

Weedless Wednesday

Weedless Wednesday is a special day encouraging smokers to take a break from cannabis for 24 hours. This event, part of Non-Smoking Week, aims to boost awareness about the health risks linked to the use of marijuana. It's a chance for smokers and other marijuana users to experience the immediate benefits of quitting, even if it's just for a day. This brief pause can kickstart longer-term efforts to quit entirely. Celebrating Weedless Wednesday highlights the importance of healthy choices and the dangers of smoking.

#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. 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, finds ways to bring the sensory familiarity of home to your hotel room.

2. Tackle your worries

We don't always travel for pleasure. 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, using your favourite night cream, turning off your phone, or popping in your favourite pair of earplugs, your pre-bed rituals from the comfort of your bed 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 AM. 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
Food and Culture Writer, based in Kolkata



#FOOD

One of the earliest instances of culinary improvisation by humans has to be wrapping food in leaves, beginning on a roasting stick. Thought up by some hunter-gatherer ancestor, it is a stroke of ingenuity, a 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 *Supashashtra*, which documents culinary traditions in medieval Karnataka, mentions a recipe for bamboo shoots wrapped in a leaf with sugar palm 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 *Khakra* (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

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 unhurried in low heat, steeping in its own juices. The results are fantastic.

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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 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.

My mother used to steam the cakes wrapped in tender teak leaves, and usually, I would be sent to pluck the leaves from our neighbour's tree," said Sequeira. In Kerala, a similar jackfruit dumpling, flavoured with a hint of cumin, comes steamed in fresh *Edaru* or *malabathrum* leaves.

That's not all. Across the South, a mind-boggling variety of sweet and savoury dumplings are steamed in moulds made with leaves like sugar palm leaves and leaves of the Indian tulip tree.

"During *Attukal Pongala* celebrations at the Attukal Bhagavathy Temple in Kerala, thousands of women gather to worship the goddess, an offering of *Therali kozhukkattai*. A doughy batter, made with rice flour, jaggery, banana and a hint of cardamom, is rolled up in *therali* leaves and steamed. *Therali* leaves are the fresh green leaves of the cinnamon tree," said Raghunathan. "They impart a refreshing citrusy flavour to the sweet dumplings."

An equally intriguing recipe from Gujarat, the *dhamni dhokla*, is paired with spicy Oriya-style *mutta* or *dalma*, a lentil and vegetable dish.

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 give the confection its distinct aroma. In Madhya Pradesh, a flatbread, called *paniya*, is cooked while being pressed between leaves of the crown flower tree, or even *khakra* 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, Aralyn 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."

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#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



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 undeniably 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 result? A fragrant feast.

Besides, rice is often steamed in different kinds of indigenous leaves like the *koupat* or the anti-bacterial *Alpinia* leaves in the North East. It also makes an appearance at the *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 *popoti* parties. The festivities pivot on a curious one-pot dish. Val beans, boiled eggs, seasonal vegetables like potatoes and brinjals, and meat marinated with spices, are packed into a clay pot, which is lined with the medicinal *Bhambru* leaves. The pot is

enclosed in pumpkin or ash gourd leaves, dipped in a thin chickpea batter and deep fried until crisp.

Patra Pora, which literally means 'seared in leaves'. "We prefer edible leaves like pumpkin leaves or *arbi* leaves to wrap fish or prawns on," said Mohanty.

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