

# FOOD MEMORIES OF MIGRANT WOMEN

Mumbai Mobile Creches



# FOREWORD

India's construction industry depends upon migrant workers who have moved from rural to urban areas, alone or with their families, each looking for better opportunities and a more sustainable livelihood. The wives who accompany them are likely to work as well, at the construction site or elsewhere, leaving their children to fend for themselves during the day. With migration, many of these women leave behind the secrets of their regional cuisine, carrying only the memories associated with their food with them. Sadly, their stories often remain untold and unwritten. Mumbai Mobile Creches (MMC) intends to bring some of these food memories alive and capture the wonderful, culinary heritage through a compilation of treasured recipes.

MMC is a four decade old non- profit organisation, and was founded in 1972 with the belief that all children have the right to a safe, happy and healthy childhood. Its mission is to cater to the needs of those children living on constructions sites, aged between 0 to 14 years, by running day care centres on - site that facilitate the comprehensive development of each child. We continue to be the only NGO in Mumbai working with these migrant children, and have been implementing comprehensive on-site education and healthcare programmes for the past four decades.

Currently, the children at our day care centres hail from over 15 different states in India, reflecting the regional diversity of the migrant construction workers' community. We wish to capture this cultural multiplicity, and the migrant perspective, through documentation of several regional recipes from across India. Through a series of personal recipes, narrated poignantly by the migrant women themselves, we wish to highlight the fascinating expanse of culinary traditions within India, and the importance of these traditions in preserving and celebrating each migrant family's cultural identity. Additionally, since MMC caters to the nutritional needs of each migrant child, we want to delve deeper into the routine dietary habits of each family, and encourage them to bring their traditional recipes to the fore and adapt them if necessary to their changed circumstances.

Our very first E Recipe Book would not have been possible without the pro-bono support of our friends and well-wishers. We would like to thank Ms. Reetha Balsavar and Ms. Sei Chong for providing ideas and helping us put the recipes together. We are also grateful to Ms. Miche Scott for her dedicated technical help and to Ms. Laura Halmes for her support. We believe that publishing these recipes will not only convey to our readers the culinary intricacies of various regions across India, but also provide a platform for the migrant women to share their incredible stories.







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**KALPANA NAGESH SIRSE**

Kalpana Nagesh Sirse comes from the Nirmal district of Telangana. A helper on a construction site in Mumbai, Kalpana offered the recipe for Aapal, which is a kind of puri (unleavened deep fried bread), which is eaten mainly during festivals, especially Sankranti, but Kalpana also makes it as a daily snack.

The cuisine of Telangana shares many similarities with the food in Andhra Pradesh, the state out of which it was carved in 2014. However, Telangana dishes are often not as spicy as the cuisine of Andhra Pradesh. Being more inland, Telangana cuisine has more of a focus on meat, such as lamb and chicken, than in other Indian regions closer to water bodies where fish or vegetarian food are preferred. Breads eaten in Telangana are often made with millet (baira) or sorghum (jowar), but Kalpana's Aapal is made with rice flour.

The last time Kalpana was at home, her mother made Aapal. Often the entire family - Kalpana's parents, brother and sister-in-law - gather to enjoy the snack. For Kalpana, the dish signifies her time with family, whom she misses now that she has moved to Mumbai.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 250 grams rice flour
- 4 - 5 cloves of garlic
- 3 - 4 green chilies
- 1/4 cup curry leaves
- 2 tsp coriander seeds
- 1/4 cup coriander leaves
- 1 tsp sesame seeds
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 cup hot water
- Pinch of aiwain/carom (bishop's weed) seeds
- Salt to taste

**SERVES 4 TO 5 PERSONS**

# AAPAL

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Pound garlic, chillies, curry leaves and coriander seeds with a mortar and pestle or use a grinder. Kalpana uses a mortar and an iron rod to pound the mixture.
- Combine the mixture with the rice flour in a large bowl, then add coriander leaves, sesame seeds, carom seeds and turmeric. Add salt to taste.
- Add hot water to the ingredients and mix with your hands to form a dough.
- To make puris, Kalpana uses an Aapal machine, a press that is akin to a roti maker. She uses it to flatten the dough into thin discs, making round puris. You can make thin discs about 8-10 cm in diameter.
- Heat oil in a pan and deep fry the puris until golden brown around the edges, about 2-3 minutes.
- It can be served hot or cold.
- It can also be eaten with sour dal cooked with raw mango or tamarind. It becomes more crisp after it cools.







# CHHOLAR DALER HALWA

**GULABSA TEHDUL SHEIKH**

## **INGREDIENTS**

- 250 grams of split chickpeas ( Chana Dal )
- 50 grams ghee
- 200 grams sugar
- 1 cup grated coconut
- 1 tsp cardamom powder
- 1/2 cup ground peanuts

Gulabsa Tehdul Sheikh, a homemaker migrated to Mumbai in February 2017 along with her family. A housewife who loves cooking, she hails from the Murshidabad district of West Bengal where sweets prominently figure in the cooking. The cuisine of Bengal is known for its subtle flavours and its spread of desserts. Sweets are deemed essential at any event in Bengal which may vary as per individual choice.

For Gulabsa, the making of Chholar Daler Halwa often coincides with Shab-e-Barat, the night of fortune and forgiveness, which is observed by Muslims. On this holy day, Muslims prepare this dessert, made of chickpeas, for their families and also share it with the poor.

Gulabsa said, " It reminds me of the time I spent with my siblings back in my native relishing this dish as well as gives me immense satisfaction to feed the needy and we all pray together as well."

**SERVES 5 TO 6 PERSONS**



# CHOLA DALER HALWA

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Boil split chickpeas after having soaked them 2 hours on medium flame until soft enough to mash. Drain, then mash the dal either in a mixer or with the help of mortar and pestle.
- Put the ghee in a pan on a flame and add the mashed Chana dal, mixing it continuously for 5-7 minutes.
- Add the grated coconut, peanuts, sugar and cardamom powder to the dal. Cook for another 10 minutes on low flame till the mixture becomes sticky. It is essential to keep stirring the mix or else it might stick to the bottom.
- Spread a small spoonful of ghee over a plate. Place the Chana dal mixture on top of it and flatten it into a circle with your hand until the disc is about 1.5 cm thick. Garnish it with grated coconut.
- Let the Halwa sit for 5-10 minutes, then cut into even pieces before serving.





# AMBADI BHAJI & JWARICHI BHAKRI (JOWAR BHAKRI)

**MONICA LAXMAN**

## **AMBADI BHAJI INGREDIENTS**

- 3 cups sorrel leaves ( Ambadi Bhaji )
- 1 cup split pigeon pea ( Tur Dal )
- 8 -10 cloves of garlic
- 6 -7 green chillies split horizontally
- 3 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1-1.5 tbsp oil
- Salt to taste

When asked what her favourite food is, Monica Laxman of the Mehboobnagar district of Telangana says that Ambadi Bhaji (a stew made with sorrel leaves) and sorghum wheat roti (jowar bhakri) are the first things that come to mind. Sorrel leaves, are common in Telangana, whose cuisine also relies on sorghum (jowar) as a staple crop.

This dish is for everyday meals. "My grandmother made it for me, and I learnt it from her." said Monica, who works as a domestic helper. "My husband thinks I make the best Ambadi bhaji he has ever eaten in his life. I enjoy making it for my family."

## **JOWAR BHAKRI INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups Sorghum flour (Jowar Atta)
- Water is required

**SERVES 2 TO 3 PERSONS**



# AMBADI BHAJI & JWARICHI BHAKRI (JOWAR BHAKRI)

## AMBADI BHAJI INSTRUCTIONS

- Rinse split pigeon peas (Tur Dal), drain the water and put in a vessel for cooking.
- Add enough water to cover the dal, add split green chilies and oil and bring it to a boil.
- Once the dal is half cooked, add the chopped sorrel leaves and let it cook for about 3-4 minutes. Then add turmeric powder.
- With a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic and cumin seeds together. Add to the dal mixture.
- Add salt to taste and turn down the heat to let the dal simmer until it is soft and cooked completely.
- Turn off the heat. While the cooked dal is hot, mash it with the end of a thick wooden spoon/ladle or anything with a flat, wide surface until it turns into a paste.
- Serve hot with Jowar bhakri.





# AMBADI BHAJI & JWARICHI BHAKRI (JOWAR BHAKRI)

## JOWAR BHAKRI INSTRUCTIONS

- Put Jowar atta in a vessel with a rim, then add water gradually until it comes together as a dough.
- Knead the dough until it is smooth.
- Make 2-inch balls, then dust some flour onto the rolling board or a big plate.
- With your palms, lightly press the dough into a very thin disk (Bhakri). Be sure to rotate the bhakri while pressing. Add flour if the dough sticks to your hands.
- Make round bhakri 15-18 cms in diameter.
- Place the bhakri on a hot tava ( grill or pan ) and spread a little water all over the bhakri with your fingers.
- Let the bottom of the bhakri cook, and flip it once you see brown spots on the bottom.
- When you see black or brown spots on both sides of the bhakri, turn the heat off.
- Serve hot with the ambadi bhaji.





### DHIRDE INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups wheat flour
- 1 cup water
- Salt as needed

### CHUTNEY INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup raw peanuts
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- 2 tbsp water
- Salt as needed

### SUGAR SYRUP INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 4-5 pods cardamom, seeds only
- 1 tsp oil

**SERVES 4 PEOPLE**

Jyotsna Parmeshwar Surase, who is from the Yavatmal district of Maharashtra state, offers her recipe for a flatbread called Dhirde, which is the Marathi word for "dosa". Grains like wheat, rice, jowar (sorghum), and bajra (pearl millet) are staples of Maharashtrian cuisine, as are lentils, vegetables and fruits. Maharashtrian food differs in coastal areas (Konkani cuisine) and the interior areas such as Vidarbha (Varadi cuisine). Flatbreads of some sort are served with all or most meals. Dhirde is usually prepared during Paush, the 10th month of the traditional Marathi calendar. Paush starts in December and ends on January 14 on Makar Sankranti, the harvest festival. During Paush, women fast for five Sundays and break their fast by eating Dhirde.

Jyotsna also makes the dish whenever her son asks for it. "I like preparing it for him," she says.

She remembers how her grandmother always made the snack whenever she and her family visited. "This reminds me of her, and I miss her a lot now that we are in Mumbai and seldom get to see her," Jyotsna says. "Dhirde is usually enjoyed with sugarcane syrup, and my grandmother used to prepare it in the morning before we reached her house so that we could eat it as soon as we arrived."



# DHIRDE

## DHIRDE INSTRUCTIONS

- Add water to flour and mix until it is free of lumps and the batter is runny.
- Add one teaspoon salt to the batter, mix then taste the batter. Add more salt if necessary.
- Heat oil in a pan and add the batter in a thin, even circle, Jyotsna scoops up a handful of batter and steadily forms a circle by letting the batter fall from her fingers in threads.
- When the bottom is golden brown, flip the Dhirde and cook until the other side is golden brown as well.





# DHIRDE

## CHUTNEY INSTRUCTIONS

- Roast peanuts till they change colour, finely grind them and set aside
- In a pan, add water and chilli powder and a teaspoon of salt
- Once the water starts to boil, add the ground peanuts and mix till a paste is formed.
- Taste and add salt if more is required.
- Turn the heat off and serve the chutney with Dhirde



# DHIRDE

## SUGAR SYRUP INSTRUCTIONS

- Add sugar to water in a vessel
- Heat a pan, add oil and cardamom seeds
- Once cardamom seeds start crackling, add the sugar mix and heat till sugar melts completely.
- Once the mixture start to darken, turn off the heat and serve it hot with Dhirde







### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups of rice flour
- 1 cup jaggery
- 1 cup grated coconut
- 1/2 cup peanuts
- 5-6 pods cardamom, hulls and seeds separated, seeds pounded with mortar and pestle
- Oil for frying
- 1 cup water or enough to dissolve jaggery

**SERVES 4 TO 5 PERSONS**

Jamuna Gangu Yadav, a cleaner and head load worker at a construction site is from the Mungeli district of Chhattisgarh. Wheat, Sorghum (jowar) and Maize (Makka) are staples in Chhattisgarh along with rice. In fact, Chhattisgarh is known as India's Rice Bowl.

The cuisine in Chhattisgarh features lentils and green leafy vegetables. The food is generally less spicy than other regions of India.

The people of Chhattisgarh also love their sweets and Jamuna and her family are no exception. Jamuna's recipe for Edasa, a fried sweet snack, is made of rice flour. Edasa reminds her of the time when her entire family would gather during Holi and Navratri in her home district of Mungeli in Chhattisgarh state. "Enjoying this dish with my family, especially my parents, my husband, and children, gives me great joy", she said. "I absolutely love making it for them and eating it with them."

Apart from festivals, it is perfect as a snack while travelling. When Jamuna moved to Mumbai with her family, she made a batch of Edasa for the long journey. "The best part of the dish is that it won't spoil for a few days, even without refrigeration," she said.



# EDASA

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Place jaggery in a vessel and add enough water to just cover the jaggery. Heat the liquid in a pot until it boils and the jaggery completely melts. Once the liquid turns into a thick syrup, take the pot off the heat. The syrup has to have one thread consistency.
- Roast peanuts in a pan and then pound them with mortar and pestle into small bits and roughly chop them.
- Add rice flour half a cup at a time to the jaggery syrup and mix with a spoon until all lumps are gone.
- Add the cardamom pods, peanuts and grated coconut and mix.
- Take about half a cup of the mixture and use your hands to shape into an oval disc.
- Deep fry until golden brown and serve hot, but it can also be eaten cold as well.





### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups wheat (whole grains)
- 4 cups water
- 1 cup jaggery
- 1 cup grated dried coconut
- 3-4 pounded cardamom pods
- 1-2 tbsp ghee

**SERVES 4 TO 5 PERSONS**

Whole wheat pudding, used to be a luxury afforded only during Nag Panchami, the traditional worship of snakes, or Diwali, the festival of lights, says Kashibai Ambarai Kamble, who is from the Gulbarga district of Karnataka.

"We used to work in others' fields, and whenever the owner had leftovers of wheat grains, he used to give them to us and we made kheer during festivals," she says. But for the last 30-40 years when she and her family have been in Mumbai, they can afford to make it whenever they want. The cuisine of her native region, which is in northern Karnataka, shares some similarities with the dishes of the neighbouring state of Maharashtra, where this dessert is called Gau Kheer. The primary grains in northern Karnataka are sorghum and rice, while the south uses mainly ragi (finger millet) and rice. Rice features predominantly in Karnataka dishes, such as in dosas. The state's cuisine comprises a wide variety of regional cooking styles, including Udupi, Malnadu, Kodagu and Mangalorean.

Kashibai says she learned to make this whole wheat porridge from her mother-in-law. "My daughter and I now cook it together and it reminds us of our time in village," she says. "We have faced many challenges before we came to Mumbai, and this only reminds us of how we struggled to get here and give a good life to our children."



# HUGGI

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Pressure cook the wheat berries with water for at least half an hour till the grain is completely cooked, or boil for two hours on a stove. The wheat has to be soft when mashed with hand.
- Once cooked, place the pot over medium heat. Add jaggery and keep stirring the mixture till the jaggery completely dissolves.
- Once this mixture comes to a boil, add grated coconut, pounded cardamom seeds and ghee to mix.
- Cook for another 10 minutes and serve hot.









# GULGULA

**SIRMANI KANDULNE**

Sirmani Kandulne, a domestic help living on a construction site in Mumbai hails from the Simdega district of Jharkhand, finds that she craves Gulgula, a sweet fritter with fennel seeds, now that she is expecting a child. "This is my favourite and it's easy to make," she said. "Back in my village, I enjoyed eating it with my in-laws." In fact, her mother-in-law was the one to teach her how to make the snack.

Gulgula is often made during Christmas and New Year, but it's also eaten as a snack all year around. The recipe is so simple that it's easy to make a big batch.

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups wheat flour ( atta )
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tbsp fennel seeds
- Oil for frying
- Water

**SERVES 3 TO 4 PERSONS**



# GULGULA

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Put the wheat flour in a vessel and add sugar and fennel seeds.
- Add water to the mixture and mix with your hands until the dough is lump free and thick and sticky.
- In a kasha/deep pot or wok, add about 3 inches oil and heat the pot. To test if the oil is hot enough, take a tiny bit of the dough and put it in the oil. If the dough immediately floats to the top, the oil is ready.
- Wet your hands by dipping them in a bowl of water, and then tear off small portions of the dough and carefully drop it into the hot oil. You can fry more than one ball at a time, but be careful not to put too many in the oil at once.
- Fry the dough over a medium flame for a few minutes until it is golden brown
- Can be served either hot or cold.



**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups ragi (finger millet) flour
- 1/5 cups water
- 1-2 tsp tamarind
- Salt to taste

**SERVES 2 PERSONS**

Tulsa Gaura Nayak, a canteen cook from the Gajapati district in the state of Odisha (previously known as Orissa), provides a porridge recipe which is made using only three ingredients: ragi (finger millet) flour, salt and tamarind. "When I had it for the first time, I was surprised as to how such an amazing recipe could be prepared with just three ingredients," she said.

Odisha farmers grow ragi, in addition to rice and dishes are often flavoured with tamarind, dried raw mango and coconut. The five-spice mixture widely used in Odisha dishes is called Panch Phutana, and it has mustard, cumin, fenugreek, aniseed and kalonji (nigella seeds). Tulsa says ragi is grown in her village so people there made this porridge frequently, often after a long day in the fields and served as part of the meals. Men sometimes eat only this dish because it is quite filling.

Because the grain is expensive in Mumbai, she doesn't make this dish here "I have seven children and they get to taste it when we go to our village," she said.



## INSTRUCTIONS

- Soak the ragi flour in water for at least 2 hours.
- Soak the tamarind in water to just cover the tamarind for 15 minutes. Extract the tamarind pulp, and set the mix aside.
- In a vessel, add water and bring it to a boil. Then add the ragi, tamarind and salt.
- Continue to let it boil until the mixture thickens to the consistency of porridge.
- Serve hot. It can be taken with meals or as a snack between meals.





# KHEER PURI

**ANITA TRILOKY SAHA**

## **PURI INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups split chickpeas (Chana Dal)
- 2-3 green chilies
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 3 cups wheat flour (atta)
- 2 tsp black caraway seeds
- 1 cup of water
- 1 tsp turmeric
- Salt as required
- Cooking oil as required

## **KHEER INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups of milk
- 1 cup of any variety of white rice
- 1/2 to 3/4 cup sugar according to taste
- Dried fruits or nuts like raisins or almonds

Anita Triloky Saha, a homemaker and mother of 3 children belongs to the Begusarai district of the state of Bihar, where the food is similar to that of Northern India but also is influenced by the state's eastern neighbours, such as Bengal. Biharis regularly use Panch Phoron, the Bengali five-spice mix of fennel, mustard, fenugreek, cumin and nigella used daily for tempering to flavour the hot oil before adding the rest of the ingredients.

The majority of the people in Bihar eat flatbreads like rotis made with wheat flour, but rice features prominently in many dishes such as Kheer Puri, a sweet rice porridge served with deep fried flatbread.

Anita reminisces, "Kheer Puri is made during monsoons especially in the month of Bhadrapada (the sixth month of the Hindu calendar, generally coinciding with August or September) She added, "Women who fast during this month break their fast with kheer Puri"

The last time she recalls making and savouring this dish was with her in-laws, though she enjoyed it the most when her mother prepared it for her. Anita sighed, "I miss my mother a lot when I make it at home."

**SERVES 4 PERSONS**



# KHEER PURI

## PURI INSTRUCTIONS

- Soak split chickpeas for half an hour in water and then either pressure cook soaked split chickpeas for 15 minutes or boil for a couple of hours until soft.
- Add salt once the chickpeas are cooked and drain any leftover liquid and set aside.
- Heat a pan, add oil then mustard seeds, cumin seeds and green chilies.
- Add turmeric powder and drained boiled chickpeas to the hot pan
- Let it cook for another 3-5 minutes, keep the mix aside.
- Add water and caraway seeds to the wheat flour and knead to make a tight dough. Add more water if necessary.
- Make small round balls of the dough about 2.5 centimeters in diameter and flatten slightly. Place a disc in the palm of your hand, indent the center to form a small cup and put a spoonful of the chickpea mixture in the centre. Apply oil on your hands. Fold over the sides of the dough and pinch the edges until the stuffing is thoroughly encased in the disc of dough.
- Flatten the dough with both hands to about a centimeter thick. Deep fry puris until golden brown. They should puff up while frying.



# KHEER PURI

## KHEER INSTRUCTIONS

- Boil milk with rice and sugar in a vessel, then turn down the heat to let it simmer until the rice is tender, about 20 minutes. You can pressure cook it for 10 minutes as well to hasten the process
- If using the pressure cooker, transfer the porridge to another pot
- Bring the porridge to boil again and add the dry fruits and nuts.
- Turn down the heat and let it simmer for few more minutes. Turn off the heat and serve hot.
- Serve the Puris hot with the kheer. The Puri should be dipped in kheer and then eaten.







# KHURMI

SEEMA RAJPUT

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups wheat flour (atta)
- 1 cup rava/semolina
- 1 cup grated dry coconut
- 250 grams ghee
- 1/2 cup peanuts
- 1/2 cup sesame seeds
- 1 cup jaggery
- 5-6 pods cardamom, hulls discarded, seeds crushed a bit with mortar and pestle
- Water to dissolve jaggery

**SERVES 5 TO 6 PERSONS**

Seema Rajput is from the Mungeli district of Chhattisgarh, which is widely known as the “Rice Bowl of Central India” for its rice production, but wheat, sorghum (jowar) and maize (makka) are also frequently eaten. Residents turn to the state’s leafy green for healthy additions to their diet, like tender neem leaves, drumstick leaves and flowers. The cuisine is mostly vegetarian, although people also enjoy mutton, chicken and freshwater seafood. The state’s tribal population relies more on wild foods, such as ants, yams, honey and small birds that they find around their homes in the jungles, forest and waterways.

Seema, who works as a cleaner on a constructions site in Mumbai, shared a recipe for Khurmi, a traditional sweet using wheat flour and coconut. This recipe is usually made during Teej, a festival celebrated in North India, primarily by women and girls, to welcome the monsoon season.

Teej celebrates Goddess Parvati’s union with Lord Shiva. “We observe it so that our husbands may attain long and healthy lives and we are able to enjoy marital bliss for a long time. We fast for an entire day without food and water. The next day we eat Khurmi to break our fast,” Seema said. “After Teej, all the women of the village eat Khurmi together. Enjoying it with them is the best memory I have of this recipe.”

# KHURMI

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Heat a pan over a medium flame and dry roast the rava for a few minutes, stirring it frequently, until it turn slightly brown. Remove the rava and dry roast the peanuts and then the sesame seeds in the same way. Set aside the Rava and sesame seeds in a bowl, and the peanuts in another.
- Pound the peanuts with a mortar and pestle (Seema uses an oval stone she found at the construction site) or use a mixer until the peanuts are in rough bits.
- Put the jaggery in a bowl and add enough water to cover, then stir with a spoon or use your hands to mix the liquid until the jaggery is completely dissolved.
- Put the wheat flour in a bowl and add the roasted rava, sesame seeds, dry coconut, ghee and the jaggery water and pounded cardamom seeds. Mix with your hands until the dough comes together.
- Shape the mixtures into oval lumps and then flatten to about an inch thick.(Seema flattens the Khurmi against the sides of the vessel in which she has prepared the mixture)
- Deep fry the khurmi until golden brown and serve hot.







## RADHA DEVI



### INGREDIENTS

- 1.5 to 2 cups of roasted gram flour (sattu)
- 2 tsp ginger
- 2-3 tsp garlic
- 2 tsp green chilies
- 2 tsp kala jeera (black cumin seeds)
- 1 cup chopped onion
- Half a lime
- 2 cups Wheat flour (atta)
- 1 cup water
- Salt to taste
- Oil for deep frying

**SERVES 4 TO 5 PERSONS**

For Radha Devi, a housewife from the Basti district of Uttar Pradesh, eating Litti, a stuffed fritter made of roasted gram flour, brings back happy memories of her village. Litti is a stuffed fritter made of roasted gram flour. "We have a farm in our village where we grow rice, wheat and peas, and we prepared this snack from the crops grown in our own farm," she said.

The cuisine of Uttar Pradesh reflects the diversity of India's most populous state, which has over 130 million people. The state is the top wheat producer in India and also grows sugarcane, pulses, potatoes and other vegetables like green peas and eggplants. Uttar Pradesh also has a significant number of people who eat meat, such as chicken and lamb, and the rich meat dishes of Lucknow are considered among the best that India has to offer.

The last time Radha made Litti was three or four months earlier, when she was traveling to Mumbai with her family. "I prepared it as a snack to have during our journey. My sons, husband and grandson - we all enjoyed having it in the train. It doesn't get spoiled for three to four days even without refrigeration," she said. The challenge with making Litti in Mumbai is that good-quality gram flour (sattu) is difficult to find. "I can make out from the smell alone whether the sattu is pure or not," she said.



## INSTRUCTIONS

- Put Sattu in a bowl, then add green chillies, onion, garlic, ginger, kala jeera, and salt. Squeeze the juice from half a lime, mix all the ingredients well and set it aside.
- In another bowl, put in the wheat flour, water and salt and knead it into a dough.
- Flatten a disc of the dough in the palm of your hand, then turn it into a small cup.
- Put the Sattu stuffing in a cup and seal the edges of the dough with your fingers so that the dough completely encases the stuffing. Smooth the edges to make them uniform and flatten the stuffed discs.
- In a frying pan, add enough oil to cover the Litti completely. Heat oil until it's hot enough to deep fry the Litti. Turn the Litti over occasionally until they are light brown on all sides
- The snack can be served hot or cold.

Radha enjoys it in her village with baingan bharta, roasted mashed eggplant.







### INGREDIENTS

- 1 bitter gourd
- 1 cup onion, sliced lengthwise
- 2 - 3 tsp tamarind pulp
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 3-4 green chilies
- 1 tbsp oil
- 2 cups of water
- salt to taste

### SERVES 2 TO 3 PERSONS

When Sirmani Kandulane, a domestic helper from the Simdega district of the state of Jharkhand, was asked how often she makes Uthu, a bitter gourd recipe, she said, "How much dal rice can a person eat? I make it once every two weeks when we've had enough of dal rice here." Her son isn't too keen on the dish, however because he doesn't like bitter gourd.

Jharkhand was created out of the state of Bihar so the two have much in common when it comes to their cuisines. The food in Jharkhand is lighter than in other regions, using minimal oil. Sirmani serves uthu with rice which is a staple in Jharkhand. In fact, Uthu is often cooked in the same liquid in which the rice simmers, Sirmani said.

Sirmani moved to Mumbai with her husband and son in December 2016 and she reminisces about the times with her parents. "I learnt to make this dish from my mother," she said. "I miss her whenever I make it." But the rice available in Mumbai isn't the same as the kind she can get in Simdega, so the dish tastes different from the one she ate in her hometown.

# UTHU

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Wash the bitter gourd and slice it into thin, round discs.
- Heat oil in a pan or a wide pot, add the bitter gourd and sauté till it turns soft and brown.
- Add onions and sauté them till they turn translucent.
- Add the green chillies, tamarind pulp and cook for 1-2 minutes.
- Add turmeric powder and coriander powder and let it sauté for a couple of minutes
- In Sirmani's village, they add the water in which rice is cooked which thickens the uthu.
- Serve the Uthu hot with rice.





# PATISHAPTA

## MAMONI GOR

Mamoni Gor, a domestic help living on a construction site in Mumbai since 2014, hails from the Nagoan district of Assam. She got married and settled in Bengal for some time. In Assam, major sources of livelihood are fishing and agriculture, especially rice cultivation, and this influence is evident in its cuisine. Assam's cuisine relies heavily on rice, fish and meat, and it is generally less spicy compared to other regions. The state has a significant Bengali population, which is why mustard oil is the preferred oil for cooking. Mamoni shared the recipe called Patishapta, a rice flour crepe stuffed with sweet coconut.

Patishapta is made during Bihu, one of the biggest festivals in Assam. Bihu is celebrated three times a year, each time coinciding with the harvesting season.

Mamoni shared, "A day prior to Bihu, we celebrate by making a hut in the farm with hay and bamboo. We make and enjoy our meals in the hut. On the day of Bihu, after having taken a bath, we celebrate by enjoying Patishapta.

Mamoni makes this dish whenever she feels like, but she associates Patishapta with the female members of her family - her grandmother, mother and sisters-in-law, who make it during Bihu. "I miss my mother a lot whenever I make it. Bihu signifies togetherness, and my sister and I enjoy being together on this day as our mother takes charge of the cooking and we are not allowed to step in the kitchen. It is her love and warmth that I miss the most," she said.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups of Bora saul (glutinous rice OR 1 bowl rice flour)
- 1 bowl wheat flour (atta) only if you're using rice flour
- if using Bora saul, omit the wheat flour
- 1 cup coconut
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 4-5 pods cardamom
- 1 cup of water, have more in case of need
- Cooking oil

**SERVES 2 TO 3 PERSONS**



# PATISHAPTA

## INSTRUCTIONS IF USING BORA SAUL

- The Bora Saul grains need to be soaked overnight, then dried and ground into a flour.
- Dry roast the Bora Saul flour in a pan over a medium flame until it turns sticky. Set aside the flour
- Pound the cardamom in a mortar along with its husks
- Dry roast the coconut in the pan. Once it turns a little brown, add sugar and cardamom to the pan. Roast the mixture until it turns a light brown. Set the mixture aside.
- Once the Bora Saul flour cools down, add water gradually to the flour until it has a thick pouring consistency, like heavy cream.
- Rub a little oil on a pan. Add a tablespoon of the batter and tilt the pan back and forth so that the batter spreads thinly but evenly in the shape of a circle.
- When the pancake turns golden brown, add the coconut mix in the centre of the pancake and roll up the pancake so that the filling remains in the centre.
- Remove the pancake and serve hot.





# PATISHAPTA

## INSTRUCTIONS IF USING RICE FLOUR

- No need to dry roast the rice flour. Mix the rice flour and wheat flour in a bowl and add water until the batter obtains a thick pouring consistency like heavy cream. Keep the mix aside and let it rest for 10 minutes.
- Prepare the coconut mix as instructed above.
- Proceed with the rest of the recipe as instructed above.





# CHAMPURACHI VADI

**JYOTI PRAKASH THACKERAY**

## **INGREDIENTS**

- 3 medium sized Colocasia leaves
- 6 sprigs of coriander leaves
- 6 spinach leaves
- 6 sprigs of fenugreek leaves
- 10 green chillies
- 3 small red onions
- 1 small tomato
- Oil for frying
- 3 teaspoons red chilli powder
- 2 teaspoons turmeric powder
- 3 teaspoons cumin powder
- 1/3 cup rice flour
- 1/2 cup wheat flour
- 1/4 cup chickpea flour
- Salt to taste

**SERVES 2 TO 3**

Jyoti arrived in Mumbai in 2010, a year after she married Prakash, a supervisor in a construction company. Like other migrant construction workers, they had no permanent home. Their two daughters, Palak and Vaidavi were born when they were staying at the labour camp set up on a construction site in Kandivali. Soon after Vaidavi's birth, Prakash's project at Kandivali was completed, so the family ended up moving to another labour camp in Lower Parel, where they have been living for the past two years.

The roof and walls of their home are made of corrugated plastic, but Jyoti, a chatty, smiling woman who is always willing to help others has done her best to turn it into a comfortable home. Jyoti shared with us the recipe for Champurachi vadi, a snack from her village in the district of Gondia in the Vidarbha region, which is near Nagpur in the state of Maharashtra. This dish, which uses Colocasia (also known as taro) leaves, is made whenever the family has guests. Jyoti said Champurachi vadi is often prepared during the monsoon season, when Colocasia leaves are abundant. The snack reminds Jyoti of her family. Every time her sister-in-law would visit, Jyoti would make the snack, then gather around with the family to share it. "I miss my mother a lot when I make it," she said. "I still cant make it the way she did."

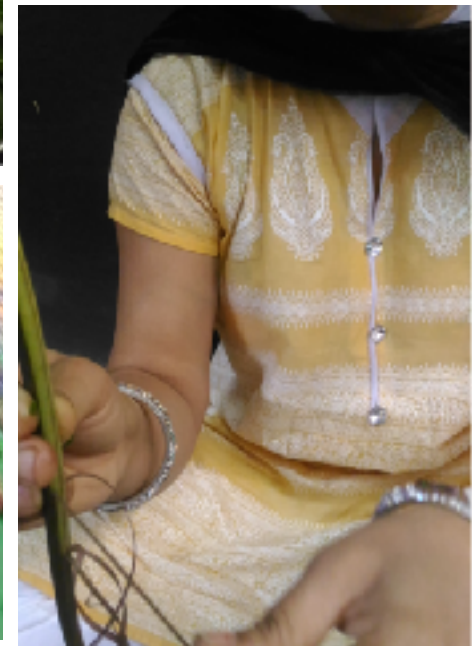
The food of the Vidarbha region is known as Varhadi, or Saoji cuisine, which relies heavily on dry coconut and Besan (chickpea flour), in addition to rich spices. Besan is



# CHAMPURACHI VADI

used more in vegetarian dishes, while the non- vegetarian dishes of chicken and mutton are flavoured with black pepper, dry coriander, bay leaves, cinnamon, cardamom and cloves.

The snack also reminds her of festive occasions. " Usually, during festivals, we prepare sweet delicacies. But this dish which is sour and a bit spicy is also made during festivals and holds a lot of significance for us," she said.



# CHAMPURACHI VADI

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Roughly chop all the leaves (Colocasia, coriander, spinach and fenugreek) along with their stems; keep aside in a large bowl.
- Jyoti uses a Bonti to chop the ingredients, a knife with a curved blade mounted on a horizontal wooden or metal platform.
- She sits cross legged on the floor, pressing the base with her foot to hold the Bonti firmly in place on the floor. Jyoti holds the item to be chopped with both hands and slides it against the stationary blade to peel, slice, or chop. But you don't need a Bonti knife for this recipe; just use any sharp kitchen knife.
- Chop the green chillies, onion, tomato and add to the bowl. Add salt to taste.
- Put enough frying oil in a wide pan so that it is a centimetre deep. While it heats up, add all the three flours to the mixture. Add the red chilli powder, turmeric powder, and the cumin. Mix all the ingredients to make a dough. Only add water if the dough isn't coming together, but the crushed leaves should give the mixture enough moisture.
- Portion out the dough into 20 small balls and flatten them with your palms so that they are thin and about 4-5 centimetres wide.
- Fry each piece in hot oil till golden brown for about 7-8 minutes. Serve hot.







# THEKUA

**SUSHILA DEVI**

MMC caught Sushila Devi on one of her visits to her husband, who is a head load worker. She lives in Theera, an hours' bus ride from the holy city of Varanasi on the Ganges river, in eastern Uttar Pradesh. She has been married for 13 years and lives in an extended family of her husband's parents, her four children, two single sisters-in-law, a brother in law and his wife. She is the eldest son's wife, so she is in charge of all the work in the house. When we spoke to her, she had been in Mumbai for several months, but was planning to return home soon. She had left her two older daughters behind and had come with her two sons.

Sushila Devi shared with us a traditional recipe of Thekua, a dry sweet, revered as prasad (an offering to the Gods) made for Chhath Puja. Chhath is an ancient Hindu Vedic festival historically native to eastern Uttar Pradesh and north Bihar. The Chhath Puja is dedicated to the sun and his wife, Usha, in order to thank them for bestowing the bounties of life on earth and to request them to grant certain wishes. This event falls in the month of October or November, in accordance with the lunar calendar. People have enjoyed Thekua as a sweet snack for centuries in eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand, it is often served with curd.

The cuisine from eastern Uttar Pradesh is similar to that of Bihar and Jharkhand, and is predominantly vegetarian because traditional society, influenced by Buddhist and Hindu values of non-violence, did not eat eggs, chicken, fish, or other animal products. Cereal grains like millet are often used in dishes.

## INGREDIENTS

- 200 grams Wheat flour
- 250 grams sugar
- Small bowl of water
- A handful of almonds
- A handful of cashews
- A handful of raisins
- Oil for frying

**MAKES 20-25**

# THEKUA

## INSTRUCTIONS

- First, put the water and sugar in a bowl, with the water just barely covering the surface of the sugar, and let it sit for 10 minutes.
- Meanwhile, mash or mix the cashews, almonds and raisins into coarse bits. Be careful not to over grind the nuts or else they will turn pasty.
- Add the nuts and raisins to the flour, and use your hands to mix it with the sugar water to make a dough.
- Shape the dough into flat, round discs about 4-5 centimetres wide.
- Heat enough oil in a wide pan so that the oil is one centimetre deep. Fry the discs until golden brown, let them drain on a paper towel. They can be served hot or cold with curd or even without it. Normally, they can keep for a week to 10 days.









# FOOD MEMORIES OF MIGRANT WOMEN





