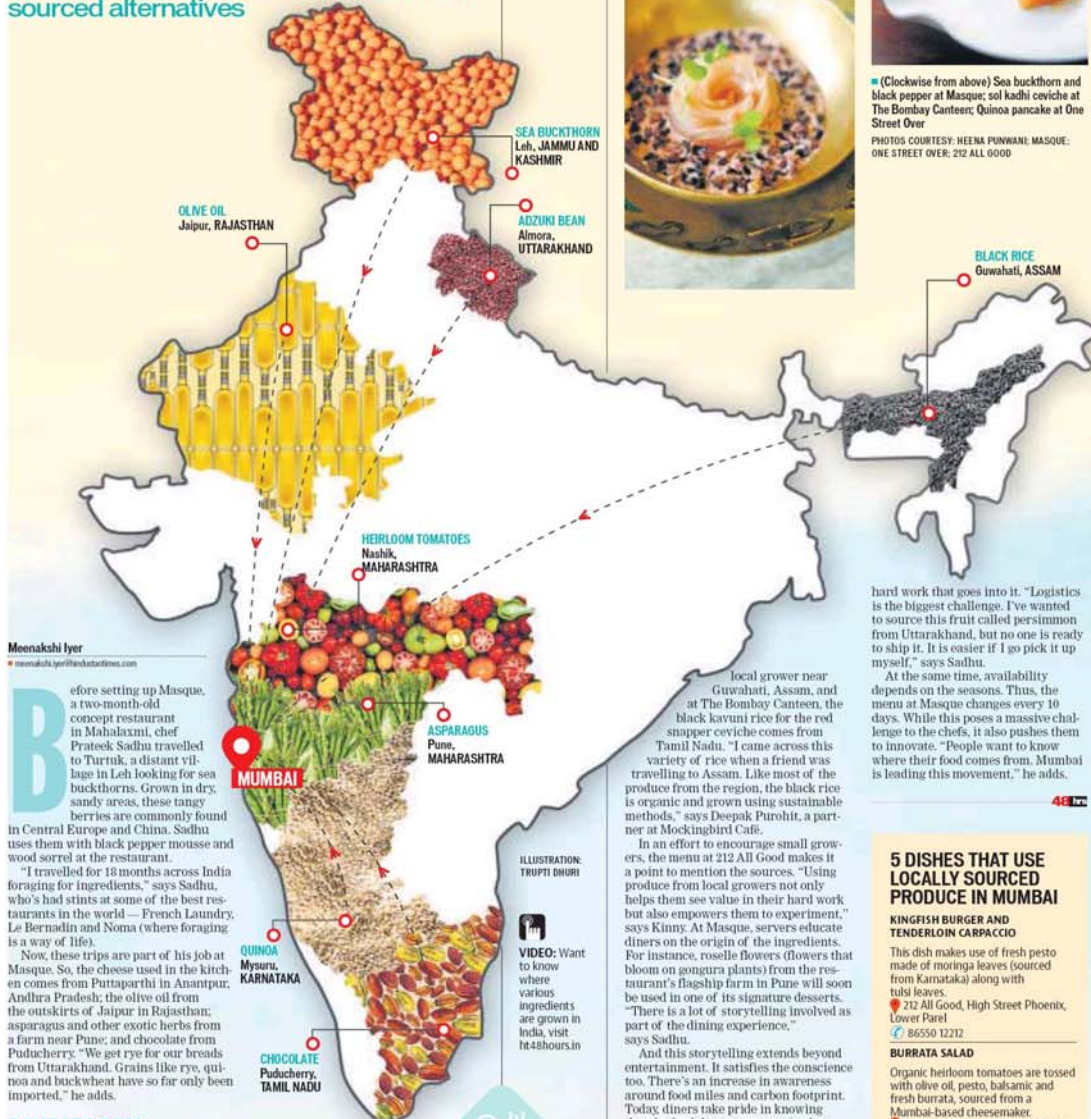


# THE GREEN MILE

Artisanal chocolate from Puducherry; olive oil from Rajasthan; miso from Uttarakhand: Mumbai chefs are ditching imported ingredients for locally sourced alternatives



Meenakshi Iyer  
meenakshi.iyer@hindustantimes.com

**B**efore setting up Masque, a two-month-old concept restaurant in Mahalaxmi, chef Prateek Sadhu travelled to Turtuk, a distant village in Leh looking for sea buckthorns. Grown in dry, sandy areas, these tangy berries are commonly found in Central Europe and China. Sadhu uses them with black pepper mousse and wood sorrel at the restaurant.

"I travelled for 18 months across India foraging for ingredients," says Sadhu, who's had stints at some of the best restaurants in the world — French Laundry, Le Bernardin and Noma (where foraging is a way of life).

Now, these trips are part of his job at Masque. So, the cheese used in the kitchen comes from Puttaparthi in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh; the olive oil from the outskirts of Jaipur in Rajasthan; asparagus and other exotic herbs from a farm near Pune; and chocolate from Puducherry. "We get rye for our breads from Uttarakhand. Grains like rye, quinoa and buckwheat have so far only been imported," he adds.

## SOURCE LOCAL, SERVE GLOBAL

Earlier, chefs would plan menus according to the availability of ingredients that were flown in from far-flung corners of the world: avocados from Mexico, French and Italian cheese and chocolates from Ghana. But now, restaurants across the city are going out of their way to find local sources for the same ingredients.

At Lower Parel's 212 All Good, a newly opened restaurant that promotes clean eating, everything (except the olive oil and balsamic vinegar) is sourced locally; even the miso for its pumpkin miso soup. "We found a Japanese community in Uttarakhand that was making miso in small batches. They also grow adzuki beans (originally from East Asia)," says chef Paul Kinny. Similarly, the latest fad in the superfood universe — moringa

leaves — comes from Karnataka. The list goes on. At Bastian (in Bandra), avocados for the gluten-free Benedicts come from a farm near Pune. At Olive Bar and Kitchen, heirloom tomatoes come from a farm near Nashik. However, at the forefront of this gradual but definite shift towards locally sourced produce is Vrindavan Farm, situated in Wada, 127 km from Mumbai. Run by Gayatri Bhatia, the farm supplies organic produce to city restaurants, including 212 All Good and Olive.

**ORGANIC AND SUSTAINABLE**  
Since most of the locally sourced ingredients are grown by small-scale farmers, they tend to come with the coveted organic tag. At Churchgate's Mockingbird Café, black rice for the black rice risotto comes from a



(Clockwise from above) Sea buckthorn and black pepper at Masque; sea kadi ceviche at The Bombay Canteen; Quinoa pancake at One Street Over  
PHOTOS COURTESY: HEENA PUNWANI, MASQUE; ONE STREET OVER; 212 ALL GOOD

ILLUSTRATION: TRUPTI DHURI

**VIDEO:** Want to know where various ingredients are grown in India, visit [ht48hours.in](http://ht48hours.in)

(Left) Black rice risotto at Mockingbird Café; Cocktails at 212 All Good use gondhoraj lebu



local grower near Guwahati, Assam, and at The Bombay Canteen, the black kavuni rice for the red snapper ceviche comes from Tamil Nadu. "I came across this variety of rice when a friend was travelling to Assam. Like most of the produce from the region, the black rice is organic and grown using sustainable methods," says Deepak Purohit, a partner at Mockingbird Café.

In an effort to encourage small growers, the menu at 212 All Good makes it a point to mention the sources. "Using produce from local growers not only helps them see value in their hard work, but also empowers them to experiment," says Kinny. At Masque, servers educate diners on the origin of the ingredients. For instance, roselle flowers (flowers that bloom on gongura plants) from the restaurant's flagship farm in Pune will soon be used in one of its signature desserts. "There is a lot of storytelling involved as part of the dining experience," says Sadhu.

And this storytelling extends beyond entertainment. It satisfies the conscience too. There's an increase in awareness around food miles and carbon footprint. Today, diners take pride in knowing that the food they are consuming has caused the least damage to the environment. "People also want to eat clean and healthy," says Kinny. For instance, at Kitchen Garden in Bandra, the newly opened café by the guys behind Suzette, organic spirulina comes from Auroville in Puducherry. Used in its green smoothie and green booster juice, spirulina is considered to be a superfood.

**THE PITFALLS**  
As a diner, it may be the best time to try locally grown produce, but there's a lot of

hard work that goes into it. "Logistics is the biggest challenge. I've wanted to source this fruit called persimmon from Uttarakhand, but no one is ready to ship it. It is easier if I go pick it up myself," says Sadhu.

At the same time, availability depends on the seasons. Thus, the menu at Masque changes every 10 days. While this poses a massive challenge to the chefs, it also pushes them to innovate. "People want to know where their food comes from. Mumbai is leading this movement," he adds.

## 5 DISHES THAT USE LOCALLY SOURCED PRODUCE IN MUMBAI

### KINGFISH BURGER AND TENDERLOIN CARPACCIO

This dish makes use of fresh pesto made of moringa leaves (sourced from Karnataka) along with tufu leaves.  
212 All Good, High Street Phoenix, Lower Parel  
86550 12212

### BURRATA SALAD

Organic heirloom tomatoes are tossed with olive oil, pesto, balsamic and fresh burrata, sourced from a Mumbai-based cheesemaker.  
One Street Over, off Linking Road, Bandra (W)  
2600 2224

### BEAN TO JAR

A new flavour of ice cream that brings together the best of local chocolate, sourced from Annamalai Hills in Tamil Nadu.  
Sucres Des Terres, Dr Annie Besant Road, Worli  
99209 85880

### SALAD WITH BURRATA AND HEIRLOOM TOMATOES WITH SORREL VINEGAR

This dish makes use of fresh tomatoes from a farm near Nashik and sorrel from Vrindavan Farm in Wada.  
Olive Bar and Kitchen, Union Park, Khar  
4340 8229

### GLUTEN-FREE AVOCADO BENEDICT

This brunch favourite makes use of avocados from a farm near Pune.  
Bastian, opposite National College, Linking Road, Bandra (W)  
2642 0145