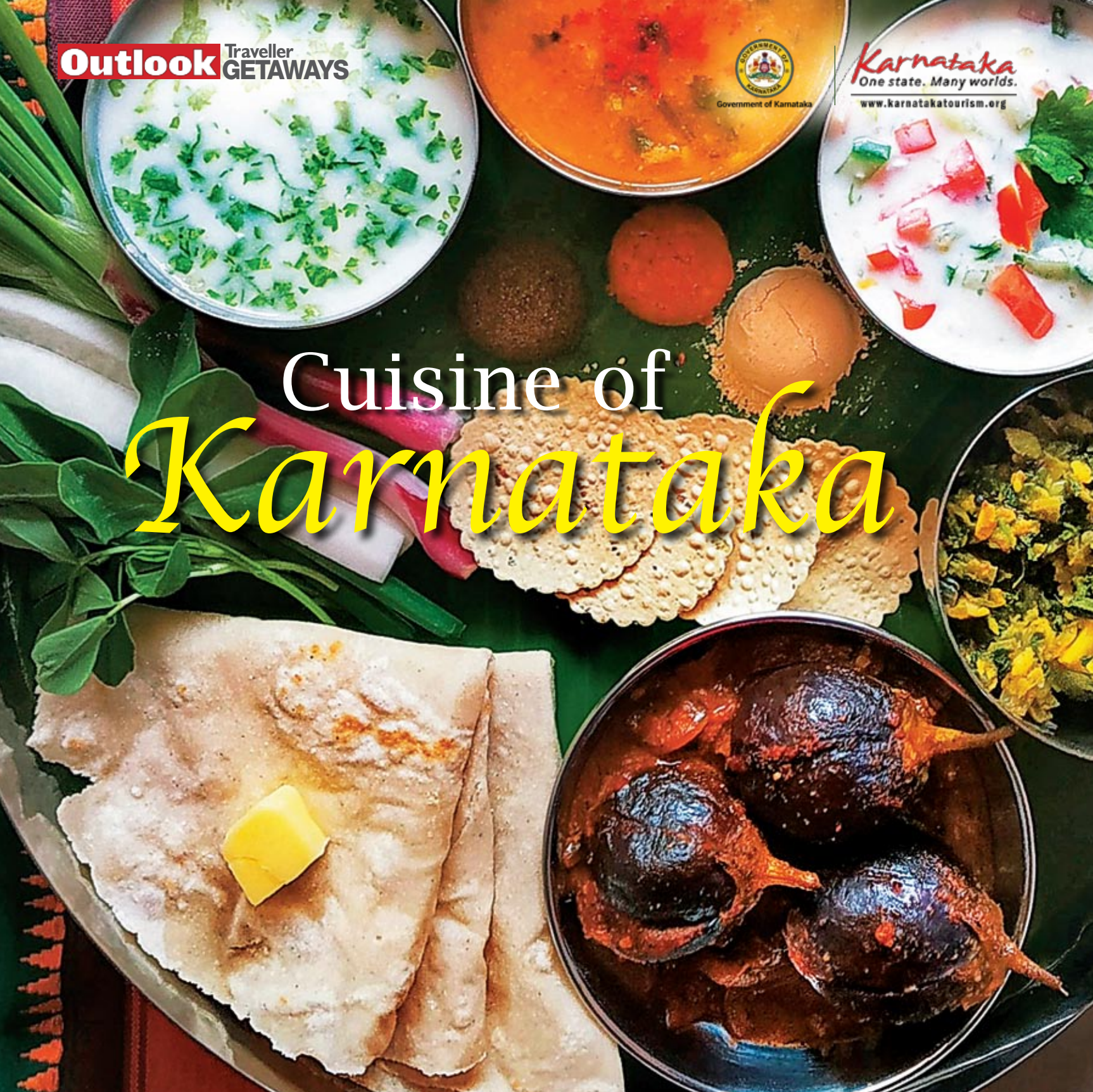




Cuisine of *Karnataka*



CUISINE OF KARNATAKA

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Introduction

When talk comes round to its food and its people's dietary habits, it is often said about Karnataka that the state's topographic and climatic diversity bears an uncanny likeness to that of India itself. Located on the western edge of the Deccan Peninsular region of India geographically, the state is often divided into several culinary zones.

Millets are a staple throughout Karnataka—if the north is dominated by jowar (sorghum), the south displays especial fondness for the hardy ragi (finger millet). If Kodava cuisine prides itself on the redoubtable pandi curry and potent shots of the traditional vinegar kachampuli, the hill tracts





of the bigger Malnad region swear by their delicious bamboo-, banana- and yam-based preparations.

One marvels at the brief breaks religious towns of Gokarna and Udupi—both almost equidistant from the northern and southern ends of the coastline, respectively—provide to the fish- and seafood-eating coast that extends from Karwar to Mangalore. The border areas display gastronomic porosity—if northwest Karnataka welcomes Maratha and Konkani flavours, the Gulbarga-Bidar surrounds often display a similarity with Andhra food—the meat, the spices, the sorrel leaves...

Such is its contract with food that even the name of its bustling capital Bengaluru, came from a modest bowl of boiled beans, as is often recounted by residents and history buffs. According to a legend, the Hoysala king Veera Ballala II, while on a hunt, got separated from his companions in the forest, as young kings are often accustomed to. He came upon the hut of a kind, old woman who fed him a bowl of boiled beans, which was the local staple, and was known as benda kaal. Overcome with wonder and gratitude, he named the village Benda-kaaluru, or 'Village of Boiled Beans'. It is a corruption of that historic anointment that Bengaluru has come to be known by, today.

Bengaluru contains within itself the whole gamut of the state's food traditions, and is without a doubt your best bet to start savouring its flavours. In the darshinis, upscale joints, military hotels, messes,



A take on the chitranna, or the lemon bath recipe Facing page: (top to bottom) pandi curry; fish fry; maddur vada

specialty restaurants and highway hotels of Bengaluru and its suburbs, you can feast not only on the Davangere benne dosa, the fluffy thatte idli, the Maddur vada and the Dharwad Peda, but also the offal-based preparations of Shivajinagar. The donne biryani, masale vade and crisp dosas with all their variations, are raging local favourites, available at iconic eateries.

In fact, vadas and bajjis (crunchy, savoury fritters), in all their various interpre-

tations, are wildly popular as teatime snacks all across Karnataka. These are generally made from balekayi (raw banana), menasinakayi (green banana caper), alugadde (potato), iruli (onion) and sabbaki (pearl sago). Rice is eaten throughout the state, in inventive recipes such as puliyogare (tamarind rice), vangibath (brinjal rice), chitranna (lemon rice), and the famous one-pot hot lentil-and-rice dish which everyone swears by, bisibelebath. ■



Geography

Karnataka's sheer geographical diversity makes it exceptional—the mysterious desert tract of Talakadu with monuments buried in sand; giant limestone formations at Yana near Sirsi; the stalactites and stalagmites of Kavala Caves near Dandeli; the stunning peach-hued sandstone ridges of Badami; the precariously perched natural granite boulders of Ramnagaram (legendary backdrop for the movie *Sholay*); the bouldering and rock-climbing haven of Hampi, Shivagange, and Kolar. Then there are the dense forests and mountains of the Western Ghats or Sahyadris—from Baba Budan Giri, the birthplace of coffee in India, to Agumbe, Kodachadri, Kemmangundi, and Kudremukh.







Above: The colourful Karavali coast at Murudeshwar Facing page: The otherworldly Jog Falls plunge, cutting through the mist

All these features collectively make Karnataka one of the global hotspots of biodiversity. Birdwatchers and wildlife enthusiasts flock to world-famous parks such as Dandeli, Nagarhole, Bandipur and Kabini. Fringing the Western Ghats are pristine beaches lined with forests and laterite cliffs.

The Karavali coast stretches 320km from Mangaluru to Karwar creating the Sapphire Route, one of the most scenic coastal drives in India. A magical boat ride on a

moonlit night in Karwar inspired the poet Rabindranath Tagore to pen his first play ‘Prokritir Protishodh’ (Nature’s Revenge). Adding intrigue are the islands off the coast—the tortoise-shaped Kurumgad near Karwar; the fine dive site Netrani Island off Murudeshwara; and St Mary’s Island near Malpe with fantastic basalt formations.

Sunny beaches at Malpe, Kaup, Baindoor, Murudeshwara, Maravanthe, Kumta, and Gokarna come with spectacular mountains to the east. ■





Culture

Its varied topographical zones; those borders shared with as many as six states; communities, both local and emigrant existing all over the meat-eating spectrum; diverse culinary histories—where does one begin to harness the aromatic crosswinds that define the culture of Karnataka? Is it the spicy pandi of the Kodavas or the ever-evolving Mangalorean cuisine? Could the up-and-coming food culture in Bangalore and its suburbs be its face or should the kitchen gardens in houses big and small, come to define what it is that lies at the heart of the Kannada platter.

It sure is a problem of plenty but one that can be solved if one looks for what floats their boat. To some, Karnataka cuisine immediately brings to mind the coffee culture of Chikmagalur and Coorg. Some others may recall the unique practice of slathering benne over crumbly idlis and gossamer dosas, or the faint, fragrant sweetness of coconut that invariably enters almost anything edible. It could mean the grainy goodness of ragi mudde towards the south or the sinful sensations of the Belgaum kunda in the north.

The clamorous polyphony of these flavours will take a lifetime, if not more, if one sets out to hear each of these lively spirits. But trying is worth it—it's worth digging into warrior-clan meats galvanised in feisty kachampuli in Kodagu's homestay kitchens.

Below: Bevu bella, which is prepared in Ugadi
Facing page: Udupi is famous for its masala dosas



Bengaluru's messes and boutique restaurants doing special thalis as well as the MTR outlets all over the state; Bidadi and Maravanthe's highway pitstops; Sauji eateries serving hot-and-spicy traditional non-vegetarian fare; Lingayat khanavalis with the lesser-known north Karnataka cuisine and Udupi restaurants—I doubt if this list can end.

Having said all that, bias must be placed where it's due—the riches of the Karavali coast and the endless cycle of life and subsistence they have spawned, colour the culinary character of Karnataka to a large extent. Be it the fresh produce markets selling locally grown veggies set up every day from Karwar to Mangaluru, the hum of activity at the docks swarming with customers, the unmistakable hint of coconut associated with coastal food in every recipe, or the flavours of the criminally underrated Tulu food—the aromas, textures and flavours of the Kanara or Karavali coast travel eastward with great persuasion, probably to mingle somewhere from their other counterparts in the centre of what a collective imagination calls South India.

Another good bet to savour not only the best, but the most special of Karnataka's flavours, would be the state's many festivals. The much-anticipated new year of Ugadi is time to sample bevu bella, a sweet-sour-hot-bitter paste made from jaggery, neem, mango, tamarind, and chilli. The Kodava festival of Huthri is quite literally a celebration of the community's love affair with rice, from the banana-and-roasted-rice-flour-based thambuttu, the similar kuvaleputtu, the ghee-







*L-R: Vadas with sambar and chutney; Podi idlis, a quick-fix snack made with leftover idlis and gunpowder masala **Facing page:** A delectable-looking thali at a restaurant*

rice-style dish neikoolu, and the neer dosa. The harvest festival of Makar Sankranti is when you can spoil yourself with some chakkara pongal and tamarind puliyogare. A dish prepared specially for Sankranti is ellu bella, a mixture of sesame, jaggery, coconut, gram, and peanuts. Ambode and mandige are wedding-specials as well as festive treats. Festivities are also a time to relish the halbai, an authentic Karnataka dessert made from jaggery, coconut and rice.

A smorgasbord of authentic community traditions practised all its religious groups, Mangaluru is the place to head to for the festive meal of the novein jowaan (new meal) where a vegetarian spread consisting of an odd number are prepared. The centre piece of this feast is the alun dento (amaranth stalks

and Colocasia stems cooked in a coconut gravy), the finale being the happy chewing of sugarcane by one and all after Mass.

The traditional style of serving Karnataka oota is on plantain leaves, and if you're acquainting yourself with these flavours for the first time, the intermingling aroma and flavours of coconut, tamarind and jaggery will prove to be a knockout punch. In more traditional settings, the leaf-plate will have to be cleaned with water first before the banana chips, coated in jaggery, poppadums, yam chips, and other stir-fried starters arrive. Rice (a small first serving) and green lentil soup called parippu, and sambar follow. Spicy tamarind-based rasam is a regular in every Karnataka platter, and the tangy buttermilk served at the last aids digestion. ■



Nature

Geographical Influences and Regional Diversities

The state features four distinct regions—the coastal plain, the hill ranges of Malnad (encompassing the upland terrain of the Western Ghats), the Karnataka Plateau to the east, and to the northwest the rich black-soil tract. While agri-driven activities are the mainstay of the majority of the populace, the coastal region, intensively cultivated, with rice, sorghum (jowar) and millet (ragi), are also a main resource for seafood. The main cash crop is sugarcane, supplemented by cashews, cardamom, betel (areca) nut, and grapes. The plantations on the sylvan slopes of the Western Ghats supply the state with coffee and tea while expensive timbers such as sandalwood come from the forests of Malnad. Other important forest products include teak, eucalyptus, rosewood, bamboo.



COASTAL KARNATAKA

Marking the Karavali coastal region the 300-km-long Karnataka coast, stretches from Mangaluru to Karwar. The diverting beauty of the terrain of this region is driven by its rivers, creeks, waterfalls, ranges of hills and peaks. It's also a magnet for its gorgeous beaches found at Murudeshwar, Udupi and Gokarna.

Flaunting her silverware: A vendor at the fish market Facing page: Fish curry



This region displays more variations in fare than you would expect from its three major divisions—Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada.

In fact, the region is a veritable melting pot of communities and also of the vegetarian and non-vegetarian food they consume. For instance, Mangalorean cuisine encompasses the diverse gastronomic traditions of the Mangalorean Catholics, the Tuluvas, the Muslim Bearys and the Saraswat Brahmins that call the Dakshin Kannada town of Kudla their home.

As the sun's first rays break on the buoyant sea, the fishing dock at Dhakke comes alive with activity of seabirds and Mogaveera fishermen. Customers call dibs and jostle for the best of the kene meenu, bangada meenu, boothai, and of course the prawns, crabs and clams—to haul into kitchens that will serve families, and kitchens that will serve customers. These will be fried to a crisp, coated with rava or dunked in coconut- or pulimunchi-based curries.

An often-cooked Tulu specialty, the bangude pulimunchi (mackerel in a tamarind-and-chilli-based gravy) is traditionally prepared in an earthen vessel to bring to the fore an earthy touch. Apart from crabs and clams, silverfish, oysters and mussels also find popularity among fish lovers in these parts. Sungta song, a prawn pickle traditionally cooked with potatoes, is made from the much sweeter prawns of the rivers and backwaters of the Souparnika near Maravanthe. The exquisite shaiyya jhinga biryani is a



result of the marriage of two cultures—that of traders from Arabia and the local Jains and brahmins.

The Chicken Ghee Roast is a Tulu/Bunt chicken recipe that was birthed in Kundapur's Shetty Lunch Home, along with the delectable Kundapur chicken. As far as poultry goes, the trading community of Bearys is known for their steamed egg dessert

Below: Chicken ghee roast, a Tulu speciality

Bottom: Tangy Mangalorean fish curry



pinyanappa, the stuffed fried chicken recipe koli norchad, sheer korma and biryani.

Its palms leisurely spread all along the Kannada coastline like wiry, frond-haired teenagers, coconut, quite unsurprisingly, dominates much of Mangalorean flavours, too. The slightly toasted, slightly sweet flavour of coconut informs the flavour of chutneys and batters all over the state in specialties such as the neer dosa, but more so in the coastal strip—as either grated flakes, oil or coconut milk. Mangaloreans are also known to use palm jaggery for that unique subtle sweetness to their payasa. A special fish curry made using coconut milk and served during the anointing ceremony in Mangalorean Catholic weddings, is a rage in these parts. Coconut flower sap also gives itself to the khali, a toddy. Even as partner to red chillies, ginger and garlic and other spices, coconut holds its own in any Mangalorean recipe. When enlisted to bring in its characteristic zing to crab, clam, prawns or fish recipes, coconut again proves to be a worthy foil.

Fish curry with rice and a dash of coconut is a major staple for the various coastal cuisines, reaching all the way to Uttara Kannada, especially Karwar. In fact, the many red rice landraces grown in the state—athikaraya, athikaya, kayame and rakthashali—are an important part of coastal cuisine. It has been seen to be both nutritive and resistant to drought and flood and water salinity, and it is common for a rural household to have a whole year's rice supply at all times. The red rice varieties of ghandasali



A sumptuous bowl of sambar garnished with dry red chilli

Udupi Culinary Exploits

The purveyors of Udupi cooking have made excellent use of the fertile land and bounteous rainfall that Dakshina Kannada is blessed with. At first glance, it might look humble in terms of the scope of offerings—idli, sambar and vada—but the fact is that it requires deft use of the locally available grains, beans, leaves, fruits and vegetables. And this is despite the fact that Udupi cuisine has long disavowed the use of not only onions and garlic, but tomatoes, radish, cabbage, cauliflower, gherkins, spinach and—wait a minute—even the local favourite brinjal!

Again, the wild vegetables and the produce grown all over house gardens in the region, including pumpkins and gourds, make

frequent appearances in sambar, and raw banana skin is an important part of the upkari. Coconut, that ubiquitous seed synonymous with the seashore, is deployed actively in dry curries, salads and chutneys. Pickles are made with mango, jackfruit, pineapple, and grapes—which are cultivated extensively in the Nandi, Krishna and Cauvery valleys.

Even leaves of seasonal greens such as brahmi and yelemuri, and the versatile Colocasia make frequent appearances in Udupi cooking, as does the technique of steaming in cups fashioned out of leaves. While it is common to eat moode cooked thus in fragrant screw pine or jackfruit leaves, kadubu olle, which is basically rava batter steamed in cups made from a native palm's leaves, is a special preparation.

and gulwadi lend their distinctive aroma not only to payasa and kesar bhaat but also to the Karwari chana dal payasa.

The Tulu community towards Dakshin Kannada absolutely abides by its boiled rice, or sanna preparations. The grain appears in a number of forms in their cooking, from idlis, appams and dosas, to neer dosa, kori rotti, and thelao. And who can forget the Kannadigas' love for shaavige, the amusing string hoppers that are again relished with curries?

It would be a grave injustice to the plentiful Canara if one believes that all it yields is a tantalising bucketful of fish and crustaceans. Coastal food harvests the tender shoot, flower,

peel, and root of both vegetables and fruits. Travelling along NH17 from Karwar to Mangalore, one finds street-side vegetable markets selling naati, or local bendekayi (lady finger), badanekayi (brinjal), heerekayi (ridge gourd) and other fresh produce grown by farmers, most of whom are women.

Home gardens flush with gujje (jack-fruit), basale (spinach), pumpkins, plantains, gourds of all kinds and cucumbers—all self-nourishing produce—is a common sight at the coast. The much-reviled-elsewhere brinjal is indispensable to cuisines here, regardless of community or region, be it the vangibaath or the Bunt special, badane nurge gashie, which is made with brinjals and drumstick. Take, for instance, the Mattu gulla, a variety of the brinjal that is grown in Udupi's Mattu, Uliyargoli and Kaipunjil villages. This brinjal is special not just because it has more pulp than seed but also because it has a GI tag.

The tangy trinity of kokum (abundant in the Western Ghats), tamarind and raw mango is central to both vegetarian food and fish recipes. These, along with the rare jummina kaayi or teppal berries are also digestion-aiding coolants that go into curries and even drinks such as mango rasam, pepper rasam, and the solkadhi, which is famous all along the Konkan coast. The boothai sukka wouldn't quite be the excellent sardine dish it is without the addition of the juice of the bimbli fruit, which is picked and used as a souring agent all over. Mango and jackfruit are summer treats and find their way into ice cream, too.

Neer Dosa is entirely different from a Masala Dosa





The hill tracts of Malenadu are home to vast reserves of wild produce

MALENADU - WESTERN GHATS

The upland terrain of the Western Ghats is known as Malnad or Malenadu. Here, floral and faunal life thrives over and at the feet of the bountiful, rainforests of the Western Ghats running parallel to the Canara coast. The region is a watershed, and descending to the plains from its crown are scores of exuberant streams. Amongst these is the Sharavati River, the source of the Jog (Gersoppa) Falls at Shimoga. Mullayanagiri, near Chikmagalur is Karnataka's highest peak (6,330ft). Not to be missed is safari through the gorgeous Nagarhole National Park.

These hill tracts are known for their herbs and ferns growing with imperious gregariousness on their slopes as well as the coffee plantations further south, in Kodagu, Chikmagalur and Hassan. It is here that a wide array of wild produce, from bamboo and honey to mushrooms and hardy tubers, can be obtained for sustenance, beneficence and indulgence.

How else do the Gowdas rustle up delicacies from kesa (Colocasia) and kal-lele (bamboo shoot), or kadabus (steamed dumplings)—the savoury khara kadabu (rice pockets with spiced lentils) and the sweet ones with pumpkin, cucumber and coconut—with astounding regularity? Banana stem, yam, beetroot and carrot—all of which grow

in profusion in the Western ghats, are used to make traditional salads called kismuri. This is supplemented delightfully by the culture of kitchen gardens abounding with vegetables and tubers, prevalent in the region.

The region is well reputed for its medicinal plants—Hassan alone was recorded to have a little under 200 wild species as of 2015. The Havyaka brahmin community concentrated in the coastal and Malnad regions has adapted beautifully to this natural plenitude, coming up with immunity-boosting recipes made using raw turmeric, carom leaves and gooseberries. They even make use of the locally-occurring raw mango, appe kayi, to make a digestive drink with an amusingly onomatopoeic name—the appe kayi ttroin. The Havyakas also make good use of the leaves of the kanne kudi bush to rustle

up a sour chutney that proves beneficial in the rainy season. Coorg honey and primrose oil (effective in aching joints) are popular medicinal food souvenirs.

Coorg, also known as India's Scotland, records easily the lowest temperatures in Karnataka, and the produce that comes from its hilly regions is used in recipes that help maintain body heat and immunity. In a response to the pineapple pachadi of neighbouring Kerala, Chikmagluru swears by the curd-based palate cleanser ondelaga tambuli, where ondelaga (brahmi) leaves, fresh coconut shavings, mustard, chilli and curry leaves are ground together and mixed with curd.

The fiery chigli chutney is savoured with great relish. Kempu iruve, or red fire ants, feared for their nasty sting, and their larvae, are roasted with salt, ground with onion, coconut, spices, garlic and bird's eye chilli, and stored. Loaded with protein, the chutney is a proven defense against cough, cold and even pneumonia. One bite of a Malnad chilli and it is clear why people all over Shimoga and Chikamagluru rely on the bili menasu and gandhari menasu to combat the winter chill.

When it comes to Malnad's hilly swathes and the eating and drinking its inhabitants do to stay buzzing and kicking, how can one forget their relationship with coffee ever since the mystic and traveller Bababudan brought those seven beans to Chikmagalur in 1670? Karnataka produces well over half of India's coffee and three of the five varieties of India's GI-tagged coffee are from Malnad. Low temperatures

Plantain leaves for sale at a vegetable market





Black and gold: Turmeric (left) and black pepper are central to Malnad recipes

and being drained by the rivers Tunga and Bhadra make the region conducive to growing the bean. And, so, it grows in obedient hedgerows, watched over by a two-tier shade canopy comprising jackfruit, wild fig and rosewood trees, and then a second layer of clove, cardamom, banana and orange. True blue Coorgis can't do their mornings without steaming cups of the *bellada* (filter coffee with jaggery) and travellers go everywhere looking for that amazing espresso.

But before coffee came along, rice ruled the land. Paddy fields, therefore, were provided protection from marauding wild boars by meting out to them the same treatment that the feral predators would to the Kodavas' crops. The famous pandi curry was born this way—wild boars were shot and eaten as a rare delicacy that is now made with pork but still leaves gourmands grinning at the prospect of savouring it.

Spiciness and pungency are things Coorgis are passionate about. Central to this quality, especially in pandi curry, are the dry spices—pepper, cumin, coriander—that go into it, and the irreplicable vinegar/syrup of kachampuli, which is made from the inedible panapuli fruit whose trees are strewn all over the forests and coffee estates in the region.

The centrepiece of Kodava cuisine may be meat, but rice is its underpinning, couldn't be said better. It is rice flour, after all, that is used to make akki ottis and the snacks chikka-lunde and baduva kajjaya. Be it the traditional noodle dish nool puttu, the all-weather partner of pandi curry, kadambuttu, or the rice-and-coconut cakes known as paputtu—ol' akki never goes out of action. Accompanying these are curries made from locally growing specialties such as wild mangoes, wild mushrooms and jackfruits.



SOUTH KARNATAKA

The Southern Karnataka Plateau encompasses the districts of Bangalore Urban, Bangalore Rural, Hassan, Kodagu, Kolar, Mandya, Mysore and Tumkur. This region is bordered by the verdant expanses the Western Ghats on the west and the south. Though its elevations fall between 600m to 900m, the Biligiriranga hills of Mysore district and the Brahmagiri range of Kodagu district have residual heights ranging between 1,500m to 1,750m. The most significant feature of the region is the Cauvery River basin. Amongst its natural attractions are the Bandipur Tiger Reserve and the Kabini Wildlife Sanctuary.

Ragi may command the fascination of the urban superfood-seeking, fitness-conscious populace today, but the humble millet has been the core of moist balls dear to Kannadigas since time immemorial. The iconic south Karnataka dish, loved throughout the region, particularly in Mandya, Hassan and Mysuru, is often paired with mutton saaru or bas saaru, where the curry is made of green gram, toor dal, beans, spinach, dill and other greens.

Millet crops have long been the core of the agrarian identity of this state that tops the millet-growing states list. Such is their place in its food grain pantheon that they've been accorded the status of siridhaanya, or miracle grains. The reason is simple: millets not only consume just about a third of the amount of water the other crops need—they are also loaded with protein, dietary fibre,

amino acids, vitamin B-complex and a host of minerals. If jola (sorghum) represents northern Karnataka, ragi is the grain that reigns in the south.

This is part of the reason why the hardy grain has come a long way from being the grain that the rural population in

Facing page: The river Cauvery at Hogenakkal falls

Below: Ragi enters both rotis and idlis in south Karnataka





these parts would use to make ragi rottis, to finding a place in the breakfast options and snacks served at eateries across Bengaluru and Mysuru and their suburbs. Today, you needn't restrict yourself to the traditional ragi mudde to get that authentic south Karnataka taste. The millet has been introduced to all kinds of pizzas, burgers, and breads... and even ice creams!

The colder months arrive and the avarekai (hyacinth) bean lords it over every other ingredient in the average Bengalurenavaru's kitchen. The mad fascination with the humble winter bean is what memes are made of, nowadays—it is consumed not only as avarekalu saagu, or as part of upma, rasam, bisibelebath, nippattu crispies, and ragi and akki rottis, but also in seasonal variants of pani puri, jalebis and barfis. The humble green bean gives off a strong, characteristic sogadu, or scent, and even has a whole city-based festival to itself!

Nothing has fuelled the countrywide love for masale dose as much as Mysuru's version, also called the Mylari dose (after the iconic status it gained from the effort of a popular city restaurant), or benne dose. The buttery and spicy, wood-fired version of the humble rice crepe that is had with a mashed potato palya, hides a sprightly saagu (curried mixed veggies with a nice dash of coriander) in its centre instead. About 60-odd kilometres to the northwest is the town of Maddur in the Mandya district, quite clearly the origin of the popular teatime snack, Maddur vade.



L-R: Jolada rotti and ridge gourd curry; the popular shenga chutney is made with peanuts

NORTH KARNATAKA

The Northern Karnataka Plateau features Belgaum, Bidar, Bijapur and Gulbarga, districts and is mainly composed of the Deccan Trap. Representing an extensive deforested plateau landscape, the area is watered by the rivers Bhima, Ghataprabha, Krishna and Malaprabha. In order to understand the culinary practices of northern Karnataka, one must account for the fact that the region mainly comprises hardy plains that remain sunbeaten for the greater part of the year and receives the lowest rainfall in all of the state.

Sorghum, or jowar, being the most drought-tolerant of crops, grown principally in the river-fed, fertile Tur Bowl, Kalaburagi, comes to the rescue of the people. It is thus that the jolada rotti becomes the crown prince of the oota or thali in these parts. The crisp flatbread that is a favourite of the residents of Belagavi, Dharwad, Hubballi, Haveri and other such towns, is often served with badanekai yennagai (a stuffed brinjal dish) and a sprouted moong preparation known as the hesaru kalu. According to the Ayurvedic system, jowar is a coolant that can pacify the vata and kapha doshas.



In terms of grains, wheat comes a close second after jowar. Besides jolada rotti, north Karnataka has typical staples like dhapati (mixed flour masala roti). Wheat is also used to make kuchida kadabu (wheat dumplings), kudisida kadabu (stuffed dumpling) and uggi chapattis, steamed on green cornhusk and served with spicy kempu (red) chili chutney and ghee! And guess what—the Lingayats of north Karnataka have an indigenous pasta-making tradition as well! It's a summer activity that is engaged in with much fervour but also requires much labour. Little dough beads are pressed on a comb for stripes and shaped into miniature shells called shankha. The broken wheat kheer, soute bija huggi, resembles tiny soute bija (cucumber seeds) and is a must in all Lingayat marriages and functions!

The region has several native vegetables and dishes unique to the region. This again includes tingal avarekayi is a local bean available only for a tingalu (meaning 'month' in Kannada) while karchikai (Momordica cymbalaria) is a tiny pod vegetable that must be consumed immediately after harvest, before it bursts open. Both are made into palya (stir fry). Also popular are jowari dodda mensinkayi (stuffed country capsicum) and gulagayi yenagai, which is like a country cucumber.

Also served along with the meal are assorted pudis (powders) packed with protein that make great dietary additives—agasi (flaxseed), gural or ucchelu (Niger seed), yellu (sesame) and shenga (groundnut)

chutney. Buttermilk and majjige saaru (buttermilk curry), which have a nice, cooling effect on the body, is also a part of the north Karnataka platter.

As one heads towards the Maharashtra border, the need to singe the palate intensifies—a common tendency in the Deccan—and the region's natural plenitude with chillies comes to the rescue of one and

Facing page: Stuffed country capsicum is a hot favourite Below: A north Karnataka platter featuring jolada rotti and spring onions



all. The warriorlike Maratha affinity for chillies is often spoken of, and this love seeps in quite un-surreptitiously into the British cantonment of Belagavi. Be it sukka (spicy dry fry) or rassa (fiery curries), red chili is essential and it's easy to see why locals love their sweets too.

Paneer ghee roast; (bottom) a curry made with carrots and cauliflowers



Belgaum is also known for its kunda or caramelized milk khova sweet and mandige (Konkani crepe pancake). Mutton is the popular choice of meat, sourced from sheep farms in Haveri while chillies are procured from Karnataka's 'Chilli town' Byadgi. The erstwhile Muslim principality of Savanur is legendary for Shivalal's 'khara' (mixture) since 1931. Just past Almatty Dam, Korti-Kolhar on the Bijapur (Vijayapura) highway attracts travellers with fresh fish from the Krishna river and matka curd, served with puttani-avalakki (spicy Bengal gram powder and beaten rice). Vijayapura is legendary for its 'Bijapur oota', served in local eateries.

The Hyderabad-Karnataka region, bordering Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, has culinary influences like a meat-heavy, spicy cuisine and the use of gongura (sorrel leaves). Locally known as pundi palya, it is popular in Central and North Karnataka and often made into chutney or cooked with lentils or mutton. The addition of Anantpur's Rayadurga brinjals to mamsa (mutton) pundi palya adds a typical flavour. Hyderabad-inspired dishes like dum biryani, Kalyani biryani, dalcha (meat with lentils) and bread ka meetha are common in Kalaburagi. Spicy kavala (tender) mutton, keema balls and anda (egg) curry are also popular in restaurants closer to the Hyderabad-Andhra border.

It is also often said that Karwari cuisine borrows also from the neighbouring Goa, and from Malwani food, in addition to the obvious Mangalorean influences. The Malwani special gavathi kombdi, and kirla suke, the



The authentic taste of the iconic Hyderabadi dum biryani percolates into the border district of Kalaburagi

Goan crab dish, are often savoured with great delight in Karwari homes. Like its Goan and Malwani counterparts, Karwari cuisine, too, is exceptionally devoted to fish, not to forget the quintessential coconut touch.

You may chuckle at the suggestion but Karnataka also boasts great Punjabi cuisine! At the beginning of the 16th century, Guru Nanak came to the Deccan during his second udasi (spiritual journey) and created a jhira or freshwater spring in Bidar that flows to this day. The langar (free kitchen) at the

Gurudwara Nanak Jhira feeds thousands of visitors daily while Rohit Restaurant nearby dishes out authentic mah ki dal, makki di roti, sarson da saag and Punjabi fare.

The scrumptious Dharwad pedha, which holds its own against Mysore Pak, the reigning champ, has its origins in Unnao, from where it was salvaged by the confectioner Ram Ratan Singh Thakur, who fled to the northern Karnataka city in the 19th century after a plague broke out in his native state Uttar Pradesh. ■

Karnataka Regions

SOUTH KARNATAKA

With *ragi* (finger millet) being the popular staple, the signature dish from South Karnataka is *ragi mudde* (steamed finger millet balls). Often paired with mutton *saaru* or *bas saaru*, it is a hearty agrarian meal popular across Mandya, Mysuru and Hassan. The curry is made of *toor dal*, green gram, beans, dill leaves, spinach and other greens; the liquid is strained and spiced while the extract is tempered into a *palya* (dry fry). The term *bas saaru* is derived from *basidu*, Kannada for 'straining'.



If Bidadi is known for its soft fluffy *thatte idli* (shaped like a *thatte* or plate and served as a pair), Maddur is synonymous with the Maddur vada. A small town near Mandya between Bengaluru and Mysuru, Maddur vada is a flat crisp made of rice flour and semolina mixed with sliced onion, curry leaves and asafoetida. Even today, travellers make a ritual pitstop at Maddur Tiffany's for a bite of the legendary vada, served with *gatti* (thick) coconut chutney. The dingy Jai Bhuvaneshwari Military Mess near Srirangapatna, which has served famous patrons like the Late Dr Rajkumar, still dishes out the local staple *ragi mudde*

with *mamsa saaru* (mutton curry), chops, *kaima unde* (keema balls), *tale mamsa* (brain curry) and *kaal* (trotter) soup.

Mysuru is a major culinary destination that spawned iconic dishes like Mysore masala dosa, Mysore bonda soup and of course the Mysore Pak. Local eateries like Mylari and GTR (Gayatri Tiffin Room) for South Indian snacks, RRR for Andhra meals, Nasheman for biryani, Hanumanthu's mutton pulao, Poojary's Fishland for seafood and RR Mess/Tegu Mess for non-veg fare continue to rule the roost. Wash it down with *badam milk* and other coolers at Brahmin Soda Factory and Mysore Pak from Guru Sweets.



Mysore Pak

Perhaps the most popular south Indian sweet, Mysore Pak is a melt-in-your-mouth fudge made of besan (chickpea flour), sugar and copious quantities of ghee. Renowned for its sweetness and notorious for its unmatched richness, it comes in two variants—crumbly with pores or smooth and dense.



Above: (L-R) Maddur vadas, which come from the city of the same name; fragrant benne dosas

Davangere's flagship dish is the *benne dosa*, made with generous dollops of white butter and served with *alu palya* (potato mash) and coconut chutney, best savoured at Kottureshwara Benne Dosa Hotel. Hundreds of *bhattis* (mills) produce *mandakki* (puffed rice), served as *mandakki oggarne* (spiced puffed rice) along with *mensinkayi bajji* (chilli fritters). Every evening, stalls like TS Man-

junath Swamy Masala Mandakki Angadi spice puffed rice into *masala*, *khara* or *nargis mandakki*. Davangere is also famous for its Shavige Street, an entire lane where *shavige* (vermicelli) is made at home industries and dried like screens of silken yarn on terraces. At Raghavendra Shavige Hotel, plates heaped with *shavige* are savoured with ladles of watery coconut chutney.



Bengalureans dine at MTR, one of the Karnataka capital's oldest and most famous restaurants

Bengaluru Food Trail

In the face of rapid change, Bengaluru's legendary old restaurants have held their own against the onslaught of the McDonalds and the Baristas. Karnataka cuisine is said to date back to the Iron Age, making it one of the oldest culinary traditions in the country. The traditional Oota or thali comprises helpings of Bajra/Jowar/Wheat Roti, Pickle, Palya,

Gojju, Raita, Payasa, Thovve, Chitranna, Rice, and Ghee. Mysore Pak, Phenori, Unde, Belle Saru amongst other regional variables. Traditional jowar and wheat rotis teamed with buttermilk, pickles, and delicious curries can be sampled at many restaurants in the city. Halbai, Udupi's famous mitha is made from jaggery, ragi, rice, and coconut.

Everyone has heard of **Mavalli Tiffin Room** (Tel: 080-22220022) on Lalbagh Road. Step in and you're back in 1970. The food continues to be as tasty as ever. The MTR dosa is thick and wholesome. Go there for the Dosas, Idli, and Badam Halwa. **Shri Sagar CTR** (Central Tiffin Room) at 7th Cross Road, Margosa Road, Malleshwaram,

continues to excel in its old favourites. **Shree Venkateshwara North Karnataka Hotel**, 1/21, Vijaylaxmi Towers, 32 Cross, 10th Main, 4th Block, Jayanagar, is popular for its delicious North Karnataka cuisine. **Naati Manae** at No. 462, 17th C Main, KHB Colony, 5th Block, Koramangala, is known for its rustic, non-veg Kannadiga thalis.

The roof is low and you have to squeeze past customers and harried waiters to reach your table. Going by the ambience, there's absolutely no reason why **Vidyarthi Bhavan** (Tel: 26677588) at Gandhi Bazaar, Basavangudi should be half as popular it is. Yet, it serves close to over 2,000 plates of crunchy and buttery dosas each day on weekends. 'Soft', 'fluffy', and 'as delicate as jasmine flowers'—that's how the humble idli is described. But idlis served in **Brahmin's Coffee Bar** (Rangarao Road, near Shankar Mutt, Shankarpuram) melt in your mouth. Little wonder that this darshini café was voted the 'Best Idli & Coffee Joint' in Bengaluru. At Brahmin's Coffee Bar, the menu is not elaborate—just idli, medu vada, upma and chow chow baath.

New Krishna Bhavan (Sampige Road, Malleswaram; Tel:

23560940) offers dishes from all over Karnataka—Mandya Ragi Dosa, Mangalore Kotte Kadabu, Gokak Jowar Dosa, Green Masala Idli and Button Idli, to name a few. Also try **Karavalli** (Gateway Hotel, 66 Residency Road, Tel: 66604545), a place with pedigree, offering authentic dishes from Kerala, Goa and Mangalore.

Ujwal Restaurant and Bar (Tel: 2235078) at 204/A, 4/2 Cross, Near Jain Hospital, Millers Road, Vasanth Nagar is most popular for the Neer Dosa, Crab masala, Chicken Ghee roast, ten-

Serving dosas at Vidyarthi Bhavan



der coconut Chicken, and Spicy Chicken kababs served inside a coconut shell. Open 11.30am-11.30pm **Sanadige Bengaluru** (Tel: 41291300) at 32, Goldfinch Hotel, Race Course Road, 3 Crescent Road, High Grounds, serves a host of traditional culinary delights. They are good for their sea food. Open noon-3.30; 7pm-11pm. In Whitefield **Oota Bangalore** atop the Windmills Craftworks at No. 331, 5B Road, EPIP Zone, promises you authentic specials from around Karnataka. Some more Bengaluru 'institutions' include the **Koshy's Bar and Restaurant** (Tel: 22213793) on St Mark's Road, one of the oldest restaurants in the city, and the hub of artists, journalists and activists.

The Bengaluru experience isn't complete till you visit an 'Iyengar bakeries'. Khaara bread (spicy bread), fruit bread, Om biscuit, coconut biscuit, palya bun (vegetable bun), dilkush (a sweet dish), are all Iyengar specials. To pander to your sweet tooth head for Pulla Reddy Sweets in Jayanagar for the delicate Putharekulu, Poonam Sweets in Banashankari for their paneer jalebi and Sri Venkateshwara Sweetmeat Stall in Majestic for the Mysore pak.

COASTAL KARNATAKA

Hemmed in between Mangaluru and Karwar, Coastal Karnataka's flavours transition from Dakshina Kannada, Udupi (See Page 46) and Uttara Kannada. It is home to various communities, each known for their distinct cuisine. Mangaluru is an epicurean delight with local snacks like 'Mangalore Buns', *goli bajji*, *uppit-shira*, *sajjige-bajjil*, *khara roti* and biscuit roti, best experienced at New Tajmahal Café. Try unique staples like *moode* (cylindrical idlis steamed in screwpine leaves), *gunda* (rice dumpling steamed in leaf cups) and *khotte* (idlis steamed in jackfruit leaves).

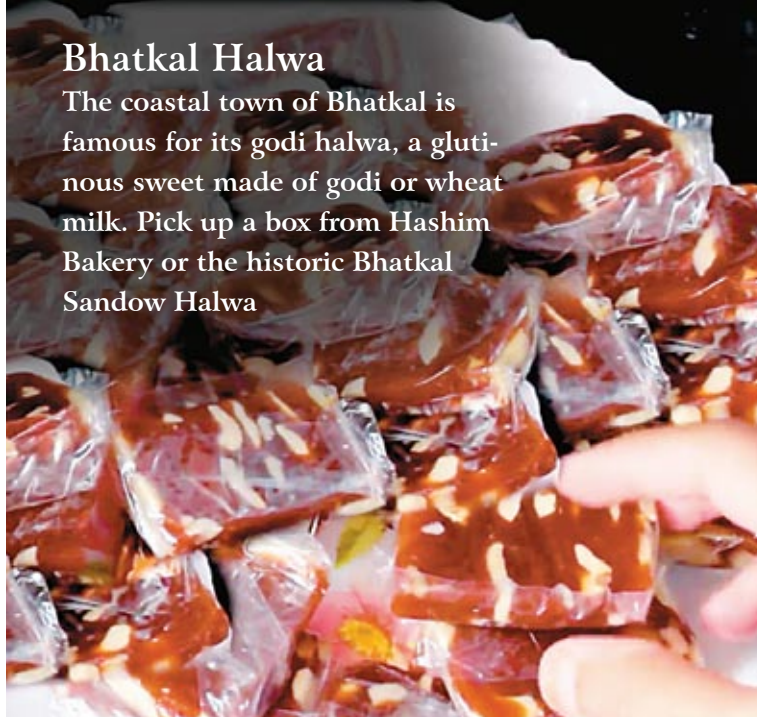
Being a coastal tract, coconut is widely used – as oil, in grated form or as coconut

milk. The key to Mangalorean food is the 'baffath' powder or red masala used in fries and curries, sourced from slender Byadgi chilli and round *uru mensinkai* or Kumta chilli. The Mangalore Catholic community is known for dishes like pork salad, brinjal salad (using the round striped *mattu gulla* aubergines), pork baffath, pork indad, *kalees ankiti* (pork offal curry), Mangalorean fish curry, chicken stew and sannas. Drop by at William Pereira Hotel, Mangala Bar & Restaurant or Mary bai 'mai jowan' (literally, 'mum's food') for a taste.

Kori-roti is a traditional dish of the Bunts or Tuluvas (Tulu-speaking community) with flavourful chicken curry served with crisp wafer-thin roti made from boiled rice.

In the past, *koli-katta* or cock fighting competitions were common and the losing rooster usually ended up becoming 'chicken pulimunchi', a curry named after its *puli* (sour)-*munchi* (spicy) flavour. Seafood is aplenty with iconic Bunt dishes like *kane* (ladyfish) masala fry, *bolanjir* (silverfish) rava fry and *anjil* (kingfish) tawa fry, topped with crunchy red masala fried in coconut oil. The fleshy and tangy *bimbli* fruit (*Averrhoa bilimbi*) is widely pickled and used as a souring agent especially for *boothai* (sardine) *sukka*. Eat at Coconut Grove or Narayana's near the jetty.

Gaud Saraswat Brahmin or GSB cuisine is dominated by *hing* or asafoetida. Despite being Brahmins, they follow a pescatarian diet as GSBs are believed to have migrated from Gaud (Bengal) to the Saraswati river system, where a severe famine led them to



Bhatkal Halwa

The coastal town of Bhatkal is famous for its godi halwa, a glutinous sweet made of godi or wheat milk. Pick up a box from Hashim Bakery or the historic Bhatkal Sandow Halwa

eat fish. Giri Manja's is the place to sample a GSB fish *thali* and assorted fish fries. The trading community of Bearys is known for rare delicacies like *kalathappa* (thick savoury pancake), *pinyanappa* (steamed egg dessert), *koli norchad* (stuffed fried chicken), biryani and *sheer korma* (vermicelli payasa).

Further north, Kundapur is an epicurean hotspot where the Kundapur chicken and chicken ghee roast were birthed in the legendary Shetty Lunch Home. Continue up the coast to the old port town of Bhatkal, known for its biryanis, often paired with *sirke ka pyaaz* (onion in cashew vinegar) and *baingan ka khatta* (sour brinjal curry). Arabian sailors who came here for trade intermingled with local Jains and GSBs to form a new community called Nav-ayaths or 'the newly arrived'. Their dialect borrows heavily from Konkani, while local tastes blend seamlessly with Arabia. They make an exquisite *shaiyya jhinga biryani* with delicate vermicelli and prawns.

Fish curry-rice forms the major staple all along the coast right up to Uttara Kannada, usually served with fish fry and a vegetable side dish like *tindli-moi* (ivy gourd with raw cashew). Located south of Goa, Karwar resonates with Konkani flavours and dishes like *sungta song* (thick prawn curry) and the farmer staple of *kulith upkari-saar* (horsegram stir fry and curry). *Kokum* (garcinia) and *teppal* (a Sichuan pepper relative) are widely used as souring agents in curries. Sol Kadi, a piquant blend of kokum, coconut milk and fresh ground masala is a digestive



Top: Karak chai and Mangalorean buns

Above: Goli bajje, another Mangalorean speciality

cooler popular all along the Konkan coast from Maharashtra, Goa to Karnataka. Try an assortment of seafood from *bandga uggi/mastani* (mackerel), *kalwa* (oyster) *sukka* and *tisrya* (clam) *sukka* at Swetha Lunch Home or butter garlic prawns and *karle ambat* (crab masala) at Hotel Amrut. ■



Udupi Cuisine

Tracing India's oldest culinary brand back to where it all began

I'm usually in a silent minority every-time there's a discussion on the merits or otherwise of Udupi vegetarian food. Mainly because most people believe that 'Udupi' amounts to idli-vada-sambar, and also because of the near-ubiquity of this cheap, veg fast food from South India. I can't really fault my friends, for what they know is what they see. And it isn't a pretty sight always, at the 'Udupis' that dot our cities. Standard idli, vada, dosas served with the regulation watery sambar and chutney. Folks who step in, eat, step out, all in double quick time. Too much predictability and too little to delight.

However, the Udupi of popular consciousness has little to do with a culinary tradition that dates back to the 13th century, when the saint philosopher Madhavacharya established the Sri Krishna Temple in Udupi, a town on Karnataka's western coast. The sage founded the Dvaita branch of Hindu philosophy and devised a set of elegant rituals to worship the godchild. Krishna in Udupi is worshipped as an infant, wielding in one hand a rod to churn curds with and a

length of rope in the other. The devout believed that Krishna would wander away unless he was enticed to stay by delicious eats. This belief resulted in the 'naivedya', where cooked delicacies—no fewer than 14 different varieties—are offered to the Lord every day. Gradually, temple authorities also cultivated the tradition of feeding the devotees who thronged the temple on a daily basis.

The Brahmins in the temple and the eight maths that surround it had to learn not just the exacting rituals required to correctly worship the Lord, but also had to cook well enough to ensure that he hung about in Udupi. Religion and culinary tradition merged to produce food that was and still is truly fit for the gods. The Hayagreeva makes a nice case in point. Prepared from Bengal gram and jaggery, this sweet dish is linked to an intriguing legend. It was apparently

Facing Page:

Fluffy idlis

Bottom: *Serving in fresh plantain leaves is central to the Udupi food experience*





A traditional brahmin cook at Udupi's Mitra Samaj shows off a giant dosa

offered to Lord Hayagreeva at Udupi's Sri Krishna Mutt by an ardent devotee. It is believed that the deity used to appear as a white horse and demolish the sweet dish while his devotees chanted shlokas in his praise. Or modakka, which was used as a cure whenever the Lord would fall ill. Then there was the bisi bele hulianna, made from spicy red gram, rice and vegetables. The light yet filling dish made sure that the lord could play after his meals.

The cuisine of Udupi, as we know it was a result of the culinary creativity of the Madhava Brahmin cooks. Some of the all-time favourite delicacies in a typical Udupi platter

include majjige palidya, which is prepared using ash gourd, coconut, cumin seeds and yoghurt; gulliappa, which uses rice and urad dal flour and drakshi gojju, a sweet, sour and spicy gravy-based dish with lots of raisins. Other hot favourite is the huli, which includes a number of cooked vegetables, curry leaves, lots of spices and coconut of course. Then there's gojju, a stew that's sweet, tangy and spicy all at once.

But, what we really need to be thankful to Udupi for is the classic Masala Dosa that has made its way to almost every nook and corner of every Indian town. In Udupi, they make it golden brown and crispy. The potato

mixture of the Udupi Masala Dosa is called Palya in the local parlance. Some restaurants even insert a banana leaf with fresh butter inside the dosa. It's this generous use of butter that lends the dosa its melt-in-the-mouth texture. Not to be missed is the fact that the masala dosas of Udupi don't usually have onions, thanks to their tamasic quality. But you could always ask for a separate bowl of onions at most restaurants in Udupi. If you get a chance to visit the student town of Manipal, also known as Udupi's twin town, do visit Pangala, which serves one of the best masala dosas, your palate will ever be blessed with.

Another popular version of the dosa that Udupi offers is the Neer Dosa, aka Bajjari Dosa. What sets it apart from the usual masala dosa is its extremely light and airy texture. While the rice batter used is more or less the same as the one used in making the rava masala dosa, it's just a tad thinner and hence the lightness. Rice is soaked in water overnight, which is why the dosa is called neer dosa, where "neer" stands for water. This dosa is best savoured with regional meat dishes and seafood gravies. Many eateries around Udupi also serves this with a chutney they make using freshly ground coconut and jaggery.

Udupi also does a great version of the ever popular idli. It's called Kaddubu or moode or gunda. The uniqueness of this variant of the idli lies in its cylindrical shape. They simply use a different mould to cook the same batter used in normal round-

shaped idlis. What makes the cooking process interesting is the fact that the conical moulds used in shaping Kaddubu is made with jackfruit leaves. These moulds are put in a large vessel inside your everyday pressure cooker. The idlis are best served with yeti or prawn chutney, an absolute delight in its own right.

What exactly a wholesome traditional Udupi meal looks like, one may ask. Well, for starters, it's served on a banana leaf placed on the ground. The dishes are served in a particular order and every dish has its designated spot on the leaf. Before they start eating and after they finish their meal, the people of Udupi make a small prayer to Govinda or Lord Krishna as we also know

Cooked with semolina and veggies, upma is a popular South Indian breakfast



him. It's not allowed to leave the meal half-way. And rightfully so. After all, the food is light on the stomach, thanks to the mild use of spices and its non-greasy and low calorie character.

The stew in a traditional Udupi meal is mainly cooked using pumpkins and gourds while the currys use raw banana skin. Chutneys are primarily all about coconut and so are the dry curries or ajadinas. The salad in Udupi is called kosambri. For pickles, mango, pineapple, jackfruit and grapes are

The evergreen sour rasam is an absolute delight for the palate



used. These also work as a taste enhancer in deserts like halwa and in the evergreen sour rasam. Udupi cuisine also uses a lot of leaves like those of valli colocasia, turmeric, curry, coriander and brahmi. To wash down their food, an all-time favourite coolant that people of Udupi rely on is thambli.

At home, the people of this region prefer meals that are both light and cool, since they have to deal with the coastal heat. They fry their season green veggies with ghee. These are then ground with pepper, coconut and cumin seeds. Buttermilk is used to lend the thinness. Rice serves as the first course and sambar is a staple. Udupi rasam rounds off the meals.

No English please...

Achyuth Holla's family has run the Mitra Samaj Restaurant in Udupi's temple square since 1949. "Today anyone who opens a vegetarian restaurant serving idli, dosa, vada feels free to add the Udupi tag, authentication just does not exist," complains Holla. It isn't difficult for me to agree with him. The taste of goli baje, a maida savoury, deep-fried in coconut oil and served with freshly ground coconut chutney at Mitra Samaj, I have never yet encountered elsewhere. As also the pineapple ksheera, a rava-based sweet served with spicy upma. This breakfast treat is served from 5am onwards as bells toll in the adjacent temple courtyard.

So entwined with the temple is the tradition of Udupi cooking that even the vegetables used are chosen according to a

Outlook—Fresh off the leaf

Several moons ago, a hungry Outlook correspondent paid a visit to Udupi's Mitra Samaj Restaurant on Car Street, in search of the reason why all of India knows the word Udupi. Somewhere amidst the flavours of the pancake, the savoury potatoes, the spicy-sour sambar and the cool coconut chutney, enlightenment dawned. How could a nation not be seduced by such perfect blends of flavour and texture? Many moons after that hot afternoon in Udupi, Outlook Traveller revisited the town for 52 Weekend Breaks from Bengaluru. To our delight, Mitra Samaj had rechristened its premium dish as the Outlook Dosa in honour of our humble story on their hallowed offering. Our name has been immortalised in the polysyllabic stream that is the Udupi waiter's menu. We'd like to thank them here for giving us a place in eternity. When in Udupi, do pay a visit to Mitra Samaj and have a bite of Outlook. You may find some of our editorials unpalatable, but we guarantee the spicy stuffing in the crispiest dosa on Earth will give you nothing to complain about.



cooks at private homes or made their way to Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and the towns of Maharashtra. In 1924, the brothers Maiya from the village of Kota landed in Bengaluru, where one worked as the cook in the home of a British judge. The brothers then set up a snack outlet in the city's Lalbagh Fort Road, serving idlis and coffee, calling it the Brahmin Coffee House, for the next 26 years. By 1950, the Maiyas had moved to larger premises nearby, renaming the hotel Mavalli Tiffin Rooms or MTR. Today after 80 years of business, MTR is more an institution than a hotel, where customers queue up at 6 am for a taste of the legendary breakfast.

Hemamalini Maiya, who now runs the restaurant, says while they no longer use coconut oil to season their dishes, the Udupi connection lingers in the taste of their sambar and rasam. "I try to include seasonal specialties from Udupi—for instance, the badanekai huli will in season have the matti gulla in it," she says. Her personal Udupi favourite is bol huli made from matti gulla. The sliced and soaked gulla is cooked in a thin gravy made of ground coconut, green chillies, tamarind and coriander seeds with a touch of jaggery and seasoned with coriander leaves.

Udupi Brahmin men are traditionally peerless cooks. As PN Narasimha Murthy, an Udupi-based historian, explains: "The monastic tradition for all priests at the Sri Krishna temple and the ashta mathas meant that all temple cooks had to be male." So where does that leave the women? What



L-R: Bisibelebath; dry chickpea gravy with appam

cooks in the homes of the Udupi Brahmins, I wonder, as I make my way to meet Vasantha, professor of literature and a Shivalli Brahmin in Udupi. She takes me to meet her mother-in-law, a lady who runs the kitchen with the vegetables and greens from her frontyard and the milk from the cows in her backyard. They like their food light, easy to digest, nutritious and cooling in the coastal heat. So a meal will consist of salads like the koosambri, made from soaked dals mixed with grated coconut, green chillies in a mustard seasoning. Then the thambli, a summer speciality, considered the ultimate coolant. Seasonal greens such as the leaves of the brahmi or yelemuri

or vitamin soppu, skin and seeds of gourds, or chathai soppu—whatever's handy—are fried with ghee and then ground with pepper, jeera and coconut, thinned with buttermilk and served with rice as the first course. Next comes the sambar, cooked either with freshly ground masala including coconut or with the sambar powder prepared every 15 days (see box). The meal is usually rounded off with Udupi rasam that bears the trademark hint of jaggery.

In keeping with coastal tradition a variety of steamed foods form a part of Udupi cuisine as well. Idli batter is poured into cups made from jackfruit leaves and

steamed. Ripe jackfruit is ground to a thick doughy batter with coconut and steamed in the leaves of the teak tree, to get a pink-hued delicacy called pelakayida gatti that is served with honey. Leaves of the mundevu palm are used to steam idlis that are locally known as moode. A variant of this dish using a rava-based batter instead of rice is called kadubule and served as naivedya.

A balanced, nutritious diet is central to the philosophy of Udupi cooking; for their protein content, lentils are a prominent feature. Udhina gojju, made from raw urad dal ground with white pumpkin, green chillies, a pinch of asafoetida and thinned with buttermilk is then seasoned with mustard and red chillies in coconut oil to make a typical

Spicy and delicious, kara kadubu are dumplings made with rice



Udupi delicacy. A variation leaves out the buttermilk, and instead shapes the ground batter into little curls to make crunchy kumbula kai sandige. No part of the white pumpkin is actually wasted, the skin and seeds and soft core go to make the cooling thambli, while the vegetable will end up as a sweet dish, the famous kumbula kai halva, cooked in pure ghee with jaggery and roasted cashew nuts if not in a sambar.

For those who believe that Udupi food cannot do without large amounts of coconut, the chefs have a treat for the summer months. When fresh pineapples, bitter gourd, mango and the local sour fruit amte kai flood the markets, they roast some black til. Then in a little coconut oil they fry red chillies, urad dal, and fenugreek and grind it all with a little coconut and jaggery. To the boiling mixture they add the sliced fruits or vegetables, and as the mixture thickens, add a seasoning of mustard and red chillies to serve a dish that is tangy and incredibly aromatic. Through the monsoons, the Udupi Brahmins make spicy chutneys that go well with boiled rice. Freshly ground with colocasia leaves, ridge gourd, or yam and spiced with tamarind, red chilli and salt, these are a fiery addition to bland monsoon fare. No wonder then this faintly mocking proverb is so popular in the coastal towns: “Brahmana bhojana priya” (the Brahmin loves his food too well).

If you live in an Indian city, you will no doubt find an ‘Udupi’ in your neighbourhood or in the next. But for a taste of authentic Udupi cuisine means, you would do well to



Udupi Brahmin Sambar Powder

Ingredients 250 gm coriander seeds; 200 gm ghati menasu red chillies; 25 gm cumin seeds; 10 gm fenugreek; 5 gm asafoetida; one bunch curry leaves; coconut oil

Method Fry each of the ingredients separately in a little coconut oil. Replenish the oil slightly between each frying if necessary. Mix all the fried ingredients and grind to a fine powder. Store in clean airtight containers for up to 15 days. The distinctive taste of Udupi Brahmin masalas comes from the coconut oil. But it is also what reduces the shelf life of the powder as coconut oil spoils more quickly than other vegetable oils

pick the eatery with care. Restaurants with a Kamat, Shanbhag or Pai attached to their names will in most cases be able to trace their lineage back to the tradition of tasteful, healthy food from the temple town of Udupi. For more than the standard idli-vadadosa, snack at some of these well-known Udupi restaurants.

Try the kadubu olle, rava batter steamed in the leaves of a native palm, and served hot with chutney, or the goli baje, a delicacy of which over 1,000 plates are sold between 3pm and 9pm every day at Mitra Samaj, Car

Sreet, Udupi. Located adjacent to the temple compound, this restaurant set up in 1949, uses no onion or garlic, lest even a whiff of these tamasic foods drift across the compound into the temple premises. For a taste of moode, palm leaf idli and ragi porridge that form part a traditional coastal breakfast, try Hotel Ayodhya Kodialbail, Mangalore. In Bengaluru, the pineapple halwa, sambar and rasam at Mavalli Tiffin Rooms (MTR), Lalbagh Road, bear traces of that distinctive taste inspired by the rich tradition of satvic cooking as practised in the temple town. ■



Mangalorean Cuisine

The Land of Sannas & Sunshine

The very mention of Mangalorean cuisine transports me to my grand aunt's ancestral home in Kankannady, with its sprawling grounds dotted with coconut and mango trees. The ancient well, or 'guwel' as it was called, captivated us city brats as we peered into its inscrutable interiors. Afternoons meant siesta time for grown-ups while we children rapidly discovered that 'sooney', the acid sap squirted from a freshly plucked mango, was worse than a bee sting! The sloping red Mangalore-tiled roof let in the sun, rain and insects through minifissures that made sleep a virtual gamble! The large kitchen with its mezzanine pantry took my breath away. It bore the distinct aroma of a million meals prepared in gigantic urns over woodfires to feed multiple generations in never ending shifts.

My mother often narrated tales of my ajji (granny), an accomplished cook, who would spend hours hunched over a brass thondoor (steamer) preparing

pundi (steamed rice dumplings) to be eaten with a spicy coconut marwai (clam) curry. My mother was no mean cook herself, and was often begged by her family to make her signature dish – 'lace' appams that derived their sobriquet from their gossamer, lace-like borders. As children, we spent a memorable summer skinning our knees clambering up trees to procure mangoes for a ripe mango curry served with piping hot rice....aah, comfort food! Saturday afternoons formally kicked off the weekend celebrations, which meant that we could look forward to prawn fry, dal and rice. The family met at the table and dissected the events of the week to the accompaniment of much noisy slurping! Sundays meant walking to the market with my soft-spoken father and being

Facing Page:
Tuppa dosa, to be savoured with different chutneys
Bottom:
Neer dosa and accompaniments



his second-in-command while he purchased our Sabbath treat of fish, mutton, chicken or prawn in rotation. Oh, happy days!

For those new to the region, Mangalorean cuisine is an umbrella term for the cuisine of diverse communities like the Tuluvas, the Mangalorean Catholics, the Muslims (Bearys) and the Saraswat Brahmin communities. Each of them made this coastal town in the Dakshina Kannada district their home over the centuries, resulting in a vibrant cuisine with multiple ingredients, flavours and

Ragi idli at Sri Ram Restaurant in Mangalore



textures. Called 'Kudla', 'Mangaluru' or the more anglicized Mangalore, this sleepy town of yore is now a bustling city, rubbing shoulders with its more renowned counterparts.

The soul of Mangalorean cuisine lies in its liberal use of coconut—combined with ginger, garlic, red chillies and a slew of spices, it gives Mangalorean cuisine that authentic zing. When combined with seafood like crab, clam, prawn or fish, it leaves a vivid sensory imprint indeed.

I never did have the pleasure of savouring my ajji's cooking, but often sensed her passion for perfection through the utensils that were lovingly handed down from generation to generation. Her wickedly heavy dosagriddle now nestles in my sister's kitchen, as do the kadepina kallu (grinding stone), and the pickle jars, redolent of a more gracious era when every morsel was savoured, with the subtle flavours playing a symphony on one's palate.

Rice appears in various avatars in Tuluva cooking like idlis, dosas, appams, neer dosa, thelao and the wafer-thin kori rotti, which is softened by drenching it in thick coconut curries. The love affair with rice continues with shaavige (string hoppers) also slathered with curries for the ultimate gastronomic experience. Bangude (mackerel), bhutai (sardine), kaane (ladyfish), prawns, crab and clams are hauled in fresh from the seas by the Mogaveeras, a community of fishermen. They are either fried to a crisp with a rava coating, or dunked in pulimunchi (tamarind) and coconut based curries.

Vegetarians needn't despair as dishes like badane (brinjal) sambar, manoli (a gherkin-like vegetable) garnished with coconut shavings, gujje (jackfruit) curry, bassale (Malabar spinach) dal and pathrade made with rice, dal, jaggery and coconut would leave them, like Oliver, wanting more! Kereng (sweet potato), khara (chilli) and gujje papadas complete the picture.

If you crave for calorie bombs in the form of fried food, then look no further – goli bajjes (deep fried maida fritters), neerulli bajjes (onion fritters), chattambades (chana dal vadas) and thukdis (fried savoury snacks) should be right up your street!

Udupi cuisine is predominantly sattvik and needs no introduction, thanks mainly to the scores of Udupi restaurants that have mushroomed all over the country. Udupi cooks, as the legend goes, were granted a boon by the gods, and one bite of their cuisine turns people into believers! The dosa is believed to have originated in this beautiful temple town which explains why dosas made elsewhere seem like pale imposters.

A typical Udupi meal would consist of kosambari (seasoned salad made from split Bengal gram), chitranna (spiced rice), saaru (a spicy watery Idli soup), fried items like bonda, chakkuli and vada and paramanna or payasa (rice pudding), among other items. Served on green plantain leaves placed on the floor, the items are served in a particular sequence, on specific areas of the leaf. Abbhigara (ghee) is sprinkled on the rice with quaint miniature spoons. Those partaking of



Bunt cuisine (thali) at Mangalore

a meal are expected to wait till everyone has finished before rising. All meals begin and end with the chanting of “Govinda”.

The Konkani speaking community is famed for their daali thoy (moderately spiced boiled lentils), avnas ambe sasam (pineapple and mango in a spicy sweet coconut gravy), kadgi chakko (raw jackfruit coconut gravy), chane gashi (chana curry), val val (vegetables in coconut milk), pagila podi (deep fried gourd) and bibbe upkari (a cashew based dish). They share a close bond with their Goan counterparts. Their vegetarian delicacies include tandalache vade (rice puris with usal or black peas curry), cabbage upkari (a dry dish with chana dal and coconut) and



patholi (steamed rice rolls with coconut and jaggery, served during Ganesh Chaturthi, much like the Maharashtrian modaks). For sheer simplicity, there is nothing to beat daali thoy, or kolambo, a Konkan style sambar. Kadambi is an idli-like dish favoured in the rainy season, made with cucumber. At local weddings, the biscuit ambado, a kind of vada, is served. The Konkan answer to the north Indian kadhi is the jeer mirya kadhi, which is served with rice. Gajbaje randayi is a mixed vegetable curry to suit all tastes.

The Muslim community (Bearys), also known as Byaris, trace their roots as far back as the 7th century. Historically, the Beary community cultivated trading links with the Moplahs of the Malabar Coast and the Arabs. In fact, the word 'beary' is believed to have originated from the word 'byara', the Tulu word for trader. This predominantly trading community enjoyed royal patronage. They developed a cuisine that, while inspired by the indigenous Tuluva cuisine, bore the distinct imprint of their rapport with the Arabs and the Moplahs.

The Byaris are famed for their take on the ubiquitous biryani. The Beary version is notoriously spicy, reflecting the regional penchant for all exotic spices. Many traditional Tuluva community dishes have made their way into Beary cuisine like the different versions of rice dumplings (bassale and erchiro pundi). Their sweet dishes include the neiyappa, a deep fried ghee flavoured dish made of rice flour and jaggery and the pudyampule, a mildly sweet rice-based dish specially prepared to welcome a groom when he visits his bride's house. The muttere appam (a sooji and vegetable appam), methero

kanji (moong dal vadas in mustard flavoured gravy), nombure kanchi (a rice and lentil based dish) demonstrate the incredible versatility of this community. The Beary's pattir – a dumpling stuffed with nuts and raisins – draws inspiration from the Arabic 'fatirah'.

Most of the Mangalorean Catholic community is believed to be of Goan origin, their ancestors migrating to the Canara region during the Portuguese-Maratha wars and the Goa Inquisition between the 16th–18th centuries. Years of living in Mangalore saw their cuisine blend in with the local cuisine.

Sannas (idlis fluffed with toddy) served with dukra maas (pork), pork bafat, sorpotel, fish roe curry are popular items in Mangalorean Catholic cuisine, as are bifa maas (beef), bokrea maas (mutton) and kunkda maas (chicken). The Portuguese influence can be seen in their laitao, which is a pork roast served at wedding dinners. Rosachi kadhi is a coconut milk curry that is served during the anointing ceremony that is held a few days before a Catholic wedding. Pollu, a sambar-like dish has galmbi (powdered dried fish) or kumbulmaas (dried tuna) added to it.

Foka, a dish combining lady's finger with cashewnuts, and karamba (cucumber salad) are popular vegetarian dishes. The thath bakri is a banana leaf dish that uses boiled rice blended with coconut and roasted over a tava on a banana leaf.

Fear not, thou lovers of sweet dishes... thy quest is at an end! Ranging from Mangalore buns (made with bananas and flour) and chiroti (deep fried layered flour eaten



Above: Chicken ghee roast Facing Page: A huge catch at a fishing dock

with sugar and milk) to holige (puran polis) and rava undes (semolina laddoos), Mangalorean cuisine has it all! Come December, Mangalorean Catholics surpass themselves with 'kuswar', a term for all Christmas treats. Newries (gujias) stuffed with plums, nuts and sesame seeds, kulkuls (flour rolled along fork tines and dipped in syrup), pathekas (savories made of green bananas), theel undes (sesame laddoos), macaroons and crisp rose cookies complete the image of a Christmas table laden with goodies of every conceivable variety. The plum cake is, of course, the piece de resistance. It is made with raisins, candied fruit and nuts, which are soaked in rum, giving it its trademark flavour. ■



Making sannas (idli fluffed with toddy or yeast) at a restaurant in Mangalore

Mangalorean Food Trail

Steering clear of structured menus and fine ambiances, Mangaluru's iconic restaurants are a delicious invite to eat like a local and be well on the way to discovering the land's soul.

As the small clock hand sleepily saunters past 6am, the fishing dock at Dhakke is awash with activity. Blue, yellow and orange crates overflowing with fish marry

the colours of shopping bags while gulls and auctioneers cry out to be heard along the Old Port road. First customers hustle and jostle for their share of kane (ladyfish), prawns, anjal (kingfish), crab, bangude (mackerel) and more. Fishing boats stand sentinel as the buys reach warm kitchens where meats and masalas are topped off by all forms of coconut to create dishes

that put this seaport town on the food map.

Three kilometres away, another tribe of early birds gather at Mangaluru's most recommended breakfast destination, New Taj Mahal Café. At this decades-old joint, where shutters open even before sunrise, the welcome is by the soul-lifting aroma of fresh filter coffee and the chief host is camara-

derie. Wizened waiters (like Mr. B. Gowda who later asks if you'll post pictures on Facebook) usher you to tables that are mostly shared and offer a brief on the town's favorites. Walkers and joggers gleefully dig into plates of tuppa dosa, unmindful of the copious amounts of ghee that glisten on the surface. Plates of the iconic Mangalore buns are devoured by sleepy college students and wedding parties eager to get on the road. Made of flour and extra-ripe bananas and fried to an elegant golden crisp, these are served with a side of coconut chutney. Soon, local newspapers are put down and multilingual conversations lull as servings of the café's famous banana and godi (wheat) halwa arrive. As meals end, patrons leave with packs of holige (a type of sweetened flatbread) and kashi halwa, prepared using ash gourd, cardamom powder and ghee. Sweet somethings in the mornings are absolutely legit, the three-generational ownership and the multitude of guests affirm.

At just a stone's throw away from the café stands Hotel Ayodhya alias Ram Bhavan Veg Restaurant. Look beyond the nondescript façade and the dim interiors to find a spot favoured for its Goud Saraswat Brahmin (GSB)

fare and seasonal specials. Like patholi (thin and long dumplings with a filling) and appa or gariyo (fritters). Both have ripe jackfruit pods, rice, coconut and jaggery as the main ingredients and the former is steamed in teak, banana or turmeric leaves while the latter is fried. Most traditional houses in the town have umpteen coconut trees, a patch of plantain yield and a couple of jackfruit trees, drawing an instant connection between the ways of living and cooking. If savoury is how you roll, the pathrode (steamed colocasia leaves pinwheels) is a local recommenda-

A chickpea dish at New Taj Mahal Cafe



tion. The leaves are painstakingly lined with spicy batter, steamed for over an hour and sometimes shallow-fried or tempered. Resting on its yesteryear fame, Ayodhya shares space with a sweets shop that serves a mouth-watering grape jalebi amongst other varieties. Be sure to bring your own cloth bag to carry the sugar stash.

Mangaluru's tropical climate often leaves you craving light eats and airconditioned spots that places like Hotel Janatha Deluxe provide. Sit down in cool environs and settle for the thin and lacy neer dosa that is accompanied by a tart tomato and onion chutney. The plate also carries a portion of coconut shavings sweetened with jaggery, ousting refined sugar from traditional preparations. Kottige (a type of Bondas steamed rice cake) is worth an order for the work that goes into its making. Four jackfruit leaves are strategically pinned to form a mini basket that holds the batter and lends a distinct flavour and fragrance. The dish is served with tovey, a preparation of split pulses cooked with coconut chips and Byadgi chilli. Absolutely thoughtful, the restaurant packs orders, replete with spoons and plates, should you need a meal on the go.

As lunch hour looms, hop into an autorickshaw and make your way to Car Street. Before long, the narrow roads lined by shops with wooden slat doors are bathed in the aroma of coconut oil. Destination Giri Manja's. Famous even across the waters, this seafood joint has its kitchen housed in a tiled-roof house on one side of the road with a brightly-lit seating space on the other. Chances are that you've already been educated about the offerings. A staple of fish curry meals and any of the specials of which the anjal masala fry (a big fillet of kingfish slathered with feisty spices), the prawns tawa masala, the crab ghee roast and the deep-fried bhutai (sardine) are much-loved. If unsure, the friendly waiter will reel off a list just like the hawkers at the dock, instantly translating when met with quizzical looks. And here's a tip: skip the aerated drinks and ask for a bonda lime. You'll thank us!

If one half of the city heads to Giri Manja's, others pledge loyalty to Hotel Narayana at Bunder. Painted a cheerful orange and swathed in aromas of the sea, this weathered house stands for heart-filling meals, pocket-friendly experiences and vows to return. The second you are seated on one of

the two levels (the top has a ladies' section), a plate of boiled rice with sides of a vegetable, tangy mango pickle and fish curry instantly appears. A glass of lukewarm rice water is next. Then arrives the showstopper – a large round plate, its circumference dripping with oil, holding the day's best fresh catch – kingfish, mackerel and more. The highlight, however, is a hot and furiously salty powder that is mostly fried remnants of the marination.

Think meat and auto drivers turned local gourmets head towards William Pereira's Hotel. Located in a complex that dates

Idlis steamed in jackfruit leaves



back to 1966, this modest establishment is a ticket to the best in the Catholic culinary ledger. Pair fluffy, toddy-laced sannas with sorpotel (a fiery, sticky pork meat dish that ages deliciously) or the baffat aka dukra maas that is slow-cooked to a beautiful tenderness that is worthy of poetry. The key is a fragrant spice mix (chillies, peppercorns, cumin and more) that can be bought as a souvenir from Konkan Traders or Don Stores. If your heart doesn't say pig out, settle for Mangaluru's beloved export, chicken ghee roast, at Maharaja's and Anupam's at Abhiman Residency. Or the evergreen kori rotti. Follow the much-trodden path to Shetty's Kori Roti, ask for a takeaway (strictly advised) and head home to douse the flat, wafer-thin dried rice crepes with the accompanying spicy, coconut-based chicken gravy.

Sunset hours in the port town see the colours effortlessly spilling onto the culinary trail. Many a hand wields paper cones filled with wispy white churmuri (spiced puffed rice) while amber fillings peek from the insides of biscuit roti, a type of deep-fried bread. Along the old-school laminate tables of Hotel Karthik at Kottara,

golden brown neerulli bajje (onion fritters) strike a contrast against sea-green walls. These are best savoured with the special tea or coffee that feature separate dancing layers of creamy milk and decoction. At Woodlands Hotel, plates of orange-tinged goli bajje (flour balls spongy on the inside with a crispy layer) are served up with a side of nostalgia. When around here, be sure to look across to a house named Saldale, an elegant testimony to the town's soft corner for long-winding driveways and soothing green canopies.

Be it day or night, breakfast, lunch or dinner, the oft repeated food commandment in this coastal town is a trip to Pabbas at Lalbagh or Ideal at Kottara Chowki. An old chain of ice cream parlours, Ideal does justice to all your favorite dessert quotes and is synonymous with their parfait or the gadbad. The latter is a vibrant medley: a layer of kesar ice-cream topped with jelly and dry fruits followed by scoops of strawberry and vanilla ice creams. Chocolate and coffee being timeless, the tiramisu edition (no, not even a remote resemblance to the Italian), loaded with cake and nuts, will leave you tasting sugar-induced happiness.



Vadas being fried at Mangalore's Sri Ram Veg Restaurant

With outlets opening as early as 7am, Ideal is out to make every time ice cream time. Probably the last to down shutters, way past midnight, Bombay Lucky fills glasses with piping hot lime tea to help the fried, the fiery, the steamed and the sugary rest easy. Once lights are off in the wee hours, the only ones around are trucks waiting to ferry the early catch and the lone cat pausing to catch a whiff of the winds that blow from the sea.

Content to operate in their humble settings, the town's most-loved restaurants are reminders of

what food once stood and ought to stand for. Recipes safely handed down through generations, peppered with stories of men and women who took pride in what left their kitchens. Carefully curated ingredients dried, roasted and treasured. Fresh catch, from the sea to the tables. A deep-rooted sense of community as conversations make no place for screens and tables are built longer. A time and place where people know their food sans cards and sheets of paper. And the beauty of cooking simple, cooking slow and cooking with absolute abandon and love. ■





Facing Page: Coconuts are found in abundance in Malnad; Above: A Malnad lunch meal featuring pathrode

MALNAD

Running inland parallel to the coast, the hill tracts of Coorg and Malnad are known for herbs, ferns and wild produce like bamboo, mushrooms and honey, besides an assortment of steamed fare. The Gowdas rustle up delicacies from kallele (bamboo shoot), kesa (colocasia) and churn out a plethora of kada-bus (steamed dumplings) – be it the savoury khara kadabu (rice envelopes with spiced lentils) or sweet ones with coconut, pumpkin or cucumber. Traditional salads called kismuri are made from beetroot, carrot, bale dindu (banana stem) and suvarnagadde (yam).

Besides Jains and Lingayats, Malnad is also home to Haviyak Brahmins, who have a scientific approach to food and churn out delightful gojjus (curries), hashis (raita), chutneys and tambulis (medicinal coolers) to combat the cold climes. Arshina tambuli, made from fresh turmeric root and buttermilk, is a lightly spiced aperitif cooler. Vonagiru nellikayi tambuli made of dried nellikayi (amla or gooseberry) and fresh coconut, is packed with Vitamin C and increases the body's immunity. Shunti Bellada Kashaya, made from shunti (ginger) and bella (jaggery) spiced with pepper, dry red chili, cumin, garlic and onion, fortifies against minor ailments. ■



Kodava Cuisine

Meats, shoots and leaves—the traditional food of Coorg

Driving around Coorg, it's easy to lose one's bearings. The district is essentially one big tree-shadowed coffee estate cut up by winding hill roads and the occasional small town market square with its inevitable seedy bar, many pork shops and, always prominent among the vegetable displays, the bright green and yellow stripes of the rotund Mangalore sautekaayi (cucumber). The plantation bungalows, many of which are now homestays, are rarely visible from the road, always tucked away at the end of long driveways or on hilltops, shrouded by dense thickets of coffee.

Arriving at these bungalows, the overwhelming feeling is one of seclusion. This cut-off-from-the-world feeling is what everyone comes to Coorg for. And well-travelled and sociable as the Kodavas are, it is the rhythms of the seasons and the produce of the land that continue to define Kodava food.

Kodava meals are primarily on the simpler side. A quintessential Kodava breakfast would generally include kumbala curry, which is prepared from pumpkins served with akki roti or rice flatbreads and ellu pajji

or sesame chutney. A cuppa hot coffee completes the meal.

The centrepiece of Kodava cuisine is meat and its underpinning is rice. The locals of the Kodagu region are largely non-vegetarian and consume fish, meat and pork on a regular basis. There's an interesting history behind pork being a part of the region's daily diet. The food of Kodagu has been largely influenced by its history and culture. Back in the day, when hunting was allowed, the game meat used to be cooked and eaten by the Kodavas. The game meat was preserved in wooden slatted frames placed over the cooking flame. This not only kept the meat dry but also provided it its special smoky flavour. Now that hunting is no more practiced, people like to eat pork.

Climatic conditions have also impacted Kodava cuisine in a large way. Food that offers

Facing Page:

A wholesome Kodava meal

Bottom: *Chake palaya, a dish of semi-fried tender jackfruit*



thermal warmth is consumed during the winter season and monsoons. While pork remains a staple throughout the year, seafood offerings are mostly cooked during the monsoon season.

An array of spices ranging from cumin seeds to black pepper is used in the making of these non-vegetarian delicacies. You will also come across a lot of ginger and jaggery being used in the cuisine of this region. They lend the dishes their peculiar sweetness. Kodava cuisine is also one of the only cuisines in south India which depends on the use of fruits, plant stems and ferns to a great extent.

Those with a sweet tooth will love akki payasa- the humble rice pudding, which is usually prepared during festive seasons. Among the locally grown vegetables and fruits, some of the most used in Kodava dishes

include coconuts, jackfruit, plantain and mango. Some people also use the rare wild mushrooms while bamboo shoots are also extensively used during monsoons. If you love mushrooms, you will also love the spicy Kummuru curry. The best part about Kodava cuisine is perhaps the fact that it is cooked in such a way that the natural taste of the key ingredients used is always retained. For instance, Kodavas allow bamboo shoots to sour in its own waters, when making Bamboo Shoot Curry. The bamboo shoots are harvested before they get too hard. On peeling the bamboo shoots, the tender part inside is used for making the dish.

The coffee plantations of Kodagu were a 19th-century British enterprise; before that it was rice that ruled the land. “The wealth of our ancestors was paddy and cattle,” said coffee planter Madan Somana, who with his wife Anita runs the BB Estate Homestay in Kadagad. The paddy fields needed protection from predators such as wild boars which were often shot and then eaten, says Madan, as an explanation for the origin of that prince of Kodava dishes, pandi curry—succulent pork cubes coated in a tangy, smooth and very dark masala.

Pandi has come to represent the specialness of Kodava cuisine—not only because it is one of those rare South Indian pork dishes but also for its unique taste. Pandi is tantalising partly because the dry spices used in it—pepper, coriander and cumin among them—are roasted before they are ground, giving the gravy a deliciously toasty flavour. The other

Kaad mangia curry uses mangoes and jaggery





L-R: Pork naked fry; traditional chicken curry

vital factor is kachampuli, a local fruit that is inedible in the raw, but pulped and thickened creates a condiment that has a shelf life of a dozen years or more, adds that crucial pungency to the meat, helps to preserve it, fights cholesterol and zaps the nasty creatures that sometimes set up home inside pigs.

Pandi is hard to resist and difficult to get outside Coorg. Anita says that many of her guests clamour for it; Kodavas visiting the homeland after long inevitably do. Among bowls of koli (chicken) and kuru (beans) curries, in which, unlike pandi, coconut is an essential ingredient, Anita has set out a plate of another rarity—tender bamboo shoot or

baimbale. This seasonal vegetable is soaked in water over three days to ferment it and then usually seasoned with mustard seeds, curry leaves and red chillies, letting the sourness and juiciness of the shoots dominate.

As for paddy, even though the Kodavas do not grow very much of it any more, they continue to honour those rice-eating traditions of old—pouring thin chicken curry over the rice noodle-like nool puttu, turning out delicious rice and coconut cakes called pa-puttu, and insisting that pandi curry only be eaten with kadambuttu (small, firm balls of steamed rice). Their rotis are akki (rice) ootis; their standard dessert payasa is broken

rice cooked in coconut and jaggery; and Kodava snacks, such as badokajaya and chikkalunde, are, inevitably, made of rice flour.

Akki roti is possibly the most popular among them all. Prepared from rice flour, this easy to make dish is extremely filling and forms a major part of lunch and dinner meals. Thanks to abundance of paddy cultivation, rice is an integral part of Kodava cuisine. But akki roti or otti is not the only way Kodavas consume their rice. They make paputtu using steamed rice and coconut cakes, rice string hoppers noolputtu, steamed rice dumplings kadambuttu and fermented and steamed rice cakes thaliya puttu. It would not be an exaggeration to say that rice finds itself at the heart of Kodava cuisine. Of these, kadambuttu is the most popular as it

is made during festivals and weddings. The dish is best enjoyed with pandi curry and chicken curry.

At the Tata-owned Cottabetta Bungalow in Pollibetta, chef Girish, who was from neighbouring Hassan District, handed me some freshly plucked leaves. We had just eaten a meal of fantastic pandi, the spices perfectly balanced with the meat, along with chicken curry, nool puttu, kadambuttu and a lovely dish of stirfried black-eyed beans and horse gram called usli. I enquired of Girish about Kodava vegetarian cuisine. “This is called harive soppu,” he said about the leaves. “Grows in the wild. We cook it into a vegetable.” He forayed into the garden a second time to get a small chakke (jackfruit) for photographer Jyothy, who wanted to see how it might look placed alongside the bowl of cooked chakke, which was also part of lunch. It was jackfruit season; everywhere on the drive we spotted the pendulous fruit hanging heavy on trees. We later encountered it on many tables.

This breaking off conversation to get something to show from the garden ran through the course of my trip—a wonderfully spontaneous gesture that said a great deal about how organic the Kodavas’ relationship with eating and cooking continued to be. At Alath-Cad, where the food was arguably the best to be had anywhere in Coorg, there were fruit trees on the estate and the vegetables on Mrs Muddaiah’s table were seasonal and, again, occasionally wild. It was there that we tasted the sublime kaad mangia (wild

Rice puttu, spicy egg roast curry and moong dal curry



mango) curry made from the fruit of a tall species that is gathered only when it falls to ground, the tree being hard to climb. The fruit was sweetened with jaggery and cooked in many of the same dark spices that pandi is. The result was sweet and sour heaven. In between sharing recipes with me for her wonderful koli barthad (chicken fry, another Kodava staple), as well as a rice and coconut milk sweet called halbai, Mrs Muddaiah sent for some leaves from her allspice tree, which she used to season biryanis with, and showed me the tiny, locally grown green chillies that they prefer to the commoner variety.

Like every other cuisine, Kodava cuisine is also blessed with its share of yum chutneys and pickles that work as great tastemakers. The Kodavas mostly use onion and garlic for their chutneys. Not only do they serve as a seasoning but also bring about the flavour. The innovative use of local ingredients was further evident in the many chutneys of Coorg. The seeds of the jackfruit are boiled and worked into a chutney with coconut and lots of lime—a seasonal breakfast accompaniment to akki ottis, as is a marvellous chutney made of kaipuli (or bitter orange, yet another wild fruit), which we later sampled at Palace Estate in nearby Kakkabe.

Kachampuli is another ingredient which finds itself in almost every household in Kodagu. You can say that it's their answer to the Balsamic vinegar, which is extracted from the ripe fruits of the Kodambuli fruit. The cook puts the fruits in baskets over large vessels. This lets the juice of the fruit which



Papittu (rice cakes) and kadampittu (rice balls)

gradually turns into pulp. Eventually, the extract thickens and acts as a perfect souring agent in many Kodava specialities, including the evergreen Pandi curry.

In southern Coorg, at Irpu Resort, set in the spacious home of the regal and friendly Vanita Bhimmiah, among the tureens of delicious pandi and koot (vegetable) curry at the table, there was a small bowl of another green that grows in the wild—kakey toppu. Vanita brought out a bottle of kachampuli to show us and described the painstaking process of making it; most buy this precious and expensive ingredient readymade nowadays.

Vanita lives alone on her plantation for most of the year and at some point in our conversation uncovered a double-barrel shotgun that had thus far been lying innocuously

in a corner. She strikes an impressive pose with the twelve bore but confessed to never having had occasion to use it. While the Kodavas have, since the mid-19th century, the freedom to carry firearms in the district without a licence, and while many still live a life their ancestors would recognise, it has to be said that there doesn't seem to be much wild boar left to hunt.

Prasad and Vincy Apparanda run Palace Estate and are particular about the traditions of their community and the ways in which these are changing. We have heard about the harvest festival and the one dedicated to the worship of the river goddess Kaveri. At Palace Estate we learnt about the lesser known Kakada Padinett, a ritual plucking of a wild leaf

Naayekulle (ghee rice) makes the mouth water



called madd toppu ('medicine leaf') which blooms for only a couple of days in August. The water in which it's boiled is used to cook rice in or eaten with honey. Vincy sticks to tradition even with the food—her yummy chicken fry and rich nai kool (ghee rice) are cooked on a wood fire, and she shared recipes with us for rare Kodava delicacies such as kuvale putt—the flesh of a tender jackfruit mixed with broken rice and steamed in a banana leaf.

The Kodavas themselves don't eat a great deal of the food that they are famous for. Mrs Muddaiah of Alath-Cad talked of chapatis made of wheat and soya flour and Anita Somana said that her dinner is often soup with brown bread. While health concerns have distanced the community from its rice- and meat-rich diet, tourists and home-sick Kodavas continue to keep the Kodava-cuisine alive.

During weddings, Kodavas like to go the old school way of sit-down feasts where the hosts serve the guests. Traditional favourites during wedding meals include pandi curry, kadambuttu and payasa.

Kodagu is not only known for its coffee, but will also delight you with its special wines and absolutely divine beverages. Local fruits like gooseberry, oranges, grapes, chick-oo and beetle nut leaves are used to make homemade wines. Toddy, also known as Bolle Kall is another hot favourite of Kodavas and they use pine and coconut trees to make it. From red to green to pink, the wines of Kodavas are as appealing as refreshing. ■

Food Trail in Kodagu

Madikeri's best is Folksy Food (Hotel Caveri Comforts, near Janata Bazaar) run by Mr Lipton. His wife, Leelavati, is a star cook, starting with her always delicious pandi and down to the perfect rasam. They make the non-vegetarian standard of pandi and chicken curry but one must definitely try the vegetarian dishes too. The koot curry of the day—a mix of vegetables in a toor (arhar) dal base—as well as the daily side dish of dry vegetable is always excellent. Coorg Cuisine (Madikeri Main Road, opposite Post Office) has more of a restaurant ambience and a full menu of Kodava dishes including baimbale barthadh (tender bamboo shoot fry) and five kinds of pork.

For those intent on just pandi, another place worth trying is Capitol Bar (near Madikeri private bus stand) whose owner Ganesh Aiyana rears his own pigs on his plantation and does not feed them chemicals. A plate of freshly cooked pandi and a cold beer during the afternoon is a worthwhile Madikeri experience. The town's most famous restaurant—East End



A typical Coorgi meal served at a restaurant in Madikeri

Hotel (General Thimmaiah Road)—is where both tourists as well as Kodava gentry can be seen, drawn by its famous mutton biryani and meatballs, and the late afternoon special of kheema dosa. East End is a must-do even though it does not really serve Kodava food, except for their superb chicken fry and vegetarian thalis.

Were one to eat one's way down the Western Ghats, the continuities in the food of this region would be hard to miss. Bamboo

shoot is a part of Mangalorean food too, as is kadambuttu, which the Mangaloreans call pundi, and puttu, which they call moode. The idiapam of Kerala is the nool puttu of Coorg and the shavige of Mangalore (as well as the string hoppers of Sri Lanka). Yet unlike both the Mangaloreans and Malayalis, the Kodavas go easy with the coconut, while the location of Coorg makes seafood marginal to its cuisine. Most importantly, of course, only Coorg's got the pandi! ■

NORTH KARNATAKA

In the hardy plains of North Karnataka jola (jowar or sorghum) is the primary staple consumed as jolada roti (flatbread); some prefer it kadak (crisp). Meals customarily begin with menthya pachadi (fenugreek salad) and heirloom cucumbers. Methi leaves help cut cholesterol, control diabetes and act as roughage. The country cucumbers have less water content with tiny closely packed seeds that makes them crunchier. Also served along with the meal are assorted pudis (powders) packed with protein that make great dietary additives – agasi (flax seed), gural or uchelu (Niger seed) and the yummy shenga (groundnut) chutney.

Below: Badnekeyae yennagai gojju;

Facing Page: Jowar roti with dal curry



Lingayats form a prominent community in North Karnataka and are vegetarians. The twin towns of Hubballi-Dharwad are dotted with Lingayat khanavalis (eateries) like Basaveshwara Khanavali and Basappa Khanavali that serve jolada roti with yenne badnekayi (brinjal curry), jhunka (steamed gram flour cubes) and hesarakalu palya (whole green gram curry), liberally sprinkled with gural or uchhel pudi that imparts characteristic taste. Buttermilk and majjige saaru (buttermilk curry) help combat the hot climate. Durgada Bail, Hubballi's legendary Khau Galli (Eat Street) fires up the evening with stalls serving chaat, bhelpuri, 'tomato' omelette and other snacks! L.E.A. (Lingayat Educational Association) Canteen is known for its terrific thuppa avalakki (beaten rice with ghee) and signature Masala Toast!

The region has several native vegetables and dishes unique to the region. Tingal avrekayi is a local bean available only for a tingalu ('month' in Kannada) while karchikai (Momordica cymbalaria) is a tiny pod vegetable that must be consumed immediately after harvest, before it bursts open. Both are made into palya (stir fry). Also popular are jowari dodda mensinkayi (stuffed country capsicum) and gulagayi yennagai (like a country cucumber).

Besides jolada roti, North Karnataka has typical staples like dapati (mixed flour masala roti). Wheat is used to make kuchida kadabu (wheat dumpling), kudisida kadabu (stuffed dumpling) and uggi chapattis, steamed on green cornhusk and served with



spicy kempu (red) chili chutney and ghee! There's a tradition of pasta making as well where little dough beads are pressed on a comb for stripes and shaped into miniature shells or 'shankha'. The broken wheat kheer soute bija huggi resembles tiny soute bija (cucumber seeds) and is a must in all Lingayat marriages and functions!

Yet, all is not vegetarian up north. Savajis or SSKs (Somavamsha Sahasrarjun Kshatriyas) claim descent from the mythic thousand-armed warrior Kartiveerya Arjun and migrated from Central India to Karnataka and Maharashtra. As kshatriyas, bold flavours of meat and spice dominate their cuisine. During Dussehra, they offer edimi (wheat-gram flour dumplings), arithi (wheat flour diyas) and lalpani (liquor) to their paramount deity Bhavani. Eateries like Nakoda and Devika in Hubli and Savaji Hotel Milan and Kathare's

in Dharwad serve kaima unde (keema ball), mutton chops, khara boti, tale mamsa (brain curry) and karadu (spicy) mutton.

Northwest Karnataka shares a border with Maharashtra and the Maratha love for spice is apparent in the erstwhile British cantonment of Belagavi (Belgaum). Be it rassa (fiery curries) or sukka (spicy dry fry), red chili is essential and it's easy to see why locals love their sweets too! Belgaum is known for its kunda or caramelized milk khova sweet and mandige (Konkani crepe pancake). Mutton is the popular choice of meat, sourced from sheep farms in Haveri while chilis are procured from Karnataka's 'Chili town' Byadgi. The erstwhile Muslim principality of Savanur is legendary for Shiv-alal's 'khara' (mixture) since 1931. Just past Almatty Dam, Korti-Kolhar attracts travelers with fresh fish from the Krishna river and matka curd, served with puttani-avalakki (spicy Bengal gram powder and beaten rice). Vijayapura is legendary for its 'Bijapur oota', served in local eateries.

The Hyderabad-Karnataka region, bordering Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, has culinary influences like a meat heavy, spicy cuisine and the use of gongura (sorrel leaves). Locally known as pundi palya, it is popular in Central and North Karnataka and often made into chutney or cooked with lentils or mutton. The addition of local Rayadurga brinjals to mamsa (mutton) pundi palya adds a typical flavour. Hyderabad-inspired dishes like dum biryani and dalcha (meat with lentils) are common in Kalaburagi. ■

Bhatkali chicken biriyani garnished with dried red chillies



Sweets of North Karnataka

Gulbarga's Malpuri

While Kalaburagi (Gulbarga) is known for its paan mithai (shaped like a paan with a stuffing of khoa), it is synonymous with the malpuri. Not to be confused with malpua, this deep-fried sweet is stuffed with khoa and dunked in sugar syrup. It was made famous by 'Mamu Jaan ki Malpuri', a shop in Chappal Bazaar.

Dharwad Peda

Dharwad Peda's legacy goes back 175 years, when Ram Ratan Singh Thakur migrated to Dharwad from Unnao due to a plague and made pedas. However, it was popular-

The absolutely divine Dharwad Peda



ised by his grandson Babu Singh Thakur. The long queues at the shop earned the area the name Line Bazaar! Unlike its flat cousins from the north, the Dharwad peda is round and grainy, with a veneer of castor sugar.

Belgaum Kunda

Belgaum kunda was created by accident thanks to cooks who had migrated from Marwar. Once Gajanan Mithaiwala, better known as Jakku Marwari, was boiling milk but forgot to switch off the stove. By the time he returned, the milk had coagulated to which he added khoa and created Belgaum kunda.

Belgaum Mandige

Besides the eponymous kunda, Belgaum (Belagavi) is known for another sweet—mande or mandige. A crepe with a thin filling of sugar, ghee and khoa, it is made on an upturned tava like a roomali but is folded similarly like a dosa.

Ballari 'Cycle' Khova

Ballari (Bellary) is famous for its 'cycle' khova, sold on bicycles and dispensed from brass containers on



Amingad Karidaa-antu is loaded with nuts

eco-friendly sal leaf plates, which accentuates the taste! Buy from vendors who trawl the streets on bicycles or have a bite at Bombay Sweets and the popular Abid Cycle Khova Store.

Amingad/Gokak Karidaa-antu

Antinunde is a teatime snack made of jaggery, dry fruits, nuts and antu (edible gum). Since the ingredients were fried, it was also called 'karida-antu' (fried gum) and eventually karadantu. In 1907, Savali-gappa Aiholli of Amingad became the first karadantu maker. Because it was sold at Gokak, it became famous as 'Gokak' karadantu. ■

Mysore Pak

Any discussion about Karnataka cuisine is incomplete without a mention of this absolutely melt-in-the-mouth delicacy from Mysore. Prepared with gram flour and loaded with ghee and sweetness, Mysore Pak originated in the royal kitchen of the Mysore Palace. The delicious dessert is known for its fine texture and a single piece is extremely filling and yet never enough.



INGREDIENTS

Water, ½ cup

Gram Flour, ½ cup

Ghee, 2 cups

Sugar, 2 cups

Oil, ½ cup

METHOD

1. Pour oil in a vessel, add gram flour to it and sieve it.
2. Take another thick bottomed pan and add water and sugar to it and make a sugar syrup.
3. Heat oil and ghee in another pan and add the sieved gram flour to the sugar syrup.
4. Stir the gramflour and sugar syrup on a low flame and make sure there are no lumps.
5. Place this paste in a tray and allow it to set.
6. Cut it into square pieces
7. Store in an airtight container.

Thatte Idli

A popular breakfast serving, the South Karnataka version of the humble idli is super easy and quick to make. Usually, the batter is prepared a day prior to cooking by using black urad lentils, poha and sabudana and of course, rice.



INGREDIENTS

Rice, 3 cups

Black Urad Dal, 1 cup

Poha, 1 cup

Sabudana, ½ cup

Baking Soda (optional), 1/2tsp

Salt, to taste

Sunflower oil to grease the mould

METHOD

1. Wash all the main ingredients and soak each of them in separate vessels (the rice and sabudana should be soaked for 4 to 5 hours, while the urad lentil and poha should be soaked for 1.5 hours).
2. Grind the urad lentil and form a smooth paste by adding water.
3. Add the soaked rice, poha and sabudana and grind them together with water.
4. Mix this paste with the urad dal paste and make a smooth batter.
5. Add salt to this batter and let it ferment for 10 to 12 hours.
6. After fermenting the batter for the required time, add baking soda if you wish.
7. Grease the idli mould with oil and pour the batter in it.
8. Let the idlis steam for 8 to 10 minutes using an idli steamer.
9. Serve hot with sambar and coconut chutney.

Jhunka Vadi

These gramflour vadis are sweet, sour and spicy all at once. They can either be square shaped or diamond shaped. A traditional north Karnataka delicacy, the veggie delight will remind you of dhoklas from Gujarat.

INGREDIENTS

Tamarind powder, 4tsp

Hot water, ½ cup

Gram Flour, 130gm

Normal water, 1 ¼ cups

FOR SEASONING

Oil, 2tbsp

Mustard seeds, ½ tsp

Cumin seeds, ½ tsp

Asafoetida, ½ tsp

Chopped coriander, 1 tbsp

Red chilli powder, 3 tsp

Turmeric powder, ½ tsp

Jaggery, 3 tbsp

Salt, 2 tsp

*Fresh coconut and coriander
for garnishing*



METHOD

1. Take hot water and soak tamarind for at least 30 minutes.
2. Mix water and gram flour to make a smooth lump less batter.
3. Heat oil in a pan. Add mustard seeds. Once it crackles, add cumin seeds and asafoetida, coriander leaves, turmeric powder, red chilli powder and coriander powder.
4. Strain the water from the tamarind and add it to the spices. Add jaggery, salt and stir.
5. Now add the smooth gram flour batter stirring continuously till it becomes thick and leaves the sides of the pan. Transfer the mixture to a greased plate. Smoothen the surface with a spoon.
6. Once it sets, cut into shape of your choice. Garnish with chopped coriander and fresh grated coconut.

Huggi

This traditional porridge from North Karnataka is made using rice and moong dal. Mostly served during festivals at the Sri Krishna Matt in Udupi, the traditional savoury is best enjoyed with tamarind gojju.



INGREDIENTS

Rice, 1 cup

Yellow split moong dal, 1 cup

Turmeric powder, 1 tsp

Cardamom, 1

Cinnamon stick, 1 inch

FOR SEASONING

Ghee, 1 tbsp

Cardamom, 1

Cinnamon stick, 1 inch

METHOD

1. Pressure cook the rice and moong dal with 3 cups of water and salt to taste. Wait till 3 whistles are heard.
2. Once the pressure releases, open the cooker and add turmeric powder, cardamom, clove and cinnamon. Let it cook till the rice and
- lentil are properly cooked.
3. Prepare the seasoning by melting ghee in a pan and adding cinnamon and cardamom to it.
4. Sprinkle the seasoning over the huggi and serve hot

Goli Bajji

This popular tea time snack is popular in both Udupi and Mangalore. Prepared with plain flour, Goli Bajji is really easy to make and requires basic ingredients.

INGREDIENTS

Maida or plain flour, 1 ½ cup

Baking Soda, ¼ tsp

Asafoetida, 1 pinch

Salt, ¾ tsp

Buttermilk, 1 cup

*Finely chopped curry leaves, 2
tbsp*

Finely chopped ginger, 1 inch

Grated coconut, 2 tbsp

Oil for frying



METHOD

1. Take flour, baking soda, asafoetida and salt in a bowl and mix well
2. Add buttermilk or curd and mix well in one direction
3. Add curry leaves, chilli, ginger and coconut in this batter and leave it covered for 3 hours
4. Mix the batter again after 3 hours
5. Apply cold water to your hands and make small balls from the batter and drop them one by one into hot oil
6. Stir and fry them on medium flame
7. Drain off the Goli Bajjis once they turn golden brown and crisp
8. Serve with coconut chutney

Mangalore Chicken Curry

Also known as Kori Ghassi or Kori Rotti, this divine curry is creamy and spicy. For the best flavour, roasted spices are generously used in its making. One of the best offerings from Mangalore, the curry serves as the perfect dish to treat your guests at dinner.



INGREDIENTS

Chicken, 1 kg
Ghee, 2 tbsp; Sliced onions, 2
Grated coconut, ¾ cup
Tamarind Ball, 1; Turmeric powder, ¾ tsp
Coriander seeds, 1 tbsp
Peppercorns, 1 tsp
Fenugreek seeds, ½ tsp
Cumin seeds, 1 tsp
Peeled garlic pod, 1
Red chillies 8, Kashmiri red chillies, 12
Thick coconut milk, ½ cup
Thin coconut milk, ¾ cup
Salt, to taste, Curry leaves

METHOD

1. Heat ghee in a pan and add onions, coconut, tamarind and turmeric and fry for 8-10 minutes.
2. Dry roast coriander seeds, peppercorns, fenugreek seeds, cumin seeds, garlic and red chillies for about 5 minutes on a low flame.
3. When this mixture cools, grind it into a smooth paste along with the coconut mixture with some water.
4. Pour the ground mixture in a large vessel and add thin coconut milk (made by adding water to the thick coconut milk)
5. Add sliced onions and let it boil after adding chicken pieces and salt
6. Simmer it for around 40 minutes till the chicken is properly cooked
7. Finally, add the thick coconut milk to the chicken and stir well
8. Pour a tablespoon of ghee over the dish and serve hot with chapatti or rice

Coorg Style Pandi Curry



Pandi Curry is to Coorg what Mysore Pak is to Mysore. The pork speciality is an all-time favourite for both Kodavas and tourists who visit Coorg. Rich in protein and other nutrients, pork meat is cooked in its own fat during the preparation of the dish. Known for its spicy and flavourful taste and rich texture, Pandi Curry is an absolute must-try dish from the treasure trove of Kodava cuisine.

INGREDIENTS

Pork, 1kg
Onion, 2
Green Chillies, 6
Garlic cloves, 5
Ginger, 1
Coriander leaves, a bunch
Curry leaves, 12
Cumin Seeds, 1tsp
Mustard Seeds, as required
Salt, to taste
Oil, as required

TO PREPARE THE GARAM MASALA

Coriander seeds, 5tsp
Peppercorns, 2tsp
Fennel seeds, 1tsp
Cloves, 3
Cardamom, 3
Cinnamon bark, 1 inch

FOR MARINATION

Chilli Powder, 2tsp
Turmeric Powder, 1/4tsp
Black Vinegar, 2tsp

METHOD

1. Cut and wash the pork pieces and drain the excess water from the meat.
2. Apply the marinating ingredients and let the meat marinate for an hour.
3. Prepare the garam masala by frying its ingredients on a medium flame.
4. Form a garam masala powder by grinding these fried ingredients.
5. Make a coarse paste by grinding onions, green chillies, garlic, ginger, coriander, curry leaves and cumin seeds.
6. Pour oil in a pan and let it heat.
7. Splutter mustard seeds in this oil.
8. Put the paste in the pan and fry it till the raw smell of onion and garlic are gone.
9. Now put the marinated pork in this paste and let it coat the meat.
10. Cover the pan with a plate and allow the meat to cook for 10 to 15 minutes
11. Remove the lid and churn the contents nicely.
12. Now put the garam masala powder you made and stir it thoroughly.
13. Allow the dish to cook for 10 more minutes and keep the pan opened till the paste dries up a bit.
14. Garnish the dish with finely chopped coriander leaves and serve hot with rice or roti.

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Jolada Rotti Oota, a North Karnataka speciality Jowar roti meal

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