



Sfogliatelle, also known as the “lobster tail” in English, is a widely eaten Italian pastry; this particular one had lemon-ricotta filling.



A decadent Lemon Tiramisu foregrounding the streets of Positano, one of the picturesque towns of the magnificent Amalfi Coast.



Catch of the Day with couscous-pepper salad as the side. Lisbon, Portugal.

#### SPECIAL FEATURE

There are no qualms of any kind on this – food and travel are inseparably intertwined. When one travels, food inevitably becomes a fascination, and creates its own pathway to a place! This is where the essence of 'gustatory tourism' lies; food paving the way to travel, and at the same time, fulfilling the purpose of travelling.

## GUSTATORY TOURISM

Call it 'Travelling for Food' or 'Culinary Tourism,' the meaning remains the same. Kashtan Habib, an advertising personnel, who loves food and travelling, weighs in on this by saying, “I guess these are all different terms for the same concept - food travel. Don't think there's any difference in them.” Sharmin Rahman, AVP-Creative at Asiatic JWT and fashion designer by hobby, compares it to regular tourism and mentions, “People who love to travel, want and expect different things from their tours; some expect relaxation, some want to see scenic places, some succumb to sights of historic importance, some seek entertainment and some people love to indulge in food. Some travellers want a combination of all or a few from the list and some travel only for food – the last type of tourism is gastronomic tourism I believe, in which case the sole purpose of travelling is to taste food from a particular geographical destination.”

Travelling for the sake of the food does not require an acquired taste, no pun intended! It comes seamlessly to those seeking it, but does it negate the other aspects of visiting a foreign land? To answer that very question, Rahman had this to say- “I'd definitely want my travel destination to offer me with an array of great tasting food; local, foreign, versatile in nature, fine dining, street food, fusion – all sorts, as my tour

would be incomplete without tasting local food or experiencing a few great dinners, but I don't think I will plan a trip just for food in near the future!”

Habib too shares the same opinion, “It's not like I will go to a foreign country just for the food. Food comes as it is, as part of the whole experience. But I have taken many 'food tours' in various cities I have visited as that give you an idea of the people there, their lifestyle etc. I've always been curious about San Sebastian in Spain, a place with the most number of Michelin Stars in one city. But I'd never go to Spain only to visit San Sebastian. I went to San Sebastian as a



Queijada, a small Portuguese cheese cake with a slightly pungent flavor, topped with nuts and berry sauce.



Shrimp in garlic sauce, buttery, smooth, sweet - heaven in other words. Lisbon, Portugal.

part of my whole Spain trip.”

Since we are talking food as the sole purpose of tourism, Habib gives a concise glimpse of his tours- “I have done many food tours in cities like Bangkok, Mumbai, Paris, Madrid to San Sebastian. What's beautiful with such tours is that the tour group, consisting of complete strangers, walking, and eating through a city for 2-3 hours, create a momentary bond. We taste the food, criticising some and loving others, we share each other's backgrounds, cultures, food habits. The tour not only opens up the culture and legacy of the locality, but also of the tourists themselves. Then, after the 3



Pudim Abade, a Portuguese pudding flavoured with cinnamon and citrus fruit, firm and velvety all the way through.

hour trip, we become strangers again, going on to our next ventures. At times, we do bump into each other again, and share a familiar hello. It's a bittersweet experience and is always memorable.”

Gastronomic tourism does not always have to mean getting a passport and hopping on a plane. Your neighbourhood food cart can draw in people from a different district, if fame reaches that far! Habib comments on this, saying, “... it's not just about international food.

Photo: Emran Khan

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14