

BBC Celebrity Chef inaugurated Bihu Bhoj in London



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Rini Kakati 28 April 2012 13331 views

On the occasion of Assamese New Year and Rongali Bihu on Saturday, 14 April, 2012 - a traditional Bihu Bhoj was organised by Assamese Community at Barham Park Lounge, Wembley, initiated by **Rini Kakati**, NRI Co-ordinator for UK. This idea came from Gordon Ramsey when he was enquiring about any Assamese restaurant in London after returning from Assam 3 years back.

Bihu is the National festival of Assam. Irrespective of caste, creed and religion the people of Assam celebrate Bihu with much pomp and gaiety. To establish the existence of cultural roots and heritage, every community in Britain put their combined efforts in an organised manner. Assamese Community is no exception.

The dignitaries present were **Jitendra Kumar**, First Secretary, Indian High Commission, **Rita Payne** (President, Commonwealth Journalists Association UK, **Rolf Kilius**, Curator for Horniman Museum, Mayor of Brent, **Navin Shah** AM (London Assembly Member), **Helga Gladbaum** including Councillors from different boroughs - Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative, **Justin Wintle**, author of the book "**The Perfect Hostage**", **Geoff Payne**, Consultant in Urban Development and Planning, **Alain Durand-Lasserve** and his wife **Maylis from France** and **Krishnan Ralleigh**, journalist and **Dilip Deka from USA**. **Cyrus**, the well-known **BBC Celebrity Chef** was invited as a guest of honour.

Cuisine of a land is a specific set of cooking tradition and practices. Assamese cuisine is influenced by the ingredients that are easily available and the climate of the area. Mother nature has given Assam abundant greenery with so many rare endemic plants and herbs. The people of this land of blue hills and red rivers take full advantage of Mother nature's bounty. Xaak (Green) forms an indispensable part of Assamese cooking including dried bamboo shoot, dried cocum (thekera), rice powder, powered lentils (mahor guri), Kharoli, Khahodi and chilly pickle.

In the West people recognise India only as Tandoori chicken, Vindaloo, Chapati, Dosa, Idli and Sambar. But the mouth watering Assamese dishes at Barham Park changed the attraction of food lovers of Indians and Europeans to a complete taste. Now Assamese cuisine is established as one of the delicious food - Khar, Tenga, Kharoli, Bamboo shoot, Mahor Bora, Khahodi, Pitika, Hah - Aru Mah, Dry-Fish, Patotdiya Fish, Oou - Tenga, Tel Pitha, Payash, Chira, Doi, Gur jalpan, Tamul, Paan and masala offered in Sarai.

Credit goes to **Jury Gogoi** and her husband **Dr. Nirjan Gogoi, a Consultant Urologist at Mid Yorkshire NHS Trust** who is instrumental and came all the way from Yorkshire to cook various dishes for this event. Jury Gogoi is a Counsellor for Ethnic Minorities. She is the one and only expert for our Assamese delicacies. Jill Baruah assisted her to cook so many dishes laid on the table presented kahor bati, ghoti and thal in a traditional Assamese Way. Everybody felt home sick missing our mother and Aita's cooking back home.

Rini Kakati introduced the invited dignitaries, community leaders and welcome everybody for joining the Assamese New Year Celebration. **Geetopala Shah** opened the meeting with a Sanskrit prayer. Young Assamese women wearing mekhla chadar felicitated the honourable guests with phulam gamosha.

Rita Payne, chaired the meeting and talked about Assam and Bihu. Jitendra Kumar, representing Indian High Commission said " **Assamese Community in UK is full of professionals Doctor, Engineer, Teacher, IT Consultant for which India should be proud of**". He is so pleased to attend this function and thanked the organisers which reminds him of childhood days, enjoying Bihu with his family in Assam. Each speaker spoke highly about our community and hospitality. The **Mayor of Brent** was so pleased and offered any assistance should we organise same event in future.

BBC Celebrity Chef, Cyrus opened the Assamese kitchen by sharing food with the host community. Cyrus has cooked for the **Prime Ministers, Presidents, Royal Families** and regularly appears on **BBC Food and Drink, BBC UK Today, Saturday Kitchen, Channel 4's The Big Breakfast, BBC World Service, Channel 4's Light Lunch, BBC's Money Matters** and also radio stations such as **BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5 Live and Talk Radio**.

Cyrus noticed when the the practice of Bhuna, the gentle frying of spices is so common in Indian cooking, is absent from the Assamese table, where one can find different recipes for vegetables, curries, chicken and duck is not so typically hot lined in the same row. He tasted everything and so pleased to announce that he is going to introduce Assamese recipe at his chain of restaurants in London. This is a great news and pride for the Assamese Community.

The mood of spring brought to a grand finale, with Bihu dance to the tune of seductive bihu songs woven around the themes of love and passion led by **Bakhar & Jill, Jafferna, Abhijit, Sumita, Arindam & Anandita, Rosy, Sahana, Lipi, Anzita, Kavita Vikram, Ashfaque, Jiban Rintu, Malabika & Siddhartha**. It is an experience out of this world.

Rini Kakati

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BY RINI KAKATI

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