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E-mail: [lifestyleds@yahoo.com](mailto:lifestyleds@yahoo.com)  
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# A summer *fling with* PRINTS

FOR THE FLYING FRIENDLIES  
SOME FOOD FOR CITY BIRDS P3  
PAISLEYS, STRIPES AND POLKAS  
WEAR PRINTS ON PRINTS WITH ELAN C  
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PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED  
MODEL: ARPITA  
MAKE-UP: ORKO  
STYLING: SONIA YEASMIN ISHA  
STUDIO: UTURN PRODUCTIONBD



## HIGHLY TRAINED PAINTERS WITH MAXIMUM PRECAUTIONS

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#PERSPECTIVE

# THE ONE THING I do every day

Procrastination — I do it every day. In fact, I am doing it right now while writing this piece. It took me an extra hour to finish writing because I was too busy mastering the art of procrastination. If there is anything in the world, I do not fail to do every single day, that will be it.



What exactly is procrastination? It is the wonderful and elegant art of putting things off intentionally and mostly out of habit. Do you have trouble persuading yourself to do things you should do or wish to do? Then, congratulations! You are a true procrastinator. Why do people like me love putting things off until the very last minute? Is it because we are lazy? I beg to differ. Procrastination does not equal to laziness. Being lazy means not doing anything and actually not regretting it. On the other hand, procrastination means wishing to start or work on something, but not finding the motivation or force to do so.

For me, procrastination is trying to muster up enough motivation and enthusiasm to start something. It can even be something which I enjoy doing. I have been putting off starting a new TV series for months because I am afraid of committing to a new one. Meanwhile, I am watching 'Parks and

Recreation' for the umpteenth time.

I like to call myself a perfectionist rather than a procrastinator. Perfection can only be achieved by thinking of the million other things you need to do before starting the actual task you should do. Now I know that it can be a bad thing too.

You do not want to end up doing absolutely nothing. You need to be able to balance out your procrastination and work ratio. Do not be too hard on yourself. One thing I learned in the past few years was that you need to stop stressing about wasting time. If you procrastinate you procrastinate, there is no reason to stress out your brain. People would be surprised to know stalling has taught me the ability to finish seven hours' worth of work in just one hour.

Procrastination should not have to be unpleasant and unfortunate. If done right it can even make oneself efficient

and hardworking. Often, I have found inspiration when I was wilfully wasting my time doing mundane times.

A writing assignment deadline in two days? Suddenly, I will find my closet and room need a deep thorough cleaning. I will spend one and half-day contemplating when I should start writing, and right when I think maybe a writing career is not for me, I will find inspiration from a seven-year-old magazine lying in a corner of my closet.

It is often shocking to me how everyday things can trigger one to create great things. If you want to work on a task you are supposed to do, try convincing yourself to work on the smaller tasks first. It is not a sign of weakness to be unable to finish something in just one go. Sometimes, amazing and the very best work have been achieved working like this.

It is quite natural to think that success will come through hard work, but I have

found that my 'laziness' has sometimes done wonders for me. The only difficult part was to come to that conclusion while berating myself for not being like other hard-workers.

Now, will my approach to procrastination work for others? Maybe not, but it might help people to gain a new perspective on life. Who knows, you might even end up liking it. There can be moments in your life where squandering away your time is the exact thing you need to do.

Sometimes, we just need to give ourselves a reminder that the end goal for all the hard work and torture we put ourselves through every day is to sit back and relax. So, why not give ourselves a small taste of what is to come when we do achieve our goals?

By Melisa Khan  
Photo: Collected

us on /Sandalina

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ঠিক যেমন ঝুপচাঁয় আভিজাত্য মানেই

**স্যান্ডালিনা**  
সোপ

ঝুপচাঁয় আভিজাত্য...

**KOHINOOR**  
CHEMICAL



# How to make a mini sanctuary FOR CITY BIRDS



Due to the dispersed nature pockets and nooks and crannies in concrete buildings, Dhaka hosts more birds than we tend to be aware of. Numerous bird species inhabit our urban neighbourhoods, from commonly sighted house sparrows and red-vented bulbuls to the scarce purple sunbird and green bee-eater. With a little bit of effort and patience, you can easily make your house a mini sanctuary for them.

If you want to make your house more accommodating for birds, makeshift bird feeders and bird baths will do wonders on their own.

Bird houses can be difficult to construct and are not as crucial as they seem. On the other hand, bird feeders can be made with ease from materials found at home such as paper plates and twine.

To craft a feeder out of paper plates, you need to stack two plates on top of one another and prick four holes, with one at each quarter turn. Then, using some twine, thread along the diameters and connect each pair of holes. This should form a threaded 'X'.

After you knot the twine at the underside of each hole, just tie both strings together at the top to form a loop and your feeder will be ready to hang.

Low hanging tree branches in your roof or garden or plant holders in your balcony will provide optimal support for your bird feeder.

Some birds like sparrows and doves are often quite reluctant to consume food from elevated surfaces. If you want to capture their attention as well, placing a small tray of bird food at ground level near a secluded part of your roof or garden will do the trick.

If you want to attract parrots, you can lay out chopped chilli peppers as they are especially fond of them.

The placement of the bird feeder plays a significant role in determining whether or not birds choose to visit it. Since birds tend to avoid feeders they feel vulnerable around, picking a quiet and protected area away from possible predators and the cacophony of the city will make your feeder more hospitable. Above all, it is vital to keep the feeder out of the reach of predatory cats and snack hogging squirrels.

Placing the feeder around shrubs or vines which birds can use as potential hiding spots or rest stops will also help attract frequent visitors.

Most ingredients used for bird feed can be found in your kitchen pantry.

Fruits, lentils, cracked corn, unsalted nuts, and millet will help you whip up a feast for visiting birds. Salt, onion, garlic and chocolate should be avoided as they can cause toxicity.

Putting out a shallow baking pan filled with water near a feeder will provide birds with a source of drinking and bathing water.

Small birds are a delight to watch when they play with water or consume it from makeshift bird-baths. Make sure to change the water in the baking pan once every few days to keep it safe and clean for your guests.

When you have all that covered, all you need is patience. Even though it might take birds some time to discover their bath and treats, it will be highly rewarding in the end.

By Tasfia Ahmed  
Photo: NB Mansoor

## Kindness to all kinds

Many of us remain unaware of the many small acts of mercy and kindness that could raise our station in the eyes of God all through the year. One of those aspects is continuous charity, or sadaqa, and while most of us are aware of the necessity and benefits of sharing our fortunes with the less fortunate, we often forget that human beings are not the only kind that Allah created!

One of the silent and often unseen casualties of our towers and glass buildings are the birds of the regions. The glass confuses them, the building obstructs their flight paths and influence their routines permanently. Not to mention the rampant denuding of city areas of old and sturdy trees— it is not just the tree that are lost, but entire ecosystems and homes of many creatures, of many kinds, including birds.

Keeping all that in mind, what could we do create a real impact? While planting trees is always an option, the space to do that might not be available to all. However, most of us have access to a roof or balcony, and one of the easiest ways to do so is to keep a bird feeder, and a water trough, with fresh clean water, for the little birds to come and drink from during these soaring temperatures of our blazing tropical summers.

As Muslims, imagine the rewards you reap each time a thirsty or hungry bird eats or drinks from your balcony, its relief translates to a reward for you as *sadaqa*, without much effort too. Sounds like a real easy deal, does it not? And even if we take out religion from the act, kindness, compassion, and caring for earth's beings is only one of the ways we can show our love to this planet, after all, it's our only home in this universe.

By Sania Aiman



#HEALTH & FITNESS

# Vaccination and immunity thoughts

Unless you have been living under a rock for the last year or so, you know all about the rampaging pandemic. How it has literally changed the world and how it's wreaking havoc all over the globe. So, having a vaccine against such a disease that has come in the form of Hades himself is certainly a fact worth celebrating. But don't throw a party just yet.

Getting vaccinated sure is a good thing but it still means that you should keep certain factors in mind.

For one thing, you still need to wear masks. Not just because the public offices demand it, but because you can be a carrier of the disease. There's a chance that you might catch the disease and not even

realise it and end up infecting someone else. There's also the risk of getting infected yourself even after vaccination in some cases, especially given the different variants of the virus becoming all too common. So don't be lazy — wear a mask.

We are still a long way from achieving herd immunity and until we can achieve that, a large number of the population are still at risk. Which is why you should probably hold off on the big gatherings that you are planning to celebrate your vaccination.

As one user posted on Twitter: "Being Vaccinated does not mean you can host an extravagant party at your West Egg mansion that symbolises the superficiality

and moral corruption of the rich." Sure, it's a satirical reference to *The Great Gatsby*, but it's appropriate for the situation.

You can travel and resume normal activities but remember, it's possible to catch the disease a second time and it's possible to catch it even after vaccination, so you should probably keep in mind that the pandemic is not over just because you got vaccinated.

Remember, there are new variants being discovered and your vaccine, while effective in general cases, may not provide such great protection against the newer variants that appear to be much more atrocious.

Keep the records and papers of your vaccination close at hand for many offices

might ask for them and right now, they are the only proof you have of having been vaccinated.

You still need to wash your hands and face. The vaccine provides an immunity but how long that lasts is still a puzzle that scientists are attempting to solve.

Yes, you can go visit your family as long as you are being cautious. Experts say that fully vaccinated individuals do not need to be quarantined if they do not have COVID symptoms following an exposure. But we still recommend taking all the necessary cautions such as mask and hand sanitisers.

**By Ashif Ahmed Rudro**  
**Photo: Collected**

## HOROSCOPE



**ARIES**  
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Your partner will be annoyed with you. Residential moves will be beneficial. Re-evaluate your own motives. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



**TAURUS**  
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

Alienation may be the result of a misunderstanding. Colleagues will believe in your ideas. Don't fall behind on chores. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



**GEMINI**  
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)

You will be eager to learn. Use your ability to motivate others. Lay down ground rules. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



**CANCER**  
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Keep important information to yourself. Schedule time for yourself. Relationships will be rocky this week. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



**LEO**  
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Channel your energy wisely. Short trips will be fruitful. Don't be forced into doing anything. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



**VIRGO**  
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Listen to loved ones you respect. Expect problems with your partner. Social functions will bring about new romances. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



**LIBRA**  
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Let go of the past. Opportunities to make financial gains are likely. Your partner will be emotionally unavailable. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



**SCORPIO**  
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Be prepared to overcome obstacles at work. Pleasure trips will be interesting. Don't let yourself feel restricted. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



**SAGITTARIUS**  
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Use your quick wit to win points with friends. Make plans for travel. Take care of pending health problems. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



**CAPRICORN**  
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Do something energetic. Your partner may be erratic this week. Avoid being too stressed. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



**AQUARIUS**  
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Keep ahead of the game. Avoid distractions while working. Prepare for massive changes at work. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



**PISCES**  
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Luck is with you. Do something special with your partner. Chronic health problems can arise. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



#FASHION

# YOUR print story

Styling does not come easy to everyone and that is not really irregular either. It is a skill that needs to be cultivated, after all.

Also, just wondering about millions of colours and what to pair with them can give any person a serious headache. And imagine what can happen when someone asks you to pair your polka dots with the stripes. As if there was nothing else in the world to worry about! And this is exactly where we come in — to make your life a little easier.

FLIP TO CENTRE FOR MORE

# A,B,C of prints

Let's start with the basics. *The rule of the thumb:* shapes that are not too similar, look good together. So, polka dots can easily be paired with florals and leopard prints with paisleys. However, the problem arises when pied-de-poule and plaids are placed next to each other, because they are way too similar to be compatible.

Similarly, large prints are a big no-no!

If you plan on giving someone a headache, then you can definitely try pairing big-sized prints together. Otherwise, simply try to remember another basic rule of fashion: *two separate, large-scale prints will always try to compete with each other for dominance.*

Finally, to complete any look that has a few different prints in it, always use neutral accessories.

Final World of Caution: *Stick to a similar colour family and DON'T add any more colours to it – not even in the form of accessories!*

Well, a lot of dos and don'ts have been mentioned here, which may get anyone nervous at the beginning. But wearing prints is not much of a chore. It can be very simple if the basics are understood properly.

Prints almost always encourage a retro look, so it can be matched easily with hoops, A-line skirts, palazzo pants, bell-bottoms and most certainly bangs and pony tails.

We all love the '60s and the '70s, the

prints especially the polka dots are a subtle proclamation to the funky and fun era of our predecessors.

Having said that, prints on the sari simply look gorgeous. But in that case, the sari must be in soft chiffon, silk or satin material. The entire look will be ten times more sophisticated when this combination is followed. Not to mention, a beehive and few soft curls added to the look, similar to Brigitte Bardot's would only enhance the sky-high experience.

We haven't spoken about shoes till now and it's about time. Almost always stilettos in the nude can enhance the look of the polka dots and prints, anytime – anywhere. But if you are unable to wear the wounding tall heels, then wedges are always a good alternative. But the secret to wearing prints is that you must always have your back straight, as you stand tall. A limp body tone almost always makes the prints fall flat.

There are a few more tips and tricks to wearing prints, and we'd like to share it here, as much as possible.

Small prints are a preferable wear for ladies with a short stature whilst large prints are meant for the taller populace. Both prints look superbly well on the separate body types.

Prints can be worn at varied occasions, from a fun night-out with friends, to a casual beach outing, to even a formal business meeting with colleagues. To make the look more serious, one should opt out of wearing eye-catching makeup and keep everything else including accessories to a more neutral shade. Whereas to make the look more fun and frolicky; sky can be the limit.

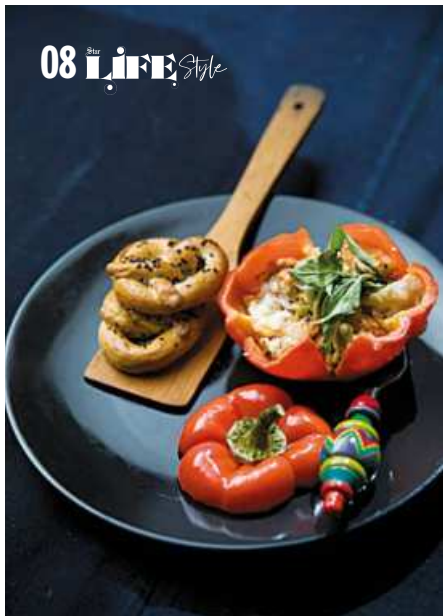
We can only give a suggestion here: *try the blood-red matte lipstick.* This shade never failed the olive-skinned Bengali belle.

Ever!

Au revoir!

**By Fashion Police**  
**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed**  
**Model: Arpita**  
**Make-up: Orko**  
**Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha**  
**Studio: Uturn Productionbd**





#FOOD

# Post-Eid Munchies

Food is the universal language of celebration. Come to think of it, every occasion or festival is incomplete without a little indulgence and food. However, sometimes, we tend to splurge a bit too much and cook out of proportion, especially when the occasion is highly significant, such as Eid.

At the end of Eid festivities, most of us have refrigerators stacked with cooked food, probably more than we need that may go to waste. So, what to do with all those leftovers from Eid? Do not worry, as you do not need to throw them away. By following appropriate storage methods, and unleashing your creativity with food, you may prepare scrumptious food with leftovers too!

#### Proper storage

Cooked food, especially curries can be stored in the refrigerator for 2-3 days and for a longer period in the freezer. However,

it is important to store them in shallow containers in batches, and cover them properly to prevent any entry of moisture. For dry food, such as kebabs, it is a good idea to store them in zip-lock bags as they take up lesser space.

#### Roasted meaty goodness

Almost all households prepare roast beef or chicken during Eid given its rich nature. Use the leftovers to make snacks for the following days. Thinly slice pieces of roast beef to add into sandwiches for a delicious taste, or cut them into strips that makes for a great addition to ramen and stir-fries.

You may also tear the pieces of beef with



a fork for a delicious topping over pizza or bread toast.

If you are willing to go that extra mile, you may even make scrumptious Mughlai paratha revved up with onions and chillies to satiate those hunger pangs during evening.

#### Grilled delicacies

Being dry foods, tikka and kebabs deteriorate in taste if they are stored for long. A great idea to utilise them quickly while they still taste delectable is to make sliders, accompanied with lettuce, fresh tomatoes and cheese, all nice and snug between two buns.

For grilled chicken that has gone further dry, I like to prepare paratha rolls or shawarma with a generous addition of

mayonnaise or curd, and cucumbers. The freshness and crunch of cucumbers elevate the taste of the rather dry chicken.

#### Eat breakfast like a king

It's not every day that we binge on scrumptious food, so I suggest savour the moment while it lasts!

Pair your curries with naan, paratha or chapri for breakfast and take a break from your usual morning jam and toast. I have found that reheating stale curries with green chillies and dried plums makes them taste better and restores the aroma.

For hosts who spend hours in the kitchen prior to Eid, give yourself that much needed rest and use those leftovers. Cooking with already cooked food not only takes half the effort and time, but adds a distinct flavour to any dish as well.

By Fariha Amber  
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad

#HEALTH & FITNESS

# Antioxidants — your everyday 'elixir of youth'



Antioxidants are compounds produced by the human body that fight free radicals, substances that are by-products of our body's regular metabolism. These radicals do not pose much threat when present in moderate amounts. However, excess amounts jeopardise human health and have been linked to a wide variety of diseases.

Fortunately, our bodies produce their own 'free-radical scavengers', better known as antioxidants, that keep the number of free radicals in check, and neutralise their harmful effects. Antioxidants come with promising benefits because they counteract free radical-induced cell and tissue damage. These notorious radicals have been linked to heart, inflammatory and respiratory diseases, diabetes, deterioration of eye lenses, certain types of cancer, arthritis, stroke, immune deficiency, emphysema, and Parkinson's disease.

Antioxidants play a significant role in keeping these at bay. Moreover, antioxidants have been hypothesised to



slow down the entire ageing process as they prevent cell damage, and thus, keep our cells rejuvenated.

Although our body does produce its own antioxidants, it does not hurt to add to its amount. Certain foods serve as excellent sources of antioxidants and the best sources are plant-based foods.

Food high in antioxidants are often referred to as a "superfood" or "functional food." They include —

Most fruits and vegetables, especially berries, oranges, carrots, peas, spinach,

mangoes, tomatoes, watermelon, papaya, pomegranate, red grapes, broccoli, apples, pumpkins, and avocado.

Other sources include:

Dairy products, eggs, and liver.

Nuts and seeds, sunflower, and other vegetable oils.

Green, leafy vegetables.

Rice, corn, wheat, and other whole grains.

Legumes such as black beans or kidney beans.

Green and black teas.

Eggplant.

Dark chocolate.

Onions and garlic.

Soybean.

Sesame seed.

Including these in your diet will protect your cells from damage, keep them more 'alive' and boost your overall health remarkably!

By Faiza Khondkar  
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad

**THE MILLENNIAL COOK**  
FARIHA AMBER



# Delicious dishes featuring pistachios

Pistachio is undeniably one of the best gifts of nature. A precious ingredient that invigorates both senses, being not only stimulating to the taste palate, but also appealing to the eyes with its subtle green hue. Albeit being a simple ingredient with humble origins, a little bit of pistachio adds a touch of royalty to any dish.

The versatile nature of pistachio makes it applicable to use in a variety of food, both savoury and sweet, and this is just one reason why we tend to love it so much! Apart from adding a depth of flavour and finesse to every dish, this nutty element is as good by itself to be enjoyed as a snack, or an accoutrement to complement other dishes.

The aroma of pistachio, its soothing colour along with its distinct taste makes it the perfect package of deliciousness. Thus, here are some exquisite dessert recipes made using pistachios that scream royalty.

## BAKLAVA FOLDS

*This contemporary twist on the traditional baklava is for those individuals who like a decadent dessert and yet try to consume lesser calories. This rendition of baklava is light and delicate, with all the deliciousness of the sinfully indulgent dessert, minus the grease!*

### Ingredients

12 sheets filo pastry  
1 cup pistachio nuts  
½ cup ghee  
½ cup butter  
1 cup sugar  
1 cup water  
¼ cup cinnamon sugar  
½ cup green candy melts  
½ cup chocolate buttons  
Flower decorations for garnish

### Method

Firstly, prepare the simple syrup, which is simply a syrup made with equal parts sugar and water. Heat

them together and allow the sugar to dissolve and set this mixture aside. Next, heat the butter and ghee together to make a homogenous mixture and preheat your oven at 160° C.

Pulse the pistachio nuts to a coarse mixture and grease a baking tray with butter. Work with one filo sheet at a time and cover the rest until they are needed. Generously brush the butter and ghee mixture over the filo sheet and heavily coat it with a single layer of ground pistachio nuts.

Fold it in half and sprinkle over some cinnamon sugar. Fold it twice until you are left with a manageable rectangle. Brush the top and edges with more butter and let them bake in the oven for 15 – 20 minutes. Meanwhile, separately melt green and chocolate candy melts for later use.

Take the baklava folds out of the oven and immediately spoon the simple syrup over them so that it is absorbed while they're still hot. Let them cool slightly and pour over a spoonful of molten chocolate on each. Sprinkle over some more ground pistachios and garnish them

with flower decorations.



## PISTA FLAN

*Fusion food at its best, this recipe combines the creaminess of a flan with the crunch of vermicelli and pistachios. Every spoonful of this delightful dessert is packed with layers of delectable flavour and amazing textures.*

### Ingredients

2 eggs  
170g sterilized cream  
¾ cup condensed milk  
¾ cup ground pistachio nuts  
1 tsp cardamom powder  
110g vermicelli  
2 tbsp ghee  
Chopped almonds for garnish

### Method

To make the flan, beat the eggs until they are foamy and add in half cup condensed milk along with cream. Mix them well before adding in half a cup of finely ground pistachio nuts and a teaspoon of cardamom powder. Beat everything together until it becomes a thick and creamy mixture.

Pour this in your serving dish and cover with aluminium foil. Let it steam for 30 – 40 minutes on medium-high heat. Crush the vermicelli strands into very small pieces and lightly roast them with ghee in a pan. Add a tablespoon of ground pistachio nuts along with a quarter cup of condensed milk into this mixture and combine.

Once the flan is done, remove the foil and allow it to cool slightly. Press the vermicelli mixture over it evenly before densely coating the entire top with ground pistachio nuts. Decorate the top with almonds as you like.

## PISTA SHERBET

*This regal drink is as indulgent as it is nutritious. Packed with the goodness of almonds and pistachios where every sip has a soothing effect, which not only cools down the stomach and throat, but is sublime to the eyes as well.*

### Ingredients

4 cups milk  
½ cup chopped pistachios  
¼ cup almond paste  
3 tbsp honey  
½ tsp cardamom powder  
Few saffron strands

### Method

Heat four cups of milk in a pan and allow it to come to a boil. Separate a tablespoon of hot milk and add in the saffron strands to this; let it infuse. Bring the milk to a boil again and then add in the almond paste along with cardamom powder and

honey. Stir everything together and then add in the saffron-infused milk along with chopped pistachio nuts.

Keep stirring continuously until the milk is visibly reduced and thicker. Take this off the heat and allow it to cool in room temperature before chilling it in the refrigerator. Sprinkle atop some slithered pistachio nuts and serve this chilled, but do not add ice as that will water it down.

## VERMICELLI BARFI

*This unique barfi is not your ordinary vermicelli dessert, which contains a delicious crunch and nutty aroma. Speaking from personal experience, for years, I have had guests hounding me for the recipe of this distinctive dessert, so here goes!*

### Ingredients

200g vermicelli  
4 tbsp ghee  
¼ cup desiccated coconut  
¾ cup ground pistachios  
300g condensed milk

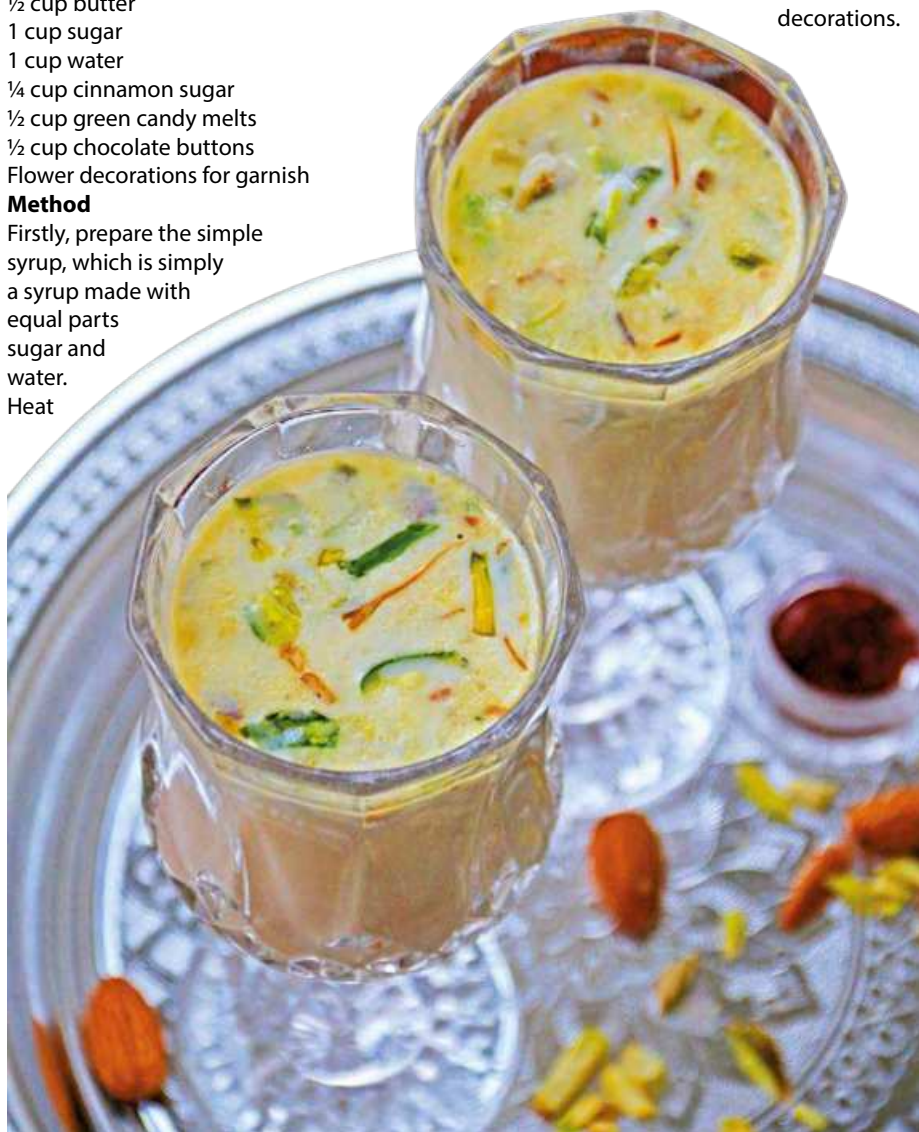
### Method

Crush one pack of vermicelli into very fine pieces and toast them on medium-heat in a pan with ghee. Stir continuously while toasting and add in desiccated coconut along with half cup ground pistachio nuts after 4-5 minutes, then cook for a couple minutes more.

Pour in condensed milk into this mixture and combine everything together. At this stage, it should be a slightly gooey mixture that holds its shape. Grease a dish with ghee and drop the barfi mixture in it and press the top to even out the surface.

Then, densely coat the top with ground pistachio nuts and press hard against the surface. Cool this at room temperature for half an hour before chilling it in the refrigerator. Once chilled, cut them into your desired shapes before serving.

**By Fariha Amber**  
**Food and Photo: Fariha Amber**





# Memories of my father

Where are you, Abbu? It has been almost seven months we are looking for you. I have been looking for you for such a long time but you don't even come in my dreams these days. Why did you leave me so abruptly and without saying anything? I still remember the day when he told me once, "Don't waste your life on unnecessary things, try to embrace your problems and solve them. Indeed, you're born to conquer this world."

My father, Syed Faizul Hussaini, grandson of the renowned Urdu poet of Bangladesh, Syed Sharfuddin Sharf Al-Hossaini, was diagnosed with COVID-19 on 20 September, 2020. He fought like a warrior for 18 long days after he was diagnosed, but finally lost the battle on Thursday, 8 October, at 6:15PM. He was among the 12,000 plus people who couldn't win against COVID.

Over the course of 18 days, my family and I witnessed my father's fight for survival, which taught me valuable lessons. I felt compelled to share my increasing awareness of my loss with others. It's difficult to write about one's own grief, but because death is an inevitable part of life, my words might be of interest to others.

His health kept on deteriorating from the



third day he was admitted in the hospital. His lung had a 76 percent infection. He was then put on high flow oxygen, and later, he took his last breath on a BiPAP.

I'm still struggling to understand the real cause of his departure from all of us. I have been grieving for the past seven months, ever since my father passed away. Others have been mourning my father's death as well, but none of them are aware of my pain. None of them are aware of the specific ways in which we were linked. My father and I had a one-of-a-kind friendship, which has left me with a lonely sorrow.

I feel like the universe has treated me badly. And there's nothing one can say to me that will make me feel better or make my suffering go away. Although

the Internet is awash with "good stories" about fathers, I'm left scratching my head, wondering what went wrong?

I was not prepared to lose him. I didn't realise what had happened back then. But then, after that day, I never saw that familiar face again. After that day, a lot of things changed. I had to 'grow up' quickly. I had to be 'mature' about everything. I had to pretend to be strong when I was falling apart. And all of this was exhausting for me. From taking care of myself to taking care of my siblings, I lost myself.

I don't have the luxury of saying, "my dad will take care of it" every time I mess up. To me, sometimes it feels as if the world took away my life support before I even learnt how to breathe properly. I have been hiding my weakness for so long that they're now just a part of me.

I came across thousands of stories in these past seven months. Here, this one's for everyone who lost someone due to COVID. This one's for the brave heart that you're. This one's for all the times when you tried to fill in your dad's shoes even if your feet were too small. This is for you for being strong.

You've come a long way. And on most

days, it doesn't pinch you as much. But then, there are days like these where you just think how different things would be if dad were with you. How different it all could've been. How simpler things could've been.

You could've remained a child, for longer.

You could've lived your life, a little more.

You could've done so much more, you're a little warrior.

My father and I didn't get to talk about many things. However, I do have the opportunity to discuss them with others and to write about them. When I know that people are listening, seeing, and knowing me, I remember how much my father and I belonged to each other. I can depend on that as I depend on the rhythms of the natural world. When my mother, sister, and all those who are grieving my dad in their own particular way feel pulled toward despair, I can tell them what he would say: Don't waste your life on unnecessary things, try to embrace your problems and solve them. Indeed, you're born to conquer this world.

**By Faizan Hossaini**

**Photo courtesy: Faizan Hossaini**

## LIFE AS IT IS

### WARA KARIM

Writer, painter, gardener, content creator  
Website: <http://www.scratchingout.com>



# Daydreaming about holidays

If you are like me, someone who jumps at the idea of exploring a new place, but have not travelled in the last one year, you will understand my plight. On some days, I so want to catch a flight and visit another state or country, inhale the air of a new place, and try a new cuisine.

A year without a 'vacay' has not been easy, but when endless hardship and suffering stemming from a pandemic continue to affect so many millions every day, planning a holiday is not a priority. However, on lazy afternoons, I daydream about happy times of the future when we can travel far and wide, when I will not have to wear a mask or remind myself to practice social distancing in public places.

I have not been on an airplane in more than a year. While flying was something I never eagerly looked forward to, in these days, I wish to catch a plane and swoosh to a holiday destination. I have kind of forgotten what it is like to go through security checkpoints, answer an immigration police



officer's questions, walk fast through a big airport to reach the boarding gate, or to decide what to pack and what to wear on the journey.



The last time I breathed in that crisp, stress-relieving ocean breeze was in the summer of 2019. I think I will go to the beach when life becomes normal. I will close my eyes and inhale the salty air which magically calms my nerves. I will relax under a beach umbrella, sip a cool drink, and hear waves crashing on to the shore, one wave after another, without a pause, relentlessly.

I might even decide to spend an evening on the beach and watch a comma of a moon hanging from the indigo sky. A smattering of stars dancing around it!

Perhaps, I will choose a bustling city as my first holiday destination in more than a year. When good days return, the empty



streets of megalopolises will once again be cacophonous, like the good old days. The sounds of siren, honking, construction, commuters talking on the phone, tourists chattering, cyclists whizzing by, street performers singing, birds chirping everything together will re-create the urban ensemble big cities were always known for. The eerily empty streets of once-buzzing American metropolises now sing songs of loneliness; heartache reverberates through the cities' steel and glass structures.

Or should I visit a mountain range? Three nights in a tranquil mountain town far from the madding crowd will be absolutely refreshing. From atop a mountain, I will feel

closer to the heaven. I will gaze at the distant horizon and realise all over again that in this infinite universe, I am no more significant than a grain of sand. The bewildering realisation will leave me with a sense of humility. Standing on the mountain, I will appreciate the idea of life and how much it is worth living.

If I am alive to live such a happy day, I will tell myself, "I could have perished in the pandemic, like so many millions perished, but I had not. I could have lost so much, but I had not. Therefore, my Creator, please make me humble."

**Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad**

#PERSPECTIVE

# “The Velveteen Rabbit” — On love, loss and life

In a nutshell, “The Velveteen Rabbit” is the story of a stuffed rabbit made of velveteen who, through the love of a boy, become real in the end of the story.

When I first read Margery Williams’ “The Velveteen Rabbit” as a child of seven years, I found within myself having a certain kind of empathy for the boy because just like the boy in the movie I had a stuffed animal I truly loved — a blue bear named Snowy, and just like the boy had to part with the rabbit in his early days I had to part with Snowy for Jet Blue Airline had misplaced it in the Christmas rush.

Another reason I truly love “The Velveteen Rabbit” was because just like the rabbit had become real and returned to the boy, it gave me faith that Snowy would one day return to me too, in another form.

Six years later, when I was 13, I realised that coming across a blur polar bear in the middle of Dhaka City was quite impossible; and even if it were possible, I would not want a blue bear to be here, for without doubt the heat would make it ill even in the coldest of Dhaka weathers. Therefore, with this new found loss and along with the



despair of partially losing my childhood I opened “The Velveteen Rabbit” again.

To my surprise, this time I found myself empathising with the Rabbit this time. How badly he wanted to be real and longed for unconditional love from which he was denied time after time!

The ripe teenage wisdom of my heart deduced that although the rabbit was real: as in it existed and had feelings, it was not Real as the horse had described “Real” to be, meaning the rabbit was unable to express her true emotions and feelings just like myself.

#### According to the story:

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real!”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept.

Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

#### Margery Williams Bianco, The Velveteen Rabbit

The little page struck a blow over my little heart and I knew that just like the rabbit, all I wanted was to be Real. However, along with that realisation came a bitter truth: to be real I must be loved unconditionally. Another page that truly had an effect on me at the time was the page where all the real garden rabbits bullied the rabbit for not being able to jump and dance, for she had no hind legs. The rabbit also got ignored and teased because she was a stuffed rabbit, she was nothing fancy as the other toys. However, the rabbit learned to ignore the haters and value his true friends: the boy and the Skin Horse; and through the rabbit I learned the same.

Therefore, I was a teenager ignoring almost my entire world (for I thought them to be haters) and valuing only the fictional characters in my books; waiting for someone to love me unconditionally so I could become real. Almost too soon, I grew up. This time actually grew up. (At least that’s what I think.) I am 18 years now and on my 18th birthday I reread “The Velveteen Rabbit” while preparing some class material for my student who was struggling in English.

By this time, my younger consusness had probably thought that I would not only see a blue polar bear in Dhaka City but I would also find the boy who would love me unconditionally and make Snowy and I real. Let us first wrap our heads around the fact that none of that, NONE OF THAT happened.

Having past denial, I looked at my student and realised that he too must be empathising with the rabbit; dying to

become real through love and once again I found myself intertwined with the boy with a long red string of fate. I came to the realisation that all of us, everyone in this world is the Rabbit: waiting to be loved so they can become Real but only few of us are the boy who has the audacity to love someone or something regardless of all the flaws they may have. All of us are willing to become the Rabbit who needs love but few of us are willing to be faded and torn down by it, as the rabbit was slowly worn out by the boy’s kisses and hugs.

The classic moral of the story to this day stands: To become one’s true self one must



be loved unconditionally. (But one must also be willing to love unconditionally.)

Having gone through this 11-year roller coaster ride and a five second epiphany, I looked at my student and asked: “Do you see yourself as the boy or the Rabbit?”

“The Skin Horse, Miss.” My student replied.

By Disha Tananze Ekram  
Photo: Collected



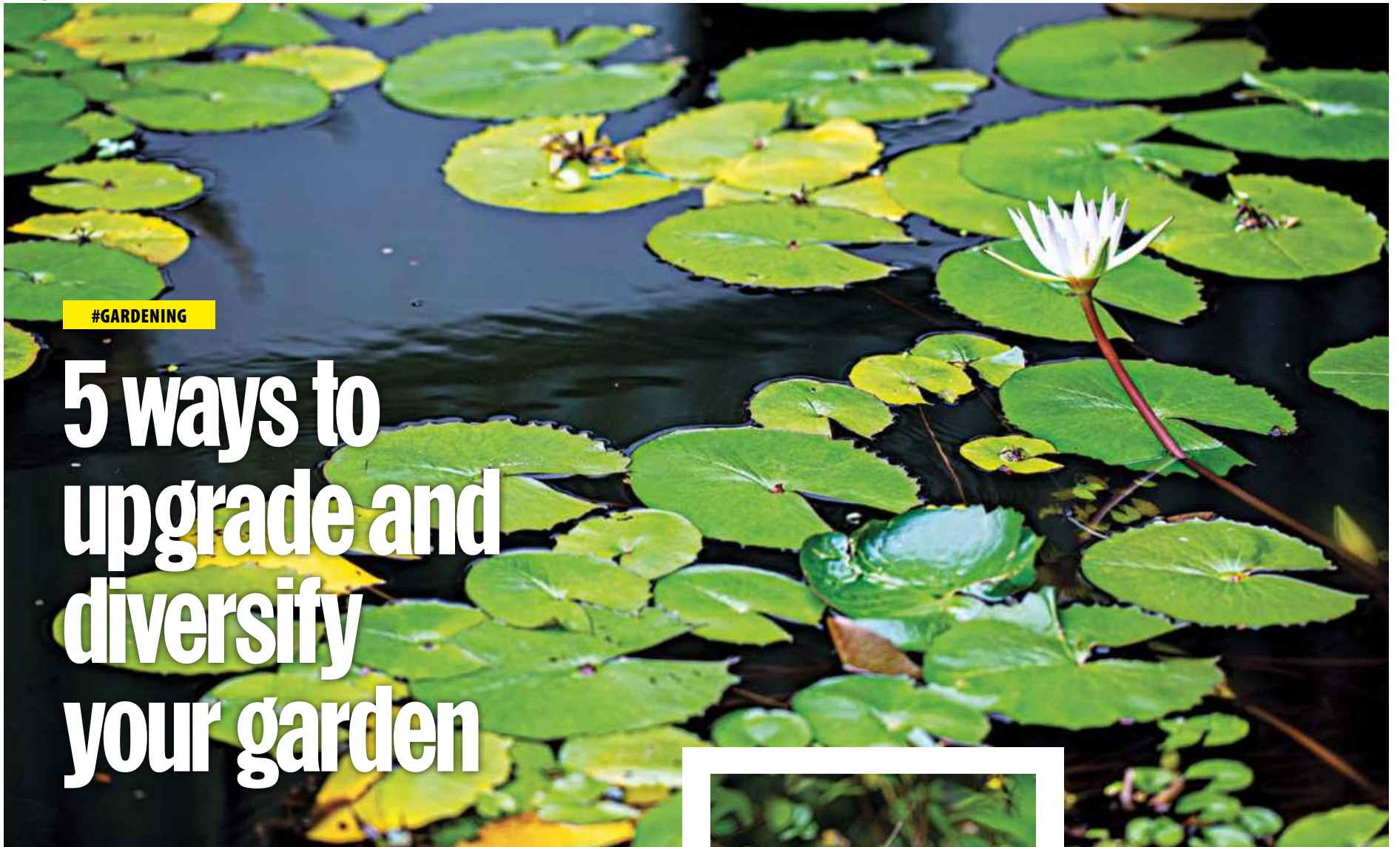
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KOHINOOR CHEMICAL



#GARDENING

# 5 ways to upgrade and diversify your garden

Even with the grass manicured and the edges lined with shrubbery, your garden may feel bleak. Planning out an upgrade can be perplexing, but even simple additions can make a noticeable difference until you are ready to embark on more complex outdoor projects.

Here are five stress free ways to spruce up your garden.

## Adorn with vibrant foliage

Ornamental foliage plants can bring in just as much colour to your garden as flowering annuals. Coleuses, triostars and fittonias help add striking combinations of pinks, greens, and white. For those who prefer warmer tones, crotons are the ideal go-to. You can also opt for foliage plants such as calatheas which boast interesting patterns if vibrant borders feel too intense for you. Calatheas possess eye catching vein patterns which resemble paintings.

## Let climbers in

Supplementing blooming shrubs with flowering climbers will add a fairylike essence to your garden. Rustic garden arches, trellis screens and obelisk towers are some of the many charming structures which you can support flowering climbers with. Flower bearing vines which are suitable for the Bangladeshi climate include purple wreaths, trumpet vines, glory lilies, coral vines and morning glories. Substituting flowering shrubs with creepers can also help free up space in your garden, allowing it to appear less confined.

## Everyday festivity

Flood lights and fluorescent spike lights have a tendency to mar the ambience of gardens even though they are efficient for security purposes. Adding supplemental decorative lights can be aesthetically transformative if the night time ambience of your garden feels dull. To blend in a burst of festivity, experiment with miniature lanterns and warm festoon lights. If you want something more minimal and modern, anthracite wall lights are a good option.

## Birds, bees, and biodiversity

The absence of birds, bees, and tiny critters, along with the animation they bring may



lead to a garden feeling barren, regardless of how healthy the greenery may be. To make your garden more inviting to these species, levelling up the diversity of native plants can go a long way as it helps create a natural ecosystem.

Flowering plants and fruit bearing ferns can provide birds with some of the essentials for their dietary needs. Expanding the diversity of plants also attracts the

insects which birds love to feast on. Adding vines and bushy shrubs will help you forge temporary rest stops for visiting birds by creating protective covers. When birds find your garden accommodating, it will not be long till they make themselves at home. Adding bird baths and feeders are also a sure-fire way to attract birds and liven up your garden.

## Drape your garden with serenity

Tranquillity and what it entails is different for everyone. It is important to tap into what makes you feel serene when you upgrade your garden. For some, it might be visual stimuli such as the flow of water within miniature fountains or the sight of bamboos with their inherently calming aura.

Your definition of calm may also be a



purely physical experience, equated with bodily comfort. If that is the case for you, try ensuring that your garden accommodates this. Whether it is with hammock seats or rattan day beds, there are numerous ways to tweak your garden to make it perfect for unwinding after stressful days.



**By Tasfia Ahmed**  
**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed**  
**Location: Brac Nursery**

