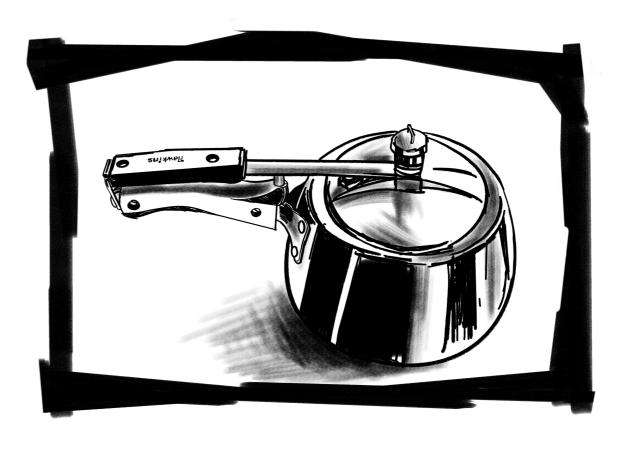
BY: ABU AMAAN PAL

BANNA BANNA! RANNA BANNA!

CHAPTER ONE



.... THE HEAVY COOKING STUFF



ABU: YES ... I GOT EVERYTHING ... HOW WILL I TURN ALL OF THIS INTO A BIRIYANI???

FATHER (200M CALL): IT'S DAMN LATE HERE IN UAE! DID YOU GET EVERYTHING THAT I ASKED FOR!???!

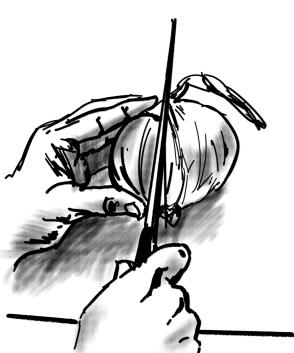
> ABU: YES, I GOT EVRYTHING ... HOW WILL I EVEN DO THIS ???

FATHER: YOU WILL DO AS I SAY! IT'S BLOODY SIMPLE! TRUST ME, YOU'LL BE THANKING ME LATER!

ABU: GOD WASHING VEGETABLES IS SO BORING.... DAMN! MY SHIRT IS WET! WISH I HAD A BLOODY APRON

FATHER: GENTLY! GENTLY! YOU DON'T WANT TO SQUISH THEM TOO HARD!

ABU: OK OK! GEEZ!

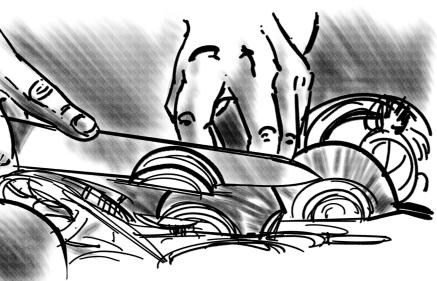


ABU: AHH... ONIONS... HOPE I DON'T CUT MY HAND.... OR FINGERS FOR THAT MATTER....

FATHER: START CUTTING THE ONION NOW, YOU'VE SEEN THE YOUTUBE VIDEO I SENT YOU, NOW DO THAT! YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS NOW.... HAHA! COUGH! COUGH!

ABU: ARE YOU OK-

FATHER: YOU CONCENTRATE THERE! I'LL TAKE CARE OF MYSELF!



ABU: DAMN THESE GARLIC PODS! SO TASTY AND YET SO DIFFICULT TO CUT! EEEEEGGGHHHHUUGHHH.... WHEW!

FATHER: HEH! NOW YOU KNOW ADULT LIFE! NOT VERY EASY, IS IT?!



ABU: MAN.... BEEF IS SO SLIMY WITH ALL THAT RESIDUAL BLOOD I FEEL LIKE A BUTCHER, HEHE! YUP! BEEF IS ALL WASHED UP!

FATHER: GOOD! NOW PLACE THE BEEF TO DRAIN FOR A BIT, THE EXCESS WATER AND BLOOD IN THE STRAINER! WHERE'S THE RICE??!!



ABU: TOMATOES LOOK GOOD! HAVE DICED THE GINGER AND CHILLIES VERY FINELY ...

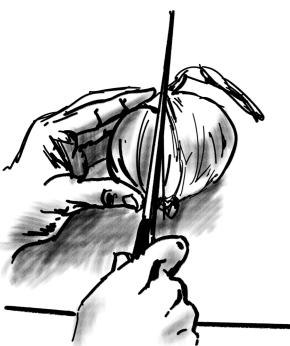
FATHER: OOH! BIG ACHIEVEMENT! DO FAST!!! WASH THE MEAT AND PREPARE THE RICE!



ABU: OOOHHH MY LEFT HAND IS PAINING! 8 CUPS OF RICE IS REALLY HEAVY ALONG WITH 1/2 CUP WORTH OF LENTILS MIXED IN IT! I'M WASHING THE RICE & LENTILS.... SLOWLY.... HOPEFULLY IT DOESN'T FALL FROM THE STRAINER

FATHER: YES. MAKE SURE THE WATER IS CRYSTAL CLEAR. THEN YOU'LL KNOW THE GRAINS ARE WASHED FULLY YAWN FAST!

ABU: ALRIGHTY



ABU: HMM.... NOT BAD AT ALL! I ACTUALLY DICED THE ONIONS BEAUTIFULLY!
WHAT DO YOU THINK??
ALL I HAVE TO DO NOW IS DICE THE OTHER HALE!

FATHER: DO IT FAST, YOU SLOW JACKASS! A REAL COOK MAKES FOOD FAST AND ... DELICIOUS!

ABU: YEAH. OK. (WHY DO I EVEN TALK?).



SPICES FASCINATE ME SO MUCH.... THE THING IS, IF YOU SIMPLY TASTE SPICE JUST AS IT IS, IT'S BITTER AND SOUR....
BUT! WHEN YOU MIX THEM IN SUCH A WAY....
IT BRINGS OUT A BEAUTIFUL FLAVOR....
IT'S LIKE MIXING PAINTS OF ALL THINGS!

SO IF YOU THINK OF A DISH AS A PAINTING,
THE MAIN INGREDIENTS ARE LIKE THE CANVAS
AND THE BASIC COLORS,
SPICES ARE LIKE THE SPECIAL PAINTS THAT ADD
DEPTH, TEXTURE, AND VIBRANCY.
JUST LIKE A PAINTER USES DIFFERENT BRUSHES AND TECHNIQUES,
A COOK USES VARIOUS SPICES
AND COOKING METHODS TO CREATE A MASTERPIECE.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPICES IS ALL
ABOUT BALANCE AND HARMONY.
EACH SPICE HAS ITS OWN UNIQUE FLAVOR PROFILE,
AND THE KEY IS TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY INTERACT
WITH EACH OTHER AND THE OTHER INGREDIENTS IN A DISH.
IT'S ABOUT CREATING A SYMPHONY OF
FLAVORS THAT DANCE ON YOUR SOFT PALATE!





ABU: I'VE TURNED ON THE STOVE....
LETTING THE WATER EVAPORATE....

FATHER: GHRRRRRRRZZZZZZZ.... GHRRRRRRZZZZZZ....

ABU: HELLO HELLO!

FATHER: HEY HEY HEY! IS THE BIRIYANI READY YET!?

ABU: NO! I JUST SET UP THE PRESSURE COOKER!

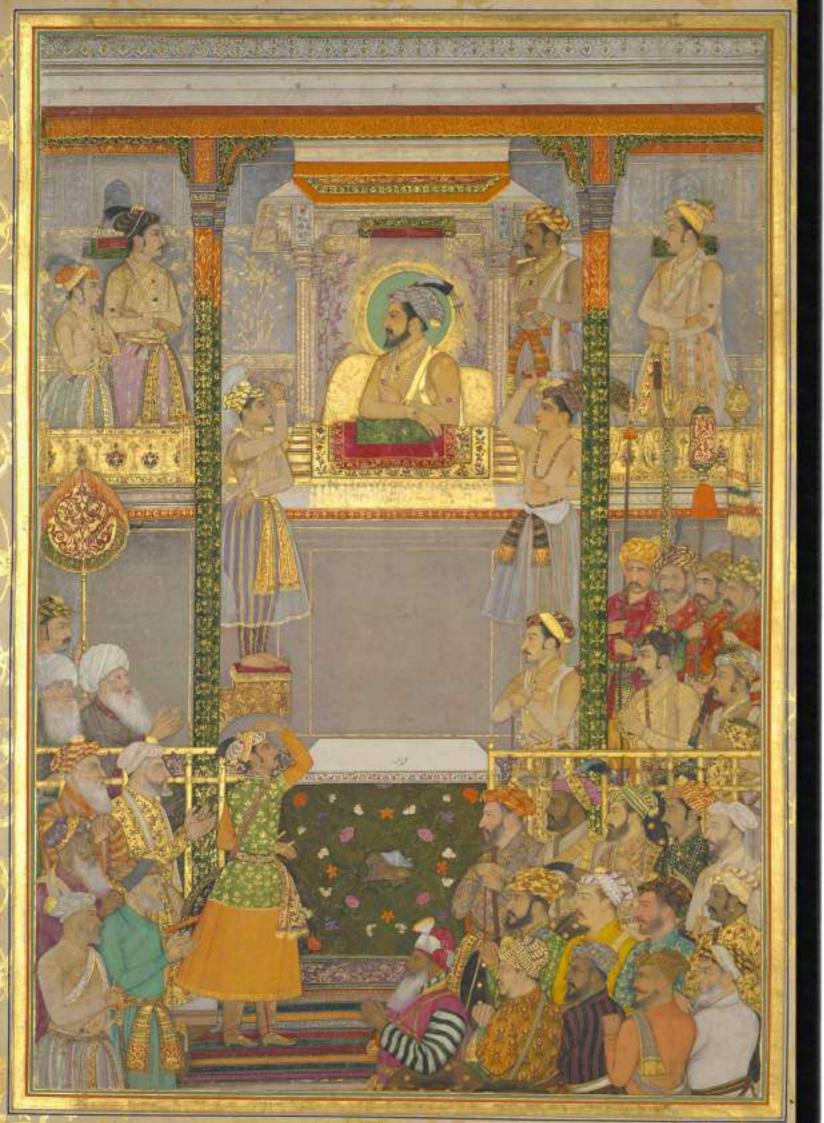
FATHER: DHUDDD!!!! >JOLDI KOR!(
(ASSAMESE FOR DO IT FAST !!!)

CHAPTER TWO



FLASHBACK TIME!

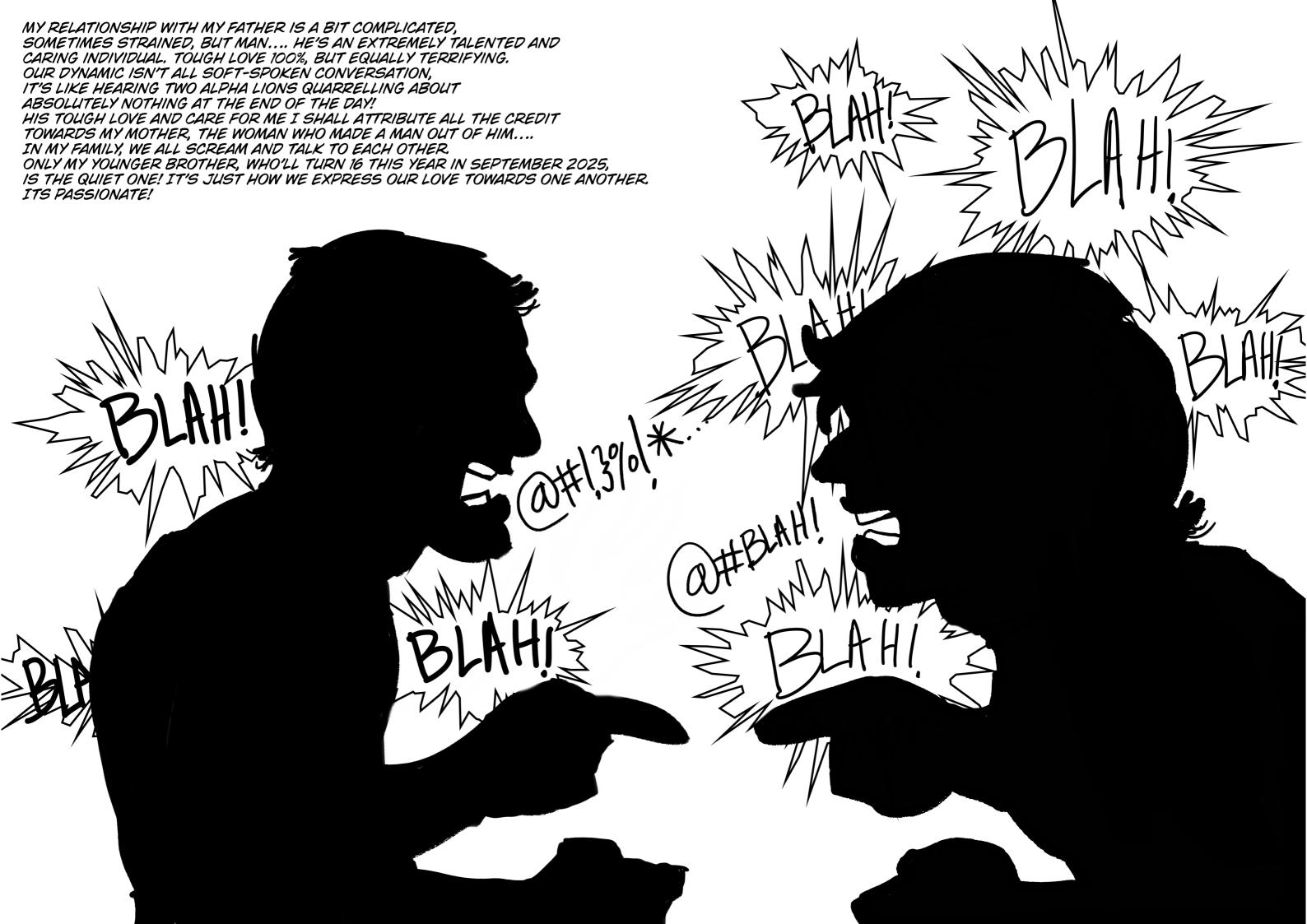




THE AROMA OF SPICES AND SLOW-COOKED MEAT FILLS THE AIR, A TESTAMENT TO THE MUGHAL EMPIRE'S CULINARY LEGACY. IT'S BELIEVED THAT EMPEROR SHAH JAHAN'S CHEFS, INSPIRED BY PERSIAN FLAVORS, CREATED A DISH TO NOURISH THE ROYAL ARMY, LAYERS OF FRAGRANT RICE, TENDER MEAT, AND AROMATIC SPICES WERE COMBINED, RESULTING IN WHAT WE NOW KNOW AS BIRYANI. THIS DISH QUICKLY BECAME A FAVORITE OF THE MUGHAL COURT, AND ITS POPULARITY SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE EMPIRE, LEAVING A LASTING IMPACT ON INDIAN CUISINE.

ANOTHER THEORY ATTRIBUTES ITS CREATION TO THE MUGHAL ERA, WHERE IT WAS DEVELOPED TO NOURISH SOLDIERS, WITH MUMTAZ MAHAL CREDITED FOR ITS INTRODUCTION. IT'S ALSO THOUGHT THAT THE DISH'S FOUNDATIONS WERE BROUGHT TO INDIA BY TIMUR'S ARMY IN 1398, WHO COOKED A SIMILAR DISH IN A CLAY POT IN A HOT PIT. OVER TIME, BIRYANI SPREAD THROUGHOUT INDIA, WITH REGIONAL VARIATIONS EMERGING.

*SHAH JAHAN AT HIS DURBAR, FROM THE WINDSOR PADSHAHNAMA, C. 1657, THE ROYAL LIBRARY, WINDSOR CASTLE.





CHAPTER THREE



THE PROCESS....



Preheat the pressure cooker and pour in 3 tbsps sunflower oil or any kind of cooking oil into the cooker. Let the oil heat up a bit and put in the dry spices and give it a little stir until the aromatic smell comes up. 2 minutes max. Pour in the finely diced onions into the hot oil and ½ tbsp of salt on it.

Stir well until the onions turn golden brown.
Add in the diced potatoes and sauté the potatoes until
golden brown with a bit of translucency.
Pour in the Beef cubes into the pot and pour 1 tbsp salt on them
and stir fry the Beef cubes until they change their colour fully.
Now pour in the finely chopped ginger and garlic onto the Beef,
stir fry until the meat smell goes.

ABU: ... YEAH! I'VE PUT IN THE DRY SPICES!

FATHER: OK! STIR IT FOR A FEW MINUTES.... LET THE SMELL COME!

ABU: ... SO ... TELL ME, HOW WAS YOUR DAY TODAY-

PAPA: FOCUS ON COOKING, YOU JACKASS! IT'S 2 AM HERE IN BLOODY UAE! I'VE GOTTA GET TO WORK AT 5 AM!

ABU: OK OK! SORRY ... JUST SMALL TALK

ABU: I'VE PUT IN THE BEEF CUBES

FATHER: GHRRRRRRRZZZZZZZ.....

ABU: HELLO?.... HELLO!!!!!

FATHER: >KI KI KI!\(\) IS THE BIRIYANI READY???!!!
("KI" IS "WHAT" IN ASSAMESE)

ABU: NO! STAY AWAKE! I JUST PUT GINGER & GARLIC ONTO THE BEEF!!!

FATHER: ... GODDAMN ... YOU'RE SLOW



It's time to put in the masala mixture onto the Beef.
The powdered spice mix being, 1½ tbsp biriyani
masala powder, ½ tbsp red chilli powder, 1 tsp cumin powder,
1 tsp Coriander powder, 1 tbsp salt to taste,
1tsp Garam Masala (Hot Spice). Give it a nice stir
until the spices are well cooked and the oil comes up.

Put in the half-sliced chillies into the mix and give it a stir. Pour in 3 the sps of Yoghurt into the pot and give it a stir until the water from Yoghurt evaporates and the oil comes up. Pour in 2 ½ cups of water into the pot, make sure not to put too much water above the opening of the pressure cooker, the Beef pieces should be submerged fully below the surface level of the water. Give it a stir.

ABU: I JUST PUT IN THE MASALA MIX! IT LOOKS GREAT! CHECK THIS OUT!

FATHER: LATER! KEEP STIRRING! *YAWN*

ABU: YEAH, I JUST PUT DOI (BENGALI FOR YOGHURT)

FATHER: MAKE SURE YOU KEEP STIRRING, OTHERWISE YOU'LL SEE LUMPS, DO FAST!

ABU: YEAH I PUT WATER.

FATHER: MAKE SURE IT'S ONE INDEX FINGER DIGIT WATER LEVEL BETWEEN THE BEEF AND THE WATER SURFACE! DO NOT OVERFLOW!



Now seal the pressure cooker and let the beef cook with steam for 35 minutes. Wait for 14 whistles until the beef becomes soft. Turn the gas off after 14 whistles. Let the steam go away slowly from the whistle. Open the lid of the cooker and check if the beef has become soft.

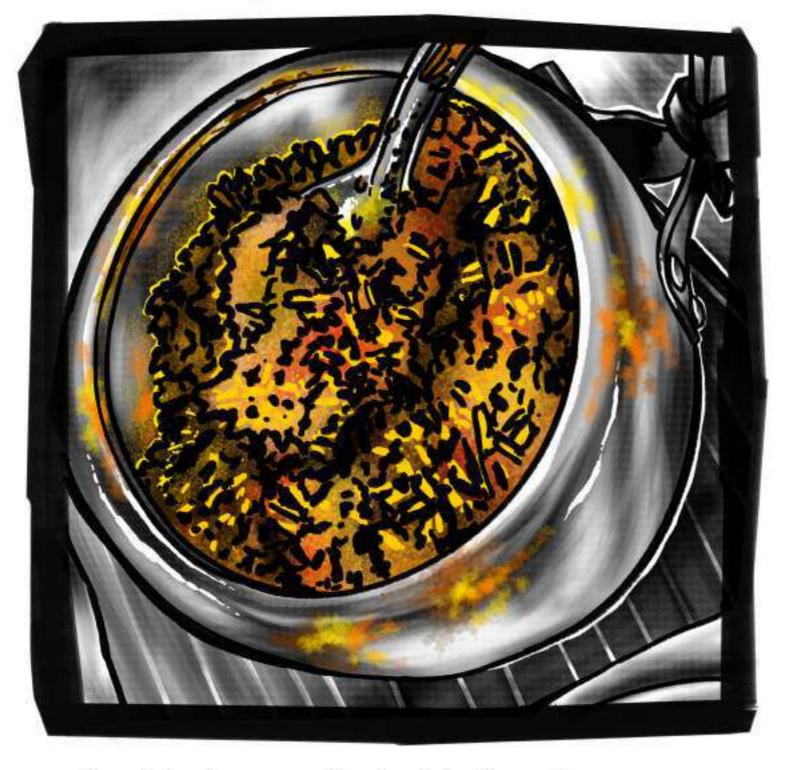
In a bowl, add around seven or eight scoops of rice through a 1/2 cup and add in one scoop 1/2 cup of red lentils in as well, it's optional. Wash and rinse the rice/lentil mix until the white starch from the rice/lentil clears. Do this first before you begin cooking! Pour in the rice/lentil mix into the pot and give it a stir until the rice/lentil is well mixed with the broth.

FATHER: SEAL THE COOKER NOW! IT'S TIME TO WAIT FOR 14 WHISTLES.... WAKE ME UP WHEN THIS HAPPENS!

ABU: OK!

ABU: OYE! PAPA!... ITS DONE! BEEF IS SOFT.... HELLO!!!!

FATHER: HAIN???!!! OH OK. GOOD. NOW PUT THE RICE IN....



Pour 1 bowl or cup of water into the pot, make sure to not overflow. Give the rice/lentil mix a good stir with the beef broth. Add in 1 tbsp of Ghee butter into the broth and give it a mix. Taste the broth to see the salt level. Add salt if necessary.

Now seal the cooker and wait for 3 to 4 whistles. Do not overdo it! Turn the gas off once done. 3 to 4 whistles later, let the steam go gradually, open the lid and your Biriyani is ready. Check the softness of the rice.

ABU: YUP.... ITS ALL DONE. YOU CAN GO TO SLEEP NOW HEHE.... I'LL SEAL THE COOKER.

FATHER:FINALLY....
NOW WAIT FOR 3 TO 4 WHISTLES MAX,
NOT MORE THAN THAT.
OTHERWISE IT WILL TURN THE RICE INTO A PASTE!
....*YAWN* GOODNIGHT....
SEND PHOTOS TOMORROW.

ABU: OK! SIGH I DID IT

FATHER: HAIN OK, BYE! (*CLICK*).....

ABU: I HOPE IT TURNS OUT WELL



Now serve the homemade Beef Biriyani on a plate and enjoy!

A small tip, garnish it with coriander leaves for freshness! You know.... show off a little! Haha!

ABU: HAHA! HAHA! HAH!!!!
HOLY CRAP IT CAME OUT GOOD!!!!....
MMMMMMMM!!!! IT'S SO GOOD!!!!

ABU:THERE! I CLICKED THE PHOTO!
PAPA'S DEFINITELY GONNA LIKE IT!
WILL FORWARD TO MUMMY AS WELL!
.... DAMN IT FEELS GOOD TO BE GOOD!



E P O G U E

H O U S E Н U S B A N D



.... WELL... THAT WAS THE TASTIEST THING I'VE EVER COOKED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE!

AFTER JUST ONE TRY!....

THIS WASN'T THE ONLY TIME I HAD LATE
NIGHT SESSIONS WITH MY FATHER OR MOTHER
BECAUSE COOKING WAS ALL NEW TO ME AND IT
TOOK ME SEVERAL WEEKS TO MASTER AND REMEMBER
THE RECIPES THOROUGHLY SO THAT I DON'T NEED MY
PARENT'S HELP ANYMORE. IT WAS CUMBERSOME TO SAY
THE LEAST, BUT BOY.... I DIDN'T REGRET ONE BIT.
NOT ONLY DID I MASTER ONE PARTICULAR DISH,
I MASTERED SEVERAL HOMEMADE
DISHES THAT WERE VERY EASY TO MAKE!
IN THE UNIVERSITY, I GOT A VERY WELL-KNOWN
REPUTATION AS BEING THE GUY WHO COOKS FOR

IN THIS COMIC, I HAD TO CUT TIME TO SHOW YOU THE BASICS, HAHA!

I GAINED THE REPUTATION FOR COOKING REALLY TASTY FOOD!
MY FLAT MATES, CLOSE FRIENDS FROM CLASS AND THE WHOLE
UNIVERSITY ITSELF, HAVE ALL TASTED MY FOOD AND HAVE
GOTTEN UNANIMOUS POSITIVE REVIEWS,
DESPITE HOW SPICY MY FOOD CAN BE!
EVEN SOME OF MY NEIGHBORS SMELT THE FOOD
IN THEIR BUILDING OUTSIDE MY WINDOW!
I JUST LIVE FOR THE SPICES MAN!
SPICES RUNS THROUGH EVERY INDIAN PERSON'S VEINS.
IT'S IN OUR BLOOD!

ALL THANKS TO MY FATHER, PUSHING ME TO COOK....
TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITIES....

IF HE HADN'T PUSHED ME TO COOK



.... THIS BEAUTIFUL MOMENT WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED

IT'S A NIGHT I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER

APRIL 4, 2025.... IT WAS ALENA'S BIRTHDAY,
WELL AT APRIL 3. I GOT REALLY LATE TO THE PARTY,
I STARTED COOKING AT AROUND 7 PM,
ALENA'S CLASSMATES AND FRIENDS WERE ALL PRESENT,
HAVING FUN, EATING CAKE AND PIZZAS,
WHILE I WAS COOKING!
I GOT TO EAT THE TREATS TOO.

IT WAS TOO LATE THOUGH. THEY ALL LEFT FOR THE PUB
FOR THE AFTER PARTY. I WAS STILL COOKING FOR ALENA...
A FEW HOURS LATER IT WAS READY. IT WAS MIDNIGHT.
RICHA, ONE OF MY DEAREST CLOSE FRIENDS,
SENT ALENA A MESSAGE THAT THE CHICKEN PULAO RICE
WAS READY AND WAS NON-SPICY.
ALL I COULD DO WAS WAIT....
THE KITCHEN WAS EMPTY AND DARK.
I DIDN'T OPEN THE PRESSURE COOKER.

WHY EAT WITHOUT HER PRESENCE?

I SORT OF SLEPT OFF IN THE KITCHEN. 1:49 AM I THINK, I HEARD THE DOOR OPEN. IN THE KITCHEN....

IT WAS ALENA.

I WAS REALLY TIRED, AND I REALLY GOT HAPPY TO SEE HER! ALENA TOLD ME TO SIT HEHE, SHE SAT DOWN AND SERVED HERSELF SOME CHICKEN PULAO RICE, SHE TOLD ME TO EAT AS WELL! I DIDN'T EAT PROPERLY THAT DAY, JUST A PIZZA AND A CAKE.

SHE LOVED IT.... HEHE. SHE REALLY DID. IT WAS JUST ME AND HER IN THE KITCHEN, SITTING TOGETHER, TALKING ABOUT HOW HER NIGHT WENT AT THE PUB PARTY.... WE TALKED AND TALKED....

THAT'S THE EXACT MOMENT.... WHERE I FELL IN LOVE WITH HER....

AND IN MY MIND... I THANKED ONE IMPORTANT PERSON IN MY LIFE.

MY FATHER

MY EVER SO CRAZY, TERRIFYINGLY BRILLIANT AND TALENTED

PAPA....

HEH ... HOW THE HELL DID I EVEN DO IT?....

Three Recipes From me...

Here are a few favorite recipes that you my dear reader, can try it out yourself!!!!

Chicken Gravy Masala

Ingredients

For Marination
1 kg Chicken bone-in cut into small pieces
1 tbsp Chilli Powder
2 tsp Turmeric Powder
2 tsp Garam Masala Powder
Salt to taste
½ cup Yogurt / Curd
2 tbsp Lemon Juice
2 tbsp Ginger Garlic Paste
For Tempering
5 tbsp Oil
1 tsp Fennel Seeds
1 tsp Cumin Seeds
1 stick Cinnamon Stick

For Chicken Gravy Base

4 large Onion sliced thinly
1 Capsicum sliced thinly
4 large Tomatoes sliced thinly
2 the Ginger Garlic Paste
1 the Chilli Powder
2 the Kashmiri Chilli Powder
2 the Coriander Powder
1 tsp Turmeric Powder
2 tsp Garam Masala Powder
3 the Garam Masala Powder
1 the Green Chilli Sauce
1 the Soy Sauce
Salt to taste
3 the Coriander leaves finely chopped

Mix chicken with the marination ingredients and set aside for 30 mins. Now take this in pressure cooker, add 1 cup of water and mix well.

Cover and pressure cook for 2 whistle, lower the flame and cook for 10 mins. Now turn off the heat and let the steam go all by itself.

Now heat oil in a kadai (saucepan), add in fennel, cumin and cinnamon.

Add in onions, salt and saute till lightly golden.

Add in capsicum and tomatoes and cook covered till mushy.

Now add in the spice powders and mix well.

Add in ketchup, soy sauce and green chilli sauce and mix well.

Add in the cooked chicken with any liquid and mix well.

Now simmer this for 10 to 15 mins.

Add in coriander leaves and mix well.

Serve.

Beef Pulao Rice

Ingredients

1 lbs beef
2 cups basmati rice
1½ tsp kosher salt or as needed
1 medium onion finely sliced
6 tbsp yogurt
½ tsp garam masala powder
1 green pepper
½ cup olive oil
4 tbsp ginger garlic paste
1 tsp cumin seeds
4 green cardamoms
5 cloves
6 black peppercorns

Muslin Pouch #1

2 tbsp fennel seeds 4 tbsp coriander seeds 1 cinnamon stick 2 bay leaves 3 black cardamoms

Muslin Pouch #2

5 inch ginger roughly chopped 30 garlic cloves

Thoroughly wash basmati rice and soak in water for 30 mins. Drain rice & discard the water from the rice, set side. Prepare the 2 muslin bags. Turn the Instant Pot to sauté mode, add water, and bring it to boil. Add both Muslin bags in the pot. Bring all of this to a boil, then add beef and mix well. Place the lid on the Instant Pot and press the pressure option and put pressure for 25 minutes or until the Beef is tender. Vent the air out.

Open the lid, take out the 2 muslin pouches. Set the inside with the stock aside. In a separate pot, on the stove, on medium heat add oil let it heat up and add green pepper, cumin seeds, green cardamom, cloves, and black peppercorns.

Add onion and sauté the onion until it's brown.
Add ginger garlic paste and mix well.
Take out beef only from Instant Pot and
transfer it to pot. Now add in the yogurt and mix well.
Add the garam masala powder and mix well.
Now add salt and mix.

Add the only 4 cups of stock to the pot. If the stock isn't enough add water to the stock so it comes to 4 cups in total.
Add rice with meat mixture and mix well.
Bring the mixture to boil on high heat.
Let it all cook for 5-7 min on medium heat.
Cover the lid on the pot with foil, place the tawa (flat saucepan) on the stove and then place the pot on top of the tawa. Cook it for 3 minutes on high then 5 minutes on medium, and 10 minutes. low-medium heat. Turn the stove to low and let it cook for 10-15 minutes. Serve it immediately.

Mutton Kaleji Fry Teekhi (Spicy Fried Diced Lamb Liver)

Ingredients

Soak the Kaleji (Liver)

1 lbs kaleji goat liver 2 cups water 1 tbsp vinegar 1 tbsp ginger garlic paste

Curry

1/3 cup olive oil
1 medium onion sliced
4 tbsp ginger garlic paste
1 cup yogurt
water

Whole spices

2 black cardamoms 2 green cardamoms 1 bay leaf 4 cloves 4 black peppercorns

Powder spices

1 tsp red chili powder 1 tbsp coriander powder ½ tsp turmeric powder 1 tsp cumin powder ¼ tsp garam masala powder

Garnish

1 tbsp dried fenugreek leaves (kasuri methi) 1 tsp kosher salt In a medium bowl, add kaleji, 2 cups of water, vinegar, and ginger-garlic paste and mix well. Let it set for 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, drain the kaleji out set aside.

In a medium size pot, on medium heat, add olive oil, and let it heat up. Add whole spices, sauté it for 10 seconds.

Now add onion, sauté until brown. Add ginger garlic paste. Now add kaleji and mix continously for 5 minutes until kaleji gets dark brown. Add powder spices without salt. Continuously mix for 5 minutes.

Add yogurt, mix on medium-high for 4 minutes.
Turn the stove to medium again. Now add ½ cup of water.
Cover the lid let it cook for 10 minutes or until Kaleji is cooked.
Turn off the stove. Now garnish with dried
fenugreek leaves and salt. Serve!

NOTES

THE END



Photo: Alena Štursová

Me & Amy in the kitchen making Nalli Nihari....



Photo: Nathaniel Sherman Windom

2024 - 2025

