

# RAJASTHANI CUISINE

Rajasthani cooking was influenced by the war-like lifestyle of its inhabitants and the availability of ingredients in this region. Food that could last for several days and could be eaten without heating was preferred, more out of necessity than choice. Scarcity of water, fresh green vegetables have had their effect on cooking. In the desert belt of Jaisalmer, Barmer and Bikaner, cooks use a minimum of water and prefer, instead, to use more milk, buttermilk and clarified butter.

Dried lentils, beans from indigenous plants like sangri, ker etc. are liberally used. Gram flour is a major ingredient here and is used to make some of the delicacies like gotta ki sabzi, pakodi; powdered lentils are used for mangodi, papad. Bajra and corn are used all over the state for preparations of rabdi, khichdi and rotis. Various chutneys are made from locally available spices like turmeric, coriander, mint and garlic.

Perhaps the best known Rajasthani food is the combination of dal, bati and churma but for the adventurous traveler, willing to experiment, there is a lot of variety available. Besides, each region is distinguished by its popular sweet - Mawa Kachori from Jodhpur, Malpuas from Pushkar, Rasgullas from Bikaner, Ghevar from Jaipur.. to name a few.

Each region in India has its own traditional dishes and specialities. In the royal kitchens of Rajasthan, as well as most other states, food is a very serious business and raised to the level of an art-form. Rajasthani cooking was influenced by the war-like lifestyle of its inhabitants and the availability of ingredients in this region.

Rarely has the world seen so rich a cuisine from so little that was available from the land. While the eastern region of the state has fertile soil capable of crops of everything from wheat and maize to millets and corn, for much part the desert's dry terrain, prone to droughts, was incapable of producing even basic necessities of survival. Yet, live and eat they did, creating an exotic cuisine from the soil that threw up a few pulses, crops of millet, and trees with beans that were dried and stored for use when, in the summers, nothing would grow.

Communication and faster means of transportation have brought in a revolution in the choice of vegetables and fruits that are now available throughout the state, but this was not always so. Which is why, for the villager, his diet still remains sparse, and consists of dairy produce, bread of millets and accompaniments of gram flour and sour buttermilk which, say dieticians across the world, is a high-protein, low-fat cuisine. Perhaps that is what gives the people of the desert their erect gait and slender build.

An important feature of non-vegetarian cooking in the Rajput kitchen was that it was rarely cooked on the main stove in the kitchen, and usually employed the male head of the family as its chef. Elie women, whether the family was vegetarian or meat eating, had their task cut out for them. They would dry the meagre sangri and gwarphali beans that are eatable, and store them for future use. They would also make papads and endless other variations and dry them, also for storage, later to be turned into curries for the family.

Accompaniments rarely changed over the region. Desserts were, by and large, rare, though exotic concoctions from vegetables were sometimes served. For most, for festive occasions, these would consist of secra, a halwa made of cooked wheat flour in ghee, or laapsi, a porridge made with desiccated grains of wheat. Rice, a delicacy in Rajasthan, was served as a sweet with the addition of sugar, saffron and dried nuts and raisins.

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Dried lentils, beans from indigenous plants like sangri, ker, etc are liberally used. Gram flour is a major ingredient here and is used to make some of the delicacies like khata, gotta ki sabzi, pakodi, powdered lentils are used for mangodi, papad. The daily food in Rajasthan typically comprises unleavened bread, made of wheat, barley, millet or maize. A soup of legumes flavored with red chili peppers, yogurt or milk and sometimes a vegetable such as okra, jackfruit, eggplant, mustard or fenugreek leaf. The wealthy can afford to eat meat regularly, but many abstain for religious reasons. Though the Rajasthani kitchen was able to create much from little, it had also to cater to different communities with their own ritual observances.

The Rajput warrior, for example, was not averse to shikar, killing game to put in his pot at night. The Vaishnavs, followers of Krishna, were vegetarian, and strictly so, as were the Bishnois, a community known for their passion to conserve both animal and plant life. Even among Rajputs, there were enough royal kitchens where nothing other than vegetarian meals were cooked.

The Marwaris, of course, were vegetarian too, but their cuisine, though not too different from the Rajputs, was richer in its method of preparation. And then there were the Jains too, who were not only vegetarians, but who would not eat after sundown, and whose food had to be devoid of garlic and onions which were, otherwise, important ingredients in the Rajasthani pot.

## **REGIONAL SPECIALITIES**

If Jaipur has its specialty, none of the other princely states have lagged behind. Bikaner has its savouries, especially bhujia, which has accounted for its fame, and the quality of its papads and badi remains unrivaled. The lean mutton of the desert goats of this region too is considered the most favorable. Jodhpur has its kachoris. In Bharatpur, milk sweets, rarely commercially available, occupy a niche by themselves. A Rajasthani delicacy, linked with the monsoon festival of Teej, is called ghevar, consisting of round cakes of white flour over which sweetened syrup is poured. Today, variations include lacings with cream and khoya, making it a delightful concoction. Muslim food has also occupied a place in the overall cuisine of the state, not just in pockets such as Tonk and Loharu, but also in Jaipur.

## **MUGHAL INSPIRED DISHES**

The Mughals influenced the eating habits of the Rajput courts. From the simple grilled meats served on leaves, the royal kitchen introduced elaborate curries, kebabs and pulao's (rice prepared with clarified butter, spices meat and vegetables) served on silver platters.

## **CHAPPATTI MAKING**

The chapatti is a flat, unleavened bread which serves almost as a spoon, for it is used as a scoop to transfer food to the mouth. It complements both the texture and flavor of the food it scoops up, absorbing, runny sauces, balancing strong flavors and smoothness.

## **FRYING PURIS**

Puris are delicious, fried wheat bubbles which have varied uses; as snacks, scoops for food and as a complement to hot spices. Family members typically sit on the floor and are served piping hot food by the lady of the houses.

## **KHUD KHARGOSH**

Khud Khasrgosh (Hare or rabbit meat cooked in a pit) is a Rajput specialty during summer, when the hare is lean. The hare is skinned and stuffed with spices, wrapped in dough and finally in layers of mud-soaked cloth. The ambrosial result is meat perfectly blended with the spices and dough.

## **THE INDIAN KITCHEN**

The simple Indian Kitchen has a brick-and-mud fireplace. Food is usually cooked over a wood or charcoal fire, in clay, brass, or copper utensils.

## **LASSI**

Natural yogurt is churned to remove the butter content for the making of Lassi or buttermilk a cooling summer beverage.

## **DESERT COOKING**

Very little produce grows in the desert. Daily food mainly comprises of daal-bati (cooked lentils and roasted balls of dough), accompanied by a variety of dried or pickled berries cooked in different ways.

## **RECIPE FOR SULA**

In Rajput cuisine, sula refer to tender morsels of meat, the most prized being ng wild boar spare ribs (bhanslas), marinated in a mixture of dry yogurt, browned onions, garlic, ginger, coriander, red chilli, and kachri, a small pod which tenderizes meat and lends a particular sharp-sour flavor to many dishes. The marinated meat is smoked, spitted on skewers, and grilled over hot coals. Sulas are made of chicken, pheasant, mutton, or fish.

## INGREDIENTS FOR SULA

2lb lamb leg (mutton boneless), salt to taste, 1 oz malt vinegar, 3/4 oz ginger and garlic paste, 17 oz curd, 3/4 oz red chilli paste. 2 oz mustard oil, 2 oz pineapple (raw) juice, 2 oz butter, 2 lemons, 1/2 oz garam masala.

### Procedure:

1. Fillet lamb leg and cut into thin one-inch strips, sprinkle salt and marinate with half of malt vinegar. Put aside for two hours.
2. Mix ginger and garlic paste, red chilli paste, salt, garam masala, mustard oil, pineapple juice, and the rest of malt vinegar with the curd (curd has to be hung in muslin cloth for two hours to obtain the solid coagulated substance, allowing the liquid to drain). Marinate mutton pieces in mixture and keep in the refrigerator for at least eight hours
3. Skewer mutton pieces. Allow eight to ten pieces per skewer.
4. Place skewered mutton in a moderately hot charcoal clay oven. After seven to eight minutes, turn over the skewer so as to ensure uniform cooking on both sides. Cook for another two or three minutes cooking.

Generally, Rajasthani curries are a brilliant red but they are not as spicy as they look. Most Rajasthani cuisine uses pure ghee (clarified butter) as the medium of cooking. A favourite sweet dish, called lapsi is prepared with broken wheat (dalia) sauteed in ghee and sweetened.

Perhaps the best-known Rajasthani food is the combination of dal, bati and churma (dal is lentils; bati is baked wheat ball; and churma is powdered sweetened cereal), but for the adventurous traveller, willing to experiment, there is a lot of variety available. Besides, each region is distinguished by its popular sweet - Mawa Kachori from Jodhpur, Alwar ka Mawa, Malpuas from Pushkar, Rasogullas from Bikaner, Ghevar from Jaipur to name a few.

Contrary to popular belief, people of Rajasthan are not all vegetarians. The unique creation of the Maharaja of Salwar is the Junglee maas. Junglee maas was a great favourite among the Maharajas and due to the paucity of exotic ingredients in the camp kitchen, the game brought in from the hunt was simply cooked in pure ghee, salt and plenty of red chillies. However, now this dish has been adapted to the less controversial ingredients like kid/lamb, pork or poultry.

The personal recipes of the royal KHANSAMA still rotate around their generations and are the highlights of regal gatherings. Each state of Rajasthan had their own style of the recipes, and are continued in the Rajput households. It was mainly the men folk of the family that prepared the non-veg. Some of the Maharajas apart from being great hunters relished the passion of cooking the SHIKARS themselves for their chosen guests and the trend continues among the generation.

## SWEET DISHES

Sweet dishes are never referred to as 'dessert' in Rajasthan, because unlike desserts which are had after the meal, Rajasthani sweets are had before the meal, with the meal, and after the meal! And typically there is no rationing.

**Churma:** is the most popular delicacy usually served with baatis and dal. It is coarsely ground wheat crushed and cooked with ghee and sugar. Traditionally it is made by mashing up wheat flour baatis or left over rotis in ghee and jaggery.

**Halwa:** Not many people know but the halwa is a marwari dish ... they are usually made of carrots or lauki.

**Ghevar:** is a honeycomb shaped delicacy made using plain flour and ghee. Ghevars are usually large in size approx. 200 mm. or 250 mm. (8" or 10") squares or rounds and are either sweetened with syrup or served topped with sweet raabdi or thickened milk. They are earmarked as a traditional dish for some special rituals and festivals. They are generally prepared in January for Makar Sankranti, in March-April for Gangaur and in July-August for the Teej festival.

**Besan Chakki:** is a very popular sweet dish made of gram flour. Balusahi, DilKhushaal, Jhajariya, Palang Torh.

### Here is a partial list of characteristically Rajsthani dishes:

?	Daal-Baati	?	Tarfini	?	Raabdi	?	Bail-Gatte
?	Panchkoota	?	Chaavadi	?	Laapsi	?	Nukhti
?	Ghoogri	?	Dhungari Chhaachh				

**Here is a partial list of characteristically Rajasthani curries:**

?	Kicha ki sabji	?	Moranga ki sabji	?	Gwarfali ki sabji
?	Beans ki sabji	?	Gajar ki sabji	?	Karela ki sabji
?	Raabdi	?	Vadi	?	Ker-saangri ki sabji
?	Khaddi	?	Makki ki raab	?	Makki ki saag
?	Kikoda ki sabji	?	Matar ki sabji	?	Aloo Matar ki sabji

**Here is a partial list of Rajasthani meat dishes:**

?	Mohan Maans (Meat cooked in milk)
?	Laal Maans (Meat in red chillies curry)
?	Safed Maans (Meat cooked in curd)
?	Saanth ro Achaar (Pickled wild boar meat)
?	Khud Khargosh (Wild hare cooked and roasted underground)