

Bakar Khani – one of the many delicacies of Old Dhaka that are still in high demand.

Eateries of Dacca

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It was the middle of the fifties. Dacca as it was named then was a small provincial town of 3 lakh people. Dhanmondi had come up but did not stretch far. Even Sobhanbagh did not have much habitation except Maulvi Abdus Sobhan's property. New Market was a sprawling shopping area among the landmarks of developing Dacca. Dacca Stadium was still under construction when it staged the India-Pakistan Test Match. It was complete when the New Zealand team came.

The only prestigious residential hotel was Hotel Shahbagh. The posh eateries of Dacca which the elite attended were around Gulistan -- Rex, Kasbah and La Sani. Rex Restaurant at the beginning, in the late forties, was located in a one – storied building at a place near where Gulistan Building stands. The orders were however served in the open space in front of the building. It was owned by a Turkish gentleman who left after 1947 handing over the restaurant to one Mr Ahmed, an employee of the restaurant. He shifted the restaurant to the then Jinnah Avenue. Paratha and Kebab was the choicest delicacy of Rex. Even the butter toast had an English touch. Liveried bearers served the orders. Rex represented whatever aristocracy the provincial town had.

Kasbah Restaurant was located where Bangabandhu Avenue takes a left turn towards Zero point. La Sani Restaurant was where Agrani Bank's Bangabandhu Avenue branch stands. The Gulistan Restaurant was on the far western side of Gulistan Building. The watering holes were at Hotel Shahbagh, Hotel Green, Gulistan Restaurant, Chu Chin Chow Restaurant, Miranda Bar at the then Mukul Cinema (now Azad) and at Deccan Hotel on Nawabpur Road.

Near Ramna Bhaban was Salimabad Restaurant, an eatery for people of modest income. One could have a hearty lunch of Rice, Curry and Dal (Lentil soup) for 6 Anna. Incredible! Isn't it? The first Chinese Restaurant of Dacca, Café China was at Segun Bagicha. Each item -- fried rice, soup, vegetable cost Rs. 4/-. For open air delicacies there were Khiri Kebab made of cow's udder, phuchka