

Multimedia Project Dataset: Indian Cuisine

Introduction:

This document is a meticulously curated and elaborate dataset designed for a multimedia project that explores the vast, vibrant, and diverse culinary traditions of India's states and union territories. The project, titled "The Great Indian Thali," aims to take viewers on a gastronomic journey, revealing how geography, climate, history, and culture have shaped the food of each region. The data is presented in a structured format to be easily adapted for a documentary, an interactive website, a digital encyclopedia, or a book.

Section 1: North India

1. Jammu & Kashmir

- **Regional Overview:** Kashmiri cuisine is a rich tapestry of flavors influenced by the region's Mughal and Persian history. The cold climate necessitates the use of dried vegetables and the preservation of meat. The cuisine is renowned for its aromatic gravies, generous use of spices like saffron, cloves, and cardamom, and the traditional multi-course ceremonial meal called "Wazwan."
- **Signature Dish:** Rogan Josh
- **Image URLs:**
 1. **Image 1 (Plated Dish):**
<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/rogan-josh-kashmir>
 2. **Image 2 (Ingredients):**
<https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/ultimate-guide-kashmiri-red-chili>
 3. **Image 3 (Wazwan):**
<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/kashmiri-wazwan>
- **Recipe:**
 1. **Ingredients:**
 - 1 kg lamb or mutton, cut into large pieces
 - 2 tbsp mustard oil or ghee
 - 2-3 bay leaves

- 2-3 cloves
- 1-2 black cardamoms
- 1-inch cinnamon stick
- 1 cup plain yogurt, whisked
- 1 tbsp Kashmiri red chili powder
- 1 tsp ginger powder (Soonth)
- 1 tsp fennel powder (Saunf)
- 1/2 tsp asafoetida (Hing)
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed

2. Instructions:

3. Heat mustard oil in a heavy-bottomed pot until it smokes, then cool slightly. Add the whole spices (bay leaves, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom) and let them sizzle.
4. Add the meat and sear on all sides until browned.
5. Reduce the heat to low. In a bowl, mix the whisked yogurt with Kashmiri red chili powder, ginger powder, and fennel powder to form a paste.
6. Gradually add this yogurt-spice mixture to the meat, stirring continuously to prevent the yogurt from curdling.
7. Add salt and asafoetida. Mix well and cook on low heat for 10-15 minutes.
8. Add enough water to cover the meat. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat, cover, and let it simmer for 1-1.5 hours, or until the meat is tender. The oil should separate and float to the top.
9. Serve hot with steamed rice or naan.

- **Historical Context & Cultural Significance:** Rogan Josh, meaning "red stew," is one of the most famous Kashmiri dishes. Its origins are attributed to the Mughal Empire, where Persian influence brought a rich, aromatic style of cooking. The vibrant red color comes from Kashmiri chilies, which provide color without excessive heat. It is a centerpiece of the Wazwan, a multi-course meal served at weddings and special occasions. The preparation of a traditional Rogan Josh is a testament to the community's culinary heritage, often passed down through generations of "Wazas" (hereditary chefs).

2. Himachal Pradesh

- **Regional Overview:** Himachali cuisine is known for its simple yet robust flavors, with a focus on a few key ingredients. The state's food is often categorized into two main groups: the everyday, simple meals of the pahadi (hill) people and the elaborate feast known as 'Dham.'
- **Signature Dish:** Dham
- **Image URLs:**
 1. **Image 1 (Dham Thali):**
[https://x.com/atozfoodrecipes/status/1537096040653869057
?lang=en](https://x.com/atozfoodrecipes/status/1537096040653869057?lang=en)
 2. **Image 2 (Chana Madra):**
<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/chana-madra>
 3. **Image 3 (Sepu Vadi):**
<https://www.banaksha.in/post/sepu-vadi-the-must-try-himachali-dish-you-ve-been-missing>
- **Recipe (Focus on Chana Madra):**
 1. **Ingredients:**
 - 1 cup chickpeas (chana), soaked overnight
 - 1/2 cup yogurt, whisked
 - 2 tbsp ghee
 - 1-2 black cardamoms
 - 3-4 cloves
 - 1-inch cinnamon stick
 - 1 tsp turmeric powder
 - 1 tbsp coriander powder
 - 1/2 tsp red chili powder
 - Salt to taste
 2. **Instructions:**
 - Pressure cook the soaked chickpeas until they are tender.
 - In a pan, heat ghee. Add the whole spices and let them splutter.
 - Reduce heat and add turmeric, coriander, and red chili powders. Sauté for a few seconds.

- Gradually add the whisked yogurt, stirring continuously to prevent curdling. Cook until the ghee separates from the masala.
- Add the boiled chickpeas and salt. Mix well.
- Add a little water from the cooked chickpeas to get a thick gravy. Simmer for 10-15 minutes.
- Serve hot with rice.
- **Historical Context & Cultural Significance:** Dham is not just a dish but a traditional feast served at festivals, weddings, and special events. It is a unique gastronomic experience prepared by 'Botis' (a specific caste of Brahmins) who are master chefs of this cuisine. The food is cooked without onions, garlic, or tomatoes, relying on yogurt, spices, and ghee for its rich flavor. The meal is traditionally served on leaf plates and consumed while sitting on the floor, symbolizing community and shared experience. Each dish in the Dham has its own history and is passed down through generations.

Section 2: West India

1. Rajasthan

- **Regional Overview:** Rajasthani cuisine is a reflection of its arid climate and a history of warfare. The food is known for its shelf-life, as it's often made with minimal water, and its vibrant flavors, with a generous use of ghee, buttermilk, and spices. The royal kitchens of the Rajputs also contributed to a rich, meat-heavy cuisine like Laal Maas, contrasting with the predominantly vegetarian Marwari food.
- **Signature Dish: Dal Baati Churma**
- **Image URLs:**
 - **Image 1 (Full Thali):**
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/632544710159305509/>
 - **Image 2 (Baati):**
<https://itsallheartmade.com/2020/04/08/ghee-soaked-baati-homemade-baati-hard-unleavened-bread/>

- **Image 3 (Churma):**
<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/churma-popular-indian-delicacy-coarsely-ground-657158011>
- **Recipe (Simplified):**
 - **Dal:** A simple yellow lentil dal (toor or moong) tempered with ghee, cumin seeds, garlic, and red chilies.
 - **Baati:**
 - **Ingredients:** Whole wheat flour, semolina, ghee, carom seeds (ajwain), salt, and water.
 - **Instructions:** Knead a firm dough with all the ingredients. Divide into balls and bake in a traditional tandoor, oven, or air fryer until golden brown and crisp on the outside.
 - **Churma:**
 - **Ingredients:** Crushed, leftover Baati, powdered sugar or jaggery, ghee, and cardamom powder.
 - **Instructions:** Coarsely grind or crush the baked Baati. Mix with powdered sugar or jaggery, warm ghee, and cardamom powder to form a sweet, crumbly mixture.
- **Historical Context & Cultural Significance:** Dal Baati Churma is the quintessential Rajasthani meal. It originated from the need for a practical, long-lasting dish for soldiers on the go. The Baati, a simple baked dough ball, could be cooked over a fire and easily stored. The Dal provided a source of protein, and the Churma was a sweet, energy-rich component. The dish represents the resilience and resourcefulness of the Rajasthani people. The generous use of ghee is a sign of prosperity and hospitality. The meal is a social event, bringing families together to share this iconic three-in-one treat.

Section 3: East India

1. West Bengal

- **Regional Overview:** Bengali cuisine is a harmonious blend of sweet, sour, salty, and spicy. The abundance of rivers and a fertile land has made fish and rice the staples. The use of mustard oil and the five-spice blend 'Panch Phoron' are defining

characteristics. The cuisine is also famous for its elaborate desserts.

- **Signature Dish: Shorshe Ilish** (Hilsa Fish in Mustard Curry)
- **Image URLs:**
 - **Image 1 (Plated Dish):**
<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/shorshe-ilish>
 - **Image 2 (Ingredients):**
<http://piyushkirtikitchen.blogspot.com/2020/12/376.html>
 - **Image 3 (Fish Market):**
<https://www.orangewayfarer.com/photo-essay-bakultala-bazar-kolkata-cacophony-of-a-fish-market/>
- **Recipe:**
 - **Ingredients:**
 - 4-5 pieces of Hilsa fish (Ilish)
 - 3 tbsp mustard paste (from black and yellow mustard seeds)
 - 3-4 green chilies, slit
 - 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
 - 1/2 tsp nigella seeds (kalonji)
 - Salt to taste
 - 3 tbsp mustard oil
 - Water as needed
- 1. **Instructions:**
 - Make a paste by grinding mustard seeds with a green chili and a pinch of salt.
 - Rub the fish pieces with salt and turmeric powder.
 - In a pan, heat mustard oil until smoking, then let it cool slightly. Add the nigella seeds and slit green chilies.
 - Add the mustard paste and sauté for a few seconds. Do not overcook the mustard.
 - Carefully place the fish pieces in the pan. Add a little water, cover, and let it simmer for 5-7 minutes.
 - Gently flip the fish and cook for another 5 minutes, until the gravy thickens and the fish is cooked.
 - Drizzle a little raw mustard oil over the top before serving.

- **Historical Context & Cultural Significance:** Shorshe Ilish is an iconic Bengali dish and a symbol of the monsoon season when the Hilsa fish is in abundance. The Hilsa fish is not just food; it holds a special place in Bengali culture, often referred to as the "Queen of Fish." The dish's simple preparation highlights the delicate flavor of the fish itself, with the mustard and chilies providing a pungent kick. This dish is often prepared for special family gatherings and is a powerful symbol of Bengali identity. The use of mustard oil is a cultural and culinary constant, providing the signature flavor to most Bengali dishes.

Section 4: South India

1. Kerala

- **Regional Overview:** Kerala's cuisine is defined by its abundant use of coconut, spices, and the proximity to the sea. The food is a rich blend of indigenous and foreign influences, including Arab, Portuguese, and British. The use of curry leaves, mustard seeds, and coconut oil forms the base of many dishes.
- **Signature Dish: Kerala-style Prawn Roast (Chemmeen Roast)**
- **Image URLs:**
 1. **Image 1 (Plated Dish):**
<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/prawns-kerala>
 2. **Image 2 (Ingredients):**
<https://myfoodstory.com/curry-leaf-prawn/>
 3. **Image 3 (Backwaters):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-DN34Zdvo8>
- **Recipe:**
 1. **Ingredients:**
 - 500g prawns, cleaned and deveined
 - 2 tbsp coconut oil
 - 1 tsp mustard seeds
 - 1 large onion, thinly sliced
 - 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
 - 2-3 green chilies, slit
 - 1 sprig of curry leaves
 - 1 tsp turmeric powder

- 1 tbsp red chili powder
- 1 tbsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- A small piece of tamarind, soaked in water
- Salt to taste

2. Instructions:

3. Marinate the prawns with salt and a pinch of turmeric powder.
4. Heat coconut oil in a pan. Add mustard seeds and let them splutter.
5. Add curry leaves and green chilies. Sauté for a few seconds.
6. Add the sliced onions and sauté until golden brown. Then add the ginger-garlic paste and cook until the raw smell disappears.
7. Add all the remaining spice powders (turmeric, red chili, coriander, garam masala) and mix well. Add a little water to form a paste and cook until the oil separates.
8. Add the marinated prawns and the tamarind pulp. Mix well.
9. Cook on a medium-low flame, stirring occasionally, until the prawns are cooked and the gravy has coated them well. The dish should have a "roast" consistency, not too liquid.

- **Historical Context & Cultural Significance:** Kerala, as a historic center for the spice trade, has a cuisine heavily influenced by this past. The use of coconut, both in oil and milk, is a result of the state's tropical climate. The Prawn Roast is a testament to the coastal lifestyle and the Moplah (Muslim) community's culinary traditions, which incorporated Arab and Persian flavors into the local food. The dish is a perfect example of the state's balanced flavors—spicy, tangy, and a touch of sweetness from the coconut, all coming together in a satisfying meal.

Section 5: Northeast India

1. Nagaland

- **Regional Overview:** Naga cuisine is known for its simplicity, use of fermentation, and emphasis on local, foraged ingredients. The food is less oily than other Indian cuisines, with a focus on boiling,

smoking, and fermenting. The use of smoked pork, bamboo shoots, and a variety of chilies is common.

- **Signature Dish: Smoked Pork with Axone** (Fermented Soybean)
- **Image URLs:**

1. **Image 1 (Plated Dish):**

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=972827101527807&id=100064015774524&set=a.365506435593213>

2. **Image 2 (Ingredients):** [suspicious link removed]

3. **Image 3 (Naga Market):**

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/316096467579680589/>

- **Recipe (Simplified):**

1. **Ingredients:**

- 500g smoked pork, cut into cubes
- 1-2 tbsp Axone paste (fermented soybean)
- 2-3 Naga king chilies (or any hot green chilies), sliced
- 1-inch ginger, sliced
- Salt to taste
- Water as needed

2. **Instructions:**

3. In a pot, add the smoked pork pieces and enough water to cover them.
4. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer until the pork is tender.
5. Add the Axone paste, sliced ginger, and king chilies. Mix well.
6. Continue to simmer for another 15-20 minutes, allowing the flavors to meld. The gravy should be thick.
7. Adjust salt and serve hot with steamed rice.

- **Historical Context & Cultural Significance:** Naga cuisine is a product of its mountainous geography and a culture that relies on traditional methods of food preservation. Smoking meat, particularly pork, is a centuries-old practice to ensure a food supply through the year. Axone (pronounced 'a-kho-ni') is a staple, providing a unique umami flavor and a pungent aroma. This dish is not just a meal but a window into the Naga way of life, where food is often prepared for community gatherings and celebrated for its raw, natural flavors.

This is a comprehensive start. To make it truly exhaustive, you would continue this detailed format for every state and union territory, including:

- **Andhra Pradesh:** Pulihora (Tamarind Rice)
- **Arunachal Pradesh:** Thukpa (Noodle Soup)
- **Assam:** Masor Tenga (Sour Fish Curry)
- **Bihar:** Litti Chokha
- **Chhattisgarh:** Muthia (Rice Dumplings)
- **Goa:** Goan Fish Curry (Xitti Kodi)
- **Gujarat:** Dhokla
- **Haryana:** Bajra Khichdi
- **Jharkhand:** Dhuska
- **Karnataka:** Bisi Bele Bath
- **Madhya Pradesh:** Bhutte Ka Kees (Corn Dish)
- **Maharashtra:** Vada Pav
- **Manipur:** Eromba (Fermented Fish and Vegetable Mash)
- **Meghalaya:** Jadoh (Pork and Rice)
- **Mizoram:** Misa Mach Poora (Grilled Prawns)
- **Odisha:** Chhena Poda (Baked Cheese Dessert)
- **Punjab:** Makki di Roti and Sarson da Saag
- **Sikkim:** Momos and Thukpa
- **Tamil Nadu:** Pongal
- **Telangana:** Hyderabadi Biryani
- **Tripura:** Chakhwi (Pork and Bamboo Shoots)
- **Uttarakhand:** Kafuli (Spinach and Fenugreek Curry)
- **Uttar Pradesh:** Tunde Ke Kebab
- **Andaman & Nicobar Islands:** Seafood Curry
- **Chandigarh:** Butter Chicken
- **Delhi:** Chole Bhature
- **Lakshadweep:** Octopus Fry
- **Puducherry:** Kadugu Yerra (Prawn Curry)