



# FLAVORS OF THE INDIAN FOOD

- A Culinary Journey through the Lens of  
a Forest Service Trainee



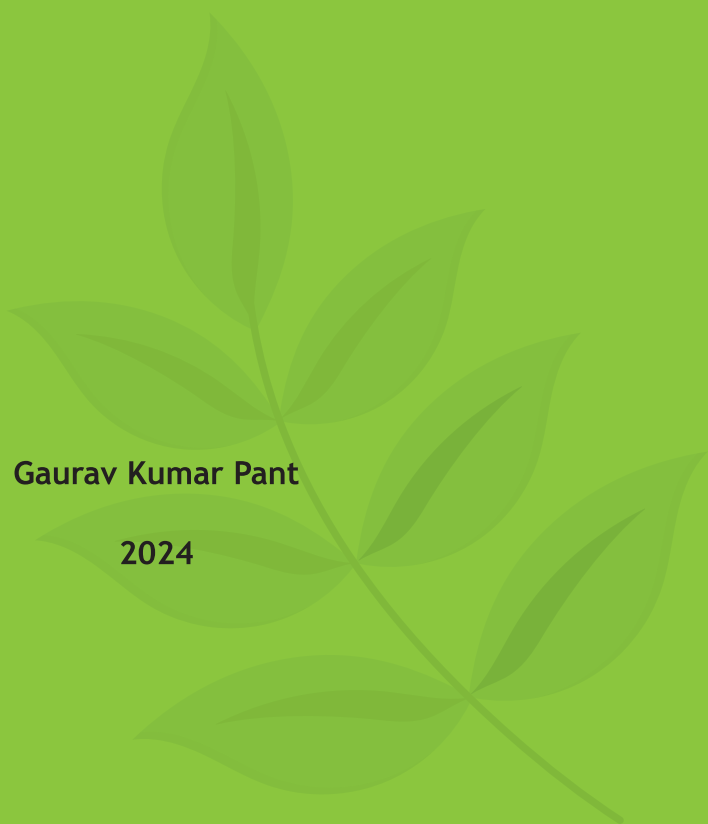
Gaurav Kumar Pant

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## Foreword

In the vast expanse of our beloved nation, India, lies a tapestry of landscapes as diverse and enchanting as the tales of our ancient epics. Within this mosaic of nature's wonders, there exists a world of flavors, aromas, and culinary traditions waiting to be discovered and celebrated.

As the Principal of the Central Academy for State Forest Service (CASFOS), it fills me with immense pride and joy to introduce you to the culinary odyssey chronicled within these pages. This book, born from the experiences of one of our forest service trainees, offers a unique lens through which to explore the rich and diverse culinary heritage of India.

The prologue sets the stage for a remarkable journey - a journey that transcends the boundaries of duty and obligation, transforming routine assignments into extraordinary adventures of gastronomic discovery. From the serene backwaters of Kerala to the majestic peaks of Himachal Pradesh, from the bustling streets of Karnataka to the tranquil valleys of Kashmir, each destination becomes a portal to a world of flavors waiting to be savored.

What makes this journey even more extraordinary is the context in which it unfolds. It is not merely a quest for culinary delights but a testament to the symbiotic relationship between humanity and nature. It is a reminder that our forests, rivers, and mountains are not just resources to be exploited but living ecosystems that sustain us in more ways than we can imagine.

At CASFOS, we believe in nurturing not only the intellect but also the spirit of exploration and appreciation for the world around us. Through experiential learning and hands-on training, we strive to instill in our trainees a deep respect for the natural world and a sense of responsibility towards its preservation.

In this regard, the journey chronicled in this book stands as a shining example of the transformative power of education and exploration. It is a testament to the invaluable opportunities afforded by institutions like CASFOS, which not only equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their field but also inspire them to seek out new horizons and embrace the beauty and diversity of our world.

As you embark on this culinary adventure, guided by the experiences and insights shared by our intrepid forest service trainee, I invite you to savor not only the flavors but also the stories behind each dish. For in these stories lie the essence of our shared heritage, the threads that bind us together as a nation, and the promise of countless more discoveries yet to come.

May this book serve as a tribute to the richness of India's culinary tapestry and a reminder of the infinite wonders that await those who dare to explore.



**V. Thirunavukarasu, IFS**  
APCCF & Principal, CASFOS, Coimbatore

## Acknowledgements

In the journey of life, we are blessed with countless souls whose presence enriches our experiences and shapes our destinies. As I stand on the threshold of sharing my culinary adventures with the world, I am humbled by the profound impact of these individuals on my journey.

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to my mother, whose love, care, and culinary prowess have been the foundation of my gastronomic journey. From the hearty comfort of Northern dishes to the warmth of her embrace, her nurturing spirit continues to inspire me every day.

To my beloved wife, whose culinary expertise knows no bounds, I owe a debt of gratitude for expanding my palate beyond borders. Her mastery of Continental, Chinese, and Thai cuisines has opened my eyes to a world of flavors and textures, enriching my culinary repertoire in ways I could never have imagined.

I am indebted to the talented chefs of the many restaurants I have had the pleasure of visiting, whose dedication to their craft has delighted my senses and broadened my culinary horizons. Each dish they create is a masterpiece, a symphony of flavors that speaks to the passion and creativity inherent in the art of cooking.

To the esteemed Central Academy for State Forest Service (CASFOS), I offer my heartfelt thanks for the invaluable opportunity to explore the length and breadth of our beautiful country. The experiences I have gained during my time at CASFOS have not only shaped me as a professional but have also enriched my understanding of the intricate relationship between nature and nourishment.

A special word of appreciation goes to the Principal of CASFOS, whose vision and leadership have made this journey

possible. Your unwavering support and encouragement have been a guiding light, inspiring me to pursue my passion for culinary exploration and sharing.

Last but certainly not least, I extend my gratitude to the Officer Trainee Mess for introducing me to the vibrant flavors of Southern cuisine. From the spicy delights of Andhra Pradesh to the soulful comfort of Tamil Nadu, each meal has been a revelation, leaving an indelible mark on my culinary journey.

To all those who have touched my life and palate along the way, I offer my heartfelt thanks. This book is as much a tribute to your generosity and kindness as it is a celebration of India's rich culinary heritage.

With deepest gratitude,  
**Gaurav Kumar Pant**



## Prologue

In the vast expanse of India's diverse landscapes, I, a humble forest service trainee, found myself on a remarkable journey. Blessed with the opportunity to traverse the length and breadth of this incredible nation, my mandatory tours became more than just assignments; they were gateways to an exploration of India's culinary treasures.

From the tranquil backwaters of Kerala, where the aroma of Malabar Parotta wafted through the air, to the bustling streets of Karnataka, where the aroma of Bisi Bele Bath teased the senses, I embarked on a gastronomic odyssey that spanned the entirety of the subcontinent.

In Tamil Nadu, the sizzle of Ghee Roast Dosa echoed the vibrancy of its temples, while the sweetness of Mysore Pak captured the essence of its royal heritage. Moving northwards, Uttarakhand revealed the earthy flavors of Palak Ka Kaapa, while Himachal Pradesh indulged my palate with the warmth of Siddu and the grandeur of Dhaam.

The valleys of Kashmir welcomed me with the succulence of Mutton Yakhnee and the richness of Goshtaba, while Rajasthan's desert plains offered the rustic charm of Daal Baati Churma. Gujarat's vibrant streets beckoned with the lightness of Dhokla, while West Bengal's culinary legacy shone through the indulgence of Baked Rosogulla.

And amidst the azure waters of the Andaman Islands and the misty hills of Meghalaya and Tripura, I savored the bounty of the sea with every bite of fresh seafood.

As I reflect upon the bounty of experiences bestowed upon me by my service, I am overwhelmed with gratitude. For in this short period, I have not only witnessed the vastness of India's natural beauty but also tasted the richness of its culinary

heritage. And as I continue on this journey, I am filled with anticipation, knowing that there are countless more flavors yet to discover, and countless more memories yet to create.

### **Theme 1: Himalayan Heights: Exploring Northern Flavors**

Uttarakhand: Himalayan Delicacies amidst Pristine Landscapes

Himachal Pradesh: From Dhabas to Mountain Feasts

Jammu and Kashmir: A Gastronomic Paradise Beyond Dal Lake

### **Theme 2: Eastern Enchantment: Indulging in Eastern Delights**

Odisha: Coastal Treasures and Temple Feasts

West Bengal: Fish, Sweets, and Culinary Heritage

Assam and Meghalaya and Tripura: Flavors of the Hills and the Brahmaputra

Andaman and Nicobar: Spices, Seafood, and Island Charms

### **Theme 3: Southern Spice Trail: Navigating the Tastes of the South**

Kerala: Backwaters and Banana Leaves - A Culinary Voyage

Tamil Nadu: Temples, Tradition, and Tiffin

Karnataka: From Udupis to Bisi Bele Bath - A Taste of Diversity

### **Theme 4: Central Confluence: Discovering the Heartland Flavors**

Rajasthan: Royal Feasts amidst the Sands

Gujarat: From Dhokla to Dabeli - A Journey through Gujarati Cuisine

Madhya Pradesh: Tribal Delicacies and Rajputana Heritage

Maharashtra: Coastal Delights and Urban Eats in the Land of Marathas

# Synopsis

## Theme 1: Himalayan Heights: Exploring Northern Flavors

**Uttarakhand:** Himalayan Delicacies amidst Pristine Landscapes- Embark on a culinary journey through the breathtaking landscapes of Uttarakhand, where Himalayan flavors meet pristine natural beauty. Explore the unique cuisine of the region, from the comforting Palak ka Kaapa to the hearty Gahat ke Dubke, as you immerse yourself in the rich culture and traditions of the Himalayas.

**Himachal Pradesh:** From Dhabas to Mountain Feasts- Discover the culinary delights of Himachal Pradesh, where roadside dhabas serve up mouthwatering Siddu alongside fresh cherries and chilgozas. Indulge in the warmth of traditional hospitality as you savor the flavors of Rajma Chawal, Madra, and Dhaam against the backdrop of snow-capped mountains and lush valleys.

**Jammu and Kashmir:** A Gastronomic Paradise Beyond Dal Lake- Experience the culinary wonders of Jammu and Kashmir, where the fragrance of Yakhnee and Chicken Kanti fills the air. Delight your senses with the rich flavors of Mutton Rista and Goshtaba as you traverse the scenic landscapes and explore the gastronomic treasures beyond the iconic Dal Lake.

## Theme 2: Eastern Enchantment: Indulging in Eastern Delights

**Odisha:** Coastal Treasures and Temple Feasts- Immerse yourself in the coastal treasures and temple feasts of Odisha, where the aroma of Daalma fills the air. Indulge in the decadence of Chhena Poda as you explore the culinary heritage of this vibrant eastern state.

**West Bengal:** Fish, Sweets, and Culinary Heritage- Delve into the culinary heritage of West Bengal, where fish, sweets, and cultural traditions intertwine. From the delicate flavors of Mishti Doi to the savory delights of Baked Rasgulla, experience the rich tapestry of flavors that define Bengali cuisine.

**Assam and Meghalaya and Tripura:** Flavors of the Hills and the Brahmaputra- Discover the flavors of the hills and the Brahmaputra as you journey through Assam and Meghalaya. From the aromatic Axomiya cuisine to the hearty flavors of Meghalayan dishes, explore the diverse culinary landscape shaped by the region's geographical and cultural diversity.

**Andaman and Nicobar:** Spices, Seafood, and Island Charms- Embark on a culinary adventure through the spice-laden landscapes of the tropical paradise of Andaman and Nicobar. From the fiery flavors of cuisine to the fresh seafood delights of the islands, experience the unique charms of these lesser-known culinary destinations.

### **Theme 3: Southern Spice Trail: Navigating the Tastes of the South**

**Kerala:** Backwaters and Banana Leaves - A Culinary Voyage- Sail through the backwaters of Kerala and embark on a culinary voyage through banana leaves. From the fluffiness of Kerala Malabar Parotta to the sweetness of Palada Payasam, savor the flavors of this coastal paradise.

**Tamil Nadu:** Temples, Tradition, and Tiffin- Explore the temples, traditions, and tiffins of Tamil Nadu as you indulge in the comfort of Pongal and the crispiness of Ghee Roast Dosa. Experience the culinary diversity of the state, from the simplicity of Idli to the intricacy of Kalki.

**Karnataka:** From Udupis to Bisi Bele Bath - A Taste of Diversity- Taste the diversity of Karnataka as you journey

from Udupis to Bisi Bele Bath. From the comforting flavors of Appam with Stew to the spiciness of Koli Saaru, discover the rich culinary heritage of the land of diverse flavors.

#### **Theme 4: Central Confluence: Discovering the Heartland Flavors**

**Rajasthan:** Royal Feasts amidst the Sands - Step into the royal kitchens of Rajasthan and feast amidst the sands. From the rustic simplicity of Daal Baati Churma to the fiery heat of Laal Maas, experience the opulence of Rajasthani cuisine against the backdrop of majestic forts and palaces.

**Gujarat:** From Dhokla to Dabeli - A Journey through Gujarati Cuisine - Embark on a journey through the flavors of Gujarat, from the lightness of Dhokla to the richness of Mohan Thaal. Delight in the unique taste of Khandvi and Thelva as you explore the culinary delights of the land of legends.

**Madhya Pradesh:** Tribal Delicacies and Rajputana Heritage - Discover the tribal delicacies and Rajputana heritage of Madhya Pradesh as you feast on Pha Jalebi and Daal Bafla. From the spicy flavors of Bhopali Ghost Korma to the earthiness of Palak Puri, experience the culinary diversity of the heartland.

**Maharashtra:** Coastal Delights and Urban Eats in the Land of Marathas - Savor the coastal delights and urban eats of Maharashtra as you indulge in Vada Pav and Pav Bhaji. Experience the richness of Sabudana Khichdi and Mutton Rassa as you navigate the culinary landscape of the land of Marathas.

# Chapter 1: Uttarakhand: Himalayan Delicacies amidst Pristine Landscapes

## Introduction to Uttarakhand

Nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, Uttarakhand, formerly known as Uttaranchal, is a state brimming with natural beauty and cultural richness. With its snow-capped peaks, lush green valleys, and sacred rivers, Uttarakhand offers a breathtaking backdrop for culinary exploration. The cuisine of Uttarakhand is deeply influenced by its geography and traditional way of life. It features simple yet hearty dishes made from locally sourced ingredients, reflecting the resilience and resourcefulness of the people living in this rugged terrain.

## Food Over There

Uttarakhand cuisine is characterized by its simplicity and reliance on seasonal produce. Staples like rice, wheat, lentils, and locally grown vegetables form the basis of most meals. Given its hilly terrain, dairy products such as milk, ghee, and yogurt are also widely used. The cuisine is known for its distinct flavors, often infused with spices like cumin, coriander, and mustard seeds, along with local herbs and wild greens.

## Palak ka Kaapa (Spinach Curry)



Palak ka Kaapa is a traditional dish from Uttarakhand, known for its simplicity and wholesome flavors. It is a creamy spinach curry that pairs well with steamed rice or chapatis.

### Ingredients

- 500g fresh spinach leaves, washed and chopped
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 green chilies, finely chopped
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- ½ cup grated coconut
- ½ cup water
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp mustard oil or ghee

### Instructions

Heat mustard oil or ghee in a pan and add cumin seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions, minced garlic, grated ginger, and green chilies. Sauté until onions turn translucent.

Add chopped spinach leaves and cook until they wilt down.

Add grated coconut and salt to taste. Mix well.

Pour water and simmer the curry for 5-7 minutes until flavors meld together.

Adjust seasoning if needed and serve hot with rice or chapatis.

### **Taste of Palak ka Kaapa**

Palak ka Kaapa is a delightful combination of earthy spinach, aromatic spices, and creamy coconut. The spinach lends a fresh, slightly bitter taste, balanced by the sweetness of coconut and the warmth of spices. The dish is comforting and nourishing, perfect for a chilly evening in the mountains.



## Bhat ki Chudkani



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup rice
- 1/2 cup split black gram lentils (urad dal)
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2 green chilies, slit
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp ghee
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish

#### Instructions

Wash rice and lentils separately and soak them in water for 30 minutes.

Heat ghee in a pressure cooker. Add cumin seeds and let them splutter.

Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown.

Add chopped tomatoes and green chilies. Cook until tomatoes are soft.

Drain water from soaked rice and lentils. Add them to the pressure cooker.

Add turmeric powder and salt. Mix well.

Pour 3 cups of water and close the pressure cooker lid.

Cook on medium heat for 3-4 whistles or until rice and lentils are cooked through.

Once done, let the pressure release naturally. Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Bhat ki Chudkani**

Bhat ki Chudkani is a comforting and nutritious dish with a creamy texture. The combination of rice and lentils creates a hearty base, while the subtle flavors of cumin and turmeric add warmth to the dish. The onions and tomatoes provide a hint of sweetness and acidity, balancing the overall flavor profile. This dish is commonly enjoyed with a dollop of ghee and pairs well with pickle or yogurt.

## Gahat ke Dubke



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup horse gram lentils (gahat)
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2 green chilies, slit
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- Lemon wedges for serving

#### Instructions

Wash horse gram lentils and soak them in water overnight.

In a pressure cooker, add soaked lentils, minced garlic, grated ginger, slit green chilies, cumin seeds, turmeric powder, and salt.

Pour enough water to cover the lentils and close the pressure cooker lid.

Cook on medium heat for 4-5 whistles or until the lentils are soft and cooked through.

Once done, let the pressure release naturally. Garnish with fresh coriander leaves.

Serve hot with steamed rice or chapatis. Squeeze lemon juice before serving for an extra tangy flavor.

### **Taste of Gahat ke Dubke**

Gahat ke Dubke is a rustic and wholesome dish with a distinct earthy flavor. The horse gram lentils have a nutty taste and firm texture, which pairs well with the aromatic spices like ginger, garlic, and cumin. The dish has a hearty consistency, making it satisfying and nourishing, especially during the cold mountain winters. The hint of lemon adds a refreshing citrusy note, balancing the flavors perfectly.

## Kheere ka Raita



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cucumber, grated
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1/2 tsp cumin powder
- 1/2 tsp black salt
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish

#### Instructions

In a mixing bowl, whisk the plain yogurt until smooth.

Add grated cucumber, cumin powder, black salt, and salt. Mix well.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

#### Taste of Kheere ka Raita

Kheere ka Raita is a refreshing and cooling side dish that complements the spicy flavors of Indian cuisine. The grated cucumber adds a crisp texture and a subtle sweetness to the creamy yogurt base. The cumin powder provides a warm and aromatic flavor, while black salt adds a hint of tanginess. This raita is light, creamy, and packed with refreshing flavors, making it a perfect accompaniment to spicy curries or biryanis.

## Bhaang ki Chutney



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 2 tbsp hemp seeds (bhaang)
- 2 green chilies
- 1/2 cup fresh coriander leaves
- 1/4 cup fresh mint leaves
- 1-inch piece of ginger
- 1 tbsp tamarind paste
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed

#### Instructions

In a blender, combine hemp seeds, green chilies, coriander leaves, mint leaves, ginger, tamarind paste, and salt.

Blend until smooth, adding water as needed to achieve the desired consistency.

Transfer the chutney to a serving bowl.

#### Taste of Bhaang ki Chutney

Bhaang ki Chutney is a unique and flavorful condiment with a spicy, tangy, and slightly nutty taste. The hemp seeds add

a distinct earthy flavor and a subtle crunch to the chutney. The green chilies provide heat, while the tamarind paste adds a sour note, balancing the overall flavor profile. This chutney pairs well with snacks like pakoras or samosas and adds a burst of flavor to any meal.

Exploring the diverse flavors of Uttarakhand through these traditional dishes offers a glimpse into the culinary heritage of the region, where simplicity meets sophistication, and every meal is a celebration of nature's bounty.

## Chapter 2: Himachal Pradesh: From Dhabas to Mountain Feasts

### Introduction to Himachal Pradesh

Nestled amidst the majestic Himalayas, Himachal Pradesh is a land of serene landscapes, vibrant culture, and delectable cuisine. Known as the "Land of the Gods," Himachal Pradesh boasts a rich culinary heritage shaped by its geographical diversity and cultural influences. From hearty mountain fare to flavorful street food, the cuisine of Himachal Pradesh offers a tantalizing journey for the taste buds.

### Food Over There

The cuisine of Himachal Pradesh is characterized by its simplicity, yet it's bursting with robust flavors. Staple ingredients like rice, wheat, lentils, and locally grown vegetables are prevalent, along with dairy products such as milk, yogurt, and paneer. The region's cuisine also features a variety of spices and herbs, including cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, and bay leaves, which add depth and aroma to the dishes. From savory delights like Siddu and Madra to festive specialties like Dhaam, Himachali cuisine reflects the region's rich culinary traditions and communal celebrations.

### Recipe and Taste of Himachali Dishes



# Siddu



## Recipe

### Ingredients

- 2 cups wheat flour
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 1/2 cup grated paneer
- 1/4 cup ghee or clarified butter
- 1 tsp baking powder
- Salt to taste

### Instructions

In a mixing bowl, combine wheat flour, baking powder, and salt.

Gradually add warm water and knead the dough until it becomes smooth and pliable.

Cover the dough and let it rest for 1-2 hours.

Divide the dough into small portions and roll them into balls.

Flatten each ball with your hands and stuff it with grated paneer.

Fold the edges to seal the stuffing and shape it into a round disc.

Steam the Siddu in a steamer for 20-25 minutes until cooked through.

Serve hot with a dollop of ghee.

### **Taste of Siddu**

Siddu is a traditional Himachali bread with a soft, pillowy texture and a subtle sweetness from the paneer stuffing. The outer layer is slightly crispy, while the inside remains moist and fluffy. When served hot with a generous drizzle of ghee, Siddu melts in the mouth, leaving behind a rich, comforting flavor that embodies the essence of Himachali cuisine.

## Rajma Chawal



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup kidney beans (rajma), soaked overnight
- 2 cups basmati rice
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, pureed
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp garam masala
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- Ghee for serving

#### Instructions

Pressure cooks-soaked kidney beans with water until soft and tender.

In a separate pan, heat ghee and add cumin seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions, minced garlic, and grated ginger. Sauté until onions turn golden brown.

Add tomato puree, turmeric powder, red chili powder, and salt. Cook until the mixture thickens.

Add cooked kidney beans along with their water. Simmer for 10-15 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook basmati rice separately until fluffy and cooked.

Serve hot Rajma with steamed rice, garnished with fresh coriander leaves and a dollop of ghee.

### **Taste of Rajma Chawal**

Rajma Chawal is a classic comfort food loved by all in Himachal Pradesh. The creamy kidney bean curry is infused with aromatic spices and tangy tomato gravy, creating a rich and flavorful dish. When paired with fluffy basmati rice, each mouthful is a delightful blend of textures and tastes, offering a wholesome and satisfying meal experience that epitomizes the essence of Himachali cuisine.

## Madra



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup chickpeas (kabuli chana), soaked overnight
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- 2 tbsp ghee
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish

#### Instructions

Pressure cook soaked chickpeas until soft and tender.

In a separate pan, heat ghee and add cumin seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions, minced garlic, and grated ginger. Sauté until onions turn golden brown.

Add turmeric powder, red chili powder, coriander powder, and salt. Cook until the spices are fragrant.

Add cooked chickpeas along with their water and simmer for 10-15 minutes.

In a bowl, whisk yogurt until smooth. Gradually add it to the chickpea mixture, stirring continuously.

Simmer for another 5-7 minutes until the gravy thickens.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Madra**

Madra is a creamy and aromatic chickpea curry that is a staple in Himachali cuisine. The combination of yogurt, spices, and ghee creates a rich and velvety gravy with a hint of tanginess. The chickpeas are tender and melt in the mouth, while the aromatic spices add layers of flavor. Madra is often served with rice or roti, making it a hearty and satisfying meal that captures the essence of Himachali cooking.

## Dhaam



Dhaam is a traditional feast served during festive occasions and celebrations in Himachal Pradesh. It typically consists of a lavish spread of vegetarian dishes, including rice, dal, curries, and desserts, served on a leaf platter called Pattal. The preparation of Dhaam is elaborate and involves slow cooking techniques to enhance the flavors of each dish. The feast is enjoyed communally, bringing together friends and family to share in the joyous occasion and savor the flavors of Himachali cuisine. Exploring the culinary delights of Himachal Pradesh offers a glimpse into the rich tapestry of flavors, traditions, and celebrations that define this enchanting region nestled in the heart of the Himalayas. Each dish tells a story of heritage, community, and the deep connection between the people and their land.

## **Chapter 3: Jammu and Kashmir: A Gastronomic Paradise Beyond Dal Lake**

### **Introduction to Jammu and Kashmir**

Nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, Jammu and Kashmir is a region of unparalleled beauty, renowned for its picturesque landscapes, rich culture, and exquisite cuisine. From the lush valleys of Kashmir to the rugged terrains of Jammu, the cuisine of this region is as diverse as its geography. Jammu and Kashmir's culinary heritage is a reflection of its multicultural influences, blending flavors from Central Asia, Persia, and the Indian subcontinent to create a gastronomic paradise that tantalizes the senses.

### **Food Over There**

The cuisine of Jammu and Kashmir is characterized by its use of aromatic spices, rich gravies, and slow cooking techniques. Staples like rice, wheat, and locally grown vegetables form the basis of most meals, while meat, particularly lamb and chicken, is a central feature of Kashmiri cuisine. The region's cuisine is renowned for its delicate balance of flavors, with dishes often infused with saffron, dry fruits, and yogurt, resulting in a symphony of taste and texture that lingers on the palate long after the meal is over.

### **Recipe and Taste of Kashmiri Dishes**



## Yakhnee



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g mutton pieces
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 1/2 tsp fennel powder
- 1/2 tsp ginger powder
- 1/2 tsp cardamom powder
- 1/4 tsp saffron strands
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp ghee or oil
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish

#### Instructions

Heat ghee or oil in a pan and sauté chopped onions until golden brown.

Add minced garlic and grated ginger. Sauté for another minute.

Add mutton pieces and brown them on all sides.

In a bowl, whisk yogurt with fennel powder, ginger powder, cardamom powder, saffron strands, and salt.

Pour the yogurt mixture over the mutton and mix well.

Add water as needed to cover the mutton pieces.

Cover and simmer on low heat until the mutton is tender and cooked through.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Yakhnee**

Yakhnee is a fragrant and creamy mutton curry with a subtle sweetness from the yogurt and aromatic spices. The tender mutton pieces are infused with the flavors of saffron, fennel, and ginger, creating a rich and indulgent dish that is both comforting and satisfying. Yakhnee is often served with steamed rice or naan, allowing the flavors to meld together beautifully.

## Chicken Kanti



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g chicken pieces
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, pureed
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 3-4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp Kashmiri red chili powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin powder
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- 2 tbsp mustard oil or ghee

#### Instructions

Heat mustard oil or ghee in a pan and sauté chopped onions until translucent.

Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add chicken pieces and cook until browned on all sides.

Add tomato puree, turmeric powder, Kashmiri red chili powder, coriander powder, cumin powder, and salt. Mix well.

Cover and simmer on low heat until the chicken is cooked through and the gravy thickens.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Chicken Kanti**

Chicken Kanti is a spicy and flavorful chicken curry with a vibrant red hue from the Kashmiri red chili powder. The tender chicken pieces are infused with the warmth of ginger, garlic, and aromatic spices, creating a tantalizing medley of flavors that dance on the palate. Chicken Kanti is best enjoyed with steamed rice or crusty bread, allowing you to savor every bite of this indulgent Kashmiri delicacy.

## Mutton Rista



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g mutton mince
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 green chilies, finely chopped
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp Kashmiri red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp fennel powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- 2 tbsp ghee or oil

#### Instructions

In a bowl, combine mutton mince with chopped onions, minced garlic, grated ginger, chopped green chilies, turmeric powder, Kashmiri red chili powder, fennel powder, garam masala, and salt. Mix well.

Shape the mixture into small balls (about the size of golf balls) and set aside.

Heat ghee or oil in a pan and add the meatballs in batches.

Fry until the meatballs are golden brown on all sides.

Remove the meatballs from the pan and set aside.

In the same pan, prepare a gravy by sautéing chopped onions until golden brown.

Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and chopped green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add turmeric powder, Kashmiri red chili powder, fennel powder, garam masala, and salt. Mix well.

Add water to the pan to make a thick gravy.

Return the fried meatballs to the pan and simmer until the gravy thickens.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Mutton Rista**

Mutton Rista is a delicacy from Kashmir, featuring tender meatballs simmered in a fragrant and flavorful gravy. The meatballs are infused with the warmth of ginger, garlic, and aromatic spices, while the rich gravy adds depth and complexity to the dish. Mutton Rista is a true indulgence for meat lovers, offering a symphony of flavors that evoke the essence of Kashmiri cuisine.

## Goshtaba



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g mutton mince
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 green chilies, finely chopped
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp Kashmiri red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp fennel powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- Salt to taste
- 1 cup yogurt
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- 2 tbsp ghee or oil

#### Instructions

In a bowl, combine mutton mince with chopped onions, minced garlic, grated ginger, chopped green chilies, turmeric powder, Kashmiri red chili powder, fennel powder, garam masala, and salt. Mix well.

Shape the mixture into small balls (about the size of golf balls) and set aside.

In a separate bowl, whisk yogurt until smooth.

Heat ghee or oil in a pan and add the meatballs in batches.

Fry until the meatballs are golden brown on all sides.

Remove the meatballs from the pan and set aside.

In the same pan, prepare a gravy by sautéing chopped onions until golden brown.

Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and chopped green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add turmeric powder, Kashmiri red chili powder, fennel powder, garam masala, and salt. Mix well.

Add whisked yogurt to the pan and stir continuously to prevent curdling.

Return the fried meatballs to the pan and simmer until the gravy thickens.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Goshtaba**

Goshtaba is a quintessential Kashmiri dish featuring succulent meatballs simmered in a rich and creamy yogurt gravy. The meatballs are delicately spiced and infused with the warmth of ginger, garlic, and aromatic spices, while the yogurt gravy adds a tangy and luxurious touch to the dish. Goshtaba is often reserved for special occasions and festive celebrations, offering a taste of Kashmiri hospitality and culinary excellence that is sure to delight the senses.



## Chapter 4: Introduction to Odisha

Odisha, located on the eastern coast of India, is a land of rich cultural heritage, stunning beaches, and delectable cuisine. With its long coastline along the Bay of Bengal and a history steeped in temple architecture and traditions, Odisha offers a diverse culinary experience that celebrates its coastal bounty and religious fervor. From seafood delicacies to temple-inspired sweets, the cuisine of Odisha is a reflection of its vibrant culture and the warmth of its people.

### Food Over There

Odisha's cuisine is a celebration of its coastal location, with an abundance of seafood dishes showcasing the freshness of the catch. Rice is the staple grain, and the state boasts a wide variety of rice-based dishes. The cuisine also features a unique blend of spices and flavors, with mustard seeds, panch phoron (five spice blend), and curry leaves being commonly used. Vegetarian dishes are prominent, with lentils, vegetables, and dairy products playing a central role. Desserts hold a special place in Odia cuisine, with offerings like Chhena Poda and Rasagola being popular choices for sweet indulgence.

### Recipe and Taste of Odia Dishes

## Daalma



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup mixed lentils (moong dal, masoor dal, toor dal)
- 1 potato, diced
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- 2 tbsp ghee or oil

#### Instructions

Wash and soak the mixed lentils for 30 minutes.

In a pressure cooker, heat ghee or oil and add mustard seeds and cumin seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions, minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté until onions turn golden brown.

Add diced potatoes and chopped tomatoes. Cook until tomatoes are soft.

Add soaked lentils, turmeric powder, red chili powder, garam masala, and salt. Mix well.

Pour water as needed to cover the lentils and vegetables.

Close the pressure cooker lid and cook for 3-4 whistles or until lentils are cooked through.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Daalma**

Daalma is a hearty and wholesome lentil stew with a medley of flavors and textures. The combination of mixed lentils and vegetables creates a rich and nourishing dish that is both comforting and satisfying. The spices add depth and warmth to the stew, while the fresh coriander garnish adds a burst of freshness. Daalma is often served with steamed rice or chapatis, making it a staple comfort food in Odisha households.

## Chhena Poda



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups paneer (chhena), crumbled
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup semolina (suji)
- 1/2 tsp cardamom powder
- 1/4 cup chopped nuts (cashews, almonds, pistachios)
- Ghee for greasing

#### Instructions

In a mixing bowl, combine crumbled paneer, sugar, semolina, cardamom powder, and chopped nuts. Mix well to form a smooth dough.

Grease a baking dish with ghee and spread the dough evenly.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F) and bake the mixture for 30-35 minutes until golden brown and firm.

Remove from the oven and let it cool completely.

Once cooled, cut into pieces and serve.

## **Taste of Chhena Poda**

Chhena Poda is a quintessential Odia dessert that translates to "burnt cheese." Despite its name, Chhena Poda is not burnt but caramelized, giving it a rich, caramelized flavor and a golden-brown crust. The paneer lends a subtle sweetness, while the semolina adds a slight crunch to the texture. The aroma of cardamom and the richness of nuts elevate the taste of this delightful dessert, making it a must-try for anyone with a sweet tooth.

## Macha Besara



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g fish fillets (preferably Rohu or Catla)
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin powder
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- 2 tbsp mustard oil

#### Instructions

Marinate the fish fillets with turmeric powder and salt. Set aside for 15-20 minutes.

Heat mustard oil in a pan and fry the marinated fish until golden brown on both sides. Remove from the pan and set aside.

In the same pan, add mustard seeds and let them splutter.

Add chopped onions, minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté until onions turn translucent.

Add chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, red chili powder, cumin powder, and salt. Cook until tomatoes are soft and the mixture thickens.

Add fried fish to the pan and mix gently to coat with the masala.

Cover and simmer for 5-7 minutes until the fish is cooked through.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Macha Besara**

Macha Besara is a traditional Odia fish curry with a tangy and spicy flavor profile. The mustard oil and mustard seeds lend a distinctive pungency to the dish, while the blend of spices adds warmth and depth. The fish fillets are tender and succulent, absorbing the flavors of the aromatic gravy. Macha Besara is best enjoyed with steamed rice, allowing you to savor the rich and flavorful curry that epitomizes the coastal treasures of Odisha.

## Pakhala Bhata



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked rice (preferably leftover rice)
- 4 cups water
- 1 cup yogurt
- 2-3 green chilies, finely chopped
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/4 cup chopped coriander leaves
- Salt to taste
- Fresh cucumber slices for garnish

#### Instructions

In a large bowl, combine cooked rice, water, and yogurt. Mix well to make a slightly watery mixture.

Cover the bowl and let it ferment overnight or for at least 8 hours.

Heat mustard oil in a pan and add mustard seeds and cumin seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped green chilies and grated ginger. Sauté for a minute.



Add the fermented rice mixture to the pan and bring it to a gentle simmer.

Add salt to taste and cook for another 5-7 minutes until the flavors meld together.

Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and serve with fresh cucumber slices.

### **Taste of Pakhala Bhata**

Pakhala Bhata is a traditional Odia dish made with fermented rice and yogurt, offering a refreshing and cooling respite, especially during hot summers. The slightly sour and tangy flavor of the fermented rice is balanced by the creamy richness of yogurt, creating a harmonious blend of tastes and textures. The addition of green chilies and ginger adds a subtle heat and aroma, while the fresh coriander leaves impart a burst of freshness. Pakhala Bhata is often enjoyed with crispy fried fish or crunchy fried vegetables, making it a delightful meal that celebrates the simple pleasures of Odia cuisine.

## Chapter 5: West Bengal: Fish, Sweets, and Culinary Heritage

### Introduction to West Bengal

Nestled in the eastern part of India, West Bengal is a state known for its rich cultural heritage, vibrant festivals, and mouthwatering cuisine. Bordered by the Himalayas in the north and the Bay of Bengal in the south, West Bengal boasts a diverse culinary landscape influenced by its geographical location and historical significance. From delectable fish dishes to irresistible sweets, the cuisine of West Bengal is a delightful reflection of its cultural diversity and culinary ingenuity.

### Food Over There

West Bengal's cuisine is a celebration of flavors, textures, and aromas that tantalize the taste buds and evoke a sense of nostalgia. Rice is the staple food, and meals are often accompanied by a variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. Fish, particularly freshwater varieties like Rohu and Hilsa, holds a special place in Bengali cuisine and is prepared in myriad ways. The state is also renowned for its sweets, or "mishti," which are an integral part of Bengali culture and festivities.

### Recipe and Taste of West Bengali Dishes

## Mishti Doi (Sweet Yogurt)



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 liter full-fat milk
- 200g sugar
- 2 tbsp yogurt (as a starter culture)

#### Instructions

Boil the milk in a heavy-bottomed pan until it reduces to half its original volume, stirring occasionally to prevent it from sticking to the bottom.

Add sugar to the reduced milk and stir until the sugar dissolves completely.

Allow the milk to cool down to lukewarm temperature.

Add yogurt to the lukewarm milk and mix well to incorporate.

Transfer the mixture to earthenware pots or any other container.

Cover the pots with a lid or a clean cloth and keep them in a warm place to set for 6-8 hours or overnight.

Once set, refrigerate the Mishti Doi for a few hours before serving.

### **Taste of Mishti Doi**

Mishti Doi is a creamy and indulgent sweet yogurt with a caramelized flavor and a hint of tanginess. The slow fermentation process imparts a rich and velvety texture to the yogurt, while the addition of sugar adds a subtle sweetness that balances the tartness of the yogurt. Mishti Doi is a quintessential Bengali dessert enjoyed on special occasions and festivals, offering a delightful contrast of flavors and a comforting richness that is sure to leave a lasting impression.

## Baked Rasgulla



### Recipe:

#### Ingredients:

- 1 liter milk
- 2-3 tbsp lemon juice or vinegar
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 cups water
- A few strands of saffron (optional)
- 1 tsp rose water (optional)

#### Instructions

Boil the milk in a heavy-bottomed pan and add lemon juice or vinegar to curdle it.

Once the milk curdles and the whey separates, strain the curdled milk through a muslin cloth to separate the chenna (paneer) from the whey.

Rinse the chenna under cold water to remove any traces of lemon juice or vinegar.

Tie the chenna in the muslin cloth and hang it for 30 minutes to drain excess water.

After 30 minutes, knead the chenna on a flat surface until smooth and soft.

Divide the chenna into small equal-sized balls and flatten them slightly to shape them like rasgullas.

In a separate pot, bring water to a boil and add sugar. Stir until the sugar dissolves completely.

Gently drop the chenna balls into the boiling sugar syrup and cover the pot.

Let the rasgullas cook for about 20-25 minutes on medium heat.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F).

Remove the rasgullas from the sugar syrup and place them in a baking dish.

Bake the rasgullas in the preheated oven for 10-15 minutes until they turn light golden brown.

Remove from the oven and let them cool.

Optionally, garnish with saffron strands and drizzle with rose water before serving.

### **Taste of Baked Rasgulla**

Baked Rasgulla is a delightful twist on the traditional Bengali sweet, offering a unique texture and flavor profile. The rasgullas are soft and spongy on the inside, with a slightly caramelized crust from baking. The sugar syrup infuses the rasgullas with sweetness, while the optional addition of saffron and rose water adds a fragrant aroma and subtle floral notes. Baked Rasgulla is a heavenly dessert that elevates the classic rasgulla to new heights, making it a perfect indulgence for any occasion.

## Machher Jhol (Fish Curry)



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g fish fillets (Rohu or Hilsa)
- 2 potatoes, diced
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- Mustard oil for cooking

#### Instructions

Marinate the fish fillets with turmeric powder and salt. Set aside for 15-20 minutes.

Heat mustard oil in a pan and fry the marinated fish until golden brown on both sides. Remove from the pan and set aside.

In the same pan, add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown.

Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, red chili powder, cumin powder, coriander powder, and salt. Cook until the tomatoes are soft and the spices are fragrant.

Add diced potatoes and enough water to cover the potatoes. Cover and cook until the potatoes are halfway done.

Gently add the fried fish to the pan and simmer until the fish is cooked through and the potatoes are tender.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Machher Jhol**

Machher Jhol is a quintessential Bengali fish curry that embodies the flavors of the region's culinary heritage. The tender fish fillets are bathed in a fragrant and flavorful gravy, infused with the warmth of ginger, garlic, and aromatic spices. The addition of potatoes adds a hearty and comforting element to the dish, while the slit green chilies impart a subtle heat that balances the richness of the curry. Machher Jhol is best enjoyed with steamed rice, allowing you to savor every spoonful of this soul-satisfying Bengali delicacy.



## Aloo Posto (Potatoes in Poppy Seed Paste)



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 4-5 potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 3 tbsp poppy seeds (postu)
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 2-3 dry red chilies
- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish

#### Instructions

Soak poppy seeds in water for 2 hours. Drain and grind them into a fine paste.

Heat mustard oil in a pan and add mustard seeds. Let them splutter.

Add dry red chilies and slit green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add cubed potatoes and turmeric powder. Mix well.

Cover and cook until the potatoes are halfway done.

Add the poppy seed paste and salt to the pan. Mix well to coat the potatoes.

Add water as needed to adjust the consistency of the gravy.

Cover and cook until the potatoes are tender and the gravy thickens.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Aloo Posto**

Aloo Posto is a classic Bengali dish that celebrates the humble potato and poppy seeds. The creamy texture of the poppy seed paste coats the tender potatoes, creating a rich and indulgent gravy that is both comforting and satisfying. The subtle nuttiness of the poppy seeds pairs beautifully with the earthy flavor of the potatoes, while the hint of heat from the green chilies adds a delightful kick. Aloo Posto is a delightful vegetarian dish that captures the essence of Bengali cuisine and is sure to leave you craving for more.

## **Chapter 6: Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura: Flavors of the Hills and the Brahmaputra**

### **Introduction to Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura**

Nestled in the northeastern part of India, Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura are states blessed with lush greenery, rolling hills, and a rich cultural tapestry. The mighty Brahmaputra River meanders through Assam, while Meghalaya is known for its breathtaking landscapes and abundant rainfall. Tripura, on the other hand, boasts a blend of indigenous cultures and vibrant traditions. The cuisine of these states reflects their geographical diversity, with each region offering a unique culinary experience that celebrates local ingredients and traditional cooking techniques.

### **Food Over There**

The cuisine of Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura is characterized by its simplicity, freshness, and reliance on locally sourced ingredients. Rice is the staple food in all three states, and meals are often accompanied by a variety of meats, fish, and seasonal vegetables. Assamese cuisine is known for its subtle flavors and use of indigenous herbs and spices, while Meghalaya's cuisine features hearty and wholesome dishes influenced by tribal traditions. Tripura's cuisine is a delightful fusion of indigenous flavors and Bengali culinary influences, offering a harmonious blend of sweet, savory, and spicy flavors.

### **Recipe and Taste of Assamese, Meghalayan, and Tripuri Dishes**

## Assamese Duck Curry (Haahor Mangxo)



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 duck, cut into pieces
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- 1/2 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1/2 cup fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Mustard oil for cooking

#### Instructions

Heat mustard oil in a pan and add mustard seeds and fenugreek seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown.

Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, cumin powder, coriander powder, and salt. Cook until tomatoes are soft and the mixture thickens.

Add duck pieces to the pan and mix well to coat with the masala. Cover and cook on low heat until the duck is tender and cooked through.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Assamese Duck Curry**

Assamese Duck Curry, or Haahor Mangxo, is a flavorful and aromatic dish that showcases the rich culinary heritage of Assam. The tender duck pieces are simmered in a fragrant gravy infused with the warmth of ginger, garlic, and indigenous spices. The mustard oil adds a distinct pungency to the dish, while the fenugreek seeds impart a subtle bitterness that balances the flavors. Assamese Duck Curry is best enjoyed with steamed rice, allowing you to savor every spoonful of this quintessential Assamese delicacy.

## Masor Tenga (Assamese Sour Fish Curry)



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g fish fillets (Rohu or Catla)
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Mustard oil for cooking

#### Instructions

Marinate the fish fillets with turmeric powder and salt. Set aside for 15-20 minutes.

Heat mustard oil in a pan and add mustard seeds and fenugreek seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped tomatoes, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté until tomatoes are soft and mushy.

Add water to the pan to make a gravy consistency.

Gently add the marinated fish fillets to the pan and cover. Cook until the fish is tender and cooked through.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Masor Tenga**

Masor Tenga is a classic Assamese fish curry known for its tangy and refreshing flavors. The sourness of the dish comes from the addition of tomatoes or lemon juice, which adds a delightful acidity to the gravy. The fish fillets are tender and succulent, infused with the aromatic spices and flavors of the tangy gravy. Masor Tenga is a light and comforting dish that pairs perfectly with steamed rice, offering a taste of Assamese culinary tradition.

## Jadoh (Meghalayan Rice and Meat Dish)



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup rice
- 250g pork or chicken, diced
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp black pepper powder
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- Mustard oil for cooking

#### Instructions

Wash the rice and soak it in water for 30 minutes. Drain and set aside.

Heat mustard oil in a pan and add chopped onions. Sauté until golden brown.

Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté for a minute.



Add diced pork or chicken pieces to the pan and cook until browned.

Add soaked rice, turmeric powder, black pepper powder, and salt. Mix well.

Add water as needed to cook the rice and meat.

Cover and cook on low heat until the rice is cooked through and the water is absorbed.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Jadoh**

Jadoh is a traditional Meghalayan rice and meat dish that epitomizes the hearty and wholesome cuisine of the region. The tender meat pieces are cooked with aromatic spices and fragrant rice, creating a flavorful and comforting meal that is perfect for any occasion. The turmeric adds a vibrant color to the dish, while the black pepper adds a subtle heat that lingers on the palate. Jadoh is often enjoyed with a side of fresh vegetables or pickles, making it a satisfying and soul-nourishing dish that celebrates the flavors of Meghalaya.

## Doh Neiiong (Meghalayan Pork Curry)



### Recipe:

#### Ingredients:

- 500g pork, cut into pieces
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp black sesame seeds
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Mustard oil for cooking

#### Instructions

Heat mustard oil in a pan and add mustard seeds and black sesame seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown.

Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, and salt. Cook until tomatoes are soft and mushy.

Add pork pieces to the pan and mix well to coat with the masala.

Cover and cook on low heat until the pork is tender and cooked through.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Doh Neiiong**

Doh Neiiong is a traditional Meghalayan pork curry that showcases the bold and robust flavors of Meghalayan cuisine. The tender pork pieces are simmered in a fragrant and flavorful gravy, infused with the warmth of ginger, garlic, and indigenous spices. The addition of black sesame seeds adds a nutty richness to the dish, while the fresh coriander garnish adds a burst of freshness. Doh Neiiong is best enjoyed with steamed rice or Meghalayan bread, allowing you to savor every spoonful of this quintessential Meghalayan delicacy.

## Mui Borok (Tripuri Fish Stew)



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g fish fillets (Rohu or Catla)
- 2 potatoes, diced
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp black mustard seeds
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Mustard oil for cooking

#### Instructions

Marinate the fish fillets with turmeric powder and salt. Set aside for 15-20 minutes.

Heat mustard oil in a pan and add black mustard seeds. Let them splutter.

Add diced potatoes and sauté until lightly browned.

Add chopped tomatoes, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté until tomatoes are soft and mushy.

Add water to the pan to make a gravy consistency.

Gently add the marinated fish fillets to the pan and cover. Cook until the fish is tender and cooked through.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Mui Borok**

Mui Borok is a traditional Tripuri fish stew that captures the essence of Tripura's culinary heritage. The tender fish fillets are simmered in a fragrant and flavorful gravy, infused with the warmth of ginger, garlic, and indigenous spices. The addition of potatoes adds a hearty and comforting element to the dish, while the slit green chilies impart a subtle heat that balances the flavors. Mui Borok is best enjoyed with steamed rice, allowing you to savor every spoonful of this soul-satisfying Tripuri delicacy.

## Bangui Rice (Tripuri Vegetable Pilaf)



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup rice
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 potato, diced
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1/2 cup green peas
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- Mustard oil for cooking

#### Instructions

Wash the rice and soak it in water for 30 minutes. Drain and set aside.

Heat mustard oil in a pan and add cumin seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown. Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add diced potatoes, carrots, and green peas to the pan. Cook until vegetables are slightly tender.

Add soaked rice, turmeric powder, garam masala, and salt. Mix well.

Add water as needed to cook the rice and vegetables.

Cover and cook on low heat until the rice is cooked through and the water is absorbed.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Bangui Rice**

Bangui Rice is a traditional Tripuri vegetable pilaf that combines the goodness of rice and seasonal vegetables in a flavorful and aromatic dish. The tender rice grains are infused with the flavors of ginger, garlic, and aromatic spices, creating a fragrant and comforting pilaf that is perfect for any occasion. The addition of vegetables adds color, texture, and nutrients to the dish, while the slit green chilies add a subtle heat that lingers on the palate. Bangui Rice is a delightful vegetarian dish that celebrates the flavors of Tripura and is sure to leave you craving for more.

## **Chapter 7: Andaman and Nicobar: Spices, Seafood, and Island Charms**

### **Introduction to Andaman and Nicobar**

Nestled in the azure waters of the Bay of Bengal, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are a tropical paradise known for their pristine beaches, lush rainforests, and vibrant marine life. This union territory comprises a collection of over 500 islands, each offering its own unique charm and culinary delights. The cuisine of Andaman and Nicobar is a reflection of its diverse cultural heritage, with influences from indigenous tribes, South Indian, Bengali, and Southeast Asian cuisines. From fresh seafood delicacies to aromatic spice-infused dishes, the cuisine of Andaman and Nicobar is a celebration of the islands' rich natural bounty and cultural diversity.

### **Food Over There**

The cuisine of Andaman and Nicobar is characterized by its emphasis on fresh, locally sourced ingredients and bold, aromatic flavors. Seafood plays a central role in island cuisine, with an abundance of fish, prawns, crabs, and lobsters caught daily from the surrounding waters. Coconut, both in its fresh and dried forms, features prominently in Andamanese dishes, lending a rich, creamy texture and subtle sweetness to many preparations. Spices such as cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, and peppercorns are commonly used to add depth and complexity to dishes, reflecting the islands' historical trade connections with Southeast Asia and beyond.

### **Recipe and Taste of Andamanese Dishes**



## Fish Curry



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g fish fillets (any local variety)
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Coconut milk for cooking
- Mustard oil for cooking

#### Instructions

Marinate the fish fillets with turmeric powder and salt. Set aside for 15-20 minutes.

Heat mustard oil in a pan and add cumin seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown.

Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, red chili powder, and coriander powder. Cook until tomatoes are soft and mushy.

Add marinated fish fillets to the pan and gently mix with the masala.

Pour coconut milk into the pan to cover the fish.

Cover and simmer on low heat until the fish is cooked through and the gravy thickens.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Fish Curry**

Andamanese Fish Curry is a tantalizing blend of flavors, with tender fish fillets swimming in a creamy coconut-based gravy infused with aromatic spices. The subtle sweetness of coconut milk balances the heat of the spices, creating a harmonious and comforting dish that pairs perfectly with steamed rice or freshly baked bread. Each spoonful of this delectable curry is a burst of island flavors, transporting you to the sandy shores and crystal-clear waters of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

## Lobster Thermidor



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 2 lobster tails
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup grated cheese
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lemon wedges for serving

#### Instructions

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F).

Boil the lobster tails until cooked through, then remove the meat from the shells and chop into bite-sized pieces.

In a saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add minced garlic and sauté until fragrant.

Stir in flour to form a roux, then gradually add milk while stirring continuously to avoid lumps.

Cook the sauce until thickened, then add grated cheese, chopped parsley, salt, and pepper. Stir until the cheese is melted and the sauce is smooth.

Add the chopped lobster meat to the sauce and mix well to coat.

Spoon the lobster mixture back into the lobster shells and sprinkle with additional cheese.

Place the stuffed lobster shells on a baking tray and bake in the preheated oven for 10-15 minutes until the cheese is golden and bubbly.

Serve hot with lemon wedges on the side.

### **Taste of Lobster Thermidor**

Lobster Thermidor is a luxurious seafood dish that epitomizes indulgence and sophistication. The tender lobster meat is bathed in a rich and creamy cheese sauce, infused with the subtle flavors of garlic and parsley. The golden crust of melted cheese adds a delightful crunch to each.

## **Chapter 8: Kerala: Backwaters and Banana Leaves - A Culinary Voyage**

### **Introduction to Kerala**

Kerala, often referred to as "God's Own Country," is a picturesque state located on the southwestern coast of India. Blessed with lush greenery, tranquil backwaters, and pristine beaches, Kerala is not only a feast for the eyes but also a paradise for food lovers. The cuisine of Kerala is as diverse as its landscape, with influences from Arab, Dutch, Portuguese, and British traders over centuries. Known for its use of coconut, spices, and fresh seafood, Kerala's culinary heritage reflects a harmonious blend of flavors, textures, and aromas that tantalize the taste buds and celebrate the abundance of nature.

### **Food Over There**

Kerala's cuisine is characterized by its emphasis on fresh, locally sourced ingredients and traditional cooking methods. Rice, coconut, and spices form the cornerstone of Kerala's culinary repertoire, with each dish meticulously crafted to showcase the natural flavors of the ingredients. Seafood, including fish, prawns, and crabs, features prominently in Kerala's coastal cuisine, while vegetarian dishes highlight the bounty of the land, with staples such as rice, lentils, and seasonal vegetables taking center stage. From hearty breakfast staples to elaborate feasts served on banana leaves, Kerala's food culture is a testament to the state's rich cultural heritage and culinary ingenuity.

### **Recipe and Taste of Kerala's Delicacies**

## Kerala Malabar Parotta



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- Ghee or oil for frying

#### Instructions

In a large mixing bowl, combine the all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, sugar, and salt.

Gradually add milk and water to the flour mixture and knead until a soft dough forms.

Drizzle oil over the dough and knead again until smooth and elastic.

Cover the dough and let it rest for 2 hours.

Divide the dough into small lemon-sized balls and roll each ball into a thin circle.

Heat a tawa or griddle over medium heat and place the rolled parotta on it.

Cook until bubbles start to appear on the surface, then flip the parotta and cook until golden brown spots appear on both sides.

Brush the cooked parotta with ghee or oil and serve hot.

### **Taste of Kerala Malabar Parotta**

Kerala Malabar Parotta is a flaky, layered flatbread that pairs perfectly with spicy curries and aromatic gravies. The delicate layers of the parotta are achieved through a technique of folding and rolling the dough multiple times, resulting in a soft, pillowy texture with crisp, golden-brown layers. The subtle sweetness of the dough complements the savory flavors of the accompanying curry, making it a versatile and satisfying dish that is enjoyed across Kerala.

## Puttu with Kadala Curry



### Recipe

#### Ingredients for Puttu

- 1 cup rice flour
- 1/2 cup grated coconut
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed

#### Instructions for Puttu

In a mixing bowl, combine the rice flour, grated coconut, and salt.

Gradually add water and mix until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.

Fill the cylindrical cavity of a puttu maker with alternating layers of grated coconut and the rice flour mixture.

Steam the puttu in a steamer for about 10-15 minutes until cooked through.

#### Ingredients for Kadala Curry

- 1 cup black chickpeas (kala chana), soaked overnight
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit



- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Coconut oil for cooking

### **Instructions for Kadala Curry**

Heat coconut oil in a pan and add mustard seeds and cumin seeds. Let them splutter.

Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown.

Add minced garlic, grated ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté for a minute.

Add chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, red chili powder, and coriander powder. Cook until tomatoes are soft and mushy.

Add soaked black chickpeas to the pan along with salt and enough water to cover them.

Cover and cook until the chickpeas are tender and the gravy thickens.

Garnish with fresh coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Puttu with Kadala Curry**

Puttu with Kadala Curry is a quintessential Kerala breakfast dish that combines the delicate texture of steamed rice cakes with the bold flavors of spiced black chickpea curry. The puttu, with its light and airy texture, provides the perfect foil for the rich and hearty kadala curry, which is infused with the warmth of spices and the creaminess of coconut milk. Together, they create a harmonious symphony of flavors and textures that is both comforting and satisfying, making it a favorite choice for breakfast or brunch in Kerala households.

## Appam with Stew



### Recipe for Appam

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups raw rice
- 1/2 cup cooked rice
- 1/4 cup grated coconut
- 1/2 tsp active dry yeast
- 1 tsp sugar
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed

#### Instructions for Appam

Soak raw rice in water for 4-6 hours.

Grind the soaked rice along with cooked rice, grated coconut, sugar, and salt to a smooth batter.

Dissolve yeast in warm water with a pinch of sugar and let it sit for 5-10 minutes until frothy.

Add the yeast mixture to the ground rice batter and mix well.

Cover the batter and let it ferment overnight or for 8-10 hours.

Heat an appam pan over medium heat and pour a ladleful of batter into the center.

Swirl the pan to spread the batter in a thin layer, leaving a thicker center and thin edges.

Cover and cook until the edges turn crisp and golden brown, and the center is soft and lacy.

## **Recipe for Stew**

### **Ingredients for Stew**

- 2 potatoes, diced
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, julienned
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1 cup thick coconut milk
- 1 cup thin coconut milk
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- A few curry leaves
- Salt to taste
- Coconut oil for cooking

### **Instructions for Stew**

Heat coconut oil in a pan and add mustard seeds. Let them splutter.

Add thinly sliced onions, julienned ginger, and slit green chilies. Sauté until onions turn translucent.

Add diced potatoes and carrots to the pan along with thin coconut milk and salt.

Cover and cook until the vegetables are tender.

Add thick coconut milk to the pan and simmer for a few minutes until the stew thickens.

Garnish with curry leaves before serving.

## **Taste of Appam with Stew**

Appam with Stew is a classic Kerala delicacy that embodies the essence of the state's culinary tradition. The soft and lacy appams, with their crisp edges and spongy centers, are the perfect complement to the creamy and aromatic stew. The stew, infused with the flavors of coconut milk, ginger and curry leaves, is hearty yet light, making it an ideal choice for breakfast or dinner. Together, appam and stew create a harmonious balance of flavors and textures that is sure to delight your taste buds and transport you to the idyllic shores of Kerala.

## Palada Payasam



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup palada (thin rice flakes)
- 1/2 liter milk
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2-3 tbsp ghee
- A handful of cashew nuts
- A few raisins
- A pinch of cardamom powder

#### Instructions

Heat ghee in a pan and fry the palada until golden brown. Remove from the pan and set aside.

In the same pan, fry cashew nuts and raisins until golden brown. Remove from the pan and set aside.

In a separate saucepan, bring milk to a boil.

Add fried palada to the boiling milk and simmer until the palada is cooked and the milk thickens.

Add sugar and mix well until dissolved.

Stir in fried cashew nuts, raisins, and cardamom powder.

Remove from heat and serve hot or cold.

### **Taste of Palada Payasam**

Palada Payasam is a traditional Kerala dessert that embodies the essence of sweetness and indulgence. The thin rice flakes, cooked in creamy milk and flavored with aromatic cardamom, create a rich and luscious pudding that melts in your mouth with every spoonful. The addition of fried cashew nuts and raisins adds a delightful crunch and burst of sweetness to the dish, elevating its flavor profile and making it a favorite choice for festive occasions and celebrations in Kerala households. Whether served hot or cold, Palada Payasam is sure to leave a lasting impression with its rich and creamy texture and comforting flavors reminiscent of home.

## Chapter 09: Tamil Nadu: Temples, Tradition, and Tiffin

### Introduction to Tamil Nadu

Nestled in the southern part of India, Tamil Nadu is a state renowned for its rich cultural heritage, ancient temples, and vibrant traditions. With a history dating back thousands of years, Tamil Nadu has preserved its distinct identity through its language, arts, and cuisine. From the majestic temples of Madurai to the bustling streets of Chennai, Tamil Nadu offers a sensory feast for travelers, with its diverse landscapes, colorful festivals, and delectable cuisine. The cuisine of Tamil Nadu is deeply rooted in tradition and reflects the region's agrarian culture, with an emphasis on locally sourced ingredients, aromatic spices, and ancient cooking techniques.

### Food Over There

Tamil Nadu's cuisine is a celebration of flavors, textures, and colors, with each dish meticulously crafted to tantalize the taste buds and satisfy the soul. Rice, lentils, and coconut form the backbone of Tamil Nadu's culinary repertoire, with dishes ranging from hearty rice-based meals to savory snacks and decadent desserts. The cuisine is known for its bold use of spices such as black pepper, cumin, coriander, and fenugreek, which lend depth and complexity to the dishes. Vegetarianism is prevalent in Tamil Nadu, and the cuisine boasts a wide array of plant-based dishes that showcase the region's abundant produce and culinary creativity.

### Recipe and Taste of Tamil Nadu's Delicacies

## Pongal



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup rice
- 1/2 cup split yellow moong dal (yellow lentils)
- 4 cups water
- 1-inch piece of ginger, finely chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- A handful of cashew nuts
- 2 tbsp ghee (clarified butter)
- Salt to taste

#### Instructions

- Dry roast the moong dal in a pan until fragrant, then wash and drain.
- In a pressure cooker, combine the rice, roasted moong dal, water, ginger, green chilies, cumin seeds, black pepper, and salt.
- Pressure cook for 4-5 whistles or until the rice and dal are soft and mushy.



- Heat ghee in a small pan and fry the cashew nuts until golden brown.
- Add the fried cashew nuts to the cooked pongal and mix well.
- Serve hot with coconut chutney or sambar.

### **Taste of Pongal**

Pongal is a traditional Tamil Nadu dish that is often prepared during festivals and special occasions as an offering to the gods. This savory rice and lentil porridge are flavored with warming spices like cumin seeds and black pepper, giving it a comforting and aromatic flavor profile. The addition of ghee and fried cashew nuts adds richness and crunch to the dish, making it a wholesome and satisfying meal that is enjoyed by people of all ages.

## Idli



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups idli rice
- 1 cup whole urad dal (black gram)
- 1 tsp fenugreek seeds
- Salt to taste

#### Instructions

- Wash and soak the idli rice, urad dal, and fenugreek seeds separately in water for 4-6 hours.
- Grind the soaked urad dal and fenugreek seeds into a smooth batter using a wet grinder or blender. Transfer to a large bowl.
- Grind the soaked idli rice into a slightly coarse texture and add it to the bowl with the ground urad dal batter.
- Mix the batters together well, adding salt to taste. The consistency should be thick but pourable.
- Cover the bowl and let the batter ferment overnight or for 8-10 hours in a warm place.

- Grease the idli molds with oil or ghee and pour the batter into each mold.
- Steam the idlis in a steamer for about 10-12 minutes or until they are cooked through.
- Serve hot with chutney and sambar.

### **Taste of Idli**

Idli is a beloved South Indian staple that is enjoyed as a breakfast dish or snack throughout Tamil Nadu and beyond. These soft, fluffy rice cakes are light and airy in texture, with a subtle tanginess imparted by the fermentation process. Idlis are incredibly versatile and pair well with a variety of accompaniments such as coconut chutney, sambar, or spicy tomato chutney. Their mild flavor makes them suitable for all palates, making idlis a popular choice for breakfast or a light meal.

# Idiyappam



## Recipe

### Ingredients

- 2 cups rice flour
- 1 cup hot water
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp oil

### Instructions

- In a large mixing bowl, combine the rice flour and salt.
- Gradually add hot water to the rice flour while mixing with a spoon or spatula.
- Knead the mixture into a smooth dough. Add more water if needed.
- Grease the idiyappam maker or sevai press with oil.
- Fill the idiyappam maker with the dough and press it onto idli plates or steamer trays in a circular motion to form thin strands.
- Steam the idiyappam in a steamer for about 7-8 minutes or until cooked through.

- Serve hot with coconut milk, sweetened coconut milk, or curry of your choice.

### **Taste of Idiyappam**

Idiyappam, also known as string hoppers, is a delicate and flavorful South Indian dish that is made from rice flour and water. These soft, stringy noodles have a slightly chewy texture and a mild, rice-like flavor that pairs well with both sweet and savory accompaniments. Idiyappam is often served for breakfast or dinner, either plain with coconut milk and sugar or with spicy curries and gravies. Its versatility and simplicity make it a beloved dish in Tamil Nadu households.

## Paniyaram



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup idli/dosa batter
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onions
- 1/4 cup grated carrots
- 2-3 green chilies, finely chopped
- 1/2 inch piece of ginger, grated
- A handful of chopped coriander leaves
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- Salt to taste
- Oil for greasing the paniyaram pan

#### Instructions

- Heat a little oil in a small pan and add mustard seeds and cumin seeds. Let them splutter.
- Add chopped onions, grated ginger, and green chilies. Sauté until onions turn translucent.
- Add grated carrots and cook for a few minutes until they soften slightly. Remove from heat and let the mixture cool.

- In a mixing bowl, combine the idli/dosa batter with the cooked onion-carrot mixture, chopped coriander leaves, salt, and black pepper.
- Grease the paniyaram pan with oil and heat it over medium heat.
- Pour a spoonful of the batter into each mold of the paniyaram pan.
- Cook until the bottom side turns golden brown, then flip each paniyaram using a skewer or spoon and cook the other side until golden brown.
- Remove the paniyarams from the pan and serve hot with coconut chutney or tomato chutney.

**Taste of Paniyaram:** Paniyarams are small, round dumplings made from fermented rice and lentil batter that are crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. They are typically seasoned with onions, green chilies, and spices, giving them a savory and aromatic flavor profile. Paniyarams are a popular South Indian snack or breakfast dish that is enjoyed with a variety of chutneys and sambar. Their bite-sized nature and addictive taste make them perfect for sharing with family and friends.

## Kalki



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup rice flour
- 1/2 cup jaggery, grated
- 1/2 cup coconut, grated
- 1/4 tsp cardamom powder
- A pinch of salt
- Water as needed
- Ghee for frying

#### Instructions

- In a mixing bowl, combine the rice flour, grated jaggery, grated coconut, cardamom powder, and salt.
- Gradually add water to the mixture and knead until you get a smooth dough-like consistency.
- Heat a non-stick pan or tawa over medium heat and grease it lightly with ghee.
- Take a small portion of the dough and flatten it into a round shape on the greased pan.
- Cook the kalki on both sides until golden brown, brushing with ghee as needed.



- Remove from the pan and serve warm.

### **Taste of Kalki**

Kalki is a traditional Tamil Nadu sweet that is crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, with a delicious blend of flavors from the rice flour, jaggery, and coconut. The aroma of cardamom adds a delightful fragrance to the sweet, making it irresistible. Kalki is often enjoyed as a tea-time snack or as a treat during festivals and special occasions, symbolizing the richness of Tamil Nadu's culinary heritage.

## Ghee Roast Dosa



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- Dosa batter (made from rice and urad dal)
- Ghee for frying
- Salt to taste

#### Instructions

- Heat a dosa tawa or non-stick pan over medium heat.
- Pour a ladleful of dosa batter onto the center of the tawa and spread it in a circular motion to form a thin dosa.
- Drizzle ghee generously around the edges of the dosa and in the center.
- Sprinkle salt over the dosa.
- Cook the dosa until the bottom turns golden brown and crispy.
- Flip the dosa and cook the other side for a few seconds.
- Remove the dosa from the tawa and serve hot with chutney and sambar.

## **Taste of Ghee Roast Dosa**

Ghee Roast Dosa is a beloved South Indian delicacy known for its crispy texture and rich flavor. The dosa is cooked to perfection on a hot griddle with generous amounts of ghee, giving it a golden-brown color and a delightful aroma. The crispy exterior contrasts beautifully with the soft, fluffy interior of the dosa, creating a satisfying sensory experience with every bite. Ghee Roast Dosa is often enjoyed for breakfast or as a snack, paired with coconut chutney, spicy sambar, or tangy tomato chutney. Its simple yet irresistible taste makes it a favorite among dosa lovers across Tamil Nadu and beyond.

## **Chapter 10: Karnataka: From Udupis to Bisi Bele Bath - A Taste of Diversity**

### **Introduction to Karnataka**

Nestled in the heart of the Deccan Plateau, Karnataka is a state renowned for its rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and vibrant cuisine. Home to bustling cities, ancient temples, and verdant forests, Karnataka offers a tapestry of experiences that captivate the senses and enchant the soul. The cuisine of Karnataka reflects the region's geographical and cultural diversity, with influences from South Indian, North Indian, and coastal cuisines. From the iconic dosas of Udupi to the aromatic spices of Bisi Bele Bath, Karnataka's culinary landscape is as varied as its landscapes, offering a gastronomic journey that delights the palate and celebrates the spirit of hospitality.

### **Food Over There**

Karnataka's cuisine is a reflection of its diverse geography, with each region boasting its own unique flavors and specialties. Rice is a staple food in Karnataka, and many traditional dishes revolve around this versatile grain. Coconut, lentils, spices, and fresh produce are also prominent ingredients in Karnataka's cuisine, adding depth and complexity to dishes. From the tangy flavors of coastal seafood to the rich aromas of North Karnataka's spicy curries, Karnataka's culinary repertoire is as diverse as its people, offering a feast for the senses that celebrates the state's rich cultural heritage and culinary traditions.

### **Recipe and Taste of Karnataka's Delicacies**

## Bisi Bele Bath



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup rice
- 1/2 cup toor dal (split pigeon peas)
- 2 tbsp bisi bele bath masala powder
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1/2 cup mixed vegetables (carrots, peas, beans, potatoes)
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- A handful of tamarind, soaked in water
- A handful of curry leaves
- 2 tbsp ghee
- Salt to taste

#### Instructions

- Cook rice and toor dal separately until soft and mushy. Set aside.
- Heat ghee in a pan and add chopped onions. Sauté until golden brown.
- Add chopped tomatoes, slit green chilies, and mixed vegetables. Cook until vegetables are tender.

- Add cooked rice and dal to the pan along with bisi bele bath masala powder and salt. Mix well.
- Extract tamarind pulp from soaked tamarind and add it to the pan. Mix thoroughly.
- Add water as needed to achieve the desired consistency.
- Simmer the mixture for 10-15 minutes until flavors are well combined.
- Garnish with curry leaves and serve hot.

### **Taste of Bisi Bele Bath :Bisi Bele**

Bath is a quintessential Karnataka dish that translates to "hot lentil rice" in Kannada. This flavorful one-pot meal is a symphony of spices, lentils, rice, and vegetables, creating a hearty and satisfying dish that is bursting with aromatic flavors. The tanginess from the tamarind, the warmth from the spices, and the creaminess from the lentils come together to create a harmonious balance of flavors that is both comforting and invigorating. Bisi Bele Bath is often served with a dollop of ghee and accompanied by papad or raita, making it a wholesome and fulfilling meal that is cherished by locals and visitors alike.

## Udipi Masala Dosa



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- Dosa batter (made from rice and urad dal)
- Potato masala (cooked potatoes, onions, green chilies, mustard seeds, curry leaves, turmeric powder)
- Ghee or oil for frying

#### Instructions

- Heat a dosa tawa or non-stick pan over medium heat.
- Pour a ladleful of dosa batter onto the center of the tawa and spread it in a circular motion to form a thin dosa.
- Spread a spoonful of potato masala over the dosa.
- Drizzle ghee or oil around the edges of the dosa.
- Cook the dosa until the bottom turns golden brown and crispy.
- Fold the dosa in half or roll it into a cylinder.
- Serve hot with coconut chutney and sambar.

## **Taste of Udipi Masala Dosa**

Udipi Masala Dosa is a specialty of the coastal town of Udipi in Karnataka and is a variation of the classic South Indian dosa. The dosa is thin and crispy on the outside, with a flavorful potato masala filling that is spiced with aromatic spices and tempered with mustard seeds and curry leaves. The addition of ghee or oil adds richness and enhances the overall flavor of the dosa. Udipi Masala Dosa is typically served with coconut chutney and sambar, creating a delicious and satisfying meal that is enjoyed by people of all ages.



## Mysore Pak



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup besan (gram flour)
- 1 cup ghee
- 1 cup sugar
- A pinch of cardamom powder
- A handful of chopped nuts (cashews, almonds)

#### Instructions

- Heat ghee in a heavy-bottomed pan over medium heat.
- Add besan to the pan and roast it in ghee until it turns golden brown and aromatic.
- In another pan, heat sugar with a little water to make a syrup.
- Once the besan is roasted, slowly add the sugar syrup to it while continuously stirring to avoid lumps.
- Add cardamom powder and chopped nuts to the mixture and mix well.
- Continue cooking until the mixture thickens and starts to leave the sides of the pan.

- Grease a plate with ghee and pour the mixture into it, spreading it evenly.
- Let it cool and set for a few hours, then cut into pieces and serve.

### **Taste of Mysore Pak**

Mysore Pak is a traditional sweet delicacy that originated in the city of Mysore in Karnataka. This rich and indulgent sweet is made from gram flour, ghee, sugar, and flavored with cardamom and nuts. The result is a melt-in-your-mouth confection that is buttery, aromatic, and irresistibly delicious. Mysore Pak is often served as a dessert during festivals, weddings, and special occasions, symbolizing the warmth and hospitality of Karnataka's culinary traditions.

Karnataka's culinary landscape is not just about the food; it's also about the warmth and hospitality extended by its people. Everywhere we went, from the bustling streets of Bangalore to the serene villages of Coorg, we were greeted with open arms and friendly smiles. Whether it was a local vendor offering us a taste of their specialty dish or a kind-hearted family inviting us into their home for a meal, the hospitality we experienced in Karnataka left a lasting impression on us, reminding us that food is not just about nourishment; it's also about the connections we make and the memories we create along the way.

# **Chapter 11: Rajasthan: Royal Feasts amidst the Sands**

## **Introduction to Rajasthan**

Rajasthan, the land of kings, is a vibrant state in western India known for its rich cultural heritage, majestic forts, and golden deserts. Steeped in history and tradition, Rajasthan exudes an aura of regal splendor, with its opulent palaces, colorful festivals, and warm hospitality. The cuisine of Rajasthan is as royal as its lineage, characterized by rich flavors, aromatic spices, and hearty dishes that have been passed down through generations. From the iconic dal baati churma to the fiery laal maas, Rajasthan's culinary repertoire is a testament to its royal legacy and desert charm.

## **Food Over There**

Rajasthani cuisine is a reflection of the state's arid landscape and royal heritage, with dishes that are hearty, flavorful, and designed to withstand the harsh desert climate. The cuisine is predominantly vegetarian, owing to the scarcity of water and the reliance on locally available ingredients such as millet, pulses, and dried fruits. Spices such as red chili, turmeric, and coriander are used liberally to add depth and flavor to dishes, while ghee (clarified butter) and milk are prized for their richness and nourishment. Rajasthani cuisine is a celebration of simplicity and indulgence, with each dish telling a story of tradition, resilience, and hospitality.

## **Recipe and Taste of Rajasthan's Delicacies**

## Dal Baati Churma



### Recipe

#### Ingredients for Baati

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup semolina (sooji)
- 1/2 cup ghee (clarified butter)
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed

#### Ingredients for Dal

- 1 cup mixed lentils (toor dal, moong dal, chana dal)
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp garam masala
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Ghee for serving

### **Instructions for Baati**

- In a mixing bowl, combine the whole wheat flour, semolina, ghee, and salt.
- Gradually add water and knead the mixture into a stiff dough.
- Divide the dough into equal-sized portions and shape them into round balls.
- Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F) and bake the baatis for 30-35 minutes until golden brown and cooked through.

### **Ingredients for Churma**

- 1 cup coarsely ground wheat flour (coarse wheat flour)
- 1/4 cup ghee (clarified butter)
- 1/2 cup powdered jaggery
- A pinch of cardamom powder
- A handful of chopped nuts (almonds, cashews)

### **Instructions for Churma**

- Heat ghee in a pan and add the coarse wheat flour.
- Roast the flour on low heat until it turns golden brown and aromatic.
- Add powdered jaggery, cardamom powder, and chopped nuts to the pan.
- Mix well until the jaggery melts and everything is well combined.
- Remove from heat and let it cool slightly.
- Shape the mixture into small balls or laddoos.

### **Instructions for Dal**

- Cook the mixed lentils in a pressure cooker until soft and mushy.

- Heat ghee in a pan and add cumin seeds and mustard seeds. Let them splutter.
- Add chopped onions, slit green chilies, and sauté until onions turn golden brown.
- Add chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, red chili powder, and salt. Cook until tomatoes are soft and mushy.
- Add the cooked lentils to the pan along with garam masala and chopped coriander leaves. Mix well and simmer for a few minutes.
- Serve the dal hot with baati and churma, garnished with a dollop of ghee.

### **Taste of Dal Baati Churma**

Dal Baati Churma is the quintessential Rajasthani dish that is a harmonious blend of flavors, textures, and aromas. The baatis, crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, are soaked in ghee and served with piping hot dal and sweet churma. The dal is rich and creamy, with a hearty mix of lentils and spices, while the churma adds a touch of sweetness and crunch to the meal. Together, they create a symphony of flavors that is both comforting and indulgent, making Dal Baati Churma a favorite choice for royal feasts and special occasions in Rajasthan.

## Gatte Ki Sabzi



### Recipe

#### Ingredients for Gatte

- 1 cup besan (gram flour)
- 1/2 tsp carom seeds (ajwain)
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed
- Oil for frying

#### Ingredients for Gravy

- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, pureed
- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- 1/2 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala

- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed
- Ghee for garnishing

### **Instructions for Gatte**

- In a mixing bowl, combine besan, carom seeds, cumin seeds, red chili powder, turmeric powder, salt, and a little water to make a stiff dough.
- Divide the dough into small portions and roll them into cylindrical shapes to make gatte.
- Heat oil in a pan and fry the gatte until golden brown and crispy. Remove from oil and set aside.

### **Ingredients for Gravy**

- Heat ghee in a pan and add cumin seeds, mustard seeds, and fenugreek seeds. Let them splutter.
- Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown.
- Add ginger-garlic paste and sauté for a minute.
- Add tomato puree, turmeric powder, red chili powder, coriander powder, and salt. Cook until the oil separates from the masala.
- Whisk yogurt and add it to the pan. Mix well and cook for a few minutes.
- Add water as needed to adjust the consistency of the gravy.
- Add fried gatte to the gravy and simmer for 10-15 minutes until the gatte are soft and cooked through.
- Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and a dollop of ghee before serving.



## **Taste of Gatte Ki Sabzi**

Gatte Ki Sabzi is a traditional Rajasthani dish made from gram flour dumplings (gatte) cooked in a spicy yogurt-based gravy. The gatte are soft and chewy, while the gravy is creamy and flavorful, with a perfect balance of spices and tanginess from the yogurt. The dish is a testament to Rajasthan's culinary ingenuity, with each bite offering a burst of flavors and textures that is both satisfying and memorable. Gatte Ki Sabzi is often served with roti or rice, making it a hearty and wholesome meal that is enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

## Laal Maas



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g mutton, cut into pieces
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 6-7 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Oil for cooking

#### Instructions

- Heat oil in a pressure cooker and add chopped onions. Sauté until golden brown.
- Add grated ginger and minced garlic. Sauté for a minute.

- Add chopped tomatoes and green chilies. Cook until tomatoes are soft and mushy.
- Add red chili powder, turmeric powder, coriander powder, cumin powder, and salt. Cook until the masalas are fragrant.
- Add yogurt to the masala and mix well.
- Add mutton pieces to the pressure cooker and mix until well coated with the masala.
- Add water as needed to cover the mutton pieces.
- Close the pressure cooker and cook for 4-5 whistles or until the mutton is tender and cooked through.
- Once the pressure is released, open the cooker and simmer the gravy until it thickens.
- Garnish with chopped coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Laal Maas**

Laal Maas is a fiery Rajasthani delicacy that is synonymous with indulgence and flavor. The dish gets its name from the vibrant red color of the gravy, which comes from the liberal use of red chili powder and other spices. The mutton is cooked to perfection in a rich and aromatic gravy, with each piece infused with the bold flavors of the spices and yogurt. Despite its intense heat, Laal Maas is incredibly flavorful and addictive, leaving a lasting impression on anyone who dares to savor its fiery delights.

## Bajra Roti



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups bajra flour (pearl millet flour)
- Water as needed
- Salt to taste

#### Instructions

- In a mixing bowl, combine bajra flour and salt.
- Gradually add water and knead the mixture into a smooth dough.
- Divide the dough into equal-sized portions and shape them into round balls.
- Dust a rolling board with bajra flour and roll out each ball into a thick roti.
- Heat a tawa or griddle over medium heat and cook the roti on both sides until golden brown spots appear.
- Brush with ghee and serve hot.

## **Taste of Bajra Roti**

Bajra Roti is a traditional Rajasthani flatbread made from bajra flour, which is rich in fiber and nutrients. The roti has a slightly nutty flavor and a dense texture, making it perfect for soaking up the rich gravies and curries of Rajasthani cuisine. Bajra Roti is often enjoyed with dal, sabzi, or chutney, and its earthy taste and hearty texture make it a favorite among locals and visitors alike.

Rajasthan's culinary heritage is a treasure trove of flavors, textures, and aromas that reflect the state's royal legacy and desert charm. Whether it's the comforting warmth of dal baati churma, the fiery heat of laal maas, or the rustic simplicity of bajra roti, each dish tells a story of tradition, resilience, and hospitality that is uniquely Rajasthani. As we savor these royal feasts amidst the sands, we are reminded of the timeless allure of Rajasthan's culinary delights and the enduring legacy of its rich and vibrant culture.

## **Chapter 13: Gujarat: From Dhokla to Dabeli - A Journey through Gujarati Cuisine**

### **Introduction to Gujarat**

Gujarat, located in western India, is a land of vibrant culture, rich history, and delectable cuisine. Renowned for its entrepreneurial spirit, cultural diversity, and warm hospitality, Gujarat offers a culinary experience that is as diverse and colorful as its people. From the bustling streets of Ahmedabad to the serene beaches of Diu, Gujarat's cuisine reflects its geographical and cultural influences, with a delightful blend of flavors, textures, and aromas that tantalize the taste buds and celebrate the state's culinary heritage.

### **Food Over There**

Gujarati cuisine is characterized by its emphasis on vegetarianism, simplicity, and use of fresh ingredients. The cuisine is a harmonious blend of sweet, savory, and spicy flavors, with dishes that are both nutritious and delicious. Staples such as dal (lentils), rice, and vegetables form the foundation of Gujarati meals, which are often accompanied by a variety of breads, pickles, and chutneys. Gujarati cuisine is also known for its extensive use of spices and condiments, which add depth and complexity to dishes and elevate the dining experience to new heights.

### **Recipe and Taste of Gujarati Delicacies**

## Dhokla



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup gram flour (besan)
- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 tsp ginger-green chili paste
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp fruit salt (eno)
- Salt to taste

#### For Tempering

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- A pinch of asafoetida (hing)
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- Curry leaves
- Chopped coriander leaves
- Grated coconut (optional)

## Instructions

- In a mixing bowl, combine gram flour, yogurt, water, ginger-green chili paste, turmeric powder, lemon juice, and salt to make a smooth batter.
- Grease a steaming plate or dhokla mold with oil and pour the batter into it.
- Steam the batter for 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the dhokla comes out clean.
- Once steamed, remove the dhokla from the steamer and let it cool slightly.
- Cut the dhokla into pieces of desired shape.

## For Tempering

- Heat oil in a small pan and add mustard seeds. Let them crackle.
- Add cumin seeds, asafoetida, slit green chilies, and curry leaves. Sauté for a few seconds.
- Pour the tempering over the dhokla pieces.
- Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and grated coconut.

## Taste of Dhokla

Dhokla is a quintessential Gujarati snack that is light, fluffy, and incredibly flavorful. The steamed savory cake has a tangy and slightly sour taste, thanks to the addition of yogurt and lemon juice in the batter. The texture is soft and spongy, with a delicate crumb that melts in the mouth. Dhokla is often served with a tempering of mustard seeds, curry leaves, and green chilies, which adds a burst of flavor and aroma to the dish. Whether enjoyed as a breakfast item, snack, or part of a meal, dhokla is a beloved dish that epitomizes the essence of Gujarati cuisine.



# Thepla



## Recipe

### Ingredients

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/4 cup gram flour (besan)
- 1/2 cup fresh fenugreek leaves (methi), chopped
- 2 tbsp yogurt
- 1 tsp ginger-green chili paste
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin powder
- Salt to taste
- Oil for cooking

### Instructions

- In a mixing bowl, combine whole wheat flour, gram flour, chopped fenugreek leaves, yogurt, ginger-green chili paste, turmeric powder, red chili powder, coriander powder, cumin powder, and salt.
- Knead the mixture into a smooth dough using water as needed.

- Divide the dough into equal-sized portions and roll them into thin discs (thepla).
- Heat a tawa or griddle over medium heat and cook the theplas on both sides until golden brown spots appear.
- Apply oil on both sides while cooking.

### **Taste of Thepla**

Thepla is a popular Gujarati flatbread that is nutritious, flavorful, and incredibly versatile. Made from a combination of whole wheat flour, gram flour, and fresh fenugreek leaves, the thepla has a unique earthy flavor and a hearty texture. The addition of spices such as ginger, green chili, turmeric, and cumin adds depth and complexity to the dish, while the fenugreek leaves impart a subtle bitterness and aroma. Theplas are often enjoyed with yogurt, pickle, or chutney, making them a perfect choice for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

## Khandvi



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup gram flour (besan)
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste

#### For Tempering

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp sesame seeds
- A pinch of asafoetida (hing)
- Curry leaves
- Chopped coriander leaves
- Grated coconut (optional)

#### Instructions

- In a mixing bowl, combine gram flour, yogurt, water, turmeric powder, and salt to make a smooth batter.
- Heat the batter in a non-stick pan over medium heat, stirring continuously to prevent lumps.

- Cook until the batter thickens and becomes smooth, then remove from heat.
- Quickly spread the batter onto a greased surface using a spatula to form thin sheets.
- Let the sheets cool for a few minutes, then cut them into strips.
- Roll each strip tightly to form cylindrical rolls (khandvi).

### **For Tempering**

- Heat oil in a small pan and add mustard seeds.
- Let them crackle.
- Add sesame seeds, asafoetida, curry leaves, and chopped coriander leaves.
- Sauté for a few seconds.
- Pour the tempering over the khandvi rolls.
- Garnish with grated coconut (optional).

### **Taste of Khandvi**

Khandvi is a delicate and savory Gujarati snack that is as visually appealing as it is delicious. The rolls are soft, silky, and melt-in-your-mouth, with a subtle tanginess from the yogurt and a hint of warmth from the turmeric. The tempering of mustard seeds, sesame seeds, and curry leaves adds a burst of flavor and texture to the dish, elevating it to new heights of culinary delight. Khandvi is often enjoyed as a light snack or appetizer, making it a perfect choice for gatherings, parties, or tea-time indulgence.

## Mohan Thaal



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup gram flour (besan)
- 1/2 cup ghee
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup milk
- A pinch of saffron strands
- 1/2 tsp cardamom powder
- A handful of chopped nuts (almonds, cashews, pistachios)

#### Instructions

- Heat ghee in a pan and add gram flour.
- Roast the gram flour on low heat until it turns golden brown and aromatic.
- In another pan, heat milk and sugar until the sugar dissolves completely.
- Add saffron strands and cardamom powder to the milk mixture.
- Slowly add the milk mixture to the roasted gram flour while continuously stirring to avoid lumps.

- Cook the mixture until it thickens and leaves the sides of the pan.
- Pour the mixture onto a greased plate and spread it evenly using a spatula.
- Garnish with chopped nuts and let it cool for a few hours. Once set, cut into pieces and serve.

### **Taste of Mohan Thaal**

Mohan Thaal is a traditional Gujarati sweet that is rich, decadent, and utterly irresistible. The sweet is made from gram flour, ghee, sugar, and flavored with saffron and cardamom. The result is a dense and fudgy confection that is bursting with the nutty flavor of gram flour and the aromatic notes of saffron and cardamom. The addition of chopped nuts adds a delightful crunch and texture to the sweet, making it a perfect choice for festive occasions, celebrations, or as a token of love and affection.

Gujarati cuisine is a celebration of flavors, textures, and aromas that reflects the state's rich cultural heritage and culinary traditions. Whether it's the light and fluffy dhokla, the hearty and nutritious thepla, the delicate and savory khandvi, or the indulgent sweetness of mohan thaal, Gujarati cuisine offers a culinary journey that delights the senses and nourishes the soul. As we savor these culinary delights from Gujarat, we are transported to a land of warmth, hospitality, and unparalleled gastronomic experiences that leave a lasting impression on our hearts and palates.

## **Chapter 14: Madhya Pradesh: Tribal Delicacies and Rajputana Heritage**

### **Introduction to Madhya Pradesh**

Nestled in the heart of India, Madhya Pradesh is a state known for its rich tapestry of culture, history, and diverse landscapes. From the majestic forts of Gwalior to the lush forests of Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh offers a captivating blend of tribal traditions and Rajputana heritage. This melting pot of cultures is also reflected in the state's culinary scene, which is a harmonious fusion of tribal delicacies and royal flavors. Madhya Pradesh's cuisine is as diverse as its geography, with each region boasting its own unique culinary traditions and specialties.

### **Food Over There**

Madhya Pradesh's cuisine is a reflection of its cultural heritage and agricultural abundance. The state's traditional dishes are hearty, flavorful, and often prepared using locally sourced ingredients such as grains, lentils, vegetables, and indigenous spices. From the spicy curries of the Malwa region to the wholesome breads of the Bundelkhand region, Madhya Pradesh's cuisine is a celebration of regional diversity and culinary ingenuity. Whether it's the fiery flavors of tribal delicacies or the royal elegance of Rajputana dishes, Madhya Pradesh offers a gastronomic journey that tantalizes the taste buds and satisfies the soul.

### **Recipe and Taste of Madhya Pradesh's Delicacies**

## Poha Jalebi



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup urad dal (black gram lentils)
- 1/2 cup moong dal (split green gram)
- 1/2 cup chana dal (split chickpeas)
- 1/2 cup rice flour
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- Oil for frying
- For Syrup
  - 2 cups sugar
  - 1 cup water
  - A few saffron strands
  - Cardamom powder

#### Instructions

- Soak urad dal, moong dal, and chana dal together for 6-8 hours.
- Drain the water and grind the soaked dals into a smooth batter.
- Add rice flour and baking soda to the batter and mix well.



- Heat oil in a pan for deep frying.
- Pour the batter into a jalebi maker or a squeeze bottle and make concentric circles in the hot oil.
- Fry until the jalebis are golden brown and crispy.
- In a separate pan, heat sugar and water to make a syrup. Add saffron strands and cardamom powder to the syrup.
- Dip the fried jalebis in the syrup for a few seconds and then remove.
- Serve hot.

### **Taste of Poha Jalebi**

Poha Jalebi is a traditional sweet dish from Madhya Pradesh that is crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. Made from a batter of urad dal, moong dal, and chana dal, the jalebis have a unique texture and flavor that sets them apart from regular jalebis. The saffron-infused syrup adds a touch of warmth and aroma to the dish, making it an irresistible treat for special occasions and festivals. Poha Jalebi is often enjoyed hot with a dollop of creamy rabri or a sprinkling of chopped nuts, enhancing its indulgent appeal.

## Daal Bafla



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup semolina (sooji)
- 1/4 cup gram flour (besan)
- 1/4 cup ghee (clarified butter)
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp carom seeds (ajwain)
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed
- For Daal:
  - 1 cup mixed lentils (toor dal, moong dal, chana dal)
  - 1 onion, finely chopped
  - 2 tomatoes, chopped
  - 2-3 green chilies, slit
  - 1 tsp cumin seeds
  - 1 tsp mustard seeds
  - 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
  - 1 tsp red chili powder
  - 1 tsp garam masala
  - A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
  - Salt to taste
  - Ghee for serving

## Instructions

- In a mixing bowl, combine whole wheat flour, semolina, gram flour, ghee, cumin seeds, carom seeds, turmeric powder, and salt.
- Gradually add water and knead the mixture into a stiff dough.
- Divide the dough into equal-sized portions and shape them into round balls.
- Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F) and bake the baflas for 30-35 minutes until golden brown and cooked through.

## For Daal

- Cook the mixed lentils in a pressure cooker until soft and mushy.
- Heat ghee in a pan and add cumin seeds and mustard seeds. Let them splutter.
- Add chopped onions, slit green chilies, and sauté until onions turn golden brown.
- Add chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, red chili powder, and salt. Cook until tomatoes are soft and mushy.
- Add the cooked lentils to the pan along with garam masala and chopped coriander leaves. Mix well and simmer for a few minutes.
- Serve the daal hot with bafla, garnished with a dollop of ghee.

## Taste of Daal Bafla

Daal Bafla is a rustic and wholesome dish from Madhya Pradesh that is a feast for the senses. The baflas, baked wheat balls, are crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, soaking up the flavors of the rich and aromatic daal. The daal, made from a mix of lentils and spices, is hearty and comforting, with a perfect balance of flavors and textures. Together, they create a symphony of tastes that is both satisfying and nourishing, making Daal Bafla a beloved dish among locals and visitors alike.

## Bhopali Ghost Korma



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g mutton, cut into pieces
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, pureed
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 6-7 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Oil for cooking

#### Instructions

- Heat oil in a pressure cooker and add chopped onions. Sauté until golden brown.
- Add grated ginger and minced garlic. Sauté for a minute.

- Add chopped tomatoes and green chilies. Cook until tomatoes are soft and mushy.
- Add red chili powder, turmeric powder, coriander powder, cumin powder, and salt. Cook until the masalas are fragrant.
- Add yogurt to the masala and mix well.
- Add mutton pieces to the pressure cooker and mix until well coated with the masala.
- Add water as needed to cover the mutton pieces.
- Close the pressure cooker and cook for 4-5 whistles or until the mutton is tender and cooked through.
- Once the pressure is released, open the cooker and simmer the gravy until it thickens.
- Garnish with chopped coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Bhopali Ghost Korma**

Bhopali Ghost Korma is a sumptuous mutton curry that hails from the city of Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. The dish is a testament to the culinary finesse of the region, with tender mutton pieces cooked in a rich and aromatic gravy. The gravy is creamy and flavorful, with a perfect balance of spices and tanginess from the yogurt. Each bite offers a burst of flavors and textures that is both comforting and indulgent, making Bhopali Ghost Korma a must-try for anyone seeking a taste of Madhya Pradesh's rich culinary heritage.

## Palak puri



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 cup spinach leaves, blanched and pureed
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- Oil for frying

#### Instructions

- In a mixing bowl, combine whole wheat flour, spinach puree, cumin seeds, turmeric powder, and salt.
- Knead the mixture into a smooth dough using water as needed.
- Divide the dough into equal-sized portions and roll them into small discs (puris).
- Heat oil in a deep pan for frying.
- Fry the puris in hot oil until they are puffed up and golden brown.
- Remove from oil and drain excess oil on a paper towel.

## **Taste of Palak Puri**

Palak Puri is a flavorful twist on the traditional Indian bread made by incorporating spinach puree into the dough. The puris have a vibrant green color and a subtle spinach flavor that pairs beautifully with the spices. They are crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, making them a perfect accompaniment to the rich and spicy curries of Madhya Pradesh. Whether enjoyed with daal, korma, or chutney, Palak Puri is a delightful addition to any meal, offering a burst of flavor and nutrition with every bite.

Madhya Pradesh's culinary landscape is a treasure trove of flavors, textures, and aromas that reflect the state's rich cultural heritage and culinary traditions. Whether it's the rustic simplicity of daal bafla, the indulgent richness of Bhopali Ghost Korma, or the innovative twist of Palak Puri, Madhya Pradesh's cuisine offers a culinary journey that is as diverse and captivating as the state itself. As we savor these tribal delicacies and Rajputana delights, we are transported to a land of warmth, hospitality, and unparalleled gastronomic experiences that leave a lasting impression on our hearts and palates.

## **Chapter 15: Maharashtra: Coastal Delights and Urban Eats in the Land of Marathas**

### **Introduction to Maharashtra**

Maharashtra, the vibrant western state of India, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks, and diverse culinary traditions. From the bustling streets of Mumbai to the serene beaches of Konkan, Maharashtra offers a delightful blend of coastal delights and urban eats that cater to every palate. The cuisine of Maharashtra is as diverse as its landscapes, with influences from various regions and communities contributing to a culinary tapestry that is both eclectic and flavorful. Whether it's the spicy seafood of the coastal regions or the savory street food of the cities, Maharashtra's cuisine reflects the state's rich history, vibrant culture, and spirit of hospitality.

### **Food Over There**

Maharashtrian cuisine is characterized by its bold flavors, aromatic spices, and use of fresh, locally sourced ingredients. The cuisine is known for its extensive use of coconut, peanuts, and sesame seeds, as well as its love for spicy chutneys and tangy pickles. From hearty vegetarian dishes like vada pav and pav bhaji to succulent non-vegetarian specialties like mutton rassa, Maharashtra's cuisine offers a culinary journey that is as diverse and flavorful as the state itself. Whether enjoyed at a traditional Maharashtrian thali or savored at a roadside stall, the food of Maharashtra is sure to tantalize the taste buds and leave a lasting impression.

### **Recipe and Taste of Maharashtra's Delicacies**



## Vada Pav



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

##### For the Potato Filling

- 4 large potatoes, boiled and mashed
- 2-3 green chilies, finely chopped
- 1 inch ginger, grated
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- A pinch of asafoetida (hing)
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Oil for cooking

##### For the Batter

- 1 cup gram flour (besan)
- A pinch of turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed

##### For Assembling

- Pav (soft bread rolls)
- Green chutney

- Dry garlic chutney
- Fried green chilies (optional)

### Instructions

- Heat oil in a pan and add mustard seeds. Let them crackle.
- Add cumin seeds, asafoetida, green chilies, ginger, and garlic. Sauté for a minute.
- Add turmeric powder and mashed potatoes. Mix well and cook for 2-3 minutes.
- Add chopped coriander leaves and salt. Mix until well combined. Remove from heat and let it cool.
- Divide the potato mixture into small balls and flatten them to make patties.
- Prepare the batter by mixing gram flour, turmeric powder, salt, and water to make a smooth batter.
- Dip each potato patty in the batter and coat evenly.
- Heat oil in a deep pan for frying and fry the coated patties until golden brown and crispy.
- Slice the pav horizontally and spread green chutney and dry garlic chutney on one side.
- Place a vada (potato patty) between the pav and press gently.
- Serve hot with fried green chilies (optional).

### Taste of Vada Pav

Vada Pav is Maharashtra's iconic street food that boasts bold flavors and satisfying textures. The crispiness of the gram flour batter complements the softness of the potato patty, while the spicy green chutney and tangy garlic chutney add layers of flavor to every bite. The pav, with its pillowy texture, acts as the perfect vessel to hold the vada, creating a harmonious balance of flavors and textures that is both comforting and indulgent. Vada Pav is not just a snack but a culinary experience that captures the essence of Maharashtra's vibrant street food culture.

## Pav Bhaji



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

##### For the Bhaji

- 4 large potatoes, boiled and mashed
- 1 cup mixed vegetables (carrots, peas, capsicum), boiled and mashed
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, finely chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, finely chopped
- 1 inch ginger, grated
- 4-5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp pav bhaji masala
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Butter for cooking

##### For Serving

- Pav (soft bread rolls)
- Butter for toasting
- Chopped onions and coriander leaves
- Lemon wedges

## Instructions

- Heat butter in a pan and add cumin seeds. Let them crackle.
- Add chopped onions, green chilies, ginger, and garlic. Sauté until onions turn golden brown.
- Add chopped tomatoes and cook until they turn soft and mushy.
- Add mashed potatoes, mashed vegetables, red chili powder, pav bhaji masala, turmeric powder, and salt. Mix well.
- Add water as needed to adjust the consistency and simmer for 8-10 minutes.
- Mash the mixture using a potato masher until smooth and well combined.
- Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and a dollop of butter.
- Toast the pav with butter on a hot griddle until golden brown.
- Serve hot with chopped onions, coriander leaves, and lemon wedges.

## Taste of Pav Bhaji

Pav Bhaji is a beloved Mumbai street food that is bursting with flavors and aromas. The buttery goodness of the bhaji, made from a medley of mashed vegetables and aromatic spices, is perfectly complemented by the soft and fluffy pav. The tanginess of the lemon juice and the freshness of the chopped onions and coriander leaves add brightness to the dish, while the toasted pav adds a crispy texture. Pav Bhaji is not just a meal but a culinary experience that captures the essence of Mumbai's vibrant street food culture.

## Sabudhani Khichdi



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup sabudana (tapioca pearls)
- 2 potatoes, boiled and chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup roasted peanuts, coarsely ground
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- A pinch of asafoetida (hing)
- Fresh curry leaves
- 2 tbsp ghee
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish
- Lemon wedges for serving

#### Instructions

- Rinse sabudana under cold water until the water runs clear. Soak sabudana in enough water for 4-5 hours or overnight.
- Drain excess water from soaked sabudana using a strainer.
- Heat ghee in a pan and add cumin seeds. Let them crackle.

- Add chopped potatoes, green chilies, and curry leaves. Sauté for a few minutes.
- Add soaked sabudana, ground peanuts, and salt. Mix well.
- Cover and cook on low heat for 5-7 minutes until sabudana pearls turn translucent and soft.
- Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and serve hot with lemon wedges.

### **Taste of Sabudana Khichdi**

Sabudana Khichdi is a popular fasting dish in Maharashtra that is both nutritious and delicious. The soft and chewy texture of the sabudana pearls, combined with the crunch of roasted peanuts and the earthiness of potatoes, creates a delightful medley of flavors and textures. The subtle heat from the green chilies and the fragrance of curry leaves add depth to the dish, while the tanginess of the lemon juice brightens the flavors. Sabudana Khichdi is not just a fasting dish but a comforting and wholesome meal that is enjoyed by people of all ages.

## Mutton Rassa



### Recipe

#### Ingredients

- 500g mutton, cut into pieces
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, finely chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- 1 inch ginger, grated
- 6-7 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- A handful of fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Oil for cooking

#### Instructions

- Heat oil in a pressure cooker and add chopped onions. Sauté until golden brown.
- Add grated ginger and minced garlic. Sauté for a minute.

- Add chopped tomatoes and green chilies. Cook until tomatoes are soft and mushy.
- Add turmeric powder, red chili powder, coriander powder, cumin powder, and salt. Cook until the masalas are fragrant.
- Add mutton pieces to the pressure cooker and mix until well coated with the masala.
- Add water as needed to cover the mutton pieces.
- Close the pressure cooker and cook for 4-5 whistles or until the mutton is tender and cooked through.
- Once the pressure is released, open the cooker and simmer the gravy until it thickens.
- Garnish with chopped coriander leaves before serving.

### **Taste of Mutton Rassa**

Mutton Rassa is a spicy and aromatic mutton curry that is popular in Maharashtra, especially in the Kolhapur region. The tender mutton pieces are simmered in a rich and flavorful gravy that is infused with a blend of aromatic spices. The fiery heat from the red chili powder and green chilies adds a kick to the dish, while the earthiness of the coriander powder and cumin powder enhances its depth of flavor. Mutton Rassa is best enjoyed with steamed rice or bhakri, a traditional Maharashtrian bread, and is sure to satisfy even the most discerning palate.

Maharashtra's culinary landscape is a testament to the state's rich cultural heritage and culinary ingenuity. Whether it's the iconic street food of Mumbai or the traditional delicacies of the Konkan coast, Maharashtra's cuisine offers a gastronomic journey that is as diverse as it is delicious. As we savor the coastal delights and urban eats of Maharashtra, we are transported to a land of vibrant flavors, warm hospitality, and unparalleled culinary experiences that leave a lasting impression on our hearts and palates.





Gaurav Kumar Pant is presently a SFS trainee of 2022-24 SFS Batch I at CASFOS Coimbatore. He studied Bachelor of Technology in Mechanical Engineering from College of Technology, GB Pant University, Uttarakhand. He previously worked as a banker with a public sector bank, short stint as a teacher and presently working as a Forest Officer. Gaurav believes that happiness is often fleeting and transient, viewing it as a facade. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of seeking peace and contentment, recognizing that true fulfilment comes from within and is found in moments of tranquillity and harmony with oneself and the environment.