



Indians worldwide welcome Diwali, the Festival of Light



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Celebrations marking Diwali, the Indian Festival of Light, is a high-point in the socializing and entertaining calendar in India, and among the Indian diaspora worldwide.

Diwali is celebrated with fun, festivities and religious traditions by global Indians living in south-east Asia, as well as in such far-flung countries as Guyana, on the north-eastern coast of South America, to Caribbean nations and island-states lying in the South Pacific and Indian Oceans. Diwali is also celebrated in countries across Africa where generations of Indians have long settled, and by the millions of migrant diaspora that have sought jobs and livelihood



in countries lying in the Far-East, Middle-East, in Europe, and in the US and Canada.

The five-day festival of Diwali, which has traditional, religious, social and historical connotations attached to it, differs based on the celebrants, and though it has acquired a more mercantile aspect in recent times, the spiritual relevance of Diwali remains the same and has abided over the ages. The Festival of Light continues to symbolize the universal power of light to uplift, guide, and lead people along the righteous path.

The festival epitomizes the conquest of light over darkness, of good over evil, and on a more individual level, the eradication of ignorance with the light of knowledge. This eternal aspect of Diwali is what makes the festival so popular

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Diwali HOME DÉCOR ESSENTIALS

By Amina Rumaney

As Diwali approaches, it is time to create a grand and inviting atmosphere in your home with essential Diwali decor items that evoke warmth and spirituality. The traditional oil lamps, aromatic candles, and incense not only bring light to your home but also symbolize the eternal victory of good over evil.



Decor items set the stage for a magical and festive celebration that everyone will cherish. So, elevate your ambiance this Diwali with these must-have decor essentials to celebrate the Festival of Lights.



Diwali/ Diya Lights: The diya-shaped lights are perfect for the festivities of Diwali 2023. LED string lights that feature hanging diya are a must have. From dramatic flashes to steady lights, you can choose the lighting

style to match your preferences. The lights are easy to install and will give your home a magnificent aesthetic look.

Rangoli: Another tradition followed during Diwali is rangoli making, it is the creation of intricate designs on the floor or ground using colored sand, rice flour, flowers, or petals. These designs are adorned with diya, candles, and other decorations to



make them more attractive. Rangoli-making is a fun activity that brings together family and friends. It is believed to bring good luck and prosperity.

Here are some ideas for creating the most stunning rangoli design:

Geometric shapes: Begin by creating intricate patterns using circles, squares, and triangles. Add diya to enhance the design's attractiveness and vibrancy.

Flower patterns: Use fresh or dried flowers, colored sand or powder to create colorful and complex floral designs, which are a popular choice for beginners.

Diwali symbols: Create designs that represent Diwali symbols, such as the lotus flower, om symbol, and swastika symbol, out of colored sand.

Rangoli templates: For those struggling with creating rangoli designs, use rangoli templates or stencils available in the markets. Trace the template onto the floor



and fill in the design with colored powder. With these ideas, you can create a beautiful and captivating rangoli that adds to the festive spirit and brings joy to your family.

Artificial Marigold Garland: Another popular decoration for Diwali is the artificial marigold garland. These garlands are made of synthetic or fabric material and designed to look just like real marigold flowers. They are available in various lengths and colors, including yellow, orange, and red. Additionally, some garlands have lights, sequins, or colorful beads for more decoration.

Using these Artificial Marigold Garlands for Diwali decoration is very simple, you can hang them around the house on doors, windows, or walls to brighten up space with vibrant colors.

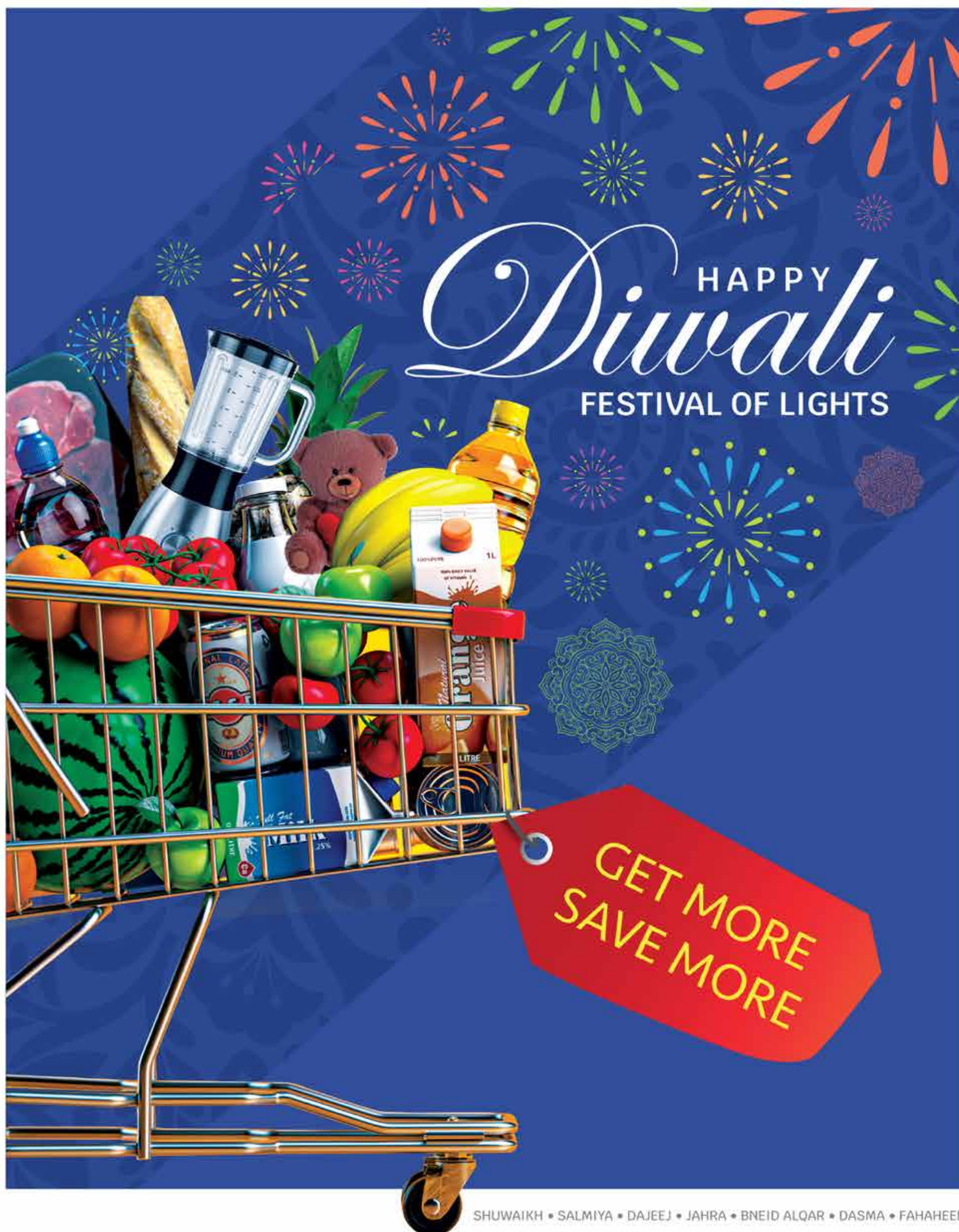
As Diwali is a time for celebration, joy and happiness, the decorations you choose can help enhance these feelings. You can mix and match the different ideas mentioned above or add some of your own unique touches to create a colorful and festive atmosphere. Make sure that it reflects your personal style and celebrates the spirit of the festival.

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Diwali, celebrating the guiding inner light

Diwali, or the Festival of Lights is arguably the biggest and brightest of festivals celebrated in the Indian subcontinent and among the Indian diaspora spread across four corners of the globe.

Diwali, or Deepavali as it is known in some Indian states, is celebrated over five days during the Hindu lunisolar month of Kartik that corresponds to mid-October and mid-November each year. In the Indian subcontinent, Diwali is concurrent with and analogous to various other religious, spiritual and historical celebrations marked by other communities, cultures and religions in the region. Besides Diwali among Hindus, the festival is celebrated under different forms and names by Jains, Sikhs, and among Newar Buddhists in Nepal, as well as by many tribal cultures in north-eastern states of India.

While the religious aspect of Diwali is the highlight of the festival for the Hindus, to the Sikhs and Jains it is the historical and sacred aspect, as well as the spiritual implications of the festival that take center-stage. To the Hindus in India, and around the world, the celebration of Diwali has religious associations that vary based on regional and local interpretations of myths and legends from the Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata.



In Nepal it is celebrated as Tihar or as Swanti by Buddhists, especially Newar Buddhists in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal. For adherents of the Jain faith, Diwali venerates the attainment of 'Moksha' — the highest and noblest objective of the soul — in the 6th century by Lord Mahavira, the 24th and last 'Tirthankar' or spiritual leader of Jains. Meanwhile, the Sikh community around the world celebrate Diwali as 'Bandi Shor Divas', or Day of Liberation, in commemoration of the release from imprisonment of their sixth Guru and leader, Guru Hargobind ji, by Mughal invaders in the 17th century.

In India, the origin of Diwali can be traced back historically to the ancient period, when it was celebrated during the Hindu calendar month of Karthik as an important harvest festival. Over time, various legends and myths from the Hindu epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata were woven into these agrarian festivals. Today, Diwali is celebrated

among Hindus in different places based on the religious legends they believe in.

In some places, Diwali is a celebration of the birth and also marriage of the Goddess Lakshmi with Lord Vishnu; in Bengal, the festival is dedicated to the worship of Mother Kali, the Goddess of strength. Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed God, the symbol of auspiciousness and wisdom, is also worshiped in many Hindu homes on this day.

To many other Hindus, Diwali commemorates the return of Lord Rama as king of Ayodhya in Northern India, along with his wife Sita and brother Lakshman, after a 14-year-long exile, and having vanquished the demon-king Ravana. In joyous celebration of the return of their king, the people of Ayodhya, the capital of Lord Rama's kingdom, illuminated the town with earthen diya (oil lamps) and burst fire-crackers.



The word Diwali comes from a fusion of two Sanskrit words, Dipa or Deepa meaning light or lamp, and Awali meaning a row, series or line. In many parts of India, the festival is celebrated by lighting rows of small earthen oil lamps called diya that symbolize the driving away of darkness. In other parts of India, the Festival of Light marks the start of a new year in the Hindu calendar.

Besides its religious, cultural or historical importance to people across the vast sub-continent, and the contextual differences of

the celebration, Diwali remains symbolic of the inner light that guides us throughout our life. The festival resonates with the message of the ultimate victory of light over darkness, of hope over despair, of good over evil, of knowledge over ignorance.

Light is one of the oldest and among the most significant and enduring symbols in the evolution of mankind, with different spiritual, mystical and metaphorical connotations in various cultures and religions around the world. Notions and symbolisms of light influenced centuries of philosophical speculation and



gave rise to a host of religious and philosophical theories over the ages.

In many mythologies of early cultures and religions, light was believed to emanate from the divine 'supreme being', and was considered as an attribute of the deity that led to the creation of life, and endowed humanity with health, wealth, and knowledge. While throughout eons light was seen as an embodiment of the divine, both gnostics and agnostics considered light to also be a symbol of life and hope, of joy and happiness, of truth, wisdom, and guidance.

In Christianity, Christ is called 'Light' in the sense that He enlightens every man, although man is free to turn toward or away from this Light. The physical light symbolizes the divine presence that penetrates all things while still

maintaining its purity. Light is also seen as a molding power that leads man forward to ultimately unite with the divine. In many parts of the world, light is represented by candles,



lamps, fires and fireworks, and depicts the ultimate victory of light in its perpetual fight against darkness.

Today, in too many places, Diwali has taken on a more temporal note, with merchants, retailers and corporates using the festival to market and sell their products. Today, the five-day long Festival of Lights has become almost synonymous with shopping frenzy, of bargain offers and special discounts, as well as a time of socializing and entertaining among family and friends. Like any major festival, preparations for Diwali begin days or weeks ahead, with the formal festival limited to five-days, beginning two days before the night of Diwali, and ending two days after. Each day of Diwali has its own tale, legend and myth to tell. Sweet treats are exchanged, houses are thoroughly cleaned, homes are lit with diya and decorated with rangoli, the colorful designs and patterns created on the threshold to homes and on the



floor during the festival using natural colors, dyes, flowers and other material. New clothes are worn and each day of the festival is marked by different traditional rituals.

Through all this celebration and festivities, what remains true and consistent throughout the five days of Diwali, is the celebration of life, its enjoyment and goodness. This year, even if you are away from the sights and sounds of Diwali celebrations at home in India, take a moment to light a candle or a diya, sit quietly, close your eyes, breathe deeply and concentrate on that supreme light which illuminates your inner self and guides you along the path of life.





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Go 'green' for an eco-friendly Diwali

As people prepare to welcome and celebrate the festival of lights with unbridled abandon and plenty of loud bangs, we hate to be the proverbial 'wet blanket' that dampens the festive enthusiasm. But, have you ever thought about the amount of damage the fire-crackers unleashed on the occasion are doing to the air quality, or the huge waste generated during celebrations is doing to the environment.

Fireworks and firecrackers have for long been a hallmark associated with Diwali celebrations. However, it is now also linked to an increase in noise and air pollution. The bursting of firecrackers on festive occasions have been shown to exacerbate the already poor air quality and high particulate matter (PM2.5) content in the many Indian cities and towns.

According to environment specialists, particulate matter refers to a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air. Some of these particles of less than 10 micrometers in diameter (PM10), such as dust, soot, or smoke, are large enough to be seen with the naked eye. Others are so small, often less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter (PM2.5) that they can only be detected using an electron microscope.

How small is 2.5 micrometers? Think about a single hair from your head. The average human hair is about 70 micrometers in diameter, which

makes it nearly 30 times larger than the largest fine particle. Particulate matter (PM2.5) poses the greatest risk to human health, as it can be inhaled deep into the lungs and even get into your bloodstream.

Numerous studies have linked particulate matter (PM2.5) exposure to a variety of problems, including premature death in people with heart or lung disease, heart attacks, aggravated asthma, increased respiratory symptoms, such as irritation of the airways, coughing or difficulty breathing. In particular, people with heart or lung diseases, children, and older adults are more likely to be affected by exposure to particulate matter pollution.

The good news, if it could be called good news, is that the decrease in air quality due to an increase in particulate matter from bursting of firecrackers was found to dissipate a few hours after the end of celebratory fireworks. But the long-term damage to the environment from the release of chemicals contained in the firecrackers into the atmosphere is yet to be determined.

At a time when the world is engaged in combating the existential threat of climate change, we all have a responsibility to play a role and contribute to helping reduce our individual carbon footprint on the planet. This includes celebrating a greener, more eco-friendly Diwali devoid of 'sound and fury'. But, if you still insist on marking the festival with 'sound and fury', especially under compulsion of the kids, opt for eco-friendly versions of firecrackers.

Ecologically less harmful 'green' crackers — conceptualized by the Indian National Environmental Engineering Research Institute — are gaining traction in many celebratory events. Manufactured without harmful chemicals,

especially barium nitrate that causes heavy smoke and unsafe emissions, these green crackers are a safer option. The sound produced from these crackers are also less than the 150 to 175 decibels associated with traditional crackers.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a safe sound limit of not more than 140 decibels for adults, and 120 decibels for children. Since the impact of sound varies in line with the distance from its source, if a fireworks explodes at 170 decibels, you need to be 15 to 20 meters away to be within safe sound limits. Children would have to stand 50 to 60 meters away, as their ear canals are narrower and sound impact is louder. Infants should not be exposed to fireworks.

Some other eco-friendly options that you could introduce in your home this Diwali and help reduce your carbon footprint on the planet include lighting up the home and yard with small earthen lamps called diya, in place of the electric bulbs that are now in vogue. Though earthen lamps need oil for illumination, the pollution is negligible and electricity consumption is nil.

Substituting scented candles and electric diya with the good old earthen oil-diya that are made from clay and other 'green' materials also helps in conservation as they can be used many times over and are compostable. Remember, the candle diya now popular can be used only once and are petroleum based. They also release toxins while burning which affects air quality.

Decorate the entrance floor with colorful patterns (rangolis) using natural dyes in place of chemical colors. Instead of the artificial rangoli color powders that are readily available in the market, make a rangoli out of fresh flowers or make the floor designs with traditional and natural



ingredients, such as rice paste or dry rice flour. Also, use energy conserving LED and CFL lamps instead of incandescent bulbs inside homes.

Employ your creativity to design handcrafted decorative door hangings (torans) including using bright and colorful dupattas and sarees, rather than the plasticky choices available now, are definitely better options to celebrating this festival of light in an eco-friendly manner.

Here are a few more ways to go green this Diwali without dimming the brilliance and glitter of the festival in any significant way.

Green alternatives to crackers: Use colored balloons in festive colors of red, yellow, green and orange, and fill them with glitter and small bits of colored paper. Burst the balloons and dance in the glitter rain with your family and friends. It may not have the bang of traditional fireworks but it also leaves no environmental damage. Reduce use of plastic bags: When exchanging gifts make sure not to pack them in plastic backed gift wrappings or carry them in plastic gift bags, instead use your creativity to come up with natural wrapping and present the gifts in cloth bags.

Make sweets at home: Spend a little extra time in the kitchen before the festivities start and make the sweets and other delicacies at home. Share them with your neighbors and friends in steel and glass plates, or compostable paper plates. It may be more convenient to just buy them from the sweet shop next door, but think about the wasteful packaging that comes with it and the artificial colors and dressings used on them.

'Making the upcoming Diwali celebrations a 'green' one, will be your small contribution to protecting the environment, to sustainability, and to ensuring a safer, livable planet for generations to come.



Indians worldwide welcome Diwali, the Festival of Light

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and is the reason it has prevailed for nearly three millennia on the Indian subcontinent and wherever Indians have made their home.

While in India Diwali is an unfettered celebration of the joy of life and marked by a profusion of riotous colors, aromas and sounds emanating from every quarter, it tends to be observed in a more subdued manner in countries populated by Indian communities, and in places where Indian expatriates live and work. No matter how it is commemorated, there is no denying the spirit of joie de vivre that the Festival of Lights spreads in the hearts and minds of Indians everywhere.

Generations of Indians abroad have marked Diwali with festive and religious traditions, and shared the joy of the festival with the exchange of sweets and gifts among relatives, friends and colleagues. For the expatriate

Indian community, Diwali is a celebration that reflects their longing to share the occasion with their near and dear ones back home. It is also a way to keep in touch with their roots, and to join friends, kith and kin in celebrating the rich culture and heritage of India.

However, in recent times, there has been a gradual but noticeable erosion of interest in Diwali as well as other traditional festivals among many young Indians overseas, engaged as they are in their own busy daily schedules. Many do not seem to share the sentiments of their parents' generation and appear to have no time for the rituals and rites associated with the festival.

Most young adolescent expats who probably were born and raised in a foreign environment, and have only made an occasional brief foray back home to India during holiday breaks, have no resonance with the cultures and traditions of a country that many find and consider alien. Many of these youngsters have only a fuzzy

idea of the culture and heritage of India, and often have difficulty in balancing the culture of their forebears with prevailing norms in the urban culture they grew up in, and in the foreign land that many have come to consider their true home. But prevailing unsettling times, of geopolitical crises, global pandemics, and economic upheavals, have driven home the fleeting nature of our lives and livelihoods, and how dependent we are on communities and social interactions. The importance of our roots and our connections are never more poignantly accentuated than during times of global crises. Knowing and acknowledging that we have a country and people to fall back on in the worst case scenario, is often the only bright spot when a situation grows increasingly bleak.

Importance of the land of our ancestors that always remains open and welcome to us, should be reason enough for the younger generations to familiarize themselves with their roots, their

cultures and traditions. The Festival of Light this year could be the right time and opportunity to revive and give a restart to relations with our native land and its culture.

The festival presents us with an occasion to immerse ourselves in the beauty and grandeur of Indian culture and heritage. It also provides us with a chance to experience the tantalizing tastes of traditional dishes and delicacies prepared during the festival period. But, most importantly, it delivers us with a golden opportunity to imbue the sense of community and friendship that is fundamental aspect of our Indian values.

So this Diwali, even if you do not like to consider yourself an 'Indian', go light up your house, don bright clothes, the brighter the better, and go have fun with other Indians and other expatriates, while remembering to take along a gift of Diwali delicacies to share with them.



Movies to watch this Diwali season

By Amina Rumaney

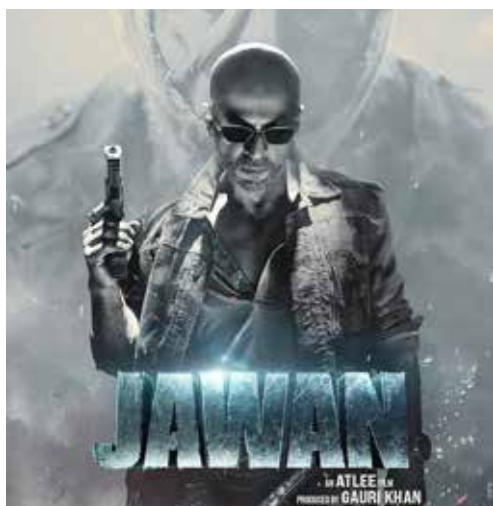
Diwali is an auspicious occasion that brings people together, spreading love, positivity, and happiness. It is an excellent opportunity to spend quality time with your family and loved ones. To make this sharing and caring for each other resonate even further, why not sit down and watch a favorite Bollywood family entertainer together. It is a great way to bond with your family and enjoy a relaxing evening filled with laughter and entertainment. And, if you are lost for choice on what to watch, here we provide you with a list of quintessential Bollywood movies. So, go ahead, gather around with your family and watch some of these feel-good movies this Diwali.



Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham: The movie is a timeless classic that features an ensemble cast, including Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Kajol, Hrithik Roshan, and Kareena Kapoor. The movie is full of drama, emotions, and heartwarming moments. So watch it this Diwali and enjoy the magic of this timeless classic.



Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara: A must-watch Bollywood movie that takes you on a thrilling roller coaster ride with three friends on their adventurous vacation. The movie boasts an ensemble cast that includes Hrithik Roshan, Farhan Akhtar, Katrina Kaif, Abhay Deol, and Kalki Koechlin. So, if you have not watched it yet, add it to your watch list this Diwali.



Jawan: Shah Rukh Khan's Jawan was a blockbuster with a storyline that is guaranteed to keep you on the edge of your seat with its gripping plot.

This action-packed thriller boasts a talented cast and promises to deliver a thrilling cinematic experience. So, if you are craving for some adrenaline rush, Jawan is the perfect movie to watch this Diwali. Stream it now on Netflix and get ready for a rollercoaster ride.



Bajirao Mastani: Another timeless masterpiece and a must-watch movie this Diwali. Based on a true story, the movie depicts the epic love story of Peshwa Bajirao and warrior princess Mastani. The film boasts stunning visuals, soulful music, and outstanding performances by the cast. Bajirao Mastani is a cinematic gem that will leave you spellbound.



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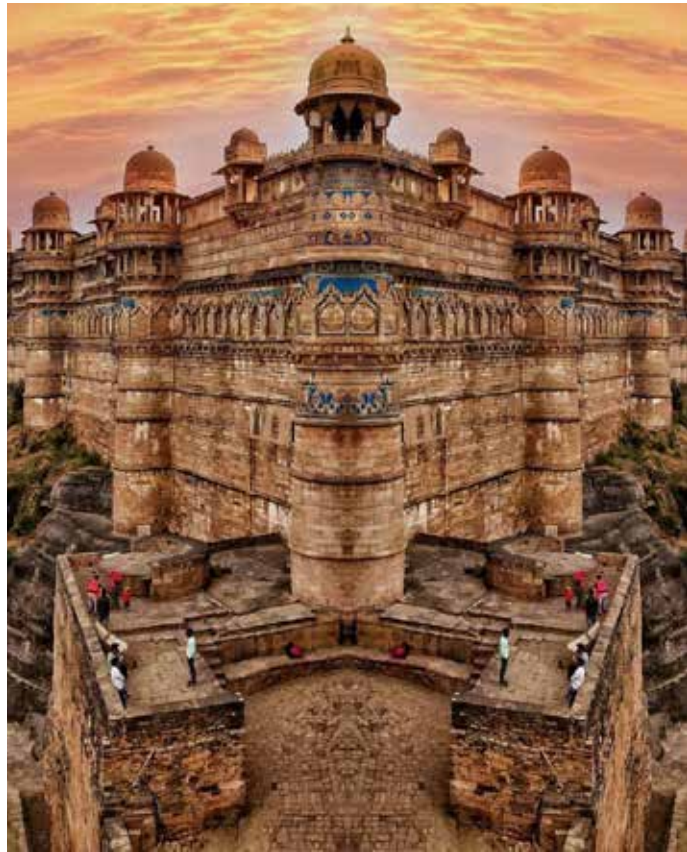




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India, one of the oldest civilisations in the world, is a mosaic of multicultural experiences, with its storied history, rich heritage and myriad attractions. India is also a billion plus people and the juxtaposition of their customs and traditions — a people who have over the centuries defined cultural and religious coexistence, and made India the 'home of holiness'. Most of the world's religions and schools of thought have millions of adherents in the country, and this religious multiplicity is reflected in the innumerable opulent temples and mosques, marvelous churches, serene monasteries and resplendent gurudwaras, both new and old that dot the country.

The cosmopolitan cauldron evidenced across the nation, is perhaps best seen in Madhya Pradesh, the state often referred to as the 'heart of India' due to its central location and confluences of cultures. Landlocked by five other bordering states and imbuing their influences, the geographic location of Madhya Pradesh has endowed the state with a unique identity that has made it home to cultural and spiritual heritages of almost all major religions. The plentitude of iconic monuments, intricately carved temples, stupas, forts and palaces attest to this diversity of cultures and religions.



Madhya Pradesh has everything for travel-thirsty souls. Witness life at its very basic with the various tribal groups, or follow the trails of Hinduism's divine Lord Rama in Chitrakoot, or lose yourself in the legend of the poet prince Baz Bahadur and his beautiful consort Roopmati in Mandu. Romance with nature on a moonlit night in the vicinity of the marble rocks of Jabalpur, or let the sands of time, which have rested gracefully on the numerous chhatris, palaces and forts of Orchha and Gwalior, whisper to you the tales of medieval India, as you meander your way through Madhya Pradesh.

From prehistoric caves to the regal kingdoms of Guptas to those of the Rajputs, Marathas, and Mughals, the landscape of Madhya Pradesh is a map depicting passage of time, embroidered with chronicles of prehistoric people, mighty empires and cultural relics. The state is also home to three UNESCO World Heritage Sites namely Bhimbetka, Khajuraho, and Sanchi. These three UNESCO World Heritage Sites are some of the places you should not miss on a visit to Madhya Pradesh.

Bhimbetka Rock Shelters: An archaeological treasure that spans the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods, the

Bhimbetka Rock Shelters lie nestled within the lush green Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary in the Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh. Bearing witness to human evolution itself, the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters are a rare glimpse of man's ingenuity left behind by our earliest ancestors.

Showing evidence of human settlement, some of these natural caves in Bhimbetka have well-preserved prehistoric cave paintings with the earliest ones dating back to more than 10,000 years and which bears resemblance to the rock shelters in Lascaux, France. Another prehistoric link is evidenced in the Bhil, a prominent extant tribe in Madhya Pradesh, whose style of painting resembles that of the painting style of aborigines of Australia.



From scenes of hunting, dancing and walking through forests to climbing trees and riding on horsebacks, elephants and chariots, these paintings are a record of man's cultural and social development in different eras. A visit to the 'Rock' is a treat for lovers of all things archaeological, artsy and mysterious.



Khajuraho: Built between 950-1050 AD by the Chandela Dynasty in what is now the Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh, 'Khajuraho Group of Monuments' are a masterclass in balancing architectural splendor and sculptural elegance. These Nagara-style temples were built as symbolic expressions depicting various themes of meditation, social life, spiritual teachings and human relationships through art. The temples of Khajuraho are India's unique gift to the world, representing love and joys of life in a sublime expression.

Distinguished in three cluster groups, these temples are dedicated to Hinduism and Jainism with 20 still standing today, out of the original 85 temples in the complex. The ornate Kandariya Mahadeva Temple meaning 'Great God of the Cave', is the largest in the medieval temple group and is the finest example of ancient Indian art and craftsmanship.

Sanchi Stupa: Located in the small village of Sanchi on a hill near the capital city of Bhopal, Sanchi Stupa is one of the oldest stone structures in India built during the Mauryan period by the great emperor Ashoka. An example of a unique architectural legacy and history, the iconic hemispherical edifice of the Sanchi Stupa has three elements to it — 'Anda', 'Harmika', and 'Chhatra'. The dome-shaped 'Anda' depicts the universe centered inside the mound. It is surrounded by 'harmika' (square railing) representing the cosmic mountain held by a central pillar supporting a triple umbrella form called 'Chhatra'. The stupa symbolizes the three jewels of Buddhism, including the Buddha, the Dharma (Teachings) and Sangha (Community).

The structure is enclosed at four points by ornate ceremonial gateways, which act as canvases that hold

detailed scenes depicting Buddhist stories. The Sanchi Stupa stands over 18 meters tall and is surrounded by many smaller stupas, monolithic pillars, temples and monasteries. According to UNESCO, the stupa is the oldest Buddhist sanctuary in existence and finest example of aniconic arts and free-standing architecture.

Most recently in 2021, the marble rock formations of Bhedaghat-Lameta Ghat in Narmada valley and biodiversity-rich Satpura Tiger Reserve (STR) have found their place in UNESCO's tentative list of natural world heritage sites.

But there is a lot more to Madhya Pradesh than the UNESCO cultural sites. Awaiting visitors are such natural and architectural marvels as the Orchha Fort Complex, Jahaz Mahal, Bhojeshwar temple, Gwalior Fort and the Udayagiri Caves among others that dot the vast landscape of the state.

The state is also home to six tiger reserves — Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Panna, Pench, Satpura, and Sanjay-Dubri. Pench National Park is said to have inspired Rudyard Kipling's 'The Jungle Book' and the real Mowgli was found in the Jungle of Seoni. In addition, today, the tiger reserve at Bandhavgarh boasts the highest density of royal Bengal tigers in the world.

Madhya Pradesh is also a shopper's paradise with beautiful Maheshwari and Chanderi textiles and the bell-metal craft of Bastar. Chanderi sarees, in particular, have gained a well-earned reputation for their exquisite weaving artistry.

Chanderi is a small town in Madhya Pradesh, which is celebrated for its prominence in Indian history and its age-old weaving tradition of Chanderi fabrics. It is one of the biggest weaving industries which was patronized by the royal family of Gwalior who set up a training center to train and empower locals. With its beautiful colors and zari work, Chanderi weaves never fail to impress the ethnic fabric lovers.

Every day a new story is woven in the quaint town of Chanderi where every fourth house in the street is lined up with a loom. Most of the artisan's work from their home whereas some work is carried out at the Chanderi Handloom Park, which was established in 2017 by the Ministry of Textile, to facilitate weavers with 240 looms. The weavers' cluster of Chanderi is the biggest in the country with over 11,000 weavers and around 5,000 pit looms.

However, no trip to Madhya Pradesh will be complete without tasting some of the finest street foods in the country. Even if you are not a fan of street-food, the stupendous variety of foods on offer by street vendors will lure you when visiting any city in the state. But, it is only when you visit the city of Indore that you get to taste the original Madhya Pradesh street food culture. And, nowhere is this culture more exemplified than at Indore's Sarafa Market.

The Sarafa Market, which interestingly is a jeweler's market during the day, magically transforms into a food paradise at night. The street food bazaar offers plenty of stalls selling local delicacies such as Joshiji-ka-dahiwada, fried Indore Garadu, Saawariya-ki-sabudana khichdi and bhutte-ka-kees. Additionally, to keep up with modern preferences, there are also outlets selling south Indian snacks and Chinese delicacies. If your stomach is willing, every item offered at these street-food venues in Sarafa Market is worth a try.



UNPACKING FASHION TRENDS FOR DIWALI 2023



By Amina Rumaney

Diwali, the festival of lights, celebrates the power of light over darkness. The word Diwali comes from the Sanskrit term for a 'row of lights', in reference to the tradition of lighting clay oil lamps on this festive occasion.

While the festivities unravel across the five days of Diwali festival, dressing up in glamorous ethnic wear is one of the most celebrated elements of this festive occasion. Every year, new trends and styles take the Diwali fashion market by storm, with celebrities and influencers setting trends for stylish ethnic wear.

Let us explore this year's Diwali fashion must-haves.

Bollywood inspired: Using Bollywood stars as inspiration, putting together a beautiful traditional outfit will make you shine in this year's festival of lights. Be it a gorgeous red lehenga like Sara Ali Khan with marvelous gold embroidery, or Sonam Kapoor's dazzling anarkali that will give a sophisticated look, every Bollywood inspired traditional style will leave you in a marvelous ensemble.

Pastel sarees: Hands down, this year's must-have Diwali fashion item is the saree. A versatile and elegant garment, the saree is a favorite among women, and this year, designers have gone above and beyond to create unique and trendy pieces. For a little extra oomph, designers have used pastels colors, intricate embroidery, and intricate embellishments like tassels, beads, and sequins to make sure the saree is the star of the show.

Comfort oriented salwar kameez: For those looking for a more comfortable and casual outfit option, the salwar kameez is an excellent choice. This traditional Indian outfit, consisting of a loose-fitting tunic (kameez) paired with matching pants (salwar) and a scarf (dupatta), is both comfortable and stylish. This year, designers have played with different cuts, lengths, and materials such as silk and georgette, to create unique and trendy salwar kameez sets.

Anything with floral patterns: This year floral prints on both sarees and lehengas with motifs ranging from delicate, dainty florals to bold and graphic prints are trendsetters. The use of floral prints incorporates elements of nature, which is a vital element in Indian culture and spirituality. Intricate floral embroidery is also used to elevate the traditional ethnic wear, adding a touch of opulence and femininity.

Amid the choice of what to don, let us not forget the importance

of accessories. Any staple Diwali outfit is incomplete without dazzling accessories. Accessories like jhumkas, bangles, and statement necklaces are among the various choices available. Traditionally worn in gold or silver, you can also experiment with different materials and colors to create modern yet timeless pieces.

So, this Diwali, you can unleash the diva in you by donning a flawless ethnic outfit. With the integration of floral prints and embroidery, with a touch of elegance and femininity, whether a saree, lehenga or salwar kameez,



you can rely on intricate designs and bold hues to give you a fashion-forward appearance. So, go ahead, experiment with these trendy designs, accessorize with statement pieces, and embrace these vibrant Diwali fashion trends.



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DIWALI DELICACIES

TO SHARE AND ENJOY



Diwali, the 'Festival of Lights', is one time of the year when people tend to forget their dietary restrictions and resolutions, and go about devouring sweet delicacies without a pang of guilt. Even though many are well aware of the 'morning-after' effects these unrestrained food 'tastings' have on their health, they nevertheless continue to enjoy them with the consoling thought,

'Diwali comes but once a year'.

However, rather than head to the nearest confectionary store and order oodles of sweets, why not prepare them fresh at home. By making them at home, you can be assured of the quality of ingredients used and also control the sweetness and fat content of the sweet delights.

Below we have put together a handful of Diwali specialties that are 'relatively healthier' and which you can prepare at home without too much effort or time.

Badam Halwa

Badam Halwa is a sweet Indian pudding made with ground almonds, milk, sugar and flavored with saffron and cardamom. Traditionally badam (almond) halwa is made with whole almonds that are first soaked and then peeled and ground to a paste to form the base of the halwa. Although this original process delivers a superb taste, it also involves slow tedious stirring and extreme care. Replacing the ground almonds with readily available almond flour speeds up the entire halwa making process without sacrificing much of the taste of the original.



Ingredients

- 1 cup almond flour
- 1 cup + 2 tbsp milk
- ½ cup sugar
- 3 tsp ghee (clarified butter)
- Few strands of saffron
- 2 cardamom pods, crushed

Instructions

- Soak the saffron in two tablespoons of warm milk
- Heat one teaspoon of ghee in a pan.
- Once the ghee melts, reduce the heat to low and add the almond flour and saute for a minute, making sure to coat the flour with the ghee
- Add milk and sugar at room temperature to the flour and ghee mixture
- Mix well and cook for a few minutes till the halwa starts to thicken
- Stir often to avoid burning the bottom of the mixture
- Add the saffron milk and rest of the ghee and cook till the halwa comes together and no longer sticks to the pan
- Finally add some crushed cardamom powder and turn off the stove
- Serve the badam halwa warm.



Besan Ladoo

A popular Indian sweet dish made from besan (gram flour), ghee, sugar, and sometimes nuts, and flavored with cardamom, besan ladoos are often prepared for festive occasions, or as a sweet snack.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup besan flour (gram flour)
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 6 tbsp ghee (melted)
- 4 tbsp assorted chopped nuts (optional)
- ½ tsp cardamom powder
- 1 small pinch salt

Instructions:

Heat a heavy bottom non-stick fry pan on medium heat. Add ghee and let it melt. Add the gram flour and salt, and mix until the flour absorbs the ghee. Keep stirring continuously till the mixture darkens to a medium golden color and the aroma of roasted besan arises. Transfer besan to a mixing bowl to prevent over-roasting. Add chopped nuts (optional), and let it cool for 20-30 minutes. When the mix is cool to the touch, add powdered sugar and mix well. Take about a tablespoon of the mix in your palm and shape it like a ball. Press the finely chopped or sliced nuts onto the ladoo surface and serve.



Gulab Jamun

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups khoya (dried whole milk)
- ¼ cup chenna (cheese curd)
- ¼ teaspoon soda bicarbonate
- 3 tablespoons refined flour (maida)
- ¼ teaspoon green cardamom powder
- 2 cups sugar
- Ghee to deep fry



Instructions:

- Grate khoya and mash chenna and set aside
- Mix the two along with soda bicarbonate, refined flour, green cardamom powder and a little water to make a soft dough
- Divide into sixteen equal portions and shape into balls
- Prepare a sugar syrup with sugar and two cups of water
- Clear the syrup by removing the scum, if any
- Heat ghee/oil in a kadai.
- Add the balls and deep fry on low heat till it turns a golden color
- Drain and soak in the sugar syrup for at least fifteen to twenty minutes before serving.



Jalebi

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups refined flour
- Two cups sugar
- ¼ tsp orange color
- Two cups sugar
- One tbsp milk
- ½ tsp green cardamom powder

Instructions:

- Place the refined flour in a bowl, add one and a half cups of water and bring them together to form a light smooth batter
- Cover the bowl and keep in a warm place to ferment for twenty hours
- Mix the batter again with your hands for fifteen minutes
- Add the food color and two tablespoons of refined flour
- Mix again for ten minutes
- Cook the sugar with two cups of water in a deep non-stick pan on high heat, stirring continuously, till the sugar dissolves
- Add the milk and remove the scum that forms on top
- Add the cardamom powder and cook, stirring, till the syrup attains a one-string consistency
- Let the syrup cool, but ensure that it remains lukewarm
- Heat the ghee in a non-stick frying pan on medium heat
- Pour some of the batter into a squeeze bottle
 - Hold the bottle over the hot ghee and gently squeeze the batter into the ghee in spiral shapes
 - Start from the outside and work inwards for better results
 - Cook, gently turning the jalebi over occasionally, till golden and crisp
 - Drain and soak in the sugar syrup for two to three minutes
 - Drain and serve hot.



Kalakand

A sweet Indian fudge made with milk and often flavored with cardamom, Kalakand is a delicious sweet to make for special occasions such as Diwali.

Ingredients:

- 6 cups whole milk
- 2 tbsp + 1 tsp lemon juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$ can condensed milk
- 1 tsp rose water
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp cardamom powder
- Chopped pistachios to garnish

Instructions

- Add the whole milk to a heavy-bottomed pan and place over medium-high heat
- Stir often and once the milk comes to a boil, turn off the heat.
- Add the lemon juice, 1 tablespoon at a time stirring gently after each addition
- Add and stir until the milk curdles completely and whey separates
- Line a strainer with muslin cloth and pour the curdled milk over it
- Wash the filtered 'chhena' (basic cheese) under a tap to get rid of the lemony flavor
- Bring the ends of the muslin cloth together and tie them in the center
- Squeeze out nearly all the water from the chhena
- Place the chhena in a pan and add the condensed milk and mix well
- Cook the mixture over low heat for 10 to 12 minutes, stirring often, until the mixture thickens and begins to leave the sides of the pan
- Add the rose water and cardamom powder, and mix well
- Remove from heat and transfer mixture to a greased pan
- Smooth out the mixture using a spatula, and sprinkle chopped nuts on top
- Let it set for 2 to 3 hours at room temperature.
- Once set, cut kalakand into pieces
- Keep refrigerated, if not serving immediately

Mysore Pak

An Indian sweet that is said to have originated in the South-Indian city of Mysore, the buttery and dense Mysore Pak is prepared with generous amounts of ghee, sugar, gram flour, and often cardamom



Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup gram flour
- 4 cups pure ghee
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups desi ghee

Instructions:

- Sift the gram flour twice
- Heat the ghee in a pan and keep it hot over very low heat
- Cook the sugar with two and half cups of water over medium heat, stirring continuously till it dissolves
- Increase heat and bring the syrup to a boil
- Cook without stirring for about five minutes or till it reaches a single-thread consistency
- Add half a cup of hot ghee to the syrup and stir
- Add gram flour gradually, stirring all the while to prevent lumps from forming
- Stir continuously till the mixture starts bubbling
- Pour in the remaining hot ghee, half a cup at a time
- Every time you add the ghee the mixture should sizzle and froth
- Continue this process till all the ghee is consumed and there is a pleasant sweet roasted aroma
- Pour the mixture into a greased tray
- Cool for a while and then cut into squares
- Separate the squares when completely cooled and store in an airtight container to retain its freshness and crispness.

Malai Peda

Ingredients:

- One liter whole milk
- Few strands of saffron (Kesar)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- Two pinches of citric acid
- One teaspoon cornflour/cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp green cardamom powder
- 4-5 chopped almonds
- 7-8 chopped pistachios



Instructions:

- Bring the milk to a boil in a deep non-stick pan
- Cook, stirring continuously, for about twenty minutes, till it reduces to half its original volume
- Soak the saffron in two teaspoons of warm milk and add to the boiling milk
- Add the sugar and continue to cook for four to five minutes.
- Mix the citric acid in one tablespoon of water and add gradually to the boiling milk Cook till the milk curdles slightly
- Mix the cornflour with the remaining two teaspoons of milk and add to the pan Cook, stirring continuously, for about forty-five minutes till the mixture thickens and resembles khoya
- Add the cardamom powder and mix well
- Remove from heat and set aside to cool
- Divide into sixteen equal portions and shape into round balls
- Decorate with almonds and pistachios, and serve.



Boondi Ladoo

Ingredients:

- 2 cups gram flour (besan)
- 2 cups sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- 10 cashew nuts
- 20 raisins
- 15 green cardamoms
- 4 saffron (kesar) strands
- A few drops of milk
- 500g ghee

Instructions:

- Shell and powder cardamoms
- Add one fourth cup of water to sugar and heat until it melts and becomes syrupy
- To check if the sugar syrup is ready, take a

drop of the solution and drop in water

- If it remains intact and does not dissolve then your syrup is ready
- (While preparing the sugar syrup, add a few drops of milk. Impurities will collect on the surface in a layer. Remove this scum)
- Add saffron and cardamom powder to the syrup
- Separately, add soda and water to gram flour and prepare a paste without lumps Heat the ghee in a deep frying pan
- Sieve the gram flour directly into the hot ghee and fry till light yellow
- Drain and set aside.
- Fry cashew nuts and raisins and along with the boondi add to the sugar syrup
- Mix well and set aside to cool
- Apply some ghee on your palms and shape the boondi mixture to form balls.



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