

**DESHI MIX**  
BY SALINA PARVIN



## Winter pitha

**C**OLOURFUL fairs, musical soirees and ceremonial festivities abound in the country to greet the harvest season. Rural Bangladesh dressed in gold; the glitters of the freshly harvested golden rice bring life to the fullest and a smile on every face.

Agrahayon, the eighth month in the Bengali calendar, marks the beginning of traditional harvest festival of Nobanno. In Bengali, Nobanno means "new crop". In an agro-based country, the principal crop - rice - is harvested in the month of Agrahayon. Truly, a joyful time in rural Bangladesh as farmers bring their sustenance home. Another attraction of

"new crop" is the beginning of 'pitha' season.

In Bengali, winter is the season for 'pitha-puli.' We have at least hundreds of different varieties of pithas. Some are associated with the harvest (Nobanno) in winter while some others are prepared on any grand occasions like weddings, eids or pujas. Some are crunchy, some steamed and others delightfully soaked in sugar, molasses, milk or date palm syrup. Most of them are sweet, though there are some savoury pithas as well.

### Dudh puli

'Dudh' stands for milk in Bengali and 'puli' is another name for pitha. Dudh puli can be described as rice flour dumpling with coconut filling, cooked in cardamom and cinnamon infused milk. Dudh puli is one of the most common and delicious pitha prepared in Bengal during Makar Sankranti celebration in January. The stuffing is generally made of coconut and date palm jaggery and shell is made of rice flour. But surprisingly these dumplings are not fried or steamed but boiled in thick milk and flavoured again with date palm jaggery.

### Ingredients:

2 cups grated coconut  
½ cup jaggery  
½ tin condensed milk  
2 cup rice flour  
1 cup water  
Salt (as required)  
2 litres milk  
½ cup sugar



3 cardamom  
3 pieces cinnamon stick

### Method:

Mix coconut, condensed milk and jaggery on a non-stick pan. Turn on stove and stir constantly until the mixture becomes slightly sticky. Remove the pan. Now boil water, add salt and rice flour, mix thoroughly and make a dough. Knead well for about 5 minutes. Take part of the dough and roll it out as thick as a tortilla. Cut out circles with a cookie cutter. Place a small amount of coconut filling on each circle. Brush the edges with water and seal tightly to form a crescent shape. Keep aside. Now boil milk, sugar, cinnamon and cardamom together in a pan. When the milk is reduced to half add the pithas and cook for 30 minutes in medium-low heat or until pithas are cooked. Remove the pan and serve.

### Bhapa pitha

Bhapa pitha is one of the most popular pithas in Bangladesh, made of powdered rice, coconut and jaggery stuffed inside. It is one of the dessert items that truly represents Bengali cuisine.



### Ingredients:

2 cup parboiled rice  
½ cup liquid milk  
Pinch of salt  
For the filling -  
½ cup grated fresh coconut  
1 cup date jaggery

### Method:

Soak the rice for at least 5-6 hour. Drain the water out well. Now pour in a grinder or food processor. Mix some water (don't take

too much). Add salt and sprinkle milk in a way that the rice powder must seem wet, not dry at all. If the flour binds together when you hold some of them in your palm, the flour is ready. Now sieve the flour through the strainer. Take two pieces of clean cotton cloth and two small bowls. In a bowl spread some flour then add the coconut and jaggery.

Cover it with another layer of flour. Cover it with piece of cloth and put in the steamer. Tap the bowl slightly, so that you can remove the bowl easily. Remove the bowl and cover the pitha with the remaining ends of the cloth. Steam for 4-5 minutes. Prepare the same way using the other bowl and cloth. You remove one pitha and place another.

### Golap pitha

'Golap pitha', the beautiful, rose shaped pitha has two versions. One is dried one like 'gina' or 'pakon pitha', fried and coated with thick sugar syrup while the other is a soft, 'gulabjamun' style version, soaked in sugar syrup. The basic dough for both of them is same. The one I will be sharing today is the soft one.

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