

# Impact of Different Food Cultures on Cuisine of Delhi

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## ABSTRACT

Culture of society and nation plays crucial role that is reflected and practiced in food industry in the big umbrella of food culture. Food culture talks about tradition, taboos, beliefs, rituals, interiors and influence of globalization being followed by the service provider that is being apparent in quality, quantity, varieties, taste, neatness and behaviour of service staffs as these factors lead to customer satisfaction for paid prices. The way that Food is produced, distributed, selected, obtained, afforded, stored, prepared, ordered, served, consumed, promoted, and learnt about can reveal much about the customs and attitudes of every social group (Counihan, 1998).

This study is focused on Delhi only where food culture is a mixture of its past, different cultures and traditions. According to Gandhi (2015) the city of Delhi is a hub of cuisine. The city has absorbed, over the centuries, settlers, and visitors from across the globe. The emperors, the nobles, the viceroys and the sahibs all provided generous patronage to the cuisine of Delhi and contributed the cultivation of fine taste.

Food culture is to be followed by concerned services provider and present study is an attempt to explore of food culture, cuisines, preferences and choices in Delhi through literature review.

**Key Words:** Food Culture, cuisines, food preferences, food choices, and Hospitality.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the key players of services sectors in India is tourism and hospitality industry. It has contribution of 6.23 % to National Gross Domestic Product and holds 8.78 percent of total employment in the country (Sharma & Kalotra, 2016). One of the important factors responsible for making this industry successful is food culture. Food culture is to be followed by concerned services provider as result of that there would be better customer satisfaction will lead to making profits.

Food is a very integral part of any culture. Local cuisine gives us an enormous insight into the culture, as it sheds light on the history of the area, cooking techniques

and regions indigenous crops. Food has now been known as an important component of imperceptible heritage. UNESCO has also attributed gastronomy as a part of their Intangible Heritage List.

Food culture talks about tradition, taboos, beliefs, rituals, interiors and influence of globalization being followed by the service provider that is being apparent in quality, quantity, varieties, taste, neatness and behaviour of service staffs as these factors lead to customer satisfaction for paid prices. The way that Food is produced, distributed, selected, obtained, afforded, stored, prepared, ordered, served, consumed, promoted, and learnt about can reveal much

about the customs and attitudes of every social group (Counihan, 1998).

This study is focused on Delhi only where food culture is a mixture of its past, different cultures and traditions. Also, Delhi today has come to embrace the best of the international cuisines. So there is no trouble in finding Italian, Chinese, Thai and American restaurants. So, Delhi food culture is mixed of old traditional aspects and globalization as well. According to (Gandhi, 2015) the city of Delhi is a hub of cuisine. The city has absorbed, over the centuries, settlers, and visitors from across the globe. The emperors, the nobles, the viceroys and the sahibs all provided generous patronage to the cuisine of Delhi and contributed the cultivation of fine taste. Exploring the melting pot of the city can be a fascinating and rewarding experience.

Today all the master cuisine of the world contributes to make what has to be one of the most tantalizing cities for the taste but of food lovers. Here food has been tried tested and modified for long. Here one sees fusion of food old and new and truly melting of many cultures people and cuisines together.

### **1.1 Research Objectives**

1. To review the academic literature on food culture in Delhi.
2. To study the cuisines in Delhi originated though different culture.
3. To understand Food Preferences and Food Choice and their relationship.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The existing literature is reviewed through an integrative literature review methodology. It is an exploratory research based on secondary data through chapters and scholarly articles relevant to a food culture and eating habits. Secondary data has been taken from company and government reports, journals, books and respective websites.

### **3. Review of literature**

#### **3.1 Food Culture in Delhi**

The term culture refers to the set of values, knowledge, language, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, folklore, rules and customs that identify a particular group of people at a specific point in time (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Gastronomic tradition is dependent upon culture, and it is an unavoidable and promising tool for learning about cultural differences (Freeman, n.d.). This is even more the case in a globalized world, where not only food and ingredients are produced, processed and exported to different countries, but also advertised and promoted via mass media to the rest of the world.

According to Stojcic (2013), the meaning of Food culture is an exploration of culture through food. What one consumes, how one acquires it, who prepares it, who's at the table, and who eats first is a form of communication that is rich with meaning. Beyond merely nourishing the body, what we eat and with whom we eat can inspire and strengthen the bonds between individuals, communities, and even countries. There is no closer relationship than the one with the family and food plays a large part in defining family roles, rules, and traditions. It helps us to discover attitudes, practices, and rituals surrounding food, it sheds light on our most basic beliefs about ourselves and others.

Food functions symbolically as a communicative practice by which we create, manage and share meanings with others. Understanding culture, habits, rituals and tradition can be explored through food and the way others perceive it (Smith, Maye & Ilbery, 2014).

The culture of public eating in Delhi grew in popularity and acceptability since the 1950s, Siegel (2010). According to (Ghosh, 2011) rapid changes in trends of culinary choices and eating out in was in the 1990s that restaurant culture began to flourish. Social and economic liberalisation resulted in an invasion of various international cuisines. Consumer learned about various cuisines from social media and internet which

resultant in growth of various multinational cuisines.

### **3.2 Cuisines in Delhi Developed though Different Culture**

The Turko -Afghan invaders of Delhi were fond of lamb and poultry but their food was not very spicy, and peppercorns were used to liven a dish. The Mughals, who came thereafter, favoured various types of meat with ghee, curds & spices. They were fond of fruits and they imported grapes and musk melon from central-Asia. What is today termed "Mughlai food" in Delhi has little resemblance to what the emperors ate. It is a blend of Punjabi & Mughlai cuisine, standardized so much it tastes same all over the city. If anything can be called the original Delhi food, it is probably the vegetarian Bania food which retained its original flavours despite the influence of the Mughal cuisine. After the partition of India in 1947, many people from west Punjab moved into Delhi and the city was introduced to Punjab's vegetarian fare which is spicier than the food eaten locally (Hussain, S. n.d.).

More and more Indians today are global citizen who embrace global trends. There is a major culinary revolution going on in the capital with provides ample Cuisine for thought. Japanese Cuisine has taken a lead and Sushi Counters are found in each and every market. Continental, Thai Spanish, and Italian cuisine is what the younger generation demands.

Cuisine historian Pushpesh Pant puts it and I quote "While there is much greater awareness and better appreciation of foreign, regional and sub-regional cooking, somewhere in the process the precious gastronomic heritage of Delhi is being lost".

In all cultural traditions, food is only one aspect but yet it is probably one of the most persistent. Food is a source of pleasure, comfort and security. Food is also a symbol of hospitality, social status, and religious significance. With the changing lifestyle and working population residing in Delhi and changing culture of generations

becoming more cosmopolitan in their lives and food habits as well.

The city's importance lies not just in its past glory as the seat of empires and magnificent monuments, but also in the rich and diverse cultures. Timms (2005) says - No wonder chroniclers of Delhi culture - from Chand Bardai and Amir Khusro to present day writers - have never been at a loss for topics.

Delhi has people from different parts of India, thus the city has different types of food traditions; its cuisine is influenced by the various cultures. It was once the capital of the Mughal Empire, and it became the birthplace of Mughlai cuisine. Punjabi food is also very much popular due to dominating Punjabi communities. Delhi cuisine comprises all types of dishes. Centuries of global trade, colonization and conquest have made the city one of the most multicultural cities in the world. Connaught Place, popularly called CP, is the mecca of multicultural cuisine, from momos to samosas, fruit chats to bhel puri, biryanis to pizzas and fine dining restaurants, CP has it all. CP is also home to typical North West Frontier cuisine "Dhabas".

Street foods play an important socio economic role in meeting food and nutritional requirements of Delhi consumers at affordable prices for the lower and middle income groups of the area and are appreciated for their unique flavours and convenience (Ackah, et.al. 2000).

Delhi has a high population density and is bustling with large number of street food vendors selling their produce in every corner of the region. This generally includes Chinese fast foods, momos, rolls and frankies, assorted Paranthas, kachoris, samosas, pastas and pizzas, assorted tandoori kebabs and tikkas, Puri-bhaji, Chole- Bhature and Kulche apart from the lighter snacks like tea, biscuits, mathri, fan etc. These food items are usually sold by vendors and hawkers in the streets or other similar public places.

Each area in Delhi is distinct in food preferences, and so not only does the

restaurant market differ, but home cooking too differs from place to place,” says food columnist Anoothi Vishal, who curates community cuisines in the Capital. Making sushi is not out of place, and cuisines such as Thai, Moroccan, using authentic Korean and Italian ingredients in one’s kitchen, all have an aspirational value. South Delhi is also getting adventurous. The experiments in the upper middle-class homes there range from takes on regional Indian cooking styles such as Chettinad or Kashmiri to Mediterranean, etc.

Food culture in Delhi is a mixture of North Indian food, Mughlai Cuisines, Punjabi food and mouth-watering street food. It also includes a variety of cuisines from different parts of India. Delhi is a hot spot for Continental, Thai, Mexican and Chinese food as well.

Delhi offers eating joints in the form of low budget restaurants, elite restaurants and road side Dhabas that satiate your taste buds with authentic Dilli cuisine. The one exclusive feature however about Delhi eating joints is that the capital city has a few streets and lanes that are totally dedicated to food. Some of the popular road side eateries in Delhi include places like Paranthewaligali, Annapoorna, Ghanewala, Bengali Market, Greater Kailash and Sunder Nagar are famous for entertaining their gastronomes with kababs, rotischaat, bhelpuri, sweetmeats and biryani.

Although Delhi is not characteristic of any typical food culture the most popular cuisine that is mostly enjoyed by the locals and tourists is Mughlai cuisine. Since the Mughal dynasty ruled over the capital for centuries the food in New Delhi is very Mughlai. The influence of the Mughal rule can be felt in the food and food habits of the locals of the region. One of the most prominent contributions of the Mughals towards cuisine was the tandoor. Mughlai dishes are almost a rage in the entire county due to their spicy flavour and aromatic nature. The smell of the coal is what imparts a specific flavour to food cooked in a tandoor.

### **3.3 Food Culture and Cuisine in Delhi**

Delhi’s food culture is a mix of different traditions and cultures from the past. As people from different places came and settled in, the city acquired identity of all the types of people living in it. All the rulers and emperors have left the taste of their food behind. The most famous being the Mughlai cuisines from the Mughal era.

Mughlai cuisines were preferred by the royal Mughal Emperors. The Mughalai cuisines are cooked in all parts of the country but the best cuisines are prepared in Delhi. The Delhilites will always be thankful to the Mughals for leaving behind their food recipes.

The Kebabs, one of the most famous Mughlai cuisines are preferred by a majority of people today. Originally, an Iranian dish, the kebabs found place in Middle East, South Asian and Turkish kitchens. Interestingly, according to Arabic traditions the medieval Persian soldiers invented the kebabs by grilling meat over open field fires, using their swords. Famous traveller, Marco Polo recalls that kebabs were served during the Delhi Sultanate and was enjoyed by the royalty and commoners alike. Some of the famous Kebabs are Boti Kebab, Shami Kebab, and Kathi Kebab etc. Another Mughlai cuisine was ‘Nihari’ which was prepared in the royal kitchens of the Mughals for breakfast is now a popular dish among the people of all the classes. Biryani, a meat based dish was a favourite of the Mughal emperors and is enjoyed all over India today. The well-known Kulfi also originated in the Mughal kitchens.

Along with the dishes, even the hotels have their past linked to the Mughals. Karim’s, one of the famous hotels in Delhi has a past with the Mughals. Mohammed Aziz was a cook in the royal court of Mughal Emperor. One of his sons, Hajji Karimuddin is known to have moved to Delhi with an idea to open a dhaba which led to the establishment of Karim’s Hotel in 1913. Today, the Karim’s is run by its fourth generation and is known for its kebabs and mutton niharis.

Ghantewala in Chandni Chowk was founded in 1790 and have served many of the Mughal Emperors. It was run by its fifth generation today and is famous for its sohan halwa and Karachi halwa recently shut down after its owner said it was no longer profitable to run it. Other than the Mughlai cuisines, there are other fingers licking foods which make the Delhilites fall in love with the city again and again.

Butter Chicken is one of the most delightful dishes of the country. It originated in the 1950s in Moti Mahal Restaurant in Delhi. The restaurant was originally known for its tandoori chicken. The cooks there accidentally tossed the sauce consisting of butter, tomato and chicken juices with tandoori chicken pieces which led to the creation of this amazing dish. Today, butter chicken is found in almost all the restaurants and dhabas.

Paranthas, an important part of the traditional Indian breakfast varies from plain paranthas to stuffed paranthas with potatoes, cauliflower, eggs, radish etc. The paranthewaligali in Chandni Chowk is lined up with shops which sells the best paranthas of the city.

Chaat is the term used to describe the street foods. Delhi serves us with a variety of street foods and Chandni Chowk is known as the Street Food Capital of Delhi.

The narrow streets of Old Delhi is very famous for its chaats. The shops in these areas have been there since ages. Nothing can beat the kind of chaat they serves us. Some of the famous shops are:

Natraj Dahi Bhalla, started in 1940 serves mouth-wateringdahibhalla which are deep fried vadas put in water and later transferred to thick beaten yoghurts.

Shri Balaji ChaatBhandar serves us with golgappas and Bara Batashewala serves us with Batasha's which are similar to the golgappas. We can also find the Mumbai version known as PaniPuri in the malls.

Jung Bahadur Kachori Wala was started in 1971 and today it serves with a variety of kachoris such as dry fruit kachori, dal kachori, matar kachori etc.

Old Legendary Jalebi wala since 1884 whose founder is Nemchand Jain famous for experimented with many recipes before deciding on the final stands at the turning to Dariba Kalan.

The symbolic importance of foodstuffs and cooking styles or cuisines to any sense of nationhood and the degree to which they remain fixed is central to the work of many structural anthropologist's and such theory is mobilized in this analysis ( LeviStrauss1969, Douglas 1972, and Barthes 1973).

Cuisine is integral to culture. Cuisine is a prism that absorbs and reflects a host of cultural phenomena. The study of Cuisine thus sheds light on many areas of working-class life such as domesticity, financial practice, aspiration, class and gender relationships, the uses of public and private space, and the transmission of knowledge. It is a good medium through which to study the way a culture operates and expresses itself.

### **3.4 Food Choice**

Shepherd (2001) divides food choice factors into three main groups; first, it is the product or food related factors which rely on the physical or chemical properties of the food, sensory attributes, functional factors and nutrient content. Second, there are the consumer related factors including personality, social psychological factors, and physiological factors. Third, there are environmentally related factors including economic, cultural and social issues (Shepherd, 2001; Wądołowska et al., 2008). Many of the aforementioned factors are mediated by beliefs and attitudes held by the individual. For instance, the beliefs about the nutritional quality of a food product may be more important than the actual nutritional value of the food when consumers determine their food choice. Marketing, economic, social, cultural, religious or demographic factors might also act through

attitudes or beliefs held by the person (Shepherd, 2001). Franchi (2012) argued that the division of food choice factors outlined by Sheperd (2001) does not prioritize culture as an important factor. According to her we must not overlook the importance of the “feeling” consumers have that makes some foods seem “better” than other foods (Franchi,2012).

### **3.5 Food Preferences**

Dietary patterns evolve and change over time (Saba, 2001) and are a part of societal development. People’s diets are multidimensional and shaped by several factors, society being one of them (Drewnowski, 1997; Naska et al.,2006), and differences in food preferences across cultures can be observed (Risvik et al.,2006). Food preferences have been closely linked to cultural development throughout history (Wright et al., 2001; Montanari, 2006). The cultural group we belong to is of great importance when it comes to food preferences. The choice of food is more complex than just liking or disliking a food product. Several circumstantial factors such as habits, beliefs, attitudes and values influence our choices (Mela, 1999; Palojoki&Tuomi-Gröhn, 2001).

Culture can be seen as a sort of collective memory that influences individual behaviours (Franchi, 2012), and the influence of culture is rooted in a combination of several factors. One factor is the environment; that is geography, climate and availability of different plant and animal species. Another is ritual and belief systems, both religious and otherwise. Community and family structure is also a factor as well as the degree of innovation, mechanization and experimentation in the society. The degree of mobility in a society is also important since the trading with, and import from, other populations or consumer groups may impact the food culture. Finally, the historical, economic and political context within a culture also affects consumers’ food choices and preferences (Mela, 1999; Wright et al., 2000).

### **3.6 Relationship between Food Preferences and Food Choice**

Several factors influence our food choice one of which is biological reactions towards the food consumed by us it is related to the perception of sensory modalities and physiological post- digestive effects. It can help us in predetermining the basic taste as per our preferences (Drewnowski, 1997).

Our chemosensory perception is more or less the same all over the world, and the psychophysical response to sensory qualities may not be much different in different cultures (Prescott & Bell, 1995). However, the preference for these qualities may depend on the context they are experienced in. Hence, different factors in our surroundings affect our preferences (King et al.2007; Rozin, 1996).

We can see distinct differences in food traditions and cuisines of people in different societies all over the world (Montanari, 2006). Different demographic, sociocultural and economic factors modulate the connection between taste responsiveness to food and our choices of food (Drewnowski, 1997). This gives the assumption that people from the same culture or region of the world would have been affected in the same way culturally and therefore has similar food preferences compared to people from other parts of the world. Further, in the contemporary world it is common for people to eat the same food, or ingredients, all over the world. However, in the current scenario due to differences in weather and soil conditions, it does not necessarily mean that foods are prepared in the same way or that they taste the same across geographical regions (Risvik et al., 2006).

Asit makes clear from the preceding discussion; several factors affect our food choices. Therefore, the process connection food choice and food preference is not straight forward and explicable. According to Wądołowska et al.(2008) food preferences interact with different food choice factors (such as advertising, functional, health,

price, sensory and socio-cultural) and sociodemographic features of the consumer (such as age, economic condition, education, gender, region of residence and size of the place of residence), which again interacts with the frequency of food intake (Wądołowska et al., 2008).

It has been shown that people who have different food choice motives differs in preferences for selected food products (Wądołowska et al., 2008). Food choice always remains a complicated area of study as the actual decision making process remains somewhat unclear, because of its complexity but also due to versatile nature. All disciplines as per their interest may approach the matter of food choice from different point of views resulting in its complexity and illuminating different processes.

## CONCLUSION

There have been tremendous changes in food habits and intake patterns owing to the increase e, changing lifestyles, women employment, per capita Income and other environmental factors. Mostly all the Indians love their own cuisine but kids are used to international food which leads to fusion kitchen: e.g. pasta with Indian spices. In Delhi globalization has played an important role in the transformation of food foreign food brands are easily available in many stores, and consumers have access to varieties of food that were not previously available to them products like Greek olives, Italian dressing, Mix herbs, Mexican salsa, French cheese, Swiss chocolate etc. in several shops. Dining Experience, which includes different dining experiences, authentic restaurant design, restaurant atmosphere, and cultural learning. These factors can be controlled to a large extent by restaurant management. Ethnic restaurants have the advantage of offering exotic dining experiences which can satisfy consumers who want to escape from their ordinary routines (H. Kim, 2000). Tourism is a rapidly growing industry worldwide, which is powered by the continual globalization of

businesses and nations we can introduce numerous aspects of global culture via food.

## Practical Implications

The study will have the relevance both in academia as well as in industry. In academia, it will contribute to the body of knowledge by providing an insight of the Food Culture and Cuisine of Delhi i.e. Delhi Cuisine, relationship between culture and cuisine and association among them through customer perspective. In context of industry, the managerial contribution of the study will support and assist the hospitality and tourism managers in planning a comprehensive strategic marketing plan focused on targeting the culinary tourism market.

## Limitations and Future Scope

This study is limited to Delhi only. Further this study explores historical background of culture and its significant contribution on cuisines, food choices and preferences. This study can be elaborated the reference of globalization, technology and role social networking sites and media.

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How to cite this article: Ram P, Sharma S. Impact of different food cultures on cuisine of Delhi. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2018; 5(7):107-115.

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