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Rampuriyat- A culinary Journey

A Coffee Table Book

Name: Shivika Singh

Student ID: 201814003

Project Guides: Prof. Madhumita Mazumdar



Master of Design (Communication Design)
Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and communication Technology

FEEDBACK PAGE

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Mirch ka halwa

I. Introduction

I am thoroughly fueled by my love of the local wealth of food delights inherent to cultural backgrounds. My interest in food triggered the interest in me to document a cuisine from India and the wide range of traditional recipes that stem down from several generations. In a discussion with my Professor, I learnt about the royal cuisine of Rampur and a growing revival of interest in it in recent years. With my family belonging to Uttar Pradesh, I was familiar with Rampur for its reputation as a centre for arts and academics, for its appliqué work, for the distilleries and Ganga, for its unique spirit of cultural and religious synthesis, a legacy of its nawabi and colonial past and most importantly for its ‘*Rampuri Chaku*’ made popular by the hindi cinema. Perhaps not as mainstream as the other Mughlai cuisines, Rampuri cuisine, a royal cuisine of India, is equally rich in its culinary heritage and has a wide variety of unique dishes like *Adrak ka halwa*, *Gosht ka Halwa*, *Mirch ka Halwa*, *Gosht ke Gulab Jamun* and many more. The cuisines from Delhi and Awadh are easily accessible in restaurants and street foods but Rampuri cuisine is not so easily available. To know more about the cuisine, I called up my relatives in Uttar Pradesh living in proximity of Rampur, but none of them seemed to know much about this cuisine. Thus began the search for the royal cuisine of Rampur.

This project talks about the courtly cuisine of Rampur, the last Muslim-ruled princely state in the colonial United Provinces in the years after the revolt of 1857. Owing to its rich and entangled history, the cuisine here

is a confluence of numerous cooking styles Awadhi, Mughlai, Afghani, and local, forming the new Rampuri cuisine. The *khansamas* of Rampur had mastered the art of blending different influences in their food. They were also masters in disguising the ingredients, which essentially meant that the diners would perhaps never know what they were eating unless they were told. This was an aspect of the royal cuisine of Rampur that caught my interest in the subject. I was interested to understand how this aspect of the royal cuisine evolved in the kitchens of Rampur, what was the purpose of this artistry and who were the people who patronised and gave life to this culinary tradition?.

This project thus took shape as both a quest for the royal cuisine of Rampuri cuisine as well as a larger quest to understand the distinctive history and political identity of Rampur as it emerged from the shadows of the Mughals and the princely kingdom of Awadh in the period after 1857.

The title of the book Rampuriyat indicates the distinctive identity this princely kingdom carved out for itself and one that it is still evident in its architecture, its cosmopolitan courtly culture and more significantly in its cuisine.

II. Problem Statement

This project is a quest for the royal cuisine of Rampur and how Rampur has tried to create a distinct identity for itself among the various cultural influences as suggested by its history, through its food.

III. Target Medium

This project aims to invite interest from people interested in regional food, history and culture. A coffee table format was chosen to illustrate the richness of royal Rampur cuisine in all its visual splendour.

IV. Communication Medium

IV. i. Initial Medium

During the initial phase I found that documentary would be an interesting way through which the story of Rampuri cuisine could be shown since it would involve images and the soundscape to support the argument and communicate the narrative.

IV. ii. Final Medium

Since my project is aimed at culturally and food aware people, the final medium that was chosen was a coffee table book since they are informative and give out a wide perspective in a simple, precise and crisp yet beautiful and visually appealing manner. Coffee table books lay out a story through large eye catching visuals and supporting texts. Since this project talks about history, courtly culture, architecture and cuisine, a coffee table book is a good medium revealing a new layer with each page turned. Also a coffee table book would be a better medium to take Rampuri recipes to a wider audience.

V. Research Phase

V. i. Literature and Film Review

During the research I was suggested a few readings based on the subject which helped me perceive the subject in depth and hence mould the questions to be asked during my field visits.

Rampur food festivals organised by certain chefs have been talked about in various news articles and blogs that gave me a brief idea about the unique cuisine of Rampur. They helped me know the dishes that exist and the various cultural influences on them. The documentary films that I watched gave me an even better idea about this cuisine. They helped me understand the parts about the cuisine that have already been discussed and the parts that needed to be talked about.

In the documentary video 'Royal Palette' by Behrouz Biryani, chef Kunal Kapoor explores the not so famous cuisine of Rampur. As Rampur is not a very popularly known place, Kunal Kapoor introduces it by referring it to a place close to Delhi. He refers to Rampur as a place which is considered to have very valuable *khansamas*. Although his focus is majorly on the very unique halwas of Rampur but he also talks about various other dishes including both savory and desserts. He further goes to current chefs belonging to the lineage of *khansamas* to know more about the food and finds out more recipes that have been lost over time and cannot be found normally over the streets. He talks about how these chefs now organise Rampuri food festivals. Chef Kunal Kapoor is

in search of Royal Rampuri cuisine and because the show is sponsored by Behrouz Biryani it emphasises more on the food and how it is made rather than the people related to it and the history behind all of it. There's also no mention of the food of common people of Rampur and how different it is from that of the Royals. Though chef Kunal Kapoor raises the question of why Rampuri cuisine is not so popular unlike Awadh cuisine and the cuisine of Delhi but there's no mention of it further in the video.

The other video '*Raja, Rasoi aur anya Kabhayaan*' talks about how Rampur is a place that can be said to be known for its food. The major emphasis of this video is also on the Royal cuisine of Rampur. It talks about Rampur, which is a really small province in front of Delhi and because it has Awadh in the east and Delhi in the west, the food here is influenced by both these princely states. Whenever there was a disturbance in Delhi aur Awadh, the *khansamas* and artists would come to Rampur in search of shelter, safety and livelihood. The video talks about how the Royal family has kept this cuisine alive. It talks about the richness of Rampuri cuisine and how the *khansamas* were great artists of Mughlai cuisine and would use gold coins and silver varq to garnish the dishes. It shows the Rampur cuisine as a rich and expensive cuisine that could not be afforded by everyone. It highlights the stories and experiences of the members of the Royal family with their food. The video gives the credit of the brilliance of this cuisine to the spices used and techniques of marination though there is not much detail on what spices are used here. It talks about the food here in reference to Mughal food and not in terms of how this food is unique in its own way. It does not give out

a lot of information on the history of Nawabs and the khansamas and the inventions and innovations they did.

Thus these articles and documentaries helped me understand the points I wanted to highlight through my project. I wanted to talk about the rich history of Rampur, how the food here has been so influenced by the other Mughal cuisines but despite these influences it is trying to stand out and create its own identity. I wanted to talk about the relationship of the royal kitchen with the royal court. I also wanted to highlight the stories of the royal chefs of Rampur and discuss their role in creating the identity of Rampur through its food.



V. ii. Discovering the history of Rampur through its architecture

Rampur had always been overshadowed by Awadh and Delhi and the Rampuri Nawabs aspired to carve a distinct identity for themselves from the courts of Lucknow and Awadh. After 1857 a new cosmopolitan culture developed in Rampur which is evident through their architecture and with an aim to understand this I went to the following places.

a. Fort Complex

The Fort complex was built as the core of the urban renewal model. It comprises Hamid Manzil, the residence of the royal family, Macchi Bhawan and Rang Mahal. Hamid Manzil, built for court meetings has now been converted into ‘The Rampur Raza Library’ which is one of the world’s magnificent, unparalleled repositories of cultural heritage and treasure-house of knowledge built up by successive Nawabs of Rampur State. It contains a very rare and valuable collection of manuscripts, historical documents, specimens of Islamic calligraphy, miniature paintings, astronomical instruments and rare illustrated works in Arabic and Persian languages besides 60,000 printed books. Adjacent to Raza Library is Rang Mahal meant for poetical and musical assemblies. The residence of Nawabs has now been converted into Rampur Girls PG College. .

b. Jama Masjid

The Jama Masjid is one of the finest pieces of architecture to be found in Rampur. It is located in the market adjacent to fort-complex.

c. Market

Rampur market is spread along the walls of the fort complex. In this market I met Harish Bhai who owns a 100 year old sweet shop started by his forefathers. This shop is famous for its *Adrak ka Halwa*, *Habsbi Halwa* and *Aloe Vera Halwa*. He allowed me to take photographs of the preparation of *Adrak Ka halwa*. The famous *Rampuri Chaaku* shop is also situated in the same market.



V. iii. Interview of historian

I interviewed Shahid Mehmood who is a historian and also the Ex. Secretary of the Nawab. The aim of talking to him was to know the history of Rampur helping me understand how Rampur evolved from Kather, to a small landed estate under the control of the Rohilla Pathans to a full-fledged princely state under British protection in the 18thc. He told me about the different people that lived in this place at different points in history helping me understand the different cultural influences here. Since he shares a close relationship with the royal family, he was able to tell me about their courtly cultures and their interests in art, music, literature, architecture and food. He also gave me a better picture of the food habits of different groups of people that resided here and how these habits changed over time. He also provided me with two books called '*Robilla Itibas : Itibas aur Sanskriti 1707-1774*' and '*Rampur Darbaar ka Sangeet evam Nawabi Rasmein*' by another historian, Nafees Siddiqui and published by the Rampur Raza Library which helped me understand the subject in depth.

V. iv. Interviews of Khansamas

Since the Rampuri recipes have not been chronicled and are mostly spread through the word of mouth, I went to khansamas belonging to the lineage of *khansamas* from the royal kitchens. The aim was to know more about how these dishes came into existence, how they are made, spices used in their preparation and the stories related to the royal kitchens. They helped me understand how this cuisine is so influenced yet so distinctive. They helped me understand how not just the cuisine but the way it is served also makes it unique. I met most of them in Rampur except Harsh Prasad who lives in Gurgaon.

a. Suroor Khan

He is a chef from the Rampur gharana. He has been visiting different hotels in India to curate menus and spread awareness about Rampuri cuisine, with his team of two other chefs. He has held food festivals in Delhi's JW Marriott, The Westin Kolkata, Conrad Pune, Taj palace Delhi and many other hotels. I met him at restaurant in Rampur. He told me about how Rampur makes the most common household dishes special and unique. He helped me with the recipe and preparation of *Mirch ka Halwa* which is one of the most unique dishes of Rampuri cuisine. He believes that the cuisine has been unnoticed and is slowly fading away. To revive this cuisine apart from carrying out food festivals, he is currently working with a book publication to translate the cookbooks in Raza Library and documenting all the lost recipes.



Suroor Khan



b. Munne Khan

He is a chef of Rampur whose family has worked for generations in the royal kitchen. He has cooked this cuisine at various food festivals within and outside the country. He also gets invited to the weddings of the Bollywood celebrities to serve this cuisine. I met him at his house in Rampur with his son who now takes his legacy forward. He helped me with the stories related to the royal kitchens since he had the experience of working in it himself. He is mostly popular for his *Gulatthi*, *Gosht ke Gulab Jamun*, and *Gosht ka Halwa*. He helped me with the recipes and preparation of these dishes.



c. Harish Sheikh

He is the owner of ‘Amanat Bhai Halwa Sohan Wale’, a 100 year old sweet shop that was started by his forefathers. I had gone looking for *Adrak ka Halwa* in the market, when I came across his shop. He is famous for his *Adrak ka Halwa*, *Habsbi Halwa* and *Aloe Vera Halwa*. He helped me with the recipe and preparation of *Adrak Ka halwa* and allowed me to take photographs of the same.

d. Mehfooz Qureshi

Chef Mehfooz Qureshi’s forefathers were *khansamas* at the royal palace, and he carries out their legacy. He used to accompany his father and grandfather to the palace at a very small age and learned their skills. He himself works as the Royal Chef of the Nawab. Since he himself works in the royal kitchen, he helped me understand the relationship of the royal cooks with the nawabs. He told me how the cooks come up with

(clockwise) Munne Khan with son, Harish Sheikh, Mehfooz Qureshi



Harsh Prasad

such unique dishes and enlightened me with a few more stories from the royal kitchen. Today, With Nawab's permission he organizes food festivals on a national and international level to popularise Rampuri cuisine.

e. Harsh Prasad

Harsh Prasad used to work in a distillery in Rampur for 20 years. He has the experience of getting these recipes from the few khansamas of Rampur. He maintains a diary for these recipes he has learnt. I got his contact from a restaurant in Rampur. He helped me understand how 1857 became an essential point in the history of Rampur. He also helped me with the recipe and preparation of *Gulatthi* and *Taar Korma*. He allowed me to take photographs of the preparation. Like other *khansamas* he has also organised various food festivals and events in various parts of the countries to revive and popularise the unique Rampuri cuisine.

V. v. Culinary classes

While some khansamas guided their workers to prepare the dishes for me so that I could photograph them, others guided and helped me prepare the dishes. These demonstrations and guidance helped me understand the aspects of blending and disguising in Rampuri cuisine to a greater extent. I experienced *adrak* being cleverly disguised into a halwa made of milk and sugar at Harish's shop and got a chance to make *Mirch ka Halwa* under the guidance of Suroor Khan at his home in Rampur. Harsh Prasad, at his home in Gurgaon, guided me in making *Gulatthi*.

VI. Design Process

VI. i. Structure of the story

The main aim of the project is to highlight Rampuri cuisine and how Rampur has tried to create a distinct identity for itself through this cuisine. The structure of this story is divided into three parts.

The story starts with the location of Rampur in Uttar Pradesh with Delhi and Lucknow in its proximity. This helps in initiating the context of how Rampur has always been overshadowed by Awadh and the Mughals. It further talks about the history of Rampur. It talks about how Rampur, originally a part of Kather, came under the rule of Rohilla Pathans who had migrated from Afghanistan to India in search of livelihood. It goes on to give details of how Rampur evolved from a small landed estate under the control of the Rohilla Pathans to a full-fledged princely state under British protection in the 18thc. Thus, this part of the story introduces all the characters involved and highlights the problem of Rampur being overshadowed by Delhi and Awadh, which drives the story forward.

The second part of the story highlights the major changes that happened. It talks about the turning point in the history of Rampur after 1857. After the revolt of 1857, many artists, poets, architects and cooks migrated to Rampur in search of Livelihood. It talks about the various cultural influences on Rampur as people migrated here from various princely states. It further talks about the new cosmopolitan culture that

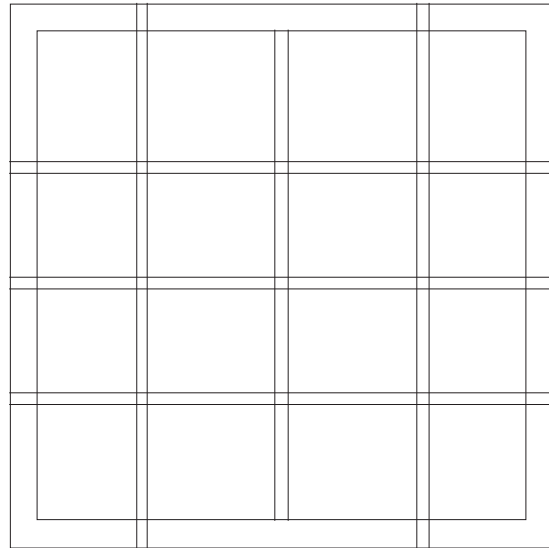
developed in the period after 1857 and how Rampur emerged from the shadows of the Mughals and the princely kingdom of Awadh during this period to acquire a distinct courtly culture of its own.

The third part of the story talks about the resolution of the problem. The story elaborated on how Rampur emerged from the shadows of the Mughals and the princely kingdom of Awadh to acquire a distinct identity through its cuisine by focussing on two major aspects of blending and disguising. It discusses the dishes, what makes them distinct and the stories related to them. It further talks about the valuable contribution of the *kbansamas* of Rampur in keeping the memories and recipes of these dishes alive across generations. These *kbansamas* play an important role in making Rampur special and investing it with an identity which makes it distinct from Awadh and Delhi.

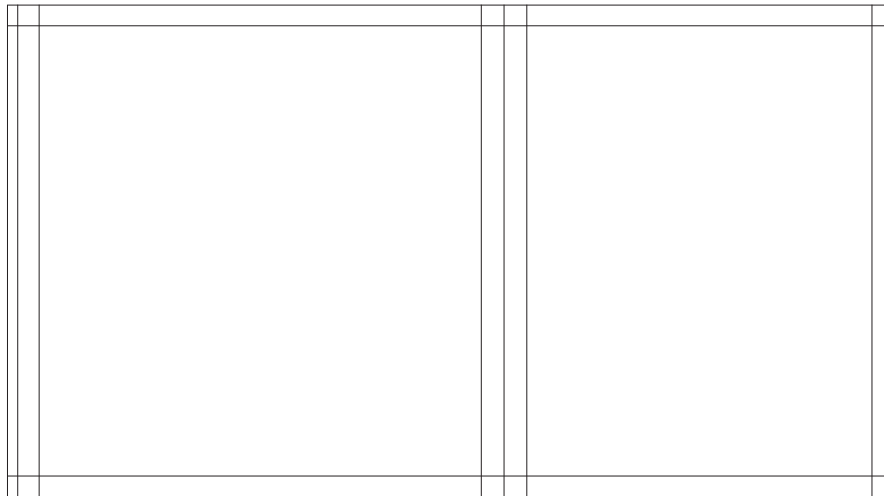
VI. ii. Storyboarding

I made a storyboard where I fixed which images with their respective texts on pages. This helped me get a better idea of how the story would move through my book.





Grid for layout



Grid for cover page

VI. iii. Layout

A square format can be eye-catching and makes the book look unique and stand out. Since this project talks about the creation of a distinct identity, I have chosen a square layout for the Coffee Table book.

The dimensions of the book are 9.75 x 9.75 inch.

Margins-

Top : 0.5 inch

Bottom: 0.5 inch

Sides : 0.5 inch

Gutter : 0.2 inch

Cover Page -

I have used a thick cover for the Cover Page. The dimensions for the cover page are

17.26 x 9.75 inch.

Margins-

Top : 0.5 inch

Bottom: 0.5 inch

Sides : 0.5 inch

Spine width: 0.15 inch

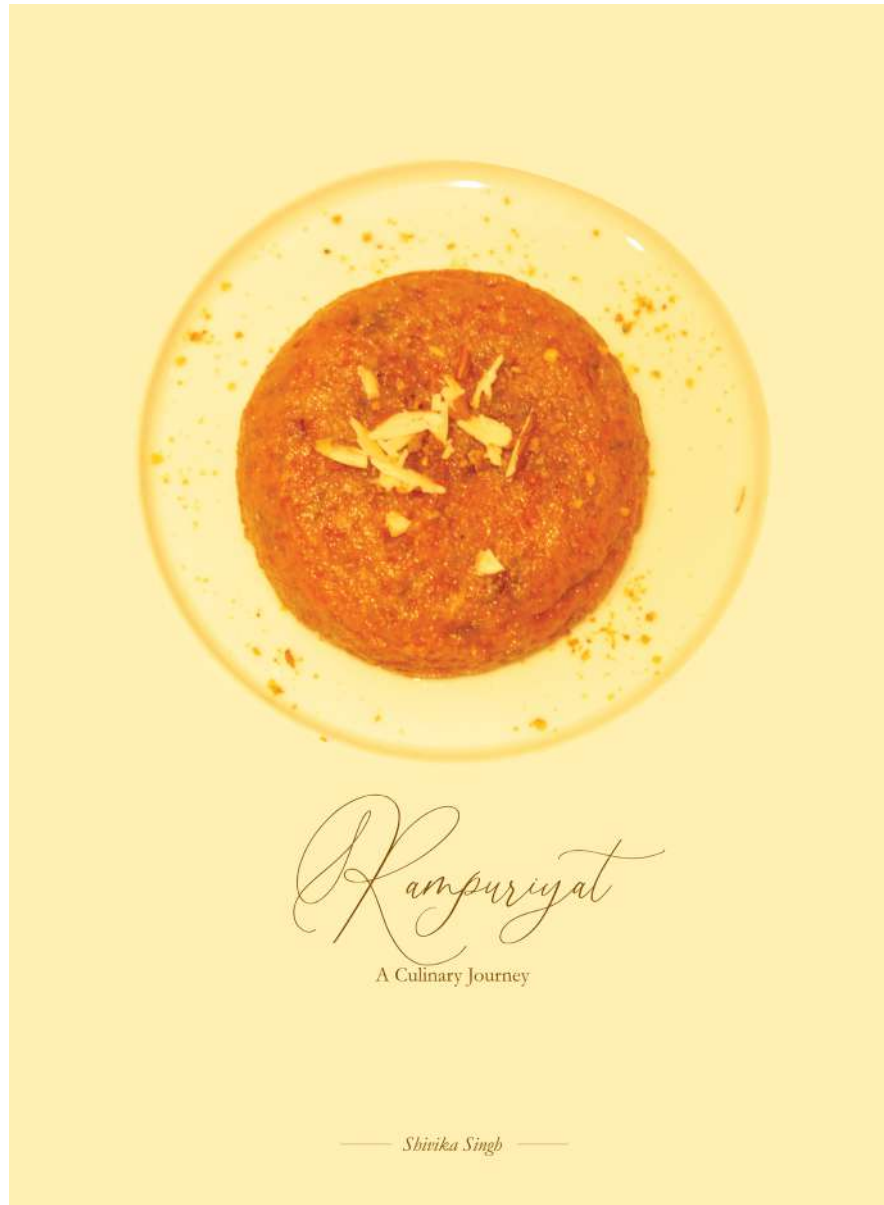
VI. iv. Typography

The typography of a book plays an important role in the experience of the users. Since the book talks about royal cuisine, I have used 'Simplicity Angela' for the titles. It is available in 9 weights. As the main objective while choosing typography is readability, I have used a serif font 'Garamond' for the body text which is available in 3 weights.

Silte (110 pt)

Heading (20 pt)

Body text (20 pt): Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Duis vehicula tortor diam, vitae rhoncus erat aliquam eget. Donec iaculis augue et leo porta vestibulum. Phasellus porttitor nisi lectus, nec malesuada elit elementum in. Vestibulum nisi magna, semper at ullamcorper vitae, accumsan sed turpis. Duis at fringilla arcu. Phasellus varius massa sit amet justo consectetur interdum. Morbi leo erat, sollicitudin ultrices urna vitae, tempor tincidunt sem. Nunc vitae dignissim sapien. Mauris tincidunt nisi est. Duis pellentesque erat sed nulla sagittis, a aliquam lorem aliquam.



VI. v. Final Layout



VII. Conclusion

This project highlights Rampur's quest for a distinctive political identity and the invaluable contributions of the khansamas who kept their centuries of kitchen secrets alive and added to the culinary richness of the kingdom. In the end, I want to leave the readers with a notion of how unique is the food of Rampur keeping in mind the two important aspects of blending and disguising. Rampur has distinguished itself from Awadh and Delhi by blending in the cultural influences. Thus, the project helped me understand how a mixture of various cultural influences is also an identity and how identity is defined in the presence of the other.

Due to the pandemic, I was unable to take some pictures. This book is a hence a prototype and I intend to work on it in the future.

This project has been a big journey for me and I learned a lot of things on the way. I am indebted to Prof. Madhumita Mazumdar for her constant support and for making me go through this journey.

VIII. Glossary

i	<i>Adrak</i>	Ginger
ii	<i>Chaku</i>	Knife
iii	<i>Gosht</i>	Meat
iv	<i>Khansama</i>	Chef
v	<i>Macchli</i>	fish
vi	<i>Mirch</i>	Chili
vii	<i>Shimla mirch</i>	Capsicum
viii	<i>Taar</i>	Fat

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