

#TRAVEL

The science of getting a good night's sleep in hotels

Sometimes, getting sleep in a hotel is an actual science. Try these doctor-approved tactics to make travel more restful.



Whether you're traveling for leisure or for work, it can be hard to believe that hotels are in the business of sleep. Between uncomfortable beds, noisy air conditioners, slamming doors, and loud upstairs guests, rest can be a hard thing to achieve while away from home.

Dr. Rebecca Robbins, assistant professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and an associate scientist at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, knows the importance of sleep. Her research aims to encourage behavioural changes to improve sleep and circadian health. So, it was only natural that she became interested in the hotel experience.

With sleep tourism on the rise, and proof that hotels are beginning to take sleep more seriously, Robbins is now helping hotel industry to provide sleep strategies, including bedroom designs and hosting sleep retreats.

Here are some of her evidence-based tips for getting some rest while travelling.

1. Find the familiar in the unfamiliar

"The truth is that when we are in an unfamiliar environment, we fundamentally have a harder time unwinding," says Robbins. When we're at home, our bodies relax more easily. Whether it's new sounds or smells, our brains are on high-alert and scanning the hotel room as unfamiliar terrain. Smells with a positive association are scientifically proven to trigger a sense of well-being. Soothing sounds are similarly powerful in easing our minds and promoting relaxation. Whether it's smells or sounds, find ways to bring the sensory familiarity of home to your hotel room.

2. Tackle your worries

We don't always travel for leisure. The trip may involve difficult family matters or work stress, but typically the things that are keeping us from falling asleep are not ones that you can act on at that moment. We've all heard about the benefits of a gratitude journal, but don't underestimate the power of the worry journal. "The biggest impediments to our ability to fall asleep is a busy mind," says Robbins. Robbins suggests writing all of these worries down on a piece of paper as a way to relieve your brain from the burden of them, and focus on the task at hand, sleeping.

3. Stick to your routine

According to Robbins, a good sleep is all about routine. Meditating, taking a long shower, and listening to your favourite night cream, turning off your phone, or popping in your favourite pair of earplugs, your pre-bed rituals from home are the key. Repeating these activities while traveling will soothe your body and spirit. "Being religious about these things is actually really important because your brain starts to understand that what comes next is sleep," says Robbins. Pack your habits with you, even if you think they aren't the best ones to have.

4. Get out of bed

It's 3 A.M. local time, but your internal clock is still set five hours earlier. As hard as you try, you just can't fall asleep. Soon, you begin to associate your bed with stress and insomnia, and then the temperature of your mattress increases. If you're struggling, especially in a new time zone, get yourself out of bed. Tossing and turning won't

help you. Instead, leaving the scene of the crime will break the cycle. Do something relaxing like a breathing exercise with the lights low, or even folding socks, whatever you find to be sleep-inducing. "Then, come back to bed when you're tired. That will help you strengthen associations between your bed and a good night's rest," says Robbins.

5. Do your research

Most importantly, find yourself a hotel that takes its hospitality seriously. While there are many things you can do to ensure a good night's sleep while travelling, there are an increasing number of hotels that are eager to help you on your journey.



Wrap it in Leaves



Priyadarshini Chatterjee
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One of the earliest instances of culinary improvisation by humans has to be wrapping food in leaves and steaming or roasting it. Thought up by some hunter-gatherer ancestor, it is a stroke of ingenuity, simple but brilliant. The leaves make for an impervious casing that protect the food from being exposed to direct heat and prevent dirt or fluids from seeping in. The leaves also trap some steam and seal in the flavours, allowing the food to cook unharmed in mellow heat, steeping in its own juices. The results are fantastic.

For the primitive foraging societies, the choice of leaves must have been contingent on availability. But over time, through trial and error, cooks learnt to identify leaves that were not merely a protective casing, but also added flavour and sometimes medicinal properties to the food.

In India, as is in most tropical countries, where banana trees abound, the large, waxy and versatile leaves are used prolifically to wrap and cook food in and eat on. Think Parsi *Patrani Machhi*, Kerala's spicy *porichathus* and Gujarati *panki* (pancakes steamed between banana leaves). But it's not the only leaf used in the country to cook food in. From sal to turmeric, to rare local varieties steeped in medicinal properties, India uses a wide variety of leaves to cook food in.

Medieval Indian texts refer to a few rather sophisticated recipes for food that's cooked after being encased in leaves. The *Nimatnama*, a fascinating, albeit quirky, book of recipes, put together by Ghiyath Shah, Sultan of Malwa, and his son, Nasir Shah, in the 15th century, archives recipes for *kuftra*, or meatballs, folded in lime leaves and added to a broth. Other variations of the

dish call for sour orange leaves or even betel leaves. In another recipe, minced meat is spiced with cumin, fenugreek, cardamoms, cloves, camphor and musk, stuffed in screw pine leaves or in a basket made with sour orange leaves, cooked, and finally eaten, with vinegar or lime juice. The *Supashastra*, which documents culinary traditions in medieval Karnataka, mentions a recipe for bamboo shoots ground into a paste, with ginger, onion and grated coconut, stuffed in betel leaves and steamed. There is also Rajasthan's legendary *khad* (pit) cooking, which was, at one time, extremely popular with the region's royal hunting parties. The day's hunt would be laced with spices, swaddled in leaves and cooked in a sealed pit, heated with hot embers. The royal family of Mewar boasts an interesting recipe for *Khad Kokara*, in which the chicken is cloaked specifically in *Khakhra* (flame of the forest) leaves and roasted in a pit.

Another iconic recipe, one that, some claim, goes back centuries, is a unique *idli*, that's a

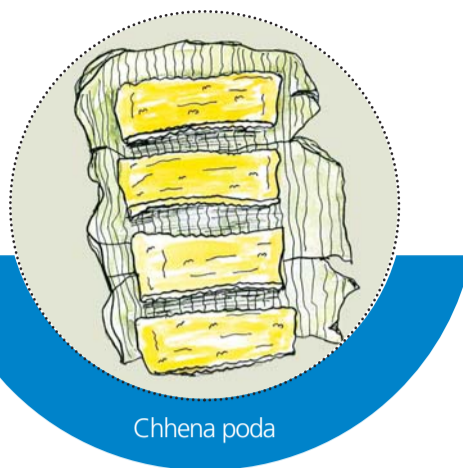
part of the *naivedyam* to Hindu deity *Varadharaja Perumal* at the *Varadharaja Perumal Temple* in Kanchipuram. The *idli* batter, laced with dried ginger, cumin, black pepper, asafoetida and curry leaves, is allowed to ferment over several hours. It is then filled into foot-long, cylindrical cane baskets, called *krattai*, that are lined with stitched-together dried *manthari* leaves, and steamed in hefty brass steamers. The result is soft and fluffy, delicately-spiced and fragrant *idlis*, which get their unique accent from *manthari* leaves. "The *manthari* leaves impart a mild, woody fragrance to the *idli*, which mingles with the spices to yield a unique flavour," said food chronicler and TV presenter, Rakesh Raghunathan, who docu-

ments traditional food on his blog, *Pulyogare Travels*.

In some parts of Karnataka, *idli* batter is cooked in moulds, made of fragrant screw pine leaves, locally known as *Kedigee*. The dish is called *Moodde*. The screw pine leaves exude a subtle, grassy aroma with floral notes that seeps into the moist, crumbly *idlis*, which are best savoured with

a splash of hot *ghee*. *Idlis* steamed in pouches, made with jackfruit leaves, known as *Khotie* or *Kotte Kadubu*, is a *Karavali* festive favourite. The jackfruit leaves, rich in antioxidants, are also used in Bengal for a special *pittha*, or dumpling, made with the pulp of the *Palmyra* palm, which is steamed in cones made out of the leaves. On her blog, *Ruchik Randhap*, Dubai-based blogger, Shireen Sequeira, shares a recipe for sweet rice dumplings that are stuffed with coconut and sesame, and steamed in jackfruit leaves.

For Sequeira, summers at home in Mangalore meant feasting on *ponsache patholi*, sweet, steamed cakes made with ripe jackfruit, jaggery and ground rice, prepared in her mother's kitchen.



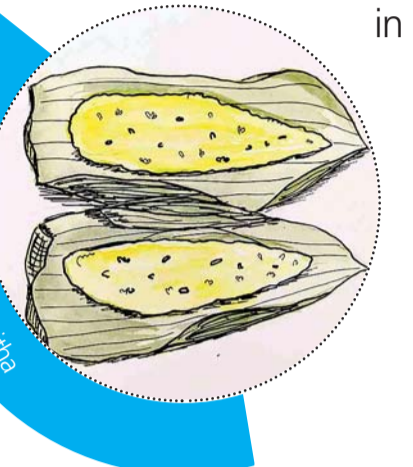
Chhena poda



Cooking in a pit



Enduri pitha



Therali kozhukattai



Patrani Macchi



#FOOD

grandmother's home, small, anchovy-like fish, locally called *Moamas*, were marinated with a little ginger, some green chillies, salt and a splash of mustard oil, wrapped in turmeric leaves, and thrown into the hearth to roast unharmed.

Besides, rice is often steamed in different kinds of indigenous leaves like the *koupar* or the antibacterial *Alpinia* leaves in the North East. It also makes an appearance on award-winning chef Aminder Sandhu's sophisticated menu at Arth in Mumbai. Sandhu serves her Jasmine rice, packed in fragrant *Alpinia* leaves, with *Deomali*, which is mutton, smoked in bamboo on charcoal. The result is a fragrant feast.

Between January and May, when val beans are harvested in Maharashtra, many rural communities organise *popti parties*. The festivities pivot on a curious one-pot dish, *Val beans*, boiled eggs, seasonal vegetables like potatoes and brinjal, and meat marinated with spices, are packed into a clay pot, which is lined with the medicinal *Bhambrut* leaves. The pot is

heady aroma that seeps into the patholi, giving them a delicious, floral undertone. Turmeric leaves are, in fact, used widely across the country. Take, for instance, Odisha's iconic *Enduri pitha* that appears everywhere, from Orisa folktales to Lord Jagannatha's breakfast platter. Rice and *urad dal* batter is layered with cardamom-scented

coconut on turmeric leaves, sealed and steamed, traditionally in clay pots. "The *Enduri* is a must on *Prathamashami*, an autumnal celebration, honouring the first-born child," said Mumbai-based home-chef Sweta Mohanty. "Typically, the sweet *Enduri* is prepared with spicy Orisa-style mutton curry or *dalma*, a lentil and vegetable dish."

In Manipur, *Paknam* or savoury cakes, made with anything from chickpea flour and chives to banana blossom or fish, typically flavoured with *ngari* (fermented fish), packed into turmeric leaf parcels and steamed, are popular as street food. "In Assam, we use turmeric leaves to wrap and cook fish in," said chef Kashmiri Barkakati Nath. At her

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In Bengal, the best-known leaf-wrapped dish is, perhaps, the *paturi*, a mustard-laced fish, steamed in banana leaves, which gives the dish a mild, woody finish. Other leaves, like those of a bottle gourd or pumpkin, are also used. Such is the popularity of *paturi* that it recently made a flaming hot appearance on celebrity chef Gagan Anand's exclusive and exorbitant pop-up menus, served up at select locations across India.

Leaves are used extensively to cook seafood in Bengal. Mustard-laced *hilsa*, steamed in pumpkin bottles, and prawns, steamed in bottle-gourd leaf parcels, are coveted delicacies. A rather intriguing recipe from erstwhile East Bengal has fermented fish enclosed in pumpkin or ash gourd leaves, dipped in a thin chickpea batter and deep fried until crisp. Paturi's Oriya cousin is the *Patra Para*, which literally means 'steamed in leaves.' "We prefer edible leaves like pumpkin leaves or *arbi* leaves to wrap fish or prawns in," said Mohanty. "Traditionally, these would be roasted in a charcoal-fuelled hearth. Nowadays, we steam or pan-fry the leafy parcels."

In Odisha, the abundant *sal* leaves are used to wrap and roast food in. In fact, *Chhena poda*, easily the state's best-known sweetmeat, is baked in sal leaves, which gives the cardamom-scented cottage cheese cake a distinct aroma. In Madhya Pradesh, a flatbread, called *paniya*, is cooked while being pressed between leaves of the crown flower tree, or even *khakhra* leaves.

What's interesting is how a rustic culinary practice has found a place everywhere, from traditional kitchens around India to sophisticated gourmet menus, from royal recipe archives to catching the fancy of ingenious chefs. As culinary writer, Arilyn Beaumont, writes in her essay, *Leaves Make things Steamy*, "Cooking in leaves is one of the humanity's simplest and most elegant culinary ideas. Its ubiquity unites us. The myriad ways, in which we adapt the same basic principle, is what makes food interesting."

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

#JAIPUR DOG SHOW

A Tail-Wagging Winter Extravaganza

A celebration of wagging tails and unbreakable bonds, the 26th Jaipur Dog Show brought together over 500 dogs from across the country in a lively winter spectacle. From dazzling ramp walks to an inspiring Indie puppy adoption drive, the event showcased not just competition, but a heartfelt celebration of love and loyalty that dogs bring to our lives.



Tusharika Singh
Freelancer Writer and City Blogger

As Jaipur's winter sun gently warmed the weekend, the Dussehra Ground in Raja Park came alive with wagging tails, joyful barks, and an air of excitement. The 26th Jaipur Dog Show turned an ordinary weekend into an extraordinary spectacle, where dogs and their owners competed for the ultimate title of champions. More than 500 dogs from across the country strutted their stuff, each aiming to win hearts and accolades in a celebration that combined elegance, energy, and an undeniable love for animals.



Dogs Take Center Stage

With every playful leap and graceful stride, dogs of all sizes and breeds showcased their finest qualities to the audience. *Siberian Huskies* with their icy blue eyes, *Afghan Hounds* with their regal demeanour, and *French Bulldogs* exuding charm were just a few of the unique breeds on display. Each canine competitor was judged meticulously by international experts from Singapore and Malaysia. The criteria?

Fashion Meets Fur

Adding a glamorous twist to the event, a fashion ramp walk, featuring dogs and models, was a clear crowd-pleaser. Organized under the guidance of Viren Sharma, Secretary of the Rajasthan Chapter of the Kennel Club of India, the segment seamlessly combined style with a heart-warming message. Models sashayed down the runway accom-

Indie Puppies Steal the Show

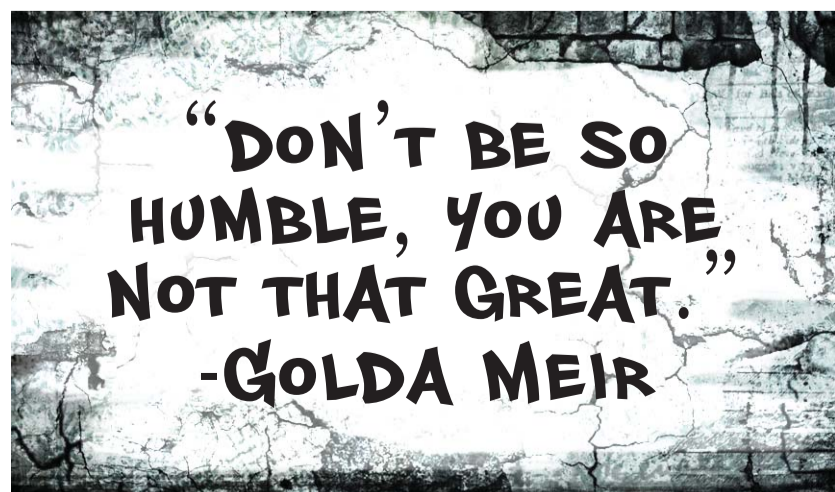
However, the true heroes of the day were not just the purebred champions or the ramp stars. Amidst the crowd and competition, a quieter, yet profoundly impactful, story unfolded. An adoption camp for Indie puppies, those often overlooked in favour of exotic breeds, saw an outpouring of affection from Jaipurites. More than 107 Indie puppies found their forever homes during the event, a testament to the growing awareness and empathy towards local breeds. For many families, adopting an Indie puppy was not just an act of kindness, but also a commitment to embracing a lifelong bond.

Celebrating Bonds Beyond Breeds

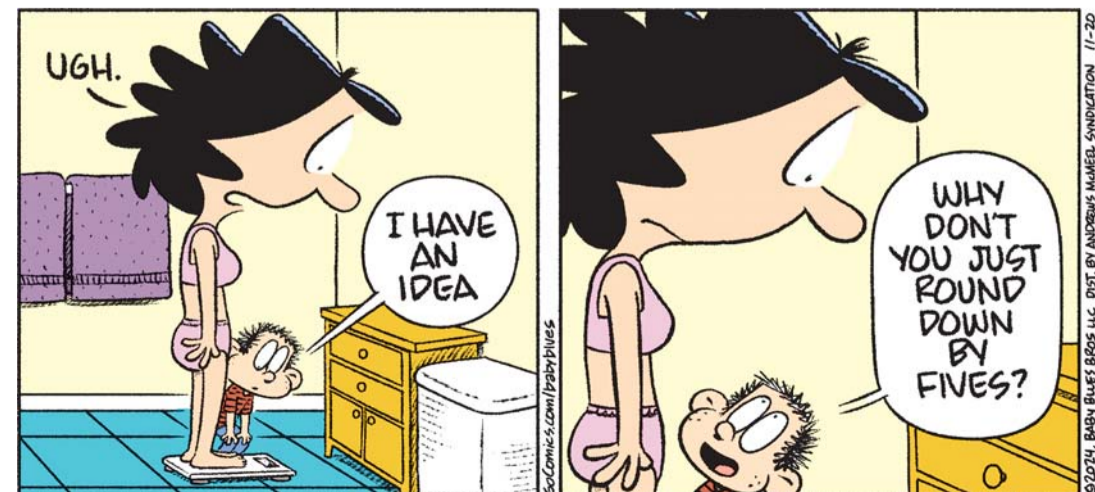
John Grogan, author of *Marley & Me*, once wrote, "A dog has no use for fancy cars, big homes, or designer clothes. A waterlogged stick will do just fine. A dog doesn't care if you're rich or poor, clever or dull, smart or dumb. Give him your heart, and he'll give you his." The Jaipur Dog Show encapsulated this sentiment perfectly, celebrating not just the beauty and skill of the dogs, but also the unconditional love and loyalty that they bring to their human companions. This weekend was not just about showcasing the best breeds, it was also about cherishing the timeless bond between dogs and their people. The Jaipur Dog Show proved that beyond trophies and accolades, real victory lies in the unconditional love and companionship that dogs bring to our lives.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS

