



Tea Trails

THE PLANTERS SOCIETY OF EASTERN INDIA

Season's Greetings to all of you...



The onset of autumn brings the much needed joy and fun through festivals of Durga Puja and Kali Puja particularly in this part of the country. However, this year we have been robbed of some fun and festivities as we are living through very challenging times. Covid-19 has led to deprivation of our freedom, loss of lives, fear and isolation, suffered all around the

globe and has been a big blow to the mankind and a big deterrent for regular education for school and college going children.

There seems to be no end in sight unless a miracle happens or an effective vaccine comes to our rescue. To overcome this difficult period and to fight this pandemic, we have to commit ourselves to some essential rules of social distancing without being socially aloof. The importance of wearing a mask cannot be undermined, personal hygiene like washing & sanitising hands need to be stepped up and avoiding crowded place needs to be strictly adhered to...

In this pandemic we have also lost some of our dear friends from the planters' fraternity. They shall be fondly remembered for times to come...

May God give peace to their departed souls.

I take this opportunity to update you about our Annual General Meeting, which is tra-

ditionally held within September but the authorities have granted automatic extension of 3 months to all Companies/Institutions for holding the same.

In view of Govt regulations for holding gatherings/meetings, the committee has decided to seek extension of time for holding of an AGM upto June 2021. We will keep you posted about a firm date and venue of the AGM as soon as its finalised.

However, all accounts related work is up to date and duly audited. Once the situation improves, we will hold our AGM and all members will be informed about the date etc well in advance.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Warm personal regards,

Sunil Munshi

President

To overcome this difficult period and to fight this pandemic, we have to commit ourselves to some essential rules of social distancing without being socially aloof.

From the Editor



Pandemic has pounded us literally. It has been an experience of a different kind.

It has been a tough time with some strict mandatory measures like wearing a mask, social distancing and good hand hygiene.

Washing hands in the pre corona era was not strictly enforced on people and was left to everyone's common sense. Some rinsed and some merely introduced their fingers to the running tap water.

Not anymore. Now you count your cleaning practice for twenty seconds, for now it is scrubbing counting, cleaning, wiping dry and then sanitizing.

The group conversations and official discussions would have people at times, breathe down the other people's necks – so acute was the proximity during such interactions.

Not anymore. Watch your space is the mantra..

This ruthless pandemic has had a better and a benevolent side too
It has made us pause think and act.

Families that were thrown in together for days and months, learnt to adjust listen and communicate with effect.

Compassion and tolerance sprang in action, empathy for the lesser privileged was witnessed. Self-reliance came into being. Children who stayed away from domestic chores learnt to cook bake and clean. A much required family bonding has been in progress, no dissent, instead peace has descended into our homes and won over stress, disagreements and conflict.

We also had the time and the tenacity to sit in a place quietly and listen to the sounds of nature. The thunder and the lightening, passing of storms, squalls all were heard and seen in great wonder. We watched nature from close quarters, something that we had no time for earlier. We have been observing with great awe the sky changing from crimson to yellow, from red to different shades of fiery orange, watching the setting sun with a radiance that is breathtaking, looking up at a perfect blue sky, savouring and relishing the outdoors from a quiet window ledge of our rooms that we hardly ever found time to lean on or sit by, with complete mindfulness and tranquility.

In the pandemic everyone had a different strategy and different module of survival and sustainability.

It is interesting to see how some members of the PSEI spent these tough days happily, making this time into the most memorable times of their lives.

Editorial Board:
Anju MUNSHI | Brenda DENNIS

Members Speak

COVID TIMES...



Meenakshi Atal

Who ever said Corona Time hangs heavy?

We have had the busiest period of our lives thanks to our "grandboys" who kept us on our toes happily engaged. I would start the morning with "me" time till the boys were roused from their slumber rather reluctantly... sleep is never enough if we need to get ready for class! Two rounds of massage for the six year old then time to be hauled up from bed. Followed with a quick shower and multiple reminders to brush teeth, we would finally be ready for online class. Books for Saahir (six year old) already laid out according to the timetable by the teacher grandma who would want everything in place. Young fella logs on and classes begin. The fourteen year old fortunately independent needed only to be given breakfast during the breakfast break. Anxious granny believes that the brain needs fuel to run full steam!

In between the two boys was the poor husband with simple needs – a little attention and a cuppa tea with his newspaper! Come 10.10 am – hurray classes would get over and now came the tough bit to keep the little boy engaged till lunch. Fortunately Saahir loves assembling Lego – creating the most fascinating vehicles-Bumblebee to space ships, lifters, transformers – I am educated with the modern toy vocabulary. Homework and reading was never an issue, it was done diligently

Lunch time! "Whats for lunch Nani? Haddi Chicken, cheese dosa, pasta, pizza, what flavour ice cream for dessert? I needed to serve different palates as our elder one Vihaan liked quite the opposite – paneer, mushrooms, boneless chicken... kebabs.

We, grandparents enjoyed having our meals together with our grandboys. Afternoon time came with some respite when Saahir would disappear with the ipad to watch his favourite shows while others retired for screen time or a nap.

Come 4.00 pm HUNGRY! HUNGRY! "I

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The Merits and Demerits of Lockdown



A K Chowdhuri

1) Six months of pandemic has taught one all the virtues of Patience. One became quite regular and punctual, despite the fact there was no pressure on commitments, meetings, appointments and even golf tee off timings!

2) This period is also reminiscent of my early days in tea, when the predominant attire from early morning was short pants. Recently without any outings or presence of visitors I found shorts as the most convenient and comfortable dress!

3) One aspect was to look forward to the meals, and the in house cook excelled in producing various culinary delights. Thank God I dont have a weighing scale in the house!

4) In conclusion, I must admit my eight months continuous hospitalisation at Woodlands Nursing Home after the shootout was more tolerable than the lock down situation prevailing since March 2020.



Covid Times

haven't eaten anything for two hours" How amused I am when I see the little fella on a stool raiding the larder. And finally came outdoor playtime – not only did he look forward to it so did I – temporary peace!

The day is not over without a face wash followed by "EEANA MEENA MUTKI MA-SALA" I was told in Chinese it means 'it's time for a leg massage!' According to Saahir he needed 4 meals:

1. morning wake massage for energy,

2. HUNGRY needs no explanation, 3. Face wash refreshing energy, 4. EEANA MEENA... for sound sleep!

Sudoku, several rounds of Snakes and ladders, Pictureka and Scrabble were regular board games with grandpa and grandma. Vihaan, a techie and a foodie encouraged me to try out a whole lot of new recipes sauces, chutneys, wraps, tortillas, pasta with homemade pesto sauce, burgers, parathas, cakes, doughnuts – the list is endless. Dishes exchanged with neighbours added to a variety of food on the table.

I am educated on bringing up boys-a skill that I have learnt not mastered as yet... karate kicks, various punching techniques, different kinds of cart-wheels, boxing stances flips on and off the bed was something I got used too. Forty years with boys in school didn't teach me what I have learnt in a few months at home!

Tollygunge Club was a haven – walk, play and eat. Hubby time, my work and the delightful chatter of the grandboys kept us fully engaged throughout the day and I must confess I loved it.



REMINISCENCES

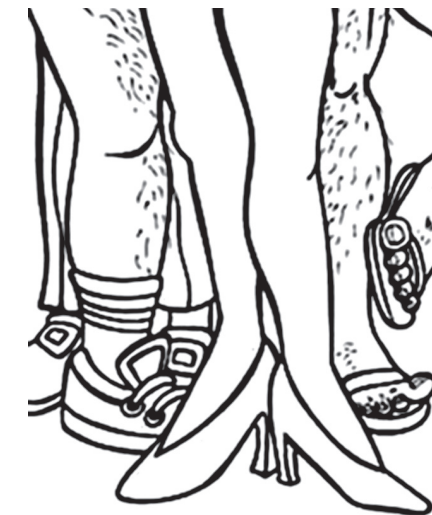
When men with hairy chests and legs walked the ramp!

– Krupa David, member The Planters Society of Eastern India (continued from 6th Edition)



One day, John showed me a letter from HO which stated that I lacked Factory Experience and that this deficiency was to be made

up! John promptly put me in charge of the factory notwithstanding that there were two engineers on the garden! I also was supposed to go to the field and 'keep my hand in!' Looking after the factory was a 24 hr job. Manufacture started at around midnight and on most days carried on non-stop. I would have dinner at 8 pm and push off to the factory and return only at 5am, try to sleep till 9am, have breakfast and out to the field. Shalini was born on the 22nd of April 1973, and when I would return to sleep she would be up and wailing! With none or very little electricity, Jyoti would sit up nights fanning her. Life was tough! Today, when I hear young assistants complain



about the A/C in the bedroom packing up, I think back to those days. I think it toughened us.

I can never thank John enough for giving me this invaluable experience in the Factory. This stood me in good stead during my entire career, spanning 40 years. I made good teas and no factory assistant or fitter could pull a fast one on me! We had our share of problems at Zurrantee – first, there was the lack of money to

run the garden and secondly, the labour problems. Not that Zurrantee had a bad labour force. It was just that times were bad. Samsing further up the hill was notorious! Bad labour force, anti-management and highly politicised. Som Kochar was the Manager and an equally tough nut! I had a sneaky feeling that he thrived in such an atmosphere! I can recollect just a couple of incidents at Zurrantee.

One evening, returning from the club, I found my chowkidar fast asleep (drunk) near the refrigerator! To wake him up I took out a bottle of water from the fridge and slammed it down on the floor near his head! He jumped up like a cat with its tail on fire and rushed out onto the back verandah and promptly fell down the stairs, screaming that the 'sahib' was murdering him! We went off to bed and I assumed the chowkidar went home. Next morning, my trusted bearer Maila, who was totally devoted to us (he used to sit outside the bedroom door the whole

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...walked the ramp!

night, knitting, when I was in the factory!) told me that there was trouble brewing. He should know, because his wife was one of the union leaders who was going to lead the procession! Apparently, the plan was to march to the factory and demand that David Sahib apologise for assaulting the Chowkidar! I had already briefed John about what had happened.

Apart from calling me an idiot, he said: "Not to worry, we will handle it." (I had, of course, not even touched him). Soon, around 500 labour assembled around the office, baying for my blood. This drama carried on for 2 hours, till John told them that David Sahib was prepared to apologise for "disturbing" his sleep in the most unusual way but, thereafter, the Chowkidar must be prepared to face a charge sheet and possible dismissal for sleeping on duty (offence under standing orders in force) and 'jeopardising' the security of the Management and the Bungalow!) This they were not expecting and did not have an answer to! Out of the corner of my eye, I could see my bearer Maila whisper into the ears of the Chowkidar, who had been ranting and raving just a few minutes back.

All of a sudden, the Chowkidar ran to the front and shouted that he now recollected that the Sahib was thirsty and had opened the fridge and a bottle had dropped out and burst! He, for that matter, was just sitting down near the fridge and had just closed his eyes in deep thought, thinking of the goat that he had lost that morning! Suffice it to say that what I could not do, the women leading the crowd did! Last we saw of the chowkidar was him pelting down the road pursued by a gaggle of angry females!

Jyoti returned and was happy to be back but was mentally very disturbed as she could not be near her mother when she passed away. I could see that she was not her usual self. The bungalow's kitchen garden and the club filled in this void, but she needed something more to help

her cope.

We decided to start a family and Shalini, our eldest, was born on the 22nd of April, 1973. She was not due for another two weeks and Jyoti was at the D&DMA hospital for her confinement. In those days, because of the distance and chances of labour disturbances on the garden, expectant mothers were shifted to the hospital much in advance as a measure of abundant caution. It was 6.30 am on a Saturday morning and John and I were standing in section No.16 inspecting our flume, when he suddenly suggested that I should go up to Darjeeling and see Jyoti. I told him that I would like to go nearer the delivery date, but he insisted that I go the same day and return next day. In my excitement, I jumped into my car and drove off! It was around 7am. After crossing Mal Bazar some 30 minutes along the way, I realized that I had brought no clothes, no toiletries - nothing! I was not about to turn back and, therefore, decided to meet Jyoti and return the same evening. It would be a tiresome drive - 4 hours each way!

I reached Darjeeling around 11.30 am, driving non-stop. It was bloody cold! However, I went straight up to her room and found her in labour! I called the nurse and she said that it was nothing to get worried about and that the Doctor would come at 3 pm, after lunch. She gave Jyoti a pain killer, saying that it was a stomach spasm! I was not convinced as I have a fair knowledge of medicine coming from a large family of Doctors. Her spasms were coming at regular intervals. I rang up the Doctor at his house and he told me to calm down! The baby would not be due for another week at least!

It was now 12.30 and she was having trouble! I said that I would have a look and, lo and behold, I saw the baby's head about to come out! I shouted for the nurse and she came running and was as shocked as I was. We rang the Doctor who thought I was drunk and hallucinating, till the nurse took the phone and told him that the baby had arrived! To cut a long

story short, Shalini arrived at 1 pm with no fuss! I was kicked out of the room and was called in an hour later to see and hold my first-born! Shalini still carries this trait of being a 'fast worker'!

I had to stay back at the Planters Club and froze! However, this occasion warranted me to polish off the better part of a bottle of Scotch which - along with the blazing fireplace - kept me reasonably warm! I rang up John to give him the news and took 2 days' leave. I had to put in a few supplies by way of some toilet articles and some inner wear. Not having much cash with me and with no credit cards in those days, the only option was to sign an I.O.U. chit at the club for a bit of cash. Those were the days when chits were honoured and planters were known to honour their debts. Alas, no more! Later generations of planters tended to have short memories and the club suffered and was wont to discontinue this helpful practice.

I must mention that the Planters Club in those days was very 'pukka pukka' (proper)! You had to be suitably attired in the dining room, which meant a jacket and tie. These items not being a part of my current wardrobe, I had to eat all my meals at Keventers or Glenarys - eating joints across the road! Mrs. Wisden was the Secretary of the Club and God help you if you contravened any of her rules!

A few years later, when Shalini was 2 or 3 years old, we were staying at the club and went into the dining room for lunch. Shalini was wearing a pair of shorts as it was a warm summer. In walked Mrs. Wisden and told us that shorts were not allowed in the dining hall and could we take Shalini out and get her 'properly' attired!! We had no option but to obey! How times have changed! Now, the dining Hall has been rented out to a Marwari caterer, and barring coming for a meal in your thongs or knickers - anything goes!

I returned to the Garden and went back a week later to collect mother and child.

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...walked the ramp!

Meera and Kuldip Rawat, our great friends from Hope, accompanied me. On the way back, there was a massive storm and torrential rains. Driving through Aibheel, we had to literally cut our way through the fallen trees! When we reached our bungalow, Shalini was crying her head off; nothing would pacify her till we detected that she had ripped of the bandage from the umbilical stump which was bleeding quite a bit. 'Dr David' soon got to work and cleaned up the stump, disinfected it and plastered it!

Looking back I think we were quite good young parents! Chand and Pushpa, other close friends from EngoTea Estate, bordering Zurrantee, were always there for us. They had two lovely young kids of their own - Vrinda, who then was about 4, and Bunny (Vikrant), 7. We are still good friends and keep in touch. The only problem I personally faced was coming home from the factory at 5 am to sleep and finding Shalini wide awake having had her sleep!

Jyoti appeared to have perked up a lot having Shalini to look after. She also started playing tennis as Pushpa and Chand were keen players. Shalini was a lovely baby and gave us no trouble. We were very fond of driving through the forests and doing a bit of poaching, Shalini lying peacefully in her basket in the back seat! In later years, she has even helped me to skin an animal! Strong genes!

Tennis nearly caused a serious crack in our 'matrimonial brickwork'!

Jyoti was after me to get her a new tennis racket and I was stalling for time in an effort to accumulate some money. This state of affairs continued, with her playing with a borrowed racket and pestering me for a new one! Matters came to a head one day when she said: "If I had asked my father he would have got me one immediately." My male ego was bruised and I replied that she was most welcome to go to Nagpur and ask her father! This all took place at breakfast. At about 12

noon, when I came to the office from the field, the peon mentioned that "Memsahib" had asked for the driver and that my car had been seen driving out of the garden! When I went to my bungalow, all the servants were huddled together and on my questioning them about the whereabouts of the memsahib said that "Memsahib has packed her bags and has said she was going off to Nagpur! She would board the train from Siliguri!"

Now, I knew that she did not have much money with her as it was nearly month end and, most importantly, had not taken the Ostermilk tin for the Baby's feed! (Shalini was only around 4 months old!). Secure in the knowledge that she would not be able to fulfil her threat, I had a good lunch and a nice lie-back and went off to the office at three pm. I left office after work and went directly to Chander Kapoor's bungalow for a cup of tea and from there to the Club! We had a few drinks and then went to the Chulsa Dhaba for dinner! Returning home at 10 pm I found a grinning Maila (my bearer) standing outside, eager to inform me that "Memsahib" had returned!

I entered the bedroom, not uttering a word, quietly changed and got into bed and soon was fast asleep! Whoever said that "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" was spot on! Suddenly, I was rudely awakened out of slumber with someone digging a sharp nail into my side! "How can you sleep? You have not asked me what happened and how the baby is? You are a useless so and so... etc etc!!" It was 1 am and I was in no mood to get into a fight! I said that as the next day was Sunday we could carry the 'battle' over to the next day! To cut a long story short, I woke up next morning on the floor, having been pushed out of the bed sometime during the night!

Madam apparently had decided to stop off at Bagrakote where Navin Huria, my old buddy, was an assistant and borrow the necessary funds from him. Bad luck for her - Navin had pushed off on leave! She saw Alok Roy, another assistant, but

could not proposition him for funds! So, instead, she made an excuse that Navin was to give her a tennis racket and could Alok get it from his bungalow? This Alok did, and Madam came back home with one of Navin's rackets! Life thereafter was not easy, but we had a good laugh and this story was told and retold many a time over a drink! Suffice it to say that I got her a nice racket as soon as my next monthly pay cheque went into my bank account! We had a happy stay at Zurrantee. Chulsa club was great and Wednesdays was tennis day when we played tennis and had a high tea. Monika was in charge of the tea and God help anyone who tried to palm off samosas and sweets from Matelli! 'Tea' had to be all home-made and we had some fantastic eats thanks to the ladies trying to outdo each other. Bachelors were not exempted and had to produce a good tea!

I forgot to mention that while Jyoti was away at Nagpur after her mother died, we had the club AGM. There was a fearful fight amongst the senior ladies, because no-one agreed to take on the position of 'catering member'! By this time, I had had quite a few under the belt and shouted from the back: "My wife will take it on!" It was unanimously agreed and passed. I nearly passed out when John and Monika gave me hell for opening my big mouth! This was, of course, followed by another tongue-lashing from Jyoti on her return! Jyoti was a good sport and took on the assignment although we were very junior. All the senior Managers and their wives rallied around and helped. Monika, of course, was always there for us. I was still getting used to being a husband and father! My days of wandering around days and nights in the forest were severely curtailed, if not stopped altogether, what with the new Wild Life Act of 1972 introduced by Indira Gandhi and my new responsibilities!

Shalini was now nearly a year old and we planned a great bash for her first birth-

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Thinking of the *Good Times...*



...walked the ramp!

day. The idea was to have a children's party and a dinner for the adults. I wanted to have a big barbeque out on the lawn and do it in style! Unfortunately, the guest list was nearly 40 couples and my wallet was lean! A 25 kg goat would cost me a staggering 200 rupees - 50% of my monthly take-home pay! What to do? So Chand Kapoor got in on the act and suggested why not shoot a deer or a wild boar?

I liked the idea and Jyoti agreed. On two Sundays before the party, Chand and I trudged through the Chulsa and Jaldapara forest night and day, but with no luck! We also had to be careful that we did not get caught by the forest guards! Just two days

left and we were desperate and resorted to something that I had always shunned: going out at night in the car with a spotlight! However, we decided to still our conscience and go ahead. I am happy to report that I shot a huge Chital stag near Lataguri without a spotlight!— It was 5am on the day of the party, having driven around all night without luck! God was certainly kind to a young, broke assistant!

What a party! You can judge from the fact that we served morning tea to a number of guests (the more sober ones!).

The year 1973 was a good year for Zurantee and under John's leadership, we worked our butts off and reduced cost, improved quality and very nearly made a profit! However, head office had other

ideas and towards the end of 1973 we were told that Zurantee was to be sold. It was heart-breaking for all of us as we had put in a lot of effort to revive it. This was the way things were in those days. Most sterling groups were selling off due to heavy losses. A number of expats were also leaving due to Reserve Bank restrictions and the devaluation of the Rupee. It was a sad time.

We soon got our marching orders, with John taking over Chalouni as Manager and I being transferred to Samsing! As mentioned earlier, Samsing was notorious for its bad labour and its tough Manager Som Kochar. I was none too pleased but had no choice! As the saying went - if "R...pe is inevitable, lie down and enjoy it!"



CoronaVirus:

Emerging evidence of health benefits of tea to combat Covid-19

From Lifestyle section of Hindustan Times | Submitted by: Mrs Brenda Dennis

The UPASI Tea Research Institute is exploring the possibility of investigating the anti-viral property of Theaflavins-3, a compound abundantly found in black tea and catechins from green tea for control of Coronavirus.

The UPASI Tea Research Institute at Coonoor in Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu is exploring the possibility of investigating the anti-viral property of Theaflavins-3, a compound abundantly found in black tea and catechins from green tea for control of Coronavirus. The study is being undertaken in collaboration with Tea Board of India through ICMR.

Researchers from Taiwan and China have found that in a laboratory study SARS Cov-2 could be inhibited by compounds that are abundant in teas, CL Shreedharan, Chairman, UPASI Tea Committee, said in a statement here.

Numerous black tea polyphenols especially those of Theaflavins-1, Theafla-

vins-2 and Theaflavins-3 were found to inhibit the SARS Cov-2 replication.

In black tea, Theaflavins-3 was the most abundant (1.05 per cent).

Results suggest that Theaflavins might be good starting point for the design of more active inhibitors for SARS-CoV-2 and these compounds are abundant in the extract of black tea produced from the seedling populations belonging to Camellia L SP as well as the cultivars developed by the UPASI Tea Research Institute, he said.

In another recent study, a research group from Indonesia and Thailand studied the secondary metabolites secreted by plants in tropical regions that can be developed as medicines.

They investigated a number of compounds for their potential to inhibit COVID-19.

Conclusion of the study was that along with several compounds catechin, and epicatechin-gallate sourced from Tea (Camellia sinensis) were also the most recommended compounds that may act as potential inhibitors of COVID-19.

The UPASI chairman said it was proved that drinking three to four cups of black tea in a day is associated with lower risk of myocardial infarction and reduced risk of stroke.

According to him, it was also proved that drinking black tea, which has Theaflavins content, three times a day had a positive impact on reducing the degree of growth of cancerous cells including breast cancer, skin cancer and prostate cancer.

However, further research on clinical studies is required to prove the anti-viral property of tea against COVID-19, he added.



Grandma's basics in the time of lockdown

Anju Munshi



With the prolonged lockdown and many ingredients people were used to disappearing from the market, homemakers and cooking enthusiasts are looking back at recipes of old which belonged to a simpler time, finds Anju Munshi.

Have you been cleaning your bookshelves and drawers in these endless days under lockdown? You may have then stumbled on your recipe collections, granny's old recipe books and hurriedly penned down notes on recipes stacked carelessly between the pages. Why not try them out, you wonder, with a touch of nostalgia.

Well, you are not alone. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the pause button on life taken for granted so long. On the plus side,

the lockdown is offering an opportunity to dig out memories of aromas and tastes that belonged to the kitchen of childhood. It will be an understatement to say that our home-menu has changed dramatically since the coronavirus pandemic. Making the best out of limited supplies at home since going out isn't a choice anymore is a challenge too. Old family recipes that emphasised minimalism and nutrition have been rediscovered.

There is another reason too – a need to build immunity to fight the virus which can sneak in unexpectedly. Besides, there is more time to experiment and introduce the younger generation to good old grandma's recipes.

Sutapa Mishra who has a home delivery unit finds that due to the uncertainty and apprehension of contamination many people are avoiding eating out. "The comfort factor and comfort platter are now going together. Seasonality is in. People are getting more aware about immunity, hygiene and nutrition and want simple ghar ka khana." She strongly advocates seasonal produce and refrains from using frozen ingredients. Less is more seems to be the kitchen mantra today. Hence local cuisine and ingredients are getting an upper hand.

"Going back to the past by way of food is nothing new," says chef Sanjay Kak, director of Culinary Arts at the International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM), Kolkata.



"It was there on social media already but what has brought it to our homes today is the limitation of ingredients and an acute need for building strength and immunity. Things like asparagus, red and yellow capsicums, broccoli were not relevant to us some fifty years ago but over the years they had occupied our plates and palates. These are adopted vegetables that need interstate or international transport, hence expensive. Most people are now wary and just want the local produce, so much like in the pre-globalisation era when the focus was on fresh ingredients and minimal and that did not involve exhaustive cooking." The pandemic has taught homemakers and cooking enthusiasts at home to use up the leftovers too.

Reena Chopra finds that each childhood recipe has a story and it feels good to go back to pleasant food memories. She calls up her family in Delhi to ask for grandma's recipes. "Simple things like aloo parathas and dal had a distinct flavour when my grandma used to make it," she recalls. On checking up she realised that the cookware was different. Food cooked in Teflon coated

pans and non-stick cookware does not taste the same she finds, who incidentally is a promoter of slow cooking in earthen and stone wares. She finds the taste gets enhanced in these traditional pots and the lack of chemical additives are among the other qualities that make it her top choice to cook in.

IIHM is a part of C2S2 (Conscious Caterers Sustainable Systems) partnership programme which researches sustainability, local produce, carbon footprint, etc. Their research says that toxicity in food can come from the choice of cookware. Earthen, copper and silverware are alkaline in nature and they neutralise the acidic element in food making it much easier to digest.

Garima Sharma, a cooking enthusiast, says that non-stick cookware has been a forced concept and highly avoidable. She prefers iron cookware, copper water jugs and simple slow cooking.

People are trying to reconnect to that era when things were completely and effortlessly organic, she finds. Home-made bread, Pressure cooker cakes and steamed bread puddings are slowly getting resur-

rected after living in oblivion in an era of fast living and hi-tech gadgets.

With a clear sky and less pollution, drying potato slices, masala wadis (lentils and gourd with spices) in the sun has become a big favourite with many ardent home cooks. In Kashmir, in the olden days when heavy snowfall in the winter would shut down the roads for a long period thus cutting down supplies from the rest of the country, people relied on dried vegetables. In summer, they used to dry vegetables like bitter melon, bottle gourd, chillies, capsicum, tomatoes, brinjals and weeds and lotus stems plucked from the famous Dal lake which used to last till the next summer. These dried vegetables are an intrinsic part of Kashmiri cuisine and have a distinct taste, flavour and texture.

With the bright sun and cleaner air during the lockdown, many have gone back to reviving this age-old practice. "Within a week of drying we consume and then dry the second lot, no need to even store," says Khshama Watal, a Kashmiri homemaker settled in Gurugram. The old coin does not lose its shine, as they say. (TWF)

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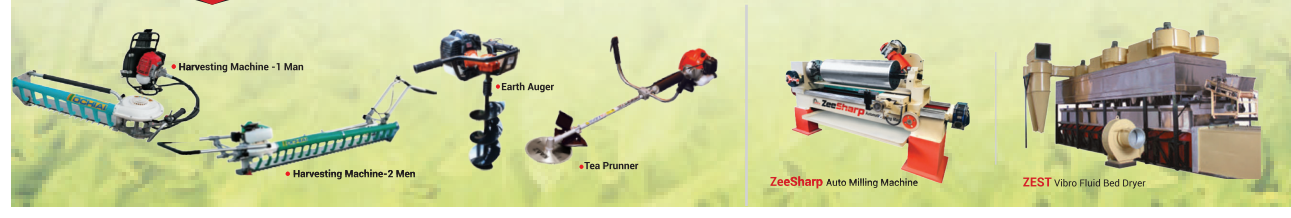
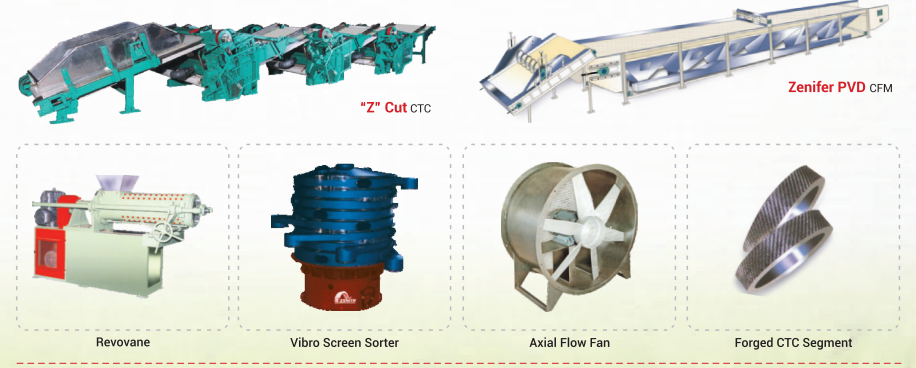


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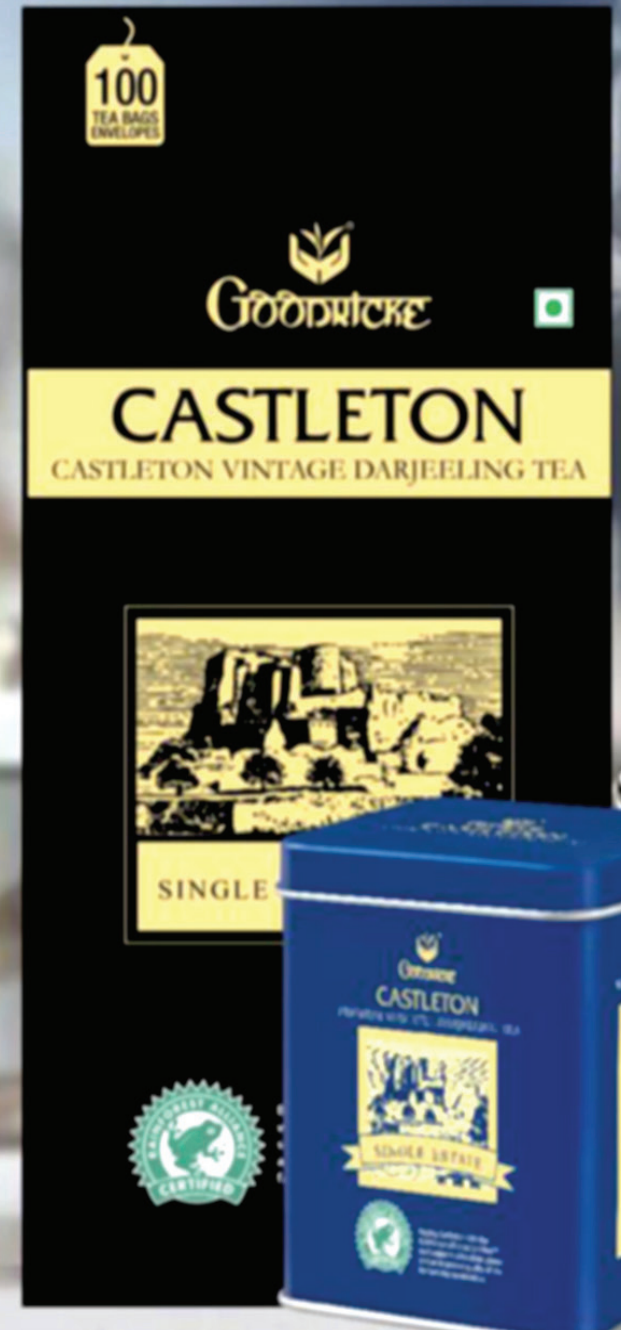
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