

An Artifact Speaks • Artifact Information Sheet

Artifact Name: Thali Set

Time Period/Date: 2014

Culture/Religion Group: Used throughout India

Material: Stainless Steel

Reproduction? No



Background Information:

Thali (**taw**-lee) is the Hindi word for plate or platter, and it signifies both the plate the food is eaten from and the name of the meal itself. A thali set consists of the platter, a cup, and a number of small bowls called *katori*. In the southern part of India, where the meal originated, the center of the platter (originally a banana leaf when the tradition first began) is filled with rice that is refilled as needed during the meal. The *katori*, individually filled with small portions of a variety of foods, are placed on or around the plate. The thali set provided for this program has three *katori*. The number of *katori* dishes served at a meal can vary considerably depending on the elaborateness of the setting.

A thali meal is eaten with the fingers. Food from a bowl is poured onto a portion of the rice with the left hand. The right hand is then used to mix the two together and lift the mixture to the mouth.

Here are some of the kinds of foods you would find in the bowls:

- **Condiments:** pickles, preserves, chutney (an East Indian sauce or relish often including both sweet and sour flavors).
- ***Salaad*** (a salad plate): thinly sliced vegetables with a dressing of *sirka* (sugarcane vinegar) or lime juice.
- **Snacks:** deep-fried foods, like *medu vadai* (a dumpling made from lentils), dry-cooked kebabs (foods roasted on a skewer), and *chaat* (a dish of vegetables or fruit often sold by street vendors).
- ***Raita***: a cold yogurt soup with spices and thin bits of vegetables.
- ***Dal***: a dried bean soup.
- ***Rasam***: a very spicy soup
- ***Curries***: dishes with a hot spicy sauce.
- ***Mithai***: sweets, including *burfi* (a spiced sweet made from milk solids and sugar), *gulab jamin* (deep fried curd cheese boiled in a sugar syrup), *gajar halwa* (carrot cake), and *kheer* (rice pudding).

In the north of India, rice is not as common, and a flatbread called *roti* is eaten instead.

(continued)

Sources:

- Ramaswamy, Kavitha. "South Indian Thali." *Foodomania*. WordPress, 21 Aug. 2013. Web. 8 Apr. 2015. <<http://foodomania.com/south-indian-thali/>>.
- Raeser, Jennifer. "A Guide to Eating Thali in India." Approach Guides, 28 Aug. 2012. Web. 9 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.approachguides.com/blog/a-guide-to-eating-thali-in-india/, 08/28/2012>>.
- "What Is a Traditional Indian Meal? Thaali (Thali)." *What Is a Traditional Indian Meal? Thaali*. Indiacurry.com. Web. 9 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.indiacurry.com/faqhints/traditionalindianmeal.htm>>.

Definitions from dictionary.com, translations.babylon.com, google.com.