

On the Ulhasnagar food trail

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The Guide travelled to Ulhasnagar to tuck into some seriously quaint and tasty fare that you won't find anywhere else. Crisp Buttons soaked in spicy water, and Mirchi Bhajiya heaped in thick dahi. Interesting? You bet!

Business and food are two strengths the Sindhi community is known for, and when the two come together and food becomes business, they come up with culinary gems.

In Ulhasnagar, it's all about value-for-money food, so, forget ambience. From the little known Butter Papdi to the very-basic cutting chai, Sindhi's manage to add a zing to it all.

Most of these nashta items don't make it beyond the 13 sq. km. periphery of the Sindhi-dominated city.

We traversed 50-odd kms to meet Ulhasnagar-based businessman and foodie Naresh Raghani, to take us to the best eateries in town.



Kheema Chaap

At Geeta Bhawan

This one's a meat-eater's delight. It has a potato patty with kheema stuffing, shallow-fried, with a steaming kheema gravy poured over it.

It's advisable not to watch calorie count while digging into this one.

Geeta Bhawan Restaurant, Shivaji Chowk, camp No. 3. Time: 9 am to 12 midnight

Mutton in Sindhi Curry

At Mama muttonwala

Most street food in Ulhasnagar is vegetarian but the Mutton in Sindhi Curry at Mama Muttonwala, is a must-try.

The popular recipe comes with a great story, if you can coax Mama to get out of the kitchen and spare a few minutes.

Mewaldas Pariyani or Mama Pakistani as he is better known, lived with one half of his family that decided to stay back in Shikarpur, Sind after partition.

In 1984, he decided he wanted to shift here permanently. But with no means to earn a living, he had to make do with odd jobs.

In 1988, he set up the eatery. Mama goes bazaar shopping himself, so that he gets the freshest meat, before overseeing the cooking process in his tiny kitchen.

Mama Muttonwala, behind Fish Market, opposite Nav Jeevan Co-Operative Bank, camp No. 5. Time: 11 am

to 11 pm

Button Papdi and Dal Sandwich

At Ballo Dal Papdiwala

Button Papdi and Dal Sandwich are two mouth-watering dishes you won't find anywhere else. The Button is a smaller version of a regular pav, baked for a longer time so that it turns crisp.

To make the dish, Ballo, the owner of one of the most popular stalls, dunks the Buttons in spicy water, letting it seep into the bread.

This is the tricky part; the Button should absorb just enough water to get spicy without getting soggy. The soaking Buttons are then dumped in a plate, garnished with chopped onions, tomatoes and farsan.

Dal Sandwich is another local speciality with a Sindhi twist. The regular sandwich with potato filling is submerged under a heap of Mung Dal, giving it an extra special protein kick and its name.

The Dal is prepared with excruciating care it's boiled over a large stove for three hours, and not a drop of oil is used throughout the process!

Ballo Dal Papdiwala, opposite Ulhasnagar Municipal Corporation, camp No. 3. Time: 6 pm to 9 pm

Bhee Vada

At Khiyal Nashtawala

The place might not have a signboard indicating its presence but the crowd outside the stall makes it clear that this is where you get the best Bhee Vada. The vada is like a Batata Vada, except that the filling is made of Bhee or lotus stem, mashed and mixed with loads of spices. Be prepared to clamour with hordes to be able to get your prized vada, since they run out of vadas within two hours of opening shop. For the sweet-toothed, there's Sheera Malpua.

Khiyal Nashtawala, Dudh Naka, camp No. 5. Time: 6 pm to 7.30 pm. Bhee Vada for Rs 4.50, Sheera Malpua for Rs 10

Pauni Chai

At Jai Vashan Shah Tea Stall

When they can experiment with Samosa and Sandwich, can chai be far behind? Jai Vashan Shah Tea Stall has at least 5 different chais, and sells over 1,000 cups of tea a day.

The most loved is Pauni Chai or pauni-kum chai (very little tea and loads of milk).

Owner Kamlesh Srivastav says the secret lies in using copper vessels to make and heat the tea concoction. The milk is kept on the boil throughout the day to lend it a creamy taste.

Jai Vashan Shah Tea Stall, behind Telson Market, Section 17, camp no. 3.

Time: 7 am to 7 pm

Sindhi Panipuri

At A1 Panipuri House

Manubhai of A1 might be a shy, quiet businessman but he makes sure his food does the talking. The Pani Puri here melts in your mouth, and the mix of spicy and sweet with a special boondi filling is just right.

Try the Dahi Mirchi (Mirchi Bhajiya loaded with thick dahi). The mirchi isn't very hot but looks deadly; perfect for those trying to build a macho image.

A1 Panipuri House, near Madhuban Hotel, Gol Maidan, camp No. 2.

Falooda with rabdi

At Mahadev Dairy

Forget the watery, milky, pink image you associate with Falooda, because in Ulhasnagar, if it's sweet, it has to be thick, rich and of course, fattening!

Here, Falooda is a combination of three or more kulfis with sevai and rabdi. The Falooda can also be disintegrated so that you can have each of its ingredients separately. What bliss!

Mahadev Dairy, Dudh Naka, Camp no. 5. Time: 9 am to 2 pm, 7 pm to 12 midnight. Mahadev Dairy, near Sub Registrar Office, Gandhi Road, camp no. 5.

Time: 7 am to 11 pm.

Anda Bhajiya

At Raju Ande Bhajiyawala

Just when you thought egg was part of a typical light breakfast, expect a Sindhi to surprise you. Raju Ande Bhajiyawala has a trademark over his Anda Bhajiyas; a regular bhajiya stuffed with a whole boiled egg.

On its own, it's not all that exciting but they have a special masala they sprinkle over it. Ask for a pav to go along with it.

Thadal

At Jairam Sharbatwala

Naresh recommends Thadal, a Sindhi drink much like Thandai. It's a summer cooler made of khus, jeera and other cooling spices.

The refresher is said to be so cooling that it can give you a cold, so a pinch of black pepper is added. Else try their Pan Pasand and Mogra sherbets.

Jairam Sharbatwala, Nehru Chowk, camp No. 2.

Dal Pakwan and Dal Samosa

At Hundomal Nashta House

These two dishes are a hit with locals. Hundomal Nashta House and Doli Nashtawala, both family-run, are where you should head.

Hundomal was started 40 years ago, and runs out of food within an hour of opening doors. The family prepares all dishes and employs just one maid to help them roll the dough for the Pakwan.

Prices might have increased from 30 paise a plate to Rs 12, but the quality is just as good, they assure you.

Daulat Talreja, owner of Jai Shankar Sweet and Snacks better known as Doli Nashtawala, started off dishing out goodies from a handcart 20 years ago.

His five brothers now run a busy establishment out of two shops in the heart of Ulhasnagar. Apart from Dal Samosa and Dal Pakwan, Doli also makes Soyabean Cutlets.

Hundomal Nashta House, near Ulhasnagar Municipal Corporation, camp No. 2. Time: 9 am to 11 am, 7 pm to 8.30 pm

Doli Nashtawala, near Kawanram Chowk, Station Road, Camp no. 3.

Time: 7 am to 11 pm

< Hundomal started his establishment 40 years ago. They run out of food within hours of opening shop

Farsan

At Tikamdas Dalwala

Tikamdas Dalwala is so popular that when NRI relatives come to visit family in Ulhasnagar, they ask for the savouries from this place to take back with them.

Mahesh Tikamdas started the place 30 years ago along with his brothers and today they boast almost 90 varieties of savouries. Dal Moth, Green Moong Dal and Masal Dal Sev are the most popular.

> Tikamdas Dalwala, near Fish Market, camp No. 4. Time: 11 am to 9 pm