



THOUGHT CRAFT
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Evening dreaming

Sometimes in late afternoons I take a book, a chair, and a cup of tea to the roof, hoping to sit and read among the plants and the flowers of the rooftop garden. The birds singing, and the flowers so radiant that often I cast aside the book and just enjoy being there doing nothing. Time seems to pass too swiftly, and suddenly it is late evening, but not yet twilight and a pale moon appearing high up in the sky.

The soft ivory crescent reminds me of stories about other moonlit evenings from long ago when sometimes on summer nights one of the family matriarchs would take the young girls up to the roof with pots of cold, rich sweetened cream laced with magical ingredients.

There, they would sit chatting as they whipped the cream to form it into froth, which they would skim off and ladle into tall chilled glasses, to be enjoyed after lunch or dinner. They called the drink Nimash.

The first time I tasted Nimash as a young bride new to the family, it seemed to me that I was experiencing the foamy essence of summer and girlhood in that chilled glass.

Memories of Nimash remind me of other dishes I had tasted in my in-laws' homes, where food, recipes, and cooking were much-loved topics. The family never tired of discussing dishes they had eaten or cooked.

They loved their rich, flavoursome, addictive meats: delicacies like Barra Kofta - large, succulent, and melt-in-the-mouth soft; bhuna gosht - rich and dark, with a taste only the family ladies could produce; shish kebab - tender, tasty, and mild; dopiaza; red and yellow rezalas; and qaliya with potatoes.

Ghee daal served with lemon and chunks of butter was my all-time favourite, and tomato kat, so dense that you could stand a spoon upright in it. Best of all, was the marvellous, unique qabooli, a chicken pulao cooked in cream and saffron with meticulously peeled green peas, and garnished with peeled segments of mandarin orange.

Happiness for the family was calorie-dense and cholesterol-rich lunch or dinner with relatives, friends, and miscellaneous drop-in guests, accompanied by non-stop conversation, witticisms, banter, noise, and general enjoyment.

At the end came pati-shapta, rabri, and steaming cups of pink Kashmiri tea, laden with heavy cream.

If the ladies were talented cooks, the gentlemen in the family were all gourmards. One of the eminent elders was noted for such a refined palate that he could tell exactly which spices had been used in any dish, and whether the proportions were right.

The fine cuisine, the graceful traditions, and courtly manners of the past, however, were intertwined with very human stories of love and broken dreams, joy and heartache, forced marriages and silent tears; but there was also poetry in these lives.

People in the family will probably remember the story of a Saanchi paan so exquisitely made and offered by a certain lady's delicate hands, that a suitor was instantly enraptured.

In those days, sidelong glances from a beautiful pair of eyes behind a half-veil had all the magic of a romantic film from the forties, except that the magic was real.

The comfortable and peaceful life of that generation, an entire way of life in fact, has disappeared with the changing times, but the cuisine lives on. The family traditions of gourmet food, along with the recipes, have been passed to daughters and daughters-in-law, and will continue on to their children.

We women, who had the pleasure of hearing some of the tales and fables of those times, will always remember and be grateful to the generations of matriarchs, with their towering personalities, grace, and skills, who bequeathed to us all the culinary knowledge and graceful traditions that we cherish today.



CHECK IT OUT

Hatil's art contest

Country's premier furniture brand Hatil has come up with a novel idea in a bid to celebrate this Bengali New Year. Titled as Boishakey Ako, PuroshkarJito, this contest paves way for students studying between classes 3 and 6, to take part in and win attractive rewards.

"Kids are born with immense ideas and creative sparks. Being responsible citizens, our responsibility is to do our bit creating right opportunities for them where they can explore their passion and express their minds. This art contest is a testament of that conviction on our part," says Moshir Rahman, Director of Marketing, Hatil Complex Ltd.

This contest is running across 67 showrooms of Hatil spread all over the country. Winners will be adjudged in two segments: primarily 3 winners - first, second, and third - will receive cash rewards of Tk 10000, Tk 8000 and Tk 5000 respectively from each of those 67 showrooms. Meaning, altogether 201 artworks and participants will be rewarded in the primary round.

In the final round, celebrated artist and actress Bipasha Hayat will pick 3 best artworks and felicitate the respective participants in an event to be held in a venue in Dhaka. The rewards for the final round winners will be Tk 100,000, Tk 75,000 and Tk 50,000.

To participate in the contest, a participant is required to visit his or her nearest Hatil showroom with parents to collect a registration pack. All the detailed information is there with clear instructions for submission. Registration pack can be collected between April 14 and April 30, 2017 while artworks can be submitted between May 1 May15, 2017.

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