



A SLICE OF PARADISE COMES TO CALCUTTA ON A PLATTER



Apart from the beautiful landscape and picturesque meadows of Jammu and Kashmir, its cuisine, particularly the ceremonial feast called Wazwan, is something that is closely intertwined with Kashmiri culture. The traditional spread of Wazwan, which comes from the words 'waza' meaning 'cook' and 'wan' meaning 'shop', is prepared by *wazzas* and gives you a peek into the well-preserved recipes that speak volumes of Kashmiri tradition, heritage and cultural manifestations.

The rich and redolent dishes are a result of three influences — Muslims, Kashmiri Pandits and Mughals — and make use of ingredients like curd, cardamom, ghee, red chillies and saffron. With a focus on meat-based dishes, Wazwan has a total of 36 items. Bringing these traditional dishes all the way to Calcutta, is the husband-wife duo of Sudip and Aparna Sen with their Jammu born son Ayushman assisting them in managing the business. While Sudip — a senior advertising and marketing professional who has worked on several projects often related to F&B — is the brain behind the conceptualisation of this eatery-cum-takeaway outlet, Aparna is the one who brings in the personal touch.

"It's very nostalgic for me to be eating these dishes here. The Goshtaba takes me back to Kashmir," said 58-year-old Aparna. Daughter of a noted historian in Kashmir, Aparna spent most of her childhood and academic life in Jammu and has

What: Kashmir On A Platter
Where: B-402 Lake Gardens, off Lord's More
Timings: Noon to 10.30pm
Meal for two: Rs 600 (All)

Note: All F&B outlets are shut temporarily to safeguard against the Covid-19 pandemic.



The owners Aparna and Sudip Sen

a lot of friends still living there. It was this trust and level of comfort that helped the couple set up Kashmir On A Platter by bringing in chefs all the way from the paradise land.

"I conceptualised this nearly two years back. We then went to Srinagar, visited restaurants and had food tastings with some friends and socialites. And that's also how there was a comfort level. The chefs didn't hesitate in coming all the way and working for us. They are like family and the entire team calls Aparna mummy and me, papa. This is much more than just food, it's about the connect," said Sudip, 62, as we tucked in a variety of dishes and savoured the warm hospitality in their 12-seater eatery, which also undertakes home-delivery orders, outdoor catering, corporate events, parties and club contracts. Kashmir On A Platter is also available on Swiggy and Zomato.

A cup of hot Kahwa, beautifully laced with saffron and almonds, ensured we went back home with a smile on our faces. Here's what we tried and loved.

Do drop in for a taste of Kashmir once the coronavirus threat alleviates and it is safe to go out again!



1 Save the best for the last holds true for one of the most well-known Kashmiri dishes — Goshtaba or Gushtaba — the last dish to be served at Kashmiri weddings. The meat is first pounded for 20 minutes and then made into balls and cooked in a mild, yoghurt-based gravy. Goshtaba has a heady aroma and is priced at Rs 200.

2 Similar to Goshtaba in terms of the consistency of the gravy and the meatballs, Pista is made with ingredients like capsicum and red chilli powder, which lend the gravy its rich hue. This dish is spicier than Goshtaba and comes at a price of Rs 200.

3 Methi Maaz, as the name suggests, has fenugreek as the main ingredient along with mutton, which is boiled and chopped into fine pieces first. Priced at Rs 200, this main-course dish with a distinct aroma and nutty flavour, is one of our favourites from the menu.

4 If there's any dish that a foodie relates instantly to Kashmiri cuisine, it's Rogan Josh. The sublime flavour and texture of the gravy, without the unnecessary thickness and spice, is made using ghee, cardamom, Kashmiri wild onions or *pan* and red chilli powder. With tender meat and a lot of warmth, this dish is priced at Rs 180. The chicken variation is priced at Rs 150.

5 The Seekh Kebabs, priced at Rs 200, are moist and succulent — a result of the constant pounding of meat along with masalas like cumin and turmeric. These are then rolled and put on skewers, grilled and served with a delicious green chutney and onion salad that provides crunch. There's a chicken variation available too, priced at Rs 160.



Sameer Bhat (right) and Nasir Ahmed Sheikh from Beerwah and Kangri Pora in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir, are third-generation chefs with work experience of almost a decade, at a restaurant in the business district of Lal Chowk in Srinagar. They are a part of the team of seven chefs, including a 'vaste vaza' or master chef, who take turns in shuttling between Calcutta and Jammu and Kashmir.

Text: Nandini Ganguly
Pictures: Chanchal Ghosh