

Fishy Ritual

by Arjuna

This unique was of food preparation was a very popular and practical method of cooking food in the old days. Locals would only have to carry with them the basic essential ingredients like a small pouch of salt, some local spices and perhaps a handful of hot chili padi (small chilli peppers), sometimes some curry powder, ginger and garlic.

It seems that other kinds of meat like pork, poultry and even beef could be cooked this way, especially in situations where clean water was not readily available.

Today, this practice has become less used but reserved only for special occasions like welcoming visitors or for local festivals. But many islanders still resort to this method, especially when they are travelling in remote places for several days.

On this special night, Mas Onor and some of our friends from the village had generously gotten us a whole basket of fishes, like Bubara fish and Parrot fish measuring from six inches to as long as three feet.

It took us a total of about two hours from the moment the fishes were hauled in from the boats, cleaned, grilled in the pit and finally for dinner.

In our highly urbanized and modern context, special cuisines are always the domain of chefs who usually keep the trade secrets to themselves but delegate menial tasks to assistants. But in this little village, sharing has become so much a part of their lives that cooking the Ikan Bakar Batu cuisine is also a community event where everyone shares in all aspects of preparing for the feast.

For instance, while some men and even boys dug the three-foot diameter and two-foot-deep pit, some other villagers cleaned and marinated the fishes. Meanwhile others climbed coconut trees and plucked several fronds which were later skillfully woven into very neat leaf vessels to contain the fishes while they were being grilled in the pit.

Another "team" was assigned to pluck fresh small chili peppers and make the famous Indonesian *Chili Sambal*. It is said that a fish meal is incomplete without this special concoction which is ever-present in every meal.

The secret formula was revealed to us then. Simply pound some chili peppers with a few garlic and onion bulbs and several small tomatoes. Add a pinch of sugar and salt to taste. Top up the mixture with liberal dashes of sweetened black soy sauce and squeeze in some lime juice to give it the extra twist.

The pit was filled with firewood which was very soon turned into red hot embers. Then the rocks were spread over the burning wood and the pit was finally covered with soil.

After about 15 minutes when the slightly covered rocks began to glow under the layer of soil, they were dug up. Coconut tree fronds and banana leaves were spread over the sizzling wooden embers lying at the bottom of the two-foot-deep pit. Then a layer of hot rocks were placed into the pit before putting in the fishes carefully wrapped in banana leaves and kept inside the woven leaf vessels.

More layers of leaves were put on top of these vessels. Only then were the hot glowing rocks stacked on top, and the entire pit was then covered with soil again.

After an hour of stomach-growing wait, steam finally started to hiss out of the soil mound — a tell-tale sign that the food within it was already cooked.

Unwrapping the neat bundle of grilled fishes and inhaling the spicy aroma was indeed a mouth-watering experience. At that moment, nothing else seems to matter except to sink our teeth finally into the juicy, succulent and tender flesh of the Ikan Bakar Batu.

— Depthnews Asia

Queen Margot

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served the revolt of the nobles against the power of the king. Beautiful Marguerite was faithful to Catholicism. So, in 1572, her mother married her to the leader of the (protestant) Huguenot camp, Henri de Navarre. It was a political marriage. Marguerite accepted it willingly to serve peace. The wedding was celebrated by Cardinal de Bourbon outside the porch of Notre Dame Cathedral, not inside. It was not yet time for Henri to consider that "Paris is well worth a mass". So Marguerite became Queen of Navarre. But the hopes of peace arising from the marriage were soon drowned in the blood of St Bartholomew's day. The massacre of protestants in Paris set the war going again.

Meanwhile, the throne of France was once again the object of covetousness. After Francois II, who died at the age of 16, came Charles IX, who was 22 in 1572. But he was ill with no hope of recovery. Henri of Anjou, his younger brother, who had just been named King of Poland, should logically have succeeded him. But that was without reckoning with Francois of Alencon, the youngest in the family. A plot, in which Marguerite was involved, aimed to give him the throne, but it failed.

Henri of Anjou, who was crowned king of France under the name of Henri III, was never to forgive his sister. He had her lover, the ladder of the plot, the Seigneur de la Mole, executed. Marguerite found consolation in the arms of Bussy d'Amboise, a perfect gallant nobleman whom the king had removed from court while he sent his sister as an ambassador to Spanish Flanders to defend the candidacy of Francois of Alencon to govern the Netherlands.

The King of Navarre had the good taste not to be offended by his wife's infidelities, as he was quite busy with Madame de Saure; but he demanded her presence. The married couple were finally reunited and, in their Chateau of Nerac, Marguerite held a brilliant court which drew poets and artists, without any prejudice of religion. Montaigne visited her and, to please the beautiful queen, he wrote the "Apology of Raymond Sebond".

But time passed, and too much in love with his new mistress, Corisande, Henri of Navarre neglected his wife. Canillac, who imprisoned her in the name of the king betrayed the latter and went over to the side of the Guise, who were Catholic extremists, against the throne. He gave his royal captive back her freedom. She remained at Usson and, once again gathered together a brilliant court and set about writing her memoirs.

During that time, Paris had fallen into the hands of Catholic extremists. Henri III, who had had to flee, had the Duke and the Cardinal of Guise assassinated, before being assassinated himself. Henri of Navarre became the heir to the French throne. He was to be the popular Henri IV. As Marguerite was sterile, he asked for an annulment, to which she consented in exchange for compensation and honours. Her return to Paris was triumphant. On the left bank, facing the Louvre palace, she had a convent and the Augustins mansion built. "Her house seemed to be an Academy devoted to Apollo and to the Muses", a contemporary noted.

In 1610, Henri IV was assassinated and, in 1615, Marguerite de Valois died. She had loved love and life with rare determination and had combined the pleasures of the body and of the mind, gallantry and devotion in the same fervour. It is a wonderful role for Adjani.

— L'Actualite En France

Adda-baazi

claimed recognition of his correct prediction that a hartal would be called on the day following the Dhaka Siege. The sudden road transport strike was a puzzle, till the Opposition claimed that it was "pre-arranged", but not by the Opposition.

Someone regaled us with the anecdote about the post-WW II condition in Britain in the '50s, when the English got so fed up with the constant government pressure to increase export, that they protested and brought out a silent procession carrying placards with the message: "Export Cripples also". (Sir Stafford was at that time the Chancellor of the Exchequer). History repeats itself; now we have a Cripps-like Finance Minister.

was a country bursting with genius but with absolutely no talent; as Hugh Leonard had commented at an adda of Englishmen (scores of years ago) discussing the Irish contribution to the Empire (as quoted by Godfrey Smith, the former editor of the London Sunday Times & The Review, in his delightful book *The English Companion*). This gentleman entertained us with another quotation. "It is important in this world to be pushing, but it is fatal to do so." — Benjamin Jowell. A typical Oxbridge stance, but somehow it sounds rather relevant in the local context, doesn't it?

As for the location of our motherland, a visiting Bangladeshi introduced his country thus in the far, far West: "I live 10,000 miles away, in a country only fifteen feet above the sea level, below the world's highest peak, having the world's densest population; and the name of my country was changed twice in one generation." We are a quiz worm amongst us posed the question whether Bangladesh

the national effort. Someone demanded, in an agitated voice, what was the political definition of 'national', and when party interest superceded the national interest. Controversial, political and religious topics are to be avoided in the drawing room, to make the conversation (not monologue) more entertaining. To divert the confrontation (*tarka* and *bitarka*), a book-worm amongst us posed the question whether Bangladesh

The Passing Show

Chuckles

Members of the Jatra Opera Group rehearse at Spitalfields Market in East London, before performing the Jatra. The opera describes tales from Bengali history and formed the centrepiece of the recent London Festival of Bangladesh.



A Youth with Aspirations and Visions

by Fayza Haq

Najib Tarque, 24, Final BFA, had his second solo exhibition at "Jon", recently. There were 23 entries in mixed media. In his subjects, he tried to capture the different forms of human beings, seen in different moods. He wished to exaggerate the forms and present them in a manner that brought in both realism as well as cubism. These forms were distorted and then displayed as a composite whole. The exaggerations and distortions were brought because the artist felt that realism alone could not depict movement or the subtle influence of the socio-economic pressures in a man's life.

Najib's style was also influenced by the young contemporary artists' visions, both at home and abroad. He concentrated on presenting both the male and female forms, along with birds and animals, that form the natural environment of mankind in Bangladesh. He depicted what he saw in the country and not beyond it, as he has not had experience of overseas travels, while at the same time, he felt that individuals in Bangladesh could represent all humanity.

In "Joy of Humanity-6" were brought in a female figure, to the left of the composition. Within her sari was the image of a child, playing, as the artist saw his subject as the symbol of motherhood. An ochre patch was seen besides the playing child, in green, and this stood for a stage, as the artist believed that "All the World's A Stage". Within the *anchal* was brought in an image of a cage, because Najib believed that human beings were confined within the bonds of their own intellectual and physical selves, as well as the confining grips of the society around them. On the backdrop at the right, was seen a twirling dancing figure that was remarkable for its complex composition. In "Joy of Humanity" was brought similar ideas, values, and expressions of sentiments. A nude female form was seen juxtaposed within her bosom, highlighted by startling red circles. The hair was depicted as stripes of red, to bring in the present use of henna by women in the Dhaka's beauty parlours. The artist had depicted the female form in the nude because he felt that the nude female figure brought out one of the finest aesthetic elements that one could come across in life. The nude presentation was there for all to see, as Najib insisted that women are preoccupied with the act of beautifying themselves in Bangladesh — both in the city and country.

In the same mixed media piece, the tribal people were brought in the left forefront, with grey shades. This was outlined with dramatic black, to contrast with the development in cities. "These tribal people were an integral part of society and should not be ignored or forgotten, while we are busy with the life in the cities," the artist explained. Three male forms, of different sizes, shapes and colours, were depicted as attacking the female form, as the artist believed that male dominated female in most societies, specially in one, such as ours.

The pieces were fascinating, as the same theme was continued on to another work "Untitled 16", which had the all-seeing eye juxtaposed almost centrally, to symbolize an omnipotent being, or a "big brother", that watched over all. Two male figures were brought into the composition, being somewhat similar to one another — the images representing two moods of the same individual, seen at different times. While one was of a lighter shade, the one behind was darker and this distinguished the two. The lips had been highlighted as a flamboyant vermilion curl. The muscular limbs were contorted in purple sweeps — the eyes remained realistic, as if taken from figures in ancient Indian temples. In between, were two figures of a youth, shown dancing with wild unleashed joy and exuberance. The father figure was brought to the right. There one found realism subtly combined with geometrical forms. It was depicted as domineering and serious, as were many fathers in most families. A female form was juxtaposed against this, as the artist felt that he could not envisage a father figure without the counterpart of a mother image.

In the backdrop of the same creation, green was brought in to represent the fertility of man, and that of the world that encompassed him. Grey was brought in too, in the background, and this stood for

white shapes — stood for the numerous desires and efforts of mankind.

A bird was seen in "Untitled-5". The bird stood for mankind and it had been depicted without a tail, as the artist believed that human beings have no strong beliefs or socio-economic support. The bird, with its confused looking eye and distorted beak, was presented as progressing from a light to a darker shade, bringing in the artist's own waves of pessimism.

The theme of metamorphosis was brought in "Untitled-4". This had five scenes on paper, with the figures progressing from that of a bloated fish (complete with a tail and fins) to a human form, seen as almost a shadow of green, purple and yellow, delicately outlined with ink. Next came a

man's outsized face, with a comparatively tiny hand, reaching out for a stick. (Here the artist felt that the mind, and the ability to move around, were sufficient, no matter what a man's age might be). Next, a human face was depicted, as people are usually identified by their faces. The final figure was that of a fallen and broken man, seen as a composite whole, in two different forms. This delineated the "fin" in man's life, when he requires an RIP on his headstone.

The artist's belief that the female form was the nonpareil symbol of beauty was continued on to "Untitled-2". The different colours and the geometrical divisions that were used in this subject, reflected the varied moods that one finds in any woman. A typical eastern head was placed atop the limbless torso. Human thoughts, being of foremost importance in the integral whole of mankind, had been expressed by the use of grey in the backdrop.

Najib believed that the younger generation of artists in Bangladesh are taking bold and decisive steps to project contemporary and universal beliefs, thoughts and feelings. "They are progressing towards a definite goal without losing sight of the importance of their past heritage," Najib concluded.

— UNESCO

UNESCO Brings in First Bosnian Theatre Group to Perform in West Since the War

Bosnia's cultural and intellectual isolation.

The 18-member ensemble is performing two plays from 12-25 September at the Bouffes du Nord Theatre in Paris. From here, they will embark on a two-month European tour performing in several French cities, the Netherlands and Germany.

"We wanted to show our work," said Haris Pasovic, the Ensemble's director, during a recent interview. "Artists always want to show their work."

This is what he told a UNESCO delegation that was visiting Sarajevo last June. UNESCO agreed to help and started negotiating with Bosnian authorities.

Nearly three months later, UNESCO was finally able to fly the troupe to Zagreb on a plane provided by the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR). From there, the Ensemble took a bus to Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital. Then on 8 September, they flew to Paris aboard a regularly-scheduled airline with tickets provided by UNESCO.

But so far, the short sojourn in Paris has not placated Pasovic, an angry young man whose gray hair belies his 33 years. He is enraged by a war that no one seems able to stop. "Every day people are dying on the streets as the rest of Europe watches," he said.

— UNESCO

Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani

tion lightly. Although the story is in typical Hollywood tradition i.e. the defenceless good guy versus the all-powerful bad guy, the viewer will certainly appreciate the high-tech visual effects. The film will go down well with families.

Hollywood's highest paid actor Jack Nicholson stars in *Wolf* another of this summer's blockbusters on both sides of

ENGLISH		
NAME	TYPE	CAST
1. The Mask	(Animation)	John Carr/Peter Riegert/ Peter Greene/Any Vasebek
2. Guarding Tess	(Drama)	Shirley MacLaine/ Nicolas Cage
3. Corrina, Corrina	(Comedy)	Whoopi Goldberg/ Ray Liotta
4. The Wind And The Lion	(Hist)	Sean Connery
5. The Seventh Floor	(Thriller)	Brooke Shields Sharon Stone/Dylan McDermott
6. Where Sleeping Dogs Lie	(Thriller)	Ray Scheider
7. The Fourth War	(War/Action)	Jack Nicholson/Michelle Pfeiffer
8. Wolf	(Thriller)	

HINDI		
NAME	TYPE	CAST
1. Prem Yogi	(Rom/Comedy)	Rishi Kapoor/ Madhu

Source : Film Fair Video and other clubs.