

EVENT

Audition rounds end in Dhaka

LAST year, in the Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef 2014, Dhaka proved to be a sort of game-changer. With the highest number of registered participants, it was evident that the Super Chef fever reached its zenith in Dhaka.

This year, the capital city did not disappoint either. Over 800 people braved the strikes to congregate in the city's Gulshan Shooting Club. Was Dhaka going to be the hardest fought auditions round? If numbers were any hint, the answer to that question was going to be a resounding yes.

Although the time for the auditions was stated as 8am, participants began coming to the venue from almost 6 in the morning. Two hours later, the participants' line stretched all across the road from Gulshan Shooting Club. The chatter, even in the main road, was near deafening.

Excitement and enthusiasm were present in the equal measures. The registration began almost as soon as the participants arrived. Initially, the numbers were overwhelming for the activation team from Market Access Providers Limited. Soon, officers from Bangladesh Edible Oil Limited also set up registration booths to hasten the process and normalcy began returning to a chaotic start.

Once the participants were registered, over 800 of them, the first part of the audition rounds began. A questionnaire was given to all the participants, containing 50 questions. These questions were, as in previous audition rounds, designed to check the culinary knowledge of each of the participants.

The questions were both MCQs and open-ended. Although a strict "No cheating" rule



was instituted, many tried their best to discreetly violate the rules. A husband-wife combination, both who had registered, were at first seen trying to help each other but soon the wife began to hide her answers. The husband could not hide his disappointment and amidst all the tension, their situation provided some much needed comedic relief.

Finally, at the end of the written test part of the auditions, 75 individuals were selected to go for the cook-off. The participants were divided into groups and then provided with Tk. 500. This amount would now be used by the participants to shop for ingredients that they would need for the cook-off.

During the cook-off, the participants would be given 30 minutes time to cook a dish from the ingredients they bought using the allotted money. Since it was a freestyle event, a lot of dishes were seen.

Judges Shaheda Yesmin, culinary expert and proprietor of Jewel's Kitchen and Syed Tazammul (Tareq) head chef of Watercross restaurant were seen asking the participants questions as they went about their preparation. Last year's Super Chef's second and third runner-ups were also additional judges for the event and they too were seen walking about and taking down notes about the participants.

Soon, the participants began taking their food to the judges for tasting. The judges had a hard time choosing among the 75 dishes. Chef Tareq and Shaheda Yesmin both took time to carefully mark each of the dishes presented before them.

Participants from last year's competition, who thought they were better prepared this year, were in for a rude awakening. In one year's time the popularity of the competition had grown immensely and hence the competition was much harder. After quite some time, the judges settled on 35 participants who would now go on to the central round of the competition.

Farhanan Yeasmin and Farzana Yeasmin, sisters, both made it through the Dhaka auditions.

"I participated last year and since I did not win then, I used that as a learning experience and came back much better prepared than before." Zebunessa, one of the best participants in Dhaka, said that although she had not participated in the year before, she knew what the program was about and was here to do her very best.

Overall, Dhaka proved once again to be rich in culinary gems. With the end of the Dhaka auditions, the audition rounds themselves had ended. Now, the final rounds were about to begin. Soon, the real fight will begin.

Keep your eyes on NTV for the latest season of the Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef 2015 and catch all the drama, excitement and more kinds of food than you knew existed.

By Osama Rahman
Photo: Palash Khan

LS PICK

Budget accessories

TV Tuner Card

This is a good option regardless of how often it's used. The ability to capture a TV program is a nifty feature no matter how you look at it. Sure TiVo does the same thing, but the files you'll record will be saved on your laptop which means you have more freedom with your content.

Avermedia Volar Go USB (Tk.3600)

A very well-known brand in terms of TV Tuner cards so you can't go wrong with this option. Plugs in through your USB and can output 1080/720p content easily and as well as record programs.

For smartphones

Wireless speakers

The demand for wireless speakers has risen significantly in recent years, thanks to the all in one quality that a smartphone has. A wireless speaker boosts the output of your smartphone so that others can enjoy whatever you are listening to or watching.

Microlab MD-212 Boom Box Bluetooth (Tk.2350)

The design may not win many awards, and the power output is a bit on the low side at just 2 Watts, but then again it doesn't really cost much either. Plus with the onboard mic,

this can also be used as a speakerphone.

Logitech X100 Mobile BOOMBOX Speaker (Tk.2900)

Sporting a very funky design, 5hr playback time, built in mic, and 3 Watt power, it's a great pick if you want something eye catching and loud enough for everyone around you to hear what you are listening to.

F&D Swan W18BT Hi-Fi Audio Speaker (Tk.5000)

With a killer design and handy size, a modest 2 Watt power, and a capable battery, this will add class and performance on any desk it's placed.

Headphones

Unanimously, the most important and most used of all accessories available for a smartphone. Whether you are an audiophile (crazy about sound quality) or just need something to drown out the world when commuting, a headphone is paramount in order to complete any smartphone experience.

Skullcandy Ink'D (Tk.1400)

Skullcandy's hip looks and various colour options seem to favour the taste of the youth much more than anyone else. Don't go expecting great quality from these though.

JVC HA FX series (Tk.1800)

A solid entry level offering from JVC, it features eye catching design, a decent sound quality and attractive pricing.

Xiaomi Pistons 2 (Tk.1800)

Don't be fooled by the Chinese name as this company is taking the world by storm through their smartphones, and now they have done their magic in headphones. For the price, these come with metal build, a sound quality that could rival headphones in the \$50-\$100 price ranges and as a plus, it has mic and three buttons so it can replace your OEM headphones easily.

Power banks

A godsend for the active on the go people, this nifty gadget has made running out of charge in awkward times.

Gadmei Elite P520 5200mAh Power Bank Portable Charger (Tk.1650)

TP-Link TL-PB10400 Portable 10400 mAh Dual USB Power Bank (Tk.2400)

Remax Proda 20000 mAh Dual USB Portable Mobile Power Bank (Tk.2800)

Smart watches

Despite still being in its infancy, the adoption rate for smart watches has gone up like a rocket, and it's not that difficult to see why

as it's a logical evolution for the wristwatch. With phones being as large as they are, a smart watch makes more sense for medial tasks such as fitness tracking, texting, etc.

Pebble Steel Smart Watch (Tk.22000)

Following the initial square face design of most smart watches and sporting leather or metal bands, and very basic screen. Looks may not be its strongest point, but it does retain its charge quite well.

LG G Watch R (Tk.25000)

Following on the footsteps of the Moto 360, the G Watch R introduces a round face which makes the watch look very much like an expensive sport watch and the beautiful screen makes working on the screen a delight.

Moto 360 (Tk.25900)

The watch that has set trends for all smart watches, the drop dead gorgeous 360 sports a design that can blend in any occasion.

Asus ZenWatch (Tk.20900)

The cheapest option in this lineup, and also following the square face, Asus has at least managed to make it look classy nonetheless.

By S M Intisab Shahriyar