Hindi on the Menu
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Introduction
Three common Indian dishes served in Indian restaurants worldwide illustrate the diversity of Indian food and how it has become an international cuisine.

'Rogan Josh' (रोग़न जोश) is a typical Kashmiri dish; a lamb curry. '*Rogan'* can mean 'red' or 'greasy' and '*josh*' is a form of the word *gosht* (गोश्त), which means 'meat'. This dish is actually much more common in the West than it is in India, which is partly because the majority of Indians are vegetarian (*shaakaahaaree* शाकाहारी) rather than meat eaters (*maansahaaree* मांसाहारी)

'Tikka masala' is short for 'Chicken *Tikka masala'*, (मुर्ग़ टिक्का मसाला) *tikka* means 'pieces' and '*masala'* spice, or here spiced. It's widely believed that this dish was actually invented as a dish by Bangladeshi chefs in London after the 1971 war when Indian food became popular in the UK.

A 'Jalfrezi' is another meat curry; marinated pieces of meat in a thick sauce. It is typical of Indian food served in restaurants around the world. Some suggest that the name derives from *jal frezee* जल फ़्रेज़ी which can be understood as meaning 'dry fried' whilst others hold that it was an Anglo-Indian dish created during the Raj period and its name means 'water fried' (Bengali *jol*, water, and *frezee* from fried).

What you can learn from this document
- Starters: Learn about which words are Hindi, and which are not, and Hindi names for some basic foods and utensils and how to ask questions.
- Mains: Learn about the names for some common foods. Practice some basic requests.
- Dessert: Learn about Indian sweets and explore Hindi expressions related to expressing enjoyment of food and etiquette.

Learning Outcomes
- Learn about one hundred food related Hindi words.
- Learn about the Hindi sound system through an 'edible alphabet'.
- Learn about some basic phrases useful in the context of eating food.

Starters

North Indian

1. *Samosa* (समोसा) Triangular pastry parcels with a peas and potato filling (or mince meat in the West). Samosa means 'triangle' in Persian[1] and this dish was brought by the Moghuls to India.

2. *pakora* (पकोड़ा) These are chopped vegetables, or cheese, (paneer पनीर) dipped in a batter made of chickpea flour (*besan* बेसन) and fried.

3. *Bhaajee* (भाजी) The word *bhaajee* (भाजी) can refer to a kind of *pakora*, such as an onion *bhaajee* (प्याज़ की भाजी). Sometimes *bhaajee* (भाजी) also means a type of vegetable curry.

4. *chatnee* (चटनी) a kind of sweet pickled sauce, like tomato sauce

5. *paapaR* (पापड़) The English 'Papadam' is from a Tamil word

South Indian

6. *iDlee* (इडली) rice and lentil steamed dumplings

7. *Dosaa* (डोसा) rice and lentil flour pancakes;

8. *masaalaa Dosaa* (मसाला डोसा) the same sort of pancake with a potato filling

9. *vaDaa* (वड़ा) fried lentil flour dumplings

10. *saambhaar* (साँभर) a kind of South Indian *daal*

11. *chaTnee* (चटनी) a spicy coconut sauce

On the table

12. *thaalee* थाली [f2] plate (normally a metal dish)

13. *katoraa* कटोरा [m] bowl (also a smaller bowl *katoree* कटोरी [f])

14. *pyaalaa* प्याला [m] cup (with a handle)

15. *gilaas* गिलास [m] glass (without a handle, often made of metal)

16. *kaantaa* काँटा [m] fork

17. *chaakoo* चाकू [m] knife

18. *chammach* चम्मच [m] spoon

19. *kaRaahee* कड़ाही [f] 'wok'

Getting Information

If you want to ask what food there is you can ask:

What food is there? *Kyaa khaanaa hay*? (क्या खाना है?)

To which the answer might be: **There is X**. X *hay* (X है)

Getting a yes/no answer

If you want to find out if there is a specific item you can ask:

Is there X? *Kyaa X hay*? (क्या X है?)

To which the answer might be:

Yes, there is X. *Jee haaN, x hay* (जी हाँ X है)

No, there is no X. *Jee naheeN, x naheeN hay*. (जी नहीं X नहीं है),

Note the capital N represents a 'nasal' sound, say the vowel through your nose as if you had a bad cold, do not say 'n'.

Mains

The English word 'curry' is not from a Hindi word; it comes from Tamil, and means something like 'sauce'. There is a Hindi word *kaDhee* (कढ़ी) but it is a specific dish made with a sauce containing chick pea flour and yoghurt. What there is not is a general category of dish called a 'curry'.

Sabzee सब्ज़ी 'Vegetables'

Vegetable in Hindi is *sabzee* सब्ज़ी (sometimes said *sabjee* सब्जी). It means 'green' in Persian (cf. English 'greens'). It refers to both raw vegetables[3] and cooked vegetable dishes. Other common cooking terms include:

20. *koftaa* (कोफ़्ता^{m}) from a Persian word meaning beaten or pounded which is often now used to mean preparations with dumpling style versions of vegetables. Often now made with cream as in *malaaee koftaa* (मलाई^{f} cream).

21. *Kormaa* (क़ोरमा^{m}) a Turkish word meaning a lightly spiced dish.

22. *Tarkaaree* (तरकारी^{f}) a common word in Uttar Pradesh for a vegetable dish.

23. *Aaloo* (आलू^{m}) potato

24. *'Mutter'* (मटर^{m}) peas

25. *Baingan* (बैंगन ^{m}) egg-plant, note that English Brinjal comes from a Tamil word,

26. *Gaajar* (गाजर ^{m}) carrot, often black in India as old varieties are still used

27. *Saag* (साग [m]) the category 'leaf veg', and a cooked dish of leaves

28. *Paalak* (पालक [m]) a particular variety of spinach

29. *Gobhee* (गोभी [f]) cauliflower, sometimes people distinguish *phool-gobhee* फूल-गोभी cauliflower from *band-gobhee* बंद-गोभी cabbage

30. *Sem* (सेम [m]) beans, actually a particular type of long bean

There are lots more vegetables, too many to learn all in one day![4]

Lentils *daal* (दाल [f])

I am often puzzled by why this is spelled *dahl* in many menus. I think that the idea of the 'h' is to try and make people say the long 'aa' sound, but make no mistake there is no 'h' in *daal*. Sometimes people in India say that in English lentils and beans are called 'pulses' but this old English term is not common now. There are many sorts of *daal*. Some of the most common are as follows.

31. *Arhar* (अरहर [f] or तुवर) yellow lentils, 'pigeon pea'.

32. *Chanaa* (चना [m]) (or *channaa* चन्ना) gram lentils, like *arhar* but bigger

33. *Masoor* (मसूर [m]) red lentils

34. *Urad* (उड़द [m]) black lentils

35. *Moong* (मूंग [m]) moong beans

36. *Rajmaa* (राजमा [m]) kidney bean

37. *Chole* (छोले [m]) chickpeas (also sometime called *chanaa* चना [m] as in *kabuli chanaa* काबुली चना white chick peas)

Non-Veg

The Tandoor (तंदूर [m]) is a traditional clay oven from the North-West Frontier Province region of Pakistan. It was originally intended to be transportable on a horse and was used for baking meat and making breads. After the partition of India a number of restaurants with Tandoori ovens were established in Delhi and it became a popular form of cooking; then in the 1960s it spread to London and the rest of the world.

38. *Tandooree Murg* (तंदूरी मुर्ग) marinated chicken cooked in a Tandoori oven.[5]

39. *'Chiken' Tikkaa* (चिकन टिक्का) pieces of marinated chicken cooked in a Tandoor.

40. *Murg makkhanee* (मुर्ग मक्खनी) Butter chicken, pieces of chicken cooked in a rich creamy tomato sauce.

Side dishes

41. Dahee (दही [f]) curd, is translated by most Indians as 'curd' and regarded as different from yoghurt which is something foreign and strange to them. Whether they are the same or different I cannot say. I remember being told that in the 1950s in the UK curd was re-branded by advertisers as exciting new 'continental yoghurt', but they were just the same thing. Some people argue the difference is whether there is a starter culture or not.

42. Raita (रायता [m]) mixed vegetables in curd

43. Achaar (अचार [m]) 'pickles' or 'chutney' such as **mango pickle** *aam kaa acaar* (आम का अचार). The word *achaar* is from Persian.

Rice

44. *Chaawal* (चावल[m]) rice. In the Eastern region of the Hindi speaking area people distinguish between *dhaan* (धान[m]) rice growing in a field, i.e. 'paddy', *chaawal* (चावल[m]) uncooked rice grains and *bhaat* (भात[m]) boiled rice. In the Western Hindi speaking area all rice is called *chaawal*.

45. *Biriyani* (बिरियानी [f]) a dish of rice and vegetables, or meat.

46. *Pilau* (पुलाव[m]) is a dish of rice and vegetables. It is probably a word of Persian origin. I believe that for *biriyani* you fry the rice first before cooking it, and for *pilau* you cook the rice separately and then fry it together with the other ingredients, but some recipes have it the other way round!

Breads

Flat breads, mostly unleavened, form a vital part of North Indian food. The general term for bread is *roTee* (रोटी [f]) and there are many forms of bread.

47. *Chapatee* (चपाती [f]) an unleavened round flat bread, cooked on a griddle plate or *tavaa* (तवा)

48. *Naan* (नान [f]) a leavened bread, cooked in a Tandoor oven.

49. *PooRi* (पूड़ी [f]) a deep fried *chapatee*.

50. *Paratha* (पराठा [m] or *paranthaa* पराँठा) a *chapatee* fried on a griddle plate, sometimes with bits of potato in it as in an *aloo paratha*a (आलू पराठा).

Ordering food

You can politely[6] ask for something to be brought in Hindi like this:
>**Bring *roTee.*** *roTee laaiye.* रोटी लाइए ।

(Replace *roTee* with whatever item you want brought.)

Or you can ask somebody to give you something by saying :
>**Give *roTee.*** *roTee deejiye.* रोटी दीजिए ।

To which somebody might reply:
>**Take this.** *Ye leejiye.* यह लीजिए ।

You can ask somebody if they want something by asking
>**Do you want *roTee?*** *Aapko roTee chaahiye?* आपको रोटी चाहिए ?

Likewise you can say you want something using a similar construction.
>**I want *roTee.*** *Mujhko roTee chaahiye.* मुझको रोटी चाहिए ।

Dessert

51. Sweets *miThaaee* (मिठाई [f]) are often eaten at the end of a meal. Many Indian sweets are made out of sugar and milk solid (*khoyaa* खोया [m]). *Khoyaa* is what you get if you boil milk till the liquid is all but gone. Some of the most famous types of sweets are as follows.

52. *Barfee* (बर्फ़ी [f]) flat sheets of milk solids and sugar and other flavourings cut up into pieces. It can be delicious. The name comes from the Persian word for snow or ice or ice-cream *baraf* (बर्फ़).

53. *Gulaab Jaamun* (गुलाब जामुन [f]) deep fried balls of milk solids and semolina and sugar floating in sugar syrup. The name means 'Rose plums'.

54. *LaDDoo* (लड्डू [m]) balls of chick pea flour and sugar etc. This is an ancient Indian sweet and in images of the god Ganesh you can see he often holds a bowl of these in one hand, or has a bowl near him. The name is so ancient it has no origin as such.

55. *Kheer* (खीर [f]) rice pudding. The Indian form of this dish is often very rich and creamy and may be finished with gold or silver leaf *varq* (वरक़ [m]) on the top. The name is derived from the Sanskrit *ksheer* (क्षीर [m]) which means milk or cream.

56. *Kulfee* (कुलफ़ी [f]) ice-cream. The traditional form of this is made from thickened milk: it tastes like condensed milk, and is in the form of cones. The name is from Persian for ice-cream. Flavours can include **saffron** *kesar* (केसर [m]), **pistachio** *pista* (पिस्ता [m]), **almond** *badaam* (बादाम [m]), **cashewnut** *kaajoo* (काजू [m]) and **cardamom** *ilaaychee* (इलायची [f]).

Drinks

57. Apart from water *paanee* (पानी [m]) Indians rarely drink anything with meals. Indeed I can remember being told it was bad for health to drink while eating and cold water particularly was a cause of indigestion. Some drinks which may be found are as follows.

58. *Lassee* (लस्सी [f]) a form of yogurt drink. I have never been offered mango lassi in India despite it being a staple of Indian restaurants. What you may be offered in India is choice of plain *saadaa* (सादा), sweet *meeThee*[7] (मीठी) or salty *namkeen* (नमकीन) *lassee*!

59. Chai *chaay* (चाय [f]) the archetypal Indian drink, made with lots of milk and sugar. Tea bushes are indigenous to Assam and to Yunnan in China, however Assam did not became a major tea growing area until the late 19th century when the British developed tea gardens there and promoted the drinking of tea in India as a home market for the tea they were growing for export to the UK. Previously tea (particularly black tea) was a known drink in India, associated with central Asian Islamic traditions. The word 'chaay' is the central Asian pronunciation of the Chinese 'chaa' which means tea. Indians had always been keen on drinking **milk** *doodh* (दूध [m]) sweetened with **sugar** *cheenee* (चीनी [f]). Perhaps that is why Indian tea in the markets often seems to be little more than milk and sugar.

Expressing Likes and dislikes

Complements
At the end of the meal you might want to say something like this.

This is very good. *ye bahut acchaa hai* यह बहुत अच्छा है ।

Other qualities you might want to substitute for *acchaa* could include these.

Tasty *svaadishT* स्वादिष्ट, **Sweet** *meeThaa* मीठा, **Sour** *khaTTaa* खट्टा,
Bitter *kaRvaa* कड़वा, **Bland** *feekaa* फ़ीका.[8]

Problems
On the other hand you might want to say something like this.

This is bad. *ye kharaab hai* यह ख़राब है ।

Or you might want to describe some particular problem with the food.

It's too salty	*zyaadaa namak hai*	ज़्यादा नमक है
It's too spicy	*zyaadaa teekhaa hai*	ज़्यादा तीखा है
It's too hot (from chilli)	*zyaadaa mirchee hai*	ज़्यादा मिर्ची है
It's too hot (temperature)	*zyaadaa garam hai*	ज़्यादा गरम है

After eating, or to stop being served more food you might say.

Enough! *bas* बस
I am full! *peT bhar gayaa* पेट भर गया ।
Thank you! *dhanyavaad* धन्यवाद

Etiquette

In Indian tradition there are things which you should and should not do while eating, some of the most important are as follows.

- Eat with your fingers, but don't use your left hand. The origins of this tradition are very ancient and relate to what you do with your left hand and how that makes it more polluting in the context of touching food.
- As far as possible avoid touching serving dishes with your hands. For traditional Indians even touching a serving dish would be enough to make it conceptually 'dirty' and then they could not eat its contents. However, its notable that in some Indian Islamic traditions to all take food from a central serving dish is taken as a sign of how all belong to the community.
- You will see some Indians drinking by holding a cup above their lips and pouring the liquid into their mouth. That is another aspect of the idea of not 'polluting' the serving vessels. It's quite a knack to master though and I don't recommend doing it unless you have had lots of practice!
- Don't leave food on your plate. It's considered rude in many households to waste food by leaving it on the plate, which is just the same as in the West really.
- In some situations when you are eating in people's homes the only way to stop being served more food is to hold your arm over your plate to indicate 'please don't give me any more'; it's a bit like putting your knife and fork together in western etiquette. However, in restaurants you don't see people doing this, normally saying **Enough!** *bas* (बस) is enough.

Ingredients: an edible alphabet

To speak Hindi well you need to know the sounds of the Hindi language. Many of the sounds are the same as English sounds, but some are quite different and its worth trying to learn them, that way people will be better able to guess what you might be talking about. Here I have tried to create an edible version of the alphabet where each item begins with a letter of the Hindi alphabet. They are in the order of the Hindi alphabet. In the first column there is the word in Hindi script, in the second the word in English script. There is no standard system for representing Hindi script in English characters; On the one hand there is a transliteration system used in many academic works and on the other film posters use schemes which only roughly show you the sound. Here I use a system which gives an approximation of the sounds. The third column has a note on the word. Sorry, sometimes I could not find a common word that began with a particular sound, so I had to choose obscure words; such words have an asterisk after them.

An Edible Alphabet[9]

अ a	अदरक	*adrak*[m]	ginger
आ aa[10]	आटा	*aataa*[m]	wheat flour as used in making chapatis
इ i	इलायची	*ilaaychee*[f]	cardamom
ई ee	ईसबगोल	*eesabgol*[m]	fly seed (useful to settle the digestion)
उ u	उड़द	*urad*[m]	a black lentil, used in *dosaa* etc
ऊ oo	ऊख	*ookh*[f]	sugarcane (also *eekh* ईख or *ganaa* गन्ना)
ए e	एरंड	*eranD*[m]	castor oil plant
ऐ ai	ऐपन	*aipan**[m]	ground rice and turmeric for rituals
ओ o	ओल	*ol**[m]	Arum lily root (Arum campanulatum)
औ au	औषधि	*aushadi*[f]	'medicine', herb, drug
क ka	कलौंजी	*kalaunjee*[f]	'onion seed', Nigella
ख kha	खजूर	*khajoor*[m]	date, as in Khajuraho (aspirated)[11]
ग ga	गाजर	*gaajar*[f/m]	carrot
घ gha	घी	*ghee*[m]	clarified butter (aspirated)
च cha	चावल	*chawal*[m]	rice (cooked rice also called *bhaat* भात)
छ chha	छोले	*chhole*[m]	chickpeas (aspirated)
ज ja	जीरा	*jeeraa*[m]	cumin
झ jha	झींगा	*jheengaa*[m]	shrimp (aspirated)
ट Ta	टिंडा	*TinDaa*[m]	a type of squash, (roof of mouth 'ta'[12])
ठ Tha	ठंढाई	*ThanDhaaee*[f]	a kind of sherbet (same but aspirated)
ड Da	डोसा	*Dosaa*[m]	south Indian pancake (roof of mouth)
ढ Dha	ढाबा	*Dhaabaa*[m]	small restaurant (same but aspirated)
त ta	तिल	*til*[m]	sesame seed (dental 'ta'[13])
थ tha	थाली	*thalee*[f]	thaalee, a plate (aspirated)
द da	दालचीनी	*dalceenee*[f]	cinnamon (dental 'da')
ध dha	धनिया	*dhaniyaa*[m]	coriander (aspirated)
न na	नमक	*namak*[m]	salt
प pa	प्याज़	*pyaz*[m]	onion
फ pha	फल	*phal*[m]	fruit
ब ba	बेसन	*besan*[m]	chick pea flour
भ bha	भिंडी	*bhindee*[f]	lady's fingers
म ma	मिर्च	*mirch*[f]	pepper, as in: लाल मिर्च *laal mirch*: chilli, काली मिर्च *kaalee mirch*: black pepper
य ya	यव	*yau*[m]	barley (Skt, more often जौ *jau* in Hindi)
र ra	राई	*raaee*[f]	a type of mustard seed
ल la	लहसुन	*lahsun*[m]	garlic
व va	वडा	*vaDaa*[m]	a kind of fried dumpling
श sha	शरीफ़ा	*shareefaa*[m]	custard apple
स sa	सब्ज़ी	*sabzee*[f]	vegetable (also said as सब्जी *sabjee*)
ह ha	हल्दी	*haldee*[f]	turmeric

Notes: The small print, additional matters not dealt with in the main text

[1] 'Sem' is derived from the word for three in Persian, which is a bit like our 'tri' in triangle being from a Latin word for three.

[2] Hindi words are all grammatically masculine (^m) or feminine (^f).

[3] Hindi does not always pluralise things as English does, 'vegetables' tends to mean 'varieties of vegetables' not a quantity of one vegetable. So there is no need to pluralise the word *sabzee* सब्ज़ी today.

[4] For a good list see: Wiktionary 'Cooking Glossary', at: http://hi.wiktionary.org/wiki/Cooking_Glossary, accessed: Monday, 1 September 2008.

[5] Note मुर्ग is 'cockerel' a *murgee* मुर्गी is a chicken and a *murgaa* मुर्गा is a rooster.

[6] Hindi has several levels of command corresponding to different forms of address, the forms of command used here all relate to polite respectful ways of speaking to somebody.

[7] Here in the feminine form to agree with *lassee*.

[8] Hindi actually changes the forms of some words which describe other words, adjectives, according the grammatical gender of the thing described. We won't go into that today, the forms given here are all for masculine singular objects, or are invariable adjectives.

[9] Well not all the things in it are edible, but 'A food related Alphabet' did not sound so catchy. Also there are a few more Hindi sounds not included. The missing sounds include: ऋ 'ṛi' a sound found only in a very small number of Sanskrit loan words in Hindi. Also a range of sounds which cannot begin words in Hindi: ञ ña, ङ ṅa, and ण ṇa all kinds of 'na' sounds, ष ṣa a kind of 'sha' sound, ड़ 'ṛa' kind of 'ra' sound, (R in the transliteration in this guide), and ढ़ ṛha an aspirated form of 'Ra'. Also फ़ 'fa' and ज़ 'za' which are easy for English speakers to say but not originally Hindi sounds.

[10] Hindi distinguishes short and long vowel sounds. To make the long aa sound you must open your mouth up wide.

[11] Hindi distinguishes consonants where you don't breath out with them and those where you do. English is about half way in between. The 'h' in 'kha' represents not a separate 'ha' sound but saying 'ka' with an out breath. Hold your hand up to your mouth, if you can feel your breath its right. Its 'aspirated' in grammar speak.

[12] Hindi distinguishes between 'ta' and 'da' sounds made with your tongue touching the roof of the mouth and touching the front teeth. English is mid way between. Hindi speakers hear all English 'T' and 'D' sounds as if they were made touching the tongue to the roof of the mouth. Try it and see if you can do it too.

[13] The dental form, i.e. with the tongue touching the tip of the front top teeth, of 'ta' sound; the first of four such dental sounds.