

SPA CUISINE

...is creating waves across hotels in the post pandemic world. Let's deconstruct what it is all about.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO



Spa cuisine offers food that is rich in fiber and prepares recipes that help you maintain your blood sugar levels, protect the digestive system

As new age travellers seek meaningful travel experiences and accommodation, hoteliers are focusing on spa cuisine that ensures a balance of nutritional requirements as per one's body type.

LOCAL LOVE

Spa cuisine bets on fresh, local produce which is not just seasonal but also sustainable. Most hotels now have their own organic garden patches as well.

"The spa cuisine at Jetwing Vil Uyana is inspired by two main factors - firstly, the bountiful harvest of our tropical island and its incredible variety of fruit, vegetables, grains, spices, and herbs. Secondly, the ancient and diverse cuisine of Sri Lanka, which draws from centuries old knowledge, is shaped by the same influences and forces that have shaped the nation's history. Jetwing is synonymously known as the home of authentic Sri Lankan hospitality. Hence, we constantly try to prioritize and integrate authentic Sri



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— Ritesh Bhatt

Lankan cuisine so that all our guests may have the opportunity to experience the island's cultural identity along with the health and nutrition benefits that come with a menu composed of the best of local produce," says Hashan Cooray, Director, Marketing & Development, Jetwing Hotels.

THOUGHT IN ACTION

Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa, Uttarakhand, offers experiences that are synergised with wellness rituals at the Jiva Spa as well as workouts to achieve the required balance in the body. The culinary experience is wholesome, nourishing and immu-

nity enhancing. Be it the detoxifying juices in the morning or the sleep-enabling turmeric milk in the evening, or even the carefully chosen superfood ingredients, each element in the experience has a role to play. Healthy, fresh, delicious, and consciously crafted, the menu is truly food for the mind, body, and soul, and is ideal for those who embrace wellness, longevity, and sustainability. Ritesh Bhatt, General Manager, Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa, Uttarakhand, says, "Inspired by typical Indian household ingredients and age-old recipes, the cuisine for the Innergise programme is curated using mindfully sourced ingredients. Our menu features fresh ingredients packed with antioxidants and immunity-boosting superfoods. The menu has been created in consultation with Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal - a century old institution renowned for its practice of the ancient health care science of India."

The food is prepared using simple cooking techniques like sautéing, steaming, and grilling to ensure that the nutrient quotient of the ingredients remain intact. "Our focus is on using fresh produce, organic, sustainable ingredients, and in-season ingredients. The menu comprises freshly made salads, wholesome smoothies, cold-pressed juices, a wide variety of starters and entrees. The juices are mostly detox, chlorophyll-rich, energizing and refreshing. There are appetizers, millet-based dishes and a variety of balanced morsels which have an option of vegan, gluten-free, amino-rich, protein rich, and high fibres," adds Bhatt.

GLOBAL AUDIENCES

In their endeavour to enable Indian cuisine its rightful place in the global culinary scape, Kaya Kalp - The Royal Spa in ITC Grand



Hashan Cooray, Director, Marketing & Development, Jetwing Hotels.



Ritesh Bhatt, General Manager, Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa, Uttarakhand

Bharat, places special emphasis on showcasing regional Indian cuisines while presenting global dining concepts that are perfected on Indian soil. At ITC Grand Bharat, the spa cuisine also known as Swasthya Cuisine underscores the 'Responsible Luxury' ethos of ITC Hotels with an emphasis on presenting dining experiences without compromising on quality. A philosophy that also ensures a 'fresh, seasonal and local' approach in their culinary offering. Ritu Srivastava, Spa Manager, Kaya Kalp - The Royal Spa at ITC Grand Bharat, explains, "Our earliest diet philosophies called upon us to pay attention to season, time of day and our own disposition, when deciding what to eat from what was available in the immediate environment. We introduced the innovative concept of Swasthya Cuisine which invokes these time-honoured principles of responsible eating through an ideal combination of foods and fluids that have been selected to enhance both internal and external well-being."



Hotels now prefer to work with local farmers and focus on internalising their supply chain which also helps in a farm-to-table approach

BESPOKE VIBES

THE Park Indore also offers Japanese and European cuisine alongside beverages and healthy smoothies which have high nutritional value and delectable taste as part of their spa cuisine. Fresh, seasonal, and organic ingredients are used in spa cuisine. Usually presented in a simple, eye-catching manner, the emphasis is on quality rather than quantity. "We offer a selection of food items to our guests. Customised food options are available based on the guests' objectives for a healthy lifestyle. By including nutrition in their spa journeys, we care for our guests in a more holistic way and make them feel much more energized. Spa cuisine is prepared by our experienced chefs who work closely with nutritionists to provide healthy, balanced meals that are exquisitely presented. We carefully balance the calorific value in our spa menu along with organic products used in creating the dishes and menu, which are curated for our guests," says Pintu Paswan, Sous Chef, THE Park Indore.

HEALTH MATTERS

The trend towards spa cuisine is also stemming from the fact that guests today are focusing on health especially after COVID. Spa menus feature fresh ingredients packed with antioxidants and immunity-boosting superfoods. The ingredients and cooking techniques used help purify and cleanse the body so you can reach your health and wellness goals, providing a balance between detoxification and re-energizing the body, restoring it back to excellent health.

"As flavourful and mouth-watering authentic Sri Lankan food can be, the island's cuisine and the methods of traditional culinary preparations are also strongly interwoven with nutritional and other major health benefits. This organic menu at Jetwing Vil Uyana is specially curated to give our guests the nutrition needed for a balanced diet. As an example, the Kurukkan baguette specifically provides multiple health benefits, such as helping with digestion and improving dietary fibre balance in your body. It also contains multiple vitamins and calcium that are essentially required by your body," says Cooray.

TRADITION FOCUS

Additionally, the team features heirloom rice varieties in the spa menu at Jetwing Vil Uyana. Unlike commercial varieties, heirloom rice is hardy and well adapted to our climate and soil, and at their paddy fields at Jetwing Kaduruketha, they are grown exclusively using organic methods, ensuring no agrochemicals end up on your plate. In comparison to most commercially grown rice varieties, heirloom rice has more dietary fibre, contains more protein per serving, and has several vital nutrients and minerals while individual varieties of rice also come with a plethora of benefits such as assisting in the control of diabetes and improving skin health and complexion. Swasthya Cuisine is a tool for improving one's quality of life by making small changes in what we eat and how we eat it. The core concept of Swasthya Cuisine derives from age-old principles of Indian cuisine, blended with modern thinking, to enhance wellbeing.

"Invoking ancient Indian nutrition philosophies through a combination of foods that have been selected to enhance both internal (Sirat) and external (Surat) wellbeing - the cuisine aims to restore, energise, calm the mind, enhance memory, and even



Ritu Srivastava, Spa Manager, Kaya Kalp – The Royal Spa at TTC Grand Bharat



Pintu Paswan, Sous Chef, THE Park Indore



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slow down the effects of ageing. We innovate dishes which are very high on flavour, texture, and presentation, yet are made with ingredients that are healthier alternatives," adds Srivastava.

FARMER CONNECT

The other driving factor for most hotels is that hotels now prefer to work with local farmers and focus on internalising their supply chain which also helps in a farm-to-table approach. Working closely with the local communities, hotels who are investing in good food, also purchase other necessities from the locality. Spa cuisine offers food that is rich in fiber and prepares recipes that help you maintain your blood sugar levels, protect the digestive system, keep you



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full, and will strengthen the immune system that will cleanse you from all toxins.

"We use healthier food options to integrate the reviving and healing powers of spa culture with the cuisine. We only utilize locally sourced, organic ingredients that help our guests from the negative impacts of food additives. We are very selective about the ingredients we use because we get them directly from local organic farmers because farming is prevalent all around this region. We ensure that the produce is fresh, local, seasonal, or organic, and they must be presented in a simple yet elegant way. Our Spa cuisine is pure, unprocessed, and full of premium natural nutrients that are good for your gut, your cells, the tissues in your body, and your mind," explains Paswan. So the next time you are at a hotel, check out the spa cuisine and you will come away pleasantly surprised... 🍴