

Rising Stars

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Mothers may be the best cooks we know but let's face it, the best chefs in the world are men. At least the cliché can be used as a miserable excuse whenever a cooking experiment goes wrong, horribly wrong.

Contrary to popular belief, females are not the only ones who (like to) cook. After all, this is the age of equal rights and such other controversial matters. Quite a few guys indulge in the art of culinary preparations especially when their mothers become fed-up with having to satisfy their sons' bottomless stomachs. Besides, these days how many girls actually know how to cook? Think a little into the future married to someone who has a hard time boiling water. Therefore, for guys, knowing how to whip up something even remotely edible is occasionally a necessity.

Safety First

The first and most important thing to keep in mind before setting out on a cooking endeavor is the telephone number of the local fire department. It is also a wise decision to buy a "What To Do In Case of Fire" guidebook. Reading the book beforehand would be an even smarter thing. This rule applies to all kitchen appliances; read the manual before using the machine. Random pressing of funny looking buttons can result in your food looking like, uh...well, anything except food. Be especially careful of pressing red buttons. As we know from movies red signifies big trouble, usually of the exploding sort. Switches that set off nuclear missiles are always red. Once I wanted to heat up a sandwich

batter.

The only downside is that excessive intake leads to death coming sooner than expected due to clogged blood vessels. Therefore, other than early death fried foods have no other discernible side effects.

Baking

Baking is a simple matter of gathering material, mixing them up and putting the mixture into an oven to, uh, bake. It sounds simple but for novices it is a much more complicated process as there are a lot more steps involved in between the above mentioned three.

In case of baking a cake first gather all the ingredients. These are eggs, flour, milk and sugar. Flour and talcum powder look the same. So, make sure which you are using. This mistake has a remote chance of occurring as most people do not have large packets of talcum powder lying about in their kitchen, but you never know.

Mistaking salt for sugar has a greater possibility of happening but then you can always call it "Cake de la Salt".

After the ingredients are sorted out, it is time to mix them all up into one messy sludge. Using a manual mixer is time consuming and all that cranking takes its toll on your arm muscles. Better to take advantage of modern technology and parental money and use an electric mixer instead. Such mixers are usually shaped like a gun. Someone who has recently watched MATRIX may feel the urge to emulate Keanu Reeves' gun-toting stance. Taking out the spinning mixer out of the bowl



Bon Appetite

By Ehsanur Raza (Chef Extraordinaire)



using a microwave oven. I pressed a red button to see what happens and then went to answer the telephone. Two minutes later the triple-decker sandwich had turned into a black chunk of something unidentifiable. The red button was for Instant Superheating.

There are many types of dishes suitable for different levels of urgency and moods.

Haute Cuisine

This is any food garnished with many decorations to make the dull item look good and expensive. "Dal-Bhaat" can be considered as haute cuisine when it is served on a fancy dish surrounded by artistically arranged color-coded pieces of vegetable. It helps if the decoration is edible because someone might actually nibble on it. Styrofoam, wood and stone are a little hard on the digestive system not to mention the teeth.

Haute cuisine should be served in extremely low lighting like in fancy restaurants. It provides a romantic setting but more importantly hides anything that has gone wrong with the dish. Any creature even vaguely resembling a cow (e.g. dog) can be served as "Beef Cuts Supreme".

Frying (a.k.a. Burning Your Food To A Crisp)

Fried foods taste best and fried chicken is the most mouth watering. Basically you take a chicken smeared with batter (paste made from flour, salt, spices, etc) and put it into the oil to fry. The chicken might show reluctance at being fried and may subject you to grievous bodily harm by pecking you. This can be avoided by slaughtering the chicken first before applying the

and going 'bang-bang' will result in redecorating the ceiling, walls and furniture by splattering cake-mix all over. I can tell from personal experience that it is very difficult to clean up. Also, remember to wash the food mixer if you have recently used it to mix paint. Paint does not taste very good.

The next and final part is to bake the mixture. Setting the timer and temperature is very important. If you are using an old fashioned analog oven then you just may figure out how it works within a couple of hours. If you own a high tech, space age, multi-function microwave and are having trouble operating it then look for someone who has an engineering degree from MIT.

One thing you can do to while away the time is to insert a toothpick in the center of the mixture and watch it rise as the cake bakes. It is nice if you use a fresh, unused toothpick instead of one found lying around after a meal.

Lastly, if the cake turns out gooey you can call it a new type of pudding and if rock hard then it becomes a biscuit.

At wits end

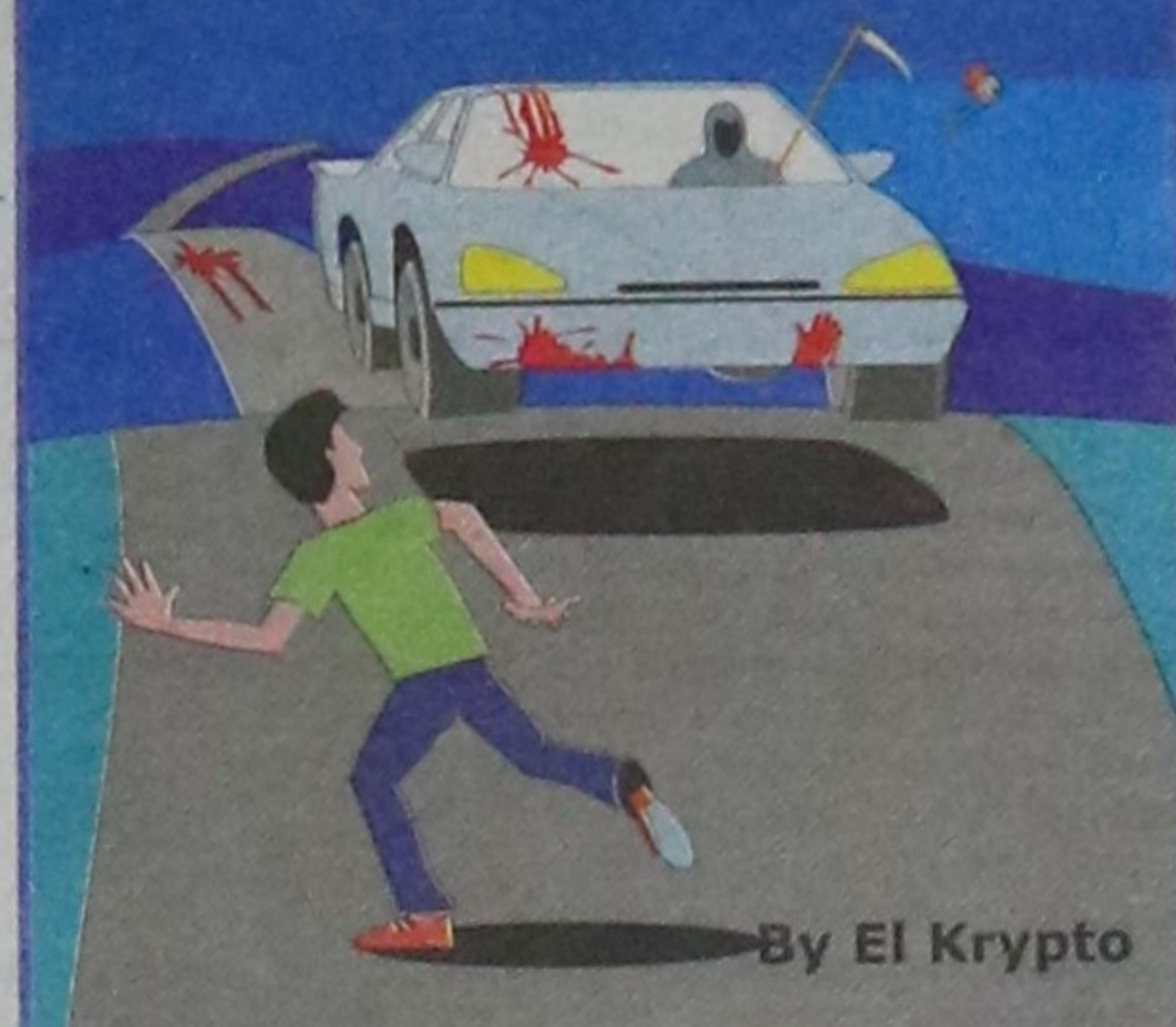
Nothing beats a sandwich when the hunger is intense and time is short. In addition, it is the least destructive of the entire foodstuff mentioned so far. A jam and butter sandwich is simple but if you are looking for something more classy try adding cheese. Run a clothes iron over the sandwich to make the cheese melt and spread evenly. Remember to turn off the steam, as it will make the bread soggy. Also, remember to wipe the iron surface so that no one gets cheese stain on his or her clothes.

If all else fails then the best thing to do is to take a glass of cold water. It will help you to calm down and explain the fire in the kitchen.

Bon Appetite.



DIE AND LET DIE



The title may sound incoherent, but anyone who has travelled in our roads would agree that it seems to be the motto of most of the motorist and rickshaw-pullers plying on our roads. Road accidents have become mundane affair in Bangladesh. People have grown so accustomed to it that they seem to have accepted the grave reality and resigned disconsolately. That is the only logical explanation to the lack of effort to prevent road accidents. People seem to have given up hope, leaving things to their own devices. It can be epitomized in small incident I once witnessed. After a short storm, the Magbazaar intersection was packed with cars. All movements ceased as traffic from all sides got entangled in the middle. There were no traffic police on duty. As I walked by, I saw a lone traffic police, in a symbolic gesture, getting on rickshaw, deserting his post seeing how hopeless the situation was.

In the Dhaka Chittagong highway, all vehicles travel at atrocious speed taking full advantage of the newly expanded road. It is not the speed that is so lethal as much as the recklessness and the lack of responsibility with which they drive. I once saw three buses side by side, moving over 95 km/hr, trying to overtake each other at the same time, with barely a foot gap between them. What the bus drivers do not realize that it is not only their life they are endangering, but also of several dozen passengers. Another time I saw a bus driver driving, his head nodding off, on the verge of falling asleep.

The passengers themselves are not wary of the situation. They are willing to risk their lives by sitting on the roofs of buses, trains etc. Either they are not aware of the peril or are completely disregarding it. It amazes me to find how little regard they have of their lives. It is almost as if they are tired of living. Risking so much in just one journey is blatantly foolish.

Another interesting feature you are likely to notice while travelling through a highway at night is that vehicles move without sufficient lights or without lights at all. Has God gifted those drivers with special eyesight that they can see in the dark? Or do they believe they are the only one travelling through the road? The ubiquitous rickshaw has started to make its appearance in the highways. This itself is a risky act. Such a slow moving vehicle cannot travel in the same road with fast moving vehicles, where some of them are moving like rampant elephants. I understand that under safety regulations rickshaws should hang lanterns while travelling at night. Otherwise it is impossible spot them until you are very close. Often you will find rickshaws travelling without light at night. In the city, lanterns are not mandatory due to the presence of streetlights. But in the highway it is sheer folly to travel without one. Such follies lead to many sad and unfortunate accidents.

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