

Regional Table

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Heritage recipes for your modern kitchen

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Forgotten Foods of Goa

Memory • Ritual • Land

Works Referred

Offline resources

The Goan Grind – the untold story of Goa's Ground Masalas and Pastes, by Perviz de Souza
Cozinha de Goa – A Glossary on Food, by Fatima da Silva Gracias
Cozinha de Goa – History and Tradition of Goan food, by Fatima da Silva Gracias
The Culinary Odyssey of Goa, by Odette Mascarenhas
Food and Identity: A journey of Goa's Food Customs, by Biula V. Cruze Pereira
Grinding Stories Retold, by Heta Pandit
Susegad: The Goan Art of Contentment, by Clyde D'Souza
Tasty Morsels: Goan Food, Ingredients & Preparation, by Dr. Maria de Lourdes Bravo da Costa Rodrigues
Feasts, Festivals, and Observances of Goa, by Dr. Maria de Lourdes Bravo da Costa Rodrigues
Cambridge University Press

Online resources

Medium, Goya, Studocu, Raul on the Prowl, Indian Community Cookbook Project, The Sassy Fork, Gomantak Times, The Hindu, Hildas Touch of Spice, Meen Scientist, Rice Association, Sahapedia, Jstor, Vikhroli Cucina, Journals, Institutional Repository at Goa University, Earth Journalism, Google Books, Free Press Journal, Herald Goa.

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Introduction

Chicken xacuti, Goan fish curry, pork vindaloo, bebinka are possibly the first names that come to mind when we think of Goan cuisine. One would agree, that it is undoubtedly among the most popular cuisines in India.

The question we asked ourselves was how to talk about this iconic cuisine without the clichés and tropes of exoticism, and bring something new to the table.

Food is memory, and oftentimes memory circles around stories from the kitchen. Food and memory are intertwined as is our evolving relationship with food. It is hard to argue that food plays a significant role in our memory as a species.

In our research, we have tried to create a balance between history, memory and folklore—this relationship forms a new kind of currency to bring about a slightly more nuanced awareness of the collective and individual past.

We decided to go beyond the obvious choices and find an inclusive way of telling this history. With their 451 years of colonial rule, the Portuguese made a significant contribution, as both the coloniser and the colonized borrowed from one another. The Gaud Saraswat Brahmins, though not at the forefront nor

the gatekeepers, have always stood their ground and fiercely guarded their precious layered cuisine. The indigenous cuisine has stood the test of time and the tribes have been keepers of ancient knowledge disseminated through food, festivals, song and dance.

There were influences from the Arabs, Jewish and Armenian traders, soldiers and slaves from Portuguese colonies in Africa, Malaysia & China. Let us not forget dynasties like the Vijaynagar, Chalukyas, Bhojas & Kadambas.

Islamic conquests had a significant role in the history of Goa—from the Delhi Sultanate to the Bahamani Sultans of Gulbarga and finally the Adil Shahis of Bijapur. It is said, there was a time when Goa was the port from where all Muslims on this side of the Hindukush would set off for Mecca.

While there are traces of this vast history, where is that influence on food? This publication includes the history of six important foods that we feel form the backbone that is a testimony to this unique amalgam of cultures. We have also included recipes that are adaptable in this modern world in your modern gadgets in simple steps so your kitchen will evoke sounds, smells and tastes of a rich tradition and culture spanning centuries.

A vote of thanks to the scholars and experts we reached out to (in alphabetical order):

- Aaron Lobo
- Hansel Vaz
- Dr. Maria de Lourdes Bravo da Costa Rodrigues
- Odette Mascarenhas
- Shubhra Shankhwalkar
- Rajendra Kerkar

Thank you for sharing your time and knowledge.

Happy cooking
Team Spice Secrets

Pez/Canjee

A symbiotic coming together of faith, food and farming

Pez, a soulful rice porridge, embodies the essence of Goa—simplicity, resilience, and communal solidarity—woven into its agrarian roots and contemporary life. Made from *ukde tandul* or parboiled rice, it celebrates minimalism, traditionally cooked in clay pots over wood fires and served in earthenware. The tender yet firm grains, prepared with unpolished rice, form the canvas for Goan flavors like dried fish, *korom* (raw mango), spicy pickles, or *kalchi kodi* (yesterday's curry).

Goa's intricate waterways nourish the Khazan wetlands, supporting the cultivation of saline-tolerant rice like *korgut*. With its hardy brown grains, *korgut* thrives in brackish conditions and monsoon climates, making it ideal for canjee, a simple yet authentic delicacy.

Pez intertwines with Goan harvest rituals, uniting Hindus and Catholics in collective reverence for rice. Festivals like Pejechem Fest celebrate community spirit, with canjee shared as a gesture of goodwill. A staple of comfort and healing, pez reflects the bond between Goan land, its people, and their enduring traditions.



Farmers threshing paddy

Ingredients

1 cup rice
4 cups water or vegetable broth
Salt to taste
Fresh cilantro leaves for garnish
(optional)
Fish khario
Mango pickled in vinegar



Method

Rinse the rice thoroughly under running water until the water runs clear, then add hot water or vegetable broth to a microwave-safe glass bowl. Add the rinsed rice to the hot liquid and cook at 100% micropower level for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the rice is soft and fully cooked. Once it reaches your desired consistency, season with salt. Serve the Goan canjee hot, optionally garnished with fresh cilantro leaves, pickles, dry fish, or any accompaniments of your choice.

**This recipe is adaptable to a hob*



Christian peasants crushing paddy

DID YOU KNOW?

Although rice wasn't indigenous to India, it has been an integral part of the subcontinent's culinary heritage for millennia. The earliest documented reference to rice goes back to China in 2800 BC, from where it is speculated to have journeyed to India around 2000 BC. Rice's significance in the Indian diet is underscored by its mention in the Yajur Veda (1200-800 BC) and its frequent appearances in ancient Sanskrit texts.



Chicken Cafreal & Poi

African roots to the Goan kitchen

Chicken Cafreal traces its origins to the Portuguese colonies in Africa, particularly Mozambique, symbolizing the cultural exchanges that shaped Goan cuisine.

As per a folklore, African soldiers, known as Kapris or Cafres, grilled chicken over open fires by the Mandovi river, a practice rooted in their homeland. The dish's name, "cafreal," evolved linguistically, with some associating it with the word "kaffir." Notably, the Russian trader Afanasy Nikitin recorded its use in India in 1466. Another story links cafreal to Goans returning from East Africa post-Liberation in the 1960s.

Chicken, though a luxury, was widely favored in Goan households, barring some vegetarian communities like the Gaud Saraswats. Cultural practices, such as rooster sacrifices in festivals like Rathasaptami, further integrated chicken into Hindu culinary traditions.

Distinct from dishes like chicken piri-iri, chicken cafreal features chicken braised in a spicy masala of coriander, green chillies, mint, and lime, embodying Goa's bold, aromatic flavors and unique culinary identity.



Fair at Banastarim village

POI

Poi, also called poee or poie, was introduced by the Portuguese after they colonized Goa in 1510. Stories say that while they brought chilli, cashew, and potato to India, they missed their 'pao' bread to accompany their meaty meals. Unable to find suitable yeast, they used toddy (local palm liquor) to ferment the dough, giving the bread a sour flavor. Baked in wood-fired ovens on stone, this created poi—slightly puffed and hollow in the middle. Modern poi, made of refined wheat flour with bran sprinkled on top, no longer uses toddy but remains a perfect pairing for Goan curries and gravies.



Ingredients

250 gms chicken
2 tsp ginger garlic paste
1 bunch coriander leaves
Few mint leaves
4-5 green chillies
3 cloves (laung)
1 tsp pepper powder
2 tbsp vinegar
1 tsp turmeric powder (haldi)
Salt to taste
Oil



Method

Clean and pat dry the chicken pieces, making slits to allow the marinade to penetrate. In a blender, combine garlic, ginger, green chillies, coriander leaves, mint leaves, cumin seeds, coriander seeds, turmeric powder, black pepper powder, vinegar, and salt, blending into a smooth paste with a little water if needed. Rub the marinade evenly over the chicken, cover, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or preferably overnight. Brush a baking tray with oil, place the marinated chicken on it, and bake at 180°C for 18 minutes. Serve the chicken cafreal hot, garnished with lemon wedges, and optionally with sliced onions and tomatoes on the side. Enjoy with a side of poi.

**This recipe is adaptable to a hob*

DID YOU KNOW?

Renders performed rituals for safety and prosperity, offering *sur* to the gods near the last tapped coconut tree to seek protection in their hazardous trade. Traditionally, a small amount of feni was cast into the flames after distillation, reflecting an adaptation of ancient Goan rites to ward off evil.



Holle

The timeless connection between dessert and rituals

Holle, a traditional Goan dessert, reflects Goa's cultural and agricultural heritage, where rice and coconut symbolize prosperity. This dessert, meaning “cone,” is central to Goan festivities, particularly the vibrant San Joao celebration on June 24th. During this monsoon festival, marked by villagers jumping into rivers and wells, holle becomes a culinary highlight.

Holle is crafted by shaping jackfruit leaves into cones, filling them with rice flour and a sweet mixture of jaggery, coconut, *chana*, and cardamom, then steaming the cones to produce a moist, fragrant dessert. Once cooled, the leaves are removed to reveal the delicately flavored treat.

Similar to *patoleo*, a coconut-jaggery sweet steamed in turmeric leaves during Hindu festivals like Nag Panchami and Ganesh Chaturthi, holle celebrates Goan heritage and the land's bounty, uniting families and communities in tradition and joy.



Women dehusking coconuts

Ingredients

1 cup rice flour
1 cup hot water (or as required)
1/2 cup grated coconut
1/2 cup grated jaggery
1/4 tsp cardamom powder
A pinch of salt
Jackfruit leaves



ROGDO

The grinding stone, or *rogdo*, holds cultural significance in both Hindu and Christian Goan kitchens, where women gather at dawn for the ritual of grinding rice while singing *oviyos*. These songs, sung in a variety of languages like Marathi, Konkani, and Gawda, weave stories and traditions that connect generations. This early morning practice, prioritized before other chores, underscores its role in daily sustenance and cultural continuity.

Method

Combine rice flour, salt, and hot water in a bowl, mixing well to form a smooth, pliable dough that is neither too dry nor too wet. In a separate bowl, mix grated coconut, jaggery, and cardamom powder until evenly combined. Clean jackfruit leaves with a damp cloth and shape each into a cone, securing with a toothpick. Apply a thin layer of rice dough inside each cone and fill with the coconut mixture, sealing the top with more rice flour. Place the cones in a steamer, then set the steamer over a microwave-safe glass bowl filled with hot water, ensuring there's space between the water and the steamer base. Steam at 100% micropower level for 15–20 minutes. Once cooked, allow the holle to cool slightly before carefully unwrapping them from the jackfruit leaves. Serve warm as a delightful snack or dessert.

**This recipe is adaptable to a hob*





Pickles

The Goan art of food preservation

Goans live in harmony with nature's rhythms, adapting to the changing seasons, monsoons, and summer heat. Summers marked a pause for farmers and saw fishermen mooring boats in preparation for the rains. This cyclical life gave rise to *purumenth*, the communal tradition of stockpiling provisions for lean times.

From March to May, Goan households became hubs for drying mango, jackfruit seeds, kokum, and salted prawns. Spare rooms stored smoked sausages and burneys of parboiled brown rice. Adults salted fish and prepared sausages, while children guarded mango slices from birds. Villages were filled with the rich aromas of food being dried, fermented, salted, or pickled with vinegar, chilli, turmeric, and garlic.

Vinegar, essential for pickling, is crafted through toddy fermentation, an art refined by the Portuguese. Toddy tappers, or renders, from Catholic and Hindu communities, pass down the skill of collecting toddy, or *sur*. Fermentation occurs in porous clay pots (*kollso*), enriched with items like charred coconut husks or roasted rice. The mixture ferments undisturbed for two months before bottling.

Four kinds of vinegar were traditionally used in Goan homes for varying intensities and flavors. Even waste whey was utilized to wash raw meats. Hindu households, however, often relied on preserving agents like lime, salt, and turmeric.



Toddy Tapper/Render

DID YOU KNOW?

The name 'feni', a local spirit, is inspired by the Konkani word 'feno', meaning froth, which forms on the surface of toddy during fermentation.

Tendli Pickle

Ingredients

100 gms tendli (ivy gourd/tendlim/
tindora)
2 tbsp salt, 3/4 cup oil
1/2 cup vinegar
Salt (as per taste)
Granulated white sugar (if required)

For the Pickle Masala

15 dry Kashmiri red chillies
6 byadagi red dry chillies (or any spicy
red chillies)
10 garlic cloves (roughly chopped)
1 inch ginger
5 gms of meethi (fenugreek seeds)
4 tbsp jaggery (palm/cane, or use sugar)
1/3 cup vinegar

Method

Wash the tendli and cut them into thin strips (about 8 pieces each), then apply salt and keep them covered in a cool place for 6–8 hours. Drain all the water and sun-dry the tendli for a few hours until they appear wilted, yielding about 1½ cups. Grind all the ingredients listed under 'For the Pickle Masala' into a fine paste. In a vessel, heat oil and fry the masala for a minute, then add the tendli and mix thoroughly. Pour in the vinegar, cover, and cook on a low flame for about 30 minutes. Adjust salt and sugar to taste, cook for another 3 minutes, and allow the mixture to cool completely. Store in a glass jar and let it mature for at least 2 weeks before consuming.



PURUMENTH TRADITION

The *purumenth* tradition is a communal effort to stockpile provisions for leaner times. The *purumenth* tradition endures, driven by nostalgia and the enduring appeal to the palate is continued to this day. Once a necessity, this practice is now a cherished cultural ritual, connecting present generations to the past and the timeless dance with nature's cycles.



Khatkhatem

The beloved vegetarian stew fit for the gods

Goa's vegetarian cuisine boasts hidden gems like khatkhatem, a traditional Saraswat stew made with a mix of local vegetables. Saraswat cuisine, rooted in the Saraswat Brahmins who migrated to coastal Maharashtra, Goa, and Karnataka, blends traditional recipes with local ingredients, featuring coconut, tamarind, kokum, and a hearty use of spices.

Folklore about Lord Ganesh's preference for 21 offerings influences khatkhatem, traditionally incorporating 21 vegetables like pumpkin, yam, drumsticks, and local plant stems. This vibrant, sweet-tangy stew is prepared during festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi, aligning with *saatvic* traditions by avoiding onion, garlic, and bitter vegetables.

Toor dal, rice, coconut, and gram are seasoned with turmeric, chilli, and tamarind, with sweetness from jaggery or sugar. Triphala berry (Sichuan pepper) is a signature addition, giving khatkhatem its unique flavor. Excluding kokum preserves its *saatvic* nature, while every family's recipe adds a personal touch.



Ganesh Chaturthi being celebrated on the river Mandovi

Ingredients

Assorted Vegetables
1/2 cup Cooked Toor Dal
1/2 cup Grated Coconut
1 tsp Peppercorns
1 tbsp Tamarind
1 tbsp Jaggery (as required)
2-3 Dry Red Chillies
1 tsp Turmeric Powder
5 to 6 Triphala Berries
2-3 Chillies
1 ltr Hot Water
Salt (as per taste)



Method

In a microwave-safe glass bowl, combine hot water, chillies, and triphala, and heat for 10 minutes at 100% micropower level until the flavours infuse into the water. Meanwhile, blend coconut paste ingredients—grated coconut, peppercorns, red chillies, haldi, and tamarind—into a fine, thick paste using a little water. Peel and dice all vegetables into large chunks, then add them to the aromatic liquid and cook for 25–30 minutes at full power. Add the cooked toor dal and prepared coconut paste into the vegetable mixture and cook for another 10 minutes at 100% micropower level. Adjust salt and jaggery to taste, and serve hot with steamed white rice.

**This recipe is adaptable to a hob*

DID YOU KNOW?

Khatkhatem derives its name from the sound of boiling, echoing the comforting noise of the stew as it simmers on the stove.



Sukhi Kolbi

Amalgam of culture and history

Sukhi Kolbi, a dry prawn delicacy, is a cherished dish in the Konkani Muslim culinary tradition along India's western coast. Known for its rich Konkani spices and slow cooking, this dish highlights the region's seafood-focused diet. The community's cuisine reflects a blend of Maharashtrian, African, and Arabic influences, stemming from historical migrations and trade.

Arab traders, who settled on India's coasts, adapted their culinary traditions by replacing camel and sheep meats with goat, incorporating local staples like coconut, rice, and seafood. While Muslim dynasties' direct influence on Goan food is debated, their culinary nuances likely left a mark.

Konkani Muslim cuisine is innovative, using local ingredients like kokum in fish curries and Arabic elements such as fennel (*saunf*). The use of coconut milk and local rice further showcases their adaptability. Sukhi Kolbi, with its unique umami flavor, symbolizes the blend of local and foreign influences, preserving a heritage passed down through generations.



A woman on a handmill (grinding stone)

Ingredients

250 gms dried prawns (kolbi), cleaned & washed
2 onions (finely chopped)
2 tomatoes (finely chopped)
3-4 green chillies (slit lengthwise)
2 tbsp coconut oil (or any cooking oil of your choice)
1 tsp mustard seeds
1/2 tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp red chili powder (adjust to taste)
Salt (as per taste)
Fresh oriander leaves for garnish
5-7 petals dry kokum



Method

In a microwave-safe glass bowl, heat coconut oil for 2 minutes at 100% micro-power level, then add mustard seeds and continue heating for 5 minutes until they splutter. Add chopped onions and sauté at the same power level for 7 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes, until golden brown. Mix in chopped tomatoes and green chillies, and cook for another 6 minutes. Add turmeric powder, red chilli powder, and salt, stirring well to combine. Add cleaned and washed dried prawns (kolbi) to the mixture, ensuring they are well-coated with the spices, and then add dry kokum petals. Cook for 10–15 minutes at 100% micropower level, stirring occasionally, until the moisture evaporates and a dry mixture remains. Remove the bowl from the microwave, garnish with fresh coriander leaves, and serve the sukhi kolbi hot with steamed rice or as a side dish with *roti* or bread.

**This recipe is adaptable to a hob*

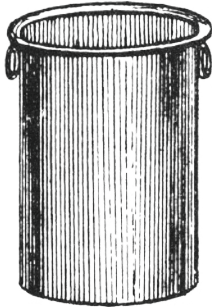


FATOR GUNDO

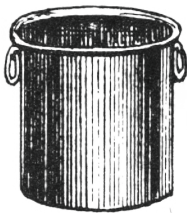
The preparation of sukhi kolbi is deeply rooted in tradition, with the use of the *fator gundo*—a pentagon-shaped grinding stone—being central to achieving the authentic texture and flavour profile of the spices in the dish. This tool, around which many generational songs and practices revolve, is emblematic of the culinary heritage of the Konkani Muslim kitchen.



PANCHA-HANDICHÓ TOP



GODGUENCHÓ TOP



HANDDO



TOP



COLSÓ



CHIMBÚ



MODQUI



CABEANDDI



COLSULI



TAMBIO



POLLÓ CAILI



VATLI



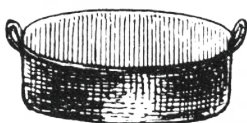
TABÓA



CAILI



ODDEA CAILI



CANSO



PITLI



LATTFOLEM



TAPCADI



ELAPÓ CAILI



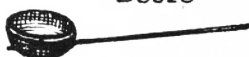
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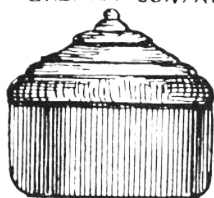
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DOULÓ



SADNAM CONFRÓ



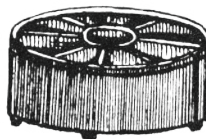
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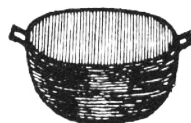
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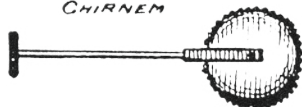
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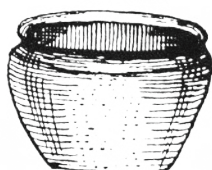
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HATÓ



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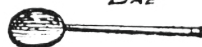
DAUL



CANSUL



DAE



THAL



TOPLÉM



LOTTI



TATLI



GANGOLI



DOBO



ZANBA



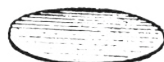
PELO



VATCÓ



TOVÓ





A hindu woman on her way to the well

Image courtesy: Krishnadas Shama Goa State Central Library.



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