EXPLORING CONSUMER TASTE PREFERENCES:
A STUDY OF SIGNATURE AWADHI DISHES OF LUCKNOW

Feroz Haider Alvi*
Dr. Gaurav Bathla**
Dr. Ranjeeta Tripathi***

ABSTRACT

This study, titled "Exploring Consumer Taste Preferences: A Study of Signature Awadhi Dishes of Lucknow", explains the varied taste preferences among consumers for traditional Awadhi food items, which include kebabs, main courses, breads, and sweets. This survey was conducted using a standardized questionnaire with 212 valid responses, and the ranking of the dishes were based on central tendency approach by the researcher. Iconic dishes are highly preferred, and Galouti Kebab is first among the kebabs because of its softness and the history it bears. In the main course, Awadhi Biryani is the favorite, prized for its richness in aroma and flavor. Under breads, Rumali Roti is found to be at the top, as it is versatile and forms a great combination even with heavy gravies. Among the sweets, Makhan Malai stands unique with its seasonal appeal and light, airy texture. The study highlights the cultural and sensory factors at play in shaping preferences. With a focus on meat-based dishes, along with some indulgent flavors, becomes the success mantra for the Awadhi cuisine. Contrary to this, evolutionary changes and individual tastes are reflected in lesser preference for dishes like Veg Korma and Zarda Pulao. Even so, the research will focus on considering how much preservation of authentic Awadhi culinary traditions can be achieved with change in consumer demands, making them relevant and appealing.

***KEYWORDS**: Consumers, Taste Preferences, Awadhi Dishes, Lucknow.*

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Introduction

Lucknow, the state capital of Uttar Pradesh, is often associated with rich cultural heritage, fabulous artistic traditions, and most importantly, its exceptional cuisine (Jacob & Bhalla, 2024; Singh & Jafri, 2011). The Awadhi cuisine, deeply rooted in the times of the Mughal, has blossomed into a distinct identity for gastronomy across the borders of India and beyond (Singh & Srivastav, 2023; Singh et al., 2024). Awadhi Cuisine-A tradition that is characterized by complex cooking methods, subtle flavors, and an ornamentation of aromatic spices, dishes such as kebabs, biryanis, kormas, or bread such as roomali roti - occupy an important place in the city's gastronomical repertoire (Manikanta et al., 2024). The taste and presentation characteristic of these dishes reflect the sophistication of the Nawabs whose patronage had helped Lucknow transform its food into an art form. In today's world of fast food and globalization, preserving the authenticity of such traditional cuisines is both challenging and necessary because it

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*   Research Scholar, School of Hotel Management, Airlines and Tourism, CT University, Ludhiana, Punjab, India.
**   Professor, School of Hotel Management, Airlines and Tourism, CT University, Ludhiana, Punjab, India.
***   Professor, Amity School of Hospitality, Amity University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India.

forms an integral part of cultural heritage (Almansouri et al., 2022; Sanmee, 2024). Consumer taste preference understanding is critical to the sustainability of regional cuisines, such as Awadhi. Taste is dictated by demographic factors, cultural exposure, and changing lifestyle patterns; therefore, taste plays an important role in food decision-making (Chen & Antonelli, 2020; Eze & Mena, 2024). Fusion foods and global cuisines have brought diverse flavors to the Indian plate, thereby changing the demand for traditional recipes (Kumari, 2024; Nanda, 2023).

The main objective of this research is to examine what the consumers prefer and which dishes are most in demand in Awadhi cuisine. More specifically, attention is focused on the kebabs, as the study explores which of these variants—Galouti Kebab, Kakori, or Seekh Kebab—is preferred by the consumer. Not only are these kebabs in high demand, but they also represent Lucknow's heritage food. The research also looks into other preferred dishes that act as the main course, like the Lucknawi Dum Biryani, Korma, or even Nihari, to get an idea of which of these dishes hits the palate of the contemporary consumer. Later, the choices related to bread, like the traditional Muglai Paratha, Sheermal, or even Rumali Roti, which is generally served as the accompaniment to the rich gravies. Finally, the sweet treats from Lucknow, such as desserts, are reviewed from Zarda, Shahi Tukda, and Seviyan Kheer, to determine the level of importance that they carry in the broad pattern of consumer preference. Consumer acceptance of these signature dishes will be investigated to understand if taste, tradition, cultural relevancy, and how it is presented lead to the consumers' food choice. Significant input from this study will be to restaurateurs and chefs in Lucknow on what to offer their customers, their likes, and preference.

Review of Literature

- **Evolution of Awadhi Cuisine**

Lucknow, within the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, has been the origin for rich historical cuisine extended by the blending of Persian, Mughal, and native Indian traditions (Khan et al., 2023). Awadhi cuisine overlaps with the grandeur and opulence of the Mughal court, in which the cooking technique was so intricate and that the royal chefs introduced some really lavish feasts. The Mughals really loved spices, slow-cooked dishes, and aromatic herbs and fruits significantly impacting the formation of Awadhi cuisine practices (Shaffer, 2012). The style is also dominated by using ghee and saffron together with a variety of spices, in addition to cooking techniques such as dum and kebabs that form part of Awadhi food (Bakshi, 2022). The Nawabs of Awadh (Oudh) further perfected this food, ensuring the creation of signature dishes such as galouti kebabs and tunday kebabs, biryanis, as well as other varieties of bread, rumali roti, and sheermal, according to Alvi et al. (2024). It was not just the food or the culinary art that happened in Awadh but also about hospitality and a dining experience (Singh, 2020). With the passage of the centuries, Awadhi cuisine evolved more but maintained its rich taste and regional taste with ingredients and kept up its regal heritage.

- **Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior towards Traditional Cuisines**

Consumer behavior toward traditional cuisine is influenced by several factors that interact with the dimensions of cultural, social, psychological, and environmental influences (Corvo, 2016). This, along with the growth of food tourism and the popularity of regional and ethnic cuisines in world markets, has added fuel to interest in traditional food (Hall et al., 2004; Sidali et al., 2015). Besides this, taste, aroma, and sensory appeal together contribute a lot to consumer preference, as the dishes are associated with great flavors and memories to recall (Sthapit, 2017). Through marketing and media representation, including food blogs, cooking shows, or food festivals, attitudes towards traditional cuisines take shape in consumers' minds (Lofgren, 2013). Price and affordability are also key economic factors, where consumers prefer traditional foods if they are perceived to offer good value or if they are less expensive than others with no differences in taste and nutritional value (Garnett, 2014). This emotional connection with food, often forged through memories, family activities, or cultural attachment, significantly influences consumer behavior, in that traditional foods foster feelings of comfort and belonging, which significantly influence repeat consumption (Holbrook & Schindler, 2003).

- **Consumers Taste Preferences towards Traditional Awadhi Dishes of Lucknow**

The taste preferences of consumers towards the traditional Awadhi dishes of Lucknow are heavily dominated by the region's rich culinary culture, which amasses influences from Mughal and Nawabi along with local flavors (Khan & Ahmed, 2023). So-called delicate spices, slow-cooked techniques, and rich textures characterize the Awadhi cuisine and hold a special place in the hearts of locals as well as tourists across the world (Sharma & Gupta, 2022). Dishes like kebabs, biryanis, and

kormas are widely preferred for their authentic taste, which is crafted using recipes passed from generation to generation for centuries (Patel et al., 2021). The usage of premium-quality ingredients, such as saffron, ghee, and dry fruits, raises the dining experience. Preparation techniques like dum cooking and tandoor grilling also contribute to distinctive flavors that consumers associate with luxury and indulgence (Ali et al., 2023).

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze consumers preferences for different types of Kebabs.
- To examine consumers preferences towards various traditional Awadhi curry and rice dishes.
- To examine consumers preferences for different types of traditional Awadhi Breads.
- To examine consumers preferences for different types of traditional Awadhi desserts.

Research Methodology

Research methodology for the study titled "Exploring Consumer Taste Preferences: A Study of Signature Awadhi Dishes of Lucknow" is designed in such a manner that it analyzes consumer preferences about iconic dishes of Lucknow's culinary heritage with all systematicity. The starting aim is to identify most favored items which fall into various categories, with an added focus on kebabs, main courses, breads, and desserts. To recognize the identity of Lucknow's culinary heritage, the study examines the popularity of certain kebabs, including Galouti Kebab, Kakori, and Seekh Kebab, in order to find out which type the consumers are most likely to enjoy. Similarly, consumer preferences for Lucknawi Dum Biryani, Korma, and Nihari, as main course dishes, are analyzed to understand their popularity among modern-day food enthusiasts. Traditional breads like Muglai Paratha, Sheermal, and Roomali Roti, that mostly accompany the gravies, are also included in the study based on their preferences. Finally, the study assesses the relevance of traditional desserts Zarda, Shahi Tukda, and Seviyan Kheer in the consumption pattern in general. The study adopts a structured questionnaire developed on Google Forms with questions framed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Not at all Preferred" to "Highly Preferred." Questionnaires are distributed by online social media networking sites to consumers of Awadhi food in Lucknow City. A convenience sampling technique has been adopted, and data collection is done during November 2024. Questionnaire was distributed to 270 respondents of which 220 had filled the form and 212 responses were found valid. Hence, analysis is based on 212 responses. To analyze, the central tendency approach is used where the weighted mean for each dish has been calculated to derive ranks which further help in establishing a clear hierarchy of consumer preferences across the several culinary categories explored in the study. Structured questionnaire constitutes the major source for data collection and books, theses, magazines, websites, research papers etc. constitute the secondary sources.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Parameter	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	129	60.8
	Female	83	39.2
Age	18-25 Years	70	33.0
	26-35 Years	45	21.2
	36-45 Years	43	20.3
	46-55 Years	34	16.0
	Above 55 Years	20	9.4
Marital Status	Single	140	66.0
	Married	72	34.0
Educational Qualification	Intermediate	34	16.0
	Graduate	89	42.0
	Postgraduate	59	27.8
	Doctorate	19	9.0
	Others	11	5.2
Occupation	Student	53	25.0

	Government Job	42	19.8
	Private Job	59	27.8
	Self-Business	38	17.9
	Others	20	9.4
Annual Income	Not Earning	40	18.9
	Up to 3 Lakhs	36	17.0
	3-6 Lakhs	52	24.5
	6-10 Lakhs	47	22.2
	Above 10 Lakhs	37	17.5
Residential Status in Lucknow	Local Resident	114	53.8
	Migrant/Visitor	98	46.2
Family Status	Nuclear Family	115	54.2
	Joint Family	97	45.8
Frequency of Consuming Awadhi Food	Daily	26	12.3
	Weekly	87	41.0
	Monthly	40	18.9
	Occasionally	46	21.7
	Rarely	13	6.1
Primary place to eat Awadhi Food	Home Cooked	50	23.6
	Street Vendors	35	16.5
	Restaurants	82	38.7
	Food Delivery Services	29	13.7
	Events/Festivals	16	7.5
Average spending per month on Awadhi Food	Up to Rs. 1000	71	33.5
	Rs. 1000-3000	66	31.1
	Rs. 3000-5000	52	24.5
	Above Rs. 5000	23	10.8

Table 1 is showing demographic profile of respondents. The demographic profile of respondents in the present study throws light on the varied nature of people who consume Awadhi food in Lucknow. Of 212 respondents taken in the survey, 60.8 percent were males and 39.2 percent females. The age distribution is youthful, with 33% falling into the 18-25 years age bracket, followed by 21.2% under the 26-35 years bracket, 20.3% under the 36-45 years bracket, 16% under the 46-55 years bracket, and 9.4% above 55 years. As far as marital status, most of the participants 66% were single, whereas 34% were married. Again, regarding the educational qualifications, most were graduates at 42%, followed by postgraduates at 27.8%, intermediate-level respondents at 16%, those with doctorates at 9%, and others at 5.2%. In the occupation category, 27.8% were in private jobs, 25% were students, 19.8% had government jobs, 17.9% were engaged in self-business, and 9.4% in other categories. Annual income group-wise, 24.5% fell between Rs. 3 to 6 lakhs, 22.2% between Rs. 6 to 10 lakhs, 17.5% above Rs. 10 lakhs, 17% up to Rs. 3 lakhs, and 18.9% were not working. There were 53.8 percent local Lucknowites, while 46.2 percent were migrants or visitors. The nuclear family consisted of 54.2 percent while joint families comprised 45.8 percent. Habits of consumption were shown through 41 percent having Awadhi food a week, 18.9 percent monthly, 21.7 percent occasionally, 12.3 percent on a daily basis, and 6.1 percent rarely. The major places of consumption were restaurants (38.7%), home-cooked meals (23.6%), street vendors (16.5%), food delivery services (13.7%), and events or festivals (7.5%). Average monthly expenditure on Awadhi food revealed that 33.5% spent between Rs. 1000, 31.1% spent between Rs. 1000 and Rs. 3000, 24.5% spent between Rs. 3000 and Rs. 5000, and 10.8% spent above Rs. 5000. In summary, this profile portrays a heterogeneous and active consumer base with diverse preferences and spending habits.

Preference Analysis of Famous Awadhi Kebabs Based on Weighted Mean and Rank

Table 2: Preference Analysis of Famous Awadhi Kebabs Based on Weighted Mean and Rank

Parameter	NAP (1)	LP (2)	N (3)	MP (4)	HP (5)	Total	Weighted Total	Weighted Mean	Rank
Galouti Kebab	10	12	22	44	124	212	896	4.23	**1**

Kakori Kebab	14	14	38	80	66	212	806	3.80	**4**
Shami Kebab	13	15	30	74	80	212	829	3.91	**3**
Seekh Kebab	15	15	24	63	95	212	844	3.98	**2**
Boti Kebab	20	19	35	73	65	212	780	3.68	**5**

Note: NAP: Not at all Preferred, LP: Less Preferred, N: Neutral, MP: Moderately Preferred, HP: Highly Preferred

The first objective of the study is to study consumers' preferences of different kinds of Kebabs. The table no. 2 provides a thoughtful analysis of consumer preference for five of the legendary Awadhi snacks made in Lucknow, which are Galouti Kebab, Kakori Kebab, Shami Kebab, Seekh Kebab, and Boti Kebab. The one that comes out as the most preferred based on weighted means and ranks is Galouti Kebab, weighing at 4.23 with rank 1. This means that an absolute 124 of all the 212 respondents rated it "Highly Preferred," while a total of 44 rated it "Moderately Preferred." That sums up its dominance as a culinary favorite. This is followed by Seekh Kebab, with a weighted mean of 3.98 and rank of 2. It attracted a lot of takers, as 95 rated it "Highly Preferred," and 63 found it "Moderately Preferred." Shami Kebab ranks third with a weighted mean of 3.91. Although it did not attain the number one position, 80 respondents rated it as "Highly Preferred" while 74 opted for "Moderately Preferred," which reflects that it is still that favourite of Awadhi snacks. Kakori Kebab again relates to the Nawabi era and is ranked fourth with a weighted mean of 3.80. Due to its historical value and delicate, flavor-rich preparation, it scored 66 "Highly Preferred" responses and 80 "Moderately Preferred" responses; it is slightly overshadowed by other dishes in terms of massive popularity. Finally, the fifth ranked kebab is Boti Kebab weighing at 3.68 with 65 "Highly Preferred" and 73 "Moderately Preferred" responses, thus denoting a relatively lower level of preference compared to the preferred kebabs.

These findings are due to all the things combined like texture, flavor, historical significance, and personal preferences for food. Galouti Kebab would be a great favorite because of its soft, creamy texture and its connection with Nawabi traditions. Seekh and Shami Kebabs have their massive flavors and convenience appeal for a wider range of people. On the other hand, Kakori Kebab, though having a strong cultural heritage, may not appeal to tastes that prefer stronger or more dominant textures. Lastly, Boti Kebab's relatively uncomplicated preparation and flavor profile might make it less exciting in a set of dishes that are known for complex spices and techniques. These results well bring out the myriad nuances in consumer preferences for Awadhi snacks and, secondarily, summarize cultural/sensory influences in food choices.

Preference Analysis of Famous Awadhi Main Course Dishes Based on Weighted Mean and Rank

Table 3: Preference Analysis of Famous Awadhi Main Course Dishes Based on Weighted Mean and Rank

Parameter	NAP (1)	LP (2)	N (3)	MP (4)	HP (5)	Total	Weighted Total	Weighted Mean	Rank
Mutton Nihari	20	13	34	56	89	212	817	3.85	**4**
Chicken/Mutton Korma	13	7	34	69	89	212	850	4.01	**2**
Mutton Pasanda	19	17	31	77	68	212	794	3.75	**7**
Bhuna Ghosht	17	13	30	69	83	212	824	3.89	**3**
Mutton Roganjosh	19	12	34	73	74	212	807	3.81	**5**
Paneer Pasanda	14	25	45	57	71	212	782	3.69	**8**
Veg Korma	17	30	44	62	59	212	752	3.55	**9**
Awadhi Biryani (Chicken/Mutton)	10	6	19	49	128	212	915	4.32	**1**
Yakhni Pulao	13	16	43	70	70	212	804	3.79	**6**

Note: NAP: Not at all Preferred, LP: Less Preferred, N: Neutral, MP: Moderately Preferred, HP: Highly Preferred

The second objective of the study is to examine the preferences of consumers toward various traditional Awadhi curry and rice dishes. The table no. 3 provides a comprehensive analysis of consumer preferences for nine iconic Awadhi main course dishes from Lucknow. Amongst these, Awadhi Biryani (Chicken/Mutton) is the leader of the pack with a weighted mean of 4.32 and rank of 1. An impressive 128 of the 212 respondents ranked it "Highly Preferred," with 49 respondents rating it "Moderately Preferred.". Second came Chicken/Mutton Korma with a weighted mean of 4.01. A whopping 89 respondents rated it "Highly Preferred," while 69 respondents found it "Moderately Preferred." Bhuna Gosht comes third with a weighted mean of 3.89. Of the respondents, 83 rated it "Highly Preferred," and 69 graded it as "Moderately Preferred." Mutton Nihari stands fourth with a weighted mean of 3.85.

Although it had more "Highly Preferred" responses at 89, its slightly higher "Neutral" number at 34 voters and 20 "Not at all Preferred" responses may have lowered its ranking. Nihari would enjoy great popularity due to the rich slow-cooked broth and traditional breakfast importance of the dish; however, the heavy and rich texture may lower the consumer appeal for a few.

Coming at fifth position is Mutton Roganjosh, holding a weighted average of 3.81. With 74 "Highly Preferred" responses and 73 "Moderately Preferred" responses, it has the respectable level of preference. Yakhni Pulao is sixth, with a weighted mean of 3.79, garnering 70 "Highly Preferred" responses and 70 "Moderately Preferred" responses. Third is Mutton Pasanda with a weighted mean of 3.75. Though 68 respondents have rated it "Highly Preferred" and 77 "Moderately Preferred," its higher percentage of "Not at all Preferred" responses at 19 and Neutral responses at 31 suggest more polarized consumer perception. Eighth position is Paneer Pasanda, with a weighted mean of 3.69. While 71 rated it "Highly Preferred," it also had the highest proportion of Neutral responses, at 45, and 25 "Less Preferred" responses. Finally, Veg Korma runs in ninth place with a weighted mean of 3.55. It received 59 "Highly Preferred" responses and 62 "Moderately Preferred" responses, but scored the highest number of "Less Preferred" responses at 30 and a relatively low score for preference overall.

Preference Analysis of Famous Traditional Awadhi Breads Based on Weighted Mean and Rank

Table 4: Preference Analysis of Famous Awadhi Breads Based on Weighted Mean and Rank

Parameter	NAP (1)	LP (2)	N (3)	MP (4)	HP (5)	Total	Weighted Total	Weighted Mean	Rank
Mughlai Paratha	11	9	27	65	100	212	870	4.10	2
Sheermal	5	20	24	70	93	212	862	4.07	3
Khameeri Roti	11	10	34	72	85	212	846	3.99	4
Rumali Roti	7	3	32	72	98	212	887	4.18	1

Note: NAP: Not at all Preferred, LP: Less Preferred, N: Neutral, MP: Moderately Preferred, HP: Highly Preferred

The third aim of the research is to study the consumers preferences for traditional Awadhi Breads. Table No. 4 gives a comprehensive analysis of consumer preferences for four of Lucknow's iconic Awadhi breads, namely Rumali Roti, Mughlai Paratha, Sheermal, and Khameeri Roti. Based on weighted means and ranks, Rumali Roti is the top favorite, with a weighted mean of 4.18 and ranked 1. It received near-total approval from the respondents, as 98 tagged it as "Highly Preferred" and 72 respondents as "Moderately Preferred." Mughlai Paratha comes right behind with the weighted mean 4.10 and rank of 2. An astonishing 100 respondents preferred it "Highly," while 65 respondents "Moderately Preferred." Next in the list comes Sheermal, with a weighted mean of 4.07. It received 93 "Highly Preferred" responses and 70 "Moderately Preferred" responses, which is why it is a product that continues to attract consumers. Last but not least, Khameeri Roti ranks fourth, with a weighted mean of 3.99. It received 85 "Highly Preferred" responses and 72 "Moderately Preferred" responses.

Preference Analysis of Famous Traditional Awadhi Desserts Based on Weighted Mean and Rank

Table 5: Preference Analysis of Famous Awadhi Sweet Dishes Based on Weighted Mean and Rank

Parameter	NAP (1)	LP (2)	N (3)	MP (4)	HP (5)	Total	Weighted Total	Weighted Mean	Rank
Zarda Pulao	19	13	46	66	68	212	787	3.71	5
Shahi Tukda	10	15	30	63	94	212	852	4.02	3
Malai ki Gilori	17	12	36	60	87	212	824	3.89	4
Seviyan Kheer	8	17	27	63	97	212	860	4.06	2
Makhan Malai	9	14	32	50	107	212	868	4.09	1

Note: NAP: Not at all Preferred, LP: Less Preferred, N: Neutral, MP: Moderately Preferred, HP: Highly Preferred

The fourth objective of the study is to check the consumers preference for various types of traditional Awadhi desserts. Consumer preferences for five popular Awadhi desserts from Lucknow have been dissected through table 5 as follows: Makhan Malai, Seviyan Kheer, Shahi Tukda, Malai ki Gilori, and Zarda Pulao. Among them, Makhan Malai was the leader of all desserts with a weighted mean of 4.09 and rank of 1. This dessert, with an almost ethereal texture and subtle sweetness, was so highly preferred by the customers that in fact it managed to get 107 "Highly Preferred" responses and 50 "Moderately Preferred" responses. Seviyan Kheer ranks second with a weighted mean of 4.06. There are 97 responses of being "Highly Preferred" and 63 are "Moderately Preferred". Shahi Tukda ranks third

with a weighted mean of 4.02. This rich dessert garnered 94 responses that were marked as "Highly Preferred" and 63 "Moderately Preferred. Malai ki Gilori assumes the fourth rank, with a weighted mean of 3.89. It received 87 "Highly Preferred" responses and 60 "Moderately Preferred" responses. Zarda Pulao ranks at the fifth place with a weighted average of 3.71. While it received 68 "Highly Preferred" responses and 66 "Moderately Preferred" responses, it also registered the highest number of Neutral responses (46) and "Not at all Preferred" responses (19) which affected its ranking. Zarda Pulao is a sweet rice dish colored with saffron and dry fruits.

Conclusion

The study "Exploring Consumer Taste Preferences: A Study of Signature Awadhi Dishes of Lucknow" offers an elaborate overview of consumer preferences across different categories of the Awadhi cuisine range, which included snacks, main courses, breads, and desserts. The results have shown a rich spectrum of food preferences influenced by taste, texture, cultural importance, and sensory aspects. The favorite among the snacks proved to be Galouti Kebab, due to its unmatched softness and historical appeal that makes it synonymous with Lucknow's royal culinary heritage. In the main course category, Awadhi Biryani showed dominance by its harmonious blend of aromatic spices and tender meat, making it a universal favorite. But in the bread category, Rumali Roti stood out as it was light, versatile, and paired well with rich gravies. Desserts crowned Makhan Malai as the most desired sweet treat, giving an ethereal texture and only being in season for a very short time, which had the strongest effect on consumers. Such results indicate that cultural and sensory factors have run very deep to influence consumer preference for the Awadhi cuisine. Meat-based dishes and richness of indulgent flavoring define the regional culinary traditions, while light options like Rumali Roti or comfort food like Seviyan Kheer find a more universal audience. However, its relatively lower ranks for certain dishes like Boti Kebab, Veg Korma, and Zarda Pulao underscore the place of individual taste preferences and evolving consumer trends in the selection of food. It highlights preserving culinary heritage as essential in innovation and diversity of tastes to make it a flavorful, ageless treat from Awadhi cuisine.

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