



SPECIAL FEATURE

Haute 'Clayture'

It is more than just 'burnt clay.' For us Bengalis, terracotta is not just a showpiece or utensil; it is a form of expression, and a necessary accessory for festivals and special days. It is one of the oldest art forms in Bangladesh, and its flexibility - while making it - and durability - later - makes it a cult favourite for both artists and consumers.

The production of terracotta itself does not require much knowledge or machinery and clay is widely available. There are entire villages where the 'kumbhokars' or potters practice this art and this art only.

In the early days, terracotta was not just for interior décor, but also the exterior. Clay tiles for rooftops, murals, plaques and many other structures were seen on the outsides of homes and temples. The clay used to make these structures were, and still are, found in Barisal; 'doash' and 'etel maati', as they are called, provide the best support and strength to these structures.

Additionally, there are also many other kinds of clay found in various parts of the country such as white clay, pink clay or red clay, and each provides their own unique texture to their final structures. Initially the structures are made by hand and later put into kilns to be set, and after a good four to five weeks, the final composition is complete.

Today, we use terracotta as a form of décor, as flower pots, lamps, dolls, wall art, and so on. With Pohela Boishakh knocking on the door it is time to make some changes around the house, and what is better than the most available, artistic, colourful and affordable terracotta to bring in a little life and earthiness.

Pohela Boishakh equals parades, animal floats and masks; music and dancing; loads of red and white saris and panjabis; family outings, get-togethers, painted faces and plenty of terracotta. Now if you cannot go out to celebrate Boishakh, you can bring Boishakh into your own home!

Tableware are an integral part of the Boishakhi celebration. During this time people want and expect their tables to exude colour and vibrancy; they want texture, they want a nice background for their 'panta ilish', and most importantly, they want something different and lively than the usual glassware.

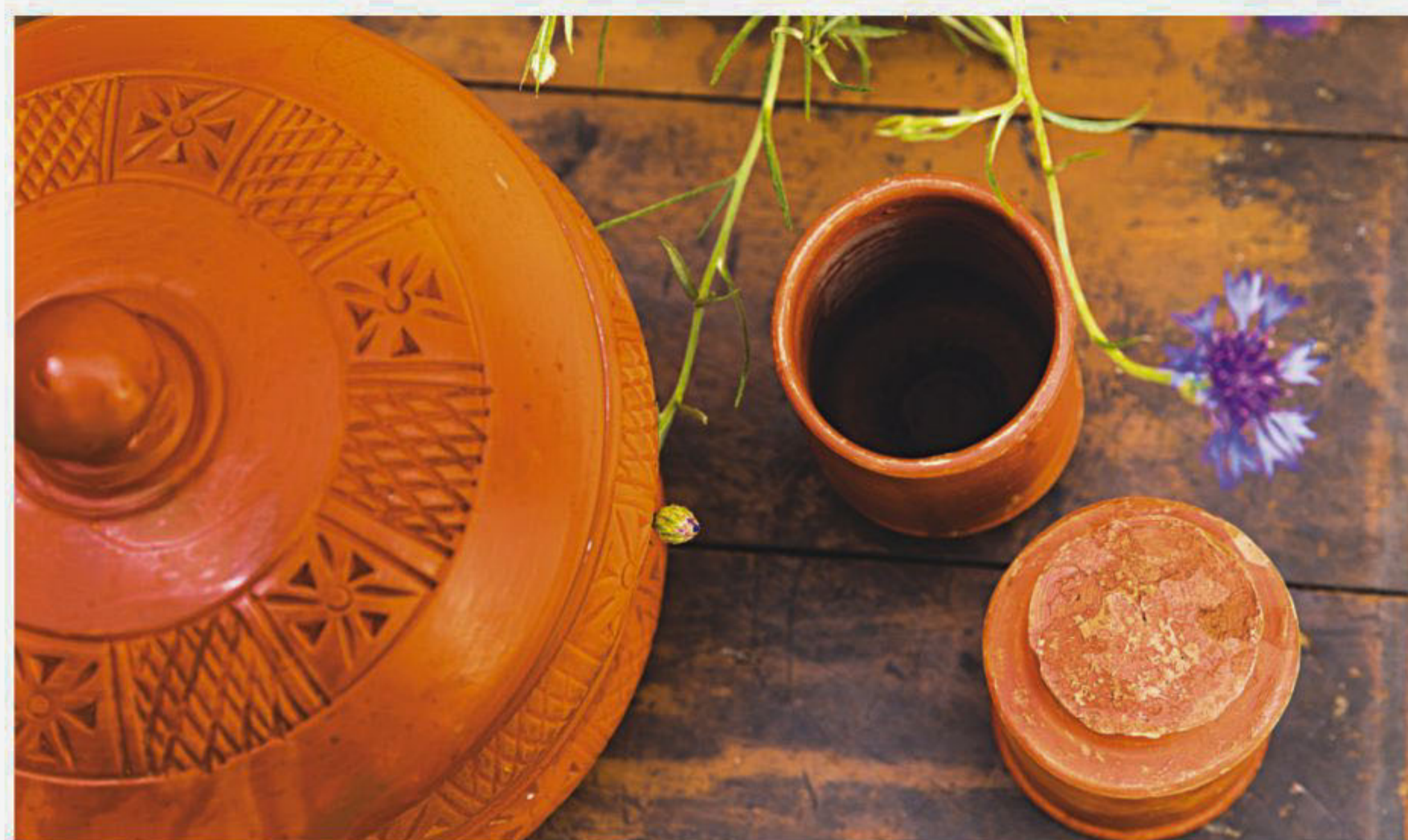
People go passionate over terracotta dinnerware, from sets to single handcrafted plates, shankis, trays, mugs, bowls, and even tea sets. These come in all different sizes and shapes, with beautiful patterns or embellishments.

Although these can be found all year round, the stores offering the products come in greater quantity before Boishakh,

with various new and unique designs, so make sure to get your hands on them before they are gone.

Other than tableware, interior décor is also very popular around this time. The beauty of terracotta does not have to be limited to your dining tables only. Wall hangings, framed and unframed artwork, masks, figurines, etc. can be used to decorate your walls. These wall decorative pieces can be found in pure terracotta form and also with wooden parts both glazed and unglazed.

There are terracotta vases, flower pots, figurines that you can decorate with, and recently there have also been candle stands and lamps of terracotta newly designed for Boishakh and can be found at your nearest Aarong or Aranya stores. These décor items cost around Tk 100 to Tk 600 depending on sizes and designs.



If décor pieces seem inadequate to bring in the desired transformation in the interior and you want to redecorate your entire house, Harappa is where you should head to. They are the largest terracotta manufacturers in the country supplying to all the big stores and also do interior décor upon payment.

From tiles to wall panels, garden planters and fountains they have a myriad décor items. All their products are completely hand-made by potters with modern technology and use all sorts of materials alongside terracotta to upgrade their designs. Since they provide such a large assortment of services they also have a wide range of prices.

Tableware can cost from a minimum of Tk 50 up to Tk 2500, garden décor is priced at around Tk 150 to Tk 5000, and interior décor items at Tk 30 to Tk 25000. They also host exhibitions before special occasions to let

people know more about their products, so if you are looking to spruce up your home do check out their exhibitions.

Now that you have glammed up your house, it's time to get prettied up too. We love to dress up in white and red and along with that we love to accessorise. This is where traditional jewellery comes in.

Terracotta jewellery has no limit, it comes in all sizes and shapes and colours too, not to mention the beautiful thread or metal add-ons. This traditional form of jewellery is brought out every year with new themes for Baishakh - they sometimes have brass hangings or clips, sometimes red and white cotton thread decorations, sometimes little floral artworks. These really help the jewellery stand out and make a statement. Earrings cost from Tk 60 to Tk 200, and necklaces start at Tk 250.

Last but not least, there is maintenance. Every terracotta item in the house and outside should be kept away from water as it is quite absorbent. A little water temporarily will not affect it, but over time it might, so it is best to avoid water damage. For outdoor planters, silicone coatings are usually applied to avoid contact with water, but this normally ruins the natural beauty and texture, so it is wise to just place it accordingly so it does not get in touch with water.

Terracotta is a form of art and décor that most people love as it is both affordable and chic at the same time, and also highly available. It is no longer just primordial art, but modern too.

By Anisha Hassan
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

