Then come the mecho's entreaties. He starts in a pathetic nasal voice, begging the human to give him the fish for he is, "hungry, very very hungry." The tone, however, rapidly builds up

to abuse and the words devolve into threats of

the dire kind. The trick to surviving, they say, is

not giving in to the mecho's demands. Should

the human think he'd get rid of the mecho by

throwing the fish and making a run for it, the

latter will pounce on the former and take both

fish and life. But if the human holds his nerves

mecho loses all sanity and does ghastly things

strong enough, and the fish stronger, the

like beat his head against a tree or start

chewing his hand off in exasperation.

bag, Mr. Angler soon had mecho in

pursuit. What had started as a vic-

tory march soon turned into a sev-

eral miles long, fear-laden run for

dear life and ended with Mr. Angler

blacking out with exhaustion at the

threshold of his home. However,

ence of them all, though. For, in his

case, there wasn't just one but a

whole team of mechos, who played

relay race at the fateful night.

Returning from the weekly market,

he'd barely tied his boat to the

wharf when a mecho accosted him

asking for the fish. He ran with his heart and fish in hand until he spot-

ted a peasant returning home.

"Which way home?" the drained

The tailor had the worst experi-

both his soul and sole were saved.

event highlights the vital skills needed to navigate the media and information landscapes effectively.

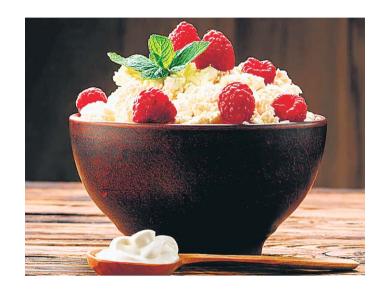
30 October 2024

राष्ट्रदुत

**#NUTRITION** 

# 10 Common Foods with the highest amount of Fibre

While many know fibre is essential, few realise just how many everyday foods can help meet our daily requirements.



in our diet is quite digestive steady blood sugar levels, and even weight management. While many know fibre is essential, few day foods can help meet our daily requirements. The recommended fibre intake for adults varies by age and gender, with men needing around 28-34 grams per day and women requiring 22-28 grams. Here are ten common foods that we likely encounter very often, which are full of fibre

### Green peas aren't just for

adding colour to our plate they're also a rich source of fibre. One cup of cooked green peas delivers around 8.8 grams of fibre, which can contribute greatly to the daily intake. They also contain vitamins and proteins, which makes them a great addition to the meals

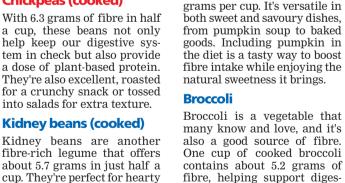
Lentils are generally conwhen eaten with the skin. A sumed almost every day. medium-sized apple provides They are not only high in around 4.8 grams of fibre, with 7.8 grams of fibre in just half the skin itself. Eating apples a cup. They're fantastic for with the peel on is a simple way improving heart health. to increase your fibre intake. Lentils' high fibre content helps keep us full longer. making them ideal for Pumpkin isn't just for fall

### weight management. Chickpeas (cooked)

With 6.3 grams of fibre in half a cup, these beans not only help keep our digestive system in check but also provide a dose of plant-based protein. They're also excellent, roasted for a crunchy snack or tossed into salads for extra texture.

Kidney beans are another fibre-rich legume that offers about 5.7 grams in just half a cup. They're perfect for hearty dishes like chilli and soups. Their high fibre content can help lower cholesterol levels This makes them beneficial for heart health.

Guavas have a fibre punch of approximately 8.9 grams per cup. It's not just high in fibre, guava is also rich in vitamin C and other essential nutrients. Eat it raw, blend it into a smoothie, or add it to a fruit salad for a delicious, highfibre snack



### fibre, helping support digestion and heart health. It's great for roasted, steamed, or added to pasta dishes, making it an easy choice for increasing fibre in your meals.

Berries are well-known for

their antioxidant properties,

but raspberries also contain a

high amount of fibre. One cup

ng them one of the most

An apple a day may indeed

keep the doctor away, especially

most of the fibre coming fron

desserts, it's also a fantastic

source of fibre, with about '

provides about 8 grams, mak-

fibre-rich fruits available.

Chia seeds Chia seeds may be small, but they're mighty when it comes to fibre content. Just one tablespoon contains 4.1 grams of fibre. Chia seeds are also known for their ability to absorb liquid, creating a gel like consistency that can help in digestion.





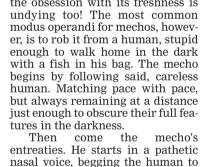
What is lacking, though, is recogni-Bengali's prime carnal pleasure (as Tagore christens it in his poem *Amontron*), goes well beyond those who live. And what better occasion than Bhoot Chaturdashi, or India's very own Halloween, to recognise that food frenzy extends far into the land's phantom fief?

Given that I have little more than lore, legends, literature, and oral history to rely on, and since, unlike Europe, which is haunted by a spectre, far too many spectres haunt Bengal, I start with an apology. An apology to both parties, those I'm speaking to and those I'm speaking of. For Ladmit that this attempt at documenting diets of the demons of the Gangetic delta is only a ghost of what's actually needed, a comprehensive compendium.

### **Mecho Bhoot- The fishloving Ghost**

Unlike the existence of ghosts, there can be no disagreement about the Bengali's love for fish. Little wonder that one of the most wellknown groups of ghosts is qualified as *mecho*, the adjective form of maach, meaning fish. Mecho, meaning fishy of the scent kind, is as apt as it gets. Not only are these phantoms purely pescatarian, but they announce their presence with piscine pungency

Some mechos fish for themselves using rudimentary angling paraphernalia. Some drive shoals into a frenzy and make them jump onto the banks of water bodies like khaals, beels, and pukurs, devouring the fresh catch. Yet others sit patiently by desolate pukurs at night, waiting for a carp to breach the surface and scoop it right out with hands that extend at will.





"Bhoot Chaturdashi is a day when the journey begins towards light after the conquest of darkness." said Raniit Bhattacharva, a retired bank officer





the obsession with its freshness is undying too! The most common modus operandi for mechos, however, is to rob it from a human, stupid enough to walk home in the dark with a fish in his bag. The mecho begins by following said, careless human. Matching pace with pace. but always remaining at a distance just enough to obscure their full fea-

Then come the mecho's nasal voice, begging the human to give him the fish for he is, "hungry very very hungry." The tone, however, rapidly builds up to abuse and the words devolve into threats of the dire kind. The trick to surviving, they say, is not giving in to the mecho's demands. Should the human think he'd get rid of the mecho by throwing the fish and making a run for it, the latter will

ounce on the former and take both fish and life. But if the human holds his nerves strong enough, and the fish stronger, the mecho loses all sanity and does ghastly things like beat his head against a tree or start chewing his hand off in exasperation. Bengali fiction is full of mecho bhoot, and they're too many to recount. Personally, however, I know of three individuals who had conquests with mechos along these very lines. A newlywed police detective in Barisal, a feudal lout with a love for angling from Hooghly, and a Muslim tailor from Chittagong. The first two are direct family. The third is not. Nobody, whom I'm related to, could ever stitch an inch of cloth

The police detective had a big Padma Hilsa with him. And the mecho drove him around in circles through rice fields all night long until dawn, until a kindly peasant arrived and took him and the hilsa to safety. The angler had won a day and night league in Hooghly and was walking down a road that passed a haunted watchtower. A spring in his step, vanity in his heart, and a large river sole in his

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mecho drove him around in circles through rice fields all night long until dawn, until a kindly peasant arrived and took him and the hilsa to safety. The angler had won a day and night league in Hooghly and was walking down a road that passed a haunted watchtower. A spring in his step, vanity in his heart, and a large river sole in his bag, Mr. Angler soon had mecho in pursuit. What had started as a victory narch soon turned into a several miles long, fear-laden run for dear life and ended with Mr. Angler blacking out with exhaustion at the threshold of his home. However, both his soul and sole were saved.

> dressmaker asked. But the peasant sniggered evilly and demanded the fish as fee for directions. From there, he ran to a tea stall and stopped to catch his breath. The tea seller promptly offered him a seat but, the very next moment, bared his fangs and said. "Why don't you give me the fish, and I'll make us some curry?" The tailor lived to tell the tale, but it's unclear what happened to the fish. What's quite clear, though, is no matter which side of a divide Bengalis stand on, religious, political, life and death, they're ready to

good fish On a serious note, many families light up 14 divas for 14 generations of their ancestors. It is said that the ancestors can help their predecessors to stay away from negative and bad energies. One thing to remember here is that these customs of *Bhoot Chaturdashi* are not celebrated in all the Bengali house-

risk life and phantom limb for a

Besides the grand narrative of the celebration of Lord Rama's

Vamana, an avatar of Vishnu pushes Mahabali down to patala (hell), with his feet (painting by Raja

return to Ayodhya and the victory of light over darkness, Diwali is associated with various other tradiional practices and rituals around the country. The day before Diwali, Chhoti Diwali, is especially associated with beliefs around the descent of spirits on earth, and the slaying of the demon Narakasura, who embodied darkness. It is for these reasons that this day is also known as Bhoot or Naraka Chaturdashi Here are some rituals associated with Diwali eve.

In Goa, huge effigies of the Asura King, Narakasura, are burnt across the state. The 'Narakasura Vadh' the defeat Narakasura by Lord Krishna. Historian, Sanjeev V. Sardesai

said, "According to mythology, drunk on power. Narakasura caused a lot of destruction. He robbed the earrings of Lord Indra's mother and kidnapped 16,000 women, which is believed to have caused darkness all around.' Narakasura was subsequently killed in a battle with Krishna.

"Narakasura is supposed to have been killed in the early hours Narkasura are filled with firecrackers and burnt at dawn. It symbolis-



The first and primary tradition is to cook a simple dish where using 14 different types of leafy veggies is a must. This mixed veg is prepared

with lots of vegetables and seasonal shaak (leafy vegetables) are added too. Devotees eat this dish as it is believed to not only keep every

morning. So, effigies of Narkasura are filled with firecrackers and

burnt at dawn. It symbolises the triumph of good over evil. The tradition gained prominence after Goa was liberated from Portuguese rule. Before

iberation, the Portuguese suppressed any sort of local rituals," he said. In

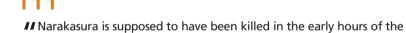
al competitions, with lucrative cash prizes on offer. "Over time, loca

and to chase away evil spirits. It is

also a ritual to consume 14 different

types of 'saag' or leafy vegetables

(choddo shaak) to mark the occa-



the days leading to the festival, youths across villages in Goa collect funds Bhoot Chaturdashi, a celebration in and build giant effigies of the demon. The effigies are displayed in severpoliticians have promoted the tradition and with the infusion of money. es the triumph of good over evil. the competitions are held on a grand scale," Sardesai said. The tradition gained prominence

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On the day before Diwali (Chhoti Diwali), people in West Bengal observe 'Bhoot Chaturdashi.' which is the same as 'Narak Chaturdashi,' or 'Kali Chaudash.' This is the 14th day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Kartik*.

It is believed on this night, the souls of the deceased come down to earth to visit their dear ones. It is also believed that 14 generations of forefathers visit their living relatives, and to guide them to the family homes, 14 oil lamps are placed at different places in the house. The 14 lamps (choddo prodip) are intended both to welcome the forefathers,

The lighting of lamps on Bhoot Chaturdashi is a tradition that has long been followed in this part of the country. Nobody remembers how long, but that's how it has been. embraced in all the contradictions that the word *bhoot* serves up. If the adjective 'bhoot' means the past, a time that once existed but does not any more, the noun 'bhoot,' as part the Hindu concept 'Panchabhoot,' implies the five elements of nature, as real and present

healthy but also become strong

enough to stay fit during this time

tence that may have had a past. On the day before *Kali Puia*, the word *bhoot* lends its multiple interpretations to the word *chaturdashi*. or the 14th day of the lunar fortnight in the Hindu calendar, a haunting, numinous conjunction that elevates what would otherwise have been an ordinary evening to something symbolic. The tradition of lighting 14 lamps, or diyas, or

pronoun 'bhoot' that means ghost.

eating *choddo shaak*, 14 types of greens, is an extension of that sym-

According to one long-held

belief among Bengalis, the light from the lamps guides their departed ancestors to their homes when they return to earth for a day on Bhoot Chaturdashi. Some also believe that these divas are dedicat ed to Yama, and that the god of death and *dharma* can even figure out who have not forgotten their ancestors. Then, there are those who believe that the 14 divas keep away unholy spirits, who visit the world of the living on this day. So, keep the lamps lit, whatever the as the past is not. Then, there is the case may be. As for the dead who have passed on, they can never which hints at a supernatural exiscome back, but they return as memory, nourished in this symbolic reminiscence by those whom they have left behind.

The evening ritual of lighting amps is not limited to this side of Bengal only. In many places across the border in Bangladesh, once part of the same land, people use leaves of the jackfruit tree in place of diyas. Tradition survives in differ



beginning of winter. The festival of Kali Puja is the divine junction Same Day, Different **Tradition** 

While Bengalis celebrate Bhoot Chaturdashi, elsewhere in the coun try, in the north and the west, people observe the day as Naraka Chaturdashi, a prayer ritual said to have been started by Lord Vishnu himself. The story goes that King Bali, a powerful ruler, had taken the form of the asura (demon), king Narakasura, as he set about conquering all the three worlds. Even the gods were not spared in the king's relentless march to expand

The gods then approached Vishnu to save them. Vishnu refused to join the war, or kill his own devotee, but presented himself before the king in his Vamana avatar of a dwarf Brahmin, with a request for three steps of land. When the king granted his wish, the Vamana transformed himself into Vishnu's colossal form, winning back both heaven and earth. The king, realising his fate, offered his own head for the third step and was

ushed down to hell. But Vishnu had realised that Bali had agreed to donate the three steps of land, fully aware of the dwarf's real identity. Grateful, he started the tradition of offering orayers to the king in his Narakasura form. Since then, so goes the legend. King Bali would visit the earth on this day accompa nied by his subordinates, ghosts and

spirits, and ask for prayers and The day is also celebrated as *Chhoti Diwali*, the second day of the five-day-long festival of Deepavali, Diwali. According to ancient Hindu literature. Narakasura was killed on this day by Lord Krishna and the goddess Satvabhama. In Bengal though, the local belief is that the goddess Kali herself descends on earth with 14 spirit attendants before she embarks on a mission to defeat the unholy spirits.

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Raniit

changing perceptions. A more mat-

ter-of-fact assessment of the place of

tradition in today's world, perhaps,

came from art student, Aheli

Chakraborty. "Halloween is a more

familiar term than Bhoot

Chaturdashi," she said, "just like

cakes and pastries are more popular

than *pithe-puli* (the winter-special

longer what it used to be, when the

real and the metaphorical lived hap-

pily together. But there are some,

though increasingly dwindling in numbers, who still have no problem

with either, "Bhoot Chaturdashi is a

dav when the journey begins

towards light after the conquest of

Bhattacharva, a retired bank officer.

for whom the day's rituals have been

part of his life for over 65 years

"Darkness is a relative word, as

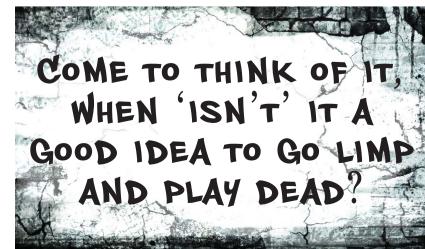
said

darkness.'

The world has moved on. It's no

Halloween is a more familiar term than Bhoot Chaturdashi," said art student, Aheli Chakraborty, adding, "just like cakes and pastries are more popular than pithe-puli."

## THE WALL



### **BABY BLUES**



## By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



# ZITS





