

IFTAR DELICACIES

Ramadan sweets of the north

KONGKON KARMAKER, *Dinajpur*

The average iftar item most people consume during the month of Ramadan include things like beguni, fried chops, chickpeas and puffed rice.

However, depending on which district, village or region you might be from, there might be some iftar delicacies that the rest of the world might not be aware of.

Such items include Dinajpur's Chhaana Jilapi, Nilphamari's Nikhudi and Rangpur's Moskat Shahi Halwa. These items are different types of confections crafted specifically for sale during the month of Ramadan.

CHHAANA JILAPI

Ma Mistanno Bhandar, a sweetmeat shop at Kalitola area of Dinajpur, has been making Chhaana Jilapi for more than a decade. "Its look like a normal jilapi, but its taste, size and flavour are different," he said.

Curd is the key ingredient behind Chhaana Jilapi, said Dulal.

Nowadays, many shops are making Chhaana Jilapi in Dinajpur town, but Ma Mistanno Bhandar is the original.

Md Abdus Sattar, a resident of Dinajpur, said that Ma Mistanno Bhandar usually makes all kinds of iftar items, but the Chhaana Jilapi is the best.



A kilogramme of Chhaana Jilapi costs around Tk 200. Besides, Chhaana Bora is another popular iftar item in Dinajpur.

NIKHUDI

In Saidpur of Nilphamari, Nikhudi is one the best selling iftar items this year.

Shah Hotel Niribil, a shop at Shaheed Dr Zikrul Haq Road, has been making this item for the last two years.

Shah Arafat Rahman, owner of the hotel, said that they named the item as Nikhudi (precisely perfect) as it is made with a lot of precision. Curd and flour are key ingredients for making Nikhudi, which costs Tk 400 per kg.

Jahurul Islam, a resident of Saidpur town, said he finally tasted Nikhudi this year. His family members really enjoyed the delight.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

The enduring allure of Khulna's Nana Halim

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

Every day during Ramadan, food enthusiasts gather in large numbers at a small outlet in front of Pioneer Women's College on South Central Road in Khulna.

Why? Because the renowned "Nana Special Halim," can be found here. Even people outside Khulna occasionally visit this place to get a taste of this famous dish. This delicacy is only sold during Ramadan.

People start queuing up at the place in afternoon, even under the scorching sun. "Nana Special Halim" is made with mutton.

THE MAN BEHIND HALIM

Hazrat Ali(80) started making Halim in 1993. His dedication and passion have turned Nana Halim into a household name. His culinary expertise and caring nature

led to him being called "Nana," akin to "grandfather" in English. This simple term of endearment eventually morphed into the brand's identity, reflecting the warmth and familiarity associated with Ali's halim.

Despite his age, Ali remains actively involved in the business. He was recently spotted meticulously keeping track of finances and overseeing customer service.

Sahabuddin, a staff member at Nana Halim, acknowledges Ali's central role. "We just assist Nana," he explained, "Ali continues to prepare the halim himself, year after year."

Ali said, "I make 130-150kg of halim every day during Ramadan. All of it is sold before Maghrib. The main goal of my business is to give the people of Khulna a taste of real

Halim, free of adulteration."

This dedication to the craft and personal touch is likely the secret ingredient that keeps customers coming back for more.

HOW IT'S MADE

The process starts around 7:00 am. Sonamug dal, palao rice, wheat, butter, mutton and various spices are used to make the famous halim. The cooking is completed by half past one in the afternoon and sales start around 2:00pm.

The price varies from Tk 200 to Tk 1800 depending on the quantity.

Sarifuzzaman Salim of Soto Boyra recently came with his daughter Adrija to buy Nana Halim.

"Iftars at many Khulna households are incomplete without Nana Halim. It's always in high demand. If you don't come early, you won't get it," he said.

Akhni: A staple at Sylheti iftars

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

During the holy month of Ramadan, there's one dish that tops everyone's list in Sylhet: Akhni. This dish made of fragrant rice and meat is a popular choice for iftar meals and family gatherings, offering a delightful alternative to biryani with its unique taste and texture.

From posh restaurants to humble street vendors, Akhni becomes ubiquitous throughout Ramadan.

THE PERSIAN CONNECTION

Derived from the Persian word "Yakhni", Akhni means broth. In Persian (present-day Iran) cuisine, Yakhni is a meat stew made of aromatic spices. In Iran, Yakhni-Pulao is a dish where the Pulao is cooked in the Yakhni. The Akhni is cooked using a similar process.

The earliest documentation of Yakhni in Bengal is found in 'Ain-i-Akbari'—a 16th-century text detailing the Mughal Empire's administration under Emperor Akbar. This gives food historians the impression that Yakhni came to India through the chefs of the Mughal emperors.

HOW AKHNI REACHED SYLHET

Some historians believe the food came to Sylhet after 1303 AD when Sufi Saint Hazrat Shahjalal (R) defeated



King Gour Govinda of Sylhet. They think soldiers of the then Delhi Sultan Alauddin Khalji, who accompanied the mystic saint, could have brought the famous dish.

RECIPE

The recipe of Akhni in Sylhet is not unique, rather it varies from chef to chef.

However, the core recipe remains the same, according to seasoned chefs Jamal Miah, a 50-year-experienced chef, and Emon Miah, a 10-year tenured chef.

The recipe demands aromatic rice and

the same amount of meat—beef, mutton, or chicken—cut into small pieces.

The cooking process begins with the meat being cooked with sliced onions, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, ginger-garlic paste, peanut paste, sliced tomatoes, salt, and other flavourful spices.

The stew also features sliced carrots, pickles, raisins and pepper. After the meat is cooked, more water and the soaked aromatic rice are added.

After the rice is properly boiled and the

water dried, an ample amount of ghee is added. Then the pot is left to cook for a while.

Biryani is usually cooked with large meat pieces and many types of aromatic spices. But Akhni is cooked with fewer spices and smaller pieces of meat.

A VISIT TO IFTAR MARKETS

Farhad Ahmed, a local of Dariapara area, was seen buying Akhni from a restaurant in Zindabazar area recently.

"Akhni is my family's favourite delicacy for iftar during the month of Ramadan. As cooking Akhni at home is time consuming, we prefer to buy it from restaurants," he said.

In Sylhet, beef Akhni is sold at around Tk 380 per kg, while chicken Akhni at around Tk 320 per kg.

Despite the influx of fancy restaurants offering all sorts of delights during Ramadan, Akhni remains the undisputed champion in Sylhet.

Every chef here, from seasoned veterans to wide-eyed rookies, can whip up a pot of this dish, said Chef Emon Miah.

The demand never seems to wane—Akhni's unique flavour profile, a mixture of fragrant rice simmered in a rich stew, simply holds a special place in the hearts (and stomachs) of Sylhetis.

AUTISM AWARENESS

Bangladesh urges global collaboration

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has urged collaboration to raise awareness, advocate, and increase cooperation and investments to ensure the rights, dignity, and well-being of children with developmental disabilities, including autism.

Muhammad Muhith, Bangladesh's permanent representative to the UN in New York, made the call at the observance of World Autism Awareness Day in the UN on Friday.

The event, co-hosted by the delegations of Bangladesh, Ghana, Malaysia, Philippines, Qatar and Zambia in partnership with key civil society organisations, featured an open forum and an art and fashion exhibition that displayed the artistic works of children with autism.

At the open forum, Ambassador Muhith highlighted the importance of accelerating awareness and actions towards addressing the challenges faced by children with autism and their families.

"It is alarming that in 2022, 1 in 100 persons have been diagnosed with autism spectrum

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

1 killed, another's hand severed in Cox's Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

Armed criminals hacked a man to death while severing the hand of another in Chakaria upazila of Cox's Bazar.

The incident took place around 11:30pm last night in Tutiakhali area under Badarkhali union.

Fazle Hasan Riyad, 30, of the union's Magnamapara, died while undergoing treatment for a severed leg at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) around 5:00am yesterday.

Meanwhile, Choton, 35, who had his left hand severed, is currently undergoing treatment at the CMCH in critical condition.

According to locals, Riyad and Choton were on their way to Tutiakhali on a motorcycle, driven by one Zidan on Friday night.

Upon reaching Tutiakhali, shots were fired at them from a shop nearby. Zidan was shot in the knee. When Choton and Riyad went to check who shot them, they were attacked with sharp weapons. At one point, the assailants chopped off Choton's left hand and Riyad's right leg.

Locals rescued and took them to Chakaria

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Rab imposters arrested for kidnapping trader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Police arrested two members of a gang for pretending to be Rab personnel and abducting an MFS (mobile financial service) trader in Tangail's Mirzapur upazila early yesterday.

The arrestees are Md Sayem, 40 of Patuakhali's Sadar upazila and Billal Hossain, 29, of Barishal's Bakerganj.

The duo are currently undergoing treatment at Tangail General Hospital following a mob beating.

Police said a gang of criminals picked up an MFS agent in a microbus from Mohera Railway Station area in early hours of yesterday.

Later, the criminals called his family and demanded Tk 12 lakh, to be paid at a spot on the Dhaka-Tangail highway.

At one point, locals challenged the criminals as they suspected their movements.

They detained two of the gang members and beat them, while the others managed to escape.

On information, a police team went to the spot, rescued them and sent them to the hospital.

Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Mirzapur Police Station, said fake pistols, walkie-talkies and a microbus were recovered from them.

A case was filed with Mirzapur Police Station over the incident, added the police official.

Woman found dead in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gazipur*

Police yesterday recovered the body of a woman from Gazipur Sadar's Dargachala area.

The deceased, aged around 35, could not be identified immediately.

Locals found the body around 9:00am in a mango garden. Her throat was slit. A blood-stained knife was also found on the scene, said Shahjalal, sub-inspector of Joydebpur Police Station.

The body has been sent to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital morgue for a post-mortem.

Meanwhile, police are trying to identify the victim, SI Shahjalal added.

Five killed in separate road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least five persons were killed and two others injured in separate road accidents in Bogura, Sylhet and Natore districts yesterday.

In Bogura, three transport workers were killed and another person was injured as a minibus collided head-on with a private car on Bogura-Nagaon regional highway in Sadar upazila.

The incident took place near Erulia High School at around 10:00am when the Bogura-bound minibus collided with the Naogaon-bound rented car, said Mizanur Rahman, a sub-inspector of Sadar Police Station.

The deceased are Fahim, Hannan and Alamgir, all of them local leaders of Bogura Motor Shramik Union, the SI also said.

The injured person, whose identity could not be known immediately, was taken to a local hospital for treatment, he added.

In Sylhet, one person was killed

and one other critically injured after a private car lost control and plunged into roadside ditch at Damri Bridge area on Sylhet-Tamabil Highway around 4:00am.

The deceased was identified as Mosabbir Ahmed, 45, of Dema village under Jaintiapur upazila. The injured Sabbir Ahmed is also from the same village.

Car's owner Amin Ahmed of Jaintiapur said, "They were returning from Piner Bazar area after refilling gas when the accident took place."

Mohammad Yunus Ali, in-charge of Tamabil Highway Police Outpost under Highway Police, said, "It was raining when the accident took place. We are assuming that the driver dozed off and lost control of the car," said Mohammad Yunus Ali, in-charge of Tamabil Highway Police Outpost.

"The car first hit a shack on right side of the road, then plunged into roadside ditch and hit an electric pillar," he said.

The injured has been admitted to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



Workers unloading bricks from a trawler in Barishal Sadar's Chandmari area yesterday. Working from dawn till dusk, they are paid Tk 800 daily.

PHOTO: TITU DAS