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Street food vendors are back after Covid safety training, now hoping for business to return

With Covid numbers rising in India, many people will continue to play it safe, which means a grim future for the street food business.

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Representational image of street food | Wikimedia Commons

Mohan Singh Varma is 42 years old. He sells biryani by day and momos by night near Delhi's Preet Vihar Metro Station, but he now hands out his plates through partitions in the plastic sheets that ensconce his cart.

He has also kept a separate table nearby, from where customers can collect food, to ensure maximum social distancing. But he only gets about 25 customers in a day now anyway, as opposed to 70-80 before coronavirus struck and the lockdown was announced.

Despite several restrictions being eased and the process of 'unlocking' well under way, street food vendors across India continue to struggle. This is not surprising, given that Covid numbers in India are on the rise, and many people are still staying home as much as they can, venturing out only for essential activities. Add to that the fact that street food such as chaat, gol gappa and aloo tikki are all contact-based food.

Yet, Varma and many other vendors are taking pains to ensure the food they serve is safe and sanitary. Despite the fact that they stand out in the heat all day and it is the peak of summer, they are conscientious about wearing their masks and gloves and have even taken on additional costs to ensure food hygiene.

“I have introduced new disposable packaging for the food. I now serve in silver foil containers that cost about Rs 5-6 a piece. Before I used to serve on disposable plates that cost Rs 2,” Varma tells ThePrint.

Street food vendor Mohan Singh Varma sells biryani and momos from a stand near Delhi’s Preet Vihar Metro Station. The stand is now covered in a plastic sheet and Varma makes sure to wear a mask and gloves |