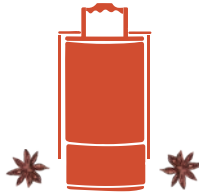




What's in Your Dabba?

Celebrities, Chefs and Foodies Share
Their Favourite Easy Recipes



FROM THE
EDITORS OF TWEAK INDIA

FOOD CONSULTANT AND PHOTOGRAPHER
VERNIKA AWAL

tweakbooks

 **juggernaut**

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Foreword

TWINKLE KHANNA

‘What’s in your dabba?’ This question reverberates around playgrounds and office cafeterias across India – as pigtailed girls grab jalebis from airtight containers in exchange for pakoras from their own and my colleagues all eye the fried arbi in the accountant’s clearly initialled steel box.

One would think that movie stars would be above dabba envy but my partner once returned from a shoot with a grievous complaint. I was sending him chauli and tendli, while his co-star, a long-standing bachelor, was unpacking lunch boxes filled with prawns and lobster.

‘That’s because it’s not a wife but his mummy who sends across his lunch! Considering the poor woman has been sending him a dabba for the last forty-eight years, she has had a lot more practice than me,’ I said flippantly, though I was feeling distinctly inadequate. It didn’t help that this comment was made over dinner at my in-laws’.

Packing dabbas every morning is a quintessentially Indian phenomenon. If we were a nation of people who would just nip out to grab a sandwich for lunch, we would not be haunted by existential questions like how do we break the monotony of aloo parathas on alternate days? How many chutney sandwiches are acceptable before we are classified as indifferent mothers? Am I going to be judged forever by a tendli in a tiffin box?

Early this year, bogged down by planning weekly menus for the family, I began asking people what they were putting in their dabbas. Friends, colleagues and Tweak readers sent in recipes and I began trying them out. A sweet potato twist to the regular sabudana khichdi. A new spin that turned theplas into tacos.

The meals I was putting together became scrumptious. It wasn't just my younger one, even my weighing scale was grateful. Her purple unicorn container was now empty, so I had no leftovers to polish off on the way back from the school pick-up, in an absent-minded stupor.

Then the pandemic hit. And people brought out their pots and pans with a vengeance. Cooking, a necessity, now became an expression of joy, a way of reaching out for solace, a gentle escape.

Mothers and aunts were frantically called with questions of how long moong dal had to be soaked to make chillas or what to use if there was no asafoetida in the cupboard. Even my mother, who can barely boil an egg, entered the kitchen, armed with an apron and a borrowed recipe.

I teased her, rather publicly, saying, 'It only took forty-six years, a pandemic and an extended lockdown for my mother to make me my first meal, fried rice.' But she had no time for me as she was engrossed in her next project, learning how to make my sister-in-law's infamous rum cake. Meanwhile, I had friends asking me to give them the recipe for my mother's simple fried rice!

We could not share meals, so we shared recipes. Slices of our past and fresh explorations. Both topped with layers of improvisations, because we had to make do with what we had till the next grocery run.

There was hope in the form of a beetroot burger, which we knew we would once again pack into dabbas when schools and offices reopened. We found support in more experienced cooks when we shared stories of our small burns and not-quite-round chapattis. Failures in the form of a curdled tiramisu were swallowed along with

our pride. Triumphs were gleefully gulped down, before we could take a picture for posterity.

The idea for this book, like the moong beans that I had soaked to sprinkle over my clumsily chopped salad, germinated slowly. It had begun its journey in the best of times and, in the spirit of Dickens's famous first line, it continued taking shape through the worst. Food as a way of connecting people remained unchanged, though the world itself was unrecognizable.

This is a cookbook for today when we eat alone and for tomorrow, when we will eat together. The way we used to, unmasked and undaunted. All our senses engaged. Our eyes darting from plates to faces. Our ears catching snippets of conversations and clanging cutlery. Our noses following criss-crossing aromas as we sit around with our opened dabbas, a mandala of dishes, across long tables.

The humble lunch box, holding centre stage in our little book, has inspired movies, started romances, cemented friendships. But above all it is representative of a singularly Indian notion – that takeaways and restaurants are occasional indulgences, but nothing beats our own ghar ka khana. Well, unless you are sent a dabba full of tendli, while someone else is sitting across the table chomping on butter garlic prawns.





Lunch dabba

A satisfying main meal that you can take with you anywhere or eat at home.

Most of the dishes here are healthy, easy to make and delicious.

Note: Most recipes are vegetarian with non-vegetarian options included where suitable.

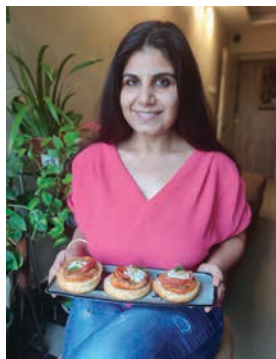
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Jasleen Marwah's

Aloo Sliders with Walnut Chutney

 NUTS INCLUDED



Kashmiri flavours – asafoetida, mustard oil, fennel seeds and ginger powder – come together in a phenomenal slider by home chef Jasleen Marwah.

Ingredients

<i>½ kg potatoes</i>	<i>2 tbsp curd</i>
<i>4 buns</i>	<i>¼ tsp ginger powder</i>
<i>4 tbsp mustard oil</i>	<i>2 tsp fennel seed powder</i>
<i>¼ tsp asafoetida</i>	<i>1 tsp salt</i>
<i>1 bay leaf</i>	<i>2 tbsp cornflour</i>
<i>2 cloves</i>	<i>2 tbsp roasted semolina</i>
<i>3 tsp Kashmiri red chilli powder</i>	<i>2 cups water</i>
	<i>Regular cooking oil</i>

Preparation

Boil the potatoes and remove the skin once they cool down. Mash the potatoes well with your hand, a fork or a potato masher. Heat mustard oil in a pan. Bring it to smoking point and let it cool down. Turn the gas back on and put asafoetida in the oil. Add one bay leaf and two cloves. Turn off the gas to prevent the masalas from burning. Add Kashmiri red chilli powder. Turn on the gas after two minutes. Add a bit of water to keep the chilli powder from burning.

Keep the gas on low flame and add the curd. Keep stirring the mixture till the oil separates from the curd. At this point the oil should be bright red. Once the oil separates, add a bit of water. Now add ginger powder and fennel seed powder. Add salt and mix well till there is no water left in the pan. Now add the mashed potatoes to this mixture and mix thoroughly. Meanwhile, make a slurry of cornflour. Spread out some semolina on a plate to coat the aloo tikkis with. Keep a non-stick pan and some regular cooking oil ready for shallow frying. Once the potato mixture has cooled down, start making tikkis (remove the whole spices added earlier). Heat the non-stick pan and put 2 tbsp of oil in it. Dip the tikki in the slurry, gently coat it with the semolina and slide it into the pan. Cook until both sides are nicely brown and crisp. The semolina will give a crispy crunch to the outside while the inside will remain soft like a dum aloo. To assemble the slider, heat the bun in the OTG. Take it out once it is crisp, place the tikki inside it, and then add the walnut chutney, fresh mint leaves and roughly chopped walnuts.

Walnut chutney Preparation

½ cup walnuts, soaked for two hours

1 cup curd

½ cup mint leaves

2 green chillies, deseeded

Salt to taste

While the walnuts are soaking in water, hang the curd in a muslin cloth to drain out excess water.

After two hours, blend the walnuts with the mint leaves and green chillies in a blender (you can keep the mixture slightly coarse). Then add the hung curd and salt. Add some chopped green chillies if you want a spicy punch in the chutney.

“A favourite in our family, it is like tasting flavours from the Kashmir Valley, but with a twist!”

Chinu Vaze's

Aubergine and Quinoa Salad with Tahini Dressing

 HIGH PROTEIN



Celebrity chef Chinu Vaze's Middle East-inspired multicoloured salad, featuring a healthy quinoa base, aubergine caviar and a delicious apple cider tahini dressing, will open up a whole new world of flavours for you.

Ingredients

1 cup quinoa

3 cups water

1 tsp salt

3 tbsp olive oil

1½ tbsp lemon juice

½ tsp salt

Tahini dressing

3 tbsp tahini

4 tbsp orange juice

2 tbsp apple cider vinegar

*½ tsp agave nectar/maple syrup/
honey*

¼ tsp salt

3 tbsp olive oil

Aubergine caviar

1 roasted aubergine (bharta style)

1 tsp olive oil

*4 garlic cloves, roasted and
chopped*

¼ cup spring onions

2 tbsp yogurt

½ tsp lemon juice

½ tsp paprika

¼ tsp salt

½ cup pomegranate

*3 tsp roasted and slivered
almonds*

8 cherry tomatoes



Preparation

Put quinoa, water and salt in a covered saucepan and cook for 15 minutes or till the water evaporates.

Keep it covered for another 10 minutes.

Transfer the quinoa into a tray and fluff with a fork. Add olive oil, lemon juice and salt.

To roast the aubergine, rub it with olive oil and turn it over an open flame for 12 minutes or till it softens.

Remove the peel and chop roughly. You should have around 1 cup of roasted aubergine.

Add chopped garlic, chopped spring onions, yogurt, lemon juice, paprika, pomegranate, cherry tomatoes and slivered almonds and mix well.

To make the tahini dressing, mix tahini, orange juice, apple cider vinegar, honey/maple syrup/agave nectar and salt.

Add a little olive oil as you whisk. It will be thinner than a regular dressing. Mix this with the quinoa.

Put it in a bowl, add a spoonful of aubergine caviar and almond flakes and serve.

“Tahini is one of my favourite condiments – it’s luscious, delicious and also really good for you. This dressing is definitely one of my go-tos!”



Natasha Gandhi's

Millet Baati

 HEALTHY GRAIN  GLUTEN-FREE

Food entrepreneur Natasha Gandhi puts on her chef's hat to update this traditional recipe from the deserts of India.



Courtesy Natasha Gandhi

Ingredients

½ cup sorghum flour

½ cup amaranth flour

Boiling water

1 tbsp ghee

1 tsp salt

½ tsp baking powder

Preparation

In a bowl add all the dry ingredients and ghee and mix well.

Add boiling water gradually and knead to make a dough.

Preheat the oven for 10 minutes at 180 °C.

Shape the dough into lemon-sized balls and grease them with ghee using a brush.

Bake in the preheated oven for 25 minutes at 180 °C.

Brush with some ghee once they are out of the oven.

Serve hot with dal and churma.

“Traditionally, baati is made using whole wheat flour and loads of ghee. This gluten-free version uses sorghum and amaranth, with just a little ghee to knead the dough and brush the baati before serving.”



Nmami Agarwal's

Beetroot Burgers

 KID-FRIENDLY

Deceptively dressed as the universally beloved 'pattice', nutritionist Nmami Agarwal's healthy beetroot and veggie tikkis are a con job that will win you the award for mother of the year. The perfect meal for kids when topped with a dollop of pink beetroot hummus and sandwiched between soft multigrain buns.



Ingredients

4 multigrain slider buns
1 medium-sized beetroot
¼ cup chopped carrots, beans and bell peppers
2 tsp beetroot hummus spread
2 tsp rolled oats
2 tsp sesame oil
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste
2 lettuce leaves

For the beetroot hummus

3 tbsp boiled chickpeas
¼ shredded beetroot
½ tsp tahini
Salt to taste

Preparation

For the beetroot hummus

Blend together boiled chickpeas, beetroot, tahini and salt. Keep the consistency thick and spreadable. Add water if needed. Keep aside.

For the burgers

Boil the beetroot and chopped veggies. Strain the water and keep aside. Allow the vegetables to cool and then cut into small pieces.

In a food processor, blend beets, vegetables, rolled oats, salt and pepper using the strained water. Make sure the paste is thick.

Shape the mixture into small patties.

Heat sesame oil in a shallow pan and fry the patties on both sides.

Arrange the buns on a flat surface, place the lettuce leaf inside and top it with the cooked patty. Spread a teaspoon of hummus over it.

Serve immediately or pack it in your kid's tiffin!

“Give your regular, fat-loaded burgers a healthy twist with these mini beetroot burgers that taste great and are high on the nutritional value index. These will surely be relished by your little ones.”

Ritu Dalmia's

Bhindi Salan

 NUTS INCLUDED

Bhindi (okra) is the vegetable equivalent of that girl in school who got along with everyone and took part in all competitions. Celebrity chef Ritu Dalmia's bhindi salan is a hybrid tweak of the desi favourite.



Ingredients

300 g okra, slit

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup tamarind pulp

2 tbsp oil

Salt to taste

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sugar

Juice of 1 lemon

1 tbsp chopped coriander

1 tsp crushed peanuts for garnish

Water

For the paste

1 medium-sized onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup toasted peanuts

2 medium-sized tomatoes,
blanched

$\frac{1}{2}$ -inch ginger

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin seeds

2–3 green chillies

2 tsp sesame seeds

Spices for the tadka

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp fenugreek seeds

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp black mustard seeds

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp asafoetida



Preparation

Blend all the ingredients for the paste in a food blender till smooth and keep aside.

In a heavy-bottomed pan, heat 2 tbsp oil.

Add fenugreek, mustard and asafoetida.

When the spices start to sputter, add the paste and cook on low flame till the oil starts floating on top.

Add tamarind paste, salt, lemon juice, sugar and some water and cook on low heat again.

In a separate pan, heat oil and fry the slit okra.

Mix the fried okra with the paste and cook for another few minutes.

Garnish with the peanuts, coriander and sesame seeds and serve with parathas or rice.

“The lockdown was a strange time for me – I did not want to cook any Italian or European food. The only cooking that would comfort me was Indian home food. This recipe is a combination of two recipes: the khatti bhindi recipe given to me by my friend Arundhati Katju and the traditional salan recipe given by a friend from Hyderabad.”



Namrata Shirodkar's

Bhindi Poriyal

This Tamil-style okra dish courtesy actor Namrata Shirodkar will have you licking your fingers. Featuring a range of flavours – pungent mustard, earthy cumin and fresh coconut – green veggies have never looked better. Best paired with roti or rice.



Ingredients

1¼ cup bhindi (okra)
1 tsp oil
½ tsp mustard seeds
½ tsp cumin seeds
8–10 curry leaves
¼ cup chopped onion
1 green chilli, chopped
¼ cup freshly grated coconut
A pinch of asafoetida
1 tsp turmeric powder
1 tbsp chopped coriander leaves
Salt to taste

Preparation

Wash the okra twice and wipe with tissue or a dry cloth.
Cut in circles and keep aside.
Heat some oil in a pan.
Add mustard seeds and cumin seeds.
Add asafoetida, turmeric, chopped onions and curry leaves.
Add the coconut and okra and sauté.
Cook on low flame.
Add salt to taste.
Garnish with coriander.

“This dish is a favourite because it satisfies my kids’ Indian food cravings. I like to keep it simple when it comes to what I feed them. A healthy and wholesome meal with small indulgences.”



Susan Millan's

Breast Bone Pepper Water



This wholesome mutton gravy dish by home chef Susan Millan is a spicier version of Mulligatawny soup. Warm and coconutty with rasam-like consistency, it is best enjoyed on a cold rainy day.

Ingredients

1 kg mutton (½ kg to ¾ kg breast bone + mutton meat)

½ tbsp oil

½ cup coconut milk

Juice of 2 lemons

8–10 curry leaves

Salt to taste

Coriander for garnish

For the masala, grind

2 onions

1-inch ginger

½ tsp turmeric

1 tsp cumin

2 green chillies

6–8 garlic cloves

Preparation

Heat oil in a pressure cooker on medium flame and put in the curry leaves.

Add the ground masala and cook till the raw onion smell goes away. You can add a little water if it gets too dry.

Then add the cleaned and washed mutton and fry for a few minutes on high flame.

Add salt to taste.

Add enough water to fully cover the mutton.

Pressure cook on high flame and after one whistle, turn the gas on low and let it cook for 10 minutes.

Once the cooker has cooled, open and check the mutton. It should be cooked but if you feel it is not, put it on for another whistle.

When you open the cooker again, check the consistency of the gravy. It should not be thick like a curry but thin like rasam.

Add coconut milk and mix. Stir in the lime juice.

Garnish with fresh coriander and serve with hot rice.

“Anglo-Indians have the funniest names for their tastiest dishes. All my life I have loved my family’s version of Breast Pepper Water, only to find out recently that the said dish is actually called Breast Bone Pepper Water.”