

# Be your best hostess this Baishakh!

At long last Baishakh is here. We bid adieu to all that is old and weary, making way for new and auspicious tidings. The time to celebrate life in all its glory is here, and a sense of rejuvenation and renewal is prevalent all around. This festive energy touches every aspect of Bengali life, as we like to embrace the spirit of Baishakh wholeheartedly!

In true Bengali style every festival involves celebrating with three major components: family, friends and food! It is a fact universally known that we Bengalis live to feast and Baishakh only strengthens that resolve. While eating out has become the norm these days many households still hold onto the tradition of dining at home on Pahela Baishakh. For what could be more enjoyable than welcoming the New Year at home breaking bread with people who are the closest to us? Nothing really. It tends to be a warm, homely affair in most households, with little pomp and flourish.

The modern hostess in Dhaka is well aware that to throw even the simplest of parties, there are certain golden rules one must adhere to in order for it to be a success. So in spirit of Baishakh and the merriment that surrounds it, this week Star Lifestyle has put together the fool-proof cheat sheet to throw the ultimate Baishakh bash in your home!

Firstly, consider the timing of your party. This is key as every mealtime comes with its own set of rules and preparations. For a Baishakhi brunch, the timing is usually from noon till four in the afternoon. It is expected of guests to show up within an hour of noon so the party can get started.

A little tip if you are planning to host a brunch: be direct and emphasise heavily on the start time when inviting guests, or else people will show up at three and expect to be served entrée when half the party has moved to desserts!

For lunch it is usually from one to four, which is more flexible in terms of preparation. Most people tend to show up on time for lunch parties so that should not be an issue. If you are having people over for tea and snacks then it is usually from four to seven, after which it is dinnertime.

Next is the menu.

Every item should be traditionally Bangladeshi to add to the festivity. For Baishakhi brunch the options are endless. Since brunch is a cross between breakfast and lunch its menu should draw from both. You could put classic Bengali breakfast favourites like chaal er ataar ruti, luchi with cholar daal, aloor dom along with plain white rice, and curries, etc.

For lunch, a platter of assorted bharta and bhaji is mandatory — for what is Baishakh without the good old bharta! Various fish curries, shutki and meat dishes are also essential. For snacks, traditional Bengali favourites like jhaal muri, chotpoti,

various kinds of pithas, savoury staples like shingara, samosa, and aloor chop are perfect.

You could also do bhetki maach er cutlet and serve it with shosha tomato raita. Seasonal fruit juices such as kaacha aam er shorbot, water melon and tamarind juice is great for snack time. Fish is the mainstay of any Bangaldeshi dinner so make it the highlight of your dinner menu.

Shorshe llish, golda chingrir malaikari and katol maach er dopeyaja will add variation to your party. Other quintessentially Bengali sides like tomator tok, begun bhaaji, ghono daal, etc. will add the right dimension. For desserts, firni, paati-shapta pitha, mishti doi and pakon pitha will complement the magnificent Baishakhi dinner perfectly.

Next are the details to keep in mind. For dining service, pack away your fancy crystals and bone china. Serve your delicious dishes in brass, terracotta or earthenware dishes



that will bring a touch of our heritage to your table.

Put away your French and English table linens and deck up your dining table with handloom weaves. A gamcha will look fabulously deshi as a table runner, as will a nakshi kantha table cloth and matching napkins. In terms of decor, give imported lilies and carnations a miss and put tube roses, marigold and jasmine in vases and bowls instead. Their heady fragrance will perfume your house and look beautifully fresh. Baishakh is all about reviving forgotten traditions so put out paan shupari on a silver tray, and maybe little cubes of morobba to take your guests on a trip down memory lane. Go ahead, wear a white sari and put some beli in your hair, put on some Tagore for your guests and embrace Bangaliana in all its glory this Baishakh!

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**Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed**

