

VOLUME 24, ISSUE 39, TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2025
FALGUN 19, 1437 BS

Star

Life

E-mail: lifestyleds@yahoo.com
64-65 Kazi Nazrul Islam

Bring in *the* EARTHY TONES

TRAILBLAZERS IN THEIR OWN FIELDS
AZRA MAHMOOD AND TASNIVA ISLAM SHOW HOW IT'S DONE **P 4-5**
SAVOUR THE FLAVOURS OF RAMADAN NIGHTS
DELICIOUS DISHES FOR IFTAR AND SEHRI **P 8-9**
DANIEL RAHMAN RESHAPING BANGLADESH'S RADIO CULTURE
RADIO FOORTI'S JOURNEY TO YOUTH-DRIVEN SUCCESS **P 12**

PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN
MODELS: ARNIRA, SUHI
STYLING: SHAHRUKH AMIN
FASHION COORDINATOR: SONIA YEAMIN ISHA
MAKEUP: SUMON RAHAT
WARDROBE: SHAHRUKH AMIN

The Art of Living Fully

We live in interesting times. On the one hand, we are going through a sea of changes, giving us hope for a better tomorrow, and on the other, we are facing hardships while coming to terms with the fact that every major change brings with it

some level of adversity.

Time reminds us that every moment counts. It urges us to seize opportunities, embrace change, and make the most of what life offers. It teaches us to pause, reflect, and realign our priorities. So, let us

not let time slip through our fingers — let us embrace the present, listen to our inner voice, and make every second meaningful.

This week we bring forth a range of articles focusing on the diverse aspects of Ramadan. Keeping in mind that Women's

Day is also around the corner, we feature some of the trailblazing women of our society.

Enjoy reading Star Lifestyle!

— LS Desk



EID / 25



Typhoon

Fabric Care

প্রথম ওয়াশেই কাপড়ের কঠিন থেকে
কঠিনতম দাগ দূর করে।

টাইফুন... লাগে কম, তাই সশ্রয় বেশী।

**Fabric Care -এর
সুপার পাওয়ার**



#PERSPECTIVE

Breaking news: You can eat sehri at home too!

I may be the most fervent foodie you could ever meet, but I am not an insomniac who gets excited about sehri outings. Sorry, calling them “Suhoor Nights” does not make them any different. How can I enjoy sehri parties when I yawn every five minutes?

Unfortunately, these days, sehri hangouts are something you have to do to be cool. I too, attend at times, but out of sheer compulsion: assignments such as food reviews, friends with no life, and invitations from corporate professionals with — you guessed it — no life!

Why would anyone want to take a hundred selfies around midnight? Why would you want to make a reel at 1 AM? Also, why would there be a fashion show at 3 in the morning? I encountered all these during sehri, and cannot tell which one was worse. I loathe dressing up at unearthly hours, but most importantly, having that energy after iftar. I would rather stay home in my pyjamas, heat a bit of rice and leftover chicken in the microwave and be done with sehri and return to bed ASAP.

Even worse are the lavish feasts that go on at these parties! Who has the mood to eat this much during sehri? The extravagant banquets would put to shame the Roman emperors I saw on History Channel.

Whenever I attend such sehri parties, I



always feel very thirsty the whole day afterwards, due to consuming rich food. Also, without a good night's sleep, I walk around like

a zombie the next day, not to mention being cranky because I was up most of the night.

We are not Batman. Let's not behave like one.

As for corporate parties, my policy is not

to engage with co-workers after office.

“You are missing out! Roads are so quiet and peaceful late at night” — my friends argue.

You know what else is quiet and peaceful late at night? Your home!

“But what about Old Dhaka? Don't you want to go to Nazira Bazar? It's open all night!” — My friends sometimes retort.

Here's a fun fact: Nazira Bazar is also open throughout the year and the food tastes

just as good, or bad. Hence, no need to lose sleep over it.

Of course, “New Dhaka” has caught up with the trend. Posh restaurants with groggy-eyed waiters put on fake smiles and play along. Parking lots get busy whilst the street dogs look in awe what humans are doing at odd hours of the night.

Meanwhile, I am at home, asleep, and my father is breaking down the door to wake me up so that I don't miss sehri, as my phone's alarm clock is also in the same pursuit.

But people will say, “What's wrong with sehri outings just a couple of times?”

No, good sir/ma'am, it's a couple of times with friends, a couple of times with your other friends, a couple of times with co-workers, a couple of times with family — and you end up being out for sehri almost a dozen times in a month!

Ironically enough, the most buzzing nightlife this city sees is during Ramadan! Which eatery serves what and which place has the best food during sehri becomes the talk of the town. Not me. My socials are asleep at night just like me.

I don't get the hype. I side more with Ted from “How I Met Your Mother,” as he quotes his mum saying, “Nothing good ever happens after 2 AM!”

By M H Haider

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed



#WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

AZRA MAHMOOD

the powerhouse behind Bangladesh's fashion revolution

Azra Mahmood needs no introduction — she is a trailblazer in the Bangladeshi fashion industry, effortlessly balancing the roles of model, choreographer, mentor, and show director. With a career spanning over two decades, she has not only ruled the runway, but also contributed to reshaping the industry from behind the scenes. As the founder of Azra Mahmood Talent Camp (AMTC), she has nurtured a new generation of models, equipping them with the skills to shine on both national and international platforms.



Star Lifestyle caught up with her recently to discuss her journey, the evolution of Bangladesh's fashion scene, and what it truly takes to make it in this ever-changing industry.

You've worn many hats — model, choreographer, MC, mentor. Which role feels the most “you?”

I've had many roles — model, presenter, choreographer, stylist, mentor, entrepreneur, and show director, even dabbling in acting. But rather than choosing one, I'd say fashion itself defines me. Whether on the runway or behind the scenes, my passion remains constant. It's not about the role — it's about the world of fashion that continues to pull me in.

Through your talent camp, you've mentored many aspiring models. What is the one quality you believe every successful model must have?

The modelling industry today is far more competitive than it used to be. With new agencies and training schools, at least 100 new models enter the field every month. In such an environment, the only way to sustain and stand out is to keep growing and evolving.

A model who doesn't improve, adapt, or refine their craft will eventually fade away.

Continuous learning is essential. If a model doesn't work on their skills — be it their walk, expressions, adaptability, or professionalism — they won't last long. So, a successful model is someone who sees the bigger picture, keeps evolving, and is always willing to learn.

How has the Bangladeshi fashion scene evolved since you first started, and what's still missing?

I started my career in 2001, when Bangladesh's fashion industry was much smaller, with limited designers, models, and events — mostly concentrated in November and December.

Now, 24 years later, the industry has expanded significantly, with more retail brands, designers, associations, and fashion weeks, creating greater opportunities. However, proper management remains a challenge. Without a system integrating economics, design, branding, and talent development, sustainable growth is difficult.

Additionally, Bangladesh has long been recognised as a manufacturing hub rather than a fashion hub. We focused on “Made in Bangladesh” instead of “Designed in Bangladesh,” limiting global recognition. While this is slowly changing, there is still a long way to go.



Fashion is often about beauty standards. Have you ever struggled with them, and how do you help others navigate this?

Inclusivity in fashion often feels like a token effort — one plus-size or unconventional model doesn't mean true diversity. When I started, fair skin was preferred by many clients, which is absurd, given our country's demographics. Unfortunately, this bias still exists.

Beauty is a political construct, shaped by those in power. Historically, different cultures have defined beauty based on their influence — today, Eurocentric features dominate due to Western control.

As a mentor and industry professional, I challenge these norms by casting models based on talent, presence, and confidence — not just their skin tone or body type. I also ensure that models understand their value goes beyond societal beauty standards. The industry is slowly changing, but we need more decision-makers to push for true inclusivity.

What inspires you to keep pushing boundaries in your work?

From the very beginning, my goal has been to bring world-class fashion productions to Bangladesh. I remember watching FashionTV (FTV) and being mesmerised by the grandeur of international fashion. I knew that with my height, I might not get

to that level as a model, but I could create shows that matched that standard.

That dream has driven me for years. I've worked on creating bigger, better productions, making fashion shows more visually compelling, and pushing for professional execution. I believe Bangladesh has the talent, but we need the right platforms to showcase it.

I'm not there yet, but I'm close. And as long as there's room for growth, I'll keep pushing. Because the moment things feel stagnant, I lose motivation. Growth is what fuels me.

What's your advice for young aspiring fashion professionals?

Today's generation wants instant results. They want to achieve success overnight, but true success takes time. If something comes too easily, you don't truly appreciate it, and it doesn't last.

The key is to invest in the process, work hard, and stay patient. If you put in the effort, learn the craft, and build your skills over time, your success will be meaningful and sustainable. Also, tolerance is crucial. This industry can be tough. There will be criticism, rejections, and setbacks. But if you stay focused, resilient, and keep moving forward, you will eventually make it.

In the next 10 years, how do you see Bangladesh's fashion industry evolving?

The biggest challenge right now is that many people still don't take fashion seriously. It's seen as something superficial, when in reality, fashion is a major part of daily life. The first thing you do when you leave your house is put on clothes — that's fashion! It's an essential industry, yet it still doesn't get the level of importance or support that it deserves.

For real growth, we need proper backing, investment, and industry-wide coordination. Right now, individuals are trying on their own, but we need a collective push.

Despite these challenges, I do believe the industry will

continue growing. More designers, brands, and platforms are emerging, and as long as people keep innovating and pushing boundaries, Bangladesh will eventually establish itself as a recognised fashion hub.



By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy



#WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

A PLATFORM FOR ARTISANS

Tasnuva Islam's vision for ethical commerce

Since time immemorial, Bangladeshi weavers have honed their craft, producing textiles that carry the weight of history and artistry. Yet, in a rapidly industrialising world, their skills are often overlooked and their voices unheard. Tasnuva Islam, Founder and CEO of The Muslin, and Director of Sales and Marketing at Le ROYAL, Le Méridien Dhaka, saw this reality and chose to act.

Her initiative provides weavers with a rare opportunity; a rent-free platform in one of Dhaka's premier hotels, where they can display and sell their creations. This is not charity, but a well-thought-out model of ethical commerce that allows artisans to thrive without the financial constraints that so often suffocate traditional crafts.

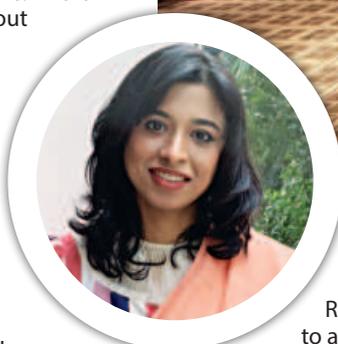
Inspiration behind the initiative

Tasnuva Islam's inspiration for the initiative traces back to the COVID-19 era when global imports came to a halt.

"During that time, we noticed on platforms like Facebook that local products were gaining traction because there was no alternative due to the lack of imports. That made me think — why not work with weavers, entrepreneurs, and artisans who are interested in showcasing their products through our hotel, or a similar initiative?" she explains.

Her passion for arts and crafts has been a lifelong one, though her engineering background kept her from directly pursuing it.

"I have always been a great admirer of arts and crafts, and I had a knack for designing and crafting. Being an engineering student, I didn't get to do much about it. So, I founded The Muslin and wanted to do something for the weavers. You know, they don't get any platform and earn a very nominal income. I believe that this project was necessary. We don't charge any rent or have any hanger price."



A platform rooted in CSR

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to a business's commitment

to contributing positively to society, and rather than being purely profit-driven, CSR initiatives integrate ethical considerations into business operations, ensuring that companies give back to the communities they engage with.

The hospitality industry rarely intersects with the traditional weaving sector, but Islam has bridged this gap with this innovative CSR project. Under this initiative, Le Méridien Dhaka has opened a dedicated space, where artisans can directly exhibit and sell their handcrafted textiles. Unlike conventional markets, these artisans are not charged any rent, ensuring that they retain the full financial benefit of their work.

To sustain the initiative without burdening the artisans, Islam has introduced a nominal VAT, which helps maintain the space and cover staff expenses. This allows the project to remain self-sufficient while keeping the focus on

the well-being of the artisans. The initiative is an exemplary model of how corporate resources can be effectively used to support cultural heritage and empower local communities.

Current situation and challenges

Despite the positive response, the initiative faces some challenges. "One challenge we face is that many people are still unaware of our location. Le Méridien, where we are based, is in a relatively quiet part of the city, so people don't always know about us. Despite that, we have seen success," says Islam.

Another issue is the misconception that the platform is a temporary pop-up event rather than a permanent boutique. To tackle this, Islam and her team are planning to launch a website soon to increase accessibility and awareness. "Since this is a CSR project, we want to make it more accessible and fairer for all. We have been experiencing a good turnover so far," she adds.

Long-term vision

Looking ahead, Islam has ambitious plans

to take Bangladeshi craftsmanship to the global stage. "Our mid-to-long-term plan is to expand to Europe and America, ensuring that Bangladeshi products, particularly those made by weavers, gain international recognition."

She envisions The Muslin as a gateway for Bangladeshi textiles to compete with Indian and Pakistani products in international markets. "We aim to create a space where Bangladeshi craftsmanship can compete with Indian and Pakistani products, reaching global markets like New York."

Ultimately, Islam hopes that by taking these strategic steps now, the seeds for long-term success will be firmly planted at the perfect time.

A model for others to follow

The success of this initiative highlights the immense potential of corporate-backed social enterprises. Tasnuva Islam's approach serves as an inspiring model for other businesses looking to integrate CSR into their operations in meaningful ways. Instead of limiting CSR to donations or short-term aid, she has created a sustainable ecosystem where artisans can thrive independently.

Other luxury hotels, corporate entities, and even government bodies can take cues from this initiative to support traditional craftspeople in their respective regions. By leveraging existing infrastructure and customer bases, such initiatives can create lasting impacts on local economies and cultural preservation efforts.

In a rapidly modernising world, preserving traditional crafts requires more than just passion — it requires strategic action, visionary leadership, and collaborative efforts. With visionaries like Tasnuva Islam at the helm, the future of Bangladeshi weaving traditions looks brighter than ever.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy

#FASHION & BEAUTY



Photo: Adnan Rahman
Models: Arnira, Suhi
Styling: Shahrukh Amin
Fashion Coordinator: Sonia Yeamin Isha
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Wardrobe: Shahrukh Amin

Star **LIFE** Style

Celebrate Eid with a touch of nature's finest COLOURS

The blessed month is here, and how lucky are we to be able to experience it. Ramadan means celebrations galore and we are here for it. As we eagerly wait for Eid, preparations are underway in full swing. The very essence of Eid begins with a new dress which is no ordinary outfit. In its beautifully woven threads, it carries the very essence of the festival, of new beginnings, joy, happiness, and prosperity.



Now, how does one decide which outfit to pick? Among so many wonderful options, one is truly spoilt for choice! This year, earthy, organic tones are ruling the runways all around the world. Mother Nature has blessed us and we are enjoying soft rays of sunshine and mellow days that are making our hearts sing! And what better way to celebrate it than embracing the bountiful hues of nature in one's attire?

As it were, the colours of the earth are beautiful in their own way. Imagine a Muslin saree in shades of taupe, terracotta, or tan, rendered in diaphanous simplicity, embellished with tiny flakes of sequin and beads. These shades, when juxtaposed with deep hues of green, look absolutely beautiful.

Shades of beige, reminiscent of kashphool fields in full bloom,

contrasted with muted shades of indigo, look stunning with intricate embroidery. And just like amidst rolling fields of greenery and earthy shrubbery, one happens upon a sudden burst of bright pink wild blooms.

Another lovely combination is classic black and white, interspersed with tiny sweet flowers reminiscent of the mustard fields. Flowers of Bengal have a beauty of their own; floral hues are flattering on everyone, especially marigold and fuchsia, which look beautiful.

It is a fact universally acknowledged that when dressed in earthy tones, one is imbued with a sense of oneness with the earth. So go ahead, embrace your Bengali roots and dress up in hues of earth — feel at one with the universe!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan



Indulge in these delectable DATE-BASED SWEET TREATS

It's the month of Ramadan once more, and so, it's time to prepare nourishing and delicious dishes for iftar. These date-infused recipes bring together tradition and flavour, offering a perfect balance of energy, sweetness, and comfort for your fasting routine.

From indulgent desserts to wholesome mains and snacks, these recipes are ideal for making your Ramadan meals both special and fulfilling.

DATE AND SESAME WONTONS

Date and sesame wonton is a delightfully innovative dessert of wonton wrappers filled with a nutty date mixture. It is crispy from outside, sweet and soft from inside. This sweet dish originates from the Canton speaking regions in China, and is traditionally stuffed with walnuts. When served after a Chinese meal, hot wonton with chilled vanilla ice-cream is a delight in itself.

Ingredients

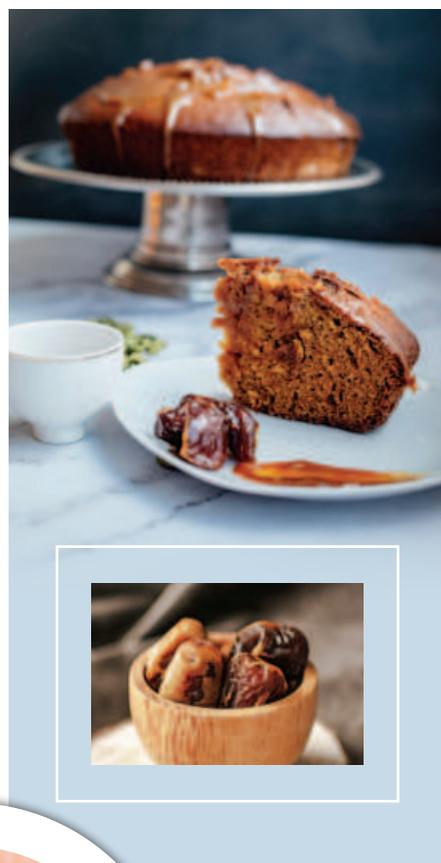
20 wonton wrappers
For the stuffing —
½ cup chopped dates
¼ cup sesame seeds
¼ cup brown sugar
1 tbsp butter
2 tbsp powdered sugar
Oil for deep-frying
To serve —
Vanilla ice-cream

Method

Toast sesame seeds on a slow flame for 2-3 minutes or till brown in colour. Keep aside to cool. Blend the seeds in a processor to a coarse mixture. Combine the sesame seed mixture, dates, brown sugar and butter in a deep bowl and mix well. Keep aside. Now place a wonton wrapper on a flat, dry surface and place 1 tablespoon of stuffing in the centre. Bring the sides to the centre, twist and seal like a money bag. Repeat to make more wontons. Heat oil in a pan and deep fry the wontons, on a medium heat, till they turn golden in colour from all the sides. Allow them to cool slightly and sprinkle powdered sugar evenly on the top of the wontons. Serve immediately with vanilla ice-cream.

DATE AND RICE POLAO

A main course that is as elegant as a dessert, the date and rice polao features a unique combination of rice with dry fruits and nut, enhanced with rose water, and garnished with fried onions and coriander. Milk gives a nice wetness to this rice, and keeps it from being too dry to taste. The cardamom flavour goes well with the mellow sweetness of this rice preparation, which combines wonderfully with spicy accompaniments.



Ingredients

¼ cup chopped seedless dates
3 cup cooked rice
3 tbsp ghee
¼ cup sliced almonds
¼ cup raisins
1 tsp rose water
3 tbsp milk
½ tsp cardamom powder
¼ cup deep-fried sliced onions

1 tbsp chopped coriander

Salt to taste

Method

Heat the ghee in a non-stick pan; add the almond and sauté on a medium flame for 1-2 minutes. Add the dates, raisins, cooked rice, rosewater, milk, cardamom powder and salt, mix gently. Cook on a medium flame for 2 minutes, while stirring occasionally. Garnish with coriander and fried onions, and serve hot.

DATE CAKE

Ingredients

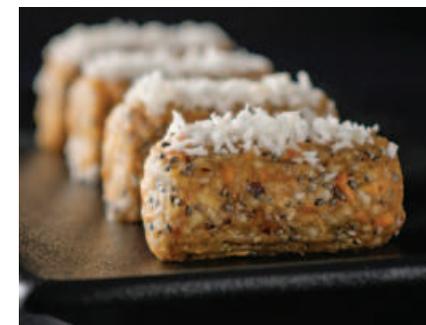
½ cup chopped dates
2 cups refined flour
3 tsp baking powder
A pinch cinnamon powder
A pinch nutmeg powder
1 cup milk
½ cup yoghurt
1 cup powdered sugar
¾ cup melted butter
1 tsp vanilla essence

Method

Pre-heat the oven to 170° Celsius. Sieve together flour, baking powder, cinnamon powder and nutmeg powder. Grind dates with half the milk and yoghurt. Mix with the sieved dry ingredients. Add powdered sugar and mix thoroughly. Mix in melted butter and vanilla essence. Add the remaining milk to correct the consistency. Pour the mixture into a greased cake tin and place it in a pre-heated oven for 25 minutes. Remove and cut into pieces when completely cooled.

TAMARIND DATES CHUTNEY

Sweet, tangy, gooey chutney is made with tamarind, dates, and jaggery that is often accompanied with snacks. It is a one-stop chutney recipe solution for fried savoury snacks.



Ingredients

½ cup seedless dates
½ cup seedless tamarind
½ cup grated jaggery (as required-adjust for preferred taste)
2 cups water
½ tsp roasted cumin powder
½ tsp coriander powder
½ tsp red chilli powder
¼ tsp dry ginger powder
Black salt to taste

Method

In a pan, take the tamarind, dates and water. Cook for about 10 minutes on low heat till they soften. Now add jaggery and continue to cook. Let the jaggery dissolve and the mixture thicken a bit. Add the powdered spices, stir and let simmer for a further 2 minutes. Season with salt. Let the chutney mixture cool down. In a grinder, grind the mixture till smooth. Pour the chutney through a strainer. Store the tamarind date chutney in an airtight container in the refrigerator, and use whenever you make snacks at home!

DATE AND CASHEW COOKIE

This iron rich treat will ensure optimum high brain function and development and assist your child's growth as well. Wholesome soy flour replaces refined flour in these cookies, while iron-rich dates and energy-rich cashews add flavour and texture.

Ingredients

½ cup white millet
½ cup deseeded and chopped dates

½ cup soy flour
3 tbsp chopped cashew nuts
½ cup butter
4 tbsp powdered sugar
1½ tsp cocoa powder
½ tsp butter for greasing

Method

Combine the dates and ¾ cup of water in a deep pan and bring to boil. Cook for 10 minutes or till the dates are fully mashed. Keep aside to cool. Combine the soy flour, white millet, butter and sugar in a bowl using your fingertips till the mixture resembles bread crumbs. Add the dates mixture, cashew nut and cocoa powder, mix and knead the dough well, until it becomes semi-stiff. Cover and refrigerate for 15 minutes.

Divide the dough into 10 equal portions and roll each portion into a small sphere and lightly flatten. Grease the baking tray with butter and bake in a pre-heated oven at 180° Celsius for 20 minutes. Cool and serve, or store in an airtight container.

DATE AND APPLE KHEER

Kheer has always been a part of the Bengali food spread. Times have changed, but kheer continues to find a special place in our meals, especially during festivals. Over time, several variations of kheer have emerged. Date and apples impart their natural sweetness



and fibre, while walnuts add crunch and taste to this kheer. Milk has abundant protein and calcium, and the goodness of apples and dates, of course, needs no explanation.

Ingredients

½ cup chopped apples
¼ cup chopped dates
2 tbsp sugar
2 cups thickened low fat milk
2 tbsp chopped walnuts
1 tbsp finely chopped apples for garnish.

Method

Combine apples, sugar and 3 tbsp of water in a non-stick pan and cook over medium heat for 2 minutes. Refrigerate to chill. Combine the milk, dates and in a pan, mix well and simmer for 10 minutes while stirring continuously. Refrigerate to chill. Just before serving add cooked apple to the milk and dates mixture and mix gently. Serve chilled, garnished with walnuts and apples.

Photo: LS Archive; Unsplash

#FOOD & RECIPES

Stay energised all day with these Bengali sehri dishes

With Ramadan now here, planning healthy and substantial sehri meals is a necessity in a bid to keep your body active throughout the day. The following traditional Bengali meals give a wonderful balance of proteins, fibres, and flavour, keeping your body full and content. Each of these meals contains elements that are perfect for enduring energy, along with a feast for your senses. If your heart desires a filling vegetable mishmash, or for a rich flavour of mustard-infused fish curry, these meals shall make your pre-dawn meal healthy and delicious.

PEPE DIYE MURGIR MANGSHO (CHICKEN WITH GREEN PAPAYA)

Ingredients

500g chicken, curry cut
1 medium sized papaya
10-12 garlic clove, crushed
1-inch ginger piece, grated
1 onion, finely chopped
1 tomato chopped
1 tsp red chilli powder
½ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp cumin powder
½ tsp coriander powder
¼ tsp garam masala powder
Salt, according to taste

Method

Heat oil in a pan, and temper with onion and garlic. Sauté until the onion turns translucent. Add ginger, red chilli powder, turmeric powder, cumin powder, coriander powder, tomatoes and salt. Mix and stir till the tomatoes become mushy. Now add chicken and papaya and give a quick stir. Cook for 2 minutes. Add water and cook for 10 minutes with the lid on. Open the lid and add garam masala powder. Mix well and cook another 1 minute. When it is done, remove from heat. Serve hot with plain steamed rice.

AAM KASHUNDI CHINGRI (PRAWN WITH MANGO AND MUSTARD DIP)

Ingredients

250g prawns, deveined and cleaned
3 tbsps kashundi

1 raw mango, grated
4-5 green chillies
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp red chilli powder
Salt to taste
Sugar to taste

Method

Wash the prawns properly. Marinate the prawns with salt and pinch of turmeric powder. Set aside. In a wok, add oil and once hot, add the prawns, turmeric powder, red chilli powder and green chillies. Sauté on low heat till the prawns change colour slightly, or about 2 minutes. Add the grated raw mango and salt. Stir and cook for 2 minutes. Add the kashundi and mix well. Add 1 cup of water, and check seasoning. Cover, and let it simmer on low heat, till the water has evaporated, and there is a thick gravy coating the prawns.

in the lentil. Cover the daal and leave them for few minutes. Serve with boiled rice or roti.

SHORSHE PABDA JHOL (CAT FISH WITH MUSTARD SEEDS FLAVOURED GRAVY)

Ingredients

6 pabda fish
1 tsp red chilli powder
½ tsp turmeric powder
¼ cup mustard seeds paste
2 green chillies
½ tsp nigella seeds
2 tbsps mustard oil
Salt to taste

Method

Wash and clean the fish. Marinate and mix with salt and turmeric powder. Rub all over fish. Marinate for at least 30 minutes and keep aside. Heat oil in a pan. Temper ½ teaspoon of nigella seeds and 2 pieces of green chilli. Stir for a few seconds. Now add mustard seeds paste, red chilli powder, turmeric powder and salt. Mix well. Sauté for 2 minutes. When oil starts to separate from sides of pan, add 1 cup of water. Mix and cover the pan. Cook for 15 minutes on medium heat. Once gravy starts to thicken, and fish are done, add 1 teaspoon of mustard oil into the fish curry. Mix and switch off the flame. Transfer to a serving dish. Serve hot with steamed rice.

LABRA (VEGETABLE MISHMASH)

Ingredients

1 cup eggplant, thickly sliced
½ cup carrots, sliced in thick long wedges
1 cup cauliflower, small separated florets
½ cup cabbage, thickly chopped
½ cup yard long beans
1 cup pumpkin, cut into small cubes
1/3 cup radish, cut into cubes
1 cup pui shak, thickly chopped
1 tsp ginger paste
½ tsp panch phoron or Bengali five spices
2 dry red chillies
¼ tsp turmeric powder
1 tbsps ghee
Salt to taste
Sugar to taste

Method

Cut and wash the vegetables separately. Heat ghee in a heavy bottom pan. Add the panch phoron and dry red chillies. Once they splutter, add the ginger paste, mixed with 1 tablespoon of water and salt. Stir

and cook till the water evaporates. Add the cabbage, radish, carrots, and yard long beans. Stir and add turmeric. Cover and let it cook for 3-4 minutes. Uncover and add the rest of the vegetables. Mix and cover. Let it cook, on a medium heat, for 8-10 minutes, or till the vegetables are soft. Adjust the seasoning and add ½ cup water and sugar to balance the taste. Cover and cook till the water is absorbed, and vegetables are coated with the gravy. Serve with rice or roti.

LAU GHONTO (BOTTLE GOURD CURRY)

Ingredients

500g bottle gourd
½ cup peas
10-12 fried bori (dried lentil dumplings)
½ tsp panch phoron
2 dry red chillies
3-4 green chillies
½ cup coriander leaves
3 tbsps oil
1 tbsps ghee
Salt to taste

Method

Peel and wash the bottle gourd, cut into thin round slices, and shred them lengthwise. Keep aside. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil, fry the bori until golden. Keep aside. Heat the remain oil, add the panch phoron and dry red chillies. When the spices start spluttering, add the chopped bottle gourd. Sprinkle a little salt. Mix and turn the heat to low and let the gourd cook in its own juice. When the gourd starts turning tender, add the peas, bori and green chillies. Keep cooking till the water has almost dried up. Add the chopped coriander leaves and finish with the ghee. Serve with rice.



SHOSHA DIYE DAAL (CUCUMBER LENTIL)

Ingredients

1 medium sized cucumber
1 cup red lentils
¼ tsp ground garlic
½ tsp cumin seeds
1 tbsps sliced onions
2 green chillies, pared
1 tbsps oil
Salt to taste

Method

Peel, wash and cut the cucumber into cubes. Rinse the lentils and drain water. In a saucepan, place all the ingredients except the onion, chilli and oil. Add 3-4 cups of water, cover and simmer till lentils and cucumber are cooked. Add green chillies and bring to a boil. Heat oil in a separate small pan. Fry the onion till brown and pour

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Why jilapi is the undisputed KING OF IFTAR DELIGHTS



But hey, are we complaining? Absolutely not! Because no matter where it's from, this golden, syrup-drenched swirl never fails to steal the show at any iftar gathering.

And with Ramadan in full swing, we are here to offend the endocrinologists once again and shine the spotlight on this undisputed Godfather of all iftar items!

So, have you ever thought about what makes jilapi such an integral part

despite my diabetes, chikon jilapi still finds a place on my iftar table. My wife does her best to keep it away from me, but every now and then, I manage to sneak in a piece — disappointing both my doctor and my wife in one go!”

Meanwhile, Shuvroto Kanchan, a businessman, doesn't just love jilapi — he's on a sugary expedition! Whether it's the royal Shahi Jilapi from Chawk bazar or the

jilapi during Ramadan from a low-key shop on Mohammadpur's Salimullah Road. It's a must-have. Iftar just doesn't feel right without it,” says Tanveer, a banker from Mohammadpur.

In many of Dhaka's households, the iftar table isn't truly complete unless there's a pile of jilapi, thin or thick, glistening golden under the lights. It's expected, anticipated, and honestly, non-negotiable. “I still remember how I used to get this dopamine rush while watching the street vendors swirl the batter into hot oil with effortless precision; the whole process felt like magic to me as a kid. It's steeped in my memories. And then, my grandfather would sometimes bring gurer jilapi — dipped in molasses instead of syrup, a rare treat that I'd show off to my friends like a badge of honour,” adds Tanveer.

So, whether you like it crispy, juicy, oversized, or bite-sized — one thing is certain: Ramadan wouldn't be the same without it. Even with new food trends emerging like cheese-stuffed samosas, chocolate-covered dates, or other gourmet iftar platters — jilapi's place still remains untouchable! And we think that's why people hoard it in ridiculous amounts, because it is indeed a secret coil to eternal happiness!

By Jannatul Bushra

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Ji-La-Pi or Jalebi — call it whatever you want; this crispy, sweet snack doesn't need a fancy introduction. Some make it extra crispy; some make it syrupy enough to put honey to shame, and some go full freestyle with shapes that defy geometry. From the fine dining tables of Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, where it's elevated to a culinary masterpiece, to the bustling streets of Puran Dhaka, where the local vendor swears by their “secret recipe” (which is probably just more sugar), the quest for the perfect jilapi is getting intense!



of Ramadan? And why do people hoard it in ridiculous amounts, as if it's the secret to eternal happiness? Let's hear from the true jilapi aficionados!

“I don't care what's on the iftar table, as long as there's jilapi,” says Biva, a university student from Dhanmondi. “The moment I take my first bite with muri makha (puffed rice salad), I feel like all the fasting struggles were worth it. It's a necessity for me.” Biva loves the chikon jilapi (the thin variant) deep-fried in ghee (clarified butter) from Ananda Bakery in Jigatola.

Emdad Hossain, a college teacher, reminisces, “Jilapi isn't just a snack; it's a sweet spiral of memories for me. Growing up in Puran Dhaka, it was always there — after Jumma prayers, at a milad, on the iftar table, or simply over endless cups of tea with friends after Taraweeh prayer. One bite of chikon jilapi, and I'm right back in those carefree days.”

With a chuckle, he adds, “Even now,

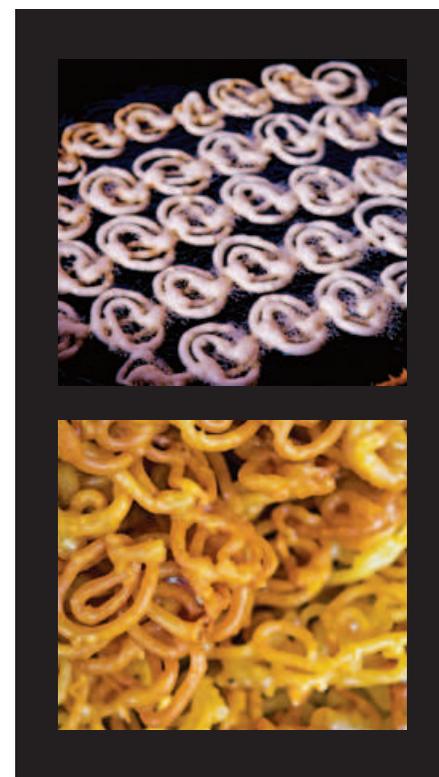
silky Reshmi Jilapi from Mithaiwala, he devours them all with equal passion. But when it comes to favourites, his heart (and taste buds) belongs to Mithaiwala's Rabri Jilapi. For the past two Ramadans, Shuvroto Kanchan has been treating himself to Rabri Jilapi — not just as a dessert, but as gym motivation! Yes, you heard that right! While most people reward their workouts with protein shakes, he prefers a sugar-soaked incentive. As he puts it, “This rabri jilapi keeps me motivated to hit the gym, even in Ramadan!”

Jilapi for fitness? Hey, whatever keeps Shuvroto's treadmill running! We are not judging!

However, his wife has pledged loyalty to Khazana Mithai's Zafran Jilapi, a saffron-infused delight fit for a queen. And just when we thought the family's jilapi saga couldn't get any sweeter, his daughter chimes in with her love for their Chana Jilapi!

With a chuckle, Kanchan says, “Our household doesn't just have a sweet tooth; we have a whole sweet jaw!”

“My grandfather always brought fresh



#PERSPECTIVE

FASTING, READING, AND FAMILY

My journey through Ramadan's sacred moments

As a lanky child who resisted eating, fasting was easy. Passing hours without food seemed like an idea not too different from the rest of the year. For a ten-year-old, Ramadan was like any other month, until Nani, my grandmother, gave it some purpose — for every day that I fasted, she would buy me a new book!

While Nani kept herself busy in the kitchen, I would read. Without ever realising how it had happened, I was immersed and fascinated by the length and breadth of human imagination. From the world of mystery, I got a healthy dose of Feluda, Teen Goyenda, and Sherlock Holmes. For adventure and sci-fi magic, I was drawn to Jules Verne and H G Wells. For a dose of laughter, Tintin and Asterix became my constant companions.

Yes, delectable iftars, too, were served on the table — sweet jilapis as incentives. However, what I remember the most is the whiff of fried cheese, one of my favourite snacks, which Nani would make especially for me. But it was not just the food that made those evenings special — it was the quiet companionship of everyone in the family. My grandmother's gentle presence, her stories from another time, and the promise of a new book made every day of fasting feel like an achievement.

Gradually, I was introduced to the joy that was sehri! Waking up at the dead end



head, and I look forward to spending time with her, just like I used to do with Nani. Mum too, has lived her life and has stories to share, and the sacred month simply comes as an excuse for us to spend more time together.

Food remains a big part of Ramadan and the familiar aroma of iftar preparations still fills our home. As much as I appreciate my wife's healthier food experiments — there is still a part of me that craves the traditional deep-fried crunch. This makes our Friday cheat meals even more delicious and pleasing to the palate.

Despite all this, it often feels like Ramadan's sacred moments are slipping away faster than I can hold onto them. However, amidst the digital distractions, I make it a point to unplug when necessary, and carve out moments.

I make a sincere effort to reconnect with friends and family who no longer live close by. Although it can never replace the physical closeness of shared meals and prayers, these virtual connections remind me of the warmth that I once experienced.

Ramadan happens to be the favourite time of the year for me. With certainty, I am not alone in this — people across the globe take these blessed hours as an opportunity to come closer to piety. In a world constantly on the move, it offers a welcome pause and appreciate what matters in life the most. I find myself more grateful for these quiet moments, reminding me that even in the midst of life's chaos, the sacred moments always provide a sense of peace and purpose.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed



of the night suddenly started to feel like a great idea. Everyone else in the family was doing it, and I felt left out whenever I accidentally missed the pre-dawn meal. As this was gradually becoming a habit, there was a subtle nudge to make Taraweeh a regular affair. People seem to undermine the beauty and effect of voluntary prayers these days, but I for one, was drawn to obligatory prayers through 'nafl'.

Those were the good old days, but as Ramadan returns every year, I find myself drawn to the same habits, as those childhood lessons have stayed with me.

My mother now has become the family




এক্সপার্ট
ডিশওয়াশ

বার | লিকুইড | পাউডার

Ordinary Dishwash বার-বার
Xpert Just একবার



* শুধুমাত্র এক্সপার্ট ডিশওয়াশ লিকুইড ৫০০ মিঃ লিঃ এর সাথে ২পিস ৭৫ গ্রাম এক্সপার্ট বার ফ্রী!

#PERSPECTIVE

How Daniel Rahman turned Radio Foorti into Bangladesh's youth phenomenon

In the mid-2000s, Bangladesh's radio landscape was barren. FM radio was virtually non-existent, and the idea of a youth-centric station seemed far-fetched. That was until Daniel Rahman stepped in, unknowingly setting the foundation for one of the country's most iconic youth brands, Radio Foorti. We got a chance to sit down with him to learn more about how the brand came to be, its role in shaping Bangladeshi culture, the decline of radio and his passion for the music industry.

An unplanned journey into radio

For Daniel Rahman, radio was never the plan. "My journey into radio happened in a rather unexpected way," he recalls. In 2006, MGH Group secured one of the first FM radio licenses in Bangladesh, and sought expert advice from India's Radio Mirchi. They were told to find someone who was deeply immersed in Dhaka's cultural scene; someone socially connected and musically inclined. "Surprisingly, I met all these criteria," Daniel says. "At the time, I was still in university, with no concrete plans to enter the radio industry. But since they were actively looking for such a person, I found myself becoming a part of it. It all happened

organically, without prior planning."

Building an authentic Bangladeshi brand

Once at the helm of Radio Foorti, Daniel had a clear vision; to create a brand that truly represented Bangladeshi youth. "Back then, brands targeting young people often felt too Westernised or carried Indian influences," he explains. "A prime example is the portrayal of youth and their culture in television commercials at the time, which didn't truly resonate with the actual young population. I wanted to change that."

The first step was to come up with a name that was unmistakably Bangladeshi and also captured the essence of being young: 'Foorti,' the Bengali word for fun, was the perfect choice. Music, of course, was the backbone of Radio Foorti, but he also wanted the station to reflect everyday youth experiences. "Traditional elements like Pahela Boishakh, *pitha, mela*, Rabindra Sangeet, and classical dance, while valuable, weren't what the youth deeply connected with. Instead, they resonated more with eating *fuchka, jhalmuri*, hanging out at tea stalls or *tong* as they are more popularly known, *adda mara*, and rickshaw rides," he says. "As someone who was young myself at the time, these were the experiences I related to as well."

By crafting a brand that spoke directly to the youth, Radio Foorti quickly became a cultural phenomenon. "We redefined what it meant to be young and Bangladeshi, moving beyond conventional cultural portrayals and embracing a more authentic identity. That's why Radio Foorti became a cultural icon from the moment it launched."

Challenges of creating a youth-centric brand

Despite his success, Daniel acknowledges that creating youth-focused brands in Bangladesh remains a challenge. "By 2009-10, Radio Foorti had established itself as one of the standout youth brands, and even in 2025, only a handful of brands have managed to



achieve that level of connection," he notes.

One of the key issues, he explains, is how brands are built. "Many ad agencies and brand developers have a rigid, outdated perception of what 'youth' means. But to successfully capture the youth market, you need to deeply understand their emotions, aspirations, struggles, and even their slang. Brands often rely on clichés rather than genuinely engaging with young people." He stresses that youth culture is constantly evolving, especially in the age of TikTok, making it even harder to keep up. "Staying relevant requires constant adaptation, something many brands fail to do."

The decline of radio and the future of the industry

While Radio Foorti flourished in its prime, the broader radio industry has struggled in recent years. "Radio's decline isn't unique to Bangladesh, it's a global phenomenon," Daniel explains. "The internet has disrupted not just radio, but also newspapers and television. However, radio's downfall happened more rapidly because the industry stopped innovating at a critical juncture."

He believes that many radio stations became complacent, assuming their audiences would remain loyal. "Once money starts flowing in, the urgency to innovate diminishes. But with the rise of the internet and social media, radio stations found themselves competing on a global scale. When content wasn't compelling enough, listeners simply moved on to better alternatives."

So, does radio have a future in Bangladesh? According to Daniel, it does, but only if drastic changes are made. "The only way forward is to embrace digital transformation. Radio can no longer function as just 'radio,' it needs to become a more integrated media platform with strong video elements and an interactive

online presence." However, he admits, "I don't see many efforts being made to capitalise on this potential. Unless drastic changes happen, the industry will continue to fade."

A burning passion for the music industry

Beyond radio, Daniel has always been passionate about the Bangladeshi music industry, which is actually one of the contributing factors of Radio Foorti's immense success. "During my time in radio, which was up until the pandemic, my main focus was always on musicians. I believed that the more musicians we nurtured, the more stars we created, and in turn, the more radio thrived."

He made it a point to support artists, regardless of their status. "My policy was simple; whether you were a legend or a bathroom singer, my door was always open. Send me your demo! Many now-successful musicians and bands got their first break because I loved their music and played it on my radio."

Today, he sees a lack of people willing to take similar initiatives. "The industry suffers because people are too focused on their own interests rather than the bigger picture. This self-centred mindset is one of the saddest aspects of Bangladeshi culture and it really stops things from growing"

However, he remains hopeful. "If more people prioritised the music scene itself, supporting up-and-coming artists instead of just pushing their own agenda, the industry could reach incredible heights. Who knows, maybe I'll step back into the industry someday to help make that happen."

From shaping the voice of Bangladeshi youth to championing local musicians, Daniel Rahman's influence on the country's cultural landscape is undeniable. His journey, though unplanned, has left an enduring mark, proving that true innovation comes from understanding and embracing the essence of a generation.

By Irfan Aziz
Photo: Courtesy; Collected