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Bejewelled

EVERYONE'S UNSUNG HERO
MAKE BLACK SHOES GREAT AGAIN P4
BACK IN BLACK
THE LITTLE BLACK DRESS P5
TREAT YOUR BODY RIGHT
JEWELLERY FIT FOR ROYALTY C
PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED
MODEL: SURJO
JEWELLERY: 6 YARDS STORY
STYLING: SONIA YEASMIN ISHA
MUA: SUMON RAHAT



পোলার
বোবাস্তা
সল্টেড
ক্যারামেল
রিফিন চকোলেট
স্যারভিস

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RICHER & CREAMIER

পোলার
বোবাস্তা
SALTED CARAMEL
POLAR BISCUITS

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SALTED CARAMEL
POLAR BISCUITS

Should men always pay the bill on dates?

Ah, modern dating—a ritual so complex that even AI dares not spit out anything decisive for fear of cancellation. Here we are, in 21st-century, landing back on the moon and still stuck on the question: “Should men always pay the bill on dates?”

To those ardent defenders of chivalry, I say, “Hold my wallet!” Or better yet, “Hold your own wallet!” Swipe right for equality, swipe left for the bill!

We’ve all come far—sliding into DMs, swiping right or left, ghosting, and whatnot. We’ve all but dumped Shakespearean romance in favour of relationship algorithms. Yet, when the bill comes, it’s as if the clock has struck midnight, and we’re back in a century where gender equality was a mere fairy-tale. Swipe right for gender equality, but swipe left when the bill comes? Oh, the irony! What happened to going Dutch?

For heaven’s sake, we’ve put rovers on Mars, and developed vaccines in record time, and yet, splitting the bill is the unsolvable equation. I mean, why isn’t going Dutch the default? If both parties are earning, it’s only fair to share the financial “burden” of a latte and a shared platter of deep-fried regret. Issues or convenient issues?



Listen, if a man paying for your meals is the sole criteria for dating, it might be time to switch from Tinder to some estate-planning websites. There’s nothing against age-gap love, but let’s not make “must pay for my Caesar salad” a relationship cornerstone. Welcome to the 50/50 zone

As someone who’s prone to procrastination and binge-watching conspiracy documentaries, even I see the logic in 50/50. We’re already splitting Wi-Fi costs with roommates, sharing rides with strangers, and sharing Netflix accounts like modern communes. Why not extend that communal spirit to dating bills? But, but, it’s the thought that counts

Fine, I hear you! You say it’s not about the money, but the gesture, the thoughtfulness, the “tradition.” Well, tradition also involves various outdated concepts that need no attention. So, if tradition dictates dating norms, why not break tradition by letting women pick up the tab? A moment of enlightenment for gender roles, if you ask me. Sensical conclusion

Like a subpar rom-com with a predictable ending, I’ll say this: The person who initiates the date should be prepared to foot the bill, regardless of gender. And if the date evolves into grabbing a moonlit ice-cream or hopping to another spot, let the other person cover that. Fair is fair;

love is love.

So, if you’re still insistent that men should always pay, kindly hop in your time machine, and set the dial to the Moghul era. You’ll find plenty of like-minded folks there, along with the absence of indoor plumbing. Choose wisely.

It’s 2023, people. Let’s put on our big human pants and step into a world where gender equality isn’t just a hashtag, but a way of life. When that bill comes, look your date in the eye, and say with unabashed sincerity, “Let’s get fiscal!”

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Collected

KOHINOOR CHEMICAL

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#PRESS RELEASES



Empowering content creators: Daraz ushers in a new era of influencer impact

In a dazzling display of the modern digital landscape's ever-expanding influence, Daraz Bangladesh, the country's largest online marketplace, joined hands with The Daily Star to orchestrate a flagship event that has sent ripples of excitement across the creator community.

The Event

The inaugural chapter of Daraz Influencer Connect, a full-day congregation of aspiring and established influencers, witnessed an overwhelming response that underscores the growing impact of digital content creators in shaping contemporary consumer trends.

From the very inception, anticipation

had been building as registrations poured in following Daraz's social media announcement in June. The event, held on 4 August at the Aloki Convention Center, Tejgaon, unfolded with an intense energy. The speakers Amin Hannan, Rafsan Sabab, Thoughts of Shams, Rakin Absar, RJ Zibraan and Bushra Kabir shared their take on aspects like content starting from authenticity, making a mark as a presenter, polishing editing skills to getting to work with brands.

Sharing of Experiences

The exchange of ideas wasn't confined to the stage; attendees, including some of the country's most popular social media content creators, engaged with each other, sharing experiences and knowledge that further enriched the event's tapestry.

Talat Rahim, Chief Marketing Officer of Daraz Bangladesh emphasized on how Daraz is enabling the youth to make their own identity through content creation.

Tajdin Hasan, Chief Business Officer of the Daily Star echoed with this and expressed how media is always there to help these young talents prosper.

Commitment to content creator growth

At the heart of the event was the mission to empower participants with the skills and insights necessary for building successful freelance careers through the creation of outstanding content.



Anisa Murshed, Head of Offline Marketing at Daraz, shared the life journey of an influencer from inception to brand ambassadorship. The platform not only equipped influencers with essential tools and knowledge to monetise their creations effectively, but also opened doors for potential collaborations with brands down the road.

Daraz's commitment to nurturing content creators has been an ongoing endeavour. Irrespective of follower counts, they have been championing aspiring influencers, offering them a unique opportunity to flourish in the digital landscape.

Focus on Affiliate Marketing

Complementing this initiative, the Daraz Affiliate Program has paved the way for

freelancers to earn enhanced commissions by promoting and selling products from the comfort of their homes. This pioneering affiliate program, the first of its kind in South Asia, bestows affiliates with commissions of up to 18 per cent, solidifying Daraz's dedication to facilitating content creators' income-generating potential.

Numerous Earning Options

In keeping with the digital age's pulse, Daraz also extends platforms like livestreaming, where sellers and influencers can go live on the Daraz app, connecting with thousands of viewers in real-time, sharing product details and campaigns that can be instantly availed.

Foreword to the Future

The resounding success of the inaugural Daraz Influencer Connect in collaboration with The Daily Star serves as a testament to the collective creative prowess of minds big and small, and it has unfurled the curtains on a new era of influencer empowerment. The echoes of this event are certain to reverberate throughout the digital realm, inspiring countless aspirants to traverse the path of content creation.

With lofty aspirations, Daraz is determined to further amplify this platform in the future, solidifying its role as a transformative force in the world of digital creativity.

#FASHION & BEAUTY

The quintessential BLACK SHOE

We've all heard of the "little black dress (LBD)"— the one thing you know will work each time, when nothing else will. It's time to make space for another unsung hero of your wardrobe that's just as versatile, but unfortunately a lot more underrated — the black shoe.

Shoes have evolved from protecting our feet to reflecting and expressing our personal style. While everything from red

options that both men and women can reach for, without hesitation or much deliberation.

The loyal black shoe takes on a different sheen on formal outfits and office wear. Coming in a variety of styles such as loafers, oxfords, to heels and boots, black is an inclusive colour that caters to a large number of tastes, conservative or flamboyant. Educator Amna Aslam says, "Black shoes are a statement piece in any person's wardrobe, regardless of their gender. In today's day and age, every person should own a comfortable pair of black shoes that can carry them through the day in a stylish way."

Not only is the black shoe an indispensable part of the everyday life of a regular office-goer or university student, it is also the go-to option for stage performers. Think of the famous black loafers Michael Jackson moonwalked in. Or Elvis Presley's iconic black boots. Or even rock 'n roll queen Tina Turner's daring, black peep-toe heels. The examples are endless.

The main vocalist of the up-and-coming Bangladeshi band, Tulkalam, Danny says, "Being a performer, a storyteller, and someone who must exude passion with every move, I have to step out of my comfort zone so many times on stage. The black shoe feels like home. It's low



maintenance, and the aesthetics are great, every time."

This article is by no means the first one to talk about the importance of timeless, classic fashion, and neither will it be the last. However understated the accessory may be, it is time to acknowledge the contributions of sable-toned footwear in the world of fashion. As any fashion expert or enthusiast will tell you, it's time for the LBD to move over, and make space for the penultimate underrated knight of fashion — the black shoe.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected



pumps to nude clunks have had their day in the sun, the understated appeal of the classic black shoe is undeniable.

Unlike other fads, the black shoe is universal in its versatility and can complement almost any outfit, its neutral tone blending in seamlessly with virtually any colour palette. Different from the more vibrant options, black shoes act as grounding elements, letting other colours in the outfit take centre stage. Adding noir to your shoe collection largely minimises the need for new purchases because a ready option is almost always available.

Black shoes transcend seasons, working equally well with summer, fall, and winter trends. Be it a peep-toe in sunny weather, pumps or loafers in the autumn or boots in the colder months, sable toned shoes are timelessly elegant



THE LITTLE BLACK DRESS AND ITS HYPNOTIC BLACK MAGIC

Is there another outfit as versatile, or as iconic as the little black dress? A wardrobe staple in every woman's wardrobe, 'la petite robe noire' as the French lovingly call it, is an absolute essential. While this dress was fashioned by the great Coco Chanel, Audrey Hepburn brought it to the limelight with her unforgettable portrayal of New York socialite Holly Golightly, decked out in a simple yet stunning black Givenchy sheath in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Such was the impact of this dress that even after six decades, it is still regarded as one of the most glamorous dresses ever worn in a film. It sparked a sartorial revolution that has carried on till today. The most stylish women in the world have always utilised the power of a black

dress to their advantage.

The fact that there is no limit to the ways a black dress can be styled is a fact universally acknowledged. The right one will take you from work to a night out in town effortlessly. History has proved time and again that with the right black dress, one can conquer the world! A true wardrobe staple if there ever was one, every woman needs this item in her closet. The classic silhouette is a sheath, preferably in a figure-hugging material such as crêpe de chine, chiffon, georgette, or silk. There are endless possibilities with this dress. A sleeveless version is chic and sophisticated, a la Hepburn, exuding timeless charm and sophistication. Throw in a pearl necklace, a pair of heels and voila! Even though this look is reminiscent of 60's style, it's more relevant than ever now considering Gen Z's obsession with an elegant, old-money aesthetic. A slinky black dress with a pleated skirt will be the perfect choice for drinks and dinner with friends. Another style is the wrap dress, which is as versatile as it gets. This version will be the best investment one can make for her wardrobe. During the day, wear it with a statement tan belt, which will give you a cinched waist and enviable curves, and throw in some leather wedges for work. Then dress it at night with some diamond danglers, swap the accessories with a pair of sparkling stilettos and a bejewelled clutch, and there you have it! The world is at your feet in this stunning outfit!

A long black dress in flowing fabrics such as georgette, heavy crêpe or chiffon is reminiscent of screen sirens of yesteryears, exuding feminine mystique and glamour. Think Rita Hayworth or Lauren Bacall, classy and fabulous in their chic, slinky dresses looking like a million bucks! The ultimatum style statement a long black dress is a dream come true for modest fashionistas. With the right accessories, this dress will make you the belle of the ball at every party! Add some flair with gold accents like a stunning pair of statement earrings and a gold cuff and there you have it!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Model: Surjo
Jewellery: 6 Yards Story
Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
MUA: Sumon Rahat



Since the beginning of time, the human body has captivated and intrigued mankind. It has been a continuous source of exploration, discovery, innovation, and inspiration.

Our bodies are our lifelong home; in it, we live from the moment we are born till we die. It grows with us, keeps us safe and sound from the elements, and ages with us as life goes on. Hence, our obsession to adorn it, celebrate it is deeply rooted in our psyche.

All the allure

BODY JEWELLERY



Jewellery for the body is perhaps our most ostentatious, obvious way of showing our love and gratitude towards our bodies! A slinky chain around the waist, an armband on the upper arm aren't modern style statements, but have been worn by men and women since ancient times.

In fact, experts believe that jewellery has been used to adorn bodies for over 5,000 years. Earliest recorded data indicates that body piercing with the intent to wear jewellery has been found on mummies of Egypt, and various other cultures, namely South America, and India among the most prominent. These piercings represented one's tribal allegiance and acted as identification.

Fast forward to modern times, body jewellery has been more popular than ever right now. They were all the rage during the late 90's and early 2000's when belly chains, pierced navels and multiple ear piercings were sported proudly by celebrities, in turn, influencing street style tremendously. Prior to the advent of social media, when television and magazines were the bearers of fashionable tidings, teenagers would copy their favourite celebrities such as Christina Aguilera, who proudly sported 12 piercings during the height of her fame! During that era, when audaciously low-rise jeans and crop tops ruled the runways and streets, belly chains, and body harnesses were the hottest jewelleryes to wear!

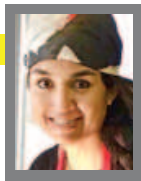
While Aguilera's daring versions may not be everyone's first choice, modern versions of body jewellery are stylish, sleek and elegant. Think of a wispy cuff connected to a ring with a chain bejewelled with small rhinestones. Simple yet stunning, it will have your wrists glinting ever so delightfully. Or a belly chain with small bells worn on the waist over your chiffon sari. Sensual yet subtle, it can be a real treat to your confidence! A cape fashioned out of rice pearl strings will look absolutely stunning on a simple black dress or a cocktail sari even, making you the star of the party. If you are unsure how to style that backless dress hanging in your closet for ages, turn a long chain on its heels and let it hang on the back and voila! It will turn heads and how!

Armlets are another fabulous jewellery that adorns one's body in the best possible way. Sexy yet chic, an armlet with chains, pearls or stones dangling will look fantastic. Cuffs with delicate finger harness are beautiful and show your hands off. Another option is the waist chain. Rows of chains embellished with sparkling stones hug your curves seductively, making you look irresistible! It can be worn on its own or over a low-rise skirt or sari. So, go on, embrace your inner diva and beautify your body with body jewellery!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Model: Surjo
Jewellery: 6 Yards Story
Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
MUA: Sumon Rahat

GREEN CROSSROADS**FAIZA AHMED**

is an artist, sustainable fashion activist, owner of Manas, owner, food visionary and vegan chef at Shanchayita.



MAKING DELICIOUS VEGAN COCONUT DUMPLINGS

Narkel Puli or Narikel Puri is a very popular Bangladeshi pitha made of rice flour, coconut, and date molasses. To add that extra essence for vegan tastebuds, I use crushed cashew, pinch of black cumin and walnut.

Vegan Narikel Puli (Deep Fried Coconut Dumpling)

Ingredients

1 cup date jaggery (gur)
1 cup water
1 cup coconut, unsweetened
1 tbsp oil
1 cup rice flour
1½ cup water
1 tsp salt
2 tsp cashew dust
1 tsp crushed walnut
Pinch of black cumin
Oil for deep frying

Method

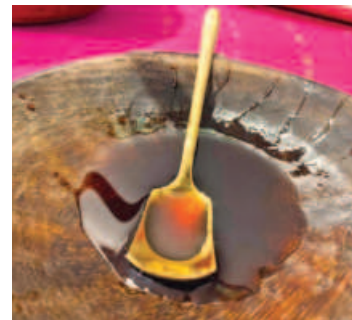
For coconut filling —

Boil water and add the gur. As gur melts, add coconut to the pan. Cook, stirring often, until the mixture is semi sticky but not runny. Add cashew, walnut and black cumin.

For pitha dough —

Boil water. Add salt and oil. Add rice flour to boiling water and keep stirring with a wooden spoon to form a firm but soft and not sticky dough. Adjust flour accordingly. Knead well for about 3-4 minutes. Take a portion of the dough and roll it out as a thick tortilla, about a quarter of an inch thick. Cut out circles with a cookie cutter.

Place a small amount of coconut filling on each circle. Repeat the process with the remaining dough. Brush the edges with water and seal tightly to form a crescent



(semi-circular) shape.

Heat oil. Fry the narikel puli pitha in medium heat until the dough is cooked through and slightly golden. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Prep time: 40 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Total time: 60 minutes

Serving: 10-12 people

Notes: Adjust water and flour for the dough depending on the quality of flour.

Cooking time will vary depending on the thinness of the dumpling skin. If the dough is thin, the narikel puli should cook very quickly but will take longer if the skin is thick.

You can serve extra liquid molasses as a dip if the pitha is less sweet!

Photo: Faiza Ahmed



#FOOD & RECIPES

TOFU IS GREAT, OKAY!

In the age of home delivery and late-night orders, one often gets detached when it comes to trying something new, something out of one's comfort zone. Since our favourite topic happens to be food (rich food), how to devour it, make it and enjoy it, why not come out of your comfort zone? Why not make something healthy on your own? Why not tofu? You do not have to be a vegan to enjoy tofu.

Before you start typing an angry email or jump into the comment section with your pitchfork stabbing against the soft, moist, and tender tofu, hear us out! It is not that bad; in fact, it can be delicious if prepared properly. Yes, we are sure that the thought has crossed your mind to have it in private, because who wants to be roasted by colleagues who only like rich food? Pay no heed to them!

Here is the easiest tofu recipe for lunch that will make your colleagues concede to the awesomeness of tofu!

Sweet and Sour Tofu

One of the all-time favourite comfort dishes in the tofu community is this sweet and sour tofu! The sweet and sour is absolutely wonderful, and the tofu

is crisp, with the ideal texture! It comes together quickly and works great for dinner preparation as well!

Ingredients

- For the crispy tofu —*
 500gm tofu block (firm), pressed and torn into 1 to 2-inch pieces
 1 tbsp soy sauce
 ½ tsp garlic powder
 ¼ tsp sea salt
 ¼ tsp ground black pepper
 1/3 cup corn-starch
 ¼ cup oil for frying
- For sweet and sour sauce —*
 ½ cup sugar (brown or granulated)
 ¼ cup ketchup
 ¼ cup vinegar (preferably rice or white)
 ¼ cup water
 1 tbsp soy sauce
 1 tsp garlic powder
 1 medium bell pepper, chopped
 ½ cup chopped/cubed

- pineapple
 ½ medium red onion, chopped
 ½ tbsp sesame seeds, for garnish
 Chopped spring onion for garnish

Method

- For crispy tofu —*
 Place the pieces of chopped and diced tofu in a medium-sized mixing dish. Toss in the soy sauce to coat. Toss in the garlic powder, sea salt, powdered black pepper, and cornflour to fully blend, making sure that all of the tofu pieces are coated in the seasonings and cornflour.
- Heat the oil in a pan or wok over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add the tofu and toss to crisp up on all sides for 5 to 8 minutes or until the tofu is cooked and



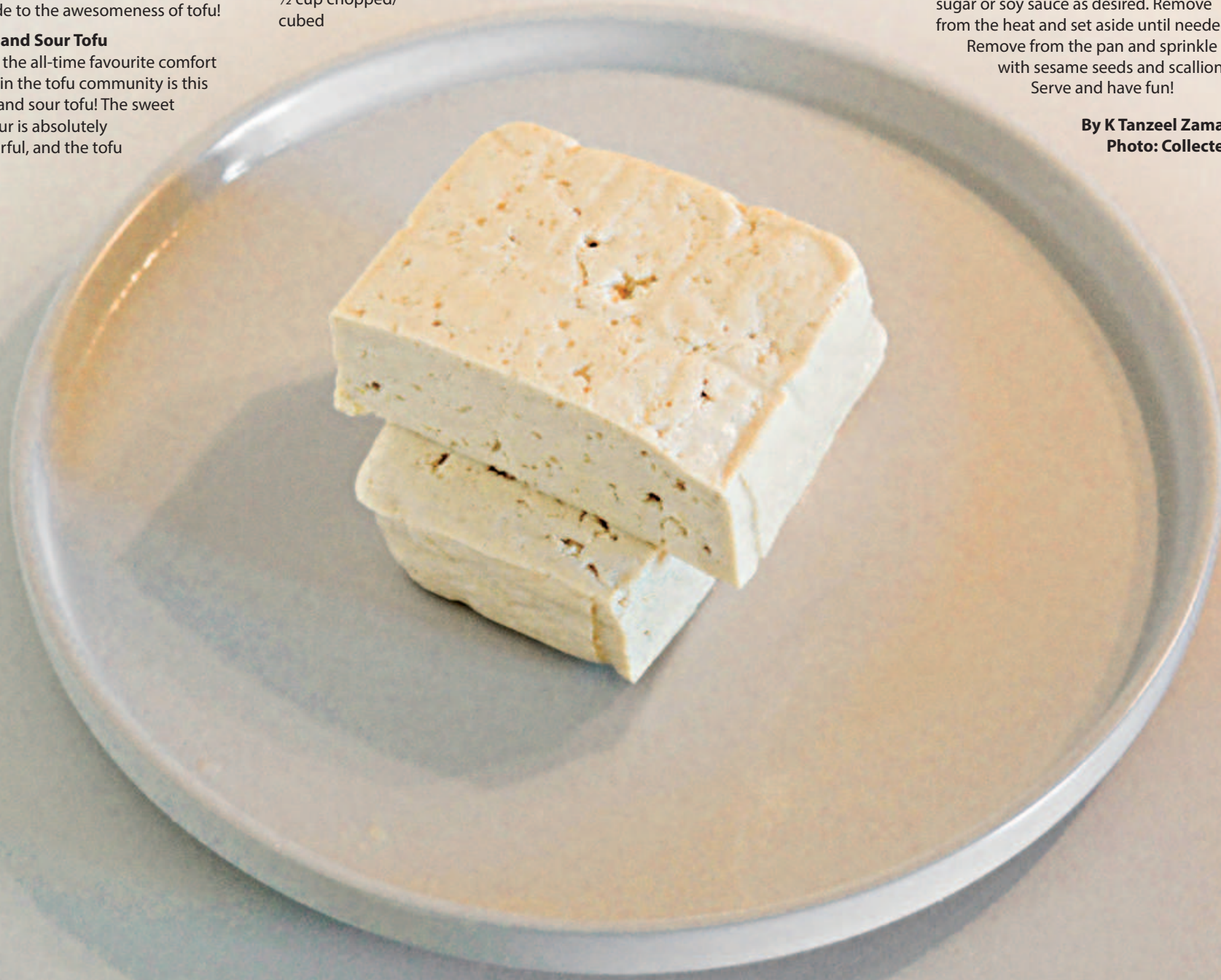
crisped on all sides. If desired, you can perform this in bunches. Remove the tofu and set it aside.

For sweet and sour sauce —

Reduce the heat to medium-high and add the onions, pineapples, and bell peppers to the same pan. Cook for 5 minutes or until the onions are transparent and the pineapples are slightly caramelised. Whisk together the sugar, ketchup, vinegar, water, soy sauce, and garlic powder for the sweet and sour sauce in a separate bowl until well blended. Pour the sauce over the vegetables. Bring to a gentle boil, then drop to low heat for 5 minutes or until the sauce has thickened. Return the crisped-up tofu to the pan and swirl to incorporate. Taste and adjust with extra sugar or soy sauce as desired. Remove from the heat and set aside until needed.

Remove from the pan and sprinkle with sesame seeds and scallions. Serve and have fun!

By **K Tanzeel Zaman**
 Photo: **Collected**



SUPERVOOC Flash Charge: Revolutionising smartphone charging

In an era where the smartphone market is fiercely competitive, one aspect has emerged as a defining factor in user experience: charging speed. Acknowledging this pivotal need, OPPO, a prominent player in the smartphone industry, has elevated the concept of rapid charging to a new dimension with its groundbreaking SUPERVOOC Flash Charge technologies.

Over the past fifteen years, smartphones have undergone remarkable advancements, yet the quest for efficient and swift charging has remained an ongoing challenge. Amidst the race for cutting-edge hardware specifications, the efficiency of the charging process often holds the key to user satisfaction. In a world where smartphones serve as indispensable tools for an array of tasks, a reliable battery life assumes paramount importance. Enter OPPO's SUPERVOOC Flash Charge technology, poised to redefine the charging experience by introducing unprecedented innovations that effectively alleviate users' charging anxieties.

In the ever-evolving landscape of smartphones, fast charging has emerged as a crucial feature in recent releases. However, the lack of a standardised definition for 'fast charging' has led to a proliferation of diverse charging standards on the market. The assumption that any generic fast charger will suffice for any device is fallacious, as optimal compatibility relies on selecting a fast charger tailor-made for a specific smartphone.

Smartphone manufacturers engage

in a constant battle of specifications, often termed the 'number game' by tech influencers. Metrics such as RAM, storage, megapixels, battery life, and charging efficiency all contribute to consumers' purchasing decisions. The question, "Will the battery last long enough?" has become a common concern among users today.

Amid this landscape, OPPO's SUPERVOOC technology has emerged as a game-changer. Conceived from a relentless pursuit of innovation, it



8T, OnePlus 9 Pro, and others have also embraced cutting-edge charging technologies that promise rapid power restoration. Each brand takes a distinct approach to optimizing the charging experience, focusing on minimizing heat, enhancing retention speed, and incorporating wireless facilities. Continuously pushing boundaries, OPPO showcased a 240-watt SUPERVOOC Flash Charge technology at the 2022 Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, setting a record-breaking industry speed by fully charging a battery in just nine minutes.

The advent of SUPERVOOC has heralded significant advancements in smartphone charging. OPPO's pioneering approach has positioned the company as a frontrunner in the fast-charging domain. Collaborating with over 23 companies, OPPO's ecosystem approach underscores its commitment to democratizing enhanced charging experiences. This inclusivity ensures that rapid and efficient charging is accessible to a wider audience.

A hallmark of SUPERVOOC technology is its ability to enable rapid charging without overheating, all while maintaining optimal device performance. Unlike some standards that limit charging power during device use, SUPERVOOC channels maximum power regardless of the device's operational state. This intelligent technology also incorporates multi-layered protection, safeguarding key components such as the adapter, charging cable, cellphone, and battery with intelligent chips. Furthermore, the power supply halts automatically upon reaching a full charge, preventing overcharging.

introduces an unprecedented level of speed and convenience to charging systems, effectively relegating charging anxiety to the past. But the pivotal question remains: how fast is it truly?

SUPERVOOC achieves its blazing charging speeds by employing a unique combination of high-voltage and low-current charging. This innovative approach necessitates proprietary adapters and cables. Through intelligent algorithms and high power levels, SUPERVOOC provides rapid charging without causing battery overheating. This distinctive approach makes it one of the fastest charging technologies available, capable of delivering up to 67 watts or other variations of charging power. Notably, using a non-OPPO cable with an OPPO adapter results in slower charging due to the company's emphasis on boosting charging current rather than voltage—a strategy that demands a thicker cable for optimal results, setting it apart from many other standards that prioritize voltage.

The term 'SUPERVOOC Flash Charge' encapsulates a range of charging speeds. For instance, the OPPO A78 smartphone boasts 67-watt SUPERVOOC ultra-fast flash charging technology. Whether after a long day of work or capturing numerous photos at a family event, the battery life depletion of this phone can be replenished from 0% to 43% in a mere 15 minutes of charging. A full 100% charge requires only 45.37 minutes.

Leading smartphone brands like Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra, OPPO Reno



#TRAVEL

5 most romantic cities around the world

Romantic tours usually stand apart from regular travel experiences due to their unique focus. While they encompass aspects of exploration and sightseeing, the focal point for couples on these journeys usually revolves around deepening their personal connection. Such intimate bonding flourishes best through shared activities, ones that resonate with both partners.

If your upcoming plan as a couple involves embarking on a journey to savour new culinary delights, indulge in shopping escapades, or simply wander through secluded ancient alleyways in each other's embrace, then consider these recommendations for the most enchanting cities worldwide to embark on this amorous expedition with your beloved partner.

Paris, France

With little surprise, the very first entry in our list of most romantic cities around the world is Paris. The reputation of this city as the City of Love is undeniably well-deserved. This iconic metropolis presents a distinctive fusion of unforgettable moments with its famous landmarks, charming cafés, and age-old cobblestone pathways.

The city's world-renowned museums, like the Louvre and Musée d'Orsay, offer splendid opportunities to delve into arts and culture as a couple and find a common ground among each other's interests. For the poetic allure of the city, a stroll hand in hand along the Seine River is recommended, as historical bridges and riverside bookstalls decorate your path. Couples may also opt for a serene boat tour, gliding along the Seine beneath the shimmering expanse of stars.

In addition, Parisian cuisine can be best described as a journey in itself. From the patisseries offering delicious pastries to intimate bistros with original French dishes, sharing a meal with your beloved anywhere in Paris can guarantee a romantic experience that is quite one of a kind.



Venice, Italy

There's something undeniably romantic about boat rides, and there is no better city than Venice to offer such an enchanting experience. Simply drifting along the stunning Gothic and Renaissance architecture aboard a gondola (a flat-bottomed traditional boat), the picturesque waterways of this city effortlessly foster an ambiance of romance.

Captivating is the sight of the colourful sun setting over the Grand Canal or the Rialto Bridge — a moment of pure romantic splendour made possible by the city's unique geographic layout, allowing for awe-inspiring vistas and perfect couple photo opportunities as the sun gracefully disappears beyond the horizon.

To get a more immersive cultural journey, setting your sights on a February visit is advisable to partake in the renowned Carnival of Venice, and amid your explorations, should your quest for the perfect souvenirs commence, please do remember to seek out the iconic Venetian masks, an embodiment of the city's unique artistic heritage.

Kyoto, Japan

Kyoto welcomes couples seeking a serene ambiance steeped in cultural heritage, crafting an enchanting canvas for their romantic journey. The renowned Arashiyama Bamboo Grove provides a breath-taking setting for leisurely walks, offering an

intimate cocoon for couples within the lush bamboo lines. Moreover, Kyoto boasts some of the nation's most beautiful cherry blossom views, with the Kiyomizu-dera Temple standing out as a must-visit, especially during the blossom season for panoramic views.

For a deeper connection and a taste of history, couples can delve into the historical layers of the Gion district, a window into Japan's past. Here, shared kaiseki, the



serene canvas for romantic strolls.

Beyond offering seclusion and ambiance, this island city also grants an enchanting glimpse into the world of vibrant marine life and intricate coral reefs. With opportunities for snorkelling at your disposal, an underwater journey hand in hand through the dazzling array of these marine creatures promises an experience for couples to treasure for a lifetime.

In addition, Malé has built a reputation for delivering a truly personalised experience, from beach diners to luxurious spa treatments, allowing couples to design their dream journey any way they prefer!

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Renowned for its vibrant energy and colourful streets, Rio de Janeiro features arguably the most stunning coastline of any city. The iconic Copacabana and Ipanema beaches, set against the majestic backdrop of Sugarloaf Mountain, create an atmosphere that seems straight out of the pages of a romantic novel.

Nevertheless, beyond its breath-taking beaches, Rio's true allure lies in its bustling neighbourhoods, which offer couples the opportunity to explore Latin American culture together, a fantastic way to strengthen the bond further. At the heart of Rio's charm lies its iconic Carnival, the largest of its kind, with bloco street parties, mesmerising Samba dance displays, and the dazzling costumes adorning performers creating an experience that stands as a reason in itself to visit.

Furthermore, Rio can be considered as a veritable haven for authentic Latin American street cuisine. As you and your beloved engage in an unforgettable street food feast, do make sure to sample dishes like feijoada, desserts like brigadeiro, or the savoury delight of pão de queijo!

By **Abdullah Al Zobayer**
Photo: **Collected**



Typhoon

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The fascinating world of bonsai

The word *Bonsai* (often misspelled as *Bonzai* or *Banzai*) is a Japanese term which literally translates to 'planted in a container'. This particular art form redeveloped under the influence of the Japanese Zen Buddhism. However, the origin of Bonsai dates back to ancient Egypt, and its evidence found in China; who called it *Penjing*.

Let us dive deep into this world of cultivation of miniature trees. Also known as 'dwarf trees' the art of growing a Bonsai took birth in people's mind because the ancient Chinese deemed a means of accessing the magical properties held within the replicated subject. The first rudimentary display of this ornamental vegetation can be found in the archaeological remains of a 2,000-year-old Han dynasty tomb in China.

The art of Bonsai entered Japan as religious souvenirs and by the Edo period (1603-1867), potting small trees became a pastime for the wealthy, with an annual show held in Kyoto showcasing traditional dwarf potted plants.

Even though Bonsai started as a symbol of wealth and something only people with a lot of free time on their hands can do; after World War II, the culture of Japan expanded and with it, expanded the cultivation or 'growing' of Bonsais. "It is the slowest sculpture in the world, and there is, at times, doubt as to which is being sculpted, man or tree," said Theodore Sturgeon, American fiction and horror writer, in his book *Slow Sculpture*.

This speaks volumes about the growing of Bonsai. The factor that sets aside this form of art apart from all other forms is their history; their requirement of immense discipline. Hence, the pride and seriousness of a Bonsai grower is like no other.

Bonsai is indeed not just a plant, but a

tree. It is necessary for them to be treated as such by using a different growing method; details as small as the beginning of seedlings to the shape it will take depending on the cultivators' techniques. Bonsai can easily live beyond 100 years. Bonsais also do not bear fruit, but they are known to bear a variety of flowers.

The beginnings of the Bonsai all start with a plant source that is aged. The plant source will need to be of a significant amount of time, in a sense "older." This source requires a specific soil, and a pot in smaller size for the growing process to begin. While growing the Bonsai, consider these points pivotal to a successful Bonsai.

Since it is an art form, the cultivator has freedom over a handful of things; such as the Bonsai's appearance, growth and formation. As the cultivator, they can bring their ideal vision of the Bonsai to life following these few factors of care.

Trimming Leaves: This involves removing both needles and leaves found on the Bonsai's branches and trunk.

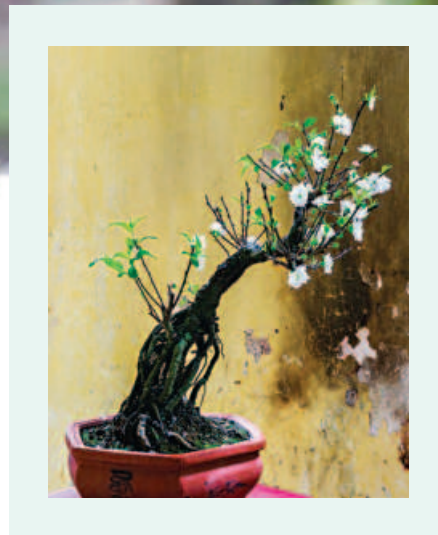
Wire: This technique has its own vital role in growing a Bonsai. The cultivator uses wires in the direction of the branches and trunk to determine which formation the tree will take.

Clamps: Instruments as such are used to give the cultivator control over the growth of the Bonsai.

Removal of Leaves: Known as defoliation, this technique is used to cause the dwarfing of the Bonsai foliage. It is used particularly on Bonsais that shed.

Bonsai Pruning: It is basically the caring for the Bonsai; roots, tree trunk and branches.

Like the quote from Theodore Sturgeon, the growing of Bonsai is a reflection of the artist and their patience. The philosophy of



Zen seen in the tasks required in Bonsai art are *Mono no Aware* and *Wabi Sabi*. A sense of awareness for things that are both fragile and not permanent describes the philosophy of *Mono no Aware*. Accepting a beauty that is both of no perfection, or not complete, as well as imperfect, is the philosophy of *Wabi Sabi*. These are the philosophies the grower of Bonsai wants their art to represent.

The philosophies have, with time, been shaped into rules and guidelines. It is not always guaranteed that with guidelines, the Bonsai will reach its maximum potential, but it will allow the cultivator to keep track of what needs to change in future attempts.

Miniature Size: The Bonsai has to fit appropriately into the pot.

Proportioning: The Bonsai should be proportional to the regular tree.

Asymmetrical: Like in nature, trees are not symmetrical, neither should the Bonsai.

Intervention Signs: The grower will want to be absolutely certain that they do not leave any sort of scarring.

Moving: A Bonsai should show feeling of poignancy and move the audience with its beauty, as no two Bonsais are alike.

Displaying of Bonsais are just as crucial as growing them. After all the hard work that has been put into growing it, the cultivator would want to keep in mind the best possible way to display their trees. It can be displayed indoors or outdoors, depending on what aesthetics the grower wants to nod to. Lighting and cleanliness are other factors

to keep in mind, since Bonsais are still a symbol of wealth and luxurious delight. Any unnecessary accessories and decorations are considered moot. These are some popular types of Bonsai display:

Formal: Upright and has a straight trunk.

Informal: Despite growing much like the formal type it still shows minimal curves.

Slanting: This type involves the Bonsai trunk being straight from the roots but slanting as soon as it is above ground.

Cascade or Semi-Cascade: Considered the most elegant form of Bonsai, these two styles represent trees that cascade over the mountain sides; specifically, the top bending below the pots base.

Raft: The trunk is slanted and twisted.

Literati: Minimal branches.

Forest: Several trees grouped together to represent a miniature forest.

Some other notable but less common styles of Bonsai include Driftwood, Weeping, Split-Trunk and Windswept styles.

The Bonsai art form steps far beyond just hard work and time; it regulates your discipline and drive to keep on taking care of a tree. The growing of bonsai has been compared to meditation. Discipline of Bonsai and the education behind its cultural history makes one very likely to find themselves deep into the art form, which stems from centuries of tradition across Asia.

For those of you who are looking forward to the world of Bonsai and creating your own signature style can learn a few headers from artists like Masahiko Kimura, Saburo Kato, John Y Naka, Harry Hirao, and Kunio Kobayashi, as they are some of the best Bonsai artists of all time. They had significantly helped spread the art form of bonsai around the world. It is said, *just as the Bonsai grows and reaches its maximum potential, so does the artist.*

By Humayra Morshed
Photo: Collected