

A signature dish of Bihar: Litti and Chokha

Abstract

Bihar is a land locked state lying in the eastern part of India. The word Bihar comes from the Sanskrit word Vihara meaning Buddhist Monasteries. The Mauryan Empire rose from Magadha. Buddhism, which is one of the biggest religions in the world, originated in Bihar and it is also home to the ancient Nalanda University, which was a centre of learning established during the 5th century. Litti Chokha a remarkable dish which comes from the state of Bihar is not only popular in India today, but has also made a special mark globally. Litti and Chokha are absolutely delicious and is the rustic way of cooking.

Keywords: Magadha, Bihar, Litti, Chokha, Rustic cooking

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The Background of Bihar

Bihar is a land locked state lying in the eastern part of India. The word Bihar comes from the Sanskrit word Vihara meaning Buddhist Monasteries. Bihar is surrounded by the states of Uttar Pradesh in the West, Jharkhand in the South, West Bengal in the East and Nepal in the North. Bihar was known as Magadha during ancient times and was a centre of education, culture and tradition. One of the greatest empires in ancient India, The Mauryan Empire, rose from Magadha. Buddhism, which is one of the biggest religions in the world, originated in Bihar. Bihar is also home to the ancient Nalanda University, which was a centre of learning established during the 5th century. The ruins of Nalanda University can still be seen in Bihar. Apart from its historic importance, Bihar also played a significant role in India's freedom struggle.

Hindi and Urdu are the official languages of Bihar. Apart from Hindi and Urdu - Bhojpuri, Magadhi, Maithili or Angika are also spoken by the people of Bihar.

History of Litti Chokha: The importance of Litti Chokha to Bihar is similar to the importance of Rosogolla to West Bengal. Litti Chokha, a remarkable dish which comes from the state of Bihar, is not only popular in India today, but has also made a special mark globally. Litti Chokha of Bihar, which can be catapulted as the part of their ethos and culture, was originated centuries ago as a staple food in the court of Magadha. With the passage of time, it imbibed the best and most suitable changes in culture that swept through Bihar with the incoming of mighty Mughals who savoured the dish with shorbhas and payas, and the exotic Britishers that liked it with curry, and so forth.

However, Litti emerged as a 'brave sepoy', when the rebels virtually survived on it during the Mutiny of 1857. Tantia Tope, Rani Lakshmi Bai, and the likes chose it as their 'food for survival' as it can be baked without any utensils or much water in the jungles and ravines and stays in eat-worthy condition for more than 48 hours. This dish underwent many changes as new rulers came in. During the Mughal period, emperors were served Littis with payas and shorbhas¹⁻⁷. Eventually, Litti came to Bihar and was paired with Chokha. Therustic

way of cooking added real flavour to Litti and Chokha but these days it is not possible for people to go rustic, hence we make it either on the gas oven tandoor or the OTG and micro-oven. But the tastes of these are absolutely different from the ones cooked in the earthen way.

Rustic way of cooking Litti and Chokha

Goitha

Goithas are cow dung cakes which are used in many villages even today for cooking, this might sound tacky but it's true. It's just not Litti and Chokha which is cooked on these cakes, but people cook a variety of dishes. The taste of the food cooked in Goitha is heavenly good.

Wood Charcoal

This is another form of rustic cooking, we do this even today. Unlike Goithas, these are easier to handle and easily available. Cooking with wood charcoal is just like barbequing. Wood charcoal adds that earthiness to the food being cooked and that too taste delicious.

Ingredients for Litti and Chokha

For the Litti dough

1. Atta (flour): 250 gm
2. Besan (gram flour): 100gm
3. Ajwain (carom/bishop's weed): 5 gm
4. Salt: According to taste
5. Water

For the Litti filling

1. Sattu (Roasted gram flour): 250 gm
2. Garlic clove (finally chopped): 1
3. Ginger (finally chopped): 50 gm
4. Green chillies (finally chopped): 5 pieces
5. Dhaniya (coriander): ½ a bunch
6. Thyme: ½ tsp
7. Mango or red chilli pickle: 1tsp or as per your taste

For the Chokha

1. Brinjal: 1 (whole)
2. Tomato: 2 (whole)
3. Potato: 2 pieces (whole)
4. Amchur powder: ½ tsp
5. Salt: according to your taste
6. Mustard oil: 1 tsp
7. Onion (finally chopped): 1 piece
8. Green chillies (finally chopped): 2



Method of cooking Litti and Chokha

1. Sieve the flour in big bowl and add salt, carom seeds and oil.
2. Knead the dough properly with water.
3. Dough should be soft.
4. Cover with a wet cloth and keep a side. Dough is ready.
5. Now grind roasted gram to powder along with black pepper (if sattu is not available).
6. In a mixing bowl, add in all the spices and grated ginger, green chillies, coriander, lemon juice, and mix well.
7. If it seems too dry, add a teaspoon of oil and few drops of water to it.
8. The texture should be crumbly, keep aside.
9. Now take medium-sized dough and make pedas from each one.
10. Simply roll it like a small chapati, but don't apply any extra flour to it.
11. Place two teaspoons of filling on it, pinch it from all sides so that filling gets covered on all sides.
12. Pinch the extra dough from top, shape it round like a ball.
13. Litti is ready for baking.
14. Place all the balls on a baking dish and bake them for 30-40 minutes.
15. Flip the side half way through, you may have to do it 2-3 times in between to get the even cooking done.
16. Boil the potatoes and remove the skin and keep aside.
17. Roast brinjal and tomatoes in the oven or on the gas stove on medium flame on both the sides until it becomes soft.
18. Peel off the burnt skin of the brinjal.
19. Mash boiled potatoes, brinjal, along with garlic and tomatoes together.
20. Add finely chopped onion, coriander leaves, grated ginger salt, green chillies and mustard oil.
21. Mix all the ingredients with hands properly.
22. Chokha is ready.

Service of Litti and Chokha

Put Chokha in a bowl, dip hot Litti in melted Ghee and serve hot with green coriander chutney. Litti can also be broken through the centre and then ghee can be poured on top, this way it reaches the stuffing too. The aroma, the flavours are divine enough to captivate all your senses.

LITTI-CHOKHA-THE TEST OF BIHAR

Choice of All Tourists!!!

Conclusion

Litti Chokha is a traditional snack food found in India's Bihar state. It basically consists of wheat and sattu. Litti Chokha of Bihar was originated centuries ago as a staple food in the court of Magadha. It is a remarkable dish which comes from the state of Bihar and is not only popular in India today, but has also made a special mark globally. Litti and Chokha are absolutely delicious and so is the rustic way of cooking. It's the choice of all tourists too.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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