

The Indian Thali Meal - A balanced diet

Written by W.J.Pais



Thali , meaning "plate"; is an [Indian](#) meal with contents varying from one [region](#) [al cuisine](#)

to another. A thali is a selection of different dishes, usually served in small bowls on a round tray. The round tray is generally made with steel with multiple compartments. In

[North America](#)

, people sometimes use plastic thalis because they are disposable. Typical dishes include [rice](#)

,
[dhal](#)

,
[vegetables](#)

,
[chapati](#)

,
[papad](#)

,

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[curd](#)

(

[yoghurt](#)

), small amounts of

[chutney](#)

or

[pickle](#)

, and a sweet dish to top it off. Restaurants typically offer a choice of

[vegetarian](#)

or

[meat](#)

-based thalis. Kerala way of Thali is known as

[Sadya](#)

, with rice as staple food, and other specialities.

Depending on the restaurant or the region you are in, the thali consists of delicacies native to that region. Thali starts out with [puris](#), chapatis ([rotis](#)), different vegetarian specialities (curries).

In some restaurants, a thali may include 'bottom-less' refills on all components of food; the idea is that one eats until fully satisfied. Such thalis are referred to as 'unlimited' thalis. In some places the term means that everything in the plate except a few items, like the sweet preparation or dahi wada, is open to unlimited helpings.

Thalis sometimes go even by the regional characteristic of the items they have. For example one may encounter [Rajasthani](#) thali or [Gujarati](#) thali. In [Maharashtra](#) the term 'rice plate' was (and still occasionally is) used for the concept of thali. At many places in India, the

[bread](#)

and the rice preparation are not served together in the thali. Typically, one finds the Indian bread being offered first and the waiter serves the rice subsequent to the consumption of bread, often in a separate bowl or dish.

Also there are arrangements especially in Northern and Northwestern India (in fact, even [Pakistan](#)

and

[Afghanistan](#)

) where one is offered bread exclusively as a part of a meal. One encounters such arrangements especially at a

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[dhaba](#)

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[The Balanced Indian Thali: an overview of the region](#)