



Indian Council for Cultural Relations
विद्यया ऽ मृतमश्नुते, अमृतमश्नुते
Bharat Vaidika Cultural Centre
High Commission of India, Canada

Sanskarika

Newsletter of the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre

AUGUST 2022



75
Azadi Ka
Amrit Mahotsav

CUISINE TASTES FROM A TRADITIONAL INDIAN KITCHEN



Be it steaming (dum), tempering (tadka/ baghar), smoking (dhungar) or sauteing (bhunao), celebrity chef Ranveer Brar highlights a few of India's indigenous methods of cooking

Cooking techniques are as fascinating as the cuisine and culture, whether in India or abroad. While some techniques are indigenous and have developed through socio-

geographical impact over the years, some have been acquired from multi-cultural influences. In India, traditional cooking methods not only focus on preparing a piquant dish by enhancing its flavours but are also linked with retaining food nutrition. Traditionally, chefs in royal households would experiment widely with food. While unique spice mixes were one

of the major tools of their trade, the others were interesting methods of preparing a dish. From slow cooking, grilling, tempering, smoking, roasting, steaming – the methods were varied and unique to certain dishes. Here are a few of these traditional cooking methods that have been revived and are practised extensively.

Dum

It's said that the last ruler of the kingdom of Awadh, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, had once observed some Persian traders 'dum' cooking their food. Needless to say, this technique of cooking food in steam, was soon adapted by Lucknow and perfected by way of optimising the shape of the vessel used for cooking. Dum, which allegedly means "breathing" in

Persian, basically lets the food cook in its own steam without letting any of it escape. A thick strip of dough is used to seal the vessel, restricting the steam. It works on the science of rotation, i.e, hot air needs to circulate inside a vessel, quite like convection cooking. To make this circulation evenly cook the food – mostly the meat and rice dish biryani – burning coals were placed both above and below the vessel to allow even cooking. This is how it is believed that while the concept is borrowed, the technique was perfected in Lucknow. And because of this even circulation of hot air, the flavour and aroma of 'dum-cooked' food remains a class apart even today.



The most flavourful method of preparing biryani (rice and meat dish) is steaming (dum). This method allows the ingredients to cook in their own steam, thereby enhancing the flavour and nutrition of the dish

Tadka

The concept of tempering in Asian terminology is different from the western concept; the latter referring more to balancing or stabilising an ingredient or a set of ingredients, especially in the confectionery field. The Asian version, however, is the practice of cooking spices in hot fat to further improve the flavour of a dish. Techniques and combinations play an important part. Each savoury dish from across the country typically uses a different set of ingredients that need to be added at specific times, in a particular order and ratio and cooked for just the right amount of time before the main ingredients are added. Or the tempering itself is added to the cooked dish. Some dishes begin with a tadka, while for some, it is the finishing touch. Most of the Gujarati farsaans (snacks) are

excellent cases in point. After all, who isn't drawn to that final dash of mustard seeds, slit green chillies, curry leaves and grated coconut on dhoklas or khandvis? My stint with Munir Ustad, a popular kebab maker from Lucknow, instilled in me the importance of 'tahseer', a concept that was ingrained in the Lucknow cooks of yore. It's about balancing the ingredients and neutralising the property of one with the property of another. The same tahseer is an important aspect of tempering in Indian cuisine. For instance, cumin seeds, cinnamon and asafoetida aid digestion, mustard seeds are excellent for heart health and relieve muscular pain. In fact, the very addition of fat as the cooking agent is to enhance both the flavours and the nutritional benefits of the spices.



The technique of dhungar or smoking of a meat-based dish is an ancient one. But today, this technique is applied to vegetable preparations as well. Here, paneer ghee roast masala with roti (flatbread)

Slow/ clay Cooking

The long slow cooking, especially in clay cookware, is inherent to our cuisine and allows little to go wrong. Whether it is the sarson ka saag and urad dal that is cooked in the "taudis" of Punjab, the fish curries cooked in the "kundlems" of the local dhabas (Khanawats) of Goa (some of them still remain in Bicholim taluka) or the Malwan fish curry and the Syrian Christian fish curry, which tastes superb the next day as it absorbs the aroma of the chali in which its cooked – the flavours of food slow-cooked in a clay utensil is unique. In this method, food is cooked on relatively low heat for a longer period of time. It slows down the nutrition loss of food items, which happens during cooking.

Dhungar

The technique of dhungar or quick and cold smoking of kebabs, involves a nearly burnt out piece of coal or 'bujha koyla' (to avoid a fire) being placed in a bowl and cold ghee (clarified butter) is drizzled over it. Some spices are also added to further enhance the aroma. This bowl is then placed over marinated meat (these days even colage

cheese and vegetables are used) and closed with a high lid to allow the smokiness to be absorbed by the dish evenly. Dhungar is indeed a very intriguing technique of refining the aromatic spectrum of a dish. The world-famous Galavat ke kebab, for example, would not be as famous without the subtle smokiness of cloves and desi ghee imparted to the fine mince during its resting. The burrani raita and the murgh Awadhi korma are the other two dishes that are significantly heightened in taste post this unique treatment. The affinity of the smoky flavour with yoghurt is no secret in the Mewar region of Rajasthan where they make an exquisitely balanced smoked chhaas. Our relationship with food is an extension of our relationship with life and aspects around us. As with life, so with cooking. It is important to be in a state of "being". Simply put, to give food its time to cook; to let it be. Traditional Indian cooking techniques have a fascinating scientific aspect associated with them. It is hardly surprising, then, to see people now going back to roots, both in terms of cooking and dishes being prepared.



RANVEER BRAR

Ranveer Brar is a celebrity chef and a well-known television and digital media personality. He is also a Masterchef India judge, author, restaurateur and food film producer. He has set up restaurants in India and abroad, and curated the menu of many more.

Source : India Perspectives | Issue 04 | 2022

INDIAN DIASPORA IN SRI LANKA

Floating in the Dead Sea

There it was! I stood at the edge of the cliff and marveled at the scenery.

It was one of those unforgettable travel moments.

A place I've read and heard so much about and finally...

I'm here at the Dead Sea!

Stretching from below me to the distant horizon was its blue expanse, famous the world over for the 'floating in the Dead Sea' experience, but also for being the lowest point on Earth (the 'sea' is 420m or 1,400ft below sea level), its extraordinarily high level of salination (it's more than 8 times saltier than the average ocean) and for its numerous mentions in the Bible. One half of its name

is misleading: it is technically a lake and not a sea. The other half is spot on: with that much salt in the water, the lake is pretty dead! I stood on the western shore of the lake that is part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It was a clear day and I had an amazing panorama of the entire length of this 67km (or 42 mile) lake. It was simply breathtaking!



I turned my gaze to the lake shore. The rocks were covered with a blanket of salt crystals, giving them an intriguing cauliflower-like appearance, whilst the water was a gorgeous jade. I couldn't wait to get into the water and experience the wonders of the Dead Sea.

The healing qualities of the Dead Sea

An hour later, I was standing on the edges of the Dead Sea, and looking at the rather comical scenes along the shore. People were floating on their backs in the lake whilst on the shore, others were slapping hands- full of mud onto their bodies.

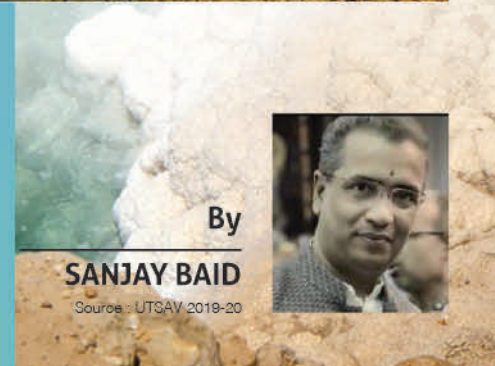
This is what makes the Dead Sea so special: you automatically float in the Dead Sea because its salinity is so dense; and the sea has therapeutic qualities. The water and mud of the Dead Sea have been recognized for their healing properties since Biblical times. Loaded with a unique blend of minerals, the water and mud are used to relieve skin disorders, sinuses and osteoarthritis.

The Dead Sea has other qualities. Situated 420m below sea level, the lake enjoys a higher atmospheric pressure with more oxygen, as well as lower

levels of harmful ultraviolet rays (you can stay in the sun for a prolonged period without sunscreen and not get burned). Did these qualities work for me? Well, keep on reading!

What it's like to float in the Dead Sea

Before long, I was slapping on the magic mud. Cuts and bruises I suffered from a mishap earlier that day started to sting as I applied the mud. I sat at the edge of the water for fifteen minutes before going in. My skin was immediately coated by an extraordinary silky film. As soon as I lifted my feet off the lake bed, the natural buoyancy took effect and I found myself on my back, bobbing around. I wouldn't know how else to describe the feeling except: AWESOME!



By
SANJAY BAID

Source : UTSAV 2019-20

7 to 28

Every Sundays
4.00 pm

Monthly Lecture Series – 90,92,94,95

Online Yoga lecture / workshop sessions
for Param Dhamma Chaitya Pirivena, Ratmanala
by Shri Ajay Kumbhar, Yoga expert from India

7.30 am

12

Friday

6.00 pm

Monthly Lecture Series – 91

On the Occasion of International Youth Day
Yoga for Youth

by Shri Ajay Kumbhar, Yoga expert from India

Sanskriti Sandhya Series – 29

**History and development of
Colombo Vel Festival**

Lecture & Dance programme

By Dr. Subashini Pathmanathan
Outstanding scholar & Renowned Bhartha Natya artiste

15

Monday



**76th Independence Day
of India Celebrations**

Monthly Lecture Series – 93

On the Occasion of World Humanitarian Day

Yoga for Human Values and Prosperity

by Shri Ajay Kumbhar, Yoga expert from India

19

Friday
6.00pm

Sanskriti Sandhya Series – 30

**An evening of Instrumental Recital
Tabla solo**

by Shasthrapathi, Vaadya Nipun
Mr. Narendra Gunarathna

*Visiting Lecturer, University of Visual & Performing Arts
and University of Kelaniya*

20

Saturday
6.30 pm

Sanskriti Sandhya Series – 31

**An evening of Instrumental Recital
Violin solo**

Darshanapathi Chandana Ruvan Kumara
Lecturer, University of Kelaniya

26

Friday
6.00 pm

Free Events. All are cordially invited.

For details in regard to **CLASSES** on

**Bharatha Natyam,
Kathak, Sitar, Violin, Tabla, Carnatic vocal, Yoga and Hindi**

please call on tell no. +94 77 672 6143 or
E-mail to iccrcolombo2@gmail.com.

For upcoming facebook live events, visit www.facebook.com/ICCRSriLanka

Published by the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre
16/2, Gregory's Road, Colombo 07. Tel: 011 2684698
Email: iccrcolombo@gmail.com Facebook: [facebook.com/ICCRSriLanka](https://www.facebook.com/ICCRSriLanka)

