

SPECIAL FEATURE

More Pamela Anderson and Guns?

THE television is a seemingly harmless, lifeless box that sits in the living room. As a matter of fact, your buying it means that you are its "master". Ever since the time when humans came to this world, we have assumed that whatever we manage to obtain is ours. However, with the television, the reverse has been the true- lately, it appears that it is the "slave" that is in charge.

It can't be argued that TV has become the shrine for couch potatoes. Who would not like to flop down in front of the telly after a long day of hard work? After all, it is also an important medium for international exposure- the news, latest fashion trends, music and what not.

But what happens when the television attacks us? Violence and sex seem to have permanently found their way into the box, transmitting images that are offending to many and unsuitable for others. There are very few satellite channels these days that the family can sit together and watch. Initially, with only a handful of stations, the objections were directed to the late night English and European films. However, with the proliferation of TV channels, sex and violence has spread out like bushfire. It has contaminated the Indian channels (which most parents describe as having reached the "point of no return") as well as the Bengali channels. There is simply no limit to what is displayed- whatever you want, you get.

Let us talk about the Indian remix music videos for a while. They are on 24 hours a day. Recently, I came across this girl clad in almost nothing, with the seat of her jeans ripped off (for "style"). She was dancing in a flashy club with some girl friends, while there were all these men eyeing them. The trend seems to have started with the infamous song "Kanta Laga", but compared to what is on these days, "Kanta Laga" was

nothing. What is worse is the fact that many Bangla cinema songs have started taking that route. The adults can only thank God that they are not on till late at night, when the children are safely put to bed. But how long will it be when these programs are aired more openly?

Turning to violence, I was watching "Die hard" the other day (an all time favourite of many out there, including mine (I have to admit)). In viewing the movie for the purpose of this article, I was astounded by the volume of blood and shootings involved. In the last five years, the situation has worsened as many famous directors ventured into films that aptly portray "reality"- ie, show violence and bloodshed you would see if you were physically present at the scene. Among others, "Kill Bill" (sorry, another favourite of mine!) would be a good example of how far these violent movies can go! In one scene Uma Thurman plucks out Daryl Hannah's eyes with her bare hands, while she unfurls blood-curdling howls of agony.

These days, in addition to regular national and cable TV, DVD channels also enjoy the unmonitored freedom to play anything they want. These include late night pornographic films, which are being shown even in the middle of the day by some operators these days! Undeniably, the greatest concern is for kids watching what is unsuitable for them.

There are also mainstream adult films like "Basic Instinct", "Wild Things" and "Sexual Predator" that are being transmitted in the different channels. While channels like HBO and Star Movies strictly censor them, there are still other channels which do not bother. A few days ago, while airing "Wild Things", one of the Denise Richards-Neve Campbell scenes that would be unsavoury even to the most liberal of adults, was left completely without censors!

What is yet more alarming is that there seems to be almost no means of avoiding these. If you can frequently stumble across the offensive materials, there is no reason why the children would not. There is no system of locking particular channels or keeping the young viewers from surfing through them. Often the channels rate their shows and movies. This can provide some relief, making it easier to determine what your child is watching and if it's actually suitable for his age.

Many parents have taken up a more perceptive approach. They are involving themselves in one-on-one talk with their children. What they are doing is breaking the generation barriers between them and teaching their young ones what is right and wrong. This may be a very bold step for many. Only a small number of parents are confident enough to set out the cards on the table and deal with the issues head-on. A lot of adults are unsure of how their children would react, or whether they would reciprocate their concerns. Some guardians use more stringent policy. TV times may be restricted, and some specific channels should be declared "off-limits". These have been effectively used by many. However, this does not allow a child to understand the reasons why such a privilege is being denied.

TV violence has become a very heated issue in the last decade. While the West has realized the side-effects of the "dumb box", Bangladesh still seems to have a long way to go. There has been many litigations and objections filed against the media abroad. Television- although a mode of entertainment- must not be completely disregarded in the potential harm it can do. The fact that very few technological means exist to combat it does not mean that people are helpless- it is never too late to take a stand.

By Shahmuddin Siddiky

TIPS

For the sticky season

THE weather is sticky and working outside is absolutely exhausting. You must be careful as your bear with this not-so-pleasant season. Take all kinds of precautions to stay fit at this time of the year.

Avoid working under the sun as much as you can. However, if your job requires you to work out-of-doors then always carry an umbrella with you. Umbrellas small enough to fit in your purse and case are widely available in the Government New Market. A bottle of clean and cool water must also accompany you this season to save you from dehydration. Besides, use large dark glasses and cover your head to stay protected from the excruciating intensity of the summer sun. In addition, carry a cotton hankie or towel to wipe yourself dry after a sudden downpour.

Trendy plastic sandals and flip-flops are now available in Gulshan 1 City Corporation Market, Elephant Road and even in some of the renowned superstores of the city. These sandals are not only durable; they are also perfect for this rainy season. Each pair would cost you between tk.150 and tk.500 depending on the make and quality. Put aside all your leather shoes and high heels and go for sneakers or flat sandals this season.

I am sure spending a day without make-up is a tough task for many women. But at this time of the year do change the contents of your make-up kit. Opt for waterproof cosmetics. An unexpected cloudburst would wash down all your make-up, leaving behind a chaos of colour on your face if you do not use the water-resistant cosmetics. Pay a quick visit to stores like Priyo and Almas for good quality waterproof mascara, eye-liner and lipstick.

For handbags, opt for the ones made from anything other than leather and cotton. Bags made from plastic and synthetic material would prove very useful at this time of the year.

If you have school-going kids at home, don't forget to buy raincoats for them. Raincoats priced between tk.200 and tk.350 are available in places like New Market and Elephant Road. Adults who travel by motorbikes can also buy waterproofs. You don't necessarily have to be in London to wear a waterproof. Rain in Bangladesh has also become pretty unpredictable in nature.

And lastly, be careful as you eat and drink out of your home. Diseases like diarrhoea and jaundice would be on the rise so think twice before eating food from outside sources.

By Wara Karim

COOKBOOK CLIPS

BY SHERIFA AHMED



Cookbook clips

Nargisi Kofta

Ingredients:

½ kg meat, minced and finely ground
8 peppercorns
3 cloves, 2 teaspoons ground poppy seeds
2 teaspoons salt, ¼ teaspoon red chili powder
2 cm finely chopped ginger
1 medium onion, sliced, 4 cloves garlic
4½ tablespoons Bengal gram (chana) dal
2 brown cardamoms, 1 teaspoon coriander powder
1 raw egg plus 7 hard boiled shelled eggs
1½ tablespoons curd, 1 teaspoon flour
1 teaspoon garam masala
1 slice bread, trimmed and soaked in water and immediately squeezed dry
Oil for deep frying.

Method:

In a saucepan boil covered the first 12 ingredients in 2 cups of water for 30 minutes until the liquid is absorbed by the mince and is dry. Grind to a fine paste. To the mixture add 1 raw egg, curd, crumbled bread and garam masala. Knead well for about 10 minutes. Spread flour on a platter and roll the shelled eggs in it. Divide the minced mixture into 7 equal portions. Take one portion on the palm of your left hand and place an egg in it pressing the meat evenly and firmly around the egg, enclosing it completely. Wet your right hand slightly with a little water to give the kofta a smooth even surface. Apply the same process for the other 6 eggs. In a saucepan heat oil and deep fry koftas 2-3 at a time until uniformly golden. Set aside.

For gravy:

2 medium onions, chopped
2 cm ginger, finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, 2 red chillies
3 medium red tomatoes
1 teaspoon sugar, 2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon salt,

3 green cardamoms and 2 cm stick cinnamon, ground together.

4 tablespoons curd, well beaten
3 tablespoons oil used for frying the koftas.

Method:

Grind onions, ginger, garlic, red chillies and tomatoes in a blender or grinding stone. Heat oil and fry ground paste until golden brown. Add bay leaves and salt and cook adding about 2 cups water. Allow it to simmer until thickened. Stir in beaten curd



with 1teaspoon sugar. Thicken further to coating consistency.

To arrange cut eggs lengthwise in halves, lay them in a platter, pour gravy over them and sprinkle with cardamom cinnamon powder.

Murgh Mussalum

Ingredients:

1 whole chicken (1 kg) skinned
1 or 2 hard boiled eggs, shelled
2 cm ginger, ground
1 teaspoon cumin seeds, 8 peppercorn

and 5 green cardamoms, ground together

3 red chillies, seeded and ground

A pinch of saffron soaked in 1 tablespoon warm milk for an hour.

2 medium sized onions, ground

2-3 tablespoons ghee or oil

Salt to taste

Gravy:

¾ cup curd, well beaten

3 medium sized onions, sliced finely lengthwise and fried golden brown.

15 almonds, blanched and ground

1 teaspoon of washed raisins

1 to 1½ cups water

Salt to taste

1 edible silver-leaf for decoration

Method:

Prick the chicken with a fork. Rub salt and ground ingredients over the surface and inside, starting with ginger, ground spices, chilli paste, half the saffron milk and ground onions. This series of application of different ingredients tenderises the chicken. Stuff with eggs. Tie securely with thread.

Heat ghee, place the chicken in the pan along with any remaining juice or masala. Cover and cook without stirring (until there is a definite frying sound indicating that the liquid has dried up).

Now reduce the heat, pour a couple of tablespoons of water around the chicken. Stir and turn only when the meat gets tender. Cover and cook further, sprinkling 1 to 2 tablespoons of water each time the liquid dries up and until the chicken is uniformly golden brown.

Mix the gravy ingredients and the remaining saffron milk. Add to the chicken. Simmer covered, stirring occasionally until the chicken is tender but does not fall apart. Coat with the gravy. Remove thread, sever joints for easy serving. Transfer to a platter and decorate with silver-leaf.

POP-UPS

PMS

THE term PMS stands for Premenstrual Syndrome, a familiar acronym used to describe a cyclical challenge with a confusing array of physical, emotional or behavioural responses experienced by an amazingly large number of women every month in the days and even weeks before their menstrual periods begin. In spite of widespread myth, misinformation and politically incorrect sexist jokes, the truth about PMS is that it is real-as real as any other legitimately recognized physical condition with a combination of physical and emotional responses that are all too often dismissed as trivial. In fact, PMS responses are known to challenge health, change normal routine and impact lifestyle.