



International Podcast Day

International Podcast Day is a global celebration that lights up the world of podcasts every year on September 30th. It's a special day when people everywhere celebrate the incredible world of podcasting. This day is not just for listening to your favourite shows but also for recognizing the hard work of podcast creators. Imagine a day dedicated entirely to the joys of podcasts, where you can dive into episodes about anything and everything. Podcasts have changed the way we consume media, offering endless entertainment and learning opportunities that fit into our busy lives.

#COMMEMORATION

Rumi Day

Dive into one of history's greatest wordsmiths, the 13th-Century Persian poet, Rumi, who has become one of the most widely-read and oldest artists of all time.



Poetry has been an important part of various cultures over the centuries. It is often a highly celebrated art. So, there is no wonder that many cultures and societies dedicate days to their most prized poets and writers.

Some of those poets are so important that their days have spread and become global celebrations. One of these examples is the very popular Rumi Day, which celebrates the life and works of the Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, or Rumi, as he is more commonly known.



How To Celebrate Rumi Day

Of course, one of the best ways to celebrate Rumi Day is to enjoy some of his enduring poetry. You will be able to find books of his poetry in plenty of bookshops. If you take a look online, you might even be able to find some free poetry available to you and won't even have to spend a penny! Not sure which poems to read? No problem! One of our favourites is *Only Breath*. This is possibly one of his most popular poems and many people like the way that it speaks directly to them.

Lots of people find that, even though they may not have the same principles and beliefs as Rumi, they can still relate to this incredible verse.

History of Rumi Day

Rumi was born in 1207, although it is unclear of the exact location. Some scholars argue that he was born in Balkh, which would be modern-day Afghanistan, while some disagree and say that he was born in Wakhsh, now in modern-day Tajikistan. In his early life, Rumi was an Islamic jurist before finally turning to poetry at the age of 37.

Even though, Rumi died in 1273, his legacy has been extremely impressive ever since. His poems have been translated into numerous languages and he, still, has a very strong English-language following.

Even though, he came to writing at a later stage in his life than most poets, that certainly didn't hold him back. Majority of his



A Rakkhoshi queen at the king's palace. An illustration from the classic Bengali folk-lore collection *Thakurmar Jhuli* (1907) by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar.

In *Chandimangal*, an important work of medieval Bengali literature, 16th-century poet, Mukundaram Chakravarty, renders grisly descriptions of a *bazaar*, where ghouls, ghosts and demons buy and sell meat cakes and blood wine, *ghee*, made with human brains and wheel-shaped bread of human paste. For the more fastidious, the market offers flat rice, made with soft bones, juicy *paan* of human skin, and tubs of bone marrow yoghurt. And if none of this appeases the supernatural epicure, there is an offer of white elephant tusks (instead of white radish), ripped fingernails (instead of water chestnut), and bananas, made of tongue.



A Shakhchunni sprinkles water mixed with cow dung.

What do Ghosts in Bengal eat?

#FOOD



A Brahmadaiya saves a poor Brahmin man from a group of bhoot. The illustration by Warwick Goble is from the 1912 edition of *Folk-Tales of Bengal* by Lal Behari Dey.

tubs of bone marrow yoghurt. And if none of this appeases the supernatural epicure, there is an offer of white elephant tusks (instead of white radish), ripped fingernails (instead of water chestnut), and bananas, made of tongue.

In Chakravarty's work, everyday, human food is denatured to evoke horror and disgust. But in Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's *Thakurmar Jhuli*, terror is served without culinary theatricality. In his iconic collection of fairytales, armies of shapeshifting trolls, *rakkhosh* and *rakkhoshi*, polish off stables, full of horses and elephants, devour humans whole and chomp on peas made of iron.

Indeed, all tales of food-loving Bengali supernatural beings can be situated in the human need to mirror their conditions in myths and legends. The folklore of the land tells us about *Shankhachurni* or *Shakhchunni*, the fish-loving ghost of a married woman, who longs to return to married life. The fish in this story is not so much about food as it is about death and intimacy. Traditionally, in Bengal, it was obligatory for a married woman to eat fish, even a morsel, to signify the health and life of her husband. A *Shakhchunni*, longing for fish, suggests her longing for marital life. What kind of fish does *Shakhchunni* and her ilk like? The lore here is divided. Some say they prefer it raw, others say they like it charred or fried, and yet others insist they want it rotten and rancid above all else. What determines the preference is, perhaps, the 'caste of the ghost.'

Casteism in Supernatural World

Pervasive in the corporeal world, casteism also runs through the social fabric of the supernatural terrain. *Brahmadaiya*, the ghost of a deceased Brahmin, often described as honorable, erudite and decorous, is at the top of the caste hierarchy in the ghost world. "All other ghosts, tall as palm trees, very thin and very black, who eat rice and all sorts of human food, are spirits of departed *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishtiyas* and *Shudras*," writes Reverend Lal Behari Dey, in his 1874 book *Govinda Samanta*. "Unlike other ghosts, they (the *Brahmadaiya*) do not eat all sorts of food but only those which are considered religiously clean," Day says.

In Taradas Bandyopadhyay's *Bhooteera Ekhon*, the order is upturned. In this story, the ghost of an underprivileged woman



admishes her ghost son for demanding rotten fish, which is a delicacy reserved for the privileged classes like the *Brahmadaiya*. From other stories emerge a whole list of ingredients coveted in the supernatural world, *gugli* (periwinkle), *shamuk* (snails), both associated with the poor and the marginalised in the human world. The peculiar culinary penchants of the *Bengali Bhoot* are also at the heart of Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury's *Kujo O Bhoot*. The motley band of ghosts in this story is fond of the fetid scent of asafoetida, mouth-puckering tartness of tamarind, pungent allium notes of garlic, zest of peppers and the overpowering smell of *shutki* or dried fish, but are repulsed by *kanchagolla*, a melt-in-the-mouth sweetmeat made with fresh chana. Seen closely, in the world created by Ray Chowdhury, ghosts favour tastes often derided by humans as unsophisticated and crude (salty, tangy,

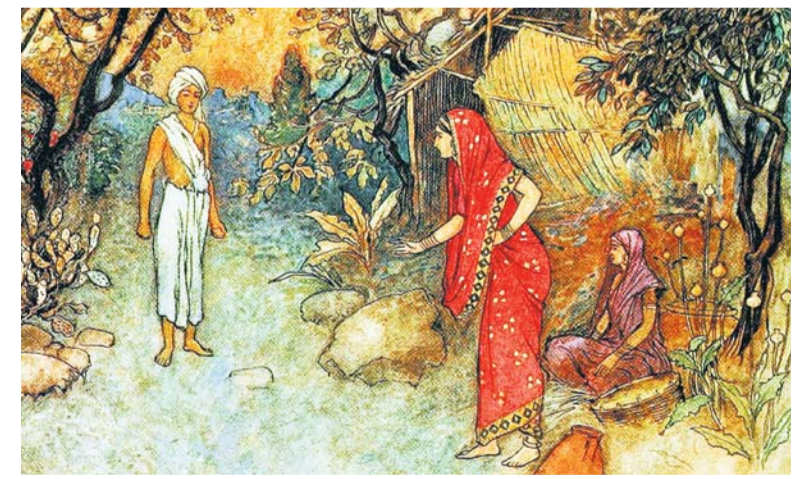
sulphuric and pungent) over the classically cherished (sweet). It is this preference that represents the altered reality of the supernatural world and separates immaterial beings from the living.

In Bandyopadhyay's *Bhoot Puran* too, when Ramayi Bhattacharya becomes a ghost after being killed by a disembodied voice, he develops an insatiable appetite for honey from *katke* flowers and glowing fireflies. Sweetmeats like *mithai*, *malpua* and *manohara* no longer hold his interest.

Among the most poignant stories of food-loving ghosts is narrated by Leela Majumdar in *Tepantore Parer Bari*. In this story, a desperate house owner recruits two youngsters, Notey and Guru, to spend a night at his purportedly haunted ancestral mansion so that he can convince a local organisation to buy the property and turn it into an ashram for the homeless. For their services, the house owner promises the boys Rs. 15 and gives them a sumptuous tiffin of *kochari* (deep-fried bread stuffed with lentils), *aloo chaat*, *kanchkolar achar* (pickled raw bananas), *jibhe goja* (tongue-shaped, sugar-crusted pastries) and bottles of lemonade.

During their stay, Notey and Guru find the mansion overrun by a raucous bunch of ghosts of homeless refugee children. The ghosts snatch and hungrily devour the boys' food, but it doesn't truly satisfy them. What the children truly long for is *garam bhaat* or hot rice, just like the rural poor in Bengal. To show their gratitude for the food, the ghosts agree to vacate the mansion, but on the condition that it be turned into a shelter where *garam bhaat* will be cooked every day, for homeless orphans, just like them.

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#FINE DINING

Culinary Gems across the country

Some brand new, some revamped, and some familiar favourites, each one better than the last.

We know it isn't easy to pick a fine-dine restaurant from the many that dot the city. If you, like us, love exploring all the new hotspots in town but also gravitate towards tried and tested gems for a comfort meal, then read ahead. We've curated our top picks that you need to check out before the year ends.

Whether you're feeling adventurous or want to revel in the comfort of knowing, this list has something for everyone. From innovative new menus to iconic culinary experiences that never disappoint, these are the places to savour unforgettable meals. Here's everything hot and heavy in India at the moment, as far as food is concerned. Let's dive in!

BONO Boutique Ice Cream, Mumbai



Poe & Co., Goa



BONO Boutique Ice Cream, Mumbai

This lovely spot in Colaba is on a mission to change the way Mumbai eats ice cream. These stunning scoops are a work of art and we're here for it. They serve an array of unique ice cream flavours, but our favourite remains the *lemon curd marshmallow*. BONO also specialises in jams, sauces, and all sorts of toppings, but the *pistachio soft serve with unicorn dust* is high up on our list of things to try.

Megumi, Mumbai

Picture this, sleek interiors that resemble Tokyo's trendiest neighbourhood, some authentic Japanese flavours, and an expansive bar menu. *Megumi* is not your average *sushi* joint, it's a contemporary pan-Asian restaurant that serves culinary finesse on a platter. The iceberg *wafu salad* with goma dressing, *avocado carpaccio* with lime and sea salt, and their extensive dessert selection is something to relish.

The Mission Bay, Delhi

The newly-opened *The Mission Bay* in Mayapuri Nagar, New Delhi brings you a slice of San Francisco on a platter. Their menu featuring plates like shrimp, truffle and spinach risotto, *parmesan Sformato* with roasted bell peppers, and *ahi tuna poke* is truly reminiscent of a typical Bay Area meal. As for dessert, don't miss the *koignu amann*, a light and crispy pastry, filled with a delicious apricot jam.



Panjim's first 24-hour restaurant, *Poe & Co.* serves authentic Goan cuisine. Chef Saurabh Tyagi, who has previously worked under chef Gordon Ramsay at Maze, curated the menu to include an array of fusion delights. Picture all your favourite sandwiches and melts such as a crispy *bbq junghi melt*, and their signature *Tokyo crispwich*, with homemade *Poe bread*, instead of your regular loaf, it's a bite to remember.

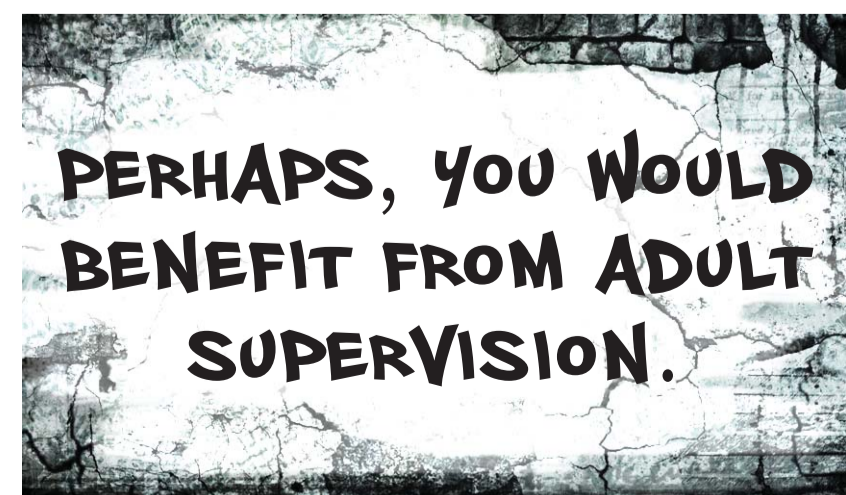
Laurel by Flavors, Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad folks, we have something for you, too! *Laurel by Flavors* is back, and better than ever. Thanks to the culinary wizardry of founder Paresh Desai and Chef Parab. This isn't just a reopening, it's a full-blown glow-up. With a new and improved menu, including flavours from around the world, we're definitely excited to give this one a go. Take their *Himalayan tehri*, for instance. It is *paner* baked with a spicy honey *gochujang* sauce, some local vegetables and is served in a Korean pot.



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS

