

SEEMA

APRIL 2021

**THE
GANDHIAN
CANDIDATE**

**COVID:
A LESSON
IN HUMILITY**

**PAKISTAN'S
GREEN
CHALLENGE**

**INSIDE
TAKING ON
TIKTOK**

**PLUS
SAVING WATER
AND HABITATS**

The Irrepressible

AASIF MANDVI



Pandit says. “The Vaishnavas are known to offer food to the gods that is then distributed as prasad that is a way of purifying the food. In New York, in fact we have a Michelin star restaurant that specializes in Japanese temple food called [Kajitsu](#) that serves Shojin Ryori menu, a vegetarian menu originally served by Japanese Buddhist monks.” Shojin Ryori cuisine is a combination of various flavors and simple processes which makes it so unique. The most simplistic form of Shojin Ryori is the traditional Buddhist cuisine that spread through China in the sixth century. Like the Saatvik concept of cooking in India, temple food in Japan is largely driven by the idea of eating local and seasonal produce.

Edo, the Japanese specialty restaurant at ITC Gardenia in



Nimai Pandit, founder of Gopal Farm, a 120-acre farm in New Paltz, NY, in the Hudson Valley

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Bengaluru, hosted a food promotion event to break the myth that Japanese cuisine is mainly non-vegetarian. The master chefs at ITC Gardenia dug deep into this historic cuisine to bring out the authentic flavors. Temple cuisine is dominated by soya products. It is based on the concept of non-violence, i.e. ahimsa and includes small portions of seaweed and underwater mushrooms such as mozuku, koyadofu, aburagae and yubaand. While there is no set rule,



Amit Patra, masterchef, Edo, ITC Gardenia Bengaluru

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mindful eating is what makes consumption very different. There are various advantages of this cuisine, such as gaining focus, losing weight and clearing one’s mind to strengthen concentration,” says Amit Patra, masterchef at the Edo Restaurant & Bar, ITC Gardenia.

SEASONAL FACTOR

While eating seasonal may be in vogue in the culinary circles, Hindu temple prasad or food offerings are unique as they have always used local and seasonal produce. Varr in Rishikesh is a new restaurant that offers a thousand-year-old history of Indian temples on a plate.

The service sequence, audio visuals and small rituals will ensure customers gain a new respect for Indian culture, says Tarun Gulati, director of the Himalayan Hotels & DJUBO Hotel Tech Suite, pointing out that the food relies on healthy ingredients, both locally sourced and delivered by select vendors across India.

Menu planning and selection of ingredients for Varr are



Anushruti RK, a food writer and recipe creator at Divine Taste

based on principles and wisdom of Ayurveda on the one hand and derived from ages of practices and rituals across Indian temples on the other. In addition, the dishes are topped up with infusions of immunity boosting ingredients such as cinnamon, curry leaves, tulsi, ashwagandha, giloy, triphala, gooseberry, ginger, nutmeg and turmeric.

According to Anushruti RK, a food writer and recipe creator at [Divine Taste](#), “The food cooked in the temples of India (with the exception of a few Shiva and Kali temples) are based on Ayurvedic principles of Sattvic philosophy, making it good for the body, mind and soul. Food cooked in the temples of India is made with fresh ingredients which are locally sourced with recipes dating back to hundreds of years making it delicious and healthy at the same time.”

And as the pandemic continues, it is perhaps time we reconsider our diets. After all, the lessons of the past can serve us well in the present and the future.