

Global kitchens

Cosmopolitanism is all about accepting societal norms and cultures from many different countries and being open to different ideas and ways of doing things. From fashion to cuisine, it has been injected into our everyday lives, and truly enough that it has become a staple in our kitchen and experiments with all things food.

If you take the case of vindaloo: the word vindaloo is a mis-constructed pronunciation of the popular Portuguese dish carne de vinha d'alhos (meat marinated in wine-vinegar and garlic), which made its way to India in the 15th century, along with Portuguese explorers.

In India, the dish had a Goan twist to it, and wine vinegar was substituted by palm wine, and local ingredients like tamarind pulp, black pepper, cinnamon, and cardamom found its way into the dish. However, when the dish travelled to



England, it became just another bland, yet somewhat hot curry!

I mention the story of this famous dish for people to understand how cosmopolitanism found its way into our food habits.

For me, a soul food would be piping hot rice with a steak of hilsa fish fried in mustard oil, but for my child, soul food is chicken siu mai or prawn har gao, which



are specific versions of Chinese dumplings. So much has changed between my child's generation and mine.

Food preference in our daily cuisine proves true to the fact that we experiment with our everyday dal-bhaat (lentil soup and steamed rice) menu. We have pastas on Monday nights, steaks over the weekends, soups and rice paper rolls on Tuesdays, burgers on Wednesdays and all these, which are not Bengali dishes, we prepare at home. Sometimes, the cooks do it for us in a way the lady of the house taught them, and they often experiment with their recipes, bringing in new twists to these common global foods.

I read somewhere that 'intellectual curiosity doesn't stop when you enter the kitchen', and its true. Cooking is an art where some of us follow the recipe to the tee, and some experiment all the while.

Exotic ingredients like pink Himalayan salt, green or pink pepper, Szechuan peppercorns, pomegranate molasses, sumac, tahini, and za'taar are not so strange anymore, in fact they are regular in our kitchen, just like our turmeric and chilli powder. Similarly, my foreign counterparts, be it an American or Mediterranean, have garam masala powder and curry powder stocked in their kitchen larder.

The question now is whether there is the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices, ideas, spices etc. or in one word, a cultural appropriation through this cosmopolitanism.

Personally, I would justify myself by saying that when I am experimenting with a vindaloo recipe, adding or subtracting from the original recipe is not a matter of grave concern, because then I make that dish out of my own understanding of the original



recipe, which I can always follow when the occasion calls for it. But one thing as an experimental cook I must learn is the right usage of all the ingredients I collect. If I add za'taar or sumac to the fish curry, it would be an utter disaster. Or, if I start calling my beef stew a regular Bengali beef curry, that would be sacrilegious in the world of cosmopolitan kitchens!

On today's episode of Lifestyle Talkies, we sit down with freelancer and food enthusiast Kaniska Chakraborty discussing about global kitchens and its following stories. Tune in to The Daily Star, and Star Lifestyle's Facebook page at 7:30 PM today, Tuesday, 22 September. While you are at it, why not try our cosmopolitan recipes of rice from Chiangmi Talukder Lena on Page 9.

- RBR

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

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ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Take the day to relax. Travel could lead to something exciting. Avoid overreacting. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



TAURUS
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

Don't let anyone get you down. Live up to your promises. Don't let anyone take advantage of you. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



GEMINI
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Don't let anyone hold you back. Don't exaggerate matters. Try not to be overbearing. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



CANCER
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Address the issues at hand. Money problems will get worse. Do your own work. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



LEO
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Be divulge any secrets. Sort out any pending work. Look into reinventing your image. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Don't come on too strongly. Don't expect romantic encounters to be lasting. Travel will be uplifting. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



LIBRA
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Don't be too trusting of anything that happens. Catch up on overdue paperwork. Find time for some entertainment. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



SCORPIO
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Romance could develop through social interactions. Don't ignore any emotional issues. Reconnect with friends. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Do things you love. Family members can be difficult. Plan a nice evening with your partner. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Co-workers can cause problems. Health issues can mess up your schedule. Lovers will be demanding. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



AQUARIUS
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Problems with loved ones may arise. Uncertainty regarding your partner may emerge. Help someone in need. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



PISCES
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Your partner will cause issues. Don't put off any work. Don't make any decisions in haste. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.