

Nepal's cultural and geographic diversity has resulted in a variety of cuisines based on ethnicity, soil and climate. Dhal-bhat-tarkari (dhal = lentil soup, bhat = rice, tarkari = vegetable curry) is eaten all over the country. Condiments are usually small amounts of really spicy pickles (achaar) which can be fresh or fermented. Many of the dishes are a variation of Asian themes. Other foods have hybrid Tibetan, Indian and Thai origins. Momo-Tibetan style dumplings with Nepalese spices, are also a very traditional and wide spread meal. Chowmein is another Nepali favourite, which are Chinese stir-fried noodles with a special twist and mostly quite spicy.

### **Different cuisines**

#### Khas and Pahadi – Generic Hill Cuisine

- Dhal-Bhat-Tarkari is the standard meal eaten twice a day.
- Tarkari can be spinach and fresh greens (sag), fermented and dried greens (gundruk or sinki), white radish (mula), potatoes (alu), green beans (simi), tomatoes (golbeda), cauliflower (kauli), cabbage (bandacopi), pumpkin (farsi) etc.
- Fruit traditionally grown in the hills include mandarin orange (suntala), kaffir lime (kagati), lemon (nibuwa), Asian pear (nashpati), and bayberry (kaphal). Mangoes (aap) grow up to about 800 meters' elevation.
- Yogurt (dahi) and curried meat (masu) or fish (machha) are served as side dishes when available.
- Observant Hindus never eat beef (gaiko masu). They also eschew buffalo and yak meat as being too cow-like.

#### Himalayan Cuisine

- Himalayan cuisine is influenced by Tibetan and closely related ethnic groups.
- Butter tea is a very common beverage, if mixed with tsampa flour it is kind of a fast food.
- Potatoes, rice and yak meat are also important ingredients of the cuisine. Meat is mostly processed in Momos.

#### Thakali Cuisine

- Thakali Cuisine is eaten by Thakali people in the Thak-Kola Valley. It is less vegetarian than Pahadi cuisine.
- Meat of local sheep called Bheda and Chyangra or Chiru is an important ingredient and eaten by all castes.

#### Newar Cuisine

- Newar households have relatively high incomes and their culture emphasizes food and feasting.
- Daily Newar food consists mostly of components of the generic hillside cuisine.
- During ritual, ceremonial and festive times food can be much more varied than that of the Pahari cuisine.
- The cuisine has a wide range of fermented preparation.

### Terai Cuisine

- Terai diets can be more varied than in the Middle Hills because of greater variety of crops grown locally plus crops imported from cooler microclimates in nearby hill regions, as well as from different parts of greater Nepal.
- Fruit commonly grown in the Terai include mango (aap), litchi, papaya (armewa/mewa), banana (kera/kela) and jackfruit (katahar/katahal).
- A typical terai set includes basmati rice with ghee, pigeon pea daal, tarkari (cooked variety of vegetable), taruwa (a batter of raw vegetable such as potato, brinjal/aubergine, chilli, cauliflower etc. deep fried in the oil), papadum, mango/lemon pickles and yoghurt. For non-veg items, they consume mostly fish or goat curry.

### **Beverages**

Tea (chiya) usually taken with milk and sugar, juice of sugarcane (sarbat), and buttermilk (mahi) are common non-alcoholic beverages. Alcoholic beverages include raksi, spirits made in rustic distilleries, and jard, homemade beer made from rice. At higher elevations there is millet beer (tongba or chhaang).

### **Etiquette**

Meals are traditionally eaten seated or squatting on the floor although urban restaurants have tables and chairs. A large mound of bhat (boiled rice or other grains such as cornmeal or barley) or a pile of roti (rounds of thin unleavened bread) is served on a Jharke thal—a rimmed brass or stainless steel plate. The rice is surrounded by smaller mounds of prepared vegetables, fresh chutney or preserved pickles, and sometimes curd/yoghurt, fish or meat.

Soup-like dal and vegetables cooked in sauce may be served in separate small bowls, to be poured over the rice. Food is brought to the mouth with the fingers of the right hand. The left hand—traditionally used for certain toilet purposes—should never touch food but may hold cups and glasses. The right hand should be rinsed before and after eating.

You will often find people drinking water by pouring it into their mouths rather than touching their lips to the container to avoid polluting the container and contents. However, water and foods cooked with water can be problematic. The rule with food is „If you can cook it, boil it, or peel it you can eat it...otherwise forget it.” Vegetables and fruits should be washed with purified or bottled water or peeled where possible. Beware of ice cream that is sold in the street it might have been defrozen. If a place and the vendor look clean than the food is most likely fine. In general, places which are packed by locals or tourists are fine, while empty restaurants are questionable.