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## Food, Faith, and Festivals: The Soul of Indian Culinary Tourism

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*"Where every meal tells a story of culture, hospitality, and regional diversity"*

In India, we say 'Atithi Devo Bhava' meaning 'Guest is God', Serving Food with Love is Greatest form of Hospitality. Indian food traditions which include eating with hands, serving food on banana leaf and one for all.

Indian food culture is distinct and multifaceted. It is unique from rest of the globe not just in terms of flavour, but also in terms of how food is prepared, consumed and presented. The Indian cuisine is fusion of customs, culture and affection. From North Indian chats to South Indian snacks, from Chinese noodles to American burgers, from North Karnataka jolada rotti to South Karnataka ragi mudde, from Coastal Karnataka neer dosa to Malnad Karnataka kadabu. The specifications of Indian cuisine change every 100km's and with every region, community and ethnic house hold kitchens.

According to the data from the OECD (2015 or the nearest years), France, Italy, and Spain spend the most time on meals, with over 2 hours daily. South Korea, China, Germany, and Japan also allocate significant time, ranging between 1 hour 30 minutes to 1 hour 45 minutes. India falls in the middle, with an average of 1 hour 24 minutes spent on eating and drinking each day. Countries like the United Kingdom, Mexico, Sweden, and South Africa have slightly lower durations, while Canada and the United States spend the least time, around 1 hour. This indicates varying cultural habits and priorities regarding food consumption across different nations.

Tourism is act of travelling to a new place, according to United Nations World Tourism Organization, "Tourism is a travel for recreational, leisure, business and education purposes". Tourism is not just about visiting places; it's about experiencing cultures. India is ranked 39<sup>th</sup> in the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024, out of 119 countries where the improvement is seen from 54<sup>th</sup> position 2021 (World Economic Forum). Karnataka ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in domestic tourism and 11<sup>th</sup> in foreign visitors. Known as the 'Cradle of Stone Architecture', the state attracts millions of tourists.

Karnataka is one of the 6<sup>th</sup> major South Indian state in India that boasts its rich cultural heritage and the exotic Karnataka Cuisine. Karnataka's rich food heritage has deeply impacted the food styles of neighboring states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra. Karnataka cuisine lies on a vast spectrum with pure veg food on one end and non- veg on another. Coconut is an important ingredient and is found in almost every dish in some form or the other.

The image shows the projected growth of the India Culinary Tourism Market. The market is expected to grow from \$13.7 billion in 2025 to \$58.6 billion in 2035, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15.6 per cent. This indicates a significant increase in the industry's value over the decade. The data source is Future Market Insights.

Food tourism, also known as culinary tourism or gastronomic tourism, is a form of travel that revolves around experiencing and exploring local food, beverages, and culinary traditions. According to World Food Travel Association, "Food tourism is the act of traveling

for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place". It involves traveling to different regions or countries to taste authentic dishes, visit food markets, attend cooking classes, and interact with local chefs and food producers. Example: Wine tours in Tuscany or mango festivals in India.



Mango Festivals are celebrated in India at International and National level, The International Mango Festival is a two-day event held annually in Delhi, organized by the Delhi Government and Delhi Tourism, The National Mango Festival in Gujarat is a seasonal event organized by Gujarat Tourism to celebrate mangoes, NMC is celebrating India Mango Festival in New Delhi, hosted by National Media Club. Mango festivals include activities like mango stalls, demonstrations, games, competitions, mango carving, judging, tasting and more. Which mainly promotes tourism, promotes mango export, promotes the agricultural heritage of India, motivates farmers, highlights the cultural significance of mangoes. Likewise, 605 products have received the GI tag in India, including 46 from Karnataka, for their unique specifications. This designation protects their authenticity and promotes the economic prosperity of producers. Some of these products include Palkova, Dharwad Peda, Bangalore Blue Grapes, Coorg Arabica Coffee, Palani Panchamirtham, Mysore Pak, Tirupati Laddu, Tur Dal *etc.* So, each year, we dedicate one day, April 18 to spotlight how and why we travel to experience the world's unique culinary cultures.