

# CHANGES THAT MAKE US #NOWINLIFESTYLE



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## Eating down memory lane

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bhorta-bhaji (fried and mashed vegetable preparations), along with a giant tub of watery lentil soup. The fish curry, although delicious, was often red from the copious amounts of spices that have been used to prepare it. I also remember the times when the fish, just caught fresh from the river, were immediately bought and cooked at those restaurants, to the joy of all the customers – a taste that still lingers on my tongue. It became an impromptu tradition every time we were crossing with the ferries, to dine in those eateries, despite my mother's chagrin about the evident lack of hygiene.

If we somehow missed out on eating at the river-bank terminal, we would eat on the ferry itself. The ferries were all two to three storeyed, and had good arrangements in terms of food. As a general rule, these restaurants only charged

skilful handling of the ferry's manager, the situation never escalated further. This tradition of free rice and lentils with any curry can still be seen on the Aricha-Nagarbari river bank restaurants.

Nowadays, the culture of eating at these places has emerged anew, but with a difference. Rather than being a roadside opportunity, these restaurants and their offerings have in fact become the purpose of travel for many. Enthusiasts simply drive off on a day they want, to Mawa or other ferry terminals, to enjoy the fresh fried hilsa and rice, along with any other dish that are rumoured to be worth the trip.

The restaurants also serve roe and a dish made of mashed 'muro' (fish head). I find it intriguing that the meals that were taken at those terminals out of necessity, is now a form of entertainment. The culture shift has been so tremendous that people simply travel to eat these very humble dishes. Often, travellers actually crossing the Padma have no time to eat at all because the restaurants are full of food-tourists!

After the Jamuna Bridge was built, all the vehicles travelling towards the 17 northern districts have shifted away from ferry crossings, but buses and other road transport to the south still relies on ferry connections at various places, particularly the Aricha-Daulatdia route. These two ghats still have a lot of restaurants that are open 24/7.

People travelling to Barisal, Bhola, Patuakhali, and Barguna by launch are all familiar with the delicious 'launch food'. Fish, meat, vegetables, paratha, or pudding – you name it, everything is tasty. These huge luxurious launches are improving their menu by adding newer items, and one should not miss an opportunity to try them.

Things have changed on the railway scene too compared to the past few years; gone are the shabby old red carriages, to be replaced by more luxurious green and white ones. What hasn't changed though is the food.

The cutlets and butter breads were a favourite amongst the travellers, and now the list also includes cakes, and of course tea and coffee. Opinions may vary on the taste of the cutlet, but it is an undeniably enjoyable part of the

journey, and most people have fond memories associated with it.

People often carry their own food onto the trains, but despite that, the trains do serve a good variety of food including rice, lentils, and curry too. Occasionally, hawkers bring in different kinds of crisps and chocolates. If the train stops at a station for a while, you can get off and quickly buy some steaming parathas, nuts, mixed chickpea and boiled eggs. Anyone who has travelled by train is familiar with the "boiled egg hawkers." If you are in luck you might even find 'jilapi' at some stations.

I think the most delicious and interesting types of food can be found while travelling on the highways. Some of these places are so famous that people from Dhaka drive all the way there just for a bite.

Those who frequently travel long distances by bus already know which route has the best restaurants and which serves the best khichuri, vegetables, meat curry and even sweets. Many well-furnished restaurants have cropped up over the last 10-15 years on these routes. Along with those small roadside restaurants, these large new places also add a significant value to travel.

While travelling towards the northern districts, you will see two wonderful restaurants, Aristocrat, and Highway Inn. Aristocrat serves delectable beef bhuna and Highway Inn offers the best roshogollas.

On the way to Sylhet, you have to stop at Ujan Bhati Restaurant, right after crossing the Bhairab Bridge. They serve great paratha, meat, bhaji, and rice, and everything is delicious. Sometimes it is actually hard to find an empty place to even sit. Highway Inn's khichuri and meat bhuna ranks amongst the best. The chefs cook round the clock, and diners flock to the restaurants in great numbers.

Easily available and good food while travelling is a blessing indeed because it is not always possible to bring food from home. These road and riverside restaurants make travelling not only easier, but also fun-filled, as long as you choose a good restaurant.

Translated By Sadit Ashraf

Photo: LS Archive



a price for whichever curry you ate, and the rice and lentils were complementary as well as limitless! I still remember this one person who sat beside our table once. He bought a single piece of fish and ate a dish full of rice and a bowl full of lentils. As the rice and lentils were free, he demanded more, and the wait staff became incredibly annoyed; so much so that a fistfight nearly broke out, but thanks to the

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