

### Global Media and Information Literacy Week

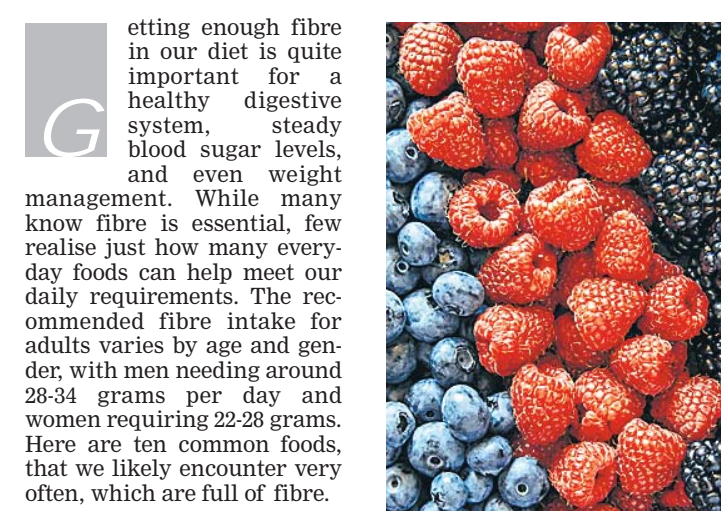


Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the vast amount of information available online? Media and Information Literacy (MIL) equips you with the skills to navigate and evaluate this information effectively. It helps you distinguish between credible news and misleading content, enhancing your ability to make informed decisions. Therefore, every year, from October 24 to 31, people around the world celebrate Global Media and Information Literacy Week. This exciting event highlights the vital skills needed to navigate the media and information landscapes effectively.

### #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.



Getting enough fibre in our diet is quite important for a healthy digestive system, steady blood sugar levels, and even weight management. While many know fibre is essential, few realise just how many everyday 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 every day, which are full of fibre.

#### Cooked Green Peas

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 (cooked)

Lentils are generally consumed almost every day. They are not only high in protein but also offer about 7.8 grams of fibre in just half a cup. They're fantastic for improving heart health. Lentils' high fibre content helps keep us full longer, making them ideal for 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 (cooked)

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 chili and soups. Their high fibre content can help lower cholesterol levels. This makes them beneficial for heart health.

#### Guava

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, high-fibre snack.



Illustration: Jishnu Bandyopadhyay.



Anjali Sharma  
Senior Journalist & Wildlife Enthusiast

Bengali lives to eat. What is lacking, though, is recognition that the Bengali's prime carnal pleasure (as Tagore christens it in his poem *Amantron*), 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 fest?

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 I admit 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.



Bengalis eat 14 leafy veggies during Kali Puja.



# Fish-loving *Bhoots* of Bengal

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 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.



Mecho Bhoot Illustration: Jishnu Bandyopadhyay.

bag, Mr. Angler soon had mecho in pursuit. What had started as a victory march 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.

The tailor had the worst experience of them all, though. For, in his case, there wasn't just one but a whole team of mechos, who played a 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 spotted

Clearly, not only the love for fish, the obsession with its freshness is undying too. The most common mechos 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, and always remaining at a distance as it gets. Not only are these phantoms purely piscatorial, 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.

Unlike the existence of ghosts, there can be no disagreement about the Bengali's love for fish. Little wonder that one of the most well-known 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 piscatorial, but they announce their presence with piscine pungency.

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On a serious note, many families light up 14 *diyas* 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 households in West Bengal.

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

return to Ayodhya and the victory of light over darkness, Diwali is associated with various other traditional 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.

On the day before Diwali (Chhoti Diwali), people in West Bengal observe '*Bhoot Chaturdashi*', which is the same as '*Narak Chaturdashi*' or '*Kali Chaudashi*'. 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,

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 occasion.

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 everyone

### #GHOST TALES



*Bhoot Chaturdashi*, a celebration in Bengal.

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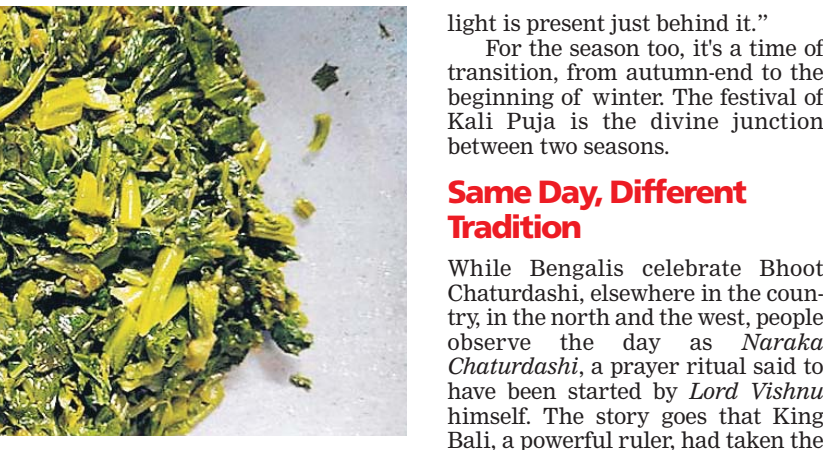
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light is present just behind it." For the season too, it's a time of transition, from autumn-end to the beginning of winter. The festival of Kali Puja is the divine junction between two seasons.

### Same Day, Different Tradition

While Bengalis celebrate Bhoot Chaturdashi, elsewhere in the country, in the north and the west, people observe the day as *Naraka Chaturdashi*, a prayer ritual said to have been started by 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 his realm.

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 pushed 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 prayers to the king in his Narakasura form. Since then, so goes the legend, King Bali would visit the earth on this day, accompanied by his subordinates, ghosts and spirits, and ask for prayers and offerings.

The world has moved on. It's no longer what it used to be, when the real and the metaphorical lived happily together. But there are some, though increasingly dwindling in numbers, who still have no problem with either '*Bhoot Chaturdashi* is a day when the journey begins towards light after the conquest of darkness,' said Ranjit Bhattacharya, 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

Sometimes it flows too, in changing perceptions. A more matter-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 sweet treats)." "The world has moved on. It's no longer what it used to be, when the real and the metaphorical lived happily together. But there are some, though increasingly dwindling in numbers, who still have no problem with either '*Bhoot Chaturdashi* is a day when the journey begins towards light after the conquest of darkness,' said Ranjit Bhattacharya, 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

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