

NORTH EASTERN INDIAN CUISINE

Before we go ahead and talk about the event, why not, for sometime, let us go back to our social science textbooks.

The contiguous seven sister states and the state Sikkim together form the north-eastern part of India. With no written history and connected to India through a mere 22 km wide corridor these states have their own identity, cultures and languages. Home to a huge number of ethnic groups arrived at different time and from different direction, each group has its distinct identity with respect to race, language and socio culture structure.

Christianity is the main religion in the states of Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland; the remaining states show a considerable amount of Hindu population with minor but substantial Buddhist populace. Difficult to relate to the Indian way, the people are highly influenced by the foreign culture, but the Brahmaputra River merges them with the rest of India. Many of the states have been in existence since ages and have been ruled by Indo-Mongolian dynasties.

Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura find their mentions in the Puranas and the epics. In Mahabharata Arjuna had married Chitrangadha, the princess of Manipur and their son was coronated the king of Manipur.

Locally brewed tea, beer and wine, the handmade musical instruments like bamboo flute, and a rich handicraft industry characterize these states. Dancing is the way of the day and martial arts with handmade weapons, a favorite sport. Rice, fish and meat form the staple diet, and agriculture drives the economy. Covered by dense forest, the tribal have made these forests their home and the wild surrounding their friend.

Many distinct and diverse mongoloid groups settled in the mountain ranges and formed various tribes and their derivatives. There are 145 tribal communities known so far of which the Bodos, Khasis, Khyntriams and Pnars, Garos are a few predominant ones. Even though these states are identified more as 'North-East' of India, each one of them stand apart from the rest in various aspects.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH (The Land Of Rising Sun):

The state was initially a part of Assam. It achieved the status of a fully fledged state in 1987. One of the rainiest state, 60 percent of the state is covered by evergreen forest. It boasts a wide variety of orchids. The state house around 26 major tribes and the main occupation is agriculture.

The major festivals are celebrated in spring, like Losar festival (New Year celebration), Reh festival, Ojale Festival. Dances form the main part of the celebration.

Mainly non-vegetarians, rice and meat is the staple food. Green leafy vegetables and maize are cooked along with fish and eggs. Apang, a popular drink among the locals is made from rice or millet. The food is non-spicy and bland, bamboo shoots and herbs are used for seasoning. Chinese food is a favorite.

Yak momos, thupka, thainthuk are some of the dishes with Tibetan influence. Pa Chao is a kind of fish curry.

Food is one expect that can very well define the variedness that India possesses. Food habits of the Arunchalese differ because of the Tribal influence. The Nishis generally take in boiled food; even meat is either boiled or dried. Apatanis, Chuki and Nishi tribals are also quiet fond of pickles. The Monpas are quiet fond of Momos and butter tea also makes an essential part of their cuisine. The most popular drinks among the tribes is Apang, made from fermented rice or millet.

Monpas love food and drinks and are considered good eaters. Alcoholic drinks are popular both amongst men and women. Butter tea is an integral part of their cuisine. They are non-vegetarians and their food choice includes Beef, Pork, Yak Meat, Fish, Mutton and Chicken. Some of the local cuisines are: -

MOMO

Monpas are very fond of this delicacy. It is prepared by stuffing a mixture of minced meat and onions in dough. These are then steamed for about half an hour in a three-tiered perforated utensil placed one above the other, containing water and bone for soup. Momos are taken along with soup and home made chilly sauce. Vegetable Momo called 'Patan-Momo' is prepared by stuffing a mixture of green vegetable called 'Maan' or 'Kyiblab', fats of meat, powered chilly, fermented cheese in dough.

ZAN

It is the staple food of the Monpas. It is prepared by adding millet or any other flour to the boiling water. It is then strived with a flat wooden implement. It is taken with vegetable or meat items to which is added fermented cheese or Soyabean as condiment. Chilli is invariably added to all items.

KHURA

It is a Monpa pancake made of 'Kyab'. Little Chang and required quantity of water is added to the flour and is stirred till it turns into a thick paste and is kept near the hearth over night so that the cake becomes soft. On the next day, with little oil in the pan the paste is spread to form a circular shape. A teatime delicacy.

GYAPA-KHAZI

Gyapa-Khazi is Monpa version of 'Pulao'. It is prepared by mixing rice, fermented cheese, small dried fish, chilli, ginger, etc.

THUKPA

This is also the most popular and common dish of the people of Tawang. It consists of noodles with soup-minced meat. This kind of Thukpa is called "Dre.thuk". Thukpa made of maize, meat and beans is called "Ashum Thukpa". "Gyapa Khatzi" made of rice, fermented cheese, small dry fish, chilly, ginger, etc. is also very popular. Bak-tza is another kind of Thukpa made in the same style as that of noodles with the difference that instead of noodles, flat rectangular shape of dough is used. Vegetables are also added to it for additional flavour.

MIZORAM: (Land Of Highlanders):

Mizos, the locals are known to be of Chinese descent. The states is situated nearly 6500 ft above the sea level and covered with Blue Mountains and carved by many rivers. Mizos are mainly tribal and follow Christianity. They have an undaunting enthusiasm for dancing; they dance to end their day. Bamboo dance, Cheraw performed during celebrations and festivals. Agriculture drives the economy; still it is the second highest literate state in India, with literacy rate being 88.5-90.2.

The food is less spicy and cooked in order to retain its nutritive value. Local wine is a favorite and 'Zu' a kind of tea is a popular drink. Soups made from bamboo shoots and black mushrooms. Sawhchair, bai, Misa mach poora, koat pitha, panch phoran tarkari, are some of the mizo preparations.

MEGHALAYA: (Abode of Clouds):

The home of three Mongoloid tribes, Meghalaya has a unique cuisine of its own, different from other states in the north east of India. The common food of the people is rice with meat and fish preparations. Besides rice, they also eat millet and maize with a number of vegetables and roots. They rear goats, pigs, fowls, ducks and cows and relish their meat. They observe food taboos, for example certain clans do not take pork. The popular dishes are Jadoh, Ki Kpu, Tung-toh, and pickled bamboo shoots. Like the other tribes in the north-east, they ferment rice beer, which is a must in all the religious rites and ceremonial occasions.

The local tribes are of Mongolian or Tibet- Burma origin. Matriarchal law of inheritance, where the property is passed from the mother to the youngest daughter, is followed in all the tribes. Agrarian economy and the domestic industry indulges major workforce of the state.

The food preparation mainly consists of rice, vegetable curries, fish and meat. The popular dishes are Jadoh, Ki Kpu, Tung Toh and pickled bamboo shoots. Fermented soya is one of the most important dishes.

GARO

As with most parts of the North East, the tribes of Meghalaya have developed different styles of house building, basketry, weaving and the an cooking indigenous food. Garo cuisine is simple to cook with small variations that bring in rich flavours. One of the important ingredients in preparing Nakham Bitchi (a hot spicy soup) is the special dry fish(Nakham). Preserved fish or meat is widely used in a variety of cooking methods. Fish or meat is preserved either by drying in the sun or smoked over the fire. The fish/ meat is usually boiled with either yam, pumpkin, ash gourd, etc with plenty of chilies and a little bit of bamboo ash water. The dish is cooked either in pots or in fresh bamboo cylinders over an open fire giving it a special bamboo flavour. A variation of this is the wrapping of meat/fish with herbs, in banana leaves and baking it over campfire coals. A typical Garo meal would consist of rice, one or two meat/fish dishes and of course the relishing dry fish soup.

JAINTIA

In Jaintia hills one gets a wide variety of mushrooms -specially during the early monsoon months. During this season mushrooms of different types are available in the local market (lawmusiang) of Jowai. There are many ways to cook these mushrooms but one of the most exquisite dish is made with a locally available mushroom called 'Tit Tung', a kind of fermented mushroom. After cleaning the mushrooms thoroughly it is fried with black sesame seeds and pork. The flavour leaves one craving for more.

KHASI

The Khasi taste buds are different from the traditional Garo way of cooking. To begin with, there are different varieties of rice to choose from. there is 'Jadoh' which is red hill rice cooked with pork and is something akin to biryani. 'Jastem' is plain hill rice cooked with pork gravy, onions, ginger and turmeric thus giving it a characteristic yellow colour. 'Mylliem chicken' is famous in these parts and gets its name from the village where it was first prepared The chicken is cooked with different condiments, most notably, the small round Khasi peppers which gives distinctive taste and flavour. 'Dohkhlieh' is a type of pork salad made with boiled pork and onions with a sprinkling of chillies as desired. Another tasty pork dish is 'Dohneiong'. A dish which has gravy and is made with black sesame seeds to give it its dark texture.

All states in the Northeast have their own types of fermented soybeans. The Khasi version is called 'Tungrymbai'. It has a strong odour and is very popular especially during the winter season as an integral part of Khasi food Also very popular are different types of rice 'pancakes'. 'Pumaloi' is powdered rice which is steamed in earthen pots called 'Khiew Ranei'. 'Pukhlein' is powdered rice mixed with jaggery which is then deep fried. 'Pudoh' is plain powdered rice stuffed with small pieces of pork and steamed. 'Putharo' is again plain powdered rice steamed.

MANIPUR: (Land of Jewels):

Better known for its dance 'Ras Leela' and the handicrafts, the state is one of the smallest in India. People speak Tibeto-Burmese dialects and follow Hinduism. Japanese has acquired Imphal during the Second World War.

Chinchu is a delicious Manipuri salad made up of vegetables and seasoned with lots of herbs. Eromba is a special fish preparation, while Kabok is a dessert from molasses or rice. Being an amalgam of several ethnic tribes, Manipur has a varied cuisine. It is difficult to set the gastronomy of the people. Predominantly, they are rice eaters with a definite tilt towards meat. They use simply boiled or steamed food with very little cooking oil. No dried spices are used. They add ginger, garlic, and bamboo shoots to their dishes for flavor. Vegetarian thali is very popular here.

The eromba is a special fish delicacy of Manipur. It is made of fermented fish and bamboo shoot with chillies, boiled vegetables and potato. The drink, shekmai made in a village with the same name, is a famous country wine of the state.

Striking factor of this zone of India is its pristine beauty and relatively much simple way of life. Food culture in this zone is much different from what we see in rest of India. And it is largely the same in these seven states. Inhabitants are basically non-vegetarian. Even if they cook vegetable they will add non-vegetarian to the same. In most parts of this zone, especially Nagaland people eat every available animal and do not waste any part of it.

Fish remains the favourite dish for most. Tripura and Assam, due to their proximity with parts of Bengal shows more love for fish than any other state. Rice is the staple food in this Zone. In Assam people consume rice in variety of forms and flavours. Pitha, a rice based sweet is a popular dish of this region. People put less oil and use mustard oil as the medium of cooking. Dishes prepared from ducks, bamboo shoots etc are very much popular in North-East Zone.

NAGALAND:

The tribal state of India, agriculture is the way of life with minimal industrialization. Nagas are mainly Christians with a high literacy rate. The folk dances of the Nagas are the main attractions.

Nagas eat everything and anything. They utilize all the creatures in their vicinity as a source of food, from a frog to dog. Snails boiled in bamboo shoots and spiders are a specialty of the Naga food. Jalokia a chili grown in Nagaland is supposed to be the hottest chili in the world.

Introduction:

The most outstanding issue of this state is the simple way of its living and its beauty. Therefore the food culture in this state is much more different from the other parts India. Mostly the people in this state are meat lovers. As if they are preparing vegetable they will definitely mix non vegetarian to it.

Mostly in this state the people eat the animals which are available and will not even waste a single piece of it. Fish is the most beloved dish of this state. Rice is the common food in Nagaland. People use mustard oil as the way to cook the food. Dishes which are prepared from the bamboo shoots, ducks are famous in this state.

Major Cuisines:

Fish Fried Rice: As the name told that it is a non vegetarian food which is prepared from the fish. It is served while after preparing the rice the cooked fish is arranged in the plates. And one can also garnish it with the leaves of coriander that is chopped.

Dal and Eggs: This is a dish which is prepared with combining the three dals. The dal is prepared and after that the prepared eggs are put into it. It is the delicious dish. This dish is served with the rice.

Poora Mach: the people who love to eat fish here is another one of the best cuisine for them. It is one of the favourite dishes of the people of Nagaland. In it the whole fish is prepared on open charcoal fire. This dish will be giving more taste when it is served with the plain boiled rice.

Poora Haah: In other words it is simply a roasted duck and it is the most special food of the people of Nagaland. The whole of the duck is roasted and it gives a delicious taste with the roasted potatoes and boiled rice.

Thukpa noodles soup: It is a noodle soup which is prepared with the meat as well as vegetables. It is a dish which is most popular among the non vegetarians but the vegetarians can also prepare it. It is very much served in the cold weather.

The cuisines of this state are mouth watering dishes that show the culture and economic resources of this state. One can easily get vegetarian as well as non vegetarian food in the state of Nagaland. But most commonly non vegetarian food is popular.

SIKKIM: (A place of Peace):

It is the least populated state of India, where Nepali as its official language. Even with a diverse population, harmony prevails. Buddhism is highly followed religion in the state.

Chogyal dynasty ruled the state of Sikkim before it was merged in the India Union. It is an agriculture state with high ore deposits and emerging industry.

Sikkim cuisine is influenced by the Nepali and Tibetan food habits. Momos and tomato chutney are the favorite snacks.

Hilly state of Sikkim boasts of a distinct cuisine of its own. It is unique because it is a cross cuisine of not just various states in India but also different countries. Sikkimese food has an apparent influence of Tibetan, Nepalese, Bhutanese besides, of course, the Indian style of cooking.

Sikkim has a blend of cultures and traditions of Nepal, India, Bhutan and Tibet. So, does the cuisine of this state. The bizarre combination of various cuisines has resulted into one specific cuisine, which is now called as cuisine of Sikkim. Today, Sikkim boasts of its own dietary culture that comprises of different food habits and some special recipes. These recipes and habits have emerged with the traditional wisdom and experiments of generations. The traditional food of Sikkim, is gaining popularity among the masses. In the present day, Sikkimese cuisine has entered the kitchens of the world.

In Sikkim, Himalaya's traditional foods form an essential part of dietary culture. Rice is the chief food of the Sikkimese. Depending on availability, meat and dairy products are consumed as well. Apart from these foods, a range of traditional fermented foods and beverages, make the basic diet for centuries. The pattern of food production also reveals the gastronomy of Sikkim. With high altitudinal variation, crops like finger millet, wheat, buckwheat, barley, vegetable, potato, soybeans etc. are grown.

The cuisine is also incorporated with Dals (lentils), fresh vegetables, bamboo shoots, wild flowers, mushrooms and nettle leaves. Talking about non-vegetarian food, beef, pork and fish are relishing items. The main thing about the cuisine of Sikkim is that it materialized under the changing needs, geographical compulsions and cultural contact of the adjoining countries. Sikkim cuisine demonstrates the good sense of the residents, who took only those styles and methods from other cultures, which helped their mode of life, maintaining their own distinctive cuisine.

Momo (steamed dumpling), Tomato Achar (Pickle), Thukpa /Gya-Thuk (Noodle soup), Kinema curry (Fermented soybean), Gundruk and Sinki Soup (Fermented vegetable soup), Gundruk ko Achar (Pickle), Chhurpi Soup (Traditional cottage cheese), Chhurpi ka Achar (Pickle), Chhurpi-Ningro Curry (Chhurpi with wild fern), Sel Roti (Fermented rice product), Shimi ka Achar (String bean pickle), Pakku (Mutton curry) and Mesu Pickle (Fermented bamboo shoot) are some of the local dishes that are enjoyed by all the communities in Sikkim.

Fermented vegetables and beverages are very common in the Sikkimese tradition. Owing to this, people can preserve vegetables, when they befall out of season. To cope up with the chilly weather, the residents of Sikkim rely on alcoholic drinks that are popular amongst both men and women. An assortment of soups, pickles and beverages

make the Sikkim cuisine more flavorsome and delicious. Slowly and steadily, the cuisine of Sikkim is getting more and more popularity due to its rich taste and enticing flavor.

Recipes in the state have evolved over the years and reflect the changing needs, geographical compulsions and cultural impact of neighbouring countries and state. It shows the prudence of the people of Sikkim who imbibed only those styles and methods from other cultures which benefited their way of life and retained their own distinct cuisine.

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Practice of eating fermented vegetables and beverages is a norm in the Sikkimese tradition. This helps to preserve vegetables when they become out of season. Soups, an assortment of pickles (a unique one with a each dish) and a variety of beverages make the food more delightful and help the people to face the chilly weather of the state.

List of Recipes

Momo (steamed dumpling)

Tomato Achar (Pickle)

Thukpa /Gya-Thuk (Noodle soup)

Kinema curry (Fermented soybean)

Gundruk and Sinki Soup (Fermented vegetable)

Gundruk ko Achar (Pickle)

Chhurpi Soup (Traditional cottage cheese)

Chhurpi ka Achar (Pickle)

Chhurpi-Ningro Curry (Chhurpi with wild fern)

Sel Roti (Fermented rice product)

Shimi ko Achar (String bean pickle)

Pakku (Mutton curry)

Mesu Pickle (Fermented bamboo shoot)

TRIPURA:

The early mention of the kingdom of Tripura can be found on Asoka pillars. The kingdom was ruled by Manikya dynasty of Indo-Mongolian origin, till it was merged with the Indian Union. It also finds a mention in Mahabharata. It is just 2 km away from Bangladesh.

Most of the people live in villages and are tribal. Sustaining on the agrarian economy, the festivals, music and the dance are related to the farming season cycle.

Rice, fish and meat are the main ingredients of the local diet.

They use different kinds of rice namely Maisa, Mamiand Guriya. All kinds of meat such as pork, chicken fish, frog, dogs and turtle are cooked with spices and coconut.

Cuisines

Cuisines are an important aspect of every culture. If there is no cuisine for a culture, then the whole civilization will become extinct within no time at all.

Food has always been a major concern for man. It is inducted into the basic necessities of man. Everything that we do is for the filling of our stomach.

Every tourist expects at least a good cuisine in the place he visits. India is a land that flabbergasts everyone who visits it as the amount of variation it exhibits. The cuisine also shows the same volume of variation. All the states have their own cuisines that are different from each other.

Feature

The basic food for all the states is mostly rice and the other foods vary. Though rice is common, it is used for a variety of dishes that totally change the face of this simple dish. Tripura is by far the most remote North Eastern state in India. The state also offers scenic views to all its tourists as nature is the ruling sovereign in these regions.

Tripura is one of the places that are most tranquil in the world. The state has green valleys, thick forests and other such places that make the tourists gape in wonder and disbelief. The scenes are so beautiful that tourists have to

pinch themselves hard to conclude that they are not dreaming. The cuisine is also as great and tasty as the places.

Simple Food

Tripura has preserved its culinary culture and has a diversified food as the state has many tribal groups. Bengali is the largest community in Tripura and their choice is non-vegetarian food having fish as an integral part of their cuisine list. Most of the household serve genuine Bengali dishes. If your choice is non-vegetarian food, you will adore Tripura. They take rice and fish mainly owing to the close proximity of West Bengal State. The people of Tripura have slowly given up their traditional attire but are maintaining the traditional cuisine.

Traditional Cuisine

The traditional cuisine is known as Mui Borok. Tripura cuisine comprises of a key ingredient called Berma. This is a dried and fermented fish. Though this has an obnoxious odor as well as flavor when it is raw, its flavor is lip smacking when cooked and enhances the taste of the dish. Berma is a spicy food as a typical spice is added to it. Moreover, this food is very healthy as it is prepared without oil.

Their food includes all types of meats. This includes pork, mutton, chicken, turtle, beef, crabs, fish, prawns, frogs and even dogs. The vegetables that are eaten here is brinjals, chillies, pumpkin, bamboo shoots and corn. Chinese and local food is also available and a local drink called Apong is taken. This drink is made from millet or rice.

ASSAM:

Cuisine of Assam is probably the most different type of cuisine you would have ever tasted. You cannot say that cuisine of Assam has not at all been influenced by external factors. New dishes have become famous and the traditional dishes have undergone a slight variation, but the change is ever so slight. The delicacies still have the same aroma and taste that made the Assam cuisine a household name in India. The cuisine is distinguished by on the basis of the exotic herbs and vegetables added to the dishes that lend a magnificent taste to the dishes. Rice is the main dish and finds a place in the ingredient list of almost all preparations. In non veg, fish curries and pork dishes are the favorite most of Assamese people. Birds like ducks and pigeon are also used in dishes.

In Assam, a traditional full course meal starts with serving Khar which is a class of dishes and ends with a tenga which is a sour dish. Just like food is served in a banana leaf traditionally in south India, a meal in Assam is served on a bell metal utensils. Almost everyone ends their meal by chewing on a betel nut known as Paan.

Vegetarian Delights

All major preparations are of rice. There are different varieties of rice which are used for different dishes, most widely used being joha, indica and japonica. Rice is eaten in different ways such as roasted, grounded, boiled or just soaked. The soaked rice called kumal saul is an important breakfast meal for many which is generally had with milk. Chira mixed with yogurt and jaggery is also a traditional breakfast. There is a special class of dishes called pithas, that are prepared only on special occasions and on festivals like Bihu. The rice dishes are had with curry that are made by boiling vegetables in water; some are grown while many grow in wild. The green leafy vegetables are called xaak.

Non Vegetarian Special

Non Vegetarian seems to be the specialty of Assam Cuisine. Fish dishes form the major part of non vegetarian food. There are different varieties of fishes that are used for cooking. The main are the rou, the illish, and the chital. Different regions are famous for different variety of fish. Tenga is the most important dish in traditional; Assam meal. Dishes of birds such as ducks and pigeons are also prepared. Though pork dishes seem to be the favorite among the young generation.

Exotic And Side Dishes

Sides dishes in Assamese are called Pitikas. They are generally made from steamed or roasted vegetables. The most popular among the people is aloo pitika (mashed potatoes). Exotic food contains a dish called eri polu; it is the pupa of Eri silkworm and fermented bamboo shoot. Both are traditional dishes that have become famous in nearby states as well.