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ers and other commercial establishments cover just a fraction of them. That is where pop-up restaurants fit the bill so admirably. Saikia may belong to Assam, but in fact she is part of the minuscule Sonowal Kachari tribe, while her husband belongs to the Bodo Kachari tribe. You may find Assamese restaurants in Assam, but try looking for one that serves ants' eggs, a Bodo delicacy. Yet, if you play your cards well, you could be crunching your way through a plate of them in far-off Malad, at the Saikia residence during a pop-up.

The food of the Kodavas, another interesting cuisine that has hardly travelled out of its native Coorg, is available in a tiny weekend-only pop-up on the terrace of the Aiyappa residence in Indiranagar, Bangalore. Called Coorg, the pop-up showcases the extraordinary bounties of nature of the land. Though pork pandhi curry has gained enormous popularity, Coorg does serve other dishes whose provenance is the coffee estates on which fruit trees grow. "Our jackfruit curry, raw mango curry and wild mushroom stir-fry are loved by our diners," says Priya Aiyappa.

Not quite a pop-up because it is permanent is Grasshopper, a charming little al fresco restaurant housed in a farm on the outskirts of Bangalore. Run by Himanshu Dimri and his wife Sonali Sattar, the fine-dine offers a delectable spread of European cuisine with touches of the Oriental and Mediterranean for a truly well-rounded flavour profile.

What has grown to be a very niche menu, started off purely as an experiment. "Himanshu would try a bunch of different things—some hits and some misses, that let him to explore and discover his strengths," Sattar says. The duo is never short on creativity and that reflects in the way they plate their food. The menu is seasonal and a seven course meal (₹2,200 per head) requires a reservation well in advance, as tables are limited to five, giving diners the privacy and exclusivity they pay for.

Not unexpectedly, Parsee food surfaces at pop-up restaurants in Mumbai. Perzen Patel may not have known how to fry an egg before she got married, but shortly thereafter she was blogging about the food of her community, making dips and desserts and planning pop-up restaurants. The few that she has been associated with so far has taught her that



HIMANSHU DIMRI AND SONALI SATTAR, Grasshopper

The fine-dine offers an European spread with Oriental and Mediterranean touches



RAVI CHOUDHARY

It's exactly as the number of people a restaurant has to be inconsistent.

You could be a friend or total stranger. You could be a regular in a new city and so on. You could be a gallery in another



ANOOTHI VISHAL,

The food journalist is a hobby cook of Kayastha cuisine, which despite its wide variety, is not available in any restaurant in the country



RAVI CHOUDHARY



AYANDRALI DUTTA, Blogger and food enthusiast attributes her passion to her Bengali genes



KC & PRIYA AIYAPPA, Coorg

Their weekend-only pop-up in Bangalore's Indiranagar specialises in food of the Kodavas, which is hardly available beyond Coorg. At present, they only do a buffet spread, with the cooking handled by Priya and two family cooks



offer. In Hyderabad, the initiative of Gopi Krishna Kishore Bylupalla is called Feazt and addresses the angst of every young professional who craves company and home food but lacks the wherewithal. Hosts who want to share their cuisine with others and those who are fond of good food and/or experimenting with flavours contact each other through Bylupalla. His concept is simple, home-style food, inexpensively priced, and he makes sure that many of the hosts are grandmothers and aunts with long-forgotten recipes to share. "The back-breaking work that I put in is totally worth it when I see the sheer pride on the faces of elderly matrons who cook for strangers and earn a bit of pin money in the bargain." Bylupalla is so sure of his product that he insists that the pricing of all those who register is kept low enough to be affordable by one and all. "I want to bring young people who live away from home in touch with elderly home cooks who may have grown up children

experience to fun baking for children to team-building exercises for corporates in a setting that requires food. Shree keeps each module to two hours to retain energy and interest of participants, which includes sharing the meal afterwards. The Foodology team sets up the mise-en-place and keeps a watch on first-timers, so it's difficult to prepare a badly cooked meal. "I want to promote the idea that food is fun in addition to healthy," beams Periakaruppan. Even she could never have anticipated the sheer variety of customers who aspire to an hour or two at Foodology, cooking, eating and bonding. From children to corporates, her venture has plenty of takers.

The concept of eating in is gaining ground rapidly. Once Upon My Kitchen introduced hobby cooks to those wanting to partake cooked meals in the company of others. Hosts

take it forward—or initiative of Ranjith ran, a media and spicing professional. I been active in Delhi: for a few months and out into other cities: hobby cook, you next and offer a sample with days and times accept diners. The group of hosts so far have with day jobs who sion for cooking. G through menus, part enjoy a meal.

Rajasek notices though but or among others. "Conversations take mere eating that is the trended." He er truth that mal or a home-different from an



NAGESH POLALI

her guests tend to be passionate about upholding the purity of cuisine than merely enjoying the convivial atmosphere of a lazy Sunday afternoon among grandpa's kheema kebabs and salli ghosht. Take for example her dhansak. To oblige vegetarian diners, she once made an all-vegetable dhansak, but when she let them know, they urged her to keep up the purity of her cuisine, even if it meant fewer vegetarian options. Now, that's not a sentiment you'd hear very often in a restaurant.

Rhea Mitra Dalal, married to Kurush Dalal, son of legendary Parsee cookbook author Katy Dalal, also hosts pop-ups with a Parsee theme at home. For the

Dalals, convenience of operation matters, so all of them are held in their flat. "We're fanatical about ingredients and their provenance. Our vinegar has to come from Navsari in Gujarat and our salli only from one source. We'd never compromise on those things, but the thought of hauling cooked dishes across the city and still being able to serve it at a certain price point—it's unthinkable except at home," she says.

You don't even need to be in a city to serve food to paid diners in your home. Sharmila Dharmapalan lives in Lovedale, outside Ooty, in a charming cottage. Her high teas are a byword, especially when clubbed with a walk through Toda villages that

this Francophile offers friends of friends. The verberna-scented butter that accompanies the scones comes from the Dharmapalan garden. More than just a high tea or a lunch, what is on offer is a window into a charmed world. The pristine countryside, the rolling hills, the impeccably maintained bungalow and the company of the Dharmapalans as they walk guests through villages and views that would be impossible to find on one's own.

Exotica isn't the only thing on

who live on another continent and who lack the chance to show off their cooking skills."

So wide-ranging has the genre of non-restaurants become that when IT professional Shree Periakaruppan moved back to Chennai after a decade in the US, she thought of food rather than software as option. Her venture, Foodology, is a smart studio kitchen in Adyar, with a dozen cooking stations and enough high-end appliances and cookware for 20 people. Foodology has been used for a number of functions, from learning how to cook to preparing a meal that re-

quires skill and

and guests have the opportunity to register online, look at menus, and



NIDHI JOLLY, Corporate who turns chef whenever she fancies. For her pop-ups, she usually sticks to world cuisine

RAVI CHOUDHARY