

“Role of local food as cultural heritage in promoting Bihar tourism”

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Abstract

Cuisine is style of cooking food that got originated from particular region. This has always been a symbol of culture. The native people of any place are making and having various meals. These local foods as a part of the culture attract various tourists. In Bihar, tourists mainly come to visit Bodh Gaya, Patna City or to celebrate local festival – Chhath or to enjoy various circuits. Therefore, the tourism industry need to diversify their products and include more cultural tourism based components of which food is a key contender. In Bihar, the promotion of food as a component of its destination attractiveness is in its infancy at both the international and domestic level. The context of this contribution is to highlight such developments using the rationale that in order to maintain and enhance local economic and social vitality, creating back linkages between tourism and food production sectors can add value to the economy. This paper using a case study approach and researcher experience will attempt to address the strengths and opportunities of food promotion in Indian state of Bihar.

Keywords- Local Food, Cuisine, Culture, Tourism

Introduction

Thousands years back, people started travelling seven seas, in search of different ingredients and food to trade. Spices, wine, fruits, and other local cultivates including oil were the currencies or the medium to exchange. Today, we unknowingly do much the same. However, the priorities of modern travelers have changed and they tend to prefer restaurants and wineries in place of those pirate-infested trade routes. Culture has always been an embodiment of a people's traditions and ways of life and this is being reflected in the food, art, crafts, architect, dances, festivals, sculptures, religion, dressing and other practises (UNESCO, 2001). According to Nasaa-art, culture is based on the mosaic of places, foods, traditions, art, rituals and experiences of a people. (Nasaa-art, 2004; Wadawi, Bresler & Okech, 2008; 2009). Within this framework, Bihar, that has very ancient history and presently represents a multi ethnic state. There are different communities residing and having a diverse mix of cultures. The culture and development are interrelated and are complex and dynamic in nature. Heritage tourism, which is the same as cultural tourism, has often been criticized for converting local cultures and lifestyles into —commodities for sale to foreign audiences (Nana & Mensah, 2006). In this argument, cultural commoditization contributes to the denigration of social customs, alienation of residents and the creation of homogeneity between places. Communities, whether rural or urban, specially the festivals like chattr, Vat Sabitri, Holi, Jitiya, Makarsankranti etc. could be used as agents of development, preservation and sustainability of cultural tourism in Bihar.

Culinary tourism is a subset of agri-tourism that focuses specifically on the search for, and enjoyment of, prepared food and drink. Agriculture being main stay of Bihar could project themselves as a destination that is producing largest number of fox nut and other goodies. Food tourism is outlined because the want to expertise a selected style of food or the turn out of a selected region (Hall & Sharples, 2003) and covers a vast number of gastronomic opportunities for tourists (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007) as well as involving numerous economic development schemes. Food tourism has been hailed as a vehicle for regional development, strengthening local production through backward linkages in tourism supply-chain partnerships

(Renko, Renko, & Polonijo, 2010; Telfer & Wall, 1996) and is considered a vital vehicle in delivering property tourism (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Simms, 2009; Everett & Slocum, 2013). Culinary tourism promotes all distinctive and spectacular culinary art experiences, not just those that have earned 4 stars or better. Previously unnoticed, culinary tourism is an important new niche that fosters economic and community development and new intercultural insights.

Culinary tourism may be found in rural or urban areas and tourists ought to be out there to go to all year spherical. As such its potential in development of food safety and security all over Bihar should be considered. Relevant literature spans the realm of food-based interactions through a variety of subsectors, such as niche tourism, agritourism, culinary tourism, food-based attractions and food-purchase motivations. For example, agritourism (farm tourism) specializes in the incorporation of visits to farms for the purposes of on-site retail purchases, enjoyment and education (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Veeck, Chee, & Veeck, 2006).

Literature Review

Culinary Tourism

According to Renko et al., (2010) food, along with different phenomena like faith, events, festivals, and architecture area unit thought-about to be —gray zones of cultural and heritage business enterprise. It principally is a catalyst in enhancing the tourist's expertise in certain places. However, the importance of foodstuffs has been recognized by additional and a lot of researchers. They specialise in the role of food in culture and take into account food as not solely being a basic necessity for traveler consumption however additionally a vital component of regional culture that adds worth to the image of a destination. native cuisines represent a core manifestation of a destination's intangible heritage, and thru its consumption, tourists will gain a very authentic cultural expertise (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007; Renko et al, 2010).

The potential role of local food

The contribution of food has for the most part been unnoticed in spite of its apparent importance and potential to be the vital driving force of differing cultures and as the key to developing and sustaining business. The argument is that local foods hold abundant potential to reinforce

tourism, whereby the business planner and also the enterpriser ought to work hand in hand to satisfy the patron, contribute to the genuineness of the destination, strengthen the economy and to supply the environmentally-friendly infrastructure of the destination. The potential of cooking as a theme to sharpen destination images, and ascertain their individuality compared to different countries is also dominant.

Food business in line with Gaztelumendi (2012) is capable of addressing cultural and environmental issues in a very means that's compatible with strictly economic arguments. The recent history of world business development is suffering from nominally property models and evidently unsustainable actions. the concept isn't to make new indiscriminate pressure on preparation heritage, however to leverage it rationally with an eye fixed to property.

The Cuisine of Bihar

Bihar, with its bountiful natural resources of fertile soil, abundant water, varied climate and wealthy cultural and historical heritage is one in every of the foremost fascinating states of Republic of India. The farmers are intelligent and hard working. Therefore agriculture has been delineate because the core competency of province by the Hon'ble President of Republic of India. Agriculture is that the very important supply of wealth within the State with concerning seventy nine of its population is engaged in agricultural pursuits. Bihar's productive contribution in cereal, fruit, vegetables, spices and flowers can increase manifold with improved methods and system management.

The food habits of Bihar are an indication of how the cuisine of the State has evolved over centuries under the influence of various cultures and regimes that controlled it from time to time. Lord Buddha attained enlightenment in Bihar and hence the impact of Buddhism is significant in the State. People of Bihar are largely vegetarian though many are fond of chicken, fish and meat dishes. As Bihar has also been under the reign of the Mughals, there is an obvious influence of the exotic Mughal cuisine on the cooking style and culinary tastes of its inhabitants. Though the State has imbibed the best of the Gupta, Mauryan, Turk, Afghan, Persian and European styles of cooking, it has retained a food culture that has the distinct features of Bihar's cuisine.

Objectives

- To understand the food habits of Bihar, identify the traditional dishes and to document them.
- To figure out the key ingredients and analyze its key benefits
- To identify the role of local food as culture and promotion of tourism

Methodology

This paper utilizes a case study approach highlighting relevant literature related to Local food, culture and culinary tourism of Bihar. It also highlights the personal experiences of authors in Bihar. The authors travelled some regions of the state to understand the food habits and local food. This study is based on qualitative analysis of available secondary data and the data obtained from observation and unstructured interview of the native people of Bihar. The author also aims to document the local food and food habits and include this as integral part of culture.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of food tourism as part of cultural heritage and on the economy?
2. To understand the food habit of Bihar and document the traditional dishes.
3. Why the documentation and branding of local food is significant?

Study Area - Bihar



Picture 1 - Bihar

The study was conducted in Bihar. The state has a very ancient history. In fact, it goes back to the very dawn of human civilization. Earliest myths and legends of Hinduism, like the Sanatana (Eternal) Dharma, are associated with Bihar. It was here that Prince Gautama attained enlightenment and became the Buddha.

The Mauryan Emperor, Ashoka, who is believed to be one of the greatest rulers in the history of India and the world, was born in Patliputra (the present day Patna).

A part of Bihar was called "Magadha" in ancient times, which witnessed the birth, rise and development of two traditions – Jainism and Buddhism. The world knows that Gautam Buddha got enlightenment under a tree 25 km away from Gaya, which is today popularly known by the name of Bodh Gaya.

Findings and Discussions

Food Habits

The cuisine of Bihar is characterized by its use of locally available ingredients. The use of hand-picked vegetables and freshly crushed spices is the hallmark of this cuisine. Wheat and rice are the staple food. Vegetables and fruits are grown in abundance and consumed in different ways. Maize, barley, gram, oilseed and pulses are important crops. Milk products, various dehydrated items (known as barriers), roasted chana powder (sattu), fresh water fish, poultry and mutton are also consumed. The traditional cooking medium is mustard oil, but ghee, vanaspati and other cooking oils are also used.

Sattu based dishes are very popular. This includes different types of litti, sattu paratha, and sattu sharbats. Sattu is also consumed by kneading it with salt and a limited amount of water, and eaten with pickles, onions and green chillies. It has a sweet and richer version which is prepared by mixing Sattu with sugar and ghee.

The cuisine of Bihar includes many mouth-watering sweet dishes. Special delicacies include pua, pitha, khajja, kheer, sevan, chandralala, ras malai, balushahi, anarasa, kala jamun, kesaria peda, parwal ki mithai, khubi ki lai and tilkut.

The day's meal consists of breakfast, lunch, high tea and dinner.

Morning Tea and Breakfast

For most people the day starts with a cup of tea. Apart from readymade tea they also have lal chai (red tea) and nimbu chai (lemon tea).

A simple vegetable dish and roti form the first meal of the day or it could be paratha-bhunja.

Breakfast also has different sattu preparations, like sattu sharbat, litti, sattu paratha etc. Items like

kachori, poori-aloo dum, chini wali roti, chiri puri (chilha/pancake made from flour batter) are also popular.

In some parts of Bihar the all time favorite breakfast is chura-dahi (pressed rice with a thick coating of creamy curd). During summer the same chura is consumed with mango pulp, and this dish is called chura aam.

Lunch

Lunch basically consists of the thali. An ideal vegetarian thali generally consists of dal (lentil), bhaat (rice), roti (breads), tarkari (vegetable preparation), bhunjia (dry vegetable preparation), chokha (mashed vegetable), ratoba (raita), bajaka (shallow fried vegetables and cereals with gram flour), chutney, achar (pickles), and papad. The non-vegetarian would have meat (mutton), machli (fish), murga (chicken) or anda (eggs).

Sometimes, a few unique combinations like bari jhor-bhat, kadhi-bhat replaces the dal. In the same way there could be besan ki subzi, saag, kofta etc.

Kadhi bari is also popular among the people of Bihar and consists of fried soft dumplings made of different lentils and vegetables that are cooked in spicy gravy. This dish makes its best combination with boiled rice.

Evening Snacks

In the evening, a range of bhunjas are consumed like chura ka bhunja (beaten rice shallow fried with sliced onions, chopped green chillies and green peas), makai ke lawa (popcorn), chana ka bhunja, mungphalli dana, masaledar murhi (puffed rice mixed with chopped green chillies, onion, coriander leaves, salt and a few drops of mustard oil) etc. These bhunjas are prepared at home. In villages there used to be a common kitchen specially meant for bhunjas called kansari. Today, mostly in the urban areas of Bihar, bhunjas are prepared and sold by vendors. Most of them roast the grains in hot sand or salt, while being constantly heated in a kadhai or earthen handi.

There are a variety of pakoras, bachakas, aloo chops, vegetable cutlets, singharas, singhara chaat, ghoggni chura and other snacks to enjoy in the evenings with a cup of tea.

Dinner

Dinner generally consists of roti, subzi, saag, chutney and a raita, along with some home-made desserts like kheer and sevian.

Priority is given to milk and milk products in their meals which include curd, butter milk (*mattha*) and sweet dishes. Some people like to take doodh roti (small pieces of roti soaked in milk and sugar) with a vegetable dish being used as an accompaniment. But milk is never combined with the non-vegetarian dishes.

Bhoj – The Traditional Feast

Bhoj is not a simple meal but a ceremony. The bhoj is the feast or the banquet of Bihar. Traditionally, guests sit on a carpeted floor and the food is served by the hosts and their relatives and friends.

Bhoj is a fine dining experience and proceeds in the following steps.

Step 1: Setting up the Cover

A special plate made from dried leaves (*pattal*) and an earthen glass (*kullarh*) is laid out in front of each guest — though today this *kullarh* is being replaced with different types of glasses. As the food is eaten with one's hands, no cutlery is provided.

Step 2: Serving of Water

Water is poured into the *kullarhs* from water jugs, traditionally known as a *lotta* (a round vessel made from different metals and alloys). Once the water is served, people wash their hands and sprinkle a little water on the *pattal* as a symbolic cleaning, although the *pattals* are well soaked and washed beforehand.

Step 3: Serving of Condiments & Accompaniments

There is no cruet set, but salt and green chillies are the first things that occupy their place on the *pattal*. This is followed by salad, chutneys, raita (called *ratoba*), *achar*, *papad* and *chanories*.

Step 4: The Serving of Food

Food service generally starts with the vegetable preparations and the *saag* (dried preparation from leafy vegetables) served on the left side of the plate making an arc and leaving the central right side for the breads (mostly *poori* or *kachori*) and rice followed by the non-vegetarian dishes (if it is there in the menu).

Step 5: The Beginning or the Toast Raising

Once the bread is served to everyone, the guests start their meal after a small prayer. When the guests are through with their breads then the rice or pulao is served. This is followed by dal that is either served on top of the rice or in a separate bowl (*katori*) made from the same leaf.

There are some occasions when breads are not served and the rice takes the central position and the guests make a small well in it. The dal is served in this well and it is topped with a spoon of pure ghee. This ghee is also called pavitri, meaning pure. This is actually the Toast Raising for the Ceremony. As it is sacred, one doesn't take a second helping of the ghee (as it is considered to be *jhoota*).

Step 6: Further Helpings/Parshan

When the guests are having their food, the serving people (mostly the relative and friends of the hosts) start a continuous serving of second and further helpings. It's really fascinating to be a part of this feast, and if not, to at least be an observer. The service brigade comes announcing the name of each dish and the guest who wants that dish gives an indication. They serve the guest with the help of a spoon or ladle without touching the plate.

Step 7: The Serving of Dessert

There is no fixed sequence for the dessert; more or less it is served as a part of the main course, though it comes a little later. Most often it comprises of rasgulla, kala jamun, jalebi, boondi, laddoo, or a variety of burfies. The number of sweets served is a true indicator of the standard of the *bhoj*.

Step 8: The Last Helping of Curd

This is another unique feature of *bhoj*; they finish their meal with curd. There is a ritual of serving a small portion of rice before serving the curd (called as *dahi ka bhaat*). So, after the last serving of rice, curd with sugar is offered.

Step 9: Concluding the Meal

There are different age groups of guests sitting and eating together and there are people with different chewing abilities and obviously there are people with different belly sizes. Traditionally, the meal is concluded together even though some may have finished early.

People get up and go to wash their hands outside. Then the hosts remove the plates and clean up the area to make the place ready for the second group of guests. This cycle continues till everyone has eaten.(Singh, 2015)

The cuisine of Bihar

Bihar's cuisine is so varied that recipes do not just change between different districts or provinces; it changes from one home/family to another. Besides recipes, the various traditions and rituals associated with food are commonly discussed and recounted. The people of Bihar prepare and eat an extensive variety of food, but not enough thought or effort has gone into giving them suitable names or an identity.

1. Bihari cuisine is one of India's best cuisines, having lots of options for vegetarians as well as non vegetarians. They have various options to offer in sweets and snacks.
2. The people prepare and eat great foods but proper name has not been given to dishes.
3. The awareness of the dishes is relatively less but they are delicious to its core and are very satisfying.
4. Some restaurants are coming up with Bihari foods as their major offerings.
5. The key Ingredients are –

Cooking Medium - Mustard oil, Ghee, Vanaspati, sesame seeds oil.

Dairy Products - Milk, butter milk and Curd - used extensively. Cottage Cheese – moderate use
Cream – is not used in cooking however homemade butter is used moderately.

Phoran - Simple and/or Panch Phoran

Basic Gravies/Masala - Onion based, Mustard and Garlic Based

Leafy vegetables - Chana saag, Nenua Saag, Gandhari Saag

Dehydrated Ingredients –Bari, Dehydrated cauliflower/ Cabbage

Sattu- Chana Sattu, barley, maize etc..

Special Spice blends - Jeera-golki, Garam Masala, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, peppercorn

Non Veg - Meat – Mutton (Khassi), Chicken, Fishes – small, medium, large – fresh water - Rohu, Katla, Pothia, Tengra, Maangur, Shell fish – Itchna (Prawn), Snails, Crabs – very less
Eggs – Local and Farm

Litti – Chokha is the most popular dish of the state outside Bihar.



Picture 2 – Litti with Chokha, Ghooghni, Chutney and salad

Apart from the litti, there are various traditional dishes that are delicious to its core and have ability to attract the tourist.

Vegetarian Preparations

Parval ki Sabzi — Pointed Gourd with Potatoes, *Katahal ki Tarkari* — Raw Jackfruit Curry, *Ghoogni* — Peas Curry, *Ole ki Sabzi* — Yam Curry, *Arbi ki Subzi* — Taroo Roots with Red Lentil, *Besan ki Subzi* — Gramflour Cubes with Mustard Gravy, *Kofta* — Deep Fried Vegetable Balls with Spicy Curry, *Kaddu ki Subzi* — Pumpkin Curry with jaggery and panch phoran

Non-Vegetarian Preparations

Tali Hui Machli — Fish Fry, *Masaledar Murga* — Masala Chicken, *Machli Chokha* — Mashed Fish, *Machli ke Ande ki Pakore* – fish Egg Fritters, *Fried Jhinga* — Fried Prawn, *Pothia Bhunjia* — Grilled Fish with Mustard, *Bhuna Maans* — Mutton Curry, *Bhuna Kalegi* – Pan Roasted Livers, *Kharde Masale Wali Meat* — Mutton with Whole Spices, *Murga Jhor* — Chicken Curry, *Sarsonwali Machli Jhor* — Fish in Mustard Gravy, *Anda Curry* — Egg Curry, *Taas Mutton* – Tawa Cooked Mutton

Dal aur Jhor — Lentils and Thin Gravies

Lauki Channe ki Dal — Bengal Gram with Bottlegourd, *Dal Tadka* — Bengal Gram and Black Lentil, *Matar Ka Jhor* — Thin Gravy of Green Peas, *Bari ka Jhor*— Thin Gravy of Sun Dried Lentil Dumplings, *Khusshi Kerao ka Jhor*— Thin Gravy of Black Peas, *Bathua Jhor* – Bathua leaves cooked with Rice Starch,

Roti — Breads

Parantha — Layered Bread, *Sattu ka parantha* — Stuffed Parantha with Roasted Chana Powder, *Kachori* — Deep Fried Bread made from Maida, *Dal –Puri* — Puri Stuffed with Bengal Gram, *Makai ki Roti (Motti Roti)* — Maize Chapati, *Tissi Parantha*— Parantha Stuffed with roasted flax seeds,

Side Dishes

Aloo ka Chokha— Potato Mash, *Baingan ka Chokha*— Aubergine Mash, *Aloo Bachka*— Shallow Fried Potato Slices with Gram Flour and Spices, *Lauki Bachka*— Shallow Fried Bottle Gourd Slices with Gram Flour and Spices, *Hare Chane ka Bachka*— Shallow Fried Green Chickpea with Gram Flour and Spices, *Lauki ka Raita*— Yogurt with Chopped Bottle Gourd, Mustard Powder and Spices, *Khire ka Raita*— Yogurt with Grated Cucumbers and Spices, *Palak Saag*— Spinach Leaves cooked with Garlic and Spices, *Channa Saag*— Green Gram Leaves cooked with Garlic and Spices, *Kheshari Saag*— Almorta Leaves cooked with Garlic and Spices, *Aloo Bhunjia*— Deep Fried Potato Straws, *Bhindi ka Bhujia*— Stir Fried Slices of Ladies Finger, *Karele ka Bhunjia*— Stir Fried Slices of Bitter Gourd, *Dhaniye ki Chutney*— Coriander Chutney, *Sabut Dhaniye ki Chutney*— Coriander Seeds Chutney, *Kele ke chhilke ki Chutney*— Raw Banana skin chutney,

Sweet Delicacies

Rasiya— Rice Pudding with Jaggery, *Pua*— Deep Fried Sweet Pancakes, *Khoya ka Pittha*— Khoya Stuffed Rice Dough Poached in Water, *Dudh Pittha*— Khoya Stuffed Rice Dough Poached in Milk, *Ras Kadam*— Khoya Coated Rasgulla Covered with Poppy Seeds, *Khaza*— Deep Fried and Sugar-coated Tempting Dessert, *Lai*— Sweet Dish made from Khubi Dana and Khoya, *Anarsa* — Sweet Dish made from Rice Flour Khoya, Coated with Sesame Seeds

Conclusions

The outcome of this study reflects the importance of awareness regarding local cuisines, its documentation and promotion. This also highlights the satisfaction with both the local food and the rest of the resources available to tourists at the destination. The destination should have multiple choices to offer at the destinations.

Promotion of local cuisine is a great opportunity to promote and strengthen particular tourist destinations. For many more, the quality of the cuisine on offer is an important part of the holiday experience as a whole. The place must bear this in mind when developing their long-term plans for the domestic and international tourism industry. The state should identify, document and promote their regional specialties. This would be one of the major attractions for the tourists.

Recommendations

- Proper nomenclature of the dish is required.
- Documentations of the dishes and its method of preparations should be documented.
- More eateries of different concepts should be started. The tourism ministry and the state government should come up with some schemes in order to encourage entrepreneurs (food entrepreneurs).
- The small food entrepreneurs and the vendors, selling these dishes should be trained.
- Promotions of the food should be done as a part of culture.
- The regional feast – Bhoj, should be promoted, as this could be an exciting experience for guests/tourists.

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