

RELAX

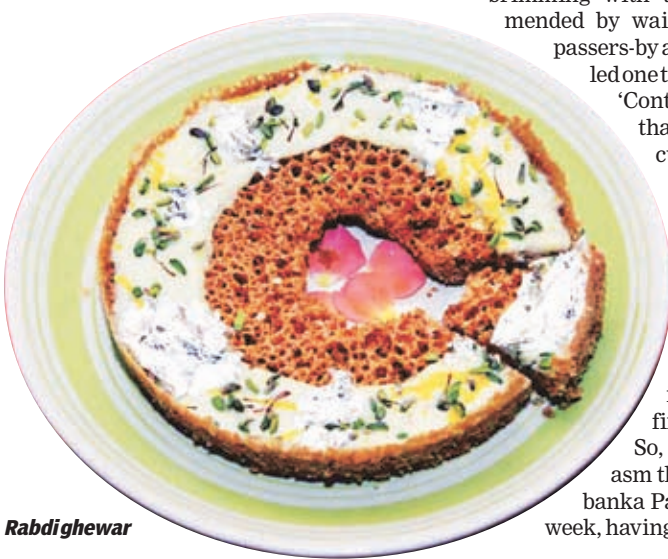
Of popular flavours and authentic cuisine

FOODPHILE



ANOO THI VISHAL

Though the cuisines of the Marwari community and the royal Rajputs have reached out to a large number of Indians, our acquaintance with them does not go beyond a couple of clichés



Rabdi ghevar

OF ALL of India's regional cuisines, Rajasthani is perhaps one of the better exposed. Of course, to call it Rajasthani is a mistake—as it is to believe that geographical boundaries must necessarily encompass a single type of cuisine. In the state itself, the cuisine of the Marwari community and the royal Rajputs dominate palates and thanks to trading and tourism, the two pillars of desert commerce, these two cuisines have reached out to a large number of Indians not to mention foreigners. And yet, our acquaintance with them is not beyond a couple of clichés.

Dal-batti-churma, pure-veg Marwari *thalis* with *gatte*, best found in *dhabas*, *ghevar*, the quintessential monsoon sweet, now popularised pan-India by chains such as Haldiram's, and *lal maans*, mutton curry cooked with red chillies, immediately come to mind whenever someone utters Rajasthani food.

In fact, during all my excursions to various cities in the state, I have gorged on various *kachoris*, *mirchi vadas*, *thalis* and notably Nero's (an old restaurant in Jaipur; I would one day like to discover the origin of its name) *laal maans* to contentment, but always had a lingering feeling that much like the spruced up *haveli*-hotels, this is a slice of cuisine that is essentially touristy and overexposed.

Over the years, even these goodies are fast vanishing from restaurant menus at tourist hot spots in the state. Last year, on a holiday in Jodhpur, I had to look hard to find an authentic Marwari *thali* in a town that should have been brimming with these. Restaurants recommended by waiters, service staff, bazaar passers-by and locals almost inevitably led one to *tikkas* and beer or dubious 'Continental' and 'Chinese' fare that has taken over local cuisines everywhere in the country particularly in towns favoured by foreign visitors.

In Jodhpur, the seat of Marwar, local families may still eat traditionally as they perhaps do in smaller Indian towns, but it is astonishingly difficult to find their fare commercially. So, it was with some enthusiasm that I ventured into the Ranbanka Palace Hotel in Jodhpur last week, having been told of some heritage



Chef MA Sayyad with maas ke sule

and local dishes—recipes from the erstwhile royal family that own this hotel.

Overlooking the spectacular Mehrangarh fort, a magnet for royalty seekers visiting India, including the Clintons, the now separated Liz Hurley-Arun Nayar and Prince Charles (who visited the fort recently during the Commonwealth Games), Ranbanka is a much quieter place than its famous cousin. Owned by a branch of the Gaj Singh family, the highlight are not just the private quarters of the erstwhile royals (complete with hunting memorabilia from older times, including furniture made from an entire elephant shot in Africa), but the food.

While the regular menu may deceive you with its sprinkling of the same commercial north-Indian/Punjabi, Indian-Continental and Chinese fare, ask the chef for Rajasthani, or better still, the family's specials and he will truly surprise you. The highlight was an inventive *gulab jamun ki subzi* that arrived as part of the vegetarian main course—a dish that supposedly originated in the bazaars of Marwar. Small *gulab jamuns*, instead of being dunked in syrup, are put in a garlic gravy (sans onions)



Rajasthani thali

and are a fun twist to *malai koftas*.

There was also the *chatte ki subzi*, that I found quite novel, essentially a variation of the more famous *gatte*. This one uses whole wheat flour—steamed and curried. It is lighter than the *besan* version. There is also a simple *haldi ki subzi*, made from fresh turmeric during winter (which is supposed to be therapeutic if included as a small side dish with each meal) reminiscent of the fact that traditional Indian cuisines always looked at food as medicine and not mere indulgence.

But one royal recipe that I came back with and am sure to recreate at future dinner is the *junglemurg*. The restaurantised name is somewhat predictable and the recipe, no doubt, used game meat instead of chicken in earlier days. But it is startlingly simple, given its origin as a recipe used to cook meat outdoors at the conclusion of a hunt. The essential ingredients apart from the meat are *ghee*, whole spices and red *mathania* chillies, grown close to Jodhpur in the region. (They are distinguished by a none too pungent taste, indeed there is no after taste at all). All these are slow-cooked together to give you a splendid dish. The chef de-seeds the chill-

ies and makes a fine paste out of them, but you are free to go the original way and use whole red chillies instead for a more robust creation.

Doongar is a technique of smoking (mainly meats, but you can try it with lentils or even *raita*) that is also quintessentially Rajput. Any spice like clove, cardamom or even sandalwood is used. A piece of live charcoal is first put on a cabbage leaf in the middle of the cooked dish; some *ghee* poured on it and then the spice. The dish is then covered for several minutes to let the aroma of the spice seep into it. The famous *maans ke sooley*—the original Indian *tikkas*, if you like, are smoked like this. Effective.

For a desert state with few green vegetables and cooking ingredients, *ghee* plays a major role in cooking. But I didn't realise quite how much until I learnt from the chef the process of making *ghevar* from scratch! The good thing, of course, is that *ghee* along with butter have now been reinstated as the new health foods much better than the refined stuff that we use, of course in moderation. So this is one feast you can indulge in, at least, while on a holiday!

The writer is a food critic

LEXICON



Hijabista

n. A Muslim woman who dresses fashionably but modestly, in accordance with her religious beliefs; a person who designs fashionable clothing for Muslim women

As the trend of wearing hijab spreads, so, too, have hijab fashions. Women from New Jersey to Jakarta are trying new ways of wearing wraps taught on YouTube or showcased on runways. Whatever the look, hijabistas share one style principle: This is not their mother's head scarf—conservative, plain, a little too formless. —Carol Huang, "The Muslim veil: modesty has its own style," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 12, 2009

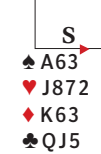
MINDGAMES

BRIDGE BOUTS | L SUBRAMANIAN

TACKLING A NEW COMBINATION

There are a number of standard card combinations that most bridge players are familiar with. However, declarers sometimes find themselves having to tackle new combinations that they have not seen before. One such combination raised its ugly head in a Board-A-Match event in the Karnataka State Bridge Championship held recently at the Bowring Institute, Bengaluru. None of the declarers was successful. See if you can find the correct line of play.

♠ K752 North Dealer, NS Vulnerable
♥ A103 N S
♦ A74 1♣ 1♥
♣ K62 1♠ 2NT
3NT Pass



Contract: 3NT by south. West leads the ♥2. Plan the play.

Bidding explanation: NS have bid their hands fairly well.

How the play went: Declarer won the opening lead in dummy and ducked a spade. West won and played a second diamond. Winning the diamond continuation in hand, declarer played a club to dummy's king. East won, and played a third diamond. West cashed his two diamond tricks, declarer discarding a heart from hand. West exited in a spade. When the spades broke 4-2, declarer had only seven tricks.

Correct play: Win the opening lead in hand, and run the ♥8. You are in effect playing west for honor-nine-small. East wins with the queen and plays a second diamond. You win with the ace and play the club king. They may win and cash two diamond tricks. Win the return in hand, finesse the ♥10, cash the heart ace, enter hand, and cash the thirteenth heart for your ninth trick. The complete hands were:

♠ K752 ♠ Q1084
♥ A103 ♥ Q54
♦ A74 ♦ J95
♣ K62 ♣ A93

Discussion: Playing on spades is not a good idea, for it can give you only one extra trick. The heart suit, however, can give you two extra tricks in addition to the ace...but you require the favorable condition to exist. If the ♥8 is covered by the nine, you will play the ten from dummy, and lose the trick to the queen. On regaining the lead, you can play the jack or the seven and run it if not covered. If you master the card combinations, you will certainly have the edge over the others.

BIZ QUIZ

1. Which computer major was founded as Multitech in 1976 in Taiwan?
2. Which engineering company built the first long-distance telegraph line in Europe in 1848?
3. Which Mumbai suburb served as the location for the first Parle factory?

1. Acer 2. Siemens 3. Vile Parle

BUZZ WORD

The Buzz Word is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

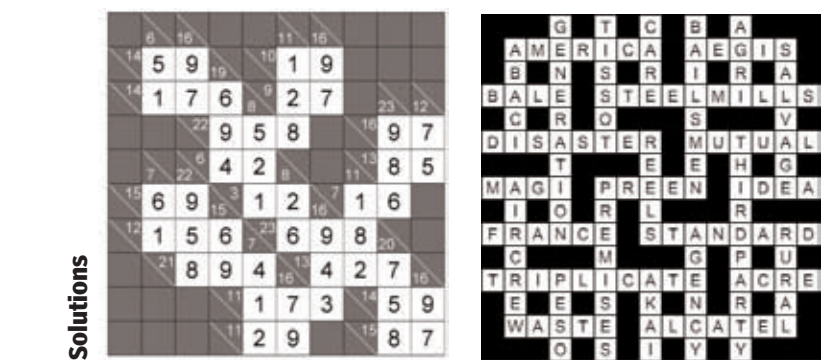
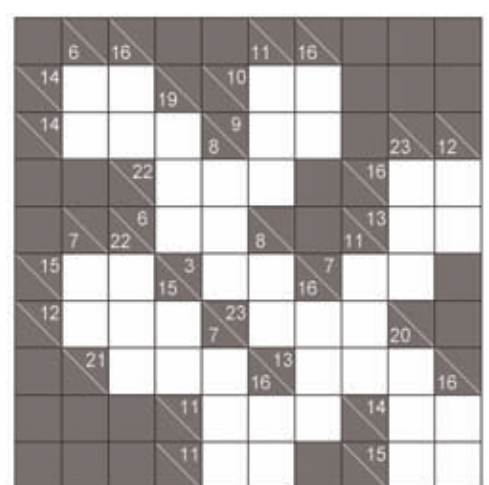
Today's clue: QTR equals DOG.

Qtg'i sx vtgixgi jliz qtlgr tgnu utwm qwiu. Qt btmx izfg utwm qwiu. Li'e izx ztmex izfi ylglezxe f gxvh fzxfg izfi jlge izx mvfx. —Fqgmjxj Vfmgrxrl

Don't be content with doing only your duty. Do more than your duty. It's the horse that finishes a neck ahead that wins the race. —Andrew Carnegie

KAKURO

In Kakuro sum puzzles, the numbers in the black squares refer to the SUMS of the digits, which you are to fill into the empty spaces directly below or to the right of the black square containing the number. No zeroes are used here, only the digits one through nine. An important point: A digit cannot appear more than once in any particular digit combination.



CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 6 Online: world's largest Internet Service Provider (7)
 - 7 Chemicals Industries Ltd: previously known as Atul Chemical Industries Ltd. (5)
 - 9 A large bundle or package of compressed and bound goods (4)
 - 10 Producers of iron and its alloys, in a way (5,5)
 - 11 A fire or an accident - or stock prices tumbling (8)
 - 13 A word with fund or benefit, e.g. (6)
 - 15 Noodles brand name (or sages!) (4)
 - 17 Pride or congratulate (one-self) for an achievement (5)
 - 18 Aditya Birla Group's mobile-phone operator (4)
 - 19 One of the G-20 nation (6)
 - 20 ___ & Poor's: international rating agency (8)
 - 23 In ___: how forms need to be filled in our present day bureaucracy? (10)
 - 26 Land measure (4)
 - 27 Industrial ___ disposal is ecologically very important (5)
 - 28 French telecom major having Sterlite as its Indian partner (7)
- DOWN**
- 1 "G" in 3-G of the radio frequency spectrum for mobile phones (10)
 - 2 Big name in Swiss wrist watches since 1853 (6)
 - 3 Glaxo Smith Kline the health ___ company (4)
 - 4 Security providers (8)
 - 5 Agriculture, abbr. (4)
 - 6 Primitive calculators (5)
 - 8 Rescue property from loss at sea or from fire, etc. (7)
 - 12 Films maybe wound on them (5)
 - 14 Car insurance when it is not comprehensive (5,5)
 - 16 Kingfisher or Jet employees (3-4)
 - 17 Land and buildings together considered as a place of business (8)
 - 21 A business that serves other businesses (6)
 - 22 Not urban (5)
 - 24 Currency of Columbia or Argentina (4)
 - 25 Japan-based electronics giants who are over 75 years old (4)

