

Run of the MILLET

ONE NIGHT IN A HILLY VILLAGE, THE CHEF FALLS IN LOVE WITH HIMALAYAN MILLET, A COARSE CEREAL WITH A NUTTY TASTE



Pickled vegetables, mixed grain and millets salad is a healthy salad, which uses lacto-fermented vegetables, quinoa, red rice and Himalayan millet, along with fresh herbs and dried fruits

● CHEF PANKAJ SHARMA

It all started with me planning to go and see the Valley of Flowers. Located in Uttarakhand, it is known for its beautiful fauna and flora. I was first introduced to this valley about four years ago, as lots of my fellow chefs hailed from this region. I must admit that the inhabitants of the valley are talented, hardworking and beautiful.

On my way to the valley, I realised that I had underestimated the region completely. It was even more beautiful than what I had visualised and even more challenging than I had thought. Narrow roadways overlooking deep and steep trenches, landslides, rains and unplanned halts



made the trip adventurous, exciting and memorable. It got extended way beyond my imagination and schedule because of the rains and frequent landslides. I had no choice but to spend a night in a village with the locals. I was tired, hungry and frustrated, and what I got to eat was some kind of cereal, which was very similar to broken rice, along with some spiced lentils.

I instantly fell in love with slightly coarse yet gooey texture of the cereal and its nutty taste. I learnt that the cereal is locally called *mundwa* or popularly known as the Himalayan millet or the barnyard millet. It is grown in the Shivaliks and it's a staple of people there.

The real fun started when my team and I decided to use it in our kitchen. We checked its flavour profile, cooking methods and other ingredients that could go well with it and came up with some innovative dishes using the millet.

The writer is a chef at Dramz Whisky Bar and Lounge, Mehrauli