

IT'S TIME YOU STARTED COOKING

Here's what you need to know

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If I were asked by a survey to sum up my experience as an amateur cook into two words, I'd pick *laborious* and *worthwhile*. I think back to the times when the smell of my burnt brownies wafted through my house and when I fried an egg with the same oil my mom used to fry fish. But today, I could not be more proud of myself now that I've grasped most of the skills that a decent cook should have.

Cooking can be such a great way of showing someone you care about them, and amidst a deadly pandemic, we all need a little more love and affection than usual, so here are some tips for beginners.

START SMALL

Break down your meals into many steps. If you feel like you can't coordinate well when you're cooking, sort your ingredients into little bowls. You'll hate yourself when the cleaning process starts, but it'll help you out during the first few weeks if you can't keep track of what ingredients you're supposed to put in.

HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS

It's quite easy to make a mess of a recipe if you don't have the right measuring tools. Don't spend years using a tea cup to measure before caving and buying the actual measuring cups. You'll want to have



PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

teaspoons, tablespoons, and cup measuring tools at your disposal. If you can, get the exact measurements, like cups, ½ teaspoons and so on. Don't ballpark recipes either. Trust the process, you can ballpark a few months into cooking. Though this isn't absolutely necessary, I prefer having a spatula and non-stick pan for most of the cooking I do. I can undoubtedly say that

they're the best kitchen utensils ever made.

LOOKING FOR RECIPES

As a beginner, I swore by *Tasty* for most of the recipes I used. Their recipes are so simple yet so delicious, and you'll find many varieties on their app. I find that their video tutorials are very much catered towards cooks who are just starting out. Of course, you can't forget the classics: YouTube and

Google, so make sure you turn to those from time to time to learn.

WHERE DO I START?

Usually, I would advise people on starting with making yourself a packet of 2-minute noodles. It's pretty simple to navigate and given that my 17-year old brother couldn't do it, I assume others might not be able to either. After that, move on to salads, but not the basic ones, go for Greek, caprese, caesar or pasta. Whatever you're in the mood for. This will give you a good grip on what kind of ingredients might go well together and teaches you essential knife skills too! You'll also want to learn to make a fancy grilled cheese: pair sliced cheese, cheddar, parmesan, mozzarella or any other cheese of choice. Lastly, learn to cook eggs. No, not just fried, but hard (and soft) boiled, scrambled, sunny side up and if you feel like you're ready, try poaching one (make the Turkish ones)!

Now that you've mastered these four basic dishes, push yourself to move onto something a bit more strenuous. Don't fret, you'll make that *kacchi biriyani* in no time. Have faith in yourself.

Fariha enjoys binge-watching movies in the dark vicinity of her bedroom. Strike up a conversation with her at fariha.safa@gmail.com

How to Set Up a Blind Date on Zoom

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Once upon a time, I wrote an article called "When you're single, but your friends are not" which pissed off my friends to a great deal. But I think in that listicle where I mentioned what these not-so-single friends do to you, I can add one more thing that I have experienced in this current quarantine.

They set you up on blind dates. Where? *On Zoom.*

Let's convince you how great this is.

This is like the new normal, right?

I mean you can't just sit alone in your home, lounging, when you can be spending that precious time finding a significant other. It is so much fun and DEFINITELY not nerve wracking. You were single when you were meeting people, now you *certainly* can not be so single in this lockdown too. What would the neighbour aunties say? Tut, tut. Boys and girls, this is the most amazing thing ever. Why? Because you are meeting an unknown person *virtually*. And while their face might pop up on your screen with the stunning backdrop of floating planets in space, there will be a strong probability that a family member would walk in and see that person's face because there is no such thing as closed doors and privacy in Bangladeshi households. But you can



PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

explain to them that you are just having a small chat with an extra terrestrial species you met. Exciting, isn't it?

Also, this genius plan does save you from the stress of pining about how to dress up. Just a few options to choose from like change into a cute outfit or

change into a better shirt, but without abandoning your comfy pajamas that you've been wearing for the last five days. Or should you entertain your date with your just-woke-up self? And you wouldn't want to miss out on having your own orchestra playing for you two: *the sound of*

a frying pan falling on cue, the whistle of a pressure cooker going off, heavily backed up with the amazing vocals of your siblings bickering and your Mom pulling off a high note to tell you to change from your PJs because that's nasty or else she'll have to kick you out of the house. Beethoven who?

Moreover, there will be a wide assortment of backgrounds you can choose for yourself instead of just spending money on overpriced coffee. Rather than sitting in the same, old boring coffee shops, you can place yourself in Hawaiian beaches, the Simpsons' living room, the space in which you'll be able to float and talk for hours with a spacesuit (that's just pure science, okay?), the Amazon forest, and of course, the moon. How many people can say that they went to these amazing places on their first date? Romantic much?

The cherry on top is that you can excuse yourself just by acting like your screen froze or you can totally show off your hidden talent of talking like a robot, when things go awkward, to hint that your Wifi connection is not taking this date well.

I think we can agree that this is better than an actual blind date. So who's up for it?

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