



Manila, Philippines

**Title:** Bihari delicacy litti-chokha to compete with American, Thai cuisines at Manila food fest

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PATNA: Bihari delicacy litti-chokha, that once bowled over Bollywood star Aamir Khan, is now slated to give competition to New York's red hook lobster pound, Mexican taco and Thailand's most popular street food, Sukiyaki — a mixture of glass noodles, egg and seafood — at the international food festival to be held in the Philippines capital, Manila, from May 31.

Aamir Khan had relished the two-dish combination of litti (baked wheat balls stuffed with roasted gram powder and spices) and chokha (roasted and mashed potato, brinjal and tomato mixed with chopped onions, garlic, green chillies and lemon juice) during his visit to Patna in 2012.

Litti expert Dinesh Kumar, along with a tikki-chaat maker from Delhi, Dalchand and Rekha Devi, has been selected to represent the country under the banner of National Association of Streetfood Vendors of India (NASVI) at the five-day event.

Hosted by World Streetfood Congress, Manila, the event will be attended by 17 countries and will have 30 stalls, two of which have been allotted to India.

"The best varieties on show will be given a certificate of excellence," said Dinesh Kumar.

"If Bihari food gets rated the best, it will not only make the country proud, but street food vendors of the state too will feel encouraged," he said.

"Mine is a rags to riches tale. I left my home in Darbhanga district in north Bihar quite a young age and came to the state capital, Patna, 127 km away, to earn money. For some time I worked at a roadside dhaaba (eatery) and sold nuts on pavements near Patna Museum and at Mauryalok shopping complex," he said.

Soon he realised the growing popularity of street food among Patnaites and also the increasing population of people who needed readymade food.

"In 2004, I started a litti stall on Dak Bungalow road, which soon started drawing food lovers. Considering this popularity, NASVI invited me to its national food festival in Delhi. I offered a new

dish' litti-chicken' prepared by my associate, Ashok, which became a rage among Delhites and even among foreign visitors," he said.

Sangeeta Singh of NASVI said street food happened to be a big industry with great employment opportunities. "Many foreign countries support street food to tap their tourism potential, but our country, which has maximum varieties, lacks this kind of support and promotion," she said. "It is because of popularity of Indian street food that our country has been assigned two stalls, while other countries have a just one," she added.

"In 2008, we formed NASVI to help street food vendors get a bigger platform and a better life. At present, more than 57,000 vendors from 42 cities are associated with NASVI, while more than 20,000 among them are food vendors," Singh said.