



# Eateries cross out pricey tomato from menu, reserve it for gravies

Chittaranjan.Tembhekar@timesgroup.com

**Mumbai:** Vikhroli resident Pratap Sovani and his family, regulars at a popular restaurant chain there, were in for an “unpleasant surprise” this past Sunday when those flower-shaped tomato discs vanished from their veggie salad. Meanwhile, Pranjal Desai and her Malad friends had to settle for dosa and idli without tomato chutney, which had disappeared from the menus of at least three Udupi joints nearby as well. Likewise, Vinod Shah rued about the missing pav bhaji and tomato rice in Powai’s eateries.

The cause for this tomato tragedy can be blamed squarely on the current surge in to-



Pic for representation

Restaurateurs say they will not pass on the rising cost of tomato to patrons, for now

mato prices—around Rs 150 a kg—that has compelled restaurant owners to make adjustments in their menus to maintain profi-

tability even as the absence of the red juicy companion in most Indian dishes has left many going for the familiar flavour.

mised. “Tomato forms the base flavour for a lot of items in Indian cuisine so we cannot remove it but fancier items like tomato bhurji, tomato bharta and tomato rice have been abandoned by a few restaurants for the time being,” said Suresh Shetty, president of AHAR which has over 12,000 restaurant and hotel members across Mumbai region.

Suresh Shetty emphasised that in several Jain dishes where onion and garlic are not used, there are no compromises when it comes to using tomatoes. “Jain menus are particularly popular across all restaurants, especially during the ongoing monsoon season,” he said.

Pradeep Shetty, president of the Hotel

and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI), which represents over 20,000 premium restaurants and hotels in Maharashtra, Goa and Gujarat, said that if tomato prices stabilise within the next two weeks, eateries will not pass on the cost to consumers and will absorb the financial impact themselves.

“These rises are often cyclical in nature and therefore we will wait for a more favourable market condition. We can’t compromise on the quality of food and so tomato base will continue to be a part of dishes wherever necessary,” he added, while Suresh Shetty warned if tomato prices continue to skyrocket, they may be forced to increase prices.

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Hoteliers say the rationale behind it is the shooting prices and hence the temporary eviction of tomato from the taste palate, including special items such as stuffed tomato and tomato salads at several restaurants. Oshiwara’s Shree Jee restaurant, for one, has temporarily stopped serving stuffed tomatoes.

The manager of Hind Mata restaurant in Tardeo said they had put fancier tomato creations on hold. However, tomato in its pureed form—a quintessential ingredient in most Indian dishes—has not been compro-