

CORRIGENDUM

On Tuesday, November 29, 2016, Volume 16, Issue 23, Star Lifestyle ran a feature on bridal makeup titled, 'Contouring is the name of the game'. The names of the featured brides and their photographers were inadvertently missed.

Sharat Shanom Fahmi, Anika Tabassum, and Nafisa Tamanna Eva were the brides, photographed by Jobayer Hossain Shuvo (Dream Weaver) and Tasfia Moontasi Raisa.

We sincerely regret the omission and apologise for any inconvenience that may have been caused.



SPOTLIGHT

Bangladesh cuisine part I - delectable and diverse

In this two-part spotlight, Shaheda Yesmin, Vice-President of the Women Culinary Association of Bangladesh and a veteran chef, explores Bangladeshi cuisine, dissecting and delving deep into what makes Bangladeshi cuisine stand out. The first part will look into the different methods of Bangladeshi cooking and the rich regional diversity in the culinary arts.

The Bangladeshi culinary tapestry is steeped in tradition and famous for its distinctive taste, be it savoury or sweet. Bhat, meaning boiled rice, is the staple. The old saying 'Machey bhatey Bangali' meant that rice and fish form the culinary base of Bangladeshi cuisine, and 'Gola bhora dhan ar pukur bhora mach' implied the abundance of both in Bengal.

While the sayings may have been true, they miss the fact that a wide variety of leafy vegetable, or shak, which is also available in plenty, forms an integral and diverse part of the Bangladeshi rural and urban cuisine, as do lentils and a variety of gourds. It is also true that meat preparation of mutton, beef, duck and chicken, preferably free-range chicken, are a common and essential part of Bangladeshi cuisine.

Then there is the meat centric sublime Mughal cuisine that adds to the diversity.

Before delving into the regional diversity, let me highlight some common Bengali cooking styles. Each of the following is actually a class of recipes, producing different dishes depending on the choice of ingredients. There are five different tastes that the Bengali palate caters to the Bangladeshi culinary tapestry is steeped in tradition and famous for its distinctive taste, be it savoury or sweet.

BANGLADESHI COOKING PREPARATION -

Bhaji or bhaja (fried): Mainly julienne cut vegetables sautéed in oil with onion, green chilli and salt. Fish can be deep-fried.

Bhorta (mash): Anything mashed (vegetable, fish, or meat) and seasoned with shallots, fresh green chilli, and mustard oil with salt.

Charchari: Considered a dry curry preparation. Daler (lentil) chorchori is a popular dish.

Dalna: Mixed vegetables cooked with eggs in medium thick gravy seasoned with ground spices, especially with garam masala with a touch of ghee.

Dolma: A vegetable stuffing.

Ghonto: Different complementary vegetables chopped and boiled with ground spices and finished with 'baghar' (onion fried in oil or ghee until sizzling and aromatic). Non-vegetarian 'ghontos' are also made with fish or fish heads added to

vegetables. The famous 'murighonto' is made of the head of the rui fish and lentil.

Jhal: 'Hot curry' is a great favourite in Bengali households.

Jhol: Light stew in which either vegetable or fish or chicken or meat, or a combination of these are immersed.

Torkari: A general term often used in Bengali, meaning, curry.

Kalia: A very rich preparation of fish, meat or vegetables.

Kofta: Ground meat, fish or vegetable croquettes bound together by spices and/or eggs served in savoury gravy.

Korma: A term that can also be called "Qurma" of Mughal origin, meaning meat or chicken cooked in mild yoghurt based sauce with ghee.

Kosha: Meaning fried for a long time with ground and whole spices over high heat until the aroma develops.

Paturi: Generally oily fish sliced then marinated with spices and wrapped in a bottle-gourd leaf and then steamed or fried.

Chutney: Generally Bengal is one of the pioneers of this particular dish. It has a sweet and sour taste with a dash of chilli.

Ombol or aum-bol: A sour dish made either with several vegetables or fish, especially fish bones. The souring agent is usually tamarind pulp, raw/green mango, amra, belembu, koromcha, etc.

Achar: Pickles generally flavoured with mustard oil.

REGIONAL DIVERSITY OF BANGLADESHI CUISINE -

Although Bangladesh consists of eight administrative divisions and sixty-four districts, the culinary diversity is not necessarily defined by this; it is broadly spread over regionally.

The palate, preparation and tradition of different regions also influence the differences.

Dhaka cuisine, for example, is hugely influenced by Mughal traditions going back to the presence of Mughals in this area. The most famous of this is kachhi biryani. The word 'kachhi' means 'raw'. Here layers of mutton, rice and potatoes are infused with warm and delectable blends of aromatic spices, making it a mouth-watering experience.

There is also the mutton chaap, beef

tikka, chicken musallam, yakhni polao, kobuli, kali kabab, boti kabab, offal dishes like khiri and gurma kabab, and desserts like zarda and phirni.

Dhaka is also famous for bakorkhani, a thick and spiced flat bread that originated in old Dhaka. These are purely Mughal dishes that give Dhaka its unique and distinct culinary identity.

Chittagong, the port city of Bangladesh and located along the scenic and the mighty Bay of Bengal, offers its own brand of cuisine. The best known is its quintessential mezbani gosht dish, or beef dish prepared for guests. The meat is as tender and succulent as it looks. It is deliciously spicy and is eaten with plain rice.

There is also the kala bhuna, a beef dish,



which is dark black in colour, as the name itself suggests, and has the depth of flavour. Kala bhuna beef dish is usually cooked with different kind of spices.

Chittagong is known for its variety of shutkis (dried fish), fresh rupchanda (pomfret) fry and fresh loitta fish fry, which is a local delicacy.

Sylhet, situated in the north-eastern region of the country and famous for its lush green tea plantations has its own delicacies.

The most distinct of these centres around shatkora, a semi-wild species of citrus fruit found in Sylhet. The dish of choice is shatkora beef curry, which is the pride of the region. Another well known shatkora based dish is ponchar (beef knuckle) khatta, a tangy tasting thick soup.

A popular dish is hash-bash curry, which is a rich curry that mixes succulent duck with bamboo shoots. A unique Sylheti delicacy is chungga pitha in which sticky rice is stuffed inside young bamboo and then smoked. The rice can be eaten with thickened milk or in fried form.

Sylhet also has its share of fish dishes. The most common among them are pabda jhol, rani fish curry and head of boal fish curry. The most popular Sylheti dessert is sticky rice with jaggery, shredded coconut and khirsha (reduced milk).

The south-western part of Bangladesh located close to the serene Sundarbans includes Khulna, Bagerhat, Barisal and Sathkhira. Watered by large rivers, this region produces the best of crustaceans like lobsters, prawns, shrimps and crabs. Because of the abundance of coconut trees, the people from this region use coconut milk and other coconut by-products for their cuisines.

A famous dish is shrimp ball with coconut milk. Khulna's another specialty is narkeli polao (polao with coconut milk). Chui jhal (pipper chaba) is a very popular and expensive spice found in this region. It comes in stem form and is used mainly for cooking big sea fish and meat.

The north-western region encompasses Rajshahi, Bogra, Rangpur and Dinajpur. The region produces the bulk of vegetable for the country. Hence the cuisine of this region has a strong presence of vegetables in different forms. Potato is a major product and comes in different varieties, of which the red potato is especially popular.

Ghonto, is a major culinary specialty. The more common ones are dal-kochur shak ghonto, mutton with pumpkin ghonto, and tomato with chicken ghonto. There is also a popular fish bhorta called pora takir bharta and sholka, a mix of five leafy vegetables mashed together.

The region is especially famous for the large variety of pithas, or home made cake. While the regional culinary diversities have been described above, there are certain elements in the Bangladeshi cuisine that transcend regional boundaries. These mostly relate to signature dishes based on fish and are universal in form.

By Shaheda Yesmin