



popular in Bangladesh and have been designated as Bangladesh's national flower. Each plant produces several solitary flowers with long peduncles, or stalks, and blooms above the water surface. The peduncle is a popular vegetable to villagers and a novelty among the urbanites.

Ingredients

- 1 kg shapla stem
- 1 tsp garam masala powder
- 2 tbsp ghee
- 2 tsp red chilli powder
- 1 tbsp chickpea flour (beson)
- 2 tsp + 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp ginger paste
- 2 cups yoghurt

Method

Chop the stems into 15cm long segments. Boil the segments in salted (2 tsp salt) boiling water for 10-minutes. Drain and chop the stem into 2.5 cm long pieces. Keep them aside and discard the water. Lightly roast the chickpea flour on a hot griddle (tawa), until it gives off a cooked aroma. In a mixing bowl combine the following: yoghurt, red chilli, garam masala, chickpea flour, 2 tsp salt and ginger. With a wire whisk, blend the mixture into a silky paste, and set aside. Heat the ghee in a wok; chuck in the lotus segments and sauté until they are coated with the ghee. Pour in the yoghurt mixture, mix up and bring it to a gentle simmer. Take off from heat and serve immediately.

BILIMBI SOUP

Bilimbi grows on an attractive tree, reaching 2-3m in height. The fruit is crisp when unripe, turns from bright-green to yellowish-green, and falls to the ground. The outer skin is glossy, very thin, soft and tender, and the flesh is green, jelly-like, juicy, and extremely sour.

Mainly grown in Chittagong, Tripura and Manipur (India), and Burma, it is also frequent in gardens of Chittagonians living in Dhaka, planted for its tasty fruit and its pretty tree.

The bilimbi is too acidic for eating raw; the fruit has 95 percent water content with 15.5g of ascorbic acid per 100g tissue. The green fruits are prepared as a 'tok' served with rice, and frequently added to curries of small fish and vegetable.

This dish of soup (called 'sorwa' in Bangla adopted from the Farsi word, Sorba, meaning runny gravy) is usually served to

the farm hands, after the main dish is exhausted, and some rice is still left on the 'paat' (dinner plate). The stinging hot gravy helps to eat the remaining rice with great relish.

Bilimbis are said to have anti-diabetic, astringent, stomachic, and anti-scorbutic properties in traditional medical literature. Syrup made by heating the juice of the ripe fruit with sugar and water on a slow fire, is useful in relieving thirst, febrile excitement and in some cases of haemorrhage from the bowels, stomach and internal haemorrhoids. The fruit is also useful as a dietary supplement to treat piles and scurvy.

Ingredients

- 20 bilimbis
- 3 tbsp mustard oil
- 10 cup water
- 20 dry red chillies
- 5 tsp salt
- 10 garlic cloves, crushed

Method

In a large non-reactive metal pot, bring the bilimbi and water to a boil, and cook until the bilimbi is tender. Take the pot off the flame, and using a slotted spoon strain out the bilimbi, and mash it to a fine paste. Leave the water in the degchi/pot. Push the bilimbi paste through a fine sieve; discard the fibre, skins, and seeds. Return the bilimbi paste to the pot. Whip hard to merge the paste with the residual water. Put the pot back on the flame and bring the broth to a boil. In a separate saucepan heat the oil to smoking point, toss in the dry red chillies, and cook until there's a change of colour. Using a slotted spoon, strain them out and set them aside. To the residual oil, add the garlic and sauté them until their edges starts to darken, pour the garlic et al into the bilimbi pot. Sprinkle the broth with salt and stir. Crush the red chillies in a mortar to a rough paste and scatter them over the bilimbi broth. Serve the bilimbi broth as accompanying gravy with any vegetable or fish dish.

RAW MANGO SOUP

Wild ancestors of mangoes originated in a region around north Burma, south-eastern Bangladesh and eastern India. The eastern Indian mango exists in two families, one from north India (grown also in Chapai Nawabgonj region of Bangladesh), and the other from Southeast Asia. The central Indian family is intolerant to humidity, has flushes of bright



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red new growth that are subject to mildew, and bears mono-embryonic fruit of high colour and regular form. The Southeast Asia or northeast Indian family tolerates excess moisture, has pale green or red new growth, resists mildew and is quite fibrous.

Mangoes are eaten fresh (green or mature), often as a dessert fruit when ripe, and are also cooked, dried (aam shotto), pickled, and canned. Raw mangoes are aromatic, and slightly acidic.

Ingredients

- 6 raw mangoes
- 1 tbsp mustard oil
- 1 tbsp mustard seeds
- 5 garlic cloves, crushed
- 5cm long ginger root
- 4 tsp salt
- 20 green chillies
- 6 cups water
- 1 tsp sugar

Method

Roast the mango over an open flame, holding them with barbeque tongs, until their skin is charred. Alternatively, poke few holes in the skin and microwave them for 4 minutes. Peel the mangoes, discard the stones and skins, and mash the flesh to a smooth paste, set aside. In a stone mortar or in a food processor/grinder, grind the following: ginger, green chillies, sugar and mustard seeds. Work to get a fine paste, set aside. Heat the mustard oil in a steel pot; toss in the crushed garlic and sauté until they start to brown. Pour in the following: water, mango pulp, spice paste, and salt; bring to a boil. Simmer for 5 minutes, and check salt, add more if required. Serve hot with steamed rice.

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