

FOOD HERITAGE OF RAJASTHAN



Editor
PEEYUSH BHADVIYA



INTACH
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Dal-Baati-Churma : Signature Rajasthan's Delicacy

Peeyush Bhadviya

Rajsthani cuisine elegantly defines its cultures, climate and tradition. Among the various mouth-watering items, dal-baati -churma is an authentic Rajsthani dish, which is loved and adored by the locals, and the tourists alike. It is popular in marriages, religious rituals, picnics and other feasts.

It is believed that the dish originated during the reign of Bappa Rawal, the founder of the Mewar Kingdom in Rajasthan. Baati evolved as a war time meal. It is said that during the time of battle, the Rajput leaders used to leave the chunked dough buried in the sand before going into combat. By the time they returned the scorching heat of the sun used to turn them into baked chunks. Baatis were dug and consumed along with curd or buttermilk. The elements of panchmel dal and churma were added to the dish later.

Churma was invented by a sheer chance when a chef from Gahlot clan of Mewar accidentally poured sugarcane juice on the baatis. It made people realise that the sweet water softened the baatis and when crushed evolved into churma.¹

In the beginning, making of baati did not require any utensil, and the dough could be prepared on cloth with dung cake being used as fuel to cook. Semi baked balls were deep pressed in the hot ash of dung cake to get fully baked baati. The same fuel was used for making dal. Since Baati used to take much time for digestion, they delayed the next meal, and hence were more useful during wartime. When the meal was over, the remaining baati would be crushed and

sugar would be added to it on the same plates to make churma.

There are other variations of baati like baafra baati and bharwa baati.

Baafra Baati: It is made by combining wheat flour and maize flour along with ajwain, turmeric and salt. Instead of kneading the dough with just water, it is prepared with ghee as an additional ingredient. This gives the baafra dough a soft and smooth texture with each grain mixed well into the batter. Baafra dough is boiled in water first and then it is cooked until it begins to float on water. It is then grilled at the appropriate temperature in the oven. Boiled Baafra dough can be fried in ghee to make fried baati.²

Bharwa Baati: It is made by preparing a mixture of potato and peas and stuffing it into the wheat balls, taking a round shape. It is then baked either on dung cake similar to simple baati or put in the oven to cook.³

The dal is cooked as it is traditionally prepared at home, with the tadka comprising a generous portion of ghee in it. Lentils used in the dal could vary from region to region. In the earlier days one would use the dal growing near their villages. The pulses or lentils are cooked together after being soaked in water for a few hours. First, a small amount of vegetable oil is heated in a frying pan and then the seasoning of mustard seeds and cumin seeds is added into the hot cooking medium. Then green chilli, garlic and some spices including asafoetida, red chilli, turmeric, coriander, ginger, etc. are added. Finally, the boiled dal is added to it and cooked by simmering on the fire. Panch dal ke mel (mix of five dal) is quite popular in the contemporary times.

There are many variations in the churma too. Some people add rose, orange or other flavours to it.⁴

Pilgrims, merchants and soldiers used bajra, wheat or maize for making baati. They would make the balls with millet and smoke these over fire, which was made with wood foraged by the man in the group. Ghee would be added after the baati was crushed and mixed with dal. This format

made it a one dish meal which was convenient to eat while traveling as one did not need to many utensils. Churma can also be made of bajra and maize baati.⁵

In present times this dish has become the signature delicacy of Rajasthan which is liked equally by local people and tourists. Its preparation is easy, and the cost is within the budget of common people. There are many restaurants who list this delicacy as their speciality.

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