

SERVICE AND MODE OF EATING

In Kashmir it is said that the food should both taste and look good. Its aroma must be appetizing. Success of a meal lies in its appeal to the eyes, nose and then the tongue.

In big Kashmirī dinners, where a hundred to five hundred people are usually invited, on the occasion of weddings and festivals etc., the food is served to the guests who are seated on carpeted floors, which are sometimes covered with 'Chāṇḍanīs' (White Sheets). These dinners are served in big halls, or under decorated 'Shāmiyānē' (Canopies), which are well illuminated, and air conditioned, if necessary, by means of fans or stoves or electric heaters, according to the needs of the season.

Big metallic plates, generally made of stainless steel nowadays, are used for eating. Eating with right hand fingers and thumb is common. Service is usually done by cooks, friends and family members. To relish the Dishes individually, and make the cuisine an enjoyable one, different preparations are not mixed while eating, and service is done in a somewhat course-wise style. Thereby each Dish, with its particular flavour and delicacy, is relished and appreciated separately at a time.

Wines and liqueurs are rarely served in Dinners. Instead, Green Condimented Tea without milk, is served generally after and even before a Dinner.

'Moḍur Polāv', a sweet 'Bāsmajī' rice 'Pulāv' cooked in clarified butter ('Ghī'), milk and water, along with dry fruits, saffron, spices and other condiments, is a favourite dessert of Kashmirī Pandits. 'Khīr', 'Halwā', 'Firnī', Fruit stews and Custards etc., are also served as desserts. In hot weather, 'Kulff', Ice-creams or some other sweets are also prevalent nowadays.

To round off, a dinner or a feast, a condimented and scented Betel leaf ('Pān') is always welcome. 'Ṭambūl', as it is called in Sanskrit, is always offered even to Deities in 'Pūjā' etc. Of course it is the relisher and the appreciator of good food preparations, who, as a guest, lends colour to a good feast. Usually, once a person joins a good Kashmirī feast, he or she never forgets it.

Utensils For Serving Meals & Processing of Foods:-

1. 'Dul', 'Dulij', 'Vār', 'Ḍhod', & 'Ṭagāer', - Baked clay, milk, curd etc., Containers.
2. 'Faoṭ' & 'Longun' - Plastered wicker basket for grains etc., and wooden mug.
3. 'Gīlās', 'Gedvā', 'Nār', 'Lūtiñ', 'Ābkhor', 'Jag', 'Bālūn', 'Kamandal', 'Gangāsagar', & 'Gāgāer' - Metallic water pots, some with handles.
4. 'Gōshpār' & 'Kaenī' - Wooden mallet and flat stone.
5. 'Greta' - Quern.
6. 'Kāshvā', 'Kreḇhh' & 'Chōñchi', - Metallic and wooden spoons and ladles.
7. 'Kāṅgāer', - Fire pot.
8. 'Kanz' & 'Muhul' - Wooden pole and big stone mortar for husking grains.
9. 'Khalur' & 'Dulā', - Boat shaped stone mortar and oval stone pestle.
10. 'Kreñjul', - Wicker basket for vegetables etc.
11. 'Lāḇhul', - Broom.
12. 'Māet', 'Math' & 'Nuot', - Baked clay big pots for grains and water.
13. 'Niám' & 'Ḍhōtā', - Stone broad mortar and wooden pestle.
14. 'Pahrāt', 'Chilamchi' & 'Dūngā', - Shallow and deep basins.
15. 'Shrākā Pugh', - & Folding knife.
16. 'Shrākḥ', 'Moand' & 'Fashā Kan', - chopping knife, wooden block and hone.
17. 'Shup' & 'Pariun', - Hand winnow and sieve.
18. 'Ṭabāḇh', 'Tōk', 'Parvā', 'Nār' & 'Machāvār', - Baked clay plates and pots used for eating meals and drinking etc.
19. 'Ṭashī' & 'Nār', - Deep metallic basin and spouted water jug with handles for washing hands etc.