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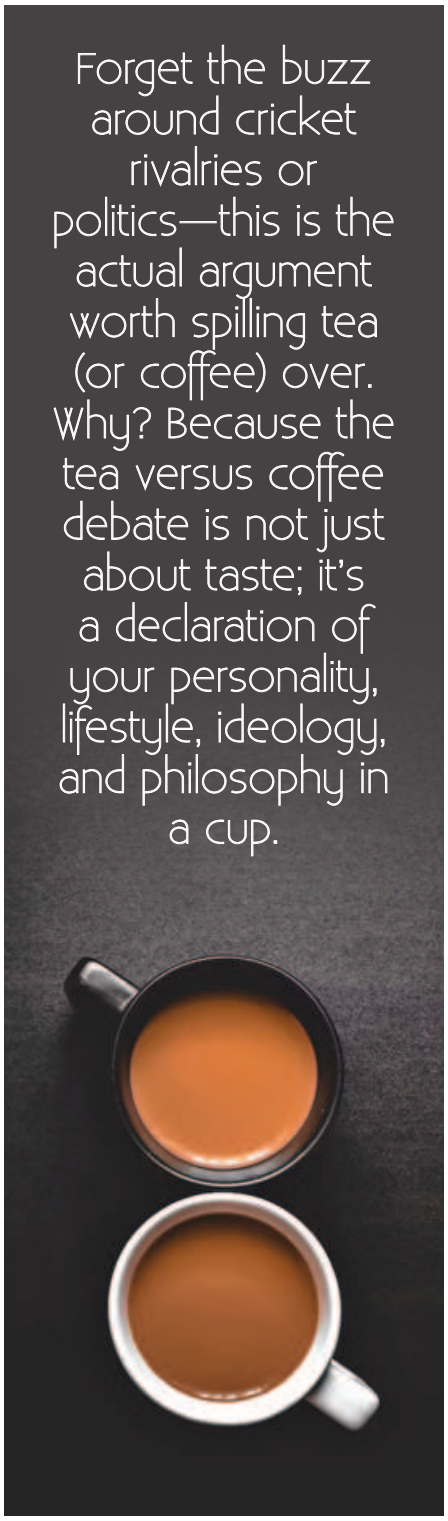
TIME *for* a tea break!

PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN • MODELS: SUHI, FABLIHA, ELLA • BACKGROUND STYLING: RBR • FASHION DIRECTION: ISHA YEASMIN
WARDROBE: SHAHRUKH AMIN • JEWELLLERY: ZAF'S JEWELS • MAKEUP: SUMON • HAIR: PROBINA • SPECIAL THANKS TO ZAFREEN KHAN



Forget the buzz around cricket rivalries or politics—this is the actual argument worth spilling tea (or coffee) over. Why? Because the tea versus coffee debate is not just about taste; it's a declaration of your personality, lifestyle, ideology, and philosophy in a cup.

#CHECK IT OUT

FORGET POLITICS, let's argue about tea and coffee!

To settle the score, we ventured into Dhaka's bustling streets, cosy cafes, and tea stalls to hear from everyday enthusiasts. The responses? As diverse and caffeinated as the drinks themselves!

"Can you picture our regular adda (hangout) sessions without tea?" asks Maruf Hassan, someone often found quoting Marx at different tea stalls near Dhaka University. "Tea is revolutionary! Every major protest we've staged was fuelled by countless cups of tea. It runs in our blood!"

Understanding Maruf's emotions, we stopped him there and proceeded to **coffee loyalists** who definitely aren't the ones to back down.

"Tea is for gossip; coffee is forideas," says Fatin, a poet who insists his best work happens over a cup of espresso. He might have written only two poems in the last decade, but they were profound, and he seemed proud!

Tea advocates argue that coffee is elitist, a drink for hipsters and CEOs who write emails with "Kind Regards." Meanwhile, coffee fans accuse tea drinkers of lacking ambition.

"Tea people are old; they just sit and talk; coffee people act!" claims Tasnia, a budding startup founder with at least five failed ventures but a robust caffeine addiction!

Meanwhile, Zareen Tasnim Aboni, an avid admirer of milk tea, who cannot think of starting her morning without a sip of it, passionately declares, "Tea is the ultimate drink of comfort and connection. Nothing—and I repeat nothing—can rival the sheer bliss of a steaming cup of milk tea. Pair it with a flaky paratha, and it's like heaven took a detour through your taste buds. Coffee? Please. It's just anxiety in a cup!"

"Honestly, I've never felt closer to a panic attack in my life until I tried an espresso shot at a fancy restaurant," chuckles Tabassum Maisha, a political science student. "Coffee doesn't wake me up; it puts me on edge—like it's yelling at me to get my life together!" she adds with a smile. "But tea? Tea is like that soft-spoken friend who just gets you. It's versatile and everywhere. Feeling cold? Ginger tea. Feeling down? Masala tea. Feeling lonely? Head to TSC for a cup and some company.

"Tea doesn't rush you; it soothes you, gives you time to breathe, to think. It's a warm hug in a cup. Coffee, on the other hand, is like a drill sergeant yelling, 'Wake up and conquer the world!' No, thanks—I don't like to be yelled at!" Maisha says.

Another TSC tea stall loyalist, Rahat Mia has a more brutal yet practical take.

He says, "Tea is for everyone. It doesn't matter if you're rolling in cash or counting pennies—you can enjoy a good cup of tea anywhere. Have you ever seen your mum serving coffee to the guests? No, right? Exactly! Tea is a ritual, a part of our culture. Coffee? That's for folks who want to look important while sipping bitterness out of overpriced cups. It's a capitalist intruder — trying to hijack our tradition!"

And then there's the health angle. "Have you ever heard of a tea overdose?" joked Enayet Haque. "Tea is gentle. It doesn't mess with your heart rate. It's the drink for longevity."

Although coffee enthusiasts retort that their beloved drink is far more cosmopolitan.

"Coffee is global, sophisticated. The aroma, the making process—it's a form of art!" says Mukit, a techie sipping on a mocha at a café that charges extra for foamed milk. "Tea is stuck in the past, much like Bengal's infrastructure!" he adds.

Now, Mukit is not entirely wrong, and not everyone is taking sides!

"Why not both?" asks Tahira, a microbiology student waiting for her tea outside Metro Station. "I drink tea during the day for energy and coffee in the evening to feel fancy." Her pragmatism, however, is a rarity in this city.

Dhaka may never choose between tea and coffee. And why should it? After all, what's more quintessentially Dhaka than passionately arguing over two cups, with no intention of picking a side?

By Jannatul Bushra
Photo: Collected

#FYI

Detecting cancer through breast self-examination

5 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Breast cancer is curable, provided it is detected in stages I, II and III. Measures like self-examination, having annual mammograms after the age of 40, and maintaining a healthy diet and weight can all help in the prevention and early detection of breast cancer.

What are the warning signs of breast cancer?

Some tell-tale signs that your breasts urgently need to be checked for the dreaded C-word are an inverted nipple that does not stick out, nipples that ooze discharge or are crusty, redness, swelling or rash on breasts, and/or dimpled or puckered skin (much like an orange peel).

How can I check for breast anomalies at home?

Women are advised to check for breast anomalies at home through a breast self-examination. The process is fairly simple and does not take more than a few minutes.

How can I do a breast self-examination?

Stand in front of the mirror with your upper body exposed. Look for dimpling, swelling, redness, or even a change in the appearance of breast skin. Feel around each breast or side of the chest in a circular motion for lumps. Go all the way up to the collarbone and under each armpit and lymph nodes. Use a mix of light and firm pressure, but do not press hard enough for it to hurt. Pay attention to the nipple — a healthy nipple will point outward with no discharge (unless breastfeeding). Lightly squeeze each nipple to check for unusual discharge or crustiness.

Repeat the process in several positions, such as while having hands on the hips, with arms held overhead, and then again, with a hand on the forehead when lying on your back. Anything that looks unusual should be monitored or taken to your physician for further medical examination.

What are the 7 Ps of breast self-examination?

The 7 Ps of breast self-examination stand for position, perimeter, palpation, pressure, pattern, practice, and planning.

Position: The exam should be done standing up with arms by your side, hands on your hips and then raised, when standing up, and lying on your back with one arm on your forehead, when lying down.

Perimeter: The exam should cover the full breast area from the collar bone to the armpits and nearby lymph nodes.

Palpation: This involves the use of the pads of three middle fingers to feel for breast changes.

Pressure: Light to firm, the pressure should be intentional but not painful.

Pattern: Patterns such as a systematic circular or linear one make sure the entire breast is covered in the self-exam.

Practice: This means performing the exam regularly to familiarise yourself with your breasts so that you are better able to tell if and when changes occur.

Planning: This involves planning for practical steps you can take if you find something suspicious.

How often should I repeat breast self-examination?

The breast self-examination needs to be repeated regularly, once every month, and ideally around the same stage of the menstrual cycle every month. Experts believe that the best time for breast self-examination is right after periods are over. For menopausal women with irregular periods, it is advisable to try to complete their exam at least once a month, regardless of their menstrual cycle.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected

#INTERVIEW

Samaha Subah on reimagining Nakshi Kantha

When Samaha Subah launched SIZ (short for Sarwar and Ismat Zaman, her parents), she was not trying to build just another fashion label. Subah was building a bridge between personal legacy and collective heritage, between the textures of tradition and the silhouettes of modernity.

"My mother introduced me to fabrics, textures, markets," she recalls. "And my father gave me the grit to create something of my own." SIZ is rooted in that dual inheritance. The result is a brand that speaks to both past and present, turning one of Bangladesh's most intimate craft forms, Nakshi Kantha, into contemporary fashion.

Why Nakshi Kantha?

To Subah, Nakshi Kantha is not just a textile; it's a narrative. "It's beautiful, intricate," she says, "but right now it's mostly limited to quilts. That risks turning it into a dying art." Her mission is to bring the kantha out of the home and onto the streets, into wardrobes, and ideally, into conversations.

It started with a jacket. Made from a repurposed kantha, it became one of her most-loved designs. Encouraged by the response, she expanded the idea into an entire collection. "The idea was to create garments that younger people would wear: clothes that carry cultural meaning, but also feel fresh, wearable, and modern."

Starting a business: Not a glamorous launch

Like many first-time founders, Subah's expectations did not align with reality. "I thought I'd sell out in a month," she admits. "I made three sales in the first month, seven in the next. It was a slow climb." But it taught her to let go of romanticism.

"Starting a business is like chewing glass. There are so many factors you do not account for, like logistics, vendor issues, delays, floods, hartals!"

She sources all her materials locally and works with a network of about 50 women in Jamalpur, whose handcrafted Nakshi Kanthas become the foundation of her garments. However, working with local vendors also means navigating an ecosystem without formal contracts, where external factors, such as weather or transportation strikes, routinely disrupt timelines.

A realistic take on sustainability

SIZ is not marketed as a sustainable brand, and that's intentional.

"We are not there yet," Subah says plainly. "We are working towards sustainability, but there are still things we need to fix." She points to her packaging: one part made from recycled plastic, the other still conventional poly. "Once that stock is done, we plan to shift to jute or paper, but until then, I will not pretend we are fully sustainable."

What she does take pride in is her brand's upcycling initiative, The Reject Project.

"When I noticed scraps of Nakshi Kantha were going to waste, I started making bandanas and patchwork jackets. I have also used rejected garments and factory waste jeans, altering them or selling them at reduced prices."

This approach, she says, is less about visuals and more about respect for the artisan's labour, for the fabric's potential, and for the environment. It's about working with what's already there and finding value in the overlooked.

Walking the line between heritage and innovation

Balancing tradition with sustainability is not always a smooth path. Nakshi Kantha is rooted in memory, emotion, and slowness, whereas fashion often demands speed, scale, and trend. Subah sees potential in the tension.

Her strategy is to amplify traditional craft while making it relevant to younger, eco-conscious consumers both in Bangladesh and abroad.

"I want people to see that you can create fun, wearable designs without losing connection to heritage," she says. In doing so, she also hopes to expand economic opportunities for rural women and reframe how we think of Bangladeshi craftsmanship.

Not a brand of perfection, but of process

SIZ does not lean into glamour or curated gloss. It's a brand that embraces being a work-in-progress, and that's what makes it compelling. From patchwork jackets to flawed denim revived with Kantha embroidery, every piece reflects not just aesthetic thought, but intention.

What Subah is building is not just a fashion label. It's a soft resistance to the idea that tradition must be preserved in museums or marketed as luxury. Grounded in everyday wear, stitched with care, and unapologetically real, her garments live in a different space.

SIZ may be small, but it's asking big questions. What does it mean to honour heritage without freezing it in time? Can sustainability emerge from systems not originally built for it? Samaha Subah does not claim to have the perfect answers. However, with every stitch, every patch, every leftover scrap given new form, she's showing us that fashion, at its best, can be both reflective and radical. And in doing so, she is not just designing clothes, she is designing a conversation.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Mashrukur Rahman Khan

#REVIEW

ASHWINER CHA CHAKRA: A tribute to singer Farida Parveen

At first glance, it looked like an intimate adda spot — a blackboard scribbled with "Ashwiner Cha Chakra," a terracotta pitcher, a palm plant in a pierced clay vase, and a dheki propped in one corner like a nod to rural stillness. However, inside this corner of curated nostalgia, something deeper was brewing. It was an evening that stitched together memory, music, and vegan meals, all in honour of the woman who once gave voice to Lalon's soul, Farida Parveen.

The event, organised by Faiza Ahmed, proprietor and fashion designer of the clothing brand Manas, was not a formal tribute in the textbook sense. Instead, it chose intimacy, the kind that lets grief breathe and admiration simmer. Ashwiner Cha Chakra was less of a memorial and more of a remembering.

"This wasn't meant to be a programme," said Faiza Ahmed quietly. "It was something I had to do with my hands, my heart, and my space. Farida Apa's voice was not just music; it was a home for so many of us. I wanted to create a corner where that feeling could linger a little longer."

At the heart of the evening was a performance by Gazi Md Abdul Hakim, flautist and husband of Farida Parveen. He did not say much, but his flute carried something words could not. It was filled with longing, gratitude, and a quiet conversation with someone no longer in the room but still very much in the air.

Anchoring the tribute was the ever-persistent presence of Lalon. His philosophy did not hover as a historical

footnote; it pulsed through the evening like a current. From the choice of vegan dinner (earth-conscious, body-respecting) to the absence of rigid formality, everything reflected Lalon's ethos of simplicity, fluidity, and inner truth.

Another subtle but significant moment was Shama Rahman's launch of a hair oil product during the gathering. It could have felt out of place, but didn't. If anything, it offered a small yet poignant counterpoint: something healing, rooted in earth and care.

The evening did not end with applause. It ended with a collective silence — people sitting a little longer than necessary, not wanting to be the first to leave. Some hummed, others clutched warm mugs of tea. Someone whispered a line from a Lalon song. No one tried to fill the air with platitudes. And that, perhaps, was the most respectful thing they could have done.

Farida Parveen was not just a singer. She was a carrier of thought, a keeper of questions. And Ashwiner Cha Chakra, in all its minimalism, was a fitting tribute.

By Ayman Anika
Photos: Courtesy

It's time for a tea party with a BANGLADESHI STORY

A deshi party is all about nostalgia, connection, and celebrating the simple joys of togetherness. It is more than a ritual and even in the city's rush, a cup shared with friends can feel like home. It is an occasion where laughter brews stronger than the tea, and stories pour freely.

It would be wrong to think that the season for a deshi tea party is well past its Baishaki prime. Traditionally, teas have always been more about bonding, where the setting and the food took a backseat. That, however, has long since changed. As the season shifts to a chilly setting, one can never say no to dressing up in their smartest casuals and attending high tea that serves as a diversion to the drudgery of daily life.

A millennial might recall gatherings of the nineties under the cosy shade of a tree on a well-manicured, green lawn. Such spaces have long since disappeared and few are left with the luxury of arranging such nature-inspired gatherings. However, if you have a veranda decked out with plants and ferns, place two garden chairs and you will have an ideal setting.

Food does not need to be grand for a tea to work. It can simply be a menu featuring salty lemonades, coconut water, puris/parathas, and tiny shingaras. In this busy, metro-life of ours, friends often do not have time to spend quality hours together, let alone enjoy a cup of tea. This small gesture, even if it is in a veranda, might sweeten your bond a bit, chit-chatting about the future or reminiscing about the yonder days.

These zero-stress, fun weekend afternoons, where a little effort goes a long way, can keep you in high spirits throughout the week. These are like nourishment for the soul.

Tea is not just about reminiscing the past; it is a present-day reality. The newer generation may have become more inclined to the coffee culture but they have not forgotten the charm of a good old tea party. They are still the perfect way to lighten one's spirit and be glad about the niceties of life!

A tea party, especially the deshi style one, reminds us that the best conversations do not need appointments, and that hospitality, at its truest, can also be shared over a cup!

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif

Photo: Adnan Rahman
Models: Suhi, Fabliha, Ella
Wardrobe: Shahrukh Amin
Set Styling: RBR
Fashion Direction: Isha Yeasmin
Jewellery: Zaf's Jewels
Makeup: Sumon
Hair: Probina
Special Thanks to Zafreen Khan

#FOOD & RECIPES

Bengali snacks THAT WARM THE HEART

From crispy fritters to syrupy sweets, the charm of Bengali snacking lies in its comforting simplicity and deep-rooted tradition. These recipes, from mixed lentil fritters and keema aloo singara to murir moa and goja, celebrate the flavours that define our festive tables and afternoon teas alike.

Whether served with a cup of steaming masala cha or a glass of salted lassi, each bite carries a taste of nostalgia, warmth, and homely delight. It is a reminder that some of life's greatest joys are found in the kitchen!

MIXED LENTIL FRITTERS

Ingredients

¼ cup red lentil, masoor dal
¼ cup yellow lentil, moong dal
¼ cup yellow lentil, khesari dal
½ cup grated onions
4 green chillies, chopped
1 tsp chilli flakes
¼ cup chopped coriander leaves
Salt to taste
Oil for deep fry

Method

Soak the lentils in water for 5-6 hours or until softened. Then wash and drain the water. Put the lentils in a food processor and blend into a semi coarse mixture. Pour the mixture into a bowl together with the rest of the ingredients. Mix until well combined. Heat oil in a pan, fry the fritters in small batches until golden brown. Remove and place them on kitchen paper to absorb the oil. Serve warm!

KEEMA ALOO SINGARA

Ingredients

500g beef/mutton mince
2 boiled potatoes, cut into small cubes
2 cups refined flour
1 tsp ginger paste
½ tsp garlic paste
½ tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp red chilli powder
½ tsp turmeric powder
¼ cup chopped onion
3 chopped green chillies
½ tsp garam masala powder
Salt to taste
1 tbsp oil for staffing
4 tbsp ghee
Oil for deep fry

Method

Heat oil in a pan, add cumin seeds. When they begin to change colour, add ginger-garlic paste. Fry for few seconds. Add meat mince, red chilli powder, turmeric powder, garam masala powder, and salt. Mix well and stir. Cook for 7-8 minutes. Add boiled potatoes, onions and chopped green chillies. Fry for few minutes and remove from heat. Allow it to cool completely. Now combine refined flour, salt, and ghee in a bowl. Add sufficient water and knead into a stiff dough. Divide the dough into small portions, shape them into balls. Roll out each ball into oval shaped puri and halve each. Dampen the edges of each halved puris with water and shape into a cone, stuff with some of the meat potato mixture and seal the edges to make singara. Heat oil in a pan. Fry the singara on low flame until brown and crisp. Arrange on a serving platter and serve hot.

POSTOR BORA

Ingredients

½ cup poppy seeds
2 tbsp poppy seeds, for coating
2 tbsp chopped onions
3-4 green chillies, finely chopped
3 tbsp grated coconut
2-3 tbsp rice flour
½ tsp ginger garlic paste
Salt to taste
Mustard oil for frying
½ cup warm water to soak poppy seeds

Method

Soak poppy seeds in water for half an hour. Drain the excess water with the help of a strainer and transfer it into the jar of a grinder. Grind the poppy seeds to a smooth paste. Add very little water, if required. Transfer the paste into a bowl. Add chopped onions, green chillies, coconut, salt ginger-garlic paste and rice flour one by one. Mix all the ingredients.

Take a small portion of the mixture in your hand and make a flat patty. Put the patty on the poppy seeds to make a coat. Repeat the same process. Heat oil in a pan. Fry the patty on medium flame till golden brown. Serve hot.

NIMKI
Ingredients
2 cups white flour
½ tsp kalojeera (fennel)
4 tbsp ghee
½ cup water
Salt to taste
Oil for deep frying

Method
In a bowl, mix flour, salt, kalojeera, and ghee. Now add water to it and make dough. Keep it aside. Cover with a wet cloth for 15 minutes. Roll the dough into thin chapatis. Cut them into shapes of your choice with a knife. Now heat oil in a pan. Deep-fry the nimkis on low heat till they turn light brown and crispy. When done, remove from heat and set aside on a paper towel to drain oil and cool. Store in an air tight container so that it lasts long.

Tip: Make sure you fry nimkis on low heat. If the flame is high, the nimkis will turn brown quickly and will remain raw and soft inside.

MURALI
Ingredients
2½ cup all-purpose flour
2½ tbsp milk powder
Water, as needed
Oil, for deep frying
2 cups sugar
½ tsp baking powder
Pinch of salt

Method
In a bowl, pour flour, milk, baking powder and salt. Mix well and add water to it. Knead well and make the dough. Make four parts from the dough. Roll each part out with about ½ inch thickness. Then cut the slab into finger-long sticks. Now heat oil in a pan. Deep fry the sticks on low heat until crunchy. Make sure these do not turn red.

For the sugar coating, mix 1 cup of water with sugar in a saucepan, and stir on medium heat to make a thick syrup. Then add the fried sticks. Mix well. Allow the sticks to cool. Store and serve.

MURIR MOA
Ingredients
250g puffed rice
700g jaggery
2 cups water

Method
Dry roast the puffed rice in a cast iron skillet for about a minute. Take them out from the skillet and keep aside. Place jaggery and water in a pan. Dissolve the jaggery over low heat. Once the jaggery dissolves, increase the heat and bring it to boil, and cook over full flame until a two-thread consistency is reached. Mix in the puffed rice quickly into the mixture. Take it off the heat and let it cool for a while. Make round balls by moistening the hands if the mixture is too sticky. Leave it to cool and serve.

GOJA
Ingredients
2 cups refined flour
1 cup sugar
A pinch of baking powder
2 tbsp ghee
2 green cardamoms
1 tbsp lemon juice
Salt to taste
Oil for deep fry

Method
Combine sugar, water, and cardamom pods in a heavy bottom pan, and bring to a boil. Stir frequently. As the syrup thickens, reduce the heat and test the consistency. Once the sugar syrup has reached a two-string consistency, turn off the heat and add lemon juice (this prevents the syrup from crystallising). Keep warm. In a bowl, mix flour, salt and baking powder. Add ghee and work it well into the mixture. Add water little by little and knead till stiff dough is formed. Divide the dough into equal portions and use a rolling pin to roll out into ovals. Make several slashes on the ovals with a knife or a fork. Heat sufficient ghee or oil in a pan and deep fry the gojas till light brown and crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon and place on an absorbent paper to remove excess oil or ghee. Dip the fried gojas in sugar syrup. Coat rapidly and remove quickly. Toss till dry and crisp.

NARIKEL ER NARU (COCONUT LADDOO)
Ingredients
4 cups fresh grated coconut
2 cups grated jaggery
1 tsp ghee for greasing palms

Method
In a heavy pan, add fresh grated coconut. Cook on low flame. Stirring often, roast the coconut for few minutes. The roasting is just to get rid of some moisture from the coconut.

Add jaggery and mix it very well with the coconut. Stirring non-stop, cook the jaggery mixture about 5-6 minutes. The jaggery will melt and mixture will slightly thicken.

To test, take a small portion and let it cool down a bit. Then try to form a tiny laddoo with it. If the mixture can be easily shaped into a tiny ball, the laddoo mixture is ready.

SALTED LASSI (SALTED YOGHURT DRINK)
Ingredients
2 cups yoghurt
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp black salt
½ tsp chat masala
Fresh mint leaves for garnish

Method
Take all the ingredients in a food processor, except the mint. Blend it properly and make a smooth lassi. Pour the glasses, add ice, and garnish with the fresh mint and serve.

MASALA TEA
Ingredients
2 tbsp tea powder
4 tbsp sugar, or to taste
½ tsp crushed ginger
2 lemon grass stalks, each cut into 2" pieces
2 green cardamoms
2 cups milk

Method
Combine 2 cups of water, tea powder, sugar, lemongrass, and ginger in a saucepan and boil on a medium flame for 2 minutes. Add milk, mix well and bring to boil on a medium flame. When the mixture boils reduce the flame to low to prevent it from spilling and continue to boil for another 4-5 minutes, stir occasionally if necessary. Strain immediately and discard the tea powder residue. Serve immediately.

— LS Desk
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#PERSPECTIVE

RESTAURANT HYPE VS. REALITY:
Are we overspending?

Here is a question that hardly gets asked — a question for the breadwinners of families, for hardworking parents, for all those newly-married couples who are dreaming to one day live a lavish life, for fresh graduates who are excited that they are now earning and enjoying a bit of independence — how much do you spend on restaurants, and is it actually worth it?

The culinary scene of Dhaka has boomed beyond imagination, and if you think of it, we as customers have made that possible. Also, we have somehow decided collectively that recreation simply means eating out. Does leisure activity have to involve food? That's a tangent we will explore a little later.

Back to my question, what is your monthly expenditure on recreational eating? Or, what portion of your hard-earned income goes in the pockets of restaurants, and should you be okay with it?

Let's do a quick calculation. Consider a family of just two people: a financially stable but not necessarily a "rich" couple in Dhaka. This couple will likely visit a relatively posh fine-dining (sometimes a 5-star hotel's restaurant to avail a BOGO offer) once a month. The same couple will perhaps go to a decent, mid-range place in another week of the month, a budget-friendly eatery in a different week, and order in food twice a month.

Now, get your calculator out. For the fancy dine, an outflow of Tk 5000 for two people is quite commonplace. For decent or mid-range dining, consider Tk 3000. Let's say the economical meal for two costs Tk 1000, and finally, our couple spends Tk 2000 for food delivered to their home via any delivery app.

However, the husband and wife will also individually — as in not as a couple — dine with their respective friends, colleagues, and cousins. Let's assume together they spend Tk 2000 on that in a month.

Add all these figures up, and you will see that this duo is spending Tk 13000 every month!

Therefore, one can say that, generally speaking, a financially-stable-but-not-rich family of just two people in Dhaka spends roughly Tk 10,000 to Tk 15,000 a month in restaurant bills. For bigger families, this figure is obviously much higher.

That's how much you spend. Now, is it worth it?

Going back to the tangent mentioned earlier, eating out has become synonymous with recreation. Imagine how much fun it would have been if you spent a portion of this money on other leisurely activities. Moreover, how about cultivating a hobby? How about saving a part of the expenditure or even investing?

Consumer behaviour is strange. We at times raise our eyebrows seeing the price of a suit from an upscale tailor, whilst we do not bat an eye at the food menu. We need to set our priorities straight.

Speaking of priorities, what about travelling? If you can curb on restaurant bills and save Tk 5000 every month, you will accumulate Tk 60,000 in a year — an amount that is enough for a better-than-average to even upscale two-night trip anywhere in Bangladesh for a couple. Save more or save for two years, and you will have around Tk 1,20,000 — enough for airfare to a holiday abroad for one person or even two, at least in several countries.

Sure, travelling, hobbies, or fancy suits may not interest you. However, there is something or other you can do if only you become more conscious about your expenses.

Furthermore, are you always getting value for the money you spend on these culinary treats? Think in terms of quality, quantity, service, authenticity of cuisine, smartly done fusions, etc.

To make matters worse, a lot of people get bedazzled by hypes and fads, and they feel they must pay a visit to the newest place in town or try out an Instagrammable eatery because otherwise, how can you be trendy, right? How can you show off to your friends? What would you otherwise post on your TikTok or Facebook?

Last but not least, this is not to say that the culinary industry is evil in general, or that you should stop spending money in this sector. However, the next time you are planning to go to a restaurant or thinking of ordering in, look at our wallet first, think whether the expense is really needed, and then decide accordingly.

By M H Haider
Photo: Collected

#FYI

TEA

A health drink, or just a lifestyle choice?

It's hard to find another drink that connects people the way tea does. It can appear anywhere, be it between study sessions, lengthy conversations, family get-togethers, or the awkward few minutes after guests arrive.

A cup of tea serves as a bridge as well as an excuse. Without having to say much, you just offer it, and somehow the air in the room softens.

Tea is, in many ways, the world's most democratic beverage. You will find it in royal teapots and chipped roadside cups alike. Three billion people reach for it every day. Green, black, oolong, or herbal strive for it for different reasons and in different rhythms. Every country seems to have its own understanding of what tea should be. The British pair it with conversation and rain; the Japanese, with discipline and silence, and in Bengal, it's boiled with milk or spices until it can almost stand on its own.

In its most basic form, all tea is derived from the Camellia Sinensis plant. What makes one black and another green, or white, is not the leaf, but what happens after it is plucked. Black tea is fully oxidised, strong, dark, and earthy. Green tea skips that process and keeps its freshness, almost like drinking the scent of a rainy garden. Oolong walks the middle path, while white tea, picked young and barely touched, is subtle in strength.

The relationship between tea and health benefits has been the subject of hundreds of studies. Although many are observational, the general trend of the results suggests that there may be some obvious advantages.

Catechins in green tea and polyphenols such as quercetin in black tea exhibit antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that can help protect cells from damage caused by free radicals.

Free radicals are unstable molecules that accumulate in the body due to stress, pollution, and even digestion. Antioxidants are the body's natural defence against these molecules. Thus, regular tea drinking strengthens the body's defences against chronic illnesses like diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Several extensive studies have shown that people who drink tea regularly tend to have lower risks of high blood pressure and cardiovascular complications. Green tea, in particular, has been linked to improved cholesterol levels and better metabolic health, while black tea has shown potential benefits for gut microbiota, the body's internal ecosystem that affects digestion, immunity, and even mood.

Tea's influence, however, does not end with the body. Its chemistry seems to favour the brain as well. One of its key compounds, L-theanine, promotes relaxation without sedation. When combined with caffeine, it creates a state of calm alertness, the kind of steady focus that has made tea a companion to both monks and mathematicians for centuries.

Modern research suggests that L-theanine increases alpha brain waves, associated with creativity and calm concentration. This may explain why tea feels different from coffee; where coffee jolts, tea balances. It offers energy that behaves itself.

From a psychological standpoint, making tea while waiting for the water to boil, watching the leaves unfold, and breathing in the first steam can all serve as a mindful break from an otherwise hectic day. Studies in behavioural health note that repetitive, sensory routines like tea-making can lower cortisol levels and ease anxiety. Psychologists might call it sensory regulation; the rest of us just call it comfort.

It's easy to think of wellness practice as something you have to exaggerate with expensive supplements, programmes, and plans. Tea disagrees. It asks for nothing fancy. Only time, heat, a few leaves, and that's that. You drink it, and something inside you steadies quietly. Maybe that's the true benefit. Tea doesn't fix you. It reminds you that you were never broken, just tired, and that sometimes all you need is a few calm minutes and a cup that knows how to listen.

By Rehnuma Shahreen
Photo: Collected

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#DECOR

HOW TO CREATE A DINING SPACE

Ideas for newly-married couples

For newlyweds just starting their married life, a dining room can be their dream space — one that reflects the essence of the household they pictured together. It also encourages them to host dinners, share meals, and create memorable moments together.

If you want to embrace an elegant lifestyle, where your guests will compliment your regal choices of interior, while also keeping your family's functional needs in mind, here are some essential tips for refurnishing your dining room.

The first thing any self-respecting dining room needs is a dining table. The size of your dining table should be proportionate to the size of the room and your family's needs. If it's just the two of you, consider opting for a small, round table. However, if you have a larger family or you love hosting and entertaining guests, opt for a bigger table with at least six seats so everyone can dine comfortably.

For the material of the table, wood is an easy and timeless choice since it comes in so many different stains and colours. Opt for a table with a glass top if you want a setup that is easy to clean and maintain and helps bring light into the space. However, they are not exactly child-friendly since glass is fragile. You can also opt for a granite or marble table that will be both easy to clean and resistant to accidental spills or the falling of heavy objects.

While the choice of chairs truly depends on comfort, space, and your design preference, if you opt for armless ones, make sure they provide enough support and comfort to make up for the absence of armrests. If the dining chairs have armrests, consider choosing a set that can slide beneath the table so they do not take up extra space when not in use. When considering the materials for your dining chairs, remember that dinners come with all sorts of unwanted surprises or accidents, such as spills that can leave stains.

Choose cushioned chairs made of synthetic or leather fabrics that are soft yet practical, as you can just wipe off spills or stains with a damp cloth or give them a quick vacuum. But if you would rather reduce any kind of maintenance, simply choose chairs with solid wooden surfaces. The key is finding the right balance between comfort and functionality.

Lighting is very important in a dining space for two reasons. First, it can highlight and even augment the look of your dining space. Second, the proper warm lighting can even work up the appetite of your family members or guests, giving them a delightful perceived satisfaction when you serve the food. A statement lighting or chandelier centred over the dining table will elevate the look of your dining space. For longer tables, you can use two pendant lights or semi-flush mounts to spread light evenly.

For a dining set that exudes elegance, consider investing in a dinner set that matches your aesthetic —classic porcelain or sand beige dinnerware.

Lastly, opt for designer table mats and napkins for your dining table, as they enhance the décor of your table set while also protecting its surface from the heat of dishes, spills, and stains that could cause damage to the table.

Whether you are setting up your first dining space from scratch or just refurnishing it, getting a new dining table set may seem like a big investment, but it does not necessarily have to drain your savings. Simply, look for a furniture brand that offers Equated Monthly Instalments (EMI), which allows you to pay in manageable portions. This way, you can build your dream dining room set without putting too much pressure on your wallet.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Hatil