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Culinary Tourism: A new way for destination attraction in Almora, Kumaun Lesser Himalaya

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Abstract

Food plays significant role in tourism promotion. Tourist visit a great number of destination in the world but we observed that some places are prominent because of the peculiar local cuisine as we know that Punjab is famous for Makke di Roti or Sarso ka saag, Rajasthan for Daal baati churma, Bihar for Litti Chhokha etc. These all example shows that if we focus in our local food it's may definitely increase the tourist influx. Uttarakhand 27th state of India situated in the mesmerizing environment of the oak and deodar canopy, snow filled mountains and chilly wind always attract thousands of tourist from the globe but local cuisine neglected till the present. Almora, an ancient hill station in Kumaun, lesser Himalaya and known as a cultural capital of Kumaun. It is not only rich in cultural heritage but also enriched with delicious and healthy cuisine. Varieties of food are well known here at local level but the special cuisine is not popular as other Indian State cuisine. So the paper attempt to study about various famous cuisine of Almora and its surrounding through the which government develop and promote culinary tourism concept likewise other form of tourism. Culinary tourism paves the way for exploring the antique food which are hidden as the treasure. The present study is based on the survey of 300 purposely and randomly selected tourists from different tourist destination of Almora district.

Keywords: Culinary tourism, cuisine, Kumaun lesser Himalaya

Introduction

The land of natural beauty known as Abode of Gods Uttarakhand has become the 27th state of India on November 9, 2000. Uttarakhand is full of Majestic beauty, panoramic view, peaceful environment which attract thousands of tourist from globe. The presence of Char Dham is the major attraction for pilgrims. Uttarakhand is divided into two regions Kumaun Region which includes six districts Nainital, Almora, Pithoragarh, Udham Singh Nagar, Bageshwar and Champawat and Garhwal Region includes seven districts Tehri, Chamoli, Pauri, Uttarkashi, Dehradun, Haridwar and Rudrapur. Each region has their own specialty in different type of food which are rich in taste and medicinal values but this sector of tourism which is known as culinary tourism is always neglected. Culinary Tourism means moving around with the aim of exploring a destination cuisine. It is a new and vibrant category of tourism where people travel beyond their immediate neighborhood to find food. Some examples of world famous cuisine are Thai, Chinese, Mexican, Indian etc. Cuisine is the best medium depict the culture of any region. In India Punjab is famous for Makke Di Roti, Sarso Da Saag and Lassi, Bihar for Litti Chhokha, Rajasthan for Daal Bati Churma and Gujarat for Dhokla. Culinary tourism contributes the long term sustainability for local agricultural food system, communities and culture.

Objectives of the Study

- Identify the popular local cuisine of Almora.
- Identify the features of local cuisine.
- To make suitable suggestion for improvement of culinary tourism.

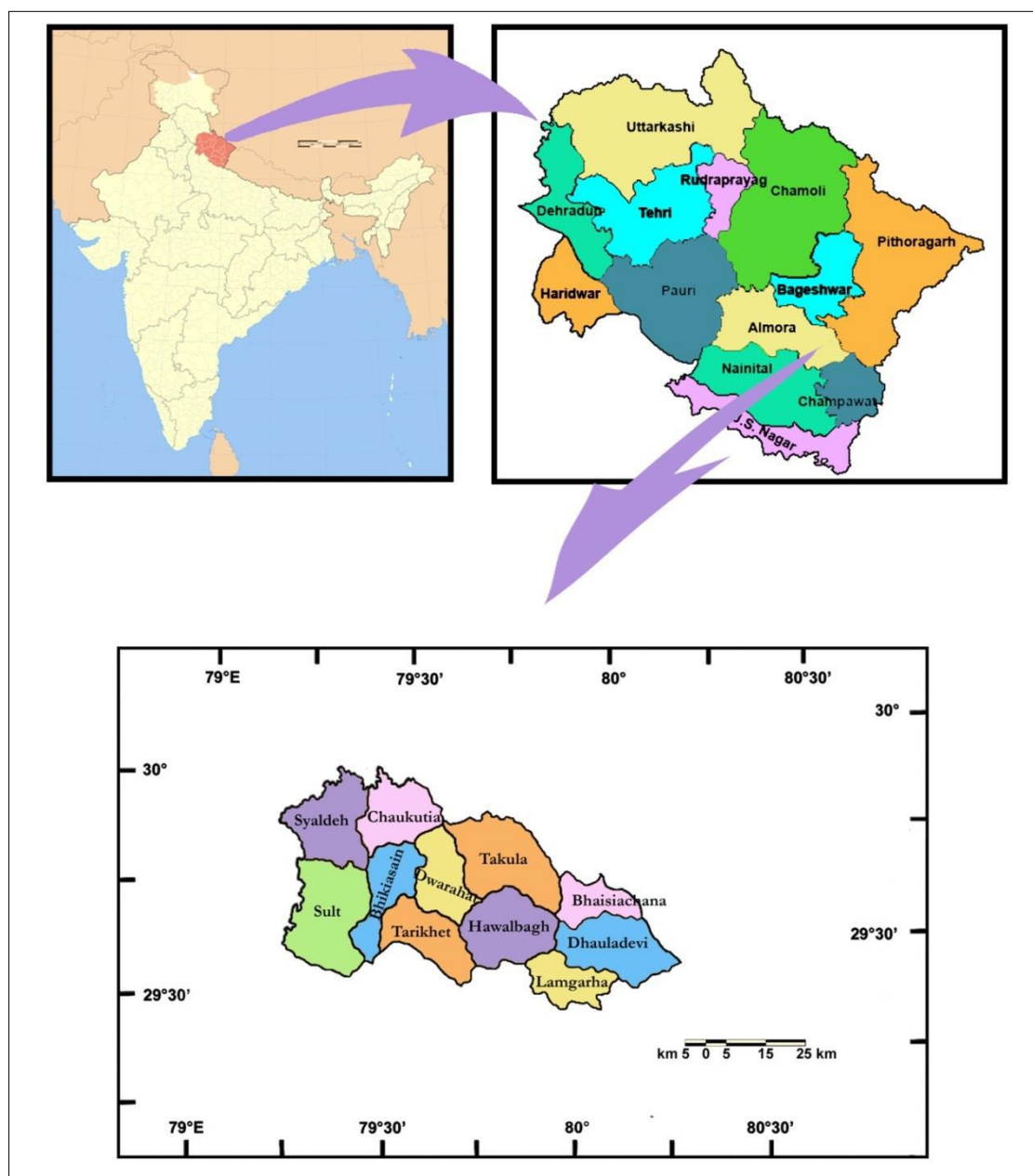
Table 1: Past Studies about Traditional Cuisine

S. N.	Writer and Publishing Year	Views
1	Bungla <i>et al.</i> , 2012 ^[4]	Traditional food recipes are helpful for sustainable livelihood in the Himalayan region.
2	Banerjee, 2013 ^[2]	Local food plays a significant role in impressing tourists and increase the tourists.
3	Burah, 2016 ^[5]	The connection between food and tourism can not be ignored.
4	Karush & Sharma, 2017 ^[6]	Regional food of Uttarakhand can be a key factor in developing the economy of the state.
5	Rawal & Takuli, 2017 ^[8]	The scope of culinary tourism in U.K is too much but still not focused because of its recognition as like other tourism.
6	Shah & Shende, 2017 ^[10]	Food tourism play a vital role in tourism industry as it is one of the major factors for selecting a tourist destination.
7	Aarti, 2019 ^[1]	Traditional food system is important part of traditional knowledge.
8	Negi, 2020 ^[7]	The most important factor for promoting tourism is Attraction, Accommodation, Accessibility, Amenities and local regional cuisine.

Study Area

The study area located in and around the hill district of Almora. The district is located in eastern part of Uttarakhand with a latitudinal extend of 29° 59' N and Longitudinal extend is 79° 65' district is surrounded by Pithoragarh district to the East, Garhwal Division(Pauri district) to the West, Bageshwar district to the North and

Nainital district to the South. Almora district has a total area of 3139 sq. km. of which around 41.70% is under forest area. The district is also known for its scenic landscape, rich forests and wildlife, spiritual heritage, beautiful landscapes, handicrafts, and hill cuisine. It is an important centre for art and culture of Kumaon region.

**Fig 1:** Location Map of Study Area, Source: M. Joshi (2012)

Major food of Almora

- 1) Aloo Ke Gutke is a Kumaoni name for simple stir-fry potato in spices. The word 'Gutke' in the Kumaoni dialect means pieces. Aloo Gutuk is the most common snack and street food served at most of the roadside dhabas. This dish is prepared by using potato, mustard oil, jakhiya turmeric, coriander powder and garnish with coriander leaves. There are two reasons for this particular potato dish is so popular in Kumaon hills – the abundance of potato and it is the easiest dish made with minimum available local resources.
- 2) Bhaang Ki Chatney composed by bhang seeds, cumin, garlic, sour pomegranate seeds, tamarind with addition of salt, this simple chatney complements any dish made in Uttarakhand. This incredibly aromatic chatney is prepared by pounding the coriander, raw turmeric and salt etc with the stone mortar.
- 3) Sana Hua Neembu is a mouth-watering snack which is prepared by local people on sunny winter days. The tangy dish is made from radish, lemon, curd, jaggery and bhang seeds it works wonders at keeping the body warm during those chilly months. It is having a great potential towards body thermoregulation in chilled months.
- 4) Kakdi Ka Raita a dish prepared from curd, turmeric, grated cucumber, green chilies and mustard seeds. This Raita retains just about everything in the Kumaoni cuisine. The word Raita includes Rai (mustard seeds) which is the key ingredient for making this dish.
- 5) Dubke the traditional Kumaoni recipe is made from lentils bhatt or gehat, which are soaked for whole night and later separated from the stock. The stock is converted into a fine paste by adding rice flour and powdered spices, cooked over a slow flame. Generally Dubke is cooked in an iron pot and this formula enriched the dish with iron and seems like special greenish dark shading.
- 6) Bhatt Ki Churkani Kumaoni gives great traditional to Bhatt pulse. It is locally grown black Soyabean and one of iconic dishes of Kumaun which is bestowed with a great essential nutrients with a strong taste of coriander and garlic. This high-protein dish can be prepared by white or black gram (Bhatt). This dish is processed as roasting the bhatt before mixed with wheat flour and then slowly cooked for a long time.
- 7) Thechwani this delicacy has been given the perfect name due to its special process. 'Thech' means crushing and 'wani' means curry. That means this dish is prepared by crushing potatoes using mortar and pestle. It is then added to sauteed garlic and ginger, topping it later with ingredients like black eye peas, turmeric, red chili and salt. To make it in curry form, hot water is poured on pounded and crushed pahari mooli and potatoes cooked with onions, tomatoes, and roasted powdered sesame seeds and finally cooked into a simple curry.
- 8) Sisunaak Ka Saag prepared by Bichchu Plant, that once touched can give you an itch and rashes that last for a couple of hours. This edible plant can be made into a scrumptious and nutritious Kumaoni classic dish. The plant is boiled, converted into a fine pulp, cooked slowly and garnished with butter.
- 9) Palak Ka Kaapa the term Kaapa pronounced by the local people, is generally a nutritious spinach gravy and very easier to make. Usually, when greens are cooked to saturation it loses its nutrients. However, in the case of Kaapa, spinach is not cooked for too long. So, it retains its nutrients with lovely green in color when you serve this dish. It is made by mixing rice flour or wheat flour for that perfect thick gravy and liquefy with water. Kaapa is best complemented with hot steaming rice.
- 10) Bhatt Ka Jaula Indian delicacy is incomplete without spices, but this healthy dish Bhatiya is made without any spices. It is made with just two things – Bhatt (black soyabean) and rice. To make this dish wholesome, it is best served with 'Hara Dhaniya Namak' (Green leafy Coriander Salt)
- 11) Mandua Ki Roti another deliciously healthy Pahari recipe Mandua Ki Roti. Making this dish is very simple which is contrary to the complex name of the dish. For this recipe, Ragi flour is simply kneaded dough. After resting this dough for a few minutes and make Chappatis out of this flour. The process of making the Chappatis remains the same while the nutritional value of the food increases ten folds.
- 12) Ras Bhaat is made up of various pulses like Chana or Chickpeas, Bhatt, Rajma or Kidney Beans, and Gahat or Horse Gram which are high source of protein. The name gives you an idea that it is a thick liquid made of all these ingredients. The preparation of this dish is quite a task as it involves boiling the pulses and then cooking in an iron pot. Further, filtered the pulses from liquid and starting the process of making Ras. To the liquid add rice flour and basic ingredients like salt, red chili powder and complete it by giving it 'Jeere ka Tadka'. Serve a hot bowl of ras with rice and mixed pulses those filtered in the starting, without these pulses ras is incomplete. You can eat ras and pulses separately or can mix pulses into ras and eat together.
- 13) Singori is a sweetmeat Khoya molded in an indigenous leaf called malu ka patta that results in a little cones fragrant with the elusive scent of cardamom with its leafy packaging.
- 14) Baal Mithai- Brown chocolate-like fudge, made with roasted khoya and then coated with white sugar balls, is a specialty of Almora, Uttarakhand. The crunchy and chewy texture of these caramelized fudge balls is a gastronomical delight hard to resist.
- 15) Jhangore Ki Kheer the delicious Jhangore ki Kheer is a must try after a heavy course of Kumuni cuisine. This sweet Kumauni dish is rich in nutrients and taste which has the goodness of milk, dry fruits and jhangora, a type of millet which is the main ingredient of this dessert.



Source: Google

Pic 1: Traditional Food Thali of Almora

Special Features of Local Cuisine

The food consumed in mountains is simple but undoubtedly delicious and nutritious. These are some special features of local cuisines:

- 1) **Seasonal Diversity:** During the warm summer months the cooling methi dana is included in diet, which has ability to boost immune system and protect against climatic condition, while the winter season Bhaang is included in different dishes, during summer when flower like Buransh and rose in bloom juice has made of it.
- 2) **Uses of herb and seed:** The aroma of unusual flavors from wild herbs and seeds like Jakhiya, Bhaang, Gandhereni, Jamboo make the cuisine unique and delicious. These herbs are also known for its digestive and medicinal properties.
- 3) **Extensive use of leafy vegetable:** The dishes are prepared here with lot of leafy vegetables like Raai, Palak, Bethua, Chaulai, Linguda, Bichchu saag etc which are highly rich in nutrition value and specially made in iron pot.
- 4) **Slow Cooking:** It is another specialties of local cuisine that the different type of pulses like Gahat, Rens, Toor, Bhatt etc are prepared with slow cooking which create the mouth watering taste.
- 5) **Medicinal Benefits:** The Pulses, spices, seeds which are used in cooking have great medicinal value. For example Maduwa flour which is a super food, very rich in calcium, potassium, iron and protein. It is also considered best food for diabetic victim. Another example is Gahat Daal (Horse Gram) which considered as panacea for kidney stone and appendicitis.

Research Methodology

The data for research work has been collected through primary and secondary mode. Secondary data collected through tourist offices, Research Papers, Journals and Newspapers but Primary data has been collected through questionnaire and personal interview for tourists. The sampling of this research paper took place in Almora district with the help of questionnaire. The data collection was conducted in the month of May and June, 2022. The Sample

size of 300 samples was taken from tourists visiting these five destinations which are Almora, Ranikhet, Dwarahat, Sheetlakhet and Manila regions of Almora District.

Data Analysis

Table 2: Tourists Perception on Specific Cuisine

Question 1	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Do you like to visit a place which is famous for specific cuisine?	220 73.33%	70 23.33%	10 3.33%	300 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

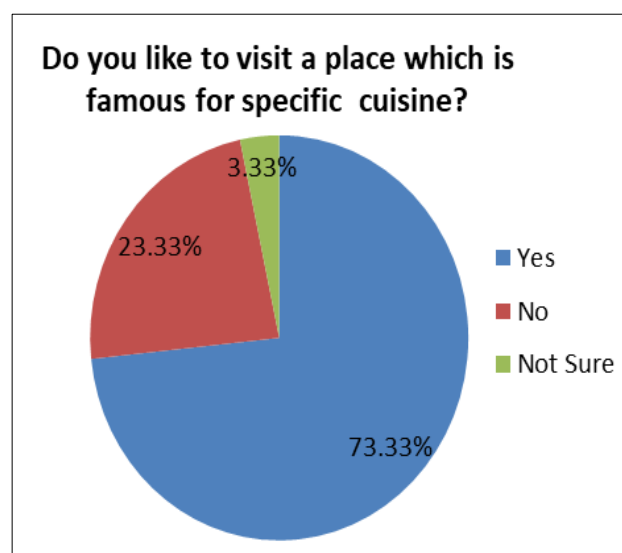


Fig 2: Graphical Presentation of Tourists Perception on Specific Cuisine

Table 3: Tourists Perception on Traditional Food

Question 2	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Do You get any traditional food here?	65 21.66%	230 76.66%	05 1.66%	300 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

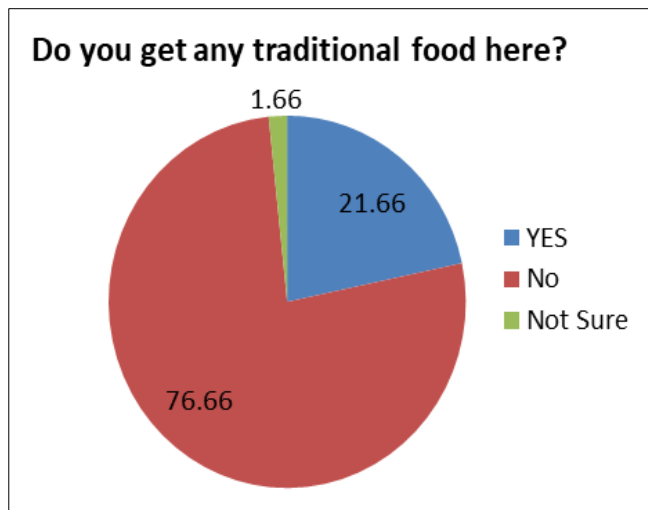


Fig 3: Graphical Presentation of Tourists Perception on Traditional Food

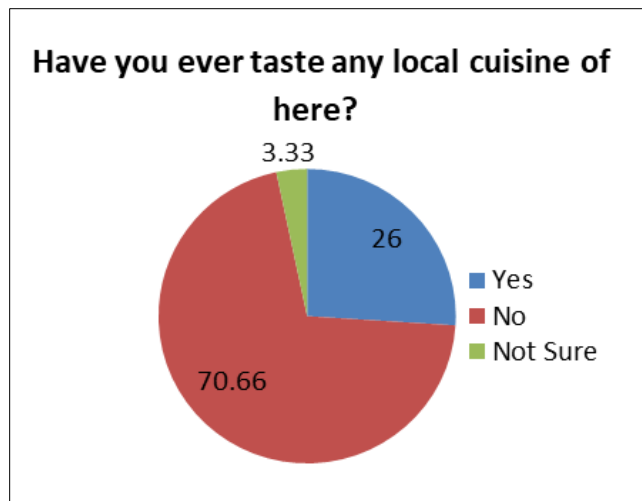


Fig 4: Graphical Presentation of Tourists Perception on Taste of Local Cuisine

Table 4: Tourists Perception on Taste of Local Cuisine

Question 3	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Have you taste any local cuisine of here?	78 26%	212 70.66%	10 3.33%	300 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 5: Tourists Perception on Attraction of Local Cuisine

Question 4	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Do you think that local cuisine can be helpful in attracting tourists?	275 91.66%	15 5%	10 3.33%	300 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

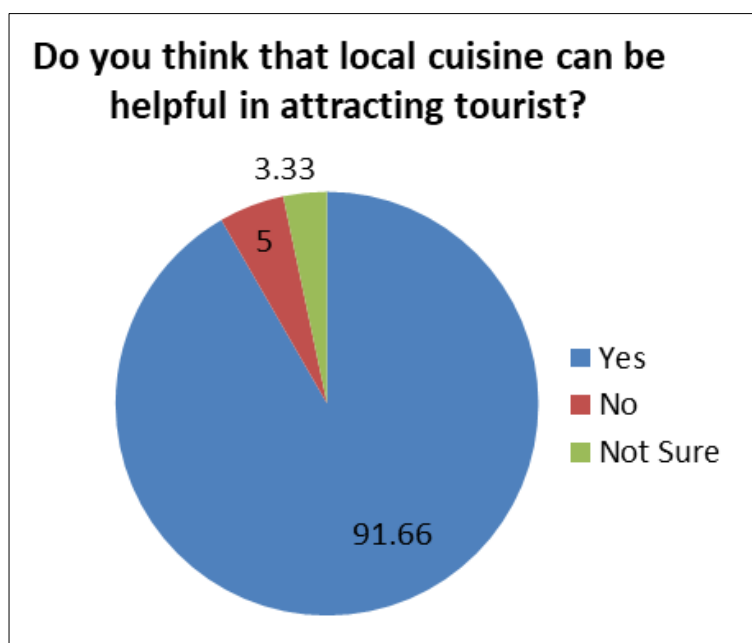


Fig 5: Graphical Presentation of Tourists Perception on Attraction of Local Cuisine

Table 6: Tourists Perception on Participation in Culinary Workshop & Festival

Question 5	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Do You Want To Participate in Culinary Workshop and festival?	257 85.66%	33 11%	10 3.33%	300 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

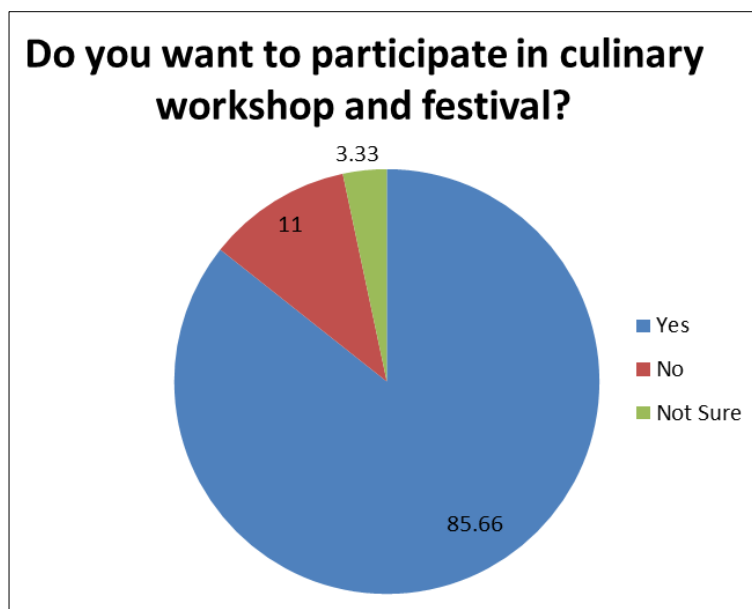


Fig 6: Graphical Presentation of Tourists Perception on Participation in Culinary Workshop & Festival

Results

Results are based on a small survey which was followed by a questionnaire related to cuisine and tourism. Some important points of these result are as follows:

1. The result shows that 73.33% tourists like to visit the place which has specific food.
2. Only 21.66% tourist said that they easily get traditional food, rest of them did not get any traditional food here. This result is a big question mark on the policies of Uttarakhand Tourism.
3. Based on the survey result only 26% tourist tasted the local cuisine. Most of the tourist (70.66%) never tasted it. The reason behind it that local cuisine has been never highlighted as like other state cuisine.
4. The maximum (92%) tourists are strongly agree that local cuisine can be helpful in attracting tourists.
5. A good percentage of tourist (86%) want to participate in culinary workshops and food festivals.

Suggestion

1. Almora has vast possibilities of Culinary Tourism. Local people may be involve in promoting Culinary tourism such as opening pure Pahadi Restaurant and preparing famous local cuisine like Bhatt ke Dubke, Churkani, Maduve ki roti, Jhangure ki kheer etc.
2. Government should develop good policies for promotion of Culinary tourism.
3. Subsidies should be given to those people who started any venture related to local cuisine.
4. Local food van should be promoted on tourist places.
5. Proper pictorial presentation of local cuisine with its medicinal benefits should be advertised.
6. Government should organize culinary workshops and food festival for promoting food tourism.
7. Mostly visiting Tourist destinations should develop for purchasing local pulses, juices, pickles etc.
8. Government may organize culinary tour for tourists including different activities like visiting the places where food prepared in traditional way, visiting the farm of farmers where the vegetables are growing by organic method, cooking classes and food festivals etc.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion is that Almora is indeed a magnificent destination in Indian Himalaya with ample resources of Culinary tourism. It is the perfect time to make new policies and suitable action plan for Culinary tourism management. The policy maker should pay attention to this sector because we have limited sources of employment but the population is increasing day by day and Culinary tourism provides employment generation opportunity to the local communities with an honest intention of preserving environment and culture. However, a systematic approach by the side of Government, NGO's with local community is needed in promotion of Culinary tourism.

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