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Dosa: India's wholesome fast food obsession

When people think of Indian food, they don't normally think of crepes. Well, think again.

But this time, think of a savory crepe doused with nutritional benefits and exotic flavors, also known as:

Dosa:

A South Indian classic - some of you may have heard of dosas when Kamala Harris and Mindy Kaling came together to make this mouth-watering dish. (That's right, the US Vice President elect is half South-Indian, making her the first individual of South Asian descent to be in the White House!)

But let's dive a bit deeper. What are Dosas? What is this notorious "Indian crepe" made of? Is it really like a crepe?

Differences Between Dosas and Crepes:

First off, dosas are called "the Indian crepe" not simply because of how it looks, but because of the texture of the wrap, which feels both soft and crispy at the same time. That being said, you can always ask the chef preparing your dosa to make the wrap crispier or softer to your personal liking. Unlike traditional European crepes, there are also different types of wraps a dosa can be made into - from plain (flat and folded) to a wrap very similar to the look of a burrito, you can have it all.

In fact, if you are looking for an extremely unique dosa, check out the pièce de resistance, which is a six-foot long dosa for you to share with your friends (or to eat on your own, for the ambitious ones).

The differences in the types of dosa available compared to crepes, is only just the beginning.

The batter for both dishes are also made out of starkly different ingredients that ultimately make dosas the perfect healthy breakfast option. Crepe batter is made out of wheat flour, while dosas are made from a fermented batter consisting of rice and black gram lentils. Black gram is a type of bean grown specifically in India, and is often used in many other Indian dishes as well.

The dosa batter-making process results in three significant health benefits:

1. The batter is completely gluten and nut free.
2. The fermentation process increases the Vitamin B and Vitamin C levels in the dish. Vitamin B improves overall energy levels, brain health, and cell metabolism.
3. The dosas have a higher level of protein, which is perfect to help build muscle.

Who would have thought that a savory crepe could be so healthy?

Now, let's get into what is inside of a dosa:

Generally, a dosa filling consists of vegetables, starch, and at times even meat. So whether you are a hard core vegan or a die-hard meat lover, you can definitely find the perfect kind of dosa for you and your diet.

Needless to say, the specific ingredients for the filling varies depending on the kind of dosa you select. Since there are countless different types of dosas you can choose from, we will discuss the three most popular categories.

1. Masala Dosa

The batter for masala dosas consists of black gram and rice flour as described earlier. Yet the most common filling used in masala dosas is aloo (potato) masala. A simple yet delectable recipe, the filling consists of a flurry of spices such as cumin, ginger, curry leaves, chana dal (chickpeas), turmeric, and green chillies to name a few. These ingredients are then mixed into boiled potatoes, providing a rich, yellow color to the starch and a delectable aroma that will have you grabbing for the plate as soon as it reaches your table. There are also many different kinds of masala dosas itself. From garlic cheese masala dosa to a mysore masala dosa - make sure to switch things up to get the full experience of all that masala dosas have to offer.

2. Rava Dosa

The difference between rava dosas and masala dosas lies in the batter. Rava dosas are made out of the same rice batter and black gram lentil, but an additional important ingredient is the roasted sooji (also called rava) which is the Hindi term for granulated wheat. This batter does not need to be fermented, though some argue that the fermentation process makes the dosas taste better. What do you think about this? Tell us in the comments below.

Just like the masala dosa, there are many variations of the rava dosa such as the delightful chili onion rava dosa. Again, fillings vary depending on the type of dosa you select so you can adjust the filling to your personal preference.

3. Mysore Dosa

This one is for all the spice-addicts out there! The batter used for the mysore dosa is the same as the masala dosa, with black gram and rice flour, but with added spices such as red chillies, tomatoes, and fried red onions. Before placing the filling inside the wrap, it is normally smeared with an enticing red chutney that is just to die for. The fillings also vary similarly to the type of mysore dosa that is selected. A popular type of mysore dosa is the mysore masala dosa, which combines the unique qualities of both categories of dosas into one.

Dosas are a wonderful meal on its own, but is often accompanied by an assortment of sides that fill you up and provide extra flavors and aromas.

So what exactly do you eat with dosa? What are common side dishes for dosas?

1. Sambar is an Indian stew made out of vegetables, lentils, and a unique blend of spices, generally sour and spicy in taste. It is arguably the most common accompaniment for any dosa.

2. Coconut Chutney is a coconut based side sauce infused with chillies, onions, turmeric, garlic, roasted chickpeas, curry leaves, and more. This provides a great sweet and soothing taste to counteract the spiciness of your dosa.

3. Idlis are a rounded and plush snack made from fermented rice and lentils. Idlis are extremely healthy, as are sambar and coconut chutney, providing even more health benefits to your already robust meal!

All of that being said, dosa can be eaten with a lot of different kinds of side dishes, or on its own. It is an adaptable dish that you can adjust to your taste preferences or mood for the day.

