

EVENT

Bank on Bogra

Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef auditions



THE second auditions of the Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef took place in the quiet city of Bogra. Despite a politically enforced shut down, the participants in Bogra weren't willing to concede their first chance at having a crack at the biggest culinary competition in Bangladesh. These people intended on putting Bogra on the map and they were not going to take no for an answer.

Over 100 participants gathered at the TMSS Mahila Market, sharp at 8am. The market was closed for the day but Super Chef's presence created such a festive environment that one would never guess that all the shops were closed. There were a lot of people, a lot of colours and a lot of excited chatter. The market seemed vibrant and alive and all this before the event even kicked off.

Having seated the participants, the rules were then explained. First, a 50-question multiple-choice question test would be taken. Those with the highest marks would then be selected for the next part of the audition.

The second part would comprise of the participants being given Tk500 and taken for shopping. After shopping for their ingredients within their budget, they would then have 30 minutes to cook their dish. The best dishes would then be rewarded with a 'Yes' card for the central round to be held in Dhaka.

Everyone seemed ready. After giving the test, they all waited in nervous anticipation. To ease the tension, an impromptu yet entertaining talent show began. The participants took to the stage to show that their talents weren't restricted solely for the culinary arts.

Some danced, some sang, some acted and some exaggerated

their local dialects, with every act meeting a round of warm applause from the gathered audience.

What was poignant was the sense of how much these individuals needed an outlet. Stuck at home with strike after strike and uncertainty in every aspect, the Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef was like a breath of fresh air. Not only was it a chance to win 10 lac or the prestigious Super Chef crown, but it was also a break from the disappointing monotony of daily life.

While the participants entertained themselves, the test papers were being thoroughly checked. The judges sat and debated some of the answers, especially the one's that broke the mcq trend and leaned more towards being open ended.

Finally, 30 participants were chosen to progress in the second round of auditions, the budget cook-off. Armed with Tk500, the participants went off to shop for their ingredients. They knew that the condition in the market would not be spectacular and they

would have to make do with what they had. The participants had to come up with on the spot decisions on what to make.

Some utilised the shopping period well, along with the 30 minute given for the cook-off. However, there were some that seemed to be crumbling under the pressure, opting for simple dishes instead of taking a risk. But it's flamboyance that generally takes you places. And in Bogra, there was no lack of flamboyance.

Nadim Sarkar, a man perhaps born to be a chef, showed that aspect the best. "I could cut and skin this chicken, blind-folded if you want me to", he said when asked if he 30 minutes would be enough for him to cut and carve up an entire chicken. He went on to get a 'yes' card but in the process showed both his x-factor and his culinary skill.

In total, 7 participants made the final cut and got the 'yes' card from Bogra. All seven were deemed to be highly qualified by the Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef judges, Mila Monjusha, consultant of Pran RFL Group's spice department, and Israt Jahan, proprietor of Sukorna, a cooking school, were the judges of the Bogra round. The 7 winners from Bogra are Nilufar Yasmin, Atia Jerin Khan, Mahbuba Begum, Sanjay Shill, Kawsara Begum, Nadim Sarkar, Rahela Begum and Bimasha Ahmed.

Next week, we look at what happened all the way in Chittagong, before heading towards Mymensingh and Dhaka. Stay tuned and find out who will be Bangladesh's next Super Chef and wear the crown of all crowns.

By Osama Rahman

Photo: Mithun



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