

ANDHRA PRADESH CUISINE (TELUGU CUISINE)

INTRODUCTION

The cuisine of Andhra is based mostly on regional variation, its rich cultural heritage and the influence of the Royal recipes from the Nawabs. The cuisine of Andhra Pradesh is mixed between the eating habits of the Hindus and Muslims style of eating.

The influence of external powers has influenced every aspect of the Andhra society. From music, dance, cuisine and literature, the foreign powers have left a mark of their own. This variety and diversity has helped the culture to become richer and more successful.

Of Hyderabad cuisine most of you would have heard, for it is famous all over the world. The Nawabs and Sultans who ruled over the Deccan brought some of the best cooks from all over the country to make the Deccan the food capital. So much so that when you talk of Andhra or its capital, Hyderabad, visions of a mouth-watering biryani comes to mind. If there is any one statement that can, in a nutshell, describe the Andhra kitchen, it is: Andhra food is hot!

Local legend says there was once a severe famine in the area and all that grew, and grew well, were chillies – red chillies, famous in a place called Guntur in Andhra. So people made as many dishes as possible with chillies. A more realistic explanation comes from nutritionists who say that being a very hot area, there are more chances of stomach infection for the local people. They probably make use of large quantities of chillies to guard against stomach infection. A parallel can be found in the desert state of Rajasthan in northern India.

REGIONAL CUISINE AT ANDHRA:

The cuisine of Andhra Pradesh can be broadly classified into 4 regions:

- Kosta (Circar)
- Hyderabad
- Telangana and
- Rayalaseema.

Factors like crops grown, eating habits and preferences play a major role in the evolution of the Telugu cuisine of each region.

- The *coastal region (kosta)* is endowed with plenty of natural resources, hence the cooking and preserving methods are highly sophisticated. The recipes of Andhra Pradesh coastal regions consist of sea foods mainly, along with cereals and lentils. In coastal region the poor and rich enjoy rice as a staple food.
- *Rayalaseema* has its own culinary delights. Due to the region's dry and arid areas, the level of pungency and spice is high in foods here. Popular dishes from the Rayalaseema regions are the *Alsandala vada, Ulavacharu, Peetala Kura, Brain fry, Liver fry and Prawn Iguru* which can be combined with *Sajja or Jonna rotis* and *Raagi sankati* (a very healthy and nutritious food) etc. *Attirasaalu (Aresalu), Baadusha, Jaangri, Jilebi, Pakam Undalu (mixture of steam rice flour, ground nuts, Jaggary), Borugu Undalu(a sweet variety made corn of jowar and jaggory), Pala Kova, Rava Laddu* are few of the mouth watering sweets also known as *Bakshalu* of this region.
- On the other hand, due to the Islamic dynasties reigning over centuries, the *Telangana region has a distinct Mughlai flavor*. In the Telugu cuisine of the Telangana region, meats play a dominating role. Popular vegetarian dishes from the land of Telangana are the *Ulli akku kura (spring onion curry), Kakaraya pulusu (gravy made of bittergourd), pesarattu pulusu, rasam, Karapu Annam (Chilli rice)* etc. The famous non-vegetarian dishes are *Chapala Pulusu (fish gravy), Kodi Kura, Guddu Pulusu (also known as Egg Pulusu), Meat curry, Shrimp curry*, etc. Famous snacks of the Telangana region are the *Billavakka* (snack prepared with rice flour and deep fried), *Sakinalu* – a traditional snack usually prepared during Sankranti festival made of rice flour and sesame seeds.
- Hyderabad cuisine that has carved its own niche among Indian cuisines. (Discussed later)

EQUIPMENTS

- **CHIPPA:** This is a clay pot that is wok – shaped and is used for cooking *chippa gosth* – a lamb dish that gets its name from this equipment.
- **TATHEE:** This is a metal stand similar to a bar-be-que griller, which is placed on smouldering charcoals to grill kebab.
- **TIRAGALI:** This is a stone mill that is used grinding rice to a perfect consistency for certain desserts such as *adhirsam*. Too fine a powder would make the dessert too sticky to eat and too coarse a powder would not allow it to shape properly.
- **KAVAM:** This is a kind of churner used for churning buttermilk – it is nearly similar to a whisk. It is manually twisted between the palms for churning the liquid food, for example – churning of yoghurt for making buttermilk.
- **PONGANALU:** This equipment is made up of cast iron and is used for making a dish called ponganalu, which is eaten for breakfast. It has round depressions into which a batter of rice and dal is poured and cooked over fire.
- **JAADILU:** These are traditional pickle jars used to store home – made pickles. These are made from ceramic as it does not react with pickles.
- **ROLU / POTHAM:** This is a stone mortar and pestle and is used for grinding whole spices and making chutneys.

CUISINE CHARACTERISTICS

- Rice is the staple food of the region.
- The cuisine of Andhra Pradesh is mostly vegetarian but the coastal areas have a vast repertoire of seafood preparations
- Fish and Prawns are major seafood eaten here. They are mainly found with curry in sesame and coconut oils along with grounded pepper flavor and are eaten with rice.
- Red chillies are predominantly used in the cuisine making it one of the hottest and spiciest. The chillies grow well in the Guntur region.
- Pickles are an essential part of the cuisine and the variety is countless. *Podis*, a mixture of various ingredients which are dried or broiled and powdered, are as important as pickle. These homemade podis are sprinkled over rice, and a dollop of pure ghee is offered, which is also mixed with the podi and rice and eaten.
- *Gongura* is an edible plant grown in India. It is a species of the Sorrel leaves. *Gongura pachadi* is quintessentially Telugu cuisine along with *pachadi* (chutney or relish). While it has many culinary uses, the most popular is the pickled version. Although *Gongura* is widely consumed all over Andhra Pradesh, *Guntur Gongura* is more popular. *Gongura* is a very rich source of Iron, vitamins, folic acid and anti-oxidants essential for human nutrition. It is a summer crop, and the hotter the place, the more sour the leaf gets.

Gongura comes in two varieties, *green stemmed leaf* and *red stemmed*. The red stemmed variety is more sour than the green stemmed variety.

The pickles popularly made with *Gongura* includes *Pulla Gongura* (*Gongura* and red chillies) and *Pulihara Gongura* (*Gongura* and tamarind). There are other varieties as well. Apart from the pickles, other well known recipes made with *Gongura* as the main ingredient are *Gongura Pappu* (*Lentils*), *Gongura mamsam* (*goat/mutton*) and *Gongura royyalu* (*shrimp*). *Gongura* and calabash is extremely popular with the Telugu community in South Africa.

Its other name includes the following: In the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh it is known as *Puntikura*. Similarly, "*Gongura*" is popular in Tamilnadu as well, which is called "*pulichakeerai*" in Tamil. *The famous combination with "pulichakeerai" is "Ragi Kali/Ragi Mudde", which once used to be a regular food for the people in villages (since these items are easily available in agricultural forms)*. In Maharashtra markets, it is called *Ambaadi*, It is known as *Pitwaa* in Hindi, *Nalita Saaga* in Oriya, *Mestapat* in Bengali, *Pandi* in Kannada and Sorrel Leaves in English.

- Other typical ingredients include the following:
 - Cowpeas (Bobbarlu): This is also known as black eyed beans or lobiya in northern India. It can be stewed or can be braised with spices.

- Field beans (Chikkudu): These beans are from the family of Broad beans. They are used fresh and even the leaves are eaten curried.
- Agathi leaves (Avisi): These are classified under green leafy vegetables. The plant that produces white flowers are suitable for eating while those producing red flowers are not.
- Sorrel leaves (Chukka kooru): These resembles spinach but has a slightly sour taste. The sour flavour of the leaves combine well with the spices used in the Andhra cuisine.
- Banana rhizome (Arati dumpa): The rhizome or the roots of the banana plant is often used in stir – fried dishes or even in curries.
- Spine gourd (Akakara): It resembles bitter melon in shape but is not as bitter. It is used in sambhars or curries in Andhra cuisine.
- Cudapa seeds or chironji or chaoroli nuts (Sara Pappu): These are nuts that are used as a thickening agent.
- Zizyphus (Regu pandu): These are a type of jujubes and are extensively used in pickles and chutneys. The dried regu pandu is often crushed with red chillies, jiggery and tamarind and used in curries.

A MEAL IN ANDHRA:

BREAKFAST:

Idlis are commonly eaten as a breakfast item with sambar and/or Coconut Chutney, called *Kobbari Pachadi* in Telugu. Chili powder (*Kaarampodi*) and Ginger Chutney (*Allam Pachadi*) or other chutneys can also be eaten along with Idli.

Minapattu (Dosa) is also commonly eaten for breakfast or in the evening. Varieties include "Masala Dosa, Rava Dosa, Sada Dosa, and Rava Masala Dosa." Generally, Andhra-style Dosas are spicier and crispier than those found in other regions of South India.

Pesarattu is also a key item in Andhra cuisine. Pesarattus are similar to Dosas, but the batter is made of green mung beans. It is thin and crispy, usually topped with chopped onions, green chillies, ginger pieces, and coriander. It is generally eaten with a ginger chutney. *MLA Pesarattu* is a popular variation of *pesarattu* filled with Upma (spiced semolina).

LUNCH:

Lunch is an elaborate affair in many households.

Traditionally, Andhra cuisine is eaten on a banana leaf by people sitting on mats or small raised wooden seats. A little water is sprinkled around the banana leaf, depicting that food can now be served. Rice is served along with a little ghee. The meal is served on (*arati aaku*), a single plantain leaf, or *vistari*, a larger plate made of several leaves sewn together. Recently, more people have begun using broad steel plates called (*kancham*). However, *arati aaku* and *vistari* are still widely used for festivals and special events.

Lunch items are served on a single plate in a specific arrangement. *Curries and pappu* are placed to the right of the diner, while *pickles and podi* are placed on the left. Special items such as *pulihora* and *garelu* are placed at the top right. A large scoop of rice is placed in the middle. Small amounts of *pulusu*, *ghee* and *buttermilk* are typically sprinkled onto the leaf. The ghee is mixed with every item except *perugu/majjiga*.

Modati Mudda / Starter:

Rice with some *podi*, *khaaram*, or a certain variety of pickles and ghee is eaten as the *modati mudda* (the first bite). *Modati mudda* items tend to taste sour or hot, have strong aromas, and include ingredients with medicinal values, such as dry ginger and curry leaves. They are usually intended to stimulate appetite and aid digestion. Only a very small amount is eaten: four or five balls of rice called *muddalu*.

A typical Andhra main course generally consists of some or all of the following:

- Cooked Rice
- Pappu - Toor Daal (Kandi Pappu) or Moong Daal (Pesara pappu) cooked with a vegetable or green.

- Curries made from a wide variety of vegetables, including green leafy vegetables. Vepudu is a fried vegetable curry. Non-vegetarian curries include "kodi kooru" (chicken), "mutton" (goat mutton), "chepa kooru" (Fish), "royyalu" (Prawns) and "peethala kooru" (Crab).
- Karam - Various types of dry powders made from lentils or chillies, eaten with ghee.
- Pachadi (Pickles), fresh or preserved, can be made from all kinds of fruits and vegetables. Examples include Aavakaaya (a spicy mango pickle) and one made of roselle called Gongura.
- Ullavacharu (cooked Horsegram soup), traditionally eaten with cream or yoghurt.
- Pulusu - A type of vegetable curry most typically exported to the west.
- Majjiga Pulusu - Buttermilk cooked with turmeric and boiled vegetables.
- Perugu (Yoghurt) or Majjiga (Buttermilk)
- Appadam (Papadums)
- Sweet dishes.
- Bananas or other fruit
- Tamalapaku-vakkapodi, also called Killi, Beeda or Paan, made of fresh Betel leaves, Arecanut pieces, and lime.

ANDHRA DELICACIES

MODATI MUDDA: This means the first few bites of the meal mainly consists of four or five balls of rice. These are either ghee rice or pickled rice. Pickled rice are typically gooseberry, lime, aavakkayaa(mango) or grapefruit. It could also be rice mixed with certain powders (podi) like parupu podi, coriander podi, pudina podi, coconut podi, curry leaves podi and so on.

Some of the typical Modati Mudda items include:

- *Dhaniyala karappodi*: roasted chillies ground with coriander seeds.
- *Karivepaku karappodi*: roasted chillies and curry leaves.
- *Shonthi podi*: dry ginger ground with a pinch of salt.
- *Nuvvula podi*: sesame seeds ground with roasted chillies.
- *Kottimeera khaaram*: cilantro leaves ground with raw or roasted red chillies.
- *Karivepaku khaaram*: curry leaves ground with raw or roasted red chillies.
- *Allam khaaram*: ginger ground with raw or roasted red and green chillies.
- *Pachimirapakaya khaaram*: roasted and ground green chillies.
- *Usirikaya pachadi*: pickled Indian gooseberries, typically mixed with roasted red chillies or chili powder.
- *Nimmakaya pachadi*: pickled Indian key lime
- *Dabbakaya pachadi*: pickled Indian grapefruit

KOORA - The region produces a wide variety of *Kooralu* (curries).

- *Vepudu* : crispy fried vegetables, typically including *bendakaya* (okra), *dondakaya* (tindora), *bangaladumpa* (potato), and colocasia (*chamadumpa*).
- *Kaaram Petti Kooru / Kooru Podi Kooru*: Sauteed vegetables cooked with curry powder or paste, served as a solid mass. The vegetables can be stuffed with curry powder or paste and are usually cooked whole.
- *Pulusu Kooru / Aava petti Kooru*: Boiled vegetables cooked in tamarind sauce and mustard paste.
- *Pappu Kooru*: Boiled vegetables stir-fried with a small amount of half-cooked lentils (dal).
- Other gravy based curries are chiefly made with vegetables cooked in tomato sauce and onion with coriander and cumin powder.

PAPPU - Toor Daal (*Kandi Pappu*) or Moong Daal (*Pesara pappu*) cooked with a vegetable or green. No masala is added to the dal. Some regions include garlic and onion in the seasoning while some regions prefer asafetida (heing/Inguva). Some times the cooked version of the dal is replaced with a roast and

ground version of the dal like *Kandi pachadi* (roasted toor daal ground with red chiles) and *pesara pachadi* (soaked moong daal ground with red chillies or green chillies).

PACHADI / OORAGAYA - For a typical Andhrite, no meal is complete without this very essential item. It is consumed on its own mixed with rice and is also eaten as a side dish with pappu / koora. There are two broad varieties –

- 1) *Pachadi* (chutney) is typically made of vegetables/greens and roasted green/ red chillies. It is prepared fresh and is consumed within a day or two.

Some of the items include:

- Vegetable pachadi - Made with vegetables like bottle gourd, eggplant, okra, etc. The vegetable is cooked al dente and is ground together with roasted red chiles/ green chiles, fenu Greek seeds and mustard seeds.
 - Greens Pachadi - The most popular one is Gongura pachadi - made out of red sorrel leaves and roasted red chillies. It is unique to Andhra cuisine and is a must have for any meal that boasts to give the eater a taste of Andhra. Other than this, *chukka koora* (a variety of sour leafy green found in AP) pachadi is also very popular. Chutney is also made out of Coriander leaves / Curry leaves. This is normally consumed as a modati mudda item.
- 2) *Ooragaya* – Andhra is very famous for a variety of these hot spicy pickles that one gets addicted to. Pickles like *Nimmakay*, *Dabbakaya*, *Usirikaya* have medicinal values that improve with aging. *Ooragaya* is prepared in good amounts seasonally and uses liberal amounts of chilli powder, methi (fenugreek) powder, mustard powder and oil.

A few of the Ooragaya items include:

- *Avakaya* - The most popular item of Andhra cuisine. It is made of cut green mangos, mustard powder, red chili powder and vegetable oil. It is prepared during the summer months of April/May, when green mangos are abundant. Every family in Andhra is rather proud of its own recipe for this pickle based on the variety of mango, chili and the oil used. There are many varieties of avakaya - with garlic/without garlic and depending on the other ingredients used like *pesarakaya* (avakaya with moong dal powder), *menthi kaya* (avakaya with fenugreek powder), *neeti kaya* (avakaya made by grinding mustard paste with water).
- *Dosa Avakaya* - Avakaya made with English (yellow) cucumber. Serves as a substitute for the regular avakaya toward the end of the season. A staple served during winter marriages when raw mangos are not readily available. Recent times have seen cauliflower avakaya also become famous. The English cucumber is replaced by cauliflower in this version.
- *Korivi Khaaram* - The spiciest of the pickles and a unique andhra item too. It is made by grinding ripe red chillies (*Pandu Mirapakaya*) with tamarind and salt. *Pandu mirapakaya* is grown in abundance in the palnadu region of Andhra (Guntur district and the surrounding areas). This variety is very famous for its spice and color. A few modifications to this pickle include combinations of *Pandu Mirapakaya with gongura* or *Pandu Mirapakaya with raw tamarind fruit (chintakaya)*.
- *Chintakaya* - Made by grinding raw tamarind fruit (*Chintakaya*) and salt. It is made during the winter season. The marinated pickle is taken in small quantities and is made into a chutney with roasted red chiles whenever it is consumed.
- *Nimmakaya* - Made by marinating Indian key lime in its own juice for a few days and then mixing it with salt, methi powder and chilli powder.
- *Usirikaya* - Made by grinding Indian gooseberries and salt. The pickle is marinated throughout the year, picked in small quantities whenever needed and is made into a chutney by grinding it with roast red chiles.
- *Dabbakaya* - A lesser-known pickle to the current generation. Made out of Indian grapefruit. Typically consumed as a modati mudda item. Buttermilk mixed with the tender dabbakaya leaves (*dabbaku majjiga*) is supposed to quench extreme thirst during the hot summer months.

PULUSU / CHARU: Pulusu/Dhappalam is the most important liquid item of the meal. Pulusu (sour) is a curry-like stew that is typically sour and cooked with tamarind paste. Other common bases are tomatoes or mangoes. The mixture can be flavoured with mustard, chillies, curry leaves, jaggery, onions, or fenugreek. Fish, chicken, and eggs are typical meat additions.

Some of typical pulusu items include the following:

- *Kharam Pulusu* - Any vegetable cooked in very diluted tamarind juice and pulusu podi (made of roast red chillies, coriander powder).
- *Tiyya pulusu* - Mild and sweet vegetables like pumpkin or sweet potato cooked in light tamarind juice with jaggery
- *Pachi pulusu* - *Unheated version of the pulusu. It includes finely chopped raw onions in a very dilute tamarind juice with jaggery. In the summer season when mangos are abundant, tamarind is replaced by stewed raw mango. It is mostly consumed during the hot season.*
- *Pappucharu* - Vegetables boiled with cooked toor dal and tamarind. No sambar/masala powder is added.
- *Sambar* - Vegetables boiled with cooked toor dal, tamarind and sambar powder.
- *Challa Pulusu / Majjiga pulusu* - Sour buttermilk boiled with channa dal and coconut paste
- *Methi Challa / Methi Majjiga* - Sour buttermilk seasoned with ginger / green chilli paste and methi seeds fried in oil.
- *Charu* - A very dilute concoction of tamarind and charu podi (made of coriander seeds, dal, ginger, pepper and heing). It is also taken as such during the meal like a soup without mixing with rice.

ANDHRA SNACKS:

- *Kaarappoosa* - Hindi (khara boondi, salted,chilli flavoured boondi)
- *Chekkalu* – Flat puri’s made using gram flour, rice flour, chana dal, and spices and deep fried
- *Jantikalu* - Long streaks of *sev* made using gram flour, rice flour and salt, turmeric, chilli powder, and deep fried
- *Chuppulu* - Chakli’s made using rice flour, sesame seeds, ajwain
- *Chegodilu* - A gem among Andhra traditional snacks is Chegodi. Golden in shade, speckled with spots of white sesame, moong dal and cumin, crunchy with an irresistible addictive taste
- *Guggillu* : Boiled chick peas flavoured with a tempering of Urad dal, Mustard seeds, Cumin seeds, Red chilli --- tear into pieces, Curry leaves
- *Boondi* - Salted boondi’s deep fried
- *Ponganalu* – This is a telugu word for fried batter puffs on a special pan. This is very popular breakfast in Andhra
- *Punukulu / Dosa Batter Dumplings* - These are called punukulu in Telugu also sold as street fare with various chutneys as accompaniments
- *Bondaalu*: These are Punukulu with spicy dips (allam pachadi) -
- *Mirapakaya Bajji* - A local variety of extra-hot chillies stuffed with spices and dipped in chick pea batter and fried.
- *Ullipakodi* – These are fritters made with sliced onion and spices in chickpea batter.
- *Gaare* – These are similar to Vada. Gaares are a deep fried and spiced dough.
- *Perugu gaare / Aavadalu* - Gaare are marinated in a yoghurt sauce.

ANDHRA DESSERTS:

- *Boorelu* :A mixture of boiled chanadal, jaggery,elaichi,ghee, coated in rice flour batter & deep fried
- *Pootharekulu* : Pootharekulu is a popular dessert made in Andhra in India. Pootharekulu is made of rice starch, sugar powder, ghee and cardamom powder.
- *Ariselu*: Ariselu is a popular Andhra sweet for Sankranthi(a harvest festival celebrated mainly in South India) prepared with newly harvested rice and jaggery,sesame & deep fried.
- *Payasam* (Kheer)
- *Gavvalu* (Shell shaped sweets made using rice flour,ghee, jaggery,milk)
- *Laskora Undalu* (coconut laddu) or *Raskora Undalu* (coconut laddu)

- *Palathalikalu* :Rice flour is made into a very thick batter which is pushed through small holes into boiling milk and simmered for a long time to achieve a thick consistency.
- *Ravva Kesari* (sheera)
- *Kobbari ladoo* (coconut ladoo)

MISCELLANEOUS:

- ***PESARATTU***: This is a crepe made with batter from soaked whole moong dal (Green gram or Green beans) has a greenish hue, while yellow coloured Pesarattu made from dehusked moong dal, gives a fine golden yellow tint to it when roasted. Both these forms are famous in Andhra Pradesh, and are typically served with chutney made from ginger and tamarind.
- ***TAMARIND RICE / PULIHARA***: Tamarind rice - Pulihora,Puliyodhara,Puliyodharai or Pulihara (Puli means Tamarind) is often made as an offering to Gods on all festivals and served to people as prasadam. It is usually prepared before going for journey's and packed in tiffins as it stays good for about 2-3 days if taken proper care.
- ***KOTHIMIRA ANNAM***: This is a coriander rice dish of Telugu cuisine.
- ***CHAPA VEPUDU***: One of commonest recipes of Andhra Pradesh, *Chapa Vepudu* is a spicy, marinated fish fry. Chapa means fish in Telugu, and this fried Murrel fish preparation has been an evergreen choice for the admirers of the Telugu cuisine.
- ***URGAI MAMSAM***: Another spicy non-vegetarian recipes of Andhra Pradesh, is *Uragai Mamsam*, a delicious dish where tender morsels of lamb are cooked to perfection in pickled masala. *Mamsam* means meat in Telugu, and this non-vegetarian preparation has been a trademark dish of the Telugu cuisine.
- ***KOTHIMIRI KODI***: This is a chicken curry form the Telugu cuisine. This Andhra chicken curry preparation made by using coriander leaves paste. *Kotimira* means coriander and *Kodi* means chicken in Telugu.
