

FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD
BY KANISKA
CHAKRABORTY



BIJOYA SAMMILANI

The much vaunted meet after Pujo celebrations. Primarily because we do not want to let go of festivities and look for any excuses to carry on.

So the Probashi Kolkata and Bangali community got to work.

It was time when all of us were back from our Pujo breaks and are still smarting from the excesses that we exercised back home over five to seven days.

Quickly a Whatsapp group was created

Then we went into a collective conniption on the rest of the menu.

Luchi (fried flatbread), ghee bhat (plain rice tossed with ghee), mishti polaw (Pulao tinged with sugar), cholar dal narkel diye (split peas with little pieces of coconut), fulki borir torkari posto diye (cauliflower and lentil dumplings in a poppy seed sauce), jhurjhure alu bhaja (thin, crisp fried potatoes), roshogollar dalna (traditional sweet in a savoury sauce), rui maacher kalia (carp in a

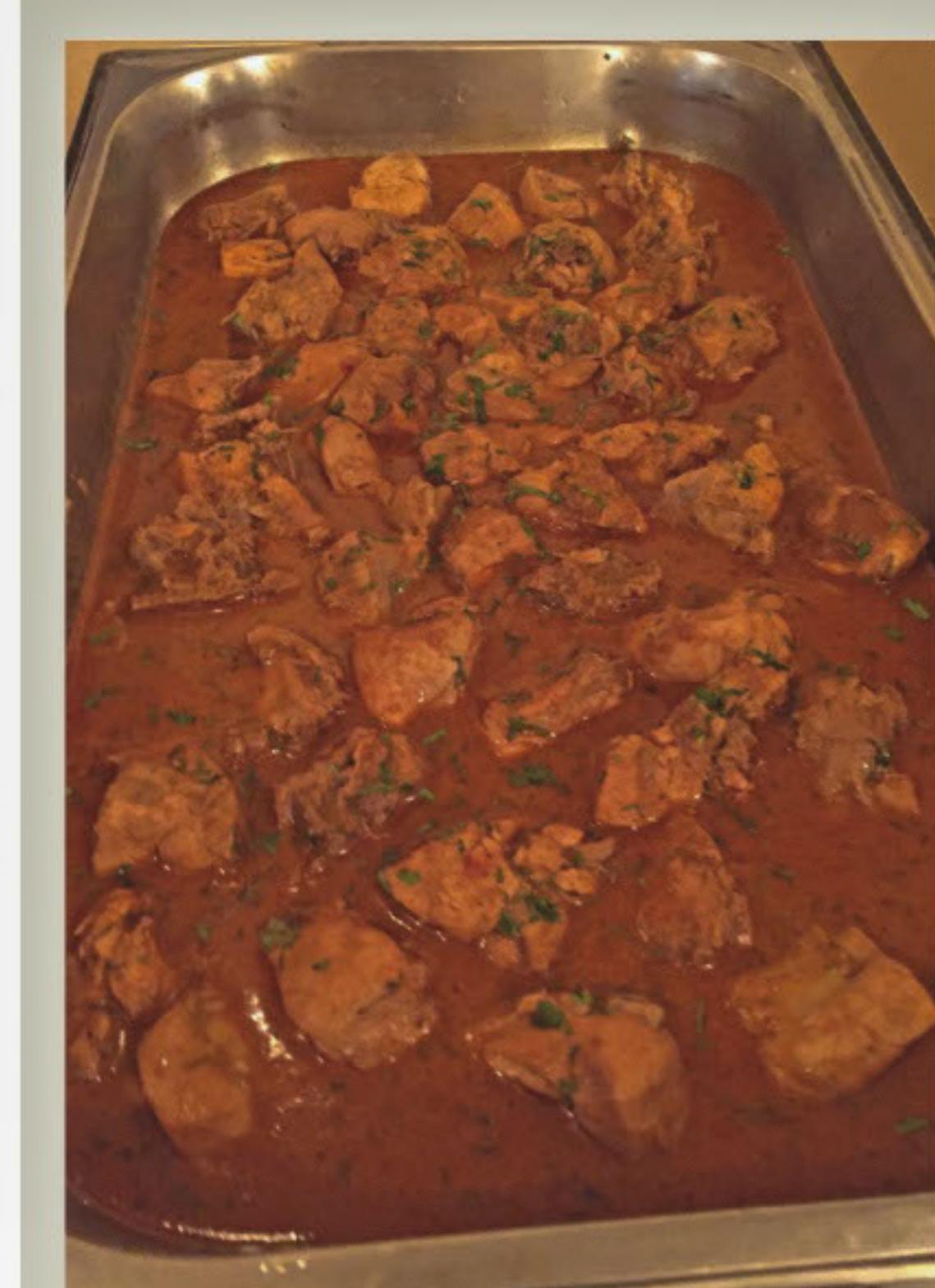
After all, how do you explain something as quintessential as koshamangsho?

Slow cooked mutton in onion rich gravy accentuated with spices? It just about scratches the surface.

I hate myself most for even trying to describe roshogollar dalna.

Lovely spongy roshogollas bathed in arich, ochre gravy creating a ying and yang like never before.

The gathering was joyful, carefree and



with phone numbers collected by word of mouth.

The most excellent Avishek of Khazana took on the onus of creating a veritable wedding feast of bygone eras.

None of that biryani and chaap business. This was serious affair.

The festivities started off with dimer devil (grown up scotch eggs) and vegetable cutlet (croquets with spicy beetroot filling). As Calcutta as it gets.

thick spicy curry), dak bungalow murgiri jhol (chicken cooked like they used to do in inspection bungalows of British raj), koshamangsho (slow cooked goat meat), ilish macher shorshe (ilish cooked in mustard gravy), khejur amshottor chatni (a sweet chutney of dates and mango cheese), raj bhog (cottage cheese dumplings in thin syrup), mishti doi (sweetened yogurt).

The English descriptions do not even begin to do justice to the food.

boisterous.

Met many wonderful people.

Reconnected with old friends.

Made new friends.

And above all, the party season got extended by another day.

Already plans are afoot to do a picnic.

As Bugs Bunny said, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Amen to that.

Photo: Kaniska Chakraborty

MUSING

Nature's Grand Finale

Summer bid goodbye not too long ago, but winter is already here, rushing to say hello. There is a short season between summer and winter though, a season that is crisp and colourful. During the presence of this short-lasting season, you feel neither the scorching summer heat nor the bone-freezing winter chill, both of which make life unbearable. I feel its presence in the afternoon when the mild sunshine and cool breeze flood me and my surroundings. Autumn reminds me of my winter days in Dhaka.

I loved winter in Dhaka. It never really got very cold in those days -- a jumper was enough to keep a child warm when he or she headed for school in the morning. It usually warmed up by afternoon and we would take our jumpers off and tie them around our waists. Autumn here in America

feels like winter in Dhaka -- a light jacket, jumper, or sweater is enough to keep myself warm and cosy.

On an autumn morning, I wake up and tiptoe to the living room in search of my slippers. The hardwood floor feels ice-cold to my feet that have lived and walked in a tropical land all their lives. I hug myself tight as I look for my slippers in the kitchen, the bathroom, behind the sofa, and under the dining table. I lose them every night. And I half-wonder if there is an elf in the house that likes to play with my footwear.

After I discover my slippers I turn the heater on. I keep hugging myself until the rooms are warm enough. Autumn is beautiful but I miss the summer mornings when sunshine poured through my small kitchen window and brightened up the house. I would open the window and breathe in the

fresh summer air. In autumn, I try not to do that because the cold outside air creates invisible lumps in my air passage. I look through the window though to see what's new in nature.

In the beginning of autumn, the nature outside appears vivid with shades of red, brown, yellow, purple, black, pink, magenta, and orange with some splashes of green here and there. The soon-to-be-bald trees sway majestically as they display their colours to man and beast alike. In autumn, the trees look their best. I think they save up their beauty for this particular time of the year. It's ironic though -- trees look their best just before they enter their dormancy period, a state that's almost similar to death. I read the other day that during dormancy, a tree's growth and development literally come to a standstill. It's this

how the trees live through extreme cold, snow and strong winds in the winter season.

But this period before dormancy is magnificent; it transforms each plant and tree into a short-lived painter. With bold and bright strokes, each of these painters paints nature in the most blazing kaleidoscope of colours.

I wait for autumn as much as I wait for summer every year. While I can enjoy summertime for a few months, I can relish autumnal beauty for only a handful of weeks. Autumn bids me a quick good-bye every year. And before I can even close the door on him, I find winter waving at me from outside the window -- he is here already, unwanted, although not unexpected.

By Wara Karim