

Tamil Cuisine: A Key to Promote Tourism in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Its best, to make a man happy, by giving delicious food goes the saying. It applies very well for the tourists and tourism industry in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu has topped the popularity charts for both domestic and foreign tourists for the second year in a row upsetting Maharashtra, Goa and Kerala. Tamil Nadu Cuisine is a major principal factor in drawing the national and international tourists due to its diverse and delicious taste, texture, range of colours, presentation and novelty. The Tamil cuisine is one of the oldest surviving cuisines and has significantly influenced the cuisines of neighboring states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Maharashtra. The Tamil Nadu traditional food items especially in Chettinad, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Kongu regions offer a distinctive tang and forms an magnetic reason to enhance tourist arrivals. From Chennai to Kanyakumari Madurai to Thanjavur, and Coimbatore and in all towns and cities you get refreshing mouth-watering Tamil delicacies like Idly, Dosa, Vada, Sambar Chettinad items which makes the guest to visit again and again. Chennai's Vada curry, Madurai's Konarkadaikaradosai, Jigardhanda, karaikudichettinad special items, Coimbatore's KonguNadu delicacies kambukoozhu, vazhaipoovadai, Kumbakkonam-degree filter coffee, Kancheepuram idly, NagarcoilNanjilNadu Special Ulunthanchoru (dish made of black gram lentils, rice and coconut), Dindugal, Ambur Special Biryani, Vellore Arcot Special Sweet MakkanPeda, Virudhunagar & Sengottai special Parotta, Tuticorin Celebrity item Macroon, Tirunelveli World famous Iruttu Kadai Halwa, Kovilpatti Candy paradise(peanut chocolate), Nagore Special 5 Variety rice, Srivilliputhur traditional Milk Sweet Palkova, Coimbatore Roadside Mushroom, Nilgiris and Ooty Special Varki and home made Chocolates Manaparaaimurukku, Pazhani- Panchamrutham are few delicacies which attracts lot of tourists. Tamil Nadu stands first in attracting Domestic as well as International tourists due to its diverse culinary elegance. The aroma of Tamil culinary skill has reached foreign shores, attracting foreign tourists in hordes to idyllic landscape of Tamil Nadu. Domestic tourists from other states of India are having a great fondness to taste Tamil authentic dishes and due to that visit the

state often. Both vegetarian and non vegetarian foods are popular in Tamil Nadu. While the non-vegetarian dishes are all heavily spiced, the vegetarian is mildly spiced and feels light. There are few challenges in tasting this Tamil cuisine by the foreigners in regard to the spiciness, language issues and other factors too. Few findings and suggestions are provided in the end of this paper This paper also attempts how the various Tamil culinary delicacies in various districts of Tamil Nadu can promote the tourism.

Keywords: Tamil Nadu, Cuisine, Delicacies, Tourism, Promotion

1. Introduction

Tourism is the largest and most rapidly growing industries in the world. Tourism is an excellent tool to promote unity, national integration, broadmindedness and understanding of different cultures. In the world tourism map India is a tourist welcoming country known for its generous treatment to all visitors. Its visitor-friendly ethnicity, varied life styles and cultural heritage and colourful fairs and festivals held enduring attractions for the all tourists. The various states in India contribute in an unique manner to draw the tourists from different parts of the world. Tamil Nadu has great tourism potential and magnetism to captivate the tourists. Tamil Culture is tradition bound. Festivals of Tamil Nadu are mostly associated with religion and temples. Music and dance are the important entertainments of Tamil Nadu.

Food is a principal factor that plays an important role in satisfying tourists. Its always said the way to a man's heart is through his stomach which very much applies for all tourists. When tourists travel to different places, not only the culture, adventure, fairs and festivals, crafts and

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souvenirs make them happy but food has a significant part in their trip. Every tourist is in need of eating good food and drinking delicious beverages.

Apart from this, food impresses other aspects such as travel agencies culinary program, package price of hotels, culture assimilation and many other factors. The significant factor for tourists to select tourist destination is based on the availability of good food. Tamil Cuisine is famous in providing delicious food. In Tamilians diet, country vegetables and rice are vital. The main ingredients used in the day today Tamil cooking are milk and its various by products, vegetables and tamarind are used liberally. There are few sayings which light the importance of food such as "There is no sincere love than the love of food." And "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach".

Culinary Tourism: Culinary tourism may be defined as a type of tourism in which the tourists like to visit a unique and unforgettable dining and drinking experience. By combining travel with these edible experiences, culinary tourism offers both locals and tourists alike an authentic taste of place in the bountiful province.

Literature Review: Food promoting tourism is a new concept which is getting momentum in Tamil Nadu. Usually tourism is based on viewing, seeing and contemplating (eg. Visiting museums, art galleries, concerts, dance performances, folk-arts, gourmet food, unique styles of ornaments, unique technology etc). But in Tamil Nadu as food and hospitality plays a significant role in welcoming the tourists it takes the different dimension.

As quality food in a tourist destination gets more and more recognition among tourists, the current study assumes particular significance (12) and relevance. Certain significant factors about Tamil cuisine and how its role in promotion of tourism in Tamil Nadu, its challenges in tourism of Tamil Nadu have been discussed and highlighted in this paper which may be of immense worth to policy makers, researchers, academicians and entrepreneurs engaged in tourism growth and development. The researcher has suggested various ideas to boost the Tamil culinary tourism. It also deals with the economic impact as well as the sustainability aspects of the culinary tourist destinations in Tamil Nadu.

The review of literature suggests the following. Tamil food items are very delicious and it is very well patronized

by domestic and international tourists.

In the book "*ThamizharNagarigamumPanbadum*" (Chennai, 2005) the author Dhakshinamoorthy focus on the concept of ancient Tamil foods, its role in society, and its socio-cultural implications. This book provides a better understanding of food culture of ancient Tamils. The objective of the study is to provide information about the various ingredients like curd, meat, raggi were used in the preparation of various foods and beverages like panagam, toddy were also drunk by those ancient people.

In the book "*Food Tourism Around the World Development, Management and Markets*" (Burlington, 2006) the author Michael Hall, Liz Sharples, Richard Mitchel and Niki Macionis focus on the role of food, wine and tourism in regional development. This book provides a better understanding of food and tourism in Papua New Guinea and in other regions. It also highlights how restaurants serve local food in Australia and New Zealand.

Objectives of The Study: The main objectives of the study is to

1. To highlight the unique features of various Tamil Nadu culinary delicacies from various regions, districts of the state.
2. To identify challenges on culinary tourism in Tamil Nadu .
3. To evaluate ways to overcome such culinary challenges by providing practical suggestions.
4. An attempt is made to know that Tamil Nadu culinary delicacies can bring sustainable and profitable development to Tamil Nadu.

Data and Methodology: For understanding the various Tamil culinary delicacies, this study has used relevant available data have been collected from Primary as well as secondary sources of information. The research design used for this research paper is exploratory in nature. Primary data and useful first hand information was available through informal discussion with the Executive Chefs of various hotels, culinary experts and tourism officials about the special dishes and tourist expectations from food served in various outlets. Secondary data is obtained from the study of culinary books, online books, manuals, promotional menus, banners, advertisements in print and electronic media, observations, data analysis and careful study of relevant literature. Information is collected from the top quality tourism journals, reports,

books, surveys and ideas of tourism experts have largely contributed towards the construction of this paper.

2. Tourism in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is located in the southern end of India. The words Tamil Nadu literally means 'The Land of The Tamils or Tamil Country'. Tamil Nadu is the 11th largest State out of the 29 states in India. It has 32 districts. Tamil Nadu may not be big in size like Uttar Pradesh or Rajasthan but it gains in its abundance of natural resources. The western, north-western and the southern parts are abundant in vegetation as they're the meeting points of the Western and Eastern Ghats with the Nilgiris Hills. This makes the state an ecological niche which gives the State of Tamil Nadu abundance in flora and fauna. Tamil Nadu has also been home to the oldest of civilizations, and has seen the rule of various ancient dynasties like the Chera, Chola and Pandya which ruled the region between 300 BC – 300 AD. The state of Tamil Nadu is thus rich in both the aspects of international and domestic tourists due to its culture and cuisine.

Fairs and Festivals: Tamil Nadu State in India gets great tourist recognition due to its renowned cultural heritage both within and outside the country. Here religion and culture are strongly intertwined. The advent of festivals marks the reaffirmation of the cycle of life with its joys and sorrows. Some of these ceremonies are purely pastoral, expressing the joy of life. Others are connected with myths and legends, sacred in our memories. Such festivals attract people of all age groups and walks of life. Several varieties of foods are prepared and served in fairs and festivals. The famous festivals are the Deewali, Xmas, Ramzan and Pongal Festival.

Name of the festival	Place Celebrated	Month of the year
1.Dance Festival	Mamallapuram	January/March
2.Natyanjali Festival	Chidambaram	February/March
3.Chithirai Festival	Madurai	April/May
4.Summer Festival	Yercaud, Kolli Hills	May
	Pachaimalai, Yelagiri	June

Unique Cultural Specialities Of Tamil Nadu Tourism

- (i) **Temple Cars:** There is a temple car in each temple. (Ther). But Madurai Meenakshiamman temple car, Srivilliputhur Andalkovil and Thiruvavur temple cars are very famous.

- (ii) **Arts and Crafts:** Thanjavur paintings and toys (thalaiyattibomma), Thanjavurthattu (plate), Kanchipuram silk work are very famous art and crafts work.

- (iii) **Kolam:** The Floor Decoration - Kolam. In Tamil Nadu the women folk have a strange practice in their day today life. The women in order to decorate in front of their homes, in the early morning with the help of white marble powder or at times rice powder put a designed ornamentation which is called as Kolam. These kolams are ancient Dravidian geometrical patterns. Its attractive patterns make villages, towns and cities more festive, pleasant, and devotional. In places, where there is a great gathering of people like Temples and Wedding Halls, rice paste made by mixing rice flour with water is used to draw kolams.

Meenakshi temple Madurai is surmounted by soaring gopuras and home to a range of spectacular festivals. The Nilgiri Blue Mountain Railway journey is a bone shaking ride up to Ooty and it is one of Asia's last steam railways which has spectacular views of the Nilgiri Hills.

Tamil Nadu's Tourists Profile: Tamil Nadu receives the largest number of tourists from the United Kingdom, followed by the United States, Sri Lanka, France, Germany and Canada.

2. Tamil Cuisine Unique Aspects

Tamil food is a signature of state and has made its mark on a universal level. Sambar, Idly, Vada and Dosa and spices have become synonymous with Tamil Nadu.

Importance of Hospitality in Tamil Culture: The Tamils have been giving much importance to hospitality (Virundombal) in their life. In Tamil tradition, it is part of good culture to entertain guests. Satisfying the desires of the guests is a part of the Tamil hospitality custom. The ladies are given kumkum while taking leave from their hosts. As per the words of Thiruvalluvar in his work Thirukural he stresses the importance of hospitality in the 9th chapter titled Hospitality, Couplet 82, such as "Though food of immortality (elixir) should crown the board, feasting alone, the guests unfed, is thing abhorred". It is not fit that one should wish his guests to be outside (in his house) even though he were eating the food of immortality (elixir).

Tamil Cuisine: Tamil Nadu pleases its visitors by serving a sumptuous Tamil cuisine with a distinctive taste. When a guest visits the Tamil homes they are provided with food as per their preference which may consist both vegetarian as well as non vegetarian dishes which may include dal, rice, pickle, pastes and vegetables. Spices are added to give a distinctive taste. Breakfast or tiffin (sitrunderi) includes idly or steamed rice dumplings, dosai and vada are really delicious. Chettinad cuisine a bit spicy one, offers a different special taste for the tourists.

Classification of 6 tasty foods, Arusuvai Unavu: Tamil food is generally classified into six tastes - sweet, sour, salt, bitter, pungent and astringent ('arusuvai unavu') and Tamil cuisine recommends food that includes all of these six tastes in each main meal.

The various tastes has good nutrition as well as great sense of balancing capability. It also helps for the digestion.

- "Sweet (Milk, butter, sweet cream, wheat, ghee, rice, fruits and honey)
- Sour (Limes and lemons, citrus fruits, yogurt, mango and tamarind)
- Salty (Salt or pickles)
- Bitter (Bitter gourd, greens of many kinds, turmeric and fenugreek)
- Pungent (Chillies, pepper, ginger, black pepper, clove and mustard)
- Astringent (Beans, lentils (dhals), turmeric, vegetables like cauliflower and cabbage)"

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Indian_cuisine

Tamils are predominantly rice eaters. They use more of tamarind, coconut in their recipes. Tamils live all over the world. There are Tamils in Singapore, Thailand, Madagascar, Thailand, Malaysia, Srilanka, Canada, Australia, UK and US. The specially designed Tamil kitchen equipment are Aruvamanai (equipment to cut), Attukal (equipment to grind idly batter), Ammi (equipment to grind masalas).

Tamil Feast: Tamilians serve food to guests and tourists in a fantastic way. In Tamil Nadu, they call it "Virundhu Sappadu". It means a feast meal. Traditionally Tamils serve their feast food in banana leaf.

During a Virundhu Sappadu, the feasty meal, the guests sits on a mat and the meal is served on a banana leaf

which is spread in front of the guests. The top half of the banana leaf is for the side dishes and the bottom part is for the main dish. Payasam, Kesari, Sweet Pongal or any Dessert also occupies a portion of the bottom part. First the host serves little salt, pickle and thayir pachadi (curd raitha). Next the vegetable gravies are served.

Dry and wet curries are placed one after the other. They are called varuval, poriyal and kootu. A minimum of three curries are served in a feast.

Traditionally, sweets are eaten first. Sambar rice is eaten first with a spoon of ghee. This is followed by Vathalkuzhambu and then Rasam. Finally rice with curd or buttermilk is eaten at the end of the meal. In the end, the meal is complete with a banana.

A major feature of Tamil Nadu cuisine is the wide varieties of tiffin items. They are served in the evening as a snack and a few tiffin items also feature in the breakfast. Dishes like idli, sevai, upma, pongal, uttapam, dosai, puttu, aval, chapathi, adai, Vadai. Filter coffee is the main beverage along with this tiffin.

Dosa actually requires a special mention in Tamil cuisine. Though it is traditionally eaten as breakfast or as tiffin, because of its deliciousness and popularity as a fast food nowadays, it is eaten at almost anytime of the day. There are variety of dosas which are relished by tourists. Murukku, seedai, bajji, bonda, karapori, mixture and pakoda are very tasty savories. A unique aspect of dishes of Tamil Nadu is that it is still prepared the original way with no adulteration of the modern lifestyle. In fact the leisure of cooking and traditional style of serving has remained unaltered for centuries.

Tamil Nadu Food has a lot of distinct meal types depending on the ancient geographical division. It has Chetti Nadu cuisine comprising of Karaikudi and nearby areas, Madurai-Tirunelveli Cuisine comprising of other southern districts, Kongu Nadu cuisine and of course Nanjil Nadu cuisine which is that of the Deep South Kanyakumari and nearby places which is famous for its fish varieties. Chetti Nadu delicacies are Vellai Appam, Idiyappam, Uthappam, Paalpaniyaram and non-vegetarian dishes are made primarily using chicken. Some of the few noted Tamil recipes are Chicken Chettinad, Chettinaad chicken fry and chettinaad chicken kurma. They also boast of Chettinad Fish curry and Chettinaad vegetable curry.

Mutton, chicken, prawn and other seafood items are very popular in Tirunelveli and Madurai.

Parota is a simple delicacy made of maida, but in Tamil Nadu it is made with a different way. It is served in all places in Tamil Nadu, including both five star restaurants and cheap wayside eateries. Jigarthanda, muttaiparotta (minced parotta with eggs) paruthipal (a evening hot beverage prepared from cottonseeds) Karidosa (mutton keema stuffed dosa) are famous in Madurai.

Nanjil Nadu and Kanyakumari districts are famous for its fish dishes because of being coastal. Sweet and spicy dishes made of coconuts are also very popular here. Coconut oil forms a base for almost all the dishes in this region. "Kongu Nadu region has delicacies like Sandhava (rice dish which looks like noodles), Uputtu (a sweet, which looks like pizza) Thengai Paal (sweet hot milk made of jaggery, coconut and cotton seeds), Ulundu Kali (Sweet made out of Jaggery and Black Gram), Ragiputtumavu (steamed rice flour cooked in cylindrical vessel), Arisi Puttumavu, Vazhaipoo Poriyal, Kambu Paniyaram, Ragi Pakoda, Thengaparai (Coconut barfi), Kadalai Urundai, Ellu Urundai and Pori Urundai."

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_cuisine

Tamil cuisine retains its basic character, as it has a special personality of its own and it remains unchanged. Idlis and many items are cooked by steaming which is good for health. It is healthy, has no fat and it involves a quick method of cooking. Generally only vegetable oils are used in cooking. Frying is limited to a few items such as varuvals, appalams and pappadams. Shallow frying is more common (dosa, adai and appams). Deep frying is done during the festive occasions and social get togethers. Gingeli oil is also commonly used. Ghee is used for seasoning and desserts.

Food eating patterns: At home Tamilians eat meals sitting cross-legged on a floor mat. During festive occasions, for both hosts and guests food is served in the traditional banana leaf.

Traditions of serving food: Corner of banana leaf faces the right side of the person. Leaf is cleaned with sprinkling water and brushing with fingers.

Order of serving food: Sweets are served initially, followed by Vegetables in the top corner of the leaf.

First serving of rice: Rice with Paruppu is served with ghee along with sambar. Then appalam is placed.

Second serving of rice : Morekozhambu (buttermilk curry) is served. Second serving of all vegetable dishes that has been consumed are served.

Third serving of rice: Rasam, appalam, Maindessert, Full cup of payasam.

Fourth serving of rice: Yoghurt is served. Wash hands and chew betel leaves with betel nut and calcium carbonate (lime) which is good for digestion.

Common Breakfast items: Coffee, Idly, Dosa, Uppuma, Pongal accompanied by Chutneys, sambars and Podis.

Common snack items: Vadas, Bonda, Sevais, Adais

Lunch/Dinner items: Rice, Rasam, Sambhar, Kootu, Poriyal, curry, Appalam, Curd, Pickle, pachadi, Thovaiyal, Podis.

Panagam: It's a beverage served during certain festive occasions. It is made of jiggery, lime, ginger and cardamom served before food.

Due to all these Tamil food delicacies both local and international tourists frequent Tamil Nadu often.

4. Tamil Delicacies Region Wise Attractions

The Tamil rural food delicacies like Kezhvaragukoozh (Raggi porridge), Kambakoozh (Pearl millet porridge), Panniyaram (A shallow fried rice flour sweet dish) and Suzhiyan (Dal based sweet) are also most sought by the culinary tourists. If these food items are provided in a professional way it will appeal to the tourists in an even better way. These foods are very simple to prepare as well as have a lot of nutritive and health benefits.

Health benefits of rural foods Kambu and Kezhvaragukoozh : Reduces Heat: Kambu mixed with yogurt and some salt cools the body immediately and gives instant energy. High in protein. Keeps the body hydrated. Energises body. Prevents heart disease. Reduces acidity. It is rich in calcium, iron and in fibre.

Foreign tourists appreciate the local style of Tamil food items and its distinct method of service of food, which is unique to Tamil Nadu, like the Dosa starters, Paniyaram,

Sambar, traditional Puttu, Idly, Chettinad curries and rich sweets. Most of these food items are served in banana leaf which is different from the usual style.

Certain local foods and beverages of Tamil Nadu are very much liked by the tourists.

The list of popular lip smacking Tamil culinary delicacy in various Tamil cities and towns are as follows.

Chennai's Vada curry, (Dal based dish served with Idly and dosa)

Madurai's Konarkadaikaradosai, Jigardhanda, (Sweetened chilled milk based Beverage)

Karaikudichettinad special items, (Non vegetarian spicy dishes)

Coimbatore's KonguNadu delicacies kambukoozhu (Porridge) vazhaipoovadai, (Rawbananavadai)

Kumbakkonam-degree filter coffee, Kancheepuram idly,

Nagarcoil Nanjil Nadu Special Ulunthanchoru (dish made of black gram lentils, rice and coconut),

Dindugal, Ambur Special Biryani, (Special type of rice is used)

Vellore Arcot Special Sweet MakkanPeda,

Virudhunagar & Sengottai special Parotta, (Fried parotta)

Tuticorin Celebrity item Macroon,

Tirunelveli World famous Iruttu Kadai Halwa, (Wheat halwa made with siruvani river water)

Kovilpatti Candy paradise (peanut chocolate),

Nagore Special 5 Variety rice,

Srivilliputhurtraditional Palkova (Milk Sweet)

Coimbatore Roadside Mushroom,

Nilgirisand Ooty Special Varki and home made Chocolates

Manaparaimurukku, (A tasty savoury item made from rice flour)

Pazhani- Panchamrutham (A sweet concoction prepared using five fruits, dates, honey and raisins made during festive occasions and in all temples).

The above regional food items in various districts of Tamil Nadu are great tourist crowd pullers as all these dishes are very much relished by the culinary tourists.

The Tamil culinary tourism has to attract more tourists. If good infrastructure is provided with comfortable room facilities coupled with transport, medical facilities, restaurants and other facilities definitely more tourists will frequent the Tamil Nadu state for tasting its food.

5. Promotion of Tamil Culinary Tourism

Food symbolizes many aspects of everyday culture and is a vehicle for social relations. In Tamil culture hospitality plays a important role. The Tamil foods are promoted in various star hotels and restaurants like Adyar AnandaBhavan, Murugan Idly kadai, Sangeetha (all vegetarian dishes) Velu Military hotels, Thalapakatti and Muniyandi hotels (for Non vegetarian items). These food items are very delicious and of course guarantee good taste for the culinary tourists.

In diverse levels the Tamil food items are promoted by various culinary experts. As per The Hindu newspaper report "The Indian Federation of Culinary Association (IFCA) President Manjit Singh Gill in 6th International Chefs Conference has opined that Indian cuisine is a scientifically-designed one, which is also health. The IFCA members pointed out that the Tourism Ministry was also in favour of promoting Indian cuisine to the international community in a big way. While the Ministry has incorporated some measures to promote Indian cuisine in the new tourism policy, it is also establishing two management institutes - Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) in Noida and Tirupati."37

These are expected to be ready by 2017. This is first-of-its-kind initiative in the country. They are the need of the hour. The U.S. has about 800 culinary institutes, while we are just establishing such institutes. The IFCA has been entrusted with the task of recording Indian cuisine.

Culinary Classes in Tourists Itinerary: In the tourists itinerary a separate Tamil traditional cooking session may be included for the benefit of the food lovers. Good food loving tourists may be invited for few Tamil homes and they can learn a few traditional food items. Home stay is a new concept developing in India. Tamil cuisine loving tourists can have a good experience by staying in the home stay hosts and can enjoy the hospitality and may get to become skilled in cooking Tamil foods. Places to Take India Cooking Classes on a Culinary Holiday is Akriti Eco homestay Nilgiri Mountains, Tamil Nadu.

Food Festivals to Promote Tourism: The Tamil Nadu festivals are celebrated with pomp and splendour. They are celebrated for cultural and religious reasons. In each festivals traditional food items are prepared and served.

Often during these festivals hotels hire exclusive household expert cooks and prepare delicious food items and serve it an authentic way.

The traditional food festivals are celebrated with lot of mouthwatering snacks and food items which are thronged by innumerable food connoisseurs and tourists from across the country. The food festivals are celebrated in the state to display the various culture and traditions coupled with authentic local flavours.

Special food items of Tamil Nadu are prepared in during these festivals in a careful manner and it is served in traditional attired waiters.

Tamil Cuisine in International Cookery Shows: In the present scenario Tamil cuisine is getting more prominent in several TV channels. Various unique and traditional methods of Tamil culinary cooking are showcased in these tv channels. The myth about curry is hot and spicy has become old school of thought. People thinking curry will trouble your stomach idea is also not accepted these days. Instead, grand culinary shows have had several references to Tamil dishes. The Tamil breakfast staple food like upma won several votes at the finale of one of them

Strict Food Standards for Restaurants By Government: Authentic tradition food serving restaurants are an essential element of a tourists visit to a place and as such the services offered by them can make or mar a visit. The Department of Tourism, Government of India has a motto of giving standard and quality service to the tourists. The Government of India has a voluntary scheme for approval of restaurants in the country. Such independent restaurants will be outside the hotels and should have more than 30 seats.

6. Challenges in Promoting Culinary Tourism

The following are the challenges faced by Tamil culinary tourism that are considered as the negatives.

1. **Lack of Managements Skills:** It is a problem among the local government tourism staff respon-

sible for planning and regulations of tourism in their offices. Most staff have little knowledge or experience of Tamil cuisine and due to that they contribute less in the Tamil culinary tourism development.

2. **Marketing:** Most rural tourism places have less facilities to prepare foods, and tends to be small and widely scattered. This makes it difficult to market them to potential visitors, and makes it almost impossible for them to cater the food items for the tourists.
3. **Infrastructure:** Many rural food outlet areas of outstanding natural beauty have a poor road or rail network and are difficult to reach. In other words, roads are poor so that travel is slow.
4. **Limited tourism season:** Rural food outlets receive most of their tourists during the October to February season only and hence less sales is done in the other months. Due to this seasonal disadvantage the people who indulge in making foods have less scope to develop their business.
5. **Ignorance of the Rural Folk:** The rural folk who provide food for tourists especially visitors from overseas are dealing with people who have different lifestyle from their own, and unfamiliar set of preferences and values. Due to their ignorance they are not able to offer proper hospitality to the tourist.
6. **Barrier of Language:** Tamil language acts as a major problem to explain about the food, between the tourists and village folks.
7. **Destroying the Privacy:** For rural people, food tourism at times may cause conflict and distress if there are too many visitors causing too much noise and traffic. They believe too many tourists can spoil the peace of their village. This leads to a feeling of regionalism among the village people.

Steps to Be Taken to Promote Culinary Tourism

This article revealed that although Tamil Nadu has unique and fabulous cultural heritage, when it comes to Tamil food most foreign tourists are ignorant of Tamil dishes as it is not popular in their part of the world. Punjabi food is popular among abroad visitors due to tandoor and to an extent even Kerala cuisine is famous due to the tourism tagline “God’s own country” and its rich culture, and popular coastline sea food. Here in Tamil Nadu in most restaurants due to poor hygiene, poorly prepared food and unprofessional service personnel at times make the

tourists unsatisfied. Even though Tamil Nadu is blessed with natural beauty and a great cuisines it is not able to cash upon them due to lack of various facilities.

There is a vast gap between the tourist expectations and the present state of affairs in tourism industry in Tamil Nadu. Tourists expect good food, clean water, comfortable accommodation, round the clock transport which are lacking in few tourist destinations.

Few steps to be taken by Central Government in this regard are as follows.

1. The Government of India can mix the traditional food with leisure and recreational games. In the restaurants the tourists may be allowed to play thayam (dice game) bambaram (top game) goli (marble game) and Pallankuzhi (folk game) .
2. The Government can conduct various food festivals in different themes and in various exotic tourist destinations to attract tourists. The tourists may be given attractive handicrafts in the form of souvenirs.
3. The Government can make a special law which states that all the hotel restaurants should have atleast a minimum number of local dishes in their menu card which gives the chance for the tourists to taste the local flavours.
4. The rural foods also should be given due importance in the menu cards of the restaurants.
5. Government of India should start more hotel management institutes in many places and quality culinary education should be taught in these institutions.
6. Apart from the culinary skills that traditional style of welcome like aarathi, wearing of veshti for men folk, dhavani and saree wearing customs for women may be taught for the tourists in the restaurants based on the tourists preference. Government can initiate steps in this regard.
7. Along with food in restaurants some entertainment like cock fight, kilijosiya (parrot astrology) and kairekaijosiya (palmistry reading) may be provided .

7. Role of Private and Govt Sectors in Promotion of Tamil Culinary Tourism

The Private sectors like hotels, restaurants and all the food outlets may contribute in a major way in attracting the by

providing delicious food and excellent hospitality .The Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) is doing its best in drawing the attention of tourists by conducting various food festivals, providing pamphlets, CDs and notices . They give lot of importance to tourists.

In the various tourist destinations of Tamil Nadu the TTDC is offering the following facilities.

As per the Tamil Nadu tourism website

“Hotels, Youth Hostels, Restaurants, Snack Bar, Boat Houses, Telescope Houses, Lake park, Coaches for operation of Tours, Exhibition site at Island Ground for conduct of exhibitions.

TTDC is operating Youth Hostels, wherein dormitory accommodation is provided to the budget tourists. This has helped the tourists to avail low cost accommodation even during the peak season in Ooty, Kodaikanal and Yercaud.”

Source: TamilNadutourism.org/about-ttdc.html

Steps Taken by TTDC for the Tourism Promotion from 2001-2010 are

- Incentives for Investment in Star hotels and One Time Subsidy for Construction of Hotels
- Converting Heritage Buildings into Heritage Hotels
- Tourism Friendly Campaign -”Virundhinar Potrudhum, Virundhinar Potrudhum” (Revere the Guests)
- Introduction of Hop-on, Hop-off Tour Chennai to Mamallapuram.
- Participation in the International Travel Marts and conferences organized by Pacific Asia Travel Association, World Travel Mart and International Tourism Bourse.
- Publication of Pamphlets.

“**Enchanting Tamil Nadu - Experience Yourself**” is the tourism department campaign which is very attractive and a successful one. The TTDC has been doing several promotional functions to attract tourists. The various efforts of TTDC from 2001 to 2010 are furnished below in the chronological order.

Few cultural tourists wish to experience the local life style by staying in the local people’s homes. To meet the demands of such tourists, “**Bed and Breakfast**” scheme

was introduced by Tourism Department in 2001-2002. The scheme derives inspiration from the words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, which goes like this. **“Receive a guest and send back a friend”**. Under this scheme, a house owner can let out a few rooms to tourists. During the stay of the tourists in his house, the tourists will be provided with accommodation and food by the house owner.

Measures Taken by the Indian Government & Private Sectors.

The Tourism Ministry launched two new campaigns to promote Indian destinations abroad. With the new campaign we have tried to take the Incredible India campaign to the next level with shifting focus from products to consumers. So far we were adopting the method of promoting India through the tourists destinations products product point of view in the world.

The campaign has been very successful so far. Now we have to change this approach and we need to focus on the tourist as consumers. As our country has diverse culture and every culture has a distinct culinary recipes the Government has come with “Incredible Tiffin” project which was recently launched by the Cuisine India Society in Delhi. As per this concept the local food are packaged and sent outside the country so that the tourists are aware of the food available in our country.

To promote the Indian culinary concept the Government likes to celebrate food weeks throughout the globe by providing tiffin boxes, food maps and also brochures, books are also distributed to the tourists. As the world wants to taste some diverge cuisines, its time for India to take this opportunity and promote the Indian cuisine, first in the Asian continent.

Indian culinary tourism means, its not only giving a taste of Indian foods, but make them to understand the cuisine and enjoy its richness and healthiness. Most tourists know French cuisine. Apart from this the tourists are having a liking to find out about the intricacies of Indian cuisine from the Indians by visiting the country. The Indian restaurants are providing a great platform for the visitors to learn and understand the Indian dishes as per the region.

The hotels in Tamil Nadu ranging from 5 star to 1 star, lodges, inns and cottages are playing a major role in promoting culinary tourism by extending a delicious

traditional food coupled with professional hospitality services for the tourists. The hotels and restaurants conduct theme lunches on the local food, decorate their restaurants as per the local culture which makes the culinary tourists to know about the culture as well as to enjoy the hospitality, recreational games and souvenir gifts which are offered to the guests.

8. Findings, Suggestions to Promote Tamil Culinary Tourism

Findings

Based on the research the Tamil Nadu food has a good taste and reach among the culinary tourists. Most of the domestic tourists are aware of Tamil food items and international tourists know very few delicacies. In general, the reasons for the moderate growth of the culinary tourism in Tamil Nadu can be categorized in the following points.

- (i) Absence of good advertisements for the quality Tamil traditional food serving hotels. Few inns and badly maintained roads and lack of professional guides and caterers are also spoil the show.
- (ii) Lack of required finance to start good traditional food joints by food entrepreneurs. In this regard this proposals and projects should be started by both public and private sectors.
- (iii) Carefree attitude of officials and unprofessional behaviour of few chefs, serviceperson in hotels and restaurants affects the culinary tourists.
- (iv) Poor marketing and publicity for the traditional food joints. Absence of sensational TV and media advertisements with creative sense.
- (v) Less attractive culinary tourism pamphlets and less inspiring quality in the content of the periodical promotional items like Brochures and pamphlets. Some of the contents of the culinary tourism hoardings are also not at all attractive and appealing to the tourists.

Suggestions

Food industry is the backbone of the tourist economy but it seldom gets the acknowledgement and recognition it deserves. This culinary sector needs a lot of encouragement and promotion to grow further. Culinary tourism is a great

method to promote a tourist spot in India as we have a variety of cuisines in each and every state.

Most tourists when they visit a tourist destination would love to frequent the local popular eatery and enjoy themselves.

The tasty food makes the guest an indelible pleasant mark in their tour.

Keeping this in mind the local food joints when planning and serving food in their menus should take proper care so that visitors will become their brand ambassadors of the cuisine. If they are satisfied they will be our repeat customers and they will advertise our cuisine to their kith and kin.

Few suggestions to develop the food tourism in Tamil Nadu are

Tamil authentic food tourism venture may be started: Proper planning to be carried out before starting this venture. Proper survey regarding this venture, discussion with culinary experts should be done for the success of this concept. New traditional Tamil food items with a twist can be started by culinary professionals.

Appreciating Food Patrons Ideas: Having a knowledge of the food patrons who come to the restaurant is very valuable. Its better to get ideas about the food to be served in the menu, their prices, preferences should be studied. Good rapport with the clientele should be kept through email, facebook and other social networking sites.

Training of Staff to Excel in Culinary Business: Trained staff can perform their duties in the utmost professional manner. As this is a food business which has great competition and it has intangible component staff have to be very careful in following the professional hospitality ethics. Training classes may be conducted to hone their cooking and serving skills. Further, theme lunches, food tasting events will make staff to be more focused.

Professional Training: Proper training to hotel and restaurant staff can help to increase the country's economy and productivity, reduce the labour costs, minimize wastages, improve customer service, develop food safety, get better security and reduce operating expenses of the restaurants.

Food Safety, Health and Environmental Factors: Restaurants which provide Tamil foods should have a

decent infrastructural facilities, toilets, proper sign boards, parking facilities and enough staff to guide the guests. Food safety precautions should be properly adhered. Health of the staff should be periodically checked by doctors. Environmental concerns like no plastic, no burning of unwanted items should be followed.

Future Initiatives: Culinary awards can be initiated by both Government and Private sectors in the following fields who serve local Tamil foods. Best authentic restaurant serving local food, best breakfast chef, best meat and fish cook, best vegetarian cook and best sweet cook.

SUGGESTIONS TO PROMOTE TAMIL DELICACIES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Simplify Tamil cuisine for the foreign connoisseurs: Tamil cuisine can be modified for foreign connoisseurs by use of fewer spices.. The Chettinad Chicken Curry from Chettinad, Madurai Meen Kozhambu, which is usually full of spices and tamarind, it can be simplified by using minimum quantities of both which is relished for foreign culinary tourists.. By doing this, the dish gets customised for the foreigners palate which they are not accustomed to high spices and sour flavours. Certain foreigners who have language issues should be taken care by proper translators. Mostly people from USA, France, UK, Australia and Middle eastern countries face the language issues.

Culinary Tourism Improves the Sustainable and Profitable Development to Tamil Nadu: Due to Tamil culinary tourism more unemployed youths will get jobs and hence the standard of living of the people will be improved. The economy will be developed due to the strengthening of culinary tourism. The culture and tradition will be sustained due to the promotion.

The Positive economic impacts of culinary tourism are as follows:

1. Contributes to the TN State Government Income.
2. Helps to enhance the local standard of living and improves the local economy.
3. Increases tax revenues, and provides the traders opportunities to sell their goods.
4. Develops employment opportunities for local citizens.
5. Generates new business prospects.

9. Conclusion

Culinary tourism in Tamil Nadu is great key to promote the tourism in the state. If proper steps taken to further promote this it would sustain development, both economic and cultural, and it can be answered only through an interdisciplinary and global approach, and in partnership with the public and private sectors, intergovernmental organizations, academics, civil society and local populations. The process of standardizing the Tamil food recipes are done in a professional manner it would definitely go a long way in developing the culinary tourism in the Tamil Nadu.

If this delectable Tamil food items are properly re-oriented towards tourism it could add flavours to tourism in Tamil Nadu in a great way.

The challenges of culinary tourism in Tamil Nadu are Lack of Managements Skills, Marketing and Limited tourism season. This challenges can be overcome by proper tourism planning. Tamil culinary recipes and Tamil culinary tourism trend is an up-and-coming, blossoming niche both in the Indian tourist market. Of course there is a brand new admiration and demand for high quality Tamil food which has a great legacy, a history, and a story, and due to this not only Tamil culinary tourists are willing to travel far and wide but also would like to learn the art of making this recipes in their country

Tamil cuisine has a great foundation in the tourism industry but it has reaped enough on its own now it is time to plan a practical strategy so that it can be made as a product which attracts several other tourist from various countries. . The Tamil culinary tourist market needs to be studied in a practical and professional way and accordingly product has to be aligned to suit the needs of the culinary tourists . The private tourism sector and tourism department may join hands and can work unitedly to improve the culinary tourist arrivals in Tamil Nadu. Due to the culinary tourism the economy of Tamil Nadu will be enhanced to a greater extent.

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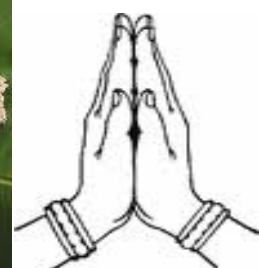
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