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The cuisine of India is a result of 5,000 years of history, of interaction between the sub-continent and multiple other outside influences, such as the Mughals, British and Portuguese. Indian food has made a complex journey and with advent of globalization, it has carved its own place in world's cuisine. In Indian tradition, food is placed next to God and that is the reason why it is an integral part of our various religious and other ceremonies.

12.1 CUISINE: INDIAN CUISINE

A **cuisine** is a style of cooking characterised by distinctive ingredients, techniques and dishes. It is usually associated with a specific culture or geographic region.

Indian cuisine is the general term for the wide variety of cooking styles from India. Indian food is mostly prepared with fresh ingredients along with delicate mixtures of many different fresh and dried spices. The exact recipes often vary greatly from one household to the next.



Fig. 12.1 : Indian Cuisine

Do you know ?



Indian food is born from the concept of Ayurveda, an ancient body of knowledge on health. Ayur is derived from the word ayus meaning span of life in Sanskrit, and Veda means knowledge. Thus Ayurveda is the knowledge concerning the maintenance of long life.



Fig 12.2 : Ayurveda

Factors influencing a region's cuisine :

Cuisine of any region is varied and diverse. In every region, food changes its flavour and techniques of cooking. There are many factors that influence the cuisine of any region.

They are:

1. Area's climate
2. Trade among different countries
3. According to religious laws
4. Culinary exchange

12.2 TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED IN INDIAN COOKING

Cooking anywhere in the world use a universal method, which is the use of some form of heat to bring raw food to an edible form. There are different types of cooking methods used to cook food. Frying, boiling, sauteing, grilling are some of the most popular methods used to cook food.

Indian cooking is vast and uses all the above methods and more. The difference lies in how the techniques are applied during the cooking process. For example, the sauteing cooking method is used in almost every cuisine including cooking Indian food. The difference is that sauteing in Indian cooking involves cooking on a low flame with the addition of a dash of water from time to time to prevent the spices or the base sauce from burning.

If we compare it to other cuisines that use sauteing method for cooking, like Chinese or just sauteing vegetables, it will mostly require to stir continuously on medium heat without any additional water.

There are subtle changes in techniques that one needs to become familiar with to bring out the typical Indian flavours.

1. *Bhunao* (Preparation of Masala):

- This method is combination of sauté, stir-frying and stewing.
- Used in preparing most of the Indian dishes.
- Add ginger-garlic paste, ground spices and tomatoes. Saute on medium heat adding splashes of liquid. Stir until oil separates.
- Add meat or vegetables to it.
- E.g. *Bhunna Murg* (Chicken masala).



Fig 12.3 *Bhunao* technique

2. *Dum* (Cooking of food in its own steam):

- *Dum* means to ‘breathe in’ and *pukht* means to ‘cook’.
- *Dum pukht* cooking uses a round, heavy-bottomed pot, preferably a *handi* (clay pot), in which food is sealed with dough and cooked over a slow fire.
- Cooking in *dum* style gives a unique aroma of the spices and the food is just perfectly tender.
- E.g. Chicken *dum Biryani*, *dum aloo*, *dum karela*, *dum pukht Biryani*.



Fig 12.4 *Dum* technique

3. *Talna* (Frying):

- This term is used for frying in Indian cuisine.
- Usually done in *kadhai* (pan).
- Depending on the type of dish it is shallow or deep fried.
- E.g. *tikki*, cheese balls, cutlets, etc.



Fig 12.5 *Talana* technique

4. *Baghar* (Tempering):

- It is also known as *tadka* in north India, *baghar* in west India, *chonkhna* in central India and *phodni* in Maharashtra.
- This technique comprises to add more spices, tomatoes, garlic, onion, ginger into an already cooked food to make it more spicy and delicious. All these ingredients are fried in ghee or cooking oil.
- Main function is to flavour a dish with aromatic spices.
- E.g. *dal tadka*, *kadhi*, etc.



Fig 12.6 *Baghar* technique

5. *Dhungar* (Smoking):

- *Dhungar* is an ancient technique of smoking and infusing the flavour of burnt charcoal smoke into a dish.
- In India while giving *dhungar*, oil or ghee is poured over burning hot charcoals.
- Spices such as clove are also used to impart a flavour.
- Some red-hot charcoal is kept in a small cup in the middle of the food. Ghee is poured on it. The pan is covered and let it rest for a few minutes. Uncover it and remove the charcoal before serving.
- E.g. *dal*, fish, meat and meat products.



Fig 12.7 *Dhungar* technique

6. *Tandoor* (Roasting/Baking):

- A tandoor is a clay oven (*bhatti*) that is used to cook *naan* or *roti* using a hot charcoal fire.
- The food cooked in a tandoor oven is roasted, baked and smoked.
- E.g. *tandoori roti*, *naan*, *tandoori* chicken, *seekh kababs*, etc.



Fig 12.8 *Tandoor* technique

7. Bhapa (Steaming):

- Steaming works by boiling water continuously, causing it to vaporize into steam.
- The steam then carries heat to the nearby food, thus cooking the food.
- E.g. *Idli, momos, modak*



Fig 12.9 Bhapa technique

Do you know ?

Indian food system classifies food into three categories –





Saatvic (fresh vegetables and juice), *Raajsic* (oily and spicy food) and *Taamsic* (meat and liquor).














12.3 EQUIPMENTS USED IN INDIAN COOKING:

Indian cuisine is most popular because of its taste, aromatic spices and cooking methods. In Indian cooking a wide range of equipments are used. The quality of end product also depends on the type of equipments used. While cooking a specific regional dish, it sometimes require unique cooking utensils and aids. Therefore the list of Indian equipments is also endless, but there are some basic tools which are used essentially everywhere.

Table 12.1 Commonly used equipment in Indian cooking

Name	Photograph	Description
Iron pan (<i>Tawa</i>)		A tawa is usually made up of cast iron. It is a flat base equipment, used for baking Indian breads like <i>rotis, parathas, etc.</i>
Rolling pin and board (<i>Polipat and latana</i>)		In Indian cuisine the rolling pin and board are also known as <i>chakla</i> and <i>belan</i> . It is used for rolling the dough into <i>roti, paranthas, puri, etc.</i> Rolling pin and board are available in wooden, stone, steel material etc.
Tongs (<i>Chimta</i>)		They are a pair of long tongs. Often made from iron or stainless steels they are used to flip the <i>roti</i> on the <i>tawa</i> or to hold food on open flames like <i>papad</i> .
Sieve/ strainer (<i>Chhalni</i>)		It is a round utensil consisting of a wire or plastic mesh held in a frame used for separation of fine particles from coarse one.

<p>Shredder (<i>Khisni</i>)</p>		<p>It is also known as grater. It has different types of grating holes and thus help in preparation of variety of foods.</p>
<p>Round spatula with holes (<i>Jhara</i>)</p>		<p>Jhara is an incredibly useful tool, while deep frying the food in kadhai. Jhara is a large round spatula with holes which allows the oil to drain out.</p>
<p>Skillet (<i>Kadhai</i>)</p>		<p>Kadhai is the Indian version of a wok. It is a thick, circular and deep cooking pot. Traditional kadhai was made from cast iron, however now they are available in a variety of different non-stick and stainless steel versions.</p>
<p>Degchi or deg (<i>Handi</i>)</p>		<p>One of the most common utensil used in Indian cooking. It is a pear shaped pot made up of brass, copper or aluminium. It is ideal for <i>dum</i> cooking.</p>
<p>Bhagona or patila (<i>Patela</i>)</p>		<p>A bhagona or <i>patila</i> is a utensil accompanied with a lid and used extensively in Indian cooking. It is usually used in boiling and simmering.</p>
<p>Agitator (<i>Ravi/Dal ghotni/Mathni</i>)</p>		<p>It is a special wooden equipment which is used to churn curd to make lassi or buttermilk.</p>
<p>Flat stone grinder (<i>Pata-varavanta/Silbatta</i>)</p>		<p>There are two pieces of stone- one is flat called the <i>pata</i> and the other is rod shaped called <i>varavanta</i>. A traditional <i>Pata-varavanta</i> is mainly useful to prepare spice mix or masala (garlic, ginger, onion, etc.) or <i>chutneys</i>.</p>

<p>Mortar and pestle (<i>Khalbatta</i>)</p>		<p>It is made up of wood, marble, stone, steel or ceramic. It is used for pounding herbs, spices and <i>chutneys</i>.</p>
<p>Spice box (<i>Masalyacha Dabba</i>)</p>		<p><i>Masala dabba</i> is one of the most fundamental tools in any Indian kitchen, containing many cups in one box. Each cup contains different, regularly used dry spices - both in whole and powdered form.</p>
<p>Spatula/ flat spoon (<i>Ulatne</i>)</p>		<p>It is a flat metal or wooden spoon used for scrapping and turning the food to cook the both sides.</p>
<p>Pressure cooker</p>		<p>Pressure cookers are used for cooking food faster. It saves time and energy than a conventional method.</p>

12.4 BASIC INDIAN GRAVIES

Indian cuisine comprises of a number of regional cuisines. These cuisines differ from each other mainly due to the use of locally available spices, herbs, vegetables and fruits. Indian food is also influenced by religious and cultural choices and traditions.

In Indian cuisine, the word gravy and curry are used interchangeably, which gives the feeling of aromatic spicy food. Gravy contain various spices which impart flavour, thickness and colour to the food item.

Definition: Indian gravy is a smooth liquid of thick consistency, which imparts body, taste, richness to any Indian food preparation. It is the heart and soul of Indian cuisine.

In general there are four types of Indian gravies that are commonly used to prepare many dishes.

- Onion tomato masala
- Makhni gravy
- White gravy
- Hariyali gravy

A. Onion tomato masala:

The basic onion tomato gravy is the base for most curries in India. It is also known as brown onion gravy.



Fig 12.10: Onion tomato masala

Preparation:

1. Heat oil in the utensil (*kadhai*).
2. Temper with *khada masala* and slit green chillies.
3. Add chopped onions and cook until slightly darker than golden brown.
4. Do not burn the onions as it gives a bitter taste.
5. Add ginger and garlic paste and cook for a minute.
6. Make a paste of red chilli in water, add it to the onion mixture and cook on low flame.
7. Add chopped tomatoes and cook.
8. Add small amounts of hot water into the gravy and keep mashing the onion and tomatoes to form a thick gravy.
9. Cover it and cook for a while until the oil separates and the colour darkens.
10. This gravy can be used in number of dishes.

Usage and storage:

This gravy is used in number of Indian dishes. It forms the base for many curries and dishes. This gravy is usually made fresh for each dish in every Indian home and used in everyday cooking. It can be stored upto one week in a refrigerator. It can be used in *palak paneer*, *rajma*, *chole* and meat preparations.

B. Makhni gravy:

It is very popular in Indian cuisine. It is mainly used in preparations like chicken *makhni*, *paneer makhni*, mushroom or *kofta makhni*. As the name suggests, cream and butter used to prepare this gravy gives it the name *makhni*.



Fig 12.11: Makhni gravy

Preparation:

1. Make a slit on the surface of tomatoes with a sharp knife.
2. Put them in a pot with small amount of water, add crushed ginger and garlic and cook them till it becomes soft.
3. Make puree and strain the mixture and keep aside.
4. Heat the butter, add red chilli powder and cook for some time.
5. Add the above mixture, salt, garam masala, green chillies and cover it and cook till oil separates on the surface.
6. Add cashew nut paste, roasted and powdered *kasoori methi* and sugar.
7. Add more butter if required and finish with cream.

Usage and storage:

It is mainly used in many curries and dishes. Basic *makhani* gravy is a silky, buttery, creamy, tomato based gravy and is commonly used in many veg and non-veg recipes. It can be kept in refrigerator in a closed container for about one week.

Do you know ?

Cream should be added at the end and gravy should not be boiled after that as it might result in curdling.



C. White gravy:

This gravy is white in colour. The base of this gravy is boiled onion paste and the gravy is thickened by nut pastes.



Fig 12.12: White gravy

Preparation:

1. Heat ghee in utensil.
2. Temper with *khada masala* and slit green chillies.
3. Add ginger–garlic paste and saute for about a minute.
4. Add boiled onion paste and cook until ghee comes out.
5. Cook on a slow flame and ensure that the onions do not gain colour.
6. Add cashew nut paste and magaz paste (melon seed paste) and cook for another minute.
7. If required, little hot water can be added at this stage.
8. Now add whipped curd and cook until the gravy comes to a boil.

9. Cover and cook until ghee comes on top.
10. The gravy is ready after 45 minutes.

Usage and storage:

This gravy is used in many dishes and curries. It is used as a base for *kormas*, where more curd and brown onion paste is added. This gravy is rarely used on its own, as it is very heavy. It is thus combined with *makhni* or *hariyali* gravy to create royal dishes such as *malai kofta*, *methi matar malai*, *navrattan korma*, etc. This gravy should be made when required as the nut pastes can make it sour and spoil rapidly.

D. Hariyali gravy:

Hariyali means green. This gravy is made by adding cooked spinach puree into brown gravy.



Fig 12.13: Hariyali gravy

Preparation:

1. Make the onion tomato masala.
2. When done, add spinach paste to the masala and cook without covering it until oil floats on top.

Usage and storage:

This gravy is used in many dishes around India. It can be stored for a week in a closed container in refrigerated condition.

Points to remember

- A cuisine is a style of cooking characterised by distinctive ingredients, techniques and dishes. It is usually associated with a specific culture or geographic region.
- Indian cuisine is the general term for the wide variety of cooking styles from India. Indian food is always prepared with fresh ingredients along with delicate mixtures of many fresh and dried spices.
- Indian food is born from the concept of Ayurveda, an ancient body of knowledge on health. Ayur is derived from the word ayus meaning span of life in Sanskrit, and Veda means knowledge.
- Indian cooking is vast and uses different methods. The difference in methods lies in how the techniques are applied during the cooking process.
- In Indian cooking a wide range of equipments are used. The quality of end product also depends on the type of equipments used.
- Indian gravy is a smooth liquid of thick consistency, which imparts body, taste, richness to any Indian food preparation. It is the heart and soul of Indian cuisine.

Exercise

Q. 1 a. Select the correct option from the given choices.

- i. By using the technique dum while cooking, we mean using which method ?
 - a. Saute
 - b. Steam
 - c. Frying
 - d. Roast
- ii. _____ is an example of Bhapa technique.
 - a. Biryani
 - b. Kheer
 - c. Pappad
 - d. Idli
- iii. For preparation of roti we use _____.
 - a. Round spatula
 - b. Chimta
 - c. Rolling pin and board
 - d. Jhara
- iv. We use _____ for deep frying.
 - a. Skillet (Kadhai)
 - b. Tawa
 - c. Degchi
 - d. Patili

- v. _____ is added to gravy which gives the name makhani.
 - a. Onion
 - b. Tomato
 - c. Butter
 - d. Cashewnuts
- vi. The colour of Hariyali gravy is _____.
 - a. White
 - b. Brown
 - c. Red
 - d. Green

b. Match the correct pairs.

A		B	
i.	Ayur	a.	Grater
ii.	Bhunao	b.	Green gravy
iii.	Baghar	c.	White gravy
iv.	Khisni	d.	Sauteing
v.	Hariyali gravy	e.	Tempering
		f.	Span of life

c. Do as directed:

- i. Write true or false.
Degchi is ideal for dum cooking.
- ii. By considering the first correlation complete the second correlation.
Talna: Tikki
Dum : _____
- iii. Identify the odd word.
a. Modak b. Naan
c. Tandoori roti d. Seekh kabab
- iv. Name the word with the help of clue:
Clue: It contains various spices in one box.

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- v. Who am i :
Clue : I am a flat base equipment used for making Indians breads (roti).
- vi. Identify the object:



Q. 2 Answer the following questions briefly:

- i. Define cuisine.
- ii. List the factors affecting a region's cuisine.
- iii. Name any four techniques employed in Indian cooking.
- iv. Define Indian gravy.
- v. Give the usage and storage of Onion tomato masala.

Q. 3 Write short notes on:

- i. Explain Dum technique.
- ii. Explain what do you understand by baghar?
- iii. Explain the following with the help of diagram.
a. Chimta
b. Kadhai
c. Degchi

Q. 4 Long questions

- i. Explain any two techniques of cooking.
- ii. Write the ingredients of white gravy and explain its preparation, usage and storage.

Projects:

- i. Select any ten recipes and make an album based on various techniques of cooking.
- ii. Select any ten recipes and make an album based on the four basic gravies.

