

Living

Gluttons, and How to Deal with Them

by Nurul Huq

THEY kept on eating and, they hardly talked. And when they had swallowed a fool's fill, they sat back and panted endlessly. Who? the gluttons, that's who. People who rejoice in the name of relatives, friends, well-wishers, etc. They were eating me out of house and home at a death anniversary at my place. They had probably skipped lunch that day. They eat sparingly at home, and enough for six outsiders.

One held up a hand with a half eaten "chom-chom" in it, and said to me, "Don't grieve for your 'Dad', she's in heaven right now." I offered him another "chom-chom" at once. He took it with a twinkle in his eye.

Later, the guests dutifully complimented my heartbroken family on the food — which, incidentally, is always excellent at my place, even if I say so myself — and belched appreciatively, despite the long faces, suitable to the occasion, when the last guests had staggered off home, my house was in shambles. When relatives like mine come to offer their condolences at a funeral feast, the house is not expected to survive the occasion.

A sage once said, "People don't die, they kill themselves." People who would be horrified to throw away their lives at one go, don't mind throwing it away in pieces. People literally eat themselves to death. Think of a splendid table laid out at a party. Whole chickens ooze on beds of "basmati" rice. Giant lobsters, rosy prawns, piles of delicious meat dumplings tempt and beckon. Tubs of salad, swimming in tomato juice, roast beef and pickled chilli, and a variety of tasty tidbits warm your heart and dazzle your eyes.

Now think of the terrible diseases lying waiting among the dishes. Think of the fashionable hards, as they descend like locusts on the food, and they continue to gobble, and gobble and you'll see what I mean. Respect your stomach and eat sparingly, or outraged Nature will revenge herself. But of course, such advice is thrown away on the "bursting bellies." And that brings us to a willing victim — my mother, who is an inspired cook. She shops intelligently in the bazaar, and cooks like an angel. Every Friday she gives us a feast, her specialty being a hell fire tomato sauce which she is famous for. It takes the roof off your mouth, but the taste is divine.

Almost every other Friday, an uncle would land on my door-step. He paid for his food

with the most outrageous flat-ttery, as he popped the goodies swiftly into his mouth. As I watched him shovelling in the food, busily picking a great many bones, grunting, gasping, panting, and murmuring compliments between mouthfuls — I had often wondered what to do. A friend suggested hiding his false teeth, but he never took them out, worse luck!

Then, I had an idea. Like many good ideas it was surprisingly simple. It was such an obvious solution, that I wondered why I hadn't thought of it before. Why not launch an offensive myself? Pay back the old

and played the role of "paglapeer" to perfection. But as I found out later, he was perfectly sane, as monsters often are.

I took one look at his paunch, and knew at once that this was a well-fed specimen who was more interested in the stew-pot than the soul. Then I decided to try him out and expose him. I told him my business had dashed out a concocted story "Help me, give me a phook," I said.

He put his hands on my head in a manner quite paternal, and gently blew into my face. "I knew about your busi-



ness before you told me, 'bhog bilaashe shorobash', I mentally cursed him twice and handed him over to the devil.

"Amar phookey shorobash," he said I offered him taka. He turned it down quietly. "Bring me two plump baby pigeons, some 'chom-choms' and 'shagor kolas'. Then I'll give you another 'phook'. You'll then see what happens."

You would think that one meal that I and my friends had at my friend's place, huge though it was, wouldn't be payment enough for all the free meals he had at my place, and that he escaped rather lightly — well, almost. Strange are the ways of justice. I have heard that all his teeth are falling out presently.

Then there was this hypocrite that I came across. This was a grasping scoundrel, who pretended to be a saint, and was doing good business on the pavement right outside my house. He was a healthy young rogue. He had bushy long hair, a flowing beard, and lively intelligent eyes. He wore a "kurta" and "lungi", sat on the pavement,

and watched me eat. He was a grasping scoundrel, who pretended to be a saint, and was doing good business on the pavement right outside my house. He was a healthy young rogue. He had bushy long hair, a flowing beard, and lively intelligent eyes. He wore a "kurta" and "lungi", sat on the pavement,

that never materialized. He's a ..."

Now that I knew what I had to deal with, I swung into action. Things quickly moved to a fascinating climax. I rounded up the crowd, and both I and the rickshawpuller told our stories. I told them about the baby pigeons, the "chom-choms" and the "shagor-kolas," I told them about the cock-and-bull story I had told this fake, and how he had pretended to know about it.

In five minutes, I had swung the crowd against him. The "paglapeer" got to his feet hurriedly, abandoned his wares on the pavement, and tried to slip away. But the crowd had turned nasty, and was fully aware of his tricks. They caught him by the beard and his bushy hair, and landed a good dozen punches in strategic places.

Then there is this thieving cook of mine, who looks like a fat goose. If I step into my kitchen suddenly, I always find him tucking into a snack to keep going. He jumps like a startled thief, trying to struggle to his feet with a fawning smile, and hide my bottle of chutney at the same time. Firing him would not help, as I've learnt to my cost. The next one would probably be worse.

Professional cooks always look so well-fed. All the cooks that I have hired and fired have done themselves proud. Each was an enterprising and formidable glutton. Each stole. And each ate better than I did in my own house.

After they had pinched and hogged, they sang while stirring things in saucepans. If only they had kept quiet, I might have tolerated the wretches — but this was too much. And since they were ugly too, I told them to get lost. Finally I've learnt my lesson and got stuck with one, and he gets healthier every day.

There are some people who call themselves my "friends". I fear them more than my open enemies. With "friends" like these, who needs enemies? They come to eat me out of house and home which reminds me of Voltaire. His friends drifted in, and stayed on for months at a time. "God save me from my friends," sighed Voltaire, "I can take care of my enemies myself."

Delicate hints do not work, so, when these "friends" drop in, I tell my servant to tell them I am not home. For old sinners, the really determined ones, I have a slightly different message. "He has just left, but you'll catch him if you hurry down the street." And off they go on a wild goose chase. Ah, but how sweet is revenge!

1 kg (2 lbs) chicken
1/3 cup finely chopped onion
2 teaspoons ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoons chilli powder
2 teaspoons ground coriander
1/2 cup finely chopped pine-apple
2.5 cm/1-in piece cinnamon, 2 sticks
3 cardamoms
2 cloves
1 bayleaf
2 teaspoons salt
2 teaspoons sugar

ing their best. The ideal time for this is after a bath, as the skin on the feet is already softened. If you give yourself a pedicure at another time, be sure and soak the feet for a few minutes.

The first steps

Remove any polish with cotton wool soaked in polish remover. Cut your toenails with proper clippers rather than scissors, and cut the toenails straight across rather than into the sides; this will avoid ingrowing toenails and prevent the nails from digging into the skin on the surrounding toes. Don't cut toenails too short; try to leave a rim of white at the edge. Once nails are cut to the proper length, file them lightly with an emery board. Then massage in a little cuticle cream to soften the skin in the area.

2 spring chickens
2 teaspoons shredded ginger
1 teaspoon crushed garlic
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
2 teaspoons ground cumin
4 whole red chillies
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1 bayleaf
2.5 cm/1-in piece cinnamon, 2 sticks
2 teaspoons salt
2 tablespoons vinegar
1/2 cup cooking oil

1. Cut chicken into eight pieces. Combine ground spices and make paste with 1/2 cup of water.

2. Except pineapple place all ingredients in a saucepan. Add a little water just to make meat tender. Put lid on and cook over a moderate heat till meat is tender.

3. Fry meat stirring constantly for 5-8 minutes. Add pineapple and keep over a low heat. When oil separates out remove the curry from heat.

4. Makes 8 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Cut chicken into 8 pieces. Place all ingredients in a saucepan. Mix well, cover and cook over a low heat for about one hour till meat is tender or put the covered pan in the oven at 180°C/350°F for 1-2 hours.

2. Add coconut milk. Cover and keep over a low heat.

3. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

4. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

5. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

6. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.

2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.

3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 25 minutes.

4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings