



## CONCEPT NOTE

### INDIAN FOOD CULTURE - LET'S BRING THE GOODNESS BACK

“Indian Food Culture - Let’s bring the goodness back” is a collaborative project to promote safe & wholesome food through showcasing regional cuisines, rediscovering our distinct culinary identity and reconnecting people with their rich cultural past.

#### **Background**

Regional food habits were primarily based on a holistic approach to nutrition as required by local people, and are ideally suited to meet our health needs. The wisdom of the ages captured through Ayurveda and Yoga teaches us to be conscious and mindful of what we eat, when we eat and how we eat it. A balanced approach to preparing, eating and digesting food, based on every individual’s unique body-mind type is key to wellbeing and sound health. But as the eating habits of Indians are changing, we run the very real danger of losing our local food heritage.



## **Approach**

The initiative adopts a structured and holistic approach to curate, share and popularize knowledge on Indian Food Culture and engage people to make more informed food choices. A systematic framework based on 5 pillars is being co-created with a cross section of stakeholders including central and state government authorities, food scientists and historians; chefs; food writers and authors; experts; corporates and multi-nationals; bloggers; restaurateurs; food revivalists; and influencers. The five pillars are:

1. Developing a National Recipe Archive
2. Creating and supporting local Food Hubs
3. Facilitating and Branding Safe Food Streets
4. Supporting and recognizing regional Food Festivals
5. Encouraging Food Trails



## **1. National Recipe Archive**

FSSAI in alliance with government bodies, stakeholders involved in food sector, and domain experts such as celebrity chefs, food historians, columnists, and food bloggers has taken up an initiative to develop a National Recipe Archive through a dedicated online portal. This portal, FOODCAST, would be unique in bringing out the historical background, origin, ingredient's health quotient, and nutritional aspects of the cuisine. The National Recipe Archive shall serve as *central database* depicting local/regional food recipes of India. "FOODCAST" is a food forecast report- a digital platform highlighting recipes, ingredients and foods suitable for a particular region during each season.

The intent of this is to ensure revival of our culinary heritage, promotion and recognition of local and regional recipes and helping people to make more informed food choices. The work of sourcing and vetting some basic recipes has been initiated, but every State would need to participate to enrich and update this initial database, for a more holistic representation of their rich regional and local cuisines.

In the National Conclave on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2017 the stakeholders would deliberate and recommend a strategy for:

- State wise mapping of regional and local cuisines.
- Developing State Food Repositories (Plans for sourcing of Recipes, Recognition to the Recipe Provider, etc.)
- Integration/Linking State repository with the central database i.e. National Recipe Archive.
- Dissemination and Engagement



## **2. Food Hub**

Food Hubs are envisaged as strategically located facilities that could offer local and regional cuisines as part of a larger cultural experience. Hubs would be co-located at points of interest including tourist attractions, religious places etc. A hub would do more than offer just food, it would offer a cultural experience e.g. there could be a food museum, a historical display of utensils, food talks, food trails etc.

India has a rich and diverse culinary heritage, and each state/city's food hub can become a hub for economic growth, promoting culture, tourism and safe and nutritious regional cuisines. A unique and recognizable brand for such regional food hubs could be created, which would not only assure the visitors of the quality and safety of the food being served, but also showcase India's soft power in food to international visitors.

The benchmarks for hygiene and safety would be pre-decided and rigorously implemented. Some common infrastructural facilities including water, waste disposal, proper lighting etc. would need to be ensured. These food hubs could offer popular & unique local and regional dishes, demonstrate relevant cooking techniques and showcase food wisdom that has evolved over the centuries. Local businesses and street food vendors may be engaged to set up outlets and provide well-priced traditional foods of that region. These hubs can also act as a point where one can buy region-specific, indigenous ingredients and food items; attend events on local food cultures through talks/ short films.

The issues to be discussed in the National Conclave of 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2017 would include interalia-

- Strategy for designing the structure and components of Food Hub
- Infrastructure support
- Timelines for implementation
- Pvt. Sector engagement/ partnership
- Strategy for Promotion and IEC (Information Education Communication) Activities



### **3. Safe Food Street**

A Food Street is a dedicated street for eating out. Every state has its own famous/unique food streets, which showcases its local and regional cuisines and are famous tourist attraction points. From Delhi's ChandniChowk to Mumbai's KhauGallis, India's 'food streets' are repositories of age-old delicacies and are must-eat locations. However, these food streets are wallowing under the widespread concern on basic hygiene practices and are perceived to be unsafe.

To upgrade existing food streets across the country and provide safe & hygienic local eating experiences for domestic and international tourists alike, benchmarks for hygiene and sanitary conditions will be pre-decided by FSSAI and state government bodies. Large scale training and capacity building of street food vendors would be an integral part of this pillar.

Credibility may be provided by recognizing such streets as "Safe Food Street" through plaques / certificate of excellence.

State governments play an important role for implementing safe food streets for potential economic growth of the tourism and culture industry of the country, apart from providing hygienic and sanitary eating conditions.

On 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2017 during the National Conclave, it is proposed to deliberate on:

- Execution plans for upgrading existing food streets.
- Strategy for Promotion and IEC Activities
- Support Required.
- Timelines for upgradation



#### **4. Food Festival**

Food festivals showcase popular dishes, representing preferences of the local community and establishing ecological links. The goal is to have high quality regional food festivals that are professionally managed events, true to the region's food story and community spirit.

Food Festivals are held in almost every city, and the Indian Food Culture initiative could leverage this well attended format to promote local and regional cuisines. A network of Food festivals with a strong element of local/regional flavor could be created in different states, culminating in a National level Festival every year. Every state could host its own food festival, with special support to vendors showcasing the regional or local cuisine. The National level festival would recognize and award the best vendors from each region. This network could become the consolidated platform that showcases the diverse Indian cuisines from all parts of our nation. Through the medium of a Food Festival, encompassing all states, we could canonize the plethora of cuisines that represent various communities in the country.

The entire effort should be branded and made aspirational, to ensure the widest participation from both the vendors and citizens. Such festivals will also lead to increased local resilience and recognition to vendors.

The participants in the National Conclave would come up with their recommendations on:

- Integration of existing regional food festivals into this network
- Strategy to develop a calendar of food festivals/ culinary events (State & National level)
- Strategy for IEC Activities / Advertising and marketing campaigns.
- Infrastructure support



## **5. Food Trails**

This is an informative and engaging way to share food, its history and the stories behind different dishes and cuisines. To enhance the popularity of food trails, Indian Food Culture could have its own certification system based on certain pre-requisites and promote such food trails through tying it in with all the other pillars e.g. they could be displayed through the FOODCAST portal, made a part of the Food Hub concept or integrate recognized food streets as part of their repertoire. The concept can be taken up for detailed discussion on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2017 to:

- Create some common criteria to recognize a Food Trail for certification under Indian Food Culture
- Map existing efforts
- Execution plans integrating Food Trails with other 4 pillars
- Strategy for Promotion and IEC Activities
- Support Required.

The entire Indian Food Culture Initiative is thus an effort to create a cohesive framework that ties together the many existing (albeit fragmented) efforts in this area by curating, upgrading and creating an aspirational branding to help us rediscover our local and regional food heritage.

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