

Project Profile: Traditional Sidku/Balbale/Bhaang Chutney Mix

Unit – Uttarakhand

1. Introduction

The cuisine of Uttarakhand, particularly from the Garhwal and Kumaon regions, is rooted in tradition, seasonality, and locally available ingredients. Among these culinary traditions, Sidku and Balbale are steamed fermented bread preparations, often enjoyed with a spicy and aromatic Bhaang (hemp seed) chutney. These dishes are not only integral to festive and cultural occasions but also represent a unique segment of sustainable mountain gastronomy. In recent years, the interest in indigenous cuisines has grown substantially due to increased health consciousness, demand for organic food, and a growing appreciation of regional flavors. A project to manufacture, package, and distribute ready-to-cook Sidku/Balbale dough mixes along with traditional Bhaang chutney pastes and spice powders aims to cater to both local markets and urban consumers seeking authentic pahadi food experiences.

This project proposes a micro-food processing unit that focuses on producing ready-to-cook Sidku/Balbale dough mixes (with fermentation starters) and Bhaang chutney in dry or semi-moist form. The aim is to preserve traditional methods while using standardized processes to ensure food safety, consistent taste, and increased shelf life. Packaged in hygienic, eco-friendly containers, the products will be suitable for home use, restaurants, and hill-based tourism destinations. The enterprise will also contribute to the revival and documentation of culinary heritage while creating income opportunities in rural areas.

The unit can function both as a standalone enterprise and in synergy with tourism, cultural heritage events, and local homestay markets. The branding of such products under Geographical Indications (GI) or "Mountain Foods of Uttarakhand" can add additional marketing value. The project's success depends on combining authentic recipes, hygienic processing, quality raw materials, effective branding, and tapping into regional and urban niche markets. The vision is to create a sustainable rural food enterprise that champions both tradition and innovation.

2. Industry Overview

The traditional and ethnic food segment in India has seen steady growth due to shifting consumer preferences toward authentic, clean-label, and regional products. According to FICCI and industry sources, India's ethnic packaged food market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 10–12% in the next five years. With increasing urbanization, busy lifestyles, and rising health awareness, demand for traditional convenience foods is increasing, especially those perceived to be healthier and chemical-free. Uttarakhand, with its strong culinary heritage and organic farming traditions, is poised to benefit from this trend.

However, the traditional food processing sector in Uttarakhand remains largely unorganized, with most products being made in households or during seasonal festivals. The challenge lies in transforming these home-based preparations into scalable, quality-assured, and market-ready formats without compromising their authenticity. Government schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) and Devbhoomi Udyamita Yojana (DUY) can play a vital role in bridging the gap between tradition and market viability.

The Traditional Sidku/Balbale/Bhaang Chutney Mix Unit aligns with government priorities on agro-based entrepreneurship, women-led enterprises, and local product branding. Additionally, with rising culinary tourism in Uttarakhand, especially in places like Tehri, Chamoli, Almora, and Pithoragarh, there is an opportunity to create demand for packaged traditional food offerings. The unit also has export potential in ethnic and organic food markets abroad, especially if compliant with FSSAI and export norms.

3. Products and Application

The unit will focus on producing the following primary products: (i) Sidku mix and Balbale dough mix (fermentable, vacuum-sealed), (ii) ready-to-cook Sidku/Balbale frozen dough rolls (in larger units), and (iii) Bhaang chutney powder and paste variants, packaged in sachets and glass jars. These products will be carefully developed using traditional recipes, tested for shelf stability, and packed in attractive formats for the consumer market.

The Sidku and Balbale dough mixes will be prepared using a combination of whole wheat flour, yeast starters (traditional jhaur/jhol), ghee, and local herbs. The mixes can be sold in two

variants: for quick home preparation and for hotel/restaurants as bulk packs. The Bhaang chutney, traditionally made using roasted hemp seeds, garlic, cumin, coriander, and lemon, will be available in two forms: (a) a dry spice mix to which water can be added, and (b) a semi-moist paste for immediate use.

These products cater to urban consumers interested in regional foods, tourists seeking to take home “flavors of the hills,” and diaspora markets abroad that desire shelf-stable traditional products. Restaurants and homestays in Uttarakhand can also use these products to enhance their local menus. Over time, the product line can be expanded to include festival-specific variants and combo packs that highlight seasonal Uttarakhandi delicacies.

4. Desired Qualification

The enterprise can be led by rural youth, women’s SHGs, or local culinary artisans with basic training in food safety and entrepreneurship. While formal education is not mandatory, candidates with a diploma or certification in food processing, hotel management, or nutrition will have an added advantage in scaling and standardizing the operations.

It is essential for the entrepreneur to undergo short-term training in food preservation, hygiene standards (FSSAI compliance), and product shelf-life management. Institutes such as the Food Technology Institute in Dehradun or Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in Almora and Rudraprayag offer such training programs. Involvement of local chefs and cultural custodians will ensure authenticity in recipes and processes.

A passion for local food traditions, basic knowledge of food processing machinery, and familiarity with digital marketing will help in branding and distribution. Involvement in schemes such as the PMFME or DUY can ensure access to machinery subsidies, seed capital, and mentoring. The entrepreneur should also be aware of the regulatory landscape governing food production and packaging.

5. Business Outlook and Trend

The outlook for this venture is promising due to increasing consumer interest in regional and traditional Indian foods, especially from the Himalayan belt. The rise in culinary tourism and wellness-based travel is driving demand for local food souvenirs and ready-to-cook mixes.

Moreover, the post-COVID shift towards immunity-boosting, simple, and healthy foods also benefits traditional chutneys and steamed fermented preparations.

Ethnic food startups in India have gained recognition for preserving local flavors and offering them in modern formats. Products like millet noodles, jackfruit pickles, and bamboo rice from Northeast India have successfully entered gourmet and organic retail chains. Similarly, the Sidku/Balbale/Bhaang Chutney Mix can become a flagship product for Uttarakhand's traditional food innovation if branded well and introduced in curated marketplaces.

With the emergence of niche platforms like The Himalayan Haat, The North East Store, and GO DESi, there is a growing space for ethnic, artisanal, and village-based food enterprises. These platforms can serve as both retail and marketing partners. Additionally, tie-ups with tourism departments, state fairs, and culinary festivals can help position the product in urban and export markets.

6. Market Potential and Market Issues

The market potential for traditional food products like Sidku, Balbale, and Bhaang chutney is growing among health-conscious consumers, culinary explorers, and the urban middle class looking to reconnect with their roots. In metro cities like Delhi, Bangalore, and Pune, regional food pop-ups and cloud kitchens offering Uttarakhandi cuisine are emerging. Additionally, NRIs and Uttarakhandi diaspora abroad present a niche but loyal market for frozen or dry-mix versions of these heritage foods. Institutional demand is also expected from eco-resorts, homestays, and boutique restaurants in hill stations that are keen to showcase local menus.

Despite the potential, challenges include market unfamiliarity outside the Himalayan belt, low consumer awareness, and limited availability of shelf-stable formats. Many potential buyers may not know how to prepare Sidku or may hesitate to try chutneys with unconventional ingredients like hemp seeds. Overcoming this requires effective packaging, instructional content (videos, QR-code-based recipes), and free tastings in food exhibitions and cultural fairs.

Market issues may also include sourcing quality hemp seeds (due to legal sensitivities), establishing cold-chain logistics for frozen dough products, and competition from mass-produced spice mixes. Branding must emphasize traditional, artisanal, and locally sourced

attributes while adhering to food labeling and FSSAI guidelines. Partnering with rural tourism boards and wellness centers can enhance trust and visibility.

7. Raw Material and Infrastructure

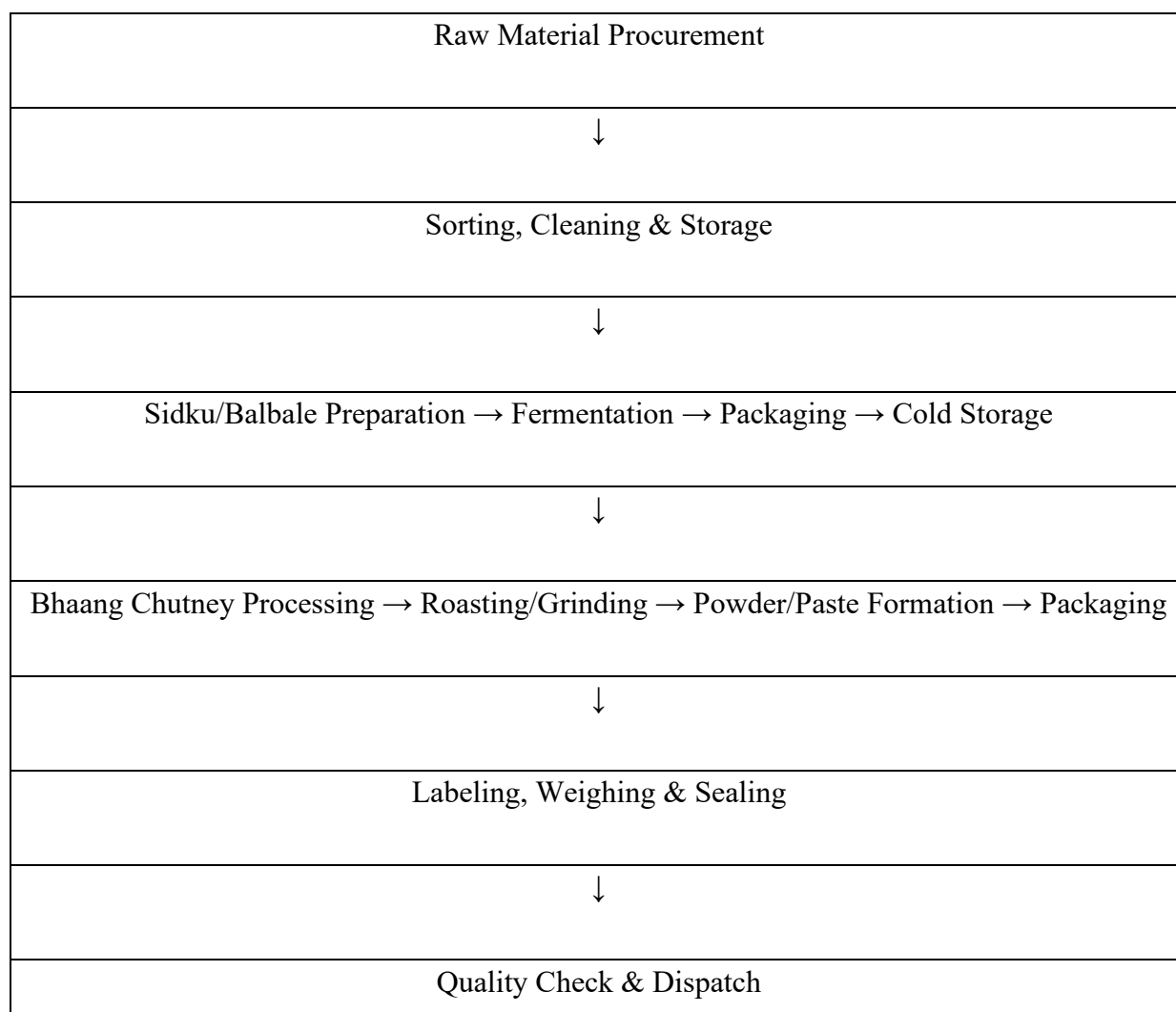
Key raw materials include wheat flour, whole spices (cumin, coriander), garlic, ghee, hemp seeds, lemons, and fermentation cultures. These can be sourced locally through farmer cooperatives and SHGs in districts like Tehri, Chamoli, and Uttarkashi. Hemp seeds must be procured from licensed vendors or NGOs working in regulated cultivation zones of Uttarakhand. Quality control and moisture content testing is essential for chutney powder and dough mix ingredients.

Infrastructure requirements include a 500–800 sq. ft. facility with separate sections for raw material storage, dough mixing, steaming, chutney grinding, drying, packaging, labeling, and cold storage. A solar dryer or hybrid moisture extractor will be needed for chutney powder, along with commercial dough kneaders and fermenting cabinets. FSSAI-approved hygienic processing standards must be implemented, including clean water access, food-safe surfaces, and air ventilation systems.

Packaging materials such as biodegradable pouches, PET jars, glass bottles, and printed labels must be sourced from reliable suppliers. Cold storage or freezers will be needed if frozen Sidku rolls are produced. The unit can be housed in a semi-permanent structure near a village cluster or tourist route to facilitate both supply and local employment.

8. Operational Flow and Flow Chart

The operational workflow for the unit includes multiple parallel activities for the Sidku/Balbale mix and the Bhaang chutney. All processes must follow hygiene and temperature-controlled standards. A simplified flow chart is provided below:



Each activity will have standard operating procedures (SOPs) to ensure quality control. A team of 5–6 staff members can manage daily operations in batches. Record-keeping and batch labeling must be practiced for traceability and inventory control.

9. Target Beneficiaries

The project primarily targets rural youth, women's self-help groups (SHGs), and traditional cooks/artisans in Garhwal and Kumaon regions. Special focus will be given to women entrepreneurs with existing culinary experience or traditional knowledge of local recipes. This unit will enhance income opportunities by formalizing traditional skillsets into viable business models.

The initiative also benefits small-scale farmers producing wheat, garlic, and spices, who can find a stable local market. Hemp growers operating under licensed frameworks can also be

integrated into the supply chain. Local packaging vendors, transporters, and artisans (for handmade containers or labels) will benefit as well.

Secondary beneficiaries include customers—urban consumers, homestay tourists, and ethnic food lovers—who gain access to safe, authentic, ready-to-eat pahadi food. Over time, culinary training centers and heritage food researchers can also be integrated for recipe development and food tourism linkages.

10. Suitable Locations

The unit is best suited for districts with strong culinary heritage, proximity to hemp growing belts, and access to tourism flows. Recommended locations include:

- **Tehri Garhwal:** Abundant in wheat, traditional cooks, and near tourist hotspots like Kanatal and Dhanaulti.
- **Rudraprayag:** Access to rural workforce and connectivity to Kedarnath route.
- **Almora and Bageshwar:** Known for food traditions and suitable for Bhaang cultivation.
- **Pithoragarh:** Border tourism potential and cultural food practices.
- **Chamoli:** High in natural ingredients, festivals, and traditional food usage.

These regions also have better access to local markets, government support under ODOP schemes, and NGOs working in food-based livelihoods. Availability of clean water, road access, and community participation should guide final site selection.

11. Manpower Requirement

A micro-processing unit of this nature requires a combination of skilled, semi-skilled, and administrative staff. The operations can be managed with a lean team of 6–8 individuals, including production workers, quality supervisors, packaging staff, and marketing assistants. Women from SHGs or local communities with experience in traditional cooking can be trained for product consistency and hygiene standards.

The core team will include one production supervisor with a background in food processing or hospitality, two cooks/artisans trained in traditional recipe handling, two packaging and labeling assistants, one sales or delivery coordinator, and one part-time accountant or MIS

manager. Seasonal labor may also be employed during festivals or bulk order seasons. With growing demand, the staff can be scaled and divided across shifts.

Skill development training must be provided to ensure workers understand food safety, fermentation protocols, contamination risks, and machine usage. Partnership with FICCI, SFAC, and the Uttarakhand Skill Development Mission (UKSDM) will ensure a continuous pipeline of trained manpower. Hiring from the local community also ensures lower attrition and better alignment with cultural knowledge.

12. Implementation Schedule

The implementation of the unit can be completed within a 6-month period if planning and fund mobilization are streamlined. Below is a tentative schedule:

Activity	Timeframe
Detailed Project Report & Land Identification	Month 1
Licensing, Registrations & FSSAI Compliance	Month 1–2
Machinery Procurement & Site Setup	Month 2–3
Raw Material Linkages & Vendor Finalization	Month 3
Staff Hiring & Training	Month 3–4
Trial Production & Quality Testing	Month 4
Packaging Design & Branding	Month 4–5
Market Testing & Initial Sales	Month 5–6
Full Production Launch	End of Month 6

Proper scheduling will depend on access to finance, vendor timelines, and local administrative clearances. Backward and forward linkages must be initiated parallelly to save time.

13. Estimated Project Cost

Below is an indicative cost structure for setting up the unit at a small scale:

Heads	Amount (INR)
Building modification (700 sq. ft.)	3,00,000
Machinery & equipment	5,50,000
Raw material (initial batch)	1,00,000
Packaging materials	75,000
Branding and design	50,000
Licensing, training, documentation	50,000
Working capital (3 months)	2,00,000
Miscellaneous and contingency	75,000
Total Estimated Cost	13,00,000

Cost may vary depending on location, scale of automation, and packaging quality. Frozen storage options may increase the overall investment.

14. Means of Finance

The project can be financed through a combination of government subsidies, own contribution, and institutional loans. A suggested financing structure is as follows:

Source	Amount (INR)
Promoter's Equity (10–15%)	2,00,000
Bank Loan (under MUDRA/PMFME)	8,00,000

Source	Amount (INR)
Grant/Capital Subsidy (PMFME/DUY)	3,00,000
Total	13,00,000

Application under the PMFME scheme may provide 35% capital subsidy for SHGs and individuals. Institutions such as NABARD or SIDBI may also offer low-interest loans under food/agri processing schemes.

15. Revenue Streams

The unit will earn revenue through the following primary sources:

1. **Sales of Sidku/Balbale mix (retail & wholesale)** – in dry mix or frozen formats.
2. **Sales of Bhaang chutney (powder and paste)** – packaged in 50g/100g jars and sachets.
3. **Customized gift hampers and festival packs** – especially for Diwali, Makar Sankranti, and local festivals.
4. **B2B sales to restaurants and homestays** – bulk packages or subscription models.
5. **Online sales via e-commerce platforms and food aggregators** – targeting metro consumers.

Secondary income may also arise from culinary workshops, tasting events, and collaborative launches with tourism departments.

16. Profitability Streams

Given the premium pricing of traditional artisanal food products, the margins on chutney and dough mix can range between 35% to 60%. Direct-to-consumer sales (through exhibitions, local stores, and online platforms) will yield the highest margins, while institutional supply (hotels/homestays) will support consistent bulk orders.

Seasonal sales during tourism peaks and festivals can contribute significantly to profitability. Exclusive festival packaging, regional branding, and health-based positioning (e.g., no preservatives, high-protein chutney) will allow pricing leverage. As the brand gains traction,

value-added offerings and limited-edition chutneys or snack combos can boost average order value.

Efficient inventory management and minimal wastage are key to profitability. Local sourcing and low transport costs further contribute to higher profit margins. Once the brand is established, customer loyalty and repeat orders will reduce marketing overheads and increase net profit.

17. Break-even Analysis

An indicative break-even analysis is presented below:

Particulars	Amount (INR)
Fixed Costs/year	5,00,000
Average Contribution Margin	45%
Selling Price per Unit (avg)	120
Variable Cost per Unit	66
Contribution per Unit	54
Break-even Volume (units)	≈ 9,300 units

Thus, selling approximately 9,300 units annually (775 units/month) will allow the enterprise to break even. With expected sales of 1,000+ units/month, profitability can be achieved within the first 12–14 months.

18. Marketing Strategies

The success of this enterprise depends greatly on smart marketing that educates consumers and highlights the product's unique heritage. The marketing strategy will focus on creating a strong regional identity, educating new consumers about Sidku, Balbale, and Bhaang chutney, and positioning the products as artisanal and health-friendly. A multi-channel strategy will be used—combining local outreach, digital presence, and institutional partnerships.

For offline marketing, sampling and sales at local food fairs, organic festivals, and Uttarakhand tourism stalls will be essential. Collaborations with hotels, cafes, and homestays to include these traditional items in their menu can build grassroots demand. Regional packaging with story-based branding—telling the history of the dish and its ingredients—will appeal to conscious consumers.

Online marketing will include building a strong Instagram presence showing behind-the-scenes stories of village kitchens, food preparation, and local farmers. A website with integrated e-commerce capabilities, along with listings on platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, and The North East Store, can help reach wider urban audiences. QR codes on packaging linking to recipes and preparation tips will increase customer engagement. Influencer tie-ups with chefs and local food vloggers will enhance visibility and authenticity.

19. Machinery Required and Vendors in Uttarakhand

The following equipment will be required for the production and packaging process:

Machinery/Equipment	Function	Approx. Cost (INR)
Dough kneading machine (10–15 kg)	For bulk kneading of Sidku/Balbale dough	70,000
Fermentation cabinet	For controlled fermentation	80,000
Steam cooker or idli steamer (multi-tray)	For steaming Sidku/Balbale rolls	60,000
Grinder/blender (commercial)	For chutney paste and powder	45,000
Solar dryer or hybrid moisture extractor	For drying chutney powders	1,00,000
Weighing and sealing machine	For accurate pouch filling and sealing	90,000

Machinery/Equipment	Function	Approx. Cost (INR)
Label printer and shrink wrap system	For packaging	45,000
Deep freezer (optional)	For frozen storage (if required)	60,000

Total Estimated Cost: Approximately ₹5,50,000

Potential Machinery Vendors in Uttarakhand:

- **Himalayan Equipment Suppliers**, Dehradun – Specializes in small food processing machinery for mountain regions.
- **Green Kraft Machines**, Haldwani – Offers custom equipment for village-scale processing.
- **Uttarakhand Food Tech Enterprises**, Rudrapur – Supplies and services solar dryers, paste grinders, and packaging tools.
- **NABARD/MOFPI Empaneled Vendors** – State-level lists available via DIC or MSME department.

20. Environmental Benefits

The unit aligns with environmentally sustainable practices in multiple ways. Firstly, it promotes the use of traditional, locally available ingredients like hemp seeds, garlic, and grains which require less chemical input and water compared to commercial monocultures. The unit discourages synthetic preservatives and encourages biodegradable, recyclable, or reusable packaging solutions. The use of solar dryers and local biomass steamers further reduces energy consumption.

Moreover, supporting native food systems ensures the conservation of seed varieties, culinary biodiversity, and mountain agro-ecological knowledge. Integrating village women and SHGs into production cycles leads to less migration, encouraging local economic resilience with low

environmental impact. Sourcing raw materials locally also reduces carbon footprint through minimized transportation.

Finally, by promoting healthier dietary habits based on traditional, seasonal, and fermented foods, the venture contributes indirectly to public health and reduced food waste. The adoption of eco-friendly infrastructure (rainwater harvesting, low-energy lighting) can make the unit a model of green enterprise for rural Uttarakhand.

21. Future Opportunities

As the brand matures, several opportunities can be pursued. First, the enterprise can expand its product line to include other pahadi foods like jhangora laddoos, mandua-based snacks, jakhiya chutney, or festival-specific sweets. Second, the brand can launch “Traditional Pahadi Meal Kits” with pre-measured ingredients and preparation guides to appeal to urban and diaspora consumers.

There is also scope for backward integration by supporting farmers to grow specific spices and herbs organically for consistent supply. Forward integration may involve establishing a dedicated pahadi café, culinary workshops for tourists, or food trucks during religious yatras and fairs. Partnering with culinary influencers, GI tagging of Sidku/Balbale, and export to NRIs via Indian food aggregators will open global markets.

In the long term, this venture can become a cooperative or FPO-led brand that supports 100+ livelihoods, represents Uttarakhand’s culinary identity nationally, and contributes to the Himalayan food heritage economy. Documentation, storytelling, and research partnerships with food historians and universities can preserve knowledge for future generations.

Disclaimer

Only a few machine manufacturers are mentioned in the profile, although many machine manufacturers are available in the market. The addresses given for machinery manufacturers have been taken from reliable sources, to the best of knowledge and contacts. However, no responsibility is admitted, in case any inadvertent error or incorrectness is noticed therein. Further the same have been given by way of information only and do not imply any recommendation.