

#REVIEW

BEEF BEYOND BORDERS

Dhaka's obsession with red meat

It really does not matter whether you are from Dhaka, Noakhali, Barishal, or even New York. As long as you have experienced the delights of Eid-ul-Azha or Qurbani Eid, your love for red meat is on the level of obsession. Rest assured, the love, so to speak, has spread globally since the ancient times of hunters and gatherers. Our love of red meat in Bangladesh is more than simply food; it celebrates tradition, community, and culinary creativity.

Dishes such as beef kala bhuna, sheek kebabs, or beef chui jhal are more than simply food made from red meat; they are testaments of our affinity for robust flavours and age-old traditions. And it's not only confined within our borders. Red-dyed meat passion prevails in palates worldwide, from the hearty beef stews in Europe to the smokey barbecue steaks in Texas.

Global citizens share in this fervour — for comfort, festivity, or the simple joy of gathering around a table. As we investigate the stories and flavours treasured so much within red meat, we will hear from aficionados who find magic in every bite, connecting us all through our shared culinary passions.

As a housewife, I wasn't always good in the kitchen, but my husband's obsession with red meat pushed me to get better. I mean, the man lives for mezbani beef and beef chui jhal! Over time, I went from making unintentional kala bhunas, I burnt them to crisp, to perfecting my skills and making my famous nehari every Qurbani Eid. Now, I can whip up a feast that makes the whole family drool. Who knew a little obsession could be infectious? It turned me into a red-meat veteran!

— Shefali Afroze, Homemaker.

I can't even remember when I fell in love with red meat—it was just always meant to be. It started with my mum's amazing dishes, and then, as I went to university and travelled outside of Dhaka, I discovered a whole new world of red meat magic.

This obsession has even helped me make new friends. Now, we take trips just to hunt down and explore the best red meat dishes across the country. From the spiciest kebabs to the juiciest steaks, it's been quite a unique adventure.

— Sahel Reza, a fourth-year university student.

At 58, my doctors told me to cut down on red meat, but I did the next best thing—I negotiated! I asked what I had to do to enjoy my favourite meals, and the doctor struck a deal: a strict diet and two hours of daily exercise for a controlled portion of red meat twice a month. Never thought I'd go to such lengths just for some mezbani beef!

Now, I'm in the best shape of my life. Funny how my love for red meat turned into the best fitness plan ever.

— Moniruzzaman, A banker and a grandfather of two.

As a middle-aged Aussie bouncing back and forth to Bangladesh for

business, I never thought I'd get hooked on the local cuisine. The language barrier was a pain at first, but once I made some friends, the world of Bangladeshi food opened up.

I've always loved a good medium-rare steak, but the game changed when I tried achari beef made by my mate's mum in Chittagong. My taste buds have never been the same since!

I've even packed frozen Achari Beef to take back home for my friends and family—they're also obsessed. I can't live without Bangladeshi beef cuisine. I even time my trips to be here for 'dawats' during Qurbani Eid. Don't judge me!

— Taylor Johnson An Australian expat living in Dhaka.

I have always been deeply and madly in love with anything that has to do with beef, especially the dishes my mum makes. I eat enough for three people because I just can't get enough and can't

stop myself.

My friends nag me about potential health issues, but I don't care. But in my defense, when I do not eat red meat, I adjust to whatever is served to me. Growing up, our household always prioritised beef, and I loved every bite. It's not a guilty pleasure because, honestly, I feel no guilt at all!

— Rakibul Alam, Director of an MNC.

In Dhaka, the love for red meat transcends generations, professions, and backgrounds, uniting people in their shared culinary passion. From homemakers mastering traditional dishes to students exploring new flavours and from expatriates discovering local delights to health-conscious seniors negotiating indulgences, red meat is more than just food—it's a cultural cornerstone.

Whether it's the smoky allure of achari beef or the comforting familiarity of home-cooked favourites, this universal obsession brings people together, celebrating the rich tradition of Bangladesh's red meat cuisine.

By K Tanzeel Zaman

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