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Culinary Tourism as a Tool for Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience: A Case Study of Western Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract:

Gastronomic tourism has emerged as a key method to foster sustainable growth, particularly in ecologically fragile regions. This research examines how food-based tourism contributes to enhancing sustainability and climate resilience in the western districts of Himachal Pradesh, such as Kangra and Chamba. The area's classic foods, such as Dham, Madra, Siddu, and dishes made with millet, reflect deep ties to local agriculture and seasonal produce

The research takes a broad view by combining ideas from tourism studies, environmental sustainability, and culinary tourism. Culinary tourism has become an important way to promote sustainable development, especially in environmentally sensitive areas. This study looks at how food-based tourism can improve sustainability and climate resilience in the western districts of Himachal Pradesh, including Kangra and Chamba. The region's traditional dishes, such as Dham, Madra, Siddu, and millet-based recipes, show strong connections to local farming and seasonal ingredients. The research uses a broad view by combining ideas from tourism studies, environmental sustainability, and rural development. It shows how practices like farm-to-table dining, terrace farming, and growing native crops such as millets, rajma, and red rice help maintain ecological balance and support local livelihoods. These crops thrive in mountainous areas and are resilient to climate change, including irregular rainfall and temperature shifts. Using a descriptive and exploratory method with secondary data, the study assesses the impact of culinary tourism on how attractive a destination is, the tourist experience, and community empowerment. It also highlights how local sourcing can reduce food miles, cut down on waste, and support circular economy practices. The findings suggest that culinary tourism can be a model for sustainable development by bringing together cultural preservation, environmental care, and economic growth in mountain regions. rural development. It reveals how practices like farm-to-table dining, terrace farming, and growing local crops such as millets, rajma, and red rice help maintain ecological balance and support local livelihoods. These crops thrive in mountainous areas and can withstand climate changes, such as unpredictable rainfall and temperature shifts. Using a descriptive and exploratory method with secondary data, the study assesses the effect of culinary tourism on the attractiveness of destinations, visitor experiences, and community empowerment. It also highlights how sourcing food locally can cut down on transportation distances, reduce waste, and support circular economy practices. The findings suggest that culinary tourism can be a sustainable development model by blending cultural preservation, environmental care, and economic growth in mountain areas.

Keywords: culinary tourism, sustainable development, climate resilience, Western Himachal Pradesh, responsible tourism

A. Introduction:

Tourism has become a key driver of economic growth, cultural exchange, and regional development around the world. In recent years, the industry has moved away from traditional sightseeing toward more hands-on, experience-based options like eco-tourism, cultural tourism, and culinary tourism. Among these, culinary tourism has gained popularity as travellers look for genuine cultural experiences through local food.

Culinary tourism involves exploring regional cuisines, traditional cooking methods, food festivals, and local food systems as part of the travel experience. It enables tourists to connect with local communities while gaining insights into cultural traditions and lifestyles. Food, in this context, acts as a medium through which the identity and uniqueness of a destination are expressed.

Local cuisine is closely influenced by geographical conditions, climate, and agricultural practices, making it a vital component of destination attractiveness. Activities such as farm visits, participation in food festivals, and learning traditional cooking techniques enrich the tourist experience while supporting cultural preservation. As a result, culinary tourism contributes not only to visitor satisfaction but also to the promotion of regional identity.

From a sustainability perspective, culinary tourism aligns with the principles of environmental conservation, economic viability, and socio-cultural preservation. The emphasis on locally sourced ingredients supports regional agriculture, reduces transportation-related emissions, and promotes responsible consumption. Additionally, it creates income opportunities for farmers, small entrepreneurs, and hospitality stakeholders, particularly in rural areas.

B. Literature review:

Thakur et al. (2023) examine the interrelationship between indigenous food, culture, and tourism in the Chamba region, emphasising the role of traditional cuisine as a reflection of local identity and heritage. The study highlights that food practices in the region are deeply influenced by geographical conditions, climatic variations, and locally available resources, which shape unique culinary traditions.

The authors further discuss a wide range of indigenous food items, including staple dishes, festive preparations, seasonal vegetables, and traditional beverages, which are primarily prepared using ancestral knowledge and techniques such as slow cooking and fermentation. These food practices are closely linked with local customs, fairs, and festivals, thereby reinforcing their cultural significance.

Thakur et al. (2023) also identify the potential of indigenous cuisine as an emerging tourism resource. The study suggests that integrating food with cultural tourism can enhance tourist experiences and create opportunities for local economic development. However, it points out that limited promotion, lack of commercialisation, and minimal representation of traditional dishes in hospitality services act as major constraints.

The study concludes by recommending strategic interventions such as marketing, inclusion of regional cuisines in restaurant menus, and development of food-based tourism products to preserve and promote the culinary heritage of the region.

Shrikrishna et al. (2025) examine the “dynamics of Slow Food Tourism in Himachal Pradesh, focusing on stakeholder perspectives, economic impacts, and sustainable practices”. The study shows that Slow Food Tourism is really good for communities because it helps people use food that is grown near them, it helps keep old cooking methods alive, and it protects the special food traditions of the people who lived there first. This is all part of making tourism more sustainable, which is what Slow Food Tourism and sustainable tourism development are all about, and that is what Slow Food Tourism is trying to do.

The authors emphasise the critical role of multiple stakeholders, including farmers, restaurateurs, tour operators, government bodies, local communities, NGOs, and tourists, in shaping the success of Slow Food Tourism. Their findings reveal that collaboration among these stakeholders is essential to ensure the authenticity, sustainability, and economic viability of the tourism model.

Shrikrishna et al. (2025) further analyse both “quantitative and qualitative data” to assess the effectiveness of various promotional and developmental factors. The study indicates that initiatives such as food festivals, digital marketing, infrastructure development, and training of hospitality staff are moderately effective, while areas like international promotion and financial support require further improvement.

The research also shows that people have thoughts about how well local communities, tourist guides, government agencies, and hospitality employees work together. This means that Slow Food Tourism needs to be improved by having these groups work together better, teaching them skills, and having the government help with policies to make Slow Food Tourism stronger.

The study concludes that Slow Food Tourism has significant potential to contribute to economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. However, it requires strategic planning, increased awareness, and integrated efforts among stakeholders to fully realise its benefits and establish a sustainable tourism model in Himachal Pradesh.

Taank et al. (2023) analyse the understanding and application of the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Policy 2019 regarding food promotion and "tourism growth" in Himachal Pradesh. The research indicates that while the policy focuses on sustainable tourism and development centred around cultural and natural resources, it largely neglects the opportunities presented by local cuisines, rural populations, and indigenous goods.

The authors argue that tourism policies are essential instruments for achieving socio-economic and environmental sustainability; however, their effectiveness depends on proper implementation and stakeholder participation. The study reveals a significant gap between policy formulation and ground-

level execution, particularly due to the lack of community involvement and bottom-up planning mechanisms.

Taank et al. (2023) further identify critical issues such as inadequate skill development, limited training infrastructure in hospitality and cuisine-related sectors, and low awareness of government schemes among local populations. The findings indicate that despite the availability of various central and state initiatives, their benefits are not effectively reaching grassroots stakeholders. The study also emphasises the absence of structured marketing, branding, and promotion strategies for Himachali cuisine. It notes that tourism development remains concentrated in popular circuits, while rural and unexplored regions with rich culinary heritage remain neglected.

The authors conclude that integrating local cuisine into tourism policy through community participation, improved skill development, enhanced marketing strategies, and decentralised planning can significantly contribute to sustainable tourism development. The research significantly promotes a transition to inclusive, grassroots methods to guarantee that tourism advantages local communities and maintains cultural authenticity.

Ainiya and Zahri et al. (2025) analyse the significance of regional ingredients in creating sustainable cooking methods and their influence on tourism and the local economy in Yogyakarta. The study highlights that the integration of locally sourced ingredients into culinary practices significantly contributes to environmental sustainability by reducing carbon footprints and promoting responsible consumption patterns. It also strengthens cultural preservation by maintaining traditional recipes and cooking methods.

The authors emphasise that sustainable culinary tourism is closely linked with the use of local resources, waste reduction, and community engagement. The adoption of farm-to-table practices not only enhances food authenticity but also supports local farmers and producers, thereby strengthening regional food systems. This method guarantees that financial gains are shared among the local community, aiding in inclusive and sustainable growth.

Ainiya and Zahri et al. (2025) further identify the economic contributions of culinary tourism, noting that the use of local ingredients increases restaurant revenues and generates employment opportunities for farmers and local communities. The research indicates that travellers, whether local or from abroad, highly favour genuine, locally sourced cuisine, as it offers a richer cultural experience and increases the appeal of the destination.

The research also underscores the importance of authenticity and cultural representation in shaping tourists' perceptions. Traditional dishes and cooking practices serve as key attractions, offering immersive experiences that connect visitors with local heritage. In this context, culinary tourism acts as a medium for cultural exchange and destination branding.

However, the study highlights several challenges, including inconsistent availability of local

ingredients due to seasonal variations, inadequate logistical infrastructure, and low awareness of sustainable practices among consumers. These issues hinder the effective implementation of sustainable culinary systems and limit their potential impact.

The authors determine that effective growth of sustainable culinary tourism necessitates robust cooperation among stakeholders such as governmental agencies, local populations, agricultural producers, and hospitality businesses. Strategic interventions such as improved supply chain management, awareness programs, and policy support are essential to enhance sustainability and strengthen the position of destinations like Yogyakarta in the global culinary tourism market.

Esponda Pérez et al. (2024), “gastronomic tourism has transitioned from simple consumption to a strategic tool for regional development. Research highlights that cultural authenticity and the integration of local actors—such as traditional cooks and producers—are vital for sustainable management” (Zúñiga Bravo, 2020). Effective promotion relies on creating specialised routes (Calderón Bailón & Hernández Rojas, 2017) and leveraging social media quality to shape destination identity (Akar et al., 2024). Nonetheless, issues such as food transculturation and the sidelining of traditional crops continue to exist. Morales Loya and Fusté-Forné (2021) ultimately highlight that sustainability and the safeguarding of heritage continue to be the standards for enduring competitiveness.

Kumar and Bathla et al. (2022) “examine the role of Himachali Dham in promoting sustainable tourism in Himachal Pradesh”, highlighting its cultural and economic significance. The study emphasises that traditional culinary practices, aligned with slow food principles, support local economies, preserve cultural identity, and enhance tourist experiences. Tourists increasingly prefer authentic, locally sourced food, making cuisine a key factor in destination attractiveness. Nevertheless, obstacles like preserving authenticity and catering to varied preferences remain. Kumar and Bathla et al. (2022) ultimately assert that incorporating traditional cuisine into tourism promotes cultural preservation and sustainable growth while enhancing community involvement.

Skordili and Tsakopoulou et al. (2019) examine the impact of culinary tourism on rural development, emphasising the “Greek Breakfast” project in Santorini.

The study highlights that reconnecting tourism with the local agrifood sector enhances sustainability, supports local producers, and enriches the tourist experiences. Culinary tourism is identified as a tool for preserving regional identity and stimulating economic growth. However, challenges such as weak stakeholder collaboration, limited awareness, and resource constraints hinder its effectiveness. The authors conclude that successful implementation requires strong networks, policy support, and active participation of local stakeholders to ensure long-term sustainable tourism development.

Parwati and Sinaga et al. (2024) examine strategies for developing culinary tourism to

enhance destination attractiveness. The research emphasises that culinary tourism significantly enhances tourist experiences and represents local culture. Key strategies identified include strengthening local culinary branding, organising festivals, developing infrastructure, and utilising digital promotion. The authors emphasise the importance of innovation, preservation of traditional cuisine, and stakeholder collaboration. Additionally, challenges such as limited human resources, lack of promotion, and inadequate infrastructure are discussed. The study concludes that a holistic and strategic approach to culinary tourism development can significantly boost tourist arrivals and support sustainable economic growth.

Triyana and Farag et al. (2025) examine visitor experiences and their influence on culinary festivals via a structured literature review. The research emphasises that visitor motivation, festival characteristics, and stakeholder cooperation greatly impact satisfaction and loyalty. Culinary festivals contribute to destination branding, cultural preservation, and community development while enhancing economic growth through job creation and local business support. Key success factors include service quality, experiential value, and effective event management. However, gaps remain in cross-cultural analysis and sustainability dimensions. The authors conclude that integrating experiential, cultural, and strategic approaches is essential for improving festival effectiveness and long-term tourism development.

Kumar and Ruliya et al. (2025) explore “the potential of culinary tourism” in Kullu, emphasising its role in enhancing tourist experiences through traditional cuisine. The research shows significant tourist fascination with genuine dishes like Dham, Siddu, and Chha Gosht, emphasising food as a major draw

Despite positive perceptions, the research identifies limited promotion and low national and international recognition as major challenges. The findings suggest that improved marketing, consistent availability, and stakeholder support can strengthen culinary tourism. Overall, the study concludes that integrating local cuisine into tourism strategies can promote sustainable development and cultural preservation.

Dordai, Becze, and Roman et al. (2026) provide a comprehensive review of gastronomic tourism trends between 2010 and 2025, highlighting its growing role in destination competitiveness, cultural preservation, and sustainability. The study identifies key themes such as farm-to-fork practices, digital transformation, and experiential consumption. It highlights the significance of gastronomy as a form of intangible cultural heritage and its role in shaping local identity and fostering economic growth. Nonetheless, issues like the absence of uniform sustainability metrics and insufficient comparative studies remain. The authors assert that merging sustainability, technology, and cultural authenticity is crucial for promoting gastronomic tourism worldwide.

Sorcaru et al. (2019) highlight “gastronomy tourism as a significant driver of local economic

development, particularly in rural regions where traditional food and cultural practices” are preserved. The study emphasises that culinary experiences enhance destination attractiveness and contribute to cultural identity and sustainability. It identifies different types of culinary tourists and their motivations, noting a growing global interest in authentic food experiences. Furthermore, the promotion of local gastronomy through festivals, food routes, and regional branding initiatives such as the European Regions of Gastronomy strengthens tourism flows. However, limited statistical data on gastronomy-specific tourism remains a challenge for comprehensive analysis.

Yadav et al. (2025) examine “the growing importance of sustainable and green practices in gastronomic tourism in post-COVID-19 India, highlighting a shift toward environmentally and socially responsible tourism”. The research highlights that sustainability initiatives—environmental, social, and economic—greatly improve business performance, customer contentment, and brand image. It further identifies innovation, certification, and organisational experience as key drivers of effective implementation. External factors such as government support, market demand, and technology adoption also play a crucial role. However, challenges including high costs, limited technical expertise, and a lack of standardised frameworks hinder widespread adoption, particularly among small tourism operators.

Sulaiman et al. (2022) emphasise “the role of community empowerment in promoting sustainable rural development through culinary tourism”. The study highlights that participatory approaches, such as training, mentoring, and institutional support, enhance local economic capacity and entrepreneurship. It identifies village-owned enterprises and small business groups as key drivers of socio-economic development. Furthermore, collaboration among government, academia, and communities is essential for effective implementation. However, challenges such as limited youth participation, inadequate marketing, and a lack of institutional support hinder progress. Overall, the study underscores that sustainable culinary tourism depends on continuous community involvement, capacity building, and integrated development strategies.

Di-Clemente et al. (2020) explore culinary tourism as a vital connection between agriculture and tourism for rural advancement. The research emphasises that gastronomy serves as a major incentive for travel and draws affluent tourists who greatly impact local economies. It emphasises that culinary tourists tend to consume local products even after returning home, creating long-term demand for regional agricultural goods. Furthermore, the research identifies culinary tourism as a sustainable alternative to traditional cooperation models like agritourism and food supply chains. Overall, the study concludes that integrating gastronomy into tourism enhances profitability, strengthens rural economies, and fosters effective intersectoral collaboration.

Rupinder Kaur et al. (2024) also discuss the growing awareness among tourists regarding healthy and diverse food choices. The research indicates that travellers are motivated to explore local

cuisine because it provides uniqueness, authenticity, and cultural value. Culinary experiences are therefore closely connected with tourist motivation, destination preference, and behavioural intentions. The study adopts a descriptive and empirical research design using primary and secondary data sources. Tourist responses were collected through questionnaires and analysed using SPSS software to assess visitor attitudes, expectations, and satisfaction regarding local cuisine in Haryana. The findings reveal that food significantly influences tourists' destination choices and contributes positively to visitor satisfaction levels. The authors further note that culinary tourism supports hospitality stakeholders by creating opportunities for restaurants, local food vendors, and tourism operators to promote regional identity and improve service quality. Additionally, gastronomy tourism is linked with rural and cultural tourism because local cuisine represents an expression of cultural heritage and community traditions.

However, the study identifies certain limitations, including restricted geographical coverage and a limited scope of data collection. The authors suggest that future research should include wider regions and broader tourist segments to obtain more comprehensive insights into culinary tourism behaviour and destination development.

Sharma et al. (2022) examine the role of regional cuisine in destination development in Himachal Pradesh, emphasising how local food contributes to tourism attractiveness and regional branding. The study highlights that culinary tourism has emerged as a significant component of the tourism industry because tourists increasingly seek authentic gastronomic experiences while travelling. Regional cuisine not only reflects the traditions and cultural identity of a destination but also acts as a marketing tool that differentiates one destination from another.

The authors explain that local cuisine plays a crucial role in shaping destination image and tourist perceptions. Food experiences involving taste, aroma, presentation, and authenticity create memorable tourism experiences and strengthen tourists' emotional connection with destinations. The study further suggests that regional gastronomy enhances the profitability and competitiveness of tourist destinations by encouraging cultural engagement and increasing visitor satisfaction.

Sharma et al. (2022) also discuss the importance of destination branding through cuisine promotion. The research indicates that tourists are motivated to explore local foods because they represent the heritage, customs, and lifestyle of local communities. Traditional Himachali dishes such as Siddu, Babru, Madra, Khatta, Sepu Bari, and Teliye Mah are identified as important culinary resources that can strengthen the tourism identity of Himachal Pradesh.

The study further highlights the contribution of food-themed events, festivals, and cultural celebrations in promoting regional tourism. Festivals and local food events not only preserve culinary heritage but also generate economic opportunities for local communities, artisans, restaurant owners, and food producers. According to the authors, food tourism contributes positively to local economic

development by creating employment opportunities and supporting entrepreneurship in the hospitality and food service sectors.

Using primary and secondary data, the researchers collected responses from tourism stakeholders, including restaurant owners, managers, chefs, local residents, and hospitality employees across destinations such as Manali, Shimla, Kullu, Solan, and Paonta Sahib. The findings reveal that marketing of local food, improvement in food service quality, regional branding, speciality restaurants, and organisation of food festivals are essential factors for promoting Himachali cuisine. Sharma et al. (2022) further identify several constraints affecting the promotion of Himachali cuisine, including limited media coverage, lack of policy integration, insufficient staff training, inadequate branding, and limited speciality restaurants offering authentic local dishes. The study suggests that government support, food tourism policies, staff training programs, and promotional strategies are necessary to strengthen destination development through regional cuisine.

C. Objectives of the Study:

1. To explore the relationship between **culinary tourism**, **sustainable development**, and **climate resilience practices** in the region.

D. Research Methodology:

D.1 Research Design:

This study employs a **qualitative and descriptive** research approach, relying solely on the review and examination of current academic literature. The research is exploratory, seeking to comprehend how culinary tourism contributes to sustainable development and climate resilience by analysing previously published research outcomes.

D.2 Study Area:

The research focuses on **Western Himachal Pradesh**, which includes regions such as Kullu, Kangra, and Chamba. These areas have been widely discussed in literature for their rich culinary traditions and emerging tourism potential.

D.3 Data Source and Collection:

The research relies solely on secondary data obtained from published sources. Applicable literature has been methodically compiled from:

- Peer-reviewed journals
- Research articles
- Conference papers
- Books and edited volumes
- Reports by organisations such as UNWTO

The selection of literature is based on relevance to culinary tourism, sustainability, and climate resilience.

D.4 Selection Criteria of Literature:

The study included research papers chosen according to these criteria:

- Focus on culinary or gastronomic tourism
- Relevance to sustainable development or rural tourism
- Inclusion of case studies (India or global context)
- Publication in indexed or peer-reviewed journals
- Recent and credible academic contributions

D.5 Method of Analysis:

The study employs a **systematic literature review approach** combined with **thematic analysis**.

- Key concepts, findings, and arguments from selected studies are identified
- Themes such as sustainability, local economy, cultural preservation, and climate resilience are extracted
- Comparative analysis is conducted to identify similarities and gaps in existing research

D.6 Analytical Framework:

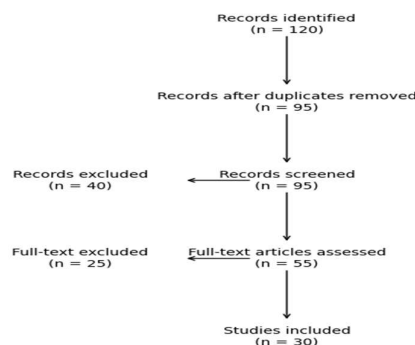
The study is guided by the following conceptual framework:

Culinary Tourism → Sustainable Development → Climate Resilience → Local Economic Growth

This framework is developed based on recurring patterns observed across multiple research studies.

D.7 Ethical Considerations:

- All sources are properly cited and acknowledged
- No plagiarism or data manipulation is involved
- The study strictly follows academic integrity standards



E. Discussion:

The findings of the study indicate that culinary tourism can serve as an effective instrument for sustainable tourism development in Western Himachal Pradesh. Traditional food systems in regions such as Kangra, Chamba, and Kullu are deeply connected with local agriculture, ecological practices, and cultural heritage. The use of indigenous crops, including millets, rajma, and red rice, demonstrates climate-adaptive agricultural practices that support both food security and environmental sustainability.

The study further reveals that culinary tourism aligns closely with the principles of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, it contributes toward **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)** by generating employment opportunities for farmers, local food producers, women entrepreneurs, and hospitality workers. Food-based tourism activities such as traditional cooking demonstrations, food festivals, and farm-to-table experiences strengthen rural livelihoods and encourage inclusive economic participation.

Culinary tourism also supports **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)** through the preservation of regional food heritage and cultural identity. Traditional Himachali dishes such as Dham, Siddu, Madra, and Babru represent intangible cultural heritage and help maintain community traditions across generations. Similar findings were highlighted by **Sharma et al. (2022)**, who argued that regional cuisine acts as a destination branding tool while preserving local identity.

From an environmental perspective, the findings relate strongly to **SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)** and **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**. The dependence on locally sourced ingredients reduces transportation requirements and food miles, thereby lowering carbon emissions associated with food supply chains. Farm-to-table dining practices minimise excessive packaging, food wastage, and dependence on imported products. **Ainiya and Zahri et al. (2025)** similarly observed that sustainable culinary practices contribute significantly to carbon footprint reduction and environmentally responsible tourism development.

The study also highlights the role of culinary tourism in promoting eco-tourism and sustainable hospitality practices. Eco-tourism emphasises environmental conservation, cultural authenticity, and responsible visitor behaviour, all of which are reflected in Himachali culinary traditions. Traditional farming methods such as terrace farming, organic cultivation, and seasonal food preparation support ecological balance and biodiversity conservation in mountain ecosystems.

Furthermore, sustainable hospitality practices are increasingly visible through the use of local ingredients, traditional cooking methods, biodegradable serving materials, and community-based food enterprises. Such practices enhance tourists' authentic experiences while simultaneously reducing environmental impacts. **Yadav et al. (2025)** noted that green practices in gastronomic tourism improve destination image, visitor satisfaction, and long-term sustainability outcomes.

Another significant aspect emerging from the study is community empowerment. Culinary tourism encourages active participation of local communities in tourism activities by involving farmers, women self-help groups, artisans, local chefs, and small entrepreneurs. This strengthens local ownership and promotes bottom-up tourism development. Sulaiman et al. (2022) also emphasised that community participation and skill development are essential for sustainable rural tourism growth. However, despite its strong potential, culinary tourism in Western Himachal Pradesh continues to face several challenges. Limited infrastructure, inadequate international promotion, lack of specialised training, and insufficient policy integration restrict the growth of sustainable culinary tourism. The absence of organised branding and marketing strategies for Himachali cuisine further limits its visibility in national and global tourism markets.

F. Conclusion:

In conclusion, culinary tourism represents a viable pathway for achieving sustainable development and climate resilience in Western Himachal Pradesh. The integration of traditional cuisine with tourism not only preserves cultural heritage but also supports environmentally responsible practices and local economic growth. Indigenous crops such as millets and rajma play a vital role in ensuring food security and adapting to changing climatic conditions in mountainous regions.

Furthermore, culinary tourism enhances visitor engagement and creates diversified livelihood opportunities for local communities. Promoting local sourcing, reducing food waste, and encouraging sustainable consumption contribute to a more resilient and inclusive tourism model. Therefore, strategic promotion and policy support are essential to fully realise its potential as a sustainable development tool.

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