



EVENT

## Super Chef '16: Dhaka Memoirs

The Dhaka audition round of Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef 2016 was different from the regional rounds on other parts of the country. Dhaka is, after all, choking with a mammoth population of over 1 crore.

Catering to this, two regional rounds were held, splitting the city into two; just like the government has done: Dhaka-North and Dhaka-South.

Even then, the crowd that accumulated on 12 December for the Dhaka-North regional round was overwhelming.

Hundreds of Super Chef aspirants sat for the written examination, out of which sixty five made it through. They were then summoned to the next challenge: cooking a dish (or dishes) for the judges within a thirty-minute deadline and using ingredients - albeit certain basic things that were already provided - bought (money was provided by the organisers) within a budget of Tk500.

Given the strict time frame and the tight budget, Hussain Mashnoor Chowdhury, a participant, had planned accordingly. "The food needed to be simple enough to be done perfectly within thirty minutes. At the same time, we were also required to showcase our culinary expertise," Mashnoor said.

The shrimp delicacy he prepared had indeed paid off. He got a 'Yes Card' with the highest score among all the winners.

Mashnoor is a man of numbers: he is the Chief Financial Officer of a private corporation. Even so, his love of art is evident, given his passion for food and cooking. He perhaps owes it to his college days in the US. "My college runs a number of eateries, and I used to work there when I was a student," he reflects. "It was during that time when I got the opportunity to hone my cooking skills."

There was a lot of diversity among the participants. Take Shoyeb Ahmed, for example. As a student studying in standard four, he was the youngest one in the crowd.

Impressing everyone, he passed the written test and qualified for the cooking round, thus making him one of the youngest people ever to enter the programme's kitchen. His journey was just that far: he did not get a 'Yes Card'. Nevertheless, kudos to him for his courage and culinary passion!

Shoyeb Ahmed wishes to become a fashion designer or a cellist when he grows up.

The regional round saw many other surprising things. Interestingly enough, three from one family and a friend - total four acquaintances - all aced the competition, taking everyone off their feet!

Md. Nazmul Haque, who runs a restaurant, saw his wife Asma Haque bid farewell to a previous season of Super Chef after reaching among the top 14. This time, she is more determined than ever, and backed up by experience, had raced through the regional round.

Nazmul's younger brother and a friend also made it through. "The four of us came

together, and luckily, all four have qualified to compete further." Nazmul concluded.

It would surely be exciting to see how the battle affects their relationships in the coming days of intense competition!

The panel of judges comprised of Jewel's Kitchen founder Shaheda Yesmin, Executive Chef of Watercress Restaurant Syed Tazammul Huq (Tareq) and past season winners of Super Chef Dr Umme Kulsum Chy and Jebun Nessa Khan.

Dhaka-North's Super Chef memoirs is one of myriad, unique stories. This is perhaps owed to the diverse mix of people who came to participate - be it a school-going kid, a doctor, a financial analyst, a restaurant owner or a banker-turned-chef.

Among them, the best has made it through; twenty people from Dhaka-North received passport to the next round.

By M H Haider

Photo: Md. Kawsar



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