

Biryani boom drives surge in demand for basmati rice

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Demand for basmati rice varieties commonly used in preparing biryani, a popular dish served with various meats and vegetables, has surged over the past few years, according to sellers of the cereal.

This has happened on the back of an increasing number of restaurants offering the dish across the country, and with food aggregators making it easy for consumers to order the delicacy at home. The increase of in-home occasions has also added to the demand for biryani, and even led to a clutch of cloud kitchens surfacing, dedicated to selling their own versions of the dish.

“Biryani has now become the Indian fast food,” said Ashwani Arora, managing director and CEO of LT Foods Ltd. “This wasn’t the case five years ago; with Zomato and Swiggy,



A rising number of restaurants in India are offering biryani on their menu now. GETTY

consumers have much better options.”

Gurugram-based LT Foods, which sells basmati under Daawat and Royal brands, said its institutional business—sales to restaurants, hotels and caterers—in India now contributes 22% to the company’s domestic business, up from 20% last year. In FY24, the company, which reported revenues of ₹7,822 crore, saw its institutional business grow

24% year-on-year. LT Foods exports rice to more than 60 markets, including the US, Europe and the Middle East.

BSE-listed rice processor KRBL Ltd, which sells basmati rice under the India Gate brand, said demand for bulk packs of basmati rice outstripped demand for consumer packs last fiscal. The company defines packs upwards of 30kg as bulk.

“The bulk pack business for us has been growing quite significantly; I would say it’s growing faster than the consumer pack business,” Ayush Gupta, domestic business head, KRBL said in an interview. “This is fuelled by the southern states, because that’s where the majority biryani consumption happens. Post-covid, we’ve been seeing a growth of almost 20-25% year-on-year on our bulk packs business.” Before covid, the company’s bulk pack business

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was growing 10% annually.

Last fiscal the company reported a turnover of ₹5,385 crore; the domestic business reported revenues of ₹3,936 crore. It draws half its domestic business from bulk packs.

Gupta said that restaurants and catering businesses are driving up demand for basmati rice. "During weddings we do see demand for our bulk packs. This is true for markets down south, especially Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where biryani is widely served," he added.

Biryani remained the most ordered dish on food delivery platform Swiggy for the eighth year in a row last year. Swiggy delivered two-and-a-half biryanis per second in 2023; 2.49 million users made a debut on Swiggy with a biryani order. In 2023, biryani was searched 4,030,827 times on the platform.

In-home occasions are also feeding the demand as con-



Biryani was the most ordered dish on Swiggy for the eighth year in a row in 2023. MINT

sumers find it easy to serve—much like pizza. Swiggy saw 250 Biryani orders per minute during the India-Pakistan cricket world cup match last year, for instance. "Number of consumption occasions has gone up. People would earlier order pizza, but they are also finding biryani convenient," said Arora.

Trends at rival Zomato are no different. According to data from the company, in 2023, more than 100.9 million biry-

ani orders were placed on the food delivery platform, making it the most ordered dish.

The soaring demand for the dish has led to the emergence of several cloud kitchen and offline biryani brands that are present across the top cities. These include Behrouz Biryani, Biryani by the Kilo and Biryani Blues.

This, said Gupta of KRBL, has also expanded the market for the dish. "The only thing that has changed is biryani is no more restricted to south India, Biryani has become a fast food for all of India now, it is as much available and in demand in Delhi as any other market. That's primarily fuelled by Zomato and Swiggy," he said.

For Mumbai-based food services company Rebel Foods that operates Behrouz Biryani, the brand is the largest in its portfolio and does the most revenue from online sales.

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