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## Travel Eater

Johanna Read is eating near and far ...

# Globavore Interview – Ruksana Hussain

· by TravelEater (Johanna Read) · in Globavore interviews ·



*We have 20 culinary travel questions in our Globavore Interviews and we're already at our 21st writer answering them! Ruksana Hussain is a journalist, writer and editor based in Los Angeles, California. Born in Chennai, India and raised in Muscat, Oman, she now calls Hollywood home base as she discovers cultures, cuisines and communities that pique her curiosity. You can read up on her travels at [TravelerAndTourist.com](http://TravelerAndTourist.com)*

Writer Ruksana Hussain; photo via Ruksana

*(<https://web.archive.org/web/20201101005217/http://www.travelerandtourist.com/>) and enjoy some of her published stories at [RuksanaWrites.com](http://RuksanaWrites.com)*

*(<https://web.archive.org/web/20201101005217/http://www.ruksanawrites.com/>). See below for her social media handles.*

### **1. Who are you and how does food play into your travels?**

Journalist, writer, editor, blogger but fundamentally a human that loves food and culinary experiences, travel-related or not.

### **2. You're at your favourite eatery with three companions (fictional, living or dead). Where (and when!) are you and who are you with?**

A meal at any of the **Ethiopian** spots on Fairfax Avenue in Los Angeles with my husband and two of our friends. I first discovered the cuisine in Atlanta and have been a fan since. It's very

similar to Indian cuisine and I also love that you eat with your hands. We've introduced friends and family to injera and tibs and fitfit and tej and doro wot ever since and not once has anybody complained – vegetarians and meat eaters alike.

“I have a thing for macarons but I don't discriminate when it comes to sugar. Macaroons will do just as well!”; photo by Ruksana Hussain



### 3. What are your favourite foods?

**Anything sweet** works especially **fresh fruit**. Sometimes salty and/or spicy stuff makes the cut. I am a meat eater so I do like a well-cooked piece of protein.

### 4. Is there anything that you'd never eat? What is it and why?

**Durian** for sure, the smell and the texture are challenging. As a matter of religious upbringing, I stay away from anything that's pork or pork-related though I have been told by many that bacon and prosciutto should be tried. **Some types of bitter gourd are simply off the negotiating table no matter what form it has been disfigured into.** Also **gooseberries** – those things turn your tongue so dry I am amazed I can still taste anything after. Ghost peppers – never! (*Ed.'s note: Anyone interested in taking a baby step toward **durian** should try durian ice cream – no texture issue, almost no smell, just the yummy taste!*)

### 5. What do you crave but can't get whilst on the road? How do you satisfy the craving?

**Rice and curry** typically especially when I travel in the US or in Europe where rice isn't a staple. It's usually the first meal I make soon as I get back home.

“Homemade French toast is a regular on the weekends at my place. Come join me if you find yourself in Hollywood”; photo by Ruksana Hussain



#### 6. What food are you embarrassed to admit you like to eat?

I can add **ketchup** to almost anything and enjoy it like I've never eaten it before. I am that person who adds ketchup to pizza, noodles, macaroni, rice, bread, chips, fritters – you get the picture. I also make a **sweet scrambled egg** version that most people are amazed to find I consume as an adult – simply add sugar to milk and eggs instead of salt and pepper, and eat it with toast for breakfast. I can eat **French toast for all meals a day** (sans additional accessories like cream and syrup and fruit) and never grow tired.

#### 7. What / where do you dream of eating, but haven't yet had the pleasure?

Breakfast in Greenland. Lunch in Iceland. Dinner in Finland. Pierogis in Poland. Desserts in Switzerland. Oysters in New Zealand. And when technology has figured out a way for me to do it all in a day, gosh! That will be THE DAY!

#### 8. Strangest meal?

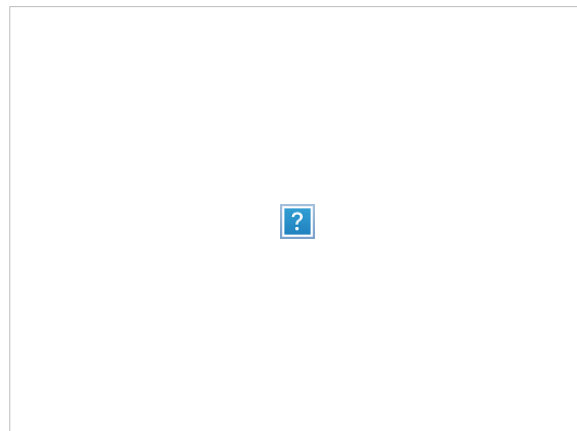
**Horsemeat** in Japan. I could not bring myself to eat it though it resembled beef. Finding **pickled fish and eggs at the breakfast spread in Japan** was another stunner. Eating at an underground communal dinner spot in **Stockholm** was a tad bit bizarre – your entrance is announced to the room, everyone welcomes you and then you eat with complete strangers in what looks like a Game of Thrones dining hall.

#### 9. Ever had food poisoning while traveling? Any advice to share?

In Mumbai, my husband's hometown of all places. **Don't eat uncooked food from street hawkers**. Don't eat ANY food from the street period. (*Ed.'s note: I'll take your advice on Mumbai, but I don't want readers to avoid street food in other locales ... it's often the best! Just make sure it's cooked in front of you and you're safer than at a hotel buffet. More food safety info can be found on my [Travel Practicalities page \(https://web.archive.org/web/20201101005217/https://traveleater.net/travel-practicalities-travel-advice-solo-travel-independent-travel/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20201101005217/https://traveleater.net/travel-practicalities-travel-advice-solo-travel-independent-travel/)).*

*“Machaca for brunch at the Mexican place down the street”; photo by Ruksana Hussain*

**10. Have you fallen so much in love with a foreign dish that you learned to make it at home? What's the story?**



Yes, I have fallen in love with so many dishes but no, I didn't learn to make any of them at home because **what would be my motivation to visit again then!** I do try finding places that make it locally or "strategically" befriend someone from that place who can make it for me. I love eating and appreciate those that make stuff for me but I don't always have the patience to make it for myself. Make that "don't ever" have the patience.

**11. What's the first thing you eat after returning home from a long trip?**

Rice and curry.

**12. Favourite foreign ingredient you wish your home supermarket carried?**

Red bean paste. Saffron for cheap.

**13. Country / city where you've found the best food? Details please so we can check it out too!**

**Poland** introduced me to more **beetroot** in ten days than one lifetime. **Singapore and Dubai** have some of the best international offerings on the same street. **Los Angeles** can offer a cuisine a day and still have more restaurants to try than the days in a year.

**14. Country / city where you've found the worst? What made it so awful?**

I don't necessarily know if this constitutes the worst food possible but **I do like trying Indian food in other countries and cities, and sometimes they just taste weird.** But I also see how that could mean the food has maybe been adapted to more of the local taste and preferences possibly. I am all for having to adjust for regional palates and even fusion food preparations, though if they aren't done right then it is easy to quickly point out the problem.

**15. What are your favourite markets for a) eating b) finding unusual things and c) for photography? Going local with some Los Angeles options:**

- Eating: farmers' market at the Grove
- Finding unusual things: Hollywood farmers' market on the weekend
- Photography: Flower market downtown

**16. If money were no object, where (and what) would you eat?**

"Coconut Ceviche in Nayarit"; photo by Ruksana Hussain

I'd go on a **shrimp dish tasting spree around the world.** (Ed.'s

*note: Oooh you need to come to*

*Vancouver in June-ish for our spot prawns! They're delicious AND sustainable).*

**17. Do you have any food regrets?**

The one time I flew Korean Airways and opted for a Halal meal to save time but then couldn't stop eyeing with envy what my neighbor was served.

**18. If you could invent any ice cream flavour, what would it be? (yes, I am looking for ideas to add to my ice cream repertoire!)**

Mango pistachio rosewater with mochi nuts.

Coconut Ceviche in Nayarit



“Among some of the things I never thought I'd like was this fresh as ever conch salad in the Dominican Republic”; photo by Ruksana Hussain

**19. What do you love and hate about food writing (yours and/or in general)?**

Competition is fierce, in the writing and the eating, with myself and others.

**20. You're having surgery tomorrow and there's a reasonable chance you'll lose your ability to taste (oh the horrors!). What would you choose as, essentially, your last meal?**

My mom's mutton biryani, beef fry, pepper chicken gravy, fried fish and shrimp curry followed by rice pudding for dessert! I will have more to add if the surgery is pushed out by a day!

Want to read more by Ruksana? Her travel site is [TravelerAndTourist.com](http://www.travelerandtourist.com) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20201101005217/http://www.travelerandtourist.com/>) and her published pieces are at [RuksanaWrites.com](http://www.ruksanawrites.com) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20201101005217/http://www.ruksanawrites.com/>). Follow her on Instagram at @ruksanah and Twitter at @RuksanaWrites.

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