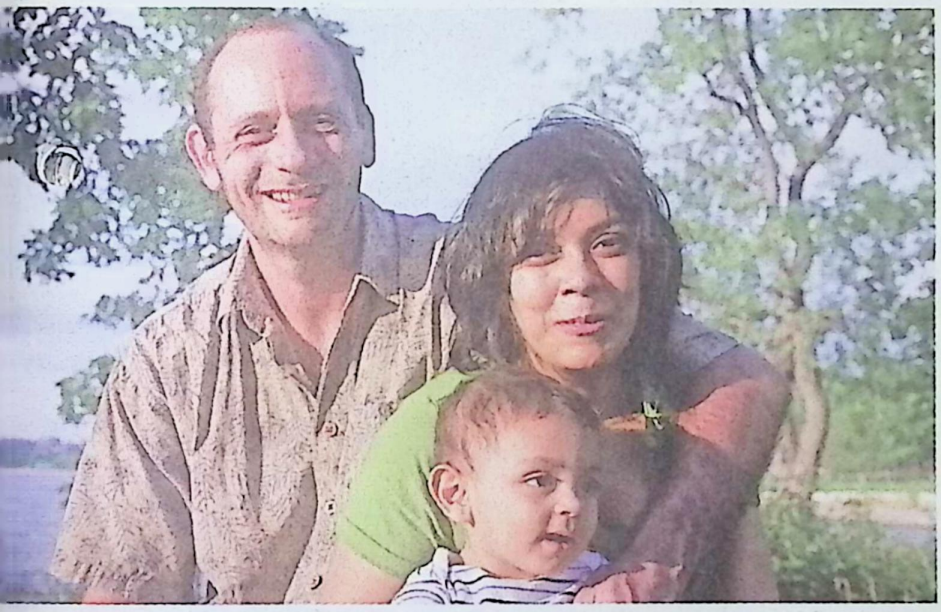
While marriage alone was quite a big and important decision for both, George had to make another very significant choice- to move to Bangladesh with Sabrina. "Sabrina had various reasons to come back to Bangladesh, which I had to respect, of course. On my part, I was in the mood to venture and see what life was like in another part of the world. Since I did not have any established business in the States and was interested to explore the world, I thought why not move to Bangladesh with her?"

Since his arrival in Bangladesh in 2007, George worked with quite a few organizations, but he had always nurtured the dream of starting his own restaurant. His culinary passion sparked during his graduate training years in Nutritional Sciences. His first proper experience as a chef began at Carriage House Café, where he established a brunch menu that still continues to please customers. Then came his years at Sebastian's Cucina in New York.



George and Sabrina with their son.

But George's love for tastes and flavours started from his early teen years. Since his childhood, George had witnessed his mother running the food company her father had started her small mill of hot, sharp tasting mustard. As a high school student, George would spend hours and hours during his long vacations in his family mill helping make and package batches of mustard. "While on my journeys across the beautiful United States of America, I grew to love the wonderful local ingredients that our amazingly diverse land had to offer. It therefore became my goal to integrate the beauty and taste of local ingredients in all my cooking endeavours to come. Bangladesh, undoubtedly, too is very rich when it comes to spices and flavours but I wanted to take some time to know the country and its people's tastes better."

When he reached Dhaka, he found the city very cosmopolitan. Soon enough he discovered a growing group of people who have experienced tastes of different cuisines through their visit in other countries, which he believes influenced their taste and demand for food. "After seven years of my stay in Bangladesh, I finally started my café along with some young Bangladeshi enthusiasts in September last year with a promise to provide my customers with 'a slice of New York in Dhaka'," says the proud owner.

Even though George is keeping his menu really brief and simple, all of his dishes and bakery items are rich in bold flavours and unique taste. Local ingredients are his first choice and most of his dishes are made using quality and simple ingredients that unlock delicate flavours. "While choosing the ingredients for our meals, we keep in mind the availability and affordability of the ingredients. There are, of course, a few challenges that we face while thinking up the dishes, for example butter, a principal ingredient for many of our dishes is quite expensive compared to the country where I come from. Or, for instance, there are many dishes where I used to sprinkle wine as it helps to burn the fat and add some extra flavour, which I need to carefully avoid in Bangladesh." True that there are a few limitations like this, but our chef brings required modifications in his dishes and makes sure that still it tastes good.

Apart from being the man behind the ever growing popular café, George also shares a very important bond with our country; we can call him the "*bideshi jamai*". Currently he is residing in Bangladesh with Jahanzeb, his six-year-old son and his wife Sabrina. He has also tried his hand at cooking Bangladeshi cuisine. A *kachchi biriyani* lover himself, he is yet to learn how to cook perfect *kachchi biriyani*, but he has become an expert in cooking many complicated dishes like *halim*. Can he speak Bangla? "Ektu ektu (a bit)," says this overly modest man with a shy laugh. "English is my son's third language, it comes after Bangla and Sylheti."

The chef personally loves eating spicy and hot foods, hence Bangladeshi cuisine never lets him down. But there are a few things he does not like about our country and its food. What are they? "The pungent taste of shutki and the unbearable traffic jam," he concludes with a laugh.