



# Indian Gastronomy

*A handbook of Indian Regional Cooking*



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# INTRODUCTION

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Indian cuisine has always been regarded as one of the finest and highly diversified cuisines of the world and the medley of flavours found across the subcontinent is definitely, not the only reason behind it. The melange of regional cuisines with their distinctiveness in terms of ingredients, cooking methods, traditional utensils, serving styles, religious values have added up to a great extent to the above cause. Be it the simple rustic cuisine of the Northern Mountain regions or the spicy flavourful dishes of Southern Plateaus, highly classical vegetarian cooking of the west, or the seafood culture of the eastern coast each of them has contributed to the diversities of Indian culinary heritage. If we look at the ancient culinary traditions of India, it was highly influenced by the seasonal availability of the ingredients and religious restrictions as per the mention of *Vedas* and *Upanishads* of the Bharat Barsha (present-day India). Such types of influences can be seen in the culinary traditions of Kerala, Maharashtra and Gujarat till date. Be it the *Sadya* meal of Kerala, Marathi *Pangat* or the *Satvik Jainic* food of Gujarat each reflects the vegetarianism aspects of Vedic food culture. Later with the advent of Islamic culture through a series of invasions from the Middle Eastern countries, the land saw the emergence of a different food culture that had a base of Islamic gastronomic aspects seasoned with the local flavours of India. These include the subtle delicacies of Kashmir, *Shaahi Dastarkhwan* of Awadh (Lucknow) and the *Hyderabadi* food culture of *Nizams*. Further, European influences brought by the Britishers & Portuguese during the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries were a supplementary addition to the gastronomic diversities of the nation. These influences are clearly visible in the food culture of various cities like Goa, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Pondicherry etc. Hence Indian cuisine went through a series of evolvments in the past thousands of years and what we saw today is a rich mixture of ancient regional flavours and the subtle influence of international food culture.