THE WEEK

AUGUST 2020

SMART life

LIVE HEALTHY, STAY FIT

Art of online dating with Sarey Ruden

Storytelling through photography

Top picks for a staycation

Italy's ancient cave city of **Matera**

Chef Raji Gupta
Bring the world to your kitchen

K.L. Rahul

A cut above the rest

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LIVE HEALTHY, STAY FIT
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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Do you remember the hand-painted movie posters of the 70s? There have been several iconic ones including that of *Mother India* and *Sholay*, which are in the list of best posters of all time. While the stars on a poster get a lot of attention, the ones who work behind it rarely get any credit. It is the poster that gets the movie rolling, even in this age of trailer video releases on YouTube. They say, "a picture is worth a thousand words"; by that logic, a poster says a lot about the movie. Cinematographer and publicity still photographer Pratha Narang calls it the art of storytelling through photography. She is the mastermind behind posters of shows and films like *Half Full* (2020 Oscar-nominated short film starring Naseeruddin Shah and Vikrant Massey), *Little Things* (Netflix series) and *Upstarts* (Netflix film). Head to our Pause section to read about her journey from poster designing and photography to production and cinematography.

Although travel is restricted with the pandemic showing no signs of going away, you can always plan ahead for your next trip. Make sure to add Matera to your list of must-visit places. Our travel section this time has covered this magical land of caves situated in Italy.

In this edition, we have cricketer K.L. Rahul on the cover who talks about his journey, setbacks, injuries, tattoos, wardrobe and more. The 28-year-old batsman is one of the most promising of his generation and the cricketing world is in awe of his stroke play. Rahul says self-belief is one of his strongest traits and that it is important in every player's life, no matter what the game is. "I don't think anybody in sports can go on to achieve success or play at high levels without believing in oneself," he says. Another quality that he calls his strength is honesty to self. "I can always look in the mirror and be completely honest with myself. I am my biggest critic and I am my biggest supporter," says the all-or-nothing player who likes to expand his initials K.L. to 'king lion'. Rahul has had a good start this year and he hopes to finish it in some style.

In One Shot, chef Raji Gupta, who is the founder of Beyond Dining Co, talks about creating delectable Goan and European dishes in one's home kitchen. The former executive editor of *BBC Good Food India* also shares six of her favourite recipes, besides some cooking hacks.

Surely, we all could use some cheering up right now and what better way than indulging in a home-cooked gourmet-style meal.

Time to put your apron on and start cooking.

Stay safe, stay healthy and enjoy this issue of *Smart Life*.

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AUGUST 2020

PHOTO **TARA LOUISE McMANUS**

PHOTO **NIVEDITA JAYARAM PAWAR**

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Let it shine

Tips for jewellery maintenance during monsoons

BY C. VINOD HAYAGRIV

Did you know that finger size changes with the weather outside? One can understand this change by how loose or tight the finger ring gets. During monsoon, the fingers shrink a bit. This happens due to vasoconstriction— the reduced blood supply to the fingers. Now, you don't want to lose those precious rings, do you?

This is the best time to get your daily-used jewellery, even the ones kept in your closets, some cleaning and polishing. Fallen pearls, gems, loosened prongs are due to wear and tear as often times these are stored under other pieces in the drawer or the jewel box. It is best to take your jewellery to a professional jeweller who routinely offers this service or a jeweller who has the infrastructure to work on pieces as they can help you bring back the shine and restore old pieces. A regular upkeep once a year or once in two years is recommended.

When should you remove your jewellery?

Most jewellery may be worn 24x7. However, remember it is made from the softest of precious metals—gold, silver and platinum, in that order. These soft metals will scratch easily. Multiple minute scratches will dullen or take the sheen away. Follow these simple tips to prevent damage.

- Do not 'dump' one piece of jewellery on another.
- Keep each piece of jewellery with some space or thin soft fabric between each piece.
- Protect the gemstones. Every gemstone is soft. Some are softer than others.

Jewellery is normally made up of several links put together. Hence, with use, with stretching, some links may open up or get too tight. Strings of beads, pearls, corals will wear out with time. Periodic restringing is necessary. Clasps with use may become less strong or may become too strong. Some metals, especially if silver is present, may tarnish with time. Watch out for links getting loose, strings snapping, clasps opening up, stones falling, change in size and length and tarnishning of metals.

Hayagriv is managing director and director at C. Krishniah Chetty Group of Jewellers.

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Quick bites

Gut-brain axis

As per a paper published recently in the journal BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health, probiotics may help reduce the symptoms of depression. There are several factors—biological, genetic, environmental or psychological—that can cause depression. Often, a combination of these factors is likely to be at play. Researchers say that one factor that may contribute to depression and mental health issues is the gut-brain axis. It describes the relationship between a person's gut microbiome and their central nervous system (CNS)—the brain and the spinal cord. Signals can pass between a person's gut microbiome and their CNS, keeping both functioning properly. This results in the health of the gut having a direct impact on the CNS. When it comes to good gut health, probiotics are our go to. Time for some yoghurt.

Sleep more, live more

A new study at Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif, suggests that deep sleep is essential for good health and too little of it may shorten your life. According to the research team, for every five per cent reduction in REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, mortality rates increase 13-17 per cent among older and middle-aged adults. Previously, studies focused on total sleep time have shown that both not enough and too much total sleep can be associated with increased risk of dying early. This study opens up new avenues for research on treatments that affect not just total sleep but target sleep stage balance. There are several conditions, like obstructive sleep apnea and intake of certain medications, that can reduce REM. The recommendation for adults is seven hours of sleep which assures a good balance of sleep stages.

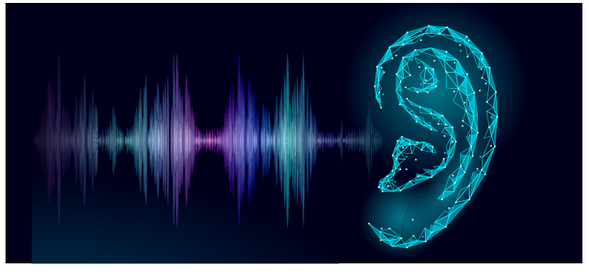
Do the math

Researchers at the University of Sussex have found that the kind of relationship children have with their parents can have a major impact on how well they do in learning mathematics at school. The researchers found two factors in a group of children and parents that clearly stood out—the working relationship between the child and the parents, and the parents' degree of education. The team tested the parent/child working relationship by having the child and parent work together on a computerised version of an etch-a-sketch. They were tasked with drawing a house together. As they did so, the child and parent were graded on how well they worked together and the emotional state of the pair as they did so. When a parent and child were able to work harmoniously together, the researchers found, the child was more likely to do better in their school math classes. The researchers also noted that children with one or more parents who graduated from college also tended to do better in their math classes.

super FOOD of the month

Quail eggs

- Quail eggs are rich in ovomucoid proteins and lysozyme. It can control infections and inflammations which lead to psoriasis, eczema, allergies and asthma.
- Compared to the chicken egg, quail egg is high in protein and has much lower levels of cholesterol.
- Naturally found iron, Vitamin A and B12 in the eggs are very good for recovery after a surgery as it helps in the regeneration of cells. The eggs also help cure anaemia.
- They are a rich source of anti-oxidants and essential fatty acids.
- The eggs are an alkaline forming product and are a natural remedy for stomach ulcers and gastritis. They are also a good source of many minerals such as potassium, magnesium and vitamin B6.



Hear, hear

Hearing is thought to be the last sense to go in the dying process. Researchers at the University of British Columbia have found that some people may still be able to hear while in an unresponsive state at the end of their life. Using electroencephalography (EEG), which measures electrical activity in the brain, the researchers analysed data collected from healthy control participants, from hospice patients when they were conscious, and from the same patients when they became unresponsive. Their data showed that a dying brain can respond to sound, even in an unconscious state, up to the last hours of life. This new insight into the dying brain's response to sound can help near and dear ones to bring comfort to a person in their final minutes.

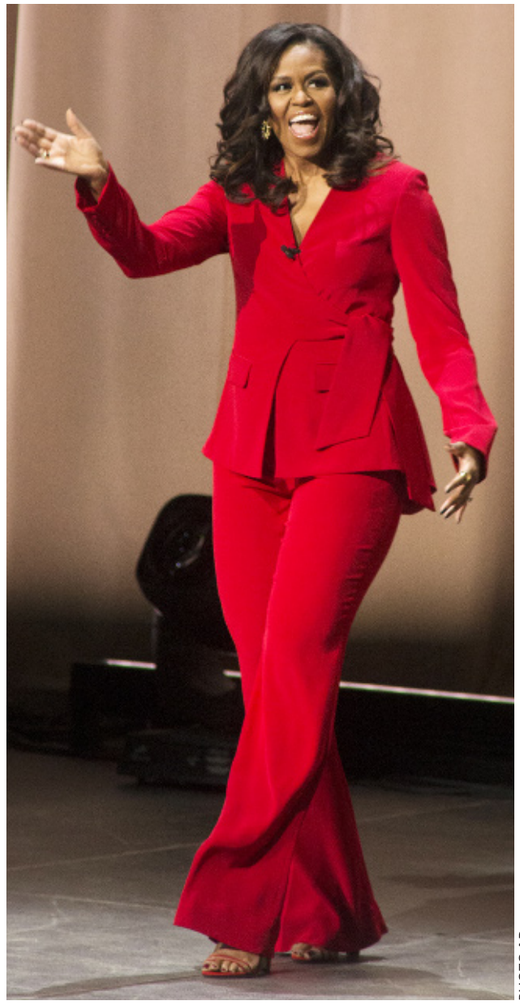
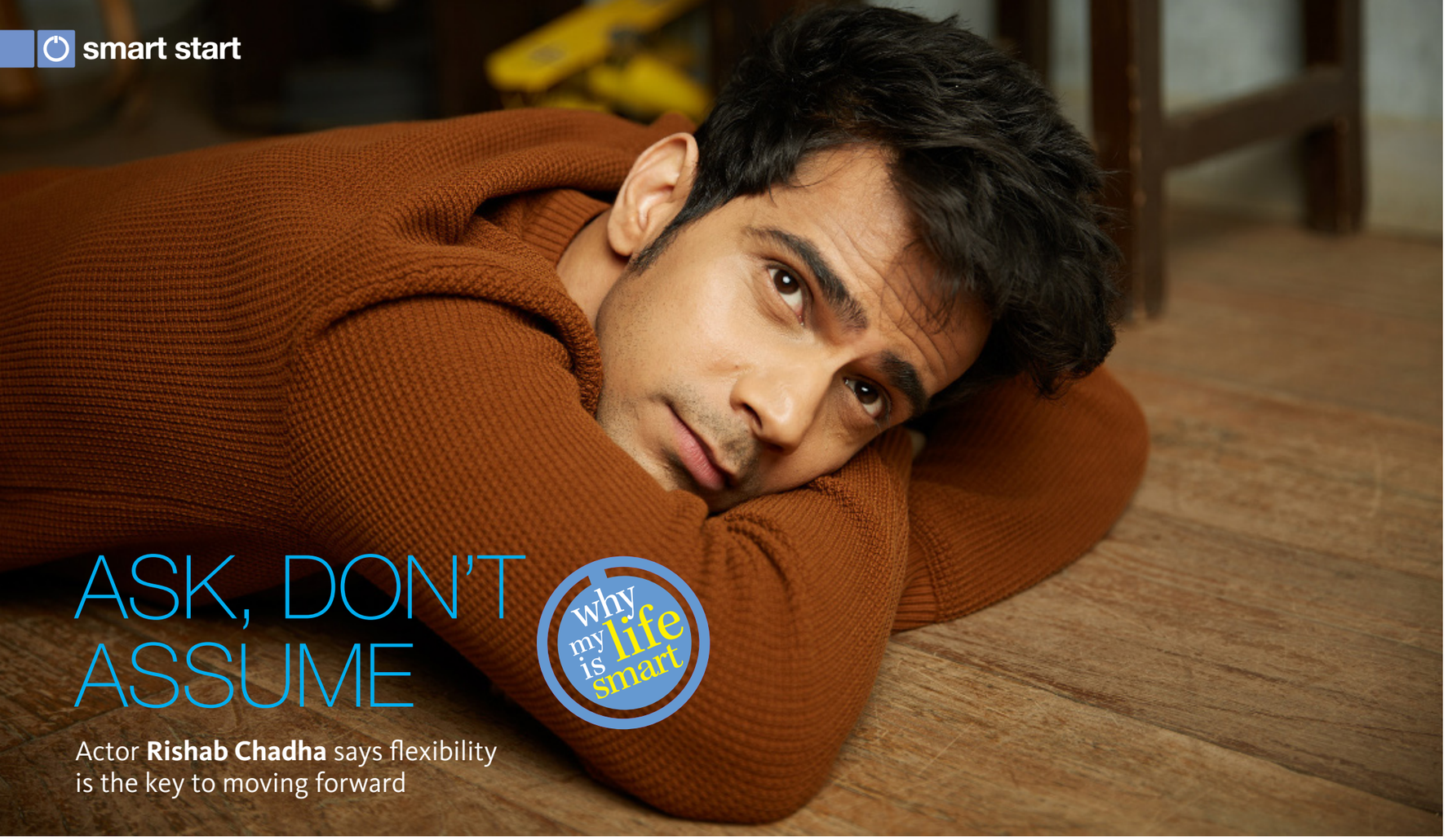


PHOTO AP

> One of the lessons that I grew up with was to always stay true to yourself and never let what somebody else says distract you from your goals.
>
> —MICHELLE OBAMA



ASK, DON'T ASSUME

why my life is smart

Actor **Rishab Chadha** says flexibility is the key to moving forward

Your journey

I started acting at the age of 13. It was my mother's desire to see me on screen. Honestly, I never considered acting before she expressed her desire. As a matter of fact, I had no clue as to how to go about it. I started asking around and then went about making a portfolio. I emailed my profile to many casting directors and coordinators. And one fine day, I attended an audition for a show on Zee TV called *Aladdin*. It was my first audition ever and luck was on my side. After that I started taking up new projects and things just worked out. I made my Bollywood debut in 2014 with *Khoobsurat* and then in *Drishyam*. I have also appeared in more than 150 commercials. From theatre to films, it has been 13 years and counting hopefully.

Current projects

With the current scenario, everything is a little uncertain. Though there are a few things I am considering and talking about, it is all in the air for now. There is something that I shot in this lockdown and it will soon be announced.

Memorable times

I have met wonderful people in my journey, whether it is a movie, TV or advertisements set. Certain memories and people stay with you. I had a great time working with Javed Jaffrey on *Lupt* along with my director Prabhuraj. It also felt great to be a part of a film like *Drishyam*, which was critically acclaimed and is enjoyed even today. I loved working on a show called *Shaadi Boys* directed by Shashant Shah. Though there are many such memories, these are some of the highlights.

Greatest challenge

I think the greatest challenge would be not knowing or having a guide as to how to approach acting or the business of entertainment. I started so young and even now I have many doubts as to how to go about certain things. But luckily, now I have people who guide me.

Strengths

I put a lot of effort into my craft and I also tend to observe a lot. I don't shy away from asking questions to my directors if I have doubts and I don't assume what they want.

Weakness

It could be a strength to some, but I think acting too seriously is not really necessary. There should be a balance, something I am still working on.

Lessons learnt

I think the best lesson learnt would be to not get attached to one way of executing as an artist or actor, rather being flexible is key when it comes to moving forward.

Binge watch

I enjoy watching *MasterChef* and *Shark tank*. I can watch these shows for hours.

Fitness

Currently, I have been going easy on myself. I have not worked out much, but yes, I am conscious of what I eat. I recently got my gym equipment and I am planning on at least 30 minutes of weight training and then some cardio.

Diet mantra

Eat how much you need to, burn all that you can.

Ways to unwind

Spending time by myself with some coffee and music. I also feel relaxed when I read a nice book.

Dream for the future

I used to be highly ambitious as a child, but I think you really don't need big or magnificent things to be happy. I want to be better a better actor though, and be happy and kind amid all difficulties.

Making a mark

I would love to be a part of an international project, and make my country and myself proud. It is definitely something I would indulge in, especially in these current times when art is not bound in anyway.

Go-to dish

Honestly, I love to eat something that I have made, however good or bad it is. I am a decent cook though. I have been experimenting with South Indian food like coconut-based curries with vegetables and some dosas. It is absolutely delicious.

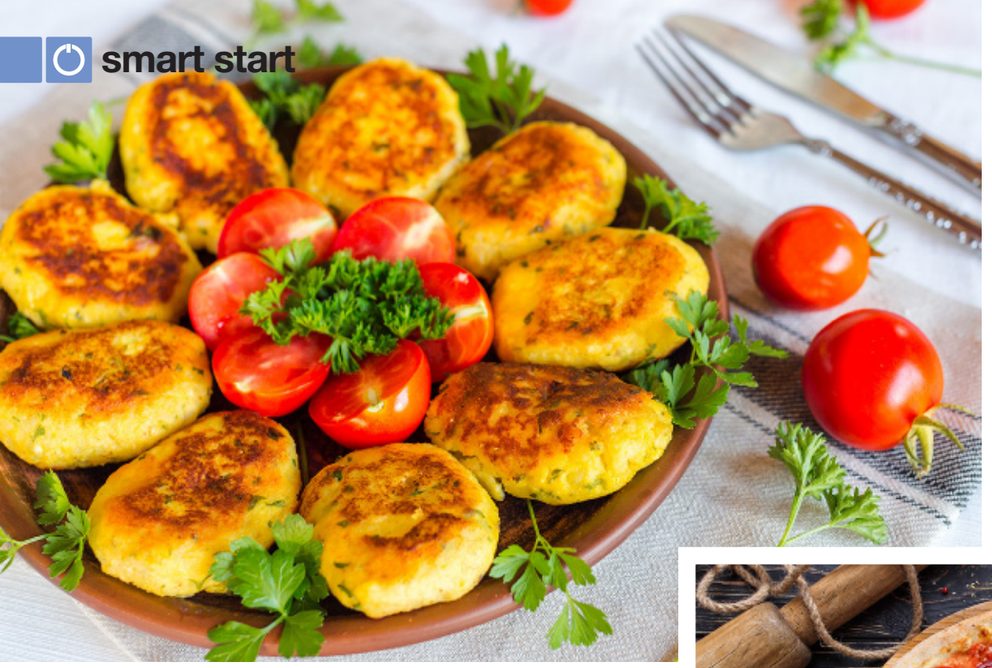
Three wishes

-Vaccine for Covid-19, to play an instrument and the third wish would be, more wishes.

Why do you think your life is smart?

I think my life is smart because of the people I surround myself with. I make sure that I spend quality time with my close-knit friends. These are the people who keep me grounded and give me honest feedback.

As told to Oshin Grace Daniell



Guilt-free indulgence

Hacks for preparing nutritious comfort food

BY NAINI SETALVAD

Most people call nutrition a science but it is beyond that; it is an art. Not only is it a synchronised balance of nutrients but also a colourful weave of flavours. Often healthy food is called boring and tasteless but that need not be the case. Here are some fun nutritious options for rainy evenings.

Potato cutlets

Most people tend to demonise potato but it is one of the most nutritious food if cooked right. It is rich in potassium, vitamin C and B and fibre. Add sautéed carrots, French beans, onions and tomatoes, spice and seasoning to boiled and mashed potato. Shape it with your hands and bake it crisp. Along with a thick vegetable soup and salad, it makes for a delectable meal.

Pizza

No, this is not a mistake. A thin crust whole wheat pizza base is far less harmful to the body than its white flour-based counterpart. Toppings like onions, peppers, mushrooms, olives and sundried tomatoes and any other vegetable you enjoy, not only elevates the taste but also adds nutrients and fibre to your meal. Accompany it with a soup or a salad and add little cheese or paneer to achieve a wholesome balanced meal.

Pickles

An ancient preserving method which is both convenient and delicious, pickling is one of the best ways to store vegetables. It comes in various colours, flavours and choice of produce. You can pickle raw mangoes, carrots, cauliflower, onions, cucumbers, cabbage and even chillies. Add an extra zing to your pickle by including infusible spices and herbs like red chilli, mustard, star-anise, cinnamon, dill and peppercorns. Pickles are fabulous accompaniments to food with their added benefits of vitamins, minerals and, most of all, the microbes in it work miracles on your gut health.

Seeds

Do not judge a seed by its size. From pumpkin seeds that are packed with zinc to melon seeds that are protein- and fibre-rich, the benefits of these seeds are countless. Its crunchy, robust flavouring makes it an excellent addition to salads, soups and sandwiches. Full of healthy fats, it is important to make sure that the seeds are roasted before consumption. Roasting removes phytic acid which inhibits the bioavailability of the seeds.

Chaat:

It is the perfect weather for some spicy and tangy chaats but are all your options tagged 'unhealthy'? Think again because it is armed with vitamin B12, folic acid, iron, protein and fibre. Toss up some golden kernels of beauty with tomatoes, onions and mixed peppers. Don't forget to add some spicy green chutney and chaat masala. Satisfy your cravings and taste buds. It is a win-win for all.

Sweet cravings

Do you have a sweet tooth? Swat away the cookies and chocolate and have nature's candy instead. Fruits contain fibre, and are a natural sugar host of minerals, vitamins and zero fat. This is a lovely season for my favourite smoothie. Fresh peaches and creamy banana make for a delectably sweet yet healthy treat.

Dosa

South Indian breakfasts are not only delicious but also highly nutritious. Dosas can be so much fun depending on what you accompany them with. Stuff it with vegetables like tomato, onions, capsicum and spring onions. Cook it in ghee and pair it with some coconut chutney or piping hot sambhar.

Paratha

Composed of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, fibre and probiotics, parathas can be stuffed with any vegetable of your choice—cabbage, cauliflower, onions, carrots or radish. Always dry roast the paratha with a dollop of ghee on top. Pumpkin, bottle gourd, cucumber or mix vegetable raita along with a paratha are a match made in heaven.

Frankie

One tends to reminisce the days in college canteen when frankies are the topic of discussion. The nostalgic flavours may not be healthy but it is not impossible to replicate it in a healthy fashion. Substitute the filling with scrambled eggs, cottage cheese, shredded vegetables, green chutney and pickled onions, and you have got yourself a healthy version of the roll.

Always remember, fun food options are not always boring. It is all about using ingredients that are fresh, unprocessed and natural. Cheers to guilt-free eating.

Setalvad is a nutritionist based in Mumbai.

Got a question for Naini? Write to us at slife.theweek@gmail.com

Birthing woes

Women with gestational diabetes mellitus can have healthy pregnancies and babies, if it is detected early and treated promptly

BY DR VAISHALI JOSHI

Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) occurs during pregnancy and reverts to normal after delivery. GDM is a global problem. Out of one in ten pregnancies associated with diabetes, 90 per cent have GDM. In India the incidence is 12-15 per cent. Due to our south Asian genes, urbanisation, lifestyle, the occurrence of GDM is expected to increase by 20 per cent which means that one in five women is likely to have GDM.

This can happen at any stage of pregnancy, but mostly detected in the second or third trimester. It can affect the baby and the mother's health during and after pregnancy.

Causes

Healthy women have certain reserve of insulin hormone which handles sugar and keeps it within normal range. In women with gestational diabetes, there is a relative deficiency of indigenous insulin hormone. It needs to increase with increasing demands of pregnancy sugar load. This causes high circulating sugar levels in the mother and baby through placental transfer.

Women are more likely to develop GDM if they have problems like:

- Pre-pregnancy high body mass index
- Family history of diabetes mellitus
- Previously delivered a big baby weighing over 4kg
- Polycystic Ovarian Disease (PCOS) prior to pregnancy.

Diagnosis

Screening is done during the first visit anytime between 24-28 weeks of pregnancy with oral glucose tolerance test. This test involves fasting overnight for 8-10 hours. Fasting sugar test is done and then the pregnant woman is asked to drink 75g of sugar solution. The blood test is repeated after an hour or two. The doctor decides when to perform the test depending on medical, family and past pregnancy history.

Adverse effects of GDM

Effects on the baby: If your blood glucose is high, your baby will have constant high sugar in its circulation, which will make baby produce more insulin. This can make your baby grow larger than usual. Big babies are known to face difficult traumatic deliveries, shoulder dystocia (babies getting stuck at broad chubby shoulders in the birth passage. Particularly at nine months, a sudden unexplained loss of your baby can happen, though its very uncommon. After delivery, baby may need to be closely monitored for low sugar levels and jaundice.

Effects on mother: From increased thirst to frequent urination and dry mouth, symptoms can sometimes go undetected. Uncontrolled sugars can give repeated vaginal fungal infections. It can sometimes increase level of amniotic fluid around the baby, which can result in premature labour. Occasionally this can lead to difficulty in breathing and weight gain. GDM can result in a high chance of induced labour, caesarean section or excess bleeding post-delivery. It has been seen to be closely associated with pre-eclampsia—development of increased blood pressure and proteinuria. It can increase chance of having GDM in future pregnancies and development of Type 2 diabetes in later life.

Managing GDM

After confirming GDM diagnosis, your obstetrician will explain the probable reasons of developing the condition, importance of controlling it by keeping your blood sugar within normal range and the need for close observation on the baby's well-being.

Dietary advice: Usually one is advised to eat regularly—small frequent meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables, at least five portions a day. One needs to cut down on high carbohydrates or starchy meals and restrict intake of artificial sugar. You will be asked to include low glycaemic index food that release sugar slowly like—brown bread, pulses, lentils, all-bran cereals. It is advisable to consult a dietician.

Exercises: Regular exercises in the form of brisk walking for 30-45 minutes daily or for at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate intensity activity is recommended.

Drugs to control sugar: If blood sugar is not controlled, one may need treatment with anti-diabetic drugs which are safe in pregnancy. Commonly used drug is Metformin which should be taken with or after meals. Glibenclamide can also be used to control sugars occasionally. If blood sugar does not get controlled with above measures then insulin injections need to be started. Insulin may be offered as first line of treatment, if blood sugars are very high, particularly in first trimester where urgent sugar control is essential or in cases when you have a big baby or excess water around baby (polyhydramnios). As the pregnancy advances, the blood sugar levels increase and so does the dose of insulin injections.

The injections should be taken by yourself before meals, or at bedtime or after waking up. The dose needs to be adjusted depending on the blood sugar levels. You need to be vigilant about understanding the early signs and symptoms of low blood sugar levels, called hypoglycemia. At times you may find it difficult to concentrate, sweat a lot and feel hungry. Please check your sugar levels then and if they are low having sugar or sugary drink or chocolate will immediately bring sugar levels in the healthy range. These medicines or injections are stopped immediately after delivery.

Monitoring

One needs to do regular blood sugar monitoring at home with glucometer as per diabetologist's instruction so that your blood sugars will remain within normal range throughout the day. A glucometer is a device in which a drop of blood is tested on a special reagent strip after pricking your finger. Most women are advised to check blood sugars before breakfast and

one hour post each meal. This record of daily blood sugars called glucose diary is a very important tool to guide further treatment according to your body's need and response to the medicines.

The anomaly scan at 18-20 weeks is important to rule out any developmental defects in the baby. The baby's growth monitoring will need bi-weekly ultra-sonography for growth and fluid in third trimester. Usually from the ninth month of pregnancy, the baby's heart rate monitoring graphs is performed to reassure baby's well being. One should also keep the baby's kick count diligently every day.

Normal weight gain in pregnancy

Any healthy woman should gain at least 10-12kg weight during pregnancy. It also depends on your pre-pregnancy weight. If you have low body mass index or are underweight, then it is optimal to have 2-3kg extra weight gain above the said criteria and if you are overweight then it should be 3-5kg less. The growing baby needs 300-350Kcal extra on pregnant woman's daily requirement. One does not need to have meals for two people as per common belief. In GDM, the total weight gain should be at least 2-3kg less than average in third trimester.

What to expect during labour?

If the sugar levels are maintained within normal range then delivery at 39-40 weeks is advised. Most of the time, labour may start naturally. If not then it can be induced at 40 weeks of pregnancy.

You are expected to continue with medications till you are in established labour. Your blood sugars will be checked at frequent intervals in labour. Insulin drip may need to be started for good control of sugars in labour.

Post delivery care

Immediately after delivery you will be encouraged to breastfeed the baby, preferably within half an hour of delivery. Babies of gestational diabetic mother may have low blood sugar levels after delivery, hence need close observation and frequent blood sugar monitoring. Some neonatal units have a protocol to look after them for 24 hours.

Your blood sugar will be checked post-delivery for 1-2 days. Usually all anti-diabetic medicines are stopped immediately after delivery and normal diet is commenced.

You will be advised to do glucose tolerance test 6-12 weeks after delivery to make sure that your body is handling glucose effectively and there is no long-term sugar problem.

You will be advised to pursue healthy lifestyle by maintaining optimal body mass index by consuming healthy diet and regular exercises. This will prevent risk of GDM in future pregnancy and you developing type 2 diabetes in later stage of life.

The babies of GDM babies do not have diabetes after delivery. But recent research has shown that the babies of mother with gestational diabetes can develop obesity and type 2 diabetes in later stage of their life.

Joshi is an obstetrician and gynaecologist at Kokilaben Hospital, Mumbai.

» inhale

ABREAST OF LATEST TRENDS, DEVELOPMENTS

Feeling frustrated? Try diffusing some bitter orange oil. It is said to dispel irritability for both adults and children alike. Bitter orange essential oil is uplifting and energising for the body yet calming to the mind and emotions. It is used in Ayurveda as an aid to meditation, and this is perhaps why it can be extremely helpful in easing stress and anxiety. The bitter orange tree is a small evergreen that typically reaches a height of 10 feet in cultivation but may reach up to 20 feet when growing in the wild. Like all citrus fruits the essential oil glands are found in tiny pits located within the peel. A study by researchers from Mei University in Japan found that people who inhaled orange fragrance were able to reduce the antidepressants they took and the oil returned their endocrine and immune systems to normal levels.

TAKE A DRIVE

Thinking of a short trip? Driveable destinations are the new travel mantra

BY RUPALI DEAN

As the coronavirus pandemic continues, travel restrictions are constantly changing. This is not just internationally though. A short getaway might seem out of question at the moment. Low-risk travel plans are definitely the need of the hour. Evolving safety protocols, social distancing and minimal guest contact is the new normal. Hotels have now redefined their operations as part of sanitisation protocols and detailed hygiene measure have been put in place to ensure the safety of the guests as well as the in-house team. Here are some safe destinations around the capital.

AIRBNB WALNUT GROVE TREE HOUSE AND SPA, DEHRADUN

Distance from Delhi: 245km

Situated just a few kilometres from Mussoorie, this Tree House Airbnb property in the middle of the forest is perfect for nature lovers. Surrounded by oak trees, the place looks straight out of a fairy tale, but has all modern amenities, including an indoor spa and a jacuzzi. The days are punctuated by the tweeting of the birds and the sounds of the jungle. An ideal place to kick back and relax in the lap of nature.

KARMA CHALETS, GURUGRAM

Distance from Delhi: 29.9km from IGI Airport Delhi

The property, which was opened 30 years ago, was previously an arid land that later got transformed into a paradise with more than 70,000 trees. From hammocks to a myriad seasonal flowers, one can enjoy a relaxing time here. On offer is also a beautiful 'Under the Neem' café as well as a spa. With deft use of colours and decor, it is both cosy and very 'English'. When it comes to operating sustainably, the property has adopted practices like bee farming, organic agro initiative, water harvesting, bio-composting of kitchen and garden waste, use of eco bricks and no plastic policy. In addition, more than 70 per cent of the vegetables used are grown on their farm without the use of any chemical pesticides. It also makes use of innovative technology aspects like mobile key check-in and check-out and QR code scanning for menus and other hotel information as part of the overall 'We Care' programme encompassing all hygiene and sanitation steps.

WELCOMHERITAGE RAMGARH, PANCHKULA

Distance from Delhi: 250 km from ITO, New Delhi

This 325-year-old luxury resort with world-class accommodation is an awe-inspiring heritage. With just 26 rooms and suites on offer, it is perhaps the largest area to guest ratio in the region. There is ample space for guests to move around and not be confined to their rooms. They encourage local employment and mostly associate with vendors in the vicinity. Sourcing locally grown and freshly harvested produce for guests is one of its highlight features. From composting plant and food waste to using leftover food, the resort takes sustainable functioning very seriously.

THE LEELA PALACE, UDAIPUR

Distance from Delhi: 665km

Located by the serene lake Pichola and skirted by the views of the Aravalli mountain range, this is a contemporary palace hotel which induces the grandeur and lavishness of Mewar. All the rooms have the scenic view of the lake, the heritage city and the mountains. If you are the kind looking for an extravagant holiday, then this is your place. The hotel has introduced 'drivecation' which includes two-way transfers from one's door-step by The Leela Palace chauffer-driven BMW, daily breakfast, city tour and sunset cocktails followed by a themed dinner once during the stay. Pick-up cities include Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Indore and Bhopal. The Leela SURAKSHA programme in partnership with Bureau Veritas India, builds on the existing rigorous cleaning protocols and is aimed at elevating sanitisation, hygiene and safety procedures to deliver a safe environment for guests and associates.

TIJARA FORT PALACE, TIJARA VILLAGE, ALWAR, RAJASTHAN

Distance from Delhi: 100km

This monument hotel reflects the Rajput-Afghan elegance in all its structures. A curation of three structures—Mardana, Rani Mahal and Hawa Mahal—the once unfinished and abandoned palace is now a fairytale destination. Most heritage hotels in Alwar are born with the beauty and treasures of history, but not all offer a spacious dream site for a peaceful getaway. One will never get tired of taking photographs here as the breathtaking 360-degree view of the palace varies with daylight and seasons. The team focuses on curating tailor-made experiences for special milestone events and celebrations. The numerous outdoor venues give guests the opportunity to create their own magical memories. The palace also grows its own seasonal vegetables and procures various raw materials from nearby areas, thereby encouraging local employment and sustainable practices.

JW MARRIOT MUSSOORIE WALNUT GROVE RESORT AND SPA

Distance from Delhi: 298km

Make your way over the misty clouds of the Himalayas to this stunning resort overlooking the valley and surrounded by lush natural foliage. Situated at the foothills of the Garhwal Himalayan ranges and snuggled between sparkling valleys, soaring oaks and gorgeous walking trails, the true-to-nature elements bring this magnificent resort to life. The 115 state-of-the art rooms with scenic views of the valleys orchestrate a unique experience where no detail is too small to escape notice. The team has worked persistently to create an environment dedicated towards 'safe is the new luxury'. Their top green initiatives include the utilisation of recycled water for resort irrigation, solar heating for hot water in rooms and an energy-saving lighting system.

THE GATEWAY RESORT, DAMDAMA LAKE, GURGAON

Distance from Delhi: 43km from IGI Airport

Spread across a sprawling 20 acres in the bosom of the Aravalli hills is this countryside sanctuary. This is where the always-plugged in city folks can unwind and connect to nature. In the light of the pandemic, the team at the resort has worked on its brand and service standards for utmost care given to the safety of its guests. If you are looking for a romantic getaway, make sure to have this property on your list.

AMANBAGH, ALWAR, RAJASTHAN

Distance from Delhi: 250km

Formerly used by the Maharaja of Alwar as a staging area for royal tiger hunts, Amanbagh is a modern-day Mughal palace with a lush estate of palm, fruit and eucalyptus trees. Carved out of local pink marble and sandstone, this property is utterly peaceful and consummately private. Yonder the extravagant suites, spa and gardens, guests can experience convivial villages, stately forts and ruins and the jungle of Sariska National Park, where tigers still roam free. The organic Amanbagh farm supports 80 per cent of the kitchen needs. The property has 37 suites on 38 acres of land with nine different private dining areas. ◻

Feeling blue

Is it a mood disorder or depression? Here is how you can distinguish between the two

BY KANCHAN RAI

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. Currently, around 450 million people suffer from such conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide. Depressive disorders are already the fourth leading cause of the global disease burden.

Currently, more than 40 per cent of countries have no mental health policy and over 30 per cent have no mental health programme. Around 25 per cent of countries have no mental health legislation. The statistics give us a clear overview about mental health and its impact on the world population.

"Treatments are available, but nearly two-third of people with a known mental disorder never seek help from a health professional. Stigma, discrimination and neglect prevent care and treatment from reaching people with mental disorders,"—a statement by the WHO.

We all go through ups and down in our life; it is quite natural to feel sad or upset at some point or the other. Low mood and depression are co-related but both are two completely different things.

Firstly, it is important to understand what exactly is mental health. The standard definition is—the level of psychological well-being or an absence of mental illness.

According to the WHO's reports, almost half of the world's population is suffering from different mental illnesses which, in turn, affects their self-esteem, relationships, physical health and even their day-to-day routine.

Psychological well-being results in happy and contented life whereas the contrary can lead to stress, anxiety or even severe psychological problems. So, it is very critical to understand what one is going through.

Mood disorders are considered to be the most common among various types of mental disorders like depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety. A mood disorder can be defined as a mental illness that affects the emotional state of any individual, making them extremely happy or extremely sad or both at times. Most times, people get confused between low mood and depression.

The awareness of one's mental health helps in handling daily life challenges in a better fashion. It is always better to know what is happening inside in order to control what manifests outside.

There are various reasons that trigger or cause mood disorders like family history, trauma, stress or any major life changes, physical illness and inappropriate use or excessive use of certain medications.

People often consider factors like aloofness, disinterest and excessive worry as symptoms of depression. But these might not be due to depression only. Low mood is just an emotional reaction to something that happened in one's life, which is

quite natural and almost everyone experiences this.

Depression, on the other hand, is diagnosed as a clinical condition—a mental illness. Low mood lasts for only short span like from a few hours to a few days whereas depression is persistent and may last from a few months to a few years. It can be recurrent. Death of loved ones, heartbreak, divorce or job loss that cause temporary pain are some of the common reasons for low mood. In the case of depression, there are chances that it might have no specific reason. It can be hereditary or may depend on factors like the environment in which the individual grew up, cultural differences and major transitions.

When it comes to low mood, look out for these signs:

- Frustration
- Anger
- Irritability
- Worry
- Low self-esteem or worthlessness
- Lack of interest in things that the person used to enjoy previously
- Lack of enjoyment
- Aloofness
- Stress

Low mood is a natural emotion. It is brief and specific with short-term effects impacting the present mood of the individual lasting for shorter duration only.

If the aforementioned signs do not show any improvement and persists for more than two weeks, it can be considered as a sign of depression. This can lead to severe symptoms like:

- Self-harm
- Suicidal thoughts
- Sense of hopelessness
- Fatigue
- Pain
- Guilt
- Inability to find joy in anything the person used to enjoy previously
- Sleeping more than normal or insufficient sleep

The best option for individuals experiencing low mood is to explain their problem to their family or close friends. This can help the person to channelise the negative energy in a better fashion. The people around can aid in the healing process. It is also recommended that the person finds a distraction.

For example, losing a job during this pandemic causes low mood. Instead of worrying about the lost job, the person can look for a new one; look for a temporary job options like freelancing and start learning a new skill parallelly. The former helps in generating income for present living and the latter adds weightage to their future job search. In case of divorce, the person can cope by making new friends or focusing more on career.

Depression is a medical condition and requires professional diagnosis. So, it is very important to seek medical help. It can be treated by different ways depending on the diagnosis and criticality through psychotherapy, counselling or medication. It has long-term consequences impacting the overall life of the individual.

Rai is a mental wellness coach and founder of Let Us Talk Organisation.

pause

HOLD THAT THOUGHT, INTROSPECT, QUESTION

Did you know that repetitive nose picking can damage your nasal cavity? Some people pick their nose out of boredom or a nervous habit while others have allergies and sinus infections that increase the amount of mucus in the nose causing irritation. In rare situations, nose picking is a compulsive, repetitive behaviour. This condition, called rhinotillexomania, often accompanies stress or anxiety and other habits like nail-biting or scratching. For people with this condition, nose picking can briefly ease anxiety. Those with compulsive nose picking may experience inflammation and swelling of the nasal tissue. Over time, this may narrow the nostril openings.

TALES FROM THE LENS

Cinematographer and publicity still photographer Pratha Narang talks about the subtle art of storytelling through photographs

BY OSHIN GRACE DANIELL

The world does not lack stories. Some say there is a dearth of good stories. But is it the story that is bad or the storyteller? Gone are the days when stories were just a long sequence of words put together to create a script. Most of us know of the stories on screen but what about the ones that are off it? This is where Pratha Narang brings her magic. The aphorism, "a picture is worth a thousand words" springs to life in the case of this cinematographer and publicity still photographer who has created posters for shows and films like *Half Full* (2020 Oscar-nominated short film starring Naseeruddin Shah and Vikrant Massey), *Little Things* (Netflix series) and *Upstarts* (Netflix film). She has also done publicity stills for *Mirzapur* Season 2 and *The Last Hour* which will be released soon.

The 27-year-old knew that she wanted to take up photography early on in life; it was not something that happened one fine day. "Right from my school days, photography is something that caught my interest. I had started designing posters in my late teens and it was something that I enjoyed doing," says Pratha.

But the young photographer faced many hurdles and had a twisted journey. In her initial days, she briefly worked as a Bollywood PR handling a couple of big names in tinsel town. Pratha says that during this period she learnt a lot of dos and don'ts in the industry. But just as she was climbing the ladder of success, a breakup weighed her down. Maybe it did not bring her down but it did take her on a trek near Dehradun. It is true what they say about the mountains giving one a sense of clarity. She found it beyond the mountains though, between Dehradun and Mussoorie, in a village called Purkal. "There is a school under the Purkal Youth Development Society in this village which provides education to underprivileged children. I instantly fell in love with the setting. So much so that

I decided to stay there and teach for a bit," she says. A project that she says is close to her heart is a short film that she made for the school—*Eloha's Instrument*. "It was to help raise funds for the school," she says. The short film not only helped the school but also Pratha. "I learned how to draw the line between being emotional and getting attached to my subject through this project. It was a fantastic experience which I will always cherish," she says.

Post working in the school, the passionate photographer got back to the film scene. She worked on the making of the film videos and still for movies and web series like *Hasmukh, Stree, Baaghi 2, Beyond the Clouds, Lucknow Central, Rangoon* and *Indu Sarkar*, to name a few. But the game changer in her career was *The Family Man*. Pratha was the second unit Director of Photography and drone cinematographer for Season 1 of the show. "It is an interesting story and a very unexpected turn of events. I was working as the photographer for the series initially. But it so happened that the DOP fell sick suddenly and Raj Nidimoru—the maker of the series—asked me if I could handle the big Red Dragon camera. The rest is history," she says. But it is not only on a film set that she captures stories, Pratha enjoys taking a walk on her own, far from the shooting floor, in search of untold tales. "Whenever we visit different places for shoots, I make it a point to go off the sets and find interesting subjects. I go around talking to locals and I listen to stories saturated with deep emotions," she says. The go-getter in her refuses to give up on anything spurned by others. And probably this is what makes her style of shooting and photography radically distinctive. Recently she produced a web series— *A Viral Wedding*—which is being streamed on Eros Now. The eight-episode series is the story of a social media influencer (Shreya) who refuses to cancel her wedding due to the lockdown. The mini series was shot at home with no one meeting each other. With the quirky disclaimer, "No humans were harmed in the making of this series" the show's brilliance and creativity definitely made it 'viral'.

One can also call Pratha's wedding viral. Draped in a gorgeous red Sabyasachi saree, her wedding was the talk of social media for quite some time. "The lockdown was announced just three days post my wedding. And we were prepared to spend our honeymoon period at home. One evening at about 8pm, there was a rotten smell in the building where we stay. It was coming from a dead cat and there was no way of disposing the body as we had been strictly asked to stay at home. So, I dug a grave and buried the cat near the building. The next morning, a headline in the newspaper read 'cats with no symptoms can also spread Covid-19.' There ended my honeymoon at home and marked the start of my quarantine period," she says.

Apart from people and sets,

You're given a minute in an electronic store, what are top five things you'll have in your cart?

- Vacuum cleaner
- DJI Drone
- iMac
- Dish washer
- IPhone 11 Pro

Five tips for aspiring photographers and cinematographers

- One does not need fancy equipment to be a photographer.
- Timing and emotion are two important factors. Sometimes pixilation can also add its own sense of texture; don't underplay it.
- Your camera should be your third eye and sometimes even first. Photography helps you to witness stories that go unseen to the naked eye most of the times.
- Look at your subject with your heart full of emotion instead of just as a composition.
- The reality of your subject must matter more than the output of your camera.

Playing with frames is a form of story-telling. Do justice to the reality of that moment and capture emotion and don't run behind the light and aesthetics.

There lived a lady who yelled and screamed in the village alleys. People called her crazy and other similar names. However, this was not because she made a lot of noise. She had over 50 rats in her house, each named after her family members who died in a natural calamity. She was the oldest and the only survivor.

This is a portrait of her son Suresh and her. The old lady believes that her son came back to her in the form of a rat.

10 must watch shows on OTT platforms

- This is us (Hotstar)
- Brooklyn nine nine (Netflix)
- Atypical (Netflix)
- Zoo (Netflix)
- The family man (Amazon prime video)
- Marvellous Mrs Maisel (Amazon prime video)
- House M.D. (Amazon prime video)
- Schitts creek (Netflix)
- An American Girl Story – Maryellen 1955 (Amazon prime video)
- Paatal Lok (Amazon prime video)

A message to people stuck at home.

Count yourself grateful for being alive and reading this, instead of cribbing about boredom. There are many battling their life just by taking a single breath without a mask and wondering if they will see a pain-free tomorrow. Make the most and don't forget to be grateful.

animals are her favourite subjects. "I want to get into full-time wildlife photography in the future. Animals teach us so much," says Pratha. "Human beings argue over petty things like standing in a queue. The wild is so systematic that way. Animals co-exist so beautifully. The best example is how the vultures and hyenas decide on who gets to eat the leftovers of a kill by a bigger carnivore. They don't fight. In fact, the decision is made based on who gets to the carcass first. The other just leaves," she says. With a lot of experiences in her kitty, Pratha is on a hunt for more untold stories—both of people and animals. ☐

ART OF LOVE

US-based artist Sarey Ruden talks how she transforms tragic online dating messages into disruptive and thought-provoking masterpieces

BY POOJA BIRAIA JAISWAL

Sarey Ruden during her talk on 'The art of online dating'

Online dating can be a largely polarising experience. While for some it can be deeply rewarding, many end up with bruised hearts, egos and a lifetime of disappointment, frustration and hopelessness. But how does one turn the cruelty on its head? How does one use the creativity and quirks of dark humour to tackle creepy, cruel and misogynistic messages? US-based artist Sarey Ruden shows how. Sarey's project Sareytales is a collection of art and designs inspired by the online insults and disturbing messages she received during her own online dating journey. Through the virtual projects, she hopes to increase awareness to the cyber-bullying and sexual harassment culture that is so prevalent in the digital dating world. What began as a fun little project that turns the ugly into art, has gotten bigger over time. Sarey's art is sold in boutiques, pop-up shops, art fairs and subscription boxes, reaching thousands of people globally. Her work has been included in gender studies course discussions at Michigan State University and Texas Women's University. Excerpts from an interview:

Online dating has been a vehicle for creating art for you. How did it start?
It happened organically in the fall of 2016. I had been online dating (on and off) for the better part of a decade and had always kept records of the craziest, creepiest and cruelest messages that found its way to my inbox. I received the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back" message from a guy in August, 2016, and it inspired an idea. What if I took his message (which is still burned in my brain) and created a graphic poster out of the insult. As a graphic designer by trade, it was a logical leap to use my art and design background to help metastasize the disbelief and breakdown the hurt that his words evoked. Since then, my project Sareytales has evolved into a larger initiative. Not only do my designs incorporate a more elaborate creative vision and execution, but the concepts and themes of the work itself often relate to larger feminist philosophies, for example, commodification of women, unpaid emotional labour, binary gendered expectations and other social justice ideologies.

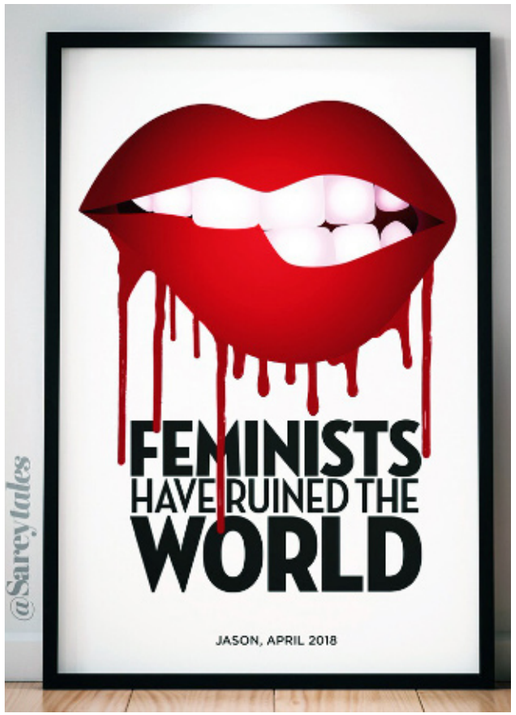
What triggered you to give your experiences a spin of sarcasm and humour?
I have a dark sense of humor. Morbid is a better word, I guess. I think this kind of outlook allows a more nuanced examination of the behaviors men exhibit in digital spaces. I believe it is the contrast of 'creepy/ sexist/ harmful message + darkly comedic interpretation + visual innovation' that draws the viewer in and invites them to explore how the combination of contrasting words and images makes them feel. Spoiler alert: It is usually discomfort.

An interesting experience that you have had while dating someone, that has had a lasting impression on you.
Every dating experience I have had has stayed with me in one way or another. I think that is part of how I find myself as an artist who is inspired by online dating mishaps. These men are my muses. About eight years ago, I met this man who would eat only things that are white. We went for dinner at a sushi place and all that he ordered was white rice and cottage cheese (I don't remember if the place actually had cottage cheese, or he brought his own). I would not categorise this as a disaster, but it has definitely stayed with me.

You have said in past interviews, that through dating apps you essentially view misogyny. How?
Dating apps are a microcosm of our world—interpersonal relationships, flirting, the chase, rejection. All of these aspects of our lives, our "real" lives (I use air quotes around real, because the line between virtual and real is basically non-existent) can be played out via a simple dating app message exchange. I treat digital dating like a social experiment. How men respond to a profile, or a picture, your disinterest or rejection, is all part of a larger picture called patriarchy.

What is your day job like?
I used to work in advertising in NYC and continued to do so when I moved home to Michigan in 2010. A couple years ago, I started working as a graphic designer on the marketing team for a local commercial real

Sarey 's artwork



estate corporation. I still do graphic designing, but mostly in-house.

Tell us about your very first date.
My very first date, that was a result of online dating, was in the summer of 2002. My serious boyfriend at the time and I were 'taking a break', so I decided to try out this new dating website called Jdate— short of Jewish Date (I am Jewish!). I don't remember too much about the date except that it was awkward. Fun fact: I often see this same guy on other dating apps now. I guess that means he sees me too.

What is the whole process?
I generally select a message from my archives (I have over 5,000 messages categorised into different topics), and from there curate a series (usually three pieces) based on an overarching theme, which can be anything from the erotic (unintentional haiku series) to a the more conceptual (the spoils).

Which dating sites have you most visited?
Plenty of Fish, Match, OKCupid, Bumble, Hinge

What has the response to your art been like?
It has been incredibly supportive and validating. It is really something magical when you can create art out of your personal experiences, but have it be universally relatable. I think my work empowers, uplifts and makes people laugh.

Have you found your life partner? What kind of a partner are you looking for?
I really am not even sure I am fit to have a life partner. I think we (men and women) are conditioned to believe we need a romantic counterpart to be fulfilled in life. And for many people that is true. But I know that whenever I am in a relationship, other parts of my life fall apart. I am anxious, crabby, uninspired and generally a jerk. And I can't help but think other than perhaps I just haven't found the right person yet. I am just not equipped to be in that traditional type of romantic partnership. I love my space, my work, my family and friends. Right now, a life partner just seems unnecessary.

What are your future plans ?
I am working on a podcast. The working title is "Sareytales: Behind the Art" and I am hoping to launch it in November, 2020. Each episode will cover one message I have received and the art it inspired. I will also bring on a guest expert to critically dissect what exactly is going on. I am nervous but also really looking forward to sharing this supplemental content with my followers. ◻

exhale

CELEBRATE LIFE, CHOICES AND CHALLENGES

Is your breath smelling bad, thanks to those raw onions that you had with your hamburger at lunch? Many people find it hard to hide what they ate because sometimes food tend to linger in the system causing bad breath. Onions and garlic are probably the most common and most well-known instigators of bad breath, or halitosis, but there are others. The issue with the likes of onion and garlic is that they contain pungent oils that get carried through your bloodstream to your lungs. When you breathe out, the pungent leftovers are exhaled too. They say, an apple a day keeps the doctor away. Looks like it does more than just that. It keeps bad breath away as well. The crunchy fruit ups the saliva production, helping to cleanse your mouth. The polyphenols found in apples break down the smelly sulphur compounds. Munch on a whole apple or slice and pair one with some yoghurt peanut butter dip for double bad breath fighting action.

Bat, gloves & glory

K.L. Rahul, the 'prettiest batsman to watch in world cricket' according to Brian Lara, on his highs, lows, fashion sense and more

BY OSHIN GRACE DANIELL

PHOTO COLSTON JULIAN

Kannur Lokesh Rahul could very well have been Kannur Lokesh Rohan had his father been a bit more careful while naming him. When a son was born to Lokesh, lecturer at the National Institute of Technology in Surathkal, and his academician-wife Rajeshwari, in 1992, the Sunil Gavaskar fan thought he was borrowing the name of his idol's son. Gavaskar's only son, Rohan, was named after the West Indian great Rohan Kanhai and Lokesh apparently missed the connection and thereby the name. So the boy was named Rahul.

It didn't matter, because around the same time another Rahul was making waves in Karnataka cricket. Rahul Dravid was just four years away from an India cap, and he went on to become an inspiration for a lot of young boys, including K.L. Rahul.

A cricket bat has been K.L. Rahul's constant companion since childhood. "A pretty normal story," is how Rahul tries to describe it. Other cricketers of his generation will also have a similar story to tell. "I grew up watching and playing the sport. I was quite athletic in school and played all the sports possible. Cricket was something that I was better at compared to the rest." The 28-year-old batsman is one of the most promising of his generation, and someone whom the great Brian Lara considers "the prettiest batsman to watch in world cricket". Former Indian opening batsman Wasim Jaffer recently said that Rahul is the most accomplished in the Indian team after captain Virat Kohli and star player Rohit Sharma. The cricketing world is in awe of his stroke play, and he was recently named captain of the IPL team Kings XI Punjab. Rahul, who "fell in love with the sport and wanted to keep playing it", is also an accomplished wicket-keeper, which adds to his value in the team.

Rahul believes that playing a lot of sports in school not only helped him enhance his hand-eye coordination but also stay fit. "I don't have a history of being fat. As a matter of fact, I was a very skinny child, probably because of all the playing. But when I took up cricket

> *"I was quite athletic in school and played all the sports possible. Cricket was something that I was better at compared to the rest."*

PHOTO TARA LOUISE McMANUS

> *There was only one cricket camp and we struggled a lot. But I think it made us hungrier and also made us value the opportunities that we got.*

seriously, I had to work hard to get muscles and get a little buff," he says.

Although he calls his journey a 'normal story', it had its share of challenges. Raised in the suburbs of Mangaluru, the biggest challenge he faced was the lack of facilities for training. He used to travel nearly 20km from where he stayed in Surathkal for training. "It is a small town that does not have a big history or rather no history of producing many cricketers. There was only one cricket camp and we struggled a lot. But I think it made us hungrier and also made us value the opportunities that we got," he says.

Rahul's parents recognised his passion for cricket and encouraged him by enlisting him in cricket camps since the time he turned 10. "Coming from a family of professors, my parents made it clear that they would support me only if I had my grades in school. It was a fair deal. They also homeschooled me a lot since I used to miss classes because of the matches," he says. Rahul says it is important to take education seriously as it equips one to deal with life better. "It was never about getting high grades or topping the class. For me, it was learning the basics," says Rahul, whose favourite subject in school was Indian history.

By the time he finished school he had already played several matches for Bengaluru United Cricket Club and his club in Mangaluru, besides playing the

PHOTO TARA LOUISE McMANUS

Ranji Trophy. "I wanted to take up the sport more seriously and my parents let me make that decision when I turned 18."

Rahul's rise in the cricketing world was not steady in a strict sense. "There were a lot of setbacks, but they only made me feel determined and zealous. Every time I was not selected for a match, I felt an unexplainable hunger and anger to prove that I am capable and that I will achieve my dreams no matter what. That is how I always bounced back," says Rahul. "I don't know whether to call what I am doing right now destiny or fate, but I am here now and I will keep growing."

Rahul apportions the credit for recognising talent and taking care of sportsmen to the Karnataka State Cricket Association and the BCCI. "I genuinely feel lucky that I got trained by the coaches at the KSCA and the BCCI. They sent me for a lot of camps and I got early guidance. I have already played in almost all my dream stadiums like Lord's and the MCG, but I would like to go back to some of these stadiums to make better memories," says the naturally aggressive batsman.

It was in the 2010-11 season that Rahul made his first-class debut for Karnataka. During this time, he also represented the country at the 2010 ICC Under-19 World Cup, where he scored a total of 143 runs. Though he was left out of the squad for the succeeding season, he got back for the 2012-13 season. It was during this time that he made his IPL debut with Royal Challengers Bangalore.

His terrific run in the domestic circuit fetched him the coveted India Test cap and a maiden international call-up in 2014. Rahul made his Test debut in the Boxing Day Test Down Under, which was also M.S. Dhoni's final Test. Call it nervousness or sheer pressure, Rahul could muster only four runs in two innings. But, he picked himself up quite well in the Sydney Test, with a hundred to show. His amazing range of strokes was also on display.

Rahul says self-belief is one of his strongest traits and that it is important in every player's life, no matter what the game is. "I don't think anybody in sports can go on to achieve success or play at the highest level without believing in oneself," he says. Another qual-

AT A GLANCE

A hobby you once had but not anymore.
Football. I used to love playing football. I have not completely stopped playing but since it is injury prone, I try not to play it a lot.

Favourite sportsperson.
It is hard to pick one. Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Roger Federer, Zlatan Ibrahimović....

A show you binge-watched.
American crime drama television series Queen of the South.

Midnight indulgence.
I actually sleep very early so there is no time for any midnight snack.

Biggest nightmare.
That I would get lazy.

A snack that you cannot do without.
There is nothing that I am extremely addicted to but I do love chips.

Your most prized possession.
Myself.

Your idea of a getaway.
Any place with a beach.

The most difficult bowler you have come across.
Rashid Khan.

Top cricketers to follow on social media.
The whole Indian cricket team.

A typical day during the lockdown period.
Wake up, have breakfast around 10am and then play PUBG for some time. This game is something I picked up during the lockdown. Post lunch, watch a show or a movie. In the evening, train for about two hours; the workout regimen is different every day. At night spend time with my family; we play games sometimes.

Post lockdown, what is the first thing you would do?
I am dying to get back on the field.

Your advice to aspiring cricketers.
I find advising very hard. All I can say is that they should enjoy playing the sport. Fall in love with it.

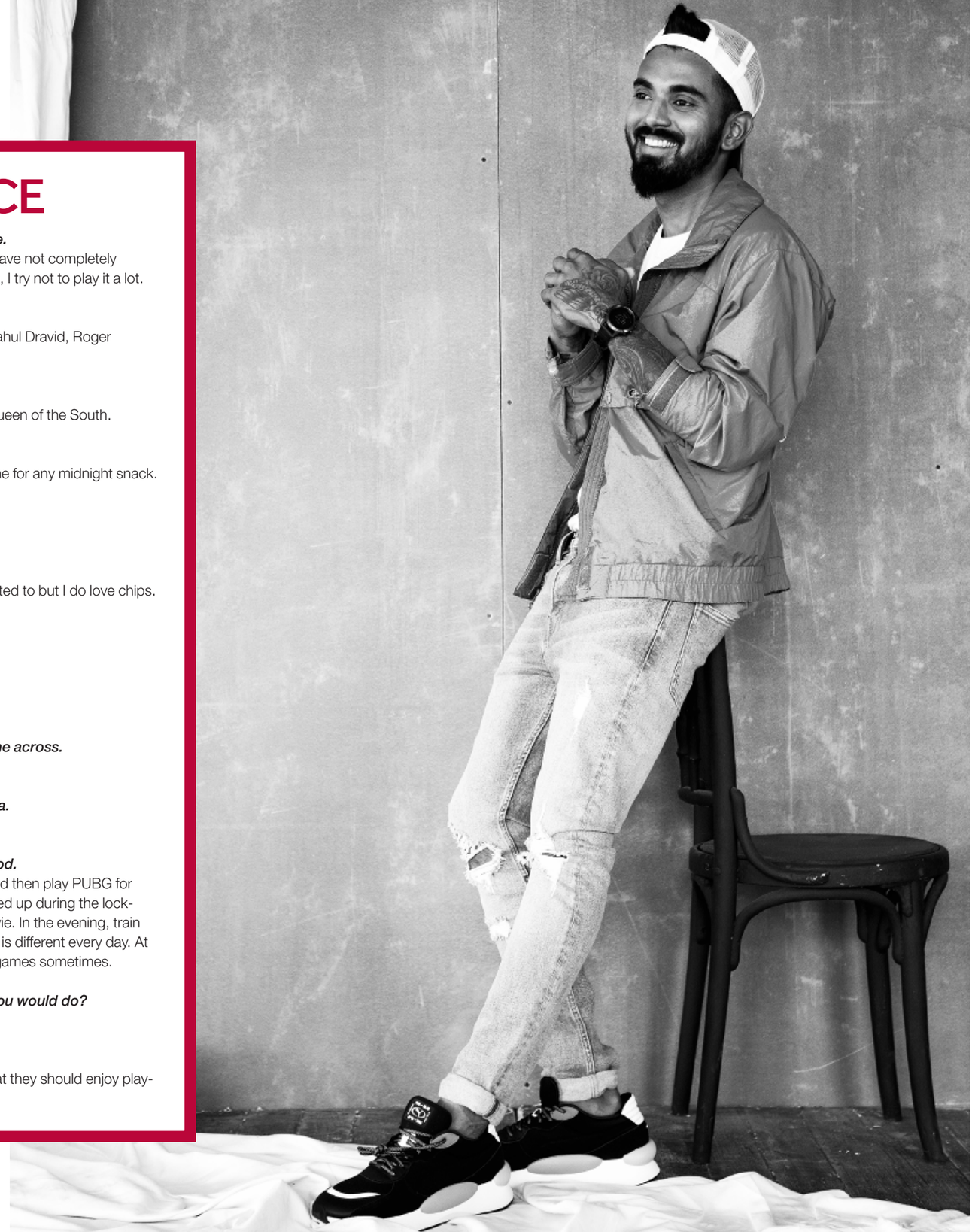


PHOTO **TARA LOUISE McMANUS**

ity that he calls his strength is honesty to self. "I can always look in the mirror and be completely honest with myself. I am my biggest critic and I am my biggest supporter," says the all-or-nothing player who likes to expand his initials K.L. to 'king lion'. Spirit animal, maybe. He surely displays a lot of its totem traits like courage, balance and strength to overcome difficulties. "Most people tend to beat themselves up when they come across failure but I have always been very balanced about success and failure. I think this is one of the aspects that keeps me going in life," says Rahul. Definitely kingly. Interestingly, 'king lion' has a furry 'lion king' called Simba. The "cute, feisty, Indian chow chow puppy"—as described on the dog's Instagram handle "@kingsimbathechow"—has an impressive fan following (over 17,000 followers). Rahul is so fond of his dog that he has a portrait of Simba tattooed on his back. Quoting Johnny Depp in an Instagram post back in 2015, Rahul wrote "My body is my journal and my tattoos are my story." There is a tattoo for every place that he has visited. There are some that celebrate memorable moments, like his Test cap number engraved in Roman numerals on his ribs. And then there are some others that remind him of low points in his life.

"The 2016-2017 period was a tough time," Rahul recalls. "I had a shoulder injury in 2016 when I was playing for the Indian team. I had dislocated my shoulder and had to go for surgery. Those two years were full of injuries and ailments. I had dengue, malaria and it just kept on pushing me back. I would go do really well for a match and then fall sick. Every time I recovered and got back to the game, I felt like I had to start all over again. There was never a continuity. I felt like I lost some important years of my life sitting at home, injured, watching TV, not being able to play. But that is the journey," he says.

But this wasn't the only time Rahul had an injury. He had a back injury even before he started playing for his state. "As a teenager, it was frightening to hear doctors say things like surgery and that I won't be able to play the sport. It was one of the scariest times in my life," he says. The injury may have bogged him down a little but he got back into line soon enough. "I grew up being a wicket-keeping batsman till the time I had my back injury. When I got back for training in the state team, post recovery, there were already a couple of players who had cemented their position in the team and I felt like I did not stand a chance at that point. That is when I started focusing more on my batting skills," says Rahul.

> *What I realised in these years of playing is that the simpler you keep your plans and game, the more consistent and successful you become.*

"I have always played as an opening batsman since the time I started playing cricket, so that is something that is comfortable for me. But when you play a team sport, you need to be flexible to do what your team wants you to do. I enjoy whatever task is assigned to me," he says.

Although playing in a single position could have helped him more, Rahul says there is a beauty in playing in different positions. "It is both exciting and challenging; I thrive on challenges. Each time you finish a game, you walk out after playing a different role and conquering a unique challenge. This is what makes the sport thrilling. And this has also enabled me to gauge myself," he says.

When it comes to the Rahul repertoire, simple plans aid consistency. "What I realised in these years of playing is that the simpler you keep your plans and game, the more consistent and successful you become. Something that has really worked for me is just being mindful and assessing the situation. I always try to stick to my strengths and be consistent in it," he says.

Though the current 'forced off-season' has kept players away from their favourite place, all of them have tried to stay fit at home. However, it may take a while for them to get back to where they were before Covid-19. Rahul feels that though the game may not

PHOTO COLSTON JULIAN

change drastically, off-field interactions before and after the match might change. "Human beings adapt very quickly and I am pretty sure we will learn how to be in an empty stadium. As a matter of fact, the crowds only come in once you start playing for the country. We all grew up playing in empty stadiums, without anyone cheering for us. So, it is not something that we are not used to. Having said that, there is a different energy that the crowd brings in. With the crowd, the game sure does become a lot more exciting and the adrenaline just pumps up. But I think we should focus on what is there; there is a lot of pressure on the field," he says.

According to Rahul, everyone in the team has their own unique calming techniques before a match. "We are taught different breathing exercises while training. Apart from that we also do our own thing. I like to listen to music. There is no lucky playlist or song that helps me do better. As a matter of fact, the playlist changes every time. It is all over the shop—from hip-hop to blues to old Hindi songs," he says.

Rahul started the year 2020 with a bang, and only the virus could stop him. He performed well in the two T20Is against Sri Lanka and in three ODIs against Australia. He also scored in the first two T20Is versus New Zealand. He was phenomenal with the bat in the shorter form of the game against Australia and New Zealand and his wicket-keeping was praised by fans and peers alike.

Although his numbers in the shorter versions of the game are better than the longer one, Rahul does not have a favourite format. "I love cricket. All of it. Not a particular format," he says. Ready to lead Kings XI Punjab, the 'king captain' is eagerly waiting for the schedule. "I am sure that the IPL will happen this year. I can't wait for the news to come," he says.

Apart from cricket, Rahul is big on investing in real estate, interior designing and his street-wear athleisure brand Gully, which was launched last year. "I think every person who earns money should invest their money in places where it can grow. That is the wise thing to do. I am lucky to have a tight group of friends who are all excellent at financial planning and inform me about the trends in the business market," he says.

When it comes to fashion, Rahul looks up to David

PHOTO TARA LOUISE McMANUS

> *"Gully is young, edgy and fun. It is an extension of what I like to wear. Gone are the days when people enjoyed wearing tight-fitted clothes."*

Beckham. "I think, to this day, he is one of the most stylish sports icons. I don't know if I can call him my fashion inspiration though," says the cricketer, who enjoys wearing stylish clothes. "Gully is young, edgy and fun. It is an extension of what I like to wear. Gone are the days when people enjoyed wearing tight-fitted clothes. Most people like comfortable yet fashionable clothing and Gully is that," he says.

"I try to keep up with the latest trends in fashion but, personally, I try to stick to solid colours. I love wearing cool clothes but I am not fond of anything bling or with prints. There is a section in my wardrobe with cool hipster clothes and then, the other extreme—formal suits," he says. Apart from clothes, Rahul has an eye for watches. "I love classic watches. No particular brand, though. If it looks good to me, I buy it," he says.

As of now, Rahul is itching to get back on the field. "We know that the call will come anytime. So, we are keeping ourselves prepared. The trainers with the Indian team, National Cricket Academy coaches and BCCI trainers have sent us fitness programmes and they keep a tab on us on a weekly basis. After all, staying fit is all that we can do during this time," he says. He has had a good start this year, but can he end it well? "Courage, dear heart," roars Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia.* □

what I ate today

Variety, her spice

British-Indian actor **Anisa Butt** on her diet and fitness

As a 12-year-old, I knew that acting is something I want to keep doing. With that in mind, I pushed myself to be active in the co-curricular activities in school. I was a part of several school plays and then I went on to study performing arts till my BA graduate level. I was fascinated with movies, the process of acting and how it linked to psychology which I absolutely loved as well. My professional journey began in a fringe theatre in the UK and then in London I auditioned for a Hindi feature film which brought me to Mumbai for a screen test. Unfortunately, I did not get the part in the final project. But my career got a kickstart as a child artist on Disney Channel India. From there I went on to do films like *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* and *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani*. I was also cast as the lead opposite Ali Fazal in the film *Baat Ban Gayi*.

In between this, I also worked commercially—I worked with Parachute body lotion for a year. I also got to be part of lovely music videos from Kailash Kher's Rangeele to Yumbarzaloo by Yawar Abdal for Zee Music Company. My recent work is with the webseries *Code M*, in which I play the role of Gayatri.

Apart from acting, I enjoy dancing, watching movies, writing poetry and travel. I have a podcast called @unplugwithani. When it comes to fitness, I enjoy variety. I actively do everything from boxing to MMA to running and weightlifting. Currently, I am on intermittent fasting. But I do love to indulge on fries or a dark chocolate mousse every now and then.

As told to Oshin Grace Daniell

Intermittent fasting is great for better insulin functioning and healing of the body..

Karishma Chawla, nutritionist and lifestyle educator.

Anisa's diet

Breakfast: I have a black coffee and finish my workout early morning. For breakfast, I make a smoothie with fresh or frozen fruit, spinach, oats, homemade milk, protein powder, wheatgrass, maca powder, cacao and chia seeds.

Lunch: Usually a protein like chicken, eggs or fish with vegetables, or when vegetarian, it is lentils or other vegetables with some rice or sometimes a sandwich or wrap.

Dinner: It just varies. Usually, it is some form of protein. I try to have tofu and paneer once a week as well. I try to have a light dinner if I had a late lunch.

Nutrition advice

- Replace white rice with brown rice, red rice or quinoa. These complex carbs help to stabilise blood sugar levels and avoid insulin spike aiding good metabolism. Also try a wrap with celery or lettuce with nut butter and some protein.
- Ensure dinner has some kind of protein everyday to help with metabolism and mid night cravings.
- Experiment with fermented vegetables (like Indian achar) during lunch and dinner;it enhances gut health and overall well-being.
- The smoothie is just perfect. It is a powerhouse of energy especially with superfood like chia seeds and maca powder.
- For dinner, try consuming bone broth as it aids in gut health and enhances immunity. Pair it with some egg, chicken or paneer salad.
- Try out apple cider vinegar and fennel water; it helps with overall well-being.
- Consider supplements like collagen, glutamine, high strength multivitamin, antioxidants and probiotics

smile

INDULGE YOUR SENSES, HAVE FUN

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression." This applies to all interactions we have with customers. Especially when it comes to the telephone answering techniques you use in your business. Often one fails to understand what makes a great call. It is important to get off on the right foot when answering the phone. The best way to do this is with a smile. Studies say that the tone of your voice changes when smiling. It is readily perceivable to the caller and it sets the tone for the rest of the call. A smile puts the caller at ease. This enables one to be calm during the call. This is especially true for customers who begin a call with a defensive, angry attitude. When they are greeted with a smiling voice, it can be contagious and help defuse any negative emotions coming through.

Beyond cooking

Chef Raji Gupta talks about her culinary journey and love for exploring new cuisines

BY OSHIN GRACE DANIELL

What started out as a passion to cook for the family turned into a full-time profession for chef Raji Gupta. But she did not start her culinary journey in her early adulthood. It was in her 30s that she enrolled in a culinary school. "There is something called second-innings in life and for me, cooking was that. I call it my second marriage and this happened when I turned 32. When I started out, my only intention was to put good food on the table for my family. Not the conventional Indian food but something new," she says. Hailing from a coastal belt in Karnataka, Raji has always been good with preparing seafood specials, spicy chicken curries and coconut milk-rich stews. But when she got married to her North Indian husband, a different set of palate-associated expectations were upon her. "I had to change my style of cooking and learn new things. I went for a couple of short courses. But then I thought, if I have to make it big in this field, I should enroll in some great institutes. From the age of 36, I made it a point to do at least one course every year in a new school. Now, I am 41," she says.

From Le Cordon Bleu, Rosalind Miller cake school in London to Blue Elephant in Thailand and Ballymaloe Cooking School, Raji has been to some of the top culinary schools in the world. "It was a show on Netflix—*Somebody feed Phil*—that took me to Ireland. I would call Darina and Rachel Allen (founders of Ballymaloe Cooking School) my culinary inspiration. Their school is in a 100-acre area where they grow their supplies. It is my dream to live their life," she says. Although she got into cooking professionally late, Raji has always been working in the food industry. "I used to work in the backend of food export department in my husband's company. Even if I did not take up my passion of cooking, I would have still worked for something in which food is involved," says the culinary expert who prefers the titles 'wife' and 'mother' over 'chef.'

She started Beyond Dining Co as a way to channelise all her culinary knowledge in the right manner. Raji's magic initially took form in her outdoor kitchen where she started out a concept of inviting 10 guests for a unique culinary experience. This not only included food but also the ambience, music and other intricate details which awakens one's organoleptic senses. "If I was doing a Mediterranean-themed meal, then I would not just serve some hummus and call it an evening. I would try to bring things that are not available in the country. One dish that I am proud of is the Mediterranean rice that I make; it is called 'zereshk polo'. Made with barberry rice, which is not available in India, it is both visually appealing and flavoursome," says Raji. From 10, she went on to invite 30 and then more to her Greek-themed setting. "My husband always wanted a house in Greece. But that was not a place I wanted to live forever. So, we decided to give the studio a Greek theme," she says.

Raji also puts a lot of thought on the art of plating and the use of the right

The main objective of Beyond Dining Co

To provide a distinctive gastronomic delight that stays with our clients for long.

Three things you picked up during the lockdown.

- Learned to spent more time with family
- Discovered some new different cuisines
- Discovered my inner self for good

5 must-haves for every chef

1. Personal chef knife
2. Oven
3. Whisk
4. Spices
5. Instant yeast

Your top picks for crockery

- Mitti
- Tejashree Sagvekar
- Kitchin

Common mistakes that home chefs make

I would not call it mistakes but it is all in the path of trial and error.

- Number one is assuming that fancy food pictures attracts followers. It may, but that is not the only thing.
- Comparing the pricing for the food delivered from a restaurant and what is cooked at home, to give a reasonable price. For example, if a particular dish in a restaurant is sold at ₹500, and the same dish by the home chef is sold at ₹500. Restaurant food is priced higher keeping in mind the rent, staff salary. Unlike with the home chef. So, I think they need to quote a reasonable price. And this will help them to retain their existing clients.

5 must-watch cookery shows on OTT platforms.

I would say cooking and food culture goes hand in hand, what to eat and where to eat is very important, keeping that in mind I would say

1. *Somebody feed Phil* on Netflix
2. *Ugly Delicious* on Netflix
3. *Salt Fat Acid Heat* on Netflix
4. *Food Market* on Curiosity Stream
5. *Bon Appetit - Gerard Depardieu's Europe* on Curiosity Stream

tableware. She calls tableware the USP of a culinary brand. "We take a picture before we bite. So, it is important to like what we see," she says. When asked about her signature dish, she takes a pause and says, "I would say dal-chaawal (rice and lentils) is the signature dish of every woman in our country." Despite the fact that she loves experimenting with different cuisines, the Mumbai-based cook enjoys her dal-chaawal. "My children prefer baked stuff, French, Italian and other foreign cuisines over Indian food, but there is a point where they get tired of it and ask for the simple rice and lentil meal," she says.

Her go-to treat is a chocolate fudge cake which she says is also a family favourite. On a blue day, which is almost never according to her, she prefers to do some elaborate baking. It is true what they say about the therapeutic effects of baking. "The chocolate fudge cake takes a lot of effort and time to bake. I purposely engage in baking it, the moment I feel like I am about to lose my temper or patience. I have even taught my daughters how to bake it," she says.

With her new project coming up in Goa, Raji is busy with the setup and its operations. "I was supposed to launch another project in the beginning of this year. It is the concept of customised candy clouds in different flavours and colours. This is something that is associated with everyone's childhood. My idea is to provide the setup for different events, be it a wedding or a themed birthday party. Our carts with the candy making machines are ready; we are just waiting for the right time to launch it," she says. Apart from all these projects, Raji also plans on writing a new kind of culinary book with dining set up tips, entertainment ideas, tableware and plating ideas apart from recipes. ☐

10 cooking hacks.

1. When baking is done at a commercial level, they have a proofer. You could use a heating pad underneath the bowl for the batter to rise in half the time.
2. Some people are very sensitive to onions and they have runny eyes while chopping onions. Cut the onion in half 4-5 hours prior to using it and place it inside the refrigerator in a zip-lock bag.
3. This one is for bacon lovers. You get a lot of grease once cooked, sometimes you use it and at times you wash it down the drain when it is still hot. But what happens once it goes back to room temperature? It gets hard and this can clog your drain pipes. Place a foil in a container and pour the hot grease inside it, it will cool down and harden. You can now dispose it along with your garbage.
4. When you place butter inside the freezer or chiller and you forget to remove it and place it at room temperature, the quickest way to soften it is to grate the butter. Within two minutes you will have softened butter.
5. Buttermilk is now used in baking as well. In order to make quick buttermilk, mix 500ml of milk and 2 tbsp of vinegar or lemon juice in a bowl. Keep it aside for five minutes and use it as per your baking instructions.
6. Add 1tsp of baking soda while boiling eggs. The shells will peel out easily.
7. Most of the time when you have leftover rotis and you try to warm it in the microwave, it dries out or gets hard. You can dampen a kitchen paper towel and cover the roti and place inside the microwave. It will stay soft.
8. If you don't have cupcake paper cups for baking, use parchment paper to make tulip cupcake paper cups.
9. To get perfectly round omelettes, grease a cookie cutter on the inside and place it in the pan, pour the egg batter inside the cutter.
10. For fluffier whipped cream, chill your beater and bowl beforehand inside the refrigerator. The chilled cream and equipment will give it more volume and better texture.

A message to all home chefs stuck at home?

Now is a good time, so use it to hone your skills. Enrol in online workshops by some top culinary schools. The admissions are usually expensive but there is a reduction in prices because of the pandemic.

Babka

You will need: loaf pans

Ingredients for dough:

- Cold water- ½ cup + 100ml (if required)
- Instant dry yeast- 2tsp
- Flour- 5cups
- Brown sugar or castor sugar- ½ cup
- Butter- 1 ¼ cup
- Egg- 2 eggs+ 1 egg white (cold)
- Vanilla extract- 3tbsp

Ingredients for filling:

- Flour- 20g
- Brown sugar- 160g
- Egg- 70ml
- Honey- 20ml
- Vanilla- 1tsp
- Melted butter- 165g
- Cocoa powder- 20g

Method:

- Mix all the Ingredients for filling. And keep aside.
- Combine all the Ingredients for the dough in a mixer bowl. Mix it on low speed for 7-10 minutes till it all combines. Grease a bowl. And place the dough in it, cover and keep aside to rise.
- Once ready, weigh out each 200g of dough, roll it in rectangle, now spread the filling in the centre, roll it down towards you, now cut it in the centre straight, and shape in a braid.
- Leave it for proofing in the greased tin, pre-heat it at 170°C.
- Once ready, bake for 35-40 mins depending on your oven at 170°C.

Langues De Chat: (Cat's Tongue Biscuit)

Ingredients:

- Butter, softened- 9tbsp
- White sugar- ½ cup
- Egg- 3 whites
- Vanilla extract- 1 ½ tsp
- All-purpose flour- 1 ½ cups

For topping:

- Melted chocolate or pistachio grinded

Method:

- Mix all the ingredients for the biscuit. Fill the batter in a piping bag without a tip and leave it in the fridge for an hour.
- Pre-heat oven at 160°C.
- Cut the piping bag 3/4th inch at tip. Pipe out the biscuits on a parchment paper placed in a baking tray.
- Drizzle the pistachio on top and bake for 15-20 minutes at 160°C.
- Or else just bake the plain biscuits and once cool, dip it in melted chocolate. Store it in container.

Milk bread

Ingredients for roux:

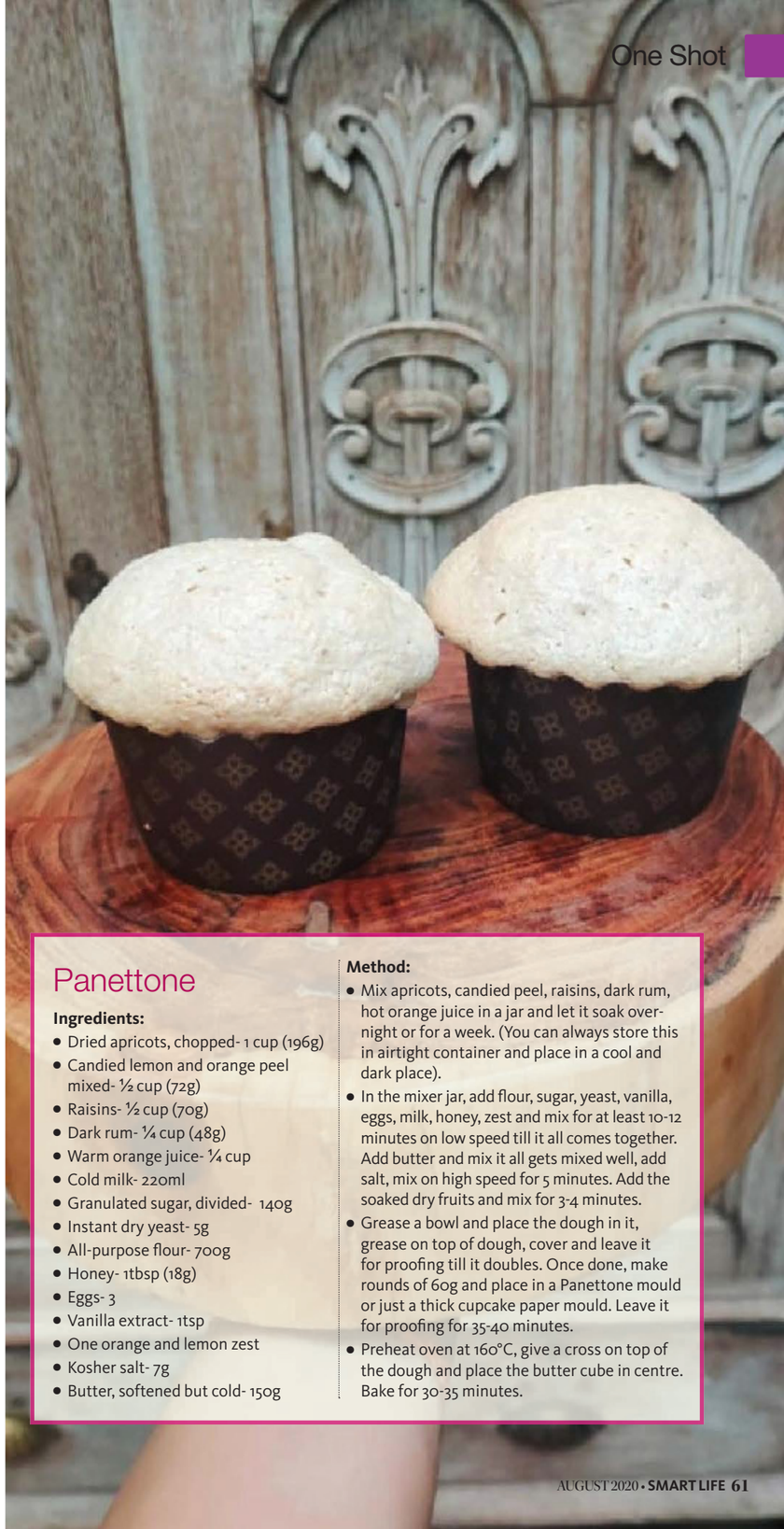
- Milk-125ml
- Flour-40g
- Make roux

Ingredients for dough:-

- Warm milk-300ml
- Eggs- 2
- Add 540g sieved flour
- Castor sugar- 115g
- Milk powder- 6tbsp
- Instant dry yeast-4tsp
- Salt- 2tsp
- Butter- 6tbsp room temperature

Method:

- Warm up the milk, add flour, keep stirring till it reaches a smooth consistency. Let it cool.
- Now mix warm milk, the prepared roux, flour, milk powder, yeast and salt. Knead in the mixer for 5 minutes. Add butter and mix for 15 minutes or till it turns into a soft dough. Make sure to scrape down everything.
- Remove the dough on the kitchen platform, and knead it for 5 minutes. Let it rise for an hour. It will be double the size.
- Cut it in three parts. Shape it. Roll it in a long rectangle. Now start rolling from the top towards you. Place it in a bread tin to proof.
- Once ready give it a egg wash and bake it for 30 mins at 170°C.



Panettone

Ingredients:

- Dried apricots, chopped- 1 cup (196g)
- Candied lemon and orange peel mixed- ½ cup (72g)
- Raisins- ½ cup (70g)
- Dark rum- ¼ cup (48g)
- Warm orange juice- ¼ cup
- Cold milk- 220ml
- Granulated sugar, divided- 140g
- Instant dry yeast- 5g
- All-purpose flour- 700g
- Honey- 1tbsp (18g)
- Eggs- 3
- Vanilla extract- 1tsp
- One orange and lemon zest
- Kosher salt- 7g
- Butter, softened but cold- 150g

Method:

- Mix apricots, candied peel, raisins, dark rum, hot orange juice in a jar and let it soak overnight or for a week. (You can always store this in airtight container and place in a cool and dark place).
- In the mixer jar, add flour, sugar, yeast, vanilla, eggs, milk, honey, zest and mix for at least 10-12 minutes on low speed till it all comes together. Add butter and mix it all gets mixed well, add salt, mix on high speed for 5 minutes. Add the soaked dry fruits and mix for 3-4 minutes.
- Grease a bowl and place the dough in it, grease on top of dough, cover and leave it for proofing till it doubles. Once done, make rounds of 60g and place in a Panettone mould or just a thick cupcake paper mould. Leave it for proofing for 35-40 minutes.
- Preheat oven at 160°C, give a cross on top of the dough and place the butter cube in centre. Bake for 30-35 minutes.

Oriental crab

Ingredients:

- Red crab- 4 pieces
- Onion, wedges- 3
- Thai red chilli, sliced- 3
- Ginger, minced- 20g
- Chopped garlic-2tbsp
- Spring onion, diced- 1 sprig
- Dark soy sauce- 4tbsp
- Oyster sauce- 6tbsp
- Chilli paste- 2tbsp
- Salt-1/2 tsp
- Sugar- 1tsp
- Pinch of pepper
- Water-1/2 cup
- Corn flour- 1tsp

Method

- Remove the shell of the crab, scrape the inner parts and clean well. Cut into eight pieces and pat crab claws.
- Deep fry onion, chilli and crab till half cooked. Remove and place it on kitchen paper and drain.
- Heat oil. Saute garlic and ginger. Add chilli paste and seasoning. Add the soy sauce, oyster sauce and cook.
- Mix water and corn flour and stir well. Add this to the ready mix in the pan. Cook and just before serving sprinkle spring onion.

Turkish chicken pide

Ingredients for bread:

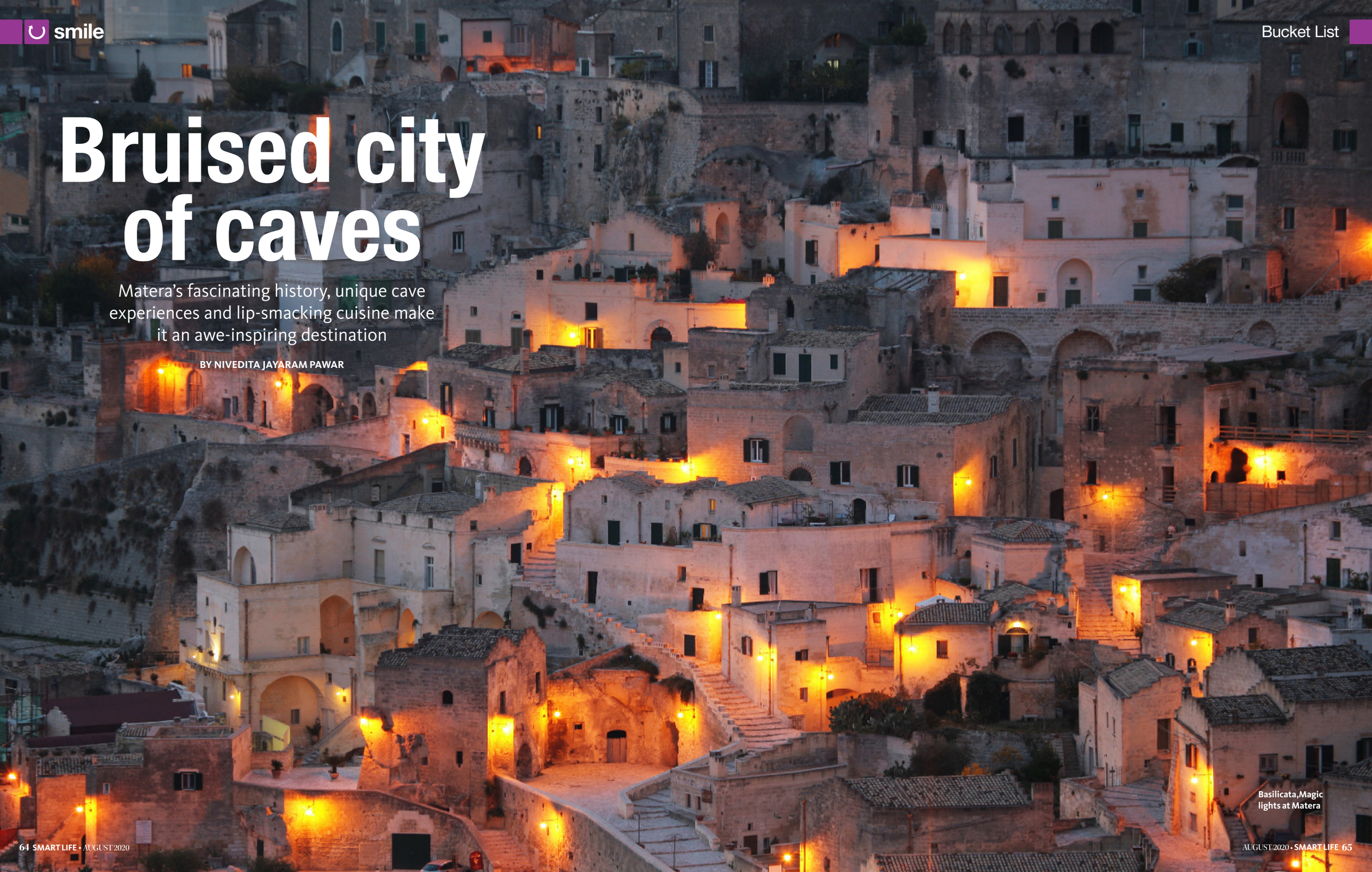
- Plain flour/ maida- 375g (3 cups)
- Sugar- 50g
- Instant yeast -1 ½ tsp
- Milk- 35g
- Water- 190ml (little more if required)
- Egg yolk- 20g
- Olive oil- 1tbsp + more for greasing
- Salt- 1 tsp

Ingredients for Toppings:

- Mutton mince / chicken mince- 500g
- Onion -2 (big and finely chopped)
- Green chilli- 3-4, finely chopped
- Garlic cloves- 6-8 pods, finely chopped
- Barberries- 2tbsp Or Candied lemon peel (finely chopped)- 2tbsp (optional)
- Ginger garlic paste- ½ tsp
- Tomato- 2 (big and finely chopped)
- Red pepper -1 (finely chopped)
- Chili flakes or paprika powder -1tsp
- Black pepper powder- 1 ½ tsp
- Cumin powder- ¾ tsp
- Tomato ketchup- 1tbsp
- Salt- as per taste
- Parsley leaves chopped- 2 tbsp
- Butter- 1 ½ tbsp
- Oil- As required
- Lime juice- 1 tbsp Or Sumac-1 ½ tsp
- Cheddar cheese or mozzarella- 200g
- Egg : 1 (for egg wash)

Method:

- In a mixing bowl mix everything except salt. Pour the yeast mix to the flour and gently combine on medium speed till it all comes together (for around 7-8 minutes). Add salt and knead on high speed for 5-7 minutes, till you can feel that the dough is smooth and soft. Rub little olive oil in your hands and dab on the dough; cover nicely and keep for 1 -2 hours, till the dough is double the size.
- Once ready, weigh 200g each piece. Roll it in rectangular shape. And start rolling from both the sides. Pinch it at both the edges. Should look like a small boat. Leave it for proofing for almost an hour again.
- When you leave your dough for proofing, meanwhile make the filling.
- In a pan, heat the oil and butter and sauté the chopped onion, garlic and green chillies. Once translucent add ginger garlic paste (optional) and fry. Next add pepper powder, chilli flakes or paprika, sumac or lime juice and cumin powder. Add the tomatoes and cook till they are soft. Mix in the pepper and fry for another minute. Then add the minced meat and salt, mix well, after 6-7 minutes add tomato ketchup. Put on low flame, cover and cook. Adjust salt, once done add chopped parsley. Let it cool.
- Preheat oven at 170°C. Give egg wash. Bake the proofed pide without filling with blind bake technique for 10 minutes, then remove and fill it with the mine mix. And bake for more 30 minutes depending on the Oven you are using, drizzle cheese on top for the final five minutes. Check whether cooked with a toothpick.
- Serve warm.



Bruised city of caves

Matera's fascinating history, unique cave experiences and lip-smacking cuisine make it an awe-inspiring destination

BY NIVEDITA JAYARAM PAWAR

Basilicata,Magic lights at Matera

Matera is both heartbreaking and enthralling. This town in the south of Italy, used to be called the "shame of Italy" because of rising poverty levels that led to starvation and death. It is said to be the third-oldest continually inhabited settlement in the world, after Aleppo and Jericho. For 9,000 years, people here lived in caves built into the cliffs. Diseases, particularly malaria, cholera and typhoid, were rampant. Things were so bad that in 1952, the Italian government forced villagers to move out of their caves and into nearby towns with more hygienic living conditions.

Today, Matera has been carefully restored and brought to life with exquisite hotels, spectacular cave churches, mesmerising art galleries, fascinating hiking paths and Michelin-starred restaurants. It was designated the European Capital of Culture for 2019 and the Sassi di Matera was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993.

I visited Matera in 2019 as part of a familiarisation trip organised by the Italy Tourism Board. The breathtaking view of homes carved into rock, piled one on top of the other and cloaked in the warm, pinkish glow of the setting sun seemed both surreally beautiful and a little eerie.

Here are the top things you must do if you get to visit this extraordinary city:

Sassi in Matera

PHOTO NIVEDITA JAYARAM PAWAR

The stunning sassi

Among Matera's unmissable sights include the sassi (Italian for 'stones'). It is a network of homes, stores and churches perched on the edge of a steep ravine and connected via narrow paths or stairs. Carved out of the cream-coloured limestone called tufa, the one-room stone homes or caves are an example of ingenious and space-saving designs. Step onto one of the narrow lanes between houses, and you are actually standing on the roof of the house below. Some of these stone homes have now been refashioned as luxury hotels, boutiques, stores and trattorias.

The best way to absorb the history and unique atmosphere of the sassi is on foot, strolling around the narrow cobblestone alleyways and uneven stone staircases. The rewards are manifold—cute courtyards adorned with flower pots, cave churches, tall cactus plants with striking red and green fruit called prickly pears and expansive views of the sassi. Just grab a city map at the hotel reception and follow the signposted walking routes. Or if you want to wing it, it is the perfect place to wander about.

Matera evokes a sense of déjà-vu because the town has been the location for many movies that required a stark, mysterious and primal setting. Mel Gibson chose it as the location for *The Passion of the Christ*, Pier Pasolini for his *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Bruce Beresford for *King David* and Catherine Hardwicke for *The Nativity Story*.

Explore the churches and museums

Matera is dotted with many rock churches. The most vivid of them is the 12th-century Piazza Duomo with its beautiful frescoes and crypts. The platform at the edge of the cathedral square also offers some of the most breathtaking views of the sassi, especially at sunset. The most intriguing is San Pietro Barisano, a 12th-century church that houses underground, narrow passageways with 4-foot niches carved in the walls. Corpses were placed there in wet weather.

La Talpa, a cave restaurant in Matera

Salvador Dali Space Elephant sculpture at the Square in Matera

PHOTOS NIVEDITA JAYARAM PAWAR

Befitting a capital of culture, Matera has several rewarding museums, including the Archaeological Museum, with a collection of 4th and 5th-century Greek vases and the Museum of Medieval and Modern Art, which includes work by Carlo Levi, whose 1945 book *Christ Stopped at Eboli* first alerted the world to the living conditions in this part of Italy. But the most compelling is the Museum of Contemporary Sculpture, which one can reach after an uphill, circuitous trek through Sasso Caveoso. The galleries are filled with a wide-ranging collection of mostly Italian works from the end of the 19th century to the present day. Five gigantic bronze Salvador Dali reproductions can be spotted around town, including a melting clock and the giant Space Elephant.

Eat in a cave restaurant

The cuisine of southern Italy is known as cucina povera, or poor man's cooking, but I found it rich and hearty. Enormous plates of tempting local cheeses, cruschi, a type of fried sun-dried peppers, and prosciutto are

A view of the Sassi

The antipasti spread in La Talpa, Matera

PHOTOS **NIVEDITA JAYARAM PAWAR**

served as antipasti. Freshly made pasta, tortellini filled with meat and the unusually-shaped Matera bread made from semolina dough turn up as main meals. Pizzas with weird and wonderful toppings remain everyone's favourite. Then wash it all down with local aglianico wine, an inky red mineral-heavy wine. The restaurant La Talpa is one of the best places to relish Materan cuisine. Entirely excavated in the rock and formerly used as a dwelling, the restaurant comes with a view of the cathedral. The pizzas cooked in the wood oven are particularly delightful and the espressos are sufficiently potent.

Travel tips

- Getting around Matera requires walking and climbing stairs. So, bring your walking shoes and prepare to work up a sweat.
- Matera is a great place to visit at any time of year, although April to October offers the best weather conditions.
- The Central Market is great to pick up pasta and dried peppers. The cucù, a colourful ceramic whistle shaped like a cuckoo, symbolises good luck and makes for an offbeat souvenir.
- Matera provides photo opportunities at every turn. Be armed with a camera.
- Go hiking. Matera is situated over a ravine and the topography makes the city perfect for hiking and exploring.

Stay in a cave hotel

The most atmospheric and exotic places to stay in Matera are the cave hotels. Carved out of the rock thousands of years ago, they have been lovingly restored with arched ceilings, contemporary artwork and modern-day comforts. I stayed at The Palazzotto, a 16th-century cave hotel located just a few steps from the historic cathedral. A chic and atmospheric hotel with limestone walls, subdued lighting and views across the sassi from a romantic Juliet balcony. A beautiful way to preserve a piece of history. ☐

It's a wrap

In the lap of memories

Oshin Grace Daniell talks about revisiting the past

A month ago, I got my old laptop working. It was during lockdown cleaning that I found the system in the corner of my cupboard, covered in dust. I remembered how the man at the computer service centre said with a smirk: "Madam, discard this and get a new one." The worn-out skin and missing keys might have been a put-off but how could I throw away something that has been a part of my life for almost eight years? It was my first laptop and you know there is a thing about firsts that makes it hard to let go. I wanted to make it work. So, I took up the job with the help of a cousin.

Together, we succeeded in resurrecting the system. But the moment I got access to the desktop I regretted the whole idea of fixing it. The wallpaper came in as a poignant reminder of a time I could never go back to. It was a group photograph of friends who I had to cut off at some point in life. The picture took me back to the day it was clicked. It was when I go-karted for the first time. I distinctly remember how I was made to test the kart project made by my best friend's brother, who I had a crush on at the time. His previous models had failed and I happened to be the only willing volunteer to try his fourth attempt—things I did to impress a boy! The photograph was our celebratory moment. The scenes of that day kept on playing in my head—the weather, the people and the place. But that was until I saw a folder called 'personal'.

There was a part of me that did not want to open it but I could not resist the urge to find out what was inside. A window opened with folders, systematically separated according to month and year, which contained photographs, videos and other media files documenting my late teens and early adulthood. A tsunami of emotions hit me as I scrolled through photographs, sloppy love letters, screenshots of hilarious text conversations and funny videos from my college times. I smiled, I laughed and even shed tears. I realised how I shoved a lot of memories—both happy and sad—into a corner along with my laptop. These memories were dormant in my brain for so many years that it almost felt like it never happened. It was like my brain got an electric shock, awakening all the inactive circuits.

I thought it would stop after a day or two but the feeling lingered on. As a matter of fact, it felt like someone was narrating all these incidents of the past inside my head without a break. It weighed me down as my brain kept on giving me suggestions on how differently I could have dealt with things. Where were these pearls of wisdom when I needed it? Maybe it is just a phase or the effect of the lockdown. Like everything else, probably, this too shall pass. But if it does not, I can always shove it into a corner of the cupboard. And this time, just leave it there and never look back. □

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