

CUISINE OF KARNATAKA

INTRODUCTION

Karnataka is a state which has a variety of cuisines grounded on traditional and special dishes of every community, The taste, flavour and the ingredient of the cuisine of Karnataka are very versatile and unique. It is a distinctive combination of different non-vegetarian and vegetarian dishes. One can find extensive diversity as Karnataka has a heavy influence of its neighbouring South Indian States and Maharashtra.

REGIONAL COOKERY

Mangalore

The Mangalorian cuisine is generally spicy and rice based. Fruits are an integral part of the Mangalorean menu. Fresh coconut and chillies are important ingredients used in this cuisine. Rice is eaten in many forms like red grain rice, sannas (idli fluffed with toddy or yeast), pancakes, rice rottis, kori rotti (a dry, crisp, almost wafer-thin rice rotti which is served with chicken curry as a delicacy), and neer dosa. One of popular Mangalorian dishes is the spicy kane fry (ladyfish). Another popular dish of Mangalore is Patrode. It is steamed stuffed colocasia leaves, a specialty, worth tasting. The Akki rotti, or rice rotti of Mangalorian cuisine is also popular in Malnad and Kodagu.

Malenadu and Malnad

The word "Malenaadu" means "land of mountain ranges". The Malenadu of Karnataka can be culturally (on basis food culture) can be clearly divided as South Malnad comprising Northern Somawarpete in North Kodagu, Sakaleshapura, Mudigere, southern part of chickamagaluru taluk and western part of Belur and Alur taluks in Hassan. Central malnad consisting of chickamagalur, Koppa, malnad region of Shivmoga, and western ghat regions of Uttara Kannada. Even though Western ghat regions of Uttara kannada and Belagavi can be considered as Northern malnad the food culture of these regions is unaware to the rest of Malnad, may be due to inadequate communication with the other parts of malnad and Karnataka. This cuisine is a blend of Coorgi and Mangalorean cuisine.

The cuisine is heavily influenced by the variety of fruits and vegetables available in the rich forests of western ghats. The ingredients like tender bamboo shoots, colocassia leaves, turmeric leaves, raw jackfruit are easily found in the Sahyadri ranges. Steaming is the favoured method of cooking in Malenaadu. More often than not, there is minimal use of oils in malenaadu cuisine. Some of the major dishes of this cuisine are the midigayi pickle (small raw mango), sandige, avalakki (beaten rice), and talipittu (akki rotti made of rice flour).

Udupi

Udupi cuisine takes its name from Udupi, a city on west coast of Karnataka. Udupi cuisine has its origin in Ashta mathas of Udupi founded by Shri Madhvacharya. Its core is a vast range of creative dishes emphasizing local vegetables and fruits. The popular Masala Dosa is said to be originated from Udupi. Many other south Indian dishes are named after this town. The cuisine of Udupi is strictly vegetarian, deprived of onions and garlic. Sambar, Rasam, Adyes (dumplings), ajadinas (dry curries), and chutneys are the specialty of Udupi's cuisine. Some of the major ingredients used here are gourds, coconut, jackfruit, colocasia leaves, raw green bananas, mango pickle and red chillies.

Kodagu

The Hilly district of Kodagu (Coorg) also has its own unique cuisine which includes spicy meat (Pandi (Pork) Curry, Chicken, Mutton), Kadumbutt(Round balls made up of rice), Paputt, Thaliyaputt. The spicy meat curries derives a tangy taste from Kokum Kachampuli. The cuisine of Kodava is quite different from the other cuisines of Karnataka. Apart from these, the koli curry (chicken curry), nool puttu (rice noodles), votti (rice rotti), and bembla curry (bamboo shoot curry) are also worth tasting.

North Karnataka

The North Karnataka cuisine can be primarily found in the northern districts of Karnataka, including Bidar, Kalburgi, Yadgir, Vijapura, Bagalakote, Belagaavi, Raayachooru, Dharwad, Davangere, Gadag, Haveri, Koppala and western and northern areas of Ballari. The cuisine is also considered a specialty in the cities of Southern Karnataka like Bengaluru and Mysuru. The wheat and jowar rottis (unleavened bread made of millet) are the popular delicacies of North Karnataka. Here, one can find a wide range of rottis like Jolada rotti, thali peet, khadak rotti and sajja rotti (bajra rotti). They are mainly served with a variety of chutneys or spicy curries. Other dishes with which these rottis are served are the yenne badanekayi, kaalu palya, soppu palya, usli (made from spicy sprouted gram) and jholka (made from channa dal flour).

South Karnataka cuisine

The South Karnataka or old Mysore region also known as Bayaluseeme or the plains including the present-day Kolara, Bengalooru, Mysooru, Tumakooru, Mandya, Haasana, Chamarajanagara. Ragi and Rice are the most important staple grains, Jowar and bajra are also cultivated and consumed in the drier parts of the region. The first meal of the day is the breakfast which is quite substantial. Regular meals consists of Ragi mudde or steamed dumpling made from ragi flour, a curry to roll bits of the dumpling often called Saaru, Rice and Yogurt. Optional accompaniments include a salad called Kosambari, various Palyas (fried, boiled or sauteed spicy vegetables) and assorted pickles.

KANNADIGA OOTA (KANNADIGA MEAL)

Although the ingredients differ from one region to another, a typical Kannadiga Oota (Kannadiga meal) includes the following dishes in the order specified and is served on a banana leaf (Patravali) or 'muttuga' leaves stitched together: Uppu(salt), Kosambari, Pickle, Palya, Gojju, Raita, Dessert (Yes, it is a tradition to start the meal with a dessert - Paaysa), Thovve, Chitranna, Rice and Ghee.

After serving ghee to everyone, one may start the meal. This is done to ensure that everyone seated has been served all the dishes completely. What follows next is a series of soup like dishes such as Saaru, Muddipalya, Majjige Huli or Kootu which is eaten with hot rice. Gojju or raita is served next; two or three desserts are served; fried dishes such as Aambode or Bonda are served next. The meal ends with a serving of curd rice.

It is believed that every meal is a wholesome meal containing essential components of a healthy meal such as proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins.

Formal vegetarian meals are usually served in a particular order and required to be consumed in a particular order as well. These meals are served on Plantain leaves or Mutuka leaves, dry Tendu-like leaves staples together into big circular discs. First accompaniments are served which includes variety of Palya, Kosambari, sweet-savory gojju, hot spicy chutney Pickles, bajji, bonda, vade, Papads. The first course alternated between sweets and rice preparation.

The second course is a set of curries to be consumed with rice. It generally starts with Tove, a mild lentil dish laced with ghee, Majjige Huli, vegetables simmered in a mild yogurt sauce, followed by Huli, lentils and vegetables spiced and tempered with ghee, mustard, asafoetida and curry leaves. This is followed by Tili Saaru which is a thin lentil stock spiced and laced with ghee and curry leaves. The final course of the meal is rice and curd with pickles.

Buttermilk is also served to be consumed at the end of the meal.

A typical simple household meal consists of pickle, salad (kosambri), vegetable dish (palle) or lentil dish (kaal), chutneys, curd, bread (chapati, rotti etc), dessert (this does not have to be eaten at the end), rice and different curries/soups (saar) and finally curd rice.

CULINARY FEATURES

- The staple items of Karnataka's culinary culture are rice, raggi and jowar (millet), wheat.

- Rice is cooked in a variety of ways. There are red grain rice, sannas, rice rotis and pancakes made of rice.
- Regional cuisines include simple flavour of Northern Karnataka, fiery flavor of the Coastal Karnataka, unparalleled flavour of Kodava and the seasonal flavour of southern Karnataka.
- A typical Karnataka or Mysore meal is pure vegetarian cooked in sesame and ground nut oil. Coconut oil also finds popular use in coastal Karnataka.
- This cuisine tends to use a lot of fresh coconut which is ground with other spices like chillies, coriander, cumin and tamarind, and sometimes curry leaves to make the basic curry paste, which forms the base for most of the curries.
- The curries are tempered with hot oil, mustard seeds and curry leaves.
- Vegetables are either steamed or stir-fried before adding to the curry paste, and boiled together.
- Different meats such as chicken, mutton and pork is used in different parts of the state. Sea fish also feature prominently in the culinary fairs of coastal Karnataka.
- Fruits, in their fresh as well as pickled forms, feature prominently in the food of Karnataka
- Karnataka is famous for its desserts. Milk, vermicelli, sugar, coconuts, jaggery and various dry fruits are most commonly used in creating the desserts of Karnataka food.
- The traditional meal constitutes of rice served with huli made from (spices, chili, different vegetables, lentils, and paste of coconut), kootu, saaru (pepper broth), puri, papad, curd, pickles, kosmabari (vegetable and lentil salad). Meals are specially served on the muttuga leaves or leaves of banana. Flavoured rice or Chitranna is also served up with lunch.
- Breakfasts consist of food items like dosas, uppittu, (prepared from semolina), thatte idlis also known as flat idlis, kesari bhaath (sweet dish prepared from ghee, cardamom, semolina and sugar), Khara bhaath etc. Set Dosa is also one of the popular food eaten in the breakfast, it is basically a set of 4 dosas, the combination specially includes rava dosa and masala dosa. These dosas are served with sambar and coconut chutney. All these food items are relished over a cup of coffee, as it is one of the most loved beverages in Karnataka.

VARIOUS FOOD ITEMS FROM KARNATAKA CUISINE:

Rice dishes

- Bisi bele bath - rice cooked with dal, vegetables and spices; like Huli with rice, but often richer
- Vaangi baath - cooked rice mixed with vegetables cooked in oil and spices; the vegetables are usually made into a playa beforehand and the vaangi baath mixed before serving
- Chitranna - cooked rice flavoured with spices, particularly oil-popped mustard seeds and turmeric.
- Mosaranna - curd rice sometimes given a fried spicy touch with fried lentils and oil-popped mustard seeds.
- Puliogare - cooked rice flavoured with spicy tamarind paste
- Maavinkaayi chitranna - cooked rice flavoured with raw green mango and spices
- Nimbekaayi chitranna - cooked rice flavoured with lemon and spices.
- Avalakki - Akki (means rice), avalakki is baked flat rice that is soaked briefly and stir fried with cumin seeds, turmeric powder, peanuts, onions, green chillies, garnished with shredded coconuts and cilantro leaves.
- Mandakki - Puffed rice that is soaked briefly and stirfried with cumin seeds, turmeric powder, peanuts, roasted ground grams, onions, green chillies, garnished with shredded coconuts and cilantro leaves.

Breads

- Ragi rotti - A flat thick pancake made with ragi dough and flavoured with chillies and onions; the dough is shaped and flattened by hand.

- Akki rotti - A thick, flat pancake-like dish made with a dough of rice flour, chillies, onions and salt; the dough is shaped and flattened by hand.
- Jolada rotti - A flat pancake dish made with a dough of Sorghum flour and salt; the dough is shaped and flattened by hand. Jowar may be sometimes replaced with bajra.
- Ragi mudde - Steamed dumplings made by adding ragi flour to boiling water.
- Gunpongalu - Also known as Gundupongla, Mane Kaavali (skillet with houses), or Poddu. It is made with a rice batter (similar to dosa) and cooked in a special skillet with compartments.
- Chapathi - flat unleavened bread made from wheat flour, water, oil and salt. Unlike rotis, the dough rolled with a rolling-pin.

Saaru (Main course)

- Huli- Combination of vegetables and lentils simmered with spices, coconut, tamarind and seasoned with Ghee, asafoetida, curry leaves and mustard, it is an integral part of every formal meal.
- Majjige Huli- Cooked vegetables simmered in yogurt with coconut, spices, asafoetida, curry leaves and mustard.
- Tovve- Mushy lentils cooked till creamy, spiked with spices and Ghee. Vegetables are also added to this dish like
- Ridged gourd, cucumber etc.
- Obbatinna saaru - made from the left over broth while preparing the sweet obbattu.
- Bas saaru - made from the broth of boiled lentils and spring beans.
- Haagalakaayi saaru: Haagalakai, the Indian bitter gourd is simmered with coconut, tamarind and spices and spiked with Jaggery and asafoetida, curry leaves and mustard. The bitterness of the gourd is cut through by the sweetness of the jaggery and tartness of the tamarind.
- Gojju- traditionally this is thicker than the Saaru but thinner than chutney. It is served with hot rice and is sweet, tangy and spicy. It is served in between courses as a palate cleanser. It is made from diverse ingredients including eggplants, okra, fenugreek, tamarind, pineapple, bitter gourd, tomatoes, lemon-lime, etc.
- Tambli - A yogurt based cold dish served with hot gravy. Optional ingredients in this dish includes vegetables and greens.
- Fish / Mutton / Chicken Saaru - A very famous local curry made mainly from assorted spices and meats. Often mixed and eaten with Ragi Balls and Rice or Bhakri.

Chutneys:

- Kaayi chutney- grated coconut ground with dal (kadale) salted and garnished with oil-fried mustard and curry leaves.
- Kaayi chutney (green) - grated coconut ground with dal, green chillies and coriander salted and garnished with oil-fried mustard and curry leaves.
- Kaayi chutney (red) - grated coconut chutney ground with dal and dried red chillies salted and garnished with oil-fried mustard and curry leaves.
- Maavina chutney - grated raw green mango ground with grated coconut, dal, salted and garnished oil-fried mustard and curry leaves.
- Heerekai chutney - grated ridge-gourd peel ground with grated coconut, dal, salted and garnished oil-fried mustard and curry leaves.
- Eerulli chutney - grated onion peel ground with grated coconut, dal, salted and garnished oil-fried mustard and curry leaves.
- Uddina Bele chutney - Fried Black Gram Dal with Tamarind, Red Chillies, salted and garnished oil-fried mustard and curry leaves.

Kosambari

A salad prepared using simple ingredients such as lentils, green chillies and finely chopped coriander. The dish is generally finished with a tempering of mustard seeds and asafoetida. Common variants include kosambari made with the above ingredients in addition to grated cucumber or carrot.

Sweets:

- Huggi - cooked rice and kadale or hesaru, with coconut, milk, elakki and sweetened with bella (jaggery)
- Ginnu - sweetened, flavoured and steam boiled colostrum of cow, buffalo or goat
- Kajjaya - Rice and jaggery fritters deep fried in Ghee.
- Kadabu - deep fried (kari kadubu) or steamed pastry with assorted sweet filling.
- Karjikaayi - deep fried crisp pastry with dry sweet filling.

