

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Chappan bags the 'clean street food hub' title

TNN | Feb 1, 2019



For many years, the terms 'street food' and 'hygiene' have been oxymoronic of sorts. Foodies indulging in piping hot kachodis were always afraid to question when last the vendor may have washed their hands, or where exactly the water in their gol gappas had been sourced from.

And while the people of Indore - and the many who visited the city - were happy gorging on Chappan Dukaan's poha, hot dogs, dosas and jalebis all this while, the same questions hounded them at the back of their mind as well. But, fear no more. This month, the city's tastiest food street bagging the coveted 'Clean Street Food Hub' certification from the food regulatory body Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). And this makes Indore only the second city in India to have a certified clean street food hub!

No plastic; caps and gloves a must!

Chappan Dukaan, which famously houses 56 food shops in a range of about 200 meters in the uptown Palasia area, has been a pitstop for all things food since pre-Independence era. The humble kiosks here have managed to contribute about 40% (approximate figure based on shopkeepers' statements) to the 5,000 cr annual turnover food market of the city - and they're only getting better with age and time.

The latest feather in their cap is the clean food street ka thappa they have received, and deservedly so!

"It was only a difference of two-three steps for us to win the title, as most of the cleanliness parameters were already being followed by the shopkeepers here," exclaims president of the Chappan Dukaan Vyapari Sangh, Shyamlal Sharma, who received the award on behalf of the community in a ceremony held in New Delhi last week. In the quest to banish plastic and

disposable cutlery at Chappan, vendors had reportedly already established a common wash area for reusable utensils – which ticked off number one on the list of mandates for being a clean city.

Then came training the staff and getting them the complete paraphernalia of cap, gloves and apron to meet the hygienic practice standards. Vivek Sharma, owner of one of the food shops shares, “There was a team of cyclists who were passing through Indore and who had previously been to Kankaria lake food street. They gave us the idea to strive for the title and tick off all the necessary parameters on FSSAI guideline to bag the award. We all pooled in resources as a community, and worked on training and meeting the required mandates for all the 56 shops in the vicinity. Aur humaari mehnat rang laayi!” The major changes added were a hand-wash area and a systematic counter top selling the food offerings of the city. “Most of the bigger shops followed these practices, but we had to target the smaller kiosks as well,” adds Manmeet Singh Bhatia, owner of yet another food shop.

Sanitizers, handwashing basins and waste segregation in every corner

Anyone visiting Chappan recently would be happily surprised to notice a bottle of sanitizer or handwash resting visibly on portable wash basins installed in front of every shop. “They have certainly stepped up from providing a tub and mug of water for one to wash their hands. Most of us would cringe, wondering if it was all just waste water. I’m happy to see all these hygienic practice in place now,” said Shambhavi Soni, who was there to enjoy her favourite hot dog. Similarly, now the food waste is segregated and the bins cleaned regularly. “We had to tackle the waste material problem. That is one factor that totally puts off the customers from street food. So, we built a common compost for disposal of food waste and employed dedicated workers to clean up the bins when it reached three fourth the capacity,” says Mahendra Soni, another vendor from the street. “It is good to not see remnants of food and pests hovering around to devour the leftovers!” added Jitendra Taneja, a student who is a regular at the street.

Sarafa’s next?

Like Ahmedabad, where three streets have now managed to bag the title, Indore is striving to get its most famous food street – Sarafa – in on the glory as well.

The street, that has become synonymous with Indore, and has been featured in countless shows and travel blogs needs gearing up to meet the parameters laid down by FSSAI.

“We want to implement the techniques in Sarafa soon enough, but we are taking baby steps right now. Since Sarafa is essentially a night market which sees a footfall close to 5,000 on an average day, it is harder to maintain sustained efforts. Chappan has a limited number of

shops so it was easier. We see a new vendor in Sarafa on a weekly basis. So, we are working on it and hopefully we'll be able to get the title soon," shares a vendor from Sarafa. Citizens too are hopeful that their favourite food street, which has put Indore on the map for foodies, should be able to pull off the feat.

"I agree that it will be more difficult to implement the parameters in the Sarafa lane, as it is not as organised as Chappan. But I'm hoping by the next audit, they manage to get to the other side. Then it will be dream run for Indore," says food blogger Kapil Jidhwani.