

NORTH INDIAN CUISINE

North Indian cuisine typically represents foods of Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan area. All the states north of Maharashtra are often clumped together in this generalization. Each state has its own specialties but it is the similarities that classify the food of this region. North Indian food is often called “Punjabi food”. North Indian food is the most popular food in restaurants and is often understood to represent Indian food.

Wheat is the staple food of this region. “Basmati” rice is grown in the northern plains and is often the rice of choice for pulaos and biryanis. Variety of dals or beans such as garbanzo, kidney, urad as well as moong and toor dal are used. Milk, butter and ghee are used extensively. Chicken and mutton are the most popular meats eaten in this region. Most of the cooking is done on the stovetop using the roasting and frying method.

Punjabis popularized tandoori food (that gets its name from the *tandoor* clay oven in which the food is cooked) in this region. Today most Indian restaurants around the world serve tandoori dishes and typically Punjabi food.

North Indian food is a mix of simple to very elegant vegetarian and non-vegetarian fare. A simple vegetarian meal may consist of moong dal, subji and phulka (thin fat-less roti). The food is seasoned with asafoetida, cumin, turmeric, coriander powder and garam masala. Other Indians often refer to Garam masala as a north Indian spice blend. Onion and garlic may or may not be used. Then there are the non-vegetarian favorites like chicken and lamb dishes heavily seasoned with spices, onion, ginger and garlic. Foods like stuffed parathas, saag and makki ki roti, chole and bhature, kofte, rogan josh, tandoori chicken, biryanies and pulao’s are very popular here. North Indian desserts like barfies, laddus, and gulab jamun are extremely popular throughout India.

North Indian food is often described as “rich”. The food is often fried, and a fair amount of ghee, butter and nuts may be used. The food is seasoned heavily with onion, ginger, garlic and spices like cardamom, cinnamon and cloves that give the food a “rich” color and flavor.

Nutritionally speaking north Indian meals with plenty of whole grains, green vegetables, beans and lean meats (poultry without skin) are high in complex carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins and minerals. The overall fat and saturated fat content of traditional meals may be high due to extensive use of milk, butter, ghee and oil. This is where the meals can be modified in fat content by using small amount of oil to season the food. Also substitute low fat or fat free milk wherever possible and use butter and ghee sparingly.

North Indian food can be easily incorporated in a healthy lifestyle. If you have diabetes it is important to watch the carbohydrate content of each meal. Plan balanced meals of roti, dal, meat (if non-vegetarian) non-starchy vegetables and salad. A typical ‘thaali’ meal (pre-portioned out foods in small cups served on a large plate or ‘thaali’) with balance of nutrients, flavors and textures may work well with diabetes and a healthy diet. The amount of carbohydrate in each meal is individualized based on needs. Portion size of foods is important to determine the actual carbohydrate intake. Remember within reason most foods can fit into a diet for a person managing his/her diabetes. See sample menu below.

Sample Menu

A sample menu of a typical vegetarian and non-vegetarian meal with an improved sample of the same is given below. A typical meal as mentioned earlier is high in carbohydrate and fat. By some modification in the amount of oil and ghee used, substituting low fat and low

carbohydrate vegetables as well as cutting down on portions will help in cutting down in carbohydrate and fat content and therefore the total calorie intake. Consult a dietitian for an individualized meal plan.

Typical Vegetarian Meal with Non-vegetarian options

Breakfast	1 cup Chai (Tea) with whole milk 3 teaspoon sugar 2 Potato Parathas Pickle
Lunch	2 Roti with 2 teaspoons ghee 1 cup Rajmah (or Chicken Curry) 1 cup spinach and potato subji 1 cup rice ½ cup Dahi (whole milk yogurt) Onion and Cucumber salad 1 Roasted Papad (4 teaspoon vegetable oil in cooking)
Tea Time	1 cup Chai with whole milk 3 tsp regular sugar 1 cup Namkeen (fried snack) 1 Laddu (sweet)
Dinner	4 Parathas (8-10 tsp oil) (1 cup Kheema) 1-2 cups potato and pea subji ½ cup Dahi (whole milk yogurt)
Snack	1 ½ cups Kheer

Above menu modified to yield a lower range of fats and carbohydrates

Breakfast	1 cup Chai with skim milk no calorie sweetener 2 Whole wheat toast 1 teaspoon margarine 1 cup skim milk
Lunch	2 Roti-no ghee 1 cup low fat Rajmah (or low fat Chicken Curry) 1 cup spinach subji ½ cup rice ½ cup Dahi (fat free yogurt) Onion and cucumber salad 1 Roasted Papad (2 teaspoon vegetable oil in cooking)

Tea Time	1 cup Chai with skim milk no calorie sweetener ½ cup roasted Chana and Murmura 1 Banana
Dinner	3 Roti-no ghee ½ cup Chole (½ cup Kheema, low fat) 1 cup cauliflower subji ½ cup Dahi (fat free yogurt)
Snack	1 Orange 1 cup Skim milk

Weekends and Parties

There is often a distinct difference in our eating between weekdays and weekends. On weekdays we are bound by time and schedules and it is easier to control the types and amounts of foods we eat. People will often say they do so well Monday to Friday implying that they make good choices in their meal selection. But come weekends (starting Friday night) we lose all restraints in our food selection. Indians love to party, as it is our way of socializing and connecting with our culture. Socializing is associated with special occasion foods of puri, chole, pakore, and not to mention kheer and halwa (generally high-fat foods). Portion control is a good tool to use here. If you are the host, plan your parties to balance meals and incorporate some lower fat foods like vegetable trays as appetizers and use less fat in your dishes. If you are the guest at a party and everything you see is high in fat and calories watch your portion sizes, enjoy the company and thank the hosts for a wonderful evening. You will be much happier on Monday morning!

Typical Party Menu

Samose or pakore with chutney
Puri
Chole
Chicken curry (non-vegetarian)
Potato Pea subji
Cauliflower with potato subji
Kofta
Onion, cucumber, radish salad
Boondi Raita
Matar Pulao
Chai
Gulab Jamun

Suggestions for person with diabetes

(Remember you have to watch your total carbohydrate intake to avoid elevated blood sugar after the meal)

1 Samosa
1 Puri

½ cup Chole
 ½ cup Chicken curry (non-vegetarian)
 ½ cup Cauliflower subji, avoid the potatoes
 1 kofta
 1 cup onion, cucumber, radish salad
 ¼ cup Raita
 ½ cup Matar Pulao
 Chai
 Avoid dessert if the main meal was too heavy or exercise portion control

North Indian Cuisine

Eat More Often

Avoid or Eat less often

STARCHES

Roti
 Plain Rice
 Potatoes-prepared with minimal oil

Paratha, puri, kachori, naan
 Pulao, Biryani
 Fried potatoes

FRUITS

All fresh fruits
 Light canned fruit

Monitor portion size of fruit
 Regular canned fruit

VEGETABLES

All vegetables cooked with minimal oil

Creamed or fried vegetables

MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES

Eat dal, chicken and fish cooked in minimal oil

Fried or creamed dal or meat

Low fat paneer
 Part skim Ricotta cheese

Eat lean lamb, goat, pork or beef less often and small quantity

Regular paneer
 Regular Ricotta Cheese

DAIRY

Skim milk, fat free yogurt and buttermilk

2% or whole milk and its products

FATS

Margarine
 Oil
 Almonds, peanuts, walnuts

Butter, ghee, cream and half half
 Coconut

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