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Genre: Nonfiction (Bangladeshi traditional food)

Level: Upper Intermediate to Advanced

Title: Bogura's Curd

Bogura's Curd: An epic 'poem' of tradition filled with the scent of earth



In the narrow lanes of Bogura, there's a **unique tradition** of curd making, also known as *Bogura's Doi* *. When pure cow's milk is heated for many hours in a large pot and thickens, a beautiful aroma spreads all around it. With the added mix of sugar and caramel, that milk changes from white into a unique copper or reddish hue. It's not just a dessert, rather it is an inseparable narrative that has risen from hundreds of years of Bengali **culture**.

The magic of this curd is hidden in '*sanki*' or a pot made of terracotta. When this mixture of milk and caramel takes place in that clay pot, a silent conversation begins. The thousands of fine pores on the surface of the clay pot absorb the excess water content of the milk. In modern science we know this **process** as '*osmosis*'*.

This natural process makes the curd grainy and thick like milk. The sweet smell of the earth makes the yoghurt authentic in taste, and it's not possible to **achieve** this same taste in a modern plastic or glass container. The patience and dedication that goes into making this yoghurt is a reflection of the rural life of Bangladesh — calm, slow and deep.



In Bengali hospitality, providing this yoghurt to guests is an important tradition. When this yoghurt fills the ‘last plate’ of a festival meal, the nature of Bengali hospitality becomes meaningful. Be it the yellow lights of a wedding, or the joyous lunch of *Eid-ul-Fitr* * — Bogura's yoghurt is a reminder of nobility there.

This yoghurt is also deeply intertwined with Bengali folk beliefs; a spoonful of yoghurt and the invitation of *khai** on a journey is like an **invisible** good luck charm, which carries a message of good wishes and protection to those who eat it.

From its beginnings, when it was first made in the Bogura district to a secret recipe by the Ghosh family, and for over 250 years, until today, this treasure of North Bengal has become a unique **item** of national pride. This product received *GI recognition* * in 2023. Winning this international recognition was like placing a royal crown on the head of this **traditional** food.

Research also shows that its unique properties set it apart from any other yoghurt in the world (Hossain et al., 2012) +. It not only satisfies the palate, but also reminds us of our roots, our hardworking artisans, and the soil that feeds us, protects us, and makes our Bengali food culture unique in taste and aroma. Bogura yoghurt is, therefore, not just a food. It is a delicious treasure of epic value in Bengal's eternal heritage.

+ M.F. Hossain, S.F. Elahi, S.K. White, Q.K. Alam, J.A. Rother, J.L. Gaunt. (2012) *Nitrogen budgets for Boro rice (Oryza sativa L.) fields in Bangladesh*. Field Crops Research, Volume 131, Pages 97-109. ISSN 0378-4290, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fcr.2012.02.029>.

(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0378429012000858>)

Vocabulary lists

1. Words from the second 1000 High Frequency General Service Word List

apart, calm, charm, clay, conversation, copper, cow, excess, guests, hidden, international, invitation, journey, luck, lunch, meal, message, mix/mixture, narrow, patience, plate, poem, pot, pride, pure, reflection, reminder/reminds, roots, satisfies, scent, slow, smell, soil, spoonful, sugar, taste, thick, treasure, yellow.

2. Words from the Academic High Frequency Word List

achieve, culture, invisible, item, process, tradition/traditional, unique.

3. Off List Words (These words are less common in English. Check the meaning in your dictionary if you need to, but focus on learning the words in lists 1 and 2 above first.)

absorb, aroma, artisans, authentic, caramel, dedication, delicious, dessert, epic, eternal, festival, folk, grainy, hardworking, heritage, hospitality, hue, inseparable, intertwined, joyous, lanes, magic, narrative, palate, plastic, pores, recipe, risen, rural, terracotta, thickens, wedding, yoghurt.

4. Glossary (words in the reading text with * after them)

- *Bogura's Doi* - a famous traditional sweet yogurt from the Bogura region in Bangladesh.
- *Eid-ul-Fitr* - The "Festival of Breaking the Fast" that marks the end of the month of Ramadan.
- *GI recognition* - GI means "Geographical Indication". This means that a product is recognised by world authorities as unique and important. With GI recognition, the product is legally protected because it comes from one particular place or area, where it is considered unique and special to that place and is not original to any other area.
- *Khai* - a Bangladeshi word used by hosts when offering hospitality to guests, to encourage them to eat and drink well.
- *Osmosis* - the movement of water (or other liquid) through a membrane (which is a kind of wall with small holes in it). The water goes naturally from an area where it is thick, to an area where it is less thick, so that in the end there is an equal balance of 'thickness' on both sides.

Questions and Activity Suggestions (Based on the revised Bloom's Taxonomy of higher thinking skills.)

1. **Remembering** - Describe the process of making *Bogura's doi* in English. Do not just repeat the information from the reading text. Use your own words.

2. **Understanding** - What qualities of *Bogura's doi* led to it being given global GI recognition? (Think not just about the curd itself, but also its role in Bengali culture.)
3. **Analysing** - Explain the meaning of 'tradition/ traditional' in your own words. Give examples of important Bengali traditions from different parts of Bangladesh. How are these traditions similar and how are they different? How are local traditions different from, or similar to traditions that the whole country enjoys?
4. **Applying** - Do you have any 'traditions' of your own, that are special just to you and/or your family? Which Bengali traditions are important to you, and why? How would you explain those traditions to someone from another country?
5. **Evaluating** - The writer says that giving someone *Bogura's doi* is like giving them an invisible good luck charm. In your view, does eating *Bogura's doi* really bring good luck, well-being and safety to those who are given it? Do you have any 'good luck charms'? If you do, what are they? Why do you keep them? What is the value of 'good luck charms', (if any) in your view? Why do you think this way?
6. **Creating** -
 - Work with a partner. Go through the reading again, and this time use a highlighter marker, or a pen or pencil, and put a circle around the key ideas in the reading.
 - Now use those ideas to create a poster with pictures that show
 - i. the process of making *Bogura's doi* (or another traditional Bengali food)
 - ii. the ways and times of sharing *Bogura's doi* (or other food)
 - iii. the importance of *Bogura's doi* (or the other food you have chosen) in Bengali life.

Do NOT put any words on your poster.

When you have finished, write some brief notes that explain each section of your poster. Use your notes and take turns with your partner to practice speaking about each point in your notes.

When you are ready, share your poster with another pair of students and speak to them, in English, about it. Imagine you are talking to people who are NOT from Bangladesh, and explaining your cultural traditions to them.

As you listen to other people talking about their poster, think of a challenging question to ask them. Can you answer each other's questions?