

the water does not stop boiling, pour in the rice and sprinkle with ½ tsp salt.

14. Stir once or twice, then boil briskly, uncovered for 5-mins.

15. Occasionally pick a few of the rice grains with a spoon and chew on them to see if they have softened.

16. When the rice is half-crunchy half-soft, take pot off the flame and tip out the water through a fine kitchen strainer.

17. Lightly rouse the rice with a large fork, to remove all moisture, and to keep the grains separated.

18. Divide the rice into three portions.

19. Colour first portion with yellow-red colour concoction, and set aside.

20. Combine the reserved ghee (#11), with the second portion of rice, set aside.

21. Keep the remaining rice untouched and white.

22. Lay the potatoes on the bottom of the large heavy degchi or a heavy pot with a 30 cm (12") base. Sprinkle potatoes with ½ tsp salt. Pile up the yellow-red coloured rice (#19) loosely on top of the potatoes.

23. Take half the quantity of meat and arrange them on top of the rice. Scatter half the baresta on top of the meat.

24. Now cover the meat with the ghee mixed rice (#20) and add one more layer of the remaining meat.

25. Disperse: cracked cardamom, 5 cloves, cinnamon sticks, over the meat and cover the entire surface with the remaining baresta.

26. Finally, loosely cover the second layer of meat with the remaining white rice (#21).

27. Sprinkle the saffron infused milk over the rice in a manner to create irregular patches of saffron colouring.

28. Make soft dough with the 2 cups plain flour and enough water. Roll out the dough into a long thin strip.

29. Place the strip on the rim of the

degchi/pot, covering the whole circumference. Rest the lid on the dough strip, and firmly press down to attach the lid with the dough tightly.

30. Place degchi/pot on high flame, for about 5-mins.

31. Take degchi/pot off the flame and place it in a pre-heated oven.

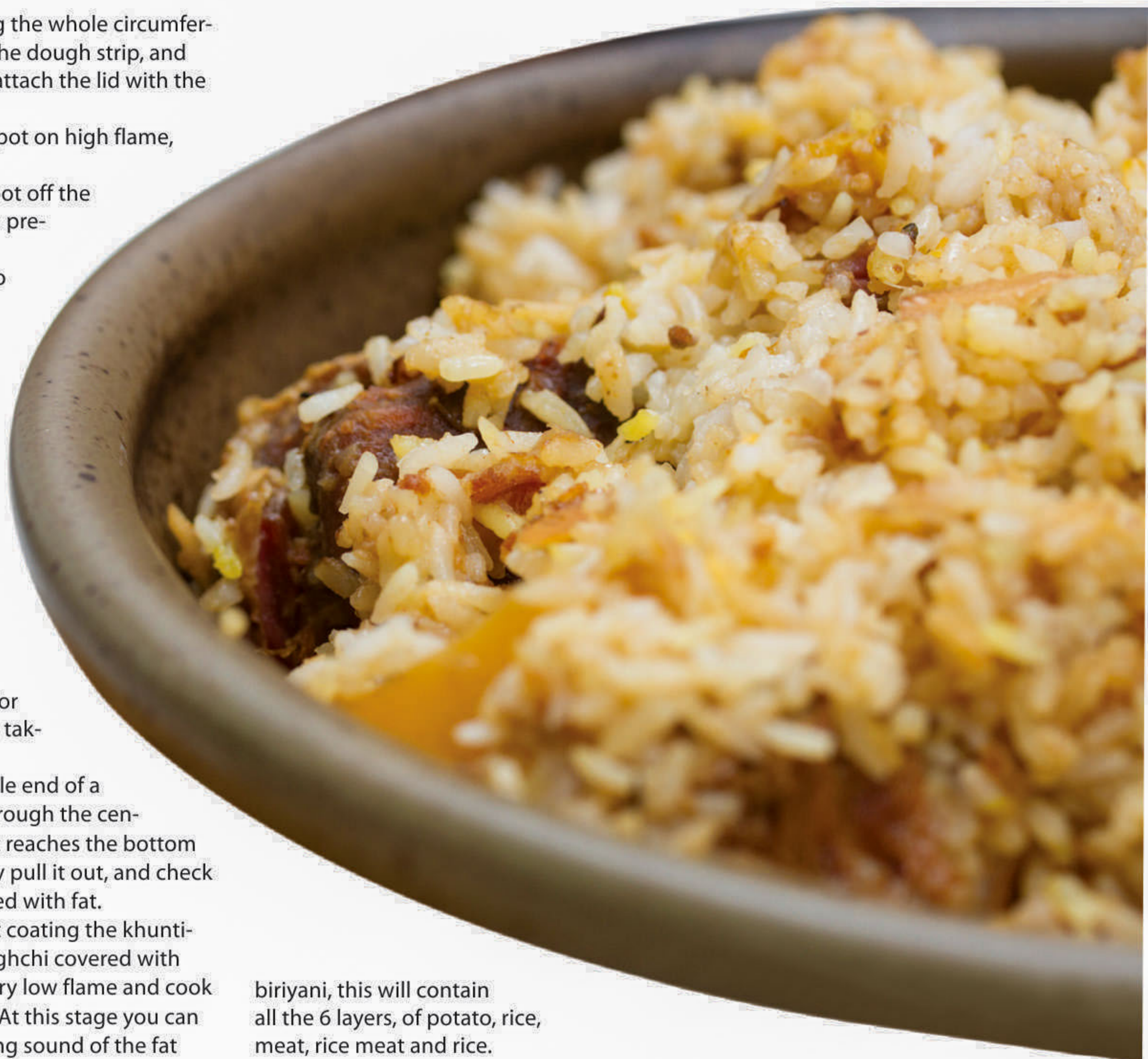
32. Cook in a low to moderate heat over 170°C (320°F Gas 3) for 50-mins (As cooking time varies from oven to oven, please experiment with the timing to find out the best result of "not overcooking the rice nor undercooking the meat").

33. Switch off the oven flame and wait for about 10-mins before taking out the degchi.

34. Insert the handle end of a metal khunti, right through the centre of the food, until it reaches the bottom of the degchi. Gently pull it out, and check if the end is well coated with fat.

35. If there is no fat coating the khunti-handle, return the degchi covered with the lid, back over a very low flame and cook for 10-more minutes. At this stage you can hear a slight splattering sound of the fat which will form at the bottom of the degchi.

36. For serving, open the lid, take a ceramic dinner plate, and cut vertically into the biriyani, push the plate down, until the plate touches the bottom of the degchi. With one deft scoop take out a plateful of



biriyani, this will contain all the 6 layers, of potato, rice, meat, rice meat and rice.

37. Slide the biriyani on to a serving rice-dish in such a manner that all the layers are discernible.

NOTE: The Ustad with all his assistants takes around 15 to 18 hours to cook this biriyani at a leisurely pace. The recipe requires a fair amount of time management, so follow the

steps in the order outlined above and you will not require more than 1 hour of preparation time and 2 hours of cooking. Rightly and carefully made, it is an epicure's ecstasy.

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

For the love of kachchi

It is often reserved for celebrations. It is indeed the ultimate food when it comes to special occasions like wedding receptions. Kachchi biriyani is a dish fit for kings. Everything about it, be it the intricate, complicated and highly disciplined cooking process where perfection is vital, or just the sheer richness of the dish, kachchi biriyani is on a league of its own.

And nowhere in the world, not even in other parts of the Indian subcontinent, is this royal biriyani tastier than in Dhaka. Kachchi biriyani is the signature dish of our city. Narrowing it down further, here's our list of the top four places in Dhaka to eat kachchi biriyani in, counting down to number one.



Star Kebab & Restaurant

Star Kebab is a brand name that we have all heard of. Tried and tested by all, the kachchi biriyani at this veteran eatery is cooked to perfection. The soft and juicy mutton and the rich spices and the kebab make the experience worth it.

Kachchi biriyani is a standalone dish. You really don't need anything else, neither a curry nor a side dish. The kachchi at Star Kebab can tell you why. With the right amount of potato and mutton and the right mix of spices, you will know that life is perfect.

Fakruddin

The only thing we love to have along with kachchi is a glass of borhani. The rich, spicy drink complements kachchi biriyani perfectly, or to put it another way, such an intricate and rich dish can only go hand in hand with borhani, which is a drink that matches the richness of the former.

And Fakruddin is a restaurant that makes one of the best borhanis and the best kachchis. The late chef Fakruddin was a highly celebrated internationally acclaimed cook, and the eatery still carries that legacy.

Kolkata Kachchi Ghor

Among the other names on the list, this eatery is the youngest one. And yet, Kolkata Kachchi Ghor in Abul Hasnat Road in Old Dhaka has become an extremely popular one in just a short span of years. What distinguishes the eatery from all others? What makes its kachchi different? The rice itself. Unlike other places, this 'biriyani house' (as such places are called, since the only – or one among a few – items on the menu are biriyanis and

pilaffs) boasts cooking kachchi with basmati rice. This is one of their key differences that sets them apart. Cooking kachchi is by itself a difficult job, and cooking it with basmati is even more challenging, where one slight mistake can ruin the dish.

Catering kachchi

Like we said before, kachchi biriyani is the ultimate celebration food. Be it weddings or corporate events, an 'ostadh baburchi' is called upon to cook this delicious dish. People say that cooking authentic kachchi biriyani for a small group of people would not yield the best. Instead, it is a dish most suited to be made in large quantities – on a huge 'deg'. Cooked outdoors over wood-fire, the master chef supervises over the preparation and his many assistants and helpers. And the end result is perfection itself.

So the best place for kachchi biriyani is, interestingly enough, not restaurants, but wedding and reception halls!

By M H Haider