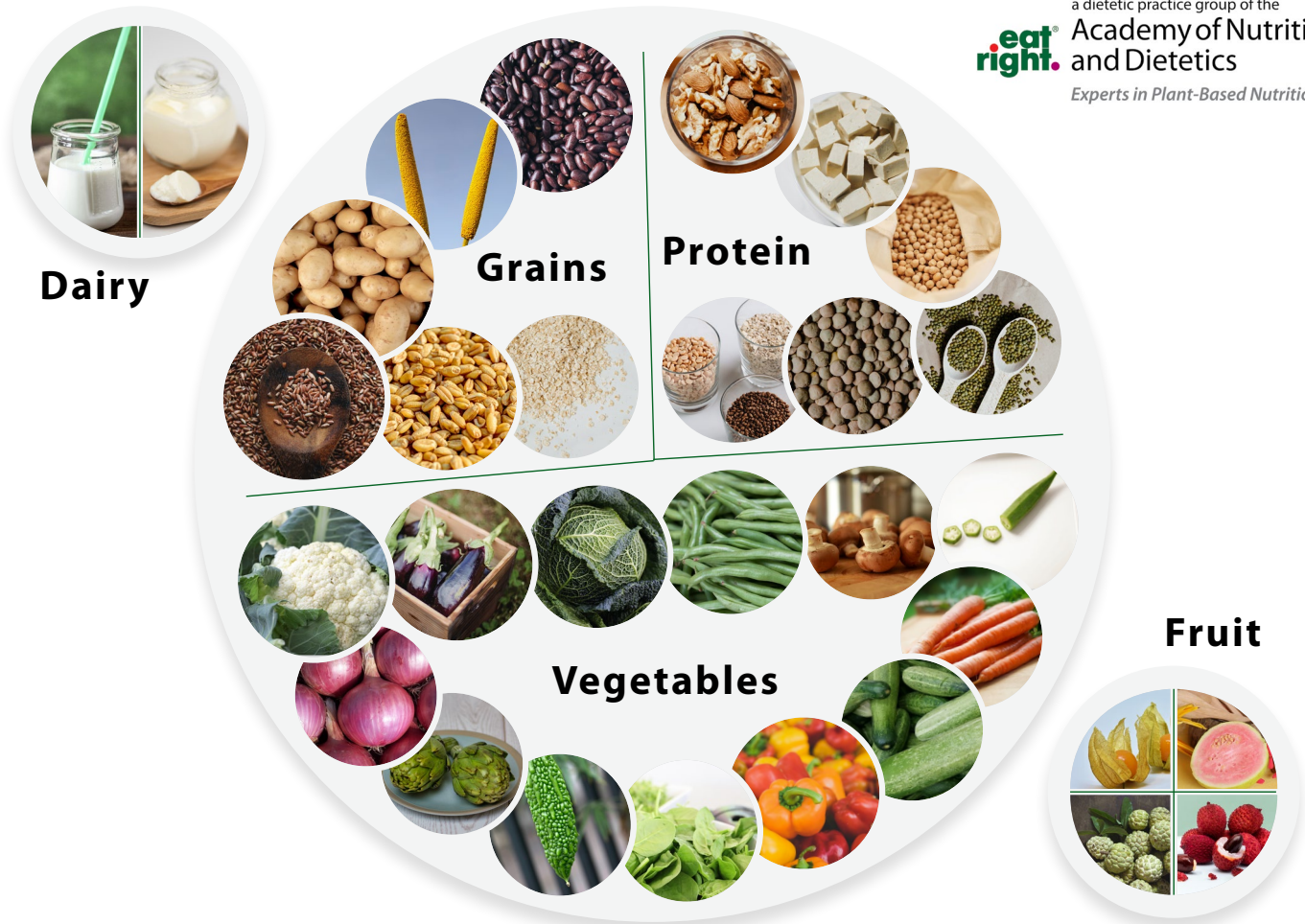


# VN DPG Culture Plates: South Asian Cuisine

## Vegetarian Nutrition

a dietetic practice group of the  
**eat right.** Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Experts in Plant-Based Nutrition



India is a country of great diversity with various regional cuisines. India has 28 states, 40% of Indian population being vegetarian and about 1% strict Vegan.

Some of the factors affecting its current cuisine are as follows:

**1. Invasion by other countries:** This brought in different foods and cooking methods to modify the native cuisine.

- Mughals introduced paneer (Indian cheese), naan (leavened bread), stuffed meats, poultry and fruits and cooking methods like tandoori in a clay oven.
- The British brought in potatoes, tomatoes, chilies and tea to India and knowing that these were not healthy and difficult to digest, spices were added to improve their digestion.

**2. Ayurveda,** one of the ancient medical systems of India, had a significant influence on diet and lifestyle prior to the invasions. Its main contribution is to approach the root of health problems and to provide an individualized remedy based on body types.

Some of the general principles are as follows:

- Food is prescribed based on body type, Agni or digestive

capacity (metabolism) and the lifestyle of a person.

- Food recommendation is made based on the 6 tastes in Ayurveda, which are sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent, versus the macronutrients used as basis in modern nutrition.
- Seasonal routine is observed to maintain balance with the nature's rhythms.

**3. Religion** also plays a role in food choices and restrictions.

- Many Hindus observe a fast every 11th day of the moon cycle.
- Muslims fast during Ramadan eating only after dusk.
- Jains refrain from eating after 6 pm and avoid onions, garlic and some root vegetables.

Fasting is in tune with Ayurvedic principles and is interwoven into the culture as a means to detox the body on a regular basis to maintain optimum health.

Wheat is the staple grain in the Northern states and rice is the staple in the southern states. The lentils and spices used and method of preparation also vary greatly between the different regions.

## VN DPG Culture Plates: **South Asian Cuisine**

The table below shows examples of some of the common dishes in the different regions.

Food Group	North	South TN/Andhra, Karnataka/Kerala	East Region Odissa/Bengal	West/central Maharashtra/Gujarat
<b>Grains/ starches</b>	Chapati/Roti Phulka Naan Paratha Rice brown basmati Khichdi Potatoes eaten often	Rice (white or parboiled) Dosa/Idlis (fermented) Adai (lentils)	Rice (white or parboiled) Puffed rice Poha Roti	Rice Poha Chapati Dhokla (steamed chickpea flour with spices) Dhebras Theplas Khichdi (rice and moong dal)
<b>Protein (legumes)</b>	Dal Chickpeas, Red kidney beans (rajma) Paneer Tofu	Toor, urad, Bengal gram and moong dais	All Dals Dalma dal with veggies Fish is common in Bengal	Masoor dal Toor dal Moong dal Sprouted moong dal green
<b>Dairy products</b>	Milk Yogurt Buttermilk (chaas) Lassi (thicker) ghee	Milk Yogurt Ghee Buttermilk	Milk in tea, Lassi, liquid, yogurt with sugar or salt	Milk Yogurt (raita) Buttermilk (chaas) Shrikand (curd, whey with sugar) Kadhi (buttermilk with chickpea flour)
<b>Veggies</b>	All veggies cooked with oil Dry with seasoning and spices With gravy of tomato, onion, garlic, spices	Stir fried veggies Kootu (with dal and spices) Seasonings usually mustard seeds, hing (asafoetida) and urad dal	Stir fried Pureed Bhartha Curry with paste of onion, ginger garlic and spices	Steamed veggies lightly seasoned Raita Salads (koshimbir) With cucumber, tomatoes, onions, peanut powder and coriander Undhiyu Gujarat special of mixed veggies
<b>Fruits</b>	All fresh fruits in season Eaten between meals	Eaten in between meals or as juices in summer	Eaten as after dinner desserts Watermelon, lychees, guavas, papayas, bananas	Eaten whole and pureed (mango puree) Juice in summer