

SOUTHERN COMFORTS

南方美饌

Steeped in ancient traditions and packed with healthy ingredients, South Indian cuisine is a delicious cultural highlight

以營養食材及古法烹調的南印度料理
堪稱古國最令人垂涎的傳統文化

TEXT/撰文 SHOBA NARAYAN

"THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE between South and North Indian food is cultural," says Manjit Gill, Corporate Executive Chef (Hotels) at conglomerate ITC. "In the South you can still see the effect of some of our ancient indigenous cuisine, but in the North the food has been influenced by waves of invasions by the Greeks, Persians, Afghans, Mughals and others." As a result, North Indian food lost its connection with the country's ancient cuisines, whereas in the South, ancient cooking methods as depicted in old Indian manuscripts are still preserved.

The cultural differences influence everything from cooking ingredients to techniques. North Indian food is generally richer and heavier, thanks to lavish use of daily products such as ghee and red meat. However, Alamelu Vairavan, the co-author (with Patricia Marquardt) of *Healthy South Indian Cooking*, points out that South Indian cooking is not only lighter but is also healthier. "South Indian cooking uses a minimal amount of light cooking oil, not the clarified butter and heavy cream used in the kitchens of many Indian restaurants," she says. "Vegetables are not served just boiled or steamed but are cooked fresh to crisp-tender to maintain their nutrients and colour. Salt can be reduced or eliminated entirely, substituting spices. South Indian cooking uses a variety of lentils which are high in fibre and protein and more easily digestible than animal protein."

Although South Indian dishes rely heavily on vegetables, lean meats and fish, legumes and rice, they are anything but boring. "One vegetable such as cauliflower can be cooked in so many different ways, each cauliflower dish tasting differently because of using various spices and spice powders," says Vairavan. The seasonings are subtler than those in North Indian cookery. "A misconception is that the food is very hot and spicy. It can be spicy, if desired, but it can also be mild. It depends on individual preparation."

The way spices and powders are combined varies within the four states that make up South India and the different language groups within those areas. But the basic processes and cooking techniques are similar, says Vairavan. Initially, dry-seed spices are sautéed in a small amount of oil. Spices get infused in oil to bring out their aroma and flavour before other ingredients are added, in a process known as tempering. And the dishes are versatile. "Vegetables are cooked as delicious stir-fries called poriyals, or they are cooked with lentils to make *kootu*, a thicker, slightly saucy vegetable dish," says Vairavan. "They are also cooked with lentils to make a delicious *sambhar*, a vegetable sauce dish that is served as an accompaniment with breakfast or served over rice to make a wholesome meal."

於

企業集團ITC的酒店部門任職企業行政總廚的Manjit Gill表示：「南、北印度菜的最大分別在於不同的文化。南印度的烹調方式至今仍沿襲道地的

古印度傳統，而北印度在歷經希臘、波斯、阿富汗及蒙古入侵之後，當地飲食文化深受異國影響。」經外來文化的洗禮後，北印度菜已偏離傳統印度料理的風格；但在南方，印度古書記載的烹調方法則代代相傳、沿用至今。

南北兩地的食材和烹飪技術，深受文化差異的影響。味道濃郁的北印度菜，通常採用大量的紅肉和酥油等奶類製品。與Patricia Marquardt合著《Healthy South Indian Cooking》的Alamelu Vairavan指出，南印度料理則相對較為清淡，而且更健康。她說：「南印度菜只使用少量的清淡食用油，不像許多印度餐廳喜歡大量使用牛油和忌廉。為免營養流失和確保菜色翠綠，南印度的廚師較少白灼或清蒸菜類，而是直接烹調新鮮蔬菜以保持爽脆，並以香料替代鹽。南印度料理中更常見含豐富纖維和蛋白質的扁豆，它比動物類蛋白質更容易消化。」

南印度料理以蔬菜、瘦肉、魚類、豆類和米飯為主，菜式變化多端，絕不沉悶。Vairavan說：「只要配合不同香料及香料粉，即使單是烹煮椰菜花也能炮製出不同的風味，烹調手法相當多變。」南印度菜的調味比北印度菜更為溫和。她指出：「一般人誤會印度菜一定又香又辣，嗜辣的人當然可以選擇香辣菜式，但印度菜中也有味道較為溫和的菜餚，端視廚師如何烹調。」

FLY WITH US
港龍航程

Dragonair flies daily to Bengaluru

港龍航空每日均有航機飛往班加羅爾

Deep-fried prawns with curry leaves at Bengaluru's Dakshin restaurant (right); an array of Indian spices (left)

班加羅爾Dakshin餐廳的咖哩葉炸大蝦(右圖)令人食指大動；還有當地目不暇給的香料(左頁)

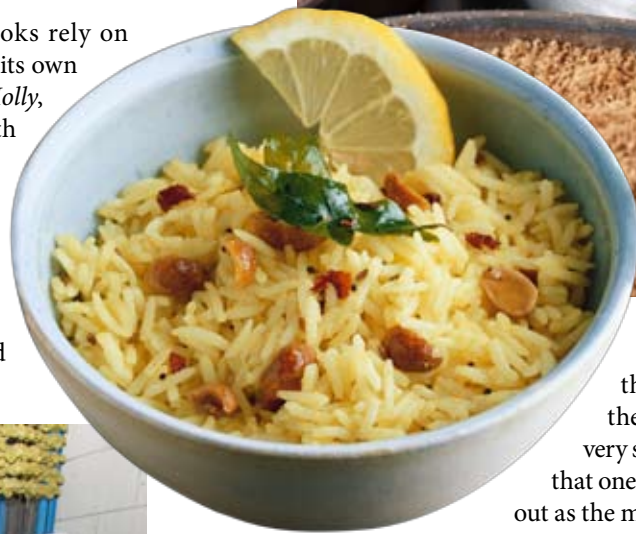


FLY INDIA 遨遊印度

While wheat-based chapatis will show up on South Indian menus, it is rice – whether cooked in a clay pot, on top of the stove or in a modern rice cooker – that's the basis of most meals. Lunch might be plain rice but for special occasions South Indian cooks prepare a variety of uniquely flavoured rice dishes such as lemon rice, tamarind rice, tomato rice and a variety of vegetable, chicken and mutton biryani rice dishes.

Many fans of South Indian food would probably say that breakfast is their favourite meal. This might consist of a multigrain pancake (*adai*), a delicate dish called *idiyappam*, a sweet crepe called *appam* served with coconut milk infused with saffron and cardamom, and fluffy dumplings called *kuzhi paniyaram*. There are *dosai*, paper-thin pancakes that puff up spectacularly; *vada*, a kind of doughnut made from lentil-based flour; and *idli*, a soft steamed rice cake. Chutneys are often served with breakfast and are always made fresh but never sweet. They usually include coconut and might be made from a combination of herbs such as coriander and mint.

Coastal South Indian cooks rely on seafood and each region has its own variations and techniques. *Molly*, for instance, is a popular south Indian Kerala-style fish dish, says chef Naren Thimmaiah of Karavalli restaurant in Bengaluru. “If I had to think of three iconic South Indian dishes, they would be *fish molly*, *Chettinad chicken* and



Spices used in South Indian cuisine (top) are infused with oil to bring out their aroma and flavour. Lemon rice (above) is a favourite dish for special occasions

廚師將南印度菜常見的香料(最上圖)過油爆香,帶出其香氣及味道。檸檬飯(上圖)是印度人在特別節日愛吃的菜餚

Bengaluru residents (left) have plenty of dishes to choose from

班加羅爾的市民(左圖)可選擇享用多款南印度美食



the humble *sambhar*,” he says. “In all these dishes, the balance of flavours is very subtle and work together to make sure that one particular ingredient or taste stands out as the main flavour.”

The ancient practice of Ayurvedic medicine plays a role in Indian cuisine, especially in achieving the balance of the six flavours: sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent and astringent. A number of South Indian dishes are fermented overnight, not just to make them lighter on the stomach but also to promote the probiotic beneficial bacteria that aid digestion. Even the seasonings are good for you.

Vairavan points out that coriander seeds were once used by Chinese doctors to treat all kinds of digestive problems. Fennel and cumin seeds, often served after a meal, are antioxidants that aid digestion. Turmeric is an antioxidant, anti-cancerous, anti-inflammatory substance that is believed to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease. Chilli peppers are powerful antioxidants and contain, gram for gram, at least twice as much vitamin C as oranges. “Chilli peppers do not aggravate and may even help those with ulcers and gastro-intestinal problems,” says Vairavan.

Photos: Spices: Foodfolio/the food passionates/Corbis. Eatery: K. Gopinathan Bangalore - The Hindu Images



Dosai with coconut, ginger and green chilli chutney

配搭椰子、薑及綠辣椒chutney醬的Dosai薄餅

Photos: Dosai: William Meppem - ACP Syndication. Lemon rice: StockFood/OTHK

Vairavan表示,印度南方四邦,以及邦內操不同方言的居民調配香料和調味的手法不盡相同,但烹調技巧卻大同小異。首先,廚師會將香料種籽用少量油爆香,將香氣及味道逼出來,再加入其他食材翻炒。Vairavan說南印度菜五花八門:「印度料理中的素菜種類繁多,例如炒蔬菜poriyal,以及加入扁豆、醬汁較為濃郁的kootu。另外還有以扁豆煮成的美味sambhar醬汁,它除了是早餐的配菜,若搭配米飯即變成營養豐富的正餐。」

以全麥製成的chapatis薄餅是南印度的主食之一,但以陶磚、爐灶或電飯煲煮成的米飯也是常見的主食。當地人通常會在午餐時享用白飯;於特別節日,廚師們則會加入檸檬、羅望子或番茄,煮成風味獨特的米飯,或烹調加入蔬菜、雞肉及羊肉的香料飯。

許多喜歡南印度菜的人會不約而同地表示,早餐是他們的最愛。於南印度最常見的早餐菜式包括:多穀物薄餅adai、幼細的麵條idiyappam、佐以混入番紅花和荳蔻的椰汁甜薄餅appam,以及鬆軟的糰子kuzhi paniyaram。另外還有遇熱膨脹的dosai薄餅、以扁豆粉製成的vada冬甩和軟綿綿的蒸米糕

idli。早餐桌上常見的,還有不含甜味、新鮮調配的chutney醬;這些chutney醬大多以椰子配搭芫荽和薄荷等香料製成。

南印度沿海的廚師常以海鮮入饌,各地均有以不同方式烹調的獨特菜式。班加羅爾的Karavalli餐廳主廚Naren Thimmaiah指出,咖喱魚molly是備受歡迎的南印度佳餚。他說:「若要舉出三道最具代表性的南印度菜,非molly咖喱魚、Chettinad辣雞肉和sambhar醬汁莫屬。這三道菜式均衡調和食材的滋味,突顯食材的原來特色。」

古印度的阿育吠陀醫學,對講求甜、鹹、酸、苦、辣、澀六味均衡的印度料理影響至深。許多南印度菜均需要隔夜發酵後才烹調,這種做法有助減輕腸胃負擔,促進益生菌形成以幫助消化,即使是調味料亦對身體有益。

Vairavan指出,昔日中醫喜以芫荽籽治療消化不良。常於餐後食用的小茴香及孜然則幫助消化及抗氧化。黃薑具抗氧化、防癌及消炎效果,能減低患上阿茲海默症的機會。辣椒也是強效抗氧化食物,每克辣椒所含的維他命C比橙高出一倍。Vairavan補充道:「辣椒不刺激腸胃,且有助治療潰瘍及腸道問題。」■

SOUTH INDIAN RESTAURANTS IN BENGALURU 班加羅爾南印度菜餐廳

Dakshin

Located at the ITC Windsor hotel, this restaurant serves regional food from across South India. From the chef's trolley enjoy delicious *appams* (sweet crepes) made right at your table.

www.itcwelcomgroup.in

Karavalli

This 20-year old restaurant at The Gateway Hotel is known for its coastal seafood dishes.

www.thegatewayhotels.com

Mavalli Tiffin Rooms

Customers queue for delicious food at this institution in Bengaluru, known for its Sunday brunches and daily breakfasts.

www.mavallitiffinrooms.com

South Indies

This stand-alone brand focuses on regional cuisine from the four South Indian states.

www.thesouthindies.com

Dakshin

餐廳位於班加羅爾ITC Windsor酒店內,提供各式南印度佳餚。廚師於食客面前即席烹調的甜味薄餅appam值得一試。

www.itcwelcomgroup.in

Karavalli

這間位於The Gateway Hotel的餐廳已開業20年,以南印度海鮮菜式馳名。

www.thegatewayhotels.com

Mavalli Tiffin Rooms

這家吸引饕客排隊入席的班加羅爾著名食府,其周日早午餐和每日提供的早餐聞名遐邇。

www.mavallitiffinrooms.com

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www.thesouthindies.com