



THE DNA-OUT OF PRINT SHORT FICTION CONTEST

Out of Print Magazine will run a special monsoon feature of short fiction for **dna**.

To reference the choices made, and the transitions affected by this extraordinary Lok Sabha election, the theme of the fiction feature is CHOICE.

We are not seeking literal interpretations. Stories could comment on the alienation of contemporary life or, in contrast, emphasise the irrelevance of our societal structures by reflecting upon nature. Works could be personal, political or social. But ultimately they should bear some adherence to the theme – CHOICE. Or its lack!

Five stories will be chosen for the Short Story Special Issue of the mid-July **dna** Sunday magazine, JUST BEFORE MONDAY. They will also be featured on the Out of Print blog. Shortlisted works will be posted in the online edition of **dna**.

Submitted works must be in English, previously unpublished and close to 2000 words in length. Excerpts from novels will be entertained if they stand independently.

Submissions should be cut and pasted into the body of an email and sent to dnashortstories@gmail.com.

Subject line should read 'DNA-Out of Print Fiction Feature'. A short bio of 150-200 words, and a photograph should accompany the submission.

The last date for submissions is Friday, June 27 at midnight, IST.

Writers, whose stories have been chosen for publication, will be informed between July 10 and 12. If you have not heard from us by then, it means, unfortunately, that your piece has not been chosen.

We look forward to receiving your submissions.

WHAT'S FOR SUPPER?

The Western concept of supper clubs is finding its way into the hearts (and stomachs) of Indians, finds **Shraddha Uchil**

Dear Secret Supper Diner..." begins the invite, lending an air of mystery to the rendezvous somewhere in Delhi. Once you're at the venue, you're asked for the password — if you don't have one, you will be turned away without ceremony. You don't know who is hosting you, who your fellow diners are or even what you will be eating. But by the time the evening ends, you are almost certain to return home after a memorable meal, and maybe some new friends too.

That's the Delhi Secret Supper Club, the latest culinary craze in the national capital. While these 'underground restaurants' or 'supper clubs' are blossoming again in Britain and the US, Indian cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Pune are catching up too. There are differences, of course, in backdrops, terms of membership and choice of venues. Several traditional supper clubs in Britain, for instance, aim for an underground New York jazz club vibe where people can enjoy a dinner with live music without the formality of a ball.

The concept is simple: you go to a venue, eat from a menu that has been specially prepared to suit the theme and fraternise with other guests you may not know.

Since its formation in March 2013, the Delhi Secret Supper Club has held 11 successful secret suppers around the capital. In an anonymous email (in keeping with their idea of maintaining secrecy), the founders said, "We organise secret suppers every month to highlight a new and exciting cuisine. We carefully scout for restaurants that will showcase their food in a different light and cuisines that will excite palates of the Dilli-wahls."

It would cost you Rs2,300 to Rs3,000 for a multiple course tailor-made meal paired with the drink of your choice. The idea, they say, is to form a great story and experience for the diner. The venues so far have included a leading Japanese restaurant, a beautiful French one and a world-famous contemporary Indian eatery.

The Delhi Secret Supper Club is invite-only. All diners on the supper table are personally screened on the parameters of wit, intelligence, passion and experiences. "Based on various permu-



Perzen Patel (centre) whips up a traditional Parsi meal for her guests at her Dadar home

tations and combinations, we then reach out a select and eclectic group of diners. We carefully screen people from different walks of life, people we would love to engage with, people who will add value to the table. Past suppers have had fashions designers, hoteliers, chefs, entrepreneurs, PR heads, journalists, stand-up comedians and authors, among others," say the founders.

Different takes

While the Delhi Secret Supper Club chooses to shroud itself in mystery and flit from restaurant to restaurant, the scene in Mumbai is a little different. Salt Water Cafe and Silverspoon Gourmet, two main leaders in the area, prefer to host supper clubs in their own premises. Salt Water Cafe's supper club goes by the name Swine Dine, and it is exactly what the name suggests.

"This one is not for the faint-hearted. We butcher an entire pig and try to ensure that the meal is worth the sacrifice, serving up every part of the pig — right from its ears and tongue to its heart and belly," says Chef Gresham Fernandes, who initiated the Swine Dine series in March 2011. While many other cultures around the world have embraced the consumption of an animal's "nasty bits", Indians are repulsed by the thought of it. Which makes pork lovers grateful for the Swine Dine.

Held at Salt Water Cafe's Bandra outlet once a month, the event hosts 12 to 15 diners and offers them a classy pig feast, with items such as pate made of cheeks, tongue, feet and smoked bacon fat; a salad with watercress, pomegran-

ate, dill and refried belly; ribs soaked in bottle masala and tamarind; chorizo and chickpeas in a cider stew; and brioché garnished with maple bacon.

Food blogger Kalyan Karmakar, an enthusiastic participant when it comes to all things food, says, "The concept of supper clubs is very popular in the UK. I think it's a great idea because menus are created especially for the event and have a pretty well thought-out theme, and it also gives you a chance to meet like-minded people. It recreates the feeling of eating out or at a friend's place."

Further south, Silverspoon Gourmet offers an experiential dining experience at its Lower Parel space. "The concept breaks the barriers of a traditional restaurant and allows participants to experience delightful gourmet food in a completely different setting. The space is designed to be very casual, welcoming and inspiring. It's almost an extension of our living room," says Chef Joshua D'Souza, who runs the place along with his wife Neha Manekia. "Our food events are theme based, from exclusive cooking classes to grilling events, tea parties and dessert lounges. We aim to break the barrier of a traditional restaurant space."

Priced between Rs1,200 and Rs2,500, depending on the event, Silverspoon has an "everyone is invited" policy, allowing you to drop them a mail showing interest.

Come on over

While we've warmed up to the idea of sharing our table with strangers at eat-

eries, there are some who are tired of restaurant fare and would prefer savouring a home-cooked meal while breaking bread with someone new. Launched by Pune-based husband-wife duo Saket Khanna and Neeta Velecha, MealTango (mealtango.com) lets you sample delicacies right at your host's table.

The project spans 20 cities across the world, including Mumbai, London, Dubai and Osaka. All you have to do is sign up on the website and you could be eating spicy *kathal* (jackfruit) masala at a Kayastha home, *vonn* (Goan coconut kheer) in Pune or a traditional Hungarian meal in Budapest.

Perzen Patel of the popular food blog Bawi Bride who, through MealTango, hosted a Navroz meal at her Dadar home in March, believes it's a great way to learn about other cultures and their food. "I am always inviting people over. So it only made sense for me to get to know strangers by calling them over to my house for a meal. It's also great for travellers, who get the opportunity to try the local cuisine of a place at the host's house," she says.

Perzen tries to keep her menu traditional — dhansak, kebabs and lagan nu custard — quite a treat at a time Mumbai's beloved Irani restaurants are gradually downing their shutters.

MealTango follows close on the heels of initiatives such as Traveling Spoon (travelingspoon.com), Gypsy Kitchen (facebook.com/pages/GypsyKitchen) and Once Upon My Kitchen (onceuponmykitchen.com), all of which pay tribute to regional *ghar ka khana* and the humble home cook.

But be it an eatery or in someone's house, supper clubs are here to stay. Kalyan says this is because it allows a lot of people, who may have the talent but not the venue, to showcase their culinary skills. "People might not be able to sustain a restaurant long term, but on an odd night, they might want to put out a spread for others," he adds.

It's time to make the most of this trend. Go out and meet new people, all while getting the best of different cultures and their food. Fork and knives ready? Time to dig in!

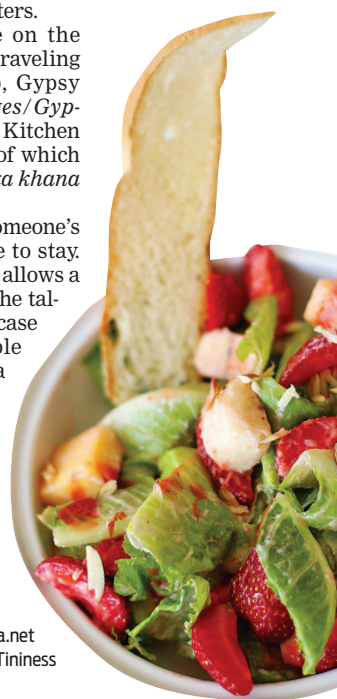
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India on the world map

Over the last few years, Indian supper clubs have become extremely popular in the West.

Specialising in regional Indian cuisine, the food is created by home cooks from the humble confines of their kitchens. Diners can experience a remote regional Indian cuisine that goes beyond

calorific curries and chicken tikka masala. Popular Indians organising suppers abroad are Geeta (based in Washington DC), Asma Khan and Padmini Gupta (based in London).



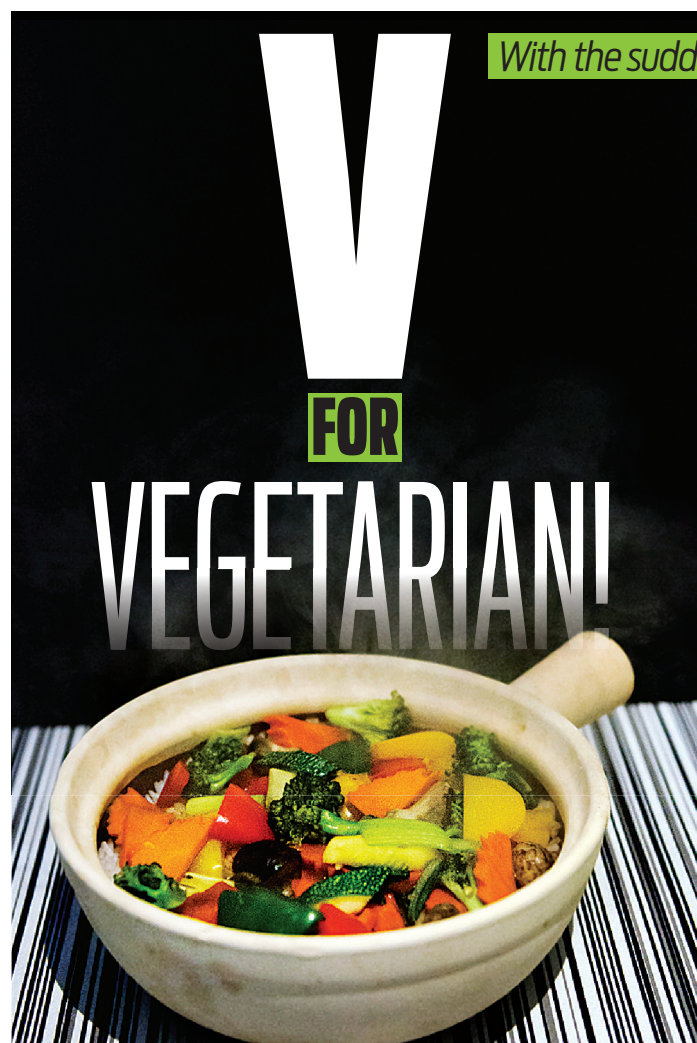
10 REASONS THE WALNUT IS THE NEW SUPERNUT



It may have been touted as the diva of new age eating but the walnut has historical virtues dating back to the 1st century BCE. Over the years, researchers have discovered many more health benefits of this unique nut. Here's why you should include it in your regular diet:

- 1 Culinary historian Andrew Smith notes that Greek physician Dioscorides, of the 1st century CE, records in his surviving work *Materia Medica* that walnuts when eaten with rue and figs counteracted poisons. Taken with honey, salt and onions, the concoction would heal those bitten "by dogs or men."
- 2 Beauty junkies and trichologists will be delighted at another of Dioscorides' discoveries: when walnut kernels were burned and ground with wine and oil and applied to an infant's head, the child's hair would grow abundantly and bald spots would disappear. Research, of course, has moved forward many centuries now.
- 3 Roman biographer Plutarch reported that walnuts were good for insomniacs. Modern day scientists have also determined that walnuts contain melatonin and researchers believe that it may play a role in reducing insomnia.
- 4 The kernel of a walnut evokes the picture of the brain. This is no idle imagery. English naturalist William Coles concluded that it had "the perfect Signature of the Head and is very profitable for the brain."
- 5 Modern-day research reveals that walnuts are rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) like oleic acid and an excellent source of all important omega-3 fatty acids like alpha-linolenic acid (ALA).
- 6 In 2003, the FDA recognised the benefits of nuts. It further endorsed the health benefits of walnuts by approving the following health claim in 2004: "Supportive but not conclusive research shows that eating 42.5 gm of walnuts per day...may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease."
- 7 Walnuts are proven to be beneficial to those suffering from diabetes. A walnut-enriched diet improves endothelium-dependent vasodilatation in type 2 diabetic individuals, suggesting a potential reduction in overall cardiac risk. Omega-3 fatty acids from walnuts can help lower triglycerides and apolipoproteins, and raise HDL.
- 8 Everyone is aware of the importance of antioxidants in our lives. Walnuts contain several antioxidants, including selenium, melatonin, gamma tocopherol (a form of vitamin E) and several polyphenols. In a 2006 study, 1,113 different foods were tested and walnuts ranked second to blackberries in terms of antioxidant content.
- 9 A study examining the levels of antioxidants in various foods reports that a handful of walnuts have significantly more phenolics (antioxidants) than a glass of apple juice (117 mg), a bar of milk chocolate (205 mg), or a glass of red wine (372 mg).
- 10 In addition to antioxidants and essential ALA/omega-3 fatty acids, walnuts contain 3-4% water, 15-20% protein and 10% of your daily value of magnesium and phosphorus. The mineral content includes iron and zinc, sodium, selenium, calcium, potassium and copper. Vitamins E and C are also found in walnuts.

(Source: The California Walnut Commission)



Pictures: Aung

With the sudden wave of all-veg, pan-Asian menus sweeping across Mumbai, it is celebration time for the vegetarian foodie, says **Raul Dias**

There's not an iota of doubt that Mumbai is a city where trends fluctuate as much as its Senex. And when it comes to food trends, you can bet your last cronut that they almost certainly will be subjected to a 'here today, gone tomorrow' kind of impermanence. Over the last few months, however, there has been one trend that seems to be gaining momentum and making a pivotal place for itself among the food cognoscenti.

Well, we are alluding to the concept of the all-vegetarian pan-Asian restaurant. Eateries basking in their new-found glory as repositories of exotic treats from hitherto 'undiscovered' lands—right from our neighbouring Myanmar to the Philippines!

"But how exotic can pan-Asian vegetarian fare get?" one might ask. Think again, say restaurateurs.

"We are used to believing that vegetarian food is very simple in nature. However, it is actually much more difficult to treat and experiment with. With the dearth of options for great vegetarian food places that are not solely Indian, a pure vegetarian pan-Asian restaurant can prove to be a great asset in any part of the country," believes Arjun Dhinsa, who, along with his mother Sanjog has started Girgaum Chowpatty's brand new Asian Street Kitchen as a tribute to the experimental vegetarian diner.

This meant making sure the Thai cooking staple *nam pla* (fish sauce)

was replaced with a special fermented soy sauce, and poultry in the Peking 'duck' with the all-vegetarian wheat gluten called seitan that resembles meat in both taste and texture. "We also knew that we would cater to some non-vegetarians who would try a vegetarian meal with us. Which is why we have dishes like the nasi goreng and the Vietnamese pho, which are—though pure vegetarian—complex dishes filled with flavour," says Dhinsa.

The latest entrant into the all-vegetarian scene, which opened its doors in early May, is the exotic Burma Burma in Kala Ghoda. Dishing out everything Burmese from the Mandalay laphe thoke, a delicate salad made with fresh tea leaves, to the crispy bottle gourd fries called budhi kyaw, it is drawing in veggie gourmands by the droves. "Finally, we have a world class, all-vegetarian Asian specialty restaurant and are no longer compelled to eat at an ubiquitous, pan-Indian cuisine veg-



etarian eateries only," says vegetarian-by-choice Preetesh Sethia, who has long lamented the step-motherly treatment of a handful 'token' vegetarian dishes on the menu meted out to him and his ilk.



Interestingly, the pan-Asian restaurant chain 5 Spice's new King's Circle and Marine Lines outlets have decided to go down the pure vegetarian route. This, they say, is due to the demographic they are catering to in predominantly veg-

from your usual garden variety 'Chindian' fare like gobi manchurian and paneer schezuan.

It's not just the vegetarians and Jains who are welcoming this burgeoning new trend.

Despite being die-hard vegans for over a decade, Ujjala Manchanda and her family love to experiment with their food. "World over, the vegan options stand so many that it's a paradise for us vegan travellers especially in the US and parts of Europe. It's great that such options within the pan-Asian segment are also available in Mumbai," says Manchanda.

So, is this sans meat, pan-Asian restaurant explosion a harbinger for change, where we see the other über popular world cuisine restaurants like Italian and Spanish turn a new leaf (pun unintended!) and adopt an all-vegetarian avatar? Let's wait and eat...

Something for everyone

While not a pure vegetarian restaurant per se, Mahalaxmi's Auriga thought it prudent to invest in a separate vegetarian kitchen. "I decided to give a prominent space for an open vegetarian counter at our restaurant, because we also want vegetarians to come to Auriga and enjoy their dining experience," says owner Kritika Nagpal.

