

A tasty retreat

I am such a gloomy Gus when it comes to celebrating days meant only for vendible gains. I, quite honestly speaking, see no reason to hail Valentine's Day, Mother's or Father's Day; even getting a stale rose on International Women's Day plays on my nerves.

Similarly taking 'selfies', 'groupies' (or whatever they are called) is not the most sought after pursuit of mine, and 'check-ins' are beyond my comprehension. So one word to sum me up would be – dated!

When one of my darling friend asked me to have lunch with him this Friendship day I was somewhat reluctant. Besides, here I was getting ready to spend my afternoon in a farmer's market at Purbachal, talking to my favourite shakwali Rani Di - an elderly lady with red vermillion on her forehead, always chewing betel leaf. She has no clue how to do sums, and much of her time is spent shooing the pranksters, who chide her for her 'mathematical prowess'.

I love to talk to her about 'shaks' and her new chicks. While guzzling down the fresh coconut and scraping off the soft kernel, I also love to eavesdrop on Hassan Miah's vegetable growing tips. Their simple lives have a certain charm that I am invariably drawn to. These are 'me-times' and compromising on these messes up my daily life.

So when out of the blue this lunch came up I was a tad hesitant but not much can be done when a dear friend makes plans other than tagging along.

Having said all that, his selection of our Sunday lunch - Jatra Biroti's 'Shadhu Bhojon' - was a sweet surprise! I was not expecting a happy sunlit restaurant with a vibrant riot of colours on the wall, and a very charming, chirpy waitress greeting us. The mason jars with tasty coconut blend, the star fruit juice, and the ginger tea in terracotta cups were also refreshing.

I instantly fell for the ambience; it was the perfect 'adda' lounge to spend a drizzly afternoon, legs folded, shoulders rested, not having to mind manners and all.

The menu was too good to write about: the Sylhet special 'methi khichuri' with jaggery and tamarind laced bitter gourd, the eggplant mustard curry; the chutneys indeed left a lasting taste on my omnivorous palate. My friend's order of rice with coconut milk, lentil soup with gourd, nigella paste

was almost equally satisfying. Rounding all these off with 'masala tea' and 'puli pitha' and 'carrot halwa' made a great dine.

Jatra has its mesmeric spell on me and their recent closure of branches left me somewhat broken hearted. This new addition, however, made up for all the catch-22s making home in my minds. Jatra's café is a soulful place where I can calm my jittery nerves, be in touch with nature and at the same time get the cosmopolitan Dhaka flavour I love so much. In a very warped kind of way, I find a similar kind of happiness in both the rustic urban bazaar and this upscale rustic eatery.

I am putting up few lines about this café from their website to further entice my readers to take the much deserved 'biroti' from chores that life brings on - Jatra Biroti's full time restaurant, 'Shadhu Bhojon' serves vegetarian food seven days a week from 10am to 10pm. They are vegan on Mondays, supporting the movement of 'Meatless Mondays'. Most of their ingredients are sourced from Delduar (Tangail), which is a declared safe food zone by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations.

To give you an idea of how much thought they are putting into your health, they even replaced soybean oil with healthier substitutes like sesame, mustard, and coconut oils, as well as ghee on non-vegan days. They believe 'a healthy outside starts from the inside.'

Their menu was done in consultation with Rubaiya Ahmad, who is not only a pioneering animal rights activist in Bangladesh, with her heroic efforts at Obhoyaronno - Bangladesh Animal Welfare Foundation (which she founded!), but also a fantastic cook and vegan cuisine innovator! It was her idea to create 'Shadhu Shom' or 'meatless Mondays' at Jatra Biroti. Rubaiya Ahmad supported their idea to make the Shadhu Bhojon restaurant completely vegetarian.

The gist of all this is it is good to break-free from all predispositions at times and go with the flow; like celebrating such days for sweet surprises.

- RBR

Photo Courtesy: Jatra websites

WHY DO WE NEED TO TRIM OUR TUMMY FAT ?

Everybody desires a flat seductive tummy but with age, stress, sedentary life style, child bearing or lack of exercise can keep you far away from it. Sadly, tummy fat is not just about fitting into your clothes but also a big issue for long-term health.

Here are 4 reasons to work on shedding it:

1. The visceral fat of the tummy is "biologically active," & produces hormones (ladipeonectin & leptin) that affects appetite & metabolism & blood sugar-regulating insulin. **Fatty liver change** is one of its consequences.
2. Fatty acids released by belly fat are also linked to higher LDL (bad cholesterol) & lower HDL (good cholesterol) & pumps out cytokines promoting constant low-level inflammation & insulin resistance.
3. As large waists are estrogen receptor negative, it is more likely to develop breast cancer.
4. Tummy fat & reduces fertility and potency.



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