la carte dishes

Makhni Gravy

Tomatoes (blanch and cook) -1kg

Ginger paste-20gm

Garlic paste -20gm

Green chilies -5gm

Red chili powder -10gm

Cloves-10nos

Cardamom (green) -8nos

Salt -20gm

Butter (white) -150gm

Fresh cream -150ml

Honey (optional) -20ml

Kasoorimethi-10gm

Green Masala (Goan)

Green chili -250gm

Garlic-25gm

Ginger -15gm

Coriander seeds -25gm

Cumin -25gm

Cloves -10nos

Cinnamon -2nos

Chopped onions -250gm

Coriander leaves -2bnch

Sugar -25gm

Salt -10gm

Vinegar -50ml

Turmeric 10gm

Used in meat dishes, to stuff mackerels, pomfret etc., spicy vegetable dishes with French fries.

Racheido masala / red masala (Goan)

Vindaloo, Balchao, Fish Racheido

Red chili -40nos

Garlic -15gm

Ginger-10gm

Cumin -10gm

Peppercorns -10gm

Cloves -10nos

Cinnamon -2nos

Turmeric -10gm

Sugar -10gm

Salt-5gm

Vinegar 100ml

Tandoor Masala

Curds -1kg

Ginger Garlic Paste -150gm

Mint leaves -1bnch

Coriander leaves -1bnch

Red chilies -100gm

Egg (beaten) -8nos

Salt -30gm

Sugar -50gm

Green chilies -50gm

Cumin -25gm

Lime -3nos

Raw Papaya-½ no

Whole spices (powdered) -15gm

Orange color (if required)

Red chili powder (if required)- 5gm

HANDI, KADHAI & TAWA – Indian food was synonymous with either the ‘rich’ food of the Maharajas or the ‘chilli-hot’ fare served in the run-of-the-mill restaurant. Neither is truly representative of the real Indian cuisine – one with thousands of years of refinement behind it. There is no denying that Indian cuisine can be elaborate and Indian hospitality overwhelming. However, as in the other parts of the world, food habits here are changing. To cater to changing tastes, many chefs started to look for alternatives and chose to experiment with delicacies that can be prepared in/on the most commonly used utensils in Indian cooking – handi, kadhai, and tawa. Though Handi cooking is prevalent in most of India, it has carved a permanent niche in the northern states. Handi come in different shapes and sizes, but there are features common to all: a thick bottom to ensure that the food does not stick and, consequently, burn; tinning on inside to prevent any chemical reaction; and, a lid to help retain the aroma and flavour. The most important aspects of handi cooking are bhunao and dum, both described in detail in the beginning. Originally, there were only two Kadhai delicacies – kadhaimurgh (chicken) and kadhaigosht (goat or lamb) – popular in Peshawar and west Punjab, both now provinces of Pakistan. Traditional kadhai shops, which still exist and serve the two dishes, have an in-house butchery. Diners select a chicken (or chickens) or cut of meat, which is weighed in pao ($\frac{1}{2}$ lb approximately) and seer (2lb approximately), the old Indian weights, and then cut into small pieces or chunks. A facile kadhai chef can handle anything upto 16 kadhai simultaneously, ensuring each is taken off the fire at exactly the right moment and reaches the right table. The diners are at liberty to watch the ‘performance’ or sit at their respective tables. The kadhai, in which the food is prepared, is placed in the center of the table and everyone eats out of it, breaking pieces from a large, family size Nan-like Roti to go with it. Except for lamb dishes, kadhai cooking is quick. Lamb has to be three-fourths cooked before being finished in the kadhai. The reason: there is no water used in kadhai cooking. The main ingredient is cooked in the ‘juice’ of tomatoes and the meat itself. Because lamb takes longer to cook, the ‘juice’ would evaporate long before it is tender. When the cooking process is about to be completed, the food is stirred constantly and the sides scraped vigorously to prevent sticking. The scraped masala adds to the flavour. There is a certain fresh – and light – quality about kadhai cuisine. To enjoy it to the fullest, the dishes must be consumed immediately. Unlike handi cooking, where many dishes can be prepared in advance, kadhai cooking has to be done ‘on site’. In the main, it is a chilli-hot food. However, one is at liberty to reduce the chillies.