

The Super Chef kitchen stories: Khulna Chapter

Even though it was a Friday, 6 November was not an idle, lazy time for Khulna. The city woke up as the host of two important events. First and foremost, the date was marked by the entrance examination of Khulna University of Engineering & Technology (KUET). Another event was Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef 2016's regional round, held at the Khulna Club premises.

Both these events - albeit the obvious, vast differences between them - were basically assessments; tests that could make or break someone's dreams. Results that could make someone leap up with joy or bring him or her to tears. Therefore, it was reasonable that Khulna was indeed a little busier and tenser than it is in most Fridays.

Not at all battered from standing in the long line for registration, the huge number of contestants enthusiastically took up the first challenge - a theoretical test.

Through the written exam, 25 candidates were selected. For the rest, Super Chef 2016 was over. But for those 25 people, the day had in fact just started. More interesting than the results though were the examinees themselves. Their dreams and aspirations were etched right across their face. They were all here to win and be crowned the next Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef, the highest accolade in the culinary arts in the country and one that could be earned only through sweat and tears. Talent, at the end of the day, coupled with grit would be the two keys to success.

To understand the affection and the popularity of Super Chef, one needs to look no further than one of Khulna's favourite entrants, Rafiya. Inspired by her sisters and with a passion for cooking, Rafiya always hinted of being a prodigious child with a penchant for the culinary and the artistic. Studying fashion designing, Rafiya made it a point to firstly mention that so far cooking is seen as something housewives, apart from professionals, are good at; Rafiya was



here to break the mould. But that wasn't the only reason why Rafiya wanted to style herself as the next super chef. "I am the eldest of my siblings," she said, explaining her ambition behind securing a stable future for her family. Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef was the platform for her to do in her estimation. "After my father's death, I undertook it upon myself to take care of my family. I am here for that," she declared, no sugar-coating required.

Runa Laila, another winner from Khulna though had designs to spoil Rafiya's best laid plans. Runa Laila announced herself to the Super Chef universe with a bang, preparing a dish that had the dishes impatiently waiting for what next can be



expected of her. Runa certainly set the bar and the bar was set quite high. Hailing from Khustia, Runa made the long journey to Khulna with her eyes firmly set on the gleaming Super Chef crown. Her tales of hardship and preparation became an after-thought. She was focused on the here and now and she had the talent to cash the cheque.

The panel of judges comprised of Armin Sultana Jui and Nasrin Hossain, the first and second runners up of Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef 2014.

"We are glad that the organisers have remembered us and it is a compliment that they have brought us here as judges," Nasrin Hossain commented. "Previously we were participants ourselves. Now, we are on the other side of the table!"

Both of them were very impressed by the variety and diversity of the dishes cooked. "From the regional dishes to Chinese to continental, we had tasted food of various cuisines and genres," Armin Sultana Jui said.

At the end of the intense session of cooking, when the race was over, the 25 aspirants keenly waited for the results,

which was announced shortly.

This year, Khulna yielded 7 winners, and among them, Runa Laila from Kushtia topped the chart. Her lassi shemai's laddus had won the hearts of the judges. "The contest had not been easy. I am extremely happy that the judges not just selected me to go further, but had given me the first position from Khulna," an ecstatic Laila told.

But this is just the beginning. Selected participants from all over the country will accumulate at the Super Chef Kitchen, where there will be weeks of tests and trainings and grooming before the Super Chef will emerge.

But that's some leaps into the future. After Khulna, the organisers had left for yet another city in their hunt for the most promising chefs in Bangladesh: Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef 2016 is truly a nationwide culinary competition.

The journey to Super Chef Kitchen continues. Join us next week as we introduce you to the stars from the other regions.

By M H Haider

Photo: Imran Kabir Likhon



Tibet Pomade With Rose Oil



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