

# Eateries of '60s

## A walk down memory lane

The decade of the '60s was the time when we were turning into young adults — curious, adventurous and eager to experience new things. We roamed around the city and tried the various gastronomic delights it offered.

Dhaka those days was still a small town. It was old Dhaka centric. The train station, the river traffic terminal, the main trade and commercial activity and important government offices were in old Dhaka.

The new Dhaka was sparsely populated and was just coming up. Only a few people lived in Dhanmandi, Gulshan, and Banani. Motijheel commercial area had only two or three big buildings like the EPIDC building, DIT building and the Adamjee Court. So naturally, most of the interesting places to eat were in old Dhaka.

The restaurants were popularly called "hotels." As a young child, I saw eateries called "pice hotel." These were cheap places where one could literally eat for a few paisas! That is how these places got the name of Pice Hotel.

Until the mid-sixties, there were floating restaurants on boats on the Buriganga River in Sadarghat. The clientele of these were mainly the poor litigants who came to the Dhaka Court. There were separate



arrangements for Hindu and Muslim customers. The cheap shanty restaurants in launch terminals catered to the travelling public. Restaurant visit by a family was extremely rare.

The former Jinnah Avenue, now Bangabandhu Avenue, had most of the high-end establishments. Kasbah, La Sani, Chu Chin Chow in former Jinnah Avenue, belonged to this category. One restaurant, called Myrander, opposite the Court House, was also a high class eatery. They had proper cutlery and linen.

The Sakura Restaurant cum bar was located in front of the Intercontinental Hotel. The big hotels like Shahbagh and later Intercontinental and Purbani had their own in-house restaurants. The Chambeli Room of Intercontinental Hotel was a classy restaurant. You had to go there formally dressed in a jacket and tie. They even had occasional floor shows featuring exotic belly dancers.



Another great place to eat, though strictly not in Dhaka city, was the Rocket steamer. They served a fine dinner, specially the smoked hilsa. The cheaper eateries were spread all over the city. Other more popular places in Jinnah Avenue were Sweet Heaven, Salimabad Hotel. Nawabpur Road had Delhi Hotel, Aminia, Amjadia, etc. There was a restaurant called Shanti Hotel in Rathkhola, where you could have a full Bengali meal at a nominal price. Two more places, Popular and Hasina restaurants in Bakhshi Bazar, were very popular, especially among the students of engineering and medical colleges.

In the '60s, the go-to place for kebab was Rex in Jinnah Avenue and Darul Kabab or Shalimar on the Airport Road.

Rex was a good quality restaurant with comfortable sitting. Darul Kabab, a cheaper eatery, used to stand on stilts in the jheel across present Sonargaon Hotel. Being cheaper, this was probably the most popular kebab house in the city.

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