

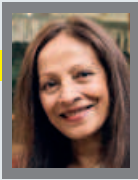
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Style

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CONFIDENCE
in every
step

Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Progga
Footwear: Bata
Styling & Fashion Direction: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Hairstyle: Probina
Studio: EVF

PENNY WISE
NASREEN SATTARFormer CEO, Standard Chartered Bank,
Afghanistan

Gold prices are up— but should you invest now?

For many years, gold has been seen as a safe way to hold valuables. However, 2025 is becoming a very important year for gold in personal finance, especially in Bangladesh. As gold prices go up, more people — both careful savers and bold investors — are making profits from investing in it.

Investing in gold in Bangladesh can provide both opportunities and risks. Below are some valuable points to consider — customised specially to the current Bangladeshi market environment:

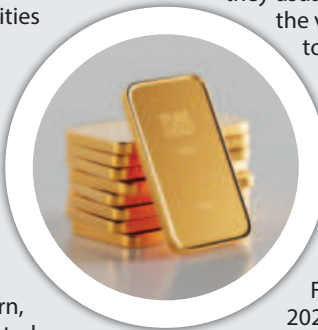
It protects you from inflation and weak currency

Bangladesh Taka has been under pressure, which in turn, increases the price of imported goods. This also includes gold.

With the inflation rising, despite regulatory efforts and returns on savings products not remaining attractive, gold is perceived as a better option in many cases.

Easy to sell and high demand in culture

In Bangladesh, gold jewellery is not just for investment — it's also an important part of culture, like weddings and gifts. Because of this, people always want gold.



So, even during hard times, it's still easy to sell gold and get money from it (though sometimes with small conditions).

Global factors support gold prices

Around the world, due to many factors like war, inflation, and central banks buying gold, prices are up. This also affects gold prices in Bangladesh, since they usually follow global rates, and the value of the taka compared to the US dollar. Because of this, gold is a good way to spread risk in your investment. Things to be careful about: Gold is very expensive and the prices change a lot. In Bangladesh, gold prices have become very high.

For example, in October 2025, the price per 'bhor' of 22-carat gold is Tk 2,17,000. Prices are going up quickly — it has risen by approximately 50 per cent over the last nine months. Because of this, it can be hard for many people to afford physical gold, especially jewellery. On a personal note, I regret selling a couple of my old 22-carat gold coins last year to make an earring set with stones. Resale value of stones is very marginal. Do not make the same mistake; save your gold as a great investment. Of course, you must also keep in mind that there will be some discount in resale value.

Gold may not give high long-term profits

Gold is good for keeping your money safe, but it may not grow as much as other investments like stocks, property, or business — especially in a growing country like Bangladesh. Some people say gold is better for safety, not for making

big profits, especially when you consider the costs and how long you hold it.

Simple tips if you want to invest in gold:

- **Check purity and papers:** Buy from trusted shops. Make sure your gold has a hallmark or certificate showing its authenticity.
- **Know the resale rules:** Ask how much money you'll get back if you sell later. Shops often take a small cut when buying it back.
- **Think long-term:** Gold prices fluctuate. It's better for holding over time, not for quick profits — unless you really know the market.
- **Don't put all your money in gold:** Gold has costs and risks. Use it as part of your savings, not your whole plan.
- **Compare with other options:** Think about what else you could do with the money — like starting a business, buying land, or investing in different things. Make sure gold is the right choice for you.

In conclusion, gold can be a smart way to protect your money from inflation and currency risk. But it's not a guaranteed way to grow your wealth fast. Gold is costly, and the market can be tricky. If you invest, buy proper gold (like coins or bars with certificates), plan to hold it for years, and make it just one part of your overall financial plan.



DISCLAIMER

Gold prices in Bangladesh are subject to change without notice. Please verify current rates before making any purchase or investment decisions.

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বদলে দিলে যে আমায়...

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#HEALTH & FITNESS

SAY GOODBYE TO BACK PAIN with these simple yoga poses

In the cramped backseat of a CNG, on a squeaky classroom bench, or hunched over a laptop — our spines are with us through it all. In a country like Bangladesh, where daily life demands so much physical resilience — from lifting groceries up five flights of stairs to sitting for hours in Dhaka's standstill traffic — we tend to normalise backaches as part of the grind.



Perhaps it's time we pause and ask: how long can we afford to ignore the very structure that keeps us standing?

THE COST OF NEGLECT

In recent years, spine-related issues like chronic back pain, lumbar spondylosis, sciatica, and slipped discs have surged, especially among the younger population. Why? It's not just bad furniture or heavy lifting. It's also digital hunching — what doctors call "text neck."

Thanks to our smartphones and laptops, our heads are constantly tilted down. That's 5-6kg of pressure on the neck and upper spine for hours at a time. Add to that sedentary lifestyles, poor nutrition, no stretching, and zero awareness, and we're breeding a generation of bent backs and painkillers.

YOGA: THE ANCIENT SCIENCE FOR A MODERN SPINE

Yoga has always viewed the spine not just as a physical structure, but as the central highway of energy and vitality. In Sanskrit, the spine is seen as the "Merudanda" — the axis of life. Keeping it mobile, strong, and supple is essential not just for health, but for focus, mood, and even emotional resilience.

So, here are some spine-loving yoga poses that can help



young or old, urban or rural — bend so they don't break.

KAPOTASANA (PIGEON POSE)

Whether you're sitting at an office desk in Motijheel or cross-legged on the floor in Gulshan, your hips and lower spine bear the burden. Kapotasana, or Pigeon Pose, is perfect for releasing that tension.

This pose deeply stretches the hip flexors and opens up the lower back. It's especially helpful for people with sciatica or lumbar tightness — a common complaint in sedentary workers. Do it slowly, with support under the hips if needed, and stay for a few deep breaths.

Tip: Use a rolled-up towel or cushion under your hip if your pelvis doesn't touch the ground.

USTRASANA (CAMEL POSE)

We've all been there — shoulders rounded, neck pushing forward, spine curved like a question mark. Ustrasana, or Camel Pose, counteracts this by opening the chest and strengthening the back muscles.

This backbend encourages spinal extension, which improves posture and increases blood flow to the spinal discs. It also expands the lungs, helping with breath — a bonus for anyone



recovering from long desk hours or chronic fatigue.

Warning: Avoid this pose if you have serious lower back injuries or uncontrolled high blood pressure.

SARVANGASANA (SHOULDER STAND)

Known as the "queen of asanas," this inversion redirects blood flow, decompresses the spine, and promotes alignment. It strengthens the upper back and shoulders while giving the spine a gentle traction effect.

Important: Practice only with supervision if you're new, and avoid during menstruation or with neck issues.

Thankfully, taking care of your spine doesn't require fancy gym memberships or imported chairs. It requires habitual intelligence — for example, traditional seating positions (like squatting or sitting cross-legged on the floor) can actually promote good spinal alignment — if done mindfully. So, sit on the floor, but keep your back upright.

So, let's straighten up — not out of vanity, but out of value. And let's teach our children that standing tall isn't just a metaphor for pride. It's a biological necessity.

By Ayman Anika

Photo: Ayman Anika



THE SILENT DANGER of pre-diabetes—and how to fight it

Diabetes has become a familiar word in nearly every household. With changing diets, sedentary lifestyles, and rising stress levels, more people are being diagnosed every year; many others find themselves teetering on the edge of it. Being pre-diabetic means your blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be classified as diabetes.

It's a warning sign — but also an opportunity. With the right changes, this stage can often be reversed.

As Dr Mashfiqul Hasan, Assistant Professor of Endocrinology and current PhD researcher at Bangladesh Medical University, states, "For people who are in the 'borderline' zone, lifestyle changes can play a significant role in delaying or even preventing the onset of diabetes."

He explains that this begins with something as simple — and as challenging — as rethinking what's on your plate.

The Bangladeshi diet is often heavy on rice, oil, and sugar — comforting but problematic for blood sugar control. Hasan emphasises that reducing

carbohydrate intake, particularly from refined sugars, and

increasing fibre consumption through fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can make a substantial difference.

While cutting out on sweets and soft drinks may seem obvious, a bigger challenge lies in moderating the hidden carbs. "We should also limit calorie-dense foods like biryani, tehari, beef, mutton, fast food, and soft drinks, as they negatively impact weight management," states Hasan.

A healthier choice would be complex carbs found in brown rice or whole wheat, which release energy more slowly and help maintain stable blood sugar levels. Lean proteins like chicken, eggs, lentils, and fish, along

with fats from sources such as nuts or olive oil, can help balance meals and keep you fuller for longer.

For those who think that skipping sugar alone will keep diabetes at bay, Hasan clarifies, "Cutting sugar is a good start, but it's not enough. Managing how much and what kind of carbohydrate you eat is just as important."

Exercise doesn't have to mean hitting the gym or running marathons. A brisk walk in the park or even regular household chores can do wonders. Hasan encourages people to move more throughout the day — take the stairs, walk short distances instead of taking a rickshaw, and avoid sitting for long hours.

Stress and lack of sleep can also elevate blood sugar levels. Chronic stress raises cortisol, which interferes with insulin function. Even simple habits like maintaining a sleep

schedule, reducing screen time, and practicing relaxation techniques can make a difference.

For someone at risk, Hasan recommends checking blood sugar levels at least every few months. "If these changes are sustained, they can prevent or at least delay the need for medication," he says.

If diabetes is common in your family, you may already have a higher risk — but that doesn't mean it's inevitable. Hasan points out that family history does play a significant role, but genetics alone does not guarantee that someone will develop diabetes.

According to Hasan, it's often the urban lifestyle — sedentary work, irregular meals, and reliance on processed food — that pushes genetically vulnerable individuals over the edge.

He puts it beautifully: "It is not necessary for the story to be written by genetics; the story can be written by each person themselves."

The tricky part about diabetes is that it can progress silently. Some early signs may appear even when blood sugar levels are still within the 'normal' range. One of the first red flags is unexplained weight gain, especially around the abdomen. "This is often an indicator of insulin resistance," Hasan notes.

For women, symptoms like menstrual irregularities or increased facial or body hair can also signal hormonal imbalance linked to excess insulin. Another subtle clue is dizziness after meals — a sign that your body may be producing too much insulin to manage the sugar from food.

Persistent fatigue and mental fog — feeling tired even after rest, or struggling to focus — can also point toward early metabolic dysfunction.

While pre-diabetes can often be managed through diet and lifestyle, it's important to know when to get medical support. If you've made consistent lifestyle changes but still experience symptoms, or if blood sugar readings remain borderline for several months, it's time to consult a physician. An endocrinologist can assess your insulin sensitivity and suggest early interventions through proper diagnosis.

Ignoring symptoms or delaying medical check-ups can lead to full-blown diabetes, which brings complications affecting the heart, kidneys, eyes, and nerves. Hasan stresses the importance of regular follow-up: "Regular check-ups and keeping an eye on your blood sugar are very important, especially for those with a family history."

As Dr Mashfiqul Hasan reminds us, "Lifestyle changes can delay or even prevent diabetes if they are sustained." It's a message of both caution and hope: diabetes may run in the family, but with awareness and action, it doesn't have to run your life.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Collected



#EVENTS

Experience the divine in Malay Bala's 'SEEKING SACRED BEAUTY'

When one steps into the painting exhibition of artist Malay Bala at Alliance Française de Dhaka's La Galerie in Dhanmondi, one doesn't simply enter an art exhibition — one enters a sanctuary of stillness. The third solo show by Professor Dr Malay Bala, titled Seeking Sacred Beauty: The Devotional Art of Malay Bala, emits a calm, rhythmic whisper — a quiet hymn to the sacred, the feminine, and the natural. His third solo show opened on 18 October 2025 and runs until 28 October.

A Devotional Undertaking

In an age when speed, spectacle, and digital dazzle dominate visual culture, Malay Bala's exhibition stands out for its meditative pace and quiet invocation of the sacred. "I paint to seek, meditate upon, and become closer to God," the artist explains. "My heart senses the Divine within the sacred myths, spiritual masters, nature, and the divine grace of women that I strive to paint."

There are eighty artworks on display. What looks at first glance like a traditional show of watercolour and gouache soon reveals deeper currents: mythical narratives, singular technique, committed materiality, and a profound sense of spirituality.



Self-Reflection-2

Malay Bala is not just a painter but also a scholar — a Professor at the Department of Oriental Art, Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka, holding a PhD in Oriental Art. His academic grounding in the oriental style of painting informs his technique and content: the wash technique pioneered by Abanindranath Tagore, the orientation towards the swadeshi spirit, and the invocation of the sacred traditions of Bengali aesthetics.

Four Narrative Streams

The works in this show are grouped under four narrative themes: Shakuntala, Dharma (Religion), Pobitro Nari (Sacred Women), and Prakriti (Sacred Nature).

Shakuntala: Drawing on the story of the eponymous heroine of Kalidasa's Abhigyan Shakuntalam, the paintings in this series depict the meeting of mortal and celestial,



Shakuntala in Tapoban

of earth's longing and heaven's grace. The wash technique gives them a soft, dream-like glow. In one canvas, tree branches merge with the figure of Shakuntala, the red of love saturating the background, the figures drenched in a sombre intimacy.

Dharma: Here the focus turns to spiritual masters — Buddha and Krishna make appearances — within compositions that evoke silence, introspection, and ritual. One piece mentioned shows a solemn Buddha in deep, bronze-toned stillness, capturing a weight of contemplation rarely seen in local art.

Pobitro Nari (Sacred Women): Celebrating the feminine as sacred, graceful yet powerful, these works honour women as icons of creation, grace, and devotion. In these paintings, female figures rarely stand alone — they absorb nature, myth, and symbol into their presence.

Prakriti (Sacred Nature): In the most spontaneous of the series, the artist allows the brush to wander, letting nature, tree branches, leaves, birds, and water weave themselves into the composition. "In the Nature and some of the Sacred Woman series I didn't plan at all. I just let it happen; left it to fate and the will of my brushstrokes," says the artist.

Technique and Materiality

The exhibition's aesthetic power lies as much in the how as in the what. Bala employs Bengali watercolour, gouache, tempera, and most notably the wash technique that Abanindranath Tagore revived in early twentieth-century Bengal.

In his words:

"Here I have mainly used the wash technique, but even among these, I've used different forms of it. The depth of colour comes from the layering; each layer must dry before another can be applied."

What this means in practice is a process of patience and ritual. Paper is dampened, pigment applied in delicate thin layers; the next layer waits until the previous sheet dries; forms emerge slowly. Bala likens the process to meditation and prayer.

In an era of bold brushstrokes and digital immediacy, this slow layering feels radical. The result is works that breathe —

they don't shout. Colours are muted yet resonant; contours hint rather than declare. One visitor quoted in coverage said, "There was an immediate sense of calm ... as though the soft tones themselves had agreed not to speak too loudly, and the gentle strokes of the brush could quieten the noise of one's thoughts."

Rooted in Tradition, Reimagined for Now

While the show is imbued with devotional and mythic content, what makes it particularly significant is its cultural grounding. The paintings commit to indigenous Bengali art principles, content, styles, and natural materials. They draw upon the ideals of Ananda Coomaraswamy's Sacred Art and Tagore's swadeshi ethos, offering renewed expressions of Bengali traditional art.

In this, Malay Bala is both conservative and adventurous: conservative in his fidelity to technique, symbol, and tradition; adventurous in how he revitalises that tradition for our moment. The result is art that feels classical — but alive, urgent, intimate.

Ceremony, Dedication, and Dialogue

The exhibition's opening ceremony brought together cultural heavyweights: photographer Nasir Ali Mamun, artist Samar Majumder, and writer Sharifa Akhter. The show is also dedicated to the memory of renowned sculptor Beerangana Ferdousi Priyabhashini, a recipient of the Ekushey Padak, whose work combined craft, devotion, and national history.

Curator Mikhail Idris puts it succinctly: "Bala reveals a spiritual impulse to illuminate the sacred world, nature, and beings his heart beholds. His art symbolises, remembers, and contemplates the Sacred, to mysteriously rekindle the soul's vocation for Divine union."

Why It Matters

In the milieu of contemporary art discourse — multimedia installations, performance art, conceptual provocations — there is a place for quiet devotion. This show reminds us of the contemplative capacity of painting; of the human yearning for stillness, for the sacred, for beauty not as spectacle but as presence.

For Bangladesh's art scene, too, the exhibition signals a thoughtful revival of tradition. At a time when local art markets chase newness, global visibility, the flicker of trend, here is a painter who turns inward — to myth, form, craft — and arrives, quietly, at something timeless.

Importantly, Malay Bala's academic and artistic identities intersect: as a scholar of oriental painting, he is investing his research back into practice. His PhD thesis looked at Institutional Trend of Oriental Painting in Bengal. Here, theory and practice converge.

For the Visitor

Walking through the gallery, one is struck by how different the series' atmospheres are. The Shakuntala pieces offer a kind of romantic melancholy, red and brown tones for love and loss. The Dharma works go into deeper stillness — greens, blues, austerity. The Sacred Women works glow with femininity and symbolic gestures. The Nature works let the viewer almost breathe alongside tree branches, birds, and quiet ambience.

To linger in front of a painting is to sense the process: one can see thin washes, paper textures, and time. From the catalogue text, one realises that what is being seen is more than representation — it is experience.

A Quiet Triumph

What Malay Bala offers is not a loud manifesto but a quiet triumph — a reverent conversation between painter and myth, tool and matter, soul and world. The viewer leaves not merely having seen paintings but having been invited to slow down, to breathe, to feel the sacred.

In a culture where art often equates to cross-border hype, global buzz, or instant viral recognition, this show returns us to the roots: of craft, of devotion, of patience. It reminds us that beauty, when sought as sacred, needn't shout to be heard.

For those who seek more than noise, Seeking Sacred Beauty is a pilgrimage worth making.

By Zahangir Alom

Photo: Courtesy

The writer is an artist and art critic.

Where does one begin with shoes? Sure, it's a necessity but for us women, it is so much more. They reflect our mood, how we want to express ourselves in the world and help us, well, put our best feet forward! Sartorial gurus will swear that shoes maketh an outfit and consequently, a woman, and we couldn't agree more! Can you imagine picking the right outfit, accessories and not have the right pair of shoes to complement it? Just the very thought of it is scary to say the least!

Sneakers WEDGES heels?

Choose shoes that match your mood

Now, shoes are dearly beloved but they also come with their own set of rules. As mentioned before, every outfit, every occasion demands its own particular style of shoes, and without said attire, will fail to shine. So, shoes are essential. Every fashionista worth her stilettos must have a few edited pairs in her wardrobe that are the building blocks of a great shoe collection.

To begin with, let's talk about the basics. Every day, we face life in different ways, which also influences how we dress. For some corporate jobs, women are required to dress formally in western wear.

Formal black pumps with low or medium heels are perfect for dress pants, skirts or dresses. Other basic colours like dark brown, tan, or beige are also great options for variation. Formal shoes should be closed toe; it is considered inappropriate to wear open toe shoes to a workplace, but in 2025, who's following the rules! Plain strappy sandals with medium to low block heels or kitten heels are also acceptable, depending on the dress code. For some women who dress ethnically to work, similar rules apply too. Heeled pumps and sandals look very stylish with sarees and kameezes, and why should

one compromise on fashion, even if it's for work? Avoid crystal-encrusted, flashy sequined shoes at work; your sparkle should come from talent, not from your feet!

For women on the move, for work or life in general which requires her to wear many hats, wedges are a great option. They come in many different types and heights, which makes them extremely versatile for everyday wear. A low wedge is good for school runs, and project meetings, while a heeled wedge looks fantastic for day-long wear when one wants to look stylish yet walk around with

ease. They look incredibly cool with capri pants, skirts and dresses. Comfortable to wear while stylish to look at, they transition perfectly from every one errand to another!

Ah, the lore of modern woman always on the move! She juggles so many roles, balancing the weight of the world on her dainty yet daring shoulders! Being active is crucial for staying fit, and the right pair of shoes are a must. When shopping for sneakers, choose wisely and invest in a great pair that will see you through various ups and downs, no pun intended! Exercising takes a toll on one's feet and a good pair of sneakers will cushion against all kinds of blows, preventing

injuries. We are living in the golden era of sneakers, and one is truly spoiled for choice! Combining form, function, and fashion, sneakers make a great style statement nowadays. Choose the pair perfect for you and burn those calories away!

Let's talk about fun stuff now! Going out, partying with friends and painting the town red means one thing — dressing up to the nines! Needless to say, shoes make or break your fabulous party outfit and needs to be paid attention to. For all kinds of dresses, short and long stilettos are the way to go for a night out. A sequined short dress will call for metallic high heels to show off your toned legs.

For slinky long dresses, pencil heels are perfect to make you look tall and lean. A mini skirt will look fantastic with chunky yet funky platform heels, trending now more than the 90's! They not only offer great support, but are also super comfortable. Your legs will look fantastic and you will look super sexy as you dance the night away flaunting your best feet!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Progga
Footwear: Bata
Styling & Fashion Direction: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Hairstyle: Probina
Studio: EVF



HANGRY
SARIA SAGUAROI have two moods.
Cooking helps both!

A Spooktacular 3D Pumpkin Cake

Nothing says “fall” like a gorgeous, showstopping pumpkin cake. This 3D Pumpkin Cake has layers of rich, moist red velvet cake, a smooth and tangy cream cheese frosting, and a luscious Swiss meringue buttercream finish. It’s not just a cake; it’s a centrepiece, a conversation starter, and a true treat for the senses.

Get ready for some fun carving, colouring, and frosting, because this cake is as much about artistry as it is about flavour.

RED VELVET CAKE BASE**Ingredients**

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp salt
2 cups sugar
1 cup butter (softened)
2 eggs (at room temperature)
1 tbsp cocoa powder
1 1/2 tbsp liquid red food colouring
1 cup milk
1/2 tsp apple cider vinegar (or lemon juice)
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 tsp baking soda
1 tbsp apple cider vinegar

Method

Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease and line your cake pans with butter and parchment paper — 6” pans work great, and you’ll want to bake the layers individually. Sift together the flour and salt and set aside.

In the bowl of a stand mixer, beat together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. In a separate cup, combine the milk with 1/2 tsp of vinegar and let it stand for 5 minutes — this will be your buttermilk substitute.

Add the flour mixture and the buttermilk to the wet ingredients alternately, starting and ending with the flour. Stir in the vanilla extract until combined.

In a small bowl, mix the red food colouring with the cocoa powder to form a paste. Add this to the butter and sugar mixture and blend well. In another small bowl, combine the baking soda and apple cider vinegar — it’ll foam up, so quickly add it to the batter and mix on medium-high speed until smooth.

Spoon the thick batter evenly into your prepared pans, levelling the tops with an offset spatula. Bake for 18-25 minutes, or until the cake springs back when pressed in the centre. Let the cakes cool completely on wire racks.

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING**Ingredients**

450g cream cheese (softened)
1 cup butter (softened)
2 tsp vanilla extract
4-5 cups sifted confectioners’ sugar

Method

In a large mixing bowl, beat together the cream cheese, butter, and vanilla until smooth. Gradually add the sifted confectioners’ sugar, mixing on low until combined. Once the sugar is incorporated, increase the speed to high and beat until the frosting is light and fluffy.

If the frosting is too thick, add a little

milk to loosen it up. If it’s too thin, add more powdered sugar or chill it in the fridge to firm up. When you’re ready to crumb coat, make sure your frosting is fresh and still sticky for a smooth application.

SWISS MERINGUE BUTTERCREAM**Ingredients**

5 egg whites
1 1/2 cups sugar

500g unsalted butter (softened)
1 tbsp vanilla essence

Method

Combine the egg whites and sugar in a large mixing bowl and set it over a double boiler. Whisk gently but constantly, using a candy thermometer to check the temperature. Once it reaches 160°F (70°C), remove it from the heat.

Transfer the mixture to your stand mixer and beat on high for 10 minutes until stiff peaks form. Let it cool to room temperature.

Switch to a paddle attachment and, on low speed, add the softened butter in small portions until fully incorporated. Once smooth, add the vanilla essence and continue to beat on medium-high speed until creamy and fluffy.

This buttercream can be stored in the fridge for up to a week or frozen for a month.

ASSEMBLY**You’ll need:**

Cake board
Cake turntable
Spatula and cake smoother
Knife for carving
Orange, green, brown, and black gel food colour
Swiss meringue buttercream
Fondant

Method

Start by placing a cake board on your turntable. Add a small dollop of cream cheese frosting in the centre of the board and set the first layer of red velvet cake on top to anchor it in place. Spread a generous layer of cream cheese frosting on top of the first layer and repeat the process with the remaining cake layers until you’ve used all three.

Once the layers are stacked, use a sharp knife to carve the top of the cake into an oval shape, angling the knife as you go to achieve that pumpkin-like appearance. Then, carve lines into the sides to create the classic pumpkin silhouette.

Apply a crumb coat over the entire cake to seal in the crumbs and smooth out the shape. Refrigerate the cake for at least 2 hours to firm up before applying the final coat.

Cover the entire cake with orange Swiss meringue buttercream, smoothing it out to form the pumpkin shape. To create the face, sketch the eyes, nose, and mouth on paper, cut them out, and use them as templates. Mark these shapes on the cake and carefully carve them out.

Next, colour some fondant with dark brown edible food colour and shape it into the pumpkin stalk, placing it at the top of the cake.

For the eyes, nose, and mouth, colour black fondant and roll it out. Use the templates to cut out the shapes and place them on the cake.

For extra detail, tint some buttercream green and pipe out tendrils or vines around the pumpkin stalk. Add green fondant leaves using a mold or knife and place them around the pumpkin for a natural, finished look.

And just like that, your stunning 3D Pumpkin Cake is ready to impress!

Once sliced, store the cake in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week. Enjoy the spooky, sweet success!

Photo: Courtesy**Food, recipes and styling: Saria Saguario**

#DIY

How to decorate the 3D pumpkin cake

Saria Saguaro
Painter & Pastry Chef



6

Tint buttercream and fondant green to pipe vines and cut out leaves for decoration.



5

Colour fondant dark brown to create the pumpkin stalk, then colour more fondant black to cut out facial features using templates and place them on the cake.



4

Cover the chilled cake with orange Swiss meringue buttercream and smooth it into a pumpkin form.



3

Smooth out the lines and refrigerate the cake for at least 2 hours to set the shape.

1

Place a cake board on a turntable with a dollop of frosting, then position the first red velvet cake base. Soak in milk for moisture and layer with cream cheese frosting, repeating for all 3 cake layers.



2

Carve the stacked cake to form the classic pumpkin shape and apply a crumb coat to refine the silhouette.



Mother-to-be? Try these safe yoga poses for your second trimester

During the second trimester, morning sickness tends to fade, energy levels rise, and the growing belly adds a visible glow to the mother. This is a good time to develop a steady yoga routine. Those who have practised before can continue with slower, gentle movements, while newcomers can join prenatal yoga classes to learn safely. These classes not only make the body feel strong and comfortable but also create a warm sense of togetherness.

Being around other expectant mothers helps share experiences, reduce worries, and build emotional support, which is just as important as the physical benefits of yoga.

Gentle reminders before starting —

Begin with loosening movements

Start every session with gentle joint and body movements. Simple shoulder rolls, neck stretches, and ankle rotations warm up the muscles and prepare the body for yoga.

Maintain balance and stability

As the belly grows, balance naturally changes. Practising near a wall or using a chair for support keeps movement steady and safe.

Be gentle and patient

The body softens as pregnancy progresses. Move slowly, avoid overstretching, and stay within a comfortable range.

Make space for the belly

During forward bends or twists, keep the legs slightly wider and twist from the shoulders, not the waist. This creates space and comfort for the baby.

Protect the abdomen

Skip poses like “Boat Pose” or “Plank Pose” that strain the abdominal area. Focus on posture and breathing to build gentle core awareness.

Avoid lying flat on the back

Spending long periods flat can affect blood flow and cause dizziness. Use pillows or bolsters to lift the upper body, or rest on the left side for ease.

Modify poses when needed

Every posture can be adjusted for comfort. Work with supportive props

and simpler versions of poses that feel right for the body's rhythm.

Include the baby in practice

During relaxation, bring awareness to the baby's gentle movements. This creates a special connection and helps both mother and baby relax together.

Yoga asanas for the second trimester

The second trimester is often a time of grace and growth. Gentle yoga builds strength, awareness, and inner calm while deepening the bond between mother and baby.

Each mindful breath and movement turn this phase into a journey of balance and quiet confidence.

Gentle yoga postures help maintain flexibility,



improve circulation, and prepare the body for the changes of pregnancy. The following asanas are safe and beneficial when practised mindfully under proper guidance.

Virabhadrasana (Warrior Pose)

Stand with feet wide apart. Turn one foot outward, inhale and raise both arms to shoulder height, then exhale while bending the front knee over the ankle. This energising posture strengthens the legs, back, and shoulders, enhances stability, and boosts confidence.

Butterfly Pose (Baddha Konasana)
Sitting with legs stretched out, the knees are bent to

bring the soles of the feet together. Heels stay close to the body while the inner thighs relax. Holding the feet, the knees move gently up and down without any force. After 20–30 soft movements, the legs are stretched out again to rest. This pose gently opens the hips, improves pelvic circulation, and helps ease discomfort in the second trimester.

Vajrasana (Thunderbolt Pose)

Kneel on the floor with big toes together and heels slightly apart. The buttocks rest between the heels, while the spine remains upright and the shoulders relaxed. Hands rest gently on the knees, palms facing downward. This posture strengthens the thighs, increase flexibility of knee and ankle joint, aids digestion, and relieves acidity. This in can be done even after having meal.

Cooling Pranayamas: Bring Calmness and Balancing in body-mind

Gentle pranayama during pregnancy helps keep the mind relaxed, regulates body temperature, improve sleep and balances emotions.

Sheetali Pranayama (Cooling Breath):

Inhale through a rolled tongue and exhale through the nose.

Sheetkari Pranayama (Hissing Breath):

Inhale through an inward-folded tongue and exhale through the mouth.

Sadanta Pranayama: Similar to Sheetkari, inhale through gently clenched teeth and exhale through the mouth.

Bhramari Pranayama (Humming Bee Breath): Inhale through the nose and create a gentle humming sound during exhalation.

By Farhana Abir

Photo: Farhana Abir

The writer is a PhD Scholar & Antenatal Yoga Expert, Pelvic Floor Rehab Therapist, and Runner, Bangladesh.

DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this article is for general awareness only and should not be considered medical advice. Prenatal yoga practices must be performed under the supervision of a certified instructor and with approval from a healthcare provider. Each pregnancy is unique, and modifications may be required to ensure comfort and safety.



#TIPS



Can't lose weight? Check your sleep quality first



What we eat and how much we move only tell part of the story. Recent studies are pointing to a less-noticed factor in body weight and health: sleep. According to research compiled by the Sleep Foundation, when we skip sleep, our bodies do not just feel tired — they begin to change how they process food and energy.

Under normal conditions, our body uses hormones like leptin (which signals fullness) and ghrelin (which signals hunger) to regulate appetite and energy balance. However, when we don't get enough sleep, this regulation falters. The research shows that leptin levels drop, ghrelin levels rise, and the result is increased hunger and cravings.



It's not just about wanting more food. Sleep-deprived people tend to consume more calories, often eating more carbs and snacking later in the day. At the same time, their resting metabolic rate — the calories burned at rest — does not go up to compensate. That means food is more likely to be stored as fat instead of being used.

If you are monitoring your diet and keeping active, but the scale is not moving or your clothes feel tighter, it might be time to look at your sleep. Prioritising seven to nine hours is not just about feeling rested; it may be a strategic move for maintaining metabolic health.

And it's not only about quantity. Poor sleep quality also shows a correlation with

higher food intake and poorer diet choices, especially among women. In practice, that means: go to bed at a consistent hour, reduce distractions and interruptions, and address any conditions like snoring or sleep apnoea that might be degrading sleep quality.

Of course, sleep alone is not a magic cure. It will not override smoking, a high-fat diet, or complete inactivity. However, it is a piece of the health puzzle that tends to be overlooked, and it may be the piece that tips the balance.

So, sleep well so your body can work well. When you skip it, you are not just tired; you are sending clear signals to your metabolism that tell it to hold onto energy rather than let it go.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Collected

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ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Don't let relatives get the better of you. Self-improvement could bring amazing results. Expect your workload to be heavy. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

You won't get the reaction you want from your partner this week. Don't spend money irrationally. Do things with your children. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Social events may introduce exciting new lovers. Broaden your horizons through awareness programs. Organise your day well to achieve your goals. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Travel will promote new romantic connections. Be willing to listen. Moneymaking opportunities will surface. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Spend time with old friends or relatives. Pick projects that benefit the whole family. You'll get along well with clients. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

You'll gain much if you listen. Examine options before financial commitments. Take positions offering training or paid courses. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Question your partner if you must. Your diplomatic nature will help resolve conflicts. Avoid sudden changes that may cause estrangement. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Involvement with groups boosts your self-esteem. Don't avoid deteriorating situations; mend them. Control your anger in family debates. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Compromise to enjoy yourself. Avoid secret affairs or underhanded dealings. Financial opportunities may arise through personal connections. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Attend social events to meet potential mates. Don't overspend. Do your job carefully to avoid future trouble. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Depression may set in if you lack control. Consider moving or renovating. Female colleagues may help you complete tasks. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Your boss may be demanding. Balancing work and home will be difficult. Business trips might not yield results. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

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#DECOR

A functional, stylish bedroom for newlyweds: WHAT TO BUY AND WHY

For a newlywed just starting out their new married life together, the bedroom will, by far, be the most important corner of their home — the place where they spend quality time and create unforgettable memories with each other.

Before purchasing furniture for a bedroom, first assess the needs of both the husband and wife. Then, consider the size, layout, and even the wall colours of their room. Armed with that knowledge, now try to set a theme for the furniture beforehand.

As a parent, in-law, or a well-wisher, even if you wish to keep it a surprise gesture, you should still solicit their opinions and try to get a sense of their preference.

Also, do a thorough recon of their bedroom before buying any furniture because you do not want to get them an oversized bed or furniture that blocks the view of the window or leaves no room for them to walk.

For a smaller room, opt for a regular queen-sized bed. However, if they have a spacious bedroom and want a modern yet classic look that embodies comfort and

sophistication, go for a king-sized pendant bed.

A bedside table will most certainly come in handy for the couple. Otherwise, where else would they conveniently keep their medicines, books, or phone charger near the bed? For a larger room, the best choice would be to opt for two bedside tables, one for each of them, on either side of the bed. To romanticise the décor a bit, consider adding a warm light lamp over each bedside table.

Go for a small sofa set or accent chairs facing one another near the window. To highlight the space as a seating corner, place a rug underneath the sofas to tie the area together and add a warm and alluring touch.

It will give the couple a cosy spot to sit back, relax, and enjoy the moonlight together — a rustic little corner that lures



them both to sit together, stargaze and share stories.

Also, place an indoor plant near the seating area by the window. Opt for a low-maintenance plant that thrives in a bedroom, even with limited sunlight, such as English ivy, peace lily, or aloe vera. Studies have shown that indoor plants such as aloe vera help improve indoor air quality, creating a calming and restful atmosphere.

In our cultural context, newlywed couples often attend numerous invitations and family programmes after their wedding, as they begin this new chapter of their life. Keeping that in mind, the bride will want to look her best when visiting her in-laws and new relatives. That's why getting a dressing table is a must in a newlywed's bedroom.

Choose a dressing table with drawers

and compartments so she can keep her cosmetics, skincare products, and jewellery within arm's reach, making the gesture both functional and thoughtful.

If you prefer an elegant theme that complements light-coloured walls in your bedroom, a mahogany wooden wardrobe can be a perfect choice, as it pairs well with both light and vibrant tones. For a spacious room, opt for a bigger wardrobe with separate compartments for both of them, keeping it ideal for the couple to store clothes, jewellery, and accessories with care.

Whether you are getting a bedroom set from scratch or simply refurnishing it, getting a new furniture set may seem like a big investment. However, it does not necessarily have to put a dent in your wallet. Simply, look for a furniture brand that offers Equated Monthly Instalments (EMI), allowing you to pay in manageable portions. This way, you can build a bedroom set without putting too much pressure on your finances.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Hatil

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