

# Going Bananas

By BINDU GOPAL RAO

The title of the show is a giveaway. 'Stories on a Banana Leaf' by Bengaluru's Museum of Art & Photography (MAP) is an ongoing art exhibition dressed in a culinary show's clothing. You would agree when you hear the titles of the artworks—'Caramel Custard' by Shruti Rao, 'Meen Moilee' by Arnika Ahldag and 'Katahal-do-Pyaaza' by Prachi Gupta.

Well, the team at MAP loves to

IMAGES COURTESY: MUSEUM OF ART & PHOTOGRAPHY (MAP), BENGALURU



Untitled KG Subramanyan C. 1980;  
(below) Chetra, Barahmasa-I Series,  
Madan Meena, 2020



think about food and how we collectively make choices about it. What gives people comfort, what is the history of a local dish or its ingredients? The idea for 'Stories on a Banana Leaf' was born in April when India was under a Covid

lockdown, yet again. Each of the members picked up a particular photograph that depicts food. There is a description of the painting followed by a note on the history of the food depicted in the photograph. The value additions are in the form of their memories and even a family recipe about the food in context.

"We wanted this exhibition to be about the MAP team and the food that brings them joy. A lot of our artworks with ingredients like chillies, bananas or plantains and coconut brought back memories for our team," says Arnika Ahldag, Associate Curator at MAP. The three-month-long exhibition combines sculptures, paintings, prints, textiles and photographs from MAP's collection together with recipes from the team members.

Art has also often used the very essence of food and its tools—fruit, utensils, farms and kitchens—to remind us of how this connection has continued over centuries, bringing us stories of healing, care, comfort and togetherness. This is where the intersection of food and art comes in. "For us, the artworks became the ingredients, resulting in a personal or familial recipe with connections to the Indian subcontinent," adds Ahldag.

KG Subramanyan's painting depicting a cat and fish inspired the MAP team to provide recipes and memories with fish. Similarly, pomegranate motifs on an 18th Century robe, presumably from the Coromandel coast, brought in anecdotes and recipes highlighting the fruit. The exhibition also has several unique artefacts that are directly related to food such as the coconut grater and vegetable cutter from the 18-19th century.

What's offbeat is the exhibit on how capsicum became popular during British rule. And another about how the pomegranate was introduced in India through trade with Iran. The exhibition includes a wide range of recipes, from salads to snacks, curries and desserts, some Indian and some western. Each artwork and recipe tells a different story, perhaps of laughter, melancholy, sarcasm or seriousness.

The three-month-long exhibition features 'alt text' for all the images and is accessible to audiences who are visually impaired.

Details: [Map-india.org](http://Map-india.org)