

MENU ITEMS OF INDIA

Eric Pederson

When they hear that I conduct fieldwork in India, Europeans and Americans ask one question without fail: "What's the food like there?" Not surprisingly, this is also the most popular question Indians ask me about Europe and America.

The short answer to the question about India is "wonderful". A longer answer quickly becomes complex. There's North Indian food and there's South Indian food. These are roughly as similar as the foods of Northern and Southern Europe. Each of these comes in as many varieties as you would expect in a country with a billion people speaking hundreds of languages.

Most prominently for the traveler to India, there is Restaurant Indian food. This food is roughly the same everywhere in the world and often bears little relationship to what local folk actually eat in their homes. In cities, restaurants will offer (in order of sharply decreasing palatability): a standard canon of generic Northern Indian food; a standard canon of Chinese dishes of uncertain origin; and a standard canon of "continental" cookery which was learned during the British occupation.

As mouth watering as these can be, often the best thing about restaurant food in India is reading about it.

I'll explain... There are two basic rules for any Indian eatery aspiring to be a restaurant: i) A restaurant needs a menu and ii) the menu needs to be in English. This second rule is true even if no one working in the restaurant speaks a word of English. It is true even if you are the first customer in 15 years who knows English. And most critically, it is true even if the person creating the menu cannot read or write in English.

Over the years, I have been collecting items from menus across India. In the early- to mid-1980's finding a choice typographic blooper was scarcely a challenge. With the increasing spread of English literacy and a growing sophistication of the dining public, the properly mangled menu item has become an endangered species.

The selection of menu items below are all strictly [sic]:

For Break Fast:

Cornflackles

--Bambino, Jaipur

Fried Egos

--Hotel Tamil Nadu, Thanjavur

Omlette Rs. 2.50

Omlette with slice Rs. 3.00

--Frontier Prem Dhaba, Kullu

2 Eggs fluffy Omelet

Filled with cheese or masala or sewed with waffer chips

--Hotel Tamil Nadu, Madurai

Light eats and Snakes:

Wafer

--Hotel Guru Deluxe, Aurangabad

Slami Sandwich

--Hackmen's, Palika Bazaar, New Delhi

Sp. Bob Marly SandWitch with fries

--Chai stand, Vashist

French Fires

--Taj Garden Retreat, Madurai

Sick Kabab (Per Palet)

Batter

Brain Fried

--Kake-Da-Hotel, Jodhpur

Boots

Smashed Potato

Smashed with Egg

Muscles Massala

Banana Fitter

--My Dream Rest., Kovalam Beach

Cheese O Pizza

Chicken Mshroom Bambooshot

--Mayur, Manali

Colt Pork Salad

--The Oriental Snowland Restaurant, Kodaikanaal

Greed Salad

-- Shilpashrii, Mysore

Soups:

Mini Stone soup

--The Guru, Madurai

Wanton Soup

--Hotel Tibet, McLeod Ganh

Elchico ala mix soup

--Elchico, Varanasi

Sweat Corn. Soup

Neg Soup

--Eagle Garden Bar and Rest., Hospet

Vegetarian?:

Green Peace Masale

--Eagle Garden Bar and Rest., Hospet

Non-veg:

Etalinspakti

Greeld Fish

--Kovalam Beach

Chicken Steak InfraRed

-- Pahalgam, Kashmir

Chilly Chicken boonless

Elchico special bomb

(Minced chicken special stuffs, butter and cream inside)

Supreme with capital

(Fillet of chicken special stuffs fresh butter and cream inside)

--Elchico, Varanasi

Chicken Prawn Chow Rice

(Slice chicken, prawn fried and cooked with rice and vegetable)

Chicken Fried Spring

(Deep fried chicken coated with fluffy oil and fried to a rich golden brown)

Chicken or Mutton Sukiyaki

(Tender slice chicken or mutton sukiyaki seasoned vegetable, noodles, beancured, in the centre, raw egg served with exciting boiling hot in a flat oven on the tables)

Chinese Chopsuey

(Home made noodles fried golden brown crisp, with assorted prawn vegetable and covered by fried egg pieces)

--Hotel Tibet, McLeod Ganj

Finish Fried With Cheeps

Tandoori Half Boneless

Sizzler Chicken Antique

Mushroom Noodles with Bamboo shoot

--Pinky International Rest. and Beer Bar, Aurangabad

Chicken Qurma with cashew and cream

--Nabjee's Alsabha Rest., Pahalgam

Chicken Drums of Heaven

--Park Lane Hotel, Mysore

Sliced Fish

--Chinese restaurant, Bangalore

Desert:

Mixed Feeling (a creamee caramel)

Chocolate Froz

--Summer Home Ice Cream, Trichy

Resin Cream Cake

--Om Restaurant, McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala

Drinks:

Pinapple Passin

--Spencer's Fiesta Restaurant, Madras

Chillied Fruit Juice

--Shah Jahan, Agra

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Of course, you need not go to India to find such culinary fantasies yourselves. For example, at the Sultan Pizza Grillhouse in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, you could enjoy the “Ooo!! Mamma Mia! - a supersonic mixed dessert voor twee personen met foto”.

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