HYDERABAD CUISINE

INTRODUCTION

Hyderabadi cuisine is a very sumptuous part of the Andhra Pradesh food. Hyderabadi cuisine is a princely legacy of the Nizams of Hyderabad, India. The city was founded by the Sultans of Golconda, who has developed its own cuisine over the centuries. It is heavily influenced by Turkish (Biryani), Arabic (Haleem), Mughlai and Tandoori, with considerable influence of the spices and herbs of the native Telugu and Marathwada cuisine.

Hyderabadi Cuisine could be found in the kitchens of the former Hyderabad State that includes Telangana region, Marathwada region and Hyderabad Karanataka region. The Cuisine also contains city specific specialities like Aurangabad (Naan Qalia), Gulbarga (Tahari), Bidar (Kalyani Biryani) etc.

The Cuisine of Hyderabad has been influenced by various regional and religious cuisines, both Indian and Foreign, despite which it has been able to create an identity of its own. It has also been able to contribute towards making Indian cuisine popular worldwide.

The Masalas or the rich blend of herbs, spices and condiments give the dishes a base, or what is popularly known as *"Gravy"*. Some of these blends are a well-kept secret that pass only down the family line or from the *Ustad (Teacher)* to his *Shagird (Pupil).* The head cooks or the *"Khansas"* were an asset to the house hold, and were treated with due respect. The word *"Nawabi"* is as synonymous with the Hyderabadi cuisine as *"Shahi"* is with Luknowi. These terms conjure delicacies that are rich in taste and texture with mouth-watering aromas.

What makes the Hyderabadi Cuisine special is the use of special ingredients, carefully chosen and cooked to the right degree. The addition of a certain Herb, Spice, Condiment, or an amalgamation of these adds a unique taste and texture to the dish. The herbs and spices used and the method of preparation gives the dish its name.

HISTORY

The cuisine is a descendant of the Nizams. A 400-year history is behind the culinary delights of Hyderabadi food. It evolved in the kitchens of the Nizams, who elevated food to a sublime art form. Hyderabad cuisine is highly influenced by Mughals and partially by Arabic, Turkish and Irani food where rice, wheat and spices are widely used to great effect. It is also influenced by the native Telugu and Marathwada food, bringing in a unique taste to the dishes.

In the past, the food was called Ghizaayat. The cuisine is linked to the nobles, who religiously maintain the authenticity of the past, and the recipes are a closely guarded secret. The royal cooks are known as Khansamas, highly regarded by the nobles.

FEATURES OF THE CUISINE

- It is a blend of Mughlai and North Indian cuisine, with an influence of the spices and herbs of the native Telugu food.
- Traditional utensils made of copper, brass, earthen pots are used for cooking. Food is even cooked on heated stone slab.
- All types of cooking involve the *direct use of fire*. There is a saying in Hyderabad, *cooking patiently or ithmenaan se is the key*; slow-cooking is the hallmark of Hyderabadi cuisine. The Slow-cooking method has its influence from the Dum Pukht method used in Awadhi cuisine.
- The cooking medium used is ghee.
- The cuisine emphasises the use of ingredients that are carefully chosen and cooked to the right degree and time. Utmost attention is given to picking the right kind of spices, meat, rice, etc. Therefore, an addition of a certain herb, spice, condiment, or combination of all these add a distinct taste and aroma.
- The key flavours are of coconut, tamarind, peanuts and sesame seeds which are extensively used in many dishes. The key difference from the North Indian cuisine is the presence of dry coconut and tamarind in its cuisine. Some typical ingredients include Betel roots (Pan ki jad) and Stone flower (patthar ke phool).

- Of all the Muslim cuisine, Hyderabadi is the only cuisine the sub-continent that can boast of a major vegetarian element. This has much to do with the local influences.
- The Hyderabadi meal is never complete without the bread from the kilns of the local bakers. The breads from this cuisine are equally popular, be it rich "Sheermal" or "lukmi" (bread stuffed with savoury mince meat). Bread is not only an accompaniment to the meal but also forms a base for a popular sweet dish "Double Ka Meetha".
- In Hyderabad, presentation of food is also important which reflect richness of food and culture. Royal dining Hall was called *Shahi Dastarkhana* where royal families used to relax and party on the delicious Hyderabadi cuisine.

EQUIPMENTS USED IN THE CUISINE

- *Heated stone slab (Pathaar):* This was used in the making of kebabs. The stone was heated using live coals
- *Taatee (sigri):* It consists of a metal framework that is heated by coal. The meat pieces are grilled on the framework.
- *Tandoor:* A tandoor is a cylindrical clay oven used in cooking and baking. The heat for a tandoor was traditionally generated by a charcoal fire or wood fire, burning within the tandoor itself, thus exposing the food to both live-fire, radiant heat cooking, and hot-air, convection cooking
- *Skewers (saliyans):* The meat was cooked over the flame by either coating the skewers with the meat or by piercing the meat with the skewer.

HYDERABADI MEAL

Shahi Dastarkhan is the dining place, where food is served and eaten. A *chowki* is a low table, instead of a dining table and cotton mattresses for squatting and bolsters for the back rest. The Dastarkhan is revered in the noble household.

HYDERABADI FOOD

BIRYANI:

Hyderabadi Biryani is Hyderabad's most famous meat-and-rice dish; the Nizams served some 26 varieties of biryanis for their guests. An authentic Hyderabad meal invariably includes a mutton biryani. Hyderabadi Biryanis incorporating chicken, lamb or vegetables instead of mutton are also popular. Some are delicate in taste, some intoxicatingly aromatic, some flavoured with saffron, some flavoured with cream and others with rose water or screwpine flower water. 'Dum' style of cooking is followed to cook Biryanis. The types are as follows:

- *Hyderabadi Biryani* - a traditional celebration meal of lamb and rice.
- *Kachche*- gosht ki biriyani - raw meat is stir fried with spices(masalas) for couple of minutes and then covered with rice and put in the Dum Pukht (slow oven).
- *Hyderabad Zafrani Biryani* - Saffron is soaked and mixed with the rice at the time it is put in the Dum Pukht.

HYDERABADI HALEEM:

Haleem is a seasonal delicacy of wheat, meat and cooked for hours to a porridge-like paste. This traditional wheat porridge has its roots in Arabia, known as harees. Haleem is a seasonal dish which is made during Ramzan (Ramadan). The high calorie haleem is an ideal way to break the ramzan fast. Haleem means patience, because it takes long hours to prepare (often a whole day) and served in the evenings. It is a popular starter at Hyderabadi Muslims weddings.

KHORMA, SHORBA and KHALIA:

These are the non-vegetarian curries made of meat. These are the pride of Hyderabadi cusine apart from Biryanis. The curries are distinguished based on colour, flavor and consistencies. *Khormas* have a light shade of red. *Shorbas* had a soup like consistency and are bright red in colour. *Khalia* ranges from dry to thick gravy-like and ranges from dark brown to dark green in colour.

***PATHAR-KA-GOSHT*:**

Mutton/lamb seared on a stone slab found in Hyderabad.

BAGHARA BAINGAN :

Stuffed Eggplants, a delicacy where tender and fresh brinjals are stuffed with grounded peanut-coconut mixture and cooked in a rich and creamy paste.

MIRCHI KA SAALAN:

A dish that is made of any type of Mirchi (green chilli or Jalapenos) or banana peppers etc which is not too spicy or fiery. This is a traditional Hyderabad salan (gravy) made in a shallow wide flat bottomed handi. The salan is sealed in this handi and kept on low fire to cook with all the flavors trapped inside to give that authentic rich taste. The mirchi ka salan recipe stands out from the bunch of Chilli recipes from Hyderabad (capital city of Andhra). Whole green chillies (along with stems) are simmered in sesame-peanut and coconut spicy sauce. The dish is easy to prepare and has a refreshingly pleasing taste.

PAAYA NAHARI:

This is a typical item of Hyderabadi cuisine. It is a dish made from trotters. A rather unusual and typical hyderabadi recipe. The *paaya* (trotters) are boiled for a long time (normally overnight) with spices and then strained. It is normally served for breakfast along with breads.

MURGH NIZAMI:

A semi – dry chicken 'masala' cooked with yoghurt, nuts (cashewnut and peanut) and coconut and sunflower and seesame seeds. The gravy is yellow coloured.

MURGH BADAMI:

Murgh Badami is chicken made from cream and almonds and garnished with chopped almonds.

DALCHA GOSHT:

This is basically a sourish lamb stew, simmered in a lentil puree. It is a common practice to combine meat and lentils to make it a complete nutritive dish. Meat is cooked along with chana dal and whole spices, and braised along with yoghurt until the meat is soft. The dish is then tempered wth ghee, garlic, and whole red chillies.

CHAPA PULUSU:

This is one of the most famous dishes in Hyderabadi cuisine. It is afish preparation made by marinating the fish in turmeric, salt and garlic. The gravy is made by cooking coconut milk, tempered with curry powder and whole red chillies, and flavoured with turmeric and tomatoes.

KHUBANI KA MEETHA:

Apricot Pudding, in which dry apricots are stewed in honey and topped with almond and cream. The original recipe is a translucent liquid.

DOUBLE KA MEETHA:

Bread Pudding topped with dry fruits, a derivative of mughlai dessert Shahi tukre. Here the bread is fried and soaked in sugar syrup before further processing

GIL – E - FIRDAUS:

This is a type of dessert made by cooking grated white marrow with milk and sugar, and thickened with sago seeds and khoya. This commonly flavoured with cardamom powder and rose essence, and garnished with slivered almonds and pistachio.

SHIKAMPURI KEBAB:

Shikampur Kebab (mutton mince cooked with cumin,cloves and cinnamon and bengal gram lentil until a proper binding is formed and stuffed with cottage cheese/ egg slice, mint, onions and green chillies) and gently grilled on a griddle or tawa with pure ghee till pink. Shikampur means 'belly-full' referring to the stuffing in the centre of the kebab.

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