

India: The Country Where Every Dish Whispers A Story of Love, Tradition, and Spirit

By *Anurita Koul*

India is abundant in natural resources and an agriculture-based nation. It has been ever rich in food grains and seasonal fruits and vegetables. This is what makes it much lavish in cuisines and food. India offers a vast variety of cuisines and food items. Each state of India has vivid cuisines to offer that makes India country with varied flavours. Cuisine tells a heartfelt story, from spicy dishes to comfort of sweet bite on the plate. Whether we are devouring a creamy pasta or slurping a soulful soup or trying something totally new, all these flavours bring people together and make every moment special. Every meal is no doubt a chance to laugh, share and with diversity.

In fact, the food and cuisines of India are internationally renowned, people across the world come to taste the rich flavour of various Indian cuisines. For Indians, food is not just a physical necessity of the human body. They are strongly attached with people's spiritual, emotional and social significance realm. Foods are considered sacred and people literally worship it, because in India food plays a major role in life as it directly constructs/ affects the mind and soul of the person.

Food is an energy and this energy is directly interrelated with consciousness, hence, to attain the purity and clarity of consciousness one should follow the purity in food also. One

of the ancient Upanishad stated that the human mind is consisted of the food, the subtle part of food that we intake moves upwards and creates, the mind of the person. In fact, the Indian philosophy dictates that "we are what we do eat". One's food habits and the kind of food one consumes creates our attitudes and behaviour and those are directly reflected through our personalities. That is why Vegetarianism is the earliest recommended food trend in the Indian philosophy.

In fact, if one really wants to lead a Yogic life and wants to attain the highest perception/clarity of consciousness then food is the foremost factor that he must take into consideration. Indians worship the food and believe in the fundamental fact that Food is ever essential for physical, spiritual, emotional and social development of a person.

Indian food represents a multifaceted fabric woven over five millennia of cross-cultural interaction and culinary development. This complex history reflects the blending of various people and cultures, which has produced a wide range of tastes and local specialties. It would be thus right to state that Indian Cuisine is a spectrum of various culinary traditions. Each region of India: North or South, East or West, has its variations, with distinctive ingredients, ways

of cooking, and cultural practices that are local and unique to each place. Indian cuisine is incredibly diverse, with regional specialties showcasing unique flavours and cooking techniques. From the spicy curries of the south to the rich, buttery dishes of the north, each region boasts a distinct culinary identity. The Cuisines of India are unique to every region, with special ingredients and unique cooking methods. Exploring Indian food is like a journey with no destination, yet full of uniqueness, history and local customs.

The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir is not only known for its breathtaking landscapes and cultural richness but also for its diverse and flavourful cuisine. Broadly, the cuisine of Jammu and Kashmir can be categorized into Kashmiri and Dogri styles, each offering a unique culinary experience.

Kashmiri Cuisine: Aromas, Spices and Traditions

Kashmiri cuisine, especially in the Kashmir Valley, is rich, aromatic, and heavily meat based. It has evolved from the ancient traditions of the Kashmiri Pandits and has also been shaped by Persian and Central Asian culinary practices. The hallmark of this cuisine is its use of unique spices such as fennel, dry ginger, saffron, and asafoetida, which lend distinct flavours to the dishes.

One of the most famous aspects of Kashmiri cuisine is the Wazwan, a traditional multi-course feast that can include up to 36

elaborate dishes, mostly prepared with mutton. It is not just a meal but a ceremonial affair, especially during weddings and festivals.



Dogri Cuisine: Simplicity Served with Soul

The cuisine of the Jammu region, often referred to as Dogri cuisine, is less spicy but equally flavourful. It emphasizes pulses, grains, and vegetables, reflecting the agricultural lifestyle of the Dogra people. Unlike the meat-heavy cuisine of Kashmir, Dogri cuisine features a balance of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes.

The cuisines of Jammu and Kashmir reflect the cultural richness and diversity of the region. While Kashmiri cuisine dazzles with its royal Wazwan and bold flavours, Dogri cuisine offers comfort and variety through its simple yet wholesome dishes. Together, they form a culinary landscape that is as diverse and captivating as the land itself. For anyone exploring Indian regional food, the tastes of Jammu and Kashmir are not to be missed.

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