

DESHI MIX

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Nobanno — a celebration of nature's boon

Colourful fairs, musical soirees and ceremonial festivals abound in the country to greet the harvest season. Rural Bangladesh is dressed in gold; the gleam of freshly golden rice bring life to the fullest and a smile on every face.

Agrahayan, the eighth month in the Bengali calendar, marks the beginning of traditional harvest festival of Nobanno, which means 'new food,' or not so literally, 'new crop'.

In an agro-based country, where rice is a staple, it is quite natural that the harvesting of fresh crop is a matter of joy. Another major part of the celebration

is that it marks the beginning of making pitha — the quintessential Bengali dish for all celebrations.

It is widely believed that the best pitha are ones made from the fresh harvest. From the savoury chittoi, to the bhapa with jaggery, almost every region of the country has its own variations of it.

The list of essential ingredients required for making pitha is not a long one; rice flour, coconut, jaggery, milk, and often oil are all that one needs. However, there are traditional rice cakes that require elaborate preparations.



NUTRITIONAL ASPECTS

The wide variations of rice, each providing a unique texture, also contain varied nutritional values. Rice is about 90 percent carbohydrate, 8 percent protein and 2 percent fat. White rice is a good source of magnesium, phosphorus, manganese, iron, folic acid, thiamine and niacin.

One hundred grams of jaggery contains 158 calories; it is rich in minerals, salt, vitamins and even contains some fibre.

One medium-sized coconut weighing about 397grams has 1405 calories, 400 grams edible meat and 30 to 150ml water. The total fat in one coconut is about 133 grams. It is high in saturated fat and fibre. It is an excellent source of minerals such as copper, calcium, iron, manganese, magnesium and zinc.

BHAPA PITHA

Ingredients

2 cup parboiled rice

½ cup liquid milk

A pinch of salt

For the filling —

½ cup grated fresh coconut

1 cup date jaggery

Method

Soak the rice for 5-6 hours at least. Drain the water out well. Now grind it in a grinder or food processor. Mix a little bit of water. Add

salt and sprinkle milk in a way that the rice powder seems wet. If the flour binds together when you hold some, the flour is ready. Now sieve the flour through the strainer.



Take two pieces of clean cotton cloth and two small bowls. In a bowl, spread some flour, then add the coconut and jaggery. Cover it with another layer of flour and even it. Cover it with piece of cloth and