



FOOD
CULTURE

From top: College Street Hing-er-Kochuri; and one of the many deep-fried delicacies at Monkey Bar

snacks or deep-fried dishes with its Colonial influence, such as chops and cutlets. Some are steamed, some stir-fried, some boiled and some freshly assembled in the way a salad is made. There are various textures, flavours, cooking techniques and ethnic origins. The streets of Kolkata are veritable smorgasbords of food on the go.”

An interesting part of the cuisine here is the myriad influences of various communities – Chinese, Tibetans, Marwari and Gujarati traders, the British colonists, the last of the Mughals and the Bengalis. For instance, Bishop Lefroy Road was once where a larger number of Tibetans came to live and started making a living selling momos out of their homes and this became a destination for a reasonable meal for college students and even to date momos are symbolic of Kolkata street food.

“Kolkata also has a strong ‘chop cutlet’ culture and one will see chops sold at the small cafes and ‘çabins’ spread across the city and its suburbs. These dishes possibly trace back to the kitchens of the British clubs of Kolkata or inherited from the khansamas and cooks of the Colonial bosses,” adds Varma.

Many of these dishes find place in the menus of Michelin-starred restaurants, bars and pubs around the country. Kolkata street food has inspired both Indian as well as iconic chefs around the world and has put Indian cuisine on the world food map. Though there are specific items from Bengali kitchens available on the streets, there is a considerable selection of food on offer that has been adopted from other states.

“What is also a brilliant example of Kolkata’s multi-culture in itself is that most of its street food does not really originate in the city. Be it the momos made famous by the Tibetan joints, the dumplings by the Chinese settlers, the meat-laden delicacies brought in by traditional Awadhi cuisine experts, or the ‘chop cutlet’ obsession

unique flavours and texture and what’s most interesting is the very simplicity of the dishes – Jhalmuri, Phuchkas, Momos, Chow Mein, Kathi Roll, Mughlai Porotas, Luchi with Aloo Dum, Ghooghni, Dimer Devil (Devil Egg), Fish Roll, Fish Kabiraji, Kosha Mangsho, Chicken Rezala. The list is actually endless. Fascinating to me is the uniform price point and sheer volume of street food available across the length and breadth of the city making it accessible to everyone,” says Dheeraj Varma, Head Chef, Monkey Bar and Co-Curator of the ongoing Street Food Festival, Next Stop Kolkata.

Iti Misra, Kolkata-based Home Chef and Curator of Food Pop-Ups & Experiences sums it succinctly when she says, “You can find both wok tossed Chinese

