

1 large potato, boiled and mashed
 ½ cup cheese, grated and 1 tbsp for garnish
 1 tsp mustard sauce
 ½ lime juice
 1 tsp chaat masala
 1 tbsp fresh coriander
 2 tsp oil, to sear the capsicum

Method

Pre-heat the oven for 10 minutes at 180 degrees C. In a pan add 1 teaspoon butter and lightly sauté cashew nuts and raisins for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and keep aside. In the same pan, add 2 teaspoon oil and cumin seeds. Sauté onions, ginger, garlic and green chilli. Now add the coriander powder, salt, red chilli powder. Add a little water to de-glaze. Now add the sautéed dry fruits, mashed potatoes, grated cheese and mustard sauce. Mix well.

Add lime juice, chaat masala and fresh coriander leaves. Mix well and keep aside. The stuffing is ready. In a pan add 2 teaspoon oil, place the de-seeded capsicums and sear them till brown spots appear on all sides. Stuff the capsicums with the prepared stuffing. Garnish with some grated cheese. Sprinkle some chaat masala if desired and bake in the oven for 10 minutes at 180 degrees C.

PUMPKIN SOUP

Pumpkin is an extremely nutrient dense food, meaning it is chock-full of vitamins and minerals but low in calories. It is one of the best known sources of beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant. Beta-carotene is converted to vitamin A in the body once it is eaten. There are many creative ways pumpkin can be incorporated into meals, including desserts, soups, salads, preserves, and even as a substitute for butter.

Ingredients

1 kg pumpkin, peeled, cut into small cubes
 2 bunches coriander, roots trimmed

1 lemon, zest and juice
 2 garlic cloves
 1/3 cup olive oil
 1 onion, chopped
 2 tsp grated ginger
 1 tbsp Thai red curry paste
 2 cups vegetable stock
 400ml light coconut milk

For garnish, thinly sliced red onion and red chilli

Method

To make the coriander paste, process coriander, lemon zest, lemon juice and garlic in a food processor. Slowly add 3 tablespoons of oil to give a saucy consistency, adding a little warm water if necessary and season. Heat the remaining oil in a large pan over medium heat. Add ginger and paste and stir for 1 minute. Add pumpkin and stock, bring to boil, and then simmer over low heat for 15 minutes until pumpkin is cooked. Cool slightly and blend until smooth. Return to the pan; add the coconut milk and season. To serve, place soup in a bowl and swirl in a spoonful of paste. Garnish with the onion, chilli and reserved coriander leaves.

CINNAMON CARROT MUFFINS

Carrots are crunchy, crispy and have a sweet, subtle and pleasant taste. Some like to chomp them raw and some like them glazed, baked, grilled or roasted. Carrots come in many different colours — orange, white, yellow, red and purple. Orange carrots are most popular around the world. Carrots are used in vegetables, daal, salads, juice and desserts. It does not just sharpen your eyesight, but can also restore it.

Carrots are a great source of antioxidants, vitamin A and vitamin C. They are also rich in alkali, a chemical which works as a blood purifier. They are high in calcium, keep the intestines free from bacteria and can help lower alarmingly high levels of uric acid.

Ingredients

3 cup carrots, grated
 2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 cup mixed nuts, chopped
 2 tsp baking powder
 Pinch of salt
 ½ tsp cinnamon powder
 2 cup brown sugar or jaggery
 1½ cup oil
 4 eggs, lightly beaten
 Pastry cups and muffin pans

Method

Roll nuts in some flour and keep aside. Sift flour, baking powder, salt and cinnamon. Add to this the brown sugar/ jaggery, oil and beaten eggs. Mix well. Mix in the carrots and nuts. Put the batter into the pastry cups (not more than ½ full) and bake in a pre-heated oven for 15-20 minutes. Remove from the oven and leave to cool. Serve.

RAINBOW SALAD

Ingredients

2 small carrots
 2 cucumbers
 1 cup shredded red cabbage
 2 tomatoes
 1 red sweet potato
 2 green onion, thinly sliced
 50g salad leaves
 50g fried noodles
 2 tbsp rice bran oil
 2 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
 2 tbsp lemon juice
 1 tsp fresh ginger, finely grated

Method

Using a vegetable peeler, cut thin ribbons from carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes and sweet potato. Place in a large bowl. Add red cabbage, onion, salad leaves and noodles. Toss to combine. Whisk rice bran oil, sweet chilli sauce, lemon juice and grated ginger together in a small bowl. Add to carrot

mixture. Toss gently to combine and serve immediately.

FRIED OKRA

Okra is also known as ladies-finger. It is widely used in Indian, Middle-Eastern, and Caribbean kitchens. Okra is a magical vegetable whose texture varies dramatically depending on how it is cooked. Whether fried, pickled, or grilled, no other vegetable tastes quite like okra.

It contains potassium, vitamin B, vitamin C, folic acid, and calcium. It is low in calories and has high dietary fibre content. Recently, a new benefit of including okra in your diet is being considered. Okra has been suggested to help manage blood sugar in cases of type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes.

Ingredients

500g okra
 2 eggs
 1½ cup corn meal, corn flour or semolina
 Salt to taste
 ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
 Oil for frying

Method

Trim the stem ends off the okra pods. Cut the pods into bite-size pieces, set aside. In a large bowl, beat the eggs with 2 tablespoons of water. Beat them well so the mixture is of a uniform, watery consistency. Set aside. In a second large bowl, combine the corn meal, salt, and peppers and set aside. Heat oil in a pan. While the oil starts heating, put the okra in the egg and toss it to thoroughly and completely coat the pods, lift the okra out. Now put the egg-coated okra in the corn meal and the other hand to toss it to coat it completely with the corn meal mixture. Repeat with remaining okra pods. Fry the coated okra till golden brown and crispy. Serve fried okra hot.

Photo: Collected

HEALTH

Manage your mood swings

I couldn't decide if it was my stomach or mind growling uncontrollably as I glared at the CNG driver who unashamedly asked for a fare that was double than usual. "It's Ramadan apu," he explained with a grin, trying to justify his demand. Reminding myself once again of my fast and the religious gains that are involved with fulfilling it successfully, I calmed my mind and climbed on, to head home where I can satiate my tummy with a delish iftar.

Hunger and anger are interconnected and during Ramadan, they frequently collide, in fact quite violently and result in catastrophic reactions inside and outside your body.

Tamima Tanjin, an accomplished Clinical Psychologist and Senior Consultant at Prottoy Clinic and Psychologist at Rokeya Hall, University of Dhaka, stated that anger and irritation are commonly linked to deprivation of food. "You know how they say, a hungry man is an angry man," she added humorously.

Generally we establish a mental understanding of abstinence from food and water in the Holy month and it helps us avert 'hunger pangs' or the urge to eat/drink in order to maintain our fast. We are, however, obliged to carry out our daily activities which require our mind and body to func-

tion effectively.

In this 'deprived' situation where the mind and body have to work hard while they are not properly 'fed', they work less efficiently and become very vulnerable to incidents that may trigger mood swings.

According to Tanjin, mood swings are not a direct characteristic of fasting. But for those who may already be suffering from some physical or mental condition, the contrary is true.

"Indulging in a good meal may be a 'happy' activity for someone who is suffering from depression and when s/he has to skip that during Ramadan, s/he may automatically become more depressed," she said. Moreover, mood swings are also common among people with anxiety.

Tanjin pointed out that diabetic patients are also prone to having mood swings while fasting. On normal days, they have to eat often, considering their food intake is absorbed faster than it would have been in a healthy person's body. Refraining from these periodic meals may be a trigger.

Another group of people are 'forced' into fasting due to societal pressures despite their reluctance to do so or sometimes, even their illnesses. This leads to the build-up of repressed emotions that may emerge in the form of mood swings.

Hormones play a big role as well, espe-

cially in women. "While they spend the day taking care of office work, household work, children and all sorts of works, they may be unable to pray or engage in religious activity to their hearts' content. This may result in a form of dissatisfaction in them which can make them susceptible to having mood swings," informed Tanjin.

Finally, coming to the most common notion – short temper! Something most of us can personally relate to.

A number of people deal with short temper and maintaining calm in an outrageous situation may be a Herculean task for them. According to Tanjin, the short-temper issue multiplies during Ramadan as the food deprived stomach fights with the weary mind and the simplest of things start to really get on your nerve.

HANDLE YOUR EMOTIONS WITH CARE

Long hours of fasting require the combined effort of a strong mind, willpower and body which does not surrender to swinging moods, and have full control over themselves. A number of habits can help fight back mood swings during Ramadan.

THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS

Due to fasting, the mind may become vulnerable and very volatile in some cases. "In order to avoid reacting negatively in certain situations, firstly we must always keep in

mind the sacred purpose of fasting," Tanjin explained.

LIGHT WORK EQUALS TO A LIGHT MIND

She advises that undertaking tasks that require little physical effort and avoiding situations which may lead to arguments or other negative emotions are always a great idea.

FASTING IS FOR THE HEALTHY

Fasting is not obligatory on those with various illnesses. "People need to understand their bodily needs and fast only when their bodies allow them to do so," she said.

IMMERSING IN PRAYERS AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

"Spending time praying or reading religious books is a great way to keep away from any triggers," she suggests. It is one of the best ways to have peace of mind as well.

PRE-RAMADAN PRACTICE

Tanjin concluded that for those who have temper issues, or are suffering from other mental disorders, it is important that they make up their mind for fasting in Ramadan well before the holy month arrives.

It is important to understand the values of the fast, try to inhibit mood swings, and in unpleasant situations, take a deep breath before reacting.

By Nafisa Faruque