ARBiT it happens here...

Building Better Cities

World Town Planning Day is highlights the importance of smart, sustainable, and inclusive urban development. Observed globally, it emphasizes how well-planned towns and cities can improve quality of life, reduce congestion, and promote environmental sustainability. The day encourages community participation, ensuring that urban growth reflects local needs and culture. Activities like workshops, seminars, and exhibitions educate citizens and professionals about innovative planning strategies, green infrastructure, and efficient public transport. Ultimately, World Town Planning Day serves as a reminder that thoughtful urban design is key to resilient, liveable, and future-ready cities, shaping the way we live and interact.

राष्ट्रदूत
SUNDAY
08 November 2026
A-B

#FOOD

Diwali Savouries

Festivals are incomplete without delicious and toothsome foods especially when we spend time with our loved ones

Easy-breezy festive munchies

Diwali is a festival of lights, colours, crackers and food. This is the time of the year when most people spend time with their family members, extended families, relatives and friends. Festivals are incomplete without delicious and toothsome foods especially when we spend time with our loved ones. Here is a collection of Diwali snacks that may be useful for you to plan ahead your diwali menu.

Ajwain Aur Kalonji Ki Nimki



Ingredients

- 150 Gram Wheat Flour
- 150 Gram White Flour or Maida
- 2 Tbsp Ajwain
- 2 Tbsp Black Onion Seeds
- 2 tsp Baking Soda
- 3 Tbsp Oil or Ghee
- To taste, Salt

Preparation

1. Sieve the wheat flour, white flour, baking soda and salt together.
2. Add the ajwain. Mix the cumin seeds with the rest of the sieved flours.
3. Add oil or ghee. Add water and start to knead the dough.
4. The dough should not be soft, but firm.
5. Take medium sized balls from the dough and roll them on dusted flour.
6. With a serrated knife, make criss cross patterns on the rolled dough.
7. Remove the diamond shaped patterns and deep fry them in hot oil till crisp and golden browned.
8. Drain the namak pare on paper napkins to remove excess oil.
9. Once they cool down, then store namak pare in an airtight box.
10. Serve them anytime along with green chutney.

Cheese and Jalapeno Stuffed Kachori



Ingredients

- 500 Gram Flour
- 15 Gram Ajwain
- 1/4 Cup Oil
- 20 Gram Salt
- 100 Gram Cottage cheese
- 50 Gram Cheddar Cheese
- 50 Gram Jalapeno

Preparation

1. Sieve flour, put oil and rub with your palm.
2. Now, add salt, Ajwain, black onion seed and mix well.
3. Make a well in the centre, add enough water and knead into stiff dough. Make small size of balls and keep aside.
4. Heat oil, add ajwain and cottage cheese. Cook for some time with salt and red chilli powder.
5. Keep this mixture for cooling. Now, add grated cheddar cheese and chopped jalapeno.
6. Stuffed this mixture inside the balls and flatten with your palm.
7. Deep fry and serve hot with tamarind chutney.

Paneer Tikki

Ingredients

- 200 Gram Paneer, mashed
- 1 Potato (peeled), boiled
- 1/4 Cup Singhare ka atta (water chestnut)
- 2 tsp Sendha namak (white rock salt)
- 1/4 tsp Kali mirch (powdered black pepper)
- 1 Green chilli, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp Tulsi leaves, finely chopped
- Ghee

Preparation

1. Grate potatoes, add paneer, atta, rock salt, pepper, green chillies and tulsi and mash well till smooth and is dough like.
2. Form into flat rounds (grease your hands if it sticks).
3. Heat a thin layer of ghee in a non-stick frying pan. Fry the rounds over medium heat, till crisp and brown on both sides.
4. Add a little more ghee if required and serve hot with chutney.



From this time on, Guru Hargobind was known as Bandi (prison) Chhor (liberator), and the day of liberation is celebrated as Bandi Chhor Divas (day). Several days later, when Guru Hargobind Sahib ji reached Amritsar, the Hindu festival of light, Diwali, was being celebrated. In their joy at seeing their Guru ji again, the people lit up the whole city with candles, lights, and lamps. After almost four hundred years, this tradition continues in Amritsar, and on this day, the Harmandir Sahib is glowing with thousands of candles, floating lamps, strings of lights that decorate the domes and fireworks bursting in the sky.







When They Were All Released

#BANDI CHOD DIWAS





Anjali Sharma
Senior Journalist & Wildlife Enthusiast

It happened in the autumn of 1619 and is now celebrated in October or November, as the date changes according to the Lunar calendar, as the *bandi chod diwas*. Guru Hargobind Sahib ji's father, Guru Arjan Dev ji, had been martyred nearly 13 years before 1619 and the Mughal authorities weren't taking their eyes off the young Guru. When he constructed the Akal Takht, the Throne of the Almighty, in Amritsar, he simultaneously strengthened his strong, fierce army. The Nawab of Lahore, Murtaja Khan, grew alarmed and suspicious, so, he informed the Mughal Emperor Jahangir. The Nawab conveyed their fear that the Guru might just be planning to avenge the horrible death of his father. At once, Jahangir sent Wazir Khan and Guncha Beg to Amritsar to arrest Guru Hargobind Sahib ji.

However, Wazir Khan was a follower and admirer of the Guru, so, instead of arresting him, he persuaded and convinced the Guru to join them to Delhi and meet the emperor. Even though Jahangir had ordered the execution of the Guru's father, he accepted the invitation and came along to the emperor's court. When the Guru Sahib reached Delhi, he stayed with his army at a place called Majnu ka Tilla. When the Emperor Jahangir met the young Guru, he was captivated by his charm and purity of spirit, and over the next few days, Jahangir asked Guru Sahib a lot of questions regarding his spiritual kingship and warlike preparations. Guru Sahib answered each and every one of his questions with grace, compassion and spiritual wisdom. One of his questions was which religion was better, Hindu or Muslim, to which the Guru quoted lines from Kabir proclaiming that One Lord is within both Hindus and Muslims. The emperor was very pleased and happy with Guru Ji and was desperate for him to be in his presence. The queen, Noor Jehan, had a strong interest in Guru Sahib, and became his follower.

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The emperor was entranced by the Guru's wisdom, so, he had prepared a royal reception for him, after which he invited the young Hargobind to come with him on his shikars or hunting expeditions. During one of these hunts, Guru Hargobind Sahib ji saved the emperor's life. The Guru and the emperor became good friends, but this only increased the jealousy of others who wanted the emperor's favour for themselves. One of these people was Chandu Shah, a rich banker, with influence in the court.

While in Agra, the emperor fell very ill and it seemed that nothing could cure him. Chandu Shah cornered the court astrologers and convinced them to tell the emperor that his illness was caused by an inauspicious alignment of the stars which could only be cured if a holy man would go to Gwalior Fort, situated to south of Agra and offer prayers for his recovery. Chandu Shah, using the garb of innocence, suggested that no one could fit for this precious task except for Guru Hargobind Sahib ji. Thus, at the emperor's request, Guru ji agreed and left for the Fort with several companions. Rather than being a sanctuary of tranquillity, Gwalior Fort was really just a prison where enemies of the state, including a number of Rajput princes, were kept. True to his nature, the Guru inspired them to join him in daily prayers and did his best to improve their conditions. In time, they came to revere him.

The governor of the fort, Hari Das, was a Sikh of the Guru and turned over to him, a letter from Chandu Shah ordering him to poison the Guru. After the Guru had been in Gwalior Fort for several months, his Sikhs, including Baba Buddha ji, made the long journey from Amritsar to tell him how much they missed his presence. Even though the emperor had recovered, the Guru ji was still held captive. At this time, Mian Mir, a noted Sufi saint, travelled to the emperor's court and asked him to release the Guru. Upon his persuasion, the emperor commanded Wazir Khan to free the Guru. Hari Das informed the Guru of this fortunate turn of events; however, the Guru could not embrace his own fortune at the expense of the other prisoners and refused to leave the Fort until all 52 of the Rajput princes were freed as well.

When Wazir Khan put the Guru's condition in front of the emperor, he initially refused it. It was only when Wazir Khan reminded the emperor that the Guru had saved his life that the emperor relented. The emperor added a condition of his own: if the Guru wanted to be released from the Fort, each prisoner must be holding on to the Guru's *chola*, which is the Punjabi word for robe, as he walked out of the prison gates. The emperor was pleased with himself because he was sure that only a mere handful would be able to fulfil this condition.

Little did the emperor know that the Guru was delighted by this challenge. He had his tailor make a special chola with 52 panels attached to it. At the appointed time, the Guru donned the heavy chola, which stretched for yards behind him. The 52 princes, each gripped onto a panel; 26 on the right and 26 on the left. Walking behind the Guru, careful not to let go, they stepped out into the sunlight and freedom, to the cheers of the Guru's Sikhs.

From this time on, Guru Hargobind was known as Bandi (prison) Chhor (liberator), and the day of liberation is celebrated as Bandi Chhor Divas (day). Several days later, when Guru Hargobind Sahib ji reached Amritsar, the Hindu festival of light, Diwali, was being celebrated. In their joy at seeing their Guru ji again, the people lit up the whole city with candles, lights, and lamps. After almost four hundred years, this tradition continues in Amritsar, and on this day, the Harmandir Sahib is glowing with thousands of candles, floating lamps, strings of lights that decorate the domes and fireworks bursting in the sky. Same is done in every Sikh Gurdwara and household across the world to celebrate the occasion of Bandi Chhor Diwas by lighting candles and fireworks.

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#LEGACY

From Princess to Suffragette

Sophia Duleep Singh: The Royal Suffragette who bridged India and Britain, a forgotten legacy

Sophia Duleep Singh's story is a remarkable tapestry woven with threads of royalty, resistance, and identity. Born into the legacy of a displaced Indian royal family and raised amidst the British elite, she grew up to become a passionate fighter for women's rights in the UK. Yet, despite her extraordinary life and achievements, she remains a little-known figure in India, the land of her ancestors.

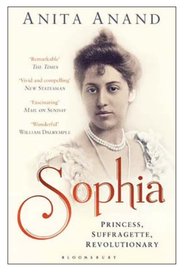
Royal Bloodline and a Turbulent Heritage

Sophia was born in 1876 in London to Maharaja Sir Duleep Singh and Bamba Müller. Her father, Duleep Singh, was the last Maharaja of the Sikh Empire, which once ruled Punjab in northern India. However, his reign was cut short when the British East India Company defeated the Sikhs in the mid-19th century. After the annexation of Punjab in 1849, the young Maharaja was taken from his homeland and brought to England under British guardianship. Converted to Christianity and separated from his Sikh upbringing, Duleep Singh's life became a complex blend of colonial displacement and royal dignity.

Sophia grew up as part of this complex legacy. She was the goddaughter of Queen Victoria, a symbol of the British Empire, and yet, she was deeply connected to her Indian heritage. This dual identity shaped her worldview and ultimately fueled her commitment to justice and equality.

From Princess to Suffragette: A Life of Activism

Sophia could have lived a life of luxury and detachment from politics, but instead, she chose to become actively involved in the struggle for women's voting rights in Britain. In the early 20th century, the campaign for women's suffrage was gaining momentum but faced fierce opposition. Sophia joined the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), founded by Emmeline Pankhurst, known for its militant tactics to demand voting rights.



Using her royal status and public profile, Sophia became a prominent face of the suffragette movement. She participated in marches and protests, wore the suffragette colours of purple, white, and green, and helped raise funds for the cause. Her involvement was not merely symbolic; she actively challenged the establishment, risking police attention and public criticism. One of the most notable moments was in 1911 when she protested outside Buckingham Palace during a WSPU demonstration. Her presence there was a powerful statement, a woman of Indian royal descent publicly challenging the British monarchy's policies on women's rights.

A Symbol of Cross-Cultural Resistance

Sophia's activism was extraordinary because it bridged the worlds of empire and resistance. As a princess of Indian descent under British colonial rule, her fight for suffrage resonated on multiple levels. She stood against gender inequality within British society and, by extension, highlighted the contradictions of British imperialism. Sophia also used her position to raise awareness about India's struggle under British rule. Although her primary activism was for women's rights in the UK, she never lost sight of the colonial injustices faced by her homeland. Later in life, she supported Indian nationalist causes and remained engaged with issues related to her cultural roots.



The Forgotten Legacy in India

Despite her rich and inspiring story, Sophia Duleep Singh remains largely unknown in India today. Her life and contributions are often overshadowed by other narratives of Indian history focused on male political leaders and freedom fighters. The legacy of colonialism and the complex identities forged during that period have contributed to her relative obscurity.

In Britain, Sophia's role in the suffrage movement is increasingly recognized through books, museum exhibits, and documentaries. Yet, in India, her story has not been widely integrated into mainstream historical accounts or public memory. This lack of recognition perhaps reflects the broader challenge of acknowledging figures who operated within colonial frameworks, yet also resisted oppressive systems.

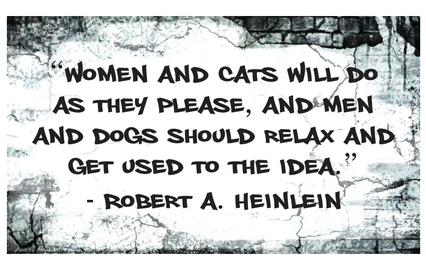
Remembering Sophia Today

In recent years, efforts have begun to revive Sophia Duleep Singh's memory, honouring her as a trailblazer who challenged social and political norms. She reminds us that history is often more nuanced than national narratives suggest. Her life is a testament to courage, intersectionality, and the enduring struggle for justice.

Sophia Duleep Singh's story invites us to reflect on the intersections of identity, power, and activism. It is a reminder that the fight for equality transcends borders and that the legacies of individuals can sometimes be hidden in plain sight, waiting for rediscovery.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

