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life
Style

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Autumnal camaraderie

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PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN • MODEL: MYSHA, ARNIRA • WARDROBE: TANGAIL SAREE KUTIR • STYLING & FASHION DIRECTION: SONIA YEASMIN ISHA
MAKEUP: SUMON RAHAT • HAIRSTYLE: PROBINA

I did the 36-hour fasting, and this is what happened

I have tried many diet experiments before, but the 36-hour fast was something I'd only read about in passing. People call it a "monk fast" in some corners of the internet, the kind that promises metabolic reset, clarity of mind, and a lighter body. I went in curious, half sceptical, half hopeful, and here's how it actually played out.

The first six hours were like a breeze. Breakfast is never at the top of my list, dubbing me the non-breakfast person, which is why skipping it right after I wake up is not a problem. As the hour hand crossed the 12-hour mark, I got a sudden, similar vibe of Ramadan fasting, with one key exception: staying hydrated. The hours were kinder, with me sipping water with no restriction, and it was somehow comforting to know that I was not getting parched and dried up for the sake of self-control.



Crossing into the 24th hour was where the game changed. My focus began to wobble. Emails that usually took me five minutes suddenly stretched to twenty. Brain fog set in; not unbearable, but definitely noticeable.

The 30th hour was brutal. Hunger returned, and every smell in the house turned into a personal attack. And if you live in a brown household, you know how unforgiving that can be. Relatives casually dropping lines like "Have you gained weight?" while frying up piyajus does not exactly help. At this

point, I questioned whether the whole experiment was worth it.

However, then came the finish line. I had the foresight to time the end of my fast to align with the time I usually wake up. The results genuinely threw me off. My body felt lighter, my joints moved more freely, and the fog that had hung over my thoughts the day before vanished. Instead, there was a sharpness, not superhuman, but discernible. It felt like my body had undergone a spring cleaning.

Curious to know what happens inside you with a prolonged fast? At the 12-hour mark, your body begins to burn stored glycogen. After around 18-24 hours, the turn of fat to burn takes over after glycogen levels drop, releasing ketones. This shift leads to the mix of brain fog, then, later, clearer energy. Longer fasts also flick on cellular "housekeeping" like autophagy, where damaged components are recycled. It's not a magic anti-ageing button, but it is real and measurable.

Breaking the fast is just as important as the fast itself. You can't just dive into curry with rice and expect your stomach to be okay. I started with small sips of water until I finished a glass, then a banana that helps the gut stay cool, and then small nibbles of a paratha, fried egg, and sausage. That first meal felt like a turbo start to my already tuned system. The energy boost that came after it helped me get through the day.

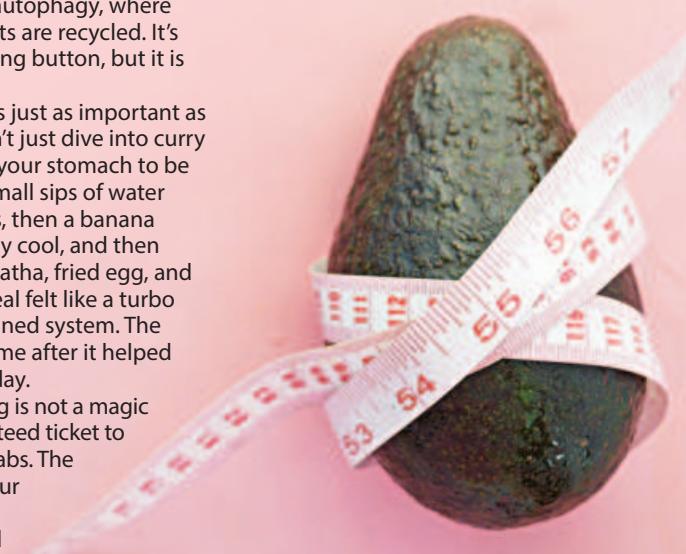
Fasting for this long is not a magic cure. It's not a guaranteed ticket to longevity or six-pack abs. The end goal of the 36-hour fast was never only about restricting food

intake. It was about self-control, a reset to my internal bio-mechanism, and most importantly, being patient in a society where meals are more important than self-control. I had spring in my step, clearer thoughts, and I felt like I had a new start when I got out. Would I do it again? Yes, but only when my body needs a break.

By K Tanzeel Zaman

Photo: Collected

Disclaimer: This article is a personal experience and should not be taken as medical advice. Prolonged fasting may not be suitable for everyone, especially individuals with underlying health conditions. Please consult a healthcare professional before attempting extended fasts or making significant changes to your diet.



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#FOOD & RECIPES

DINA BEGUM

and the rise of Bangladeshi cuisine in Britain



When she left Bangladesh as a small child, Dina Begum carried little more than memories of family, fragments of taste, and the cadence of home kitchens.

Barely four years old, she arrived in England with her parents, part of the vast Sylheti diaspora that today makes up the overwhelming majority of the British Bangladeshi community.

For many of these families, the "curry house" became their most visible cultural export. Around 80–90 per cent of Britain's curry restaurants are Bangladeshi-run, a fact that transformed Britain's food landscape while also flattening the complexities of Bangladeshi cuisine into a single word: curry!

"However, they have not been representative of authentic Bangladeshi food. Bangladeshi food is varied and unique, and I strive to show that in my work," she says. Dina Begum, now an acclaimed food writer and cook, has spent her career undoing that simplification. With her latest book, *Made in Bangladesh*, she brings the kitchen of her childhood

into the kitchens of the world.

If her first book, *The Brick Lane Cookbook*, sizzles with the smells and sights of London's East End's clamorous street stalls and home dishes, *Made in Bangladesh* is sumptuously produced, featuring idyllic images of the Bangladeshi countryside, bazaars, and produce shots, accompanied by mouthwatering photos of food.

From observation to documentation

Begum's journey as a food writer began, quite literally, at the side of her grandmother and mother.

"I learned to cook by observing and picking up techniques little by little over the years," she recalls.

"The challenge was to accurately document and write recipes that had been passed down orally, by estimation, rather than with measurements. To capture the essence of these treasured recipes and distil them into something anyone could cook meant I almost had to unlearn the way I cooked. Measuring and timing felt unnatural at first — Bangladeshi cuisine is about feel."

The painstaking process of committing these inherited rhythms to paper led to a curated set of 76 recipes for *Made in Bangladesh*. Each dish was chosen to reflect not only her Sylheti heritage but also the eight divisions of Bangladesh, ensuring that the country's diversity — geographic, cultural, and culinary was represented.

Sylhet in the spotlight

Sylheti flavours are central to Begum's story. She pays homage to them in dishes like *tusha shinni* (a ghee-based wheat halwa that evokes family gatherings), and *shatkora diye gorur mangsho* (beef cooked with the bittersweet citrus fruit unique to Sylhet). The *naga chilli*, too, fiery and unapologetic, finds its place in her repertoire.

Her most personal comfort, however, is far simpler. "For me, *alo bhorta* (potatoes mashed with fried chillies, coriander, onions and mustard oil) is the quintessential taste of home. It reminds me of childhood and, to this day, brightens a meal. Mixed with steaming white rice, it is home on a plate."

Beyond the curry house

For decades, Bangladeshi cuisine in Britain was synonymous with the neon-lit curry house. While these restaurants were vital in popularising South Asian food, Begum insists they are not the whole story. "They have been instrumental," she acknowledges, "but they haven't represented authentic Bangladeshi food."

That authenticity is now coming into focus. Britain's diners are increasingly

curious about regional cuisines, moving away from "Indian" as a catch-all label.

Social media, she notes, has accelerated this process: "From the comfort of their homes, women in particular share what they cook, piquing the interest of viewers and spreading the joy of Bangladeshi cuisine to every corner of the globe."

Travel, too, plays a part. As more Britons explore South Asia, their palates broaden, and curiosity deepens. In this climate, Bangladeshi food is finally claiming its rightful place alongside Indian and Thai in the global conversation.

A love letter to Bangladesh

Begum's first book, *The Brick Lane Cookbook*, was inspired by the diversity of East End in London, home to the biggest Bangladeshi community in the UK, its curry houses and Bengali sweet shops, its graffiti, market stalls, and, more recently, its art, fashion and street food scene.

This time, her second book is different. Begum is quick to remind readers that *Made in Bangladesh* is not simply a collection of recipes.

"It is my love letter to Bangladesh," she says. "I hope non-Bangladeshi readers discover a joyous, flavour-filled country through its food and learn about our culture and traditions. There's something in this book for everyone — vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free options included."

She credits her parents and grandmother for igniting her passion. "They instilled in me my love for Bangladeshi heritage, not just the food but the vibrant culture." That heritage, lovingly captured in recipes, photographs, and stories, is the thread she uses to stitch together her own narrative: a Bangladeshi child who grew up in Britain, now returning through taste to a homeland always present at her table.

Mustard oil and beyond

For the curious newcomer, Begum suggests three pantry staples: mustard oil, panch phoron (the five-spice mix), and date molasses. Together, they form the foundations of Bangladeshi flavour.

However, what she really offers is not a starter pack of ingredients but an invitation. To see Bangladesh beyond curry houses, beyond clichés. To recognise that behind every plate is a story: of migration, memory, adaptation, and pride.

As Britain's Bangladeshi community grows ever more confident in reclaiming its culinary identity, Dina Begum is both chronicler and catalyst. With *Made in Bangladesh*, she is not only feeding curiosity; she is feeding connection.

By Sudha G Tilak

Photo: J C Candanedo



FOREVER SILK

Reinventing a classic for EVERY generation

For Bangladesh, the saree has always been a symbol of grace, tradition, and identity. Among the countless weaves that shape the region's sartorial story, Rajshahi silk has stood out for centuries. Known for its rich sheen, intricate motifs, and luxurious drape, it has long been the centrepiece of weddings, Eid festivities, and Puja celebrations.

In its folds lies heritage, yet its enduring allure proves that silk is never stuck in the past. It evolves, adapts, and continues to hold relevance in wardrobes across generations.

The charm of silk sarees lies in their ability to create impact without trying. A single drape can transform your posture, heighten elegance, and command attention in a room full of people. Perhaps that is why these pieces have always been reserved for special occasions — when one seeks not just to dress, but to mark a moment.

Their sheen catches light differently during the day than it does at night, making them equally suited for all times of the day. An heirloom that may have once been worn by a mother at her wedding can just as seamlessly appear decades later on her daughter, styled in a way that feels fresh and timeless.

Modern fashion, however, has given the silk saree a different kind of edge.

No longer confined to a singular way of draping, today they are a canvas of experimentation. Belts cinching the waist have become a striking way to redefine its silhouette, adding structure to what was once fluid. Wide leather belts lend a bold, contemporary flair, while embroidered fabric ties keep the traditional spirit alive with a twist.

Drapes, too, have evolved; some prefer the neat, cascading pleats of classic Bengali style, while others let a longer part flow freely over one shoulder like a cape, or even loop it

have been paired with silks to push boundaries further.

Colour, too, is central to the conversation. Traditional palettes of red and gold remain eternal, but jewel tones now dominate festive wardrobes — emerald, sapphire, and ruby that gleam with intensity.

A striking combination of green and violet silk plays with complementary contrast, while vibrant magentas and cobalt blues shimmer with unapologetic glamour.

These hues are not chosen merely for aesthetic pleasure; they speak to confidence, to the spirit of celebration,

to the very essence of festivals that embrace light, sound, and life. Modern styling also makes way for softer palettes — powder blues, pastel pinks, or muted golds — that bring daytime freshness to a fabric otherwise associated with grandeur.

Accessories are like adding punctuation marks to the story we tell in our outfits. Tones of gold remain a forever companion, its warmth echoing against silk's sheen. Pearls bring restraint and refinement, while gemstones introduce playfulness.

Chunky handcrafted jewellery has found its place alongside silks, often layered over bold colours to create maximalist statements. Yet, even minimal styling — just a belt, a sleek watch, and bold earrings — can make the same impact, letting the saree's fabric command the spotlight.

In recent years, the fusion of traditional drapes with contemporary footwear has become a statement in itself. Boots peeking from beneath jewel-toned pleats break stereotypes while grounding the saree in a modern world. What once may have seemed like a rebellious styling choice now feels like a natural extension of fashion's ever-shifting language.

However, the most compelling thing about silk is its timelessness. A grandmother may drape her Rajshahi silk with practised ease, each pleat an echo of her youth, while her granddaughter may wear the same saree cinched with a metallic belt and paired with a structured blouse. Both interpretations are valid, both beautiful, and both representative of the same heritage. This intergenerational adaptability is why silk sarees endure.

In a world dominated by fleeting fashion cycles and fast-changing trends, the Rajshahi silk remains unshaken. It is as relevant in a curated fashion editorial as it is in the intimacy of a family wardrobe. It can be worn by someone twenty or seventy, in the heart of the capital or halfway across the globe, and it will always exude the same quiet authority.

And, perhaps that is the secret to its undeniable pull. Whether draped traditionally, belted boldly, or paired with experimental blouses, silk sarees continue to live on as timeless canvases of individuality. They remind us that some garments do not need to be reinvented to survive; they simply shine brighter when allowed to evolve.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Mysha, Arnira
Wardrobe: Tangail
Saree Kutir
Styling & Fashion
Direction: Sonia

Yeasmin Isha
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Hairstyle: Probina

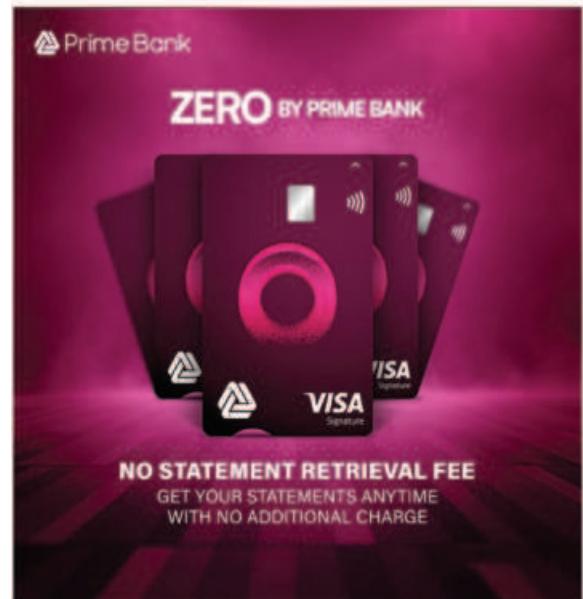


The New Style of Youth: Zero Fee Credit Card

With time, people's needs are changing and with those needs, new services are arriving in the market. The credit card industry in Bangladesh is no exception. Today, credit card usage is rapidly increasing across the country. From paying bills, online shopping and international travel to managing emergency expenses, credit cards have become an essential financial product. For many, a credit card is now more than a financial tool, it is a constant companion. Especially for urban youth, professionals and travel enthusiasts, life without a credit card seems almost incomplete. Yet, the burden of multiple fees often discourages many from using credit cards.

According to Bangladesh Bank data, domestic credit card usage showed an overall upward trend from April 2024 to April 2025. The credit card industry has seen remarkable growth, with the number of cards increasing by 65 percent—from 1.5 million to 2.5 million. However, along with this rise, customers collectively spend nearly BDT 1,500 crore annually just on credit card fees, an amount that often feels like an unnecessary burden.

Imagine, at the end of the month, when you are balancing your budget and suddenly find an issuance fee or an annual fee of credit card added on top.



ZERO BY PRIME BANK
NO MFS TRANSFER FEES
SEND MONEY TO YOUR MOBILE
WALLET AT NO ADDITIONAL CHARGE

Annoying, right? Many customers hesitate to use credit cards because of these additional and often unexpected charges. To address this pain point, Prime Bank PLC. has introduced Bangladesh's first-ever Visa Signature Credit Card with zero fees.

The Zero Fee Credit Card by Prime Bank is not just another financial product; it is a lifestyle statement, carefully designed to match the aspirations of the new generation. No unnecessary charges, no hidden costs—only freedom, comfort and a touch of modern living solution for smart life. Think about it: you apply for a credit card but you never have to worry about fees. How does that feel? Relaxing, isn't it? This is the reality now. With Prime Bank's Zero Fee Credit Card, you do not pay issuance fees, annual fees, EMI processing fees, SFS transfer fees, SMS alert fees or even over-limit fees. There are no hidden charges either. Which means— you can use your card with absolute peace of mind while elevating your lifestyle.

Take the example of Tuhin Hasan, a private sector professional who loves traveling with his family and kids. Every month, he saves a portion of his salary to plan a year-end vacation. Nevertheless, often, due to budget constraints, he cannot fully enjoy his trips. On top of that, he avoids using credit cards because of the extra fees. This meant many of his travel dreams remained incomplete. Recently, Tuhin came across news that Prime Bank had launched a Zero Fee Credit Card. Curiously, he visited a nearby branch to learn more and applied for the "Zero by Prime Bank" card. Within three working days, the card was delivered to his office address. Now, with his upcoming December vacation, he is confident that this time budget constraints won't stop him from creating memorable family moments.

This card brings freedom to every lifestyle. For those who love to travel, booking flights, hotels or arranging a last-minute holiday becomes effortless. For shopaholics, from trendy outfits to gadgets, shopping feels more enjoyable without the burden of extra charges. For the digital generation, Netflix, Spotify, online gaming and other subscriptions are easier to manage and when there are

no extra fees, the card becomes the perfect digital lifestyle partner. Even during emergencies such as medical needs, unexpected travel or sudden expenses, a credit card often acts as a lifesaver. Without extra fee pressure, this card becomes even more reliable and trustworthy.

Prime Bank's Zero Fee Credit Card is more than just a payment tool—it is an enabler of financial freedom and modern living. For today's youth and professionals, it reflects a lifestyle that values both smart spending and stress-free financial management. With no fees and no hidden charges, the card promises one thing: the freedom to live your life, your way.





Star **LIFE** Style

SHADES OF STYLE

The fashion **POWER** of eyewear



Eyewear has always straddled the line between necessity and style, but today, the balance feels more relevant than ever. There is no denying that sunglasses are a genuine necessity, shielding our eyes from sun damage and, in the time we live in, something we should make a habit of wearing regularly. Yet, practicality doesn't have to mean predictable.

Glasses and shades no longer follow a one-size-fits-all formula. From timeless aviators to bold, bedazzled frames, eyewear has become less about hiding behind lenses and more about revealing personality.

Gone are the days when oversized aviators were the only shorthand for glamour. Yes, oversized frames still have their allure, but fashion is cyclical, and the pendulum has swung back toward shapes that feel distinctly retro. The 80s-inspired smaller round glasses, or their close cousins (the slim oval frames rimmed with gold), have resurfaced in full force. Their comeback has nothing to do with nostalgia, really. It is about reclaiming an edge, balancing understated cool with effortless sophistication.

That said, choosing sunglasses is never a random affair.

Your face shape dictates which frames flatter you most. Round faces find balance in angular frames, while sharp jawlines soften beautifully under rounded edges. Heart-shaped faces lean into cat-eyes, elongating the eyes and cheekbones with feline drama. Oval faces, of course, win the lottery — they can carry nearly any frame, from oversized square shades to the tiny 90s rectangles now back in vogue.

But the real secret lies not in rules, but in the dialogue between face and frame. The right pair doesn't just complement, it amplifies.

And while we speak of amplification, few things illustrate the power of audacity better than bedazzled frames. Think glittered rims, jewel-encrusted borders, and crystals scattered across the lens edge. Once ridiculed for being "unwearable", these are now the emblem of fearless fashion.

The shift happened when stylists began pairing them not with maximalist outfits, but with streamlined, monochrome ensembles. Imagine an all-black look punctuated with rhinestone-rimmed shades. Like statement earrings, embellished sunglasses are no longer "too much" if the wearer knows how to frame them within their overall aesthetic. They

declare: fashion is supposed to be fun.

It is not just sunglasses carrying this weight of expression anymore. Regular spectacles, too, have had their renaissance. What was once reluctantly worn has now become desirable. Thin golden frames paired with casual denim make for a subtle intellectual chic, while thick-rimmed



They challenge the very idea of what eyewear should be. Why shouldn't you wear frames simply because you like the way they change your look? Not everything in fashion needs a function; sometimes, beauty is its own justification.

Current styling trends have further strengthened the role of eyewear. Where once accessories were chosen as afterthoughts, they are now central to the look. A solid, monochrome outfit

— a pristine white kurta, a sleek black jumpsuit, or even a muted beige sari — comes alive when paired with the right accents. Layered jewellery has been one go-to, but sunglasses or spectacles add another layer of intrigue.

Perhaps that is the true allure of eyewear: its ability to be transformative with minimal effort. You can step out in the most basic outfit, yet the right pair of shades instantly lends an air of mystique, nonchalance, or authority—whichever persona you wish to channel. And unlike clothes, which may be restricted by occasion or formality, sunglasses and glasses walk easily between worlds. They belong at the beach, in the boardroom, at brunch, and even at evening galas.

In the end, eyewear is not just an accessory. It is a narrative. A pair of tiny oval sunglasses might whisper of vintage, while jewelled frames may roar with contemporary rebellion. A golden-rimmed spectacle might signal bookish charm, while tinted glasses can exude rockstar casualness. The story changes not only with the design but with the wearer.

Even "fashion glasses," a whole different category lacking actual lenses and having embellishment in their place, have carved out their place. These are frames that exist purely for style — sometimes rimless, sometimes embellished with pearls or metallic detailing, and sometimes nothing more than a dramatic silhouette on the face. Worn perched lightly on the bridge of the nose, they function much like a statement necklace or an ear cuff: ornamental, striking, and designed to transform an outfit instantly.

black glasses can turn an otherwise plain outfit into something commanding. And then, there are tinted frames — rosy pinks, ocean blues, smoked greys — that straddle the line between sunglasses and prescription lenses.

Even "fashion glasses," a whole different category lacking actual lenses and having embellishment in their place, have carved out their place. These are frames that exist purely for style — sometimes rimless, sometimes embellished with pearls or metallic detailing, and sometimes nothing more than a dramatic silhouette on the face. Worn perched lightly on the bridge of the nose, they function much like a statement necklace or an ear cuff: ornamental, striking, and designed to transform an outfit instantly.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Surjo
Styling & Fashion Direction: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Hairstyle: Probina

#FOOD & RECIPES

TAAL ER ROSH, TAAL ER GUR: Bengal's Sweet Summer Tradition



In Bengal, summer is incomplete without the sweet allure of palm fruit and its golden counterpart, palm jaggery. Known locally as *taal er rosh* and *taal er gur*, these age-old gifts of nature are more than just seasonal indulgences. Whether warming up a cup of coffee, binding sesame into laddus, sweetening celebratory pongal, or blending into a refreshing milkshake, palm fruit and jaggery find ways to surprise both the palate and the body.

COFFEE WITH PALM FRUIT EXTRACT

Ingredients

- 2 cups water
- 1/4 cup palm jaggery
- 1 pod cardamom
- 1 tsp instant coffee powder

Method

Bring the water to boil then add the jaggery and let it simmer for up to 3 to 4 minutes or until the jaggery is properly mixed. Add the coffee and cardamom and brew for another 2-3 minutes or until it smells just the right amount of heavenly!

Serving —

Strain it and serve. You may add milk to this.

PALM JAGGERY AND SESAME LADDUS

Ingredients

- 1/2 kg palm jaggery
- 250g white sesame seeds
- 1 tbsp pure ghee
- 100g cashew nuts powder

Method

Roast the sesame in a frying pan for up to 30 seconds. Break the jaggery up into a malleable powder and add the powdered cashew nut, the ghee and the sesame seeds and mix them well. Roll them up into small balls. You may add some extra ghee if you feel the laddu is looking to dry or the laddus keep flaking off.

Serving —

Place a chopped almond or a raisin on top before serving.

SHAKKARA PONGAL

Ingredients

- 100ml pure ghee
- 30g cashews
- 2 tbsp raisins
- 150g split yellow lentils (moong dal)

- 250g basmati rice
- 350ml milk
- 150g-200g jaggery
- 1/2 tsp ground cardamom
- 1/4 tsp ground star anise

Method

Melt the ghee in a large frying pan over medium heat; fry the cashews and raisins in the melted ghee until the cashews are brown, about 5 minutes. Remove the cashews and raisins from the frying pan, set aside and add the lentils to the frying pan and fry in the ghee until fragrant. Stir in the rice, milk, jaggery and cardamom with the lentils. Cook like any normal 'polao' or until the rice is tender, adding water as needed to keep moist, about 30 minutes.

Serving —

Mix the cashews and raisins into the mixture to serve and sprinkle some mint leaves on top.

PALM FRUIT MILKSHAKE

Ingredients

- 3 ice apples or palm fruits
- 1 cup chilled milk
- Few saffron strands



- 1 tsp jaggery
- Lots of ice

Method

Blend the ingredients together except for the saffron. Use the saffron sparingly so as not to overpower the entire taste of the fruit with that of the fragrant saffron.

Serving —

Serve chilled with a spring of mint on top!

Note

Palm juice or "taal er rosh" is the sweet sap extracted from the fruit of palm trees during summer. This is a symbolic and well-known food in Bengal. It contains vitamin A, B, C and the elements zinc, calcium, potassium, and iron. It also contains antioxidants.

How to extract the palm pulp —

Peel the fruit, separate the seeds (there are usually three segments) and cut off the fibre with a pair of scissors. Just rub the fibre over colander holes until the pulp passes through. Now pass the pulp through a sieve. The juice is ready to use.

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#HEALTH & FITNESS

Eating right without starving: A practical nutrition plan for women

Staying in shape while maintaining proper nutrition has almost always been an uphill battle for Bangladeshi women. A 2023 study reveals that female students in universities were more likely to develop eating disorders in comparison to male students. It further stated that women have higher body dissatisfaction and place greater importance on physical appearance, which may cause them to exhibit unfavourable eating behaviours.

The media further perpetuates these by endorsing thin-ness as the benchmark for beauty and fitness. To add insult to injury, there are family members and peers passing snide remarks about their bodies. The result? Skipping meals and eating less than the required amount have become the norm for many young girls and women, ultimately forcing them to go into starvation mode.

Nayma Hasan, Nutrition and Lifestyle Coach, does a deep dive on the social, emotional, and cultural factors that hinder women from meeting their nutritional and fitness goals. She is a Certified Nutrition Coach backed by Precision Nutrition on Exercise Nutrition. In addition, she's a Personal Trainer, vetted by the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) and a Level-1 Online Trainer, certified by Personal Trainer Development Center.

Hasan shares that energy-dense foods like processed carbohydrates and industrialised fats cause us to store more fat in our bodies instead of gaining muscle. However, if we eat protein and fibre-rich foods, and consume three smaller meals throughout the day we will not gain this weight. However, the grim reality is that our relationship with food is mostly



emotional than logical.

The fault in our portions

Having gone through the same motions in her formative years, Hasan reminds us that each body is unique, and no one should force themselves into one specific type as their health and well-being are tied to genetics, age as well as environment. According to the nutrition coach, our social and cultural conditioning often acts as the blueprint for our staple diets.

"Habit and comfort are two reasons why people have a hard time controlling their portions. Hence, they don't think about the repercussions in the long run. Children who are fed large portions of rice from a young age tend to continue this practice in their later lives. Which is why no one has the awareness to question it, let alone unlearn it," she observes.

Nayma Hasan adds that the cultural practice of 'eating fast' as opposed to mindfully also impacts children well into their adulthood. This behaviour causes the bodily functions to fight stress, which signals the body to store the fat as a coping mechanism for survival.

"When we eat mindfully from an early age, it promotes a relaxed digestion, reduces storage of fat and suppresses spontaneous cravings. This holds more benefits for children's bodies as they get older," states Nayma Hasan.

Carb conundrum: To eat or not to eat?

Nayma informs us that carbohydrates, proteins, and fats are essential macronutrients for all bodies. Micronutrients are the minerals and vitamins that we get from certain fruits and vegetables. Therefore, we need to strike the right balance.

Carbs fuel our bodies and give us energy,



and also aid in growing muscles. If our body lacks the energy to develop muscles, it will not function properly. We primarily focus on protein for muscle development, but this also needs to be backed by carbohydrates.

"Keeping body fat percentage at an all-time low is recommended only for those who are participating in bodybuilding competitions. But for ordinary people, it is not possible to function with just six per cent body fat. Hence, we need to consume a specific amount and not completely cut it out as a measure for weight loss," she suggests.

Is this realistic?

Discipline must be tailored according to one's health and lifestyle, says Nayma.

"I will never be super skinny, despite my skills and knowledge of fitness and nutrition, since I have a specific body type. We must remember that there's a stark difference between our lives and influencers, which is why we cannot replicate their fitness goals," she emphasises.

For example, people who have PCOS struggle to lose weight as their body's messaging system is disrupted. Emotions are at an all-time high, which is why their drive to lose weight is often thwarted.

In such cases, Nayma recommends giving grace to our bodies through a befitting action plan aligned with health issues and weaknesses. Only then will we get an understanding of our strengths and limitations.

Clean eating: Easy, affordable and guilt-free

Contrary to popular belief, a calorie-deficient diet can be maintained while eating rice, provided it's the right amount. Nayma Hasan recommends women to split their daily nutrition into two to three smaller meals, or four to five if needed, while keeping in mind that these may

change according to their lifestyles.

For women working 8-10 hours, the strategies need to be simple — to have food that's available at home and not fall for the popularly marketed 'fit foods' such as oats and quinoa. Simultaneously, they need to consciously keep processed food at bay.

"Wherever we go, we must find the foods which are naturally produced. While it's impossible to control portions at restaurants, we can still prioritise protein. So, instead of cutting out carbs, we must amp up our protein intake to encourage muscle development and overall bodily function on a cellular level. Secondly, if we are adding vegetables and salads to our diet, we can choose places that provide items such as grilled chicken. For home-cooked meals, our carb intake should be one-fourth of the portions, in comparison to protein. University-going women can opt for budget-friendly foods at the cafeteria that include chicken, eggs or try packing lunch from home," Nayma Hasan says.

For homemakers who are unable to exercise regularly, she suggests maintaining portions of home-cooked meals and reducing the availability of processed foods at home, when shopping for groceries.

"If meal prep sounds physically taxing, they can prepare some ingredients to avoid preparing food from scratch. At the same time, they need to eat foods at specific times of the day to practice mindful eating and try to curb their cravings after having the last meal of the day," she explains.

Before signing off, Nayma Hasan reminds us that alongside nutrition, every individual should prioritise drinking water. She says, "Whether you eat healthy or junk, make sure you drink enough water, as it helps suppress hunger and cravings."

By Rubab Nayeem Khan
Photo: Collected



#LIFEHACKS

A millennial's guide to buying fish in Dhaka



So, here's the tale: it all started with that classic accusation from the older generation, "millennials wouldn't know a fresh fish if it flopped into their shopping bag." We, the city-dwelling, screen-addicted generation, apparently stand accused of being hopeless at navigating a proper raw fish market.

Well, challenge accepted!

My plan was ambitious at first: wake up at an ungodly 4 AM and head to Karwan Bazar just as the fish trucks rolled in. But let's be honest, that didn't happen. I'm a millennial, not a miracle worker. Instead, I settled for a more human-friendly hour and trotted

that's not my problem." Fair enough. You don't come to a bazar in Dhaka, expecting customer service with a smile.

But then came my saviour: Munir bhai, the owner of shop number 17, who decided that I was worth a bit of his time. Over a quick cup of tea from a nearby stall, he explained the art of fish buying. "The prime time," he said, "is around 9 AM, when the freshest fish hit the stalls. The longer you wait, the more you are left with what everyone else has passed over."

He also broke down the types: the priciest are pure river fish, then you have the mid-tier fish that are a cross between farmed and river fish, and finally the fully



off to Town Hall Bazar in Mohammadpur around noon.

When I walked into the bazar, it was like stepping into a world of fishy chaos. It was a beautiful, slippery chaos where every seller was busy, every stall was full, and everyone seemed to have only two seconds for a clueless newcomer like me. The air smelt like salt, iron, sweat and fish. So. Many. Fish. The floor was so wet that you might have thought flip-flops were a death trap.

I tried asking a few sellers how to tell a good fish from a bad one, and the responses ranged from polite "I'm too busy" hand waves to the blunt "if you don't know,

farmed fish, which are the most affordable. And when it comes to our beloved hilsa, check the neck; wide and firm is the mark of a good one, and clear eyes are a must.

Now, Munir bhai's advice was golden, but here's what I picked up beyond his wisdom, lessons every first-time fish buyer in Dhaka should know:

Freshness matters

Fish doesn't lie if you know where to look. Smell is the first giveaway. A good fish should smell fresh and mild, not like a pungent, damp rag. Then there are the eyes, clear, not cloudy, with a brightness that screams it was swimming just hours



ago. The flesh should bounce back when you press it, never soft or mushy. And don't forget the gills: they should be a healthy red or pink, not a dull brown.

And then he added, "You also must look if the 'naabhi' of the fish is fresh and clean! Well, don't shoot the messenger. This is how the fish seller names the anus of the fish. If it's fresh and clean, it means the fish is still fresh. If it is dark, then the guts of your fish are most likely at the point of no return."

Seasonality and price

Fish in Dhaka, especially hilsa, play by their own rules. Off-season, you'll pay more for less, and what you get may not even be the real deal. Hilsa is notorious for being faked, with cheaper species passed off as the prized fish. There's even research dedicated to spotting counterfeit ilish. Moral of the story: be cautious and don't let excitement cloud your judgement. Sometimes it's better to wait for the season than overspend on a knock-off.

Authentication and trust

Dhaka's fish trade has its fair share of creativity, not always the good kind. With high-demand species, it's not uncommon for sellers to mix in cheaper fish or pass off low-quality stock as premium. That's why

reputation matters. Word of mouth is your best friend here; ask locals which stalls are trustworthy, and stick to sellers who don't mind you inspecting their stock closely.

Storage and handling at home

The battle does not end once you have bought your prize catch. Fish is delicate. Keep it cold on the way home, preferably on ice if you are making a long trip, and do not leave it sitting out in Dhaka's heat. Clean and gut it as soon as possible, even if you are not cooking right away. Your freezer is a safety net, but freshness fades the longer you wait.

Munir bhai also had a strong opinion on online fish shopping. "Yes, it's easy. Yes, they clean and deliver to your door," he said, with a shrug, "but you lose the instinct. You don't learn how to judge a fish. Here," he pointed to his stall, "you see, you smell, you touch. Online, you trust."

And he wasn't wrong. It would not be a lie if you call using an app for convenience from your couch tempting, but experiencing and doing what many people do daily, such as standing in a bazar, shoulder to shoulder with strangers, picking up on things and how they haggle and get the best fish are some things that an app can never teach.

I felt this eerie sense of success when I walked out of the Town Hall Bazar with the fish I just bought. I chose a fish, according to the checklist, haggled a little and felt like I was failing, learnt a lot, and didn't slip on the wet floor.

For a bystander, it could have seemed like a normal errand, but for me, it was a process that my father and forefathers went through. It reminded me that even some skills, however small, can tether you to the culture you grew up in.

By K Tanzeel Zaman

Photo: Md Ashiqul Alam (Shuvo)

#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

What 'GHOR JAMAI' really means in today's society

In many cultures around the world, the norm after marriage dictates that the newlywed wife moves in with the husband (and his family) and makes his house her new home. But what happens when circumstances demand a reversal of this shift and the husband decides to move in with the wife's family?

For as long as memory serves, women have been glorified for leaving their families after marriage and coming to the husband's home to accept his family as hers. It is a heavy cross to bear, but one that earns her the badge of being a "good" wife and an "adjusting" woman.

Oddly, the same is not the case for a man who decides to live with his wife's family. In fact, the term "ghor jamai" has been used as a derogatory label across the Indian subcontinent, often implying that the husband is "too soft" or that he lacks self-respect. As a result, the phenomenon is rarely discussed, much less accepted. For many, the idea of a man leaving his own family to be with his wife's simply means the husband values his own kin less or is too lovesick to stand up for his own familial bonds.

Despite the double standards, modern society is a convenience society. Back in the day, the concept of a nuclear family was perhaps just as frowned upon, but here we are. Younger couples with dynamic lifestyles prefer to tailor their lives according to what works for them and are happy to turn a deaf ear to what people have to say about it.

"I've moved in with my wife after marriage," shared Anwar Mutahar, a 36-year-old banker. "My house is small, and already has an unmarried sister living in it, along with my parents."

Anwar mentioned that there was simply no room for him and his wife to be able to live there comfortably. "My mother-in-law is an ailing widow who needs my wife's support with most things," he added. "It just made sense to shift to my wife's home — we saw it as a win-win situation for everyone."

Many couples consider proximity to workplace, ailing/dependent parents and space issues to be adequate reasons to decide to reside in their wife's home. "Both my husband and I work in Gulshan," stated Ruchi, a new bride of barely four months. "My husband used to commute all the

way from Lalmatia, and with the present traffic situation, this was a very stressful arrangement."

She managed to convince her husband that living in Gulshan with her parents was a better solution to their problems.

"I told him that it would save us at least a couple of hours in the day, not to mention fuel costs."

Her husband saw the logic behind her words and was able to convince his parents. "My husband and I visit my parents-in-law over the weekend, sometimes even staying over for the two days."

Not everyone, however, is on board with this idea, finding it difficult to change the age-old mindset. "I am a girl-mom," declared Najma Kareem, a woman in her early 70s. "My mother left her home when she got married, and never claimed any other house but my father's as her own. Nor did I. And neither will my daughter."

Najma feels that if her son-in-law

While Najma has concrete reasons for her stance in this regard, most of the time, people above a certain age do not have any reasonable backing for their vehement refusal of such a setting — except, perhaps, that the husband retains no respect when residing in his wife's home. This volatile idea of respect, however, is renounced abjectly by younger couples who want to break out of this traditional thinking.

"I am my own person," said Anwar. "I have to earn my own respect; it is hardly something I can shove down society's throat simply by living in my own house." Anwar claims that his wife probably holds him in higher regard due to his decision to support her ailing mother, and his parents don't mind the arrangement, which is what ultimately matters.

The youth of today care more about their own convenience and well-being than society's perception of them. As such, one can expect familial structures to be fluid and dynamic, and as long as both sets of



lives with her daughter and herself in their home, the groom's family may have misgivings with her, now or in the future. She also feels that her son-in-law may become dependent on her income in future, if he feels he is doing them a favour simply by allowing her daughter to stay with her.

parents are open-minded and practical, there is no doubt that the ghor-jamai is here, not just to stay, but to become at least as common as the conventional culture or the nuclear family culture.

By Munira Fidai
Image: LS

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#LIFEHACKS

RENTING SMART: What every apartment dweller should know

Renting an apartment is often seen as a temporary pitstop on the way to something more — owning a home. But for many urban dwellers, especially young professionals or couples starting, renting is not a phase. It's the reality. And like any reality, it gets better the more you understand it. Whether you are moving into your first apartment or switching to a new one, being a smart renter can save you money, mental energy, and sometimes, your security deposit.

Ask the right questions

The first step to being a smart renter starts long before moving in. During your visit, don't let a fresh coat of paint or a city view distract you from practical issues. Ask about backup electricity during outages, whether there's a 24-hour water supply, how utility bills are handled, and who is responsible for plumbing or electrical repairs.

If the landlord says "everything is fine," push gently for specifics. "I asked the landlord if the water supply was reliable," says Farhan, a recent renter in Uttara. "He assured me there were no issues, but during my first week, the taps ran dry every morning after 9 AM. Some days, I had to buy water jars just to shower."

Getting details now prevents frustration later. Always make sure what's agreed upon ends up in writing!

Negotiating rent and extra benefits

Many renters assume the rent on the listing is fixed. In reality, it's often negotiable if you approach it politely and with data. Compare nearby listings and highlight the apartment's shortcomings — lack of natural light, older fixtures, and no parking space.



"I liked the place, but showed the landlord two cheaper options nearby," says Nusrat, a young professional who recently moved to Mirpur. "He didn't drop the rent but offered to install free Wi-Fi instead."

If the landlord can't reduce the monthly rate, negotiate for improvements or services — painting, new fans, minor repairs before you move in. Sometimes the rent stays the same, but the value you get increases.

Document everything to protect your deposit

Once you have moved in, don't assume everything is fine just because the keys are in your hand. Take photos or videos of every room — scuffed walls, chipped tiles, broken sockets — and store them somewhere safe. This protects you from unfair deductions when you leave.

Normal wear and tear — faded paint, minor scratches — should not be charged

against your deposit. But breakage caused by misuse will occur. If something breaks, report it early. The longer you wait, the more it looks like negligence. Clarify with your landlord which repairs they handle and which ones you are responsible for. This is one of the simplest ways to avoid losing your security deposit unnecessarily.

Understand what not to do in a rented apartment

Living in a rented apartment means respecting limits. Don't drill holes or repaint without permission, even if you think you're improving the space. These changes can cost you at the end of your lease. Avoid subletting to someone else or letting a



friend stay long-term without approval; it can violate your agreement and even lead to eviction.

Be especially careful about ignoring small issues. A leaking tap or a damp corner might seem harmless, but left unchecked, they can turn into expensive problems you'll be blamed for. Smart renters treat small problems as early warnings and communicate with the landlord promptly.

Think beyond the first month

Before signing any rental agreement, it's essential to understand the legal aspects — even if it's just a simple contract between you and the landlord. Go through the lease carefully. Make sure it clearly states the monthly rent, deposit amount, duration of the contract, notice period, and who handles repairs.

In many cases, tenants skip the fine print and later get caught in verbal loopholes. If you are unsure about a clause, ask for clarification. In some cases, landlords might add conditions like "no guests after 10 PM" — rules you should be aware of from the start. And if anything seems one-sided or unclear, it's always better to discuss (or renegotiate) before moving in, not after a problem arises.

In short, a smart renter is not someone who always pays the lowest rent; it's someone who lives with fewer surprises and more control. By asking the right questions, negotiating with facts, documenting the condition of your home and respecting the boundaries of a rented space, you're not just protecting your deposit — you're protecting your peace of mind.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Collected