# FOOD SOUTH S

A typical food-filled day during

Durga Puja

NAVRATRI Those Nine days of Zillion Hopess

How to have A COVID SAFE DIWALI

Decoding Chef's Style
Kunal Kapur







# We do all things food!

Foodism works to empower home-cooks by providing them a range of services that allows them a range of services that allows them to do what they do best - cook up a strom! We use our multi-platform expertise, and rapidy expanding reach to help your recipes find a place of pride on the plates of all who love good food. Get featured in our magazine, share your recipes on our platform, or leverage our digital outreach and e-shop to promote your products. We are passionate about food, and if you are too, Foodism is the perfect playground, or shall we say 'kitchen' for you!





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# foodism "if it's food, it's foodism"

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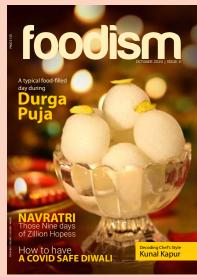


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# FOUNDER'S

Dear Food-fanatics,

October is a symphony of longevity and alteration. In fact, given the current predicament of the world, almost everything seems to be a concerto of permanence coupled with change. On one hand, we have two major festivals knocking at our doors, waiting desperately to be welcomed with open arms while on the other, we are being expected to practice self-isolation and be wary of each other. Nevertheless, human life is a perpetual cycle of tragedy followed by hope...followed by tragedy...followed by more HOPE!

By now you already apprehend Foodism to be the quintessence of the human love for sunshine and vigor—of well-being and health. And we are determined to continue choosing optimism over

despair. For all the love you have shown us in the past few months, we are grateful and look forward to more. Upholding the food and happiness principles of Navratri and Diwali, we bring forth this month's festive issue—taking forward the conversation and enthusiasm for food in all its beautiful, delicious textures and flavors. Foodism plans to keep supplying you with more amazing content with every issue and via every other social platform viable. Our newly updated website with many more exciting features shall soon be at your disposal—and we know you will love it! With our perseverant team efforts, we plan to keep winning over you until you merge completely into us like sugar in your favorite lemonade!

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# Garba

# A Grab-Worthy Workout



o most non-Indians, it is a surprise that almost all Indian films have song and dance as their vital features. But wait, take a look at the numerous diverse communities of the country and you would find our colorful films to be making perfect sense. Song and dance are not in our movies by accident. Every Indian state, every community have their distinct dance and song that are performed during festivities and at other special occasions and family functions. And this is perhaps the best way families and communities come together as one in our country. "Garba", the traditional folk dance of Gujarat is also widely performed in various other states of India, especially during the Navratri season. One naturally associates Garba with high energy, colorful costumes, and lots of fun and laughter. With its traditional origins, Garba stands guite strong on the global performance platforms today

as it has carved its niche in modern choreography.

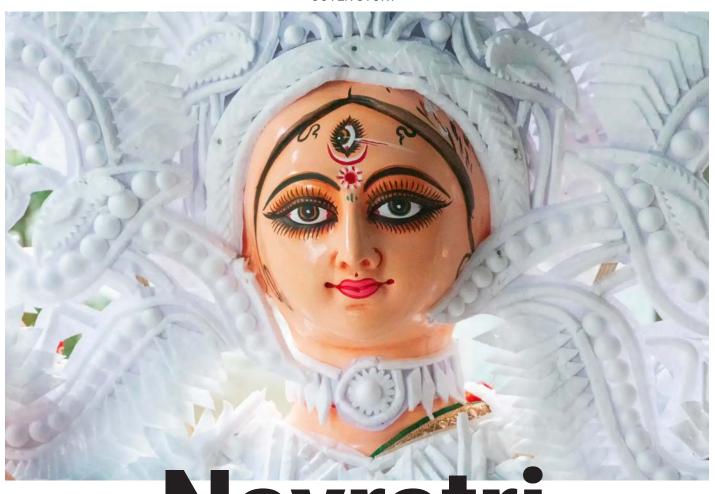
Yet, the dance form has managed to evolve sans any damage done to its customary roots. If a lot of health and fitness experts are to be believed, apart from being a "wonder-folk-dance", Garba also passes summa cum laude for a "wonder-workout". Those happy men, women, and children dancing and clapping in circles are burning tons of calories without even feeling any drudgery one associates with standard physical exercise such as jogging or walking on the treadmill. The jumps, the twists, the squats, the waves, and the beautiful twirls make the grab-worthy Garba a "must-workout"—meant for all. How likely are we to find so much variation in the common physical exercises?! No wonder most people feel depressed at the idea of hitting the gym!



Many societies begin prepping for the Navratri season performances much in advance and it is common for people to report having successfully gone down on both the weighing scale and the inch-tape without even realizing the effort that went into it. Garba is indeed the full-body workout

that you plan all the time but hardly find time to actually do. It naturally augments blood circulation, and strengthens the dormant muscles-gifting your body the much needed agility. Since Garba is bodily challenging, it improves blood circulation and bestows upon one higher stamina. Is not this delightful? Well, who would not like to fit into their old jeans via this fitness route?! Also, we must not ignore that this non-stop cardio is done in a spirit of devotion to the almighty-in a kind of thankfulness to the higher forces, which is why one seldom minds the workout. In fact, even the grandma and grandpa you take to be the most immobile members of the house owing to their sickness and other age-linked factors, can be seen happily dancing in circles, clapping, and singing songs emanating a kind

of exhilaration one relates only with childhood. But mind it, despite the various benefits this magical dance form brings to you, it can also be silently draining you of energy, so dance on and munch on!



# Navratri

Those Nine Days of Zillion Hopes

very festival in the country has a legend to go by and all our folklore leads us to understanding one basic tenet: the victory of good over evil. The hope that Navratri brings us goes beyond the nine nights of celebrations and fun-filled happenings. Going by the book, we have four Navratris in a year, but "Sharad Navratri" is celebrated in Sept-Oct every year, is the one that gets to be most widely enjoyed and celebrated in the entire country. People from different regions of India relate to the festival in their own community-based traditional ways. While some fast in devotion to Durga, others celebrate her by filling the air

with vibrant energy of their devotional song and dance. This festival of lights and colors is also a celebration of the undaunted female spirit as in these nine days we honor the various forms of Goddess *Durga* and her conquest of *Mahishasura*, the *asura*. In millennial lingo, it is indeed a celebration of the powerful boss-lady who manages to beat the shit out a nasty demon!

Each day of the Navratri is symbolized by a different color and for the devotees of *Maa Durga*, it is common to adorn clothes confirming with the color of the day. Amongst the many interesting parables

associated with Navratri, the one that gets most attention is that Lord Rama revered all the nine forms of Durga before he waged a war against Ravana, and as we know it, what a feat! Thus, Rama's victory symbolizes the strength of the female spirit. In this celebration of the feminine god, it is common for Indian families to invite to their homes nine girls, who have not yet attained puberty, to be offered food and other good things—to be honored and worshipped by the family. Different communities have different names for this ritual of revering the female prowess.

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Apart from the traditional wisdom that Navratri embodies, like Diwali. Navratri is also a lot about getting dressed, eating great, dancing, meeting family and friends, and just feeling more alive. It is a festival for anyone and everyone who wants an instant boost of energy. In urban India, people look forward to the nine days as it is their social time—the time for family, friends, and togetherness. People become friends at garba-dandiya parties and young lovers await the festival to get time away from their families. Foodies, like always, have only food on their minds when they think of the festival. From all sorts of decadent sweets to spicy, crunchy snacks, the Navratri platter is a foodie's delight. Even those who fast on all nine days have some amazing falahar options available to them-that can be enjoyed by both the fasting and nonfasting brigades of the family. Many families follow a ritual of performing a daily pooja in the morning and singing aartis in praise of the goddess in the evenings. But irrespective of whatever else is going on in the house and outside of it, food is all over the place. And giving in to high public demand, even the good old Navratri snacks offer an assortment of different versions of the same thing nowadays. Gone are the days when one could only think of standard Navaratri snacks such as saboodana papad and khichdi; each and every food item is now available in its fusion versions as well-giving the entire Navratri food story an interesting twist. Right from sabudaana bhel to falahari-Mexicanpaneer to samak ki tikkis to khatta meetha pumpkin, the Navratri platter is a reflection of the transitional urban Indian landscape, where we see an amalgamation of tradition with westernization. So, a McNavratri burger for you? Ohh yes! Top it with some cheese, saboodana, and fries! Could you also get Enrique to sing us pankhida? Will you, please?!

# SIMPLE SAGO'S SAGA

Sago is to our exquisite Navratri fare what SRK is to DDLJ and Kate Winslet to Titanic. Yes, exactly, the main lead of the film. The simple "sago" or "tapioca"—our friendly neighborhood saboodana is one traditional comfort food that's not only synonymous with Navratri snacking but also a great dose of health. In different regions of the country this humble yet goodness-packed snack is eaten in varying forms; the commonest of its avatars being saboodana vada, papad, kheer, and khichdi. In fact, in several Indian homes saboodana is a standard breakfast item while in numerous others it is eaten only on fasting days (or Navratri). Interviewing many people on their preferred saboodana recipe, team Foodism has been led to believe that saboodana vada or saboodana pakodi (as some may like to call it), is the most loved amongst all. When soaked tapioca is mixed into mashed boiled-potatoes and peanuts, sprinkled with various spices, and then garnished with some finely chopped coriander leaves and green chilies-to be finally fried (shallow/deep) in those old-style kadhais. the environment is filled with a delectable aroma. But there is a lot more to tapioca than its taste: the humble-looking snack is actually great for maintaining hormonal balance in women and has amazing health benefits for everyone, irrespective of their age and gender. So, what are you waiting for? Go ahead...tap into the goodness of tapioca!











# Navratri Nostalgia Amidst Covid19 Blues

ell, when was the last time you went to play dandiya with friends and family and were cautioned to maintain physical distance, wear a face-mask, and frequently sanitize your hands? Who could have ever anticipated that a lethal virus would dampen our moods during the festive season? But worry not! Despite the various precincts and uncertainties, the Navratri season is not to be wasted in a broody, gloomy mood. It is time you reminisce and celebrate the spirit of Navratri even more. Why? Because in tough times you need more hope. How? Well, dig into your phone folders and old family photo-albums and celebrate! Take a look at your happy and colorful Navratri pictures of dance and delicious food and make this Navratri a special one. Because...there is a lot that can still be done to feel festive and vibrant.

In this special festive issue of ours, we, from the land of Foodism, have gone an extra mile to bring that smile back to your faces by featuring some real people, with real Navratri nostalgia—and realistic plans to feel happy—no matter what! These ardent devotees in the temple of Foodism have their Navratri spirits undaunted. There are and will always be some that refuse to give up...... (see, aren't you already humming that song!).

# **Lipi Bhavesh** 24, Female, and a Proud

### Amdavadi

Currently finishing her master's in Urban Planning and Design at Monash University, Australia, Lipi is someone to look up to this Navratri season. Despite her very busy schedule with online classes and assignments, and the obligatory social isolation rules imposed in her current country of residence, Lipi still managed to dig into her old Navratri photographs and memories to get into the festive mood. She has decided to order her favorite celebratory tidbits, shrikhand-Puri, khandvi, sandwich dhokla, to satisfy her crazy cravings this Navratri. Yes, yes, she has a Gujarati home-chef living right in her building in Australia—and those guys always come in handy. Don't they?

### Ritika Pradhan

# 31, Female, from Jaipur, Rajasthan

Mostly busy with reading books and book-keeping for others, CA Ritika Pradhan, lets her hair down every Navratri. She cannot come to terms with how her favorite festival has been jeopardized by Covid19. But Ritika is determined to do some things to revive her mood. The raas may be missing but she has plans for a house-party with family and is also raring to go for those long drives with her bevy of girls! A colorful combo of ethnic skirt and top is her alternative to chaniya-choli this festive season.

# Mihika Sarabhai

22, Female, from Delhi Currently finishing her graduate degree in engineering, Mihika admits she is experiencing major blues just thinking Navratri 2020 will be more of a miss (at least in the traditional sense). She says she cannot even imagine how dull it will be without the lights, drums, and that magical masti she had with her college friends last Navratri. And since most of her friends are not even in town now, she has plans for group video calls-wherein all friends will snack and drink together, socializing virtually. Mihika is also going to make sure she learns to cook some festive dishes with her mother-for which she never had time until the pandemic. Blessing in disquise!

# Kanishk Madaan

# 25, Male, from Udaipur, Rajasthan

A retail banker by profession, Kanishk Madaan is one of those bright young people who believe in the strength of the human spirit above everything else. To him, the virus is too small to disturb his mood this festive season. Kanishk and his group of 4-5 friends are going to be attending a close knit garba party organized in their society and are resolute to have fun no matter what! He believes festive season calls for a break from the routine—and break free he shall! Kanishk also cooks some amazing festive snacks and will feed his favorite saboodaana vada and fusion burger to his cousins and friends.

# Durga Puja

# A tradition of emotion and creativity

aa Durga's 10-day sojourn, is a time to allow the spirit to connect with the divine through rituals and immerse in various celebrations. Every year, Devi's abode is built at various places following traditional principles despite imbibing modern themes. Durga Puja or Durgotsava is celebrated for 9 nights and on the 10th day culminates into Dusshera.

An age-old tradition of Hinduism finds mention in a manuscript from the 14th century where guidelines for Durga puja have been mentioned. The prominence of the festival multiplied manifold during the British Rule. Over the years, Durga puja

has become an inseparable part of the Indian culture with innumerable people celebrating this festival in their unique way, but stringently adhering to traditions.

This festival celebrates the victory of good over evil as on this day goddess Durga killed the demon Mahishasura. Durga Puja is celebrated across India, but in West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Manipur, Meghalaya, and Jharkhand, festivities have a distinctive flavour. Apart from eastern India, this festival is also welcomed and celebrated in other parts of the country including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.



# **Pandal Hopping**

During the Durga Puja, joy is spread in every nook and corner, various illuminated lanes lead to big and small pandals that are nerve centers of the festival. These pandals are the outcome of both intensive and extensive planning, designing, and budgeting. The beauty is that amidst the impact of modern times, including the setting up of "Theme Pandals" the main structure housing Devi's pratima follows the traditional principles. To add on to the charm is traditional music including Rabindra Sangeet. Pandals are also a haven for a foodie and offer everything from Chinese to Mughlai. But obvious choice are kochuri, kabiraji, green mango lassi, fish cutlets, and mishti doi.

# Shashti Puja

Visiting a pandal on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of Durga Puja is crucial as the main idol's eyes are painted on the day. It symbolizes the infusing of life in the idol Also known as Bodhon, this day sees the unveiling of the idol's face.

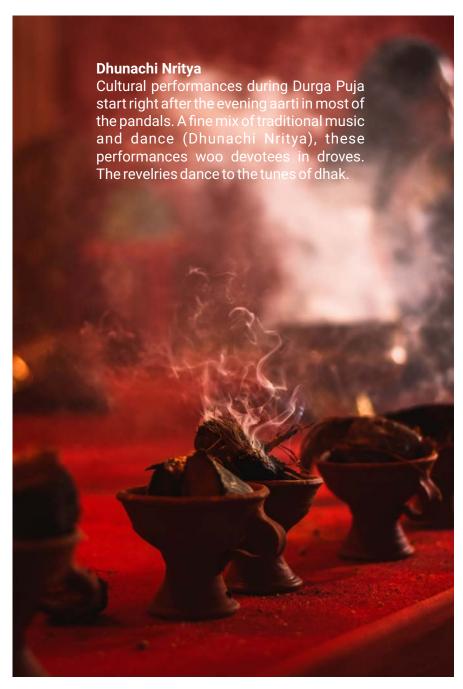
# Sindur Khela

Dashami, the last day of Durga Puja celebrations, bring in the fervour of 'Sindur Khela.' Once the evening aarti ends, this ceremony sees married women

smear the main idol and each other with vermillion. Sweets are also distributed.

# **Bonedi Bari Pujas**

Parallel to this vibrant world are Bonedi Bari Pujas, which are celebrations at homes of aristocratic and eminent families that have an existence even before Calcutta was formed. Come Durga Puja, families from all over the world congregate to welcome the goddess and be part of rituals. The goddess is placed against Chal Chitra (decorated semi-circle background) and family-specific traditions take place.





Here are 6 Bonedi Bari Durga Puja celebrations you cannot miss in Kolkata:

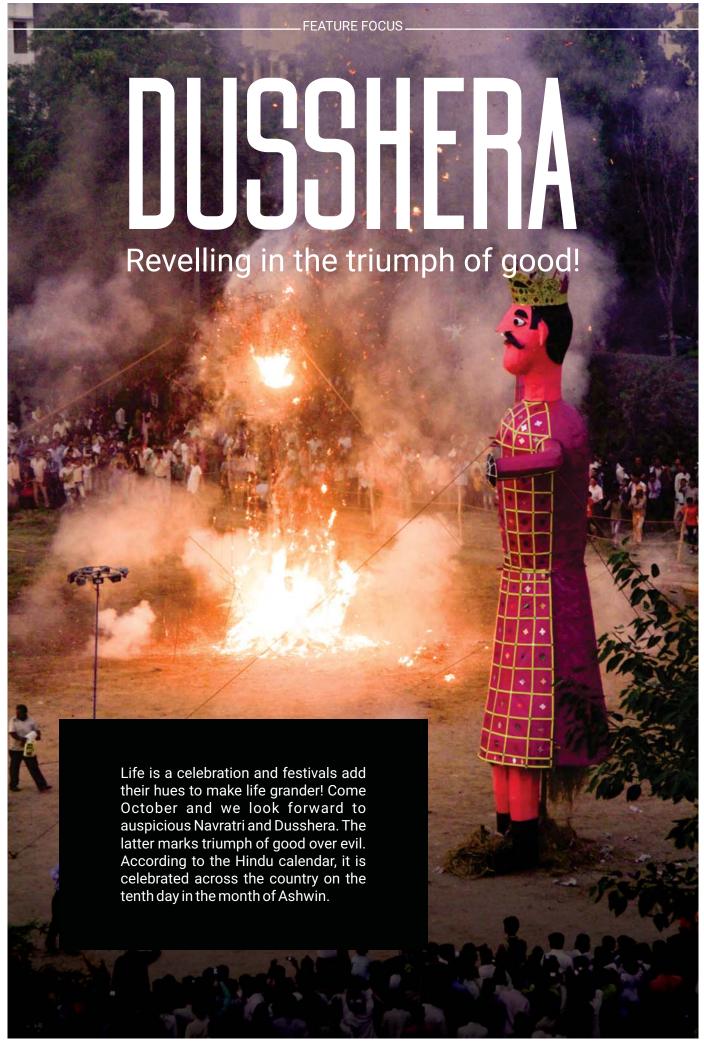
- Sabarna Roy Choudhury Family: Located in Barisha, the family puja "Atchala Pujo" dates back to 1610 AD. It is from this family the English East India Company acquired the three villages of Sutanuti, Govindapur, and Kalkata in the 17th century, to later consolidate it into Calcutta (now Kolkata).
- Raja Nabakrishna Deb Family: Shobha Bazar Rajbari is a century old and one of the grandest Bari puja. It is celebrated at two places Chhoto Rajbari and Boro Rajbari. A distinctive feature of the idol is the lion that the goddess' mounts on, has a face of a horse. The rajbari comprises two households of Raja Naba Krishna Deb, a zamindar (landowner). History states that Deb was a supporter of the British East India Company and Robert Clive and company gathered to celebrate the victory in the Battle of Plassey, at his Durga Puja.
- Dwarka Nath Dutta family: Started in 1855 by Dwarka Nath Dutta, this bari is among few places where Maa Durga is worshipped in the Vaishnava style. It's a ritual in the families that all the married daughters and daughters-in-law are gifted a gold nose ring and the silver anklet to be worn during the puja. It is also worth mentioning that the bari has the Hara-Gouri or Shiva-Durga idol. In this, Goddess Durga is seen seated on Lord Shiva's lap.
- Durgacharan Mitra family: Started by businessman Durgacharan Mitra, the puja at Nilmani Mitra Bari was known for its ancient tradition of flying two Neel Kanth birds (Indian Roller Bird) in opposite direction after the immersion of the Durga idol. This ritual was discontinued after the introduction of the Wildlife Preservation Act 1972. The goddess at this more than 200-year-old puja is worshipped with aparajita flowers.
- Rani Rashmoni Family: Located in Janbazar in Central Kolkata, is the home of Rani Rashmoni built in the 19th century. She founded the Dakshineswar Kali Temple. After her death, the Pujo has been continued by the families of her daughters. This bari has the only idol where the goddess is painted in a shade of orange.
- Purnendu Chandra Dhar Family: The puja of Purnendu Chandra Dhar's family is almost 157 years old. This Vaishnav household at Debendra Mullick Road (North Kolkata) does not worship Maa Durga in her demon-slaying pose. Instead, she is worshipped here as Abhaya Ma. The idol has two hands and at her feet are two seated lions. Maa is surrounded by her children.

# Farewell to goddess

This year, the celebrations are bound to be a low-key affair due to the corona pandemic. The festivities will go virtual and on Facebook live with limited people at Pandal keeping in mind the social distancing norm. However, whether the celebrations are limited or extravagant, Durga Puja is a festival where rituals and traditions merge with creativity and present larger than life impression for one and all to take a plunge in festivities. But as celebrations come to an end and people bid adieu to the goddess with hope "Aasche Bochor Abar Hobe" (It will happen again next year)



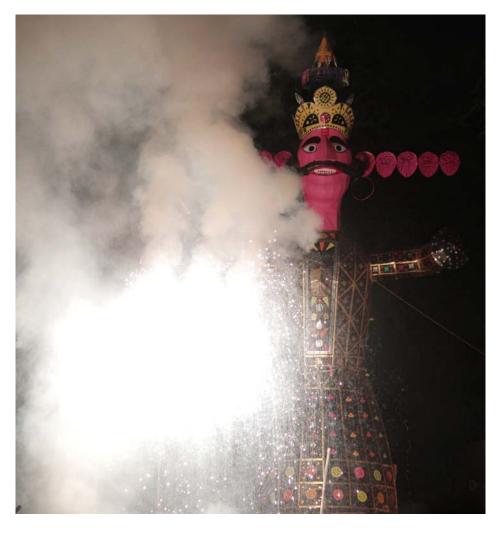




eople consider this day auspicious to buy a new house or vehicle or to begin anything new. The word 'Dusshera' has two words - Duss and hera, where 'Duss' signifies the ten evils and 'hera' means to remove. As per the popular legend, Dusshera is celebrated on the day when Lord Rama killed Rayana and won the battle. However, as per another legend, it was on this day, Goddess Durga killed the demon Mahisasur to bring peace on the earth, after fighting him for nine nights(Navratri).

Regional diversity adds glitter to Dusshera celebrations. In the East, **Durga Puja** is a massive affair, where pandals are set and an effigy of a goddess is placed. People offer prayers and participate in cultural activities. In Gujarat, **Dandiya Raas** is a traditional dance played by men and women with short sticks. It

is nicknamed 'the sword dance' because this dance form is a mock-staging of the battle between Mahisasur and Durga. While in Northern India and Maharashtra, Ramlila is a part of celebrations where people enact Ramayana. On the last and



final day of Dusshera, tall effigies of Ravana, his son Meghnad and brother Kumbhkaran are burned. The fireworks symbolize the quelling of darkness by light. On the other hand, the Gondi people, an Adivasi community, celebrate Ravana by carrying

> an image of him riding an elephant and singing praises about him, as they consider the demon king as their ancestor.



Festivities without food? Naah, not possible. To churn the taste buds, a lot of delicacies have that Dusshera connect. In Gujarat, it is known that people make a beeline before shops, a night before, to timely savour their favourite delicacy fafda jalebi. While in Maharashtra, people eat Kadakani (sweet poori). In the southern part of country, yeriyeppa, payasam and kosambari are prepared. Another tradition is to eat Paan – a symbol of prosperity and happiness.







POTTERY · FURNITURE · LIGHTS

# A TINY MISTAKE

Handcrafted Stories, for your Home.

# THE DOLCE PROJECT

# Bringing More Flavours to Udaipur!

I would insist that everyone who is passionate, and wants to make pastry a career, to just take the plunge and keep practicing. Every chef, no matter how experienced, has bad days in the kitchen. The key is to not let that bring you down."

...sensible counsel from a home baker creating ripples in the city of lakes!

ood has always been an integral part of the family life of Pratiksha Khurana of 'The Dolce Project'. Alike all young children she's also been exposed to food as she observed her mother whip up yummy delicacies for the family and the attention she garnered for all the love and effort she put into every meal. This perhaps was where Pratiksha's love for food stemmed from. Her

curiosity prompted her to learn about different cultures and their cuisines especially desserts. She aspires to "Take my customers on an all-encapsulating sensory experience through my brand; as it is their reactions and feedback that drive me to keep creating!"

Armed with this desire she embarked on a Summer Course in Baking from IHM Dadar-Mumbai followed by an internship; thereafter progressing towards a Diploma from the Lavonne Academy of Baking Science and Pastry Arts, Bengaluru.

The past five years which have not been smooth but definitely been beautiful have helped Pratiksha discover new recipes as well as herself and her brand 'The Dolce Project'.



Pratiksha Khurana, Udaipur

When she started two years back, it took a lot of trial and error for her to understand the market. But as she had done her course from Bengaluru and got her experience from Mumbai, she was bursting with creative ideas on which she wanted to work. So she initially started with few tea cakes and pies in mind that she knew would be unique in the Udaipur market; albeit she was determined to offer flavours apart from the standard variants of red velvet, pineapple and chocolate truffle. Pratiksha continued to do her research and experimentation and kept adding products to her repertoire which today offers vegan banana bread, carrot cake, banoffee pie and cold set cheesecakes.



Despite her panache for working with seasonal produce one thing that Pratiksha absolutely loves to prepare is tea-cake. Elaborating on the why factor she shares "Tea-cakes are simple, light on the palette yet big on flavour. Moreover the flavours and combination



options are galore. While cakes are reserved for special occasions; tea cakes are evergreen. Who doesn't love a light slice of cake with their tea/coffee? And why should we wait for an occasion to treat our taste buds to something yummy?"

Understanding that food is subjective, and everyone has a different taste and preference; Pratiksha through 'The Dolce Project' maintains a one-on-one



relationship with all her customers and ensures that she customizes their orders based on their dietary restrictions. So when it comes to her diabetic patrons she replaces sugar with healthy substitutes like dates, organic jaggery powder and honey; and also has on offer sugar-free desserts using artificial sweeteners. Her bestsellers in the healthy segment comprises - keto cheesecakes, gluten-free tea cakes, quinoa and almond flour bread (gluten -free), vegan cupcakes and tea cakes.

The festive season plans for 'The Dolce Project' focuses on providing a wide range of products in terms of flavour preferences and budget options. The objective is to ensure that there is something for everyone and that the packaging is appealing from every perspective. Pratiksha is keen to "incorporate a plethora of Indian flavours with a contemporary twist to offer a refreshing change from the age-old

Mithais, but is still festive enough for gifting to loved ones. I'm visualising an amalgamation of familiarity and adventure for your taste buds!" sounds exciting doesn't it!

Pratiksha's future plans include bringing in to the city of lakes new flavours that are doing really well abroad and in metropolitan cities but which many local patisseries are not experimenting with. On her wish list is setting up her own baking studio, which

"will be the hotbed for culinary innovation, where I can create and curate recipes to my heart's desire. I also want to pass down what I've learned to others who are interested in this field, so I hope to be able to conduct classes in my studio."

Pratiksha signs off with "Food, especially desserts has always been a focus and an experience for me ... and I'm always game to trying a new patisserie whether in a city in India or abroad. I make it a point to jot down a list of places and desserts to sample and religiously check them off my bucket list. Nothing makes me happier! I love to experiment with flavours and I get an emotional high by persuading people to try a different flavour. Personally, I know no greater joy than eating something that scintillates all my sensory organs, or seeing the expression of joy on someone's face when they eat something that I have prepared."

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# **Chocolate Chunk Cookie**



Yield: 7Cookies

### **INGREDIENTS**

Butter 50 Grams
Caster Sugar 25 Grams
Brown Sugar 40 Grams
Maida (Refined Flour) 100 Grams
Baking Soda Half Teaspoon
Vanilla Half Teaspoon
Water Half Tablespoon
Oil, One Tablespoon
Chopped Chocolate 50 Grams

# **METHOD**

- 1. Cream the softened butter and sugars in a bowl using a hand mixer.
- **2.** Add the vanilla, water and oil and mix.
- **3.** Sieve the flour and mix all the dry ingredients together.
- **4.** Put the dry ingredients into the butter mixture till it forms a dough.
- 5. Add the chocolate chunks

- and form the dough.
- **6.** Rollout seven equal portions from the dough and refrigerate till cold.
- **7.** Pre-heat oven to 180 degree (in the no fan mode).
- **8.** Place the rolled cookie balls on a tray lined with baking paper.
- 9. Bake for 13-15 minutes.
- **10.** Voila your crisp chocolate chunk cookies are ready to be devoured!

# COOKING RUNS IN HER DNA...!



Dolcee Bachkaniwala, Surat

ith both her parents being excellent cooks, making a space for herself among the top six finalists of the MasterChef India Season 2 was not a big deal for Chef Dolcee Bachkaniwala from Surat!

There are some who learn cooking the hard way, while there are some who learn cooking because they love it and then you have those rare few for whom cooking runs in their genetics! Chef Dolcee Bachkaniwala falls in the last category and no small wonder that she has made a name for herself in the city of foodies – Surat!

This engineer's culinary odyssey began with the MasterChef India Season 2 on Star Plus in which she figured among the

top six finalists – she became so famous that she changed the name of her outfit to Chef Dolcee which today is a niche brand at Surat.

Dolcee shares upfront that "The only formal training that I have had is the one provided by the organizers of MasterChef; but honestly I've never felt the need as the art and science of cooking runs in my blood with my parents being innovative cooks par excellence!"

Trust us, catering to the palate of the very discerning foodies of Surat is quite a demanding task ... but Chef Dolcee comfortably achieves this feat through her tempting array of personalized services and products that includes master classes, takeaways and subtle and refined dining!

### Chef's Table

A pioneering concept premiered by Dolcee this entails exquisite and ultrafine dining where a small group of people is served a seven-course meal, cooked live and individually plated in front of them. During the on-going pandemic wave this initiative promises safety and hygiene alongside lip-smacking delicacies



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# **Gourmet Takeaways**

This one's a takeaway vertical, patrons can preorder - say the 'Gourmet Unbox' for instance - limited and exotic food generally on weekends and enjoy it in the comfort of their house and in the company of their loved ones.

# Customized Master Classes

Understanding the need to provide hands-on cooking training, Chef Dolcee has launched needs-based master classes for niche groups to enable them to practically learn to whip up exclusive cuisine which does not figure on the checklist of regular cookery classes. So if exotic is up your sleeve then sign up for Chef Dolcee's Master Classes!

What makes Dolcee's Chef's Table and Master Class stand out in the plethora of food outlets and cooking classes is their thrust on curating menus and content basis the request of their patrons. No small surprise that vegan, diabetic and gluten-sensitive clients are some of her regulars.

Life is uncertain...Eat, pray and love. And during the ongoing turbulent times hold close to your heart your kitchen tools and cater to food cravings with aromatic and flavour-filled homegrown and handmade produce. Remember to ensure that what goes into everyone's mouth should be the perfect blend of taste and health interwoven with magic and love. Happy cooking!"









# **BROCCOLI AND PARMESAN CROQUETTES**

# **INGREDIENTS**

Milk Around 150 Millilitres
Broccoli (cut into florets) 200 Grams
Butter 3 Tablespoons
Bay Leaf 1
Maida (refined flour) Two-and-a-half Tablespoon
Parmesan Cheese Two Tablespoons
Cheese (grated) 1 Cube
Salt, As per taste
Pepper As per taste
Paprika As per taste
Corn Flour One-fourth Cup
Breadcrumbs One-fourth Cup

# For the Dip

Oil (for frying)

Mayo One-fourth Cup Zest of Half Lemon Red Chili Powder, A pinch

# **METHOD**

- **1.** Boil the milk and cook broccoli for 5-7 minutes. Strain and mash the broccoli and reserve the milk.
- **2.** Heat butter in a pan. Add bay leaf and broccoli. Fry them for 3-4 minutes.
- **3.** Add maida, salt, pepper and paprika and cook for 2 minutes.
- **4.** Add the hot milk slowly to ensure that no lumps are created; and keep stirring continuously. Let it simmer for 3-4 minutes. The mixture should be dry enough to prepare balls.
- **5.** Stir in the cheese and keep this mixture in a container, cling wrap it and refrigerate it.
- **6.** Scoop out a spoonful of the broccoli mixture and make round balls out of it.
- 7. Make the corn flour slurry by adding the remaining milk or water. Dip the round balls in the cornstarch slurry and then in the breadcrumbs and deep fry them.
- **8.** Mix all the ingredients of the dip and serve it with the hot broccoli croquettes.

# GATEAU BY AJITHA

An epicurean delight from an interior designer



Ajitha, Hyderabad

hen a mother decides to take up baking - quality, health, unique taste and yummy treats are what customers can look forward to! 'Gateau by Ajitha' has been delivering this and much more to Hyderabadis.

It was viewing cake shows on TLC combined with her penchant for creativity that pushed Ajitha into exploring if she too could do something of this sort. But her actual baking journey started a couple of years ago when she decided to carve a career for herself and was dead-sure that an archetypical desk job was not something up her sleeve! And out of the blue came the thought that why couldn't she convert her passion into her profession? Moreover with two children one thing she knew for sure was how to satisfy the dessert cravings of a demanding stomach and heart! Gradually she built the 'Gateau by Ajitha' brand focusing on providing the best in terms of quality, design, innovativeness and hygienic ingredients.

# Unique selling point

Ajitha's USP lies in the simple philosophy that if the final product turns out to be something which she wouldn't like to feed to her kids then she won't offer it to her patrons too. It is precisely this ethos which reflects in her bakes and has helped her build a strong base of loyal customers which has substantially increased through word-of-mouth referrals thereby shaping the brand which two years down the line is one of the best in Hyderabad and has bagged three food awards in such a short span too!

### Self-learner

Ajitha shares, "I have learnt all I know from the internet and by trying things out on my own. I haven't done any courses. Agreed that self-learning is time consuming and one incurs a lot of wastage also but honestly, I wouldn't have it any other way as I learnt all what should NOT be done first. And the best part is that as my learning journey has been exploratory and practical my learnings shall remain with me forever!"



### Other interests

Apart from selling customized cakes and desserts at 'Gateau by Ajitha' Ajitha also culls out time to teach under the brand 'ABCD with Ajitha'; besides taking up interesting interior design assignments in between.

# About her products at 'Gateau by Ajitha'

Elaborating on the rich product spread, Ajitha says, "We have a huge variety of products ranging from simple tea cakes to intricate wedding cakes and gourmet bakes or even luxury chocolates. With best ingredients and creative presentation, I offer the best of both worlds. As I firmly believe that everyone has a right to enjoy sweet treats so we have an extensive menu to cater to all kinds of needs. While for our diabetic clientele we have on offer tea time cakes, cookies, brownies et al; for our gluten-sensitive clients we go a step forward to customize almost all the items on our menu; and we also have allergy-friendly cakes and perhaps one of the widest range of vegan bakes in Hyderabad."

While from the professional perspective, the hot selling products of 'Gateau by Ajitha' are themed cakes and the entire range of cookies; when it comes to Ajitha's personal favourites then it's simple and rustic stuff like a good old pound cake or a brownie which she enjoys indulging in with her family.

# Festive season offerings

This Diwali Ajitha and her team are planning on curating around five to six types of hampers comprising of varied items like - exotic chocolate bonbons, moist cakes et al; and some fancy themed dessert range as well. Apart from these they would also be catering for some corporate hampers too.

# **Future plans**

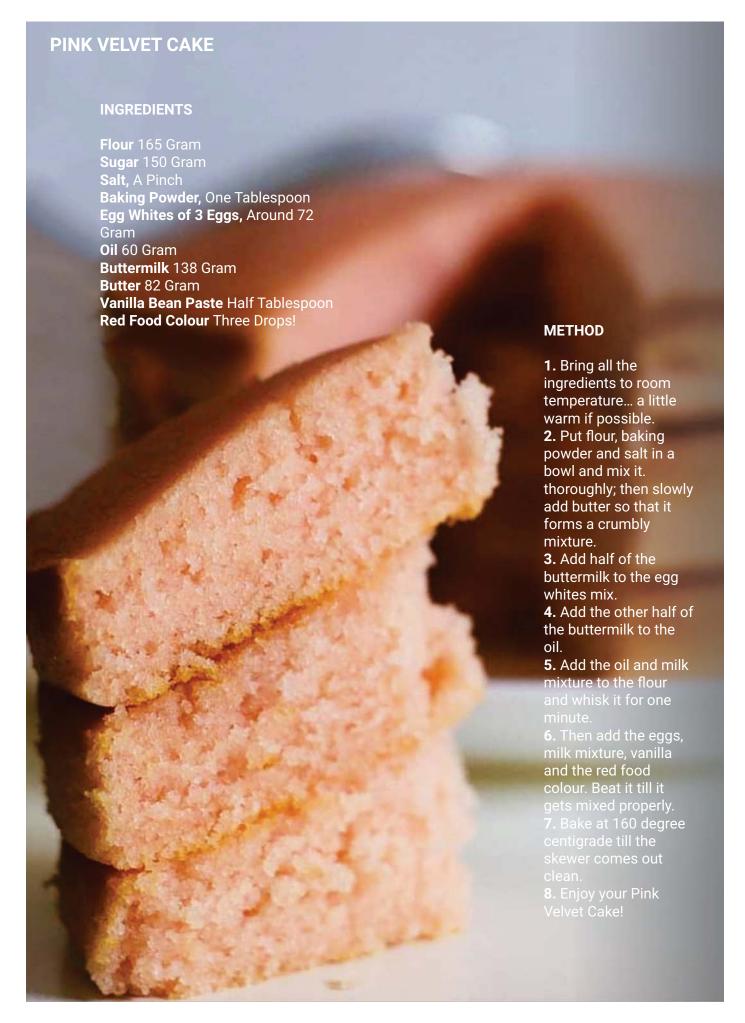
Ajitha aspires to set up her own outlet of gourmet bakes where everything is baked from quality ingredients and is prepared from the scratch so that 'one can smile from cheek-to-cheek when they taste it'!

Ajitha ends with a lovely message for Foodism readers

"Being part of your celebrations is what makes my day special, so keep the party alive and let me sweeten it up for you!"







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# BAKING DELIGHTS FROM RADHIKA

There are many who step into the food business, but only those people are successful, in the real meaning of the word, who get a high by simply watching their products being enjoyed by their patrons. Meet one from this rare breed...



Radhika Binani, Kolkata

he first dessert prepared by Radhika was way back when she was in Grade V and it was the blissful joy which she experienced that made her realize that baking was her forte. And at the school leaving decisive age of 18 she had made up her mind to take-up hospitality as a career and don the chef's apron. The ultimate joy for Radhika is observing people enjoying her cooked or baked offerings and this was what set the ball rolling for her home bakery too.

# Learning is a continuous process

This food entrepreneur has graduated in culinary arts from the Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal -Karnataka. And as this field is in a state of continuous flux she continues to attend workshops - on preparing different delicacies and adopting varied culinary styles - as and when she gets an opportunity to. Then again the internet, books, experience sharing on social media platforms and practical experimenting are modes through which Radhika has picked up the art of cake decoration and learnt to whip up exotic desserts.

### Work-life balance

Initially when she started it was just Radhika handling everything with the family pitching in. Right from resourcing raw materials, baking, decorating and logistics and other backend work everything was independently looked after by her! After a year, once the business stabilized she on-boarded two extremely hardworking women who've been a major support and have helped Radhika maintain a decent work-life balance.



# **Products**

Radhika has a rich product spread comprising of customised cakes, tart cakes, cupcakes, brownies, macarons, cookies, savoury breads, crackers, dips, etc. Some of the best seller desserts have been macarons, brownies and cupcake bouquets.

Sharing about the product which she loves to prepare Radhika says, "I simply love to prepare macarons – it's a sweet French meringue-based confection. The reason being it was a herculean challenge to master this recipe and in fact it took me a lot of trials and a good amount of time to perfect my recipe. But then, good things don't come easy, do they? Now we have around 15 flavour options and the best part is that we hand paint these treats too! So it's like a proud feat for me to have learnt how to prepare macarons... perhaps that's why it's close to my heart."

# Diwali hampers

Understanding that people are turning more-andmore to gifting baked goodies instead of traditional sweets on festivals like Diwali, Radhika generally curates around 4 to 5 types of hampers every year during Diwali. The concept is to incorporate a few savoury items along with desserts that are decorated keeping the festival theme centric. Some of their Diwali pièces de résistance include - hand painted macarons, taash cookies and hand rolled truffles.

Sounds sinfully tempting, doesn't it! So hurry and book your Diwali order on/before 7 November!

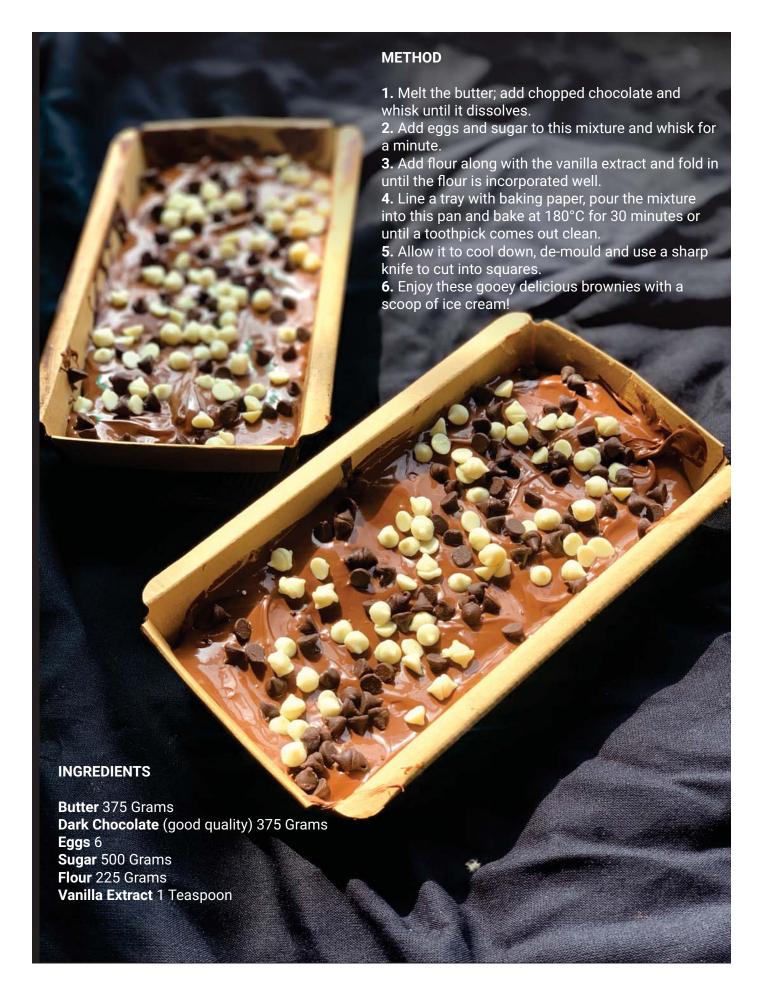


So that's Radhika for you ... a successful home baker who relishes her work...!



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# **BROWNIES**



# ADDING A 'ZEST' TO YOUR PALATE!



ooking, fitness and teaching... there's a lot which Anjali is packing-in, in order to provide the best to her patrons. Foodism brings you a peep into her plethora of products and services...

It was way back in 2014, after her Board Exams that the roots of Zestful Flavours were laid. This was through something as basic as Anjali conducting a few complimentary workshops for her school mates. The positive response which these workshops garnered pushed her to do a few more leading to even more resounding success especially with regards to her teaching style - engaging, interactive and funfilled! It was this response which

made Anjali realises her true calling and passion. What clicked with her participants was the ease with which daily kitchen ingredients could be whipped up into sophisticated restaurant cuisine.

But the road was not as easy as it appeared! While culinary options for non-vegetarian home chefs are boundless: when it comes to their vegetarian fraternity developing recipes demands a lot of hard work and continuous trial and error due to lack of ingredient options in this segment. But armed with her Baker and Confectionery Diploma from Lavonne Academy, Bangalore and internships from reputed five star hotels; and her

never-say-die attitude Anjali set forth to independently explore whatever options were available and added her customized touch to transform them into magical recipes!

But she didn't stop at teaching and cooking, this spunky home chef dons multiple hats one of which is her fitness venture Fit N Ace wherein she is a co-founder and one of the head fitness influencers. They deal with daily lifestyle changes, positive holistic wellness et al, Anjali shares that "Weight loss, muscle and fat

gain along with healthy life and body maintenance for all age and work groups are our forte."



Anjali Kejriwal, Bangalore

The price range for most of the products of Zestful Flavours falls from INR 500-1500: barring the gourmet gifting and hampers where the pricing escalates basis the client spend; while the online cooking tutorials are priced between INR 250 and INR 1000 per class.

Teaching is undoubtedly Anjali's first love; but when it comes to food preparation she avers, "I enjoy both cooking and baking and honestly it's difficult to choose between the two. But yes I absolutely adore preparing pizzas, decorating my platters and garnishing cakes!"

Zestful Flavours has on-board healthy options - like vegan sliders, diabetic deserts, keto platters - for the diabetic and gluten-free segment

Lined-up for Diwali are hampers and workshops centred on Indian fusion flavoured tarts, cookies, bars and all things festive with a hint of traditional decor!

This ambitious homechef has a firm head on her shoulder and has a clearly chalked out future blueprint which includes – increasing the number of cooking tutorials ...up-scaling the standards with each passing one; expanding the ambit of Zestful Flavours; and making it a household name for the best workshops and pocket-friendly healthy food options

Anjali 'zestfully' (pun intended) shares about her passion, "Food is the basis of all that I am doing in my life and also one of the sturdy pillars of my success. If I had to describe myself it would all revolve around food - anavid foodie, passionate cook and a fitness influencer! Thank you for being a part of the Foodism family and sparing your time to go through my story of how food celebrates my life."







#### APPLE CRUMBLE CAKE

For one seven inches- sized cake

#### **INGREDIENTS**

#### Caramelize apples in the following way

- · Heat half cup sugar in a pan on low flame
- Peel and chop two apples and add sugar as per taste once it starts caramelizing
- · Cook well for 5 minutes
- · Add half teaspoon cinnamon and salt as per taste
- · Add half teaspoon of lemon juice; mix welland keep aside

#### For the crumble

Crumble the following using your fingertips - half cup maida (refined flour); two tablespoons cold butter; 3 tablespoons powdered sugar; and one teaspoon of cinnamon powder; and then store it in the refrigerator. Ensure that the mix is in small lumps alike big bread crumbs.



#### **IMETHOD**

- **1.** Preheat your oven to 180 degree centigrade for ten minutes.
- **2.** Line and grease a cake tin with butter and butter paper.
- **3.** Beat together one-fourth cup soft butter; one-fourth cup powdered sugar; one teaspoon vanilla; and one-fourth cup yoghurt.
- **4.** Sift three-fourth cup maida; two tablespoon cornflour; one teaspoon baking powder; half teaspoon baking soda on the wet ingredients
- little by little. Keep mixing so that the batter nicely assimilates.
- **5.** Add some milk to form a smooth and fluffy batter.
- **6.** Pour into the greased tin and add apples and the crumble.
- **7.** Bake in the preheated overnat 160 degree for 50-60 minutes or till done.
- 8. Cool for 2-3 hours and then un-mould.
- 9. Serve with vanilla ice cream and caramel sauce.

# PHARMACY DEGREE TRADED FOR A CHEF'S APRON!

It was Nuha's passion for cooking that led this pharmacy graduate to set up 'My Global Kitchen' which today brings food and people together at the City of Pearls...Hyderabad



Nuha Iftekhar, Hyderabad

uha Iftekhar, Founder and the Head Chef at 'My Global Kitchen' traded her pharmacy degree for a chef's apron in order to pursue her childhood passion of cooking. It requires a lot of courage to not bow down to the standard expectations from society and take the bold step of following the call of one's heart, doesn't it? But Nuha did this and how it's paid off! Today 'My Global Kitchen' is a name to reckon with in the food segment.

It all started years ago when alike a majority of daughters Nuha too picked up the ladle to assist her mother in her cooking. But she used to love the time spent in the kitchen and she groomed, nurtured and refined this passion for cooking by practicing and perfecting recipes across various cuisines roping in the help of the internet, recipe books, local workshops and through experience sharing with family and friends. In a nutshell, Nuha latched onto every possible opportunity to learn!

Nuha shared that

"I started my kitchen with the sole purpose of teaching and disseminating my love for cooking to other young girls and women around the city. The response was phenomenal and extremely encouraging. My students urged me to take up catering and started ordering food for their special occasions. It's been two-and-a-half years now and we have conducted various multi-cuisine cooking workshops and catered to hundreds of orders!"

Basically 'My Global Kitchen' brings food and people on a single platform and their services radiate through the tempting, flavour-filled, homestyled food with the ultimate thrust being on seasonal and freshly selected ingredients.

The menu of 'My Global Kitchen' includes around 150 dishes from Mughlai, Mediterranean and Pan Asian cuisine. They have a mind-boggling array of desserts and are probably one of the few places in Hyderabad who have 15 flavours of cheesecake on their menu card!

They have recently added high tea platters which are fast gaining popularity. They also provide salads for the fitness enthusiasts; all kinds of grilled proteins; and gluten-free breads for the health-conscious segment.

In the pipeline are plans of further expanding their menu, their geographical reach and their food business in general and tapping the corporate sector.

Nuha signs off with a message for our young readers and chefs out there "Remember that you are never too old to dream and follow your passion. I started my business at the age of 32 with no prior experience; although initially it was not easy but my love for my work kept pushing me through. And trust me - the amount of satisfaction you get at the end of a hard working day cannot be compared to any other pleasure! So go ahead and follow your heart but do put in a lot of dedicated efforts too!"



# NOTHING BUT PURE 'BLISS'!

n LSE graduate, who trained as a pastry chef at Le Cordon Bleu and eventually started her own venture, 'Bliss Patisserie', Chandani Shah is the quintessential twenty first century young creative entrepreneur. She has successfully established herself with innovation and unique desserts from her studio.



Chandani Shah, Ahmedabad

After a five-year study stint in the United Kingdom, where she completed her undergraduate degree from Warwick Business School and her Masters in Economics from the London School of Economics and Political Sciences, Chandani Shah returned to India aspiring to give wings to her passion project – Bliss Patisserie.

Bliss is a unique dessert catering and cake company that specializes in highly customized projects. The idea is to deliver an experience to the customer cantered around a chosen theme and customized using the highest quality ingredients from around the world. As espoused by Chandani

"Our desserts are innovative and minuscule works of art."

#### Chandani's experience at LCB, London

Chandani passed out with her patisserie diploma from Le Cordon Bleu London in 2015. Elaborating on her LCB stint she says, "It was a truly unique experience, where we worked under MichelinStar Chefs and trained in the strictest French culinary arts. The atmosphere in the kitchens was highly charged right from 7am to 7pm, which gave us a thorough training of running and setting up a restaurant kitchen. We were on our feet from morning to evening, around a frenzy of activity, and it was those few months that shaped my energy and attitude towards this profession. Creativity is inborn but it was here that we learnt what it truly takes to be a chef - patience while waiting for the dough to rise and optimism through many a burnt batch of cakes. LCB used a hands-on, practical approach where we were encouraged to focus on skills needed in the operational areas of business and how to engage in the discipline of a professional kitchen environment. It was here that I learnt that food if hygienically prepared and aesthetically served can be turned into a satiating and sustainable business."



### Chandani's pick

Upon being asked what she loves to prepare, this food entrepreneur shares, "I love making our edible sugarpaste flowers. I enjoy the process as there's no mechanical work involved. When you

sculpt each petal and thoughtfully place each piece, you end up with something that sparks emotion and creates an immediate connect. It is not assembly line work. Each tiny piece has been hand-sculpted based on visual or real life reference...quite similar to the way a person would draw what they see."

#### Product spread

Bliss Patisserie has a wide product range of confections and chocolates. Their specialty is customized theme cakes for children's birthdays. Chandani enthusiastically shares, "Although I have been trained in classical French baking, yet we have adapted quintessential western staples like macaroons to Indian flavours such as Paan, Mango and Chilli; and teacakes with chaiinfused sponges." Upon being asked whather muse is pat comes the reply, "Living and studying in London, travelling

during those years has been one of the strongest sources of inspiration for me. Another thing that really resonates with me is Julia Child's memoir 'My Life in France', where she talks about the experiences she had and trials she faced while attending Le Cordon Bleu herself in Paris." Now that's an intellectual food entrepreneur we have, don't we!

#### Future plans

Chandani intends to open up her own concept bakery in a trendy and accessible location. As experience aswell as hardwork is vital to this industry; she feels her experience in Hyatt Hotel's patisserie kitchen and supplying the entire dessert menu of a café will be a value add-on. Thanks to the same she now has an overview of the modus operandi of a commercial kitchen in India and its operational challenges. This has made her "better





equipped to deal with the challenges of inventory management, employees' behaviour and satisfaction, decisions regarding suppliers and other procurement issues."

Chandani signs off with, "My advice to all the young readers who would like to convert their creative ambitions into reality is to organize, organize, and organize. I am a self-confessed list-making junkie who believes that the business side of creativity is equally important for any kind of start-up to be sustainable. Technically speaking, listing your entity, filing regular balance sheets, constantly reviewing expenses, revenue, working capital, stock will not only help you maintain a sufficient cash flow but also secure a loan/investment or take advantage of the government schemes, exemptions and benefits in place specifically for small businesses."

#### **ROSE AND PISTACHIO TEA CAKE**

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Condensed Milk Half Cup
Oil Half Cup
Milk Three-fourth Cup
Rose Syrup Two Tablespoons
All Purpose Flour One-and-a-half
Cup

**Powdered Sugar** Three-fourth Cup

**Baking Powder** One Teaspoon **Baking Soda** One-fourth Teaspoon

#### **METHOD**

- **1.** Sieve the dry ingredients and keep aside.
- **2.** Mix oil into the condensed milk until smooth.
- **3.** Make rose flavoured milk using any rose syrup and milk.
- **4.** Gently fold in the wet mixture to the dry ingredients.
- **5.** Batter should be at dropping consistency.
- **6.** Bake at 160 degrees for 30 minutes and serve.



# THE TECH-SAVVY CHEF!



Sai Raj Praneet, Banglore

eet Chef Praneet, a baker/chef and a filmmaker who posts videos on food on various social media handles that inevitably tempt the viewers to try his recipes. He loves connecting with the food community and sharing his passion for food across the globe.

The home chef / baker segment comprises of a variety of personalities while some believe in learning the ropes of their profession through formal education; others are blessed with cooking / baking in their genetics; while still others believe in self-learning whereby they experiment, make gaffes and learn the skill hands-on. These home chefs / bakers then cascade their learnings to others through cookery / baking classes and social media handles.

Chef Praneet a new generation chef / baker is renowned for creating cake videos. Trust us this requires multiple talents besides the mandate cooking / baking skills one also needs to have a flair for communication, videography and photography along with a technically

creative bent of mind.

Upon being asked what prompted him to join this emerging stream Chef Praneet shares, "I started creating cake videos because I wanted to capture my journey as I learn how to decorate cakes." He makes quick, engaging, recipe videos/cake videos for people on Instagram "to

consume and to be inspired by."

While most of his expertise has been gained basis his self-learning he also attributes his success to the few people who either supported him or inspired him during his learning odyssey.

Chef Praneet specializes in preparing butter cream cake sand fondant cakes; and proudly says that "I can recreate anything and everything that the client gives me into cake!"His best sellers are probably the tall colourful cakes that everyone loves looking at. He occasionally explores preparing cakes that have healthy alternatives to sugar and even dairy free cakes too! Sharing about which is his favourite cake video he laughingly says "The ones with butter cream, it's just so satisfying to watch the butter cream oozing out of the piping bags! In fact I distinctly remember that I once piped with butter cream for 21 hours continuously!!!"

While others in his segment have lined up hamper options galore for Diwali, this techsavvy chef / baker intends to post a rangoli-inspired cake.

Praneet aspires to create unique cakes that have never been seen before and wants to create whacky and out-of-the-box stuff. He is eager to lap up innovative recipes and wishes to go abroad to participate in global level cake events to learn from his peers...in short he "never wanna stop learning"!

Chef Praneet has a very motivating message for home chefs and home bakers "When you begin to try something new, you may fail the first time and you may fail even the tenth time. But there is always room for improvement, as you keep at it; your work starts to look better. Put your heart into whatever you do and you'll be fine!"





#### **LEMON CUPCAKES**

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Eggs 3pcs All-Purpose Flour 130 gms Castor Sugar 80 gms Vegetable Oil 20 ml Vanilla Extract 2 Tsp Lemon Zest 1 Tbsp Baking Powder 1/2 Tsp

#### **METHOD**

- **1.** Preheat oven for ten mins at 160 degrees Celsius.
- 2. Split egg whites and egg yolks. In a clean bowl, add the egg whites, a pinch of salt and whip to stiff peaks while gradually adding the castor sugar to the mixture to form a meringue with stiff peaks.
- **3.** Then gradually add the yolks, one at a time by beating each one in between.
- **4.** Fold in the sifted flour, baking powder into the mixture without losing too much air from the egg whites.
- **5.** Then fold in the oil, vanilla, and lemon zest with the rest of the batter.
- **6.** Pour the batter into cupcake tins and bake the cupcakes for about 25-30 mins.
- **7.** Decorate the cupcakes with your preferred icing.



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# PJAZZY'S PIZZA The brainchild of a food lover!

here is a segment of people who believe in turning every disaster into an opportunity. So while the entire world was brought to a standstill by the raging pandemic one spunky girl set up her own pizza outlet to ensure that foodies were not deprived of safe and healthy pizzas.

Palak Desai, an undergraduate student from Johnson and Wales University USA and a selfconfessed food lover had always dreamt of opening her own restaurant. But post some recce and research on the internet she realized that just understanding the commerce of this was not enough she needed to learn all the hacks of the business she wanted to carry out. Being an Italian cuisine buff, she flew to Italy to study Italian cuisine! And it was there that she zeroed-in on what she exactly wanted to offer to her clientele -THE perfect fusion of Italian and Indian Dishes.

Palak returned to India fully-geared up to action her dream project but unfortunately the pandemic and the multiple phases of the lockdown to arrest the same floored her aspirations. But destiny stepped in and the mother of one of Palak's friends who was getting married in the 'new normal' commissioned her to cook for the small group of guests. Palak immediately agreed and then gradually through word-of-mouth referrals orders started trickling in.

Then with orders came business planning. Palak decided that instead of offering an entire menu it would be more practical and niche to offer a single item; and with pizzas being an all-time favourite cutting across age, gender and social strata bars she and her mother decided on preparing pizzas and that's how Pjazzy's Pizza took form.

Sharing the story behind the name Palak says, "Pjazzy has been my Instagram handle since 2013 so I just added the word 'Pizza' and it had a nicering to the name so that's how we decided to go ahead with the name Pjazzy's Pizza".

There are many features that make Pjazzy's Pizzas stand apart from the renowned pizza brands primarily the base, edges and crust of the pizza; the recipes of the sauce which are a closely-guarded family secret; then again the fresh from the oven supply as they cook all the orders on the very same day that they receive them; moreover as there is no system of storage everything is freshly baked and cooked at Pjazzy's.



Palak Desai, Ahmedabad

Palak shares, "My mum is my business partner and I have inherited my cooking skills from her. She helps me with everything at Pjazzy's!"

While the thumb rule is abstaining from using the wheat base for preparing the pizzas, the niche spread of Pjazzy's includes -

Veg Out: Onions, Peppers, Olives, Jalapenos

Red Vine: Tomato, Basil, Sundried Tomatoes. This one is Palak's brainchild and quite popular too!

What's Bacon: Bacon, Onions, Jalapenos, BBQ Sauce Yes Vegan: Sundried Tomatoes, Basil, Olives, Vegan

Build Your Own Pizza: Upto 4 toppings from -Tomato, Basil, Onions, Pepper, Sundried Tomatoes, Olives, Mushrooms, Corn, Bacon, Jalapenos,

Zucchini, Pesto Drizzle, Ranch Drizzle, Olive Oil, Garlic Oil, Barbeque Sauce.

The thrust at Pjazzy's Pizzas is on safety, hygiene and contact less delivery so - the outlet is home-based and has a delivery window through which people collect their takeaways; and everything is prepared inhouse including the Sun Dried Tomatoes and the Vegan Cheese.

Palak signs off with "This brand is a baby born out of the pandemic and as of now has no future because I am returning to the States and will be soon getting my green card. Where I shall first learn and work under some professionals and then start my own business out there...and the experience gained here will be of great help to mel"



#### **CLASSIC PIZZA MARGHERITA**

#### **INGREDIENTS**

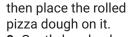
All Purpose Flour 4 Cups
Semolina One-fourth Cup
Active Dry Yeast Two-and-a-half Teaspoons
Salt, As per taste
Sugar 2 Teaspoons
Lukewarm Water As required
Extra Virgin Olive Oil 2 Tablespoons
Semolina (for dusting and rolling) 3 Tablespoons
Other Ingredients for Assembling
Homemade Pizza and Pasta Sauce
Mozzarella Cheese
Basil Leaves (for garnishing)
Dried Oregano (as required)
Red Chilli Flakes (as required)

#### METHOD

- **1.** Mix flour, semolina, salt, sugar and yeast in a mixing bowl and make a deep well in the centre.
- 2. Add water and one tablespoon of olive oil in the flour mixture. Mix everything well to make a soft but not sticky dough. Add more water if the dough is still dry.
- **3.** Apply the remaining oil onto your palms and knead it for 10 minutes by hand on a lightly floured work surface.
- **4.** Cover the pizza dough loosely with oiled cling-film, making sure it is airtight. Leave in a warm place for about two hours until doubled.
- **5.** Once the pizza dough has doubled in size, pull it out of the mixing bowl,punch the dough a couple of times and divide it into

four small dough portions.

- **6.** Preheat the oven to 220°C and place the pizza stone into the cold oven. Let it gradually heat and achieve the temperature for approximately 10 minutes.
- **7.** While the preheating happens, the next step is to prepare the pizzas –
- Sprinkle some semolina onto the working surface.
- On the semolina surface, roll out the dough thin, into a large circle approximately eight inches or the shape of your choice using a rolling pin..
- The dough would rise in the oven, so roll it as thin as possible.
- Run the fork all around the middle leave half inch around the edges. This process will remove any bubbles/air.
- **8.** Pull out the hot pizza stone and carefully place it on a hot plate. Sprinkle some semolina on the stone and



- **9.** Gently brush a layer of olive oil and to the base with pizza sauce and mozzarella cheese.
- 10. Bake this for 10-15 minutes until the crust turns golden brown or the cheese has melted. Allow it to cool down for twothree minutes.
- **20.** Garnish with basil leaves, oregano and chilli flakes. Serve this cheesy homemade pizza hot!



### CHEESE IS NOT A CHEESY BUSINESS!

or someone who's grown up experimenting with preparing flavoured cheese it's no small wonder that Priyanshi Jariwala opted for setting up her own cheese outlet.

Priyanshi is a self-taught food entrepreneur who has cooking programmed in her DNA with both her parents being fabulous cooks. She has always been "obsessed with cheeses since childhood" because her mother briefly ran a cheese marketing business. So experimenting with making her own flavoured cheeses has been something she used to revel in. Guests would drop in to sample her

cheeses and cheeseboards and they simply drooled over them! Perhaps this is when the initial seed of setting up a cheese making outlet was sown in her mind.

Other ventures which Priyanshi has experimented with are - Dzurt Patisserie, Cut chocolate cake and Allthings chocolate. It all started with baking for charity alongside her profession in the finance sector. Albeit, currently she doesn't sell any desserts but loves making them for friends and family.



Priyanshi Jariwala, Ahmedabad

Sharing that she finds preparing cheeseboards "creatively satisfying." Priyanshi upfront mentions that her product range is quite niche and comprises of - mainly cheeseboards; flavoured cheeses; and marinated cheeses such as mustard cheese, flavoured feta etc. With around 10 cheeses on her product list mustard cheese wins handsdown as the best seller. Unfortunately as anticipated there are not many healthy options on offer; but the Bocconcini garden and summer rolls platter is relatively healthy...With the summer rolls platter additionally being glutenfree, dairy-free and fat-free.

While for Diwali, Priyanshi intends doing cheeseboards, cheese gift boxes and a few wooden trays with cheeseboards; her future plans are quite ambitious as she aspires to diversify and bring gourmet food products not just to the Ahmedabad market but also Pan-India.

Priyanshi leaves a nice message for readers and budding homechefs, "Cooking is a very therapeutic activity, keep cooking passionately!"









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SUMMER ROLLS

#### **INGREDIENTS**

#### For Rolls

Spring Roll Rice Paper Wrappers 10
Large Carrot (peeled and julienned) One
Large Cucumber (julienned) One
Large Red Bell Pepper (julienned) Half
Chopped Purple Cabbage One-third Cup
Spring Onions (finely-cut) One-fourth Cup
Cooked Rice Noodles /Rice Vermicelli (optional)
One Ounce

Avocado (sliced) One Fresh Cilantro, Mint, Basil Handful Large Green Lettuce Leaves (torn into half) Five

For Peanut Dipping Sauce

Creamy Peanut Butter One-third Cup
Demerara Sugar One Teaspoon
Juice of One Lemon
Soy Sauce Two Teaspoons
Garlic (mashed) One Clove
Ginger Half Inch

Sriracha Sauce or a Chile Garlic Sauce (optional for spice) One Teaspoon Warm Water One-Two Tablespoons (or more)

#### **METHOD**

#### For Rolls

- 1. Pour warm water into a large bowl. Work one at a time, dip the rice paper wrapper into the warm water for 15-20 seconds (or whatever the package suggests). Usually it's around that time. Ensure that the wrapper remains soft, yet still slightly firm and pliable. Immediately remove from the water and place flat onto a work surface such as a cutting board. Pat the wrapper slightly dry.
- 2. Place a few sticks of carrot, cucumber, red pepper, and a sprinkle of cabbage on top of the bottom one-third of the rice paper; then, a small amount of noodles (if you are opting for using the same), a slice or two of avocado and lots of cilantro,mint,basil

and spring onions. Thereafter, lay half of a lettuce leaf on top. Remember, do not overstuff the roll. Start small then add more, as needed, as you roll each one

3. Roll everything up tightly. To do so, gently pull up the bottom of the roll and roll over the filling. Then, roll and use your hands to tuck-in the filling as you go. It's basically like you're rolling a burrito! Remember, you want a very tight roll. You can fold in the sides of the rice paper roll if you wish.

After rolling each, place on a serving plate. Cut in half, and serve with peanut sauce.

#### For Peanut Dripping Sauce

- **1.** Add everything to a medium bowl (except water) and whisk until smooth.
- **2.** Add one-two tablespoons of warm water or until you reach desired thinness.
- **3.** Pour into a serving bowl and top with crushed peanuts.

# SELF-LEARNING HAS BEEN THE WAY FOR RASHMI!



Rashmi Chawla, Mumbai

arving a niche for yourself in the 'Aaamchi Mumbai' of 'dabbawalas' is no small feat but home chef Rashmi has managed this and that too without undergoing any formal training in cooking! Foodism profiles this 'self-taught cook' for its readers.

For Rashmi food has been the overriding passion in her life enabling her to cook for her loved ones since the past 35 years besides designing menus for their special events; and she is pretty comfortable rolling out dishes for guests ranging from 20 to 200! Lapping up her delectable savouries it is her friends and family only who kept on nudging her to convert her passion into a career.

Whipping up a new dish, mixing and matching ingredients are her forte. Hence no small wonder that she's able to cater to the requests for customized dishes basis the requirements of her clients be it diabetic food; or 'Jain' food (no onion, no garlic and no tuber roots too!); or healthy food

for the fitness enthusiasts. What makes her cuisine exclusive is the fact that she pours her heart into what she does; and the appreciation by her patrons is a major driver for her creativity and desire to explore new recipes either through books or through videos or even through experience sharing with other likeminded home chefs.

Rashmi has carved a name for herself in a city which has a plethora of food entrepreneurs ... and she's done this without availing any formal training! Another case which proves that skills and forte are self-learnt rather than formally taught! Feedback from her family and friends is her teacher and incorporating their suggestions ensures that she prepares unique and delicious dishes!

A thoroughly focussed home chef, savoury is Rashmi's strength with her pomfret coconut curry being a hot favourite with patrons across all age and gender groups. Revealing her

> business strategy, she says, "I keep adding new dishes to my menu on a daily basis; because variety is the spice of life, isn't it?"

Her rich platter includes multiple cuisines like - Indian, Pan Asian, Chinese, Italian and Thai. Rashmi has on offer a humungous variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian appetizers; and baked chicken and paneer wraps. Her main course variants

paneer wraps. Her main course variant comprise butter chicken lite (no cream/no butter), mutton chops, Green Thai curry et al. What makes her Thai curry special is that unlike her peers she abstains from using any readymade paste for it and takes the pain to create her own homemade paste.



What makes Rashmi's dishes healthy?

- She incorporates fresh ingredients into each and every dish.
- Her sauces and spices which give different flavours are also homemade.
- She avoids using readymade pastes.

For the health conscious segment Rashmi has a wide palette including - baked wraps, zucchini rolls, steamed fish in soya chilli, jalapeno poppers stuffed with celery and basil chicken, jowar quesadillas. Moreover simple steps ensure that her food is healthy say for example she abstains from using butter and cream in her butter chicken making it a safe option for diabetics too; her samosas and noodle rolls are not deep fried but air fried; et al. She accommodates the dietary requirements for the Jain community and for patrons with allergies.

While Rashmi's Diwali plans include customizing around five varieties of vegetarian and non-vegetarian platters; her future plans are to grow and expand her business geographically and numerically. She also intends to start taking up mini-group catering orders and perhaps tying up with the corporate sector and providing her services during conferences, parties, seminars etc.

Rashmi ends with a sweet message for the Foodism readers "Sit back, relax and let me do the cooking...and rest assured that my food will bring a smile on your face alongside satiating your taste buds!"

#### **Lotus Stem with Baby Potato in Tamarind Sauce**



#### **INGREDIENTS**

Lotus Stem 200 Grams **Baby Potato** 15 Tamarind 50 Grams Jaggery 2 Tablespoon Brown Sugar 1 Tablespoon Chopped Garlic 10 Pieces Cinnamon 2 Inch Piece Cloves 6 Black Salt One-fourth Teaspoon Chaat Masala One-fourth Teaspoon **Cumin Powder** Half Teaspoon Red Chilli Powder Half Teaspoon Corn Flour One Teaspoon Spring Onion 2 Stems **Red and Yellow Bell Peppers** Half Each Salt, As per taste

#### **METHOD**

Soak the tamarind in warm water for 30 minutes. Then bring it to boil for two minutes and thereafter completely strain the pulp.
 Place it on the gas again and add a cup of water (200 millilitres). Add jaggery, brown sugar, cinnamon, chaat masala, black salt,

- cumin powder, red chilli powder and cook for 10 minutes. Keep stirring it till it thickens. Your tamarind sauce is ready. Please keep it aside.
- **3.** Boil the lotus stem and the potatoes together in a pressure cooker (at one whistle).
- **4.** In a new pan add two tablespoons of olive oil or any cooking oil and add chopped garlic till it turns brown. Then add the lotus stem and potatoes and stir for one-two minutes. Then add two tablespoons of the tamarind sauce; then add one tablespoon more and sprinkle five tablespoons of water in it.
- **5.** Take one teaspoon of corn flour mix it with cold water, and then add it to the lotus stem and stir it. It will take a minute or two on the gas till it thickens. Your lotus stem with baby potato in tamarind sauce is ready.
- **6.** Garnish it with chopped spring onions and red and yellow bell peppers.

## TASTE RETREAT BY TASHEEN



Tasheen Rahimtoola, Mumbai

hen a financial consultant takes up the ladle her patrons are provided with a one-stop-shop for all their food experience needs... be it – curated custom food gifting experiences, party menu consultations and creations, customised unique corporate gifting, comprehensive food consultancy services et al.

Let us introduce you to Tasheen... a Mumbai based 25-year-old girl who believes in celebrating every milestone and occasion. Hailing from a Math, Finance, and Economics background she graduated from Wellesley College with a Bachelors in Economics and Math, and embarked on a career as a financial consultant in New York at Crisil, after which she worked with Ernst and Young in Mumbai for three-and-a-half years. Despite her expertise in the field of finance she pursued a diverse array of interests, from hosting women empowerment events to curating soirées in the caviar circles.

#### Story behind the brand

It was basically Tasheen's passion for food, beauty, and personalised luxury that inspired the launch of Taste Retreat. Taste Retreat is a one-of-a-kind luxury brand that promises customized and unique gourmet food experiences. It was her varied interests that made her realize that food was her true calling. Proudly elaborating on what sets her

venture apart Tasheen says, "Having tried and tasted delicious cuisine from an expansive variety of budding entrepreneurs in the F and B space, Taste Retreat can guarantee you the finest taste and quality, from chefs and home bakers that are at the peak of their speciality! The brand is a one-stop-shop for all your food experience needs and excels in - curating custom food gifting experiences, party menu consultations and creations, customised unique corporate gifting, comprehensive food consultancy services et al.

#### **Product variety**

The foundation of Taste Retreat's success is the quality of what the customer has come to expect - beautifully packaged scones that make you miss London's flippant weather; and tiny, multi-flavoured cupcakes that are reminiscent of 'Baked by Melissa' leaving you craving for more.

Tasheen shares, "For us, the customer is king. My end goal is to curate the best offering for every customer so that they smile, with satisfaction and surprise, when looking upon what they have received. Our menus are personalized and everything that comes in is quality-checked before being delivered. After all, quality is what we are known for... And the devil is in the detail."







and handcrafted trunks. "What make the offerings unique are the personal touches which are given to each product right from the messages to the hues of the boxes; every element complements the vibe and personality of the receiver. These boxes and trunks are painted by artists across Mumbai which is my way of helping these artists who have lost jobs during the lockdown." Now isn't that thoughtful!

Taste Retreat's best sellers comprise - parmesan butter biscuit base, roasted tomato and zucchini, basil cream cheese filling, pine nut garnish, dark chocolate sponge soaked in coffee ... to name a few.

#### Touching on the price range

Tasheen elaborates "We don't have a fixed price point, but rather curate items based on the budget our client provides us. Our USP is our flexibility to work around the budget to offer everything under the sun. Our offerings are available for INR 3000 onwards"

The favourite offerings of this selftaught food curator comprise the customized hand painted boxes

#### Special product range

Taste Retreat is among the few food enterprises which has onboard nutritionists and dieticians who guide the team on providing exclusive low-count calorie options for the health-conscious, diabetic and gluten-sensitive segment. Some of the best-selling glutenfree and refined sugar- free options available at Taste Retreat include diabetic cake (chocolate cake with coconut frosting and edible flowers); almond butter fudge brownies; whole rolled oats double chocolate chip cookie (eggless); dark chocolate raspberry cake (butter free and eggless as well); snicker and twix slices: cookie dough brownie loaf: dense chocolate fudge cake; apple

walnut crumble cake; quinoa cake, chocolate cake... to name a few.

#### Diwali hampers

For Diwali, Taste Retreat is premiering a couple of special edition Diwali boxes with themes apt for the festive season –

- "Denim Pearl" which includes light blue glazed donuts, blueberry lemon curd infused cakes/muffins.
- "DIY Bhel" which is a spin-off on Indian desserts like carrot ghewar halwa tart and much more!
- A must-have after all the festive bingeing is the "Reboot Box" which consists of detox food items such as smoothies, healthy snacking options, et al.

#### **Future plans**

Tasheen is looking at expanding
Taste Retreat across as many
avenues as possible. She also
intends focussing more into
catering for upto 50 people in the
COVID-19 new normal besides
indulging in corporate settings and
styling with the niche curated
offerings from Taste Retreat.

Tasheen leaves a lovely message for the Foodism Reader Segment "Always follow your passion. Sooner or later you will realise your calling. It is food that has been a source of utter bliss for me, despite hailing from a Wall Street background. Always remember that curating food means knowing the various options available, experimenting with what is new, and delivering it to customers with such speed that there is no room for complacency. There's a certain thrill about understanding how people buy and spend, and what I have learned during my journey is that people want to give and show love, and what better way to do it than with customized foods curated specially for you?"

#### TROPICAL SABLÉ BRETON

(With citrus cream topped with caramelised pineapple and desiccated coconut)



#### **INGREDIENTS**

#### Dough

**Butter** 65 Grams Sugar 57.5 Grams Salt 1 Gram Vanilla Essence 0.5Gram Egg Yolk 32 Grams Flour 90Grams Baking Powder 5.5Grams

Egg Wash For 1 egg

#### For Mascarpone Cream Cheese Frosting

Whipping Cream 25Gram Icing Sugar 42 Gram Cream Cheese 110Gram Mascarpone Cheese 60Gram Vanilla Extract 0.5Gram Lemon Zest Of 1 lemon Lemon Juice 15 Grams

#### For Caramelised Pineapples

**Butter 10 Grams** Sugar 30 Grams Pineapples Half Bowl

#### **METHOD**

Note: Ensure that cream cheese and mascarpone are at room temperature.

- Take a bowl and add in the cream cheese, mascarpone cheese, whipping cream, lemon zest, lemon juice, vanilla extract and sieve in the icing sugar.
- Beat the ingredients with an electric mixer or whisk it by hand.
- Refrigerate the frosting.

#### For Sablé Dough

- 1. Cut the cold butter into cubes and beat the butter, sugar and vanilla extract with a whisk or an electric beater.
- 2. Add egg yolks and beat this mixture till it's smooth and fluffy.
- 3. Sieve the dry ingredients flour, baking powder and salt together and add it to the mixture.
- 4. Combine and form a dough
- 5. Put the dough between two sheets of plastic and roll out to half centimetre thickness.
- 6. Freeze this for 20 minutes.
- 7. Take a circular cutter and cut circles with the dough; the size depends on personal choice.
- 8. Preheat the oven at 170-degree Celsius.
- 9. Crack an egg and apply egg wash on the sable circles with a brush before baking.
- 10. Bake for 12-15 minutes until golden brown.

#### **Toppings**

- 1. Cut the pineapple into cubes.
- 2. Add 10 grams of butter and 2 tablespoons of sugar (30gms) in a saucepan.
- 3. Stir and let the sugar melt after which add the pineapples.
- **4.** Add a pinch of cinnamon when the pineapple turn soft.

#### <u>Assembling</u>

- 1. Take the sable circular domes.
- 2. Add the refrigerated cream.
- 3. Put the caramelised pineapple on top and add some desiccated coconuts(chocolate lovers can add chocolate pearls!).

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# I SCREAM, YOU SCREAM AND WE ALL SCREAM FOR SHAILI'S ICE CREAM!

young food entrepreneur making waves in Ahmedabad in Gujarat-the ice-cream capital of India with her variety of traditional and contemporary ice-cream products to suit every palate.



Shaili Mehta, Ahmedabad

Ice-cream has always been a major part of Shaili's life before and after marriage, owing to the fact that her father, her husband and her father-in-law love it. Growing up, she would see her mother prepare ice-creams and her father sneaking into the kitchen to have his fill! Post marriage, every time she travelled to a new city, no matter the season or the time of the day, both, her husband and father-in-law, would go hunting for ice-cream. It made them happy. Over time, she started equating ice-cream with happiness.

#### Story behind the business

Shaili Mehta has always been making ice-creams for her family and friends. A very dear friend pushed her into starting this business and sharing her creativity with the rest of the city. Shaili avers,

"Ice-cream is the perfect comfort food and yet there is so much scope for adventure when it comes to new and unique flavours. When my friend suggested that I start this, I was excited by the possibilities this presented. Besides, what better business to be in, than one that makes people happy?"

So in this way armed with no degree in ice-cream making but simply a strong desire to 'make people happy' and banking on the experience-sharing of her mother who used to prepare ice-creams under the Anando brand around 45 years back Shaili stepped into the cold yet exciting ice-cream business!

#### Other ventures

Alongside ice-creams, Shaili also prepares shrikhand; and hold your breath, she also runs a trading company for construction materials (Pyramid Enterprises) – food and construction... quite a weird combo, eh? But like she transparently shares, "It was my construction material trade that lent me the confidence to run my own business." What she thoroughly enjoys preparing is 'Kesar Elaichi Shrikhand' whose recipe is simple but whose process demands a lot of precision.

#### **Product array**

From a time when she offered only three icecream flavours - Seasonal Sitafal, Blueberry and Sea Salt and Decadent Chocolate; today Shaili has on her menu card around 12 flavours of ice-cream, excluding the vegan and sugar-free options. This list is continuously being strengthened. The thrust is on offering a blend of traditional and contemporary flavours to suit all palates. So in sync with the same, some of the flavours on offer are - Rose Pistachio, Badam, Pista, Kesar, Malai, Raspberry, Lemon, Cookies and Cream, Coffee Caramel et al.

When it comes to the healthy variants of icecreams there's a wide arena of sugar-free and vegan options available as Shaili strongly believes that, "There are a lot of people who cannot consume sugar or dairy and we don't want them to feel deprived of the simple joy of eating a nicecream."

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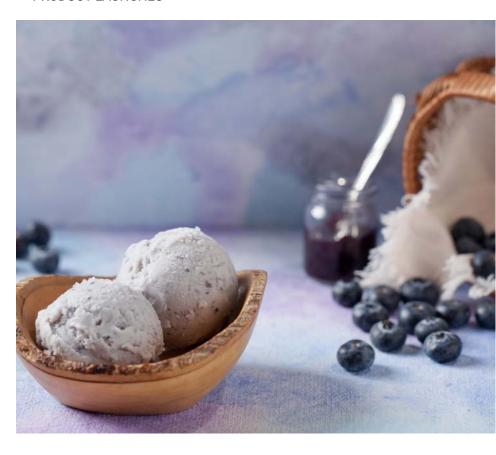
#### Festive hamper

For Diwali Shaili is looking at offering festive and practical hampers in sync with the 'new normal'. These would include a decorated ice box with glass jars of ice-cream curated to the specifications of each client.

#### In the pipeline...

Shaili is working on bringing an even larger range of ice-creams for her customers alongside expanding the current product range. But everything's hush-hush at the moment!

Shaili concludes with a meaningful message, "Well, it may sound cliché but follow your passion and do what comes to you naturally. That makes life more fun... and hey while you're at it, don't forget to have a scoop of ice-cream!"





#### **MALAI ICE-CREAM**

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Milk 2 litres Sugar 200 Grams Cream 200 Grams Custard Powder One Teaspoon (melted in cold milk)

#### **METHOD**

- **1.** Take half-a-cup of milk and add custard powder to it.
- **2.** Heat the remaining milk; add sugar and custard powder to it; and boil it until halved.
- **3.** Cool it completely and then add cream and mix well.
- **4.** Run it through the ice-cream machine and your Malai Ice-cream is ready!

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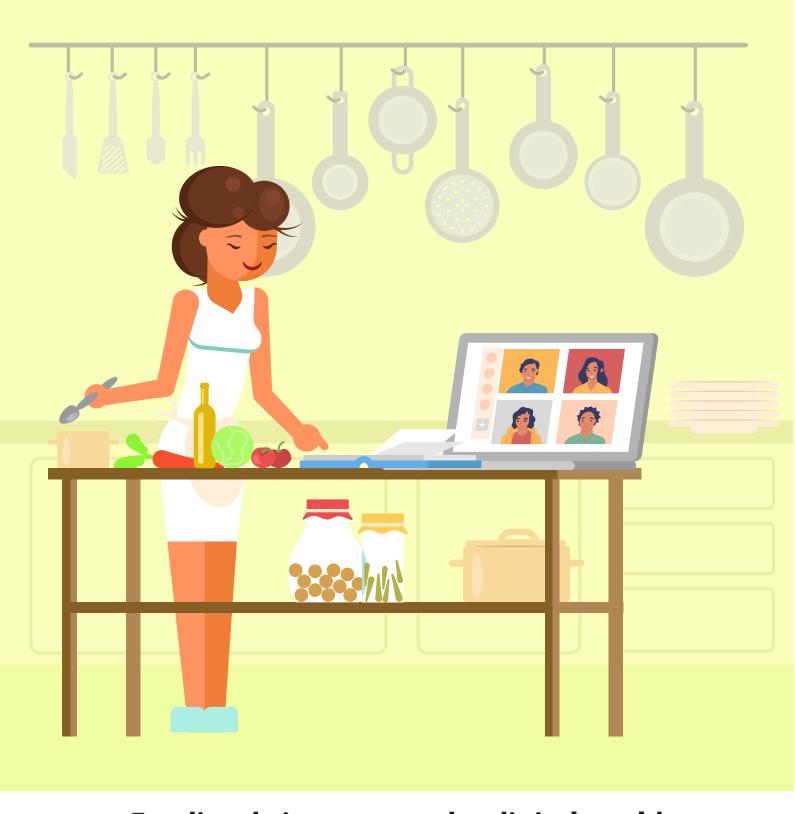




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# Balaji Farali Chevdo

ant something to munch when fasting for Navratri but too tired with chores or with your never ending work-from-home? Fret not! This ready-to-eat namkeen snack by Balaji will come to your rescue—just ask for it! Appetizing, light, and fun, "Balaji Farali Chevdo" is a sumptuous union of spicy and tasty ingredients right from your kitchen. Crunchy to bite and savory to taste, this chevdo is also loved likewise by those not fasting. No matter how much of it you eat, you are left invariably asking for more!

#### **Packaging and Presentation**

On Balaji's official website

https://www.balajiwafers.com/products/, this snack is available in two versions, which happen to be poles apart in terms of taste and flavoring. Meetha Farali Chewda is the one that comes in blue packaging and is described to be a combination of potatoes, raisins, and roasted peanuts. The namkeen version, available in yellow packaging, just indicates potatoes and roasted peanuts as its main ingredients. Needless to say, the namkeen version is way more popular amongst snackers (well, we just coined this word!).

#### Availability

It is commonly available at almost all confectionary and grocery stores—and yes you will find this even at those small stalls for chai and quick snacks. Because of its mass appeal, the chevdocan also be bought via online stores such as Grofers and Amazon.

#### Paisa Wasool or not?

Well, what would you say about a snack which starts at a price point of just ten bucks for its 60 gm chhotu packet? Anyone can afford it and moreover, it can also be bought in larger packaging (of course, for those with large families and large appetites)!

#### **Our Verdict**

Balaji Wafers and Namkeen group, as is well-known, is based in Rajkot, which is a relatively small city in Gujarat. To start as a micro-business somewhere in the 1970s and be standing today as a multi-crore venture, testifies for the quality of their products. And of course, consistency, which is so rare these days. We would just like to say that we stand united with all lovers of Balajichevdobut like most, we also like it more for its namkeen version. Even though quite content with how it is, we would also like more variants to be made available for this snack. Happy Navratri and a very joyous chevdo-chewing time y'all!





# SPIRIT



#### **ALOO CHEWDA**

A quick evening snack relished by all age groups is a hit in India. It is a mix of sweet and savory which gives it an interesting taste and hence is liked by the majority of people.

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Potato 2 Cornflour 1 Tbsp Peanuts 2 Tbsp Cashews 2 Tbsp **Dry Coconut** 1 Tbsp Curry Leaves, Few **Dry Red Chilli** 1 Pepper Powder 1/4 Tsp Turmeric Powder 1/4 Tsp Red Chilli Powder 1/4 Tsp **Dry Mango Powder** 1/4 Tsp Salt, to taste

#### **METHOD**

- 1. Peel & Grate the fresh Potatoes.
- 2. Rinse well with water to remove starch.
- 3. Drain the water & let the Potatoes dry.
- **4.** Add the potatoes in a bowl and cover them with cornflour.
- 5. Deep fry the Potatoes till golden brown & crisp.
- 6. In the same pan, fry the

peanuts, Coconut, Cashews, Dry Red Chilli & Curry Leaves.

- 7. Add all the dry Spices to Potato mixture along with the fried Nuts.
- 8. Mix the ingredients well and serve.
- 9. Can store the mixture in an airtight container.



#### **NO-BAKE CHOCOLATE COCONUT BALLS**

Quench your sugar cravings with this vegan recipe. These bite sized chocolate coconut balls will leave you reaching for just one more.

#### **INGREDIENTS**

**Shredded Coconut** 3/4 Cup Almond Flour 1/4 Cup Honey 3 Tbsp Coconut Milk 4 tsp **Chocolate Chips** 1/2 Cup



#### **METHOD**

- 1. In a mixer or food processor, mix in all the 5 ingredients. Grind till the mixture turns into soft dough like mixture. If it is not moist enough, add in coconut milk.
- Refrigerate the mixture for 20 minutes before shaping it in balls.
   Make equal balls of the mixture; coat them in shredded Coconut and serve.

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### CORN CHAAT

This corn chaat is healthy and nutritious and does not use any fancy ingredients and it serves as a healthy snack as well.

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Papad 2 **Chopped Onion 1/4 Chopped Tomato** 1/4 cup Green Chilli 1 to 2, chopped **Chopped Coriander** Leaves 1 Tbsp **Boiled Corn Kernels** 1/4 Cup **Crumbled Paneer** 1/4 Cup Capsicum 1/4 Cup **Ginger Garlic Paste** 1/2 Tsp Butter 2 tsp Chaat Masala 1 tsp Cumin Seeds 1/2 Tsp Salt, to taste Sev, to sprinkle

#### **METHOD**

- **1.** In a Pan, add Butter and roast Ginger Garlic Paste along with Green chillies.
- **2.** Add in the vegetables, Salt, Cumin seeds & Chaat Masala.
- **3.** Pour the mixture in a bowl & add sev & Coriander Leaves.
- **4.** Roast two Papad on both sides.
- **5.** When done, take out on a kitchen towel & shape it immediately into a cone shape.
- **6.** Add prepared filling. Serve immediately.



## **FAFDA INGREDIENTS** Turmeric 1/4 Tsp Hing, a pinch Baking Soda, a pinch Water 2 Tbsp **METHOD** ajwain, black pepper, turmeric, hing, baking soda, water, salt and make a dough. 2. Add some oil & knead well till the stickiness goes away and prepare a soft dough... 3. Let it rest for 15 to 20 minutes. 4. Make small balls from the dough. 5. Take one ball & use your hands to spread the dough on the counter top in the direction opposite to you. **6.** Scrape the fafdas with a knife. 7. Deep fry in Hot oil. You can fry atleast 3-4 Fafdas at a go. 8. Take out on a clean towel, let it cool.



#### **INGREDIENTS**

#### For Sugar Syrup

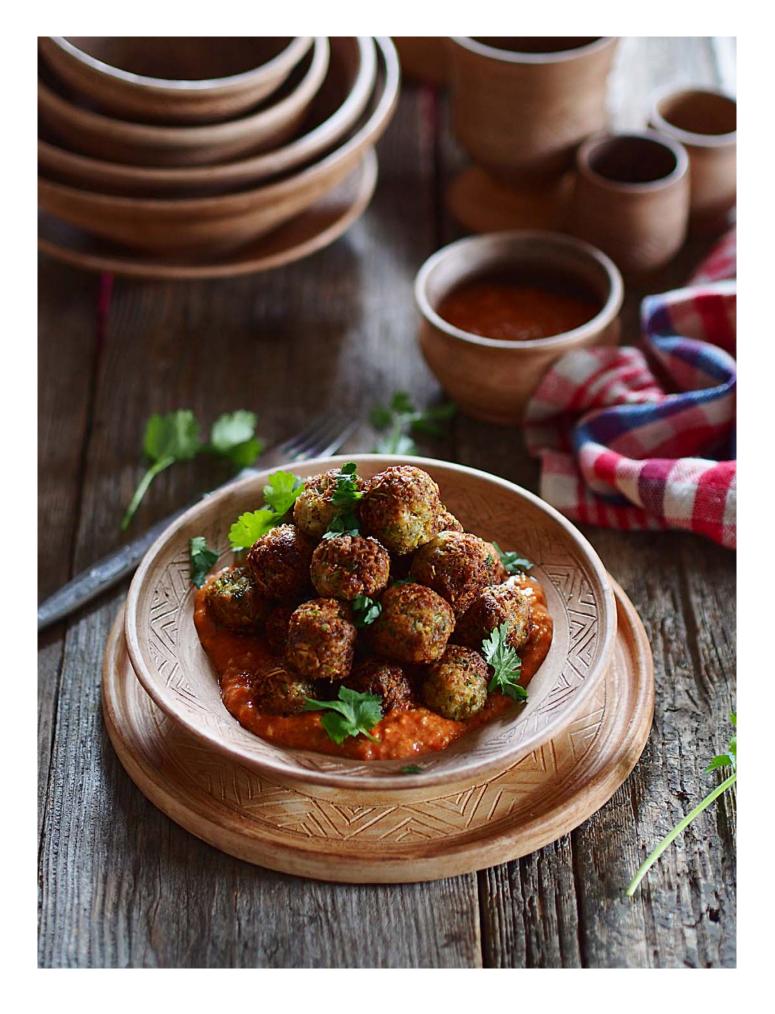
Sugar 1 cup Saffron, Few strands Warm Milk 1 Tsp Rose Water 1 Tsp

#### **Other Ingredients**

All Purpose Flour 1 cup Baking Powder 1/4 tsp Cardamom Powder 1/4 Tsp Ghee, for frying Curd 1/4 cup

#### **METHOD**

- 1. Make the sugar syrup of 1.5 string consistency with sugar and 1 cup of water.
- 2. Combine Flour, Baking Powder, Cardamom & Curd and add in water little by little to form a flowing batter.
- **3.** Pour Batter into piping bag or Jalebi Pouch.
- **4.** Pour the batter in the shape of jalebis and deep fry till crispy.
- **5.** Take it out on a plate & then add to the prepared sugar syrup.
- **6.** Serve these hot jalebi and fafda with some chutney.



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#### **GOBI MANCHURIAN**

Let's give a twist to the traditional Gobi and make it exciting to eat. This recipe is a fun and delicious way to eat cauliflower without having to eat it in the usual way.

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Cauliflower 1 Flour 3 Tbsp Cornstarch 2 Tbsp Ginger Garlic Paste 1 tsp Salt, to taste Pepper Powder 1/2 tsp Water 1/4 cup Oil, for frying

#### For Sauce

Oil 1 tbsp Ginger, grated 1 tsp Garlic, grated 1 tsp Green Chilli 1 Chopped Celery 2 tbsp Chopped Onion 1/2 cup Chopped Green Capsicum 1/2 cup Soya Sauce 1 Tbsp Tomato Ketchup 1 Tbsp Vinegar 1 tsp Hot Red Sauce 1 tbsp Sugar 1 tsp Pepper 1/2 tsp Salt, to taste

#### **METHOD**

- **1.** In a Pan, add Oil, Garlic, Ginger, Green Chilli, Celery and mix well.
- **2.** Later add capsicum and onions and cook well.
- **3.** Pour in Ketchup, Soya Sauce, Vinegar, Hot Sauce,

Sugar ,Pepper powder and Salt. Cook well and turn off the heat.

- **4.** Now in hot boiling water, add in the chopped flower florets. Cook for 5 minutes. Strain it, rinse it & pat dry on towel.
- **5.** To a bowl, add in the Flour, Cornstarch, Ginger Garlic Paste, Salt & Pepper. Make a smooth paste.
- **6.** Now heat Oil in a Pan. Take the floret, dip it in the prepared paste & fry it in hot Oil.
- **7.** Now add in all fried florets in the prepared hot Sauce.
- **8.** Cook for 2 minutes. Serve Hot.



#### GREEN PAV-BHAJI

Green Pav Bhaji is made with green leafy vegetables which is a healthier alternative to the traditional pav bhaji. If you are a fitness freak or want to try a new version of pav bhaji then do check this recipe.

#### **INGREDIENTS**

#### **TO MAKE PUREE**

Spinach, half bunch Soda, a pinch Ginger, chilli, garlic paste 1 Tbsp Coriander Leaves 1/4 cup

#### **OTHER INGREDIENTS**

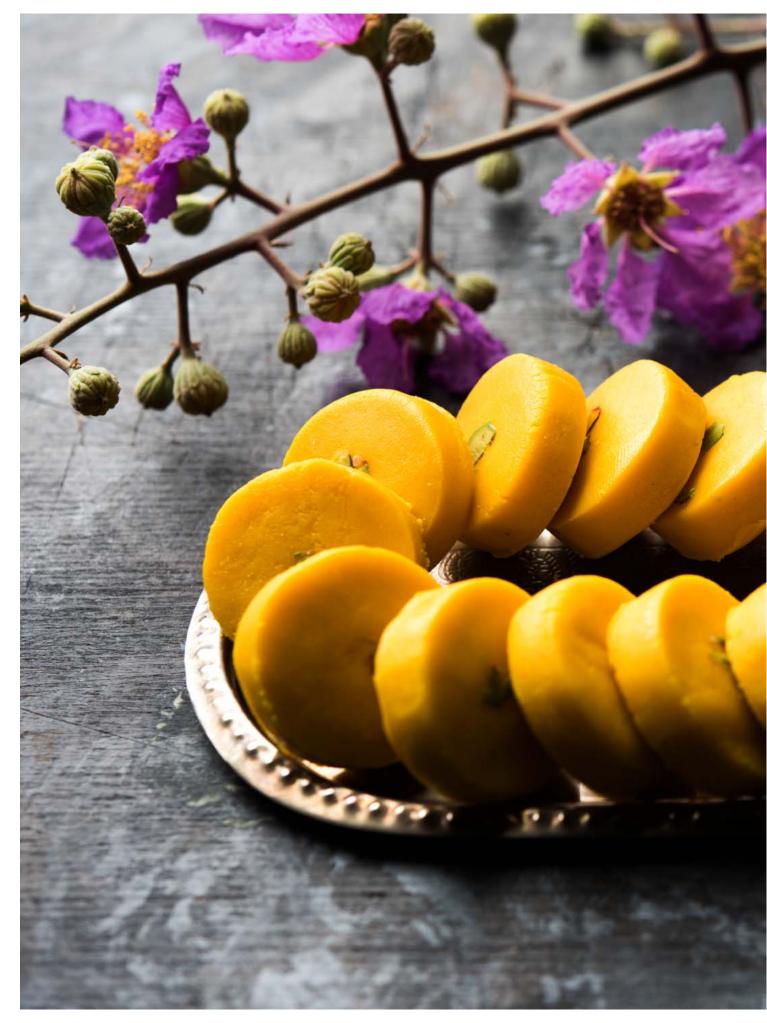
Butter 2 Tbsp
Oil 2 Tbsp
Chopped Onions 1/4 cup
Green Capsicum 1/4 cup
Tomato 1/4 cup
Green Onions 1/4 cup
Boiled Potato 1/2 cup
Boiled Green Peas 1/4 cup
Coriander Leaves 1/4 cup
Salt, to taste
Turmeric Powder 1/4 Tsp
Pav Bhaji Masala 1 Tbsp
Butter 1 Tbsp to garnish

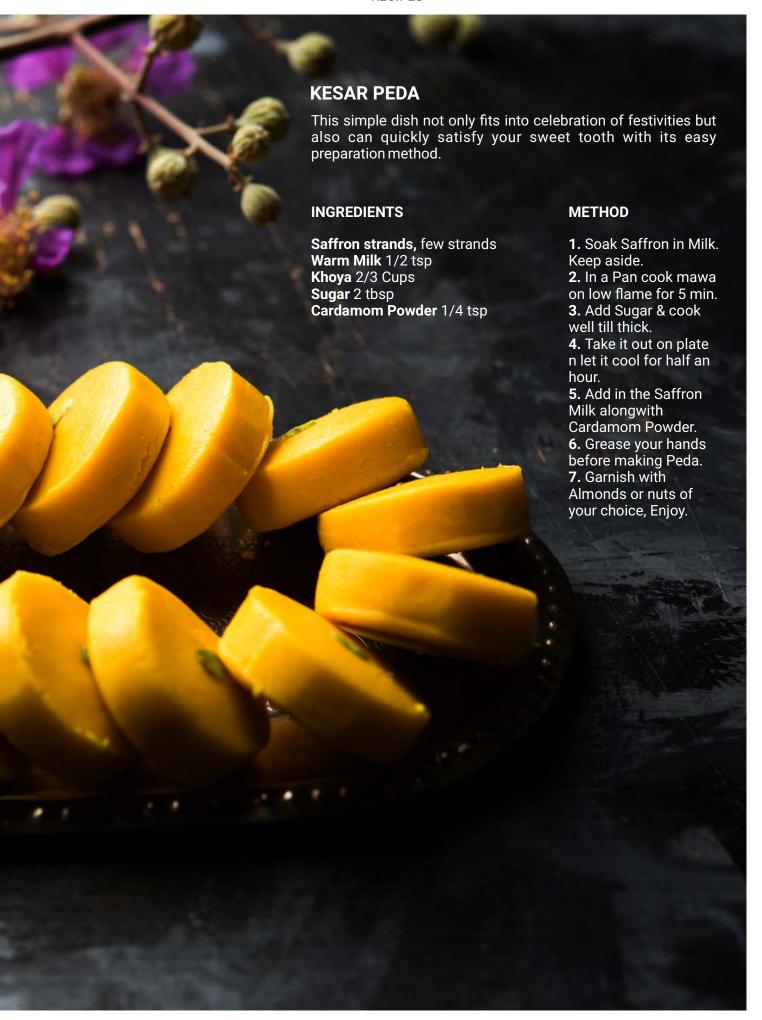
#### **METHOD**

**1.** Saute spinach for 2 minutes in cooking oil and sprinkle

- some soda on it and set aside. **2.** In a Mixer, add Garlic, Green
- chilli, Ginger, Coriander & cooked Spinach.Grind the ingredients until you get a smooth paste.
- 3. Heat Oil & Butter. Add in Onions, Capsicum, tomatoes along with the Spinach paste & cook well
- **4.** Add Potatoes, green peas, turmeric powder, pav bhaji masala and mix well.
- **5.** Add 1 cup of hot water, Mix and mash the bhaji well
- **6.** Garnish with butter, chopped green coriander & spring onions
- **7.** Serve hot with Salad & Butter Pav.









#### **MOONG DAL HALWA**

This sweet dish is a great accompaniment on occasions like Holi, Diwali, weddings etc. This halwa is majorly relished in winters to help keep the body warm.

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Yellow Moong Dal 1 cup Saffron, Few strands Warm Milk 1 tbsp Ghee 1 cup Warm Milk 1 cup Sugar 1 cup Cardamom Powder 1 tsp Almond Slices, to garnish

#### **METHOD**

- 1. Soak Dal for 3 to 4 Hours. Pulse in mixer with 1 Tbsp water till a fine paste.
- **2.** Soak Saffron strands in Warm milk. Keep aside.
- **3.** Heat Ghee in a pan. Add in the Dal paste & cook for 30 min.
- **4.** Then add in Milk n Water. Stir well.
- **5.** Then add Sugar n again cook for 5 minutes.
- **6.** Lastly add in the Saffron milk n cook for 2 min.
- **7.** Cook till it leaves the pan. Garnish with Almond & Serve Warm.





#### NO BAKE GULAB JAMUN CHEESECAKE

This is a treat to your taste buds as gulab jamun has turned into a cheesecake. What more does one want? Check the recipe to make this one of a kind delicacy.

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Digestive Biscuits 200g
Butter 100g
Cream Cheese 300g
Double Cream 200ml
Pinch of Saffron infused in 2 tbsp of Milk 1 tbsp of rough Chopped
Pistachios & Almonds
Cardamom Powder 1 Tsp
Icing Sugar 50g
Gelatin 1 tbsp soaked in 4 tbsp of water
10 medium sized Gulab Jamun
Edible dried rose petals & crushed pistachios for decoration - optional...



#### **METHOD**

- **1.** Prepare the base by crushing the pistachios almonds & biscuits. Add butter, mix.
- **2.** Layer it in the base of a cake tin approx 6". Flatten the biscuit base & refrigerate.
- **3.** Soak the Gelatin in water & let it bloom.
- **4.** Add saffron to the milk. Mix the cream cheese then add the cream, cardamom powder & icing sugar. Whisk till its stiff.
- **5.** Warm the Gelatin for 30 seconds & add to the cream cheese along with

the saffron.

- **6.** Whisk a little more till it's all incorporated.
- 7. Cut gulab jamun in half & place them over the base of the biscuit.
- **8.** Spoon the mixture over the gulab jamun, making sure you've layered the filling in between all the gaps.
- **9.** Smooth the top of the cheesecake and refrigerate for a few hours or overnight.
- **10.** Decorate the top with pistachios, dried rose petals & quartered gulab jamun.



#### **MISHTI DOI**

West Bengal's incredibly famous mishti doi is prepared by just three simple ingredients. Check out the hassle-free recipe of mishti doi and enjoy the flavour of West Bengal in the comfort of your home.

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Milk 9 liters of full fat milk

Sugar

Curd 4-5 tablespoons of fresh curd or a yogurt starter

#### **METHOD**

- **1.** Take 9 liters of full fat milk in a heavy *kadai* / pan.
- 2. Keep flame to low or medium-low and begin to heat milk.
- **3.** Stir occasionally when the milk is getting simmered.
- **4.** The continuous simmering will reduce the milk when the milk reduces to 2 liters add another liter of milk in it.
- **5.** Now increase the flame and constantly stir the milk when the milk reduces again switch off the flame and cover the *kadai* / pan with a soft muslin cloth and leave the milk to cool.

you have a cooking thermometer, you can check the temperature. It should be between 40 - 44 degree Celsius.

Now add 5 tablespoons of curd with a whisk.

- **7.** Mix the curd very well so that the curd dissolves in the milk.
- **8.** Now transfer the mixture in an earthen bowl and cover it with a lid

Keep the mishti doi in a warm place to set. Mishti doi takes longer to set than plain curd.

- 9. When mishti doi is set, refrigerate it.
- 10. Serve Mishti Doi chilled.



By Mr. Sudip Mullick (Proprietor of Balaram Mullick & Radharaman Mullick)

#### MANAGO GELATO SANDESH

Sandesh being a staple sweet for celebrations of Durga Puja and Navratri is relished by all the Bengalis. Try this recipe by Balaram and Radharaman Mullick to give a twist to the recipe of original Sandesh.

#### **INGREDIENTS**

Cottage cheese 500 Gms Freshly cut mango cubes 500 Gms Mango pulp 200 Gms Condensed milk 250 Gms Fresh cream 100 Gms



#### **METHOD**

- 1. Heat a pan. Add freshly cut mangoes and sugar and cook for 4-5 minutes, stir continuously.
- 2. Switch off the heat and cool to room temperature.
- 3. Now, in another container mix the following- 500 gms fresh cottage cheese, 140 gms sugar and 100 gms mango pulp.
- 4. Mix the above ingredients well and then
- add condensed milk, fresh cream, soaked saffron and the previously made mixture of mango cubes & sugar.
- 5. Mix everything well but in such a way that the mango cubes do not get smashed completely.
- 6. Divide into 15 equal portions and put it in the refrigerator for 10-15 minutes.
- 7. Serve chilled.



# A TYPICAL FOOD-FILLED DAY DURING DURING DURING A PUJA

very year during Ashwin month of
Bengali calender, the streets of Kolkata,
drab and tired from the months of heat
and humidity, transform into something
resplendent. One only has to witness a
Bengali's face light up when the words 'Durga
Puja' are said to him, to realize the mammoth
place it holds in the Bengali cultural fabric. The
words cease to remain words and
metamorphosize into an emotion.

The phenomenon of the Pujas is larger than life. The city lights up like an amusement park, throngs of visitors take to the streets, by lanes are crammed with pandals created with astonishing creativity and dexterity, traffic stands at a halt for hours. It is impossible to be in Kolkata and not be swept up in the fervour. However, despite these being an integral part of the festival, every Bengali knows that this is not simply what Pujas are about.

Durga Puja is equally a festival of mornings spent around the table with unlimited cups of chai and the wafting smell of fresh luchis being fried, the giddy laughter shared with relatives wearing notun jama, the adda sessions before lunch discussing politics and love, the sounds of drums early in the morning, the sindur khela and the dhanuchi naach. It is also a festival where people of all classes walk shoulder to shoulder in the same pandals, the thirst for Maa's Aashirvad uniting everyone. But most of all, Durga Puja is also a time for unlimited food, especially the fried kind.

A typical day during Durga Puja starts with an effervescence visible in a Bengali mother's smile, as she prepares a traditional Bengali meal of chale dale, pappad, tomato chutney, begun bhaja (fried brinjal), and jhuri bhaja (fried shredded potatoes). The meal may also be



accompanied by meat or fish such as kosha mangsho (mutton curry) or Chingri maacher malai curry (prawn in coconut milk curry). On some days, lunch consists of the habitual luchi with alu dum or chholar dal, and hing kachori. The mornings start out slow as people take to the para (locality) for an adda session. In the evenings, people make their way to the aarti in front of the goddess. The adda then shifts to a relative's house. Bhetki fish fingers and mutton or vegetable chops are served as everyone gets ready for a night of pandal hopping.

Which pandals the locals choose to visit is determined not only by their popularity (with some pandals looking like they were crafted using wizardry), but also by the quality of food available nearby. Durga Puja is nothing without its road side food. A visitor may need a sturdy stomach (and heart) to fill up on these, but locals take it on with gusto. This is not the time for sophisticated Bengali meals at Bhojohori Manna or 6 Ballygunge Place. This is the time for rolls, chowmein and chaat.

Kathi rolls are almost symbolic of the city's street food culture - a saucy combination of meat, egg and onions rolled up in a paratha.

Nizams and Baadshah at Esplanade, Kusums on Park Street and Anamika in New Alipore are noteworthy. Every Bengali loves visiting oriental restaurants but the allure of roadside chowmein is unavoidable. There is plenty of experimentation with some shops adding ketchup, indian spices or even leftover chicken gravy to the noodles. Famous Kolkata chaats like puchka, papri chaat, ghugni and jhaal muri are always available and worth gorging on.

One must not forget the more spiritual offering of food - the puja bhog. Served gratis to visitors, it is a completely vegetarian preparation of khichuri with labra (mixed vegetables) and porebhaja (fried vegetables). Locals swear that the same smokey flavour is impossible to achieve at home and credit it to the Goddess' blessings. The bhog is also often accompanied by the lifeline of Bengalis - sweets such as payesh (kheer) or sandesh.

With the current pandemic still looming large, it is evident that the festivities this year will not be the same. With debates around the feasibility of exposing people to the corona virus while cases continue to rise, it is perhaps advisable to bring the spirit of the Pujas home. While one may not enjoy the roadside food, one can find new appreciation



for the hygienic home-cooked food prepared with so much love and devotion. One can be thankful for reduced wastage of food and can choose to keep the spirit of the Pujas alive and help the lesser fortunate. Afterall, as most Bengalis know, 'Durga Puja' is not just words, it is an emotion.

By Shreya Mundhra



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### How To Have A Covid Safe Diwali

If there is one festival that lights up the entire country, it is unarguably Diwali. The festive season is heralded by Navratri, a nine day extravaganza of food, music, dance and pujas, which begins on October 17th this year. Dandiya and Garba fever grips the nation. The streets come alive with people adorned in their festive best, excitement and laughter fill the air. The merriment continues up until Diwali with poker nights being a regular occurrence. However, with the corona virus situation refusing to abate, it is evident that this year might look quite different.

By Shreya Mundhra

estivals are a time for socializing more than anything else. To even imagine one with social distancing seems contradictory to its very essence. But this is the year for caution and pragmatism. Our festivals will return every year but our health is of paramount importance. It is imperative that we restrict social gatherings and find ways to celebrate at home. While there may not be the same gaiety and interaction this year, we can find ways to celebrate safely and innovatively. Below are some ways to keep both your smile and health intact this festive season.

### L. SHIFT TO VIRTUAL CELEBRATIONS

While nothing can replace the mood created when people assemble together physically, this year has proved that celebrations can be held virtually with enough scope for fun! Planning digital games, catching up with cousins from all over the world, dressing upnone of it has to stop. There are many small businesses offering a great virtual experience for a

fee and are worth checking out. You and your friends can just sit back and enjoy the experience while they curate the entire event to match the occasion's needs.

#### 2. BE KIND

If you're feeling dejected about not being able to go out and celebrate your favourite festivals, so is everyone else. Brighten up someone's day and send them some gifts. Make it thoughtful and package it well. Show people that even if you can't visit them, you're still thinking of them. Extend the kindness to the needy as well. Spend a part of your festival budget on feeding the hungry, donating to a charity or even feeding stray animals! Doing a good deed will feel satisfying enough to make up for the loss of extravagant celebrations.

#### 3. LOOK AT THE POSITIVES

Although festivals mean a lot of joy and merriment, they also mean humongous amount of wastage. There is also the accompanying pollution and subsequent health issues, problems for people living on

the streets, accidents etc. Restricted celebrations this year would mean a lot of those problems not occurring at all.

#### 4. SPEND TIME WITH FAMILY

Take a break from the fervour of festivities this time and instead, spend some quality time with your family. Plan events centered around time with family and use the time to bond and make memories. Make rangolis together, have meals together, maybe even sing bhajans together. Once life is back to the same busy grind, these are the memories that will make you smile.

#### 5. INDULGE A LITTLE

So what if you're spending Diwali or Navratri at home? Dress up the way you would if you went out. Spend time on getting ready and encourage everyone to do the same. Look your part and the excitement will follow! Treat yourself to the decadent food on offer - jalebis, laddoos, kachoris and puris. Allow yourself to let loose for a while and revel in the spirit of the festival.

As they say - there's a positive side to everything, it just takes a positive mind to see it.

There are plenty of ways to keep the celebrations going but also remaining safe at the same time. We must all be cognizant of the rising cases in our country and do our best to not just stay safe, but to keep the people around us safe too. This year, we must all pledge to put others before our whims, but also not allow it to dampen our spirits. Let our festivals bear the same pomp and joy this year, just with a lot more responsibility.



### TOWARDS A GREEN DIWALI

A positive downside of the pandemic is that practically all festivals have been celebrated in an eco-friendly way with - less noise, waste and pollution; no road processions; and social distancing being adhered to. Let's continue with this positive trend and host a Green Diwali.

his year let's celebrate
Diwali a tad bit differently
... less noise and more
lights; less of consumerism and
more of sharing; less of artificial
and more of natural; and less
recklessness and more
thoughtfulness. Here's how –

#### **Firecrackers**

Instead of regular crackers which pose a steep level of health and pollution risk opt for Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-certified green crackers... spread this awareness among your relatives, friends, neighbours and community.

#### Let there be light

Opt for diyas which cause minimal damage to the environment. You can also light up your home with lanterns which drastically 'lighten' (pun intended!) your electricity bill.

#### Natural rangoli

Select eco-friendly colours or even flowers in water instead of chemical colours for your rangoli.

#### Give to others

The year has been a trying one for all especially the underprivileged. How about dropping the idea of a consumerist Diwali and instead diverting that spending on rations and other essentials for the needy - say labourers for instance? You could also buy a new outfit or a box of sweets or a smart phone (an essential in



these days of study-from-home) for the child of your domestic help or security guard.

#### **Waste tips**

Dispose off the Diwali waste in a responsible way by segregating it into biodegradable and nonbiodegradable waste; and try and recycle and reuse as much as you can.

#### **Connect virtually**

With social gatherings being best avoided virtual options to connect with friends, relatives and team members are galore – write personal e-mails; send Diwali cards; or prepare a video capturing memories from past Diwali celebrations – and bring a smile on their faces.

#### **Healthy snacks**

Festivals are incomplete without a sumptuous spread. But what about choosing to go healthy

and nutritious this year by replacing - chocolates and pastries with homemade less sugar-based traditional sweets; fried snacks with baked ones; sweetmeats oozing with ghee (clarified butter) with dry fruits...add your own healthy options!

Other simple but meaningful steps comprise – ditching plastic; opting to cycle, walk or car- pool as much as possible during the Diwali break; gifting loved ones saplings, recycled products, cloth bags, biodegradable candles; et al.

This year let's do the environment a favour and celebrate a clean and green Diwali and illuminate not only our life but the lives of others too!

## **GEARING UP FOR DIWALI!**

With Diwali just a month away its time now to start preparing for the festival of lights! For Indians across the globe Diwali is synonymous to - de-cluttering the house and giving it a new look; shopping for goodies and gifts for loved ones; and of course preparing a spread of lip-smacking snacks!



he countdown to the festival of lights begins! There's a wave of excitement and urgency running through Indian households as they start preparing a to-do checklist. Albeit the restrictions in the new norm are a deterrent to social gatherings but let that not dampen our festive spirits! So here's a priority list to help you gear up for Diwali –

#### **Spruce up your house**

If your house is in a bad shape then book a safe-painting service provider. In case, you've had your house painted recently then roll up your sleeves and get to the task of thoroughly cleaning it including the - balcony and terrace, walls, fans, doors and windows, furniture, grills, et al.

#### De-clutter

Weed your wardrobe, pantry, lofts or attics and ruthlessly dispose of or donate anything which hasn't been used for the past one year.

#### **Shopping**

If stepping into a mall puts you off; explore e-retail portals which have a variety of products to suit everybody's palate ... be it - clothes for family and friends; tapestry and home décor; electronic gadgets; bullion; something for your house temple; candles; diyas; string lights; cotton wicks; oil for the diyas; knickknacks; dry fruits; crackers green ones please!; colours and stencil designs for your rangoli; grocery items for preparing those sumptuous Diwali snacks ...the list is

endless!

#### Gifts for loved ones

This year gifting is a test of your thoughtfulness! So try to select gifts which are safe and useful rather than decorative but impractical.

#### Check out recipes

Snacks and sweets are an innate part of Diwali so home-chefs need to prepare themselves by scouting for healthy recipes online.

#### **Decorate your house**

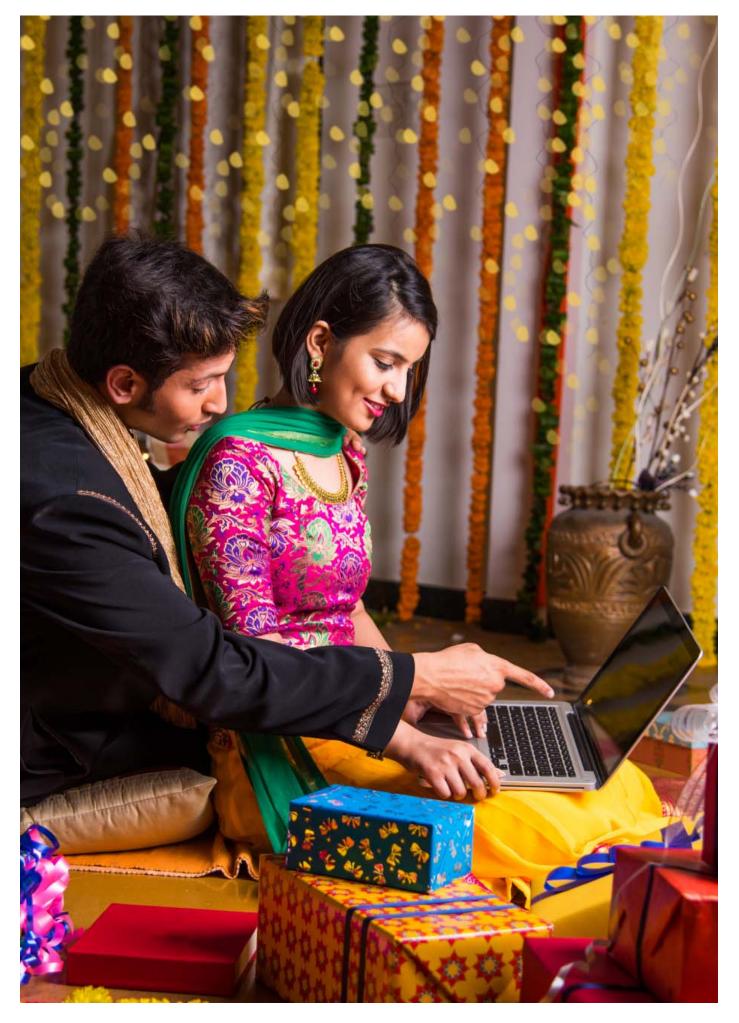
Plan things in advance so that your house is well-decorated before you are; be it – the rangoli at the entrance; the paper lanterns; the lighting; the diyas; the new cushion covers, bed-sheets, pillow cases…everything needs to be in place.

#### Wind-up all pending tasks

Complete all tasks in advance say airing your winter apparel; cleaning your vehicle; Diwali projects and assignments of your kids, et al.

And most important banish the negativity and the sense of gloom and welcome the festival of lights!

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# From a humble tea stall to 'THE GRAND BHAGWATI'...!



From a tea stall in 1983 to The Grand Bhagwati or TGB as it's fondly called by its patrons... Narendra Somani has come a long way simply on the strength of his innovative and out-of-the-box thinking and passion for connecting food and people.

I am very passionate about food and a firm espouser of vegetarian cuisine. I have travelled around the globe and have viewed multiple cuisines and dishes - both vegetarian and nonvegetarian. I challenge you to select any food item from any cuisine be it Mexican, Italian or Lebanese – and I'll offer you its vegetarian version without compromising on the taste!"

-Narendra Somani

arendra Somani embarked on his hospitality industry journey with a modest tea stall at Relief Road way back in 1983 which he ran along with his studies. The entrepreneurial streak in him pushed him to elevate from merely serving tea to customers at his stall to taking orders for tea and espresso coffee machines; he then moved on to taking catering orders for wedding, parties et al for serving tea, coffees, juices and ice cream.

The next big step came in 1989 when he decided to re-introduce street chaat to a Fafda-jalebi Gujarat. The quintessential Delhi style chaat was something novel, exciting and yummilicious for the foodies of Gujarat. So he hired a

cook from Delhi and started his mini chaat outlet at White House. Panchwati, Ahmedabad. The response from the very first day was awesome with people showering this venture with love and support. This lead him to continue expanding the chaat items and gradually turning towards outdoor catering services. Narendra, then started India's first centralized outdoor kitchen which was yet another page in his success book. And then came the turning point of his career when he decided to enter into the catering business on a full-fledged basis.

Where in those days the wedding menu of an archetypal Gujarati comprised of around 10-12 items and all offered at one place; Narendra and his team changed the trend by expanding not only the number of items but also the types of cuisines making the food display rich and lavish; and bagging an overwhelming response to the same not only from the crèmede-la-crème but also from the upper middle class segment. The reason being that weddings in India per se are a once-in-alifetime occasion: so each household irrespective of its financial bandwidth strives to make it a memorable occasion for the guests. Then again food being one of the integral elements ... offering options galore to suit everyone's palate left an indelible impact on the quests stomach and more importantly on their hearts!

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Elucidating on the reason for the name TGB, Narendra says, "The name of my tea stall was Bhagwati Tea Stall: the chaat outlet which was my second venture was also named as The Bhagwati Chaat Centre. So when we were planning to inaugurate our hotel we had released an advertisement inviting people to suggest names for our hotel with a cash reward of INR 10,000/- for the best name. In response to the same we received a number of hilarious suggestions carrying names of the Bollywood Khans. But then someone from the core team suggested that we continue with our tag name 'Bhagwati' as its stood us in good stead till date; plus it would be foolish to dilute our brand by giving our new initiative some other name...but yes in sync with the grandeur and ambience of the hotel perhaps we could name it - The Grand Bhagwati. And that's how TGB came into existence!"

The man who offers a plethora of cuisine and dishes to his guests is quite simple in his tastes - 'daal-rice' is something that Narendra can eat 365 days of the year; and from the TGB menu it is potato roasties which are his all-time favourite!

In the current phase of unlock, TGB is strictly adhering to the SOPs issued by the government and has in place norms like – thermal screening of staff, vendors and guests; donning of masks, face shields, hair nets etc. by staff; maintaining social distancing among staff and guests; frequent sanitization of premises et al. Employees are regularly tested for COVID-19 and in case of an employee being indisposed he/she is not allowed to work until perfectly fit

to resume duties.

Opining on the on-going pandemic and its effect on businesses in general and the hospitality industry in particular Narendra says "As everyone knows the worst impact of the various phases of the lockdown has been experienced by the hospitality and food industry. But slowly and gradually the economy is gearing up and we hope and pray that by April 2021 matters stabilise and everything returns to normal. In the recently announced Unlock 5 guidelines, the government too has given us a bit of leeway by allowing gatherings of up to 200 people in open spaces like party plots and lawns; we await their guidelines with regards to closed spaces like banquet halls." But he continues on an optimistic note, "We haven't lost anything in this pandemic... in fact we as a team have used this as an opportunity to research and evolve in a different manner. I have myself learned so much from this pandemic that I am positive that it will definitely help me in my future endeavours."

There's a popular management quote, 'When the times are tough, the tough gets going'! The TGB Team epitomises this to the T! While their peers were lamenting the loss of business due to the pandemic and the lockdowns announced to arrest its growth, TGB turned this disaster into an opportunity by brainstorming on various ideas. One of their brainchild is an innovative venture - 'Frozen Food Factory', through which they aim to supply safe and ready-to-use packaged food products. With everyone busy with their careers in today's fastpaced lifestyle this initiative

offers patrons an opportunity to save their time and energy without compromising on their cravings for delicious homemade food. This product is targeted at the - youngster, student, working parent and couple segments.

Narendra intends to launch this venture in the month of January. Food items on offer would comprise - manchurian, hara bhara kebab, aloo paneer, mutter paneer, kachoris and much more... hmm sounds sinfully tempting, doesn't it?

Then again understanding that the various phases of the lockdown would have wreaked havoc with household budgets, TGB under its baking sector expansion plan has launched cakes and cream rolls starting at INR 5/- and INR 10/- only!

Another innovation has been brought about in the menu card of TGB; adopting the western food culture they've come up with a platter style menu where everyone can order curries of their own choice nullifying the need (and risk in the pandemic times) of sharing one curry. This is akin to a combo platter, Narendra ends with a warm message for our home chefs, "Even we at TGB have learnt so much from homechefs be it how to make less oily food items or how to prepare the healthy versions of any recipe... and lots more! So I would like to tell them to go ahead and have a shot at the big market out there in the industry. My best wishes are always with the homechefs and home bakers who are planning to open their ventures and take a professional step into the hospitality industry."



#### About The Grand Bhagwati

Set up in the year 1989 for providing quality, excellent food and great services in the food and catering segment, TGB Banquets and Hotels Ltd, through its catering division pioneered the concept of professional catering. The same has resulted in TGB Banquets and Hotels Ltd being among the few select organized corporate catering companies across India providing food and hospitality services pan-India and also at the global level (Hong Kong, Dubai, Macau et al).

Your search for a superlative and safe gastronomic experience ends with TGB!

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## **Umang Hutheesing**

### A Royal Cultural Revivalist

mang Hutheesing - a designer and costume historian whose designs feature in a number of museums including the National Museum of Bahrain and the YSL Foundation in Paris, France. Hutheesing also runs the Hutheesing Haveli Art Museum in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

For designer and costume historian Umang Hutheesing, design is a passion and a patronage. Hailing from the oldest (since 1981 in fact) established design company of Asia, which is a founding partner of Louise Tiffany (now Tiffany and Company); all his predecessors are welleducated in business. Irrespective of their interests

> be it IT, engineering, design et al each and every member of the family has a strong grip over the nitty-gritty of business. Umang is simply "taking forward the legacy of what his ancestors started

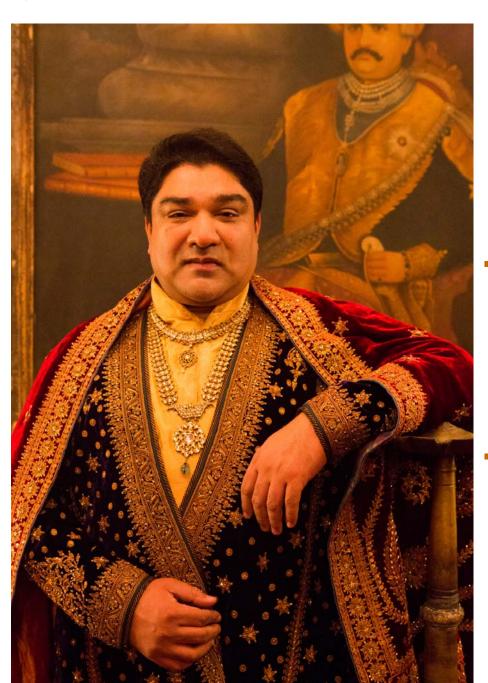
## of what his ancestors started centuries back."

Inspired by the classics...

Umang emphatically states that his designs are based on classics and he avoids fusion as he is a hard-core 'revivalist'! He further elaborates...

"I am a patron of culture, art and my heritage; and all my designs are inspired by heritage and culture and they remain true to classical sense. My inspiration comes from having known and understood the classics. Everybody has their own signature style... this is mine."

To quote Jawaharlal Nehru - "The early beginnings of civilization are tied up with the manufacture of textiles, and history might well be written with this as the leading motif." And India undoubtedly has a great heritage in textiles and handicrafts. The objective of Umang's designing is "not just showcasing beautiful art but also supporting, sustaining and keeping alive our heritage of hand craftsmanship"



#### Thoughts on fashion

According to Umang, fashion is an entirely different ball game. He firmly denies being in the fashion rat race and is proud that he belongs to the 'classic stratum' that never goes out-of-fashion, that never changes and that is perennially charismatic! Like he says "Culture is never temporary... Cultural heritage evolves over time but never changes; while it is the contrary which holds true for fashion!"

#### **Personal fashion statement**

The designer par excellence is himself always seen in a regular *khadi kurta*; the reason being he is a firm believer in the Gandhian values of simplicity and humility. Moreover he adds with a smile, "Honestly, there is nothing more stylish than our khadi kurta because it is only when you have mastered arrogance that you can afford to be simple; and only when you are an achiever on the social ladder can you be humble! Hence, humility and simplicity are the ultimate statement of having reached the pinnacle until then you are in the process of 'trying to be'!"

#### Navratri doesn't need a fashion statement

Umang strongly believes that Navratri is not for making a fashion statement ...

"it's a religious festival dedicated to Nav Durga so it's all about devotion. Revellers do wear traditional clothes but it has been the same since years... there is no change per se."

It is Sheri Garba (house garba) which excites this designer instead of its commercial counterpart. "House garba is a wonderful thing which is coming back in trend. Navratri is not a fashion statement ...a *ghaghara* will be a *ghaghara*! Navratri garba according to me starts with an *Aarti* and ends with the same. So my style statement to all the garba goers is to 'go with purity and devotion'".

#### Wedding designs in the pipeline

Umang never repeats his designs, his each piece is one of a kind! For brides-to-be his designer wear varies from simple, exquisite and beautiful panetars... to heavily embellished

complex garments basis various factors like comfort level, need to look unique et al besides the cost. Umang nicely encapsulates this for us, "my job is not to put something which I have made on a bride; in fact my job is to give something to the bride that makes her happy on her wedding day and something that she has dreamt and fantasised about as it is HER special day!"

#### Relationship with royalty

Umang attends a lot of weddings and royal functions...and many royalties attend his events too besides walking the ramp for him. Their association is not simply based on clothing or fashion but rather on heritage and culture. The single thread which binds them is their custodianship of culture and tradition. Instead of 're-inventing traditions' they are 'continuing with traditions'; hence the relationship with royalty is not based on the modern platform of fashion but rather on the sturdy foundation of history.

#### Navratri...then and now

Umang feels that the longest dance festival in India is celebrated across the country in varied ways not just through dancing but also through fasting. Royal families follow certain traditional rituals like celebrating it in the courtyard in a close knitted ceremony offering their devotion to Maa Durga.

He nostalgically talks about the Navratri organized by the Maharaja and Maharani of Baroda last year where around 10k people had gathered to enjoy the event; and mentions that it was an aesthetic and beautifully done celebration with royalties from all over the country attending the function.

During the earlier times, people used to celebrate Navratri very simply by fasting and offering sweets to Maa Durga and lighting an oil lamp. And for Umang, "This is precisely the best way to celebrate Navratra. Dancing is more of an outlet for our expressions. A 5000-year tradition can't be changed based on a fad which has come up in the recent 30 years!"

Umang signs off with Navratri Greetings to all the readers

## Chocolates, Pastries & All Things Good!

Chef **Tejasvi Chandela** based in Jaipur, Rajasthan derives her inspiration from comfort food and backs it up with French techniques to give the dessert a chicer look. If it doesn't come from her heart it won't go on our menu.



ejasvi was just 22 when she started Dzurt. She had returned post completion of her course from Le Cordon Bleu Paris. It was primarily her frustration at not being allowed to experiment and give wings to her creativity, thanks to most hotels having their standard offerings in the pastry and dessert segment that drove her to explore the option of starting out on her own. That's how she opened her patisserie in Jaipur. This was seven years back when there were only bakeries and people were totally unaware of the patisserie concept! But Chef Tejasvi was an exception as she loved to "play with colour, to glam things up and wanted a piece of my personality to reflect in my patisserie" So that's how Dzurt came up!

Hey let's rewind a bit and go back into Tejasvi's school days — even as a higher secondary art student she always knew that she wanted to get into cooking and baking as she found this world more intriguing, creative and attractive than academics! But that doesn't mean that she quit academics; of course not, this spunky entrepreneur completed her Business Management degree from Royal Holloway University, London; after which she indulged her creative leaning by pursuing a certificate course at the Leith School of Food and Wine, London. She then returned to India for a short internship and then shifted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where she worked as a project manager for a patron who was setting up his own studio kitchen/culinary institute.

Sharing about her Paris experience while pursuing the course at LCB, Tejasvi dreamily says, "The best thing about Paris is that you not only get to learn new desserts and pastries but you get to live those moments. I met people from every culture and today have friends all over the world. We exchanged recipes and learnt about each other's culture through food. The amount of food my mind got to eat is amazing...and then again the beauty of Paris is something which just can't be captured in words!"

Fast forwarding to six months after opening Dzurt, Tejasvi got married and moved to Gurgaon. But once she settled down she realized that sitting tight at home was not her cup of tea! And around that time a friend re-connected and suggested that they open a venture in partnership... perhaps something to do with chocolates. That's how Allthingschocolate took shape. Her family then shifted to Jaipur and Tejasvi was able to concentrate on Dzurt– the immediate next steps were rehashing the menu and fixing the factory system for Allthingschocolate. Her experience in

chocolates pushed her to gain some formal learning in this segment, so she went off to Barcelona a year later and studied masters in chocolate making from a certified chocolatier. Post her return, she opened her studio kitchen Cutchocolatecake. It is here that Tejasvi conducts her workshops and also hosts other chocolatiers. Today, she has a bean to bar chocolate production factory in Jaipur.

Upon being asked whether she faces any product overlapping issues among all the three brands, Tejasvi promptly denies the same "The audience for all the three ventures is slightly different. As Allthingschocolate is a luxury brand, it pulls in a metropolitan crowd; while Dzurt is only for Jaipurians and is standing tall since the last seven years; and Cutchocolatecake is my studio kitchen primarily targeted at localities but with online classes I am getting people from all over the world attending it. I take a batch of 200 people at a go."

I am yet to discover my favourite dish! For now it's'just all things dessert

- Chef Tejasvi Chandela





Well how does one introduce a multifaceted personality like Tejasvi Chandela?

Let's try ...

- a pastry chef and a chocolate maker; the founder of Dzurt and Cut chocolate cake; co-founder of All things chocolate; someone who is passionate about working in the world of chocolate and pastry; and a mommy to a three year old. Whew quite a handful, isn't it?

To Foodism's query regarding what's her favourite product, Tejasvi laughingly confides, "I am yet to discover my favourite dish! For now it's' just all things dessert'. But as I continue to launch new dishes, I'm hoping to find my favourite one soon. My menu keeps on evolving with me. But yes I adore the allthingstropical chocolate bar with its 72 per cent dark chocolate and passion fruit ganache." Her patrons have a soft spot for her choux buns, nutella cheesecake and hazelnut tarts among others; and they also swear by her Malabar chocolates, macarons, carrot cake, allthings hazelnut brownie entremets and devil fruit cakes. On-going is an in-depth research on suitable options for diabetics and vegans.

Besides, the all-time-favourite macaron hamper, her Diwali hamper plans comprise of a gift box at Allthingschocolate – an exquisite box to which clients can select and add the products available on their menu.

With so many things on her plate, Tejasvi just wishes to maintain the current pace of life alongside ensuring a good work-life balance. Happy with not getting bored and having enough time for her family; she aims to continue to be dedicated and passionate about the work she does.

Tejasvi signs off with "Read, learn and be creative...find your signature style...and if you can create a place for yourself in this crazy world you have got your turning point!"







IS THE WAY FORWARD!

Dr Chef Avin Thaliath who has 'understood the different aspects of culinary arts such as knowing the history and culture of a place through cuisines; and aptly grasps the importance of detail and the value of presentation, texture, colour and palate.

Educationist, author, celebrity chef / baker, trainer... Dr Avin Thaliath dons multiple hats and that too with élan! Here's presenting a closer look at the man and his professional aspirations.

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#### **Decision to Become a Chef**

Post completion of the first year of his hotel management, Avin bagged a scholarship to France. It was here, that he underwent a specialized training competency mapping to check which segment would be suitable for him. What emerged was that he had an artistic perspective and he was hence counselled to get into cuisine or bakery and confectionery. He started with bakery and confectionery for a week, and then there was no looking back! Avin realized that this was something which he'd want to do for the rest of his life. Albeit, he did train in other departments as well; but it was in bakery and confectionery that his productivity, creativity and comfort levels were at their zenith.

**Training/s Availed** 

He has been awarded a Golden Certificate of Vatel Scholarship from the prestigious Hotel School Vatel, Nimes, France. He has interned under Chef Antonio Texeira before working with Le Grenier a Pain, in Paris, Mamamia, Institute Vatel situated in Nimes, Rhone Valley, France. Back home in India, he has also worked with The Taj Hotel Group and The Orchids.

#### **Signature Dish**

Hailing from Kochi located in 'God's Own Country' (Kerala) organically Kerala Cuisine is Avin's all-time favourite owing to - its unique flavour; each dish having its own story to tell; every ingredient having a niche health benefit; and a plethora of cooking methods.

Elaborating on his signature dish, Avin says, "It is croissants with Bengal Tiger prints over them. The great Bengal Tiger is not only the national animal of India but also an epitome of royalty, heritage, culture and pride. India hosts almost half the population of global tigers. Pride and honour are the words which come to my mind when I watch this magnificent animal walk! Unfortunately, this species is fast becoming extinct in the absence of proper conservation measures. Hence, my signature dish is a personal tribute to this majestic creature; and the croissant epitomises the beautiful and natural look and feel of the tiger."

#### **Cooking Style**

Avin treats baking as simple science. His philosophy of baking has always been associated with the history, art and science of baking. According to him,

"Each and every product in the world of baking and confectioneries has a past to talk about, with a specific style of art involved in it. I take a little extra effort to understand the scientific aspect of each ingredient involved in baking and how it contributes to the end product. The most important ingredient in my life is the love I put in while baking. In terms of my creation, I give a lot of importance to taste, texture and colour. Many of my creations have a story and are a work of art to me!"





#### **The Lavonne Academy Odyssey**

Realizing that in the absence of good institutions for skilled pastry-making courses, interested home bakers were forced to go abroad for the same leading to indirect brain drain for the country and humongous expenses for the student; Avin along with two of his partners set up Lavonne Academy of Baking Science and Pastry Arts. Initially it was launched on a small scale as it was a testing step; but then gradually after watching the positive response it's metamorphosed into an elaborative pastry school.

In sync with the changing education pedagogy, Lavonne academy strives to convert each and every aspect of learning into entrepreneurial baking and mentors students to become entrepreneurs in the field of bakery and pastry. To prepare them for this role they are taught every aspect that is required - not only the art part of it but also the science as well as entrepreneurial and management aspect of baking. Some of the courses offered by the Academy to culinary aspirants include - Diplôme de Pâtisserie, Six Week Certificate, Online Class Calendar, Sugar Art and Master Class by reputed international chefs.

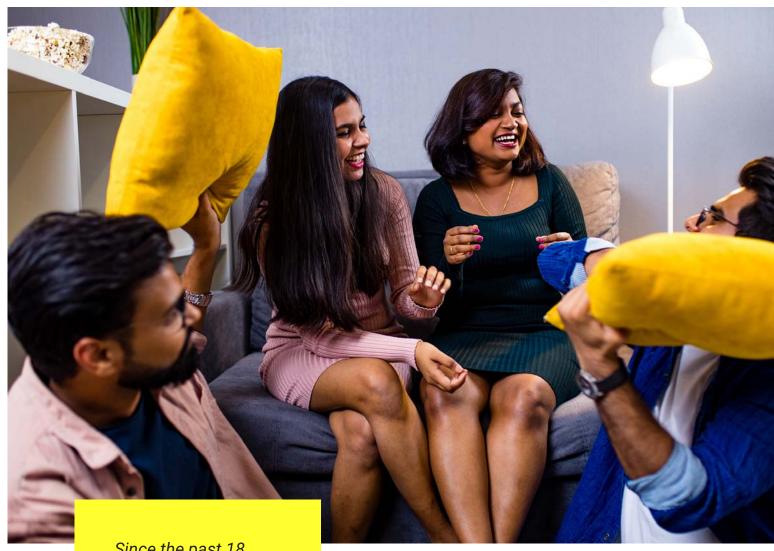
#### Avin's Take on Changing Food Trends in India

Avin feels that the days when patrons appreciated what was served on their plate by chefs are gone. Today's customer is more discerning and demanding. With more options available and with more awareness regarding the health benefits of ingredients thanks to the internet, the key word cutting across all products is 'customization'. So his word of counsel is "A good chef must understand what his guest wants and then come-up with a product. Customizing product not only delights the guests but also creates an amazing food experience – which is the ultimate goal of all chefs!" Dr Chef Avin Thaliath winds up with a valuable message for our home chefs "Cooking at home and cooking at a restaurant are vastly different; environment, people, equipments, ingredients etc. play a very important role in compiling the end product. The main difference between a chef and a cook is the technique, skill and the knowledge of food that one possesses. Professional cooking is all about getting these three things right irrespective of cooking at home or in a restaurant. At times there are few ingredients and equipments that are not easily available at home - making the best use of available resources and bringing out the best product is as good as being professional. So go ahead and reach out to the food community with your delicious offerings!"



## **THEIR ONLY 'LAKSH'**

to create unforgettable memories!



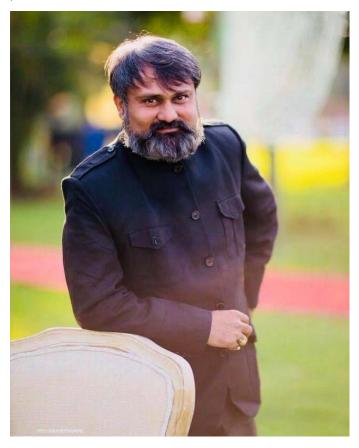
Since the past 18
years, Snehal Modi is
adding a personal
hue to social and
official events from
his event
management
company – Laksh
Events - based out of
the Banyan City of
Vadodara.

who is well attuned to all the nuances involved in the function; plus you as a host have provided a detailed brief of the dos and don'ts.

Building on this need, event management these days has become a course in the academia where everything from A to Z is taught by industry experts. So pass-outs are thoroughly equipped to efficiently handle all your events with a flourish!

But while there are some who need to be trained in the nitty-gritties; there's a segment in this field that has practical hands-on knowledge – Snehal Modi, Founder and Partner at Laksh Events falls in the second category.

Blessed with a creative bent of mind it is he who has developed Laksh Events right from the scratch and that too an early age. Today with Laksh Events figuring among the best event management companies his 18 years of dedicated diligence has paid off.



Sharing his journey Snehal says "This was when events were not a business ... I started off by providing raw material to caterers and used this as an opportunity to engage with the prime players of the field. Gradually while visiting events I started giving small but uniquely valuable inputs on a casual basis which were widely appreciated by the vendors and the patrons; this set me into thinking of building my own event management company."

Snehal's pluses include - his creativity, innovative mindset and never-say-die attitude; his flair for production; and his innate talent for pulling out a project in any given time frame. Resourcing and PR

are his forte enabling him to deliver any event be it classy or conventional, big or small. Renowned for his raw character he's a one-stop-solution for the event industry and unbeatable with 1,000-plus weddings and 10,000-plus artists shows.

During the on-going pandemic, Laksh Events is strictly adhering to the SOPs announced by the government ensuring that social distancing, hand hygiene and masking are adhered to thereby ascertaining the safety of all. Snehal aptly points out "Your patrons would definitely be keeping an eye on the safety measures you are taking in light of the pandemic and would keep coming back to you or referring you to their contacts only if they feel safe around you."

Understanding that these are trying times for the hospitality and event management industry as a whole Snehal shares some hacks to host a safe and successful event in the new normal like – playing games which ensure maintenance of social distancing norms say hide and seek, badminton, cricket et al; hosting parties on the terrace or in the backyard instead of closed interiors; keeping the guest list minimal and excluding children and senior citizens from the same; replacing house parties with innovative get-togethers like outdoor picnics with home-made food where everyone reaches in their personal cars; etc.

Snehal closes on a positive note "We at Laksh Events firmly believe that this is a passing phase and the resilient event industry will be able to bounce back with more energy and vigor than ever before! Until then we just need to bide our time and think out-of-the-box to come up with ideas to continue delivering in these turbulent times without compromising on the safety of our team and our patrons".



Thriving in the wedding industry since 2001, Gujarat-based Laksh Events is one of India's most sought after event management firms offering end-to-end wedding planning solutions and management of other social and official events. With their extensive experience in decor, absolute finesse and keen attention to detail, Laksh Events are known to create fresh and unique decor designs for every celebration. The team of young talented professionals has a futuristic vision with an eye for deadlines and more than that a dedication to an event. With a plethora of perfectly executed destination weddings pan-India and at various exotic international destinations like Thailand, Sri Lanka, Dubai, Bahrain and Malaysia, the company has won not only many awards but also innumerable hearts of the guests attending their events. They have worked with many renowned stars and artists like Kareena Kapoor Khan, Arijit Singh, Shreya Ghoshal, Radhika Apte, duo Vishal-Shekhar and Guru Randhawa to name a few.







# Garba

on the Mind & in the House

sk a Gujarati to skip their favorite Garba houseparty and they might unfriend you for good. Don't tell us later we didn't warn you! Covid19 or the end of the world, you cannot tell a *quiju* to not party on Navratri. So what if it cannot be as enormous as it used to be in the pre-virus world; for the true-blue garba-lovers, even a small party is enough to keep the adrenaline pumped. While some have plans to break into a full blown raas within their close-knit circles, for others stuck away from immediate family and friends, virtual hangouts will come to the rescue. We cannot say about you but we are thoroughly thrilled to know that some have even gone to the extent of hiring professional

singers to keep the mood alive at their virtual parties. Maybe not as mystic as listening to a celeb-singer in a large *garba pandal* with all your people dancing and hopping around with you, well-thought-out song and dance, followed by prayers, housie, snacks and whatnot can be made as fun in the virtual world.

And listen, you guys, the virus has no potential to stop you from doing up your homes this festive season. Gear up to create the *garba* vibe with various props and décor items that remind one of *dandiya*, *topli*, *matki*, *chaniyo chori* and all the other colorful things that talk Navratri to you. Those vibrant *latkans*, *torans*, umbrellas in

myriad designs and colors can work like a charm in uplifting the overall mood of your setting. If you have access to a private garden attached to your house or even a balcony that can be done up with vibrant lights and other fun stuff, you are all set to welcome the merry season.

And then, when you are thru, refresh yourself with your favorite snacks; from farali chaat to fafda jalebi to chanachor garam to piping hot theplas to handvo and your close-to-heart khandvi, is there an end to food-fun-frolic in Gujarat?!!! For those new-age kids that don't quite relish the traditional platter, special fast and fusion food-stalls can be set up supplying them with mini

food platters loaded with pizzas, cheese and butter maggi, mushroom bruschetta, and a range of pastas to tickle their guts. If you pay heed to our veteran advice, stock up on healthy and sweet drinks such as haldi and kesar milk, revitalizing nimbupani, choco-latte, and packaged and fresh fruit juices—for garba delights but leaves you hungry and thirsty in the end. Cut being HANGRY!

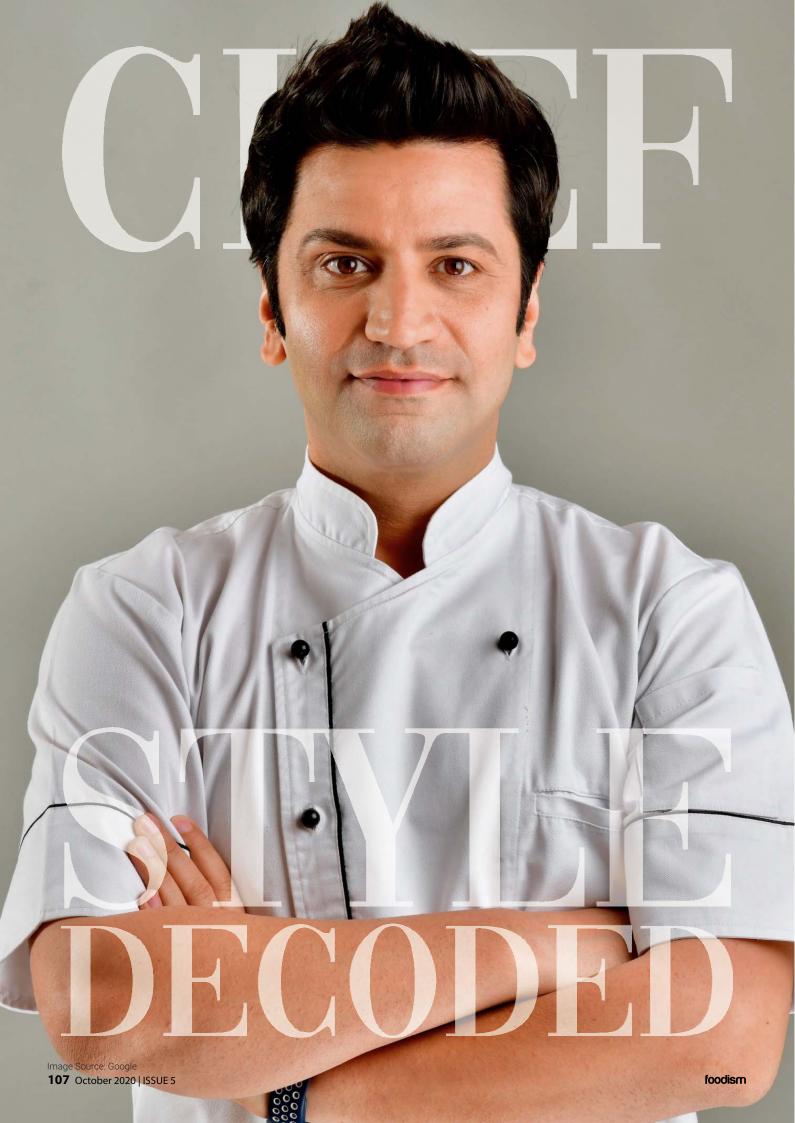




## REDEFINING KARWA CHAUTH 2020



your "calendar" could also be called that? We understand.). If Hindu folklore is anything to go by, Karwa Chauth counts amongst the most auspicious days in the lives of married couples. Speaking bluntly, the fast that women observe on this day for the longevity of their beloved husbands—is perhaps too gender-biased as a concept in totality. So, to redefine its meaning without damaging its original idea of matrimonial love and commitment, men these days try their best to be as participative on the occasion; while some fast along with their beautiful wives, others make up for their non-fasting skills by pampering their spouses with gifts and favorite food. So, what are you cooking your wife this Karwa chauth? Since fasting sunrise to moonshine can fatigue the body and mind, draining one of all vital energy, it is recommended the fast be broken with something that immediately nourishes without overloading an empty system. We propose you make her a lip-smacking milk smoothie with lots of fruits and nuts. And yep, dinner should also be cooked to her liking. What? No cooking skills? Call a pizza, please! Do whatever it takes but make her happy!



# Escaping The Ordinary



Food is a great conversation starter... it's the best way to bond."

# KUNAL KAPUR

elebrity chef, Kunal Kapur has not only swayed women through his good Punjabi looks but also through his mastery in the kitchen. He became a huge name in Indian households when he debuted as a host of Masterchef India. While exploring different parts around the country, he clicks some of the much needed OOTD snaps in his staple attires. From florals to plaids and plains, he has done it all and to be honest, taking inspiration from his style is mandatory! Here's a peek at Chef Kunal's style.

Beauty in simplicity and function—what an on-point idea Chef Kunal has set for these times. A person who truly believes in not tucking-in shirts with belted trousers has set new rules for blending in street style with the formal go to look. For him it's the

comfort that gets him hooked with the simplicity that looks this good. Pairing good quality sneakers black or white - with casuals is one of the best investment tips one can take from his looks. He believes Flowers are a statement. He always experiments with flowers when he goes for his clothing choices. These make him look more playful and makes him stand out. We just can't get enough of his printed shirts. While sticking to timeless clothing pieces, the chef also ticks his mark on classic colours with patterns and textures of various combinations along with florals that never disappoint.

ake the Chef's tip when refreshing your wardrobe -"Go ahead, try different styles and make mistakes. They will be your best teacher."

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## THE LITTLE FOOD COMPANY

... Catering for you

self-taught chef, Bhakti grew with her company, traveling the world and drawing inspiration from modern European,
American and Asian cuisine, and constantly adding new recipes and ideas to the mix. Food styling, working with restaurants on menu development, recipe testing, kitchen planning, and training – If it's about food, chances are Bhakti's had a hand in it

From 2005 to 2010 Bhakti Mehta worked as an advertising and media professional. She loved cooking and was extremely passionate about food. Despite working with a television channel (2009-2010), on weekends she was still left with a lot of free time on her hands. It was around this period, that she did a small catering gig for a friends fashion store simply out of sheer fun. But it was executed so well that it got written about in the newspapers and media; the reason for this being the unique food items like - wasabi hummus, thai style paani puri et al - that were served at the event.

This was the beginning of Bhakti's journey in the food industry. She was flooded with catering orders and no one was ready to listen to a 'No'! So while she worked from Monday to Friday with the media company; her weekends were devoted to catering for home gigs. She shares, "I used to cook and go for the catering accompanied with just one helper and one server. In fact it's a matter of deep pride that back then the Little Food Company was amongst the first few gourmet catering services for homes – as opposed to the 'Maharaj' (cook), restaurant or wedding caterers!"

This continued for the next 9 months post which Bhakti quit her media job and continued with the Little Food Company. And this is how between 2010 and 2020 something that was intended to be a weekend passion project grew into a Gourmet Catering Company.



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### **About The Little Food Company**

When you're looking for a delicious experience with family or friends, you don't want to sweat the small stuff. That's where LFC steps in. It offers you a complete catering experience that will reflect your personality and bring your vision to life. Their passion for bringing food and people together shines through beautiful, flavour-filled homestyle cooking. They keep things fresh with an emphasis on seasonal ingredients and cooking with olive oil and they'll work with your theme to create bespoke menus that are truly unique.

Their attention to detail will ensure you have a hassle-free experience from start to finish. And their extensive menus, with Italian, Mexican, Mediterranean, Asian and Indian fare, are so current that your guests will be talking about them for days. Food festivals, music gigs, film crew catering, board meetings, are some of the events they've catered to.



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Bhakti elaborates on the story behind the brand name

"Well this venture was basically supposed to be a weekend project and when I launched it I was 24 years old and stood at 5 feet, hence the term 'Little'; then again I was opting for catering that's how the word 'food' came in... so basically The Little Food Company means a 'little food company by a little girl'."

The Little Food Company is renowned for its appetizers, presentation and Mexican fare. In fact as Mexican cuisine has been Bhakti's pet project the same is reflected in the menu as it has radically evolved over the last 10 years.

The Little Food Company had shut their catering service before the lockdown was announced with the sole objective of ensuring the safety and health of the entire staff. The next steps in Bhakti's words - "We then quickly pivoted our then delivery business, which was a healthy subscription service prior to the pandemic, to our party catering favourites onto the delivery menu and that's what we've been doing since the last six months now. At first people were sceptical to even order out, people were enjoying cooking at home; which has made things extremely challenging for us ... but we have survived with the help of a very, very determined team! The menu is slightly modified every two weeks, and that's helped us keep going in these turbulent times. We recently did a special seven-course Mexican Meal delivered in a box with props, name tags and menus - making it literally our catering experience fitted in a box!"

Bhakti has her act in order to tackle the upcoming wedding and festive season abiding by all the COVID-19 SOPs. While currently the LFC is focussing only on food delivery; they are preparing for catering services from the third week of October. In the pipeline are precautions like – testing all the employees prior to any event; ensuring that they wear PPE suits; reducing the number of staff at each event; increasing the grazing stations to cut down on service; minimizing staff interactions; besides of course ensuring SMS (social distancing, masking and sanitizing). Alongside this Bhakti also intends to check with the clients with regards to the precautions that they are planning for the guests as well. Because the onus to keep everyone safe rests with all involved be it the client, the caterers, the guests or the venue partner.

Bhakti signs off with a motivating message for our home entrepreneur segment, "Well, as entrepreneurs this may have been the hardest time we will see, and it has been excruciatingly painful and unimaginable to be honest. But, when I talk about myself, it also made me think out-of-the-box, it challenged me to change the way we work, it made me cut out the unnecessary frills and instead focus on what really matters. And the same was reciprocated by our consumers too. So it allowed us to change the game bit- by-bit and it has only made us stronger! We shall all emerge like the proverbial Phoenix from this disaster too!"



# Bawarchi Gucina

### Bringing their soul to your platter!

Cooking up an authentic meal and curating an inimitable experience, Bawarchi Cucina pop-ups and events are replete with feisty flavours, tantalising cuisines, new faces and of course awesome taste. From sit-down dinners to brunches; from serving authentic cuisines to discovering new modern Indian dishes ... Unnati Gupta and her team curate exquisite food experiences for their patrons.



eet Unnati Gupta born in the national capital of Awadhi cuisine and flavours who is of the opinion that the smell of fragrant kebabs runs in her blood. Unnati initially aspired to be a fashion designer but that 'aspiration' changed with three major incidents—the first one being when she cooked Biryani for a family get-together and everyone went crazy and wiped the plate clean off each single morsel; the second one was when her mother enrolled her in a cake-icing competition just for fun sake and she went on to win the second prize; and the last was when she missed her date of the NIFT entrance exam.

They say life sends you signals ... perhaps it was these three incidents which portended that Unnati was cut out to floor the food segment.

She embarked on her professional career with The Oberoi Group at The Trident Udaipur; she started off here as a trainee where she learnt the art of being a chef - which involved not just cooking the finest food but handling the extreme pressure and atmosphere of a kitchen which daily served hundreds of guests.

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Post completion of her internship her desire to explore stand-alone kitchens led her to Olive Bar and Kitchen Delhi. Unnati enthuses "I believe food is not just about colours and flavours but about stories and memories and this is what I wanted to highlight in my work. Creating a community and platform for people to explore flavours and a manifesto to bond over food was my goal. After months of planning and organising ...the first pop-up dinner came into my life in May 2019 which marked the inception of my brand 'BawarchiCucina'."

This was how the culture of monthly pop-ups and boutique catering started and as her chosen field is quite niche it provides Unnati with incessant learning; as she is exposed to something new practically on a daily basis. So this was how she moved from being a baker to a Garde Manger and SautéChef! Today this spunky young lady has a seven-and-a-halfyear industry experience under her belt!

On another note, the meaning of the brand name is quite interesting - while Bawarchi is a Hindi word for Chef; Cucina is an Italian term for kitchen. So - Chef's Kitchen (BawarchiCucina) - the brand name aptly describes Unnati's personality, profession and work.

Touching upon her menu and best seller products Unnati says, "My focus has always been on quality rather than quantity. I try and keep a crisp yet a flavourful menu which is an amalgamation of cuisines. Being a Sauté Chef my best sellers have always been either appetizers or salads. But looking at how people relish showcasing their talent and creativity, I have recently added a new section in my menu and started a concept of DIY meal kits."

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Bawarchi Cucina is super excited and all geared up for the upcoming festive and wedding seasons. In view of the pandemic, the entire team is taking multiple precautions right from washing the vegetables in potassium permanganate, baking soda and salt water to drying them under the sun; washing their hands every 15 minutes; sanitizing all the packaging material; wearing masks, gloves and head gear while preparing the food; conducting regular temperature checks to ensure everything is under control et al.

Elaborating on the impact of the on-going pandemic Unnati says, "COVID-19 has definitely shaken the global food industry and the hospitality industry per se has been disturbed. The fear of infection and damage has led people to think twice before trusting anyone with their food. The base of my business was set in Delhi; but due to the current

situation I had to shift back to my hometown Lucknow. As the popular adage goes - Each coin has two sides – similarly every situation has its positives and negatives. Agreed that the pandemic disturbed our commercials but it also gave us time to brainstorm new thoughts and ideas for our growth. We at Bawarchi Cucina firmly believe that 'every morning is a new beginning', so we have to wake up, buckle up, and get back in the race."

Unnati leaves her readers with a beautiful message, "The support and trust we as a brand and a hospitality community receive from you is what keeps us motivated. Small business brands and start-ups need your support and love. We at Bawarchi Cucina are blessed with the affection that our customers and followers have showered upon us. Keep Trusting. Keep Ordering and Stay Safe!"



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# ZODIAC

### **ARIES**



We know you love competition, so it's no surprise that you want to be the best at anything and everything—be it dancing, singing or trying the most unthinkable festive snacks. Bold and ambitious, Arieans, you celebrate Navratri with a wild, passionate streak. Enjoy but also be vigilant—for all that looks tantalizing is not always healthy.

### **GEMINI**



Dear chatty and vibrant
Geminis, we know you like to
go out and hang out with
friends all the time. For a
Gemini, every day anyway is
like a day of festivity; an
assortment of snacks keeps
you going. Given to long
conversations and chit-chats,
you sometimes end up
drinking more chai and coffee
than needed. Soothe your
spicy gut with curd-laden
snacks this Navratri!

### **LEO**



Dear relatively more meticulous eaters of the zodiac, don't let go of your self-restraint this festive season. Keep munching on those wholegrain foods. Yes, those nuts, fruits, and sprouts are what you need to pump yourself up this Navratri. And yeah, give up that cheese obsession for a while—for there is so much else to eat.

### **TAURUS**



The most carnal of all the zodiac signs, we just love..love...love how you guys relish every morsel. We respect your chocolate cravings too but do eat some veggies in between. And yes, keep tapping your feet to those amazing festive songs. Though initially shy, once you get into the mood, you are a lesson in happiness. Step up!

### **CANCER**



Dear Cancerians with sensitive temperament and complex guts, we know you prefer your comfort food at home. Your worry about your health, especially at this point, is absolutely valid too. But do step out a little (practicing caution of course!) and meet your people. "Distance" mustn't get to your heart and mind! Go easy on the salt though.

### **VIRGO**



The "fuss" you move around with is the worst and the best of your features (apologies for we initially thought it to be a bug). Your prissiness will help you sail through this Covid19 phase better than most others. But dare to be off your diet for a while and enjoy! Remember: Navratri fare and Diwali platter are as healthy!

### **LIBRA**



The rowdy little Librans decide at 20 to not age further. Amazing! You are given to pleasurable experiences in everything you choose and therefore, the festival time is absolutely your time. You wake up and sleep with thoughts of pudding... but go easy, please! Stick to small portions and include lots of fluids in your diet. No harms meant to YOLO!

### **SAGITTARIUS**



Ohh..Sagi...our dear non-veggie...please get back to being veggie! You are given to being the "dude/dudette" at every party. You are the powerhouse of energy but also the lover of decadent non-vegetarian dishes and beer crates. The word has it that vegetables and nuts are good for health. And yeah, don't forget to detox after every house-party this season. Keep that nimbupaani handy.

### **AQUARIUS**



You picky little diners, invigorate your love for food (and life!). Get out of that constant stress- mode and try to live some. Life is short (and mostly uneventful)! Don't waste time brooding—put on your dancing shoes. Some crazy, un-choreographed dancing with friends will work like a charm on your appetite. Eat whole meals and top them with loads of small munches and healthy fluids. Power On!

### **SCORPIO**



Can we find better junk-sters in town? No! Midnight munches are your everyday affair—only indicating an excess this Navratri with your house parties with friends and family. Worry not! Keep a water bottle handy...and yes... stick to home-cooked versions of the "junk" you live on! Mom's burger can also be as fun!

### **CAPRICORN**



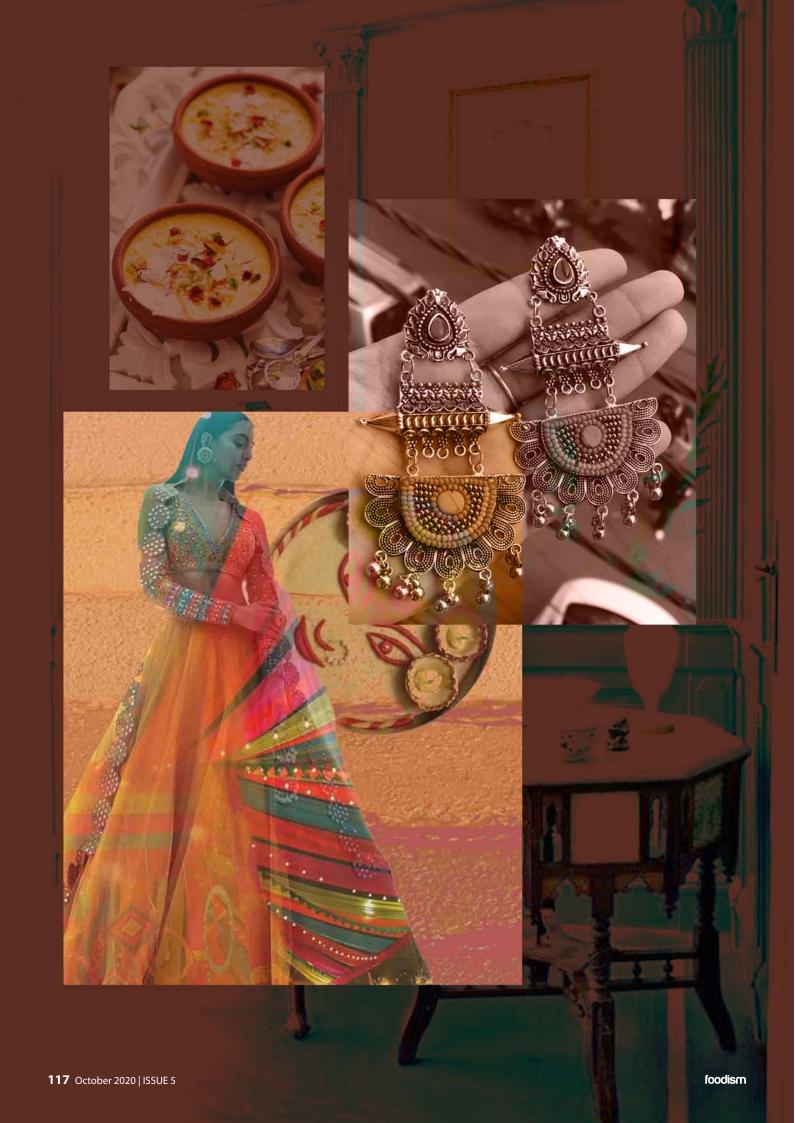
Lovely Capris, please don't give in to caprice. We know you ace the game when it comes to balancing the carnal/material with the emotional but also understand and accept that others may falter. So, forgive—and let live! You, out of all, don't need food advice. Just stick to what you do best—much love and health your way!

### **PISCES**



Last in the zodiac, you are also the last to leave those fun parties. Don't let this craziness take a toll on your sleep though. Remember, 7-8 hours of lying like a dead log keeps us alive and kicking! And you are way too smart to not know the harms of emotional-eating. Listen to your gut (and your grandma)!

 $\star$ This is a fun writeup that our edit team has put together and must not be considered as authentic forecast. The content of this article is not targeted towards any profession or individual and is meant to be taken with a humorous pinch of salt.







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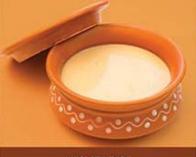
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