

Pan Asian cuisine is taking Dhaka by storm

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These days, the popularity of traditional *biryani*, the all-time favourite fast-food joints, and Bangla-Chinese is closely followed by the growing craze around Pan-Asian cuisine. If you ever fantasise about sushi boats or are familiar with midnight kitchen-runs for instant ramen, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

In the last few years, the culinary realm of Pan-Asia, featuring cuisines from countries like Japan, China, Thailand, South Korea and more, has opened up to Dhaka's food enthusiasts, conquering hearts.

Rice and fish have long been staple foods in Bangladesh, but we have come a long way from our homely *bhaat-mach-bhorta*. The confluence of Asian food cultures has changed the way many of us eat. Japanese restaurants and sushi bars are now the go-to places for both hangouts and fine dining. Be it deftly wrapped colourful sushi rolls with soy and wasabi, or freshly cooked seafood bentos topped with sesame dressing, we seem to have acquired a taste for uniqueness in our platters.

In addition to embracing sushi, we have now mastered the use of chopsticks. Long gone are our days of fumbling with those wooden sticks while attempting to snag a slick piece of sushi or dumplings. Globalisation has indeed exposed everyone to

these practices a long time ago, but for a person like myself who has not travelled around the world so much, these small victories add to the fun of indulging in new food.

We cannot deny

indulging in them on screen, I would be lying if I said I didn't feel like running to the kitchen to cook myself some kimchi and ramen. Even if it takes us hours to find these rare ingredients or master the cooking



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

the influence of pop culture on our adoration of Pan Asian cuisine whether it is through Mukbang ASMRs, Ghibli animations, or Asian films and TV shows. When I see K-Drama characters preparing these irresistible and delicious looking foods with ease or

methods, we are tempted to at least try and replicate them.

Popular restaurants like Kiyoshi and Yum Cha District have led the way in introducing us to the fusion of Pan Asian cuisine when it comes to the more high-end dining experience, although initially

Tokyo Express and Umai popularised it about 8 years ago. These eateries not only provide a variety in the menus (Cantonese, Chinese, Thai, Japanese, etc), they also deliver their food in an aesthetically pleasing manner that adds to the experience. While it's debatable if the level of authenticity offered in these restaurants mirrors that of the parent countries, these restaurants have indeed played a significant role in revolutionising the way we view Pan-Asian cuisine.

The glories of Pan Asian cuisine have also taken over our street food and evening snacks. Momo carts have taken up a large chunk of street food real estate around the city. Momos aren't the only economical pan-Asian food being offered; dim sum, nanbans, and ramen bowls are also becoming more and more common in and outside households.

Pan Asian cuisine has infiltrated our culture, and we can't get enough of it, whether for a lavish night out or a hearty home-cooked meal. At the same time, we must not forget to take pleasure in the culinary diversity that already exists throughout Bangladesh, ours equally being one of the most diverse cuisines in Asia.

Spill the tea with Joyeeta on [instagram.com/nahianjamaljoyeeta](https://www.instagram.com/nahianjamaljoyeeta)

The evolution of cooking shows

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Cooking shows have been around for almost a century now. Their ever-changing nature has helped the genre evolve and expand over multiple mediums to stand the test of time.

At first, cooking shows were broadcast on radios and focused on helping homemakers with recipes rather than for entertainment purposes. It was 1946 when cooking shows made their transition to televisions. According to the Guinness World Records, British chef Philip Harben's *Cookery* was the first show to be broadcast on television. This was closely followed by the first American cooking show, *I Love to Eat*. Shows like these, with well-known chefs, were focused primarily on teaching how to cook certain dishes. Among these was also Julia Child's *The French Chef*, famously known for showing mistakes one might make in the kitchen.

The transition of cooking shows from being educational to a form of entertainment happened quickly throughout the late 20th century. As television became a more accessible commodity, shows became more concerned with their entertainment value and marketing. Simple demonstrations of cooking became outdated, and the hybrid of cooking and reality shows became the standard. These new shows often took the form of



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

cooking competitions, such as *MasterChef*, a show that is still relevant and running in different parts of the world.

With the widespread access to social media platforms across the globe, content related to cooking of all sorts has become a part of pop culture. With platforms like YouTube or TikTok, now you don't even have to be a chef to create your cooking-related content. This fact played out in a rather positive way during the 2020 pandemic. People confined within their homes turned to cooking and social media – often combining the two – and

created content. These online contents ranged from commentary, Mukbangs, or even visual ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) content.

Food content now serves a variety of purposes. From instructional videos to people channelling their inner cooks, food content now brings people of all cultures together to share the simple pleasure they derive from consuming cooking content.

Speaking of ASMR, neither cooking nor eating rather, just watching food videos trigger a sense of pleasure in people.

Content creators often go a step ahead in making their own studios at home, giving an aesthetically pleasing ambience to their videos, with wholesome settings or cute utensils. Surrounding noises and a lack of voiceover are a speciality in creating this ambience. Certain channels go beyond their home or studio setting and create a whole setup in an outdoor place, giving their videos a very rustic feel.

As it often happens online, every platform and each piece of content is ever-evolving and caters to the taste of the consumers. Following this pattern, even food content has adapted and evolved to match the trends.

What started with an early period of focusing mainly on instructional videos to help homemakers with their cooking has quickly transitioned and focused itself on entertainment with the widespread access to televisions. From there it was not long before the age of the internet and cooking videos adapted themselves to online content. One thing that remains constant is people's connection with food thus making this genre of shows or videos everlasting.

Watching cooking videos takes up a lot of Rudaiba's time. Send time management advice at rudaiba.rhymee@gmail.com