



Khyen Chyen

khyenchyen.net

World's Food Guide To Kashmir



Food Riding On A Scooty

Revives Cafes In The Valley

Editor'sTake!

Khyen Chyen Is back

Welcome to the revival edition of Khyen Chyen. It has been long since we had a conversation last time, and when I say I am ecstatic to write this, it's a mere understatement of my jubilation. We had started Khyen Chyen in the July of 2018 as a humble initiative to explore and archive culinary heritage of Kashmir. While Khyen Chyen received critical acclaim on its launch and subsequent editions, nature had different plans for us. The revocation of Article 370 along with the Pandemic Crisis forced our hand to discontinue the project and impelled us to shove it to the abyss. World has come a long way since then and the realm of being survived to see the day. We live in a different epoch now where the dogmas of living and sustenance have changed a little. Our food industry has also been through a tormenting time since last year including our cafes, restaurants, street food vendors and hospitality sector. There is an eerie in the air that has made us pose uneasy questions to ourselves. We have all experienced stress and distress in recent times but time has come to loosen things up and get back to being normal and eventful. Being a beacon of vibrance and triumph, Khyen Chyen is coming back to life. We are resuscitating Khyen Chyen so as to continue our efforts at harmonizing the essence of food in Kashmir. We are here once again to rediscover and re-explore the cultural and culinary heritage of the valley, to breathe life in the food industry and to evince the succulent food of Kashmir on the world map. We are banking on overwhelming support of our loyal readers like before so that our little tribute to our valley metamorphoses into a wave of culinary happiness for the people of our beloved Kashmir. Let food heal the bruises that we have survived together. P. S: Till the pandemic plays Hide and Seek with us, Stay Home and Stay Safe.

Namisha Raj
Editor

EDITOR'S PICK

WOK TO WALK COMES TO VALLEY

First international food chain to make it to Srinagar, Kashmir

Wok to Walk is a QSR restaurant which was started by young Spanish guys who traveled to Bangkok and were impressed by the culinary culture there. They developed the same food concept and opened their first outlet in Amsterdam in 2004. Since 2004, Wok to Walk has become a huge name in the restaurant industry and set their feet in India 2018 and opened its first outlet in Delhi. As a student in UK for three years, I was a regular at Wok to Walk. It was cheap, healthy and fulfilling to the core. It was among my favorites and remained so long after I left the UK. Hence when Wok to Walk came to India, I was overjoyed and decided that we have to get this for Kashmir; a place like Kashmir deserves a hangout like this and I started the outlet at The Boulevard.

Wok to Walk is headquartered in Barcelona Spain and the kitchen is led by the Head Chef Derek.

Setting up Wok to Walk in Kashmir was also full of challenges. We encountered logistics, sourcing and manpower problems when we started. The design for the space was sent by the head office in Spain and most of the material came from outside the state. We boast of state of the art kitchen equipment including a German Rational Oven to an Italian Simran cutter. Everything was imported to make it one of the best places in Kashmir. It was a major uphill battle to import everything and transport the same to Kashmir due to the prevailing situation.

The last few months have been lot tougher on us. Since the abrogation of Article 370 and the Covid lockdown, business and social gatherings came to a sudden halt. This was a big blow but we have revived and are receiving an overwhelming response from our visitors. People of all age groups tend to like the food and appreciate our efforts of bringing something new to the landscape of the city. Since we have an ambient chilled out



backpackers kind of an outlet, Wok to Walk is turning out to be a popular spot for people.

Our staff was trained in Delhi and we had some chefs from Delhi too who supervised the new staff and guided them through Wok to Walk Protocols. Now that they are back in Delhi, our boys have evolved into world class Wokists. Our menu is simple, our dishes are fresh and we use imported quality which are used all over the Wok to Walk brand outlets all around the world. A dish you will savor in New York, London, Kolkata would taste same as in Srinagar. Our menu is hot among the visitors with people showering us with love and trust. Our Japanese Udon Noodles with Shrimp, Broccoli, Pak Choi with Szechuan Sauce and topped with Sesame is our top selling item currently. Kashmiris are building taste buds for new classes of food now and we are most happy about it.

I bring brands which I believe in, like Pappa Roti & Wok to walk. It is imperative to invest in something that you believe in. We are opening Pappa Roti at the end of June and we have 6-7 more outlets in pipeline with more world class brands.

(Adaptation of a conversation with "Sanjar Dev" Director "Palatable Group" Edited by "Namisha Raj")
Address: Main, Boulevard Rd, opp. Gate No 1, Durgan, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir 190001



FOOD NEWS



NIRULA'S NOW IN VALLEY

SRINAGAR: In his first public appearance after release from house arrest former Chief Minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir Dr. Farooq Abdullah Saturday inaugurated an ice cream shop in Srinagar. Dr. Abdullah who has been lying low ever since his release last month appeared at Sangarmal Shopping Complex on MA Road and inaugurated 'Nirula's Ice Cream' shop there.

Dr. Farooq who is incumbent member of Parliament was placed under house arrest on August 5 following abrogation of Kashmir's special status and its division. At the inauguration of the ice cream joint, franchise of popular Indian food chain Nirula's Dr. Farooq was accompanied by his younger brother Dr. Sheikh Mustafa Ka-

mal. Dr. Farooq declined to answer volley of questions from the journalists present there.

Nirula's is India's oldest fast food restaurant chain and its first restaurant was opened in the New Delhi's busiest Connaught Place in 1977. Talking to Kashmir Observer Nirula's franchise owner Ashiq Rafiq Khan said that he plans to expand his business and open more branches in the Valley once the pandemic is over.

"We will start hot shops, and Sundae stations on the lines of Nirula's CP branch. We will keep on adding varieties," he said.

"Brand doesn't need any introduction or endorsement. Nirula's is an oldest brand in India. I am optimistic this business venture will go well," he added.



A Blind Date with BAQIRKHANI

SWAPNEEL PRABHU

Kashmir has a rich tradition of bread making and baking. Every neighbourhood would have what is locally known as a Kandur/Kaandar. These traditional bakeries churn out a variety of breads and other goodies to meet the demands of the community.

Amongst all the fascinating Kashmiri breads (Kandur Tsot as they are called in Kashmiri) that my friend would tell me about, the Baqirkhani caught my fancy. "Aah... Baqirkhani. The name has got a nice ring to it", I had thought. The name kept popping up during many subsequent conversations and I felt, "Seems like someone I would like to meet."

So, on my last evening in Srinagar, my friend set me up on a blind date with Baqirkhani. "Y'all can meet at Jee Enn Sons", she suggested.

As I walked down the Chinar – lined, brightly – lit street on a pleasantly cold, early autumn evening, I kept imagining how it would be and rehearsing what I would say.

Stepping into the iconic bakery which is something of a city institution, I was a cocktail of excitement and anxiety. I was welcomed by the sweet aroma and heady fragrance typical of bakeries. "At least the place is warm and cozy. That's a good start", I assured myself.

But soon the atmosphere got a little intimidating, the task; daunting and my heart sank into my boots. Noticing I was disoriented and probably sensing my nervousness, a sympathetic employee came to my rescue. He asked me to follow him, which I obediently did. Pointing to a corner, he swiftly moved aside. As I gingerly approached the counter, the gentleman introduced us and almost instantaneous-

ly I knew that this was 'meant to be'. The rest of the evening passed like a dream. All I remember is that we smiled a lot and the smile hasn't left me since.

Baqirkhani is a traditional hand-made teatime bread. The bread dough is interleaved with shortening. The result is a soft, flaky, delicate pastry-like bread. The light flakiness appealed to the Khaari – loving Mumbaikar in me. The hint of sweetness reminiscent of the buns we get in the bakeries here. The beautifully risen, light crumb and large caves of air ('air pockets' just doesn't do justice) would impress any croissant connoisseur. A dusting of poppy seeds serves as beauty spots on the glowing complexion of the Baqirkhani. One bite and you know that it is the work of a baker who has earned his skill and inherited the wisdom from generations of master bakers. It eats so smoothly and the shortening used is of such superior quality, it doesn't leave you with that unpleasant mouthfeel of a coating of fat and a bitter aftertaste on your palate.

When I got back from the date, the first thing I did was call my friend to thank her for this new chapter in my life which she had started and written the first words of. She was thrilled beyond words and wanted to know every little detail. "Tell me everything", she demanded as only true friends can with a genuine enthusiasm and interest only true friends have.

Towards the end of our long talk, I mentioned how much I was looking forward to enjoying the Baqirkhani with some homemade jam and a mug of coffee. This was met with silence that screamed "Sacrilege".

You see, not only are there breads for every occasion, season and different times of the day, there are as many rules for what these

breads can and should be paired with. You will never have a Harissa with anything other than a Girda and a Baqirkhani is always, ALWAYS enjoyed with Noon Chai (salted pink tea).

Now I am back in Mumbai. I don't have any Noon Chai, but I'm limiting the blasphemy to a cup of regular tea. Baqirkhani doesn't mind. She has accepted me with all my quirks and idiosyncrasies. That's what true love is after all, isn't it?

Distance only makes the heart grow fonder, they say. Today I sit hundreds of miles away, reminiscing about the memorable flavourful rendezvous that laid the foundation of this life-long association. The air outside heavy with palpable uncertainty from a growing pandemic. Withdrawn in my cocoon from the COVID-inflicted distancing. The pulsating emptiness is quickly turned into a happy place. Like clouds of nostalgia, sensing the void, swiftly moving in with a soothing shower of memories. A hazy image starts to take form. I see piles of freshly baked biscuits being shoveled into a huge holding tray. The tinkling of friendly banter starts ringing in my ears. I follow the aroma of freshly baked Baqirkhani to a smiling face that hands me a parcel still warm from the contents it holds.

I snap out of the trance. Hastily reach out for my laptop and intently type "how to make Kashmiri Baqirkhani at home" in the field, with the cursor matching my heartbeats. I want to fill this mirage with colours, aromas, sounds and textures. Even an average attempt at recreating the flavours will be like looking at sepia-tinged postcards from a beloved and rekindling memories. I will hold on to the thread in this long-distance relationship, till one day, when the world heals, I'm able to travel to Kashmir again and ask Baqirkhani out.





Ziggys Cupcakes

By Ziggy Jeelani



Survival of Home Based Patisserie

Sanah Jeelani

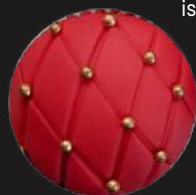
Coronavirus has impacted our lives drastically. Everyone is afraid to socialize, go out or go shopping. We were confined to our homes, thinking of what to do every single day. We all know baking is a stress buster although everyone took this therapy too seriously. Half of the population has become enthusiastic bakers. This has everyone running around grabbing that last bag of flour available. The shelves emptied and stocks finished. Quarantine baking became synonymous to meditating for people generally but for us who do this professionally is our prime source of income. We don't have the privilege to just bake for busting stress!

Although it is mandatory to stock up, for bakers it was a bit nerve wrecking to see the products out of stock in the markets. From flour, icing sugar to fresh - cream which is still scarce in the markets, it is annoying to perfectionists who don't like to use substandard

ingredients in their recipes.

However, people found home based patisserie safer, more hygienic and dependable as, only the baker handles all operation. For people who wanted a professionally finished product, resorting to home bakers was the only option. Although, delivering the product was a slight bother as the movement of traffic was restricted. Orders started pouring in on festivals, birthdays etc as the restrictions were eased. Customers who were previously skeptical about the prices didn't ask twice as they couldn't get bakery from the 'comparatively cheaper' store this time. Talk about appreciation for skilled home bakers!

Sanah Jeelani is Human Resource Management and Psychology Graduate from Middlesex university Dubai. She is a home baker and runs a baking venture known as Ziggy's Cupcakes.



What Did You Miss During The LOCKDOWN?

Raheel Khurshid – journalist and business executive

Missed watching lazy afternoons go by over a cup of Kehwa or Noon Chai at Chai Jaai and Tujj from Hashim's at Munawarabad



RJ Farhuma – rjfarhuma

Chicken Shanghai from Streams



RJ Mehak – mirchimehakkashmir

Chicken Cheese & Pineapple Pizza from Smokin' Joes



RJ Rafiaa – rj_rafiaa –

Chai from Lala's at Bagath Chowk



RJ Sameen – rjsameenkhan

Tujj from Imran Cafeteria, Khayam & Wazwan Trami from Downtown Café



RJ Sofie –sofie_redfmkashmir –

Lhasa Special Soup and Momos also Hummus and Pita Bread from 14th Avenue



RJ Vijdan – rj_vijdan

Lamb Pound Burger from Books & Bricks & Tujj at Makkai Park



RJ Rafiq – rj_rafiq_redfm

Cheese Garlic Toast from Just Baked



RJ Nasir – rjnasirofficial

Kabab with Butter Toast and Tea at Ahdoos



Mehnaz Shafi (TV Host) – mehnazshfi

Chicken momos from Tibetan Momo House at Regal Chowk and Roasted Corn on Cob from any hawker at Barbarshah



COVER STORY

Food Riding On A Scooty

Revives Cafés In The Valley

By KC DESK

As streets are slowly picking up the familiar footfall faded by consecutive curbs in the valley, Kashmir's new-age cafes are trying to regain their pulse through a robust system of deliveries, utmost hygiene and clientele support. This revival strategy has paved path for some interesting sectors to blossom for the first time in the valley. Prime among them being the Delivery Industry that has started to pick pace and drive the hospitality sector towards a more sustainable system of serving delicious meals and exhilarating experiences.

These new-age self-starters have been following a popular pattern to create a different niche for themselves in the valley's hospitality sector. While the Cafés are trying hard to find logistic solutions to breathe new life into their business, few young entrepreneurs have taken this challenge upon themselves to create a supply chain directive for the people of Kashmir.

Some of these young people have shunned their lucrative jobs and careers all around the world to start their own ventures at a place where private sector is still struggling to shape up. Despite facing situational hitches in the valley, these young lots have become instrumental in transforming the dull social hangout spots in Kashmir with their theme-based cafes in recent past. Now that these Social Hotspots have become deserted, more people with enterprising zeal have come up with solutions to fill the void in the F & B Industry. This initiative has evolved into a life line for the struggling Cafés who are trying hard to get business.

Many theme-based cafes and eateries run by young people are today looking forward to resume their ventures as they are getting instrumental support from the newly emerged logistics industry. Khyen Chyen talked to some of the best cafes in Srinagar with wide fan following and ever building reputé about the toll Covid-19 took on their business. We also tried to explore their future plans of overcoming this situational crisis.

Café Liberty

Well the impact is same all over the world and we are no different. It's actually exciting to think new ways of doing business.

In my view takeaways and home-delivery will surely pick up so we are shortly coming up with one of its kind takeaway unit (Rajbagh) designed for quick delivery and easy packaging to ensure the best experience. Additionally, we are starting home deliveries from both units. We are giving our best as always to ensure our customers safety and eating experience. – "Khawar Jamsheed"

**Books and Bricks**

After the near doomsday experience last August, and collapsing of our worlds in the following months, each of us was hoping and secretly praying for a vibrant, hustling and bustling, busy summer this year. It was our chance at putting on our ventilators and gently forcing normalcy into our rustic cafe. Now that feels like a distant dream. Apart from immediately being introduced to a restaurant survival package, we also need a strategy for business in the post lockdown COVID scene (say June to April 2021), only to keep a huge supply chain afloat and subsequent livelihoods thriving. We are going to rely on our telephone lines and social media and hope that they are not shut time and again. Another option could be people driving up to the cafe, waiting in their cars, placing an order and then picking it up from a table outside the cafe, where it stays packed with a name tag on it. (to read the complete article, visit the website) – "Anam Khan"

Winterfell Café

I think, from now onwards, innovation is the key to survival. Social media is a powerful tool and needs to be used properly.

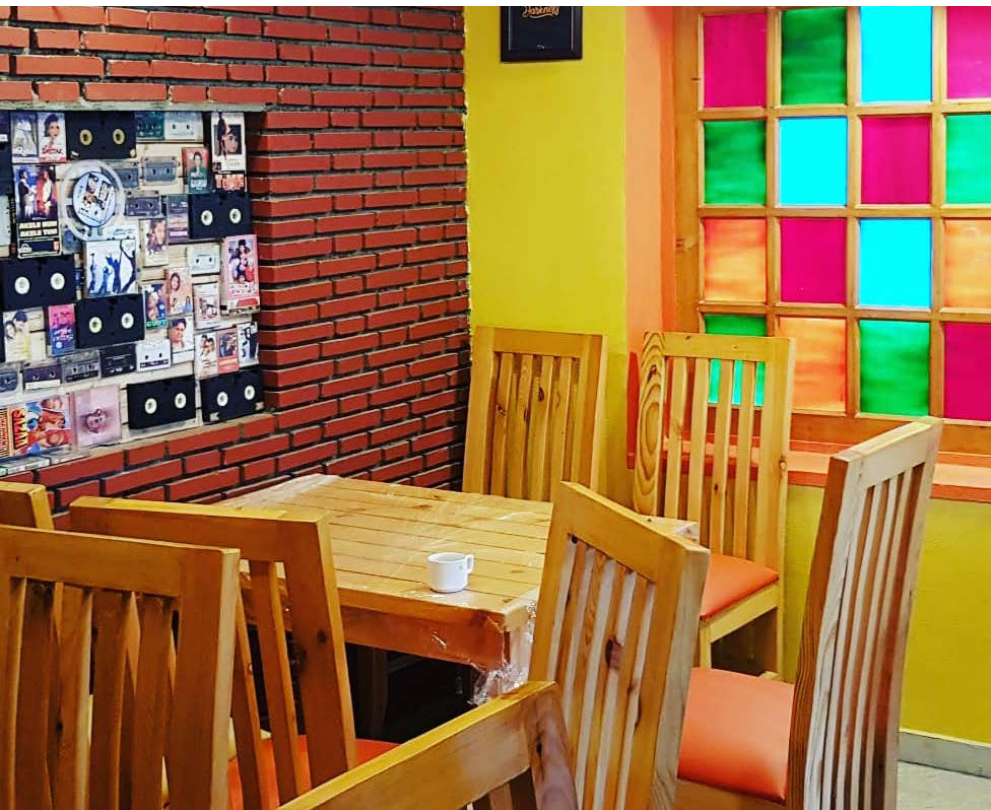
Quality of food will matter the most now. Packaging and presentation will give you an edge over the competition. With a market dominated by certain delivery chains, it's imperative that your food be different than the rest. "Kamran Nisar"

Parsa's

Ten out of our seventeen outlets are based in the valley and we were trying to get back in business in February after more than 6 months of shutdown, when, all of a sudden, we were hit by this global crisis. We had to shut down again, but this time it was different and we had no clue what awaited us in the days to come. I have close to 200 employees and in this pandemic I paid their salaries from our savings and also paid salaries to the franchise employees because things were different this time. It was time for me to extend my support to those who invested time, money and faith in me and my project, also keeping in mind that most of the franchise owners are young first generation businessmen, fresh graduates with limited resources. Parsa's is a place beyond food, it's more like an experience. Unless and until it is safe to dine-in and things get close to normal, I'm not ex-

Khyen Chyen

7



pecting a miracle out of the current situation. I cannot rely on home deliveries but to sustain and survive we have to resort to the only option left with us. My delivery boys are fully equipped with all the protective gear and to double check I call / text everyday randomly to know if they're satisfied with the delivering procedure and quality. – "Javid Parsa"

Chaa Ji Jaai

At CJ we take it as given that the situation of a lockdown will continue for quite some time. As such any business, big or small will have to adapt to this situation. Our effort is to combine the safety of our people and the security of our employees. We need to calibrate operations so that we can find a sustainable solution. We have come up with an optimized program of quarantining employees at the premises and their testing. The Café space is sanitized regularly, and protective gear is being provided to the staff. We have started takeaway to ensure contactless delivery also. We have made our bakery products available at convenience stores too. "Ruhi Nazki"

Fat Panda

I don't consider it [lockdown] a toll on our business. It literally brought us on our knees. We had to stop all our operations and all our stock was wasted. Most importantly, we had to let go our precious human resource, on which you spent so much time and money in training and grooming. The plan ahead is to retain our lost staff and building confidence among ourselves first, that yet again we can emerge out of this and then building confidence in our customers that food from Fat Panda is completely safe. While we're following SOPs and guidelines, we hope that at least 50 percent of dining is allowed as soon as possible, because surviving only on takeout and delivery is not possible. "Sameer"

Jhelum Café

We had already been suffering after the abroga-

tion of Article 370. This [COVID] came as second wave of disaster. We were honestly expecting good season in 2020 but unfortunately God had other plans. We suffered huge losses and we're in fact mentally disturbed too. We saw new light as the lockdown was smoothened and found an opportunity in home delivering our food to people. We've got a great response till now, and are very positive for the future. "Adil Farooq Khan"

Zero Miles Café

Lockdown has put cafes in a lot of pressure. Since people are afraid to go out to dine, it has affected the business. It's also affecting home delivery system since people don't prefer to eat from outside as of now. But we need to restart, and for that, we need capital infusion. Situation is still critical. Many restaurants are shutting down because they can't pay the rent and salaries. And therefore, we would be focusing on home delivery and takeaways in post-COVID era. Hygiene will be our priority. – "Jibran Khan"

Alif the Café

Our plan was to serve something unique—say, for example, Kashmiri food with Lebanese or Turkish twist—in the valley. But unfortunately, lockdown changed everything. As a travel agent with substantial experience in the tourism industry, I have observed that tourism and food are interconnected. Such combination works well in Thailand, Tashkent, Europe, Egypt and other countries. We tried to reopen our cafe in January 2020, but after one month COVID once again made it a shut shop. As Kashmiris we are used to these kinds of lockdowns and restrictions, but pandemic experience was really different, so it really changed our entire lifestyle. – "Ather Yameen"

Hukus Bukus

The lockdown-induced gap has put business on the brink of collapse as the footfall of our restaurant has depleted. But thanks to our staff,

we're back in action. With proper SOPs in place, we hope to regain our normal customer footfall soon. "Amir Farooq Khan"

Ahdoos

It is always a struggle to get back to business as we've been facing these shutdowns since many years. Ahdoos has been standing tall as a legendary icon and people feel a bond with us as their sentiments are attached to the place. We need to be diligent more than ever in preparing our meals now. Great attention will be paid to minute details from sourcing, handling, packaging to delivering the food. – "Hayat Bhat"

Gulab Sweets

We've a professional team of chefs and bakers hired from various parts of the country. Sending them home safely was our first concern. And as the restrictions were slowly relaxed, we reopened the sweets and bakery portion while restaurant still remains closed. As we're committed to the hygiene and wellbeing of our customers and service staff, we've limited our operations keeping their safety in mind. With our professional team and visionary management, we will be back to business as usual as the situation gets better. "Bilal Dar"

Conclusion

Our conversation with the Café Owners presented a mix of hopeful and grim scenarios. While they have been worried about Dine In in near future, they are optimistic too in the form of take away and recently started deliveries. Most of them are anticipating resumption of business with delivery partners which would also help in the development of the latter as an emerging and ground defining industry. The logistic companies are still in infancy, but they are evolving at a tremendous rate each passing day. We are also positive about this new change that the lockdown has triggered. Hopefully, for the best of the valley.



KANDUR Unlocked 1.0

Since the lockdown was announced on 25th March, 2020 due to unanticipated pandemic heading towards us, people resorted to cooking as a stress buster in their humble kitchens. They have been cooking all sorts of day-to-day survival meals to exotic preparations and taking social media by a storm sharing pictures, videos and even going LIVE. Although a crisis, this pandemic enforced lockdown also encouraged people to view cooking in a whole new light

Kashmiris have always been dependant on “Kandur Tsot” for their morning

and evening breads. Making chapatis or rotis always seemed like a tedious task to be pulled off at home. No denying many households loved it, but fetching freshly baked *Girda* or *Tsochwor* was far more convenient and pocket – friendly too. I came across some remarkable people who invested time and effort studying the intricacies of these *Kandur Tsot* and experimented to recreate them in their home kitchens.

Speaking to one such enthusiastic culinarian Sheikh Eiman, I discovered her experience and journey of baking *Girda* at

home during the lockdown. Coming from a family of great home cooks, she decided to carry forward their legacy and take her home cooking to a whole new level. “For us Kashmiri folk our breakfast is incomplete without a humble *Kandur Tsot* (*Girda*.) But in order to survive and adapt to these unprecedented circumstances (post COVID – 19 outbreak) the lifestyle had to be modified thus changing the age old tradition of having fresh market – bought breads”, says Eiman.

With great curiosity I asked her how she came up with the idea of baking *Girda* at

Editor-in-Chief **Sajjad Haider** | Executive Editor: **Namisha Raj** (9871007610) | Layout Designer: **Muntazir Yaseen** (7006957449)
Content Manager: **Tanya Rigzin** Coordinator: **Ajaz Rahi** | | Online Editor: **Ashiq Sufi** | Published by and on behalf of Khyen Chyen Publishers Pvt Ltd,
Srinagar by **Andleeb Ansari** | Published from #5 Dal Lake Boulevard, Srinagar | Phone: **0194-250 2327**

home, to which she answered, *"one day while having breakfast, my granny with a sorrowful look told me that these biscuits and homemade parathas cannot replace our traditional Kandur Tsot which she was missing badly. So, I thought it was better to depend on ingenuity as one would like to stay safe in this lockdown, compelling me to think out of the box. It was then that this idea of making homemade Girda struck me"*. Eiman further explains, *"I don't like to face a timeline and work under pressure. I spent a lot of time working with the ingredients till I perfected the Girda recipe."*

She described how she had to improvise by using an iron skillet as a substitute for tandoor. When finally her knowledge, experience and efforts reached fruition, she presented these perfect looking Girdas before her family. As expected they were swept away by her brilliance. Soon afterwards, she uploaded the recipe on her YouTube channel – "Aemylicious" and got an exhilarating response.

Another magnificent and resourceful Kashmiri home cook residing in Munich, Germany didn't shy away from the seemingly daunting task of making *kandur tsot* during the lockdown. Aqsa Mushtaq made the most of this global crisis by baking Kashmiri breads 5357 kilometers away from home.

She shares that lockdown provided time and opportunity to explore and attempt recipes which always seemed like a far-fetched dream. Since one tends to miss home more when away from it in another country all together, her list was full of Kashmiri recipes which she wanted to try her hand at. *"Tsochwor turned out wonderful, with that hallmark crispy texture one associates with a commercially produced one. My next experiment was 'Kulche' and they came out short and crisp just like the ones we relish at a wedding"*, proudly says this engineer by education and baker by passion. Although Aqsa's family misses the comfort of traditionally brewed *Noon-Chai*, these classic home – baked goodies more than make up for its absence.

Kashmir-born Kainat Syed runs a popular YouTube channel 'Kashmiri Zaika', where she documents and showcases her recipes. *"Despite living away from my home state, I always had a deep connection and affinity towards Kashmiri cuisine and culture"*, informs Kainat who currently

lives in Saudi Arabia.

While she started cooking at a very young age and is a self-taught cook, she later honed her skills through courses on Continental cuisine, going on to become a trained 'Turkish Chef'.

"We always cooked traditional food, but immensely missed the unique Kashmiri breads which are not available outside the valley and are extremely challenging to replicate at home", she says.

"When I launched my youtube channel the appreciation was accompanied by requests to demonstrate Kashmiri bakery products. Especially traditional breads like Girda, Kulcha, Tsochwor and Bakarkhani. This coupled with my own fondness and deep craving for the baked goodies only fuelled my desire to try making them at home", she recollects.

"After multiple trials and tests coupled with creativity and innovations I succeeded in achieving the perfect look, texture and flavour of a traditional Kashmiri Kandur Tsot. The love and support that pours in from all over the world keeps me motivated to further polish and perfect my skills", says the YouTuber.

"With the recent pandemic-enforced lockdown, my channel has gained more popularity and demand", says Kainat who epitomizes the expression 'necessity is the mother of invention' through her creative culinary endeavors.

Ansab's story is that of an occasional home cook drawing inspiration from online tutorials and turning into an accom-

plished one to the sheer delight of her family.

"I remember we would always have freshly-baked hot Girdas from the local Kandur with our post – Iftar Noon-Chai", fondly reminisces Ansab about the annual family tradition.

"But this year we could not get any since the lockdown made their availability scarce and the pandemic made their consumption perilous"

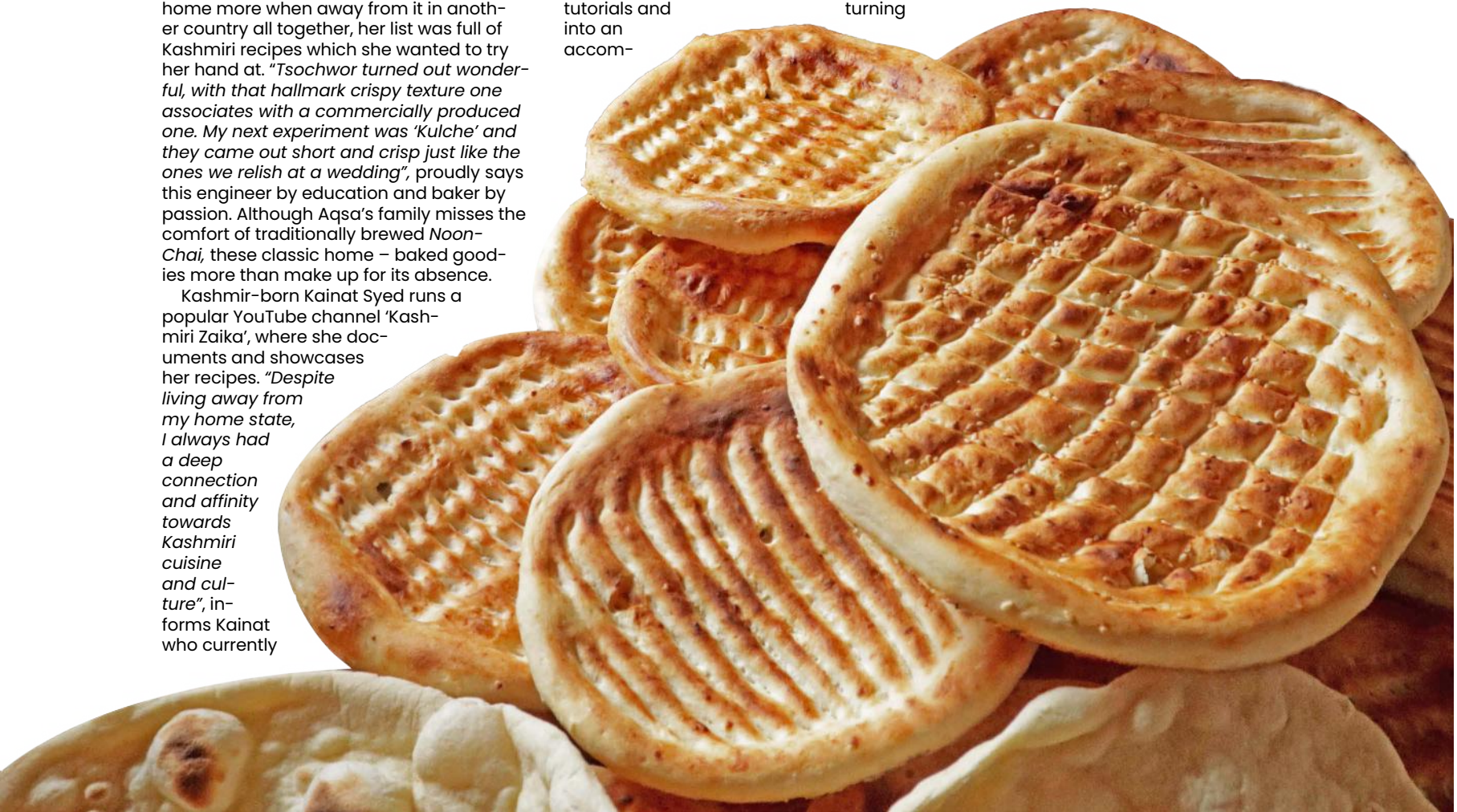
"That's when I decided to try baking them at home and turned to online videos by Kashmiri home chefs and bakers which proved to be very helpful", she says.

"They turned out perfect and we could enjoy them for Ramadhan"

Observing the current situation, *"I don't think we will be getting them from commercial bakers any time soon and I'm not really complaining as they are so much fun to bake and turn out amazing"*, says the excited medical student who is also a passionate artist in her leisure time.

These home chefs have demonstrated how with the right attitude one can adapt and tackle an adversity, transforming it into an opportunity. Although their journeys vary in their points of genesis and inspiration but have a common thread of a strong desire and urge to connect with their roots and traditions through the cuisine and taking it further by introducing its multifarious wonder to the world.

~ Tanya Rigin



FARHEEN FARID

YouTuber

in Lockdown



I can never claim a recipe to be mine. Just like folk songs and stories, recipes cannot be owned and claimed. – Farheen Farid

We caught up with this young and emerging YouTuber to know about her creative process and this is how the tête-à-tête unfolded.

Tell us about yourself

I am Farheen Farid, a full time Research Scholar and a part-time YouTuber from Kashmir who loves to read, paint, bake and day-dream. Two months ago, I started my own YouTube channel and uploaded my first ever video on 15th April 2020, amidst the nation-wide lockdown due to the outbreak of an uncontrolled and raging pandemic. My channel is called 'Let's Get Dough'ing' and it's all about food. I mostly post easy recipes that anyone can recreate with simple kitchen tools and basic ingredients.

Why did you choose baking?

Well it might sound a little funny because as I was growing up I had a fear of working with fire and knives, so cooking never really worked for me. Baking on the other hand always interested me, partly because I didn't have to light fire nor did I have to use knives for anything except cakes. The day I baked my first cake was the day I realized I was made for this. It wasn't perfect but I was overwhelmed by the response of my family and felt even more tempted to explore this field and my capabilities as a baker along the way and fell in love with it. Baking has always been therapeutic for me. It is like magic. If you've ever baked bread in your life and watched it transform and rise from coarse ingredients to a piece of beauty, you will know what I mean. Isn't it just magical? I don't follow rules and do it the way it works best for me. My approach to baking has always been relaxed and casual. Baking for me has always been synonymous with love, care and family bond.

Who is & has been your inspiration?

My family has been my inspiration. The smile and satisfaction on their faces is what motivates me and keeps me going. They are my biggest supporters and critics. I improve and rework on my recipes according to their likes and preferences. I have grown watching my

Mom cook delicious food. My Grandma baked the best walnut & vanilla sponge cake and dry fruit semolina cake ever in her old round oven (I still have that with me). Binge watching cooking and cake shows, baking videos and following food blogs has been a treasured hobby.

What made you start your own YouTube channel?

This was an unplanned venture. I just wanted to record and share the recipes I loved with everyone and reach out to those who wanted to try different recipes but never really felt motivated or were too scared to do so. My brother came with the idea of starting a YouTube channel. It was a great opportunity to reach out to more and more people who wanted to learn new skills and hone their old hobbies in the lockdown. It is in the lockdown that I myself felt motivated to start a channel which I otherwise would never have done, owing to my busy work schedule and unavailability of time. I felt that my videos would resonate with people as my content was mostly based on affordable and easily available ingredients. To be honest, I have only recorded videos of the all those things that my family and me craved to have in the lockdown. I treat my followers and viewers as my extended family. YouTube is a direct interactive platform where you are criticised, appreciated and approached openly and that is what I love about

this medium.

How much time does it take to shoot a video?

Shooting a video doesn't take much time. However, preparing yourself for the video takes time; you got to make sure you are not rushing for ingredients in the middle of the video. Also, all the steps including editing the video, writing down the recipe, uploading it and then finally promoting it across social media platforms is a time consuming process. I think here in Kashmir, slow speed Internet is a big limitation for aspiring YouTubers. With the current broadband speed, a five-minute long video takes about 5 hours to get uploaded on YouTube.

Tips on making a YouTube channel popular.

Just be honest with your content, don't push yourself too hard, don't lose hope and keep trying. Promote your videos on different social media platforms and stay grounded. Success will come gradually. My channel is only 2 months old and it has become so much more than I ever imagined and has brought creativity and joy into my life. However, I still feel that the things that have worked well for me, might not work for you or anyone else. Everyone has to learn by doing, understand their target audience and improvise accordingly.

Did you go to a culinary school? If no, would you like to, one day?

No, I have never been to one because I never really got the time to do so. Yes, I will definitely once I am done with my Ph.D. I am just an amateur part-time home-baker who loves to share all she knows with everyone (which is like a small drop in the ocean). I've never really made perfect cakes or breads, nor do I endorse perfection. Cooking/ baking for me is only about sharing love and spreading smiles. My cakes also sink in the middle, my bread dough doesn't always rise, there are days when I over bake my breads and it is alright as long as you are learning from your mistakes and experiences.

What is your favorite cuisine?

Do I have to pick one? I have too many favourites. I love Kashmiri and Middle Eastern cuisine the most. But that doesn't mean I love Italian, Chinese, Thai or Indian/Pakistani any less. Well, I think I love food in general and I love to try out different dishes from across different cuisines.

Which bakeries do you recommend in Kashmir?

I love to have traditional baked treats from the local bakeries/ *Kandurs*. I genuinely feel nothing can beat that. A lot of bakeries and cake houses have come up in the recent past across Kashmir. All of them have something unique to offer.

But I still crave for the classic walnut tart from Moonlight Bakery- Dargah; coconut cookies from JeeEnn; chocolate fudge from Hatrick;

assorted cookies and cakes from Crème bakery and LeDelice; cream rolls from Shalimar Bakers and the list goes on and on. Apart from these classics, I love Sweet Treats by Tanya's walnut and banana loaf and all her cakes.

Please share some baking tips.

The most important tip for a successful baking attempt is to have a positive attitude towards baking and keep trying until you succeed.

This one's for areas with colder climate like Kashmir- to instantly raise the bread dough, heat up the oven for about 15 minutes, switch it off and place the bowl containing the dough inside it and watch it rise without fail.

If you struggle with making butter cream frosting for cakes, decorate your cakes with chocolate ganache as it is easy to work with and you can change its consistency as per your requirement and preference.

Always grease your baking tins and trays. I would recommend using a good quality parchment paper.

Always pre-heat your oven for at least 20 minutes prior to baking. Don't feel tempted to open the oven door while baking as it will ruin your cakes, cupcakes, breads and probably everything.

Invest in a good oven; microwave is not a substitute for an oven. Any good quality and economical OTG works well.

Did you encounter any challenges during this journey? How did you tackle them?

Every new journey comes with its own challenges. First of all, to begin with, I didn't know anything about the art of making videos while baking/cooking and editing them has been and is still a task. My brother has helped a lot with editing and with online promotions. My parents have been an important part of this journey, from taking risks and bringing home a list of ingredients I handed them over every other day during the lockdown to helping me strike a balance between my work life and YouTube. I am happy with how Kashmiri markets are changing; there was a time when we hardly got any bake ware here. I remember years ago I got all my cake tins, parchment paper rolls and compound chocolates from Delhi. We've come a long way to where we are today and I absolutely love that.

What are your views on artisanal breads of Kashmir?

A place is known by its culture and traditions and breads form an important identity of that. Breads have sustained life throughout ages and across bound-

aries amidst wars, economic crises, epidemics, and natural disasters. It is not just a food of necessity but a work of art and our local bakers here are nothing less than artists and craftsmen. Kashmir has its own variety of breads to offer that form an essential part of every household here. From Girda, Lawasa, Kulcha to Tel-wor, Bakirkhani, Krip (the list is long); it is hard to choose a favourite. Local bakeries here are social spaces and emblems of culture that convey a sense of oneness and exhibit the spirit of community bonding.

Your message to all aspiring YouTubers.

Create engaging content. Your audience will direct you and your instinct will guide you. Don't overburden yourself. Do it as long as you are enjoying doing it. You'll always find all kinds of people here, especially those who are so full of negativity that they will try to pull you down every step of the way. Stay focused, stick to your principles, handle criticism with grace and keep moving forward. It is important to understand that your recipes will not work for everyone and you cannot cater to everyone's expectations. And moreover, cooking/ baking is all about trying out different recipes and sticking to the ones that you love.

As is evident from the conversation we had with this upcoming YouTuber, we see this medium gaining importance and popularity as we come to terms with the new normal of social distancing and minimal contact interactions. YouTube serves as an effective bridge for two way communication between content creators and viewers. This democratic platform and the level playing field it offers to express one's creativity is here to stay and we only see it growing in future.

(Adaptation of a conversation with "Farheen Farid" Edited by "Tanya Rigzin")



WARRIORS ON WHEELS

As the world stood still and witnessed the biggest crisis of the century, a bunch of youngsters, feeling the immediate need of the hour, came forward to lend a helping hand to society. Khyen Chyen had a chance to interact with one such dynamic individual who offered home delivery of essentials and groceries all around Srinagar city.

Talib Farooq, engineer by education and a realtor by profession, took the initiative of starting "Ghar Baazar"; a start – up which was modeled to fetch groceries and other essential commodities along with medicines and deliver them at people's doorsteps. Talib informs us that he underwent a training organized by the Disaster Management Department and was all set to take on this daunting but satisfying task. Fully equipped in a PPE kit, he would source fresh vegetables and fruits, take them home, clean and wash them thoroughly to ensure the safety of his clients. Following all safety measures as provided by the administration was always a top priority while functioning. He



request clients to keep a minimal contact delivery process. Sometimes, he would be assisted by few of his friends on this noble adventure and at times they had to carry out the deliveries on foot, particularly

when they were required to go into a red zone where plying of vehicles was restricted. "It was not a time to make money and seek profit. It was time to help one another and extend support to the community", says Talib who had a tough time convincing his mother who was understandably worried for her son's safety and well-being. Our services helped the elderly, families with infants and the most vulnerable lot to stay at home safe while we would carry out grocery shopping which seemed like a rather intimidating task in these trying times. Now that the lockdown is being partially lifted in stages, Talib goes back to his real estate office in Lal Chowk reminiscing of days gone by. "I earned respect and appreciation from my clients and in the eyes of the society, who valued my dedication and hard work during this Pandemic Lockdown and at the end of the day that's all that matters", says a content Talib who did his bit to contribute towards building a better tomorrow.

–KC Desk

GIRDA Without Tandoor

Ingredients

- 2 cups of All Purpose Flour (Maida)
- 1.5 Teaspoons Yeast
- 1/2 Teaspoon Sugar
- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- 3 Teaspoons of Milk Powder
- A Pinch of Baking Powder
- 1 Tablespoon Butter at Room Temperature

For Glaze

- 4 Tablespoons Milk
 - 1 Tablespoon Milk Powder
- Generous Sprinkle of Poppy Seeds

Method

In half a cup of lukewarm water add sugar and yeast, mix and keep it aside for 10 minutes till the yeast gets activated and becomes frothy.

In a large mixing bowl, add flour, milk powder, baking soda, butter, yeast mixture and salt. Mix well and knead it into soft, springy dough.

Cover and keep it in a warm place till dough doubles in size (1-2 hours depending on the warmth of temperature, may take longer in winters).

After the dough has risen, punch the dough to degas and knead it for 1-2 minutes using the stretch and fold method. Divide into equal portions.

Preparing the glaze – In a bowl add milk and milk powder, mix well and keep aside.

USING TAWA (cast iron skillet)

We can use tawa /cast iron skillet (make sure not to use non-stick one) to bake the girdas.

Pre – heat the tawa on high flame for 5 minutes.

Dust the surface with plain flour, place one portion of the prepared dough and roll it slightly thick. Apply milk wash. With the help of finger tips press down firmly and make indentations to replicate the signature dimpled look of a girda. Sprinkle some poppy seeds. Now apply milk wash to the bottom side of girda.

This helps girda to stick to the tawa. Place it on the preheated tawa and in some time flip the tawa over the flame and cook the girda directly over the flames till it gets golden brown and a crisp crust is formed. Brush with butter and serve hot.

In an Oven:

Preheat your oven at 200° celcius. Grease the baking tray with oil/butter and keep it ready.

Dust the surface with plain flour, place one portion of the prepared dough and roll it slightly thick. Apply milk wash. With the help of finger tips press down firmly and make indentations to replicate the signature dimpled look of a girda. Sprinkle some poppy seeds and place the prepared girda on the baking tray and bake for 10-15 minutes till golden brown crust is formed. Serve hot smeared with butter.

Recipe Credits : **Sheikh Eiman**
YouTube Channel : **Aemylicious**
Edited by – **KC Desk**

Mango Recipe

KC Desk

Making the most of our favourite summer guest, we're here with simple yet delectable mango recipes for you.

Easiest Mango Kulfi

Ingredients

- 1.5 cups full fat milk
- 1 cup sweetened condensed milk
- ½ cup cream
- 4 green cardamom powder
- 1 large mango chopped
- Slivers of pistachio for garnish

Method

- Blend chopped mango, milk and condensed milk till the liquid is lump free.
- Add the cream and cardamom powder and blend till fully incorporated well with the previous ingredients.
- Pour the mixture into kulfi moulds (if you don't have kulfi moulds you may

improvise and use small bowls).

- Freeze till the kulfi is set. This may take about 5 – 6 hours.
- Demold by dipping the molds in warm water.
- Garnish with pistachio slivers.
- You may serve it with falooda or a generous helping of bloomed basil seeds.

Mango Muffins

Ingredients

- 1 cup all purpose flour (maida)
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- Pinch of salt
- 1 large mango chopped
- 4 tablespoons of castor sugar
- Powder of 3 cardamoms
- 2 pinches of nutmeg powder (if you don't have nutmeg then substitute with cinnamon powder)
- ½ cup chilled butter



Food and Nutrition Tips during COVID – 19 Pandemic

Nowsheen Fazili
(Clinical Dietician)

Make a Plan

- Buy only what you need.
- Panic buying has negative consequences like over consumption of food.

Prioritize Fresh Products

- Use fresh ingredients and those that have a shorter shelf – life first.
- Fruits, vegetables and dairy products should be consumed everyday if available. Avoid canned foods as they have excessive sugar or salt content.

Be Mindful of Portion Sizes

- Being at home for extended periods of time with limited activities can lead to over – eating. Seek guidance through National Food Based Dietary Guidelines on healthy portions for adults and children.

Follow Safe Food Handling Practice

- Food safety is a prerequisite for food security and a healthy diet. Only safe food is healthy food. When preparing food, it is important to follow good food hygiene practice to avoid food contamination and food borne diseases. The key principles of good food hygiene include:
 - Keep your hands, kitchen and utensils clean
 - Cook food thoroughly
 - Use clean and safe water and raw material



Limit Salt, Sugar and Fat Intake

- Prefer foods containing healthy sources of unsaturated fats such as nuts and opt

for cooking methods that require less or no fat. Steaming, grilling or sautéing instead of frying should be favored. Avoid red and fatty meats, butter and full fat dairy products. Avoid trans fats as much as possible, like junk food, oily street food, etc.

Consume Enough Fiber

- Fiber contributes to a healthy digestive system and offers a prolonged feeling of fullness which prevents overeating. Aim to include vegetables, fresh fruits, pulses and whole grains like oats, brown rice, quinoa and whole – wheat bread rather than refined grain foods such as white



bread, white rice, pasta, etc.

Stay Hydrated

- Good hydration is crucial for optimal health. Drinking water instead of sweetened drinks is a simple way to limit your intake of sugar and excess calories. Drink water infused with lemon & mint, rosemary & cucumber, lavender & basil seeds, tender coconut water and butter milk.



Are you feeling weak?

- Get enough sleep – Sleep and immunity are closely tied. Inadequate or poor quality sleep is limited to higher susceptibility to sickness.
- Eat healthier fats – Nuts, olive oil, fish, chia seeds, whole eggs, cheese, etc.

- Gut and immunity are deeply interconnected, probiotics may bolster your immunity system by helping to identify and target harmful pathogens. Take a probiotic supplement (such as yogurt, buttermilk, kefir, etc).



Immune System Boosters

- Citrus Fruits – Vitamin C increases production of WBC, which are key to fighting infections. Almost all citrus fruits are high in Vitamin C.
- You may include these in your daily meals for that extra boost of goodness and health:
 - Lemon or Lime
 - Red bell peppers
 - Broccoli
 - Garlic
 - Ginger
 - Spinach
 - Yogurt
 - Almonds
 - Walnuts
 - Sunflower seeds
 - Turmeric
 - Green tea
 - Papaya
 - Kiwi
 - Poultry
 - Dark chocolate
 - Pumpkin
 - Nigella seeds
 - Sweet potatoes
 - Guava
 - Indian gooseberry (amla)

Nosheen Fazili is Clinical Dietitian in Department of Gastroenterology, SKIMS, she is also a PG Diploma in Dietetics, MSC DFSM, REGISTERED DIETITIAN(RD), MEMBER OF INDIAN DIETITICS ASSOCIATION and MEMBER OF IAPEN.

NEW-AGE VALLEY WOMEN

TRYST WITH SURVIVAL

Scenario | Precautions | Way-forward



Anam Khan
Co-owner Books and Bricks Cafe

When the lockdown was imposed in March, as a response to the COVID 19 pandemic, it seemed unimaginable that there would come a time when we would be able to run the cafe normally again. Not undermining the fact that millions were on the verge of starvation, not directly because of COVID but because of the state of poverty and inequality, the post lockdown phase of COVID looked very grim. It still is the same.

At least a dozen people had asked me, when will your cafe open? More had asked me if we would start delivering food when the lockdown was lifted? Relatives had also asked why I had to come to Kashmir, to which my response was always the same- look at what's happening around the world! Many had expressed their concern over how our business is suffering monetarily with the multiple lockdown, the longest being since August last year. All of these questions infuriated me to say the least and gave me multiple panic attacks.

Thousands of Kashmiris like me, who in the last one year have suffered tremendous losses because of the lockdowns and have been thrown to the edge with hopelessness, are thinking the same. How are we going to survive this?

We are sheltered by our privilege and cozy comforts and yet our business is at the brink of starvation too. Rent, salaries, doubling debts! Rent, salaries, doubling debts! Rent, salaries, doubling debts! Plays on loop in my head each time I start thinking about the cafe. The biggest of my concerns always remains the staff, our boys, for whom the salary is what their families sustain on. If the lockdowns continue, how will we support them.

When TV channels hysterically debate over the hospitality sector or when administrative spokespersons talk from their twitter handles, they mainly talk of it from a safety standpoint. They never look at it from the purview of a chain of inter connected job spectrum that this sector upholds and how our sinking ship is majorly posing a threat to our sinking economy as well. While it is still debatable that the lockdowns have

ensured the curtailment of the virus, they have also set the restaurant industry to a major loss stream! We don't have any formal statistics of how the restaurant industry has directly been affected in Kashmir since August 5 last year, but you can do the math. While the restaurant industry is taking a major jolt all across the globe, the situation in Kashmir is worrisome since this sector directly and indirectly employs a large population with no security to their incomes.

When our cafe decided to open for home delivery and takeaway in the month of June, we had a lot of leg work to do before we got our engines running. Safety and hygiene were going to be the game changers for the months to come as unlock ONE was set in motion. We understood this and strategised every little detail very meticulously. First included getting all of our boys back from their hometowns, safely into our rented house. That was followed by a training on guidelines and lifestyle change, delivered by the Srinagar Administration at Tagore Hall. We got every single staff member tested for COVID and while many restaurants and cafes opened, we remained shut- waiting for the test results and strategising even more.

Our other problem here was that Kashmir didn't have a strong ecosystem of food delivery, so that was an added roadblock. Food delivery along with maintaining hygiene isn't as easy as writing these words down in my to do list. On 4th of August last

year, we were close to signing papers with Swiggy, a food delivering service, but then that was busted. Zomato was to come next, that is old story too. But undeterred hope and resilience does make miracles happen. We understood that the only way we could prioritise the health of our customers and our staff was by directly involving ourselves in the entire process of home delivery and not partnering with a third party, so as to have more control over hygiene. We did it! We dived into home delivery and takeaway, head on, and opened the place mid June for the same.

For a cafe like mine, home delivery is a tough market since the whole idea of my cozy rustic cafe was to enjoy a cup of coffee and chit chat with friends with some good ambience. The pandemic took that away.

The new normal also meant that we had to get our customers used to the idea of packed food and deliver the same feel of the cafe somehow in tiny bags! Our energies went into ensuring that every food item, that was prepared, was made with absolute finesse.

It is going to be extremely difficult to convince our customers that we are doing everything in the ambit of our possibility to make sure that hygiene is taken care of. But, as important the health of our own kin is to me, my staff's health is equally paramount and so is our customer's. If our staff is fit, so will our customers be and this is the cycle of interdependence that I'm really worried for and that really keeps us on our toes. The ball game is to earn the trust of our patrons and also of the new customers who would be ordering from beyond the periphery of our usual clientele.

There are numerous lives that are touched by a small cafe like mine. And that's a beautiful thought in itself. But that also puts a lot of responsibility on each of us reading this. I think for any business to thrive in Kashmir, and for Kashmir to become a strength in its own, we all will have to push each other up, trust one another, support our local businesses and support each other in whatever capacity we can.

When are you meeting me for your next cup of the best coffee in town?

Author - "Anam Khan" moved back to Kashmir in 2018 and invested in the cafe in May 2019. Trained as a journalist from Delhi University with a masters in Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding from Jamia Milia Islamia, she has also worked in the public health sector as a communications specialist for John's Hopkins University in New Delhi for their programs in maternal and child health, family planning and sexual health and rights for women and adolescents.



Kashmir's First Cloud Kitchen



Momos....

FOGO

will be serving you soon....

To Know More, Stay Tuned For The Next Issue.