



PHOTO: COURTESY

There is something about *biriyani er aloo* that makes it a subject of universal adoration. But before I go rambling about my love for potato-cooked-to-perfection, here's some background story.

Last week, my editor asked me with enough conviction so that I can't turn her down, to write an article for this week's issue of *Star Weekend*. The nice person that I am, wondered, "What could I write about? Something topical? Some sort of critical analysis?"

It took me a couple of days to come up with something; I'm not much of a writer, you see. After much thought when I did pitch my idea, which I hope you realise is absolutely not what you're about to read, she plainly asked if it would be "funny". Now that's a curveball, or a bouncer in sub-continental context, I wasn't expecting.

Back to the drawing board I went and by that I mean procrastinating on Facebook. And there it was: pictures of wedding ceremonies. Cut to pictures of wedding food a.k.a the *biriyani*. Before you say it, no, the *polao*-roast set menu doesn't count. So in the very same manner that Archimedes solved the golden crown conundrum—and created billions more math problems in the process for school kids—I had found "gold". I would write about *biriyani er aloo*. Fun fact: as I write this piece, our

dedicated photographer is running down the aisles between the cubicles in the office, asking every employee if they have a picture of my subject—a potato covered in a cosy blanket of aromatic rice. A close source tells me people have been asking about my write-up, and that they're planning on ordering some biriyani as well. Wow, my word processor is yet to produce the write-up—that too about a tuber—and the idea has gotten people salivating left, centre, right, and justified. I feel like this article has put me in a place of power. This feels nice. Also, there's a joke in there somewhere.

So, *aloo*. Where do I start?

Carried over the shoulder by men in waistcoats, the *aloo* arrives to your table like royalty. With loud children and louder aunties in the background, it is placed strategically between you and your fellow gluttons. Your eyes find it, and it finds you. Draped in piping hot *biriyani*, bejewelled with succulent pieces of mutton—the *aloo* is here.

It plays hide and seek with you. Will it give all of itself to you? Nine more pair of eyes long to have the same object on their plates. A cosmic trance spreads across the table, and the hall, like wildfire; everyone places their silent "dibs" on the hot piece of *Solarum tuberosum*. As the clattering of steel utensils replaces the murmur, you fight to help yourself to a spoonful of the *kacchi biriyani*.

Fast forward: you somehow manage to get a piece of *aloo* on your plate. The joy is real; victory is yours. Your happy tears won't season the bland rice, but who cares? You have the *aloo* under the command of your oily fingers. With one soft press down, the potato separates in the middle, much like the Titanic, but what's truly titanic here is your satisfaction. The steam from inside the potato rises to mesmerise your senses, its slightly charred surface a work of art, its soft starchy centre... no, words don't do justice.

In slow motion: the theme from *Chariots of Fire* plays in your head [please try this next time you have *biriyani*] as you push a morsel of the potato and rice in your mouth.

Continued to page 15

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# CAUTION: IT'S HOT

*Fast forward: you somehow manage to get a piece of aloo on your plate. The joy is real; victory is yours. Your happy tears won't season the bland rice, but who cares?*

us on f /Sandalina



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ঠিক যেমন রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য মানেই

# স্যান্ডালিনা সোপ

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