



The Idea of Vande Bharat: Hospitality services

Trains introduced till oct 2024

SN	Train no.	Train Name	No of Coach	Date of Inauguration	Frequency	Railway	Zone
1	22435-36	NDLS-BSB Vande Bharat Exp	20	15/02/19	6	NR	NZ
2	22439-40	NDLS-SVDK Vande Bharat Exp	16	03/10/19	6	NR	NZ
3	20901-02	GNC-MMCT Vande Bharat Exp	16	30/09/22	6	WR	WZ
4	22447-48	AADR-NDLS Vande Bharat Exp	16	13/10/22	6	NR	NZ
5	20825-26	BSP-NGP Vande Bharat Exp	8	11/12/22	6	SECR	SCZ
6	22301-02	HWH-NJP Vande Bharat Exp	16	30/12/22	6	ER	EZ
7	20833-34	VSKP-SC Vande Bharat Exp	16	15/01/23	6	ECOR	SCZ
8	22223-24	CSMT-SNSI Vande Bharat Exp	16	10/02/23	6	CR	WZ
9	22225-26	SUR-CSMT Vande Bharat Exp	16	10/02/23	6	CR	WZ
10	20171-72	RKMP-NDLS Vande Bharat Exp	16	01/04/23	6	WCR	WZ
11	20701-02	SC-TPTY Vande Bharat Exp	16	08/04/23	6	SCR	SCZ
12	20977-78	ALL-CDG Vande Bharat Exp	16	12/04/23	6	NWR	NZ
13	22895-96	HWH-PURI Vande Bharat Exp	16	18/05/23	6	SER	EZ



preface

- Catering on moving trains is more than just a service; it reflects a culture .The introduction of Vande Bharat trains marked a significant modernization and upgrade in Indian Railways' passenger services
- The modernisation was happening at a very fast speed. Changes in the culture of catering generally require time , IRCTC therefore has to run to match the speed of Indian Railways.
- Many trains across India operate with modern rolling stock on journeys lasting one to two days. Trains were different as they were with the modern stock and in beginning thankfully in a day trip.
- People were paying more so were expecting better services than Shatabdi and Rajdhani also.
- To meet passenger expectations and justify this modernization, IRCTC has to create a difference in meal quality and onboard services which could align with the elevated standards.
- The inaugural Vande Bharat train was flagged off by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on February 15, 2019, symbolizing a new era for Indian Railways.



How this was done :

- IRCTC has been entrusted with provision of catering services as per catering policy
- **With a focus on quality, hygiene and timely service, the catering experience in Vande Bharat trains aims to complement the modern, efficient and comfortable travel experience.**
- **In beginning :**
 - **During 2019- 2023**, short term tenders for a limited period of 6+6 months, were invited for provision of onboard catering services in Vande Bharat Trains to meet urgent demand .
 - The successful bidder was required to submit the meal pick up points, prior to commencement of services.
 - **Now :**
 - However, upon issuance of Commercial Circular- 24 of 2023 by Railway Board i.e. addendum to Catering Policy 2017, mandating IRCTC to manage onboard catering services in trains through Long-Term (5+2 Years) Cluster based contracts.
 - Accordingly, switching to long term tenders from short term tenders of Vande Bharat Trains and other trains which is helping now .



Issues and Challenges for IRCTC

- With shorter contract durations, Licensees were **reluctant to invest in infrastructure**, such as kitchens and storage facilities. This was impacting food quality and hygiene standards.
- Disrupting service consistency and leading to variations in menu offerings and meal presentation across journeys. As Vande Bharat trains are running in various sections/routes.
- Licensee face **limited time to understand and respond to passenger feedback**, further lowering service standards and more challenges for IRCTC
- Receipt of complaints with regard to **absence of services (Lunch/Dinner) for those passengers who deboarded the trains just before the destination of train.**
- Managing quick and efficient service to passengers at **right time and with required temperature,**
- **Less window time** for food service.
- late running of trains due to winters/foggy season always a real challenge.
- Maintaining food quality during moving train is difficult without **proper reheating or availability of equipment in the initial days.**



Opportunities

- Railways/IRCTC are gainers :
 - Investment in infrastructure and establishment of modern kitchens, with industry standard equipment and infrastructure.
 - Unlock greater commercial value for licensees and IRCTC with viability of economies of scale.
 - Better and more focused contract management by IRCTC
 - continuous supervision of the kitchen, to ensure best practices including cleanliness and hygiene in preparation and service of food.
 - QR Code based Packing, Labeling & Marking (PLM) for tracking and transparency.
 - CCTV access through same QR code will also enable live streaming of Kitchen where food was prepared and build confidence in the eyes of the passengers.
 - IRCTC has also engaged leading Institutions like NIFT, IHM & Indigo Airlines for upgrading the services.



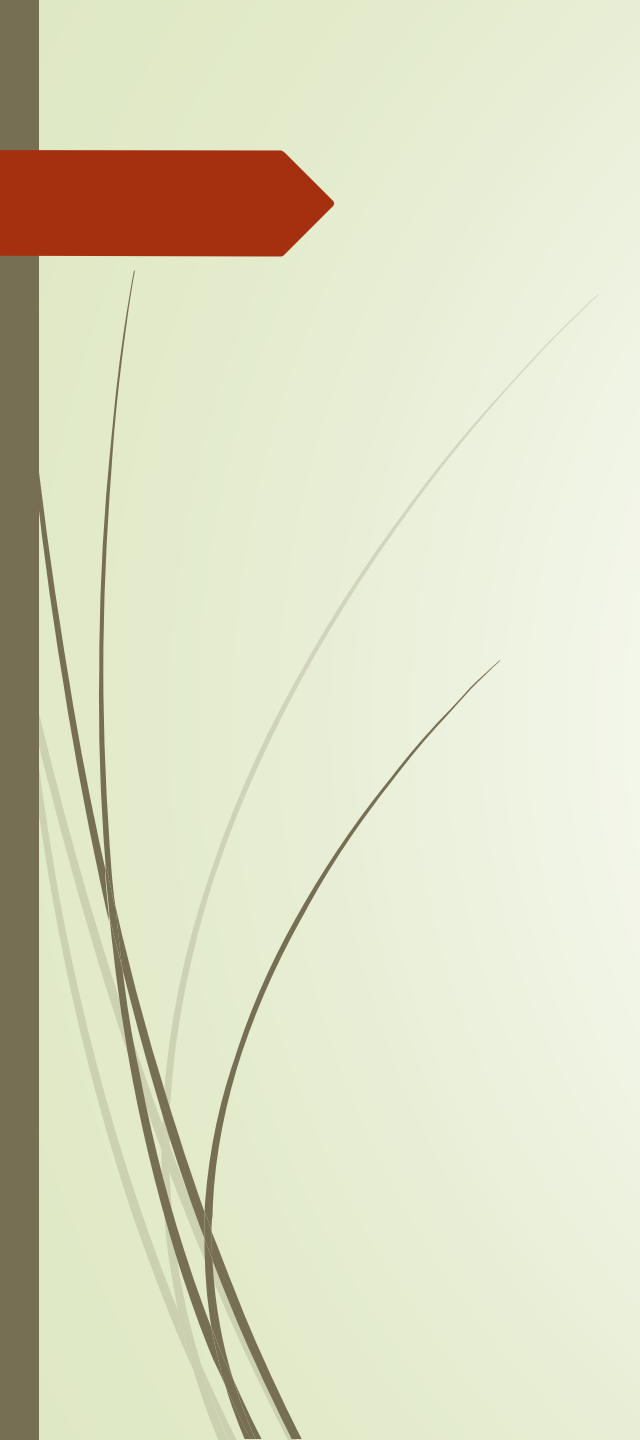
How this was done:

- Use of PRIMES Module by IRCTC to correctly assess the meals requirement as per the coach-wise occupancy and type of meals (Veg./N.Veg/No Food) opted by the passenger.
- Employing regional language speaking service staff and supervisors on board the VBT as a policy.
- Regional cuisines which are popular in the states where VBT are operated is being ensured as part of menu served.
- Facility of instant SMS to On Board Catering Supervisor, as soon as a complaint related to catering is lodged on Rail Madad, to quickly attend the complainants.
- Online Training Program of OBCS by Skill Development Team of IRCTC/CO.
- An additional set of uniforms (over and above the 3 sets) are issued to all staff to ensure personal grooming & hygiene along with 2 sets of staff to work where one way journey is more than 8 hrs.



This was not the End : further up-gradation

- Deployment of IRCTC officers at Depots, to address the issue of non-working of equipment and infestation of pests in the mini-pantry areas.
- Introduction of customized RTE meals for non-optee and current booking passengers of VBTs.
- Introduction of Premium A+ Category for PAD items for Vande Bharat Trains.
- Mandatory En-route garbage disposal by Pantry Car/Catering Staff, to support Indian Railways sustainability goals.
- IRCTC has taken steps toward reducing single-use plastics and incorporating eco-friendly packaging for onboard meals.



Thank You