

Versatility in Hospitality Industry around the Globe

Case Study on Cuisines and Culture of Bangladesh

Khushi Pawar¹, Sandip Kaur², Nandini Roy³, Ashish Nevgi⁴

Student, Thakur Institute of Hotel Management, Thakur Shyamnarayan Degree College, Mumbai, India¹

Assistant Professor, Thakur Institute of Hotel Management, Thakur Shyamnarayan Degree College, Mumbai, India^{2,3}

Coordinator, Thakur Institute of Hotel Management, Thakur Shyamnarayan Degree College, Mumbai, India⁴

Abstract: Food and food traditions are often perceived as important markers of identity, culture and local heritage. Gastronomy and local culinary traditions provide direct and more authentic connection to spaces and places while at the same time contributing towards a more memorable and meaningful interaction between 'hosts' and 'guests'. Food is an indispensable part of every community and its intangible heritage, a valuable tourism resource and important tool for destination image and branding. Food and beverage attributes play a special role in the Bangladeshi's culture and heritage. Rich culinary traditions, variety of food and a unique blend of spices have made the Bangladeshi cuisine popular in various parts of the world. Gastronomy provides a window to the country's past and present by giving insights to farming practices, ancient gastronomic traditions, customs and manners. Largely influenced by ethnic and social diversity, and its indigenous communities, Bangladesh is a place with a rather underdeveloped food tourism industry. This chapter seeks to analyze this potential and provide recommendations for how food tourism can be established and further developed as an important pillar of the Bangladeshi tourism industry. [1] "Most guests limit their understanding of the Bangladeshi culinary scene to Mughal-inspired cuisines and Panta Ilish (fermented rice and Hilsa), both of which are popular within the capital of Dhaka and, therefore, accessible. At our hotel we are introducing a food festival especially for the foreign guests through which we are bringing delicacies from across Bangladesh, delving deeper into the inner food culture of each division of the country, preparing the food with only locally sourced ingredients to ensure that our guests enjoy the most authentic gastronomic experience," says Shahid Hamid, executive director of Dhaka Regency Hotel & Resort, a five star hotel in the capital. [1].



Keywords: Cuisine, Eating Habits, Values, Sweetmeat

I. INTRODUCTION

The Culture of Bangladesh is intertwined with the culture of the Bengal region. It has evolved over the centuries and encompasses the cultural diversity of several social groups of Bangladesh. The Bengal Renaissance of the 18th early 19th centuries, noted Bengali writers, saints, authors, scientists, researchers, thinkers, music composers, painters, film-makers have played a significant role in the development of Bengali culture. The Bengal Renaissance contained the seeds of a nascent political Indian nationalism which was the precursor in many ways to modern Indian artistic cultural expression. [1]

According to M. Nazrul Islam Tamij, a human rights activist and chairman of the National Human Rights Society (NHRS), human rights are the most important part of Bengali culture, and it plays an important role in the development of Bengali culture.

The cultures of Bangladesh composite over the centuries have assimilated influences of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. It is manifested in various forms, including music, dance, drama; art craft; folklore folktale; languages literature; philosophy religion; festivals celebrations; as well as in a distinct cuisine culinary tradition.

The music dance styles of Bangladesh may be divided into three categories: classical, folk, modern. Bangladesh was once part of Pakistan. It was called East Pakistan. The classical style has been influenced by other prevalent classical forms of music dances of the Indian subcontinent, accordingly, show some influenced dance forms like Bharatnatyam Kathak.

Several dancing styles in vogue are practiced in the northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent, like Manipuri Santhali dances, but Bangladesh has developed its own distinct dancing styles. Bangladesh has a rich tradition of folk songs, with lyrics rooted in vibrant tradition, spirituality, mysticism, devotion. Such folk songs revolve around other themes, including love.



The most prevalent folk songs music traditions include Bhatiali, Baul, Marfati, Murshidi, Bhawaiya. Lyricists like Lalon Shah, Hason Raja, Kangal Harinath, Romesh Shill, Abbas Uddin, and many unknown anonymous lyricists have enriched the tradition of folk songs of Bangladesh.

Tamak' (r.) and Tumdak' (l.) - typical drums of the Santhal people, photographed in a village in Dinajpur district, Bangladesh.

In a relatively modern context, works of Rabindranath Tagore and Nazrul Islam form a major part of the cultural heritage of Bangladesh. Several musical instruments, some of them indigenous, are used in Bangladesh. Major musical instruments used are the bamboo flute (Bashi), drums (tabla, dhol), a single-stringed instrument named ektara, a four-stringed instrument called dotara, a pair of metal bowls, used for rhythm effects, called mandira.

Currently, musical instruments of western origin, like guitars, drums, and the saxophone are used, sometimes along with traditional instruments (Muajj). Recently, Western influences have given rise to quality rock bands, particularly in urban centers like Dhaka.

Durga Puja in Bangladesh



Durga Puja, the largest religious festival for Hindus, is celebrated widely across Bangladesh. Thousands of pandals (mandaps) are set up in various villages, towns, and cities. Durga Puja is a grand cultural celebration in the capital city of Dhaka. Major pujas of Dhaka are held in numerous pandals, but the biggest celebration takes place at Dhakeshwari Temple where several thousand devotees and onlookers stream through the premises for four days.

Special boat race on Buriganga river is arranged and it attracts a large crowd. A five-day holiday is observed by all educational institutions, while Bijoya Dashami is a public holiday. On Bijoya Dashami, effigies are paraded through the

streets of Shankhari Bazaar in Old Dhaka in loud, colorful processions before being immersed into the rivers. Thousands of Muslims take part in the secular part of festivities in celebration of Bengali solidarity and culture.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is assisting the Government of Bangladesh in managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting the socio-economic recovery of the country. A \$500 million budget support was provided in 2020 under the COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support Program to improve social protection, strengthen the public health system, create jobs, and accelerate human development. See the results and status of the implementation of the program through this photo essay. [2]

II. CUISINE

Bangladeshi food is the brother of India's Bengali cuisine and shares a similar past, cooking techniques and ingredients. However, it is not the same and food from Bangladesh has a distinct personality that makes it very different from that in India.



Bangladesh is famous for its distinctive culinary tradition, delicious food, snacks, and savories. Rice is the staple food, and is served with a variety of vegetables, fried as well with curry, thick lentil soups, egg, fish and meat preparations of chicken, mutton, beef, duck. Bengalis have a sweet tooth. Sweetmeats of Bangladesh are mostly milk based, and consist of several delights including rosogolla, shondesh, roshmalai, gulab jamun, Kalo jam, and chom-chom, jilapi and more. Fish is the dominant source of protein, cultivated in ponds and fished with nets in the freshwater rivers of the Ganges delta. More than 40 types of mostly freshwater fish are common, including carp, varieties like rui (rohu), katla, magur (catfish), chingri (prawn or shrimp), as well as shutki machh (dried fish) are popular. Saltwater fish ilish is very popular among Bengalis and can be called an icon of Bengali cuisine. Unlike neighboring West Bengal, serving dishes with beef is not a taboo in Bangladesh as Hindus are a minority in the latter. Beef curry is a very common and essential part of Bengal cuisine.

Pithas are a category of food which most like crepes and fritters though there are exceptions to that such as bibikhana Pitha which is like a steamed cake. Pithas are most common in seasons of Shoroth, Hemanto, and Sheet. Popular pitas include Teler pitha, Patishapta pitha, Bhapa pitha and more.

The cuisine of Bangladesh is influenced by its landscapes and the bounty that the land, the rivers and the sea produce. It is heavily shaped by the country's low-lying altitude and abundance of water, especially through the annual monsoon.

Besides the land and geography, the cuisine in Bangladesh has been heavily molded on Dhaka's historical trade routes and the many civilisations that ruled the land. The Mughals brought with the Turkish and Persian techniques and foods, the British left the tea.

As an eminently rural and agricultural country where over 60% of the population live off the land, foods are seasonal and dependent on what grows where. The coastal areas will be more dependent on fish while the hills might eat more meat, but variations are small.

Bangladeshi are predominantly Muslim, so pork is a rare food that you will not find in Bangladeshi menus. On the other side, beef is more common, as is chicken or goat, but meats are not common on the average Bangladeshi diet as many cannot afford to eat them everyday and fish is more easily available.

Vegetables of all kinds are eaten in full, stems and leaves, pulses such as lentils, and grains like rice are the main staples, but bread, usually the deep fried puffy kind or the naan version, is almost always served.

Bangladeshi food features several ingredients in many of the dishes. Root vegetables like potatoes and vegetables like aubergine are commonly eaten.



The many rivers that cover the country and end in the world's largest delta also produce lots of different kinds of freshwater fish and halsi and carp are the most popular.

Bangladeshi food is generally spicy like Indian food, and chili peppers are used in almost every dish, so you should expect to feel a degree of heat with almost every dish. The marsala spice mix that is used in India to flavor food is also used in Bangladesh, but the mix is different.

Food in Bangladesh is cooked in curry gravies made with onions, garlic and, oftentimes, with small dried fish similar to what is commonly used in Myanmar or Thailand to flavor food.

As per cooking techniques, frying is widely used to cook foods, as ovens do not exist in most of Bangladesh rural areas and boiling is less common. Food is cooked in clay, earthen or metal pots over a pit fire or charcoal. Banana leaves are also used to cook food. Unlike in India, Bangladeshi food is not always fried in ghee but also in mustard or other vegetable oils.

Bangladeshi eating habits



As with all Muslim countries, Bangladeshis eat with their right hand and do not use the left as it is considered impure. This is also common in India and requires a degree of skill.

You will notice that locals, like most Indians, are able to cut a piece of bread with just one hand, using three fingers, one to hold the bread and two to pull. My partner, of Bengali Indian descent, is very skilled at this, I always need both hands to pull a piece from any bread.

It is common in Bangladesh for food to be served for sharing and all plates to be brought to the middle of the table with spoons to help yourself. The woman of the house will serve you and may not eat until you are finished.

Traditional Bangladeshi food

Traditional food in Bangladesh reflects the country's culinary past and its rich heritage influenced by the many empires and cultures that inhabited its land.

Unlike other countries where modern takes on food are prevalent, almost all the food in Bangladesh is still traditional. Despite every household having its own recipes for the famous Bangladeshi recipes, the foundations remain the same. Even in the capital city of Dhaka, fusion or fine dining Bangladeshi restaurants are practically nonexistent so you are likely to get the real deal no matter where you eat. Of course, street snacks are best enjoyed from street vendors, even though I would not recommend the inexperienced belly to take the risk.

Pitha – rice cakes

Pitha are rice cakes that are made sweet or savory and with several types of rice and then soaked in milk and topped with sugar, date palm syrup, jaggery or molasses. The rice cakes can be steamed, fried or in other ways. It is a typical Bangladeshi food eaten at the beginning of winter when the rice harvest ends and they are found across the country.

Bortha – mashed vegetables and fish



This is the most common Bangladeshi food of all. Bortha refers to any vegetable that has been cooked and served mashed. This can be anything and everything, from one vegetable only to several, from spicy to mild, from leaves to stems.

Bortha is served in small dishes for sharing and will usually accompany a full meal which includes rice and some kind of curry or fried fish. Some Bortha can be delicious while others are not my kind. The good thing is that they are usually served in small portions and cost little so you can order a few and see which one you like best.

Biryani



Biryani is a favorite Bangladeshi food that is very popular in Old Dhaka where it is sold in various stalls and restaurants the oldest of which is Haji Biryani which opened in the 1930s and sells only goat biryani.

The dish is usually made with meat, goat and chicken are very popular but also prawns or beef are used (vegetarian options are common in India), cooked in mustard oil, and spiced with saffron, cumin, cloves, bay leaves, chili powder, onions and other spices which give it the traditional yellow strokes and flavor.

Biryani is not just meat and rice cooked together, but the result of a long and slow cooking process in specific dum pots and the result is a layered dish with two parts of rice and one of protein in the middle.

The origin of the word and the food are unclear and lots of versions explain how it arrived in India but the most likely one talks about the trade routes between Persia and Bengal which brought this way of cooking and recipe to India and from there to Bangladesh via the Mughal Empire.

Biryani is famous in several parts of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, each with its own mix of spices, type of protein and cooking method. In India, one of the most famous biryanis comes from Hyderabad

Phuchka or Fucsa – Pani puri



Pani puri is an Indian snack that is also eaten in Bangladesh and is known by different names depending on the part of the world you eat it in. While in Dhaka and the Bengal Bay it is known as Phuchka, Chittagong calls it Fucsa and Indians refer to it as pani puri.

Curry



Curries are a very common way of cooking food in Bangladesh and are eaten with rice. They tend to be spicy and made with vegetable oil but in the south of the country they can also be made using coconuts.

All kinds of food are cooked curry-style but most notably prawns, fish, goat, chicken, beef and even eggs. Vegetable curries are also possible but less common since vegetables tend to be served mashed.

The curries in Bangladesh have an onion and tomato gravy base instead of the Southeast Asian coconut milk base and one of the most prized ones is the fish head curry which is offered to guests and is called muri ghonto.

Fried fish



Bangladeshis love to eat fish, as mentioned above, this is one of the main staples, especially in the cities and especially freshwater fish.

The most common fish is halsi but also carp fish. They are both white fish and they are quite nutritious. Halsi is often served fried or as a whole fish baked in the oven. Because it is really boney, it is quite a lot of effort to eat it.

Chotpoti



Chotpoti is a combination of potatoes, chickpeas and onions in a semi soup format that is eaten in the street as a warm snack.

Traditional Bangladeshi desserts

Bangladesh food has to end with a generous dose of sweetness and that is easy because the local desserts are incredibly sugary and sweet so they top a spiced and spicy meal.

Bangladeshi desserts use palm sugar, jaggery, honey and milk which is processed into cheese, yogurt, curd and other milk derivatives.

Firni, kheer and payesh

Firni, or kheer, is a sort of rice pudding made by boiling broken rice or other grain in milk and sugar. The concoction can be spiced with cardamom, raisins, saffron, cashews, pistachios, almonds or other dry fruits and nuts. Payesh is very similar to firni but made with whole rice grains.

III. SUMMARY

Wondering if any differences exist between Indian food and Bangladeshi food? We are here to decode the differences in the two cuisines which seem to be similar.

Be it Bangladesh or India, Bengalis on both sides of the border speak the same language. It is hard to distinguish between the two.

However, you enter into the kitchen and the ocean of carefully veiled differences lay open in front of you. There is a stark contrast in the cooking styles of the two regions.

Many factors influenced the two communities, that were one once, differently. Hence, leading to two entirely disjoint cuisines. Some of these factors include geography, religion, availability of fish, use of spices, etc. Geography plays a vital role in the culinary field too.

West Bengal region is surrounded by many tributaries and rivers. Also, there is the Bay of Bengal on the coast for both the countries. However, the availability of freshwater fishes in Bengal was high. People prefer fishes and eggs over meat options like chicken. [1]

This choice is reflected in a dish as basic as Biryani. If you visit West Bengal, you will find fish biryani everywhere instead of the otherwise famous chicken and mutton biryani. Since Bangladesh is not as rich in the river department, freshwater fishes are replaced by seafood like prawns, loitte, and Bombay duck. They relish on fishes only in the months of Aug-Sept when the prices dip. Also, the way of cooking fish is different in both regions. All Bengalis love Hilsa. Hilsa is a type of herring found in the sea. However, the way of cooking defines the border.



Indian Bengalis believe in relishing its distinct flavors. They prepare simple curries using nigella seeds and aubergines or steam it in a mustard paste without onion or garlic. Whereas the Bangladeshi counterparts cannot imagine cooking hilsa without onion or garlic. They have many ways of cooking the fish but each of them involves a lot of onions and garlic.

Bangladesh is a country where most of the population follows Islam. This clearly shows when it comes to culinary choices too. The most basic being the choice and availability of meat. In West Bengal, seafood, chicken, mutton, and eggs are the preferred choices for non-vegetarian food. In Bangladesh, all types of meat like chicken, mutton, pork, beef, goat-meat are easily available and also widely consumed. Another interesting fact is that Islam forbids alcohol. Hence, it is difficult to find alcohol in Bangladesh. In India, it is rather easy as India is a hub of all religions. Just like the food, Bangladesh borrows sweets from the Arabic and Persian cuisine as well. Ingredients such as vermicelli, pistachios, almonds, and dry fruits are directly imported from the Gulf countries, to be used in sweets.

IV. USES OF SPICES



There is a tremendous amount of difference when we talk about using various spices in both regions. Many are regular on one side whereas the other doesn't even use them.

Poppy Seeds: Ingredients like poppy seeds are essential to the Indian side whereas they are used in Bangladeshi cuisine only to thicken the gravy.

Cloves: In India, homemade garam masala includes a generous amount of cloves. On the other hand, Bangladeshis do not use cloves at all.

Chili's: Bangladeshi cuisine is known for its hottest dishes in the world. Their food is very spicy. The Indian counterpart mostly skips the chilies.

While Indian Bengali cuisine is more on the subtle side, Bangladeshi cuisine focuses on spices a lot more. Even the leafy veggies are first tempered with onion, garlic, and green chilies before being used in the main course.

Bangladeshi food outlets serve white rice, while Indians prefer Basmati rice. Similarly, breads are also made with white wheat flour in Bangladesh.

Even the dals are not runny like Indian Bengali cuisine but rather cooked in a semi-dry style to give a more spicy texture.

BHORTA

Bhorta is a unique technique in Bangladeshi cooking. In this, the main ingredient is first boiled/smoked/roasted and then mixed with the masala. After this process, no further cooking is done.

V. CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter is to focus on Bangladesh as the country where the consumption of food becomes a key feature of the society; as well as a place having an underdeveloped food tourism industry. The chapter makes critical explanations of both gastronomy and food on the global scale that narrows down to the Bangladesh context. This chapter finds rich food culture and culinary traditions in Bangladesh. In support of these findings on the literal notes, Mookherjee (2008) opines that the country is a place of good food, hospitality, and warmth when the conventional Bangla cuisine combines the old traditions with culinary techniques, seasonal practices, and ancestral community customs. The customary food and hospitality traditions are well influenced by the Arabs, Persians, the past foreign settlers like British and Portuguese, even India as the neighbor. Possibilities of gastronomic tourism in Bangladesh is immense as evidenced by its strong presence in many countries in Europe, America, and the far east Asia. [1]

The present Bangla cuisine is thus a combination of different tastes, flavors, and influences of diverse cultures and civilisations. Also, the in-country differences between the regions are notable as inherited from earlier generations. This research affirms that even with several pertaining challenges, the Bangladeshi cuisine is flourishing both domestically and globally. Gastronomy Bangladesh is able to represent the Bangladeshi present and past gastronomic traditions, customs and manners to some extent and with limitations. Food tourism in the country has tremendous potential and can be developed as a useful facilitator of the Bangladeshi tourism industry that future studies can research more elaborately and critically.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Culture of Bangladesh is intertwined with the culture of the Bengal region.
- [2]. ADB is assisting the Government of Bangladesh in managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [3]. http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/culture_of_bangladesh
- [4]. <http://www.adb.org/news/photo-essays/bangladesh-road-recovery-covid-19>
- [5]. <https://indiaoutbound.info/experiences/food-path-of-bangladesh/#>