

# A ONE-OF-A-KIND FOOD FESTIVAL IN THE CITY IS BRINGING TOGETHER UNIQUE CUISINES FROM REMOTE PLACES AND COMMUNITIES

TRISHA GHOROI

Mumbaikars are getting ready to taste food they've never tasted and ingredients they've never seen at the ISUZU X Food Festival. The event brings together the most exotic foods from around the country, from Pahadi cuisine in Kumaon to hearty Ladakhi food and traditional Kerala Toddy.

Curated by the biggest foodies in the city such as Kunal Vijayakar, Michael Swamy, Nicole Mody, and Tara Deshpande, people can expect bite-sized preparations that take you on a trip across the country. Vijayakar is excited beyond words and hopes to introduce the locals to cuisines that are part of our heritage. "There's a lot of food which is inaccessible to normal people living in Bombay because it comes from other parts of the country. There are some foods that are extreme in a way that they are foods that we don't eat in our daily life. Because they're also part of our culture, our heritage, and our cuisine, we must get exposed to it," the food writer explains.

Furthermore, Vijayakar is bringing forth a traditional dish that is cooked in Mumbai households, but only in particular communities. Popularly known as vajre (tripe) in the local language, this ingredient is not something people cook with often. Talking about how the dish became a delicacy, he explains: "Things become a delicacy when you cannot afford to eat mutton, which is expensive to eat on a regular basis, so you eat whatever you can afford. The tripe is more affordable than the actual meat of the goat, so they took this ingredient and got creative with it. If you create dishes with it, then over generations it becomes a delicacy."

The food personality is also bringing the best and original Parsi food via Kurush Dalal, who has been digging out age-old recipes that have been forgotten.

Meanwhile,



# A feast for the senses

Nicole has been on a northward and northeastward journey, bringing Ladakhi and Meghalayan cuisines to the festival. When asked about her experience finding good chefs, she says that it was nerve-racking. "The mandate is that we don't want to have food that you find commonly in Bombay," the foodie reveals, adding that it was difficult to turn down friends in the food community who didn't fit the niche. "The biggest challenge was convincing the chefs that there was value coming to Bombay, putting up a food stall, and presenting their culture and cuisine," she shares.

On her friend Varun Inamdar's suggestion, Mody reached out to a

Ladhakhi woman and got her to onboard after a small chat. Sharing details of the uncommon cuisine, she says:

"Ladakh is a mountainous region and it's cold all the time, so there's a lot of hot food; a lot of stews, broths, soups. Yak meat is used a lot but only in winter because it's very hearty. They use a lot of mutton and sheep instead of chicken, so they have mutton momos."

Some other stand out cuisines and dishes one can find at the food festival include Silkworm Pupae with Roselle leaves from the northeast, Khoobani ka Meetha from Hyderabad, and Spicy Sausage Chiptap Roll and Shahi Halwa from Awadh, to name a few. Since the chefs at the festival aren't pro-

fessionals, the food festival has tied up with ITM so that culinary students can help the chefs to keep the crowd fed.

Finally, when asked whether Mumbaikars can adapt their palates to these unique foods, Vijayakar says he isn't sure. "I don't know, but Mumbaikars are experimental and curious. Only Punjabi and Chinese food would work before, but now people are trying Bengali, Assamese, Sindhi, and Bihari food, so they are more interested in other people's cuisine. It's a trend. Micro-cuisines are trending right now, and this is even more micro than micro," he concludes.

The food festival is scheduled for November 16 and 17 at Royal Western India Turf Club, Mahalaxmi Race Course

Apart from decadent food, patrons would get to enjoy local brews, food market, cooking demos and more



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