

GODREJ





INTRODUCTION

- About The Annual Godrej Food Trends Report
- Note From Tanya Dubash
- Note From Sujit Patil
- Message From Rushina Munshaw-Ghildiyal
- How To Use The Godrej Food Trends Report 2025

TOP TREND PREDICTIONS FOR 2025

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE: CUSTODIANS OF RICE

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: INDIA IS THE GLOBAL FLAVOUR OF THE SEASON

DINING-IN

DEEP DIVE

• Seasonal Consumption at Home

TOP TRENDS

- Culinary Themes at Home
- Product Propositions: Consumers
- Snacks and Convenience Foods
- Food Delivery Experiences

6 DINING-OUT

DEEP DIVE

• A Culinary Consumption Calendar: Creating Year–Round Feasts of Opportunity

TOP TRENDS

- Menu Propositions
- Menu Inspirations
- Dining Formats
- Product Propositions: Industry

CONTENTS

BEVERAGES

DEEP DIVE

• As the Glass is Witness: Indian Non–Alcoholic Drinks Through Time

TOP TRENDS

- Beverage Categories
- Alcoholic Beverages
- Non-alcoholic Beverages
- Coffee

SWEETS & DESSERTS

DEEP DIVE

CREDITS

16

Fruitful Propositions

TOP TRENDS

- Dessert Categories
- Chocolates



EMERGING CONVERSATIONS

DEEP DIVE

- Sustainable Fish: Past Lessons, Future Gains
- The Story of Palm Oil in India

TOP TRENDS

- Frozen Foods
- Sources of Dietary fats

FOOD AND TRAVEL

DEEP DIVE

• Fork in the Road: The Crossroads of Flavour and Travel

TOP TRENDS

- Food Itinerary
- Indian Culinary Destinations
- International Culinary Destinations



FOOD MEDIA & STUDIES

DEEP DIVE

• Screen to Table: The Digital Transformation of Food Content

TOP TRENDS

- Culinary Discovery
- Food Content in Media



DEEP DIVE

• Enduring Legacies: Evolution of Dairy Consumption in India

TOP TRENDS • Health and Lifestyle Influences

ABOUT THE ANNUAL GODREJ FOOD TRENDS REPORT

Since its inception in 2018, the Godrej Food Trends Report has emerged as one of the most credible platforms on themes that significantly impact the food industry each year. Over the years, the report has continuously evolved to include a wider group of industry experts who are encouraged to reflect on the year gone by and share their projections on key themes that will influence the industry in the coming year.

The Godrej Food Trends Report has been facilitating deep conversations in the food space each year. To date, the report has drawn on insights from over **2000 experts and thought leaders** from **food, beverage and allied industries** spanning **across industry verticals and geographies**.

Media Coverage

Over the last 7 years, the report has driven **over 2000 media conversations** and has been read by people across the globe. The 2024 edition of the Godrej Food Trends Report alone drove **400 news features** since its launch, reaching regional and global audiences. This edition garnered **2.5lac downloads**, reaching **11M readers!**

Awards and Accolades

So far, Godrej Food Trends Report has won **over 10 prestigious industry awards and accolades** for concept, content and design.









RECOGNITION FOR GODREJ FOOD TRENDS REPORT-2024



Afaqs-Foxglove Awards 2024 Best Book Design

World Gourmand Awards Best of the Best Free Publication of the Year

The Godrej Food Trends Report 2024 won Best of the Best Free Publication of the Year at the 'Gourmand Best in the World' competition. Team GFTR is honoured to receive the below accolade from its founder and president *Edouard Cointreau*.

"Since 2016, the Gourmand Awards, inspired by the Olympics, and embodying the glamour and style of the Oscars, have rewarded the best free food and drink publications and honored authors and publishers worldwide. Food and Drink publications from 203 countries and regions participated in the 2024 edition. The Godrej Food Trends Report 2024 represented India and won at the 'Gourmand Best in the World' competition, in one of the most important categories 'Best of the Best Free Publications in the world'. This is a first for India!

A good food or cookbook, like any book, has a spirit of its own, thanks to its author. Readers connect very personally with the author, which is a key aspect. All books whether about war or peace, hunger or gastronomy have the potential to become masterpieces. The Godrej Food Trends Report 2024 was the star of the jury meeting in May. Great teamwork! We were also extremely impressed by the quality of the twelve pages Food Media and Studies Section. You can be very proud of this most-read, much-awaited food book of the year! No other country has such a reference resource, it is a real treasure!

I personally found the Godrej Report unique for its scope and vision. It is all about India, but universal in its concepts and analysis, has a unified writing and style, is easy to read, authentic and detailed, informative and entertaining. Reading the Godrej Food Trends Report has been one of my best, deepest experiences of 2024. It is a benchmark I sincerely hope inspires others in more countries."



- Edouard Cointreau, President, Gourmand Awards



A NOTE FROM **TANYA DUBASH**

Welcome to The Godrei Food Trends Report 2025!

It is extremely heartening to see how the Godrej Food Trends Report has grown into a valuable resource that maps the everchanging contours of India's dynamic food and beverage landscape.

This year, our focus turns to seasonality—a theme that feels especially relevant as we navigate a world increasingly attuned to authenticity and sustainability. Seasonal eating, once a way of life, is reclaiming its place in the spotlight, driven by a collective desire to celebrate nature's rhythms. The Report unpacks this theme through a rich tapestry of statistics, insights, and essays that reflect the evolving preferences and practices of our time.

Over the last seven editions, the Godrej Food Trends Report has grown beyond trend forecasting, to distil the intricate interplay between tradition and innovation, heritage and modernity, the grassroots and the global. Through actionable perspectives that inspire food professionals, enthusiasts, and innovators alike, the report serves as a compass for those leading the Indian food and beverage industry towards a more thoughtful, resilient, and delicious future.

It is my hope that this edition sparks meaningful conversations, fuels creativity, and serves as a guide for all of us invested in the food ecosystem.

Best,



Tanya Dubash **Executive Director & Chief Brand Officer** Godrej Industries Group

As we unveil the 8th edition of the Godrej Food Trends Report, I am reminded of the remarkable journey that began in 2018 under the banner of Vikhroli Cucina. What started as an effort to catalyze conversations within the Indian food and beverage industry has grown into a cornerstone for collaboration, innovation, and thought leadership, championing emerging and established voices across geographies and industry verticals.

What makes GFTR truly impactful is its methodical approach: insights grounded in keen observation and robust data from our respondent panel, that undergoes careful analysis from our research and design team, under the leadership of Rushina, to ensure the report continues to set benchmarks year after year. I'm immensely grateful not only to the hundreds of industry players that offer their insights, but also to the lakhs of readers across India and the world, for your continued support in shaping this initiative for eight years and counting!

As a validation of our collective intent and perseverance, we have received considerable recognition and many accolades for our creative efforts over the years. This year, we have already won two more: one for 'best book design' at the AFAQ-Foxglove awards, and another for 'best use of content' at the Businessworld Excel awards. Our report also caught the attention of the International Gourmand Awards, and I am delighted to inform you that they have declared the 2024 edition as 'Best of the Best Free Publications In The World' this year! It was heartening to read the glowing review of the report by none other than Edouard Cointreau, the founder and president of that institution. I take this opportunity to congratulate the entire team that makes the magic happen every year.

This 8th edition is centred around seasonality-a theme that speaks to the heart of cultural heritage, sustainability, and the evolving expectations of today's consumers. This focus is timely and strategic, highlighting the opportunity for businesses to embrace seasonally driven innovation that aligns India's rich biodiversity and culinary traditions with global trends. Seasonality is not just about the ingredients on our plate; it's a lens through which we can rethink supply chains, menu strategies, consumer engagement and storytelling. By bringing this theme into the spotlight, this report provides a roadmap for the industry to navigate an increasingly conscious and dynamic marketplace.

As you read on, I invite you to leverage all that this issue has to offer and join us in shaping the future of India's food and beverage landscape.



Sujit Patil (@sujitpatil) Chief Communications Officer Godrej Industries Group

A NOTE FROM **SUJIT PATIL**



A MESSAGE FROM RUSHINA MUNSHAW-GHILDIYAL

Welcome to the 8th edition of the Godrej Food Trends Report.

In 2024, I was fortunate to participate in the enchanting experience of harvesting Saffron in Pampore, Kashmir to create a captivating story-driven menu that showcased Kashmiri saffron - which is the finest in the world. I also participated in the centuries-old *Ittar* making process in the perfume capital of India, Kannauj. Both experiences underscored the importance of provenance, a theme we explored extensively in 2024, and the key role climate and seasons, our theme for 2025, play in their annual recurrence. It also brought home to me the interconnectedness of culture, cuisine, provenance, seasons and travel.

As we embark on 2025, India continues to solidify its position as a global culinary leader with Indian cuisine, restaurants, products, spirits, and publications continuing to garner attention and win prestigious international awards.

From Indian cuisine ranking 12 in the Top 100 Cuisines to Indian restaurants making significant strides on prestigious international lists. Indian Accent and Masque made it to *La Liste* while *Jamavar* (Doha) received its first Michelin star, *Gymkhana* and *Opheem* (UK) and *Musaafer* (Houston) were awarded their second. Least, but not last of course, is Chef Vikas Khanna's *Bungalow* (New York) making India proud by receiving the coveted Michelin Bib Gourmand award.

The Indian alco-bev industry is also gaining international acclaim. Indian spirit brands like Indri and Amrut won prestigious international awards while ZLB23 at The Leela Palace Bengaluru secured the 40th spot on Asia's 50 Best Bars while The Bombay Canteen, Lair, Sidecar, and Home were recognized on the extended 100 list. Indian chocolate too made its mark on the world stage with Paul and Mike's winning a historic Gold at the International Chocolate Awards. On a more personal level, I am ecstatic to share that the 2024 edition won the prestigious Gourmand award (more on that in our awards section). Turn to this year's global perspectives section to read more about India being the 'Global Flavour of the Season'.

Our relationship with food is constantly evolving. Beyond mere sustenance, food has emerged as a potent force for storytelling, social commentary, and cultural exchange. In 2025, we anticipate food to remain at the forefront of conversations, acting as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue and social change within our homes and communities.

The digital age has democratized access to food knowledge, fostering a dynamic ecosystem of interconnected food communities. These communities are poised to evolve into collaborative hubs of learning and growth, where passionate home cooks and aspiring chefs can connect, share recipes, develop their skills, and learn from each other.

Food and travel have always been inseparable. The palatedriven wanderlust that drove us to chase flavour in 2024 has fueled destination dining, in which food lovers travel to specific destinations in a quest for exquisite culinary experiences against breathtaking landscapes. The focus has shifted from simply showcasing culinary prowess. Today, chefs are transforming into culinary artists, orchestrating symphonies of flavors, textures, and aromas that engage all the senses. Thanks to this the degustation or tasting menu has come of age in India. Fine dining is no longer just about appreciating a chef's talent, but an immersive and emotional journey. Expect the unexpected with innovative techniques, theatrical elements, dramatic flair, interactive details that will leave a lasting emotional and intellectual impact on diners!

The sensory stimulation this portends makes this year's focus on 'Seasons' particularly relevant. For centuries, Indian culture and cuisine have been deeply intertwined with the rhythms of nature. Our essays in this edition delve into India's rich history of seasonal consumption, exploring how industry players are and can continue creatively adapting these seasonal shifts to develop innovative new product and menu propositions.

2025 is poised to be a year of unparalleled culinary excitement and a feast for the senses. As we navigate these exciting times, let's embrace our diversity, and celebrate the interconnectedness of our complex relationships with food and flavour to cultivate a more sustainable, inclusive, mindful and equitable food system that brings joy in sharing food with those we love and nourishes both our bodies and souls.



Rushina Munshaw-Ghildiyal Curator & Editor-in-Chief, Godrej Food Trends Report Managing Director, A Perfect Bite Consulting



HOW TO USE THE GODREJ FOOD TRENDS REPORT 2025

What does the report contain?

The Annual Godrej Food Trends Report is designed to be an impactful and accurate resource for stakeholders from the Indian food and beverage industry as well as their counterparts in global entities looking towards building propositions in India.

The foundation of the report is a survey that collates insights on dining-in and dining-out behaviours of customers, gathered from a panel of respondents that include global voices, celebrities, pan-India and panindustry respondents. The analysis of the data gathered spans across quantitative and qualitative parameters and is analysed vertically and horizontally to forecast the coming year's (and sometimes beyond) trends.

We recommend giving the whole report a read once, then going back to look at specific sections for deeper understanding as required.

Who is the report for?

The simple answer is that it is for anyone with even the smallest stake in the Indian food Industry. It has been designed and laid out for a variety of audiences like:

Industry Players

Chefs, restaurateurs, owners and managers of large and small food brands, home chefs and food entrepreneurs can use insights on consumer consumption patterns to plan concepts and cuisines to invest energy and resources into, design menu offerings, strategise on festivals, special menus, and design PR and marketing strategies for the year to come.



Hospitality Institutions

Culinary colleges and hospitality students can draw on insights to understand directions the market will take and plan curriculum, events, special lectures, and personal study projects.

Food Media Professionals

Food journalists, lifestyle, food and travel writers, food bloggers and social media content creators can draw on this report to plan editorial calendars, pitch trend stories, plan deep dives for research, article pitches and content creation, and strategise on social media content creation in the year to come. In the past, the report has also been recognized as useful source for triggering new story ideas when writer's block strikes.

F&B Marketing & Communication Professionals

Marketing, communication and pr professionals across categories can use this report as an advisory tool, for future forecasting, to suggest brand positioning, marketing strategy, and create brand and product messaging as well as social media content to widen existing audiences and tap new markets for their clients.

Food Lovers

Food connoisseurs, hobby cooks and bakers, can look to this report to expand their own understanding of the culinary space and learn more about the kind of food adventures they can look forward to in the coming year.



How to navigate the report?

The 2025 edition of the Godrej Food Trends Report carries eight sections: Dining In; Dining Out; Beverages; Sweets and Desserts; Health, Hygiene and Lifestyle; Food Media and Studies; Food and Travel; and Emerging Conversations.

Each survey section of the report comprises two subsections. The culinary deep dive subsection offers a critical review of a key industry trend that has seen persistent growth over multiple years. This review is presented in a long-form essay and contains valuable learnings and insights from relevant industry leaders and experts. The top Trends subsection offers a detailed report on the predictions made by our expert panel about the section's themes in the coming year.

Here's how to make the most of them.

Culinary Deep Dive

This subsection contains an essay that takes a comprehensive look at a topic that has shown resilience during analysis. Each deep dive opens with a visual spread filled with interesting and useful information that makes for an enlightening casual read. It can also potentially trigger further study and exploration, or perhaps even instigate conversations on social media. Turn the page to gain deeper insights on the core theme of the section through a rich, well-researched essay about the evolution of topic in focus. A succinct conclusion at the end summarises the focus areas along with several actionable takeaways that the reader can leverage for the coming year.



Notes	

Top Trends

This subsection begins with a short overview of the theme and summarises the high points of trends across all the themes in that section. This subsection also carries a toolkit with recommendations for various stakeholders in the F&B industry to explore in 2025. This is followed by a detailed summary of the top 3-5 themes that emerged from our survey.

Team GFTR itself keeps returning to explore these pages time-and-again as the year progresses to leverage the key trends statistics and insights from experts against an evolving industry landscape.



Who are the experts contributing to this report?

The names of our panel of industry experts who contributed to this edition of the Godrej Food Trends Report have been listed alphabetically at the end of the report. It is our way of thanking our esteemed panellists for their valuable contributions to the report, while also offering our readers an overview of the different people and roles that make up our industry, and for them to follow, connect and build networks with.



TOP TREND PREDICTIONS FOR 2025

CULINARY EVENTS WILL BE IN DEMAND



Growing interdisciplinary intersections with food themes will drive a surge in food-focused events by institutions and venues that are not traditionally associated with food. 2025 will see more food conferences, festivals, and residencies that bring together communities across industries and disciplines, fuelling the demand for collective exploration of important themes and issues that affect our larger food ecosystem.



FOOD CONVERSATIONS WILL DOMINATE MEDIA

In 2025, food will be a dominant topic across media. As demand for relatable media continues to grow, content creators are quickly recognising our collective ability to recognise and engage with topics around food. This surge in interest will drive a boom in food content across formats (books, shows, social media), perspectives (art, science, history), and voices (regional, cultural, including rural, tribal, and vernacular).



FOOD ACTIVISM WILL RISE



Rising concerns over food sources, quality, processing methods and transparency, has given rise to a community of consumer-activists. raising key issues on social media on behalf of the general public. They are educating their peers, advocating for transparency, and demanding accountability from the industry and policymakers, and are set to play a prominent role in shaping food narratives in 2025.



FROZEN SNACKS WILL BE HOT

Driven by demand for convenience, affordability, and variety, frozen snacks have shed their stigma, fueling growth and innovation. In 2025, expect a rise in pre-prepped, semi-cooked, gourmet, and comfort options, boosted by improved technology, hygienic packaging, and quick commerce for greater appeal and accessibility.

DESTINATION DINING WILL INSPIRE TRAVEL

Destination dining involves weaving together remote, immersive environments, narratives of terroir and seasonal, and hyper-local produce with Michelin-level culinary artistry to craft an unforgettable dining experience. As the concept grows, it will stimulate and inspire travellers looking for unforgettable dining experiences in 2025.

FOOD COMMUNITIES WILL FLOURISH



Food has ascended to the forefront of popular culture today, mirroring the influence of film, literature, art and sports on community, culture and society, and evolving into a movement of its own. In 2025, this movement will flourish in the form of vibrant food communities like supper clubs, cookbook clubs, and whatsapp groups, offering platforms to like-minded individuals to build meaningful relationships around shared passions for food.

FUNCTIONAL DRINKS

WILL MUSHROOM



Functional drinks will dominate in 2025, appearing in a variety of pre-mix and ready-to-drink formats across retail and home kitchens. Offerings will become increasingly niche, including functional ingredients that target specific requirements from consumers seeking better health, nutrition, fitness, and wellbeing.



stage in 2025!

MODERN VEGETARIAN DINING WILL COME ALIVE

Over the years, prominent plant-forward movements like vegetarianism, sustainability, and veganism have inspired adventures and innovation to go beyond conventional vegetarian menus. 2025 will see food outlets offering exciting modern vegetarian food that even hardcore carnivores will not be able to resist





HERITAGE ALCOHOLS WILL HIT A NEW HIGH

The rising popularity of heritage spirits and liqueurs like Feni, Mahua, Toddy and Kesar Kasturi is being fueled by easier access, innovative bar programs, generous media coverage, and an increasingly positive public discourse. Further improvements in regulations, guality control, accessibility, and adoption by major brands will propel heritage alcohols to new heights in 2025.

HIMALAYAN CUISINES WILL STAND TALL



In its perennial quest for culinary novelty, the industry now finds itself looking for inspiration from the lesser known cuisines of the Himalayas. The mere thought of these mountains invokes strong associations with a fresh, mindful, and healthy lifestyle, as being witnessed across hospitality formats, food media content and social media conversations. For their additional appeal of being ingredient-forward, clean and flavourful, cuisines from Ladakh, Jammu, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nepal are now poised to take center

MICRO-RESTAURANTS WILL SHINE



Micro-restaurant formats will redefine dining experiences in 2025. Limited capacity (8-20 covers), prepaid reservations, and intimate settings at these outlets will offer greater control on backend logistics, allowing them to experiment more freely with their offerings, and emerge as hubs of innovation.

TASTING MENUS

WILL BE POPULAR

The tasting menu has come of age. In 2025, it will evolve into a form of artistic expression. Chefs will approach the dining experience as a performance, employing innovative techniques and theatrical elements to create immersive, multi-sensory experiences that take guests on a journey of emotional and intellectual discovery.

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES CUSTODIANS OF RICE

This year, the Regional Perspectives section celebrates the tireless efforts of some exemplary individuals and institutions that are keeping traditional knowledge and practices around rice alive. That said, the legacy of rice in India is as old as it is diverse, and there are a million stories still waiting to be explored and learned from, not just at the pan-India level but also the hyper-local micro-cultural level.



The significance of India in the global history of rice is apparent in the fact that Indica, a long grain subspecies of the Oryza Sativa species, is named after the country. Evidence of rice cultivation goes back to the seventh millennium BCE (pre-Neolithic Koldihwa in Uttar Pradesh) in the sub-continent.

India is the second-largest producer and the largest exporter of rice in the world, today. Rice is the staple food for 65 percent of the population. However, in the civilizational sense, rice has long been more than just food or a commodity in India.

Home to one of the earliest 'cultures of rice,' a phrase with far deeper connotations than meets the eye, the early domestication and widespread consumption of rice has shaped societies, affected local economies and influenced global trade relations. Even today, rice is at the core of the sacred and the mundane in India and the cultural cornerstone that binds everything together.

The history of the sub-continent is deeply interwoven with rice, and it finds a place in all our ancient texts. The Atharvaveda mentions 'kshiraodana', or rice cooked in milk. The Upanishads mention a variety of rice preparations such as kshiraodana, dadhiodana (cooked with curds), tilaudana (cooked with sesame). Rice is mentioned in Buddhist and Jain texts as well as in Ramayana and Mahabharata. Medicinal texts of Charaka and Sushruta give prime importance to rice as do tribal folklores of Gond, Juang, Gadaba and Muria. Rice touches everything and everyone in India.

Rice is a thread that weaves together the very fabric of Indian culture. Being an agrarian society, the Indian festival calendar is linked to the harvest of rice; Makar Sankranti, Bihu (Assam), Pongal (Tamil Nadu), Nabanna (Bengal), Nuakhai (Odisha) and Onam (Kerala) are important festivals linked to paddy harvest. Considered sacred, the grain is part of most occasions from happy to sad, and rituals from birth to death.

No Hindu ritual is complete without rice. According to the Grihashastra, rice should be given to a child in the *annaprasana* ceremony as her/his first food outside of mother's milk. According to the Sukraniti, balls or lumps of rice mixed with curd, milk, flowers, sesame, ghee and more are offered to the Gods as an oblation to deceased ancestors by the nearest surviving kin. Festival foods are rooted in the produce available at the time, and no Indian festival is complete without rice on the menu. From simply accompanying special preparations to ubiquitous ricebased celebratory dishes like *pulao, tehri, kheer, meethe chaval* and *zarda*, and specific festive specials like *pongal* in Tamil Nadu, *khichdi* at Sankrant, and *phirni* and *biryani* at Eid.

Over time, rice has come to be a major driver of technological innovation and sustainable practices in agriculture. But beyond all of this, rice is intricately woven into India's history, culture, nutrition, literature, and economy.



VANISHING VARIETIES: THE IMPORTANCE OF RICE CONSERVATION IN INDIA

India was once home to 100,000 varieties of rice. The Green Revolution and subsequent incentivization of high yield varieties resulted in the loss of thousands of species. Today, only about 6000 varieties survive. Given the criticality of the grain to the sub-continent and its pivotal importance to food security and sustainability, from environmental, cultural and social perspectives, conservation of the grain is the need of the hour.

With renewed interest in rice among producers, consumers, businesses, artists, conservators, and sustainability experts, it is becoming apparent that the answers to key issues around nutrition and food security are to be found in India's rich heritage of rice cultivation. A revival in conversations around rice has individuals and entities revisiting and reexploring cultural connections with this important grain at all levels.



GUARDIANS OF THE GRAIN: LEGACY CUSTODIANS OF RICE

Custodians of India's rice legacy come from different fields, but each individual contribution adds invaluable knowledge and learning to the overall conservation of rice diversity.

When it comes to rice conservation. **Debal Deb** and his efforts lead the conversation. This Odisha-based conservator, seed warrior, ecologist and agrarian scientist. is the founder of Basudha, a seed bank for rare indigenous rice, that has grown into a significant network of seed banks with a footprint spread across Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka and Kerala. In 1997, Deb also founded Vrihi Beej Binimoy Kendra, India's largest open-source rice seed bank which has conserved an incredible 1480 endangered rice varieties from across twelve states, all from a mere 1/7 acres of farmland. Seeds of this endeavour were subsequently distributed amongst 7000 farmers across six different states. One of the biggest advocates of native varieties like sateen (three grain rice), and *jugal* (double grain rice), Deb believes that the answer to climate change, environmental disasters and seed monopolies lies in keeping traditional rice cultivation practices alive.

In Bengal, **Anupam Paul**, who retired as an Assistant Director in the Nadia-based Agricultural Training Center, has been instrumental in conserving more than 400 indigenous folk rice varieties (FRVs). Paul started his conservation work in 2001 by cultivating 5 FRVs on his farm, which was subsequently declared a 'Biodiversity Conservation Farm' by the state government of West Bengal in 2006. Conservators like Paul were instrumental in proving that FRVs were as high in yield as hybrid varieties in the wake of the Green Revolution. He demonstrated the same using *Kerala Sundari*, and *Bahurupi* strains whose yield with traditional methods is as high as that of hybrid seeds.

Sabarmatee Tiki, from Odisha, is a scholar, conservationist and farmer who runs an NGO called Sambhav with her father **Radha Mohan**. The father-daughter duo received the Padma Shri in 2020 for their significant work on rice. The entity has conserved over 500 varieties of rice since its inception and restored 90 acres of wasteland into a forest. Deeply invested in women farmer-related issues, the organisation also conducts training for women farmers, and organises seed festivals. They have also been promoting the SRI or System of Rice Intensification, a method that does not need constant flooding of rice fields, thereby reducing drudgery and exposure to chemicals and requires less labour while delivering higher yields and easing the life of women labourers who toil in the rice fields.



In North East India, **Mahan Chandra Borah** runs Annapurna Seed Library in Jorhat, Assam which received the Plant Genome Saviour Farmers award from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India in 2019. Run like a community program in which farmers are taught to be self-reliant and invest in sustainable farming, the organisation has conserved more than 400 varieties of rice like *bao dhan*, and *dol kosu* over the last 15 years,

Started by **Neelum Dutta** in 2008, Pabhoi Greens in Assam conserves and propagates native seeds. They have a gene pool of around 200 varieties of folk rice indigenous to India and the sub-continent such as *joha*, sticky gum rice, and black rice. In addition to producing and selling aromatic rice varieties, they also practice organic and SRI methods, and parallelly encourage the proliferation of fish and ducks that act as natural pesticides and increase food security in rice fields. With a philosophy of conservation alongside commercialisation, they optimise yields by selling 40%, using 30% for seed propagation, dedicating 10% to research purposes and consuming the remaining.

Spirit of the Earth, founded by **Sheela Balaji** in Manjakkudi, Tamil Nadu, runs conservation projects to cultivate and bring to market rare rice varieties. Having preserved over 300 heirloom rice varieties from across India including *kala namak, Kerala sundari, ajara ghansal and jeera phool,* they enable conversations around heirloom rice that they take to the consumer via a store in Mylapore, and on an e-commerce platform. At their farm, 10 acres is dedicated to seed regeneration and upholding traditional practices. Organic farming, use of natural pesticides, reliable water supply and soil regeneration are mainstays of their approach. They also get their rice tested by the National Agro Society to determine the nutritive value of each variety. Balaji was awarded the Nari Shakti Puraskar in 2018 by President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind.

Prof (Dr) Ram Chet Chaudhary, who founded the Participatory Rural Development Foundation or PRDF, was formerly the coordinator of the International Network for the Genetic Evaluation of Rice or INGER. His work on rice research extends beyond India to Nigeria, the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia and Myanmar. His other positions include Rice Specialist with the World Bank, Global Coordinator of IRRI and the FAO. In 1974, he received the Dr. Rajendra Prasad Award for his work in developing superior rice varieties in Uttar Pradesh, and was awarded the Padma Shri by the Government of India in 2024 for his contribution to agricultural advancements and the promotion of *kala namak* rice.

BRIDGING THE GAP: STEWARDS OF MARKET LINKAGE

Within the vast diversity of India, rice is deeply ingrained regionally. The key to keeping rice varieties and conservation efforts alive lies in creating consumer demand - through building reliable supply chains, creating and spreading awareness and investing in consumer education. Enterprises across the country are working to do this in various wavs.

At social enterprise Ekgaon, founded by Vijay Pratap Singh Aditya, technology is used to bridge the urban-rural gap, by combining intelligence on rural markets with digital technologies, financial inclusion, community building and market access. Over the last fifteen years, Ekgaon has fostered a 'One Village One World Network' across 10,000 villages and sources products from over 20,000 farmers and 20 artisan producer organisations. They bring traceable lesser-known rice varieties tagged with 'Know Your Farmer' stickers that tell the story of the farmer to the consumer. Their deep engagement and impact on farmers. earned them the Stockholm Challenge - GKP Awards in 2007, and earned Pratap Singh Aditya a mention amongst 50 Social Entrepreneurs in India by The Business Outlook magazine in 2009.

Buffalo Back Collective was founded by social activist, farmer and changemaker Vishalakshi Padmanabhan in 2013 in Bengaluru. What began with Padmanabhan and her husband moving to a small village to begin farming soon grew into a rural agricultural community that operated as a collective and impacted local practices and economy. Villagers moved to organic farming, women set up grain mills to hand-grind produce, forgotten rice varieties were reintroduced and market linkages built via the Roots to Grain project. The initial organic weekend market too, has today grown into a network of sustainable small farmers. It operates in a community-supported agriculture format that promotes-drought and flood-resistant rice varieties, such as kala bhath and kala nunia. Buffalo Back Collective have not only brought trusted products to consumers but also worked on policy aspects. In the process, they have also introduced urban consumers, whose buy-in is crucial, to the cycle of native folk rice varieties.

Amar Khamar, a brand started in 2019 by Sujoy Chatterjee, goes deep into the rice heritage of Bengal with around 35 kinds of rice that span a wide spectrum of aromatic. organic, unpolished, black and small grain varieties in its



repertoire. Their ecommerce platform set a new benchmark when it came to online selling, by changing the game. They linked rice to a geography and culture, by understanding and embedding itself into its consumers psyche and delivering without fail. Their initiatives to build a knowledge ecosystem and recipe collection around the rice they sell on their website and their physical store, Annaja, is a lesson in community building. Through the Khamar Table initiative, they offer intimate dining experiences built around their rice varieties to small groups.

Social enterprise Biobasics, based in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, was launched in 2015 by Ramesh Chandran and Sridevi Lakshmikutty, who left behind corporate and social sector jobs, to work towards preserving forgotten rice varieties. Biobasics has today grown into an organic, safe food movement that preserves and promotes local varieties of rice that are good for the consumers and the environment too. The initiative has successfully brought around 30 varieties of rice to market including raktasthali from Kerala and thooyamalli from Tamil Nadu.

Government-backed OND or Open Network for Digital **Commerce** is an open, inter-operable e-commerce network that aims to connect small farmers with urban consumers. Started in 2021, the platform has onboarded around 4000 FPOs or farmers producers organisations and sold 3,100 varieties of agricultural products, predominantly rice. This network has revolutionised access to digital platforms that were previously inaccessible to small and marginal rice farmers. Today, a consumer can buy katarni rice from a small FPO in Bihar via PAYTM! While still in early days, the ease of access and assurance of delivery they offer, could cumulatively generate much higher demand for lesserknown rice varieties from across the country.

THE GREEN GRAIN: RESEARCH AND SUSTAINABILITY IN RICE

In recent times, rice has been wrongfully vilified as a crop that cannot be grown sustainably and is detrimental to the climate - an argument that gained traction when it was compared with millets, which are considered much more climate-friendly. As demand and cultivation of rice grows, production that is sustainable and has a smaller environmental footprint, is critical for the planet. Numerous institutions are working to revive climate change adaptable/ resilient rice varieties, reduce rice's climate footprint and evolve higher yield, lower water consuming varieties.

Established in 1946 in Bidyadharpur, Cuttack, the National Rice Research Institute (NRRI) is India's premier body dedicated to rice research and has been at the forefront of rice innovation. During the last five years, the institute has been instrumental in developing 35 varieties of rice. including pest-and disease-resilient strains, protein-rich options and innovation around different growing conditions like lowland-and cyclone-affected areas. They launched the 4S4R or Self-sufficient Sustainable System of Seed for Rice, to address the issue of seed quality, a program that focuses on local seed production, processing and marketing of rice grains. They also use modern technology like their mobile app 'riceXpert' which provides real time information on insect pests, nutrients, and disease-related problems and post-harvest operations.

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is

the world's most premier organisation dedicated to rice research. It was established in 1960 with the goal of abolishing poverty and hunger among farmers and consumers of rice-based agri-food systems in South and South-East Asia and climate adaptability is one of the main pillars of their work. IRRI works across all aspects of the rice ecosystem - from climate change and sustainability to yield, nutrition and social aspects of rice production. They develop rice varieties that can withstand intense climate conditions as well as high salt and iron toxicity, such as sahbhagi dhan, a drought-resistant variety, and swarnasub1, a flood-resistant variety. In Odisha, IRRI is trying to close the gender gap by working through a WPC or Women Producer Company with 1300 members to provide input, marketing, assistance in mechanical and digital technologies and financial services.

Rize, a technology platform at the cutting edge of technology in rice farming, captures essential data



required to implement sustainable practices. Their MRV or Measuring, Reporting, and Verification technology, aims to reduce carbon emissions by 100 million tonnes and improve farmer livelihoods. Rize is also at the forefront of testing and scaling innovative technologies in biological farming inputs, seed treatments, and climate-resilient rice varieties. Their initiatives are projected to reduce emissions by 50% and reduce water usage by 20%.

OOO Farms, is a farmers' organization that initiated the OOO Farms Rice Conservation Project 6 years ago. What started as a humble initiative with 11 indigenous rice varieties, has today grown into a communal project that has conserved and revived 1108 indigenous, native and heirloom rice varieties including ajara ghansal, krishna kamod, ambemohar, sahyadri black and more with the support of tribal communities in Maharashtra & Gujarat. They believe that there is enough scientific evidence to suggest that the native and indigenous seeds will meet both nourishment needs as well as adapt to the rapidly-changing climatic conditions. The varied indigenous rice varieties that OOO Farms conserves include varieties that thrive in high salinity, and drought- or flood-prone environments. Some are also resistant to pest attacks; others are medicinal and therapeutic as well as aromatic varieties. Most importantly, they have cultural value.

AN ENDURING LEGACY: CHRONICLERS AND CUSTODIANS OF RICE

When it comes to food, documentation and chronicling knowledge and memory is as critical as serving it at a table - one without the other will always be incomplete.

Shalikuta, started in 2019 by **Deepa Reddy**, is a collaborative knowledge project that chronicles and disseminates knowledge, stories and recipes of rice. The project examines how rice is embedded in local ecology, documents traditional knowledge around folk varieties, and shares scientific information around its nutritive properties. A cultural anthropologist by training, Reddy is joined by writers, researchers, home cooks, photographers and storytellers to record numerous interesting and untold stories about rice. One of the outcomes of the project is a digital rice library that documents cultural and ecological aspects of rice strains along with their medicinal properties, culinary uses and procurement information.

There is no greater advocacy of a food ingredient than putting it on the dinner table. This helps in increasing actual consumption and thereby demand. If this is combined with knowledge about the grain, nothing could be better. **Chef** Anumitra Ghosh Dastidar has been doing precisely that with her restaurant Edible Archives in Goa. She and her partner Shalini Krishan have collected more than 200 kinds of rice from their travels throughout India, many of which are served at their restaurant. They are still remembered for their impressive opening at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in 2019 where, over three months, they served 40 rice varieties, backed by accurate information on their nutritive gualities and provenance, in dishes made using fusion techniques and innovative twists. Dedicated to preserving and propagating disappearing rice varieties, Edible Archives continues to serve, educate and dispel myths about rice.



Rakesh Raghunathan, chef, researcher and storyteller, traces the history of rice through Tamil Sangam literature. He has also made a cause of showcasing the nutraceutical properties and versatility of heirloom rice varieties. At a food festival that he conducted, he served a 12-course menu with each course spotlighting a heirloom rice variety. Mango *Phirni* Tart with *thooyamalli* rice, *Riz au lait* (French rice and milk pudding) with Espresso Caramel using *navara* rice and Bannur Mutton Pulao Arancini with *kala namak* rice were a few of the standout dishes.

Auroni Mukherjee, the chef known for his *bajaar*-to-table and nose-to-tail cooking concepts is a great advocate of seasonal and local produce repurposed in modern avatars. His tasting menus introduce urban consumers to multiple heirloom rice varieties through interesting and novel dishes. One of his dishes – *neem begun* and *shukto* – uses the local *radhatilok* rice shaped into a ball and stuffed with fried neem leaves and brinjals. The *bhoger khichuri*, is made with fragrant *chinekamini* rice. *Pukur*-to-table, perhaps his most famous creation, uses ingredients that are found around a village pond – rice, mussels, pennywort leaves, spinach and mushrooms in a risotto-like dish and is made with *tulaipanji*, yet another local variety.

THE EVOLVING GRAIN: A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE OF RICE

A key game changer in this scenario would be the HORECA sector. While it may be a logistical challenge for commercial kitchens to promote varied rice varieties with long grained rice in demand thanks to its aspirational perception in the eyes of consumers, some like Bombay Canteen in Mumbai, Oota in Bengaluru, and Sienna Store in Kolkata, as well as chains like Ishaara and ITC hotels with outlets across the country have already successfully been driving consumer adoption away from generic rice towards heritage rice varieties like *ambemohar, jeera samba, joha, gobindo bhog* and more by showcasing them on their menus.

This move, if adopted by more players, could potentially make a significant difference by stoking curiosity and bringing rice into mainstream focus rather than letting it exist on the fringes of menus. Dining establishments offer ideal platforms for consumers to discover, experiment, and adopt new ingredients, especially with chefs and home chefs advocating for them, and increased consumption will not only support local economies, and bolster farmer livelihoods but also help conserve and sustain lesser-known rice varieties.





GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES INDIA IS THE GLOBAL FLAVOUR OF THE SEASON



The scents of cumin, coriander, and cardamom are wafting their way across the globe. From bustling city streets to cosy suburban kitchens, the tantalising flavours of Indian cuisine are captivating palates

worldwide, as Indian chefs, brands, and cookbook writers alike seek to share their culinary traditions with new audiences. This rising popularity reflects a growing appreciation for the sheer vibrancy and diversity that Indian food has to offer.

With regional Indian flavours in high demand, these culinary innovators face a unique challenge - sourcing the authentic ingredients needed to recreate the dishes of their homeland. They must often turn to local alternatives when traditional staples prove elusive. For example, in her cookbooks, Author Priya Krishna recommends accessible substitutions for home cooks, like using Greek yoghurt in place of homemade *dahi* or swapping leafy greens like spinach for harder-to-find mustard greens. Bangkok-based Chef Garima Arora applies Indian techniques to local Thai produce, exploring how the same ingredients are used in two different cuisines to create something new and unique. One of the first dishes she created at Gaa, was an ode to the betel leaf or the paan ka katta. In India, the take on this is sweet, but in Thailand, it is served as a savoury dish. So meals at Gaa begin with the savoury take on the betel leaf

and finish with a sweet exploration of it based on Indian flavours. Meanwhile, in Melbourne, Chef Helly Raichura swaps out the Indian karela for the native Australian bush tomato in her rendition of a Bengali shukto, which she was nervous about initially, but her culinary leaps have been widely appreciated by the local Bengali population.

This kind of creative adaptation has led to a flourishing of novel dishes that resonate with both the Indian diaspora, as well as local communities eager to explore these enticing new tastes. In the process, a broader connection to Indian culinary heritage is being fostered, one flavourful bite at a time. Below, Indian origin food entrepreneurs, chefs and restaurateurs weigh in on what this means for their businesses.



At Navi, a modern Indian restaurant in Berlin, Chtef Shannon Lawrence works with familiar local ingredients to create novel dishes for his diners. "Berlin's food scene is diverse, and residents are responding positively to our regional Indian flavours. Our menu items are often unfamiliar. prompting requests for a dictionary. Surprisingly, crisp okra and zunka are popular. Although sourcing specific Indian ingredients is challenging, local alternatives have worked well, and collaborating with vendors in Markt Halle Neun has been vital for our kitchen."

At Brooklyn's Malai Ice Cream, founder & CEO *Pooja Bavishi*, recreates the rich milkiness of Indian sweets in ice cream, especially during Diwali, "My inspiration stems from memories, like transforming my grandmother's ghughra into a unique ice cream flavour. Sourcing mawa or khoya is difficult, so we creatively enhance

flavours to capture that essence. Connections to childhood memories make our creations special, resonating even with those outside the diaspora."



In New York City, Roni Mazumdar, co-founder of Unapologetic Foods aims to showcase India's diversity. building restaurants like Dhamaka. Semma, and Rowdy

Rooster. "Many chefs work to please Western palates, but I want Indian chefs to embrace our cuisine and ingredients. Our restaurants showcase India's diversity, and I've seen the narrative shift. One diner told me it was his first time feeling proud of Indian food in 30 years living in NYC."

Sameer Taneja, Executive Chef at Benares, London, finds that such innovation is working to shift the global narrative around Indian culture. "Celebrations like Holi and Diwali have become international social events. And the growth of Indian restaurants globally, which speaks to

our cuisine's diversity, is expanding the ecosystem and increasing the availability of Indian ingredients."

At Bungalow in New York City, Chef Vikas Khanna constantly innovates, adapts and pushes himself to ensure that the essence of India shines in his menu through fresh, authentic ingredients. "Sourcing authentic Indian ingredients outside of India is a constant struggle. Negotiating with vendors, coordinating deliveries, ensuring that the vibrant flavors of India reach my kitchen, not from the local farms, but from distant shores, is a constant dance with uncertainty and a source of daily anxiety. Will I have mangoes for my signature dessert or phalsa for the beverage menu tomorrow? I'm always trying to capture a fleeting memory - the aroma of freshly ground spices, the taste of a perfectly ripened mango. It's a testament to the lengths we must go to bring the soul of India to the world and it's challenging but it fuels my creativity."

CHEFS TAKING INDIA TO THE WORLD

Indian chefs are welcoming awards, recognition and diners, who just can't get enough of their unapologetic takes on desi flavours, ingredients and dishes. From redefining Indian cuisine in New York to introducing its complexity and adaptability on the global stage, these culinary innovators are bridging cultural divides and elevating perceptions of Indian food worldwide.



The formidable force behind London's Darjeeling Express, Asma Khan has redefined what it means to be an Indian restaurant in London since its opening in 2017. Her passion for cooking began out of homesickness after moving to Cambridge in 1991. Initially hosting supper clubs in her home, Khan's gatherings featured dishes from her childhood and Nawabi heritage, such as lamb dum biryani, Tangra chilli prawns, and Hyderabadi Khoobani ka meetha.

Launching her culinary career at 45, with a background in British constitutional law, Khan has pushed boundaries in the restaurant industry, notably with an all-female, South Asian kitchen team. Her leadership and innovation have earned Darjeeling Express accolades and media attention, including a feature on Netflix's Chef's Table.

Beyond her culinary achievements, Khan is a UN World Food Programme advocate and was named one of Time magazine's 100 most influential people of 2024, celebrated for her contributions to food and social change.



Chef Chintan Pandya, who grew up eating at no-frills Malvani joints in Mumbai, has been pivotal in redefining Indian cuisine in New York City with his business partner Roni Mazumdar. Since meeting in 2017, they've launched seven acclaimed restaurants under the Unapologetic Foods umbrella. Their first endeavour. Adda in Long Island City, set the stage with its unrepentant embrace of bold, authentic flavours. Dhamaka, in Manhattan's Lower East Side, introduced daring dishes like goat kidneys and testicles.

The duo continued to push boundaries with Semma, which earned a Michelin star for its focus on Southern Indian fare. and Masalawala & Sons, which draws from Mazumdar's Bengali heritage. Rowdy Rooster in the East Village brought Indian fried chicken to the forefront. Along the way, Pandya earned a James Beard Award for Best Chef in New York. Their commitment to authenticity and refusal to dilute rich spicing, has deeply resonated with diners, often leaving them moved by the genuine homestyle cooking.







Deepanker Khosla, Bangkok

Chef Deepanker Khosla, born in Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad), has made significant strides in the culinary world with his Bangkok-based restaurant, Haoma. Growing up in India's first plastic-free city, Khosla was influenced by his environmentally conscious family, who practised sustainability and resourcefulness. This ethos drives Haoma, awarded the Sustainable Restaurant Award at Asia's 50 Best Restaurants 2024 and recognised with a Michelin Green Star for its commitment to sustainability.

At Haoma, Khosla reimagines traditional Indian cuisine using local Thai ingredients, presenting dishes that take diners on a journey across the subcontinent. The menu features delightful offerings such as a molecular gastronomy-inspired pani puri, a version of *nalli nihari* he relishes back home and even squid xacuti, showcasing the interplay of complex flavours in Indian cuisine. Khosla's dedication to sustainability and creativity honours his heritage while introducing Indian cuisine to a broader audience, highlighting its adaptability and depth.

Garima Arora, Bangkok

Garima Arora is the only Indian woman to run a two-Michelin-starred restaurant, and yet, she wears these laurels lightly. Originally from Mumbai, Arora is redefining Indian fine dining at her Bangkok restaurant, Gaa. In 2023, in addition to running Gaa, Arora was a judge on MasterChef India while pregnant with her first child. Her dedication has introduced Indian cuisine to international audiences, highlighting its complexity and adaptability on the global stage leading to Gaa achieving its second Michelin star in 2024.

Gaa combines Indian culinary traditions with modern techniques and Thai influences. Arora's food philosophy is centered on understanding the deeprooted 'whys' of Indian cuisine. She innovatively applies Indian techniques to Thai produce, creating unique dishes like her savoury and sweet takes on betel leaf, bridging cultural flavours. Her scientific approach involves meticulous layering of spices and diverse use of oils, like sesame and mustard, to enhance dishes methodically.

Helly Raichura, Melbourne

Rejecting the clichés of butter chicken and dal makhani, Chef Helly Raichura, brings a fresh perspective to Indian cuisine at her Melbourne fine diner. Enter Via Laundry. Raichura curates a degustation menu that showcases lesser-known regional dishes, providing an intimate dining experience for just 20 quests. Her culinary journey began in her home kitchen, where she hosted communal dinners, inviting diners to enter via her laundry door.

Raichura's food philosophy emphasises made-fromscratch dishes that honour traditional techniques and seasonal produce, steering clear of excessive butter and cream. Each year, she focuses on two different regions of India, crafting menus through meticulous research. Dishes like shukto, a traditional Bengali vegetable medley, reflect her commitment to authenticity, while simultaneously offering an educational journey into India's diverse culinary landscape. Raichura successfully introduces Indian cuisine to an international audience, resonating with both the Indian diaspora and curious food lovers eager to explore the richness of her heritage



Chef Himanshu Saini, learned how to cook for a small crowd at a young age thanks to growing up in a joint family in New Delhi. His background has prepared him for a life of feeding, instilled a passion for cooking and a commitment to bringing familial warmth to his professional kitchens. Today, the hardworking, humble chef, who honed his skills at Indian Accent and Masala Library, is a leading figure in modern Indian cuisine with his Michelin-starred restaurants Trèsind, and Trèsind Studio in Dubai.

Saini's food philosophy involves pushing the boundaries of Indian cuisine by creating new classics. Dishes like khandvi ice cream exemplify his innovative approach, blending traditional flavours with modern techniques to educate and entice international audiences unfamiliar with Indian food. At Trèsind, he creates a welcoming dining experience, inviting guests to explore Indian flavours through inventive twists on dishes like pani puri, which have gained recognition and influence worldwide.

Vikas Khanna, New York City

Born in Amritsar, India, Chef Vikas Khanna's passion for cooking was ignited by his grandmother's culinary traditions. Having overcome early challenges from a physical disability, he went on to pursue culinary arts in the United States at the Culinary Institute of America and New York University. Khanna's unique blend of culinary expertise, cultural understanding, and philanthropic endeavors has established him as a global ambassador for Indian cuisine and a respected figure in the culinary world.

Khanna's New York restaurant, Bungalow, has been winning awards and accolades since it first opened. Most recently it garnered the prestigious Michelin 2024 Bib Gourmand Award. Khanna masterfully blends nostalgia with innovative twists, weaving emotional connections and compelling narratives through his menu and social media narrative. Bungalow offers a unique dining experience, blending traditional Indian flavors with contemporary techniques and a warm, inviting atmosphere. The menu features a range of dishes, from all 28 states of India, from classic favorites like butter chicken and biryani to innovative creations like Bengali Kasundi Tandoori Avocado, Bihari Sattu Roti, Udipi's Annanas Menaskai, Gujarati Tindora Pickle, 'Nagaland' Black Rice Pudding, Indore-inspired Dahi Kebab, Jewish-Indian Chicken Chitranee and Sindhi style Achaari Aloo.



SPOTLIGHT: RONI MAZUMDAR ON REFRAMING NYC'S UNDERSTANDING OF INDIAN CUISINE

Roni Mazumdar, co-founder of Unapologetic Foods, is at the forefront of a culinary revolution that is reshaping perceptions of Indian cuisine globally. With innovative restaurant concepts in New York City such as Dhamaka, Semma and Rowdy Rooster, Mazumdar is challenging the longstanding stereotypes associated with Indian food, showcasing its rich regional diversity and authentic

"We design our restaurants to showcase the diversity of india"

Q Indian food abroad is often stereotyped as just curries and naan, but your restaurants are redefining this narrative. What key elements do you focus on to challenge these preconceived notions?

India has a vast population, and food changes every few miles. For too long, only 10 to 12 dishes were showcased commercially. We believe that Indian food, given its diversity, deserves to be presented authentically.

Q How has the perception of Indian cuisine in the U.S. evolved over the past decade, and what role do you see Unapologetic Foods playing in this narrative?

The perception of Indian cuisine is changing every day. We aim to be a small part of this transformation, encouraging others to join us in reshaping the narrative of Indian food in America

Our philosophy is straightforward: to create excellent food and provide a memorable experience, emphasising highquality ingredients and authentic cooking techniques.

Q You've introduced concepts that transcend the typical Indian restaurant experience, such as Dhamaka and Rowdy Rooster. What drives your innovation when conceptualising new dining experiences?

When creating new concepts, we look for what's missing in the market. For instance, we noticed a lack of Indian fried chicken in America, and that inspired our Rowdy Rooster concept. We filled a gap that had gone unrecognised.



flavours. His approach goes beyond the typical curries and *naan*, introducing lesser-known dishes that celebrate India's culinary heritage. As Indian food gains traction on the international dining scene. Mazumdar and his team are committed to taking risks and fostering appreciation for the depth and richness of Indian flavours.

Q. How important is storytelling in the success of your restaurants, and how do you weave the narrative of Indian culture and heritage into the dining experience?

We've been fortunate that our customers often share their own stories of Indian cuisine. For example, with Channa Pora, diners send their friends to Dhamaka, sharing the dish's story organically rather than through our promotion.

Q With the growing popularity of Indian cuisine, what trends do you foresee shaping its future on the global dining scene?

A significant trend will be the focus on micro-regional cuisines from various Indian states, bringing more authentic and diverse flavours to the forefront.

The Northeastern regions of India are extremely underrepresented. It would be wonderful to see restaurants highlight these areas. I'm particularly interested in exploring how cow dung cakes are utilised as cooking fuel for some dishes.

W How do you see the impact of your restaurants extending beyond food in terms of cultural representation and changing narratives about India?

We design our restaurants to showcase the diversity of India. The narrative is changing; I recall a gentleman who dined at our restaurant saying it was the first time in 30 years in New York he felt he could advocate for Indian food based on what we serve.

COOKBOOKS THAT INSPIRE

Indian-inspired cookbooks have been taking the Western culinary world by storm of late, introducing bold, unapologetically Indian flavours and techniques into home kitchens across the globe. Books like Gurdeep Loyal's Mother Tongue, Chetna Makan's Easy Indian Vegetarian, and Khushbu Shah's Amrikan proudly celebrate their Indian roots, blending traditional ingredients with accessible recipes that stay true to their cultural origins. Proving that Indian spices, cooking methods, and iconic dishes like chaat, biryani, and masala mac and cheese are no longer just a niche, but an integral part of the global food scene and that Indian cuisine can seamlessly blend into Western kitchens while remaining authentic and exciting.

Chetna Makan, Easy Indian Vegetarian

Celebrated cookbook author and former Great British Bake Off star Chetna Makan brings her latest book, Easy Indian Vegetarian, designed to make regional Indian flavours accessible to Western audiences without compromising on tradition. Known for her approachable, creative take on Indian cooking (her Instagram and YouTube channels are a testament to this), Makan has written eight popular cookbooks exploring everything from Indian street food to quick, healthy meals.

In Easy Indian Vegetarian, she simplifies cooking techniques, demystifies spices, and uses widely available ingredients, so readers can recreate the vibrant vegetarian dishes of India with ease. Recipes like quick aloo gobi (spiced potato and cauliflower) and masala paneer wraps offer familiar, comforting flavours in a way that's easy to understand and prepare. With over 80 recipes and 10 menu plans, Makan's straightforward instructions make dishes like dal tadka (tempered lentils) and vegetable birvani accessible even to beginners. Perfect for busy cooks, Easy Indian Vegetarian helps bring flavour-packed Indian meals to Western kitchens effortlessly.



Khushbu Shah, Amrikan

In Amrikan, Khushbu Shah serves up the flavours of her Indian-American upbringing with humour, heart, and a little spice. This isn't your typical Indian cookbook-Shah invites readers to step into her world, where cardamom meets cream cheese and cumin finds a home in cornbread. Known for her sharp, witty storytelling, Shah reimagines everyday comfort foods with an Indian twist, creating dishes that are both deeply nostalgic and refreshingly unexpected.

As a celebrated food writer and former restaurant editor at Food and Wine magazine, Shah brings her extensive culinary knowledge and unique perspective to the page. Recipes like Masala Mac and Cheese, Maggi Omelette and Saag Paneer Lasagna are love letters to the comfort foods that shaped her. Her *Tandoori* Tacos bring smoky tandoori flavours into the world of taco night, with tips on balancing spices to make sure the flavours sing without overwhelming. Shah's insights are full of charm, like her advice on using everyday pantry items when Indian ingredients are hard to find or her playful approach to layering spices for extra oomph.

Amrikan isn't just about cooking; it's about embracing a culinary dual identity with flair and flavour.



Gurd Loyal, Mother Tongue: Flavours of a Second Generation

London-based chef and food writer Gurdeep Loyal makes his cookbook debut with Mother Tongue: Flavours of a Second Generation, a heartfelt exploration of Indian flavours reimagined for a modern, Western audience. Growing up as a second-generation immigrant, Loyal weaves his unique perspective into every recipe, blending the vibrant tastes of his Punjabi heritage with a contemporary twist that resonates across cultures.

In Mother Tongue, Loyal invites readers to experience his 'second-generation fusion' with dishes like masala pasta, tandoori-spiced roasted vegetables, and his signature chaat fries, balancing traditional spices with ingredients commonly found in Western kitchens. The book is rich with thoughtful insights that help readers understand, adapt, and confidently cook with Indian flavours, even if they're new to them. For example, he guides readers through selecting and blending spices, explaining how cumin can add earthy depth, while a hint of black mustard seed brings a sharper, nuttier note. He includes helpful advice on substitutions, suggesting alternatives for harder-to-find ingredients like replacing fresh curry leaves with lime zest for a similar aromatic quality.

Loyal's insights also extend to balancing flavours, such as tempering the heat of a spicy masala with a touch of yoghurt or a sprinkle of pomegranate seeds for a hint of sweetness. Throughout the book, Loyal shares tips on using Western ingredients to capture authentic tastes, like roasting cauliflower with a spiced yogurt marinade for a tandooriinspired dish or creating a simple chaat salad using everyday pantry staples. These thoughtful touches make Indian cooking less intimidating and highly adaptable, encouraging readers to explore and experiment with confidence.

Priya Krishna, Indian-ish & Priya's Kitchen Adventures: A Cookbook for Kids

New York Times reporter and cookbook author Priya Krishna, brought a fresh, playful take to Indian cooking with Indian-ish, her first cookbook. In Indian-ish, Krishna shares recipes inspired by her Indian-American upbringing, blending traditional Indian flavours with a modern twist that fits seamlessly into a Western kitchen. Her thoughtful tips-like using Greek voghurt in place of homemade dahi or substituting leafy greens like spinach for harder-tofind mustard greens-demystify Indian ingredients and empower readers to experiment with confidence. Recipes like Roti Pizza, Dahi Toast and Saag Feta showcase her unique approach, making classic dishes feel familiar yet exciting.

In her latest, Priya's Kitchen Adventures: A Cookbook for Kids, she brings Indian and global cuisine to young chefs, showing them how to create vibrant, kid-friendly meals through accessible steps and fun, hands-on guidance. Krishna's clear instructions and simplified techniques make complex flavours easy for kids to understand, with dishes like her Nana's Dahi Bhalla making mealtime an adventure in creativity and flavour.



Romy Gill, India: Recipes from Home

A collection of beloved flavours, regional secrets, and the warmth of home kitchens across the country, this cookbook is a genuine invitation to explore the vibrant soul of Indian cuisine through the eyes of celebrated chef and storyteller, Romy Gill. Each recipe tells a story, revealing the beauty of India's diversity-from the fiery curries of Bengal's coastlines to the delicate vegetarian fare of the Himalayas, all peppered with anecdotes and memories that span Gill's childhood and career, making the book come to life. Recipes span unique creations like a Hakka style tofu and Komru, inspired by the many flavours and culinary influences of Kolkata.

Gill's gift lies in making even the most intricate recipes feel accessible and meaningful, as if she's cooking right beside you, guiding each sprinkle of spice with care. It's a colourful journey into the heart of Indian cooking, seasoned with love and tradition.











Over the last decade, the world has truly become the Indian consumer's oyster. This is primarily due to the growing presence of reputed international food and beverage brands, supported by an improved supply chain enabling consistent supply of international fresh produce and products. However, concerns around climate change have inspired consumers to reconnect with indigenous Indian culture and traditions to practice more sustainable lifestyles. This growing segment of informed consumers are rediscovering the value of agricultural abundance that India enjoys in the bounty of its hyperlocal, seasonal produce and incredible diversity across regions and communities.

Meanwhile, a growing focus on organic farming and Geographical Indications (GI tags) is encouraging producers to preserve generations-old traditional ingredients, techniques, and dishes, and make the best use of the natural resources of their regions. Consumers are equally invested in sourcing produce directly from farmers, village cooperatives and small scale industries, many of whom, now adept with technology, use social media to connect with their customers. These developments offer huge potential to food producers and manufacturers to create a more resilient and sustainable food system.

In the Dining In section this year, we explore a return to seasonal eating and mindful lifestyles for all.



SEASONAL CONSUMPTION AT HOME

Ayurvedic recommendations for seasonal changes in food and diet.

Shishir Ritu

(Mid-January - Mid-March) inence of kapha dosha (ruled by water & earth). Consume carbohydrate and energy-rich foods.

Consume	Avoid
 Tart foods (amla) Cereals and pulses Wheat/gram flour items, rice Corn, root vegetables Ginger, garlic, pippali Sugarcane items, 	 Pungent Bitter Astringent Light foods Cool foods

Milk and milk items

Hemant Ritu (Mid-November - Mid-January) Prominence of kapha dosha Consume unctuous, sweet, tart, and salty foods Consume Avoid New rice, green gram · light, cool. · Different meats, fats, dry foods

milk and milk items. · Cold sugarcane items, beverages sesame

Vasant Ritu (Mid-March - Mid-May)

Increase in kapha dosha which is 'liquefied' by the sun, diminishing digestive activity. Avoid kapha-increasing foods.

Consume	ł
Easily digestible	
foods like wheat,	
rice, old barley	
Pungent and	
astringent foods	
Honey	1
Coriander, cumin,	
turmeric and fennel	

Avoid Cold, heavy, fatty foods that are hard to digest and increase kapha

Grishma Ritu (Mid-May - Mid-July)

Prominence of vata dosha (ruled by air & space). Consume light, sweet, unctuous, cool foods.

- Consume • Seasonal fruits • Water & fluids like buttermilk fruit juices. curd, milk
- Sharp, acrid, warm foods

Avoid

Uttarayana (Northern Solstice) 14 January - 14 July

Dakshinayana (Southern Solstice) 14 July - 14 January

Varsha Ritu (Mid-July - Mid-September)

This is the season when the body is most prone to illness and digestive activity is weakened. Consume easily digestible food to avoid stress of the digestive system.

Consumo Tart. salty. unctuous foods Soups

Avoid Excessive

fluids Foods that are difficult to process

Sharad Ritu

(Mid-September - Mid-November) Prominence of pitta dosha (ruled by fire & water). Consume sweet, sharp tasting foods with cold properties that are easily digested.

Consume	-
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gra

- and astringent Honey, peas, green vegetables, from dry land (jangala mamsa) red rice
 - fat, oils, meat of aquatic creatures curds

Avoid

Hot, bitter, sweet,

SEASONAL **CONSUMPTION** AT HOME

Once a prominent leitmotif across communities in India, seasonal eating is finding its way back onto plates with consumers diversifying their diets to address the nutritional demands of modern-day lifestyles.

FOCUS AREAS

India's traditional practice of seasonal consumption offers a wide variety of foods that draw on its rich biodiversity, to provide essential nutrition and exciting tastes on the plate. With the concept of seasonal eating seeing a revival in the Indian kitchen, there will be benefits across the board. For the producer, farmer and agriculturist, it offers a means of sustainable cultivation, food security and livelihood. For the consumer, it offers tradition, affordability and periodic variety in taste, and for the Food Industry, it offers opportunities for regular refreshes of menus and product offerings.

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SEASONAL COMES FULL CIRCLE

For a while in the mid-2010s, the term 'healthy green' became synonymous with green kale. Non-native to the Indian subcontinent, this leafy green surreptitiously made its way into everything from juices, salads and chips, to Indian style 'kale ki sabzi'. A happy outcome was that its runaway popularity sparked conversations about equivalent, and perhaps even more nutritious seasonal greens that the Indian landscape offers.

Many Indians will remember times when the onset of new seasons ushered in the joy of eating foods associated with them. Ripe mangoes signalled the advent of summer, mooli parathas graced breakfast tables in winter, gourds filled plates during monsoons, and edible flowers brought spring into kitchens. While regional nuances vary, many of these foods continue to be the torchbearers for their respective seasons even today, despite homogenisation and shrinking of our daily plates.

Seasonal eating is not an isolated concept. It has traditionally been a way of life in India for centuries. Until the Industrial Revolution, what went on Indian plates was largely dictated by the agricultural cycle, seasonal availability of foods, and practices that find mention in historical Indian texts. Ayurveda emphasises Ritucharya, or the practice of seasonal regimen, in enabling the body to withstand environmental changes. It recommends proper food habits such as avoiding pungent, bitter and astringent foods during winter, but consuming them in spring.

Similarly, the Mānasollāsa, a 12thcentury chronicle of King Someshwara Ill's rule, documents that the King's diet was synchronised with the seasons to ensure proper digestion. It recommends eating oily and hot dishes during winter, acidic foods in autumn, salty foods in the monsoons, cooling foods during summer and pungent ones in spring. Interestingly

the text also classifies water sources based on the seasons and observes that rainwater purified using sunlight is ideal for consumption in autumn while in spring, water from lakes with lotuses growing in them is recommended.

As ingrained as seasonality has been in the Indian diet, the advent of the Industrial Revolution and World War II, colonial policies and economic developments brought a shift in practices that encouraged the propagation and cultivation of cash crops. These changes were further exacerbated by advancements in agricultural practices, the Green Revolution, and the increase in food processing and storage techniques.

A growing focus on health and wellness in recent years, however, has been driving more mindful food choices that have the industry and the consumer looking back at India's rich culinary tradition of seasonal eating.



THE FORGOTTEN TRADITIONS OF MAKING MORE FROM LESS

When the food lens zooms out, it appears that the average urban Indian is spoilt for choice. Supermarket shelves offer an abundance of options. Look closer however, and the critical issue of dietary homogenisation becomes apparent. Research shows that seventy five percent or more of global food production and consumption today is based on just five animal species and twelve plants including sugarcane, wheat, rice, maize, soybean, tapioca, potatoes, sugar beet and oil palm. This extends to India too where primary cultivated crops include grains like rice and wheat, oilseeds and sugarcane.

Additionally, this has also been influenced by Western diets based on macronutrients like carbohydrates, protein, fat and sugar, and ignore the critical function of micronutrients for overall health and wellbeing; a gap that seasonal produce has played a vital role in filling down the ages. "Seasonal foods are delicious wavs to add diversity to the plate and

NEW FRONTIERS AND OLD FOOD HABITS

The age-old adage. 'let thy food be thy *medicine'*, is more resonant today than ever before. A growing desire to build deeper relationships with one's food is driving a revival around seasonal eating, because these foods, rich in phytonutrients and antioxidants, are more beneficial for the demands of today's lifestyles.



"From an avurvedic perspective, seasonal foods help balance the doshas —Vata, Pitta, and Kapha," explains

Rajeshwari, Dietician at the Arya Vaidya Chikitsalayam & Research Institute, Coimbatore. Elaborating, for example, on how *Pitta* or heat tends to increase during summer, and can be alleviated by consuming cooling foods like watermelon and cucumber. Vata in contrast, is associated with cold and dryness, so warm spices like ginger and cinnamon are recommended to balance them in colder months. "While some of these foods are instantly recognised as antidotes to weatherrelated illnesses, the knowledge of others is slowly percolating." Citing the example of in-patients at the Chikitsalayam, she adds that people are more receptive to diversifying their diets in today's era of lifestyle diseases. While some patients have adapted to millets instead of rice-a significant change for the south Indian palate, others are embracing less

Herbeshwari, who elaborates, "what grows well in a season addresses the body's specific nutritional requirements for that period. Tubers, for example, are in season during the colder months when there is a greater need for energy. The consumption of these starchy foods at this time benefits the body."



gain from their rich micronutrient profile", explains Naturopathic Physician and Nutritionist Dr Poorvi Bhat, aka

Similarly every region in India has local seasonal foods as well as traditions and techniques to extend their shelf lives. Reminiscing back to her childhood, Dr Bhat observes that the connection with seasonal foods goes beyond the plate. "I am from the Malnad region in Karnataka, where we have extended monsoons when it was difficult to obtain vegetables. We would tie ash gourds and Mangalore cucumbers to windows to extend their shelflife while jackfruit was preserved

popular seasonal vegetables like ridge and bottle gourds for their seasonal nutritive benefits.

This pursuit of healthy eating is evolving against a backdrop of changing food environments. As of 2023, a third of India's population lives in cities. The steady increase of urbanisation and impacts of migration on food choices over the last decade have been significant. When people move away from their home regions. the traditional ecological knowledge tied to their ecosystems is lost even as they encounter and adapt to new practices in their new habitat. A renewed need to connect to one's roots has been driving a rediscovery of regional cooking and familial recipes since the pandemic.

A slew of cookbooks is addressing this need Books like 'Five Morsels of Love' by Archana Pidathala, 'Pangat, a Feast: Food and Lore from Marathi Kitchens' by Saee Koranne-Khandekar, 'The Bangala Table: Flavours and Recipes from Chettinad' by Sumeet Nair, Meenakshi Meyyappan and Jill Donenfeld, and 'The Lucknow Cookbook' by Chand Sur and Sunita Kohli offer a treasure trove of recipes that exist within India's regional culinary annals. These inward introspections of culinary heritage have led people back to traditional practices of local and seasonal

in brine and used for curries. As gourds contain a lot of water, they lose their texture when pickled. Tving them up helps to circulate air evenly around them and prevents the floor's dampness from spoiling these vegetables." She concludes with expressing dismay over the drastic reduction in consumption of regional seasonal diversity – and the consequent disappearance of traditional preservation techniques and the foods they yielded – with the homogeneity of a ubiquitous basket of offerings like broccoli, cauliflower and carrots and year-round access to foods taking over plates.



consumption, and a rediscovery of the ingredient diversity that was characteristic of their traditional diets.



"After reading my cookbook, 'Beyond Dalma', people message me about how some of the recipes reminded

them of their grandmother's cooking, or a vegetable or green they ate during a particular season back home." shares author Sweta Biswal. Highlighting as it does, intricate links between seasons and agricultural cycles, and documenting seasonal recipes from Odisha, the book is sparking interest in many ways. "While healthy eating is definitely a factor that is steering people in this direction, it is also a means to reconnect with one's roots. These recipes inspire a sense of curiosity, and help people find a wav back to their traditional foods wherever they are." Adding that conversations around diversifying the contents of plates are slowly growing as well. "In Bhubaneshwar, I see a lot of people visiting the haat bazaars in search of seasonal and local produce. *Restaurants here in Odisha have also* begun offering seasonal greens on their menus.'

In addition to authors like Biswal, home chefs and food establishments, as well as educational institutions. are playing a key role in driving

conversations and awareness around seasonal consumption. Biswal shares the example of a friend who recreated a recipe from her cookbook at a popup in Delhi. The preparation, *Hidmicha* Sagaw Patua, made with bitter Buffalo Spinach greens and potatoes, had participants seeking out the greens in Delhi's markets. Rajeshwari on the other hand, observes, "many schools

THE VISUAL IMPACT

While the knowledge around seasonal consumption traditionally begins at home, passed down by elders who lived in sync with the seasons, for many today, it is gleaned through social media, food festivals, and pop ups that serve to cement these concepts.

Social media stars like Chef Thomas Zacharias of The Locavore, Radhika Khandelwal of Fig & Maple, Akash Muralidharan of Vizha, and Santa Sarmah of MasterChef India 2023 are just some of the voices that influence consumers by sharing knowledge and recipes on seasonal foods and bringing them into the mainstream. Furthermore, events like the Wild Food Festival by the OOO Farms; Rooting for Tubers, by Spudnik Farms and the food collective known as Edible Issues; and the Ingu Tengu Supper Club by the Ole Project, a social media initiative which focuses on seasonal foods of Karnataka, all served to educate and highlight how easily many of these foods can be incorporated into modern-day diets.



"Social media played a key role in helping us reach our target audience," share the duo **Sheetal Bhatt**. a

culinary chronicler and Purvi Vyas, an academician and agriculturist. Together they run Rooted Culinary Experiences, an initiative that crafts bespoke culinary events that educate participants about Gujarat's foodways. "We are able to connect with people in their early and late twenties, a target

today talk about healthy eating and insist on lunchboxes or provide meals that are rich in a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. While seasonal school lunches are not widespread yet, there is definitely a push to look beyond the usual suspects of potatoes, carrots and cauliflower." Raieshwari is hopeful that such conversations will both sensitise younger generations to the

group that most needs this awareness.

In September 2024, the team worked

Polo Forest, Vijaynagar, Gujarat, to

native corn varieties. Held at Utthan

Rasoi Ghar, where women from the

communities serve traditional meals.

they created a menu with offerings

like dish, and Makai Sev Puri, that

married traditional culinary wisdom

with contemporary tastes. The stars

Pohta and Pili Godi varieties of corn

which surprised participants with their

of the event, however, were native

distinct textures and subtle sweet

being replaced by monoculture of

regularly," they observe.

commercial American corn. The only

way to preserve them is to eat them

Initiatives like these certainly seem to

be moving the needle on consumer

For the Tons Valley Shop, an online

platform that connects consumers

Tons Valley in Uttarakhand, social

media has been vital in building a

community that values seasonality

chain. In 2020, during the pandemic,

Shubhra Chatterii and Anand Sankar

turned to Facebook and Instagram to

apple harvest. By the end of the apple

help farmers in the region sell their

and transparency in the supply

with farmer produce from the

preferences and buying patterns.

flavours. "Although traditional food

culture is rich in the region, such local

and seasonal plant varieties are slowly

like Makai Ghooghri, a nutritious stew-

host a 'Makai Utsav', spotlighting

with indigenous communities in

and give them a glimpse of what it

means to eat seasonally."

importance of seasonal food choices and also change parents' purchasing habits at home



season, they managed to deliver 25,000 kgs – a testimony to the power of conscious consumers.

"While the idea had been growing for a few years, it saw a sharp rise during the pandemic" shares Shubhra Chatterji, Co-founder of Tons Valley



around us changed drastically, we became more attuned to ideas like that of eating seasonally like our parents and grandparents

did." Chatterji goes on to observe that the average consumer is more discerning today. "It's no longer about eating the same foods all the time. They want both healthy and exciting ingredients." Adding that apartment complexes in metro cities are increasingly forming networks with producers like Tons Valley shop and other farms, allowing residents to collectively purchase seasonal produce directly from source. She concludes happily that loval customers of Tons Valley Shop are today tuned into the seasons of the valley through a calendar of seasonal offerings like plums, apples, pears, persimmons, garlic, rajma, and more.

Most importantly, social media today has also become an indispensable medium for documenting seasonal foods and recipes. "The wisdom behind eating these foods cannot be packed into minute-long reels. But, social media does aid in creating a repository of information that is accessible and generates curiosity." adds the Rooted Culinary Experiences team.



FOR THE PLATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The awareness that cyclic consumption goes beyond individual health, wellbeing, and novelty on the plate to impact the planet is also more prevalent than ever. A rise in consumer demand for local and seasonal produce enables farmers to diversify crops by shifting away from resourceintensive farming practices, thus fostering the propagation of longvalued, lesser-recognised nutritious plant foods that have fallen by the wayside.

Local and seasonal foods are closely linked to issues such as food security and food safety. Non-seasonal cultivation also requires more

THE FUTURE OF SEASONALITY

In 2025, as seasonal foods increasingly expand consumers' palates and plates. many predict that the food industry and dining establishments will work with farmers and food producers to cater to these demands and create solutions to optimise seasonal availability of produce.

Biswal observes that in the home kitchen "seasonal eating does not involve a drastic shift in terms of cooking techniques. As long as they are able to access the produce. consumers will embrace the diversity of seasonal foods, be it a greater variety of grains, fruits and vegetables or interesting herbs and seasonal greens, these options will enable them to completely refresh their menus every few months." Krishnan however highlights with dismay, the wastage of native varieties of fruits like mangoes and jackfruit that do not have dedicated markets. "Around my home in Kerala, we get seven different varieties of native mangoes. Despite sincere efforts to consume or process them for pickles and other products, we still waste quintals-worth because mainstream markets are largely attuned to popular varieties like Banganapalli and Alphonso."

ACTION POINTS

The greater focus on cyclical consumption in 2025 can be leveraged in many ways by the Indian food Industry, thereby aiding in diversifying the Indian plate and palate while reducing agricultural loss. Farmers, food producers and agriculturists can expand their offerings to include lesser known local and native seasonal produce. Restaurants can increase local and seasonal offerings on menus. Sellers can build communities to educate consumers on seasonal produce and the traditional wisdom behind their consumption. Food media can create content to propagate and educate on the benefits of sustainable food practices and seasonal food consumption by sharing recipes and knowledge.

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chemical inputs for crop sustenance, raising concerns about food safety. Plant foods that have been invaluable to rural farming communities are a



/// case in point. "With time, knowledge about such uncultivated foods is fading. In Wayanad, there

are 93 varieties of wild seasonal greens recorded, of which 15 to 17 varieties come from paddy fields and are, unfortunately, largely classified as weeds. Which, as a result of how intensive farming is structured. farmers are encouraged to destroy." shares **Rajesh Krishnan**, farmer and CEO of TAPCO, or Thirunelly Agri Producer Company Ltd. in Wayanad.

"As we move towards seasonality, we move away from a monotonal and monochromatic food industry. rebuilding our connection with the food that surrounds us," Krishnan observes citing the success story of *Thakara* or sickle senna, an edible bush that grows naturally by paddy fields and wetlands. Valued in traditional medicine for its laxative properties, research has highlighted its antioxidant-rich compounds. garnering the plant renewed interest in recent times.

Perhaps the solution lies in the food industry stepping in with higher consumption requirements and innovative solutions that use seasonal consumption in product innovation. The team at Tons Valley Shop experienced this first hand when they were recently approached by a brewery for Rhododendron extracts to use in brewing trials. According to Chatterii, the Rhododendron trees flower for about 20 days in season in Uttarakhand. The Tons Valley Shop utilises this small window to produce innovative propositions for the home. while also supporting requests from commercial establishments interested in incorporating them into their products. This example underlines the possibilities of seasonal produce being leveraged in new ways.

Many chefs have already paved the way for seasonal foods to serve as conduits of health and flavour. Through endeavours like Goa-based Edible Archives by Chefs Anumitra Ghosh Dastidar and Shalini Krishan, Bangalore-based Farmlore by Chefs Johnson Ebenezer and Mythravie Iyer and Chennai-based The Farm by Chef Shreya Sreeram, immersive food experiences that highlight seasonal

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and local produce and the multitude of flavours they bring to the table have gained popularity among consumers. In the coming year, consumers will begin seeking more of these experiences within the comforts of their kitchens.

The seeds of seasonality have been sown and are sprouting. That said, while seasonal consumption offers solutions toward enhancing the nutritional value of diets, creating safer foodways, the onus also lies with consumers to help it flourish through conscious choice; whether it's ordering apples online from Uttarakhand, choosing to cook Hidmicha Sagaw Patua from an Odiya cookbook, or buying Thakara at a local market.



SECTION AT A GLANCE

Conscientious Indians, looking to adopt a more healthy and sustainable lifestyle, are once again recognising the benefits of the traditional ways of growing, cooking and eating food. As a result, many are now turning to traditional wisdom to guide their own food and lifestyle choices.

Social media is playing an important role in fuelling this movement by bringing traditional tools, methods and recipes back into conversations, and showcasing the benefits of returning to lesserknown local and seasonal ingredients. Food companies are making substantial changes in their products, labels and messaging to engage with this growing segment of consumers. Restaurant and delivery chains are expanding their menus to include new dishes designed to support specific dietary and lifestyle choices.

Read on to see what our panel of tastemakers have to say about the trends that will shape the dining scene at home in 2025.



TOOLKIT FOR 2025

Consumers are exhibiting increased curiosity and excitement over exploring local roots. It is no accident that Indian brands and products are increasingly occupying prime shelf space in retail outlets across the country. In the packaged foods and snacks segment, while traditional flavours are most soughtafter, consumers are also keen to purchase products that are cooked in healthier methods, and use more nutritionally beneficial ingredients and less preservatives.

Restaurants and cloud kitchens, who have capitalised on consumers' interest in regional cuisines, must now also pay attention to the fact that most diners read online reviews carefully before placing an order.

Local and seasonal are the keywords this year, and regional language food content and social media professionals will find many opportunities to showcase heirloom recipes and passeddown traditions and wisdom. Industry players and marketers should look to find the connections between native traditions and modern science to appeal to consumers.





This year, we asked our panel to predict which culinary themes will influence daily meals at home the most in 2025. Our panel predicts that more people will take inspiration from culinary roots (82%) by digging into their family's culinary traditions to revive forgotten recipes. In the process, they will come to appreciate the merits of eating seasonally (79%), drawing from the immense wisdom encapsulated in our traditional Indian regional and community cuisines (78%).

They will also actively seek to apply traditional wisdom (75%) in their food habits, and **adopt sustainable food** practices (70.0%) by incorporating them back into their daily routine, using traditional utensils, and revisiting ageold cooking techniques where necessary.



82% Taking inspiration from culinary roots



79% Eating seasonally

78%

Exploring Indian regional and community cuisines



75% Applying traditional wisdom



70% Adopting sustainable food practices



CULINARY THEMES



I believe daily meals at home will be most satisfying because they blend wellness, sustainability, and a deeper respect for culinary roots. Traditional wisdom adds a meaningful layer to this with heritage ingredients and cooking methods that make meals wholesome and grounded.



Aditya Agrawal

Many people are exploring healthy choices in their kitchens by going back to their roots. Adopting millets, using traditional utensils and cooking methods to cook food so it retains its nutritional value and traditionally rich flavours. We have been seeing an increased interest in consumption of content revolving around traditional practices. The easier availability of traditional ingredients through e-commerce platforms makes it even more convenient for consumers to adapt to traditional recipes.



Now more than ever, it is accepted that regional, home and everyday foods check the boxes for time, convenience and health. This suits many dietary restrictions and hence checks the box for 'coolness'. Regional foods being heavily dependent on seasonal produce and sustainable eating, make it inevitable that Indian regional cuisine will rule tables, lunch boxes and even special occasion meals!



Chef Ranveer Bra

I find the concept of exploring one's culinary heritage through cuisine quite compelling. Our regional diversity is so vast and wonderful, with each region rich in unique flavours, ingredients, and cooking styles. it's essential to not only explore and celebrate this diversity and the treasure trove of flavours, techniques, and stories it encompasses, but also our duty to preserve it.

PRODUCT PROPOSITIONS: CONSUMERS



While contemplating which product propositions will influence consumer purchase decisions most in 2025, our panel made a clear and near unanimous prediction favouring products with only natural ingredients, with no additives or preservatives (87%). A growing awareness around food composition, safety, and hygiene, combined with greater activism on the social media platforms, is a sign that both regulatory authorities and food businesses will need to find better ways to communicate their commitments to regain consumer trust.

The panel also predicted an increased sense of pride for the Made in India (87%) movement, as demonstrated by the growing confidence in our ability to produce high quality, world-class products that are winning accolades and awards. Within this category itself, consumers will especially favour brands that claim to support local (84%) farmers, producers and businesses to bring **freshly**processed (81%) products into the market in 2025.



INDIA

No preservatives,



81% Made in India



Deepa Chauhan

food activism is no longer just a social media phenomenon. In specific cases, the involvement of regulatory authorities has resulted in product relabelling, and sometimes even product roll backs. For example, some state governments have been cracking down on food outlets violating health, safety and hygiene norms, while FSSAI has disallowed food colours and certain additives, especially in street foods where such usage was rampant. These actions are essential to bring back consumer confidence in the quality of food they consume everyday.



Lans Sadhu Consumers are becoming more aware and prioritising quality and transparency over well-marketed products. Brands of the next decade, regardless of size, would need to focus on a great product mix that offers both, a brand story backed by a procurement story, showcasing openness and transparency.



Lubna Rafigi

The growing preference for artisanal, local, and traditional food items reflects a desire for authenticity and connection. By choosing foods that carry stories - whether it's a loaf of sourdough crafted by a local baker or spices sourced from a nearby farm — we're not just buying products; we're honouring heritage, community, and sustainability. In a disconnected world, food serves as a bridge, helping us connect to ourselves through mindful preparation and eating, and our surroundings by supporting local traditions and crafts



Chef Varun Inamdar

The growing appreciation for traditional food reflects a collective yearning for authenticity and deeper connections with our heritage and communities—which truly warms my heart. I firmly believe that traditions, in their purest form, serve as bridges to our roots, anchoring us in a world that can often feel untethered. And, not everything needs to be reinvented; sometimes, preserving what is timeless is the most powerful way to move forward. By honoring and passing traditions on we also create a profound legacy that strengthens intergenerational bonds and keeps our cultural essence alive. To sum up, as I always say, the future is in the past.





The top picks from our panel of experts for snacks and convenience foods underscores the growing awareness among Indian consumers towards healthy eating even when it comes to convenient snack choices.

According to their predictions, consumers will continue to seek healthier options (84%) as replacements for their traditional fried and processed snacks. They will look for guilt-free options like roasted nuts, seeds, and air-popped grains to satisfy cravings without compromising on their health. Also, as consumers become increasingly aware, and therefore wary, of artificial additives and preservatives that are currently going into food, our panel predicts a decisive growth in demand for preservative-free snacks (84%).

Meanwhile, with health and fitness retaining their importance in decisions related to lifestyle and well-being in 2025, nutritionally-fortified snacks (80.0%) along with special diet/health-driven options (78%) will continue to grow as popular options especially with busy individuals looking to augment their diets.



84% **Preservative-free** options



84% Healthier options



79% Nutritionallyfortified options



78% Special diet/healthdriven options

CONVENIENCE FOODS



Anurag Mallick & Priya Ganapathy

Currently, the traditional Indian snack market is exploding with lots of regional players offering a wide range of Indian snacks - from Adukale in Bangalore to Haldiram's, Bikaji and Shreeji in the north. Makhana (fox nut), ragi, dry fruits, nuts, berries and trail mixes will continue to grow as a category, as will specific diet oriented, nutritionally fortified food. Instant noodles and ramen will continue to ride the Korean popularity wave.



Madhushree Basu Roy

By 2025, consumer snacking habits will reflect a mix of convenience, health consciousness, and global influences. Comfort foods like instant noodles and frozen momos will remain popular for their affordability and ease, offering a sense of homemade effort. Healthier, non-fried options such as flavoured makhanas and nutritionally fortified millet based options like millet granola and makhana chivda will see strong growth, driven by the rising focus on balancing health and satiety. Meanwhile international snacks, especially Japanese and Korean, will continue to attract young consumers.



Nehal Karkera

It's great to see healthier, fortified, and preservative-free snacks becoming so popular. People are clearly looking for options that don't just taste good, but also feel good to eat. It's also nice to see how brands are stepping up to make convenience food align with what consumers actually want - snacks that are both easy and healthy, products like baked snacks, no palm oil based products & alternatives to potato chips like tapioca or chickpea crisps are in fact an essential in my home too now.



Sharmila Vaidyanathan

Reports show that snacking has increased among consumers, but they are also conscious about what they snack on. There is definitely going to be a right-place, right-time approach. But one is also getting the best of both worlds. Healthy snacks are available for a certain time of the day, while traditional nibbles fill the need when occasion calls for them. It's also interesting to see how the food industry caters to both these demands.

FOOD DELIVERY EXPERIENCES



Weighing in on the most important factors that will influence consumer choices while ordering food at home, our experts predicted that **cuisine preferences (93%)** will continue to be the primary factor that drives ordering-in in 2025. Consumers will also spend more effort and time critically evaluating the **reputation of the establishment (87%)**, through positive word-of-mouth, favourable online reviews, and strong brand connect before committing to an order.

Meanwhile, the **price of an average meal (88%)** will continue to remain an important consideration for individuals seeking affordable, high-quality meals at home to support their busy lifestyles. Finally, our experts predict that consumers will prefer outlets with **menus (81%)** that offer a diverse range of dishes, catering to different tastes and dietary preferences.





Debjani Chatterjee Alam

I find that word-of-mouth recommendations work best when ordering from home chefs. However, I avoid ordering if prices seem unreasonably low, because I believe it isn't feasible to cook and sell food below a certain cost without compromising on the quality of ingredients, which is unacceptable to me. I also examine the food images used carefully, which may seem strange, but if stock photos have been used or taken from somewhere else, it gives me a sense of the seller.



Pranav Joshi

A majority of people I've come across rarely care about the brand in this field. They want to try out new things and they want to try them NOW. If the delivery time is low and the food sounds exciting and also fits in their budget, people are going to end up trying it. The Indian market is very price sensitive. New food done quickly at a bargain is the perfect hook.



Shweta Mohapatra

I would love to see food delivery apps evolve further to offer a frictionless, intuitive digital ordering experience. While more features like saved favourites, easy reordering, order tracking, personalised recommendations, and one-click ordering will help, innovations like voice-based ordering through smart speakers, virtual 3D dish menus, or AI-powered assistants would be particularly attractive to younger, tech-savvy consumers in 2025.



Soumitra Velkar

The key factors in food delivery choice will revolve around speed, personalisation, quality, sustainability, and convenience. Delivering a tailored experience that meets customer requirements, whether it's faster delivery, healthier options, or innovative packaging, are crucial in a highly competitive market. Discounts, rewards & loyalty programs, and gamified experiences like earning badges or rewards in UPI apps etc. will also be important catalysts in customer decision-making processes.



DINING OUT

In 2024, food dominated conversations with an additional focus on culinary experiments, creative use of seasonal and local ingredients, and collaborations between restaurants and chefs, homemakers, and food producers. India's restaurant industry is vibrant as ever, and evolving to showcase the country's rich culinary heritage and diversity. The steady growth of independent brands, and rise of local farmers and producers supplying specialty ingredients are some of the key factors driving chefs to keep innovating with dishes and dining experiences.

Eating out in India is no longer about satisfying hunger, or even just celebrating milestone occasions - consumers are now looking for authentic, immersive experiences that celebrate unique flavours and bridge diverse culinary themes. In this year's Dining Out section, our experts discuss how the growing trend of seasonal menus is no fad, but a sustainable shift that will connect future generations to the country's unique culinary heritage by reviving regional micro-cuisines and celebrating homestyle cooking.

CONSUMPTION CALENDAR

A tool to select, plan and organize marketing activities around relevant food events throughout the year



Sankranti is an ancient Indian festival that is celebrated in varied ways across India, Til Gud and Khichdi are central to celebrations in many regions Food writers can explore the culinary traditions of Sankranti, and/or chronicle varied khichdis made across the country in this period.



Dhan Diwas (Rice Day) **Chefs and Restaurateurs**

India has a rich historical bond with rice and a diverse selection of heritage rice varieties and dishes as one travels around the country Chefs and restaurants can showcase menus that celebrate the diversity of Indian heritage and heirloom rice varieties and dishes-made with them from rice to rice based breads. birvanis and desserts.



Content Creators

The connection of monsoon and Chai Pakora Day is one that Indians associate strongly with. Monsoons when consumers are often rained in, offer ideal opportunities for browsing online. Content creators can leverage this opportunity to engage their audience by showcasing delectable chai pakora recipes and pairings, as well as origin stories of varied chai and pakora offerings from around India or the world

World Gulab Jamun Day Patissiers, Dessert makers and Mithai walas

Gulab Jamun is a much loved dessert for Indian consumers. Patissiers and dessert makers can showcase the original offering with ils origin slories, or create crossover products like Old Monk *Gulab* Jamun, Gulab Jamun Financiers, and Gulab Jamun cheesecakes, to grab attention of desert-loving Indians always open to trying new things









International Cheese Day PR and Food Marketeer Indian cheese has evolved and

grown exponentially in the last decade. Indian cheeses are making their mark on global platforms. PR and Food Marketing companies can leverage this spotlight on cheese to showcase their own Indian cheese, cheese-based products, value added products. and menus around chees



Sustainable Gastronomy Day Across Vertical

Sustainability, especially in the food space is a big dynamic conversation that both the industry and the consumer are participating in. Sustainable gastronomy day offers the entire industry an opportunity to participate in the conversation by initiating advocacy programs, showcase solutions to minimise/use food waste, use sustainable processes and packaging and spread awareness.



World Tourism Day **Tourism Professional**

The Indian traveller today is seeking out propositions that allow deep immersion in the culinary culture of places they visit. Tourism professionals could showcase a variety of culinary tourism experiences available to explore food around India such as food walks. market explorations, culinary masterclasses, fruit and vegetable harvests, restaurant discovery tours and more.



World Diabetes Day

Product Developers and Marketeers

India being a diabetes hotspot, product developers and marketers can use this day to put a positive spin on a serious topic by creating relevant solutions in the form of convenience foods and value-added products that can offer diet and lifestyle solutions for diabetics such as innovative sugar-free, good-for-you desserts, high protein, low calorie snacky treats, and mindfully created menus for diabetic diets

A CULINARY CONSUMPTION CALENDAR: CREATING YEAR-ROUND FEASTS OF OPPORTUNITY



The Indian F&B industry can unlock greater marketing potential by diversifying its strategies beyond the traditional festive season calendar.

FOCUS AREAS

Utilise data analytics to identify consumer trends, preferences, and behaviours. Prioritise customer needs and preferences, and tailor offerings accordingly. Stay updated on emerging trends and consumer preferences, and be ready to adapt to changing market dynamics. Leverage a mix of traditional and digital marketing channels to reach consumers across various platforms. By effectively leveraging regional festivals, brands can create memorable experiences, build brand lovalty, and drive sales.

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DOMINANCE OF THE FESTIVE SEASON: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Marketing and event calendars have served as invaluable strategic tools for boosting sales within India's F&B sector. Typically focused on festive seasons, they incorporate special themed menus. limited-time offers (LTOs), and engaging events - an approach that drives profitability by harnessing heightened consumer sentiment and spending during these periods.



"In today's competitive landscape, it's critical that brands adopt a deliberate and tactical approach to differentiate

their consumer propositions." points out **Prashant Issar.** Founder of Ishaara and Director of Bellona Hospitality Services. "Although frequent menu innovation, special offerings, and pop-ups are crucial for maintaining relevance amidst the noise of social media and the constant pursuit of restaurant accolades. However, it is critical that these are approached with direction and intent, otherwise they can reduce a restaurant to a mere event venue."

Issar leads a diverse portfolio of successful restaurant brands, including Ishaara, Dobaara, Cha. Allora, Julius, Fyole, Poult, and Eight. "Everv restaurant brand possesses a unique identity. At Bellona, we curate subject matter experts and knowledge partners tailored to each brand's needs, collaborating with them to define food and beverage programs, plan strategic calendars, and map public relations efforts." A wellplanned calendar provides brands with clear direction, enabling them to align their offerings with their philosophy,

Gauri Devidaval, Co-Founder and Director of the Mumbai-based Food Matters Group which is home to thriving brands like The Table. Mag St. and Mag St. Bread Co. among others, elaborates on the varying strategies they apply. Positioned as a neighbourhood eatery, Mag St. occasionally introduces new items, but its core appeal lies in its staple comfort offerings. "Rather than plaving with fleeting seasonal menus. we focus on thoughtfully adding

target audience, and strategic goals.



comfort-driven ethos, prioritizing quality and a consistently delightful experience. Seasonal fruits however, play a big role in our cocktail program. We introduce them in our signature cocktails as well as in our recurring special menus."

However, at the company's bakery, Mag St. Bread Co., the approach is different. "Christmas and Easter naturally lend themselves to baked products, while seasonal fruits heavily influence our specials, so it makes sense to align to a seasonal calendar *here.*" With 80% of their business coming from their signature menu, the variable 20% driven by such specials, periodically provides marketing boosts to maintain media and consumer visibility.

The year-end festive season from October to December, is the industry's peak, with the highest marketing efforts, budget allocation, and revenue generation. However, with every brand generating buzz simultaneously,

the chaos of new launches and promotional campaigns can prove overstimulating for consumers. diluting individual brand impact. "Today, food fatigue is high," observes Issar. "With the sheer number of new eateries opening, home delivery being more convenient than ever, and higher disposable incomes fuelling more frequent dining out and ordering in, consumers are spoilt for choice. And this only increases during the festive season," Moreover, the heightened

sense of urgency and competition to make the most of this period may also lead to contrived curations. which could be detrimental to brands that don't easily lend themselves to predefined notions of certain popular festivals. This begs the question: Can a diversified marketing calendar with

CELEBRATIONS IN INDIA: A FEAST OF FESTIVALS

India's rich cultural heritage offers a calendar packed with festivals. While brands leverage popular ones like Diwali, Eid, Christmas, Holi, or Raksha Bandhan, a calendar integrating a diversity of regional cultural celebrations could present more unique and targeted opportunities.

Onam is a prime example. Leveraged effectively through annual campaigns by the state's Tourism Board, the regional festival has transcended its cultural roots to capture broader attention. At its core is the Onam Sadhya—a sumptuous feast showcasing Kerala's culinary vibrancy—which has captivated the Indian food industry in recent years, prompting more brands to feature the festival on their activation calendars with both traditional and unconventional offerings. In Mumbai, for example, Chef Marina Balakrishnan curates exquisite Sadhya pop-ups in collaboration with restaurants and hotels, and delivery kitchen Nair On Fire has earned city-wide acclaim for its inventive 'UnSadya', which includes non-vegetarian dishes alongside traditional fare. Meanwhile, Bangalorebased Ulo Ice Cream's palada payasam flavour is a limited special that consumers, Malayali and otherwise, eagerly await each year.

Similarly, several other regional and community festivals, like Assamese Bihu, Tibetan Losar, Parsi Navroz, and more, offer opportunities for creative propositions, allowing food brands to embrace diversity, connect with local communities, foster cultural



distributed resources lead to more stable and sustained vear-round activation in the Indian F&B industry?



understanding, and expand their customer base.

Now add to this the potential of global festivals. For decades, Thai, Chinese, and Pan-Asian restaurants across India have capitalized on occasions like Songkran or Thai New Year, Chinese New Year, and the Mooncake Festival, introducing special dishes and menus. However, the most iconic celebrations for Chinese New Year unfold in Kolkata's historic Chinese enclayes: Tangra and Tiretta Bazaar. An annual tradition dating back to the late 18th century. Anindya Sundar **Basu**, co-founder of Kolkata Classics, a YouTube channel that showcases the city's heritage, effectively leveraged the festival to create engaging



audience curiosity.

content. "The video highlighted the invaluable contributions of Kolkata's Chinese community to the city's rich history. By

bringing to life the vibrant spectacle of the Chinese New Year celebrations, including the iconic dragon dance, the video resonated with viewers." shares Basu, emphasizing that festivals provide opportunities for content creators to enrich their content with well-researched narratives that pique

Well-planned culinary consumption calendars can enable focused content creation for tailored marketing campaigns across channels, and deliver relevant propositions to customers throughout the year.

Inventive festivals that are topical and tap into the cultural zeitgeist, also offer exciting opportunities. A remarkable example that emerged in 2024 was 'Diwalloween'. Halloween, a major commercial holiday in North America, has captivated Indian markets, inspiring creative campaigns and limited-edition themed products. But on October 31st in 2024, it coincided with Diwali, sparking global excitement around this fusionfestival. Bengaluru-based Farmlore, renowned for its creatively themed menus, tapped in. 'GET READY FOR A SPOOKTACULAR DIWALI!' proclaimed their Instagram handle.



"We typically curate special menus for both Diwali and Halloween, but with both festivals coinciding in 2024.

we felt compelled to elevate the experience," says Chef Johnson Ebenezer, Chef Patron and Cofounder of Farmlore. The result was a captivating 12-course degustation menu around 'Food vs Evil', an imaginative narrative intertwining the folklore of both festivals into a culinary battle. Set within the enchanting realm of 'Farmloredesh' and accompanied by comic book-style illustrations, the experience proved to be a resounding success.

While 'Diwalloweens' may be few and far between, by identifying specific festivals that resonate, and understanding their significance. associated customs and food traditions, F&B brands can create razor sharp propositions for specific periods and demographics.

SEASONS AND PROVENANCE: AN INGREDIENT-FORWARD APPROACH

The proliferation of winter promotions centered around dishes like Punjabi Sarson da Saag, Gajar Halwa, and Gujarati Undhiyu serve as compelling evidence that seasonal promotions offer lucrative opportunities for food businesses across various sectors.

Soam in Mumbai recognized the value of limited-time seasonal menus early on, implementing an annual calendar of seasonally-rotating food festivals alongside its core menu of Gujarati and Marwari offerings. These seasonal menus, showcasing heirloom recipes meticulously researched from traditional cookbooks and gathered from patrons, not only offer timely refreshes to the menu, but draw diners in with dishes that are disappearing from home kitchens. In December the winter menu features seasonal delicacies like Undhiyu and paunk (tender green jowar millet). January welcomes the comforting embrace of simple, wholesome Khichdi. The scorching summer inspires refreshing beverages, icy treats, and light, cooling menus. Mugay monsoons present the perfect opportunity to entice customers with a Chai Pakoda menu, and during *Shravan*, the month of fasting, Soam offers a specially curated menu of *faraal* offerings.

Bangalore-based Oota, an awardwinning fine dining restaurant specializing in Karnataka cuisine, has similarly developed a calendar of seasonal food festivals. "In addition to festive thalis for Sankranti.



monsoon culinary treasures," shares Total Environment Hospitality's Corporate Chef Mandaar Sukhtankar. "We also offer a Kadlekayi Parishe menu coinciding with Bangalore's groundnut fair, an Avarekalu Habba to celebrate the humble hyacinth bean, and a Mavina Habba or mango special featuring the delectable Sakarekatti mangoes during the summer."

Seasons intrinsically influence ingredient availability, allowing F&B players to capitalize on ingredientforward propositions that highlight provenance and unique properties. The 'Year of Millets' campaign exemplifies how a single-ingredient focus can resonate with consumers on a large scale.

Much of India's ingredient diversity carries deep historical and cultural relevance, which can be tapped into similarly. Pan-Indian chain Ishaara has recently done just this, with 'Kesariva'. a festival dedicated to Kashmiri saffron highlighting saffron brand Noush by Basu Kesar. "As someone with Kashmiri roots, witnessing saffron's journey from plant to plate and the dedication of Kashmiri farmers was deeply inspiring. It sparked profound appreciation for the ingredient, driving us to craft a menu

honoring its remarkable history and

versatility." shares Issar. Prioritising ingredient quality and origin can enhance brand image, driving revenue and customer loyalty. Such ingredientforward approaches also prove wise in the long run by fostering supplier relationships, ensuring a consistent source of high-quality ingredients, and acknowledging the producers who bring them to the plate.

Moreover, seasonal and ingredientdriven approaches also allow brands to engage with consumers mindful of their personal well-being as well as the environmental and social impact of their food choices, not to mention the rich storytelling potential ingredients carry that can elevate consumer experiences. Chef Ebenezer's culinary philosophy at Farmlore is particularly focused on ingredient-driven creations and their compelling narratives. For instance, 'Ant Bites', inspired by his observations of ant colonies thriving in the farm's citrus trees, tapped into the story of their farm's unique ecosystem, while capturing significant attention on social media for its novelty.



FOOD OBSERVANCE DAYS: A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Another exciting avenue is that of food observance days. Typically initiated by governments, agencies or organizations, these days spotlight specific ingredients or dishes, enhancing their popularity. For example. International Hummus Dav (May 13th) celebrates the versatile Middle Eastern spread, while Ramen Day (July 11th), championed by the Japan Ramen Association, promotes and supports the country's ramen culture.

Today, social media reflects this global trend: nearly every day is dedicated to some food, ranging from the mundane to the extravagant. By strategically leveraging food observance days, brands can not only increase their bottom lines but also get creative

with topical offerings, events, and social media campaigns, allowing them to connect with customers seeking novelty and strengthen their brand identity. Ironically, India, with its incredibly diverse culinary landscape, lags behind in this regard. While there are a few dedicated days, such as Undhiyu Day (January 14th), Dal Divas (January 24th), Chutney Day (September 23rd), and the rather peculiar World Samosa Day (celebrated only on leap years), the number pales in comparison to global offerings. However it also presents endless opportunities as exemplified by LT Foods, the company behind the Daawat rice brand.

To capitalize on India's obsession with biryani, a dish deeply intertwined

with the quality of the rice used, LT Foods established 'Biryani Day' on 7th July 2021. One of their most successful initiatives, the campaign set a Guinness World Record in 2023 for the 'World's largest biryani tasting session!' In 2024, they elevated the experience with an AI-powered platform allowing *biryani* enthusiasts to enjoy personalized cooking experiences alongside celebrated Chef Sanieev Kapoor.

Daawat's success with Birvani Dav is an example of how the brand leveraged emotion to influence consumer buying habits and fostered long-term loyalty, while also creating a strong association between Biryani and Daawat.

BEHIND THE BITE: FROM MATERIAL TO CEREBRAL

Beyond the tangible sensory opportunities of food marketing awaits the realm of cerebral experiences that resonate with consumers on a deeper level, evoking nostalgia, wonder, curiosity and motivation.



"In today's media landscape, consumers are increasingly discerning, equipped with a 'cognitive ad

blocker' that instinctively filters out exaggerated claims and overly promotional content. This skepticism has necessitated a shift towards authentic, data-driven storvtelling, Audiences now demand factual. transparent communication, and brands that ground their messaging in robust research can build trust and cut through the noise." advises Sujit Patil, Chief Communications Officer, Godrej Industries Group. Patil is the force behind the company's IPdriven thought leadership initiatives, including this very Godrej Food Trends Report, as well as the Milk Report by Godrej Jersey and the annual STEMM reports by the company's ready-tocook brand Godrej Yummiez.

Building on its inaugural report's five pillars (Safety, Technology, Taste, Ease, and Mood Uplifter), STTEM 2.0. the second edition of this influential snack report delves into evolving consumer perceptions in the Indian frozen snacks market. "As the



categorv leader. Godrei Yummiez prioritizes understanding consumer needs. STTEM 2.0 provides crucial insights, guiding our product development

and strengthening our market position," says Abhay Parnerkar, CEO of Godrei Foods. Released just before the festive season, when consumer sentiments veer towards indulgence.

CULINARY CONSUMPTION CALENDARS: A POWERFUL TOOL

A well-crafted Culinary Consumption Calendar, blending festive and culturally relevant events, seasonal offerings, food observance days, and thought leadership initiatives, provides an endless repository of unique

ACTION POINTS

Agile brands in the F&B space can tap into a potentially more diversified marketing calendar by identifying and leveraging various occasions, such as regional festivals, seasons and seasonal produce, food observance days, and trends, or even create specific IPs to create a year-round strategy that resonates with wider audiences.

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the report garnered significant media attention, elevating brand visibility and credibility. Its in-depth analysis also served as a valuable resource for industry peers, stimulating innovation and collaboration. Key findings from such resources can be effectively repurposed into engaging content, sparking discussions and driving audience interaction, so media channels, journalists and content creators also actively seek and cite industry reports in their work.

Another example of such thought leadership is the Wild Food Project by OOO Farms, in collaboration with Chef Thomas Zacharias of The Locavore. This initiative championed the exploration of indigenous foraged foods from Maharashtra's Sahyadri mountains, their cultural significance and culinary applications in traditional and modern contexts, documented in their 'Wild Food Zine'. The zine remains a valuable resource for chefs, researchers, and food enthusiasts. Beyond raising awareness of the region's biodiversity, the project fosters appreciation for traditional knowledge, sustainable practices, and the heirloom products OOO Farms conserves and propagates.

If research-driven artefacts trigger cerebral propositions, then nostalgia is a potent tool to evoke emotional connection. Two Brothers Organic Farms India, a brand reviving traditional ingredients and recipes through evocative social media campaigns, resonates with older consumers nostalgic for their childhood flavours while simultaneously appealing to a new generation curious about heritage foods.

The brand collaborated with publishing projects Nivaala by

Shruti Taneja and Alipore Post by Rohini Keiriwal on their second edition of 'Memories on a Plate', an anthology of anecdotes, recipes, art, poetry, and photo essays from 100 global kitchens. According to Taneja, the first edition of the book was a resounding success, with 450 of the 550 printed copies sold at ₹1,199, while 100 were aifted to contributors. By funding the second edition's production. Two Brothers Organic Farms expanded its reach, resulting in an increased print run of 1,000 copies with enhanced size and quality, priced at ₹1,499. "For



us, cooking is an act of love, and sharing recipes extends that love. We needed a partner like Two Brothers Farms to amplify

this message and share these stories with a broader audience." shares Keiriwal.

For Taneia, the project greatly bolstered Nivaala's brand identity as a platform celebrating family food



memories. "This book embodies our brand ethos, showcasing our commitment to preserving culinary

heritage while sparking interest in Andaaz, our vertical specializing in family cookbooks. Since the release of 'Memories on a Plate', we have received numerous inquiries from individuals eager to document their own family recipes, inspired by the high-quality standard it set."

Such initiatives exemplify how F&B brands can leverage both cerebral and nostalgic thought leadership, as well as timely and meaningful partnerships with media channels to enhance their reputation and credibility, break through marketing chatter, and build impactful, emotional connections with industry peers and consumers alike.

concepts around which to curate targeted culinary campaigns. By strategically leveraging this approach. brands can amplify the impact of their marketing efforts, establish a distinct identity, and forge lasting resonance

with their consumer base. This dynamic vision can redefine the Indian F&B industry, ensuring relevance and growth across every season.

SECTION AT A GLANCE

The trend towards celebrating Indian flavours, cuisines, ingredients and chefs will continue to grow in the coming year. Festivals that were once chiefly celebrated in home kitchens, are now coming onto restaurant menus, with chefs focusing on showcasing regional festive delicacies in the best way possible. Indian-origin continues to be a catchphrase for restaurants and bars. That said, innovations like vertical farming and indoor growing systems now provide year-round access to fresh produce, and reduce the environmental impact of long-distance transportation. Farm-to-table dining will continue to gain momentum, with restaurants spotlighting the farmers and producers behind their ingredients, and fostering deeper connections between diners and the food they consume.

Read on to find out which Dining Out trends our experts are expecting to see on the menu for 2025.





TOOLKIT FOR 2025

In the coming years, restaurant dining will be heavily influenced by technology, and entrepreneurs and chefs must both consider leveraging AI-powered tools to understand diners' preferences. Restaurants will also benefit from focusing on creating quality culinary experiences around innovative tasting menus that showcase culinary creativity, seasonal ingredients, heritage recipes and personalised experiences. Technology and automation can help to streamline operations and increase efficiency, creating an environment that enables chefs to showcase their creativity. Restaurants that are able to blend sustainability, innovation, and personalization will stay ahead of the curve in 2025. By embracing regional identity, prioritizing provenance, showcasing culinary craft, and leveraging the power of storytelling, restaurants can create unique and memorable dining experiences that resonate with discerning guests.







Restaurants and bars constantly look for creative ways to strengthen their credentials, grow clientele, and push boundaries by experimenting with new propositions alongside regular menus. This year, we asked our experts to predict menu propositions that will entice regular diners to try something new in 2025. Local/regional signature dishes (95%) emerged as the top pick, reaffirming a desire for more authentic, culturally rooted experiences. This was followed by Chef recommendations (82%) and special tasting menus (74%), highlighting the industry's growing confidence in catering to a tribe of diners that have become increasingly comfortable with newer, more curated dining experiences.

As themes of sustainability and ethical sourcing continue to dominate conversations, ingredient-first menus (70%) celebrating seasonal ingredients, local farms, and sustainable practices will be popular. More **functional**/ healthy menus (70%), catering no-compromise dining experiences to diners with specific dietary needs will also finally emerge.





At its core, dining has evolved beyond sustenance into an emotional journey, where every choice reflects a blend of nourishment, individuality, and a sense of purpose. People now prioritize menus that offer transparency in ingredients, nutritional benefits, and options aligned with their health goals, such as vegan or low-carb choices. Against this backdrop, Chefs are now using creative specials and seasonal menus to provide diners with unique, memorable experiences.



Priva Pathiyar

These days, diners are clued into chefs and their backstories and look forward to engagement, recommendations and interactions. Meanwhile, an appreciation for regional cuisines has been on the rise for the last decade, and more restaurateurs are taking the leap with focused, regionspe<mark>cific menus. This trend will continue as consumers seek new</mark> experiences and go hyper-local while traveling or even try new cuisines in their hometowns.



Chef Shilarna Vaze

Provenance-driven, ingredient-forward restaurants and those offering niche regional cuisines, led by young chefs embracing their culture after honing their culinary skills on global platforms, will be the nouvelle Indian restaurants that everyone will want to eat at. fine dining seems to be a thing of the past although that doesn't mean food is cheap! If you are going to source the best quality ingredients then paying more for your food & drink makes sense. Craft cocktails, fusion flavours, craving-led food and on the other hand artisanal, fermented, gut-friendly, plant-forward cafés seem to be the other end of the hipster spectrum.



Sourish Bhattacharyya

I believe tasting menus will catch on because increasingly people want to be presented with the chef's signature menu that is quick and effortless to order from. And also because such tasting menus offer a great lunchtime proposition to the time-constrained executive in the form of access to the best of the restaurant's menu, ordered and served in the shortest time!





A restaurant's success hinges on its ability to captivate diners with an exciting and innovative menu. A welldesigned menu that highlights unique flavour combinations and visually appealing presentations can leave a lasting impression, encouraging repeat visits and positive word-ofmouth recommendations.

Weighing in on the biggest menu inspirations in 2025, our panel's top pick of **regional identity (86%)** not only celebrates India's rich culinary heritage but also anticipates a persistent demand for authentic and culturally relevant experiences. At the same time, provenance (85%), our theme from last year, will continue inspiring restaurant menus that offer fresh, seasonal ingredients from local farmers, adding a layer of authenticity and sustainability to the experience. Also expect to see menus with a greater focus on **culinary craft (80%)**, one that elevates the dining experience beyond just the food and creates a memorable and engaging interaction between the chef and diners. Finally, **storytelling (77%)** will be on full display weaving narratives around the dishes, highlighting their origins, the stories behind the ingredients, and the cultural significance of the flavours.



77% Storytelling



Chef Hussain Shahzad

As the culinary world evolves, food now isn't just about feeding people - it's about evoking memories and telling stories. At Hunger Inc. Hospitality, we are inspired by India's incredible diversity, from its coastal flavours, to the repertoire of spices and regional recipes. Using locally-sourced ingredients, we celebrate traditions while adding our own creative and contemporary twist for me, storytelling and craft go hand in hand. Every dish is a chance to share a piece of culture – whether it's through the history behind it, the techniques we use, or the way we present it. It's about creating an experience that's immersive, memorable, and connects deeply with guests.



Radhika Misra

2025 will seek the growth of fine dining - a segment that has been long ignored. With practically every restaurant doing delivery, today diners are seeking 'experiences' that go beyond just great food and offer an all-encompassing one-of-a-kind experience that makes stepping out worthwhile and memorable. When people step out to dine, they are seeking a unique and one-of-its-kind meal experience that goes beyond the ordinary. Chef special and tasting menus reflect exclusive offerings, unconventional cuisine, and more. The revival of lost recipes forms a part of that desire.



Sid Mowara

There is renewed interest in hyper local/regional dishes which are trending. and Storytelling on provenance and historical context of the dishes. But I do feel that the last is driving a collective social media driven hype around provenance of ingredients and sustainability in the race to stand out from the competition in some meaningful way. I am skeptical about how many fine dining places will open considering the costs of operation. Micro restaurants are an interesting growth area however.



Chef Urvika Kanoi

Regional cuisine, local produce, authentic flavours from around the world, and traditional methods of cooking are all going to make a mark on menus this year. The consumer is becoming more literate & experimental and finding joy in less is more vs the whole modern gastronomy era where everything needed a million components. If it's a traditional or nostalgic dish, they prefer it executed well or with new ingredients that make sense. The revival of heirloom dishes is getting people really excited too! Be it Odia temple cuisine, rich Maratha dishes, or flavourful Bihari meats - pop-ups, special menus & food festivals are all helping get these out to them.





As the Indian diner's relationship with food continues to evolve, their expectations of dining experiences are changing as well, especially when eating out. Everyday, more individuals are grabbing a quick, inexpensive bite from a roadside outlet on the way to a meeting, joining casual team meetings in/from a cafe, grabbing a quick lunch at a QSR between meetings, and knocking down a few pints in a local bar or pub with their friends. Against this backdrop, we asked our experts to predict which dining formats would the F&B industry be most bullish about in 2025.

Their top pick of **bars and pubs (90%)** is reflective of the industry's confidence in the growing demand for high quality social experiences and nightlife entertainment, especially amongst young and affluent diners. Following closely, new **bistros and cafes (87%)** designed around trendy themes, offering an elevated casual dining experience, will continue to appeal to diners looking for both quick bites and leisurely conversations. Finally, many more **micro-restaurants (81%)**, by renowned chefs, with limited, eclectic menus, focusing on specific cuisines or culinary concepts, will be in the limelight in 2025.



Micro-restaurants (8-20 covers)



Kalyan Karmakar

People are looking to have a relaxed time while eating out, over good food. Traditional restaurant formats such as family dining spaces, large spaces or formal fine dining spaces are losing out to more informal bar focused eateries, cafes, bistros etc, especially with the latter offering chef-driven culinary expertise.



Chef Karan Upmanyu

I feel like while the bars, cafes and micro-spaces would continue to gain popularity, the upcoming f&B outlets would break away from the mould of fitting in any specific format. They would just be places where people feel nice about spending their afternoons and evenings, and generally have a good time. These places would come in all sizes and have an offering that appeases a broad segment of diners. Great, quick offering without the uptightness would be the baseline.



Chef Niyati Rao

In my opinion, there hasn't been a better time to introduce conceptually-led establishments to the Indian diner. People have decided that dining and drinking are integral to their social environment. Something shifted with trends after 2020. Diners today are looking for experiences equivalent to what they are experiencing during their travels. It's becoming a way of life! Chefs, and restaurateurs have realised that focusing on one concept at a time does well, and brings clarity to the way guests perceive and enjoy them as well. This is only the beginning! The desire to indulge and try something new will challenge the hospitality sector to adapt, evolve and innovate, every day in times to come.



Raian Sethi

2024 has shown us that the Indian diner is not just looking to consume food, but to engage with it. There is a clear move away from "safe" choices toward exploration—be it lesser-known regional Indian cuisines, fermented foods, or experimental cocktails. This willingness to experiment has encouraged the industry to think bolder, and push creative boundaries while staying true to their philosophy. Several triggers will continue to shape trends in 2025. Restaurants that focus on storytellingwhether through a dish's cultural significance or its innovative preparation—will capture the imagination of their audience. As a restaurateur, I believe the Indian dining scene will continue to evolve with heritage meeting innovation in the most delightful way.

PRODUCT PROPOSITIONS: INDUSTRY



Conscientious consumers are increasingly seeking products that align closer to their own beliefs, lifestyles and dietary requirements. We asked our panel for their pick of the top propositions that will see the biggest investments from the industry in 2025 to appeal to this growing tribe of consumers.

Locally sourced (90%) emerged as the top proposition highlighting industry intent to support local economies and reduce environmental impact. This was followed by products with clean labels proclaiming to be **all natural**, zero or no preservatives, and no additives (86%), free of artificial colors, flavours, and preservatives. Their last three picks of **artisanal and/or small batch (86%)**, freshlyprocessed (86%) and signature house-made (85%) reflect a growing appreciation for handcrafted and unique offerings that are typically associated with traditional methods and small-batch production.



90% Locally sourced

86% All natural, zero or no preservatives and no additives



86% Freshly-processed

85% Signature house-made products



Amrita Raichand

Today's conscious Indian consumers are on a journey of re-discovery, seeking products that truly reflect their values. They crave authenticity – locally sourced, freshly processed offerings that align with their ethical and sustainable beliefs. This is translating into a growing appreciation for handcrafted creations, often born from traditional methods and small-batch production, that celebrate the stories behind the products, recognize the human touch and respect the traditions that these methods embody.



Kunal Viyayakar

India is witnessing a delightful culinary revolution. The era of mass-produced, flavourless food is fading. Instead, we're embracing artisanal and small-batch goodness. freshly-processed, signature house-made delicacies are taking center stage. From farm-to-table concepts to hyperlocal ingredients, we're celebrating unique flavours and supporting passionate producers. This shift towards authentic, handcrafted experiences is not just a trend; it's a testament to our evolving palate and a celebration of India's rich culinary heritage.



Chef Rakhee Vaswani

The future of Indian food lies in embracing the 'locally sourced' movement. Buying local, and supporting local industries and talent is not just a trend, it's a responsibility. We also need to move towards preservative and additive-free, all-natural foods. This is not just about delicious food; it's about building sustainable and thriving local economies while nourishing our bodies and respecting our environment.



Sadaf Hussain

With a plethora of online sources dissecting 'good' and 'bad' in food, consumers are more informed than ever. The emphasis on hygienically packed, and zero additives/preservatives has grown, aligning with the demand for 'clean' labels. However, this has also led to unnecessary vilification of some ingredients. We forget that certain 'extras' are essential to delivering the experience we expect. Take hot sauce, for example: acidity regulators ensure it brings flavor without overwhelming the system. And xanthan gum — it creates that smooth, velvety mouthfeel of a proper sauce. These elements aren't villains; they're part of the science that makes food enjoyable.



BEVERAGES

Consumers across the world are growing more conscientious about environment, health and lifestyle. These transitions are now reflecting prominently in the choices they are making across all food and beverage categories.

For instance, the non-alcoholic beverage segment is registering significant growth in popularity of 'functional beverages' – drinks that go beyond basic hydration, and promise to increase energy levels, improve cognition, lower stress, or improve overall well being! As a direct consequence, India's rich heritage of traditional nonalcoholic, seasonal beverages, are now beginning to feature prominently on shop shelves and restaurant and bar menus.

This year we explore how the Indian F&B industry is rediscovering, revitalising and reinventing seasonal Indian beverages for their discerning and conscientious consumers.

SEASONAL INDIAN BEVERAGES



Kanii Fermented savoury carrot drink that nourishes and warms the body

Summer



Aam panna

Raw mangoes & spices blended into a chatpata and sweet cooler



Cooling milk-based beverage with the addition of almond gum and served sweetened



Spiced lemonade, with chaat masala/black salt/cumin/mint



Tangy and cooling cumin & mint based drink, often garnished with boondi



A thick, yogurt-based drink, usually served sweetened and creamy, but savoury versions also exist



Light and savory spiced buttermilk; the spices & names vary by region

Sattu sharbat

Beverage made with roasted gram flour, often sweetened



Sweet and spiced jaggery drink with cardamom, ginger, and black pepper, popular in South India

Monsoon





While chai is consumed all year round, it is especially preferred in the

Filter coffee

Masala chai

While coffee is consumed all year, it is particularly enjoyed in monsoons for the comfort it provides.

Kaadha

Traditional Indian hot, spiced-infused drinks consumed for many health benefits as preventative and restorative solutions to colds and coughs in the monsoons.

Bhedku



Hot millet drink, spiced with pipli or long pepper from Gujarat.























A ready reckoner to some traditional Indian beverages consumed by season that can inspire modern offerings.



Thandai Milk-based spiced drink usually consumed during Holi

monsoons for warmth and comfort.











Seasonal fruit shakes Milk-based drinks made out of seasonal fruits like mango, sapota etc.

Juice from tender coconut. sugarcane, mango, sweet lime, watermelon etc.

Nimbu pani Classic lemonade, with salt/sugar

Milk sweetened with rose syrup

Seasonal sharbat

Traditional drink made from a concentrate, usually derived from local summer fruits (Kokum, Bael), berries (Phalsa), roots (Nannari), and flowers (Buransh)



Gond Katira-based beverages Gond Katira (tragacanth gum) is added to beverages to increase their cooling properties.

Winter







Kesar/Masala/Badam doodh

Warm milk, infused with saffron, a medley of spices, almonds, and cardamom

Haldi doodh

Warm milk infused with turmeric and sweetened is regarded for its immunity boosting and healing properties.

Vegetable juice

Fresh juice from winter vegetables like carrots (red and black), beetroot etc.

Chukku/Sukku kaapi

Known for its immunity boosting properties, this beverage is made with dried ginger, coriander seeds and other warming spices. often sweetened with palm sugar/jaggery.

Seasonal fruit juices

Rose milk

AS THE GLASS IS WITNESS: INDIAN NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS THROUGH TIME

India has sayoured a rich repertoire of seasonal non-alcoholic beverages that have shaped cultural identity through history and continue to play a vital role in social gatherings and everyday life today.

FOCUS AREAS

The vast and diverse landscapes of India have nurtured an unparalleled tradition of non-alcoholic beverages rooted in seasonal and regional wisdom. These drinks, often crafted from indigenous ingredients, bridge the gap between nutrition, health, and sustainability, offering more than just refreshment. As consumer preferences shift toward conscious choices, the beverage industry is reviving traditional recipes while innovating for convenience and modern tastes. These changes are fostering a beverage landscape that reflects an array of functional, flavourful, and culturally resonant options.

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ANCIENT REMEDIES: REDISCOVERING INDIAN BEVERAGES

The vastness of the Indian subcontinent makes it one of the most climatically diverse regions on the planet – engendering rich, biodiverse landscapes that offer a cornucopia of produce across its length and breadth. This has given rise to a vast range of traditionally made and consumed beverages designed to have a healing effect on the body that corresponds with the seasons.

These seasonal ingredients-fruits. vegetables, flowers, herbs, and more form crucial building blocks in the subcontinent's numerous regional and community sub-cuisines and are fundamental to the embedded understanding that food, health, and seasonality are all linked. Most traditional knowledge systems consider food and drink to be integral to holistic well-being, beyond simply

observes Dr Vinay Narayana Pandit,

amplify these effects by stimulating

providing sustenance and even within micro-cuisines, specific foods and drinks are prescribed to address the effects of the changing seasons on the human body.



BEVERAGES AND TRADITIONAL KNOWI FDGE SYSTEMS

Traditionally beverages have played a key role in the studied approach to diets in the Indian context. Each regional, and community cuisine boasts a repertoire of traditional Indian drinks made from locally available produce. These play a bigger role than that of simple hydration or tasty thirst-quenching, as tonics and panaceas, designed to balance gut health and the body in context to the season, warming it during winter. cooling it during summer, or keeping illness at bay during monsoon.



"Festivals in India aren't just celebrations within religious groups. They also mark and celebrate the changes

between the four major seasons which vary according to region." a Bengaluru-based practitioner of Nadi Pariksha, the ancient ayurvedic technique of diagnosis through the pulse. "For example, the beginning of spring in North India is marked by the festival of Basanta Panchami, in January and February, while in the

South, it is marked by the festival of Ugadi around March and April," he explains. "Traditionally, during these festivals, homes offer specific foods and beverages that highlight the connection between nature and the body." Ugadi signals the onset of the buttermilk consumption season, flavoured with a myriad of different ingredients, particularly digestive jeera. "Buttermilk cools down the body and delivers good bacteria to the gut. The seasoning choices

digestion, nutrient absorption, and detoxification.'

In the same vein, *Shikanji*, made with lemons, is popular in the North while Panakam, a drink made of lemon. jaggery, cardamom and dry ginger is consumed during spring and summer months in the South. While the choice of ingredients might vary regionally, Pandit highlights that every ingredient used has a purpose "some counteract heat-associated issues to the body, like bad stomachs and skin irritations." he observes, while others like "the lemon in the shikanji act as an energy booster while the cardamom and ginger in the Panakam settle the stomach and protect the digestive system during the Indian tropical summers, when food tends to go off faster."

Outside festival formats too, yearround, daily interventions of traditional knowledge systems are applied in non-alcoholic beverages beginning with water itself. Most of the Indian subcontinent traditionally boiled water to purify it because one wasn't sure of the source, contamination or salinity of the water. Some regions went further to boil water with *ieera* during the monsoon months; it is believed to lower the *pitta* or heat in the body, and prevent food poisoning, diarrhoea. and headaches, which are common water-borne ailments. Similarly,

COMMERCIAL BEVERAGES: THE FIRST WAVE

The long months of the subcontinental summer inspired a variety of traditional beverages down the ages. Designed to boost energy, cool the system, and aid digestion, these summer offerings were also the first to become commercially available.

Sharbat, cold drinks made with diluted fruit juices and herbs, or concentrated syrups were some of the earliest to be packaged and sold. In 1906, in the Delhi of undivided India, Hakeem Hafiz Abdul Maieed, a practitioner of Unani medicine (a traditional system of medicine with origins in Greece and Persia), opened Hamdard Dawakhana. The following year, he created a concentrated sugar syrup, infused with the medicinal properties of ingredients like purslane, chicory, dried grape, blue water lilv, star flower. bottle gourd, orange, pineapple, carrot, watermelon, and spinach along with stone flower, coriander leaves and seeds, rose, keora (oil distilled from the male flower of the screw pine). sandalwood, vetiver and salt, each of which addressed specific summer ailments. That sharbat, named Rooh Afza, meaning 'soothing to the soul' in Persian, became a panacea in hot

rediscovering or remembering these familiar drinks from their childhoods, and returning to them." While this has given many brands the impetus to launch buttermilk and allied products. many add stabilisers and emulsifiers. to ensure the solids and liquids don't separate. "These additives often defeat the health benefits of the drink. At Akshayakalpa, we invite the customer to partner with us and shake

TRADITIONAL DRINKS IN NEW PACKAGING

Summer fruits like mango. gooseberries, tamarind, kala jamun and so on, also valued for their healing properties, have long been turned into beverages. "We used to fight with each other to drink a colleague's *thermos of aam panna,"* remembers Neeraj Kakkar, CEO and co-founder of Hector Beverages, which created the popular brand Paper Boat in 2013. Going on to explain the origin of the brand, **"going out into the ready**to-drink market space, aam panna wasn't commercially available. Plus. it's a dying art to make it at home. And so, it struck us to consciously go down this path of traditional Indian

younger generation." The hurdle to marketing Paper Boat drinks wasn't about discovering if consumers would like to drink aam panna, aam ras or jal jeera. Rather, it was whether they would be open to drinking it in a social setting. "We weren't worried that people wouldn't like the taste because these are flavours that have been passed down from generation to generation. It's part of our DNA in some sense," as Kakkar paints a picture. "But a decade ago when one was flying more

regions along the coast treat brackish water with jeera or coriander to purify. For example, in Kerala, *karingali vellam* is made by boiling water with *patanga* wood (Caesalpinia sappan) to purify it and prevent water-borne diseases. "Especially during the monsoon months, addition of ieera, is effective with all three Ayurvedic doshas - vata, kapha and pitta — lowering heat in the body, as well as preventing food poisoning, diarrhoea, headaches and other common water-borne ailments." concludes Pandit.

With a natural predilection to beverages ingrained into the culinary culture, it's not difficult to understand the robust industry that has evolved around beverages in India.



Indian summers, and is still a popular beverage base mixed with water or milk, even today

Another summer beverage to make inroads into the commercial space was buttermilk. Produced by staterun dairy cooperatives, buttermilk has been a go-to summer drink for hydration and cooling throughout Indian culinary history. "Buttermilk is basically a by-product of butter making. So dairy companies selling milk. curd. and butter branched out into selling this beverage as well," observes Vachana Shetty, head of marketing at the fifteen-year-old dairy company, Akshayakalpa. "In recent vears, there's been a marked shift among Indian consumers looking for healthier lifestyle alternatives,

the tetra pak well to mix the two layers before consuming a product that is truly healthy.

Despite operating in a market saturated with options and longterm players, Akshayakalpa has managed to gain a niche foothold with its determination to be organic by creating a closed-loop system. "Becoming an Akshayakalpa farmer is a three-vear iourney — one's land has to be converted into organic, the cows have to be free-range and untethered, and the fodder must be grown by the farmers themselves. They are encouraged to do things differently so that the soil, the cow and the milk are taken care of," explains Shetty, Through closely monitoring this system, the consumer is ensured a product that is as *"healthy as the* buttermilk they might make in their own homes." she adds.



drinks with a lot of history, packaged in a modern way in order to reach a

frequently - this was the time of Jet Airways and Kingfisher Airlines - one just wanted to look good drinking from a can. So one might order a diet soda. Would that person be okay with paying to drink jal jeera? Or might they think the roadside version is cheaper and not want to pay our price for it." These initial concerns were swiftly dispelled, as Paper Boat was readily embraced by the market. "Providing people with the option of traditional. familiar drinks in good packaging took away any embarrassment they felt reaching for this choice," he reflects.

Paper Boat's success in this market points to the increasing confidence in indigenous ingredients, products, and the culture of consumption around them. From their early offerings of *aam panna* and *jal jeera*, Paper Boat has moved into *aam ras*, *iamun, kokum,* pomegranate, lychee, and spiced pink guava. "Initially, we wanted to protect these beverages from disappearing and tried to hunt down niche recipes from microcuisines. However, over time, we realised that we had to consider scalability as well. With consumers becoming more health-conscious, turning to traditional knowledge systems to address their body issues, and becoming more aware of options available to them. Paper Boat realised these weren't just fads, but definitely here to stay, and their offerings had to have both a broader appeal and make commercial sense.



SOBRIETY AND SOCIALITY

One of the by-products of the increased health consciousness of the Indian consumer has been a growth in the sobriety market. "There has been



a lot of experimenting with newer ingredients and techniques of late to address the teetotalling,

sober customer. Turning to familiar flavours of traditional nonalcoholic beverages has been one of the approaches to this," explains Sahil Mohan, director of F&B operations at Burma Burma, the national Burmese restaurant chain. "Tapping into the traditional connections between food, nutrition and health has been a good foundation to catalyse these new offerings," he adds, citing the example of Burma Burma's 'Spiced Ginger' drink, inspired by a ginger salad from the Shan region of Burma. "Changing it up to a drink, while staying true to the ingredients allowed us to find another way to bring these nutritional benefits to our customers in a fresh, playful form."

Mohan notes that the market for these offerings is growing at a very rapid pace. "There's been a proliferation of kombuchas, shrub sodas, and healthy beverages at the supermarket level ever since the pandemic. And a new world of options have become available to the sober consumer going out to have a good time in the past four years." Going on to observe that there also seems to be a generational shift in ideas. Today, consumers in their twenties and thirties seek alcohol-free drinks with complexity similar to cocktails. This is encouraging bars and restaurants to rethink their menus and take mocktails beyond simple saccharine drinks, by increasingly flexing the flavours of indigenous ingredients.

"Familiar flavour and local ingredients allow for the introduction of a product like kombucha to feel less intimidating to the potential customer. So we didn't want to start off with a raspberry

or blueberry flavour," says Cyriac

Thomas, founder of Pune-based Umami Brews, a brand among the new wave of beverage industry stakeholders striving for a balance between flavour and function.

The first kombucha that the brand launched was *kokum*-ginger - a flavour familiar to people all along the coastal belt of the Konkan. Location and regionality have remained major influences in the decision to stick to traditional Indian flavours. "We wanted to entrench ourselves with flavours that were found in and around our region of production. Kokum was easily available here, so that became the base for our first offering. We built our production in a mango farm. and so it seemed logical that our next offering would be a spiced kairi kombucha. In this way, we have slowly built out our brand's offerings." The brand also seeks to make the health benefits of ingredients like kokum and ginger, known to be good for one's gut health, as is kombucha, available to more people.



SIPPING INTO THE FUTURE

"Consumers no longer want to blindly seek out offerings from abroad. They want to drink more Indian, in every way," concludes Thomas. Just like homegrown alcohol brands that now compete with the best of their global counterparts, he believes that the market for homegrown brands of nonalcoholic beverages too is ripe for this takeover.

In recent years, there has been a significant interest in looking inwards to local contexts for solutions to health, wellness, flavour and beverage experiences on the whole. Adding

ACTION POINTS

To thrive in today's evolving beverage landscape, players can leverage growing consumer interest in health benefits, indigenous ingredients, and the sobriety movement by anchoring product development in regional identities. Incorporating local and seasonal ingredients like kokum, mango, and ginger, allows brands to craft beverages that resonate with consumer nostalgia for familiar flavours. Highlighting the nutritional and functional properties of these drinks can strengthen their appeal to wellness-conscious audiences. The rising demand for sophisticated sober beverages signals a burgeoning potential for innovation in alcoholfree options that are complex, and flavour-rich. Additionally, modern, thoughtful packaging designed for convenience, sustainability and storytelling can play a crucial role in connecting with consumers. Ensuring broad availability through diverse distribution channels, including supermarkets and online platforms, can further amplify their reach and success.



to that is a rising awareness of the medicinal benefits of indigenous ingredients. Both these waves of change are the result of higher disposable incomes and crucial, contemporary conversations around sustainability and climate change. Conscious consumers today seek traditional home-style beverages, in convenient propositions that do not require prolonged processes to make them. With these innovative new beverage offerings, the beverage industry is delivering complexity of flavour along with richness of function, all thoughtfully packaged

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and distributed, making them easier to integrate into today's fast-paced lives.



BEVERAGE TRENDS

The post-COVID-19 era has reshaped the beverage landscape in India, with consumers prioritizing health, safety, and sustainability. In the evolving landscape of Indian beverages, there's been a notable shift towards health-focused drinks. From functional beverages that include adaptogens and nootropics in place of caffeine and alcohol, to the rise of e-commerce and a focus on local and sustainable choices, the beverage industry is adapting to the evolving preferences of consumers in the new normal. The growth of these new age drinks however, in no way signals the end of alcohol or dairy consumption. Our experts weigh in on changing trends and offer insight into this landscape.





TOOLKIT FOR 2025

Commercial fizzy drinks are taking a backseat as consumers gravitate towards green beverages and flavoured still and sparkling water. These drinks are expected to be low in sugar and salt, aligning with the prevailing consumer preference for reduced sweetness. Savoury flavours typically common in food are entering the beverage category, and can be an avenue for innovation and development.

In the coming years, beverage manufacturers would benefit by showcasing the health benefits of their products with simple, easy-to-read labels. Consumers are tired of relying exclusively on caffeine or alcohol for mood upliftment, calmness and sociability, and want healthier substitutes that still taste great. Restaurants and bars would do well to offer a selection of lower sugar and lower calorie cocktail and mocktail options based on seasonal fruits and botanicals.

Content creators and marketers can continue to engage with audiences through compelling storytelling based on traditional, local products and recipes.







On the subject of beverage categories, our experts predicted continued emphasis on homegrown and artisanal options across both alcoholic and non-alcoholic segments, with nearly everyone picking Indian-origin, artisanal coffee (90%) as their top choice. This significant jump from 62% in 2022, clearly indicates a burgeoning interest in appreciation for the nuances of Indian coffee – be it robust South Indian filter coffee or the aromatic single-origin beans from regions like Araku Valley and Coorg.

Meanwhile, significant shifts in the positioning and perception of Indian-origin artisanal spirits (87%), fueled by growing reputations of recognition on prestigious international platforms, and continuous media attention, will sustain the popularity of this category in 2025. Finally, interest in fermented drinks (77%) will continue to grow this year with more brands offering greater variety, flavours and health benefits.



90% Indian-origin, artisanal coffee



87% Indian-origin artisanal spirits



77% Fermented drinks







Abhay Kewadka

Indian origin spirits will continue to drive the market growth owing to awards and recognition they have been getting globally, supported by better distribution reach and competitive price edge advantage these products have.



Indian alcohol goes back to centuries in terms of history, and it is finally getting its due. Also, thanks to a plethora of info available on social platforms, people are taking interest in creating their own drinks. Hence, artisanal spirits and aids for bartending at home will be on the rise. Non-alcoholic beverages in novel formats, that provide a good sensorial experience as well as some health benefits (Kombucha etc.) will gain more attention.



Nikki Gupta

It's going to be a golden year for beverages in India! With a growing demand for premium, health-conscious, and convenient options, driven by a more discerning and experimental consumer base. Artisanal and locallysourced products like Indian origin coffee (the growth of the coffee culture in India is enough proof of this) and exotic teas are gaining traction as consumers seek quality, and unique flavours.



Prerna Kuma

In 2024, India's at-home beverage landscape experienced a shift as consumers become more experimental and open to new formats, flavours, and concepts. Greater awareness around gut health will draw people to Kombucha and other fermented beverages. With coffee also taking a premium center stage with new concept cafes, Indians' love for their masala chai will penetrate into coffee as well with masala coffee, cinnamon coffee, more opulent sounding vanilla coffee etc.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES



Native Indian alcohols have progressively been coming out of the shadows of their more illustrious brethren. in the imported and IMFL categories, and taking the spotlight! Our panel believes that this will translate into a surge in popularity of bars with **dedicated menus around** indigenous Indian alcohols (78%), showcasing unique flavours and versatility of the native Indian spirits like Feni, Toddy, and *Kesar Kasturi*. As this interest in exploring and celebrating India's rich alcoholic heritage grows, indigenous spirit-based cocktails (78%) will also be a major draw for consumers in 2025.

Meanwhile, innovative bars will roll out menus designed around home-grown branded bitters, mixers and shrubs (74%), that offer better control over flavours , and clearly differentiate them in the eyes of the consumer. Finally, as demand for low-calorie, zero-sugar cocktails grows, our panel expects to see a greater variety of **savoury cocktails** (74%) featured prominently in bar menus of 2025.



78% Indigenous spiritbased cocktails







74% Menus showcasing homegrown branded bitters, mixers and shrubs

74% Savoury cocktails



Anisha Rachel Oommen

I'm really excited to see bars celebrating indigenous alcohol traditions, playing with homegrown mixers and shrubs, and celebrating unique and unexpected ingredients. It's a trend that's already been picked up in exciting ways across South East Asia, and now in India too. Bombay Daak has a beautiful Kodava chilli wine, Bandra Born has a mahura-focused bar. It's a good time to be in f&B.



Chef Dr. Parvinder Singh Bali

With an increased interest in quality over quantity, consumers are gravitating toward premium spirits and high-end cocktails, willing to invest in well-curated, exclusive experiences. Tasting flights, bespoke cocktails with premium spirits, and mixology that emphasises the spirit's purity are all trends likely to grow in popularity. Exclusive events, like whiskey tastings and gin workshops, add a layer of sophistication and knowledge-sharing to social gatherings.



Shatbhi Basu

In spite of the interest in indigenous spirits from India and outside, until they are available easily throughout the country they won't see enough traction. Consumers too will take time to connect with these. flavour profiles of cocktails using regional ingredients will continue to grow and technique forward cocktails will remain popular before setting a gradual decline in favour of flavour-forward cocktails.



Shonali Muthalaly Savoury cocktails will become more popular, as bars experiment with flavours from the kitchen to create spirit-forward cocktails that have an unexpected hit of umami.





This year, we asked our experts to share their predictions for the non-alcoholic beverage categories that will inspire most innovation in 2025.

Of late, the humble milk tea has diversified from its traditional role as a social drink, into a much more exotic role of a wellness drink. These new, innovative teas (76%) will continue attracting a lot of attention for their natural functional properties and lighter flavours, either consumed on their own, or as infusions into other innovative drinks. Meanwhile, consumers looking for alternatives to dairy to support their dietary or lifestyle choices, can expect to find a lot more options in the **lactose-free drinks (76%)** category. Finally, innovation will continue in **fermented** drinks (76%), bringing in new formats, flavours and functional benefits percolating across a wide spectrum of utilities throughout 2025.





Charmaine O'Brien

The functional/health trend is playing out in these categories. Innovating in fruit and vegetable juices has a lot of potential as I don't see a lot being done with these, possibly because of the assumption that they are 'healthy' in of themselves and also because other drinks, like kombucha for example, have captured consumers that might have previously chosen a juice thanks to their novelty. Fruit and veg juices can be innovated with and reconceived as new and exciting.



Debolina Ray

In 2025, non-alcoholic drinks will cater to more diverse tastes and preferences, focusing on quality, health benefits, sustainability, and creativity. The line between traditional cocktails and their alcohol-free counterparts will continue to blur. Non-alcoholic options will increasingly be part of inclusive drinking cultures, catering to those who are sober, healthconscious, or simply looking for a break from alcohol. There will be a greater focus on functional drinks that promote wellness, including those infused with adaptogens, nootropics (for cognitive function), and ingredients that boost immunity, digestion, or relaxation (like CBD, ashwagandha, and turmeric). Non-alcoholic beverages may also feature antioxidants, probiotics, and other ingredients with health benefits.



Nolan Michael Mascarenhas

fermented drinks and pairing options of the food program to complement the bar is a win formula at present. A storyline is paramount and the vibe is the main focus on easy going hipster bars and making it a much sought-after norm post working hours to relax and kick back with a few friends old and new.



Parin Sanghvi

2025 will spotlight beverages that offer convenience and wellness in equal measure. functional energy drinks and fermented beverages will dominate menus, catering to a health-conscious clientele. Lactose-free options are growing in demand, offering inclusivity for diverse dietary needs. fortified juices and exotic teas represent indulgence backed by benefits, making them mainstays. The industry must innovate around ingredients and experiences that bridge the gap between tradition and modern preferences, emphasising health-forward solutions without sacrificing taste.



COFFEE

As coffee culture in India continues to evolve, we asked our panel to predict which concepts would stand out most in 2025. According to a significant majority, provenancefocused coffee (86%) is poised to be a major trend, due to the undeniable influence of origin-stories in elevating the quality of coffee experiences everywhere. At the same time, convenient gourmet/specialty coffee options (86%) will make further inroads into the traditional home setting, with innovative flavours and formats, that offer premium, barista-quality with minimal effort, in the comforts of one's home.

Our experts are also betting on the unique flavour profile and rich cultural heritage of traditional South Indian filter **coffee (81%)** to captivate a wider audience this year, mainly through premium and gourmet offerings that include highquality blends, innovative brewing methods, and stylish filter coffee sets. Finally, coffee tasting, brewing, and other educational/experiential workshops (78%) will continue to be the most effective ways for the industry to engage meaningfully with consumers, and effectively grow the market for premium coffee in 2025.



86% Provenancefocused coffee

86% Convenient gourmet/ specialty coffee options



81% Premium and gourmet brands of traditional south Indian filter coffee

78%

Coffee tasting, brewing and other educational/ experiential workshops



Litoin Dur

The coffee wave of India is beginning to peak starting the next year, without a doubt, with coffee actively replacing tea at the deepest levels of cultures in all cosmopolitan cities of India.



Insia Lacewalla

Discerning coffee enthusiasts will be drawn to concepts that prioritise traceability, craftsmanship, and experiential brewing methods. Small-batch, single-origin coffees, experimental fermentation techniques, and immersive brewing experiences like pour-over tastings or cold-brew infusions will captivate those seeking a deeper connection to their coffee's journey from farm to cup.



Rukshana A. Kapadia

A focus on quality and origin for transparent sourcing and small-batch roasts will attract enthusiasts. A distinctive cultural fusion where Indianised flavours and formats will resonate with a diverse audience. Convenience Meets Craft — think Ready-to-Drink and DIY options that will cater to both traditionalists and modernists. Coffee Cocktails are going to continue making their presence felt on cocktail menus. Curating immersive experiences with coffee pairings and brewing techniques will continue to attract coffee enthusiasts and create better understanding and appreciation of coffee.



Zamir Khan

Consumers have become smarter and more aware. Today, most prefer to find unique beans and estates within India, which offer fine coffee at nominal costs, rather than spend exponentially on gourmet brands. Though there still remains a market for those kinds of brands within the premium consumer market, it is the indigenous estates and brands that will capture the market in the coming years.







SWEETS & DESSERTS

Over the past decade, the sweets and desserts segment has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors within the Indian food industry. Desserts offer quick, affordable everyday indulgence, and the burgeoning market has inspired a wave of young entrepreneurs and businesses. Innovation is taking place across every category from traditional mithais, to sweets and chocolates, and baked desserts, to ice creams, with players across the board seeking a finer balance between familiar comfort and exotic indulgence.

The sweets and desserts section this year examines how India's evolving supply chain systems are bringing more seasonal fruits to dessert menus, as brands push hyperseasonal produce to create limited time specials! Read on as our experts weigh in with their predictions on the most attractive propositions the sweets and desserts segment will offer in 2025.



Spring



Maharashtra

Andhra Pradesh. Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh

Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha,

Watermelon Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal

Papaya

Jackfruit

Tamil Nadu, West Benga





Rajasthan

Pomegranates Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra,



Citrus Fruits (Sweet lime, Lemon) Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu





Avocado Karnataka, Kerala, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu

RIPE FOR PICKING!

A ready reckoner of seasonal fruits popular across India







Assam, Bihar, Tripura Uttarakhand, West Bengal

Peaches and Plums

Himachal Pradesh, Jammu &

Kashmir, Uttarakhand



Summer

Himachal Pradesh Jammu & Kashmi Uttarakhand

Winter



Jamun (Indian Blackberry) Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal



Custard Apple (Sitaphal) Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan









Guava Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh

Apples Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & ashmir, Uttarakhand



Assam, Kerala, Meghalaya, West Bengal

FRUITFUL PROPOSITIONS

India's vibrant fruit industry is a cornerstone of its agricultural landscape. With consumer palates maturing and supply chains improving, the fruit sector is ripe with potential, that India's dessert segment is reaping the harvest of, with seasonal offerings.

FOCUS AREAS

Seasonal eating is seeing a revival in the Indian kitchen. The incredible spectrum of seasonal flavours available across the country can be used by bakers, patissiers and traditional mithai makers to craft innovative, fresh, seasonal desserts that differentiate them in the market, and endear them to consumers looking for better dessert experiences. For the farming and packaging industry, the resulting increase in demand for high-quality, fresh produce will help strengthen initiatives around sustainable cultivation, food security and livelihood. For the dining industry, seasonal changes will create additional opportunities for regular refreshes of dessert offerings and menus. Finally, the Indian consumer will be spoilt for choice on matters of sweet indulgences.

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FRUIT BOWL OF THE WORLD

India, often hailed as the 'fruit bowl of the world', is a powerhouse in the global fruit market thanks to the unfathomable biodiversity of incredible tropical and temperate fruits it produces, from regionally and seasonally varying cultivars, to a bounty of underexplored wild varietals



Romil Ratra, CEO of Graviss Good Foods, notes "You have people

talking about lychees and longans everywhere!

International trade bodies have realised the potential of marketing exotic fruit in India." With big budgets to promote their offerings, these organisations have been vying for a

place at Indian tables, by educating and expanding the Indian consumer's palate. As a result, everything from American blueberries & raspberries and Chilean cherries, to New Zealand kiwis and Canadian lingonberries are available on supermarket shelves for the consumer and consequently adorning dessert offerings across the industry.

Ironically seasonal dessert offerings have long been ruled by these imported offerings and very little of the rich Indian fruit bounty beyond mango in the summer, and strawberry in the winter, see similar traction. However, this is changing. With its vast agricultural landscape, diverse climatic conditions, and a burgeoning





FRUITFUL LEARNINGS FROM THE SAVOURY MENU

Restaurants routinely change the savoury sections of their menus. to attract customer attention with attractive new and innovative offerings, often showcasing seasonal produce. In recent times, this practice has gradually seeped into the dessert section. Recognising that consumers respond to seasonal offerings, patissiers are taking cues from hot kitchen chefs, and highlighting the country's bounty of seasonal fruits reinvented into tempting offerings with innovation and technique.



a restaurant," says **Heena Punwani**, chef and founder of Maska Bakery in Mumbai. Through the year, her menu adapts familiar formats, incorporating fresh produce and seasonal flavours. with desserts like the Khatta Meetha *Kairi Tart* in the summer, and their monsoon special PBJ Toast, that combines Peanut Butter and Jamun in

the form of a peanut diplomat cream, and housemade blackcurrant iam incorporated into a bostock pastry. "Jamun is an underrated fruit", she observes, "sure, it can be astringent, but cook it down slowly, and it mellows and rounds out to a deep berry-ish flavour and hue, that pairs beautifully with the nutty roasted, brown butter peanut frangipane." For a country that has always eaten locally and seasonally, it seems intuitive to work seasonal Indian fruits into menus, and these demonstrations of

culinary prowess, with an openness to experiment with seasonal fruits, offers endless possibilities.

Adding another delicious layer to the mix is the growing nostalgia for flavours of the 90s. Reinvention of desserts that millennials grew up eating is fueling a reinvention of retro desserts, but made with better techniques and ingredients. Take the classic Black Forest cake—a rich indulgent cake traditionally made by layering chocolate sponge cake with cherries and whipped cream, finished with shaved chocolate and more

Consumers will often return for unique desserts they enjoy on the menu, but chefs and dessert brands are increasingly using social media to create FOMO (fear of missing out) inducing buzz and excitement around novel propositions! The short window of opportunity local and seasonal fruit offer have made social media a powerful driver of sales, encouraging fans and customers to seek out the novelty of frequently changing seasonal menus.



"Fruit-based macarons have always been popular for us. The first one I did, 14 years ago, was strawberries and cream,"

recalls chef **Pooja Dhingra** from the launch of Le 15 Patisserie in 2010. She leverages her strong customer connect through Le 15's brand and her personal social media channels, to promote seasonal offerings with narratives that weave together stories behind particular menu items, or why she's excited to share a new creation. Over the years, this has led to success with limited drops of many fruit-based

followers with them, and may add additional direct sales," Chef and founder of Miam Patisserie. Bani Nanda, scours local markets and travels across India. to study and source hyper-local fruits like phalsa, galgal, and seabuckthorn to incorporate into entremets in her Atelier Miam program. She similarly leverages social media to engage



cherries—has inspired innovations amongst innovative patisseries like Mumbai's Ether Chocolate. TwentySeven Bakehouse, NCR's Miam Patisserie and more. Bengaluru's Maki Patisserie reimagined it with Indian cherries, Punwani's offering at Maska gave the Paris Brest a twist with fresh dark cherries and a cherry coulis, and Bakhtiani's smoked black forest variation at Ether featured sour cherries.

"It just feels very natural to use fruits" in desserts, even if the season is very short," shares Punwani, observing

that these limited edition offerings sell out quickly and leave consumers wanting more. 'We made a special mango-lychee-tadgola Tres Leches that everyone loved.' Fruits like lychee and tadgola have such short seasons, they are almost ephemeral. Once gone they'll only be back next year. And people wait for it-that's the beauty!"



FRUITFUL STORY TELLING ENRICHES SOCIAL MEDIA

macarons like passionfruit, *jamun* and lychee.



"It makes sense to get the customer base to understand seasonality. Because we're sourcing fresh fruits directly from Indian producers, it's not frozen

raspberry puree that's available year round," points out Aarohi Sanghavi, chef and founder of Bengaluru's Maki Patisserie, who uses Instagram to share timely updates on the availability of limited specials and promote producer partners. "We talk about the producers we source from, tagging the ones that have their own Instagram pages. This connects our

consumers, observing that the social media conversations require as much attention as the desserts themselves.



"It's not just about saying, here's the tree, I've picked out fruits. and now here's the cake. There's a lot more to it

and people want to know more. They enjoy the storytelling and context." Nanda, adds that she travelled to Meghalaya, in 2024 to document the harvest of *sohiong*, a native black berry rarely seen outside the region. The resulting entremet she created pairing a *sohiong* compote and Kazi Lebu Bavarian cream not only received an exceptional reception but also educated hundreds of her clients about lesser known indigenous produce, seasonal harvests and regional flavour pairings.

In addition to encouraging an appreciation for new flavours, the use of social media to share the journey of a dessert from fruit to plate is fostering a broader, deeper interest in the Indian consumer for both local and seasonal fruits as well as the people that grow them.

FROM FARM TO FINANCIER

This desire to spotlight local fruits and their growers resonates with chefs and brands across the industry. The farm to fork connection is undeniable for anyone in the food business, and it is no surprise that interactions with farmers inspire a desire to tell their story. Improving supply chains and strengthening relationships with farmers and producers and bakeries are collectively driving the celebration of more fresh and unique fruits.



"I draw a lot of inspiration from farmers. I visit our farms verv often and love to see how their food

morphs with the seasons and what kinds of ingredients they use," shares Ruby Islam, head

chef at Hyderabad-based Manam Chocolate, At Manam, starch-rich

SEASONAL SCOOPS

Beyond the patisserie, fruit is finding its way onto menus across the dessert spectrum. Mumbai-based Parsi Dairv Farm has been in business for over a century, and while they offer several popular dishes, their creamy kulfis have a dedicated fan base. "We



don't use anv artificial or synthetic flavourings," says Head of Operations, Parvana Mistry, about

their fruit-based kulfis that come in mango, strawberry and sitaphal flavours. The pulp for the mango and strawberry flavours is frozen during the season and used year-round while the *sitaphal* kulfi is available only in peak season at year end when its inherently mild flavour is at its best.

In the more contemporary segment of ice cream, Natural's was one of the first to emphasize all-natural. seasonal flavours, however, today brands big and small are celebrating nature's bounty in different ways. *"From an ice cream standpoint, fruit"* flavours in India were always mango or strawberry, and never went beyond." says Romil Ratra. "Our fruit-based popsicles came from conversations with potential and existing consumers who said, listen, why don't you have more fruit options?" Brooklyn Creamery's all-natural, refined sugarfree range tout variants like lychee and pineapple, containing 'real fruit pieces'. This recognition that fruit is

Chakkarakeli bananas, ubiquitous in the West Godavari region, that thrive on their cacao farm, are used as a fermenting agent for cacao as well as incorporated into their cookies,

> gelato and bonbons. *Ria* Belliappa of Bengalurubased Juny's Bakehouse concurs, "the big reason why I was very keen on

working with producers and farmers themselves was to empower them from the grassroot level. I feel it's important for them to see where their produce is going, and how it's being used." Her unique insight into the connection between farm and food derives from belonging to a family that owns a coffee plantation that grows avocados and spices like black pepper.

Siddhartha Verma, founder of Better Greens, which supplies fresh produce to bakeries and cafes like Mjol Bakehouse, Omo Café, Parisian and Espressos Anyday, in Delhi observes that bakeries can be nimble and



seasonallv."



"A lot of baked goods already feature fruit.

making it easier to make

substitutions and change

toppings or inclusions

perceived as a healthier alternative to refined sugar in the dessert equation, has resulted in many brands launching fruit-based popsicles and frozen dessert options via grocery stores and delivery apps. Noto, a brand offering healthy, low-calorie ice creams and dessert options offers local flavours like *kala jamun*, alongside global staples.



shares **Saloni Kukreia** of Mumbai-based Indu Ice Cream which

now supplies ice cream to restaurant brands like Burma Burma and Ishaara. Offering unique flavours like the tangy sweet kokum and black grape sorbet inspired by the Kala Khatta gola, they regularly promote limited edition offerings, like a seasonal litchi ice cream that was a runaway success with its rich, creamy tender coconut base, studded with bits of tender coconut, and a sweet slightly sour lvchee and kewra water compote swirled through. "The kewra added a delicate floral note and sense of nostalgia," smiles Kukreia.

Similarly Shilpi Bhargava and Pavan Jambagi, founders of Jaatre Ice Cream in New Delhi, recognised the potential of fruity flavours and the promise the rich biodiversity of Indian fruits like mangoes, sharifas,

chikoos, guavas, jamun, and more. offered. They studied farming cycles of varied fruits cultivated around India, and experimented with different flavours that they showcase in unique combinations of fruit and spice, and sell in sustainable containers like scraped coconut shells and terracotta tubs.

Given India's punishing summers. cooling desserts like kulfi, ice cream and popsicles are firm favourites that demand constant replenishing, and new 'items,' that the plethora of fruity propositions Indian fruit offers, will more than fulfill.



SWEET HOMECOMING

Indian fruits have come full circle in recent years. Not only have they inspired the patisserie and frozen dessert segment but they are also finding their way into a new generation of offerings from traditional halwai and mithaiwalas.

In NCR. Bhawan has a rotating roster of *mithai* that has included Nagpur Orange *peda*, Coconut and Passionfruit *barfi*, Strawberry *Srikhand* Choux, and Amchoor Ladoo - their



motichoor with a mango twist. "Mithai makers need to consider how flavours interact with the milk-based building



The greater focus on seasonal fruit in 2025 can be leveraged in a variety of ways by the Indian food Industry, aiding in diversifying the Indian dessert segment and consumer sweet palate while reducing agricultural loss-particularly high in the case of fruit surplus. Agriculturists can expand their repertoire of seasonal fruit offerings to include lesser known local and native varieties. Restaurants can add local and seasonal fruit based dessert offerings on menus. Sellers can build communities to educate consumers on seasonal fruit and its consumption through recipes and knowledge sharing. Food media can create content to propagate and educate on the farm to fork journey of fruit, benefits of seasonal fruit consumption. Consumers can mindfully shop for local and seasonal fruit.



blocks of most Indian desserts "

shares Bhawan's co-founder, Kainaz **Contractor** whose creations emerged from her exploration of "fruit pairings that could work with khoya to add flavour without the use of artificial flavourings and sweeteners."

With consumer palates evolving. the desire to explore new flavours will continue to grow as will the demand for fresh, high-quality ingredients. Offerings that highlight natural sweetness, and offer limitedtime exclusive specials potentially create a sense of anticipation among consumers, making seasonal desserts both conscious and indulgent, a

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scenario against which seasonal fruits are emerging as a pivot point for dynamic dessert menus



SWEET & DESSERT TRENDS

The legendary Indian sweet-tooth has manifested itself in a zillion different ways over the years, with consumers spoilt for choice, from ultra-sweet, indulgent, traditional Indian mithais at one end of the spectrum, to healthier modern desserts with lower sweet quotients. Advancements in food technology are enabling the creation of innovative dessert products with unique textures, flavours, and nutritional profiles.

As India's dynamic sweet and dessert landscape continues to evolve, it is clear that consumers are seeking a better balance between indulgence and health. By focusing on quality, innovation, and sustainability, businesses can cater to the changing needs and preferences of consumers.

Read on to know which sweet and dessert concepts are slated to entice consumers in 2025.





TOOLKIT FOR 2025

Players in the desserts segment, both traditional and modern, can be rest assured that there will be demand for their creations, as long as they prioritise freshness and quality in ingredients and transparency in production. Traditional sweets resonate deeply with our heritage and gastronomic traditions, and appeal to consumers who value familiarity over novelty. That said, concurrent with changing dietary preferences, health-conscious choices, and a desire for unique flavours, there is a growing demand for modern interpretations and bite-sized offerings especially in the case of frozen desserts. Restaurants and patissiers showcasing innovative spins on heritage recipes, and offering both seasonal specials and low-calorie options are most likely to get the attention of customers.







When asked to predict the popular dessert choice in 2025, our panelists voted overwhelmingly for **chocolate** and chocolate desserts (83%). Many experts attributed their confidence to the growing legion of Indian chocolate brands that are expanding the market with complex and sophisticated chocolate offerings. Meanwhile, as consumers continue to be health-conscious, the demand for **desserts** with healthier claims (78%) that offer low sugar, fat, and calories with labels like 'sugar-free,' 'low-calorie,' 'fruitbased' will continue to grow..

A growing tribe of discerning consumers will be increasingly willing to pay a premium for **desserts with** claims of higher quality (78%) like 'authentic', 'pure', 'single-origin' and 'artisanal' that clearly differentiate them from standard, mass-produced fare. Our experts also foresee that **baked desserts (76%)** will continue to be the most exciting alternative to traditional sweets and *mithais* in 2025.



83% Chocolates and chocolate desserts



Desserts with healthier claims



78% Desserts with claims of higher quality



76% **Baked desserts**

DESSERT CATEGORIES



India's love for its sweets is as old as its culture. Today's consumers are equally likely to go for a baked gulab jamun cheese cake or a classical Tiramisu to name a few. Dessert trend for 2025 will be the prominence of fruit and indulgent flavours along with hyper-realistic fruit desserts, vegan, gluten-free and sugar-free delights. Pistachio, rhubarb, sour cherries, basil, sage, citrus, cinnamon and ginger will be the ingredients to look out for.



Sayantani Mahapatra

In India, traditional sweets continue to dominate the dessert landscape and will likely maintain their stronghold. This is partly due to the 'all or nothing' approach many Indians have toward desserts—indulging in a single, authentic mithai each week to satisfy cravings, rather than opting for sugarfree or milk-free alternatives.



Sharmila Ribeiro

I feel there is a huge market potential and opportunity for innovation in the area of sugar-free desserts like mithais and chikkis made using dates, figs, and nuts. The growing spectre of diabetes in India will fuel a demand for inexpensive sugar-free and dairy-free cold desserts and desserts exploring alternatives to white sugar.



Chef Vikas Seth

Desserts with no added sugars, as well as those that are naturally sweetened and low in fat, are gaining notable appreciation among health-conscious individuals. These options cater to the growing demand for delicious yet nutritious sweets, without sacrificing indulgence, making them a popular choice for a diverse audience.

CHOCOLATES



Indian chocolates have been making a decisive mark for themselves over the last few years and 2025 will be no different. As a result, the market saw a wide range of offerings intentionally targeted towards an even wider range of consumer preferences via interesting propositions. This year, we asked our panel to predict which chocolate propositions would find most traction in the market.

Their top picks for 2025 were **Artisanal, handmade or craft (89%), Indian-origin (83%), bean-to-bar (80%)** and **small-batch (78%)**, proving once again that consumer focus is decidedly shifting towards higher-quality, artisanal chocolates with unique flavour profiles and ethical sourcing practices.



89% Artisanal, handmade, or craft



83% Indian-origin



80% Bean-to-bar



78% Small-batch



Chef Girish Nayak

Chocolate always wins over most flavours, and there will be a good demand for chocolate bars, and small-batch mithai, as well as chocolate bars with Indian mithai inspirations. However, due to the sudden rise in the cost of cocoa products this year, I think we will see more milk-chocolatebased products.



Chef K.Thiru

The recent global surge in chocolate prices has created significant ripples across the food industry, affecting chocolate and chocolate-based products worldwide. As we navigate through this challenging scenario, the need for innovation and adaptability has never been more critical. The road ahead for the chocolate industry is fraught with challenges, but it also presents opportunities for growth and reinvention. By focusing on sustainability, innovation, and consumer preferences, the industry can adapt to these trying times while delivering value to both producers and consumers.



Chef Shanaya Dastur

At the end of the day chocolate is king. Even people who are disinclined to eat anything containing chocolate, still favour chocolate-based desserts. But more people are willing to experiment with flavours and try out new foods outside of their comfort zone. And they seem to be appreciating them as well. As a chef, this is wonderful to know because it opens up a lot more possibilities for innovation and showcasing our talents.



Zeba Kohli

Growing awareness of the subtle nuances like fewer ingredients, microbatch, and bean-to-bar that determine the quality of the chocolate experience, is helping grow demand, and in turn encouraging small batch chocolatiers and local farmers. I feel that clean chocolates, with higher cacao content, and low refined sugar will be key towards driving higher sales in 2025.


HEALTH, HYGIENE & LIFESTÝLE

In India, like the world over, wellness has become a key factor in decision making for consumers across age, gender and economic categories. Indigenous knowledge systems are no longer viewed with suspicion, as Western science increasingly ratifies traditional practices originating from Indian and Eastern kitchens, that have always recognised food as medicine. New frontiers are being opened by a growing tribe of consumers who view fresh food as holistic medicine, and are willing to invest in the same. With consumer focus trained on gut health and overall wellbeing, food producers and retailers are also ensuring they include health as a key message in their strategy and communications.

Dairy has traditionally played a significant cultural, and nutritional role in India throughout the seasons. While the role of dairy remains intrinsic in India, the segment is evolving with new brands entering the market and introducing disruptive concepts around milk, along with a growing variety of value-added dairy products targeting specific consumer preferences.

This year's essay explores the rapidly changing landscape of the Indian dairy industry in keeping up with evolving consumer demands.







ment: Curd is Nourish considered cooling, and curd-based preparations like raita, thambuli, and curd rice are popular in the summer months.



Hospitality: Cool milk-based drinks like milk shakes made of seasonal fruits and rose milk are offered to guests during hot months

Flavoured Milk

Monsoon August To October

Masala Chai Comfort : A cup of hot masala chai, with a plate of samosas or pakoras is a go-to rainy day combination

Butter/Ghee

Nourishment, Comfort: Generous servings of ghee and butter on parathas, dosa and dal baati, demonstrate love, care, and generosity

Cheese

Nourishment, Subtenance: Traditionally, pastoral communities across the Himalavas preserved excess milk by converting it to cheese like *kalari*, *churpi* which offered sources of comfort and nutrition.

Hot Milk

Nourishment: Paneer is a traditional form of cheese that is a source of protein for many vegetarians, offering nourishment, while also being a well-loved comfort food. Paneer dishes are also essential additions to celebratory menus to demonstrate hospitality.

Milk Desser



(a)



DAIRY IN INDIAN CULTURE: A SEASONAL PERSPECTIVE

Cultural significance of dairy across seasons

Palla

Nourishment, Celebration: Tempered, fermented drink offered as digestive during weddings in Uttarakhand.

offered to guests in the summer to cool & hydrate the body.

Lassi

Masala Chaas Nourishment : This lightly spiced, savoury buttermilk drink is served as a cool refreshment during hot summer days

Comfort, Nourishment : Thick lass

offers a boost of energy, and thin buttermilk offers comfort. It is also



Spiced Milk

Nourishment: Spiced milk drinks, like haldi doodh, which offer immunity and recovery during monsoons and winters, and are strong symbols of nostalgia and care.

Nourishment: Milk is a universal symbol of nourishment in India across seasons, particularly administered to the young, elderly and infirm, when solid foods can't be consumed

Celebration: Rich khoya, mawa and chhena-based mithai are central to celebrations across the country. Milk-based sweets like kheer and sheer korma are made on special occasions like festivals, weddings and birthdays.



Spiced Milk

Masala Chai

in the winter

Nutrition: Hot masala chai,

spices, offers welcome respite

enriched with herbs and

Nourishment: Spiced milk drinks like haldi doodh, which offer immunity and recovery during monsoons and winters, and are strong symbols of nostalgia and care

Curd

Nourishment, Comfort: Curd is considered cooling, and curd-based preparations like raita, thambuli, and curd rice are popular in the summer month

Filter Coffee

Comfort, Hospitality: Hot, milky filter coffee is considered an idea start to the day in most South Indian households

Comfort, Nutrition: Ghee is a soothing addition, drizzled onto comforting meals like dal-rice, khichdi, and pongal. The richness of ghee also represents celebration through generous lashings on festive meals and prosperity in the form of pure-ghee' sweets

Winter ovember to Janua

Summer

May to Jul

ENDURING LEGACIES: EVOLUTION OF DAIRY CONSUMPTION IN INDIA

Dairy has been intrinsic to Indian culinary culture throughout its existence. Over centuries, the subcontinent's tropical climate has resulted in the evolution of unique dairy traditions, consumption and preservation practices.

FOCUS AREAS

The ever-evolving Indian dairy industry will see traditional consumption patterns of milk, malai, dahi, makhan, and ghee coexist alongside modern offerings as the segment incorporates new stakeholders and a growing repertoire of new products. Seasonality, which has shaped the evolution of Indian dairy will continue to prevail but conversations around terroir and seasonality will become flavour-defining nuances for categories like artisanal ghee, butter and cheese. Identifying, sharing and offering local dairy products will connect producers to their consumers and infuse transactions with empathy, inclusivity and growth. Food and beverage businesses are driving innovation in value-added products across subcategories. At the consumer end, this offers a diverse range of products to improve health, nutrition and lifestyle while encouraging loyalty and engagement.

OF COMMUNITIES AND CULTURES

"For sheer inventiveness with milk itself as the primary ingredient, no country on earth can match India", wrote Harold McGee in his book 'On Food and Cooking' in 1984.

India's interaction with milk dates back several thousand years. Cattle were first domesticated in the era of the Indus Valley Civilisation. Remains of cheese molecules found in clay vessels of the time indicate the presence and possible preservation of milk. Over time, the domestication of animals continued to evolve as humans learned to co-exist with cattle. This laid the foundation of one of the richest dairy cultures in the ancient world, as centuries of traditional milk procurement and distribution practices continued to evolve as the Indian dairy sector grew and sculpted itself into the global dairy powerhouse it is today

The 1940s brought Anand Milk Union Limited, an organisation that decentralised the cooperative structure in the dairy space and awarded every producer along the supply chain a sense of agency. So successful was this approach that it

became a benchmark for government institutions nationally and globally. Operation Flood, also known as The White Revolution, initiated by National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) a few decades later, catalysed private industries, encouraged accessibility and increased milk consumption. This resulted in the dairy sector taking a historical turn that made India a milk-sufficient nation that drove an evolution in diets, consumption practices, buying behaviours, market demands and even government policy.

Over time, brands like Amul, Parsi Dairy Farm, and more recently Akshayakalpa and Godrej Jersey emerged to organise and strengthen the sector, prioritising hygienic production processes while constantly innovating to address changing consumer preferences with a diverse inventory of product offerings. Bhupendra Suri, CEO, Godrej Jersey

observes. "Indian consumers exhibit a unique blend of traditional preferences and openness to modern dairy options. That said. they are mindful of the quality and nutritional value in their

selections, be it milk, established staples like curd, paneer and ghee, to emerging choices. There is definitely a shift in consumers' preferences towards convenient and affordable value-added dairy products like voghurt. flavoured milk. and whevbased drinks."

From tea or coffee, and restorative beverages, to varied allied products including cream, curd, butter, whey, buttermilk, ghee, cheese, and desserts, dairy products hold an intrinsic space in the Indian kitchen today.



MILK, ANCIENT FOOD TO INDUSTRIAL COMMODITY

Milk has been at the cornerstone of human sustenance since antiquity and deeply permeates Indian culture, transcending sustenance to find its way into folklore, literature, music, and poetry. While the Indian dairy sector has transformed significantly over time, milk remains paramount, both as a vital commodity in itself and as a foundational ingredient for various allied products. From its importance as a daily beverage, to the role it plays in daily restorative cups of tea or coffee, a day in the life of most Indians would be incomplete without milk.

The dairy space in India today bifurcates into regulated and unregulated milk markets, and guality milk has become a defining factor in the narrative of trust and authenticity for many brands. Recent years have seen the sector evolve. Milk itself has diversified from a basic commodity, to inspire a variety of new value-added products including flavoured milkbased drinks, milkshakes, smoothies and even protein-enriched beverages.

There has also been an emergence of new stakeholders, from dairy farmers to pastoralists, who operate on unique models structured around local ownership and cooperatives and offer a variety of new kinds of milk. Milk in India is primarily sourced from

A TASTE OF TRADITION: PRESERVING MILK

In the absence of modern refrigeration, ancient India developed varied methods to preserve the bounty of its milk like converting it into curd and butter.

Separating cream from milk has been the first step in dairy consumption since milk became a source of food. Early methods relied on the simple principle of gravity which left fresh milk to stand for a few hours or boiled and cooled it (which encouraged cream to separate quicker). Eventually. lighter fat globules rose to the surface, forming a distinct layer of cream that was carefully skimmed off. A majority of Indian homes collect cream like this even today, depositing it in a container, with a 'culture' of curd spooned in ever so often. When the container is full, the cultured cream is churned to separate fresh white butter from the whey or buttermilk (leftover liauid).

The traditional Indian kitchen, being ever mindful of wastage, put the whey to good use to make daily roti dough, in traditional refreshing and probiotic-rich summer drinks like

The visual of butter melting into a pool atop piping hot foods-be it homemade rotis, parathas, or dosassymbolises the generosity of Indian warmth and hospitality. Somewhere





bovine species, non-bovine-largely pastoral-breeds such as goat and camel have not been a part of the mainstream even though pastoral communities have been custodians of Indian dairy culture for centuries. Known to prize their cattle as part of their families, they play a key role in maintaining diverse ecosystems, husbanding varied species of cattle. nurturing grazing land and ensuring a diversity of fresh grasses and wild edibles for animal diets. Their nomadic nature has made it difficult to engage with them from an administrative standpoint, however, efforts by varied organisations to protect and support these vulnerable groups have been growing. One such initiative is Maru Manthan, an annual conclave organised by Bikaner-based Urmul Seemant Samiti that brings together different stakeholders to work towards empowering communities in the fields of dairy, textile and agriculture.

"Mainstream society doesn't necessarily comprehend the sophistication related to managing animals in response to climate variability. Pastoralism evolved in these areas because they were sub-optimal

from an agricultural standpoint: with inadequate water, unpredictable

rainfall or snowfall. These animals are bred to adapt to often harsh conditions like desert, semi-arid, water-stressed environments, and mountain landscapes," points out Vasant Saberwal, Director, Centre for Pastoralism, an organisation that works on collaborative programs to enhance pastoralist livelihood security across India.

Milk from varied breeds of cattle possess differentiating characteristics defined by terroir, composition, fat content and feed that influence the general flavour of the milk. However, pastoral livestock often engage with larger ecosystems offering solutions to sustainability, farmer welfare, health and nutrition in India.



chaas, or majjige, or as an ingredient in millet porridges, kadhis, and dhoklas, Whey was also treated with an acidic ingredient like lime juice or vinegar to separate the milk solids or paneer. In recent years commercial dairy brands, recognising the value of its primary protein composition have begun using this previously discarded by-product as a base for beverages. The F&B space combines it with herbs and fresh fruit to make whey sodas. zero-proof drinks and cocktails while the retail segment is using it to make VAPs. "Protein inclusion is extremely critical in today's fast-paced lifestyle," observes Suri, commenting on the positive response Jersey Recharge, the brand's rejuvenating flavoured whey protein drink offered in singleserve tetra packs continues to enjoy. "These energizing drinks offer a quick and easy way for people to meet their hydration needs with the added benefit of healthy proteins."

along the way, however, the butter in this visual morphed from makhan, or natural homemade unsalted white butter, to commercial vellow butter. enhanced with salt for preservation and visual appeal. Interestingly white butter has seen a resurgence recently with many large brands entering the market with 'desi makhan.' The butter segment is also being enriched by a growing tribe of artisanal and smallscale butter producers-such as Local Ferment Co. and Eleftheria-making cultured compound butters, enriched with varied flavours.



AN ENDURING LEGACY: GHEF

Ghee, or clarified butter was the next step in optimising surplus dairy. Traditional homemade white butter being high in moisture, went rancid within days so much of it would be boiled and clarified into ghee. Holding an indispensable place in Indian cuisine, ghee goes beyond being a cooking medium to occupy a revered position, that is a confluence of Ayurvedic principles, culinary artistry, and an enduring legacy. The process of ghee making-because of the time and labour invested in collecting cream, churning butter and then clarifying it into ghee-has played such an integral role in the Indian kitchen down the centuries that ghee has come to symbolise the ultimate form of love and care.

Ghee is typically obtained using one of the two methods. The simplest being to heat cream directly and convert it into ghee. Far more complex and valued is the traditional bilona method, so named for the 'Bilona' or wood churner, used to obtain the white butter. The butter is heated at a steady temperature until the solids separate and settle at the bottom, any remaining water evaporates, and yields pure liquid clarified fat.

With its intrinsic value, the commercial ghee market has been a dynamic one that promotes cow and buffalo ghee. However, with the influx of non-bovine dairy sources, small-scale operations are experimenting with making ghee from goat and camel milk sources too. The mainstream restaurant space has been showing a rising interest in preserving indigenous food cultures has chefs showcasing ghee in unique new wavs.

In 2023, Masque Lab in Mumbai curated a tasting menu around Indian Cheese & Dairy Traditions with Chefs Aditya Raghvan, Thomas Zacharias and Varun Totlani, that began with a ghee tasting, highlighting the regional nuances of varied terroirs like Uttarakhand, West Bengal,

> Maharashtra and Bhutan. "We started with a relatable ghee from the plains, and moved on to showcase more

experimental offerings like ghee that had undergone fermentationbased changes along with a dark ghee with caramelly notes, each made with distinctive traditional practices from around India," shares cheesemaker Chef Aditya Raghavan. Highlighting that it is easier to taste flavour nuances in ghee rather than its corresponding milk because the compressed nature of the fats enhances the nuances of feed, terroir and fermentation. "Mountain ghee has stronger floral notes as the cattle graze freely across the slopes rather than being limited to a monocultural farmland."

Neeraja Dhorde, founder of Dongaon Local adds that seasons also affect the flavours based on her experience sourcing ghee for her Maharashtra based micro-enterprise, "Milk from the same cow can yield very different ahee across seasons and stages of bovine motherhood. It tends to be more buttery and oily in the summer when cows feed on millets or hay while winter ghee is grainier because the cows feed on fresh green grasses and wild edibles."

Not to be forgotten when talking about ghee is mithai of course. "It is mandatory to store up surplus ghee for every festival to use in varied food preparations," observes Dhorde. Inherent to just about every Indian mithai be it the homemade halwa or outsourced indulgences like kalakand, ghee is the crowning glory of all festive occasions in India.



DAHI: A CULTURED HISTORY

One of the oldest forms of preserving milk, curd is deeply intertwined with the culinary evolution of India and mentioned in ancient Indian texts. including the Ayurveda. Even today, Indian homes follow a daily ritual that goes back centuries - 'starting' a new batch of curd using a spoonful from the previous day's batch. So deeply ingrained is this practice that legends abound of families storing their curd

culture in dried form on pieces of muslin, and transporting it over vast distances, only to bring it back to life in new homes far away.

Curd has held an indelible space at the Indian table. Valued as a creamy tangy food rich in probiotic properties, savoured as it is, and as an invaluable. versatile ingredient in regional and communal cuisines, it may be used as

a souring agent, marinade, thickener or base for many dishes. Today curd is available in many variations; based on fat content (regular, low fat, fatfree) and form (conventional curd, Greek yoghurt, probiotic enriched). Its perceived nutritive value has also driven significant innovation in the value-added product segment with modern options like flavoured and 'froyo' or frozen yoghurt.



NEW FRONTIERS: CHEESE

Cheese-making in India has been relatively limited historically. compared to the West where it evolved more structurally due to feasible climates and cultural evolution. India being largely tropical saw most of its cheese-making culture-beyond that of paneer-evolve in the Northern and Northeastern Himalavan regions where the right climatic conditions and rich dairy consumption practices prevailed.

Paneer has always been much loved, and while there are not too many innovations in this segment, the preference for high-quality paneer is growing. Characteristics like a smooth, spongy texture, combined with a delicate, sweet flavour and an appealing, creamy white colour, are all associated with a pleasing mouthfeel and perceived freshness of paneer. These qualities are highly sought after not only in the North and West, which were traditional markets, but now also in South India, where the demand for packaged paneer is growing even though awareness around cooking paneer-based recipes is limited.

The last decade however has seen rapid growth in the Indian cheese

SWEET DELIGHTS: DAIRY-BASED MITHAI

With milk's natural affinity towards sweet flavours, it is no surprise that the Indian *mithai* space is rich with offerings.

Dairy-based *mithais*, are primarily categorised into three types: chakka or hung curd based offerings like shrikhand and mishti doi: channa or soft paneer-based options like rosogolla, sandesh, chum-chum or chena poda; and lastly khoya or reduced milk-based sweets like pedas, barfis, and Mysore pak. That said, delicate nuances deriving from the textures and flavours manifest in





ACTION POINTS

The Indian milk and dairy space, dynamic in product offerings, promises to be rich with opportunities in 2025. Small artisanal brands, dairy farmers, and pastoral communities can build communities and educate consumers on terroir to encourage local sourcing. Small dairy brands, with rich sources of quality milk, can consider diversifying into artisanal dairy products like cheese and take a leaf from larger brands to create small batch value-added products in their segments. Larger players can consider emulating artisanal producers to create high-quality elevated offerings for niche segments. Food media can create content to propagate and educate on the benefits of quality milk, terroir, sustainable practices by sharing knowledge and recipes. ۰. • •



market. Commercial brands like Amul, Britannia, and Go Cheese have diversified from simple processed cheese into eclectic offerings like mozzarella, cheddar, and more. The cheese-making segment meanwhile has come of age, with artisanal cheesemakers blooming across the country. Brands like Begum Victoria, Spotted Cow Fromagerie, Camel Charisma, Eleftheria, Kodai Cheese, Nari & Kage, The Cheese Collective, The Farm, Kase Cheese and more laid the foundations for a promising future for Indian cheese that already boasts varieties ranging from soft, fresh Oaxaca, salty Halloumi, semisoft cheddar, hard-aged Manchego, and unusual offerings like Brunost that have received global recognition and won international awards.

According to Namrata Sundaresan, co-founder of Kase Cheese, these experiments combining Western cheese-making techniques with the rich regional variations Indian milk offers, portray a rich future for Indian



artisanal cheese. "Indian urban consumers are coming of age and are aware of the nuances of cheese-making. The

milk cake. The fresh milk we have access to behaves in its own way, contributing to the flavour in each of these mithais," differentiates Shalini Phillip, owner of The Farm Chennai where these traditional offerings allow the farmstead to convert surplus daily milk into value-added products.

Similarly, Mumbai-based Parsi Dairy Farm makes iconic signature offerings like malai khaja, mawa boi, basundi, and kulfi, and takes pride in using natural unadulterated ingredients like fresh milk, ghee, and khoya, and authentic recipes, but are also striking a balance between traditional



and contemporary offerings. "The dairy space is expected to witness significant transformations driven

questions they ask have changed over the last half decade. They are also very experimental in their purchases, though they would always go back to what they are familiar with, they do want to try something that's new!"

Collaboration across multiple stakeholders in the ecosystem promises even bigger wins. One such effort is the Desi Dairy Dialogue- a cheese-making community hosted by The Farm Chennai that fosters dialogue in production and policy frameworks. Sundaresan illustrates this by describing one of the most gratifying projects she has been part of- teaching pastoralists in Gujarat the science of cheese-making. "Cheesemaking was the knowledge. the tool that allowed pastoralists to hold onto the bounty of milk they had access to, to create their own style of cheeses." The endeavour led to the opening of Panchal Dairy, which produces a wide variety of pastoral goat and sheep milk cheeses including Chevre, Valencay, St. Marcellain, Tomme, Feta, Goat Milk Cheddar, Pecorino and Roquefort, which are all seasonal

by consumer preferences and technological advancements. Demand for low-fat, high-protein, sugarfree and organic dairy products will likely grow as health consciousness rises and the industry moves toward environmentally friendly practices. including eco-friendly packaging", shares **Bakhtvar K. Irani**, Managing Director of Parsi Dairy Farm.

With its ancient bond to dairy, Indian lifestyles will continue to be dependent on milk and dairy-based products. However with the advent of modern technology, improved cold chain and innovation mitigating the erstwhile climate limitations once enforced, India's dairy segment will only continue to evolve and transform in new and wonderful ways in times to come.

SECTION AT A GLANCE

In the Indian context, wellness and sustainability aren't just about health or the environment - they are deeply tied to cultural and regional identity. Individuals looking for guidance to make better decisions about their diet and lifestyle choices are no longer limited to formal sources of expertise like doctors, nutritionists and dieticians, or to informal sources of wisdom like family and friends. This movement is now being actively fuelled by a growing tribe of lifestyle experts, practitioners and evangelists offering information and advice across social media channels.

Read on to find out what our experts picked as the biggest influences of health, hygiene and lifestyle advice in 2025.



TOOLKIT FOR 2025

Urbanisation and incorporation of small dairy farmers into the organised sector, coupled with measures such as genetic improvement in indigenous breeds, has rapidly enhanced milk supply while also creating a demand for ancillary dairy products such as curd, cheese, whey protein and probiotics as well as value added products across these subcategories. Consumers are spoiled for choice, but are leaning towards brands that support environmental stewardship.

Dairy, more than any other food category, represents the shortest distance between producer and consumer. In 2025, dairy businesses can appeal to consumers by being transparent about the journey their food takes from farm to store.

Consumers are actively reading product packaging in their search for health and nutrition solutions. While continuing to work with marketing experts, content creators and journalists, brands must also look to make packaging and labels simple and easy to understand.







As conversations about the irrefutable connection between - and wellness grow across all channels, there is an increasing need for credible and trustworthy sources to help conscientious individuals make informed choices toward living healthier and more fulfilling lifestyles. We asked our experts to predict which sources would play a pivotal role in shaping dietary habits, most in 2025.

Topping their list are **nutritionists (87%)**, who with their expertise in food science and human nutrition, were voted most credible for providing personalized advice tailored to individual requirements and goals. They also felt that **friends and colleagues (80%)** would continue to be a significant source of influence, particularly among younger consumers. Social media platforms and messaging apps have facilitated the exchange of information and recommendations, further making peer influence a powerful force in shaping food and lifestyle trends.

Meanwhile, lifestyle coaches (77%), who offer a holistic approach to health and wellness, will continue to grow in popularity. These professionals help individuals develop sustainable lifestyle habits, including diet, exercise, and stress management. Finally, as gym culture continues to grow in India, gym instructors (76%), with their unique perspective on exercise and nutrition, will become influential figures, particularly among young adults in 2025.

87% **Nutritionists**



80% Friends and colleagues

77% Lifestyle coaches



Gym instructors

LIFESTYLE INFLUENCES



Avantika Bhuuai

One of the most heartening trends from 2024 that will hopefully spill over into 2025, is that people have started reading labels. They want to know what is in their health and wellness food, if it is nutritious, the provenance of the ingredients, and in some cases the carbon footprint of the product. People have also realised that one size does not fit all, and are turning to health apps and life coaches, who are accessible 24/7 to design customised health plans. This is, by extension, influencing the kind of products that people are consuming for health and nutrition.



Chef Dr. Avin Thaliath

An increasing number of consumers are turning to medical and lifestule frameworks to enhance their food and diet choices, driven by heightened awareness of personal wellness and a desire for cleaner living. This movement is supported by lifestyle experts and practitioners, providing a wealth of information on emerging wellness concepts.



Chef Rakesh Raghunathan

Clean eating and functional, lifestyle-focused food are the future. The commercialisation of the food industry, driven primarily by profit, has sparked a crucial awareness. With regulatory bodies and publishers having largely lost credibility, people are taking action – calling out these practices, exploring alternative lifestyles, and becoming more discerning consumers. In this climate, a personal recommendation carries far more weight.



Poxanne Bamb

These days, almost everyone looks for an authoritative figure in the form of a health coach, a nutritionist or a gym instructor to help them with their journey towards a healthier lifestyle. A lot is driven by weight loss as the end goal, but the focus is to do it in a healthy, sustainable way. They have become great advocates for the same. People trust them, especially when they come recommended.





FOOD MEDIA & STUDIES

Food media, be it on television, videos, podcasts, blogs and social media posts, has long been regarded as one of the most popular sources of entertainment, especially in India. However, there has been a visible change in the nature of food content being produced in recent times. Producers are looking beyond content on cooking, recipes, travel, reviews, and advice, and now expanding into deeper and richer dialogues on culinary culture, food history, trends, sustainability, environment, agriculture and policy and even inclusivity. Meanwhile, the internet is bringing together like-minded people into communities that engage meaningfully and cultivate conversations, and discuss and debate food from multiple perspectives.

In the Food media section this year, our experts elaborate on why the time is right for the food industry, media houses and independent creators to dive into and leverage the diverse world of food media.



DIGITAL FOOD MEDIA

Most popular forms of digital food media in 2025

SCREEN TO TABLE: THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF FOOD CONTENT



If ever there was a time for brands, small businesses, media houses or independent creators in the food space to invest in and diversify communications across digital media channels - it is now!

.....

FOCUS AREAS

Digital media is revolutionising the discourse around food. Channels like social media, short-form videos, long form podcasts, and newsletters empower creators to build personal brands and connect authentically with audiences. Food and Beverage businesses utilise these channels to cultivate community, showcase values, and drive innovation. At the other end, audiences who seek content that educates, entertains, and holds cultural and social relevance, reciprocally participate through loyalty and engagement. As a result, this collective ecosystem encourages diverse yet highly specialised dialogues on food, reiterating its role as a powerful medium for creative and cultural expression.

Food media is evolving rapidly. With their established credibility, production standards, and extensive reach, traditional media like print publishing and television once delivered a level of authority and influence that played a vital role in shaping food and beverage narratives. Today, however, these platforms, operating within the bounds of longstanding conventions as they do, can present significant barriers to emerging voices, especially those of small brands and businesses.

This is where a variety of new digital multimedia platforms that have emerged in recent years, are ushering in a transformative era of food storytelling by offering access to

wider, more targeted audiences with new formats, in-built content creation tools, scope for discoverability and brand association. Food businesses. both emerging and established, are recognising the value these platforms offer and investing in storytelling to connect more deeply with niche audiences.

SOCIAL MEDIA: FOSTERING CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION

Today's consumer exists in an attention economy, spending more time on social media than ever before, but consuming shorter content formats. Meta reports that since the launch of Instagram Reels in 2020. time spent on Instagram has increased by over 40%. Short-form video content has emerged as a gamechanger, with its ability to capture attention through engaging, snackable narratives.



"I didn't start my page thinking it would grow into the beast it is *today,"* admits *Pranav*

Joshi, the creator behind popular Instagram account Floydian Cookery, who began his journey because a friend asked if he could make something as mundane as milk interesting. "Sure, that's one of the easiest, there's just so much to tell!" he replied, and began his Instagram

iourney with a post exploring the historical, cultural, and evolutionary significance of milk the very next day. Appetite whetted by the power of storytelling to transform aspects of everyday food into subjects of curiosity and intrigue, he went on to share unfiltered narratives of kitchen experiments making mozzarella, haggis, dragon's beard candy, and exploring questions like 'why cheddar cheese is orange', or the origin of the Indian name mosambi for the sweet lime.

What began as a creative outlet is a full-time profession and revenue source for Joshi today. His creative, humorous, entirely relatable content that highlights often overlooked nuances of food, resonates with hundreds of thousands of viewers. "People enjoy raw, straightforward content. They also love living vicariously through others'

experiences. If you can deliver this, the audience will follow." This potential of social media in fostering connections offers rich pickings. According to consulting firm Bain & Company, three in four internet users will clock in up to an hour of watch time daily by 2025, just consuming short-form videos made by professional social media creators. A concept that was unprecedented just a decade ago!

However, for food brands and creators to stay relevant in this evolving scenario, narratives that create opportunities for creative collaborations are almost nonnegotiable. "Short-form video is a great equaliser. It has allowed many more creators to enter this world." The dynamic nature of these platforms allow creators to tap into powerful feedback loops, refine content based on real-time reactions, and make audiences feel gratified for being

heard, all of which serves to build long term credibility. This is why creators with highly engaged and invested audiences offer significant opportunities for targeted and authentic collaborations with brands, regardless of follower count. "Brands todav recognise that creators are savvy and understand their target audiences, so they leave them to do what they do best, instead of dictating stringent deliverables."

While some, like Joshi, have turned content creation itself into an earning business, others like nutritionist Dr. Poorvi Bhat, aka Herbeshwari, and Bangalore-based designer Anurag Arora are leveraging social media to promote their offline businesses.

Bhat, who uses her platforms to showcase and amplify her nutrition expertise, has transformed her practice, creating an ever-growing demand for her nutrition consulting services. She relies on extensive documentation and simplification of traditional practices to make wellness

PODCASTING: PUSHING DIALOGUES IN NEW DIRECTIONS



"On one hand, a majority of people are choosing 30-second-long reel content, and on the other, more people are

consuming two-hour-long podcasts than ever before," comments journalist **Smitha Menon**, who has been leveraging social media to amplify her online platform as an independent creator and podcaster.

This, in 2024, when India has emerged as the third-largest podcast market globally, but sees a mere 15% of its population currently engaging with the medium. With its immense opportunity for growth and innovation, potential for longer format content creation and possibility for deeper exploration of niche topics, podcasting has creators excited. That podcasts allow consumers to multitask, by using their ears to tune into favourite shows while doing other things like walking or cooking, is an added benefit.

While visual platforms like YouTube and Instagram have long been spaces for more visually compelling formats. such as recipe content, food travelogues, and restaurant reviews, the podcast format allows for complex narratives to be unpacked.



long-form storytelling, podcasts allow us to delve into the history. geography, and culture

"The written word doesn't allow for conversations to meander into interesting tangents, the way a podcast can. Insights, which may never come up in an interview for a written story, unless I specifically ask, are what make a podcast most engaging" analyses Menon, who hosts Big Food Energy, which she feels has helped her find her voice. "As journalists, while we may pepper our articles with our own opinions, we're expected to present facts as objectively as we can. But with podcasting you really have to bring your personality into the conversation," adding that the scope for independent creators to leverage the medium, build their platform and push conversation on food in new directions is immense. "There hasn't been enough that speaks to the zeitgeist of where we are as a nation. in terms of the business of food. I wanted Big Food Energy to operate

and nutrition more accessible. Similarly, Arora, who has crafted a parallel identity for himself as an indie chef, uses his Instagram page to promote his home-based culinary pop-ups that sell out in minutes. His growing popularity has taken him to prominent venues such as The Conservatory, Bangalore, Magazine Street Kitchen, Mumbai, and even Sauced, a wine bar in Brooklyn, New York

One format of collaboration that remains largely untapped by Indian food brands is that of UGC or user generated content. Unlike paid partnerships or influencer marketing. user-created content turns customers into active participants in a brand's narrative by featuring authentic consumer reviews and use cases on their social media pages. Typically in exchange for non-monetary incentives like loyalty points, or opportunities to be featured on a brand's social media platforms, this strategy has given rise to a new segment of specialist UGC creators that global brands like

Red Bull, Starbucks, Graza and Fishwife are leveraging to build engagement and credibility. While beauty and fashion brands like Paradyes and Tailor & Circus are riding the wave in India, Indian food brands are yet to tap into the potential UGC offers.

In a digital-first era, a strong social media presence offers potentially unprecedented opportunities, making it an indispensable avenue for food forward businesses and creators alike.



of food, and decode its science. economics, and business," evaluates Kavita Rajwade, co-founder of IVM Podcasts. which has produced several notable food-themed podcasts. Success stories include Feeding 10 Billion in which Varun Deshpande and Ramva Ramamurthy explored sustainable solutions for the future of global food systems; This Round Is On Me, in which Gauri Devidyal, broke down entrepreneurship in food; and Naan Curry, in which Sadaf Hussain and Archit Puri, examined various facets of Indian cuisine.

in this niche, and build a playbook for people interested in the Indian food space right now."

Alco-bev company Countertop India, which is investing deeply in the Indian beverage landscape through varied endeavours, has tapped into podcasting to drive conversations



around alcohol. "We were missing a voice and platform to reach a larger audience," observes founder

Pankaj Balachandran, who aims for Countertop to become the torchbearer of beverage and bar offerings in the country. "In India, alcohol education has traditionally been quite serious and technical. But spirits, wines and cocktails are social beverages meant to be enjoyed in more relaxed environments. Our podcast, No Snob Tasting, avoids throwing around iargon and technical terms that intimidate people. Instead, we just have fun tasting and talking about beverages we love!" Catering to varied segments including consumers and hospitality professionals, who get a good laugh from the banter, the podcast also explores specific topics like alcohol categories, nuances of specific beverages, new launches and market trends. This format of edutainment, blending education with entertainment, is one of the fastest-growing podcast genres that's proving particularly effective in driving meaningful engagement around food and beverage content.

The recent growth of video podcasting is further expanding the reach of the genre. Auditory learning is powerful, but incorporating visual stimuli bridges an essential gap between traditional and modern media consumers. *"It means a lot more work, but it is the best way to reach a wider audience who may not listen to audio podcasts, but are open to watching videos," says Menon. Spotify, which introduced a video feature in 2020, now hosts over 250,000 video podcasts globally. And IVM Podcasts, which launched* as an audio-first network in 2015, has pivoted to focus on video since 2020. Rajwade declares, *"Video podcasting is undoubtedly the future in India".*

This rise of podcasting—particularly with the integration of video—affirms a sustained future for long-form content in the food industry. It is set to become a valuable medium for creators and consumers to explore the dynamic and evolving world of food, enabling in-depth storytelling, personal engagement, and innovative brand collaborations.



NEWSLETTERS: BUILDING COMMUNITY

While audio-visual formats are undoubtedly resonating, the written word continues to evolve in today's digital era. The last decade has seen a surge in digital magazines and publications dedicated to food and beverage content that ranges from new openings to industry trends, chef and creator spotlights, food history, culture, and beyond. Food has become an indispensable editorial vertical that more expansive culture and lifestyle publications are also investing significantly in today. Adding to the segment are newsletters, which have emerged as one of the most effective digital mediums for brands and creators, especially writers, to create dedicated platforms for themselves and foster engaged communities.

Newsletters are to the 2020s what blogging was to the 2000s - intimate platforms for authentic and unfiltered narratives. In an increasingly competitive editorial landscape, writers are leveraging newsletters to independently publish their work. "A lot of my newsletters are essays I pitched that got rejected or that I felt wouldn't fit the scope of a publication," shares writer and editor Apoorva Sripathi, whose newsletter 'shelf offering' has been a liberating space to reflect and comment on niche ideas. "Later I've had editors reach out to say they'd love to commission stories like these for their magazines!" This freedom has also created a space for bold new narratives, broadening the discourse around food. "I write



about things that occupy my everyday thoughts and excite me, or that I feel strongly about. I

delivery apps and labels. I had read

a piece of news that made me really angry, and I just felt I had to write about it."

The direct-to-inbox delivery format that newsletters offer, make extremely personal interactions with readers possible. The Locavore, an organisation championing impactdriven local food initiatives with over 22,000 social media followers, uses newsletters to connect with a more invested subset of 5,500 subscribers. Through it, the organisation shares regular updates on their producer partners, projects, recipes, early access to events, and outtakes from their published articles.

Editor-in-Chief Yamini Vijayan

emphasises the value of this format in driving meaningful engagement, by highlighting that the six-member editorial team of The Locavore invests



voice and tone. We've increasingly been writing with more honesty and vulnerability, not shying away from getting really personal." Practically everyone on the team, including interns, have written and individually signed-off newsletters. This has allowed readers to connect with the team, share thoughts directly, and engage in dialogue that enrich both sides. "Because my essays land in readers' inboxes, I often get email replies sharing their reactions that I cherish and revisit when I need a boost

In addition to being valuable tools for expanding community, newsletters also help foster professional networks

of motivation," shares Sripathi.

amongst peers. Sripathi shares that joining popular newsletter platform Substack not only created opportunities for discoverability among new audiences, but also fostered connections with fellow writers. "The platform has a feature that allows one to recommend other newsletters to one's readers that I began using to recommend newsletters I liked. And soon many writers reciprocated by recommending mine. Through this, I've connected with a global writing community, and we now have a writers' group to discuss essays we're working on." Similarly, The Locavore connects with its network of 30-plus producer partners, via a dedicated newsletter that helps them identify shared challenges and enable collaboration. *"It has helped our producer partners"* learn about others doing similar work as well as connect and work together

Newsletters are creating impactful opportunities for writers and brands alike by offering a platform for creative freedom, nurturing communities, and enabling professional collaborations.

directly," notes Vijayan.



THE FUTURE: AN INSATIABLE HUNGER FOR NEW NARRATIVES

Digital media has transformed food storytelling into a rich, multidimensional arena where creators, brands, and audiences seamlessly converge.

Today, the interest in food is undeniable and insatiable—and goes far beyond cooking and eating. "More and more people are consuming and creating content that investigates and documents the culture, history, geography, science, and just about every other field that can be connected back to food," comments Joshi. For independent creators like him and Sripathi, digital channels offer accessible and democratic platforms to showcase expertise, hone their unique voices, and shape personal brands that will pave the way for professional opportunities.

Meanwhile, brands and businesses like The Locavore and Countertop India are harnessing these dynamic channels to articulate their values, foster meaningful communities, and cultivate trust, all while spearheading conversations to drive innovation in their industry niches. "Today, one's work can't speak for itself anymore. You have to speak for your work. And we see this in the way chefs. bartenders, restaurants and brands are embracing content creation to reach a wider audience," observes Menon. Consumers today are hungry for such content to show off their food quotient. "It makes you cool if you know where an ingredient is from or what koji starter was used on it." In a world where food has become an experience to seek out, a means to access culture, and a lens through which to understand and engage with

ACTION POINTS

In the age of digital media a multi media presence is practically non-negotiable. It is essential for brands, small businesses, media houses and independent creators to **be agile and adapt to evolving formats and platforms**, to leverage the host of accessible, democratic channels that allow new narratives of food to grow and thrive. By **creating long form content**, in and of itself, and **promoting it with snackable bites**, brands and creators can use a multi-pronged approach. **Short-form video** will hook new audiences, and build brand engagement while **long-form video** will deliver deeper value, inspire trust and keep audiences invested.



the world around us, possessing such knowledge gives audiences a level of social credit.

"I could credit Krish Ashok with single handedly glamorising the maillard reaction. It's food science that we see on a daily basis, but now people at home are excited to know how the browning of dosa works," adds Rajwade.

Digital media has created the ideal environment for this culture to flourish in 2025 and beyond. Collectively, this evolving ecosystem is elevating food to a powerful cultural touchstone, reflecting its universal appeal and significance. *"I think it speaks to this moment in time, where food has progressed into the realm of art, inquiry and expression,"* concludes Menon.

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SECTION AT A GLANCE

Digital media has transformed communication across food related industries. The advent of social media has led to the 'spectacularization' of everyday life, with food at its centre. Today, well-crafted, real food content that skilfully weaves together written, audio and visual narratives, inspires audiences to seek out those culinary experiences in real life.

This year, in the Food & Media section, we panel of experts weigh in the new types of content that food enthusiasts will engage with the most.





TOOLKIT FOR 2025

Social media is arguably the best window shop for the food business. In 2025, it is no longer an option, but a necessity for food brands to maintain a strong online presence. Understanding and leveraging the influence of social media can make all the difference in staying ahead of the curve and attracting new customers continually.

Photographs and written content have now been overtaken by short-form videos, designed to capture and communicate key messages in punchy, easily digestible ways, and longer format podcasts. These formats offer great mediums for chefs, entrepreneurs and retailers to engage with consumers and talk about the local, cultural and sustainable aspects of their products. Food producers with niche offerings, be it theatrical food presentations, seasonal and local menus, wellness-based foods or special culinary experiences, will find these new media formats ideal to engage with niche audiences.







Diners today desire far greater engagement with the food they eat! This often involves extending the dining experience beyond functional and aesthetic, into the realms of social and intellectual engagement. As a consequence, our experts foresee food connoisseurs gravitating towards more immersive and interactive experiences in 2025, that will be designed to stimulate the mind, and satiate the appetite.

They will encourage their **favourite restaurants (88%)** to experiment with new themes and concepts like special menus featuring seasonal ingredients, chef's tasting menus, and pop-up collaborations. They will join food communities (80%) like supper clubs and book clubs, to participate in events and experiences that allow immersion into deep conversations with fellow food enthusiasts.

They will actively seek out new restaurants (80%) that offer new tastes and culinary experiences. They will book home dining experiences (79%), that allow them to engage in exploring food, culture, and traditions of the host and finally, they will look to explore new cuisines, ingredients and culinary cultures at food festivals and exhibitions (79%), while also using these events to connect with, interact and learn from industry experts.





Consumers will find inspiration in formats that prioritise community, sustainability, and personalisation like farm-totable restaurants, community-driven kitchens, and pop-up experiences that offer opportunities to connect with local producers and consumers. Immersive dining experiences, such as themed dinners and interactive cooking classes, will engage diners on a deeper level. By studying these formats, F&B professionals can gain valuable insights into consumer preferences and design new dining experiences that are both memorable and meaningful.



Aparna Bhat

A quality experience typically brings together a community of food enthusiasts and ticks off all the boxes; innovative <mark>clean hygienically-made food you know the origins of, often </mark> deep rooted in tradition and with a story. I run culinary experiences, and I see the excitement people have when they eat a meal that comes with history, culture, tradition, and stories that go beyond just the food.



Nalini Sadhu

There is going to be a huge learning from developed cuisines and countries. Never seen before concepts will come forth as industry players attempt to provide experiences that set them apart from their competition. The future will revolve around & authenticity packed into products that deliver consistently. Travel, understanding climatic and cultural influences on food, and traditional techniques will be of prime importance to understanding the roots of a particular cuisine or a dish for effective storutelling



Sanjay Anana

f&B professionals in 2025 will benefit most from analysing formats that combine innovation and interaction, along with data insights. food apps and favourite restaurants offer quantitative and qualitative data, while food communities and home dining experiences provide a deeper understanding of consumer values and social connections, while street food offers raw, authentic consumer insights and food festivals and new restaurants showcase emerging trends.

FOOD CONTENT IN MEDIA



Digital media continues to play an integral role in shaping our conversations about food. This year, we asked our experts to share their pick for the most popular food content across digital media in 2025.

With a near unanimous vote, food travel and lifestyle (94%) based content was their top pick. This trend reflects a growing desire among audiences to experience food not just as sustenance, but as a cultural and social immersion. It was closely followed by a vote for content around culinary culture and history (89%). Expect to see a rise in documentaries, short films, and articles that explore the cultural and historical context of food, from ancient culinary traditions to the evolution of modern cuisine.

Meanwhile, growing interest in understanding the origins and quality of food, greater awareness of environmental and social issues, and a desire to support local and ethical food systems will drive the popularity of ingredientfocussed (85%) content across all channels. Finally, the popularity of content related to **food science**, health and nutrition (72%) will continue to grow, examining, expanding, clarifying, and helping us refine our relationship with food



Food travel and lifestyle

Culinary culture and history



72% Food science, health and nutrition



The gaze on kitchens in the media is huge and chefs certainly enjoy the fandom and glorification of the craft. And we love to see it in fiction too, but I don't think reality tv is very exciting since it's a lot more amateur-looking. Culture and history around food, and travelling with a culinary lens are always of great interest for learning new things and being inspired.



Content creators and social media will play a pivotal role in shaping the food narrative in 2025. [&B professionals with a voracious appetite for learning will increasingly engage with dynamic online platforms that provide visually captivating, bite-sized content. This includes interactive cooking videos, live streaming sessions, and behind-the-scenes looks at culinary processes, which bring techniques and recipes to life in an engaging manner. Additionally, podcasts and food-focused webinars will gain popularity, offering in-depth discussions on trends, sustainability, and the cultural significance of dishes, allowing for a deeper understanding of the food landscape.



As someone who constantly strives to understand food on a deeper level, I believe engaging with culinary culture and history gives me the foundation to appreciate the roots and stories behind food traditions. I find it essential to explore ingredient-focused content because it allows me to get creative with what I already know, providing fresh insights for menu innovations. food science, health, and nutrition content is becoming increasingly important as guests demand healthier options, and I want to stay ahead of that curve.



Sweta Biswa

In recent years, new avenues for exploring food have opened up. Many, especially younger generations, are embracing the cultural and historical dimensions of various cuisines. They're no longer satisfied just to eat—they want to dive deeper into the stories behind the food. This trend is likely to continue, with more people eager to explore every facet of food, including the technical nuances of complex recipes.

Obsessed with food, inspired by community, driven by trends

A vibrant online community of food enthusiasts from brands, chefs, and food critiques to content creators, and everyday food lovers. Sharing a passion for all things culinary, Godrej Vikhroli Cucina aims to engage and cross-pollinate ideas in the exciting realms of the food industry.





www.vikhrolicucina.com

FOOD & TRAVEL

The Indian culinary tourism landscape is undergoing a transformative shift. Epicurean travellers are seeking out hyper-regional, seasonally-driven experiences that go beyond the traditional tourist fare. Instead of focusing solely on iconic dishes at popular restaurants, travellers are preferring to book a meal at family-run eateries, participate in cooking classes with local chefs, and embark on food tours that explore the intricate relationship between cuisine and culture. Furthermore, they can now plan their trips around specific harvests, experiencing the unique flavours of each region throughout the year. This seasonal approach not only enhances the overall travel experience, but also promotes sustainable tourism practices by encouraging travellers to visit during off-peak seasons and supporting local agricultural practices.

In our Food & Travel section this year, we turn the focus back on India, and explore a gamut of hyperregional, seasonally-driven experiences that are offering epicurean travellers new itineraries all year long.

SEASONAL ITINERARIES



Rhododendron Trail Stons valley, Uttarakhand Extend local treks by involving travellers in harvest and post-harvest processing, cooking, eating, drinking rhododendron flower-based products.



Saffron Harvest

Pampore, Kashmir Q Journey with the saffron farmers to understand the intricacies behind the world's most treasured spice.



SWestern Chats, Pan India Organize "trips to origin" hosted by coffee

plantations for coffee buyers, brands, enthusiasts to witness post-harvest processing & tasting.

Exciting opportunities for seasonal culinary experiences available across the country.

Mango Tourism

6 Kotawde & Sawantwadi, Konkan coast, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra Curate tasting tables to explore mangoes through local & regional micro-cuisines Organize pickle, chutney &

preserve making workshops. Explore other produce that are by-products of the season

Kokum Harvest

O Angadibail, Karnataka

Visitors can experience gathering and processing wild kokum with locals.

al Mushroom Harvests

Kodagu, Western ghat

Various kinds of seasonal mushrooms are celebrated in traditional preparations. Celebrate local mushrooms & cuisines through content showcase, seasonal menus



SMaharashtra, Pan India OUse as inspiration for more

propositions around seasonal wild greens



Cacao farms across India

Summer is harvest & post-harvest processing of cacao fruit & beans. With a growing number of cacao plantations and bean-to-bar conversations sparking across the country, one can curate experiences in harvest & production.



Traditional Alcohol Brewing

Pan India

Create experiences through seasonal practices of brewing traditional alcoholic beverages like Feni in Goa and Mahua in MP.

FORK IN THE ROAD: THE CROSSROADS OF FLAVOUR AND TRAVE



As culinary tourism flourishes in India, epicurean travellers are gravitating to hyper-regional, seasonally-driven experiences and enabling food travel to diversify across year-round propositions.

FOCUS AREAS

Culinary tourism is going beyond food walks and urban fine dine experiences with enterprising tour operators, farm stay owners and home chefs across India finding new niches and unique food and drinking experiences that showcase the culinary diversity and culture of destinations. These propositions not only provide a deeper understanding of local traditions and flavours, but also contribute to the economic and social well-being of the communities involved.

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FLAVOURS OF THE SEASON: TOURISM'S BOUNTY

In Ritusamhara, an ode to the passing seasons–Greeshma (summer), Varsha (monsoon), Sharad (autumn), Hemanta (frost), Shishir (winter) and Vasanta (spring)-poet Kalidasa made astute observations on how natural cycles influence the rhythm of love and life. From the heady aromas of flowering mango trees in spring, to the changing colours and festive celebrations during autumn harvests, and the flowering Lodhra, an ancient healing

herb alongside rice, ripe for reaping in winter.

Within these rhythms, food plays an undeniable evocative role in how people choose to experience and respond to the world, making it a significant inspiration for travel.

Discerning Indian travellers seeking immersive experiences into local landscapes and culture are

increasingly gravitating toward food themed propositions like food trails, cooking workshops, agri-tourism and heritage conservation, solidifying culinary tourism as a vertical within the Indian travel industry. A growing number of players in the hospitality and tourism sectors are also responding with highly specialised experiences, making 2025 a promising vear for those who love food and travel!

FRUITFUL EXPLORATIONS: HARVEST PROPOSITIONS

Forward thinking destinations have long exploited specific seasons and become synonymous with them, like Goa and Ladakh in the summer, Kerala or Mandu in the monsoons, or Kashmir in winter. Similarly, many regions in India have special local produce and ingredients that can be leveraged to create seasonal offerings.

Mahabaleshwar established this long ago by promoting strawberries. Before they became widely available across seasons and regions, visitors flocked to farms in the hill station during winter to relish fresh strawberries. Savvy entrepreneurs - Mapro farms especially - capitalise on this, with cafes and shops mushrooming all over selling strawberries with cream, real strawberry ice cream, jams, and other value-added products.

While winters were once captivated by strawberry tourism, recent years have seen Indian summers become synonymous with manages. Farms and homestays along the Konkan Coast have been luring travellers with immersive mango experiences. At Atithi Parinav, a farm stav in Kotawde. near Ratnagiri and Ganapatipule, the diversity of local mangoes is

showcased in varied ways. "There are so many hyperlocal varieties to eniov, each with distinct taste, shape, size and aroma". observes host Medha

Sahasrabuddhe, who incorporates varied varieties into the traditional Konkanasth Brahmin meals she serves.

Guests are also encouraged to savour unlimited mangoes from their orchard where 25 trees vield not only the legendary Ratnagiri Hapoos or Alphonso, but also Kesar, Neelam, Vanraj, Ratna, Malgis and the tiny Dudhpeda. That mangoes are deeply

embedded in local food is apparent with Sahasrabuddhe's specificity of how she uses them. "A knife is never used for the tiny Bitki aam, it is always consumed whole or pickled with mustard to make a sweet and sour kharaat la amba. Another seasonal dish is Amba Dal made with soaked chana dal, seasoned with fresh coconut." Aam ras is regular on the menu, but even with that, a specific ratio of 1 Pairi to 10 Alphonsos is used. "Pairi has a khataas (tang), so we add it to our aam ras for bite. We also use Bhopli amba, a mango that's the size of a small pumpkin, for Aam Muramba." Surplus fruit is made into value-added products like *aam panna* and pickles served and sold around the year. "Our Aam poli made by drying mango pulp into fruit leather and Amboshi cha Lonche, a jaggery sweetened pickle of diced sun-dried raw mangoes, are very popular.'

The Northeast has taken a leaf from these fruitful initiatives to develop a similar economy around oranges. At the Konyak Tea Retreat, in Shiyong village, Nagaland, orange picking offers a standout winter experience at the charming stone-walled farmhouse, run by author and cultural documentarian Phejin Konyak. Set within a 250-acre tea estate, the farm stay attracts guests wanting to savour

BEYOND THE BEACHES: GOA'S GASTRONOMIC CAI FNDAR

Goal once attractive for its beaches. is today more popular for its vibrant culinary scene, boasting fresh seafood, rich coconut curries, and cashewinfused delights, making it a prime destination for food-driven tourism. The tiny state offers diverse culinary experiences.

Famed for cashew farming amongst other things. Goa has been leveraging its cashew season to offer exploratory trails into varied aspects of the harvest, from picking the fruit, and processing the nut to feni trails and more. The last, being particularly attractive as indigenous Goan spirits like 'feni' and 'urak' (the first distillate) are witnessing a renaissance, in craft cocktails along with other ingredients like kokum and teppal, at swanky watering holes in the region. At his cashew farm in South Goa, Hansel Vaz also known as 'The *Feni* doctor'. who is the man behind premium *feni*

of feni, feni cocktails and food pairing, at a table in the middle of a natural spring under a canopy of trees. For food lovers, Shubhra Shankhwalker, of Goa from Home, offers uniquely curated culinary experiences at her North Goa farm. spotlighting authentic Saraswat cuisine. Committed to sourcing locally, all her ingredients - from fresh seafood and seasonal produce to spices, oils, and even kokum extract - are either locally fished, grown, or made in-house. Each morning. Shankhwalker personally goes shopping for the day's catch and seasonal vegetables for the day, which is why asking her what she'll serve typically results in a no-nonsense. characteristic 'depends on what I

MONSOON FORAGING JOURNEYS

Like Goa, Karnataka, which pioneered coffee tourism decades ago, has transcended coffee walks and cooking classes to offer more nuanced experiences. Monsoons bring an opportunity to explore forest foraging.

In Kodagu (Coorg), Karnataka, the monsoon ushers in a feast of foraged delights. Coveted among these are various types of *kumm* (mushrooms). including alandi kumm, the needleshaped nuchi kumm, large, umbrellalike koday kumm, and tree mushrooms like *mara kumm*. Kodavas also enjoy *kakkada koli*, chickens that feast on *malaypaathe* (winged termites) emerging during the rains. This is also when madd thoppu (Justicia wynaadensis), a potent medicinal plant, is harvested. Believed to peak in potency on the 18th day of the Kakkada (mid-July-August) month, it is boiled to make a purple extract that is used to make steamed cakes called madd puttu and a sweet porridge called *madd pavasa*. First timers are cautioned not to be alarmed-It

The Bungalow 1934, a heritage homestay in Coorg run by rallyist Amrit Thimmaiah, showcases these seasonal delicacies on its menu. Nestled on a 200-acre coffee estate near Thadiyendamol, Kodagu's highest peak, this bungalow was built by Thimmaiah's great grandfather. Diwan Bahadur Ketolira Chengappa, the first Chief Commissioner of Coorg. Renovated in 2023 and featured in Gordon Ramsay's 'Uncharted', the bungalow reflects Thimmaiah's pride in his heritage, with photo displays honoring his grandmother, the restoration process, and the Ramsay shoot on its walls. Steeped in history, The Bungalow 1934 offers authentic seasonal Kodava

fresh oranges amidst breathtaking views of the plantations and valley. In neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh. the Dambuk region has celebrated the harvest with an annual Orange Festival since 2015. Every December the festival plays out against the vibrant backdrop of the orange harvest offering a blend of music, art, and local food drawing visitors to Dambuk's 50-plus orchards, boosting local economy and livelihoods.

Oranges, strawberries and mangoes are just a few examples. Across India, there are endless seasonal opportunities waiting to be harvested. be it Kashmiri apples from late August to October, or various melons, ber (Indian jujube), *falsa, bael* (wood apple) and more in the Indian summer.

brand Fazenda Cazulo, offers a unique 'Floating *Feni*' experience - that includes a tour of the farm/distillery, followed by a masterclass and tasting

may turn urine vellow or orange – a harmless cleansing effect.

cuisine with misty views. Chudals (barbecue grills) offer succulent meats while 'The Local Table' their restaurant features classic Coorg flavours inspired by Thimmaiah's grandmother.

find, but it will taste good' approach. Savoi Plantation has also been offering Saraswat cuisine at their 40-hectare organic farm in Ponda, South Goa, since 1985. Hailed as Goa's first ecotourism plantation, here Baburao Shetye and his family offer guided spice plantation tours showcasing kulagar or intercrop cultivation, that end with a Goan Saraswat buffet meal at Sadauli, their onsite restaurant.





"Machavva, my late paternal grandmother, was a great cook. Her mutton pulao, keema balls and onion pickle

were legendary. She passed all her recipes down to my mom Fancy, and Sarsu amma, our family cook." His mother, Fancy Ganapathi, a chocolatier, adds her own culinary magic to every meal with special desserts.

Guests are encouraged to explore Coorg's seasonal flavours throughout the year. Thimmaiah, a passionate host, emphasizes fresh, local ingredients. Organic vegetables are grown on-site, while meats and seafood are sourced from Virajpet. "We adhere to traditional cooking methods, using only fresh ingredients and avoiding chemicals or food colours. Although things are much easier, today, in the past, sourcing groceries by bullock cart took days!"

OCEAN TO PLATE: SEASONS OF THE SEA

Seasonal propositions extend beyond produce, encompassing fish too, like in the case of the prized monsoon delicacy. *hilsa*. This prized fish called *ilish* in Bengal and *pulasa* in Andhra Pradesh attracts dedicated fans willing to pay a premium for their seasonal fix from far and wide.

In Kerala, **Gopinath Parayil** of The Blue Yonder, a responsible travel company, created 'Nilavala', a twilight dining experience on the historic Chinese fishing nets along the Kollam-Kottapuram waterway. He expanded the platform, adding boarding stations, lighting, and traditional decor. Guests can now enjoy sunset cruises and savour sundowners while a canoe delivers meals prepared by local fishermen's families. This revived the heritage site and provided income for fishermen impacted by declining

fish stocks. "Every time we use the platform, it directly benefits 6-7 stakeholder families who offer their services.

including boatmen. oarsmen and various partner families that cook the food. Guests find it magical!" Encouraged by its success with the Ezhikkara village Panchayat, a second project is currently underway in

Edavanakkad.

The Blue Yonder prioritises climate resilience. Outside the monsoon, their 'Day with the Fisherfolk' offers a 3-hour immersion into the unique process of fishing for thirutta (mullet), culminating in a fireside grill of the fresh catch. "We operate in climate-vulnerable areas. Our goal is to empower communities through sustainable tourism," shares Parayil,

highlighting 'Pokkali: Story of a Rice', another half-day tour located in Ezhikkara village. Launched in 2010 it showcases a beautiful example of symbiotic farming, built around a one-of-a-kind saline-water rice variety fertilised by shrimp waste. "Out of 7000 hectares, only 700 acres are farmed. We aim for 1000 acres, and eventually, Sampoorna Pokkali (complete Pokkali cultivation)!"



FLAVOURS OF THE FOREST: EXPLORING TRIBAL CUISINES

Responsible travel extends to respecting and supporting indigenous communities thereby supporting tribal livelihoods and contributing to the preservation of their unique culinary heritage.

In 2021, **Dr. Manisha Oraon** and Abhishek Oraon with friends Prateek Toppo and Shibah Ekka, launched The Open Field on Abhishek's 20-acre family farm near Khunti where they showcase the cuisine of Jharkhand using local produce foraged or sourced from the farm and nearby tribal haats (markets). Their

elaborate Jharkhandi thali showcases tribal cuisine including *maduwa* or finger millet *rotis* to be eaten with a variety of sides made from kutumba (Thai brinjal), *haduwa* (dry bamboo shoot), phutkal (dried Ficus leaves), a choice of protein (chicken, desi chicken and mutton), goda chawal, a drought-resistant variety of local rice, aromatic Sonachur rice from Simdega, Jharkhand's staple dhuska (rice puri). dal pitha (steamed rice lentil dumpling), chilka roti (rice batter dosa), and more.

"Our thali keeps evolving with the seasons including ants from the local haat made into ant

chutney when available or crabs, ferns and rugda or thunder mushrooms coming onto the plate in the monsoon," adds Manisha. "With the onset of the winter, Sanai phool or thepa, the flower of the jute plant that belongs to the hemp family appears and is fried into pakodas, served with a chutney made of kudrum." The last is the fleshy, pink roselle flower popular in local folk medicine (Roselle or gongura leaves are used widely in the

southern states).



CULINARY TOURISM

Transcending conventional propositions are unique gastronomic and multi-sensory journeys that are captivating travellers' imaginations with the promise of truly immersive and unforgettable experiences.

Pranav Kapoor, an eighth-generation perfumer and chef, from Kannauj, *itar* or perfume capital of India transformed his 120-year-old family *haveli* into a perfume tourism destination. Combining his passion for cooking and perfumery, he curates bespoke meals using perfumes and



seasonal flowers. "We offer experiences based on different flowering seasons. February to March is the rose season

and everything is centred around roses, including the food. Jasmine flowers are harvested at the end of summer and need to be plucked at night because the days are extremely hot, and nights are cooler. We modify our itineraries accordingly." The

2-day experience includes a stay at the *haveli*, with sumptuous meals inspired by Kapoor's Khatri heritage, harvesting flowers at the farm, observing the distilling process at the itar factory, a perfume blending session at the perfume bar.

ACTION POINTS

By embracing the diversity that seasons can bring to culinary tourism, industry folk can leverage unique seasonal propositions. Farms and estates can offer farm tourism around crop harvests. Restaurants and tourism boards could collaborate with local food experts to create authentic and engaging experiences for travellers. Food media and content creators could create content to amplify unique seasonal propositions. Brands in the food and travel spaces can foster online communities to build brand loyalty and provide a platform for direct interaction. Travellers can embark on exciting journeys of discovery, fostering a deeper appreciation for the world's rich gastronomic heritage while supporting sustainable and responsible travel practices.



GASTRONOMY TO ASTRONOMY: NEW FRONTIER FOR

Equally ephemeral is the promise of food, farm, stay, and stars offered by Sanjay Austa, owner of Meena Bagh Homes, in Himachal's Ratnari district. What started as an experimental eco project was voted as India's favourite homestay in 2022. The 6-bedroom bungalow, a repurposed Kathkuni Pahari house nestled in a permaculture farm is perfect for those seeking seclusion, tranquillity, and nature according to Austa. The highlight however is Meena Bagh Observatory, the largest privately owned telescope in India. Perched at 8032 ft with the benefit of the darkest skies (ranked 2 on the Bortle Scale) the 20-inch Dobsonian offers guests a chance to stargaze



"We encourage our guests to participate in the activities on our farm, from planting to harvesting fruits, flowers, berries and vegetables and

experience living in a Himachali homestead with cats, dogs, sheep, chicken, ducks and rabbits for

company," says Austa, adding that guests also encouraged to participate in seasonal farm activities. "Corn is planted in mid-June, apple picking is

in September, feasting on Pink Jewel plums, strawberries and blackberries in October.'

Culinary tourism inspired by seasons offers multifaceted and enriching travel experiences that extend far beyond simply tasting local dishes. While seasonal windows may be short, their potential as unique limited edition immersive travel experiences could enrich businesses small and big. across tourism and horticulture sectors. Be it fruit harvests, indulging in delectable traditional feasts. smelling the roses on a perfume tour.



SECTION AT A GLANCE

Indian culinary travellers are using everything from AI to newspapers, and social media to travel websites, to research chefs, local experts, and seasonal experiences while planning their holiday itineraries. An everincreasing number of cooking classes, food-based exhibitions, pop-ups and tours available to pick from in recent times are reflective of their desire for immersive, experiences and skill-based activities. Travellers are also becoming more conscious of the environmental impact of their food choices and are seeking out experiences that promote sustainability. This includes dining at farm-to-table restaurants, participating in foraging tours, and visiting organic farms, thereby supporting local economies. India is being explored by Indians like never before!

Our panel of gastronomes discuss the food and beverage destinations that will be top-of-mind for discerning foodies looking for immersive culinary and cultural experiences in 2025.





TOOLKIT FOR 2025

There has never been a better time for niche and small entrepreneurs in the Indian travel space, than now! Travellers are on the lookout for authentic experiences that help them make meaningful connections with their destinations. The focus today is on quality rather than quantity or checklist itineraries. Service providers, local experts, restaurants and hotels should focus on offering experiential travel, invest in skill development for their workforce as well as digital infrastructure and storytelling, to promote their offerings. The rise of long weekend travel and disposable incomes have contributed to a clear preference for quick getaways, both national and international, presenting immense opportunities for niche hospitality brands. Hotels and restaurants should focus on developing seasonal menu offerings that highlight local produce.



FOOD **TINERARIES**



Food experiences are now playing an increasingly significant role in defining travel itineraries. We asked our experts to select top sources that culinary enthusiasts will rely on most when planning their food itinerary in 2025.

An overwhelming majority picked **local food experts** (89%), in the form of chefs, food writers, food historians, and local guides, as the most trusted sources to explore personalised, authentic, and high quality experiences beyond the typical tourist trail. Enthusiastic travellers will also be hooked to food and travel influencers (86%). whose curated feeds and visually appealing content, will continue inspiring wanderlust for existing and new culinary destinations. Meanwhile, online communities and forums (81%) will remain a valuable resource for food travellers to explore, discuss and validate recommendations with local experts and likeminded enthusiasts, before committing to an itinerary.



Local food experts



89%

Food and travel influencers



81% Online communities and forums





Anubhuti Krishn

People across the board are now spending time and money to research the food of a destination before taking a trip. In the process, many of them are reaching out to local food specialists and experts to help them experience local flavours and cuisines. This is also reflected in the rise of curated experiences around food and food culture in major culinary hubs around the country. My 'Lucknow with Anubhuti' is just one example.



Chef Ashish Bhasir

The Indian gourmand, planning culinary adventures, will prioritise trusted sources to ensure authenticity amidst widespread misinformation. Recommendations from family and friends will remain the most reliable, offering genuine insights. Local advisors, such as chefs and food historians, will play a key role in uncovering hidden gems and authentic practices. Trustworthy influencers with a proven focus on transparency and credible platforms like Eater, The Infatuation, and curated Google Reviews will guide decisions. Culinary tours, workshops, and books by respected food writers will further enrich itineraries, blending expertise with local authenticity for a wellrounded exploration.



Rohit Kasuganti

In 2025, food will likely continue to drive travel decisions, with food and travel influencers guiding followers toward lesser-known dining spots. These influencers often provide insights into the culture and history of a destination through its cuisine. They highlight local dishes, cafes, and street food, allowing travellers to discover authentic culinary experiences. They also bridge the gap between aspiration and action, making destinations more accessible, relatable, and exciting.



Vernika Awa

Travel content creators will matter because urban audiences today prefer planning trips on their own, as opposed to opting for a pre-planned itinerary, as this allows them greater flexibility to selectively enjoy what they want. To tap into this trend there will be two specific types of content that will continue to find strong viewership. first, mainstream publications such as newspapers, magazines and their online platform that could aid decision making when identifying a new location, or niche things to do in an established destination. Such content will also influence independent travel content creators with followings on YouTube and Instagram to create detailed travelogues of destinations that will find popularity among Indian audiences.

INDIAN CULINARY DESTINATIONS



As food tourism gains momentum, discerning travellers are increasingly prioritising immersive culinary experiences over mere sightseeing. In our panel's picks for top culinary destinations within the country, Goa (89%) grabbed the top spot this year. The state's unique blend of Portuguese, Indian, and local influences combined with a vibrant, constantly evolving dining and nightlife scenario, make it the most popular culinary destination in 2025.

Mumbai (79%), with a variety of culinary offerings from its diverse communities, its bustling, mature, street food culture, its thriving fine-dining scene, and an easygoing nightlife, featured as a distant second. In third position, Kolkata (78%), boasts of a rich culinary heritage, deeply rooted in Bengali traditions with a variety of community influences including a vibrant Chinese immigrant one. Travellers to this beautiful city would be further enchanted by its blend of old-world charm and modern vibrancy. exploring hidden alleys and discovering culinary treasures.





Abhilasha Chandak

I am a Marwadi from Rajasthan, brought up in Purulia, West Bengal. I have lived most of my life in Kolkata and feel it's not explored or spoken of enough. Share Market's classic malai toast, the generous offerings of Dacres lane, the veg food in Bada Bazaar, the innumerable street puchka waalas, each with distinct offerings, the kathi rolls in Park Street and the bakeries in New Market that have stood the test of time, homemade Bengali meals, and the aroma of fresh tele bhaja at 4pm, the momos, the biryanis and don't even get me started on the mishtis (sweets)! There is a plethora of undiscovered dishes on offer!



Chef Kunal Arolkar

Huperlocal, culture-influenced dining and food like my grandma made it, has a unique novelty to it. Travellers are seeking out local Goan eateries and dining experiences where they get a taste of the local Goan food, and local Goan ingredients and marvel at the commonalities of traditional cuisine across regions, cultures and religions. Meanwhile, Chefs will have to be more than just chefs — they would have to become culinary historians and cultural guardians to ensure discerning travellers g<mark>et a wholesome experience, and this is as true in Goa as it is in</mark> Hi<mark>machal, Uttarakhand, the North East or any other part of India.</mark>



Rocky Singh

With its kaleidoscope of regional cuisines, flavours and street food offerings, India is finally taking its place on the global culinary map. Indian travellers are increasingly seeking foodcentric immersive experiences. Destinations like Goa-with its unique coastal, Portuguese-influenced cuisine; Mumbai, with its melting pot of cosmopolitan flavours; and Kolkata, rich in culinary legacy and Bengali flavours; offer unique blends of cultural immersion and gastronomic adventure. Also watch out for Hyderabad in coming years! I see it becoming a true powerhouse, offering some of the finest coffee shops, confectioneries, and traditional local foods.



Shilpa Sharma

Credibility comes from having travelled oneself. F&B professionals specifically will need to always think ahead of the curve. if they are looking for 'local influences' to drive their travels - most F&B professionals embark on 'culinary adventure' looking to be inspired, create content, collect stories, build menus, identify regional cuisine collaboration opportunities for popups, or even include them in their menu depending on who they are and what their philosophy is. NAAR needed a Prateek Sadhy to travel the country working with foraged ingredients and local communitymade produce. Vanshika Bhatia of OMO travels all the time, to be able to build on her menu and identify ingredient stories.

INTERNATIONAL ·



Asian nations, with their rich culinary traditions and vibrant food cultures, have been popular choices for a growing segment of travellers looking for culinary adventures. When asked to vote, our panel once again picked Japan (90%) with a cuisine defined by meticulous preparation, emphasis on seasonal ingredients, and reverence for tradition, as the most coveted international culinary destination to visit in 2025. Thailand (89%) with its vibrant street food scene, wealth of regional specialties, from the delicate flavours of Northern Thai cuisine to the rich, coconut-infused dishes of the South, came a close second.

Vietnam (84%), emerged as the rising star, with its unique blend of French colonial influences and indigenous flavours, ranking third. Finally, riding on the enormous popularity of K-dramas, K-pop and K-food in India, Korea (81%) came in as the fourth most popular international culinary destination.



CULINARY DESTINATIONS



Chef Anahita Dhondy

Korean and Japanese cuisine have become incredibly popular among Indian travellers, whose interest has been significantly fueled by TV shows. The captivating visuals of Korean dramas and Japanese anime showcasing mouthwatering dishes have piqued viewers' curiosity, leading them to seek out these culinary experiences firsthand. This has also fostered a thriving ecosystem for Korean and Japanese cuisines within India itself with cities like Gurgaon boasting a plethora of Korean and Japanese restaurants.



Uarish Pao

Asia's emergence as one of the hottest regions for culinary travel in 2024 is no accident. Its unmatched diversity, rich food heritage and investment in infrastructure for food tourism make it ideal for food explorers. Whether they are seeking traditional street food, fine dining, or fusion cuisine, there is something for every culinary enthusiast. One of the biggest draws for culinary tourists, of course, is the rich street food culture across Asia. From the bustling food stalls of Vietnam to the night markets of Taiwan and Thailand, authentic, there are abundant food experiences that allow travellers to immerse themselves into a region's food culture.



Tara Deshpande

I have travelled to all these countries. While China is the most popular destination in Asia, Macau and Taiwan are also starting to show under the top 15 destinations. But food alone is not enough to make a destination popular. Many of these destinations can be very expensive, but the ease of travel, safety, hygiene, great infrastructure, good roads, excellent hotels, and amenities for the disabled or elderly make them particularly attractive to travellers.



Vicky Ratnani

India is witnessing a thrilling surge in culinary tourism. Travellers today are seeking gastronomic adventure, be it authentic dishes from local street food stalls or Michelin-starred restaurant experiences. This is fostering cultural exchange and deepening our understanding of this incredible world we live in through the lens of its vibrant culinary heritage. Southeast Asia's popularity with the Indian traveller against this backdrop, is a testament to the draw of the authentic flavours and vibrant cultures of these regions offer in their bustling street food markets, local cuisines and fine dining experiences.

EMERGING CONVERSATIONS

Consumer demand for greater variety, quality and convenience in food products continued unabated in 2024, often driving the nature and context of conversations in different directions. This section looks at topics that have the potential to turn into bigger conversations and seed future trends.

With sustainability now a constant concern across the globe, especially with regards to food sourcing and supply chains. Our first essay this year looks at sustainability in fish, where we explore traditional and emerging concepts of mindful consumption, and how several local initiatives are using them to overcome social and economic challenges that impact India's future food security.

Meanwhile, our essay on the story of palm oil in India, offers a deeper examination of consumer and industry perceptions that are shaping the demand for this ubiquitous, and often vilified category of vegetable oils.

Read on for an extensive preview of topics that we feel you will hear a lot about in the coming year.

A FIX OF FISH THROUGH THE YEAR Examples of diverse cooking and preservation methods that

ustenance

S

Substitution

Preservation

Simulation



Clams

Hand-harvesting, seasonal closures, and size limits for protection, ensuring sustainable, albeit lower, yields but of higher value

In-season vs Off-season



mor: Surmai (See fish) is substituted with

Rawas (Indian Salmon)

Drying

Across India: Dried fish is usually prepared by gutting and drying under the sun, or by other means, for several days. In some cases, fish is salted before drying. Shelf life may vary from several months to years, based on species and preservation methods used

Condiments: (Indian equivalents to fish sauce)

Across piscine & coastal cultures in India, rice with dried fish is considered a comfort meal, often consumed with fermented, day-old rice (Panta bhat in Bengal, Pakhala bhat in Odisha, Pazhayadu in Tamil Nadu) as gruel or porridge



promote sustainable consumption.



Kane Traditionally fished and eaten through summer and monsoon only



Hilsa Traditionally eaten only during monsoon, when it is not in breeding season and is of the best quality





Post-moonsoon: Pomfrei or Kingfish is substituted with seasonal Mackerel or

Saltwater vs Freshwater



Monsoon: Depending on the region, saltwater fish like Hilsa are replaced with freshwater options like Rohu or Catla



Post-monsoon: Small freshwater fish are substituted with marine fish like Barracuda or Snapper.



Smoking Lakshadweep: Fishers turn their surplus tuna into mas meen - a boiled, smoked and dried preparation.



Fermenting

Manipur: Hentak, is a paste of fish fermented with the hongu (alocasia) plant.

Across the Northeast: Shidal, a fermented fish preparation, is made in an earthen pot with fish oil.

Meghalaya: Tungtap, is prepared by mixing fish with salt and fermenting it in an earthen pot for 2 to 6 months.



Pickling

Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala: Seafood chunks are pickled with chillies and local spices to make a delicacy accessible year round



Dried shrimp chutney podis

Popular versions include Unnakka Chemmeen Chammanthi (Kerala), Sukva Sungtachi Chutney (Goa), and Galmbi Chutney (Mangalore)



Ganglode ka saag

Iranslates to a gravy made of stones from the Ganga, which lend a fishy flavour to the dish *Anecdotal



Seaweed

In parts of the Kerala coast, seaweed is added to a soup like meal, while it is used as a leafy vegetable in parts of Tamil Nadu

In Kadmat and Minicoy islands in Lakshadweep, seaweed is consumed in both pickled and fried formats.

SUSTAINABLE FISH: PAST LESSONS, FUTURE GAINS

Securing India's seafood future depends on integrating historical knowledge with modern, sustainable practices across the entire supply chain.

FOCUS AREAS

India has a long-standing history of sustainable seafood fishing and consumption. However, due to commercial needs and changing market demands, the current state of the industry is in flux. Amidst this volatility, there are a number of initiatives present in the country promoting sustainable fishing and consumption practices. A deep-dive into indigenous knowledge, ongoing distribution systems, gastronomic innovations, and educational efforts promoting fishing and consumption can build a long-standing foundation for the future of the seafood industry.

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EMPTY NETS: THE DANGERS OF OVERFISHING

With its vast coastline spanning over 7500 kilometres, it is unsurprising that seafood is woven into the fabric of everyday life for millions of Indians. A variety of fish, both marine and riverine including shellfish and molluscs are central to many traditional Indian cuisines. In recent years however, while demand is increasing, significantly driven by the

export market and consumer demand for protein, supply is in jeopardy.

However, overfishing and overconsumption are depleting onceabundant seas, causing widespread damage to the ecology and economy, marine ecosystems and the communities that depend on them for sustenance. As India's seafood hurtles towards a dire future, if unchecked, efforts to address this rampant disruption are bringing sustainable practices into sharp focus along with interventions that can be employed by stakeholders across the industry including fisheries, distributors, policy makers, chefs, and consumers,

COAST TO KITCHEN: INDIA'S SEAFOOD STORY

Indian fishing communities, both marine and inland, have relied on time tested traditional practices and tools for sustenance and livelihood. Methods like hand-picking and spear fishing and tools like nets, hooks, and traps have evolved from centuries of living with natural rhythms and tied to deep, intrinsic understanding of hydrology of riverine and oceanic systems.

Fishermen in Chennai take their daily cues from the climate and currents. when going out to sea in *kattumaram* or fibre boats for hook-and-line fishing. In Karnataka, the generationsstrong Kairampani fishing method relies on the tides. Taking its name from the local Tulu word 'kai' meaning both hand and small, which highlights the close relationship between fishers and their catch. It involves groups of

40 to 50 fisherfolk working in unison, to cast large nets using a *dhoni* or wooden boats, and pulling them back to shore. In Bengal, the *khepla ial* or cast net is widely prevalent, while a similar hand-woven netting technique called *Dol* is used in the Konkan.

With the advent of mechanisation in the mid-20th century, these culturally and ecologically rooted techniques gave way to methods like trawling that increased the volume of individual catches and optimised yields. However a growing consciousness of the strain such methods impose on marine resources, has driven efforts to reinstate traditional practices.

Around the Ashtamudi lake in Kerala, where short-neck clams have been a local staple for centuries, commercial mechanised clam fishing gained

popularity in the 1980s. Recognising the dangers of over-extraction and damage to the delicate clam habitat, the CMERL or Central Marine Eisheries Research Institute and the World Wildlife Fund collaborated with advisors, scientists, and local fisheries to implement proactive measures. Mechanised equipment was banned, and fisherfolk were encouraged to resume traditional methods like diving, hand dredging and hand-picking in shallow waters. A size limit was established to ensure only mature clams were harvested, and a threemonth seasonal closure was enforced during peak breeding season.

Similar traditions of abstinence from fishing during the monsoons prevail across India's coastal fishing communities, and are reinforced by government-regulated seasonal

fishing bans. These breaks account for both, the safety of fisherfolk, and replenishing of fish populations following their natural breeding cycles. Such periods of abstinence, much like land-based harvest festivals, conclude with festivity. In the Konkan, the fishing season recommences with Narali Poornima in which communities pay homage to the sea with coconuts and seek blessings for a safe and fruitful season.

India's coastal communities are rich repositories of traditional knowledge around climate, ecology, economics and livelihoods, within which lie valuable solutions for strategic

SEASONS OF THE SEA: TRADITIONAL SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Systemic change in the procurement of seafood will undoubtedly play a vital role in driving sustainability, however it must be reciprocated at the consumer end of the value chain to create true impact. Here too, the answers lie inward. Traditional knowledge of fishing synchronises with traditional consumption practices-from seasonal and fin-totail eating, to preservation of surplus.



Bengali cuisine and features in our daily meals and special feasts alike. But we choose our

"Fish is intrinsic to

fish by season" shares Madhushree Basu-Roy, co-founder of Pikturnama Studios, a Kolkata-based media company that documents food culture. She explains that freshwater fish like Rohu, Katla, and Parshe are everyday staples. "But Ilish or Hilsa is in season *in the monsoons, and therefore a* cherished special. Meanwhile, summers call for fish that are light and easy to consume like the Mourola, and winter meals feature rich, fatty fish like Chitol and Boal, along with Koi Mach, a small, earthy fish from shallow, muddy ponds and paddy fields."

Similarly, coastal communities of the Konkan, including the Kolis, Konkani-Muslims, Saraswats, Pathare Prabhus, and Goan Christians, also practice



seasonal consumption. "Except during the monsoons, when fishing stops, saltwater fish like the Karali, Bombil,

and Mandeli are abundant and are a mainstay in daily meals throughout the year," says Dr Mohsina Mukadam, food historian and professor at Ruia College, Mumbai. "The monsoons see an increase in the consumption of catch from freshwater estuaries and wetland regions, like mudskippers and *snails,"* she adds, lamenting that this practice has declined over the years due to widespread ecological change and increased toxicity from pollution.

For fish eating communities mindful consumption goes beyond seasonal consumption to encompass fin-to-tail eating as well. "In Bengali cooking we don't waste any part," highlights Basu-Roy. There are many dishes like macher tel, chorchori and macher *muro diye dal* that are made to use everything. Fish heads are cooked with lentils or rice, fish roe is deep fried into dumplings and added to gravies, while entrails and bones chhvachra. Similarly with Konkani communities, an example of this can be seen with the Ghol. "It is a rare and expensive fish that is normally savoured only during festivities or joyous occasions. Even so, it is ensured that all parts, including offals—pisara or kaata—are utilised to honour the fish's rarity." says Dr Mukadam

are cooked into a robust dish called Mindful consumption offers immensely valuable solutions that extend

intervention. The Ashtamudi Lake initiative demonstrates this in the economic success for the local communities. Their preemptive actions have ensured sustained harvests, yield higher prices for hand-picked clams, and even earned local fisheries eco-label certification from the Marine Stewardship Council, allowing them to export to Japan and Southeast Asia.



"Ashtamudi has served as a pioneering model, signalling local fisheries across Kerala to follow suit," says Dr K. Sunil

Mohamed, retired Principal Scientist and Head of Division at CMFRI who now collaborates with government

beyond fresh fish. Both saltwater and freshwater catch are preserved by drying, salting, smoking, pickling, and fermentation across different parts

bodies to advance similar initiatives in other regions as chair of the Sustainable Seafood Network of India

Such interventions are a testament to the power of collaboration between scientists, governing bodies and traditional fishing communities, towards securing a sustainable future for Indian fishing



of the country. In Kashmir, river fish is dried to make *hogadda* to supplement winter diets. In the Konkan, sode and *bombil* are dried in the summer and stocked along with pickled fish. In the Eastern and Northeastern regions, an array of preserved fish based condiments supplement meals including Manipuri hentak, a fermented fish paste, *tungtap*, a salted and slow-fermented fish condiment from Meghalaya, and *shidol*, small fish fermented in earthen pots and enjoyed across Bengal and Assam. In Lakshadweep, fishers boil, smoke and dry surplus tuna to make Mas Meen.

These preserves and condiments serve to fortify daily meals with flavour and nutrients in seasons of need like winters when lakes and rivers freeze off monsoons when fishing halts. These traditional practices emphasise sustainable resource management, address sensory and dietary requirements in accordance with changing seasons, and offer cues that chefs and home cooks across the country can leverage creatively.



BEYOND THE CATCH: SUSTAINABILITY ON THE RESTAURANT MENU

The seafood industry in India is driven significantly by metropolitan markets. Many consumers, especially those that aren't from traditionally fish-eating cultures, limit themselves to a few familiar species that are less challenging to consume, fueling overfishing. *Mitra Walke*, closely observed this dynamic at his family's legacy restaurant, Chaitanya Assal Malvani Bhojangruh since the 1990s.



"Mumbai's seafood supply was typically found in local waters. Lately however, we have

had to widen our reach to source from areas like Sindhudurg. Mangalore, and Visakhapatnam. Fish currently travels 500 to 1300 kilometres to reach Mumbai."

That said, the culinary industry is indeed drawing inspiration from various traditional approaches, and employing modern ones, in efforts to foster a more sustainable seafood system. Trends set by chefs and restaurants often trickle down into the consumer landscape, making them powerful mediators in popularising lesser-known, local and seasonal catch

Walke founded Coast & Bloom, a modern seafood restaurant in Mumbai. in 2023, to change this narrative and shift focus from popular but severely overfished varieties like pomfret,

surmai, rawas and prawns by offering lesser-known seasonal varieties. "Recently, during the monsoons we have started experimenting with serving freshwater fish, like kane, red snapper, silver bream and chonak. found in rivers. estuaries and mangroves. Initially, there was some resistance from consumers, who wanted to stick to familiar favourites. But with time, we have seen a significant increase in the sale of these alternative varieties."

Chef Auroni Mookerjee who is

currently taking a break before starting his own restaurant in the summer, shares that instead of flying in French escargot or Kochi oysters, he prefers to showcase local paddy snails and pond mussels found in Kolkata's water bodies. "In my kitchens I try my

best to focus on using a lot of freshwater fish available locally. I think the biggest pescatarian cause I have taken up over the vears is the llish or Hilsa. If its rampant overfishing continues

the way it is, future generations will definitely not get to try this local delicacy."

While chefs and stand-alone restaurants can be more agile with menus to leverage local supply chains, it can be far more challenging for larger restaurant and luxury hotel

chains that operate with stringent SOPs and centralized supply chains. However, the right intent and philosophy can drive change. Case in point the Choose Wisely program ITC Hotels initiated in partnership with the the World Wildlife Fund in 2012 and ran for almost 12 years. "All the



our menus, and all the seafood options were ranked using a 'sustainability traffic light system'. Red icons indicated critically endangered species, orange icons denoted species under pressure, and green icons signified sustainable options," explains Chef Manisha

Bhasin, Corporate Executive Chef at ITC Hotels, adding their guests really took to the concept. Through this initiative, ITC not only succeeded in shaping perceptions of its significant consumer base and encouraged them to implement more sustainable practices but also educated the industry and consumer at large about seasonal seafood consumption.



POWER OF PURCHASE: IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMER EDUCATION

The success of the Choose Wisely Program shows that given the right encouragement consumers will make more mindful choices. "Consumers



are willing to follow guidelines provided they highlight risks with practical information and safeguard stakeholders

across the industry, rather than just act as narratives. There is an increased sense of awareness when it comes to sustainability. But more education and awareness are kev factors to focus on in future" emphasises **Sangram Sawant**.

CEO and Founder of Pescafresh, a seafood and meat company with a philosophy based on environmental consciousness and sustainability.

This is where organisations like Know Your Fish, and In Season Fish, fill a gap. Powered by scientists, conservationists, and activists, these platforms work to connect consumers with local fishing communities and fishmongers and educate both vendors and consumers on why and how to diversify their fish consumption. With the help of simple, pictorial calendars and charts they have created that are widely shared and appreciated, they guide consumers in identifying ideal fish species to consume or avoid during varied seasons. They also offer simple tips and recipes, to encourage cooking unfamiliar fish varieties.

Mayuresh Gangal, co-founder of Know Your Fish and biologist-researcher at the Nature Conservation Foundation,

points out, "we must not underestimate the power of lifestyle changes at an individual level. During the month of Shravan or

the Ganesh festival in India (August to September) many Indians prefer not to eat seafood making it uneconomical

to catch fish during the time. But during Christmas and New Year, there is a high demand for seafood and as a result, fishers put in extra effort to catch fish. This shows us how our choices can affect demand." While a single person consuming responsibly may not solve overfishing overnight. as more people understand the importance of responsible choices and adapt them too, it will catalyse change. "As Know Your Fish, we have created a seafood calendar but its effectiveness will depend on the consumer. Addressing overfishing is not just the responsibility of fishers. scientists, policymakers but the consumer as well,"

While such initiatives are driving awareness and intent among conscious urban consumers, convenience is a big factor in their busy lives which is where direct-toconsumer brands like Pescafresh are bridging the gap by taking the onus of sustainable sourcing and delivering fresh fish on demand. "Fresh chilled seafood comprises more than 70% of our business, of which 95% is ocean or wild caught and dependent on mother nature. So we have to engage in responsible trade and adhere to

Rising demands for fish at home and for export, estimate India's seafood production to hit 22 million tonnes, positioning it as the third largest producer in the world. "Demand for seafood in India is growing at a compounded 3-4 % in line with our GDP growth of India." estimates Sawant, "we must husband resources and prepare for future generations and their sustainable requirements."

A growing body of research is underway to meet future demands. CMFRI is working with biotechnology firms across the country to develop modern, technology-driven approaches like lab-grown seafood and advancements in aquaculture that seek to relieve the burden currently borne by natural fish resources.

That said, in a country like India. traditional livelihoods are an important factor to consider. According to the 2016 Marine Fisheries census, 6,00,890 marine fishing families in India live below the poverty line, an alarming fact that highlights the importance of

ACTION POINTS

The seafood industry in India needs a significant **overhaul of regulatory frameworks** due to its outdated laws and lack of accountability. Furthermore, a lack of cohesion between national and state laws make it easier for commercial fishers to overfish. Industry players need to focus on **adopting heritage practices and traditions** rooted in sustainability. While turning to sustainable consumption is one aspect of the story, the other is to reduce the industry's reliance on specific species of fish. Encourage consumers to make sustainable choices through increased availability in restaurants and B2C companies, leading to a wider variety of seafood and by supporting sustainable fishing practices. Additionally, restaurants and hotels can play a role in educating consumers about the benefits of eating less common fish. While educational organisations are already doing this, more outreach programs are needed.





economy. Like engine dealers, makers of nets, boats and other tools of the trade, and even people that stay on the shore to moor and push out vessels towards the sea." observes Sumaiya Mustafa, an independent food scholar, emphasising the need for a more robust cultural and anthropological approach. Sawant adds, "fishing bans eventually

mean a lack of revenue for fisherfolk as that is their primary revenue stream. *Given alternate revenue streams* fisherfolk may stop risking their lives out of compulsion. Government or seafood promotion organizations spreading awareness of the potential of quality frozen seafood with complete traceability standards would also mitigate illegal fishing."

While players across the landscape are actively working to drive better.

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strict procurement policies. Which includes informing our consumers about sourcing, traceability and seasonal varieties," shares Sawant, going on to point out that tackling overfishing of species is not the only issue. "It is more important to control the harvest of undersized fish, because

that hinders healthy replenishment of the species. At Pescafresh we have a threshold cutoff point. pomfret fish weighing less than 200 grams or surmai, rawas and snappers below 1 kg are not offered."

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE: CHARTING A COURSE

taking a human-centered approach.



"Beyond fisherfolk and fishmongers, there is so much to be investigated about the systems that support the fishing

more sustainable practices, a lot more can be done towards building an ecologically and economically resilient future for fish according to Sawant. "Vendors can be agile. While buying fresh seafood during the fishing bans on the West coast is considered illegal and a strict NO at Pescafresh, we take advantage of the fact that the fishing begins on the East coast around the time and flv in fresh seafood from there, we also supplement with farmed fish "

The future of sustainable fish in India hinges on a multi-pronged approach. Traditional knowledge, passed down through generations, integrated with modern scientific practices, advocacy for policies to support local fishing communities and promote sustainable fishing practices, raising awareness, empowering consumers and the industry. By fostering collaboration between government, industry, communities and consumers India can safeguard its rich marine biodiversity and ensure a thriving and sustainable seafood sector for generations to come.

THE STORY OF PALM OIL IN INDIA

Often misunderstood and misrepresented, palm oil presents an opportunity to revolutionise India's agricultural sector.

FOCUS AREAS

When consumed mindfully, palm oil offers numerous benefits, from its nutritional value to its versatility in cooking. Consumers opting for sustainably sourced palm oil can mitigate certain environmental issues and choose oils rationally to move towards a better nutritional intake and a healthier standard of living. By using tools like the Palm Oil Scorecard by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), consumers and businesses can identify sustainable and ethically sourced options.

significant criticism. Its high yield

has led to widespread demand and

increased cultivation, particularly in

Southeast Asia, resulting in severe

environmental consequences such as

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Palm oil, a versatile vegetable oil, has historically been a staple cooking fat in West and Central Africa. Its exceptionally high yield and wide range of applications have made it a valuable resource, used widely across the world today.

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In recent years, palm oil has garnered

THE STORY SO FAR

Today, palm oil stands as one of the most widely used vegetable oils worldwide. Extracted from the African oil palm tree (*Elaeis guineensis*), it comes in two primary forms: red palm oil, obtained from the fruit's flesh, and palm kernel oil, derived from the seeds. These are typically refined, bleached, and deodorized through industrial processes to produce what is more commonly referred to as palm oil in a modern context.

However, palm oil boasts a rich and complex global history spanning over 5.000 years. In Western and Central Africa where it originates, the oil palm tree has been a historic cornerstone of local life. Akin to the banana tree or coconut palm in India, every part offers a range of cultural and practical uses: the fruit is ground to make soup, the stem is tapped for palm wine. the trunk and fronds provide roofing and building materials, as well as mulch and ash for natural fertilizer, and various parts also find their place in cultural rituals and traditional medicine. In these regions, unrefined red palm oil was (and continues to be) a staple cooking oil, valued for its flavour, nutritional profile and high smoking point.

deforestation, habitat destruction, and loss of biodiversity. Such issues have tarnished its reputation, discounting the pivotal role it plays in global

way into global trade, when European traders began importing it, primarily for use in soap and candle production. During the Industrial Revolution, palm oil's heat resistance and lubricating properties made it a highly soughtafter component for machinery, further driving its demand. This surge led to the establishment of largescale plantations in Africa, fueled by colonial expansion. Thriving in tropical climates, by the 19th century, its cultivation spread to Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, which lead global production today.

Its contemporary applications are extensive, from cooking oils and deep-frying agents in Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia, to blended vegetable oils, commercial mayonnaise, ice cream, chocolate, biscuits, snacks and other industrially produced foods across the world. Beyond the food industry, palm oil is a critical ingredient in cosmetics, personal care and cleaning products, as well as biofuels, making it a ubiquitous global commodity.

In an Asian context, palm oil has now surpassed soybean oil as the

agriculture, food production and allied economies.

However in India, where cooking oil continues to be a major import, the context of this emerging industry differs markedly, creating opportunities to approach its production responsibly and sustainably.

most widely used commercial fat, accounting for about 43% of the region's total vegetable oil consumption. Indonesia, China, Malaysia, Pakistan and India are the top consumers. This puts a sharp focus on India's prospects as an emerging producer.

At this pivotal juncture, it is imperative to examine the perceptions that shroud palm oil. And in unpacking this, two crucial questions arise: Is palm oil detrimental to human health? And does it negatively impact the environment? While common narratives paint an oversimplified picture, as with most food-related discussions, the answer is far more nuanced.



ON THE PLATE: CULINARY & NUTRITIONAL PERSPECTIVES

From the consumption perspective, no ingredient is inherently good or bad; its impact is derived from how it is consumed and in what context. Palm oil exemplifies this complexity, offering both benefits and considerations for health.

Traditionally, red palm oil is a staple cooking fat in many African cuisines. Apart from its vibrant vermillion colour and mildly floral flavour, its culinary characteristics are not unlike coconut oil or ghee—creamy, buttery, solid at room temperature, and packed with nutrients.

This form of unrefined red palm oil is rich in carotenoids, a precursor to Vitamin-A. The refined version, pale golden in color, lacks carotenoids and thus does not provide the same Vitamin-A content. However, from a nutritional standpoint, studies show that palm oil can help maintain healthy cholesterol levels and is rich in vitamins, minerals, and monounsaturated fatty acids.



"Palm oil boasts a more balanced fatty acid profile than alternatives like coconut oil or butter, making it a potentially

healthier choice," explains Prof. (Mrs.) Vijaya Khader, Former Dean Acharya N. G. Ranga Agricultural University, who has been actively engaged in nutrition research and teaching for over thirty-three years. "Its strength lies in the fact that it offers 40% monounsaturated fats (MUFAs), comparable to other heart-



healthy oils like sesame, mustard, and groundnut, and just slightly lower than olive oil." She explains that MUFAs can contribute to heart health by potentially increasing good cholesterol (HDL) without significantly raising bad cholesterol (LDL). In fact, research shows that palm oil also contains cholesterol-reducing antioxidants known as vitamin E tocotrienols.

"Despite the general perception that oils contribute to obesity and heart disease, palm oil does not inherently pose risks to heart health, when consumed in moderation", concludes Dr. Khader.

In commercially produced foods, fats play an important role in the nutritional, physical, and sensory quality of products. Palm oil, with its high heat tolerance and price advantage, is widely used as a cooking medium in the commercial sector, particularly for deep frying. Its unique properties have also made it a key component in many processed foods, both in its refined form and as part of blended oils.

Vegetable oils exhibit diverse fatty acid compositions, and blending oils with different properties creates cooking oils with improved nutritional profiles and enhanced functionality. Palm oil is a valuable component in blended oils due to its high oxidative stability, which enhances shelf life, prevents rancidity, and contributes to a desirable texture and consistency.



"It should not be forgotten that the use of palm oil in processed foods has exploded primarily (as

a replacement for) hydrogenated vegetable oils that have trans fats," says Krish Ashok, author of the seminal book, Masala Lab, explaining that its natural semi-solid state at room temperature provides a naturally stable fat that eliminates the need for hydrogenation, addressing the health risks associated with trans fats.

Many authorities emphasise that the focus on dietary fat should be on the amount consumed rather than the type. The WHO recommends 20-35% of daily calories come from fat, regardless of the source. And with its unique blend of nutrients, balanced fatty acid composition, and absence of trans fats, a moderate consumption of Palm oil as part of a balanced diet is recommended by The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN).

"Palm oil is actually a really high quality vegetable oil," says Ashok, adding that when it comes to cooking, like any other foods, moderation is key. "Ideally, rotate between coldpressed plant oils for daily use, refined oils for deep frying and limit saturated fats (like ghee, butter, coconut or palm oil) to less than 10% of your daily calories. Be aware of how much ends up in your snacks (the average person in the US consumes 7kgs of palm oil without even knowing it). And *if you can afford it, pay attention to* whether it's coming from responsible plantations or exploitative ones."

ON THE LAND: ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Considering the environmental and economic implications of palm oil also requires a nuanced approach.



"Well-maintained plantations can coexist with diverse ecosystems, supporting a region's natural biodiversity. They

also play a role in soil conservation by preventing erosion and improving fertility. Moreover, these plantations act as carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and helping to mitigate the effects of climate change," explains Dr. Suresh Motwani, General Manager of Solidaridad India, an organisation that

runs sustainable oil palm programmes worldwide.

Simply put, oil palm cultivation is not detrimental in itself. Rather, it is the methods of cultivation that have an impact. In African regions, for example, oil palms form an integral part of the natural ecosystem. However, in Indonesia and Malavsia. the implementation of large-scale plantations that have replaced native forest cover to practice intensive monocropping, is what has proven detrimental. That said, many argue that oil palm cultivation has had a significant social impact in these countries, lifting millions out of poverty.

In the Indian context, the crop's remarkable productivity presents a compelling opportunity. Oil palm plantations can yield up to ten times more oil per acre than crops like soybean, sunflower, rapeseed, or even coconut, translating to lower land requirements for the same output. Combined with favourable market prices, this makes oil palm cultivation an attractive income source, especially for small farm holders. In fact, the entire value chain, from cultivation and harvesting to processing and refining, has the potential to generate substantial employment and livelihood for rural communities.

"When managed responsibly, oil palm cultivation offers numerous benefits to India's agricultural and economic sectors, positioning it as a crop with immense potential for sustainable growth and rural development," adds Dr Motwani. With special initiatives surrounding small farm holders, Solidaridad has played a critical role in developing IPOS, India's own standards and sustainability frameworks for the effective implementation of the National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP).

India is the world's fifth-largest producer of edible oil, contributing 5% of global output. However, with per capita consumption rising to 19.7 kg/

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year, domestic production falls short of the growing demand. According to NITI Aayog's 2024 report on accelerating edible oil self-sufficiency, India's imports reached 16.5 million tonnes in 2022-23, accounting for 21% of global trade of edible oil. An expanding palm oil industry aligns with the country's need to meet local oil demands, reducing reliance on imports. Furthermore, export potential from surplus production could also allow India to establish itself as a key player in the global market, bolstering the nation's economic growth.

The 2024 report outlines a threepronged strategy: crop retention and diversification, horizontal expansion (utilizing fallow rice fields and wastelands for oilseed and oil palm cultivation), and vertical expansion. Leveraging these measures could significantly reduce the edible oil deficit, cut imports, and boost economic growth and livelihoods. To support sustainable palm oil production, the Indian government has introduced subsidies for farmers, R&D investments to improve vield and quality, and infrastructure development.

With careful implementation, and prioritisation of certified sustainable palm oil, India can establish a palm oil industry that delivers economic benefits while ensuring environmental and social responsibility.

ACTION POINTS

It is clear that ethical production of palm oil is not only possible, but also essential for food security in India. However, achieving this will require a **strong industry commitment towards responsible practices**, also supported by **government initiatives** and **stakeholder collaboration**. By prioritising **ethical sourcing**, **environmental conservation**, and **innovation**, India can harness palm oil's potential to transform its agricultural sector while supporting a sustainable and prosperous future for its people and the planet.

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SECTION AT A GLANCE

As newer categories of frozen food proliferate the market, touting better quality of processing, packaging and supply chain logistics, consumer perceptions around frozen foods are changing fast, especially among the younger demographics. This year, we decided to examine how these perceptions would manifest into consumer purchase decisions.

For our second trend topic, we looked at the growing discourse around our relationship with traditional fats. These are driving meaningful conversations around sourcing, production, distribution, consumption, and a growing demand for better understanding of its impact on food habits, culture, health and the environment.







TOOLKIT FOR 2025

In a world where environmental concerns are becoming increasingly pressing, sustainable policies are gaining importance across industries today. Sourcing local, seasonal ingredients, reducing energy and water consumption, minimising waste and supporting local communities are not only practices that the hospitality and FMCG industries should focus their efforts on, but also communicate the same with their consumers via clear labels and menu offerings. Service providers, hoteliers and companies can nudge customers towards new attitudes and habits through product innovation. Consumers are increasingly health oriented, and the quality of a company's communications and its ability to strike the right tone, will increasingly become a competitive advantage.

FROZEN FOODS



When asked which frozen food categories will see greatest adoption in 2025, our panel of experts predict that consumers will opt for those that offer maximum quality, variety and convenience to young consumers. Frozen fish and meats (79%), riding on stronger claims of quality in sourcing, packaging, and logistics, emerged as the top pick. Frozen fruits and vegetables (72%) came a close second, demonstrating an increased dependence on high quality, prepped and ready-to-cook solutions in daily cooking.

In the same vein, panellists also felt that frozen snackables (66%) like momos, samosas, kebabs and burgers, that offer guick and flavourful alternatives to regular meals at home, are starting to make deeper inroads into the home kitchen.

In summary, our panelists feel that these categories of frozen foods, offering wholesome, time-saving and cost effective solutions for busy individuals, will continue to drive demand for these versatile and ready-to-eat options in 2025.



79%

Frozen fish and meats

72% Frozen Fruits and vegetables



66% **Frozen Snackables**



frozen snackables like kebabs, momos and more have always been on international supermarket shelves, but there has been a growing uptake in India since 2023. I believe it will only become bigger in 2025. The idea that we can create something exciting at home is very appealing. The idea of cleanliness, health and zero trans fats is kicking in, and people believe that cooking these semi-prepared frozen dishes at home affords greater control over oil and butter levels and hygiene. Semi-cooked momos can be steamed at home, or frozen samosas can be fried in fresh oil/less oil, or even air-fried. The same goes for burgers. Burger buns are easily available, so if I buy a chicken burger patty, I can make my own healthy burger at home.



Larissa Valladares

frozen foods offer convenience for busy professionals. Many young consumers work long hours, so frozen items like salamis, vegetables, and breads make it easy to put together a quick meal. While this generation enjoys experimenting with their meals, they often prefer not to cook everything from scratch—making frozen foods a practical solution.



Pooja Khanna

Young consumers today clearly desire products that seamlessly fit into their busy lives while offering variety and taste, but also balancing health. frozen fruit and vegetables are perceived as retaining nutrients, and have become essential in terms of convenience while potato snacks and ready meals are popular because they deliver indulgence and comfort with minimal time and effort. Cold cuts and ready-tobake items are more niche but offer variety, whether for a quick breakfast or an effortless charcuterie board.



Ravi Miglar

Indian consumers used to believe that fresh is better than frozen, but that perception is changing. Increasing awareness that frozen is often fresher than fresh, and that fresh fruit and vegetables, frozen soon after harvest, retain freshness better than those that go through India's poorlychilled supply chain. Many consumers today also have larger freezer spaces, or standalone freezers, and can store more frozen food at home.





When asked about preferred sources of dietary fats at home, our experts reiterated that ghee, traditional oils, and cold-pressed oils will stay on top in 2025. These findings underscore the enduring position of traditional cooking mediums and a growing awareness of the health benefits associated with consuming these fats in rotation. The panel was unanimous in picking **ghee (94%)** as the top source of dietary fats yet again!

They also felt **traditional oils (91%)** will continue to gain traction, driven primarily by growing consumer preference for **cold pressed oils (91%)**. Considered superior, because they retain more of their original flavour, aroma, and nutritional value, this category will be more sought after by the health-conscious consumers.

Although not as dominant as ghee and traditional oils, our panellists put **butter (79%)** as the fourth most favoured category of dietary fats at home in 2025.





Anushrut

Industry efforts to incorporate indigenous fats into packaged foods and clearer labelling about trans fats and saturated fats would benefit consumers. Additionally, emphasising the versatility of traditional fats, like using ghee for sautéing or as a finishing drizzle, could help bring these back into everyday diets in a modern and health-conscious way.



Robin Nagar

Valley Culture's cultured ghee's creamy texture and rich flavour profile have made it a versatile favourite, now embraced across diverse culinary traditions—from drizzling over sourdough toast to enriching Mediterranean dishes and even baking. Consumers value ghee not just for its taste but for its purity, nutrient profile, and ability to elevate everyday meals.



Dipali Khandelwal

As health remains the top priority, consumers are increasingly choosing high-quality, nutrient-rich fats. By 2025, the primary sources of dietary fats at home are likely to include traditional ghee and a variety of cold-pressed oils, such as coconut, sesame, and mustard oil, valued for their nutritional benefits and artisanal production methods.



Vijhay Ganesh M

I am aware that in many cases, the ghee we purchase has been adulterated with vanaspati and essence. Similarly, sometimes, palm oil is mixed with other oils and essences to make something that resembles cold-pressed oils, but at a more affordable price. Belonging to a South Indian family that produced crude palm oil that was converted to refined oil and hydrogenated oil, I can safely say that it is much safer to have refined palm oil than these types of manipulated oils. If our government subsidises small businesses that manufacture cold-pressed oils, we would all be eating much better food in general.

PANEL OF EXPERTS

FIRST NAME (A-Z)

Aarohi Sanghavi Head chef, Owner @MÄKI

Aatish Nath Freelance food writer

Abhay Kewadkar Alcobev consultant; MD @Fox In The Field Microbrewery

Abhay Parnerkar CEO @Godrej Tyson Foods Ltd.

Chef Abhilasha Chandak Private Chef; Caterer, London

Abhilasha Jain Owner @Marwadi Khana

Chef Abhishek Gupta Executive Chef @The Leela Ambience Hotel, Gurugram

Abhishek 'Chinsi' Chinchalkar Founder @Bombay Duck Brewing

Aditi Bharadwaj Founder @The NaniMa Project

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events





02. FEBRUARY



03. MARCH



04. APRIL

04	International Carrot Day
07	🗞 World Health Day
14	Ambedkar Jayanthi, Vishu, Tamizh Putthandu, Rama Navami
20	🎉 Easter Sunday
22	🎥 #AchaarDay
30	Stop Food Waste Day

05. MAY

11	直	Mother's Day
12	K	Buddha Purnima
13	2	#PapadBadiDay
	9	International Hummus Day
20	2	#MasalaDay
21		International Tea Day
28	3	Hamburger Day
30	0	International Day Of The Potato
-	22	Dumpling Festival

Dragonboat Festival

06. JUNE

01	8	World Milk Day
05	3	World Environment Day
07		Vishwa Poha Divas
12	8	International Falafel Day
14	8	World Gin Day
18	8	International Sushi Day
		Sustainable Gastronomy Day
24		#PulaoBiryaniDay
27	12ª	Jagannath Rath Yatı

07. JULY

01	-8	International Fruit Da
06	0	World Biryani Day
07		World Chocolate Day
10	1	National Fish Farmer's Day
11		French Fries Day
		World Kebab Day
20		Ice cream Day
21		Junk Food Day
25		Culinarians Day
26		World Tofu Day
27	12	Hariyali Teej
-	8	International Pineapple Day
29	12	Nag Panchami
30	23	#ChaiPakodaDay
31		Avocado Day

08. AUGUST

01	-2	International Beer Day
02	10	Aadi Perukku River Festival
03	A	Friendship Day
09	100	Narali Purnima
-		Raksha Bandhan
15	A	Independence Day
		Navroz Parsi New Year
16	10	Janmashtami
23		World Vada Pav Day
25	-	Instant Ramen Day
27	萨	Tomatina Festival
28	R.	Naukhai Harvest Festival





10. OCTOBER

- @International Coffee Day 01 World Vegetarian Day
- Gandhi Jayanti 02
- Oktoberfest 05

0

International Beer & Pizza Day

- 10 Karwa Chauth
 - World Egg Day
 - @World Gulab Jamun Day
- h #LadduDay 15
 - National Women Farmer's Day, International Day Of Rural Women
- 16 World Bread Day
- World Food Day
- 18 Ayurveda Day
 - Dhanteras, Dhanvantari Jayanthi
- 🖉 Diwali, Deepavali 20
 - A International Chefs Day
 - @World Butter Chicken Day
- @International Day Of The 21 Nacho
- Bhai Dooj 23
- World Pasta Day 25



11. NOVEMBER

01 🗞 World Vegan Day 03 🛞 World Sandwich Day Gurpurab, Nanak Jayanti 05 International Stout Day 06 Children's Day 14 World Diabetes Day National Chicken Day 16 International Cake Day 22 National Milk Day 26

12. DECEMBER

- 04 @International Cookie Day 05 World Soil Day maindian Breads Day 09
- Kisan Diwas, National 23
- Farmers' Dayy 25 Christmas

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Join us in a thrilling ride of fashion, food, travel and everything that is lifestyle.

Scan to follow and celebrate the Goodness of Lifestyle.

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