
UNIT 24 MARKETING LOCAL FOODS

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24.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- appreciate the importance and role of cuisine in tourism,
- know about the various food flavours of India,
- learn about the ways adopted to package local foods, and
- know about the promotional tools and publicity measures adopted.

24.1 INTRODUCTION

Cuisine has a prominent role in tourism promotion. Every destination highlights its local foods as an attraction in its promotion campaigns. Off late local foods and cuisine have been given attention by tourism planners and developers. In this Unit an attempt has been made to familiarise you with some of the different varieties of local foods available in India along with the cultural and traditional values attached with their preparation, serving and consumption styles. The idea is to acquaint you with the richness and qualities of cuisine which you can promote as an attraction or to use the marketing jargon, as a product. The Unit also discusses the cuisine outlets, outdoor catering, feasts and festivals along with the methods being adopted for promoting local foods.

24.2 FLAVOURS OF INDIA

From time immemorial India has been renowned as the source of exotic spices and its cuisine famed for its variety and infinitely subtle blends of aromatic spices and seasoning which flavour meat, pulses and vegetables.

The reference of 'curry' instantly transports you to India, where the spices are highly aromatic with as many as ten used to flavour one single dish. But the word 'curry' does not do justice to the sheer range of Indian dishes which reflect the diversity of geography, culture and religion that this vast country has to offer. What does not vary is the care and sophistication with which food is prepared and cooked and the values that are attached to its excellence.

From the rich meat-based dishes of the north to the simple pulse based diet of the south, food is a way of life with many religious and social rituals surrounding it. Throughout the country food is the source of great enjoyment and celebration. Indian food varies from region to region and from season to season. Every region has its own flavours, taste and its way of cooking.

The great dishes of the world cuisines are characterized by specific combinations of herbs, spices and flavouring. These mixtures have developed over the centuries, influenced largely by the food stuff determined by climate, soil and local culture of each region. India has been a place of interest to foreign invaders and traders and all of them have left their own food flavours behind.

The different flavours of Indian food make it more popular and a tourist may not be tired of eating it even if one has to stay for a long time. Let us mention the flavour of some regions.

- 1) The flavours of Kerala are sweet from banana and coconut and sour from lime, fresh green mango, yoghurt and kokum. What sets Kerala food different from other southern states is the addition of fresh chunk of coconut in cooking and the last minute drizzle of cold-pressed coconut oil. The sweetness and perfumed quality of coconut is replaced by sesame oil and food colour changes from creamy white and green to red- red with chillies as one moves out of fish-eating Kerala, away from the coast.
- 2) Andhra Pradesh has a flavour of its own which is spicy and sour. Sour from tamarind, lime and sour mangoes. The sour taste in Hyderabadi food might have been inherited from pre- moghul Persians, Turkish and Arab traders who loved vinegar and pomegranates.
- 3) Maharashtra was geographically far from the Moghul empire and hence did not feel the impact of elaborate moghul cuisine. Maharashtra tends to add spices only at the final stage of tempering. Here vegetables have a visual appeal and a play of colours.
- 4) Gujarat, with a strong Jain influence, cooks its food without onions and garlic. It is said, without taking life, it satisfies all man's health requirements, the need for flavour and beauty and the desire for luxury. Fresh vegetables go in making of cool salads with the use of yoghurt and musky as a foetida replaces garlic and ginger commonly used in Indian cooking.
- 5) Garlic and dried red chilli powder flavour the food of Rajasthan – the desert state of India. Base wage of Rajasthan food is Smoke and Suu. Wild desert games are roasted over fire and bread is baked in the fire ashes. Vegetables are sun-dried and preserved. Milk is used often as cooking media than water, which is rare in the desert.
- 6) West Bengal is distinguished by the liberal use of poppy- seed, mustard, fish and prawns. Flavour of West Bengal is bitter and sweet bitter with neem and karela and sweet with milk and sugar. The people are known for their sweet tooth.
- 7) Goa, once colonized by Portuguese, has a cuisine that is strongly influenced by the Europeans. With widespread use of flavourings such as coconut milk, tamarind, chillies, cinnamon, curry leaves and peanut.
- 8) Delhi, the capital of India accepted a new flavour with each new invader or wave of immigrants who left their impact on food. Northwest frontier provinces bringing with them Afghan taste-Kebab and Naan. Turkish and Persian influence of Mogul royalties who brought a refined and courtly etiquette of both group and individual dining and sharing food in fellowship.

Moghul kings gave exotic flavour to local food with rose- petals, dry fruits, Nutmeg and mac. Most of their dishes have survived intact to this date, little did Moghuls know that they were giving this country a cuisine which would be cooked and remembered three centuries later and public eating places would keep their names alive in their menu cards. They have marketed their food very well and now it is our turn to keep it going for centuries to come. Then the long stay of the Britishers who have contributed very little as far as food is concerned but have left their legacy in shape of cakes, cookies and puddings.

We can go on adding to this list the cuisine of different regions. The delicious **wazevan** of Kashmir valley, delicacies from the Lucknow kitchen, the rice and meat dishes from the northeast and so on.

Indian food not only differs in its flavour from region to region but the way of its cooking also changes from north to south and from west to east. South does most of it cooking by steaming, fermenting, poaching and frying. Many in northern India cook for a prolonged period over a slow fire their meat and rice and call it **Dumpukht**. This method of cooking has several virtues. The aroma of the spices remains intact as food gets cooked by internally generated steam. **Kadhai** cooking now also known as **Balti** cooking is another way. In fact every region has its own set of recipes, utensils and ways of cooking.

Climate plays a major role and in certain regions the distinction between winter and summer food is strictly followed. For example, in north India popular winter foods include parathas,

spicy meat dishes, saag and makka ki roti, etc. These are rich in fat nutrients and stimulate the body metabolism.

There is a lot of philosophy, handed down through generations, attached with the use of spices.

Spices are considered to have medicinal properties. For example, Garlic is good for the circulation of blood, turmeric is an antiseptic and is good for liver. Asafoetida is a pungent resin which helps the digestion. Garam Masala means warm blend of spices and these are usually highly aromatic made with spices that are believed to warm the body. Cumin is a stimulant and remedy for internal upsets, stomach cramps and colic. Fenugreek is a hair tonic and is used as a conditioner. It also produces red-blood cells. Ginger is digestive and keeps the stomach warm.

Apart from spices, other ingredients also influence the flavour, varying in their use from region to region. There are many kinds of oils that add another dimension of flavour to the ingredients they are cooked with. In southern India groundnut oil is widely used. In the coastal area coconut oil is used along with coconut milk. In Bengal mustard oil and in Maharashtra and Gujarat sesame oil or groundnut oil is commonly used. In many parts of northern India ghee is used instead of oil.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Discuss some flavours of Indian food.

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- 2) What type of variations do you find in Indian food?

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24.3 CUISINE OUTLETS

Travel away from home is more fulfilling when one has some knowledge of unfamiliar dishes and can choose with confidence from a menu in a foreign land. At the same time one should also be aware of the various outlets of the local cuisine.

- 1) Inflight catering is the first real introduction to the food of a destination. An inflight kitchen serving menus from different Indian regions can attract the passenger to those destinations in India to enjoy the food in a real way. Therefore, more attention has to be paid to inflight kitchen. It has to be served with great imagination and creativity. Eye-appealing dishes also add to the dining pleasure of a bored passenger.

- 2) **Food Plazas:** Let us take the example of the the favourite food plaza of the walled city in Delhi, the parathewali gali which offers astonishing variety of griddle fried bread. Stuffed with Aloo, gobhi-prathas or multi-layered baldars which is creased and folded Khasta or crisp rava or semolina and sada or plain, these prathas are served with dhaniye ki chutney. A frequent visiting joint for the host population, today this place finds space in the itineraries offered by many tour operators.

The alternative came in the shape of Nihari and Delhi's Kebab makers. From steps of Jama Masjid to Dilli Darwaza Maseeta the Kebabchi ruled. He claimed descent from Bawarchi in Shajehan's Kitchen, but the man responsible for the revival of the lost glory was the late Madan Lal Jaiwal - the undisputed king of the skewer, who displayed his stuff at the bukbara until just a year ago.

The **Kebab-Nihari** were eaten with sheermal, Bagar Khani, Khameeri and roomali roti or taken away to eat with the salan made at home. Not only this, the plaza also had a choice of pickles and murabbas. Amle ka Murabba was wrapped in Chandi Ka Varaq (Silver leaf) and served with breakfast for its medicinal value.

Hawker centre at Hotel Janpath where Karim (mughal), Coconut grove (South Indian), Mandarin (Chinese), Pau Bhaji, Vada Pao and Sandwiches have their stalls, was an organised effort of the government for a modern food plaza where a person could sit and eat comfortably in a clean hygienic atmosphere.

Dilli-Haat is a step ahead in this regard, where not only the food (from Kashmir, Kerala, Maharashtra, Mizoram, etc.) but also the culture and the handicrafts of different region find representation. Dilli-Haat is not only beautiful but inexpensive and interesting for an Indian as well as a foreign guest. A local Delhite also enjoys the evenings there.

- 3) **Farm Houses:** One who wants to relish food without any disturbance with friends farm-house parties are emerging as another food outlet. In farm-houses where place is no problem, theme parties are arranged tastefully and food is presented in a creative way. But again farm-house parties are not for everybody and anybody. Only a certain class of people can enjoy this facility.
- 4) **Home Foods:** There is always the possibility of selecting categories to entertain tourists with home-style food. This would give the tourists an opportunity to observe the style of living, cooking and also day-to-day eating habits and food itself of an Indian family.
- 5) **Local Joints:** Either you eat to live or live to eat. It would not be wrong to say that the latter breed is growing, which is why any thing to do with food is a good business. Starting from the road side dhaba to restauranteur, to the publisher, to T.V. producers every body seems to be on the gravy train.

This is a booming business and the main reason for its success is, because people have become more cuisine cautious and are chasing flavours more than just food which is why outlets that are doing well are the one that offer special cuisine and differnt flavours.

Small local-joints offer a variety of food which as compared to five-star hotels is cheaper and tastier. These joints are available for informal eating and have no rules for prior reservations. A tourist likes to walk around the city to get familiar with the culture and finds these joints suitable. The only point which bothers him or her is the unhygienic kitchen. Therefore, the government and the tourism industry must ensure hygienic preparation of food in these kitchens and safe water to cook and clean.

Similar is the case with dhabas or with street-food which is delicious but considered unsafe. No doubt street food has low- cost, it is filling, has variety, provides employment to thousands of people but efforts should be made to make it hygienic and safe.

A survey on street-food carried out by FAO and All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health held in Calcutta emphasised, licencing facilities, police protection, portable water, proper garbage disposal and providing mobile kiosks, etc. Food inspectors should ensure that food is sold only on stalls in a hygienic way.

If the points mentioned above are taken into consideration and food is made safe, sale of Indian food would go still higher and streets would also become clean and pretty.

24.4 OUTDOOR CATERING AND FEASTS

This business is on the increase. Many housewives have opted for this sector as out-door catering gives them a substantial profit without much investment. The growth area is the speciality cuisine segment. Demand is always for something new and homely and who won't like to have food the door-step.

Women cooperatives can be formed to supply food for different parties like embassies, corporate offices, etc. Such cooperatives would be beneficial and can provide employment to women who need money and are not able to or permitted to work in the offices. Such a cooperative society does exist in Bombay formed by the Aga Khan community of Muslims. Orders are procured by the office of the society and are either passed on to woman members or cooked in the kitchen of their **Jamat Khana** (community centre). Such cooperatives are needed to promote home-made food and provide extra income to a housewife.

Wedding feast: Each community has its own food and caterer. This sector is a repository of culinary secrets as much as in homes where cuisine is taken seriously. Weddings are a major event and a large number of guests are fed on this occasion. It is a great opportunity to make money and sell best of the food. In spite of the modern outside catering business the traditional **halwai** has not lost his relevance.

Temple food: In India temple festivals are a favourite time for people. In southern India it is also time for weddings, where several hundred people are fed on banana leaves. It will not be wrong if said that Hinduism is a kitchen religion, where God as well as people have to be fed and even Gods have their preferences. The diety at Ayappa in South India is said to favour pepper while Ganesh prefers sweets flavoured with cardamon.

Temples have their own special food and even the **prasad** offered to dieties can be quite distinctive. For example:

- the temple of Padmanabha Swami located in Trivandrum has a special **aviyal** that uses traditional vegetables and fresh coconut oil.
- the Ganesh temple of Kerala have spongy brown fried pieces made of rice powder, banana, jackfruit and jaggery. Maharashtra's famous prasad for Ganesh Chaturthi is **Modak**, a sweet.
- Vishnu temples in south have a giant **Idli** weighing one kilogram and half spices with pepper, zeera, ginger and asafoetida fermented with curd.
- the famous temple of Tirupathi gives **laddus** as **prasad**, besides **dosam vada** and **appam**.
- in Jagannath temple of Orissa Gods are served five times a day and pilgrims can eat at **bhogmandap** or buy **mahaprasad** at the huge market within the temple wall. Hundred varieties of dishes using rice, wheat, grits, **urad dal**, vegetables, spices, jaggery with coe-ghee are made.

Temples and other religious places were also a meeting ground and people come to eat the special food and carried back some in the shape of **prasad**. Sweets hold a special importance in all occasions of celebration or religious festivals.

Similarly, **Langar** at Ajmer Shareef is unique where once in a year a huge Coldrum of rice, meat, vegetables is cooked and distributed amongst people. One has to use a ladder to reach into the **Deg**.

On the tenth of Muharram, **Hichda**, **Haleem**, **Qubuli**, **Badam Sharbat**, **Rose Sharbat** are some of the favourite offerings of the day, and Sikh Gurdwaras give **Kara Prasad** of **Secra Halwa**.

24.5 FOOD FESTIVALS

Today scenario has changed. Upper budget tourist enjoys a food festival in a five star hotel, whereas the one with a low budget goes to the common market place to relish the food.

To attract more customers big hotels have adopted creative methods. These days a serious effort is there to demonstrate the cuisine and culture of one particular flavour by organising food festivals. These food festivals are arranged tastefully with total ambience of one particular state but are not within the reach of common tourist who comes to India to explore its culture.

In some states the tourism departments have also taken initiative in this regard. We can cite here the Mango Festival organised by the Delhi Tourism Department. Similarly, many state tourism departments organise food and cultural festivals in other regions to attract domestic tourists.

Food festivals are also arranged by tourist offices all over the world to help in promoting India as a destination. Giving a taste of Indian food abroad is helpful to a traveller who is not familiar with the cuisine and its flavours. Such festivals are arranged with the help of Air-India, who carries some of the famous chefs from India to make these festivals successful. Many hotels also join in such promotion. (See also Unit-22 of TS-2 for the use of Cuisine by TCI for promoting tourism to India).

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) List some cuisine outlets.

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- 2) Give examples of special temple food.

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24.6 MARKETING

In marketing local foods the issue is not always to meet the customer's requirements but to attract the customer to your product. This is particularly the case as far as ethnic foods are concerned. You cannot temper the basic recipe except for the mix of salt or chilli. However, you can definitely add to the tangible components of the product like the ambience and atmosphere in which the food is served, types of furniture, cutlery and crockery etc. This, of course needs a lot of imagination and creativity. In the same way different items can be served in different meals in different surroundings. A good hotelier or tour operator takes care of this in his product formulations. Whatever may be the food served and wherever it may be, not only the serving and eating place but the kitchen also must maintain cleanliness and hygienic conditions. Proper arrangements should also be made for garbage and waste disposal.

It is important to have the right location for setting up the food outlets. This is applicable to all types of outlets whether a restaurant in a five star hotel, market or a road side outlet. This

- 2) How would you promote Indian local foods at international forum?

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24.7 LET US SUM UP

This Unit provides you information about the Indian foods, as regards their flavour, variety and styles of cooking etc. For any one working in tourism industry this information is vital. For example, there are different food outlets and a tour operator without such information will not be able to give the best to his or her groups. In spite of the popularity abroad, Indian foods need to be marketed in a planned way. A similar situation exists in the case of domestic markets. The print as well as the electronic media have been playing a major role in promoting local foods through their columns, reviews, food shows etc. Keeping in view the history of local foods in India and the culture related to it, they can be promoted as tourist attractions. In fact, local foods find a prominent place in the brochures of tour operators and hotels etc.

24.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Read Sec. 24.2 and mention the flavours of different regions.
- 2) The food differs not only in flavours and recipes but also in cooking styles, serving styles, etc. See Sec. 24.2.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) You can list many from Dhabas to fast food joints, restaurants, etc. See Sec. 24.3.
- 2) Base your answer on Sec. 24.4.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) TV serials, videos and audio cassettes play a role in this regard. See point 5 of Sec. 24.6.
- 2) Food markets, food festivals, conferences, help of NRI's, promotional literature, etc. will be useful in this regard.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

M.A. Khan (ed.)	:	VNR's Encyclopedia of Hospitality and Tourism , New York, 1992.
Dharamrajan and Seth	:	Tourism in India , New Delhi, 1994.
Rob Davidson	:	Tourism , London, 1993.
Colin Michael Hall	:	Hallmark Tourist Events , London, 1992.
Victor T.C. Middleton	:	Marketing in Travel and Tourism , Oxford, 1993
Brennan	:	Curries and Bugles , Penguin.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS BLOCK

Activity-1

List some events in your area that can be promoted as tourist attractions for domestic tourists.

Activity-2

Make a list of the local cuisine items of your area which can be used as food attractions.

Activity-3

Survey your local market and find out how many shops deal in ethnic handicrafts.

Activity-4

Prepare a brochure of your area highlighting tourist attractions and facilities.

Activity-5

Make a tourism promotion plan for your city or village.