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In a city where people arrive carrying their memories, food often becomes the most delicious link to home. But Bangalore's increasingly adventurous dining audience is no longer content with what is familiar. As travel, social media and cultural exchange widen palates, diners are seeking flavours that tell stories, of places, people, communities and traditions. Lesser-known regional Indian cuisines are finding their way onto restaurant menus, bringing forgotten ingredients, heirloom recipes and distinctive cooking techniques into the spotlight. At the same time, under-represented international cuisines are offering diners a chance to venture beyond the predictable global fare that has long dominated urban dining. The appeal lies not merely in novelty, but in authenticity, context and connection. Chefs, too, are responding, finding ways to reinterpret traditional food without stripping away its character. In this evolving culinary landscape, curiosity is becoming an appetite in itself. Let's find out how...

Beyond familiar flavours

Exposure through travel, social media, food documentaries and interactions with people from different communities has encouraged diners to look beyond familiar restaurant formats. They want to understand the regions, histories and people behind a cuisine, while exploring flavours beyond familiar international formats. **Chef Vikas Seth, Culinary Director, Embassy Leisure**, explains, "Karnataka's cuisine is incredibly diverse, although restaurant menus have traditionally showcased only a small part of it. We are now seeing greater interest in the food of North Karnataka, Malnad, Mangaluru, Udupi, Coorg and the coastal communities of Gowda. Ingredients and preparations such as ragi, jowar, jackfruit, bamboo shoots, colocasia leaves, local greens, Byadagi chillies, akki rotti and traditional chutney powders are receiving renewed attention." Chefs are presenting these flavours through tasting menus, contemporary plating, small plates and thoughtfully designed regional experiences. The objective is to create a fresh context in which diners can appreciate their depth, seasonality and cultural significance.

Authenticity, reimagined

Authenticity does not necessarily mean reproducing every dish exactly as it would be served in a particular home or village. Recipes naturally vary across families and regions. For chefs, the responsibility is to preserve a cuisine's fundamental flavour, technique and cultural intent while making the experience approachable for a wider audience. **Ashik Ali Saha, Executive Chef, Druma**, says, "Change the format, not the flavour. Our Kundapura ghee roast goes into a parota with melted cheese, and it comes out a full quesadilla - salsa, lime sour cream, and house salad on the side. The Mexican half is what makes a guest order it. The masala is what brings them back." The approach is to retain the spirit

FROM FORGOTTEN REGIONAL RECIPES TO UNFAMILIAR GLOBAL FLAVOURS, BANGALORE'S DINERS ARE HUNGRY FOR SOMETHING BEYOND THE USUAL



CHEF ASHIK ALI SAHA - DRUMA

of the regional inspiration while using modern techniques and contemporary presentation where appropriate. The objective is to make unfamiliar food approachable without removing the identity that makes it interesting. For chefs and restaurateurs, the challenge is to maintain the soul of a cuisine while presenting it in a format that today's diner can understand and enjoy. Authenticity should not mean making food inaccessible. It is about respecting original ingredients, techniques and flavour profiles while thoughtfully



adapting presentation and service. Pratik, Research and Development Chef at Kompany Hospitality, adds, "Traditional cooking methods are particularly important because they carry the identity



of a region. Ingredients, spice combinations, fermentation, slow cooking and techniques passed down through generations can communicate a sense of place that cannot be replicated simply



CHEF VIKAS SETH

through a recipe."

Global tastes, local context

Diners are increasingly exploring Korean, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Malaysian, Japanese Peruvian Nikkei, Ethiopian and African cuisines, alongside lesser-known regional Indian cuisines. "We are also seeing specialised formats such as Izakayas, ramen bars, Korean BBQ and international burger concepts gaining traction. The opportunity is to move towards authentic regional experiences and meaningful cross-cultural culinary concepts. The opportunity is to move from generic global food to authentic regional experiences and cross-cultural concepts that connect cuisines meaningfully," says **Chef Priyank Singh Chouhan, Director - Culinary & Operations, JSM Corporation, the chef for Shiro and Yoichi by Shiro**. Chefs and restaurateurs are increasingly working to retain the soul of a cuisine while adapting presentation, spice levels and formats to local preferences without compromising its identity. The focus is on educating diners through storytelling, curated menus and familiar entry points. Fermentation, smoking, grilling, slow cooking and traditional spice blends create flavours that are difficult to replicate. Fortunately, India's strong culinary skills, scratch-cooking culture and availability of fresh, locally sourced and relatively affordable ingredients make it increasingly possible to maintain authenticity while



CHEF PRIYANK

presenting these cuisines to a wider audience. Karnataka itself has an incredibly diverse culinary heritage, from coastal and Malnad cooking to North Karnataka flavours. There is an opportunity to bring these traditions forward through indigenous ingredients, regional techniques and recipes that have traditionally remained within homes and communities. "Similarly, ingredients such as millets, native rice varieties, local greens, forest produce, regional chillies and traditional oils carry flavours that cannot always be replicated with standardised substitutes. When chefs work with these ingredients and methods, they are not merely



reviving nostalgia; they are protecting knowledge and supporting biodiversity and local producers. The most meaningful innovation often emerges when ancestral knowledge and contemporary culinary understanding work together," says Seth.

Tradition with a future

Indigenous ingredients and regional cooking methods are central to giving regional food its personality. Ingredients, preparation methods and combinations developed within a particular geography carry a character that cannot always be recreated through a generic interpretation. "Our menu begins with fresh produce, quality ingredients and flavour, while bringing traditional influences together with modern techniques. That balance allows us to respect the culinary foundation while creating food that works naturally in a contemporary dining environment," says **Kumaran Jayapal, Executive Chef, Indian Craft Brewery**. Storytelling is equally important. A dish becomes more meaningful when a diner understands that it represents a particular region, community or culinary tradition. "When we put Home Style Chicken Curry, Natti-Style Lamb Chops, Mutton Kari Dosa or Mutton Pepper Fry on the menu, we are not simply adding another dish. We are giving the diner an opportunity to discover a different part of India's culinary landscape," adds Jayapal. Sharing the story creates curiosity and emotional connection beyond the dish itself. Combined with authentic flavours and an engaging experience, it makes a cuisine more meaningful and memorable. Diners in the city are becoming increasingly curious about different flavours and cuisines, and its diverse population creates a natural environment for that exploration. There is a growing appetite for regional Indian cuisines, forgotten recipes and international cuisines that are not traditionally part of the city's mainstream dining scene. Travel, social media and a more informed younger audience are all contributing to this curiosity. There is growing interest in regional Indian cuisines as well as specialised international formats. This curiosity can help revive forgotten ingredients, traditional recipes and cooking techniques by presenting them in contemporary, accessible formats, giving culinary traditions a new generation of diners while creating opportunities for local communities and producers. Chefs believe this curiosity can give lesser-known culinary traditions a new contemporary audience. Diners also play a role by asking questions and supporting restaurants that approach these cuisines with integrity. Commercial interest, when guided by respect and research, can help living culinary traditions remain relevant for future generations. When regional food is presented thoughtfully and diners enjoy the experience, those traditions remain relevant rather than becoming limited to the past. And that is what makes a menu exciting: taking inspiration from our culinary heritage, understanding it and finding a way to let a new generation experience it. And having said this much, it's time to say bon appétit!