



Versatility in Hospitality Industry around the Globe A Case Study on Cuisines and Culture of Afghanistan

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Abstract: *Afghanistan is rich in traditions and customs, and has long been a melting-pot for an array of ethnic groups and cultures. The country is geographically positioned at the meeting point of 4 major cultural areas: the Middle-East, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and the Far-East. These different influences can be seen in the cultural norms and practices across the country, and can be tasted in Afghan cuisine, with the country's regional specialities reflecting the variety found across the country. Hospitality is an integral part of Afghan culture, with the best possible food being served for guests, always following a cup of delicious tea, of course. Tea is drunk multiple times every day, is offered to all guests and most families have their own recipe. Food is traditionally eaten communally, sat on large colourful cushions called toshak placed around a low table called a sandali. From kebabs and palaw to marinated meats and fruit, a variety of special dishes are prepared throughout the year. Whether during religious celebrations or festivals, or at engagements and weddings, there is always an excuse to eat well. It is whilst listening to music when the various linguistic, ethnic and regional cultural traditions of Afghanistan are perhaps the most prominent. Folk music from the southern Pashtun regions, that come in the poetic form of a landay, composed of nine and thirteen-syllable lines, contrast with the Dari four-line chahar baiti form traditionally found in the West. Fused together with western-influences with the foundation of Radio Kabul in 1941, a nation-wide Afghan style of music began to form. It was this era that produced internationally famous Afghan artists such as Ahmad Zahir, and later Farhad Darya.*

Keywords: Chapli kebab, Nowruz, Mantoo.

I. INTRODUCTION

For two millennia, Afghanistan (which borders Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, China, Pakistan and Iran) was the place where important trade routes between India, China, the Middle East and Europe converged. Marco Polo crossed the country en route to China; Arab travellers and the British passed through on their way to India.

A rich culture took hold at this crossroads, and with it a varied cuisine that has survived centuries of war, invasion and internal upheaval. Strife-torn Afghanistan is now an undeniably poor country, but as expatriate Afghani food lover Ryla Smith says, "some of the poorest countries in the world come up with amazing dishes. No matter how hard-pressed, the Afghans treat their guests with immense respect and will go to great lengths to serve them the best food possible.

Afghan cuisine is mainly influenced by that of Persia (Iran), India and Mongolia. From India came chillies, saffron, garam masala (cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, nutmeg) and pepper. Persia contributed coriander, mint and cooking with sabzi (spinach or green herbs), while Mongolian influences take shape in dumplings and noodles. But Afghan cuisine has a style of its own, [1]"Ahmed Shah Massoud".

Fatty dishes are an important fuel in this nation of harsh landscapes and freezing winters, with oil used liberally and mutton fat traditionally added to many dishes. Unlike some in their region, Afghans like their food neither too spicy nor too hot, and they are renowned for their use of dried fruit and nuts. They have a flair for rice, with yoghurt used as a dressing, topping or accompaniment, much like Italians use cheese.

Meals are eaten with the right hand, using bread as a scoop. And bread is eaten with just about everything. The two main types are similar to those of Pakistan, India and Iran: a large round, flat bread (lawash) and a naan-style bread marked with distinctive grooves, commonly sprinkled with sesame and nigella seeds, and cooked on the inside walls of a clay oven.



Rice is a specialty and considered the best part of any meal. Rice-based dishes range from simple chalu – fluffy white rice, popularly eaten with korma – to the flagship dish Kabuli pilao, which consists of slow-cooked meat in a dome of gently seasoned, spiced rice with lentils, raisins, carrots, ground cardamom and nuts.

Dozens of variations of pulao are eaten in Afghanistan. Weddings and family gatherings must feature several rice dishes and reputations can be made or lost with rice, which is also the key ingredient in sweet dishes such as sheer berenj (rice pudding).

Dumplings are hugely popular but usually reserved for special meals at home, as they are time-consuming to make. Mantoo are tortellini-like pasta parcels filled with onion and spiced minced meat, usually topped with a tomato-based sauce, a yoghurt sauce and dried mint; while ashak are filled with a chive-like vegetable called gandana, topped with a garlic yoghurt sauce, spiced minced meat and dried mint. Each family or village will have its own version of these dishes.

Lamb and chicken are widely enjoyed, with lamb or mutton commonly minced or marinated for hours to ensure tenderness. The Afghan lamb kebab is a must-try, with chunks of meat (sometimes on the bone) threaded onto long metal skewers, cooked over charcoal and served with naan. Chapli kebab, a beef mince patty, is a specialty of eastern Afghanistan.

Meat dishes also include lamb chops or ribs, kofta (meatballs) and the highly popular korma, a type of stew with a base of fried onion and garlic, to which the cook adds her choice of meat, vegetables, chickpeas, tomato, fruit, yoghurt and spices. Dried plum is a unique Afghan addition that imparts a sweet and sour flavour.

Afghans drink copious quantities of strong black or green tea (choi), spiced with cardamom or with sugar, milk or cream added depending on the occasion. Tea defines hospitality in Afghanistan, and it too is steeped in ritual. For instance, tea with milk (sheer choi) is usually served on more formal occasions, with lashings of sugar added for honoured guests. Accompaniments might be dried fruits and nuts and/or sweets such as sheer pira (a nutty milk fudge, also known as shirpera) and fried pastries flavoured with combinations of saffron, cardamom, rosewater and nuts.

Types of Staple Foods

Rice

- Rice is a core staple food in Afghan cuisine and the most important part of any meal
- Kabuli palaw (the national dish) – meat and stock are added, plus a topping of fried raisins, slivered carrots, and pistachios.
- So, what is kabuli palaw also known as (QABILI PALAU) kabuli palaw is one of the most famous dishes in Afghanistan. Kabuli Palaw was created by the upper-class families of Kabul who could afford to include caramelized carrots, plump raisins and coveted nuts in their rice.
- Over time as people in Afghanistan became wealthier this dish became more common. So, the name was changed from Kabuli Palaw to Qabili Palaw. The Dari word Qabil - means well accomplished, indicating that only a skilled chef can truly balance the various flavors of this dish.

Bread

Naan is a type of flat-bread cooked in an oven made from a hole in the ground. The bread is slapped onto a stone wall to cook. Other varieties include naan-e-afghan /naan-e-tandoori (a type of afghan bread cooked in a vertical ground clay oven or a tandoor) and naan-e-tawagy (flatbread cooked on a flat pan), among others.

Qormah

- Qormah (also spelled "korma" or "qorma") is an onion- and tomato-based stew or casserole usually served with challow rice. First, onion is caramelized, for a richly colored stew. Then tomato is added, along with a variety of fruits, spices, and vegetables, depending on the recipe. The main ingredient, which can be meat or other vegetables, is added last. There are hundreds of different types of qormahs including:
- Qormah e gosht (meat qormah) – usually the main qormah served with palaw at gatherings
- Qormah e alou-bokhara wa dalnakhod – onion-based using veal or chicken, sour plums, lentils, and cardamom
- Qormah e nadroo – onion-based, using lamb meat or veal, yogurt, lotus roots, cilantro, and coriander

Kabob

- Kabob Also known as kabab in Indian cuisines.
- Afghan kabob is most often found in restaurants and at outdoor street vendor stalls. Most of the time, it contains lamb meat. Kabob is made with naan instead of rice. Customers have the option to sprinkle sumac or ghora (dried ground sour grapes) on their kabob. Pieces of fat from the sheep's tail (jijeq) are usually added to the skewers to add extra flavor.
- Other popular kabobs include the lamb cho, ribs, kofta (ground beef), and chicken.
- Chapli kebab, a specialty of eastern Afghanistan, is a patty of minced beef. It is a popular barbecue meal in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is prepared flat and round and served with naan. The original recipe of chapli kabob dictates a half meat, half flour mixture which renders it lighter in taste and less expensive.

Shorba

- Shorba (Afghan soup), shorba is one of the most famous dish in Afghanistan Shorba is a kind of soup that is served as a part of many cuisines all over the world. Shorba is derived from the Arabic word Shurbah, which means soup, and it originated in the Middle East, although its popularity is growing exponentially in India It is traditionally prepared with meat, although Indian renditions include vegetarian and vegan preparations to cater to the food habits of the majority of people.
- Though used interchangeably, soup and shorba are actually different in two key aspects. Firstly, soup is meant to be served as a starter and before the main course, whereas shorba can be eaten before or during the main course. Secondly, soup may or may not include ingredients like meat or veggies, but shorba never includes any added ingredient. Shorma is prepared with meat or veggies and herbs and spices, but the broth is separated from the ingredients before being served, leaving the recipient with only the flavoured broth.

Tea

- Tea in Afghanistan is called chai, which can either be green or black. It is consumed at all times, especially a short time after finishing a meal or with guests during any social gathering. Most people drink green tea with no sugar. Some add saffron, sugar or cardamom.[2]Banting, Erinn (2003).
- Sheer chai (which translates from "milk tea") is also consumed but mostly in the morning and on special occasions. It is a type of Kashmiri chai. Many people of Afghanistan also drink masala chai, particularly in cities such as asadabad, jalalabad, khost and kandahar.

Desserts

Now lets jump into one of the most foremost part of every cuisine (desserts)

Afghanistan has a lot of desserts and snacks it contains

- Sheer Yakh, a traditional dessert
- Sheer Khurma, a traditional dessert
- Sheer Berini (Rice Pudding)
- Cream Roll (pastry)
- Baklava (Pastry)
- Afghan Cake (similar to Pound Cake, sometimes with real fruit or jelly inside)
- Fernea, sometimes spelled feereny, (milk and cornstarch help make this very sweet, similar to rice pudding without the rice)
- Kulcha (variety of cookies, baked in clay ovens with charcoal).

Afghanistan Culture

The culture of Afghanistan has persisted for over three Millennia, tracing record to at least the time of the Achaemenid empire in 500 BCE, and encompasses the cultural diversity of the nation. Its location at the crossroads of central, south and western Asia historically made it a hub of diversity, dubbed by one historian as the "roundabout of the ancient world".



Afghanistan is a mostly a tribal society with different regions of the country having its own subculture. Despite this, nearly all afghans follow Islamic traditions, celebrate the same holidays, dress the same, consume the same food, listen to the same music and are Multilingual to a certain extent. Its culture is strongly tied with elements of Turko-Persian and Indo Persian Culture which can be seen in the likes of language, cuisine or classical music.

Afghan culture is increasingly becoming a dynamic realm of academic study in scholarly terms. In more recent history, Afghan culture has been threatened and fragmented due to the prolonged conflict in the country.[4]"Ahmed Shah Massoud". History Commons. 2010.

Music

- Traditionally, only men have been involved in theater acting. Recently, in theater arts, women have begun to take center stage.
- Since the 1980s, the nation has witnessed several wars so music has been suppressed and recording for outsiders minimal. During the 1990s, the Taliban government banned instrumental music and much public music-making.
- Many musicians and singers continued to play their trade in the cities of other countries. Pakistani cities such as peshawar, karachi and islamabad are important centers for the distribution of Afghan music. Kabul has long been the regional cultural capital, but outsiders have tended to focus on the cities of herat and mazar-i-sharif with its qataghani style.
- Lyrics across the country are typically in both dari- Persian and pashto. uzbeki, hindi, and western style songs and music are also very popular in Afghanistan.
- Afghans enjoy music by playing many types of instruments. They also enjoy performing the attan, which is considered the national dance of Afghanistan. What is typically heard in the country are folk songs or ballads. Many of the songs are known by almost everyone and have been around for many years. The main traditional Afghan music instruments include:
 1. Harmonium
 2. Santur
 3. Chang
 4. Rubab and many more.

Language and Literature

- Dari and Pashto are both the official Languages of Afghanistan, although Dari (Afghan Persian) serves as the Lingua Franca for the majority. People in the northern and central areas of the country usually speak Persian/Dari, while those living in the south and east speak Pashto.
- Afghans living in the western regions of Afghanistan speak both Dari and Pashto. Most citizens are fluent in both languages, especially those living in major cities where the population is multi-ethnic.
- Several other languages are spoken in their own regions, which includes Uzbek, Turkmen and Balochi. English is gradually becoming popular among the young generation. There are smaller number of Afghans who can understand Russian, mainly among the northern Tajik, Uzbek and Turkmen groups

Poetry

- Poetry in Afghanistan has long been a cultural tradition and passion. It is mainly in Persian/Dari and Pashto languages, although in modern times it is also becoming more recognized in Afghanistan's other languages. Classic Persian and Pashto poetry plays an important role in the Afghan culture.
- Poetry has always been one of the major educational pillars in the region, to the level that it has integrated itself into culture. Some notable poets include Khusal Khan Khattak, Rahman Baba, Massoud Nawabi, Nazo Tokhi, Ahmad Shah Durrani, and Ghulam Muhammad Tarzi. Some of the famous Persian Language poets and Authors from the 10th to 15th centuries are Rumi, Rabi'a balkhi, Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, Jami, alisher navoi, Sanai, Abu Mansur Daqiqi, Farrukhi Sistani, unsuri, and anvari. Contemporary Persian language poets

and writers include khalilullah Khalili and Sufi Ashqari.

Housing

- Houses in rural Afghanistan historically have been made of Mudbricks and Mud, and have a series of rooms located around a private rectangular courtyard where women and children can move around without being seen by the public.
- In recent years, however, Afghans living in rural areas began building their homes using cement and Bricks, similar as those built in the big cities. In the north and west they are typically in fortified villages called qalahs ("fortresses"), whereas in the mountainous northern and eastern regions they differ, for example wooden multistoried dwellings in Nuristan.
- Married sons often share houses with their parents, but with separate quarters. Afghan houses contain a special room where men socialize with each other known as a hujra. In the major cities, many Afghans live in modern houses or Apartments. The Nomadic, Kuchi People live in large tents because they are constantly on the move from one part of the country to another. The nomads of Turkic or Mongol origin in the north tend to live in yurts.

Art, Weaving, Ceramics

- The lands of Afghanistan have a long history of art, with the world's earliest known usage of oil painting found in cave murals in the country. Afghan art includes Persian miniature style, with Kamaledin behzad of Herat being one of the most notable miniature artists of the Timurid and early Safavid periods. Since the 1900s, the nation began to use Western techniques in art. Abdul Ghafoor Breshna was a prominent Afghan painter and sketch artist from Kabul during the 20th century.
- Afghanistan's art was originally almost entirely done by men, but recently women are entering the arts programs at Kabul university. Art is largely centered at the national museum of Afghanistan, The National Gallery of Afghanistan and the National Archives of Afghanistan in Kabul. There are a number of art schools in the country. The Center for Contemporary Arts Afghanistan (CCAA) in Kabul provides young people to learn contemporary paintings.
- The art of making Carpets has been prominent for centuries. Afghanistan is known for making beautiful oriental rugs. The Afghan Carpet has certain prints that make them unique to Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan is known for its production of Afghan Rugs, traditionally handwoven using a number of well-known and highly-prized patterns.

Traditional

- Farmer's Day, also known as nauruz (Nowruz), is an ancient annual Afghan festival which celebrates both the beginning of spring and the new year. The observances usually last two weeks, culminating on the first day of the Afghan New Year, March 21, and corresponds to the first day of the Persian calendar
- Nauruz is related to a religion called zoroastrainism which was in practice in ancient persia before the emergence of Islam. This festival is to celebrate the arrival of spring as plants, trees, and flowers start to bloom making the weather pleasant. On the day of Nauruz, families usually celebrate the festival by cooking food and going out for a picnic.
- Families cook various kinds of meals, Samanak, and Haft-mewah or dry fruits that start with the letter (س) or (S) which represents the arrival of spring season. Haft-mewah contains seven dry fruits which families place in warm water two to three days before Nauruz. Samanak is another type of dessert made from wheat and sugar.
- Women usually get together days before Nauruz to prepare Samanak. They pour the ingredients into a big pot placed on an open fire and take turns to stir the wheat and sugar in the pot before it turns into a thick paste. Once prepared, the dessert is then served on the day of Nauruz.

II. SUMMARY

So, as we know Afghanistan consists great cuisines and culture, Afghanistan is mainly Recognised by its Tradition, we saw their way of living, housing, way of clothing and etc. Afghanistan has grown a lot as a country compared to other Arabic countries.

III. CONCLUSION

Afghanistan is highly rich in culture & tradition, they have vast variety in cuisines, Afghanistan is also a country which follows their ancestors' traditions till now, Afghan people also prefer to Read/listen to a poetry, in their households they got very unique types of arts weaving, ceramics, Dari and Pashto are both the official Languages of Afghanistan. There are many famous monuments in Afghanistan which are worth a visit such as herat citadel, Khawaja abdulla shrine and many more. The points which we covered with the help of that we can say that Afghanistan is one of the few countries which follows the tradition and culture of their ancestors but it is getting modernised day by day.

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