

Meaty honour for Bhatiyar Gali

By [Brendan Dabhi](#), Ahmedabad Mirror | Dec 23, 2018, 06:14 AM IST



Even multi-generational vendors at Bhatiyar Gali feel that getting the place cleaned is a mammoth task; PICS: NILKANTH DAVE

How many of us have walked into Bhatiyar Gali near Teen Darwaza, blinkered to the waste lying around, just so we could enjoy its 600-yearold tradition of mouth-watering non-vegetarian delicacies. Well, you may no longer have to blindly ignore the prowling animals and woeful standard of hygiene here for long as the government plans to develop this paradise for non-vegetarian lovers into the State's first fully 'Non-Vegetarian Clean Street Food Hub'.

Kankaria Lake in Ahmedabad has already bagged the honour of being India's first Clean Street Food Hub in July this year. If Bhatiyar Gali is spruced up and its nomination is approved by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, it would add another feather to Ahmedabad's cap.

The state government took the decision in line with the FSSAI's move to train, audit and certify popular street food destinations across the country. This is quite an interesting development for Gujarat, which is frequently referred to as a vegetarian state where areas within the cities are demarcated on the lines of food and religion.

Food Safety Commissioner (Gujarat) Dr Hemant Koshia said, "We will develop Bhatiyar Gali as a clean street food hub. The food cluster is quite famous in the city – both, for its amazing food and its lack of hygiene. We want to change this image."

Deputy Municipal Commissioner Kuldeep Arya, who is liaising with the government department on this project, told Mirror, "Yes, we are working on this project and the health department of the AMC is heading it."

Big Challenges

Speaking to Mirror on the details of the project, in-charge Medical Officer of Health Dr Bhavin Solanki, Medical Officer of Health said, "The project is at a nascent stage and we are yet to work out all the details between the Gujarat Food & Drug Control Administration and the AMC about how to proceed further."

About challenges facing the AMC, Dr Solanki said, "In contrast to other street food clusters, Bhatiyar Gali will take a lot more work in terms of infrastructure, hygiene, animal control and, most importantly, regular monitoring of food standards. Non-vegetarian food can be dangerous to consume if spoilt."

Another official said, "There is always a fear of bacteria and untold germs in undercooked non-vegetarian food. The food safety standards will hence have to be stringent and continued monitoring will be required." The fish-and-meat market operating during the day and the irregular garbage collection are major causes for the lack of hygiene.

Massive undertaking

Even multi-generational vendors at Bhatiyar Gali feel that getting the place cleaned is a mammoth task. G P Chawala, owner of Kutub stall, has been selling food here for close to 200 years. "I am the fifth generation of my family to work here," said the owner of Kutub hall, adding: "Bhatiyar Gali has been the same for generations. The garbage does not get picked up. There is no sense of hygiene. Although the food is unadulterated and very good, the filthy conditions need to change."

He added, "The filth, the garbage cannot be cleared immediately. The administration will take time to change all of it. But I do agree that it has to change, to make it better with changing times."

There are about 30 vendors in Bhatiyar Gali but the amount of work required is massive. While other street food hubs have infrastructure and usually just involve training vendors, the situation here will be quite different.

Before AMC can recommend sending the nomination to FSSAI, officials believe that the animal control department will have to clear the area of cats and dogs. The sanitation department will have to go on an overdrive to ensure that the organic waste disposal system is effective.

Unnat, another vendor said, "The place smells a lot due to the waste from fish and meat that is dumped here during the day market. This also attracts stray animals. The waste needs to be cleared and the animals removed."

Training vendors

Mahesh Prajapati, Head of Food Safety Awareness and Training Organization, an agency contracted to FSSAI to train vendors, said, "We will have to train vendors in personal hygiene, maintaining quality of raw materials, maintaining sanitary conditions in the premises, most importantly, the need for a better system of cleanliness and its effect on their business."

Chairman of the Sunni Waqf Committee Rizwan Kadri, who looks after heritage monuments like the Sidi Saiyyed ni Jaali, said, "Bhatiyar Gali and Manek Chowk, which came later, are both part of the diverse heritage of our city. One serves non-vegetarian food and the other serves vegetarian. It is definitely good if the government is looking to revamp this place."

Sahil Abhichandani, a musician said: "Growing up in Mirzapur, Bhatiyar Gali has fed me. From knowing real good *zayka*, it has turned to one of worst places in terms of hygiene. It's great to know the place will be spiffed up."



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Bhatiyaaras of yore

Bhatiyar Gali has been in operation, serving food to weary travellers, since the Sultanate's period of Ahmedabad and informally dates back to 600 years. It derives its name from the word 'Bhathiyara', which means a person who cooks and sells food. Students of Ahmedabad University recently conducted a study tour at Bhatiyar Gali as part of their course on 'Sociology of Bazaar'. They spoke to the vendors regarding their oral history since not much is available in written literature about the street food there. Professor Abrar Ali Saiyed who teaches the course, said, "The vendors say they started out as bhatiyaras (cooks) serving meals to weary travellers going north. Slowly, as the city evolved, they turned to business and this place exists to this day as a street food bazaar where people eat and leave."

Meat of the matter

Bhatiyar Gali comes to life in the evening. However, different food items can be had at different times of the day—mornings are for chicken and mutton, while fish, crabs, prawns and even lobsters can be relished as the central fish market is located here. Through the day, spicy kheema samosas, haleem, sheekh kabab, tawa biryani, bheja masala, chicken angaar, chaap fry, bhuna gosht, and khurdi (bone soup) which has bajra added is available. This place is also famous for Barah Handi—the signature dish that melds 12 separate preparations. For sweet lovers, there are jalebies, gulab jamun and malpua which is available in two varieties, with and without egg mixed in its gravy.

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Dr Hemant Koshia, Food Safety Commissioner

“ I had stopped going to Bhatiyar Gali due to its lack of hygiene. But a revamp will not just pull me back, but will also attract a number of other people as well

Pankaj Pathak, Entrepreneur

“ My friends and I used to frequent the place earlier but reduced our visits as it became increasingly filthier. The food is quite good, it but is not a place one would frequent with family

Amitabh Roy, Marketing professional