

Chapter 12

An Exploration of the Cuisines and Culinary Habits of the People in the Indian State of Kerala: A Gastronomy Tourism Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The culinary legacy of Kerala, an Indian state, offers a captivating experience for food enthusiasts and cultural explorers alike. The vibrant flavors, diverse influences and the cultural significance of the cuisines of the state have high touristic value. This Chapter analyses the culinary habits of the state and its association with the sociocultural fabric from a tourism perspective. The food habits and culinary practices of the state are deeply intertwined with the social structure, gender roles, rituals, festivals and way of living of the people. The study closely examines those interrelationships thereby bringing lots of insights on offering Cuisine as a Tourism Product in the state. The sociability component of dining at a Thattukada, the Ayurvedic diet associated with wellness tourism, the gourmet elements of toddy shops, the cultural significance of traditional Kerala Sadhya, and the spiritual element of temple cuisines of Kerala are all covered in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Cuisine and culinary habits have long served as a gateway to understanding and experiencing the cultural fabric of a region. The importance of food in tourism has increased as tourists seek for more engaging and real experiences. Gastronomy tourism, in fact, has become a vibrant and essential part of the travel business, providing a meaningful fusion of tradition, taste, and cultural discovery. Every dish tells a story, reflecting the history, geography, climate, and social customs of a particular region. Many gourmets and culinary enthusiasts travel for the purpose of tasting foods, understanding the techniques of culinary preparations and for appreciating the cultural nuances that shape culinary traditions. Such

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culinary experiences offer a unique insight into a community's identity which is educative as well as entertaining. The culinary legacy of Kerala, an Indian state, offers a captivating experience for food enthusiasts and cultural explorers alike. The vibrant flavors, diverse influences and the cultural significance of the cuisines of the state have high touristic value. This Chapter analyses the culinary habits of the state and its association with the sociocultural fabric from a tourism perspective. The food habits and culinary practices of the state are deeply intertwined with the social structure, gender roles, rituals, festivals and way of living of the people. The study closely examines those interrelationships thereby bringing lots of insights on offering Cuisine as a Tourism Product in the state.

Literature Review

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) describes gastronomy tourism as an exploration of regional flavours. It is an experience that extends beyond the simple act of eating; it entails discovering the provenance of ingredients, customary cooking techniques, and the cultural importance of certain dishes (UNWTO, 2019). Through this type of tourism, visitors can learn about the local way of life and the rich cultural legacy of a place.

Gastronomy tourism promotes cross-cultural interaction and aids in the preservation of culinary customs. Local communities are urged to preserve and promote their traditional cooking methods and recipes as tourists seek for unique culinary experiences. This promotes pride in the locals' culinary identity while also protecting cultural heritage (Richards, 2015).

The tourism industry is greatly impacted by food. It makes it possible for neighbourhood companies to prosper, including eateries, markets, and food producers. The UNWTO claims that by creating jobs and encouraging sustainable practices, culinary tourism may boost regional economies (UNWTO, 2017). It can also draw capital to the food and hospitality industries, which will accelerate economic expansion.

Gastronomy tourism promotes sustainable tourism practices by encouraging the use of local produce and reducing the carbon footprint associated with food transportation. It also supports the development of farm-to-table initiatives, where travelers can visit local farms, learn about sustainable agriculture, and taste fresh, locally sourced ingredients (Hall & Sharples, 2008).

Gastronomy tourism provides visitors with a multi modal experience that enriches their trip experience as a whole. It enables the participants to experiment with flavors, pick up cooking and culinary skills, and comprehend the cultural value of other cuisines. These kinds of encounters frequently produce enduring memories and deepen one's understanding of other cultures (Ellis et al., 2018).

Participating in culinary tourism has the potential to enhance one's own life. Travelers learn new cooking techniques, expand their palates, and frequently acquire more daring eating habits. Additionally, taking part in food tours, culinary workshops, and local dining experiences can help people learn new things and increase their awareness of national customs and global foodways (Smith & Xiao, 2008).

Food has a special ability to unite people. Travelers and locals alike benefit from the social links that are fostered by gastronomy tourism. Over a dinner, people from different cultures can come together and build a sense of community. Additionally, it offers storytelling opportunities for the community to discuss the background and significance of their culinary traditions (Sims, 2009).

Research by Banerjee and Dutta (2013) emphasizes the importance of regional cuisines in promoting tourism. Each state in India offers a distinct culinary experience, from the spicy dishes of Andhra Pradesh to the vegetarian delicacies of Gujarat. Regional cuisine is not only a culinary experience but also a gateway to understanding the local culture and traditions.

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