



Khyen Chyen

Kashmir Observer Food & Beverages Supplement



■ **KABAB FIESTA**

Let the Kebabs roll this Eid

₹5

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KASHMIR OBSERVER



KEHWA CAKE

The Lalit Grand Palace

Khyen Chyen News Desk

"Kehwa Cake" is an age old cake introduced in the valley by "The Lalit Grad Palace, Srinagar". Chef "Surendra Mohan Bhatt" has revived the recipe and introduced the cake all over again in the month of august. The ingredients primarily comprise of Kehwa leaves, saffron, cream cheese, cardamom powder and vanilla essence. Chef "Bhatt", says "Kehwa is a vital tea flavour in Kashmir so we thought of baking a kehwa cake for our guests". – "Surendra Mohan Bhatt", Chef de cuisine, The Lalit Grand Palace, Srinagar, Kashmir.

Tear Up Coupon 25% Off

THE SICILIAN GUSTO, The Lalit Grand Palace

Relish Greek, Italian and whole of Mediterranean cuisine on a Sicilian platter at "The Lalit Grand Palace, Srinagar. They are serving a five course meal at an extremely affordable price which makes it even more attractive. The F&B manager, Mr Akhtar has some interesting suggestions to make in the Sicilian menu so please don't forget to take his specialized opinion.

Tear Up Coupon 50% off

Burger and Beverage Fest

Ongoing from 15th August 2018 at The Lalit Grand palace, The Chinar
The chef "Surendra Mohan Bhatt" has tried to include a varied variety of burgers in the burger fest menu. The 10 varieties of burgers being served are a

treat to the mouth. The signature burger suggested by the F&B manager "Mr Akhtar" is "Mutton Kanti Burger" which is inspired by the Mutton Kanti dish famous amongst Kashmiri People. Another mouth-watering burger is "Clay Oven Roasted Chicken Burger". The combo deal for two beverage and burger would cost 2250 INR excluding taxes. But to your delight khyenchyen team brings an exclusive discount of 50% on this burger festival. Just take the tear up coupon below along.

Tear up coupon 50% off

Nasi Goreng at Vivanta by Taj, Srinagar

Try the signature Malaysian dish "NasiGoreng" by Taj Rebak Island, Langkawi at Vivanta by Taj, Srinagar. Chef "SumantDadhwal" at Taj Srinagar specialises in this signature dish that comprises of stir fried rice with chicken & prawns. The dish is served with battered prawns, chicken satay and prawn wafers.

Tear up Coupon 20%

Readymade Eid Bakery Hampers, Just Baked

To put an end to your bakery shopping woes, Just Baked at Sanat Nagar has come up with an innovative way and introduced their Eid Bakery Hampers by the name of Eid in a box. The hamper which includes almost all their popular bakery items like their muffins and butter cakes comes in two sizes. The smaller one, priced at Rs 1900 and the larger one, priced at Rs 3650.

New Restaurant on the Block:

HUNGER CLUB, Opp. K2 Inn, Rajbagh:

We at KhyenChyen are always proud of new ventures in Srinagar, as this heralds the onset of a culinary exploration. Kashmiris are more than deserving of the food culture that is synonymous globally, and along with our rich gastronomic culture, Kashmir could be the next food capital of the world. Restaurants like Hungry Club and the people who run them, are in a way pioneers of the F&B industry in Kashmir. To encourage the public from a cross section to indulge in tastes from across the globe,

should be the aim of every restaurateur in the city. The restaurant which opened on 16th of August, 2018 is a foodie's dream to bring quality fast food to Srinagar. With a chef who has spent time working both in KFC and Pizza Hut, the restaurant seems to have already raised the bar for fried chicken and pizza in Srinagar. The prices, which are competitively lower than other fast food restaurants make it evident that the managers have taken special care to keep in mind the spending power of the general population.





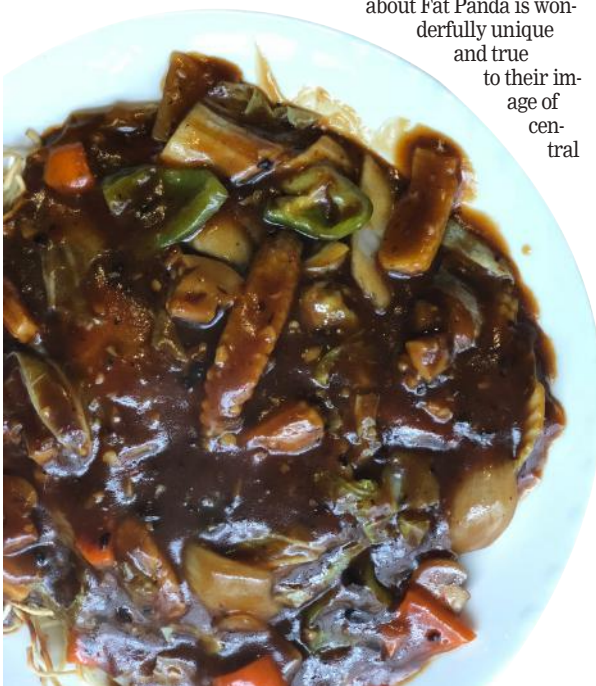
EATING OUT

FAT PANDA

Tasting Pan Asian Food in Kashmir

Jugal Bhide

“It doesn’t really feel as if I’m eating at a restaurant in Srinagar” were the words exclaimed by my friend, as she bit into her mixed vegetables in blackbean sauce, as we were both sat a table in Fat Panda restaurant, a delightful eatery on Boulevard road in Srinagar. As someone who has moved here from Mumbai, I don’t really expect an oriental restaurant with genuine flavors, textures and ingredients, that are reminiscent of a five-star meal in a major metropolis. From their varying menu, every item we ordered, lived up to the standards we as travelers have come to expect from a fine dining restaurant. Everything about Fat Panda is wonderfully unique and true to their image of central



and pan Asian cuisine. The ambiance is in a way quite charming, with wood laden furniture and Chinese new year lamps, creating an authentic, oriental aura. Staying true to it’s name, there is a massive stuffed panda right at the entrance, a popular spot for families with children looking to capture a couple of pictures together. We were sat at a window side table, and were able to just see a glance of the dal lake, as we indulged in our meals. First to arrive were chicken dim sums, served in the traditional wooden box, keeping the steam in to maintain heat. With every bite there was a release of taste and steam, and the freshness of the dim sums made for a delicious assortment of bite sized wonders. After this, we moved to a portion of mixed vegetables, topped with the restaurants own black bean sauce. The veggies were perfectly cooked, and the blackbean sauce had just the perfect umami (savory taste), that I as a food reviewer will put my reputation on the line, and label this the best blackbean sauce based dish I have tried not just in Kashmir, but in other parts of India. I implore you to travel to this well run and great service based establishment, and pick any item you find appealing. I assure you, you won’t be left disappointed. It is a matter of immense pride for a Kashmir based food journalist, to find gems like Fat Panda that are at par with any other oriental restaurant elsewhere. All the way from the servers, to the people who run this joint, are entirely dedicated to provide their patrons a fine dining experience worthy of remembrance. I can say with certainty that restaurants like Fat Panda take Srinagar’s food scene to a whole other level, and the least we locals can do is go to this restaurant, and enjoy a wholesome, delicious meal.

**20%
OFF**



GREEN THAI CURRY
at Fat Panda

The Fat Panda restaurant’s signature dish “Thai Green Curry” is a must try as this is the only restaurant in the city that serves this dish. What makes it more authentic is that its ingredients like Lemon grass, basil leaves, bok-choy and chinese cabbage are all exclusively sourced by the chef “Vivek Thapa” from Mumbai. Chef “Vivek Thapa” has worked for last 18 years in famous authentic Chinese restaurants like “China Garden” and “Mainland China”. Their competitive price also gives your pocket a reason to try and relish this dish.

CHICKEN THAI CURRY: RS 399 | RICE:RS 129

Show **Khyen Chyen** at the Counter & Get An Exclusive **20% OFF** on **GREEN THAI CURRY**

“ **IT IS A MATTER OF IMMENSE PRIDE** for a Kashmir based food journalist, to find gems like Fat Panda that are at par with any other oriental restaurant.”



TRAVEL FOR FOOD

My Tryst With Kashmiri Food



By: Namisha Raj

The first thing that comes to my mind when I plan my travel is the food associated with the particular destination. Kashmir is one such place. The moment we talk about Kashmir, its scenic beauty and world famous cuisine (wazwan) comes to my mind. I have travelled to Kashmir numerous times but this time was entirely different as I was introduced to different food specialties of the region.

Eating Rista & Rice at friend's home

There are few iconic restaurants and streets that are a must visit for foodies, food bloggers and food critics. Being a photographer, for me exploring these streets and old town (downtown) of Srinagar was a must but exploring it through experiencing food became even more exciting for me. Kashmiris are known for their hospitality which I experienced when I was invited by a Kashmiri friend to his home. There was a beautiful table that was set up for me, the menu consisted of mutton kebabs and biryani along with raita, naan and salad. It wasn't authentic Kashmiri food and my craving for

eating authentic food was still there.

Food Served at my friend's home

Fortunately, my another Kashmiri friend invited me to a wedding and this was the moment I considered myself the luckiest of all. I have never come to Kashmir in the wedding season and this was my chance to attend one and eat the mouthwatering WAZWAN, a truly Royal Feast in its traditional setting.

Kashmiri wedding was a complete eye opener for me. The Kashmiri wedding ceremonies and eating, serving culture is completely different than any other wedding traditions of India.

Kashmiri Wedding- TRAMI at Kashmiri Wedding

The wedding meals are served separately to men and women, men are served first and women have to wait for their turn to eat. An elaborately decorated huge tent (shamiyana) is erected for the purpose where carpets are spread out for seating on the floor. As we sat down for the meal. A dastarkhwan (White table cloth/great spread) was laid out for everyone. We were asked to sit in a

group of four, the food is served in TRAMI

(a huge copper plate) and the eating portion size is huge and that's probably the reason we were asked to share the meal. The meal consisted of several mutton based dishes that were served course by course.

I remember some names of the dishes which were absolutely mouth-watering. Rista being one of my favorites. Others are Gushtaba-Yakhni, Abgosht and Tabak Maaz. I was also given a bag in which I could carry the left-over food that I could eat for lunch the next day. The mehmaanawazi that I experienced can be experienced nowhere in the world and one has to be in Kashmir to feel the hospitality extended

by the warm hearted people of Kashmir.

Being a coffee lover and an early breakfast person I was looking for a café and I wasn't sure if I would find one, but to my surprise I found several.

Hot Chocolate at 14th Avenue Café / Pasta at café Book and Bricks

14th Avenue is located at Silk Factory Road and if one wants to have a cup of "hot chocolate" this is the café to be. It's a perfect café for coffees and shakes, although the owner insists that you try their pizza which one should avoid as it isn't the best pizza in the town.

Another café "Books and Bricks" at Gogji Bagh is nice and cozy place, I tried "fish & chips" and pasta and to my surprise it was made with perfection like any other cafés in a metropolitan city.

After interacting with some more local friends in Srinagar I realized there is a lot more to explore and experience in terms of food. Srinagar has a many contemporary cafés and restaurants and I am sure I will back soon to experience more food.

Photos: by Nimisha Raj

(The author loves to travel for food and experience new cultures. She can be reached at namisharaj1@gmail.com)



KHYEN CHYEN'S: PICK OF THE WEEK

RIZQ

The Food Studio



“ THE JOURNEY THAT STARTED
with the intention of feeding people has culminated in what people know as Rizq and we couldn't be more happier”

-Mohammed Shuaib Shah,
Owner

Najwa Shabir

In a city mushrooming with restaurants and cafes, it can become quite overwhelming to decide where to eat. It so happens that most people when provided with such a vast number of choices, tend to go for the fanciest places with the most luxurious and over the top menus only to sadly realise that the restaurant has only focused on ambiance and completely neglected the most important aspect of any good restaurant—the food. It is quite rare to find a restaurant which not only provides you the perfect setting for an evening out with your family and friends but also serves food that leaves your bellies full and wallet happy.

Located at Shah Complex, Main stop, Lal Bazar, “Rizq-The food Studio”, a Mughlai Indian restaurant is one such hidden gem. The restaurant which is owned by Mohammad Shuaib Shah and his partner, Sajeel Majeed Wani is at par nay better than any high end eatery in Srinagar or any other metropolitan city. A perfect place to dine out, the restaurant serves quality food with competitive prices. What is even more delightful is that unlike most typical restau-

rants in Srinagar, the place has an open kitchen and one can easily inspect how one's food is being prepared. The menu includes all the typical famous Mughlai dishes like chicken chengezi, Afghani Chicken, Tandoori gosht etc. In the short while that you have to wait for your food to be prepared, the amazing aromas that waft in from their kitchen leaving your drooling all over your table. As soon as the food is set on your table, the looks and the delicious smells coming from the food, make even the perfect conformist amongst us pounce on the food. The delicious meal leaves one in a happy food comma.

Although everything on the menu is meticulously prepared and special care is taken to maintain the quality and the flavour of the food, Khyen Chyen team would recommend you go for their Tandoori Gosht, Afghani Chicken Tikka and their amazing white mutton korma. The trio make for an amazing relish when combined with their freshly prepared naan or tandoori roti. To sum up, Rizq is a place that definitely sets the bar for quality food in Srinagar. It is a restaurant that will definitely leave you happy even if you have been disappointed with food more than once in Srinagar.

BREW & BAKE

CHAI

WITH A PRICE



Jugal Bhinde

In Srinagar, Chai isn't a just a beverage. It is synonymous with being a concept, or an elixir of endless work if you will. As an outsider, I've come to notice whenever I am offered a cup, I get asked whether I'd like 'nun chai', or the usual 'Lipton'. I have had my experiences with 'nun chai', and I'd describe them as challenging. But there is a sense of comfort in every sip of what the Kashmiri's describe as 'Lipton' chai, or what I've grown up calling, Masala tea. Finding really good tasting tea is a little bit of a challenge in Srinagar, because people are so used to the concept that we've accepted mediocrity. Which is why in the pursuit of finding something outside the ordinary, I traveled to Ahdoos, a place fabled for its restaurant. The bakery at Ahdoos is known around the city for its pastries and confectionery items, but what many people perhaps don't know is that they can enjoy a cup of chai here as well, along with their favorite cakes and cookies.

Walking in to the place, I was greeted with the sweet fragrance you'd associate with a bakery. But not just any bakery, a high end establishment showcasing imported chocolates and novelty

items, one immediately gets teleported to a metropolitan city café, the likes of which hardly exist in Srinagar. There's Western music playing in the bakery, and the assortment of pastries makes one feel as though the café belongs in Mumbai or

New York City. But alas, we are in Srinagar. The city deserves a bakery of international standards and quality. I have a look at their chalked out menu, and instantly chose Ahdoos Special Tea, and a piece of glistening carrot cake.

The fragrance of the tea, as their name suggests, was indeed special. Served in a transparent glass tea pot, there was a dark red glisten to the tea, and on the side a cup of milk, leading the tea drinker to decide just how he or she liked their cup. I poured myself half a cup, two drops of milk and a pack of brown sugar. The tea was literally uplifting, and after a cup or two, I genuinely felt happier. The carrot cake has soft, delicious and shone under the lights of the establishment. Though the cake was a bit on the drier side, it didn't take away from the fact that it was extremely comforting and left a warm, fuzzy feeling inside me.

Ahdoos is a place that can only be described as special, and a rarity in Kashmir. But a cup of tea and a piece of cake, are so synonymous in the daily existence of a Kashmiri, that I wonder just how many people will be willing to cough up close 200 rupees for one visit. The quality of the products served here is excellent, but I don't see the place being regularly frequented by the chai connoisseurs. And if the main targets are tourists and outsiders, perhaps they could be located on Boulevard or closer to Dal Lake? Maybe this is just my cynicism as a reviewer, but I implore you to not let this take away from the fact that Ahdoos is spell bindingly good, and definitely worth a visit.

**Creme Bakery Cafe
Residency Road Srinagar**



“Walking in to the place, one immediately gets teleported to a metropolitan city café, the likes of which hardly exist in Srinagar”

Khyen Chyen

KASHMIR'S VERY OWN FOOD GUIDE

Kashmir is a connoisseur's choice and attracts a large number of visitors not only to indulge in its heavenly ambience but also to savour its sumptuous delights.

Booking.com, a global leader in connecting travellers with the widest choice of incredible places to stay, has released the findings which also says that If there's one thing most people agree on when traveling, it's that food is a major consideration when picking a destination.

The survey, which analysed responses from 19,000 travelers across 26 countries, says 41

percent of travelers incorporated new food and drink destinations into their travel plans in 2018 (compared to 29 percent in 2017).

The survey also notes 64 percent of travelers want to eat more local food on their trips, and 22 percent plan to travel to a destination for the food alone. Additionally, 25 percent plan to avoid destinations without strong culinary scenes.

Yet Kashmir, famous for its incredible range of culinary delights, remained perhaps the only place in the world without a proper guide for food lovers and

FAMILIES CAN NOW MAKE an informed choice to select a place for a quality meal outside their homes, thanks to Khyen Chyen.

enthusiasts.

'Khyen Chyen' (Kashmiri for Food & Drink) is the first and only Food & Beverages journal from Kashmir.

The quality fortnightly journal carries features, reviews and focused reports.

The journal, powered by

Kashmir Observer, a trusted name in Kashmir's English journalism, serves as a guide for food enthusiasts of the Valley and travellers alike.

Families can now make an informed choice to select a place for a quality meal outside their homes, thanks to Khyen Chyen.

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9906395507

/Hungerclub_srinagar

KABAB FIESTA

Let the Kebabs roll this Eid



Najwa Shabir

If there is one name that sends all mutton lovers into a salivating frenzy, it is the name barbeque. While the word has come to be associated with any type of meat be it skewers or kababs cooked over charcoal, in Kashmir the name has remained restricted to just tujje or mutton skewers cooked over charcoal. The aroma of spitting meats coated with a mixture of salt and chilli is what defines barbeque for an average Kashmiri. While you can find every road lined with portable carts selling these delightful snacks in the evening, for any health conscious Kashmiri, the only places to enjoy the tujje are either at Khayam Chowk where you can find a street full of shops with crammed spaces ushering in groups after groups of eager tujje lovers even when the inside of the shop has no space to accommodate even a single one of them. The perfect analogy would be to compare them to the obnoxious Kashmiri bus drivers who keep pushing and pushing the passengers inside even when there are more than a dozen people hanging out from the door. Unlike Khayam Chowk, Makai Park on Boulevard Road does provide a decent sitting space to enjoy your barbeque with an amazing view of the Dal Lake but to enjoy your barbeque you need to fish out a little more than an average tujje purchased from a roadside tujje seller will cost.

Barbecue is probably the world's oldest cooking method. It has come a long way from the traditional pit BBQ that originated in the Caribbean to the great Indian tandoor. Since Eid ulAdha is just around the corner and it is the best time for barbeque given the huge amount of fresh and tender mutton available at every house, KhyanChyan brings to you the many varieties of barbeque

and how you can prepare them right at your home to enjoy a perfect barbeque evening.

First things first, for any good barbeque the most important step is to heat your charcoal and oil the grill on top so that the meat doesn't stick. A perfect barbeque never touches the fire directly. Instead it smokes and cooks slowly over the charcoal. The next important thing to bear in mind while barbequing is to not poke the meat a lot as it releases the juices and you end up with charred and chewy mutton. A perfect barbeque should burst with juices as soon as you bite into it.

Another important thing to pay attention to is the marinade or the seasonings that you need to rub onto your meats. Like they say, a perfect seasoning can make or break your barbeque game. Also, no matter what type of marinade you choose, try to get the meat in the mixture at least 24 hours ahead of time to allow the meat to soak in all the delightful aromas and flavours from the seasoning. Now that we are done explaining about the nitty-gritty of barbeque, let us get into some delicious recipes that will make for certain make your relatives crown you the barbeque King or Queen.





1. **Guilt Free BBQ Mutton Recipe:**

Ingredients:

1. Mutton cut into small pieces.
2. One small onion
3. 5-6 red chillies
4. 5 garlic pods
5. ½ cup lemon juice or vinegar
6. Salt as per taste
7. ½ cup oil
8. 1 tsp red chilli powder
9. 1 tsp fennel powder
10. 1/2 tsp Italian herbs mixture

Cook Time: 01 Hour

Difficulty Level: Easy

Method:

1. Bash the mutton pieces with a rolling pin or a meat mallet.
2. Grind a small onion, 5-6 red chillies and 5 garlic pods into a paste. Sauté this paste in oil for a few minutes.
3. Take ½ a cup lemon juice or vinegar in a bowl and season it with some salt and red chilli powder. Add a tsp. of fennel powder to it and ½ a tsp of Italian herb mixture.
4. Now pour this liquid into the onion paste and reduce this on fire for 20 minutes, and your BBQ sauce is ready.
5. Now marinate the mutton pieces with this sauce, preferably overnight. Put in on the heated griddle and brush with oil. Let the mutton grill for about half an hour if you like it medium rare and for 45 mins if you like it completely done.

2. **Reshmi TikkaKabab**

Cook Time: 50 Minutes

Difficulty Level: Easy

Ingredients:

1. 250 gms of mutton mince
2. 1 tsp refined oil
3. 1 tsp turmeric powder
4. 1 Tbsp ginger-garlic paste
5. 50 gm malai
6. 50 gm curd
7. 1 lemons
8. 1 Tbsp garam masala
9. Salt, to taste

For the garam masala:

1. 1 tsp cumin
2. 1 tsp coriander powder
3. 1 tsp black pepper
4. 5-6 green cardamom
5. 1 stick cinnamon
6. 5-6 cloves

Method:

For the garam masala:

1. In a pan, dry roast cumin, coriander powder, black pepper, green cardamom, cinnamon and cloves.
2. **Grind them in a mortar and pestle.**
For the tikka:
 1. In a bowl, add the mutton mince, refined oil, turmeric powder, ginger garlic paste, malai, curd, juice of 1/2 a lemon, the prepared garam masala and salt. Mix them well together. Keep them in the fridge for 20 minutes.
 2. Preheat the oven for 20 minutes at 180 C. Shape into a kabab
 3. Roast the prepared kababin the oven for 30 minutes.
 4. Remove them from oven and squeeze half lime over it.
 5. Serve hot.

3. **Mutton Shashlik Recipe:**

Total Cook Time: 45 Minutes

Difficulty Level: Easy

Ingredients:

1. 500 gm boneless mutton/beef cut into fairly large cubes
2. 1 Tbsp garlic paste
3. 1 Tbsp ginger paste
4. 1 cup yogurt (dahi)
5. Chilli powder to taste
6. 1 tsp powdered garam masala
7. 1 Tbsp powdered coriander seeds
8. 1 tsp salt or to taste
9. 2-3 capsicums
10. 2 onions
11. 3-4 tomatoes skewers oil to brush chaat masala to garnish

Method:

1. Prick meat cubes and marinate in garlic, ginger, yogurt, chilli powder, black pepper, chilli powder, coriander powder, and salt. Leave for 7 hours or overnight.
2. Cut capsicum, onions and tomatoes to match the meat cubes.
3. Thread a piece of tomato, onion and capsicum into the skewer and follow that with a cube of meat.
4. Repeat thus having 3-4 pieces of meat sandwiched with the vegetables on each skewer.
5. Pour whatever juices there may be left over the prepared shashlik skewers and place over a drip tray.
6. Brush with oil.
7. Grill the skewers slowly over charcoal while brushing with oil every now and then, till cooked through and browned at the edges.

How to preserve your Qurbani meat

HOW TO FREEZE YOUR MEAT:

1. The best way to store the meat is to thoroughly clean it and put it into small ziplock bags of half a kg, flattened them a bit and freeze them right away. The flattening makes it easier to thaw the frozen meat when we need to use it.
2. Another method is to place the cleaned meat pieces on a plate and keep them under a fan overnight after covering with a muslin cloth. This will dry out a little moisture from the meat and make it easier to freeze it.
3. Yet another way can be by marinating the meat pieces along with the herbs of your choice and oil and leaving them in the freezer to freeze after putting into a zip lock bag. This will also save you the hassle of having to add a ton of spices while cooking it later on and the flavour from the herbs will incorporate well into the meat.
4. The most important part before freezing any meat however is how to pack it. Never ever freeze the meat in readymade polythene bags from the market or a newspaper. The polythene bags will result in freezer bites and the ink from the newspaper will soak into the meat making it quite harmful for consumption. While the ideal way to pack the meat is in freezer safe zip lock bags that can be purchased from any supermarket store, you can make a makeshift wrap from aluminium foil if you don't have any ziplock bags available at hand.
5. You can also mince the boneless cuts, make them into ristas and kababs and freeze them. Minced mutton can easily be frozen for up to 3 months or more.

Non-freezing methods:

For folks who don't have access to a freezer, there is no need for an alarm as it is possible to store meat for long without freezing it. After all the ancient folks didn't always have freezers.

1. For preserving meat without a freezer, the best way is to dehydrate it. You can rub the mutton with salt all over, heat it over water for 10 mins. After 24 hours heat the meat in water again for 15 mins. This way you can easily use the meat for 3-4 days without having the need to put it into a refrigerator.

2. If you want to preserve your meat for longer than just a few days, then after slicing the meat into thin cuts, rub them with salt and leave them hanging on a wire hook in sun. The salt and sun will dry out the moisture from the meat and prevent it from spoilage.

It is always best to consume the frozen meats as early as possible. To thaw the frozen meat, simply leave it out on the counter top in the bag it was frozen in till it de-freezes, discard all the liquid that will ooze out from the meat while thawing and cook it as you would normally. Since this is Kashmir and we are prone to the occasional electricity woes, if the frozen meat de-freezes, never ever refreeze it. Instead try cooking it and freezing the cooked meat. Your body will definitely thank you for it.



Exclusive Chef's Tip

“To preserve any kind of meat for a longer duration, just put the meat in a container and cover with a layer of sea salt. This will help dehydrate the meat and allow it to stay fresh for longer durations.”

-Chef Sumant Dadhwal,
Executive Chef, Vivanta by Taj



BREW & BAKE

JUST BAKED

A Dream Patisserie

As Kashmiris, we love our bakeries. The tradition has evolved over centuries. From the locally baked sheermal to exotic tarts, bakery forms an essential part of our cuisine. Be it a simple cup of nun chai or Kehva in the morning or an elaborate tea spread in the afternoons, no tea in Kashmir is complete without a variety of bakery to go along. The concept of sipping tea just by itself, unaccompanied by either the bread from the kandur or a variety of bakery assortments, just isn't the Kaeshur way.

Our love for bakeries stems from the fact that this tradition has evolved over centuries with people flocking to this earthly paradise from all across the world bringing along varied tastes and recipes. Traditional baked goodies like the sheermal, butter cakes and bakirkhani are freely available but, there are only a few bakeries that cater to these newly acquired tastes. As a bakery enthusiast and an explorer of new tastes, I took it upon myself to look for bakeries that have forayed into catering to our globalised tastes. My exploration

in the city took me to a chic bakery outlet that goes by the name of 'Just Baked'.

Located near Sanat Nagar Chowk, Just Baked is every bakery lover's paradise. The smell of freshly baked breads and cakes that wafts in from the bakery just as you step into the outlet is sure to send your taste buds into a salivating frenzy.

Started by Mr. Bilal Gani Lone along with his daughter, Ms. Adha Lone in June 2015, the bakery boasts of being pioneers of exotic baked items in Kashmir. According to the manager, Mr. Imtiyaz Ahmad, it took

years and

years of planning before the actual bakery came into existence. "Mr. Lone had a dream of introducing the locals to baked items from all over the world. The process was a long and tedious one because we didn't want the focus to be on taste alone. We wanted to give equal attention to hygiene, something very few bakeries consider to be of importance in Kashmir", says Mr Imtiyaz.

"The quality is what attracts our customers. We have people coming here and saying that ever since they had bakery from our shop, they don't like bakeries from any other shop"

Although the higher quality of the products is reflected in their prices, the bakery certainly doesn't believe in compromising on quality. Everything from the counter tops to the packaging material is food grade and spotlessly clean. The equipment used is all high grade and the chefs take extra care of the hygiene by wearing hair nets, aprons and gloves while baking. "The quality is what attracts our customers.

We have people coming here and



OUR LOVE FOR BAKERIES STEMS FROM

the fact that this tradition has evolved over centuries with people flocking to this earthly paradise from all across the world bringing along varied tastes and recipes.



saying that ever since they had bakery from our shop, they don't like bakeries from any other shop", says Mr. Imtiyaz. Besides the huge bakery selection, Just Baked is perhaps the only place in Srinagar that makes perfect woodfire Italian pizzas that you can gobble down with an espresso shot or any other drink of your choice. But while the beautifully baked goods displayed in the glass counter may make you want to sit there the entire day and enjoy all the treats one by one, the

dearth of space may not allow it. Although the bakery is not crammed like most bakery shops, there are only a few tables where you can sit and enjoy the delicious goodies. If you are looking for some quality bakery, I would highly recommend you visit Just Baked, if not to buy bags full of bakeries then just to indulge in delightful tastes every once a while.

Text: Najwa Shabir
Photos: Faisal Bhat



“THE QUALITY IS WHAT ATTRACTS OUR CUSTOMERS. We have people coming here and saying that ever since they had bakery from our shop, they don't like bakery from any other shop.”

EATING OUT

BOOKS & BRICKS

Away from the Madding Crowd



By Jugal Bhide

IN a city like Srinagar, there aren't many places for peace and quiet, where one can sit down and spend an afternoon, reading your favourite novel. What would be even more alluring for an avid reader, would be a place that serves you freshly made delights, to accompany your private 'me' time.

Located at uptown GogjiBagh, 'Books and Bricks' café is one such place, where I found solitude on a hot afternoon, to sit down with a copy of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby" while sipping a freshly made concoction of apple and kiwi juices.

I was direly looking for a place such as this, because I was looking for an escape from everything that goes around in the otherwise chaotic city, Srinagar has lately turned into. The traffic, noise, protests everything drowns out inside the brick laden walls of this



café. I also ordered a portion of fruit salad, trying to be a little calorie conscious. But much to my surprise, and rather pleasantly, they'd included a dollop of vanilla ice cream on top of the assortment of apples, pomegranates, bananas and kiwis. I let my calorie consciousness vanish for a moment, and indulged happily. The aura of 'Books and Bricks', is a based on a traditional British café, with brick walls, wooden tables and chairs and subtle classic music.

Along the walls are shelves lined with books, and I did find a few of my favourites like J.D Salinger and Hemingway.

BB is moderately priced, has a variety of sweet and savoury dishes to choose from and is located quite prominently in the city. It's quite unusual for Srinagar to cater to the needs of a person who is looking for a cocoon of calm and thoughtfulness, and Books & Bricks offers it.

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IN-FOCUS

CHAI JAAI

Mumbai chai festival



By Jugal Bhide

So much has been said and written about Chai Jaai in Srinagar, that it has become an establishment synonymous with tourists as an essential on their to do list. They are known for their diverse range of teas, and an Instagram perfect décor and ambiance. So when word reached our offices that Chai Jaai was hosting a food festival based on dishes and chai from Mumbai, we leapt at the opportunity to bring you an honest review of the items the people at Chai Jaai deem fit to call Mumbai “based” or “inspired.” We expected a high standard of food, just as we’ve come to expect from Chai Jaai for so long now. And perhaps most importantly, I writing this, have lived in Mumbai my entire life. Who better to judge the quality of food at a Mumbai food festival than a Mumbaikaar himself?

The menu made for an interesting read, as I saw some staple items such as cutting chai and misal pav, listed on the menu. What was even more

intriguing being the fact they’d included a parsi food list, which contained Salli Botti. It makes me happy to realize that the parsi culture and Mumbai continue to be synonymously used even all the way north in Kashmir. Just a glance at this list had me excited for ordering dishes, that I hadn’t expected to eat in my time in Kashmir. We ordered a cutting chai, an Irani chai, vada pav and pav bhaji; all quintessentially Mumbai delicacies.

The chais were the first to arrive, served in the typical side of the street glass cups, presented in makeshift tea stalls all over Mumbai. The teas were aromatic, and I did enjoy the Irani chai, but what they label as ‘cutting chai’ on their menu, should not be referred to as ‘cutting’ or ‘chai’. In what appears to be a mucky attempt to recreate a classic, the chai served to us tasted nothing as the comfortable cup of piping hot tea, brewed magnificently in so many parts of India. But do not let this take away from the fact that the Irani chai, and so many other magical teas served at chai jaai,

are delightfully made and remain wonderful to indulge in.

When it comes to the food, we were left a tad bit disappointed with the Pav Bhaji. The managers at Chai Jaai confessed to us, that the bhaji was cooked with a ready made masala. That’s cheating isn’t it? Albeit the dish was a decent replica of a Mumbai staple, we didn’t feel the attempt was entitled to its price tag of 150 rupees, especially since you or I could cook it at home with the exact same ready-made masala they confessed to use at the restaurant. The vada pav was quite delicious, and the vada perfectly cooked, I would’ve preferred a side of chutney, as a compliment to the dish. In Mumbai you always have the option of adding either mint, tamarind or garlic chutney for your vada pav, thus the lack of this was disappointing.

Overall, as a Mumbaikaar, I feel a sense of pride in seeing the cuisine of my city being paid homage to in other states. The Mumbai chai festival at chai jaai will be an intriguing experience for any seeking to taste the flavors of the city I call home.

FRUIT & NUTS

LADAKH

The Land of Miracle Fruit



Syed Tuffail

Apricot to Ladakh is what apples are to Kashmir. The brief season of apricot harvest is upon us, and many fruit enthusiasts will soon bite into one of these small, delicate, yellowish-orange fruits.

They say travel makes a man richer and I say travel completely changes you, especially if you are travelling for food. It reveals to you the immense bounties of nature. I recently decided to take a short trip to Ladakh. As a Kashmiri, all I was seeking was to experience the rugged yet beautiful terrain but what I ended up finding was something even better.

Well before I reached Kargil, a sweet fragrance greeted me. As I moved a little further into the area, I was left mesmerised by a brilliant display of green and orange apricots. Ever since my childhood, I have always heard praise and appreciation for Balti apricots. Therefore, I decided to explore and find out a little more about these sweet little one biters.

I visited quite a few households in and around Kargil, a district of Ladakh division of Kashmir and erstwhile part of Baltistan now under Pakistani control. At every house the first thing served to me were apricots and it turned out to be a tradition to welcome guests with apricots especially in the harvesting season. A little interaction

with the locals and I came to know that Apricots are called 'chulli' (non dried) 'faddeng' (dried ones) in the Balti language.

Apricot in Ladakh, is believed to have been introduced a century back from Central Asia. Since then, it has become one of the most preferred and commercially cultivated fruit crop of the region and has become an integral part of the people there.

It has a wide range of distribution in different parts of Ladakh with particular abundance in Sham areas (lower Ladakh) including Dha-Hanu, Garkhon, Skurbuchan, Domkhar, Wanla, Khaltse and Timosgang and also in Kargil.

Having luxuriously adapted to the extreme environment of Ladakh, the apricot tree can attain a height of about 4-7 meters. The trees bear heart shaped leaves, and bloom in spring to subsequently give fruit in summer. With the onset of breezy spring, these trees overcome the long terrible winter dormancy and start producing young healthy leaf buds, and by the month of April-May, they produce beautiful white or pinkish flowers that not only ensures the continuity of their population but also give a unique look to the sandy desert of trans-Himalaya.

By the month of August-September, they start producing yellow-orange, rounded or oval shaped fruit which are juicy and sweet in taste with a peculiar flavour associated with apricot. There are many varieties of apricot grown in Ladakh.

The varieties differ from one another in taste (sweet, bitter, sour), size, shape and physical appearance. Some of these varieties include Halman, Laktse-karpo, Safaidda, Khanteh etc. Halman and Laktse-karpo are the most preferred one for commercial purpose.

Even though farming in Ladakh is generally difficult due to extreme temperatures and poor soil quality but apricots are an exception. Due to their unmatched suitability and synchronization with the environment the apricots do not need any fertilizers or pesticides, thus are 100% organic. This makes them an excellent choice for a commercial crop as the investments are low and yields high. low investments and high yields.

Apricots are the major source of income for many Ladakhis who are engaged in the cultivation and marketing of this fruit.



“APART FROM STRENGTHENING THE BODY,
protecting the eyes and contributing to the health of bones, it has been proven that apricots reduce the risk of cancer and prolongs life. Fresh apricot abounds with vitamin A, C and B and various minerals.”



Halman and Laktse-karpo are the two prime varieties that have a good demand in the market and are profitably sold at Rs 400 – 1000 per kilogram. Besides, the kernel of the apricot is also consumed and marketed by locals. The seed with the sweet kernel is consumed as dry fruit and make for a good market price of Rs 500-1000/kg while the seed with bitter kernel is used for oil extraction.

Apricot oil (locally called tseghumar) is a multipurpose oil with a peculiar apricot flavour and is sold at a remarkable price of Rs 1000-3000 per litre. Traditionally, the oil is extracted from the semi-roasted kernels by crushing them in a large wooden mortar, locally termed as Thorn, followed by heating and compressing them with few drops of water on a flat stone, called as Tsigg.

Besides the oil, several other products such as apricot jam, squash, jelly and apricot cakes are also produced for commercial purposes.

As per the locals, most of the produce is either consumed locally or goes to waste given that the region remains cut off from the rest of the world for quite a few months but this scenario has seen a drastic change in the recent years due to better connectivity and improved communication. Now a considerable portion of the fruit is being exported to many parts of India, thus fetching a better price for the producers.

Even though the local apricot growers have the knowledge of cultivation and drying, but, they are devoid of any modern technical skills for proper preservation, storage, transportation and marketing of apricot products. Another major challenge is the lack of a proper network for processing and supplying apricot products elsewhere in India. This results in a huge loss not only to the poor farmers but also to the economy of Ladakhin general.

While the challenges of growing apricots may be numerous yet the region is a must visit for any fruit or dry fruit enthusiast as the growing apricot season brings with it a mesmerising display of colours and a sweet fragrance that will forever linger in your memories.

BENEFITS OF MIRACLE FRUIT

It prevents cancer, prolongs life and does not add weight

Apart from strengthening the body, protecting the eyes and contributing to the health of bones, it has been proven that apricots reduce the risk of cancer and prolongs life. Fresh apricot abounds with vitamin A, C and B and various minerals.

Just by eating walnuts and dried apricots, most of

the inhabitants of the Hunza Valley experience deep old age. However, the influence of modern foods has reached these mountainous regions. Therefore the younger inhabitants of this tribe are prone to sitting and inactivity.

What is particularly intriguing about this fruit is the fact that it contains a compound that comes from the apricot seed – amygdalin. From which, by simple extraction, it is obtained by Leatril or B17. In 1971, the B17 was banned in the United States, and it is precisely what some call it a real cure for cancer. The ban came because it allegedly contained a dangerous dose of cyanide. Some experts reject these claims and say that it is important for the pharmaceutical industry to exclude from the market all real, natural, effective and cheap drugs.

What is contained in the apricot?

Apricots contain 10 times more magnesium than other fruits, by which they affect the improvement of brain functions due to the high levels of magnesium and phosphorus. These elements can help in normalizing blood pressure.

They are an excellent source of polyphenols, strong antioxidants that neutralize the harmful effects of free radicals and prevent cardiovascular disease. Fresh apricot abounds with carotenoids and xanthophylls, sodium which protect the eyesight, prevent muscle degeneration and weakening of the eyelid muscle in old age.

Lutein, which is present in this fruit, also protects the retina. It is a great source of catechins, a kind of flavonoids that enter into the composition of green tea, and have anti-inflammatory properties. Apricots contain a high percentage of nutrients that are beneficial to the digestive organs and prevent constipation.

Effects of apricot on your body

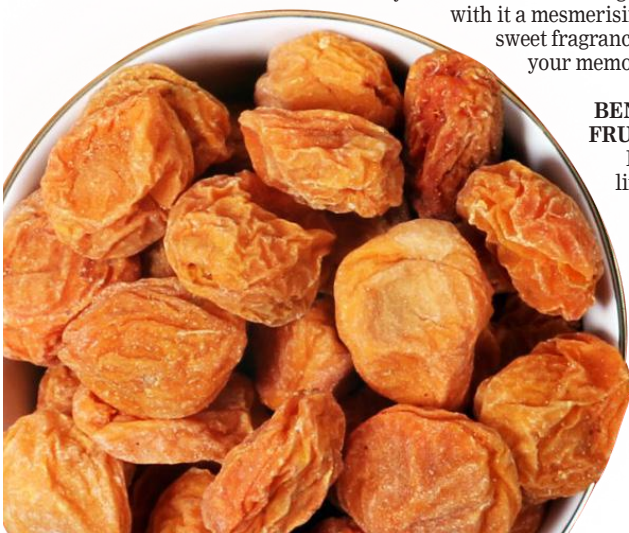
Apricots will not get you fat, and they are especially recommended to people who want to lose weight. They also help in the treatment of various infections, prevent heart disease, repair damaged tissues, reduce the level of bad cholesterol and stimulate the development of teeth and bones.

To maintain bone health, a number of minerals, such as calcium, phosphorus, manganese, copper and iron, are needed, and the apricot contains a huge amount of it. Therefore women who have entered menopause should consume apricots as much as possible since they contain a lot of calcium in order to prevent osteoporosis.

Fresh apricot juice is recommended for people suffering from anemia, and apricot is also used as a medicine for fever and skin diseases, because it relieves irritation and eliminates the symptoms of inflammatory processes. The health benefits of this fruit include its benefits to regulate digestion, constipation, ear infections, flu, skin disorders, anemia, and even cancer.

The apricot is mostly used for the production of juice, jam and compote, but it can be dried and consumed too.

(Syed Tuffail is a travel enthusiast and loves to write. He can be reached at syedtuffail@gmail.com)



THE
LaLiT
GRAND PALACE
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THE SICILIAN GUSTO

Relish Greek, Italian and whole of Mediterranean cuisine on a Sicilian platter at "The Lalit Grand Palace, Srinagar. They are serving a five course meal at an extremely affordable price which makes it even more attractive. The F&B manager Mr Akhtar has some interesting suggestions to make in the Sicilian menu, so please don't forget to take his specialized opinion.

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