



Culinary Magic in Dhaka: Chef Zohra Maliha's Fine Dining Revolution

In the bustling heart of Dhaka, where the city's culinary scene thrives with an eclectic mix of flavours, stands Manzo, a testament to the gastronomy prowess of Executive Chef Zohra Maliha. Her journey into the culinary world is as rich and layered as the dishes she creates, rooted in childhood experiences with her father and grandmother in their family kitchen.

"Her love and care really went a long way," Maliha reflects, recounting her early days as her grandmother's personal food taster.

Maliha's path to culinary greatness was not just paved with family traditions. Her vibrant personality and flair led her to hospitality studies abroad, where the disciplined, clean aesthetics of professional chefs cooking tantalising dishes drew her into the culinary sector.

"Food is the one thing that I personally feel connects everyone," she shares, underscoring her belief in the unifying power of cuisine.

At Manzo, Maliha's culinary philosophy shines through every dish. Her ingredient of choice, butter, speaks to her commitment to quality and flavour. "It adds a different layer, texture, and flavour to food," she says, also noting her fondness for spicy, sweet, and umami flavours. The inception is a



story of passion meeting opportunity. Drawn to fine dining's appeal, Maliha was inspired by Bangkok chefs who masterfully utilised local ingredients.

"After a trial run, they really loved me, my work and my dedication," she recalls about her beginning as a chef, setting a benchmark for fine dining in Bangladesh.

Despite her hectic schedule, Maliha's home life is filled with simplicity and love. She admits to rarely cooking at home, relying instead on her family's culinary care.

Maliha's free time is a blend of socialising with close friends and exploring local food spots, reflecting her down-to-earth personality despite her in-depth culinary stature. Her approach to ingredients is equally grounded.

"I always create dishes based on local ingredients I can find, it's not always about imported ingredients," she explains, expressing a desire to cook for the prime minister with a special take on ilish, a local favourite.

To aspiring chefs, Maliha offers profound advice: "Think outside the box. Don't be



constrained by anything." She emphasises the importance of creativity, skill honing, organisation, and discipline.

Chef Zohra Maliha's story is not just about culinary excellence; it's about passion, innovation, and the power of connecting people through food. In the heart of Dhaka, at a famed high-end restaurant, every dish tells a story, and each flavour carries the signature of a chef who dared to dream big.

By K Tanzeel Zaman

Photo: Sabirul Islam Tanjil