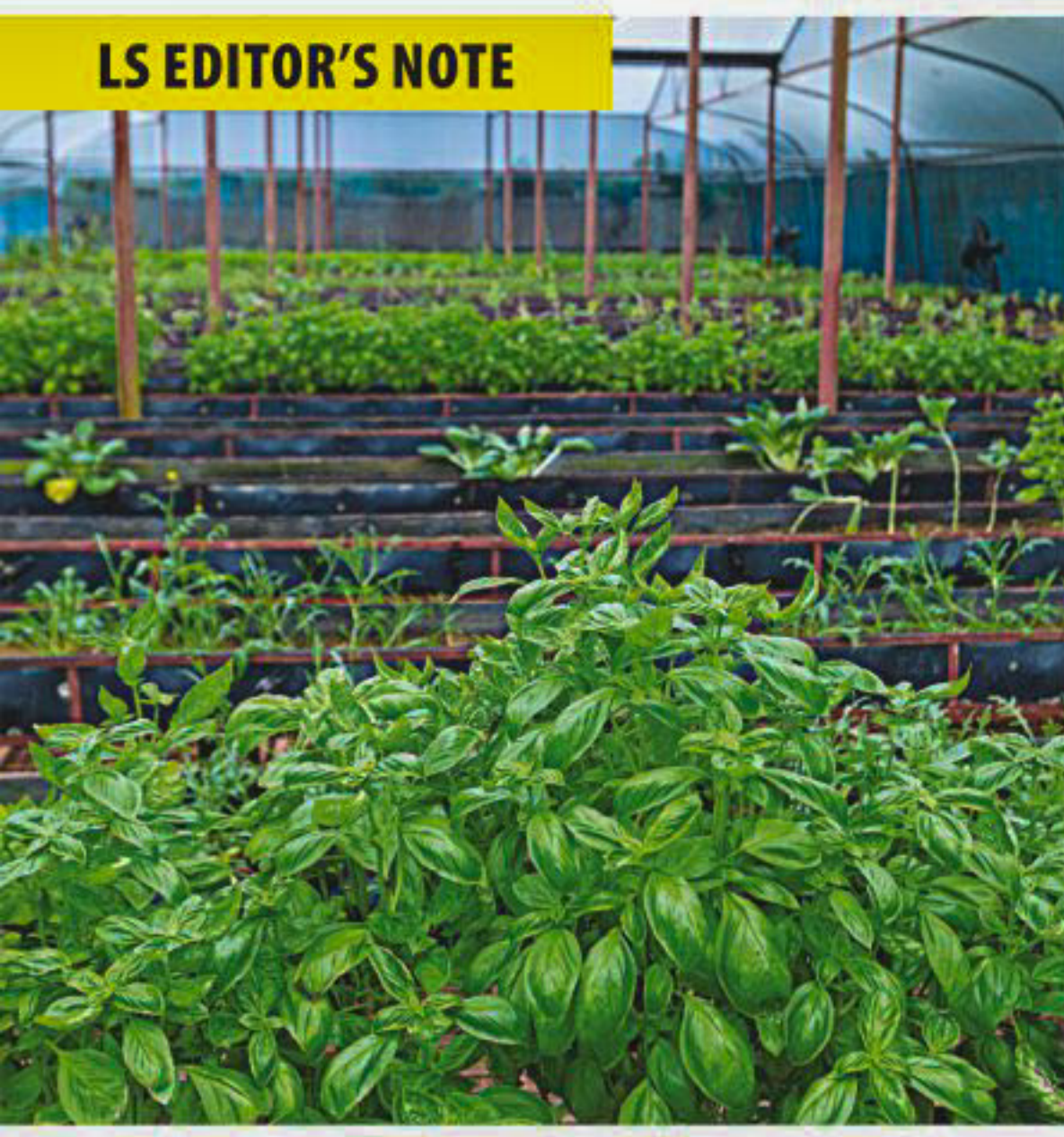


LS EDITOR'S NOTE



Herbs for my heart

It would inevitably be late in the afternoons; after wrapping up her daily household chores and completing Zuhr prayers, Nanu would sit down to have her lunch, which in itself was an art, almost like a ceremony of relishing heavenly manna.

The array of food in her small brass bowls, her hefty brass glass filled with water flavoured with lemon leaves and rinds to add that refreshing tartness, poured from a terracotta pitcher; were placed on the table in an artistic manner. Her style of mixing fried vegetables or the curry sauce with her piping hot steamed rice, and that exact amount of squeezed lemons- everything was a ritual, almost on an otherworldly level.

Being her favourite pet and pampered of them all, I would be her constant companion during school breaks.

I simply loved watching Nanu's everyday rituals — from oiling her hair with homemade coconut oil scented with hibiscus petals and fenugreek, to washing her hair with soap nut, moisturising herself with aloe vera and rose water... everything she did was in sync with nature. In other words, our grand dames were the true crusaders of all things organic. And I was always by her side, learning life hacks first-hand and most importantly, discovering the art of cooking and loving food by sharing tricks and meals with her.

The fun of partaking in mealtimes or cooking times with her was almost theatrical, with

each activity carefully scripted like a performance. Food, which she made, was indeed a mind-blowing treat for my ordinary palate.

The simple act of calling out to me before she sat down to eat was, "Go get a green chilli from the garden, and bring a spring onion sprig while you are there."

This ordinary call left an extraordinary impression on my young mind, and thus began my love for herbs and kitchen gardens. The heady smell of coriander leaves, the proud green mint looking up to the sun, the aromatic basil, the dark green spring onions, the tangy lemon leaves, the tall branches of glistening bay leaves; all of them were used by my darling granny in various dishes she prepared lovingly for her family, and the freshness of her herbs was the touch of magic in her cooking.

And come any festival or Eid, herbs and condiments always took the centre stage in the kitchen as well as the dining table.

A lemon leaf in your sweet lemonade in the midst of games in her backyard on Eid days was a treat; the tamarind chutney with coriander and molasses was something I yearned for during midday kabab snacks at her place.

She made various 'achars' and chutneys for us cousins on a regular basis, half of which were devoured during the time it was laid down in the sun to cure and the leftovers were served during the grand Eid

lunch at her place.

While reminiscing, I now find my memory blurred, but one thing I am sure of is my love for greens was sowed in my Nanu's garden, especially that particular 'run to the garden for a green chilli during lunchtimes' left a lovely hangover, which I am still nursing.

I was ecstatic when, for the first time, I grew thyme, dill, and rosemary. Unfortunately, our harsh summers and monsoons were not ideal for their growth.

My Vietnamese basil, oregano, chives, bay leaves, and ginger flowers are thriving, although I am still waiting for my peppercorn shrub to bear its first pod.

Greens honestly add a different kind of colourful pleasure to life, for which you do not need to have a green thumb. Just put the fresh herbs and plants in ordinary jars or water jars and you can grow herbs that are great to have in the kitchen, and the entire experience — handy for life.

And Qurbani Eid is the perfect time to stock up on spices about which our celebrated recipe writer Selina Parveen has written in detail, and our special Qurbani food spread has hints of herbs all through the photoshoot. Flip our pages and find what you would like to try this Eid.

— RBR

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Location: The Palace, Bahubal, Habiganj

IMAGES THROUGH A THEODOLITE

MANNAN MASHHUR ZARIF
Senior Subeditor, The Daily Star



Tempering life with some spice

The TV channels are already airing trailers; celebrities promoting their shows on Social Media, and control freaks jotting 'to-dos' on notes and pasting them all over the monitor. Setting aside the fact that a downpour on Eid day is highly probable, we are all set for a picture perfect Eid — and isn't it just as always?

Eid is a celebration of human bonding; of self-reflection, and of sharing. Qurbani is unique in the sense that it simultaneously teaches us the virtue of sacrifice and construct a social order to rejoice at.

True, Qurbani is about slaughtering, which many object to. But being vegetarian, or a vocal advocate of animal rights for a day will not bring about any change. In similar lines, piety should be reflected through actions in our everyday lives, in our every action. Religion is by no means a weekend option.

There is no denying, we as a nation are so desensitised that total disregard for the sanctity of life is rampant in society. Those who chose to respond to the call of the scriptures, should know that religion gives others equal right to express their opinions.

All quarters must understand. for millions Qurbani serves a higher purpose transcending the ways of our lives. While sacrifice now seems like a lip-service, it is in the very heart of the ritual. And any discerning mind would be quick to grasp the social, the agrarian and the economic importance that revolves around the celebration of Eid-ul-Azha.

There is no disagreement that livestock

are no longer part of our lifestyle. There was a time when household cattle were loved as we love our pets. They were treated with love and affection, served with the most nutritious food the family could afford.

Much remains to be learnt from the traditions of the past. Today, cattle are fattened through chemical means, which



is not only unfit for human consumption, but fatal for the animal. It has been widely reported that if remain unsold, they are destined to face painful deaths.

Eid-ul-Azha takes us back to the experi-

ences of the patriarch of the three Abrahamic religions.

There is nothing wrong in celebrating an occasion, as long as they are done within the boundaries set by scriptures. Qurbani is as much about feasting, as it is about accepting God's will and leading life accordingly.

On Eid day, think about blood sugar levels if you are diabetic. Think about your carb intake, if you are trying to lose weight, or maintain a healthy routine. Rethink if it is in line with the spirit of Qurbani that you share the image of the sacrificial animal on Social Media.

All cultures have their unique ways of saying grace before having food. Today, we make sure that the world knows what delicious steaks we are having via Instagram, while a neighbour's children go to sleep on an empty stomach.

This is by no means a lesson on the probable evils of our current ways. Eid is, and will always remain, a joyous occasion, with some great food to go along. And of course, it's acceptable that it continues for days on end. That soupy meat dish cooked on the day of the Eid turns dry, and gets better every time we reheat it on a gas stove. Understand and observe the day with due respect, but also pamper yourself with delicacies, even if you can only have a spoonful.

After all, its Eid!

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Food prepared and styled by: RBR

