

A CULINARY LEGACY

Long before culinary gurus thought of fusion food, it was Anglo-Indian cuisine that was perhaps the precursor or inspiration for this trend. By assimilating and amalgamating ingredients and cooking techniques from all over the Indian sub-continent, it became a completely new cuisine with a distinctive flavour of its own. **Fareeda Kanga** discovers nostalgic cuisine that has made a contemporary comeback.

There is a certain glamour about Anglo-Indian cuisine which makes it so appealing with quirkily named dishes like Railway Lamb or Mutton Curry, The Dak Bungalow Curry, Grandma's Country Captain Chicken, Colonel Standhurst's Beef Curry, Veal Country Captain, Devil Pork Curry, Calcutta Cutlets (Kobhiraji Cutlets), Fish Kedgeree and so on. All these dishes were a direct throwback to the conditions prevailing at the time of the Raj. Anglo-Indian cuisine has evolved over hundred of years as a result of reinventing and reinterpreting western cuisine. By assimilating and amalgamating ingredients and cooking techniques from all over the Indian sub-continent it became a completely new cuisine that was neither too bland nor too spicy, but with a distinctive flavour of its own.

cooking was more Indianized than British and developed a strong regional bias. Local ingredients and flavours were incorporated in the dishes while the core ingredients remained unchanged, no matter where the dish was prepared," suggests Lakhbir Singh, Sous Chef, Saffron, Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru. Anglo-Indians who were influenced by the Portuguese, British, Dutch and French, incorporated the many herbs and spices that grew in their vicinity and developed their own unique cuisine. Coconut based curries were popular in Anglo-Indian dishes in the south while mustard oil and fresh water fish were popular ingredients in the Anglo-Indian dishes of Calcutta and West Bengal. Bengali star chef Gaurav Sircar, currently a Sous Chef at Maya, Trident BKC, Mumbai, elaborates on the regional

diversity of Anglo-Indian food. "Bengali cuisine has strong roots and ties with Anglo-Indian cuisine and many of our typical Bengali dishes are actually spin-offs from Anglo-Indian ones," he avers. At Maya, Sircar offers diners a chance to sample such classics as Scotch eggs or Dimer Devils as they are popularly called and Chingri Kabiraji (battered fried prawns stuffed with mince). Whilst Chef Lakhbir Singh's use of a traditional western meat (rabbit) is a unique and interesting spin-off combining Indian ingredients on a gamey meat. "Khargosh ke dhol is our take on humble rabbit with a blended rich gravy of almond paste and yoghurt with mild spices," he avers. Most of the Anglo-Indian ladies were excellent cooks and adept in baking a variety of cakes and pastries. The enticing



Scotch Eggs or Dimer Devils as they are popularly called



"Khargosh ke dhol is our take on humble rabbit with a blended rich gravy of almond paste & yoghurt with mild spices."—Chef Lakhbir Singh

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Grandma's Country Captain Chicken

Ingredients: For 4 portions
1kg chicken cut into medium size pieces
3 large onions sliced finely
10gm chili powder
5gm turmeric powder
20gm oil
Salt to taste
10 grams garlic paste
2 small sticks cinnamon
4 cloves
2 cardamoms
6 or 8 whole pepper corns
2 dry red chillies broken into bits

Method
Heat oil in a pan and fry the onions cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, red chili and pepper corns lightly. Add the chicken, mix in the garlic paste and sauté for about 5 minutes on medium heat. Add the chili powder, turmeric powder, and salt. Mix well and stir fry for a few minutes. Add ½ cup of water and cook till the chicken is tender and the gravy is quite thick.

Anglo-Indian Mulligatawny Soup

Ingredients: For 4 portions
250gm masoor dal
2 cups coconut milk
40gm oil
3 green chillies
25gm Madras curry powder
5gm turmeric powder
15 grams ginger garlic paste
10ml lime juice
Salt to taste
8 to 10 curry leaves
2 medium size onions sliced
1 celery stem chopped
4 coriander root
2 apple peeled and chopped

Method
Cook the dal with sufficient water till it's cooked and whisk till the dal is smooth, keep aside. Heat oil in a big pan and fry the curry leaves, green chillies, coriander root celery, apple and onions till slightly brown. Add the ginger garlic paste and sauté for a few minutes. Now add the curry powder and turmeric and fry for a few minutes till the oil separates from the mixture. Mix in the cooked dal and mix well. Slowly add the coconut milk and add salt to taste. Add 2 more cups of water and simmer for about 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the lime juice. Garnish with boiled rice.

Soups were seasoned with cumin and red chillies, roasts were cooked in whole spices like cloves, pepper and cinnamon, rissoles and croquettes came to be flavored with turmeric and garam masala. The concept of 'curry' which started out as a watery based concoction with the addition of a few spices to meat and vegetables became the 'food fashion' of the time.



Most of the Anglo-Indian ladies were excellent cooks & adept in baking a variety of cakes & pastries



Chef Sandip Narang, Taj West End



Mulligatawny Soup, Meat Jalfrezi, ketchup etc were some of the first culinary inventions of those early cooks or khansamas to cater to the new craze for Indian spice flavoured food



"It is the extremely unusual blend of tastes that makes Anglo-Indian cuisine so unique."—Chef Abul Koolhar

"Bangalore is a heritage hotspot for Anglo-Indian settlers. Anglo-Indian food is neither too bland nor too spicy, but with a distinctive flavour of its own and the dishes are easy to prepare. Signature Anglo-Indian dishes served at The Taj West End are Classic Mulligatawny Soup, Pepper Lamb Chops, Pork Vindaloo, Grandma Country Captain Chicken Curry, etc," says Chef Sandip Narang, Taj West End.

aromas of food cooking on the hobbs and cakes baking in the ovens were always part of an Anglo-Indian home in those early days. Nestled in Bengaluru is one such kitchen that still upholds the Anglo-Indian tradition to the hilt. Bridget Kumar whose cookbook *Anglo-Indian Cuisine, A Legacy Of The Past* a bible for Anglo-Indian food lovers is always cooking delicious outlets, Railway Mutton curry and other dishes that symbolize this cuisine and feature in the pages of her book. In fact this enterprising lady has written a total of six recipe books on the subject. "Anglo-Indian cuisine was influenced by the various European invasions in India and evolved over centuries to what it is today. Throughout the colonial period many new hybrid cuisines came into existence. The Indian khansamas or cooks of those times innovated new dishes, which combined some of the flavours of India with those of Britain and Europe and vice versa. Spices and other ingredients were added to Western dishes giving them a mild Indian flavour," says Kumar. Thus soups were seasoned with cumin and red chillies, roasts were cooked in whole spices like cloves, pepper and cinnamon, rissoles and croquettes came to be flavored with turmeric and garam masala. The concept of 'curry' which started out as a watery based concoction with the addition of a few spices to meat and vegetables became the 'food



Bridget Kumar whose cookbook *Anglo-Indian Cuisine, A Legacy Of The Past* a bible for Anglo-Indian food lovers



Pepper Lamb Chops



Dak Bungalow Beef Curry

fashion' of the time. Worcestershire Sauce, Mulligatawny Soup, Meat Jalfrezi, ketchup, etc were some of the first innovations or culinary inventions of those early cooks or khansamas to cater to the new craze for Indian spice flavoured food. If you don't have the opportunity to visit an Anglo-Indian home then there are other venues where you can sample this cuisine. "Bangalore is a heritage hotspot for Anglo-Indian settlers. Anglo-Indian food is neither too bland nor too spicy, but with a distinctive flavour of its own and the dishes are easy to prepare. Signature Anglo-Indian dishes served at The Taj West End are Classic Mulligatawny Soup, Peppers Lamb Chops, Pork Vindaloo, Grandma Country Captain Chicken Curry, etc," says Chef Sandip Narang, Taj West End. Whilst many food trends sink faster than a soufflé, this unusual style of cooking has stood the test of time. Mumbai star chef Abul Koolhar whose newest outpost in Mumbai NRI (Not Really Indian) draws inspiration from some of these classics says, "It is the extremely unusual blend of tastes that makes this cuisine so unique."

Recipes Courtesy: Taj West End, Bengaluru