

HOSPITALITY TRAVEL

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FUSION COOKING

LEARN THE ART OF FUSION COOKING
FROM THE CELEBRITY MASTER CHEF
KAVIRAJ KHIALANI.

HUITLACOCHE

WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS SOFT,
SPREADABLE AND DARK-AS-NIGHT
INGREDIENT?

DHAM

EXCLUSIVE ARTICLE ON THE FOOD OF
GODS : DHAM

CONTINUED...

THE SUMMER ISSUE!



MR. RUDRA SONI.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - HOSPITALITY
CONNESAUR.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DESK

“

BETTER PRESENT
BRINGS
BETTER FUTURE

DEAR READER,

The Growth in the Hospitality Industry depends on your **Learning Capabilities, Your Experience and Your Attitude** towards The Growth!

Simply here I am trying to say... In terms to grow in the Hotel Industry, You have to **get rid of bad experiences of past** by only keeping the learning, **working the best in the present** and The clear vision of **what you need to accomplish in the future**, which is can put you on the certain level of your professional life.

If you are willing to have a better future than there is no need of keep thinking about the future, rather you should start working with the best possible manner in the present which will eventually create a better future!

So the best thing would be... Change your attitude today, Leave the bad experiences of past, keep up with learning, grow in your professional life and consciously create such an environment for the people who are working under you, so that they don't have to go through such bad experiences like yours, and apart from that they can simply put their selves on the path of growth under the guidance of such a **change maker like you!**

Simply It's all about "**Better Present brings Better Future**", Not just for you but for everyone!



**MR. MANVENDRA SINGH
GOHIL**

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT -
HOSPITALITY CONNAISSEUR

“

HOW IS COURTEOUS IMPORTANT IN HOSPITALITY?

DEAR READER,

Well, **Courteous is the positive gesture** of a hospitality personnel which makes the guest **comfortable**, as well as **delightful** in a Hospitality Establishment.

Courtesy is the result of continuous improvements through a well rehearsed knowledge based **learning**, along with the **human relationship** skills in an appropriate way.

The basic human gesture is Courteous, which is an utmost important factor in hospitality service, which is also rewarded as well as required at all levels in a hospitality establishment.

A personnel doesn't need to be Santa Claus to be Courteous, all one need is the **art of listening** along with the **eagerness to create a positive impact** on the guest's memory.

A well served, or sufficiently satisfied guest is undoubtedly a valuable asset, which not only upraises the revenue, while also does loyal branding raising of the hospitality establishment.

So, every hospitality personnel must be Courteous, and humble as everyone likes the same gesture in return as they are serving!

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Mrs. Kumudini Soni.

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TRAVELOPEDIA

"MONGOLIA"

**AN ANCIENT COUNTRY STRETCHING BETWEEN
HETEROGENEOUS CLIMATE.**

Official Name: Mongolia.

Location: East West Asia.

Total Area: 1.566 million km²

Total Population: 3.2 million.

Capital City: Ulaanbaatar.

Famous Cities: Darkhan, Erdenet, Murun & Khovd.

Official Language: Mongolian.

Religion: Buddhism.

PREVIEW



The summers here are short and **winter** is terribly long and the average rainfall is only about 20 inches.

“

The Mongolian people know how to live amidst such challenges of nature.

Mongolia is an ancient country. Its borders are bounded by **Russia** in the north and **China** in the south east and west. The newly formed **Kazakhstan country** is only 24 miles from the western end of Mongolia. **Mongolia's Upper Flat region is a large area located in Central Asia.**

Both **Inner Mongolia** occupied by China and **Independent Mongolia**, are home to the vast plains of **Gobi desert** and steppe grass. Its height ranges from 900 to 1500 meters. The majority of Mongolia is **flat** and **desert**, with a very low population. Here is chilled atmosphere and frosty breeze that blows through the winter. The region also recorded a temperature of **-40 degrees Celsius**. As the capital city of Ulaanbaatar has an average annual temperature of 0 degree and it is **considered to be the coldest capital in the world**.



HISTORY

Mongolia has been under the rule of Xiongnu, Xianbei, Rouran and some other kingdoms in ancient times. The Mongol Empire was founded in 1206 by **Genghis Khan**. Before this, the Mongol tribe living in Central Asia and in East Asia as lost and wandered.

Genghis Khan instilled goodwill spirit for working together in skillful tribes of hunting, archery and horseback riding. Mongolia is known to be influenced by Tibet's Buddhism in the 16th and 17th centuries. By the end of the 17th century, the **King Dynasty** was ruling on the most parts of Mongolia. With the fall of the King Dynasty in 1911, the country was spontaneously liberated. But they had to struggle until 1945 to gain international recognition.

Under the influence of **Russia**, Mongolian People's of Revolution; Party continued unilateral communist rule until 1990. Russia's own collapse and the Communist regime of Eastern Europe in 1989 also resulted in a **quiet & successful revolution** against Communist rule in Mongolia.

In 1992, the implementation of a multilateral governance system brought reforms in the constitution of Mongolia.

ECONOMY

After the liberation of the communist regime, **economic liberalization** was introduced into the country and The government was also working hard to get the benefit to the poor. *35 to 40 percent of the population lives in the old fashioned lifestyle. More than 50 percent of people have a daily income of just \$ 1 to \$ 1.50.* Since the climate here is not conducive to agriculture the Animals like horses, camels, cows, oxen and sheep are the true property of the country. As the spring water is found in the valleys of the northern part, The crops like **wheat, barley** and **vegetables** can be grown.

The country has coal, iron, copper, lead, gold and silver mines. The eyes of many countries around the world have fallen on its mines and the Chinese, Russian, Canadian, etc., have become a giant in the mining business. **About 3000 mining licenses** have been issued and Mongolia accounts for 80 percent of its export minerals. In terms of market capitalization, **Ulaanbaatar is the smallest stock exchange in the world.**



THIS IS M
THE LAND OF NATURE,
AND MOST IMPORTA
AGAINST A

CUISINE

'Airag' (*fermented - mare's milk*) is a traditional drink of Mongolian people. Which is made from the milk of the mare. It is stored in leather or plastic containers to make it freeze as it produces acetic and alcoholic support due to its chemical process. **In a long winter's deadly cold, The fat-rich and protein-rich Airag brings heat to the Body.**

Mongolians are also known for their Hospitality. Entering as a guest in Mongolian tents means, as we serve Tea here, similarly this beverage '**Airga**' is served there. If you do not want to drink this, it is customary to return with a slight touch at lip or throw a dipped finger to the sky.

Mongolians use Cheese, Steamed milk and Yogurt, freely in everyday meal. You can also see snakes moving around in traditional Mongolian homes. From May to September, the weather is warm. **There is a rule to hold or eat food with the Right hand only** and they won't mind if you just take help of your left hand for the preparation. Mongolians also drink sweet tea.

The use of meat from horses, camels, sheep and goats is quite common. As meat is eaten daily, it can also be eaten by boiling. **Meat is made delicious when there is a special occasion.** Russia also seems to have little influence in Mongolian cooking. Especially wealthy people are fond of Russian vodka.

CUSTOMS

'Naadam' is the main festival of Mongolia, which is celebrated for centuries. In which **archery, horseback riding** and **wrestling** are played.

In celebration of the middle of the summer, the girls also participate in archery and horseback riding. But men are only allowed take part in Mongolian wrestling. Revolving and tough people live with specific traditions from generation to generation. The door to the house in Mongolia is on the south side. On the north side are engraved images of God and family photos.

On the west side, the man, who is considered to be the head of the house, resides. A drink made from mare milk is placed here on a wooden stand. Well, On the east side there is the kitchen system for women. Primus or stove smoke is passed through the rooftop generally.

Men and Women wear long gowns here. The gown has a strap to the left of the button. Men also wrap scarf made from wool around the waist. Believers go to the local Buddhist temple and pray. New Year's start means new clothes and celebration.

Mongolia believes in preserving its ancestral heritage and its traditions. It is very common to have a family chart. After 1925 the Communist government banned the keeping of tribal and family documents. **After 1996, the records of the tribe's name, father's name, etc. are considered official documents.**

ONGOLIA.
, BELIEF, HOSPITALITY
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WHY GROOMING IS VERY IMPORTANT IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY?



“

The Hotel Industry and Hotel Business is always considered as The Show Business. Things should be **eye appealing**. No matter if it's just hotel rooms, a dish or an entire building!

The Hotel Staff are simply the representatives of the entire organization and that is why their Grooming and looks are very important in the Hotel Industry.

So if you have wondered Why Grooming and looks is very important in the Hotel Industry? The only reason is How you look, dress & present yourself **speaks volumes about your approach towards the guests**. It is important to understand, that no matter what your job role is, you're the face of your organization! The act of grooming is to make yourself

and, as an extension of the organization presentable.

Furthermore... While we may all know not to judge a book by its cover, there are a few instances where **presentation really does matter**. In the hotel industry, polished presentation is vital to success. Everything about your property will be evaluated through photographs and reviews before a guest even decides to purchase a room!

If your rooms look out of date, your lobby is dirty or your restaurant looks cramped, Guests will make **an initial judgment about your property that will not be in your favor!** The same applies to the **hotel staff** too. They must look **professional** and **presentable** because they are an integral part of the property.

Now, **Being hospitality professional is a challenge** as grooming in hotel industry is an essential skill one needs to hone. **The importance of grooming in hospitality industry lies in the fact that it is more than a profession; it is a lifestyle that requires personality, charm, enthusiasm, a caring attitude and pride.** It is a demanding job that requires not only skills but also a personal commitment as a lifestyle change.

The elements of image excellence do not stop at clothing and grooming in the hotel industry. A **positive first impression** goes beyond how we look (*appearance*) and what we do (*body language*) to the way we communicate and serve others.

Therefore, regardless of your position in the organization whether you serve guests directly or serve those who serve the guests, you are in the business of customer satisfaction.

The importance of grooming in hospitality industry cannot be ignored. Hence, making the first impression the nest and lasting impression will assure the excellence that you and your company promise and provide.

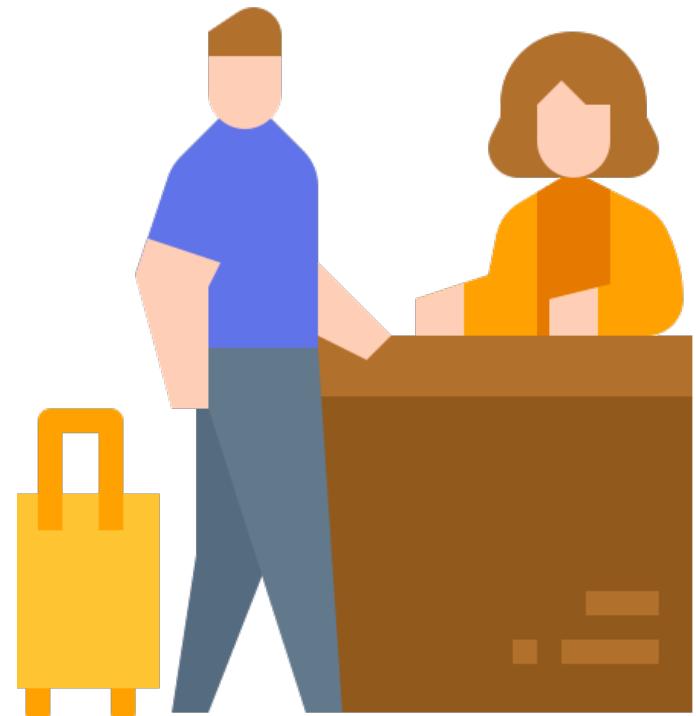
At the End of the day, More than your grooming, The Commitment you have made to yourself matters the most. **More Power to Hoteliers!**

Here's a list of "**Top Traits**", You will be needing to be successful in any human relationship, or work or specifically in the Hospitality Industry!

- A keen **interest in people**, with polite and courteous nature.
- A **warm personality** and smart appearance.
- A desire to be helpful, but also **diplomatic** and **tactful**.
- Poise under pressure, keeping his cool and **problem solver**.
- The **ability to listen**, a hard worker and punctual.
- A **willingness to reflect** management policy and brand ethics.
- Should be able to make **quick decisions** and The ability to get along with co-workers.
- A pleasant approach and a **good motivator** and coordinator.
- A desire to be liked, with **good public-relation qualities**.

- Neat personal **habits**.
- The ability to **help another employee** without resenting it or showing imitation.
- Front Office Aspirant should also be **confident, analytical, intelligent** and **a good sales person**.
- Impressive **Memory**.
- Knowledge of **languages** and **accounting**.
- Front Office Aspirant should also be an **Image Builder**.

So, That was the brief overview of why Grooming is very important in the Hospitality Industry, along with some key points on Top Traits, you needed to develop in youself in terms to be a winning candidate of the Hotel Industry! Cheers!



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ART OF FUSION COOKING.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASIC FUNDAMENTALS...
TO FUSE & NOT CONFUSE!



DR. KAVIRAJ KHALANI.

Guest Contributor - Hospitality Connaisseur
Celebrity Master Chef.

Dr. Kaviraj Khialani – celebrity master chef is a Mumbai based culinary- hospitality- health & lifestyle consultant. Besides having specialised in over 33 international cuisines he has also received several national & global awards of excellence for his untiring dedication and service to the food & hospitality industry. Chef kaviraj is also a renowned author, writer, food designer, academician and has featured his recipes and food related articles in over 25 publications worldwide.

“

It seems and appears really fascinating these days when a lot many of us start to feel and realise that cooking is fun at times and we can try to use our minds and ideas to dish out new concepts, variations and flavours onto our plates and invite loads of compliments! Sounds good indeed but the real practical approach towards just mixing things together doesn't always really work.

Well, **Experience** and **understanding your ingredients**, your passion to bring out the complimenting concoctions do need to find their perfect equations into that dish before it gets plated and appeal to the eyes of its truly deserving connaisseur.

I came across this word "**Fusion**" since almost two decades now where people from home cooks to the aspiring to be chefs and a few foodies shared thoughts and ideas where for some it happened by accident and for some it turned out to be disasters as well for the first time.

It's a mixed bag of emotions and experiences which people speak about when it comes to something new! There is a segment of the foodie market which is not at all able to digest and accept this trend while some percentage goes for it feel the change concept and to some the mere concept of it only is quite mesmerising.

Let us try and understand this concept in a little more detail...



WHAT DOES FUSION MEAN?

The concept of Fusion refers to combination of flavors, aromas to gel them up well to create something variant and new in order to appeal and excite our senses and create a new experience of eating and enjoying the open mindedness of the person working on with his experience and creativity.

HOW DID THIS CONCEPT OF FUSION START UP?

The concept of fusion is not new to us and it has been around since a few decades now it is believed that most parts of Asia and Europe started with this idea of doing something out of the box in order to have the guests try new touch with their routine cuisines also presenting a little bit of cross culture affiliations and inclusions into the dish.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW BEFORE GETTING INTO FUSION CONCEPTS?

- **Knowing your Basics of Cooking** : I usually relate this with a very simple example like not knowing how to make a cup of tea and planning to pour out an herbal infusion based innovative cuppa full of confusions.
- **Need to Learn the ABC** : to me Fusion has been ever exciting since many years and it refer it to as **A-Articulate, B-Believe, C-Compile**: This simply means that we need to first chalk out the base cuisine, which we want to work on, be sure on what changes/alterations are to be made on it and finally take notes on the same and then develop the recipe.
- **Follow an E – T – C Model** : **E- Experiment, T- Taste, C –Change** : These are of course the terms and codes designed by myself over the years as I worked on this trend and it made it easy for me to share it with budding chefs on how to relate to it. So firstly, we need to be able to put those compiled ideas into a practical lab/kitchen set up & work on it to make it come out the way we wanted it to... **for example...** if I want to try a fusion recipe like a **Tex-Mex Stuffed Olive and Cheesy Makhana Koftas in Makhani Gravy** using sun-dried tomatoes and fenugreek soil, I need to make sure I do it step by step understanding the changes being made from the basic recipe to this new modified

Italian & Mexican fused flavors into my gravy & koftas. While doing this I will be taking note of all the changes and alterations happening in the saucepan and hopefully expect it to work with my final recipe. Once the dish is ready, I will plate it, garnish it as per my thoughts and check for **Reality Vs Plan**.

- *Once I have done the comparison I will look for any improvements if needed and make the necessary changes and re-schedule my trials.*
- **Get a C –C – C Evaluation done for your dish** : C - **Checking for taste, C - Confirming on flavors, C - Critical improvements if any.**
- This really works a lot since I still remember the first time I made a recipe with a fusion concept and upon doing a blind fold tasting with it, the results were surprisingly **90 % YES** and a **10 % NO**. what mattered more to me was **the element of NO and the critical feedback is very important** before we decide to finalise the dish to feature on our menu card of our restaurant.
- *I agree all of us have varied choice of tastes and flavors with foods but what ultimately matters are how successful it can be when it goes to the guest table and the feedback form/comments/its social media posting and coverage also needs to be thought about.*



- **S.O.P. your Fusion Concept :** referring to a commonly used term here called **Standard Operating Procedure**, which makes you maintain your recipe from start to end process, and also shows stability and continued quality on the plate whenever it is being prepared and served. Once you have achieved your final plan as per reality check, it becomes imperative to have the futuristic approach model ready for the same by documenting it with the revised **final recipe plan, method, garnish and plating design**, take photographs of your finished dish, also note on portion size as well how many gms, ml etc... will be served per portion and of course it will lead to the costing of the dish in order to fix up its selling price if being used for a commercial purpose!!

WHICH ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON CUISINES ONE CAN TRY FOR FUSION COMBINATIONS AND WHICH OF THEM USUALLY WORK WELL?

The varieties of cuisines are as long as we can imagine them to be, from the very basic like Indian cuisine, French cooking, Italian cooking, Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, English, American, Spanish, Filipino, Indonesian, Sri-Lankan and more! I started with Indian cooking and worked on it and my first ever recipe with fusion was a Dal-Khichdi, the wonder comfort food!



FUSION DAL-KHICHDHI

It was fun and a great experience working fusion with a dal rice combo with international flavors and watching it picking up well in the pan leaves back wonderful memories to cherish!

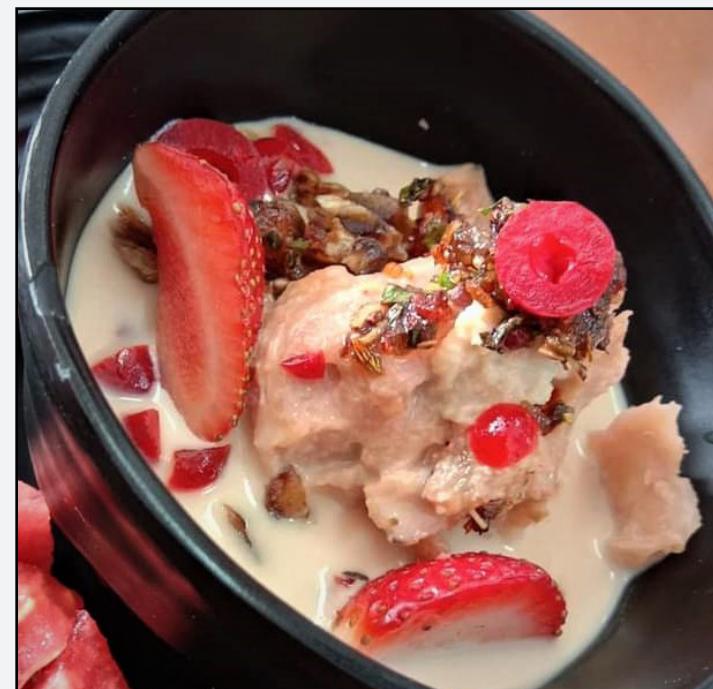
For Instance : Trying a Indo – Mexican Fusion Dal Khichdi having the lentils and rice soaked, cooked up, lightly mashed and tempered with garlic, herbs, peri-peri spice, tomato salsa, olives to top garnished with curry leaf and pepper dust, served with Aamchuri Avocado raita relish and Sprout – Cabbage salad with desi Achari dressing!



FUSION DAL-KHICHDHI

Another example... which I feel like sharing with fusion is with desserts which most of us are fond of and love trying something new once in a while.

Desh- Videsh ki Mithaas : a fusion dessert with a combination of our desi rabdi being infused with cinnamon, blueberry and rose petal salsa layered with walnut brownie soil/crumble, stewed dragon fruit, topped with mini betel leaf samosa with a stuffing of Kiwi Gulkhand and Coconut –Cashew Praline.



FUSION : DESH VIDESH KI MITHAAS DESSERT

SOME OF MY TRIED AND TESTED IDEAS WITH FUSION RECIPES

“

- Indo-Italian- Spanish Fusion Pasta Dum Biryani :** Choice of pasta, bell peppers, mildly spiced cooked soy chunks or mini meat balls in kadai masala, birishta, saffron cream veloute sauce, slivered almonds / pistachios, black and green olives rose water, fresh herbs like basil, coriander, grated cheese all layered up in a pot, sealed, given dum and served piping hot!



- Indo- Filipino Mini Chicken Tortas [mini cutlets] :** These are originally non-spicy made with pork mince, here I made it with chicken mince, onions, potatoes, garlic, oil cooked up together, spiced up with garam masala powder, crushed peppercorns, coriander, green chili, mixed herbs, chili flakes. Adding egg into the mixture and little grated cheese, they are spooned out into a pan with oil and shallow fried, golden browned and enjoyed with tomato ketchup but for now I did a pesto- peanut- coriander chutney to go with this fusion.
- Indo- Italian- American Fusion :** Western Lasagne Florentine Delight: in this concept we have two options For the pasta sheets, **1.** We can use variety of flours and flavors, natural colors as well to make it different for example a chili tomato paste into a soy- whole wheat dough. **2.** We can also use leftover chapattis, theplas as well being fusion.

- Indo- Italian- American Fusion :** Western Lasagne Florentine Delight : in this concept we have two options For the pasta sheets, **1.** We can use variety of flours and flavors, natural colors as well to make it different for example a chili tomato paste into a soy- whole wheat dough. **2.** We can also use leftover chapattis, theplas as well being fusion.
- For the fillings/layers for the lasagne we have multiple options as well in Fusion :** **1.** Assorted vegetable fillings-peas-potato subzi, stir fried veggies, Aloo Gobi, kadai mix veg, paneer bhurji etc. **2.** For non-veg we have options as well like egg bhurji, scrambled eggs with chicken keema and cheese, mutton keema mattar, boiled cubes of chicken in Thai sweet chili, grilled sliced prawns in Achari masala. We also have a choice of using our tikkas and kababs as well into the lasagne concept!
- Moreover, We will also be needing our white sauce, cheese, olives, chili flakes, herbs, and baked beans to be spiced up with green chili, onions, garam masala and coriander leaves for this recipe. Once all is ready, we can start layering the dish for baking, with white sauce, pasta sheets, layers of veg- or non-veg options, cheese, spiced baked beans and repeat the layers. Finally temper it on top with oil, curry leaves, bohri red chilies, fresh herbs and top with grated cheese and bread crumbs, bake and serve.



CELEBRITY CHEF KAVIRAJ

FINAL WORDS OF ADVICE : to me this topic is never ending and **cooking and creativity are two sides of the same coin** and the more we indulge the more we innovate is the key!

I'm sure this would be a good eye opener for all those who always thought how to get started and create some impressions on people and loved ones. Fusion to me also has been an easy way since using leftovers also a good option and saves on time as well, what is most interesting is the final output on the plate and that first bite and not to forget the reactions and expressions, they are truly worth the watch! **Remember to make good fusion you must not be confused but open to trying out new stuff!**

So here's wishing you all good luck for your fusion cooking, do try it for sure, it is extremely interesting working on it, do it patiently, be planned and watch out for the wonders getting you the wow's!

“
HAPPY COOKING!



FUSION CHOCOLATE SHEERA WITH RUM AND RAISIN SAUCE



FUSION LAYERED CHOCOLATE SEVIYAN KHEER WITH FRUITS & MOTICHOOR



FUSION ROASTED RED PEPPER- LENTIL MULLIGATWANY



FUSION DESH VIDESH KI MITHAAS DESSERT

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THE CORE OPERATIONAL AREAS OF FRONT OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

A BRIEF ARTICLE ABOUT THE MAJOR OPERATIONAL AREAS OF THE HOTEL FRONT OFFICE DEPARTMENT!



MR. VIVEK SALHOTRA.

Guest Contributor - Hospitality Connisseur
(An Assistant Professor of Hotel Management at Shree Hanumat IMT - Goraya, Punjab)

1. RECEPTION OR REGISTRATION SECTION.

This section is located in the lobby. It also allocate the room and established the rates for different types of guest. The person of the section is called Receptionist. **GSA** (Guest Service Associate) has direct contact guest.

The function of this section are...

- Warmly received all arrival guest.

- Complete registration formalities and perform guest check-in. Perform pre-registration formalities for group, VIPs and disable guest.
- Co-ordinate closely with house-keeping department for clearance of department room, room change and UR (Under Repaired) rooms.
- Issue VIPs amenities voucher to the food and beverage service.

2. INFORMATION.

It is located at a front desk and responsible for handling **mail and messages** with **room keys**. It also provide information regarding outside and inside of

hotel's rules and regulation, facilities, services. It also handle the e-mail, fax, xerox machine, cable through **the business center**.

3. CASH.

It is also located at front desk and **handled by front cashier**. The main function of cashier are as follows...

- The secure payment from the guest arrival.

- To change foreign currency as per rules and regulation of the hotel.
- To manage safety deposit locker.

- To settle guest account while check-out.
- To balance cash at the close of shift.
- To complete the guest check-out procedure.

4. RESERVATION.

The term reservation means booking in advance. It is basically **blocks/reserve** the room as per the request or specifies data. The main functions are as follows...

- Handle all cancellation and revisit as reservation made by the guest from different source and modes.

- Keep out reservation correspondence complete and systematic.
- Process and confirm reservation request.
- Forecast future room reservation status.
- Update room availability chart.

5. TELEPHONE SECTION.

This section is handle by **telephone operator** and it is located at the **back of the office**. Its main function is to handle **incoming** and **outgoing** calls. It is also

responsible for managing **wake up calls** as requested by the guest and **preparation of telephone bills** made by guest and staffs.

6. LOBBY.

It is an area which is located at the **entrance of a hotel building** with sitting arrangement for guest's visitors to meet and wait. It is synonym to the word "**Foyer**" which means a wide passage or large hall just inside the entrance of a public building. The dimension and

design of this area rely upon the size and design of the building. Basically lobby area must be furnished with all the necessary things. Example :- **Lobby desk, Bell desk, GRE/GRO, Reception desk, Cash counter, Rest room, Business center, Safety lockers etc.**

7. BELL DESK.

It is located at either side of lobby needed by bell captain and followed by bell boys. This desk is responsible for handling the guest luggage

during arrival and departure. The bell desk section also handle the **paying, deliver guest mail and messages** to the concern guest room.

8. BUSINESS CENTER.

The person who handle the business center in known as "**Business Centre Attendant**" and the main function of this section is to provide the

communication facilities and service like **STD, ISD, E-mail, internet, fax, xerox** etc.

9. TRAVEL DESK.

This section of front office is responsible for **arranging the packages, tickets etc,** for the guest as per their request.

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HUITLACOCHE

CORN SMUT, FUNGUS, MEXICAN TRUFFLE — THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE ALIASES OF HUITLACOCHE (PRONOUNCED **WHEE-TLA-KOH-CHEH**). BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS SOFT, SPREADABLE AND DARK-AS-NIGHT INGREDIENT?



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In simple terms, it's a **plant disease** that grows on **ears of corn around the kernels** in puffy, grey clouds that look kind of like river stones. But when you take this strange fungus into the culinary world, **Huitlacoche** becomes a delicacy used in all sorts of dishes from soups to enchiladas to sauces.

WHERE IT'S FROM?

The name huitlacoche is **Nahuatl**, which is the language of the **Aztecs** still spoken by more than a million people in Central Mexico today. Utilizing this ingredient also dates back to this time. **Corn, or maize, was a staple in the Aztecs' diet, and they used the corn fungus mainly in tamales and stews.**

The Native American **Hopi** and **Zuni** tribes have also worked with huitlacoche from the get-go. The former called the fungus "**nanha**," and the latter held the

ingredient in such high standing they say it symbolized the "**generation of life.**" In fact, huitlacoche has been an important food for indigenous peoples of the Southwest for centuries. So much, so that the fungus has **ceremonial, culinary** and **medicinal** uses. As far as the healthfulness aspect is concerned, **huitlacoche offers more protein than regular corn and has high amounts of lysine**, an essential amino acid not found in normal kernels.

Of course, not everyone is okay with plant-ruining diseases creeping in on their crops. Many farmers outside of Mexico destroy infected plants, and new strains of corn have been modified that prove resilient to the fungus. Luckily, with the influx of culinary awareness, huitlacoche has become a bit of delicacy in the States. The semi-popularity of the ingredient came about thanks to **Josefina Howard**, founder and the first chef-owner of **Rosa Mexicano** in New York.

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Josefina Howard was the Executive Chef & Co-Owner of the original Rosa Mexicano on First Avenue near 58th Street in New York. Josefina's knowledge of regional Mexican cuisine and her dedication to providing genuine flavors and tastes quickly made Rosa Mexicano a destination for lovers of authentic Mexican cuisine. Born in Cuba, Josefina Howard was raised in Spain and lived in France, Italy, Mexico and the United States.

She also served a **huitlacoche**-focused dinner at the **James Beard House in 1989** that went over so well, others started thinking about the food. It's still served at Rosa Mexicano restaurants, as well as many other, mainly Mexican eateries.

WHEN IT'S IN SEASON

As you may suspect, huitlacoche follows the corn season. But instead of harvesting it when the ears are ripe and ready, you get it whenever you see it, which usually happens around the **rainy months**. This gives the fungus a window of seasonality between **May and November**.

SEACUTIERE

Think salmon or octopus salami, swordfish ham and shellfish sausages. “This is a re-imagining of charcuterie, using seafood instead of meat. A trend that started in Australia, it incorporates pickling, fermenting, smoking and ageing,” says a representative of **Waitrose**. “It’s likely to become more popular, as chefs and enthusiastic cooks begin to add value to fish in ways they’ve done with meat for years!”

HOW TO PREPARE IT

Using huitlacoche in the kitchen is far easier than saying the name. Since it's technically a vegetable, you can use it raw. And because it's a soft fungus, you don't have to worry about chopping, pureeing or shredding, especially if you get it in a can or frozen. If you do manage to source some fresh huitlacoche, first thank the corn gods, then throw it into dishes whole, or delicately tear it apart with your fingers.

Don't be surprised when the grey fungus turns black with heat - this is a signature characteristic of the ingredient and the reason why many dishes that contain huitlacoche have a dark hue. The Rosa Mexicana chain, executive regional chef **Joe Quintana** says the ingredient goes with so many things, you will have no trouble finding a way to play with it : *“Huitlacoche has many uses, and its earthy flavour gives you options to put it into dishes as well as sauces”*.

At the restaurants, he has paired it with chicken, beef and, surprise, more corn! He also says... it goes brilliantly with **cheese**, especially in quesadillas. In a way, you can think of pairing huitlacoche with items that you would normally add mushrooms to, and beyond.” Most typically we sauté and incorporate huitlacoche into sauces or dishes for its earthy flavour,” says Quintana. “It can be puréed with cream to make a delicious sauce for steak, and we have even made huitlacoche flan for more of a savoury twist on dessert.”

Next time you find yourself with a can of the stuff, spoon some onto freshly poached eggs or dollop it into a quesadilla. It will give your dinner guests something to talk about and help spread the magic of this corn fungus!



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Huitlacoche can be bought at most **Mexican food specialty stores** and comes **frozen, jarred or canned**. Since you don't have to strip the corn of the fungus, using huitlacoche in this way proves pretty easy and requires little to no prep. If you do happen upon it fresh, pick the spores when they are light grey in color on the outside and have a spongy texture.

Firm samples are overripe and bitter. For a superior earthy-corn taste, go for huitlacoche that forms **on the ears, not the stalk**. Occasionally, you may find this ideal huitlacoche at a farmers' market or a Mexican grocery.

HOW TO STORE IT

Fresh huitlacoche can be stored in **the fridge just as you would store mushrooms**. However, the stuff doesn't have a long shelf life, so if you get it right from the ear, use it as soon as possible. Canned, frozen and jarred obviously last longer; once you open a can or jar you can keep it in the fridge and use it for weeks.

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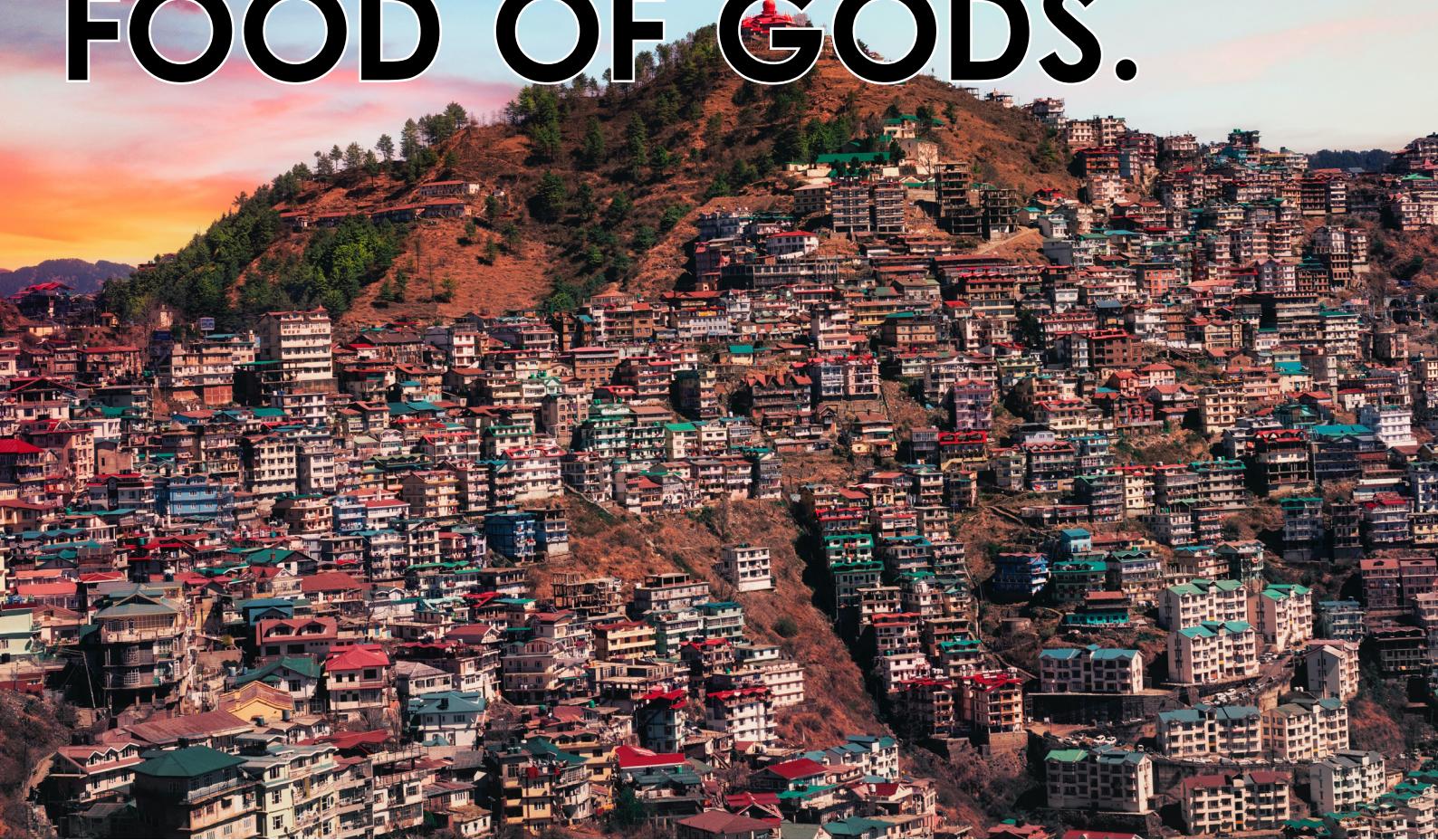
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DHAM : THE FOOD OF GODS.



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The Article Continues...

MISE-EN-PLACE :

The Preparation of Dham is a special activity. This **traditional meal** is served during lunch hours on special occasions. The meal is cooked by the Expert Chefs known as '**Botis**' (*revered Brahmin Chefs with inherit qualities of cooking dham*).

The cooking preparation starts a night before by digging trenches with dimension 6 ft. * 2ft. these trenches are called **Rasailu**. Special copper utensils,

some **iron vessels** as well as **brass utensils** are used for the preparation of food. The utensils are collected from the people in the village or town. The utensils are known as **charoti/ batlo** or any other name as specified in the local dialect. The trenches with fire lit is known as **char** or **tiun**. Wood is only used for cooking the food. **The temporary kitchens** are built with bamboo sticks as pillars and steel sheets as roofs. These are usually built outside the house but not far from the boundary.

With the amount of heat generated during cooking,

the chefs prefer it to be without a roof until and unless there's a severe weather. The cooks wear **dhoti** (*a long loincloth worn by the men in India, usually white or with Chequered pattern*) and work bare foot. The kitchen is considered a **sacred place** and the food cooked is first offered to the local deity hence, no one is allowed with footwear in the kitchen.

The use of tomato, onion, garlic, chemicals and artificial color is forbidden, hence, various other spices and condiments along with curd and yoghurt are used for enhancing taste, improving digestibility and providing nutritional value to the slow-cooked food.

The prepared food is offered to the local deity to seek the blessings. Post this, the food is served to the community. The male and female sit on ground with gunny bags arranged for sitting in different files. A handcrafted plate made with broad leaves are known as Pattals, which are made using **leaves of three species such as Bauhinia vahlii (Taur), Ficus roxburghii (Tremal) and Shorea robusta (Sal).** These leaf plates being bio-degradable are being replaced by the plastic or Thermocol disposable plates of cheaper price.

The meal starts with the serving of rice as an accompaniment for the various main dishes being offered.

The Kangri dham starts with **moong dal** and **rajma madra** which is cooked in yoghurt with the addition of a dozen and a half spices, whereas, the **mandiyali dham** (*dham of Mandi*) starts with the rice along with dumplings of pumpkin in sugar syrup. With every helping of rice a new dish is served and the dham concludes with **meetha bhat or mithdee**, which is made of **boondi** or **breadcrumbs.** (*Traditional dishes himachal must definitely try, 2017*)

THE MEAL :

The Kangri dham consists of Steamed Rice, Madrah, Sabut Moong Dal, Maah ki dal, Chana dal, Boor Seviyan, Khatta Kadu, Kadhi, along with Meetha and is different in method of preparation as compared to the dham prepared in other districts of Himachal Pradesh. **Kangra, produces wheat, maize, rice, while barley is mostly cultivated in Shimla.**

Kangra or Kangri Dham is one of the **most popular foods of the state.** In Chamba, Rice, Rajma madrah (*a curry prepared by cooking rajma in ghee and yoghurt*), Moong dal, Boor ki kadhi, Khatta (*sweet and sour sauce of tamarind and jaggery*) and Meetha is made of sweet rice with dry fruits.

Whereas, in Mandi, **Sepubari** (*sun dried dumplings of fermented black dal fried and cooked in spinach gravy*) finds a place in the dham and the dham of Kullu has dal mash. The accompaniments consumed are Rice, Khichree, pulao, Breads such as... **makki ki roti** which is corn flour flattened pancakes, wheat flour pancakes, refined flour pancakes, (*cooked in tandoor or on tawa*). Dhule maah ki Dal is the specialty of Bilaspur. The desserts consumed can be Meethe chawal (*Sweetened jaggery rice*), kheer (*rice cooked in milk and sugar with dry fruits*), meetha kadu (*pumpkin cooked in sugar syrup*), and Post ka halwa (*poppy seed dry dessert*)!!

THE KANGRI DHAM OR THE KANGRA DHAM IS KNOWN TO BE THE BEST DHAM OF HIMACHAL PRADESH. THE MEAL TYPICALLY INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING DISHES...

"KANGRI DHAM MENU"

MADHRA
MEETHA BHAT
SABUT MOONG DAL
MAH KI DAL
CHANA DAL
BOOR SEVIYAN
KADHI BOOR WALI
KHATTA BOOR WALA
RICE

The Article continues in the next issue.....



"THE KANGRI DHAM"



“THE SIMPLY SUMMER ISSUE”



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**WELCOME
HOME AWAY FROM HOME”**