

Flavours of the season

COLD cuts, beef jerky or 'mejbani ranna'; spoiled for choice, aren't we? Every Qurbani Eid ushers in a time when the Bengali staple -- fish -- is replaced by an alternative source of protein: red meat. Eid-ul-Adha is a unique celebration of human bonding, of sacrifice, of self-realisation and of sharing. A pious act that ensures every household has at least one chance of feasting on the meat from the sacrificial animal.

For us who are more fortunate than others, eating meat sometimes takes prece-

to offals.

As a matter of fact, on Eid day, it has been a family tradition to have the first meal of the day with greasy, ox liver and gooey 'khichuri' and clarified butter! Truly a godsend.

As the day progresses, the beefy parts of the animal reach the kitchen and an elaborate dish is prepared in a large 'patil' -- a pot that is used only on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha. Our house chef prepares a gastronomic delight in the form of a watery, beef preparation by dinner time.

And of course the feasting continues as

the odd odour, it makes a delectable dish.

Somehow akin to the 'jhura mangsho' the preparation of the intestines give of the juices as they are cooked and heated, over and over again. As the fleshy parts get drier, they give off the flavours and that is what makes them a delicacy.

It would be a crime not to mention the head of the animal, which yields culinary delights such as the brain (excellent when fried), the meaty portions of the head and of course, the tongue (which is a bliss as a cold cut; great for sandwiches).



dence over the spirituality of the occasion. Or so we think! Qurbani is unique in the sense that the religion simultaneously provides a valuable lesson on sacrifice while providing a chance to rejoice through a very human activity -- feasting!

The actual day of Eid begins with the early morning prayers. As the butchers arrive, specific instructions are given -- don't spoil the skin, make sure the pieces are moderate in size, and if you were thinking the offals would go wasted handed over to, think again! We are sensitive when it comes

the days roll on. Somewhat akin to the television programmes that are aired, Eid extends for weeks on, months even. That watery dish gradually loses its liquid content and the meat fibres get loose. What it then turns into are juicy, non-gravy remains of the meat fibres that have been simmered on low heat for a week or more. The taste is quite distinct and unmatched.

While the meat is being simmered, another large pot is mounted on the flame. Along with the 'jhura mangsho', the intestines are simmered and if one can get past

Even after distributing a significant portion of the meat, some is stored in the fridge for future consumption. Although electricity is now accessible even in the farthest corners of the country, many rural households still prepare beef jerky as a means for preservation. Sun dried to prevent fungal or bacterial growth, beef jerky is an acquired taste that is not found in other times of the year.

So! Cold cuts or beef jerky? Spoiled for choice, aren't we?

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

MAN TO MAN

Tired with a reason

"WHY are you sleeping? Its Eid!" -- the voice inevitably disturbs your slumber every Eid day. The voice is, usually at least, of female origins. It seems women cannot for the life of them comprehend why men like to sleep on Eid day, right after they come back home from their prayers and have a hearty breakfast. Well, not that the men owe you an explanation, apart from the fact that they are lazy, we might still try to make sense of their behavior.

Firstly, buying the cow, whose slaughter we just over-saw by the way, is not an easy process. It's not grocery shopping, where you feel up the ripest one, strike a mean deal and carry your spoils back home. No. Buying a cow is difficult. It's not like buying meat either. A better analogy is buying a nail-polish without trying on the shade. You never know what to expect behind the hide, so you must carefully evaluate your options.

And the options are many but the traders are skilled liars.

They will bluff and tell you everything you want to hear and if past discretions are anything to go by, men are fickle when flattered. They might and probably will go over-budget. Once they do, the men will then, most likely, walk the cow back home all the way from the cattle market. That's a tiring journey. Even if they don't, the haggling process in itself is draining. Even before the cow is sacrificed, we are already tired.

While Eid starts on Eid day for the general population, for the men it starts when the cows, goats and camels crowd the streets. The minute that happens, the men know they have to get to work. While women don't know this, the men spend weeks discussing cows and goats. An Afghan would feel right at home during this time, at any tea shop wherever. Men discuss prices, size, what to look for, where to go, who to contact, etc. All this talk is exhausting but not more so than the hunt for the slaughterer.

Though real men know that the man who passes the

sentence should swing the sword, there is still a need for the butcher. And getting a good butcher is hard but a bad butcher usually means taunts from your wife for every remaining Qurbani Eid for the rest of your life. The pressure is intense. Once the cow and the butcher are done, it comes to overseeing the work. We also must wake up real early, bathe the cow and ourselves and spend quite a bit of time praying and things. There are also Eid day discussions at the mosque, a rather tiresome activity.

And then the men have to do the hardest part; go around and meet relatives and everyone really hates relatives, especially those who come around every Eid and only during then, flashing their meat in your face. How's that fun? And so, with all things to do, consider and discuss the whole ordeal is a difficult one. Why are we sleepy? Because we damn well haven't slept in days, that's why and with good reason too. Leave us be, why don't you?

By Osama Rahman