

How regional biryanis are showcasing India's culinary diversity abroad



Chef Mahesh Dhami

Few dishes represent India's culinary diversity as vividly as biryani. While often viewed internationally as a single dish, biryani encompasses a wide range of regional traditions shaped by local ingredients, historical influences and distinct cooking techniques. From the robust, slow-cooked dum biryani of Hyderabad to the delicately spiced preparations of Kolkata, every version reflects the culinary identity of its place of origin.

This regional richness is being showcased beyond India's borders through initiatives that focus on the country's varied food traditions. At Zaya Indian & Persian Kitchen in McAllen, Texas, Executive Chef Mahesh Dhami has introduced a year-round Seasonal Biryani Program that highlights different regional styles of biryani, offering diners an opportunity to explore the diversity of Indian cuisine through changing menus.

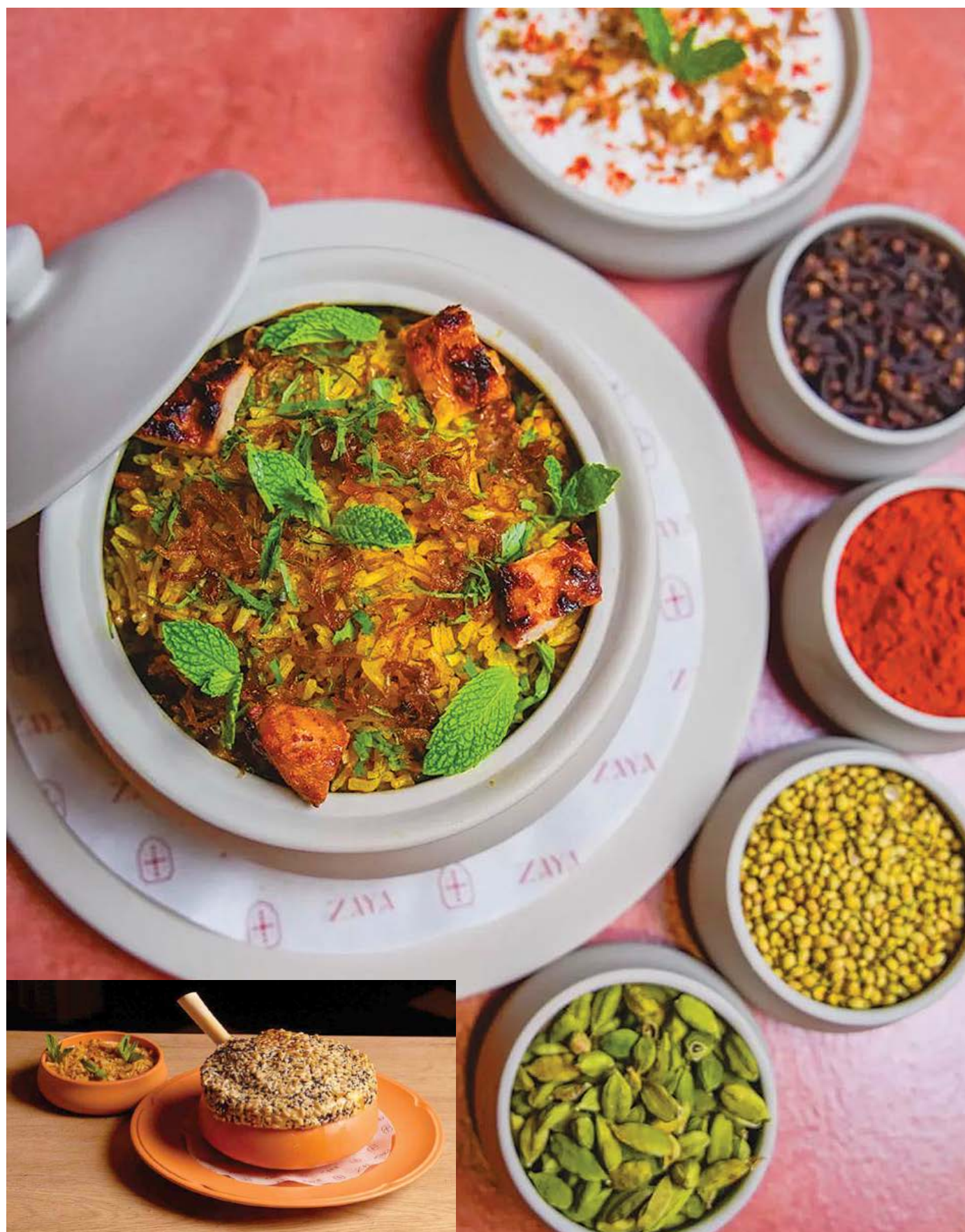
Rather than presenting biryani as a single recipe, the programme features regional interpretations at different times of the year. Current offerings include Hyderabadi Goat Dum Biryani, prepared using the traditional slow-cooking dum technique; Kolkata Vegetable Biryani, known for its subtle aromas and balanced flavours; and Chicken Tawa Pulao, inspired by the street-food traditions of western India.

According to Chef Dhami, each variation tells a story about the region from which it originated.

"Every biryani carries the story of the region where it was born," he said. "The spices, cooking techniques and ingredients reflect local history and traditions. We want guests to discover that India is home to many different culinary identities, not just one."

Chef Dhami has built his culinary career across India and the United States. He began with the Taj Group of Hotels before spending six years at Musaafer by The Spice Route Co., where he contributed to the restaurant's Michelin-recognised culinary programme in 2024 and 2025. At Zaya, he combines classical Indian cooking techniques with Persian influences while incorporating seasonal ingredients and contemporary presentation.

The growing interest in regional Indian cuisine reflects broader global trends in dining. International consumers are increasingly exploring cuisines beyond familiar



staples, seeking authentic regional dishes that showcase local traditions and centuries of culinary heritage. Restaurants, in turn, are highlighting India's vast gastronomic diversity by presenting regional recipes

that emphasise authenticity, history and craftsmanship.

As Indian cuisine continues to gain recognition worldwide, chefs are playing an important role in introducing audiences to

the country's many regional food traditions. Biryani, with its numerous local interpretations, remains one of the strongest examples of how a single dish can reflect the cultural and culinary diversity of an entire nation.