# EASTERN VANITHA CHEF OF KERALA 2026 CROWNS KERALA'S FINEST HOME COOK

## Over 8,000 Entries from Across Kerala Celebrate the State's Rich Culinary Heritage

**Kochi, October 4, 2026:** Kerala's love for food runs deep. Every district has its own flavours, every family its treasured recipes, and every kitchen a story waiting to be told.

Celebrating these stories and the people behind them, Eastern and Vanitha came together to present **Eastern Vanitha Chef of Kerala 2026**, one of the largest culinary talent hunts ever conducted in the state. The initiative concluded with a spectacular Grand Finale at Lulu Mall, Kochi, where **Shamla Ummer from Thrissur** was crowned **Eastern Vanitha Chef of Kerala 2026**, emerging as the winner from thousands of participants across the state.

More than **8,000 home cooks and food enthusiasts from all 14 districts of Kerala** participated in the competition, showcasing recipes that reflected the diversity, authenticity and rich culinary traditions of Kerala.

After multiple rounds of evaluation, 60 participants advanced to the zonal semi-finals held across Kozhikode, Palakkad, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram before 15 finalists competed for the coveted title at the Grand Finale.

### A CELEBRATION OF KERALA'S FOOD CULTURE

From age-old family recipes handed down through generations to unique regional specialities seldom seen outside local communities, the competition became a vibrant showcase of Kerala's culinary heritage.

Participants were challenged to prepare a traditional sweet dish along with a vegetarian or non-vegetarian curry inspired by Kerala's local food traditions. The result was a remarkable display of creativity, authenticity and passion for cooking.

The competition brought together participants from different age groups, professions and backgrounds, all united by a common love for food. For many contestants, the event was not just a contest but an opportunity to share family traditions, preserve local recipes and celebrate the cultural identity embedded in Kerala cuisine.

Across the four zonal events and the Grand Finale, audiences witnessed dishes that reflected the diversity of Kerala's food landscape, from Malabar and Central Kerala to Travancore and the southern districts.

For Eastern, the initiative was a natural extension of its long-standing relationship with Kerala households. For more than four decades, Eastern has been part of millions of kitchens across Kerala, accompanying families through everyday meals, festive celebrations and special occasions. Through Eastern Vanitha Chef of Kerala 2026, the brand sought to celebrate the people who keep these traditions alive.

One of the highlights of Eastern Vanitha Chef of Kerala 2026 was the presence and support of some of Kerala's most respected culinary personalities. Throughout the competition, participants had the opportunity to showcase their skills before distinguished chefs and food experts who brought deep knowledge, experience and passion for Kerala cuisine. The Grand Finale jury included Chef Suresh Pillai, Chef Regi Mathew, Chef Rasheed, culinary expert Lakshmi Nair and Chef Vishnu V. Nair, Executive Chef, Eastern. Beyond judging the dishes, the panel actively encouraged contestants, appreciated the stories behind their recipes and celebrated the culinary traditions that make Kerala's food culture so unique. Their presence added immense credibility and inspiration to the competition while reaffirming the importance of preserving Kerala's rich food heritage

Speaking about the initiative, Girish Nair, Chief Executive Officer, Eastern, said:

*"Food is one of the strongest expressions of Kerala's identity. Across our state, every family has recipes that have been cherished, refined and passed down through generations. Through Eastern Vanitha Chef of Kerala, we wanted to celebrate these traditions and create a platform for the talented home cooks who keep them alive."*

*"The response has been truly overwhelming. More than 8,000 entries from across Kerala reaffirm that our food heritage remains vibrant and deeply valued. What inspired us most were the stories behind the dishes, stories of mothers, grandmothers, family gatherings, festivals and local traditions. These are the stories that define Kerala, and we are proud that Eastern could play a small role in bringing them to the forefront."*

*"For over four decades, Eastern has been part of Kerala kitchens and family meals. This initiative was our way of celebrating the people behind those kitchens, the passion they bring to cooking, and the rich culinary legacy that continues to unite Malayalees everywhere. We congratulate all the participants and winners who made this journey so memorable."*