

# Vegan Vows

Indian hotel brands are increasingly integrating vegan cuisine into their core menus, reflecting evolving guest preferences for conscious and inclusive dining experiences

By Bindu Gopal Rao

**L**uxury hospitality brands are witnessing a significant rise in demand for vegan-friendly stays, wellness-led menus, and sustainable dining offerings from modern travellers.

## The Specifics

Vegan cuisine is no longer viewed as a separate category but as an integral part of modern hospitality. Travellers today are increasingly conscious about wellness, sustainability, and mindful eating, and menus are evolving to reflect these preferences.

“The focus is on creating balanced, flavourful dishes that naturally incorporate plant-based ingredients rather than simply replacing dairy or meat. Seasonal produce, local grains, Himalayan herbs, and traditional cooking techniques are being highlighted to create authentic experiences. Vegan offerings are

now thoughtfully integrated across buffets, à la carte menus, wellness meals, and experiential dining concepts, ensuring inclusivity without compromising taste or indulgence,” says Mahinder Rawat, GM of Rishivan, Shimla.

Indian hotel brands are redesigning their menus to make vegan cuisine a core offering rather than a niche add-on. Luxury Indian hotel brands are seeing measurable demand for vegan-friendly stays, wellness menus, and sustainable dining experiences from travellers. Hotels are investing in chef training, innovative plant-based culinary techniques, and stronger sourcing partnerships to elevate vegan dining experiences.

Daya Shanker Chaubey, Executive Chef, Aravali Marriott Resort & Spa, Delhi NCR, says, “Hotel chefs are creatively reimagining regional Indian dishes into vegan formats while



Hotels are increasingly integrating vegan cuisine directly into mainstream dining experiences

preserving their authentic flavours, ingredients, and cultural essence. Indian hotel brands are actively promoting local, seasonal, and indigenous produce within vegan menus to support sustainability and celebrate regional diversity.”

**Wave of Change**

Indian hospitality is moving vegan cuisine from a niche category to a core menu pillar, driven by changing guest expectations around wellness, sustainability, and flavour-led dining.

At Groove Hub Hyderabad, vegan food is positioned as part of the core culinary identity rather than an alternative segment. “The emphasis is on experience-led menus where plant-based dishes are crafted with the same attention to flavour, presentation, and creativity as any premium offering. Signature



Mahinder Rawat, GM of Rishivan, Shimla



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Hotels are increasingly investing in specialised culinary training, sustainable sourcing networks, and menu innovation to meet the growing demand for vegan dining



Prakash Arekatla, Head Chef, Ibis Hyderabad HITEC City



Sumit Kumar, Executive Chef, voco Amritsar by IHG Hotels & Resorts

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dishes such as Chilli Soya Chaap, Mushroom Vepudu, Spicy Millet Pumpkin Khichdi, and Nalla Karam Fries reflect this approach, alongside plant-forward beverages like Raw Mango Cooler and Butterfly Lime Pea Fizz,” says Prakash Arekatla, Head Chef, Ibis Hyderabad HITEC City.

#### Doing it Right

Hotels are investing across three areas – kitchens, people, and supply chains – to scale plant-based dining. “At Ibis Hyderabad HITEC City, this includes a 1,000 sq. ft on-site herb garden supplying fresh basil, curry leaves, and native herbs directly to kitchens. Chef training is supported through Accor’s digital learning platform TYPSEY, which builds capability in plant-forward cooking and global vegan trends. Operationally, plant-based dishes are integrated into existing kitchens for efficiency and scalability, while sourcing is strengthened through local vendor networks for a consistent supply of grains, vegetables, and dairy alternatives,” says Arekatla.

#### Demand Drivers

Demand is steadily rising, particularly among millennials, Gen Z travellers, corporate guests, younger consumers, international travellers, and wellness-focused guests. There is an increased preference for vegan breakfast options, lighter dishes, detox menus and fresh, seasonal food, aligning with broader hospitality trends where guests now evaluate dining through the lens of health, sustainability and lifestyle alignment and appreciate hotels that align culinary experiences with responsible living and environmental consciousness.

“Indian cuisine naturally offers immense scope for plant-based innovation because many traditional recipes already celebrate vegetables, lentils, spices, and grains. At The Orchid Rishikesh, Rishivan, chefs are reinterpreting regional dishes by using alternative dairy options, cold-pressed oils, nut-based gravies, and indigenous ingredients while preserving original flavours and cooking methods. The focus is not on drastically altering recipes but on enhancing their natural essence through thoughtful substitutions.

Traditional Himalayan ingredients, seasonal produce, and local herbs also play an important role in maintaining authenticity. Guests today appreciate dishes that feel rooted in culture yet aligned with modern wellness preferences, making vegan adaptations both meaningful and experiential,” says Rawat.

#### Innovation Matters

Chefs are retaining authentic flavours while replacing



Hotels today are becoming strong advocates for sustainable and regional food systems by promoting local, seasonal, and indigenous ingredients within their culinary offerings



Collaborations are becoming increasingly important as hospitality brands look to expand and diversify vegan offerings

animal-based ingredients with plant-based alternatives. Indian cuisine naturally offers strong plant-based foundations. The focus today is on reinventing regional dishes using modern vegan techniques while preserving authenticity, texture, and traditional flavours. For example, dairy is substituted with coconut, cashew, or millet-based creams, while meat is replaced with jackfruit, mushrooms, and lentils.

Traditional techniques such as tandoor cooking, tempering, and slow cooking remain central to preserving authenticity. This has led to vegan versions of regional dishes such as jackfruit-based laal maas, dairy-free tikka marinades, and plant-based kebabs inspired by Indian classics.

Sumit Kumar, Executive Chef, voco Amritsar by IHG Hotels & Resorts, says, “The hotel is investing in chef training, plant-based culinary innovation, sustainable sourcing, and ingredient partnerships. The culinary team focuses on modern vegan cooking techniques, dairy-free alternatives, millet-based cuisine, and locally sourced produce to elevate guest dining experiences.”



Hotels are creating vegan dishes that are both nourishing and memorable



Manoj Padmanaban, Executive Chef,  
ITC Windsor

*“Some vegan and artisanal ingredients can be expensive, so the focus is on using them thoughtfully where they genuinely add value to the guest experience.”*

- Manoj Padmanaban

### Going Green

Hospitality brands are balancing sustainability goals by collaborating closely with local suppliers, farms, and plant-based producers to ensure quality and scalability. Many Indian hospitality brands are partnering with plant-based startups, alternative dairy brands, and sustainable farms to expand and innovate their vegan offerings.

Vegan dining in India is steadily evolving from a niche wellness trend into a mainstream hospitality standard driven by sustainability, health, and guest expectations. Hotels are integrating sustainability into standard operations through structured systems rather than standalone initiatives.

Manoj Padmanaban, Executive Chef, ITC Windsor, says, “A hotel kitchen running banquets, multiple restaurants, and room service at the same time needs reliable supply. That’s the first requirement. So, we work with multiple vendors rather than

depending on just one. Cost is another important consideration. Some vegan and artisanal ingredients can be expensive, so the focus is on using them thoughtfully where they genuinely add value to the guest experience. Our approach has always been to build this gradually and authentically – improving over time rather than overpromising. Today’s guests can easily recognise the difference between meaningful sustainability efforts and something that is purely marketing-led.”

### Seasonal Push

Hotels are increasingly building menus around local, seasonal, and indigenous produce. This includes millets, native grains, pulses, and regional vegetables, often sourced directly from local farmers. Many hotels are also developing kitchen gardens and farm partnerships to ensure freshness and reduce food miles.

“At ibis Hyderabad HITEC City, we strongly believe that



Grilled Avocado Chickpea Chaat from ITC Windsor



Almond Flour Brownie from ITC Windsor

sustainability begins with localisation, using regional ingredients that reflect Telangana's culinary heritage while meeting evolving guest expectations. The result is more sustainable sourcing, stronger support for local agriculture, and menus that reflect regional food diversity in a more authentic way," says Arekatla.

The focus is always on creating a complete and satisfying experience – balanced protein, layered textures, and depth of flavour. "We always begin by asking, 'What is the soul of the dish? Once we understand that, we find ways to adapt it without compromising its essence or flavour. South Indian cuisine offers a rich foundation for this approach. At ITC Windsor, we've explored traditional preparations like Paruthi Paal, a traditional Tamil cottonseed milk drink in dessert preparations; Ragi Ambali, the fermented millet drink from Karnataka, works well as a refreshing starter; and Hurali Saaru, a simple horsegram broth, has incredible depth as a pre-course," adds Padmanaban.

#### Collaborating Cues

Hospitality brands are increasingly partnering with organic farms, local suppliers, and plant-based startups. These collaborations support better sourcing of fresh produce, introduce innovative plant-based ingredients, and strengthen farm-to-table ecosystems.

Hotels are also working with nutrition and wellness experts to design healthier, more balanced menus, helping expand vegan offerings while supporting India's growing ecosystem of conscious food entrepreneurship.

"The culinary team creatively adapts traditional Punjabi and North Indian dishes using plant-based ingredients while preserving authentic flavours, regional spice profiles, and traditional cooking techniques. We actively promote the use

of local, seasonal, and indigenous ingredients such as millets, regional vegetables, herbs, and traditional Indian grains within the vegan dining experiences," adds Kumar.

#### Future Perfect

Vegan dining in India is expected to move in three directions: wellness integration, sustainability focus, and mainstream adoption. It will increasingly align with wellness tourism and healthy lifestyles, while also supporting sustainability goals such as lower carbon impact and reduced food waste. Over time, vegan options will become standard across hotel menus, especially in urban and luxury segments. Emerging trends include flexitarian menus and hyper-local sourcing. In the next few years, vegan cuisine will become seamlessly integrated into everyday hotel dining experiences rather than being positioned as a separate category.

From a niche preference, vegan dining in India is steadily evolving into a mainstream hospitality expectation. While wellness remains a strong driver, sustainability and conscious consumption are equally influencing this transformation. Travellers today are more informed about nutrition, environmental impact, and ethical sourcing, and hotels are responding by offering more inclusive and thoughtfully curated dining experiences.

The future of hospitality is likely to focus on personalised wellness, locally sourced ingredients, and menus that cater to diverse dietary lifestyles without segregation. Industry-wide, vegan cuisine is expected to become a natural part of everyday dining rather than a specialised offering, reflecting broader shifts in consumer behaviour and sustainable hospitality practices. ■