

# The Famous Food Joints in Mumbai

## A Culinary Tour

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Street food in Mumbai has a distinctly different flavour from that of the street food in other parts of the country. What may have started as chaat from Uttar Pradesh (UP) eventually got modified to a whole new kind of food. The addition of onion and garlic and the abundant use of red chilli powder which was traditionally missing in the Lakhnawi version give an earthy quality to most dishes.

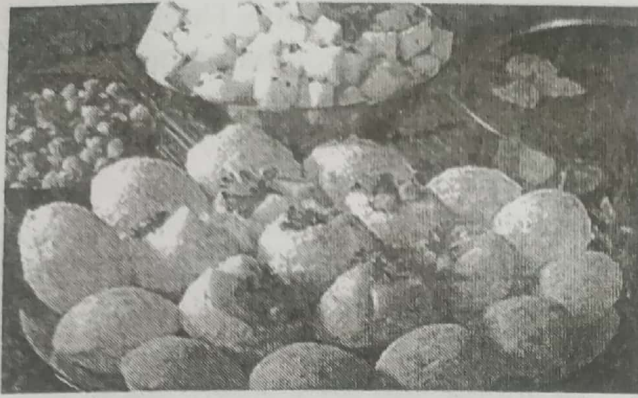
From Paav Bhaji, Vada Paav, potato and onion Bhajias, Bombay sandwiches, street-side Dosas, Patti Samosas, Pani Puri, Sev Puri, Dahi Puri, Ragda Pattis, boiled Channa Chaat, Kala Khatta, raw mango slices and berries in Chinese Bhel Indian-style pizzas heaped with cheese to fresh fruit accompanied by real dairy cream that is rare to find in most places. This is a gastronomes delight. As layers of flavours, textures, colours create

dishes that pop in your mouth and hardly impact your pocket, it may be fun to play a guessing game of what came from where and how it may have transformed here.

**Where:** Versions of street food are available all around the city and everybody has their own favourite destinations. To start with, if you are in the suburbs you could head to Juhu and seek out - Chowpatty, Amar Juice Center, Sharma Chaat Center near 'On Toes', and hawkers outside Mithibhai college in the Suburbs.

In South Mumbai, Girgaum Chowpatty snack shops, Bachelors for shakes, Indian style pizzas and sandwiches, and Homji Street Khao Galli (Fort) offer a spectrum of street food. Cannon (near CST) and Sardar (Tardeo) are famous for Pao Bhaji, Gurukrupa (Sion) for Samosa Ragda and Haj Ali Juice Centre for fresh juices, fruit cream, sandwich-





es and Indian style pizzas.

### A Konkani Coastal Meal

The Konkani coast starts from Mumbai and goes on till Goa. Malvani cuisine is marked by the use of garam masala and red chilli. On the other hand, Gomantak cuisine is the coastal cuisine of areas in and around Goa and is marked by the generous use of fresh coconut and kokum. In most Mumbai restaurants, you'll find a mix of Malvani and Gomantak cuisines. The curries here are tangy, coconut-y, fiery with spice and red chilli and accompanied by rice as the primary starch. Eat the catch of the day in a coconut-y curry poured over a heap of steaming white rice or mop them up with the variety of breads unique to this coast. Bombil, prawn and Surmai fries, fresh and tangy fish curries and Sol Kadi as a before and after drink are a must. If you have any space in

your tummy left, I would enviously recommend Mutton Masala and Tisriya (mussels) Suke, rice Bhakris and fried, deep-golden wade to mop it all up. If you are extra lucky, you will run into a Gaboli fry in season for fish roe. This is a meal that will grow on you and have you coming



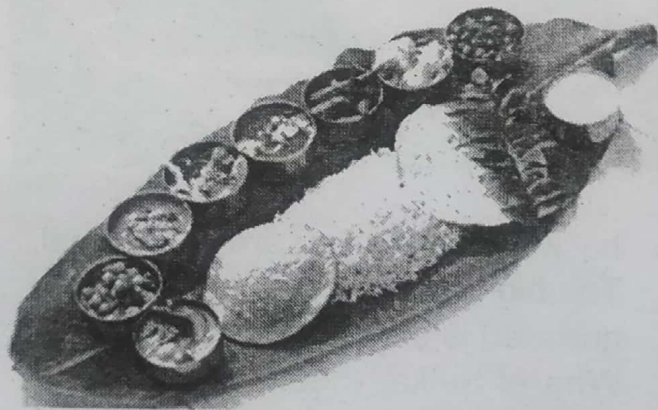
back each time you are in Mumbai. The highlight as you may have guessed is definitely seafood. **Where:** Satkar (near Goregaon station) for Malvani, Highway Gomantak (on the Western Express Highway, Bandra East) and Goa House (Juhu), Singhudurg and Pradeep Gomatak (Fort).



## A Typical Vegetarian Maharashtrian Meal

The native cuisine of Maharashtra is best tracked down in the lanes of Dadar. Most of the small, unassuming restaurants here offer a meal at lunch time that include the traditional, unassuming meals of Varan Bhat (dal rice) with vegetarian sides that usually include a Koshimbir (salad), Usal (sprouted pulse) and Pale Bhaji (green leafy vegetable).

The star attractions that really pull crowds are snacks like Thaali Peeth (a sort of a multigrain pancake or flatbread), Kandha Pohe (flattened rice snack), Sabudana Vada (sago and potato fritter flecked with roasted peanuts), Misal Paav (a fiery curry made of pulses and fried nothings served with bun), Kothimbir Vadi (coriander leaf and gram flour fritters) etc. Aamras (fresh mango puree) when in season and



Kharwas (a jelly like milky pudding made from the milk of a cow that has just given birth) round off the meal perfectly.

**Where:** Aaswad (opposite Sena Bhavan in Dadar) and Prakash

(Dadar) though Vinay Health Home (Charni Road) comes highly recommended as well.

## A South Indian Meal

The saga of Udupi cuisine began in this city when Rama Nayak arrived from Karnataka, in the 1940s. In Matunga, the area where a lot of South Indians lived, he set up his establishment near the King Circle railway station, and started cooking and serving authentic Udupi food on plantain leaves. This was Mumbai's humble initiation into the idli-dosai menu.

Soon Rama Nayak quadrupled his outlets into restaurants that are still known for great, uncompromising South Indian food in the city.

Meanwhile, many other similar stories resulted in Udupi and Udupi-esque restaurants that cropped up all over the city, to be the primary dining room for the hungry working class of Mumbai.

A surge of North Indians flooded the city with the chaat and sandwich culture at the heels of which followed tandoori roti lunches and Indo-Chinese of the Chicken Chilly Fry ilk. Most of the city's Udupi restaurants assimilated each of these layers that got added to the working class and today many of these restaurants serve a mind boggling mix of Maharashtrian, Punjabi, Chinese and South Indian food.

**Where:** Most Udupi style restaurants have gotten Mumbaiified in their offerings but there still are a



few in Matunga like Ramanayaks Udipi (the thaali is what this place is most famous for), Udipi Idli House (absolutely fantastic range of idlis, chutneys and unlimited sambhar), Café Madras (recommend almost everything here but the Podi Upma and Ragi Dosa are favourites), Ramashray (great idlis and dosas) and Manis Lunch Home (known for the thalis).

Venturing into most Udipi style restaurants of the city will guarantee a fix of South Indian 'fast food' fare ranging from the staple Masala Dosa to the mind boggling ilk of Chinese 'Schezuan Dosas', but you will also be spoilt for choice with the typical Bombay mix of street foods. What you have may not be authentic, but it will definitely be tasty, affordable and absolutely Mumbai. You must also know that today a lot



of the streetside stalls make some really innovative dosas. For example, the Pizza Dosa at the stall opposite Narsimonjee college seems rather popular with the youth. If you're somewhere near the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) you

must try the scrumptious dosas at Jay Snacks next to BSE in Fort.

### An Irani Cafe for a Parsi Meal

At the end of the 19th century, a tiny bit of Iran mushroomed in the historic areas of South Mumbai as cafes and bakeries. Today if you walk down the oldest parts of the city, it's impossible to miss these ancient establishments that inevitably draw you in with their period architecture, quaint graphics and centurion old men at the helm. Run mostly by second or third generation proprietors, descendants of Zoroastrians who came to India in the 19th century, the cafes all serve up a faintly colonial sleepy air of a bygone era along with some great Parsi food and typical old style bakery fare.

Irani cafes (Iranis were the second batch of Zoroastrians to come to India from Persia) today offer simple menus with signature Parsi dishes including Salli Boti (a fantastic dish of melting mutton in a beautifully caramalised gravy, topped with crunchy fried potato straws), Mutton Dhansak (meat cooked in a creamy gravy of lentils and spices), Kheema Ghotala (curried minced mutton with an egg scrambled in, served with paav for breakfast) all to be washed down with the syrupy raspberry soda.

Finish with the famous Lagan Nu Custard. Pick up a crusty Brun layered with oodles of soft and salty



butter. Or you may just choose to drop in at breakfast and splendidly make do with Akoori (parisi style creamy scrambled eggs) served with the freshly baked bread, crisp butter kharis and sweet milky tea.

**Where:** Kyani (near Metro cinema) and Yazdani Bakery, Ideal Corner, Jimmy Boy (try their new Parsi Wedding feast), Military Cafe (all in Fort), Britannia (personally, I am of the opinion that the Berry Pulav is hyped but it certainly has great appeal and the berries themselves are a lovely tart-sweet payoff). In the suburbs, I would highly recommend the Salli Boti at Ashmit's Snack Shack (Bandra, Pali Junction).

### Regional Bests

If you want to try seriously authentic versions of cuisines from parts of the country you have never been to before, the city does offer a few restaurants that just about manage to escape Mumbaification.

**Where:** Head to Bhojohori Manna (Oshiwara) for superlative home-style Bengali food, Punjab Grill (Juhu or Phoenix Mills) for fantastically authentic Punjabi fare. Soam (Girgaum) and Hiralal Kashidas (Girgaon) make fantastic Gujarati Undhiyo when the season is right. Deluxe (Fort) and Just Kerala (Andheri East) are known for their non-vegetarian Kerala meal, Chetna (Fort) for its Rajasthani thali and Maharaja Bhog (Goregaon, Inorbit Mall) for a Gujarati and Rajasthani

melange.

Bhagat Tarachand (several outlets) is famously known for its North Indian thaali (I am great fan of their rotis and dal). The food is recognizably North Indian, dishes tease in associations with several North Indian states but try pinning it down to any one place and the closest you will arrive at, is Bombay.

P.S. - The Koli food of Mumbai, while is not available in a restaurant, can be brilliantly experienced at the relatively new Koliwada Seafood Festival in Versova, typically in the last week of each January.

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