

MAKE THE MOST OF THURSDAY TO SUNDAY

3

TRIPS TO SIGN
UP FOR

Roasted and ready

WEEKEND BINGE

ROAST chicken has gravitas, how else would it pull a Christmas spread together as the central dish of the table? Goa-based chef **Christopher Fernandes** says, "Chicken is universal; most people eat it. It's a good centrepiece because it is interactive. Everyone can share the food experiences and tuck into their favourite pieces. Then, you have the sides — gravy, mash and roast vegetables. Growing up, we would fight for the crispy skin. I like my roast chicken made with flavoured butter and a spice rub tucked under the skin." Don't forget the stuffing; along with their versions and flavour profiles of the classic roast, different Catholic communities also include their preferred stuffing. Fernandes lists Goan chorizo with bread; only bread, and chicken mince as good options. But most importantly, you must ensure the chicken isn't dry. Chef Fernandes' tip: Soak the bird overnight in brine, pat it dry and cook it low and slow.

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We turn to the star of the Christmas lunch table, the roast chicken and their makers for memories, traditions and heirloom recipe secrets



Roast chicken by Fernandes (right)



Stick to the basics

For **Vincy Rebello**, chef de cuisine at Silver Beach Cafe, a traditional Christmas roast dinner is meant for a large family gathering. "Roast chicken, beef roulade, pork and ham, and lamb stew make up the lavish meat course on a table. Pair these with good wine and it is the perfect way to celebrate." He suggests, "If this is your first Christmas dinner, the important thing is to not experiment too much. Avoid overpowering spices for the right flavour." His tip for a perfect roast chicken: Keep your marinade simple with ginger garlic paste and a touch of homemade garam masala. The key is to marinate your chicken for three to four hours. A whole bird takes at least 30 to 35 minutes at 160 to 180 degrees Celsius to cook thoroughly and yet retain its juiciness.

AT Silver Beach
Cafe, Juhu

Old and new traditions

Some familial traditions are born around the chicken roast, whether that includes who cooks it, carves it, or gets the leg pieces. Mahim's **Aaron D'Souza** of The Goan Poie recalls his mum's 10 siblings and their families gathering every Christmas, each bringing a dish to the table. The tradition still stands even with a gathering of five cousins while others reside across the world. His heirloom roast chicken (top) recipe comes from his grandmother and is fondly called Mama's roast chicken. "It's a classic with whole spices, Kashmiri chilli, toddy vinegar and feni, slow-cooked over a fire. Sometimes, Goans will make a cafreal roast chicken too, marinated with the masala overnight," he tells us. And from the complementary dishes the most common suspects are sorpotel, potato salad, pulao, sannas, smoked ham, and fugias. Wait, fugias in a Goan household? "Yes, my cousin married an East Indian," D'Souza signs off.

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Get your roast here

Traditional roast chicken with potatoes and baby carrots
AT Gables, Hazji Niyaz Road, Colaba. CALL 9224269773
COST ₹1,200

Oven-baked chicken legs with a sauce of choice
AT The Food Window by Carlyle and Shahis
CALL 9224111419
COST ₹1,500

Roast chicken with vaudoan cauliflower steak
AT SAZ American Brasserie, JIO World Drive, BKC.
CALL 9920056686
COST ₹600 onwards

Compiled by
**Tanishka D'Lyra and
Shriram Iyengar**

Tang in the roast

Pali Village-based **Denise D'Abreo Pessa** and **Krislyn Gomes** (right) of Kris's Den have been creating Christmas memories with an East Indian (EI) roast chicken for their customers for nearly three years. Their own memories and skills in perfecting the dish go back to three decades. It's not impossible to ensure the chicken is cooked throughout and still stays succulent, but it is a fine balance. Spilling some secrets, Gomes tells us, "Chicken isn't as dry as turkey. When cooking it, make sure it's browned on top. When you pierce it, there should be no resistance, the skewer or fork



should sink right in and the juices should spill out." The EI way around a roast chicken ditches additional sauces to highlight the flavour of the chicken. Typical recipes include dried red chillies, cloves and cinnamon sticks. Gomes and Pessa's heirloom recipe includes lemon to make the chicken tangy. "We learned by watching and helping our mums, and when it was time to take over, we did." To complete the Christmas meal, you'll always have EI wedding rice or arroz fugath — a cinnamon-ey or mildly spiced pulao with plums, nuts, dried fruits and caramelised onions; mutton or chicken curry, sorpotel or vindaloo, salad and fugias.

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(Top) Roast chicken; (right) El brown chicken roast



Truffle it up

While the Indian Catholics turn to Kashmiri chilli for a gentle kick of heat, La Loca Maria's chef **Manuel Oliveira's** roast highlights the depth of truffle. For Oliveira, growing up in Toledo, Spain, the Christmas lunch table "stretched for miles, decorated with ornaments for a gathering of nearly 30 family members." The chef has brought such wholesomeness to his festive black truffle menu with pollo fricassee a la trufa (right) which includes a particularly crispy golden exterior over succulent chicken breasts, with notes of sherry from the vino fino fricassee and is topped with shavings of black winter truffle or la trufa negra. He shares, "The flavour of black truffle is rich, savoury and often described as umami, which



enhances the overall depth and complexity of flavours." At a recent visit to the Bandra restaurant, we treated ourselves to the sous vide roast chicken that's available year-round and carries the traits of a Christmas roast; the bonus here was the truffle jus, which complements the delicate sweetness of the meat.

AT La Loca Maria, Bandra West



Under Alibaug skies

Watch the beautiful sunset and indulge in an intimate candlelit dinner with friends and family at a rustic countryside retreat in Alibaug. Each meal boasts of an exclusive menu, featuring ingredients sourced in small batches from local farmers and fisherfolk.

TIME 7 pm to 9.30 pm AT Paisley Experience, Jiji's Resort, Lake Dhokawade, Alibaug. CALL 9082804116 COST ₹1,250 (includes dinner)



Make waves in Malvan

Immerse yourself in a thrilling weekend of watersports, scuba diving, and local delicacies. This three-day backpacking escapade along the serene coastlines of Malvan and Tarkarli includes visits to the picturesque Sindhudurg fort and Tsunami Island for memories destined to last.

ON December 15; 3 pm onwards
MEETING POINT Multiple pick-up points from Borivali to Belapur.
CALL 9325287233 COST ₹5,599 (includes food and travel)



Adventure in Aadraai

Walk through an untouched jungle; explore caves, waterfalls and shepherd trails en route to an overnight trail in the lush valley of Aadraai.

ON December 16; 9.45 pm
MEETING POINT Main gate, SGNP, Borivali East. LOG ON TO [treksandtrails.org](#) COST ₹1,399 (includes one day breakfast and lunch)