



PALLAVI MAJUMDER

# Vegetarian: Breaking the Stereotype in the Northeast

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At our core, we believe that food is more than just a meal—it's a living expression of culture, memory, identity, and place. And nowhere is that truer than in Northeast India, a region where recipes are passed down orally, ingredients are rooted in the land, and every dish carries the essence of community.

Our journey into curating food tours here didn't begin with a trend—it was born out of deep respect for the people who preserve this rich culinary heritage every single day. The individuals we partner with aren't commercial kitchens or large hospitality groups—they're home cooks, farmers, and chefs who have dedicated themselves to keeping tradition alive, often in the most personal and heartfelt ways.

In Majuli and Nameri, for example, the Mising meals our guests enjoy are lovingly prepared by local housewives using time-honored techniques. In Shillong, our host Vivek opens up his home and his kitchen, passionately serving up family recipes with stories that linger long after the meal. At Nordon Farmstay in Arunachal, guests taste the freshness of the land itself—organic produce harvested just steps away from the table.

We also collaborate with chefs and food entrepreneurs who blend tradition with creativity. Chef Ahme in Shillong reimagines Khasi delicacies through her pop-ups, adding her own contemporary flair while staying rooted in authenticity. In Arunachal, Damus—a fine-dine experience run entirely by Monpa women—is more than just a restaurant; it's a cultural revival, offering a rare glimpse into the Monpa way of life through food.

Though the Northeast is often associated with its rich meat-based cuisine, the region is incredibly vegetarian-friendly. Many of our hosts are mindful of dietary preferences, allergies, and spice tolerance—ensuring each meal is both delicious and considerate of individual needs.

For us, these tours are not just about tasting something new. They're about building bridges—between cultures, between people, and between the past and the present. When you travel with us, you don't just eat the food—you meet the hands that make it, hear the stories behind it, and experience a region through its most intimate, nourishing language.

## Our Favorite Vegetarian-Friendly Restaurants in Northeast India: Where Local Flavours Meet Creative Plates

From traditional thalis to modern interpretations, these spots celebrate the region's rich culinary diversity with something for every kind of vegetarian traveller.

### 1. Paradise, Guwahati

Located in the heart of Guwahati, Paradise has been a pioneer in serving traditional Assamese cuisine since 1984. Known for its

authenticity and warmth, the restaurant's signature offering is the 'Parampara Thali'—a thoughtfully curated three-course meal that gives guests a true taste of Assam's culinary heritage.

For those who want to explore beyond the thali, Paradise also offers an exquisite à la carte menu featuring unique dishes like food cooked in bamboo hollows, smoked delicacies, and light steamed preparations. One of the standout items is the Gooseberry Soup, a comforting and nutritious dish you won't want to miss.

Paradise is vegetarian-friendly, with plenty of vegan and gluten-free options available, making it an inclusive dining destination for all. You will experience the soulful flavors of a traditional Assamese meal—served with love and legacy.



## 2. ML 05 Café, Shillong

A favorite among locals and travelers alike, ML 05 Café in Shillong blends modern comfort with a lively, youthful vibe. Known for its custom-themed decor and relaxed ambience reflecting the owners love of sports, bikes and travel, it's the perfect spot to unwind over a great meal. The menu features a mix of contemporary and comfort foods, with plenty of vegetarian options to choose from—making it a go-to for diverse palates. Whether you're stopping by for a coffee, a quick bite, or a long catch-up session, ML 05 offers a fresh, modern taste of Shillong.



## 3. Lhasa Newar, Gangtok

A culinary gem in Gangtok, Lhasa Newar is the perfect place to savour authentic Nepalese and Tibetan cuisine. The restaurant also surprises guests with its impressive Western fare—from handcrafted pastas to wood-fired pizzas—thanks to a chef trained in Naples. With reasonable prices, a warm ambience, and a menu that bridges tradition and modern flair, it's a must-visit for any food lover in town. And while you're there, be sure to sample their signature cocktails—they're as memorable as the food!





#### 4. Baankahi, Kohora - Kaziranga

Located conveniently near the Kohora bus stand, Baankahi is a great stop for a wholesome and budget-friendly meal. Their Assamese vegetarian thali (approx. ₹200), is both satisfying and delicious. The thali included two types of dal, pumpkin sabzi, aloo pitika, baingan bhaja, a dry mixed veg, chutney, luchi, payokh, and a fresh salad—a well-balanced spread with homely flavours and generous portions, perfect for one person. The restaurant has ample seating, and the service was quick and efficient, making it a reliable choice for a hearty local meal in Kaziranga.



## A Round-Up of Must-Try Vegetarian Dishes from Northeast India

Explore the diverse and delicious world of vegetarian cuisine across the eight states of the Northeast—each dish a reflection of the land, its people, and their timeless culinary traditions.

### 1. Khar - Assam

The first thing you'll notice on any traditional Assamese table is **Khar**. Unique and full of character, this dish is made using *kola khar*—sun-dried peels of the banana plant's trunk, which are burned to ash and then filtered in water. This alkaline liquid is then used to cook raw papaya, pulses, or other vegetables, resulting in a flavour that's earthy, smoky, and unlike anything else in the world.

Traditionally served at the beginning of a meal, Khar is believed to cleanse the palate and aid digestion.

**Where to try:** *Paradise Restaurant, Guwahati.*

## 2. Kelli Chana – Manipur

**Kelli Chana** is a vibrant Manipuri street food that delivers a bold punch of flavour. Boiled chickpeas are paired with crispy fried bamboo shoots and tossed with onions, garlic, ginger, green chillies, tomatoes, and black gram. The result is a tangy, spicy, and utterly addictive snack that perfectly represents Manipur's dynamic food culture.

Best enjoyed as a quick bite on the go or during a leisurely stroll through Imphal's bustling markets.

### 3. Jadoh (Vegetarian) – Meghalaya

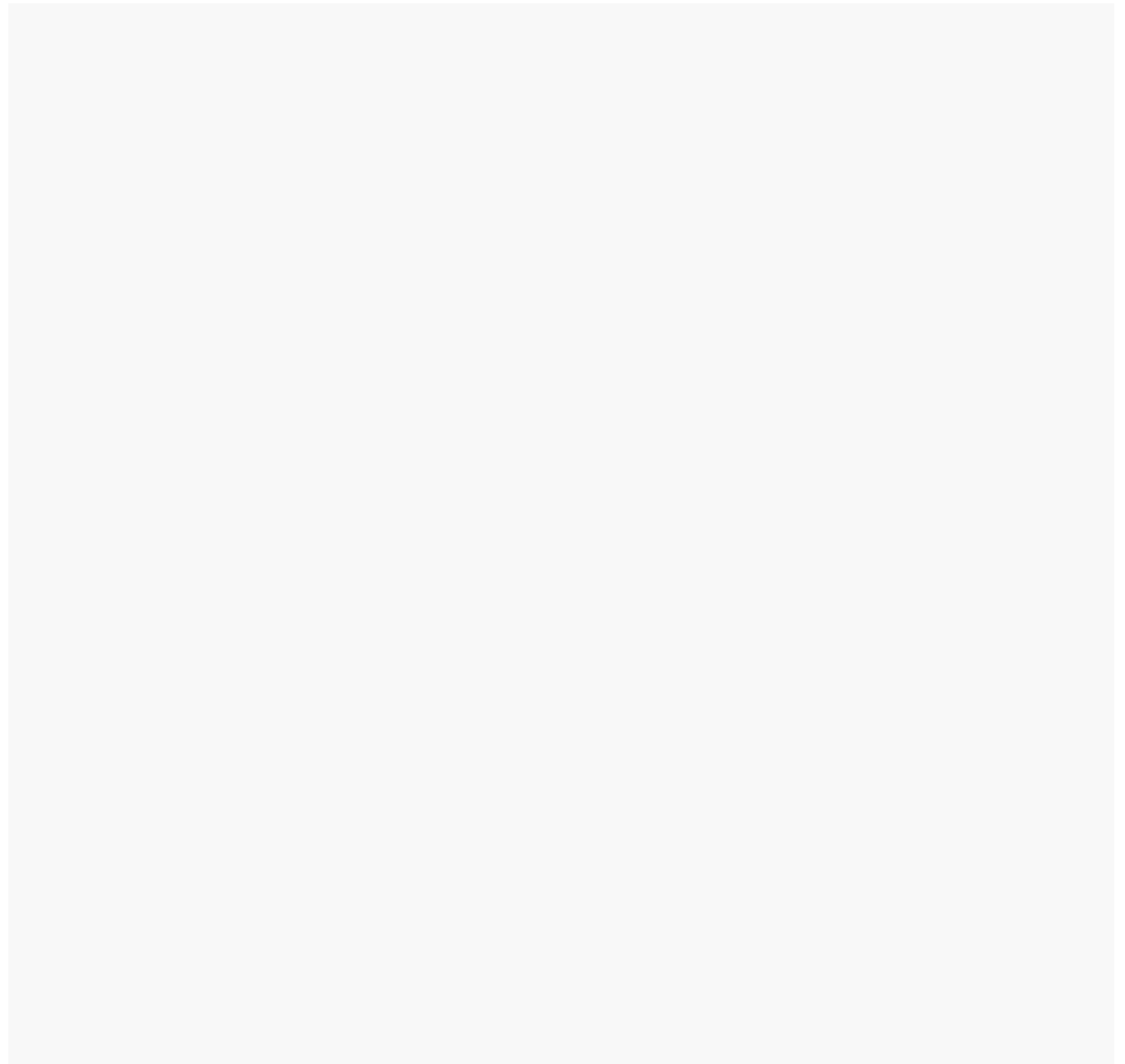
A beloved dish among the Khasi people, **Jadoh** is traditionally a rice-and-meat preparation, but its vegetarian version is equally satisfying. Made with long-grained red rice and cooked with tomato purée, local vegetables, and a blend of aromatic spices, vegetarian Jadoh carries the tranquil spirit of Meghalaya's hills on every plate.

**Where to try:** *Trattoria*, Shillong – for authentic Khasi flavours in a humble setting.

## 4. Ombhl – Nagaland

In the heart of Nagaland's culinary repertoire lies **Ombhl**, a simple yet soul-satisfying pumpkin curry. Cooked in tamarind water with mustard seeds, bay leaves, lemon juice, and a hint of jaggery, Ombhl is typically served with fragrant mountain rice. Its sweet, sour, and savoury balance offers pure comfort food—especially in the cool hills of Kohima.

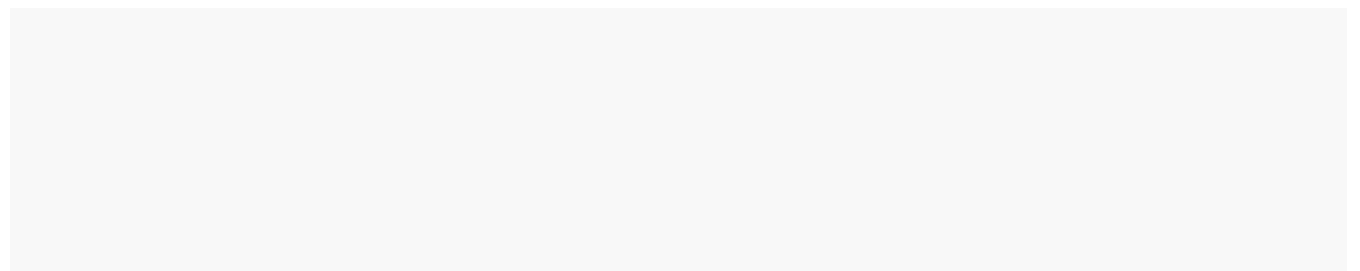
**Where to try:** Local restaurants and homestays in Kohima.



## 5. Zan – Arunachal Pradesh

A hearty and wholesome dish from the Monpa tribe, **Zan** is a millet porridge made nutritious with vegetables like carrots, spinach, green peas, soybeans, and a warming touch of black pepper and local herbs. For those who dare, a hint of *bhut jolokia*—the world's hottest chilli—adds fire and depth to this mountain favourite.

**Where to try:** *Zero Point*, Itanagar or *Orange* and *Dragon Restaurants* in Tawang (call ahead to check availability).





## 6. Sanpiau – Mizoram

Mizoram's answer to comfort food, **Sanpiau** is a light and flavourful rice porridge topped with coriander paste, spring onions, black pepper, and a sprinkle of powdered rice. This humble yet flavour-packed street food is perfect for chilly evenings or quick lunches.

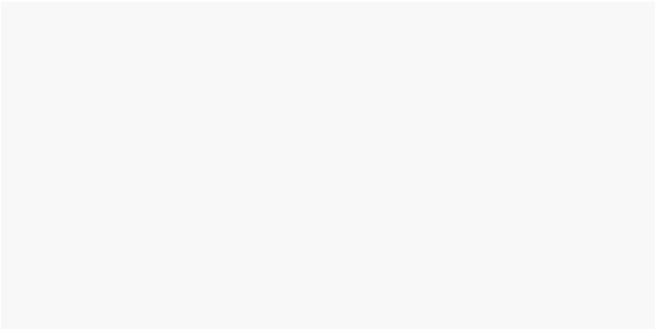
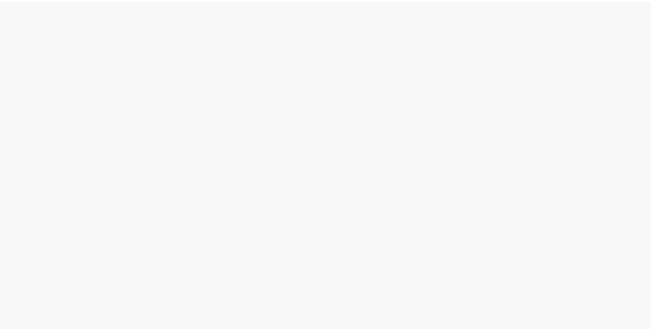
**Where to try:** Found easily on the vibrant streets of *Aizawl*.



## 7. Sisnu Ko Pakora – Sikkim

A favourite in Sikkimese homes, **Sisnu Ko Pakora** are fritters made from blanched nettle leaves, mixed into a batter of rice flour, gram flour, chopped onions, green chillies, ginger, and aromatic spices. Deep-fried until crisp and golden, they're best enjoyed with tangy tomato chutney or a refreshing mint dip. Crunchy, savoury, and perfect with a cup of tea.

Often served during local festivities or as a teatime snack in mountain homes.



## 8. Awan Bangwi – Tripura

**Awan Bangwi** is Tripura's answer to dessert—a traditional steamed rice cake made with **Guria rice**, garlic, grated ginger, raisins, and cashews, all wrapped in fragrant *lairu* leaves. The surprise? A delicate interplay of sweet, spicy, and earthy flavours that somehow just works.

Rooted in folklore and cultural celebrations, Awan Bangwi is one of the oldest surviving recipes in the region.

**Where to try:** Local sweet shops in *Agartala*, especially during festive seasons.

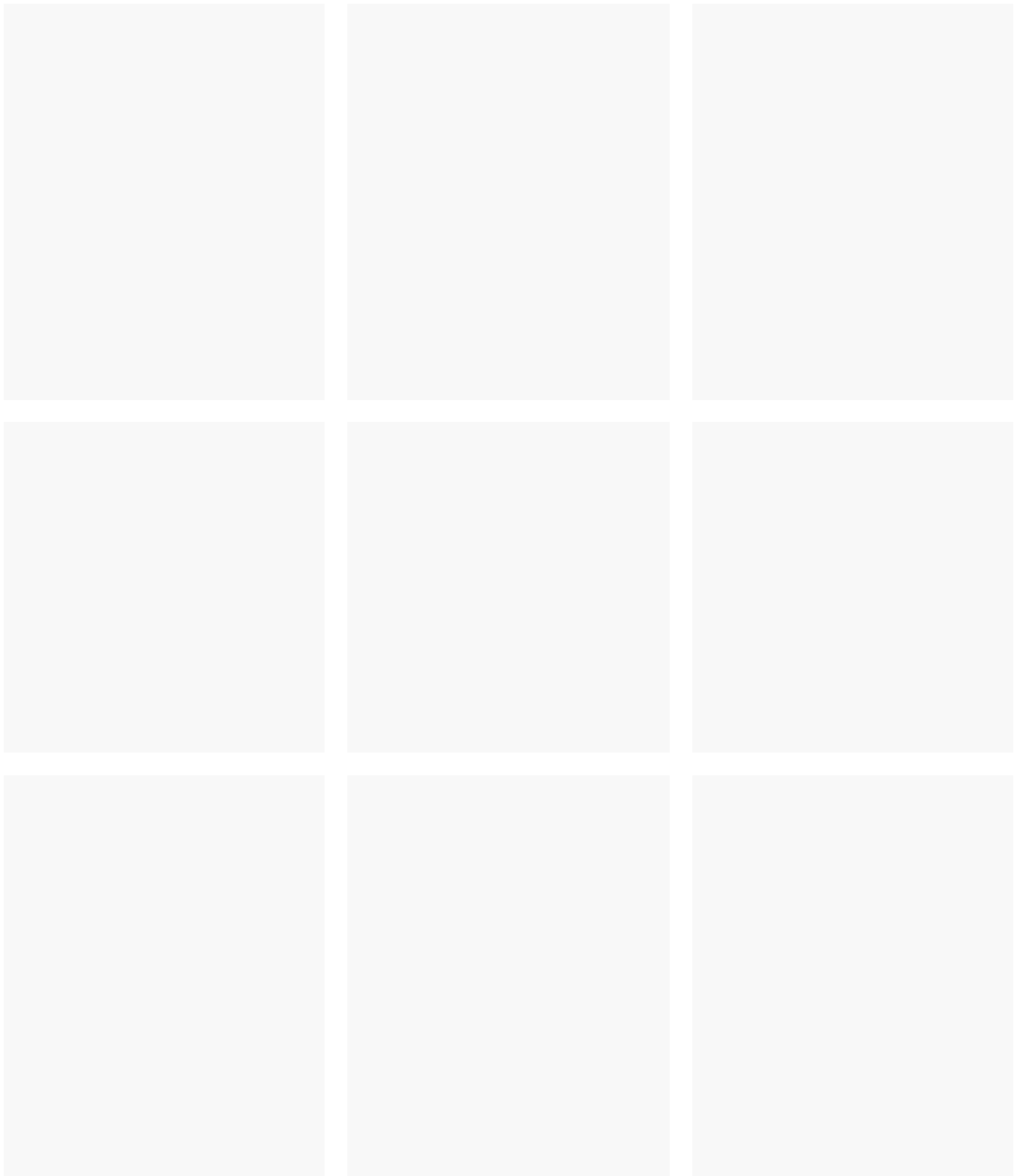


## Fruits, Vegetables & Spices of Northeast India: A Unique Culinary Landscape

Northeast India is home to an extraordinary variety of fruits, vegetables, and spices that are rarely found in other parts of the country. Deeply rooted in local traditions and ecological richness, many of these ingredients form the backbone of the region's distinct cuisines. From wild-foraged produce to region-specific crops, here's a glimpse into some of the most unique and flavourful natural offerings from the Northeast.

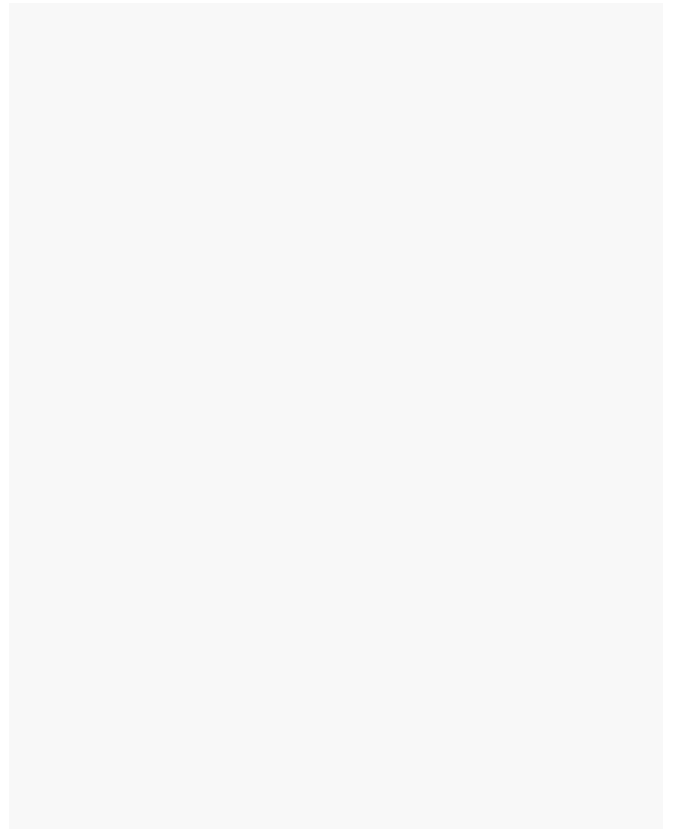
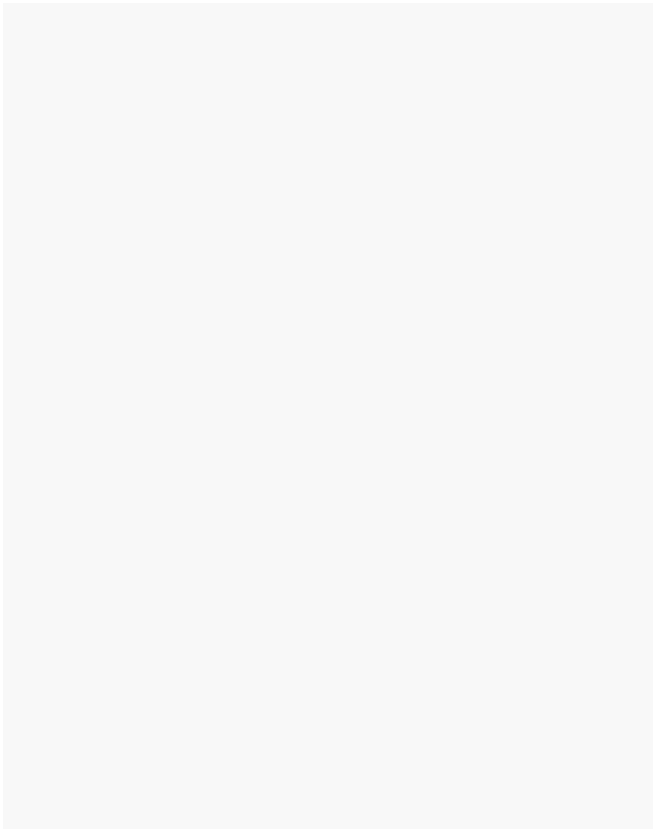
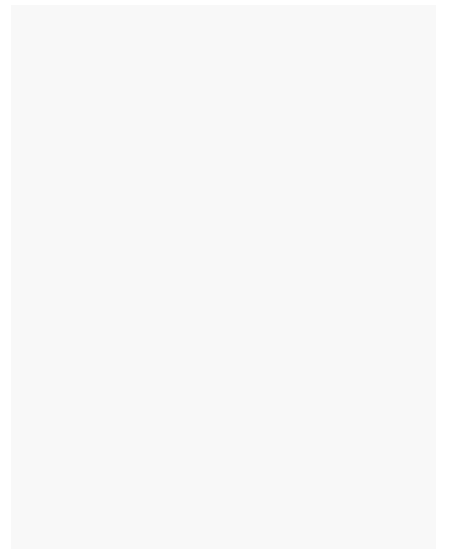
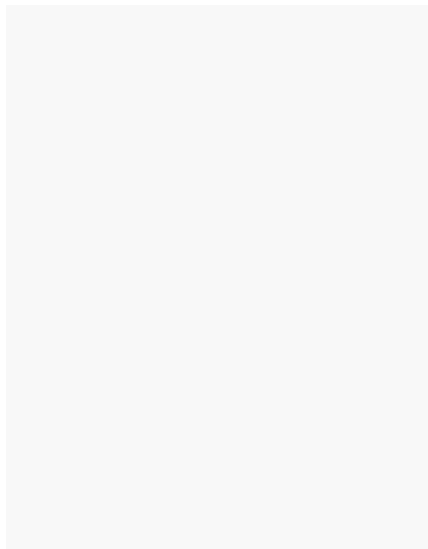
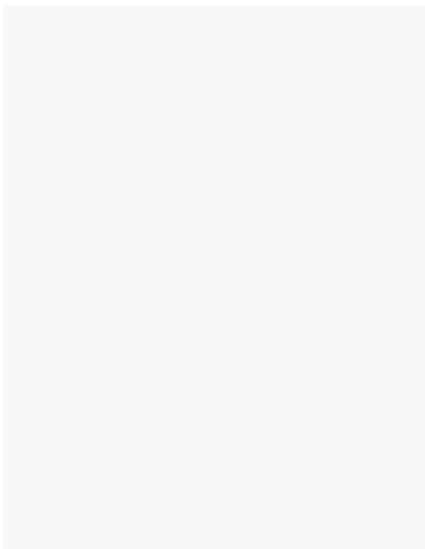
### Fruits to Discover

1. **Thekera (Assam):** A tangy, purple fruit often dried and used in curries and lentil soups for its sourness.
2. **Sohphie (Meghalaya):** Known for its sharp, tart flavour, this seasonal fruit is a local favourite often eaten with salt and chillies.
3. **Tezpur Litchi (Assam):** A GI-tagged variety famous for its exceptional sweetness and juicy pulp.
4. **Burmese Grape:** Found in Assam, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh, this small round fruit has a sweet-sour taste and is usually eaten fresh.
5. **Elephant Ear Fig (Nagaland):** A wild fig with a slightly chewy texture and subtly sweet taste.
6. **Pineapple (Meghalaya):** The region's pineapples are particularly sweet, juicy, and often sold fresh in markets or roadside stalls.
7. **Bael (Assam):** Revered for its medicinal properties, this fruit is commonly consumed as juice or pulp.
8. **Ou Tenga (Assam):** A sour fruit used in traditional curries and chutneys.
9. **Sohiong (Meghalaya):** A deep purple fruit used in making jams, wines, and local desserts.
10. **Sohshang (Meghalaya):** Light pink and oval-shaped, this tangy fruit is high in Vitamin C and often eaten fresh.
11. **Passion Fruit (Sohbrab):** Grown across Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Sikkim, this juicy fruit adds a burst of tropical flavour to drinks and desserts.



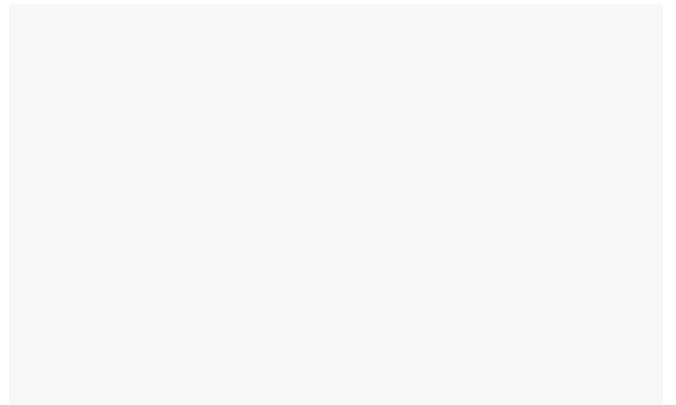
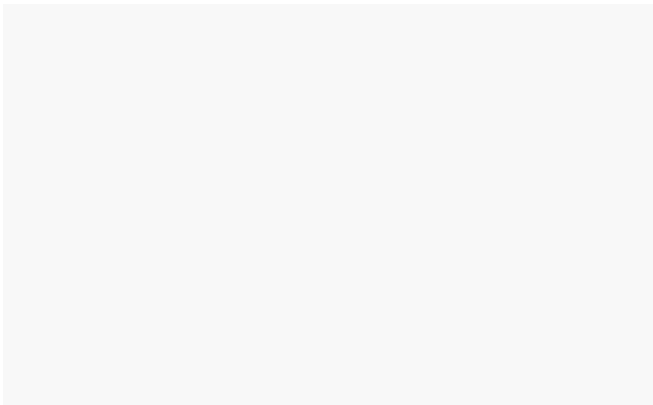
## Vegetables You Shouldn't Miss

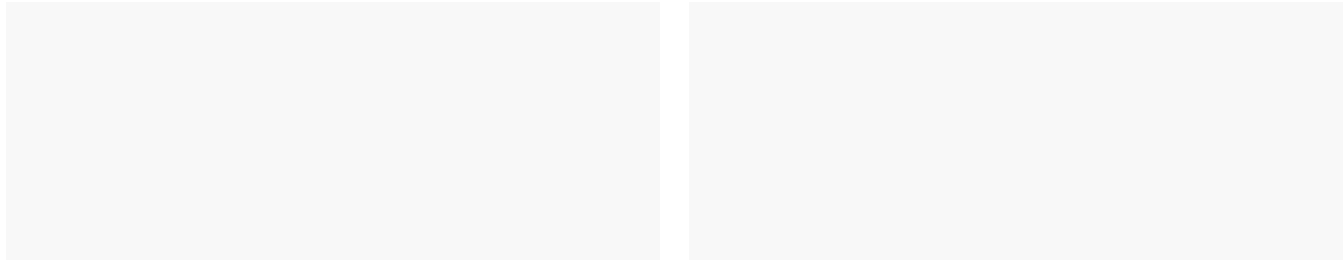
1. **Bamboo Shoots:** A regional staple, bamboo shoots are used fresh or fermented in everything from curries to stir-fries.
  2. **Mushrooms:** Wild and cultivated varieties are popular, particularly in monsoon months, cooked with minimal spices to let their natural flavour shine.
  3. **Leafy Greens:** From mustard leaves to foraged forest greens, these are often sautéed with fermented soybeans or fish for a rustic meal.
  4. **Sohphlang (Meghalaya): (Flemingia vestita)** A crunchy tuber with a nutty taste, enjoyed raw with salt and chillies. High in iron, phosphorus, and protein, this rare root is valued for its nutritional benefits.
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  5. **Tree Tomato (Tamarillo):** Used in chutneys or roasted with chillies for a spicy side dish.
  6. **Vigna vexillata (Tuber):** Rich in carbohydrates and minerals, it's used in both tribal diets and traditional medicine.
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## Spices from the Soil

- **Lakadong Turmeric (Meghalaya):** Known for its deep golden colour and high curcumin content, this turmeric is prized across India for its medicinal and culinary value.
- **Karbi Anglong Ginger (Assam):** A premium variety of ginger with a strong aroma and high oil content, often used in pickles and traditional remedies.





## Bringing You Closer to the Flavours of the Northeast

As a travel company deeply rooted in the region, we take pride in curating personalised food experiences that go beyond the plate. Whether it's a home-cooked meal with local hosts or a thoughtfully prepared thali at a regional eatery, we ensure that your dietary preferences are always respected.

Our hosts take special care to tailor dishes to your taste and spice levels, and if you have any allergies or dietary restrictions, just let us know—we're happy to customise the menu to suit your needs.

Do keep in mind that many of the region's unique fruits, vegetables, and ingredients are seasonal or foraged, and may not always be readily available. If you're hoping to try a specific dish or ingredient during your trip, we recommend informing us well in advance while booking your tour, so we can do our best to make it part of your journey.

After all, food is one of the most intimate ways to connect with a place—and we're here to make sure you experience the Northeast with all your senses, one memorable meal at a time.

Here are some of our popular tours that showcase the region's diverse and flavorful vegetarian options which guests have loved:

- The Chota Assam Tour: Explore Assam's lush landscapes while savoring local vegetarian delicacies made from fresh, organic ingredients.
- The Cherry Blossom Khasi Hills, Meghalaya: Immerse yourself in the enchanting beauty of Meghalaya and indulge in traditional vegetarian fare, featuring seasonal produce and aromatic spices.
- The Food-Fueled Trip to West Assam and Garo Hills: Enjoy a vibrant gastronomic journey where vegetarian dishes come alive with distinct flavors and cultural influences.
- The Mythical Tawang Tour: Discover the stunning vistas of Tawang while feasting on mouthwatering vegetarian meals inspired by Tibetan cuisine.

Join us in redefining the Northeast experience—where vegetarianism and vibrant flavors coexist beautifully!

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