

BRITISH FUSION FOOD FESTIVAL

Sheraton adds to the epicurean delight

DURDANA GHAS

"Everybody likes to experiment and this is one good reason for the origination of British fusion food," said Partha Mitra.

He is heading the team of four of the United Kingdom's (UK) best chefs traveling to Bangladesh for the third International British Fusion Food Festival brought jointly by Dhaka Sheraton and British culinary magazine Curry Life.

"We are blending the style of Bangladesh with the English way of cooking using all the local spices and ingredients," he said. The other three chefs are Jamal Uddin Ahmed, Oli Khan and Syed Zohurul Islam all of them second generation British born Bangladeshis.

Partha was sharing his experience in cooking at five star hotels both in India and UK. He is the executive chef of the Bengal Dynasty in Flintshire, UK. Prior to that he was in Taj Bengal Hotel in Kolkata and went to UK in 2002.

He is a graduate in hotel management from the catering college in Kolkata. He represented India in many food

festivals abroad. He traveled to places with former Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee as his personal chef.

"This is my first time in Bangladesh. We wanted to give the Bangladeshis the taste of what we created abroad and bring the taste of Bengal back," said Jamal Uddin Ahmed, executive chef of Shozna Indian Cuisine, Kent, UK, giving emphasis on learning.

"This time we tried to make it healthier by adding less spice and maintaining the nutritional value. It's very different and modern," he said.

Oli Khan, named 'curry king' by the local newspapers, is the executive chef of Surma Tandoori, Hertfordshire, UK. His interest in cooking was spurred while helping his mother prepare food.

Syed Zohurul Islam focuses on North Indian cuisine with a strong Bengali influence. He is the executive chef of The Capital, Durham, UK.

For a long time restaurateurs from Bangladeshi and Indian origins in UK operated on their own sticking to the tradition with resolution which was behind the success of the Indian catering

industry with the strong backing of electronic media.

"This is the third year of the fusion food festival and executive chefs from different parts of UK are participating. We are inviting guests to have a taste of the foods by our four ingenious chefs," said Greg Morgan, executive chef, Dhaka Sheraton.

"Fusion is 'east and west coming together' to soothe the pallet of food buffs and aficionados," said Partha.

A series of 'fusion' meals for dinner will be served with some spicy twists on traditional dishes, such as spicy flaked fish with sherry and walnut dressing, roasted red pepper soup with croutons grilled lemon chicken with carrots, he said.

"In my family I am the only one in this business. I had the interest for cooking when I was only 13," said Jamal while he is 17 years into this profession. When he was 16 years of age he stood out as the best chef in a national curry chef competition and was runner-up in another national competition organised by the Food Standard Agency of UK.

"One of the perquisites of working as a chef in five-star hotels is you will have the chance to meet renowned personalities. I met politicians like Hilary Clinton and CEOs of many big companies and really like it," said Partha.

"We love to inspire the young generation to take cooking as a promising career," he said.

There are 50 different dishes in this festival with 14 hot items. The festival started from August 26 in the ballroom of Sheraton and will continue till August 29 in the Bithika restaurant of Sheraton. It will cost Tk 1600 per person. After their mission in Dhaka the team will leave for Kolkata.

The festival is not about food only. It displays the diversity of multicultural UK and the efforts of West Bengal and Bangladesh to forge friendship and tolerance beyond boundaries.



British high commissioner Anwar Choudhury (third from right) was one among the food aficionados present to taste fusion food in the Ballroom of Dhaka Sheraton.

CNG- REFUELLING STATIONS

Fuel crisis causes long queues

Kausar Islam Ayon

Long queues at compressed natural gas (CNG) stations in the city are back again. Station owners said that the severe power crisis is responsible for this while a rapid increase in CNG-run vehicles is also a major reason.

Vehicles now have to wait in long queues for up to an hour for refueling.

Staff at some CNG stations said a smooth power supply could have shortened the queue by half. They said they face load shedding for three to five hours a day that leads to huge loss for the stations. "Such disruptions cut profit for

my company," Shaheed, an employee of Anupid CNG filling and conversion station in Moghbazar, said.

The vehicle owners who have converted to CNG are in trouble while the CNG-run autorickshaw drivers are suffering the most.

"If I have to wait in the queue for one to two hours at the CNG

stations how would I survive? The struggle we went through in 2004 is coming back," said Amjad Ali, an autorickshaw driver.

The private cars and buses are now making it a custom to refill tanks at night.

"During the daytime standing in the long queues is a horrible experience. So I send my driver to

collect gas after 9pm," said Ahsan Ullah, a private car owner. "But the problem is the CNG stations often do not have optimum gas pressure at night."

The Bangladesh CNG Filling Station and Conversion Owners Association (BCFSCOA) feels that the increase in the number of CNG-run vehicles is also responsible for the unexpected long queues at the stations.

"Yes, electricity crisis is one of the reasons but the number of CNG vehicles is increasing rapidly but not the CNG refilling stations," Manoranjan Bhakta, member of the BCFSCOA, said.

BCFSCOA statistics show 3,500 to 4,000 vehicles are being converted to CNG in the city every month.

The statistics also show that a CNG station can refill 700 to 800 vehicles a day depending on the gas pressure and power crisis. This means the queue will keep on stretching unless six to seven stations open every month.

He said the process of establishing stations should be made easier.

"It takes 18 to 24 months to get permission from different departments to set up a CNG station. We urge the government to make the process easier," said Bhakta.

The city now has 82 CNG stations against a total number of 75,000 CNG-run vehicles.

Dhaka: Yesterday, today and...

FROM PAGE 21

TDS: Which part of Dhaka in your eyes, we should be proud of?

SMI: Ramna area and Dhaka University campus are still struggling to remain green. There I can still walk on the sidewalk, footpath. Earlier I was proud of Kamrangirchar, the Buriganga and Old Dhaka but all of these have lost their original shape.

TDS: Is today's Dhaka the city you want to live?

SMI: I'm forced to live here but if I have a choice I will not. It is not a city -- it is pretending to be a city. It is a city travesty of metropolis.

TDS: What do you envisage for Dhaka in future?

SMI: The city must have a master plan and mass urban transit. It will recover all the occupied lands. Wetlands and rivers should be recovered, and there should be parks and playing fields adjacent to schools. It must have roads

with regulated traffic. Rajuk should be strong, composed with judicial people with adequate power so that they can demolish the illegally constructed building without favouring the owners. Dhaka has now turned into an unhealthy city. If Dhaka persists in this way it will must die.

...
Syed Manzoorul Islam, Professor, English Department, Dhaka University spoke to Wahida Mitu of Star City.



Fuel crisis is forcing vehicles to wait long hours for refueling.

If I have to wait in the queue for one to two hours at the CNG stations how would I survive? The struggle we went through in 2004 is coming back,

Anarchy reigns city public

FROM PAGE 21

TDS: The yellow taxi drivers are on a strike today. But in fact, there was no strike of taxi drivers that day.

"I was so exhausted under the scorching sun I felt I might collapse and lost my strength for bargaining with them any longer," said Nasira. She helplessly boarded the CNG three-wheeler.

The punitive measures against the violators of traffic rules are so insignificant that this punishment can hardly make the offenders abide by the law, said the traffic joint commissioner, drivers become all the more arrogant having paid the fine once or twice.

As per existing rules, police can fine an offender between Tk 50 and 500. In serious traffic offences when police file cases against the offenders, they get immediate bail.

A lecturer at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), Mizanur

Rahma on Friday set out to find a taxicab or CNG run three-wheeler to go to Gulshan.

"I found a number of empty CNG auto-rickshaws around the main entrance to the Buet," Rahman said, "But, as I approached them one by one, they either refused to take me to my destination or demeaned money on top of the meter."

He walked up to the Polashi intersection where he had to face a similar situation though there were quite a few vehicles standing around.

"Angered and disappointed, I then walked down to Dhakeswari taxi stand where again I had to undergo a similar hassle," he said, "At one stage, I had to hire a CNG auto rickshaw agreeing to pay Tk10 in addition to the metered fare."

"This is obviously a lawless situation with none in sight to bring the culprits to book," Rahman said.

This correspondent in the guise of a Gulshan-bound passenger at 9:00 in the morning on Sunday approached a number of CNG-run auto rickshaws at Karwan Bazar.

Driver of the CNG auto rickshaw no- Dhaka Metro Tha 14-0907 demeaned Tk 20 more. Normally, the metered fare from Karwan Bazar to Gulshan circle-1-1 is around Tk 35.

Driver of another auto rickshaw (no- Dhaka Metro Tha 12-7056) Mahub Khan said that he would not go anywhere other than Mirpur. Asked why, he said, "I have some business there."

The joint commissioner of traffic said that they need at least 600 police sergeants to tackle the city's traffic movement but they currently have around 400.

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Cezanne Art Gallery
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Tel: 8826578, Email: cezanne@bangla.net

Drik Gallery
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Gallery Chitrak
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Tel: 8620345, Email: chittrak@agnl.com

National Art Gallery
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Tel: 9562801-4

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Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursdays
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New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday