

GOAN CUISINE

INTRODUCTION:

Goa is famous because of its 451 years history and dominant culture. Mughals ruled all over the India but Portuguese had a strong hold over Goa and thus similarity in cuisine. Port city of Goa up the mandvi river traded in everything from Chinese silk to asafetida so it was named as 'GOA DOURADA' or Golden Goa.

Culinary traditions in goa are regionally divided in to **hindu, muslim and latin catholic**. Hindu's are mainly fish and rice eating. Konkan farmers and fisherman are mainly hindu by caste. Muslims are pilaf eaters. Latin catholic cook their food in olive oil and are mainly beef, sea food and pork eaters. The intermingling of Arabian, Portuguese and native cultures is reflected in the cuisine of Goa, which is a unique blend of richness and simplicity- the constantly recurring notes being struck by the fish and the coconut. Goa is also unique in the sense that this mixture of East and West co-exists in a friendly and peaceful lifestyle. The best of both worlds has been absorbed and knit into a culture very distinctly different from that of any other part of India. This is well reflected in its cuisine.

Goan cuisine has a number of influences from its Hindu foundations, contemporary methods of culinary art, and 400 years of Portuguese rule. The state experiences a large number of footfalls from both domestic and international tourists and they visit the place for its pristine seashores and momentous historic locations. Therefore, Goan cuisine plays a key role in its tourism industry and has achieved global fame.

People of Portugal fetched tomatoes, potatoes, guavas, pineapples, and cashew nuts from Brazil to Goa. Till the latter part of the 20th century, potatoes and tomatoes were not acknowledged by the Hindus. The most significant segment of spices in Goa, the chili, was put into use by the Portuguese which turned out to be very popular. All the aforesaid ingredients were not used in Goan food prior to the arrival of the Portuguese settlers.

Goan food today is a fusion of many cuisines, and in many ways it brought the colonizer and the colonized closer. Goan food drew on different influences – Arab, Konkan, Malabar, Malaysian, Portuguese, Brazilian, French, African and even Chinese. There are many dishes common to Goa, Daman, Kerala, Mangalore (other areas of Konkan), Malaysia, Macau, Portugal, Brazil and Sri Lanka. The history of the evolution of Goan cuisine not only helps us understand the complex processes of assimilation and exclusion, it also serves as an exemplar of Indian multi-culturalism.

BRAHMIN AND CHRISTIAN CULINARY VARIATION:

BRAHMIN: Hindu Goans use less heat, tamarind and Kokum for souring and jaggery for sweetening. They use asafoetida, fenugreek, curry leaves, mustard and urad dal. It is not very spicy, less amount of onion and garlic is used. It also includes more use of vegetables, lentils, pumpkins, gourds, bamboo shoots, roots, etc. It is less oily and the medium of cooking is coconut oil. *In the early period the Hindus of Goa did not eat tomato. Even today most Goan Hindu families do not cook tomato, aubergine, radish and papaya on festive religious occasions when they prepare 'food for the Gods' since these vegetables are from 'across the seas' and considered polluting.*

Goan Saraswat Brahmin sub-castes, Daivajna Brahmins are mostly fish eaters. Broadly they can be considered as facultative vegeterians, i.e. they eat fish and chicken on most days, while eating strict vegetarian (no meat, no-fish diet) food on some days, due to religious reasons. Fish and meat in their diet is considered as non-vegetarian. On the other hand other Brahmins belonging to *Pancha Dravida* category are strictly vegetarian. Their vegetarian cuisine is unique. The rest of the Goan Hindus are non-vegetarian, but unlike the Catholic Goans, do not eat beef or pork, due to religious beliefs.

PORTUGESE / CHRISTIAN: During the Portuguese period (1510-1961) many traditional habits were discarded, new ones added and recipes circulated and modified to suit the needs of the rulers and the ruled or the availability of certain ingredients. Many new food products and customs percolated into Goan society. Among these was the use of potato by people of all communities in making savouries such as *samosas, batawadas, potato baji* as well as in meat and fish recipes.

The new food products brought to India changed the lifestyle of the people, sometimes in a subtle way. Many of the food producing plants became an integral part of the local flora, altering the economy and food habits of the people. Few realize, for instance, that chillies which are widely used in Goan and Indian cuisine were a stranger to our continent until the Portuguese introduced them from the Americas. **Chillies**, particularly the dried red variety, are used widely to add pungency, flavour, texture, marinate meats and fish and to make the world famous Goan *humon* – prawn/fish curry and other curries. They are also used in *tempero* (a paste of spices, chillies, garlic, turmeric ground with vinegar) popularly known among Goans as *recheio/recheio-masala* to stuff fish or to make the famous Goan pork *sorpotel*, prawn/ fish or pork *balchão*, while the green variety is used to make chutneys, pickles, give pungency and taste to vegetables, meats and fish.

Rulers, merchants, missionaries, Portuguese women in India, exiles, slaves and others, all played different roles in introducing various types of food, knowledge of food habits and for circulating recipes. It has often been pointed out that the nuns of the Convento da Santa Monica in the old city of Goa were responsible for introducing Portuguese recipes and for creating the Indo-Portuguese recipes – particularly sweets like *dedos da dama*, *petas de freiras* (similar to the French sweet, *pets de none*), *pasteis de natas*, *pasteis de Santa Clara*. These conventual sweets are still served as dessert in some Goan Christian homes on festive occasions. Some of the Indo-Portuguese recipes created by them are a blend of Portuguese and Goan recipes or Portuguese recipes adjusted to meet the needs of the time and availability of ingredients. In addition to sweets, the Portuguese brought to Goa their *guisados*, *caldei-radas* and *assados* prepared with fish and meats. Dishes such as *racheiada*, *caldeirada* and *cabidela* reflect the legacy of the state's colonial heritage

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CUISINE:

- The basic components of Goan cooking are, not surprisingly, local products. The claim that every part of the **coconut** is used for something is not an idle one. Coconut oil, milk and grated coconut flesh flavour many dishes. *Groundnut oil is also sometimes used as a cooking medium.*
- Although coconut is an essential part of the everyday cooking, there is no coconut in several of the popular delicacies like *rissois de camarao*, *sopa grossa*, *balchao* and *vindaloo*, and that wedding favourite, *caldo*.
- **Rice** is the staple food here.
- Meats such as **beef, pork and chicken** are widely used. Beef and pork is not consumed by the Hindu community but relished among the Christians. All the parts of pork are used. *Sorpotel* is one of Goa's most famous meat dishes, and is prepared from pork, liver, heart and kidney, all of which are diced and cooked in a thick and very spicy sauce flavoured with *fenni*.
- **Chouricos** are spicy pork sausages, which owe more than a passing debt to Portuguese culinary traditions. Goan sausages are prepared using well salted and spiced cubes of pork. Once they have been made, the strings of sausages are dried in the sun and then hung above the fire where they are gradually smoked. Traditionally they are eaten during the monsoon, when fish is scarce. In preparation, they are soaked in water and then usually fried and served with a hot sauce and rice.
- Goa is famous for its **seafood**, the 'classic' dish being fish curry and rice. Kingfish is probably the most common item, on the menu, but there are many others including pomfret, doumer, shark, tuna and mackerel. Among the excellent shellfish available are crabs, prawns, tiger prawns and lobster. Other seafood includes squid and mussels. Besides fresh seafood, dried and salted fish dishes are also highly prized by Goans.
- **Toddy**, the sap from the coconut palm, is also used to make vinegar and to act as a yeast substitute. Coconut palm **fenni** and cashewnut fenni are very popularly used for marination and to wash down the meals.
- Another important product of the palm is **jaggery**, a dark colored sweetener that is widely used in preparing Goan sweetmeats. Jaggery made from sugarcane is also used which has got a lighter colour compared to the coconut palm one.
- Goan cooking generally involves **liberal amounts of spices**, too, giving dishes a strange taste and distinctive aroma. The most commonly used include cumin, coriander, chilies, garlic and turmeric. Traditional Goan cooking calls for plenty of muscle and time. **Grinding** is always part of the recipe and the nicer the dish the longer it takes to make.
- **Chillies**, particularly the dried red variety, are used widely to add pungency, flavour, texture, marinate meats and fish. The green variety is also used to make chutneys, pickles, give pungency and taste to vegetables, meats and fish.

- The Christians prefer to use **vinegar**, while the Hindus use **kokum and tamarind** to get the tang in their respective cuisines.
- Particular combinations of spices have led to a number of styles of cooking, which have subtly differing flavours-masala, **vindaloo and balchao** being some of the most famous.
- The northerners of Goa grind their coconuts and masalas (spices) individually while the southern Goans like to grind them together, and then pass it through a fine muslin cloth to retain the goodness.
- **Bakers** regularly do the rounds of each village in Goa, pushing bicycles laden with fresh bread and either rings a bell or hooting a horn on the handlebars to let the villagers know they've arrived. There are several types of local bread. *Uned*, a small round crusty rolls, which are usually served fresh from the bakery, and an ideal alternative to rice when eating, say, a sorpotel. Traditionally fenni was used to ferment the bread dough.
- Particularly famous and unique in goa are **sanna**, which are steamed rolls made with rice flour, ground coconut and coconut toddy, which are ideal to eat with any of the spicy Goan dishes.
- **Sweets:** Offering an impeccable blend of European extravagance and simplicity of Konkan cooking, the sweetmeats of Goa are a must try for every holidayer. Although, the desserts are kept simple in Konkan, it takes a lot of effort to create those culinary magic dishes. Many of Goa's most popular cakes, including the rich '**Bebinca**', were developed in Goa's convents and monasteries, where time was never in short supply. Their sweets usually have the same core ingredients of rice flour, coconut milk, palm jaggery, semolina and eggs, from which a formidable array of sweets and savouries are created.

EQUIPMENTS USED IN THE GOAN CUISINE:

- **Clay Pots:** Most of the Goan cooking is done in the earthen pots. The use of the earthen pots improve the flavour of the food and in these vessels it does not get spoilt easily. A classic example is the Goan fish curry, which when kept for a day in this vessel tastes even better.
- **Brass utensils:** Pots and pans of brass are commonly used in cooking desserts. This is because of the fact that the thick and heavy bottom metal prevents the sticking of jiggery and coconut to the bottom.
- **Varn:** It is a grinding stone which has a round stone that is moved around in circular motions to grind and make pastes of spice.
- **Dantem:** This equipment is used for grinding the cereals. It consists of two wheel shaped stones fitted on top of each other. The stone on top has a hole in the centre in which the grains have to be put. The top stone is rotated and the friction cause the grains to be ground into flour, which collects all round the stone.
- **Doules (Coconut spoons):** A very economical use of the coconut shells is as a spoon for cooking. The shells are split into halves, polished, and attached to along wooden handle to make a spoon.
- **Moltulem:** these are earthen ware dishes that are traditionally used for serving the prepared dishes. They give an attractive and ethnic appeal to the Goan food and also helps to retain the flavour and aroma of the food.
- **Vantleo and confro:** Vantleo means the uniform moulds made out of Stainless steel. Confro is an air – tight steaming chamber.

HAVING A GOAN MEAL:

- *Pez*, a rice gruel with leftover curries and pickles is a common mid – morning meal. Food for daily consumption consists of rice, curry, fish/vegetables and pickles depending on the economic status. Goans are basically non-vegetarian. Fish is an important item of their diet.
- Hindus, unlike their Christian counterparts, are usually vegetarian and do not consume fish and meat (chicken and mutton) during religious festivals.
- Rice is eaten in different forms. Rice for meals is boiled in water and drained. Hindus cook it without salt. A *canjee* is also made of rice. In the past canjee was cooked in a container called *modki* and was popular as breakfast or as a light meal when ill. Rice flour is also used to make a variety of roasted breads.
- Curry is made of coconut juice or by grinding coconut shavings to a fine paste with chillies, garlic, turmeric, dry coriander and tamarind.

- Hindus cook their food in copper, aluminium or stainless steel vessels while the Christians (in colonial times) used fired clay vessels. Today, aluminium and stainless steel vessels are common to people of all communities as they are easily available and durable and firewood has been replaced by gas as a cooking fuel. 'Food for the Gods' meant for religious occasions, particularly among the upper classes, is cooked in special vessels that are kept apart.
- Among the Hindus and Muslims the food is served and eaten together – rice, curry, vegetables/ fish and pickles. This is followed by drinking *kaddi made of an extract of kokum* in a container called *peló*. The upper classes drank coconut juice with kokum in a *vati*. In the past, sweets were generally not eaten after meals. Hindus of all classes eat their food with fingers without messing up the rest of the palm. Therefore, it is common practice to wash hands before and after meals. Earlier the upper classes used metal spoons to serve food while the poorer classes used spoons made of coconut shell.
- Among the Christians, the manner of serving food reflected the class they belonged to. The lower classes eat food sitting on the floor or on a low stool known as *bakin*. Food is cooked in fired clay pots and eaten in clay or metal plates, or cheap quality porcelain ones. *Doules* (spoons) made of coconut shells were common in Christian kitchens. The upper classes and even middle class Christians ate their meals sitting on chairs around a table in the dining room/hall or in a passage near the kitchen. The table is covered with a tablecloth or a synthetic material. On festive occasions the tablecloth would be of white damask, Chinese embroidery or crochet lace. This class mainly used porcelain dishes to serve and eat food.
- On festive occasions, Chinese blue and white pattern porcelain and other imported porcelain is used. Upper class Christians use cutlery to eat which is placed according to the custom in Portugal, usually the French or Russian style – the fork on the left, the knife on the right and the spoon in front besides a dessert spoon. Separate glasses for water and wine are arranged on the table on festive occasions. In colonial times, among the upper class Christians, domestic staff served food, course by course – soup, fish followed by meat, vegetables, rice and curry. It was customary to eat a dessert or fruit after a meal.

DISHES IN GOAN CUISINE:

Caldo verda: This is a Goan soup that is thickened by adding mashed potatoes and is garnished by juliennes of spinach. It is usually served during the Christmas feasts.

Fish Curry: A popular version of fish curry in Goa is the *Ambot-Tik* which literally translates to Sour-Spicy. The sour comes from the use of the petals of the tart '*Kokum solam*'. Known to be a cooling agent and honoured for its medicinal value, the red-coloured fruit of '*Kokum*' is the real king of Goan cuisine.

Grounded coconut is mixed with red chillies, peppercorns, cumin seeds, coriander seeds, turmeric powder, garlic and ginger to make a fine paste. Sliced onions, tamarind juice and green chillies are added along with a cup of water and salt. The mixture is cooked and dried mango and kokum are added in process. Later, fish is added and is cooked till ready. The dish is a hot favourite of all seafood lovers.

Fish Recheado: *Recheado* means stuffed in Portuguese and in this recipe, a fresh whole fish, usually a mackerel or pomfret, is slit down the center and stuffed with a spicy red paste, after which it is shallow fried. Mackerel Recheado is one of Goa's most famous dishes. Other fish can be used as well. *The fiery-red Recheado masala made of kashmiri red chillies, garlic, cumin, peppercorns and tamarind is ground into a smooth but thick paste using vinegar.* It is very versatile and can be used to prepare many other Goan seafood dishes. The Recheado masala can be made and stored in an airtight container for months as the vinegar in it acts as a preservative.

Fish Caldeirada: This is a mildly flavoured offering in which fish or prawns are cooked into a kind of stew with vegetables, and often flavoured with wine.

Fish Caldeen: It is a thick fish curry made by grinding coconut, turmeric, ginger, garlic, cloves and cumin. Rice is the thickening agent used in the dish and the base of the gravy is coconut milk.

Prawn Balchao: Prawn Balchão is another Goan favourite. Brought to Goa by the Portuguese, Balchão originated in Macao, where it is called *Balichao*. Balchao is a method of cooking either fish or prawns in a dark red and tangy sauce. Balchao is almost like pickling and can be made days in advance without reheating. The traditional Balchao uses a paste made from dried shrimp known as

'galmo' in Konkani spices and feni. This paste is added to fresh prawns, onion, spices and oil to prepare a prawn balchao. Balchao is often bottled and eaten as an accompaniment in meals.

Mergolho: This is made from pumpkin and papaya and breadfruit curry.

Kotkotem: This is a dish made out of several vegetables, pulses and coconut is a favourite dish among the Goan Hindus.

Pez: This consists of Goan rice (also known as Ukade rice that are reddish in color and thick grained), water and salt to taste. This is usually eaten with pickle or Papads or dried roasted fish or prawn curry (very thick). Pez is very popular in Goan homes and usually eaten at around 11.00 am everyday.i.e, it is a mid – morning meal.

Pork Vindaloo: Pork is a must for any festive occasion in Goa and the most famous preparation is the vindaloo. There are diverse interpretations of the etymology for this word one being 'vinho' for wine, 'alhos' for garlic (Portuguese), 'viande' and 'aloo' for meat and potato (French and Indian). It is a spicy concoction, lots of red chilies, garlic, cooked with chunks of pork, Goa vinegar, and hard palm jaggery and is best enjoyed with plain boiled rice.

Sorpotel: Sorpotel is unarguably the essence of Goan Christian cuisine. Adapted from the Portuguese dish of **Sarabulho*, it is served traditionally at Christmas and on feast days. Sorpotel is one of those classic dishes that truly highlights the melange of Goan and Portuguese cultures in the cuisine of this state - Goan because of the generous use of spices; Portuguese because of the use of vinegar, which is hardly seen elsewhere.

**Sarabulho* in its original form consisted of pork meat, liver, ears, tail and limbs. Only a few spices were added to the cooking. Goan Christians discarded the ears, tail, limbs, added tempero paste and called it sorpotel (sarapatel)

Sorpotel is prepared from pork, liver, heart and kidney, all of which are diced and cooked in a thick and very spicy sauce favoured with red chilies, cinnamon, cloves bathed in tangy toddy vinegar, which is needed to balance the strong taste of *pig's blood*: another traditional ingredient of this revered dish. Sorpotel, like balchao, keeps for several days, and is actually considered to taste better if left for three to four days before being reheated.

Chouricos (Spicy Goan Sausages): Chouricos are spicy pork sausages, which owe more than a passing debt to Portuguese (*chouricos de rien*) culinary traditions. Goan sausages are prepared used well salted and spiced cubes of pork. Once they have been made, the strings of sausages are dried in the sun and then hung above the fire where they are gradually smoked. Traditionally they are eaten during the monsoon, when fish is scarce. To prepare them, they are soaked in water and then usually fried and served with a hot sauce and rice.

Chicken Cafreal: A Goan dish of tribal origin is *cafreal*. It was named after the African soldiers or *Kaffirs* who brought it to Goa centuries ago. Today, the dish is made by marinating pieces of chicken in a paste made of spices, chilies, garlic and ginger and lemon juice and then deep-fried or shallow fries till dry. The result is rather dry, but spicy dish. This is the equivalent of Portuguese-style grilled chicken and the sauce it is marinated in tastes a lot like the famous Portuguese Peri-peri sauce.

Chicken (Galina) Xacuti: Xacuti makes use of plenty of spices like nutmeg, coriander leaves, red and green chillies, ginger and cloves. Additionally tamarind and lemon juice make for a pungent curry. The base of the gravy is made from grated coconut which is roasted and then ground with the spices to make a rich, dark gravy. The recipe can also be made with mutton, pigeon, lamb or fish.

Rissois are snacks or starters, which are made from prawns, fried in pastry shells.

Beef Assado and Pork Assado: There are different variations of this dish. Usually pork or beef are used in the preparation. Assado which means roast is prepared by first boiling the meat till it is almost cooked and the water used to cook it is almost dry. It is then sliced and fried with Ghee or oil. This is very popular as it does not get spoilt easily and does not involve much trouble to cook.

A very simple way of preparing roast beef is by first marinating the beef cut into blocks in ginger garlic paste and a little of chilli paste ground in vinegar. In a pot onions are fried in oil and to it is added the marinated blocks of beef. After frying for some, time sufficient quantity of water is added. Then cinnamon, cloves and pepper is added. Green chillies are also added. It is then allowed to cook fully. When the water is almost dry it is removed from fire. The beef is then sliced and fried.

Sanna: This is a traditional steamed rice preparation popular among Catholics and Hindus alike and prepared by them on several special occasions. On the outside Sannas would appear to be somewhat like idlis but they are totally different in texture as well as taste.

Sannas are prepared by mixing ground rice, grated coconut and toddy and a bit of sugar to aid the fermentation process. The mixture is kept overnight to ferment. Early in the morning, the mixture is put in uniform moulds called “vantleo” made of stainless steel. These moulds are then placed in a large copper vessel with an air tight lid called “confro” for steaming. After a certain amount of time dictated by the size of the mould they are removed and the next batch goes in. Freshly made Sannas are nice and soft in texture and slightly sweet in taste. Another variety is prepared by mixing Coconut Jaggery in the batter and the process of making them is similar to the plain variety.

Putte: To make this dish, a paste of rice flour stuffed with grated coconut and jiggery is wrapped in a jackfruit leaf to resemble a cone and steamed. The dish is commonly used by the Hindus during the Nag Panchami and by the Christians for the Novem.

Shevyo: it is made from the rice dough, previously steamed and then pressed in the vermicelli press to make fine vermicelli like strands, which are eaten with a mixture of grated coconut and jaggery. Shevyo is usually made to mark the harvesting season in Goa.

Bebinca: The most famous Goa's sweetmeats is bebinca also known as bibik. *There is a legend that says that Bebinca was made by a nun called Bibiona of the Convento da Santa Monica in Old Goa. She made it with seven layers to symbolise the seven hills of Lisbon and Old Goa and offered it to the priest. But, he found it too small and thus the layers were increased. There are some claims that it is made with 20 layers. But, ideally it is 14 or 16 layers.* According to some culinary experts this is a modified version of bebingka made in Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia.

It is a wonderful concoction made from layer upon layer of coconut pancakes. The extract of coconut milk is added to flour, sugar, eggs and ghee and other delectable ingredients are used to make this delicacy. Each scrumptious layer has to be baked before the next one is added, traditionally it has 16 layers but can be made with less or more. The dessert is baked in a specially-made clay oven, with hot coal as a source of heat, placed above. Though the process of making bebinca is tedious process the dessert is a mouth-melting dream.

Dodol: Dodol is another famous Goan sweet, traditionally eaten at Christmas time, and made with rice flour, coconut milk, black jiggery of coconut palm and cashew nuts. It is usually cooled in a flat pan and served in slices, and is very sweet. (The Hindus call it *Alvo* and use a lighter colour jaggery made of sugarcane).

Batica: Batica is a Goan sweet dish or dessert is prepared by first preparing a batter of grated coconuts, rawa, sugar, eggs and butter. The batter is mixed thoroughly and kept overnight. It is then poured into a baking dish and baked the next morning.

Some common spice mix used in the Goan Cookery: (04 pax)

Source: Cooking with the Indian Masters (PRASHAD)

Balchao:

- 20 whole red chillies
- 4 sticks of cinnamon (1 inch each)
- 15 green cardamom
- 15 cloves
- 03 gm black peppercorn
- 03 gm cumin
- 10 gm garlic
- 30 gm ginger
- 150 ml malt vinegar

Goan fish curry:

- 15 whole red chillies
- 15 gm coriander seeds
- 05gm cumin seeds
- 05 gm turmeric
- 05 gm garlic
- 20 gm ginger
- 40 gm tamarind

Vindaloo:

- 08 whole red chillies
- 4 sticks of cinnamon (1 inch each)
- 03 gm cumin
- 10 gm coriander seeds
- 03 gm turmeric
- 10 gm garlic
- 30 gm ginger
- 100 ml malt vinegar

Sorpotel:

- 05 whole red chillies
- 05 gm black pepper corn
- 03 gm cumin
- 03 cloves
- 03 green cardamom
- 05 gm garlic
- 30 gm ginger

Fenni:

An accompaniment to wash down all Goan food is the locally brewed feni. The Goans probably first distilled this from the fermented sap of the coconut flower-stalk, but later they also made it from the fruit of the cashew tree which the Portuguese had brought to the state with them. Though other forms of liquor are readily available across the state, the Goans are as emotional about their feni as they are about their food.

There are two types of feni, both of which are made from local ingredients. Coconut or palm feni is made from the sap drawn from the severed shoots on a coconut tree. In Goa this is known as toddy, and the men who collect it are toddy tapers. Cashew or caju feni, on the other hand, can only be made during the cashew season in late March and early April.

Undoubtedly Goa's most famous triple, double distilled perfectly clear and fearfully potent (has an alcoholic strength of around 30% to 35% proof), this is a drink which deserves respect.
