

Impact of Colonial Era on the Cuisine of Pakistan

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Abstract

This study is an effort to find out the impact of the colonial era on an important aspect of the society and culture of Pakistan; its cuisine. The British food products and eating customs in India that were later assimilated into Pakistani culture and society are explored to evaluate and discuss the effects of colonialism on Pakistani cuisine. Data is collected from oral, visual, and literary indications. It is a Qualitative study for which a Historical research design was adopted. A purposive sampling technique was applied for this research and Lahore, a cultural hub, historic city, and Punjab Province was selected as a sample. All the themes that emerged from gathered data were discussed and the study's findings unveiled that although the British Colonial era did not entirely impact Pakistani Cuisine, certain foods and practices became an integral part of culture and society. The study highlights how clubs, restaurants, and social gatherings played a pivotal role in embedding British food culture into Pakistani society. The research underscores the role of colonialism in shaping dining customs, which continue to evolve today. The results have implications for understanding the socio-cultural evolution of post-colonial societies and offer policy recommendations for preserving culinary heritage amidst globalization.

Keywords: Colonial food Culture, Pakistani Cuisine, Colonial Era, Food practices.

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Introduction

Pakistan is an intriguing place to observe how different civilizations interact. Pakistani culture is valued because it is linked to the ancient South Asian culture, which gave ascent to civilizations with a wide range of cults and religions. British rulers established India in the 19th century and reigned it until its division in 1947. During this period Indian sub-continent underwent major cultural and social alterations. Pakistani culture changed over time since its independence and split from India.

Pakistan has a unique cultural identity and great value because it is connected to its ancient South Asian roots and is home to numerous cults and sects. The country's strategic location has made it a melting pot of various cultures, including Central Asian, Mughal, and

British. This cultural fusion is evident in Pakistan's cuisine, which numerous factors, including local ingredients, invasions, religions, and empires, have shaped.

Lahore, a city steeped in history and tradition, is renowned for its rich cultural diversity. The city's cuisine, handicrafts, music, and fashion all bear testament to the beautiful blend of various cultures and their unique tastes (Ian Talbot, 2016). Lahore is often regarded as the culinary hub of Pakistan, offering a diverse range of traditional and Western flavors. The city's vibrant food scene showcases a unique blend of local specialties and international cuisine, catering to a wide array of tastes and preferences (Imtiaz, 2018).

Since Lahore is a cultural hub and has remained a central city during Raj, therefore the selected sample for the present research is the cuisine of Lahore. The study examines the degree to which British cuisines, eating habits, and eating patterns influence local cuisine and are subsequently absorbed into Pakistani culture and society. These influences are explored in detail, and conclusions are derived based on the findings gathered from visual and literary evidence, public archives, and interviews.

Problem Statement

This research addresses the gap by examining how British food practices were assimilated into Pakistani society, particularly in Lahore, a cultural and historical hub.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the influence of colonialism on cuisine provides insights into Pakistan's socio-cultural evolution and offers lessons for preserving its culinary heritage in the face of globalization.

Research Questions

1. How did British colonial practices influence Pakistani cuisine?
2. Which British food elements have become integral to Pakistani society?
3. What role did clubs and social gatherings play in introducing British dining customs?

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the impact of British colonialism on Pakistani cuisine.
2. To identify British food items and practices assimilated into Pakistani culture.
3. To evaluate the role of Lahore as a cultural hub in this culinary evolution.

Literature Review

In the 19th century, India was colonized by the British, who dominated the area for about a century. India had undergone significant social and cultural transformations throughout this time, which affected the emerging Pakistani culture following its founding in 1947 (Fatima Ali, 2016).

Diverse Indian cuisine is a testament to the country's rich cultural heritage. The blending of local ingredients, invasions, religious influences, and the attributes and preferences of different governing empires have all contributed to the evolution of Indian cuisine, which is an integral part of the country's cultural identity (Ramzi, 2012; Naheed & Azfar, 2017; Herbert, 2024). Religious preferences, such as Hinduism and Islam, as well as foreign invasions by Central Asians, Mughals, and the British, all contributed to the evolution of Indian cuisine into a vibrant, diverse, and eclectic entity (Ahmad, 2012).

Colonial cuisine was a unique fusion of flavors, shaped by the interactions between British colonizers and native servants. Local chefs played a significant role in developing colonial gastronomy, leveraging their knowledge of local ingredients, cooking techniques, and creativity to create an integration of distinct food styles (Ahmad, 2012; Leong-Salobir, 2011; Prabhu, 2019).

The British initiated their tea industry in North India (Mahapatra, 2022). By the 1880s, Indian tea was replaced by Chinese tea in the British marketplace (Breed, 2020). British in India used to consume tea frequently at daybreak and eve (Goodman, 2018). The Indian Tea Market expansion board launched an initiative to encourage tea consumption in Punjab. Portable tea stalls were strategically set up in Lahore's streets and bazaars, making tea easily accessible. East India Company (EIC) facilitated tea import to the Indian subcontinent through traders. Not just tea but the British were credited for bringing potatoes to India.

The British introduced the concept of clubs to India, establishing them in various parts of the country. These clubs provided European members with a familiar dining experience in a colonial context by having bars and restaurants that catered mostly to them (Leong-Salobir, 2011).

Research Methodology

This qualitative study employs a historical research design to explore the impact of British colonialism on Pakistani cuisine. The historical research design provides a comprehensive understanding of how communities and groups have evolved (Creswell, 2011). To conclude historical data, thematic analysis is used. In-depth interviews were done to get more details about the data that was gathered and to confirm the accuracy of the results.

Observations of Pakistani society's culinary customs, museum-archived photographs, newspaper ads from libraries since the partition, field trips, and in-depth interviews with historians, writers, and subject matter experts served as the main sources of information. Books, research journals, and internet sources were used as secondary sources to gather data. Purposive sampling was the method used for sampling. Lahore City's food was chosen as a representative sample.

Results and Discussion

Food culture encompasses the methods, strategies, and ideologies as well as the structures and institutions related to food production, distribution, and consumption. Uniqueness, a sense of

community, beliefs, prestige, authority, inventiveness, and inspiration are all expressed via food. Taking into account all of these factors, the impact of colonialism on Pakistani cuisine is evaluated. The themes that appeared from gathered data are listed in Table number 1 and are discussed in particular below as outcomes of the investigation followed by Themes formulated from in-depth interviews. Data is also presented with the help of illustrations.

Themes derived from Data from public archives, research articles, and books	Themes derived from In-depth Interviews with Experts
Club Culture after Partition	British food culture in India
Food and beverages	British food culture in Pakistan
Crops	British Breakfast
Industrial food	English Tea time
Tableware and Table manners	Bread and Bakery
	Industrial Food
	Tableware and Mannerism

Table 1. Themes emerged from collected data and In-depth interviews with experts.

Clubs Culture after Partition

Research findings indicate that club culture persisted in Pakistan after partition. Public announcements for casinos and nightclubs were common until the late 1970s. However, due to political restrictions and General Zia's Islamization policies, these establishments became private affairs. These clubs were meant for the elites of the country and they offered multiple facilities such as sports, theatre, discotheque, healthcare, food, banquets, etc. to their members. Food being an important part of such clubs later on gave advancement to dine-out culture and the development of eateries, restaurants, cafes, and hotels.

The balls and formal events continued to be held even after the partition. These occasions, such as Independence Day, New Year's Eve, and Christmas, brought together civil services officers, politicians, and businessmen.

These social gatherings and exclusive clubs played a significant role in shaping Pakistan's cultural and social landscape, particularly among the country's elite (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Inter-Continental Hotel, The Mall Lahore, 1972, The Pakistan Times, Photograph taken by Author.

Two iconic establishments in Lahore, the Lahore Gymkhana Club and Faletti's Hotel, have been integral to the city's social and cultural fabric since colonial times. The Lahore Gymkhana Club is a social and sports club that has operated since 1878. The club offers a range of facilities, including Sports, Entertainment, Literary activities, and Dining facilities. One of the oldest Colonial-style hotels in Lahore City is Faletti's Hotel, Designed and constructed by Italian architect Giovanni Faletti in 1880. Faletti's had several owners over the years but has retained its original name. It was considered the most prestigious hotel in Pakistan (Figure 2). Faletti's Hotel has hosted numerous famous personalities, including Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a regular guest. The hotel's luxurious suites include:

Jinnah Suite: Named after Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Ava Gardner Suite: Named after the famous actress Ava Gardner, who stayed at the hotel for three months in 1955 while filming one of her movies. These suites have maintained their legacy and continue to offer British-style services and food, showcasing the hotel's rich history and cultural significance.



Figure 2 Concert at Faletti's, Mall Road Lahore, The Pakistan Times, 1956, Photograph taken by Author.

The Inter-Continental Hotel, established in 1964 and later renamed as Pearl-Continental in 1985, is a prominent example of colonial-style hotels in Pakistan. With branches across the country, PC Hotels is renowned for maintaining international standards and catering to a diverse clientele. One of the interview panelists, Executive Chef Z.A. Khan, who has worked at both the PC Hotels and Gymkhana Club, provided valuable insights:

The British created a cultural divide between themselves and the locals, which was later adopted by the elite classes. This colonial-era club culture persists in modern Pakistani cities like Lahore and Karachi. Despite restrictions, casinos, ball dances, and beer consumption continued as private affairs. Bars remain a common feature in these establishments, catering to visitors who consume alcohol. Beer was used as an ingredient in English dishes before General Zia's regime and was served as a drink in nightclubs. Anglo-Indians were preferred for hiring in nightclubs due to their ease in adopting colonial culture.

Colonial Impact on Food and Drink

The influence of British cuisine on Pakistani food culture is a lasting legacy of colonialism. The introduction of new foods and beverages by British colonizers has had a profound impact on Pakistani cuisine. The British introduced new food articles to facilitate trade and commerce. As the British colonized and settled in the region, they brought their food preferences with them to create a sense of familiarity and comfort in their new surroundings. (Chatterjee, 2022).

Tea has had a greater influence on Pakistani food culture and cuisine than anything else. Pakistani culture has evolved to rely heavily on tea, or chai. In both homes and businesses, it is commonly consumed. Pakistani cuisine and society are not new to the proliferation of tea and coffee outlets and cafes that we witness nowadays. In the 1930s, British colonists brought tea to Lahore. At the time, tea was given away for free. According to renowned author Sir Mustansir Hussain Tarar and educationist Prof. Dr. Shaukat Mehmood, tea was first offered as a therapeutic beverage with the phrase "*Garmi mai Garam Chai thandak deti hai*" during the campaign. Soon after, it became fashionable to drink tea in porcelain. The tea stall was positioned at the railway station before Partition. In 1971, after the split of East Pakistan from West Pakistan, West Pakistan became a tea importer from all over the world. (Goodman, April 2018).

The tea advertisements in early year newspapers show that the campaign for familiarizing tea was still going on. However, tea consumption became an essential part of Pakistani society. In Figure 3 Lipton Tea advertisement in January 1948 shows Tea Promotion. Lipton Tea was launched in Pakistan in the year 1948. The originator of Lipton Tea was Sir Thomas Lipton in the 19th century. His vision was to spread tea worldwide and make it affordable for all socio-economic levels. According to Unilever Pakistan, 100 billion cups of Lipton are consumed each year making it a household name.



Figure 3: Lipton's Tea advertisement in the newspaper The Pakistan Times, November 1948, Photograph taken by Author.

A Hub of Literary and Artistic Activities located on Mall Road in Lahore, Pak Tea House has been a cornerstone of literary and artistic activities since the 1940s. Originally established as India Tea House by Boota Singh, the name was changed to Pak Tea House after Partition. Pak Tea House became a famous meeting point for authors, poets, and intellectuals (figure 4).

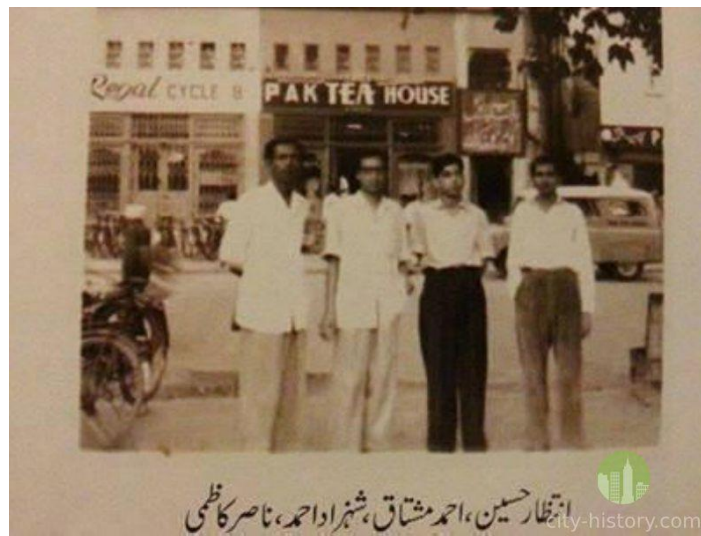


Figure 4 A memorable Group photo of Poets and writers in front of Pak Tea House, 1960s, Pak Tea House Once a galaxy of Urdu Literature, retrieved from <http://lahore.city-history.com>

The cafe culture of Lahore, which flourished during the British Raj, continued to thrive in the post-Partition era. Cafes and restaurants, particularly in the mall Area, were renowned for their food, drinks, and entertainment. The introduction of tea by the British has had a profound and lasting impact on Pakistani society. With globalization, tea has become an intact component

of Pakistani culture, consumed domestically, in offices, and social gatherings. Tea is an essential component of socializing, and its consumption is deeply ingrained in Pakistani culture. The tea that the British introduced has had a major impact on Pakistani society till today. This impact grew with globalization. Tea became an important part of Pakistani culture. Tea is essentially consumed domestically as well as in offices and workplaces. It is considered to be a major part of socializing. From conventional Lahori *chai* (tea) to Hi-Tea in Hotels, restaurants, and tea and coffee café it has become an inherently vital part of Pakistani culture which cannot be detached. Tea is widely consumed with Breakfast and in the evening along with snacks (figure 5).



Figure 5. Chaaye Khana is A modern tea house with a traditional name, The Photograph was taken by the Author.

With the consumption of tea, smoking also became a part of culture. According to Dr Shaukat Mehmood British projected smoking by the slogan “*Her kash mai lazzat hai*” (Personal communication, May 2022).

The Pakistan Tobacco Industry's advertisements provide valuable insights into the promotion of smoking in the country. In the 1930s and 1940s, smoking was endorsed by doctors, who themselves smoked, as a healthy habit. Capstan was the brand leading the industry during this period. Smoking advertisements remained successful until the 1980s (Figure 6). The tobacco industry underwent restrictions and bans on publicity due to growing concerns about the hazards of smoking. Today, while smoking is still legal in Pakistan, its promotion is strictly limited. Despite these restrictions, smoking remains a deeply ingrained element of Pakistani culture.



Figure 6. Pakistan Tobacco Industry ad, The Pakistan Times, 1972, Photograph taken by Author.

Colonial Impact on Crops

The Lahore District Gazetteer for the years 1883–1884 states that the English vegetables are peas, potatoes, and cabbage. The three most lucrative veggies are chili, onions, and potatoes. In Pakistan, potatoes are used in large amounts. It is an essential component of Pakistani cookery. Even during the Raj era, potatoes were always an inexpensive produce. (unknown, 2023). Potatoes have become a staple ingredient in Pakistani cuisine, widely consumed across all socioeconomic levels due to their affordability, satiety value, and taste. Potatoes are a versatile part, used in various forms. Potatoes are a fundamental ingredient in the hotel industry, used in dishes such as chips, fries, and poached potatoes. Potatoes are also used in the manufacture of pharmacological products. Potato dishes have evolved over the decades, with various traditional and English preparations. Potatoes are processed industrially to make potato chips, a popular snack in Pakistan. Some of the leading brands of processed potato chips in Pakistan include: Super Crisps, Lays, Kurkure, Kolson, and Smiths.

Colonial Impact on Bread and Bakery

A bakery is a place where bread and cakes are made. The local bakes before the Raj were *Bakar khani* and *Khatai*. Biscuits, bread, and cakes were the bakery products introduced by the British in India. M. Akber said that Bread and bakery was a British contribution to society. And Z.A. Khan, the chief chef at Gym Khana Club, claims that bread, muffins, cakes, patties, cookies, and biscuits are all baked goods that originated in Britain. Shimla was the hub for baking and bakeries in those days. Pakistani cuisine cannot be separated from the Bakes, which are relished by people all around the country. The impact was so great that a wide range of bread, buns, biscuits, and cakes are produced by several industrial brands in Pakistan that have units in different parts of the country and are distributed all over the country. Cakes, Cookies, and

cupcakes are aesthetically custom-made by home-based culinary artists. Figure 7, Bakeries, restaurants, hotels, and other establishments sell all kinds of baked goods. Individual companies also provide made-to-order internet services. In Pakistan, baking has long been a staple of home cooking as well.

Dedicated to the memory of experts Z.A. Khan and A. Saeed Shezan Restaurants and Bakers was one of the few well-known English-inspired cuisines. Fish and chips were the cuisine brought from Britain reported by experts M.Siddiq, A.Saeed and A. Khan but the information from Lahore gazetteer confirmed that British-harvested potatoes in India and Pakistani society potatoes are a very important part of Pakistani cuisine and are consumed by all socio-economic levels and potpourri of recipes can be made out of Potatoes (Ahmad, 2012).



Figure 7 Promotional ad of Bread Company, The Pakistan Times, 1956, Photograph taken by Author.

Colonial Impact on Industrial and Processed Food

Food The enterprise was created in 1933 by British industrialist Francis J. Mitchell, who also set up a fruit plantation on a 720-acre tract of land that he leased from the Punjab government. The business first attempted to develop vine fruits before focusing on citrus fruit. Originally known as Indian Mildura Fruit Farms, the business was renamed Mitchell's Fruit Farms Ltd. following the split in 1948, and the Pakistani company was granted exclusive ownership of the "MITCHELLS" brand (Mitchells, 2020; Khan, 2023). This company's jams, jellies, chutneys (such as ketchup and other sauces), pickles, and a variety of flavored drinks set the standard, and other food firms like Shezan, Shangrila, and many more are now producing processed foods like Mitchell's. Dr. K Khalid, M. Akber, and Z.A. Khan endorsed that preserved food items like Jams, jellies, sauces, and soft drinks like squashes were initiated by the British in India Mitchell's fruit farm was the first Industry originated by British Industrialists. Mitchell's

Fruit Farm is still operating and making a wide range of these products (Personal Communications, 2022).

Colonial Impact on Tableware and Mannerism

Before the British Era, the traditional manner of eating food was eating with hands by sitting on the floor and traditional *thali* (steel plate) and *cola* (bowl) were used for eating. British introduced table and table wares that have become essential parts for the display arrangement and setting of food Figure 8. According to the owner of the renowned restaurant Mr. Mehmood Akbar, “British did not give us much for cuisine, our cuisine was and is strong but they introduced culture to our cuisine”. All the experts M.H. Tarar, M.Siddiq, K. Asif, M.Saeed, Dr. K. Khalid, and Z.A. Khan agree to the point that the British introduced tableware, crockery, and cutlery to society before there was *Farshi* system. Today this influence is evident at domestic and commercial levels and advancing with time Eating with a fork and knife and the concept of menu cards introduced by the British (Ahmad, 2012). K. Asif; and Z.A. Khan though considered it a pessimistic outcome as it has affected family time together (Personal Communications,2022).



Figure 8. Quaid-e-Azam having a conference with ladies, Western tableware can be seen in the picture, 1948, Courtesy Lahore Museum Gallery.

The exploration procedure was fractional without discussing the related questions with field experts, writers, and field and History Experts of the society, as their views about the area to be explored have been quoted from their life experiences. The research aimed to explore the Cultural impact British Colonial Era on the Cuisine of Pakistan. In-depth interviews were conducted with Experts to gain from their knowledge, views, and experiences about the British Era and its influence on the cuisine and food culture of Pakistani society and for validation of the collected data. With the in-depth communication with experts, the themes that emerged were

According to M.Siddiq, M. Akber, and A. Saeed. British influence in Pakistani cuisine is not much because the area they belong to did not have many ingredients due to severe and drawn-out winters and Indian cuisine was already heterogeneous and strong. However, with the extended interaction with the Indian region, they developed a food culture and introduced certain

foods and drinks to the Indian society which have fused with Pakistani cuisine (Personal Communications, 2022).

British introduced social club culture in India and it continued after partition but was followed by Anglos and an elite group of Civil services, Bureaucrats, and business persons (Leong-Salobir, 2011; Pandey, 2010). However, certain activities in clubs became private affairs since the bans during General Zia's government. A. Saeed and M. Siddiqi revealed that nightclubs and brews are still part of our culture. Butler's service was introduced by the British and is still prevailing. According to M. Akber British gave culture to our cuisine. M.H. Tarar expressed that British organization and presentation were extraordinary that Indians lacked (Personal Communications, 2022).

British Breakfast: M.H. Tarar, M. Siddiqi, A. Saeed, M. Akber, and K. Asif narrated that British breakfast is the strongest influence on Pakistani society. We used to have *desi Nashta*. British were the ones who presented bread and eggs for breakfast. The egg was antecedently used but with different recipes and types of eggs for instance, fried, boiled or scrambled eggs were introduced by the British and are an essential part of our culture now (Personal Communications, 2022).

English tea time: English tea time is celebrated worldwide. Z.A. Khan, M. Akber, M.H. Tarar, Dr. S. Mehmood, and Dr. K. Kahlid Tea was introduced by the British in India before that tea was consumed in different forms, they were the ones who campaigned for tea and distributed it free for one year. Tea has now become a national drink and is consumed significantly along with tea Smoking also came as fashion and penetrated society (Personal Communications). Z.A. Khan, dr. K. Khalid and M. Akber agree that they introduced tea for commercialized reasons.

The organization, establishment, and display of British Colonists were significant. British Colonial Era and their cuisine practices have an impact on Pakistani cuisine. From observance and inquiry through newspaper archives, historical records, research articles, and in-depth interviews with experts it is concluded that a variety of cuisines and a unique culinary culture were introduced to the subcontinent by the British. Bakery goods, tea (G.C. Walker, 2006), and potatoes as a crop (G.C. Walker, 2006) were all introduced (Mahapatra, 2022). As supported by A. Saeed and M.H. Tarar, industrialized and processed food and preserves such as jams, jellies, sauces, and squashes were produced in India, and their influence spread in Pakistan following Partition (Personal Communication, 2022). Tea culture and the English breakfast have evolved into essential components of society. The affordability of these products, as recommended by Z.A. Khan, Dr. K. Khalid, and M. Akbar (Personal communication), was a factor in their penetration because they are widely accessible to people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. When tea was first brought to the British, it was a cash crop. Additionally, it is determined that food plays a significant role in culture. According to A. Saeed, M. Siddiqi, K. Asif, and M. Akbar (Personal communication), the British introduced local cuisine to Pakistan through clubs, smoking, the hospitality sector, and tableware, all of which progressively became integrated into the community even after partition and became a part of Pakistani food culture. For instance, Pakistan continues to support the same class-based culture as the British did through clubs

(Leong-Salobir, 2011), and these practices have had a long-lasting sociocultural influence on Pakistani society and its food M.H. Tarar (Personal communication,2022).

Conclusion

The research aimed to investigate the impact of the colonial era on the cuisine of Pakistan, focusing on the British influence. The findings revealed that the British colonial period introduced several elements into Pakistani cuisine, such as tea, bakery products, and potatoes as a crop, along with the establishment of an industry for preserved foodstuffs like jams, jellies, sauces, and squashes. These practices not only influenced the food culture of pre-Partition India but also continued to grow and integrate into Pakistani society after independence.

Tea culture and the concept of an English breakfast have become an essential part of Pakistani daily life, primarily due to their affordability and accessibility across all socio-economic levels. Additionally, elements such as club culture, smoking, the hospitality industry, and tableware practices introduced by the British have gradually become embedded in Pakistani society, particularly among the elite.

These findings underscore the commercial and industrial motives behind these cultural exchanges and highlight the persistent class-based structure that continues to shape culinary and social traditions in Pakistan. The study concludes that food is not just a necessity but a significant cultural element, reflecting broader societal transformations. The colonial legacy in food practices is a testament to the cultural fusion that defines Pakistan's culinary identity today.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

- This research adds to the understanding of post-colonial cultural studies by examining the impact of colonialism on culinary traditions in South Asia.
- The results offer valuable perspectives for policymakers, educators, and the hospitality sector on how to harmonize cultural preservation with modernization.

Policy Recommendations

1. It is essential to make efforts to preserve and promote traditional Pakistani cuisine in the face of increasing globalization.
2. Showcasing the colonial and indigenous culinary heritage of cities such as Lahore can help attract tourists and generate economic opportunities.
3. Educational institutions and cultural organizations should incorporate modules on the history of Pakistani cuisine to cultivate awareness and pride in this rich heritage.

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