

#FOOD & RECIPES

Eating on a budget in Badda? Here are 4 spots under Tk 150

Dhaka is a city of hustlers, where people from all classes venture out into the world each day with the hope of making it big. These big dreams come with long hours and lots of eating on the go. Thankfully, it does not always have to be expensive; budget-friendly food carts are available just about anywhere. If you are in Badda and looking for a bite that packs a punch without the high prices, we have got you covered! We have put together a list of 4 inexpensive food and drink spots that will have you coming back again and again.



CHILLHOUSE

A small food stall located opposite the back entrance of BRAC University, you are bound to see it right away. Their service is quick and the options innumerable. You can find everything from tried-and-tested fried items to carbohydrate-heavy options like chowmein and fried rice, with prices noted prominently on the window display. Drinks are also available, but not the most bang for your buck here.

Food prices start from Tk 10, with the most expensive item on the menu being well under Tk 100. The chicken sandwich and shawarma are regular crowd favourites here. For Tk 70, you can get a good portion of your daily protein intake, wrapped in either grilled white bread or fluffy pita bread.

And, the dip options are simply unparalleled. Even if you are a sauce snob who thinks ketchup is the average joe of the dip universe, you may just be impressed by the tamarind chutney and shorisha sauce (not to be confused with yellow mustard). While the chutney offsets the peppery meat with its sweet tang, the shorisha sauce brings a pleasant pizzazz to your meal with its kashundi-like flavour notes.

CAFEISTA

If you are dining at Chillhouse, you might be looking for something refreshing to sip on after your meal. Or, you may just be in desperate need of a caffeine kick for your midday slump. Well, look no further! Cafeista is right next door to Chillhouse, and it serves up a delicious range of hot

and cold caffeinated and chocolate-based beverages at half the price of a regular cafe. And, the best part? They do not skimp on quality with freshly ground coffee being sourced directly from North End Roasters.

For a small student-owned business that operates in tiny quarters, I was surprised to find they made no compromises on their coffee equipment either. Top-notch coffee machines from DeLonghi are used for all drinks. In a quick chat with the barista, he revealed that they do a deep cleaning of all machines every week.

Within Tk 50 to 170, you can find anything from strong espresso to creamier, flavoured drinks to satisfy your sweet tooth. I opted for the black coffee and Cadbury hot chocolate, spending Tk 70 and Tk 80 respectively.

First impressions — The temperature is just right. Not too piping hot, it allows you to dig right in and let the caffeine (or sugar) flow through you. The black coffee is well-balanced, with no burnt bitterness, while the hot chocolate is more suitable as an occasional treat.

INDIAN PANI FUCHKA

Finding a pani fuchka cart in Maddha

Badda is rather like spotting a unicorn in the wild. While fuchka and bhel puri stands are a dime a dozen in every neighbourhood, pani fuchkas are not as accessible, with the nearest ones being in Uttar Badda.

Indian Pani Fuchka is one of the few stands that you can find here, all six days of the week, from 10 AM to 10

PM. If you are near BRAC University's back gate, just keep walking straight ahead until you spot the solitary fuchka cart with metal haris (pots).

At Tk 30, you will get six hard fuchka shells and free rein to drown them in as much topping as you want from the five options: sour tamarind, sweet tamarind, yoghurt, olive, and Naga spice. I doled out just enough to get maximum flavour without losing the crunch factor.

My personal favourites were the olive and Naga spice. The olive topping tasted a lot like the juice of actual sun-dried pickles, evoking the nostalgia of slow summer days. As for the naga, be warned! Only three to four drops bring the fire faster than one would expect. If you are a spice lover, you will enjoy this thoroughly,

but do not blame me if you get an upset stomach!

CAFE JHOTPOT

Like the other spots in this list, Cafe Jhotpot is located in the same network of alleys. If you walk straight on from the fuchka cart and turn to your left, you will have arrived at Cafe Jhotpot.

Initially, I did not consider this spot seriously, figuring it to be yet another chhasta place. But, it made the list for three reasons: the crowd, the seating spaces, and one unique item!

As a rule of thumb, I try to go where the crowd goes. If customers are willing to wait outside on the alleys even when all seats are taken, clearly, the food must be worth it.

I ordered the three-piece masala singara, which came peppered with a nice quantity of in-house spice powder and a pora ruti. A regional delicacy from Kushtia, this torched loaf of sweet, caramelly milk bread is hard to find in the city except in places like Mohammadpur.

Right in the heart of Badda, you can sink into the pillow-like bliss of a well-torched pora ruti at just Tk 30. Usually enjoyed with malai cha, I ordered it sans the tea to see if it could stand on its own. I am happy to report that it did. The caramel was not saccharine sweet, and the milk powder was the icing on top of the figurative cake! The only downside? The cafe does not live up to the promise of its name, with slow service nearing a 15-minute wait time.

By Sunehra Afreen

Photo: Sunehra Afreen

