



# Culinary Explorations of India

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## Special Reports

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ETI Head Office (Delhi)  
ETI Agra Branch  
ETI Jaipur Branch  
ETI Cochin Branch  
ETI Wildlife Branch

**In this issue we will focus on amazing Agra with its magnificent Mughal monuments and delectable culinary preparations.**

Indian food is incredibly varied in taste. The unique and strong flavors in Indian cuisine are derived from spices, seasonings and nutritious ingredients such as leafy vegetables, grains, fruits and legumes. Geographical location further influences the style of preparation and type of cuisine.

Indian cuisine has six distinctive tastes – sweet, sour, salty, spicy, bitter and astringent. A well balanced Indian meal achieves this through the use of inventive spice combinations and rich depth of flavor. Side dishes and condiments like chutneys, curries, lentils and pickles enhance the overall flavor and texture of a meal and provide the necessary balance.

The featured cuisine this month is called Avadhi. It is the distinctive cuisine of Uttar Pradesh, where Agra is located, and was honed to perfection to satisfy the palate of the nobility.



The highlights of most visits to Agra are explorations of the incredible monuments, namely Agra Fort and the Taj Mahal.

Begin your day with a detailed tour of the original red sandstone fort of North India - the Agra Fort - built by Emperor Akbar in 1565 A.D. and elaborately embellished by his successors. Now proceed to visit the pride of Agra - the Taj Mahal. Unparalleled in its beauty throughout the world, this white marble mausoleum symbolizes an emperor's love for his queen. After exploring these beautiful monuments, indulge yourself at the Taj Khema restaurant - a stone's throw from the Taj Mahal.



As you savor the delicious Kormas, rich mutton and chicken curries (flavored with saffron and nuts), remember that you are feasting like Indian royalty! Help yourself liberally from a platter of pullao (aromatic rice), garnished with tender green peas, cumin seeds, or onions - the choices are endless.

An absolute must of every Avadhi meal is its impressive variety of kebabs - bite - sized mutton and chicken preparations made from finely minced meat. Ground spices are added to the minced meat which is then cooked to a tender succulence. After enjoying delicious royal cuisine, it is time to explore the marvels of Mughal architecture.

A perfect start would be to visit the Itmad-ud-Daulah and admire the exquisite marble tomb made by Empress Nur Jahan for her father. Ornamented with marble lattice screens and intricate Pietra Dura - marble inlay work - it stands as an eloquent testimony of a daughter's love.

Travel from Itmad-ud-Daulah to the sprawling Mughal Gardens at Mehtab Bagh, to watch the sunset. The sunset view of the Taj Mahal from here is truly spectacular. The royal legacy lives on, woven into the intricate gold thread embroidery adorning a multitude of garments, cushion covers and evening bags.

It can be seen in the fine inlay work on marble, crafted by master artisans who trace their ancestry back to the Mughal era and the skilled craftsmen who created the Taj Mahal.

Myth merges into architectural magnificence at the now deserted red sandstone city of Fatehpur Sikri, about 39 kilometers from Agra. The delicate white marble tomb of Salim

Chisti (the Muslim mystic who gave his blessings to Emperor Akbar for a son), the towering Buland Darwaza, Birbal Bhawan and memories of a remarkable visit that will never fade from your heart. Jodha Bai's Palace are just a few of the monuments which stand as silent sentinels of Akbar's legacy. As you bid farewell to the grand city of Agra, we hope you will carry back

## Chef of the Month



The modest demeanor of **Mahipal Singh Rathore**, the Executive Chef of the Taj View, Agra, doesn't do justice to his culinary capabilities. He is a specialist in Avadhi cuisine and a graduate of the prestigious Institute of Hotel Management, Catering & Technology in Ahmedabad. This keen interest in the culinary arts was kindled at an early age, by his grandmother. Having accumulated accolades and experience over his last two decades at the prestigious Taj group of hotels, he delights patrons at the Taj hotel in Agra, with his mouthwatering recipes. Given below are three recipes from his vast repertoire of Avadhi preparations.

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### Kadhai Paneer:

*(Batons of cottage cheese and capsicum cooked in a wok, with tomatoes and herbs, prominently flavored with coriander seeds).*

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#### Utensils:

- 1 serving dish
- 1 small pan
- 1 wok
- 1 grinder

#### Ingredients:

(All ingredients are easily available at any Indian grocery store in the U.S.)

- Cottage cheese – 24 oz.
- Coriander seeds – 0.2 oz.
- Ginger – 0.6 oz.
- Tomatoes – 24 oz.
- Garam masala powder – 0.2 oz.
- Capsicum – 5 oz.
- Whole red chilies – 5
- Fenugreek leaves – a pinch
- Salt – to taste
- Green coriander – 0.6 oz.
- Clarified butter or oil – 1.41 oz.

#### Preparation:

1. Cut cottage cheese into cubes.
2. Wash capsicums, remove stems, cut into halves, deseed and make juliennes.
3. Scrape, wash and chop two-thirds of the ginger, cut the rest into juliennes for garnishing.
4. Clean, wash and chop the coriander.
5. Grind the red chilies and coriander coarsely in a grinder.
6. Finely chop the tomatoes, spoon two tablespoons of oil into a small pan and heat, then add the chopped tomatoes and cook till the liquid of the tomatoes is reduced and the fat floats on top. Remove the pan from the fire.
7. Heat the oil in a wok, add capsicum and sauté over medium heat for 30 seconds. Add the ground red chilies and coriander seeds, as well as the chopped ginger and stir for 30 seconds.
8. Now add the cooked tomatoes to this mixture, bring to a boil and brown until the fat leaves the masala (cooked spice mixture).
9. Add the cottage cheese and stir gently for two to three minutes.
10. Sprinkle fenugreek and garam masala, stir again. Adjust the seasoning.
11. Move to serving dish, garnish with ginger juliennes and chopped green coriander. Serve hot.

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## Khumb Hara Pyaaz:

*(An exotic mushroom and green onion preparation cooked with yogurt and spices, flavored with cashew nut paste).*

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### Utensils:

- 1 round, thick bottomed pan
- 1 bowl for whisking yogurt
- 1 serving dish
- 1 small pan for cooking onion paste

### Ingredients:

- Fresh mushrooms – 24 oz.
- Spring onions – 24 oz.
- Oil – 6 oz.
- Green cardamoms – 5
- Black cardamoms – 1
- Cloves – 5
- Cinnamon stick – 1
- Bay leaves – 2
- Onion paste – 6 oz.
- Ginger paste – 1 oz.
- Garlic paste – 1 oz.
- Ginger – 1.2 oz.
- Green chilies – 4
- Coriander powder - 0.12 oz.
- Yogurt – 12 oz.
- Salt – to taste
- Fresh green coriander – 0.2 oz.
- Cashew nut paste – 2 oz.

### Preparation:

1. Trim, wash and drain the mushrooms.
2. Wash and cut the spring onions.
3. Scrape, wash and chop two thirds of the ginger, cut the rest into juliennes.
4. Wash green chilies, remove stems, slit, deseed and chop finely.
5. Clean, wash and chop the coriander.
6. Heat one tablespoon of oil in a small pan, and cook the onion paste for two to three minutes or until it becomes light pink in color. Remove pan from fire and keep aside.
7. Whisk yogurt in a bowl.
8. Heat oil in a round, thick bottomed iron cooking vessel, add the green and black cardamoms, cloves, cinnamon stick and bay leaves and sauté over medium heat until it begins to crackle.
9. Add the cooked onion paste, brown for two minutes, now add the ginger and garlic pastes and stir for one more minute. Remove cooking vessel from fire, add the spring onions and replace vessel on fire. Stir for the next five to seven minutes. Remove the pan from the fire and keep aside.
10. Add the whisked yogurt and salt, return the cooking vessel to the heat, add a little water and bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer until the fat leaves the mixture.
11. Now add mushrooms to the cooked mixture above, simmer for two minutes, add the cashew nut paste and bring to a boil.
12. Adjust the seasoning and remove to a serving dish, garnish with chopped coriander and ginger juliennes.
13. Serve hot with plain boiled rice.

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## **Methi Murg:**

*(Chicken with fenugreek)*

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### **Utensils:**

1 round, thick bottomed pan  
1 bowl for whisking yogurt  
1 serving bowl

### **Ingredients:**

Chicken – 2.21 lbs.  
Yogurt – 9 oz.  
Salt – to taste  
Oil – 4 oz.  
Black cardamom – 1  
Green cardamom – 5  
Cloves – 5  
Cinnamon stick – 1  
Bay leaf - 1  
Javitri (mace) – a pinch  
Onions – 12 oz.  
Garlic – 1.2 oz.  
Ginger – 2 oz.  
Green chilies – 6  
Turmeric – 0.12 oz.  
Coriander powder – 0.2 oz.  
Red chili powder – 0.2 oz.  
Tomatoes – 10 oz.  
Fenugreek – 0.4  
Coriander (leaves) – 0.6 oz.

### **Preparation:**

1. Clean, skin and cut the chicken into pieces.
2. Whisk yogurt in a bowl, add salt and put the chicken pieces to soak in this marinade for at least thirty minutes.
3. Peel, wash and chop the onions and peel and chop the garlic.
4. Scrape, wash and chop the ginger, saving some to be cut into juliennes for garnishing.
5. Remove stems from the green chilies, wash, slit, deseed and chop them finely.
6. Wash and chop the tomatoes and coriander leaves.
7. Heat the oil in a round, thick bottomed pan, add both the green and black cardamoms, cloves, cinnamon stick, bay leaf and mace and sauté over medium heat until it begins to crackle.
8. Add onions and sauté over medium heat until golden brown.
9. Now add the chopped ginger, garlic and green chilies, stir for two minutes, then add the turmeric, coriander powder and red chilies and stir for another two minutes.
10. Add the tomatoes and brown the mixture until the fat leaves the mixture, then add marinated chicken along with the marinade and liquid, bring to a boil, cover and simmer until the chicken is almost cooked and the fat leaves the mixture once again.
11. Adjust the seasoning, transfer to a serving dish, sprinkle fenugreek, ginger juliennes and chopped coriander.
12. Serve hot.

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## Resort of the Month

### The Taj Sawai Madhopur Lodge

Located on 12 acres of lush gardens, the Taj Sawai Madhopur Lodge exudes a rustic old world charm and an air of history. Built in 1930 by Jaipur royalty (Sawai Man Singh II), this 81 year-old hunting lodge is one of the finest hotels belonging to the prestigious Taj Group of Hotels.

Conveniently situated just a 20 minute drive away from the popular Ranthambhore National Park, this charming retreat has played host to royals such as Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip. They stayed in the spacious rooms of the deluxe suite used by the King of Jaipur and his personal guests.



The Sawai Madhopur Lodge's offers guests an incredible culinary experience, serving mouth-watering Rajasthani specialties prepared on an open Chula cooking fire. In addition to wildlife safaris, the Taj offers nature walks into the surrounding countryside and its own private gardens. The lodge also schedules colorful cultural performances such as folk dances and puppet shows each evening. Guest can relax and rejuvenate by indulging in Ayurvedic massages and yoga practices.

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## Updates from our Regional offices

### 100 Years of Delhi: heritage walks begin throughout the capital

#### Delhi closer to UNESCO world heritage city status.

As Delhi celebrates its 100 year anniversary as the capital of India, heritage conservation groups are designing guided tours and heritage walks to highlight the most important historical sites in the city. The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) is a non-profit organization designed to involve its members in protecting and conserving India's vast natural, built and cultural heritage. They have now set their sights on Delhi as a heritage tourism destination. The city of Delhi has a long history - the British capital, the foundation of which was laid in December, 1911, was planned by two leading 20th century British architects,



Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, who embedded it with Victorian style grandeur. Today, after a century of growth, its citizens live in an environment where new elements are juxtaposed with old ones. Often centuries-old buildings and groups of buildings lie out of sight behind modern development. Sometimes new growth tends to overshadow the older areas of the city. But these areas and the communities that live in them represent the city's history, tradition, heritage, culture, architecture and craftsmanship.

The Heritage walks take place every weekend and are conducted by experienced and knowledgeable walk-leaders. Visitors are provided with illustrated information material which includes relevant facts about the monuments, a route map etc. Walks are conducted every weekend in the following five areas of Delhi: Chandni Chowk, Nizamuddin, Mehrauli Archaeological Park, Lodi Garden and Hauz Khas.

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## **From Our Agra Office**

### **A R Rahman performs at the Taj Mahal**

Agra's Taj Mahal has always been considered the ultimate symbol of love. And now, music composer AR Rahman has cemented its association with Bollywood by releasing the soundtrack of his upcoming film, Ek Deewana Tha, at the white marble mausoleum.



"The movie has so many romantic songs, so what can be the perfect way to project my songs with Taj as a backdrop. I always want people to recognize my music and this is what I am trying to do (through this album),"

Rahman told reporters. "The film is the perfect expression of love and that's what the songs speak," he added. Rahman was accompanied by the film's cast, Prateik and Amy Jackson.

The album has an interesting mix of romantic and emotional numbers. While two of them are fresh Hindi songs, the remaining five are Hindi versions of original songs sung in Tamil and Telugu. Directed by Gautham Menon, the film revolves around an aspiring filmmaker from Mumbai, who falls in love with a woman from a strict orthodox Christian family.

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## **Jaipur is the place to be on New Year's Eve**

### **Jaipur ranked as Seventh best touring destination**

The Pink City saw an increase in foreign and domestic tourism this New Year's Eve as tons of tourists flocked to the city to ring in the New Year. Luxury hotel and resort operators were thrilled with the turn out, organizing lavish dinners and celebrations to suit every tourist's need. Jaipur is hosting three major events this New Year, Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas, Jaipur Literature Festival and Jaipur International Film Festival. Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas is celebrated in India each January to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of India.



The day commemorates the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in India from South Africa. The Jaipur Literature Festival is held each January, usually in the Hall of Audience and gardens of the Diggi Palace in the city center, and celebrates excellence in Rajasthani, Indian and International writing. The Jaipur International Film Festival is the fastest growing international film festival. It is approaching its fifth year of connecting filmmakers and actors to distributors and audiences across the globe.

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## **From the ETI Wildlife Desk**

### **Wildlife exhibition at IIC**

Rare pictures capturing tiger habitats through the lens of an India Customs official, Vinod Goel, are on display at India International Center from December 8-15. The exhibition is a compilation of pictures taken across India for over 8 years.

"I hope the exhibition becomes an eye opener for the new generation. I want them, not only to love the wildlife, but to see its glory for themselves," said Goel.



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## **From Our Desk at Kochi - God's Own Land**

### **After beaches, Kerala to showcase heritage**

Tourism in Kerala, which has so far targeted beaches, forests and backwaters, will soon showcase the glory of the 3000-year old Muziris port, unveiling the state's heritage to the world. The Muziris Heritage Project, claimed to be the first of its kind in the country, is expected to turn Muziris into a major destination for cultural tourism, Chief Project Consultant Benny Kuriakose said.



Muziris was among the earliest port cities in the world. It is also home to India's first church (Mar Thoma), first mosque (Cheraman Juma Masjid) and the oldest European monument (Portuguese Fort).

Situated on India's south-western coast, Muziris was a prominent city for spice traders. As they did business, they became partners in promoting an early model of cosmopolitanism with Muziris as its global nucleus. Recent and ongoing excavations by archaeologists have yielded evidence of the ancient glory of the place as a hub of commercial activity. The Muziris project is an endeavour to showcase this 3,000 year-old culture in all its plenitude and complexity.

"This project is a walk through 3,000 years of Kerala history. Buddhists, Arabs, Chinese, Jews, Romans, Portuguese, Dutch and British came here. Jews have left two synagogues. We are trying to link all these. the existing muziris and the sites," Kuriakose said.

A series of 27 museums, spread over the heritage region displaying maritime trade, lifestyle, barter system and handicrafts, are being planned and five will be opened next year. Interactive museums are a major component of the project. Life and works of contemporary men and women who made a difference to social life in what was once Muziris will be the subject of some museums. Since Muziris is spread on either banks of Periyar river, efforts were made to deepen canals and construct jetties.

"Since Muziris had links with many countries, we would like to seek the coordination of the these countries with the help of UNSESCO and also try to include Muziris as a World Heritage Site", Kuriakose said.

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## Festival Alerts

### The Desert Festival

The Desert Festival is an annual event organized in the beautiful city of Jaisalmer. This three day festival is held in the month of February and is organized in association with the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation. The Desert Festival represents the rich and colorful Rajasthani folk culture.



During the festival, villagers sing and dance eloquently to the triumphs and the tragedies of the land.

Attractions include traditional gymnasts, mystical snake charmers, entertaining puppet shows and captivating folk music recitals.

Along with this, a number of competitions are held during the festival, including the turban tying competition and longest moustaches competition. It's a fantastic showcase of all things Rajasthani, and is justifiably popular with tourists, both Indian and foreign. Besides the food, the music and the cultural performances, there are camel rides, processions, camel polo, and even a camel tug-of-war. All of it is held against the backdrop of the awesome Jaisalmer Fort. Firework displays at night light up the area, and the fort is illuminated too.

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**India Offices:** Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Udaipur, Ranthambhore, Cochin, Bangalore, Chennai.

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