

Sheherwali

Regal Vegetarian Cuisine of Murshidabad

Pradip Chopra



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*The subtle fragrance of rose water is a
trademark of Sheherwali cuisine.
This rose water container dates back almost
100 years, with exquisite filigree work by the
master craftsmen of Murshidabad.*



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The dishes included in this book are merely representative and do not reflect the entire spread of Sheherwali cuisine.



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 Imli Chutney
 Shimla Mirch ka Achaar
 Dhaniya ka Chutney
 Meetha Dhaniya
 Aam ka Panna
 Daab ka Sharbat

Foreword



To put it mildly, the tryst has been formidable and the journey unparalleled. No teacher, book or school could have ever prepared the *Sheherwali* community, as they are known, to face and indeed triumph over the contrasts that life had in store for them. From scorching deserts of Rajasthan to the lush green lands of Bengal, from scarcity of water to a bountiful Gangetic plain, their real lives were in for a reel change!

In all of this, what's absolutely commendable is that the community kept their faith and tradition intact. In fact, they prized what they had, but were also open to what's on offer, inadvertently resulting in what we today know as 'fusion'!

How else can one explain the cheerful co-existence of an ornate *achkan*, teamed up with the *bhadralok's* pump shoes or the generous use of *panch phoron*, a typically Bengali spice that they learnt to use with great aplomb!

A community that was hard working, simple, rooted and believed in giving back and never let their starting line determine their finishing spot.

My heartiest compliments to Sri Pradip Chopra for his book, which will no doubt whet your appetite to know more about the unique customs, traditions and lives of this unique community and their journey.

Happy Reading!

Harsh Neotia

Chairman, Ambuja Realty

Preface

The *Sheherwalis* have fascinated me ever since I was a young boy. My aunt had married into a *Sheherwali* family, and I visited her often spending most of my school vacations in her house. I was enthralled by the stories I heard: a heritage from Rajasthan, as vibrant and spicy as its famous red chillies; an invitation from the Nawab of Bengal to a verdant green Eden called Bengal; sharp business decisions that brought immense wealth, power and prestige. These tales of adventure and triumph were what piqued my childhood interest and created an interest in *Sheherwali* culture and ethos.

I also remember that food was always at the centre of thoughts and events: steaming hot puris and kachoris with red chilli pickle and green chutney; vegetables prepared in so many different ways and with subtle variations in tastes and flavors. All underscored by the care and love the *Sheherwalis* take when cooking for their near and dear ones - the *Sheherwali nazakat*.

My son recently got married, to a *Sheherwali* girl, and my ties to this community were further strengthened. At the elaborate wedding ceremony, *Sheherwali* gourmet cuisine featured prominently and I found that people were amazed and delighted by the traditional preparations. It troubled me that our current generation knew very little about *Sheherwali* cuisine, probably the most varied, rich and elaborate vegetarian spreads one can find today.



As I set out to compile this book I began to realize the elaborate cooking techniques and high level of technical perfection that *Sheherwali* cuisine demands. Most of the recipes are handed down through generations and there were very few written down. The *Sheherwali* project was a daunting and time consuming task. My only solace was the willingness of many, who contributed their time, sharing their stories and knowledge enthusiastically - my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all who helped bring this book to fruition. I would like to especially thank Anouk Chatterjee, Anita (Gopa) Dugar, Anupama Singhi, Asha Singhvi, Bikram Dugar, Dr. Deepali Singhee, Geeta Sipany, Lilu Mancha, Leslie D'gama, Nondon Bagchi, Payal Chopra, Pradip Patra, Prince Sipany, Pramila Singhi, Saloni Goyal, Sangeeta Dudhuria, Surabhi Singhi, Sandip Nowlakha, Sidharth Dudhuria, Tushar Singhi and the staff at CDC Printers and iLEAD.

My dear readers, I request you to kindly excuse any errors of omission, commission or oversight as I am relatively inexperienced in the realm of culinary sciences. Please send me your comments and observations, especially the experts of *Sheherwali* cuisine. We will make sure they are carefully studied, acknowledged and incorporated in the next edition of this volume. You can contact me at chopra_pradip@yahoo.com.

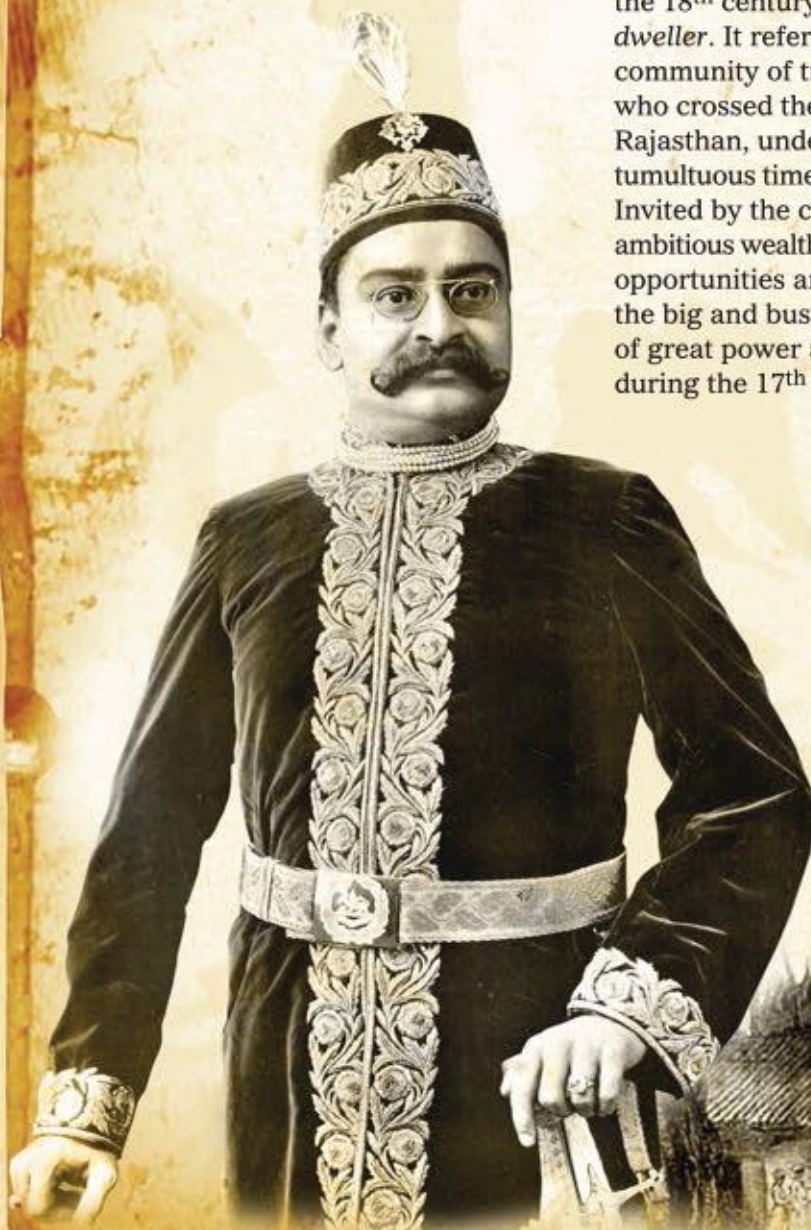
Happy Cooking!

Pradip Chopra

Chairman, iLEAD
CMD, PS Group

The Sheherwalis

The term *Sheherwalis* was coined in the middle of the 18th century, and literally translates into *city dweller*. It refers to the intrepid Oswal Jain community of traders, businessmen and bankers who crossed the sub-continent from small towns in Rajasthan, under arduous conditions in those tumultuous times, to make Murshidabad their home. Invited by the court of the Nawab of Bengal, these ambitious wealth creators yearned for the excitement, opportunities and personal fulfillment offered by the big and bustling city of Murshidabad, the seat of great power and the capital of undivided Bengal during the 17th and 18th centuries.



Today, the *Sheherwali* community has a distinct identity which is different from the *Marwaris* of Rajasthan. The Oswal Jains made their way across scorching deserts of Rajasthan and sprawling plains, to settle down on the lush banks of the Bhagirathi river around Azimganj, Jiaganj, Lalbagh, Nashipur, Cossimbazar and adjoining areas, which were important suburbs of Murshidabad during the Mughal rule.

This Jain community proved indispensable in India's export trade forming all important liaisons with European trading companies, providing financial and banking services for local/overseas trade, and thus amassed great fortunes and wealth.

Politeness, morality and honesty in business dealings were a hallmark within the *Sheherwali* community. They conducted themselves with such finesse and etiquette that generations of people had confidence and trust in them. The *Sheherwalis* played pivotal roles in shaping events and ultimately the course of history.

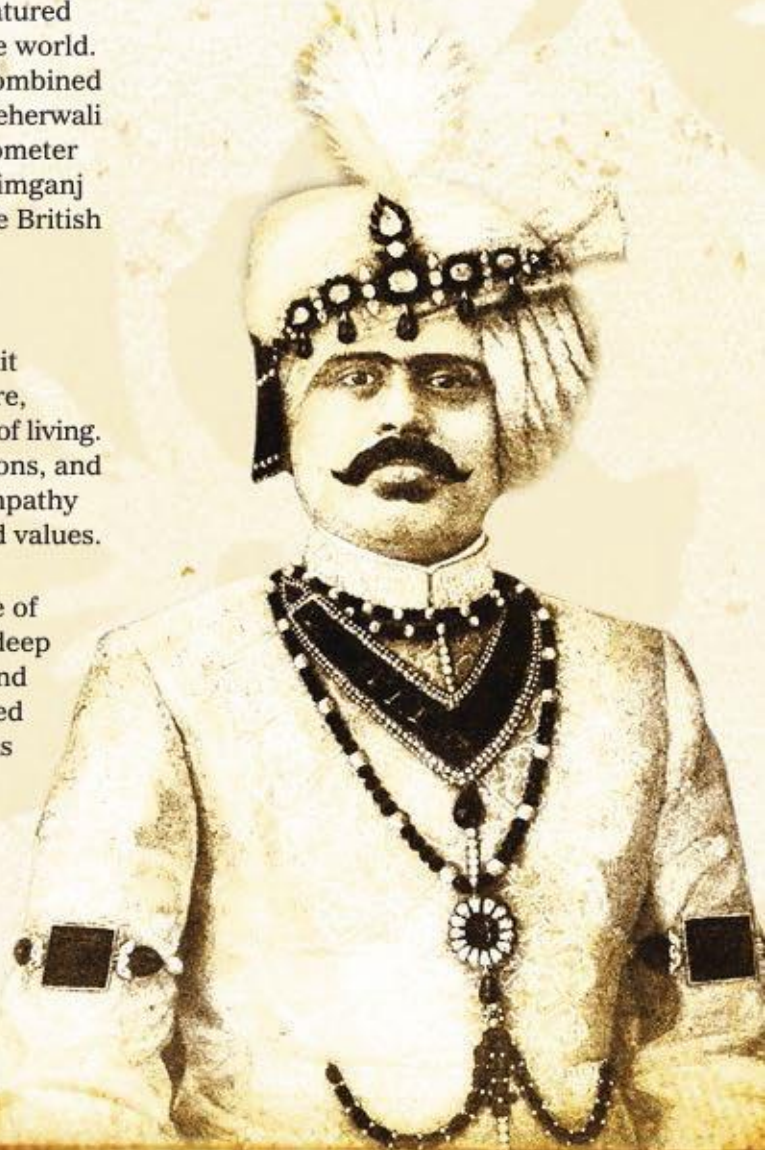


The Sheherwali Day of Life

The *Sheherwalis* have been living in Bengal for almost 300 years. During the 17th and 18th centuries, they featured among the richest families in the world. It is a confirmed view that the combined wealth of twenty to thirty odd *Sheherwali* families settled within a one kilometer diameter in the twin cities of Azimganj and Jiaganj surpassed that of the British aristocracy of that time.

The Jain families who came to Murshidabad became a close knit community with a distinct culture, demeanor, style, cuisine and way of living. They adapted to their new environs, and migrated to a new lifestyle in empathy with local customs, practices and values.

As testament to the very essence of being 'Indian', the *Sheherwalis'* deep understanding, amalgamation and acceptance of local culture helped them to make huge contributions to the economic and social development of Bengal.





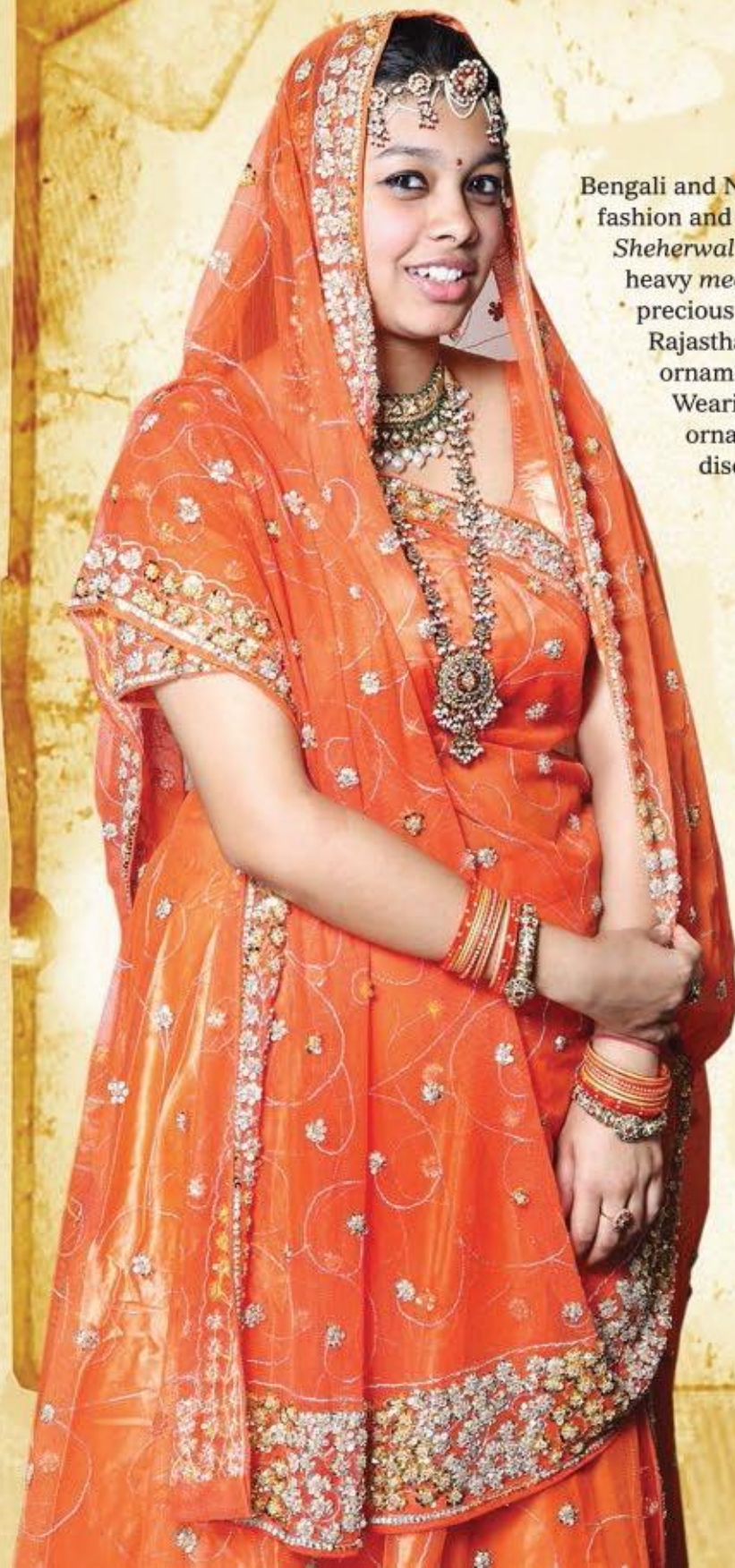
The *Sheherwalis* are known for their unique way of life, their *joie de vivre* if you will. Sit with the elders of the community and you will be regaled with stories of the royal banquets, the lavish lifestyles and the power and influence of their ancestors during the glorious days of Murshidabad. It was a time when India held the purse strings of the world, and both the Nawabs and the British relied heavily on this Jain community, the famed wizards of the financial, political and commercial world.

Their lifestyles reflected an amalgam of the princely traditions of Rajasthan and the culture of Bengal. The *Sheherwalis* developed their own social ethos over time, a fusion in terms of cuisine, culture and traditions.



A lavish lifestyle led to the love for the finer things in terms of art, jewelry, clothes and textiles, houses and gardens, furniture and libraries and of course vegetarian gourmet cuisine. Many anecdotes about their gastronomic preferences for the huge variety of mangoes are legendary. Their love for flowers led to the cultivation of some unique variety of roses. As patrons of the arts, they contributed significantly to the cultural ethos of Murshidabad.





Bengali and Nawabi influences are seen in the fashion and style of dressing as well. The *Sheherwali* women adorned themselves in heavy *meenakari* jewellery studded with precious stones and pearls, distinctly Rajasthani while developing a love for the ornaments worn by Bengali women. Wearing of the Rajasthani *bore* (head ornament with circular loop) was discarded in favour of *beena* or *tikli*.



While the *Sheherwalis* retained the *achkan* and *churidar* that they wore in Rajasthan, they also added some typically 'local' styles to their attire. Elaborately hand-frilled and pleated *dhoti* paired with an embroidered shawl thrown over one shoulder and a distinctive *pagdi* (head dress) were borrowed from the stereotypical 'bengali babu' image. These are some quintessential *Sheherwali* wardrobe must-haves. The heavily embroidered Rajasthani *mojris* were discarded in favour of light-weight and formal pump shoes.

Some *Sheherwalis* bow to their elders, saying *silam* (from the Urdu word *salaam* meaning to pay respect). The *Sheherwalis* speak their Hindi mixed with a smattering of Bengali and Urdu words, along with a little Rajasthani thrown in for good measure. Bengali words like *jal* (water), *gaach* (tree), *boi* (book), *tarkari* (vegetable) are freely used by the *Sheherwalis* in their conversations. Their use of grammatically incorrect Hindi and Urdu is often ridiculed in jest! These small inflections gave birth to a distinctive way of speaking that is identifiable with *Sheherwalis* even today.

Blending Rajasthani & Bengali
influences to create a
distinctive fashion

Style



Religious Traditions

Being a small religious group, accustomed to great piety as well as a pure standard of living, and bound by customs and very old traditions, the *Sheherwalis* preferred marriages within the community, thus even today, most *Sheherwali* families are related to each other in some way.

Strict discipline was maintained in the pursuit of rituals and ceremonies. Most family members performed regular *pujas* in the nine beautiful temples in the twin towns of Azimganj & Jiaganj.

Fasting was maintained for eight days during the important Jain festival of *Paryushan*, with only boiled water imbibed. Religious ceremonies and functions were celebrated with great enthusiasm by the community as a whole, collected together in grand processions resplendent in all their finery. The altar with the idol was carried through the streets on the shoulders of devotees and the sanctity of the procession was maintained by an army of bearers carrying *asa-sota* (tall decorated sticks) tied together with ropes. Young boys would be riding *tamjams* (open palanquins) and young girls would be carried in *palkis* (closed palanquins).

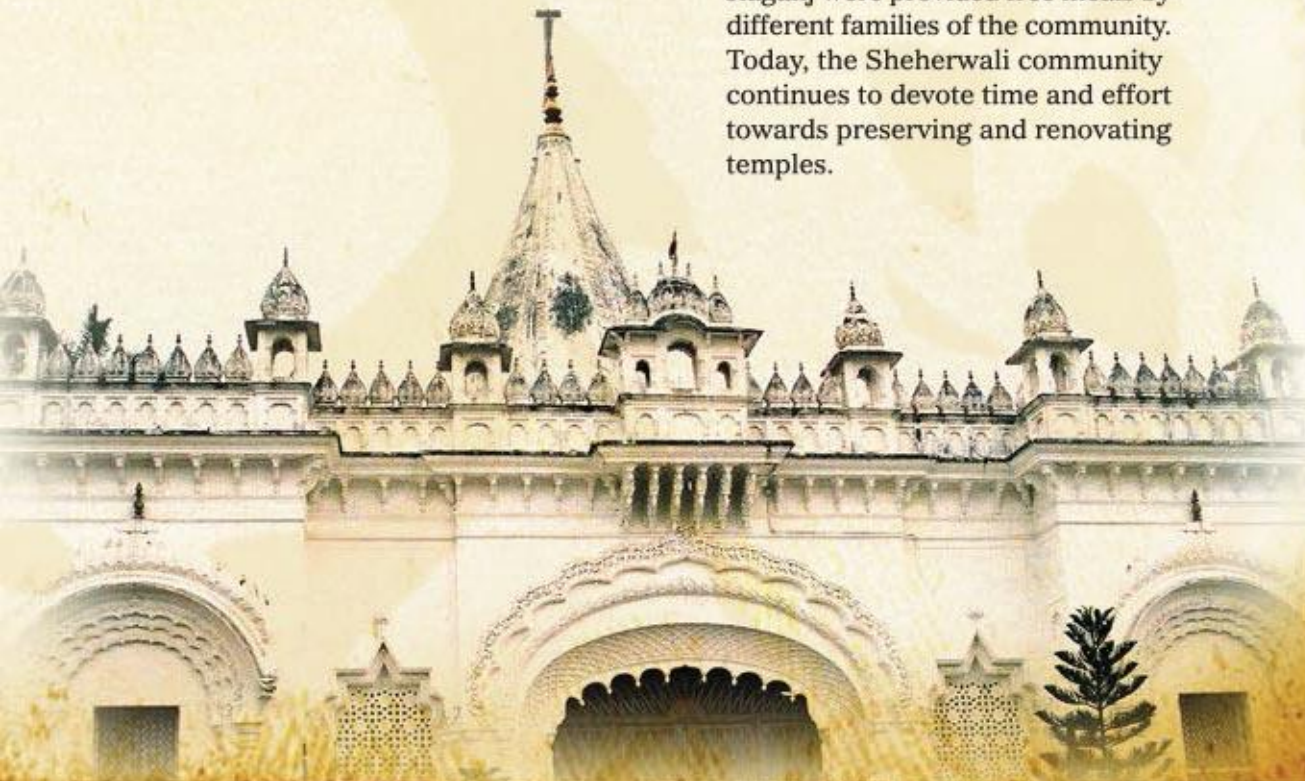


Philanthropists & *Patrons*

The philanthropy of the *Sheherwali* community is legendary. They have established schools, colleges, hospitals, markets and even a railway station in Azimganj, Jiaganj and Lalbagh. Several families have historically provided huge aid to the distressed during natural calamities. They keenly supported publications on Jainology and Jain stories. The leading families of this community provided employment to most in the region and provided outstation accommodation to students arriving for higher studies.

They invited ayurveds and medical practitioners to set up permanent clinics in the twin towns to cater to the medical needs of the entire region.

Collections of jewelery, artifacts and antiquities, of a few families have been donated to the Indian Museum and other institutions for the benefit of the nation. Several families of the community built temples and *dharamshalas* in Azimganj, Jiaganj, Lalbagh, Katgola, Palitana, Parasnath, Giridih, Pawapuri and Rajgir. All pilgrims to Azimganj and Jiaganj were provided free meals by different families of the community. Today, the *Sheherwali* community continues to devote time and effort towards preserving and renovating temples.





Horticulture is a passion for several gentlemen of the Sheherwali community. They created beautiful gardens with exquisite varieties of roses, rare flowers and plants. Music in bandstands and pavilions enthralled the large number of guests who flocked to these gardens to witness nature's beauty and munificence. Others set up mango and other orchards with rare fruit, and herb gardens with medicinal plants. One family even opened a zoo, while many others have been connected with the Calcutta Zoological Gardens, Victoria Memorial and libraries.

Abounding in interesting tales of events, victories and defeats, every Sheherwali household has a story to tell - be it floating down the Ganges in the *bajras* (two-tier boats) on family picnics; playing with perfumed rose water mixed with saffron during the festival of Holi;

betting on a game of cowrie shells for entertainment before the festival of Diwali; or cases of exquisite Murshidabad mangoes shipped to the Buckingham Palace in London, which drew appreciation from Queen Victoria herself! You are sure to find a Sheherwali sharing many tales with great fondness and pride, often slipping into a nostalgic reverie.

In fact, don't be surprised if you come across a typical Sheherwali who, in his trademark style and a keen eye for authenticity and tradition, will spend valuable hours explaining the correct way to fold a *paan* (betel leaf), or waiting patiently for a type of delicate mango to ripen to the exact point of ripeness! Or, the extra care they'll take in getting that right thickness while slicing a particular vegetable, or painstakingly telling you the exact method of preparing and binding the *chhuare ka goli* (distinctively shaped sweet dish) evenly and without a single finger mark!



It is important to note that in pure numbers, the *Sheherwali* community hardly made its mark in the burgeoning population of India through the ages. From a few thousands, they have now grown to a few tens of thousands, yet their contributions have ensured that history has taken account of the noble *Sheherwalis*. Be it in charity or in philanthropy, be it in economic, political or social sectors, be it in dressing or in cuisine - the indomitable, pioneering innovative *Sheherwali* spirit continues from generation to generation, setting new standards in harmonious public-spirited community activities.

*None can equal the keen eye for detail,
perfection and fulfillment like a* ***Sheherwali***



Sheherwali Cuisine

The love of food, especially all things sweet, is an accurate label for any Sheherwali.

Food features prominently in this community, evolving passionately through their 300-year history in Bengal. *Sheherwali* cuisine is possibly the finest vegetarian spread one can find, even in modern times, and is a wonderful *mélange* of the cuisines of the west and the east of India.

Flavors of food rich in ghee and bold spicy tastes that could survive in the tough climate of Rajasthan, met the distinctive local flavors of Bengal and the royal cuisines of the Afghans and later the Mughals. Bengal at the time was also a melting pot for the British, the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch, the Danes and the Armenians, as it served as the hub for most trading activities, and was the seat of political and economic power during the 17th & 18th centuries.

As in most cultures, it was in the local cuisine where these diverse cultures marinated and stewed, marrying the traditions of so many global influences in to a veritable cascade of tantalizing ingredients, tastes and flavors, to create a unique culinary experience.





The *Sheherwalis* came from a land of extreme climate, where food was cooked to last for a long time and meals did not necessarily require reheating. The scarcity of water was compensated with the liberal use of milk and ghee. Lentils and beans replaced fresh vegetables, and gram flour, corn and bajra were also used extensively. Spicy and bold dominant flavors characterized the common man's kitchens in Rajasthan, with the famous *Daal-batti-churma* or the *Ker Sangria*.

Rajasthan's royal kitchens, under the influence of Mughal royal kitchens, on the other hand, also started using some of the most rare and opulent ingredients - saffron, rose water, herbs and other costly aromatics, to produce esoteric fine dining experiences. The royal cooks or *khansamas* closely guarded recipes, and only passed them on to succeeding generations.

The Royals treated their guests to glorious spreads served on gold and silver, with the number of preparations sometimes running into hundreds. It was a lavish and indulgent way of life, where food featured as way to showcase affluence and share it with their guests. When the Oswal Jains reached the eastern shores of the Ganges, rich and lush, with an abundance of seasonal and fresh produce, they found themselves in a veritable garden of eden. This was very different from the more strong, robust and earthy flavors that they were accustomed to. Slowly, they adapted, absorbed and evolved a new fusion cuisine, characterized by the use of rich ingredients, elaborate cooking techniques, with the very best of vegetables, lentils and grains.

Sheherwali cuisine is a vegetarian's paradise, in which Bengali meets Rajasthani, Afghan, Mughal, Awadhi and several European culinary practices making it a unique mix of ingredients and flavors that

*tantalizes
the palate*



Reminiscent of *Rajasthan*

The *Sheherwalis* retained many of the food habits they were accustomed to in Rajasthan, the land of the princes. Rajasthani cuisine also has its diversities: from the every day hearty and fortifying food to the legendary kitchens of the Royals where culinary excellence was revered as an art form.

A variety of breads are an integral part of the Rajasthani diet - plain, fried or toasted and stuffed with spices. The ubiquitous *dal-baati-churma* is prepared with five kinds of dal mixed with flaky baked bread, the *batti*. Leftover dough is deep-fried in ghee, crumbled into pieces, and mixed with brown sugar to be eaten as a quick and easy dessert, the *churma*. A richer *Sheherwali* version of the *dal-baati-churma* is made with dry fruits, and a generous helping of rose water and saffron. They also modified this famous dish using local ingredients experimenting with different kinds of fillings for the *baati*.

Another legendary dish is the interesting *Ker Sangri ki Sabji*. *Ker* (small radish-like wild berry) and *Sangri* (longish beans) grow abundantly in the deserts of western Rajasthan flourishing under the harsh climatic conditions. The ease of drying and storing *ker sangri* made it a staple in Rajasthani cooking. Combined with oil, spices, and powdered with *amchoor* (dried green mango), *ker sangri* is eaten with *bajra rotis*. *Ker sangri* is still a very popular item on most Rajasthani menus, and even now all traditional Rajasthani weddings include this on the menu.

No story of Rajasthani cuisine would be complete without the fiery dried red chilies, and no collage complete without the vibrant pictures of red chilies drying in the baking hot sun. Rajasthanis love their spicy food and use liberal amounts of chilies, either for their color, or for their eye-watering heat quotient. *Amchoor* or dried green mango powder is used in place of tomatoes, and *hing* or *asafetida* mimics the flavors of onion and garlic, both possessing excellent digestive properties.

A variety of pickles and chutneys are also prepared, compulsory components of any Rajasthani spread. *Sheherwali* cuisine is also widely famed for its *achaars*, *Kutti Mirchai ka Achaar* (Red Chilli Pepper pickle) made with lime juice as one of its all time, all season favorite pickle.



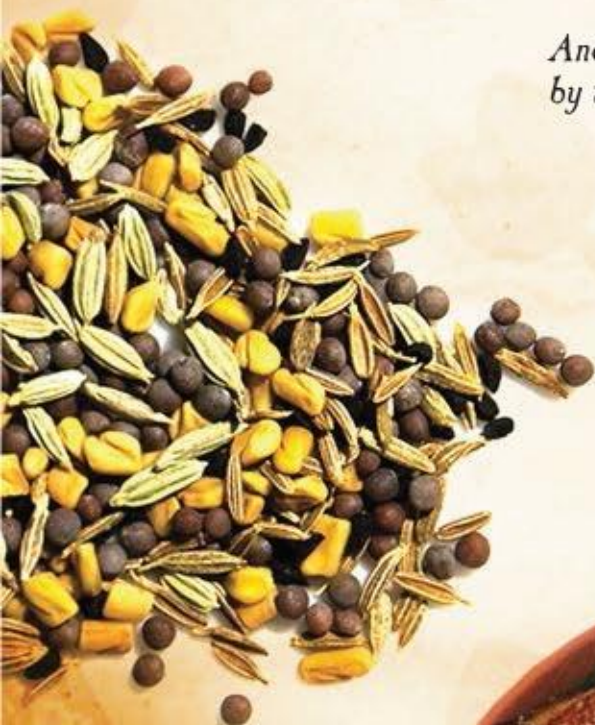
A bite from *Bengal*

Preparations like *kathail ka tarkari* (a vegetable preparation using raw jackfruit) *chhaata ka tarkari* (vegetable prepared using lotus pod), *mocha ka tarkari* (banana flower preparation), *kathbel chutney* (wood apple paste), *muri ka laddoo* (puffed rice and jiggery sweet), *pitha* (steamed rice dumplings stuffed with khoya), *kachche aam ka kheer* (raw mango pudding) and *borey ka boondiya* (a sweet made of white bean powder) distinct to the Bengal region, are also favorites in many Sheherwali homes.

Typically used in vegetarian cooking, *panch phoran* or the collection of 5 spices is a heady blend of whole nigella, cumin, mustard, fennel and fenugreek, in equal proportions. *Panch phoran* is used for tempering, a handful thrown in hot oil, splutters and emits an inimitable aroma identifiable with all Bengali kitchens. *Sheherwali* cooking adopted the use of the *panch phoran* in some of their preparations.

Another typically Bengali flavor profile absorbed by the *Sheherwalis* in their cuisine is the fragrant

panch phoran



The kitchens of the *Royals*

Bengal has been ruled by Islamic dynasties since the mid thirteenth century, after which came the Mughals and the Nawabs. One of the great travelers of all time, Ibn Battuta of Tangiers, Morocco, visited Sultanate Delhi and ended up staying for twenty years. His

detailed observations paint a fascinating picture of the culinary practices of that time. Akbar, the greatest of the Mughal Emperors, liked to regale his guests occasionally with banquets serving as many as five hundred dishes which

included dishes richly doused with ghee and cleverly seasoned with spices the way traditional Rajasthani food was cooked, influenced undoubtedly by his Rajasthani Queen.

Apart from spices, the cooks in the Mughal imperial kitchen used dried fruit in their dishes, a custom inherited from the culinary practices of Turkey and Iran. Mughal rulers from Babur onward planted fruit trees all over the territories they conquered. From the fertile orchards of Kashmir, they also imported fruits of the temperate zones - peaches, plums, grapes, apples, apricots, pears. Later, as European traders, most notably the Portuguese brought in different fruit and vegetables from the New world, the Mughal chefs adapted their cooking to include these items.

By Shah Jahan's time, the chilli pepper was a familiar ingredient, supplementing the indigenous black pepper. Use of spices included cinnamon, cardamom, clove, black pepper, coriander seeds, fennel seeds, and fresh ginger. Much later, Kolkata became a refuge for exiled Nawabs, most prominently the Nawab of Awadh who was exiled by the British to the outskirts of Calcutta, and the family of Tipu Sultan from Mysore. These Royals brought their entire household with them, including their prized cooks and *masalchis* (spice mixers). These highly knowledgeable chefs lent their opulent touch to local ingredients and introduced locals to exotic spices such as saffron and mace, dry fruits, the extensive use of ghee and other flavours typical of regal cuisine.

All this made for exciting transformations and evolutions in the indigenous cuisine of Bengal - perhaps the most famed being Mughlai Cuisine, and the Awadhi flavor (seen in the use of rose, ittar and kewra) and cooking methods like *dumpukht*. The *Sheherwalis* use of kewra jal in water and rose water in most of its sweets, cold drinks and other preparations to have a unique delicacy of flavor.



Mad about Mangoes

For a *Sheherwali*, no summer is complete without enjoying a ripe bounty of mangoes handpicked from the orchards of Azimganj - varieties like the anaras, bimli, champa, rani, bhavani, to name a few. There are reportedly over 100 varieties of mangoes cultivated in Murshidabad. While in season, mangoes feature in all meals, either eaten naturally or in a wide array of preparations from pickles, chutneys to drinks. Whole mangoes were stewed in a heavy combination of herbs making for an intense dish bringing out the exquisite essence of the fruit. The *Sheherwalis* Nazakat of serving extended to their beloved mangoes as well. Mangoes were kept in water for few hours before cutting it with a thinnest possible knife and making sure that there were no knife or finger marks left on the flesh.

Akbar promoted the cultivation and cross-breeding of many strains of India's native mangoes, a tradition which the *Sheherwalis* of Murshidabad perfected. The varieties of mangoes coming from Azimganj and Jiyagung such as the Bimli, Anaras, Kala Pahar and Kohitoor were amongst the best varieties in the world, relished and greatly admired by the European aristocracy of that time. The Dugar family of Jiyagunj & Azimgunj regularly sent mangoes as their annual tribute to the Empress Victoria and have in their collection letters of thanks received from Buckingham Palace for sending 'excellent qualities of mangoes' which were relished by the British Royalty and also served to visiting guests like the French Emperor, American President and other dignitaries.

The Sheherwali Sweet Tooth

Sweet dishes in any *Sheherwali* household are not referred to as 'desserts', a word for the end of the meal. The reason is simple - *Sheherwalis* eat sweets before, during and after a meal! There is no time that is not a sweet time! A typical breakfast for a *Sheherwali* consists of a glass of milk and a sweet, such as *Malpua*, *Channa-bara* or *Ras-kadam*. The fun of winter would be incomplete, if not accompanied by *khaaja* (jaggery and sesame seed sweet preparation) and *neemas* (milk froth), an outcome of regional influences. *Borey ka boondiya* (a sweet dish made of white bean powder) is another delicacy.

This intense sweet tooth is inherited from the *Sheherwalis'* Rajasthani roots and later influenced heavily by the Bengalis' love for sweets. The *Sheherwalis* made the Portuguese technique of cheese making their own by adapting it to make *chhana* and the whole array of sweets that are made from it.

*Everything has a reason,
and the Sheherwali way of
doing it is in the*

*tradition
of Nazakat*

The fastidiousness of the *Sheherwalis* manifest when it comes to food and they are known for their eccentricities. Everything has a reason, and a way of doing it in the 'sheherwali way'. Vegetables are cut accurately maintaining an even size. Even peas are graded - the most tender small pods are used for salad, the slightly larger ones for curry and the biggest for *kachoris*. A *Sheherwali* pays close attention to the aromas wafting from his kitchen, and can accurately describe what dish is being cooked, and whether a certain herb or spice is used too liberally or inadequately. Ask a non-sheherwali about some of the food habits of a *Sheherwali* and you get the quirkiest replies, "they only eat the top 'papri' of a fried puri" or "they add half a cup of sugar in a cup of tea!" All this, of course makes for a much-sought after cuisine that is well loved by all who have had the chance to sample a true *Sheherwali* spread.

The *Sheherwali* cuisine is perhaps also best known in Murshidabad and its environs, although one might be hard-pressed to find a restaurant or hotel specializing in *Sheherwali* cuisine. High cost of ingredients and elaborate and time consuming cooking techniques make it difficult to offer traditional *Sheherwali* cuisine. This culinary tradition continues in the homes of *Sheherwali* descendants, who still eat in the style and tradition of their ancestors.



Sheherwali Signature dishes

Saloni Mewa ka Khichdi

Saffron Sweet Rice



A must have on every *Sheherwali* thali, Saloni Mewa ka Khichdi is influenced by the famous Jaipuri Mewa ka Pulao, which is rich in dry fruits. The *Sheherwali* khichdi uses more saffron, their favorite aromatic, combined with mewa or dry fruits to create a vibrantly colored and delicately flavored sweet rice dish.





Pitha

Stuffed sweet pancakes



Impossibly thin circles of rice flour dough are rolled out to create the casing for this exquisite *Sheherwali* dessert. The pancakes are then filled with a sweet filling and steamed.

Bhapia

Steamed spiced dumplings

Lentils are blended with a delicate spice mix and then beaten vigorously to make these steamed, airy dumplings. Bhapia, which is savoury, is almost always eaten with the sweetish pitha, thus complimenting each other perfectly.



Bode ka Boondiya

Deep fried sweet balls of black-eyed bean flour



Uniquely *Sheherwali*, these boondis or translucent spheres are suspended in a sweet syrup. Made with black-eyed bean flour, it has the distinctive aroma of kewra water.





Sweets

A decorative flourish consisting of a central scroll-like element with symmetrical, flowing lines extending outwards to the left and right.

Bode ka Boondiya

Deep fried sweet balls of black-eyed bean flour



A very unusual dish making use of black-eyed bean (*chawalie* or *lobia*) flour in a sweet preparation. Deep fried, these small translucent balls or *boondis* are served chilled in a sugar syrup flavored with the aromatic kewra water.

Serves 8

Preparation & cooking time: 1 hr

1 cup black-eyed bean flour
1 cup sugar
15-20 pistachios, finely chopped
1 tsp kewra water
1 cup water
Ghee for deep frying

Combine the black-eyed bean flour and a little water in a bowl to make a batter of medium consistency. Beat the mixture thoroughly.

Combine the sugar and water in a pan. Cook until you get a thin syrup. Keep aside.

Heat the *ghee* in a *kadhai* or wok. Deep fry by pouring the mixture through a special kind of round slotted spoon, called a *boondi-strainer*. The strainer has holes through which the mixture passes forming the *boondis*.

Soak the fried *boondi* in the sugar syrup for about an hour, garnished with pistachios and kewra water. Serve chilled.



Besan ka Katli

A fudge-like sweet made with gram flour



Very common in most Sheherwali homes, this sweet is made with gram flour or *besan*, using the rajasthani technique of making "*barfi*".

Makes 10 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 1 hr

2 cups gram flour (*besan*)

1 cup sugar

½ cup ghee

2 big cardamoms

1 sheet silver foil (*varq*)

Mix the *besan* and ghee in a vessel. Heat on low heat for 10-12 minutes, stirring continuously.

Add a little water to the sugar and then add it to the *besan* mixture. Cook until the mixture starts leaving the sides of the vessel.

Pour the mixture on to a greased sheet or plate forming ½ inch thickness. Let it set for 30 minutes. Garnish using cardamom powder and sugar. Cut into desired sizes.



Gaund Giri ka Laddoo

Ball-shaped sweet made with natural gum

A winter favorite, *gaund* or natural gum warms the body up and is recommended for glowing skin.

Makes 10 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 1 hr

2 whole dried coconuts

½ cup edible gum (*gaund*)

½ cup sugar

½ cup water

Ghee for frying

Peel and grate the dried coconuts. Roast the coconut till it turns light golden brown.

Deep fry the *gaund* in ghee till it turns light brown.

Mix the sugar in water and boil till it is of 1-string consistency.

Combine the *gaund* mixture, grated roasted coconut and the warm sugar syrup. Mix well.

Once the mixture cools down, shape them into small balls or *laddoos*.

Ghaal ka Laddoo

Sweet wheat flour balls

This *laddoo* is made with wheat flour (*atta*) and sugar with the subtle touch of rose water to add a delicate aroma. Enjoyed especially during the cold winter months.

Makes 8 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 1 hour

1 cup wheat flour (*atta*)

½ cup sugar

1 cup milk

1 tbsp rose water

½ cup ghee

Mix the *atta* and ghee in a heavy bottomed kadhai or wok. Add the milk and cook on medium flame stirring continuously for 20-25 minutes till the mixture turns almond brown. Keep it aside to cool.

Add the sugar and rose water and shape into *laddoos* of ½ inch diameter.





Kachche Aam ka Kheer

Sweet raw mango milk pudding



Most *Sheherwalis* use mangoes in raw or ripe form while in season to get the best out of their favorite fruit. This *kheer* or milk pudding is made with raw mangoes and is best served chilled. *Sheherwalis* also enjoy the typical *kheer* made of rice or *sabudana* (tapioca pearls) from North India, including Rajasthan, but with a generous dash of saffron and rose water.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

2 lts. full fat milk (preferably buffalo milk)

500g raw mangoes

200g sugar

1 tbsp rose water

A pinch of saffron

Boil the milk. Add the sugar and keep boiling till the liquid reduces by half.

Peel and grate the mangoes. Wash in several changes of water to reduce the sourness. Boil the washed mangoes in water for 5 minutes.

Place the boiled mangoes into a muslin cloth and wash it again under a running tap. Squeeze the excess water out.

Mix the boiled mango into the milk. Add saffron and rose water. Chill and serve.



Chhuare ka Goli

Dried Date "Bullets"



Uniquely *Sheherwali*, this bullet-shaped sweet is made by slow cooking dried dates, which are high-energy and nutritious, not to mention scrumptious. The *Sheherwalis* are known to be very meticulous in ensuring the same shape and size of each of the *golis* or bullets! Add slivers of almonds and pistachios to add extra richness.

Makes 20 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 2 hrs plus soaking time

250g dried dates

250g thickened milk/*khoya*

250g sugar

250ml milk

1 tbsp rose water

Deseed the dates and chop into small pieces. Wash the chopped dates thoroughly.

Boil the milk. Add the cut dates and cover. Leave this mixture for 5-6 hours/soak dates in milk overnight.

Blend the date mixture in a blender. Cook the mixture in a heavy bottomed *kadhai* on low flame. Stir continuously until the mixture leaves the side of the vessel.

Grate *khoya* and add it to the cooked mixture. Allow it to cook over a medium flame till it turns a shade of red and it's completely dry. Now strain the mixture using a coarse sieve.

Add sugar and rose water, then shape into bullet-shapes about 2 inches long.





Kumhra ka Murabba

Juicy white pumpkin in a sweet syrup



Similar to the translucent soft candy *petha*, a speciality of north India, and especially Agra, the Sheherwali version is juicier and more succulent with a jam-like syrup.

Serves 8-10

Preparation & cooking time: 45 mins

1kg white pumpkin (*kumhra*)

500g sugar

1 tbsp milk

1 tbsp rose water

Choose pumpkins that are firm to the touch. Prepare the pumpkin by peeling the thick skin and removing the seeds from pulp. Slice into 2-inch long strips. Pierce the strips using a fork and cut into pieces of 2x2 inches.

Boil the pumpkin pieces in water. Drain excess water.

Heat the sugar and water till the sugar dissolves and the syrup is of 2-strings consistency.

Add the pumpkin to the sugar syrup and continue boiling till the syrup becomes thick and sticky. Remove from fire, cool and then add rose water. Serve chilled. You can also add strands of saffron.

Nariyal ka Katli

Fudge-like sweet with coconut



The *Sheherwalis* fused a traditional Rajasthani technique, the making of the *katli* or a fudge-like dessert, usually flavoured using nuts, with a local ingredient, the coconut, abundant in Bengal.

Makes 12-16 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 1 hr

2 cups grated fresh coconut

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar

2 tbsp milk

2 tsp rose water

Silver foil (*varq*) to garnish

Wash and clean the fresh coconut. Break the coconut into two halves. Grate the coconut taking care to avoid grating the skin.

Add the sugar and milk to the grated coconut and cook on low heat until the mixture becomes thick and sticky. Remove from fire and add rose water.

Spread the mixture evenly on a tray/plate (1 inch thick). Cool and garnish with silver foil (*varq*). Cut into desired shapes.



Pista ka Katli

Fudge-like sweet with green pistachios



The rich taste of pistachios shines through in this simple recipe.

Makes 20 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 2 hrs plus soaking time

250g green pistachios
200g sugar
1 sheet silver foil
(varq)

Soak pistachios in water for 5-6 hours. Remove the skin and grind it to a paste.

Mix the pistachio paste and sugar. Cook on a low flame. Stir continuously till the mixture starts leaving the sides of the vessel.

Using hands, knead the paste into a soft dough. Using a rolling pin, roll the paste into a ½ inch thick cake. Garnish with silver foil and cut into desired sizes.

Methi ka Laddoo

Fenugreek flavored sweet balls



These *laddoos* are flavoured with fenugreek seeds, a digestive aid that also possesses other medicinal properties.

Serves 4-6

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

4 tsp fenugreek seeds
(methi)
200g wheat flour (atta)
200g jaggery (gur)
50g edible gum (gaund)
4 tbsp ghee
2 cups water
20 pcs of
Badam/Almond cut into
small pieces (optional)

Dry roast the *methi* till it releases its aroma. Cool and powder the seeds coarsely. Keep aside.

Heat 4 tbsps ghee in a heavy bottomed *kadhai* or wok and fry the edible gum (*gaund*) till it puffs up. Keep aside.

Now, dry roast the wheat flour on a low flame until light brown in colour.

Dissolve jaggery in water and strain. Boil the syrup for 15-20 mins till it becomes frothy. Drop a little of the mixture into water and try and form a ball between your fingers - if it forms, the mixture is ready. Remove from fire.

Add wheat flour, *gaund* and *methi* seed powder to jaggery syrup. Mix it lightly. Scoop out 1 tbsp at a time and make balls while the mixture is still hot. It is a good idea to grease the spoon as well as your hands while making the balls.





Nimas

Delicate & airy milk froth



A variation of Daulat ka Chaat from Lucknow, Nimas is, essentially, milk froth. Traditionally, Nimas is churned by hand and uses full fat milk. Layers of subtly sweet creamy milk froth are collected and served with a sprinkling of saffron. One can eat several bowls of Nimas at one sitting; each mouthful is so light that it vanishes once in your mouth. This delicacy is enjoyed in the peak winter months.

Serves 8-10

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

2 litres full fat milk (preferably buffalo milk)

200g sugar

1 tbsp rose water

½ tsp saffron

Boil milk. Add sugar. Keep boiling the milk for 15-20 minutes until it thickens a bit. Chill.

Blend/churn chilled milk with a hand held mixer / blender. Add rose water and saffron while blending.

Collect the dense milk froth formed by the blending / churning with the help of a *jharni* and serve in bowls.



Pitha

Thin pancakes with a sweet filling



This recipe is a modified version of east Bengal's popular dish - *Pithe Poli*. Rice flour dough is rolled into wafer thin circles, stuffed with a sweet filling and then steamed. *Pitha* is usually accompanied with *Bhopia*.

Serves 8

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

Pancakes

1 cup rice flour
4 cups water

Knead the rice flour with warm water. Make small flat balls and steam for 10-15 minutes. Knead the steamed balls till it turns into a smooth, pliable dough. Cover the dough with wet cloth.

Stuffing

1 cup thickened
milk/*khoya*
1 cup sugar
1 ½ tbsp rose water
1 tbsp water

Cook the *khoya* in a thick bottomed *kadhai*, stirring constantly on a low flame till it turns brown in colour. Cool.

Add the sugar, rose water and water (to moisten stuffing).

To assemble the *Pitha*, divide the dough into small balls. Roll the rice balls into 3 inch diameter circles. Place the filling in the centre and fold the disc to form a semi-circle. Press down on the edges to seal the pancakes. Steam for 10 minutes till it is cooked. Brush the top with ghee. Serve hot.

Bhapia

Steamed dumplings made with yellow split lentils



A perfect partner for the Pitha. Savoury and lightly spiced, *Bhapia* is made out of blended yellow dal (*moong dal*).

Serves 8

1 cup yellow dal (*moong dal*)
 ½ cup green peas (tender)
 ½ tsp red chilli paste
 ¼ tsp *hing*
 ½ tsp salt
 ¼ cup chopped coriander leaves

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins + soaking time

Wash and soak the *moong dal* for 4 to 5 hours. Grind into a coarse paste using a little water. Beat the mixture vigorously to allow air to enter into the batter. This will make the *Bhapia* light.

Add the chilli paste, salt, *hing*, green peas, coriander leaves and mix thoroughly. Pour the batter into greased *Idli* moulds and steam for 10 minutes. Serve hot, brushed with ghee. Serve with lemon pickle, coriander *chutney* and *Kutti Mirchai ka Achaar*.



Saloni Mewa ka Khichdi

Sweet rice with saffron



Rich, aromatic sweetened rice flavoured and coloured with saffron. Usually served as part of a traditional *thali* for formal occasions. It goes perfectly with *Dahi ka Khichdi* and *Madia*.

Serves 4-6

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

100g rice (Basmati)

200g sugar

¼ cup thinly sliced almond

¼ cup thinly sliced pistachio

2 cloves

3 small cardamoms

2 pinches of saffron

2 tbsp ghee

Boil the rice. Each grain of rice should be separate. Add the thinly sliced almonds and pistachios.

Heat the *ghee* in a *kadhai* or wok. Add the cloves and cardamoms. Add the rice and mix thoroughly. Keep it aside.

Cook sugar and water on a low flame till the sugar syrup becomes one string consistency. Add saffron to the sugar syrup. Add the rice and allow it to cool slightly.





Mirich

Pepper & sugar crackle



It is a uniquely *Sheherwali* sweet dish which is relished post fasting days. *Mirich* is recommended for its therapeutic properties as it contains black pepper and sugar. Add coarsely powdered nuts or almonds as a variation.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

1 cup sugar
 ½ tsp black pepper,
 powdered coarsely
 2 tbsp almond (shivered)
 ghee

Drizzle the *kadhui* with *ghee* on the stove. Add sugar to the *kadhui* and caramelize it. Once the sugar has melted, add the almonds and pepper. Mix well. Pour the mix onto a greased, flat surface and roll till it is a thin layer. Let the caramelized sugar cool a little then pull it out into small pieces with the help of a knife. Store in a dry container.

Snacks

A decorative flourish consisting of two symmetrical, swirling lines that meet at a central point, with a small, ornate scroll-like element in the middle.



Bhuna

Puffed rice & roasted rice flakes with peanuts in a spicy mix



A light and healthy snack that can be eaten any time of the day. Crisp, puffed rice and roasted rice flakes are mixed with crunchy peanuts. Coated with Bengali mustard oil, Bhuna has a delightfully pungent flavour.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 10-15 mins

2 cups roasted rice flakes
4 cups puffed rice
¼ cup roasted peanuts
¼ cup roasted *chana*
(Bengal gram)
¼ tsp black mustard seeds
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 whole dried red chilli
1 bay leaf
1 pinch *hing*
Salt to taste
1 tbsp mustard oil

Heat the mustard oil in a pan. Once the oil starts smoking, add the mustard seeds and wait for them to splutter. Add the *hing*, red chilli and bay leaf.

Add the puffed rice, rice flakes, roasted peanuts and *chana*. Mix well. Add the salt and turmeric powder. Cook on low heat for 5 minutes.

Leave it in the cooking pan for a while so all the flavours are absorbed. Cool and store in an air tight container.

Bhutte ka Talni

Deep fried corn kernels



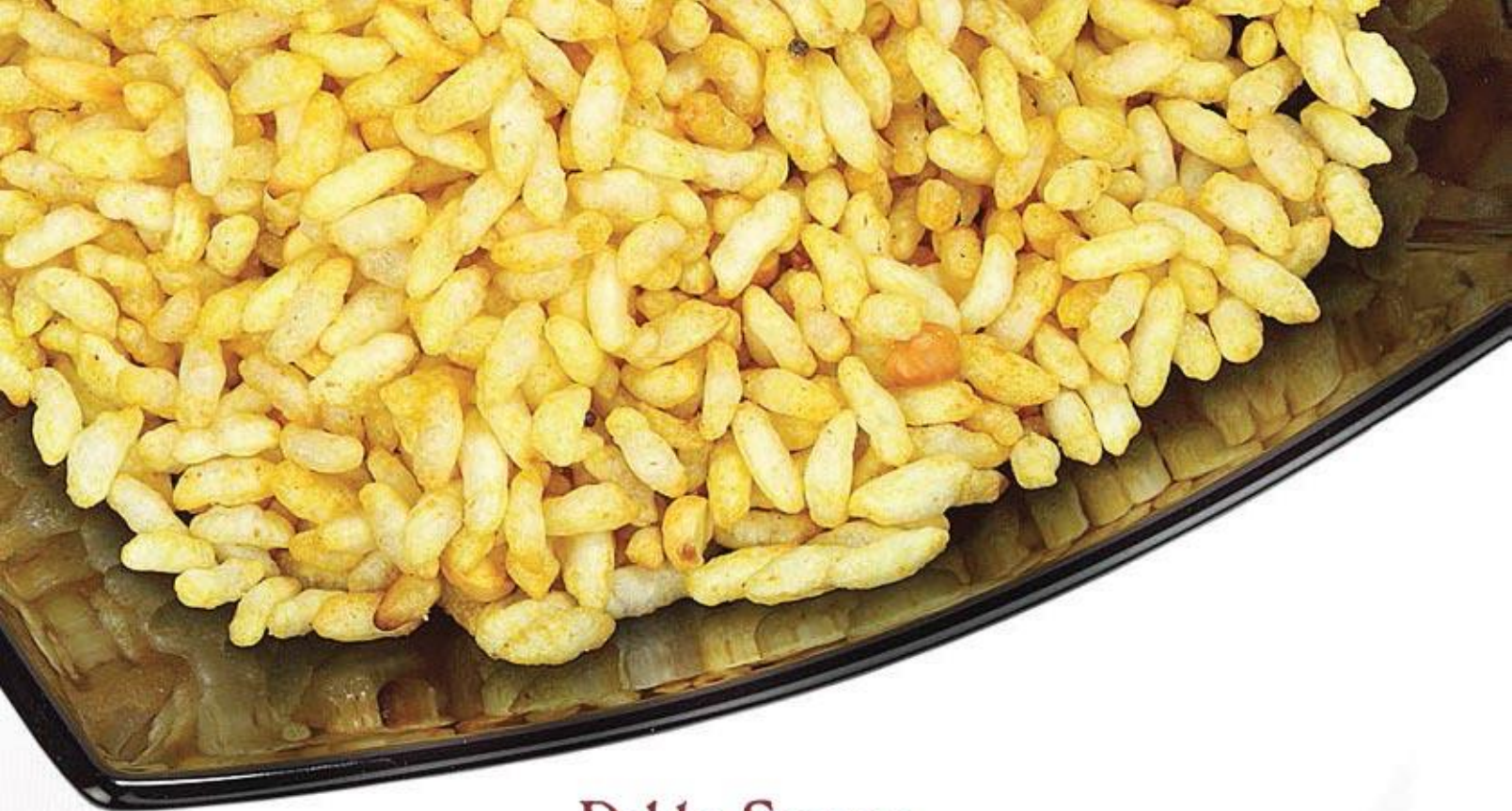
Serves 2

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

1 cup fresh corn
¼ tsp black pepper powder
1 tsp salt
Oil for deep frying

Tender corn cobs work best for this recipe. Deep fry the corn kernels in hot oil over a high flame for 5-7 minutes until they turn brown and crispy. Toss with salt and pepper and serve hot with tea.





Dal ka Samosa

Deep fried savoury pastry stuffed with lentils



Samosas are hugely popular throughout India. These deep fried triangular pockets are filled with a variety of stuffings from savoury to sweet. This variation is made with a savoury tangy stuffing made with Bengal gram or *chana dal*. These samosas can be stored for a few days and taste good when eaten cold too.

Makes 20 pcs

1 cup *chana dal* (Bengal gram)
1 tsp salt
½ tsp black salt
1 cup *atta* (wheat flour)
¼ cup semolina (*sooji*)
¼ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
½ tsp roasted cumin powder
½ tsp cinnamon powder
¼ tsp cardamom powder
¼ tsp *amchoor* (dry mango powder)
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp red chilli powder
1 tbsp *ghee*
Oil/*ghee* for frying

Preparation & cooking time: 40 mins + soaking time

Soak the *chana dal* in water for 4 to 5 hours. Grind into a coarse paste.

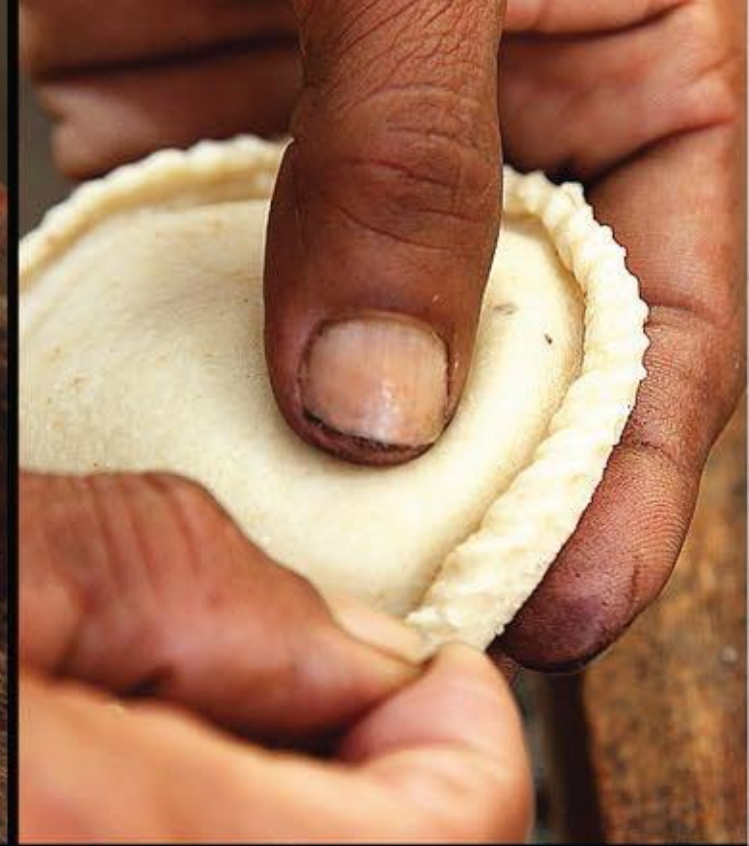
In a pan, add the *ghee* / oil. Fry the *dal* paste till it turns brown. Keep aside to cool.

Once the *dal* paste cools to room temperature, add the salt, black salt, red chilli powder, *amchoor* powder, cardamom powder, cinnamon powder, roasted *hing* powder and turmeric powder. Mix well. This is the filling.

Knead the *atta*, *sooji*, salt and *ghee* into a pliable dough. Cover with a moist cloth and let it rest for 15 minutes.

Divide the dough into 20 small balls. Roll each ball into a 4-5 inch diameter circle. Cut it into 2 semi-circles. Fold each semi-circle to form a cone shape. Use a spoon to stuff the cone with the filling and seal the edges.

Heat oil / *ghee* in a *kadhai* and deep fry the *samosas* until golden brown. Serve hot with coriander chutney.



Khira ka Kachori

Savoury deep fried pastry stuffed with cucumber



Possibly every *Sheherwalis'* favourite snack - kachoris are made with a variety of fillings. Here, the kachoris are stuffed with *kheera* or cucumbers and deep fried to crispy perfection.

Makes 15-20 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

1kg *kheera* (cucumber)

Masala to be mixed with the curd:

750 gms hung curd

2 tsp roasted cumin powder

2 cup *atta* (wheat flour)

½ tsp cinnamon powder

½ cup *sooji* (semolina)

1 tsp red chilli powder

3 tsp *ghee*

¼ tsp black salt

1 tsp salt

¼ tsp *hing* powder (*asafoetida*)

Oil for deep frying

Wash, peel and grate the cucumbers. Place the cucumber on a muslin cloth, add salt and squeeze out the water. Hang the curd in a muslin cloth for 4-5 hours to remove the water.

Mix the grated cucumber and hung curd together. Add all the *masala* powders and keep aside. Add the salt just before stuffing.

Knead the *atta*, *sooji*, salt and *ghee* with water to make a hard dough. Divide the dough into 30 balls. Roll the dough into 3-inch diameter circles. Place a little of the stuffing in the center of the dough circle. Cover it with another circle. Seal all the edges by pressing the ends together in the style shown in the picture on the left. Using a fork, prick a few holes on only one side of the *kachori*.

Heat oil in a wok or *kadhai* and deep fry on medium heat until it turns slightly brown. Serve hot with coriander *chutney* and lemon wedges.



Khatte ka Pakori

Gram flour fritters in tamarind water



Besan or gram flour is used to make these delicious and simple dumplings (*pakoris*), which are then submerged in tangy tamarind water. *Khatte ka Pakori* is typically eaten during the hot summer months for a refreshing respite.

Serves 10

Preparation & cooking time: 1 hr 30 mins

1 cup *besan* (gram flour)
 50g tamarind
 ½ cup sugar
 1 tsp black salt
 1 tsp salt
 ½ tsp cumin powder
 ½ tsp red chilli powder
 1 bay leaf
 1 dried red chilli
 A pinch of *hing* (asafoetida)
 1 tbsp oil (for tempering)
 Oil for deep frying

Mix the *besan* with enough water to make a thick batter. Beat well so the batter becomes light. Add the salt, *hing* and red chilli powder. Heat the oil in a pan and make small *pakoris* or balls with the *besan* batter.

Heat water in a deep pan until it is slightly warm. Place the *besan* balls in the warm water for 10 minutes. Take out and drain.

To make the tangy syrup, start by dissolving the tamarind paste in water. Add the salt, black salt, cumin powder, red chilli powder and sugar.

Heat oil in a pan; add the bay leaf, dried red chilli, cumin seeds and *hing*. Cook for 1 minute. Now, add the tamarind water and *besan* *pakoris*. Let the *pakoris* soak in the tamarind water for an hour before serving.



Paniphal ka Samosa

Deep fried savoury pastry stuffed with water chestnuts



Water chestnuts (*paniphal*) grow abundantly in fresh water lakes and are widely available in Murshidabad. *Sheherwalis* use a lot of water chestnuts in preparations as they avoid eating root vegetables such as potatoes which are the typical filling for a samosa.

Makes 20 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 40 mins

1 kg water chestnut	½ inch piece
1 cup <i>atta</i> (wheat flour)	cinnamon sticks (grind to make paste)
¼ cup <i>sooji</i> (semolina)	¼ tsp <i>hing</i> (asafoetida)
1 tbsp <i>ghee</i>	¼ tsp <i>amchoor</i> (dry mango powder)
2 tsp cumin seeds	½ tsp turmeric powder
4 cloves	1 tsp red chilli powder
2 green cardamoms	Salt to taste



Wash and peel the water chestnuts. Slice them first lengthwise into two halves, and then chop each half into small pieces.

Heat *ghee* in a pan. Add cumin seeds, *hing*, the chopped water chestnut, turmeric, chilli powder, salt and sauté for 5-10 minutes.

Add cinnamon paste, *amchoor* powder and allow the *masalas* to cook for 2 minutes on a slow flame. The stuffing for the *samosas* is now ready.

Knead the *atta*, *sooji*, salt and *ghee* into a dough and let it rest for about 10-15 mins. Divide the dough into 10 balls. Roll each ball into a 4-5 inch diameter circle. Cut it into 2 semi-circles. Fold each semi-circle to form a cone shape.

Use a spoon to stuff the cone with the filling and seal the edges.

Deep fry in hot oil over medium heat until they turn golden brown. Serve hot with coriander *chutney*.

Kheera ka Pitod (Pakori)

Cucumber fritters



Cucumbers are a favourite with most *Sheherwalis* and feature in salads, curries and a variety of stir-fried preparations. *Kheera* (cucumbers) are dipped in a *besan* batter and deep fried into crispy *pakoris* (fritters). Carom seeds or *ajwain* can be added, which aid digestion.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

2 medium sized cucumbers
1 cup *besan* (gram flour)
½ tsp salt
½ tsp chilli powder
½ tsp cumin seeds
A pinch of *hing* (asafoetida)
Water
Oil for deep frying

Peel the cucumber and slice into very thin rounds.

Make a thin batter (pouring consistency) by mixing the *besan*, salt, chilli powder, *hing*, cumin seeds and water.

Dip the cucumber slices one by one in the batter and deep fry until brown and crisp. Serve hot with coriander chutney.





Mathari

Deep fried savoury flat bread



A crispy wholesome snack served through the year. Mathari is always eaten with a combination of Kathbel ka Pachak or Kutti Mirchai ka Achaar and is found in almost all Sheherwali homes.

Makes 16-20 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

1 cup *atta* (wheat flour)

½ cup *sooji* (semolina)

2 tbsp *ghee*

½ tsp *Kala jeera* (Nigela seeds)

Salt

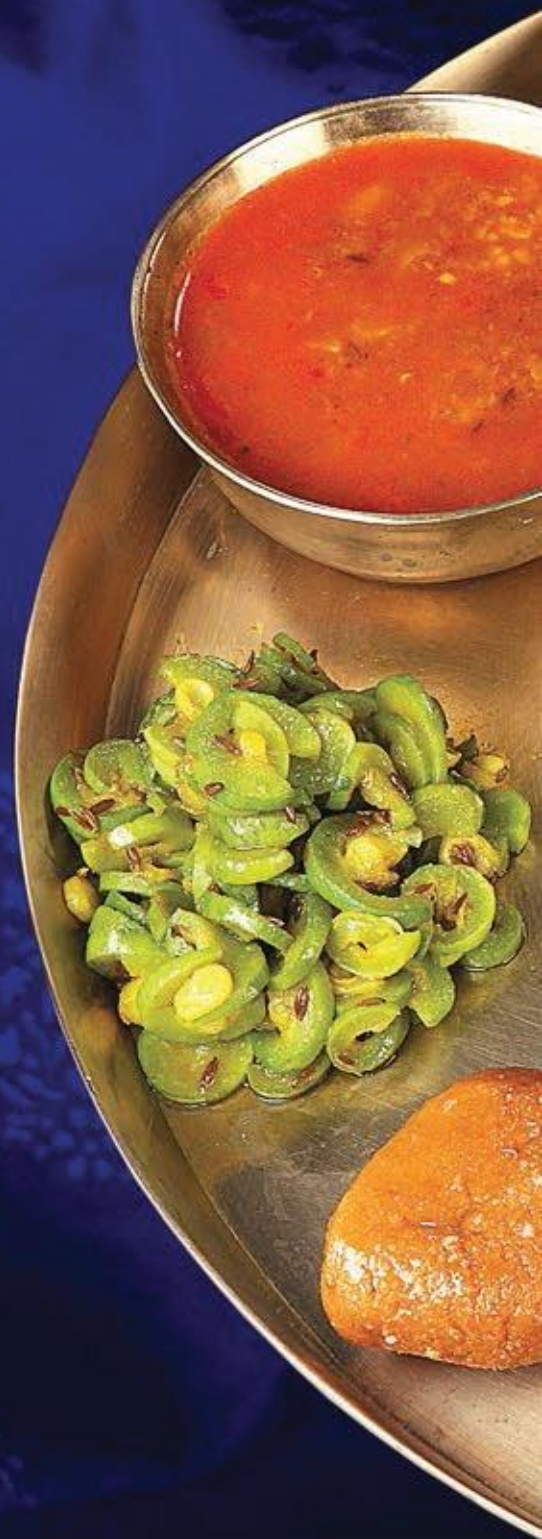
Oil/*ghee* for deep frying

Knead the *atta* and *sooji* into a hard dough with *ghee*, *kala jeera*, salt and as little water as possible. Divide the dough into 20 smalls balls.

Roll the dough into 2 inch diameter circles. Using a fork, prick both sides of the circle so that they do not puff up during frying.

Heat the oil in a *kadhui* or wok. Fry the circles over a low flame until they turn golden brown. Cool and store them in air-tight containers.

Main Courses







Boraphali ka Tarkari

Tangy & spicy stir fried long beans



A frequently eaten vegetable, *boraphali* or long beans are lightly cooked. Tamarind is added giving this light preparation a pleasant sourness.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

200g long beans

½ tsp cumin seeds

¼ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)

1 tsp coriander powder

1 ¼ tsp turmeric powder

2 tbsp water

1 tbsp tamarind paste

2 bay leaves

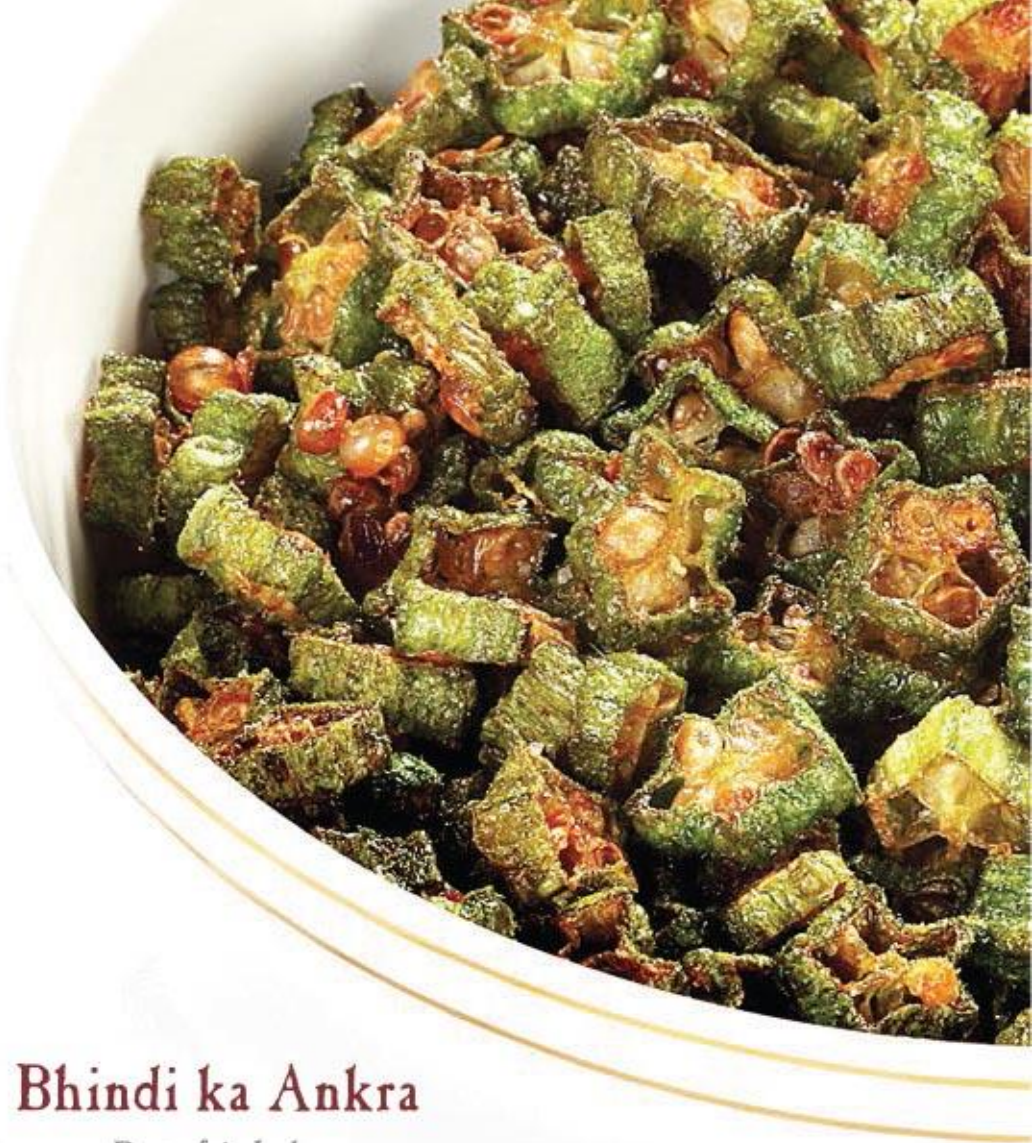
1 tsp salt

1 tbsp oil

Wash the long beans and chop it finely.

Heat the oil in a pan and add the *hing*, cumin seeds and bay leaf. Once the cumin seeds have browned, add the chopped long beans.

Add all the spices and water. Cover and cook for 10 minutes on low heat. Now add the tamarind paste and cook for a further one minute.



Bhindi ka Ankra

Deep fried okra



Okra / ladies' fingers (*bhindi*) are fried till crispy and simply dressed with salt. This is usually eaten as a crispy additive with *dal* and rice and is quite addictive! Vegetables like *parwal* or pointed gourd can also be prepared in this way.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

500g okra/ladies fingers

1 tsp salt

Oil for deep frying

Wash and wipe the okra with a clean cloth till dry. Slice off the top and bottom ends, and then slice horizontally into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch pieces.

Heat the oil in a deep pan. Fry the okra in hot oil until slightly golden brown. Take them out and then refry them to get crispy brown okra. Drain on paper towels to get rid of excess oil. Sprinkle with salt and toss to coat.

Using the same recipe the following can be used instead of Okra: *Parwal* / soaked *lal channa* (whole Bengal gram)



Dahi ka Hola

Green chickpeas in yoghurt curry



A flavourful curry made with yoghurt, *Dahi ka Hola* can be eaten at most meals. This variation is made using green chickpeas.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

1 cup yoghurt	2 almonds made into a paste	2 small <i>elaichi</i> (cardamom)
½ cup <i>hola</i> (green chick peas)	¼ tsp <i>hing</i> (asafoetida)	1 pinch saffron
1 tsp <i>besan</i> (gram flour)	½ tsp cumin seeds	1 tsp sugar
½ tsp turmeric powder	½ tsp red chilli powder	1 tsp salt
¼ tsp cumin powder	¼ tsp cinnamon powder	1½ cups of water
2 cloves		1 tbsp ghee

Boil the *hola* with salt and sugar till soft. Strain and keep aside to cool.

Beat the yoghurt and *besan* till smooth. Cook the yoghurt mixture with the almond paste over high heat, stirring continuously. Once the mixture comes to a boil, add the salt and turmeric powder. Now put the boiled *hola* in and cook for 2 minutes. Add the cinnamon, cumin powder, almond paste and sugar. Heat the *ghee* in a pan. Once hot, add the cumin seeds, *hing*, red chilli powder and cook for a minute. Now pour it over the yoghurt and *hola* curry and cover for a few minutes to allow the flavours to absorb. Garnish with saffron. Using the same recipe the following can be prepared instead of *hola*:- Peas/ Cabbage/ pointed gourd / water chestnuts / long beans.

Kaddu ka Tarkari

White bottle gourd curry



A dish made with the naturally sweet bottle gourd.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

500g bottle gourd

½ tsp *panch phoran*

½ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)

½ tsp turmeric powder

1 ½ tsp salt

5 tsp *ghee*

Wash and peel the bottle gourd. Slit it lengthwise in two halves. Cut each half from the middle into two equal portions. Chop each portion into thin pieces.

Heat the *ghee* in deep pan. When hot, add the *panch phoran* and *hing*. Stir till the *panch phoran* turns golden brown.

Add the chopped bottle gourd and stir on low heat for 2 minutes. Add the salt and turmeric powder. Cook on high heat for one minute. Now cover the pan and cook on low heat for a further 10 minutes.





Kela Parwal ka Jholgiri

Raw banana & pointed gourd curry



This is a curry served in most homes throughout the year. Raw bananas and gourd are simmered in a flavourful sauce. The dish can be eaten with both rice and roti.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

250g raw banana
250g pointed gourd
(parwal)
½ tsp hing (asafoetida)
½ tsp turmeric powder
2 tsp red chilli powder
2 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp powdered
mustard seeds
1 tsp salt
8 tsp oil

Wash and peel the raw bananas and split lengthwise in two halves. Slice each half into thin pieces of ¼ inch thickness. Soak immediately in turmeric-salt water to avoid blackening due to oxidation.

Wash and scrape off the pointed gourds using the edge of your knife. Split lengthwise in two halves. Slice each half into thin pieces, slightly thinner than the raw banana slices.

Heat the oil in a pan. Add the cumin seeds and hing. Once the cumin seeds turn brown, add the gourd, salt and turmeric powder. Stir on medium flame for 5 minutes.

Add the sliced raw banana and cook for 2 minutes. Add the red chilli, coriander and mustard seed powders. Stir for one minute on high heat. Add ¾ glass of water to get a thick curry-like consistency. Cover and cook for 10-12 minutes a low heat till the vegetables are tender.

Kheera Shimla Mirch ka Tarkari

Stir fried cucumber and green capsicum



An innovative combination where two different kinds of vegetables, cucumber and green capsicum, are cooked together and served with the flavour of Murshidabad.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

250g cucumbers
250g green capsicum
1tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp hing (asafoetida)
1tsp turmeric powder
2 tsp coriander powder
2 tsp salt
6 tsp oil

Wash the vegetables. Peel the cucumbers, cut lengthwise and then chop into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch pieces. Cut the green capsicum vertically from centre. Deseed and chop finely into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch pieces.

Heat the oil in a pan. Add the hing, cumin and mustard seeds. As they splutter, add the cucumber and green capsicum. Stir on low heat. Add the salt and turmeric powder. Cover and cook for 2-3 minutes.

Add the coriander and red chilli powder. Cook for a further 5-7 minutes on low heat.



Maheen Tori

Ridge gourd curry



Sheherwalis are very particular about how they cut and chop their vegetables. In this simple and quick preparation, the ridge gourd is finely chopped. Maheen Tori is usually eaten with flatbreads like tikda, roti or paratha.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

500g *tori* (ridge gourd)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp cumin seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric powder
 A pinch of sugar
 1 tsp salt
 4 tsp *ghee*

Wash and peel the skin of the *tori*. Cut each *tori* lengthwise into halves and then divide into four equal portions. Slice each portion into 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long thin shreds.

Heat the *ghee* in a pan. Add the cumin seeds and *hing*. Stir well. Add the shredded *tori*. Stir well for two minutes. Add salt, turmeric powder and sugar. Cook on medium heat for 10 minutes.

Kheera ka Khatta Meetha

Sweet & sour cucumber curry



Cucumbers are often used in *Sheherwali* cooking in savoury stir fries or even as a filling for their various savoury breads. The whole *amchoor* or dried mango gives this dish its tangy flavour.

Serves 2

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

1 medium sized cucumber
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
 2 tbsp sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red chilli powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ piece whole *amchoor* (dried mango)
 2 tsp oil

Wash and peel the cucumber. Split lengthwise into four slices. Chop each portion into thin slices.

Heat the oil in a pan. Add the cumin seeds and *hing*. Once the cumin seeds brown, add the cucumber slices, salt, turmeric powder and red chilli powder. Add a little water. Cover the pan and cook on medium heat for 4-5 minutes.

Add sugar to the cooked cucumber and stir for 30 seconds. Once the sugar melts, add the whole *amchoor* and cook it for 5-7 minutes on medium heat.





Masale ka Pattagobhi

Spicy stir fried cabbage with tomato



Popular during the winter months, *patta gobhi* or cabbage is cooked with spices and tomatoes. There is no gravy although the tomato does add a nice coating to the cabbage.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 10 mins

400g cabbage
1 medium tomato, chopped
1 tsp cumin seeds
½ tsp mustard seeds
½ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
½ tsp turmeric powder
3 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp salt
4 tsp oil

Wash and shred the cabbage.

Heat the oil and add the cumin and mustard seeds. Once they start to splutter, add the shredded cabbage, tomato, salt, coriander powder and red chilli powder.

Cover and cook on low heat for 2-4 minutes or until the tomatoes are cooked through.

Uncover and cook on high heat for 2 minutes. Serve hot.

Matar ka Dabdaba

Spicy green peas



This spicy preparation is another winter specialty, the season of fresh green peas. Green chilli paste is used to give the slightly sweet peas a spicy kick.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

500g fresh peas
1 tsp green chilli paste
2 tsp ginger paste
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp hing (asafoetida)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sugar
Salt to taste
2 tsp ghee

Wash and shell the peas. Boil them for 15-20 minutes in one litre of water containing $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt. Once done, strain and keep aside.

Heat the ghee in a deep pan. Add the cumin seeds and hing. Once the cumin seeds turn brown, add the green chilli paste and ginger paste. Cook on medium heat for 5-7 minutes.

Add the boiled peas and salt and cook on high heat for 5 minutes. Serve hot.



Milao ka Tarkari

A four vegetable curry



Milao means combination and this recipe has raw banana, gourds and cucumbers in a fragrant curry that uses the Bengali *panch phoran* spice mix. Tamarind adds tanginess to the dish.

Serves 6

100g raw bananas
100g tori (ridge gourds)
100g cucumbers
100g *parwal* (pointed gourd)
½ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp chilli powder
½ tsp *panch phoran*
6 tsp tamarind paste
2 dry red chillies
1 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt
2 tbsp oil

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

Wash and peel all vegetables, except the *parwal* which is cleaned using the edge of a knife. Slit all the vegetables lengthwise and then chop into 1½ inch pieces.

Heat the oil in a pan. Add the *panch phoran*, red chillies and *hing*. Once the *panch phoran* has browned, add a little water followed immediately by all the chopped vegetables. Add the salt and turmeric powder. Cover the pan and cook over low heat for 15 minutes, stirring it occasionally.

Cook until the vegetables are just about ready. Add red chilli powder, sugar and the tamarind paste and simmer for two minutes. Serve hot.





Paniphal ka Tarkari

Stir fried water chestnuts



Water chestnut (*paniphal*) is grown in certain parts of Murshidabad. This is a unique *Sheherwali* dish prepared in a very simple manner.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

500g water chestnuts
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp *amchoor* (dry mango powder)
1½ tsp salt
1 tbsp *ghee*

Wash and peel the water chestnuts. Slice into thin pieces.

Heat the *ghee* in a pan. Add the cumin seeds and *hing*. Once the cumin seeds have browned, add the sliced water chestnuts, turmeric powder and salt. Cover the pan and cook on low heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add the red chilli powder, coriander powder and *amchoor* powder. Stir on medium heat for 5 minutes. Now add 2 tbsp of water and sauté on high heat for 2 minutes. Serve hot.

Parwal ka Dabdaba

Pointed gourd stir fry



Sheherwalis cook *parwal* or pointed gourd in various ways, cutting and chopping the vegetable differently for each recipe. Here *parwal* is stir-fried with mild seasoning.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

500g *parwal*
(pointed gourd)
1 tsp cumin seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp *hing*
(asafoetida)
1 tsp salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric
powder
4 tsp oil

Wash the *parwal* and scrape off the skin using the edge of your knife. Slit the *parwal* lengthwise into two halves and then chop each half horizontally into thin slices.

Heat the oil in a deep pan. Add the cumin seeds and *hing*. Once the seeds crackle, add the *parwal*. Stir on low heat for two minutes.

Add the salt and turmeric powder. Cover and cook for 5-7 minutes on low heat or till done.





Taroi Boot ka Dal

Lentils cooked with ridge gourd



Chana dal or Bengal gram is used extensively in Bengal. This *dal* preparation has the distinct style of Rajasthan blending with local Bengali flavours.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

250g *tori* (ridge gourd)
2 tbsp *chana dal*
(Bengal gram)
1 tsp cumin powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp turmeric powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red chilli powder
50g tamarind pulp
Salt to taste
1 tbsp ghee

Wash and peel the *tori*. Split lengthwise into two halves and then chop it into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thin slices.

Soak the *chana dal* for one hour. Pressure cook for 5-10 minutes. Drain excess water.

Heat the *ghee* in a pan. When hot, add the *hing* and cumin seeds. Let the seeds brown slightly.

Now add the *tori* and the cooked *chana dal* to pan. Add the salt, turmeric powder, cumin powder and red chilli powder. Cover the pan and cook for 5-7 minutes.

Mix the tamarind pulp in a little water and add to the pan. Cook for a further 1 minute.



Matar ke Chilke ka Tarkari

Green pea pod peel stir fry



The crunchy peels of green pea pods are carefully removed and then stir fried with capsicum. A delicious dish, especially when fresh peas are in season and the pods are sweet and tender.

Serves 4

1 cup green pea pod peels
½ tsp cumin seeds
A pinch of *hing* (asafoetida)
¼ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp coriander powder
½ tps red chilli powder
2 tbsp water
Salt to taste
1 tbsp *ghee*

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

Heat the *ghee* in a pan. Add the cumin seeds and *hing*. Fry for a few seconds. Add the pea peels and stir for a few minutes.

Add the salt, turmeric powder, coriander powder, chilli powder and water and stir for a few more seconds. Cover and cook for 5-7 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Dal Piththi

Wheat flour dumplings in lentils



Nutritious, filling and perfect for a rainy day, this *Sheherwali* specialty is mouth-watering to say the least. Made with ingredients usually always available at home (lentils and wheat flour), this can be whipped up in a jiffy and is true comfort food.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 40 mins

1 cup *atta* (wheat flour)
1 cup mixed *dals* (*arhar*,
moong, *chhilka moong*,
chana and *urad*)
1 tbsp tamarind pulp
1 tsp salt
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp chilli powder
2 tsp cumin seed
½ tsp *hing* (*asafoetida*)
2 bay leaves
2 whole red chillies
1 tsp oil
1 tbsp *ghee* for tempering
Water

Make soft dough with the *atta*, ½ tsp salt, ¼ tsp turmeric powder, ¼ tsp *hing*, ½ tsp cumin seeds, oil and water.

Divide the dough in four equal parts. Roll out each part into very thin circles and cut them into 1½ inch squares. To make the *Piththies*, fold the squares in the shape of a flower by bringing the corners together. Keep aside.

Pressure cook the *dal* with the remaining salt and turmeric powder. Do not overcook.

Put the *Piththies* (prepared *atta* squares) in the cooked *dal* and boil for 15 minutes till the *Piththies* are cooked. Add the tamarind pulp and boil for 5 more minutes.

Heat the *ghee*, add the bay leaves, whole red chilli, *hing* and chilli powder and pour over the *dal*.



Bhuna Dal

Roasted red gram lentils



An aromatic roasted *dal* with a tangy undertone. *Bhuna Dal* can be eaten every day and is a *Sheherwali* favourite.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 40 mins

1 cup *arhar dal*
(red gram)
½ tsp turmeric powder
¼ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
¼ tsp cumin seeds
½ tsp red chilli powder
1 pc whole *amchoor*
(dried mango)
1 bay leaf
1 whole dried red chilli
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp *ghee*

Dry roast the *arhar dal* on low heat for 5 minutes. Wash the roasted *dal* and pressure cook with 5 cups of water, salt and turmeric powder until the *dal* becomes soft. Mash the cooked *dal* using a hand churner/whisk. Now add the whole *amchoor* and cook for 10 minutes over medium heat.

Heat the *ghee* in a pan. Add the *hing*, bay leaf, dried whole red chilli, cumin seeds and red chilli powder. Stir till the seeds brown. Pour over cooked *dal* and serve.





Madia

Red gram & rice starch lentils



Madia is a spicy and thin *dal* made with *arhar dal* or red gram. Rice-starch water is added and the dish is usually eaten with *khichdi* or in combination with rice and *dal*.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 40 mins

¼ cup <i>arhar dal</i> (red gram)	4 cloves	1 tsp red chilli powder
1 cup rice starch	4 small cardamoms	2 whole dried red chillies
1½ tsp cumin seeds	1 tsp coriander powder	2 bay leaves
¼ tsp <i>hing</i> (asafoetida)	3 pieces whole <i>amchoor</i> (dried mango)	2 tsp salt
½ inch piece cinnamon sticks	6 tsp <i>amchoor</i> powder	1 tbsp <i>ghee</i>
		½ tsp <i>garam masala</i> powder

Wash and soak the *arhar dal* in water for half an hour. Pressure cook with water, salt and turmeric powder until soft. Churn the cooked *dal* using a hand churner/whisk.

Add the rice-starch, water (1 cup), *garam masala* powder, *amchoor* powder and whole *amchoor* to the cooked lentils and boil on medium heat for 10-15 minutes.

Heat *ghee* in a separate pan. Add the cumin seeds, whole red chillies, bay leaves, *hing*, cloves and red chilli powder. Cook on low heat for 30 seconds and pour over the rice starch.



Panchmel / Milao ka Dal

Combination of five types of lentils



Panchmel or the combination of 5 varieties of lentils makes up this spicy, slow-cooked preparation. It is usually eaten with *Phenabid ki Roti*.

Serves 10

Preparation & cooking time: 40 mins

50g *urad dal* (split black gram)
100g *moong dal* (green gram)
100g *chana dal* (Bengal gram)
100g *arhar dal* (red gram)
50g *lobia* (black-eyed beans)
½ tsp cumin seeds
¼ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp red chilli powder

100g whole *amchoor* (dried mango)
4 small pieces of dried red chillies
3-4 cloves
2 small cardamoms
½ inch cinnamon stick
3 tsp tamarind paste
1 tsp salt
3 tbsp *ghee*

Soak all the lentils in water for an hour. Wash and boil in one litre of water with salt and turmeric powder until cooked. Add whole *amchoor* and cook for another 10 min.

Heat the *ghee* in a pan. Add cumin seeds, *hing*, cloves, cardamoms, dried red chillies, red chilli powder and cinnamon stick. Stir until they turn brown. Add the boiled lentils, tamarind paste and cook for 20 minutes on low heat.

Chhaata ka Dahi Khichdi

Rice in yoghurt



A delicious way of beating the summer heat, yoghurt rice is cooling on the system. Tempered with a spice mix, the *Sheherwali* version also adds almond paste for a touch of decadence.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 30-40 mins

1 cup rice
1 cup yoghurt
1 tbsp *besan* (gram flour)
½ cup *chhaata* (lotus seeds)
1½ cup water
¼ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
8 almonds (soak & grind)
2 tbsp *ghee*
Salt to taste

Grind together for the *masala* powder:

1 tsp cumin seeds
½ inch piece cinnamon sticks
3 cloves
2 small cardamoms, powdered
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp red chilli powder

Cook the rice. Beat the yoghurt to remove any lumps. Mix the *besan* and water with the beaten yoghurt to get a thin liquid consistency. Add almond paste. Heat this mixture while stirring continuously for 10 mins.

Once the mixture starts boiling, add the ground *masalas*, salt and turmeric powder. Now add the boiled *chhaata* and cooked rice. Simmer over low heat.

Heat the *ghee* in a pan. Add the cumin seeds, *hing*, cloves, small cardamoms and red chilli powder. Pour over yoghurt rice and mix well. Using the same recipe the following can be substituted for *Chhaata*: Peas / water chestnuts / corn.





Breads



Besni Puri

Puffy fried bread with gram flour



These are wholesome puffed puris made with *besan*. The addition of red chilli powder lends a spicy flavour and turns them deep red in colour when fried. Best eaten with various pickles and *pachaks*.

Makes 10 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 10 mins

200g *besan*
(gram flour)
½ tsp salt
1 tsp red chilli
powder
½ tsp *hing*
(asafoetida)
4 tsp oil
Water for the dough

Knead a hard dough by mixing the *besan*, salt, oil, *hing*, chilli powder and very little water. Keep aside for some time.

Divide dough into 10 equal parts and make balls. Roll each ball into 2 inch diameter circles. Deep fry in hot oil and serve hot.

Bedmi

Shallow fried bread stuffed with green gram



Wheat flour square packages are stuffed with a mixture of green gram and spices; then roasted until golden. Delicious!

Makes 4-5 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins + soaking time

1 cup yellow *moong dal*
1 cup *atta* (wheat flour)
Salt to taste
¼ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
½ tsp red chilli powder
¼ tsp coriander seeds
1 tbsp *ghee*
Water for the dough

Wash and soak the *moong dal* for 3-4 hours. Grind the soaked *moong dal*. Add salt, *hing*, red chilli powder, coriander seeds and mix well.

Using water as required, knead the *atta* and *ghee* into a soft dough. Divide the dough into small balls and roll out into a thin disc. Spread the *moong dal* mixture evenly over the disc leaving 1½ inches space from all the sides. Fold the disc into a square.

Roast the square *Bedmi* on a pan on both sides. Prick 2-3 holes on its surface using a fork. Cook with *ghee* on both sides till golden. Serve hot with mango pickle, lemon pickle and coriander *chutney*.





Kalai ka Kachori

Deep fried bread with a spicy black gram mix



These *kachoris* are deep fried and stuffed with split black gram or *urad dal*. Generally served at marriages or other festive occasions, it goes best with *Aloo Kumre ka Tarkari* and *Imli ka Chutney*.

Makes 20 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

½ cup *urad dal*
(split black gram)
½ cup *sooji* (semolina)
½ cup *atta* (wheat flour)
½ cup *maida* (flour)
¼ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
1 tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp *saunf* (fennel seeds)
1 tsp *shahi jeera* (black cumin seeds)
1 tsp salt
2 tbsp *ghee*
Ghee/oil for deep frying

Soak the *urad dal* for 3-4 hours.

Wash and clean the *urad dal* with a dry cloth. Grind into a coarse powder.

Mix the *urad dal* powder, *atta*, *sooji* and *maida* together. Add the *ghee*, *hing*, salt, red chilli powder, *saunf* and *shahi jeera*. Knead into dough. Keep aside to set.

Divide the dough in 20 equal balls. Roll each ball into 3 inch diameter circles. Deep fry in *ghee/oil* till it turns golden.

Suji ka Roti

Semolina flatbread



This light *roti* is made with *sooji* (semolina) with a hint of *ajwain* (carom seeds).

Makes 10 rotis

Preparation & cooking time: 10 mins

1 cup *sooji* (semolina)
½ tsp salt
1 tsp *ghee*

Mix the *sooji*, salt, *ghee* and make a soft dough using water as required. Cover the dough with a wet cloth for 30 minutes.

Divide the dough into 10 balls. Roll each ball into ½ inch thick circles of 3 inches diameter. Roast lightly on a hot *tawa* or flat pan. Prick all over the surface and roast it directly over the flame on the stove. Brush with *ghee* and serve hot.

Khichdi ka Roti

Flatbread made with rice, lentil & flour



A rare combination of rice, moong dal and atta make this a wholesome and nutritious meal. Best eaten with *Kadhi*, *Achaar* or *Launji*.

Makes 20 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins

¼ cup moong dal (green gram)
¼ cup rice
1 cup atta (wheat flour)
1 tbsp ghee
1 tsp salt
¼ tsp hing (asafoetida)
1 tsp red chilli powder
¼ tsp turmeric powder
¼ tsp coriander powder
1 tsp saunf (fennel seeds)
1 tsp kala jeera
(black cumin seeds / Nigela)

Pressure cook the rice, moong dal, salt and turmeric powder with ½ cup of water to get a soft but non-sticky mix.

Add the atta, salt, chilli powder, coriander powder and ghee and knead into dough. Roll the dough into 3 inches diameter and ¼ inch thick circles.

Roast on a hot flat pan till it is half done. Cool down the half-done rotis and pinch all over. Roast again, directly over the flame this time.

Brush with ghee and serve hot.

Tikda

The favourite roti of the sheharwalis



The favourite flatbread of all Sheherwalis – crispy and light. It goes well with almost any dal/tarkari preparation.

Makes 5

Preparation & cooking time: 10 mins

100g atta
(wheat flour)
2 tsp ghee
½ tsp salt

Mix and knead the atta, ghee, salt and water to make pliable dough. Divide the dough into 5 equal parts. Roll each part into a thin circle 3 inches in diameter. Apply ghee and sprinkle some atta on top.

Now fold the circle, into a shape similar to a Chinese fan, and roll it lengthwise into a ball. Roll this ball into a thin circle of 6 inches diameter. Using ghee or oil, cook lightly on tawa or flat pan on both sides until brown and crispy.

Matar ka Phutta Puri

Shallow fried bread stuffed with green peas



This recipe makes *tikdas* or flatbreads that are stuffed with a richly spiced filling of green peas. Relish with *Kutti Mirchai ka Achaar* or *Kathbel ka Pachak*.

Makes 4-5 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

For the stuffing:

- 1 cup green peas
- 1 tbsp oil
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder
- ¼ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
- 1 tsp roasted cumin powder
- ¼ tsp cinnamon powder
- 1 tsp *amchoor* powder (dried mango)
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp black salt
- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- ¼ tsp cumin seeds
- Salt to taste

For the dough:

- 2 cups *atta* (wheat flour)
- 1 tbsp *ghee*
- Salt to taste

Heat oil in a pressure cooker or pan. Add the cumin seeds and *hing*. Add the peas and a little water. Pressure cook/boil till done. Mash the boiled peas till smooth. Add the roasted cumin seed powder, cinnamon powder, *amchoor*, sugar, black salt and red chilli powder.

Knead the *atta*, *ghee* and salt into a soft dough. Divide into 4-5 balls. Roll each ball into a thin circle. Place a little stuffing in the centre of the circle. Fold from all four sides, and then roll it out again. Roast on a *tawa* or flat pan on both sides using *ghee*/oil.





Moin / Suji ki Puri

Crispy puffed semolina bread



A crispy semolina *puri*. It can be served as part of the main meal or as an evening snack. These puris stay crisp long after being fried. This recipe was probably devised out of necessity as in most *Sheherwali* kitchens nothing is prepared after sunset.

Makes 20 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

200g sooji (semolina)

1 tsp salt

30 ml/2tbsp ghee

Oil for deep frying

Make the dough using sooji, ghee, salt and water. Keep aside for some time.

Divide the dough into 20 equal balls. Roll each ball into circles of 3½ inches diameter.

Deep fry the *puri* in hot oil till it puffs up and turns golden brown & crisp.

Panchmel/Milao ka Missa

3 flour flatbread



This flatbread is made with a combination (*milao*) of three (sometimes five) types of flour. The *rotis* are then roasted with mustard oil, which Bengalis use extensively in their cooking. This makes for an excellent companion to various *dahi tarkaris* or yoghurt-based preparations.

Makes 12 pcs

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

1 cup *atta* (wheat flour)

½ cup *besan* (gram flour)

½ cup green gram (whole) flour

2 tbsp mustard oil

1 tsp salt

1 tsp red chilli powder

½ tsp of *hing* powder

4 tbsp *Methi patta* (fenugreek leaves)/*dhania patta* (coriander leaves) - Optional

Grind the whole green gram to a coarse powder. Make dough by mixing all the ingredients and a little water.

Roll circles out of the dough - ½ inch thick and 3 inches in diameter. Cook on both sides on a *tawa* or flat pan using a little mustard oil.



Phenabid ka Roti

Roasted flatbread



These *rotis* require a little technique, but the effort is worth the final look - an ordinary *roti* is transformed into something special! Goes well with *Panchmel ka Dal* and *Dhaniya ka Chutney*.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 15 mins

250g *atta*
(wheat flour)
5 tsp *ghee*
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
Water to make
dough

Make the dough by mixing the *atta*, *ghee*, salt and water. Knead it well. Divide the dough into 6 equal portions. Roll each portion into a thin circle of 3 inches diameter. Apply *ghee* and sprinkle a little *atta* on top. Fold this circle (like a Chinese fan) and roll it lengthwise into a ball. Roll this ball into another circle of 4 inches diameter and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thickness.

Roast the *roti* or flatbread lightly on a *tawa* or flat pan on both sides. Cool and pinch all over. Roast again on both sides directly over the flame on the stove till reddish brown. Brush with *ghee* and serve.



Accompaniments

A decorative flourish consisting of a central scroll-like element with symmetrical, flowing lines extending outwards.



Kutti Mirchai ka Achaar

Spicy red chilli pickle



An all-time favourite Murshidabad pickle. A staple in most *Sheherwali* homes worldwide. This pickle is also an oil-less pickle.

Makes 500g

Preparation & cooking time: 40 mins

200g fresh red chillies

½ tsp *saunf* (fennel seeds)

½ tsp *kalonji* (black onion seeds)

2 tsp *rai* (brown mustard seeds)

50g *amaada* (mango-ginger)

4-5 *chhuara*, chopped (dried dates)

2 tbsp raisins, diced in ¼ inch cubes

1 tsp black salt

2 tsp salt

2 tsp mustard seed powder

1 tsp cumin powder

½ tsp cinnamon powder

Juice of 12-15 lemons

Wash the red chillies and dry with a clean cloth. Cut into ¼ inch thick pieces with the help of kitchen scissors.

Remove all the seeds using a sieve. Boil the red chillies with lemon juice, *chhuara*, raisins and *amaada* for 5-7 minutes. Now add all the spices. Cool and store in a clean glass container.



Kathbel ka Pachak

Stone apple powder



A unique blend made with powdered stone apple. It is almost always eaten with *Mathri* and *Moin ka Puri*, in addition to *Kutti Mirchai ka Achaar*.

Makes 100g

*Preparation time: 20 mins
(plus drying time)*

4 *bel/kathbel* (stone apples)

1 tsp black salt

1 tsp salt

½ tsp cumin powder ½ tsp cinnamon powder

½ tsp black pepper powder

½ tsp roasted *hing* powder (*asafoetida*)

Wash and crack open the nutshell of the *kathbel*. Scoop out the pulp. Sun dry the pulp on a steel plate for 6-7 days till it becomes absolutely dry.

Grind the dried pulp into a fine powder. Sieve and grind it again ensuring you get a very fine powder. Mix all the masalas with the *kathbel* powder.

Kachcha Aam Chana ka Kutti

Raw mango & black chickpea pickle



This freshly marinated pickle is made with raw mangoes. *Sheherwalis* love their mangoes and delight in relishing even the raw ones as they first appear on the trees.

Serves 4

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

250g raw mango
4 tbsp *lal chana*
(red chickpeas)
½ tsp turmeric powder
1tsp dried red chilli
powder
½ tsp *shahi jeera*
(black cumin seeds)
¼ tsp *rai* (coarse brown
mustard seeds)
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp mustard oil

Soak the *lal chana* in water for 3-4 hours. Wash thoroughly and wipe dry.

Wash and peel the raw mango. Chop finely into ¼ inch small cubes. Mix with salt and turmeric powder and keep aside for an hour till the mango softens.

Add the *lal chana*, dried red chilli, mustard oil, *rai* and *shahi jeera* to the raw mango. Mix thoroughly.



Kachche Aam Ka Launji

Tangy, sweet and sour raw mango chutney



This sweet and sour chutney can be eaten with almost any dish, but goes well with *Moin ka Puri* or *Missi Puri*.

Serves 4

250g raw mango
100g sugar
1 tsp salt
2 green chillies
1¼ tsp of *paanch phoran*
1 tbsp mustard oil
¼ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
2 bay leaves

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

Wash and peel the raw mango. Cut into 1 inch cubes. Wash and slice the green chillies into thin slices.

Heat the oil in a pan. Add *paanch phoran*, bay leaves and *hing*. Cook on medium heat for a minute. Add the chopped raw mango, salt and turmeric powder. Add sugar once the raw mango is cooked. Cook on medium heat until the sugar melts.

Mirchai Ka Launji



Another sweet and sour *launji* that can be eaten with almost any dish.

Serves 4

1 cup chopped green chillies / green capsicum
4 tsp mustard oil
½ tsp *hing*
1 tsp *paanch phoran*
1 tsp salt
½ tsp turmeric powder
2 tsp mustard seed powder
4 tsp *amchoor* powder
4 tsp sugar

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

Heat mustard oil and add *panch phoran* and *hing*. Add green chillies. Add salt and turmeric and cover the pan. When the chillies become tender, add mustard powder, *amchoor* powder and sugar. Keep stirring till the sugar melts.

Kathal ke Beej ka Chutney

Jack fruit seed relish



A rare delicacy - seasonal chutney made with jackfruit seeds.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

200 g *kathail ka beej*
(jackfruit seeds)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp red chilli powder
2 tsp mustard oil

Peel off the skin of the *kathail beej* and pressure cook for 15 minutes. Throw away the water and grind it to a paste. Add the salt, chilli powder and mustard oil and mix thoroughly.

Parwal ka Chutney

Pointed gourd relish



The *parwal* can be roasted over a slow fire to get a distinctive smoky taste.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

250g *parwal*
(pointed gourd)
1 tsp salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp *hing* (asafoetida)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds
1 green chilli
1 tbsp mustard oil

Wash and peel the *parwal*. Split lengthwise into four portions. Chop each portion into four pieces.

Heat the mustard oil in a *kadhai* or wok. Add the *hing* and cumin seeds. Stir till brown. Add the *parwal*. Cover the *kadhai* and cook on medium heat for 5-10 minutes or till the *parwal* is cooked. Keep aside to cool.

Grind the *parwal* mixture into a fine paste. Add finely chopped green chillies and a little mustard oil. The *chutney* is ready to be served.

Kachche Kela ka Radi

Raw banana quick pickle



Sheherwalis use a lot of raw banana as they avoid eating potatoes. It is also eaten during the Jain festival of Paryushan. This spicy pickle can be consumed with a variety of flatbreads. The pickle does last a while and can be, therefore, carried while travelling.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 12 hrs, 40 mins

500g raw banana
2 tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp turmeric powder
3 tsp mustard seed powder
100ml mustard oil

Wash and boil the raw banana for 15-20 minutes with a little water. Once boiled, peel and split it lengthwise into two halves. Slice each half into thin slices of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thickness.

Add the red chilli powder, turmeric powder, mustard seed powder, salt and mustard oil to the raw banana slices. Mix thoroughly. Cover and keep aside for 12 hours (to allow proper seasoning).



Imli Chutney

Sweet & sour tamarind relish



It is no exaggeration to say that this chutney is eaten with practically all kinds of flatbreads and accompanies almost all dishes. It is a perennial favourite.

Makes 200g

100g tamarind pulp
1 tsp salt
1 tsp black salt
½ tsp roasted cumin powder
¼ tsp red chilli powder
2 tbsp sugar

Soak the tamarind pulp in water for 30 minutes. Mash the pulp with water to make an even mixture. Strain using a sieve to remove any lumps. Add sugar and all the spices and mix well till the sugar dissolves. Boil till the mixture becomes thick and sticky. (5-10mins)



Khire ka Radi

Cucumber salad



Almost all *Sheherwali* meals contain some sort of fresh salad. This cucumber salad is simple in taste and essential on any *Sheherwali* plate.

Serves 2

Preparation & cooking time: 10 mins

1 medium sized cucumber
1 tsp mustard seeds
½ lemon juice
Salt to taste
1 green chilli finely chopped (optional)

Wash and peel cucumber. Chop into small square pieces. Mix in the green chilli, ground mustard seed powder, a pinch of salt and lemon juice.



Shimla Mirch ka Achaar

Green capsicum pickle



A tangy capsicum pickle that can be made quickly as an add-on to any spread on the table.

Serves 6

Preparation & cooking time: 20 mins

2 medium sized green capsicums

A pinch of *hing* (asafoetida)

½ tsp cumin seeds

½ tsp turmeric powder

1 tsp coriander powder

¼ tsp red chilli powder

¼ tsp cinnamon powder

½ tsp *amchoor* powder (dried mango)

½ tsp sugar

1 tsp *panch phoran*

Salt to taste

1 tbsp oil

Wash and deseed the green capsicum. Chop into ½ inch square pieces.

Heat the oil in a pan. Fry the capsicum for 5 minutes. Add all the spices including *hing*, cumin seeds, turmeric powder, salt, coriander powder, red chilli powder, cinnamon powder and *amchoor* powder and cook for 5-10 minutes.

Once the capsicum is cooked, add sugar and mix it well.

Dhaniya ka Chutney

Green coriander relish



Dhaniya ka Chutney is part and parcel of everyday meals for the *Sheherwali*. It spices up the plate and is an accompaniment not many can do without.

Makes 1 cup

Preparation time: 10 mins

200g coriander leaves

1 tsp *jeera*

¼ tsp *hing*

½ tsp salt

2 green chillies

Juice of half a lemon

Grind everything to a very fine paste. Add lemon juice and serve.





Meetha Dhaniya

Sweet coriander seeds



A flavoured and tasty mouth-freshener which is believed to aid digestion. Usually presented at the end of a meal, meetha *dhaniya* is so tasty that some eat it throughout the day.

Preparation & cooking time: 30 mins (plus soaking time)

500g *dhania ka chawal*
(Split coriander seeds)

500g sugar

500g milk

1 tsp rose water

Wash the *dhania ka chawal* thoroughly in water. Soak it overnight in milk in the refrigerator.

Cook the *dhania* soaked in milk in a kadhai or wok. Keep stirring till it has dried completely. Make sure that there are no lumps remaining. Add the sugar and cook for another 10 minutes.

Cool, add rose water and mix thoroughly. Store in air-tight containers.

Aam ka Panna

Raw mango drink



A cool drink for hot summer days. Sweet and sour in taste, this is a refreshing drink to beat the heat. You can add a little spice by adding some cracked black pepper or roasted cumin seeds.

2 raw mangoes (*aam*)

10-12 tbsp sugar

Peel the mangoes. Pressure cook with 2 cups of water. When cooked, strain the mango pulp. Add sugar and 6 cups of water. Mix thoroughly. Serve chilled.

Salt, black/rock salt, roasted cumin seeds and cracked black pepper can be added to spice up the panna according to taste.



Daab ka Sharbat

Tender coconut water drink



Coconut water is naturally refreshing, nutritious, super hydrating and full of electrolytes.

1 tender coconut

30ml *kewra sharbat*

Pour out the coconut water and gently scoop out the soft flesh. Add *kewra sharbat* to the coconut water. Serve chilled on crushed ice.

Garnish with the tender coconut flesh.



the Tradition of Paan

Preparation of *paan* (betel leaf) in India is an art and the secret technique is passed down from generation to generation. There are many varieties of betel leaves and the *magahi* from the region of Magadh in Bihar is considered the best. Chewing the leaves with *choona* (slaked lime paste), *katha* (Acacia Catechu paste) and nuts has been in practice for thousands of years. It was a craze among the aristocrats.

Paan has a very important role to play in Bengali lifestyle. In Bengal, a bride enters her marriage ceremony covering her face with two palm leaves. She will remove them at the auspicious time of exchange of first glances with the groom. All through the ceremony she will keep two whole betel leave stucked in her cheeks. A tray full of well-decorated *paan* is an essential part of the wedding trousseau.

The typical Sherwali Paan preparation

Every Sheherwali household had a *khillee* of *paan* ready for impromptu guests. The ladies of the household took great pride in the art of folding the perfect *paan*.

A betel leaf is removed from the wrapping cloth and deveined. *Katha* and *choona* are generously applied and then tiny pieces of areca nuts, cardamom, saffron, roasted or unroasted coconut pieces or powder, cloves and tobacco are added, all dependent on personal preferences. The leaf is then folded into a triangle, called *gilouree* or *khillee* and is ready to be eaten. On special occasions, the *khillee* is wrapped in delicate silver leaf (*varq*). To serve, a silver pin is inserted to prevent it from unfolding, and placed inside a domed casket called *khaas-daan*. Some *paan* makers insert the pointed end of a clove to prevent the *khillee* from unfolding.





Glossary



Some of the essential ingredients referred to in this book.

Ajwain	Carom seeds
Amchur	Dried mango powder
Arhar Dal	Red gram
Atta	Whole wheat flour
Besan	Gram flour
Bhoona Chana	Dried roasted chickpeas
Boondi	Small, round, pearl-sized drops made from green lentil flour
Chana Dal	Bengal gram
Chhuara	Dry dates
Chilli Powder	Cayenne pepper
Dalchini	Cinnamon stick
Dhania Powder	Coriander seed powder
Elaichi	Cardamom
Gaund / Gond	Natural edible gum
Gulab jal	Rose water. A particular brand of rosewater prepared from Shahi Basra Aruk Gulab by S. Asgar Hossain & Abdul Hossain has one of the best aromas, quite distinct from other brands.
Haladi	Turmeric powder
Hara chhola	Chickpeas, green
Hari mirch	Chillies, fresh green
Hing	Asafoetida
Imli	Tamarind
Jaifal	Nutmeg
Jeera	Cumin seeds
Kachcha Aam	Raw mango
Kachcha kela	Raw banana
Kali Mirch	Black pepper
Kalonji	Black onion seeds

Kheera	Cucumber
Khoya	Thickened milk
Khus khus	Poppy seeds
Kumhra	White pumpkin
Laal mirch	Chillies, dried red
Lauki	Bottle Gourd
Laung/Lavang	Cloves
Lobia	Black eyed beans
Maida	Refined wheat flour
Masoor Dal	Red lentils
Methi	Fenugreek seeds
Moong dal	Green gram
Panch phoran	Mixture of fennel seeds, fenugreek seeds, black onion seeds, carom seeds and black cumin seeds
Paniphal	Water chestnut/arrowroot
Parwal	Pointed gourd
Patta gobhi	Cabbage
Pista	Pistachio nuts
Rai	Black mustard seeds
Sabut Moong Dal	Whole green gram dal
Sarson	Mustard seeds
Shahi jeera	Black cumin seeds
Shimla Mirch	Capsicum
Suji	Semolina
Til	Sesame seeds
Tori	Ridge Gourd
Urad Dal	Split black gram dal
Varq	Edible silver leaf

Recommended Menus



We, the Sheherwalis, take great pride in bringing you the right food combination for your taste buds

Menu 1

Peetha
Bhapiya
Nimbu Achaar
Green Chutney
Kutti Mirchai ka Achaar

Menu 3

Moin ka Puri
Milao ka Tarkari
Boondi Raita
Khatte ka Pakori
Launji

Menu 5

Matar /Paniphal / Gatta Dahi
Khichdi
Madia
Saloni Mewa ka Khichdi

Menu 7

Tikda
Mogar/Chana ka Dal
Mahin Taroi
Matar ka Dabdaba
Kela ka Radi

Menu 2

Milao ka Dal
Suji ka Roti/Phena Bid ka Roti
Aloo Ankra/Lal Chana Ankra
Kheera ka Khatta Meetha
Green Chutney

Menu 4

Chaawal
Kathi Daal
Madia
Kheera ka Khatta-Meetha
Aloo Ankra/Lal Chana
Ankra/Parwal Ankra
Papad

Menu 6

Puri
Missa
Parwal/Pattagobhi/Matar/Barbatti
Dahi Sabji
Aloo Masala
Lauki Matar ka Sabji/ Milao ka Tarkari
Khire ka Radi
Launji
Papad

Menu 8

Chaawal Bhuna dal
Aloo Ankra/Lal Chana Ankra/
Parwal Ankra
Matar ke Chhilke ka Tarkari
Launji

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