

WHAT IF?



A woman in a red satin dress with a large green apple head. The apple has a human eye and lips. A white arrow points from the word 'APPLE!?' to the apple head.

Try, Myths &
Everything
Nice!

Unraveling the
mysteries of food
taboos

UNREAL!?

Food Myths,
Crazy
Experiments &
Mind-Boggling
What Ifs!

Discover
the surprising
effects of everyday
ingredients!

DRESS!?

Twisted Food Combos
That Actually Work!

Chocolate dosa,
ice cream samosa
—love or disaster

EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello, dear readers!

I'm Sanika Deshpande, and I'm thrilled to introduce you to The What If? Series—a magazine that doesn't just talk about food but questions it. This isn't your typical food magazine filled with recipes and restaurant reviews. Instead, it explores the "What If" questions surrounding food—those quirky, cultural, and sometimes mind-boggling thoughts we've all had.

Food is more than just sustenance; it's deeply woven into culture, traditions, myths, and everyday experiences. Have you ever wondered, What if India didn't have spices? or What if food ads showed what the food really looks like? Or maybe you've questioned those age-old food beliefs like What if eating curd before an exam actually made you smarter? This magazine is designed to spark curiosity, challenge assumptions, and make you think differently about the food we eat.

This issue takes you through different sections, from the legendary flavors of India to bizarre street food experiments, food superstitions, and even the fantasy sold to us through food ads. It's meant for food lovers, deep thinkers, and anyone who enjoys a good "What If?" conversation over chai or coffee. Through interviews, fun facts, and engaging articles, we aim to create a magazine that is both thought-provoking and entertaining—a perfect coffee-table read.

So, flip through these pages, dive into the wild world of food "What Ifs," and let your curiosity take over. After all, the best conversations start with a question!

Happy reading!
Sanika Deshpande
Editor, The What If? Series





WHAT IF FOOD WASN'T
JUST ABOUT
EATING,
BUT ABOUT QUESTIONING?





06

What if Milk and Fish
really made you sick?

08

What if India didn't have
spices?

16

What if you ate like a
king everyday?

12

What if Food Ads
showed the real thing?

18

What if we could eat
food during an eclipse?

14

What if eating curd
before an exam made
you smarter?

20

What if you ate like a king
everyday?

22

What if we could eat food
during an eclipse?

What If Milk & Fish Really Made You Sick?

Imagine this: you eat fish, sip milk, and—boom!—you wake up covered in spots. Sounds like a comic book plot, right? The belief that fish and milk together cause skin diseases, like vitiligo, is more myth than fact.

This comes from Ayurveda, which suggests that mixing “heaty” fish with “cooling” milk creates an imbalance. However, modern science has found no evidence that this combo harms your health. At most, if you’re lactose intolerant or allergic to seafood, your stomach might stage a mild protest.

In reality, many cuisines mix fish and dairy - creamy seafood soups, yogurt-marinated fish, and even fish tacos with sour cream. If this were truly toxic, wouldn’t half the world be in trouble?

Unless you’re aiming for a surprise leopard-print makeover, enjoy your fish and milk worry-free.







What If India Didn't Have Spices?

Imagine a world where India's culinary landscape is as exciting as unseasoned oatmeal. No garam masala, no turmeric—just a monotonous parade of bland dishes. Without its vibrant spices, India's rich gastronomic heritage would be reduced to a flavorless existence, and global cuisine would lose a significant source of its zest.

Historically, India's relationship with spices is nothing short of legendary. For over 4,000 years, the subcontinent has been a hub for cultivating and trading coveted spices like black pepper, cardamom, and cinnamon. These aromatic treasures didn't just enhance local dishes; they embarked on epic journeys along ancient trade routes, infusing their essence into kitchens worldwide.

The allure of Indian spices was so potent that it sparked fierce rivalries among European powers.

Nations vied for control over these prized commodities, leading to the establishment of new trade routes and even the colonization of distant lands. This global spice race not only altered economic landscapes but also wove Indian flavors into the fabric of international cuisines.

Without India's spice legacy, beloved dishes around the globe would face an identity crisis. Southeast Asian specialties, influenced by Indian culinary traditions, would lose their characteristic warmth and depth.

In essence, a world without India's spices would be like a song without melody—a fundamental element missing, leaving a void in both taste and cultural richness. So, let's raise a toast (with a dash of cinnamon) to India's enduring spice legacy, which continues to make our meals and lives infinitely more flavorful.

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Unreal cooked food in ads looks flawless—perfectly grilled, steaming hot, and mouthwatering. But in reality? Fake steam, oil-coated veggies, and half-cooked meat. A delicious illusion that tricks our eyes, not our taste buds!



Unreal cakes are picture-perfect but often inedible, built with foam, cardboard, and fake icing—great for photos, sad for taste!





Unreal food looks mouthwatering in ads—glossy burgers, perfect pizzas, and towering cakes. But behind the scenes? Glue for milk, mashed potatoes for ice cream, and fake steam.

What If Food Ads Showed the Real Thing?

Imagine watching a burger ad where the bun isn't fluffy but squished, the lettuce is limp, and the patty looks like it survived a rough day. No slow-motion cheese pull, no perfectly drizzled sauce—just the sad reality we often unwrap. The truth? Food styling is an art of illusion. That picture-perfect burger? It's held together with toothpicks, coated in glycerin for shine, and sometimes even painted. Those juicy grilled marks? Drawn with a branding iron. And that scoop of ice cream? It's probably mashed potatoes, because real ice cream melts too fast under studio lights!

If food ads showed reality, our expectations would adjust, but our cravings might not survive. Lawsuits against misleading advertising would skyrocket, and the magic of food commercials would vanish. But would that make us happier? Probably not. After all, we love the fantasy of the “perfect bite.” So while we continue falling for glossy, drool-worthy ads, deep down, we know—real food never looks that flawless. But hey, hope (and hunger) keeps us ordering!







Sweetened
Curd!

What If Eating Curd Before an Exam Made You Smarter?

Imagine if acing exams were as simple as indulging in a spoonful of curd mixed with sugar!

In India, this delightful duo isn't just a treat; it's a time-honored tradition believed to usher in good luck and sharpen the mind before important events. But does this ritual have any scientific merit, or is it just a sweet superstition?

Curd, rich in probiotics, aids digestion and promotes gut health. When combined with sugar, it provides a quick energy boost, thanks to the glucose content. This combination is thought to cool the body and calm the mind, potentially reducing stress—a handy benefit before facing an exam.

While there's no direct evidence that this practice enhances cognitive function, the comfort and energy it offers might help soothe pre-exam jitters. So, while curd and sugar might not transform you into a genius overnight, they could make your exam day a bit sweeter and more relaxed.



what if
you ate

like a
King
everyday?





Imagine dining like a maharaja daily—your table over owing with rich biryanis, succulent kebabs, and creamy kormas! While your taste buds embark on a royal adventure, your waistline might stage a rebellion, and your cholesterol levels could request a cease re. Historically, Indian royal feasts were grand affairs, showcasing culinary artistry and opulence. These extravagant meals featured a plethora of dishes, each more indulgent than the last. However, such indulgence was balanced with an active lifestyle, including hunting and physical training. Today, while savoring a royal thali—a platter brimming with diverse delicacies—is a delightful occasional treat, making it a daily habit might transform you into culinary royalty, but with the added burden of modern health woes. So, perhaps reserve the royal feasting for special occasions, allowing both your palate and health to remain in harmonious accord.





What If We Could Eat Food During an Eclipse?

Imagine if every time the moon decided to play hide and seek with the sun, your kitchen went into lockdown mode. In many cultures, especially in India, it's a long-held belief that eating during an eclipse is a cosmic no-no. Ancient scriptures suggest that food cooked during an eclipse becomes impure, leading to various ailments.

The rationale behind this superstition varies. Some say that during an eclipse, harmful rays contaminate food, making it unsafe to consume. Others believe that the absence of sunlight during an eclipse promotes bacterial growth, rendering food unfit.

However, modern science assures us that an eclipse doesn't possess the culinary sabotage skills of a mischievous poltergeist.

The sun's rays don't suddenly turn toxic, and your sandwich remains as wholesome as it was pre-eclipse. In fact, astronomers and rationalists have gone to great lengths to debunk this myth. The Astronomical Society of India has actively encouraged people to eat during eclipses to dispel unfounded fears. Similarly, rationalist groups have organized public feasts during eclipses, featuring dishes like biryani, to challenge these age-old beliefs.

So, if you find yourself peckish during an eclipse, feel free to indulge. Your digestive system won't stage a rebellion, and the cosmos won't hold it against you. After all, the only thing you should be worried about during an eclipse is finding your eclipse glasses, not an empty stomach.



What If They Didn't Glamorize Food?

Imagine a Bollywood where food is merely sustenance, devoid of the glamour and allure that has tantalized audiences for decades. Gone would be the seductive biryani scenes and the iconic chai breaks that have become cinematic staples. Without the gastronomic charm, our films might lose a significant flavor, both literally and metaphorically.

Bollywood has a rich history of intertwining food with storytelling, using it as a medium to convey emotions, culture, and even product placements. Consider the mouth-watering sequences in "Daawat-e-Ishq," where the sumptuous dishes almost overshadow the plot. The film's portrayal of Hyderabadi cuisine is so vivid that audiences can almost smell the spices wafting through the screen. Such scenes not only serve to advance the narrative but also leave viewers craving the depicted delicacies.

Product placement in Bollywood has seamlessly integrated food and beverages into its narratives. For instance, "Phir Hera Pheri" features a memorable scene where the characters indulge in Domino's Pizza, blending humor with brand visibility. Similarly, "Taal" incorporates Coca-Cola into its romantic sequences, adding a refreshing twist to traditional courtship.

Perfectly
Decorated
→



However, if Bollywood were to strip away this glamorization, the impact would be multifaceted. The sensory appeal of films would diminish. Food scenes engage multiple senses, creating a visceral connection between the audience and the narrative. Without them, movies might feel less immersive.

Moreover, food in Bollywood often serves as a cultural bridge, introducing audiences to diverse cuisines and traditions. The absence of such depictions could lead to a homogenized portrayal of Indian culture, depriving viewers of the rich tapestry that regional cuisines offer.

The inclusion of food elevates the experience, adding depth and relatability. A Bollywood devoid of its culinary charm would be like a bland curry—nutritious but lacking zest. So, here's to the biryani seductions and chai breaks that continue to spice up our cinematic journeys.

✓ Perfectly
Baked



NEVER MI



What if Chocolae was fused with Dosa?

Chocolate dosa—when crispy South Indian tradition collides with a sugar rush! Imagine a dosa slathered with gooey chocolate, sometimes topped with nuts or sprinkles. Innovation or dosa betrayal? While dessert lovers rejoice, purists cringe. Would you take a bite or stage a protest with a bowl of sambar?

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In the bustling streets of India, culinary creativity knows no bounds. Street vendors are blending traditional flavors with global inspirations, leading to fusion dishes that range from delightful to downright dubious. Take, for instance, the "Chinese Bhel," a Mumbai favorite that tosses crispy fried noodles with raw cabbage and a medley of spicy sauces—a harmonious blend of textures and tastes.



ND



**WHAT
IF CHAI
WASN'T A
NATIONAL
OBSESSION?**



THE JOURNEY OF TEA FROM CHINA TO INDIAN STREETS

Imagine an India where chai never became the lifeblood of daily life. No tiny cutting chai glasses clinking at roadside tapris, no evening tea breaks turning into deep philosophical debates, and no Bollywood heroes dramatically sipping chai in the rain. Sounds horrifying, doesn't it? While tea originated in China, the British East India Company commercialized it in India in the 19th century to break China's monopoly. At first, Indians were indifferent—tea was considered an elite drink.

But then, the magic happened. Street vendors added spices like ginger, cardamom, and cloves, transforming British-style tea into the soul-warming masala chai we love today. It went from a colonial commodity to an everyday necessity, enjoyed by rickshaw pullers and CEOs alike.

Now, picture a chai-less India. Maybe filter coffee would have taken over, making South Indian coffee culture the norm nationwide. Perhaps lassi or nimbu pani would be our go-to refreshment. But would they carry the same comforting warmth as a hot cup of chai on a cold morning? Without chai, India's economy would shift—millions of tea vendors, plantation workers, and chaiwallahs would lose their livelihoods. Even Bollywood would suffer—what's a monsoon romance without chai?

Chai isn't just a drink; it's a ritual, a culture, and an emotion. A world without chai is a world we're not ready for. So the next time you sip your chai, remember—you're indulging in a tradition that shaped a nation, one cup at a time!

What if we had only one cuisine?

If India had only one cuisine, food lovers would revolt! No biryani, no dosas, no chaats—just the same dish daily. Diversity makes Indian food magical; monotony would be a tragedy!

India's flavors unite its soul—one cuisine would dull its spirit!

Festivals would lack their delicious feasts, street food would disappear, and family dinners would be dull. India's rich culinary heritage is what makes it vibrant; without it, we'd be left with a tasteless reality! No buttery parathas in Punjab, no spicy vada pav in Mumbai, no tangy rasam in the South—just the same dish, every day.



What If You
Invented The Next

Yum!

Tasty!

WHAT IF 'GHAR KA KHANA' WAS THE ULTIMATE LUXURY—A MICHELIN-STARRIED EXPERIENCE, A BOLLYWOOD DREAM, AND THE ONLY MEAL YOU COULD EAT FOREVER? SEND YOUR ANSWERS!

Coming up next: More food myths, pop culture bites, and wild 'What Ifs' to challenge everything you thought about food!

