



PHOTOS: MASTERCHEF AUSTRALIA

KISHWAR CHOWDHURY'S journey in MasterChef Australia

A love letter to Bangladesh

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

Kishwar Chowdhury is the first Bangladeshi-Australian to secure the third place in the internationally renowned show MasterChef Australia. Throughout her journey, she stunned the judges, participants, and viewers by introducing different recipes and innovative dishes inspired by her Bangladeshi roots.



Smoked Rice Water with Aloo Bharta

Kishwar may not have won the title, but she certainly won the hearts of millions across the world. In most foreign countries, Bangladeshi food is often associated with Indian food, drowning out Bangladesh's own flavours

with flavours and spices in her own home for years. Though Kishwar herself was not raised in Bangladesh, she represents the millions of Bangladeshi stay-at-home mothers, whose culinary brilliance is more often than not, taken



Winter Melon and Prawn Soup, Sardine Curry, and Jau Bhaat

and recipes. On a global platform, Kishwar presented Bangladeshi cuisine in its simplest and most authentic form, courageously.

Born and raised in Australia, the mother of two had been experimenting

for granted. Kishwar's journey showcased a re-introduction of Bangladesh through food.

Her inspiring story proved the power of Bangladeshi cuisine, cementing the capability of our mothers, sisters, and



Kishwar's dessert inspired by Mishti Paan.

grandmothers' home-cooked food.

Kishwar cooked traditional Bangladeshi dishes like 'Lau Chingri', 'Jau Bhaat', 'Niramish', 'Mach Bhaja' and 'Mutton Rezala'.

It was emotional for any Bangladeshi to see the simple food that we eat at home, make its way into the MasterChef kitchen. When Kishwar presented the judges with her own version of a dessert inspired by 'Mishti Paan', one of the judges termed it as Kishwar's 'love letter to Bangladesh'. In a bold move, Kishwar presented 'Panta Bhaat' and 'Aloo Bharta', arguably the most iconic Bangladeshi food, as her finale dish in the competition.

One hopes that inspired by Kishwar's journey, Bangladeshi-owned restaurants across the globe will now be proud to serve solely Bangladeshi cuisine, and our hardworking home cooks and small restaurant owners serving simple food will be proud of their dishes, which are filled with love and warmth.

"We are stepping into a new era of digital content"

NAZIA HAQUE ORSHA

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Popular television actor Nazia Haque Orsha first came into prominence with Lux Channel i Superstar. Since then, she has been consistently putting out remarkable performances on television. The talented artiste is currently busy with several productions. On a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, the actor shares her recent plans and more.

You are set to appear in Chorki original film "Networker Baire". Can you tell us a bit about it?

We worked on this production from November last year. This film is about friendship, exploring the bonds of friendship in past and present times. The film will tell us a story about four friends and it is a fantastic story. The film has every element of entertainment, directed by Mizanur Rahman Aryan, the film will present the audience with a fresh new perspective.

How was your experience working with director Mizanur Rahman Aryan?

I worked with Mizanur Rahman Aryan on his directorial debut, "Ami Tumi She". I acted alongside Arifin Shuvoo and Ishana in that production. Back then, he was a novice director but now he's an expert director who understands what the audience expects.

Aryan has a different style of storytelling, which is captivating. He knows what kind of stories the audience wants, the kind of story they expect to see on the big screen.

OTT platforms are gaining a lot of popularity these days, how do you see this change?

This is definitely a positive aspect of the entertainment industry. Media is an ever-changing form of entertainment, we've seen so many changes in the last few years. Now the online platform is presenting a new opportunity to broadcast different types of stories.

The web is a powerful medium and it has a different language to it. The viewing platform has also changed drastically, as the audience can watch these contents anywhere, anytime. The directors can maintain a sense of individuality while working on digital content. We are stepping into a new era of digital content. So far, we are succeeding.

What are the Eid projects you are currently working on? Right now, I am working on an Eid project, shooting in Pubail. Directed by Golam Sohrab Dodul, I worked on an Eid special for Banglavisión, titled, "Mastermind". I also worked on a Shokal Ahmed directorial scheduled to air during the Eid holidays. I am busy with several other Eid projects at the moment as well.

What are your future aspirations regarding acting?

Acting is my passion, my place of love. I've received much appreciation and love from the audience because of acting, and it will remain my place of comfort and passion in the coming days.

I am trying my best to put out my best work. I expect to be involved in more quality content. I aspire to indulge myself in different versatile characters. I believe, with powerful acting, you can win the audience's hearts.



PHOTO: STAR

Shihab Shaheen gets candid about 'Morichika'

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Acclaimed director and screenwriter Shihab Shaheen's web series, "Morichika", featuring Afran Nisho, Siam Ahmed, and Mahiya Mahi among others, was released on Chorki recently. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, he spoke about how the series came to be, what his process of directing looks like, and more.



Shihab Shaheen



Afran Nisho, Siam Ahmed and Mahiya Mahi in 'Morichika'.

'Morichika' has a stellar cast. Can you tell us a bit about the casting process?

Casting Afran Nisho as Salaam Sharif Babu was unplanned, as I had no idea that he would be interested. I was fortunate enough to have a conversation with him, after which he agreed to take up the role instantly. However, I had to rework the character after Nisho was cast. Initially, Babu was meant to be loved, and then hated by the viewers. I changed the whole projection of Babu in such a way that people will hate him immensely, but will not be able to forget him. Siam is a well-established commercial actor. I wanted to break away from his screen image of the romantic hero. I gave him a challenge with the character Shakil, and I am pleased with his performance.

'Morichika' emphasises on prevalent socio-political issues. How did you plan to execute that to the viewers?

In the case of socio-political themes, I thoroughly presented both sides of the coin. On the one hand, there is Babu, a charming and flamboyant young political leader who strives upon power because it guarantees his freedom. On the other hand, Shakil is a simple police officer who is temperamental, but wants to ensure justice. Bonny, played by Mahiya Mahi, is a girl-next-door who is willing to work hard towards her ambitions. However, she fails to accept rejection gracefully, and that is how the story starts. I wanted to have a power balance in the series between the characters and the different sections of society. I aimed to explore the relationship between politics, economics, and social norms, and how they shape up the world of glamour.

You picked an array of shooting locations for this series. What did you have in mind while selecting them?

The sets always contribute to the plot. As the series is a drama with action, thrill, and romance, the locations had to radiate the essence of the story. Different colour schemes, backgrounds, and sceneries play important roles in establishing the mood for every scene. We shot at various locations in Dinajpur, Comilla, and other places under the advice of our location manager Malu Dewan.

What were some of the challenges you faced while shooting for 'Morichika'?

As we shot in multiple locations, the pandemic was a big setback. We had to finish shooting in just 21 days. While a day's shoot usually gives us six minutes of content, we had to double it up to 12 minutes of content as an outcome of every shoot on a daily basis.

How do you feel about the response to 'Morichika'?

The trailer of the series had created quite a hype. As it was Chorki's debut original series, we put a lot of thought into it. The messages and appreciation I received from my fans on social media and my colleagues via phone have been overwhelming. Now, I know that my efforts did not go in vain.

You have been in the industry for over 19 years, working on television and films. You recently ventured out to over-the-top (OTT) platforms. What are your expectations from Bangladeshi content on streaming platforms? I feel that OTT platforms offer a lot of new opportunities and scopes. They can be a breakthrough for upcoming filmmakers. With digital platforms, creators can have easy access to the Bangla-speaking audience around the world. I request viewers to support both promising and established filmmakers, as we explore more of the digital space.