

Meatless dishes are the rage in namma city

What do Anil Kumble, Vishwanathan Anand and Amitabh Bachchan have in common? They are all vegetarian and proud of it. Whether it is for health reasons, to save the planet or do their bit for animals, a number of Bengalureans too seem to be going their way. Veg food is now preferred for highend quality dining and is not just limited to cafes and darshinis.

South Indies and Higher Taste are proof of the fact that there is a customer who enjoys fine dining veg, maybe for the

unique ness of the concept.

Chef Aditya Fatepuria of Higher Taste at Iskcon believes there is a trend of people turning to vegetarianism off late. "At the restaurant, we go deeper into the concept by providing Sattvic food," he explains. "It is veg minus the use of ingredients like garlic, onion and eggs which create tamas (heat, desire) in your body. Sattvic equals wholesome."

Food is made and served within four hours. Aditya says the popular dishes are Nellikka sharu (Gooseberry soup), for starters there is Kakori seekh kabab, inji vadai (ginger flakes vadai) and zafrani kofta. For main course there is Elaneer Caraisu (tender coconut curry). The base of the curry is ground cashews which are mixed with tender coconut water and tender coconut pieces and boiled. This goes well with rice or dosa.

Rajabhojanam is another signature dish which is very popular.

This 'food of the kings' is a curry made with delicious nuts -cashew, pista, almond and raisins. Paniyarams or rice dumplings are another favourite with guests, according to chef.

"We have them in different forms. Plain, sukku (ginger flavoured), and idiyappams."

Kaikari idiyappam is a specialty which uses specially ground masalas. "The masalas that we have developed are the basic for the food. The entire experience is very aromatic." For desserts, the Nendrapadam dosai (sweet banana pancakes) and a paan ice cream which "is a mouth freshner cum digestive cum dessert is a must-have!" adds Aditya.

Started in 1924, MTR is an institution by itself for most Bengalureans. Famous for its masala dosa, the restaurant is packed at meal times too. A typical meal consists of rice (plain, bisibele, kara or vangi), rasam, sambhar and holige. Says Geetha Bhat of MTR, "There has never been a time when veg cuisine was out of fashion. We at MTR have maintained cleanliness, quality and quantity. That is the reason for our continued patronage. But we definitely see a resurgence in the number vegetarians."

Raju S, spokesperson for Kadambam restaurant believes the traditional will never go out of taste. "There is no use of garlic, and very little onion in this Iyengar cuisine restaurant."

There are several other famous items from the Iyengar's kitchen.

Nuchina Unde (a steamed ground tur dal delicacy served with Majjige Huli--buttermilkbased pumpkin

curry; Adai Dosa --a dosa of mixed lentils; Pacha kolambu Sadham --mixed vegetable rice preparation without any sour ingredient and a dominant mustard tang. Adds Raju, "The mini meal is cheap at Rs 30 and contains rice, rasam, sambhar, palya, curd rice and chapatti. It is usually topped off with Kadambam specialty -sweet sakkara pongal."