Millennials and the most sought-after Mexican restaurant in Dhaka

FOOD TALK

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For those of us who grew up in Dhaka in the 1990s, it is more than just a Mexican restaurant. It is a window to somewhere else — a world that exists somewhere between the movies we watch, the places we imagine visiting, and the lives we think we will eventually lead.

This is Dhaka before the internet takes over our lives. Before Instagram tells us where to eat, before Google Maps makes finding a restaurant a matter of seconds, and before every meal needs to be photographed, reviewed and shared.

Going out to eat is an event. Finding a restaurant is an adventure. And sometimes, the restaurant itself becomes part of our personal history. Tucked away in Gulshan 1, El Toro is one such place.

University life is a curious mix of ambition, youthful rebellion, and the discovery of things we have never experienced before. Food is a big part of that discovery. Mexican food feels exotic. Tacos and nachos aren't things we grow up eating at home. They belong to another world; one we are only beginning to understand.

And then there is the piña colada.

There is something wonderfully grown-up about ordering a drink whose name sounds as though it belongs on a beach somewhere far away. Even if we aren't quite sure what the world outside Dhaka looks like, we can, for a little while, imagine ourselves somewhere else.



El Toro becomes the setting for university dates, conversations that seem capable of going on forever, and evenings that feel significant simply because we are young enough to believe everything is significant.

It is also a time when eating out means discovering more than just new dishes. It is about testing boundaries, trying things our parents might not have ordered, and finding little pockets of the world within a city that is still figuring out what it wants to become.

That is what El Toro represents for me.

It isn't simply about the food, or whether the tacos meet today's standards of authenticity. It isn't about comparing the restaurant with places we visit now, armed with years of travel, better information and more sophisticated palates.

It is about what the place means at the time.

It is about being young in a city that is changing, discovering new tastes, falling in and out of love, and believing the world is waiting for us to figure it out.

Perhaps nostalgia is a generous editor. It softens the edges, makes the ordinary extraordinary, and allows us to remember not just what happens but how it feels to be there.

But perhaps that is precisely the point.

The places we remember most fondly aren't always the ones that serve the best food. Sometimes they are the ones that happen to be there when we are becoming who we are.

A restaurant can be a time capsule. Its tables, its menu and even the familiar journey to get there can bring back a version of ourselves we haven't thought about in years. We may return with different tastes, different expectations and a few more miles behind us, but a part of us remains exactly where it was.

El Toro is one of those places.

And somewhere between the tacos, the nachos, the piña coladas and those university dates, a little bit of our story is written.

For many of us, that is where the miles begin.

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#HEALTH & FITNESS



Why imaginary friends are important for healthy child brain development

Seeing your child interact with an empty room might raise immediate concerns about their mental health. Yet child psychiatrists confirm that invisible companions actively boost language skills, emotional intelligence, and cognitive development.

Picture a three-year-old pulling out a chair at the dining table. Nobody is sitting there, yet she insists you leave it alone. "That's Tutul's seat," she says, and hands him an empty spoon.

For many parents, this is where the worrying begins. Is this normal? Should we play along? Is something wrong? According to Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed, Professor of Child, Adolescent and Family Psychiatry at Faridpur Medical College, the answer is usually reassuring.

A SIGN OF A GROWING MIND

"Having imaginary friends is an important part of a child's development, and we should see it positively," says Dr Ahmed.

Imagining means holding in your mind something that is not in front of you. He explains that this process is a core part of cognitive development, the way a child's thinking and understanding grow. It usually starts around the age of three and is most common between three and seven.

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, whose work on child development remains a staple in education, provided an excellent description of this stage. In simple terms, young children learn about the world by pretending. A cushion becomes a boat, a spoon becomes a microphone, and a friend nobody else can see becomes someone to talk to.

The benefits go beyond fun. Imaginary play builds communication skills, Dr Ahmed confirms, and helps children learn to read other people's feelings. When doctors assess a child for developmental concerns, they ask parents whether the child plays imaginary games. "If they can, we consider it normal," Dr Ahmed says, expressing relief. "If they cannot, it may point to a neurodevelopmental disorder."