

## Royal Indian Delicacies: All About Biryani Pulao

The word Biryani Pulao is a combination of two individual Indian delicacies - Biryani and Pulao. While both are preparations containing rice, meat or vegetables, and aromatic spices, the difference in methods of cooking distinguish the two. Both Biryani and Pulao words find their origin in the Persian language. Biryani has been derived from the Farsi word "Biryan", and its cooking style "Dum", which means steam boiled or cooked. Biryani has been a favorite dish in India since the Mughal era and has kept its place of pride on the royal dinner table since then.

In general conversation, Biryani Pulao is used to indicate the delicacy biryani. Depending on the inclination of the connoisseur, biryani can be either non-vegetarian or vegetarian. It was originally developed as a non-vegetarian delicacy consisting of goat meat, rice and condiments.

While there are many variants of biryani available in India and internationally, the most famous of these variants is the Hyderabadi biryani. Considered by many to be the original form of biryani in India and brought over by the Mughal rulers from Persia, Hyderabadi biryani is a widely loved and eaten rice delicacy.

Full of spices and succulent mutton mixed with long-grain basmati rice, the Hyderabadi biryani is a preparation that can easily be ranked among the most mouth-watering dishes available anywhere. Its vegetarian version in which, the mutton is replaced by a number of different vegetables, is also equally appealing and has featured in cook books the world over.

The other major variant of biryani is the Lucknow Biryani, which is a native of the princely city of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. The major points of difference between Hyderabadi and Lucknow Biryani are in their methods of cooking and the usage of spices. Hyderabadi biryani is cooked using raw meat and raw rice, while Lucknow biryani is created using pre-cooked meat and pre-cooked rice.

The method of cooking a biryani is also unique and vastly different from regular rice delicacies. The rice is par-boiled without washing and with the addition of ghee (clarified butter) to give it a nutty taste. The meat, preferably goat meat, is marinated in a paste of papaya, yogurt and spices. It is then cooked to prepare it for mixing with the rice.

An earthen pot known as Handi is used for the final cooking. A bottom layer of rice is created. Meat and other spices are then layered over this rice, forming the center of the biryani. The handi is then filled with rice on the top layers. The pot is then sealed using dough and is placed on embers of coal for cooking.

After being allowed to cook for the necessary period of time, the biryani is ready to be served. It is normally served in the original handi, and the entire mixture has to be mixed well prior to eating. Biryani is mostly accompanied by vegetable raita, which is a preparation of yogurt with cut vegetables and spices.

Many expert cooks are of the belief that the best biryani takes nearly 24 hours to prepare and calls for measuring of the spices by hand. The "dum" or heat should be supplied for a period of four or more hours for the meat to acquire the full flavor of the rice and the spices and the biryani to carry a special taste.