What India Wants to Eat?

MORE THAN FOOD
Newsletter Edition 3

France
Wild Heirloom Tomatoes
Netherlands
Olive Taggiasche Liguri, PGI
Crostini
MAKE YOUR NEXT MEAL
MORE THAN FOOD
ENJOY IT'S FROM EUROPE

Dear Readers,

India has always been a food lover's delight – a melting pot of cuisines that not only cater to distinct, diverse tastes but can also, if needed, blend into or complement each other beautifully. As Indians increasingly get exposed to international cultures, our food preferences are evolving too. European foods, especially, are becoming popular among Indians from both a cooking and a dining standpoint. It's not just about food; it's also about embracing new cultures and enriching our lifestyles with what's healthy, novel, and aspirational.

There's also a conscious shift towards healthier eating options and a growing preference for products that come with the assurance of safety, quality, authenticity, and sustainability. This is precisely what makes European Union (EU) products such a great choice for Indian consumers and the F&B industry alike.

In this edition of our newsletter, we shall explore 'What India Wants to Eat' and how European foods fit into the dining, cooking, and business trends of our times. To elaborate on these points, we have **Chef Ajay Chopra**, who is the official campaign ambassador of the 'More Than Food' campaign in India. Ajay is renowned for his unconventional approach to cooking and for using ingredients from different international cuisines to create dishes that appeal to the Indian palate. We are also joined by **Amit Lohani**, CEO and Founder of Max Inc. and Founding Director of Forum of Indian Food Importers. Amit's experience in the import-export domain gives him an eagle-eye view of consumption trends and what drives them.

Read on!

Chef Ajay Chopra shares his views on the increasing influence and seamless integration of European ingredients into Indian cooking. While he advocates taking a contemporary take on traditional recipes, he warns that the key is not merely to use European ingredients for the sake of it, but to select them thoughtfully so as to create a harmonious fusion of flavours

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Can you share some insights into current trends on what Indians like to eat?

Indian eating preferences are diverse, with a notable inclination towards fusing regional cuisines with global flavours. While traditional Indian dishes remain popular, there's growing interest in experimenting with international ingredients and cooking styles. It is becoming increasingly common to see Greek extra-virgin olive oil, Havarti cheese PGI from Denmark, Feta Cheese PDO from Greece, Spanish jalapeños, and other European products in Indian kitchens. The concept of grazing boards is becoming very common in Indian households, with many people putting out cheese and charcuterie boards for family gatherings, parties, high-teas, and dinners. Mozzarella cheese, olive oil, and Italian balsamic vinegar have gained huge popularity in Indian cuisine in recent years. Looking ahead, I believe Gouda cheese, pesto sauce, and Spanish chorizo, too, could become household favourites.

What are your thoughts on fusion cuisine in India from the perspectives of popularity and health?

The popularity of fusion cuisine in India reflects a dynamic culinary landscape that embraces creativity and innovation. Blending European influences into traditional Indian dishes has become a widespread trend. Whether it's incorporating Italian herbs into Indian curries or using French techniques to prepare Indian desserts, fusion cuisine opens up a world of possibilities for chefs and home cooks alike. For health-conscious consumers, one can combine European ingredients with Indian superfoods to create nutritious and flavourful disheswithout compromising on any dietary goals.

The use of European ingredients such as olive oil, cheese, and herbs has already seamlessly integrated into Indian cooking. European cheeses such as feta, mozzarella, and parmesan have found their way into Indian cuisine, adding richness and depth of flavour to dishes like paneer tikka, stuffed parathas, and fusion pizzas. These creative adaptations elevate the taste and texture of Indian cuisine to make your everyday meals 'More Than Food'

How can one incorporate European ingredients into everyday Indian cooking?

Home cooks can easily incorporate European ingredients into everyday dishes by experimenting with recipes and flavours. They can start by substituting everyday ingredients such as vegetable oil with European alternatives such as olive oil, and gradually adjusting the combinations and proportions to suit their tastes. Or experimenting with European foods with Indian ingredients, for example, I recently made Arancini Balls spiced with Jeeravan Masala, and it was a massive hit! However, one must remember the flavour profile and purpose of each ingredient, so as to not create confusion in the name of fusion.

Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)

What are the benefits of using EU products, in terms of quality and the cooking/dining experience?

European ingredients enhance the cooking and dining experiences in terms of safety, quality, novelty, and taste. From the richness of French butter to the tanginess of Greek yogurt, EU products are a collection of flavours that can elevate any dish from the usual to extraordinary. EU products are also known for their authenticity, and superior quality, with many of them bearing Geographical indication (GI) labels such as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), testament to the intricate connections between the products and their place of origins. The EU sets high standards for production, processing, and packaging and follows sustainable farming practices, which means that your food is not only healthy and tasty but alsobut also responsibly sourced.

Are there any misconceptions about European ingredients that you'd like to address?

A common misconception is that European ingredients are expensive and inaccessible. However, with the availability of imported products in supermarkets and online platforms, incorporating European flavours into everyday cooking has become more convenient and affordable than ever before.

We chat up next with CEO and Founder of Max Inc. and Founding Director of Forum of Indian Food Importers **Amit Lohani,** who shares his views on the European ingredients he thinks will rule the roost in the coming years. Amit believes that the evolving food preferences of Indians are reflective of a broader lifestyle and behavioural change, stemming from wider international exposure and a sharper focus on well-being and sustainability.

What is driving Indian consumers' preferences for European ingredients?

The growing demand for international foods, especially European, is fuelled by exposure to global food trends through travel, social media platforms, and international food shows. Indians are also using European ingredients to recreate traditional dishes. Consumers are seeking out high-quality, sustainably sourced European ingredients, which are known for their quality. Certain segments of consumers are willing to pay a premium for imported European ingredients as a symbol of status and sophistication. Consumers are also becoming increasingly aware of geographical indication GI labels and what they mean, hence seeking certain PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) cheeses or meats for a truly authentic eating experience.

Are there any specific factors that influence the demand for European food ingredients – why customers would prefer an EU product over others?

The purchase of international goods is primarily based on convenience and lifestyle trends. Products originating from EU member states are associated with excellent taste and adherence to strict quality standards, which resonate well with discerning customers. Moreover, EU products are perceived as exotic and prestigious, which heightens their appeal. There's a niche segment of Indian consumers who appreciate the quality and authenticity of EU products. Moreover, Europe has centuries-old culinary traditions and regional specialties that resonate with the fondness that Indians have for traditional cooking methods.

Which EU products or product categories are seeing high demand from Indian consumers?

Dairy products such as cheeses are sought after for their distinct flavours. Chocolates, especially premium brands, are highly popular among Indians. Olive oil, known for its versatility, is in demand as a health-conscious alternative to traditional cooking oils. Wines from European regions are also gaining traction, as are specialty flours. Looking ahead, I believe we would be seeing the rising interest of other EU products - Feta cheese, varieties of olives , and Spanish cured meats for example. These are just a few of the future favourites.

What are the criteria or considerations when you select European food products for your business?

As a business, our selection process is primarily guided by a commitment to offering high-quality, authentic food products that meet the needs and preferences of our customers. Indian consumers want to do information-based shopping and seek safe, premium, and readily available food products. All our criteria – quality, authenticity, brand reputation, innovation, health and wellness, sustainability, and consistency in supply – are reflective of what consumers want. European ingredients satisfy all these criteria – they adhere to stringent EU regulations for safety and quality; are traceable to their origins; come in many varieties; have great taste; and are sustainably produced.

Are there any behavioural/lifestyle shifts that the evolving consumer preferences point to?

I think the trends we're witnessing in food preferences revolve around a heightened emphasis on health and wellness with urban consumers actively seeking organic and authentic ingredients. Buying preferences among consumers reflect a strong focus on conscious eating and sustainable cooking practices and are often driven by a growing awareness of international food trends. Indian consumers today, much like their global counterparts, are well-informed and use the wealth of available information to make informed purchasing decisions that align with their lifestyle preferences and personal values.

Did You Know?

In olden days, Greeks and Romans used rosemary wreaths around their heads because they believed it had the power to enhance energy and memory. During weddings, the bride and the groom would wear a rosemary crown to seal the memory of their sacred vows.[1]

Contrary to popular belief, croissants originated not in France but in Vienna, Austria. This buttery pastry that people around the world have come to cherish was inspired by the Austrian kipferl.

Fish and chips is originally a Portuguese concept. Only white fish would be fried in a thin coat of flour, but when the potato became popular in the 1800s, it made the perfect accompaniment with the fish.[2]

European-style butter has a higher percentage of butterfat (82-90%) than American-style butter (80%). This seemingly small difference greatly enhances the flavors and textures of the dish.[3]

Balsamic vinegar contains no balsam. The word 'balsamico' means balsam-like in a 'restorative' or 'curative' sense. For centuries in Italy, grapes were aged for decades in wooden barrels and the resulting vinegars were called balsamic vinegars.[4]

Roquefort PDO is one of the oldest known cheeses to man, and in France it is called *le fromage des rois et des papes* (the cheese of kings and popes).[5]

1.https://www.anticorestaurant.com/fun-facts-herbs/#:~:text=Italy%20has%20a%20huge%20variety,%2C%20thyme%2C%20oregano%2C%20rosemary.
2.https://www.cda.co.uk/blog/foodie-facts-surprising-food-origins/
3.https://www.tastingtable.com/1356517/facts-know-european-butter/
4.https://bellabalsamic.net/interesting-extra-virgin-olive-oil-facts/
5.https://www.britannica.com/topic/Roquefort

What's Been Cooking?

Masterclass in association with Guru Nanak Institute of Hotel Management (GNIHM) Kolkata

EU recently successfully hosted a second culinary masterclass at Guru Nanak Institute of Hotel Management (GNIHM) Kolkata with More Than Food Ambassador, Chef Ajay Chopra.
The masterclass aimed to introduce and promote the integration of EU products into Indian cuisine and sought to motivate aspiring chefs and other HORECA professionals at GNIHM Kolkata to open themselves to play with EU ingredients. Read more about it here.

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EU Pavilion at AAHAR 2024

As a strong supporter of quality and authenticity, the EU participated in AAHAR 2024, India's leading B2B event for the food and hospitality industry. From March 7th to March 11th, the EU unveiled its unwavering commitment to sourcing the finest European foods and beverages for the ever-growing Indian market. During the event, there were displays of chocolates from Ireland, Danablu PGI from Denmark, green olives from Spain, Prosciutto di Parma PDO from Italy, fruit spreads from Austria and Poland, and grape drink from France. Those who visited the EU Pavilion at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan in Delhi, witnessed the essence of European excellence firsthand. Find out more details here.

Upcoming Networking Event – Zero Waste Kitchen

Sustainability being a fundamental pillar of the European culinary industry, the EU in collaboration with brand ambassador Guntas Sethi, a strong advocate for sustainable cuisine, will be hosting a luncheon event on April 26th in Mumbai for members from the importers, retailers, the HORECA community who share a passion for the cause.

Zero Waste Kitchen: Where Sustainability Meets Flavour - Playing on conscious eating trends such as 'trash treasuring' and 'leftover stretching', the event will showcase creative applications of these concepts using various food and beverage products from the EU. You can read in more detail about it here.

To know more about the campaign and our events, **Follow us online.**

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Find out more information on our website **More than food India (europa.eu)**

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