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DELICIOUS MEMORIES OF DIWALI

Culinary nostalgia from the kings of the kitchen

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Culinary nostalgia from the kings of the kitchen

By Bindu Gopal Rao



Diwali is here and it is time for lights, food, and fun. A festival that we all look forward to also is one that is all about family bonding and making memories. We speak to three Chefs from across India to share their food memories of Diwali.

Gautam Kumar, Executive Chef, Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort

Diwali is a festival of lights, praying for prosperity, but it also signifies the culinary delicacies in every household across our country. Thorough deep cleaning is done before the festival, and new household equipment and kitchen utensils are introduced to the kitchen. This is the festival when traditional commercial Halwai kitchen cum sweet shop owners across the country generate revenue, as with other festivals most people eat delicacies prepared at home. Being a foodie and a joyful child since childhood, Diwali has been my favourite festival. I have fond memories of Diwali when I was in Bhubaneswar, as I had Bengali and Odia families as neighbours. We planned to have a Diwali dinner together at my own flat. After offering puja to Laxmi and Ganesha, wearing new clothes, all the guests started coming to my place. The guests brought sweet packets as gifts. As per our traditions, we have Lava in earthen toys, Khilona, and Laddu as Prasad. According to our Angika (a region of Bihar where we belong) custom, I cooked Chana dal poori, Aloo Gobi Matar Rasedar, Oal (Jimikand) Masala, Rice, and Makhana Kheer, along with Tamatar ki Mithi Chutney. Sweets from sweet shops included Gur ka Khilona (Jaggery Toys), Chini ka Khilona (Sugar Toys), Boondi laddoo, Gulab Jamun, Lava (Puffed Rice), and assorted Indian sweet packets. Mr. Sen brought Luchi, Chola, and Dhokar Dalna (Besan Dumplings curry), along with Rasgulla. We were offered Chingdi Malai Curry (Prawn Curry) and Murgi curry (Home style Chicken Curry). We did





not eat non-vegetarian dishes as we don't eat non-vegetarian food on Diwali. However, I learned that Bengalis eat non-vegetarian food during this festival. My Odia neighbours brought Poori, Rice Kheer, Ghanto, and Kakra Pitha. Kheer and Kakra Pitha were to die for. So, it was the day we enjoyed the delicacies from undivided Bengal, and I still relish those memories.

***Bhanwar Singh Rathore, Executive Chef,
WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa***

Historically referred to as the 'state of the princes', Rajasthan has a rich heritage and a beautiful history. Because of the harsh weather and vegetation, the state has seen the development of cooking techniques and eating habits that are distinct from those of other states in India. Because of the state's unusual climate and vegetation, residents developed their own cuisine and eating customs. They seem to be fading away as globalisation brings new influences. Nonetheless, many families continue to prepare regional dishes. One such recipe that

is called Bina Pani Ki roti. Because it does not contain any water in its preparation, ghee is employed in the process of kneading the dough instead. The dry climate compelled people to eat greasy meals; thus, you may get ghee loaded recipes from Rajasthan. Sugar cookies (Bina pani ki roti) is a delicate dessert prepared with castor sugar, flour, and ghee. It is also called a cookie baked without water. The roti is shaped with light hands, adding different types of dry fruits to it, the same plate in which it was made, is cooked on a slow flame of coal, and is consumed as a dessert. It is generally prepared as a farewell gift given to daughters-in-law or daughters when they leave home. If you would like to make it, here is the recipe:

Ingredients

- Ground sugar candy 500 grams
- Ghee 250 grams
- Refined flour 350 grams
- Dry fruits 150 grams

Method

Mix flour and sugar in the bowl and knead

make a dough out of it and make roti in a thick bottom plate and stick dry fruits on it and cook it on low flame of coal.

**Mani Mohan Pathak, Executive Chef,
Pilibhit House, Haridwar, IHCL SeleQtions**

When I try to recall my fondest food memory of Diwali, it always takes me back to my childhood. A time when the festival of light was a magical experience filled with joy, excitement, and lots of good food. We used to look forward to celebrating the festival for weeks prior at least. As a child, buying and lighting fireworks and crackers excited us. However, the main highlight of the festival for me was making Gharudha (mud house) with my siblings. We used to decorate it with small pots filled with puffed rice, sugar candy toys, and some coins that made it look exciting. It was a creative and fun activity for us that added to the festive spirit. After the puja (prayer ceremony), our puja room would be filled with an array of delicious sweets and treats. The aroma of freshly prepared laddoos and kachoris would waft through the air, making us even more hungry with anticipation. Among all the delectable sweets, my absolute favourite was the 'sev ki laddu' and 'moong dal kachori'. The sweet and savoury were flavours combined to create a delightful treat that I just could not resist.

